

The Window

Volume 1, No. 6

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A Primer on House Painting

The Window

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June 2006



Through The Window

Through *The Window* above we can see the Partridge Homestead on Cayuga Street, commonly known as "The White House". This Greek Revival house was built by Erastus Partridge and was later used by the Seneca Falls School District for classrooms until it was demolished in 1967 to make room for a playing field. Erastus Partridge founded the community's first bank, the National Bank of Seneca Falls, later known as the Partridge Banking House and then as the State Bank. 1837, when this home was built, began the reign of British Queen Victoria - the start of the "Victorian Era."

Photograph Courtesy Seneca Falls Historical Society

People generally paint their houses for two reasons: aesthetics and protection. Paint, the various colors available and how and where they are applied, may be the easiest way to have your house offer a fashion statement. Paint, as well as roofing material, is often considered the first line of defense when it comes to protecting your house from the elements.

Preparation is considered the most time-consuming aspect of painting. Without adequate preparation the paint you apply will rapidly deteriorate and fail. Lack of proper preparation is one of the leading causes for a too-frequent need to repaint.

Before starting to paint examine the condition of all surfaces to be coated. Be sure that everything is clean and free of loose old paint and dirt. Scraping and sanding are familiar to nearly everyone and are very important for a good, long-lasting paint job, but be aware of other potential problems. Punky, or rotted, wood and blistering or peeling to reveal bare wood are indications of moisture problems that should be addressed to ensure a reliable painting surface.

It is possible to have too much paint on a building. When paint builds up to a thickness of 16 to 30 coats, or about 1/16", that extra fresh coat or that new color layer may be enough to trigger cracking and peeling. This is usually caused by the old, thick paint's inability to withstand the shrinkage or pull of the new paint as it dries. Again, the importance of good scraping enters the picture, removing old layers where possible. For problems with severe build-up of paint extensive paint removal may become necessary.

Other "Dos" and "Don'ts" to consider when getting ready to paint are:

- Don't apply incompatible types of paint to surfaces already painted. In other words, don't use latex paint directly over oil-based paint, or vice-versa;
- Do caulk around window and doorframes and any other gaps where moisture can penetrate;
- Do repair or replace all loose and deteriorated surfaces, and reputty and sand nail holes and minor cracks before painting;

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ARCHITECTURAL STYLES, PART 4



Cayuga Street



Cayuga Street

of styling and spacing. They are arranged as single brackets or in pairs, and are usually placed on a wide trim band.

Almost all Italianate houses feature a single-story porch extending the full width of the façade or covering just the front entry. Single or paired doors may

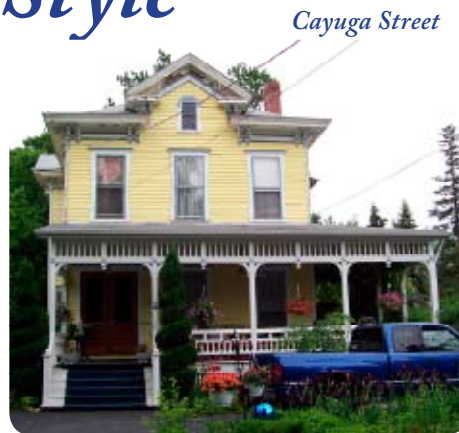


West Bayard Street

be found with large pane glazing and with shapes and decorative details similar to the windows. Transoms and sidelights are rarely incorporated into the front entry.

Italianate Style

This month we resume our series on architectural styles with the Italianate Style, most popular in Seneca Falls between 1850 and 1880. While Italianate houses were built in several different forms, the most common form has a square or box shape with a low-pitched hip roof. The roof usually has a very wide overhang and is commonly topped by a cupola. They will sometimes include a square tower projecting over the roof. Some local Italianate houses have front facing gables containing bracketed overhangs. The general style was suggestive of informal Italian villas.



Cayuga Street

Often Italianate buildings are elaborately ornamented, especially around windows, doorways, cornices, and porches. Window sashes are normally double-hung, configured one over one or two over two. Tall, narrow windows can be rectangular or arched, decorated with cast iron or wooden hoods or caps. Paired and triple window groupings are common.

Eave brackets supporting the wide overhanging roof dominate the cornice and are commonly found with a

Fall Street great variety

State Street

Italianate commercial buildings are similar to residential buildings in that they often feature brackets, narrow windows with ornate hoods. They commonly include large



storefront display windows set in cast iron or wood framing. A storefront cornice or lintel usually divides the commercial ground floor from the residential or office upper floors.

Fall Street



Fall Street

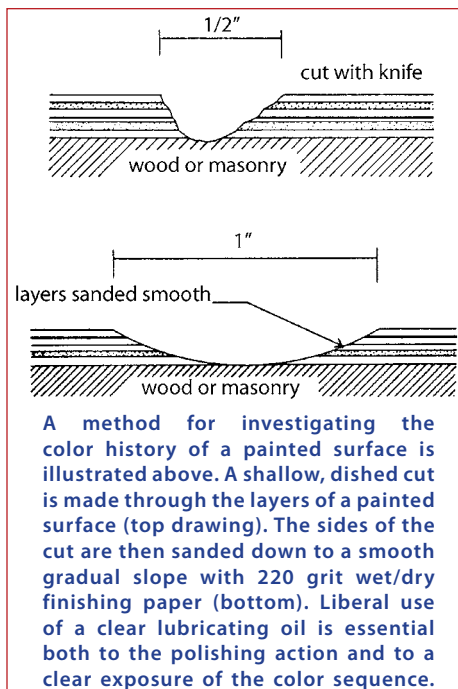


- Do apply an appropriate sealing primer, especially to new wood surfaces;
- Don't apply paint in cold or wet weather. Check the paint can label for recommended conditions for applying your particular brand of paint.

Selection of appropriate paint colors is a major decision that will not only impact the building being painted, but will also have a visual effect on the surrounding neighborhood as well. With that in mind, consider your building in relation to others nearby. Your proposed paint scheme should attempt to harmonize with the neighborhood and, when possible, be traditionally associated with the architectural style of the building.

Avoid using too many colors. Using two colors, one for the main body of the house and the other for trim elements, is the most common treatment or scheme. Three colors can also be used successfully, especially on Victorian era houses with their traditional dark sashes. The dark sashes create an illusion of the windows receding from the viewer, an effect that was very popular during the latter half of the nineteenth century. With certain architectural styles additional trim, or accent, colors may be carefully incorporated into the paint scheme.

A muted tone is generally recommended for the main body color of a house, as it will provide a better background if you are using brighter trim colors. It will also most readily complement neighboring structures. Use bright colors sparingly, and usually only for decorative trim or accents. To restore a building to its original color scheme, search for evidence through previous layers of paint. Contemporary equivalents can then be sought out or matched to the historic colors.



Some architectural styles lend themselves to creative color schemes but it's not a requirement, even though someone will always remark on the monotony of white house after white house. As long ago as 1842, after a visit to America, Charles Dickens wrote, "All the buildings looked as if they had been painted that morning... Every house is the whitest of white; every Venetian blind is the greenest of green."

For basic painting advice and for suggested paint schemes, free copies of *Guidelines & Standards for the Protection and Enhancement of the Seneca Falls Historic District* are available at Village Hall. You may also contact the Village Planning Office for advice and assistance when considering paint scheme selection.

Meeting Results

The Seneca Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on May 23, 2006. Chair Noble welcomed newly appointed Commissioner Hartwell. The Commission reviewed the following applications:

- APPROVED as submitted the application of Trinity Episcopal Church, to install an emergency long-term temporary replacement for one of the louvered window inserts in the church tower at 27 Fall Street.
- APPROVED the application to renew the Certificates of Appropriateness issued on May 3, 1993, February 28, 1995, and June 23, 1998 for a fence, for installation of vinyl siding on a garage addition, and for an ornamental truss in the front gable at 102 State Street.
- APPROVED an application to install a wood, 20' X 22' deck, stained with a clear, natural stain; skirted with tongue-and-groove lumber; and having steps and a handicap access ramp at the rear (south) elevation of 57 Fall Street.
- APPROVED an application to change the paint scheme at 243 Fall Street from white to Baked Brick (light beige) with white trim.

The Commission received a letter from Nancy Mangano, Executive Director of the Seneca Knit Development Corporation, informing the Commission of plans to subdivide the former mill property and, working with the National Women's Hall of Fame, to rehabilitate the former mill buildings for the Hall.

The next scheduled Commission meeting is Tuesday, June 27th at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

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NEWS & NOTES

Heritage Area Events

Convention Days 2006: A Celebration of Women's Rights
July 21, 22 & 23, 2006 Academy Square, Seneca Falls

Convention Days 2006: A Celebration of Women's Rights is an annual, three-day celebration commemorating the first Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls on July 19th and 20th 1848. The Convention Days celebration always falls on the weekend closest to these dates, and draws an estimated 1000 people of all ages.

Through various activities held during the weekend, Convention Days attempts to help those in attendance understand the struggles, accomplishments, strengths, and abilities of women- past and present. Activities include historical boat tours; walking tours; a wide variety of music featuring women performers; storytelling and plays; train and buggy rides; women's workshops and seminars; professional speakers; a theme-oriented parade and a craft show. This year the event will end in a blast as fireworks are set off over beautiful Van Cleef Lake. Don't miss this exciting annual event.

Convention Days, Inc. is a non-profit organization consisting of a group of community volunteers. The committee is still accepting vendor applications for this event. Please contact Christina Selvek, 315-568-2703 for more information or visit www.conventiondays.com.



Where Am I?

This photo depicts an architectural detail found somewhere in the Seneca Falls Historic District.

Can you identify the building?

ANSWER to the May Where Am I?: "drop bracket" under a bay window at 218 Fall Street

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