



THE BAY AND GABLE HOME

THESE
NARROW
YET-LIGHT-
FILLED
HOUSES
HAVE A
STORIED
HISTORY

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THE BAY AND GABLE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE is significant in Toronto's architectural history. Unlike well-known styles such as Georgian, Tudor or Queen Anne Revival, the Bay and Gable stands out for its wide geographic spread and numerous homes. This style can be found throughout the city, with concentrations in areas like Cabbagetown, Summerhill, The Annex, Little Italy, and Parkdale, and smaller groupings stretching from the Upper Beaches to Weston and down to Mimico.

Developed in the 1870s, the Bay and Gable style emerged in response to the economic challenges of housing the growing middle class in Toronto's suburban outskirts. The city's population boom at the time necessitated affordable yet attractive housing options beyond the confines of the city center. Between 1881 and 1891, Toronto's population more than

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The Bay and Gable style proved to be an optimal solution due to its stylistic roots in English architecture, which resonated with the waves of immigrants from the British Isles, and its cost-saving features. Since property taxes were based on lot width, Bay and Gable homes' tall and narrow design (usually 13 to 20 feet wide) maximized space without increasing taxes. To compensate for the narrow frontage, these homes often featured large bay windows, high ceilings of 10 feet or more, and transom windows above doors, which allowed ample light and ventilation.

A typical Bay and Gable home features a staircase along the interior wall, leading to various living and bedroom spaces. The parlour is usually placed at the front of the house, separated from the central dining room, with doors that offer privacy and assist with heat retention. The kitchen is typically located at the back for better ventilation and access to work yards and deliveries. Some style variations incorporate elements from Gothic Revival, Queen Anne Revival, or Romanesque Revival styles. In contrast, others are more utilitarian in nature, reflecting the working-class neighbourhoods they were built.

As the 20th century dawned, the Bay and Gable style remained prevalent in "Old Toronto." However, as middle-class residents began to venture into the suburbs of North Toronto, High Park and Playter Estates, they embraced different building styles due to varying taxation systems and more affordable land. Nonetheless, the Bay and Gable homes remain an integral part of Toronto's architectural heritage, showcasing the aspirations and lifestyles of its residents at the turn of the 20th century. ■