



Queen Anne Architecture: Characteristics & Style

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Learn about the styles of Queen Anne architecture. Understand characteristics of Queen Anne houses in the UK, US and Australia. See images of Queen Anne architecture.

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History of Queen Anne Architecture: A Confusing Start

One of the most identifiable architectural styles in America, Queen Anne enjoyed great popularity in England, where it originated, and in the United States. This style was associated with wealth, luxury, and increasing industrialization. Often elaborate and eclectically styled, Queen Anne houses are known for their mix of materials, bold use of texture and color, and complex silhouettes employing **towers**, turrets, **gables**, and intricate decorative wood elements.

Hugely popular in England and America in the late 19th century, the Queen Anne architecture style's timeline is often debated. Queen Anne of England, who reigned from 1702-1714, is often credited for its name and general inspiration. More than 150 years later, a style known as English Baroque Queen Anne flourished during the mid to late 1800s. While more influenced by earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean elements, its attribution to Anne's reign stuck despite the disparities. Most of the buildings built under the style known as British Queen Anne Revival were constructed long after Anne's reign. While the style hit its British peak in the 1870s, the American counterpart, known as the American Queen Anne Revival, was tremendously popular from 1880-1910.



Stick Style Queen Anne

The terminology can often mean different things to different people, as the style has a wide range of characteristics, ranging from flashy and attention-grabbing faces to simpler, more streamlined homes using local craftsmen. Its influences also vary, pulling from a wide range of styles, including Tudor, Gothic, and Georgian elements. Within the Queen Anne style, there are also varieties within the classification, including stick style facades, employing decorative stick work on other materials like brick and stone to form a pattern, as well as what many call "gingerbread houses" with large amounts of scalloped wood accent trim.

British Queen Anne Revival

The earliest manifestations of the British Queen Anne Revival style often exhibited specific characteristics, including steep tiled roofs, multiple chimney stacks, quoins (bricked corners), and large bar sash windows. Poulton House in Wiltshire, England, built during the reign of Queen Anne in 1706, is an excellent example of an early Queen Anne style house. While it is simpler and more subdued than the daring and eclectic elements of the American Queen Anne style, we see echoes of what would come, including the triangular central pediment and a bay window on one side. Similarly, what is known as the Red House in London displayed an elaborately gabled roofline, intricately detailed facade elements, and multiple chimney stacks.

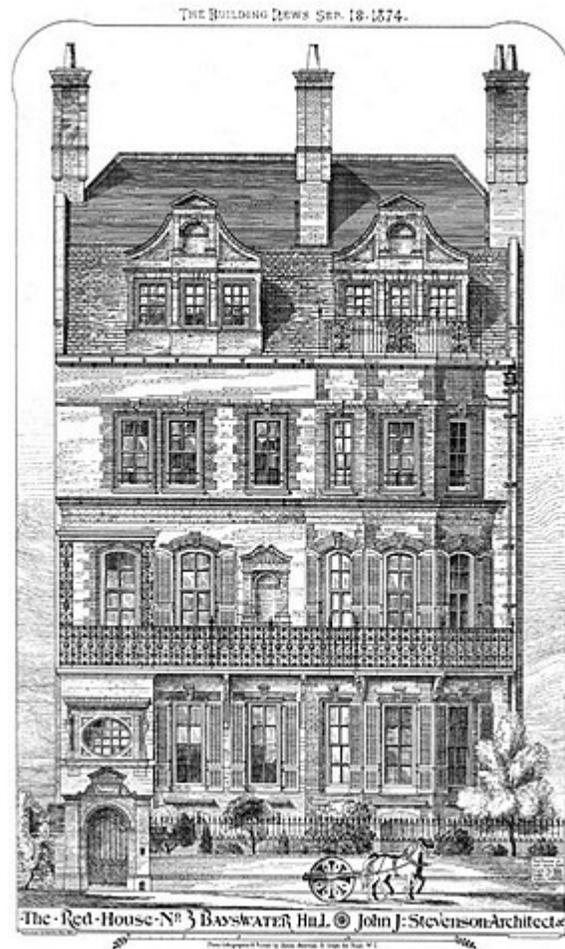


Illustration for The Red House, England, 1870

New World Queen Anne Revival: US and Australia

In the newly settled lands of America and Australia, Queen Anne Houses gained popularity during 1880-1910, springing up in numerous cities. As new homes were built, architects often worked from British **pattern books** and magazines, including the first serial publication devoted to architecture, *The American Architect and Building News*. However, the American version of Queen Anne differed in both its eclecticism and grandeur compared to the earlier British style. It often incorporated new elements like intricate **spindle work** that benefited from American **industrialization** and manufacturing. As the railroad system spread across the country, prefabricated parts were more readily available, including screws, custom brickwork, and large factory-manufactured panes of glass.



American Queen Anne, Kentucky

American Queen Anne style was bolder and quirkier than its English counterpart, often employing multiple influences simultaneously. Many homeowners in America prided themselves on creating distinctive and individualistic houses in their neighborhoods. As the homes were built, variation from one's neighbors was vital, resulting in multiple towers, eaves, gables, and **asymmetrical** lines. The American version has often been described as "decorative excess," drawing from previous architectural eras (sometimes all at once). Wide or wraparound porches were popular, as were texture and variation in exterior materials, including brick, stucco, and tile. While Queen Anne constructions were popular with elites families making new money in the age of industry, more affordable houses were also made, including L-shaped cottages with similar features on a smaller scale.



APA building, Melbourne, Australia

Queen Anne architecture was also popular in Australia, where it was often called Federation Style. Federation Style homes boasted many similar characteristics to British and American Queen Anne structures, including complex rooflines, asymmetry, towers, bay windows, and the use of many textures and materials like brick, terracotta tiles, and wood timbers. A distinct element of the Australian variety of Queen Anne homes was circular windows, often called "bulls-eye" windows.

Norman Shaw, Queen Anne Style Architect



Norman Shaw: Scotland Yard, London

British architect Richard Norman Shaw's (1831-1912) work hallmarked the Queen Anne style in Britain through the beginning of the 20th century. Popularizing the Queen Anne style in residential and public buildings, Shaw's work contained elements drawn from many past styles and branded as Queen Anne, including gabled windows and roofs, liberal use of towers, and mullioned windows. Shaw's materials were usually brick but sometimes included terracotta. Shaw's unique style, a move away from the High Victorian era that preceded it, was distinct and recognizable. While many architects worked in the Queen Anne style, Shaw was later called an "architectural Picasso" by scholar Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

Identifiable Features of Queen Anne Houses

American Queen Anne style is very identifiable. Hallmarks include contrasting colors and textures, asymmetrical exterior elements, elaborate rooflines, corner towers, turrets, and broad or wraparound porches. Homes were often painted one or more colors, including bold pastels unseen in other styles. San Francisco's famed Painted Ladies are an excellent example of this use of bold color and style.



Painted Ladies, San Francisco

Materials of Queen Anne Houses

In an era of increasing manufacturing and industrialization, architects had a world of new materials, including pre-cut spindles, large plate glass windows, and other building materials not as plentiful elsewhere. Architects took advantage of the ease in shipping materials across the country to their build locations. Materials like blonde limestone, specific wood timbers, custom tiles and brickwork, cement, and terra cotta, were available everywhere the rail companies went. Many structures also included rubblestone and manufactured panels of pebble work. Facades were often multi-textured, employing tile and shingle patterns like waves and fish scales.

Roof of Queen Anne Houses

The roof of a Queen Anne house was usually steep and often sprouted numerous decorative gables, pediments, and dormers. They contained multiple and elaborate chimney stacks, terra cotta tiled roofing, and scalloped trim. Windows on the topmost floors were often gabled, where pitched sides met at a ridgeline to form a triangular wall below.

Towers of Queen Anne Houses

Many homes include a corner tower or turret, topped by a conical tent or domed roof. One of the most popular features of Queen Anne architecture and the most easily identifiable. These towers often contained curved glass windows, which were a new development in manufacturing and construction.



Wisconsin Queen Anne

Windows of Queen Anne Houses

Queen Anne windows most often had simple surrounds and could be quite large with new industry capabilities of large plate glass pieces. They often contained stained glass elements in upper panes or as accents to larger clear glass windows. Bay windows, which featured three sides protruding from the exterior wall were popular, as were similar upper-level versions--oriel windows.

Entrance of Queen Anne Houses

The entrance to Queen Anne houses often involved large or wraparound front porches and shaded entrances. Such entrances usually involved intricate elements like spindle work, decorative pediments, and corbels. Doors were placed asymmetrically on the structure to one side instead of the center placement of the British Queen Anne style.

Lesson Summary

American Queen Anne architectural style, which spread across the US like wildfire from 1880-1910, is distinctive in American neighborhoods. Queen Anne homes are identifiable for their eclectic style, marked by wide wraparound porches, decorative wood trim, elaborate rooflines, **asymmetrical** lines, and bold patterns and colors. With its roots in Britain during the 18th century,

the American Queen Anne style spread via magazine features and pattern books. New developments in **industrialization** allowed decorative elements and building materials to be readily available in American towns and cities.

Known for their large front or wraparound porches, Queen Anne homes often involved intricate wooden spindle work and accents. Bay windows, three part windows which protrude from the exterior wall were popular, as were oriel windows, similar in design, but located on upper floors. A Queen Anne home will usually employ a number of gables, where pitched sides met at a ridgeline to form a triangular wall below. Various textures in building materials like stone, wood, and custom-colored or molded brick made each home distinctively unique.

Video Transcript

What Is Queen Anne Architecture?

Some architectural styles celebrate excess. Have you ever seen a house embellished with lots of decorative flourishes? You might have been looking at an example of Queen Anne architecture, which seems to express the idea that more is better.

Queen Anne architecture was a style found from around 1880 to 1900. It began in England and then became very popular in the United States, lasting in the western states until around 1910. When you hear someone talking about Victorian architecture, chances are this is the style that comes to mind.

The style was christened 'Queen Anne' by several English architects. But the name's a bit of a misnomer, because it was based on several medieval and early Renaissance architectural styles from the late 1500s and early 1600s. In reality, the actual Queen Anne didn't rule until at least one hundred years later, in the early 1700s. Nevertheless, the name Queen Anne stuck.



Example of Queen Anne architecture from England

In England, Queen Anne architecture is often seen in brick structures. As the style moved to the United States, it became even more eclectic, picking up other decorative flourishes and adding a little bit of everything. Printed **pattern books**--publications full of illustrations--helped spread its popularity and show builders, carpenters, and craftspeople how to add elements of the style to various structures.

So, what does Queen Anne architecture look like?

Characteristics of Queen Anne Architecture

Queen Anne structures vary greatly, but several key characteristics make the style easy to identify. Buildings are often asymmetrical with more than one story, and they usually feature a large wrap-around porch. External surfaces often use multiple materials like stone, brick, or wood. On some buildings, you might see more than one material used, one right next to the other.



Queen Anne building with large wrap-around porch and wood shingles

And those external surfaces are full of contrasting textures, like patterned stone and brick. Sometimes the brick might be colored or custom-molded. Especially in the United States, Queen Anne buildings often have lots of wood decoration, like wood shingles with curving edges that resemble fish scales. You might also see sections of half-timbering and of **clapboard** paneling, long thin wood strips that overlap slightly. Porches and railings might include lots of fancy woodwork.

Queen Anne architecture often features towers and turrets, usually found on a building's front corner. Towers might be round or polygonal. A **polygonal** shape is one that has three or more sides. The towers might be topped by roofs with a conical or bell shape. A **turret** is a small tower that thrusts upward from a building's roof or upper story.



Queen Anne building with tower and front-facing gable

Queen Anne buildings have deeply-pitched roofs with irregular shapes, often with one or more front-facing gables. A **gable** is a roof section with two sloping sides that meet at a ridge line, creating a triangular vertical wall section below them. On these roof sections, you might see large dormer windows. A **dormer** is a window extension that sticks out from the side of a roof, usually with a gable top.

Windows on Queen Anne structures are often in the shape of bay or oriel windows. A bay window has three or more segments that stick out from a building's first floor. An **oriel window** also protrudes from a building's surface, but on an upper floor. Windows usually have one glass pane. Sometimes the panes are curved, or you might see colorful stained glass.

So, now that you know more about common characteristics of Queen Anne architecture, take a walk around your neighborhood. Do you see any houses built in this style?

Lesson Summary

Queen Anne architecture was a style popular in England and the United States from roughly 1880 to 1900. It began in England and was based on a mix of earlier medieval and Renaissance styles. Printed and illustrated **patterns books** helped spread the style's popularity in the United States.

Queen Anne architecture is recognized by several key characteristics. These include the use of multiple materials like wood, brick, and stone, and lots of decoration on exterior surfaces, including **clapboard** paneling. Structures usually have large wrap-around porches. You might see towers of round or **polygonal** shape with three or more sides or smaller **turrets** coming from an upper story. Queen Anne architecture features steep-pitched roofs, often with triangular **gables** and projecting **dormer** windows. Windows can also be in the shape of bay or upper-floor **oriel windows** and might also be curved or made of stained glass.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Queen Anne Victorian style?

Queen Anne style is usually used to refer to both British Queen Anne Revival, most popular in 1870's England, as well as American Queen Anne Revival, which proliferated from 1880-1910. The style was marked by distinctly unique houses employing various influences, textures, and elaborate facades.

When was Queen Anne architecture first used?

An early example the Queen Anne Style, Poulton House, stems from the first decade of the 18th Century during British Queen Anne's reign. The style would evolve in England throughout the following century, moving across the Atlantic to America, where it became even more decorative and elaborate.

What makes a house a Queen Anne?

Queen Anne style homes are often eclectic in style, drawing from a number of different periods at the same time. They are identifiable by liberal use of gables, towers, decorative woodwork, bay windows, and varying textures and colors of materials.