

Name _____



Date _____

Colonial Architecture

By Sharon Fabian

The colonists were starting from scratch. They were only able to bring over a limited amount of building supplies from England, and there was no place to buy more once they arrived here.

There were plenty of natural resources - trees, rock, clay, etc. - but it would take time to turn these resources into building materials. In the meantime, the colonists built temporary structures with the materials at hand. Their first buildings were designed only to provide shelter and safety. More permanent buildings would come later.



Some of the earliest settlers built tent-like structures from poles with branches or pieces of fabric for a covering. Some built cave-like structures against the sides of hills. Others built walls called palisades from pointed stakes set in the ground side by side.

The original fort at Jamestown was a palisade fort. The palisade was intended to provide protection for the colonists inside. Inside the palisade, they built their homes, a storehouse, a guardhouse, and their church.

Early colonial homes were built of timber, probably split logs, not smooth sawn boards. A typical house might have one or two rooms downstairs. This would include the kitchen, living and working space, and space for the parents to sleep. A ladder would lead to a loft upstairs where the children slept.

Soon, the colonists began to build more permanent houses and public buildings. American styles began to develop. Different styles developed in the North and South.

In the North, many of the people lived on small family farms or in towns. Gradually, the frontier style of log cabin gave way to a style of home more like the homes that the settlers had known back in England. Eventually, the Cape Cod and the saltbox became recognized as New England styles.

Cape Cod houses were one-story homes with high, steeply pitched roofs. Each house had a large chimney in the center. Early Cape Cods had only two main rooms but there was also space for sleeping or for storage up in the roof area. Later Cape Cods added on more rooms.

Saltboxes were high-roofed cottages with a room added on the back. This added-on room gave the house its recognizable salt box shape.

In the towns, the number of houses, shops, churches, and meeting houses grew as the population of colonists grew.

In the South, the development of large plantations led to a different style of architecture. There, planters and wealthy merchants built large, stately homes. Members of this new leisure class had the time and money to entertain and to travel, and their homes included large dining rooms, rooms for large parties, and extra bedrooms for guests to stay over.

Southern estate homes were modeled after English styles, just as New England homes were. The Georgian style from England was adopted here and became known as Colonial Georgian in America.

During this time period, slaves and other workers continued to live in simple, poor accommodations.

At the same time that home architecture was developing in America, so was the design of public buildings and public places. Williamsburg, Virginia, was planned with its main street 99 feet wide to make it an inviting public place. The capital building stood at one end of the street, and the College of William and Mary stood at the other end. Along the main street and the other streets of the city were a variety of shops and elegant homes.

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By the 1700's, the American colonies had changed from settlements of crude shelters to established urban and rural areas with distinctive architecture that is still admired today.

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Questions

- _____ 1. The first homes built by the colonists were _____.
- A. simple shelters
 - B. Colonial Georgian houses
 - C. saltboxes
 - D. large estates
- _____ 2. The first colonists built _____ to live in and for protection.
- A. cave-like shelters
 - B. palisade walls
 - C. tent-like structures
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 3. The two styles of architecture that developed in the American colonies were located in the _____.
- A. East and West
 - B. South and West
 - C. North and East
 - D. North and South
- _____ 4. Colonial American styles of architecture were based on _____ styles.
- A. Canadian
 - B. French
 - C. English
 - D. Native American
- _____ 5. The style of house known as Cape Cod was developed in _____.
- A. The West
 - B. New England
 - C. Virginia
 - D. Maryland
- _____ 6. The loft in a colonial cabin was the place where _____.
- A. the wagons were repaired
 - B. the cooking was done
 - C. the children slept
 - D. the animals were kept
- _____ 7. A large elegant party with many guests traveling from far away and staying at the house for many days would most likely have occurred in a _____.
- A. log cabin
 - B. plantation house
 - C. Cape Cod house
 - D. salt box house

