

Windows

Windows are crucial to every building's character. In their size, shape and spacing, window openings create a sense of rhythm and proportion which sets the tone for an entire building. Moldings and other decorative trim reinforce the effect of the openings and set them apart from the surrounding walls. The windows within the openings are full of important design features. These include the materials of the windows and frames, the number and spacing of the panes, the recessing and shadow lines of the window frames, the reflective quality of the glass, and the width, profile and shadow lines of the wood muntins in which the panes are set. Details like these may seem subtle, but the eye can tell immediately if they are wrong, and mistakes with windows can be a visual disaster.

So far, downtown Bennington has been lucky to avoid many of the window problems which have badly damaged the character of many other places. The worst of these include enlarging or reducing the size of window openings to create picture and bay windows, or accommodate manufacturers' stock window sizes; and removing original wood windows to substitute new aluminum or vinyl-clad windows. Replacement windows often have artificial grids which are supposed to imitate the appearance of real window panes. The intention is good, but the artificial grids almost always look flat and pasted-on. Bennington's most common window problem is one of the easiest to solve: over the years, many buildings have had unpainted aluminum storm windows installed. With proper surface preparation, the bare metal can be painted to blend with a building's other painted surfaces.

For additional background, see National Park Service Preservation Briefs 3 ("Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings") and 9 ("The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows"), and other publications listed in the Information Sources section of this handbook.

Basic Guideline

Maintain existing windows and frames in their original materials, design and dimensions. Avoid changing window sizes or installing replacement windows in aluminum, vinyl or other inappropriate materials. Avoid artificial grids which attempt to imitate the appearance of real multiple window panes. Use storm windows of appropriate materials, design and color.

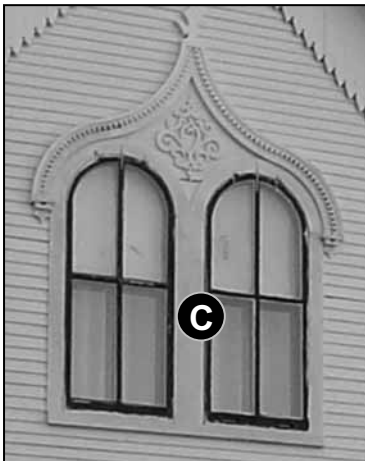


Fig. 5-18: 125 Jefferson St. Wood storm windows match the unique window design.

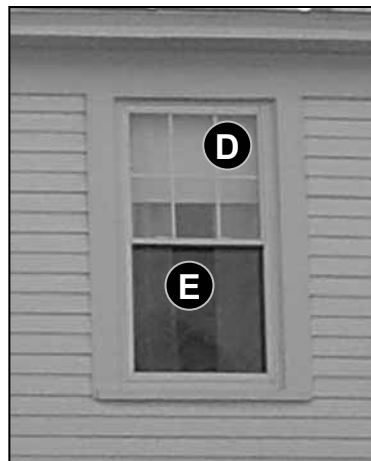


Fig. 5-19: 213 Washington St. The storm windows are recessed inside the window trim, and are designed to blend into the overall design.



Fig. 5-16: 213 Main St. Custom wood storm windows and working shutters match the design and blend nicely with the historic architecture.



Fig. 5-17: 120 Benmont Ave. It is best to try to repair existing historic windows before replacing them altogether.



Fig. 5-20: 217 Washington St. Many different window types and sizes can make a façade appear confusing.

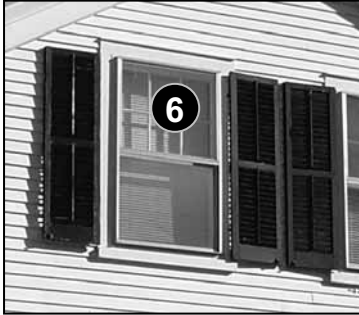


Fig. 5-21: 102 Jefferson St. Bare metal storm windows are mounted onto and covering the window trim, which is not ideal. Also, shutters are not consistently mounted to the windows.



Fig. 5-22: 105 Holden St. Window shutters should be used realistically and consistently on a façade. The imitation window shutters like the one shown here are often seen used on only one side of a window, or on alternate sides of a pair of windows. Such installations are not historically accurate.

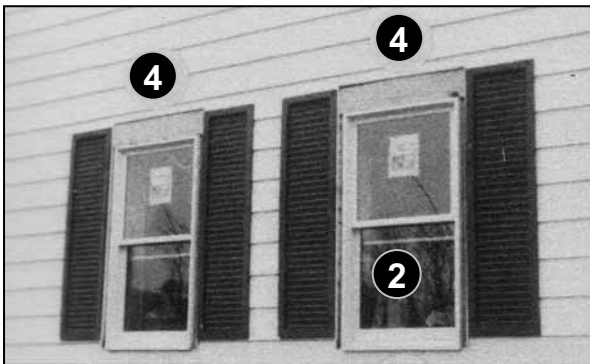


Fig. 5-23: The original historic windows have been removed in this picture and replaced with smaller vinyl clad windows. [Date unknown.]

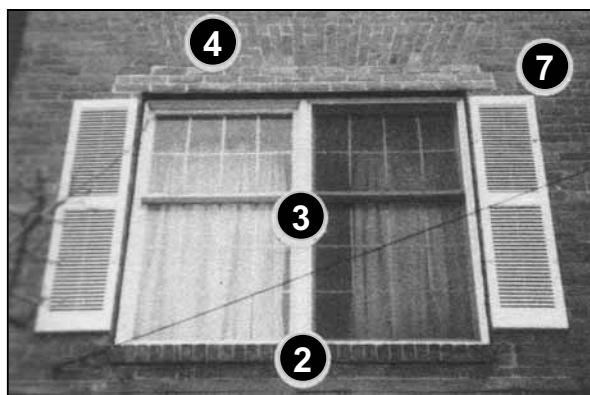


Fig. 5-24: The imitation window shutters like the ones shown here do not make any sense on either side of this large window opening since they would not be able to cover the window. Also, the original arched top of the window has been filled-in and replaced with a straight metal lintel. [Date unknown.]

Appropriate

- A Repairing, reglazing, painting and weatherstripping old windows and storms which are basically sound.
- B Matching the original design and materials when replacing old windows which are beyond repair.
- C Installing wood storm windows, or storms of other materials which are compatible with the color and design of the existing windows.
- D Recessing new aluminum storm windows within the frame of the existing window, rather than covering the frame.
- E Painting aluminum storm windows, using proper surface preparation and colors which blend in with the existing windows and frames.
- F Repairing and keeping wood shutters and fabric awnings which are in keeping with a building's historic character.

Not Appropriate

- 1 Replacing windows which are in sound or reasonably repairable condition.
- 2 Removing old windows and replacing them using inappropriate materials like aluminum or vinyl, or boarding the windows up.
- 3 Replacement windows with applied grids to imitate multiple panes.
- 4 Enlarging or reducing the size of old or original window openings.
- 5 Making new window openings in visible portions of a building, or in ways which clash with the size, spacing and design of existing openings.
- 6 Installing aluminum storm windows which are not properly recessed within original openings, or which do not match the color of the existing windows and frames.
- 7 Installing metal awnings or imitation shutters in vinyl or metal.
- 8 Adding vinyl, metal or wood imitation shutters where shutters never existed previously.
- 9 Removing original wood shutters or fabric awnings.

Preservation Guidelines: Windows

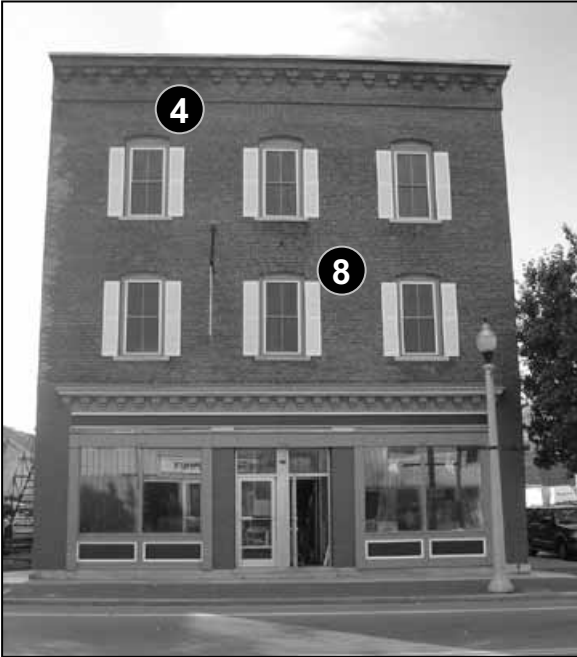


Fig. 5-25: 198 North St. The original windows have been removed and replaced with smaller ones without the arched top. The original windows of this building never had shutters, yet new vinyl ones have been added here. This does not match the original design, and doesn't even match the windows on the side of the building, as shown in Fig. 5-26.



Fig. 5-28: 512 Main St. Windows that are no longer used should not be boarded up or filled in on the outside. Instead, the wall can be in-filled on the inside, leaving the existing window to remain on the outside.

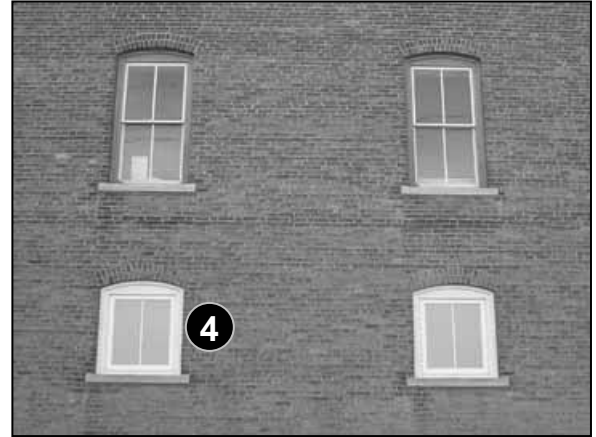


Fig. 5-26: 198 North St. The original arched top windows have been replaced with smaller, flat-top windows, and don't match from the second to the third floor.

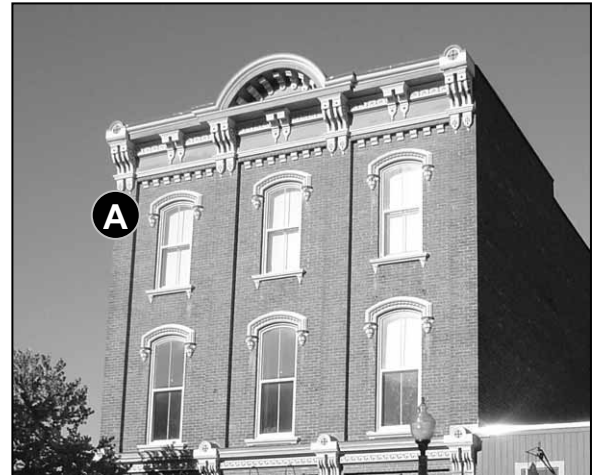


Fig. 5-27: 332 Main St. The original arched top windows have been maintained.



Fig. 5-29: 532 Main St. The original building façade here has been replaced with a large, post-modern window in the center which is inconsistent with the building and its surroundings.