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A STYLE FIT FOR A QUEEN: QUEEN ANNE

by Bonnie Stepenoff

On a recent trip to England, I heard from a tour guide that Queen Anne was only five feet tall and weighed four hundred pounds. My companion, who thought that was impossible, asked another tour guide how much the eighteenth-century queen really weighed. The guide responded that her weight was close to six hundred, or maybe even seven hundred, pounds. Her actual weight remains unknown, but even the most flattering portraits depict her as plus-size. Modern-day tourists laugh at anecdotes about a square coffin accommodating a woman who was just as wide as she was high. Historian Robert Bucholz, who has written a book about her reign, insists that there was much more to her (no pun intended) than her physical size. ¹

Virginia and Lee McAlester, authors of a standard book on American architecture, say that "Queen Anne" is an inappropriate name for the late-nineteenth-century houses that are also often called "Victorian" in reference to another, much more venerated, British monarch. Even the biographer of one of the style's British originators lamented the inaccuracy of the name. The chronology is puzzling, of course, because Queen Anne ruled from 1702 to 1714, a century and a half before the Queen Anne style of architecture became popular. The architectural styles of Anne's own time were classically proportioned and symmetrical. Neither of these adjectives applied to the Queen herself or to the style that eventually took her name. Nevertheless, I believe that there is a significant connection between the nineteenth-century houses and an eighteenth-century ruler. In the following paragraphs, I will try to explain what I mean.2

Queen Anne, the last of the Stuart monarchs, was thirty-seven years old when she ascended to the throne. Seventeen pregnancies, with no surviving children, had left her seriously overweight and prematurely old. Contemporary critics called her plain, dull, clumsy, overly formal, gloomy, and prudish. More sympathetic observers praised her sweetness and her devotion to England's past. Historians have often compared her unfavorably with Queen Elizabeth I, the brilliant and virginal monarch of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Anne's supporters have called her sensible or wise, rather than brilliant, maternal rather than virginal. Happily married, she sacrificed her

health in a vain effort to produce a Stuart successor. But her thirteen-year reign resulted in military victories, commercial and financial progress, and a smooth transfer of power to the House of Hanover (the family that would eventually produce Queen Victoria).³

Between Anne's reign and Victoria's, the world changed momentously. England peopled and then lost many of its North American colonies, but the British Empire spread around the globe. Both England and the United States experienced an industrial revolution. In both countries, "selfmade men" rose from humble circumstances to positions of power and wealth. Working people suffered from grueling labor, poor housing and sanitation, rampant disease, and early death. Largely ignoring these cruel facts, the emerging middle class embraced a creed of hard work, sobriety, and familial devotion. Queen Victoria publicly reinforced these values and exemplified them in her own life. During her long reign, sentimentality, common sense, prudishness, and devotion to home and family became the building blocks of a new, secular morality that sustained people through a time of rapid social and economic change.



A one-story cottage, 811 Meriwether Street in Cape Girardeau

In these changing times, a group of architects developed a new kind of house that embodied the ideal of domestic bliss. In his book, *Sweetness and Light*, Mark Girouard has produced an excellent and detailed account of the innovators of the Queen Anne Movement. I will not try to retell the story in this essay. I will say only that, taking their inspiration from the English country dwellings of the late medieval period, they produced asymmetrical buildings with gables, chimney stacks, half-timbering, and small-

paned sash windows. From the styles of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the architects borrowed hipped roofs, wooden cupolas, external shutters, and fanlights. Dormers, porches, and bay windows added variety to the facades of houses in both the country and the town. By the early 1870s, brick homes in this new "Queen Anne" style had caught on with the British public and become the rage.⁴

Americans quickly adopted the new, but nostalgic, British architectural form. The first Queen Anne houses on this side of the Atlantic resembled the half-timbered brick residences created by English architect Robert Norman Shaw. By the end of the 1870s, American publishers helped popularize the innovative designs through periodicals and pattern books. The railroads delivered pre-cut architectural details to destinations throughout the United States. Inventive American craftsmen developed many varieties of decorative spindle-work, as builders abandoned masonry in favor of wood. American Queen Annes ranged from one-and one-and-one-half-story wood-frame cottages to three-story brick and stone mansions with complex roofs, asymmetrical facades, elaborate wall textures, prominent porches, fanciful towers, and lacy detailing.

Modest Queen Anne cottages expressed the desire for family togetherness and comfort. Characteristics of these charming dwellings were asymmetrical plans, gable-on-hip roofs, patterned wooden shingles, spindle-work, bay windows, and porches. A queenly little one-story cottage at 811 Meriwether Street in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, retains many original features, including a small tower topped by a front-facing gable with fish-scale shingles. Many builders purchased ready-made decorative details and applied them to vernacular house forms, including shotgun houses, pyramidal houses, and simple one-story houses with front or side gables. Home-owners often added Queen Anne porches to older, more traditional dwellings.



Gilded Age mansion, 631 Hall Street in St. Joseph

Lavish Queen Anne designs testified to the rising fortunes of the nation's industrial elite. On posh Hall Street in St. Joseph, Missouri, Queen Anne residences sprang up alongside lavish Second Empire, Chateauesque, and Richardsonian Romanesque mansions that housed bankers and "merchant princes" during the Gilded Age. Architects freely combined elements of various styles. For example, the stone residence at 631 Hall Street featured many Queen Anne elements, including a steeply pitched roof, bay windows, a front-facing gable, an asymmetrical façade, a tower with a conical roof and a decorative finial, and a partial one-story porch that extended along a side wall. Incised ornamentation added texture to the smooth stone walls. Additional details, such as doubled belt courses, a balcony, and a second tower of the small candle-snuffer variety suggested the French influence of the Chateauesque style.⁵



"Queen Anne front" of the Glenn House on Spanish Street in Cape Girardeau

Wealthy owners sometimes glamorized older, plainer houses by adding Queen Anne facades. In Robert Drake's short story entitled "Queen Anne Front, Mary Anne Behind," a turn-of-the-century southern lady named Grandma King hires an architect to decorate her antebellum Greek revival house with "all sorts of curlicues and extra balustrades and whatnot." The real family who owned the Glenn House in my city, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, did the same thing, adding a tower and a grand front porch to a late-nineteenth-century brick house sometime after 1900. The rear of the house, which has been restored by the Historical Association of Greater Cape Girardeau, seems austere and restrained compared to its extravagant façade.

Robert Watson Schmertz, a song writer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offered a mid-twentieth century perspective on this phenomenon with his ballad, "Queen Anne Front." According to the lyrics, his great grandfather searched through *Godey's Lady's Book*⁷ for house plans that would please his new bride. He found what he wanted and built a house with a big veranda on a hill overlooking a river. After the death of his great-grandparents, his Aunt Amanda

opened a ladies' seminary in the house. When Aunt Amanda passed on, the house, in a declining neighborhood, fell upon hard times. Finally, a group of ladies moved in, but the police took them away. The last lines of the song are, as follows: "But they closed that house, that jolly little house/With a Queen Anne front/ And a Mary Anne behind." The song tells something about the houses of the late Victorian period, but more about twentieth-century disdain for Victorian prudishness – and hypocrisy.



"Mary Anne behind" of the Glenn House

In the late 1970s, when urban pioneers revitalized Victorian homes, they often transformed them into "painted ladies." In their book, *America's Painted Ladies: the Ultimate Celebration of Our Victorians*, Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen promulgated the rules for these make-overs. A true "painted lady" must display three or more contrasting colors on exterior surfaces, must balance color and architectural style, and must use color to enhance decorative elements. The authors encouraged this treatment for many types of Victorian homes, but described Queen Anne homes as the "ultimate, anything-goes Victorian." The phrase "anything-goes" seems inappropriate in connection with the proper and strait-laced Queen Victoria. One wonders if the monarch would have been amused.

What does all this have to do with Queen Anne? Obviously, the connection is complicated, but I believe it is meaningful. In the late nineteenth century, England and America searched for a set of values that would remain fixed and reliable in a rapidly changing world. Looking back to the eighteenth century, Englishmen found a model in a previous monarch, who staunchly defended motherhood and the Crown, while she led her people into a new era of worldly power. Queen Anne architecture perfectly represented the two most sacred ideals of the Victorian period: pleasant domesticity and material prosperity. In America, as well as England, the style caught on because it

embodied the people's longings, tied them up with ribbons, and presented them to passers-by on city streets and country lanes.



A "painted lady" on Fountain Street in Cape Girardeau; a beige body with aubergine and mint window surrounds, lavender, purple and mint turns on the porch posts and balusters

Twentieth century observers questioned these values. In the song, "Queen Anne Front," Schmertz looked past the curlicues and frills to the smugness and pretension. His great-grandparents' "jolly little house," built for a lady, eventually harbored "ladies" of the night. Girouard's "sweetness and light" gave way to grittiness and shadows, as modernism ascended. The Queen Anne houses that still graced our streets – often in shabby, declining neighborhoods – became quaint relics that were sometimes cherished, but often neglected, in a changing landscape that placed function before form. Honesty developed into brutalism, and something hopeful had been lost.

We see the past through the lens of present-day preoccupations. Art and architecture reflect, in complex and sometimes unintended ways, the mood of the times.

We have to wonder what the buildings of the twenty-first century will reveal about our time. It would be presumptuous of me to make a prediction. But I have some misgivings about a society that sees nothing at all in poor old Queen Anne – except that she was fat.

NOTES

- 1. See R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993); Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England*, *1485-1714* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
- 2. Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 268; Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 130.
- 3. Bucholz and Key, Early Modern England, 340-376.

- 4. Mark Girouard, Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 60-63.
- 5. Hall Street Historic District, National Register Nomination, prepared by Thomas W. Carneal, March 1979.
- 6. Robert Drake, "Queen Anne Front, Mary Anne Behind," *The South Carolina Review* 30, No. 2 (Spring 1998): 13.
- 7. *Godey's Lady's Book*, a popular women's magazine published in the United States from 1840 through 1892, featured house designs and floor plans in almost every issue.
- 8. Pete Seeger recorded this song on his album "Dangerous Songs" for Columbia Records in 1966. Robert Watson Schmertz died in 1975 at the age of seventy-seven. Several different versions of the lyrics to "Queen Anne Front" can be accessed on the internet.
- 9. Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen, *America's Painted Ladies:* the Ultimate Celebration of Our Victorians (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1994), 11-12.

A NOTE ON THE ITALIANATE STYLE

by Esley Hamilton

As early as 1957, John Maass, in *The Gingerbread Age*, correctly observed that the Italian Villa, the asymmetrical, towered house ostensibly based on the farmhouses of Tuscany, was only one aspect of the revival of Italian Renaissance forms in the second quarter of the 19th century: "A second distinctive type of Italianate villa is shaped like a cube with a lookout atop the flat roof." Wildwood House in Ferguson, which was recently nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, is a fine example of this important house type. Virginia and Lee McAlester, in their 1984 *Field Guide to American Houses*, noted that this house type was more than just a footnote: "The Italianate style dominated American houses constructed between 1850 and 1880."



Wildwood House, 40 Dames Court, Ferguson, built 1855-1857 by Major Joseph LaMotte and his wife Ellen. She was the daughter of Charles and Jane Mullanphy Chambers of Taille de Noyer.

Nevertheless, recognition has been long in coming. In spite of its importance to American architecture, the Italianate style has never been the subject of a major monograph, as have the Georgian, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles, for example. When the Italianate style has been discussed in general histories of American architecture, if it has been mentioned at all, it has usually been represented by the Italian Villa. This is true, for example, of the books by David P. Handlin, Leland Roth, Vincent Scully, and Marcus Whiffen & Frederick Koeper.³ In all these cases, the Italian Villa seems to fit the authors' broader framework of the Romantic, picturesque movement, following and contrasting with movements based on symmetrical classicism. The center-entry, symmetrical, hip-roofed Italianate house that was much more common at that time doesn't fit this (flawed) paradigm because it continues the tradition that can be traced back through the Greek Revival and Federal styles to the Palladian and Wrenian houses of the Colonial era.

In Marcus Whiffen's other book on this subject, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (MIT Press, 1969, rev., 1992), he divides the style into three categories for the 1820-1860 period: Renaissance Revival-Romano-Tuscan Mode, Renaissance Revival-North Italian Mode, and Italian Villa; with the High Victorian Italianate coming in 1860-1890.⁴ The National Register follows Whiffen in classifying the Italian Villa as a mid-19th-century style and the Italianate as Late Victorian. In fact, they were two sides of the same movement, which, as Alan Gowans notes in Styles and Types of North American Architecture, "becomes prominent on the American architectural scene well before the Civil War."⁵ This has been noted in several of the stylebooks that the preservation movement has fostered, including the McAlesters, mentioned above, and John Poppeliers, et al, What Style Is It? Poppeliers writes, "At its most elaborate the Italianate house had a low roof, overhanging eaves with decorative brackets, an entrance tower, round-headed windows with hood moldings, corner quoins, arcaded porches and balustraded balconies. At its simplest, it was a square house with low pyramidal roof, bracketed eaves and perhaps a cupola or lantern."6

The McAlesters define the Italianate house based on features actually observed in the field. Among the characteristic features seen at Wildwood House are the two-story height, the low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath; tall, although not particularly narrow, windows, arched above (on the second floor); windows with elaborated crowns of an inverted U shape. Originally Wildwood House also had a square cupola. Its principal areas of elaboration are windows, cornices, the porch, including the porch-support columns, and the front doorway. The full-width, single-story entry porch has paired square posts. A feature that makes the front elevation particularly attractive is the way the large looping

shapes of the porch railings match the arches of the front door and the scrolls of the brackets.



Wilson Larimore House, 11475 Lilac Avenue, Spanish Lake, c. 1860, the finest Italianate house in St. Louis County

In St. Louis, the heyday of the Italianate style was the decade from 1850 to 1860, as celebrated by Lawrence Lowic in his groundbreaking book, The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis 1803-1891. In fact, the Italianate remained one of the dominant styles locally well into the 1880s; George I. Barnett's warehouse and retail building designs continued to be Italianate until the end of his career. In St. Louis County, examples of the style appeared in the new suburbs created by the opening of the railroads in the 1850s, including Kirkwood, Webster Groves, and Ferguson.⁸ The transition from Greek Revival was gradual, however, and many houses of this era timidly apply Italianate brackets and porches to Greek Revival bodies.⁹ Away from the railroads in the country, a fullblown Italianate house such as the Wilson Larimore House near Spanish Lake, was apt to be a product of city financial interests rather than farming. 10

NOTES

- 1. John Maass, *The Gingerbread Age* (New York: Bramhall House, 1957), p. 98.
- 2. Virginia McAlester & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 212.
- 3. David P. Handlin, *American Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985); Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988); Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture*, 1607-1976 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980).
- 4. Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969, rev., 1992), pp. 68-82 and 97.
- 5. Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture* (New York: Icon Editions, 1992), p. 188.
- 6. John Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Jr., Nancy B. Schwartz, *What Style Is It?: A Guide to American Architecture* (Washington, D. C.: Preservation Press, 1977); quote from 1979 edition, page 20.

- 7. Lawrence Lowic, *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis 1803-1891* (St. Louis: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1982), "The Italianate City: 1850-1860," pp. 47-68, and *passim*.
- 8. *The Past In Our Presence: Historic Buildings In St. Louis County* (St. Louis: St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, 1996), see especially pp. 13, 23, 26, 44-49
- 9. Among National Register properties this is true of the Archambault House in Florissant, c. 1850, and the Hawken House in Webster Groves, 1857. Other county landmark examples pictured in the *Past In Our Presence* include the Tunstall-Douglas in North County, c. 1855 (. P. 25), and the St. Cin House in Hazelwood, 1850s (p. 26).
- 10. National Register February 10, 1989; Past In Our Presence, p. 23.

WHITE PILLARS? COLOR IN THE GREEK REVIVAL

by Esley Hamilton

The Chatillon-DeMenil House at Cherokee and DeMenil Place (13th St.) is the premier surviving example of the Greek Revival style in St. Louis and one of the finest in the state. Its popular image is defined by its portico of four Ionic columns, which has been painted white since sometime before the house's restoration in the early 1960s. The outstanding study of that St. Louis architect Kimball Cohn undertook for house's board of directors in 2004 turned up that fact that neither the house nor the columns were originally white. This is evident in the black and white photographs taken for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) back in 1936.

The idea that Greek Revival porticos were always white is so engrained that J. Frazer Smith could suggest the subject of his 1941 book about the early life and architecture of the lower Mississippi valley country by titling it *White Pillars* (New York: W. Helburn, 1941). But modern scholarship



Chatillon-DeMenil House, St. Louis. From Historic American Building Survey, Theodore LaVack, Photographer Oct. 29, 1936 HABS MO, 96-SALU, 17-1

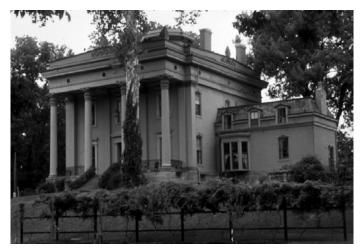
has shown that in the cases of several important Greek Revival houses, the pillars were not white, and that the style was not as uniform in appearance as we have assumed.

ARLINGTON HOUSE, the Robert E. Lee Memorial, in Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, was built for Martha Washington's grandson, George Washington Parke Custis. George Hadfield, the young English architect, introduced the Greek Revival to the Washington, D.C. area with this house, completed in 1820, and the original city hall, started the same year. The monumental Doric columns of Arlington House's portico were built of wedgeshaped bricks with wooden capitals and entablature, covered with a hard stucco called "hydraulic cement" and painted to look like marble and sandstone. The main house was finished similarly, with the stucco scored to resemble masonry. The National Park Service reinstated these finishes in the 1970s.



Arlington House, Arlington, Virginia
From http://www.nps.gov/archive/arho/tour/home.html

THE LANIER MANSION in Madison, Indiana, 1840-1844, was built for banker James Lanier by architectbuilder Francis Costigan, who drew on pattern books published by Asher Benjamin and Minard LeFever. When first opened to the public by the State of Indiana, the house was painted white, but in the 1980s it was repainted a variety of blue-grey and warmer stone colors to bring out the architectural details. These colors faded, and Site Manager Gerry Reilly reports that a new color study made in 1997 by Mathew Mosca of Baltimore found that the brick body of the house had been painted a yellow ochre color, almost pumpkin, with yellowish white trim. That color scheme was applied in 1998, but within two years the ochre had faded to a pinkish color. St. Louis County's Faust Park had the same experience with the fading ochre Bates-Conway House in the village, recently repainted.



The Lanier Mansion, Madison, Indiana, photographed about 1995 For a more recent view in color, go to http://www.in.gov/ism/StateHistoricSites/LanierMansion/index.aspx

MAGNOLIA HALL looks like a plantation, but it is actually a town house, situated at 215 South Pearl Street in Natchez, Mississippi. Today it is the headquarters of the Natchez Garden Club and houses a museum of costume and an antique doll collection. The Garden Club restored it to imitate brownstone following a professional paint analysis. The house was buil in 1858 by Thomas Henderson, a planter and merchant, and was the last great mansion to be completed in Natchez before the Civil War.



Magnolia Hall, Natchez, Mississippi From http://www.natchezgardenclub.com/mag.htm

WAVERLEY (also spelled Waverly), in Clay County, Mississippi, ten miles east of West Point and somewhat farther west of Columbus, a center of antebellum architecture. It is a remarkable wooden house completed about 1852 for Colonel George Hampton Young, who had recently arrived from Georgia. Waverley is constructed around a large octagonal rotunda that rises from the floor through three levels of balconies to a rooftop cupola. The design is attributed to Charles Pond, the architect from Maine whose notable career in St. Louis was chronicled by David Simmons in the Spring 2005 issue of this newsletter.

A photograph from the early 20th century shows a group of school girls in white dresses standing in front of the house and demonstrates that the house was darker than the all-white paint it has now. According to Heath Childs, (*Waverley: Memories of a Mississippi Plantation*. Columbus, Mississippi: 2000, p. 17) the original exterior color scheme used "various grays and slate blues, which were early signs of the coming fashion for Romanticism in architecture."



Waverley, near West Point, Mississippi A vintage photo showing the house before it was painted white

EVENTS CALENDAR

Exhibit: "Fish Houses: Prints by Larry Stark"
Bernoudy Gallery of Architecture
Sheldon Galleries, 3648 Washington Avenue
January 20 to May 19

Wisconsin-based printmaker and conceptual artist Larry Stark has investigated and made works of art inspired by aspects of contemporary American vernacular culture since the 1960s. In 1992, he spent 26 days living in an ice fishing house on a frozen lake in Minnesota. There he documented the unique hand-built structures that dotted the lake, which were the basis of a series of silkscreen prints, seen in this exhibition. The Sheldon Galleries are open Tues & Thurs 12-8; Wed & Fri 12-5; Sat 10-2; plus one hour before Sheldon concerts & during intermissions.

Talk: "English and European Precedents for Tower Grove Park"

Stupp Center, Tower Grove Park Sunday, March 4, 3 p.m.

John Karel, former director of the state park system and respected director of Tower Grove Park for nearly two decades, has made pilgrimages to nearly all the European sites that inspired Henry Shaw's interest in botany and park-making, and this talk promises to reveal many insights into our National Historic Landmark park. The Stupp Center is located in the southeast corner of the park, off Grand Boulevard north of Arsenal.

HISTORY HIKES, SPRING 2007

The St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians sponsors this series of walking tours of historic neighborhoods of St. Louis County. Your guide is Esley Hamilton, preservation historian for the County. \$3 per person. Phone Mr. Hamilton at 314-615-0357 for information. Reservations are essential. The theme of this spring's walks is early private streets in the County.

Webster Park

Saturday, April 7, 9 to 11 Meet at Webster Groves Public Library, 301 East Lockwood at Orchard

The first private subdivision in the county, laid out in 1892, has many large frame houses in styles not well represented elsewhere in the area.

Brentmoor Park, Forest Ridge & Carrswold

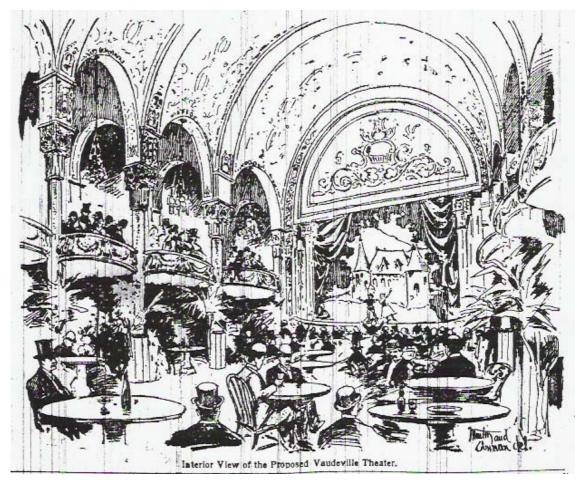
Saturday, April 14, 9 to 11 Meet at the Brentmoor Park Pavilion, corner of Wydown and Big Bend

Henry Wright, famed planner of Radburn New Town, started his career in 1910 with Brentmoor Park & Forest Ridge. Jens Jensen, the Danish-born landscape architect who pioneered the use of native plants, designed Carrswold in 1923. Three houses by Howard Van Doren Shaw and one by Bernoudy are here.

Claverach Park & The Moorlands

Saturday, April 28, 9 to 11 Meet on Audubon Drive at the corner of Wydown Blvd.

A wide range of residential types were accommodated in these sibling subdivisions from the 1920s, from large mansions to stylish apartments, many now condos.



The St. Louis Post-Dispatch announced on October 28, 1894 that Charles W. Whitney Jr. and Charles Pope planned to convert Shaare Emeth's magnificent Moorish style temple at 17th and Pine into a vaudeville theater. Annan and Son provided two drawings of the renovation, one of which we included in the Winter 2006 issue. Here is their proposed interior, signed "Martin and Annan del. [delineators]" Although the renovation was actually carried out to different designs by Kirchner & Kirchner, this drawing provides a fascinating look at what a "first-class" vaudeville establishment would have looked like, a cross between a theater and a cabaret. It also retains vestiges of the original temple, including the columns, arches, vaults. This may be the only surviving 19th-century view of a St. Louis synagogue interior.

News Letter

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