



TOPSFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

WINDOWS AND SIDING REPLACEMENT: WHAT TO DO?

The Historical Commission strongly recommends that homeowners think twice before replacing windows or siding. Many builders and contractors, and even homeowners themselves, do not understand the major role that both windows and siding play in determining the historic character of the home. Manufacturers and building supply stores have vested interest in promoting replacement of older materials rather than restoration of existing materials. Repairing the old windows and siding may both save you money and increase the value of your home.

Window replacement and repair

Because of the rising cost of heating this winter, some Topsfield residents are considering ways to improve the energy-efficiency of their windows. Many in the building community advocate replacing old windows and storms with new thermopane sash, sometimes using vinyl-clad surfaces rather than wood. In many cases this may not be the best decision for a historic home. Please consider the following factors when making a window replacement decision.

- Old windows are a major part of the character and charm of an historic home. Where replacements are necessary, they should replicate the style and materials of the original as closely as possible.
- Old windows are more durable than new ones because they were made of harder wood than is readily available these days.
- Often drafty and loose windows only need simple repairs rather than total replacement. Be sure that this isn't true in your case.
- A traditional window with a good storm window or storm panel has roughly the same energy-efficiency as a double-glazed insulated window and can be bought for the same price as a lesser-quality double glazed window.
- A traditional window is a terrific solar heat source and will often help to heat your home in Winter better than replacement windows. New double-paned insulated windows are designed to keep the sun's heat out of your house.
- Double-glazed windows have a shorter life span than single-glazed windows because the plastic sealant deteriorates.
- Often double-glazed windows are not available in the appropriate sizes or patterns for historic windows.
- Single-glazed windows are more easily repaired than double-glazed ones, where typically the whole sash must be replaced if a window is broken.