

# Victorian Homes 1837 - 1903 AD



*“The 19th century buildings of Ulster, which survive today are the tangible evidence of life in the province during its most important period of industrial and mercantile growth. Many of us live in, work in or visit these buildings on a daily basis without recognising their architectural qualities.”*

Hugh Dixon, An Introduction to Ulster Architecture, UAHS.

The Industrial Revolution spawned a new range of housing. The railway companies built whole rows of small terraced houses for their workers, following the example of the earlier canal companies with their houses for lockkeepers. As the century progressed and the wealth of the province grew, so too did the demand for the skills of architects and engineers. The Industrial Revolution was making an impact. Mills and factories were being built especially in the north east; roads, railways and bridges had to be constructed to enable goods to be transported and exported. The new middle class industrialists, mill owners, distillers and brewers housed their workers near their enterprises. Workers had to be accommodated in new housing and this resulted in street after street of identical brick houses. The listed terrace below is a good example.



Above, McMaster Street, Belfast



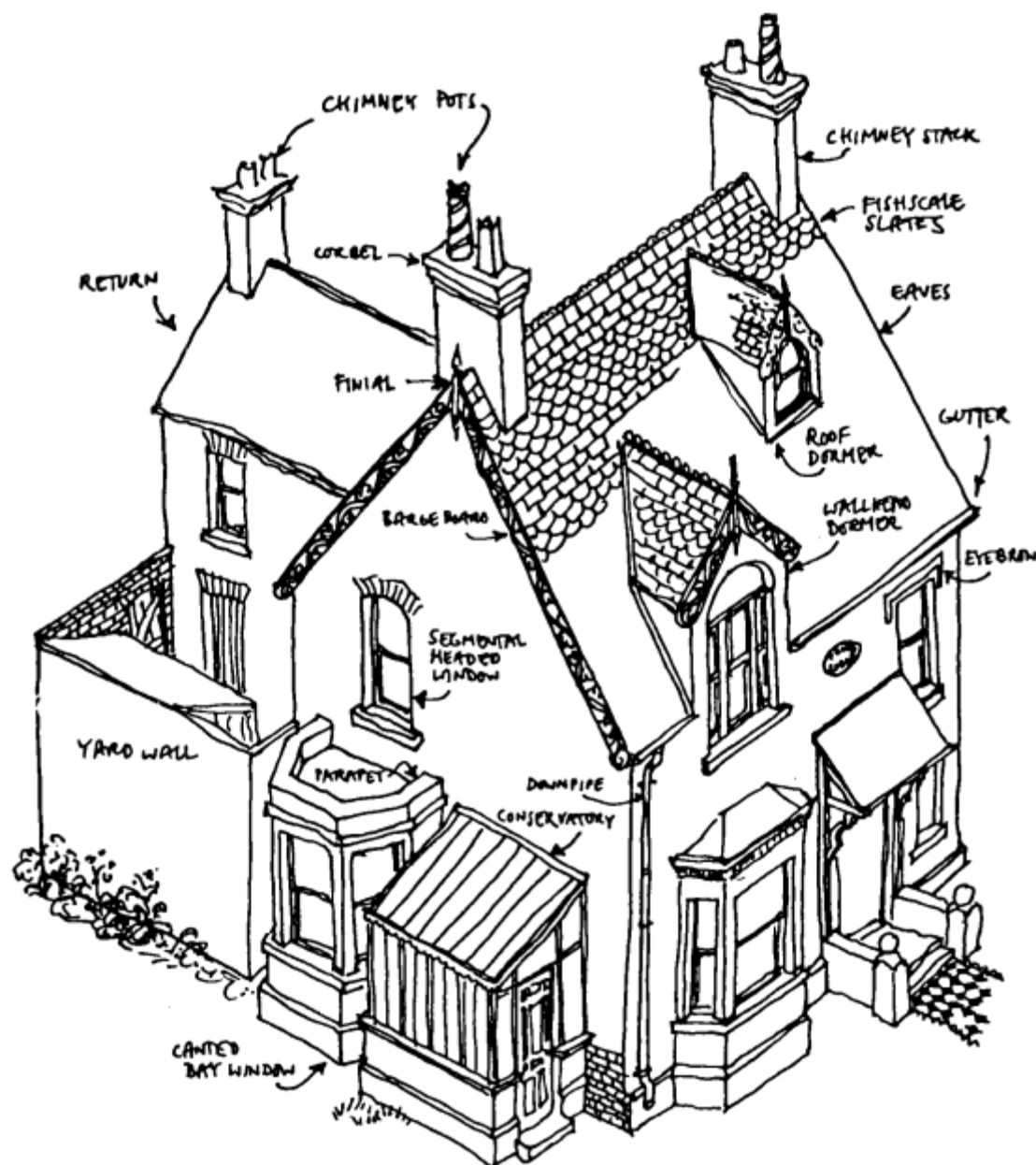
Above, Ballywalter Park

Meanwhile, larger terraces and semi-detached dwellings in the suburbs were built for more senior staff. Owners commissioned impressive villas further afield. Ballywalter Park was built for Andrew Mulholland, proprietor of York Street flax spinning mill in Belfast. These wealthier people could afford more elaborate ornamentation in their homes. Decoration was a hallmark of 19th century architecture. The Victorians felt no inhibitions about adding woodcarving, elaborate plasterwork, stone sculpture, coloured tiles and stained glass to their buildings. To achieve all this, architects were obliged to settle in the area and to train local assistants, some of whom became their partners or rivals. Their offices in turn developed, dealing with a range of building, engineering and surveying projects. Lanyon, Lynn, Barre and Duff are some of the best known Victorian architects. With this progression the province had become architecturally self-sufficient and by the middle of the century it was unusual to find a ‘foreign’ designer at work.



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The century saw the growing use of new building materials, chiefly local brick and stone imported from England. Portland stone was imported in larger quantities and Bath stone was used for interior carvings. Machine-made bricks, such as Bridgewater, and Welsh slates from **Bangor** were also imported. Increasingly the walls were plastered for the purposes of waterproofing but also to allow for small economical decorative materials and colour washes. There was a growing use of cast iron. The mechanisation of the building industry led to a decline in hand craftsmanship. The typical builder's yard of the 19th century had open sheds for stonecutters and a simple joiner's shop.



This is a late Victorian house, probably built about 1890. It is built with 9-inch brick walls and has timber ground floors except in the kitchen area at the back. The roof is slate, laid both in ordinary and in fishscale styles, and there are elaborate bargeboards to the gable and dormers. The bay windows provide light but are also decorative, and the porch and conservatory are stylish as well as functional. The yard at the back enables clothes to be dried outside. Note the prominence of the chimneys and elaborate chimney pots. The roof is almost more important than the ground floor.