

Field Guide To

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OLD-HOUSE STYLES

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THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED to familiarize the reader with the architectural details of the most common old-house styles. Old houses derive their charm from the richness and variety of details that the old-time builders crafted with their hands.

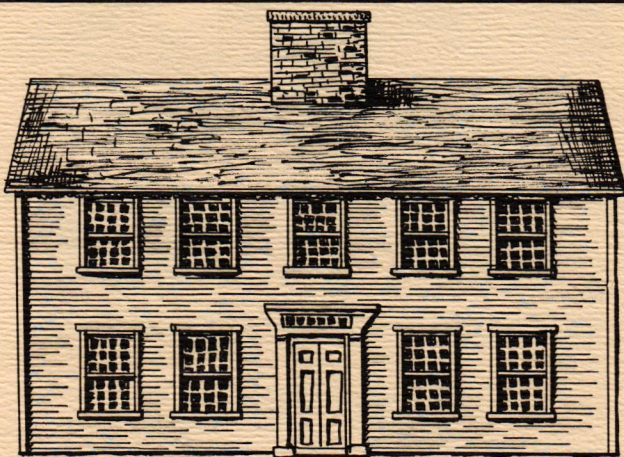
EACH DETAIL BY ITSELF is subtle...it's the combining of different, related details that makes "style." Because of the subtlety of individual details, all too often they are destroyed during a remodeling. These character-destroying alterations could be better called "remuddling."

THE OUTLINE PRESENTED HERE enables you to identify the architectural heritage of most American old houses. Very few houses represent a "pure" style. Designers were continually trying out different combinations of traditional details. Also, many houses have been altered during the years in keeping with the latest fad. Today you're likely to find Colonial houses with Victorian additions...and Victorian

houses with Colonial Revival additions. Once having mastered a few basic principles, however, your eye will begin to discern what is original to a house, and what has been added—or removed—in keeping with the latest fashion.

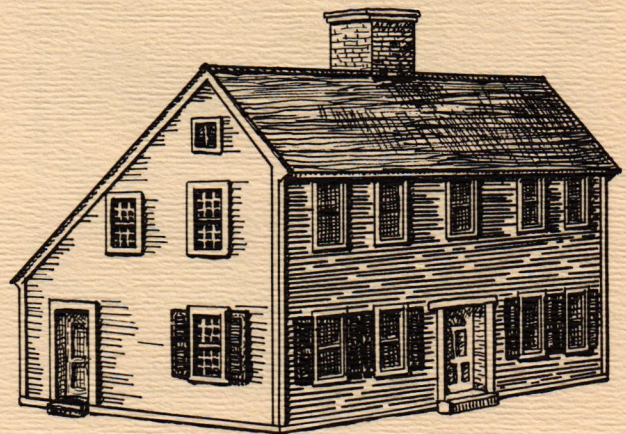
IT IS HOPED that a greater appreciation of architectural detail will inspire more old-house owners to preserve and restore their houses in harmony with the original intent of the builder. It is relatively easy for the home craftsman to preserve detail that is already in place. But it is difficult and/or expensive to replace architectural detail once it has been thoughtlessly removed.

THE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO DETAIL that went into the construction of old houses is a cultural treasure that cannot be replaced. Keeping up an old house is keeping faith with past—and future—generations.



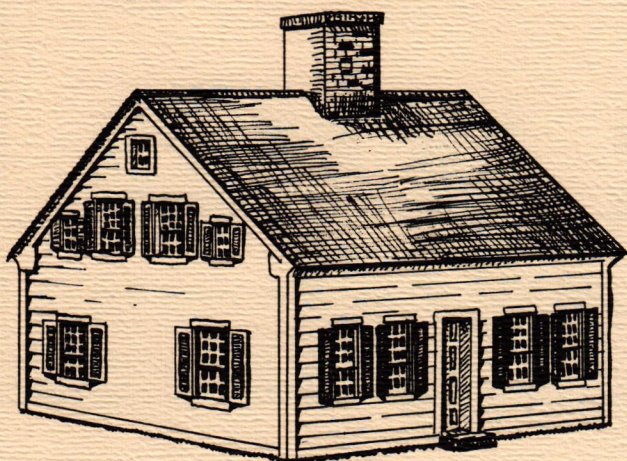
Colonial 1690-1760

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Large central chimney; narrow clapboards; simple frames around doors and windows; few—if any—small windows (lights) around doors. Windows had numerous small panes—frequently 12 over 12. In South, similar designs were executed in brick. Few have survived without addition of wings, ells and lean-tos, and other changes in details.



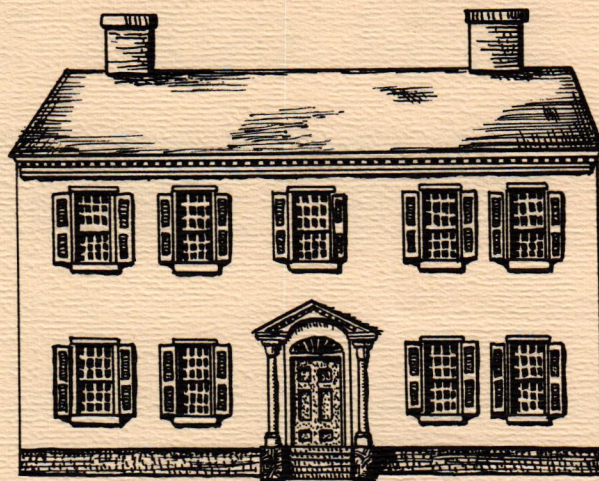
Saltbox 1700-1770

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: The roof line defines the saltbox. It evolved from the practice of adding a lean-to on the back of a house in order to gain extra space. Sometimes a change in the angle of the back roof shows where the lean-to was added. The design became so popular that some houses were built with the long back roof as part of the original structure.



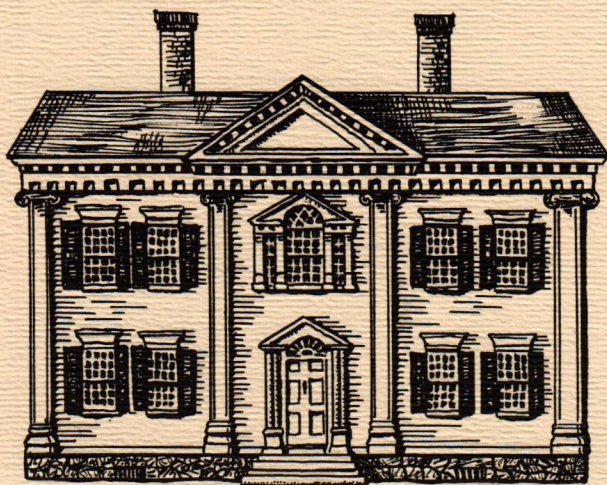
Cape Cod 1710-1830

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Frame structure, one and one-half storeys high; low pitched roof; large central chimney; no dormers. Light for attic comes from windows in gable ends. To increase attic headroom, builders sometimes used a bowed ("ship's bottom") roof. Originally covered on all sides and roof with wood shingles that weathered gray. Later houses used clapboards. Three basic designs: Half House—two windows to side of front door; Three-Quarters House—two windows to one side of door and one to the other; Full Cape—two windows to each side of door.



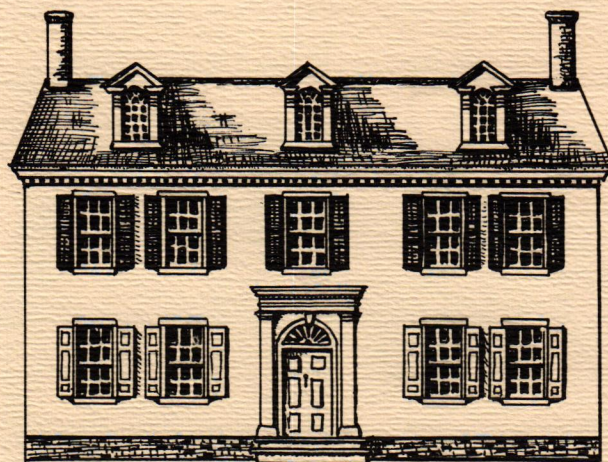
Early Georgian 1720-1760

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Symmetrical design based on Roman classicism. Set on high foundation, with emphasis on entrance bay in middle of house. Wide panelled door had row of rectangular lights in door, or transom light above. Columns or pilasters frequently framed door, with pediment above. Plain colonial eaves were replaced with cornice, often with classical features such as dentils. When dormers were used, they had triangular pediments and were spaced symmetrically. Usually had pitched roof; sometimes hipped. Executed in brick or wood.



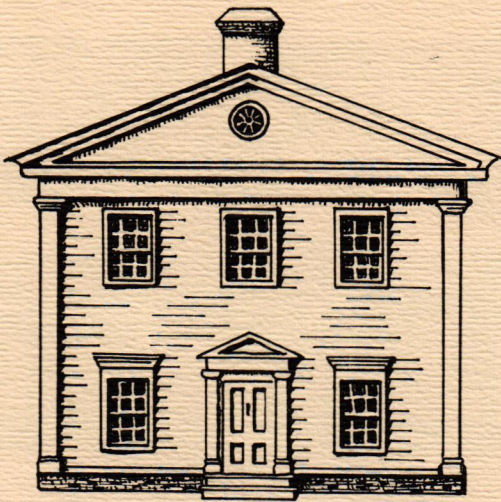
Late Georgian 1760-1780

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Heavy use of classical details...doorways surrounded with pilasters or columns, surmounted by cornice and/or pediment; semi-circular fanlight over door. Palladian (triple) window on second floor in center. Cornice on window caps. More elaborate houses would have projecting entrance pavillion topped by a pedimented gable. Use of columns and pilasters became more lavish, as did use of classical details in the cornice. Corners on masonry houses usually had stone quoins; on wood houses the quoins were often simulated in wood.



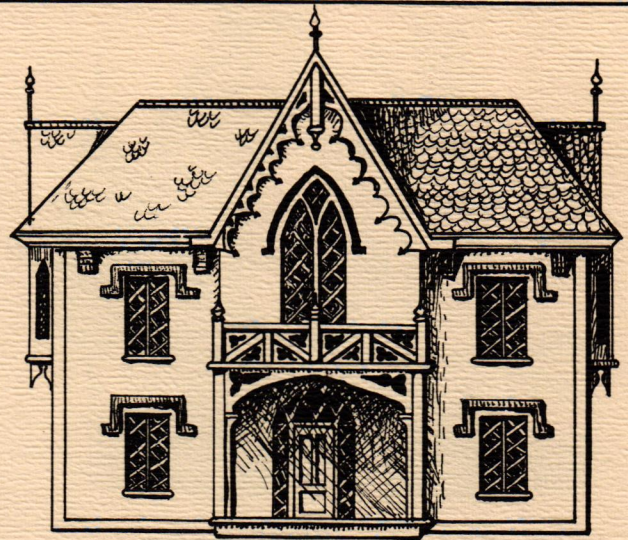
Federal 1780-1820

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: After the Revolution, house designers rejected much of the classical decoration of Late Georgian, but retained basic Roman symmetry. The result is often hard to distinguish from Early Georgian. Doorways retained pilasters and columns, usually topped with flat entablature. Elliptical fanlights over doors were popular. Simple frames around windows; corners unmarked by quoins or pilasters. Hipped roofs became more common, sometimes rimmed by a balustrade. Flat boarding sometimes used on exterior for a more classical effect.



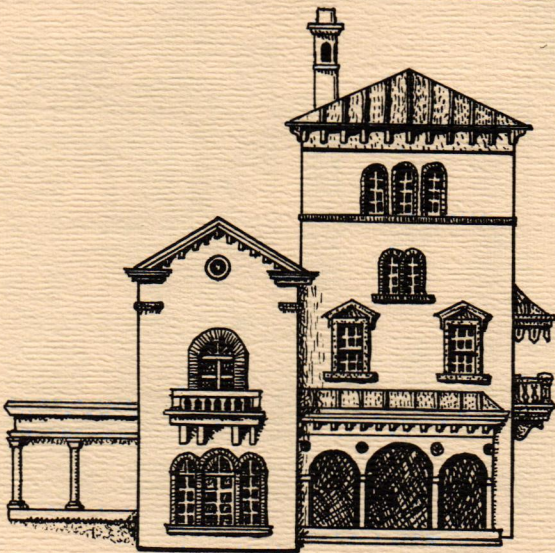
Greek Revival 1815-1840

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Emphasis on columns (or pilasters), capitals and low triangular gabled pediment—all to create the effect of a Greek temple. Focus shifted from the long side of the house to the gabled end. Pedimented gable appears to rest on classical entablature, which is in turn supported by columns. More elaborate homes had a columned entrance portico—especially popular in the south. Windows are strongly vertical, with six-over-six panes. Lines are simpler and cleaner than Roman-influenced Georgian.



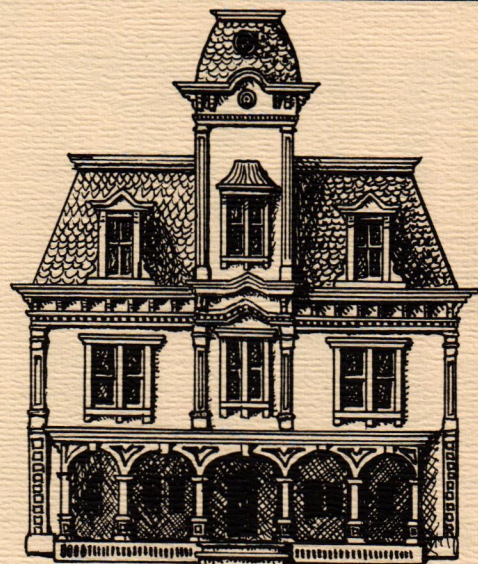
Gothic Revival 1835-1880

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Objective was to recapture the romance of medieval buildings. Emphasis was on vertical effect, achieved through multiple sharply pointed gables with slender finials at the peaks. Windows were tall and slender, sometimes topped with a lancet arch. Casement windows with leaded diamond-shaped panes were also popular. Wooden verge boards under eaves—and other decorative woodwork—was cut with medieval motifs such as trefoils, quatrefoils, gothic crosses and other pointed symbols.



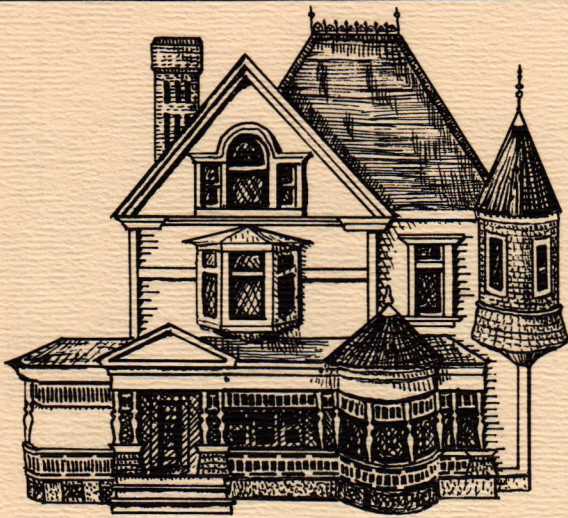
Italianate 1845-1885

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Designed to resemble Italian country villas. Asymmetrical arrangement of squared shapes and lines. Flat or low-pitched roofs; extended eaves that emphasize deep and heavy cornices set with ornate brackets. Plain horizontal decorative bands. Tall, slender windows, some with rounded heads. Square-pillared porches; semi-circular arches; tall square tower or cupola; balconies set on stout, ornate brackets.



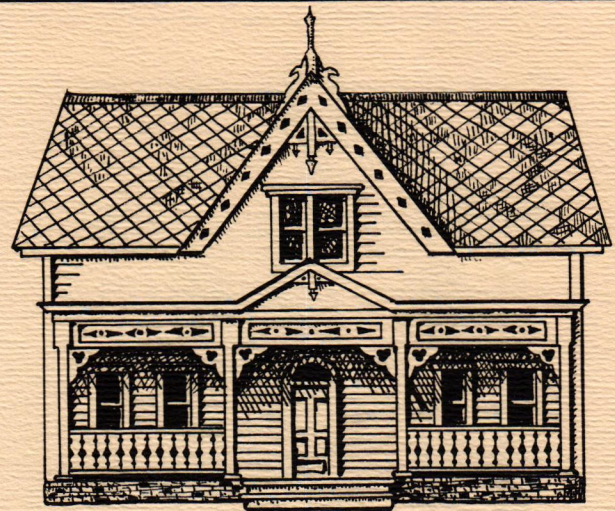
Mansard 1855-1885

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Easily recognized by highly distinctive roof line. Extra living space on top floor is gained by bending out the slope of the roof. The Mansard roof is pierced by a dazzling variety of dormer windows: Rectangular, pointed, gabled, round—even double rows of dormers. Dormers often ornamented with pediments and console butresses. Slate often used on steep slope of roof. Also called Second Empire style.



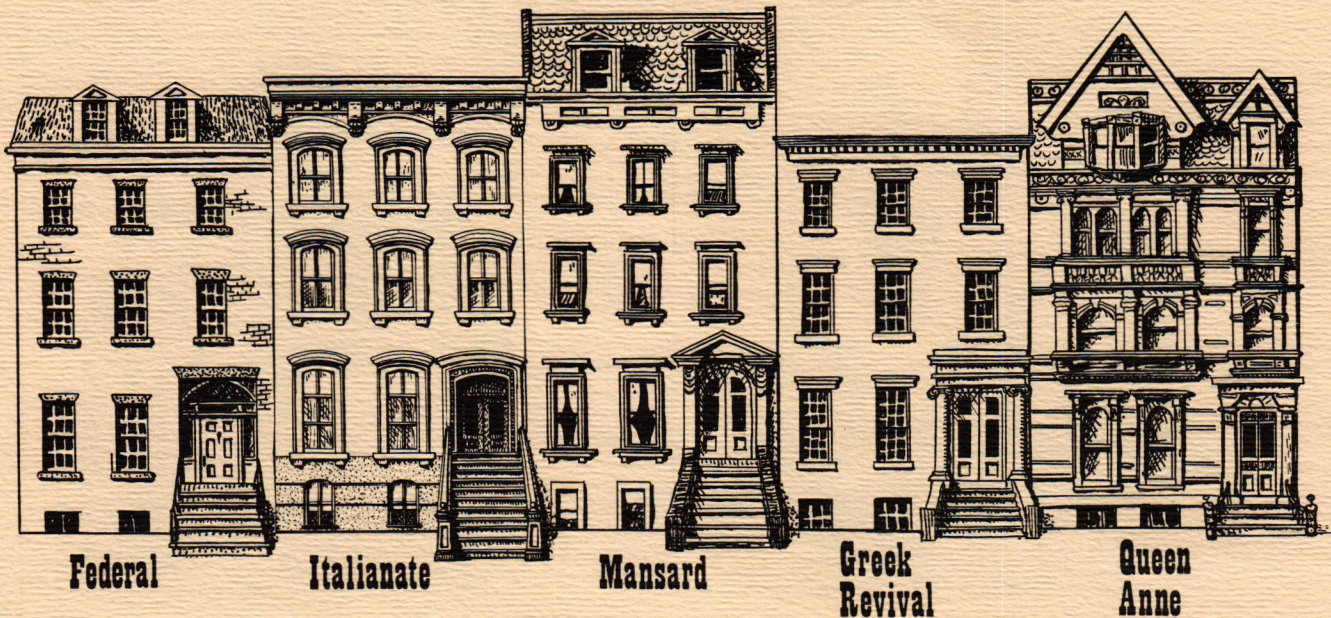
Queen Anne 1875-1900

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: A picturesque massing of variety of shapes and textures in a non-symmetrical composition. Gables, dormers, chimneys, round turrets and oriel windows used freely. Porches feature delicately turned spindlework; horizontal decorative bands. Brick chimneys usually fluted, with large caps. In brick, terra cotta used for decoration. In wood, smooth boards are mixed with clapboards and shingles for variety.



Carpenter Gothic 1870-1910

CHARACTERISTIC DETAILS: Sawn wood ornament at peaks of gables, in verge boards under gables, and on porches. Even porch railings and aprons sometimes have sawn patterns. Designs may be holes and slots cut out of wood—or pieces applied to other boards. Sawn brackets appear on porch posts and on cornice. Ornament depends more on whim of the carpenter-builder than on any architectural style. This type of ornament also called "gingerbread."



Federal

Italianate

Mansard

Greek Revival

Queen Anne

CITY ROW HOUSES: Although they had only the front surface to work with, designers captured the essence of various styles in row houses... Doorways with fanlights and sidelights in Federal; Arched windows and heavy brackets on

Italianate; Using the Mansard roof with countless dormer variations; Dentilled cornice with classical columns and architrave on Greek Revival doorway; Dazzling variety of gables, bays, textures and horizontal banding on Queen Anne.

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