



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1984 Volume I: Elements of Architecture, Part II

A View of the River: Cellars, Columns and Porches

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Situated between the Mill and Quinnipiac Rivers is the community of Fair Haven. From Colonial times this area of land known as the Neck was sold for farmland to its early settlers. On the eastern side of the Quinnipiac River is the area identified as Dragon. Dragon originally was located at the Point of where the present day Ferry Street bridge crosses the Quinnipiac River. Early Indian settlements existed in the same location. Supposedly the name Dragon originated with stories told by suitors of seals (sea dragons) that would sun themselves on this sandy point of land. ¹ Dragon in time came to include the eastern side of the river that belonged to East Haven, and came to be known as the Heights. Together both the Neck and Dragon became Fair Haven in the nineteenth century (1824). In 1870 the Neck became part of New Haven. It was not until 1881 that the Heights joined New Haven after an affiliation with the town of East Haven.

The history and growth of Fair Haven greatly relied upon the resources of the Quinnipiac River. From the time of the Quinnipiac Indians ("long-water-land") the oyster was to become not only an available food source but a major industry of the community; which was to influence the prosperity of Fair Haven during the nineteenth century. ²

One hundred years have passed, and along with it many changes have occurred in the Fair Haven community. Many of my students at the Fair Haven Middle School have expressed an embarrassment or lack of pride in their homes in Fair Haven as a result of the Architecture unit we worked this past year. Realizing that Fair Haven has many fine examples of home architecture it became apparent that a unit on the subject would be valuable in raising my students' pride in their community.

The nineteenth century in Fair Haven has a period of tremendous growth and architectural development. An architectural tour of Fair Haven's homes constructed during this time emphasizes the Greek Revival and the Victorian varieties of houses. Three architects were directly involved or influenced the design of these styles: Alexander Jackson Davis (Greek Revival, Gothic Revival), Henry Austin (Italian Villa) and Austin's apprentice Rufus Russell (Victorian Gothic). ³

After the Dragon Bridge was constructed across the Quinnipiac River (1791-Grand Avenue Bridge) Herman Hotchkiss, considered the Founder of Fair Haven bought a large amount of land on both the west and east sides of the river. Within forty-five years eighty families here living near the West side of the Dragon Bridge on South Front Street, North Front Street, Pine Street and Clinton Avenue. ⁴ The homes built along the Neck side of the river were suitable for the oystering business. Usually there was a high stone basement with an

entrance that would permit a wheel barrel full of oysters to pass through. This basement room was designed for opening oysters. Along North and South Front Street can be found Greek Revival examples, some with the tiered porches. The Captain Edhin Thompson house is located at 66 South front Street. Captain Thompson has a coaster (trader along coast) and oyster dealer. ⁵

East Pearl Street became the prestigious street on which to live if you were a successful business man. The street was paved in crushed oyster shells. 37 Pearl Street was the home of Samuel Hemingway who was an oyster broker and active in the shipping business. His home was built in the Greek Revival style of the 1840's. 69 and 76 East Pearl Street are examples of A.J. Davis' work which began in the villa style. Columns support a decorative bracket and cornice. An example of Queen Anne Victorian style can be found at 100 East Pearl Street. Another fashionable street of the mid nineteenth century was Pine Street. 17 Pine Street is an example of the Greek Revival with its gable end facing the street.

A large areas of land in Neck belonged to the Hillhouse and Everett families. After their deaths in the late 1830's their land was sold and broken up into lots. Along with wood, red sandstone from the Lancraft quarries in the Heights was often used as a building material. Ferry Street was developed in this are. The Hiram Camp house can be found at 9 Fox Street (added at a later time). His property originally faced Ferry Street. Hiram Camp was an inventor and manufacturer of clocks. His New Haven Clock Company was known to have manufactured the greatest number of clocks in the world during his life time. Hiram Camp's home was built in the Italian Villa style and is believed to have been designed by Henry Austin. ⁶

Continuing along Ferry Street towards Grand Avenue, which was known as Grand Street during the nineteenth century, stand what remains of some examples of the Victorian Gothic style. 414 and 418 Ferry Street were Victorian Gothic cottages. Behind a row of stores at 547 Ferry Street one can find what is left of a fine Victorian Gothic home, a fishscale shingled peak topped with an ironwork crest similar to the Lancraft house at 120 Lexington Avenue in the Heights.

At 169 Grand Avenue stands an example of the Italian Villa style. The columned porch and symmetrical proportions are believed to have been described by Henry Austin. This house stands directly across from Fair Haven Middle School and is presently the home of the Hispanic organization Junta.

The period during and following the Civil War saw an impressive growth in building. On the east side of the Quinnipiac River the Heights was generally fields and woods. This area saw the construction of many homes in the Victorian Gothic style. Spacious homes were built by successful businessmen high above the river on streets known as East Grand Avenue, Clifton Street, Sherland Avenue, Lenox Street and Quinnipiac Avenue.

James F. Babcock, a lawyer and publisher of the *New Haven Palladium* built a large Victorian Gothic home on thirty acres of land between East Grand Avenue and Clifton Street. The present day address is 89 Sherland Avenue. A few years later the house, two barns and a carriage house were sold. The Babcock home was altered and two more homes were built. Arched woodwork decorates the eaves and high gables. On the southern part of what was the Babcock estate at 154 East Grand Avenue can be found the Victorian Gothic home of the Moody family. Lucius Moody was a successful insurance agent. his wife, Dr. Mary Blair Moody was the first woman physician in the area. Sharp gables, porches and bays, and decorative woodwork complete this example of wooden Victorian Gothic. Two Victorian Gothic cottages remain at 106 and 112 Sherland Avenue. ⁷

The Charles Ives home originally was built on Clifton Street on land that is now Fairmont Park. The Ives

redstone walls and gates remain. Charles Ives, a lawyer, was a member of the Connecticut General Assembly and Speaker of the House in the mid-1800's. The Ives' Victorian Gothic home was designed by Rufus Russell. In the early 1920's the Ives' property was purchased by the City of New Haven to become Fairmont Park. The Ives' home was moved across the street, and made into two two-family homes. (151-153 and 159-161 Clifton Street). Further down Clifton Street at 80 and 84 stand two Greek Revival homes on high cellars.

The Henry Lancraft house was built on Lenox Street in the Victorian Gothic style. The Lancraft brothers were builders and oystermen in the late nineteenth century. A redstone wall remains on the property with an entrance at 120 Lexington Avenue. ⁸

Coming down the hill to 61 East Grand Avenue one finds the Foote-Chamberlain house. Built in the 1830's in the Italian Villa style it sits above a stone wall topped by an iron fence. In the late 1800's the house was renovated with the addition of a veranda, two ells, a balustraded roof and scalloped shingles.

All along Quinnipiac Avenue one can find homes that were built by families in the oyster business, banking and provisions. The Barnes Victorian Gothic home can be found at 1212 Quinnipiac Avenue. Henry Barnes and his neighbor Horace H. Strong along with Franklin H. Hart were wholesale dealers in meat, seafood and vegetables. At 965 Quinnipiac Avenue stands a home built by Willet Hemingway. Descendants of the family have lived in the home since it was built in the late 1840's. At the turn of the century changes were made in the house that altered it to the Victorian Carpenter Gothic style. ⁹

Recently the New Haven Preservation Trust awarded honors for restoration to some nineteenth century homes in Fair Haven. A Victorian Gothic home at 43 East Pearl Street that was owned by the oysterman John Ludington has been cited to receive a merit plaque. Also given a merit plaque for creative rehabilitation was a home in the Italian Villa style at 630 Quinnipiac Avenue. A unique feature of this rehabilitation project is that this home is part of village concept of condominiums being built along the Quinnipiac River. ¹⁰

Architectural Examples of Homes in Fair Haven

219, 220, 226 Blatchley Avenue (V.G.)

106, 241 Exchange Street (I.V. & V.G.)

414, 418, 547 Ferry Street (V.G.)

9 Fox Street (I.V.:? Henry Austin)

Hiram Camp House

169 Grand Avenue (I.V.:? Henry Austin)

118 Clinton Avenue (I.V.: Henry Austin & Son)

The Home for the Friendless

37-39 North Front Street (G.R.)

270 North Front (G.R.)

17 Pine Street (G.R.)

76 South Front Street (G.R.)

66 South Front Street (G.R.)

Captain Edwin Thompson House

37, 42, 48, 59, 69, 76 East Pearl Street (I.V. & G.R.: Henry Austin and A.J. Davis)

965 Quinnipiac Avenue (V.G.)

Willet Hemingway House

151-53, 159-61 Clifton Street (V.G.: Rufus G. Russell) Charles Ives House

80, 84 Clifton Street (G.R.)

89 Sherland Avenue (V.G.)

James F. Babcock House

106, 112 Sherland Avenue (V.G.)

154 Bast Grand Avenue (V.G.)

Dr. Mary Blair Moody House

61 East Grand Avenue (I.V.)

Foote-Chamberlain House

120 Lexington Avenue (V.G.)

Lancraft House

Code : G.R. = Greek Revival

I.V. Italianate/Italian Villa

V.G. Victorian Gothic

The nineteenth century brought about many changes in American architecture due to changes in the social structure and advances in technology. Education was spreading to the masses where formerly it was generally limited to the wealthy. A new social class of merchants and industrialists were rising to power to become the wealthy middle class of the time. The development of steam power enabled factories to produce more goods that would be made available to the masses. The populations of cities like New Haven increased due to business and industrial growth along with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants seeking jobs and homes.

11

Architecture in the nineteenth century began to look at the architecture of the past. It was fashionable, if you were educated, to be interested in reviving styles of the past such as Greek ornament, Chinese wall papers or Egyptian sculpture.

Greek Revival Architecture 1790-1850

Greek Revival architecture reflected the optimistic American mood of the early nineteenth century. Americans had emerged from two hundred years of struggling to form their own government. The Greek Revival period between the years of 1820 and the Civil War occurred at a time of many social and technological changes. American culture had been classically oriented. Greek and Latin was part of a learned persons education. An awareness of Greek and Roman myths was necessary to understand the poetry and novels of the time. The vocabulary of classical architecture symbolized the association of American democracy to the ancient Greek culture. Even fashionable at the time (1821) was American sympathy for things Greek since Greece was fighting for its independence from Turkey.

The first Greek Revival building was the Bank of Philadelphia which was constructed in 1790. Banks and churches are usually those buildings most often associated with the Greek Revival Style. In New England the Greek Revival was naturally suited to the basic rectangular form of home typical to the area. The traditional gable ended house needed to have its gable end turned to face the street. This facade could then readily accept the Greek Revival portico, columns and entablature. For a person of more modest means the portico was replaced with pilasters and/or a frieze under the eaves. The doorway offered a dignified entry for any home. Doorway and house windows, including glass side lights and transoms, were straight. To simulate Greek marble homes were painted white.

Often the Greek Revival floor plan had an entrance hall along one side of the building. A single row of rooms went from the front to the back of the home. The Greek design continued to the interiors on moldings and fireplace mantles. The front room of the house, often had taller windows. Usually the house was two stories high, but if it was only one story high additional rooms were added to the back.

Smaller homes took their inspiration from public buildings and larger mansions. Rather than a front facing gable some Greek Revival homes used a nearly flat roof that had a high cornice above the architrave to hide the roof peak. The corners of the house would be balanced with pilasters.

Examples of Greek Revival architecture can be found in Fair Haven on North Front Street, South Front Street, East Pearl Street, Pine Street and Clifton Street. Much of the design or inspiration for these homes came from the architect Alexander Jackson Davis, his partner Ithiel Town and the many builders who copied or adapted their designs to suit the successful merchants and business owners who became prosperous during this time.¹²

Descriptive Characteristics of Greek Revival Homes

Portico with one or two story Greek classical columns/or heavy square pillars/or a fully pedimented gable.

Doors with side lights, framed by flat pilasters and architrave and covered by a transom.

Corniced eaves.

Long front windows.

Pilastered corners with roof cornice.

Often main entrance in gable end.

Floor plan often had entrance hall along one side with rooms from front to back.

Victorian Architecture—1837-1901—Italianate (Italian Villa) Gothic

The Victorian period of architecture approximates the reign of Queen Victoria. In America a new middle class was becoming wealthy and more powerful. Dramatic changes in styles developed into what may be called a romantic movement. With its beginnings in England and the industrial revolution, the American manufacturing class became the leaders in tastes and styles. The rational style of Greek Revival gave way to a large variety of romantic and exotic architectural styles. The Italianate and Gothic styles of homes are discussed here, because these two styles are readily found in Fair Haven.

The Italianate or Italian Villa style is generally recognized by its two story, cube form with a pyramidal roof. At the apex of the roof there could often be found a cupola or a tower. The windows were commonly round arched with the front door having double round arches. Scroll work with fancy brackets held up the deep and heavy cornices. The front of the Italian Villa often had a portico complete with columns.

During this period of time before the Civil War Henry Austin was the most well known architect of the Italian Villa style in Fair Haven. Houses reflecting Austin's influence can be found on Fox Street, Grand Avenue and East Pearl Street.

Victorian Gothic architecture generally derived from the medieval Gothic style and encompassed a wide variety of eclectic mixtures that were built between 1837 and the turn of the twentieth century. During this period of time architects and builders, with the help of a fast growing industrial technology, produced the Victorian homes from which emerged buildings that can be considered original American architecture. Victorians devised a profusion of ways to design and decorate the home combining functionalism and fantasy. This was a new approach to building with an open and free planning, large windows and surrounding verandas.

The Victorian exuberance developed the stickwork technique as applied to Victorian homes, and called the "Stick Style" by Vincent Scully. Thinner repeated studs replaced the heavy timber frames found earlier homes. This balloon framing permitted vertical, horizontal and diagonal building. The house could be planned from the inside out, and added to in any direction. Wings, bays and gables could be placed where wanted. Some of the design features that could be found throughout the many Victorian styles of homes were: medieval window moldings, five-sided bay windows, latticed lights, porches, columns, colored transoms, round arches, shingled walls. What is known as "gingerbread" could be applied to the outside and was easily cut into a myriad of decorative designs due to the availability of the scroll saw. Exterior walls of homes developed varied surfaces from vertical board and batten, horizontal clapboard and shingle to half-timbering. ¹³

Descriptive Characteristics of Victorian Homes

Wide variety of styles developed from medieval Gothic: Italian, French, Tudor and Oriental.

Windows, bays and projections added in many directions.

Large gables

Balloon frame construction

Porches and verandas with decorative wood fretwork

Gingerbread woodwork (jigsaw, bandsaw)

Flexible floor plans, high ceilings, many and varied window styles.

Mansard roof often used.

Glossary

Architrave the bottom section of a Greek Revival entablature that rests on the columns.

Balloon Frame house frame constructed with small dimensioned lumber, usually two-by-fours.

Batten Door a door built of two or more vertical boards held together with horizontal boards.

Bracket an angled or curved projection at the top of a post that supports a horizontal section.

Cantilevered Door Hood a hood over the door that is supported at the wall end only.

Carpenters' Gothic a Gothic Revival house built of wood with decorative wood trim.

Clapboard horizontal board siding.

Column a pillar or shaft that usually has a base and a capital.

Cornice the top section of an entablature at the edge of a roof.

Crocket a Gothic carved fern frond in stone that was copied in wood in Victorian architecture.

Cupola a small structure on the top of a building originally used as a lookout.

Eave projecting edge of a roof.

Entablature the cornice, frieze and architrave that rests on the capitals of columns.

Entasis the convex curve given to a column that causes the sides to appear straight.

Eyebrow Window low windows found in the architrave of some Greek Revival homes. They are also known as "lie on your stomach" windows.

Facade the front or face of a building.

Fanlight a fan shaped window.

Fret a decorative pattern cut into or through a flat surface (wood, stone, iron).

Frieze the part of the entablature found between the architrave and the cornice.

Gable the end wall(s) of a house with a gambrel or pitched roof.

Gambrel Roof a roof with two pitches.

Gingerbread the decorative woodwork found on Victorian homes.

Gothic Revival an adaptation of the Gothic style (pointed arch) to homes in nineteenth century United States, England, Canada and other European countries.

Greek Revival an adaptation of Greek classical architecture to buildings in nineteenth (1820 to 1860) century United States, England, Canada and other European countries.

Hipped Roof a low sloped roof that does not have any gables.

Lights window panes.

Mansard Roof a four sided roof that has two slopes and no gable.

Mullion bars of wood or stone between sections of windows.

Pediment the triangular space that forms the gable of a roof; also found over doors and windows.

Pilaster a rectangular flat pillar that projects from a wall.

Portico a roofed space at the entrance of a building.

Ridge Roof a roof with two pitches.

Shakes split wood shingles.

Side Lights a vertical line of small glass panes on sides of doorway.

Transom a window over an outside door, usually found on the front of the house.

Victorian the style of American and European architecture developed during the nineteenth century (1837 to 1900). The Victorian style includes medieval Gothic, Italian, French, Tudor and Oriental. The many varieties of the Victorian style offered greater freedom of plan than the Greek Revival since it was planned from the inside out. The exterior was unified with decoration and porch(es).

Architectural Activities

Architectural Tour of Fair Haven

A slide presentation of the above *Architectural Examples of Homes in Fair Haven* will be shown to students. The three styles of nineteenth century architecture found in Fair Haven (Greek Revival, Italianate/Italian Villa and Victorian Gothic) will be demonstrated utilizing the above *Glossary*. When appropriate historical information is available it will be discussed. Being able to discuss who lived in a particular home when it was built, and what that person contributed to the community can be of a great interest to the student. Students may also be aware of who lives there in the present.

Lesson One : Greek Revival Homes in Fair Haven (Utilize Figures I through IV)

Students will draw examples of a Greek Revival Portico and Door, Front Window, Eave Cornice and Column. The example of a Greek Revival home at 17 Pine Street (Figure IV) will be enlarged in pencil and painted. If a student lives in or near a Greek Revival home a photograph of it may also be used for a drawing.

Lesson Two : Italianate/Italian Villa Homes in Fair Haven (Utilize Figure V)

Students will enlarge the example of an Italian Villa home in pencil and paint. Figure V is a simplified example of an Italian Villa home which is directly across the street from Fair Haven Middle School at 169 Grand Avenue.

Lesson Three : Victorian Homes in Fair Haven (Utilize Figure VI)

Students will enlarge the example of the Victorian home in Figure VI. This particular home was the Charle Ives home which stood in what is now Fairmont Park. It was taken down and rebuilt into two two-family homes at 151-153, 159-161 Clifton Street. Slides of the two-family homes can be viewed again to compare what remains of the original home. Pencil and paint will be utilized.

Lesson Four : (Utilize Figures VII through XI)

An integral part of Professor Kent C. Bloomer's seminar on *Elements of Architecture, Part II* was the examining of an existing building in order to analyze it through the following methodology:

- *1. Distinguish between *path* and *Place* . Figures VII and VIII. *Place* is hatched area. *Path* is a negative white area where people move in order to reach *Place* .
2. Concept of *Outside-Inside* . Examples would be porch, stoop or front yard.
- *3. Concept of *Layering* . An example would be the series of layers one goes through to get from outside to inside: doors. Figure IX.
4. Concept of *Boundary* . *Boundary* is the territory of the house, the property surrounding the house.
5. Concept of the *Center* . Buildings can have single, multi or no *Centers* . A building without *Centers* is totally *Path* .

For purposes of this unit *Number One: *Path and Place* as well as *Number Three: *Layering* will be suitable for use with my middle school students. Students will analyze one floor of their home or apartment along with the main entry, to their home or apartment.

Using graph paper students will draw the floor plan of one floor of their home or apartment. Students will draw hatching to demonstrate *Place* . The remaining area is *path* .

As a final design problem the concept of *Layering* will be applied to designing of an improved front door (*Figure XI*). A teacher made model will be shown as an example. The front door is a point of transition between inside and outside and contains many social signals. Doors suggest sociability as well as privacy.

Notes

1. John W. Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections* (Hartford, 1836), p. 197.
2. Doris B. Townshend, *Fair Haven: A Journey Through Time* (New Haven, 1976), pp. 2-3.
3. Elizabeth Mills Brown, *New Haven : A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design* (New Haven, 1976), pp. 5-7.
4. Townshend, pp. 9-13.
5. *Ibid .*, pp. 140-141.
6. *Ibid .*, pp. 96-97.
7. *Ibid .*, pp. 91-93.
8. Brown, p. 207.
9. Townshend, pp. 144-147.
10. Janet Kipphut, "Preservation Awards Go to Shubert, Tavern," *New Haven Register* , April 24, 1984, p. F4.
11. J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Baltimore, 1953), pp. 19-24.
12. Henry Lionel Williams and Ottalie K. Williams, *A Guide to Old American Houses 1700-1900* (New York, 1962), pp. 87-114.
13. Williams and Williams, pp. 115-140.

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(figures IDXI available in print form)

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