

VERMONT DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

www.HistoricVermont.org

Rehab Do's and Don'ts

Roofs

- Though wood shingles and standing seam metal roofs are the most historic roofing material in Vermont, less expensive asphalt shingles are generally an acceptable replacement.
- Avoid adding dormer windows to the front of your house. It depends on the roof type and orientation; but generally roof changes are much less intrusive on the rear roof slope and even on the sides.

Exterior Walls

- Never sandblast to clean or remove paint from brick walls or clapboards; use appropriate chemical cleaners and a garden hose sprayer to rinse. Sandblasting and high pressure “power washes” can permanently damage the protective outer layer of the brick and wood surfaces. Power washing can also force water through the sheathing and damage insulation. Always clean small test patches first in order to determine the gentlest effective method.
- Repoint deteriorated mortar joints with a softer, high-lime content mortar rather than modern mortar which is made up mostly of portland cement. Modern mortar is stronger than the old brick, so as the building expands and contracts through the seasons the brick will be the first to crack. A basic historic mortar mix contains one part lime to three parts sand. The University of Vermont can analyze specific mortar content. Contact the Historic Preservation Program, Department of History, Wheeler House, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405, (802)656-3180 for more information.
- Avoid aluminum or vinyl siding, even on soffit and eaves. They often obscure architectural details, can trap moisture inside the wall, and are not maintenance-free as sometimes claimed (dents and scratches can't be fixed, colors fade over time, etc.).
- Exterior woodwork can be protected from the elements with a good paint job. This includes proper preparation of the surface and the right kind of paint (generally oil base paints hold up better than most latex based paints, but the newer “super latex” paints can outperform oil. A 20 or more year warranty on the paint is a good indication of high quality). Please note: Oil and latex paints can be incompatible, frequently latex primers are required over oil based paint for proper adhesion. Refer to your specific paint manufactures instructions for further information.

Windows

- Whenever possible, repair rather than replace historic windows. Old windows can be made weather-tight with weather stripping and storm windows. While triple track storms diminish the historic appearance of the building, they are okay because they protect the historic windows from the weather. In fact, good weather stripping combined with storm windows matches the thermal efficiency of modern double glazed windows. If windows must be replaced due to deterioration, select windows that match the appearance, size, material, number of panes, molding profiles, and glass reflectivity of the existing windows.
- Avoid changing the size of window openings or closing them off.
- Storm windows on the interior rather than the exterior are less visible and often cheaper. However, interior storm windows can trap moisture in the space between the storm window and the historic window that can lead to deterioration problems.
- Avoid using tinted or dark “low-e” coated glass in replacement sash windows; they are inappropriate on historic buildings.

Additions

- Keep new additions to the rear where they are less visible and make them narrower and shorter than the original building. If an addition on the side cannot be avoided, set it back as far as possible so the shape of the original house is still discernable. Try to match the original roof pitch, window shapes, eave width, etc. without duplicating the precise details of the original house. The overall design of the addition should be contemporary, but compatible.
- Avoid attaching garages to historic houses whenever possible. A free-standing garage or one attached with an inconspicuous connector or breezeway is preferred.

Kitchens / Bathrooms:

- These rooms often need to be upgraded with new fixtures, etc., but this can be done so they complement the original house rather detract from it.

More Information

For more specific information on a wide range of preservation treatments and recommended practices, please refer to the **Preservation Brief** titles on page 3. Published by the National Park Service, the preservation briefs are a great source of assistance to owners and developers of historic buildings. Use them to help recognize and resolve common preservation and repair problems prior to beginning work.

The complete text of briefs 1-41 is available on line.

<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

Paper copies of these briefs can be ordered from the web page. Copies are available from the Division for Historic Preservation as well.

Preservation Briefs 1-42:

1. Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings
2. Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
3. Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings
4. Roofing for Historic Buildings
5. The Preservation of Historic Adobe Buildings
6. Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
7. The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta
8. Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
9. The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
10. Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
11. Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
12. The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)
13. The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows
14. New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns
15. Preservation of Historic Concrete: Problems and General Approaches
16. The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
17. Architectural Character - Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character
18. Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings - Identifying Character-Defining Elements
19. The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs
20. The Preservation of Historic Barns
21. Repairing Historic Flat Plaster - Walls and Ceilings
22. The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco
23. Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster
24. Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches
25. The Preservation of Historic Signs
26. The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings
27. The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron
28. Painting Historic Interiors
29. The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs
30. The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs
31. Mothballing Historic Buildings
32. Making Historic Properties Accessible
33. The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass
34. Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors: Preserving Historic Composition Ornament
35. Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation
36. Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes
37. Appropriate Methods of Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing
38. Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry
39. Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings
40. Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors
41. The Seismic Retrofit of Historic Buildings: Keeping Preservation in the Forefront
42. The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone