

CHAPTER 3

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES



Introduction

Truckee contains a diversity of architectural styles representing its history of commercial, residential, institutional and industrial development. This rich architectural heritage enhances the town and provides a strong sense of place. This chapter provides a brief overview of architectural styles found in Truckee. It is not exhaustive. Some architectural styles are not included here because they are either less significant to the historical development of the town or are too few in number to merit inclusion.

Property owners should review these descriptions carefully. In many cases, the design guidelines that follow make reference to the characteristics of the building styles that are presented in this chapter. This will aid the property owner in choosing appropriate design solutions for any proposed work.

Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory Update

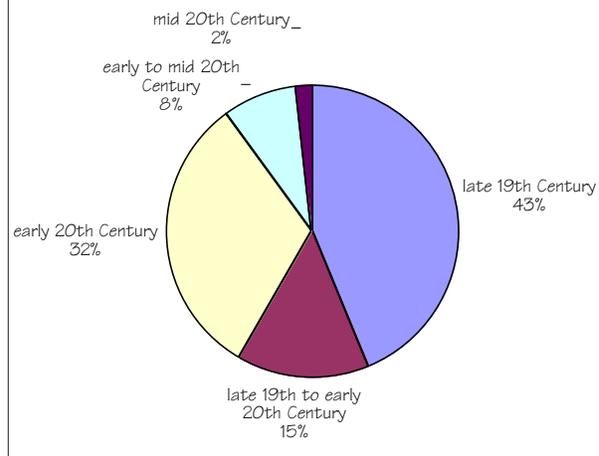
Some of the information found in this chapter on Truckee's architectural styles is adapted from the *Town of Truckee: Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory Update*, prepared by Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc., in 2002. In particular, information regarding when construction occurred in Truckee, as well as the different types of buildings that were constructed, is provided.

Construction Activity in Truckee

The architectural survey evaluated all properties constructed before 1950. Based on the periods of construction identified during the Kautz *Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory Update*, much of the construction of Truckee's representative architecture can be characterized in the following pie chart.

This indicates that well over half of the buildings recorded within the project area date from the earliest phase (1863-1909). The first time of unprecedented growth—when 43% of downtown Truckee's existing construction occurred—clearly had the highest rate of architectural construction. This “boom” was followed by a brief recession around the turn-of-the-20th century when the lumber industry began its decline. Shortly thereafter, another resurgence in development occurred, but then dropped off around the late 1930s and into the 1940s.

Age distribution of properties included in the architectural survey for buildings constructed before 1950



Building Form and Scale

Generally, it appears that among all buildings recorded, the predominate architectural form is the gable-front residential building. Nearly 40% of all structures surveyed in the Historic Preservation Overlay District are gable-front. Buildings with cross-gable plans—such as T-gable, L-gable, gable-front-and-wing and I-plans—are also represented. The cross-gable, another residential building form, is found on 17% of the structures. Other residential building forms include: side-gables (12%), pyramidal/four-squares (1%), hipped gables (2%), clipped gables (3%), and shed (3%). Commercial buildings, which have rectangular forms with flat or slightly sloping roofs, make up 13% of the buildings.

Among all the buildings recorded in the Inventory, the building height category is dominated by the one-story form. This, again, is representative of the dominant residential architecture in Truckee, with 63% of all structures being one-story in height. Buildings of various heights are found throughout Truckee, however. One-and-one-half story (19%), two story (13%), three story (1%), and four story (1%) can all be found.

Architectural Styles

The dominant architectural style represented in Truckee is a modest, relatively unadorned Folk/Vernacular style (48%). Folk/Vernacular houses, generally constructed circa 1860-1890 in Truckee, are characterized by gable-front forms and massed-plans. These buildings are relatively unadorned and also include forms of the gable-front-and-wing, hall-parlor, I-house,

side-gable, and pyramidal families. Originally, these buildings displayed porches of very simple construction (partial or full front, and/or wrap-around), along with minor variations in roof pitch and window placement (all typically double-hung, tall and rectangular).

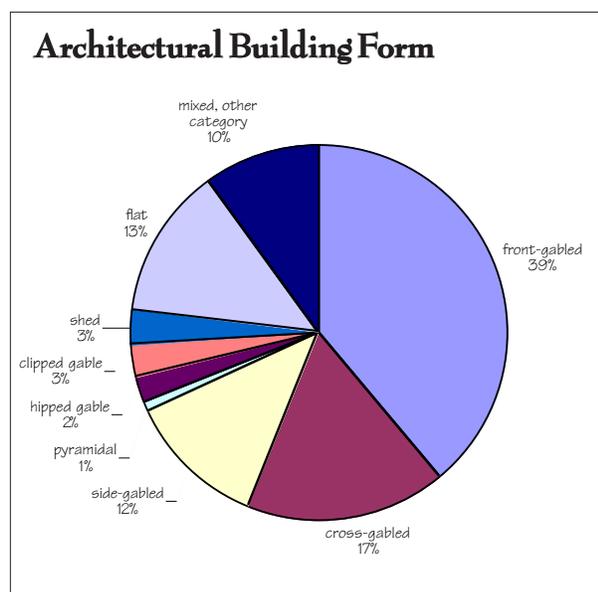
The second most frequent style is that of the vernacular commercial building (16%). The simple Folk Victorian style is also well represented (9%) along with the Craftsman (10%). Craftsman buildings are generally a single story, wood framed and have low pitched gabled roofs with wide eaves and exposed rafter tails. Other characteristics include full or partial width porches often under the principal roof and supported by tapered, squared columns or pedestals. Cladding varies greatly including wood clapboard, wood shingles, stone, brick, concrete and stucco.

More elaborate styles, Italianate (5%), Gothic Revival (3%), and Queen Anne (3%) are present but in limited numbers. Italianate styling is characteristically represented by buildings of two to three stories (rarely one story), low to moderate pitched roofs with overhanging eaves and decorative brackets beneath, tall narrow windows with elaborate arched or curved forms and decorative crowns, and occasionally cupolas or towers. The Gothic Revival style is reflected in buildings with steeply pitched roofs (usually with cross gables), decorated verge boards, windows with pointed-arch shapes, and a one-story porch often flattened by decorative Gothic arch detailing. Queen Anne styling is reflected by features including a steeply pitched roof often of irregular shape, a dominant front-facing gable, patterned shingles and wall texture patterns, bay windows, asymmetrical facade appearance, and partial and full-width porches generally with elaborate spindle work support posts and balustrade.

Commercial Buildings

Because these buildings reflect commercial/trade development within the community over a relatively broad frame of time (1870s-1940s) there is not one dominant style or design, other than Vernacular which could accurately describe the commercial architecture.

The historic commercial buildings vary in height from one story to four stories. Most commercial buildings along Front Street are constructed of masonry (brick or brick and stone) materials, and are relatively modest in design with built-up shed or flat roofs.



Commercial architectural styles include Neo Spanish Colonial; Art Deco; Frontier Vernacular; and modest early 20th century vernacular commercial buildings, frequently with elaborate brick work patterning in multiple colors. Overall, the condition of Truckee's historic commercial buildings is relatively good, although most have slightly diminished levels of integrity resulting from alterations.

Residential Buildings

Similar to Commercial Row, the domestic properties along Truckee's residential streets and neighborhoods vary in architectural styles, although the form of a one to 1-1/2 story, modest, gable-front, appears most frequently. In general, most historic residential buildings appear to represent an eclectic mixture of working class houses dating from the late 1870s to the 1940s. Within each neighborhood, building ages vary although those constructed during 1891-1909 comprise nearly half of all residences. Buildings constructed

from 1863 to 1890 and 1911 to 1940 are nearly equally represented and only a few buildings from the early Modern Years are present in the district. Unfortunately, relatively few of the residential properties from 1863-1890 have survived unchanged.

Although a number of residential buildings are large, there are relatively few with surviving elements that display "high-style" with respect to architectural design. The most notable of these are the Kruger-White House on Donner Pass Road and the Richardson House on High Street. Several large properties along High Street, East Jibboom Street, West River Street and Donner Pass Road have limited surviving detailing that suggests at one time they displayed grander architectural styles.

A summary of key characteristics of the most prevalent building types and styles appears on the following pages.

Folk/Vernacular

circa 1863-1910



A simple cross-gable vernacular form.



A raised, gable-front vernacular.

Sometimes referred to as “other,” “no style” or “folk houses,” vernacular residential building reflect their basic functions and have modest detailing. The houses are constructed of simple designs, some of which remained common for decades. Many of these designs were indeed based on popular styles of the time, but the vernacular structures were much simpler in form, detail and function. Elements from other styles found in the district will appear on the vernacular types but in simple arrangements.

While the neighborhood includes “folk houses” of several types, the most prevalent is the gable-front. The gable-front Vernacular, usually one-story, has a front-facing gable roof with a full-width front porch.

Characteristics

- hipped roof over the main block; projecting wing with front-facing gable
- porch, extending the length of the building, with shed roof on one-story; often a gable on two-story examples
- usually round columns
- tripartite, often Palladian window in upper story of gable
- tripartite division of windows on projecting wing
- clapboard wood siding, or shingles

Folk Victorian

circa 1863-1910

Technically the word “Victorian” refers to the long reign of Queen Victoria, which lasted from 1833 to 1901 and encompassed the rich variety of architectural styles that were popular during the nineteenth century. Architecturally the word “Victorian” evokes the complexity and irregularity seen in the massing and materials of modest homes to large mansions. The use of Victorian era styles became available with the advent of rail transportation; access to national markets and culture was reflected in its architecture.

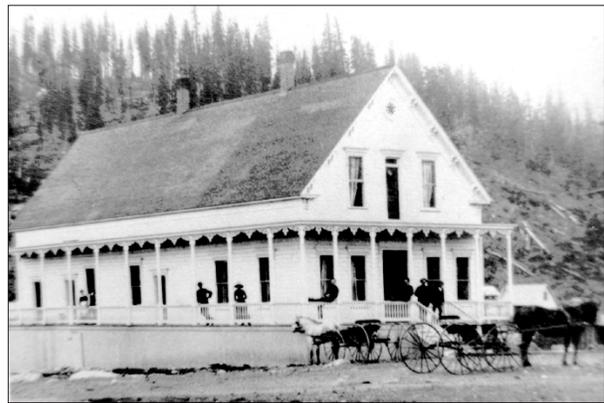
The majority of Truckee’s Folk Victorian houses do not represent pure examples. Simply describing a house as “Victorian” can be misleading because home builders tended to take elements from one style and mix it with another. Still, the term conjures up the image of a one or two story house, with an asymmetrical form, a steeply-pitched roof and “lots of gingerbread.”

Characteristics

- complex massing made of towers, turrets, dormers, gables, bay windows and porches
- shingles are the most commonly used embellishment, especially in gable ends
- horizontal wood siding, often with a “crispness” that gives the building a repetition of light and shadow
- sometimes a combination of materials was used, such as horizontal siding on the first story and shingles on the second
- fancy scroll cut wood work, especially around gables and porches
- wrought or cast iron as cresting along ridge lines or as railings and fencing
- double-hung sash windows, made of wood
- large, plate-glass window with a fixed transom, often with leaded or stained glass
- Palladian windows in gable ends
- windows are often grouped in thirds (tripartite) in varying combinations



A hip-roof cottage with turned posts on an inset porch.



Jigsaw ornamental trim is a signature of Folk Victorian building.

Gothic Revival

circa 1863-1880



Original Gothic windows on the United Methodist Church

The Gothic Revival style was most popular in this country during the 1870s. In a broader context, the style was part of the Picturesque Movement that valued emotion over rational thought. As a rejection of classicism the most vocal proponent of this style, Andrew Jackson Downing, emphasized vertical lines, deep colors and the use of applied ornament.

Characteristics

- steeply pitched roof
- cross gable roof plan, or
- side gable roof plan with central cross gable over the door
- clapboard or plaster siding
- quoins
- decorative barge board along eaves of main gables and dormers
- two-over-two, double-hung sash windows
- pediments over windows
- bay windows
- lancet windows
- elaborate porch railings: turned posts, cut-out boards

Italianate

circa 1863-1885

The Italianate style, along with other styles of the Picturesque Movement such as Gothic Revival and the Victorian Era, were a reaction to the formal classicism of the Greek Revival style. Popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing's pattern books published in the 1840s and 1850s, the Italianate style began to introduce more exuberant detailing to structures; such as rounded windows (often paired), decorative brackets and elaborate window hoods.

Commercial Characteristics

- two or three stories
- quoins
- decorative paired brackets
- double doors with glass panels
- double-hung, narrow upper-story windows, often with round arch heads

Residential Characteristics

- low-pitched hipped roof
- brick, wood clapboard, plaster
- overhanging eaves
- ornate treatment of the eaves, including the use of paired brackets, modillions and dentil courses
- double-hung, narrow windows, often with round arch heads
- window panes are either one-over-one or two-over-two
- protruding sills
- transom, often curved, above the front door
- ornate porch treatment, with round columns or square posts, and bargeboard ornament



Projecting round arch window hoods.



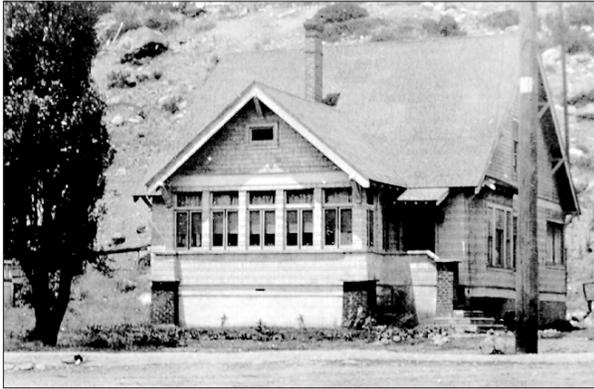
Deep Italianate bracket.



Overhanging eaves with ornate treatment.

Craftsman

circa 1905-1930



Exposed rafter ends and overhanging eaves.



Tapered, or "battered" porch columns reflect Craftsman details in this cottage.

Craftsman homes were originally inspired by two California brothers—Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene—who practiced in Pasadena from 1893 to 1914. Beginning as simple bungalows, the Craftsman style was known as the “ultimate bungalow.” Influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement and oriental architecture, elements such as low-pitched gabled roofs, wide eaves, exposed roof rafters and porches with tapered columns were common.

Craftsman Bungalow Characteristics

- low-pitched gabled roof
- decorative beams or braces under gables
- one-over-one, double-hung windows, or
- one-light, fixed window; with fixed transom
- prominent lintels and sills
- full or partial, open porch with square posts and tapered arched openings
- gabled dormers
- exposed rafters
- wide eaves
- wood clapboard, stucco
- concrete, brick or stone foundation

Craftsman Cottage Characteristics

- steeply pitched gabled roof
- decorative beams or braces under gables
- exposed rafters
- full or partial, open porch
- wood clapboard or shingles
- concrete, brick or stone foundation

Queen Anne

circa 1885-1905

Proponents of the Queen Anne style found their inspiration from the medieval art and architecture of its namesake's reign (1702-1714), growing out of recognition of vernacular, modest, pre-industrial structures and a desire to bring about a close relationship of architecture to ornamentation.

In the United States, it developed from a desire to identify a national style. Both the Centennial Exposition, held in Philadelphia in 1876, and the popularity of New England coastal towns exposed Americans to their colonial, vernacular architectural past. The wood clapboard and shingle houses that were constructed in eastern Massachusetts during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries brought about the usual longing of security and simplicity that earlier ages always evoke, and were all the more appealing because they were seen as purely "American." The new Queen Anne style used the broad gables, long sloping roofs and small pane windows of these early houses for the exterior, while giant hearths, inglenooks and spacious, inviting halls influenced interior design.

Characteristics

- irregular, asymmetrical massing
- use of bay windows, towers, turrets, dormers, gables—anything that protrudes from the wall and the roof
- use of varying wall textures
- use of ornament: wooden scroll work on porches and gables, ornate metal railings
- windows with leaded or stained glass
- windows with large panes of glass surrounded by small panes
- tall brick chimneys



Irregular massing and varied materials.



Slim, ornamented Queen Anne chimneys, combined with the Folk Victorian jigsaw detailing.

Commercial Vernacular

circa 1863-1920

Usually limited to two to four stories, vernacular commercial buildings are divided into two distinct bands. The first floor is more commonly transparent, so goods can be displayed, while the second story is usually reserved for a residential, office or storage space. In Truckee, some smaller one-story examples exist, as do the early false front storefront.



Horizontal wood siding.



Large display windows at street level.



Tall upper story windows.

False Front (with gable roof) Characteristics

- one to one-and-one-half stories in height
- gable roof with "false front" commercial facade
- horizontal wood siding
- large display windows or bay windows
- recessed entries
- simple bracketed cornices

(Early) Flat Roof Characteristics

- two to four stories in height
- primarily masonry construction, with wood reserved for framing elements and architectural details
- large display windows
- transom lights, above entry and storefront windows
- kickplate, below the storefront window
- central, recessed entry
- tall second story windows
- decorative cornice at the top of the building
- sometimes a mid-belt cornice separates the first floor from the upper floors



Decorative cornice and parapet.

(Later) One-Story Flat Roof Characteristics

- one-story in height
- brick construction
- large display windows
- central, recessed entry
- patterns in brick-work for ornamentation and cornice element



One-story flat false fronts.



Decorative brick corbeled cornice.

Railroad/Industrial

circa 1863-1910

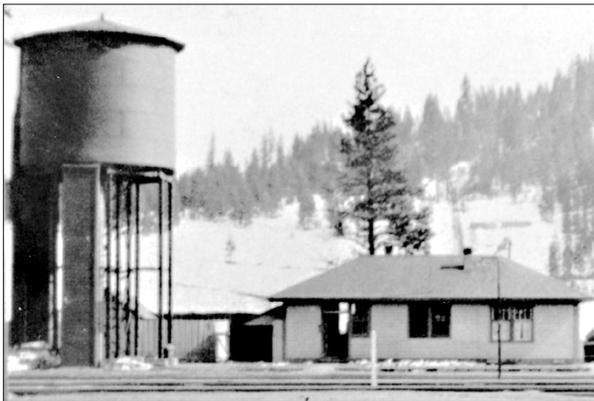
There were two classes of railroad and industrial type buildings seen in Truckee historically. Simple industrial buildings were scattered throughout the railroad right-of-way. These buildings had little architectural detailing. The buildings were often “clustered” in groups to service a single activity (e.g., lumber yard or warehousing). Commercial oriented railroad buildings were also found in the railroad right-of-way, but these provided services to residents and visitors and did exhibit some ornamentation and detail. The many hotels and passenger depots that once existed in downtown are examples.

Characteristics

- one to one-and-one-half stories in height
- gable roof
- horizontal wood siding
- simple building forms
- simple brackets and other details on commercial-oriented buildings



Gabled end details.



Simple buildings and roof forms.



Simple roof form.



Clustered buildings.