Glossary of Architectural Terms

**Batten** (‘bat-en). A usually thin, narrow strip of wood used to seal or reinforce the vertical joint between two boards.

**Captain’s walk** (from its use by sea captains during their absence from the sea; also called widow’s walk, from its similar use by their wives). A railed observation deck atop a waterfront house.

**Cornice** (‘kor-nis). The projecting horizontal part of a roof which extends beyond the wall.

**Cresting**. A decorative ridge on a roof, usually as a continuous series of ornaments. A crest is the single ornament; creston is the continuous feature.

**Cupola** (‘kyu-po-la). A small structure, square, octagonal, or round, built upon a roof.

**Dentil** (‘den-til) **board-and-batten**. Small rectangular batten intended for ornamental effect by alternation of light and shadow.

**Double-hung windows** (also called vertical slide windows). A type of window having two balanced sashes that operate vertically.

**Fretwork.** Decoration consisting of intricate, interlaced openwork of wood, metal, or stone, usually in relief.
**Gable.** The triangular piece of wall under the ridge of a pitched roof.

**Gingerbread** (from the lavish gilding often applied to the cake of the same name). Any superfluous ornament in architecture.

**Gothic arch.** An arch that forms a point, rather than a curve, at the apex.

**Mansard** (‘man-sard) roof. A roof having two slopes on all sides, the lower of which is steeper than the upper one.

**Molding.** Any strip of material used for ornamentation, covering joints, or concealing wires.

**Ogee** (‘o-jee) arch (also called keel arch). A pointed arch, slightly convex near the apex.

**Parapet** (‘par-a-pet). A low wall or railing at the edge of a roof, terrace, or balcony.

**Scroll.** A spiral or scroll-shaped band, usually in relief, to contain an inscription.

**Sidelights.** A pair of narrow windows flanking a door.

**Transom** (‘tran-som) window. A hinged window over a door usually for ventilation.
Glossary of
Architectural Styles

American architecture is unique, and the architecture of the Bass Islands is an excellent example of that uniqueness. The designs seen in American architecture are often difficult to categorize. Many structures are catalog or handbook variations of standard architectural styles constructed by local builders or by traveling carpenters and masons. Other buildings are products of a blending of styles or of the transitions from one style to another. And of course each community or region contains a few really spectacular creations that epitomize particular styles and are the work of talented architects.

The Bass Islands offer a delightful cornucopia of architectural styles, ranging from elegant summer residences of the rich to simple dwellings of local farmers. This glossary is intended to help the tourist identify and appreciate island architecture.

Bass Island Styles

**Greek Revival (1840-75).** This style is exemplified by simple, rectangular, frame houses with offset doorways surrounded by sidelights or transoms or both. Roofs are low pitched; windows are flat topped and double hung. The plans often feature a two-story main section with a one-story wing attached (called the “upright-with-wing” plan). Generally these structures have wide eaves and no porches.

**Gothic Revival (1850-1900).** Dominated by the steep, pointed arches of rooflines, windows, and moldings, Gothic buildings may be of brick, stone, or frame construction. They feature heavily carved gable moldings (gingerbread), decorative porches, and vertical battens covering wood siding joints (the “board-and-batten” style).
Romanesque Revival (1860-1900). The Romanesque style is often found on churches, mausoleums, or public buildings made of brick or stone. It is dominated by round-arched openings and often is incorporated into other styles of architecture.

Italianate (1865-80). This design, seen very often on the Bass Islands, features ornate decorations such as brackets supporting roof cornices, decorative window and door moldings, carved porch woodwork, tall, narrow windows, and bay windows. Building plans may be square, rectangular, or L-shaped.

Italian Villa (1865-80). This design is similar to Italianate and is often characterized by a corner tower, wooden or iron cresting (railings) at the roofline, and a large, wrap-around porch.

Second French Empire (1870-80). This design is also similar to Italianate but is dominated by a sloping mansard roof above the main part of the house, with dormer windows piercing this roof. Buildings of this style are frequently squarish and small in scale with wide porches.

Stick Style (1880-99). This type of architecture is less ornate than other styles; it is characterized by boards in vertical, diagonal, and horizontal patterns applied to the walls or to projecting gables. These buildings are of frame construction.

Queen Anne (1885-1905). The Queen Anne style is often called “Victorian.” Its buildings are irregular in plan, and a variety of construction and decorative materials (such as bricks, shingles, clapboard, stone or wooden moldings, leaded and stained glass) may be used on a single structure. The style is often dominated by a rounded corner tower and features high roofs in many shapes, gingerbreaded wrap-around porches, decorative chimneys, and decorative (often geometric) window and gable designs.

Eastlake (1890-1900). This style is sometimes referred to as “Steamboat Gothic.” Elements include furniturelike woodwork (such as knobs and spindles) produced on lathes. Other features are those of Stick Style or Queen Anne architecture.
**Shingle Style (1890-1910).** This style takes its name from its wooden shingle-covered walls. Elaborate examples are usually irregular in plan, whereas less elaborate versions are often more symmetrical. Buildings of this design generally are simpler in overall execution than those of other styles.

**Colonial Revival (1890-1930).** These structures may be symmetrical or asymmetrical and usually have simple, formal, rectangular floor plans. Features include classical motifs (such as dentil moldings, Corinthian capitals, or Roman columns), oval or semi-oval openings, and windows and doors that are generally flat topped with geometric mullions. They are usually of frame construction.