

THE WILLIAMSON HOUSE

1807 Jersey Street

Style: Shingle Style

Dates: 1890 (Lot Purchase – Value \$50.00) 1894 (Home Constructed – Value \$2,400.00)

Architect: Frederick W. Clarke (This home was his Architect's Certification Project)

The house at 1807 Jersey is an almost perfect example of the Shingle style of design first introduced on Mount Desert Island in Maine in 1879 by the architect William Ralph Emerson. The Shingle style quickly succeeded Queen Anne as the most up-to-date design, from the early 1880's, and in many ways is a development and Americanization of the Queen Anne style. In it, the frame of the structure is totally concealed and walls and roof are perceived as a thin skin shaped by the enclosed space. The style brought a new freedom and openness into the planning of the American house. The Williamson House is *significant* as an example of the *Shingle Style*.

The Williamson House presents many of the most typical features of the Shingle style of architecture. The exterior walls are covered in a continuous skin of shingles that wrap around the corners uninterrupted and in broken only by the cut away porch, bands of windows, and bays embraced by the uniform veneer. The shingles are even extended to the posts of the porches and verandas. The rear of the house has some 3" clapboards. Windows are small-paned and often form horizontal bands. The roof is of a moderate pitch and has a single broad gable in the front. The over-all effect is altogether simpler and quieter than the Queen Anne style, with more horizontal emphasis and much less variety of color and texture. It is a 2-1/2 story, cross gable with a dominant broad gable with projection under eave and recess below is cut into hipped portion of roof. The cornice extends into gables and is carried by small brackets. The front porch has shingled supports, a blind arch over the entrance, and an eave line that is carried across the front façade, strengthening horizontal continuity. At the upper level changes in horizontal continuity of wall place occur with octagonal bay at second level, upside down eyebrow engaging a small bay and the projection under gable. These elements are held together by continuous shingle skin.

This home has 17 rooms, including the baths and pantries. The interior of the home is notable for its fine extensive use of a variety of woods: quarter sawn red and white oak, butternut and sycamore, each lending its own texture and definition to the different rooms. Pine was used only in the kitchen, back hall, butler's pantry, linen room and upper back bedrooms. Two of the most outstanding features of the house are located in the entry hall: the exceptional newel posts, mantle and the arch over the fireplace. Note the lovely displays of wood ornamentation throughout the "public" part of the main floor: pocket doors with raised panels, wainscoting with flat panels, mantles, built-in bookcases, stair storage seat, landing seat and beams. The floors are quarter sawn white oak with inlaid oak strips. The home's solid brass hardware carries a continuity from room to room, as do a series of matching chandeliers and sconces. Many of the original features, such as gas light fixtures and tiles, are still intact.

Glass is exceptional and should be noted in the leaded glass windows of the stairway landing and in the music room. The built-in bookcases in this room also features leaded-glass doors, and a built-in mirror is mounted in the room. The receiving room also has the bookcase with leaded glass doors. The house originally had three fireplaces: in the entry hall, music room and living room; however the living room unit has been closed, probably due to a fire.

One of the architectural delights of the Williamson House is the small stairway, located just beyond the home's main staircase, which leads down to the side door and port cochere. The decorative boot closet under the main stairway is great for wood storage in the winter and "air conditioning" in the summer. The main staircase and landing are suspended by cables that support the extension.