Architectural Styles

Gothic Revival
A revival of medieval styles began in the 18th century and was very popular in Britain in the early 19th century. America saw its first Gothic Revival structures in the 1830s and the style was used widely for churches and schools as well as homes, until the 1890s. Most of Albany's gothic houses were built in the 1870s. The first use of this particular style found few builders who could afford the elaborately carved decorative detailing which was so much a part of these structures. But with the invention of the jigsaw came the ornate bargeboards, window tracery, hood molds, bay windows and foliated ornaments. Characteristic of Gothic Revival is the asymmetrical plan and facade as well as pointed arch windows.

Classic Revival
Greek Roman temples were the models for this style. Low pitched gable roofs with eave returns and pedimented gables were common. Classical columns or pilasters were also employed on the porch and front of the house. Six-over-six pane double-hung windows are usually found on the Classic Revival home popular in Oregon from the 1840s until the 1860s.

Italianate
Italianate is an umbrella term that is used to describe the type of building, both residential and commercial, that was inspired by Italian Renaissance palaces and modest Italian Farm houses of the 18th and 17th centuries. Its most characteristic element is the low-lined roof (flat on commercial buildings) with overhanging eaves that are supported by decorative scroll-like brackets. Italianate styles were popular in Oregon in the 1880s and 1890s. They usually have a vertical emphasis and often have the rounded or segmental 'Roman' arch.

Federal
This symmetrical, box-like style was very popular on the East Coast from 1776 to 1820 and was commonly used by early settlers here on the West Coast. The internal structure of these buildings was generally made of hand-hewn beams while exterior siding was often of locally milled lumber. Typical of this style are interior chimneys and symmetrically placed six over six pane double-hung windows.

French Second Empire
Second Empire architecture was developed in France during the rule of Napoleon III (1852-1870) and was popular in Europe throughout the latter half of the 19th century. In the United States it was adopted for museums, hotels, colleges and houses. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this style is the Mansard roof, straight, concave or convex, usually with decorative shingles. Other features include classical ornamentation (lintel courses, cornices, moldings, etc.), tall chimneys with decorative caps, dormer windows, and deep cornices supported by brackets. This style was popular in Oregon in the 1870s and 1880s. Albany has the largest concentration of French Second Empire structures in the state.

Rural Vernacular
The Rural Vernacular or Western Farmhouse style was widely used throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley from 1875 to 1910. These homes were built with thrift in mind and utilized materials, which were easily available. The Rural Vernacular floor plan was "T" or "L" shaped with rectangular rooms placed at right angles. These structures often began as one wing, with other areas being added as the family grew. Typical of these buildings are the gable roofs, corner boards, freeze boards at rooflines and shiplap siding. Variations built in the 1870's have Classic Revival and Gothic Revival elements, while Queen Anne and Stick features are common on homes built in the 1880s and 1890s. Variations in 1900 and 1910 combine Colonial Revival and Bungalow elements with the basic Rural Vernacular style.
The downtown commercial district of Albany began to grow soon after the found- ing of Albany in 1848. Shortly after the Monteith brothers moved into their new house on the edge of the present downtown, they opened a general store. Other businesses soon followed. By 1876, downtown Albany boasted groceries, dry-goods stores, a wagon dealer, cigar stores, butchers, livery stables, a tailor, a "shaving solon," shoe stores, a printer, saloons, hotels, an agricultural implement dealer, and a furniture dealer who doubled as an undertaker.

The first steamboat called at Albany in 1852, and the downtown district quickly developed into the mid-valley riverboat landing. By 1866, five riverboats owned by an Albany man made regular trips between Albany, Corvallis and Portland. Remnants of this era of river travel still exist in the former riverbank warehouse and steamboat landing located at the foot of Broadway Street.

Downtown Albany bears reminders of other modes of transportation as well. Starting in 1891, E. M. Briggs' ferry crossed the Willamette from the foot of Ferry Street. The ferry charged 75 cents to cross. After the Albany Steel Bridge was built in 1908, the Straney and Moore building, 321 Second Ave. SW, was originally one of the several livery stables in the downtown district servicing the trolleys. At the turn of the century, Albany was known as the "Hub City" of the Willamette Valley, with "unrivaled shipping facilities, railroads radiating in nine different directions, and a passenger service with fifty trains per day." During Albany's early commercial building period, impressive and ornate structures sprang up downtown. When it was built in 1887, the Flinn Block, 222 First Ave, boasted one of the most ornate French Second Empire facades in the Northwest (see the drawing above). The Straney and Moore Livery Stable is a fanciful Queen Anne structure built in 1891. The S.E. Young Building, 138 Lyon SW, was built in 1887 and moved to its present location by teams of horses in 1914.

Architectural styles of the Downtown Historic District include: Italianate, Queen Anne, American Renaissance, Commercial Brick, Art Moderne, Twentieth Century Period Revivals, and a modified French Second Empire.

Stability marks the history of Albany's Downtown Historic district. Many of the buildings and businesses pictured in fading old photographs still exist-evidence of the downtown's continuing vitality and charm. The downtown district remains the civic, commercial, and social center of Albany.