

Conducting a Neighborhood Survey

What's a survey?

When researchers want to learn more about the history of a community (or neighborhood), one of the tools that they commonly use is a "survey." A survey is a visual assessment of the buildings in an area to identify their age, style, and other details.

Conducting the survey

Now, you're the researcher. You'll conduct a survey of your neighborhood to determine the style and age of each house in the neighborhood. Be sure to refer to the summary of the styles that you've learned about that's attached here. You'll use the survey form to record:

- the address
- the style (and the type, if you can identify it)
- the estimated year it was built and
- any notes on the house

In the "Style" column, include the type of house, if you can identify it. There are three types that you've learned about, and they're described in the summary of the styles:

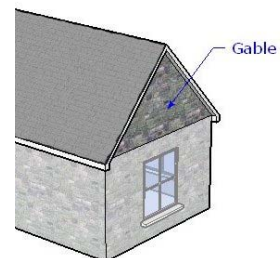
- Cross Wing (common with Victorian houses)
- Bungalow (common with Early twentieth Century houses)
- Foursquare (common with Early twentieth Century houses)

The "Notes" column is important, because it will help you to record important details. You should note specific characteristics that tell you that a house is built in a particular style. You should also note if a house has been changed somehow from its original condition. Maybe at some point a homeowner built an addition. Or maybe it looks like the original material has been covered with something else. But it's important to note details like this as you do the survey.

You might see houses that don't fit the styles that you've studied in class. For these houses, simply write "Undetermined" in the "Style" column. But take notes on why you think a particular house isn't built in one of the styles that you've learned about.

Glossary

- Eave: The part of a roof that projects out past the house itself.
- Elevation: The side of a house (usually a term used in referring to an architectural drawing).
- Façade: The front or main side of a building.
- Gable: The gable is the triangle formed by the two sides of a roof and the main body of the house itself. (See picture.)
- Light: A single pane of glass in a window.
- Ornamentation: The decorative elements on a house.
- Pitch: Pitch is the slope of a roof—basically, how steep it is.
- Sash: The frame of a window.
- Symmetry: When two halves of a facade are the same. If you draw a line through the middle of the façade, the two halves are mirror images of each other.



Neighborhood Survey Field Guide of Architectural Styles

Pioneer Style (1847 – 1890)

The Pioneer styles were based on ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Houses built in the Pioneer styles often told others that the owner was wealthy and of high social standing. The Pioneer styles were brought to Utah by Mormon settlers and was prominent in Utah until the late nineteenth century.

What to Look For

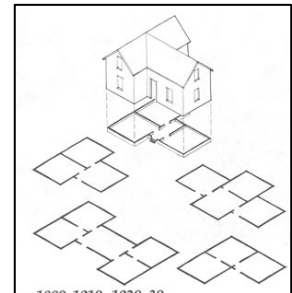
- Shape: The house feels stretched out. It's rectangular with one long side and one short side.
- Balance: The façade is commonly symmetrical. The front door is usually in the middle of the facade with evenly spaced windows on either side.
- Lines: Walls and details emphasize straight lines and right angles. If there are any curves, they're found in arches above the windows.
- Materials: There is little variety in materials—usually just masonry (brick, stone, or adobe) for the main house portion, and wood (window frames, doors, and trim) for the details.
- Roof: The roof has gables and a shallow pitch.
- Windows: The windows are generally tall with numerous “lights”. (panes)
- Entries: The front door is on the long side of the house and is often highlighted by sidelights.
- Ornamentation: The front facade is relatively plain with little if any ornamentation.



Victorian Style (1880 – 1910)

By the late nineteenth century, the Pioneer style came to be seen as artificial and unnatural. The Victorian style was considered to be more natural. The goal of Victorian style was to express spontaneity over control. The growth of the Victorian style in Utah coincided with periods of great economic growth and a substantial increase in the state's population.

During the Victorian period, the “Cross Wing” became the principle house type built in Utah. Cross Wing houses were built with two wings placed at right angles to form a “T” or an “L”. Cross Wing houses were popular during the Victorian period, because they were usually asymmetrical and were ornamented according to various Victorian styles.



Cross Wing

What to Look For

- Shape: The house feels stretched up, often with towers or turrets pointing to the sky.
- Balance: The façade is asymmetrical.
- Lines: The lines are irregular, with lots of curves and a variety of angles.
- Materials: Materials are often varied to create a diversity of textures.
- Roof: The roof has a steep pitch.
- Windows: Windows are commonly “double-hung” (one “sash” over one “sash”) and have few lights.
- Entry: The main entry is usually to one side (as exemplified by the crosswing house popular in this period).
- Ornamentation: The façade is highly textured and decorated with intricate ornamentation. (The term “gingerbread” is often associated with Victorian houses.) The house may be brightly colored and/or multi-colored.



Early Twentieth Century Style (1900 – 1925)

At the turn of the twentieth century, houses with all of the ornamentation of the Victorian era began to look old-fashioned. It became more fashionable to build houses that were less conspicuous. In addition, the early twentieth century saw rapid growth in communities in Utah. To accommodate the growth, houses had to become smaller. Houses built in the Early Twentieth Century styles therefore feel simple and less ornate than Victorian houses.

Early twentieth century style houses were commonly built in one of two house types: the Bungalow and the Foursquare (sometimes called the “Foursquare Box”).

Bungalows were low (usually one story) with low-pitched roofs and became the most popular house type in Utah in the early twentieth century.

Foursquare houses were cube-shaped and usually two stories tall, often with wide front porches and dormers facing the street. Foursquare houses represented the opposite to the irregularity and variation of Victorian houses.



Bungalow



Foursquare

What to Look For

- Shape: Even though it may be small, the house often feels stretched out, primarily because it is often low to the ground.
- Balance: The façade may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.
- Lines: Walls and ornamentation emphasize straight lines and right angles.
- Materials: Materials are varied and often include brick, stucco, wood, and stone. Wood framing is often exposed (most visibly under the eaves). The foundation is often constructed of cobblestone or brick (sometimes of “clinker brick”).
- Roof: The roof has a low pitch.
- Windows: Windows may vary quite a bit both in size and the number of lights.
- Entry: There is a wide front porch or veranda. The front door may be located in the middle of the façade or to one side.
- Ornamentation: There is relatively little ornamentation. The ornamentation that does exist is usually found in the woodwork such as rafter framing that is exposed.



Period Revival Style (1910 – 1955)

Period Revival styles were based on historical details. They imitated older styles to look like something out of Colonial America or medieval England or Europe. They became popular because soldiers returning home from World War I had seen them in Europe and wanted to build their own houses in these styles. In addition, the war had raised the sense of national pride in America, and American citizens felt that older styles made a statement about national pride.

There are two common Period Revival styles in Utah: Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival. Although they share the characteristic that they look like something from long ago, they are very different from one another.

What to Look For

Colonial Revival: Colonial Revival houses look like something out of Colonial America.

- Shape: The house may be a little more stretched out than stretched up, but not in an obvious way.
- Balance: The façade is symmetrical.
- Lines: The walls and ornamentation emphasize straight lines and right angles.
- Materials: There is generally little variety in materials—usually just masonry and wood. Shingles are sometimes used to cover outside walls.
- Roof: The roof has a shallow pitch.
- Windows: The windows are not large, but they generally have lots of lights. Some windows are arched with lights running through the arch (Palladian Window).
- Entry: There is usually a front porch, often with columns, that highlights the main entry. Even without a porch, the main entry is often highlighted with a “crown” molding.
- Ornamentation: Other than the front entry, there is little if any ornamentation.



Tudor Revival: English Tudor houses look like something out of medieval England. A common variation of the English Tudor house is the English Cottage, a smaller, simpler version of the English Tudor house, usually made from brick without other materials (e.g. stucco or timbers).

- Shape: The house itself generally feels more stretched out than stretched up, but the steep roof pitch gives it a “taller” feeling.
- Balance: The façade is asymmetrical.
- Lines: The walls generally emphasize straight lines, but exposed woodwork may display curves.
- Materials: Except in the English Cottage, materials are varied and always include exposed wood in plaster (a combination called “half timbering”).
- Roof: The roof has a steep pitch that often makes the house feel taller. Sometimes these roof include multiple projections with dormers and curving slopes.
- Windows: Windows take a variety of sizes and shapes but are generally tall with lots of lights.
- Entry: The entry may be in the middle of the façade or to one side, but even if it’s in the middle, the asymmetry of the façade makes it feel as if it’s off to one side. The main entry is often highlighted with some form of masonry or stonework.
- Ornamentation: If brick or stone are used as the primary building material, they are often multi-colored. The walls display exposed wood framing, but it’s fake—not actually part of the structure.



Early Modern Style (1930 – 1955)

“Modern” architecture first appeared in America in the 1920s in a competition to design skyscrapers. Architects designing in the Early Modern styles came from Europe, which was the “breeding ground” for modern architectural thought. The idea was to design houses that had the appearance of machines, so houses built in the Early Modern style often look and feel like machines. The Early Modern style was not very popular in Utah, so it’s unusual to find houses in this style in residential neighborhoods. Those that do exist often find themselves surrounded by more traditional Period Revival houses.

What to Look For

- Shape: The house feels stretched out and often looks like blocks have been attached to each other.
- Balance: The façade is asymmetrical.
- Lines: Walls emphasize straight lines although a corner of the house may be curved.
- Materials: Masonry is the primary material, often covered by stucco (for a smooth appearance).
- Roof: The roof is always flat.
- Windows: Windows are large with lots of lights. The window frames are made of metal. There are often corner windows where two separate windows meet at the corner and even some that may follow the curve of the corner.
- Entry: The main entry is usually plain, although there may be an awning.
- Ornamentation: There is little if any extra ornamentation as the ornamentation was thought to come from the unique shape created by the design itself. If there is added ornamentation, it is usually metal accents (e.g. steel pipe railings) that reinforces the straight lines of the house.



Post-War Modern Style (1949 – 1970)

By the end of the 1930s a combination of events fostered a transition in design to smaller houses in a simpler, less ornate style:

- The nation was recovering from the Great Depression, which forced a change in how buildings were designed—smaller and simpler with less embellishment.
- Concepts of the Modern style became more commonly applied to residential architectural styles.

The early version of the Post-War style—called “Minimal Traditional”—was based on this smaller, simpler house. But house size grew in the 1950s because of increasing prosperity and increasing family size. The later version of the Post-War style—call “Ranch”—was basically a stretched-out version of the Minimal Traditional house with more living space.

What to Look For

- Shape: The house may feel “boxy” (from early in this period) or it may feel stretched out (from later in this period).
- Balance: The façade is usually asymmetrical, and there is often a gable facing the street.
- Lines: Walls and ornamentation emphasize straight lines and right angles.
- Materials: There is little variety of materials. Brick is the primary material, although siding is sometimes used to cover the outside walls.
- Roof: The roof has a shallow pitch.
- Windows: Windows are not large; however, there is often a picture (large) window in the façade. Windows typically have few lights and are often “sliders” (windows that open horizontally rather than vertically).
- Entry: The main entry may be in the center of the façade or to one side, but the asymmetry makes it feel as if it’s off to one side.
- Ornamentation: There is little or no ornamentation.
- Ranch style houses often have an attached garage.

