



GREEK INSPIRATION

Bethlehem, like most of the rest of the country, was fascinated by the Greek revival style of architecture in the early to mid 1800s. Americans, with their commitment to democratic ideals, found the connection to ancient Greece appealing.

The temple front became ubiquitous across America from high style public buildings and banks to common vernacular farmhouses. Grander buildings sport a large triangular pediment that projects outward, supported by a row of columns, creating an inviting porch-like area. Think of the ancient Greek Parthenon.

The style filtered down to common homes with the gable of the house turned toward the street helping to create the triangular pediment. Vertical pilasters applied to the corners of the house create the visual suggestion of free standing columns. The front door is offset to one side with two windows next to it. Details such as dentil molding, entablatures, raking cornices and half round windows come into play with the creativity of the local carpenter/builder and the budget of the owner.

Next time you are driving around town, look for Bethlehem's Greek temples. Some, like the Adams House Hotel, Delmar Reformed Church or the Haswell-Houck Tavern, are obvious. Even though their columns are square, their triangular pediments are prominent and pay homage to Greek proportion and style.

Look for the farmhouses. Once you start looking for those triangles facing the street, you can spot them easily enough along busy Kenwood Avenue and New Scotland Road, along country roads like Wemple and Meads Lane or hidden away on side streets like Roweland and Willowbrook Avenues. Some are brick, some are clapboard. Keep a sharp eye, and you'll even find them under vinyl siding with most of the old details removed.

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