



“Take proper care of your monuments and you will not need to restore them... Watch an old building with anxious care, guard it as best you may and at any cost from every influence of dilapidation.”

-John Ruskin, The Seven Lamps of Architecture, 1849

- It has been proven that repairing historic wood windows is less expensive than total window replacement. The typical payback period for replacement windows is 30-100 years.
- Your historic wood windows have survived for many years with minimal maintenance.

Where to Find Technical Assistance:
National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services: www.nps.gov/tps

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties: www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm

Preservation Trades Network: www.ptn.org/index.htm

FAUQUIER COUNTY

Department of Community Development

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Maintaining Your Historic House



FAUQUIER COUNTY

Department of Community Development



SCALE FEET 1/4 METERS 1:

Plan and Prepare

The first rule of thumb of maintenance is be well-informed before making decisions. Sometimes haste can lead to bad choices that have irrevocable consequences, which usually means more maintenance problems. Research the work to be done to prioritize work items, and don't be afraid to ask questions. The National Park Service's Technical Preservation Services has excellent, in-depth source material. Preservation Briefs concerning everything from painting siding and reroofing to making your historic building more energy efficient are available free of charge at www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm.

Diagnose the Problem

Determining the best way to repair a building can be compared to a doctor diagnosing an illness. It is imperative that the source of a problem be identified before the symptom is treated. For example, patching a roof leak with liquid asphalt does not remedy the leak. The patch fixes the symptom (the leak) for a brief time but doesn't address the reason for the moisture problem. The symptom will return again and again if the problem isn't addressed.

Let Them Breathe

Historic building materials are generally natural—wood, stone, clay, etc. All natural materials must be allowed to “breathe.” As buildings withstand the elements of weather and temperature changes, airborne moisture must be able to escape or evaporate through materials. When a moisture barrier is created by wrapping a building in plastic in the form of vinyl siding or using Portland cement to repoint an exterior brick wall, deterioration is accelerated.

A General Guide for Maintenance Projects

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties are used as a general guide when making treatment decisions. Before undertaking repairs or alterations, consider the following concepts:

- **Use the gentlest means possible**—The objective is to use the gentlest method of achieving the desired effect without damaging the material. For example, when attempting to clean a masonry surface, use low pressure water (between 100-300 psi) and natural bristle brushes, instead of high-power water or sand blasting.
- **Reversibility**—Work should be undertaken in such a way that if removed in the future, the essential integrity of the material would not be damaged.
- **Repair instead of replace**—Repair of building materials is preferred over indiscriminate removal. Begin with the least degree of intervention possible, such as patching, splicing, or otherwise reinforcing elements according to recognized preservation methods. When features are substantially deteriorated or missing, replacement with an in-kind material or compatible substitute material is preferred.

Water is NOT a Friend

Many factors lead to the deterioration of historic buildings, including neglect of routine maintenance, but the effects of water are the most profound. Some of the common signs of moisture damage include: presence of mold or fungus; wet stains, eroding surfaces, or efflorescence

(salt deposits) on interior and exterior surfaces; flaking paint and plaster; warped, cracked, or rotted wood; and spalling masonry or eroded mortar joints. The easiest way to discover the source of water penetration is inspecting your house during a heavy downpour. Inspect each part of the house—gutters & downspouts, foundation, basement, crawl space, roof valleys, attic, and areas of roof/chimney junctions.

Helpful hints: clean and inspect gutters at least twice a year; regularly repair roofing, deteriorated siding and flashing around chimneys and in roof valleys; draw downspouts away from the building foundation; avoid growing vines and other foliage on or around the house (they hold moisture close to the building and secrete acids); and avoid adding waterproof coating to exterior masonry walls.

Repair Windows Rather Than Replace

Take a few minutes to examine your old windows before you make a hasty (and more expensive!) decision to replace them. Often, all a window needs to function well is good paint preparation and new putty. Other cost-effective practices include adding weather stripping to the sides, bottom, and meeting rails of a window and installing storm windows. Points to consider about historic windows:

- You can achieve higher levels of energy efficiency by maintaining existing windows. Only about 10% of heat loss and air infiltration occur at windows. The biggest energy consumer in a historic house is the heat lost through the roof and chimneys. Consider adding insulation in the attic first.