

## Wall Materials and Surfaces

Wall materials and surfaces make a building what it is. They are crucial parts of architecture, determining not only how a building is made, but also how it looks. Most older buildings in central Bennington have outside walls of clapboard or brick, sometimes with foundation walls of marble or other stone. Some prominent buildings are trimmed or completely clad in marble; wood shingles, stucco or concrete, and metals are primary or secondary materials elsewhere. The most common problem with wall materials in Bennington is the covering of original wall surfaces with aluminum and vinyl siding, asphalt and asbestos cement shingles, or other synthetic materials. This changes a building's character radically in many cases, and it usually causes more maintenance and construction problems than it solves. Another common wall problem in Bennington is heavy cleaning and improper repointing of brick, especially on the commercial streets.

For additional background, see National Park Service Preservation Briefs 1 ("The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings"), 2 ("Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick Buildings"), 6 ("Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings"), 8 ("Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings"), and other publications listed in the Information Sources section of this handbook.

### Basic Guideline

Retain old or original exterior wall materials. Avoid covering wall surfaces with metal or synthetic cladding, and avoid improper cleaning, repair, repointing or coating of masonry walls.



Fig. 5-30: 124 Elm St. Original curved shingles are used here to highlight the sculptural nature of the façade enclosure.



Fig. 5-31: 206 Main St. Original scalloped shingles are used only on the gable ends of this home to give them a more unique appearance.



Fig. 5-32: 118 South St. Light colored stone surfaces such as this often need to be cleaned, but the cleaning process should never permanently change the appearance of the materials.



Fig. 5-33: When cleaning masonry surfaces, avoid using harsh or abrasive cleaning agents that can permanently discolor the surface.



Fig. 5-34: 150 Depot St. This rough ashlar masonry wall surface adds texture and depth to the façade.

### Appropriate

- A** Repairing and keeping clapboards and other wood wall materials.
- B** Using matching wood to replace missing or badly deteriorated wood wall material.
- C** Cleaning brick or other materials using the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting, high pressure water blasting and harsh chemicals can damage even the hardest brick.
- D** Removing only the worst staining on masonry rather than trying to make the surface look "like new".
- E** Removing deteriorated mortar with hand tools only, and repointing masonry with soft, high-lime mortar which matches the original in color, texture and dimensions. A mortar made up of 6 parts sand, 1 1/2 parts cement and 3 parts lime is recommended.

### Not Appropriate

- 1** Covering wall surfaces with metal or vinyl siding, or other synthetic cladding which differs greatly from original materials.
- 2** Sandblasting, high pressure water cleaning (over 500 psi), highly concentrated chemical cleaning or other harsh methods of cleaning or paint removal for masonry or wood.
- 3** Removing and repointing mortar which is not deteriorated, or using power tools to remove any mortar from masonry.
- 4** Repointing masonry with hard, portland cement mortar. Sloppy repairs, using brick or mortar which does not match the color, texture and dimensions of the original mortar.
- 5** Painting masonry walls if they were not painted in the past. Stripping paint from wood or masonry surfaces if they were painted in the past.
- 6** Applying stucco or imitation stone or brick to exposed brick or other surfaces which are not now stuccoed. Adding brick or stone veneers to walls which never had them.
- 7** Applying acrylic, silicone or other sealers to masonry.

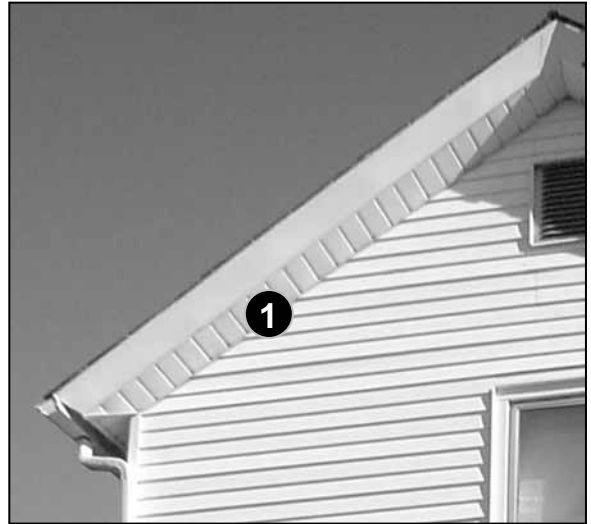


Fig. 5-33: 115 McKinley St. Vinyl siding hides the original wood trim that gives a façade definition and scale.

Fig. 5-34: 518 Main St. Repair work done to this brick has resulted in an uneven appearance and discoloration.

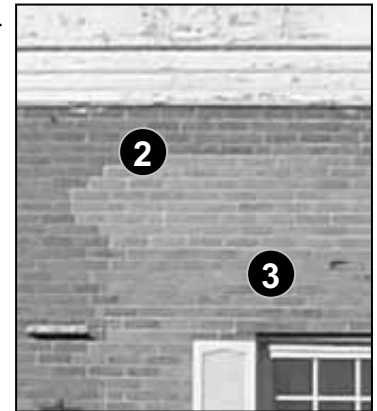


Fig. 5-35: 449 Main St. Joint repair which uses the wrong mix or mortar can result in highly visible joints. Be sure that test-mixes are tried before real work commences.