

History of the Italianate Style

The Italianate style is categorized as a Romantic Style and part of the Picturesque movement of the 1800's. The Italianate style is often associated with the Victorian style. The style was created in reaction to the formal Classicism in art and architecture since the early 1700's. The first Italianate houses in America were built in the late 1830's and quickly became very popular. The style was made popular by the influence of pattern books by Andrew Jackson Downing published in the 1840's-50's and his "Cottage Residences." Other books published Italianate house plans, and suddenly, builders had homeowners had all they needed to build in this new style.

Although the Italianate style has its roots in the Italian Renaissance style and houses in rural northern Italy, it also has its roots in the Greek Revival style of the early 1800's. In the late 1850's houses that were built and were being built in the Greek Revival style gradually began adding Italianate features and ornaments. This is evident especially in cities like New Orleans, where an interesting mix of Greek Revival and Italianate design was made very popular by Henry Howard in mid 1840's and 50's.

By the 1860's, the style had become the most popular house style. The early years stylings were more simple in nature, but the addition of detailing to the designs of houses in the 1860's and 1870's brought us the highly detailed and elaborate stylings that remain in examples we see today. The decline of the style, along with the closely related Second Empire style, was due to the financial depression of the mid-1870's. Once prosperity returned late in the decade, new and other styles, like Queen Anne, began to emerge in popularity.

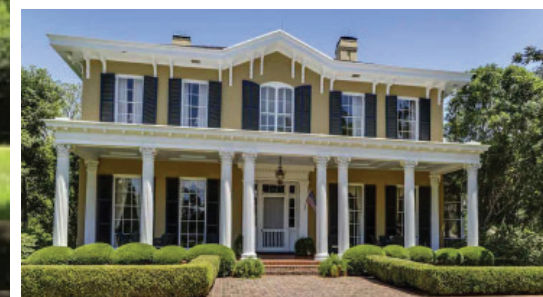
The Italianate examples we have in Mississippi and Louisiana are a southern variant of the style, partly adapting to the hot and humid weather conditions and partly incorporating more Greek Revival and Creole massing forms.



ITALIANATE

Key Elements of style

1. Large overhangs with decorative brackets in the cornice.
2. Prominent porch elements.
3. Decorative entry door surrounds.
4. Vertically proportioned windows with decorative crowns, heads, or hoods.
5. Symmetrical and Asymmetrical massing.
6. Tower or front gable element.



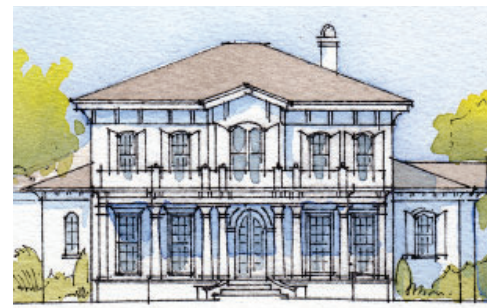
Italianate Massing

American houses built between 1850-1880 were designed predominately in the Italianate style. It was very fashionable and common in the small towns and cities of the midwest and northeast. However, in the southern states, the Italianate style was not as wide-spread as other parts of the country. The destruction of the Civil War left the south desolated.

Although not as common in the southern states due to the Civil War's destruction and reconstruction efforts, there are many prime examples of the style because of the expansion of rail lines through the South and the ability to ship architectural details across the country. Along with the rail lines came construction workers and craftsmen sharing their trade.

An Italianate house, in its most basic form, is square with a low-pitched hip roof and wide overhanging eaves, always decorated and supported with large brackets. The massing is two or three stories, rarely one. Italianate windows are relatively simple, but adorned in the detail of the window heads, columns, and porch elements. For the first time, arched and curved window heads became common, along with the traditional rectangle top.

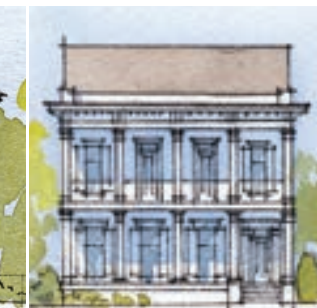
Italianate examples in the midwest and northeast are slightly different than examples in the south. Northeastern examples tend to have more three-story tower and cupola elements of the Italian Villa style, whereas southern examples tend to eliminate the tower and use the front gable feature as the tower element. Northern examples rarely have two-story porches, but double galleries are very common in the south. Low-pitched hip roofs are more common on Italianate examples in the north, southeast, and west. In the deep southern states of Louisiana and Mississippi, a variety of low-pitched and steeper pitched gable roofs are almost entirely used.



Symmetrical Massing



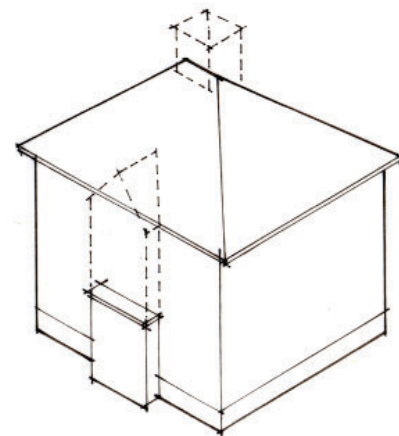
Duplex, Asymmetrical Massing



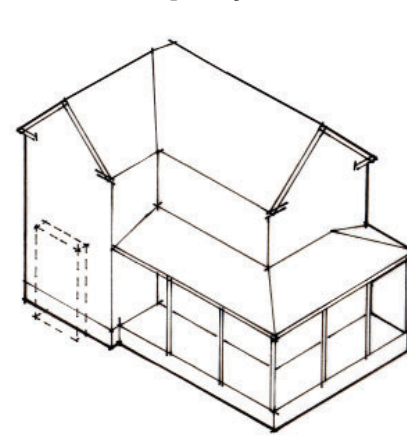
Double Gallery, off-center entry



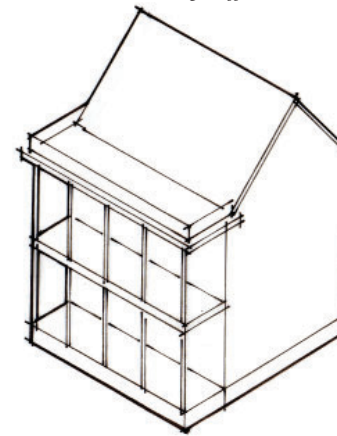
Italianate Creole Cottage



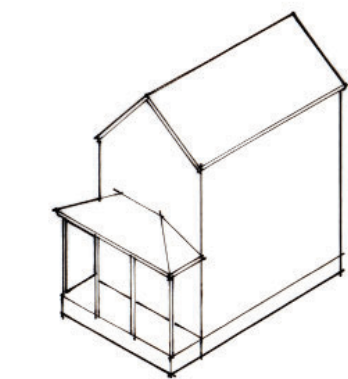
*Symmetrical Massing, with center entry
Simple Hipped Roof, Common Center Gable*



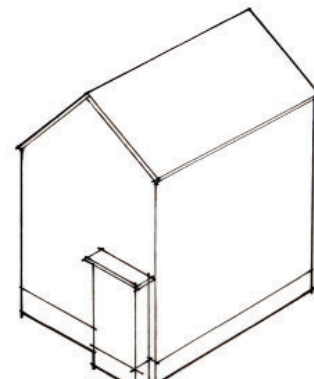
*Asymmetrical Massing (L-shaped)
Hipped Roof, Porch, Common Gable Front*



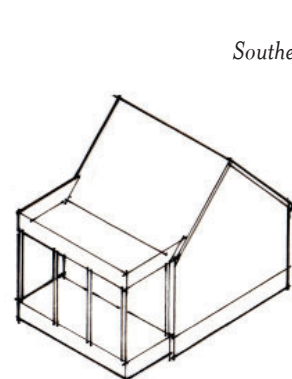
*2-4 Bay Double Gallery, Broad Roof
Common in the South*



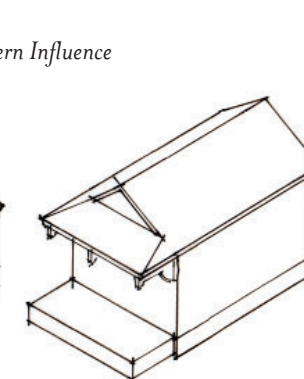
Front Gable with Porch



Front Gable with off-center Stoop



2-4 Bay Cottage, Broad Roof



2-4 Bay Bracket Shotgun, front gable

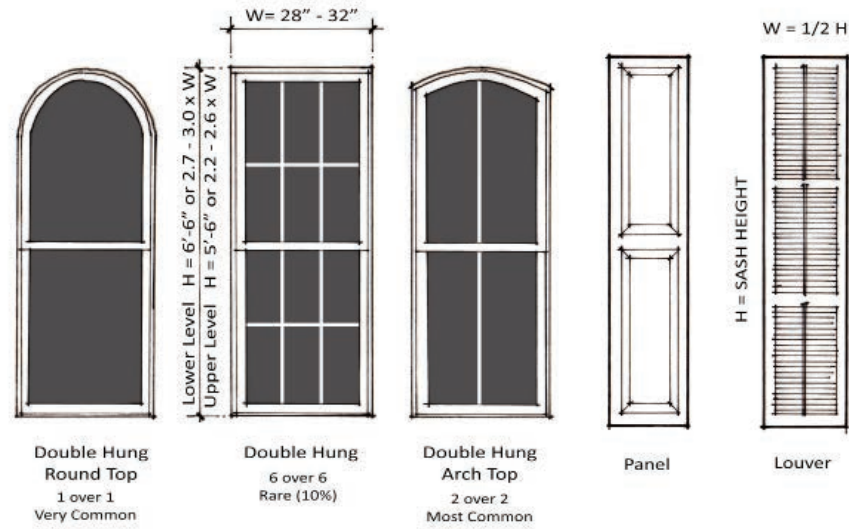
Southern Influence



Mississippi Italianate

The Italianate house, in its most basic form, is square with a low-pitched hip roof and wide overhanging eaves, always decorated and supported with large brackets. Double galleries are very common in the south. Low-pitched hip roofs are more common on Italianate examples in the north, southeast, and west. In the deep southern states of Louisiana and Mississippi, a variety of low-pitched and steeper pitched gable roofs are almost entirely used.

Italianate Elements



Windows are to be placed on side walls within the first eight feet from the corner of the Main Body.

Window pairings often occur in areas of importance - most commonly in the center bay on a symmetrical house, or in bay window location. Sometimes all the window locations on the front facade feature paired windows.

Decorative trim around windows is frequent. Small brackets under the sill and ornamented hoods are common.



Paired windows are most often 1 over 1 or 2 over 2. Bracketed heads are more common on rectangular windows and pairings.



Italianate Windows & Doors

Windows: typically large vertical openings of double hung with simple muntin patterns. May be single, paired, or even tripled. May have flat, round-top, or arched heads. Bay windows often occur on asymmetrical front facades. Window surrounds should be more simple than door surrounds.

Doors: Wood doors with panels and large glass panes. Entry doors can be single or paired. Door surrounds are usually consistent with detail of windows and eaves but can be more ornate. May include rectangular, round-top, or arched transoms.

Shutters: Louvered or solid panel shutters may be present, and must fully functional.

Italianate Window Types



Shutter

Windows should be a tall, vertical proportion with large clear lites. Most Common arrangements are 1 over 1 or 2 over 2.

Cottage windows may be used as well with 2 over 4. Muntins should be 7/8" wide.

Italianate Window Pairings



Casings for windows should be 1x4 minimum and 1x6 maximum. Sills are sometimes accentuated, extending beyond the casing and supported with brackets.

Window head should be minimum 8" above finish floor.



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Flat, round-top, or arched transoms are common. Sidelights are only present with solid entry doors.

Italianate Door Types

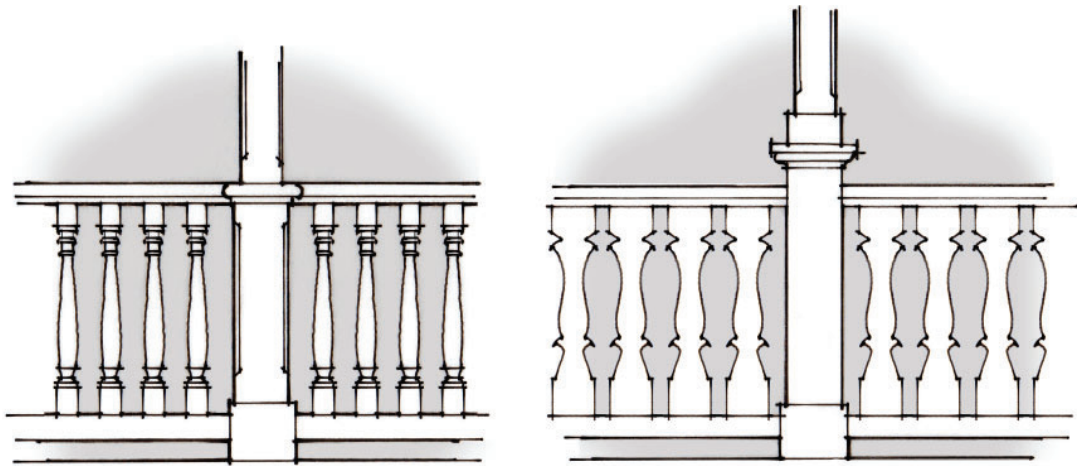
Italianate Elements



Columns are square, often on a handrail-height base. Columns are also often chamfered, but never round (like Victorian). Brackets, single or paired, often sit atop columns. Beams are segmented arches, or, when flat, often have arched scrollwork/trimwork.

Closely paired columns are most common in Mississippi. Cities like Natchez and Vicksburg unique designs where trimwork between the closely paired thin columns ties them together as one.

Italianate Single Column Types



Turned Balluster - Very Common

Decorative Pattern Balluster - Less Common

Porch columns often sit on larger framed and trimmed bases. Handrails are always contoured. Decorative Ballusters vary greatly. Decorative wrought iron railings are usually used with iron columns, but can be used with wood columns.

Italianate Railing Types

Italianate Paired Column Types



There are occasions that classical columns are used in the Italianate style. They tend to be Roman Doric or Corinthian styled columns. Henry Howard used these quite often in his work in Louisiana and New Orleans on Italianate house designs in the mid 1800's.



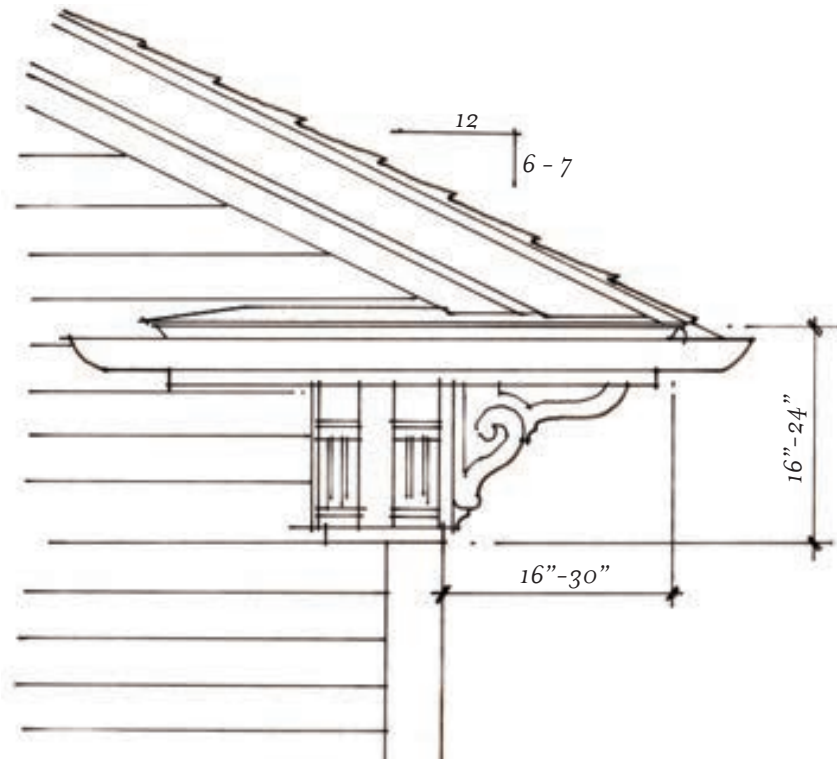
Italianate Elements

Columns:
Square columns, with or without a chamfer. Usually on a trimmed base, but not always.

Capitals are always detailed, usually with brackets above. Scrollwork, in the form of arches, or side brackets are usually present, but not always the case in more simple forms, or simple column/beam relationships.

Railings:
Railings are wood and either turned or decorative pattern. Wrought iron railings can be used - usually with iron columns.

Italianate Elements



Eaves are deep so that the brackets can fit. Brackets can be single or paired as a design feature aligned with another architectural element, like a window, or column, or bay.

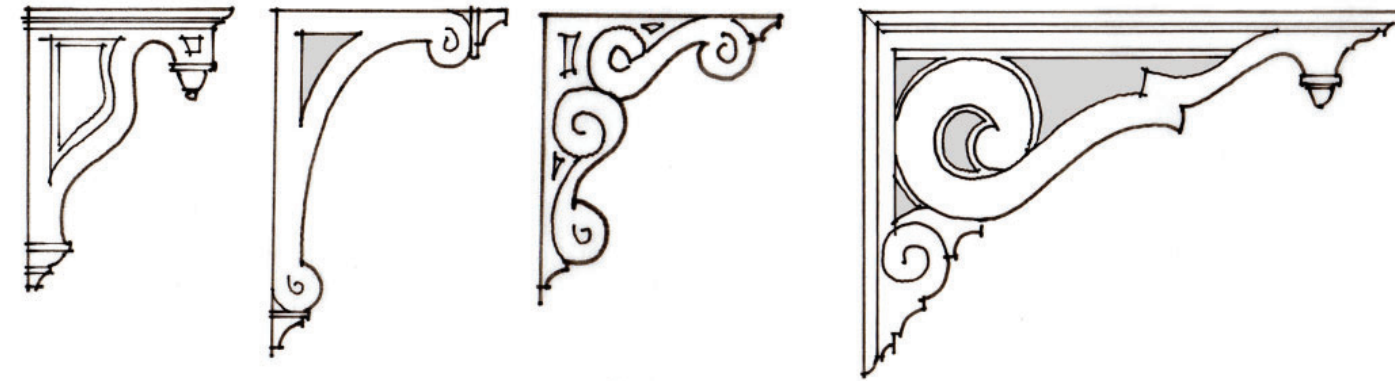
Main roof pitch should be 6/12 to 7/12. Side gable roofs on southern designs can be 12/12, if the main form and detailing is kept simple. Hipped roofs should be 4/12 to 6/12.

Secondary roofs over porches should be 3/12 to 4/12 pitch or nearly flat at 1/12, which requires standing seam or membrane roof.

Eaves on gable ends must be returned with a 1/12 pitch flashing over the return. Frieze board and brackets must return as well.

Italianate eaves are large and simple, except for the brackets. Brackets come in a wide variety of shape and designs. They should extend a minimum of 80% of the eave depth and many times, all the way to the fascia.

Quite often, large brackets and small brackets are used in the same eave. The large brackets are often paired, with the smaller brackets used similarly to dentils. It's not common for large brackets to be used in singles without the smaller brackets, but it does occur more often in the south as long as they are spaced at some regular interval around the house. Use historic examples for reference in design.



Italianate Roof & Eaves



Brackets are treated as design elements, aligned with a roof element, like a gable, or aligned between windows or column. They can be single, paired, or even tripled, if designed well. The more vernacular and simple the house and it's detailing, the more simple the bracket and used more sparingly.

Italianate Brackets



Italianate Elements

Columns: Square columns, with or without a chamfer. Usually on a trimmed base, but not always.

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Railings: Railings are wood and either turned or decorative pattern. Wrought iron railings can be used - usually with iron columns.

Italianate Variations & Inspirations



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Italianate

Wall Materials:
Smooth finish wood or fiber cement lap siding with 5" exposure, beveled or flush siding, brick base, or light-colored sand-finish stucco. Corner boards are 1x4 or 1x6.

Decorative foundation vents are common. Southern Italianate houses are often framed on piers with lattice between, or solid brick with foundation vents.

Roof: 5V metal roof, standing seam, slate or synthetic slate, asphalt shingles. All colors to be approved by ARB.

Windows: Wood or clad units with true or simulated divided lites.



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