

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

Porches

INTRODUCTION

A porch is a roofed space sheltering the entrance, and is known as a portico if it has a pedimented roof supported on columns. It may project from the facade or be recessed into it.

A verandah is an open porch, large enough for a sitting area.

The porch is one of the most vulnerable parts of a house. It is exposed to the weather from all sides, and is often neglected, which can lead to its eventual removal. This can diminish the historical style of the building.

Retain and maintain original porches or, if missing, rebuild based upon the original or a period design.

If the porch is a much later addition, and does not harmonize with the original architecture, remove it, and build a porch that is of an authentic design.

PORCH STYLES

The porch compliments the style of the house. It is important to recognize and maintain the continuity of the style.

GEORGIAN pre 1800-1830

Porticoes with Greek or Roman design columns supporting a roof. Exhibits a classical influence. Outside enclosed vestibles occasionally date from this period.



GOTHIC REVIVAL 1850-1870

Generous rambling porches and verandahs are a common feature of this style. Usually enlivened by finials, pinnacles, decorative roof-edge "bargeboards" and patterned railings. Generally only one or two steps from the ground. If higher, area under porch screened with latice or vertical boards.



SAINT JOHN





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ITALIANATE 1850-1870

Both porches and porticoes were common, usually an integral part of design. Often generous in size, and extending across facade. Deep projecting eaves, supported by large wooden brackets on a wide cornice. Variety of column styles, often twinned or clustered. Often no railings, even though usually raised several steps. Flat roofs common.



QUEEN ANNE 1880-1900

Exuberant porches and verandahs with gables, intersecting roofs, turrets and towers. Decorative iron cresting, finials, patterned and coloured shingles enliven the roofscape. Variety of column, spindle and railing styles.



MAINTENANCE

Rot Repairs (Non-structural)

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

Surface Repairs

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.

Caulking

Use caulking to seal gaps between materials and different building elements to keep out water. 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.

Cast-iron

Iron castings were often used for railings and newel posts. To maintain, prevent rust by plugging any holes with plumbing epoxy or auto-body putty, and by regular painting. Reset any loose elements, and replace missing pieces.

Wire-brush, spot-prime and paint any exposed metal. Usually cast-iron was painted dark brown, dark green, or black.

Caulk all joints with black silicone rubber sealant. Missing pieces may be replaced with new castings from a local foundry, replicated with a polyester resin casting (a do-it yourself project), or turned from wood. A number of Canadian companies are producing cast aluminium replicas of old castings.



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Sagging Porches

The verandah was often built without a foundation and it often practically falls off the house, until it is finally removed. New footings, below frost, using sono-tube concrete forms, can be poured, and the porch repaired in place. No wood should be closer than 200mm to the ground, and it's wise to treat all new wood with preservative.

Deck repairs

Replace loose, warped or rotting decking. The porch floor should slope slightly away from the house. Run the boards in the direction of the slope. Use pressure treated material. Ensure adequate ventilation under the porch.

Railings And Balustrades

Check periodically for signs of decay, loose rails and balustrades. The bottoms of balustrades and posts are often rotted by accumulated moisture or snow. As long as the member remains strong enough treat the rotted area, re-install and repaint. Otherwise replace the member with a matching piece. All horizontal surfaces should be shaped or sloped to shed water.

Wooden Steps

The stair carriage system often rots away under apparently sound steps. Use pressure treated material for steps and the structural framing, and galvanized fastenings. Use one-inch thick tread stock, slope each tread slightly to drain. Caulk the joint between riser and tread.

Stone Steps

Stone steps wear naturally over time from repeated use. Unless the depression is dangerous no repair should be necessary. Stone steps may become broken at edges and no sings from accidental damage, from the expansion of a rusted insertion at a railing, or from frost. A broken step should be removed, and the pieces re-inforced with stainless steel pins. A broken edge can be repaired with mortar, reinforced as necessary with 1/4" stainless steel rod. Build up the step to its original shape in successive layers of mortar, colored. to match the step.

References

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

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:

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