

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



Nels Reese
Commission Chair
hpc@ci.moscow.id.us

Regular Meeting ~Minutes~

Mike Ray
Staff Liaison
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<http://www.ci.moscow.id.us/431/Historic-Preservation-Commission>

**Thursday
January 23, 2025**

4:30 PM

**Haddock Building
504 S. Washington Street**

Reese called the meeting to order at 4:36 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nels Reese, Chair; Eleanor Evans, Laurabeth Kowalick, Renee Magee, Jack Porter, Shelley Walker-Harmon
MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Taylor
STAFF: Mike Ray

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Approval of October 24, 2024 Minutes (ACTION ITEM)

Porter moved for approval of the minutes as written, seconded by Evans. Vote by Acclamation: Ayes: Unanimous (6). Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

2. Public Comment

Members of the public may speak to the Commission regarding matters NOT on the agenda or currently pending before the Commission. Please state your name and city of residence for the record and limit your remarks to three (3) minutes.

None.

3. Election of Officers for 2025 (ACTION ITEM)

The Commission will need to nominate and elect officers for 2025.

Magee moved to elect Nels Reese as Chair, Shelley Walker-Harmon as Vice Chair, and Laurabeth Kowalick as Secretary for 2025, seconded by Porter. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous (6). Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

4. Fiscal Year 2026 Commission Budget (ACTION ITEM)

The City is currently preparing the 2026 fiscal year budget, and the Commission will need to submit their request by the end of February.

Staff had removed some of the funds allocated for Preservation Publications since the last budget cycle.

Magee moved for approval of the FY2026 commission budget request as written, seconded by Porter. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous (6). Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

5. University of Idaho Historic District Update

A discussion about the work being done for the University of Idaho Historic District.

Reese offered to provide a tour of the University of Idaho (UI) for the Commissioners. He let the Commission know that UI President Green is still supportive of the goal to establish a Historic District on campus. Walker-Harmon provided an update on progress for the proposed district and State Historic Preservation Office application deadline.

6. Interpretive Signage in Friendship Square

The Commission will discuss the idea of adding interpretive signage in Friendship Square.

The Commission talked about moving forward with designing the interpretive sign for Friendship Square. Magee will begin work on captions and photo credit data and Kowalick will contact the owner of the Moscow Hotel to request permission for placing the sign on the building exterior.

7. How Italianate Architecture Came to Moscow – Nels Reese

Chair Reese will give a presentation on Italianate Architecture in Moscow.

The Chair provided the presentation as described above (see attached).

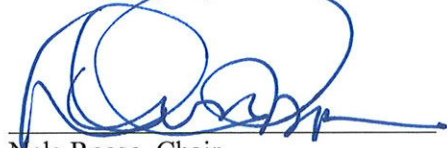
REPORTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS / MEETINGS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 PM



Nels Reese, Chair

02/27/25
Date

How Italianate Architecture came to Moscow

by D. Nels Reese, 2025

Sometime in the distant past, around 1850, the residential architectural world in America was influenced by three gentlemen. Their names were **Alexander Jackson Davis** (1803-1895), **Alexander Jackson Downing** (1815-1852) and **Calvert Vaux** (1824-1895).



A.J.Davis



A. J. Downing



Calvert Vaux

America was in the search for new styles leading away from the typical colonial architecture. There had been some infatuation with Greek Revival, but that effort stuttered and out of Europe came a rebirth of Italian styles. One romantic style would be called **Italianate**. Each of these three architects would publish books dedicated to the styles of residential architecture, they would publish many plans and along the way design some form of an Italianate house.



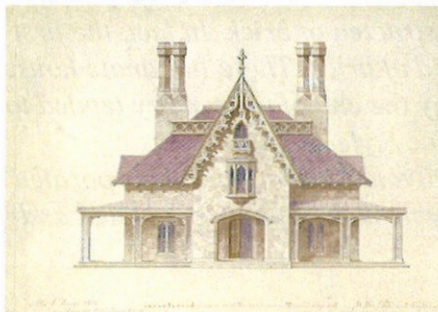
Blandwood, NC, 1844



Ammadelle, MS, 1859



Dodge House, Wash DC, 1851



Drawings from the Plan Books of Davis, Downing, and Vaux

*As the world turned, the **Italianate Style** became a favorite style for residential architecture in the Northeast and Mid-west. Thousands of Italianate homes were built in this style that was a derivative of the original work of Palladio and influenced by our three prolific architects. A great many of these houses were constructed in brick. The following display of a dozen houses found in ten states, reveals the basic shape and quality of the Italianate Style.*



1844 Blandwood, NC



1853 Wheeler House, CT



1858 Bashford, WI



1858 Indiana



1860 Illinois



1862 Farnum, MA



1869 Detroit, Michigan



1869 Nebraska



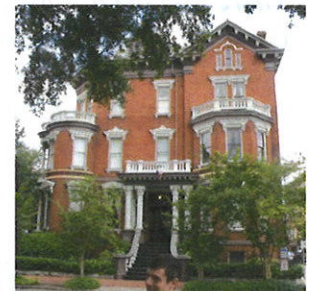
1870 Indiana



1877 Bartells, NJ



1857 Day, CT



1892 Savannah, GE

Some of the standard qualities of Italianate homes include a basic two-story structure, large overhangs with noticeable brackets, tall windows often round headed, bay windows, and decorated porches. The Italianate house would either have a tower over the front porch or a cupola or lantern on top of the house. Most of the illustrated houses above are constructed of brick. In fact, the first three house here shown are the only three that are not constructed of brick. These Italianate houses are substantial but not opulent. The very wealthy home-owners by the end of the century tended to choose either a classical style or the new and popular Queen Anne Style.

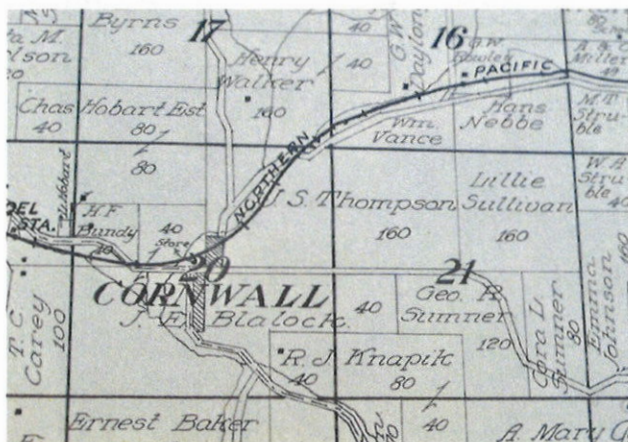
It is worth noting that Idaho did not become a state until 1890 and Moscow was incorporated in 1876. So, it was not likely that this 1860s style would find its way to such a lightly populated and recently developed region.



Mason Cornwall, 1821 – 1906

In 1821 Mason A. Cornwall was born in Truxton, NY. He attended a seminary in New York and moved to Canada where he was involved in educational work for more than twenty years. Notice that Mr. Cornwall was nearly the same age of Calvert Vaux and one might imagine that he was familiar with all three of the architects here introduced. He then moved to Ohio where he was involved in Real Estate. It was reported that Mason did meet Joseph Smith during this period. In 1849 he married and in the next years raised six children. At the age of 40 he moved to Richland County, Wisconsin where he worked in several occupations. It was reported that Mrs. Cornwall died there in Wisconsin. In 1881 Mason married Annie Maria Olson. In 1883, the 62-year old Mason and his 25-year old wife moved out west to Idaho with their two young children, Lulu and Mason Jr.

Mason and Annie and their two children chose to make their residence just six miles east of Moscow where the Troy road and the Genesee roads meet. There Mason homesteaded one section and through additional purchases soon owned approximately 1000 acres. Mason started a store and post office there at the cross-roads which is now known as Joel.



Map showing the Cornwall Homestead and the Northern Pacific rail line. Joel in 1885.

In 1888 Mason and his wife moved into Moscow where he constructed a house for his growing family and set up a banking business in Moscow. In Moscow he chose 27 acres just east of town on Hayes Street. As the railroad had just come to Moscow in 1885 it is likely that the growth sponsored by the railroad encouraged Mason to move into town where the new economic action was happening.

The Cornwall Castle is Born

1889



*The City of Moscow was officially 13 years old when Mason Cornwall moved into town and built his **Italianate House** on the very edge of the city. This 3D map of Moscow illustrates the emerging city in 1897, as well as the Cornwall House on the city's edge. The house immediately attracted attention and the year after it was completed the house was featured along with the **McConnell Mansion** and the **Baker/Shield's House** located just blocks away.*



A Lithograph published in Portland, Oregon

*The Cornwall house shared space on this lithograph published in the South Shore Magazine in Portland, Oregon. Notice that the important Moscow public buildings shown on this litho included the **University of Idaho Administration Building**, the **Latah County Courthouse**, the **Durnham and Kauffman Store** and the **Shield's Building**.*

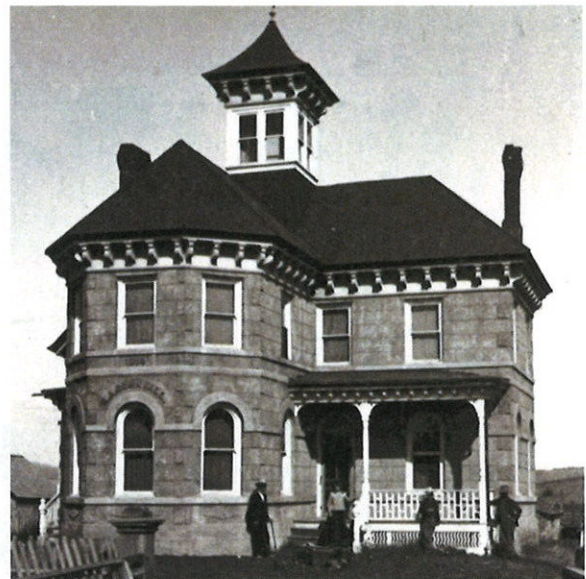


The Cornwall family shown in photo between 1889 and 1912.

The Cornwall family in a photo presumed to be taken in 1889, which appears to be the year that the Moscow house was constructed. One notable Cornwall child was Lulu shown in sepia image and again with her mother, child and grandmother on the steps of the Cornwall house. This photo was said to be taken in 1912. Lulu died of influenza in 1919.



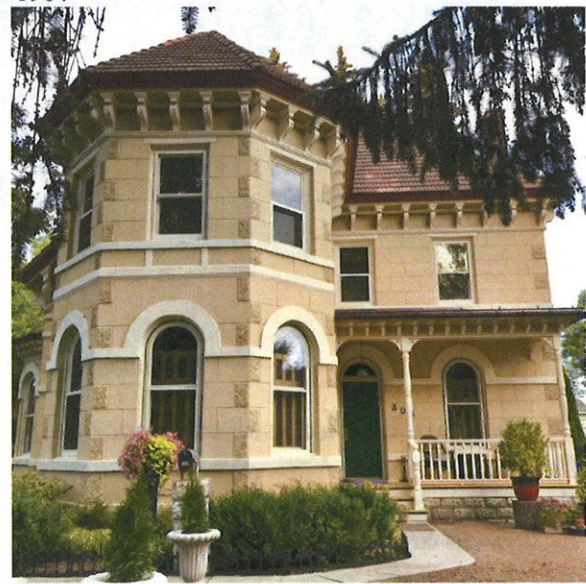
1900



1904



1991



2018

Four photographs of the Cornwall House

The only two photos of the Pioneer Cornwall House that appear to be available are shown in black and white, above. Notice that the house appears to be constructed of stone and has metal diamond shaped shingles. There are no dates that accompany these photos. However, it is assumed that the man with a cane would be Mason Cornwall himself. One presumes that this photo was taken between 1900 and 1906 the year that he died. The first color image, shown here, was taken in 1991 just 12 years after the Reeses purchased the house. The last image was taken in 2018 after the historic porch was rebuilt.

One question that might be posed about the Cornwall House, is, **why would Mr. Cornwall desire a stone house** when most of the Italianate houses in America appear to be constructed of brick, and in fact, while the Cornwall house was being built, most of the important commercial buildings in Moscow were constructed of brick. One other fact was that of the nine pioneer houses being constructed in Moscow before 1900, none of them were built of either brick or stone.

Pre-1900 Pioneer Houses of Moscow



1884 Lieuallan House



1885 Shields House



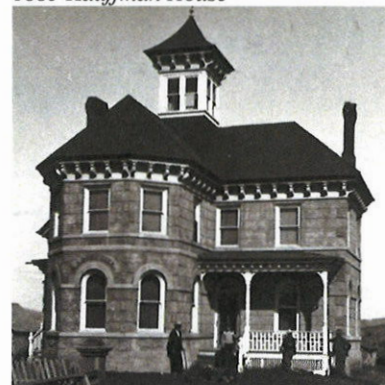
1885 Kauffman House



1885 Durnham/Gritman House



1886 McConnell Mansion



1889 Mason Cornwall House



1893 Alexander Ryrie House



1893 Judge Forney House



1895

These nine houses serve to represent the pre-1900 Pioneer houses in Moscow. It is very likely that there are several other pre-1900 houses in Moscow, but this group represents the houses most often discussed and known. Note that only the Cornwall house is built of masonry. The Cornwall House was actually constructed of brick with an applied stucco scored to resemble stone. In 1975, in the guidebook *"Saints and Oddfellows"* the Cornwall House was reported to be made of stone. Dr. Neil said of the house. **"It was built of local granite by Michael Zeigler, with a cupola tower in the center of the roof (removed during the 1940s).**

Returning to the question of why Mason Cornwall decided to build a faux stone house. One needs to know that Mason and his family lived in Muscoda, Wisconsin for about 20 years between 1863 and 1883. Muscoda was located about 50 miles west of Madison, the capitol of Wisconsin. Cornwall owned property and was involved in business, and it is both reasonable and likely that he would occasionally travel to Madison for business reasons. There in Madison, close to the capitol was a residential area known as Mansion Hill. There on Mansion hill were located several beautiful homes

built of **Wisconsin Sandstone**. One of the houses was the Governor's Mansion, done in the Italianate Style and nearby was the Mansion Hill Inn, designed in Romanesque style, and again built out of beautiful Wisconsin sandstone. The following images of houses constructed in the mid 1800s are all located within sight of the Wisconsin State Capitol and form a rather impressive collection of sandstone houses. This writer has every reason to believe that Mason Cornwall would have been aware of these structures and would have taken the Italianate idea to Moscow, Idaho.



1855 Governor's Mansion



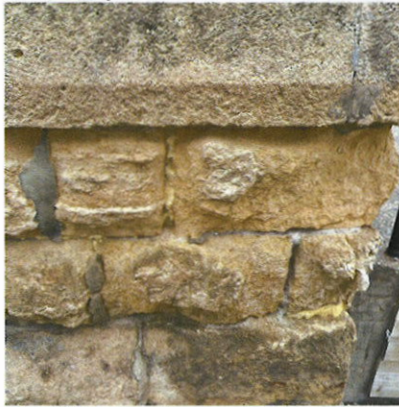
1858 Bashford House



1857 Mansion Hill Inn



Anonymous Italianate House



Sandstone Detail



Italianate House of brick

And so ends my own personal story of how the Italianate style came to Idaho.

Construction Afterthought:

Dr. Neil's comment referring to local granite was not entirely off the mark, as the foundation of the Cornall house is essentially composed of granite from Moscow Mountain. My wife Joyce and I became vividly aware of the nature of the Cornwall House foundation in 2005 when we decided to craft a new access window from the basement apartment.



Joyce Reese in the basement.



Close-up of the foundation granite.



Nels Reese with jackhammer.

As to the essential brick structure of the house there have been many ways and many times that we have come face to face with the brick work. The following images display a few places where the brick structure came to our attention.



Dining room under re-construction.



Brick work above the basement window.



Brick work in the second story wall.

Remodeling of the dining room in 1996, revealed the brickwork of the north bay window. The new egress window work in 2005 revealed the brick work just above the window frame. In fact, the bricks began to fall out as little mortar had been applied to those bricks. Then in 2012 Joyce spent hours cleaning the space behind the new upstairs bathroom wall and there she was confronted with the second story brickwork.