

FEDERAL c. 1790 - 1820

The Federal style is well represented in Brunswick's architecture, particularly along the major streets such as Federal Street and Park Row. This reflects Brunswick's prosperity at the turn of the nineteenth century. Although some properties have sustained extensive alterations, there are other buildings that retain a significant portion of their original exterior character-defining features.

The Federal style was influenced by the Neoclassical movement in Europe and became increasingly popular in America after the Revolution. The designs of English architect Robert Adam had a dramatic impact on American architecture, thus the term, Adamesque, is also often used to describe this architectural style. Hallmarks of the Federal style are delicate proportions and details as well as applied ornament. Facades are symmetrical with the entry centered on the long side of the house.

Generally, the Federal style houses in Brunswick are of wood frame construction with a rectangular or block form oriented with the long side facing the street. Typically, they are two or three stories with either a side-gable or shallow hipped roof. Wood clapboards are the predominant exterior material with the building sitting on a granite and/or brick foundation. In some cases, clapboards are laid flush only on the front elevation to give the impression of smooth masonry.

Chimney placement is usually at either end of the main block of the house. Shifting the chimneys out from the center towards the end walls permitted greater flexibility for interior room configurations. In some high-style houses it is not unusual to see a pair of chimneys at either end of the house.

One of the primary defining features of a Federal style house is the main entrance. The front door is usually centered on the primary façade with a semi-circular or elliptical fanlight window above it. The door is flanked by sidelights that typically have lead tracery. The door is often accentuated with simple pilasters and a broken triangular pediment. In some houses, the entry pediment is carried forward to create an entrance portico. The portico may be rectangular or elliptical and is often supported by groupings of slender, Doric columns. This use of classical elements (columns, arches) is typical of the Federal period.

Rectangular portico supported by simple columns.

Flush boards

Elliptical fanlight.

Sidelights with delicate tracery work.



Above: Classic Federal details are evident at this main entry.



Above: Wooden fans can also be found in the district.

Windows

are also an important defining characteristic of a Federal house because they establish a balanced rhythm and pattern across the primary façade. Windows are typically wood, double-hung sash with six panes in each sash, often referred to as six-over-six. Federal era windows are characterized by thinner and more delicately proportioned muntins and mullions, which contribute to an overall feeling of light and air. In three story houses, window openings may get smaller as they go up the façade. For example, the first floor windows might be large paned six-over-six sashes and the top floor might be a three-over-three sash. This stylistic treatment was used to enhance the perception of a building's height.

Wood louvered shutters are another prevalent feature of Federal style houses. Several types of ornamental window forms were used as decorative elements in Federal houses including semi-circular windows; Palladian windows; and three-sectioned windows.

The cornice, window and door surrounds are other areas to look for the intricate, finely proportioned and small-scale detail that is characteristic of the Federal period.



Above: Example of a typical Federal style house.



Federal Defining Features:

- Chimneys located towards either end of main block of house.
- Shallow pitched hip roof
- Symmetrical façade, typically five bays (openings)
- Main entry centered on façade with an elliptical or rounded fanlight above the door and sidelights.
- Rectangular building form with long side facing the street