CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Historic District Landmarks Commission

Building Types and Architectural Styles

New Orleans' Abundant Historic Architecture

New Orleans possesses an abundance of historic architecture constructed over a period spanning almost three hundred years. The City is home to more than twenty National Register historic districts, nineteen local Historic Districts, and scores of local and national Landmark buildings. Almost half of the buildings New Orleanians call home were built before World War II, the earliest dating from the 18th century. As a result, the City has a diversity of architectural styles and types, of buildings both grand and small, unrivalled in the nation. As importantly, New Orleans is home to architectural styles and types that are closely tied to the image of the City, and that appear in New Orleans in numbers and combinations unseen in other places.

Visitors to New Orleans are as frequently confused by local building terminology ("what is a Camelback Shotgun?") as they are when residents refer to "lakeside" instead of "north." Given the sheer number of historic buildings in New Orleans, the wide variety of building shapes and sizes, architectural styles and details, and imaginative design ideas building owners and architects have created over the years; it is sometimes hard for even the native New Orleanian to know the type or style of a particular building.

Section Index

While these *Design Guidelines* cannot give a full description of every historic building type or architectural style one might encounter in a New Orleans historic neighborhood, this section is designed to provide the basic tools necessary to recognize the most prevalent historic building types and architectural styles in the City.

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"Building Types" and "Architectural Styles"

Building type refers to the basic "bones" of the building such as:

- Is it long and narrow, 1 story tall, 1 room wide?
- Taller than it is wide, with no roof to speak of and double galleries?

Architectural style refers to the more decorative building elements:

- What do the porch columns or brackets look like?
- Does it have plain siding or is there a pattern?
- Does it look like a wedding cake or a Greek temple?

When a building type like a Shotgun is combined with elements of an architectural style, such as Greek Revival with classical columns and a wide porch, the final product is a Greek Revival Shotgun, which contains the bones of one and the styling of the other.

It is important to keep in mind that some building types are closely associated with some styles, such as Bungalows and Arts and Crafts. By contrast, some combinations almost never happen, for example a Creole Cottage with Eastlake detailing.

Similar to clothing fashion, the popularity of building styles and types change over time, and in some cases, types fell out of fashion before certain styles, and vice versa.

Vernacular types were often decorated with wood trim characteristic of the prevailing style, such as the Eastlake example.

This Townhouse building type is in the Greek revival style. Some of the character-defining elements include the double gallery supported by classically inspired piers and columns, a stepped pediment, the Greek key surround at the front entrance door, and the wood siding "scored" to resemble stone blocks.

How Types and Styles were Selected for this Section

There are a wide range of buildings in New Orleans' historic neighborhoods. The types and styles in this section are those that occur most and whose description will be most useful to the typical property owner in a local Historic District. As a result, some styles and types have been left out entirely. If a specific property does not seem to fit any of the styles or types described in this section, please consult the books and other resources on New Orleans architecture that are referenced on Page 01-14 of the *Guidelines Introduction*, on the HDLC website www.nola.gov, or contact the HDLC Staff at (504) 658-7040 for assistance.

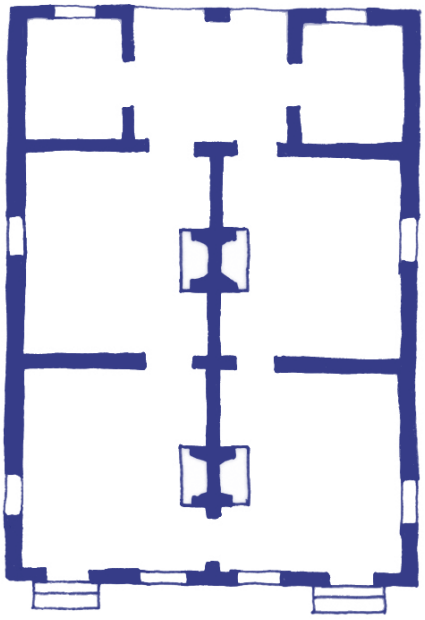
Building Types

The façade of this Creole Cottage is symmetrical and the building is topped by a steeply pitched side gabled roof with an abat-vent extension.

This weatherboard Creole Cottage has a steeply pitched side gable roof that extends over the front façade to provide rain protection over the windows and doors.

Creole Cottage (1790s-1870s)

The Creole Cottage is the earliest remaining local housing type in the City of New Orleans. It is a vernacular type – typically designed and built by the owners and builders to fit local needs – and heavily influenced by both French and Spanish construction methods and the local climate. The typical Creole Cottage is 1- to 1½- stories tall, 2 rooms wide and 2 rooms deep, often with small storage rooms (cabinets) attached at the rear to each side. Creole Cottages have hipped or side gabled roofs, frequently with tall, narrow gabled dormer windows.



A typical Creole Cottage façade is symmetrical with four openings, usually four sets of French doors or two sets of French doors and two double hung windows, all shuttered. Smaller Creole Cottages 1 room wide by 2 rooms deep, with only one door and a window (a "2-bay cottage") also occur, although less frequently. The front façade is typically sheltered from the weather by an overhang (abat-vent) that directs rain away from the front façade and windows. Earlier Creole Cottages are typically of brick between posts or masonry construction with smooth plaster or wood weatherboard sheathing. Later Creole Cottages are often of frame construction with wood weatherboard siding.

While the Creole Cottage is a vernacular type with minimal stylistic features, cottages built at different times may exhibit subtle stylistic details of their period, such as arched or flat-topped windows, dentil moldings, and "Greek Key" door surrounds. In some cases, Italianate details were added to update older cottages.

The main block of this Townhouse features a side gable roof. Townhouses typically include multi-level service wings accessed by exterior galleries.

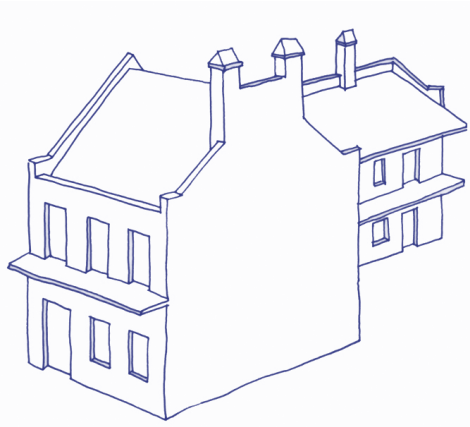
Townhouses with galleries on each floor stretching the full width of the façade are typically referred to as Double Galleries.

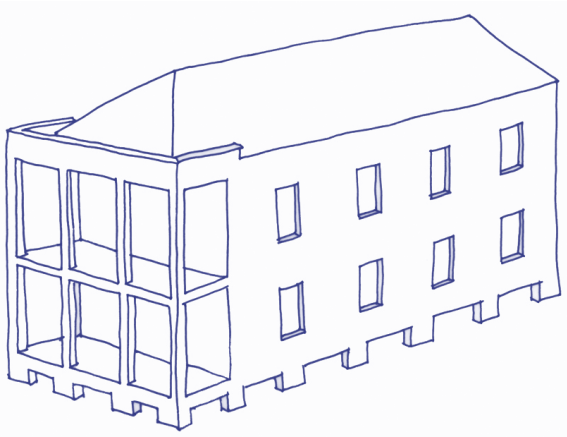
TOWNHOUSE (1790s-1890s)

The Townhouse building type, or some variation thereof, is a very common type in urban areas, because its vertical massing and long, narrow footprint makes efficient use of land. The townhouse in New Orleans appeared first in its Creole form in the late colonial period, but the basic type remained popular for the better part of a century and has recently seen a resurgence in popularity.

The Townhouse building type is a 2- to 3-story, 2 room deep building with distinctly vertical massing, a side gabled or hipped roof, and a long, narrow footprint oriented to the street. The "Creole Townhouse" typically has a carriageway instead of an entrance door and no interior first floor hallway. The "American Townhouse" has a grand front entrance door leading to an interior hallway. A Townhouse with galleries on each floor stretching the full width of the façade is typically referred to as a "Double Gallery." Despite their grand appearance from the street, Townhouses usually have relatively few formal rooms, often with a smaller service wing behind.

In Townhouses of different periods of construction, the type and style of windows will vary, as will its placement on the lot as well as whether or not projections such as balconies or galleries are present.

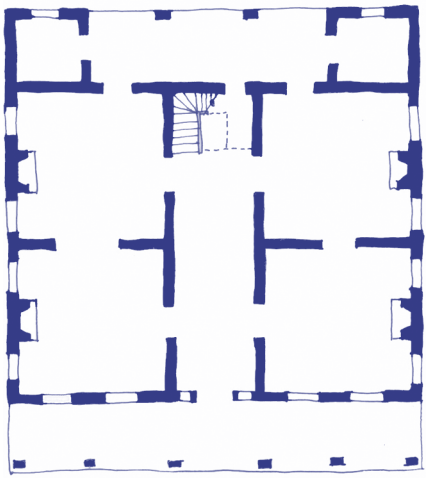




The side gable roof form, central door flanked by windows and deep front porch are typical features of a Center Hall Cottage.

This raised Center Hall Cottage is spanned by a deep front porch.

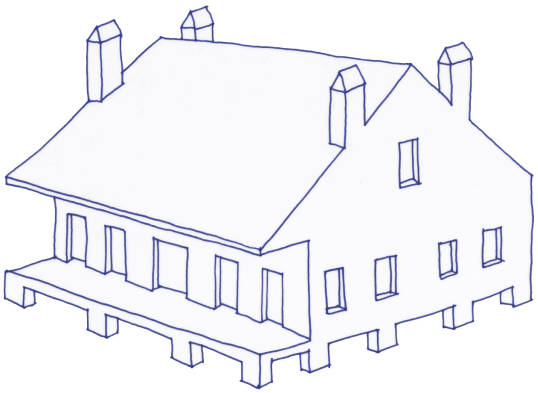
CENTER HALL COTTAGE (1830s-1880s)

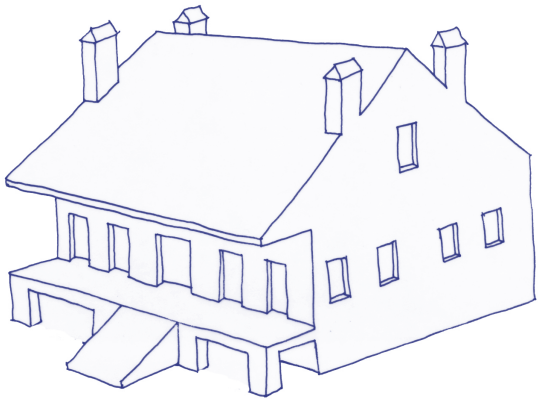


The Center Hall Cottage is a vernacular building type that is common throughout the American South and the Caribbean. Its origins no doubt predate its use in New Orleans, where it began to occur in its typical raised form in the 1830s and '40s.

The Center Hall has a rectangular plan, typically at least 2 rooms wide and 2 deep with a central hallway running from the front façade to the rear, and 2 small storage rooms (cabinets) to either side on the rear, flanking a rear service porch. Center Hall Cottages have side gabled roofs, often with dormer windows. The front façade of the typical Center Hall is spanned by a deep front porch covered by a flat roof supported by symmetrically placed columns and accessed by a central stair. It has a symmetrical arrangement of windows, usually two to either side of the front entry door. Center Hall Cottages are most frequently sheathed in wood weatherboard, although the exact type will vary according to style. A variant of the Center Hall Cottage is the Raised Center Hall Cottage, typically raised on piers to five feet or more above grade.

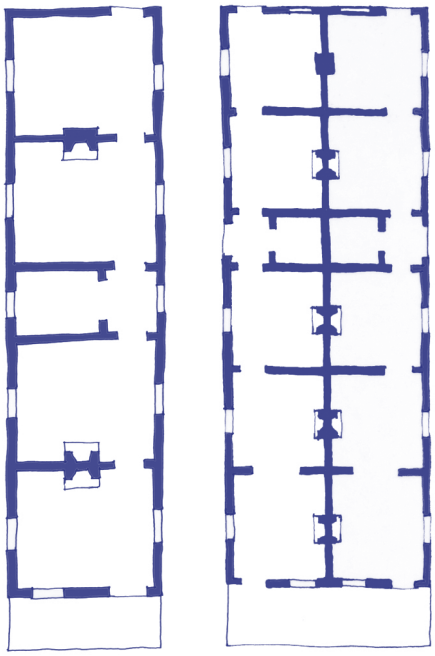
Greek Revival and Italianate Center Hall Cottages are most common in New Orleans, but the type can be found in other styles including Queen Anne/Eastlake and other Victorian styles.





This narrow single Shotgun includes a paired, shuttered, door and window with a front gabled roof and a hipped projecting overhang.

The form of this residence is typical of a double Shotgun with a central pair of windows flanked by entrance doors.



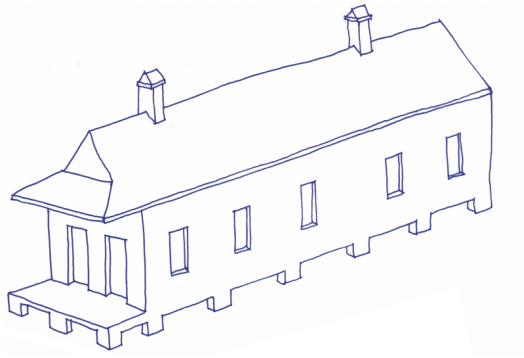
SHOTGUN (1830s-1950s)

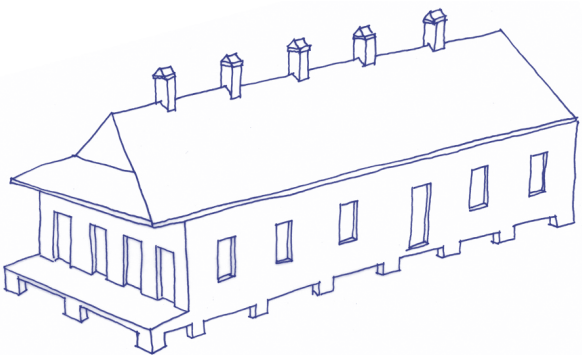
The earliest known examples of Shotgun type houses in New Orleans date at least to the 1830s. Shotgun houses bear a strong resemblance to Caribbean house types prevalent in the 18th century, and some historians suggest it may have been imported to New Orleans in the early 19th century. Whatever its origins, this highly efficient and comparatively inexpensive building type was so popular among both the middle and working classes for over a century that it is probably the most prevalent historic building type in the city.

The simplest Shotgun type house is the "single Shotgun," a long narrow structure 1 room wide and 3 to 5 rooms deep, with each room opening onto the next. In addition to the Shotgun single, the Shotgun type includes "Shotgun doubles," "Camelback Shotguns," "Sidehall Shotguns," and "Side Gallery Shotguns."

The typical Shotgun single façade consists of a door and window, usually shuttered, which may or may not feature a porch or deep overhang to offer protection from the weather. The typical Shotgun has a front gabled or hipped roof.

The Shotgun double is essentially a twinned single, a 2-unit residence with a symmetrical façade of two doors and windows, each unit 1 room wide and 3 to 5 rooms deep with no interior hallway. Shotgun doubles usually have a front





This Camelback Shotgun double has a deeply overhanging hipped roof over the main block and a side gable rear second story addition.

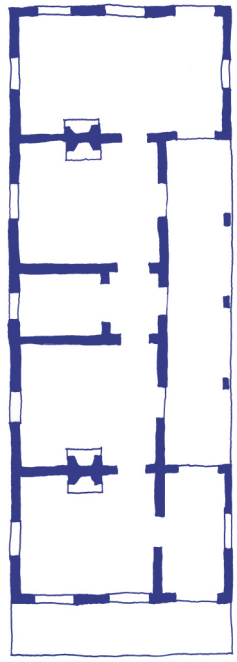
This Side Gallery Shotgun features a narrow covered side porch at the right that acts as an exterior corridor to connect the rooms.

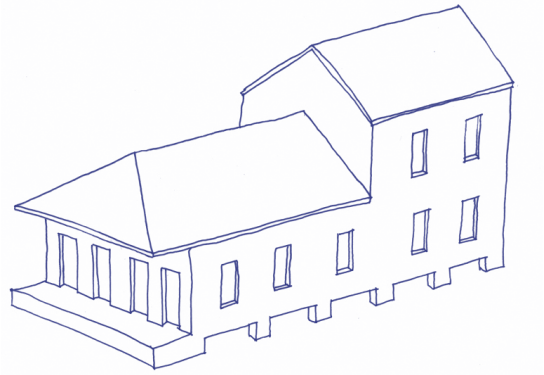
roof overhang and may or may not have a front porch providing shelter from the elements.

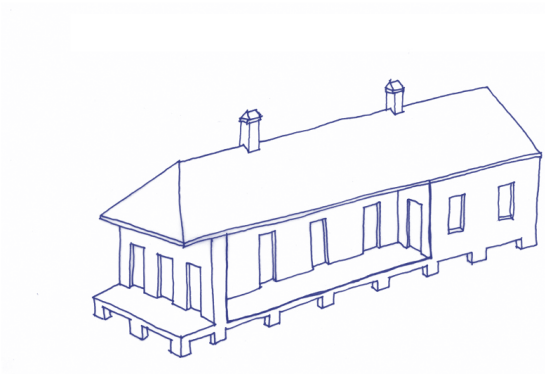
The Camelback Shotgun is essentially a Shotgun single or a Shotgun double, with a second story rising at the rear portion of the building. The second story originated as a vertical addition to increase living space, but was later built as a part of the original house.

The Sidehall Cottage and Side Gallery Shotguns are very similar in form. Their front façades usually are 3 bays wide with two windows and a front door. Similar to Shotguns, they are each 1 room wide and 3 to 6 rooms deep. Unlike Shotguns, both Sidehall and Side Gallery Shotguns include a passageway that runs most of the length of the house. The difference between the Sidehall Cottage and Side Gallery Shotgun types is that the side passage in a Sidehall Cottage is a conventional hallway, while in the Side Gallery Shotgun it is a narrow covered side porch. A hybrid of these two types can be found in which the front door opens onto a side hall 1 room deep, and then onto a side gallery.

Shotgun type buildings can be found with façade decorations, windows and doors, and front porch designs reflecting every architectural style popular in New Orleans from 1830-1950. In addition, there are many humbler, purely utilitarian Shotgun type buildings that have little to no stylistic embellishment.

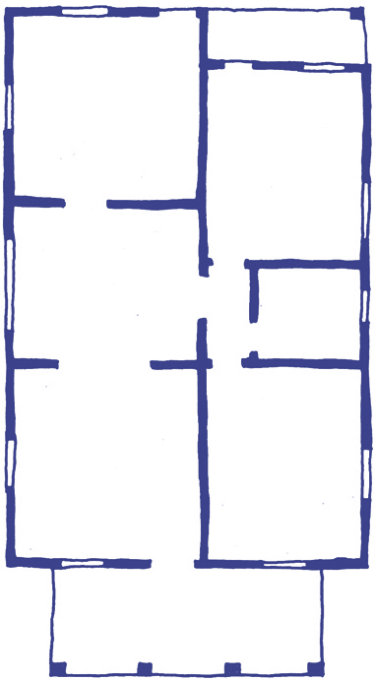






The prominent shed roof dormer with multiple windows, extended eaves, and deep front porch are typical of a Bungalow.

This Bungalow features intersecting roofs with overhanging eaves as well as a deep porch.

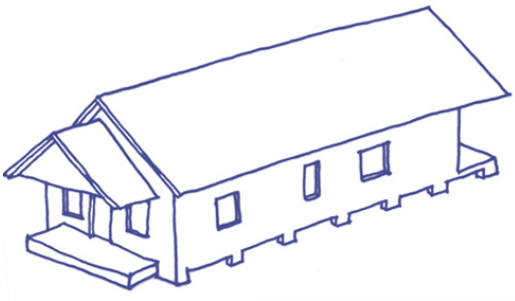


BUNGALOW (1910s-1950s)

The basic Bungalow typology probably originated in India, Indonesia, or the South Pacific and was imported to Britain in the 19th century by Britons who had lived in those areas. The Bungalow type did not become popular in the United States until just after 1900, when it was strongly associated with the Arts and Crafts or Craftsman style. The Bungalow type achieved its greatest early popularity and stylistic development in California. The Bungalow type began to appear in New Orleans after the First World War, and continued in popularity until at least the 1950s.

The basic Bungalow is a 1- to 1½-story residence, usually about as wide as it is deep, with a moderately irregular floor plan, reflecting the internal room arrangement and sometimes incorporating bay window projections. Buildings in the Bungalow type almost invariably have a substantial front porch that may be incorporated under the main roof or project in front of the main roof structure. Bungalow-type residences are usually asymmetrical in composition, with complex roof plans, including gable on hip, cross-gabled, or more complex plans, frequently with substantial dormer windows.

The Bungalow type is typically found in the Arts and Crafts style, but may also show motifs of other early 20th century architectural styles, such as the Colonial Revival.



Architectural Styles

This simple stucco box has deep overhangs at the eaves. Windows and doors are understated and protected by shutters with strap hinges.

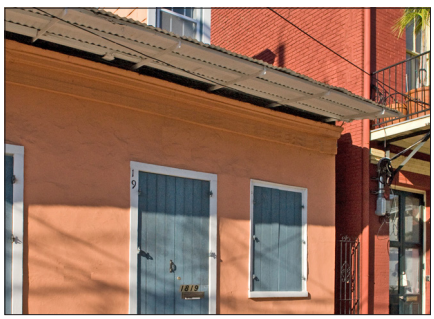
Creole townhouses often include a carriage way as seen on the left instead of a prominent entrance door. The second floor gallery was a later addition.

Creole (1800s-1840s)

The Creole style, while often thought of as a "French Colonial" style, in fact is an architectural style developed in New Orleans. It represents a melding of the French, Spanish and Caribbean architectural influences in conjunction with the demands of the hot, humid climate of New Orleans. As the aesthetics of American architecture were accepted within the Creole population, the style died out in favor of more fashionable styles.

Hallmarks of the Creole style include simplicity, brick, stucco or weatherboard exterior walls, large six over six windows, French doors, no dominant entrances and shutters attached with strap hinges on all windows and doors. In 2-story Creole townhouses or mixed use buildings, fanlights above ground floor windows often open to provide ventilation and can provide illumination to an entresol or mezzanine. Unroofed second floor galleries with wrought iron railings were often added after 1850.

It is unusual to find buildings where the Creole style is liberally mixed with another architectural style. Most frequently, one might find a Creole style building that has been modified by placing Italianate brackets under galleries or roof overhangs.



This Greek Revival residence has a pedimented portico with double-height round columns flanked by boxed corner piers.

This double gallery is supported by fluted Ionic columns which are more delicate in appearance than the square posts typically associated with Greek Revival buildings.

Greek Revival (1820s-1860s)

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, in both the newly formed United States and in Europe, the architecture and arts of the classical world were adopted as symbols of democracy. The Greek Revival style is strongly associated in the popular mind with the southern United States, although it is a style that appeared throughout the country.

Hallmark elements of the style as it appears in New Orleans include wide, flat, plain, often "Greek key" design or pedimented trim around windows and doors and full height porches with classical round columns or boxed piers. Roofs may be front gabled or hipped, and porches may be topped with triangular, flat, or stepped pediments and/or wide, plain entablatures, often with dentil molding. Building finishes are usually plain in style, and frequently the primary cladding is stucco or wood scored to look like stone blocks. Originally, these may have been painted in two colors to make them more closely resemble classical masonry.

The Greek Revival style is often associated with mansions, plantation houses and institutional or commercial buildings, but it was also popular on more modest residences, such as Cottages and Shotguns of all types.

This bracketed shotgun house has Italianate brackets supporting the deep front overhang above.

The posts supporting the double gallery have arched brackets and a deep horizontal overhang, typical of the Italianate style.

ITALIANATE (1850s-1880s)

The Italianate style is a 19th century interpretation of the architectural motifs of Italian Renaissance and Northern Italian vernacular architecture. The style was popular in England and the American East Coast beginning in the 1840s, and took hold in New Orleans in the 1850s. It was a very popular style during the 1860s and 1870s, and some of its elements appeared in a mixture with other styles until at least 1900.

Common characteristics of the Italianate style include tall, double hung, four-over-four, two-over-two or two-over-one windows with arched heads and hood moldings, symmetrical facades, hipped roofs, frequently hidden behind a parapet. Italianate-style buildings have horizontally protruding eaves visually supported by brackets, single or paired. Cladding on primary facades is usually weatherboard or wood drop butt siding, often with weatherboard on secondary facades. Corners are typically marked by molded or carved quoins, typically small raised blocks mounted on a flat board.

Elements of the Italianate style can be found mixed with other, later styles, most strikingly in the large number of "bracketed" shotgun type houses. This very popular hybrid style usually features oversized carved or turned wood brackets supporting a deep front overhang, Italianate window forms, drop siding, carved quoins, and Queen Anne "gingerbread" embellishment.

This Queen Anne home has a distinctive roof line with multiple dormers and a corner turret.

This shotgun has applied Queen Anne / Eastlake "brackets" at the porch columns that frame the span to appear like a series of arches.

Queen Anne / Eastlake (1870s-1900s)

The related Queen Anne and Eastlake styles came into vogue in New Orleans in the late 1870s and continued to be influential until the first decade of the 20th century. These styles were wildly popular across the United States, spread through the use of commonly available architectural pattern books and made possible by new mechanized woodworking techniques that made highly ornate embellishment fairly inexpensive. Elements of both styles are similar and often intermixed.

The most striking feature of Queen Anne and Eastlake styles is usually the use of pierced, cut, turned, and other patterned wooden trim, quoins, brackets, porch posts and rails, often in conjunction with wooden shingle siding in a variety of shapes and patterns. High-style Queen Anne and Eastlake style buildings frequently sport wrap-around porches, irregular floor plans, complex roof plans, bay windows, turrets or towers, patterned roofing shingles, decorative metal ridge caps and attic vents, and multi-light, specialty-shaped or stained glass windows.

New Orleans has many examples of high-style Queen Anne and Eastlake style buildings, but this number is dwarfed by the profusion of shotgun-type dwellings decorated with Queen Anne or Eastlake style elements. The use of the styles on shotguns ranges from modest turned wood brackets to porches and front façades that are highly embellished with decorative woodwork.

Neoclassical buildings often feature classically inspired details such as fluted porch columns, ornate cornices and pediments.

The double-hung window features a decorative multi-light upper sash with classically inspired surround.

Colonial Revival/Neoclassical Revival/Edwardian(1870s-1930s)

The Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival styles both owe their initial popularity to international expositions, the Colonial Revival to the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia and the Neoclassical to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Each represents a resurgence of interest in architectural styles associated with the symmetrical, classically-based architecture popular in the 18th century. Edwardian style refers to design that became popular between 1890 and 1920 whose primary distinguishing characteristics are a relative simplicity of form and detail, often embellished with elements of Colonial or Neoclassical Revival detail.

The Colonial Revival style includes stylistic motifs that include classical pilasters, six over six double hung windows, egg and dart and dentil moldings, porches supported by classical columns, and doors flanked by sidelights and topped with fanlights. Neoclassical Revival buildings tend to be more ornate than Colonial Revival, with fluted columns topped by complex capitals, friezes and entablatures embellished with garlanded or patterned carvings and massive porticos. Edwardian style homes tend to be simple rectangles in plan, 1- to 2-stories in height, with a front or cross gabled roof and subdued decorative elements.

Colonial and Neoclassical Revival stylistic motifs can frequently be found mixed with earlier Victorian styles and sometimes with later styles, like Arts and Crafts, and on shotgun type residences.

This high-style Arts and Crafts home features exposed rafter tails and fascia boards, various wood siding finishes and deep porches and overhangs.

This double shotgun has Arts and Crafts stylistic elements including deep overhanging eaves with decorative fascia boards.

Arts and Crafts (1900s-1940s)

The Arts and Crafts style in New Orleans is a combination of influences from the California Craftsman style, the English Arts and Crafts style, and the Prairie-style bungalows of the Mid-West. Early examples of the style arrived in New Orleans around 1900, but it was most popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Common design themes of the style include: the use of unadorned structural building parts, such as rafter tails, fascia boards, and roof and porch beams as decorative elements; the use of "natural" or "rustic" materials such as wood shingle siding and either roughhewn masonry or rusticated concrete block, often in combination; and the presence of deep porches, with robust porch columns and overhanging eaves.

In addition to these design elements, high-style Arts and Crafts residences frequently have irregular bungalow floor plans; rectilinear window bays; heavy, horizontal massing; windows composed of many small patterned panes and/or leaded glass windows; and, frequently, oversized windows under the porch overhang. They may also be raised a half story above grade, with a masonry or stucco foundation wall.

Arts and Crafts shotguns are also fairly common in New Orleans. Typically, on these structures the style is expressed through doors and windows with square or rectangular panes or patterns, plain shingles or wood cladding and tapered wood porch columns, usually with masonry bases.

This home is inspired by a Mediterranean villa and includes a hipped terra cotta roof, stucco walls and vertical arched window and door openings.

This corner tower feature has a pyramidal hipped roof covered with red terra cotta tiles. The textured stucco walls are framed by smooth "quoins".

Eclectic / Exotic Reivivals (1900s-1950s)

Beginning in the 1920s, popular architecture began to take forms loosely adapted from real or imagined historical forms. A variety of homes were built whose design drew inspiration from popular conceptions of Italian villas, Renaissance palaces, medieval English cottages, Gothic Revival church buildings, Spanish Mission architecture and many other picturesque architectural styles.

Assorted "Revival" styles can be found in New Orleans commercial and institutional architecture, as well as numerous homes. Homes in these styles ranged in scale from the palatial to very small starter homes, but the majority of "Revival" style homes were built for the middle class. The materials and motifs used in these styles were often scaled down from the original inspiration, so a Mission Revival cottage might feature a faux bell tower, a Norman Revival farmhouse reduced to 1,000 sq. ft., or a Renaissance palazzo translated to a one story, 1,200 sq. ft. foot home.

As time went by, these styles became even less faithful to their inspirations, and the motifs associated with them began to be the only expression of the style. So, for example, a building that was essentially a smooth-stuccoed rectangular box could become a Spanish Colonial Revival home with the addition of a Spanish tile roof, wrought iron window grilles, and an arched entryway, or pay homage to a Renaissance palazzo by adding twisted columns to window and door surrounds.

Charity Hospital is one of the most recognized Art Deco buildings in the city. The bold, geometric volumes are stepped to emphasize the building's verticality.

Art Deco was a style often used at institutional buildings including schools. The pale blue contrasts the simple white volume, with the pilasters adding to the vertical emphasis.

Art Deco (1920-1950)

The Art Deco style takes its name from the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris. The movement combines an interest in modernism with craftsmanship and fine materials. The style took cues from Picasso's Cubism and emphasized bold geometric forms. The forms, paired with bright colors, and the sheen of metallic materials and glass, made for a new style that firmly departed from the past.

Americans adopted the Art Deco style primarily for government buildings, sky scrapers, hospitals, movie theaters, airports, train stations and commercial enterprises. Iconic Art deco designs include the Chrysler building in New York City with its classic curvilinear spire and Rockefeller Center, also in New York Center. Characteristics of the style include an emphasis on various simple geometric shapes, verticality, rectilinear forms, smooth surfaces, bas relief ornamentation, zig zags, and simple, curvilinear metal accents. Art deco buildings were typically made of concrete, stucco, smooth faced stone and terracotta. Window and door openings were punched. Rooflines are flat but punctuated by vertical elements at the main facade. Stone and metal screens were incorporated as a decorative devices. Art deco buildings could be austerely monochromatic or wildly colorful, depending on the structure. Well known Art deco buildings in New Orleans include Charity Hospital and the Lakefront Airport.

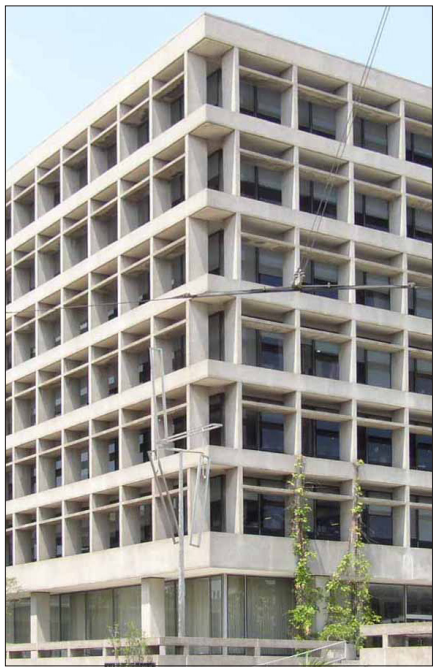
The horizontality of the modern style is visible in the ribbon windows as well as the decorative banding that wraps the corner of this residence.

This plain concrete buildings feature continuous ribbon windows with chrome frames, which are interrupted by the central, decorative neon wall and blade signs.

MODERN (1920-1960)

Following the turn of the 20th century, technological advances combined with a desire to abandon classicism, led European architects to design in a new idiom now recognized as the Modern Style. The Modern style includes several subcategories, including Art Moderne and the International Style. European designers rejected the prevailing ideals of classicism in favor of designs stripped of extraneous ornament and historical associations. American architects soon followed suit, abandoning Eclecticism in favor of designs which heeded the famous maxim: "form follows function." European architects championing the style in Europe and the United States included Mies Van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier.

Characteristics of the style include an emphasis on horizontality, rectilinear forms, smooth facades, ribbon windows, large, uninterrupted expanses of glass, the use of reinforced concrete, steel and chrome accents and little to no ornament. New Orleans turned to the modern style to symbolize the City's post-war two progressive era of government. The Civic Center, including City Hall, the main branch of the Public Library, and the Civil Courts building on Loyola Avenue, were constructed between 1952-1956, and remain standing today. Many residences throughout the City were designed during this era by nationally recognized modern architects Curtis and Davis and Albert Ledner.



High Style Versus Individual Style

As owners modify their properties to reflect their personal tastes, it is not at all uncommon to see a building that includes more than one style. When any given building was designed, its owners worked with a builder or architect to create a structure that reflected both their needs and tastes, not one that fulfilled a checklist titled "Creole Cottage" or "Greek Revival Townhouse." Some buildings were designed by architects and others by builders, owners and commercially available plans. Individuals may have preferred pure Greek Revival forms, while others may have wanted a copy of a house they saw visiting California or on the Mediterranean Coast, with a porch just like one they saw on a house that morning, the windows from another and the roof of a third.

If a building seems to have all of the elements listed here under "Creole Cottage" but it has 5 openings on the front façade instead of 2 or 4, it is most likely an unusual Creole Cottage and not some other style or type of building entirely. If a building appears to have both Greek Revival and Italianate details, it is probably just that one style was waning in popularity, as another was becoming more fashionable, and the person who built it thought they looked nice together. Just because one building is a combination of two or three styles, another has all the characteristics of a style, and a third is a building with no style to speak of does not mean that one of them is any more "historic" or important than the other. Our City's unmistakable architectural character is attained through not only its diversity of building types and styles, but also each building's relationship to those around it.

This home features Italianate style elements at the 2nd floor and neoclassical elements, such as the porch columns and frieze, at the 1st floor.

Alterations to Building Types and Styles

At properties where modifications have been made over time, those changes, particularly those made before the mid-20th century, may have become significant character-defining features of its development. By contrast, more recent changes, particularly those with inappropriate materials or details, often compromise historic integrity. When considering alterations to a historic property, identifying the building type and style is a critical first step in ensuring a successful result. Simply stated:

- The HDLC encourages the removal of inappropriate later changes to make buildings and properties more historically appropriate.
- The HDLC discourages modern changes that further compromise a building's or property's historic type, style, significance and integrity.

Information About Appropriate Alterations

If considering altering a building and would like more information regarding whether the proposed change is appropriate for the building type or style, please contact the HDLC at (504) 658-7040 for more information.

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