



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Historic District Commission

Guidelines for Architectural Styles



Although Portsmouth enjoys a wide variety of architectural styles, there tends to be a predominant style along many streetscapes. The buildings along this streetscape are generally wood-framed, 2-1/2-story, side-gable residences in a Georgian or Colonial style.

UNDERSTANDING THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH'S ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The development and architectural heritage of the City of Portsmouth includes both high-style and vernacular buildings. The term “vernacular” suggests that they were based upon traditional or regional forms without being designed by an architect or similarly trained individual. As a result, many vernacular buildings share common floor plans and are relatively simple in form with embellishments that are reflective of the period or popular styles of the day.

Styles can be difficult to define because of changes over time. As the prosperity of Portsmouth's residents flourished and

a family's needs grew, buildings were commonly enlarged and houses updated to meet the tastes of residents. Some original buildings were integrated into new construction or expanded and updated to current styles - such as the addition of Italianate brackets or turned posts to porches of an earlier period to make a house appear more “Victorian.” As a result, many houses reflect multiple time periods and are not easily categorized as reflecting a single or “pure” style.

It should also be noted that style is not necessarily limited to a specific time period. Some property owners have a preference for more traditional architecture. As a result, they may have constructed a building that appears to be of an earlier time or style in a manner that is visually indiscernible from its predecessors. As a result, it can be difficult to differentiate buildings that are truly historic from those that only appear to be so.

The images in this section depict the variety of residential architectural styles found in the Portsmouth Historic District. The images are accompanied by a sidebar with a list of typical elements and features associated with the style. The images depicted in this section are not meant as an exhaustive list of all of the architectural styles present in the Historic District; rather, they represent a sample of the most common styles. It is important to note that not every building will include all elements listed for a particular style, but to be considered of the style, a building should bear most of the characteristics indicated.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the City of Portsmouth's Historic District Commission (HDC) and the Planning Department. Please review this information during the early stages of planning a project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money.

In its review, the HDC considers a property's classification, recommending the greatest historic authenticity at focal buildings, with more flexibility at contributing structures, and the most at non-contributing properties. The HDC Staff in the Planning Department is available to provide informal informational meetings with potential applicants who are considering improvements to their properties.

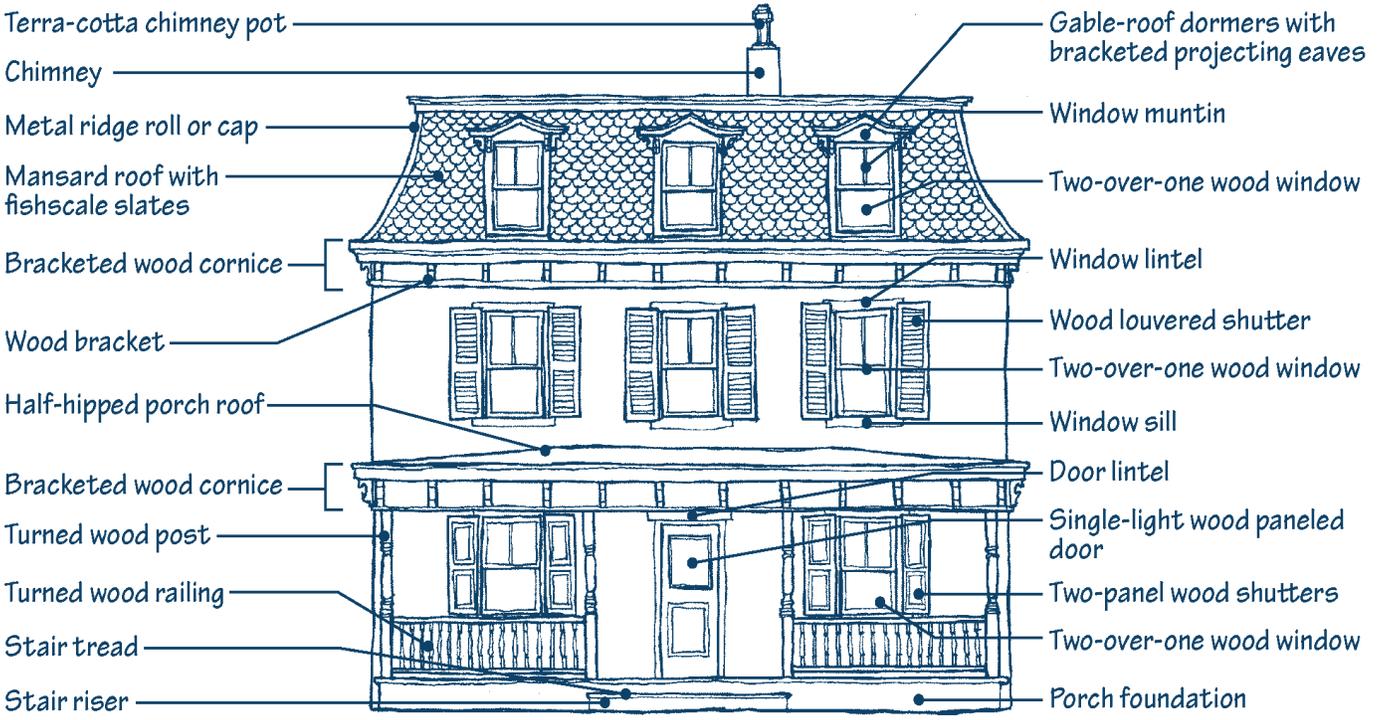
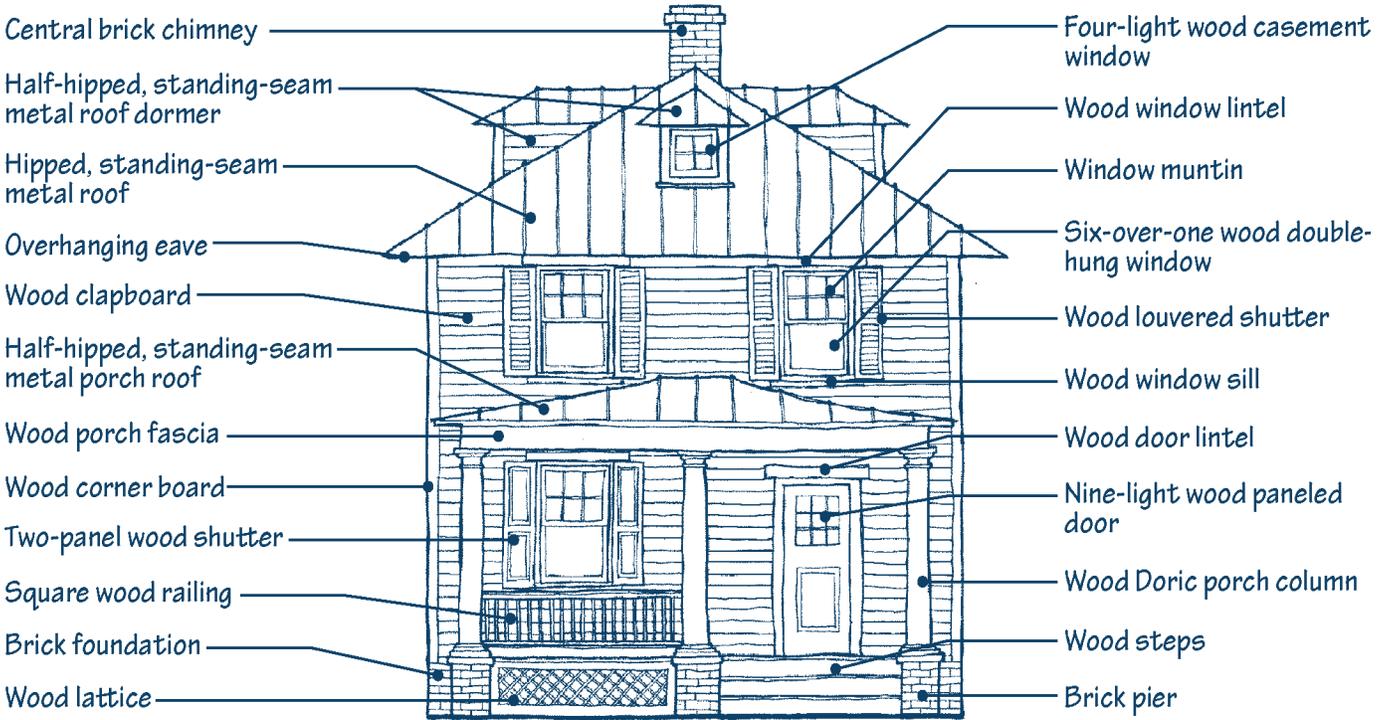
Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at City Hall and on the Commission's website at www.planportsmouth.com/historicdistrictcommission. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires HDC review, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Planning Department at (603) 610-7216.

STYLES & APPROPRIATE ALTERATIONS

When property owners are considering altering a building and would like more information on whether the proposed change is appropriate for a building type or style, please contact the HDC at (603) 610-7216 for more information.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

The following diagrams represent composite buildings, and provide a basic vocabulary of architectural elements and terms. Please refer to the individual *Guidelines* for additional information.



GEORGIAN

- Constructed in the mid- to late-18th to early-19th century
- Wood framed most prevalent
- Brick can include belt course separating floors
- Symmetrical in plan
- Quoins at outer building corners
- 1 to 2-1/2 stories in height
- 1 or 2 rooms deep in plan
- Side-gable, hipped or side-gambrel roof form
- Massive, multiple brick chimneys, often central
- Pedimented and segmental arch roof dormers
- Little or no overhang at the gable ends
- Cornice with decorative moldings, typically dentils
- Roof balustrade
- Roof cupola
- Multi-paned, double-hung windows with small panes and wide, shallow wood muntins – Possibly pedimented lintels
- Paneled wood door, typically centered
- Entry door detailing can include an entablature, multi-light transom window and pediment



The 1758 John Paul Jones house includes a side-gambrel roof, massive brick chimneys, arched and pedimented dormers. The wood-framed house has clapboard siding and a fieldstone foundation. The 6/6 double-hung windows at the first floor include pedimented lintels.



The 1716 Warner House includes a side-gambrel roof with massive brick chimneys, arched and pedimented gables, a central cupola and a roof balustrade. The Flemish bond brick walls include belt courses at each level. First and second floor double-hung windows have 9/6 sash.



This wood-framed Federal residence includes a central entrance door below a half-round fanlight flanked by sidelights. The projecting entrance porch has paired Corinthian columns and a classical cornice topped by a half-round bay and decorative iron railing (a later addition).



This austere Federal residence is constructed of brick, and includes a central paneled wood door flanked by sidelights and topped by an elliptical fanlight. Windows all have double-hung, multi-light sash and are flanked by shutters.

FEDERAL

- Constructed in the late-18th to early-19th century
- Wood framed most prevalent, with clapboard or flush siding
- Brick townhouses, often with flat or keystone window lintels and prominent sills and belt courses separating floors
- 1 to 3 stories in height
- 2 or more rooms deep in plan
- Side-gable, hipped or gambrel roof
- Massive, multiple brick chimneys, often central
- Segmental arch roof dormers
- Little or no overhang at the gable ends
- Refined, detailed cornice moldings
- Roof balustrade
- Multi-paned, double-hung windows with narrow muntins and larger panes, aligned in rows and columns
- Flat window lintels
- Centered paneled wood door – Possibly with elaborate rectangular, elliptical or semi-circular fanlight
- Elaborate door surround or a small entry porch
- Palladian or decorative window over center entry
- Iron stair rails

GREEK REVIVAL

- Constructed in the mid-19th century
- Wood framed most prevalent
- Brick townhouses
- 1 to 3 stories in height
- Side-gable or front-gable roof, low-sloped at townhouse
- Cornice with wide, divided band of trim, can include classical details such as dentils
- Classical pilasters
- Gable end returns or pedimented gable ends
- Multiple brick chimneys, often central
- Front entrance porch, with prominent round columns or square piers, cornice with wide, divided band of trim or pedimented front gable
- Multi-paned, double-hung windows with narrow muntins and less elaborate surrounds
- Small frieze-band windows
- Prominent, paneled entry door, with narrow, multi-light transom and sidelights, often in decorative frame



Many of Portsmouth's Greek Revival residences are wood framed with front-gable roofs. This example includes a wide rake board with molded trim and classically-inspired corner boards frame the front elevation, as well as a granite foundation.



The side-gable roof of this wood-framed has a deep, stepped cornice with gable end returns and wide, classically-inspired, corner boards. The classical entrance surround includes pilasters and a wide, stepped frieze. The door is flanked by sidelights with a transom above.



This wood-framed Italianate house has a projecting, denticulated cornice with paired brackets. The symmetrical facade has paired, arched, panelled entry doors and 2-over-2 double-hung windows with elaborate window hoods. Arched windows are located at the third floor.



This side-gabled, Italianate residence has a projecting, cornice with paired brackets. A prominent entrance porch includes an extended bracketed cornice and balustrade above. Windows have 2-over-2 double-hung sash with prominent, bracketed lintels.

ITALIANATE

- Constructed in the third quarter of the 19th century
- Symmetrical or asymmetrical façade
- Wood framed most prevalent, with clapboard or flush siding
- Brick townhouses, often with arched window lintels
- 2 to 3 stories in height
- Low-pitched roof, often hipped
- Moderate to wide overhangs supported by decorative brackets, single or paired
- Square cupola or tower
- Tall, narrow windows, often arched, single or grouped, with large panes of glass
- Elaborate window heads, sometimes bracketed
- Bay windows
- Small entry porch, typically supported by square posts with beveled corners
- Singled and paired entry doors, often arched, with large panes of glass and elaborate heads; often includes a transom window

SECOND EMPIRE

- Constructed 1860-1890
- Mansard roofs with dormers, often with patterned slate, particularly fish scale
- 2 to 3 stories in height
- Dormers and dormer windows elaborate in design
- Bracketed cornices and overhanging eaves
- Window, door and porch details similar to Italianate
- Tall, narrow windows, generally 1-over-1 or 2-over-2 double-hung, often paired or grouped
- Elaborate window head moldings
- Restrained porch with square or turned posts
- Heavily molded doorways with singled or paired entry doors, often arched, with large panes of glass, an elaborate head, often a transom window



This Second Empire home includes a Mansard roof and projecting cornice with paired brackets. The elements below the cornice, including the pair of projecting bay windows and the 2-over-2 double-hung windows with decorative lintels, are similar to those found at Italianate homes.



Although a symmetrical building, this is a Second Empire paired residence. The decorative, slate, fish scale shingles remain at the right half of the Mansard. The brick walls feature brownstone quoins, belt courses and window surrounds. Note that the former balustrade has been removed.



This Gothic Revival residence has a steeply pitched, cross gabled roof. A decorative, scalloped vergeboard is located at the front gable with a similar motif along the eave. The front gable features a tall, pointed arch lancet window, typical of the style.

GOTHIC REVIVAL

- Mid-19th century – 1880
- Steeply pitched gable roof
- Vertical emphasis
- Wood framed often with wood clapboard or vertical board-and-batten siding
- Cross gables or gable roof dormers
- Scrollwork or decoration at gable ends and porches
- Pointed arch lancet windows, often grouped
- 2/2 double hung sash
- Windows and walls extending into gables
- Doors can include pointed arches or Gothic motifs
- Small entry porch or full-width porch with flattened arch detailing



Stick Style buildings are wood framed and can include decorative patterns and details. This building features a gabled dormer with a diagonal board patterns with a similar pattern used to frame the entrance porch below. Windows have 2-over-2 double hung sash.

STICK STYLE

- Constructed 1860-1890
- Steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, often with patterned shingles
- Exposed rafter ends
- Prominent front-facing gables/dormers
- Wood wall surfaces, possibly with vertical, horizontal or diagonal raised board patterns
- Cut-away and projecting bay windows, breaking up flat wall surfaces
- Asymmetrical facades
- Partial or full-width one-story porch
- Round/octagonal turrets

QUEEN ANNE

- Constructed 1880-1910
- Steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, often with patterned shingles
- Prominent front-facing gables/dormers
- Decorative pediments
- Patterned wall texture, often using wood shingles
- Cut-away and projecting bay windows, breaking up flat wall surfaces
- Asymmetrical facades
- Partial or full-width 1-story porch
- Spindlework at porches
- Round/octagonal turrets or towers with curved glass at windows
- Simple door and window surrounds
- Windows with colored glass



This Queen Anne residence has asymmetrical massing with an inset, double-height porch to the left and a shingle-clad, tower-like semi-circular bay to the right. The porch includes turned railings and a spindlework frieze and jigsaw cut panels at the second floor.

VERNACULAR VICTORIAN

- Constructed 1870-1910
- Traditional house form, often with a gable-roof form with applied Victorian detailing at porches, cornices and gable ends
- Gable or cross-gable roof, possibly with dormers
- 1 to 3 stories in height
- Overhanging eaves, possibly with brackets or highly molded cornices
- Spindlework porch detailing or possibly jigsaw-cut trim
- Projecting elements such as porches, door hoods and bays with Victorian-period components



Many Vernacular (or Folk) Victorian residences are relatively simple in form, and include a few Victorian details such as decorative gable ends, projecting bay, and decorative detail at the entrance porch, or in this case, door hood.



The complex roof form at this Shingle Style includes a hipped roof with an intersecting gable and round tower projection. A semi-circular porch supported by turned wood posts with simple brackets wraps the left side of the house.



A semi-octagonal tower intersects the side of this gambrel-front shingle residence. The double-hung windows include multi-paned upper sash over a single-paned lower sash. The front porch is supported by Doric columns and includes a simple, wood balustrade.

SHINGLE

- Constructed 1880-1910
- 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 stories in height
- Wood shingled wall cladding and roof surfaces
- No corner boards, can include patterned wood trim within wall surface
- Asymmetrical façade
- Varied, complex roof forms including cross gables, towers and multi-level eaves
- Varied dormer and dormer window forms
- Extensive porches with simple detailing and supports, often with classical columns
- Single and grouped windows with simple surrounds
- Double-hung windows often with multi-light upper sash and single-light lower sash

COLONIAL REVIVAL

- Constructed 1880 - 1955
- 1 to 2-1/2 stories in height
- Colonial Revival roof forms including gable, hipped and gambrel
- Accentuated front entry door – Possibly with decorated hood, porch, transom window and/or sidelights
- Single or paired multi-paned double-hung windows
- Materials including stone, brick, stucco and wood clapboard for the wall surfaces; slate or wood shingles for the roof (or synthetic alternatives)



The slate, hipped roof on this 2-1/2 story, Colonial Revival residence include three dormers. The entry porch is centered on the front elevation and includes a paneled wood door and decorative sidelights topped by an arched transom.



Dutch Colonial Revival residences, such as this one, typically have a side gambrel roof, often with wide, shed-roof dormers. Double-hung windows with 6-over-1 windows are installed throughout.



This former Gothic Revival residence was remodeled as a Tudor Revival. Two of its principal features are the highly articulated gabled front entrance and three dramatic, stepped, multi-light windows at the side elevation. The half-timbering has a rectilinear pattern.

TUDOR REVIVAL

- Constructed 1890-1940
- Steeply pitched roofs with prominent cross gables
- Brick or stone often at lower level
- Half-timbering at upper floors and gable ends
- Massive chimneys
- Slate roofing
- Tall, narrow multi-light windows, often in pairs or sets of three

DETERMINING A BUILDING'S STYLE

When trying to determine a building's style, it is helpful to know the original dates of construction and any major additions. If this information is not available, the major forms of the building, such as the roof shape and composition of major volumes, should be considered and then the individual features such as the porches, windows and doors in order to identify the style. It can be helpful to keep in mind:

- Style is not a function of building use – Churches, schools, courthouses and residences can be of various styles
- Style is not a define by the construction date – Multiple styles tend to overlap in any given period, and although certain styles were most popular during a specific period, property owners often continued to build in that style after that period
- Styles blend into each other, and specific features from an earlier or different style were often incorporated into a building of an altogether different style to achieve a desired effect or design
- Several of Portsmouth's historic buildings were stylistically simplified because they were constructed by homeowners or builders with limited budgets and limited knowledge of high styles and detailing

- Since many of Portsmouth's buildings evolved over a period of time, some earlier houses were subsumed into larger buildings or decorated to appear more up to date and "stylish"
- Original elements may have been removed, replaced or modified so that they are no longer in keeping with the characteristics of the original style – Such as the replacement of multi-paned windows with 1/1 windows at a Greek-Revival style building or the removal of porch brackets at an Italianate building

Some buildings defy any one style "label" and are difficult or impossible to classify. It is often the case that previous owners made choices or alterations based upon personal tastes, needs, economy or whimsy. It is more important to identify what the most significant remaining features of a building are, and consider and protect those features when planning changes, than it is to categorize a building by a style label.

The types and styles in this section are those that occur most frequently and whose description will be most useful to the typical property owner in Portsmouth's Historic Districts. If a specific property does not seem to fit any of the styles described in this section, please consult the books and other resources referenced in the *Guidelines Introduction*.