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Lagging behind: Fayetteville's historic architecture

Jennifer Taylor^{*} and *Jennifer Webb*[§]

ABSTRACT

Architecture is a reflection of what is happening in the larger cultural, economic, and artistic scene. Therefore, understanding regional variations in trend adoption is significant to understanding the relationship of Fayetteville, Ark., to the larger national context. Local architecture is a reflection of the citizens of Fayetteville as consumers of popular culture. Simultaneous adoption theory was used as the framework of this study. The project objectives were to 1) document significant architectural styles within designated historical districts and nearby areas, and 2) compare local stylistic trends with national trends to determine fit. Findings indicate that Fayetteville lagged behind the national trend in architectural styles during its early years but that increased transportation connections and the establishment of the University of Arkansas may have helped to move the area into the mainstream.

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INTRODUCTION

Architectural trends are a reflection of the relationship between geographical regions and the nation at large. Rifkind (1980) states “buildings, streets and landscape configurations speak of history and culture, art and technology, time and events.” McAlester and McAlester (2000) further explain that homes are reflections of fashion. They explain that “most surviving American houses are not folk houses but are styled; that is, they were built with at least some attempt at being fashionable. As such, they show the influence of shapes, materials, detailing, or other features that make up an architectural style that was currently in vogue.”

Simultaneous adoption theory explains the rise and fall of fashion styles (Sproles, 1985) and can be applied to a variety of creative fields in which the public consumes the product. The theory explains that innovators

and forward thinkers initially adopt a trend or fashion during its introductory stage. These styles are introduced to the public by these innovators, and the subsequent stage, acceptance, results in mass market consumption of the style at its peak of popularity. The final stage, regression, is the decline of the style when it is adopted by fashion isolates (through lack of awareness) or fashion laggards (due to social pressure or economics). The graphic model generated by Sproles (1985) indicates that a bell-shaped curve accurately represents the introduction, acceptance, and regression of a particular style during its life-span. Adoption theory is appropriate not only to fashion but also to other stylistic trends such as art, architecture, and design. The suggestion that trends have a definable life span provides a foundation from which a comparison of regional to national trends can be made.

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Meet the Student-Author

After graduating from Springdale High School in 1990, I attended the University of Central Arkansas in Conway where I received a BSE in history. While I was at UCA I completed an internship at the Old State House Museum where I provided tours of the facilities to school groups and the general public, as well as assisting the director of docents in developing educational programs and summer classes. I also worked part-time for two semesters at the Arkansas Museum of Science and History where I presented interactive programs that included story telling, role playing, and the handling of artifacts and animals. As a result I have a strong background in Arkansas and Civil War history. After taking a few years off, I enrolled in the interior design program at the U of A and plan to work in the field of historic preservation upon graduation. I attended the 2001 session of the Nineteenth-Century Studies' Summer School in Newport, R.I., sponsored by the Victorian Society in America.

I chose to do this research project because of my combined interests in history, architecture, and decorative arts. This was a great opportunity for me to become more familiar with American architectural styles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. I also made some very good contacts in the historic preservation field and learned a lot of interesting history about the city of Fayetteville.

Many thanks to the people at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program in Little Rock and to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Webb, for her assistance throughout this project.



Jennifer Taylor

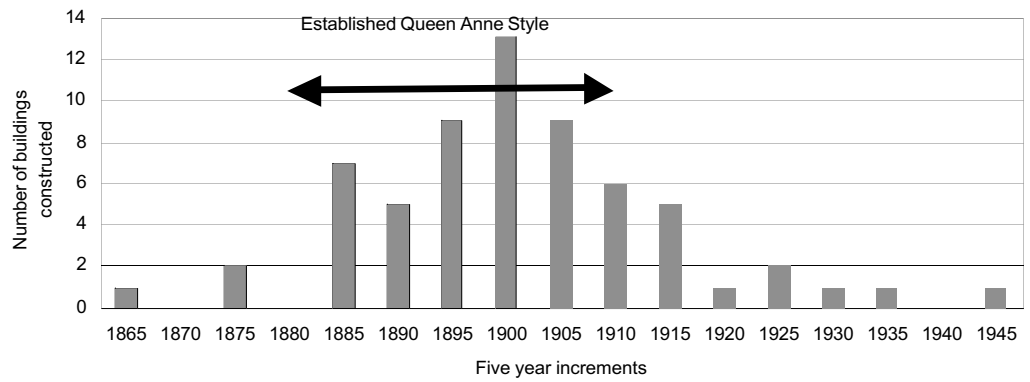
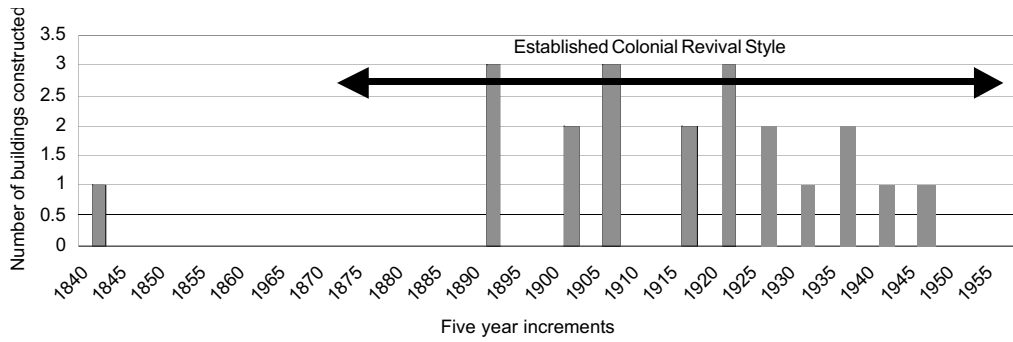
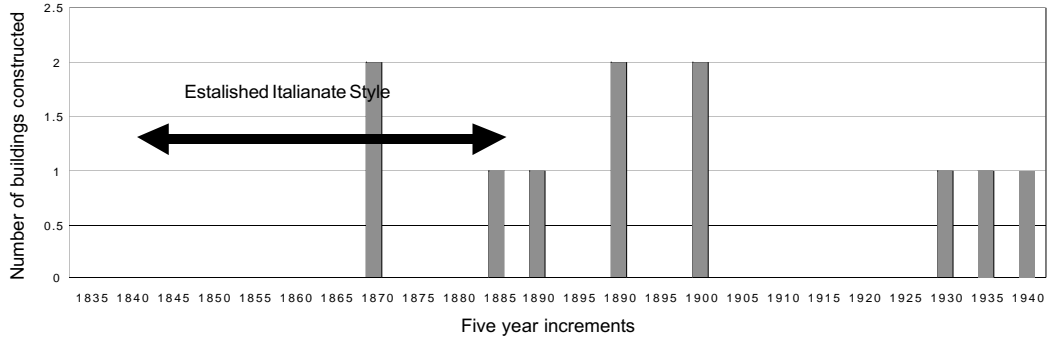
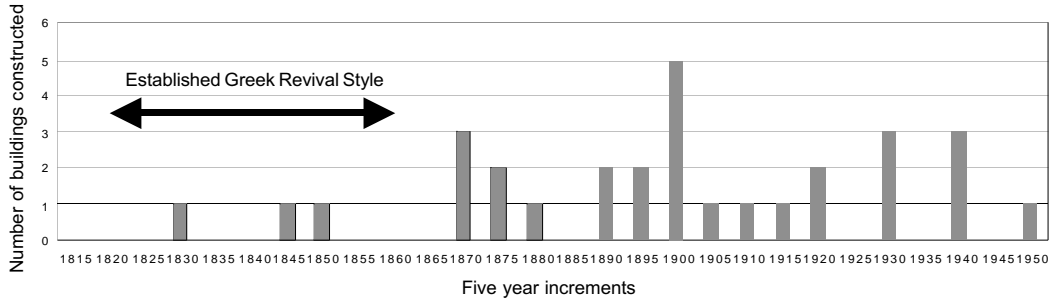


Fig. 1. Architectural trends in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

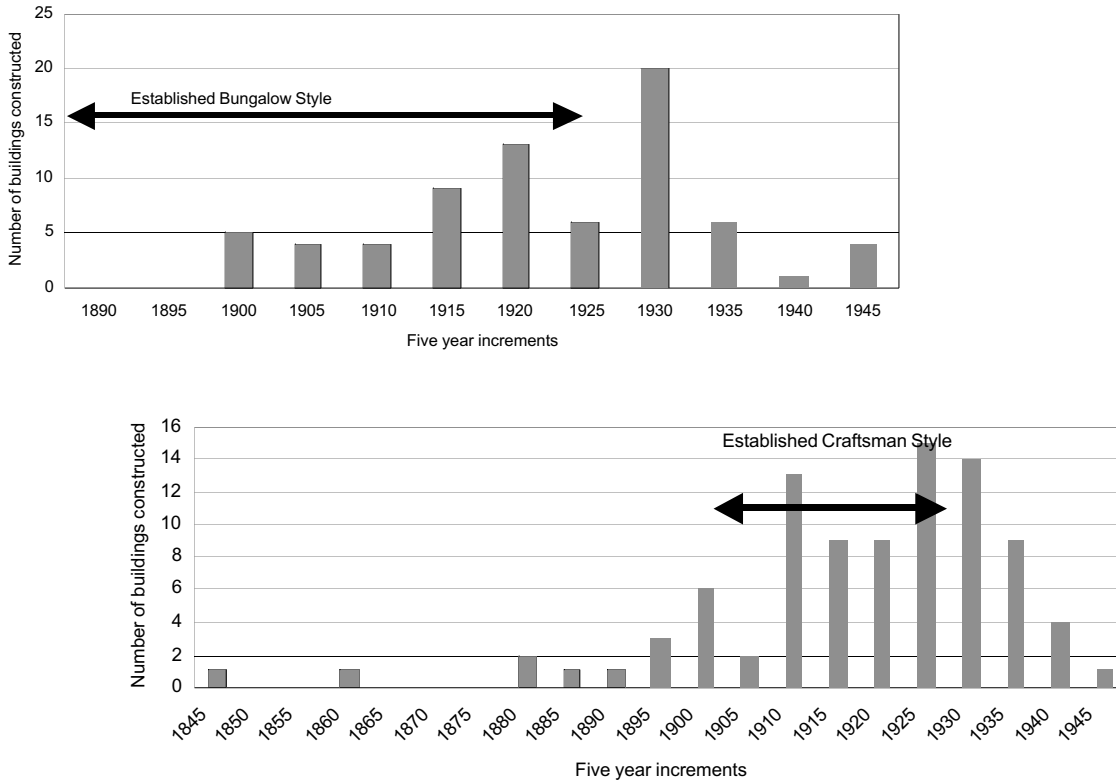


Fig. 1. continued. Architectural trends in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

the larger cultural, economic, and artistic scene; therefore, understanding regional variations in trend adoption is significant to understanding the relationship of Fayetteville, Ark., to the larger national context. It is a further reflection of the citizens of Fayetteville as consumers of popular culture. The project objectives were to 1) document significant architectural styles within designated historical districts and nearby areas, and 2) compare local stylistic trends with national trends to determine fit.

Background

Private individuals, state or local governments, federal offices, or Native American tribes can nominate buildings for addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The initial evaluation includes property categorization (district, site, building), prehistoric or historic context, significance (important event or person, design or construction), determination of exclusion, and integrity (National Register Bulletin, 1998). If the building passes the initial evaluation, a nomination

form is used to record the building's features and determine the style and significant history related to the building. The National Register Bulletin (1998) gives explanations of what the Register is and how it works. The Keeper of the National Register is responsible for the final evaluation and listing of the building (National Register Bulletin, 1998).

The earliest recorded reference to Fayetteville is in 1819 (USA Fact File, 2000). Fayetteville was officially established in 1828, and the boundary marking the Indian Territory was moved 40 miles west of the town (Facts and History, 1999). This boundary relocation created the perception that the area was considerably safer, and the city grew in population. Fayetteville achieved town status in 1835, was surveyed into lots sold at public auctions over the next two years, and by 1841 had a population of 425 (USA Fact File, 2000). Fayetteville was incorporated in 1870.

Access to Fayetteville was at first limited to wagon or river transportation. The materials for the first buildings were brought in by wagon. Later, the

Butterfield Stage Line ran through Fayetteville between 1858 and 1861 (Key to the City, 1999); the stagecoach brought settlers, news, and visitors to Fayetteville and provided a major connection between this area and the rest of the nation. The Arkansas Industrial University was established in 1872, and renamed the University of Arkansas in 1874. The establishment of the University attracted faculty, students, and supporting populations to the area, furthering diverse ideas and influences. When the first passenger train arrived in 1882, it marked the end of the geographical isolation previously experienced by the area. In 1925, the rail depot operated by the Frisco Line received a major renovation and expansion as a result of the rapid growth of the area coupled with expansion at the University of Arkansas (Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Records, 1984). This expansion marks a further growth in the area and is significant in the influx of new ideas and information into the town.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our sample consisted of 587 structures in three categories. The first category (n=196) included structures listed in 2000 in the National Register for Historic Places; these structures remain accurate representations of architectural style or construction. The second category (n=349) included structures that had been previously surveyed by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program but had not been listed in the Register due to additions or alterations that impacted the original integrity of the architectural style. The third category (n=42) included buildings considered by the researcher to have historical value as a result of appearance, and located within reasonable proximity to existing structures or districts presently listed with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

A search of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program records provided the lists of buildings named above, excluding the last category of structures. These records provided construction dates, stylistic classifications, and, in some cases, brief histories of the property or area. All buildings included in the sample were photographed for reference. Additional records searches in the Washington County archives

allowed the researcher to establish construction dates of those buildings not surveyed by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

The sample was organized by construction date, primary and secondary style, and physical location within the city. Structures that had no style assigned previously were categorized utilizing standard classification texts (Blumenson, 1983; McAlester and McAlester, 2000; Rifkind, 1980). Houses (n = 217) that had been previously categorized as “traditional” were re-examined and classified according to predominant styles when possible; 110 structures were reassigned to stylistic categories.

Frequency counts were completed for all buildings

Table 1. Comparison of building construction dates in Fayetteville, Ark., to nationally established style dates.

| No. of Houses | Style | Date range | Style range * |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 6 | 19th C Commercial | 1897 - 1930 | * |
| 40 | 20th C Commercial | 1900 - 1965 | |
| 2 | 4 Square | 1910 - 1925 | * |
| 2 | Adam | 1919-1944 | * |
| 8 | Art Deco | 1925 - 1946 | 1920 - 1940 |
| 77 | Bungalow | 1897 - 1956 | 1890 - 1940 |
| 1 | Cape Cod | 1892 | * |
| 6 | Classical Revival | 1901 - 1930 | 1770 - 1850 |
| 5 | Collegiate Gothic | 1934 - 1939 | * |
| 25 | Colonial Revival | 1840 - 1947 | 1870 - 1955 |
| 6 | Cottage | 1905 - 1948 | * |
| 93 | Craftsman | 1845 - 1945 | 1904 - 1930 |
| 7 | Dutch Colonial | 1900 - 1955 | 1625 - 1840 |
| 4 | English Revival | 1866 - 1940 | * |
| 1 | Federal 1897 | 1780 - 1820 | |
| 2 | French Colonial | 1913 - 1930 | 1700 - 1860 |
| 8 | Gothic Revival | 1871 - 1931 | 1830 - 1880 |
| 33 | Greek Revival | 1830 - 1950 | 1820 - 1860 |
| 3 | Industrial | 1908 - 1946 | * |
| 10 | Italianate | 1871 - 1940 | 1840 - 1885 |
| 1 | Log | 1910 | * |
| 1 | Mission | 1925 | * |
| 17 | Modern | 1950 - 1988 | 1930 - Present |
| 8 | National | 1885 - 1940 | 1850 - 1890 |
| 1 | Neo-Classical | 1907 | 1895 - 1950 |
| 12 | Prairie | 1850 - 1931 | 1900 - 1920 |
| 66 | Queen Anne | 1869 - 1948 | 1880 - 1910 |
| 3 | Ranch | 1959 - 1985 | 1935 - Present |
| 3 | Renaissance Revival | 1909 - 1940 | 1890 - 1935 |
| 1 | Second Empire | 1871 | 1855 - 1890 |
| 1 | Shingle | 1905 | * |
| 107 | Traditional | 1890 - 1990 | * |
| 19 | Tudor | 1888 - 1946 | 1890 - 1940 |
| 3 | Victorian Folk | 1885 - 1988 | 1870 - 1910 |
| 1 | WPA Rustic | 1940 | * |

Note: Style range was established by averaging the dates established in reference texts. * Style was provided by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and style range is not verifiable in reference texts.

in the sample by construction date, style, and number of structures (Table 1). Distribution curves were generated for each style with 10 or more buildings listed in the National Register, which included Greek Revival, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Bungalow, and Craftsman. A chart was created for each of these styles illustrating the number of structures in the sample constructed in five-year increments. For each of these distribution curves, an overlay illustrating the date range of the style was created (Fig. 1). Stylistic date ranges were established by averaging the date ranges stated in each of the primary reference texts (Blumenson, 1983; McAlester and McAlester, 2000; Rifkind, 1980).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparison of Fayetteville's construction date ranges to established stylistic date ranges indicates that Fayetteville, in its early years, could be termed a fashion laggard in the architectural sense. A comparison of the styles established during the early to mid-1800s (Greek Revival and Italianate) indicates that Fayetteville was lagging in the implementation of both styles. The Greek Revival and Italianate styles had a small initiation toward the end of the date range and considerable use as much as 30 to 50 years afterward. Comparatively, plots of the Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Bungalow and Craftsman styles, initiated in 1875, 1880, 1890, and 1900, respectively, indicate that Fayetteville construction was reflective of the nation at large in the adoption of these four styles. In Fayetteville, the Bungalow style continued well after the official date range; this is reflective of the nation at large. The style was affordable and appealing and responded to a particular lifestyle. Additionally, there was a trend away from clearly defined styles, particularly in residential construction, and the continuation or reintroduction of earlier styles is reflective of this.

Several events in Fayetteville's history indicate that information about architectural style and fashion is tied directly to links outside the region. The path of the Butterfield Stage Line in 1858, the establishment of the University of Arkansas in 1874, and the construction of the railway station in 1881 were events that provided regular delivery of news and the influx of people from other regions of the United States. These events coincide with Fayetteville's shift from laggard to mass market consumer in architectural style. In Fayetteville, as

well as many other mid-continental areas of the United States, "fashions" took a long time to be introduced because of the secluded locations.

Several tracks for future investigation can be developed from the data collected. There were 13 houses in which the style postdated the actual construction date, suggesting that significant renovations and additions had been made. Analysis of the renovation dates may illustrate the same delayed curve seen in the styles of other buildings. Yet another study of interest would be to compare Fayetteville to larger cities such as Little Rock or Memphis. Varying transportation methods and access to information may be more clearly defined in those large cities established earlier.

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