Architectural Terminology
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So what is a *quoin* anyway ... other than a great word to have in your head when playing Scrabble®? Or how about a *rincleau*? A *belvedere*? A *radiating voussoir*? If these questions leave you scratching your head in wonder and confusion, you’re not alone! Few people outside the confines of an architect’s office have a working knowledge of architectural terminology. For you, however, that’s about to change! After studying the following glossary, you’ll be able to amaze your friends as you walk through the streets of your town pointing out lancets, porticos, corbels and campaniles.

NOTE: The definitions of some terms use words which themselves require definition. Such words are italicized in the definition.

**Acanthus Leaf** - Motif in classical architecture found on *Corinthian columns*

**Aedicule** - A *pedimented entablature* with columns used to frame a window or *niche*

**Arcade** - Series of round arches supported by *columns* or *posts*

**Architrave** - The lowest part of a classical *entablature* running from *column* to column

**Ashlar** - Squared building stone laid in parallel courses

**Astragal** - Molding with a semicircular profile

**Astylar** - Facade without *columns* or *pilasters*

**Balconet** - False balcony outside a window

**Baluster** - The post supporting a handrail

**Balustrade** - Railing at a stairway, porch or roof
**Bargeboard** - Decorative boards located at the end of a *gable*

**Bas Relief** - Shallow carving of figures and landscapes

**Battered Wall** - Wall leaning inward from its base rather than outward

**Belt Course** - Narrow horizontal band projecting from exterior walls, usually defining interior floor levels

**Belvedere** - Projection from top of roof; also called *cupola*

**Bracket** - Supporting element under a *cornice*

**Broken Pediment** - *Pediment with cornices* ending before they meet at the top; *finial* often placed in the center

**Bulkhead** - Horizontal or inclined door over exterior stairway to cellar

**Cames** - The lead portions of stained glass windows

**Campanile** - A tower

**Cantilever** - Projecting overhang

**Capital** - The top part of a *pilaster or column*

**Cartouche** - Ornamental panel; oval or scroll-shaped

**Casement Window** - Window hinged on the side that opens like a door

**Clapboard** - Long thin overlapping wooden boards placed horizontally on the outside of a building

**Colonet** - Small decorative *column*

**Colonnade** - Series of *columns* supporting an *entablature*

**Column** - Round vertical support

**Columniation** - Arrangement of *columns*

**Composite Column** - Elaborate combination of *Ionic* and *Corinthian* features

**Coping** - Top course of a wall

**Coquillage** - Seashell-styled decoration

**Corbel** - *Bracket* or block projecting from the face of a wall

**Corbiestep** - Stepped-end *gable*

**Corinthian Capital** - Top part of a *column* characterized by large *acanthus leaves* and *fluted* column

**Cornice** - A horizontal molded projection that completes a building or wall; or the upper slanting part of an *entablature*

**Crenellation** - Square openings in the top of a *parapet*

**Cresting** - Line of ornamentation finishing a roof

**Cupola** - A cup-shaped cap over a structure; often found on carriage houses

**Cyclopean Block** - Rock faced blocks often used in foundations
Dado - Mid section of a pedestal, between base and cornice
Dentil - Molding made up of rows of small square blocks
Dimension Stone - Large blocks of stone used in foundations
Doric Column - Column with plain capital, no base or fluting
Dormer Window - Window that projects from a sloping roof
Double-Hung Windows - Windows with two sashes sliding up and down

Eaves - Lowest projecting part of a sloped roof
Egg & Dart - Molding in which an egg shape alternates with a dart shape
Elephantine Columns - Tapered; used as porch supports on Bungalows
Entablature - Horizontal detailing above a classical column and below a pediment, consisting of cornice, frieze and architrave
Exedra - Wall alcove with bench space
Eyebrow Window - Roof dormer having low sides; formed by raising small section of roof

Facade - Main face or side of a building
Fanlight - Fixed half-moon window sash above a door
Fascia - Flat vertical board used to hide ends of roof rafters
Fenestration - Design and placement of windows
Finial - Decorative vertical roof ornament
Flat Arch - Arch without rounded underside
Fluting - Narrow vertical grooves on shafts of columns and pilasters
Foliated - Decorative motif with leaflike ornament
Frieze - Band below cornice
Frontispiece - Small pediment over door or window

Gable - Upper triangular portion of wall at the end of a roof
Gable Roof - Shaped in an upside-down V
Gambrel Roof - Double-pitched with end walls pointed at top
Gargoyle - Carved figure with grotesque features; often on corners of buildings
Garland - Ornamental detail in the shape of a band of flowers
Gingerbread - Elaborate wooden fretwork used on gables or as porch trim
Gutta - Droplike element found underneath a triglyph or in a mutule
Gothic Arch - Arch with pointed top
Guilloche - Molding resembling twisted rope

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Helicline - Curved ramp
Hipped Roof - Slopes upward from all four sides
Hoodmold - Decorative projecting trim above a window
Horseshoe Arch - Arch in which the bottom is smaller than the mid-span; found in Moorish architecture

Imbrication - Overlapping of shingles or tiles
Impost - Horizontal band from which arch begins
Ionic Column - Slender, fluted, with spiral volutes on capital

Jamb - Sidepiece on doors and windows
Jerkinhead - Gable roof with hipped end; also called hipped gable
Jutty - Upper story projecting beyond the one below; also called jetty

Keystone - Wedge-shaped stone found in the center of some arches

Lanai - Furnished veranda
Lancet Window - Window with a pointed arch
Leaded Light - Window made up of small rectangular or diamond shaped panes of glass set in lead came
Lintel - Horizontal structural member that spans an opening
Lites - Individual panes of glass
Loggia - Arcade or gallery open on at least one side
Lug Sill - One that extends beyond bottom window
Lunette - Semicircular window or wall panel

Mansard Roof - Double pitched roof in which lower pitch is nearly vertical and upper is nearly horizontal
Mezzanine - Partial story between two main stories; usually projects as a balcony
Modillion Blocks - Ornamental scroll-shaped brackets or blocks found under the cornice
Mullion - Vertical member separating two or more windows
Muntin - Vertical or horizontal divisions between lites in a window or door
Mutule - Block under the soffit of a cornice

Newel - Post supporting one end of a handrail at top or bottom of stairs
Niche - Wall recess reserved for statue
Oculus - Circular opening in a wall
Ogee - Molding with both concave and convex curves
Oriel - Upper-story projecting bay window with corbels or brackets
Ovolo - Convex molding also called quarter round

Palladin Window - One with an arched center section flanked by lower flat-topped sections
Parapet - Part of a wall that extends beyond the roof
Patera - Round or oval disc, usually ornamented with a rosette in the center
Pediment - Triangular gable end of roof above cornice
Pendant - Hanging ornament
Pent Roof - Sloping roof attached to side of building
Pier - Square pillar or post
Pilaster - Half column or pier attached to a wall
Plinth - Raised platform upon which sits a column
Porte Cochere - Porch roof projecting over a driveway
Portico - Porch supported by columns, usually above entrance
Postern - Side entrance
Putto - Statue of naked chubby baby; similar to a cherub with no wings

Quatrefoil - Four-lobed motif; usually in block shape
Quoins - Units of cut stone or brick used to accentuate the vertical corners of buildings

Reeding - Opposite of fluting; protruding half-round molding
Ridge Roll - Rounded cap covering exterior peak of roof
Rinceau - Scroll or vines cut in stone
Rubble - Undressed broken stone used in construction
Rusticated - Stonework with beveled or angled edges

Sash - Frame in which the glass panes or a window are set
Scrollwork - Ornamental work with curvilinear open patterns
Segmented Arch - Arch that does not form complete semi-circle
Sill - Bottom member of a window or door
Soffit - Underside of an eave, lintel or other horizontal element
Spindle - Turned vertical wooden element used in stair railings and porch trim
Stoop - Small porch leading to entrance of a house
String Course - Horizontal band of masonry wrapping around entire facade of building
Terrace - Open area connected to building; usually paved
Terra Cotta - Fired clay used for decorative ornamental details
Tracery - Interlaced lines that form the lacy openwork of a Gothic-style window
Transom - Small window above door
Trayle - Decorative motif of continuous vine, leaf and grape clusters
Trefoil - Clover-leaved pattern
Triglyph - Banded decoration in a frieze
Turpet - Small tower on corner of building supported by corbels
Tuscan Column - Simple column with plain shaft
Tympanum - Triangular face of a pediment

Uncoursed Masonry - Not set in layers; no continuous horizontal joints

Veranda - Porch that runs along front or side of a building; supported by pillars or columns
Vermiculation - Decorative masonry surface with shallow channels
Volutas - Scroll shape found on Ionic capital
Voossoir - Wedge-shaped stones forming curved parts of an arch

Wainscot - Facing of wood paneling, usually covering lower portion of interior wall
Water Table - Molding or projection on the exterior located at the intersection of the basement and first story
Wheel Window - Round window with mullions radiating from the center
Widow’s Walk - Narrow platform on roof; usually with wooden or wrought-iron balustrade
Wing - Building part projecting from a central or main part

Xystus - Tree-lined walk
Yoke - Top of a double-hung window

Zoophorous - Frieze decorated with animal or human figures