



Architecture in Ohio

Learn about the architecture of Ohio as represented in its public, commercial and residential structures.

Introduction

Throughout Ohio, a rich and diverse architectural history can be discerned from the landscape. This history reflects the many cultural traditions of the people who migrated to the state and adapted to its varying environments. From Ohio's southern hill country hamlets to the northern lakefront communities and all settlements in between, the region's early settlers brought their building traditions with them. Initially, these traditions were Prehistoric Algonquin or Iroquoian from north and east of Ohio. Noticeably influenced by the building practices of New England, the South and Europe, white settlers continued their traditional building techniques, styles, and types of structures, but with minor changes to adapt to their new environments. The combination of building traditions, available materials, and the local climate greatly determined the architecture of the region. This diversity of building traditions is the defining element of Ohio's architecture.

American Indian Architecture

Ohio's ancient peoples built a variety of large earthen mounds and enclosures. Simple conical mounds were used as cemeteries whereas geometric enclosures and effigy mounds (earthworks built in the shape of animals) are believed to have been used for ceremonial and religious purposes. The ancient culture known as the Hopewell built a series of mounds near present-day Ross County, Ohio, now known as Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. They also built the elaborate Newark Earthworks in Licking County. The Hopewell culture lived in Ohio between 100 BC and AD 400. These people lived in small villages, or hamlets, consisting of a few rectangular houses framed by wooden posts and roofed with bark or grass matting.

Serpent Mound is the largest and finest serpent effigy in the United States. At nearly a quarter of a mile long, Serpent Mound represents an enormous uncoiling serpent. The effigy mound lies on a plateau overlooking the valley of Brush Creek in Adams County, Ohio, and was built nearly a thousand years ago by the people of the Fort Ancient culture. The Fort Ancient people lived in large farming villages surrounded by a palisade wall. SunWatch Village, south of Dayton, is an example of a reconstructed Fort Ancient village.

Algonquian Indians, including the Delaware, Miami, Ottawa, and Shawnee tribes, along with Iroquoian groups such as the Wyandot and Seneca tribes, were present in Ohio when white settlers entered the region. By the historic era, mound-building was no longer part of their culture. Many lived in small farming villages in structures called wigwams. Constructed of saplings set into the ground in a circle and bent to form a dome, with a cover of elm or walnut bark (winter) or reed mats (summer), the wigwam sheltered a family and typically measured 15 feet in diameter. In the center of the dome was a smoke hole, and below, a fire pit. A reed mat or bark served as a door.



The tribes of the Iroquois confederation sometimes lived in longhouses, which were built in a rectangular pattern with poles set into the ground and lashed together to form an arch measuring 50-150 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 15-20 feet high. Posts were placed inside down the center to support the roof. Elm bark was used as a covering as well as for doors set at each end. Fire pits and smoke holes were placed approximately every 20 feet along the centerline of the shelter.

Frontier Architecture

Primarily intended as temporary shelters, log cabins were often the first types of homes built in the Northwest Territory and can trace their lineage to northern and eastern Europe. Constructed of round or hewed logs with notched joints and sealed with chinking (a filler material between logs), the rectangular or square cabin typically measured 15 by 20 feet. A fire pit and smoke hole would be in the center unless a chimney (often of wood and chinking) was built at one of the gable ends. Windows were sparsely used, and doorways were often off-center. Many log homes were covered over with clapboard and ornamentation. Newcom Tavern in Dayton, built in 1796, is an example of a surviving log cabin.

Pioneers in northern Ohio were mostly from the New England area and brought with them a style that resembled the traditional towns of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Towns were laid out around a central village green, surrounded by a church, courthouse and school. Houses were typically one-and-a-half or two-story white-framed homes built in the Federal style that was popular in the East. Most homes were built of wood, although occasionally brick was used. First developed in England, the Federal style, with its classical details and graceful proportions, was well-suited to the ambitions of the new American republic and came into fashion shortly after the Revolutionary War ended. In Ohio, the style spanned from around 1790 to 1840. The distinguishing elements of the Federal style are classical details (Greek and Roman motifs), relatively little ornamentation, clapboard siding (if wood), Flemish bond (if brick), semi-elliptical fanlights, multi-paned windows, flat arches, and cornices.

Southern Ohio homes were often also built in Federal style, but differed from those in the North. Adena, the home of Governor Thomas Worthington, is a classic example of Georgian Colonial style (similar to Federal style but with more symmetrical lines and fewer embellishments) and resembles a plantation house of Virginia. The Golden Lamb Inn, built in downtown Lebanon for travelers between Dayton and Cincinnati, was built in the Federal style in 1815. In 1820, Martin Baum (1765-1831), one of Cincinnati's early merchants, began work on his Federal house in the Palladian style.

Central Ohio's architecture differed from that of the northern and southern regions of the state. Predominantly settled by Pennsylvania German and Scotch-Irish settlers, most homes in the area were built of stone, although some were built of logs. The Greek Revival style was more common in this area, as exemplified by the Ohio Statehouse in downtown Columbus.



Common Architectural Styles of the 19th Century

Greek Revival: Archaeological investigations conducted during the first quarter of the 19th century produced measured drawings of Greek and Roman temples and inspired the Greek Revival style (circa 1835-1860). As with the Federal style, Greek Revival depends on classically-derived symmetrical proportions and details. Buildings were constructed to resemble Greek temples, and typically included a trabeated, or recessed, entryway surrounded by a porch with Doric or Ionic columns. In Lebanon, Ohio, lawyer John Milton Williams built Glendower Mansion in the Greek Revival style, and in Toledo, the "House of Four Pillars" was built around 1835. The Ohio Statehouse, completed in 1867, is in the Greek Revival style and was modeled after the Parthenon in Greece.

Gothic Revival: Almost concurrent with the Greek Revival style, the development of the Gothic Revival (circa 1835-1870) was an outgrowth of Romanticism and the rejection of classical styles. As its name suggests, the style was based on medieval forms and motifs—most notably the pointed arch and an emphasis on the vertical. Whether a high-style church or a modest cottage, Gothic Revival buildings shared some key features: vertical lines, narrow lancet windows, decorative bargeboard or "gingerbread," steeply-pitched roofs (often cross-gabled), stained glass or diamond-paned sashes, dormers, towers (on churches), and tall chimney stacks. The Truman Bagby House in Tiffin (1855) and Oak Hill Cottage (1847) in Mansfield exemplify the Gothic Revival style.

Romanesque Revival: Inspired by German and Northern Italian/Lombard architecture, the Romanesque Revival (circa 1850-1880) was more common for public architecture, churches and industrial buildings than for residences. The style has some readily-identifiable features: monochromatic masonry construction, rounded arches, and carved archivolt for window and door openings, brick corbelling and belt courses, and large square or polygonal towers with pyramid roofs. Public buildings in the Romanesque style include the Brumback Library (1901) in Van Wert, the City Building in Springfield, and the Hamilton, Clark and Fulton County courthouses. In Springfield, the Asa Bushnell House (1888) is an excellent example of a residential building in Romanesque Revival style.

Italianate: By far the most common style in Ohio, the Italianate style (circa 1850-1880) became popular during the state's greatest growth period (around 1870) and the requisite building boom that accompanied it. Entire downtown or main street commercial blocks were constructed in the style, as were industrial buildings and farmhouses that resembled Italian country villas. The style's most apparent features are the rounded arched windows and a low-hipped roof with bracketed cornices. The Benninghofen Home (1861-1863) in Hamilton, the Witzler Building in Perrysburg, and Urbana University's Bailey Hall (1853) typify the Italianate style. Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood is also home to one of the largest concentrations of urban Italianate buildings in the United States.

Second Empire: This style developed in France during the 1850s, when Napoleon III began a building campaign to maximize real estate space in Paris by promoting the mansard roof—a concave and almost vertically-pitched roof with enough space to allow a full window dormer and standing room in the attic. Second Empire style, popular from around 1855 to 1885, is virtually defined by the mansard roof, with its large dormers, iron cresting, slate shingles, and



heavy bracketed cornices. In Ohio the style became popular for public buildings, including the Henry County, Richland County, and Defiance County courthouses.

Queen Anne: Perhaps the most easily-recognizable mode of Victorian architecture, the Queen Anne Style, was popular in Ohio from 1880-1905. It was employed primarily for residences. A British architectural exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, and the published designs of the English Victorian architect Richard Norman Shaw, were important factors influencing the adoption of the style. Drawing upon medieval and classical forms, Queen Anne embodies a picturesque melding of both traditions. The prominent traits of the style are the round tower and wrap-around porch. Additional characteristics include bay windows, roof gables, overhangs, and spindle work. The Riley Home (1896) in Celina and the Sullivan-Johnson House (1896) in Kenton are examples.

Colonial Revival: The Colonial Revival (circa 1895-present) is one of several popular period revivals that continues into the 21st century. Its two subtypes, the Georgian Revival and Dutch Colonial Revival, were both common in Ohio. The Colonial Revival represented architects' reaction to the "excessive" styles of Victorian architecture (epitomized by the Queen Anne) and their desire to correct it with a structured, ordered and "clean" style. The restoration work at Colonial Williamsburg in 1925 increased the style's popularity substantially. With its patriotic lineage and formal appearance, it was well-suited not only for residences, but also for public buildings like libraries, post offices and municipal buildings—particularly those built by the public works programs of the Great Depression. Similar to the Federal style in terms of graceful classical details and proportions, the colonial revival has such features as a symmetrical façade, dormered gable roofs, Tuscan columns or pilasters, large double hung shuttered windows, modillions, and Palladian windows. Orville Wright's home in Dayton exemplifies the Georgian Revival style.

Common Architectural Styles of the 20th Century

Jacobethan Revival: Based on English manor homes of the 17th century, the Jacobethan Revival style is similar to Queen Anne but on a larger scale. Jacobethan Revival was popular among Ohio's elite in the first half of the 20th century. The Governor's Residence, built in 1923 by the son of industrialist Joseph A. Jeffrey, was designed in the Jacobean Revival style by architect Robert Gilmore Hanford. The Van Swearingen House in Shaker Heights and the expansive Stan Hywet Hall, built by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company President Frank Seiberling in Akron, are other examples.

Craftsman/Arts and Crafts: The arts and crafts movement, which was a philosophy as much as a style, focused on high-quality craftsmanship, natural materials, and simple forms. It was promoted in the United States by Gustav Stickley, a furniture designer who published the magazine *The Craftsman*. The style was adapted to various house types and plans, especially the bungalow, in which the style could display qualities such as exposed rafter tails and knee braces, multi-paned casement windows, and low-pitched front-facing gable roofs with projecting eaves. Arts and Crafts buildings in Ohio include "Greystone," built by the Arms family in Youngstown in 1904 and the Upper Arlington historic district near Columbus.



Prairie: Almost synonymous with architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the Prairie Style (circa 1905-1930) is considered a truly American style. It was created to suit the Midwestern landscape and shares philosophical underpinnings with Arts and Crafts, Japanese, and American Indian architecture. Proponents of the style sought to create honest buildings that displayed natural materials and structural form while blending in with the surrounding landscape. Prairie style houses in Ohio include the Wescott House (1907-1909), designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Springfield, the Dobkins House in North Canton and the Lincoln Gries residence in Fairlawn.

International: During the 1920s, various modern architectural and artistic movements took form, such as Art Deco, Art Moderne, and the International style. In Ohio, the International style was more practical and well-suited for residential architecture while the other styles can be found in commercial or high-rise buildings. The principal tenets of International style are its use of modern materials and structural forms in an almost industrial design and a lack of ornamentation. Typical elements found in an International building include asymmetrical cubic massing, reinforced concrete, white concrete or stucco wall surface, and horizontal windows with steel sashes and curtain walls.

Art Deco/Art Moderne: Art Deco was influenced by the modern art movements of Cubism, Futurism, and Constructivism and incorporated geometrical designs and natural shapes. Columbus' LeVeque Tower (1927) and Cincinnati's Union Terminal (1933) are the foremost examples of Art Deco architecture in Ohio.

Ranch: Suburban home building slowed in the early 20th century due to World War I and World War II, but gained traction again in the post-war era with the design of the ranch house, inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and his followers. Ranch homes have all living quarters on a single ground floor and are often built on a concrete slab.

Distinct Styles of the 20th Century

Ohio is also known for distinguishing examples of several 20th century architectural styles. The Ohio History Center in Columbus typifies Brutalism, a rational, structuralist, monumental style exported in the early 1950s by French and British architects. It was designed by Byron Ireland and opened in 1970.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland was designed by architect I.M. Pei. The building, located on the shore of Lake Erie, features a 162-foot tower and cantilevered wings in geometric shapes. The building opened in 1995.

The University of Cincinnati's Molecular Science building, designed by architect Frank Gehry, features a design in which no two walls meet at a ninety-degree angle. The exterior of the building is made of brick and glass, creating a curving and twisting effect. It was completed in 1999.

Ohio's Tallest Buildings

The tallest building in Ohio, and also the tallest building between New York City and Chicago, is the Key Tower in Cleveland. The building stands 947 feet tall and has 57 floors. Next on the list of Ohio's tallest buildings are:



- Progressive Life Tower, Cleveland (837 feet tall, 60 floors)
- Terminal Tower, Cleveland (708 feet tall, 52 floors)
- BP Tower, Cleveland (658 feet tall, 45 floors)
- Rhodes State Office Tower, Columbus (629 feet tall, 41 floors)
- Carew Tower, Cincinnati (574 feet tall, 49 floors)
- LeVeque Tower, Columbus (555 feet tall, 47 floors)
- William Green Building, Columbus (530 feet tall, 35 floors)
- Huntington Building, Columbus (512 feet tall, 37 floors)
- Vern Riffe State Office Tower (504 feet tall, 32 floors)
- PNC Tower, Cincinnati (495 feet tall, 31 floors)

Ohio's Courthouses

The pattern for the first generation of Ohio's courthouses was set by the original statehouse, in Chillicothe, Ohio. Completed in 1803, the courthouse was Ohio's first stone public building and was of Georgian Colonial design. Many of Ohio's first county courthouses, including those in Ashtabula County, Darke County, and Columbiana County, resembled the Chillicothe design with square shapes, hipped roofs, and cupolas. Classic Revival courthouses like the Highland County courthouse were built in brick that was painted white. Greek Revival courthouses include those in Montgomery County, Brown County, and Knox County.

Significant courthouse architects in Ohio include G. Maetzel, who designed Shelby County and Madison County courthouses and Thomas Boyd, who designed the courthouse in Wayne County. Frank J. Packard and J. W. Yost designed Orton Hall and remodeled University Hall at The Ohio State University in addition to their work on the Ottawa and Putnam County courthouses.

Barns

The bank barn, also known as German/Swiss or Pennsylvania barn, is one of the most common barn styles in Ohio. It features a lower level on the side of a hill and an overhanging forebay on the second level. Transverse frame barns are often found in the southern part of the state, and include two gables on either end of a center aisle. There are doors on each of the gables and the ends of the barn to allow easy access for wagons and animals.

Raised basement barns, common from around 1840 to 1900, are found throughout northern and central Ohio. Based on the English three to five bay barns, raised basement barns typically have doors on both ends and a large ramp going to the second floor of the barn.

Bridges

In the 19th century, bridges were often covered to prevent rain from rotting out the wood floors. More than one hundred covered bridges existed in Ohio at the end of the 20th century, and Ashtabula and Fairfield counties boast the largest number of covered bridges with sixteen each.

The many tributaries of Lake Erie in the north and of the Ohio River in the south required the construction of hundreds of bridges in Ohio. The Ohio River Suspension Bridge between Cincinnati and Covington, Kentucky, was designed by John A. Roebling and built between



1856 and 1866. Before the Brooklyn Bridge (also designed by Roebling) was built twenty years later, it was the longest bridge in the world. Cleveland's High Level Bridge over the Cuyahoga River was one of the longest steel-arch bridges in the world when it was completed in 1917.

Zanesville, Ohio, is known for the "S" and "Y" bridges. The Y-Bridge in Zanesville, named for the Y-shape created when the bridge forks in the middle, was built where the Licking and Muskingum Rivers converge. Five bridges have been built on the site, the most recent in 1984. Several S-Bridges exist in Muskingum and Guernsey counties. The bridges were built as part of the National Road in 1828. When bridges were constructed of brick, they were occasionally built in an S shape to compensate for the angle of the river the bridge was crossing.

Sports Stadiums

Cleveland's Municipal Stadium was the largest outdoor stadium in the world when it was completed in 1931. It could seat 78,189 fans. Designed by the Cleveland architectural firm of Walker and Weeks (who also designed the Public Auditorium and the Cleveland Public Library), the stadium housed the Cleveland Indians baseball team and the Cleveland Browns football team, and served as the site of dozens of other sports and musical events. Municipal Stadium was demolished in 1997 to make way for Cleveland Browns Stadium (now known as FirstEnergy Stadium). Hok Facilities Group led the design of the new stadium, which was completed in 1999.

Hok Facilities Group also designed Cleveland's Jacobs Field (now known as Progressive Field), completed in 1994. The park became the home of the Cleveland Indians, who played in League Park and Municipal Stadium prior to moving to Progressive Field. Both Progressive and Gund Arena (now the Quicken Loans Arena), home of the Cleveland Cavaliers NBA team and the Lake Erie Monsters hockey team, are part of the Gateway Entertainment Complex. The facilities were the first sports facilities in the United States to be built in the same location at the same time.

Riverfront Stadium (later Cinergy Field), former home of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team, opened in 1970. Riverfront was the first stadium to completely use AstroTurf. Prior to moving to Riverfront Stadium, the Reds played at Crosley Field, designed by architect Harry Hake in 1912. Crosley Field contained a two-tier seating deck in the outfield. It was destroyed in 1972. Cincinnati's Great American Ball Park, opened in 2000 and has since replaced Cinergy Field as home field for the Reds.

Ohio Stadium, home of the Buckeyes, was the first double-deck horseshoe stadium in the country. It also included an overhanging "C" deck. Attendance at the dedication game against Michigan totaled 71,385, well over the 66,210 capacity. It was built for slightly more than one million dollars and funded largely through donations. The stadium was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The first major Ohio Stadium renovation began in 1998 and was completed in 2001. In addition to adding new team facilities and a band room, seating was increased to about 96,000. Dayton native Howard Dwight Smith (1886-1958) designed the stadium on the Ohio State campus in Columbus.



John A. Fawcett Stadium, named for a member of the Canton Board of Education, was completed in 1938. At the time it was the largest high school stadium in the United States. The stadium was renovated in 1997. Five Canton area teams call the field home: Glen Oak, McKinley, and Timken high schools, Malone College, and Walsh University.

Other Structures

Roughly two-dozen lighthouses line the northern coast of Ohio along Lake Erie. Lighthouses at West Sister Island near Toledo, Green Island near South Bass Island, and Marblehead on Sandusky Bay are among the oldest existing lighthouses. Marblehead Lighthouse was built by William Kelly in 1822. It stands fifty feet tall and can be seen for several miles from Lake Erie. Two lighthouses, at Celina and Northwood, line Grand Lake St. Mary's in western Ohio.

Blossom Music Center, the summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra, is a contemporary structure consisting of a steel parabolic arch that anchors a large pavilion. Acoustic details allow concertgoers in the open pavilion and on the lawn area to enjoy music performed in the structure. It was built in 1968 and remains a popular venue today.

Another structure, the Shawnee Lookout Tower, was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1939 to protect the Wayne National Forest from fire. It was used for fire protection until the 1970s. The 100-foot-tall steel tower was restored in the 1990s and is listed on the National Historic Lookout Register.

National Register of Historic Places

With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the United States began an effort to "identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources." The Ohio Historic Preservation Office nominates eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places, which include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is a program of the National Park Service, and is administered at the state level by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office.

Notable Ohio Architects

Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) designed the Woolworth Building in New York City. When it was completed in 1913, it was the tallest building in the world. Gilbert was born in Zanesville, Ohio.

Benjamin Latrobe (1764-1820) designed Adena, the home of Thomas Worthington. He worked as Surveyor of Public Buildings in Washington, D.C., where he oversaw the construction of the White House and the U.S. Capitol Building.

Maya Lin (b. 1959) won a national competition with her design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1980, while an architecture student at Yale University. Lin was born in Athens, Ohio.



Levi T. Scofield (1847-1917) of Cleveland designed the Mansfield Reformatory (1896) as well as the asylums for the insane at Athens (1868) and Columbus (1869), Cleveland's Central High School (1878), and private residences such as the R.K. Winslow House (1878) on Euclid Avenue in Cleveland.

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