

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 *ringleau*? 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.



Photograph, balustrade, undated (By the Author)

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

Astyler - 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

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

Rinicleau - 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
Volutes - Scroll shape found on *Ionic capital*
Vousoir - 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



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