Dating Maine Houses by their Features

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	11-12-2009	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s	1810s	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
OUTSIDE	House Types	Low posted cape, front door centered & under eaves								Mansard Roof, 1 & 2 stories				No single suceeding style						
		Gable & hipped roof 2 story house, front door centered & under eaves							Gable end to road with offset front door				No pattern to placement of front door							
		Gambrel roof, center door under eaves			High posted cape,clapboards above windows, front door centered & under eaves							No single suceeding style								
	Front Door & Entry	Front door not facing road (house built before road)							Front door facing road (house built after road)											
		Lights only over front door			Side lights 1/2 way down				Side lights entire door length				No pattern to door lights							
		Front door centered under the eaves flanked by windows, flush with siding							Front door recessed (Greek Revival)				No pattern to front door							
		Flat/triangle pediment over door			Fan shutter or lights above front door				No pattern to front door surrounds											
	Siding & Trim	Rake trim flush with siding, widening from top to bottom							Rake trim stands out from siding, no taper									No pattern to rake trim		
		Narrow exterior corner boards, earliest have a decorative bead at joint							Wide exterior corner boards						No pattern to corner boards					
		4' clapboards lapped at the vertical joints						4' clapboards butted at vertical joints				Long clapboards butted at the vertical joints								Metal Siding
	Sash & Frames	Sash glass measures 7" by 9"				Sash glass 8" by 10"			Sash glass 9" by 12"		2 panes of glass per sash				1 pane upper, 2 panes lower			No pattern to glass size		
		No exterior shutters			Fixed slat shutters, no center rail			Fixed slat shutters, center rail			Movable slat shutters, center rail				Decorative shutters that don't function					
		No storm windows							Wood storm windows										Metal storm windows	
	Masonry Brick Stone	Granite split by wedges (a "V"flat on bottom visible)						Cut granite split by drilling (portion of a hollow cylinder visible)							Granite not used for foundations					
		Fieldstone to sill			Cut granite above grade to sill						Brick foundation above grade to sill							Poured concrete above grade		
		Large chimneys with multiple flues (largest are earliest)							Single flue chimneys servicing stoves, then furnaces									2 flue chimney - furnace, fireplace		
	Fireplace Hearth Chimney Stack	Bake oven: 1st at fireplace back, then to the side, then with stove							Wood, then coal cook stoves							Gas, then electric stoves				
		Brick fireplaces for principal heat source					Cast iron fireplaces		Wood, then coal stoves			Warm air central heat		Steam radiator central heat			Radiators, then baseboard hot water central heat			
		No mortar between hearth bricks, square bricks used in formal rooms							Lime mortar used between hearth bricks					Portland cement used between hearth bricks						
		Clay mortar used away from fireplaces & chimney tops					Lime mortar used							Portland cement used						
		Fireplace wall paneled (no mantel is earlier)					Mantels with plaster		Mantels with only a stove thimble				No pattern							
	House Framing	Hewn timbers, pegged frame					Up & down sawn timbers, pegged frame				Circular sawn timbers (& dimension lumber), simple post & beam early							Machine planed lumber		
		Rafter purlin roof: 1st hewn, next purlins sawn, then all sawn							Common rafters (first hewn and approximately square in cross section, then full dimension, then nominal dimension)											
		4 cased posts on front wall			Cased corner posts only			No framing visible in finished rooms												
INSIDE	Wainscot Boards Floors Trim	Pit Sawn boards		Up and down sawmill boards					Circular sawmill boards										Band sawn boards	
		Hand planed finish boards and floors								Machine planed finish wood										
		Wide pine floors, face nailed in formal front rooms							Narrow tongue and groove floors, no nails visible, in the front rooms (poor quality wood used where carpets were intended)											
		Wide board wainscot & chair rail					Chair rail, plaster underneath			No chair rail										
		Vertical sheathing on back stair walls						Horsehair lime plaster on back stair walls							Gypsum plaster on stair walls				Sheetrock stair walls	
	Plaster	Plaster & lath butted against window & door trim							Lath behind window & door trim, but plaster butted against trim							Plaster & lath both behind window & door trim				
		Lime plaster with "horsehair" as a binder. Earliest on riven lath, then accordian lath, then sawn lath													Gypsum Plaster - wood lath, then metal lath				Sheetrock	
	Doors Latches Hinges Hardware	7/8" thick Door, upper 2 panels slightly longer, morticed & pegged together								5/4" thick door, top 2 panels longer (morticed & pegged is earlier)						5/4" thick door, 4 panels similar size				
		Thumbnail molded doors		Ovolo molded doors		Applied molded doors		No molding on doors				No pattern to door moldings								
		H & HL door hinges			Cast iron butt door hinges (lift off earliest, then pin type)										Wrapped steel hinges with pin					
		Suffolk (bean) thumb latch			Norfolk (plate) thumb latch				Cast iron thumb latch							Steel thumb latches				
		Brass Knob door latch with face plate						Wood knob door latch		Glass knob door latch		Pottery knob morticed door latch				Metal knob morticed door latch				
	Nails	Wrought iron nails (fine point)			Square "cut' nails (square point) - introduced in the smallest sizes first											Round wire nails				

Key: Oldest | Next Oldest | Next Oldest | Next Oldest | Next Oldest | Next Oldest | No Pattern

Note: In each period some houses are old fashioned and some modern. Each generation may also change the house. Thus, any one detail is rarely definitive; dating a house depends on sleuthing the patterns.