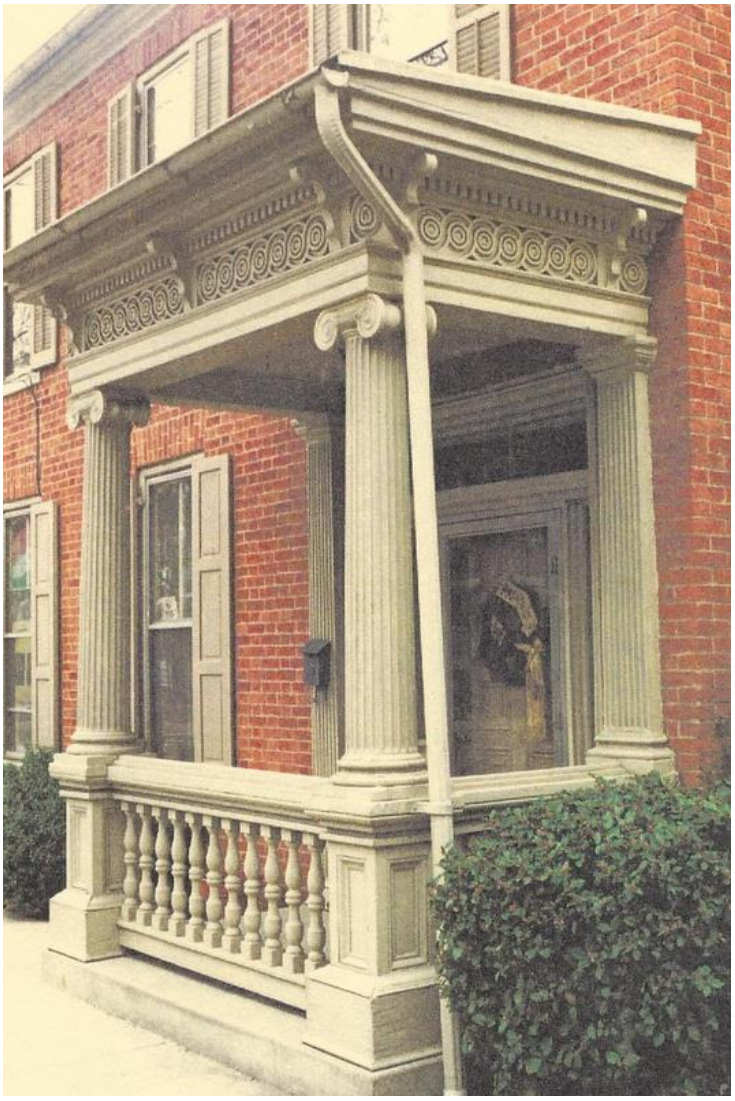
# Mercersburg Design Guide

## A Guide for Maintaining and Rehabilitation Buildings

## in the Mercersburg Historic District



Borough of Mercersburg

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Welcome to the Mercersburg Historic District

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Mercersburg Historical Architectural Review Board

Borough of Mercersburg

Certified Local Government Program

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

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Pennsylvania
Historical & Museum
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# INTRODUCTION

**Purpose of this Reference Guide**

These guidelines are intended to be an easy reference for property owners within the Mercersburg Historic District. The primary goal is to help those who wish to do repairs or make alterations to buildings in the historic district understand the process for getting approval to begin the work.

It is divided into sections by the type of work being undertaken. You may use the entire guide as a reference or just use the applicable section.

## Introduction

Mercersburg is rich in 18th and 19th century residential and small commercial buildings that reflect a variety of architectural styles and the history of the Borough. It is this collection of buildings, sites and features that creates a setting unique to Mercersburg. The preservation of the Borough's historic district benefits all its citizens as well as visitors to the community.

### Why is it important to preserve our town?

To many people the desire to preserve comes from a simple need to retain linkages with the past. While libraries and museums hold countless treasures of the past for the curious visitor; buildings, structures and sites are among the most important and readily accessible pieces of our past. The arrangement, size, shape and form of buildings, spaces, and structures give towns like Mercersburg their identity. Once lost, the unique identity of a town and its surrounding area is irretrievable.

Another reason for preservation is the tremendous **value of reusing our existing buildings.** It is simply more cost effective to rehabilitate existing buildings and their architectural components than to remove and dispose of old materials such as doors, windows, shutters and porches. **Properly maintained, these components can have a long, useful life.**

# MERCERSBURG: AN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Mercersburg was founded in 1750 by William Smith. The town was situated on an important trade route linking the western frontier with the port city of Baltimore, Maryland. Most of the buildings standing today in Mercersburg date from the last quarter of the 18th century through the first quarter of the 20th century. Mercersburg follows a typical Pennsylvania town plan with main streets intersecting at the town square. Characteristic of many Pennsylvania towns, buildings are sited even with the sidewalk without front yards or setbacks.

Mercersburg has a variety of both residential and commercial buildings constructed of log, stone or brick. Most log buildings have been covered with wood siding. Eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular forms of Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival and Italianate architectural styles are found in Mercersburg. There are also a few high style examples of Queen Anne, Classical Revival and Colonial Revival dating from the early 20th century.

In addition to its buildings, important character-defining features of the town are brick sidewalks with limestone curbs, tree-lined streets, stables, carriage houses, smokehouses, outhouses and other outbuildings that grace the back lots and line the alleys. Much of this manmade environment is remarkably intact.

# WHAT IS THE MERCERSBURG HISTORIC DISTRICT

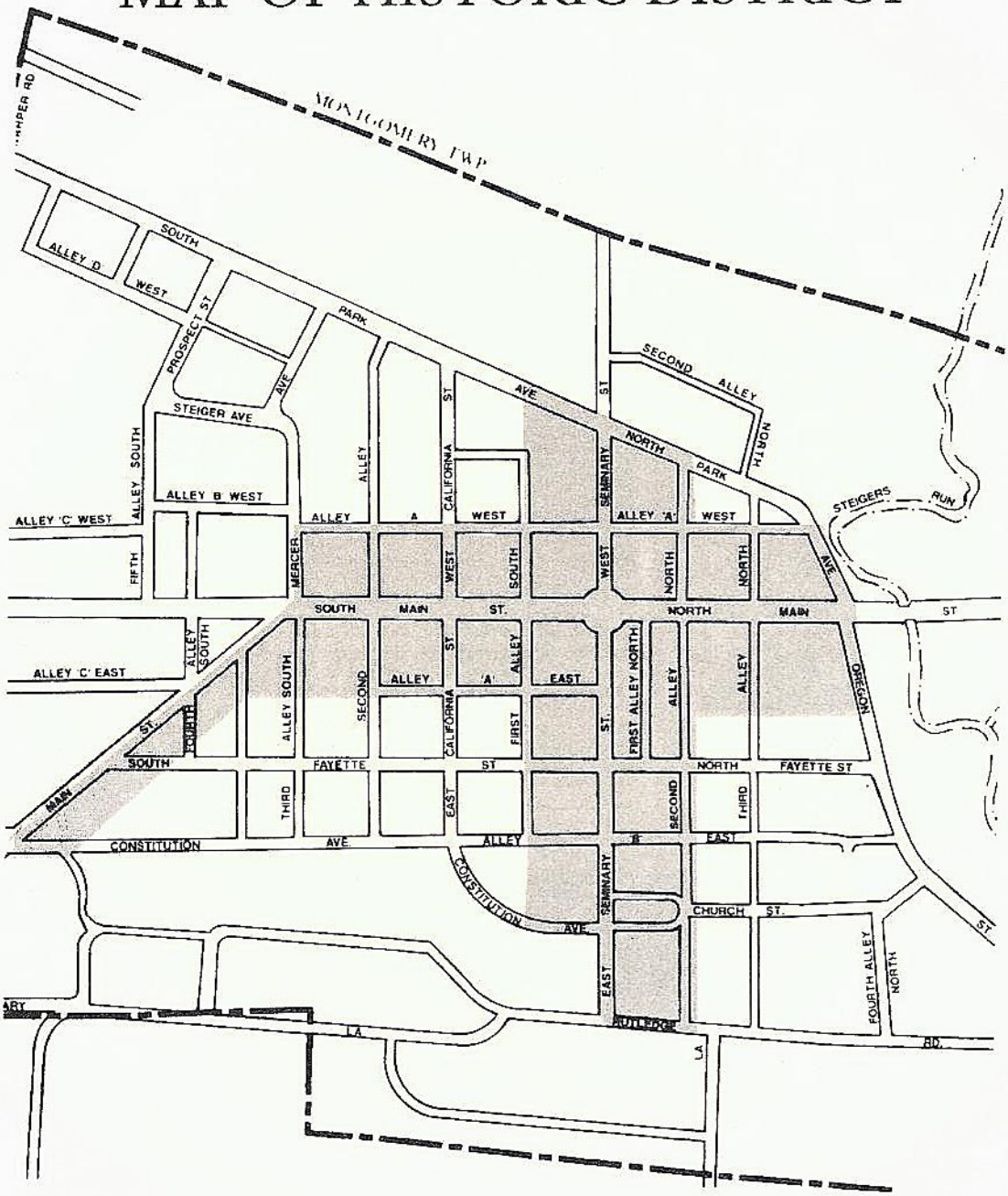
The Mercersburg Historic District is a collection of compatible structures dating from the late 18th through the early 20th centuries. The district encompasses the older central portions of the Borough. The Mercersburg Historic District actually has two distinct designations.

In 1975 the Mercersburg Borough Council established the Mercersburg Historic Architectural Review Board district through the passage of an ordinance authorized under the Pennsylvania General Assembly Historic District Act (1961). This district provides a way for citizens and property owners to recognize and protect the special character of their community. This ordinance is designed to ensure that the essential characteristics of this district are preserved by requiring any exterior changes to buildings within this district to be reviewed by the HARB prior to the work being completed.

Additionally, the historic district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and was expanded in 1988. The National Register of Historic Places was established by the United States Congress in 1966 to create a list of properties, including districts that are significant to American history and culture. Listed properties are protected from federal funded or licensed projects that could damage or destroy historic resources. Listing on the National Register of Historic Places may make property owners eligible for federal income tax credits for the rehabilitation of income producing properties.

While the boundaries of both districts (HARB and National Register) are the same, it is the HARB district designation that requires work to be reviewed prior to commencement.

# MAP OF HISTORIC DISTRICT




*NOTE:*
*Boundaries of district are not exact on map.*

# THE HARB PROCESS

**So you want to do some work on the exterior of your house, now what?**

If your building is located within the Mercersburg Historic District (see map), you will need to submit an application to have the work approved by the Historical and Architectural Review Board (HARB) **BEFORE** you begin the work.

Any activity that alters the appearance of your building and can be seen from the public right of way (streets AND alleys) must be reviewed by Mercersburg's HARB.

**What is HARB?**

HARB (Historical and Architectural Review Board) is made up of members of the Mercersburg community appointed by the Mercersburg Borough Council. The Board includes a registered architect, a licensed real estate broker, the Borough's codes official, and four volunteers with knowledge of and interest in historic preservation.

**What does HARB do?**

HARB is an advisory board to Borough Council. It is HARB's responsibility to review all changes to the exteriors of buildings within the Mercersburg Historic District to determine if the work is appropriate to the character of the district and meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Their recommendations are forwarded to the Mercersburg Borough Council, who gives final approval.

The establishment of a HARB district in Mercersburg is official recognition that many of the Borough's buildings are of architectural, cultural, and historic value. Development, growth, changing fashions in building styles and attempts to modernize, weatherize, and remodel put constant pressure on owners to change the appearance of their historic buildings. HARB tries to mitigate the cumulative effects of these changes by reviewing each change as it is proposed, to make sure that every effort is made to preserve the historic integrity of the buildings in the district.

Just as a zoning ordinance protects neighborhoods from uses that would be incompatible and inappropriate, a historic preservation ordinance protects against changes to individual historic buildings that would damage their unique character.

# THE HARB PROCESS

### How do I know if I have to submit an application to HARB?

If your property is located within the boundaries of the Mercersburg Historic District (see map), you must submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness describing your proposed work plans for review by HARB if the work will alter any exterior architectural feature visible from a public street or way. This includes the rear of buildings, garages or outbuildings visible from the alley. It also includes the installation of signage and fencing and the chemical and/or water cleaning of any masonry surface. It does not include painting a previously painted surface. **HARB has no jurisdiction over the choice of paint colors.** Proposals for demolition and new construction must also be submitted for approval by HARB.

### How do I submit an application to HARB and when does HARB meet?

HARB meets regularly on the 1st Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in Borough Council chambers. Applications to appear on the meeting agenda are due the preceding Tuesday by noon. Applications are available at Borough Hall and on the website:

http://www.mercersburg.org/borough/pdfs/MercersburgHistoricalAndArchitecturalReview-BoardApplication.pdf

Applicants must give their name, home address, and telephone number on the application, as well as that of their contractor, if one has been selected. A complete description of the work must also be given. Specification information and samples of proposed materials are strongly recommended

### What work does HARB review?

- **Exterior Changes** visible from any public right of way on all properties within the historic district, even if the property is vacant or contains buildings that are not historic. This includes replacement of windows and doors!
- **Changes to property features** including signs, awnings, fences, handicap ramps, sheds, decks, pools, sidewalks and all other built features of a property.
- **Demolition** of existing building (whether they are historic or not)
- **New Construction** including additions to existing buildings

# THE HARB PROCESS

**What work does HARB not review?**

- **Repair and Maintenance** projects where the color, size, texture, shape and composition of building materials remains unchanged.
- **Interior Changes**
- **Landscaping** including street trees, shrubs, etc. HARB does review built features such as walls, fences, driveways and decks.

**How does HARB make its decisions?**

In order to protect the historic character of the district, HARB considers:

- The effect that a proposed change will have upon the general historic and architectural nature of the historic district, not just the building itself;
- The appropriateness of exterior changes to architectural features which can be seen from a public right of way; and
- The general design, arrangement, texture, and material of the proposed work on the building and the relation of these factors to similar features of buildings in the historic district.

To help make its decision, HARB members apply the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (See Page 13). These standards are guidelines developed by the United States Department of the Interior. They are accepted as the national standard for rehabilitating historic buildings.

At the HARB meeting, the applicant or his or her representative, presents their proposed plans and the HARB members can ask questions or make suggestions. After HARB has considered all the issues, it votes on the proposal and sends its recommendation to Borough Council.

**What happens after my application has been reviewed by HARB?**

HARB recommendations for approval or denial of the proposed projects are forwarded to the Mercersburg Borough Council, who decides whether or not the project will receive a Certificate of Appropriateness. Council usually meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, so generally HARB recommendations are reviewed within one week of the HARB meeting. Once Council has approved the application, the Borough staff can issue the Certificate of Appropriateness during their regular business hours. Projects may not begin until a Certificate of Appropriateness is received.

# THE HARB PROCESS

### What happens if HARB or Council denies my application?

If your proposed work is not approved, you can meet with Borough staff, HARB or the Borough's historic preservation consultant to discuss ways to undertake the work so that it will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

### Is this Certificate of Appropriateness the same as a building permit?

No, the building permit process is separate from the HARB process. While some work within the historic district may not need a building permit, it still must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.

### When can I start my work?

Work can begin as soon as a Certificate of Appropriateness is received from the Borough.

### What happens if I do work without HARB or Borough Council approval?

If a property owner initiates work without a Certificate of Appropriateness, a stop work order may be issued and the owner may be required to pay a fine. Work may not resume until HARB and Borough Council approval is obtained.

### How long does all this take?

From initial application, review by HARB, approval by Borough Council and issue of Certificate of Appropriateness, the HARB process usually takes 3-4 weeks. It is important that you plan this time into your project schedule.

HARB also encourages informational discussions with property owners at regularly scheduled HARB meetings prior to submission of a formal application. Contact the Borough and asked to be placed on the agenda for an informal discussion.

### I'm in a hurry! Isn't there some way around this process?

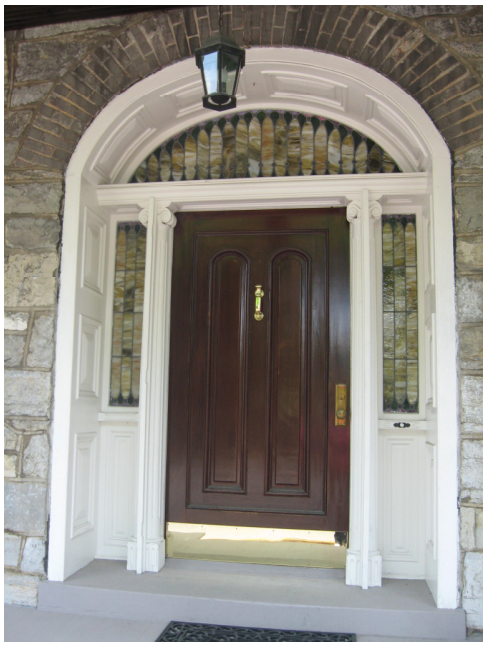
All projects that result in a visible change to the exterior of your property as seen from a public right of way require HARB review. So if you would rather not go through the HARB process, you can always just maintain the current appearance of the property. If you do not change your property, HARB review is not necessary.

In some rare cases, where emergency work is needed, an expedited review can take place to allow the repairs to be made

quickly. HOWEVER, the work will still receive a full review by HARB and Borough Council after the fact. It is important that the emergency work is undertaken carefully and according to the requirements set forth by the Borough staff when the emergency approval is given. Otherwise, work may need to be redone.

### Where Do I Go for Technical Assistance?

Property owners can obtain FREE advice from the Borough's Historic Preservation Consultant on appropriate changes, materials and cost effective maintenance techniques. Contact the Borough office to obtain this free service.



Please refer to the last section of these guidelines (*Where Can I Find More Information?)* for additional free resources.

### How do I use these Guidelines?

HARB is required to evaluate all proposed work and determine if it will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation* (see Standards on the next page). However, these *Standards* do not provide detail on how to address specific rehabilitation issues. This Design Guide has been developed to provide some guidance on appropriate treatment of historic buildings and changes to the building's individual components.

This design guide is a tool for property owners, design professionals, contractors, HARB and Borough Council. These guidelines are not meant to be rigid restrictions. They are meant to be used as guiding principles that, when followed, will result in the sound preservation of Mercersburg's historic buildings.

As a property owner, you are encouraged to review these guidelines when planning changes to your property. Early consultation with HARB will provide for the most flexibility in planning your project.

# SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS

## SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION*

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own rights will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of the deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions or adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

* U.S. Department of the Interior, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, 1995.

### Identify, Retain and Preserve

Rehabilitation begins with identifying the form and detailing of those architectural materials and features that are important in defining the building's historic character. First priority should always be to retain and preserve those features.

### Protect and Maintain

Protection of important architectural features involves the least amount of intervention necessary including maintenance. This can involve cleaning, caulking, painting, rust removal and general care of all features.

### Repair

When the physical condition of character-defining features requires additional work, repairing is recommended. Once again, this should be done with the least amount of intervention possible to accomplish the work. Patching, splicing, consolidating and reinforcing are recognized preservation methods. Repair can also include limited replacement-in-kind of deteriorated or missing features. Although using the same material is preferred, substitute materials may be acceptable if the essential form and design will remain the same visually.

### Replace

If the level of deterioration or damage of a feature is not repairable, then replacement is appropriate. If the essential form and detailing of the deteriorated element is still evident, it should be used as a model to create the new feature. First priority should be to replace the entire element in-kind with the same material. If that is not possible, a substitute material should be carefully chosen that matches as closely as possible.

### Design for Missing Features

When an entire features is missing, it no longer plays a role in defining the historic character of the building. However, if it can be accurately reproduced using historical, pictorial and physical evidence, it should be reinstalled. However, a second acceptable option for the replacement feature is a new design that is compatible with the remaining character-defining features of the historic building. The new design should always take into account the size, scale, and material of the historic building itself and, most importantly, should be clearly differentiated so that a false historical appearance is not created.

### Alterations/Additions to Historic Buildings

The construction of an exterior addition to a historic building should be avoided, if possible. If a new addition is the only option, it should be designed and constructed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building and so that the character-defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed. It should also be located on the least prominent elevation of the building and should not overpower the existing building in size or siting.

### Energy Efficiency/Accessibility Considerations/Health and Safety Considerations

It is important to understand that work will be needed on historic buildings to meet accessibility requirements and health and safety code requirements; or retrofitting measures to conserve energy. Although this work is quite often an important aspect of rehabilitation projects, it is usually not a part of the overall process of protecting or repairing character-defining features. Instead, this work is assessed for its potential negative impact on the building's historic character. For this reason, particular care must be taken not to radically change, obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining materials or features in the process of rehabilitation work to meet code and energy requirements.

# MASONRY— BRICK AND STONE

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Most brick and stone will require very little maintenance work. It is a very durable material and will generally not require extensive cleaning. In all cases, harsh methods such as sandblasting are NOT appropriate.
- Most problems with masonry come about because of deteriorated mortar joints. Missing or crumbling mortar joints allow moisture to get into the brick and stone causing further deterioration.
- The repointing of brick and stone should be done carefully and in consultant with a masonry expert. Please contact the Borough for advice and assistance.

## Introduction

Brick and stone are used extensively in Mercersburg. The color and texture of individual bricks and stones, the pattern in which the units are laid, and the consistency, color, size, and shape of the mortar joints between the units all give character to masonry. Ornament and detailing in masonry contribute greatly to the character of a building. Although masonry is typically viewed as a very strong building material, excess water can literally turn it to dust. Other major causes of masonry deterioration include general neglect, improper maintenance, inappropriate repair, and harsh cleaning methods. The most common problems with masonry include the crumbling and flaking of individual bricks and the loss or loosening of individual bricks. This type of deterioration is typically caused by excess moisture penetrating the masonry wall - a problem that is worse if the building was ever sandblasted. This removes the protective coating on the brick, exposing the softer interior and leading to more rapid deterioration.

## Cleaning Masonry

Masonry should be cleaned as needed by the gentlest means possible. This mean non-abrasive low pressure water washes. A garden hose, soft nylon brush and a mild detergent will often be very effective.

If water washing cannot produce the desired result, proceed with chemical washing under the guidance of an experienced professional. Use the weakest possible solution and neutralize afterwards. Be sure to follow manufacturer's directions, particularly regarding the range of appropriate temperatures for working with chemicals, and the potential hazards.

Sandblasting is not allowed under any circumstances. Abrasive materials and tools remove the protective outer layer of brick and expose the soft inner area to moisture. Repeated years of freeze and thaw cycles can literally turn the brick to dust.

Sandblasting can remove the protective outer layer of brick allowing it to absorb moisture and quickly deterio-

## Other Damaging Conditions for Masonry

Efflorescence: Efflorescence is a spotty, white haze appearing in a horizontal pattern in brick. It is created by salts that are deposited after water evaporates inside the wall and means there is excess moisture present. The moisture enters through a defect, or by rising damp, and then evaporates at the interior or exterior.

Rising Damp: Rising damp is the condition that exists when suction pulls groundwater into a masonry wall from the bottom up. Rising damp can result in spalling, efflorescence, and other deterioration.

Biological Growth: Mold, algae, fungus, and vegetation can grow on a masonry wall when excess moisture is present. The moisture may be a result of faulty caulking or mortar; cracks created by building settlement; faulty gutters, downspouts, and flashing; improperly ventilated interior spaces; or excessive shade. This growth encourages moisture to remain in the masonry, thus making it more susceptible to deterioration.

## Repointing

Mortar is composed of sand, water, and lime or Portland cement. Historic mortar may also contain ash, horse hair, oyster shells, or other additives. The process of using mortar to bond masonry units - brick or stone - to form a wall is called POINTING. REPOINTING is the process of removing deteriorated mortar and applying new mortar to restore the strength and appearance of the wall.

Repointing masonry where the mortar has deteriorated or is missing is a common repair. However, it requires a very careful mixture of ingredients to be sure that the new mortar matches the original. It is recommended that only an experienced mason undertake this type of work.

Always determine the appropriate mortar formula for historic masonry. Always test the existing mortar to determine its composition, then base the new mortar composition on the old. Mortar mixes historically are much softer than the current standard mixes available commercially today.

**Mortar Types**
(Measured by volume)

| Designation | Cement | Hydrated Lime or Lime Putty | Sand |
|---|---|---|---|
| M | 1 | 1/4 | 3 - 3 3/4 |
| S | 1 | 1/2 | 4 - 4 1/2 |
| N | 1 | 1 | 5 - 6 |
| O | 1 | 2 | 8 - 9 |
| K | 1 | 3 | 10 - 12 |
| "L" | 0 | 1 | 2 1/4 - 3 |

**Suggested Mortar Types for Different Exposures**

| | Exposure | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Masonry Material | Sheltered | Moderate | Severe |
| Very durable: | O | N | S |
| Moderately durable: | K | O | N |
| Minimally durable: | "L" | K | O |

## Guidelines For Repointing

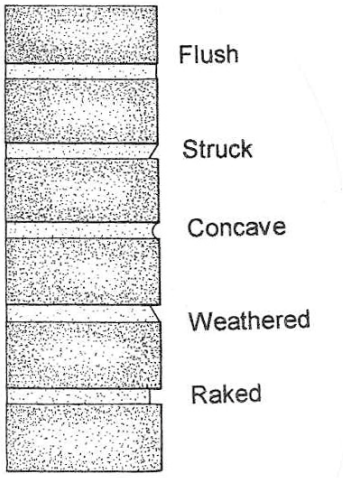
1. New mortar must match the strength of the historic mortar, and must be softer than the surrounding masonry.

2. Mortar to be used for repointing should match the original mortar in color, texture, and composition.

3. Sand color is critical to determining mortar color.

4. Although it will be time and labor intensive, use only hand tools for removing old mortar. Using power tools will damage the edges of the stone or brick. Remove mortar to a depth of 3/4 inch or deeper to reach sound mortar.

5. When flushing the joints after removing mortar, use as little water as possible in a gentle stream.




6. Copy the tooling method and detailing of the historic joints. Be aware that these details may change on different portions of the building. Check for joint profile on protected areas of the building, like under eaves, because weathering may alter the profile.

7. Avoid removing sound mortar to achieve a uniform appearance. Achieve a uniform appearance by properly analyzing the existing mortar and matching it to the original recipe in only the damaged area. New mortar of the historic recipe should weather to the color of the original.

**NEVER**

- use a synthetic caulking compound.
- use a mortar mixture with a Portland cement content higher than 20% of the total volume of lime and cement combined.
- use a mortar that is harder than the surrounding masonry.

## Should I Paint My Masonry?

The application of paint to previously unpainted brick, stone, or masonry buildings is usually inappropriate. The character of masonry is an important element of a historic building and the painting of these surfaces can alter the integrity of the building.

However, many old masonry buildings are made of soft bricks that were meant to be painted. Some were painted to hide poor quality brick or stone. Removing the paint from these buildings would drastically change their character and cause the bricks to erode.

If you are unsure whether or not your building should be painted, contact the Borough office for help.

* Drawings used with permission from Borough of Gettysburg.

# EXTERIOR WOOD AND SIDING

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Properly maintained, wood can be a long lasting and durable material.
- The biggest enemy of wood is water so it is important to keep wood surfaces protected with a good coating of paint.
- Replacement of deteriorated wood should be undertaken carefully and new members should match the original as closely as possible.
- Artificial siding, such as vinyl, is not maintenance free and is generally NOT appropriate within a historic district.

## Introduction

Wood is a surprisingly durable material. Properly maintained, it can last centuries. But it does have enemies: water, fungus, and insects can dramatically shorten the life of wood.

Wood is used in many forms on the exterior of buildings - in clapboards, shingles, ornament and trim; and these elements contribute significantly to the building's character. They also protect the frame of the structure from the weather, which extends the life of the building. Consequently, these elements should be protected so that they may continue to contribute to the beauty and integrity of the building for generations to come.

One of the most common projects encountered in historic building rehabilitation is the maintenance and repair of wooden siding. Options for dealing with these projects are outlined on the following pages.

## DEALING WITH ROTTEN WOOD

Most wood deterioration is caused by fungi that thrive if given enough water and suitable temperatures. The prevention of wood decay begins with the elimination of excessive moisture and the use of wood preservatives that act to poison the "food" needed by the fungi to survive.

## TREATING WOOD DETERIORATION

Water infiltration, poor maintenance, and the lack or improper use of paint can lead to decaying wood and loose, cracked, and missing siding and other wooden elements.

The options listed below pertain to all wood siding, shingles, ornament and trim.

- Repair damaged wooden siding by reinforcing, patching, or piecing. Repair simple cracks and splits with strong exterior wood glue. Warping may be repaired by careful, slow, and well-placed nailing or drilling.

- Repair the pieces of wood that can be repaired; replace the pieces that are too deteriorated for repair with new wood of the same size, profile, and character as that of the historic wood. Putty or wood filler should be used to smooth out the seams between old and new wood.

- When deterioration is too severe or extensive, replace all deteriorated wood with new wood of the same size, profile, and character as that of the historic wood. Take a sample of your siding or other wooden element to the lumber yard to get a close match.

**NOTE:** Rarely, the installation of new wooden siding is not feasible. In such special instances, a compatible artificial siding that conveys the same visual appearance as the historic siding should be chosen.

# EXTERIOR WOOD AND SIDING

**It is the policy of the HARB that visible walls of buildings in the historic district should NOT be covered in artificial wood siding.**

## Artificial Siding

Mass-produced siding was intended to imitate traditional building materials; but the imitation is rarely convincing. Aluminum and vinyl siding are extruded pieces of metal and plastic, respectively, and are much thinner and lighter in weight than their wood counterparts. Artificial siding is susceptible to bending and denting. Its method of attachment leaves unsightly joints. Both of these conditions give this siding an appearance that is uncharacteristic of wood siding.

## Artificial Siding is NOT Maintenance Free

Artificial siding can cause and increase maintenance problems by hiding structural defects, water damage, and insect damage, and by allowing such damage to progress unnoticed.

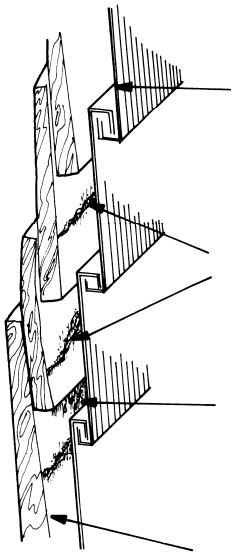
Aluminum siding is easily dented; its painted surface is easily scratched. Panels can fade in the sun, and need to be painted with special products to renew their appearance.

Vinyl siding is prone to cracking in cold weather, and it is difficult to match replacement pieces for both aluminum and vinyl.

Although much vinyl siding comes with a lifetime warranty, because it is a relatively new building material as compared to wood, it is difficult to predict how long it will really last. Other vinyl products, such as windows, appear to have life spans that are considerably shorter than expected.

In recent years, many homeowners have turned to painting their aluminum and vinyl siding, becoming tired of the color, or realizing that these materials were really not "maintenance free." Once painted, the artificial siding will need to be painted as often as wood.

## Potential Problems with Covering Wood Siding



Covering existing wood siding with other materials can lead to a variety of problems. One of the worst problems occurs when artificial siding reduces the ability of your building to "breathe." Artificial sidings create a sealed barrier between the original siding and the new siding. In the cold weather, moist air from inside the house tries to escape to the exterior. When it reaches the synthetic siding, it cannot escape, and so it remains, resulting in the deterioration of the wood siding and underlying structural elements. Moisture penetrating the historic siding from other sources results in the same type of deterioration. Eventually this can lead to severe mold growth which is bad for not just the wood but for the health of the occupants.

Cold outside air turns moist inside air to condensation between the wood siding and the artificial siding. In time, the condensation rots the wood.

## New Alternate Materials

New materials are always being introduced to the market that are promoted as an alternate to traditional building materials. The HARB will consider these requests and will approve uses of some of these new materials in certain situations. Detailed information about the alternative material should be provided to the HARB for consideration.

Cement Fiberboard (i.e. Hardiplank) is often proposed as an alternative to wood. The largest criticism to it is its lack of shadow and depth as compared to traditional wood clapboard. The boards can take on a wavy appearance and the product is difficult to install requiring special cutting tools.

### Use of Cement Fiberboard

- Its use is generally not allowed on primary facades of historic buildings
- It may be allowed in less visible locations, rear elevations and garages
- It will be allowed on new construction

### Guidelines for Cement Fiberboard

- Use only as the main siding on non-primary elevations. It may not be installed over any other siding material.
- All fiberboard used must have a smooth finish. No pre-finished or wood grain finishes will be allowed. The exposed face of the fiberboard lap siding may not exceed six inches in width (height when installed).
- All trim elements to be used in conjunction with cement fiberboard must be wood (i.e. door trim, window trim, cornice, fascia, etc.)
- When used on an addition to a historic building, the cement fiberboard must match the existing siding or shingles in size, exposed face profile, scale, finish and articulation.

* Drawings used with permission from Borough of Gettysburg.

# ROOFS

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Properly maintaining your roof is one of the most important things you can do to protect your house from damage.
- Don't forget to check flashing, gutters and downspouts for needed repairs. The failure of a roof can often be linked back to these areas.
- Remember there are many other features that should be maintained and preserved: cornice, dormers, chimneys and other decorative features.
- Original roofing materials are character-defining features of buildings and should be retained if possible.
- New roofing material should be as close to the original as possible and compatible and appropriate for the building and historic district.

## Introduction

Roofs are important because they offer shelter to the activities in the building below. Roofs are highly vulnerable to the damaging effects of wind, rain, snow, and heat from the sun and a weather-tight roof is a necessity for the preservation of any structure - new or old. Problems inherent in the design of a historic roof can be controlled through the use of good materials and regular maintenance.

Although the functional requirements of a roof are important, roof design often goes beyond the merely functional and contributes considerably to the character of the building. The shape, size, color, pattern, and detailing of a roof are important elements that help define the building's character and add interest to the streetscape.

# ROOFS

## Significance of Form

Roofs, even those of simple form, help to determine the character of a building. The combination of the size, shape, and slope of a roof create a unique silhouette. Typical roof shapes include gable, gambrel, hip, mansard, shed, and flat.

Builders were guided by practical considerations in their selection of roof shapes. Often builders chose steeper slopes to shed snow and rain. Sometimes the need for attic space prompted the construction of a gambrel or mansard roof, which provided more space than a flat or gabled roof would. Ease of construction prompted other builders to choose a simple gable over a more complex mansard.

This combination of practicality and stylistic influence created buildings that relied heavily on the shape of the roof for character definition. Because roof shape is so important to the character of the building, the guidelines contained in this chapter should be followed when undertaking roof repairs and alterations.

## The Significance of Roofing Material Appearance

Like the shape and slope of the roof, roofing materials are also chosen for practical and aesthetic reasons. The choice of materials depended upon a number of factors, including availability of materials, availability of skilled artisans, roof pitch, and weather conditions. Steep roofs require materials such as shingles, slate, or tile to shed water. A flat roof calls for an unbroken surface. Moderately sloped roofs can be covered with metal or asphalt shingles.

In addition to providing a weather-tight surface, roof covering materials can add color, texture, and pattern to the roof. Shingles can be found in a variety of shapes and colors. Wood, slate, and metal offer variety in texture. The seams of metal roofs and the ways in which shingles are laid can create patterns of great visual interest. This combination of practical and aesthetic considerations has produced roofs that contribute to the overall architectural character of Mercersburg.

# ROOFS

## Guidelines for Roof Material Details

If new roofing details will be readily visible, their appearance should be based on architectural evidence or on historic prototypes.

The spacing of the seams on a standing seam metal roof will affect the building's overall scale and should therefore match the original dimensions of the seams.

## Guidelines for Determining if Roof Materials Should Be Replaced:

Calculate the amount of damaged and missing material. If the amount is less than 20% and the roof is in generally good condition, the material should be repaired. If the amount is over 20%, consider replacement. If the amount is near 20%, consider the age and condition of the roof in relation to its expected serviceable life. Remember, the older the roof gets, the more repair it will need.

Don't replace an entire roof if only one slope is deteriorated. If one slope has weathered more heavily than the other slopes, consider replacing it and repairing the others.

Check for the source of any active leaks. Gutters, valleys, and flashing are at fault more often than roof covering materials. Don't replace materials if other features are the source of leaks.

Check the roof rafters and sheathing for moisture stains and rot. Deteriorating materials can hold moisture that will cause adjacent wood to rot. Replace wood and structural members as necessary. If only underlying roof elements are deteriorated, attempt to carefully remove and then reuse the historic roof covering materials once the underlying trouble is resolved.

Check to see if the fasteners are corroding, loose, or missing. Replace the fasteners and reuse the materials.

Consider the availability of replacement materials.

## Roof Materials: Deterioration & Replacement

The most commonly used roofing materials in Mercersburg are metal, slate, and wood. Most roofs with asphalt shingles are likely replacements. Each of these materials is described below. Information is also provided on typical patterns of deterioration and replacement options.

### Metal

Metal roofing began to be used in the nineteenth century. After about 1850, when manufacturing facilities for these products were established in the United States, sheet metals became more popular. To cover roofs of low or moderate pitch, individual sheets are joined by upright (standing) or flat seams. This is probably the most common roofing material in Mercersburg.

Deterioration: Metal roofing can last a long time if properly maintained. Early metal roofs were painted regularly. However, metal will deteriorate and will eventually rust. Metal roofing can also deteriorate from chemical action caused by pollution and acid rain, which cause pitting and streaking. Because metal expands and contracts with changes in temperature, metal roofs are subject to thermal movement, buckling, and warping. These problems can lead to cracks in joints and open seams. Metal roofs are also subject to corrosion that occurs when incompatible materials, such as copper sheets and iron nails, are in direct contact. If metal roofing is severely rusted, if it contains numerous holes and splits, if several sheets have buckled or warped, if edges and joints are disfigured, or if there are large areas of thin or worn material, consider replacing the material in kind. If only a few spots have rusted or if a few holes exist, proceed with repair rather than replacement. If a single sheet has slipped, repair it.

Replacement Materials: Sheet aluminum, copper, lead-coated copper, galvanized metal, painted steel and zinc are all available today, as are a variety of metal coatings. Imitation standing seam metal roofs are available but must be carefully evaluated to ensure that the distance between the "seams" is as close to original as possible. There are many modern galvanized metal roofs available today that are manufacturing primarily for pole buildings or agricultural buildings. Typically they have a larger raised "V" to imitate a seam with two smaller raised "V"s in between. This style of roofing is NOT an acceptable replacement for an historic standing seam metal roof.

## Slate

Slate began to be used during the Colonial period, but its initial use was limited because of cost. In the mid-nineteenth century, canals and railroads made slate more accessible and economical, and it became more widely used. The color and texture of slate varies according to its place of origin. Grey, blue, and green shades are available. In Mercersburg, grey and blue-gray slates are common. The remaining slate roofs in Mercersburg are a significant historic resource; their preservation should be a priority.

Deterioration: The most typical problem with slate is with the nails used to install it. Iron nails usually fail before the slate does. If this happens, reattach the historic slates with copper nails and copper flashing. Another problem with slate is delamination. As slate weathers, its surface is slowly chipped away. The slate scales and thin layers flake off. The slate eventually becomes soft and spongy and the inner layers begin to fall apart. In this condition, slate will hold moisture and can cause adjacent wood to deteriorate. Slate in this condition should be replaced. Missing slates or slates with visible holes, cracks, or breaks should also be replaced. Slates that have slipped should be reattached. A simple method to determine the condition of slate is to press firmly on the slate with your hand. Sound slates will be unaffected. Deteriorated slates will feel brittle and crack.

Replacement Materials: A number of manufacturers continue to offer new natural slate in a variety of shades. Salvaged slate is also available from a number of suppliers. If you choose to use natural slate, find a supply that matches your roof and get enough for current needs and for future repairs. A variety of synthetic slate look-alike products are also available on today's market. These products have a ceramic, concrete, fiber-cement, or mineral-polymer base. Appearance varies among the types and manufacturers. Review as many samples as possible before choosing one.

**Beware** of roofers who insist that slate roofs cannot be repaired. Be sure to hire a roofer who specializes in slate. Note: Clay tile roofs are similar to slate roofs in most respects. Slate, asbestos and clay tiles are fragile - don't walk on them.

## Wood Shingles

Wood shingles of white pine, oak, elm, cypress, redwood, and red cedar were used for roofing throughout American architectural history. Because they were a fire hazard, wood shingles were typically replaced as other more fire resistant materials became available.

Deterioration: Wood shingles are subject to all the typical type of exterior wood deterioration. (See *Exterior Wood and Siding* chapter) If wood shingles appear thin, eroded, cracked, cupped, split, spongy, or warped, the shingles are probably no longer providing sufficient weather protection. If only a few shingles are missing or damaged, replace them individually. Splits or holes in wood shingles can be treated with a piece of aluminum or galvanized steel under the shingle and roofing cement in the hole or crack. Moss and fungi on wood shingles hold moisture that can speed deterioration. Attempt to dry the roof by trimming trees that block the sun, and consider fungicide treatments. If a significant amount of water damage is visible in the attic, consider shingle replacement.

Replacement Materials: Southern pine, white pine, white oak, red cedar, and white cedar shingles are available today for replacement roofing. Fiber-cement shingles intended to match the appearance of wood shingles and wood shakes are also available.

# ROOFS

## Asphalt

Asphalt shingles were introduced to the building market around 1890 and gained wide popularity by about 1910. Asphalt shingles are made of asphalt-saturated felt or fiberglass, embedded with mineral granules to reflect the heat and ultraviolet rays of the sun. They were considered a good roofing material because of their relative inexpensive cost and their fireproof quality. If your building was constructed before 1890 and it currently has asphalt shingles, the roof was probably originally covered with slate, wood, or metal.

Deterioration: Asphalt shingles can deteriorate due to inappropriate installation. Wind can lift and dislodge them. Over time, shingles may curl and lose their mineral covering. If more than 20% of asphalt shingles have curled or warped, if the mineral granule surface has been abraded, if they are cracked or dried out, if the overall surface is lumpy, if moss covering is pervasive, or if the surface has been numerously and repeatedly patched, consider replacement. Remember that trees may stain light colored shingles.

Replacement Materials: Most asphalt shingles available today are reinforced with fiberglass. These are an acceptable replacement for the earlier felt-based shingles. Manufacturers are now producing thicker asphalt-based shingles to suggest the appearance of natural materials like slate and wood. These are not appropriate for twentieth century houses that were originally roofed with asphalt shingles but can be an appropriate substitute for wood or slate roofs that are too deteriorated to be repaired. For all buildings, beware of dramatic colors on the roof. Asphalt shingle colors should mimic natural materials such as gray, brown, or black.

## Choosing Replacement Materials

When choosing replacement materials, cost and the life of the material are important factors. For example, slate and tile will last about three times longer than asphalt shingles. Additional factors for consideration include the fact that asphalt shingles will increase in price each time they are purchased, and, if scaffolding is required, it will be required two additional times, as well.

# ROOFS

## Keep In Mind

Replacing historic roofing materials in kind is preferred. Most historic materials continue to be available today. In addition, new technologies are making possible the fabrication of a number of substitute materials that more closely duplicate the appearance of historic materials. As these technologies continue to improve, the HARB is open to considering them as replacements for materials that are beyond repair when economic factors are a consideration. Samples of these materials should be obtained for review. Remember, although most paint color is not reviewed by the HARB, the color of roofing materials is reviewable.

## Flashing

Flashing is the thin metal material used to prevent water penetration into areas of your roof that is difficult or impossible to protect with the roof covering alone. Most roof leaks are caused by deteriorated flashing; leaks don't necessarily mean that the roof covering material (such as slate) is deteriorated and must be replaced. Flashing is typically installed around chimneys, dormer windows, vents, and at the intersections of additions, porches, bay windows, and parapet walls. Copper, terne, aluminum, steel, and lead are all used for flashing. Copper has the longest life. Steel has a shorter life span than copper. Aluminum has a shorter life than steel and easily tears, twists, and punctures.

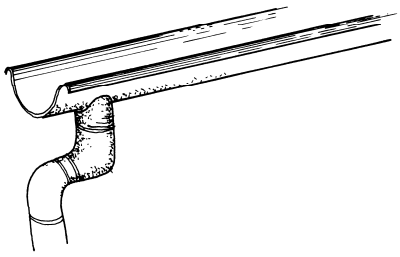
Check the condition of flashing whenever you are making roof repairs. If a new roof is being installed, install new flashing if the existing material is not expected to last as long as the new roof.

## Gutters and Downspouts

Gutters and downspouts have been used for decades to carry water off the roof and away from the building. Some early 19th century houses were equipped with built-in gutters. If your house has them, they are the best option for removing water from your building. Make every effort to maintain and retain the system in operating condition.

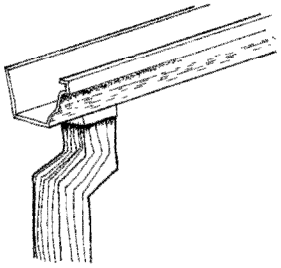
Gutters and downspouts have been made of wood, copper, galvanized steel, aluminum, and vinyl. Historic wood and copper gutters and downspouts are relatively rare and should be preserved. Copper gutters are durable, they don't need painting, and they take on a natural patina that protects them from deterioration. Galvanized steel with soldered joints is more

economical than copper. Aluminum is less durable than steel and dents easily. Vinyl becomes brittle and may fracture in cold temperatures.



Half Round Profile

Gutters with a half-round profile are more appropriate for historic structures than the K-style profile. Plain round or rectangular downspouts are more appropriate for historic buildings than corrugated ones.



Modern K-style

The earliest buildings often did not have any type of gutter or downspout system. They sometimes have a water table or series of corbels on the façade of the building to help direct water away from the foundation. However, present day owners may find the lack of a gutter system to be a problem. While it is preferable to leave the design of the building as it was intended, the installation of gutters and downspouts should be allowed as long as an appropriate style is installed. Installation should be carefully done and all attachments into the historic material should be as discreet as possible and should not damage historic fabric.

Regularly cleaning gutters and downspouts, patching holes, and mending broken or loose elements will protect the roof and associated features. If additional gutters and downspouts are required, they should be installed on walls that are not readily visible from public streets or alleys. If they must be installed on main building walls, painting them the color of adjacent building materials will help hide them.

## Rooftop Features

Chimneys: One of the main elements in the visual profile of a house is its chimney, and many chimneys were originally built to match the architectural style of the house. For these reasons, the character of a chimney should be retained when improvements are being made. Because of their exposed position, chimneys are particularly susceptible to the effects of wind, rain, and frost. Brick and stone chimneys are subject to the same problems as brick and stone walls. (See the *Masonry* chapter of this manual for additional information.) Deteriorating flashing can also be a problem. Even if chimneys are no longer in use, they should not be removed or replaced.

Snow Guards: Snow guards, also called snowbirds, are often found on Mercersburg's roofs. They were traditionally installed to avoid dangerous ice slides and to protect gutters, eaves, and cornices from snow and ice damage. Many of these elements were decoratively designed. They are often found near the eaves at the lower edge of slate and metal roofs in staggered rows, or on steeper roofs in greater quantities. The number of snow guards used depended on the slope of the roof. Iron or copper were typically used. Whenever possible, these elements should be retained. If a new roof will be installed, consider carefully removing these snow guards and reinstalling them with the new roof.

Dormers: Existing dormers should be carefully maintained and repaired as necessary. Avoid adding new dormers to prominent slopes of the roof. If they are added on other slopes, they should be in proportion to the building. New dormers should have roof forms that match those of existing dormers, or if historic dormers are not present, the dormer roof should match the house roof or should be compatible with it. (See the *Windows and Doors* chapter of this manual for more information on windows.)

Skylights: Skylights were typically not a part of the historic design of houses in Mercersburg. If skylights must be added, they should be added only to roof slopes that are not visible from public streets or alleys. They should be flat and their placement should be compatible with the other windows of the building. Installation should not damage historic materials.

## Where the Roof Meets the Wall

The part of a building where the roof meets the wall is often treated with ornamental elements. Sometimes elaborate, often simple and refined, these elements contribute significantly to the character of a building. They may include simple boards, moldings, panels, cornices, brackets, and ornamental brickwork.

All of these elements are subject to water damage, especially from water entering at the joint between the wall and the cornice or molding materials. Due to the distance from the ground to these elements, this damage often goes undetected. See the sections of this manual on windows, wooden walls, and masonry walls for additional information on deterioration and treatment.

Don't remove these elements simply because pieces are missing or damaged. Instead, look for replacement pieces or stock elements that could be used as substitutes. Never cover these elements with aluminum, vinyl, or other materials. This hides the important architectural elements and increases deterioration.

* Drawings used with permission from Borough of Gettysburg.

# WINDOWS AND DOORS

**The Least You Need to Know:**

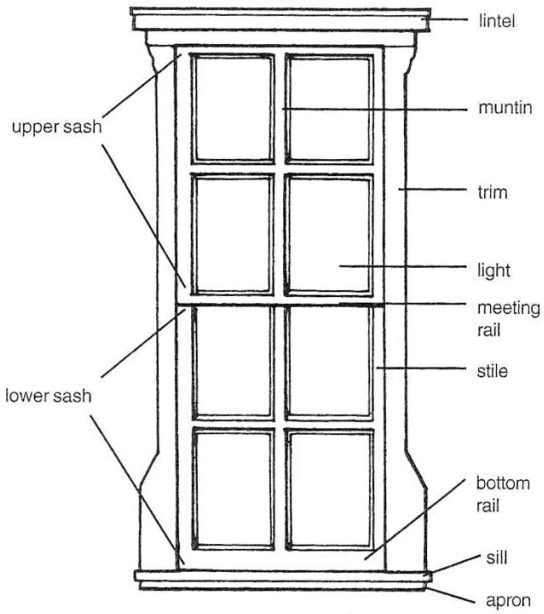
- Windows and Doors are character-defining elements of all buildings.
- Do not replace historic windows and doors solely to improve energy efficiency.
- Air infiltration around windows and doors is often caused by missing or deteriorated weather-stripping, caulking or loose glazing around glass.
- Well maintained windows and doors can be energy efficient too.

## The Significance of Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are among the most prominent features of buildings.

Windows typically comprise about 20 to 30 percent of a historic building's surface area, and they act as both interior and exterior elements. Historic doors often use size and detailing to draw attention to the entrance.

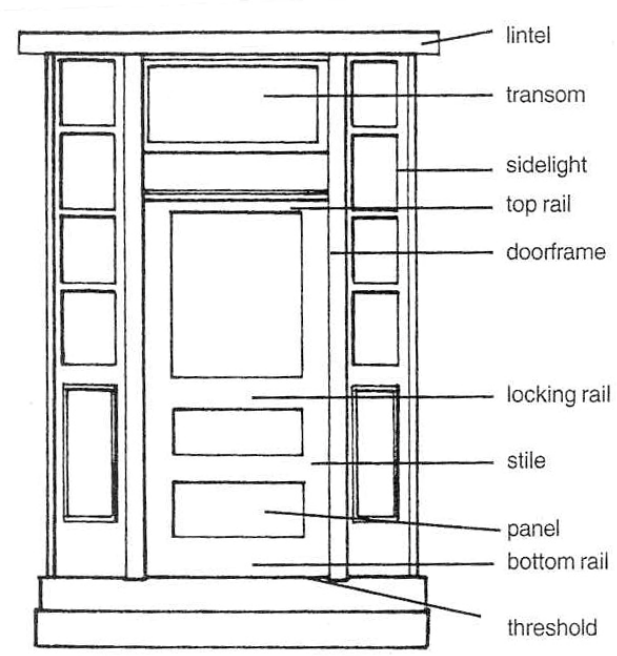
Significant parts of doors and windows include their materials and shape, panel and pane arrangement, moldings, hoods, fanlights, and sidelights.




Windows and doors receive consistently hard use, but they are so thoroughly integrated into the structure of a house that complete replacement is rarely advisable. Repair and weatherization are often more practical and economical than most property owners realize.

**Windows** are typically composed of sash in a frame with surrounding trim.

**Shutters** were used historically for insulation. They closed over window and door openings to keep the wind and sun out. Shutters are rarely used for this purpose today, but on a historic building they should still appear functional.




**Doors** are typically composed of panels and rails that are placed in frames. Doors are often combined with transoms and sidelights to create a more elaborate doorway.

## Window and Door Repair

The options for repairing, rehabilitating, and replacing historic wood windows and doors directly relate to the degree of deterioration present.

Undertake routine maintenance on windows and doors. This may include replacement of broken panes, repair of sash cords, removal and reapplication of caulking, putty, and weatherstripping, and scraping, sanding, priming, and repainting.

Repair decayed parts in place. If wood is badly rotted, treat with fungicide, saturate with linseed oil, fill cracks and holes with putty, consolidate with epoxy or patching compound, sand, prime, and paint.

Without replacing the entire unit, replace parts of the frame and sash or door by patching, splicing, and piecing in. (Using surviving parts as models, choose replacement parts that match the original in size, shape, material, and all detailing. If a majority of a member is deteriorated, replace the entire member using the old one as a pattern for the new.

If a majority of the components of the window sash and frame, or door and door frame, require replacement, consider replacing the entire unit using the following guidelines.

## When to Replace Windows and Doors

Wood windows and doors are subject to deterioration from years of use, water accumulation, and insects. But, deteriorated wood windows and doors may look worse than they are. The most commonly affected areas, the sill and the lower rail, can often be restored without replacing the entire unit. In most cases, even if individual units are severely deteriorated, replacement of all the windows and doors in an historic building is seldom necessary and should be avoided. Often the decision to replace an entire window is due only to a rotted sill. In this case, full replacement is NOT necessary.

**Signs that a Window or Door Needs Maintenance or Repair**

- Broken sash cords
- Broken glass
- Peeling paint
- Loose putty
- Air infiltration
- Stuck sash

**These conditions alone do not warrant replacement.**

**Signs That a Window Should Be Replaced:**

- The existing window cannot be made to fit tightly in the wall because of settlement or deterioration in the outside wall.
- Materials or skills required to repair the window are not available.
- Substantial parts of the window are missing or are so severely damaged that they must be replaced.

*Caution: Removing window or door units for repair increases the likelihood of damage. Attempt to repair windows and doors in place.*

**Replacement Guidelines**

When original windows are missing, replacements should be chosen based on historical, pictorial, or physical documentation. Avoid creating a false historic appearance due to insufficient documentation.

Check salvage yards, antique stores, demolition companies, and custom manufacturers for replacements. Be sure to reuse all serviceable historic hardware.

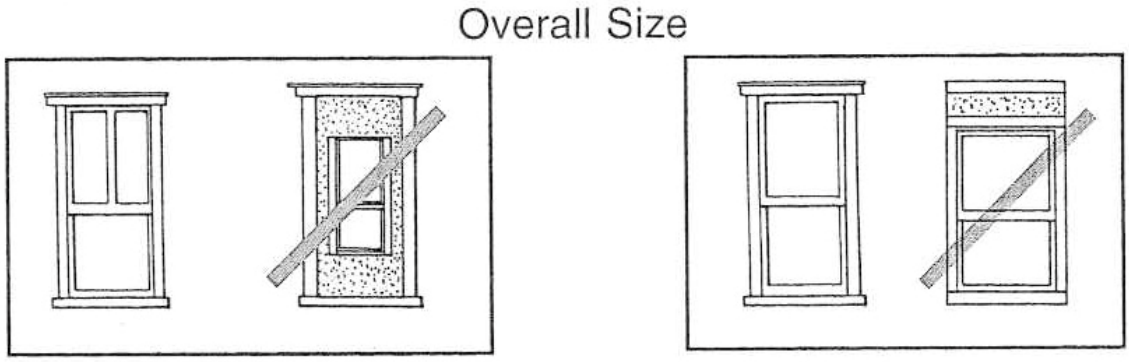
For multi-pane replacement windows, replacements that have panes of glass divided by muntins (strips of wood) are the best choice. Snap-in muntins, surface applied muntins, and muntins between panes of glass should be avoided. They are not convincing because they don't have enough depth to provide a shadow.

Picture windows, bay windows, and casement windows should be chosen as replacements only when these types are original to the building.

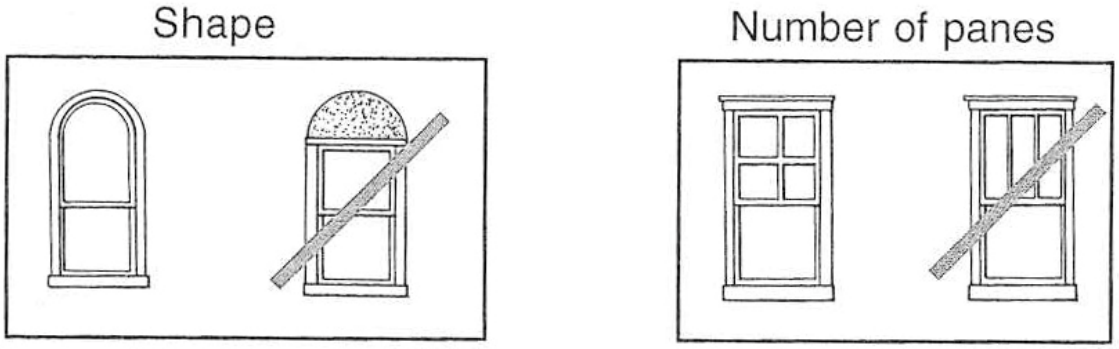
Steel-covered hollow core doors have a poor finished appearance and often do not come in sizes and styles that are appropriate for historic buildings.

## Choosing Replacements

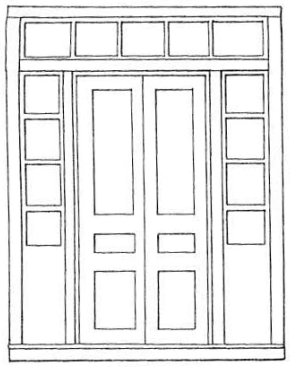
Once it has been determined that a window or door is beyond repair and must be replaced, the type of replacement unit must be chosen.



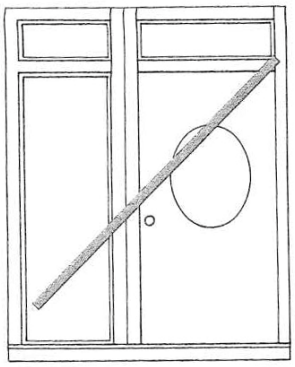

Choose replacement windows and doors that fit the original opening exactly and match the original units in material type, glass color and reflectivity, overall size, number of panes, shape, type of operation, arrangement of panes, decorative details, and component size (frames, muntins, etc.) Glazing should be single pane and muntins should be integral to the construction of the window (i.e. true divided light).



Choose windows and doors of a comparable material and style that match all other design details of the original. Choose styles that are appropriate to the age of the building.



A historic entrance.



An incompatible modern entrance.

## Increasing Energy Efficiency in Windows

**Old windows should never be replaced solely for the purpose of improving energy efficiency.** An old window that has been properly repaired and provided with a well-fitted storm sash will be as efficient as a new, double-glazed unit.

Remove and reapply caulking, putty, and weather-stripping. Tighten the interior lock on the meeting rail of double-hung windows to fit the window tightly against the frame and to decrease air infiltration. Refer to guidelines below.

Install properly designed and fitted storm units.

**A Note about Energy Efficiency and Replacement Windows**

Most people want to start weatherizing their buildings by replacing their windows. While making these upgrades can improve performance and reduce energy bills, the cost to your bank account and the environment are quite large in relation to the savings. The payback period is long – usually longer than the life of the replacement windows.

**The average payback period for replacement windows has been calculated at 28 years with a typical lifespan of a replacement window calculated between 7 and 12 years.**

## Storm Windows and Other Modern Treatments

Common triple track aluminum storm sash is acceptable. Some modern treatments for increasing the energy efficiency of windows, like "low-E" glass and the use of argon and krypton gas, may be appropriate for historic buildings. They are appropriate when they do not alter the character of the glass or the overall window from its historic appearance.

## Weather-stripping and Caulking

Air can leak between a window's sash and frame, between window and door frames and the adjacent wall surface, and where sash rails meet. Weather-stripping fills cracks around doors and windows to provide a tight seal and to eliminate drafts. Caulking seals gaps between building materials to prevent air and water infiltration.

Storm windows are much more effective than storm doors. Storm doors and entrance vestibules are typically not cost effective. A properly weather-stripped door can outperform a door/storm door combination.

## Guidelines for Storm Windows and Doors

- Wood storm frames are preferred. They can be fabricated to fit any opening and are much more energy efficient than aluminum or vinyl because wood conducts heat more slowly than those materials. Well maintained wooden storms can last over 100 years - much longer than aluminum.
- Storm units should completely fill the opening. Any divisions should match existing divisions in the primary unit. Aim to reveal as much of the original unit as possible.
- Storm units should match the shape of the window or door opening. If the opening is arched, the storm unit should be arched.
- Install storm units without damaging the original building fabric. Install caulking to ensure that moisture does not collect between the storm and the primary unit.
- Avoid storms with a natural aluminum finish. They should be painted to match window trim.

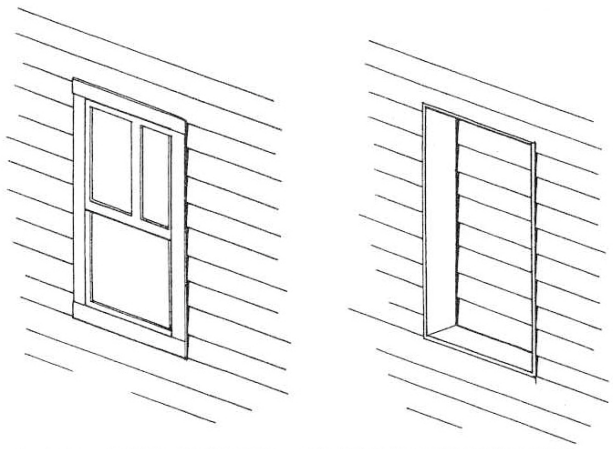
## Making New Window and Door Openings

New window and door openings tend to destroy the rhythm and balance of historic buildings and their historic materials. For these reasons, creating a new opening is a last resort alteration, and new openings should never be added to the walls of buildings that are visible from the street.

## Closing Window and Door Openings

Filling in historic window and door openings destroys the rhythm and balance of a building and destroys historic materials. This type of alteration is rarely appropriate.

Retain the historic window or door in place, with all its associated features. Add materials or treatments at the interior to make the units inaccessible and non-serviceable, while maintaining the external appearance. Painting glass black on the inside or adding other similar materials to achieve the same effect may be considered. Also consider installing shutters over windows and sealing doors.



A window opening filled with the material of the surrounding wall.

If the window or door must be removed, fill the opening with a material that is compatible in appearance to the wall facing material. Be sure that the surface of the infill material is recessed from the face of the wall, and the original size and shape of the opening are maintained. Retain as much detailing and ornament in place as possible. Save any removed historic materials for later use.

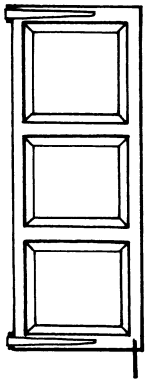
## When are Shutters Appropriate?

Shutters were not installed on all buildings, and should only be added to those historic buildings that did have them. Shutters were used on most Federal style buildings, and were less frequently used on Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne buildings. Look for holes near the top and bottom of your window frames, or faded silhouettes of shutters on

your exterior walls, or shutter anchors on the wall near your windows. If this evidence exists, shutters may be appropriate for your building.

**Shutter Guidelines:**

- Shutters should be attached to the face of the window frame with hinges - not to the wall.
- Many buildings were fitted with paneled shutters at the first story and louvered shutters at the second story. Replacement shutters should duplicate this pattern.



- Retain ornamental anchors.
- Horizontal divisions of shutters should match those of the sash.
- New shutters should be made of wood.
- Shutters should match the window in height, shape and each shutter should cover ½ the entire window opening.
- Shutters should be installed only if they were used historically.

## Awnings

In the first half of the 20th century, canvas awnings were often installed on new residences and were added to older residences. Awnings can enhance the appearance of a building and can be up to seven times more effective than drapes in controlling heat gain.

## Guidelines for Awnings:

- The top of the awning should conform to the shape of the window or door opening.
- The awning should be contained within the opening.
- Awnings and their associated hardware should not damage or hide existing historic materials or features.
- Canvas or other flexible, natural materials are preferred. Rigid awnings should not be installed.

# PORCHES

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Porches are a prominent feature of any historic building.
- Size matters – careful inspection of existing porch may reveal a smaller (or larger) porch was added or removed over the years.
- Details of porches are very important – railings, decorative features, steps. These details should be retained, repaired and maintained.

## Introduction

Porches are very important and visible features of older houses. They are also some of the most frequently altered elements.

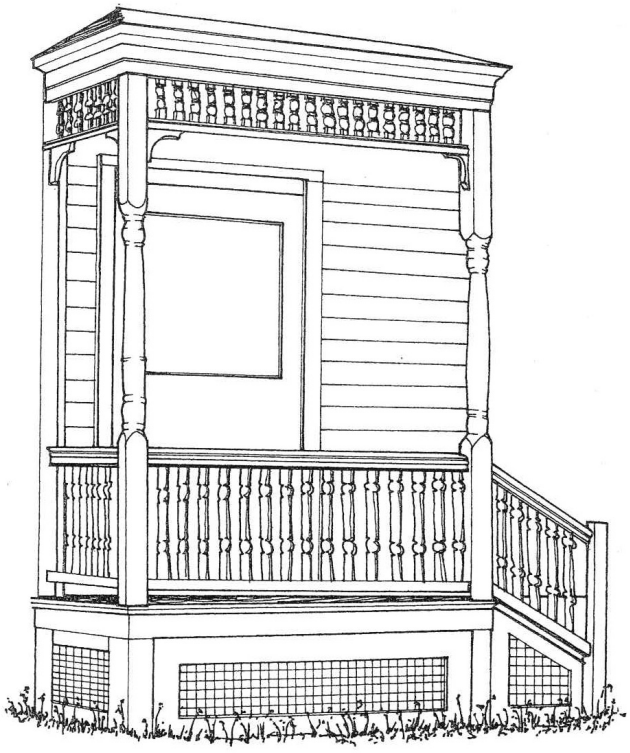
Regardless of the size or scale of the porch, the component elements, which can include columns, posts, pilasters, balustrades, entablatures, pediments, stairs, railings, floors, ceilings, trim, and other ornament, are essential to the distinctiveness of houses.

Many porch elements are protected from the weather by the porch roof. Other porch elements, like stairs and railings, have received hard use and exposure to weather for many years. Consequently, porches require careful maintenance to retain their unique character.

# PORCHES

## Guidelines for Porch Repairs

Carefully inspect deteriorated porch elements. Replace only those parts that cannot be repaired. For example, the bases of porch columns are often a major site of extensive deterioration. But, a deteriorated column base does not necessarily require the replacement of the entire column.



Avoid introducing new materials that were not historically a part of the porch. For example, don't replace wooden posts with brick, metal, or vinyl posts, or with other synthetic material.

Using standard maintenance techniques, repair the damaged elements of the porch in place and reuse the original parts of the porch, including moldings and three-dimensional turned balusters, to restore the porch to its historic appearance.

If individual porch elements are beyond repair, replace only those elements with new elements of the same material and visual characteristics.

If a major portion of the porch has deteriorated beyond repair and the original design cannot be replicated, use stock lumber and moldings to create a simplified design that conveys the same visual characteristics as the original porch. Duplicate the dimensions and materials without the extensive detailing.

## Enclosing Porches

Porches were meant to be open exterior spaces. Enclosing them is a radical change on any side of a building, and should never occur on the front of a building.

## Porch Steps

Steps need maintenance because they receive heavy use, are constantly exposed to the weather, and are in close contact with the ground. If your steps are deteriorated beyond repair and must be replaced, follow these guidelines:

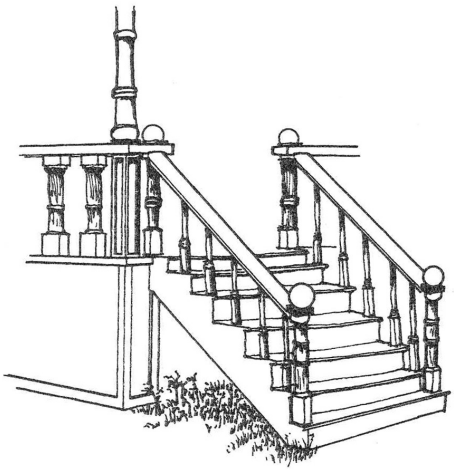
**Rebuilt steps should continue the materials of the porch:**

Wood stairs for frame houses are historically correct. They should not be replaced with concrete.

Brick steps are typically appropriate only for porches with brick posts and foundations.

Stone steps are typically appropriate only for porches with stone posts and foundations.

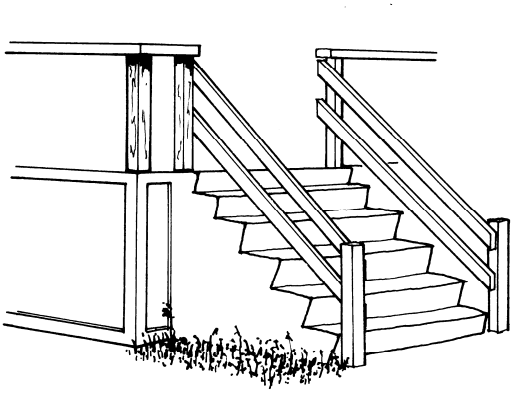
Concrete steps are rarely appropriate for historic houses.



**Replacement step railings should match the balustrade of the historic porch in material and detailing:**

Simple wood railings assembled from standard pressure treated or dimensional lumber is NOT appropriate.

Wrought iron or aluminum railings and columns are not good substitutes for wood elements. Their lightweight appearance is inappropriate.



# PORCHES

## When is a New Porch Appropriate?

When it can be documented by historical, pictorial, and physical evidence that a porch of the type to be erected once existed on the house.

When it can be determined that houses of similar type, style, and date of construction were originally built with porches of the type to be erected.

## Door Hoods

Many buildings have hoods over the entrance door rather than full porches. These hoods may be simple or highly ornamented. They may be rounded or triangular in shape. Such hoods offer a degree of shelter and add detail and interest to the entrance and the overall building. Existing historic door hoods should be retained.

* Drawings used with permission from Borough of Gettysburg.

# STOREFRONTS AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- It is common in smaller towns for earlier residential buildings to have been converted to commercial use over the years.
- The storefront of a historic building is very prominent and may not match the age or style of the remainder of the building.
- These older storefronts are important too.
- Alterations to existing storefronts or the addition or removal of a storefront is a significant change and the design should be compatible with the original building as well as the surrounding buildings.


## Introduction

Mercersburg does not have a large commercial district. Generally its commercial buildings are interspersed among residential buildings near the square. Commercial buildings include both buildings originally constructed for commercial purposes or for a combination of commercial and residential uses, and buildings originally constructed as residences that were later converted to commercial use. Because these buildings have different origins, they may require varying treatments. However, careful coordination of all these buildings can enhance the appearance of the historic district, draw customers to the area, and make Mercersburg a better place for residents and visitors to live, work, and shop.

# STOREFRONTS AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Because many of the commercial buildings are so closely spaced along the street, the facades - or front walls - of the buildings are particularly important. Alterations to the facades must be carefully considered to ensure that the special character of the building is maintained.

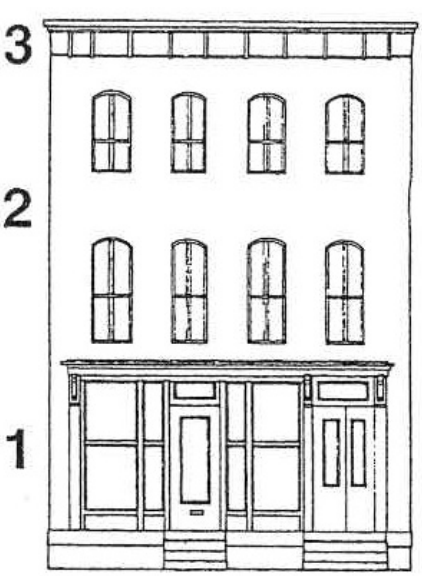
## The Storefront

Commercial buildings in Mercersburg are typically two or three stories high and are divided into three parts:

**A decorative cornice at the top**

**A middle section comprised mainly of windows**

**A storefront**




The lowest part of a commercial building, whether originally erected for residential or commercial purposes, includes the entrance to the business, windows to display merchandise, and associated structural and ornamental features. Some converted residential buildings might only receive enlarged windows, but many such structures have had storefronts installed.

The storefront is often the most significant feature of a commercial building. For this reason, it should be carefully maintained. For the same reason, it has historically been a prime target for alterations. Because storefronts are highly visible, sensitive design and rehabilitation can help draw customers into a business establishment. Such rehab is also a clear sign that the downtown is an active place, and this, too, will encourage consumers to shop downtown.

# STOREFRONTS AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The storefront is the most common form for the combination of entrance and display elements in buildings. Its primary characteristic is its open quality; a storefront typically has more glass than solid materials. Historic storefronts may be constructed of metal (cast iron, bronze, copper, tin, galvanized sheet iron, cast zinc, stainless steel), wood, masonry, or pigmented structural glass. Later alterations may have added plastic, imitation brick or stone, wood products, or new glass to the storefront.

## Repairing and Rehabilitating Storefronts

The repair and rehabilitation of a storefront can have a dramatic effect on the appearance of a building and on the number of customers who visit the building. The deterioration of individual elements of the storefront does not necessarily require the replacement of the entire storefront. Follow the options below to determine the appropriate treatment for a deteriorated storefront.

## Guidelines for Rehabilitating Existing Storefronts

Maintain the commercial character of the storefront. Avoid adding elements that appear residential in character.

Maintain the open character of the storefront that is achieved by using comparatively large amounts of glass. If a smaller window area is desired for a new use, retain the historic windows and install interior blinds, shutters, or curtains. Don't add solid materials to display window openings.

Use materials that were used historically. Because of the high visibility of storefronts, vinyl and aluminum siding, artificial masonry, and mirrored or tinted glass are not appropriate.

Historically, storefronts were set into the facade - not applied to it. This character should be maintained.

Maintain the location of the historic storefront entrance. If the entrance was always at the center of the building, avoid moving it to the side.

**Priorities for Storefronts**

- Remaining historic storefronts should be maintained and repaired, not replaced.
- Storefronts that have been altered or replaced should be restored to their historic appearance.
- Retain original designs and dimensions of recessed entrances.
- Maintain the historic size and shape of window openings of upper facades of commercial buildings. Reopen window and door openings that have been filled, and install appropriate doors and windows.
- Maintain all historic storefront cornices.

## Awning Guidelines for Commercial Buildings

Awnings have a number of advantages for commercial buildings. They help control heat gain in the summer, shelter customers, provide space for a sign, and add visual interest to the building.


Choose retractable awnings. They can be opened and closed as weather and lighting change.

Install awnings over entrances, large first story windows, and possibly over individual windows on upper stories of commercial buildings. On a storefront, they may be installed below the transoms or below the storefront cornice.

New awnings should be of canvas or natural, flexible fabrics. Plastic, metal and wood awnings reinforce the hard lines of the building, and the rigid character of the material does not allow flexibility in heating and in cooling.

## Guidelines for Residential Buildings Converted to Commercial Use

Maintain the residential character of the building, particularly above the first story, by maintaining the historic size and shape of window openings, and the shape and character of the roof.

If the first story of the building remains residential in character, continue to maintain and retain that character.

If the first story has been altered to incorporate a storefront, that storefront may now be historic and significant. Maintain and retain such elements.

If unsympathetic alterations were made to incorporate a storefront at the first story, consider other options for making the building compatible with other buildings on the street, for example, through the use of appropriate awnings and signs.

* Drawings used with permission by Borough of Gettysburg.

# SIGNS

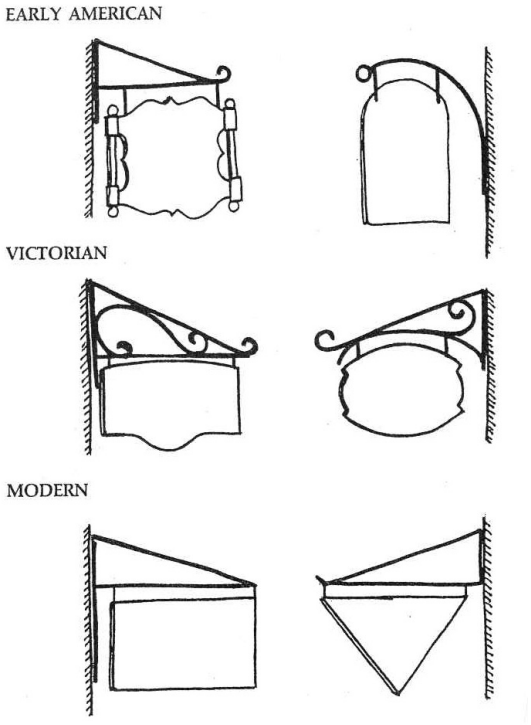
**The Least You Need to Know:**

- While signs often change with usage of the building, they are still an important element of the overall appearance.
- Signs should be appropriate for the architectural style of the building and the character of the surrounding buildings.

## Introduction

Signs are important parts of commercial buildings, both from a visual and a financial perspective. A clever, carefully designed sign can make a good first impression and can attract customers. A confusing, ordinary sign can detract from the appearance of a building and can turn customers away. Please consult with the Borough office regarding the limitations on sign size. Generally, signs on historic buildings should not exceed six square feet.

Signs were attached to and erected near buildings in Mercersburg from the earliest periods of the borough's settlement. Historic photographs can be used to determine the sign shape, lettering, and location of early commercial businesses. New signs advertising today's modern businesses can use these same elements to create contemporary signs that both enhance the character of the historic building and convey necessary information to the public.

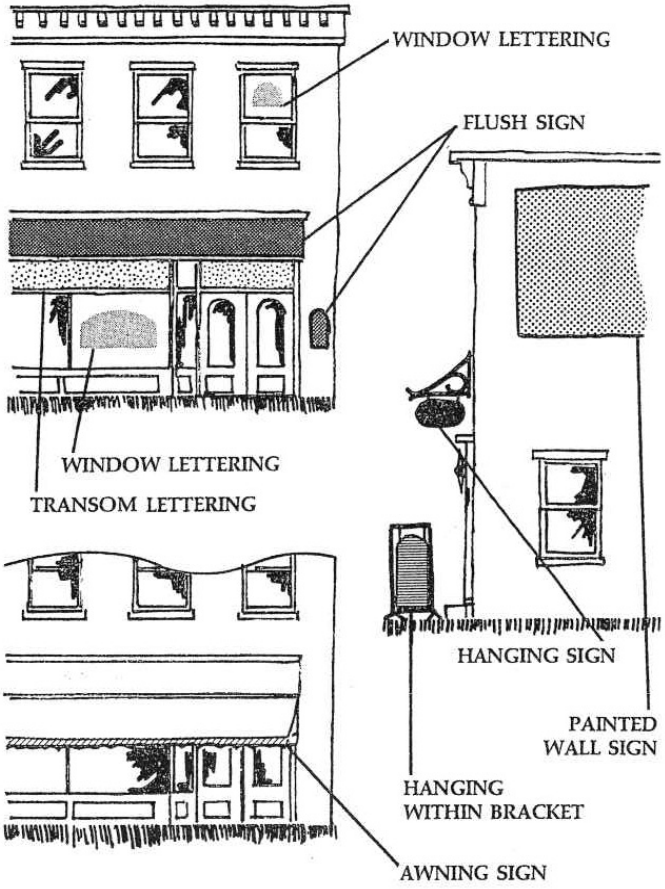


# SIGNS

The guidelines presented in this section are meant to help property owners design and select new signs that are compatible with their historic buildings and Mercersburg's historic district, while meeting the needs of modern business. In addition to following the guidelines in this manual, all signs installed must meet the provisions of Mercersburg's Zoning Ordinance.

## Sign Position

- Hanging from a bracket perpendicular to the front wall
- Under the storefront cornice
- Attached flush to the building
- On the lower flap of a fabric awing
- Paint, vinyl, or etching on window(s)
- Temporary, movable, freestanding sidewalk signs



## Sign Types


Hanging Signs: Hanging signs are usually hung from an iron bracket perpendicular to the wall of a building, but parallel hanging signs may also be appropriate.

Painted Wall Signs: Include any signs that are painted directly onto the surface of the wall. This type of sign was used historically, but is appropriate today in limited cases.


Window Signs: Window signs include all signs that are attached in any way to a window. Painted signs, vinyl signs, and etched signs are the most typical types of window signs.

Awning And Canopy Signs: Awnings and canopies can include lettering and graphics on the lower flap, or valance. Letters and ornamental elements can be painted, screened, or sewn on the fabric.

Flush Mounted Wall Signs: Flush mounted wall signs include all signs that are more or less flat and attached parallel to, and directly against, the face of the building.

Sandwich Boards: Sandwich boards are two-sided, movable signs that are triangular in form. They may advertise information that changes regularly (such as menu items), but the temporary nature of the information does not mean that this type of sign should be considered makeshift. These signs should be designed as carefully as all other business signs.

## Guidelines for Attaching a Sign to a Building

The method of attaching signs to buildings must be carefully considered to minimize damage to historic materials.

- Choose methods that allow holes to be appropriately patched if the sign is removed. When possible, mount signs in mortar joints, not in masonry, so holes can be patched if the sign is removed.

- If holes or hardware remain in the building from previous signs, attempt to place the new sign in the same location.

- Place signs so that significant architectural details and features, including transom glass, remain visible.

# SIGNS

## Material

Historically, signs were most often made of wood and were hung from wrought iron brackets. Brass plaques were also made and attached directly to the building. In the late nineteenth century tin, cast iron, and steel became available for signs. After 1920, steel, aluminum, and plastic became popular. Leaded glass signs also became popular at this time. Business names and other designs were incorporated into leaded and stained glass transoms that were installed above doors and display windows. Tile signs gained popularity in the 1930s. Names and designs were created in tile at the floor of an entrance to a commercial building or under the display windows.

Today, signs can be made from all of these materials.

**Wood** can be used, but redwood, which is the preferred species, is limited and therefore expensive. Wood look-alikes include urethane board and MDO board. Urethane board is compressed and hardened foam that can be finished by any real-wood method, including painting, carving, and routing. MDO board is similar to plywood and is made specifically for signs. It is composed of six layers, with the grain running in opposite directions in consecutive layers, which guards against warping. (Regular plywood is prone to warping.) MDO board has an approximate life span of 7 years. Like urethane board, it can be painted, carved, and routed, but it is heavier and thinner.

**Vinyl** is used for signs to produce letters and graphics that are applied to windows, boards, or other surfaces. Vinyl lasts longer than paint and is easier to change. A special frosted vinyl is available; on glass, it gives the appearance of etching. Vinyl, with the appearance of gold leaf, is also available.

**Plastic** signs are widely used for commercial advertisement, but they are generally not appropriate for historic areas. Corrugated plastic and Plexiglas are also not appropriate.

**Aluminum** with a baked enamel finish can also be used for signs. White is the most common color, but others are available. Vinyl or painted graphics are typically added to the surface.

**Brass** or other metal is sometimes used for small identification signs, markers, and plaques.

**Cast iron** is typically used for brackets and other hardware required to hang signs. Standard scroll brackets are available, but custom designs can be created. Steel is also sometimes used for hanging hardware. When it is used, it should be finished with a dark color to resemble cast iron.

**Gold leaf** is a historically appropriate finish for signs. It gives letters and graphics a sophisticated, polished appearance. An Acid ink is available to create the texture and appearance of etching on glass. *Sandblasting*, which is generally inappropriate for historic buildings, can be used on new signs to create special textures.

## Illumination

If a sign requires illumination, the lighting should be indirect, hidden from view, and small in scale. Lights may be placed in the ground, pointing up at a sign, or for hanging signs; they may be attached to the bracket, pointing down. Internally lit signs are not appropriate for historic areas. Neon signs, which were made of slender glass tubes illuminated by electrified gas beginning in the 1920s, may be appropriate for a limited number of buildings. Existing neon signs can still be repaired and refurbished today.


* Drawings used with permission from Borough of Gettysburg.

# DEMOLITION

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Demolition is forever. The decision to tear down a historic building requires careful consideration.
- When determining whether demolition is acceptable or not, strong consideration of what will replace the lost building is very important.

## Introduction

The demolition of a historic structure is irreversible and its negative impact is far-reaching. Demolition is not an appropriate treatment for historic buildings because:

- The demolition of a building can have great negative social and psychological effects on the residents of a neighborhood. The loss of familiar and meaningful landmarks is disturbing, upsets the established sense of community, and decreases livability.
- Demolition also has a negative effect on the environment and the economy. It adds materials to our already overcrowded landfills, and it necessitates the use of money, energy, and materials to rebuild, with the energy and materials coming from already depleted natural resources.


- A demolished historic building is a lost educational resource. It can no longer illustrate the accomplishments of historical figures, the occurrence of historical events, or the construction techniques of the past.
- The demolition of a historic building creates a great physical loss in the streetscape. The loss is particularly harsh in a historic area that derives its character from the consistent appearance of more or less equally spaced buildings on the street.

# DEMOLITION

**When Demolition May Be Appropriate:**

When the public safety and welfare requires the removal of the structure.

When the structural instability of the building has been amply demonstrated by the report of an engineer or architect, and after sufficient documentation.

When the building does not contribute to the historic district.

**Guidelines for Demolition of Historic Structures**:

- Document the structure with photographs and/or in drawings before demolition.
- Ensure that demolition will not damage other historic buildings.
- Consider donating salvageable materials (such as windows, doors, bricks, or siding) to an architectural salvage yard, so that they may be used for other projects.

# NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- New construction in a historic district is not only allowed but should be encouraged.
- The design of a new buildings or an addition must be compatible with the character of the surrounding historic district.
- New buildings should not try to appear historic; they should be compatible but clearly new.

## Introduction

New construction is a sign of economic health and community vitality. New buildings and additions can dramatically change the appearance of a community. For this reason, new construction and additions should be compatible with historic buildings. They should not pretend to be historic or duplicate historic buildings, lest they diminish the importance of the historic buildings. New construction and additions should achieve compatibility through appropriate massing, shape, size, materials, etc.

### Borough Regulations for New Construction

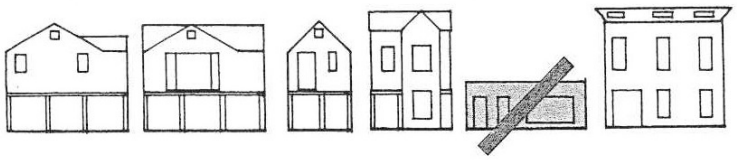
In addition to the review provided by HARB for new construction and additions in the historic district, there are other regulatory considerations to be taken into account for such projects. Building codes and zoning regulations of the Borough must also be met. For more information on these requirements, contact the Borough office.

## Guidelines for New Construction

- New construction should be compatible with historic buildings, while maintaining a contemporary appearance.
- New buildings should not visually overpower surrounding buildings.
- New buildings should not duplicate the design of nearby historic buildings.

## Important Considerations

Size, Scale, Proportion - New construction should relate to the dominant proportions, size and scale of buildings in the district. New construction should not exceed the height of buildings in the district by more than ten percent. Long, low buildings are inappropriate amid taller structures.

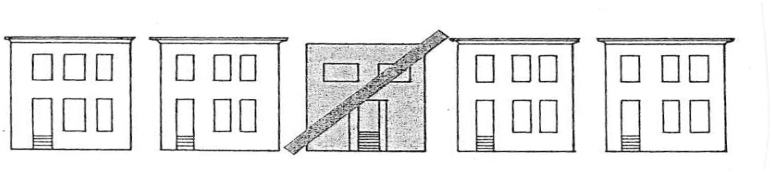


Shape and Massing - New construction should incorporate massing, building shapes, and roof shapes that are present in surrounding buildings.

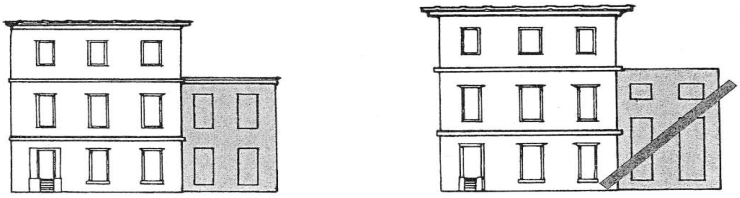
Materials - Building materials should be compatible with those of the surrounding buildings. Traditional materials that are common in the district, such as wood, brick, and stone, are preferred.

Patterns and Rhythm - The rhythm of facades along the street and components thereof should be maintained. Large buildings can be divided into bays to reflect neighboring rhythms.

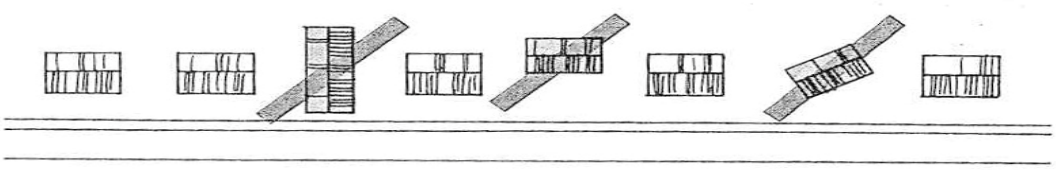
Cornice and Floor-to-Floor Heights - New construction should continue the floor-to-floor and cornice heights of historic buildings in the district, or should incorporate detailing that suggests those heights.



Windows and Doors - New construction should use window and door openings of design and size typical of those of historic buildings in the immediate neighborhood.



Orientation and Location - Principal facades of new construction should face the same direction as the rest of the buildings on the street. The prevailing setback line at the street should be preserved.



## Excavation and Archaeological Resources

If your building project will involve substantial excavation under or adjacent to an existing building, or to a previously undisturbed area, there may be potential to discover archaeologically important resources. Potential for this is greater on sites that were previously occupied by cemeteries. For further information, contact the Borough office.

## Additions to Historic Buildings

Additions should maintain the proportions and profile of the original building. Position additions at the rear or on view-obstructed sides of buildings.

Set additions back from the front wall of the existing building.

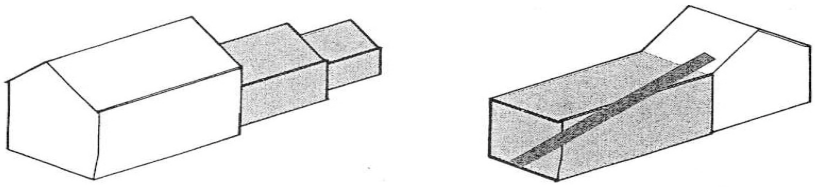
Construct additions so that important details and materials of the historic building are not hidden, damaged, or destroyed.

## Guidelines for Additions

- Construct additions to minimize the loss of historic material.
- Place additions so that they are inconspicuous to the public eye. Use rear or side walls whenever possible.
- Avoid duplicating the appearance of the original building.

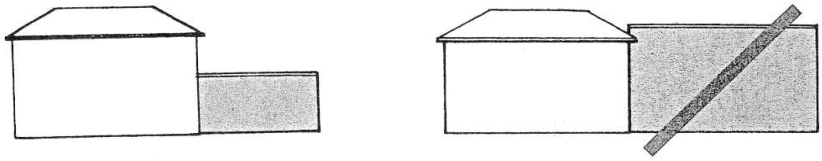
# NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

- When adding stories to a building, set them back from the front wall to differentiate them and make them less conspicuous from the street.



- Design additions so that it is clear what is historic and what is not. Contemporary designs for additions are not discouraged when compatible with the character of the building.

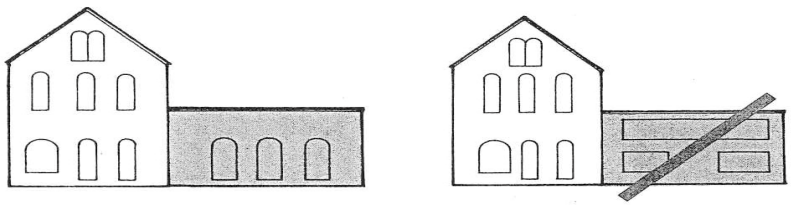
- Additions to non-historic buildings should not clash with or visually overwhelm nearby historic structures.



- Additions should be constructed so that their removal will not harm the historic form or integrity of the building.

- Build additions so that walls of historic buildings that face the street are not hidden, damaged, or destroyed.

Avoid using materials or details that draw attention away from the historic building.



* Drawings in this section used with permission from the Borough of Gettysburg

# EXTERIOR COLOR AND PAINT

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- Paint Color is NOT regulated by HARB
- Proper surface preparation will extend the life of paint on your building
- If you "power wash" your wood prior to painting, you must allow the wood to fully dry before applying paint. This could take several weeks or longer.
- The color of more permanent materials such as roof shingles is reviewed by HARB.

## Introduction

Perhaps no other historic district issue is more controversial than that of COLOR. Color preference is a personal matter, and most property owners don't want to be told what color to paint their homes.

In Mercersburg, approvals are usually **NOT** required for the selection of paint color because paint color is not permanent.

Approvals **ARE** required for:

- The selection of color when the color is permanent to the material being applied to a building, and
- The application of paint to previously unpainted brick, stone, or masonry buildings.

For example: HARB approval is not required for the selection of a color to paint your wood porch; but, HARB approval is required for the selection of the color of shingles for your roof.

When it is time to paint, you can determine exactly which colors were applied to your building in the past and recreate them, or you can create new color schemes for your building.

# EXTERIOR COLOR AND PAINT

## General Guidelines

- Color can emphasize or de-emphasize architectural elements: darker colors recede and make your building look smaller, while brighter and lighter colors stand out and make your building look larger.

- Color can be used to tie all the parts of a building together.

- Many houses require only two colors of paint; houses with more detail may require three colors. Few houses are ornate enough to require more than three colors.

- Appreciate the natural color of unpainted masonry.

- Pick your colors in daylight.

- Building style, period of construction, materials, and setting contribute to the appropriate choice of paint color.

**Tip:** There are many color guides available that will help you choose the colors that are appropriate for house style. Contact the Borough office for assistance with this.

## Why Your Building Won't "Hold Paint"

If you find yourself repainting your building more frequently than every 5 to 8 years, one of the following reasons may be to blame:

- There is too much moisture present.
- Your paint was applied under adverse conditions.
- Your paint was applied with inadequate surface preparation.
- There may be latex paint over oil base paints.

## Proper Conditions for Painting

Temperature And Weather

Weather conditions can dramatically affect your paint job. Paint should be applied when the temperature is between 50 and 90 degrees, and at relative humidity levels below 60%. Painting in direct sunlight can also ruin a paint job; it is best to paint in the shade. Always paint strictly according to the manufacturer's directions.

Surface Preparation

If excess moisture or weather conditions are not causing your paint to fail, your surface may not have been properly prepared. The surface must be clean and free of loose paint. Harsh or abrasive methods should never be used to clean the surface or to remove the paint. Such methods involve considerable risk because they can remove the outermost surface of the material, speeding future deterioration, and they can destroy delicate detailing.

**Tips for Preparing a Surface for Paint:**

Only paint a clean surface. Use household detergent, water, and a natural bristle brush.

After cleaning, always dry, treat, and prime all surfaces before repainting.

Wood that is too wet will not accept paint. Consider testing the moisture content of exposed wood and make sure that it is between 12% and 15%.

Wood that is very dry may not accept paint well. An application of boiled linseed oil, cut 50% with paint thinner or turpentine, can condition the surface for painting with an oil-base primer.

New cedar clapboards may require a light sanding prior to painting.

If preparation involves lead-based paint, call the National Lead Information Clearinghouse at 800-424-LEAD.

# ACCESSIBILITY, UTILITIES AND AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT

**The Least You Need to Know:**

- The installation of modern elements on historic buildings still require review by HARB.
- This review is not intended to prohibit these additions, only to ensure they are installed in a compatible manner.

## Introduction

Better and more widely distributed information has made us aware of the needs and requirements of persons with disabilities, and of their right to participate more fully in the experience of historic structures. This presents us with the challenge of making our historic resources accessible without destroying the character that makes them special.

Improvements in telecommunications, electric, gas, and water service; and in heating and air-conditioning have made living spaces much more comfortable year-round. However, these conveniences visually and physically alter structures and streetscapes with wiring and equipment.

## Accessibility

Historically, buildings and landscapes were not designed to be readily accessible for people with disabilities. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, access to properties open to the public is now a civil right. The goal is to provide barrier free access that promotes independence for disabled persons to the highest degree practicable, while preserving significant features of the historic resource. Building accessibility for individuals with disabilities should be achieved without compromise to historic materials or to character-defining elements of historic buildings and sites. Each case is individual, but the guidelines below should be followed.

### Process for Implementing Accessibility Modifications

Review the historical significance of the property and identify character defining features. Alteration of these features should be avoided when making changes or additions for accessibility.

Assess the existing and required levels of accessibility. Identify all barriers in the structure and on the site. Review all local codes and state and federal laws.

Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context. The goal is to provide a high level of accessibility with minimal impact on the historic property.

**Note:** Seek the assistance of preservation professionals, code officials, and persons with disabilities. The expertise of each will be critical in determining the full range of options for accessibility.

### Guidelines for Accessibility

Seek to provide barrier free access that promotes independence for disabled persons to the highest degree practicable while preserving historic features.

The design of new ramps should be compatible with the original structure and the overall site.

Compatibility can be achieved through appropriate location. Ramps and elevators should be located on rear or secondary walls.

Increase the compatibility of new ramps by constructing them of materials equal to or similar to the materials of adjacent stairs and walks.

Consider providing barrier-free access through removable or portable ramps if installing permanent ramps would damage distinctive historic features.

Utilize landscaping elements to shield ramps and elevators. For more information on accessibility, see "Where Can I Learn More?" at the end of this manual.

# ACCESSIBILITY, UTILITIES AND AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT

## Utilities

Because utility meter boxes, air handling units, and other service equipment are so common, the appropriate placement of these objects on historic buildings is often overlooked. Historically, service equipment was placed near the service entrance, which was located at the rear or side of the building. This placement on unobtrusive walls of buildings should be continued. There are three options for the placement of service equipment:

- Attached to wall
- Placed on a roof
- Located on the ground

Appropriate placement depends to a great extent on the type of equipment being installed; however, in all locations, the key to compatibility with historic resources is concealment.

- Locate equipment on rear or inconspicuous side walls.
- Plant vegetation to hide equipment on the ground or on the wall. Coordinate new vegetation with old.
- Erect appropriate fencing to shield equipment on the ground. Coordinate all fencing on the property.
- Paint wall-mounted equipment to blend with the wall.
- Set rooftop equipment back from the edge of the roof to reduce visibility from the street.

### Meter Boxes

Utility meters, wires, piping, boxes, and related equipment should be installed in unobtrusive locations on rear or secondary walls.

### Satellite Dishes and Antennas

- Satellite dishes should be minimal in size.
- Satellite dishes should be attached to rear or inconspicuous side walls of buildings. Locations that are not visible from the street are preferred.
- Satellite dishes should be attached to buildings using methods that do not cause damage to building materials or to historic features.
- Antennas that are no longer functional should be removed.

### Window Air Conditioners

- Window air conditioners should be installed on rear or secondary walls, rather than primary walls.
- The use of window air conditioners should not result in the removal or replacement of window sash or in the alteration or damage of any window materials.
- Through-wall air conditioners are inappropriate for historic buildings. Avoid cutting through walls or removing other historic materials to add mechanical equipment.

# WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

**For any questions regarding Mercersburg's**

**historic district and/or HARB, please contact:**

Borough of Mercersburg
113 South Main Street
Mercersburg, PA 17326
(717) 328-3116
http://www.mercersburg.org/borough/

**To download a HARB application:**

http://www.mercersburg.org/borough/pdfs/MercersburgHistoricalAndArchitecturalReviewBoardApplication.pdf

**For more information about state programs, federal rehabilitation tax credits and grants:**

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/historic_preservation/3741

**For more information about current trends and national issues in historic preservation:**

National Trust for Historic Preservation
http://www.preservationnation.org

**For technical assistance and preservation advocacy**:

Preservation Pennsylvania
http://www.preservationpa.org

# WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

## Preservation Resources

The National Park Service has produced technical guides called *Preservation Briefs* on many important subjects related to the maintenance and preservation of historic buildings. They can be accessed online at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

Below are a few that may be useful:

02: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
03: Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings
04: Roofing for Historic Buildings
06: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
08: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
09: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns
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
19: The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs
29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs
32: Making Historic Properties Accessible
33: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass
37: Appropriate Methods of Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing
44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design
45: Preserving Historic Wooden Porches

National Park Service's Educational Features

**From the Roof Down and Skin Deep**: www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/roofdown/index.htm

Explores how to care for the exterior or "skin" of your historic house.

**All Wet and How to Prevent It**: www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/allwet/index.htm

A guide on how to manage moisture in your historic house.

**Walk Through Historic Buildings – Inside and Out:** www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/walkthrough/index.htm

Teaches how to identify the visual character of historic buildings.