



# Spanish Bungalows

This style embodies a romantic nod to the past.

BY ROBERT SCHWEITZER



PHOTOGRAPH BY HILLARY BLACK



ONE OF THE MOST EASILY IDENTIFIABLE AND VISUALLY INTERESTING styles of American architecture from the first third of the 20th century is the Spanish bungalow. It drew spiritual inspiration from the Arts and Crafts movement that emphasized overall building simplicity, vernacular forms and the employment of regional architectural types to create harmony. Notable for its plain wall surfaces that were intended to resemble stucco or adobe brick, this type of small house was in direct contrast to the highly ornamented Victorian homes of the late 19th century with their fish-scale shingles and

**above:** Moorish or Romanesque elements created a more fanciful style while ironwork supports the look.

**far left:** Rexford Newcomb wrote this insightful book in 1927 extolling the virtues of the Spanish house. It was lavishly illustrated with many wonderful period photos.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HILLARY BLACK

clapboard siding. The Spanish bungalow was vastly popular on the western and southern U.S. coasts, although examples are also found in Chicago, Toledo, Ohio and Dearborn, Michigan.

Some examples of a Spanish Colonial Revival building style were constructed in the nineteenth century. These fore-runners to the bungalows were: The famous St. Augustine, Florida, Ponce de Leon Hotel (1888); the California Building from the Worlds Columbian Exposition (1893); as well as several major Santa Fe Railway depots. These buildings drew on the Colonial period mission buildings of California as well as the Spanish settlements in Florida for inspiration. But perhaps the biggest



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**top to bottom:**

*Some models included the bungalow's ever-popular front porch.*

*On this circa 1927 home, exterior details include a large arched window under a flat adobe-inspired roof, an arched entryway off of the garage, a terra cotta-tiled roof and a balcony.*

*C.L. Bowes of Hindsdale, IL published a number of house plan books in the 1920s. This Idea Homes book had a large number of Spanish Bungalows including the "Auricula." Note its lovely courtyard, arched entryway as well as the street level garage.*





impact on the launching of the domestic Spanish bungalow was the 1915 San Diego, California, Exposition that highlighted numerous buildings in that romantic style.

Not all bungalows followed a strict Spanish style. Elements of the Pueblo and Hopi Indian adobes as well as some Moorish and Romanesque elements were mixed into designs creating even more fanciful homes. The bungalow version was popular from just before World War I to the early 1930s. Many of the rectangular, standard bungalow floor plans were sold by plans book companies as well as in kit form. It became popular because it was a radically different, charming building to look at. The smoother wall surfaces were usually a light color and topped with a low pitched tile roof in red or terra cotta. The eaves

**top to bottom:**

*The arched entryway and quatrefoil detailing add to the charm of this classic Spanish-style home.*

*The "Amedee" was a two bedroom model with a tiled roof, front courtyard and covered porch. Note the rustic light fixtures and spears holding up the awnings.*

*This "Athens" house plan from 1926 includes a tower, smooth stucco walls and is shown with period striped awnings.*

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generally didn't overhang as on Craftsman bungalows. Some walls and dormers had parapets. Chimneys were often a point of architectural detail with rustic venting and imaginative use of tiles.

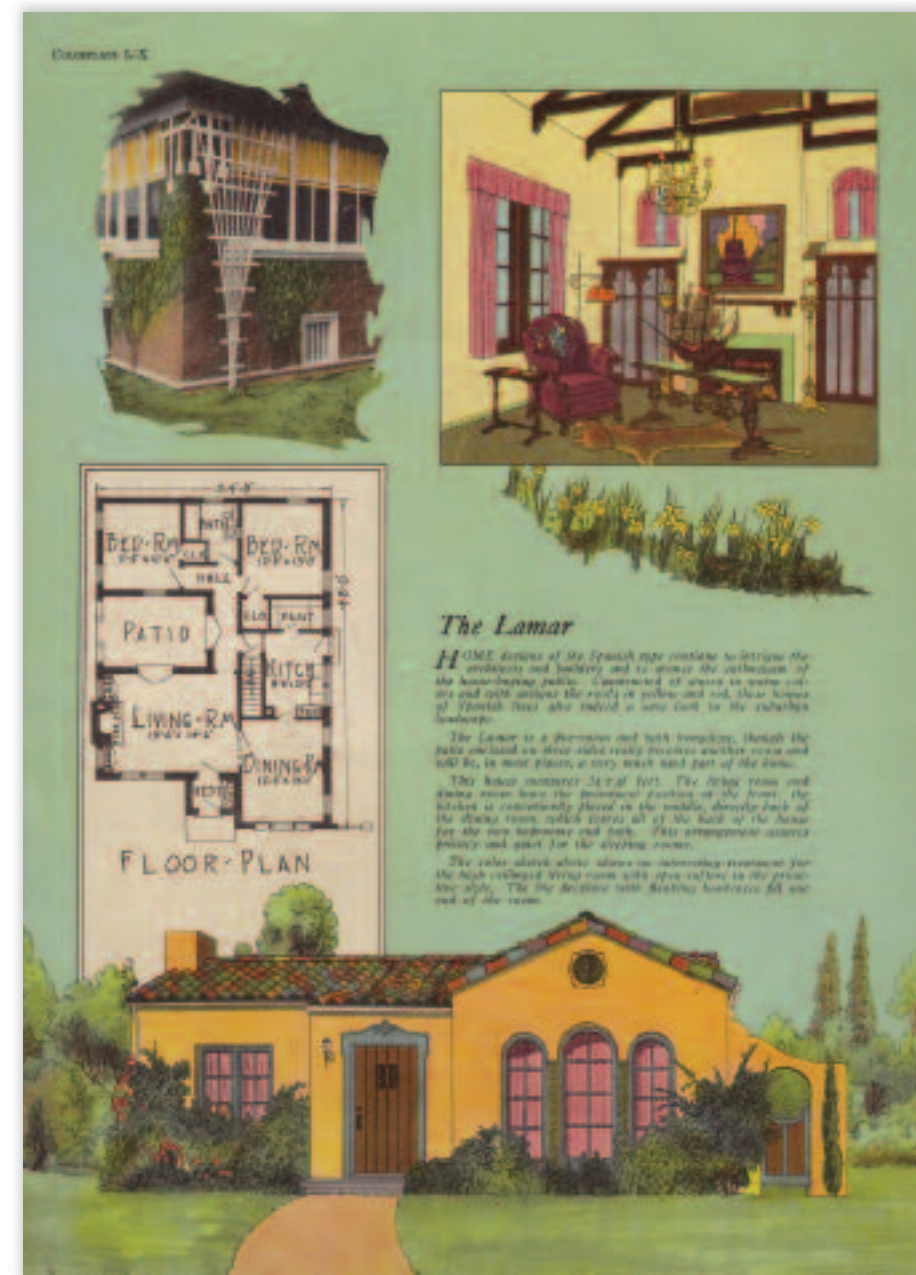
Other exterior details include the ever popular porch that on the Spanish bungalow was generally small and could be uncovered; some were fronted by small courtyards containing a fountain. Balconies were popular on models that had any type of second story. Canvas awnings covered arched casement-style windows or were surrounded by rustic wooden shutters. High-end models had quatrefoil windows and arched entryways. There was often extensive use of decorative iron work on window grills or railings. Entry doors could be rustic, created with wide planks with iron hinges. Because the style was popular into the '30s, some models had attached garages.

**top right:**

*This colorful illustration of the "Lamar" house plan highlights a bright multi-colored roof above a pumpkin colored stucco body. The trim-work is blue and the rustic planked front door is stained wood.*

**Right:**

*Center illustration from a Home & Garden publication in 1926. It illustrated the romantic life style the Spanish bungalow was supposed to represent.*




## ROMANCING THE BUNGALOW

Further reading on Spanish bungalows and the Spanish Revival Style. All are available at amazon.com.

- *Spanish Revival Architecture*, by S. F. Cook and Tina Skinner (Schiffer Publishing, 2005).
- *California Colonial: The Spanish and Rancho Revival Styles* by Elizabeth Jean McMillian PhD, photographs by Matt Gainer (Schiffer Publishing, 2002).
- *Santa Barbara* by Kathryn Masson, photographs by James Chen (Rizzoli International Publications, 2001).
- *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture for the United States (Twentieth Century Landmarks in Design, Vol. 9, Acanthus Press Reprint Series)* by Rexford Newcomb (Acanthus Press, 1999).
- *Red-Tile Style* by Arrol Gellner and Douglas Keister (published by Studio, 2002).
- *Pure California: 35 Inspiring Houses in the New California Tradition* by Bassenian and Lagoni Architects (published by Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, 2004).



Writing in 1927 Rexford Newcomb said, "Today Spain offers us an architecture of versatility of which perhaps is matched in no other European country. ...The type of house which emerged from the vicissitudes of Spanish history is one eminently adapted to life in sunny lands." By the 1920s Southern California was booming as were areas of Florida and Texas which all boasted a sunny climate and were in need of considerable new housing stock. The romantic Spanish colonial history of these

areas was perfect for a new style of domestic architecture – the Spanish Bungalow. 

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**Opposite:**

This "Barcelona" model was a kit offered by Montgomery Wards' Wardway Homes in 1929. The basic design is a standard bungalow with a few "Spanish" enhancements such as the entryway arch.

**Top:**

Since this style remained popular into the 1930s, some homes had attached garages.

**Middle:**

This plans book model illustrates the influence of the Native American homes of the Southwest with a flat roof. The arched windows and entryway are Spanish as are the decorative tile pieces in the upper walls.

**Bottom:**

This Spanish style cottage in Hollywood, California shown in the late 1920s shows the entry of the automobile into suburban life with its rear garage. Note the pillars and large gate forming a courtyard that block the view of the "Auto House."

