



# Architecture in Salem

## *A Guide to Four Centuries of Design*



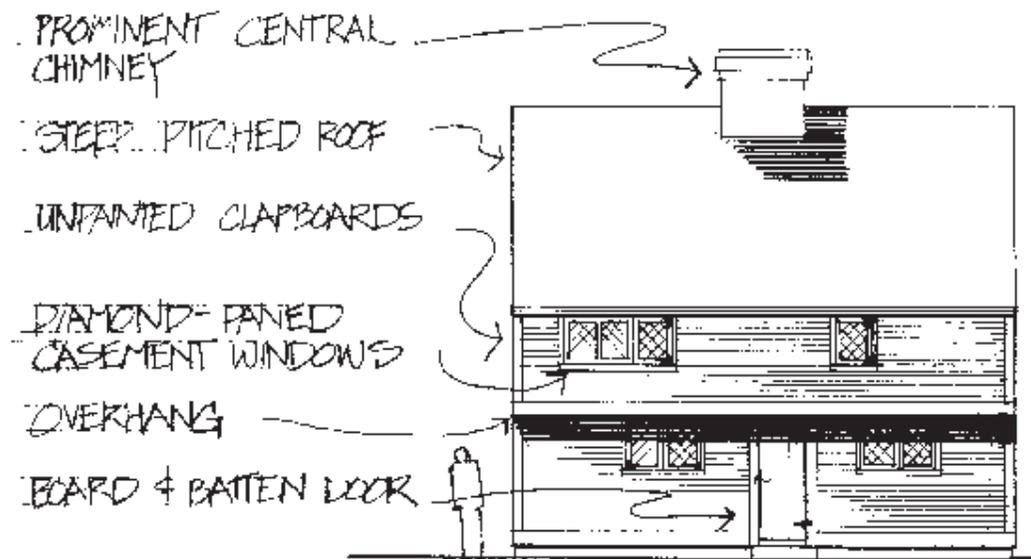
# The Seventeenth Century

*Salem, originally founded by Roger Conant as a Puritan fishing community in 1626, rapidly became a thriving seaport of 1500 residents. Salted codfish was the earliest staple of the colony, but it was soon joined by imported molasses from the West Indies, which was distilled into rum for domestic consumption and export to England. Salem quickly became one of North America's major mercantile ports, trading with British ports on the Atlantic Ocean.*

## Architecture in the Seventeenth Century

Architecture of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is commonly known as the First Period style. A First Period house is typically only one room deep with a prominent central chimney, an overhang on the front façade, and a lean-to in the rear. The timber framing of these buildings is usually visible in the interior of the house, and the exterior covered with unpainted clapboards and minimal decoration. Unlike later buildings, the doors and diamond-paned casement windows are often not placed symmetrically in the walls, although the front door is usually placed in front of the chimney. The doors are board-and-batten, made of vertical boards held together with smaller horizontal battens. The roof of a First Period house is steeply pitched and often has numerous gables.

Below: the elements of a seventeenth century (First Period) house. Images courtesy of Historic Salem, Inc.



Above: windows in First Period homes, like these replica windows in the John Ward house, are casements. Casement windows are hinged on the side and open like a door. The panes of glass are diamond shaped, with strips of lead holding them in place.

## Gedney House (1665), 21 High Street

Map Number 8

The Gedney House is a mid-17<sup>th</sup> century house that has survived nearly 400 years despite significant changes to its surrounding urban landscape. It was built c. 1665 by Eleazor Gedney, a prominent and wealthy Salem shipwright who was related to John Turner, the builder of the House of the Seven Gables. Originally, the house had the central chimney, oblong shape, and peaked gables of First Period architecture, but like many 17<sup>th</sup> century homes, it was added to in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The house is oriented to the east and originally overlooked Ruck's Creek and the South River (the present municipal parking lot at the end of the street), where Gedney had a wharf and shipyard. Today, visitors can view the structural carpentry and early decorative painted finishes that were preserved when mid-18<sup>th</sup> century lath and plaster ceilings, beam casings, and paneled walls were installed. *Gedney House is owned by Historic New England and is open by appointment June through October.*



Decorative pendants, like these on the Corwin House, were located on the corners of the overhang.

## House of the Seven Gables (1668), 115 Derby Street

Map Number 21

This house was built in 1668 by wealthy merchant John Turner, and it is recognized the world over because of the famous novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The house is also known by the names of its owners, the Turner and Ingersoll families, and it was lived in and renovated by three generations of Turners. For this reason, the Turner-Ingersoll mansion contains some of the earliest and most splendidly restored Georgian rooms north of Boston. The exterior is a 1912 Colonial Revival restoration that celebrates the mansion's First Period splendor with a second-story overhang and carved pendant drops. *The House of the Seven Gables is open for tours daily, and is closed in January.*

## Jonathan Corwin House (1642-1675), 310 Essex Street

Map Number 7

Built sometime between 1642 and 1675, the so-called "Witch House" was bought by Jonathan Corwin in 1675 from Captain Nathaniel Davenport of Boston. Corwin was a wealthy merchant who served as one of the judges of the 1692 Salem Witch Trials, thus lending the house its nickname. The house is an excellent example of an opulent First Period home, and features a steeply pitched salt-box roof, large central chimney, projecting two-story porch, five steep gables, and triple-casement windows. The restored interior is furnished to the late 17th century. *The Corwin House is owned by the City of Salem, and is open for tours daily from May through October.*

## Narbonne House (1675), 71 Essex Street

Map Number 17

This house, built by butcher Thomas Ives, is a good example of a craftsman's family home of the late seventeenth century. When it was first completed, the house consisted of single rooms on the first and second floor, with an attic under the tall peaked roof and a small root cellar. Most people in Salem would have lived in houses about this size. In the eighteenth century, a shorter addition was added to the side of the house away from Essex Street. *The National Park Service administers the Narbonne House, and it is open for tours daily.*

## John Ward House (c. 1684), Brown Street

Map Number 11

This house was built by a leather tanner of moderate wealth, more successful than the families living in the Narbonne house, but less than those in the Corwin and Turner houses, and was about equivalent to the Gedneys. It originally stood on a one-acre plot with a garden and outhouse on St. Peter Street opposite the jail used during the witchcraft trials. Like the Gedney and Narbonne Houses, the Ward House was built in stages between 1684 and 1730: first the left side, then the right, and last the lean-to addition at the rear. The house was moved to its current location in 1910, and was one of the earliest buildings to be relocated and restored for historic interpretation in the United States. *The Ward House is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum and is open for tours daily.*

# The Eighteenth Century

*Throughout the eighteenth century, Salem grew as the fishing industry and the West Indies trade expanded. During the American Revolution, the town prospered still further by privateering. After the Revolution, Salem reached the greatest heights of its wealth and influence as local merchants began to trade with China, India, and other countries around the world. Ships from Salem returned from their voyages filled with coffee, tea, silks, spices, and other exotic goods that filled the mansions in the town. By 1790, Salem was the sixth largest city in the United States, with a population of about 10,000.*

## Architecture in the Eighteenth Century

Between 1725 and 1775, the principle architectural style of 18th century America was Georgian, named after the three Kings George who ruled England and her colonies from 1714 to 1820. Balance and symmetry are the main features of Georgian architecture, and is reflected in the floor plans of homes of this period, and in the placement of windows and doors in the street façade. In addition, side or end chimneys often replaced the central chimney of First Period homes. Structures built at the beginning of the period typically have gambrel roofs, while later houses often feature a hipped roof. In New England, brick became a popular material for house construction in the mid-to-late 18th century, although wood was still the most common building material.



Above: the Hawkes House (left), begun in 1780, has a typical late Georgian hipped roof, with the roofline rising from all four sides of the building to a ridge in the center, in this case hidden behind the decorative railing. The Derby House (right) built in 1762, has the earlier style of a gambrel roof. NPS photo.

Below: the elements of a Georgian house. Courtesy of Historic Salem, Inc.



## Crowninshield-Bentley House (c. 1727), 126 Essex Street Map Number 14

The Crowninshield-Bentley House was built for ship captain and merchant John Crowninshield, and is where the famous diarist Rev. William Bentley boarded with the Crowninshield family for many years. For most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the house was a duplex, because two members of the family each inherited half of the house. This was very common in New England, and explains the presence of multiple kitchens in many 18<sup>th</sup> century homes. Like most town houses at the time, it originally stood at the curb, but in 1959 it was moved down Essex Street to its present location. *The house is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum and is currently closed for renovation.*



Cheaper glass in the 18th century led to the development of windows with top and bottom sashes with many panes, such as these on the Derby House.

## Hawthorne Birthplace (1730-1745), 115 Derby Street Map Number 20

This house, purchased by author Nathaniel Hawthorne's grandfather in 1772, is a typical house of the successful captain or small business owner of 18<sup>th</sup> century New England. The first floor contains a kitchen, parlor, and study; the second floor contains three bedrooms, and more bedrooms and storage are in the attic. Two staircases, at the front and the back of the chimney, provide access to the upper stories. Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in this house on July 4, 1804, and because of the association the house was moved from Union Street to the grounds of the House of the Seven Gables in 1957. *It is owned by the House of the Seven Gables, open to the public daily for tours, and closed in January.*

## Derby House (1762), 168 Derby Street Map Number 19

Built as a wedding present from successful merchant Richard Derby to his son Elias Hasket Derby, the Derby House is the oldest standing brick building in Salem. The gambrel roof, symmetrical placement of windows, and elegant front door all exhibit the taste that a wealthy merchant family needed to express in the eighteenth century British world. This house is not as large as many other merchants' homes of the period, but it is made of brick, the most expensive building material in New England at the time. The bricks were made locally, but the lime that was needed to make the weatherproof mortar had to be imported, since lime is not common in New England. *The house is administered by the National Park Service, and is open daily for tours.*



Samuel McIntire (1757-1811) was one of the first American architects. These "designers" usually oversaw house construction and carved decorative work as well as drawing house plans. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, design and construction of homes were different professions.

## Hawkes House (1780, 1800), 174 Derby Street Map Number 18

About 1780, the Derby family hired Samuel McIntire to design a house to replace the brick home they had lived in for twenty years. The new house was in the late Georgian style, with tall ceilings, large windows, an imposing three story facade, and hipped roof. The Derbys did not, however, move into the house, and it was left unfinished until about 1800, when it was sold to Benjamin Hawkes, who completed the building. *The Hawkes House is part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site, and is not open to the public.*

## Peirce-Nichols House (c. 1782), 80 Federal Street Map Number 4

At about the same time McIntire was building a new house for the Derbys, he was also designing a similar house for Jerathmiel Peirce, co-owner of the merchant ship Friendship. McIntire returned to the Peirce house in 1801 to remodel the interior of the east side for the wedding of Sally Peirce to George Nichols. Behind the house are stables and a terraced garden extending back to a small arbor. The property originally swept down to the North River, where Peirce could dock his vessels. *The house is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum, and will be open for tours in the fall of 2007.*



# The Nineteenth Century

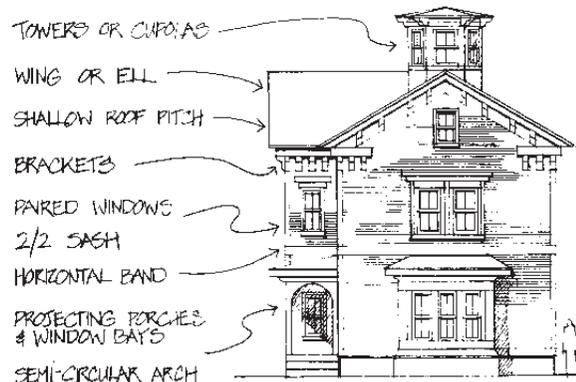
As the 19th century dawned, Salem ships going “to the farthest ports of the rich East,” as the city’s motto says, brought millions of dollars of goods into the city. However, the 1807 Embargo and the War of 1812 closed many American ports. As the economy recovered, Boston became the regional center for international trade. But Salem’s economy expanded again in the 1830s, as factories in the area processed raw goods like hides, cotton, and jute into cloth, shoes, and other products. Salem’s population grew as immigrants came to find jobs in the mills.

## Architecture in the Nineteenth Century

The Federal style (c.1780–c.1830) dominated early 19th century architecture. Symmetry still ruled, but the hipped roof, often hidden by a balustrade, was the most prevalent. While Georgian homes were solid and masculine, the Federal style was light and feminine, with tall, slender chimneys and large fanlights over the entry, creating a feeling of delicacy.

The rest of the 19th century saw an explosion of revival styles. Some of the most popular styles in Salem were Greek, Gothic and Italianate. The **Greek Revival** (c.1830–c.1850), based on Greek temples, visually connected America with the ancient democracies of Greece and Rome. Its difference from British Georgian design made it a popular way for Americans to express their new independence. Around the same time, the **Gothic Revival** (c.1840–c.1870) developed as some argued that the cathedral, not a pagan temple should be the model for a Christian home. This style was not symmetrical, and houses often had peaked roofs decorated with verge boards, or “gingerbread trim.” The **Italianate Revival** (c.1860–c.1890), celebrated the robust, rambling, and informal forms of Italian farmhouses, and had heavy overhanging roofs supported by large brackets, rounded arch windows, and cupolas.

Top to bottom: Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate styles. Images courtesy of Historic Salem,



Gridley J. F. Bryant (1816-1899). Between 1837 and 1899, Bryant designed more buildings in the Boston area than any other architect of his time. He worked in a variety of revival styles.

## Gardner-Pingree House (1805), 128 Essex Street

Map Number 13

This elegant Federal-style mansion was built for John Gardner, a wealthy Salem merchant and nephew of Elias Hasket Derby. At the time it was built, the house was one of the most expensive buildings in Salem, and it is one of Samuel McIntire’s finest and best-preserved designs. *The Gardner-Pingree House is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum and is open for daily tours.*

## Hamilton Hall (1805), 9 Chestnut Street

Map Number 6

Samuel McIntire designed Hamilton Hall for a group of stockholders to serve as the gathering place for the local Federalist political party. For over 200 years, the Hall has hosted balls, auctions, plays, concerts, cotillions for local debutants, and weddings. The building exterior has many beautiful examples of the Federal style, including the evenly spaced arch-topped Palladian windows which light the ballroom and the delicately carved classical swags flanking the eagle. Many dignitaries, including the Marquis de Lafayette have been feted in the hall. *Hamilton Hall is open by appointment.*

## Custom House (1819), 178 Derby Street

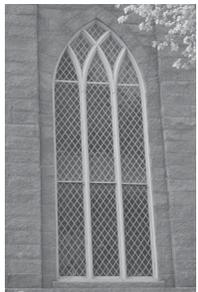
Map Number 16

Built by the U.S. Customs Service in 1819, this Federal-style building served as a governmental office building from 1819 to 1937. The building was built in the most fashionable style of the period, featuring a flight of granite steps leading to the formal entrance on the second floor of the building. This building was designed to show that the Federal Government could build the type of monumental architecture that merchants and captains were used to seeing in Europe, and was a visual reminder of the strength and stability of the Federal Government. *The Custom House is administered by the National Park Service, and is open daily by tour as part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site.*

## First Church (1835), 316 Essex Street

Map Number 5

The home of the second oldest Protestant congregation in the U.S. (established in 1629), the First Church is one of New England’s best examples of Gothic Revival stone masonry, and is made of Quincy granite. The interior was originally plain white, but in 1848, the Gothic design was carried through the interior of the church in wood carvings on the walls, pews, and pulpit, as well as the stained glass that was placed in the pointed-arch windows.



Pointed windows, such as the ones on the First Church, are typical of the Gothic style.

## City Hall (1837), 93 Washington Street

Map Number 10

Salem City Hall, erected in 1836-37, is a good example of the Greek Revival style. The building was designed by Boston architect Richard Bond, and has a granite street facade, with brick walls on the other three sides. A replica of the eagle carved by Samuel McIntire is on the roof. The building was expanded in 1876, and again in 1978-1979.

## Plummer Hall (1856) and John Tucker Daland House (1851), 132 Essex Street

Map Number 12

Plummer Hall, (to the left) was designed by Enoch Fuller in the Italianate style, and built for the Salem Athenaeum. It was purchased by the Essex Institute in 1906 and joined by a connector to the Daland House in 1907. The Daland House (to the right) was built for a wealthy Salem merchant. Designed by Boston architect Gridley J. F. Bryant, it is one of the finest Italianate houses in New England and was among the last great townhouses built in Salem. Both of these buildings have the tall, thin windows and heavy brackets supporting the roof that are typical of the Italianate style. *Plummer Hall and the Daland House are owned by the Peabody Essex Museum and house the Phillips Library, museum offices and collections storage.*

# The Colonial Revival

*Salem's golden era of international shipping was over by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, eclipsed by larger ports like Boston and New York. However, manufacturing supported the local economy and the transportation of raw materials and finished goods continued by water and rail. Beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Salem also began to employ its unique history and magnificent architecture to encourage tourism. In 1926, the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Salem's founding was a landmark event that attracted visitors from all over the country.*

One of the last architectural revival styles to come to Salem was the Colonial Revival, which began in the 1870s with the celebrations around the nation's 100th birthday. As a style, Colonial Revival influenced architecture, interior decoration, clothing, crafts, landscape design, and literature, as Americans tried to recapture an idyllic past. However, the term "colonial" is misleading as many architects of the period did not worry about historical accuracy when reproducing 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century styles. Therefore, both First Period diamond-paned windows and Federal fan-light windows can often be found on the same Colonial Revival building. In Salem, some of the most notable Colonial Revival buildings include 30 Chestnut Street, an 1896 re-interpretation of the Federal style by John Benson for Ann Maria Pingree Wheatland and the Lydia E. Pinkham Memorial at 264 New Derby Street, designed in 1922 in the neo-Georgian style.

As a reform movement, the Colonial Revival used educational and cultural institutions to "Americanize" new immigrants. Outdoor museums like Colonial Williamsburg, Greenfield Village in Michigan and Mystic Seaport in Connecticut reflected a new interest in America's past. This fascination led to the beginning of the historic preservation movement, and Salem was the scene of some of the most important historic building restorations in the country. The earliest period rooms in the U.S. were assembled in 1907 by George Francis Dow, and are still housed in the Peabody Essex Museum's Phillips Library. Dow also restored the 17th century John Ward House, the 1762 Derby House, and oversaw the construction of "Pioneer Village," a replica of the c.1630 Salem village for the Salem Tercentenary. Joseph Chandler, the architect who restored the Paul Revere House in Boston, restored the House of the Seven Gables in 1917 at the behest of Caroline O. Emmerton. One of the

last large-scale Colonial Revival restorations in Salem was the 1948 restoration of the 1642/75 Jonathan Corwin House, also known as the "Witch House," which forever identified the City of Salem's tourist image with the Witchcraft Trials of 1692.

Left: Caroline Emmerton (1866-1942), was one of the most committed Colonial Revival reformers in Salem. In 1908 she bought the old Turner mansion, had it restored to its 17th century appearance, and opened it as a historic house museum. Her goal was to associate this historic building with a settlement house, which would provide the surrounding Polish and Russian community with classes in English and citizenship, as well as other forms of assistance. Emmerton wrote later that "the historical and literary associations of the old houses must surely help in making good citizens of our boys and girls." Today, the House of the Seven Gables still supports the Settlement House, which provides educational opportunities to Salem children.



## Ropes Mansion (1727 and 1894), 318 Essex Street

Map Number 3

This house was built in the Georgian period, and was home to three generations of the Ropes family. It was renovated in 1894 in the Colonial Revival style by the firm Stone, Carpenter & Wilson, and as part of that renovation, the house was moved back from the street to create a front yard. *The Ropes Mansion is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum and is open for tours by appointment. The Colonial Revival Garden is open to the public daily.*



## Salem Athenæum (1907), 337 Essex Street

Map Number 2

Architect William G. Rantoul designed this classically-inspired red brick structure for the Salem Athenæum, an independent membership library incorporated in 1810. Dedicated in 1907, the library building is modeled on Homewood, a Federal period mansion built by Charles Carroll of Baltimore. *Tours of the building and exhibits are available during open hours year-round.*



## Phillips House (1800, 1821 and 1911), 34 Chestnut Street

Map Number 1

The Phillips House is a mix of many of Salem's popular architectural styles. The original section of the Phillips House is made up of four rooms from a Samuel McIntire-designed building that was moved to Chestnut Street. The exterior of the Phillips House - the evenly sloped roof, graduated three stories, symmetrical facade, and corner quoins - is in the Federal style, but as the house was expanded throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the room decorations and proportions contained both Federal and Victorian styles. The Phillipses, a Massachusetts family since 1630 and ship captains and merchants in Salem since the 1780s, purchased the house in 1911, stripped away the Victorian decor, and created traditional interiors in the Colonial Revival style that reflected the early 20<sup>th</sup> century nostalgia for the American past.



*The Phillips House is owned by Historic New England, and is open Tuesday through Saturday from June through October.*

One of the most popular 18<sup>th</sup> century designs that the Colonial Revival style borrowed was the Palladian window.

## Hawthorne Hotel (1924-25), 18 Washington Square West

Map Number 15

Opened in 1925, the Hawthorne Hotel was Salem's first hotel, paid for by local citizens who raised \$750,000 to build "[a] hotel to meet the needs of Salem, its guest and visitors..." For the city's guests, Salem architect Philip Horton Smith created the largest Colonial Revival building in Salem. The hotel has many modified "antique" architectural elements that are hallmarks of the Colonial Revival style including corner quoins, Palladian windows, and recessed arched windows - designs found in actual Georgian and Federal buildings, yet exaggerated here for monumental effect.

*The Hawthorne Hotel lobby is open all year round.*

Top: an original Federal Palladian window, designed by Samuel McIntire for Hamilton Hall in 1805.

Center: a Palladian window designed by William Rantoul in 1911 for the Phillips House. This window closely copies the scale of 18th century windows to fit the scale of the house.

Bottom: One mark of Colonial Revival architecture was to exaggerate details, as seen on the Hawthorne Hotel ballroom's nearly twenty foot high Palladian windows.

## United States Post Office (1932-33), 2 Margin Street

Map Number 9

Salem's Post Office building epitomizes the nostalgic appeal of the Colonial Revival architecture style. Philip Horton Smith once again looked to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century American building styles for his inspiration. The temple-like classical front with its double flight of stairs highlights the importance of the building, and the flattened columns, or pilasters, as well as the triple arched entrances with fan-light windows are architectural motifs found in many of Salem's original Colonial and Federal domestic and public buildings.

*The Post Office is open Monday through Saturday.*



Salem Maritime National Historic Site  
174 Derby Street  
Salem, MA 01970  
978-740-1680  
[www.nps.gov/sama](http://www.nps.gov/sama)

On the cover, top to bottom: The House of the Seven Gables (1668), the Crowninshield-Bentley House (c. 1727), the US Custom House (1819), and the Salem Athenæum (1907).

**For Further Reading:**

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Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2004.

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All the structures in this guide are either individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or sit within a district listed on the National Register. For more information, visit the National Register web site: [www.cr.nps.gov/nr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr)

The National Park Service thanks our partners in this project. For more information on the institutions whose buildings are listed in this guide, please visit their web sites:



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