

### Porches and Stairs

Porches and stairs play an important role in Bennington's buildings. Their shapes and outlines are interesting, and they often include some of a building's most important decorative features: columns, railings, balusters, newel posts, brackets, molded cornices. Porches and stairs also create a lively transition between opposites: inside and outside; building and street; light and shade. A large number of Bennington's porches and stairs survive in good condition; others suffer from a lack of maintenance, especially around roofs and cornices. Some of the most common changes which diminish architectural character occur at porches and stairs. These include replacing original wood columns with open wrought iron supports, and replacing ornamental wood railings with incompatible new ones in wood or wrought iron.

### Basic Guideline

Maintain the form and ornamental features of porches and stairs. Where columns and railings need to be replaced, match the original materials and use designs as close to the original as possible. New columns and railings need not have all of the ornament and detail found in historic designs, but they should keep basic forms and proportions.

#### Appropriate

- A** Repairing and retaining porches, stairs and related decorative features.
- B** Maintaining porch roofs, cornices and gutters to prevent water-related damage.
- C** Matching or closely approximating original materials, proportions and details when replacing deteriorated features.
- D** Keep original work whenever possible, and try to integrate any new modern elements as inconspicuously as possible.

#### Not Appropriate

- 1** Stripping porches of columns, cornices or other decorative features.
- 2** Enclosing open porches on highly visible portions of a building.
- 3** Replacing railings or columns with new ones in wrought iron, wood or other materials whose design and appearance are not in keeping with the original.
- 4** Adding new stair railings in materials or designs which are not compatible with originals (black ornamental railings next to white wood railings, for example).
- 5** Carpeting stairs and porches in colors and materials which contrast strongly with original character (bright green astroturf, for example).



Fig. 5-1: 213 Main St. The ornamentation has been retained along the eaves, columns and porch railings, but the stair railings have been replaced with wrought iron.

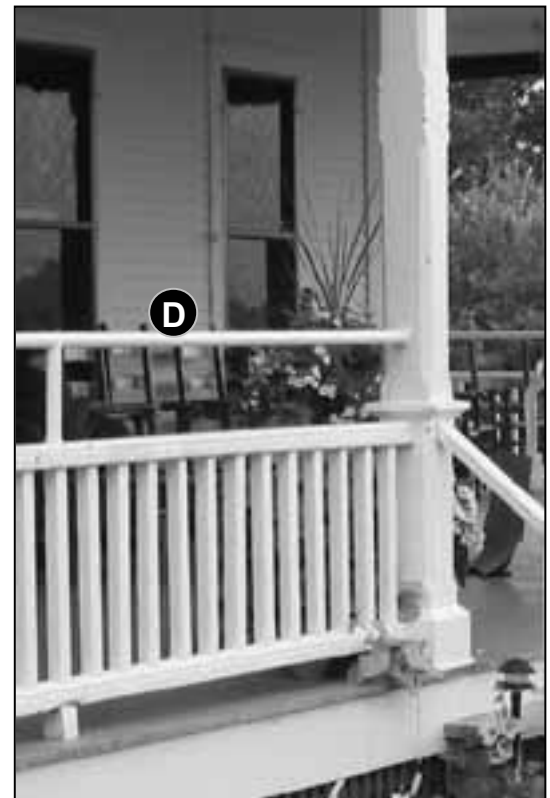


Fig. 5-2: Grand Isle Lake House, Grand Isle, VT. Original porch railings were very low, but new pipe has been added along the top to meet code requirements while still preserving the original scale of the railing design. Photo by Meg Cambell.



Fig. 5-3: 206 Main St. Porch roofs should be flashed properly and kept at least 10" below any windows to help prevent snow and water build-up at the window sill.



Fig. 5-4: 202 Main St. The front steps and railings up to this porch are similar to the style and character of the porch overall, and are painted to match. The underside of the porch is concealed with grillwork which allows the structure underneath to breathe.

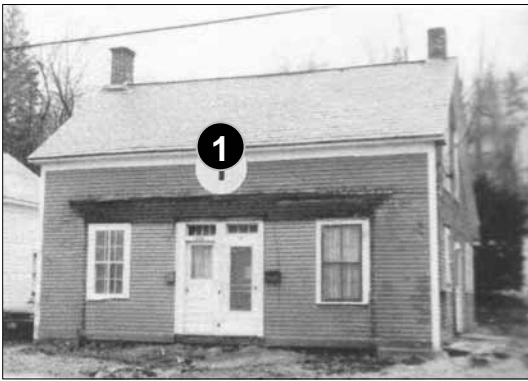


Fig. 5-5: The removal of this front porch completely changes the scale and character of the original home. [Date unknown.]



Fig. 5-6: 115 McKinley St. The front steps and railings up to this porch do not match the original porch design, and are instead constructed of standard framing lumber. The porch railings have themselves been replaced with blank wood panels which changes the scale of the facade. The underside of this porch has been completely enclosed as well, and likely does not provide enough ventilation to prevent moisture buildup and rot.



Fig. 5-7: 138 River St. The front porch of this structure has been partially filled-in with an addition.