

BY CLAYTON DEKORNE



First Unitarian Church at 1 Benevolent Street, in Providence, R.I., is an amalgam of Classical and Gothic architectural features.

A Study in Classical Orders

If you find yourself in Providence, R.I., for JLC Live later this month (March 16 to 19), take a stroll after hours across the Providence River to College Hill—site of one of the most extensive and authentic collections of historic architecture on the East Coast. On just about any street in the College Hill neighborhood, the houses look like the pages of Ascher Benjamin's *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter* come to life.

Begin your tour at 1 Benevolent Street, at the First Unitarian Church (1816). Its facade is a study unto itself of the Classical orders that Benjamin illuminates in the first pages of his treatise; at each level, the columns step up (in order from bottom to top) from Doric to Ionic to Corinthian. Designed and built by master-builder/architect John Holden Greene—back when there was no distinction between the professions—the church resembled New South Church in Boston (1814), which was modeled after London's St. Martin in the Fields (1726). What Greene brought that was unique—and appropriate for a congregation that embraced the idea of “universalism”—was a blending of architectural styles, not only in the ascending columns and pediments, but in the windows' Gothic tracery combined with ancient Roman arches.

While I'm in Providence to attend JLC Live, I'm hoping to also talk my way into a tour of the clock tower. I'm told the trusses up there are as impressive as the exterior detailing of the facade.



Doric



Ionic



Corinthian

Photos: Clayton Dekorne