

Context 7 – Residential Time Span – 1857-1950s

Chaska’s Residential History

Downtown Chaska, in the area bounded by Beech Street, First Street, Hickory Street, and Sixth Street, contains the bulk of historic residences in the town. There are, however, other scattered sites, including former worker’s residences along Stoughton Avenue, other scattered houses on the outskirts of town, and former farmsteads such as the Eitel House, Karen House, and the Ortlieb House.

Though Chaska was founded in 1851 and settled by the mid-to-late 1850s, the major development of the town occurred from 1870-1900. The town was determined a city by special legislative action in 1891, and was already the county seat and held a busy monthly farm market. Thus, many of the historic buildings are commerce-related. There are, however, many homes scattered throughout the business district, and the majority of Wards 1 and 3 are residential neighborhoods.

Chaska brick was a very popular building material, and many of the town’s most distinctive homes, such as the Schmidt House, Greiner House, DuToit House, Young House, and Eder-Baer House are made of the brick. There were, in the late 1800s, many distinctive frame homes as well, but in general proved not to be as durable, and many were lost to the periodic floods before the levee was constructed. Others were simply torn down to make room for new development. Today, though Chaska’s housing stock is less varied than it was at the turn of the century, it still contains many well-preserved, beautiful historic homes.

Housing Styles

Chaska’s main focus has often been on the materials that its homes are made of (mainly in reference to Chaska brick), rather than the styles of homes represented. Nevertheless, even within the relatively small central core of the city exists a wide range of different kinds of homes, many of which are historic. It is important to understand the types of architecture present in order to understand how to preserve these homes and to guide sympathetic future development.

To this end, the following pages of this context spend no small amount of time on defining and clarifying various styles of vernacular architecture, as well as giving examples and visual references. The end of the context touches on some associated issues, including design elements such as outbuildings and fencing, as well as considering apartment units.

Greek Revival Cottage

Predominant period 1850s to 1860s

Classical models of architecture were of particular interest to a young, idealistic nation based on the Greek and Roman democratic principles. Indeed, the style was so prevalent in the mid-eighteen hundreds that it grew to be called the “National Style.” Examples of Greek Revival buildings ranged from high style public buildings and institutions such as banks to grand Southern plantations to diminutive, small cottages. Greek Revival influences are found on many of the early Chaska brick cottages.

Identifying cottage characteristics:

- gabled, low-pitched roof
- symmetrical plan
- low-pitched pedimented window and door crowns
- Front gabled with no porch

Examples in Chaska include:

209 Maple Street

109 Walnut Street



*Greek Revival cottage a in Chaska brick at
109 Walnut Street*

Gothic Revival

Predominant period 1850s to early 1880s

Gothic inspired homes, often referred to as “cottages,” were popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing in two successful pattern books, *Cottage Residences* and *The Architecture of Country Houses*, and are based loosely on ecclesiastical architecture.

Identifying cottage characteristics:

- gothic arched detailing
- steeply pitched roofs, often with steep cross gables
- strong vertical orientation, often with full porch or one-story entry
- heavy decorative ornamentation, made possible by the innovation of the scroll saw

An example in Chaska is:

113 Oak Street by pumping station.



*House with Gothic influences at
113 Oak Street*

Italianate

Predominant period 1850s to late 1880s

The Italianate style evolved from the romantic notion of the northern Italian houses and landscapes depicted in late eighteenth-century paintings. These residences often strongly influenced the architecture of the commercial storefront of the late nineteenth century. A typical Italianate is two to three stories high, is characterized by a square or rectangular shape, and is of stone or wood frame construction. The style is particularly prevalent in rapidly expanding Midwestern towns such as Chaska.

Identifying characteristics:

- rectangular or square plan
- vertical orientation, with tall windows and doors
- wide eaves supported on large ornamental brackets
- projecting door and window crowns, often arched or hooded

An examples in Chaska is 322 W. 1st. Street



Italianate influences can be seen at 322 W. 1st Street

Queen Anne

Predominant period 1880s to approximately 1910

This popular style, considered by many to be the quintessential Victorian style, mixes medieval, Elizabethan, and Jacobean elements in asymmetrical collections of architectural details. In particular, the use of highly ornate spindle work was an American interpretation of the style popularized by the distribution of pre-cut architectural elements through the rapidly expanding railway system. Whether architect-designed or vernacular, Queen Anne homes, with their distinctive ornamentation, wide front porches, and romantic towers and turrets, are a favorite Midwestern house style.

Identifying characteristics:

- asymmetrical composition of towers, tall chimneys, and steeply pitched roofs
- front facing gable
- wrap around, one-story porches with ornate spindle work
- exterior texture through shingles, bay windows, and other details

Examples in Chaska include:

105 Elm Street

111000 Bavaria Road • The Koehnen House



105 Elm Street is a good example of a "high-style" Queen Anne house

Gabled-Ell Cottage

Predominant period 1880s to late 1950s

The Gabled -Ell layout refers to the non-style conscious house design which evolved from the rural dwelling of the 1870s to the modern home after the turn of the century. Simple in layout, and home to an emerging working class, the Homestead dwelling rejected the ornate architectural detailing of the former century and remained simple, utilitarian, and popular through the mid-century.

Identifying characteristics:

- minimal architectural detailing
- defined by shape, rather than architectural detailing
- tri-gabled, in the shape of an L, with the front porch tucked into the crook of the L
- brick or wood frame construction with clapboard siding
- simple, box-like massing

Examples in Chaska include:

322 Cedar Street

116 Maple Street

115 Elm Street

906 Stoughton Avenue



322 Cedar Street, a Gabled-Ell Cottage rendered in clapboard siding

Colonial Revival Cottage

Predominant period early 1880s to late 1950s

The Colonial Revival style draws its influence from the Georgian, Adams, and Dutch architecture of the east coast. The revival style usually strays from strict historical interpretation and tends to be eclectic, using a mixture of details (often exaggerated) from the high styles of colonial architectures and contemporary elements.

Identifying characteristics:

- symmetrical façade with central entrance
- slender columned porch
- door defined with fanlight and sidelights
- windows often double hung with multi-pane glazing, frequently in adjacent pairs

Examples in Chaska include:

415 Walnut Street

209 Cedar Street



Colonial Revival details are found in the Chaska brick home at 415 Walnut Street

Italian Renaissance

Predominant period 1890s to late 1930s

The Italian Renaissance revival style, in the first quarter of the 20th century, recalled grand architectural forms and asserted itself as an icon of “civilized” Mediterranean style over the regional American architectural types. The style was partially popularized by Edith Wharton’s popular 1904 publication titled, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*—illustrated by Maxfield Perish.

The style received national attention with the design of the 1883 Villard Houses in New York by the renowned architecture firm of McKim, Mead & White. The style was introduced as a strong contrast to the medieval inspired Shingle and Queen Anne styles.

Characteristics and Details

- Low pitched hipped roofs
- Upper story windows less elaborate than lower windows
- Upper story often followed the Italian tradition of being shorter than the first
- Entrances usually accented with classical columns and/or pilasters
- Second story porches over entries
- Quoins may appear on building corners
- Light-hued stone or brick facades

Examples in Chaska include:

Peacock Inn, 314 Walnut Street

215 E. 4th Street • The Klein House



The Klein House at 215 E. 4th Street

Craftsman Bugelow

Predominant period approximately 1905 to 1930s

The Craftsman style home was popularized in the early 1900s by magazines including *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*, which led to a plethora of pattern books. The style was developed and refined around the turn of the century by California architects and brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene (“Greene and Greene.”) The Greenes were influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement, oriental aesthetics, and an interest in both wooden construction techniques and the manual arts. The vast majority of vernacular Craftsman homes were bungalows, praised for their efficient use of space.

Identifying characteristics:

- low pitched roof, usually gabled
- usually one story tall, especially in vernacular examples
- un-enclosed wide overhanging eaves, with exposed roof rafters
- decorative beams often added under gables
- front porch supported by tapered square battered columns

Examples in Chaska include:

315 W. 2nd Street

516 Pine Street • Mill House Gallery

307 W. 1st Street

307 Cedar Street

203 Oak Street



Craftsman home at 307 Cedar Street

Ranch

Predominant period 1945 to late 1970s

The Ranch home is a twentieth-century vernacular style that grew out of expansion of the middle-class domestic needs of America's postwar population explosion. As soldiers returned from World War II and started new families, there was a growing need for quickly constructed, simple in plan, and affordable homes.

The single-story Ranch home was influenced in style, by the Prairie School work of Midwest architect Frank Lloyd Wright, with its long, horizontal orientation, its low pitched roof, and window banding (ribbon windows). However, the Ranch often took advantage of factory made materials such as imitation stone, pressed fiber wood siding, and metal siding. Short of the vague references to Prairie School, and some use of stone, as influenced by California residential architecture, the Ranch home is generally devoid of historic stylistic detailing.

The Split Level, popular starting in the 1950s, is a variation on the one-story Ranch. The Split Level incorporated an additional story to allow for better separation of living functions, and providing interior interest to the floor plan.

Characteristics and Details

- Single-story residence with a strong horizontal orientation
- Low pitched gable and hipped roofs

- Often an exterior attached brick fireplace stack on the gable end
- Use of a variety of exterior materials including face brick, stone, artificial stone, horizontal wood siding, particle board siding, and/or metal siding
- Window banding
- Wide use of “picture windows” with or without flanking side windows
- Often displaying a garage door at one end of the front facade

Examples in Chaska include:

509 Beech Street

611 E. Sixth Street



611 E. 6th Street

Modern Shed

Predominant period 1960 to present

This variation on modern residential architecture evolved from the writings and teachings of modern architects such as Charles Moore and Robert Venturi. These residences generally appear to be architectural blocks with multi-directional shed roofs creating visual interest. With the development of Jonathan in Chaska, many of this type of residence were constructed.

Characteristics and Details

- Multi-angled, low pitched shed roofs
- Extensive use of wood siding, sometimes at a diagonal
- Upper story often followed the Italian tradition of being shorter than the first
- Entrances usually recessed and obscured

An example in Chaska is:

67 Jonathan Neighborhood 1



Notice the multi-angled shed roof and the vertical wood siding on this home in Jonathan's Neighborhood One

Residential Special Features

In addition to the main dwellings, many houses have notable special features that add to the character of the home. These features, while often not remarkable in their own right, contribute substantially to the character of the home, and should be recognized.

The most evident example of these features are garages, carriage houses, and outbuildings. Often, these structures are not original to the home; if they are, they should be treated with special care, as they represent part of the historic fabric of the home. Even if an outbuilding was added later, it demonstrates the house's history and period of influence, and ought to be treated in a similar way to the main building. In Chaska, these outbuildings were often used as small factories located on the same lot as a residential structure

Other examples of exterior detailing includes sidewalks, walls, and fencing. Original walks are also uncommon, but should be preserved if available. Fences and walls are important because, like front porches, they mark the transition between the public streetscape and the private yard. A few examples of historic walls include the tall wall surrounding the back of Guardian Angels Church, and the stone retaining wall of the house at 208 Second Street W.

Another consideration is the relationship of the street to the home. The city has not tended to retain original curbing, or carriage-related elements such as carriage steps and horse posts. If these elements are in existence anywhere in the city, or discovered during future construction, they should be preserved and retained.

In all of these cases, any repairs and new construction should be compatible with the original materials and design of the home.

Multi-Family Housing

The majority of the houses in Chaska, as described above, are single-family homes. Presumably, some duplexes or triplexes were constructed, and there is a good example of rowhouses — the O. Goodrich rowhouses at 414-22 North Walnut Street. There are no historic, multi-family units, such as the apartment buildings or “flats” that were so fashionable in larger metropolitan areas by the 1920s.

However, several of the downtown commercial buildings were constructed with apartments overhead. Often, this was a situation of convenience, where the shopkeeper lived above his store to make access and service easier. In other cases, the upstairs living quarters simply provided extra income for the landlord. Today, most of these units have been converted to offices or storage.

National Register Properties

The following Chaska residences are currently individually listed on the National Register of Historic Place:

- Frederick Greiner House
319 E. 3rd Street
associated with Chaska merchants history
- Frederick E. DuToit House
121 Hickory Street
founder of the Chaska Herald
- Eder-Baer House
105 Elm Street
distinctive Queen Anne styling
- Conrad Fink House – National Register eligible but not listed
322 W. 1st Street
- EH Lewis House
321 W. 2nd Street
associated with Lucius Faber and Dr. E.H. Lewis families
- Ortlieb Farmstead – National Register eligible but not listed
Chaska Township
- William Scott House – NR eligible but not listed
516 Pine, currently a gallery (Mill House Gallery and Gifts)
9/05 – nomination in process by owner
Criterion B – association with mill owner, next to mill
- Walnut Street Historic District
a number of houses, as well as commercial buildings

Property Types

Single-family Homes

Vernacular

Architect Designed

Apartments and Multi-unit Homes

Rowhouses

Apartments Above Storefronts

Multi-family Units

Outbuildings

Carriage Houses

Garages

Sheds

Barns

Other Outbuildings

Landscaping and Gardens

Sidewalks
Fences
Walls
Carriage Steps

Recommendations and Future actions

1. In order to accurately assess cultural resources, and prior to initiating any kind of historic district, the entire residential housing stock of downtown Chaska should be fully surveyed. This could be done as part of the CLG process.
2. Based on this survey, the Chaska HPC should consider local nominations of more residences. The commission should then update the outreach materials on the locally nominated properties. The HPC may want to update the walking tour maps, and perhaps even lead occasional guided tours.
3. Two houses are National Register-eligible, but have not yet been listed. These include:

Conrad Fink House	322 W. 1 st Street
William Scott House	516 Pine Street

The Chaska HPC should work with these property owners to complete the nomination process and secure National Register listings.

4. A recent Department of Transportation survey suggested several residential properties that may be appropriate for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as individual properties. These include:

Eiden House	115 Elm Street N.
Ottinger House	821 Howard Lane
Riedele House	122 US Highway 12
Nobel-Sell House	301 3 rd Street E.
DuToit House	208 2 nd Street W

The Chaska HPC should pursue nominating these to the National Register.

5. Chaska should pursue a Multiple Property nomination to the National Register of Chaska brick structures, as suggested in Context 2. This nomination should include a strong representation of residential properties.
6. Other houses may be identified as National Register-eligible or likely as part of the inventory process, and the HPC should investigate nomination of any such properties at that time.

7. Based on the inventory research, Chaska may also want to consider designating more historic districts, either locally or as a district designation to the National Register. One possibility for this may be (depending on research), the area around Guardian Angels as a parish neighborhood.
8. The city could also investigate establishing historic conservation districts. These districts are a unique blend of preservation and planning. Such districts generally seek to preserve a specific neighborhood's "sense of place," rather than individual structures, and make use of zoning and land use regulations to influence future development through historic patterns.
9. The HPC should conduct outreach to city residents regarding architectural styles and preservation techniques. Such information would allow homeowners to understand their home's distinguishing features, and assist them in planning for the preservation of their property. Such outreach should not ignore elements such as outbuildings, landscape, fences, walks, and other details. Ideally, this process would occur through some sort of residential design guidelines.