

Early Wood Frame Houses (1895-1905)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, one storey shed-roofed shanties of frame construction began replacing the early log homes in most areas of Icelandic settlement. Small frame lean-tos had been common additions to the log homes in the early 1890s, but within a short time larger versions of these earlier appendages were completely replacing many of the original log structures (Figure 17).

Shed-Roofed Type

Small and simple in design, the popularity of the shed-roofed residence was due to the ease and inexpensive with which it could be constructed (Figure 18). A settler did not have to be a skilled carpenter to build such a house and construction took little time. Early photographs and remaining examples indicate that shed-roofed residences varied in size and plan. Some, such as a now-abandoned structure near Hnausa, were simply constructed single-roomed bachelor shacks that rested on a foundation of loose stone (Figure 19). Others, built as more permanent structures, had several rooms and concrete foundations (Figure 20).

A number of improvements were generally made to these early shed-roofed residences within a few years of their construction. These were similar to those made to the log homes during the same period. The earlier metal stovepipe chimney was often replaced with one of the brick, and the interior walls were sheathed with siding or wallpaper. If the original floor was constructed of rough lumber, it was recovered with tongue and groove flooring. The construction of additions was also quite common (Figure 21).

Eighteen of these early shed-roofed structures remain in the planning district: ten residences and eight farm outbuildings. Five of the residences were found in rural districts. Although the shed-roofed residence was once prevalent throughout the Icelandic portions of the planning district, only a small number remain intact today. Most were enlarged or incorporated into larger residences over the years while others were put to alternate uses, abandoned, or were simply demolished.



Figure 17

This two roomed shanty, photographed in the Vidir area around 1903 was typical of the period. The absence of siding on the rear portion suggests that it may have been a later addition to the house. (Provincial Archives Manitoba)

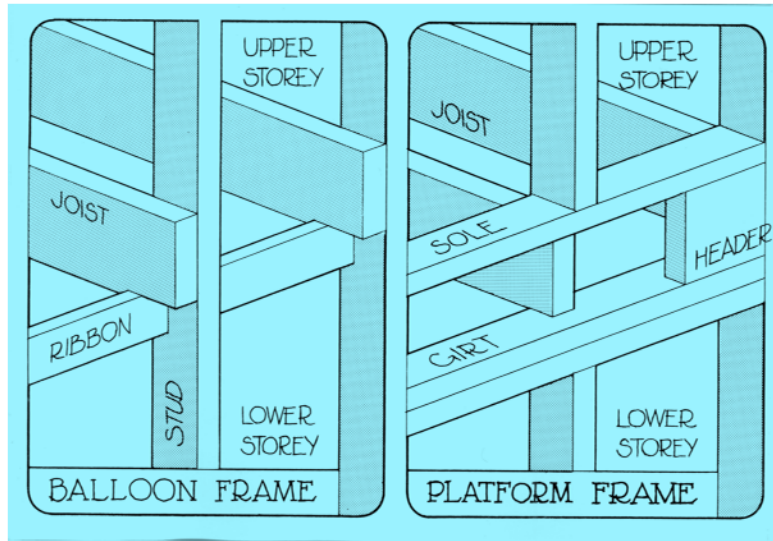


Figure 18

Settlers generally relied on balloon framing, before 1890, for the construction of their houses. After 1890 platform framing became more common.



Figure 19

Around the turn of the century, simple shanties, like this one, now abandoned in the Geysir district, were the standard form of housing for many of the Icelandic settlers.



Figure 20

In the foreground of this 1910 photograph of Gimli, which also shows the newly-completed Lutheran Church, are three variations of the shed-roof house.



Figure 21

Later additions to the original shed-roofed residences, like this one in the Vidor district, were often shed-roofed as well. (Provincial Archives Manitoba)

Gable-Roofed Type

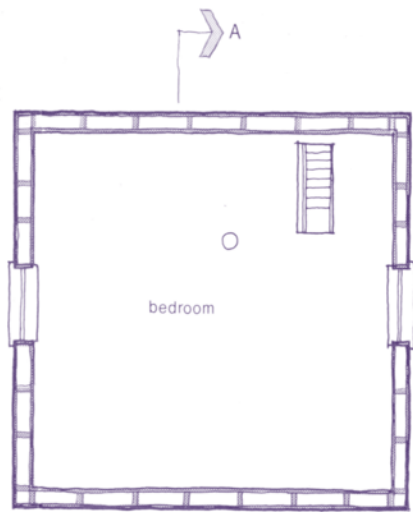
In addition to the shed-roofed frame residences built in New Iceland, a small number of 1 1/2 storey gable-roofed frame houses were constructed prior to the turn of the century. Like the shed-roofed shanties these buildings featured balloon framing construction methods; the basic differences then between the two structures involved the internal planning and the roof shape. A residence, located at SW 19-22-3E, one mile east of Arborg, is the most interesting of the three remaining early gable-roofed examples (Figure 22).



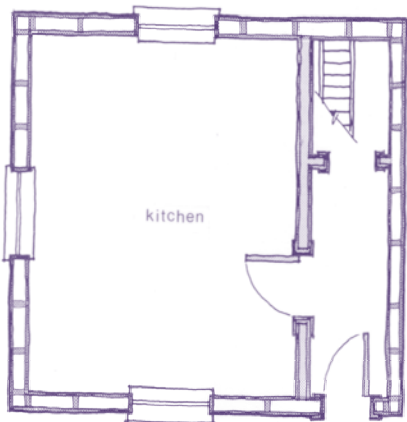
Figure 22
Borgfjord house, SW 19-22-3E, ca. 1895.

According to local residents, it originally stood several miles east of its present location on the banks of the Icelandic River. It is one of the oldest wood frame structures in the entire planning district.

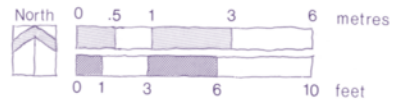
Despite its small size (Figure 23), it is solidly built and exhibits a good deal of workmanship. The interior is nicely finished with wainscoting on the lower half of the walls and on the ceiling. Simple wood mouldings surround all the interior windows, door frames and corner joints. There is no chimney in the structure; holes were simply cut in the ceiling and roof, as they were in log houses of this period, and fitted with stove pipes. The upper level walls and ceiling were finished in a similar manner as the main level. The plain exterior of the buildings has some interesting details. The gable ends were decorated with bargeboards, one of which remains, and a small, coloured glass transom was fitted over the entranceway.



Second
Floor Plan



Ground
Floor Plan



Section A-A

Figure 23
Borgfjord house: floor plans and cross section.