

Architecture on Mackinac Island

With few exceptions, Mackinac Island's buildings are constructed of wood and at least eleven are built of logs, most with clapboard siding. There is also a history of building over existing buildings as well as moving buildings around on the Island which lends to each building's history of place. Styles found on Mackinac Island span three centuries and include Native American, French Rustic, Military, Colonial, Victorian, Carpenter Gothic, Greek Revival, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Shingle Style, Arts & Craft and American Foursquare.

Because of the Island's architectural importance, the United States of America has deemed the entire Island as a National Historic Landmark.

Native American

Known as the Anishnaabe, Ojibwe or Chippewa, prior to the coming of the Europeans, they moved according to a season-tapping for maple syrup and fishing in the spring, fishing and planting during the summer, harvesting wild rice in the fall and hunting, trapping and fishing during winter. Homes needed to be portable and the lightweight birch bark or wiigwaas was perfect to create a wiigiwam. Women built the wiigiwams. Here, we have a replica of a Birch Bark Chapel in Marquette Park to show us what Mackinac's Native Peoples used as a dwelling...and to remind us of the conversion program of the French Jesuit explorers.

French Rustic

Built ca.1780, the McGulpin House on Fort & Market streets is a one story log house of piece-sur-piece construction with a steeply pitched gable roof in the northern rustic French Colonial style. This is the only known example of northern French Rustic architecture found outside of France and the shores of Northeastern Canada that we are aware of at this time.

Military

Fort Mackinac is an example of interpreted Islamic military architecture by Europeans on American soil.

Islamic thought and architecture came to Europe via the crusades during the medieval era. Instead of using wood for military fortifications, the Islamic architects used stone or brick made from local materials in order to withstand fire. The French and Spanish crusaders brought this idea to the west after their military campaigns through the Islamic world. Fort Mackinac's walls reflect this influence. At the highest point on the Island, the Island's second military post, Fort Holmes reflects British Military architecture as it is completely made of wood and as a result has burned and been rebuilt several times.

Federalist

Mission Church was built in the 1820's and is like much of eastern America's architecture. The Adams, two British brothers, adapted the Georgian style by adding swags, garlands and other quietly delicate details to their new style. In the early days of the American colonies, settlers were looking for a distinct identity and the austere Federalist style fit the bill.

Colonial

The Indian Dormitory was built in 1838 as a result of the Treaty of Washington negotiated by Indian Agent Henry Schoolcraft as a place for the local tribal members to receive payments from the Great White Father. Schoolcraft designed the building and had it built by local craftsman in the east coast Colonial style. However, the Indians refused to sleep in the building. During the 20th century it was used as the Mackinac Island Public School and later became a part of the Mackinac State Park system. Newly restored, today is the home of the Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Island Art Museum to showcase the state parks collection of art and decorative collectibles in addition to contemporary art by living Mackinac Island artists.

Victorian Era

The term Victorian is not an architectural style but an era from 1840-1900 encompassing many styles. Gothic Revival, Carpenter Gothic, Stick Style, Shingle Style,

Italianate, Second Empire, Romanesque and Queen Anne are all Victorian era styles. Early buildings include the Island House Hotel and Lake View Hotel. Stick style may be found gracing Bay View Bed & Breakfast and many cottages on the East Bluff while Queen Anne style holds sway at the cottage Brigadoon and on the West Bluff.

Greek Revival

Architectural features include a gable, front wings, full height classical portico and eared architraves. Ste Anne's Church Rectory, Harbour View Inn and Haan's 1830 Inn are excellent examples. The later two were both built on the foundations of a fur trader's cabin. Harbour View Inn was built for fur trade icon Madame LaFramboise by her son-in-law, the respected Col. Benjamin Pierce (brother of President Franklin Pierce) and was home to the Island's first school. Haan's 1830 Inn was built for Colonel Preston when he was stationed at Fort Mackinac. Col. Preston was also the Island's first mayor.

Gothic Revival

Gothic architecture was dominant in France and the western half of Europe in the 12th through the middle of the 16th centuries. During the Victorian era, the Gothic style made a comeback as a favored cottage style. Alanson and Ann Sheley built Small Point in 1882 and was moved to its present location during the 50's when the Moral Re-Armament developed Mission Point. This is the only surviving Gothic Revival cottage on Mackinac Island. Mr. Sheley grew up in Albany, New York and learned his carpentry, stonemason and construction skills while building canals in Canada and lighthouses in Thunder Bay. He served in the Michigan senate and became a partner in the Detroit & Cleveland Steam Navigation Company who in turn partnered with other Steamship companies to build Grand Hotel. The detail work and craftsmanship expressed in the architectural elements at Small Point are reflective of Sheley's talent, knowledge of carpentry and representation of current styles from the 1880's.

Stick Style

Angular and austere, the plainer Stick Style couldn't compete with Victorian tastes, especially the fancy Queen Anne style. As a result, there are few stick style homes left in America. Lucky for us, Mackinac Island probably has more stick style homes than high style Victorian era buildings, but no one is counting. Excellent examples of Stick style are the Verandah at Harbour View B&B, Pine Cottage, Bogan Lane Inn and the Inn on Mackinac.

Shingle Style

This is a prevalent style on the Island and may be seen at the Governors Summer Residence, Anne Cottage, the Mackinac Island Yacht Club and downtown on the west end of the boardwalk. Many of the homeowners at the turn of the 19th century worked with architects to create their interpretation of Victorian era architecture, which led to many of the beautiful cottages having many styles combined to create their dream homes. The Shingle Style also conveyed a sense of the house as continuous volume. This effect—of the building as an envelope of space, rather than a great mass, was enhanced by the tautness of the flat shingled surfaces, the horizontal shape of many shingle style houses and the emphasis on horizontal continuity, both in exterior details and in the flow of spaces within.

Tudor Revival Style

The elaborate Inn at Stonecliffe was the Island's largest summer estate. It is the only example of Tudor Revival Architecture on Mackinac and was built for Michael Cudahy of County Kilkenny, Ireland who emigrated with his family to the United States in 1849. With his brother John Cudahy and Philip Armour they started a meat-packing business in Milwaukee and revolutionized the meat industry by introducing curing under refrigeration. The mansion was designed by famed high society architect Frederick Perkins (*Governor's Summer Residence and The Pines*). Tudor Revival homes became a sign wealth in the early 20th century. Perkins created a 2 1/2 story frame house with decorative half timbering, steeply

pitched cross gable roof, battered rubblestone tower, an exterior combined of stucco, brick, stone and wood with varied window shapes with a clover motif to give the mansion a relaxed yet stately appearance.

Colonial Revival

Some architectural historians say that Colonial Revival is a Victorian Era style; others believe that the Colonial Revival style marked the end of the Victorian Era. Either way, Colonial Revival is based loosely on Federal and Georgian house styles and was developed as a reaction to the excessively elaborate Queen Anne style.

The best example of Colonial Revival is Grand Hotel. In 1882, U.S. Senator Francis B. Stockbridge purchased the land and formulated a way to finance construction with the Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company, the Michigan Central Railroad and the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad. The Mackinac Island Hotel Company was formed and they commissioned Charles W. Caskey, an architect-builder to use the design plans from Mason and Rice of Detroit. Among the wealthy Midwesterners assembled at the Grand Hotel for its opening in 1887 were lumber barons Algiers, Newberrys and Blodgetts; retailers Potter Palmer and Marshall Fields; and the meat packers, the Armours, Cudahys and Swifts.

Today, Grand Hotel is an architectural icon for the Island and the State of Michigan and the world's largest summer hotel. Built of Michigan White Pine, it is five stories high with a three story verandah and of course, the longest summer porch in the world at 627 feet. The slim lines, roof line curves and symmetry of the tower-ing columns gives the hotel it's graceful appearance.

Later, Colonial Revival became incorporated into what is known as American Foursquare. More examples of Colonial Revival included Chateau Lorraine, Cloghaun Bed & Breakfast and various homes in the Mission area.

Mackinac Island

Self Guided Architectural Walking Tour

*300 Years of
American Architecture*

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