

1997

UA51/3/3 Historic Architecture at Western Kentucky University

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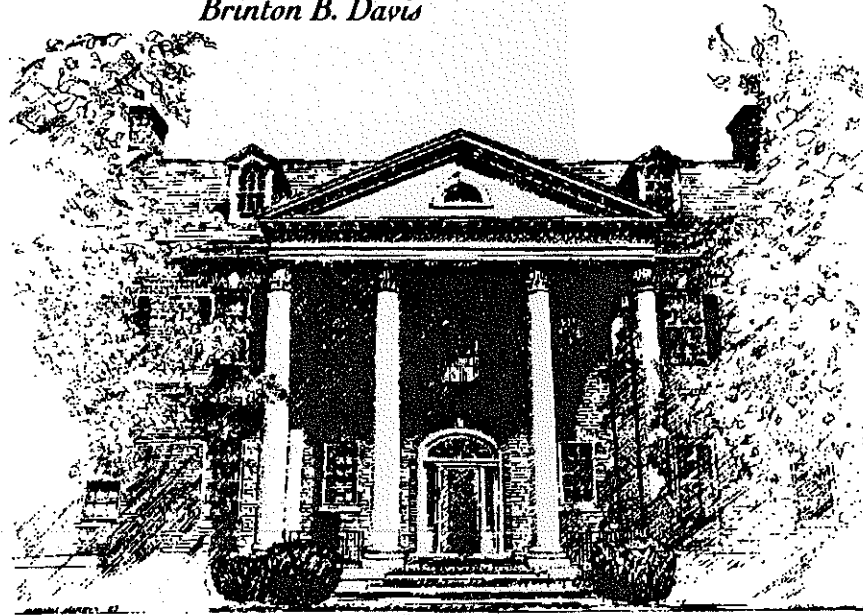
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Historic Architecture at Western Kentucky University

*designed by
Brinton B. Davis*



The Kentucky Museum, Western Kentucky University

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GREEN WARREN COUNTY BICENTENNIAL

1997



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Historic Architecture at Western Kentucky University

*designed by
Brinton B. Davis*

- 1910** Van Meter Auditorium
- 1924** Perry Snell Hall
- 1927** Heating Plant
Stadium
Library Building (Gordon Wilson Hall)
- 1928** Manual Arts Building
West Hall (Schneider Hall)
- 1930** Health Building (Helm Library)
- 1931** The President's Home (Craig Alumni Center)
- 1931-32** The Kentucky Building (Opened 1939)
- 1937** Cherry Hall

Also designed by Davis

- 1927** Home Economics Building (razed 1982)
- 1931** Swimming pool (razed 1970)
- 1935** Log house (behind the Kentucky Building)

BRINTON B. DAVIS: THE HILL BUILDER

□ In February 1931, a Bowling Green newspaper dubbed Louisville architect Brinton Beauregard Davis the "Hill Builder" for his untiring efforts as the architect for Western Kentucky State Teachers College. With the exception of two major projects, Davis designed all the college's hilltop structures from 1909 to 1937, including nine major buildings, a swimming pool and a stadium. □ Born in 1862 in Natchez, Mississippi, Davis was the son of a self-taught architect. After attending school in Boston, he held several internships before setting up a practice in Paducah, Kentucky in 1892. With an established reputation, he removed to Louisville in 1902, where he remained until his death fifty years later. His successful practice included commissions for a number of Louisville landmarks, including the Jefferson County Armory (now Louisville Gardens), the Inter-Southern Building (Kentucky Home Mutual Building), the Watterson and Kentucky Hotels, and the interior remodeling of the Jefferson County Courthouse. □ How Western's president, Henry H. Cherry, and Davis met is unclear, but it may have occurred when Davis was in Bowling Green supervising the construction of the new city hall in 1907. The college hired Davis as school architect in 1908. Davis and Henry Wright, a landscape architect from St. Louis's George Kessler Company—met and walked Western's new property atop Vinegar Hill. □ Davis' first assignment for Western included submitting rough sketches for 12 buildings to Wright, who supervised the drafting of the school's first master plan. The plan called for an unusual circular arrangement of structures around the hill. This arrangement allowed each campus building to dominate its spatial section of the hill's perimeter. □ Davis's first building on the hill was the Administration Building (now Van Meter) and his last was Cherry Hall. Surely there was no greater way to begin or end an architectural career on the hill. Given the opportunity to design not one building, but a "city in microcosm" at Western, Davis left an indelible signature; he became the "Hill Builder." In the early 1980s, Davis' Western buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Brinton B. Davis Thematic Scheme, recognizing his contribution to the development of the hilltop campus. The National Register recognizes buildings of historic, architectural, and cultural significance.



VAN METER AUDITORIUM

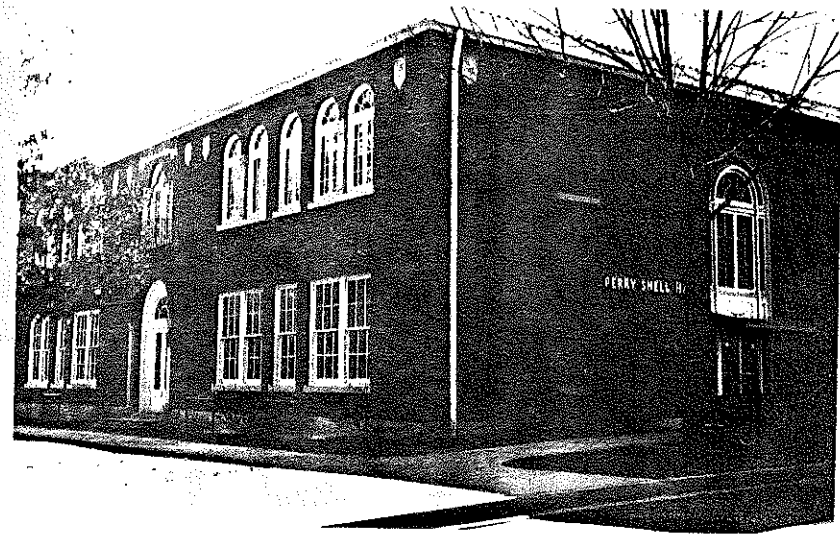
(Administration Building)

Brinton B. Davis' first building erected on Western Kentucky University's campus is a Classic Revival brick and limestone structure. Dedicated on May 5, 1911, the original cost of construction was approximately \$125,000. This building was named for Captain Charles J. Van Meter. In addition to developing the Green and Barren Rivers for commerce as a riverboat captain, Van Meter was elected Chancellor of the Western State Normal School and helped develop the Bowling Green Business University.

Jacob Bornstein, a stonemason from Louisville, was responsible for the stonework. The stone, known as white oolitic limestone, came from local Bowling Green quarries, and was highly prized for its quality and color. Among the building's outstanding architectural features are its stately portico, graceful Ionic columns, classic ornamentation, and placement at the crest of College Hill. Renovations were conducted in 1968, 1969, and 1971. Originally an administration building and auditorium, it has become a performance hall for musical and theatrical events.

PERRY SNELL HALL

This Italian Renaissance building, named for C. Perry Snell, a benefactor of Ogden College, was dedicated on November 19, 1924. The Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green supervised construction at an original cost of \$85,000. The building was acquired in 1928 when Ogden College merged with Western. The 418-seat auditorium has seats from the old downtown Princess Theater. Also, in 1926, Snell presented to Western the Florentine statuary, "Four Seasons," now located in a small park at the rear of the building. Distinctive architectural features include brick and limestone detailing, Palladian windows, a front entrance with fanlight and sidelights, a hipped tile roof, and decorative tin ornaments above the exterior entrances. It was last renovated in 1959-60. Snell Hall is the only Italian Renaissance style public building in Bowling Green.



HEATING PLANT

A necessity, the brick Heating Plant was completed in 1927. The design includes a simple utilitarian towering masonry smokestack. Original construction was completed by Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green. A spur line from the nearby L & N Railroad ran adjacent to the building, allowing easy access to coal cars. The building was renovated in 1938, and underwent a major remodeling in 1956. In 1963, it was expanded at a cost of \$402,725. A brick and glass wing was added during the 1970s.

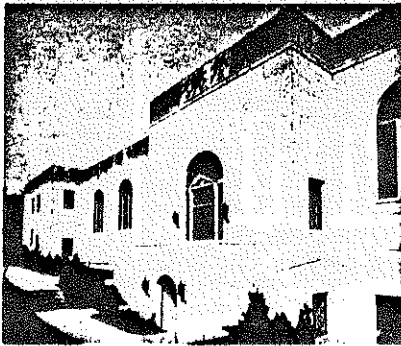
After the building's completion, the College Heights Herald reported: "No more will the student on cold rainy days enter the classroom and have icicles freezing on his coat or leave the room with an almost numb body."

HEALTH BUILDING

(Helm Library)

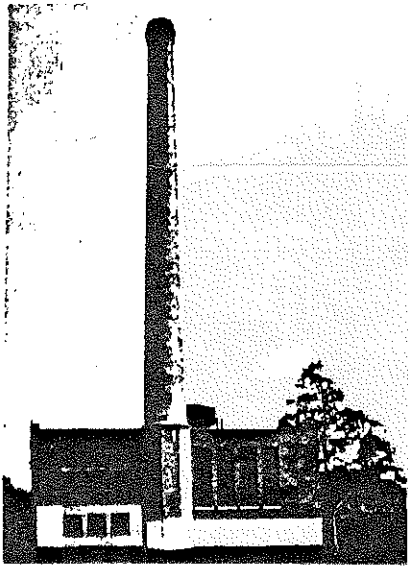
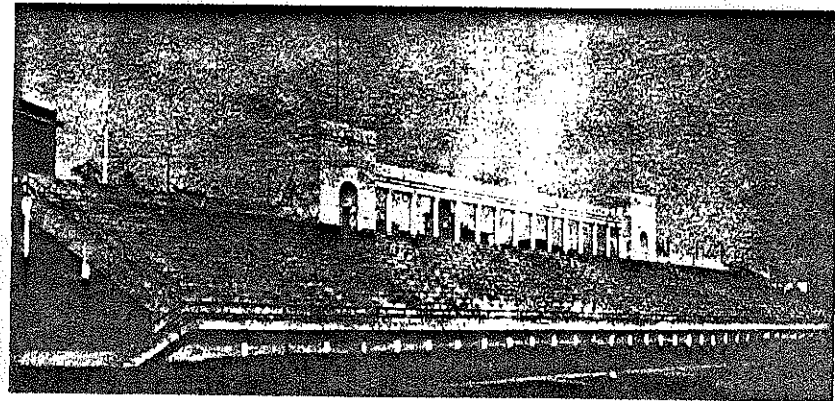
Eclectic in architectural style, the Health Building is faced with limestone. Of particular interest is the terra cotta frieze, the only instance of this type material in the area. Originally built as a gymnasium, it was completed in 1930 by the Moore Brothers Construction Company of Louisville at a cost of \$250,000. It also housed a clinic and a large band practice room as well as ROTC offices. Upon renovation and conversion to a library in 1965, the structure was renamed in honor of Margie Helm, who served the university as a librarian for many years. A steel and glass entrance was added during the 1960s. Presently, the building houses the reference and periodical departments of the Helm-Cravens library complex, as well as several classrooms, administrative offices, and the Student Technology Center.

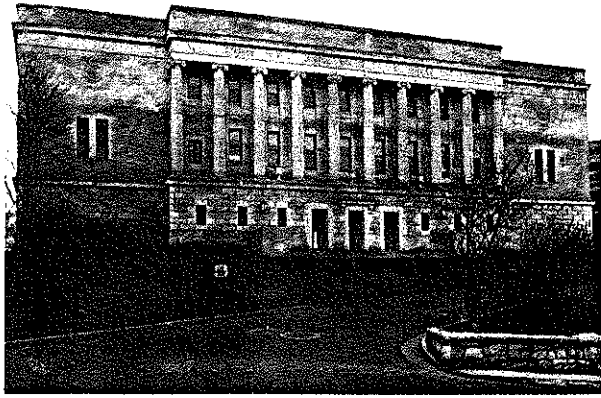
Western's swimming pool, also designed by Davis, was once attached to the north side of the building.



STADIUM

This Classic Revival colonnade once served as the entryway to an athletic stadium. It was built at an original cost of \$50,000 and was completed in November, 1927. The Stadium replaced a limestone quarry on the northeast side of campus. Lights were installed in 1946, and metal bleachers replaced wooden bleachers in 1963. Constructed of limestone by the Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green, this colonnade contributes significantly to the character of the campus. Although the athletic field has been replaced by the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts center, the stadium seats continue to serve as an amphitheater.





LIBRARY BUILDING

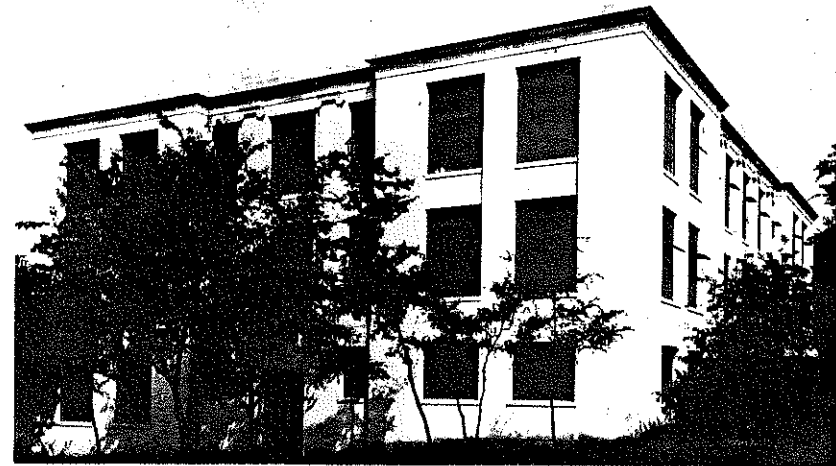
(Gordon Wilson Hall)

This Classic Revival building's cornerstone was laid in 1926. Faced with Bowling Green limestone, the facade has an Ionic order with graceful columns and large urns. Carved into the frieze are the names of a number of the greatest contributors to Western literature. Completed in 1927, the cost of construction was \$200,000. The Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green served as the contractor.

Originally serving the university as a library, the building was vacated in September 1965 when the Margie Helm Library was opened. Renovations were undertaken in 1967 and 1968, and a rear steel and glass stairway was added during the 1970s. Renamed in honor of Gordon Wilson, Sr., a well-known folklorist and professor of English at Western, the building currently houses the Department of Journalism on its third floor. The Department of Theater and Dance utilizes the first and second floors.

MANUAL ARTS BUILDING (INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION BUILDING)

This building was constructed by the Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green in the fall of 1928, at an original cost of \$57,000. It replaced a former industrial arts building that burned. The Ionic order pilasters are the most distinctive architectural feature of this Classic Revival limestone structure. The factory-type windows are a recent replacement. Additional renovations took place in 1960, 1961, 1964, 1965. It was closed in 1975 for remodeling when the windows were replaced. This building houses the Departments of Industrial and Engineering Technology.

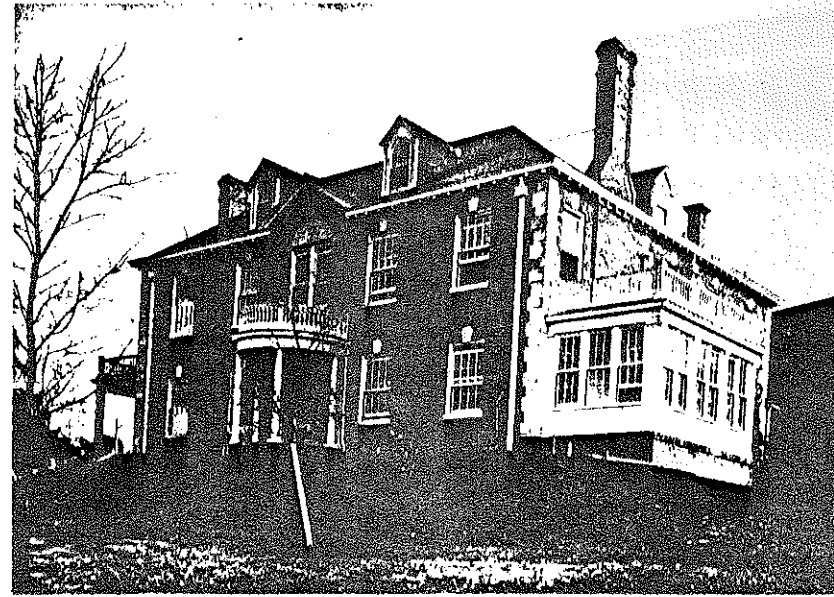


WEST HALL

(Schneider Hall)

West Hall, of Georgian Revival design, was completed in 1928 by the Raymond Construction Company of Bowling Green. With a facade of white limestone, outstanding architectural features include a central Palladian window, ornamental cornice, pilasters with Ionic capitals, and wrought iron ornamentation.

The building was built at a cost of \$160,000. Renovations took place in 1959, 1963, 1965, and 1977. The name was changed to Whitestone Hall in 1961, and in 1969 was renamed in honor of Florence Schneider, who served the university for many years as secretary, bookkeeper, registrar, and bursar. The latest renovation (1977) concentrated on the interior, with some visible external improvements. This was done under the supervision of local architect Joseph P. Wilk. The general contract work was done by Meco, Incorporated of Louisville, at a cost of \$870,000. The building is now a co-educational residence hall, with some rooms available to University visitors.



PRESIDENT'S HOME

(Craig Alumni Center)

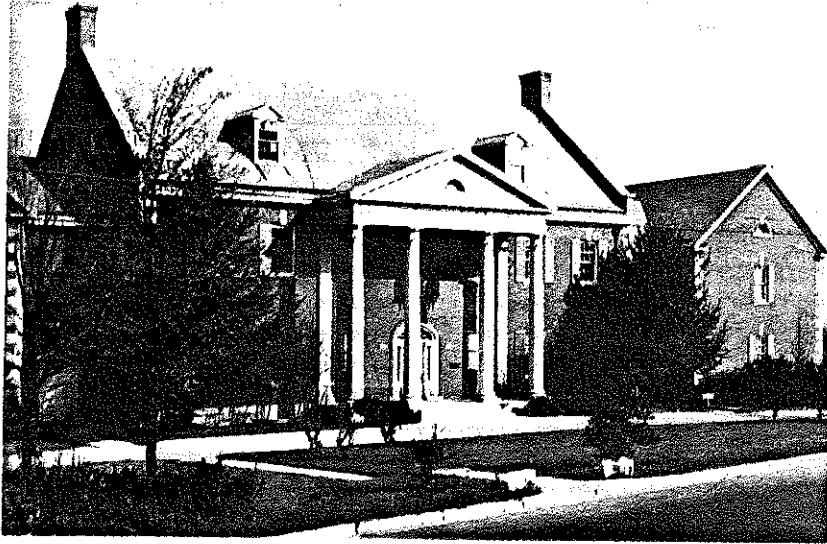
Originally serving as the president's home, this perfect example of a Federal style building was completed in 1931 by Van Winkle, a contractor from Louisville. Outstanding architectural elements include limestone quoins, dormers, bracketed eaves, a rounded portico, a hipped roof, paneled chimneys, and lovely balustrades. The building was completed at a cost of \$26,050. It was renovated in 1938, and converted to its present use as an Alumni Center in 1960.



KENTUCKY BUILDING

Although this Georgian Revival structure was erected during 1931-1932, the building's interior was not completed until after 1938. As a result, while Brinton B. Davis designed the building, James M. Ingram was the architect responsible for finishing the interior. Construction on the building halted in 1934 when funds were depleted, but some sections were used for classroom space while Cherry Hall was being completed in the late 1930s. This building was completed with funds from the Public Works Administration.

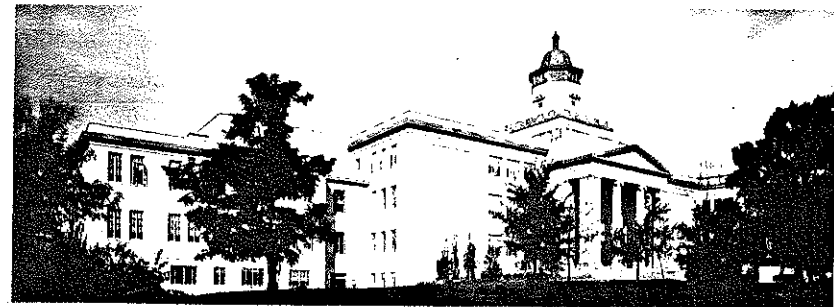
This building was constructed to serve as a repository for Kentuckiana materials, an idea developed by Henry H. Cherry and other Western faculty members. Renovation and expansion took place in 1977 and 1978, and a new addition was dedicated on July 4, 1980. Currently, the Kentucky Museum, the Kentucky Library, and Manuscripts and Archives are housed in the building. It is also the site of many public functions throughout the year. A pedimented portico adorns the front of the building. The portico columns have distinctive Tower of the Winds capitals, and each column is cut from one shaft of limestone. Other distinctive architectural elements include limestone quoins, limestone and masonry lentils, and a distinctive fanlight transom and sidelights on the front and rear entrances.



CHERRY HALL

Constructed in 1937 by the George H. Rommel Construction Company of Louisville, this Classic Revival building, with a temple front and columns of the Ionic order, occupies a key site at the summit of College Street. Named after Western Kentucky University's first president, Henry Hardin Cherry, this structure commands a vista of College Street through the College Hill Historic District and the Downtown Commercial Historic District to the Barren River. The building was made possible with funds from the Public Works Administration, a federal Depression-era agency created to foster new jobs and to erect large public buildings. Cherry died August 1, before the dedication of the building on November 16 (Cherry's birthday) in 1937. At the dedication, a \$10,000 statue of Cherry by sculptor Lorado Taft was unveiled.

Cherry Hall was built at a cost of \$560,000. Struct Construction Company of Louisville served as the contractor. A set of 25 cathedral chimes, costing \$6,000, was placed in the cupola; these were replaced in 1959 and 1974. Two life-size bas-relief panels, dedicated to "The Sciences" and "The Arts," adorn the front of Cherry Hall. This structure has been renovated several times. The exits were remodeled in 1960-61, the lighting in 1965, and a new rear entrance and elevator were added in 1973-74. Currently, this building houses the English, History, and Philosophy and Religion academic departments, and it remains a focal point of the university community.



GLOSSARY

(From *What Style Is It?*, by John Poppeliers, et. al., *The Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D. C., 1977.*)

- Architrave:** The lower part of a classical entablature, resting directly on the capital of a column; the molding around a window or door.
- Ashlar:** Hewn or squared stone; also masonry of such stone; a thin, dressed rectangle of stone for facing walls, also called ashlar veneer.
- Baluster:** An upright, often vase-shaped, support for a rail.
- Balustrade:** A series of balusters with a rail.
- Bracket:** A support element under eaves, shelves or other overhangs; often more decorative than functional.
- Capital:** The top decorated member of a column or pilaster crowning the shaft and supporting the entablature.
- Corinthian Order:** The most ornate of the classical Greek orders of architecture, characterized by a slender fluted column with a bell-shaped capital decorated with stylized acanthus leaves; variations of this order were extensively used by the Romans.
- Cornice:** In classical architecture, the upper, projecting section of an entablature; also projecting ornamental molding along the top of a building or wall.
- Dormers:** A vertically set window on a sloping roof; also, the roof structure housing such a window.
- Eaves:** The projecting overhang at the lower edge of a roof.
- Egg-and-dart:** A decorative molding comprised of alternating egg-shaped and dart-shaped motifs.
- Entablature:** In classical architecture, the part of a structure between the column capital and the roof or pediment; comprised of the architrave, frieze, and cornice.
- Fanlight:** A semicircular or fan-shaped window with radiating members or tracery set over a door or window.

- Fenestration:** The arrangement of windows in a wall.
- Frieze:** The section of the entablature between the cornice and the architrave.
- Hipped roof:** A roof with four uniformly pitched sides.
- Ionic Order:** An order of classical Greek architecture, characterized by a capital with two opposed volutes.
- Molding:** A continuous decorative band that is either carved into or applied to a surface.
- Palladian window:** A tripartite window opening with a large arched central light and flanking rectangular side lights.
- Pediment:** A wide, low-pitched gable surmounting the facade of a building in a classical style; also, any similar triangular crowning element used over doors, windows and niches.
- Pilasters:** A shallow pier attached to a wall; often decorated to resemble a classical column.
- Portico:** A major porch, usually with a pedimented roof supported by classical columns.
- Quoins:** Units of stone or brick used to accentuate the corners of a building.
- Volute:** A spiral, scroll-like ornament incorporated into the Ionic capital.



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HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

*at Western
Kentucky University*

CLASSIC REVIVAL STYLE

Considered to be a later, more refined stage in the beaux-arts interpretation of classical architecture, the Classic Revival style is typified by stately elegance and symmetry. The facade is generally dominated by a full-height porch with the roof supported by classical columns, usually of the Ionic or Corinthian orders, set upon massive ashlar bases. Fenestration is symmetrically balanced, with a matching number of windows flanking a central door. Classical elements commonly found in this style include balustrades, cornices, egg-and-dart moldings, massive porticoes, and grand stairways. Decorative features such as medallions, sculptural figures and carved swags are also typical. This style was particularly popular for government buildings and monuments in the early decades of the twentieth century.

GEORGIAN REVIVAL STYLE

Distinctive front doors are common to this style. The door itself is usually centered, capped by an elaborate decorative crown that is in turn supported by decorative pilasters. Often a row of small rectangular panes of glass is beneath the crown, either within the door or in a transom just above. The cornice at the roof line is typically emphasized by decorative moldings, most commonly with tooth-like dentils.

Windows with double-hung sashes having many small panes (most commonly nine or twelve panes per sash) separated by thick wooden muntins; Fenestration is horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows, never in adjacent pairs, and usually five-ranked on the front facade, though three- or seven-ranked can also be found. Brick was the dominant building material in surviving Southern examples. On some Southern brick examples, doors were accentuated only by changes in the surrounding brick pattern.

FEDERAL STYLE

Federal architecture is derived from Georgian, and is known as the Adam style in Britain, where it was popularized by two brothers, Robert and James Adams. The principal differences between Federal and Georgian houses are larger window panes, occasional bay windows, and an almost universal fanlight above the front doorway. Federal style architecture also frequently uses balustrades, semi-circular porticos, dentils, and windows in symmetrical vertical rows around a central paneled door.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE STYLE

Italian Renaissance structures were popular from about 1890 to 1930. They feature hipped roofs of low pitch, usually covered with tile. Wide overhanging eaves are often supported by decorative brackets. These typically symmetrical buildings generally boast arched windows on the first floor or arched windows in rows on second floors, and generally include arched entrances.