

ARCHAEOLOGY EDUCATION PROGRAM

December 1999
Vol. 8 No.2



Mississippi
Valley
Archaeology
Center

M.V.A.C. at the
University of Wisconsin
- La Crosse

1725 State Street

La Crosse, WI 54601-3788

phone: 608/785-8463

fax: 608/785-8486

Website:

<http://perth.uwlax.edu/mvac>

*Future issues
will focus on
commercial
and agricultural
structures.*

This year's Archaeology Education Program Newsletter theme is Architectural History. The first issue provided an introduction to the subject, and this issue focuses on Residential Architecture. MVAC's Architectural Historian, Barbara Kooiman, provided content information.

Residential History

Introduction

Though there are many different types of buildings in any community (such as schools, commercial buildings and industrial buildings) by far the largest number fall under the property type of "residential buildings." Houses, of course, are the greatest number within that property type. Houses make up approximately 75% or more of the buildings in any community, and come in a wide variety of materials, sizes and styles. This edition of Archaeology Education will focus on the property type of "houses."

House Subtypes

Under the category of "house", there are many subtypes, including rowhouses, mansions, residences, rockshelters, log cabins, homesteads and caves. Most houses that we are familiar with are described as "single family dwellings." Unless you live in an apartment building, you probably live in a single family dwelling.

Styles

The styles of houses have changed over the years, much like preferences in clothing styles change. Factors such as the economy, availability of building materials, ethnic influences, climactic variables and decorative preferences all impact the style of a house. For example, pioneers in this area first lived in log cabins, since wood was plentiful, and they could build the houses themselves. Once sawmills made finished lumber available, people built larger, fancier houses. Many of La Crosse's grand Queen Anne style houses were built in the 1880s and 1890s when large, fanciful houses were popular, the economy was strong because of the lumber mills in the vicinity, and there was relatively easy access to decorative cut wood from the lumber companies.

Identifying Styles

In order to identify the style of a house, the observer must look at the individual elements that make up the whole house. What shape is the roof? What are the wall materials made of? What are the special features of the front door? What about the porch? Does it cover the entire front of the house, wrap around to the side, or just shelter the doorway? What do the windows look like? What is the foundation material made of? By looking at all of these elements and more, you will be able to determine what style the house is. The lesson/worksheet on the next page will give you practice in identifying houses by their styles.

Find This Style

Go around town and find examples of each of these styles of houses. Write down the address. Draw or take a picture of the house. Try to identify and record all the different styles of houses in your neighborhood. Look at the books in the resource section if you need help.

Queen Anne Style

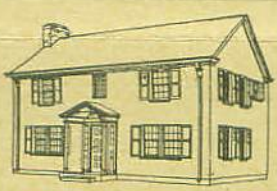


The Queen Anne style is identified by steeply pitched roofs of irregular shapes, often with a predominant front-facing **gable** and sometimes a rounded **turret** on the corner; patterned cut **shingles** in the gables and on the walls, **bay windows** which project out from the walls, porches which often extend at least the full front of the house, and often around to one of the sides, decorated with turned **posts** and cut **brackets**. The Queen Anne style was most popular in the La Crosse area between 1880 and 1905.

I found a Queen Anne style house at:

Address- _____
City, State- _____

Colonial Revival Style



The Colonial Revival style, which brought back some of the elements of houses which were popular prior to the Revolutionary War in New England, include features such as prominent front doors, normally with a decorative **pediment** supported by **pilasters**, overhead **fanlights** or **sidelights** decorating the door, **symmetrical facade**, or front of the house, **multi-pane** windows, and often shutters decorating the windows. The Colonial Revival style, in the La Crosse area, was popular between about 1910 and 1940.

I found a Colonial Revival style house at:

Address- _____
City, State- _____

Bungalow/Craftsman Style



The Bungalow or Craftsman style, which tended to be one or one and one-half stories tall, often have low-pitched, gabled roofs with wide, unenclosed **eave** overhangs, roof **rafters** which are often exposed **brackets** under the gables, porches which span part or all of the width of the house, **columns** or pedestals which are often square or round and **tapered**. Windows often feature pieces of geometrically shaped colored glass. The Bungalow/Craftsman style was popular in the LaCrosse area from about 1910 to 1940.

I found a Bungalow/Craftsman style house at:

Address- _____
City, State- _____

NOTE: Phrases in bold are more thoroughly explained in the Glossary.

Glossary

Brackets: support structures, often triangular in shape, which are set under the eaves of overhanging roof lines of houses and porches.

Bay Window: A rounded or three-sided window structure which juts out from the flat wall of a building.

Column: A decorative post which supports the roof of a porch or entryway. Columns are often decorated with classical styled tops, and on houses are usually made of wood or stone.

Eave: The edge of the roof that extends beyond the wall surface.

Fanlight: A half-circle window, divided into "pie" shaped segments, which is usually located over a main doorway.

Gable: A roof type formed by the meeting of two sloping roof surfaces, creating a triangle shape at the gable's end.

Multi-pane: Multiple small window panes in a larger, often rectangular shaped window.

Pediment: A decorative, often triangular or semicircular-shaped, element found at the gable of the roof, or above an entryway.

Pilaster: A column which is actually attached to the wall.

Posts: The supportive structural part of a porch or portico. A post can be in the form of a column.

Rafters: The inner, structural part of a roof, which is often exposed at the roof ends in bungalow/craftsman style houses.

Shingle: A small, flat piece of hard material, most often wood, asbestos or asphalt. Shingles were often cut into square, triangular or rounded shapes to use as decorative wall surfaces on Queen Anne style houses.

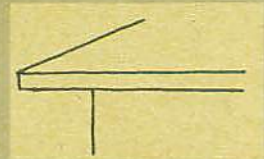
Sidelight: Narrow, vertical windows which often flank either side of an entryway, commonly used on Colonial Revival style houses.

Symmetrical facade: The facade is the front of a building, and symmetrical refers to the elements of the facade (doors and windows) being centered and even on both sides of the center, i.e: centered door, and same number and style of windows on either side of the door.

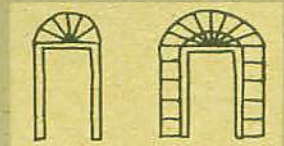
Tapered: Often used in describing columns, tapered refers to the column being wider at the bottom than at the top.

Turret: A rounded or squared tower, usually on the corner of a Queen Anne style building, with a decorative roof, which is either conical or hipped/pyramidal in shape.

House Attributes



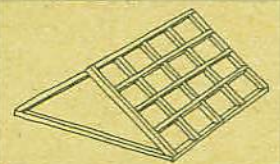
Eaves



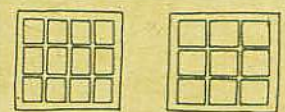
Fanlight



Pilaster



Rafters



Multi-pane Window

Architectural History Resources

These book reviews, websites, and historic places in Wisconsin can be used to supplement historic architecture lessons.

Let us know if you have found any great resources we can share with our readers.

Books Reviews

Title: *A Field Guide to American Houses.*

Author: Virginia and Lee McAlester

Publisher: New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Age Range: 12 to adult

One of the best sources available for identifying architectural styles of houses.

Title: *The American Family Home, 1800 - 1960.*

Author: Clifford Edward Clark, Jr.

Publisher: Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Age Range: 12 to adult

A good book to explain why people live in the kinds and styles of houses that they do, and what influenced their decisions.

Title: *City of La Crosse, Wisconsin Architectural & Historical Intensive Survey Report*

Author: Joan Rausch, Architectural Researches, Inc.

Publisher: City of La Crosse, WI (available at the LaCrosse Public Library, reference)

Age Range: 12 to adult

The only comprehensive source available for looking up particular historic buildings in La Crosse, with narrative sections on architectural styles and area history.

Title: *Under Every Roof*

Author: Patricia Brown Glenn

Publisher: Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press

Age Range: 9 to 15

A kids' style and field guide to architecture, with topics such as "why houses look the way they do," "location, historic status, and accessibility," and a field guide.

Web Sites

Real Sites Designs www.realviews.com/architecture

This is a good site for looking up photographs and drawings of various architectural styles.

Major Works www.majorworks.com/wright

This is a great site for looking at some representative photographs and text about Frank Lloyd Wright buildings. Frank Lloyd Wright, born and raised in Wisconsin, was arguably one of the world's most famous architects.

Places to Visit

Hixon House, located at 429 S. Seventh Street in LaCrosse

La Crosse County Historical Society's house museum. Designed in the Italianate style, it is a good example of a lumber baron's home in the 1880s.

Palmer-Gullickson Octagon House, located at 358 N. Leonard Street in West Salem.

This unusually shaped house is the museum of the West Salem Historical Society. Built in 1856 by Dr. Horace Palmer, the house is one of only a handful of rare, octagon shaped houses which exist in the country.

The drawings in this section were taken from *A Field Guide to American Houses*, by Virginia and Lee McAlester