Vallejo has one of the best collections of historic homes and old commercial and industrial buildings to be found anywhere in the San Francisco Bay area. There are examples of many architectural styles, such as Shingle, Queen Anne, Spanish Colonial Revival, Beaux Arts, Italianate, Greek Revival, Craftsman, Zig-Zag Moderne and more. For each style, there are examples ranging from the grand to the modest workingman structures in a city envisioned by Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Mexico’s commandant general of Alta California. As a result of the general’s influence, the city of Vallejo served briefly as California’s capital in 1852 and 1853.

There are three designated historic districts in Vallejo:

The Heritage District
Centers on and radiates out from Georgia Street in the oldest part of town

The Jt. Vincent’s Hill Historic District

The Mare Island Historic District
The old Mare Island Naval Shipyard, which became the first permanent Navy base on the West Coast in 1854. The base closed in 1996.

This brochure provides a partial list of the historic structures in Vallejo and on Mare Island. The goal is to highlight some of the best architectural gems and encourage people to eventually tour adjacent streets to fully appreciate what Vallejo has to offer.

Vallejo Architectural Heritage Tour

Vallejo Architectural Heritage and Landmarks Commission
555 Santa Clara St., Vallejo CA 94590
www.ci.vallejo.ca.us
1 - This tour of Vallejo's historic highlights starts at the city's ferry terminal. For most of its history, Vallejo has had ferry service to San Francisco and other points.

2 - California's Capitol: Vallejo briefly served as California's capital city in 1850-1852. A monument at the city's new bus transportation center marks the location of the old capitol, destroyed by fire in 1855.

3 - The Empress: The beautifully restored Empress Theater, at 338 Virginia St., was built in 1911. It now houses the center of Vallejo's arts and entertainment district, with live music shows and other events. Next door, at 326 Virginia, is the building that once housed Bay Brokerage. It was built in 1852 and was used as a warehouse.

4 - Temple Arts, City Hall: The newly restored Temple Arts Center, featuring an art gallery and a theater at 707 Marin, is a former Masonic temple built in 1917. Next door, at 715 Marin, is Vallejo's first city hall, jail and police and fire stations, constructed in 1872. Across the street at 734 Marin is Vallejo's second city hall, built in 1927 in a Spanish Renaissance Revival style.

5 - Downtown: Historic buildings in the 300 block of Georgia Street include the Classicist-style bank at 330 Georgia St. Also note 314 and 337-39 Georgia. Several downtown structures underwent floor-replacement but remain historically intact above that level.

6 - More downtown: Note the Redman's Hall at 1220 Georgia St., mid-1920s, with decorative American Indian motifs, and also 418 and 444-448 Georgia.

7 - Duchess of Windsor's apartment, 924 Georgia: Renters in this Mission Revival structure, built in 1902, are the wife of a Navy officer who later became Mrs. Simpson for whom the Duke of Windsor gave up the throne of England.

8 - More downtown: Note the twin Zig-Zag Moderne tiled storefronts at 541-63 Georgia, built in the mid-1920s.

9 - Actor Raymond Burr's home, 610 Georgia: Burr lived with his mother, a piano teacher, in this Queen Anne-style home. Also note the Queen Anne at 622 Georgia and the elegant Classical Revival at 637 Georgia.

10 - Will Jones Territory, 700 block: There are several prominent Vallejo architect Will Jones's signature brown-shingle houses, including 721, 711, 721, 723, 729 Georgia St., dating to the late 1800s and early 1900s. The 705 Georgia house is a fine example of Queen Anne/Late Victorian style. This house is on the corner of Georgia and Napa streets, and a short walk down Napa St. to York St. will take you past many architectural gems on both those streets.

11 - Meghary home, 809 Georgia St.: Sisters Mary and Letitia Meghary lived in this Georgian-Style home, one of a few in a Vallee, for decades. The street of these sisters, who were old-fashioned black dresses down and walking, once saw a man for $20,000 in the 1920s or 1930s. They taught them a virtu. They won the case. Also in the block are many Victorian houses, at 636 and 842 Georgia.

12 - Will Jones' Home, 403 Alameda St.: Architect Will Jones in 1912 designed this L-shaped, two-story brown shingle with a curved porch and a bay window, built by four oversize columns. Across the street, at 901 York St., is the cottage he designed for his own family.

13 - Swiss Chalet, 721 Alameda St.: Swiss Chalet decorative elements were adapted to this Craftsman-style home, designed in about 1907.

14 - Shingled Italianate-style farmhouse, 639 Virginia. Built in 1868, this house was owned by prominent early-day Vallejo brewer Charles Wiedemann. Note several other architectural gems on the block and on adjacent streets.

15 - Rare, Eastern-style Gothic Revival, 918 Sutter St. This picturesque Italianate-style house was built for William Henry Tripp, who in 1867 opened a penmanship school in downtown Vallejo and ran a coaching business.

16 - Washington Madam's House, 803 Capitol St.: Among this block's interesting homes is the Italianate home of "Washington Madam" Dorothea "Dora" Bethal. Married to a politician, she charged related to an alleged Washington, D.C., prostitution ring, the committee sued the city in 1908. Yet many clients allegedly included a U.S. senator, a U.S. ambassador and a military strategist.

17 - Julia Morgan house, 728 Capitol St.: The Wilson House, built in 1893-1894, is a fine example of the Academic Eclectic movement styling as it developed in the San Francisco Bay area, reflecting work done by Bayfield Maybey influenced by Swiss architecture in the Chinese style after his travels abroad. Noted architect Julia Morgan worked with Vallejo architect Will Jones on the house. Next door, at 740 Capitol St., is a Carpenter–Gothic Revival home, probably prefabricated and shipped to Vallejo.

18 - Boris Karloff's apartment, 614 Capitol Street: In 1918, the small apartment house at the top of the Capitol Street steps was home for Karloff, the actor best known as Frankenstein. He was 31 and a dozen years away from fame in Hollywood's horror film genre.

19 - Casa de Vallejo hotel, Capitol St. and Sonoma Blvd. Built in 1919 as a YMCA, the Spanish–Mediterranean– influenced hotel was a luxury hotel and hosted many of the top entertainers of the Big Band era. A thriving center for community events in the 1960s, it now provides subsidized apartments for low-income seniors.

20 - Lincoln School, NE corner of Sonoma and Vallejo Sts. Vallejo's first public school was located on land donated by city founder John Frisbie. Destroyed by an arson fire in 1894, it was replaced by another structure, then by a third, then by a forth in the current Monterey Revival–style school.

21 - Dr. Platon Vallejo's home, 420 Carolina St. Dr. Platon Vallejo was the son of General Mariano Vallejo, one of the early Mexican pioneers. A volunteer battle surgeon during the Civil War, he later had a private practice in Vallejo for decades and established a hospital as one of the region's most gifted doctors.

22 - "Tug" McGraw's boyhood home, 312 Carolina St.: Frank "Tug" McGraw was a left-handed Major League pitcher and father of country music singer Tim McGraw. He coined the phrase "You gotta believe!" during the New York Mets' improbable run to the 1973 National League pennant. With the Philadelphia Phillies, he recorded the final out in the 1980 World Series, bringing the Phillies their first World Championship.

23 - St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church, NW corner, Florida and Sacramento streets. The St. Vincent Ferrer Parish was established in 1855. Construction of the existing Gothic Revival church was started in 1867. The imposing church, with its 150-foot tower, is both a physical and spiritual landmark for Vallejoans.

24 - St. Vincent's Art District, centered on the 300 block of Marin Street, includes several artists' studios. At Marin and Carolina streets, note the Vallejo Bible Church, a Spanish Colonial Revival structure built in 1925.

25 - Homes in the 1100 block of Marin St. and Sutter and Kentucky streets include examples of Gothic, Queen Anne and Craftsman styles, along with shingled homes, veranda porches and a Gothic-style barn built in the 1800s.

26 - The Vallejo City Park encompasses a square block, bounded by Marin, Sacramento, Alabama and Louisiana streets. Structures ringing the park include the Beaux Arts–style Veterans Memorial Building, built in 1929. A Vallejo showcase for decades, it featured musicians such as jazz greats Fats Waller and Ella Fitzgerald. Note also the flat–front Italianate structure, 1214 Sacramento St. across from the park.

27 - In the 500 block of Alabama Street there are four side–by–side bungalows, all in a similar Craftsman style. Each bungalow was occupied by famed author Jack London's grandson Bart Abbott and his wife Helen. Groupings of bungalows and cottages with similar styles can be seen in several locations in neighborhoods that were home to shipyard workers.

28 - and 29 - Many more architectural designs can be seen in the 400 and 300 blocks of Ohio Street and the 200 and 100 blocks of Kentucky street, as well as on the former military roads and streets and adjacent streets. Look for Craftsman, Gothic, Prairie, Dutch Colonial, Mediterranean and Greek Revival buildings.

30 - Note the Queen Anne–Shingle at 1 Kentucky St., built in 1902 for the Herbert family and moved to its current site in 1961. Across the street is the shoe–last factory for the Vans–Van Heusen Corporation Club, established in 1920. Jack London joined the club in 1910 and was a frequent late–night patron there.

31 - Mare Island Naval Shipyard I N D U S T R I A L B U I L D I N G Mare Island was the first U.S. Navy installation on the Pacific Coast, and David Farragut, who later became the Navy's first admiral, was its first commanding officer. During WW II, there were more than 200,000 workers repairing and building naval vessels. One of the cavernous buildings repurposed to store coal for ships now is a haven for artists. Another building, the old pipe shop, houses a museum.

32 - St. Peter's Chapel, built in 1901, is the oldest surviving naval chapel in the U.S. Classic example of Shingled Gothic architecture, it has a priceless collection of Tiffany stained glass windows.

33 - Navy Officer's Mansions: The Colonial Revival–style "Officer's Row" mansions on Walnut Avenue were built after a major 1898 earthquake and engineers' brick homes that dated to 1855.

34 - The 215–acre Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve includes the Navy's first ammunition depot in the Pacific, founded in 1857, and the West Coast's oldest naval cemetery, dating to 1856. Besides some 900 sailors, Marines and family members, Anna Arnold Kenyon, daughter of Francis Scott Key, composer of "The Star–Spangled Banner," is buried there.