

EXTERIORS

Windows

One of the biggest challenges historic building owners may face is the treatment of old windows. Deferred maintenance and careless painting over the years can result in rotting wood, missing hardware, and draughty window that don't open. Fortunately, repair is easier than you may think.

Resources listed at the end of this section will help in that regard.



The unique window configuration, wide wooden surrounds and distinctive fish scale shingles work together to add important elements of character to this fine brick home.

Frames

Retain and restore original window frames wherever

possible. If parts of a window are deteriorated, but other parts can be salvaged, consider replacing only those elements that are damaged. This type of “selective replacement” should be done with pieces milled to match the original as closely as possible.

Replacement window frames for wooden windows should be of wooden construction and dimensions should match the original windows. Any decorative detailing on the original windows should be accurately duplicated.



A little gentle scraping and a careful re-painting is all it will take to maintain the look and authenticity of this window.

Sashes

Replacement sashes for wooden windows should be of wooden construction and dimensions should match the original windows. Any decorative detailing on the original sashes (such as muntins, mullions, and sash frames) should be accurately duplicated. Similarly, replacements for metal windows should be of metal construction.

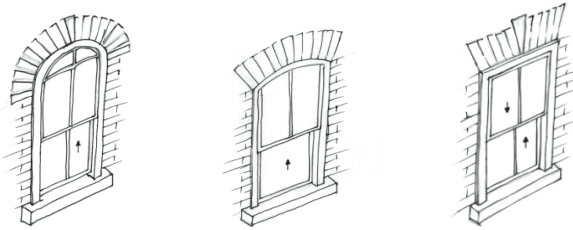


Fig 1. Square single or double hung window Fig 2. Segmented arch single hung window Fig 3. Arched single hung window

Hardware

Window type should match the original window. For example, original double hung units should only be replaced with new double-hung window units. The sizes of sashes and location of meeting rails should match the original windows. Replacement windows should incorporate any special features of the original windows, such as transom windows.

Window locks, latches, hinges, and cranks are made differently today than in the past. The patina that develops on old hardware, or the shine on a well-used door knob, is irreplaceable once lost. Consider the heritage value of these holders of memory before discarding them.

Try the following resources to help you:

Working Windows: A Guide to the Repair and Restoration of Wood Windows, by Terrance Meany, is an excellent, easy-to-follow guide aimed at helping ordinary people with basic skills and no special tools to bring even the most deteriorated, abused window back to beauty and utility.

Various editions are available, and the Winnipeg Public Library has several copies.

If you wonder why you should keep your original windows instead of replacing them with new ones, there are lots of sources that do the math for you and explain the environmental and economic implications. A good example is "What Replacement Windows Can't Replace: The Real Cost of Removing Historic Windows," by Walter Sedovic and Jill H. Gotthelf, which was published in the *Journal of Preservation Technology* in 2005 and is easily found online by entering the title into a search engine. The following articles are similarly available online and, though perhaps not quite as down-to-earth as *Working Windows*, will give you the information you need to fix your windows.

"Windows in Historic Buildings: Sustainable, Repairable," by Susan D. Turner (available on the Heritage Canada Foundation website).

"Maintenance and Repair of Historic Wood Windows" by Craig Sims and Andrew Powter (also available from Heritage Canada).

Finally The U.S. National Park Service has produced an excellent series of guides to the care of historic sites, which you can find by entering the term "National Park Service Preservation Briefs" into an online search engine.

Number 9 covers "The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows", but don't hesitate to browse through the list for other topics of interest.

Most important to the character of the window is the size of the opening and the materials of which it is made. Keep these two primary concerns in mind when deciding upon windows for your historic building.