



This is a design drawing for the rear façade of a Four-Square that Wentworth, Inc. is remodeling in Cleveland Park, Washington, D.C. The upper floor is now a playroom; the lower level is a new a nanny suite with bedroom and bath; and the mid-level porch is updated with a new stair, new railings and roofing over the lower level.

The Classic American Four-Square

A SUBTYPE OF COLONIAL REVIVAL RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE IN CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE

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Living in a historic district with interesting architecture definitely has an upside, especially in the Washington, D.C. Metro area. With so many historic districts, one can take a short walk and find an abundance of architectural history; a person could almost think they were on vacation. Chevy Chase Village benefits from this history, and one of its many charming features is the architecture of its historic homes.



Chevy Chase Village- a Four-Square home featuring a centered front door with side lights. Hip roof with broad roof overhangs is typical of the architecture. Asymmetrical porch with pediment may have been remodeled. Paired double-hung windows are commonly seen in this style. Pebble-dash stucco looks to be original.

The Charm

Specifically, the charm of homes known as the “Classic-Box,” otherwise called the American Four-Square house. Typically, the interior stair is located in a corner with four rooms per floor, although there are many examples with a centered front door. Within the Colonial Revival style, the American Four-Square is a subtype defined by its architectural detailing and ornament. These homes have even been referred to as “Cube Style” because of their simple square form with distinctive hip roof. Probably the most common vernacular form for a house, the box was designed and embellished in the styles of Prairie, Colonial Revival (the most common), Neo-Classical, Craftsman, and even Folk house style between 1890 and 1930. According to the author of *A Field Guide to American Houses*, about 30 percent of the Colonial Revival homes built prior to 1915 fit into the Classic-Box category. The more upscale versions have full-width, or wider, front porches that are sometimes asymmetrical. Early examples had American colonial detailing, sometimes elaborated in unusual and whimsical ways.

The Evolution

After 1920, the designs became more conservative and proper in their proportions and architectural detailing. Exterior treatments of Colonial Revival, Four-Square homes use a variety of materials. The most frequently-found exterior materials are stucco, shingle, and clapboard. The homes with a nubbly stucco exterior, known as pebble-dash because of its use of pea gravel and Portland cement, was applied over masonry or wood frame. The rough texture of the pebble-dash stucco gives the build-



Chevy Chase Village- a Four-Square home with side entrance, asymmetrical porch and windows grouped in pairs. The dormer in the front appears to be original while the side dormers appear to be additions. Pebble-dash stucco was used throughout.

ing a substantial appearance that suggests masonry and did not require painting, although many have been painted over the years. Often the entire building is clad in stucco, but occasionally it will only be found on the first floor. I speculate that prior to 1915, there must have been plenty of contractors who were good at installing pebble-dash because it has held up well. I have also seen versions of this home with pebble-dash stucco at the first floor and shingle siding above. Another common exterior material was narrow wood clapboard at the first floor with cedar shingle on the second floor.

An Adaptable Style

The Cleveland Park historic district, in Washington, D.C., is also a neighborhood to see examples of Four-Square homes. Our design/build team of professionals designed a thoughtful rear addition for a Four-Square with construction commencing in April. The addition provides a new glass-enclosed playroom, first floor porch, and lower level nanny suite with bedroom, bath and storage. Again, it’s an example of a Four-Square house that is easily adaptable to changing lifestyles.

The livability and spaciousness of the Four-Square design is an indicator of why so many of these homes have been loved and cared for over the last century. Homeowners find them to be livable and easy to remodel, as is evidenced by the many rear additions found on Four-Square homes.

To learn more about home remodeling, visit www.wentworthstudio.com or call 240.395.0705.