

GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL
AND
MASONRY TERMS

- acanthus - a plant whose prickly leaves provide the inspiration for decorative motifs such as are found on the capitals of Corinthian columns
- arabesque - ornamentation that uses flowers, fruits, foliage and sometimes animals to create an intricate pattern
- Art Deco - a movement in architecture and the arts characterized by clean lines, highly stylized forms and crisp, sharp motifs and decorative borders
- ashlar - the rectangular cut of a masonry block
- balustrade - a row of upright, often vase shaped, supports topped by a rail
- bas-relief - a sculpture which projects from the surrounding surface and of which no part is undercut
- brownstone - formed during the Triassic Age, one of many sandstones; characteristic brown hues are caused by iron oxide present in the stone
- buttress - a projecting structure of masonry giving stability to a wall or building
- canopy - an ornamental roof-like structure often suspended over a doorway
- capital - the top member of a column or pilaster crowning the shaft
- capstone - the covering course of a wall or foundation; in the case of a wall acting as a coping
- chamfer - to cut at an angle or bevel
- Collegiate-Gothic - Neo-Gothic architecture inspired by ecclesiastical and university buildings such as are found at Oxford and Cambridge, England
- Corinthian - the latest of the three major orders of ancient Greek architecture characterized by much decoration such as ornate acanthus leaves on the capitals
- cornice - the molding or horizontal member that crowns a building or wall in an architectural composition
- coursed - even rows of masonry material be it brick or stone; in the case of stone it is an ashlar cut

crandall - a tool for dressing stone resembling a comb having adjustable, pointed, steel rods held in a slot at the end of the handle

crandalled - a masonry surface characterized by shallow narrow groves parallel to each other and finished with a crandall

crenelated - having battlements which are notched at even intervals

dentils - a series of small projecting rectangular blocks often under a cornice that have the appearance of teeth

Doric - the second of the three orders of ancient Greek architecture characterized by scrolled capitals crowning the column

drums - separate sections of a column stacked one upon the other to create of entire length of the column

eaves - the lower border of a roof that overhangs the wall

Eclecticism - an architectural style characterized by the combination of seemingly disparate styles of architecture such as Gothic, Moorish, Flemish, Romanesque, etc.

egg and dart - ornamental design carved in relief and consisting of egg shaped figures alternating with elongated shapes similar to javelins or arrowheads

facade - the front of a building often given special treatment; sometimes a false or artificial treatment of a building with material to achieve a richer appearance

fascia - a flat and or broad fillet used to form a horizontal member; often the vertical and lower most edge of the eave

filigree - ornamental work, sometimes open, of a delicate and intricate design

finial - an ornamental termination at the top of a gable or pinnacle often foliated or urn shaped

Flemish - an architectural style characterized by stepped roof lines on the facade of buildings; a style of architecture found in the Netherlands and Belgium (the Low Countries)

fleur-de-lis - an architectural motif often found in heraldry and represented by a stylized depiction of the iris

gargoyle - a spout in the shape of a grotesque human or animal used to throw rain water clear of a building

Georgian - an architectural style popularized during the reign of the Kings George of England generally characterized by formal balance and much used during the colonial period in the United States such as in Independence Hall in Philadelphia

Gothic - an architectural style arising from the era known as the Middle Ages which is characterized by pointed windows, tall spires, buttresses, much stained glass

griffin - a fabulous animal usually half eagle and half lion

grotesque - a sculpture characterized by fanciful or fantastic shapes of human and animal form meant to distort into absurdity, ugliness or caricature

Ionic - the first order of Greek architecture characterized by plainly turned capitals, cleanness of line, and simplicity or lack of adornment

Italian Villa - an architectural style influenced by the great Roman villas characterized by ABA balance, a large rectangular center section of the building, and generally crowned with a small, rectangular member or balustrade; adornment is often elaborate

lancet window - a high, narrow window with an acutely pointed head and without tracery

lintel - a horizontal member spanning an opening such as a door or window

medallion - resembling a medal; a tablet or panel in a wall bearing a figure in relief, a portrait or an ornament

monolith - a single great stone

Moorish - a style of architecture originating in Spain during the Moslem occupation and characterized by horseshoe arches arabesque adornment, and filigree piercing

Neo - a prefix added to many styles of architecture meaning "new" and used as a method of indicating a reworking of the original concept

niche - a recess in a wall especially for a statue

Palladian window - a window crowned with an arch whose panes radiate from a central pane resembling a rising sun; a copy or reworking of a classic style of window originally conceived by the architect Andrea Palladio

pilaster - an upright architectural member that is rectangular in plan and is structurally a pier but treated as a column and usually projects one third of its width or less from the wall

portico - a colonnade or covered ambulatory often used as the entrance to a building

Queen Anne - a style of architecture popularized during the reign of Queen Anne in England and characterized by high, peaked roofs, balconies, turrets and porticos

quoin - one of the blocks forming a solid exterior on the corner of a building

rinseau - an ornamental foliate or florid motif

rock-faced - a finish for stone which has been dressed with a hammer producing a rough-hewn surface; often referred to as quarry-faced

Romanesque - a style of architecture incorporating features of classic Roman architecture such as the round arch, dome

rose window - a circular window filled with tracery and often employing stained glass

rusticated - generally refers to rough-hewn blocks either ashlar or random that have been rock-faced

serpentine - a mineral rock given its pale chartreuse color by inclusions of hydrous magnesium silicate

sill - the horizontal member at the base of a window

soffit - the underside part of a member of a building such as on an eave or a stair

steeple - a tall structure having a small spire at the top and surmounting a church tower

tracery - a decorative interfaces of lines suggestive of the Gothic tracery of a window

transept - the part of a cruciform church that crosses the nave and the apse or choir resembling the arms of a cross

turret - a little tower

uncoursed - masonry blocks not laid in even tiers or rows; sometimes referred to as random coursed

water table - a string course or similar member that is projected so as to throw off water