

A Walking Tour of Historic Winchester



**PRESERVATION OF
HISTORIC WINCHESTER, INC.
Winchester, Virginia**

\$1.25

History

The first known settlement of Winchester took place about 1730. Many of the early residents of the region were Germans and Scotch-Irish, migrating from Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley and the Carolinas. The official founding of Winchester as the first city west of the Blue Ridge was in 1744 by Colonel James Wood, who laid it out and named it after his birthplace in England.

Only four years later George Washington had his office in Winchester when he began work as a young surveyor for Thomas Lord Fairfax, whose Northern Neck Proprietary, estimated at five million acres, stretched from the Tidewater area between the Rappahannock and the Potomac west to the fall line of the Potomac. Later Washington served here as youthful aide to Braddock. After Braddock's defeat in 1755 Washington was named Colonel in command of the Virginia frontier. It was from this district that Washington was first elected to public office, as 26-year-old member of the House of Burgesses from Frederick County in 1758. The center for commerce and culture west of the Blue Ridge in those pre-Revolutionary

days, Winchester has been called the Williamsburg of the West.

The dense central core of Winchester resulted to a great degree from the system of inlots and outlots developed by Lord Fairfax and James Wood prior to 1760. These men laid out the city streets in a rectilinear pattern and divided each block into four to six half-acre lots. To each half-acre lot was assigned a five-acre outlot where all animals were to be kept and all farming to take place. This fine example of early city planning encouraged the subdivision of the inlots and promoted the orderly growth of the city within specified boundaries.

Over the past two hundred years the city has changed only slowly. It did not become a mill town or a boom town. The main railroad bypassed the city, and population growth during the nineteenth century was slow. A number of buildings were destroyed during the Civil War as the town changed hands numerous times; the house used by Stonewall Jackson as headquarters still stands as a reminder of those hectic years. Post-war recovery was slow but steady. Apple-growing replaced tanning as the main industry. Change took place, but the charming "old town" flavor preserved itself naturally.

Naturally, that is, until after World War II. The country's pros-

perity found Winchester prosperous — and growing. By 1976 the city's population was almost double the pre-war figure. The proximity of the city to eastern markets and the construction of Interstate 81 precipitated a dramatic growth in diversified industries, increasing demand in the area for housing and services. Such growth and commercial success triggered precipitous architectural changes. During the late 1950's and early 1960's, it was not unusual to see small old houses of stone or brick demolished to make way for larger buildings or parking lots.

Alarmed by this razing of old structures during the post-war expansion, a group of citizens saw the need in the early 1960's to keep the old while building the new. The association these citizens founded has adopted this formal purpose:

"Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc., organized in 1964 by concerned members of the community and incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, exists for the purpose of safe-guarding the heritage of the city and assuring a quality of life for tomorrow represented by the best of Winchester's past.

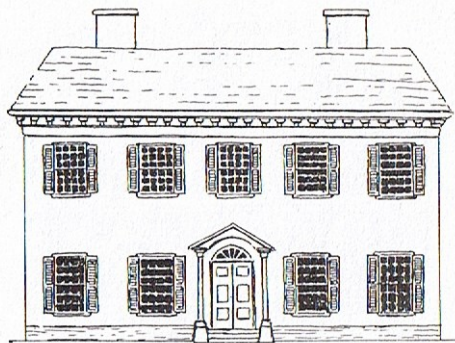
"To the end that this goal may be encouraged among the people and the charm of their City maintained and improved, this organization shall through a program of education en-

list the sympathy for and participation in the preservation, restoration and ownership of sites, buildings, structures and objects significant to the cultural, social, political, economic and architectural history of Winchester.

"In pursuit of these objectives, the fostering of civic pride, the uses of beauty, the welfare and pleasure of the residents, and the strengthening of the local economy shall be viewed as important by-products of the purposes defined."

Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc., hopes to preserve the city's historical and architectural heritage by making that heritage vital and useful for the people of northern Virginia today.

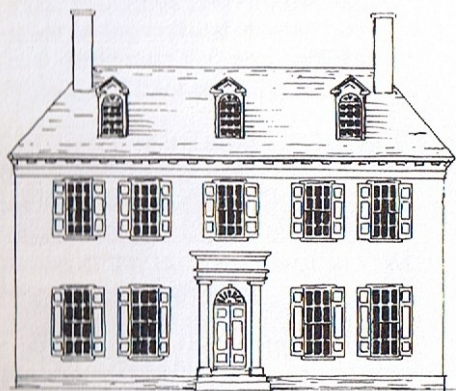
Architecture



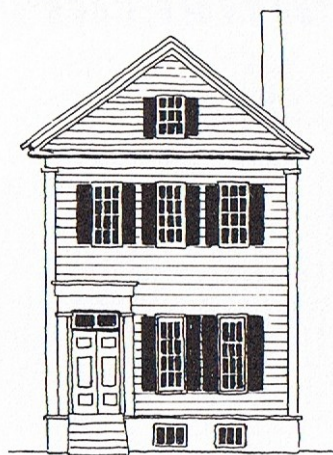
Georgian

Winchester architecture is, for the most part, conservative and unassuming. Many of the early buildings are "vernacular," that is, indigenous to Winchester or the Valley and of no particular academic style. These structures were constructed of log, native limestone, or brick. German and Scotch-Irish influences do not dominate local architecture, as might be expected, but rather are merged with the English architectural heritage of the westward-bound Tidewater settlers. The two-story house with center hall and end chimneys was most common in Winchester with the chimney occasionally being built on the outside of the gable end of the house, a typical Virginia feature.

During the first two hundred years of the settlement of Winchester, 1730-1930, six styles of architecture passed through various stages



Federal



Greek Revival

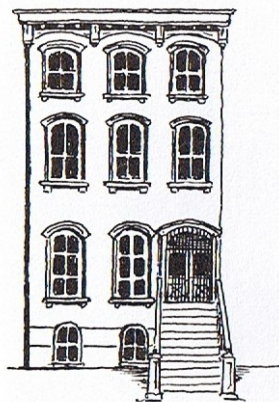
of popularity on the East Coast: Georgian (the reign of King George, 1725-1780), Federal (the period immediately following the Revolution, 1780-1830), Greek Revival (1820-1840), Victorian (the reign of Queen Victoria, 1836-1900), Beaux-Arts (1890-1920) and Colonial or Georgian Revival (1885-present). Winchester has buildings in each of these styles, although, reflecting the city's conservatism, they were often constructed twenty years after the period became fashionable elsewhere.

The identifying external features of the Georgian period are a balanced facade, an imposing doorway with pilasters and cornice or pediment, large sash windows, a low-pitched roof, a modillion cornice and narrow pedimented dormers. The Georgian and Federal styles are often difficult to differentiate, but, in general, the Federal style is more se-

verely classical than the Georgian. The doorway is often the key, with its wide elliptical fanlight and narrow sidelights.

The Greek Revival period was the first architectural style founded in the United States that did not have its origin in England. It is the first truly American architecture. Among the earmarks of the Greek Revival are a portico with single or two story Greek classical columns, a fully pedimented gable, tall main facade windows and/or pilastered corners.

The Victorian period was a reaction against the severely classical styles of the previous 150 years. Floor plans became more varied and exteriors less symmetrical. In Winchester, however, the standard rectangular floor plan was usually preferred,



Italianate

with Victorian adornments limited to the cornice, windows and porches. Among the many Victorian styles, the Italianate, Gothic and Queen Anne are most often found in Winchester. Features of the Victorian Italianate are large brackets under a projecting cornice, segmental (arched) windows and a flat or low-pitched roof. The availability of inexpensive applied wooden decorations encouraged many builders to decorate the exteriors of houses extensively, leading to the familiar "gingerbread look," or "Carpenter's Gothic" found on many porches on North Loudoun Street and Fairmont Avenue. The Queen Anne style employs bay windows, high and multiple roofs, round or polygonal turrets and a variety of color and texture.

Beaux-Arts classicism swept the country at the turn of the century and was the favored style for many public and quasi-public buildings



Gothic Revival

such as railroad stations, city halls and libraries. The style is characterized by coupled columns, monumental flights of stairs, allegorical figure sculpture and contrasting materials and relief. The Colonial or Georgian Revival began about 1885 and has endured up to the present day.

Alterations to older buildings in Winchester have been frequent over the years as owners attempted to keep up with the latest fashions and technological discoveries. Common exterior house changes that the observer must be aware of are the mid-19th century replacement of small "six over six" window panes with larger "two over two" panes, the addition of brackets at the cornice and the replacement or addition of a porch.

More recently, a renewed interest in city living and a heightened appreciation of older structures have en-



Queen Anne

couraged many individuals to renovate historic buildings for offices, apartments and single family dwellings. The benefits of this preservation activity are tremendous. The character of the city will be retained and the positive economic impact felt for years hence.

Many techniques are used in renovation work, but one in particular is questionable. Many brick buildings in Winchester have been sandblasted to remove old paint and return them to what many consider an earlier appearance. Studies have proven, however, that sandblasting is very harmful to the bricks as it removes the protective glaze formed when they are fired. As a result, the bricks weather very rapidly, dramatically cutting the lifespan of the building. No chemical coating has yet been discovered which will effectively protect a sandblasted

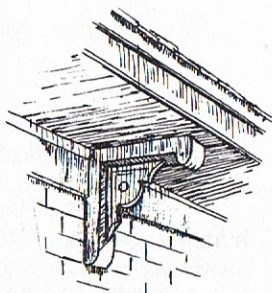
building. For the renovator, it is better to repaint than to sandblast.

Please refer to the glossary at end of book for more complete definition of architectural terms.

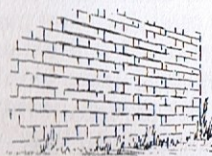
Glossary

BARGEBOARD: A board, often ornate, attached along the outside edge of a gabled roof; also called vergeboard.

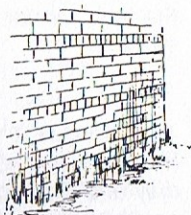
BRACKET: Any angle-shaped support projecting from a wall, etc.



BRICK BONDS: The arrangement of bricks which binds them into a compact whole.



Flemish Bond



Common Bond

CORNICE: A horizontal molding projecting along the top of a building.

DENTIL: A small rectangular block forming one of a series applied as an ornament.

DIAMOND-POINT CORNICE: The setting of a brick cornice so that the corners of the bricks project to form a diamond pattern.

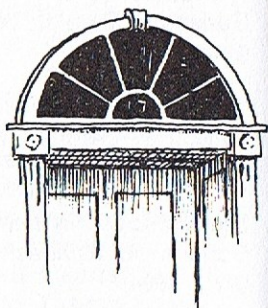
EYEBROW WINDOWS:

Small rectangular windows located just under the cornice of a building.



FACADE: The front of a building.

FANLIGHT: A semicircular window over a door or larger window.



FINIAL: An ornament at the top of a spire, gable, etc.

FLOUNDER BUILDING: A two-story half-house formed as if the gable were split down the center. Common in Alexandria, Virginia.

GABLE:
The triangular upper part of a wall under the end of a ridged roof.



GOTHIC: The style of architecture, characterized by the use of the pointed arch, that developed in Western Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries.

HIP ROOF:
A roof with sloping ends and sides.



JACKARCHES:
The vertical bricks or stones over a window which form the support for the window opening. If the central brick or stone is larger than the others, it is called the keystone.

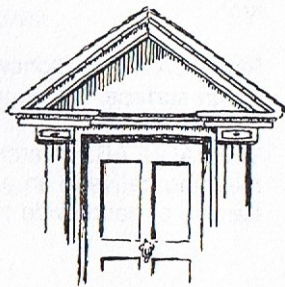


LOGGIA: An arcaded gallery built into, or projecting from, the side of a building.

MANSARD ROOF: A roof with two slopes on each of the four sides, the lower steeper than the upper.

MODILLION: An ornamental block placed under a projecting cornice.

PEDIMENT:
A low-pitched gable on the front of some buildings or a similar triangular piece used decoratively over a doorway or mantel.



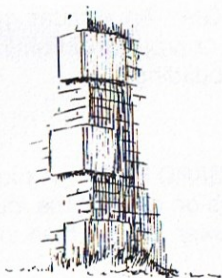
PILASTER: A rectangular support treated architecturally as a column, with a base, shaft, and capital.

PORTICO:
A porch consisting of a roof supported by columns.



QUOIN:

Any of the large, squared stones by which the corner of a building is marked.



ROMANESQUE: The style of architecture, developed in Western Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries and characterized by the rounded arch.

RUSTICATION: Stonework with a rough surface.

VERNACULAR: In architecture, meaning native to an area, not reflective of nationwide trends.

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