

“30 Architectural Gems in Nebraska” Lesson One – Passport

Buildings in Nebraska have influences from several sources. Many immigrants brought over architectural styles they were accustomed to. Archeological excavations in Greece and Italy early in the early 1800’s revealed beautiful classical buildings created by earlier civilizations. During the Victorian Age in Europe (1854 to 1901) various architectural styles were refined and became very popular in the United States. Early Spanish settlements in the American Southwest influenced the design of buildings in Nebraska.

Identify the building or buildings in “30 Gems” whose design was influenced by architecture in the following countries:

England Spain Morocco Italy Scotland Greece France

Lesson Two – Building Function

The “function” of a building is the intended use of that building.

How come all the museums in “30 Gems” have the same intended use, but look different?

Why do the houses of worship in “30 Gems” look different?

Why do the bank buildings in “30 Gems” look so different?

Why do the railroad depots in “30 Gems” look so different?

Why do the entertainment venues in “30 Gems” look so different?

Why do the government buildings in “30 Gems” look so different?

Were they built at the same time?

Were they built of the same materials?

Do they serve the same people?

Do they house the same things?

Are they built in the same places?

Were they designed by the same architects?

Lesson Three – Basic Design

Architects use many elements of design in buildings. Four important elements of design are rhythms, pattern, asymmetry and symmetry. Rhythms are elements that repeat themselves several times in one direction. Patterns are like rhythms, only they go in two directions. Symmetrical things, like our bodies, have identical halves opposing one another on an axis. They often appear “balanced.” Asymmetrical things are not that way and often appear “unbalanced.”

Six projecting classroom/laboratory functional elements on the west façade of the Beadle Center at UNL create a very strong “rhythm.” The deep window recesses on the east façade of the NBC Center (Wells Fargo Bank) in Lincoln create a very strong “pattern.”

The Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln is an excellent example of symmetry in design. Joslyn Castle in Omaha is an example of asymmetry in design.

What elements of design best describe the following buildings – rhythm, pattern, symmetry and asymmetry?

First Presbyterian Church in Bellevue
Buffalo Bills Ranch in North Platte
Hall County Courthouse in Grand Island
St. Cecelia’s Cathedral in Omaha
Burlington Depot in Hastings
Rose Blumpkin Performing Arts Center in Omaha
Joslyn Museum in Omaha
Stuhr Museum in Grand Island
DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge in Blair
International Quilt Study center and Museum in Lincoln
Henry Doorly Zoo Desert Dome in Omaha
Carl T. Curtis National Park Service Headquarters in Omaha
First National Tower in Omaha

Lesson Four – Shapes and Forms

Architects work with “shapes” in two dimensions and “forms” in three dimensions. The basic shapes are squares, circles, and triangles. The basic forms are cubes, prisms, and spheres.

If you had a full set of Lincoln Logs, could you build a model of Palmer-Ephard cabin?

If you had a full set of kindergarten wood blocks including all the rectangles, arches, circles, cylinders, triangles, and cones, could you build a reasonable model of the Farmer’s State Bank in Nebraska City?

If you had a load of grass sod and plenty of long sticks, could you build a model of Sod House in Merriman?

If you had a Lego set with a whole lot of pieces, could you build a model of First National Tower in Omaha?