

Rehab Lab: DIY Dos and Don'ts

Do I Replace or Repair Old Windows?

When combined with an exterior storm window, refurbished windows perform as well as standard replacement windows for energy savings. Most standard replacement windows are expected to last 5 to 20 years before they must be torn out and thrown out. A repaired historic window can last for another 100 years!

Do It Yourself Resources for Window Repair:

National Park Service Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

Save America's Windows: Caring for Older and Historic Windows by John Leeke

Restoring your Historic House: The Comprehensive Guide for Homeowners, Scott T. Hanson

Historic Window Repair: Sash Joint Dutchman How-To

Historic Window Repair Professionals:

Maine Preservation's List of Window Repair Experts

How Do I Clean My Exterior Without Damaging It?

Historic buildings should always be cleaned using the “gentlest means possible”. This means using a low-pressure water wash and scrubbing with a natural bristle (not metal) brush versus abrasive cleaning methods.

Do it Yourself Resources for Exterior Cleaning:

National Park Service Brief 1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

National Park Service Brief 6: The Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning

Preservation Virginia: How to Spring Clean your Historic Home

Should I Seal or Paint My Masonry?

It is generally recommended to keep your masonry unpainted and unsealed if the building has never been painted or sealed before. Painting and sealing can trap moisture in your masonry causing your masonry to fail.

For More Information:

Historic Wisconsin: Preserving the Exterior Masonry on your Historic Building

Preservation by Prevention: Paint and Historic Brick

What Mortar Should I Use on My Historic Home?

You will need to do a little research before you choose your mortar to ensure that the proposed material is both physically and visually appropriate to the building. Your mortar replacement should be neither excessively strong nor vapor impermeable.

Do it Yourself Resources for Choosing Mortar:

National Park Service Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

How To: Repoint Historic Mortar

This Old House: Repointing Brick

Masonry Repair Professionals:

Maine Preservation's List of Masonry Repair Experts

Should I Cover My Building's Siding with Vinyl Siding?

While vinyl siding advocates tout the fact the vinyl siding is both cheaper, more waterproof and requires less maintenance than traditional building materials, when you break it down, these facts appear less than solid. Vinyl siding certainly can be waterproof, but it can also trap water in your home's walls. For historic buildings this means that covering your building in vinyl siding can lead to sill rot and mold. In terms of cost-effectiveness, the average lifespan of vinyl siding is 20 to 40 years while with appropriate maintenance, wood can last for much longer. Vinyl siding also does still require maintenance and often when this maintenance is required it is much more complicated than painting a wooden structure. Finding matches for broken pieces of vinyl is next to impossible and painting vinyl siding often voids the guarantee.

For More Information:

Vinyl Siding and the Historic House

Kansas Historical Society: Vinyl is Not Final