Preservation Briefs: National Park Service

The National Park Service provides a list of technical preservation briefs aimed at guiding property owners in preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings. Upon considering a restoration or preservation project, consulting a relevant preservation brief is a great way to start, even if the property owner will not be completing the project alone but hiring consultants, contractors, or other specialists. These briefs will help property owners understand possible issues they may encounter, and provide points of conversation with any hired specialists. It is important to remember that any work done on a historic property within the Washington Square Commercial Historic District should comply with the Secretary Standards for Rehabilitation and the Design Guidelines document (also found on the City of Washington's website). The following sections illustrate a handful of preservation topics relevant to the Washington Square Commercial Historic District. For additional briefs and preservation information, feel free to visit http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm

Preservation Briefs: Assessing Cleaning and Water Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

1 PRESERVATION BRIEFS

Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

Robert C. Mack, AIA
Anne Grimmer

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

Inappropriate cleaning and coating treatments are a major cause of damage to historic masonry buildings. While either or both treatments may be appropriate in some cases, they can be very destructive to historic masonry if they are not selected carefully. Historic masonry, as considered here, includes stone, brick, architectural terra cotta, cast stone, concrete and concrete block. It is frequently cleaned because cleaning is equated with improvement. Cleaning may sometimes be followed by the application of a water-repellent coating. However, unless these procedures are carried out under the guidance and supervision of an architectural conservator, they may result in irrevocable damage to the historic resource.

The purpose of this Brief is to provide information on the variety of cleaning methods and materials that are available for use on the *exterior* of historic masonry buildings, and to provide guidance in selecting the most appropriate method or combination of methods. The difference between water-repellent coatings and waterproof coatings is explained, and the purpose of each, the suitability of their application to historic masonry buildings, and the possible consequences of their inappropriate use are discussed.

The Brief is intended to help develop sensitivity to the qualities of historic masonry that makes it so special, and to assist historic building owners and property managers in working cooperatively with architects, architectural conservators and contractors (Fig. 1). Although specifically intended for historic buildings, the information is applicable to all masonry buildings. This publication updates and expands *Preservation Brief 1: The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings*. The Brief is not meant to be a cleaning manual or a guide for preparing specifications. Rather, it provides general information to raise awareness of the many factors involved in selecting cleaning and water-repellent treatments for historic masonry buildings.

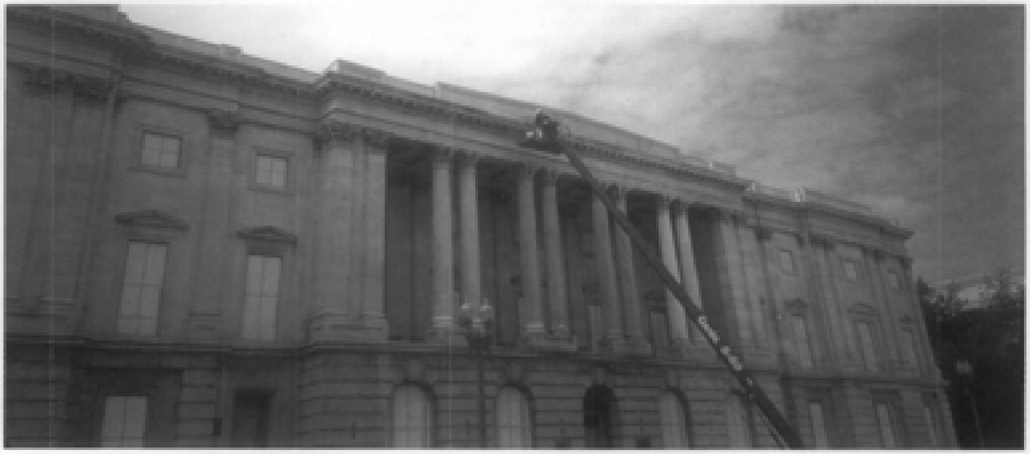

Figure 1. Low-to medium-pressure steam (hot-pressurized water washing), is being used to clean the exterior of the U.S. Tariff Commission Building, the first marble building constructed in Washington, D.C., in 1839. This method was selected by an architectural conservator as the "gentlest means possible" to clean the marble. Steam can soften heavy soiling deposits such as those on the cornice and column capitals, and facilitate easy removal. Note how these deposits have been removed from the right side of the cornice which has already been cleaned.

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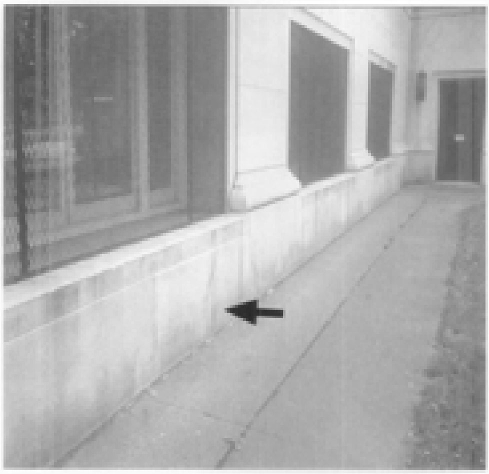

Figure 2. Biological growth as shown on this marble foundation can usually be removed using a low-pressure water wash, possibly with a non-ionic detergent added to it, and scrubbing with a natural or synthetic bristle brush.

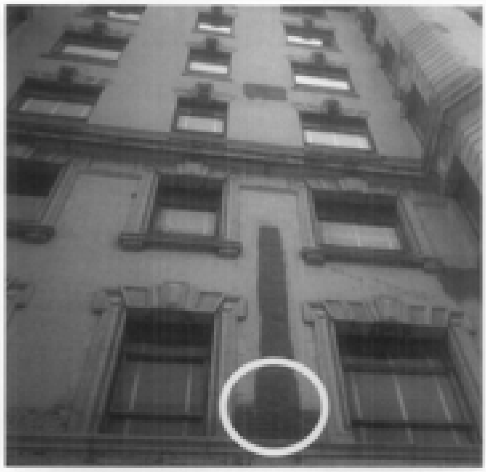

Figure 3. This small test area has revealed a red brick patch that does not match the original beige brick. This may explain why the building was painted, and may suggest to the owner that it may be preferable to keep it painted.

Preparing for a Cleaning Project

Reasons for cleaning. First, it is important to determine whether it is appropriate to clean the masonry. The objective of cleaning a historic masonry building must be considered carefully before arriving at a decision to clean. There are several major reasons for cleaning a historic masonry building: **improve the appearance of the building** by removing unattractive dirt or soiling materials, or non-historic paint from the masonry; **retard deterioration** by removing soiling materials that may be damaging the masonry; or **provide a clean surface** to accurately match repointing mortars or patching compounds, or to conduct a condition survey of the masonry.

Identify what is to be removed. The general nature and source of dirt or soiling material on a building must be identified to remove it in the *gentlest means possible*—that is, in the most effective, yet least harmful, manner. Soot and smoke, for example, require a different cleaning agent to remove than oil stains or metallic stains. Other common cleaning problems include biological growth such as mold or mildew, and organic matter such as the tendrils left on masonry after removal of ivy (Fig. 2).

Consider the historic appearance of the building. If the proposed cleaning is to remove paint, it is important in each case to learn whether or not unpainted masonry is historically appropriate. And, it is necessary to consider why the building was painted (Fig. 3). Was it to cover bad repointing or unmatched repairs? Was the building painted to protect soft brick or to conceal deteriorating stone? Or, was painted masonry simply a fashionable treatment in a particular historic period? Many buildings were painted at the time of construction or shortly thereafter; retention of the paint, therefore, may be more appropriate historically than removing it. And, if the building appears to have been painted for a long time, it is also important to think about whether the paint is part of the character of the historic building and if it has acquired significance over time.

Consider the practicalities of cleaning or paint removal. Some gypsum or sulfate crusts may have become integral with the stone and, if cleaning could result in removing some of the stone surface, it may be preferable not to clean. Even where unpainted masonry is appropriate, the retention of the paint may be more practical than removal in terms of long range preservation of the masonry. In some cases, however, removal of the paint may be desirable. For example, the old paint layers may have built up to such an extent that removal is necessary to ensure a sound surface to which the new paint will adhere.

Study the masonry. Although not always necessary, in some instances it can be beneficial to have the coating or paint type, color, and layering on the masonry researched before attempting its removal. Analysis of the nature of the soiling or of the paint to be removed from the masonry, as well as guidance on the appropriate cleaning method, may be provided by professional consultants, including architectural conservators, conservation scientists and preservation architects. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), local historic district commissions, architectural review boards and preservation-oriented websites may also be able to supply useful information on masonry cleaning techniques.

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Understanding the Building Materials

The construction of the building must be considered when developing a cleaning program because inappropriate cleaning can have a deleterious effect on the masonry as well as on other building materials. The masonry material or materials must be correctly identified. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one type of stone from another; for example, certain sandstones can be easily confused with limestones. Or, what appears to be natural stone may not be stone at all, but cast stone or concrete. Historically, cast stone and architectural terra cotta were frequently used in combination with natural stone, especially for trim elements or on upper stories of a building where, from a distance, these substitute materials looked like real stone (Fig. 4). Other features on historic buildings that appear to be stone, such as decorative cornices, entablatures and window hoods, may not even be masonry, but metal.

Identify prior treatments. Previous treatments of the building and its surroundings should be researched and building maintenance records should be obtained, if available. Sometimes if streaked or spotty areas do not seem to get cleaner following an initial cleaning, closer inspection and analysis may be warranted. The discoloration may turn out not to be dirt but the remnant of a water-repellent coating applied long ago which has darkened the surface of the masonry over time (Fig. 5). Successful removal may require testing several cleaning agents to find something that will dissolve and remove the coating. Complete removal may not always be possible. Repairs may have been stained to match a dirty building, and cleaning may make these differences apparent. De-icing salts used near the building that have dissolved can migrate into the masonry. Cleaning may draw the salts to the surface, where they will appear as efflorescence (a powdery, white substance), which may require a second treatment to be removed. Allowances for dealing with such unknown factors, any of which can be a potential problem, should be included when investigating cleaning methods and materials. Just as more than one kind of masonry on a historic building may necessitate multiple cleaning approaches, unknown conditions that are encountered may also require additional cleaning treatments.

Figure 4. The foundation of this brick building is limestone, but the decorative trim above is architectural terra cotta intended to simulate stone.

Figure 5. Repeated water washing did not remove the staining inside this limestone porte cochere. Upon closer examination, it was determined to be a water-repellent coating that had been applied many years earlier. An alkaline cleaner may be effective in removing it.

Choose the appropriate cleaner. The importance of testing cleaning methods and materials cannot be over emphasized. Applying the wrong cleaning agents to historic masonry can have disastrous results. Acidic cleaners can be extremely damaging to acid-sensitive stones, such as marble and limestone, resulting in etching and dissolution of these stones. Other kinds of masonry can also be damaged by incompatible cleaning agents, or even by cleaning agents that are usually compatible. There are also numerous kinds of sandstone, each with a considerably different geological composition. While an acid-based cleaner may be safely used on some sandstones, others are acid-sensitive and can be severely etched or dissolved by an acid cleaner. Some sandstones contain water-soluble minerals and can be eroded by water cleaning. And, even if the stone type is correctly identified, stones, as well as some bricks, may contain unexpected impurities, such as iron particles, that may react negatively with a particular cleaning agent and result in staining. Thorough understanding of the physical and chemical properties of the masonry will help avoid the inadvertent selection of damaging cleaning agents.

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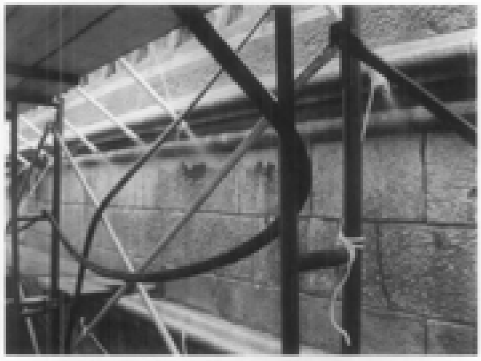

Figure 6. Timed water soaking can be very effective for cleaning limestone and marble as shown here at the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. In this case, a twelve-hour water soak using a multi-nozzle manifold was followed by a final water rinse. Photo: Diane S. Kaese, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., N.Y., N.Y.

Other building materials also may be affected by the cleaning process. Some chemicals, for example, may have a corrosive effect on paint or glass. The portions of building elements most vulnerable to deterioration may not be visible, such as embedded ends of iron window bars. Other totally unseen items, such as iron cramps or ties which hold the masonry to the structural frame, also may be subject to corrosion from the use of chemicals or even from plain water. The only way to prevent problems in these cases is to study the building construction in detail and evaluate proposed cleaning methods with this information in mind. However, due to the very likely possibility of encountering unknown factors, any cleaning project involving historic masonry should be viewed as unique to that particular building.

Cleaning Methods and Materials

Masonry cleaning methods generally are divided into three major groups: water, chemical, and abrasive. *Water methods* soften the dirt or soiling material and rinse the deposits from the masonry surface. *Chemical cleaners* react with dirt, soiling material or paint to effect their removal, after which the cleaning effluent is rinsed off the masonry surface with water. *Abrasive methods* include blasting with grit, and the use of grinders and sanding discs, all of which mechanically remove the dirt, soiling material or paint (and, usually, some of the masonry surface). Abrasive cleaning is also often followed with a water rinse. *Laser cleaning*, although not discussed here in detail, is another technique that is used sometimes by conservators to clean small areas of historic masonry. It can be quite effective for cleaning limited areas, but it is expensive and generally not practical for most historic masonry cleaning projects.

Although it may seem contrary to common sense, masonry cleaning projects should be carried out starting at the bottom and proceeding to the top of the building always keeping all surfaces wet below the area being cleaned. The rationale for this approach is based on the principle that dirty water or cleaning effluent dripping from cleaning in progress above will leave streaks on a dirty surface but will not streak a clean surface as long as it is kept wet and rinsed frequently.

Water Cleaning

Water cleaning methods are generally the *gentlest means possible*, and they can be used safely to remove dirt from all types of historic masonry.* There are essentially four kinds of water-based methods: soaking; pressure water washing; water washing supplemented with non-ionic detergent; and steam, or hot-pressurized water cleaning. Once water cleaning has been completed, it is often necessary to follow up with a water rinse to wash off the loosened soiling material from the masonry.

Soaking. Prolonged spraying or misting with water is particularly effective for cleaning limestone and marble. It is also a good method for removing heavy accumulations of soot, sulfate crusts or gypsum crusts that tend to form in protected areas of a building not regularly washed by rain. Water is distributed to lengths of punctured hose or pipe with non-ferrous fittings hung from moveable scaffolding or a swing stage that continuously mists the surface of the masonry with a very fine spray (Fig. 6). A timed on-off spray is another approach to using this cleaning technique. After one area has been cleaned, the apparatus is moved on to another. Soaking is often used in combination with water washing and is also followed by a final water rinse. Soaking is a very slow method – it may take several days or a week—but it is a very gentle method to use on historic masonry.

Water Washing. Washing with low-pressure or medium-pressure water is probably one of the most commonly used methods for removing dirt or other pollutant soiling from historic masonry buildings (Fig. 7). Starting with a very low pressure (100 psi or below), even using a garden hose, and progressing as needed to slightly higher pressure —generally no higher than 300-400 psi—is always the recommended way to begin. Scrubbing with natural bristle or synthetic bristle brushes—never metal which can abrade the surface and leave metal particles that can stain the masonry—can help in cleaning areas of the masonry that are especially dirty.

Water Washing with Detergents. Non-ionic detergents –which are not the same as soaps –are synthetic organic compounds that are especially effective in removing oily soil. (Examples of some of the numerous proprietary non-ionic detergents include Igepal by GAF, Tergitol by Union Carbide and Triton by Rohm & Haas.) Thus, the addition of a non-ionic detergent, or surfactant, to a low- or medium-pressure water wash can be a useful aid in the cleaning

*Water cleaning methods may not be appropriate to use on some badly deteriorated masonry because water may exacerbate the deterioration, or on gypsum or alabaster which are very soluble in water.

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process. (A non-ionic detergent, unlike most household detergents, does not leave a solid, visible residue on the masonry.) Adding a non-ionic detergent and scrubbing with a natural bristle or synthetic bristle brush can facilitate cleaning textured or intricately carved masonry. This should be followed with a final water rinse.

Steam/Hot-Pressurized Water Cleaning. Steam cleaning is actually low-pressure hot water washing because the steam condenses almost immediately upon leaving the hose. This is a gentle and effective method for cleaning stone and particularly for acid-sensitive stones. Steam can be especially useful in removing built-up soiling deposits and dried-up plant materials, such as ivy disks and tendrils. It can also be an efficient means of cleaning carved stone details and, because it does not generate a lot of liquid water, it can sometimes be appropriate to use for cleaning interior masonry (Figs. 8-9).

Potential hazards of water cleaning. Despite the fact that water-based methods are generally the most gentle, even they can be damaging to historic masonry. Before beginning a water cleaning project, it is important to make sure that all mortar joints are sound and that the building is watertight. Otherwise water can seep through the walls to the interior, resulting in rusting metal anchors and stained and ruined plaster.

Some water supplies may contain traces of iron and copper which may cause masonry to discolor. Adding a chelating or complexing agent to the water, such as EDTA (ethylene diamine tetra-acetic acid), which inactivates other metallic ions, as well as softens minerals and water hardness, will help prevent staining on light-colored masonry.

Any cleaning method involving water should never be done in cold weather or if there is any likelihood of frost or freezing because water within the masonry can freeze, causing spalling and cracking. Since a masonry wall may take over a week to dry after cleaning, no water cleaning should be permitted for several days prior to the first average frost date, or even earlier if local forecasts predict cold weather.

Most essential of all, it is important to be aware that using water at too high a pressure, a practice common to "power washing" and "water blasting", is very abrasive and can easily etch marble and other soft stones, as well as some types of brick (Figs. 10-11). In addition, the distance of the nozzle from the masonry surface and the type of nozzle, as well as gallons per minute (gpm), are also important variables in a water cleaning process that can have a significant impact on the outcome of the project. This is why it is imperative that the cleaning be closely monitored to ensure that the cleaning operators do not raise the pressure or bring the nozzle too close to the masonry in an effort to "speed up" the process. The appearance of grains of stone or sand in the cleaning effluent on the ground is an indication that the water pressure may be too high.

Figure 7. Glazed architectural terra cotta often may be cleaned successfully with a low-pressure water wash and hand scrubbing supplemented, if necessary, with a non-ionic detergent. Photo: National Park Service Files.

Chemical Cleaning

Chemical cleaners, generally in the form of proprietary products, are another material frequently used to clean historic masonry. They can remove dirt, as well as paint and other coatings, metallic and plant stains, and graffiti. Chemical cleaners used to remove dirt and soiling include **acids, alkalies** and **organic compounds.** Acidic cleaners, of course, should not be used on masonry that is acid sensitive. Paint removers are **alkaline**, based on **organic solvents** or other chemicals.

Chemical Cleaners to Remove Dirt

Both alkaline and acidic cleaning treatments include the use of water. Both cleaners are also likely to contain surfactants (wetting agents), that facilitate the chemical reaction that removes the dirt. Generally, the masonry is wet first for both types of cleaners, then the chemical cleaner is sprayed on at very low pressure or brushed onto the surface. The cleaner is left to dwell on the masonry for an amount of time recommended by the product manufacturer or, preferably, determined by testing, and rinsed off with a low- or moderate-pressure cold, or sometimes hot, water wash. More than one application of the cleaner may be necessary, and it is always a good practice to test the product manufacturer's recommendations concerning dilution rates and dwell times. Because each cleaning situation is unique, dilution rates and dwell times can vary considerably. The masonry surface may be scrubbed lightly with natural or synthetic bristle brushes prior to rinsing. After rinsing, pH strips should be applied to the surface to ensure that the masonry has been neutralized completely.

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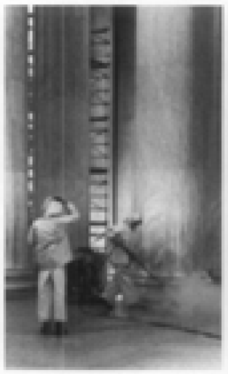

Figure 8. (Left) Low-pressure (under 100 psi) steam cleaning (hot-pressurized water washing), is part of the regular maintenance program at the Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C. The white marble interior of this open structure is subject to constant soiling by birds, insects and visitors. (Right) This portable steam cleaner enables prompt cleanup when necessary. Photos: National Park Service Files.

Acidic Cleaners. Acid-based cleaning products may be used on **non-acid sensitive** masonry, which generally includes: granite, most sandstones, slate, unglazed brick and unglazed architectural terra cotta, cast stone and concrete (Fig. 12). Most commercial acidic cleaners are composed primarily of hydrofluoric acid, and often include some phosphoric acid to prevent rust-like stains from developing on the masonry after the cleaning. Acid cleaners are applied to the pre-wet masonry which should be kept wet while the acid is allowed to "work", and then removed with a water wash.

Alkaline Cleaners. Alkaline cleaners should be used on **acid-sensitive** masonry, including: limestone, polished and unpolished marble, calcareous sandstone, glazed brick and glazed architectural terra cotta, and polished granite. (Alkaline cleaners may also be used sometimes on masonry materials that are not acid sensitive—after testing, of course—but they may not be as effective as they are on acid-sensitive masonry.) Alkaline cleaning products consist primarily of two ingredients: a non-ionic detergent or surfactant; and an alkali, such as potassium hydroxide or ammonium hydroxide. Like acidic cleaners, alkaline products are usually applied to pre-wet masonry, allowed to dwell, and then rinsed off with water. (Longer dwell times may be necessary with alkaline cleaners than with acidic cleaners.) Two additional steps are required to remove alkaline cleaners after the initial rinse. First the masonry is given a slightly acidic wash—often with acetic acid–to neutralize it, and then it is rinsed again with water.

Chemical Cleaners to Remove Paint and Other Coatings, Stains and Graffiti

Removing paint and some other coatings, stains and graffiti can best be accomplished with alkaline paint removers, organic solvent paint removers, or other cleaning compounds. The removal of layers of paint from a masonry surface usually involves applying the remover either by brush, roller or spraying, followed by a thorough water wash. As with any chemical cleaning, the manufacturer's recommendations regarding application procedures should always be tested before beginning work.

Alkaline Paint Removers. These are usually of much the same composition as other alkaline cleaners, containing potassium or ammonium hydroxide, or trisodium phosphate. They are used to remove oil, latex and acrylic paints, and are effective for removing multiple layers of paint. Alkaline cleaners may also remove some acrylic, water-repellent coatings. As with other alkaline cleaners, both an acidic neutralizing wash and a final water rinse are generally required following the use of alkaline paint removers.

Organic Solvent Paint Removers. The formulation of organic solvent paint removers varies and may include a combination of solvents, including methylene chloride, methanol, acetone, xylene and toluene.

Figure 9. (Left) This small steam cleaner—the size of a vacuum cleaner—offers a very controlled and gentle means of cleaning limited, or hard-to-reach areas or carved stone details. (Right) It is particularly useful for interiors where it is important to keep moisture to a minumum, such as inside the Washington Monument, Washington, D.C., where it was used to clean the commemorative stones. Photos: Audrey T. Tepper.

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Figure 10. High-pressure water washing too close to the surface has abraded and, consequently, marred the limestone on this early-20th century building.

Other Paint Removers and Cleaners. Other cleaning compounds that can be used to remove paint and some painted graffiti from historic masonry include paint removers based on N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone (NMP), or on petroleum-based compounds. Removing stains, whether they are industrial (smoke, soot, grease or tar), metallic (iron or copper), or biological (plant and fungal) in origin, depends on carefully matching the type of remover to the type of stain (Fig. 13). Successful removal of stains from historic masonry often requires the application of a number of different removers before the right one is found. The removal of layers of paint from a masonry surface is usually accomplished by applying the remover either by brush, roller or spraying, followed by a thorough water wash (Fig. 14).

Potential hazards of chemical cleaning. Since most chemical cleaning methods involve water, they have many of the potential problems of plain water cleaning. Like water methods, they should not be used in cold weather because of the possibility of freezing. Chemical cleaning should never be undertaken in temperatures below 40 degrees F (4 degrees C), and generally not below 50 degrees F. In addition, many chemical cleaners simply do not work in cold temperatures. Both acidic and alkaline cleaners can be dangerous to cleaning operators and, clearly, there are environmental concerns associated with the use of chemical cleaners.

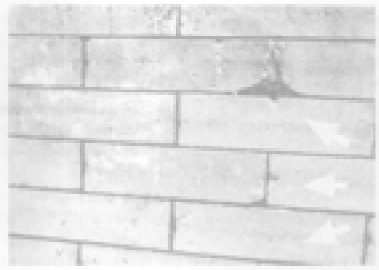

Figure 11. Rinsing with high-pressure water following chemical cleaning has left a horizontal line of abrasion across the bricks on this late-19th century row house.

If not carefully chosen, chemical cleaners can react adversely with many types of masonry. Obviously, acidic cleaners should not be used on acid-sensitive materials; however, it is not always clear exactly what the composition is of any stone or other masonry material. For, this reason, testing the cleaner on an inconspicuous spot on the building is always necessary. While certain acid-based cleaners may be appropriate if used as directed on a particular type of masonry, if left too long or if not adequately rinsed from the masonry they can have a negative effect. For example, hydrofluoric acid can etch masonry leaving a hazy residue (whitish deposits of silica or calcium fluoride salts) on the surface. While this efflorescence may usually be removed by a second cleaning—although it is likely to be expensive and time-consuming—**hydrofluoric acid** can also leave calcium fluoride salts or a colloidal silica deposit on masonry which may be impossible to remove (Fig. 15). Other acids, particularly **hydrochloric (muriatic) acid**, which is very powerful, should not be used on historic masonry, because it can dissolve lime-based mortar, damage brick and some stones, and leave chloride deposits on the masonry.

Figure 12. A mild acidic cleaning agent is being used to clean this heavily soiled brick and granite building. Additional applications of the cleaner and hand-scrubbing, and even poulticing, may be necessary to remove the dark stains on the granite arches below. Photo: Sharon C. Park, FAIA.

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Alkaline cleaners can stain sandstones that contain a ferrous compound. Before using an alkaline cleaner on sandstone it is always important to test it, since it may be difficult to know whether a particular sandstone may contain a ferrous compound. Some alkaline cleaners, such as **sodium hydroxide (caustic soda or lye)** and **ammonium bifluoride**, can also damage or leave disfiguring brownish-yellow stains and, in most cases, should not be used on historic masonry. Although alkaline cleaners will not etch a masonry surface as acids can, they are caustic and can burn the surface. In addition, alkaline cleaners can deposit potentially damaging salts in the masonry which can be difficult to rinse thoroughly.

Abrasive and Mechanical Cleaning

Generally, abrasive cleaning methods are not appropriate for use on historic masonry buildings. Abrasive cleaning methods are just that—abrasive. Grit blasters, grinders, and sanding discs all operate by *abrading* the dirt or paint off the surface of the masonry, rather than *reacting* with the dirt and the masonry which is how water and chemical methods work. Since the abrasives do not differentiate between the dirt and the masonry, they can also remove the outer surface of the masonry at the same time, and result in permanently damaging the masonry. Brick, architectural terra cotta, soft stone, detailed carvings, and polished surfaces are especially susceptible to physical and aesthetic damage by abrasive methods. Brick and architectural terra cotta are fired products which have a smooth, glazed surface which can be removed by abrasive blasting or grinding (Figs. 18-19). Abrasively-cleaned masonry is damaged aesthetically as well as physically, and it has a rough surface which tends to hold dirt and the roughness will make future cleaning more difficult. Abrasive cleaning processes can also increase the likelihood of subsurface cracking of the masonry. Abrasion of carved details causes a rounding of sharp corners and other loss of delicate features, while abrasion of polished surfaces removes the polished finish of stone.

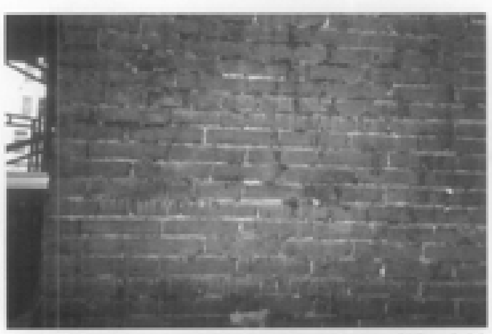

Figure 13. Sometimes it may be preferable to paint over a thick asphaltic coating rather than try to remove it, because it can be difficult to remove completely. However, in this case, many layers of asphaltic coating were removed through multiple applications of a heavy duty chemical cleaner. Each application of the cleaner was left to dwell following the manufacturer's reccommendations, and then rinsed thoroughly. (As much as possible of the asphalt was first removed with wooden scrapers.) Although not all the asphalt was removed, this was determined to be an acceptable level of cleanliness for the project.

Figure 14. Chemical removal of paint from this brick building has revealed that the cornice and window hoods are metal rather than masonry.

Mortar joints, especially those with lime mortar, also can be eroded by abrasive or mechanical cleaning. In some cases, the damage may be visual, such as loss of joint detail or increased joint shadows. As mortar joints constitute a significant portion of the masonry surface (up to 20 per cent in a brick wall), this can result in the loss of a considerable amount of the historic fabric. Erosion of the mortar joints may also permit increased water penetration, which will likely necessitate repointing.

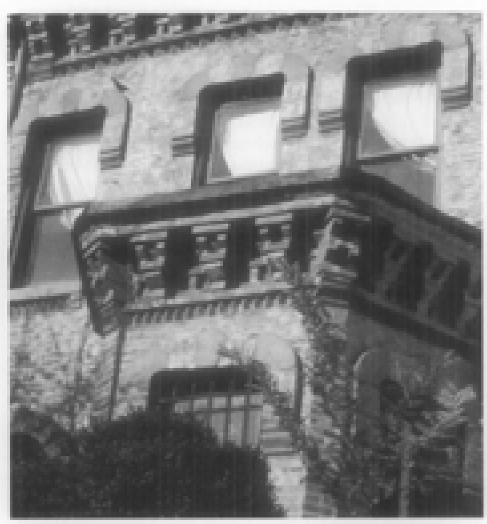

Figure 15. The whitish deposits left on the brick by a chemical paint remover may have resulted from inadequate rinsing or from the chemical being left on the surface too long and may be impossible to remove.

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Poulticing to Remove Stains and Graffiti

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Figure 16. (a) The limestone base was heavily stained by runoff from the bronze statue above. (b) A poultice consisting of copper stain remover and ammonia mixed with fuller's earth was applied to the stone base and covered with plastic sheeting to keep it from drying out too quickly. (c) As the poultice dried, it pulled the stain out of the stone. (d) The poultice residue was removed carefully from the stone surface with wooden scrapers and the stone was rinsed with water. Photos: John Dugger.

Graffiti and stains, which have penetrated into the masonry, often are best removed by using a poultice. A poultice consists of an absorbent material or clay powder (such as kaolin or fuller's earth, or even shredded paper or paper towels), mixed with a liquid (solvent or other remover) to form a paste which is applied to the stain (Figs. 16-17). As it dries, the paste absorbs the staining material so that it is not redeposited on the masonry surface. Some commercial cleaning products and paint removers are specially formulated as a paste or gel that will cling to a vertical surface and remain moist for a longer period of time in order to prolong the action of the chemical on the stain. Pre-mixed poultices are also available as a paste or in powder form needing only the addition of the appropriate liquid. The masonry must be pre-wet before applying an alkaline cleaning agent, but not when using a solvent. Once the stain has been removed, the masonry must be rinsed thoroughly.

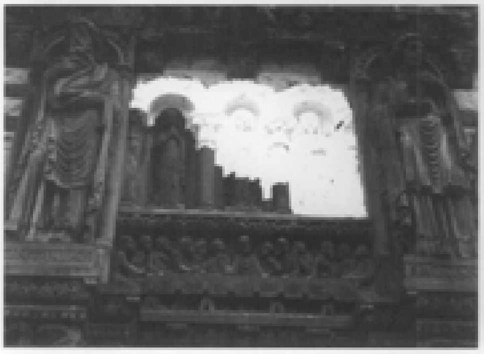

Figure 17. A poultice is being used to remove salts from the brownstone statuary on the facade of this late-19th century stone church. Photo: National Park Service Files.

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Preservation Briefs: Assessing Cleaning and Water Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

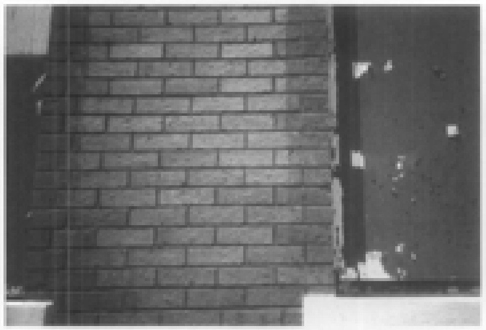

Figure 18. The glazed bricks in the center of the pier were covered by a signboard that protected them being damaged by the sandblasting which removed the glaze from the surrounding bricks.

Figure 19. A comparison of undamaged bricks surrounding the electrical conduit with the rest of the brick facade emphasizes the severity of the erosion caused by sandblasting.

Abrasive Blasting. Blasting with abrasive grit or another abrasive material is the most frequently used abrasive method. *Sandblasting* is most commonly associated with abrasive cleaning. Finely ground silica or glass powder, glass beads, ground garnet, powdered walnut and other ground nut shells, grain hulls, aluminum oxide, plastic particles and even tiny pieces of sponge, are just a few of the other materials that have also been used for abrasive cleaning. Although abrasive blasting is not an appropriate method of cleaning historic masonry, it can be safely used to clean some materials. Finely-powdered walnut shells are commonly used for cleaning monumental bronze sculpture, and skilled conservators clean delicate museum objects and finely detailed, carved stone features with very small, micro-abrasive units using aluminum oxide.

A number of current approaches to abrasive blasting rely on materials that are not usually thought of as abrasive, and not as commonly associated with traditional abrasive grit cleaning. Some patented abrasive cleaning processes—one dry, one wet—use finely-ground glass powder intended to "erase" or remove dirt and surface soiling only, but not paint or stains (Fig. 20). Cleaning with baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) is another patented process. Baking soda blasting is being used in some communities as a means of quick graffiti removal. However, it should not be used on historic masonry which it can easily abrade and can permanently "etch" the graffiti into the stone; it can also leave potentially damaging salts in the stone which cannot be removed. Most of these abrasive grits may be used either dry or wet, although dry grit tends to be used more frequently.

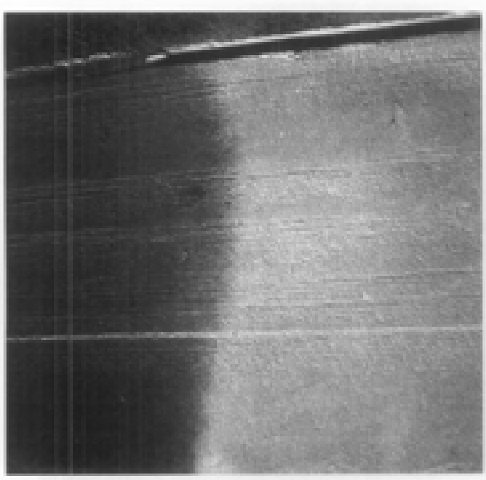

Figure 20. (Left) A comparison of the limestone surface of a 1920s office building before and after "cleaning" with a proprietary abrasive process using fine glass powder clearly shows the effectiveness of this method. But this is an abrasive technique and it has "cleaned" by removing part of the masonry surface with the dirt. Because it is abrasive, it is generally not recommended for large-scale cleaning of historic masonry, although it may be suitable to use in certain, very limited cases under controlled circumstances. (Right) A vacuum chamber where the used glass powder is collected for environmentally safe disposal is a unique feature of this particular process. The specially-trained operators in the chamber wear protective clothing, masks and breathing equipment. Photos: Tom Keohan.

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Preservation Briefs: Assessing Cleaning and Water Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

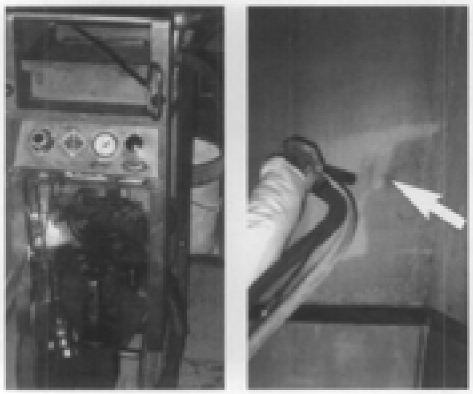

Figure 21. Low-pressure blasting with ice pellets or ice crystals (left) is an abrasive cleaning method that is sometimes recommended for use on interior masonry because it does not involve large amounts of water. However, like other abrasive materials, ice crystals "clean" by removing a portion of the masonry surface with the dirt, and may not remove some stains that have penetrated into the masonry without causing further abrasion (right). Photos: Audrey T. Tepper.

Ice particles, or pelletized dry ice (carbon dioxide or CO_2), are another medium used as an abrasive cleaner (Fig. 21). This is also too abrasive to be used on most historic masonry, but it may have practical application for removing mastics or asphaltic coatings from some substrates.

Some of these processes are promoted as being more environmentally safe and not damaging to historic masonry buildings. However, it must be remembered that they are abrasive and that they "clean" by removing a small portion of the masonry surface, even though it may be only a minuscule portion. The fact that they are essentially abrasive treatments must always be taken into consideration when planning a masonry cleaning project. *In general, abrasive methods should not be used to clean historic masonry buildings.* In some, very limited instances, highly-controlled, gentle abrasive cleaning may be appropriate on selected, hard-to-clean areas of a historic masonry building if carried out under the watchful supervision of a professional conservator. But, abrasive cleaning should never be used on an entire building.

Grinders and Sanding Disks. Grinding the masonry surface with mechanical grinders and sanding disks is another means of abrasive cleaning that should not be used on historic masonry. Like abrasive blasting, grinders and disks do not really clean masonry but instead grind away and abrasively remove and, thus, damage the masonry surface itself rather than remove just the soiling material.

Planning A Cleaning Project

Once the masonry and soiling material or paint have been identified, and the condition of the masonry has been evaluated, planning for the cleaning project can begin.

Testing cleaning methods. In order to determine the *gentlest means possible*, several cleaning methods or materials may have to be tested prior to selecting the best one to use on the building. Testing should always begin with the gentlest and least invasive method proceeding gradually, if necessary, to more complicated methods, or a combination of methods. All too often simple methods, such as low-pressure water wash, are not even considered, yet they frequently are effective, safe, and not expensive. Water of slightly higher pressure or with a non-ionic detergent additive also may be effective. It is worth repeating that these methods should always be tested prior to considering harsher methods; they are safer for the building and the environment, often safer for the applicator, and relatively inexpensive.

The level of cleanliness desired also should be determined prior to selection of a cleaning method. Obviously, the intent of cleaning is to remove most of the dirt, soiling material, stains, paint or other coating. A "brand new" appearance, however, may be inappropriate for an older building, and may require an overly harsh cleaning method to be achieved. When undertaking a cleaning project, it is important to be aware that some stains simply may not be removable. It may be wise, therefore, to agree upon a slightly lower level of cleanliness that will serve as the standard for the cleaning project. The precise amount of residual dirt considered acceptable may depend on the type of masonry, the type of soiling and difficulty of total removal, and local environmental conditions.

Cleaning tests should be carried out in an area of sufficient size to give a true indication of their effectiveness. It is preferable to conduct the test in an inconspicuous location on the building so that it will not be obvious if the test is not successful. A test area may be quite small to begin, sometimes as small as six square inches, and gradually may be increased in size as the most appropriate methods and cleaning agents are determined. Eventually the test area may be expanded to a square yard or more, and it should include several masonry units and mortar joints (Fig. 22). It should be remembered that a single building may have several types of masonry and that even similar materials may have different surface finishes. Each material and different finish should be tested separately. Cleaning tests should be evaluated only after the masonry has dried completely. *The results of the tests may indicate that several methods of cleaning should be used on a single building.*

When feasible, test areas should be allowed to weather for an extended period of time prior to final evaluation. A waiting period of a full year would be ideal in order to expose the test patch to a full range of seasons. If this is not possible, the test patch should weather for at least a month or two. For any building which is considered historically important, the delay is insignificant compared to the potential damage and disfigurement which may result from using an incompletely tested method. *The successfully cleaned test patch should be protected as it will serve as a standard against which the entire cleaning project will be measured.*

Environmental considerations. The potential effect of any method proposed for cleaning historic masonry should be evaluated carefully. Chemical cleaners and paint removers may damage trees, shrubs, grass, and plants. A plan must be provided for environmentally safe removal and disposal of the cleaning materials and the rinsing effluent before beginning the cleaning project. Authorities from the local regulatory agency—usually under the jurisdiction of the federal or state Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should be consulted prior to beginning a cleaning project, especially if it involves anything more than plain water washing. This advance planning will ensure that the cleaning effluent or run-off, which is the combination of the cleaning agent and the substance removed from the masonry, is handled and disposed of in an environmentally sound and legal manner. Some alkaline and acidic cleaners can be neutralized so that they can be safely discharged into storm sewers. However, most solvent-based cleaners cannot be neutralized and are categorized as pollutants, and must be disposed of by a licensed transport, storage and disposal facility. Thus, it is always advisable to consult with the appropriate agencies before starting to clean to ensure that the project progresses smoothly and is not interrupted by a stop-work order because a required permit was not obtained in advance.

Vinyl guttering or polyethylene-lined troughs placed around the perimeter of the base of the building can serve to catch chemical cleaning waste as it is rinsed off the building. This will reduce the amount of chemicals entering and polluting the soil, and also will keep the cleaning waste contained until it can be removed safely. Some patented cleaning systems have developed special equipment to facilitate the containment and later disposal of cleaning waste.

Concern over the release of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into the air has resulted in the manufacture of new, more environmentally responsible cleaners and paint removers, while some materials traditionally used in cleaning may no longer be available for these same reasons. Other health and safety concerns have created additional cleaning challenges, such as lead paint removal, which is likely to require special removal and disposal techniques.

Cleaning can also cause damage to non-masonry materials on a building, including glass, metal and wood. Thus, it is usually necessary to cover windows and doors, and other features that may be vulnerable to chemical cleaners. They should be covered with plastic or polyethylene, or a masking agent that is applied as a liquid which dries to form a thin protective film on glass, and is easily peeled off after the cleaning is finished. Wind drift, for example, can also damage other property by carrying cleaning chemicals onto nearby automobiles, resulting in etching of the glass or spotting of the paint finish. Similarly, airborne dust can enter surrounding buildings, and excess water can collect in nearby yards and basements.

Safety considerations. Possible health dangers of each method selected for the cleaning project must be considered before selecting a cleaning method to avoid harm to the

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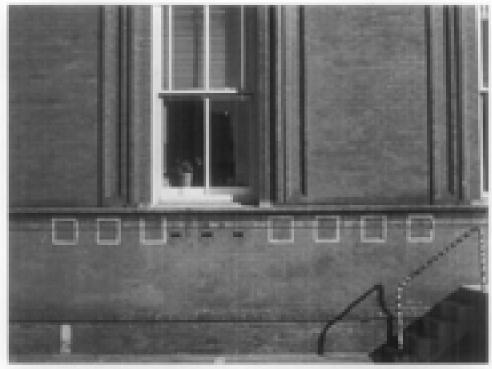

Figure 22. Cleaning test areas may be quite small at first and gradually increase in size as testing determines the "gentlest means possible". Photo: Frances Gale.

cleaning applicators, and the necessary precautions must be taken. The precautions listed in Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) that are provided with chemical products should always be followed. Protective clothing, respirators, hearing and face shields, and gloves must be provided to workers to be worn at all times. Acidic and alkaline chemical cleaners in both liquid and vapor forms can also cause serious injury to passers-by (Fig. 23). It may be necessary to schedule cleaning at night or weekends if the building is located in a busy urban area to reduce the potential danger of chemical overspray to pedestrians. Cleaning during non-business hours will allow HVAC systems to be turned off and vents to be covered to prevent dangerous chemical fumes from entering the building which will also ensure the safety of the building's occupants. Abrasive and mechanical methods produce dust which can pose a serious health hazard, particularly if the abrasive or the masonry contains silica.

Water-Repellent Coatings and Waterproof Coatings

To begin with, it is important to understand that waterproof coatings and water-repellent coatings are not the same. Although these terms are frequently interchanged and commonly confused with one another, they are completely different materials. **Water-repellent coatings** —often referred to incorrectly as "sealers", but which do not or should not seal— are intended to keep liquid water from penetrating the surface but to allow water vapor to enter and leave, or pass through, the surface of the masonry (Fig. 24). Water-repellent coatings are generally *transparent*, or clear, although once applied some may darken or discolor certain types of masonry while others may give it a glossy or shiny appearance. **Waterproof coatings** seal the surface from liquid water and from water vapor. They are usually *opaque*, or pigmented, and include bituminous coatings and some elastomeric paints and coatings.

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Water-Repellent Coatings

Water-repellent coatings are formulated to be vapor permeable, or "breathable". They do not seal the surface completely to water vapor so it can enter the masonry wall as well as leave the wall. While the first water-repellent coatings to be developed were primarily acrylic or silicone resins in organic solvents, now most water-repellent coatings are water-based and formulated from modified siloxanes, silanes and other alkoxysilanes, or metallic stearates. While some of these products are shipped from the factory ready to use, other waterborne water repellents must be diluted at the job site. Unlike earlier water-repellent coatings which tended to form a "film" on the masonry surface, modern water-repellent coatings actually penetrate into the masonry substrate slightly and, generally, are almost invisible if properly applied to the masonry. They are also more vapor permeable than the old coatings, yet they still reduce the vapor permeability of the masonry. Once inside the wall, water vapor can condense at cold spots producing liquid water which, unlike water vapor, cannot escape through a water-repellent coating. The liquid water within the wall, whether from condensation, leaking gutters, or other sources, can cause considerable damage.

Water-repellent coatings are not consolidants. Although modern water repellents may penetrate slightly beneath the masonry surface, instead of just "sitting" on top of it, they do not perform the same function as a consolidant which is to "consolidate" and replace lost binder to strengthen deteriorating masonry. Even after many years of laboratory study and testing few consolidants have proven very effective. The composition of fired products such as brick and architectural terra cotta, as well as many types of building stone, does not lend itself to consolidation.

Some modern water-repellent coatings which contain a binder intended to replace the natural binders in stone that have been lost through weathering and natural erosion are described in product literature as both a water repellent and a consolidant. The fact that newer water-repellent coatings penetrate beneath the masonry surface instead of just forming a layer on top of the surface may indeed convey at least some consolidating properties to certain stones. However, a water-repellent coating cannot be considered a consolidant. In some instances, a water-repellent or "preservative" coating, if applied to already damaged or spalling stone, may form a surface crust which, if it fails, may exacerbate the deterioration by pulling off even more of the stone (Fig. 25).

Is a Water-Repellent Treatment Necessary?

Water-repellent coatings are frequently applied to historic masonry buildings for the wrong reason. They also are often applied without an understanding of what they are and what they are intended to do. And these coatings can be very difficult, if not impossible, to remove from the masonry if they fail or become discolored. Most importantly, the application of water-repellent coatings to historic masonry is usually unnecessary.

Figure 23. A tarpaulin protects and shields pedestrians from potentially harmful spray while chemical cleaning is underway on the granite exterior of the U.S. Treasury Building, Washington, D.C.

Most historic masonry buildings, unless they are painted, have survived for decades without a water-repellent coating and, thus, probably do not need one now. Water penetration to the interior of a masonry building is seldom due to porous masonry, but results from poor or deferred maintenance. Leaking roofs, clogged or deteriorated gutters and downspouts, missing mortar, or cracks and open joints around door and window openings are almost always the cause of moisture-related problems in a historic masonry building. **If historic masonry buildings are kept watertight and in good repair, water-repellent coatings should not be necessary.**

Rising damp (capillary moisture pulled up from the ground), or condensation can also be a source of excess moisture in masonry buildings. A water-repellent coating will not solve this problem either and, in fact, may be likely to exacerbate it. Furthermore, a water-repellent coating should never be applied to a damp wall. Moisture in the wall would reduce the ability of a coating to adhere to the masonry and to penetrate below the surface. But, if it did adhere, it would hold the moisture inside the masonry because, although a water-repellent coating is permeable to water vapor, liquid water cannot pass through it. In the case of rising damp, a coating may force the moisture to go even higher in the wall because it can slow down evaporation, and thereby retain the moisture in the wall.

Excessive moisture in masonry walls may carry waterborne soluble salts from the masonry units themselves or from the mortar through the walls. If the water is permitted to come to the surface, the salts may appear on the masonry surface as efflorescence (a whitish powder) upon evaporation. However, the salts can be potentially dangerous if they remain in the masonry and crystallize

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Figure 24. Although the application of a water-repellent coating was probably not needed on either of these buildings, the coating on the brick building (above), is not visible and has not changed the character of the brick. But the coating on the brick column (below), has a high gloss that is incompatible with the historic character of the masonry.

beneath the surface as subflorescence. Subflorescence eventually may cause the surface of the masonry to spall, particularly if a water-repellent coating has been applied which tends to reduce the flow of moisture out from the subsurface of the masonry. Although many of the newer water-repellent products are more breathable than their predecessors, they can be especially damaging if applied to masonry that contains salts, because they limit the flow of moisture through masonry.

When a Water-Repellent Coating May be Appropriate
There are some instances when a water-repellent coating may be considered appropriate to use on a historic masonry building. Soft, incompletely fired brick from the 18th- and early-19th centuries may have become so porous that paint or some type of coating is needed to protect it from further deterioration or dissolution. When a masonry building has been neglected for a long period of time, necessary repairs may be required in order to make it watertight. If, following a reasonable period of time after the building has been made watertight and has dried out completely, moisture appears actually to be penetrating through the repointed and repaired masonry walls, then the application of a water-repellent coating may be considered *in selected areas only*. This decision should be made in consultation with an architectural conservator. And, if such a treatment is undertaken, it should not be applied to the entire exterior of the building.

Anti-graffiti or barrier coatings are another type of clear coating—although barrier coatings can also be pigmented—that may be applied to exterior masonry, but they are not formulated primarily as water repellents. The purpose of these coatings is to make it harder for graffiti to stick to a masonry surface and, thus, easier to clean. But, like water-repellent coatings, in most cases the application of anti-graffiti coatings is generally not recommended for historic masonry buildings. These coatings are often quite shiny which can greatly alter the appearance of a historic masonry surface, and they are not always effective (Fig. 26). Generally, other ways of discouraging graffiti, such as improved lighting, can be more effective than a coating. However, the application of anti-graffiti coatings may be appropriate in some instances on vulnerable areas of historic masonry buildings which are frequent targets of graffiti that are located in out-of-the-way places where constant surveillance is not possible.

Some water-repellent coatings are recommended by product manufacturers as a means of keeping dirt and pollutants or biological growth from collecting on the surface of masonry buildings and, thus, reducing the need for frequent cleaning. While this at times may be true, in some cases a coating may actually retain dirt more than uncoated masonry. Generally, the application of a water-repellent coating is not recommended on a historic masonry building as a means of preventing biological growth. Some water-repellent coatings may actually encourage biological growth on a masonry wall. Biological growth on masonry buildings has traditionally been kept at bay through regularly-scheduled cleaning as part of a maintenance plan. Simple cleaning of the masonry with low-pressure water using a natural- or synthetic-bristled scrub brush can be very effective if done on a regular basis. Commercial products are also available which can be sprayed on masonry to remove biological growth.

In most instances, a water-repellent coating is not necessary if a building is watertight. The application of a water-repellent coating is not a recommended treatment for historic masonry buildings unless there is a specific

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Figure 25. The clear coating applied to this limestone molding has failed and is taking off some of the stone surface as it peels. Photo: Frances Gale.

problem which it may help solve. If the problem occurs on only part of the building, it is best to treat only that area rather than an entire building. Extreme exposures such as parapets, for example, or portions of the building subject to driving rain can be treated more effectively and less expensively than the entire building. Water-repellent coatings are not permanent and must be reapplied

Figure 26. The anti-graffiti or barrier coating on this column is very shiny and would not be appropriate to use on a historic masonry building. The coating has discolored as it has aged and whitish streaks reveal areas of bare concrete where the coating was incompletely applied.

periodically although, if they are truly invisible, it can be difficult to know when they are no longer providing the intended protection.

Testing a water-repellent coating by applying it in one small area may not be helpful in determining its suitability for the building because a limited test area does not allow an adequate evaluation of such a treatment. Since water may enter and leave through the surrounding untreated areas, there is no way to tell if the coated test area is "breathable." But trying a coating in a small area may help to determine whether the coating is visible on the surface or if it will otherwise change the appearance of the masonry.

Waterproof Coatings

In theory, waterproof coatings usually do not cause problems as long as they exclude all water from the masonry. If water does enter the wall from the ground or from the inside of a building, the coating can intensify the damage because the water will not be able to escape. During cold weather this water in the wall can freeze causing serious mechanical disruption, such as spalling.

In addition, the water eventually will get out by the path of least resistance. If this path is toward the interior, damage to interior finishes can result; if it is toward the exterior, it can lead to damage to the masonry caused by built-up water pressure (Fig. 27).

In most instances, waterproof coatings should not be applied to historic masonry. The possible exception to this might be the application of a waterproof coating to below-grade exterior foundation walls as a last resort to stop water infiltration on interior basement walls. **Generally, however, waterproof coatings, which include *elastomeric paints*, should almost never be applied above grade to historic masonry buildings.**

Figure 27. Instead of correcting the roof drainage problems, an elastomeric coating was applied to the already saturated limestone cornice. An elastomeric coating holds moisture in the masonry because it does not "breathe" and does not allow liquid moisture to escape. If the water pressure builds up sufficiently it can cause the coating to break and pop off as shown in this example, often pulling pieces of the masonry with it. Photo: National Park Service Files.

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Summary

A well-planned cleaning project is an essential step in preserving, rehabilitating or restoring a historic masonry building. Proper cleaning methods and coating treatments, when determined necessary for the preservation of the masonry, can enhance the aesthetic character as well as the structural stability of a historic building. Removing years of accumulated dirt, pollutant crusts, stains, graffiti or paint, if done with appropriate caution, can extend the life and longevity of the historic resource. Cleaning that is carelessly or insensitively prescribed or carried out by inexperienced workers can have the opposite of the intended effect. It may scar the masonry permanently, and may actually result in hastening deterioration by introducing harmful residual chemicals and salts into the masonry or causing surface loss. Using the wrong cleaning method or using the right method incorrectly, applying the wrong kind of coating or applying a coating that is not needed can result in serious damage, both physically and aesthetically, to a historic masonry building. Cleaning a historic masonry building should always be done using the *gentlest means possible* that will clean, but not damage the building. It should always be taken into consideration before applying a water-repellent coating or a waterproof coating to a historic masonry building whether it is really necessary and whether it is in the best interest of preserving the building.

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Acknowledgments

Robert C. Mack, FAIA, is a principal in the firm of MacDonald & Mack Architects, Ltd., an architectural firm that specializes in historic buildings in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Anne Grimmer is a Senior Architectural Historian in the Technical Preservation Services Branch, Heritage Preservation Services Program, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

The original version of *Preservation Brief 1: The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings* was written by Robert C. Mack, AIA. It inaugurated the *Preservation Briefs* series when it was published in 1975.

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This publication has been prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, which directs the Secretary of the Interior to develop and make available information concerning historic properties. Comments on the usefulness of this publication may be directed to: Sharon C. Park, FAIA, Chief, Technical Preservation Services Branch, Heritage Preservation Services Program, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Suite NC200, Washington, D.C. 20240 (www2.cr.nps.gov/tps).

Front Cover: Chemical cleaning of the brick and architectural terra cotta frieze on the 1880s Pension Building, Washington, D.C. (now the National Building Museum), is shown here in progress. Photo: Christina Henry.

Photographs used to illustrate this Brief were taken by Anne Grimmer unless otherwise credited.

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3 PRESERVATION BRIEFS

Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings

Jo Ellen Hensley and Antonio Aguilar

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Technical Preservation Services

The concept of energy conservation in buildings is not new. Throughout history building owners have dealt with changing fuel supplies and the need for efficient use of these fuels. Gone are the days of the cheap and abundant energy of the 1950's. Today with energy resources being depleted and the concern over the effect of greenhouse gases on climate change, owners of historic buildings are seeking ways to make their buildings more energy efficient. These concerns are key components of sustainability — a term that generally refers to the ability to maintain the environmental, social, and economic needs for human existence. The topic of sustainable or "green" building practices is too broad to cover in this brief. Rather, this preservation brief is intended to help property owners, preservation professionals, and stewards of historic buildings make informed decisions when considering energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings.

Sound energy improvement measures must take into consideration not only potential energy savings, but also the protection of the historic property's materials and features. This guidance is provided in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to ensure that the architectural integrity of the historic property is preserved. Achieving a successful retrofit project must balance the goals of energy efficiency with the least impact to the historic building. Planning must entail a holistic approach that considers the entire building envelope, its systems and components, its site and environment, and a careful evaluation of the effects of the measures undertaken. Treatments common to new construction need to be evaluated carefully before implementing them in historic buildings in order to avoid inappropriate alteration of important architectural features and irreparable damage to historic building materials. This brief targets primarily small-to medium-size historic buildings, both residential and commercial. However, the general decision-making principles outlined here apply to buildings of any size and complexity.

Inherent Energy Efficient Features of Historic Buildings

Before implementing any energy conservation measures, the existing energy-efficient characteristics of a historic building should be assessed. Buildings are more than the sum of their individual components. The design, materials, type of construction, size, shape, site orientation, surrounding landscape, and climate all play a role in how buildings perform. Historic building construction methods and materials often maximized natural sources of heat, light and ventilation to respond to local climatic conditions. The key to a successful rehabilitation project is to understand and identify the existing energy-efficient aspects of the historic building and how they function, as well as to understand and identify its character-defining features to ensure they are preserved. Whether rehabilitated for a new or continuing use, it is important to utilize the historic building's inherent sustainable qualities as they were intended to ensure that they function effectively together with any new treatments added to further improve energy efficiency.

Windows, courtyards, and light wells
Operable windows, interior courtyards, clerestories, skylights, rooftop ventilators, cupolas, and other features that provide natural ventilation and light can reduce energy consumption. Whenever these devices can be used to provide natural ventilation and light, they save energy by reducing the need to use mechanical systems and interior artificial lighting.

Historically, builders dealt with the potential heat loss and gain from windows in a variety of ways depending on the climate. In cold climates where winter heat loss from buildings was the primary consideration before mechanical systems were introduced, windows were limited to those necessary for adequate light and ventilation. In historic buildings where the ratio of glass

Fig. 1. A decorative, stained glass skylight allows natural daylight into the interior.

to wall is less than 20%, the potential heat loss through the windows is likely minimal; consequently, they are more energy efficient than most recent construction. In hot climates, numerous windows provided valuable ventilation, while features such as wide roof overhangs, awnings, interior or exterior shutters, venetian blinds, shades, curtains and drapes significantly reduced heat gain through the windows. Historic windows can play an important role in the efficient operation of a building and should be retained.

Fig. 2. Upper and lower shutters control daylight and provide privacy.

New architectural styles, beginning with the International Style of the 1920's, brought about an increase in the percentage of glazing in the total building envelope. By the 1950's, with the advent of the glass curtain wall, glazing constituted nearly 100% of a building's exterior walls in many buildings. While many early modern buildings continued to use operable windows as a way to provide natural ventilation, greater reliance on mechanical heating and air conditioning systems eventually reduced the function of exterior glazing to providing light only, particularly in commercial, office, and institutional buildings.

Fig. 3. Stone walls with substantial mass have high thermal inertia.

Walls

Thick masonry walls typical of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries have inherent thermal characteristics that keep the buildings cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. Walls with substantial mass have the advantage of high thermal inertia, which reduces the rate of heat transfer through the wall. For instance, a wall with high thermal inertia, subjected to solar radiation for an hour, will absorb the heat at its outside surface, but slowly transfer it to the interior over a period as long as six hours. Conversely, a wall having the equivalent thermal resistance (R-value), but a substantially lower thermal inertia, will transfer the heat in perhaps as little as two hours. Heavy masonry walls also reduce the need for summer cooling. High thermal inertia is the reason many older public and commercial buildings without air conditioning still feel cool during the summer. The heat from the midday sun does not penetrate the buildings until late afternoon and evening, when it is less likely to be occupied or when exterior temperatures have fallen. Heavy masonry walls are also effective in moderating internal temperatures in the winter by dampening the overall peaks of heat gain and loss resulting in a flatter and more tolerable daily cycle. In areas that require cooling during the day and heating at night, masonry walls can help spread out excess heat gain from the day to cover some of the needed heating for the evening and night hours.

Roofs

Roof construction and design in historic buildings, particularly vernacular buildings, are strongly influenced by the conditions of the local climate. Wide overhangs that sometimes extend to create porches minimize the heat gain from the sun in warmer climates, while steep, sloping roofs with minimal or no overhang prevail in colder climates to allow for shedding snow and increasing beneficial solar heat gain through the windows. Materials and color also influence the thermal performance of roofs. Metal and light colored roofs, for example, reflect sunlight and thereby reduce the heat gain from solar radiation.

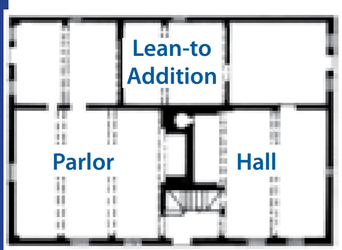

Fig. 4. A typical New England saltbox features a steeply sloping roof to shed snow and a floor plan organized around a central chimney to conserve heat.

Floor Plans
The floor plan of many historic buildings, particularly traditional vernacular ones, was also designed to respond to the local climate. In cold climates, rooms with low ceilings were clustered around central chimneys to share the heat, while small windows with interior shutters reduced drafts and heat loss. In warmer climates, wide central halls with tall ceilings, breezeways, and large porches all maximized air circulation.

Landscape
Site orientation was another factor considered especially in the location of a historic building on its property. In cold climates, buildings were oriented against northern winds while buildings in warm climates were sited to take advantage of prevailing breezes. Evergreen trees planted on the north side of buildings shielded from winter winds; deciduous trees planted to the south provided summer shade and maximum sun in the winter.

Fig. 5. The side porches of this house in Charleston, SC, shade the large windows and provide outdoor living spaces that take advantage of sea breezes.

Energy Audit

Before implementing any measures to improve the thermal performance of a historic building, an energy audit should be undertaken to evaluate the current energy use of the building and identify deficiencies in the building envelope or mechanical systems. In some areas, the local utility company may offer a free simple audit, however a more in-depth audit should be obtained from a professional energy auditor. The goal of the audit is to establish a baseline of building performance data to serve as a reference point when evaluating the effectiveness of future energy improvements. It is important to hire an independent auditor who does not have financial interests in the results, such as a product vendor.

An energy auditor first documents the current energy use patterns in the building to establish an energy use history. This initial step includes obtaining the billing history from the local utility company over a one- or two-year period, as well as documenting the number of building occupants, how the building is used, and the type of fuel consumed. The location of any existing insulation is recorded and the approximate R-value of various components of the building envelope including walls, ceilings, floors, doors, windows and skylights is calculated. The building envelope is inspected to identify areas of air infiltration and air loss. The type and age of mechanical systems and major appliances are also recorded.

Tools such as a blower door test or infrared thermography are useful to identify specific areas of infiltration, lack of insulation and thermal bridging. Mechanical depressurization along with infrared thermography is extremely useful in identifying locations of air leakage and heat loss followed by the use of tracer smoke to isolate specific air leaks. These tests are often challenging to perform on buildings and must be undertaken by experienced professionals to avoid misleading or inaccurate results. There are professional standards for audits, those of the Building Performance Institute (BPI) being the most widely used.

The energy auditor then produces a detailed report that documents the findings of the audit and includes specific recommendations for upgrades such as air sealing, adding insulation, general repairs, lighting, and improvements to or replacement of mechanical systems or major appliances. Cost estimates are provided for each of the improvements including the cost of implementation, potential operating cost savings, and, importantly, the anticipated payback period. Armed with this information, historic building owners can start to make informed decisions on how to improve the performance of their buildings. Usually the auditor finds a few locations where there is major air leakage; large “holes” that are unique to a particular building and require equipment to find them. These anomalies are often invisible to the people who use the building on a regular basis. It is important to retest the performance of the building following the implementation of any upgrades undertaken as a result of an energy audit to ensure that the upgrades are performing as expected.

Prioritizing Energy Upgrades

When implementing energy upgrades, efforts should be concentrated on improvements that will provide the most payback for the money expended and the least compromise to the historic character of the building. Some upgrades recommended in energy audits may not be introduced into a historic building feasibly without damaging historic fabric or altering the appearance of significant features. Removing historic siding and replacing it with new siding to introduce insulation into the wall cavity of a frame building or replacing repairable historic windows are examples of treatments that should not be undertaken on historic buildings.

A common misconception is that replacing windows alone will result in major energy savings. This argument, often used to sell replacement windows, is simply not true. Although it varies from building to building, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has documented that air loss attributable to windows in most buildings is only about 10% of the total air loss. Studies have shown that window replacement does not pay for itself in energy savings in a reasonable length of time. Moreover, there are ways to improve the performance of historic windows that do not require their replacement. In addition, historic windows can usually be repaired and are, thus, sustainable, while most new windows cannot be repaired, or even recycled, and may wind up in landfills.

When considering energy upgrades, it is imperative to get a clear picture of what an improvement will cost initially and how long it will take to pay back the cost in energy savings. Therefore, the life cycle cost of the improvement must be considered as well as its impact on historic fabric. Reducing infiltration around existing windows and doors, sealing penetrations in the building envelope, and adding insulation — particularly in the attic where it has little impact on historic fabric — can result in significant improvements at relatively little cost. Updating mechanical systems or changing the way in which they are operated can also be cost-effective interventions. For example, installing a more efficient mechanical system alone may pay for itself in ten years.

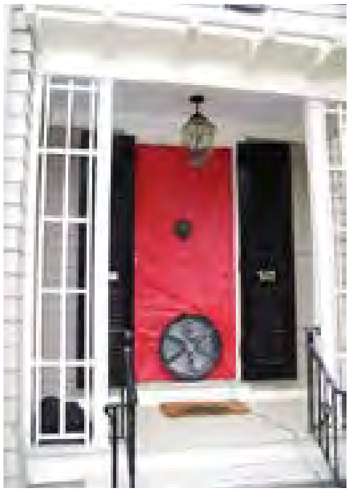

Fig. 6. (left) A blower door is used to depressurize a building by exhausting air at a rate that allows pressure gages and tracer smoke to measure the amount and location of air leakage. Photo: Robert Cagnetta, Heritage Restoration, Inc.

Fig. 7. (center and right) The left thermal image shows the walls of this building before insulating. After insulation was added, the cooler and, thus darker exterior walls evidence how much the heat loss has been reduced. Photos: EYP Architecture & Engineering.

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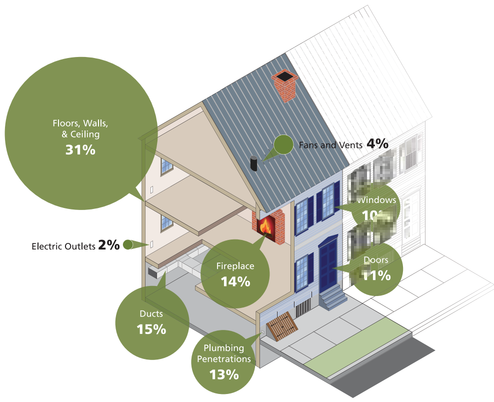

Fig. 8. Where Air Escapes From a House (by percentage) – Image based on data from Energy Savers, U.S. Department of Energy. Illustration: Blank Space LLC.

Actions to Improve Energy Efficiency

Reducing energy demands for heating and cooling may be accomplished in two steps. First, implement operational changes and upgrades to mechanical systems and major appliances — measures that do not require making alterations or adding new materials — to ensure that a building functions as efficiently as possible. After all these measures have been implemented, corrective work or treatments, such as weatherization, that require other alterations to the building may be considered.

Residential Energy Use Intensity by Age

Year Built	KBtu/sq ft/yr
Prior to 1950	74.5
1950 to 1969	66.0
1970 to 1979	59.4
1980 to 1989	51.9
1990 to 1999	48.2
2000 to 2005	44.7

Source: Residential Energy Consumption Survey, 2005

Establishing Realistic Goals
Energy consumption data gathered by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (see chart) shows that residential buildings built before 1950 (the largest percentage of historic building stock) are about 30 to 40 percent less energy efficient than buildings built after 2000. Using this as a baseline, a 30 to 40 percent upgrade of a historic building's energy performance can be a realistic goal. A 40 percent increase in energy efficiency would of course be a more achievable goal for buildings that have had minimal upgrades since their original construction, i.e., added insulation, tightening of the exterior envelope, or more efficient mechanical equipment. On the other hand, achieving "net zero" energy goals as it is currently done with some new construction can be a much more difficult challenge to achieve in a historic retrofit. Attempting to reach such a goal with a historic building would most likely result in significant alterations and loss of historic materials. [The data for commercial buildings documents that buildings in 2003 used approximately the same energy as they did before 1920, after reaching their peak in the 1980's.]

Operational Changes
One of the greatest effects on energy use is user behavior. Once an energy audit has established a baseline for the current energy use in a building, operational changes should be identified to control how and when the building is used to minimize the use of energy-consuming equipment. These changes can range from simple measures such as regular cleaning and maintenance of mechanical equipment to installing sophisticated controls that cycle equipment on and off in specified intervals for maximum performance. The following changes are recommended to reduce heating and cooling costs.

- Install programmable thermostats.
- Close off rooms that are not in use and adjust the temperature in those rooms.
- Do not condition rooms that do not need to be conditioned, thereby reducing the thermal envelope.
- Use insulated shades and curtains to control heat gain and loss through windows.
- Use operable windows, shutters, awnings and vents as originally intended to control temperature and ventilation.
- Take advantage of natural light.
- Install compact fluorescent lights (CFL) and light-emitting diode (LED) lights.
- Install motion sensors and timers for lighting and local ventilation, such as bathroom exhaust fans.
- Reduce "phantom" electricity loads by turning equipment off when not in use.
- Clean and service mechanical equipment regularly.

These measures should be undertaken first to save energy in any existing building and are particularly appropriate for historic buildings because they do not require alterations to historic materials.

Upgrading Equipment and Appliances
In addition to maximizing the energy efficiency of existing building systems, substantial savings can be achieved through upgrading equipment and appliances. One should still weigh the operational savings against the initial cost of the new equipment, particularly if the existing equipment is not near the end of its life.

Calculator aids that take into account the efficiency of both the existing and new equipment are available

Fig. 9. An energy auditor tests the efficiency of a boiler.

online to assist in determining the payback. Advance planning will allow time to find the most efficient unit, as well as to investigate the availability of any state and federal energy credits. As energy prices continue to rise and technology advances, options such as the installation of a solar hot water heater or geothermal ground source or water source heat pumps are becoming more economically feasible. Recommendations for upgrading equipment and appliances include:

• Upgrade the heating system. It is important to install new furnaces that utilize outside combustion air to reduce air drawn into the building through uncontrolled infiltration. [All furnaces and boilers are now measured by their annual fuel utilization efficiency or AFUE.] Heating equipment is now more efficient and gas furnaces that used to have a 60% (AFUE) rating can now operate at as much as 90 to 97% efficiency.
• Upgrade the air conditioning system.
• Replace the water heater. High-efficiency water heaters use far less energy than earlier models, and high-efficiency tankless water heaters heat water on demand and offer even greater savings. Point of use water heat can also reduce costs and water consumption by reducing the time it takes to draw hot water.
• Upgrade appliances. Energy Star appliances, particularly refrigerators, washing machines and dishwashers can all reduce electricity use and additional indoor heating loads.

Upgrading Building Components
In addition to operational and mechanical upgrades, it can be possible to upgrade many building components in a manner that will not jeopardize the historic character of the building and can be accomplished at a reasonable cost. The goal of these upgrades is to improve the thermal performance of the building, resulting in even greater energy savings. Retrofit measures to historic buildings should be limited to those that achieve at least reasonable energy savings, at reasonable costs, with the least impact on the character of the building.

The following list includes the most common measures proposed to improve the thermal performance of an existing building; some measures are highly recommended for historic buildings, but others are less beneficial, and can even be harmful to a historic building.

Requires Minimal Alteration
• Reduce air leakage.
• Add attic insulation.
• Install storm windows.
• Insulate basements and crawlspaces.
• Seal and insulate ducts and pipes.
• Weather strip doors and add storm doors.
• Add awnings and shading devices where appropriate.

Requires More Alteration
• Add interior vestibules.
• Replace windows.
• Add insulation to wood-frame walls.
• Add insulation to masonry walls.
• Install cool roofs and green roofs.

The treatments listed first have less potential to negatively impact the historic fabric of a building. They tend to be less intrusive, are often reversible, and offer the highest potential for energy savings. Undertaking any of the treatments in the second group, however, may pose technical problems and damage to historic building materials and architectural features. Their installation costs may also outweigh the anticipated energy savings and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with advice from professionals experienced in historic preservation and building performance.

Requires Minimal Alteration

Reduce air leakage. Reducing air leakage (infiltration and exfiltration) should be the first priority of a preservation retrofit plan. Leakage of air into a building can account for 5 to 40 percent of space-conditioning costs, which can be one of the largest operational costs for buildings.[1] In addition, unwanted air leakage into and out of the building can lead to occupant comfort issues resulting from drafts. Air infiltration can be especially problematic in historic buildings because it is closely linked to increased moisture movement into building systems.

Air flow into and out of buildings is driven by three primary forces: wind pressure, mechanical pressure and the stack effect. Cold outside air that infiltrates the building through big holes, as well as through loose windows, doors, and cracks in the outer shell of the building, causes the heating system to work harder and consume more energy. In a multi-story building, cold air that enters the building at lower levels, including the basement or crawlspace, will travel up through the building and exit out leaky windows, gaps around windows and the attic as a result of temperature and pressure differential. This pattern of air movement

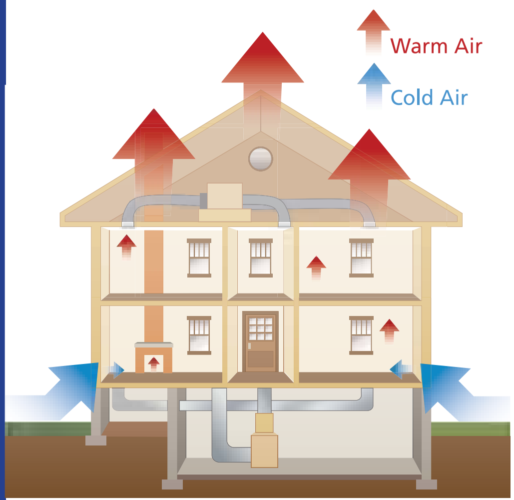

Fig. 10. The pattern of air movement referred to as the "stack effect". Illustration: Blank Space LLC.

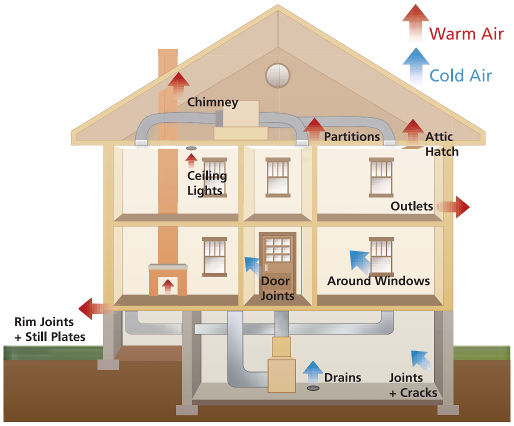

Fig. 11. Air infiltration and exfiltration. Illustration: Blank Space LLC.

is called the "stack effect." Not only is valuable conditioned air lost, but damaging moisture may also enter the wall cavities and attic spaces. To stop the stack effect, the top and bottom of the exterior walls, inter-floor bypasses, and any existing chases or shafts must be sealed, or "draft proofed." The use of spray foam sealants in basement and attic cracks is a particularly useful technique for reducing air infiltration.

Adding weatherstripping to doors and windows, sealing open cracks and joints at the base of walls and around windows and doors, sealing off recessed lighting fixtures from above, and sealing the intersection of walls and attic, will substantially reduce air leakage. When using exterior caulk to seal the intersection of siding and doors or windows, do not caulk the underside of clapboards or below windows to allow any liquid water to escape. When infiltration and, consequently, exfiltration are reduced, mechanical ventilation may be necessary to meet occupants' requirements for fresh air.

Add attic or roof insulation. Heat loss and gain caused by increased interior/exterior temperature differentials primarily due to the stack effect and solar radiation are greatest at the top of a building. Therefore, reducing heat transfer through the roof or attic should be one of the highest priorities in reducing energy consumption. Adding insulation in unoccupied, unfinished attics is not only very effective from an energy-savings perspective, but it is also generally simple to install and causes minimal disruption to historic materials. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) provides a recommended R-value chart based on climate zones to help determine the optimal amount of insulation that should be installed in a particular project. Local codes may also have specific insulation requirements. Insulating trap or access doors should not be overlooked. Even though they may be small, attic doors can be responsible for substantial heat loss and should be addressed as part of any attic insulation project.

DOE Climate Zone Map

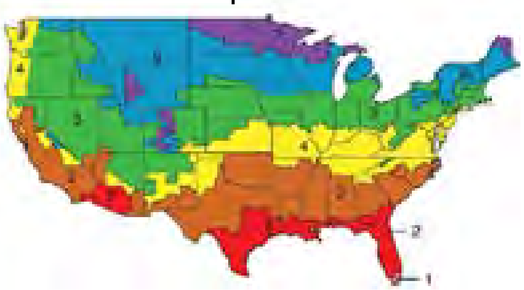

Fig. 12. Recommended energy improvements vary widely based on climate. The information contained in this document is based primarily on the available data for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

In unfinished and unheated attics, the insulation material is typically placed between the floor joists using blown-in, batt, or rigid foam insulation. When using fiberglass batts faced with a vapor retarder, the vapor retarder should be face down towards the heated interior. However, the use of a vapor retarder is not necessary in attic applications. If additional batt insulation is being added over existing insulation that is near or above the top of the joists, new un-faced batts should be placed perpendicular to the old ones to cover the top of the joists and reduce thermal bridging through the frame members. In low-pitched roofs, or where installing batt insulation is difficult, a more complete coverage of the attic floor may be achieved by using blown-in insulation. Unfinished attics must be properly ventilated to allow excess heat to escape.

Radiant barriers may be used in attics to reduce thermal radiation across the air space between the roof deck and the attic floor in order to reduce summer heat gain. They are most beneficial in reducing cooling loads in hot climates and consist of a highly reflective sheet or coating, usually aluminum, applied to one or both sides of a flexible material. They are effective only when the foil surface faces an air space, and as long as the surface remains shiny – that is, free from dirt, dust, condensation and oxidation. Radiant barriers should not be installed directly over insulation on the attic floor, as they can act as vapor retarders and trap moisture in the insulation unless they are perforated. Their placement should be ventilated on both sides.

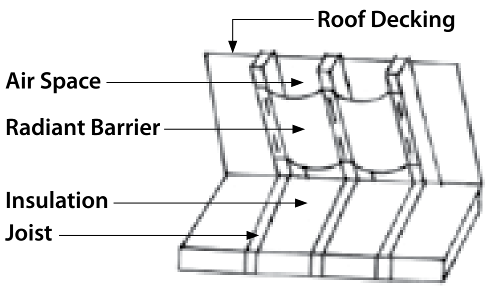

Fig. 13. Sample installation of a radiant barrier.

Insulating the underside of the roof rather than the attic floor increases the volume of the thermal envelope of the building, thus making this treatment inherently less energy efficient. However, when mechanical equipment and/or ductwork are housed in an attic space, placing the insulation under the roof and treating the attic as a conditioned space is strongly recommended. This treatment allows the equipment to operate more efficiently and can prevent moisture-related problems caused by condensation on the mechanical equipment.

When insulation is placed under the roof, all vents in the attic and the intersection between the walls and roof rafters must be sealed. Rigid foam or batt insulation placed between the roof rafters is a common method of insulating the underside of a roof. Open cell spray foam (.5lb/cuft) may sometimes be applied under the roof deck only when there are no gaps in the sheathing which could allow the foam to expand under slates or shingles, preventing the re-use of the roofing material. Also, if roof leaks do occur, they may go undetected until after major damage occurs. Consideration must also be given to the irreversibility of this procedure because the foam enters the pores of the wood. It may be more advisable to install a breathable layer of material that will allow for future removal without leaving a residue.

When total roof replacement is required because of deterioration, installing rigid foam insulation on top of the roof deck before laying the new roofing material can be simple and effective, particularly on low-pitched or flat roofs. However, the added thickness of the roof caused by installing rigid foam can alter the appearance of projecting eaves, dormers, and other features. If this application would significantly alter the appearance of these features, consider other methods.

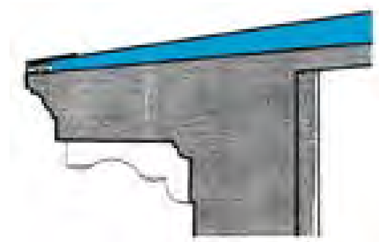

Fig. 14. Sample installation of rigid foam insulation, tapered at the edge to avoid altering the appearance of the roof.

Install storm windows. The addition of metal or wood exterior or interior storm windows may be advisable to increase the thermal performance of the windows in ways that weatherstripping and caulking cannot address. A single-glazed storm window may only increase a single-pane window's thermal resistance to R2, however, that is twice as good as a single-glazed window alone. It will make a noticeable contribution to the comfort level of the building occupant, with the added benefit of protecting the historic window from weathering. Using clear, non-tinted, low-e glass in the storm window can further increase the thermal performance of the window assembly without the loss of historic fabric. Studies have shown that the performance of a traditional wood window with the addition of a storm window can approach that of a double-glazed replacement window.[2] Some storm windows are available with insulated low-e glass, offering even higher thermal performance without the loss of the historic window. Furthermore, a storm window avoids the problem of irreparable seal failure on insulated glass units (IGUs) used in modern replacement windows. While the lifespan of the IGU depends both on the quality of the seal and other factors, it is unreasonable to expect more than 25 years. Once the seal fails, the sash itself will usually need to be entirely replaced.

By providing an additional insulating air space and adding a barrier to infiltration, storm windows improve comfort and reduce the potential for condensation on the glass. To be effective and compatible, storm windows must be tight fitting; include a sealing gasket around the glass; align with the meeting rail of the primary sash; match the color of the sash; and be caulked around the frame to reduce infiltration without interfering with any weep holes.

Whether a storm window or the historic window itself, the interior window must be the tighter of the two units to avoid condensation between the windows that can occur in a cold climate that requires indoor heating. Condensation is a particular concern if it collects on the historic window, as can easily happen with a loose-fitting, storm window. While interior storm windows can be as thermally effective as exterior storm windows, appropriate gaskets must be used to ensure that damage-causing condensation does not form on the inside face of the historic window. Opening or removing the interior storm windows during non-heating months also helps to avoid the negative effects of moisture build-up.

Fig. 15. Original steel windows were retained and made operable during the rehabilitation of this historic mill complex. Insulated sliding windows were added on the interior to improve energy efficiency.

For large, steel industrial windows, the addition of interior, insulated sliding glass windows that align with the primary vertical mullions has proven to be a successful treatment that allows the primary window to remain operable.

Insulate basements and crawlspaces. The first step in addressing the insulation of basements and crawl spaces is to decide if they are to be part of the conditioned space and, therefore, within the thermal envelope of the building. If these areas are kept outside the thermal envelope of the building and treated as unconditioned areas, insulating between the floor joists on the underside of the subfloor is generally recommended. Alternatively, rigid foam insulation installed over the bottom of the floor joists on the basement or crawlspace side may also be used. All gaps between the unconditioned and conditioned areas of the building, including the band joists, should be air sealed to prevent air infiltration into the upper levels of the building.

If the crawlspace contains mechanical equipment, or if high levels of moist air enter the crawlspace through vents during the summer months, it is advisable to include the crawlspace within the thermal boundary of the building. As in attics, water vapor can condense on ducts and other equipment located in unconditioned basements and crawlspaces. In the past, building codes routinely required that crawlspaces be treated as non-conditioned spaces and be ventilated. However, this has not proven to be a best practice in all cases. Ventilation through crawlspace vents does not keep the space dry during humid summers. All vents should be sealed and access doors weather-stripped. Rigid foam insulation installed on the interior face of the wall is recommended for basement and crawlspace foundation walls, only after all drainage issues have been addressed. Special attention should be given to ensure that all the joints between the insulation boards are sealed.

A moisture barrier on exposed dirt in a crawlspace is strongly recommended to prevent ground moisture from entering the building envelope. Whenever feasible, pouring a concrete slab over a moisture barrier in crawlspaces or basements with exposed dirt floors should be considered.

Seal and insulate ducts and pipes. A surprisingly enormous amount of energy is wasted when heated or cooled air escapes from supply ducts or when hot attic air leaks into air conditioning return ducts. Based on data collected in energy audits, as much as 35 percent of the conditioned air in an average central air conditioning system may escape from the ducts.[3] Care must be taken to completely seal all connections in the duct system and adequately insulate the ducts, especially in unconditioned spaces. This loss of energy is another reason to treat attics, basements and crawlspaces as conditioned spaces. Ducts located in unconditioned spaces should be insulated based on the recommendations for the appropriate climate zone. Hot water pipes and water heaters should be insulated in unconditioned spaces to retain heat, and all water pipes insulated to prevent freezing in cold climates.

Weather strip doors and add storm doors. Historic wood doors are often significant features and should always be retained, rather than replaced. While an insulated replacement door may have a higher R-value, doors represent a small area of the total building envelope, and the difference in energy savings after replacement would be insignificant. The doors and frames should, however, have proper maintenance including regular painting, and the addition or renewal of weatherstripping. Storm doors can improve the thermal performance of the historic door in cold climates and may be especially recommended for a door with glazing. The design of the storm door should be compatible with the character of the historic door. A fully glazed storm door with a frame that matches the color of a historic door is often an appropriate choice because it allows for the historic door to remain visible. Storm doors are recommended primarily for residential buildings. They are not appropriate for commercial or industrial buildings. These buildings never had storm doors, because the doors were opened frequently or remained open for long periods. It may also not be appropriate to install a storm door on a highly significant entrance door. In some instances,

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the addition of a storm door could add significant heat gain on certain exposures or in hot climates, which could degrade the material or finish of the historic door.

Add awnings and shading devices. Awnings and other shading devices can provide a considerable reduction of heat gain through windows and storefronts. Keeping existing awnings, or replacing them if previously removed, is a relatively easy way to enhance the energy performance of a building. Awnings should only be installed when they are compatible with the building type and character. In building types that did not have awnings historically, interior shades, blinds or shutters should be considered instead.

A wide range of shades, blinds and shutters is available for use in all types of buildings to control heat gain or loss through windows, as well as lighting levels. When properly installed, shades are a simple and cost-effective means of saving energy. Some shade fabrics block only a portion of the light coming in — allowing the use of natural light — while others block all or most of the light. The light-colored or reflective side of the shades should face the window to reduce heat gain. Quilted roller shades feature several layers of fiber batting and sealed edges, and these shades act as both insulation and an air barrier. They control air infiltration more effectively than other soft window treatments. Pleated or cellular shades provide dead air spaces within the cells to add insulation value. These shades, however, do not measurably control air infiltration.

Fig. 16. Historic vestibules retain conditioned air in the living spaces.

Retractable awnings and interior shades should be kept lowered during the summer to prevent unwanted heat gain, but raised in the winter to take advantage of the heat gain. Interior shades, especially those that have some insulation value, should be lowered at night during the winter months.

Light shelves are architectural devices designed to maximize daylight coming through windows by reflecting it deeper into the building. These horizontal elements are usually mounted on the interior above head height in buildings with high ceilings. Although they can provide energy savings, they are not compatible with most historic buildings. In general, light shelves are most likely to be appropriate in some industrial or modernist-style buildings, or where the historic integrity of interior spaces has been lost and they can be installed without being visible from the exterior.

Requires More Alteration

Add interior vestibules. Vestibules that create a secondary air space or "air lock" are effective in reducing air infiltration when the exterior door is open. Exterior and interior vestibules are common architectural features of many historic buildings and should be retained wherever they exist. Adding an interior vestibule may also be appropriate in some historic buildings. For example, new glazed interior vestibules may be compatible changes to historic commercial and industrial buildings. New exterior vestibules will usually result in too great a change to the character of primary entrances, but may be acceptable in very limited instances, such as at rear entrances. Even in such instances, new vestibules should be compatible with the architectural character of the historic building.

Replace windows. Windows are character-defining features of most historic buildings. As discussed previously, the replacement of a historic window with a modern insulated unit is not usually a cost-effective choice. Historic wood windows have a much longer service life than replacement insulated windows, which cannot be easily repaired. Therefore, the sustainable choice is to repair historic windows and upgrade their thermal performance. However, if the historic windows are deteriorated beyond repair, if repair is impractical because of poor design or material performance, or if repair is economically infeasible, then replacement windows may be installed that match the historic windows in size, design, number of panes, muntin profile, color, reflective qualities of the glass, and the same relationship to the window opening.

Other options should also be considered before undertaking complete window replacement. If only the sash is severely deteriorated and the frame is repairable, then only the sash may need to be replaced. If the limited lifespan of insulated glass is not a concern, the new sash can be made to accommodate double glazing.

Where the sashes are sound, but improved thermal performance without the use of a storm window is desired, some windows may be retrofitted with insulated glass. If the existing sash is of sufficient thickness, it may be routed to accept insulated, clear low-e glass without extensive loss of historic material or historic character. When insulated glass is added in a new or retrofitted sash, any weights will have to be modified to accommodate the significant extra weight.

Wall Insulation
Adding wall insulation must be evaluated as part of the overall goal to improve the thermal efficiency of a building and should only be considered after the installation of attic and basement insulation. Can this goal be achieved without the use of wall insulation? Can insulation be added without causing significant loss of historic materials or accelerated deterioration of the wall assembly? Will it be cost effective? These are basic questions that must be answered before a decision is made to insulate the walls and may require professional evaluation.

Add insulation to wood-frame walls. Wood is particularly susceptible to damage from high moisture levels; therefore, addressing existing moisture problems before the addition of insulation is essential. Un-insulated historic wood buildings have a higher rate of air infiltration than modern buildings; while this makes older buildings less efficient thermally, it helps dissipate the unwanted moisture and thus keeps building assemblies dry. Climate, building geometry, the condition of the building materials, construction details, and many other factors make it difficult to assess the impact that adding insulation will have on reducing the air flow and, hence, the drying rate in a particular building. For this reason, predicting the impact of adding insulation to wood-frame walls is difficult.

Insulation Installed in the Wall Cavity: When sheathing is part of the wall assembly, and after any moisture-related problems have been addressed, adding insulation to the interior cavity of a wood-frame wall may be considered. Adding insulation in a wall where there is no sheathing between the siding and studs is more problematic, however, because moisture entering the wall cavity through cracks and joints by wind-driven rain or capillary action will wet the insulation in contact with the back of the siding.

Installing **blown-in insulation**, either dense-packed cellulose or fiberglass, into the wall cavity causes the least amount of damage to historic materials and finishes when there is access to the cavity walls, and it is therefore a common method of insulating wood-frame walls in existing buildings. In most cases, blowing insulation material into the wall cavity requires access through the exterior or interior wall surfaces. When historic plaster, wood paneling, or other interior historic decorative elements are present, accessing the cavity from the exterior is recommended by removing individual siding boards at the top of each wall cavity. In this manner the boards can be reinstalled without unsightly drill holes on the exterior. If the plaster is deteriorated and will require repair, then the wall cavity may be accessed from the interior through holes drilled through non-decorative plaster.

AN INTERIOR
Showing Mineral Wool in Floor, and Walls behind Wire Lath.

Fig. 17. Illustration of insulation from the 1889 trade catalog "The Uses of Mineral Wool in Architecture, Car Building and Steam Engineering". Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada.

Of the materials available, dense-packed cellulose fiber is most commonly used. Its R-value, ability to absorb and diffuse moisture, impediment to air flow, relatively simple installation, and low cost make it a popular choice. Cellulose insulation from most manufacturers is available in at least two grades that are characterized by the type of fire retardant added to the insulation. The fire retardants are usually: (1) a mix of ammonium sulfate and boric acid or (2) boric acid only (termed "borate only"). The recommended type of cellulose insulation for historic buildings is the "borate only" grade, as cellulose treated with sulfates reacts with moisture in the air and forms sulfuric acid which corrodes many metals.

Optimum conditions for installing insulation inside the wall cavity occur in buildings where either the exterior materials or interior finishes have been lost, or where the materials are deteriorated beyond repair and total replacement is necessary. However, wholesale removal of historic materials either on the exterior or interior face of a historic wall to facilitate insulation is not recommended. Even when the exterior materials, such as wood siding, could potentially be reinstalled, this method, no matter how carefully executed, usually results in damage to, and loss of historic materials.

Fig. 18. Dense-packed cellulose insulation is being blown in through holes drilled in the sheathing. Once the operation has been completed, the shingles will be reinstalled. Photo: Edward Minch.

If the wall cavity is open, the opportunity to properly install **batt insulation** is available. A tight fit between the insulation and the adjacent building components is critical to the performance of the insulation. Batt insulation must be cut to the exact length of the cavity. A batt that is too short creates air spaces above and beneath the batt, allowing convection. A batt that is too long will bunch up, creating air pockets. Air pockets and convection currents significantly reduce the thermal performance of insulation. Each wall cavity should be completely filled. Unfaced, friction-fit batt insulation fluffed to fill the entire wall cavity is recommended. Any air gaps between the insulation and the framing or other assembly components must be avoided. Batts should be split around wiring, pipes, ducts and other elements in the wall rather than be pushed or compressed around obstacles.

When adding insulation to the sidewalls, the band joist area between floors in multi-story, platform-framed buildings should be included in the sidewall insulation retrofit. The R-value of the insulation installed in the band joist area should be at least equal to the R-value of the insulation in the adjacent wall cavities. In balloon-framed buildings, the wall cavity is continuous between floors except where fire stops have been inserted.

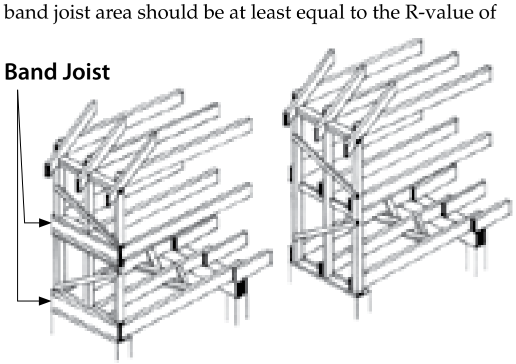

Fig. 19. Platform framing (left) and Balloon framing (right).

The use of **spray foam or foamed-in-place insulation** would appear to have great potential for application in historic wood-frame buildings due to their ability to flow into wall cavities and around irregular obstacles. Their high R-value and function as an air barrier make them a tempting choice. However, their use presents several problems. The injected material bonds tightly to historic materials making its removal difficult, especially if it is encased in an existing wall. The pressure caused by the expansion rate of these foams within a wall can also damage historic material, including breaking the plaster keys or cracking existing plaster finishes.

Insulation Installed on Either Side of the Wall: Batt, rigid foam board, and spray foam insulation are commonly added to the interior face of walls in existing buildings by furring-out the walls to accommodate the additional thickness. However, this often requires the destruction or alteration of important architectural features, such as cornices, base boards, and window trim, and the removal or covering of plaster or other historic wall finishes. Insulation installed in this manner is only recommended in buildings where interior spaces and features lack architectural distinction or have lost significance due to previous alterations.

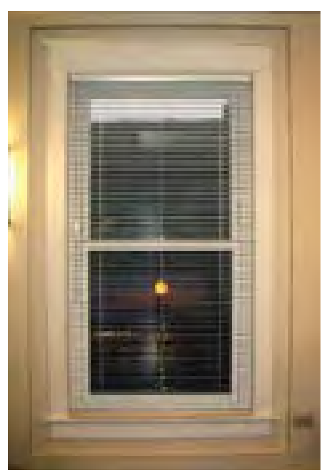

Fig. 20. The walls have been furred out inappropriately around the historic window trim creating an appearance the interior never had historically.

Adding rigid foam insulation to the exterior face of wood-frame buildings, while common practice in new construction, is never an appropriate treatment for historic buildings. Exterior installation of the foam boards requires removal of the existing siding and trim to install one or more layers of polyisocyanurate or polystyrene foam panels. Depending on the amount of insulation added for the particular climate, the wall thickness may be dramatically increased by moving

What about moisture?

The issue of moisture in insulated assemblies is the subject of much debate. While there is no conclusive way to predict all moisture problems, especially in historic buildings, experts seem to agree on a few basic tenants. Exterior materials in insulated buildings become colder in the winter and stay wet longer following a rain event. While the wetness may not pose a problem for robust materials, it may speed the deterioration of some building materials, and lead to more frequent maintenance such as repainting of wood or repointing of masonry. Summer moisture problems are most commonly associated with excessive indoor cooling and the use of interior wall finishes that act as vapor retarders (paint buildup or vinyl wall coverings). Good air-sealing at the ceiling plane usually controls moisture in insulated attics.

Most problems are caused by poor moisture management, poor detailing which does not allow the building to shed water, or inadequate drainage. Therefore, a thorough assessment of the building's ability to keep out unwanted moisture must be done before adding new insulation materials. Refer to Preservation Brief #39: *Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings* for more information. Because of all the uncertainties associated with insulating walls, brick walls in particular, it may be advisable to hire a professional consultant who specializes in the many factors that affect the behavior of moisture in a building and can apply this expertise to the unique characteristics of a particular structure. Sophisticated tools such as computer modeling are useful to predict the performance of building assemblies, but they require interpretation by a skilled practitioner and the results are only as good as the data entered. It is important to remember, there are no reliable prescriptive measures to prevent moisture problems.[4]

Vapor Retarders (Barriers): Vapor retardants are commonly used in modern construction to manage the diffusion of moisture into wall cavities and attics. For vapor retardants to work properly, however, they must be continuous, which makes their installation difficult in existing buildings, and therefore generally not recommended. Even in new construction, installation of vapor retardants is not always indicated. Formerly, the recommended treatment was to install a vapor retardant toward the heated side of the wall (toward the interior space in cold climates and toward the exterior in hot climates). DOE now recommends that if moisture moves both to the interior and exterior of a building for significant parts of the year, it is better not to use a vapor retarder at all.[5]

the siding as much as 4 inches out from the sheathing. Even if the historic siding and trim could be removed and reapplied without significant damage, the historic relationship of windows to walls, walls to eaves, and eaves to roof would be altered, which would compromise the architectural integrity and appearance of the historic building.

Solid Masonry Walls: As with frame buildings, installing insulation on the interior walls of a historic masonry structure should be avoided when it would involve covering or removing important architectural features and finishes, or when the added thickness would significantly alter the historic character of the interior. The addition of insulation on solid masonry walls in cold climates results in a decreased drying rate, an increased frequency of freeze-thaw cycles, and prolonged periods of warmer and colder temperatures of the masonry. These changes can have a direct effect on the durability of materials.

Fig. 21. The interior face of a brick masonry wall shows damage that resulted from the installation of a vapor retardant (foil facing) and thermal insulation. Photo: Simpson Gumpertz & Heger.

Depending on the type of masonry, exterior masonry walls can absorb a significant amount of water when it rains. Masonry walls dry both toward the exterior and the interior. When insulation is added to the interior side of a masonry wall, the insulation material reduces the drying rate of the wall toward the interior, causing the wall to stay wet for longer periods of time. Depending on the local climate, this could result in damage to the historic masonry, damage to interior finishes, and deterioration of wood or steel structural components imbedded in the wall. Masonry walls of buildings that are heated during the winter benefit from the transfer of heat from the inside to the outside face of the walls. This thermal transfer protects the exterior face of the wall by reducing the possibility of water freezing in the outer layers of the wall, particularly in cold and wet climates. The addition of insulation on the interior of the wall not only prolongs the drying rate of the exterior masonry wall, but keeps it colder as well, thereby increasing the potential for damage due to freeze-thaw cycles.[6]

Extreme swings in temperature may also have negative effects on a historic masonry wall. The addition of insulation materials to a historic masonry wall decreases its ability to transfer heat; thus, walls tend to stay warm or cold for longer periods of time. In addition, walls exposed to prolonged solar radiation during winter months can also be subject to higher swings in surface temperature during the day. Deleterious effects due to stress caused by expansion and contraction of the building assembly components can result.

Buildings with masonry materials of higher porosity, such as those built with low-fired brick, or certain soft stones, are particularly susceptible to freeze-thaw cycles and must be carefully evaluated prior to adding insulation. Inspection of the masonry in areas that are not heated such as parapets, exposed wing walls, or other parts of the building is particularly important. A noticeable difference in the amount of spalling or sanding of the masonry in these areas could predict that the same type of deterioration will occur throughout the building after the walls are insulated. Brick that was fired at lower temperatures was often used on the inside face of the wall or on secondary elevations. Even masonry walls faced with more robust materials such as granite may have brick, rubble, mortar or other less durable materials as backing.

Spray foams are being used for insulation in many masonry buildings. Their ability to be applied over irregular surfaces, provide good air tightness, and continuity at intersections between, walls, ceilings, floors and window perimeters makes them well suited for use in existing buildings. However, the long-term effects of adding either open- or closed-cell foams to insulate historic masonry walls as well as performance of these products have not been adequately documented. Use of foam insulation in buildings with poor quality masonry or uncontrolled rising damp problems should be avoided.

Periodic monitoring of the condition of insulated masonry walls is strongly recommended regardless of the insulation material added.

Install cool roofs and green roofs: Cool roofs and vegetated "green roofs" help to reduce the heat gain from the roof, thereby cooling the building and its environment. Cool roofs include reflective metal roofs, light-colored or white roofs, and fiberglass shingles that have a coating of reflective crystals. All of these roofing materials reflect the sun's radiation away from the building, which lessens heat gain, resulting in a reduction of the cooling load. Cool roofs are generally not practical in northern climates where buildings benefit from the added heat gain of a dark-colored roof during colder months. Cool and green roofs are appropriate for use on historic buildings only when they are compatible with their architectural character, such as flat roofs with no visibility. A white-colored roof that is readily visible is not appropriate for historic metal roofs that were traditionally painted a dark color, such as green or iron oxide red. A white reflective roof is most suitable on flat roofed historic buildings. If a historic building has a slate roof, for example, removing the slate to install a metal roof is not a compatible treatment. It is never appropriate to remove a historic roof if the material is in good or repairable condition to install a cool roof. However, if the roof has previously been changed to an asphalt shingle roof, fiberglass shingles with special reflective granules may be an appropriate replacement.

Fig. 22. Installation of both cool and green roofs in an urban environment.

A green roof consists of a thin layer of vegetation planted over a waterproofing system or in trays installed on top of an existing flat or slightly sloped roof. Green roofs are primarily beneficial in urban contexts to reduce the heat island effect in cities and to control storm water run-off. A green roof also reduces the cooling load of the building and helps cool the surrounding urban environment, filters air, collects and filters storm water, and can provide urban amenities, including vegetable gardens, for building occupants. The impact of increased structural loads, added moisture, and potential for leaks must be considered before installing a green roof. A green roof is compatible on a historic building only if the plantings are not visible above the roofline as seen from below.

Alternative Energy Sources

Although not the focus of this publication, alternative energy sources are dealt with in more detail in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* and other NPS publications. Devices that utilize solar, geothermal, wind and other sources of energy to help reduce consumption of fossil fuel-generated energy can often be successfully incorporated in historic building retrofits. However, if the alterations or costs required to install these devices do not make their installation economically feasible, buying power generated off site from renewable sources may also be a good alternative. The use of most alternative energy strategies should be pursued only after all other upgrades have been implemented to make the building more energy efficient because their initial installation cost is usually high.

Solar Energy: Man has sought to harness the power of solar energy to heat, cool, and illuminate buildings throughout history. Construction techniques and design strategies that utilize building materials and components to collect, store, and release heat from the sun are described as "passive solar design." As previously discussed, many historic buildings include passive solar features that should be retained and may be enhanced. Compatible additions to historic buildings also offer opportunities to incorporate passive solar features. Active solar devices, such as solar heat collectors and photovoltaic systems, can be added to historic buildings to decrease reliance on grid-source fossil-fuel powered electricity. Incorporating active solar devices in existing buildings is becoming more common as solar collector technology advances. Adding this technology to historic buildings, however, must be done in a manner that has a minimal impact on historic roofing materials and preserves their character by placing them in locations with limited or no visibility, i.e., on flat roofs at a low angle or on a secondary roof slope.

Solar collectors used to heat water can be relatively simple. More complex solar collectors heat a fluid or air that is then pumped through the system to heat or cool interior spaces. Photovoltaic panels (PV) transform solar radiation into electricity. The greatest potential for the use of PV panels in historic buildings is on buildings with large flat roofs, high parapets, or roof configurations that allow solar panels to be installed without being prominently visible. The feasibility of installing solar devices in small commercial and residential buildings will depend on installation costs, conventional energy rates, and available incentives, all of which will vary with time and location. The same factors apply to the use of solar collectors for heating water, but smaller installations may meet a building's need and the technology has a considerable track record.

Fig. 23. Solar collectors installed in a compatible manner on low sloping sawtooth monitors. Top Photo: Neil Mishalov, Berkeley, CA.

Geothermal Energy: The use of the earth's heat is another source of readily-accessible clean energy. The most common systems that utilize this form of energy are geothermal heat pumps, also known as geo-exchange, earth-coupled, ground-source, or water-source heat pumps. Introduced in the late 1940s, geothermal heat pumps rely on heat from the constant temperature of the earth, unlike most other heat pumps which use the outside air temperature as the exchange medium. This makes geothermal heat pumps more efficient than conventional heat pumps because they do not require an electric back-up heat source during prolonged periods of cold weather.

There are many reasons that geothermal heat pumps are well suited for use in historic buildings. They can reduce the amount of energy consumption and emissions considerably, compared to the air exchange systems or electric resistance heating of conventional HVAC systems. They require less equipment space, have fewer moving parts, provide better zone space conditioning, and maintain better internal humidity levels. Geothermal heat pumps are also quieter because they do not require external air compressors. Despite higher installation costs, geothermal systems offer long-term operational savings and adaptability that may make them a worthwhile investment in some historic buildings.

Wind Energy. For historic properties in rural areas, where wind power has been utilized historically, installation of a wind mill or turbine may be suitable to the historic setting and cost effective. Before choosing to install wind-powered equipment, the potential benefit and the impact on the historic character of the building, the site and surrounding historic district must be analyzed. In order for the turbines to work effectively, average wind speeds of 10 mph or higher are necessary. This technology may not be practical in more densely-populated areas sheltered from winds or regions where winds are not consistent. In cities with tall buildings, there is potential for installing relatively small rooftop turbines that are not visible from the ground. However, because of the initial cost and size of some turbines, it is generally more practical to purchase wind power from an off-site wind farm through the local utility company.

Summary

With careful planning, the energy efficiency of historic buildings can be optimized without negatively impacting their historic character and integrity. Measuring the energy performance of buildings after improvements are completed must not be overlooked, as it is the only way to verify that the treatments have had the intended effect. Ongoing monitoring of buildings and their components after alterations to historic building assemblies are completed can prevent irreparable damage to historic materials. This, along with regular maintenance, can ensure the long-term preservation of our historic built environment and the sustainable use of our resources.

End Notes

[1] John Krigger and Chris Dorsi, "Air Leakage," in *Residential Energy: Cost Savings and Comfort for Existing Buildings.* Helena, Montana: Saturn Resource Management, 2004, p. 73.

[2] *Measured Winter Performance of Storm Windows.* A 2002 study done by Lawrence Berkeley National Labs.

[3] *Midwest Weatherization Best Practices Field Guide.* Prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program, May 2007, p. 157.

[4] Adapted from comments provided by William B. Rose, Research Architect, University of Illinois, April 2011.

[5] U.S. Department of Energy, *Insulation Fact Sheet*, DOE/CE-0180, 2008, p.14.

[6] Bradford S. Carpenter, P.E., LEED AP et al., *The Designer's Dilemma: Modern Performance Expectations and Historic Masonry Walls* (paper presented at the RCI 2010 Symposium on Building Envelope Technology, San Antonio, Texas).

Acknowledgements

Jo Ellen Hensley, Senior Architectural Historian, LEED Green Associate, and Antonio Aguilar, Senior Historical Architect, Technical Preservation Services Branch, National Park Service, revised *Preservation Brief 3: Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings*, written by Baird M. Smith, FAIA and published in 1978. The revised Brief contains expanded and updated information on the subject of energy efficiency in historic buildings. A number of individuals and organizations have contributed their time and expertise in the development of this Brief, beginning with the participants of the "Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings—A Round Table Symposium," Washington, DC, 2002. Special thanks go to Mike Jackson, FAIA, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Edward Minch, Energy Services Group; William B. Rose, Research Architect, University of Illinois; Bradford S. Carpenter, P.E., LEED AP; and Mark Thaler, AIA, for their technical advice. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Sustainability Task Force, the General Services Administration's Center for Historic Buildings, and our colleagues at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training commented on the manuscript. In addition, the Technical Preservation Services professional staff, in particular Anne Grimmer, Michael J. Auer and John Sandor, provided critical and constructive review of the publication.

This publication has been prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, which directs the Secretary of the Interior to develop and make available information concerning historic properties. Additional information about the programs of Technical Preservation Services is available on the website at **www.nps.gov/tps.** Comments about this publication should be addressed to: Charles E. Fisher, Technical Preservation Publications Program Manager, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, 1201 Eye Street, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, DC 20005. *Cover photograph: Farmhouse with energy efficient historic storm windows.*

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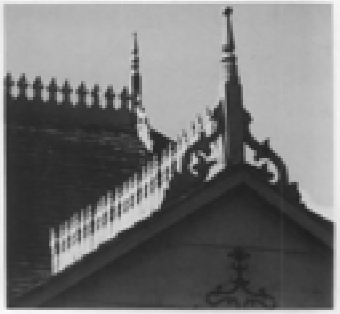
Preservation Briefs: Roofing for Historic Buildings

4 PRESERVATION BRIEFS



HABS

Roofing for Historic Buildings

Sarah M. Sweetser

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

Significance of the Roof

A weather-tight roof is basic in the preservation of a structure, regardless of its age, size, or design. In the system that allows a building to work as a shelter, the roof sheds the rain, shades from the sun, and buffers the weather.

During some periods in the history of architecture, the roof imparts much of the architectural character. It defines the style and contributes to the building's aesthetics. The hipped roofs of Georgian architecture, the turrets of Queen Anne, the Mansard roofs, and the graceful slopes of the Shingle Style and Bungalow designs are examples of the use of roofing as a major design feature.

But no matter how decorative the patterning or how compelling the form, the roof is a highly vulnerable element of a shelter that will inevitable fail. A poor roof will permit the accelerated deterioration of historic building materials—masonry, wood, plaster, paint—and will cause general disintegration of the basic structure. Furthermore, there is an urgency involved in repairing a leaky roof since such repair costs will quickly become prohibitive. Although such action is desirable as soon as a failure is discovered, temporary patching methods should be carefully chosen to prevent inadvertent damage to sound or historic roofing materials and related features. Before any repair work is performed, the historic value of the materials used on the roof should be understood. Then a complete internal and external inspection of the roof should be planned to determine all the causes of failure and to identify the alternatives for repair or replacement of the roofing.

Historic Roofing Materials in America

Clay Tile: European settlers used clay tile for roofing as early as the mid-17th century; many pantiles (S-curved tiles), as well as flat roofing tiles, were used in Jamestown, Virginia. In some cities such as New York and Boston, clay was popularly used as a precaution against such fire as those that engulfed London in 1666 and scorched Boston in 1679.

Tiles roofs found in the mid-18th century Moravian settlements in Pennsylvania closely resembled those found in Germany. Typically, the tiles were 14–15" long, 6–7" wide with a curved butt. A lug on the back allowed the tiles to hang on the lathing without nails or pegs. The tile surface was usually scored with finger marks to promote drainage. In the Southwest, the tile roofs of the Spanish missionaries (mission tiles) were first manufactured (ca. 1780) at the Mission San Antonio de Padua in California. These semicircular tiles were

Repairs on this pantile roof were made with new tiles held in place with metal hangers. (Main Building, Ellis Island, New York)

made by molding clay over sections of logs, and they were generally 22" long and tapered in width.

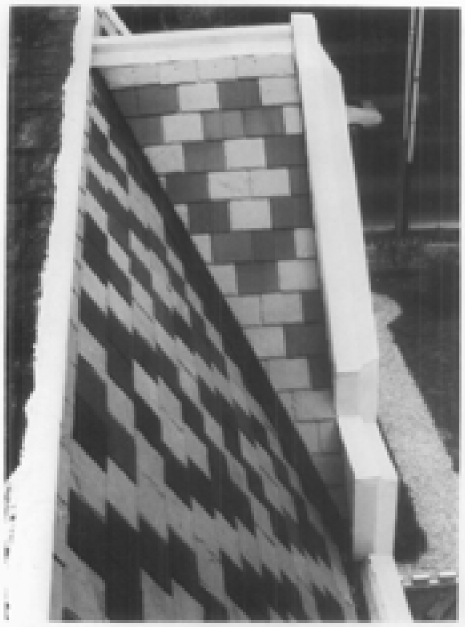
The plain or flat rectangular tiles most commonly used from the 17th through the beginning of the 19th century measured about 10" by 6" by ½", and had two holes at one end for a nail or peg fastener. Sometimes mortar was applied between the courses to secure the tiles in a heavy wind.

In the mid-19th century, tile roofs were often replaced by sheet-metal roofs, which were lighter and easier to install and maintain. However, by the turn of the century, the Romanesque Revival and Mission style buildings created a new demand and popularity for this picturesque roofing material.

Slate: Another practice settlers brought to the New World was slate roofing. Evidence of roofing slates have been found also among the ruins of mid-17th-century Jamestown. But because of the cost and the time required to obtain the material, which was mostly imported from Wales, the use of slate was initially limited. Even in Philadelphia (the second largest city in the English-speaking world at the time of the Revolution) slates were so rare that "The Slate Roof House" distinctly referred to William Penn's home built late in the 1600s. Sources of native slate were known to exist along the eastern seaboard from Maine to Virginia, but difficulties in inland transportation limited its availability to the cities, and contributed to its expense. Welsh slate continued to be imported until the development of canals and railroads in the mid-19th century made American slate more accessible and economical.

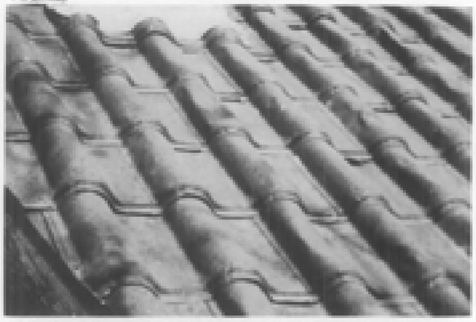
Slate was popular for its durability, fireproof qualities, and

Preservation Briefs: Roofing for Historic Buildings



The Victorians loved to used different colored slates to create decorative patterns on their roofs, an effect which cannot be easily duplicated by substitute materials. Before any repair work on a roof such as this, the slate sizes, colors, and position of the patterning should be carefully recorded to assure proper replacement. (Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, photo courtesy of William D. Hershey)

Replacement of particular historic details is important to the individual historic character of a roof, such as the treatment at the eaves of this rounded butt wood shingle roof. Also note that the surface of the roof was carefully sloped to drain water away from the side of the dormer. In the restoration, this function was augmented with the addition of carefully concealed modern metal flashing. (Mount Vernon, Virginia)



Galvanized sheet-metal shingles imitating the appearance of pantiles remained popular from the second half of the 19th century into the 20th century. (Episcopal Church, now the Jerome Historical Society Building, Jerome, Arizona, 1927)

aesthetic potential. Because slate was available in different colors (red, green, purple, and blue-gray), it was an effective material for decorative patterns on many 19th-century roofs (Gothic and Mansard styles). Slate continued to be used well into the 20th century, notably on many Tudor revival style buildings of the 1920s.

Shingles: Wood shingles were popular throughout the country in all periods of building history. The size and shape of the shingles as well as the detailing of the shingle roof differed according to regional craft practices. People within particular regions developed preferences for the local species of wood that most suited their purposes. In New England and the Delaware Valley, white pine was frequently used: in the South, cypress and oak; in the far west, red cedar or redwood. Sometimes a protective coating was applied to increase the durability of the shingle such as a mixture of brick dust and fish oil, or a paint made of red iron oxide and linseed oil.

Commonly in urban areas, wooden roofs were replaced with more fire resistant materials, but in rural areas this was not a major concern. On many Victorian country houses, the practice of wood shingling survived the technological advances of metal roofing in the 19th century, and near the turn of the century enjoyed a full revival in its namesake, the Shingle Style. Colonial revival and the Bungalow styles in the 20th century assured wood shingles a place as one of the most fashionable, domestic roofing materials.

Metal: Metal roofing in America is principally a 19th-century phenomenon. Before then the only metals commonly used were lead and copper. For example, a lead roof covered "Rosewell," one of the grandest mansions in 18th-century Virginia. But more often, lead was used for protective flashing. Lead, as well as copper, covered roof surfaces where wood, tile, or slate shingles were inappropriate because of the roof's pitch or shape.

Copper with standing seams covered some of the more notable early American roofs including that of Christ Church (1727–1744) in Philadelphia. Flat-seamed copper was used on many domes and cupolas. The copper sheets were imported from England until the end of the 18th century when facilities for rolling sheet metal were developed in America.

Sheet iron was first known to have been manufactured here by the Revolutionary War financier, Robert Morris, who had a rolling mill near Trenton, New Jersey. At his mill Morris produced the roof of his own Philadelphia mansion, which he started in 1794. The architect Benjamin H. Latrobe used sheet iron to replace the roof on Princeton's "Nassau Hall," which had been gutted by fire in 1802.

The method for corrugating iron was originally patented in England in 1829. Corrugating stiffened the sheets, and allowed greater span over a lighter framework, as well as reduced installation time and labor. In 1834 the American architect William Strickland proposed corrugated iron to cover his design for the market place in Philadelphia.

Galvanizing with zinc to protect the base metal from rust was developed in France in 1837. By the 1850s the material was used on post offices and customhouses, as well as on train sheds and factories. In 1857 one of the first metal roofs in the

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Repeated repair with asphalt, which cracks as it hardens, has created a blistered surface on this sheet-metal roof and built-in gutter, which will retain water. Repairs could be made by carefully heating and scraping the surface clean, repairing the holes in the metal with a flexible mastic compound or a metal patch, and coating the surface with a fibre paint. (Roane County Courthouse, Kingston, Tennessee, photo courtesy of Building Conservation Technology, Inc.)

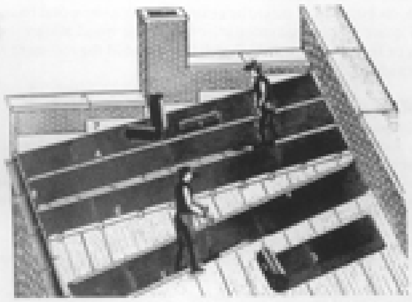
South was installed on the U.S. Mint in New Orleans. The Mint was thereby "fireproofed" with a 20-gauge galvanized, corrugated iron roof on iron trusses.

Tin-plate iron, commonly called "tin roofing," was used extensively in Canada in the 18th century, but it was not as common in the United States until later. Thomas Jefferson was an early advocate of tin roofing, and he installed a standing-seam tin roof on "Monticello" (ca. 1770–1802). The Arch Street Meetinghouse (1804) in Philadelphia had tin shingles laid in a herringbone pattern on a "piazza" roof.

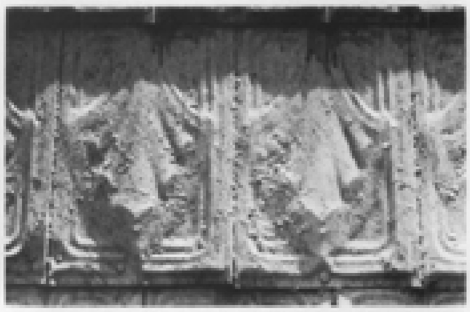
However, once rolling mills were established in this country, the low cost, light weight, and low maintenance of tin plate made it the most common roofing material. Embossed tin shingles, whose surfaces created interesting patterns, were popular throughout the country in the late 19th century. Tin roofs were kept well-painted, usually red; or, as the architect A. J. Davis suggested, in a color to imitate the green patina of copper.

Terne plate differed from tin plate in that the iron was dipped in an alloy of lead and tin, giving it a duller finish. Historic, as well as modern, documentation often confuses the two, so much that it is difficult to determine how often actual "terne" was used.

Zinc came into use in the 1820s, at the same time tin plate was becoming popular. Although a less expensive substitute for lead, its advantages were controversial, and it was never widely used in this country.



A Chicago firm's catalog dated 1896 illustrates a method of unrolling, turning the edges, and finishing the standing seam on a metal roof.



Tin shingles, commonly embossed to imitate wood or tile, or with a decorative design, were popular as an inexpensive, textured roofing material. These shingles 8½ inch by 12½ inch on the exposed surface) were designed with interlocking edges, but they have been repaired by surface nailing, which may cause future leakage. (Ballard House, Yorktown, Virgina, photo by Gordie Whittington, National Park Service)

Other Materials: Asphalt shingles and roll roofing were used in the 1890s. Many roofs of asbestos, aluminum, stainless steel, galvinized steel, and lead-coated copper may soon have historic values as well. Awareness of these and other traditions of roofing materials and their detailing will contribute to more sensitive preservation treatments.

Locating the Problem

Failures of Surface Materials

When trouble occurs, it is important to contact a professional, either an architect, a reputable roofing contractor, or a craftsman familiar with the inherent characteristics of the particular historic roofing system involved. These professionals may be able to advise on immediate patching procedures and help plan more permanent repairs. A thorough examination of the roof should start with an appraisal of the existing condition and quality of the roofing material itself. Particular attention should be given to any southern slope because year-round exposure to direct sun may cause it to break down first.

Wood: Some historic roofing materials have limited life expectancies because of normal organic decay and "wear." For example, the flat surfaces of wood shingles erode from exposure to rain and ultraviolet rays. Some species are more hardy than others, and heartwood, for example, is stronger and more durable than sapwood.

Ideally, shingles are split with the grain perpendicular to

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the surface. This is because if shingles are sawn across the grain, moisture may enter the grain and cause the wood to deteriorate. Prolonged moisture on or in the wood allows moss or fungi to grow, which will further hold the moisture and cause rot.

Metal: Of the inorganic roofing materials used on historic buildings, the most common are perhaps the sheet metals: lead, copper, zinc, tin plate, terne plate, and galvanized iron. In varying degrees each of these sheet metals are likely to deteriorate from chemical action by pitting or streaking. This can be caused by airborn pollutants; acid rainwater; acids from lichen or moss; alkalis found in lime mortars or portland cement, which might be on adjoining features and washes down on the roof surface; or tannic acids from adjacent wood sheathings or shingles made of red cedar or oak.

Corrosion from "galvanic action" occurs when dissimilar metals, such as copper and iron, are used in direct contact. Corrosion may also occur even though the metals are physically separated; one of the metals will react chemically against the other in the presence of an electrolyte such as rainwater. In roofing, this situation might occur when either a copper roof is decorated with iron cresting, or when steel nails are used in copper sheets. In some instances the corrosion can be prevented by inserting a plastic insulator between the dissimilar materials. Ideally, the fasteners should be a metal sympathetic to those involved.

Iron rusts unless it is well-painted or plated. Historically this problem was avoided by use of tin plating or galvinizing. But this method is durable only as long as the coating remains intact. Once the plating is worn or damaged, the exposed iron will rust. Therefore, any iron-based roofing material needs to be undercoated, and its surface needs to be kept well-painted to prevent corrosion.

One cause of sheet metal deterioration is fatigue. Depending upon the size and the gauge of the metal sheets, wear and metal failure can occur at the joints or at any protrusions in the sheathing as a result from the metal's alternating movement to thermal changes. Lead will tear because of "creep," or the gravitational stress that causes the material to move down the roof slope.

Slate: Perhaps the most durable roofing materials are slate and tile. Seemingly indestructable, both vary in quality. Some slates are hard and tough without being brittle. Soft slates are more subject to erosion and to attack by airborne and rainwater chemicals, which cause the slates to wear at nail holes, to delaminate, or to break. In winter, slate is very susceptible to breakage by ice, or ice dams.

Tile: Tiles will weather well, but tend to crack or break if hit, as by tree branches, or if they are walked on improperly. Like slates, tiles cannot support much weight. Low quality tiles that have been insufficiently fired during manufacture, will craze and spall under the effects of freeze and thaw cycles on their porous surfaces.

Failures of Support Systems

Once the condition of the roofing material has been determined, the related features and support systems should be examined on the exterior and on the interior of the roof. The gutters and downspouts need periodic cleaning and maintenance since a variety of debris fill them, causing water to back up and seep under roofing units. Water will eventually cause fasteners, sheathing, and roofing structure to deteriorate. During winter, the daily freeze-thaw cycles can cause ice floes to develop under the roof surface. The pressure from these ice floes will dislodge the roofing material, especially slates, shingles, or tiles. Moreover, the buildup of ice dams above the gutters can trap enough moisture to rot the sheathing or the structural members.

Many large public buildings have built-in gutters set within the perimeter of the roof. The downspouts for these gutters may run within the walls of the building, or drainage may be through the roof surface or through a parapet to exterior downspouts. These systems can be effective if properly maintained; however, if the roof slope is inadequate for good runoff, or if the traps are allowed to clog, rainwater will form pools on the roof surface. Interior downspouts can collect debris and thus back up, perhaps leaking water into the surrounding walls. Exterior downspouts may fill with water, which in cold weather may freeze and crack the pipes. Conduits from the built-in gutter to the exterior downspout may also leak water into the surrounding roof structure or walls.

Failure of the flashing system is usually a major cause of roof deterioration. Flashing should be carefully inspected for failure caused by either poor workmanship, thermal stress, or metal deterioration (both of flashing material itself and of the fasteners). With many roofing materials, the replacement of flashing on an existing roof is a major operation, which may require taking up large sections of the roof surface. Therefore, the installation of top quality flashing material on

This detail shows slate delamination caused by a combination of weathering and pollution. In addition, the slates have eroded around the repair nails, incorrectly placed in the exposed surface of the slates. (Lower Pontalba Building, New Orleans, photo courtesy of Building Conservation Technology, Inc.)

Temporary stabilization or "mothballing" with materials such as plywood and building paper can protect the roof of a project until it can be properly repaired or replaced. (Narbonne House, Salem, Massachusetts)

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These two views of the same house demonstrate how the use of a substitute material can drastically affect the overall character of a structure. The textural interest of the original tile roof was lost with the use of asphalt shingles. Recent preservation efforts are replacing the tile roof. (Frank House, Kearney, Nebraska, photo courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska)

a new or replaced roof should be a primary consideration. *Remember, some roofing and flashing materials are not compatible.*

Roof fasteners and clips should also be made of a material compatible with all other materials used, or coated to prevent rust. For example, the tannic acid in oak will corrode iron nails. Some roofs such as slate and sheet metals may fail if nailed too rigidly.

If the roof structure appears sound and nothing indicates recent movement, the area to be examined most closely is the roof substrate—the sheathing or the battens. The danger spots would be near the roof plates, under any exterior patches, at the intersections of the roof planes, or at vertical surfaces such as dormers. Water penetration, indicating a breach in the roofing surface or flashing, should be readily apparent, usually as a damp spot or stain. Probing with a small pen knife may reveal any rot which may indicate previously undetected damage to the roofing membrane. Insect infestation evident by small exit holes and frass (a sawdust-like debris) should also be noted. Condensation on the underside of the roofing is undesirable and indicates improper ventilation. Moisture will have an adverse effect on any roofing material; a good roof stays dry inside and out.

Repair or Replace

Understanding potential weaknesses of roofing material also requires knowledge of repair difficulties. Individual slates can be replaced normally without major disruption to the rest of the roof, but replacing flashing on a slate roof can require substantial removal of surrounding slates. If it is the substrate or a support material that has deteriorated, many surface materials such as slate or tile can be reused if handled carefully during the repair. Such problems should be evaluated at the outset of any project to determine if the roof can be effectively patched, or if it should be completely replaced.

Will the repairs be effective? Maintenance costs tend to multiply once trouble starts. As the cost of labor escalates, repeated repairs could soon equal the cost of a new roof.

The more durable the surface is initially, the easier it will be to maintain. Some roofing materials such as slate are expensive to install, but if top quality slate and flashing are used, it will last 40–60 years with minimal maintenance. Although the installation cost of the roof will be high, low maintenance needs will make the lifetime cost of the roof less expensive.

Historical Research

In a restoration project, research of documents and physical investigation of the building usually will establish the roof's history. Documentary research should include any original plans or building specifications, early insurance surveys, newspaper descriptions, or the personal papers and files of people who owned or were involved in the history of the building. Old photographs of the building might provide evidence of missing details.

Along with a thorough understanding of any written history of the building, a physical investigation of the roofing and its structure may reveal information about the roof's construction history. Starting with an overall impression of the structure, are there any changes in the roof slope, its configuration, or roofing materials? Perhaps there are obvious patches or changes in patterning of exterior brickwork where a gable roof was changed to a gambrel, or where a whole upper story was added. Perhaps there are obvious stylistic changes in the roof line, dormers, or ornamentation. These observations could help one understand any important alteration, and could help establish the direction of further investigation.

Because most roofs are physically out of the range of careful scrutiny, the ''principle of least effort'' has probably limited the extent and quality of previous patching or replacing, and usually considerable evidence of an earlier roof surface remains. Sometimes the older roof will be found as an underlayment of the current exposed roof. Original roofing may still be intact in awkward places under later features on a roof. Often if there is any unfinished attic space, remnants of roofing may have been dropped and left when the roof was being built or repaired. If the configuration of the roof has been changed, some of the original material might still be in place under the existing roof. Sometimes whole sections of the roof and roof framing will have been left intact under the higher roof. The profile and/or flashing of the earlier roof may be apparent on the interior of the walls at the level of the alteration. If the sheathing or lathing appears to have survived changes in the roofing surface, they may contain evidence of the roofing systems. These may appear either as dirt marks, which provide ''shadows'' of a roofing material, or as nails broken or driven down into the wood, rather than pulled out during previous alterations or repairs. Wooden headers in the roof framing may indicate that earlier chimneys or skylights have been removed. Any metal ornamentation that might have existed may be indicated by anchors or unusual markings along the ridge or at other edges of the roof. This primary

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evidence is essential for a full understanding of the roof's history.

Caution should be taken in dating early "fabric" on the evidence of a single item, as recycling of materials is not a mid-20th-century innovation. Carpenters have been reusing materials, sheathing, and framing members in the interest of economy for centuries. Therefore, any analysis of the materials found, such as nails or sawmarks on the wood, requires an accurate knowledge of the history of local building practices before any final conclusion can be accurately reached. It is helpful to establish a sequence of construction history for the roof and roofing materials; any historic fabric or pertinent evidence in the roof should be photographed, measured, and recorded for future reference.

During the repair work, useful evidence might unexpectedly appear. It is essential that records be kept of any type of work on a historic building, before, during, and after the project. Photographs are generally the easiest and fastest method, and should include overall views and details at the gutters, flashing, dormers, chimneys, valleys, ridges, and eaves. All photographs should be immediately labeled to insure accurate identification at a later date. Any patterning or design on the roofing deserves particular attention. For example, slate roofs are often decorative and have subtle changes in size, color, and texture, such as a gradually decreasing coursing length from the eave to the peak. If not carefully noted before a project begins, there may be problems in replacing the surface. The standard reference for this phase of the work is *Recording Historic Buildings*, compiled by Harley J. McKee for the Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1970.

Replacing the Historic Roofing Material

Professional advice will be needed to assess the various aspects of replacing a historic roof. With some exceptions, most historic roofing materials are available today. If not, an architect or preservation group who has previously worked with the same type material may be able to recommend suppliers. Special roofing materials, such as tile or embossed metal shingles, can be produced by manufacturers of related products that are commonly used elsewhere, either on the exterior or interior of a structure. With some creative thinking and research, the historic materials usually can be found.

Because of the roof's visibility, the slate detailing around the dormers is important to the character of this structure. Note how the slates swirl from a horizontal pattern on the main roof to a diamond pattern on the dormer roofs and side walls. (18th and Que Streets, NW, Washington, D.C.)

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Craft Practices: Determining the craft practices used in the installation of a historic roof is another major concern in roof restoration. Early builders took great pride in their work, and experience has shown that the "rustic" or irregular designs commercially labled "Early American" are a 20th-century invention. For example, historically, wood shingles underwent several distinct operations in their manufacture including splitting by hand, and smoothing the surface with a draw knife. In modern nomenclature, the same item would be a "tapersplit" shingle which has been dressed. Unfortunately, the rustic appearance of today's commercially available "handsplit" and re-sawn shingle bears no resemblance to the hand-made roofing materials used on early American buildings.

Good design and quality materials for the roof surface, fastenings, and flashing minimize roofing failures. This is essential on roofs such as on the National Cathedral where a thorough maintenance inspection and minor repairs cannot be done easily without special scaffolding. However, the success of the roof on any structure depends on frequent cleaning and repair of the gutter system. (Washington, D.C., photo courtesy of John Burns, A.I.A.)

Early craftsmen worked with a great deal of common sense; they understood their materials. For example they knew that wood shingles should be relatively narrow; shingles much wider than about 6" would split when walked on, or they may curl or crack from varying temperature and moisture. It is important to understand these aspects of craftsmanship, remembering that people wanted their roofs to be weather-tight and to last a long time. The recent use of "mother-goose" shingles on historic structures is a gross underestimation of the early craftsman's skills.

Supervision: Finding a modern craftsman to reproduce historic details may take some effort. It may even involve some special instruction to raise his understanding of certain historic craft practices. At the same time, it may be pointless (and expensive) to follow historic craft practices in any construction that will not be visible on the finished product. But if the roofing details are readily visible, their appearance should be based on architectural evidence or on historic prototypes. For instance, 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.

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Many older roofing practices are no longer performed because of modern improvements. Research and review of specific detailing in the roof with the contractor before beginning the project is highly recommended. For example, one early craft practice was to finish the ridge of a wood shingle roof with a roof "comb"—that is, the top course of one slope of the roof was extended uniformly beyond the peak to shield the ridge, and to provide some weather protection for the raw horizontal edges of the shingles on the other slope. If the "comb" is known to have been the correct detail, it should be used. Though this method leaves the top course vulnerable to the weather, a disguised strip of flashing will strengthen this weak point.

Detail drawings or a sample mock-up will help ensure that the contractor or craftsman understands the scope and special requirements of the project. It should never be assumed that the modern carpenter, slater, sheet metal worker, or roofer will know all the historic details. Supervision is as important as any other stage of the process.

Special problems inherent in the design of an elaborate historic roof can be controlled through the use of good materials and regular maintenance. The shape and detailing are essential elements of the building's historic character, and should not be modified, despite the use of alternative surface materials. (Gamwell House, Bellingham, Washington)

Alternative Materials

The use of the historic roofing material on a structure may be restricted by building codes or by the availability of the materials, in which case an appropriate alternative will have to be found.

Some municipal building codes allow variances for roofing materials in historic districts. In other instances, individual variances may be obtained. Most modern heating and cooking is fueled by gas, electricity, or oil—none of which emit the hot embers that historically have been the cause of roof fires. Where wood burning fireplaces or stoves are used, spark arrestor screens at the top of the chimneys help to prevent flaming material from escaping, thus reducing the number of fires that start at the roof. In most states, insurance rates have been equalized to reflect revised considerations for the risks involved with various roofing materials.

In a rehabilitation project, there may be valid reasons for replacing the roof with a material other than the original. The historic roofing may no longer be available, or the cost of obtaining specially fabricated materials may be prohibitive. But the decision to use an alternative material should be weighed carefully against the primary concern to keep the historic character of the building. If the roof is flat and is not visible from any elevation of the building, and if there are advantages to substituting a modern built-up composition roof for what might have been a flat metal roof, then it may make better economic and construction sense to use a modern roofing method. But if the roof is readily visible, the alternative material should match as closely as possible the scale, texture, and coloration of the historic roofing material.

Asphalt shingles or ceramic tiles are common substitute materials intended to duplicate the appearance of wood shingles, slates, or tiles. Fire-retardant, treated wood shingles are currently available. The treated wood tends, however, to be brittle, and may require extra care (and expense) to install. In some instances, shingles laid with an interlay of fire-retardent building paper may be an acceptable alternative.

Lead-coated copper, terne-coated steel, and aluminum/zinc-coated steel can successfully replace tin, terne plate, zinc, or lead. Copper-coated steel is a less expensive (and less durable) substitute for sheet copper.

The search for alternative roofing materials is not new. As early as the 18th century, fear of fire cause many wood shingle or board roofs to be replaced by sheet metal or clay tile. Some historic roofs were failures from the start, based on over-ambitious and naive use of materials as they were first developed. Research on a structure may reveal that an inadequately designed or a highly combustible roof was replaced early in its history, and therefore restoration of a later roof material would have a valid precedent. In some cities, the substitution of sheet metal on early row houses occurred as soon as the rolled material became available.

Cost and ease of maintenance may dictate the substitution of a material wholly different in appearance from the original. The practical problems (wind, weather, and roof pitch) should be weighed against the historical consideration of scale, texture, and color. Sometimes the effect of the alternative material will be minimal. But on roofs with a high degree of visibility and patterning or texture, the substitution may seriously alter the architectural character of the building.

Temporary Stabilization

It may be necessary to carry out an immediate and temporary stabilization to prevent further deterioration until research can determine how the roof should be restored or rehabilitated, or until funding can be provided to do a proper job. A simple covering of exterior plywood or roll roofing might provide adequate protection, but any temporary covering should be applied with caution. One should be careful not to overload the roof structure, or to damage or destroy historic evidence or fabric that might be incorporated into a new roof at a later date. In this sense, repairs with caulking or bituminous patching compounds should be recognized as potentially harmful, since they are difficult to remove, and at their best, are very temporary.

Precautions

The architect or contractor should warn the owner of any precautions to be taken against the specific hazards in installing the roofing material. Soldering of sheet metals, for instance, can be a fire hazard, either from the open flame or from overheating and undected smoldering of the wooden substrate materials.

Thought should be given to the design and placement of any modern roof appurtenances such as plumbing stacks, air vents, or TV antennas. Consideration should begin with the placement of modern plumbing on the interior of the building, otherwise a series of vent stacks may pierce the roof membrane at various spots creating maintenance problems as well as aesthetic ones. Air handling units placed in the attic space will require vents which, in turn, require sensitive design. Incorporating these in unused chimneys has been very successful

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in the past.

Whenever gutters and downspouts are needed that were not on the building historically, the additions should be made as unobtrusively as possible, perhaps by painting them out with a color compatible with the nearby wall or trim.

Maintenance

Although a new roof can be an object of beauty, it will not be protective for long without proper maintenance. At least twice a year, the roof should be inspected against a checklist. All changes should be recorded and reported. Guidelines should be established for any foot traffic that may be required for the maintenance of the roof. Many roofing materials should not be walked on at all. For some—slate, asbestos, and clay tile—a self-supporting ladder might be hung over the ridge of the roof, or planks might be spanned across the roof surface. Such items should be specifically designed and kept in a storage space accessible to the roof. If exterior work ever requires hanging scaffolding, use caution to insure that the anchors do not penetrate, break, or wear the roofing surface, gutters, or flashing.

Any roofing system should be recognized as a membrane that is designed to be self-sustaining, but that can be easily damaged by intrusions such as pedestrian traffic or fallen tree branches. Certain items should be checked at specific times. For example, gutters tend to accumulate leaves and debris during the spring and fall and after heavy rain. Hidden gutter screening both at downspouts and over the full length of the gutter could help keep them clean. The surface material would require checking after a storm as well. Periodic checking of the underside of the roof from the attic after a storm or winter freezing may give early warning of any leaks. Generally, damage from water or ice is less likely on a roof that has good flashing on the outside and is well ventilated and insulated on the inside. Specific instructions for the maintenance of the different roof materials should be available from the architect or contractor.

Summary

The essential ingredients for replacing and maintaining a historic roof are:

- Understanding the historic character of the building and being sympathetic to it.
- Careful examination and recording of the existing roof and any evidence of earlier roofs.
- Consideration of the historic craftsmanship and detailing and implementing them in the renewal wherever visible.
- Supervision of the roofers or maintenance personnel to assure preservation of historic fabric and proper understanding of the scope and detailing of the project.
- Consideration of alternative materials where the original cannot be used.
- Cyclical maintenance program to assure that the staff understands how to take care of the roof and of the particular trouble spots to safeguard.

With these points in mind, it will be possible to preserve the architectural character and maintain the physical integrity of the roofing on a historic building.

This Preservation Brief was written by Sarah M. Sweetser, Architectural Historian, Technical Preservation Services Division. Much of the technical information was based upon an unpublished report prepared under contract for this office by John G. and Diana S. Waite. Some of the historical information was from Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, "American Notes," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.*

The illustrations for this brief not specifically credited are from the files of the Technical Preservation Services Division.

This publication was prepared pursuant to Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," which directs the Secretary of the Interior to "develop and make available to Federal agencies and State and local governments information concerning professional methods and techniques for preserving, improving, restoring and maintaining historic properties." The Brief has been developed under the technical editorship of Lee H. Nelson, AIA, Chief, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcome and can be sent to Mr. Nelson at the above address. February 1978.

Decorative features such as cupolas require extra maintenance. The flashing is carefully detailed to promote run-off, and the wooden ribbing must be kept well-painted. This roof surface, which was originally tin plate, has been replaced with lead-coated copper for maintenance purposes. (Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, New York, photo courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation)

Additional readings on the subject of roofing are listed below.

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Preservation Briefs: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

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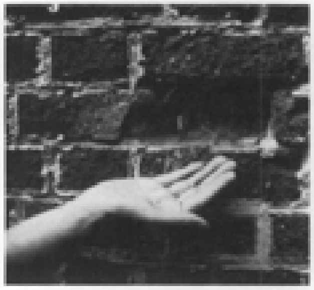

Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

Anne E. Grimmer

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

> "The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken."—The Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Historic Preservation Projects."

Abrasive cleaning methods are responsible for causing a great deal of damage to historic building materials. To prevent indiscriminate use of these potentially harmful techniques, this brief has been prepared to explain abrasive cleaning methods, how they can be physically and aesthetically destructive to historic building materials, and why they generally are not acceptable preservation treatments for historic structures. There are alternative, less harsh means of cleaning and removing paint and stains from historic buildings. However, careful testing should preceed general cleaning to assure that the method selected will not have an adverse effect on the building materials. A historic building is irreplaceable, and should be cleaned using only the "gentlest means possible" to best preserve it.

What is Abrasive Cleaning?

Abrasive cleaning methods include all techniques that physically abrade the building surface to remove soils, discolorations or coatings. Such techniques involve the use of certain *materials* which impact or abrade the surface under pressure, or abrasive *tools and equipment.* Sand, because it is readily available, is probably the most commonly used type of grit material. However, any of the following materials may be substituted for sand, and all can be classified as abrasive substances: ground slag or volcanic ash, crushed (pulverized) walnut or almond shells, rice husks, ground corncobs, ground coconut shells, crushed eggshells, silica flour, synthetic particles, glass beads and micro-balloons. Even *water* under pressure can be an abrasive substance. Tools and equipment that are abrasive to historic building materials include wire brushes, rotary wheels, power sanding disks and belt sanders.

The use of water in combination with grit may also be classified as an abrasive cleaning method. Depending on the manner in which it is applied, water *may* soften the impact of the grit, but water that is too highly pressurized can be very abrasive. There are basically two different methods which can be referred to as "wet grit," and it is important to differentiate between the two. One technique involves the addition of a stream of water to a regular sandblasting nozzle. This is done primarily to cut down dust, and has very little, if any, effect on reducing the aggressiveness, or cutting action of the grit particles. With the second technique, a very small amount of grit is added to a pressurized water stream. This method may be controlled by regulating the amount of grit fed into the water stream, as well as the pressure of the water.

Why Are Abrasive Cleaning Methods Used?

Usually, an abrasive cleaning method is selected as an expeditious means of quickly removing years of dirt accumulation, unsightly stains, or deteriorating building fabric or finishes, such as stucco or paint. The fact that sandblasting is one of the best known and most readily available building cleaning treatments is probably the major reason for its frequent use.

Many mid-19th century brick buildings were painted immediately or soon after completion to protect poor quality brick or to imitate another material, such as stone. Sometimes brick buildings were painted in an effort to produce what was considered a more harmonious relationship between a building and its natural surroundings. By the 1870s, brick buildings

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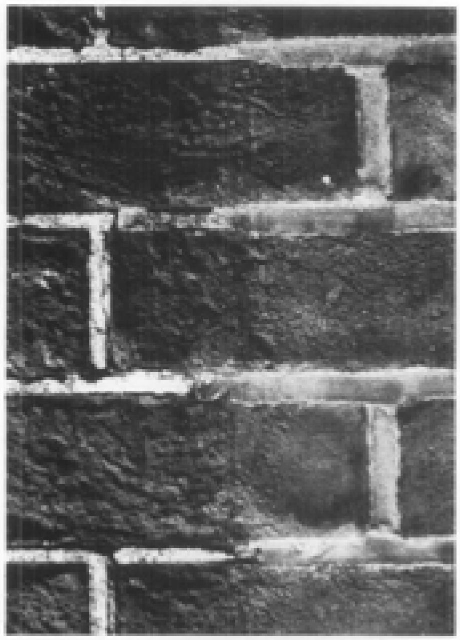
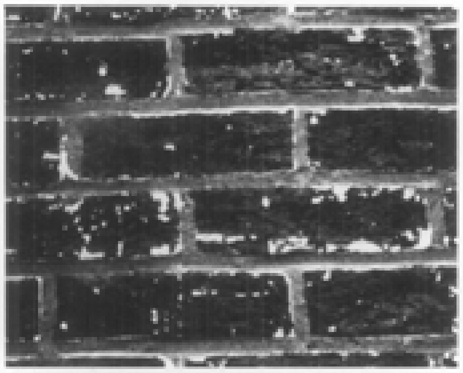


Abrasively Cleaned vs. Untouched Brick. *Two brick rowhouses with a common façade provide an excellent point of comparison when only one of the houses has been sandblasted. It is clear that abrasive blasting, by removing the outer surface, has left the brickwork on the left rough and pitted, while that on the right still exhibits an undamaged and relatively smooth surface. Note that the abrasive cleaning has also removed a considerable portion of the mortar from the joints of the brick on the left side, which will require repointing.*

were often left unpainted as mechanization in the brick industry brought a cheaper pressed brick and fashion decreed a sudden preference for dark colors. However, it was still customary to paint brick of poorer quality for the additional protection the paint afforded.

It is a common 20th-century misconception that all historic masonry buildings were initially unpainted. If the intent of a modern restoration is to return a building to its original appearance, removal of the paint not only may be historically inaccurate, but also harmful. Many older buildings were painted or stuccoed at some point to correct recurring maintenance problems caused by faulty construction techniques, to hide alterations, or in an attempt to solve moisture problems. If this is the case, removal of paint or stucco may cause these problems to reoccur.

Another reason for paint removal, particularly in rehabilitation projects, is to give the building a "new image" in response to contemporary design trends and to attract investors or tenants. Thus, it is necessary to consider the purpose of the intended cleaning. While it is clearly important to remove unsightly stains, heavy encrustations of dirt, peeling paint or other surface coatings, it may not be equally desirable to remove paint from a building which originally was painted. Many historic buildings which show only a slight amount of soil or discoloration are much better left as they are. A thin layer of soil is more often protective of the building fabric than it is harmful, and seldom detracts from the building's



Abrading the Surface without Removing the Paint. *Even though the entire outer surface layer of the brick has been sandblasted off, spots of paint still cling to the masonry. Sandblasting or other similarly abrasive methods are not always a successful means of removing paint.*

architectural and/or historic character. Too thorough cleaning of a historic building may not only sacrifice some of the building's character, but also, misguided cleaning efforts can cause a great deal of damage to historic building fabric. Unless there are stains, graffiti or dirt and pollution deposits which are destroying the building fabric, it is generally preferable to do as little cleaning as possible, or to repaint where necessary. It is important to remember that a historic building does not have to look as if it were newly constructed to be an attractive or successful restoration or rehabilitation project. For a more thorough explanation of the philosophy of cleaning historic buildings see Preservation Briefs: No. 1 "The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings," by Robert C. Mack, AIA.

Problems of Abrasive Cleaning

The crux of the problem is that abrasive cleaning is just that—abrasive. An abrasively cleaned historic structure may be physically as well as aesthetically damaged. Abrasive methods "clean" by eroding dirt or paint, but at the same time they also tend to erode the surface of the building material. In this way, abrasive cleaning is destructive and causes irreversible harm to the historic building fabric. If the fabric is brick, abrasive methods remove the hard, outer protective surface, and therefore make the brick more susceptible to rapid weathering and deterioration. Grit blasting may also increase the water permeability of a brick wall. The impact of the grit particles tends to erode the bond between the mortar and the brick, leaving cracks or enlarging existing cracks where water can enter. Some types of stone develop a protective patina or "quarry crust" parallel to the worked surface (created by the movement of moisture towards the outer edge), which also may be damaged by abrasive cleaning. The rate at which the material subsequently weathers depends on the quality of the inner surface that is exposed.

Abrasive cleaning can destroy, or substantially diminish, decorative detailing on buildings such as a molded brickwork or architectural terra-cotta, ornamental carving on wood or stone, and evidence of historic craft techniques, such as tool marks and other surface textures. In addition, perfectly sound and/or "tooled" mortar joints can be worn away by abrasive techniques. This not only results in the loss of historic craft detailing but also requires repointing, a step involving con-

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siderable time, skill and expense, and which might not have been necessary had a gentler method been chosen. Erosion and pitting of the building material by abrasive cleaning creates a greater surface area on which dirt and pollutants collect. In this sense, the building fabric "attracts" more dirt, and will require more frequent cleaning in the future.

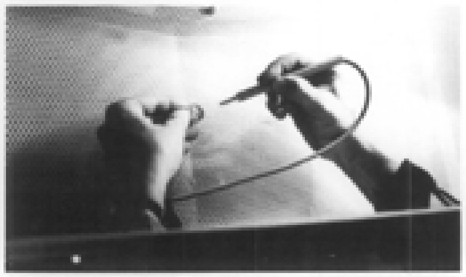
In addition to causing physical and aesthetic harm to the historic fabric, there are several adverse environmental effects of dry abrasive cleaning methods. Because of the friction caused by the abrasive medium hitting the building fabric, these techniques usually create a considerable amount of dust, which is unhealthy, particularly to the operators of the abrasive equipment. It further pollutes the environment around the job site, and deposits dust on neighboring buildings, parked vehicles and nearby trees and shrubbery. Some adjacent materials not intended for abrasive treatment such as wood or glass, may also be damaged because the equipment may be difficult to regulate.

Wet grit methods, while eliminating dust, deposit a messy slurry on the ground or other objects surrounding the base of the building. In colder climates where there is the threat of frost, any wet cleaning process applied to historic masonry structures must be done in warm weather, allowing ample time for the wall to dry out thoroughly before cold weather sets in. Water which remains and freezes in cracks and openings of the masonry surface eventually may lead to spalling. High-pressure wet cleaning may force an inordinate amount of water into the walls, affecting interior materials such as plaster or joist ends, as well as metal building components within the walls.

Variable Factors

The greatest problem in developing practical guidelines for cleaning any historic building is the large number of variable and unpredictable factors involved. Because these variables make each cleaning project unique, it is difficult to establish specific standards at this time. This is particularly true of abrasive cleaning methods because their inherent potential for causing damage is multiplied by the following factors:

— the type and condition of the material being cleaned;
— the size and sharpness of the grit particles or the mechanical equipment;
— the pressure with which the abrasive grit or equipment is applied to the building surface;
— the skill and care of the operator; and
— the constancy of the pressure on all surfaces during the cleaning process.



Micro-Abrasive Cleaning. *This small, pencil-sized micro-abrasive unit is used by some museum conservators to clean small objects. This particular micro-abrasive unit is operated within the confines of a box (approximately 2 cubic feet of space), but a similar and slightly larger unit may be used for cleaning larger pieces of sculpture, or areas of architectural detailing on a building. Even a pressure cleaning unit this small is capable of eroding a surface, and must be carefully controlled.*

"Line Drop." *Even though the operator of the sandblasting equipment is standing on a ladder to reach the higher sections of the wall, it is still almost impossible to have total control over the pressure. The pressure of the sand hitting the lower portion of the wall will still be greater than that above, because of the "line drop" in the distance from the pressure source to the nozzle. (Hugh Miller)*

Pressure: The damaging effects of most of the variable factors involved in abrasive cleaning are self evident. However, the matter of pressure requires further explanation. In cleaning specifications, pressure is generally abbreviated as "psi" (pounds per square inch), which technically refers to the "tip" pressure, or the amount of pressure at the nozzle of the blasting apparatus. Sometimes "psig," or pressure at the gauge (which may be many feet away, at the other end of the hose), is used in place of "psi." These terms are often incorrectly used interchangeably.

Despite the apparent care taken by most architects and building cleaning contractors to prepare specifications for pressure cleaning which will not cause harm to the delicate fabric of a historic building, it is very difficult to ensure that the same amount of pressure is applied to all parts of the building. For example, if the operator of the pressure equipment stands on the ground while cleaning a two-story structure, the amount of force reaching the first story will be greater than that hitting the second story, even if the operator stands on scaffolding or in a cherry picker, because of the "line drop" in the distance from the pressure source to the nozzle. Although technically it may be possible to prepare cleaning specifications with tight controls that would eliminate all but a small margin of error, it may not be easy to find professional cleaning firms willing to work under such restrictive conditions. The fact is that many professional building cleaning firms do not really understand the extreme delicacy of historic building fabric, and how it differs from modern construction materials. Consequently, they may ac-

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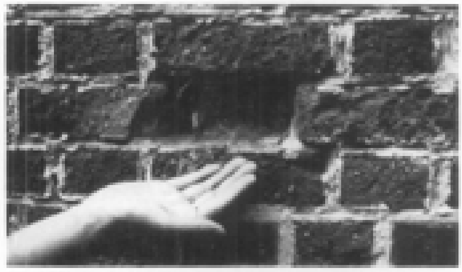
cept building cleaning projects for which they have no experience.

The amount of pressure used in any kind of cleaning treatment which involves pressure, whether it is dry or wet grit, chemicals or just plain water, is crucial to the outcome of the cleaning project. Unfortunately, no standards have been established for determining the correct pressure for cleaning each of the many historic building materials which would not cause harm. The considerable discrepancy between the way the building cleaning industry and architectural conservators define "high" and "low" pressure cleaning plays a significant role in the difficulty of creating standards.

Nonhistoric/Industrial: A representative of the building cleaning industry might consider "high" pressure water cleaning to be anything over 5,000 psi, or even as high as 10,000 to 15,000 psi! Water under this much pressure may be necessary to clean industrial structures or machinery, but would destroy most historic building materials. Industrial *chemical* cleaning commonly utilizes pressures between 1,000 and 2,500 psi.



Spalling Brick. *This soft, early 19th-century brick was sandblasted in the 1960s; consequently, severe spalling has resulted. Some bricks have almost totally disintegrated, and will eventually have to be replaced. (Robert S. Gamble)*

Historic: By contrast, conscientious dry or wet abrasive cleaning of a historic structure would be conducted within the range of 20 to 100 psi at a range of 3 to 12 inches. Cleaning at this low pressure requires the use of a very fine 00 or 0 mesh grit forced through a nozzle with a ⅛ inch opening. A similar, even more delicate method being adopted by architectural conservators uses a micro-abrasive grit on small, hard-to-clean areas of carved, cut or molded ornament on a building façade. Originally developed by museum conservators for cleaning sculpture, this technique may employ glass beads, micro-balloons, or another type of micro-abrasive gently powered at approximately 40 psi by a very small, almost pencil-like pressure instrument. Although a slightly larger pressure instrument may be used on historic buildings, this technique still has limited practical applicability on a large scale building cleaning project because of the cost and the relatively few technicians competent to handle the task. In general, architectural conservators have determined that only through very controlled conditions can most historic building material be abrasively cleaned of soil or paint without measurable damage to the surface or profile of the substrate.

Yet some professional cleaning companies which sepcialize in cleaning historic masonry buildings use chemicals and water at a pressure of approximately 1,500 psi, while other cleaning firms recommend lower pressures ranging from 200 to 800 psi for a similar project. An architectural conservator might decide, *after testing*, that some historic structures could be cleaned properly using a moderate pressure (200–600 psi), or even a high pressure (600–1800 psi) water rinse. However, cleaning historic buildings under such high pressure should be considered an exception rather than the rule, and would require *very careful* testing and supervision to assure that the historic surface materials could withstand the pressure without gouging, pitting or loosening.

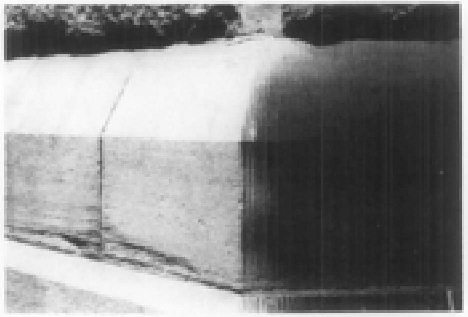
These differences in the amount of pressure used by commercial or industrial building cleaners and architectural conservators point to one of the main problems in using abrasive means to clean historic buildings: misunderstanding of the potentially fragile nature of historic building materials. There is no one cleaning formula or pressure suitable for all situations. Decisions regarding the proper cleaning process for historic structures can be made only after careful analysis of the building fabric, and testing.

How Building Materials React to Abrasive Cleaning Methods

Brick and Architectural Terra-Cotta: Abrasive blasting does not affect all building materials to the same degree. Such techniques quite logically cause greater damage to softer and more porous materials, such as brick or architectural terra-cotta. When these materials are cleaned abrasively, the hard, outer layer (closest to the heat of the kiln) is eroded, leaving the soft, inner core exposed and susceptible to accelerated weathering. Glazed architectural terra-cotta and ceramic veneer have a baked-on glaze which is also easily damaged by abrasive cleaning. Glazed architectual terra-cotta was designed for easy maintenance, and generally can be cleaned using detergent and water; but chemicals or steam may be needed to remove more persistent stains. Large areas of brick or architectural terra-cotta which have been painted are best left painted, or repainted if necessary.

Plaster and Stucco: Plaster and stucco are types of masonry finish materials that are softer than brick or terra-cotta; if treated abrasively these materials will simply disintegrate. Indeed, when plaster or stucco is treated abrasively it is usually with the intention of removing the plaster or stucco from whatever base material or substrate it is covering. Obviously, such abrasive techniques should not be applied to clean sound plaster or stuccoed walls, or decorative plaster wall surfaces.

Building Stones: Building stones are cut from the three main categories of natural rock: dense, igneous rock such as granite; sandy, sedimentary rock such as limestone or sandstone; and crystalline, metamorphic rock such as marble. As op-



Abrasive Cleaning of Tooled Granite. *Even this carefully controlled "wet grit" blasting has erased vertical tooling marks in the cut granite blocks on the left. Not only has the tooling been destroyed, but the damaged stone surface is now more susceptible to accelerated weathering.*

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posed to kiln-dried masonry materials such as brick and architectural terra-cotta, building stones are generally homogeneous in character at the time of a building's construction. However, as the stone is exposed to weathering and environmental pollutants, the surface may become friable, or may develop a protective skin or patina. These outer surfaces are very susceptible to damage by abrasive or improper chemical cleaning.

Building stones are frequently cut into ashlar blocks or "dressed" with tool marks that give the building surface a specific texture and contribute to its historic character as much as ornately carved decorative stonework. Such detailing is easily damaged by abrasive cleaning techniques; the pattern of tooling or cutting is erased, and the crisp lines of moldings or carving are worn or pitted.

Occasionally, it may be possible to clean small areas of rough-cut granite, limestone or sandstone having a heavy dirt encrustation by using the "wet grit" method, whereby a small amount of abrasive material is injected into a controlled, pressurized water stream. However, this technique requires very careful supervision in order to prevent damage to the stone. Polished or honed marble or granite should *never* be treated abrasively, as the abrasion would remove the finish in much the way glass would be etched or "frosted" by such a process. It is generally preferable to underclean, as too strong a cleaning procedure will erode the stone, exposing a new and increased surface area to collect atmospheric moisture and dirt. Removing paint, stains or graffiti from most types of stone may be accomplished by a chemical treatment carefully selected to best handle the removal of the particular type of paint or stain without damaging the stone. (See section on the "Gentlest Means Possible")

Abrasive Cleaning of Wood. *This wooden windowsill, molding and paneling have been sandblasted to remove layers of paint in the rehabilitation of this commercial building. Not only is some paint still embedded in cracks and crevices of the woodwork, but more importantly, grit blasting has actually eroded the summer wood, in effect raising the grain, and resulting in a rough surface.*

Wood: Most types of wood used for buildings are soft, fibrous and porous, and are particularly susceptible to damage by abrasive cleaning. Because the summer wood between the lines of the grain is softer than the grain itself, it will be worn away by abrasive blasting or power tools, leaving an uneven surface with the grain raised and often frayed or "fuzzy." Once this has occurred, it is almost impossible to achieve a smooth surface again except by extensive hand sanding, which is expensive and will quickly negate any costs saved earlier by sandblasting. Such harsh cleaning treatment also obliterates historic tool marks, fine carving and detailing, which precludes its use on any interior or exterior woodwork which has been hand planed, milled or carved.

Metals: Like stone, metals are another group of building materials which vary considerably in hardness and durability. Softer metals which are used architecturally, such as tin, zinc, lead, copper or aluminum, generally should not be cleaned abrasively as the process deforms and destroys the original surface texture and appearance, as well as the acquired patina. Much applied architectural metal work used on historic buildings—tin, zinc, lead and copper—is often quite thin and soft, and therefore susceptible to denting and pitting. Galvanized sheet metal is especially vulnerable, as abrasive treatment would wear away the protective galvanized layer.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these metals were often cut, pressed or otherwise shaped from sheets of metal into a wide variety of practical uses such as roofs, gutters and flashing, and façade ornamentation such as cornices, friezes, dormers, panels, cupolas, oriel windows, etc. The architecture of the 1920s and 1930s made use of metals such as chrome, nickel alloys, aluminum and stainless steel in decorative exterior panels, window frames, and doorways. Harsh abrasive blasting would destroy the original surface finish of most of these metals, and would increase the possiblity of corrosion.

However, conservation specialists are now employing a sensitive technique of glass bead peening to clean some of the harder metals, in particular large bronze outdoor sculpture. Very fine (75–125 micron) glass beads are used at a low pressure of 60 to 80 psi. Because these glass beads are completely spherical, ther are no sharp edges to cut the surface of the metal. After cleaning, these statues undergo a lengthy process of polishing. Coatings are applied which protect the surface from corrosion, but they must be renewed every 3 to 5 years. A similarly delicate cleaning technique employing glass beads has been used in Europe to clean historic masonry structures without causing damage. But at this time the process has not been tested sufficiently in the United States to recommend it as a building conservation measure.

Sometimes a very fine smooth sand is used at a low pressure to clean or remove paint and corrosion from copper flashing and other metal building components. Restoration architects recently found that a mixture of crushed walnut shells and copper slag at a pressure of approximately 200 psi was the only way to remove corrosion successfully from a mid-19th century terne-coated iron roof. Metal cleaned in this manner must be painted immediately to prevent rapid recurrence of corrosion. It is thought that these methods "work harden" the surface by compressing the outer layer, and actually may be good for the surface of the metal. But the extremely complex nature and the time required by such processes make it very expensive and impractical for large-scale use at this time.

Cast and wrought iron architectural elements may be gently sandblasted or abrasively cleaned using a wire brush to remove layers of paint, rust and corrosion. Sandblasting was, in fact, developed originally as an efficient maintenance procedure for engineering and industrial structures and heavy machinery—iron and steel bridges, machine tool frames, engine frames, and railroad rolling stock—in order to clean and prepare them for repainting. Because iron is hard, its surface,

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which is naturally somewhat uneven, will not be noticeably damaged by controlled abrasion. Such treatment will, however, result in a small amount of pitting. But this slight abrasion creates a good surface for paint, since the iron must be repainted immediately to prevent corrosion. Any abrasive cleaning of metal building components will also remove the caulking from joints and around other openings. Such areas must be recaulked quickly to prevent moisture from entering and rusting the metal, or causing deterioration of other building fabric inside the structure.

When is Abrasive Cleaning Permissible?

For the most part, abrasive cleaning is destructive to historic building materials. A limited number of special cases have been explained when it may be appropriate, if supervised by a skilled conservator, to use a delicate abrasive technique on some historic building materials. The type of "wet grit" cleaning which involves a small amount of grit injected into a stream of low pressure water may be used on small areas of stone masonry (*i.e.*, rough cut limestone, sandstone or unpolished granite), where milder cleaning methods have not been totally successful in removing harmful deposits of dirt and pollutants. Such areas may include stone window sills, the tops of cornices or column capitals, or other detailed areas of the façade.

This is still an abrasive technique, and without proper caution in handling, it can be *just as harmful to the building surface as any other abrasive cleaning method.* Thus, the decision to use this type of "wet grit" process should be made only after consultation with an experienced building conservator. Remember that *it is very time consuming and expensive to use any abrasive technique on a historic building in such a manner that it does not cause harm to the often fragile and friable building materials.*

At this time, and only under certain circumstances, abrasive cleaning methods may be used in the rehabilitation of interior spaces of warehouse or industrial buildings for contemporary uses.

Interior spaces of factories or warehouse structures in which the masonry or plaster surfaces do not have significant design, detailing, tooling or finish, and in which wooden architectural features are not finished, molded, beaded or worked by hand, may be cleaned abrasively in order to remove layers of paint and industrial discolorations such as smoke, soot, etc. It is expected after such treatment that brick surfaces will be rough and pitted, and wood will be somewhat frayed or "fuzzy"

Permissible Abrasive Cleaning. *In accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's* Guidelines for Rehabilitation Projects, *it may be acceptable to use abrasive techniques to clean an industrial interior space such as that illustrated here, because the masonry surfaces do not have significant design, detailing, tooling or finish, and the wooden architectural features are not finished, molded, beaded or worked by hand.*

with raised wood grain. These nonsignificant surfaces will be damaged and have a roughened texture, but because they are interior elements, they will not be subject to further deterioration caused by weathering.

Historic Interiors that Should Not Be Cleaned Abrasively

Those instances (generally industrial and some commercial properties), when it may be acceptable to use an abrasive treatment on the interior of historic structures have been described. But for the majority of historic buildings, the Secretary of the Interior's *Guidelines for Rehabilitation* do not recommend "changing the texture of exposed wooden architectural features (including structural members) and masonry surfaces through sandblasting or use of other abrasive techniques to remove paint, discolorations and plaster. . . ."

Thus, it is not acceptable to clean abrasively interiors of historic residential and commercial properties which have *finished* interior spaces featuring milled woodwork such as doors, window and door moldings, wainscoting, stair balustrades and mantelpieces. Even the most modest historic *house* interior, although it may not feature elaborate detailing, contains plaster and woodwork that is architecturally significant to the original design and function of the house. Abrasive cleaning of such an interior would be destructive to the historic integrity of the building.

Abrasive cleaning is also impractical. Rough surfaces of abrasively cleaned wooden elements are hard to keep clean. It is also difficult to seal, paint or maintain these surfaces which can be splintery and a problem to the building's occupants. The force of abrasive blasting may cause grit particles to lodge in cracks of wooden elements, which will be a nuisance as the grit is loosened by vibrations and gradually sifts out. Removal of plaster will reduce the thermal and insulating value of the walls. Interior brick is usually softer than exterior brick, and generally of a poorer quality. Removing surface plaster from such brick by abrasive means often exposes gaping mortar joints and mismatched or repaired brickwork which was never intended to show. The resulting bare brick wall may require repointing, often difficult to match. It also may be necessary to apply a transparent surface coating (or sealer) in order to prevent the mortar and brick from "dusting." However, a sealer may not only change the color of the brick, but may also compound any existing moisture problems by restricting the normal evaporation of water vapor from the masonry surface.

"Gentlest Means Possible"

There are alternative means of removing dirt, stains and paint from historic building surfaces that can be recommended as more efficient and less destructive than abrasive techniques. The "gentlest means possible" of removing dirt from a building surface can be achieved by using a low-pressure water wash, scrubbing areas of more persistent grime with a natural bristle (never metal) brush. Steam cleaning can also be used effectively to clean some historic building fabric. Low-pressure water or steam will soften the dirt and cause the deposits to rise to the surface, where they can be washed away.

A third cleaning technique which may be recommended to remove dirt, as well as stains, graffiti or paint, involves the use of commercially available chemical cleaners or paint removers, which, when applied to masonry, loosen or dissolve the dirt or stains. These cleaning agents may be used in combination with water or steam, followed by a clear water wash to remove the residue of dirt and the chemical cleaners from the masonry. A natural bristle brush may also facilitate this type of chemically assisted cleaning, particularly in areas of heavy dirt deposits or stains, and a wooden scraper can be

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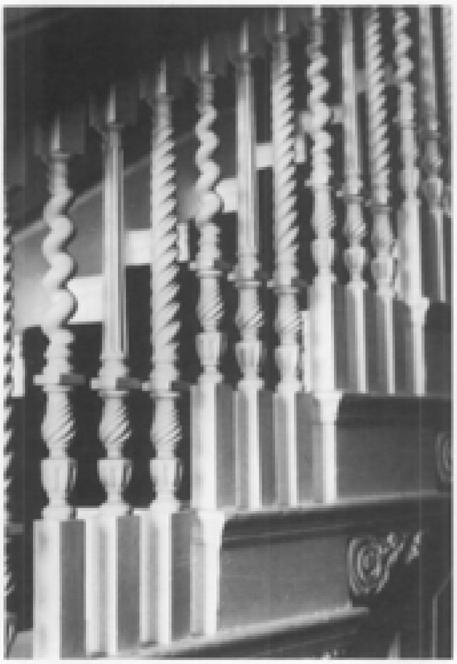

Do not Abrasively Clean these Interiors. *Most historic residential and some commercial interior spaces contain finished plaster and wooden elements such as this stair balustrade and paneling which contribute to the historic and architectural character of the structure. Such interiors should not be subjected to abrasive techniques for the purpose of removing paint, dirt, discoloration or plaster.*

useful in removing thick encrustations of soot. A limewash or absorbent talc, whiting or clay poultice with a solvent can be used effectively to draw out salts or stains from the surface of the selected areas of a building façade. It is almost impossible to remove paint from masonry surfaces without causing some damage to the masonry, and it is best to leave the surfaces as they are or repaint them if necessary.

Some physicists are experimenting with the use of pulsed laser beams and xenon flash lamps for cleaning historic masonry surfaces. At this time it is a slow, expensive cleaning method, but its initial success indicates that it may have an increasingly important role in the future.

There are many chemical paint removers which, when applied to painted wood, soften and dissolve the paint so that it can be scraped off by hand. Peeling paint can be removed from wood by hand scraping and sanding. Particularly thick layers of paint may be softened with a heat gun or heat plate, providing appropriate precautions are taken, and the paint film scraped off by hand. Too much heat applied to the same spot can burn the wood, and the fumes caused by burning paint are dangerous to inhale, and can be explosive. Furthermore, the hot air from heat guns can start fires in the building cavity. Thus, adequate ventilation is important when using a heat gun or heat plate, as well as when using a chemical stripper. A torch or open flame should never be used.

Preparations for Cleaning: It cannot be overemphasized that all of these cleaning methods must be approached with caution. When using any of these procedures which involve water or other liquid cleaning agents on masonry, it is imperative that *all* openings be tightly covered, and all cracks or joints be well pointed in order to avoid the danger of water penetrating the building's facade, a circumstance which might result in serious moisture related problems such as efflorescence and/or subflorescence. Any time water is used on masonry as a cleaning agent, either in its pure state or in combination with chemical cleaners, it is very important that the work be done in warm weather when there is no danger of frost for several months. Otherwise water which has penetrated the masonry may freeze, eventually causing the surface of the building to crack and spall, which may create another conservation problem more serious to the health of the building than dirt.

Each kind of masonry has a unique composition and reacts differently with various chemical cleaning substances. Water and/or chemicals may interact with minerals in stone and cause new types of stains to leach out to the surface immediately, or more gradually in a delayed reaction. What may be a safe and effective cleaner for certain stain on one type of stone, may leave unattractive discolorations on another stone, or totally dissolve a third type.

Testing: Cleaning historic building materials, particularly masonry, is a technically complex subject, and thus, should never be done without expert consultation and testing. No cleaning project should be undertaken without first applying the intended cleaning agent to a representative test patch area in an inconspicuous location on the building surface. The test patch or patches should be allowed to weather for a period of time, preferably through a complete seasonal cycle, in order to determine that the cleaned area will not be adversely affected by wet or freezing weather or any by-products of the cleaning process.

Mitigating the Effects of Abrasive Cleaning

There are certain restoration measures which can be adopted to help preserve a historic building exterior which has been damaged by abrasive methods. Wood that has been sandblasted will exhibit a frayed or "fuzzed" surface, or a harder wood will have an exaggerated raised grain. The only way to remove this rough surface or to smooth the grain is by laborious sanding. Sandblasted wood, unless it has been extensively sanded, serves as a dustcatcher, will weather faster, and will present a continuing and ever worsening maintenance problem. Such wood, after sanding, should be painted or given a clear surface coating to protect the wood, and allow for somewhat easier maintenance.

There are few successful preservative treatments that may be applied to grit-blasted exterior masonry. Harder, denser stone may have suffered only a loss of crisp edges or tool marks, or other indications of craft technique. If the stone has a compact and uniform composition, it should continue to weather with little additional deterioration. But some types of sandstone, marble and limestone will weather at an accelerated rate once their protective "quarry crust" or patina has been removed.

Softer types of masonry, particularly brick and architectural terra-cotta, are the most likely to require some remedial treatment if they have been abrasively cleaned. Old brick, being essentially a soft, baked clay product, is greatly susceptible to increased deterioration when its hard, outer skin is removed through abrasive techniques. This problem can be minimized by painting the brick. An alternative is to treat it with a clear sealer or surface coating but this will give the masonry a glossy or shiny look. It is usually preferable to paint the brick rather than to apply a transparent sealer since

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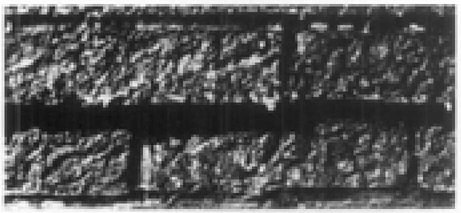
Preservation Briefs: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings



Hazards of Sandblasting and Surface Coating. *In order to "protect" this heavily sandblasted brick, a clear surface coating or sealer was applied. Because the air temperature was too cold at the time of application, the sealer failed to dry properly, dripping in places, and giving the brick surface a cloudy appearance.*

sealers reduce the transpiration of moisture, allowing salts to crystallize as subflorescence that eventually spalls the brick. If a brick surface has been so extensively damaged by abrasive cleaning and weathering that spalling has already begun, it may be necessary to cover the walls with stucco, if it will adhere.

Of course, the application of paint, a clear surface coating (sealer), or stucco to deteriorating masonry means that the historical appearance will be sacrificed in an attempt to conserve the historic building materials. However, the original color and texture will have been changed already by the abrasive treatment. At this point it is more important to try to preserve the brick, and there is little choice but to protect it from "dusting" or spalling too rapidly. As a last resort, in the case of severely spalling brick, there may be no option but to replace the brick—a difficult, expensive (particularly if custom-made reproduction brick is used), and lengthy process. As described earlier, sandblasted interior brick work, while not subject to change of weather, may require the application of a transparent surface coating or painting as a maintenance procedure to contain loose mortar and brick dust. (See Preservation Briefs: No. 1 for a more thorough discussion of coatings.)

Metals, other than cast or wrought iron, that have been pitted and dented by harsh abrasive blasting usually cannot be smoothed out. Although fillers may be satisfactory for smoothing a painted surface, exposed metal that has been damaged usually will have to be replaced.

Summary

Sandblasting or other abrasive methods of cleaning or paint removal are by their nature destructive to historic building materials and should not be used on historic buildings except in a few well-monitored instances. There are exceptions when certain types of abrasive cleaning may be permissible, but only if conducted by a trained conservator, and if cleaning is necessary for the preservation of the historic structure.

There is no one formula that will be suitable for cleaning all historic building surfaces. Although there are many commerical cleaning products and methods available, it is impossible to state definitively which of these will be the most effective without causing harm to the building fabric. It is often difficult to identify ingredients or their proportions contained in cleaning products; consequently it is hard to predict how a product will react to the building materials to be cleaned. Similar uncertainities affect the outcome of other cleaning methods as they are applied to historic building materials. Further advances in understanding the complex nature of the many variables of the cleaning techniques may someday provide a better and simpler solution to the problems. But until that time, the process of cleaning historic buildings must be approached with caution through trial and error.

It is important to remember that historic building materials are neither indestructible, nor are they renewable. They must be treated in a responsible manner, which may mean little or no cleaning at all if they are to be preserved for future generations to enjoy. If it is in the best interest of the building to clean it, then it should be done "using the gentlest means possible."

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This Preservation Brief was written by Anne E. Grimmer, Architectural Historian, Technical Preservation Services Division. Valuable suggestions and comments were made by Hugh C. Miller, AIA, Washington, D.C.; Martin E. Weaver, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Terry Bryant, Downers Grove, Illinois; Daniel C. Cammer, McLean, Virginia; and the professional staff of Technical Preservation Services Division. Deborah Cooney edited the final manuscript.

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Preservation Briefs: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings

8 PRESERVATION BRIEFS

Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings

The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings.

John H. Myers, revised by Gary L. Hume

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

Standard 6 of the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" states that "deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities." Therefore, the Secretary's Standards and their accompanying Guidelines *never recommend* resurfacing frame buildings with any new material that does not duplicate the historic material because of the strong potential of altering the character of the historic building.

A historic building is a product of the cultural heritage of its region, the technology of its period, the skill of its builders, and the materials used for its construction. To assist owners, developers and managers of historic property in planning and completing rehabilitation project work that will meet the Secretary's "Standards for Rehabilitation"(36 CFR 67), the following planning process has been developed by the National Park Service and is applicable to all historic buildings. This planning process is a sequential approach to the preservation of historic wood frame buildings. It begins with the premise that historic materials should be retained wherever possible. When retention, including retention with some repair, is not possible, then *replacement of the irreparable historic material can be considered.* The purpose of this approach is to determine the appropriate level of treatment for the preservation of historic wood frame buildings. The planning process has the following four steps:

1. Identify and preserve those materials and features that are important in defining the *building's historic character.* This may include features such as wood siding, brackets, cornices, window architraves, doorway pediments, and their finishes and colors.

2. Undertake routine maintenance on historic materials and features. Routine maintenance generally involves the least amount of work needed to preserve the materials and features of the building. For example, maintenance of a frame building would include caulking and painting; or, where paint is extensively cracking and peeling, its removal and the re-application of a protective paint coating.

3. Repair historic materials and features. For a historic material such as wood siding, repair would generally involve patching and piecing-in with new material according to recognized preservation methods.

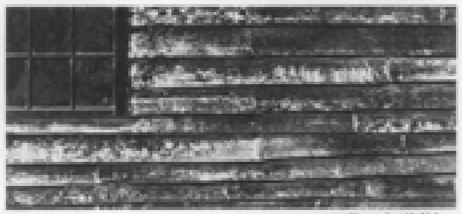

Photo: Lee H. Nelson

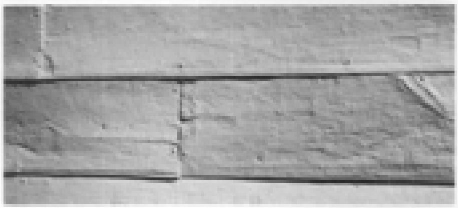

Photo: Hugh C. Miller

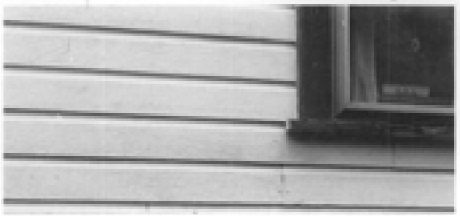

Photo: John H. Myers

Historic wood sidings exhibit rich and varied surface textures. They range from hand-split clapboards of short lengths with feather-edged ends, to pit or mill sawn boards which can be beveled, rabbeted, milled, or beaded.

Preservation Briefs: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings

Photo: Laurie Robin Hammel

When a building is in need of maintenance, such as the house on the right which needs painting, some owners consider installing aluminum or vinyl siding. The result, like the house on the left, can be a complete loss of architectural character due to the covering of details (cornice), the removal of features (window trim), and a change of scale due to inappropriate siding dimensions.

4. Replace severely damaged or deteriorated historic materials and features in kind. Replacing sound or repairable historic material is never recommended; however, if the historic material cannot be repaired because of the extent of deterioration or damage, then it will be necessary to replace an entire character-defining feature such as the building's siding. The preferred treatment is always replacement in kind, that is, with the same material. Because this approach is not always feasible, provision is made under the recommended treatment options in the Guidelines that accompany the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to consider the use of a compatible substitute material. A substitute material should only be considered, however, if the form, detailing, and overall appearance of the substitute material conveys the visual appearance of the historic material, and the application of the substitute material does not damage, destroy or obscure historic features.

In many cases, the replacement of wood siding on a historic building is proposed because little attention has been given to the retention of historic materials. Instead, the decision to use a substitute material is made because: (1) it is assumed that aluminum or vinyl siding will be a maintenance-free material; and (2) there is the desire to give a building a "remodeled" or "renovated" appearance. A decision to replace historic material must, however, be carefully considered for its impact on the historic resource—even when the model planning process has been followed and the appropriate treatment is replacement.

Therefore, this brief focuses on the visual and physical consequences of using a substitute material such as aluminum or vinyl siding for new siding installations on a wood frame historic building. These concerns include the potential of *damaging or destroying* historic material and features; the potential of *obscuring* historic material and features; and, most important, the potential of *diminishing the historic character* of the building.