

Folk Victorian

The elements that characterize the Folk Victorian Style are:

- moderately-sloped gabled roof
- dormers
- porches with decorative spindlework
- lace-like spandrels and column brackets
- large stand-alone sash windows
- simple massing & construction
- dominant gabled-front “pavillion”
- wood plank combined with shingle siding
- square or L-shaped floor plan
- decorative detailing on the gable ends

The Folk Victorian style was widely popular between 1870 and 1910. Though it is sometimes considered to be a simplification of the Queen Anne Style, it is more of a dressed up version of “everyman’s” basic shelter.

Before railroads could reach remote farm regions, there was little concern for stylistic expression. Neither the materials, the money, nor the manpower existed for creating anything other than a practical dwelling. However, advances in distribution and mechanization gave builders even in rural areas access to inexpensive Victorian detailing. These manufactured elements could be applied easily to a structure to add a bit of Victorian “sophistication.”

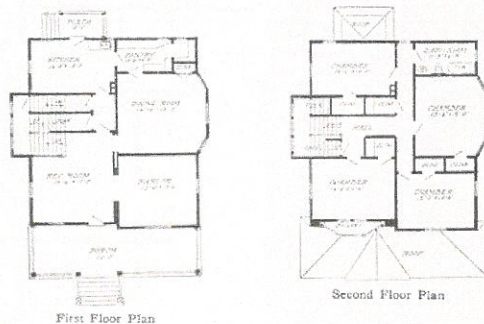
With the advent of railroads, home owners could build more house with less money and began morphing their vernacular rural styles into forms that looked more Victorian. While wealthier home owners could opt for the “full-monty” Queen Anne style with towers and turrets, those of more modest means could apply its decorations to their more basic structures.

What began as a decorated shed matured into a unique style with its own distinct architectural vocabulary that was neither Queen Anne or vernacular. It was a style for the people... and a popular one at that.

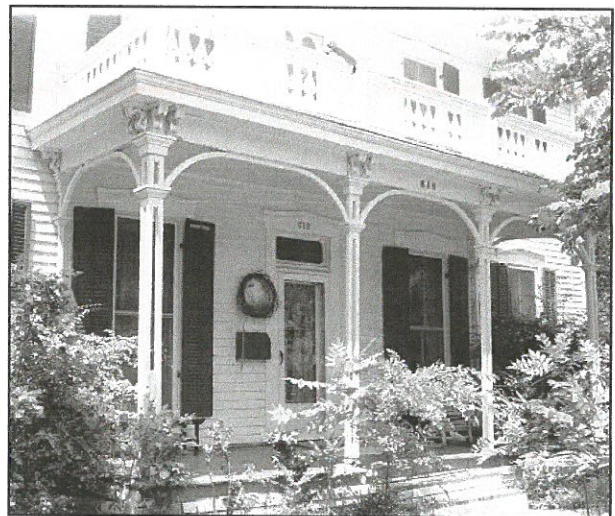


Design No. 7054

Size: Width, 38 feet; Length, 36 feet 6 inches, exclusive of porches.



The above illustration is from a 1908 Wilson & Girod pattern book by William A. Radford Company showing a Folk Victorian home.



Railroads could ship architectural detailing that local carpenters could not produce. These elements were often applied to vernacular structures in an attempt to enhance their appearance.

Folk Victorian Style in McKinney

Victorian architecture in McKinney owes much of its development to the railways that served the town. The first rail line into McKinney was the Houston & Texas Central Railroad which arrived in 1872. Prior to that, domestic structures were barely anything more than wooden sheds. The railroads brought plenty of building materials and boosted economic development which gave residents the money necessary to construct homes with stylistic expression.

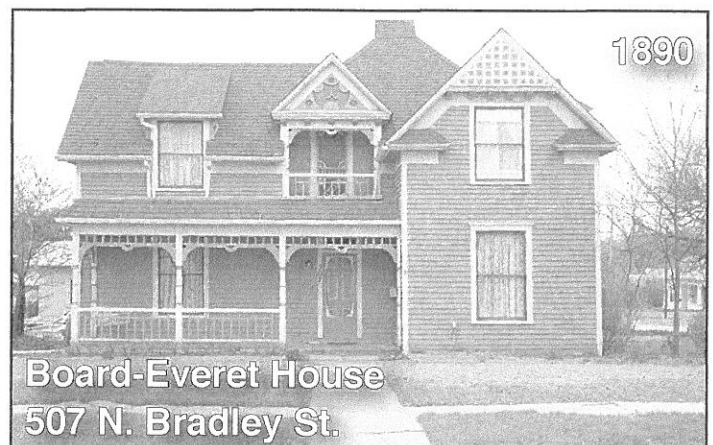
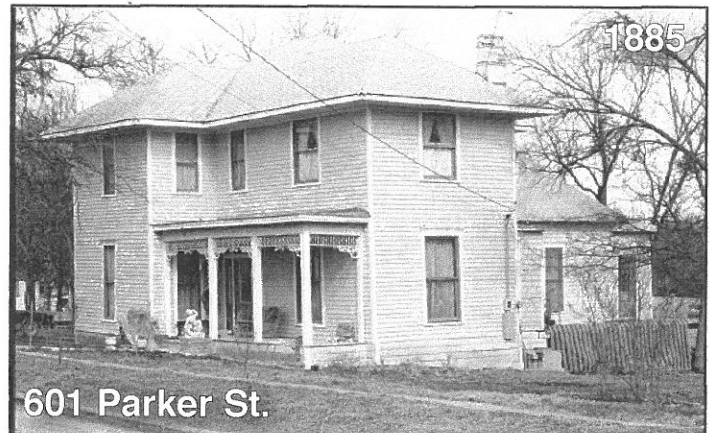
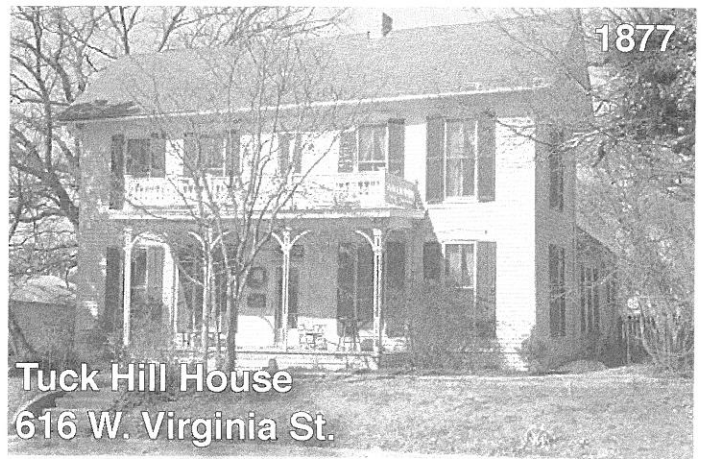
The early home of wealthy stockman Tuck Hill is a good example of a simple, vernacular structure conveying no discernible style. Except for the mismatched Victorian elements applied to the porch, this house is merely an I-house. An I-house is a vernacular dwelling whose floor plan is a simple elongated rectangle. Supposedly, the name I-house comes not from the shape of the house but from the fact that these houses were popular in Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois in the late 1800s.

A few years later in 1885, the house at 601 Parker St. which has the popular vernacular L-plan form attempts to claim Victorian pedigree with the placement of Queen Anne looking porch made up of jig-saw cut brackets and spindlework spanning between columns. As with the Tuck Hill House, the overall vernacular structure remains unaltered.

In 1890, the builder of the Board-Everet House skillfully integrates Victorian decoration into a home-design to produce a style that transcends the vernacular but is neither Queen Anne in style. This house is a good example of how “stylish” Folk Victorian was becoming in McKinney.

For those, like State Senator James R. Gough, who wanted a truly Queen Anne Style home, that was still an acceptable choice. The house he built on West Louisiana in 1898 is one of the last purely Queen Anne Style homes to be built in McKinney. However, the Folk Victorian Style with its simpler styling was starting to look more modern than its ornate big sister.

When J.R. Gough built his house in 1898, there was already growing interest in newer styles like the Prairie and the American Craftsman. The emerging styles were less ornate and sported cleaner lines. This is exactly what the folk vernacular structures had always been.



Around the beginning of the 20th century, Folk Victorian became more sophisticated to the point that it was blurring the lines that separated it from Queen Anne. Designers were incorporating more Victorian decoration but the basic confirmations of the homes they built shared more with American agrarian structures than they did with aristocratic European ones. Gone are the towers, turrets, half-timbering, and bay windows.

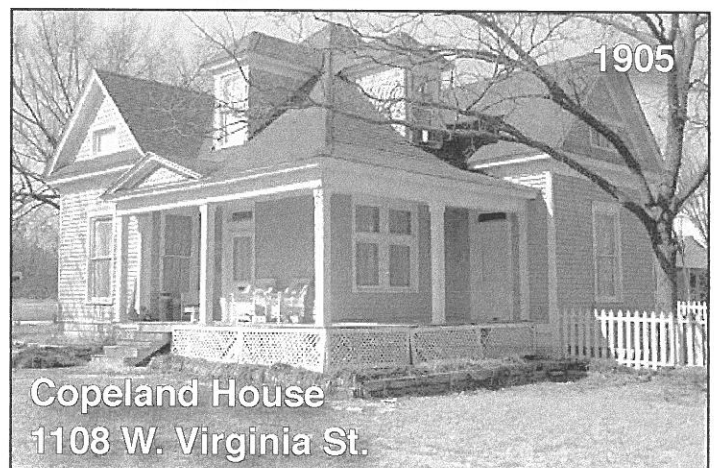
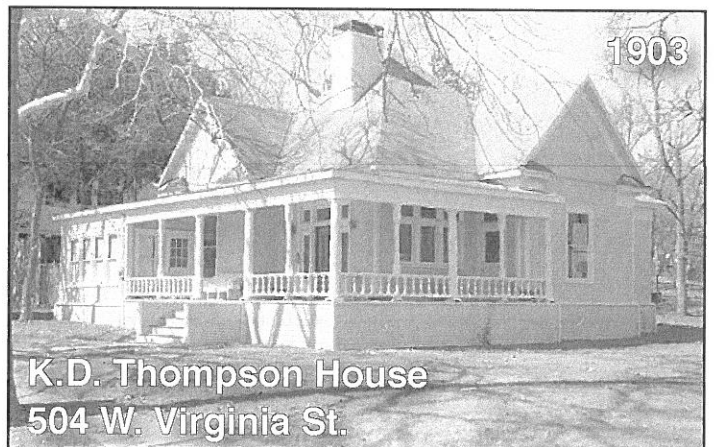
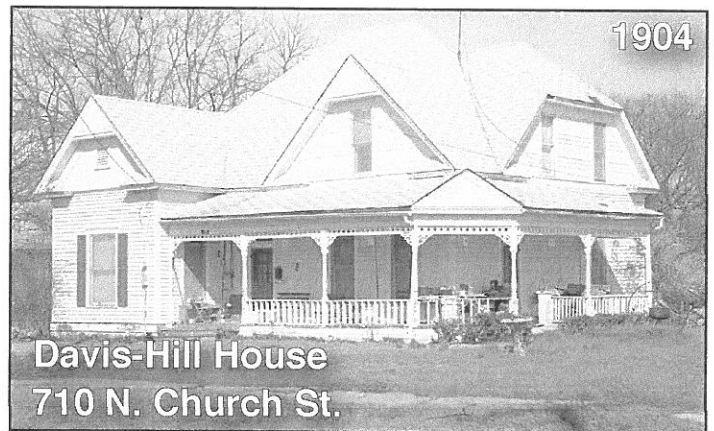
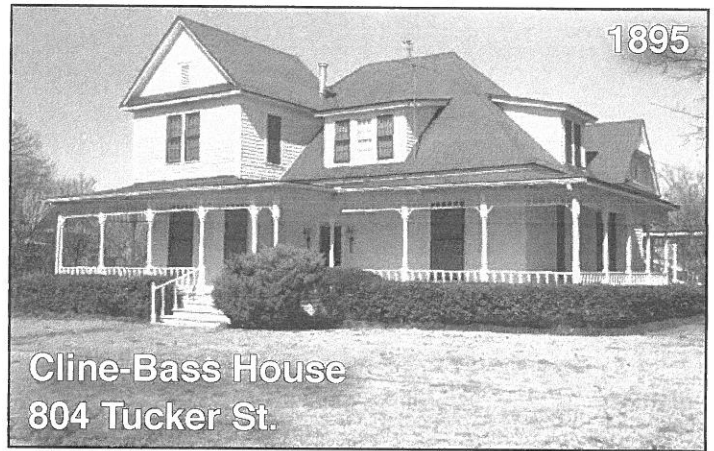
The Cline-Bass House shows how sophisticated the Folk Victorian Style could be. The typical L-plan structure has been manipulated to accommodate a pyramidal hip roof. The wrapping porch with the spindlework between the delicate columns lightens the massing of the house. Still, the overall effect is a stylized farm building rather than a simplified English castle.

There were several other examples of the Folk Victorian Style built in McKinney at the beginning of the 20th Century. One of these is the Davis-Hill House on North Church Street. It freely borrows Queen Anne decoration and combines gable treatments with aspirations of being a Queen Anne design. It only falls short by virtue of the fact that the designer does not balance these elements with Queen Anne precision.

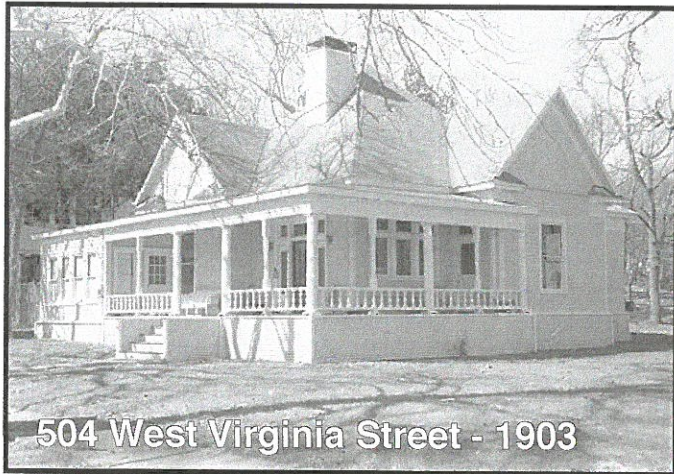
An example of a house that skillfully expresses Folk Victorian as a style of its own is the house at 504 W. Virginia. Built in 1903, this structure applies Victorian ornament with restraint and playfully places turned wooden columns on top of the porch balustrade. The gables are well-proportioned to the size of the hip roof with the chimney at its apex. The door treatments with transoms and sidelights show a design sophistication not seen in vernacular structures. This house is as far from being Queen Anne Style as it is from being a pre-railroad farm house.

The designer of the house at 1108 W. Virginia takes Victorian Folk Style in a slightly different direction eschewing all Victorian decoration except for the scale-like shingles on the gable ends and dormers. This house does not hide its vernacular origins as the designer is able to combine the gables and dormers in a way that balances the whole. Again, it is not Queen Anne nor is it a house built with only shelter as its goal.

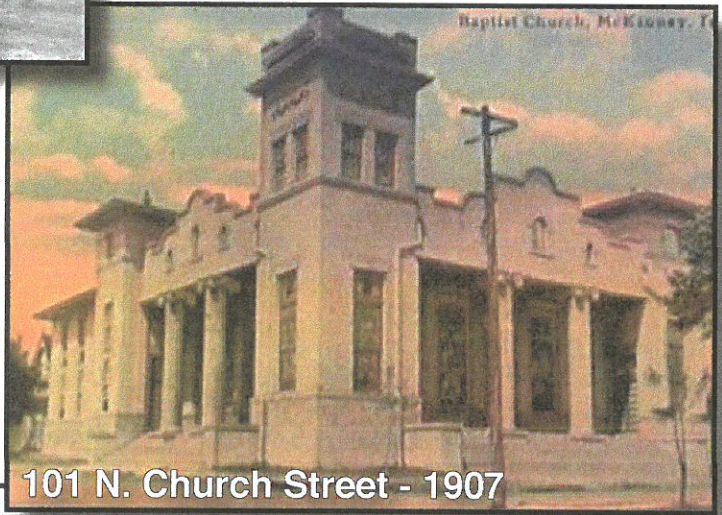
By the 1910s, Folk Victorian fell out of style in favor of Craftsman and revival styles.



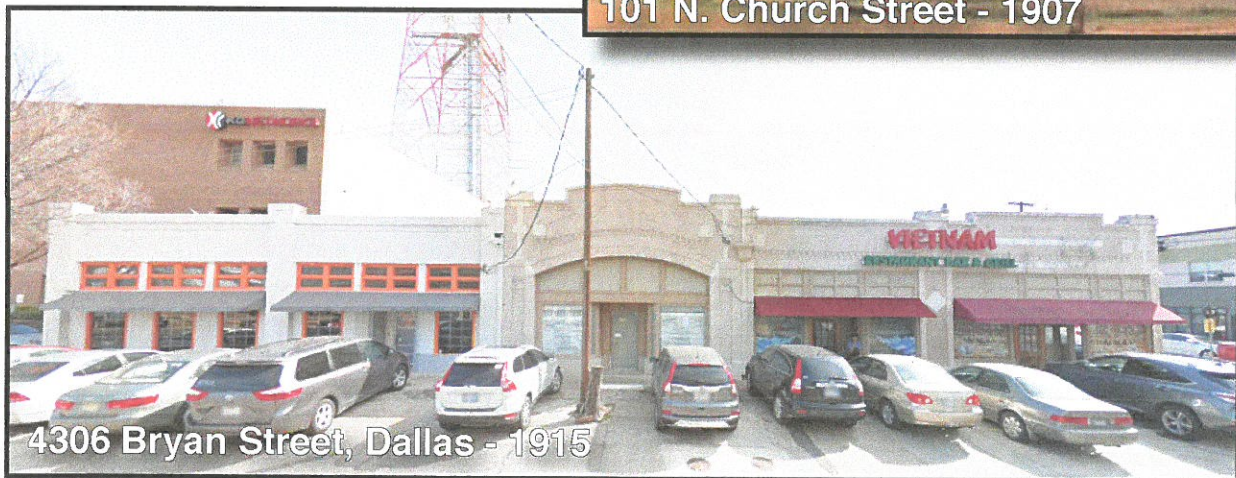
The Work of John M. Martin (1862-1944)



504 West Virginia Street - 1903



101 N. Church Street - 1907



4306 Bryan Street, Dallas - 1915

John M. Martin is responsible for building several substantial structures in McKinney and Dallas. In 1903, he built the K.D. Thompson House on West Virginia. A few years later he was contracted to erect a Mission Style building for the First Baptist Church (razed). In 1915, he was hired by Dr. W.E. Rucker of McKinney to build a suburban business block in Dallas which included a cinema.

Current Photos (2018)



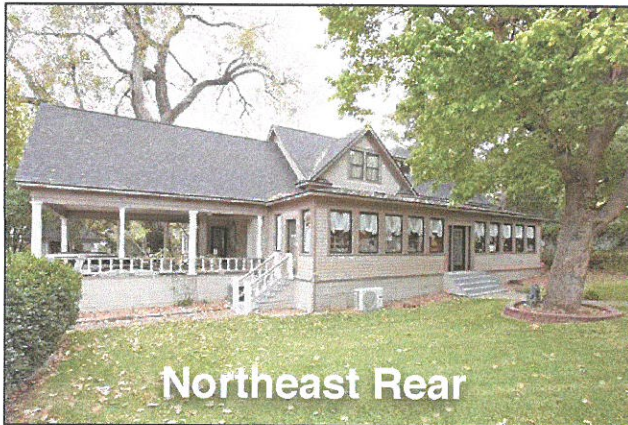
South Front



Porch



Southeast



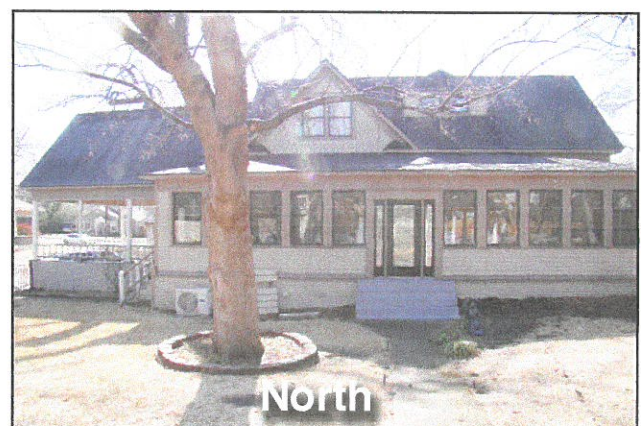
Northeast Rear



East



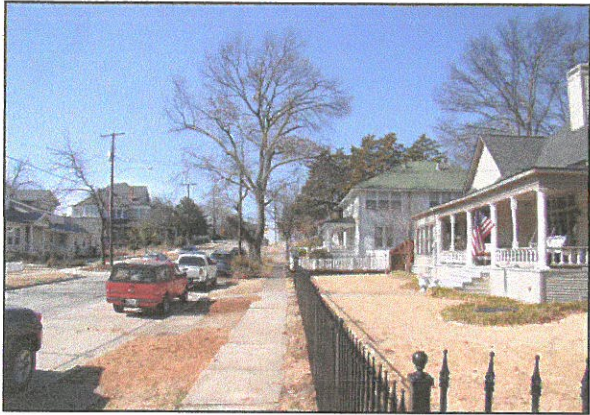
Southwest



North

Neighborhood Context (2018)

504 West Virginia Street neighborhood context

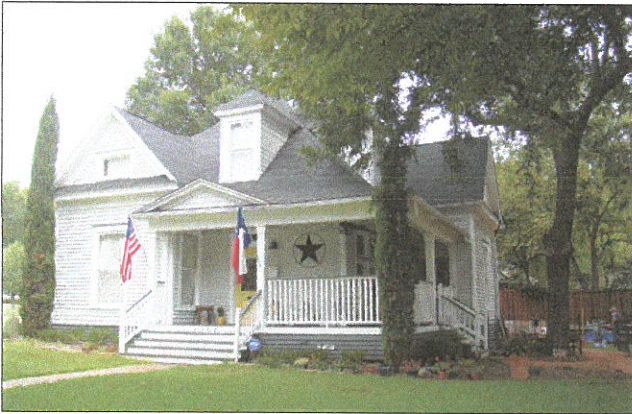


View looking East on West Virginia Street



View looking West of West Virginia Street

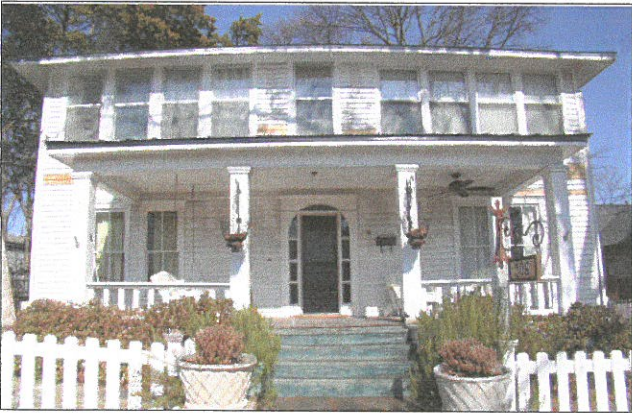
Homes near 504 West Virginia Street



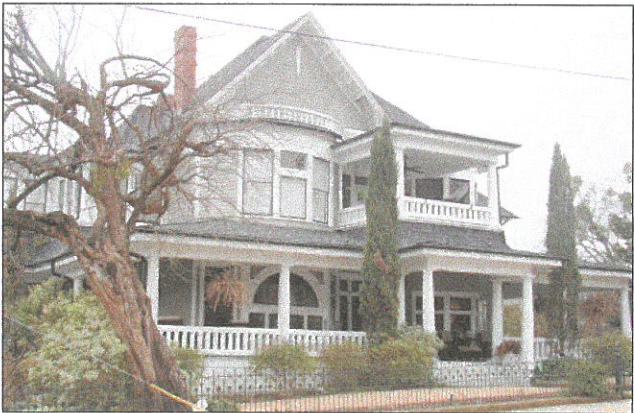
1108 West Virginia Street



1102 West Virginia Street



506 West Virginia Street



511 West Virginia Street