

Commercial Buildings

HERITAGE VALUE

Hartney's downtown business district contains elements of a streetscape that defined small-town commercial cores from the turn of the 20th century.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The heritage value of the Hartney's business district is embodied in elements which include:

- *The organization of commercial activity on one side of East Railway Street, facing the tracks where the station, elevators and mill once stood.*
- *The ongoing functional variety that defines the district.*
- *The A.E. Hill building and Lewis Block on the corner of East Railway Street and Poplar Street*

AUTHENTICITY OF MATERIALS

Wood, brick and glass make up the majority of exterior materials used in the construction of Hartney's downtown.

Today there are still some surviving features that should be saved: original wood windows and doors, and exterior brickwork. As these materials age they provide the

character people speak of when they refer to an older building's character.

When repairing these materials, keep in mind the heritage value of the original material used, and think about how your intervention (preservation, restoration or rehabilitation) can add to the character of the place. This includes both a specific action to a building or feature, and to the street as a whole.



East Railway Street in the early 1900's

With the arrival of the CPR in Hartney, and the building of the station and the banks, public offices, and businesses that inevitably followed, a distinct rhythm to Main Street Hartney was born. All storefronts are still pushed up to the property lines with zero setbacks. Several of the brick two-story buildings remain.

STOREFRONT ASSEMBLIES

The commercial establishments of downtown Hartney were located in buildings at the ground floor along East Railway Street. Shops often sought different ways to separate themselves from their neighbours. Awnings of canvas and signs over the sidewalk or on the signboard above the storefront were common design features seen on some of Hartney's commercial buildings.

Storefronts should be considered as more than just the sum of their parts. Wherever possible, significant storefronts (be they original or later alterations), including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signs and decorative features, should be repaired in order to retain the historic character of the building.



East Railway Street 2009





ENTRANCES AND DOORS

Entrances are an integral component of storefront design. A typical 19th century storefront consists of single or double doors flanked by display windows. Entrances were frequently recessed, not only to protect the customer from inclement weather but to increase the amount of space in which to display merchandise. Thin structural members of cast iron or wood, rather than masonry piers, usually framed the storefront.



A close look at Hartney's business district in bygone days reveals a variety of approaches to storefront design. The thoughtful use of windows, entranceways, awnings and signage contribute to the streetscape.



The best entranceways were distinctive and functional.

WINDOWS

Windows were raised off the ground by wood, cast iron or pressed metal panels or bulkheads; frequently, a transom or series of transoms (consisting of single or multiple panes of glass) were placed above each window and door. The storefront generally should be as transparent as possible. Use of glass in doors, transoms, and display areas allowed for visibility into the store.



Display Windows



Distinctive window design on an office building.

SIGNBOARDS



The signboards above the storefronts became a prominent feature.



Archival photos enable one to duplicate signage concepts. Wood was the material generally used.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATING EXISTING HISTORIC STOREFRONTS

When possible review archival photos of your building. Don't "early up" your building front. Avoid purchasing off the shelf "old world" representations such as lanterns, wood shakes, nonoperable shutters and small paned windows, unless they existed historically.

Preserve the storefront's character defining elements even when there is a new use on the interior. If less exposed window area is desirable, consider the use of interior blinds rather than altering the building.

Avoid use of materials that were unavailable when the storefront was constructed; this includes vinyl and aluminum siding, anodized aluminum, mirrored or tinted glass, artificial stone, and brick veneer.

Choose historical paint colors. In general do not coat surfaces that have never been painted.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PAINT

Although now most colours are made using synthetics that give us every colour in the rainbow, it is helpful to revisit the evolution of paint colours in order to help guide colour choices. Synthetic manufacturing of colours had already started prior to the construction of Hartney's Main Street, but paint colours were still more limited than today. Keep in mind, this was a railway town, built quickly

with readily available, common building materials. This includes paint colours.

PROTECTOR

Paint protects exterior finishes from sun, wind, rain and snow, and it is the first layer of defense for your building envelop. Often paint's aesthetic qualities are more highly valued than this first humble task. Without the protective, sealing qualities of paint, exterior wood and metal finishes would quickly deteriorate, causing repair or replacement costs to be very high.

PERSONALITY

The colour of paint is likely what draws your first emotional response. Is the colour an eye-catching red, or a subtle and sophisticated neutral? Colour can strategically draw attention to character-defining elements and cause other features to fall back into more of a supporting role.

COLOUR

The number of colours on the building, what they reveal or conceal, and how these colours fit with neighbouring buildings are the key factors to consider when repainting your building. Look to archival photos for colour clues (in black and white photographs, look at the contrast with a known colour, such as the brick).

Typically, a neutral colour was used on storefront windows so as not to detract from the merchandise displayed. To be sure of this generality, one could take paint scraping samples.

FINISH

A traditional protective coating for most exterior finishes such as wood and metal is required as protection from sun, wind, and water. Without it, wood would rot and metal would oxidize very quickly. For durability, high gloss finishes are used on sashes, while trim has a glossy finish. The higher the gloss, the harder and more durable the paint. For this reason, places that experience the most wear and tear from the elements or because of more frequent cleaning should have a higher gloss finishes.

WHAT PARTS OF MY BUILDING SHOULD BE PAINTED?

Paint is applied to exterior finishes, and because it acts in a supporting role to the more dominant features of a building like the cornice, storefront, windows and doors, it

must be considered in conjunction with these more dominant features. Using archival photographs and clues from the building itself, determine which parts of your building originally had painted finishes. Which of these parts give most of the overall character to your building?

Which of these parts play a role on the streetscape and the larger social scene in the historic district? If, by reading the other sections of the Design Guidelines, these prominent characters can be picked out, then deciding what to paint with an eye catching colour, what to downplay with neutrals.

Wood and metal need to be painted to be protected from rot and rust.

Brick should not be painted unless it already has been and is in need of maintenance.

Stone should not be painted.

PAINT: QUESTIONS TO ASK

Many storefronts will use a trim colour and perhaps another colour on the door.

THE BRICK ON MY BUILDING HAS BEEN PAINTED.
CAN I REMOVE THE PAINT?

Although the intention to go back to the original brick finish is good, removing paint from old brick is not recommended. Bricks from the early 20th century were hard on the outside surface, but softer on the inside. If paint removal is undertaken with severe methods such as sand blasting, the bricks will be damaged, the soft interior exposed, and deterioration of the brick will be quick and inevitable. If it is the paint colour that does not suit the character of the building and streetscape, the brick could be painted a similar colour to the natural brick under it. Paint can be removed chemically, but this is a costly invasive process.

IS THERE A HERITAGE PALETTE FROM WHICH I
CAN MAKE
COLOUR CHOICES?

Yes. Your local hardware store's paint line has colours based on those available in the early 20th century.

I THINK I ONLY NEED ONE COLOUR FOR MY
STOREFRONT, IS
THAT ACCEPTABLE TOO?

Yes. Often three colours are used on houses for trim, siding and gables, but storefronts usually have only trim.

WINDOWS

EYES TO THE STREET

Storefronts use large windows for display and advertising. Small openings are more private and well suited for professional offices.

TRANSMITTERS OF AIR AND LIGHT

Operable windows allow for the passage of air and light. The glass used in historic windows was clearer than the glass made today, allowing more light to pass through the same size aperture. For this reason, among others, it is recommended that repairs to existing windows are considered rather than replacement.

WINDOW REPLACEMENT & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

A common concern with retaining original windows, even after repair, is that they will not be as efficient as newer windows. This myth has been refuted by conservation research which reveals:

“A double pane aluminum window performs much like a properly maintained single pane wood window that has an interior or exterior storm window in place.”

Wood windows require much less energy to produce, are often a character defining element of a historical building and can be repaired using simple methods by home or building owners. A *Windows Assessment Checklist*

available from the Historic Resources Branch can be of assistance in evaluating the condition of your windows.

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.

SIZE

Investigating your building for clues as to the original size of windows is very important.

Archive photos help with deducing what the original size of opening was, and by comparing this with what you see now on your building, you can easily tell if these openings have been altered. Due to the cost of windows, it may benefit you to look at doing other storefront improvements at the same time.

If metal or vinyl siding or any other inappropriate finish has been added to your building that you want to remove, consider this at the same time as windows. If you have original windows in original openings, retain these with proper maintenance and repair.

WINDOW TYPE

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 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.

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.

GLAZING

Although low-e coatings are fine, other treatments such as mirrored or tinted glass are not recommended.

HARDWARE

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.

SHAPE

Storefront windows are as large as possible, which means they were often rectangular windows. The transoms above the large display panes were sometimes operable.

Upper storey and office windows are typically one of three shapes: squared, arched, or segmented arch. Upper storey windows that have an arch should keep this shape. Covering the arch with a solid finish is not recommended. Doing this would substantially change the character of the facade.

MATERIAL

The original windows were made of wood. Whenever possible, the originals should be retained and repaired. If the originals are not there, and other non - recommended windows were installed (such as pvc windows), look to archival photos to determine where muntins were, and how the window operated.

Second floor windows were likely hung windows, sometimes with a single vertical muntin bar. Wood

windows that are constructed from clues from the originals are the best replacements.

Aluminum windows can also be used, provided they are made with a dark exterior colour, and operate in the same way. If choosing an aluminum window, do not have internal muntin bars that imitate what they would do in a wood window (that is, provide a way for smaller panes of glass). Imitation muntin bars come across as exactly that: an imitation, and are therefore not recommended.

DOORS

The location of the door sets the tone for its character. Is it recessed? Is it flush with the rest of the storefront? Is it solid? Does it have a window in it? Ask these questions when assessing your entryway.

EASY TRANSITION FROM STREET TO STORE

A recessed door with windows that are in proportion to the rest of the storefront is welcoming. Standing in the entryway, you are surrounded by displays and are, in some ways, already inside. This makes the transition between in and out more gentle.

Glazing provides a more transparent and open relationship between the inside and outside. Recessing the entrance gives the store more viewable display area from the sidewalk, helping to entice pedestrians into the store.

ENTRANCES AND LOCATION

Recessed entrances were typical in commercial districts. This type of entrance helped to show off goods to pedestrian traffic outside, luring them into the store. Entrances flush with storefront were for privacy and security. These entrances were typically found at banks and professional or public offices. Often there is a transition space within the building, such as a foyer or waiting room, to make the transition from outside to inside less abrupt.

MATERIAL

Wood and clear glass are the materials of choice for an exterior door. For recessed entrances, wood doors often have clear glass panels which continue the storefront pattern of windows with transoms above. For doors flush with the facade, solid wood doors are recommended. Look to archival photographs for design (how many panels, flat or raised panels).

STYLE

Raised panel, flat panel, and glass panels are common styles. These vary in specific situations, and for this reason archival photographs should be consulted. Often the panel design on doors will play off the panel design of bulkheads (the section below storefront windows, between the window and the ground).

HARDWARE

Weight and material set the tone, as this is usually the first part of a building you touch. Whenever possible, use original hardware. If old hardware has been lost, look for something made of brass, i.e., use the same material as would have originally been used.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DOORS:

I WANT TO KEEP THE ORIGINAL DOOR I HAVE, BUT I'M WORRIED THAT IT WILL NOT SEAL AS WELL AS A NEW DOOR WOULD. IS THIS TRUE?

No.

A wood door is a good insulator, better than a metal door, but may require work done to improve the weather stripping. Good metal weather stripping lasts much longer than plastic, foam or rubber. Check to ensure that there is weather stripping along the bottom of the door, and a piece attached to the outside of the door called a door sweep. All sides of the door should have weather stripping.

WHAT SPECIES OF WOOD SHOULD I CHOOSE FOR MY NEW WOOD DOOR?

Fir, pine and oak were likely the species most readily available for use in construction at the time Hartney was built.

IF I FIND A DOOR WITH A MATERIAL THAT IMITATES A WOOD FINISH IN THE STYLE THAT IS APPROPRIATE TO MY BUILDING, CAN I USE THAT MATERIAL INSTEAD OF WOOD?

No.

A lot of the character that is found in the specific features of the heritage buildings comes from the aging of materials. Although other materials may be able to imitate a new wood door, they will not age in the same way. For this reason, imitations are not recommended.