

Glossary of Architectural Terms

ALIGNMENT - The theoretical, definitive lines that establish the position of construction (such as building) or the shape of an individual element (such as curved or straight beam).

ALLEY - From "allee" meaning a garden walk between rows of trees. Currently refers to secondary system of access ways between blocks bounded by streets.

ANCILLARY STRUCTURES (DEPENDENCIES) - One or a group of buildings having a secondary or dependent use, such as a carriage house, barn, garage, shed.

APEX - The highest point, peak or tip of a structure.

APPLIED MOLDING OR TRIM - Supplementary and separate decorative strips of wood or moldings applied to the face or sides of a base surface, such as on a doorframe.

APPLIQUE - An accessory decorative feature applied to an object or structure.

ARCADE - A series of arches supported by columns or piers, or a passageway formed by these arches.

ARCH - A curved construction which spans an opening. Arches vary in

shape from those with very little curvature, often called flat arches, through semicircular arches, often called Roman arches, to bluntly or acutely pointed arches, often called Gothic arches.

ARCHITECTURAL - Pertaining to architecture, its features, characteristics, or details. Pertaining to material used to build or ornament a structure.

ARCHITRAVE - In the classical orders, the lowest member of the entablature; the beam that spans from column to column, resting directly upon their capitals.

BALCONY - A platform that projects from the wall of a building and is surrounded by a railing, balustrade, or parapet.

BALUSTER - One of a number of short vertical members, often circular in section, used to support a stair handrail, porch railing of a coping.

BALUSTRADE - A railing system, generally around a balcony or on a second level, consisting of balusters and a top rail

BANDING - Different materials, colours or textures used in horizontal bands along a wall

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BARGEBOARD - A board which hangs from the projecting end of a roof, covering the gables; often elaborately carved and ornamented. Also called Vergeboard.

BATTEN - 1. A narrow strip of wood applied to cover a joint along the edges of two parallel boards in the same plane. 2. A flat strip of wood attached to a wall as a base for lathing, plastering, etc.

BAY - 1. Within a structure, a regularly repeated spatial element defined by columns and beams. 2. A protruded structure as in "bay window."

BAY WINDOW - 1. The window of a protruded bay. 2. Commonly, the window bay itself.

BEAD MOLDING - A small convex molding of semicircular or greater profile.

BEAM - The principal horizontal members of a roof, often attached to girders or a main beam

BELVEDERE : *Belle vedere* means beautiful view in Italian. A belvedere is an architectural feature on a roof, in a garden, or on a terrace, that affords a beautiful view

BOND - The arrangement of masonry units to provide strength, stability, and in some cases, beauty through a setting pattern by lapping units over one another.

BOW WINDOW - A rounded bay window; projects from the face of a wall in a plan which is a segment of a circle.

BRACKET - Any overhanging member projecting from a wall or other body to support a weight acting outside the wall.

BROWNSTONE - A dark brown or reddish brown arkosic sandstone, quarried and used extensively for building in the eastern U.S.A. during

the middle and late nineteenth century.

CANTILEVER - 1. A projecting bracket used for carrying the cornice or extended eaves of a building. 2. A beam, girder, truss, or other structural member which projects beyond its supporting wall or column.

CAP - Usually, the topmost member of any vertical architectural element.

CAP FLASHING - A waterproof sheet that seals the tops of cornices and walls.

CAPITAL - The topmost element of a column, pilaster, etc.; often it is decorated.

CASEMENT (Window) - A window sash which is hinged to the vertical portion of a frame.

CASING - The exposed trim molding, framing, or lining around a door or window; may be either flat or molded, surface to provide a stop or separation between two dissimilar materials.

CHAMFER(ED) - The edge of a corner of wood, stone, etc., that is beveled or angled off, usually at a 45 degree angle

CHIMNEY CAP - A cornice forming a crowning termination of a chimney; a covering that shelters the opening at the top of a chimney from rain and snow but permits gaseous products to escape. Typically found in Tudor Revival.

CHIMNEY POT - A cylindrical pipe of brick, terra-cotta, or metal placed on the top of a chimney to improve the draft to draw away noxious fumes from coal-burning fireplaces

CLAPBOARD (Bevel Siding, Lap Siding) - A wood siding commonly used as an exterior covering on a building of frame construction; applied horizontally and overlapped.

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CLERESTORY - An upper zone of wall pierced with windows that admit light to the center of a lofty room.

COFFER - A rectangular or square recessed area in a ceiling. Sometimes these emphasize the roof beams; other times they are carved, molded, or ornately decorated.

COLONADE - A row of columns, usually equidistant.

COLUMN - In structure, a relatively long slender structural compression member usually vertical, supporting a load which acts in or near the direction of its longitudinal axis.

COPING - A protective cap, top or cover of a wall parapet, commonly sloping to protect masonry from water.

CORBEL - In masonry, a projection or one of a series of projections, each stepped progressively forward as each course of masonry rises.

CORINTHIAN ORDER - The last of the three Greek orders, similar to the Ionic, but with the capital decorated with carvings of the acanthus leaf.

CORNICE - 1. Any molded projection which crowns or finishes the part to which it is affixed. 2. The exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall.

COVE - A concave or canted interior corner or molding, esp. at the transition from wall to ceiling or floor.

CROWN MOLDING - Any molding forming the crowning or finishing member of a structure.

CUPOLA - Originally, any small domed structure set on the ridge of a roof; now, any small structure set of the ridge of a roof. One type of cupola is a Bebevedere.

DENTIL - One of a band of small, square, tooth-like blocks, usually in the cornice.

DEPENDENCIES (ANCILLARY STRUCTURES) - One or a group of buildings having a secondary or dependent use, such as a carriage house, barn, garage, shed.

DORIC ORDER - The first and simplest of the three Greek orders and the only one that normally has no base.

DORMER - A structure projecting from a sloping roof usually housing a window or ventilating louver.

DOOR SURROUND - A continuous concrete, wooden, brick, metal or stone "border" around a door that is designed to complement the style and enhance the style of the building.

DOUBLE-HUNG A type of window with two sash, each sliding on a vertical track.

DRIP MOLD - A projecting string, hood, or molding over doorways, arches, windows, and niches, first installed to direct rainwater away from the opening.

EAVE - The lower edge of a sloping roof; that part of a roof of a building which projects beyond the wall.

ELEVATION - A drawing showing the vertical elements of a building, either exterior or interior, as a direct projection to a vertical plane.

ENGAGED COLUMN - A column partially attached to a wall and projecting from 1/3 to 3/4 of the extent of its diameter

ENTABLATURE - The horizontal building part resting on vertical supports, in turn supporting the roof.

ENTASIS - From early times the Greeks incorporated intentional distortions, including entasis, a slight curving of

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the outline of the shaft of the column so that it was wider in the middle. This corrected an optical illusion that perfectly straight sides appeared concave.

ESCUTCHEON - A protective plate surrounding a penetration through a surface such as a pipe, a door handle, or the keyhole of a door.

EYEBROW - A low dormer on the slope of a roof. It has no sides, the roofing being carried over it in a wavy line. Also, in local vernacular, a small window under the eaves of a Greek Revival house; a frieze window.

FABRIC - The basic elements, or materials, making up a building.

FACADE - The exterior face of a building which is the architectural front.

FANLIGHT A semicircular or semielliptical window above a door, usually inset with radiating glazing bars.

FASCIA - Any flat horizontal member or molding with little projection.

FENESTRATION - The arrangement and design of windows in a building.

FINIAL - An ornament which terminates the point of a spire, pinnacle, etc.

FLASHING - Strips of sheet metal bent to fit the angle between any two roof surfaces or between the roof and any projection, such as a chimney.

FRIEZE - 1. The middle horizontal member of a classical entablature, above the architrave and below the cornice. 2. A similar decorative band in a stringcourse, or near the top of an interior wall below the cornice.

GABLE - The vertical triangular portion of the end of a building having a double sloping roof, from the level of the cornice or eaves to the ridge of the roof.

GAMBREL - A roof with a steep lower slope and a flatter upper slope.

GINGERBREAD - Highly decorative woodwork applied to a building.

HIP ROOF - A roof which slopes upward from all four sides of a building.

IONIC ORDER - Second of the three Greek orders. Its capital is decorated with spiral scrolls (volutes).

KNEE BRACE - A diagonal support placed across the angle between two members that are joined; serves to stiffen and strengthen the members

KEYSTONE - Central, wedge-shaped stone of an arch, so called because the arch cannot stand up until it is in position

LATTICE - A network of strips, rods, bars, laths, or straps of metal or wood, used as screening or for airy, ornamental constructions.

LINTEL - A horizontal structural member over an opening which carries the weight of the wall above it.

MANSARD ROOF - A roof with two slopes, the lower almost vertical to allow extra roof space for the attic rooms

MODILLION - An ornamental bracket used in series to support the upper part of a Corinthian or Composite cornice. Classical modillions are usually in the form of a scroll with acanthus leaves; later modillions are sometimes plainer, as in block modillions

MULLION - A vertical member separating (and often supporting) windows, doors, or panels set in a series.

MUNTIN - A secondary framing member to hold panes within a window, window wall, or glazed door.

ORDER - In classical architecture, a particular style of column with its

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entablature, having standardized details. The Greek orders were the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian; Romans added the Tuscan and Composite.

ORIENTATION - The placement of a structure on a site with regard to local conditions of sunlight, wind and drainage.

PALLADIAN WINDOW - A window with a central arched section flanked by two narrow rectangular sections. Named after Andrea Palladio, 1508-1580, an Italian Renaissance architect.

PARAPET - A low guarding wall at any point of sudden drop, as at the edge of a terrace, roof or balcony.

PARTY WALL - A wall used jointly by two parties erected upon a line dividing two parcels of land, each of which is a separate real estate entity; a common wall.

PAVER A block of stone used in sidewalk or areaway paving.

PEDIMENT - 1. In classical architecture, the triangular gable end of the roof above the horizontal cornice, often filled with sculpture. 2. A surface used ornamentally over doors or windows; usually triangular but may be curved.

PIER - Vertical masonry support for a wall arch.

PILASTER - An engaged pier or pillar, often with capital and base, projecting from a wall.

PLINTH - 1. A square or rectangular base for a column, pilaster or door framing. 2. A recognizable base of an external wall, or the base courses of a building collectively, if so treated as to give the appearance of a platform.

POINTING, REPOINTING - The treatment of joints between bricks, stone, or other masonry components

by filling with mortar; also, called tuck-pointing.

PORTE COCHERE - A doorway large enough to let a vehicle pass from street to parking area, or a porch or portico providing shelter for vehicles.

PORTICO - A porch or covered walk consisting of a roof supported by columns, usually a building entrance.

QUOINS - Blocks of stone or wood laid at the corner of a building, often providing decorative toothed patterns.

RAKE - A common reference to the sloped members or trim pieces at the gable end of roof.

RESTORATION - The process of returning an object, material, or building as nearly as possible to its original form and condition.

REVEAL - The side of an opening for a door or window between the frame and the outer surface of a wall, showing the wall's thickness.

RIDGE - The horizontal line at the junction of the upper edges of two sloping roof surfaces.

ROWHOUSE - One of a group of an unbroken line of attached houses that share common side walls, known as party walls.

SASH, WINDOW SASH - Any framework of a window, may be movable or fixed.

SCALE - 1. The size of a design element or group of elements in relation to the balance of the building, adjacent buildings, landscape or streetscape. 2. In architecture, the size of spaces, or building elements in relation to the human body.

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SIDELIGHT - A framed area of fixed glass along side of a door or window opening.

SETBACK - The placement of buildings, walls, fences, or other objects behind a property line or street line.

SHED DORMER - A dormer window covered by a single roof slope without a gable.

SHINGLE - A unit composed of wood, cement, asphalt compound, slate, tile or the like, employed in an overlapping series to cover roofs and walls.

SIDELIGHT - A vertically framed area of fixed glass, often subdivided into panes, flanking a door.

SILL - The horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door.

SOFFIT - The exposed undersurface of any overhead component of a building.

SPALLING - The chipping or erosion of masonry caused by abuse or weathering.

SPANDREL - Triangular space between the curves of two adjacent arches and the horizontal molding above them

STRINGCOURSE - A narrow horizontal band of masonry, extending across the facade, which can be flush or projecting, and flat surfaced, molded, or richly carved.

TERRA-COTTA - Hard, unglazed fired clay; used for ornamental work and roof and floor tile.

TEXTURE - The tactile and visual quality of a surface or substance other than its color.

References:

Cyril M. Harris, *Historic Architecture Sourcebook*, Editor

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Adapted from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Rowhouse Manual

TRACERY - The openwork shapes of stone or wood creating a pattern within the upper part of a Gothic window, or an opening of similar character. By extension, similar patterns applied to walls or panels.

TRANSOM - A horizontal bar of wood or stone across the top of a window or door.

TRANSOM LIGHT - A glass panel or window above the transom bar of a door or window.

TRELLIS - An open grating or latticework of either wood or metal.

VAULT - A roof or ceiling built in stone, brick or concrete, as opposed to wood

VERANDA: An enclosing porch or sheltered area around a shopping district or on a house. The veranda might circle two or three sides of the house as in Queen Anne designs.

VERGEBOARD: A board which hangs from the projecting end of a roof, covering the gables; often elaborately carved and ornamented. Also called Bargeboard.

VERNACULAR: This term applies to both local styles and local materials. A building can be of a grand style in vernacular materials - for example a Georgian building made of field stone - or it can be a vernacular type of building such as an igloo or a mud hut. Vernacular buildings are built to suit the local climate and conditions.

WIDOW'S WALK- A walkway or narrow platform on a roof, esp. on early New England homes with a view of the sea

Illustrated Glossary of Typical Residential Design Elements

