

Division 5 Historic District

Development Standards

**Carson City,
Nevada**

**APPROVED August 18, 2005
Board of Supervisors**

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PREFACE

Carson City's Historic District is often thought of as a "Victorian Village" frozen in time. Nothing could be further from the truth. Carson City's Historic District reflects a unique variety of ongoing economic, social and political circumstances. The district provides a link with Nevada's past through historic buildings dating from the early 1860's to the 1950's. Modest in scale, means and architectural pretense, these buildings document Nevada's development as a state and give Carson City its unique character.

The value of Carson City's historic resources was formally recognized by the Carson City Board of Supervisors in May 1982 with the creation of the Historic District and the designation of an architecture review committee. Renamed the Historic Resources Commission (HRC), it is comprised of property owners, building, design, and preservation professionals. By ordinance, the Carson City Historic Resources Commission is charged with maintaining the overall architectural character of the district and properties listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within the guidelines recommended by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Carson City adopted these guidelines to protect and preserve its heritage.

The Commission recognizes that Carson City's future prosperity lies in a balanced approach to economic development and historic preservation. These objectives are not mutually exclusive. The Commission realizes that it is necessary to maintain a balance between preservation and utility.

This section explains the review policies and design guidelines of the Commission when reviewing projects within the District, whether involving historic structures or new construction.

HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP

5.1 Introduction

The architectural styles found in Carson City's Historic District span approximately 100 years from the 1860's to the 1960's. Examples of ten architectural styles found in the Historic District were selected. Less common styles in the district have not been included, however, the buildings representing these styles are equally important to the district's character.

Between the City's founding in 1858, and 1874, the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles were popular. After 1874 four "Victorian" period styles were adopted: the Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne and Stick/Eastlake styles. By the turn of the century, changing architectural fashions prompted period revivals and "modern" architecture. The period revivals included: Colonial, Classical, Mediterranean and English Country. The modern styles included the Bungalow Craftsman, a uniquely American creation, and Art Deco/Modern. These styles were popular in Carson City up to World War II.

Architectural styles form a system which describes the design of the building - its scale, mass, proportions, height, rhythm and ground plan - and the architectural details - such as roofline, exterior cladding, windows, entrances, ornamentation and interior features. A house of a particular style is not just a random collection of parts; all the design elements work together to form a specific image.

Most buildings do not possess all the characteristics of a particular style. Carson City buildings are vernacular interpretations of architectural styles which include the essential form of the style and selected details. Many houses within the Historic District reflect the influence of more than one style. For example, a house which was built in the 1860s may have the form of the Greek Revival style, but the original form was enlarged and embellished in the 1880s with Italianate style ornamentation. Similarly, a house constructed in the 1880s could combine the popular Queen Anne and the Stick/Eastlake styles in its design.

The designs of a large number of buildings within the Historic District do not fall into a discrete style. These "vernacular" houses provided basic shelter for their occupants and were probably built without much regard for the current architectural fashion. These buildings are important to the ambience of the Historic District and provide us with a balance between the modest and the spectacular. Vernacular houses represent building traditions handed down from one generation to another modified by technology, local building materials and geography. Their basic design and modest details are their identifying features.

The character-defining features of a particular house should be recognized and protected through maintenance and rehabilitation. Features which define a building's style and character also contribute to the overall character of the Historic District.

5.2 Greek Revival (1850 to 1870)

Classically inspired architecture developed as an outgrowth of our country's desire to distance its culture from England after the War of 1812. In architecture, classical Greece and Rome became the new inspiration and Nevada adopted these prototypes in the latter part of this era through the Greek Revival style. During this period Greek temples were regarded as the perfect building forms and the character defining features were applied to American residences.

The typical Carson City, Greek Revival house is rectangular or L-shaped in ground plan, is one or one-and-one-half stories, and has clapboard or shiplap siding. A characteristic feature is the gable roof with the gable facing front to emulate the Greek Temple form. Its ornamentation is classical in its derivation as evidenced by plain, boxed cornices with eave returns, simplified columns and in some case, metopes and tryglyphs. Windows are commonly six-over-six light, double hung with cornice molding. The typical entrance in this style includes a paneled door with transom and sidelights. Front porches are common.

There is no dominant floor plan, front facade fenestration pattern, or porch type associated with Greek Revival residences in Carson City. Greek Revival appears to be the most popular pre-Victorian period style for residential construction. Many houses in the vernacular of the Greek Revival style include ornamentation from the Italianate style.



Built in 1862 by a Carson City carpenter named Smail, this house, at 512 North Curry Street, is one of the finest Greek Revival styled houses in Carson City. Its ornamentation is Classical Greek and suggests a designer familiar with Classical architecture. Its frieze with tryglyphs and metopes is unique in Carson City. Its basic form and detailing is typical of the Greek Revival style. Other Carson City examples of Greek Revival include 304 West 5th Street, 108 North Minnesota Street and 406 North Mountain Street.

5.2.1 Characteristic Elements of the Greek Revival Style

PLAN VIEW:
Rectangular or L-shaped

HEIGHT:
one, one-and-one-half or two story

EXTERIOR SIDING:
horizontal clapboards

ROOF:
medium pitched gable roof, eave returns, gable facing front

WINDOWS:
double-hung sash, six-over-six lights
ENTRANCE:
sidelights and transom around door

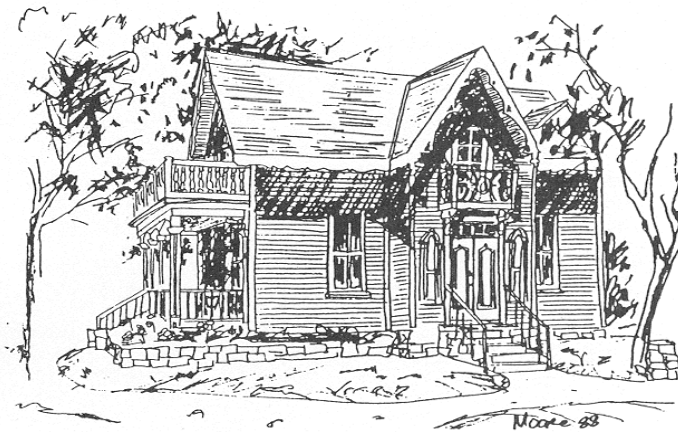
ORNAMENTATION:
Classical: frieze board, dentils, eave returns

5.3 Gothic Revival (1850 to 1875)

Inspired by the romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Gothic Revival style came to America from England. Proponents proclaimed the superiority of the Christian medieval past and sought to replace the formal, pagan Greek and Roman architectural styles. Made popular by the designs of architect Alexander Jackson Davis through the pattern books of landscaper and writer Andrew Jackson Downing, the Gothic Revival style was seen as appropriate for the rural American landscape.

The Gothic Revival style, introduced to Nevada in the 1850s, was popular through the 1870s for residential design and until the early 20th century for church design. Four of Carson City’s churches built during this period include elements of the Gothic Revival style: First Presbyterian Church (1862-64), First United Methodist Church (1865), St. Peter’s Episcopal Church (1867-68), and St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church (1870-71). All four churches have Gothic or pointed arch windows: some very plain, some elaborate with tracery and stained glass.

The Gothic Revival style is distinguished by the pointed arch (used with doors, windows, entries, etc.) and its elaborate woodwork. The invention of the jigsaw allowed builders to produce an endless variety of fancy wooden details - “gingerbread” - cheaply and quickly. These wooden decorative embellishments are found on Gothic Revival style buildings in the form of bargeboards, pendants, finials, brackets, and other ornamentation.



The J.D. Roberts house, built in Washoe City in 1859 and moved to its present location at 1206 North Carson Street in 1873, is Carson City’s finest residential example of the Gothic Revival style. Note the following characteristic elements of Gothic Revival: steeply pitched, cross gabled roof; bargeboard decorating the gable ends; and pointed arch or “Gothic” windows. Another domestic Gothic Revival style building in Carson City is the Ormsby-Rosser house at 304 South Minnesota Street.

5.3.1 Characteristic Elements of the Gothic Revival Style

PLAN VIEW:
rectangular, L-shaped or T-shaped

EXTERIOR SIDING:
clapboard vertical board-and-battens

WINDOWS:
pointed arch or Gothic commonly located in the gable

ORNAMENTATION:
jigsaw cut barge-boards, brackets, balustrades, porch, end frieze

HEIGHT:
one-and-one-half story, one story porch

ROOF:
steeply pitched cross gables

ENTRANCE:
pointed arch door, sidelights and transom

5.4 Italianate (1875 to 1900)

The Italianate style was derived from the rural architecture of northern Italy and came to the United States via England as part of the Picturesque movement. The Picturesque movement was a reaction to the earlier classically influenced styles and includes both the Gothic Revival and the Italianate architectural styles. Introduced into the United States during the 1830s, the Italianate style dominated American domestic architecture between

1850 and 1880. Its popularity was spread by the pattern books of landscaper and writer Andrew Jackson Downing, who utilized the designs of architect Alexander Jackson Davis.

Italianate style buildings are identified by heavy, wooden cornices, window surrounds and door overhangs. Window bays, cupolas, and entry hoods also are typical of the style. Roofs are typically low, hipped or gabled and finished with a boxed cornice. Windows are tall and narrow.

Carson City has several Italianate styled houses. Many houses designed from the 1870s and 1880s combine some Italianate style influences along with other styles. Earlier houses also include Italianate style features, probably resulting from remodeling in the late 1870s or 1880s. A larger number of Italianate residences survive in Virginia City.



The Lou Meder house located at 308 North Nevada Street was built circa 1875 and is an excellent example of the Italianate style in Carson City. The house has the typical heavy boxed cornice with double brackets and dentils; a paneled entry with recessed door under a hood; and characteristic square window bays. This house is one story while most houses in this style are two or three stories adding to the vertical emphasis. Another Italianate example is the Rinckel Mansion at 102 North Curry Street.

5.4.1 Characteristic Elements of the Italianate Style

PLAN VIEW:
rectangular

EXTERIOR SIDING:
shiplap

WINDOWS:
tall, narrow, sometimes
arched one-over-one light
with heavy and elaborate
crowns

ORNAMENTATION:
boxed cornice with
brackets, bay windows,
cupolas, entry hood

HEIGHT:
two stories or more

ROOF:
low pitched, hipped or
gabled roof

ENTRANCE:
tall door with transom
recessed door, paneled
entry

5.5 Second Empire (1830 to 1880)

The Second Empire style originated in France and took its name from the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870). Considered a “modern” style, its most identifying feature is the Mansard or

dual-pitched hipped roof introduced by 17th century French architect Francois Mansart. The boxy roofline allows a full story of usable attic space.

This style is characterized by: a mansard roof; roof dormers; decorative patterns of color or texture in the roofing material - often wooden shingles of different cuts; and a tower with a curved roofline. Below the roof, Second Empire styled houses may borrow many of the characteristics of the Italianate style including: heavy wooden cornices, window surrounds and door overhangs; tall and narrow windows, window bays, cupolas and entry hoods.

The Second Empire style was popular in the United States between 1860 and 1880. Used for many public buildings during President Grant’s administration (1869-77) it is sometimes referred to as the General Grant style. The Second Empire style was not widely used in the west and rapidly declined in popularity following the panic of 1873. Nevada’s most prominent Second Empire public building is the Fourth Ward School (1876) in Virginia City.



The Beck-Barber-Belknap house, 1206 North Nevada Street, is one of three extant Second Empire styled houses in Carson City. Built in 1875 by H.H. Beck, the house was later owned from 1881 to 1908 by Supreme Court Justice Charles Belknap. The Second Empire styled house has the characteristic mansard roof with arched hooded dormers. Eave lines are decorated with brackets and dentils. A full front width porch and square window bays further enhance the design. The two other examples of the Second Empire style in Carson City are 1112 North Carson Street and 503 East Telegraph Street.

5.5.1 Characteristic Elements of the Second Empire Style

PLAN VIEW:
rectangular

EXTERIOR SIDING:
shiplap

WINDOWS:
tall, narrow, sometimes arched one-over-one light with heavy and elaborate crowns

ORNAMENTATION:
boxed cornice with brackets, window bays, cupolas, entry hoods

HEIGHT:
two stories or more

ROOF:
mansard with dormers, dormers often patterned wood shingle

ENTRANCE:
tall door with transom recessed door paneled entry

5.6 Stick (1875 to 1895)

The Stick style was promoted through period pattern books along with the Italianate and Second Empire styles but never gained the popularity of the other styles. Stick style

architecture is defined by decorative stickwork applied to the wall planes rather than applied to windows, doors, cornices, etc. The Stick style was used to express the structure of the building through its ornamentation on the exterior walls. Wall ornamentation imitated corner posts, studs, brackets, bracing and other structural elements. A typical Stick style house would include some of the following features: steeply pitched, gabled or cross-gabled roof; decorative trusses at the gables; overhanging eaves supported by simple brackets; horizontal board siding with stickwork decoration - patterns of horizontal, vertical or diagonal boards raised from the wall surface; and porches with diagonal braces.



112 North Curry Street is a Carson City example of the Stick style. Although not a strict Stick style design, this building has a tall corner tower decorated with diagonal Stickwork ornamentation and diagonal braces decorating the front porch.

5.7 Queen Anne (1880 to 1905)

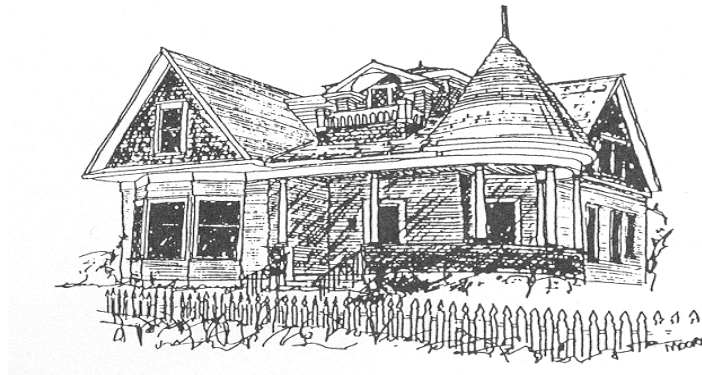
The Queen Anne style has little to do with England's Queen Anne or the style of formal Renaissance architecture popular during her reign in the 18th century. The style was named and popularized in England by a group of architects led by Richard Norman Shaw. The most popular domestic style of architecture during the last two decades of the 19th century, the Queen Anne is conspicuously eclectic and romantic. It is decoratively rich with bright colors and a generous variety of exterior wall textures. The Queen Anne house is typically asymmetrical and large with multi-gabled roofs and tall, decorated chimneys. Towers with conical roofs and turrets protrude from corners. The style frequently uses: a multiplicity of window types including rectangular, oval, round, square; slanted and square bays; and oriels. Wrap around veranda and porches with turned posts are typical of the Queen Anne style.

There are many variations of the Queen Anne style in the United States. Some are based on different roof types and others are based on various types of ornamentation. Throughout the United States about half of the Queen Anne houses are ornamented with spindlework. Spindlework, delicately turned wooden pieces, were used as porch balustrades, porch friezes and in gables. About one-third of the Queen Anne houses in this country used Classical ornamentation. Classical columns replaced posts with spindlework; Palladian windows, cornice line-dentils and other classical details were also

employed. Two other expressions of the Queen Anne style not typical to Carson City include half-timbered work and patterned masonry.

Related to the Queen Anne style is the Princess Anne style: a slightly later and subdued derivative of the popular Queen Anne style. Princess Anne style houses retain the asymmetrical plan and mass, multiple gables, and tall, decorated chimneys. In keeping with the 20th century move towards more restrained decoration, the Princess Anne style is less ornamented and does not include the characteristic towers, turrets, and verandahs of its progenitor.

The Queen Anne Cottage style is derived from the Queen Anne style. This smaller version (usually one or one-and-one-half stories) first appeared in the 1880s and was ideally suited for smaller city lots. It retains the asymmetrical massing of the large Queen Anne and is dominated by a tall gabled roof. Ornamentation is usually confined to the gable end. Typically a front window bay, corner porch and a variety of window types are included.



The Springmeyer House located at 302 North Minnesota Street is a rare Carson City example of the Queen Anne style. Built in 1908 by H. H. Springmeyer, a member of the Douglas County ranching family, the house is also known as the home of Governor and Mrs. Charles Russell. Typical of the Queen Anne style, this house has both clapboard and shingle siding; gabled, hipped, and conical roof forms; asymmetrical massing; a roof dormer with balcony; and a slanted bay.

5.7.1 Characteristic Elements of the Queen Anne Style

PLAN VIEW:
irregular

EXTERIOR SIDING:
shiplap, clapboard fancy
cut shingles for second
floor or gable end
columns, dentils

WINDOWS:
Many types and shapes,
Palladian windows

ORNAMENTATION:
spindlework, turned
balustrade, frieze, turned
posts, Classical

HEIGHT:
two stories or more

ROOF:
hipped or gabled or
combination conical roof
over tower/ turret

ENTRANCE:
Classical or ornate single
or double doors often a
single light

5.8 Colonial & Classical Revival (1895 to 1915)

At the end of the ornate Victorian period, American builders sought new inspiration for 20th century residential design. As suburban living became the norm for an increasing number of Americans, earlier and more rural building forms and styles from both the United States and Europe were chosen as prototypes. Two stylistic movements grew in the early 20th century: the “picturesque” Period Revival and the Modern movement.

The World's Columbian Exposition held in 1893 in Chicago was built with a classical theme and started this architectural revival in classical forms. Colonial and Classical Revival styles were dominant for residential building in many parts of the country in the first part of the 20th century, but few Classical and Colonial Revival houses were built in Carson City.

The Colonial Revival style is a restrained, dignified, and harmonious style, uniquely American, based Colonial styles which, in turn, were influenced by Classical Roman designs. The typical Colonial Revival style design is a large, two storied, rectangular-in-plan structure with a paucity of exterior projections from its symmetrical facade. A centrally placed entrance is the major focus of the design. The door is commonly framed by sidelights and topped with a fanlight. A portico may cover the entrance. Windows are double hung; Palladian windows are a popular feature. The hipped roof is moderately pitched and includes a projecting cornice ornamented with modillions and dentils. Classical, fluted pilasters, quoins or cornerboards ornament the corners.

The identifying feature of the Classical Revival include: a dominating full-height porch with roof support by classical columns; columns with Ionic or Corinthian capitals; central door; and symmetrical facade.

The most prominent Classical Revival style house in Carson City is the Governor's Mansion at 600 North Mountain Street. Built in 1909 as the Governor's Mansion the large symmetrical building is ornamented with a pedimented front porch supported with fluted columns with Ionic capitals; a projecting cornice with modillions and classically inspired door and window moldings.



Pictured above is a fine Carson City example of the Colonial Revival style. Built in 1915, the Ira I. Winters house at 600 North Richmond Avenue is sometimes called a Classic Box; the house is a two-story, rectangular-in-plan box topped with a hipped roof. The front dormer, the one story full width porch, and the quoins are all typical to the Colonial Revival.

5.9 Craftsman/Bungalow (circa 1905 to 1930)

Moving toward a modern lifestyle, the architects that popularized the Craftsman and Bungalow styles were among the first to emphasize comfort and convenience, concepts of human scale and sensible plans. Their designs helped shape a growing phenomenon of the time: the affordable small house for the middle class. The designs (in wood or brick)

provided an easy to build, affordable house for the growing middle-class, who were moving to the suburban fringe of cities. The homes were also the first to include a detached garage.

The Craftsman style represented an independent western movement in American architecture. Its guiding force was the English Arts and Crafts movement, which rejected the mass reproduction and mediocre design associated with the Industrial Revolution in favor of the beauty and “honesty” of traditional handcraftsmanship and natural materials. The Craftsman ideas were widely disseminated in the pages of the Craftsman magazine, published from 1901 to 1916 by the furniture maker and designer Gustave Stickley. The style was adapted for countless small houses and bungalows but found its most sophisticated expression in the work of Pasadena architects Greene and Greene. Craftsman details often included inglenooks, built-in wood cabinets, wood beam ceilings and large fireplaces.

The Bungalow is often affiliated with the Craftsman but also may be influenced by Japanese, chalet and period styles. The Bungalow is typically a snug one-and-one-half story home with wide overhanging roof, deep porch and simple interior with built-in cupboards. The interior floor plan differs little from prior architectural styles with floor plans divided into small distinct rooms. One exception was the inclusion of a plumbed bathroom. Other conveniences such as central heating, electricity and gas ranges were becoming standard during this period.



The Craftsman Bungalow was the dominant residential building style in the United States between 1905 and 1920. The house at 202 North Curry Street, illustrated above, is a typical example. Note the exposed rafter ends, the purlins decorating the gable end, the three part windows with four-lights-over-one-light and the typical front porch with typical elephantine posts on piers. Also, 502 West Spear Street is an excellent example of a brick Bungalow and is similar to the brick Bungalows prevalent in southwest Reno. Few examples of the style survive in Carson City.

5.9.1 Characteristic Elements of the Craftsman/Bungalow Style

PLAN VIEW:
rectangular, square, L-shaped masonry

EXTERIOR SIDING:
wood shiplap, shingles

WINDOWS:
grouped in pairs or ribbons multi-pane over single, double-hung or fixed sash, decorative pane glass

ORNAMENTATION:
stick work, dormers, extended rafter ends, eave braces and brackets, window boxes, balconies, bay windows, stone or large masonry exterior chimney, Oriental or flared roof line, exposed beams

HEIGHT:
one, or one-and-one half story

ROOF:
low pitch, wide overhang eaves, hipped, front gable, cross-gable, side-gable

ENTRANCE:
raised entry porches, porch columns or piers, baustrades

SPECIAL FEATURES
detached garage often in the same style as the house