

# WARD 3 TOUR

ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM

*Aaron Helfand, August 2009*

*Historical Style Guide to Western Massachusetts Houses:*

**Georgian (1700-1790)** Dominant style from colonial period. Most typically a symmetrical 5-bay façade with central door. Central chimney, double-hung windows with 12 panes of glass in each sash (these have frequently been replaced with larger-pane glass over time)

**Federal (1790-1825)** Very similar to Georgian in overall layout, but with more refined detailing, especially semi-circular or elliptical fan-lights over front door. Window and door trim is more delicate than in Georgian examples. Usually features a center hallway, so central chimney is replaced with a smaller one on either side. Windows originally would have been six panes over six, or sometimes still 12/12

**Greek Revival (1825-1850)** Inspired by ancient Greek architecture, usually with front-facing gable articulated as a pediment (having either a full horizontal cornice or abbreviated returns in addition to the raking cornice of the gable), sometimes with columned portico. In many cases, corners are emphasized with heavy pilasters. Door surrounds tend to be quite robust and heavy, sometimes treated as an aedicule with pilasters, or as a small portico with columns. Windows typically 6/6 or 2/2.

**Gothic Revival (1840-1880)** Popular Victorian style, easily identified by the use of pointed arches or flat Tudor arches (as in Northampton City Hall), and steeply pitched roofs.

**Italianate (1850-1870)** Another popular Victorian style, inspired by Italian villas. Generally characterized by very low-pitched roofs with wide overhangs, often supported by elaborate brackets. Sometimes asymmetrical with tower.

**Second Empire (1855-1880)** Common during and following the Civil War, inspired by contemporary architecture in France, especially Paris. Identifiable by the use of a Mansard roof (having a steep, sometimes curved lower pitch, usually with dormers, and a shallow upper pitch).

**Queen Anne (1880-1910)** Very common in Northampton, and quite variable in form. Almost always asymmetrical (“picturesque”), with a variety of architectural features, such as projecting bays, gables, towers, porches. Frequently with elaborate and varied detailing, lending itself to complex paint schemes.

**Colonial Revival (1890-1940)** A return to the simplicity of early American architecture, with increasing attention to historical accuracy over time. Frequently more elaborate or refined than their 18<sup>th</sup> century source of inspiration.

*A few general notes regarding historical styles:*

In almost all of the 19<sup>th</sup> century styles listed, examples may be found in both wood and masonry (most often brick).

Porches became popular in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and were frequently added on to earlier houses, usually without much regard for the style of the original house. It is not uncommon, for example, to see an Italianate porch (with stylized columns and brackets) on an earlier Georgian house.

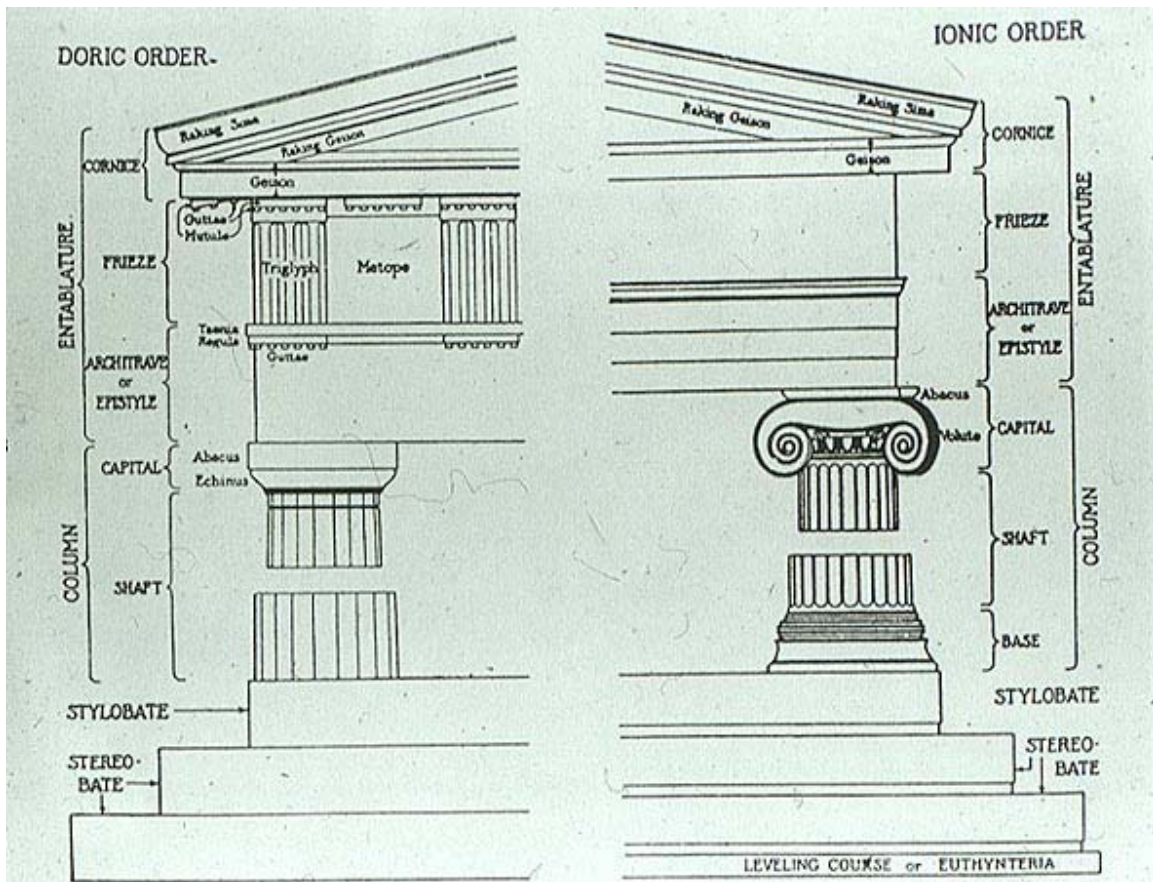
Similarly, Exterior shutters became common only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they were frequently added to older houses.

Windows are perhaps most subject to modification and replacement over time. As glass-making technology improved, allowing ever larger panes of glass to be made affordably, the typical double-hung window changed from 12 panes over 12 to 6/6 to 2/2, and finally to 1/1. In the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, smaller panes were used occasionally for ornamental effect. Small-paned windows became widely popular with the colonial revival style. Because windows were such a visible indicator of how 'up-to-date' a house was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, older windows were frequently replaced, in some cases multiple times over the lifespan of the house. The trend of replacing windows continues today, now more often a matter of energy efficiency than an aesthetic consideration. Bear all of this in mind when estimating the date of a house.

Architectural details, such as window and door surrounds, pilasters and cornices, are frequently hidden by recently installed aluminum or vinyl siding. In these cases, it is necessary to rely on the overall form and proportions of the house to determine what its original style and date of construction were.

Finally, in all styles, the level of articulation will vary widely. While the most elaborate Greek Revival House may have a feature a pedimented portico supported by six or eight columns, putting the viewer in mind of the Parthenon, a more modest house might stake its claim to the Greek tradition merely by having a front-facing gable and slightly wider vertical trim boards at the corners.

## THE ANATOMY OF A CLASSICAL ORDER

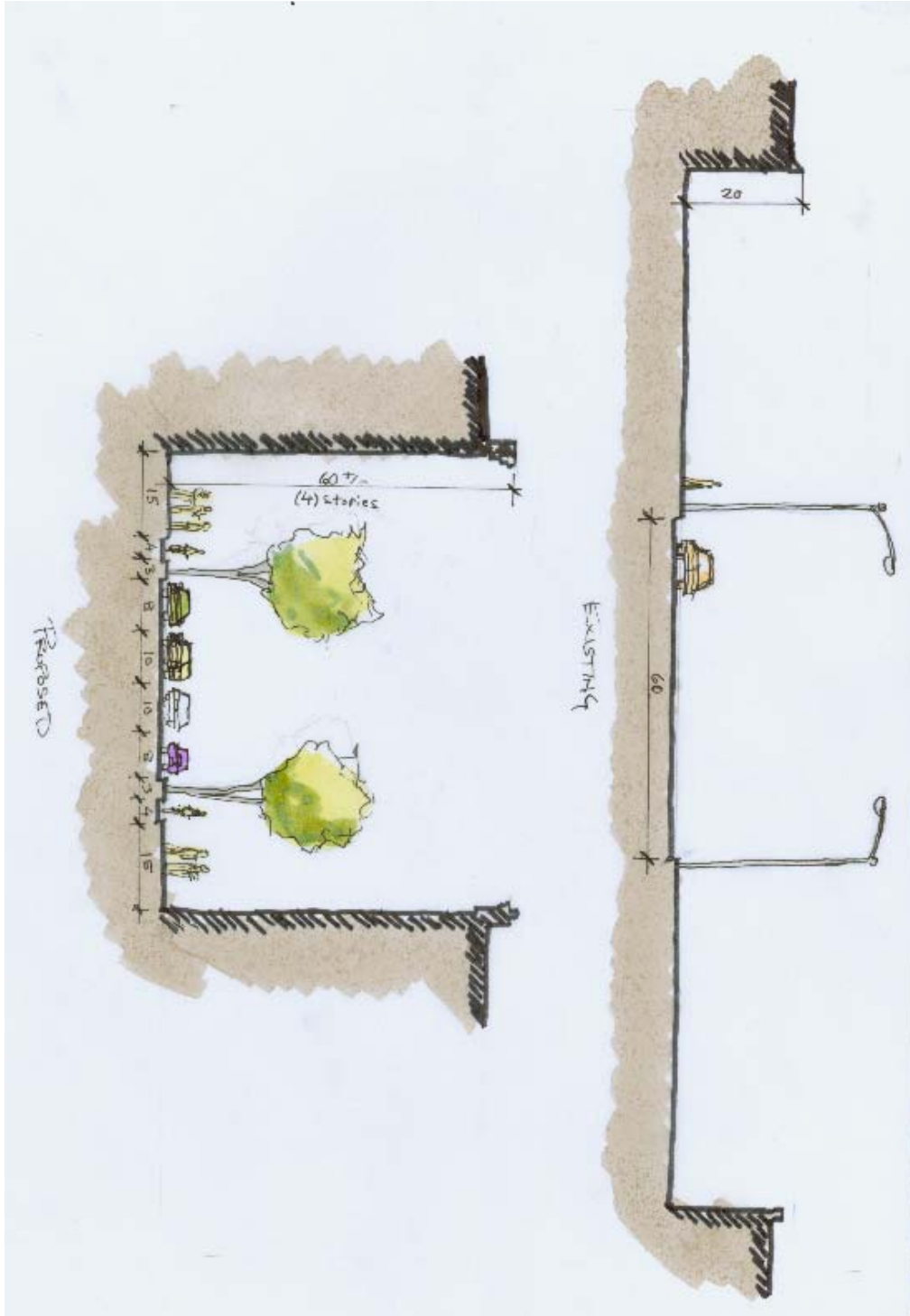


Almost all Western traditional architecture is derived from the Greek classical architecture, so the terminology of a Greek temple turns out to be surprisingly helpful in talking about American residential architecture.

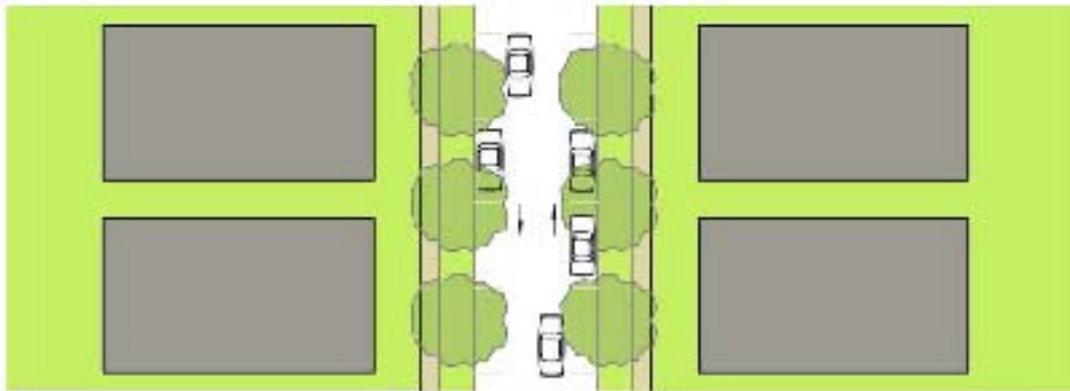
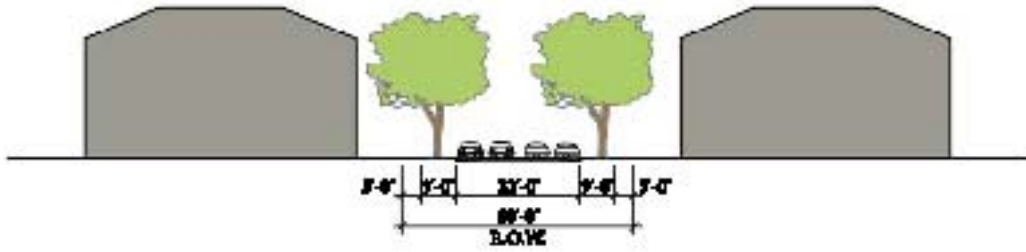
## GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

- Aedicule:** A type of door frame comprised of an entablature supported by pilasters.
- Arch:** A structural means of spanning a masonry opening, consisting of a series of wedge-shaped voussoirs. Arches may be round, pointed, segmental, elliptical or flat (“jack arch”).
- Bracket:** A decorative element which supports a cornice.
- Clapboards:** The overlapping horizontal wood boards which protect an exterior wall from the elements.
- Column:** A classically articulated post (vertical structural member), which supports an entablature, and which is typically comprised of three parts: base, shaft, and capital.
- Cornice:** A classically articulated eave, and the uppermost component of an entablature, which projects from the wall, thereby protecting it from rain. It is comprised of three parts: bed-mould, corona, and cymatium (gutter).
- Dormer:** A window which projects from a pitched roof, usually with its own small pitched roof, perpendicular to the main roof.
- Double-hung window:** Standard window type consisting of two sashes which slide vertically.
- Eave:** The projection of a roof beyond the exterior wall, which protects the wall from rain.
- Entablature:** The horizontal member supported by columns. It consists typically of three parts: architrave, frieze and cornice.
- Gable:** The triangular area created by the eaves of a pitched roof.
- Gambrel Roof:** A roof having two pitches.
- Hipped Roof:** A roof which is sloped on all four sides, (having no gables).
- Lintel:** A beam spanning a wall opening.
- Mansard Roof:** A French-style roof having a steep (sometimes curved) lower pitch and a shallow upper pitch on all sides (thus no gables). In contrast to a gambrel roof, it typically has a cornice at the top of the lower pitch.
- Muntins:** The wooden members which divide and hold the panes of glass in a window.
- Order:** A classical system governing the details and proportions of columns and their entablatures. The three classical Greek orders are the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.
- Pediment:** A classical gable, typically with shallow roof pitch, having a horizontal as well as raking cornice, which describe a flat or carved zone, called the tympanum.

COMMERCIAL STREET DIAGRAMS



RESIDENTIAL STREET DIAGRAM  
section and plan.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Books on Northampton architecture:*

Wright, Patricia, et al., Paradise Built: Shaping Northampton's Townscape, 1654-2004, The 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, City of Northampton, 2004.

MacDonald, William L., Northampton Massachusetts: Architecture & Buildings, Northampton, 1975.

### *Books on American residential architecture:*

McAlester, Virginia & Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Carley, Richard, The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture New York: Henry Holt & Company, Inc., 1994.

Lewis, Michael J., American Art and Architecture London: Thames & Hudson, 2006.

### *Books on architecture*

De Botton, Alain, The Architecture of Happiness. New York: Pantheon Press, 2006.

Hale, Jonathan, The Old Way of Seeing. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Krier, Leon, Architecture: Choice or Fate. Andreas Papadakis Publishers, 1998.

Rybczynski, Witold, The Look of Architecture. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

### *Books on urban design:*

Calvino, Italo, Invisible Cities. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc. 1972.

Duany, Andres; Plater-Zyberk; Speck, Jeff: Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream. New York: North Point Press, 2000.

Kunstler, James Howard, The Geography of Nowhere. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Kunstler, James Howard, Home from Nowhere. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Kunstler, James Howard, The City In Mind. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Summerson, John, The Classical Language of Architecture. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963.