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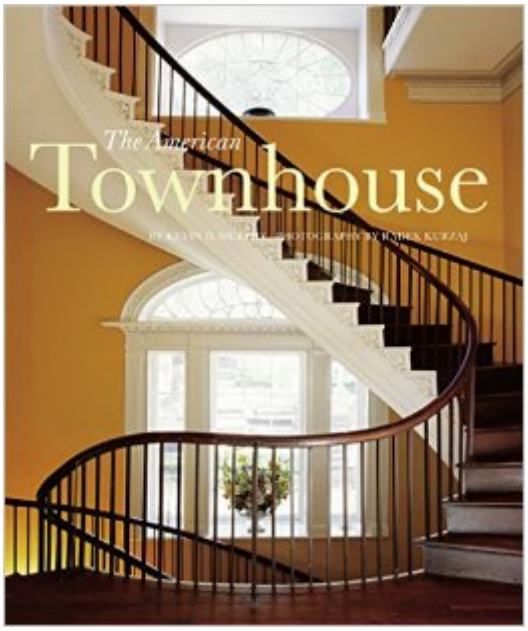
The American Townhouse



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Synopsis

The American townhouse is one of the most popular house types in urban America. This comprehensive volume tours the reader through 25 stunning examples of townhouses and rowhouses from Boston to Brooklyn, St. Louis to San Francisco. Radek Kurzaj's striking photographs complement a fascinating text by nationally recognized historic-house expert Kevin Murphy about the townhouse as cultural phenomena, as well as the unique design peculiarities, construction records, and ownership histories of these 25. Included are some of the country's finest townhouses, including the famed Nathaniel Russell House in Charleston; Teddy Roosevelt's New York birth house; the Payne and Helen Hay Whitney House in New York; and the Glenn and Ida Moore House in Rancho Santa Fe. An important book for townhouse dwellers and a captivating read for anyone interested in the history of how we live in America, this book will be widely regarded as a primary reference on this important subject.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kevin Murphy's book, "The American Townhouse," aims to give an overview of this building type through a historical essay and a short survey of various exemplary townhouses across the country. The essay is good, and is recommended to anyone who wants to learn about townhouses in a concise but fairly thorough essay. The essay hits all the high points with great historic photographs (mostly from the Historic American Buildings Survey/HABS) of extant and demolished buildings as reinforcement.Where the book falls short is in the 25 selected townhouses profiled after the essay.

Perhaps the author had difficulty getting homeowners who wanted their houses in this book. That is the only logical explanation for the odd choices made of which houses to include in "The American Townhouse." Classic houses such as the Nathaniel Russell House in Charleston, the Merchant's House in New York City, and the Gibson House in Boston are included, but so are very poor examples such as the Theodore Roosevelt "Birthplace" in New York City (a replica of the demolished Gothic/Italianate Brownstone constructed in the 1920s), the John Ryan House in San Francisco (a one-story cottage turned into a faux, two-story San Francisco Victorian in the 2000s), and the Glenn and Ida Moore House in Rancho Santa Fe, California (a small bungalow extensively added on to in 2004 with most of the book's photographs being of the additions). Other houses included are puzzling but not egregious as they are not the best examples of that style in that city but are still actual historic townhouses (the Robert Alexander House in Washington, D.C. and the Francis Stone House in Savannah, among others, fall into this category).

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