



1.4 Residential Architecture & Building Styles of St. Charles Historic Districts

St. Charles possesses an impressive collection of late 19th and early 20th century residential architecture. The city's rapid growth and development after 1860 led to intense construction efforts on both sides of the Fox River and the prosperity of the community is reflected in the many fine dwellings built during this period. The majority of homes built in these years are of frame construction and are two-stories in height. The architectural styles built in St. Charles mirror those popular throughout the country including the Italianate and Queen Anne styles. Other dwellings were more simple in design such as the National-Homestead style house which was attractive yet functional and economical. In the early 20th century styles such as the Craftsman, Prairie and Tudor Revival styles along with the American Foursquare and Bungalow forms, began making their appearances and flourished in St. Charles.

St. Charles' architectural legacy is not only impressive due to its large number of historic dwellings but in the quality of construction as well. The city's various industries supported a substantial middle-and upper class who built many architect designed homes. These dwellings set high standards and the overall approach to St. Charles' construction from 1870 to 1900 emphasized substance, diversity of style, and attention to detail. The following building types and styles are those most common in the locally designated districts. Architectural terms are defined for each building type as well as its characteristics and context. The illustrations present specific examples but variations of the same style may also exist.

Individual Architecture and Building Styles are discussed on the following 4 pages.



The Dr. J.K. Lewis House—
19 S. 5th St.

Greek Revival Style, ca. 1850 – ca. 1880

The Greek Revival style was an important architectural style of the mid- 19th century. The style reflected the influence of the early Greek architecture which was felt to embody the idealism of democracy and classical beauty. Dwellings constructed in this style were built with symmetrical floor plans and classical columns or pilasters. In St. Charles, the most prominent examples were built with a side wing extending from the main gabled front section. Common details include multi-light sash windows with plain lintels, entrances with sidelights and transoms, and classically detailed columns or pilas-



421 S. 4th St.

Gothic Revival Style, ca. 1850 – ca. 1880

The Gothic Revival style was influenced by formal Gothic designs and forms of Europe. This style was especially popular for churches and civic buildings, however, it was also used to a limited degree for dwellings. This style is characterized by the use of pointed Gothic arches for windows and doors. Roofs are steeply pitched and windows are often decorated with hood moldings. Bay windows are common as is eave decoration and attached millwork.



416 N. 2nd Avenue

Italianate Style, ca. 1850- ca. 1890

The Italianate style, a popular national style from the mid to late 19th century. The style was influenced by rural villas and urban architecture of Italy and promoted by a number of notable American architects such as Alexander Davis and Andrew Downing. Italianate dwellings in St. Charles are generally two stories in height with low-pitched gable roofs and wide eaves. Characteristics of this style include elaborate eave brackets, segmental arched windows, and decorative hood molding. Porches with ornate milled columns and railings are also common on these dwellings.



Beckstrom House– 521 Indiana St.

Folk- National/Homestead/Gable Front Style, ca. 1850 – ca. 1900

The National, Homestead, or Gable Front dwellings are vernacular or folk housing of the mid to late 19th century. These dwellings are typically of frame construction, two stories in height, and have gable roofs. In St. Charles, these house forms generally have a central projecting gabled bay on the main façade or an overall gable front plan with a one or two-story lateral rear wing. Decoration is often more restrained than found in the Queen Anne style except for milled porch columns and brackets on the primary façade. One-over-one rectangular sash windows are common as are single-light glass and wood front doors.



405 S. 7th St.

Second Empire Style, ca. 1865 – ca. 1890

The Second Empire style is related to the Italianate style in its design, detailing, and overall proportions. The primary distinguishing characteristic of this style is its mansard roof for its main roof line or attached tower. These mansard roofs can be concave (bow in), convex (bow out) or straight sided. Slate is a common material covering the mansard roofs. Second Empire style dwellings are usually ornate with bracketed eaves, arched windows with hood molding, and milled porch columns and railings.



411 S. 2nd St.

Queen Anne Style, ca. 1880 – ca. 1910

The Queen Anne style was one of the most common American house forms in the late 19th century and featured an asymmetrical floor plan and extensive exterior detailing. This style is generally two-storied in height and often features corner towers, turrets, or projecting bays. Exterior wall surfaces are often varied with mixtures of brick, wood siding, stone, and wood shingles. Large wraparound porches with milled columns and balusters are usually present on the main facade. Windows are one-over-one sash or small multi-light design. Brackets or decorative verge board are often found in the gables. The boom years of St. Charles's late 19th century growth coincided with the popularity of the Queen Anne style and hundreds of excellent examples of these dwellings were built throughout the city.



603 Geneva Rd.

Shingle Style, ca. 1880 – ca. 1900

Related to the Queen Anne style is the Shingle style which is characterized by an exterior wall sheathing of wood shingles. The shingles are often designed in various interlocking shapes and provide a rich texture to the exterior appearance. In many cases not only is the exterior wall surface covered with shingles but also the front porch columns are sheathed in shingles. Decorative windows and doors are common as are turned porch railings and balusters.



412 Fulton Ave.

Colonial Revival Style, ca. 1890 – ca. 1930

The Colonial Revival style was one of the most popular architectural styles of the early 20th century. During the 1890's there was a renewed interest in the architectural forms of Colonial America. These dwellings were built with symmetrical floor plans and with classically detailed formal porches. Common characteristics are columns and pilasters in Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Tuscan orders, eave dentils, and pedimented windows and doors. Dwellings of this style were constructed both of brick and frame and are generally two-stories in height.



505 Prairie St.

Neo-Classical Style, ca. 1890 – ca. 1930

The Neo-Classical style is closely related to the Colonial Revival style of the early 20th century. The Neo-Classical style maintains the symmetrical forms and classical detailing, but is distinguished by two-story or full-height porches called porticos. These porticos most commonly display wood columns in the Doric and Ionic orders. Entrances are often highly decorative with pediments, sidelights, and transoms.



E. F. Goodell House- 502 N. 2nd Ave.

Prairie Style, ca. 1900 – ca. 1920

The prairie style originated in America in the early 1900's from architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. This style emphasized the importance of blending houses with their surroundings and relating the house to the flat, horizontal lines of the Midwest. Prairie style houses have low pitched hipped roofs, wide eaves, and broad porches. Exterior wall surfaces are often stucco or brick. These dwellings are generally two-stories in height and have decorative multi-light windows.



514 S. 7th St.

American Foursquare Form, ca. 1900 – ca. 1925

The American Foursquare house reflects an early 20th century return to simple forms and minimal decoration. These forms are common throughout St. Charles's neighborhoods and feature rectangular plans with hipped roofs and one-story porches on the primary façade. Porches often have square or Tuscan columns and eaves often feature modillion blocks or brackets. The roofline on the primary façade generally displays a hipped dormer window.



503 S. 5th St.

Craftsman/Bungalow Style, ca. 1910 – 1940

The Craftsman or Bungalow style was the most common architectural style in America during the early 20th century. The craftsman style is characterized by square plans with low-pitched gable or hipped roofs, often with shed dormers. Windows are double hung-sash with three or more vertical lights in the top sash and a single-light bottom sash. Craftsman dwellings have large broad porches which usually extend across the front façade and are supported by tapered columns resting on stone, frame or brick piers. In contrast to the vertical emphasis in Victorian styles, Craftsman dwellings emphasized the horizontal, with wide windows and wide roof eaves. In many examples, rafter ends and knee braces are visible below the eaves.



207 Prairie St.

Tudor Revival Style, ca. 1910 – 1940

The Tudor Revival style was another popular national style of the early 20th century. These dwellings are based upon medieval house forms of England and were built in America from 1915 to 1940. These house forms have high pitched gable roofs, multiple gables on the main façade, and are generally of brick and stucco construction. Doors are often set within rounded or Tudor arches while windows often have multiple lights in the upper and lower sashes. In the gable fields stucco and wood are often combined to create the appearance of a design known as "half-timbering"