IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Gabled or hipped roof of low pitch; cornice line of main roof and porch roofs emphasized with wide band of trim (this represents the classical entablature and is usually divided into two parts: the frieze above and architrave below); most have porches (either entry or full-width) supported by prominent square or rounded columns, typically of Doric style; front door surrounded by narrow sidelights and a rectangular line of transom lights above, door and lights usually incorporated into more elaborate door surround.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Six principal subtypes can be distinguished on the basis of porch and roof configurations:

ENTRY PORCH LESS THAN FULL HEIGHT, OR ABSENT—About 20 percent of Greek Revival houses have small entry porches which do not extend the full height of the facade. In some examples the entry porch is recessed into the facade. About 3 percent lack porches altogether.

FULL-HEIGHT ENTRY PORCH—This subtype has a dominant central porch extending the full height, but less than the full width, of the facade; it thus resembles the Early Classical Revival style from which the Greek Revival sprang. The Greek Revival version can usually be distinguished from its predecessor by the typical band of cornice trim and the rectangular lights, rather than a curving fanlight, over the entrance. As in the earlier style, many Greek Revival examples have a traditional classical pediment above the entry porch. In contrast to the earlier style, however, many Greek examples have flat-roofed entry porches. As in the entry porch less than full height, this type of entry porch also occurs recessed into the facade. About one-fourth of Greek Revival houses are of this subtype; like Early Classical Revival houses, these are most common in the southern states.

FULL-FACADE PORCH—In this configuration, the colonnaded porch occupies the full width and height of the facade. No pediment occurs above the porch, which is covered either by the main roof or, less commonly, by a flat or shed-style extension from it. In a few examples, the full-facade porch also extends around one or both sides of the house. This subtype makes up about one-fourth of Greek Revival houses. Like the preceding type, it is most common in the southern states.

FRONT-GABLED ROOF—All of the preceding subtypes have side-gabled or hipped roofs. In
IDENTIFYING FEATURES
Steeply pitched roof, usually with steep cross gables (roof normally side-gabled, less commonly front-gabled or hipped; rarely flat with castellated parapet); gables commonly have decorated vergeboards, wall surface extending into gable without break (eave or trim normally lacking beneath gable); windows commonly extend into gables, frequently having pointed-arch (Gothic) shape; one-story porch (either entry or full-width) usually present, commonly supported by flattened Gothic arches.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES
Six principal subtypes can be distinguished on the basis of roof form, ground plan, or detailing:

CENTERED GABLE—These are symmetrical houses with side-gabled or hipped roofs having a prominent central cross gable. The plane of the cross gable may be either the same as the front wall or projected forward to make a small central wing. Smaller cross gables, or gable dormers, sometimes occur on either side of the dominant central gable. In some examples these are enlarged to give three identical cross gables. This subtype makes up one-third of Gothic Revival houses.

PAIRED GABLES—Similar to the preceding subtype but with two, rather than one or three, cross gables. The two gables are sometimes extended forward into projecting wings. About 5 percent of Gothic Revival houses are of this type.

FRONT-GABLED ROOF—About 10 percent of Gothic Revival houses are simple gabled rectangles rotated so that the narrower gable end makes up the front facade. Some have additional cross gables added to the roof slope over the side walls, but many lack such cross gables.

ASYMMETRICAL—About one-third of Gothic Revival houses are of compound asymmetrical plan. L-shaped plans with cross-gabled roofs are the most common form, but there are many less regular variations. Small secondary cross gables, or gable dormers, were commonly added to one or more wings. After 1860, square towers were occasionally used.

CASTELLATED OR PARAPETED—The four preceding subtypes all have normal roof-wall junctions in which the eaves project outward beyond the wall. A fifth subtype, more closely based on English Medieval models, has either flat roofs with scalloped (castellated)
IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Two or three stories (rarely one story); low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath; tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above, windows frequently with elaborated crowns, usually of inverted U shape; many examples with square cupola or tower.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Six principal subtypes can be distinguished:

SIMPLE HIPPED ROOF—These are square or rectangular box-shaped houses with hipped roofs that are uninterrupted except, in about half of the surviving examples, by a central cupola (these have been called cube and cupola houses). Facade openings are typically three-ranked, less commonly five-ranked, rarely two- or four-ranked. This is the most common subtype, making up about one-third of Italianate houses.

CENTERED GABLE—These are houses of both simple and compound plan having a front-facing centered gable. The usually rather small gable projects from a low-pitched hipped or side-gabled roof. Frequently the front wall beneath the gable extends forward as a prominent central extension. About 15 percent are of this type.

ASYMMETRICAL—These are compound-plan houses, usually L-shaped, without towers. Roofs are cross-gabled or cross-gabled. In a few examples the addition of a second forward-facing wing makes a U-shaped plan. About 20 percent of Italianate houses are of this type.

TOWERED—Only about 15 percent of Italianate houses have the square tower that is often considered to be characteristic of the Italian Villa. The tower is sometimes centered on the front facade or placed alongside it; more commonly, it occupies the position where the wing joins the principal section of an L-plan house. Typically, such towers have narrow paired windows with arched tops. Tower roofs are most commonly low-pitched and hipped; occasionally, steep mansard roofs are used instead.

FRONT-GABLED ROOF—In this subtype, Italianate detailing is added to the simple front-gabled rectangular box popularized by the Greek Revival style. This subtype, about 10 percent of surviving examples, is common on narrow lots in large cities.

TOWN HOUSE—Italianate styling, along with the related Second Empire style, dominated urban housing in the decades between 1860 and 1880. Italianate town houses are characterized by wide, projecting cornices with typical brackets; the cornice conceals a flat or low-pitched roof behind. Typical Italianate windows further distinguish these examples.
Three principal types of exotic decorative ornament were occasionally used on romantic era houses: Egyptian, Oriental, and Swiss Chalet. These define three very rare styles, which, for convenience, will be treated here as subunits of a single Exotic Revival movement. The Egyptian and Oriental revivals were patterned after similar movements taking place in 19th-century Europe. The Swiss Chalet style, in contrast, was a romantic borrowing from contemporary Swiss domestic practice.

**EGYPTIAN**

The handful (probably fewer than a dozen) surviving domestic examples superimpose Egyptian columns on otherwise Greek Revival or Italianate forms. These columns resemble massive bundles of sticks tied together at the top and bottom and flared at the top.

The European Egyptian Revival sprang from Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign (1798–99), coupled with a subsequent scholarly interest in Egypt as a source for the more familiar architecture of classical Greece and Rome. In Europe, as in this country, Egyptian motifs were most often applied to public buildings.

**ORIENTAL**

The several dozen surviving examples are mostly hipped-roof Italianate cubes with ogee arches (sometimes with scalloped edges added) and oriental trim. Another favored feature was the Turkish (onion) dome; few of these survive on domestic buildings.

The Oriental Revival was inspired by increasing exploration and trade in the Far East during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Numerous detailed accounts of travels in India and China led to a new appreciation of the complexities of oriental architecture. The resulting use of Far Eastern motifs in Europe and America was the longest-lived of the exotic movements; occasional examples were built throughout the 19th century.

**SWISS CHALET**

Most of the few dozen surviving examples have low-pitched front-gabled roofs with wide eave overhangs. A second-story porch or balcony with flat, cut-out patterned balustrade and trim is characteristic, as is patterned stickwork decoration on exterior walls. Some examples superimpose Swiss porches and trim on Greek or Gothic Revival forms.

The style was introduced into the United States by the romantic popularizer Andrew Jackson Downing, whose pattern book, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), showed several Swiss models suitable for “bold and mountainous” sites.
The Octagon house is easily recognized by the eight-sided shape of the exterior walls. Most are two-story with low-pitched hipped roofs and wide eave overhangs; eave brackets are common. Occasional examples show six-, ten-, twelve-, or sixteen-sided forms; a few are round. About half have an octagonal cupola and most have porches. Many show Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, or Italianate decorative details; others lack detailing.

This is a very rare style; probably only a few thousand were originally built, mostly in New York, Massachusetts, and the Midwest. Several hundred of these survive; most were built in the decades of the 1850s and '60s.

The style owed its popularity to Orson S. Fowler, a lecturer and writer from Fishkill, New York, who in 1849 published an elaborate defense of its virtues entitled The Octagon House, A Home for All. Following Fowler, at least seven other pattern books of the 1850s also illustrated Octagon houses. Fowler stressed that an octagon encloses more floor space per linear foot of exterior wall than does the usual square or rectangle, thereby “reducing both building costs and heat loss through the walls.” He also maintained that Octagons were superior to square houses in “increasing sunlight and ventilation” and in “eliminating dark and useless corners.” As can be seen in the two typical plans shown in the accompanying drawings, he conveniently ignored interior room shapes, which were not octagonal and therefore still had “useless” corners, including triangular spaces not found in conventional shapes. Furthermore, much of this “increased sunlight and ventilation” went into pantries and closets; most rooms, in fact, have only a single exposure rather than the two commonly found in conventional houses. Such practical problems are undoubtedly responsible for the only modest success of the Octagon movement.

Fowler also advocated other improvements such as indoor plumbing, central heating, “board walls” made of lumber scraps and “gravel walls” of poured concrete. He was not generally concerned with decorative treatment beyond “the beauty of the octagon form itself,” although many Octagons were built with decorative detailing. Fowler claimed his domestic use of the Octagon to be original but there were scattered earlier examples including Thomas Jefferson’s summer house, Poplar Forest, completed in 1819. Octagonal wings and projections were also common in Adam houses (1780–1820).