

Dressing Windows for Spring

Spring! After a long, cold Colorado winter, the warm, bright days of spring are a wondrous delight. For many years in Colorado's brief history, springtime meant cleaning windows, taking down storm windows and putting up screens, and changing heavy drapes and curtains to lighter ones.

To truly sustain an older home's appearance in keeping with the time when it was built, the look of window treatments of the period are crucial. During Victorian times, the Arts and Crafts movement, or even post World War Two, many of the fabrics and materials of today's selection of window coverings did not exist.

What does the well-dressed window wear for spring? Here is a summary of important fashion statements for Colorado's historic homes—those over 50 years old.

The Victorians and Denver Squares: 1860 to 1910 (approximately)

Windows during the Victorian times were dressed to the nines! Windows dressed after Colorado's disastrous silver bust in 1892 were slightly less frivolous, reflecting the look of thrift in the Denver Square architecture. Before Easter, windows shed some of their clothes. The heavy material of drapes, cornices and valences, often velvet in a dark jewel color, was replaced with lighter weight fabric such as cotton. The lace curtains covering the windows, like undergarments or petticoats, were taken down hand washed, and put on stretchers in the sun to dry before going back up to cover the freshly cleaned windows.

Bungalows, Cottages and Tutors – the Arts and Crafts Movement – 1890 to 1935 (approximately)

Homes of these architectural style reflect the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement that gripped Europe and most of the United States and Canada from about 1890 to 1925. In Colorado, these types of homes continued to be built until the start of World War Two. Several words could summarize this philosophy: nature, simplicity and handmade. The philosophy was a direct reaction to the industrial revolution and goods made by machine. The well-dressed window during this time could be seen in *Ladies Home Journal*. The popular magazine had a circulation of about one million in 1910, stated Dianne Ayres, a textile expert of the era, during a talk to Colorado's Arts and Crafts Society this year. Most of Colorado's older homes are of this period. During springtime, heavier curtains were taken down and lighter ones hung. "Café" curtains, with or without simple valences, dressed windows. Embroidery sometimes trimmed borders. Roller shades were often used.

The Usonian and Internationalists – 1946 to 1957 (and still today)

Englewood's Arapahoe Acres neighborhood is Colorado's "youngest" historic district. In this neighborhood and many throughout Colorado, homes were built in the Usonian and Internationalist style. The homes reflect economic construction and the use of natural materials. Part or all of these homes are flat-roofed. Naturalism is equated with functionalism. Closed shutters guard against the cold in winter and are thrown open in the spring to let in the warmth. Larger windows sport pleated sheers and pleated drapes, often of a floral pattern in greens and corals. The homes are designed to have an abundance of light. To learn more about these homes and Arapahoe Acres, visit the Web site at arapahoeacres.org.