

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

Signs

THE VICTORIAN TRADITION

Signs and awnings were always a vital part of the Trinity Royal area. Victorian merchants were hardheaded businessmen who took themselves and their business seriously. Their confidence was reflected in assertive signs which were bold, plain and plentiful.

Quality workmanship was evident in the hand-carved letters and in the moulded frames with which boards were always finished.

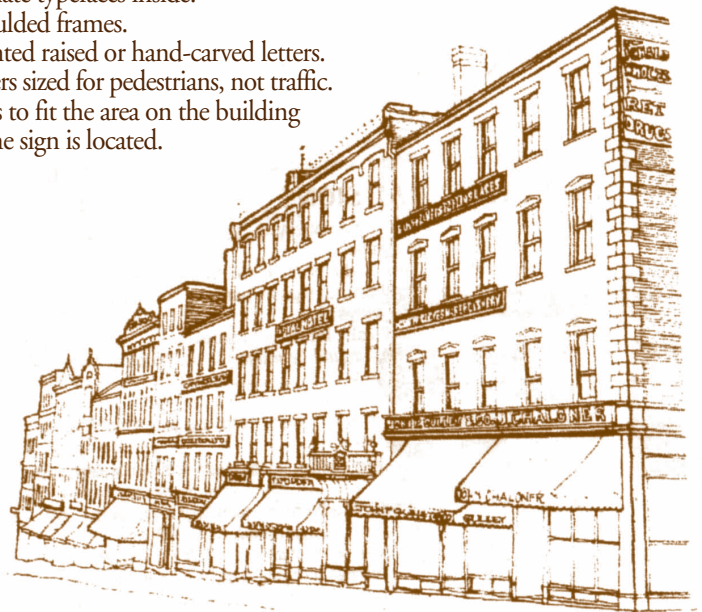
DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Trinity Royal is notable for its fine buildings which have remained largely intact for a century. The photographic record shows that signs and awnings were a dominant feature of the original streets; without them, the true character of the area is altered and incomplete. Signs were well-crafted and boldly utilitarian.

Today, Trinity Royal remains an active and prosperous business area. The design philosophy towards new signs is to recapture the vigorous and enterprising spirit of the Victorian era – a spirit that requires signs to be bold and plentiful, and of a design and material in the Victorian tradition. This does not infer a turning back of the clock, but rather an emphasis on preserving the distinct and historic character that is good for business too!

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Design bold and utilitarian signs.
- Use a variety of sign locations such as storefront, upper wall, roof and windows.
- Use traditional materials.
- Use dark colors and strong contrasts, between letters and background.
- Use basic shapes.
- Use straightforward lettering. See list of appropriate typefaces inside.
- Use moulded frames.
- Use painted raised or hand-carved letters.
- Use letters sized for pedestrians, not traffic.
- Use sizes to fit the area on the building where the sign is located.



Signs and awnings are critical to the character of the streetscape.



SAINT JOHN





PRACTICAL CONSERVATION GUIDELINE

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS SIGNS

ROOF SIGN

Popular in Victorian Trinity Royal. It should extend across full width of facade and have a decorative profile.

PAINTED WALL SIGN

Should be large and decorative on side walls. Preserve existing painted wall signs (use pigmented breathable sealers instead of oil-based paints on masonry).

ARCHITECTURAL SIGN

Preserve and restore existing date and name panels. Introduce into new buildings.

WINDOW SIGN

A secondary but effective signage area, particularly for advertising services. Upper windows as well as storefront windows were used for advertisement.

WALL SIGN

Used extensively in Victorian Trinity Royal. It should extend across full width of facade.

PROJECTING SIGN

Rarely used in Victorian Trinity Royal. It should be subsidiary to storefront signs and a simple design and shape.

STOREFRONT | FASCIA SIGN

Principal location for displaying name of business. It should fit neatly into cornice above storefront.

AWNING

Should be large and roomy. Place lettering on side panels and flaps only. (See Awning Guideline & Typical Detail.)

TYPES OF SIGNS

Storefront Fascia Signs

Storefront (or fascia) signs are located on the horizontal band which divides storefront windows from the upper facade. Traditionally, the business name was displayed here in a single line of lettering large enough to be read by people walking on the street. For this purpose, storefront designs often incorporated a flat panel deep enough to accommodate a framed name board.

Lettering was centred over doors or windows, or ran the full width of the store. The boards were usually simple elongated rectangles but, occasionally, the street numbers of the properties were added on top as decorative central features.

Wall Signs

Wall signs are located flat against the surface of front or side walls, usually on the upper facade.

In the nineteenth century, upper facade signs were the most prolific type of sign in Trinity Royal. Buildings were usually occupied by one business which had its retail outlet on the ground floor and offices, warehouse and manufacturing space above. Owners advertised their name and wares on whatever plain wall surface presented itself. The most common type of sign took the form of a large board





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or individual letters running horizontally across the face of a building between windows of the upper floors.

Many buildings boasted two or three such signs and most of them stretched the full width of the property. On end walls and corners, lettering was occasionally placed vertically or, more often, panels were used. Panels were framed rectangular boards, sometimes bowed to suit a corner position. They were often designed in the style of posters and tended to be more decorative than other types of signs.

The use of upper facade wall signs is encouraged in order to reassert the commercial spirit of Victorian Trinity Royal.

Roof Signs

Roof signs are located on top of building facades. An elaborate skyline was an important element in the



character of nineteenth century streetscapes in Trinity Royal. Designers delighted in decorative roof lines, using dormer windows and mock gables for variety. Cornices were built out with fancy brick corbeling and often finished with delicate iron work. Merchants seized on the opportunity to top off plain roof lines with built-up signs, and, because they were proud of their individual buildings, they gave their roof signs fancy profiles, usually featuring a central decoration. The lettering was necessarily large and matched the style of upper facade signs. Sadly, the delightful roof lines of Trinity Royal have deteriorated. The reintroduction of appropriate roof signs will help to bring interest and vitality back into the skyline.

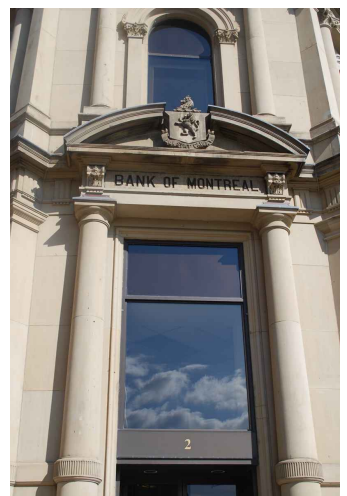
Window Signs

Window signs are applied inside the glass of store windows, upper floor windows and doorways. Signs are etched, painted or attached to the glass, or displayed directly behind the surface. Window signs were a common type of advertisement in Trinity Royal, particularly where services, rather than goods, were being sold. Where store window space was valuable for display, narrow signs were fitted into the base of the windows. High ceilings meant that signs could also occupy the upper portion of windows and still leave adequate display space. As window signs often included secondary information, several lines of lettering were needed and the top line was commonly curved. Lettering was centred, small and meant to be read at close quarters.



Architectural Signs

Architectural signs are integrated into the building fabric and are constructed of permanent materials such as stone or tile. The Victorian merchants who rebuilt the Trinity Royal area after the Great Fire of 1877 were proud of their family businesses and wanted to leave their stamp on their fine buildings. Names and dates were made an integral part of the design – carved into lintels and archways, and set into mosaic panels on facades or on the floors of doorways. Carved symbols were also used to enrich the





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architectural detailing. Many buildings are still known locally by their original names and they add a valuable sense of place and history to the Trinity Royal area.

Projecting Signs

Projecting signs are placed at right angles to the building face, either fixed to the wall or hanging from a bracket. Although they are a common form of signage in some areas, and attractive modern versions are popular today in restoration work, projecting signs were rare in the Victorian Trinity Royal. There are too few examples to draw general conclusions about style, but one type which appeared was a simple rectangular board projecting horizontally and directly from the wall face. The message was brief and the style of lettering plain.



Although few projecting signs existed in historic Trinity Royal, they are an effective means of signage, and widely used today. They have an advantage over storefront signs in visibility at right angles to the building facade as well as from a distance. The problem of closely-spaced projecting signs obscuring each other can be lessened by moderating the size of the sign boards.

Projecting signs are considered an acceptable form of subsidiary signage in Trinity Royal. Designs should be in keeping with storefront signs on simple wooden boards with moulded frames and raised, carved or painted letters.

The whole composition should be strong and plain but a decorative flourish is acceptable.

SHAPE OF SIGNS

The signs of Trinity Royal were forthright and utilitarian. Simple framed rectangular boards were constructed to fill the available spaces. A common type was the long narrow sign which stretched across the upper facade. The typical fascia sign was also a plain rectangle, but property numbers were sometimes featured on top in a central decoration. All board signs were finished with moulded borders. Roof signs were always given symmetrical and decorative profiles. Projecting signs were rare and appear to have been in the form of rectangular panels jutting horizontally or vertically from the wall face; there is no record of fanciful shaped hanging signs in Trinity Royal. Window signs were also symmetrical and the top line of lettering was frequently curved.

An exception to the general rule of plain lettering centred on plain boards was the wall mounted panel which was sometimes bowed out and was often designed for decorative effect rather than easy legibility.

LETTERING

Most of the original signs in Trinity Royal were strictly practical. The lettering had to be large enough to have an impact at the required viewing distance, and clear enough to be readily legible. Contrast with the background was important. Letters were painted, routed or carved, and mounted on framed boards or directly onto the wall surface.

Generally the style was a plain bold or classic uppercase arranged symmetrically, and one style was often repeated on various signs applied to the same building. Only occasionally, where mood was more important than message, did the merchants use the robust and showy styles evident in newspaper advertising of the period; several highly decorative styles might then appear on one sign and the layouts included diagonals, ornamented capitals, scrolls and flourishes. Such frivolous deviations from the serious business of sign making usually occurred on wall panels,

These typefaces are appropriate for use in Trinity Royal

Algerian
Ambrose
Belwe
Bernhard Antique
Bookman
Caxton Roman
Century Schoolbook
Clarendon
Copperplate
Edwardian
Fortune
Gold Rush
Goudy Handtooled
Helevitica
Horndon
Mellissa
Quay
Tiffany
Times
University Roman
Victorian

Wall Signs Only

Emporium
Fat Shadow
Julia Script
Old English
Quentin
Romantiques



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which were perhaps viewed more as posters than marks of real and respectable commerce.

Size of Letters

Signs in Trinity Royal are meant to be viewed by pedestrians, not traffic. Letters should therefore be sized to be read by a person walking on the street. Fascia signs which are mounted on the storefront -- parallel with the street -- can only be read from approximately 90 feet, due to the oblique angle created by a greater distance. Letters should therefore be sized in accordance with the following chart:

Letter Height	Maximum Impact	Viewable Distance
2"	20'	200 feet
6"	60'	600 feet
8"	80'	800 feet
10"	100'	1,000 feet
12"	120'	1,200 feet

COLOR

The Victorians did not use a wide range of paint colors. In the businesslike setting of Trinity Royal, the palette was particularly narrow -- dark green, dark brown and black were common. Signs were painted for contrast rather than for color: black letters on a white background; gold letters on a black background.

A complete range of paints and a great variety of sign materials are available today, in colors ranging from the jarring to the pastel. If they are used indiscriminately, the unique historic character of Trinity Royal will be destroyed.

LIGHTING

In the nineteenth century, Trinity Royal would have been dimly lit. Today we expect our cities to be bright and lively at night. We must achieve an acceptable standard of lighting without compromising the essential character of the historic setting.

Indirect lighting from either incandescent or fluorescent sources may be used to illuminate signs. Neat design of fittings is important. In some situations, more prominent lights may be used as features; the utilitarian character of the area should be respected in the choice of style.

Neon tubes may be used in window signs only; their design, color and lighting intensity must be handled with discretion.



SIGNS WHICH ARE NOT APPROPRIATE

Backlit signs are inappropriate. By their nature, they are out of keeping with the solid character of the brick and stone buildings of Trinity Royal. Flashing lights are equally inappropriate.



SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS **SIGNS**

YES

NO

TYPICAL DETIL

Check the appropriate boxes in the various categories which apply to your signage.

Roof Signs

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you considered using a roof sign where the facade finishes in a plain, flat roof line? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Design an ornamental profile, symmetrical and centred on the building facade. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you made the sign and the lettering large enough to have impact? |

Painted Wall Signs

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you restore existing wall signs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | On corner sites, or where setbacks or low adjacent roofs expose the blank brick of side walls, will you use painted wall signs and/or wall-mounted sign boards? <i>Painted wall signs should be large – minimum 100 sq.ft.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you kept the message simple and the lettering big and bold? |

Architectural Signs

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you preserved existing architectural signs such as block names, floor mosaics and carved architectural symbols? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you promote the use of the original building names in new signage? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you create new architectural signs where the opportunity arises – as in the reconstruction of entryways? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you designed specifically for the situation? <i>New architectural signs should be unique to the building in question.</i> |

Window Signs

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Window signs are effective in attracting pedestrians and should be used where possible, particularly to advertise services. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Where it is desirable to keep display space clear, will you insert a sign at the base or the head of the window? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you use window signs to advertise secondary information, such as hours of opening? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you kept lettering small and centred? <i>Use several lines where necessary and consider curving the top line.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you use transparent panels hanging inside the window instead of letters applied directly to the glass? <i>Traditionally, letters were painted directly on the glass.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you use lettering formed of neon strip? <i>Neon strip may be used for window signs, provided the size, light intensity, color and style are handled appropriately.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will you display street numbers above doors whenever possible? |

Wall Signs

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you considered using wall signs on sections of plain wall, particularly where the design of the building leaves plain spaces running horizontally between windows of the upper floors? <i>Board mounted letters should be centred. Where possible, span the full width of the building, use large plain lettering, and use matching signs on more than one floor level.</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|



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YES

NO

☐
☐

Where the situation suggests it, have you used stacked vertical lettering?

☐
☐

Will you add framed panel signs on end walls, corners or other available wall space and make the most of this opportunity to design in a more florid, ornamental Victorian style?

☐
☐

Have you designed a small, high-quality sign or plaque for mounting at eye level to present a professional image?

☐
☐

Storefront/Fascia Sign

Will you display the name of the business on a storefront/fascia sign? *Use one line if lettering where possible and leave out secondary information.*

☐
☐

Will you use painted or carved lettering centred on a framed wooden name board? Where the available flat space is restrictive, have you considered alternatives such as mounting individual letters directly on the wall, window signs or wall signs mounted between the storefront and the second floor windows? *As a last resort, you can use a board tilted out over the cornice.*

☐
☐

Will you use a simple rectangular board with a moulded frame? *Consider adding a central decorative feature which might include the street number.*

☐
☐

Will the signboard run the full width of the storefront?

☐
☐

For legibility, have you chosen a strong simple style of lettering and a color to contrast with the background?

☐
☐

Projecting Signs

Have you designed projecting signs in the spirit of Victorian storefront signs?

☐
☐

Have you used a framed wooden board in a simple shape?

☐
☐

Have you used strong, plain lettering, centred on the board?

☐
☐

Have you considered adding a decorative flourish such as the street number on top of the board?

☐
☐

Coordination

Have you viewed the building as a whole and planned a unified design strategy to take advantage of all possible sign locations – upper facade, roof, window, etc.? *Don't put up signs piecemeal.*

☐
☐

Are you cooperating with tenants and owners to use a common lettering style and color scheme on the building?

☐
☐

Is your layout designed to emphasize the full width and symmetry of the building and provide individual identity to storefronts?

☐
☐

Materials

Have you used painted wood where possible? *Authentic materials will look appropriate against the weathered brick of Trinity Royal's commercial facades.*

☐
☐

Have you used modern materials only where other design factors (such as location, size and color) ensure that the finished sign will be appropriate to an historic area? *Neon may be used as a window sign only. Do not use backlit signs.*

☐

Krezon plywood

☐

Wood mouldings

☐

Neon

☐

Metal bracket

☐

Other



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YES NO

Shape

- ☐ ☐ Have you designed the sign shape to fit and fill the available space? *Consider using long narrow signs spanning the full width of the upper facades*
- ☐ ☐ Have you framed all board signs with a moulded border?
- ☐ ☐ Have you featured the property number as a central decoration over any fascia sign which projects in front of its Cornice?
- ☐ ☐ Are roof signs designed with boldly decorative and symmetrical profiles?
- ☐ ☐ Have you introduced wall panels in the Victorian decorative tradition? *Bowed panels were used on corner sites and occasionally against a flat wall.*
- ☐ ☐ If a projecting sign is essential, have you kept it simple in shape, small in size and utilitarian in design?
- ☐ ☐ Are your window signs symmetrical in layout and position? Top lines may be curved.

Colors

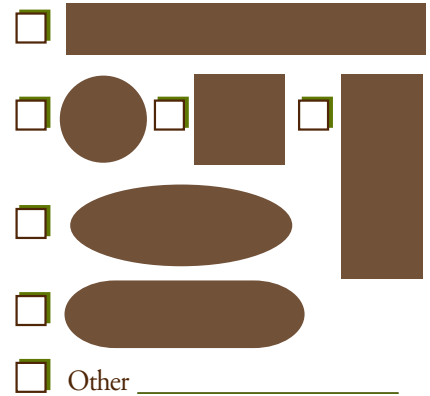
- ☐ ☐ Have you chosen subdued colors and dark tones in keeping with the Victorian tradition? *Dark brown and dark green, black, ivory and gold are all appropriate.*
- ☐ ☐ Have you chosen colors with sufficient contrast to be clearly legible; dark on light or light on dark?

Lettering

- ☐ ☐ Have you chosen a bold and simple type style and used it on all appropriate signs?
- ☐ ☐ Have you used uppercase letters?
- ☐ ☐ Does the size fit the location? *Don't be afraid to use large lettering on upper facades, roof signs and painted wall signs, Fascia signs, which are seen from closer range, do not need to be big to be legible. Keep them in proportion to the available space.*
- ☐ ☐ Have you made sure there is sufficient color contrast with the background for easy reading? *Raised letters are helpful in this respect and are traditional.*
- ☐ ☐ Where letters are board mounted, does the board have a moulded frame and are the letters centered?
- ☐ ☐ Where appropriate, have you used decorative, framed wall panels in the authentic Victorian Style with elaborate lettering styles and ornamentation?

Size

- ☐ ☐ Do large signs fit horizontally between the windows of upper floors? *Use several such signs where possible and allow them to stretch the full width of the building.*
- ☐ ☐ Are your roof signs large enough to stand as apart of the overall architectural design? *Roof signs should not perch on top of buildings.*
- ☐ ☐ Are your window signs small enough to be read comfortably at close range?
- ☐ ☐ Does your sign project less than 4 ft. from the face of the building? Projecting signs are intended for pedestrians and 5 sq. ft. should normally be an adequate size.



Color for sign

Background _____

Moulding _____

Letters _____

Type of lettering

☐ Carved ☐ Raised ☐ Painted

Type style

☐ Times Roman

☐ Century Schoolbook

☐ Other _____

Letter Height	Impact	Viewing
6"	60'	600'
8"	80'	800'
10"	100'	1,000'
12"	120'	1,200'



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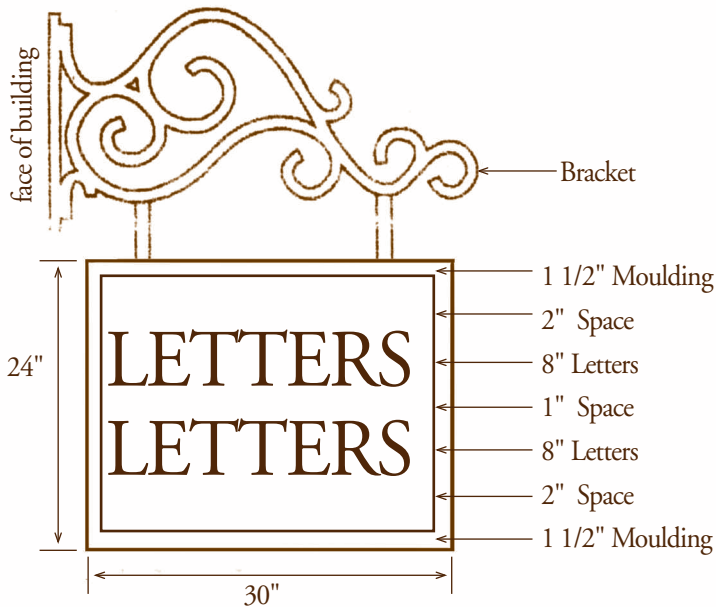
SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS SIGNS

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ **Lighting**
- ☐ ☐ Are you using a simple sturdy incandescent light fixture? Place wall-mounted spotlights discreetly. Do not use flashing or intermittent lights. Do not use blacklit signs either projecting or wall mounted.
- ☐ ☐ Have you used neon lights in window signs only and designed them with respect for the historic ambience of the area?
- ☐ ☐ Are your lighting fixtures attached on gooseneck arms?



EXAMPLE OF A PROJECTING SIGN



Height above ground – Minimum 9 feet

DRAW YOUR PROJECTING SIGN HERE

Include Wrought Iron Bracket detail.

Provide the following information:

Width _____

Height _____

Number of sq. ft. _____

Typeface _____

Size of letters _____

Colors:

Background _____

Letters _____

Moulding _____



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SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS **SIGNS**

EXAMPLE OF FASCIA / STOREFRONT OR WALL SIGN



DRAW YOUR FASCIA / STOREFRONT OR WALL SIGN HERE

Provide the following information:

Width _____
Height _____
Number of sq. ft. _____
Typeface _____
Size of letters _____
Colors:
Background _____
Letters _____
Moulding _____

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Practical Conservation Guidelines, application forms for Grants and Certificates of Appropriateness and other useful information for fixing up your older building is available from:

Heritage Services | Growth and
Community Development Services
15 Market Square,
Saint John, New Brunswick | E2L 4L1
Phone: (506) 658 2838

Email: heritage@saintjohn.ca
Online: www.saintjohn.ca/heritage

Property Owners! Contact Heritage Staff before you begin to make any plan purchase supplies or hire contractors. Advice on ways to save you time, money and energy will be offered free of charge.