

Prairie/ American Foursquare Style Guide

FL  **RENCE**
ALABAMA



Prairie style/American Foursquare (1900-1920)

As seen in Walnut Street, Wood Avenue, Cherry Street, Seminary
O'Neal, Locust Street, and College Place Historic Districts.

Summary of Characteristics

The Prairie style is one of few architectural styles original to America. First developed by a group of Chicago architects, Frank Lloyd Wright's early work was in this style. Though the Prairie style was not very common in its purest of forms in the Southeast, its most common subtype, the American Foursquare, was extremely common here in the early twentieth century.

The American Foursquare is considered the principal subtype of the Prairie style and therefore shares its characteristics, however, the term "American Foursquare" refers to the building's form more than its style. Stylistically, the American Foursquare can take on applied details from several contemporaneous eclectic styles, such as Craftsman, Colonial Revival, or Neoclassical.



Low-Pitched
Roof with Widely
Overhanging Eaves

Details Emphasize
Horizontal Lines

Two-Stories
with One-Story
Porch and Wing

Heavy Porch
Supports

Low-pitched roof
with widely
overhanging
eaves

Roof is often hipped
with widely
overhanging eaves
that are typically
boxed. The eaves
contribute to the
emphasis on
horizontal lines.



Two-stories

This style is two-storied and can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, which is more common in high-style Prairie examples. The American Foursquare subtype is most common in Florence and is typically symmetrical, featuring symmetrical window pairings on both stories. Often attached porte cocheres and side porches contribute an asymmetrical appearance to an otherwise symmetrical façade.



Note the widely overhanging eaves and how they and the porte cochere contribute to the low, wide appearance. Heavy brick piers and tapered wood posts borrow from the Craftsman style.

Porches

This style can have a small entry porch or more commonly a full width porch with heavy porch posts made of masonry or square brick or stone piers topped by some type of wood post. The latter is more common when Craftsman details are present, as in the example above.



The rooftop balustrade on this porch, Classical columns, dentil molding, and brick quoins on the corners of the house are all applied details of the Neoclassical style.

Applied details

Colonial Revival – multi-light double-hung wood windows, often over a large single pane in the lower sash, dentil molding, and columned porch supports are common.

Craftsman – porch supports may be brick or stone piers with tapered wood posts, windows may feature Craftsman three-lights over one large pane in the lower sash, exposed rafters and bracketed eaves also common.

Neoclassical – multi-light double-hung wood windows, often over a large single pane in the lower sash, porch supports include classical columns, often paired or grouped atop brick piers, decorative quoins and a rooftop balustrade adorn the example above.