

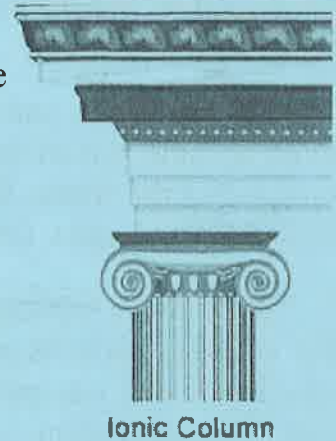
Graceful Greek Architecture

By Colleen Messina



¹ The Greeks were the cultural superheroes of the ancient world. They wrote gigantic poems. They sculpted fine figures. They wrote tragic plays. They built graceful structures which have influenced many of our buildings today. The ancient Greeks seem to peer out at us in many ways in the modern world.

² Pericles helped make the Greek city of Athens spectacular. He was an admiral and statesman, but he also liked to build things. He decided that Athens should have beautiful buildings. He was in charge of building the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to Pallas Athena. It was built between 447 B.C. and 436 B.C. The architecture of the Parthenon affected buildings for centuries.



³ It might seem strange to you that an old building would be so important. Some people think that the Parthenon was the most important building in history. Let's pretend that you lived in Athens. A proud moment of your life would be when you visited the Parthenon. What was special about this temple? Its colorful walls shone in the sun. Its strong pillars looked elegant. Inside, the forty-foot, gold and ivory statue of Pallas Athena stood straight and tall to protect your city. Everything about the Parthenon made you proud to be a citizen of Athens.

⁴ Even today, this temple looks graceful. It has a rectangular shape with columns on its sides. These columns were a key part of Greek architecture. The Greeks used three different kinds of columns for their temples and other buildings. Each kind of column had different proportions, or shapes. They were called Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The Parthenon has both Doric and Ionic columns.

⁵ Imagine that Greek columns were different kinds of people. The Doric columns were the oldest kind of column. They were plain and sturdy like a fat, balding farmer. Architects on the mainland of Greece and in colonies in Italy and Sicily used this kind of column. The top of a Doric column, called its capital, was simple and flat. That is why the Doric column looked bald compared to its fellow columns!

⁶ Ionic columns were taller and thinner like an elegant lady with her hair in curlers on each side of her head because the Ionic capitals had curly scrolls on each side. The Greeks got the idea for these columns from rams' horns! Architects in eastern Greece and on Ionia islands liked this kind of capital. They used them for smaller buildings. They also put them inside the temples.

⁷ Corinthian columns were taller and thinner. Corinthian columns were not common in Greece, but the Romans loved them. They put many Corinthian columns in their temples.