

# Preserving Elgin's Bungalows



## History of Bungalows

The bungalow style emerged in the early 1900s in response to a variety of societal changes— a move away from the pretense and formality of the Victorian period, a renewed interest in the natural sciences and a reaction against growing industrialization and toward a new, authentic craftsmanship. Originally rooted in California, it quickly spread to the rest of the country by means of plan books, magazines and mail order homes.

*At its simplest*, a bungalow is defined as a one to one and half story house with a low sloped roof and front porch; however, there are many variations to this theme and many sub-styles that developed over the years. Many of these sub-styles still exist and remain well preserved in Elgin. It is our hope that many more will be restored.

## Get involved!

1. Check out bungalow books and resources at the Elgin Area Historical Society.
2. Visit the Historical Society web site for more information: [elginhistory.org](http://elginhistory.org). If you would like help in determining whether your home qualifies, click on **Research Services** and then **Home Research**.
3. Explore bungalow books, literature and magazines at Gail Borden Library — [gailborden.info](http://gailborden.info)
4. Check out American Bungalow Magazine at [americanbungalow.com](http://americanbungalow.com)
5. If you are interested in the **Building Plaque Program** for your bungalow, visit the City of Elgin Historic Preservation page and click Building Plaque Program.
6. For more information on how to preserve your bungalow, contact the Historical Society.

## Is your house a bungalow?

*Q. What if my house has only some of the characteristics that are listed as a bungalow?*

A. There is an almost infinite variety of bungalows, each with a unique combination of details. If your home exhibits some of the main form characteristics, but not details, it may be a simpler vernacular bungalow, or some details may have been covered or removed by earlier “renovations”.

*Q. If my house is a full two stories but still has many of the characteristics of a bungalow, is my house a bungalow?*

A. A square two story house with qualities similar to a bungalow is commonly called an American four-square. For more information on verifying what type of house you have, see Elgin’s Design Guideline Manual available at [cityofelgin.org](http://cityofelgin.org).

*Q. Are interior details considered in determining a bungalow’s style?*

A. Yes and no. The bungalow style represented a way of building, even a way of life, in its return to authentic materials and details. Thus there is a simplicity in the use of flat stock trim and baseboards; exposed beams and columns on the interior, natural or stained wood finishes, built-in furniture, inglenooks, box beams, and room dividers. In terms of the City’s historic landmarks and districts as well as its Building Plaque Program, interiors are not considered.

*Q. How do I increase my bungalow’s value?*

A. There has been a real resurgence in appreciation of bungalows in recent years. Whatever the reason, it is important to understand and try to conform to original detailing as much as possible when maintaining or renovating your home. For example, maintain existing cedar siding rather than covering with vinyl siding. It is the quality of these details that often attract people to bungalows in the first place.

The Elgin Area Historical Society and Neighborhood Housing Services of the Fox Valley are leading an initiative to promote and restore historic bungalows in Elgin.

[elginhistory.org](http://elginhistory.org)

Published by the Elgin Area Historical Society through the Cornerstones for Community Program, an initiative of NHS of the Fox Valley and Landmarks Illinois with generous support from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.



# The Bungalow Form

Bungalows are generally simple rectangles in form and can be described by their orientation to the street— one main type of bungalow has the short side of the house facing the street.

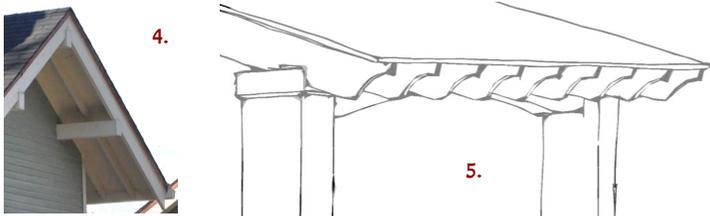
Typically, the roof is a hip (pyramid-shaped) or jerkin head roof that faces the street with single or multiple dormers. The porch can be half or full-front with square or tapered columns.

The other main type of bungalow has the long side facing the street. Typically, these have a side gabled roof with a half or full-width porch and a shed, gable or hip dormer facing the front. Sometimes, the front porch has been screened in or completely enclosed after the fact. Side bays are common on both types.

## Characteristics of Bungalows

The following are various exterior elements that help to distinguish bungalow designs. While these are common, they are by no means found on all bungalows.

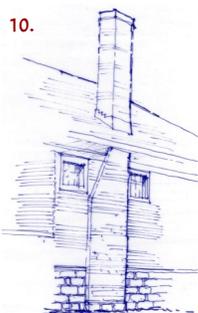
1. 1 to 1 1/2 story residence
2. Low sloped roof (3:12 to 7:12)
3. Simple rectangular shape
4. Overhanging eaves
5. Exposed rafter tails, often cut out; eave brackets
- 6, 7. Second story dormers
8. Front porch— full or half; open or enclosed
9. Elevated first floor (3' or 4' above grade typical)
10. Exposed chimney
11. Double hung, cottage style windows
12. Square or tapered (battered) columns
13. Cedar shingles, clapboard, stucco, or brick exterior walls
14. Natural colored exterior – earth tones & pastels, natural finish



6. Jerkin head dormer



7. Shed dormer

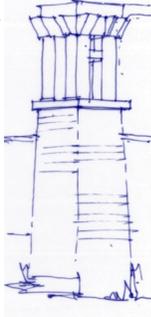


10.

11.



12.



# Styles of Bungalows

There are numerous bungalow styles or “sub-types”, many of which can be found throughout Elgin’s older neighborhoods. The most likely areas to find bungalows are in the National Watch Historic District, the Northeast Neighborhood and the Southwest Neighborhood.

## Vernacular:

Vernacular bungalows are the most common bungalow style in Elgin. With their rectangular shape, low sloping roof, and wide overhanging eaves, they epitomize the sturdy construction and functional detailing of the bungalow form.



## Arts & Crafts or Craftsman:

True to its name, this style exhibits skillfully detailed wood columns, exposed rafters, large overhanging eaves and brickwork. Beam/post connections may exhibit a Japanese influence. Front porch columns are often battered (tapered) and the exposed foundation may be of stone, ornamental concrete block or concrete.



Bungalows were one of many styles sold by catalog companies such as Sears and Gordon-Van Tine.



## Other Specialty Styles:

**Chicago:** Always has long and narrow plan with the short side facing street. It is common for an offset porch that is inset and dark brick exterior walls.

**Swiss Chalet:** Has features common to the Arts & Crafts style as well as swooped roof lines, vertical siding, and decorative cut-out designs often seen in porch or balcony railings.

**Spanish Revival:** The construction is usually stucco exterior that often has clay tile roofing. Arched windows and doors and/or arched colonnades are common; s-curve elements reminiscent of Spanish missions.