

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

Wood

INTRODUCTION

Wood cladding is applied in a variety of ways; horizontal clapboards, cedar shingles, flush-boards, and vertical board and batten.

With good maintenance the service life of wood cladding can be fairly long. Also, it is easily repairable.

As with all exterior materials, the primary source of decay is moisture. Periodic inspection of the siding, and a timely response to any initial signs of deterioration will minimize long term problems with wood cladding.

Look for evidence of rot and for opportunities for water penetration, such as cracks, splits, gaps and peeling paint.

Wood shrinks, expands, or warps due to changing temperatures or moisture content. These changes occur to the greatest degree early in the construction process, but continue throughout the life of the building. Well designed and constructed cladding anticipates and accomodates a certain degree of movement.

PRESERVATION

Saint John is blessed with a rich variety of older wooden buildings that together help form the character of our city. Individually, many of them are excellent examples of a particular style of architecture.

The treatment of exterior cladding should be considered in relation to the design of the building as a whole.

- Preserve the original historic fabric.
- Repair, rather than replace deteriorated architectural features.
- When replacement is necessary, match the original.
- Replacement of missing features should be based upon historical accuracy.

Cladding is the one element of a facade that has most commonly been altered from original appearances.

If the original material remains intact, preserve and repair it.

Where alterations are out of character, probe into the more modern veneers to determine what, if anything, of the original remains. In many cases the original cladding, and some trim or decorative woodwork are still in place, concealed by the addition of later layers.

The facade should be renovated in keeping with the original building design, using those elements that are intact, and replacing the missing features.

Photographic evidence is available for many areas in Saint John to assist in recreating the original design. In the absence of historic photographs, look for similar buildings in your neighbourhood, and consult reference books for clues to the appropriate cladding treatment.



SAINT JOHN





SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS WOOD

TRADITIONAL WOOD CLADDING

Wood Shingles

Wood shingles have been used since about 1650. Sawn wood shingles have been available since the mid 1800's. Life expectancy is 25-30 years. Most shingles used in this area were native (eastern white cedar).

Shingles are graded as to quality and appropriate use. The grades of eastern cedar shingles are, in ascending order of quality: clearwall (for interior use only); clear; second clear; extra:

Native shingles are usually installed with 4 to 5 inches exposed to the weather. Shingles with octagonal, diamond, fish-scale or saw-tooth ends were used for decorative effect.

Clapboards

Also known as lap siding, clapboards are applied horizontally, and are traditionally pine boards 8 to 10' long, 5 to 8" wide, tapering from a bottom edge 1/2" thick to a top edge about 1/8" thick.

Each clapboard laps over the one below about 1", and is nailed through the upper edge, concealing the nails, and permitting each board to move independently.

Board and Batten

Prevalent on gothic-revival houses, square edged pine boards are applied vertically, with narrow strips of wood covering the joints. The edges of the narrow batten strips were often chamfered to soften the appearance. To permit movement the battens should not be nailed to both boards.

Flush Boards

Sawn boards, 12" to 18" wide with shiplap joints, applied horizontally, were occasionally used to provide a smooth exterior surface.

Novelty Siding

Horizontally laid 6" to 8" wide shiplapped boards, with moulded concavities at the joints and at false intermediate joints.

MAINTENANCE

Regular maintenance will ensure that the wall functions properly, and will preserve it in good condition. Regular washing and painting protects the wall from the elements, and provides an opportunity for periodic inspection and repairs. Most repairs to wood cladding are relatively simple.

Surface Repairs

Gouge out all the rotted wood, and treat the area with a preservative. Then fill the cavity with epoxy filler. Large areas of rotten material should be removed, the remaining good wood treated with preservative and fitted with a new piece glued in place. New epoxy consolidates permit repair without removal of the rotted material.

Small cracks should be cleaned out, primed with linseed oil and then puttied. For minor damage use plastic wood. For larger areas use epoxy resin techniques. Drill 1/4" holes at an angle into the rotted area and inject the resin with a plastic squeeze bottle. Then using a paste of resin and sawdust, fill and shape as with plastic wood or putty.

Maintaining Wood Shingles

Renail loose shingles. Drill a hole for a new nail, to prevent splitting the shingle. Splits and holes can be fixed with a piece of metal slid under the shingle, nailed in place through the shingle.

Badly split, rotted or missing shingles should be replaced. Loosen the shingle above it, remove the shingle, and cut off the nail with a hacksaw blade. Slide a new shingle into place and nail it down with zinc-coated nails just below the butt of the shingle above.

Maintaining Clapboards

To remove a clapboard drive the nails in with a nail set, or pry up the board to loosen the nails, and remove them. Cut the board with a backsaw to remove a partial clapboard. Nail the replacement board along the butt edge, high enough to avoid the board below. Caulk the joints. Fill old holes with putty.



• Shingles



• Clapboards



• Flush



• Board & Batten



• Novelty



SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS **WOOD**

Trim

The corner boards, window and door casings, eaves, sill board and water table give the house its proportion, and define its principal lines. Maintain these features and repair or replace them with matching material.

Flashings

The flashings between the walls and adjacent materials or surfaces such as low roofs over porches are the weakest point in most wall systems. Any search for the source of leaks should start with the flashings. Flashing materials include various metals, roll roofing, sheet plastic and rubber. Avoid using dissimilar metals together.

Caulking

Use caulking to seal gaps between materials and different building elements to keep water out. Caulking must be able to adhere to the surfaces and should accommodate movement in the joint. Large joints should first be filled with a foam backer rod to provide a bed for the caulking. Rubber butyl and polyurethane caulking will last 15-20 years in exterior applications, and can be painted. Silicone caulk will last over 20 years but can't be painted.

References

The Old House Journal. Edited By Clem Labine, Published Monthly

Hanson, Shirley, And Hubby, Nancy. Preserving And Maintaining The Older Home. New York: Macgrawhill, 1983

Horton, Peter: So You Want to Fix Up an Old House: Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1979

Hutchins, Nigel, Restoring Old Houses: Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1980

Hutchins, Nigel, Restoring of Houses Of Brick And Stone.: Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1980

Magee, Phoebe Anne, And Smith, M. Aileen, Heritage Handbook: St. Andrews: St Andrews Civic Trust, 1980

Rempel, John L. :Building With Wood: Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1980

Stephen, George Remodeling Old Houses Without Destroying Their Character, New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1974

Williams, Henry L, & Ottalie K.: A Guide to Old American Houses 1700-1900, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1977

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.