

# City of Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER

## *Rising from the Sashes:* Old House Journal Staff Writers' Tips

The average old house has over 40 sash windows and most need work. Weather, use, improper care, a mere coat of paint, or broken sash cords can render sashes inoperable, despite their lasting design, making frustrated homeowners prime targets for vinyl window salesmen.

But fear not! Traditional double-hung windows are designed to disassemble fairly easily for upkeep and repairs. A quick recap of basic maintenance tips and procedures will free up even the most painted-in sashes for re-puttying and repainting if needed.

**Do it all:** Even if only one sash is stuck, it's worth the extra work to remove both sashes for a complete overhaul that restores fingertip ease of operation.

First, remove the stops (vertical moldings that hold the bottom sash in its channel). These moldings are designed to come out but are usually painted over with several layers. To avoid repainting when finished, carefully score the paint where the stops meet the adjacent moldings with a razor knife. Keep the line straight by making several light passes instead of one heavy pass, which can veer off and mar the wood or finish.

Next, remove all visible screws and attachment hardware. Stops are typically held in place with small finishing nails, but wood screws are also common, especially for adjustable stops on high-quality windows. Then, carefully pry the stop out, working from the middle and any attachment points. To avoid pry marks on the moldings, protect the molding edges with a pair of wide-blade putty knives used as shields for a flat pry bar after a gap is started, or pry from the backside of the stop with a mini-pry bar or similar

tool with less than a 1" lip that fits in the sash channel.

Once loose, bow the stop very slightly to release it from the window without forcing at the ends. To secure intact

### **Glazing Pointers (by Steve Jordan)**

Sash windows can be glazed in place, but it is much easier to glaze a window on a table or saw horses. Before reglazing or glazing a new piece of glass, clear of dust and debris from the rebate (recess that holds the glass) with a duster brush and remove old paint on the glass with a razor blade. Condition the clean rebate with a coat of boiled linseed oil, Penetrol, or oil-based primer to make the glazing compound last longer and the task easier. (The oil or primer should dry before glazing, but if all work is to be done at one time, thin the oil or primer about 50 percent, apply it sparingly, and accelerate the drying by setting the sash in the sun or near a mild heat source.)

Glazing compound or putty should be pliable like bread dough but not gooey so that it sticks between your fingers. (If putty is too stiff, heat it on a paper plate for about 30 seconds in a microwave oven or heat the putty with a propane torch. If putty is too sticky, dust it with whiting or powdered chalk, plaster or talcum powder, and work the powder in with your palm and fingers until the putty reaches the proper consistency.)

Once the glass is set in a bed of putty and points are in place, professional glaziers and painters usually apply the putty firmly to the rebate with a shortened 1 1/2" putty knife or fingers. Once one side of the sash has been loaded with putty, tool it smoothly into a bevel using a clean 1-1/2" to 2" flexible blade putty knife. Begin at the corner with the knife at an angle so that, as it is pulled along, the putty is simultaneously pushed tightly into the rebate and the leading edge is cut. (The putty will pull back out if the rebate was not conditioned or the putty is not the right consistency.) If the clean line of putty was drawn from left to right, run a finger lightly back over it from right to left for a final smoothing and to ensure it abuts the glass appropriately. Remember: the putty line should fall just below the sight line of the interior wood in order to allow a small space to seal the putty to the glass with paint. Clean up corners using the knife point.

weights, pull the cord until the weight reaches the pulley, then hold in place with a slip knot in the cord, clamp of locking pliers, or a nail stuck in a chain link, then remove the lower sash.

**Upper Sash:** To take out the upper sash, first remove the parting beads (slim, vertical sticks separating the two sashes). If stuck, hold the parting bead near the bottom with pliers and gently wiggle it out of the channel, moving the pliers up and carefully guiding it around the weather check on the meeting rail (bottom part of the upper sash). If needed, cut a slight bevel in the check for more room to remove it. If the bead has a notched top, carefully slide it out of the upper frame once is nearly free of the channel. If the bead breaks, or is already broken, repair it with glue or replace with new stock found at good lumberyards.

With the stops out, ensure the upper sash is not held in place with nails or hardware. Gently wiggle the sash bottom to assess the strength of the paint holding it tight. If the paint starts to crack easily and the sash moves more readily with each wiggle, continue until it pops free; if the sash does not move, don't apply more pressure for risk of sash damage or glass breakage. Rather, try to break the exterior paint seal from the inside by inserting a thin piece of metal, such as a hacksaw blade or a serrated tool made for this purpose. Once the paint is cut on both sides, the sash will wiggle free; remove it to a bench for restoration to a like-new condition.

## Resources: Public information

In an ongoing effort to keep the general population, and especially those residents within the Historic District and the Jacksonville Main Street district, educated about various preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration issues, Jacksonville's Historic Preservation Commission makes a variety of preservation related research materials and informational brochures available at the Jacksonville Public Library. To learn more about any of the following topics, simply ask for the Historic Preservation Commission reference materials at the main desk:

- The Economics of Historic Preservation (A Community Leader's Guide) by Donovan D. Rypkema
- Strategies for the Stewardship and Active Use of Older & Historic Religious Properties by Diane Cohen and A. Robert Jaeger
- Putting on a Brand New Coat: The Paint Partnership Program by Anna Mod and Chad McLaughlin
- A Community Guide to Saving Older Schools by Kerri Rubman
- Introduction to Photographing Historic Properties by Kirk Gittings
- Historic Homes Tours: Showcasing Your Community's Heritage by Ann Anderson and Keri Rubman
- Rescuing Historic Resources: How to Respond to a Preservation Emergency by Leah Konicki
- The Economics of Rehabilitation by Donovan D. Rypkema
- The New Old House Starter Kit by Richard Wagner
- Safety, Building Codes and Historic Buildings by Marilyn E. Kaplan
- Building Support Through Public Relations: A Guide for Non-Profit Preservation Organizations by Olivia T. Meyer, et al.
- Buyer's Guide to Older and Historic Houses by Richard Wagner
- Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds by Lynette Strangstad
- Design Review in Historic Districts by Rachel S. Cox
- A Guide to Tax-Advantaged Rehabilitation by Jane F. Boyle, Stuart Ginsberg and Sally Oldham, revised by Donovan D. Rypkema

In addition, Jacksonville Main Street has some VHS tapes available to borrow (with a refundable deposit) by calling 245-6884.

- New Life for White Elephants: Adapting Historic Buildings for New Uses (Elizabeth Johnson)
- Community Preservation Video Series: Volume I – Residential Architectural Styles in Illinois produced by Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
- Community Preservation Video Series: Volume II - Windows produced by Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
- Using Tax Increment Financing video produced by Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

## What Style is Your House?

### Saltbox (c. 1680-1890)

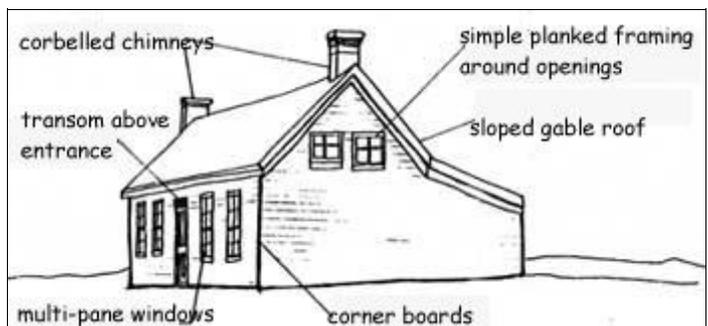
The saltbox is more a building shape than a style. It began as an easy method of enlarging a Cape Cod or



Colonial style house with a sloping gable roof on a 1-story addition across the rear of a 1-1/2 or 2-story building, making

the house resemble a wooden box used to store salt in Colonial times. Over time, it came to be an accepted building form, especially in New England from 1680-1830, and remained popular across the country until the late 1800s.

Since a house with a low roof line cannot offer a useable ceiling height and a two-story roof slope may not be flat enough to cover a large, one-story rear ad-



dition, the roof line where the shed meets the main house was commonly changed to allow more ceiling space in the rear rooms, though still fairly low.

Typically, the rear lean-to addition was divided into three rooms: a central kitchen with fireplace and oven; a room to be used for childbirth and nursing the ill, and a pantry. Saltboxes typically have a prominent center chimney or pair of end chimneys. A center entrance with a transom above and 4/4 or 6/6 double-hung windows are common features.

Materials were simple and functional inside and out. Often, rooms had to serve multiple purposes.

**Save this sheet...**

**...more styles in the next edition!**