

# City of Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER

## Some Exterior Projects to Start *Thinking About?*

There is always something to do on a home, especially and older one. Recent editions of Old House Savvy on-line offer suggestions for a few Spring projects:

- **Shingles:** While usually used for roofing, shingles can also be used for decorative purposes on the side of homes. Many styles of roofing are available, but some materials lend themselves to historic homes better:



◇ Full-size base composition shingles with 8-inch tabs, chamfered corners and scalloped edges for deep shadow lines that add depth can be applied in a rosette pattern using red, green, and black to emulate a 19th-century slate roof.

◇ Polymer or laminated asphalt shingles in scalloped and diamond-cut styles can also suggest slate with less weight and easier installation.

- ◇ Wood shingles or shakes are classic period roofing and siding material. Sensible for “going green,” Eastern white cedar shingles come from forests that renew every 20-30 years and offer insulation factor of R-7 to R-12, depending on size, thickness, and exposure length. Kiln drying removes protective oils and ruptures the wood’s cellular walls, reducing moisture, fungus, and insect resistance, and is not recommended. Installed properly, Eastern white cedar shingles may last 40 years. Shakes (longer with rougher texture and thicker end) last even longer. They are common on rustic or Storybook styles and in high-wind locales. Western red cedar panels look like individual shingles, yet install quicker and easier.

- **Porches:** Constant exposure to weather means porches need more maintenance than the rest of the house. Proper roofing helps and piecemeal repairs can make do for decades, but eventually porches must be replaced and the original building elements are costly and hard to replicate.
  - ◇ Remove any rotted sections, but save pieces to copy for replication, like posts, turned rails, etc.
  - ◇ Use treated lumber on hidden structure; mimic original tongue-and-groove decking with Douglas fir. Marine epoxy the first and last 3 boards together, then secure with galvanized finish nails to keep overlapping end boards from pulling loose on the overhanging edge. Do not cut each deck board to fit, but install it longer than needed, then trim. Clean up edges with a router after.
  - ◇ Use clear, old-growth, vertical grain Western red cedar for balusters and column pieces to resist rot and insects. Slope column bases to shed water. Attach lower baluster ends from underneath the bottom rail; affix upper baluster ends to another piece of wood with hot-dipped galvanized nails



then attach the entire unit to the top rail to avoid face- or toe-nailing into the top rail.

- ◇ Miter post and column base frame edges to limit exposure of the wood’s grain-end to moisture, for better longevity of work and materials.
- ◇ Prime all sides of all wood to be used with oil-based paint or enamel before assembling or installing.

- **Wooden Gutters:** Peeling paint or rotting wood on soffits? Water dripping down in the wrong places? Gutters may need repair or replacement which involves rebuilding eaves and soffits, plus replacing 2-3 courses of roof shingles.

- ◇ Yankee or box gutters are drainage systems built into the roof so it isn’t visible along the roofline of the house. Dating to the 18th century, Yankee gutters consist of a V- or U-shaped wooden trough lined with metal (often copper or terne-coated steel) that directs water away from the house. The channel on built-in gutters is often wider than modern ones (from 4” to 12”). Built-in gutter systems need regular inspection and wood sealing as maintenance, but are less prone to clogs or obstructions.

- ◇ To prepare gutter, brush off all debris and gently scrape loose pieces of old coating. Remove mold with a 15 minute soak in 1:3 bleach-water solution and scrub with a stiff, soapy brush. Rinse gutters with detergent and water to remove any oil or dirt, then let dry completely.

- ◇ Recoat terne-coated steel about every 8 years, but not needed if on stainless steel. If wood portions are reusable then recoat and repair the lining with rubber membrane. Liquid membrane is a brush-on emulsion to create a seamless waterproof seal on metal, wood, and other materials covering areas of light corrosion directly.

- ◇ Where decay gaps are 1/16”-1/4” wide, first clean area with paint thinner then use butyl tape (it adheres well to metal and can come in contact with liquid rubber or EDPM) to reinforce the damaged area. Cut tape to go 1” over all damaged sides, keeping release paper intact. Press firmly down by hand or with a roller to release air. Remove release paper.

- ◇ Follow manufacturers directions to activate liquid rubber membrane. Apply it when weather will be clear for 16-20 hours afterwards (heavy rains before the membrane sets can pit the surface.) Use a paintbrush to apply about a 1/4” thick coating slightly past the gutter to cover the area intersecting the roofing. Allow 7-10 days for membrane to cure completely.



# What Style is Your House?

## American Foursquare (1895-1930)

Early 20th century builders called this style “truly American . . . the square type of modern home,” “massive,” and “conservative.” Whether done plain or embellished with Prairie School, Arts and Crafts, or Colonial Revival details, the Foursquare was an economical house to build, well-suited to small lots, prefab parts, and the housing boom.

Foursquares seemed to spring up almost overnight. There were none in 1890. By 1910, thousands had been built. But it was not until 1982 that this familiar house got recognition and a name, thanks to an article by Old-House Journal publishers Clem Labine and Patricia Poore.

The hallmarks of Foursquares make them relatively easy to identify:

- **BOXY SHAPE** It’s nearly a cube (practicality usually dictated a slightly greater depth than width), with two full stories and an attic that was often made livable by large dormers.
- **SYMMETRICAL** From the front, foursquare houses are usually balanced, with a center front door and equal numbers of window groups on each side on both levels.
- **HIPPED ROOF** Exceptions exist, but most Foursquares have a hipped or steep, pyramidal roof.
- **WIDE PORCH** The piazza normally extends the full width of the front, with a wide stair and entry either at the center or to one side.
- **LARGE WINDOWS** Grouped windows became popular with this style, admitting plenty of light. Bay windows may sometimes be featured on the side (typically in the dining room) to add interest to the straight lined design. Shutters are a common decorative element.
- **MATERIALS** Foursquare homes are often built of wood with clapboard siding. There are some of brick with a belt course between floors. Other decorative accents, like brackets, shaped shingle siding, or timbering is also seen.
- **LAYOUT** This family home usually boasted three or four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second level, with a dining room, kitchen, living room and entry foyer on the first floor. This simplistic design was a commonly offered style for Sears, Aladdin, and other catalog homes of the day.
- **QUIET STYLE** Yes, there are Foursquares with lots of art glass, jutting bays, and tiled roofs, but in general the “style” of the house is quietly announced in the use of simplified motifs, whether A&C, Prairie, or Colonial.



There are several variations to the style, giving credence to the argument of whether or not “foursquare” a house type or a true style? When you can narrow down a building phenomenon to a period of about 25 years, what’s the difference? There’s no mistaking these houses for earlier cube forms like the Georgian Manor or the Italian Villa.

**ARTISTIC:** Craftsman details were incorporated in the early wave, ca. 1900–1915: boxed posts, exposed rafter tails. (Some of these examples could be called “bungalow in a box.”)



**PRAIRIE:** Many Foursquares throughout the Midwest incorporated the “modern” motifs of the region: horizontal banding, porch with a slab roof, geometric ornament, and “Prairie” art glass after Frank Lloyd Wright.



**CLASSIC:** Houses like this might be called Free Classic: note the Palladian-style window and oval “cameo.” After 1915, most examples could be termed Colonial Revival.



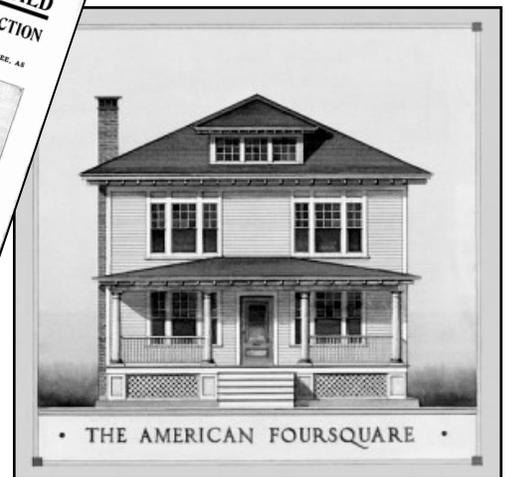
**FOR LESS THAN \$2,500<sup>00</sup> YOU CAN BUILD THIS ELEGANT CONCRETE AND FRAME CONSTRUCTION NINE-ROOM \$4,000.00 HOUSE**  
BY USING OUR PLANS, SPECIFICATIONS AND BILL OF MATERIALS WHICH YOU CAN GET FREE, AS EXPLAINED ON PAGE 8.

**MODERN HOME No. 111**  
 The arrangement of this house is as follows:

**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
 PANTRY 5'0" x 6'0"  
 ENTRY 6'0" x 6'0"  
 DINING ROOM 12'0" x 16'0"  
 KITCHEN 10'0" x 10'0"  
 HALL 10'0" x 10'0"  
 PARLOR 12'0" x 16'0"  
 PORCH 6'0" x 6'0"

**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**  
 BED ROOM 12'0" x 12'0"  
 BATH 5'0" x 6'0"  
 BED ROOM 12'0" x 12'0"  
 HALL 10'0" x 10'0"  
 BED ROOM 12'0" x 12'0"  
 PORCH 6'0" x 6'0"

**BOOK OF MODERN HOMES**  
 SHEETS, REYNOLDS & CO., CHICAGO, ILL.



“What Style is Your House?” was a regular feature of early HPC Newsletters; some information in these articles may have already been published or compiled from other sources like Old House Journal online and about.com.