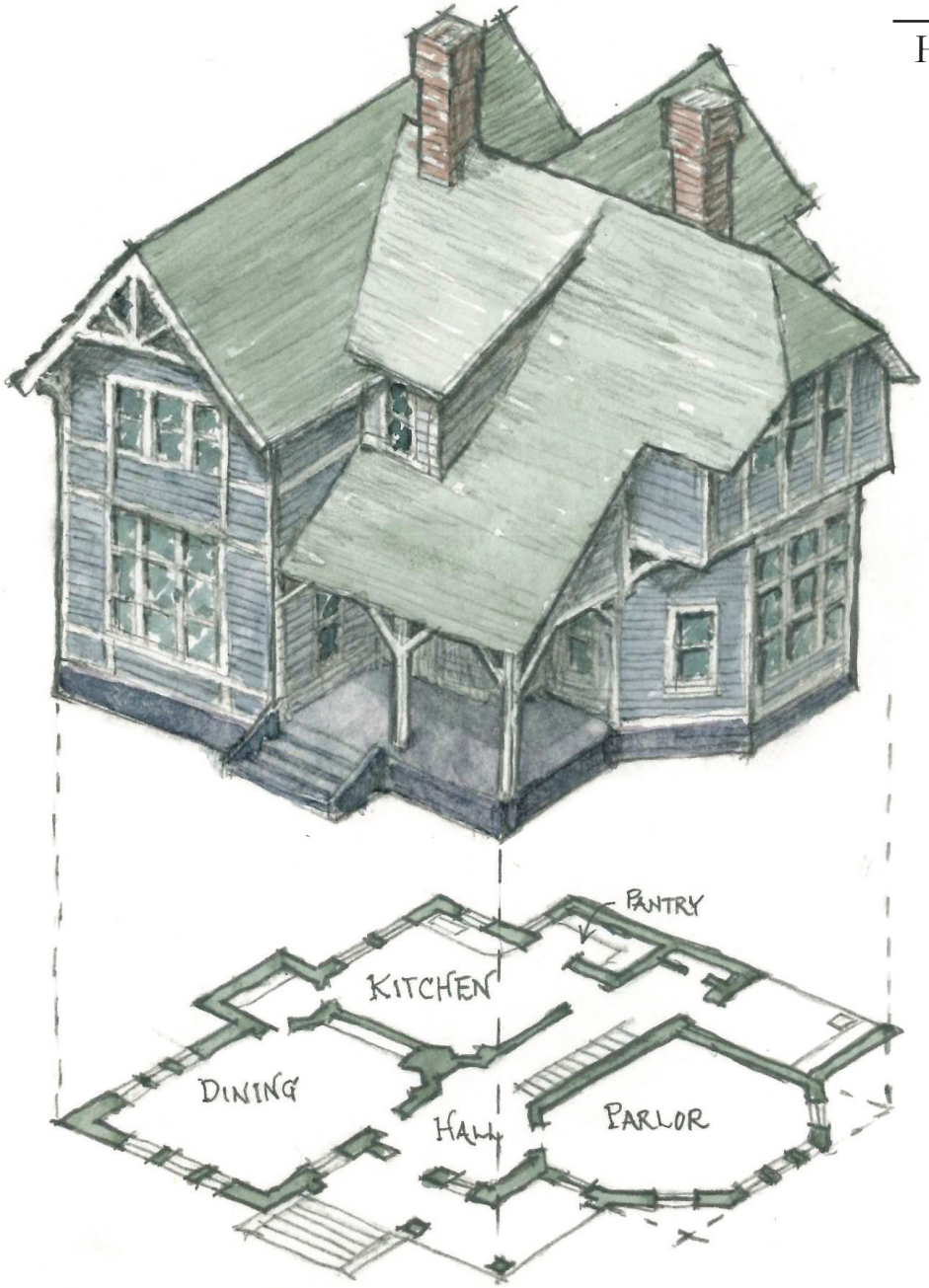
Stick

Historic Resources • Santa Barbara, California



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INTRODUCTION

Named for its "stickwork" or grid of boards infilled with various wood siding treatments, the Stick style played an important role in Victorian architecture. In Santa Barbara and across the United States, the Stick style transitioned Victorian architecture from the earlier styles of Italianate and Gothic Revival, to the later Queen Anne Revival.

A Stick style house on Brinkerhoff Avenue features horizontal and vertical bands raised from the wood weatherboards for emphasis.

The Stick style residence in the Lower West Side of Santa Barbara expresses its unique decoration with vertical boards dividing the wall, brackets under the overhanging eaves, a transom over the solid paneled wood door and long, two-over-two, double-hung wood windows.

HISTORY

Stylistically, Stick architecture bridges the Gothic Revival to the later Queen Anne and all three styles reference Medieval English building traditions. One core difference however, is that while Gothic Revival houses emphasized windows, doors and cornices set against the backdrop of the plain wall, the Stick style began to treat the wall itself as decoration. This resulted in subdivided panels that were then filled with a variety of shingles or siding giving the Stick style much of its character. This quality also carried on to the Prairie style and the Craftsman or "Western Stick" style, which also celebrated wood construction.

Compared to its contemporaries, Italianate and Second Empire, relatively few Stick houses were built. However, in California and especially in San Francisco, the style was very popular into the 1880's. This was due to the abundance of lumber and California's large building boom.

Stick style houses can be found in Santa Barbara in the Brinkerhoff Avenue Landmark District as well as dotting the other neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

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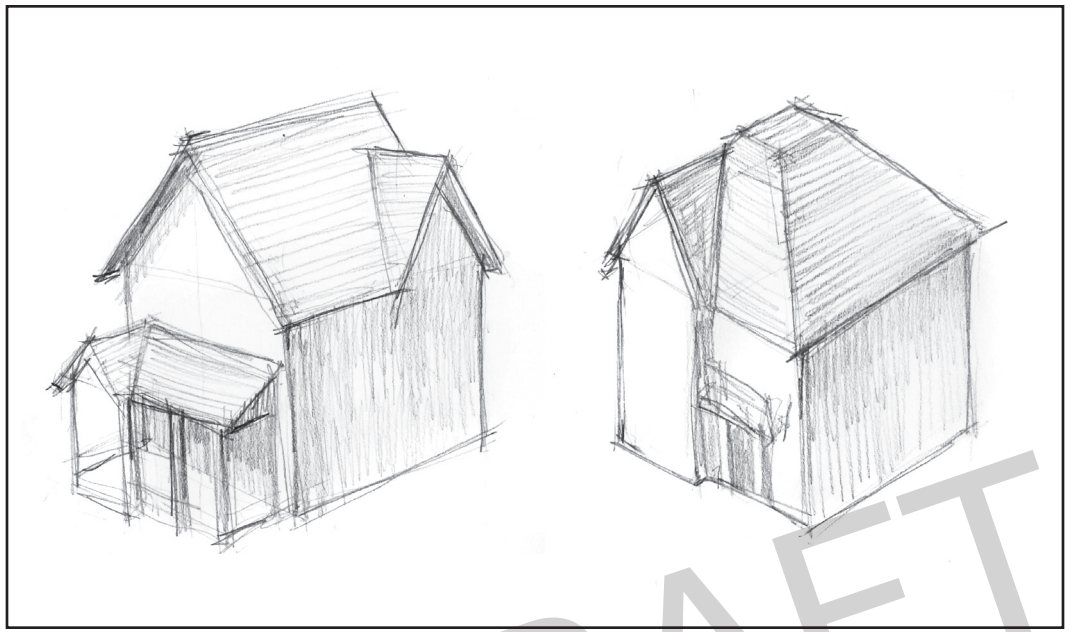
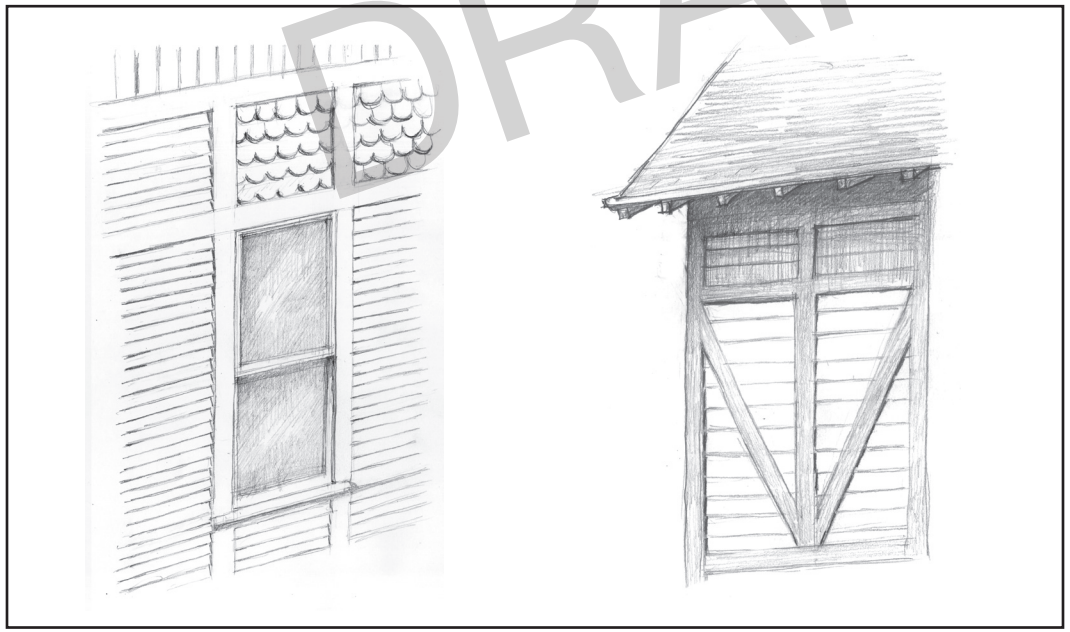


MASSING & OVERALL FORM

The massing of the Stick style is primarily a steep-pitch gable (7:12 or greater) and cross-gable, although hipped examples are also used. The hipped examples with cross-gables prefigure a form that develops further in the Queen Anne Revival style.

Usually two-story, Stick houses often included sizeable porches and are mostly asymmetrical in layout. Occasionally, square or rectangular towers are included in the design.



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CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Gable, Cornice and Eave Details: Overhanging eaves adorned with brackets play a regular role in Stick architecture. Used as supports for gable ends, stepped wall conditions, and porch supports, brackets help to define the geometry of Stick architecture. The treatment of the gable ends are key characters in Stick architecture, which are often embellished with trusses (in a variety of patterns), bargeboards, or other decorative treatments. These can be featured in the main gables of the house roof, as well as in dormers and porch gables.

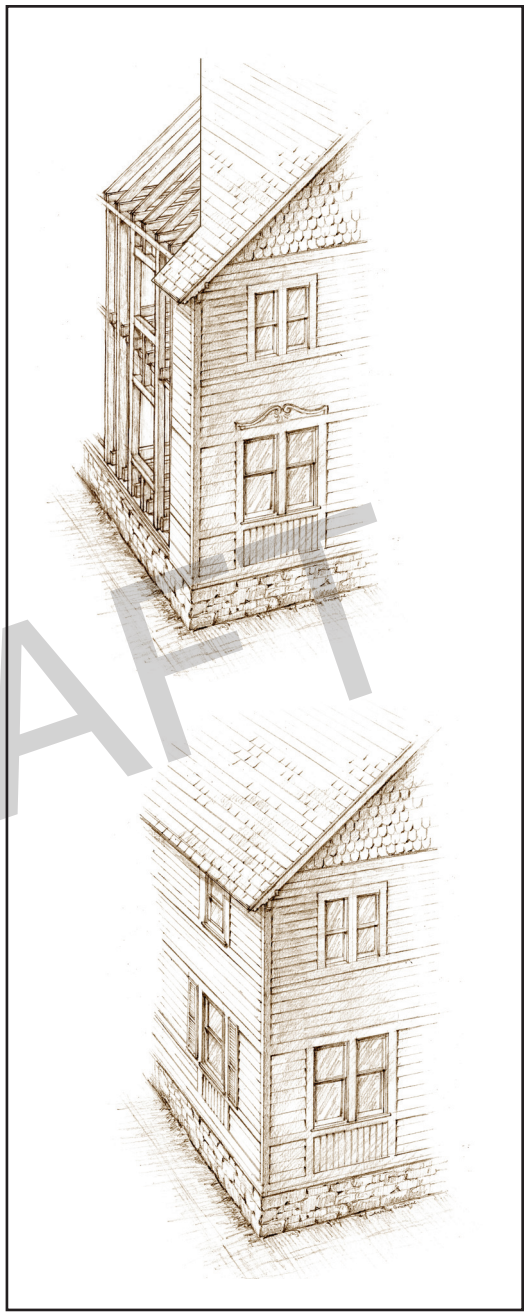
Porch Columns: Porches are a common feature of the Stick style. They come in a range of single-story sizes and shapes with decorative features of the gable ends and walls echoed along the posts or in the cornice of the porch.

Doors: Solid paneled doors and single pane over wood panel doors with a transom above the opening are common in Stick architecture.

Windows: Elongated, rectangular, double-hung, two-over-two or one-over-one, wood windows with simple casings are typical in Santa Barbara Stick houses.

Dormers: Dormers are often embellished with trusses (in a variety of patterns), bargeboards, or other decorative treatments.

Wall Material: Stickwork is key to understanding the language of Stick architecture. Infill of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal siding, as well as a variety of shingles, helps to express the wall as decoration. Meant to vaguely reference the half-timbering of Tudor and other Medieval styles, Sticks boards are often slightly raised from the rest of the wall, emphasizing their role in dividing the wall.



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