



# Rock Hill Board of Historic Review NEWSLETTER

MAY 2011

GENERAL QUESTIONS (803) 329-5587

[www.cityofrockhill.com/historic](http://www.cityofrockhill.com/historic)

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Main Street, showing part of "The White Way," Rock Hill, S. C.

The Rock Hill Board of Historic Review was created in January of 1989 to oversee and aid in the preservation of the City of Rock Hill's identified historic structures, both within districts that have been locally and nationally designated as historic, and structures individually listed as historic.

**What a mouthful.** Basically, the Board oversees Certificate of Appropriateness applications that have been submitted by you, the property owner, and makes certain that the work you are proposing to do will not eliminate or destroy the features and materials that make your property historic. Most of the time, though, you want to do simple maintenance and just replace a rotting board or two on the front porch or some siding. No problem – Staff can approve that and maybe you will have to get a building permit. Or you just want to paint your house. Even less of a problem – you don't even have to get a building permit.

But your windows are in bad shape. This is a situation

where Staff needs to be involved, and may require the Board's approval. Staff can come in and see what kind of shape your windows are in and make the determination as to whether the windows should be replaced and if you will need Board approval. Windows that have been in historic houses and buildings for over a hundred years were built to last. That's why they are still in place. It's not necessarily that the windows are rotted and need to be replaced – the window components may be in bad shape and need to be repaired and put back into working order so that the window functions as it should. Staff has an extensive collection of **free** information you can put to use in order to help maintain your historic property – including detailed information to help you make informed decisions about what needs to be done. And Staff will come out to your property **at no cost** and do an assessment of what can be done to best protect your investment. Because let's face it, the window guy is there to sell you new windows, the vinyl siding guy is there to sell you new siding. And neither is there to help you find out what the real problems might be.

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May is National Historic Preservation Month. For more information visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation website at <http://www.preservationnation.org/>.



## Storm Windows

The [May 2010 RHBHR Newsletter](#) dealt with window replacement (“My Windows are Old & Drafty – Why Shouldn’t I Buy New Ones?”) and why this might not solve the energy efficiency problems you may be experiencing. One of the facts presented stated that it can take 240 years to recoup enough money in energy efficiency savings to pay for the installation (calculations are available online at <http://restoreomaha.org/resources/WindowEnergyAnalysis.pdf>). If energy efficiency is an issue – and you have already insulated your attic and crawl space, placed gaskets in the exterior wall light switches and electric junction boxes, and followed the other “[15 Steps to Efficiency](#)” from the National Trust for Historic Preservation – consider installing interior or exterior storm windows.



Exterior storm windows are an acceptable means of energy conservation and efficiency. The [Design Review Guideline Manual for Historic Properties](#) (available online or you can call and request a printed copy) states that storm windows should match the openings in proportion and dimension, be constructed of wood or aluminum, and have the meeting rail match that of the original window. Popular for a number of years, exterior storm windows can



be left in place all year round and be opened for ventilation as needed. The handy DIY-er can build and install simple wood-framed storm windows at a much lower cost than professionally installed aluminum units. Since these are, obviously, installed on the exterior of the property, these would require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

However, for those who feel that exterior storm windows would detract from the appearance of their property, the best option is interior storm windows. By creating air-space between the interior storm window unit and the original window, the insulation value of the window assembly is improved. Additionally, interior storm windows can reduce exterior noise pollution, decrease window condensation, and reduce fading of materials from sunlight. These windows can be easily installed by the homeowner at a fraction of the cost of replacement windows and can be easily removed to enjoy natural outside air and ventilation. There are a number of manufacturers of interior storm windows that can be found online.

## History After Hours

The first Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm, Historic Rock Hill will present "History After Hours" at the White Home. These programs will focus on a number of historic topics of both local and regional interest, including Fuel Stations in Rock Hill, Lost Architectural Treasures, Sanborn Maps, Rock Hill's Builders and Architects, Using Ancestry.com, and African American Schools: The Rosenwald School History. This is only a sample of the many topics this group will explore and present to the public. Admission is free, refreshments will be provided, and you are more than welcome to bring a friend. Contact Historic Rock Hill at 803/329-1020 or by email, [info@historicrockhill.com](mailto:info@historicrockhill.com). And if you haven't already, take a look at their new website – [www.historicrockhill.com](http://www.historicrockhill.com) – for more information about programs, membership, history, the White Home, projects and the newly opened gift shop.



## How Things Have Changed

It used to be that the selling point for vinyl siding was – Never Needs Painting! Introduced during the 1960s, vinyl siding gained popularity during the 1970s by being marketed to homeowners for remodeling use. Since then, vinyl siding has dominated the market and increased in production thanks to its consistent use in new construction.

So, imagine this question to Danny Lipford, home improvement expert, in a recent issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*: Can vinyl siding be painted?

Huh? Vinyl siding was supposed to be the end all to the aches and pains of painting. No more scraping and sanding. One might even recall the Sears commercial with the guy standing outside his house in his bathrobe spraying down his house with a garden hose.

Mr. Lipford's answer? "If the vinyl siding on your home has seen better days, painting it can be a great way to boost curb appeal." The same can be said of wood siding, but Mr. Lipford, along with other home improvement experts and paint manufacturers, recommends choosing a color that is no darker than the siding since dark colors absorb heat, which in turn leads to warping. Wood, fortunately, doesn't have that problem, so your color choices are as wide as the color spectrum.



Further, Mr. Lipford states, "If the siding is slick and glossy, it will need to be roughed up first with medium- to fine-grit sandpaper. Then two coats of a high-quality exterior acrylic latex paint can be applied to the siding with either a brush or sprayer." And the price for this job? May be about the same or more since the surface preparation of scraping/sanding wood siding might only be necessary in some locations that are more exposed to weather, as opposed to sanding all of the surfaces of a vinyl sided structure.

## National Park Service Preservation Brief 37

### Appropriate Methods for Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing

Published in 1995, this leaflet takes a look at lead-paint hazards and how to deal with these hazards in an historic structure. Lead paint for use in residential housing was banned by the federal government in 1978, so it can be assumed that historic houses still have some lead paint remaining in both the interior and exterior façades. The critical areas that the historic property owner needs to be aware of are any places where friction occurs, for example doors and door frames; areas where paint adhesion is failing and exposing bare wood, such as the soil areas around the building foundation; and any areas of peeling paint inside or outside the structure.

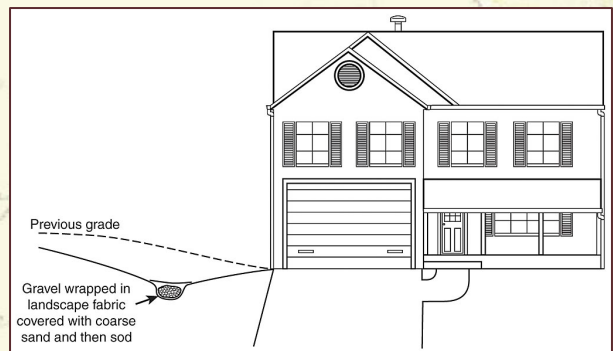


You can request a copy of this Preservation Brief from the National Park Service by sending an email to [nps\\_hps-info@nps.gov](mailto:nps_hps-info@nps.gov). Other information is available from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/lead-paint/>. Additionally, the City of Rock Hill has information available online (<http://tinyurl.com/3goa9nd>) about how to treat areas you suspect may contain lead. You can also call the Lead Awareness Hotline at 1-800-424-LEAD for more information.

## Water, Water Everywhere

Ever think about what the most damaging factor is to an historic property? It's also one of the most important things we can't live without – water. Water damage leads to a wide variety of results, from rotten wood to insects.

We all know that water searches for the path of least resistance, so it's important to look for areas that are susceptible to water damage. Take a walk outside during a nice rainy day and make note of areas that collect rain, especially around the foundation. Water that settles in those areas can cause damage to bricks or wood (both of which act like sponges), wash away the binders in old mortar, and encourage the attraction of pests, like subterranean termites (which come from the ground) or Formosan termites (the flying type). Once you have spotted those collection points, you can start dealing with diverting the water away. A non-porous soil layer, not a topsoil, around the home should slope away at a minimum of six inches for the first 10 feet to prevent rainwater from collecting next to the foundation. To keep moisture from accumulating in the crawlspace, install a vapor barrier and make sure there is adequate ventilation with crawlspace vents. You may also investigate the possibility of a French drain (see figure).



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## Water, Water Everywhere (continued)

If you have gutters, consider a rain barrel. You can mount a rain chain to divert water from your roof's lowest point into a rain barrel which will in turn store water for garden use at a later time. Rain barrels can also help in eliminating soil runoff into the stormwater system.

You can also create a rain garden which encourages the diversion of water away from your structure. These gardens are landscaped depressions that receive stormwater runoff and allow the water to be absorbed back into the existing water table. Besides becoming a collection point for rainwater, these gardens also become beautiful landscaped areas that add to the overall appeal of historic structures. For more information, go to the City of Rock Hill's Raingarden website at [www.cityofrockhill.com/raingarden](http://www.cityofrockhill.com/raingarden) or contact the Clemson University Extension Service for York County at 803/684-9919.



Look up – not only at existing gutters, but also at fascia boards, porch ceilings, column caps and bases, shingle ends, and surrounding trees. Peeling paint anywhere is a good indication that water is infiltrating underneath the

paint and causing damage not only to the paint but also to the wood underneath. Water leaks from porch roofs show up as water damage or



peeling paint on porch ceilings. Water infiltrating the tops of columns over a number of years can cause splitting at column bases – make sure the tops are closed and that water (as well as creatures) are not allowed to settle on the caps. Shingle ends that are frayed or broken may be allowing water to infiltrate the roof, so make sure that these are replaced to direct water away from the roof as quickly as possible. Limbs and leaves from surrounding trees can cause damage in a number of ways, from clogging up existing gutters to preventing proper air circulation – ever seen moss growing on a roof? Any greenery that is growing where it shouldn't is a good indication that you have a water issue.

Water damage can come in all forms but one that might not be noticed for a while is insect damage. Usually by the time you notice the damage, it's more extensive than it looks. Insects like to find an infiltration point into the wood and eat the good stuff on the inside. Rule of thumb? Do a thorough investigation once a year of all wood areas, especially those close to the ground and under the house. Like the superstition says – knock on wood. If it looks solid but it sounds hollow, or it begins to fall apart, something might be going on that you need to get checked out.

Steps you can take right now are relatively inexpensive and can help you significantly in the long run. Materials you need include a digital or disposable camera (a date stamp is nice, but if you don't have one, just make note of the

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## Water, Water Everywhere (continued)

date as to when you took the photos), flashlight, screwdriver, pen, and notebook. Begin by taking a photo of the front, sides and rear of your house. Make note and photograph any low spots around the foundation – you'll want to check these out in the near future during a good rain. Take photos and note any areas that are of concern – keep checking on those areas about once every two or three months. If there is no change, there may not be any cause for alarm, but if there is, you might want to have a professional come take a look at the area. Having photographs and notes available may help the professional pinpoint the issue.

Tap wood and brick areas with the screwdriver handle – don't gouge or poke. If you tap the wood or brick and any of the materials start to disintegrate, stop and tap another about 3-4 inches to either side. If the same thing happens, make note of the area and move onto another section several feet away. The goal here is to determine the overall location of the damage. This will give you a better understanding of how much work may need to be done, and give you control of the situation, especially if you find that the wood or bricks are solid everywhere else except for one three-foot section and your contractor says that everything has to be replaced immediately.

Do this type of inventory once or twice a year, maybe on the first Saturday that occurs after fall or spring takes place. Taking notes about your structure also helps you look at your house in a new way. You will begin to notice if something is out of place or just doesn't look right. Taking the time to know your house inside and out will help you save money in the long run since small repairs and maintenance are way cheaper than full scale replacement, something all of us would much rather avoid.

## Do I Need A Building Permit?

It can be confusing trying to figure out what requires a permit and what does not. If you are planning to do remodeling or other work on your home, there are several things that do require a permit and inspection. Here are a few examples:

*Roofing* - Installing new shingles

*Windows* - replacing windows

*Vinyl or Wood Siding* - replacing vinyl, wood or other types of siding or trim boards

*Sheetrock* - replacing or installing sheetrock to remodel or finish an unfinished room

*Framing* - adding new interior walls or extending an existing wall, creating a new door or opening in an existing wall

*Plumbing* - replacing a sewer line or water line, adding plumbing to a room that did not previously have it, replacing water heater, installing an irrigation system

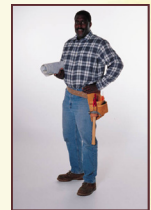
*Electrical* - installing new wiring or replacing wiring, adding outlets or lights

*Mechanical* - installing heating and air units or equipment, installing ductwork

*Gas* - installing or replacing gas lines

Permits and inspections are also required for:

- Swimming pools including above ground pools 24 inches deep or more or more than 5,000 gallons
- Storage buildings, garages and carports
- Fences including privacy walls over 6 ft. in height
- Retaining walls over 4 ft. in height or that provide structural support



## Do I Need a Building Permit? (continued)

### What types of work do not require a permit?

The following types of work are exempt in our ordinance from requiring a permit:

- Painting
- Wallpapering
- Tiling
- Flooring & Carpeting
- Cabinets
- Countertops
- Retaining walls not over 4 ft. in height and not providing structural support
- Swimming pools less than 24 inches deep, not exceeding 5,000 gallons and entirely above ground



### Can I do work on my own house without hiring a contractor?

There are some types of work the City allows you to do on your own home. State regulations require you to live in the home you wish to work on for a period of two years. A homeowner is basically allowed to do any type of remodel or repair work on their home that does not include electrical, mechanical (heating and air) or gas. Electrical, mechanical and gas work is required to be done by a state licensed contractor. There is an exception for a homeowner with electrical knowledge. You can take an electrical examination given by the building official to do electrical work on your own home only. You should obtain a permit for any work that requires a permit before starting the work. All permits require inspections.



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### How do I find out if a contractor has a license or if it's the right kind?

You can check a contractor's state license online at the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation at [www.llr.state.sc.us](http://www.llr.state.sc.us). Click on Licensee Lookup at the top of the page. Electrical, plumbing and mechanical contractors should be listed under Commercial Contractors. Other types of contractors for roofing or remodeling should be listed under Residential Builders. You can also call us at (803) 329-5590 to check a contractor's license. In addition to a state license, contractors are required to have a City of Rock Hill Business License. We can also check this for you. Just give us a call at (803) 329-5590.

### Why do I need a permit?

Permits allow the City to inspect work performed by a contractor or yourself to make sure it's safe and meets the minimum standards of the building code. Permits also allow the City to verify a contractor's license and keep a record of the work performed.

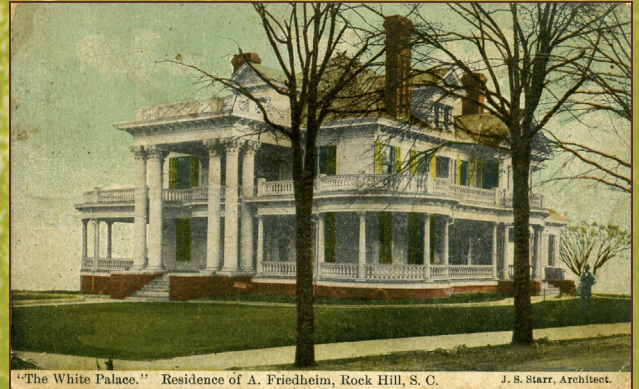
If you don't get a permit for work performed on your home you may run into problems when trying to sell your home. Real estate agents usually check to make sure permits were obtained for repair work.

You may also run into problems if a contractor performs work on your home without the proper licenses. If you try to take a contractor to court and he doesn't have a license and didn't get a permit, it will be hard for the judge to rule in your favor.

*Postcards from the Past*

**Some helpful advice about hiring a contractor:**

- ☑ Always have a contract in writing outlining exactly what the contractor is supposed to do. Make sure you both sign it.
- ☑ Always check to see if a contractor has the proper licenses before he starts the work.
- ☑ Make sure the contractor obtains a permit for any work he will perform.
- ☑ It's ok to ask for references of work the contractor has done in the past. Call the references to find out if the customers were satisfied.



"The White Palace." Residence of A. Friedheim, Rock Hill, S. C. J. S. Starr, Architect.



B-26 Main Street at Night, Rock Hill, S. C.



Main Street, Rock Hill, S. C.

**Board of Historic Review Meeting Schedule**

May 5	September 1
June 2	October 6
July 7	November 3
August 4	December 1

**City of Rock Hill Holidays  
Offices Closed**

Memorial Day .....	May 30
Independence Day .....	July 4
Labor Day .....	September 5
Thanksgiving .....	November 24 - 25
Christmas .....	December 23 (1/2 day), December 26 -27
New Year's Day .....	January 2

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