

Guidelines

BUILDING STYLES IN THE CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Identifying building styles is fascinating to homeowners and neighborhood observers alike. Knowing a building's style is also key to making good decisions about modifications. Many of the assaults on the building fabric of Capitol Hill, shutters on buildings that never had them, six-over-six Colonial windows on Victorian era houses and the like, are the result of not understanding what is appropriate to a building's style.

The building stock of Capitol Hill defies simple stylistic categorization for a number of reasons, some attributable to the dominant row house building stock itself:

1. Except for corner lots, row houses have only a single facade on which to develop a style whereas most styles developed on freestanding buildings with three or four important elevations.
2. Whereas most styles have floor plan and massing implications, diverse styles were applied to identical row house floor plans on Capitol Hill. Thus, a building's floor plan and massing doesn't help in identifying its style.
3. Much of the building stock is hybrid, "designed" by builders and tradesmen combining various styles popular at the same time.
4. Some Capitol Hill buildings are transitional, incorporating elements of two or even more succeeding styles.
5. Many of Capitol Hill's buildings have been extensively modified. As fashions changed, owners often "modernized" their buildings. Generic Federal houses acquired Italianate cornices in the late 19th century; many buildings acquired Colonial Revival touches in the 20th century. Buildings have been added to, front, rear, and sides. Various disasters have resulted in new building faces.

The defiance of style labels of so many of Capitol Hill's buildings should be seen as a celebration of diversity and not as a source of frustration. In many cases where an entire building cannot easily be categorized, there are com-

BY JUDITH M. CAPEN, AIA



THESE FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE ROW HOUSES AT 505-507 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SE, ARE TYPICAL OF A HIGH STYLE REDUCED TO ITS ESSENCE. THEY HAVE THE CHARACTERISTIC SECOND EMPIRE DORMERED MANSARD ROOF, PAIRED WINDOWS, AND ONE STORY CANTED BAY.



THE SHOTGUN TYPE HOUSE AT 518 NINTH STREET, SE, DERIVES FROM THE FOLK TRADITION IN WHICH THE BUILDER WAS ALSO OWNER AND RESIDENT, BUILDING FOR HIS OWN USE, NOT USING ANY PRODUCTS OF TECHNOLOGY. ANOMALOUS FOR CAPITOL HILL, WHICH HAS NO DOCUMENTED EXAMPLES OF TRUE FOLK BUILDINGS, IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE RICHNESS OF THE BUILDING FABRIC.

ponents, a window head, a bit of detail on a cornice, a decorative flourish, identifiable with a style. Looking for these elements in an architectural treasure hunt can lead to an appreciation of the visual exuberance of Capitol Hill's rich and varied built environment.

FORCES SHAPING CAPITOL HILL

While much of the built environment of Capitol Hill is a product of national forces of the late 19th century, such as rapid industrialization and general economic prosperity, the Hill also has its own specific context. First, George Washington's "party wall proclamation" of 1792, shaped it as a row house community. Second, Capitol Hill was a middle and working class neighborhood,

with residents who did not generally use professional building designers. Third, whereas the Queen Anne and other late 19th century styles were most commonly realized in wood, in urban Washington, including Capitol Hill, laws restricting the use of flammable building materials transformed wood styles to brick.

Finally, the parking act (1870) creating front yards out of excess street rights of way in the L'Enfant plan, and the projection legislation (1871) allowing bay projections into the public space allowed the builders of Capitol Hill to give full reign to the popular late 19th century style preferences for towers and turrets. Fashion and the possibility of increasing floor area by building into the public space resulted in an architecture of towers and projecting bays in all of Washington.

CATEGORIES OF BUILDINGS

The vast majority of buildings, including Capitol Hill's, have always been non-pedigreed products of builders and others without formal design training, housing ordinary people, their shops, and places of business. Capitol Hill's building styles are largely popular adaptations of high styles to housing, the result of builders working from pattern books or from available materials at lumber yards. Whereas designs in pattern books were often quite sophisticated, allowing untrained builders to erect fine examples of a particular style, other houses are more idiosyncratic interpretations of building fashion. There is often a lag between periods of broad popularity of a style and its appearance on Capitol Hill reflecting conservatism of builders responding to market forces. This piece will refer to the trickled-down styles of these buildings as "garden variety" examples of the better documented high styles.

Garden variety styles are reductionist. A high style building might incorporate six attributes of a style. But the garden variety version of the same style, especially when limited to a row house facade, might be identifiable by only one or two characteristics.

Vernacular or generic types. In many cases, perhaps because of the modesty of both the building stock and the means of the residents, Capitol Hill houses are not clear examples of trickled down high styles, but rather are types.



800 BLOCK OF A STREET, SE, WITH "FLAT-FRONT" BUILDINGS ON THE LEFT, AND A "WASHINGTON ROW" BUILDING ON THE RIGHT.

These, which we will refer to as vernacular or generic types, do not fall into stylistic categories, however dilute.

Generic or vernacular types are best characterized by shape, configuration, or plan. Roof form is often the best descriptor of type on free-standing houses. On Capitol Hill, facade categories generally refer to bay types: round bay, square bay, canted bay, or, in the case of the absence of a bay, flat front. Various side hall row house floor plans are mixed in no particular pattern with generic facades. These buildings are not totally a-stylistic: frequently a decorative motif derived from a high style is identifiable, but in sum, these details do not warrant a style label for the entire building.

The following sections discuss the characteristics of various styles popular during Capitol Hill's development and present examples of Capitol Hill row houses, largely garden variety versions of those styles. Before the chronological description of buildings styles and Capitol Hill examples, is a discussion of Capitol Hill's vernacular, generic types.

Finding the distinctive example of a style is like finding the prize in the pudding, but the majority of Capitol Hill row houses do not fit neat categories. For every pure example, there is an exception. Vernacular builders have always been immensely inventive, and Capitol Hill's 19th century builders were no exception. Some styles, represented by only a few of Capitol Hill's 8,000 buildings, are included here for their sheer ability to delight, as reflections of trends occurring elsewhere in the country, to illustrate the late Victorian era as the Battle of the Styles, and to present as broad a base as possible for understanding the building styles of the era. This fairly comprehensive coverage of styles will also help us to recognize elements even when they appear in isolation, such as a single Moorish or Gothic arch on a building.

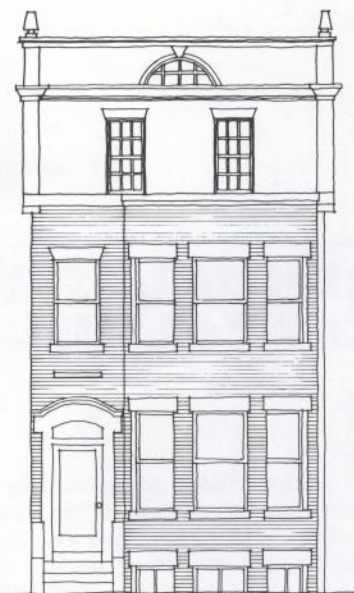
VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE ON CAPITOL HILL. 1800-1930.

Flat fronts. Capitol Hill's oldest houses are little flat fronted wood frame distant relations to Federal era row houses. These are discussed in the section on the Federal style.

Many of Capitol Hill's later flat facade buildings are Italianate with the characteristic pronounced bracketed cornices, door and window hoods. Other flat-front buildings may be faintly Italianate, but are so stripped down they can scarcely be called such. The row in the 800 block of A Street, SE, are minimal reductions of the Italian style. These houses have prominent, bracketed cornices and simple brick door and window hoods. There are other flat-fronted buildings, probably built later, with trabeated windows, porches, and all brick cornices, that do not even make a modest reference to a style (707 and 709 North Carolina Avenue, SE). ("Trabeated" refers to beam systems. Relative to window openings, it denotes a flat head, spanned by a lintel.)

Washington Row. Another row house facade type common to Washington is the square bay-fronted row house, so ubiquitous it has been dubbed the "Washington Row." These houses generally have little or no stylistic reference, although their belt courses, stained glass, sometimes elaborate door and window treatments suggest Queen Anne antecedents.

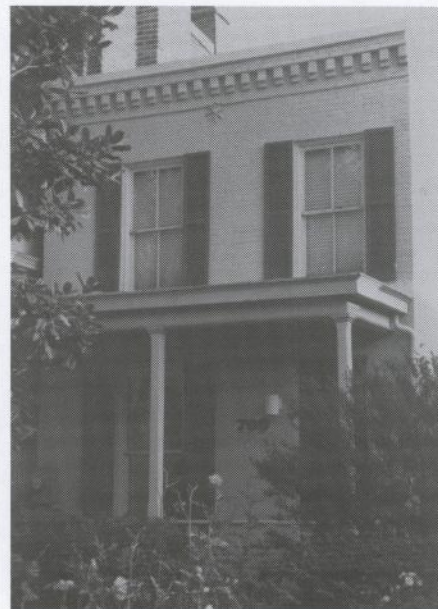
Round and canted bay buildings, in addition to being so simple they are most easily identified as generic types, can also be seen as Renaissance Revival types (as discussed in the section on late Italian forms). Many of these have flat plain wall surfaces, trabeated arches, and denticulated cornices. (Canted bays are angled or three-sided bays). Also, numerous canted and round bay front buildings are generic Queen Anne in their treatment, with somewhat more elaborate decorative development.



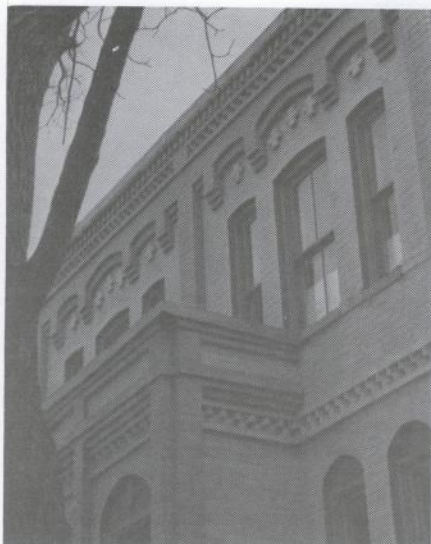
316 MARYLAND AVENUE, NE.



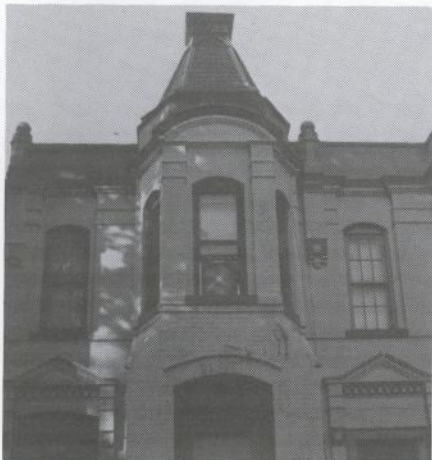
310 SOUTH CAROLINA AVENUE, SE.



707 AND 709 NORTH CAROLINA AVENUE, SE, ARE SIMPLE FLAT FRONT BUILDINGS.



603-607 A STREET, SE, HAVE A PANEL AND PIER TREATMENT SIMILAR TO A GROUP OF HOUSES IN THE VICINITY OF SIXTH AND A STREETS, SE, ALL OF WHICH ARE PROBABLY THE WORK OF A SINGLE BUILDER. THE UNIQUE VOCABULARY FOR THE HILL OF THESE BUILDINGS CAPTURES THE AMBIANCE OF THE PANEL AND PIER SYSTEM OF THE PRE-ROMANESQUE LOMBARD ARCHITECTURE, ESPECIALLY WHEN COMBINED WITH THE ARCADE LIKE EFFECT AT THE CORNICE LINE. THESE BUILDINGS WITH THEIR LOMBARD REFERENCES ARE FURTHER DISTINGUISHED BY A CROSS-SHAPED BRICK MOTIF CHARACTERISTIC OF THE PANEL BRICK STYLE.

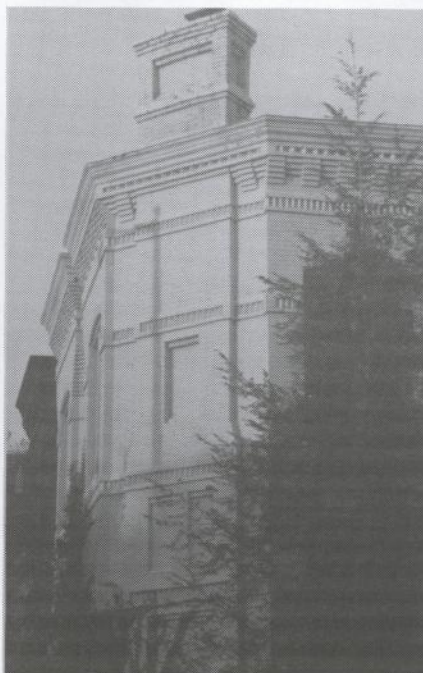


THIS ROW IN THE 800 BLOCK OF MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NE, DEFIES EASY STYLISTIC LABELS. THE BAYS TRANSITION FROM SQUARE TO CANTED; BAY CAPS INCLUDE AN ONION DOME-LIKE ONE, A CONICAL ROOF, AND A FACETED TOP; SOME OF THE BAY CAPS HAVE SUGGESTIONS OF THE RENAISSANCE WITH ALTERNATING ARCHES AND PEDIMENTS; FINALLY, A STEPPED FLEMISH PARAPET IS TOSSED IN FOR GOOD MEASURE. THIS WILDLY ECLECTIC MIX COULD ALTERNATELY BE IDENTIFIED AS QUEEN ANNE.

Other: Victorian Era. Various factors: feats of ingenuity, often the unique efforts of a particular builder; the general tendency of Late Victorian era builders to conceive of whole buildings without specific historical precedent, or to combine elements from several styles at once; and the vernacular nature of much building, can lead to a category of architecture simply identified by era: Victorian. Thus, we can often identify elements of various styles on a single building without being able to catalog the entire building as being of a particular style. This may lead us to



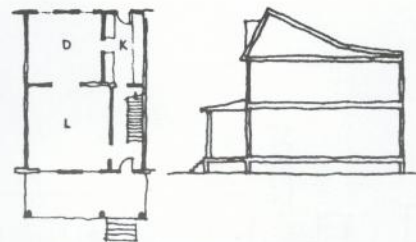
THE ROW HOUSE AT 119 SIXTH STREET, NE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A VICTORIAN ERA BUILDING, AN ECLECTIC MIXTURE OF STYLES RATHER THAN A SINGLE STYLE. THE BASE OF THE BUILDING IS PRESSED BRICK WITH A RUSTICATED TEXTURE; THE FORM IS THE TYPICAL SQUARE BAY; IT HAS A SEMI-CIRCULAR ARCH ABOVE THE DOOR. IT SUGGESTS A FLEMISH OR DUTCH QUALITY WITH ITS STEPPED COPING ON THE GABLE FRONT AND THE TRIANGULAR ARCHES ON THE SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS. THE SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS ON THE BAY FRONT COULD BE RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE.



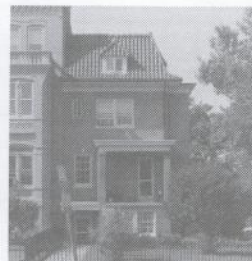
600 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NE, WITH PANELS WORKED INTO BRICK MAY BE SEEN AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PANEL BRICK STYLE, IDENTIFIED BY BAINBRIDGE BUNTING IN *HOUSES OF BOSTON'S BACK BAY*.

refer to "Victorian era houses, with elements of various styles."

The "Victorian era" category becomes, in some ways, one of the most interesting groupings. The buildings that resolutely refuse to conform to the descriptors of the various styles are often extraordinarily rich in visual interest.



PLAN AND SECTION OF THE "S" TYPE HOUSE.



656 EAST CAPITOL STREET, 1932, ADAPTED TO A CORNER SITE.

"S" Type, 1900-1930: A relatively late vernacular Capitol Hill row house is identified here as the "S" type. Nearly every Capitol Hill block had an empty lot or two by the early 20th century, many of which were filled with these houses. Further from the Capitol, entire blocks or even squares such as the square bounded by Sixth, Seventh, D, and E Streets, NE, were developed with these houses.

Unlike many Capitol Hill plan types that were freely mixed with various facade styles, the "S" type has both a characteristic plan and facade style. The facade is flat-fronted with a porch, sometimes with columns in one of the classical orders, usually running the full width of the house; a slate or clay tile mansard roof with two dormer windows providing light for a third floor front attic room; and trabeated window openings. The dominant "S" type facade on Capitol Hill has vertically scored yellow/tan or buff colored brick (sometimes known locally as "tapestry brick") with raked joints.

The typical floor plan for this type has a galley kitchen located directly behind the stair next to a two-room deep section with no dogleg, a plan made possible because these houses are often slightly wider than the norm for older Capitol Hill row houses.

Row houses of this type were built all over Washington, their facades developed in different vocabularies. In a few cases on Capitol Hill, these houses are clad in red brick, have slate on the mansard, and dormers developed with Georgian motifs. (See Georgian Revival section). Other Capitol Hill versions of this type (also found throughout the rest of the city) have Flemish bond red brick and eaves with rafter ends reminiscent of the Craftsman style. Some sources refer to this type as Georgian, possibly because Georgian Revival was the popular residential style of the early years of the 20th century, when these houses were being built. So few Capitol Hill examples are Georgian in character, however, the label hardly seems justified.



(HABS, PAUL A. GOETTMAN, DELINEATOR; 1934.)

THE MAPLES (ALSO KNOWN AS THE OLD DUNCANSON HOUSE AND AS FRIENDSHIP HOUSE), 630 SOUTH CAROLINA AVENUE, SE (1795-96, WILLIAM LOVERING), IN THE GEORGIAN STYLE, IS A VERY EARLY CAPITOL HILL BUILDING AND VIRTUALLY ITS ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STYLE. THE CENTER SECTION IN THIS ILLUSTRATION IS PROBABLY THE ORIGINAL PORTION DATING FROM THE 18TH CENTURY. THE PORTION TO THE FAR RIGHT IS THE STABLE BEYOND.

CAPITOL HILL'S EARLIEST BUILDING STYLES. 1795-1870.

A note about the dates given for each style: these dates reflect periods of national popularity, not necessarily the period of popularity on Capitol Hill. Capitol Hill's row houses were largely built at the end of the period of popularity for a style or even after it had ceased to be popular, testimony to the conservative nature of both Washington and Capitol Hill.

Georgian Style, 1730-1790: The Georgian style, which originated prior to the development of Capitol Hill, is characterized by symmetry, frequently with a central bay; sash windows; classical detailing handled in a robust way; belt courses; hipped roofs, and an emphasis on horizontal elements. The White House is a good Washington example of a Georgian house.

Federal Style, 1790-1820: The Federal style became the style of the new republic. Its decorative features were more delicate, flatter, and less robust than those of the Georgian style. Typical windows, often graduated, had lintel heads with arched windows (often semi-elliptical). Fan lights appear as accents. Roof slopes were flatter than those of the Georgian style. Expensive houses had round and oval rooms. Decatur House on Lafayette Square (1818, Benjamin Latrobe) is a fine Federal style house.

Capitol Hill's oldest buildings include rather grand houses, such as the Maples, and very simple wood frame houses with gabled roofs. These little wood houses were flat-fronted and built during the Federal period and can be seen as clear collateral relatives to their grander Federal style cousins. Whereas the classic Federal style row house had dormer windows, many of these do not. The classic brick Federal row house had some elaboration at the cornice and entrance but



CAPITOL HILL'S "PHILADELPHIA ROW" (1863, 124-154 ELEVENTH STREET, SE). THIS ROW IS DERIVED FROM SIMILAR PHILADELPHIA FEDERAL STYLE MODELS. THE INFLUENCE OF THE ITALIAN STYLE CAN BE SEEN IN THE BRACKETED CORNICE.

these wood Capitol Hill versions have no decorative detail at all. These houses are basically a generic Federal row house. These very simple, gable roofed houses are not uncommon on Capitol Hill, although they are frequently significantly modified. Modifications range from new exterior materials (such as the too-large aluminum siding on this pair), to Italian touches at the cornices, including the addition of flat bracketed cornices obscuring the gable roof slope. This basic form is also seen in an Italian version.

Greek Revival, 1820-1840: American fascination with archeological discoveries in Greece, the Greek war for independence, and the romanticized link between ancient and modern democracies led to the popularity of the Greek Revival style in the 1820s to 1840s. The style was characterized by pier and lintel construction; classical columns and pilasters; heavy, linear trim and bold moldings; and pedimented porticoes. Buildings were painted white or stuccoed and painted to simulate marble. Monumental Washington's Greek Revival examples include the Treasury Building and U.S. Patent Office.

The translation of this style to Capitol Hill row houses was typically reductionist: often little more than some classically inspired moldings around doors and windows. Much of the Greek or classical ornament on Capitol Hill houses probably was applied during various periods of popularity of the classical revival and colonial styles subsequent to the 1820-40 period.



THESE HOUSES AT 523-25 SIXTH STREET, SE, HAVE THE FEDERAL STYLE ROW HOUSE MASSING OF EAST COAST BRICK VERSIONS BUT WITHOUT THEIR ORNAMENTAL TOUCHES OR ROOF DORMERS.



500 A STREET, SE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GREEK REVIVAL STYLE REDUCED TO DENTICULATED CORNICE, WINDOW TRIM, AND CLASSICALLY INSPIRED DOOR AND PORCH MOLDINGS. (HEAVILY PEBBLED PLASTER IS NOT ORIGINAL FINISH.)



CLASSIC FEDERAL STYLE ROW HOUSE HAD A GABLED ROOF WITH DORMERS AS DOES CARBERRY HOUSE AT 423 SIXTH STREET, SE, 1813.

(HABS, DRAWN BY MARGARET GAUGHAN, 1989).



317 EAST CAPITOL STREET COULD BE MISTAKEN FOR A 19TH CENTURY GREEK REVIVAL BUT ACTUALLY IS AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL.



(HABS, DRAWN BY DENNIS MCCARTHEY AND JOEL AGNON, 1989).



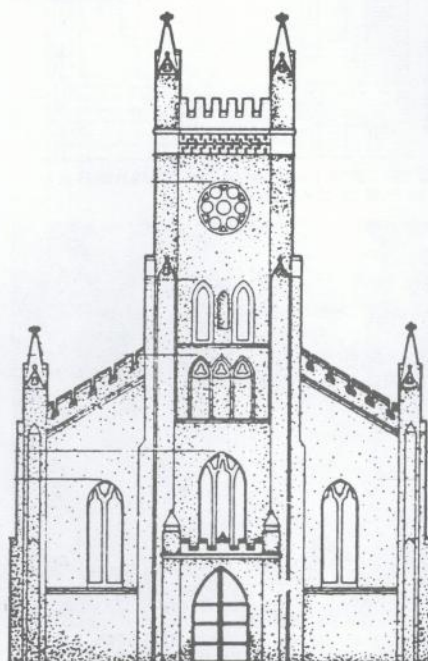
MOORISH REVIVAL. 427-433 SECOND STREET, SE



WHILE THE POINTED GOTHIC ARCH IS THE MOST PERSASIVE ELEMENT OF THE GOTHIC REVIVAL STYLE, GOTHIC REVIVAL ELEMENTS (THESE WINDOWS AT 642 A STREET, NE) OCCASIONALLY SHOW UP ON LATE VICTORIAN BUILDINGS AS PART OF THE CATALOG OF ELEMENTS DRAWN UPON BY BUILDERS.



THE OLD HAWAL LODGE BUILDING AT 330 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SE, HAS SUGGESTIONS OF THE EGYPTIAN REVIVAL IN ITS COLUMNS AND OTHER DETAILING.



CHRIST CHURCH (BEGUN 1806, ATTRIBUTED TO BENJAMIN LATROBE; BELL TOWER 1849), 622 G STREET, SE. (HABS, J.P. NOFFINGER, DELINEATOR; 1939(?) THE GOTHIC CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING PROBABLY DATES FROM THE BELL TOWER RATHER THAN THE ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION.

Exotic Revivals, 1845-65: Various revival styles were popular throughout the 19th century, including exotic revivals such as Egyptian and Moorish. The obelisk of the Washington monument is one of the premier examples of the Egyptian Revival style. (Robert Mills, 1848-85).

While the period of national popularity for Exotic Revivals coincided with Capitol Hill's earlier years, the Hill's examples date from the last years of the 19th century, representing but another weapon in the arsenal of that era's "Battle of Styles."

The most dramatic example of exotic revival on the Hill is the group of four Moorish Revival row houses at 427-433 Second Street, SE. This group of buildings incorporates various arch forms including horseshoe arches at the entrances



EMBEDDED AMONG CAPITOL HILL'S BRICK BUILDINGS IS A CHARMING EXAMPLE OF CARPENTER GOTHIC AT 541 SEVENTH STREET, SE. NOTE THE STEEPLY SLOPED CENTRAL GABLE; THE DECORATIVE TREATMENT OF THE EAVES WITH THE PENDANT AND FINIAL AT THE GABLE PEAK; THE PROJECTING ORIEL BAY; AND THE SUGGESTION OF LEADED GLASS IN THE UPPER SASHES OF THE WINDOWS, IN A PATTERN KNOWN AS "QUEEN ANNE SASH" STYLE. THIS SASH SUGGESTS THIS BUILDING IS LATE FOR THE GOTHIC STYLE, BEGINNING TO SHOW QUEEN ANNE ELEMENTS.

and exotic looking triangular and pseudo four centered arches (above window in projecting bay). The stained glass transoms, tracery trellage decoration above the third floor windows reminiscent of the characteristic plaster tracery work of Moorish architecture, and reinterpreted bracketing all contribute to the overall Moorish feeling.

Gothic Revival, 1830-1870: The Gothic Revival style was a reaction against the rational classicism that preceded it and a precursor to the romanticism and interest in the picturesque that typified late 19th century styles. The style was characterized by deliberate asymmetry; freer interior planning than preceding styles; verticality; emphasis on roof lines; towers; battlements; buttresses; peaked gables; windows with pointed arches, tracery, and stained glass; and, finally, the use of dark, rough cut stone. Gothic Revival was popular for churches, a result of the concurrent search for more Christian church forms than pagan Greek or Roman temples. On grander, often urban buildings, the Gothic Revival appeared in a castellated or crenelated version. The style's most notable feature was a pointed Gothic arch appearing on cottage and mansion. The broadest application of the Gothic style was in wood, the "Carpenter" Gothic style.

The Gothic style appears almost exclusively on Capitol Hill on religious buildings with an occasional Gothic element, most commonly crenellation, appearing on row houses.

Carpenter Gothic, the Gothic style in wood, is characterized by steeply sloping, gabled roofs; large, striking chimney tops; gable ends decorated with lacy or scroll worked bargeboards, "gingerbread," finials, and pendants; verandas; bay and oriel windows; and leaded or stained glass.

(HABS, DRAWN BY MARGARET GAUGHAN, 1989)

BUILDING STYLES FROM 1870 TO 1901.

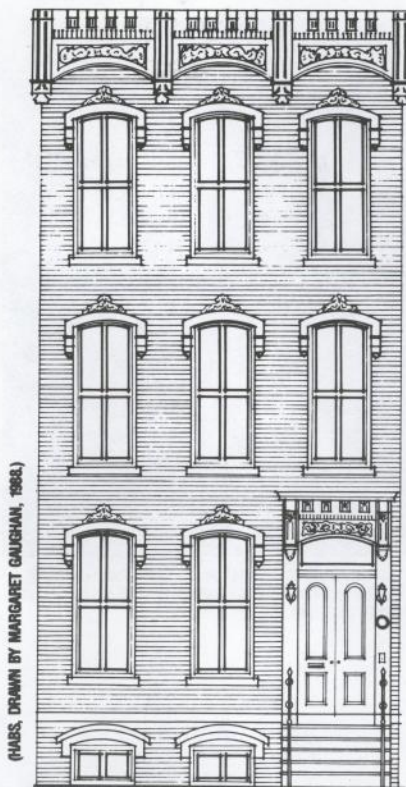
The Victorian period has been called the “Battle of the Styles.” It is important to note that “Victorian” is not a style but an era, during which many building styles were developed and employed.

The principal architectural expression of the Late Victorian period (1875–1901) of Queen Victoria’s reign, during which much of Capitol Hill’s development occurred and from which its visually dominant building stock dates, was the Queen Anne style. While the Queen Anne style began as a simplification and reaction to all the preceding elaborate detail work, it rapidly became its own highly elaborated style. During the Late Victorian era the range of historical sources included almost every known style. During that time there was little concern with historical accuracy and a great quest for novelty. Motifs with no historical precedent and whole buildings conceived in that spirit appeared.

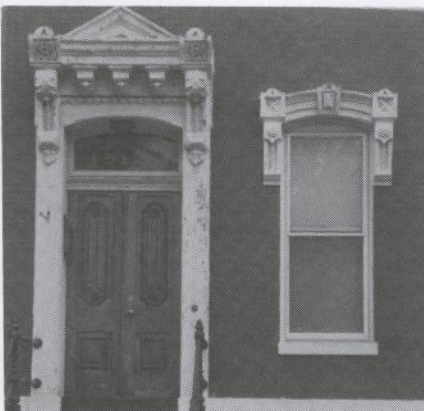
Popular national styles of this period appearing on the buildings of Capitol Hill include the Italian (or bracketed); the Richardsonian Romanesque; and the Queen Anne styles. Also popular but less represented on Capitol Hill is the French Second Empire (mansard) style. Applying all of these styles to a limited range of row house floor plan types; to the restricted width of row house facades; and, in the cases of the primarily wood styles, to a largely brick building stock, dramatically transformed the styles.

A number of other nationally popular late 19th century building styles were not widely employed on Capitol Hill row houses for a number of reasons.

Few Capitol Hill row houses of this period are strictly representative of a single style. Instead, the buildings employ a general vocabulary of brick, vertically attenuated attached buildings with elements identifiable from various styles. Elaborate window hoods and cornices, angled one story bays, and sometimes a charming porch, either original or added, derive from the



602 EAST CAPITOL STREET, ONE OF FOUR ITALIAN HOUSES IN A ROW, FROM 600 TO 606 (1887).



PRESSED METAL DOOR AND WINDOW HOODS AT TYPICAL FLAT FRONTED ITALIAN ROW HOUSES (512–18 EAST CAPITOL STREET).

Italian styles. The French Second Empire style provides mansard roofs. The Romanesque style contributes round corner towers, rusticated stone bases, and stone entrance steps with foliate carving. A strong Queen Anne decorative influence results in highly articulated surfaces, stained glass transoms, and complex cornice lines with turret caps. The emphasis of towers and bays in the styles that shaped Capitol Hill’s dominant image—the Italian, the Queen Anne, and the Richardsonian Romanesque—creates Capitol Hill’s varied street fronts.

The major building style represented on Capitol Hill is the Italian, with the Queen Anne style contributing a significant decorative vocabulary. Occasionally we find very clear examples of styles but these textbook cases tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

Great Britain continued to influence trends in the United States well into the 19th century, with imported styles like the Italian and the



103–105 SIXTH STREET, NE: AN EXAMPLE OF A DUPLEX, ITALIAN VILLA HOUSE.

French Second Empire arriving via England. England was the origin for much of the fascination with the medieval. The Tudor style informed the Stick Style. The Queen Anne was strongly influenced by 17th century English rural buildings. Finally, of course, Great Britain’s ruler gave her name to most of the 19th century.

Italian Style, 1840–1870: The Italian style was so immensely popular in the United States around the Civil War that it appeared in several variations. The Italian Villa form (1830–1880) was derived from Italian country houses and appeared in the plain Villa form and in the Tuscan form. The Villa form had an “L” shaped plan, generally informal massing, and an almost inevitable square tower or campanile tucked into the “L.” The Tuscan form was a simple square mass with the low hipped roof typical of the style, capped by a belvedere, sometimes without brackets on the deeply overhanging eaves.

The Renaissance Revival form (1840–1890) of the Italian style derived from the villas and urban palaces of the Italian Renaissance. Formal, urban, and non-residential, it was characterized by regularly organized fenestration; windows capped by pedimented or cornice window hoods; and simple overall forms. Washington has several fine examples of the Italian palace type: the Pension Building (Montgomery C. Meigs, 1883) and the Masonic temple (Adolph Cluss), Ninth and F Streets, NW.

Eventually, the term “Italianate” became a catch-all for what also came to be known as the “bracketed” style (1840–1880) for the ubiquitous decorative brackets. The Italian style, in all its forms, was virtually a national style. Freestanding buildings were characterized by an adaptable plan: as asymmetrical as the Gothic or as symmetrical as the classical. A prominent characteristic in all the variants of the Italian style was a low, hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves and prominent decorative brackets. Italian style



ITALIAN STYLE IN WOOD ON MODEST ROW HOUSES WITH FRONT PORCHES (621-623 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NE).



EXAGGERATED EAVES AND PROMINENT BRACKETS TRANSFORM WHAT IS OTHERWISE A TYPICAL SQUARE BAYED ROW HOUSE INTO A BUILDING REMINISCENT OF AN ITALIAN VILLA (800 A STREET, SE).



HOUSES AT 114-116 EIGHTH STREET, NE, TYPICAL OF THE MINIMAL RENAISSANCE REVIVAL STYLE ON CAPITOL HILL, WITH THEIR LACK OF ORNAMENT, OVERALL FLATNESS OF FACADE, AND SUGGESTION OF CLASSICISM IN DETAIL.



A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A CAPITOL HILL MANSARD STYLE BUILDING IS 28 NINTH STREET, NE. ITS STONE CORNER QUOINS REINFORCE THE CLASSICISM OF THE STYLE AS DO THE DRESSED STONE FACADE; HALLMARK MANSARD ROOF WITH DORMERS; CLASSICAL MOTIFS; BALUSTRADED BAY; AND PAIRED WINDOWS. ITS CORNER LOCATION ALLOWS A FULLER EXPRESSION OF THE STYLE THAN WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN A ROW.



TWO GROUPS OF ROW HOUSES IN THE 1200 BLOCK OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SE, EXEMPLIFY THE LATE RENAISSANCE REVIVAL MANIFESTATION OF THE ITALIAN STYLE. THE ONES ON THE RIGHT HAVE A DEEPLY OVERHANGING CORNICE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE

ROMANO-TUSCAN MODE (1236 TO 1242 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SE, 1905). THE ONES ON THE LEFT HAVE THE FLAT, PLANAR QUALITY TYPICAL OF THIS STYLE ON CAPITOL HILL (1206 TO 1212 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SE, 1898).

buildings tended to have highly decorative window and door hoods, often arched. Projecting canted (three-sided) bay windows and one-story porches with chamfered posts were common.

The developing technologies of the 19th century contributed to the popularity of the style. Cast iron, pressed metal, and wood technologies, including band and jig saws, allowed mass production of decorative building components such as bracketed cornices, door, and window hoods that were then shipped by rail.

Capitol Hill Italian examples range from corner duplex, free-standing buildings, strongly reminiscent of Italian country houses, albeit modest, to the ubiquitous use of prominent bracketing on

cornices and door and window hoods. There are many flat-fronted buildings with segmentally arched windows, elaborate window hoods and bracketed cornices in addition to modest wood frame houses with or without the characteristic one-story porches.

Most of Capitol Hill's older frame buildings from the Civil War to the building boom of the 1880's are ornamented in the Italian style. Many of these buildings have had their siding plastered over so are not immediately identifiable as frame.

Capitol Hill has some late 19th and early 20th century (1895-1915) row houses, late both for the Hill and for the style, which might be identified as very minimal Renaissance Revival and

very late Italian. On Capitol Hill row houses, this type is characterized by flat, smooth, plain wall surfaces, trabeated windows linked by string courses, massive cornices (often denticulated rather than bracketed), low roofs, and a faint classicism in ornament. The flat, smooth wall planes and trabeated windows of the Renaissance Revival extends to rounded, almost streamlined corners on the bays of these row houses. The lack of strongly distinctive detailing makes the identification of these buildings difficult.

French Second Empire, 1855-1885: Perhaps because its popularity predated Capitol Hill's major development or because of the grandeur of the style, the French Second Empire, or Mansard, style was not widely represented on Capitol Hill. Many of the Hill's French Second Empire houses were located near the Capitol and have been demolished. However, in addition to a few fairly pure examples of the style, we also see the distinctive mansard roof grafted onto buildings that otherwise might be considered Italianate.

The Second Empire style's most distinctive feature is the mansard roof form, named for the 17th century French architect, Francois Mansart. The nearly vertical pitch of the first section of the roof from the cornice allowed an extra story in a building that appeared shorter. The vertical,



A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A MANSARD STYLE ROW HOUSE IS 619 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NE. ITS MANSARD ROOF WITH CRESTING, ELABORATE DORMERS, AND POLYCHROME SLATE SHINGLE PATTERNS; PAIRED SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS; AND THE ONE-STORY CANTED BAY ALL IDENTIFY IT AS FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE. ITS BRACKETS ARE MORE RESTRAINED AND CLASSICAL IN FEELING THAN THEY WOULD BE ON AN ITALIAN HOUSE.

visible sections of these mansard roofs were typically slate, very decorative with polychrome patterns in the shingles, elaborate dormers, highly ornamented chimneys, and cresting on the roof peak. This style used classical detailing and pediments including stone corner quoins; paired columns and paired windows; projecting and receding wall planes; and projecting, often canted bays and towers, sometimes with one-story bays topped with balustraded railings. Unlike the primarily residential Queen Anne style, the French Second Empire style was widely employed on many building types. Both the Renwick Gallery (James Renwick, 1859, an early example of the style) and the Old Executive Office Building (State War and Navy Building, 1871–81, A.B. Mullett) are excellent examples of the style. (See also example of group of three mansard style houses at 505–507 Independence Avenue, SE, on page 1.)

MASS. DRAWN BY JEFF BEREL, LEE LIFRANCOS, AND MARY ANN MORRIS, 1988.)

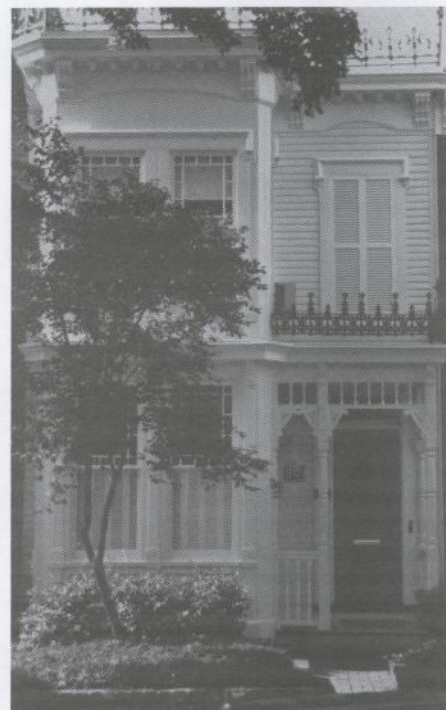


636 TO 654 EAST CAPITOL STREET: A ROW OF TYPICAL CAPITOL HILL ROW HOUSES, NOT OBVIOUSLY QUEEN ANNE, BUT INCORPORATING MANY OF THE STYLE'S CHARACTERISTICS AS TRANSLATED TO A ROW HOUSE PALETTE. THE ELABORATE BAY CAPS REFLECT THE FONDNESS FOR ELABORATE ROOF LINES CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STYLE.

Queen Anne, 1880–1890: The Queen Anne style began as a reaction against stylistic excesses, but rapidly became a style incorporating all of the preceding styles. It was eclectic, picturesque, and exuberant, with medieval motifs inspired by the work of English architects.

Queen Anne buildings were characterized by multiple textures and materials. You might find wood siding combined with various decorative wood shingles and perhaps some stucco all sitting on a brick or stone foundation. Window sizes and patterns varied (the double hung sash type being most common), often with multiple panes and stained glass in the top sash. Buildings in the Queen Anne style were vertical with steep intersecting gables enlivened by towers, turrets, dormers, and medieval looking, highly decorative, often ribbed, chimneys. Gable ends were prominent and exaggerated. Floor plans were asymmetrical with porches of all kinds, generous, encircling ones being a hallmark of the style. Later, classical elements crept in, especially columns and capitals on porches. The Queen Anne style was primarily residential. Washington has good examples of houses in this generous and commodious style in its older suburbs such as Takoma Park and Cleveland Park.

The translation of this richly textured, complexly massed, wood-frame style to the brick row houses of Capitol Hill substantially transformed the style. Variety in siding and wood details was replaced by variety in pressed brick, and as belt and string coursing. The cast iron or pressed metal door and window hoods of Italian buildings were replaced by brick door and window hoods. To enliven the roof line, row houses acquired large and elaborate corbeled brick cornices. The tops of projecting bays were capped with gabled and pyramidal roofs, often with slate



A QUEEN ANNE STYLE FRAME HOUSE. NOTE TYPICAL QUEEN ANNE UPPER WINDOW SASH, THE GOTHIC STYLE SECOND STORY WINDOW HOODS, AND THE SPINDLEWORK AND TURNED POSTS ON THE PORCH (617 A STREET, NE).

shingles in several colors. The use of brick at cornice lines may have been dictated by ever more stringent fire laws, but the elaborate highly decorative cornices that resulted were responding to tastes for richly expressive roof lines. Windows had stained glass transoms, were paired with turned wood pieces between, often had different arches on each floor, and sometimes had a band of small square panes around the major glass pane in the upper sash, a sash design that came to be identified as Queen Anne.

Porches were not common on Capitol Hill row houses of the late 19th century, but some of the Queen Anne row houses acquired porches



WHILE MOST OF CAPITOL HILL'S QUEEN ANNE INSPIRED ROW HOUSES FOLLOW THE FORMULA OF SQUARE BAY WITH MOLDED BRICK DECORATION, THERE ARE TWO NOTABLE EXAMPLES THAT MORE DIRECTLY EVOKE THE QUEEN ANNE STYLE AT 506 AND 508 EAST CAPITOL STREET. THE HIGH GABLED FRONT OF 506 WITH THE UPPER SASH WINDOWS GRIDDED INTO SMALL PANES ALLUDE TO THE MEDIEVAL. BOTH HOUSES INCORPORATE THE VARIED WINDOW

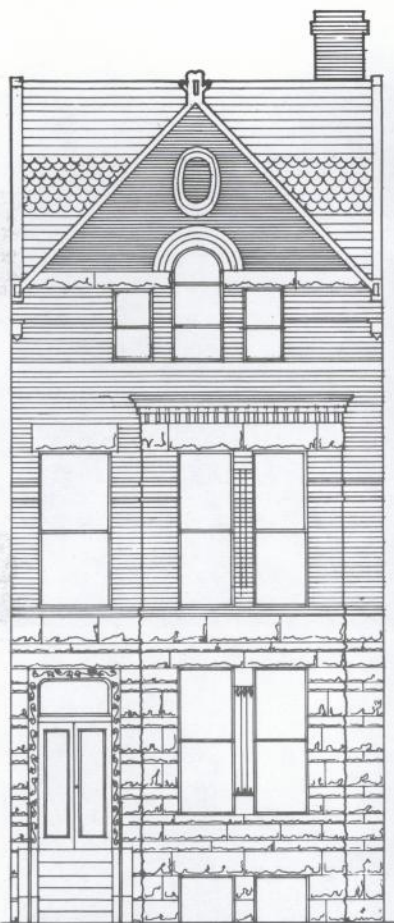
PATTERNS, LIVELY ROOF LINES (NOT ALWAYS EASY TO ACHIEVE ON ROW HOUSES), AND HIGHLY TEXTURAL USE OF MATERIALS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STYLE. THE ORIEL BAYS ON BOTH 506 AND 508, WITH THEIR DECORATIVE BASES AND THE LIGHT-COLORED BRICK, SUGGEST THE LATENESS OF THESE BUILDINGS AND THE BEGINNING OF A TRANSITION TO THE BEAUX ARTS STYLE.



322 AND 329 EAST CAPITOL ARE PARTICULARLY EVOCATIVE OF THE QUEEN ANNE STYLE. 322, A CANTED BAY BUILDING, (ABOVE) INCLUDES A WONDERFULLY ELABORATED ENTRANCE IN PRESSED BRICK AND QUINTESSENTIAL QUEEN ANNE WINDOWS. THE OTHER, 329, A CORNER BUILDING WITH A ROUND TOWER, TAKES FULL ADVANTAGE OF ITS SITING FOR AN ELABORATED ROOF LINE AND MEDIEVAL FEELING CHIMNEYS. IT ALSO HAS TEXTURAL RICHNESS SUCH AS THE BRICK BASKETWEAVE BAND NEAR THE TOP OF THE CORNER TOWER, EXTENSIVE BELT COURSING, AND CHARACTERISTIC QUEEN ANNE SASH IN THE TOP FLOOR WINDOWS.

recessed into the body of the building (506 East Capitol Street) or porches on tops of bays (636 East Capitol Street).

The major manifestation of the Queen Anne style in Capitol Hill's row house building stock is in ornament and the ever-present bays and corner towers. The complex massing and generous wood porches and verandahs of the style were simply not possible on row houses. Thus, a style noted for massing and texture was translated on Capitol Hill to one largely of texture. Queen Anne decorative details are seen on numerous Capitol Hill houses ranging from the modest to the elaborate.



1124 EAST CAPITOL STREET INCORPORATES A WALL DORMER, A SEMI-CIRCULAR ARCH, ROCK-FACED STONE, FOLIATE CARVING, AND BUNDLED COLUMNS BETWEEN THE WINDOWS, ALL OF THE RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE STYLE.

Richardsonian Romanesque, 1880–1890:

The Romanesque Revival style appeared as early as the 1840s and 1850s on churches and public buildings. Its greatest popularity was later in the 19th century under the influence of Henry Hobson Richardson. Richardson's work became the baseline for the style, and also strengthened it as a residential style through some of his early houses.

The style used heavy, rock-faced stone, often coursed ashlar, for a heavy, massive look; details such as short, robust and bundled columns; intertwining foliate motifs; polychromy (materials of contrasting color or texture); transomed windows varied in both type and size (although one-over-one sash windows were very popular); roof lines enlivened by wall dormers, turrets, and towers with conical "witches hat" tops; and round arches with polychrome or foliate carved voussoirs. ("Voussoirs" are wedge-shaped masonry units in arches, round, flat, or other. In round arches, their converging sides are radii of the center of the arch.) Slate was the preferred roofing material throughout. Major public buildings were crowned by a large tower. Richardson developed the style, combining elements from 11th century French churches of the Romanesque era with picturesque Queen Anne motifs.

Washington's premier examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style include the Old



CHATEAUESQUE. 139–147 D STREET, SE



DETAIL FROM 1126 EAST CAPITOL STREET WITH TYPICAL RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE FOLIATE CARVING AND ROCK-FACED STONE.

Post Office (1892–99, Edbrooke); the Riggs Building, Ninth and F Streets, NW; the National Union Building, 918 F Street, NW, (Glenn Brown); and St. Peter's Church and rectory, Second and C Streets, SE, on Capitol Hill.

Semi-circular arches and rock faced stone bases are common features on many Capitol Hill row houses, which may also include features of other styles. The overall darkness of materials used in the Richardsonian Romanesque style may be seen as an important influence in the creation of Washington's dark red brick Victorian neighborhoods.

Chateausque, 1860–1890: This style, exemplified by the most adroit designers on the grandest houses, can scarcely be imagined as modest row houses. Yet, the masonry construction (stone, brick, or both) and steeply pitched wall dormers on some Capitol Hill row houses may be seen as derived from this style, providing an air of the Chateau. "Tourelles" corbeled out from the walls at the second floor level, a favored feature of the style, may have helped transform the ubiquitous bay/tower of the Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque to the oriel bay found on these houses. Capitol Hill oriel bay buildings frequently have entries close to street level, and wall dormers, often with high pinnacled gables such as those at 139–147 D Street, SE.



AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF A RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE CAPITOL HILL ROW HOUSE, IS AT 408 A STREET, SE, WITH ITS BUNDLED COLUMNS, SEMI-CIRCULAR ARCHES AND ROCK-FACED GREEN STONE AT THE BASE CONTRASTING IN COLOR TO THE RED BRICK AND GRAY LIMESTONE ABOVE.



STICK STYLE. 508–518 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NE

Shingle and Stick Styles, 1860–1890: Some late 19th century building styles were not employed on Capitol Hill row houses because wood was so intrinsic to them. The Stick style, an outgrowth of the Queen Anne style, may also be seen as an evolution of the Carpenter Gothic style. The style was predicated on expressing the structural skeleton of a building through its exterior ornament, often as applied wood half-timbering on upper stories and gable ends. On Capitol Hill, one of the rare manifestations of the Stick Style is the applied ornament at 508–518 Constitution Avenue, NE, on a group of otherwise typical square bayed row houses. Half timbering is occasionally seen on the gable ends of roof dormers.

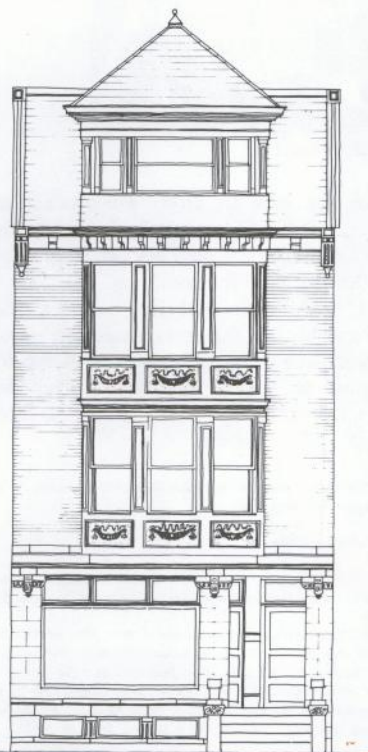


TRANSITIONAL. 420 TENTH STREET, SE.



122 E STREET, SE, AND 126 E STREET, SE, PART OF A MORE EXTENDED ROW, HAVE BEAUX ARTS CLASSICISM IN THEIR DETAILS AND THE USE OF SYMMETRY.

Transitional. An example of a transitional building can be seen at 420 Tenth Street, SE. Built in 1893 by William Yost and Brother, an active builder on the Hill, the building has strong Richardsonian Romanesque features including its use of stone and the polychromy of its green rock-faced stone foundation, gray limestone and red brick; semi-circular windows on the second floor; and the arcaded effect in the top of the round, corner tower. But then, surprisingly, the treatment of the semi-circular arched windows at the third floor, separated by pilasters with Ionic capitals and surmounted by a frieze with a swag decoration, suggests a later, Beaux Arts building.



515 EAST CAPITOL STREET. THE WILLIAM PENN HOUSE INCORPORATES THE DECORATIVE MOTIFS OF THE BEAUX ARTS STYLE: THE MATERIAL PREFERENCE OF LIGHT COLORED STONE AND BUFF BRICK, AND THE FORMALITY OF SYMMETRICAL SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS. NOTE THE SWAG DECORATION ON THE PANELS OF THE ORIEL.

MODERN AND REVIVAL STYLES. 1915-45.

The later years of the 19th and the early years of the 20th century witnessed another of the periodic cycles of ornamental excess alternating with retrenchment. In reaction against the romantic picturesqueness, complexity, and eclecticism of the preceding fifty years, classical styles in various Beaux Arts forms came to dominate commercial architecture. On the residential front, classical forms previously seen in Georgian and other "Colonial" styles dominated. Revival versions of various styles were also popular (especially Tudor Revival, but also a late manifestation of the Italian style, discussed in the section on the Italian style). All the styles, with the exception of the Tudor Revival, were characterized by light colored materials and restraint in ornament, startling contrast to the flamboyance of the late Victorian styles. Some of the early 20th century styles (Tudor Revival, Georgian Revival) are scarcely represented on Capitol Hill; other styles such as Beaux Arts and the Renaissance Revival are more common.

Beaux Arts, 1895-1915: In 1893, the Chicago Exposition, dubbed the "White City," helped foster a national enthusiasm for classicism. In Washington and Capitol Hill, previously dominated by red brick and dark materials of the styles of the preceding fifty years, materials now tended to light colored brick and stone with row houses built of buff and tan roman brick. This period was characterized by the flamboyant mix of classical and Renaissance details as practiced by graduates of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris rather than pure classical motifs. Beaux Arts buildings tended to be highly planned and sophisticated, using monumentality, axuality, and symmetry.

Capitol Hill has one of Washington's great examples of the Beaux Arts style as a neighbor, the Library of Congress building (1897, Smithmeyer and Pelz). The three dimensional and, in this case, symmetrical demands of a style posed a challenge for row house designers. The solution was often a symmetrical second floor oriel bay above a less symmetrical ground floor, grafted onto the typical side hall row house plan. Copper, often used on oriels, weathered to a blue-green, and Beaux Arts ornamental motifs such as swags and garlands appeared.

TWENTIETH CENTURY REVIVALS

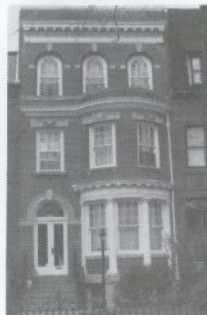
The category of "Twentieth Century Revivals" is an umbrella for various revival styles identified with the decorative vocabulary of earlier periods. Because most of Capitol Hill was built by the time the revival styles peaked in the first third of the 20th century, there are few examples of the revival styles that were to become ubiquitous in the suburbs of that period apart from a few Georgian and Tudor Revival houses and decorative gestures on the stone door surrounds of generic brick apartment houses.



310-312 FIFTH STREET, SE



GEORGIAN REVIVAL VERSIONS OF THE GENERIC "S" TYPE HOUSE (1118-1122 E STREET, SE).



1012 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NE, IS A GRANDER VERSION OF THE GEORGIAN REVIVAL STYLE THAN THE MODEST VERSION AT 9 EIGHTH STREET, NE.

Georgian Revival, 1870-1920: What is generally identified as "Georgian Revival" can actually be either Georgian/Colonial in form, or a revival of the Adam/Federal style. In either case, these buildings are free interpretations of their antecedents, having only decorative motifs in common. These motifs include red brick construction with white painted multi-paned (usually six-over-six) sash windows, flat lintel openings



518 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SE, WITH A CLASSICALLY INSPIRED SWAG AS STYLE APPLIQUE AT THE ENTRANCE.



15 SECOND STREET, NE

often with voussoirs, arched windows used as accents, and various classically derived details.

Capitol Hill has a small but significant number of Georgian Revival houses.

While this revival style later became a reflexive and debased 20th century suburban response, it began as a revival, as early as 1859, when the originals had scarcely fallen from fashion. Therefore, it is not possible to use the style to date Capitol Hill row houses.

Tudor Revival: The Tudor Revival style was primarily a suburban style of freestanding dwellings. There are few row house examples of the style and, indeed, one of Capitol Hill's several examples of the style, at 310-312 Fifth Street, SE, is a duplex. Another example, at 15 Second Street, NE, manages to fit Tudor expression to the constraints of the row house.

Tudor Revival houses used varied but rustic materials: brick, stone elements at the entrance, sometimes an odd stone cropping up in a field of brick, cement plaster often half-timbered, and small, multi-paned casement windows. Steeply pitched roofs, often asymmetrical with one side continuing down much closer to the ground than the other, are another hallmark of the style, often employed as entrance elements when not used on the main house body. Massing was as complex as permitted.

Modernistic, 1925-45: The 1925 Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in Paris heralded a move toward the "modern" in a variety of decorative disciplines. Art Deco and Art Moderne are both "modern" and essentially decorative in nature. Vitrolite (black decorative glass), aluminum, stainless steel, mirrored, and cement panels were all commonly used decorative materials. Ornamentation emphasized zigzags, chevrons and stylized floral themes.

Because of the odd unbuilt lot or larger parcel created by demolition of earlier structures, Capitol Hill has examples of various 20th century styles, including the Modernistic ones.

Both the Penn Theater, Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Folger Shakespeare Library are examples of the Modernistic.

Anonymous generic apartment buildings, such as the ones at 401 A Street, NE, and at 518 Independence Avenue, SE, are almost devoid of stylistic reference except for entrances with applique in various styles, Modernistic included.

ADDITIONAL READING

Books

Bunting, Bainbridge, *Houses of Boston's Back Bay: An Architectural History, 1840-1917*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967.

Few of the "style" books listed below treat row houses at any length. But, to understand the stylistic antecedents of Capitol Hill row houses, one must understand the various styles as realized by architects and designers on freestanding buildings.

Blumenson, John J.G., *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1983.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

John Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Nancy Schwartz, *What Style Is It?* Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983.

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Carr, Lynch Associates, *Anacostia Conserved and LeDroit Park Conserved* prepared for the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, 1979.

James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, (series of articles in the *Old House Journal*) "Gothic Revival," Vol. XVI, No. 6, November/December 1988, pp. 33-37; "The Italian Style," Vol. XVII, No. 1, January/February 1989, pp. 49-53; "The Second Empire Style," Vol. XVII, No. 2, March/April 1989, pp. 48-53; "Romanesque Revival Style," Vol. XVII, No. 3, May/June 1989, pp. 42-45; "Queen Anne Style," Vol. XVII, No. 4, July/Aug. 1989, pp. 38-42.

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Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcomed and may be sent to the author, care of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, P.O. Box 15264, Washington, D.C. 20003-0264; (202) 543-0425. Additional copies are available from the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and from the D.C. Preservation Office, 801 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002; (202) 442-8800. Normal procedures for credit to the author and the Capitol Hill Restoration Society are appreciated.