



VICTORIAN PERIOD

1850 - 1900S



"Victorian" is more than just architecture. It had a wide ranging influence on culture and society. Because of this influence the period is sometimes referred to as the Victorian Era. When it comes to architecture, most people think Victorian is a style of architecture. In fact it is eleven different styles that span about 50 years. The numerous Victorian styles dominated American architecture until the turn of the 20th Century. As more Americans migrated west to California, the architecture continued to come with them. The land booms of the early 1880's brought lots of settlers and with it a need for housing, most of it designed in one of the Victorian styles. The Victorian Period wasn't an evolution of the Mission Period architecture, it was a revolution. It ended the Spanish and Mexican influences in California's architecture. Gone were the simple details and forms, replace by the architecture of the "Gilded Age", containing its highly decorative details, including moldings and brackets, commonly referred to "gingerbread".

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ITALIANATE ARCHITECTURE

1860 – 1870S



CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- Vertical orientation in massing
- Spindled balustrades
- Quoins used on corners
- Flat, parapet or low-pitched hipped roofs
- Projecting roofs
- Decorative brackets under projecting roof
- Use of arches in windows and doors
- Paired windows
- Ground floor windows often start at floor
- Decorative window and door headers

The Italianate style was a celebration of Italian architecture. It primarily drew its inspiration from the Italian villas that dotted the countryside. The inspiration is also not from Ancient Rome but from medieval and renaissance Italy. Because of this, the Italianate style is sometimes mistakenly referred to as Renaissance Revival style which was based on the more formal public buildings of the renaissance.

The Italianate style's popularity surged because of an English king. King George IV of England, while he was Prince Regent, prior to assuming the throne, and his Architect, John Nash, put Italian elements in their buildings. The popularity of the style increased further when his niece and her husband, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert embraced the style for their summer residence, Osborn House. Like many Victorian-era styles, Italianate emphasized vertical proportions and richly decorative detailing.

In California, many downtown commercial buildings in various California cities were originally in the Italianate style, although many Italianate elements were removed in the 1940s and 1950s when the buildings were remodeled and "modernized."

MASSING AND PLAN

- Rectangular in plan.
- Large mass to emphasize its vertical proportions.
- Wings may be added to an Italianate building, L-shaped plan is possible.
- More suburban versions of the style have a wide main facade and are narrow in depth.
- Urban versions are not as wide and are squarer in appearance.
- Minimum of 2 stories and up to 4 stories in height.
- Height helped emphasize vertical proportions of building.

FACADES

- Facades either be balanced and symmetrical or asymmetrical.
- Asymmetrical facades tended to occur more often at the end of the period, influenced by the Queen Anne style.
- Facades are also elaborately decorated.
- Some examples of the Italianate style use a tower, typically centered at the main entrance.
- Openings for doors and windows on different floors are lined up to emphasize the vertical.
- Wood siding, smooth plaster finish stucco, brick, or stone.
- Stone or brick was preferable.

PAINT COLORS

- Light body color with a second trim color.
- Trim usually darker than the main body color.
- There may also be a third color on the building which was used on the window frames. Stone and brick facades were typically not painted.
- Tans, browns and grays were typical with a contrasting accent color.

ROOFS

- Low-pitched hipped or flat roofs.
- Gable roofs were sometimes used, typically on asymmetrical or buildings with towers.
- Eaves were wide and rafters were boxed.
- Square cupola as a tower.

TRIM AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- Ornate details.
- Soffits used decorative paired brackets and cornices.
- The corners of buildings had quoins if the building was stone.
- For wood sided buildings, decorative corner boards were used.
- May also use a pediment over the entrance.

DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Windows were typically tall, narrow, double-hung windows with hood moldings.
- Ground floor windows would reach almost to the floor.
- Windows were also typically paired.
- Roman or segmented arches above windows and doors.
- Side bay windows also used.
- Doors heavily molded double doors.
- Arched transoms common.

PORCHES

- The front porch varied, based on symmetrical or asymmetrical facade.
- Symmetrical facade: Small porches and completely covered or be cantilevered.
- Balustrade balconies on top of the porch were also common.
- Columns and pilasters could be either round or square with Corinthian columns, either smooth or fluted, common.
- Asymmetrical facades: Porches much larger, highlighting the Queen Anne influence. Square columns more often than round, and the details were simpler.

FENCES AND WALLS

- Fences were simple compared to house details.
- Larger, decorative posts, simple, smaller rails
- Simple fence boards.
- Front yard fences mostly open
- Iron or wood



THE MOST DISTINCTIVE PART OF AN ITALIANATE BUILDING IS USUALLY THE CORNICE