

In the western and southern parts of the Lakes Province, the Great Plains begin rolling west to the Rockies. Within these open grasslands there is not enough precipitation to grow many trees and there is virtually no exposed rock. The climate is harsh, with hot summers and long, cold winters.

CULTURAL

“Forest Service architecture had an intimate relationship with the landscape and was sympathetic to the natural environment....The Forest Service’s philosophy of nonintrusiveness called for the use of native and natural materials.”

—Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan*

Native peoples arrived more than 12,000 years ago and found a landscape dominated by glaciers. Before the arrival of white settlers, native peoples built dome-shaped wigwams by stretching bark over curved poles. Other building types included communal long houses (built by the Hurons), sweat lodges, and earthworks (which may have been either forts or ceremonial places). Only remnants of the building heritage of Native Americans remain in this province.

Waterborne commerce brought the first influences of European design into the province. French and British trappers and traders, who used the province’s rivers and lakes like highways, built fortified compounds for trading posts, military commands, and religious missions. These compounds were typically square complexes of

log construction protected by tall log fences or stone ramparts. In 1817, the American Fur Company built an agency house on Mackinac Island in the elegant Federal style, foreshadowing the accelerated use of East Coast architecture in coming decades.

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 introduced European settlement in the form of frontier farms and villages. The new pioneers initially built log cabins but soon replaced them with fashionable East Coast structures in such styles as the Greek Revival and the Gothic Revival. They also employed such New York and New England building methods as coursed cobblestone and wood.

In 1833, the invention of the balloon-frame house in Chicago introduced mass-production techniques to the construction of houses. Railroads fostered the shipment of prefabricated building parts (such as elaborately ornamental cast-iron building façades) to frontier towns across the Nation.

The log cabin was another major influence that originated with early Scandinavian settlers in Delaware. A staple of the Appalachian frontier, the log cabin was reintroduced by Scandinavian settlers in the upper Great Lakes in the 19th century. Early versions used logs in their natural state as they were cleared from the land. Later versions were more sophisticated, with hewn logs and more permanent chinking.

The abundance of wood (especially in the huge stands of pine forests) and lakes also influenced design. Ornate wooden houses filled the towns where lumber was plentiful.

Later in the century, the Arts and Crafts movement emphasized handcrafted buildings and custom-designed details and decorations as an antidote to standardized design. A regional variation, the Adirondack style, created elaborately crafted “rustic” log-and-stone vacation homes for the wealthy. In the Lakes Province, rustic design for hotels, resorts, and getaway cabins peaked between 1890 and 1910. Rustic design for public recreational structures peaked during the 1930’s height of the CCC. The Park Lodge in St. Croix State Park, Pine County, Minnesota, is an example of the rustic style in the Lakes Province.