

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board



Italianate Style Comes to the Clark District

There is new construction taking place near the corner of 17th and Birch in Forest Grove. The addition to the neighborhood is in the form of a three story Italianate style home. Rich Taylor, current owner of the 1905 Rasmussen-Price house, is building the new home and has done much of the construction himself.

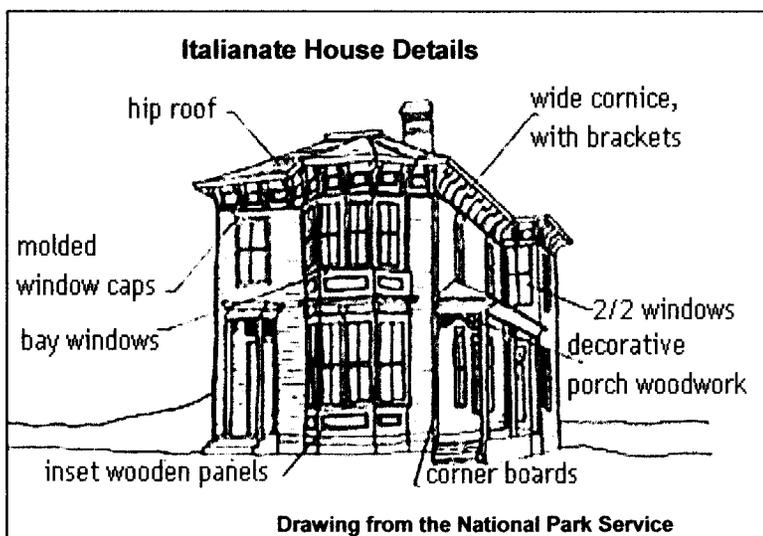
Italianate houses were a very popular design in the United States from the mid to late 1800s. The style was developed in England in the 1840s and was inspired by architects' desire to replicate a style of Italian villas. These Italianate homes were typically two to three stories with flat or hip roofs, bay windows, corner boards, and two-over-two double-hung windows. Often the windows had curved window caps.

Italianates typically have many of these features:

- Low pitched or flat roof
- Wide overhanging eaves
- Decorative paired brackets
- Cornices
- Wood frame
- Rectangular layout
- Elaborate decoration
- Balanced, symmetrical façade
- Emphasis on vertical proportions; 2 to 4 stories
- Tall, narrow double paned windows with cap moldings
- Bay windows
- Roman or segmented arches above windows and doors

The two main reasons for acceptance in the United States of the Italianate design in the 1800s were:

1. The style was suitable for many different building materials and budgets
2. Development of cast-iron and press-metal technology made producing decorative elements like brackets and cornices more efficient



The style, also known as Tuscan and Lombard, continued to be the most popular style until the 1870's. Barns, town halls, and libraries were often constructed in the Italianate style. Every region of the United States, with the exception of the Deep South, has Italianate buildings. The Civil War brought with it such economic devastation that few buildings in this style were built or remain in this region.

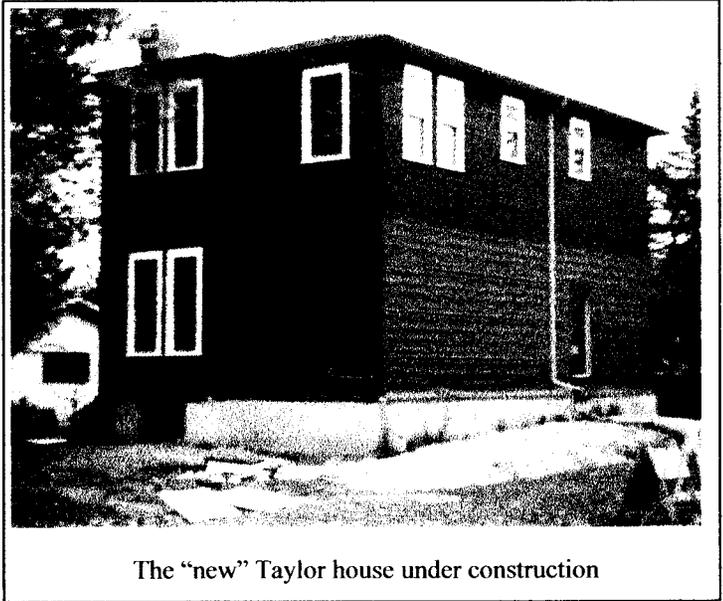
This 1864 house in Aurora, Illinois, shows the classic wide cornice and brackets of an Italianate. The Queen Anne style porch is not original, and was added sometime between 1890 and 1916. At the same time, the original pairs of narrow windows were removed and replaced by wider windows with the stained glass inserts.



The "new" Taylor house will not only add to the character of the Clark Historic District but it will also be very energy efficient. The walls of the house are structural insulated panels - a Styrofoam like substance. They are 5½ inches thick and provide insulation equal to R-26. Each 8x10 foot panel has a weight of approximately 250 lbs. A radiant floor heating system will provide heat throughout the house. A stainless steel boiler will heat water that will then circulate through pipes in the floorboards. The floorboards have a covering of aluminum for better heat transfer. There is also an instant hot water system that will heat 7½ to 8 gallons of water a minute. This system will provide enough hot water to run two showers and a dishwasher at the same time. Because of all of the energy efficient aspects Rich has included in the house, his heating bill should be low at around 200-300 dollars per year.

In keeping with the Italianate style Rich has included double hung wood windows made of fir in the 3½-story house. The windows will also have lots of detail including crown molding and corbels. There are two bay windows upstairs and a landing window in the staircase to the second floor. A sunken patio in the back of the house will provide protection from the wind when entertaining outside. The wide overhanging eaves and low-pitched roof are also in keeping with the Italianate style. The interior of the house

will have an arched foyer and there will be a detailed fireplace mantle. In all, the 2,500 square foot house will add character and style to a historic neighborhood while at the same time being very energy efficient.



The "new" Taylor house under construction

The Taylor Hollow Concrete Wall House

In the early 1900's, a man named John Taylor developed a process for building structures with hollow concrete walls. He used his process in Ohio and Florida until, sometime around 1920, he moved to Forest Grove and patented his new technique under the name of the Taylor Hollow Concrete Wall method.

Taylor then formed a company: Thormost Building Corporation. Thormost consisted of Taylor, his sons A.H. and J.B., and their business partner C.W. Mertz. Thormost began building residential and commercial buildings in and around Forest Grove, and in addition began licensing his process for use in other parts of the country.

The Taylor Hollow Wall process involved casting a double concrete wall with an internal cavity, with the two sides connected together with metal ties. Movable forms, both external and internal, were moved up the wall with each pour of concrete until the desired height was reached. The internal air space reached entirely around the house, from the footing to the rafters. The air space could either be dead air or used for ventilation.

Both the walls and the air space could be built to any thickness. For residences, the sides of the wall were typically two to three inches thick with an air space of approximately 1½ inches, bringing the total thickness to approximately 5½ to 7½ inches – quite similar to that of a wood framed house.

Aside from that insulating air space, what was the attraction of a hollow concrete wall building? According to the company's brochure, four men could set the forms and build the walls of an average seven-room house in four to five days. Another benefit was the reduced fire insurance premiums, due to the comparatively little flammable material used in the house – a matter of concern in Forest Grove since a fire had almost destroyed the downtown section. Additionally, the reduced cost of construction due to less lumber and labor being involved was an attractive quality for the process.

There are several examples of the Taylor Hollow Concrete Wall house still in the immediate area. In Forest Grove:

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- F.D. Gardner House, 1545 Main Street
- Dr. W.R. Taylor House, 2212 A Street
- Otto Osborn House, 3837 Pacific Avenue
- Parson House, 1825 Mountain View Lane
- C.L. Wagner House, 1318 Birch Street
- J.S. Buxton House, 1924 Pacific Avenue
- 1806 Elm Street

The Dr. W.R. Taylor house, built in the Dutch Revival Style, is one of Forest Grove's more attractive houses. Dr. Taylor wrote to John Taylor, stating:

"I have been living for the past two years in the Hollow Wall Concrete House you built for me. If I were going to build another house, I would have nothing else but the Hollow Wall Concrete type. I like it because in the hottest day I can find a cool place in it. It is also very easy to heat."

In Hillsboro, the Linklater House, at 230 NE Second, is listed on the National Register.

In addition to the residential homes built using the Taylor Hollow Wall method, there are also commercial buildings in the area still in existence built with the same method: the Forest Grove Memorial Chapel at 1920 Pacific Avenue, and in Gaston, the H.A. Krahmer Garage, which used to be the Gaston Fire Department.

Since John Taylor licensed his building process nationally – charging a royalty of \$0.05 per square foot – we may never know how many Taylor hollow concrete wall houses were built in the nation. However, you can see for yourself the enduring quality and charm of those built in Forest Grove.

The Eric Stewart Collection

If you've been around Forest Grove for a few years and are interested in history, then there's a good chance you knew Eric Stewart. Eric was the resident history expert, but passed away in 1995. Did you know that he donated his entire history collection to the library? This is a rich collection of thousands of items that Eric amassed over more than a decade – maps, photos, news articles, private papers, books, short biographies (often obituaries), city directories, postcards, thousands of slides and much more, chronicling the documented history of the city and its residents.

Currently, the Eric Stewart Collection is awaiting its new home within the new library building – a history room was built into the library, called appropriately enough, the Stewart History Room. But there's lots of work to be done first to organize and prepare the material for public viewing. Sitting in over 27 boxes in a city building, each box contains one type of item (maps, new clippings, photos, etc) but there's no way to find any particular item, or all the items pertaining to a specific historic site. Neither are there any procedures by which the Library will administer the collection – can items be checked out? what can be copied? will staff be able to assist?

Tackling the Herculean task of organizing and filing these thousands of items is a collaboration between the Friends of Historic Forest Grove (FHFG), the Historic Landmarks Board, the Library Commission, the Friends of the Library and the Library staff. Spearheading the project is Mary Jo Morelli of FHFG. There are four key pieces to this:

Cataloguing the items. Each item needs to be identified, catalogued and filed away. A computer database will be created that helps find any particular item, or all the items related to a specific topic. This will require many hours of volunteer help – in the weeks to come, expect to hear more about volunteer opportunities to help collate this fascinating collection (watch your mailboxes!).

Preparing a workspace. Working with the city, a room with adequate space to sort out the collection needs to be provided. It's all sitting in an unoccupied building, but access

and workspace issues need to be addressed before volunteers can begin.

Preparing the Stewart Room. Today, the Stewart Room houses a microfilm reader/printer and some reference materials, but much more needs to come before the collection moves in. More storage, a table, additional outlets, and a computer are all needed. (Many thanks to the FHFG for providing the table materials, and Greg Kriebel for donating the labor to build it!).

Creating the access policies and procedures. Will items be checked out? Copied? Easy enough if it's a Xerox™ copy, but what if someone wants an enlargement of an original photo or slide – do they take it out of the building? What about future collections – under what conditions will the library accept other collections? Will the collection remain unlocked, or how/when will it be opened? Library staff is currently drafting policies and procedures that will address how the collection will be administered.

So the obvious question that's burning in your mind is "When can I begin accessing this totally cool collection of history?" The timeline is mostly dependent upon the cataloging – that will most likely take longer than any other task. Estimates of the time and labor required are of ten to twelve volunteers putting in a total of a few hundred hours. But first, the database needs to be created (many thanks to David Morelli!), filing methods need to be determined, and protective materials such as notebooks, sleeves and additional cabinets need to be purchased. A project of this size could well stretch to a year or more.

Still needed are a computer (or donated funds to purchase one) plus additional funds for archival storage materials. Donations can be made to the Friends of Historic Forest Grove, a tax-deductible 501(c)3 organization.

This is a rare opportunity to have such a wonderful collection made available to the public and not locked away in a vault. But much work still needs to be done – keep watching this newsletter for updates and even an announcement!

The Oregon Cultural Trust

Effective December 1, Oregon has just enacted a great program that will directly help heritage projects! The Oregon Cultural Trust is a donation-funded program that makes grants to cultural projects such in Oregon's heritage, arts and humanities. The best part is that for every dollar you give, you reduce your taxes by a similar amount, meaning **donations cost you nothing!**

Here's how it works: If you've made a contribution* in 2002 to an Oregon cultural non-profit^, and then make a matching donation to the Oregon Cultural Trust, you can claim the Trust donation as a credit[†] on your 2002 taxes. In effect, this allows you to direct a portion of your state taxes toward Oregon's culture.

For more details and to find out how you can make a contribution online, go to www.culturaltrust.org. Contributions may also be mailed to: Oregon Cultural Trust, 136 State Capitol, Salem, Oregon 97301.

* A contribution can be cash, a membership, or documented in-kind contribution

^ A cultural non-profit is a heritage, humanities or arts organization

† Tax credit up to \$500. A credit directly reduces the taxes you pay, while a deduction only reduces your taxable income.

Upcoming Events from Friends of Historic Forest Grove

Mar 15 Trinkets and Treasures antique appraisal show
June 7 Annual Spring Garden Tour "Quilts and Gardens"

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board

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Preserving Forest Grove is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 992-3233.

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board Grant Program

Is your house on our local register? If it is - did you know that your house is eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding? The Historic Landmarks Board has funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work such as painting, restoring a porch or if you have structural work to do such a foundation repair, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant. Come see us! We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to any problems you may have.

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