

The Riverside Township Hall

Architect: George Ashby 1895

George Ashby completed his design for The Riverside Township Hall in 1895.

In 1895. How many years ago is that? Right, 120 years ago. I'm telling you this to put the whole timeframe in perspective. In 1895, the first commercial film was shown in Paris, the patent for the INVENTION of a gas-powered car was granted, and Tchaikovsky first produced the music for the famous "Swan Lake."

Ashby had his office in the Arcade building, so he was a local guy. He was familiar with the Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux Plan for Riverside and very familiar with all the building projects in the village. He created our township hall as an integral part of this designed community.

George Ashby was one of the key architects in the late 19th & early 20th Century movement towards "Plan Book" homes, the most famous of which are the Sears, Roebuck type. Ashby did dozens of Plan book home designs.

The Riverside Township Hall is definitely not a plan book design. But, many believe that Mr. Ashby had in mind a seat of local government that honored the degree to which the French nation, subsequent to the French revolution, gave us many of our modern ideas concerning democracy. This is not a Lords or a Kings castle but a grand home of the people. In essence, Mr. Ashby designed a chateau in the woods for our unique village: an approachable, representative government building.

Executed in cut limestone, the French Chateau or Chatauesque style building serves the village and the township as the administrative center. The steep and varied roofline is crested in copper, while copper gutters serve to decorate. Notice the bands of elegant terra cotta used for lentils and cornice trim.



This building has the look of an old castle.



On a much smaller scale.

Our township hall mainly adopts the French Chateau style of architecture. "Châteauesque buildings are typically built on an asymmetrical plan with a roof-line broken in several places and a facade composed of advancing and receding planes".¹

Do you see how if you take your hand and hold it in a horizontal line across the top of the building, the tops of the windows reach different levels. Not all the same.

"French Chateau style buildings were mostly employed for residences of the extremely wealthy, although the style was occasionally used for public buildings. This very free revival style incorporates 11th and 12th century southern French, Spanish and Italian Romanesque characteristics. It emphasizes clear, strong picturesque massing, round-headed "Romanesque" arches, often springing from clusters of short squat columns, recessed entrances, richly varied rustication, blank stretches of walling contrasting with bands of windows, and cylindrical towers with conical caps embedded in the walling."²



Our Riverside Township Hall looks the same today as it did 120 years ago. When Central Elementary burnt down in 1896, classes were held in the Township hall for a year until the new school was built. The main building cost \$28,000 when constructed. The clock was added in 1941 and was restored in 1998 with a grant from the Olmsted Society. A large renovation took place in 1979. An elevator was added and the interior was remodeled. The structure and style, however, remained the same. The building is owned by the township, the property is owned by the village.

It cost 28,000.00 to complete. What else can you buy with \$28,000.00?



Okay. So you can buy one Mastiff puppy for \$700-\$1500. Let's say \$700. You got a deal. That means \$28,000 will buy you this many puppies:





Did you know that back in the 19th century, there was another spring of pure water, similar to Bourbon Spring, bubbling out of the river bank right where our Township Hall is now?

Thank you for your attention during this tour.

References:

1 2 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau>

Jim Petrzilka The Frederick Law Olstead Society