

VIRGIN ISLANDS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Charlotte Amalie | Christiansted | Frederiksted | Cruz Bay



HISTORIC DISTRICTS GUIDE

VIRGIN ISLANDS PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE



ARE YOU A PROPERTY OWNER, BUSINESS OWNER, OR PERHAPS A TENANT RENTING OR LEASING A PROPERTY WITHIN THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS OF CHRISTIANSTED, FREDERIKSTED, CHARLOTTE AMALIE, OR CRUZ BAY?
HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW.

NOVEMBER 2025



WELCOME MESSAGE

COMMISSIONER



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

4611 Tutu Park Mall
Suite 300, 2nd Floor
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 774-3320

45 Mars Hill, Frederiksted
St. Croix, VI 00840
(340) 773-1082
dpr.vi.gov



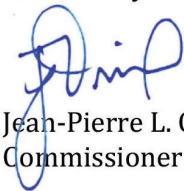
Office of the Commissioner

My Fellow Virgin Islanders,

I am pleased to present the new **Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission Historic Districts Guide**. This new guide provides comprehensive information on the techniques and resources needed to preserve and maintain your historic buildings and sites. You will find guidance from selecting the right paint colors to adding a new addition onto your historic building. Included in the guide are links to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources’ website where you can find further information on our historic preservation program, links to historic district applications, the historic districts maps, and the E-Permitting portal.

The Virgin Islands are blessed with a rich architectural heritage that is reflected in our towns and plantation estates. As Secretary of the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission, I have a great appreciation for the mission of the Commission in preserving and protecting the historic towns and sites of the territory. DPNR joins you in this partnership of preserving and restoring these architectural gems. In the end if we have all done our part, these historic resources will be around for the enjoyment of this generation and those to come.

Historically Yours,


Jean-Pierre L. Oriol
Commissioner

WELCOME MESSAGE

CHAIRMAN



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

4611 Tutu Park Mall
Suite 300, 2nd Floor
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 774-3320

45 Mars Hill, Frederiksted
St. Croix, VI 00840
(340) 773-1082
dpr.vi.gov



Greetings,

Special salutations to partners in preservation and the people of the Virgin Islands of the United States; the people whose legacies are enshrined in the very structures, spaces, and resources that the Historic Preservation Commission seeks to protect, explore, and share with all. It is not always easy to do the critical work of Historic Preservation, as it is often confronted as a hinderance to “progress” or “development”, but with the steady reliability of a seasoned and committed Commission, a supportive Government, and a trusting Community, this good work ensues. Initiatives like the revamping of our guides, a newly accessible website, and the restructuring of the Commission’s regulatory functions support further education about honoring the legacies of our vast and distinguished histories.

Being the Territorial Chairman of the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission has been a great honor and reward, helping to steer some of the wonderful things we have yet to see materialize in our breathtaking Historic Districts, and at our Nationally Registered Historic Sites and places. Continued research and development of some of our most revered Historic Sites, the regular updating of the Registry of Historic Sites & Places, enhanced online preservation tools and resources, markers and narratives of sites of importance, resources for our stewards of Historic Sites/Places/resources, and greater outreach – like this initiative – will help to keep these resources accessible and available for generations to come. **Preservation is progress!**

Best,


Kurt G. Marsh Jr.
VI Historic Preservation Commission

HISTORIC DISTRICTS GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KNOW THE FACTS

Planning for the protection and use of the historic, architectural and other cultural assets

LEARN THE GUIDELINES

Do your research on how to restore, build and maintain your property in a Historic District

SUBMIT APPLICATION

We are here to guide you, submit an application to our preservation offices in St. Thomas and St. Croix



WELCOME STATEMENTS

From DPNR Commissioner, JP Oriol..... 2
& Chairman of VIHPC, Kurt Marsh..... 3

INTRODUCTION.....5

HISTORIC DISTRICT MAPS6-15

Charlotte Amalie 8/9
Christiansted 10/11
Frederiksted 12/13
Cruz Bay 14/15



CHAPTERS

1	Signage in the Historic Districts	16-25
2	Paint Colors & Materials	26-29
3	Plaster Covered Rubble Walls	30-33
4	Repair, Cleaning & Repointing Brick Walls ..	34-37
5	Repair of Stone Walls	38-41
6	Repairs to Wood Buildings	42-49
7	Windows and Doors.....	50-55
8	Porches, Balconies and Arcades	56-59
9	Roof Replacement and Repairs	60-63
10	Repair & Replacement of Architectural Metals.....	64-67
11	Lighting and Other Mechanical Systems.....	68-69
12	Landscape Treatments & Site Improvement.....	70-77
13	Historic Exterior Staircases & Steps	78-81
14	New Additions to Historic Buildings.....	82-85
15	New Buildings in the Historic District.....	86-89
16	Interior Changes.....	90-93

GOOD TO KNOW

Are you a property owner, business owner, or perhaps a tenant renting or leasing a property within the Historic Districts of Christiansted, Frederiksted, Charlotte Amalie, or Cruz Bay? Here are a few things you need to know.

The Committees of the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission (VIHPC) are regulatory boards which promote planning for the protection and use of the historic, architectural and other cultural assets of the Historic Districts and the Virgin Islands Registry Properties.

The Committees have the power to approve or reject any proposed changes, large or small, in the areas of designated historic districts and sites.

Applications before the Committees are evaluated based on its adherence to established preservation criteria

and policies, rules and regulations. The V. I. Zoning, Building and Housing laws and regulations are also applicable to the Historic Districts except where specific Historic District regulations govern.

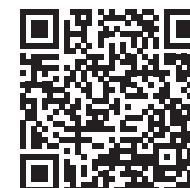
So, before you erect a sign, paint, alter or renovate your building, add an addition, new construction or demolition, etc., **YOU NEED A PERMIT.** Failure of any person who has been so notified and has willfully failed to comply with the law are subject to fines and legal sanctions. After your Historic Preservation Committee Application for Change, has been reviewed and approved by the St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee or the St. Thomas

St. John Historic Preservation Committee, depending on your project's complexity you may have to submit your plans to Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) for review before proceeding with the work permits.

Preserving
the past
for the
future

HISTORIC DISTRICTS GUIDE VERSION 1.0

November 2025 · DIRECTOR Sean Krigger.
Produced in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
Copyright 2025



VIRGIN ISLANDS

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

- Charlotte Amalie
- Christiansted
- Frederiksted
- Cruz Bay

If you have questions or concerns, the V. I. State Historic Preservation Office staff offers technical assistance to HPC applicants or anyone interested in learning more about complying with the rules and regulations of the Historic Districts. In addition to our technical assistance, each district office offers **sixteen Preservation Guidelines** with the do's and don'ts for preserving and restoring your historic buildings.

KNOW THE FACTS

Title 29, Chapter 3, Subsection 285: "Until plans are submitted to, and acted upon by the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission, no building or structure, including stone walls, fences, paving and steps, may be erected, reconstructed, altered, restored, moved, or demolished within any Historic and Architectural Control District, or affecting any building, site or place listed in the Registry."



NEED HELP?

In addition to our technical assistance, each district office offers sixteen Preservation Guidelines with the do's and don'ts for the typical projects on historic buildings.

Learn more about us Visit our website dpr.vi.gov/vi-state-historic-preservation

CHARLOTTE AMALIE

HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Charlotte Amalie National Register District
- Charlotte Amalie Historic and Architectural Control District

Important Is your property located within the boundary lines?



Apply today Scan the QR code to begin the application process

CHRISTIANSTED

HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Christiansted National Register District
- Christiansted Historic and Architectural Control District

Important Is your property located within the boundary lines?



Apply today Scan the QR code to begin the application process

FREDERIKSTED

HISTORIC DISTRICT

 Frederiksted National Register District

 Frederiksted Historic and Architectural Control District*

* The same district lines as National Register

Important Is your property located within the boundary lines?



Apply today

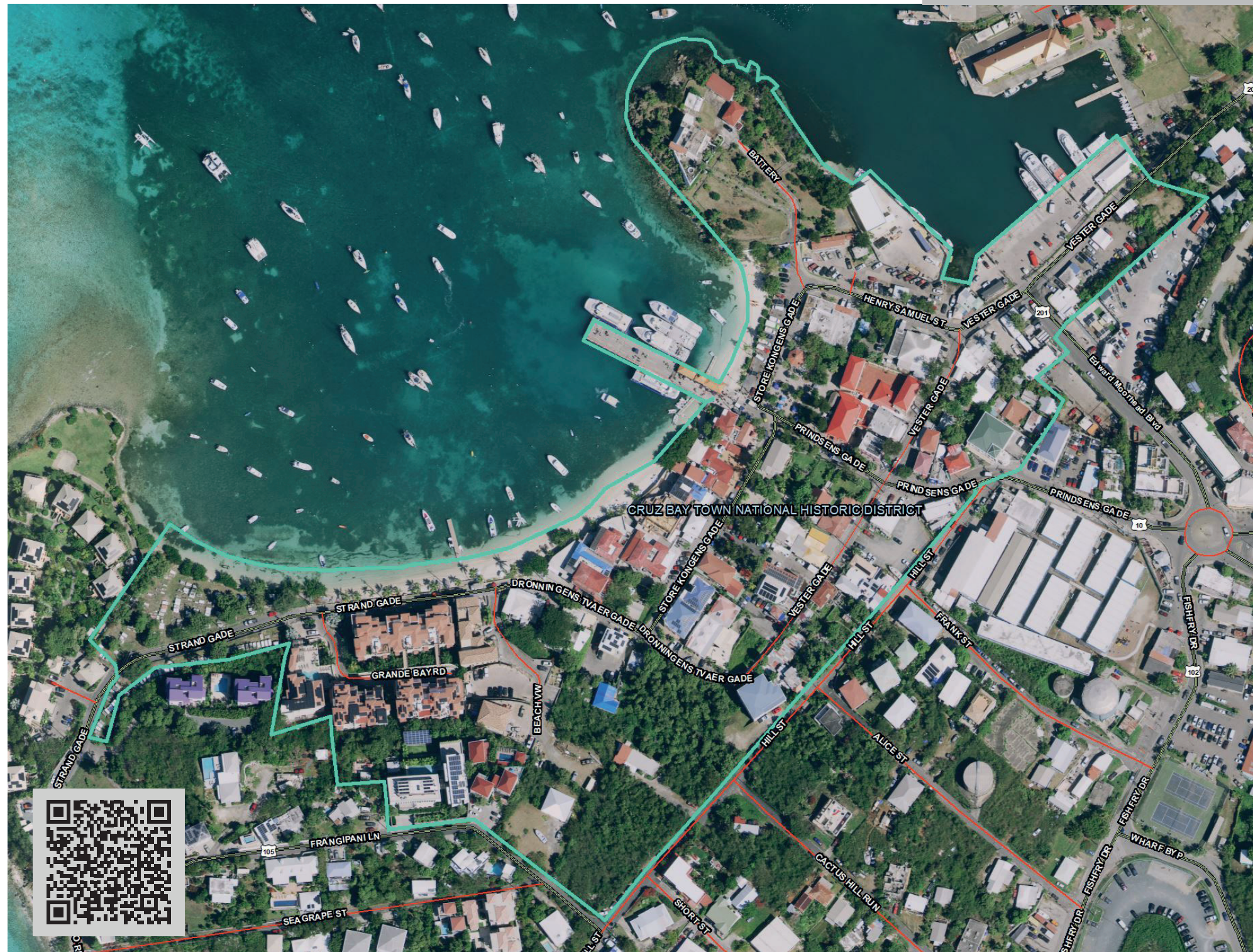
Scan the QR code to begin the application process

CRUZ BAY

HISTORIC DISTRICT

Cruz Bay National Register District

Important Is your property located within the boundary lines?



Apply today Scan the QR code to begin the application process



1

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

SIGNAGE IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The size, color and shape of signs within Virgin Islands Historic Districts are governed by two factors; specific requirements as set out in Title 29, Chapter 3; Section 225 and 231 of the Virgin Islands Code and standards determined by the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission. Any sign erected within the Virgin Islands must be approved by the Department of Public Works and, if within the St. Thomas/St. John or St. Croix Historic and

Architectural Control and Registry Districts, must first be approved by the Historic Preservation Committee on their respective island districts. Procedures for erecting signs within any

of the Historic Districts are outlined here.



There are many types of signs.

DEFINITIONS

A SIGN

A sign is defined as any publicly displayed board, placard, or other object bearing store name, information, brand names, merchandise, or other writing or picture.

BUSINESS SIGN

A sign which directs attention to a business by exhibiting its name on the premises it occupies. There are different types of Business signs:

- **Hanging:** A sign mounted perpendicular to a building's wall and attached to a frame or bracket.
- **Flush-mounted:** A sign mounted directly onto a building's wall, so that it is flat against that wall.

DOOR LEAF

A sign that is applied to the interior of a shutter door.

DIRECTORY SIGN

A sign which directs attention to a group of businesses. It is placed off-site or on the building itself in a highly visible area.

ADDRESS SIGN

A sign that bears the number of a street address and/or quarter of a building

NAME OF BUILDING OR IDENTIFICATION SIGN

The name of a building, an institution or a public or semi-public facility. Examples are the Grand Hotel and Hotel 1829.

DIRECTIONAL SIGN

A sign which directs attention to a historic feature or destination located off the premises.

NAMEPLATE SIGN

A small nameplate of a firm or professional office. (Not used very often.)

TEMPORARY BANNER

A temporary banner celebrates or announces a special event of cultural or public importance. These are special, and of restricted use.

TEMPORARY SIGN

The main use of a temporary sign is to identify construction projects, sale of property or other special circumstances related thereto.



DESCRIPTION OF SIGNS & DESIGN STANDARDS

HANGING SIGNS

Hanging signs are those placed perpendicular to the building's wall mounted on a bracket for identification of the business.



1

FLUSH-MOUNTED

Flush signs are those placed for identification on a wall.



2

DOOR LEAF SIGNS

Door leaf signs are relatively recent additions to the historic towns of the Virgin Islands and are not historic.



3

DIRECTORY SIGNS

The only off-premise signs allowed within the Historic and Architectural Control Districts are uniform directories on a street or alley.



4

HANGING SIGNS

Hanging signs are those placed perpendicular to the building's wall mounted on a bracket for identification of the business.

- Size**
The size of hanging signs is up to four (4) Square feet.
- Shape**
Hanging signs are generally square or rectangle in shape, but other shapes are acceptable.
- Quantity**
One (1) hanging sign per business per facade is allowed.
- Materials and Design**
Brackets of single wood or wrought iron shall be used for mounting the hanging sign.
- Placement**
Placement is determined by a building's architectural features and historic fabric.
- Mounting**
Signs shall be mounted so as to be minimally disturbing to these features and fabric. All brackets on a building shall be of the same style and size and are to be mounted at the same level.

The bottom of the sign must be a **minimum of eight feet, six inches (8' 6")** above the grade of the sidewalk, **a maximum of eight inches (8")** from the wall and shall not extend beyond the curb line of the sidewalk.



FLUSH-MOUNTED

A sign mounted directly onto a building's wall, so that it is flat against that wall.

- Size**
The size is determined by the type of sign and the architectural features and scale of the building in consultation with the Committee. In some cases, the maximum size will not be allowed if it conflicts with the building, size and mounted at the same level. **A flush mounted sign can be up to five (5) square feet.**
- Shape**
Flush-mounted signs are almost always rectangular to complement the basic components of the building on which they are attached. Other choices may be considered, depending on the individual building.
- Placement**
Placement is determined by a building's architectural features.
- Mounting**
Signs shall be mounted so as to be minimally disturbing to the historic fabric of a building. Flush-mounted signs must line up with door or other openings or be designed to fit within an existing panel of the wall.



DOOR LEAF

Signs that are applied to the interior of a shutter door.

- 1 Size**
Mini business sign is 12" x 12 ", each leaf/blade is 12" x 2.5".
- 2 Spacing**
All signs are spaced 2 ½ inches apart.
- 3 Shape**
Rectangular shape is preferred.
- 4 Quantity**
No more than five (5) blades are allowed to be attached per door shutter. This means that 2 Mini-business signs and 10 blades can be applied per shutter door set. Following, no more than twenty (20) blades shall be allowed for a store that has 2 sets of shutter doors.
- 5 Content**
Products advertised shall be limited to major name brands (such as Seiko or Lancôme), products (such as "Local Crafts") or supplies sold by the store.
- 6 Placement**
The signs should not obscure architectural features, such as panels or molding.
- 7 Mounting**
Blades should be mounted horizontally. They should be evenly placed, lined up vertically and horizontally and where possible, kept at eye level. No Door Leaf signs are allowed above the first floor.
- 8 Materials and Design**
All door leaf signs of a business must be of the same material and color. Lettering style may vary. Color must be uniform throughout.



Important Note

→ Door leaf signs are relatively recent additions to the historic towns of the Virgin Islands and are not historic. Door leaf signs are to be mounted on open exterior shutters or doors so that the signs can be seen only when the doors are open. Door leaf signs are composed of two different kinds and shapes. The top is a "Mini-Business" sign, that is similar to or replicates the main Business Sign. Below this are smaller, narrower "leaves" or "blades". As shutter doors are made to two parts, each door can have a set of door leaf signs. See the accompanying diagram.

DIRECTORY SIGN

A sign which directs attention to a group of businesses.

- 1 Size**
The size of a directory is determined by the location where it shall be placed. However, no mounted directory shall exceed eight (8) square feet except for a free-standing directory subject to the approval of the Committee. Each leaf or nameplate shall be no larger than twenty-four (24") square inches.
- 2 Shape**
Directories shall be rectangular in shape with the larger dimension running vertically. The leaves on them shall be rectangular with the longer proportion running horizontally.
- 3 Quantity**
No more than two (2) directories are allowed per building. If two are permitted, then placement shall be at either end of an alley or courtyard.
- 4 Placement**
Existing architectural features must be taken into account when determining the size and placement of the sign.
- 5 Color**
Colors of backing sign and blades must be matching or compatible.
- 6 Lettering**
Lettering styles for leaves may vary.



Important Note

→ A directory sign is situated either off-site or on the building itself in a highly visible area. It is one of two permanent type of off-premises signs allowed in the Historic Districts. It is set up collectively by several merchants or businesses on a single street or alley. These signs must follow a standard format and should allow for flexibility to change the names as businesses change. Descriptive language on them is subject to approval of the Committee.

ADDRESS SIGN

A sign that bears the street address, lot number, and quarter of a building. Owners of properties shall comply with existing laws requiring address signs on their properties showing parcel number, street name and quarter.

- 1 Size**
Building Address signs shall not exceed one (1) square foot.
- 2 Design and Material**
The sign shall be of traditional design and material with a black background and white letters and numbers.

NAME OF BUILDING OR IDENTIFICATION SIGN

The name of a building, an institution or public or semi-public facility. Examples are the Grand Hotel or Hotel 1829.

- 1 Size**
The sign shall **not exceed** twenty (20) square feet overall.
- 2 Lettering**
Lettering shall be comprised only of individually mounted letters.
- 3 Placement**
The sign is generally placed at the top of a building, beneath the fascia board.



DIRECTIONAL SIGN

A sign which directs attention to a historic feature or destination located off the premises. Examples: Fort Christian, Rothchild Francis Square. Such a sign shall not be used for commercial purposes.

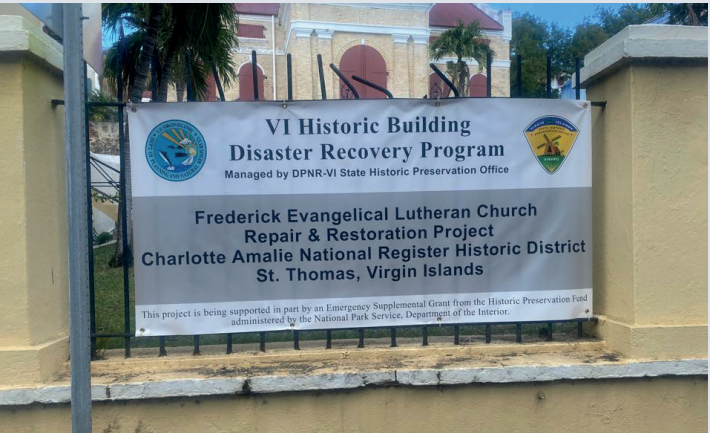
NAMEPLATE SIGN

A small nameplate of a firm or professional office. Not used very often. The size is not to exceed two (2) square feet.



TEMPORARY BANNER

A temporary banner celebrates or announces a special event of cultural or public importance. This is a special kind of sign and is of restricted use. Banners are allowable if sponsored by a civic organization. They are not intended for general, commercial purposes. Their size, form and placement must be determined in consultation with the Committee. They are allowable for a period not to exceed three (3) months, unless otherwise permitted by the Committee. Political banners are not allowed in the Historic District.



TEMPORARY SIGN

The main use of a temporary sign is to identify construction projects, sale of property or other special circumstances related thereto. Temporary signs are allowable in the historic districts. They must, however, be located on the premises to which they refer. Advertising is not permitted.



THE SIGNAGE LOWDOWN

Type Of Sign

Business Sign

Flush Mounted Sign
Area: Up to 5 square feet
Quality: 1 per facade on platted street

Hanging Sign
Area: Up to 4 square feet
Quality: 1 per facade on platted street

Door Leaf Sign Per Door Shutter Half
"Mini - Business" Sign
Area: 12 inches X 12 inches

Leaves or Blades
Dimensions: 12 inches X 2 1/2 inches, each
Quantity: 5 (10 per full shutter set)

Directory Sign

Backing Plate
Area: Up to 8 square feet

Leaves
Area: Up to 24 square inches, each

Name of Building Sign
Area: Up to 20 square feet

Nameplate Sign
Up to 2 square feet

Address Sign
Up to 1 square foot

GENERAL SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

A. Continuity: Each building shall have continuity in signage. Sign colors should harmonize with the color of a building. All signage of each individual business premises shall have consistent color and design schemes. Lettering shall be legible and standardized.

A building that contains two or more adjoining businesses shall have color schemes that do not clash. Owners of properties with multiple tenants in one building must submit a conceptual signage plan for their properties for review and approval by the Historic Preservation Committee.

Individual tenants of these properties must conform to the overall signage plans.

The signage of businesses shall harmonize in placement. For Hanging signs, brackets of single wood or wrought iron shall be used for mounting. All brackets on a building shall be of the same style, size, and placement.

B. Architectural features and placement of signs: All signs must relate to existing architectural features in placement, design, and proportions. Signs shall not obscure architectural features, such as quoins, pilasters, cornices, or panels.

C. Maximum area of signs: Many types of signs have a maximum allowable area. However, an applicant can opt for a smaller area.

D. Maximum height: Signs may not be placed more than fifteen (15) feet above grade unless approved by the Committee.

E. Historical signs and markers: Historical signs and markers require approval of the Committee.

F. Awnings and signage: Awnings are allowed in the St. Thomas/ St. John Historic District ONLY. Therefore, the placement, color



Company Street 53A, Christiansted

and installation of any awning must be reviewed and approved by the St. Thomas/ St. John Committee. They must fit within the architectural features of a building. Long, unbroken awnings which stretch across the facade are not allowed. They must be plain. Name, logo, or wording is considered signage or advertising and is not allowed. Consultation with the Committee is required. NOTE: Awnings are NOT approved within the St. Croix Historic and Architectural Control Districts.

G. Sandwich boards and other off-premises or remote signs: No off-premises signs are allowed, except as part of uniform Directories and Directional (Way Finding) described above in the Directory Directional sign sections. Sandwich boards or "A" signs are considered off-premises signs and are not allowed.

H. Decals and paper or plastic paste-on signs: Decals and paper or plastic paste-on signs used for advertising commercial affiliation, acceptance of credit cards, or any purpose whatsoever are prohibited from all exterior surfaces or those exposed to the exterior of any establishment.

I. Sale signs, movable signs or display of merchandise: These are prohibited on the exterior of the premises or in the public domain.

J. Roof-mounted signs: Roof-mounted signs are not allowed.

K. Political banners are not allowed in the Historic Districts.

L. Lighting: Internally lit, rotating, or flashing signs are not allowed. Highly reflective mirror-like finishes on signs are not allowed. See "illumination" in the Design Standards section.

SIGNAGE IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Good sign design is an art - one that has a long history in the Virgin Islands.

1 - SIGNAGE

DESIGN STANDARDS

Much of sign design is determined by the Virgin Islands Code and by the Historic Preservation Committees review. Materials, colors, lettering, illumination, placement, and execution are all factors which are subject to Committee review. The following standards shall serve as a guide to the design.



Company Street 53A, Christiansted



- 1

Material

Traditionally, wood has been and continues to be used for signs in the Virgin Islands. Other materials such as hard plastics and metals are acceptable only if they are durable, do not shatter under stress and have dull finishes.
- 2

Colors

Sign colors should harmonize with the color of a building. Fluorescent or strident colors are not allowed. All signage of each individual business premises shall have consistent color and design schemes. A building that contains two or more adjoining businesses shall have color schemes that do not clash.
- 3

Lettering

Lettering shall be legible and standardized. Letters may be painted, raised, or engraved.
- 4

Illumination

Illumination of flush-mounted or hanging business signs is allowed only for businesses operated at night. It should be sufficient only for lighting the sign. The light sources must not shine into the eyes of passers-by on the streets or sidewalks or onto neighboring properties.
- 5

Placement

A sign's placement is strongly related to a building's architecture.
- 6

Execution

The signage of each individual business must be uniform in design and material. If several businesses occupy one building, the signage of businesses shall harmonize in placement.signage of businesses shall harmonize in placement.



2

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

PAINT COLORS AND MATERIALS

Paint colors and the ways paints are applied are important to the character of historic buildings. Owners are required to use traditional colors in historic districts especially to help preserve a sense of order and continuity.



VIRGIN ISLANDS TRADITION

Paint colors in the Virgin Islands have traditionally been conservative - whites, grays, yellows and terra cottas. It is important to preserve these characteristics.

Paint colors in the virgin islands were traditionally conservative. Most masonry buildings were given coats of lime wash, usually white, but sometimes tinted a yellow gold or pinkish to terra-cotta red. Wood buildings also were painted or washed white, with other colors, such as gray, becoming more popular during the late 19th century. Shutters and jalousies (interior blinds) were usually green or white; roofs were traditionally dark, iron-oxide red. Modern wall colors such as green, bright pink, or blue were never used before the post-World War II era. However, they are often now considered "appropriate" for smaller scale buildings.

2 - PAINT

PAINT SCHEMES

Paint colors are very important to the overall appearance of a historic area and do much to convey an impression of pride and care for a building. Most importantly, owners should be aware of the impact of their paint colors on the appearance of their street or neighborhood and consider their neighbors when making a color selection. The following are samples of recommended color schemes. Please do confer with the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Office for advice and recommendations.

SAMPLES



1



2



3



4

COLOR TREATMENTS



KEEPING THE TOWN VIBRANT IN ITS COLOR PALETTE



Above: North Street 13, Christiansted
Below: "Crown House", Dronningens Gade, St. Thomas

TYPES OF PAINTS

Although Lime paints and washes are still available, the upkeep of the painted surfaces can sometimes be a challenge. As an alternative property owners can consider using a Silicate Paint. Silicate Paints are a mineral paint, like Lime paints, but are significantly more durable with a repaint timeline of 10 to 15 years if applied correctly.



MASONRY BUILDINGS

The best paint to use for masonry buildings is a simple lime wash, made up of slaked hydrated lime, water and ideally an organic tint. This method requires often annual maintenance, however, but nonetheless can be successful. The addition of white Portland cement to the mixture can help to prolong the life of a wash, however, cutting down on maintenance requirements.



WOOD BUILDINGS

Wood buildings should be carefully brushed and sanded and then given a coat or two coats of a good quality alkyd paint (oil-based) or a high-quality acrylic latex paint. Generally, oil paint causes less build-up than acrylic latex or latex paint and for many wood buildings is often longer lasting (though recent improvements in latex technology is beginning to change this). Sanding should be done by hand or with a pad sander. Belt and disc sanding gouge wood surfaces and alter their appearance.



MODERN CONCRETE BUILDINGS

In the absence of a traditional treatment, flat acrylic latex or latex paints can be substituted for masonry buildings and oil paint or high quality acrylic latex for wood. For masonry walls a more expensive latex acrylic as opposed to a lower acrylic content latex paint is definitely recommended. Acrylic paints allow for some evaporation from the walls and therefore are less apt to flake or fall off. Chemical strippers can be used for build-up problem processes. Colors can be selected to closely resemble traditional lime washes or oil paints.



PLASTER COVERED RUBBLE WALLS

A large percentage of the historic buildings in the Virgin Islands are constructed of rubble-masonry, covered with lime plaster or “stucco.” This is a building technique of age-old origins and the building technique of choice throughout the Mediterranean region (from which, in many ways, Caribbean architecture take the lead) for many thousands of years.

The Division of Archeology and Historic Preservation is pleased to provide help and advice.



PRESERVING HISTORY

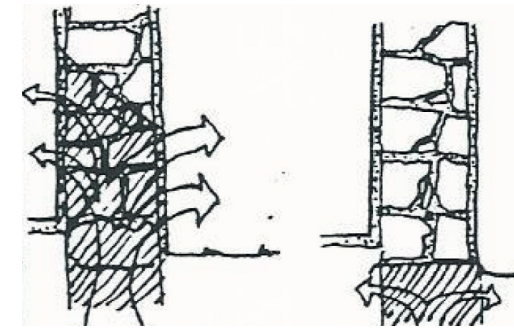
The rich detail of many “high-style” buildings in the Virgin Islands is achieved through molded exterior plaster or stucco detailing.

Above: Lord God Sabaath Lutheran Church, KingnStreet, Christiansted. One of many plaster-covered buildings in the Virgin Islands.

The historic procedure was a simple one: rough-cut or simple fieldstone was built up in uneven courses to form thick supporting walls. Brick or cut-stone was used for corners and to provide a sharper edge for window and door openings. The whole wall was then covered with several coats of lime plaster, then either troweled smooth or scored to resemble the ashlar or (cut-stone) walls that these less-expensive walls clearly imitated.

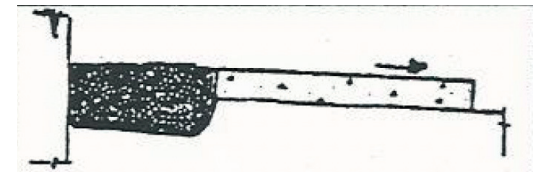
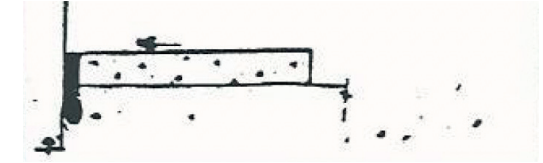
PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

The key to preserving plaster-covered rubble walls is constant maintenance. The walls themselves are usually strong but are weakened by penetration of water, either from above through leaking walls or through damp ground. If problems exist - as shown through bulging or scaling of the wall - the first step is to look for the source of dampness. Steps should then be taken to keep the walls dry, either by repairing the faulty roof, gutters, or flashing, or by providing for better drainage at the base. A simple bed of loose gravel can often help in the latter instance, new gutters or flashing can help stop problem leaking.



PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

Typical damp conditions. Water is “wicked” through walls, leaving salt deposits and causing surface scaling. The provision of a damp-proof course as shown on the right, can help cut down on moisture problems.



PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

Improved drainage, in the form of gravel-filled trenches can help cut down on moisture problems. Such treatments, however, are often difficult in urban situations.

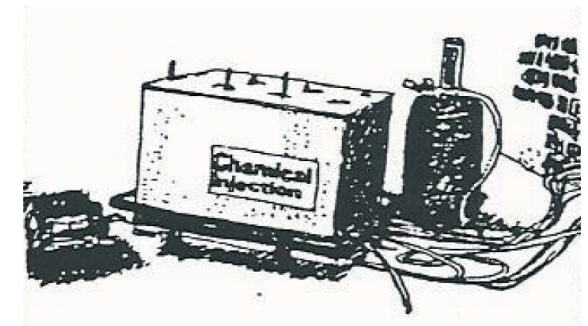
PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

After solving the moisture problems the next step is simply to patch the wall as necessary. If the whole lime-plaster surface is failing, it may be necessary to chip the plaster from the walls and then resurface. Care must be taken to match the appearance, texture, design details, and thickness of the original plaster covering.



PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

Cutting in a damp-proof course with a circular masonry saw. A relatively expensive and difficult procedure.



PRESERVING EXISTING WALLS

Chemical injection to provide a damp-proof course. Still largely un-tested in the Virgin Islands.



DO NOT USE PORTLAND OR READY-MIXED CEMENT

Many people choose to replace the plaster or patch it with a Portland cement compound. This procedure is definitely not recommended. Portland cement is simply too hard and does not allow for proper evaporation from the walls, resulting in unwanted moisture build-up. A certain amount of white Portland may be added to the lime plaster, but this is not in fact necessary. Ready-mixed cement compounds are not appropriate for historic buildings.

MORTAR

A Portland Cement

ASTM C 150, Type 1, White

B Lime

ASTM C207, Type S, high plasticity

C Sand

ASTM C1 44, fine washed

D Admixture

Use a water reducing and plasticizing agent to reduce water content and drying shrinkage, "Omicron Mortar proofing," a product of Master Builders Company or equivalent. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use.

E Water

Free of impurities and organic material.

PROPORTIONING

Variations of this specification are allowable, and the staff of the Division for Archaeology and Historic Preservation are happy to discuss alternative mortar mixes with owners. The important thing is that the nature of these historic wall surfaces be understood and that steps be taken to encourage their preservation and continued use.



Note

→ It is essential that details such as quoins and molding profiles be duplicated when replacing plaster.



Note

→ Be sure to match the texture and overall character of the original walls in both repairs and replacement.

A 1 part White Portland cement; 5 parts lime, 9-10 parts sand, recommended mix. A higher lime content is also possible and in many cases desirable.

B Sample areas should be tested and examined by the architect or supervisor prior to settling on the final mix.

WHOLESALE PLASTER REMOVAL NOT PERMITTED

Another concern is the removal of plaster. Rubble masonry walls were meant to be plastered and protected from the elements. The workmanship of the rubble masonry wall, while picturesque to our eyes, was never meant to be seen. This is true for both interior and exterior walls. Much damage is caused to walls from which plaster is removed. As a result, this treatment is not permitted.

WATERPROOFING NOT RECOMMENDED

A final concern is waterproof coverings. Such coverings, usually silicones or polyurethanes, are often applied to protect previously plastered rubble walls. They can have both a visual and material impact on walls. The main concern is such coverings often discolor walls and do not allow for the normal evaporation cycle causing, therefore, a build-up of salts within walls. It is highly recommended that such coverings not be applied.

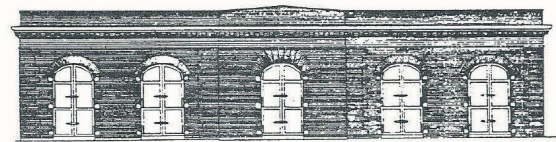
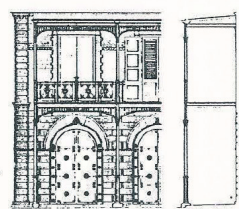
Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church - Cruz Bay





REPAIR, CLEANING, AND REPOINTING OF BRICK WALLS

There are few exposed brick-faced buildings in the Virgin Islands. However, there are a few outstanding examples from the 19th-century, mostly located in commercial areas of the towns. While problems of treatment come up rarely, greater care than ever must be taken for the preservation of these buildings.



Although brick buildings are rare in the Virgin Islands, there are several outstanding examples. These are both on Kronprinsensgade, in Charlotte Amalie.



GENERAL PROBLEMS

Brick buildings often consist of brick veneers over rubble masonry cores. Whether all brick or brick-veneer, however, they share many of the characteristics of rubble walls. Initial concerns are water penetration into walls. Walls should be carefully examined for indications of leaking roofs or gutters or damp foundations. Efforts should then be made to correct such problems either by repairing roof problems or providing better drainage. Badly damaged or deteriorated brick, should be replaced in kind with bricks resembling the original (or in some cases, original bricks can be turned around to expose less deteriorated faces). All mortar joints should be sound and well-maintained.



4 – REPAIR OF BRICK WALLS

MORTAR AND MORTAR MIXES

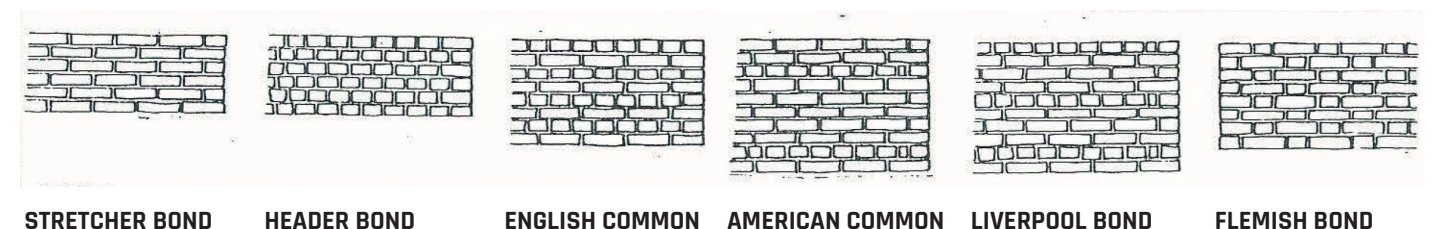
It is important that the mortar for repair of deteriorated brick joints match the original. This usually means a high-lime-content mortar following the following specifications:

Mortar

- A Portland Cement**
ASTM C 150, Type 1, White
- B Lime**
ASTM C207, Type S, high plasticity
- C Sand**
ASTM C1 44, fine washed
- D Admixture**
Use a water reducing and plasticizing agent to reduce water content and drying shrinkage, "Omicron Mortar proofing," a product of Master Builders Company or equivalent. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use.
- E Potable Water**
Free of impurities and organic material.



→ Some typical brick bond patterns are created by the way in which the brick was laid. It is important to duplicate the original pattern when repairing or rebuilding brick walls.



Note

→ As with rubble walls, brick walls are subject to moisture problems. A damp-proof course can cut down on rising dampness.



Note

→ Efflorescence is a surface salt deposit caused by rising dampness.

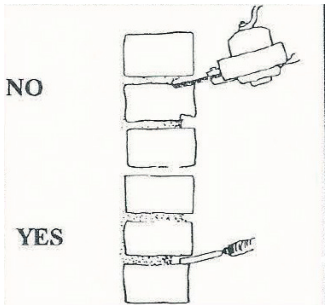
MORTAR MIX

It is recommended always that a test patch be made in areas to be treated. If any doubts exist, the VISHPO in the Department of Planning and Natural Resources is available for consultation.

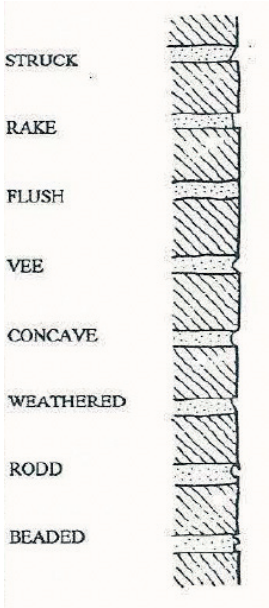
- A** 1 part white Portland cement; 5 parts lime; 9-10 parts sand, recommended mix. A higher lime content is also possible and in many cases desirable.
- B** Sample areas should be tested and examined by the architect or supervisor prior to settling on the final mix.

REPOINTING

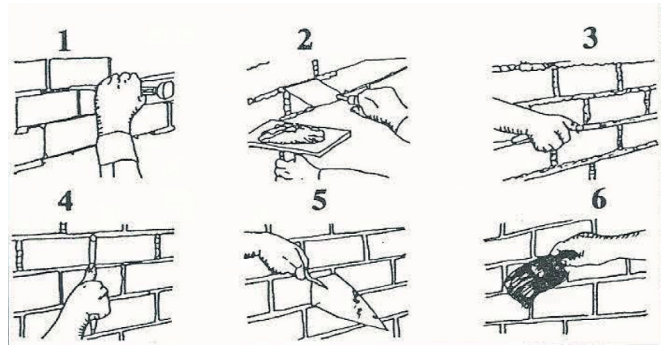
The main concerns for brick wall repairs are repainting and cleaning. Repainting, or replacing the mortar between bricks, should be carried out in a careful way. All joints should be raked by hand and no machines or saws should be used. Using a chisel, loose mortar should be removed to a depth approximately twice the width of the opening. New mortar should be carefully laid in the joints being careful not to feather the joints or spread the mortar onto the surface. All joints should be, in mason's terms, "neatly struck."



Brick joints should be raked out to 2 1/2 times their width using a chisel. Mechanical means, such as circular masomy saws, can badly damage brick surfaces.



Traditional joint profiles. "Concave" and "Weathered" are probably the most common historic joints in the Virgin Islands. Occasional "Toolea" (either "rodded" or "beaded") are also common historic joints.

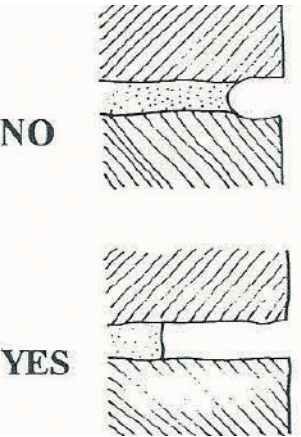


The six steps for repointing, from top left

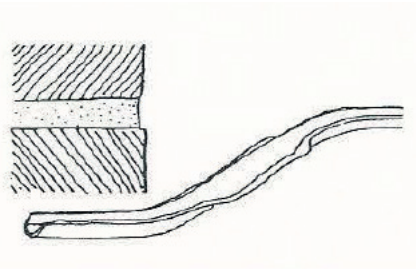
- 1** Remove loose mortar
- 2** Pack in new mortar following recommended mix
- 3** Apply jointer to horizontal joints
- 4** Apply to vertical joints
- 5** Remove excess mortar
- 6** Wait 2 hours, then brush and wash clean

SANDBLASTING OF BRICK IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

Sandblasting mars the brick surface, altering its character altogether. Extremely porous or soft bricks or bricks that have been previously sandblasted can be treated with a coat of lime wash, following the instructions for plaster walls set out in a separate guideline. Painting with a flat acrylic latex, waterbased paint is also recommended.



Don't break the surface of the brick. Be sure to rake out to a sufficient depth.



Unless your building had an unusual joint type, a concave joint such as this obtained with a common jointer is best.

CLEANING

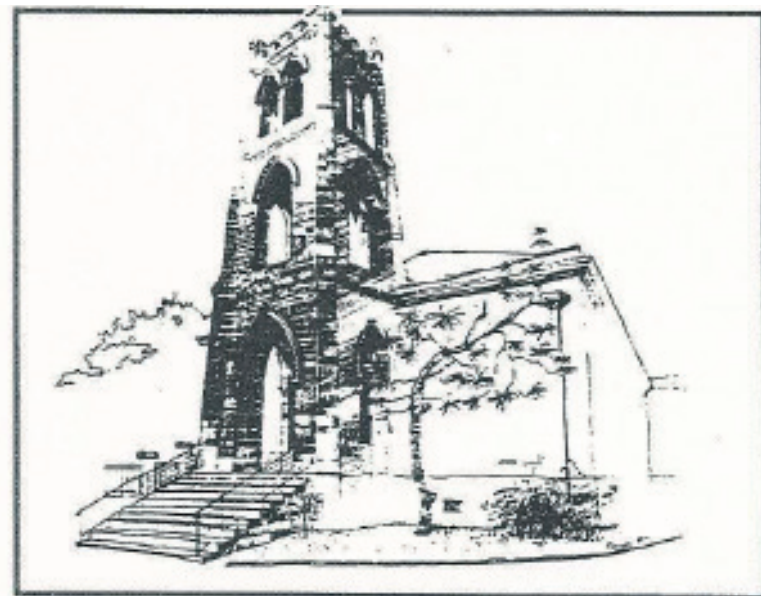
Cleaning should be carried out only when necessary. The recommended cleaning method is simply water or a combination of detergent and water, with water applied under low pressure. High-pressure water cleaning (over 1000 pounds per square inch) can damage brick surfaces. If dirt is resistant, bristle brushes can be used on the surface. Wire brushes should not be used. Particularly dirty surfaces may be cleaned using an extremely weak chemical solution of sulfuric acid. Test patches should be made before full cleaning begins.



THE REPAIR OF STONE WALLS

Cut-stone walls – as distinguished from rubble masonry – are common throughout the Virgin Islands, but especially in commercial areas. Frederiksted, in particular, has a number of cut-stone walls.

Most of the stone for St. Croix buildings are nearly all of limestone, which was quarried in the central valley or was taken from the coral beds along the west end.



St. Paul's Anglican Church Tower, St. Croix, c. 1849, built of local limestone.



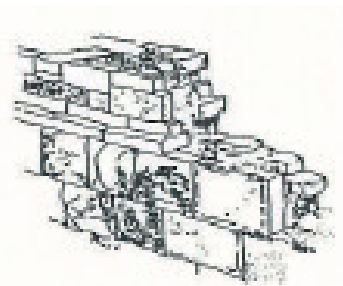
STONE WALLS IN CHARLOTTE AMALIE

Stone in Charlotte Amalie was mainly imported. As with rubble walls, the cut-stone walls are often rough-coursed (unevenly laid) and are typically coated with lime plaster. The only difference from rubble walls is one of degree: cut-stone walls employ more regular stone blocks and the stones show more clearly on the existing buildings.

5 – REPAIR OF STONE WALLS

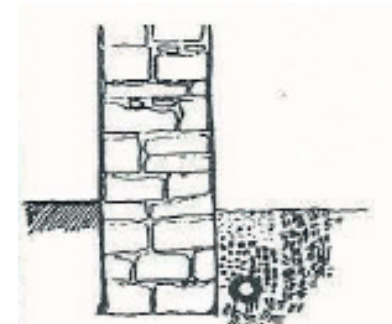
MOISTURE

As with rubble walls and brick walls, surfaces should be examined for evidence of water penetration, usually leaks or damp ground. These should be corrected before other work begins. (See guidelines for rubble masonry and brick as well.)



Note

→ Typical masonry work. Note, even when outer layers are evenly coursed cut stone much of the interior of the wall is still rubble. Water penetration remains the main problem for preserving such walls



Note

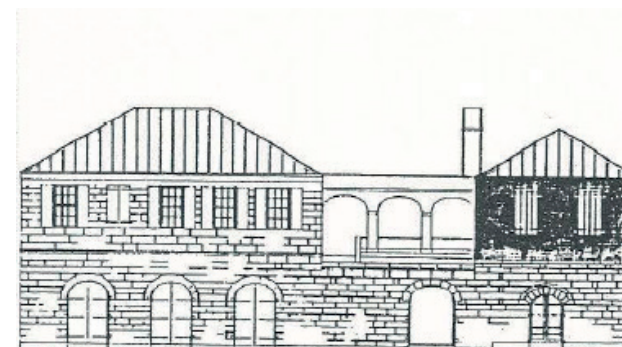
→ Installation of a perimeter drain can help cut down on moisture problems. Set perforated drain in a bed of gravel and be certain that the ground slopes away from building and that the pipe also drains.



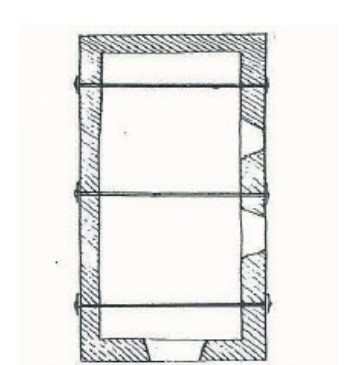
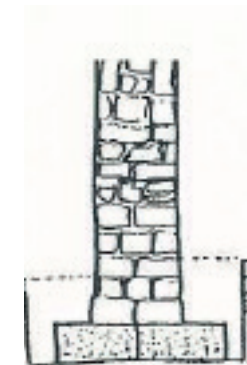
Excavating and providing a proper concrete footing can help correct a failing masonry wall.

OUTWARD LEANING WALLS

If a wall is leaning outward or shows other signs of falling, the wall may be tied using stainless steel ties and anchors. Otherwise, the foundation should be reinforced, often to the point of providing a new concrete footing. In some cases the wall may have to be rebuilt. If this is done, care must be taken to duplicate the original appearance of the wall.



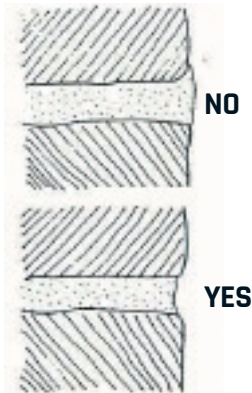
Stone for several St. Thomas buildings was mostly imported.



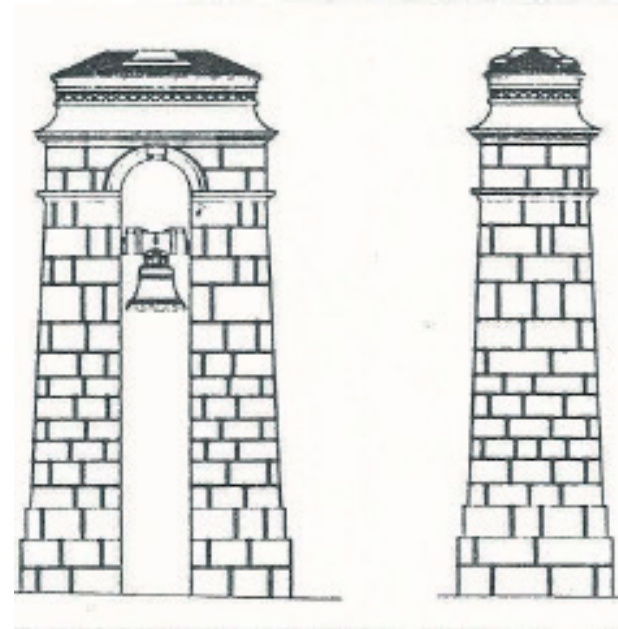
Stainless steel tie rods and anchors can help to stabilize outward-leaning rubble walls. Combined with a concrete footing and, in some cases, a concrete rim ring bond band, ties can help reinforce existing walls. Generally do not attempt to straighten leaning walls!

CLEANING AND REPOINTING

Stone walls rarely need to be cleaned, but often need repointing. If the mortar between the stones is loose, this should be removed with a chisel and fresh mortar put in its place. Modern Portland cement should not be used for this purpose, as it is too hard for the soft limestone.



Efforts should be made to duplicate the finish of existing stone walls. As with brick repointing, joints should be raked out to 2-1/2 times their width and packed with an appropriate mortar. Concave joints are usually preferable. Do not feather edge as in the example to the left.



Retain the character and details of original stonework.

PROPORTIONING

Following repointing, a thin coat of limewash is highly recommended. This coat, being composed of the same material as the wall, will not affect its appearance, but will help to protect from rain and pollution.

- A** 1 part white Portland cement; 5 parts lime; 9-10 parts sand, recommended mix. A higher lime content is also possible and in many cases desirable.
- B** Sample areas should be tested and examined by the architect or supervisor prior to settling on the final mix. (See the guideline for brick walls for more complete instructions.)



A coat of limewash can help to protect the surface of stone structures such as these.

Preserving the Historical Architecture of the US Virgin Islands

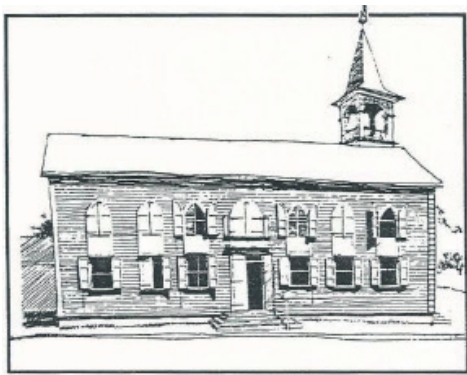


Types of Stone Walls for Cleaning and Repointing



REPAIRS TO WOOD BUILDINGS

Many of the buildings in the Virgin Islands are built of wood and require special care. The main concerns are that original materials not be replaced, unless it is fully necessary and, that if wood walls or wooden parts of buildings must be replaced, the replacement material should resemble the original as closely as possible.



Wood has long been a popular building material in the Virgin Islands, used for both institutional and other buildings. Friedensfeld Midland Moravian Church, one of the largest all wood buildings in the West Indies.

GENERAL TREATMENTS

Inspection for Leaks

An initial inspection should be made for signs of leaks and, usually accompanying this, infestation by termites or other insects. As with stone or brick buildings, the main threat to wood buildings is water penetration. If a roof is sound and gutters work properly, a seemingly fragile wood building can, in fact, last indefinitely.

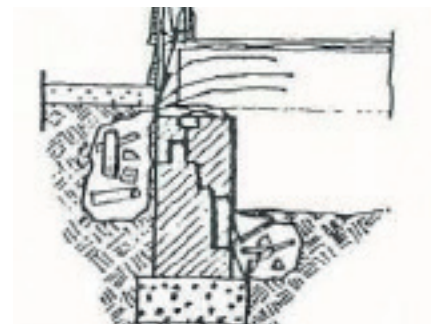
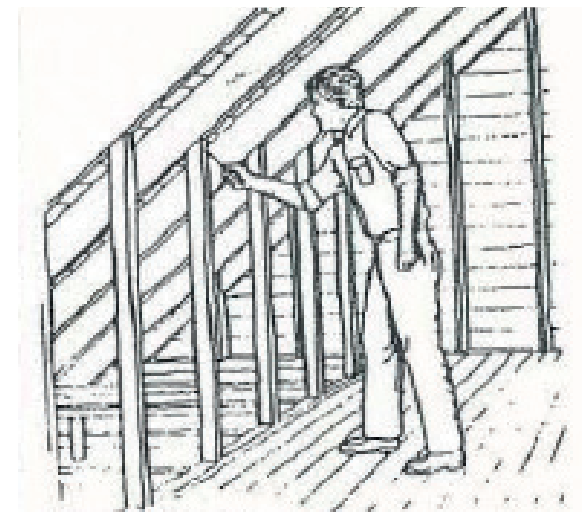


Wood combined with masonry. Shingle surfaces such as this have been common since the 18th century.

6 – REPAIRS TO WOOD BUILDINGS

TERMITE INSPECTION

Once sources of water penetration have been discovered and an effort made -- even if temporarily -- to repair leaky roofs and gutters, an examination for termites can be made. Termites get into walls both through the ground and by air. Formosan or subterranean termites are by far the most damaging to wood buildings. To look for signs of termite infestation walls may be examined simply by knocking or probing with an ice pick knife or screwdriver. Foundation should also be examined for termite trails although these are often hidden from view within the wall cavities. Rubble masonry buildings and buildings with rubble masonry foundations -- the case with most Virgin Islands historic wood buildings -- have this problem especially and roofs and walls can be infested by termites invisible at the foundation level.



Some typical sources of termites: debris in the soil either inside or outside the foundation walls; in contact with the soil; hidden termite trails.



Subterranean termite trails - frequently a sign of termite presence.

If termites are discovered, the ground around the building and the building itself should be treated by a professional exterminator. In isolated areas, wood preservatives (generally chromated copper or zinc naphthanate, both anti-fungicides as well) or other similar preservative treatments can be applied. Treatment, however, is less effective than tenting and -- especially -- professional ground treatment with pesticides.

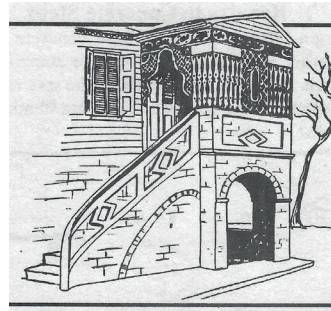


AVOID COVERING INTERIORS

Traditional practice should be followed when undertaking any wood repairs. Exposed stud walls and rafters, so typical in most older West Indian buildings, were not simply a means of saving materials, but had a practical rationale as well. Exposed walls meant less vermin, an easy way to detect termites, and ensured proper ventilation both of walls and roofs. Whenever possible, this method of building should be retained. Installation of gypsum board or other wallboard is discouraged for the same reason, although modern fire codes may in many instances require some changes.

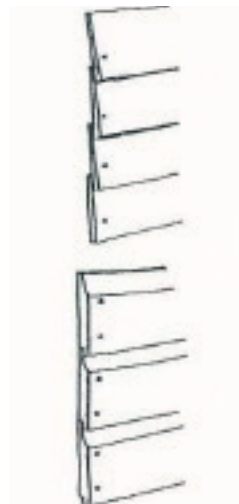
DECORATIVE SAWN-WORK AND OTHER DECORATION

The Virgin Islands is particularly noted for its wealth of jig-saw or sawn-work, known variously as gingerbread or decorative “icing”. There is also some turned work and other significant decoration. Whenever existing decorative work is in place, this should be retained and repaired. In some cases replacement of entire sections, of either bargeboards (also called “valences” when horizontal) or balusters, may be necessary. If this is done, great care should be taken to duplicate the original design as closely as possible. Always, good quality materials should be used to ensure long-lasting repairs.

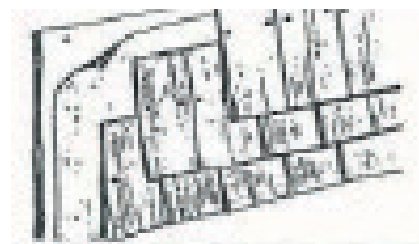


Sawn-work detailing a significant feature of many wood buildings. Efforts should be made to retain existing examples and repair where necessary.

Illustration from Pamela Gosner's Historic Architecture of the Virgin Islands.



Lapped weatherboard and “German” or novelty siding.



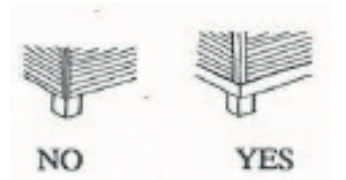
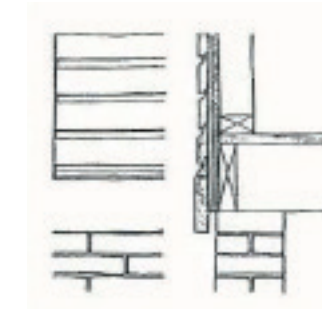
Cedar shingles - a common siding material for wood buildings in the Virgin Islands



SIDING

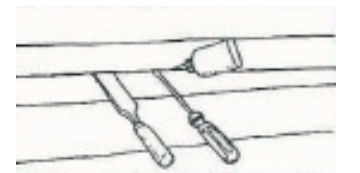
There are basically four kinds of siding in the Virgin Islands:

- 1 older weather-boarding with a “bead” or rounded portion at the bottom;
- 2 simple lapped weatherboard;
- 3 “novelty” board, also known as German siding; and
- 4 cedar shingles or shakes. Whenever replacement is necessary, replacement with material closely resembling the original is highly recommended. All of these materials are available from lumber yards or can be special ordered.



Match the detailing of original siding. Duplicate the corner board (quoin) and baseboard details.

Lapped weatherboard. Shiplapped novelty board. Note the drip molding or drip cap along the baseboard. (Be sure to include proper detailing and flashing to better preserve your building.)



Don't remove siding unnecessarily. Often gluing or other spot repairs can prolong the life of damaged siding.

EXTERIOR DETAILING

Great care must be taken to duplicate the details of exterior walls. Window and door surrounds or trim must be exactly reproduced. Corners should have endboards or, in some cases, quoins. A drip molding, properly flashed, should be provided at the bottom of the wall. Similar molding or caps must be placed above doors and windows.



Consider replacing damaged pieces rather than wholesale replacement of siding:

- (1) degree of damage;
- (2) use wood wedges to pull damaged sections away from wall;
- (3) use back saw to cut away damaged piece ;
- (4) use hacksaw blade to cut nail;
- (5) push replacement siding into place using block, back with “spacers” for reinforcement;
- (6) nail in place, pre-drilling nail holes.



A similar technique can be used to replace individual shingles: (1) cut away damaged material; (2) cut nails; (3) push new piece into place measuring carefully for length.

TERMITE PRESENCE

Often an indication of termite presence is less dangerous than many assume. In most instances, buildings in the West Indies were built of imported heart pine, a material extremely resilient to termites -- even more resilient than modern treated materials. Often, too, termites have "completed" their work and are no longer present in the building.

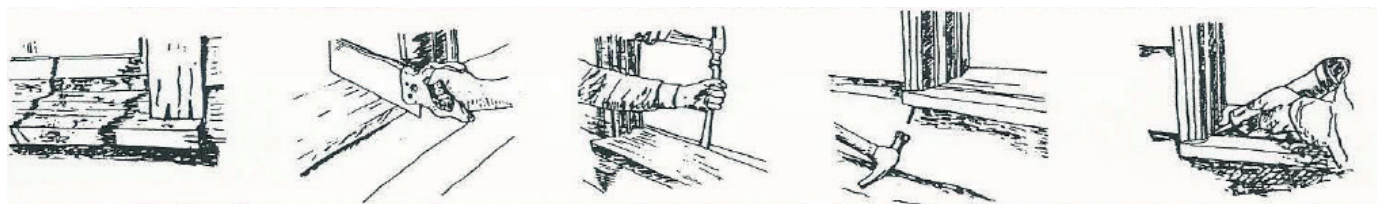
Also, since most historic wood buildings are stronger than they actually need to be, the loss of some materials may not really threaten the building's stability. Wood sheathing or wood interior walls often have nothing to support other than themselves and can simply be repaired with wood hardeners and epoxy and partial replacement, rather than being replaced entirely. A wood building often gains "character" through such repairs, and the walls need not all look new and perfect.

Tests and repairs for other types of wood-eating insects including carpenter ants and anobid beetles, should follow similar procedures.

Extreme caution must be taken when using pesticides or fungicides (discussed below). Other than in limited circumstances, they should be applied by professionals only, and care must be taken to ensure that chemically treated materials are not left exposed.

WOOD REPLACEMENT

Rotted wood takes a variety of forms and each type of rot has a particular character. For purposes of repairs to wood buildings, it is only important to remove that portion of the material that is rotted. Unaffected pieces, or even portions of original pieces, should be retained wherever possible.



Rotted sills can be replaced in part or totally. Be certain to replace with treated materials. Caulk well and paint.

ROTTED WOOD

In addition to termites, wood buildings are affected by rot. Again, the cause is moisture, coupled closely with poor ventilation. Rot will generally occur where:

(1) water leaks in through the roof or leaky gutters or downspouts; (2) areas that are poorly ventilated, allowing a build-up of moisture, and (3) in cases when the wood is in contact with the ground or covered by vegetation. The main solution in each instance is to remove the source of dampness and begin replacement of affected wood elements only after that point.



Typical brown rot - generally remove, though consolidation and repair is possible if affected area is small enough.



Cross-grain cracking - indicative of more virulent "dry-rot. Always remove completely and discard.

REPLACEMENT MATERIALS AND REPAIRS

It is important that replacement materials resemble the originals, in terms of wood type, shape, and so on, as closely as possible. Also, only pressure-treated materials (wolmanized) with at least limited guarantee against termite infestation and/or rot should be accepted for replacement pieces. In some cases, naturally resistant woods, such as redwood, cedar, or mahogany may be substituted, though call for the use of such higher cost materials is unusual.

Newer materials, particularly pine or fir, are often not so well-cured as original wood materials. Therefore they are more subject to warping or twisting. This is particularly true of materials treated with wolman salts (wolmanized), which are relatively "damp" at the time of purchase. It is important that good quality kiln-dried wood be used whenever possible. The extra cost is often worth it in the long run.

While replacement materials should match the original closely, materials more-or-less hidden from view, such as wall sheathing, floor decking, or roof sheathing may be of a less historic character. Pressure-treated plywood is often an excellent substitute for original wood plank sheathing. Similarly 2 by 4 and 2 by 6 inch pine, rather than traditional 4 by 4 members, may be used in roof-structures hidden from view, though more traditional treatments are always the most recommended.



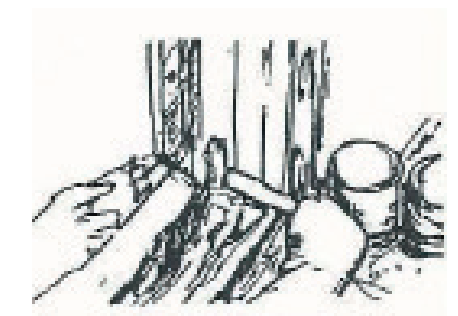
Wood components of masonry buildings often require replacement. Again, treated materials should be used.



Illustration of wood rot before repairs.

EPOXY REPAIRS

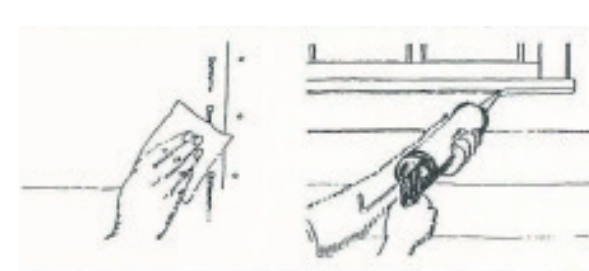
Before replacing wood materials entirely, the owner should consider other less dramatic repairs. Often a wood structural member can be spliced (a small piece inserted to replace damaged piece) or infilled with epoxy fillers. Epoxy fillers and impregnation (using drills to penetrate the wood) can be used to stabilize and reinforce damaged pieces. This procedure should be considered especially for elements such as window sills or exposed interior structural members, where the original shape or decorative treatment is itself significant.



Epoxy repairs - consisting of hardeners and fillers - can often be used to repair limited damage, such as hard to remove window sills or decorative details.

PAINTING

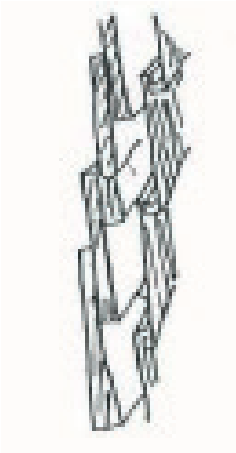
Wood surfaces should nearly always be painted as a protective measure. Paint repels moisture and helps keep the wood sound. It also inhibits warping or twisting. Always, a good quality primer should be used and, whenever possible, a good quality alkyd (oil-based) or acrylic latex paint applied. Light colored stains can also be used, particularly on shingled walls. (See the separate guidelines on paints and materials).



Use the opportunity to set and putty nail holes and caulk. Use a high grade, marine type caulk (toluene or butyl) for the best results.

ARTIFICIAL MATERIALS

Vinyl or aluminum siding should never be used. These materials can be damaging to the wood understructure (encouraging rot) and do not hold up well over time. Also, metal and vinyl siding usually hides important details and alters the building's character.



Artificial siding over wood siding can mask more dangerous problems and trap additional moisture. Vinyl and aluminum siding are not permitted on historic structures in Virgin Island historic districts.

YES

YES

YES

YES with caution

NO



For paint preparation use (1) a putty knife (sometimes combined with chemical strippers); (2) a paint scraper; (3) an orbital sander; and (4) a heat plate (with caution). Do not use disk or belt sanders, both of which can mar wood surfaces.

Preserving the Historical Architecture of the US Virgin Islands

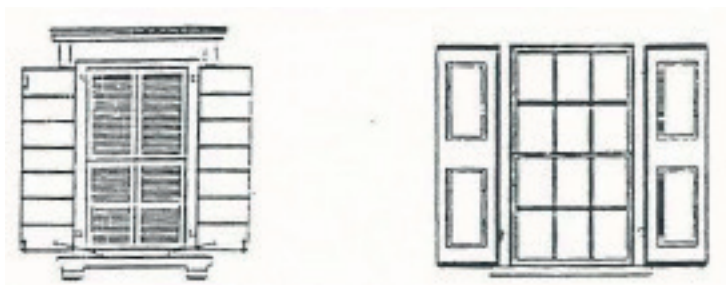


Example of wood siding in Charlotte Amalie
"Petersen Yard"
Kongens Gade 3B, Charlotte Amalie



WINDOWS AND DOORS

Windows and doors are extremely important to the appearance of older buildings. Traditional windows and doors in the Virgin islands consisted of double-plank or solid paneled exterior storm shutters and louvered blinds called “jalousies” on the inside. Some buildings had glass windows from early period and some had true-paneled shutters and doors, although both are exceptions.



Jalousies and glazed sashes are both historic window treatments.



PRESERVATION

When undertaking window or door repairs, consideration should be given to retaining both external shutters and original jalousies. Both can often be repaired, many times requiring simply replacement of a few louvers or splicing in a piece where wood is damaged. If jalousies or shutters are badly damaged, they should be reproduced when possible. Both can be made by local carpenters and mill shops. Cheap, non-operable jalousies are not recommended. Their life-span is short, and they are usually not worth the expense.

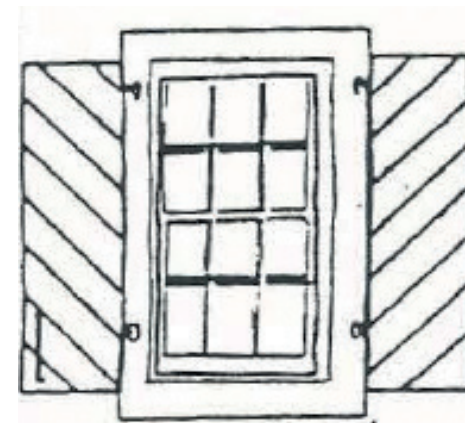
Original windows and doors are extremely important to the historic character of older buildings. Every effort must be made to preserve both openings and the types of doors and windows in each opening.



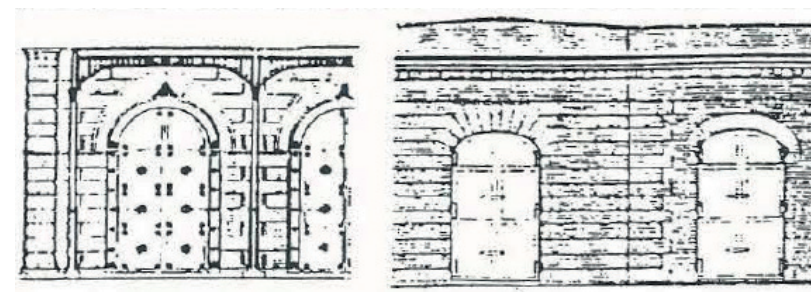
7 – WINDOWS AND DOORS

SELECTING NEW SHUTTER AND DOOR PATTERNS

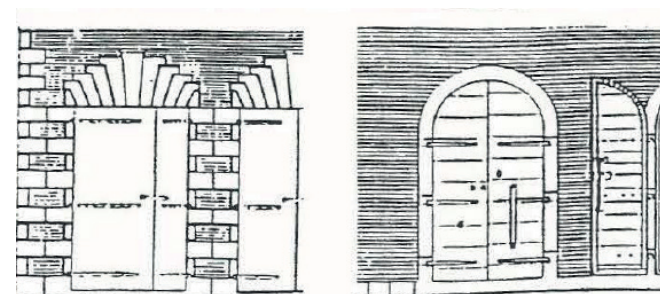
If the existing doors and shutters cannot be repaired or the building lacks any shutters or doors, new replacements will be necessary. Care must be taken, however, to select the correct pattern for shutter or door replacement. Most shutters and doors originally were solid (or “false”) paneled, at least for upper stories, and of double plank construction for ground floors. (This is not always the case, however, as both double-planked and solid paneled shutters are sometimes placed in just the opposite way or are uniform throughout a building). Modern chevron patterned shutters and doors, particularly those using tongue and groove. “V-grooved”, pine are definitely not recommended. There are modern renditions of traditional doors and shutters and are generally not in keeping with the historic character of buildings in the Virgin Islands.



Avoid modern chevron patterned shutters. While there is some historic precedent for shutters of this kind, combined horizontal and vertical plank shutters were more common. “V-grooved” boards were not used historically.



Metal doors both cast iron and sheet metal over wood are extremely important features of many commercial buildings.



Retain existing wood and metal doors. Irregularities, as shown in these two examples are often important to their character.

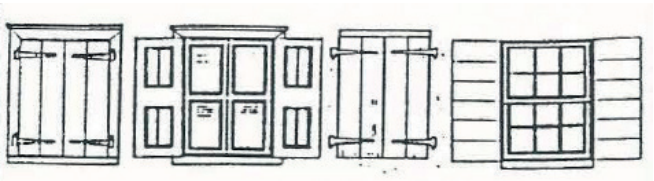


REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

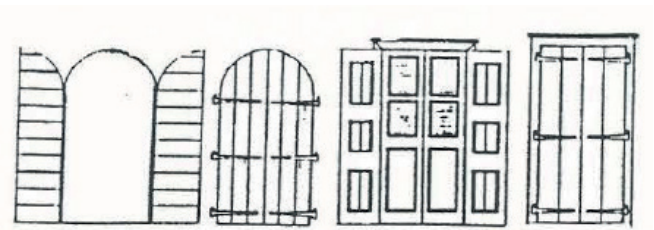
As with doors, owners are encouraged to preserve and repair existing window treatments whenever possible. If the building has no jalousies or other historic windows, compatible treatments may be considered. Custom-made wood jalousies can be fitted with interior screens or glazing; screened or glazed “boxes” over jalousie louvers are ideal. In the case of historically glazed windows, interior storm windows can be installed to improve efficiency.



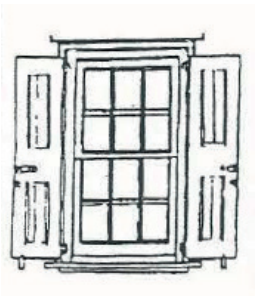
If security or air-conditioning are a concern, glass windows may in most instances be substituted. Traditional glass windows are of two types: double-hung, multi-paned sash; or inward swinging glass encasements. Both are readily available from manufacturers or can be special ordered (or manufactured locally) for custom sizes. In some cases, especially when thermo-pane windows are desired, enamelled-metal windows or vinyl-clad windows, with appropriate muntin patterns (window divisions) can be substituted. Muntins (dividers) must have proper depth, however, and must resemble those on traditional wooden windows. Cheaper “snap-in” or “sandwiched” muntins are not acceptable.



Recommended replacement windows and storm shutters. Either false panelled or plank shutters are acceptable. Always attempt first to repair the originals.



Recommended replacement windows and storm shutters. Either false paneled or plank shutters are acceptable. Always attempt first to repair the originals.



Note

→ Pay attention to details such as the depth (reveal) of the muntins (dividers). When introducing glass windows be certain that they are in keeping with historic examples.

PAINTING

Doors, shutters, jalousies, and wood and metal windows should be painted to protect the original materials. Typical colors (as described in a separate brief) are white, gray, reddish-brown, and green for exterior shutters; green and sometimes white, for jalousies. Hardware can be painted black or, more typically, the same color as the door or shutter.

HARDWARE

Existing hardware should in all cases be reused whenever possible. If new hardware is required, it should be of high quality, although it can be simple. Wrought-iron strap hinges and pintles, both available from local suppliers, should be used both for shutters and doors. Modern butt hinges, whether square or triangular, are not appropriate replacements, nor are especially ornate brass or other hardware.

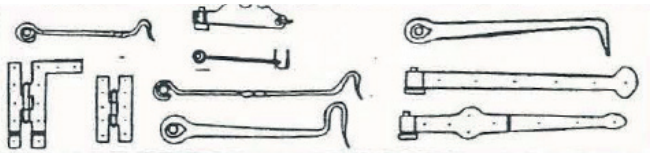
STOREFRONTS/DISPLAY WINDOWS

Few Virgin Islands buildings have traditional, European or North American type storefronts. Most modern businesses are located in older stores and warehouses, most of which lacked display windows or typical storefront entrances.

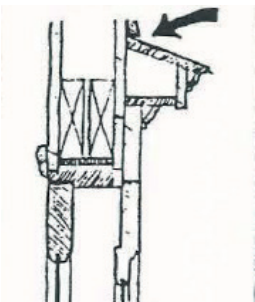
In all cases, every effort must be made to retain existing warehouse type entrances. The introduction of display windows - even in the place of former entrances - is highly discouraged.



Keep historic, early 20th century storefronts.



Traditional hardware, hooks and hinges. Longer, strap hinges arc for storm shutters and doors; “H” and “L” hinges are commonly used on interior jalousies.



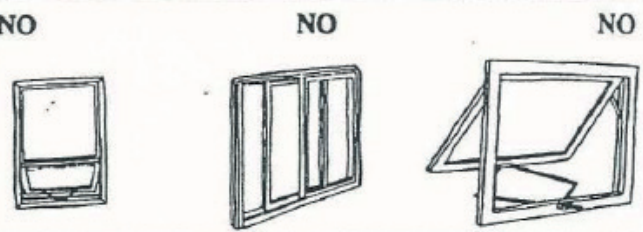
Be sure to install flashing over window heads (lintels) when making repairs.



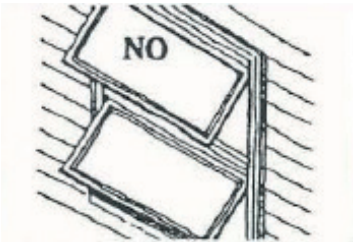
WINDOWS, SHUTTERS AND DOORS

Modern glass jalousies, or metal jalousies should never be used on historic buildings. These take away significantly from the historic appearance of a building. Their use can, however be considered for new construction (discussed in a separate guideline). Single-paned, glass windows either for commercial forms or for residential uses are discouraged.

WINDOWS

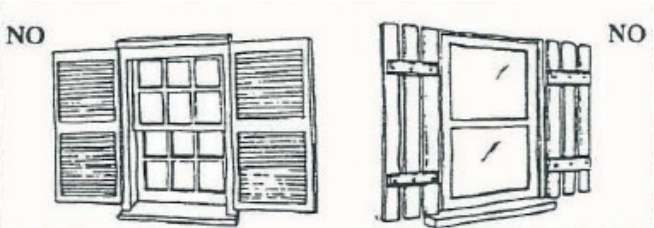


Avoid modern windows such as these. They should never be used on the fronts or visible sides of historic building.



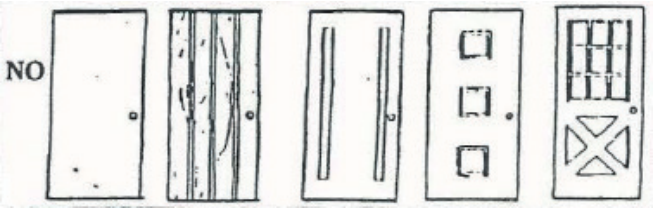
Awning type windows can be used on rear elevations when changes are required and on new additions to historic buildings - again, on less prominent elevations.

SHUTTERS



Inappropriate muntins, obviously inoperable shutters, all detract from the character of windows such as these.

DOORS



None of these doors are appropriate for historic buildings.



Glass or metal jalousies (Miami louvers), should never be installed in historic buildings.

Preserving the Historical Architecture of the US Virgin Islands



Historic Buildings on Government Hill. Charlotte Amalie



8

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

PORCHES, BALCONIES, AND ARCADES

Porches, balconies, and arcades are original to many buildings in the Virgin Islands and elsewhere in the Caribbean. Their origins probably go back to the intermeshing of Spanish and northern European culture in the Caribbean, with possible influence as well from the West African coast.

Porches, balconies, and arcades are basic features of Virgin Islands historic districts. Existing examples should be preserved whenever possible.

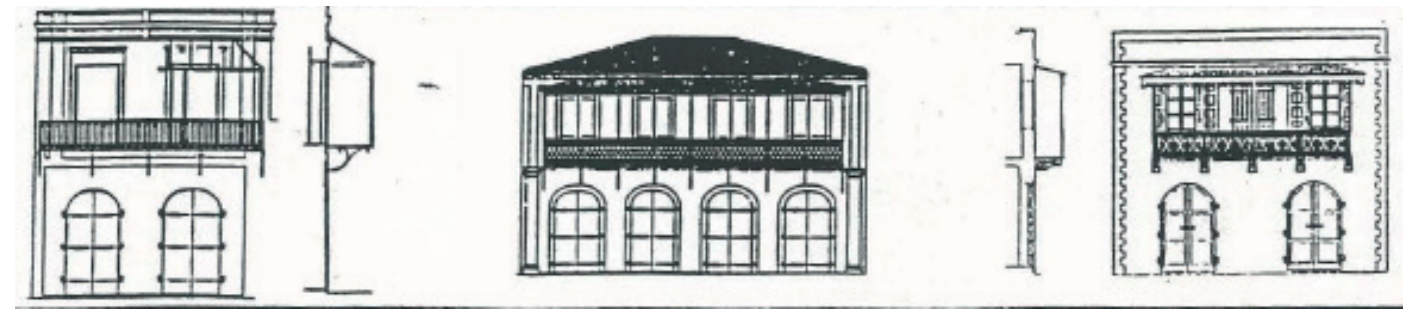


PRESERVATION

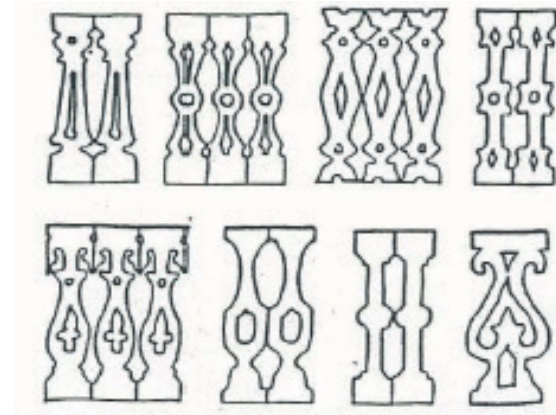
For porch, balcony, or arcade repairs, owners should follow the same procedures as those for wood, metal, and masonry repairs in general: Original materials should be saved whenever possible; replacement materials should come as close to the original as possible. Reference should be made to guidelines on wood repairs, the repair or preservation of architectural metals, and also separate guidelines on masonry repairs. The addition of new porches, balconies or arcades to old buildings is generally discouraged. In some instances, however, new porches may be added and, similarly, balconies may be added where there were none before. Rarely, a masonry arcade may be required where past evidence of a similar arcade is available. The main concerns are whether such an addition will alter the overall character of the building or not and the overall "authenticity" of the change.

8 – PORCHES, BALCONIES AND ARCADES

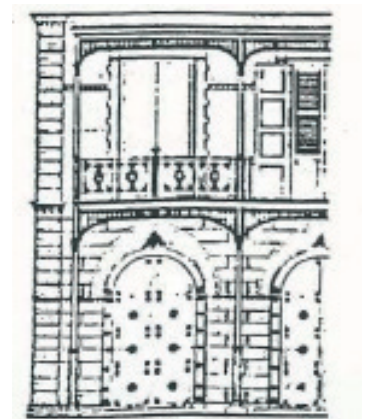
REPAIRS TO EXISTING PORCHES, BALCONIES, AND ARCADES



Some outstanding wrought and cast iron balconies.



Some common sawn-work balusters. Care should carefully duplicate original patterns when repairing or replacing wood balconies.



A metal double: arcade (two-story), on the: former St. Thomas Bank. Charlotte Amalie.



Note

→ A wood balcony on metal brackets. While a distinctive feature of the Virgin Islands buildings, balconies should rarely be added to existing historic buildings unless their prior presence can be documented.

NEW PORCHES, BALCONIES AND ARCADES

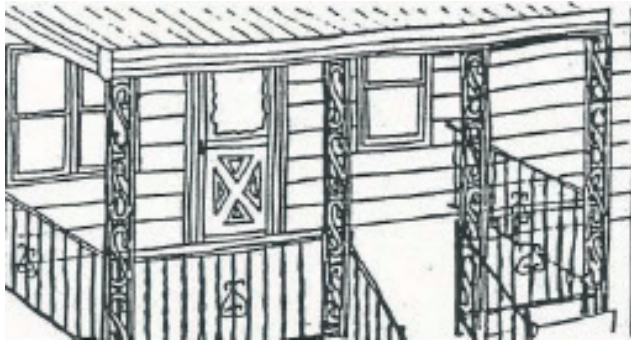
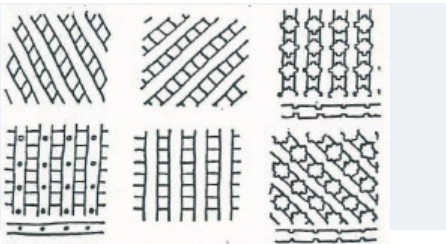
Placement of new porches, balconies, and arcades is obviously an important factor, especially if the concern with character change for the original building is taken into account. Ideally, new porches and balconies (as opposed to the replacement of existing examples) should be added to the rear of buildings, where they are less in the public view. Their design should be simple and, generally, should follow historic precedent. More strikingly “contemporary” designs are also acceptable, provided they follow basic rules of sympathetic materials, scale, and overall quality.



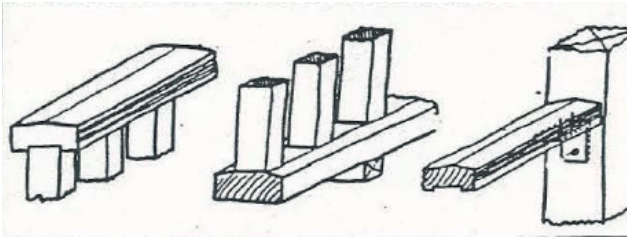
For new porches and balconies on street facades, even more care must be taken. Generally, new porches or balconies on facades of historic buildings should only be added when there is some evidence of their presence historically on that building. When uncertain of the original design, historic reproductions based on comparable examples are recommended. Care must be taken to duplicate the placement, size, and known details of historic porches, balconies, or arcades whenever adding these as a replacement of previously existing features. Modern materials, such as reinforced concrete or concrete block must not be used, nor should modern decorative ironwork be employed for either posts or balusters.

Note

→ Some common lattice pattern. Lattice was often used instead of balusters for both balconies and verandas.



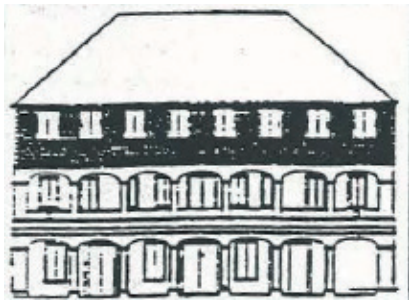
Do not use modern metal posts, rails, or balusters. These detract from a building's historic character.



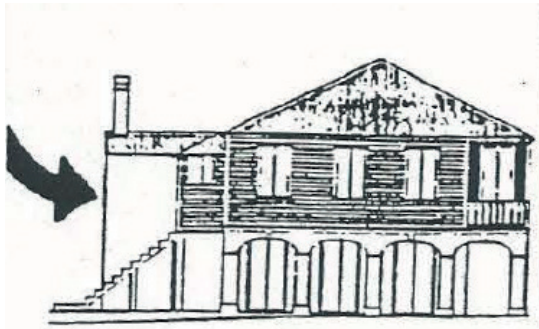
Typical detailing for a simple rail and baluster.



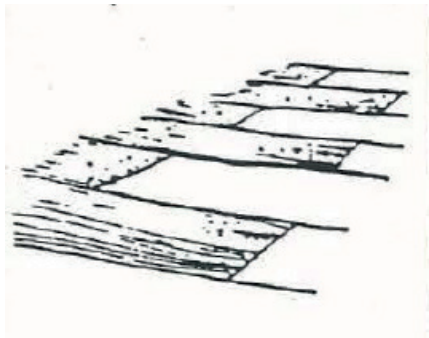
More recent arcades often fail to duplicate essential features of historic examples. The modern arcade in the right hand picture - built of reinforced concrete - allows too great a span for arches, which in turn rest on columns too small (visually) to support them.



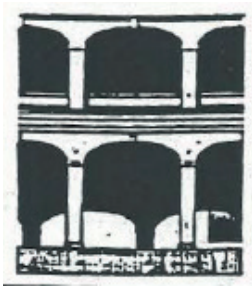
Arcades are important to the historic character of Christiansted and Frederiksted. Every effort should be made to retain existing examples, and replace damaged arcades with new arcades to match.



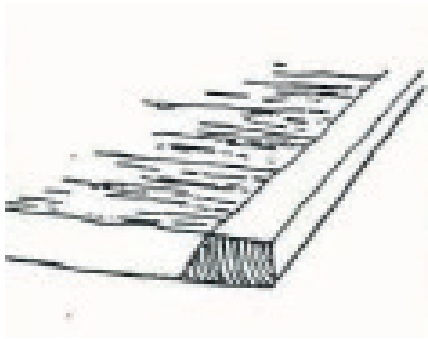
New porches or balconies should be added to rear elevations only - unless there is historic precedent that can be documented.



If repairing rotted decking, attempt to splice in replacement boards.



Plaster and other details of historic arcades must be carefully duplicated.



Nosing at the edge of the floor decking can help cut down on water penetration.



Warped or lifting decking can often be repaired. Always try to repair existing materials rather than replacing wholesale.

ROOF REPLACEMENT AND REPAIRS

There are two major concerns when undertaking roof replacements or repairs: form and materials. Both of these should be taken into account when considering changes to existing historic buildings.

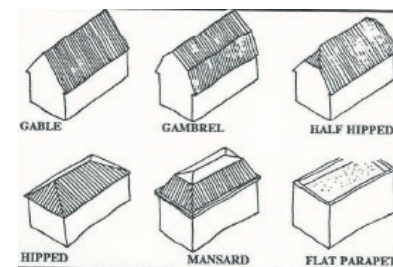


Strand Street 17, Frederiksted



ROOF FORM

Most roofs in the Virgin Islands are “hipped”, that is, a roof of four intersecting planes. Occasionally these rise to a single point, but more often are topped by a ridge line running parallel (though sometimes perpendicular) to the street. A few roofs are gable-ended. A few combine these elements with “halfhipped” forms. Others, such as Mansard roofs (eight-planed), are truly exceptions.



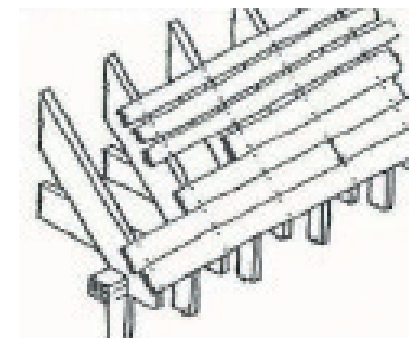
The range of roof types.

9 – ROOF REPAIRS

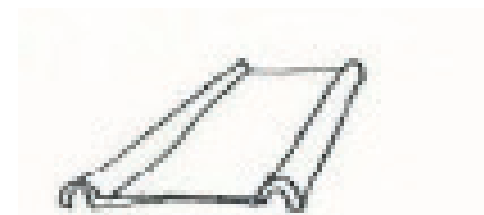
HISTORIC ROOFING MATERIALS

Roof framing in the Virgin Islands was traditionally timber usually lacking ridge-poles. The frame is covered by a sheathing of planks, or separated purlins, then covered by tile or wood shingles. Occasionally older buildings still have wood or tile roofs, though most have subsequently been covered over by metal roofing.

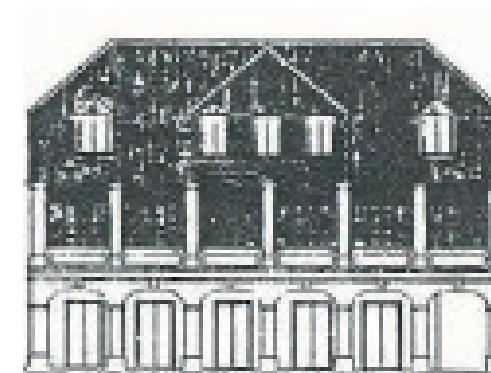
Most roofs now are covered with galvanized sheet metal. These come either in plates (extremely rare and old) or in corrugated sheets. They are generally painted red or silver, although some roofs are white and a few are green. Red is a recommended historic color, though other roof colors are acceptable.



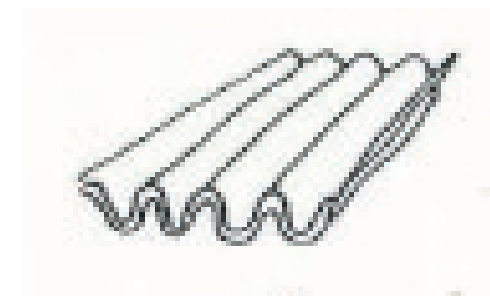
Sheathing for roofs: purlins or butted. Modern plywood makes an effective replacement. Ideally, 3/4 inch or 1 inch thick plywood improves roof performance during storms. Also use appropriate fasteners.



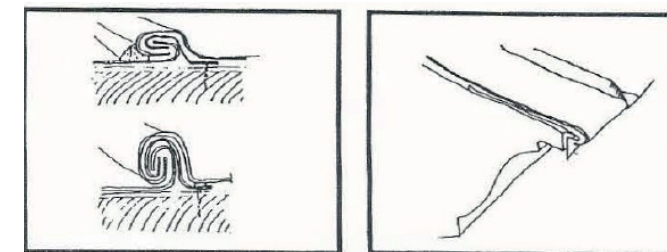
A half-hipped or “clipped” roof. This roof form is typical of larger, mostly 18th-century buildings in the Virgin Islands.



A half-hipped or “clipped” roof. This roof form is typical of larger, mostly 18th-century buildings in the Virgin Islands.



Corrugated sheet metal - Now the typical roofing material. Use of a low gauge (heavier) material combined with proper fasteners - usually screws into both purlins and decking - vastly improves metal roof performance during hurricanes.



Two seam types for sheet metal roofs. Both work effectively for better quality metal roofs. A proper drip edge for standing seam metal roofs can improve performance.

REPLACEMENT ROOFS

Every effort should be made to retain existing roofs when undertaking repairs. If, however, the existing roof is severely deteriorated -- or in some cases absent -- new roofs following the existing or in some cases traditional examples are acceptable. The main concern in replacing or repairing roofs is the need to reproduce the shape and pitch of the original or historic roof. Measurements must be taken before removing a deteriorated, older roof, and the new roof should be designed to match exactly. If information is not available for a specific building-- either in the form of historic photographs or physical evidence -- then another roof form appropriate to the historic period of the building may be selected.



Traditional roofs were (and are) high-pitched with angles generally at 35 degrees. Nearly always, rafters were tied directly into the masonry wall, or in the case of wood buildings, attached directly to the top plate. Overhanging eaves were altogether absent, both for maintenance and to reduce wind resistance in the event of hurricanes. Unless evidence exists to the contrary, no overhang should be incorporated into new roof designs.

Note

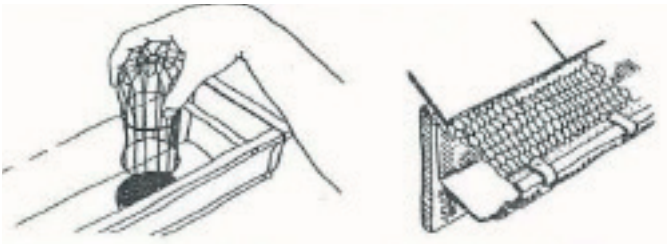
→ There is no substitute for regular gutter maintenance.



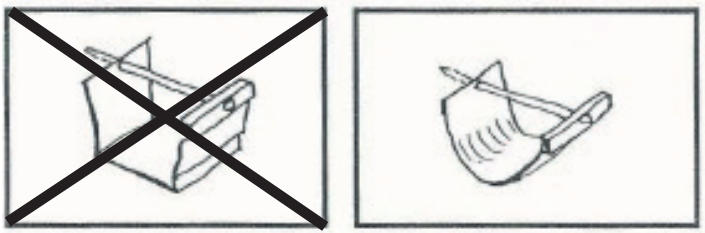
GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Another concern is the design and placement of gutters. Traditional gutters are semi-circular (half-round) in profile not ogee patterned as are many modern gutters. An effort should be made to obtain the proper gutters, as they have an important impact on the appearance of a building.

Some Virgin Islands buildings have bracketed, attached overhangs, known elsewhere as pent roofs or awning roofs. If an owner wishes to duplicate this feature, it should be based on prior documentation.



Screens or basket fitters can help prevent clogging of downspouts or gutters.



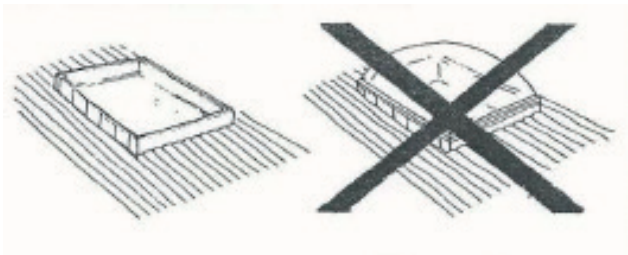
Left: Ogee patterned gutters (less traditional). Right: Half round gutters (more traditional).

ROOFING MATERIALS

Roofs should be covered with a highgrade, low-gauge (the lower the gauge the stronger the material) galvanized, corrugated sheet metal and repainted regularly. Standing seam roofs -either custom built or manufactured roofing -- are also acceptable.



Dormers - a special problem. Generally, dormers should not be added to buildings which never had them. Also, existing dormers should be retained. To some extent however new dormers can be added to historic buildings. Sometimes roof framing holds clues to earlier dormers. Otherwise, the overall effect of new dormers should be taken into account: will the new dormers significantly alter the appearance of a building; is it possible to locate dormers on less visible sides of a building? Owners should ask these and other questions when considering new dormers.



Skylights are generally discouraged in the historic districts, unless they can be hidden from public view. Avoid "bubble-top" (convex) skylights in favor of relatively flat-profile lights. Skylights are not permitted on visible roof surfaces.





10

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL METALS

There is surprisingly little use of architectural metals in older Virgin Islands buildings. The main reason, simply, has always been the high cost. There are, nonetheless, a number of exceptions, and several fine examples of architectural metalwork do exist. Also, most buildings incorporate metal into other features such as shutter hinges, brackets, and door hardware. Therefore, the proper preservation – and, in some cases, the selection – of architectural metals are important issues.



MAINTENANCE

Architectural metals are extremely subject to deterioration, especially when unprotected by paint. The key to good preservation is constant maintenance-- especially in a marine environment such as the Virgin Islands. Metals should be cleaned periodically, wire-brushed or scoured (and in some cases sandblasted) to remove all traces of rust. The metal work should then be painted with a good-quality metal primer before repainting. Never paint over existing rust spots.

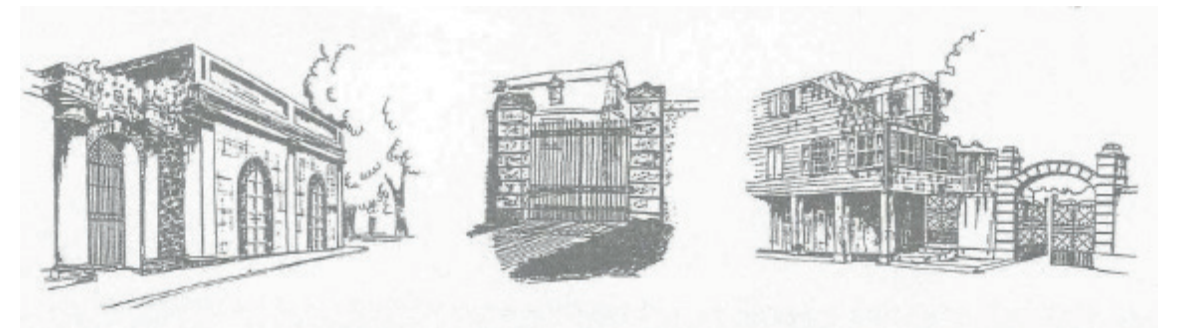
Repairs to metal work should be undertaken before replacement. Both cast (rare in the Virgin Islands) and wrought iron can be patched and repaired in place, and this practice should generally be followed.

Replacement hinges, pintles, and hooks and eyes for shutters and doors should be duplicated accurately whenever possible. If the cost is too high, simple wrought iron strap hinges may be substituted. These should be painted to blend in with the shutter or surrounding masonry. Good quality metal primers are also recommended for hardware.

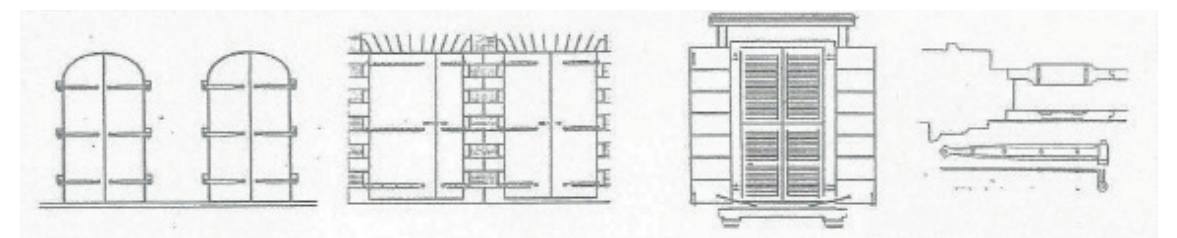
10 – ARCHITECTURAL METALS



While relatively rare, there are a number of exceptionally high quality cast and wrought iron balconies in the Virgin Islands.



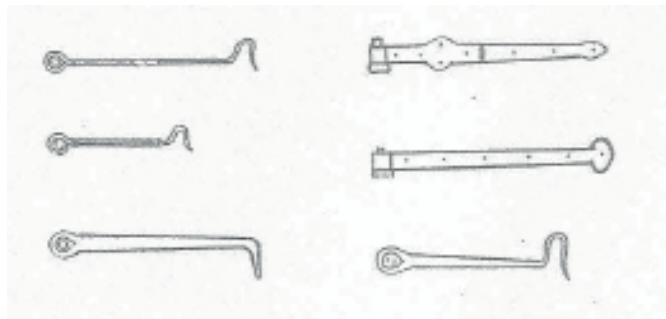
Gateways are another common place where historic metal work is found. Efforts should be made to preserve original or otherwise historic examples.



Original hardware is important to the “historic value” of older buildings. Always, existing hinges, hooks and other hardware should be reused or, where pieces are missing, duplicated during repair or rehabilitation work.

METAL BRACKETS

Metal brackets for balconies or signs, following traditional shapes, can be easily obtained or made-up by local metal workers. Care should be taken to duplicate other old examples in the islands, if none can be found on the building.



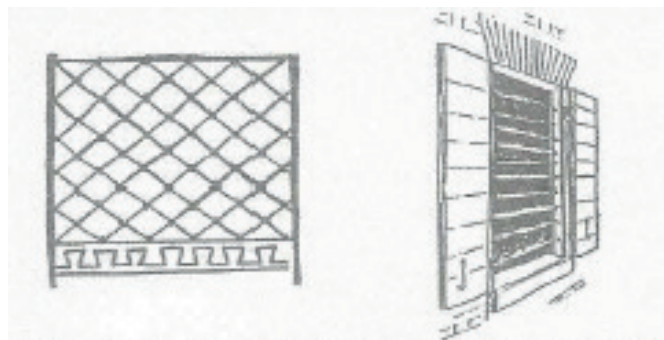
Examples of historic hinge and hook types.



SECURITY GRILLS

One of the main uses for architectural metals is for protective grillwork. Traditionally, there was little use of metal grills for security in the Virgin Islands. Window shutters were simply barred from the inside at night to ensure safety; during the day, at least on commercial buildings, simple horizontal bars were used. These were sometimes of metal, but more often, of wood.

When a window opening needs to be protected, the simplest solution is usually the best one. Wrought iron bars, ideally square in section and set into the frames horizontally, are a good traditional solution to security needs. For maximum protection, the bars should be set directly into the masonry. Ornate, decorative grillwork is completely out of character with traditional buildings in the Virgin Islands and should be avoided. Most of this iron work is not particularly strong and is less effective than simple iron bars. Another solution, however, if a more decorative treatment is sought, is simple, plain designed grillwork of a generally contemporary character. There are several contractors and craftspeople capable of this kind of work, and their design can often add greatly to the quality of a rehabilitation job.



Security grilles should be kept as simple as possible. The use of historic metal grill - such as that shown on the left - is one possible solution. Horizontal metal - or even wood - bars, shown on the right, is another.

Preserving the Historical Architecture of the US Virgin Islands



Government House, Christiansted, St. Croix

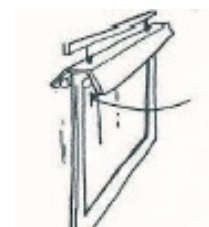
LIGHTING AND OTHER MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

Historically, there has been little public lighting in the Virgin Islands. Houses were typically lit internally, and the few street lights were maintained by the municipality, or more recently, by the Public Works Department. Business signs were traditionally often unlighted; and those signs that were lighted are lighted with one or two low-wattage bulbs. Internally illuminated signs-- neon signs or flashing signs -- have never been allowed in the historic districts.



LIGHTING

When adding new lighting to historic buildings, the best solution is the simplest one possible. Plain light fixtures, pointing upwards to avoid glare, should be used for hanging signs. Passageways can be lit with simple contemporary wall or post mounted lights (usually mounted low) or by wall sconces or canister lamps. Indirect lighting, in the form of flood lights, is also a good solution for alleys and courtyards. Artificial looking historic coach lamps are definitely not recommended.



Indirect, spotlighting or ground level, downcast lamps can be used to light alleys or courtyard spaces. Neither are permanent additions to historic buildings, nor do they alter historic buildings or materials. Simple boxed fixtures can be used on arcades. Do not use artificial looking coach lamps. They detract from the historic character of the Virgin Islands.

MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

Traditional historic buildings had no modern mechanical systems. Fresh air was supplied through good design, making use of the breeze; light was provided by kerosene lamps, and plumbing facilities were in the backyard (probably the least acceptable of the three). Nowadays we expect more, but changes still need to be introduced in the least damaging way possible.

AIR CONDITIONING

Before air conditioning is installed, natural cooling means should be explored. Traditional openings above partition walls should be retained. High ceilings and open rafters should be kept exposed. Jalousies should be used; electric fans installed. If none of these measures meet cooling needs, then air conditioning may have to be installed. Since windows now will have to be glazed, one of the solutions described in the separate window guidelines should be used: ideally, specially fitted wood jalousies or double-hung sash windows or multi-paned casements. Glass louvers are definitely not recommended for historic buildings.



For larger buildings, a central air conditioning system should be considered. The equipment for these should be located in the rear or hidden by other features. Traditional wood picket fences can be used to mask the condensing unit, or it can be hidden by shrubs. Specially designed louvered "hoods" may be considered for through-the-wall units on secondary facades.



For individual air conditioning units, a number of factors should be considered. Units should be mounted on an unexposed side of the building, away from public view. They should be placed in an existing opening to avoid damage to original walls, or, if on rear or other less visible facades, may be specially installed in separate new openings. Through-the-wall units should be avoided in historic masonry buildings where damage to original materials would be necessary.

PLUMBING

New bathrooms, pipes, and fixtures should be added in the least obtrusive way possible. If the building is large enough, existing rooms should be used. Pipes should be installed in such a way as to cause minimal damage; vents should be carefully placed on less visible roof planes or on rear elevations.

When adding a new bathroom -- a common occurrence on many smaller residences -- every effort should be made to make the addition blend in with the old building. If the building is wood, the bathroom should also be wood. If it is masonry, either wood or masonry is allowable. Ideally the new bathroom should be added to the rear of the building to cause as little impact as possible. (See the separate guideline on new additions.)



12

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

LANDSCAPE TREATMENTS & SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Owners of properties are responsible for maintaining the walkway and yards around their houses and, in commercial areas, for maintaining the sidewalk in front of their buildings. Courtyards are also a concern, and frequently subject to change. All such changes are subject to review by the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission.



LANDSCAPING

The main rule in making site changes is that original features, such as paving materials, especially early paving stones or bricks, be carefully preserved. If resetting is required, original materials should be safely stored and then reused. New sidewalk, alley, or courtyard paving should follow traditional practices whenever possible. Other features, such as retaining walls and gates, fences, even historic plantings should also be kept wherever possible. New Features should be sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, and overall texture to the historic character of the site.



Keep the existing characteristics of interior courtyards and sidewalk areas. Retain paving patterns, changes in elevation, and special features, such as kitchens, outbuildings, or wells.

12 - LANDSCAPE & SITE IMPROVEMENTS

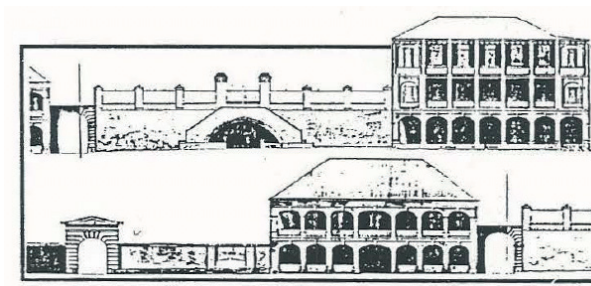
NEW LIGHTING, PLANTERS, AND PAVING

Lighting, benches, planting and other additions to rear courtyards and side yards should be kept as simple as possible. Fake historic-looking, pole-mounted lamps should be avoided as should wall-mounted coach lamps. Free-standing, raised masonry planting beds are also discouraged, though larger planting beds, especially at the edges of alleys and courtyards, are often appropriate. Every effort should be made to retain the historic – often utilitarian – character of traditional interior courtyards.

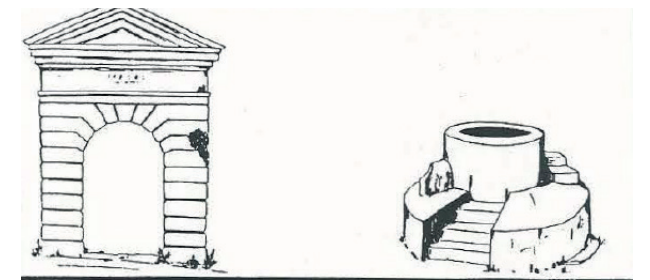
Use of concrete paving should be kept to a minimum. Gravel yards, bricks, or paving stones are recommended substitutes for harsher concrete. Moveable concrete or terra cotta planters are recommended for plant materials.

HISTORIC FENCES AND WALLS

Fences – either wood or masonry – are typical features of historic Virgin Islands properties. Many town residences and businesses had fenced rear courtyards, which were also defined by outbuildings or secondary residences. Masonry fences, such as those of the old West Indian Company warehouse in Christiansted (now the U.S. Post Office) were constructed of brick or rubble masonry, or commonly, the two in combination. Usually, masonry fences (or walls) were stuccoed and extended from five to eight feet above grade. Many included gates, some of which are fairly elaborate, to provide separate access.



The character and qualities of existing masonry walls should be maintained.



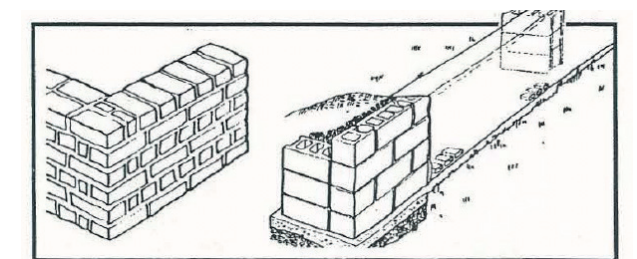
Masonry gates and masonry wells are important architectural features that must be carefully preserved.



The few remaining wood fences must be preserved. Efforts should be made to duplicate the qualities of historic wood fences when building new ones.

In addition, many Virgin Islands properties had wood fences, to provide privacy and security. Vertical plank fences are common in historic pictures of the islands as are wood picket fences. A few examples still exist, both protecting side yards and as decorative fences across the fronts of properties.

A final category of fences is iron or steel fences. Both were rare historically, though a few historic iron fences do exist. Any existing fences should be carefully preserved and repaired.



Whether constructed of brick, rubble, or concrete new masonry perimeter walls and masonry retaining walls should duplicate the qualities and textures of historic walls.

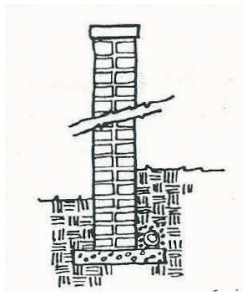
NEW FENCES AND WALLS

Generally, new fences and walls should follow historic examples. New masonry fences, however, should only be introduced following careful consideration of other alternatives; such fences are permanent features and can drastically alter the character of historic properties. New masonry fences or retaining walls for historic properties should convey many of the qualities of historic walls -- including the slightly irregular profiles of rubble masonry, even if constructed of concrete block. All should be stuccoed to resemble older walls.

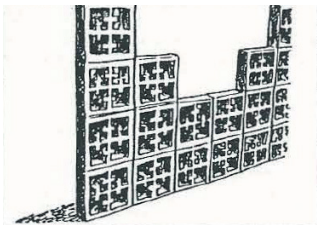
Wood fences can rebuilt in a variety of patterns. Privacy or courtyard fences should generally consist of simple vertical planks attached to horizontal rails. Picket fences can follow a variety of patterns. Ideally, owners should look to historic examples for their design inspiration, though a number of standard designs are acceptable.



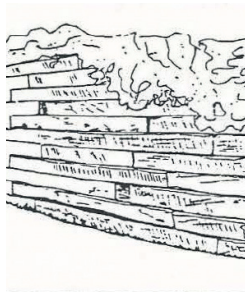
'Classic' picket fence designs - based on 18th-century pattern books.



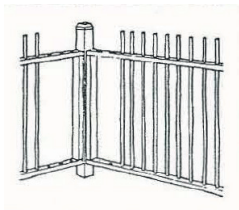
Provide for adequate drainage when introducing new walls. Note tile footing drain (a perforated pipe set in gravel) used to help drain the "high side" of this brick wall.



Pierced concrete block fencing detracts from historic areas. Use of this material is not permitted.



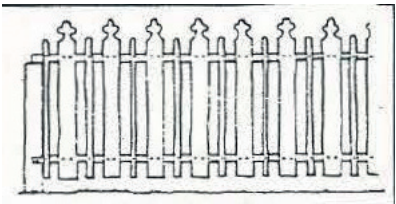
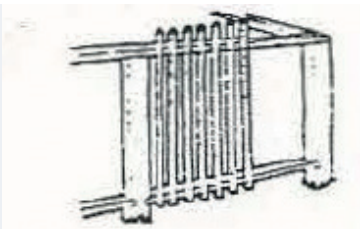
Modern 'railroad-tie' retaining walls are not permitted in historic districts.



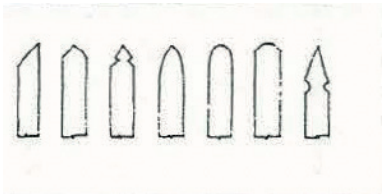
Wood dowels — set in rails provide a historic alternative to wood pickets.

Note

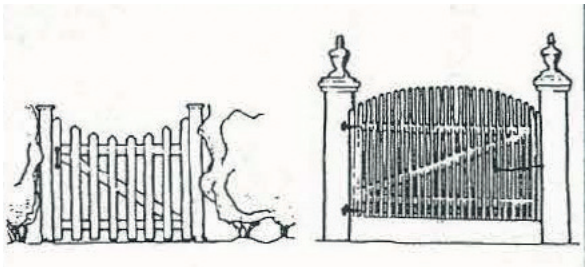
→ Wide and narrow pickets are acceptable.



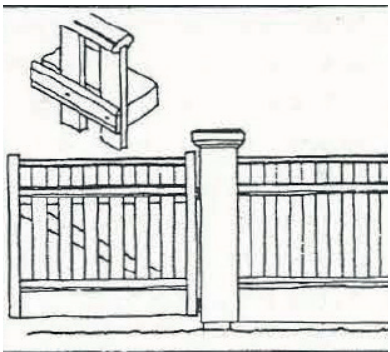
Fanciful pickets, such as these shown to the left were common historically in the Islands.



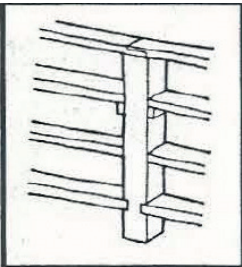
Some alternative picket designs.



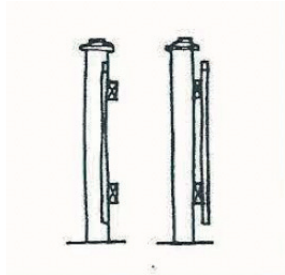
Gates should compliment the fence design.



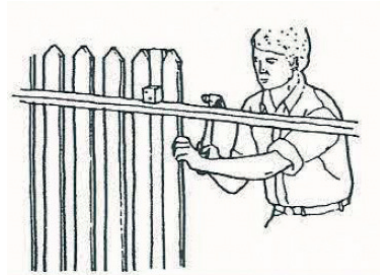
More complicated, "cased" fences can also be considered.



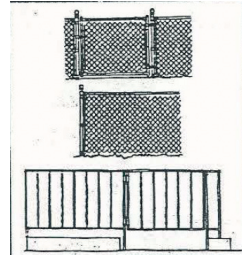
Alternative methods of attaching rails.



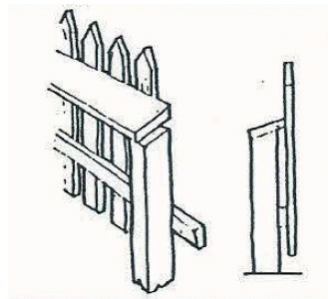
Pickets also can be attached in several ways.



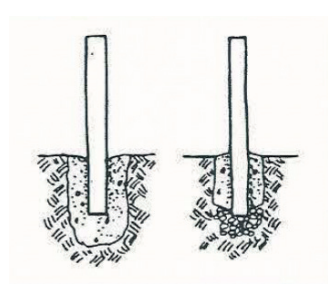
Use a spacer when installing.



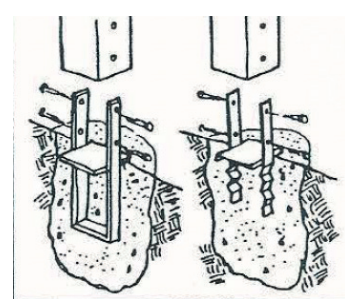
Modern metal fences: welded steel and chain link. Neither are appropriate.



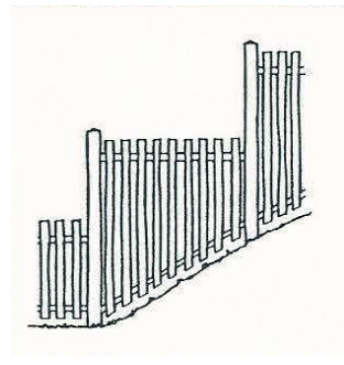
Consider refinements, such as sloping top rails, to help fences shed water.



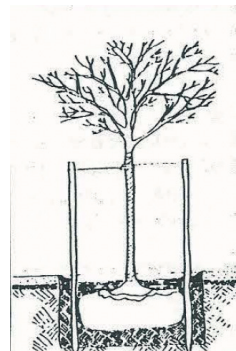
Be certain that fence posts can drain -- as in the example at the right. Always use traded materials.



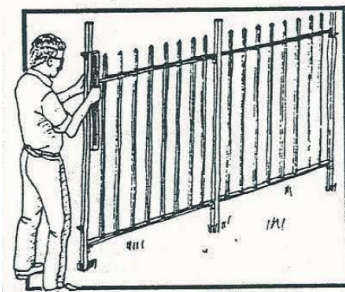
Consider metal anchors for installation. Anchors reduce contact with soil and cut down on moisture penetration.



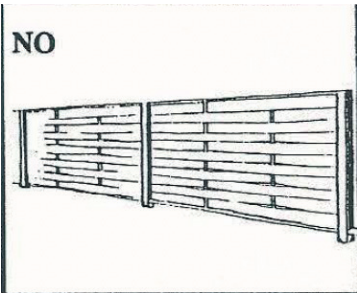
Step fences on hills.



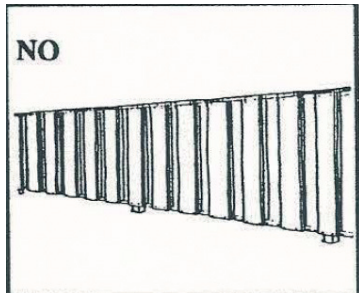
Provide adequately for new plant materials. Consider the variety, water needs, and drainage.



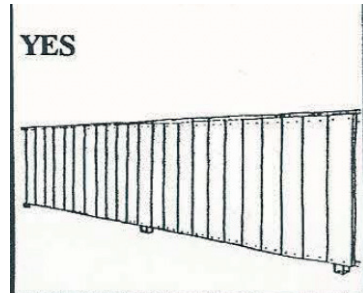
Steel fences such as this provide good security.



Wood fences to avoid: basketweave and staggered plank.



Both are modern “privacy” fence designs that should be avoided in historic district.



A simple plank privacy fence.

PLANT MATERIALS

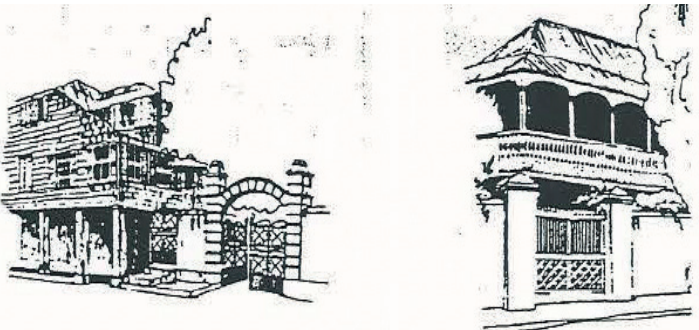
Owners are encouraged to use native and traditional plant types within historic districts. A wide variety of plants are available and perform well in urban areas. Larger trees are especially encouraged for shade. Among recommended specimens are: Golden shower (Cassia Fistula), Apple cassia (Cassia Javanica), Geige (Cordia Sebestena), and Black calabash (Engallagma Latifolia). Recommended palms include Thatch (Coccothrinax Argentea), Lady (Rhapis) and Royal (Roystonea Borinquena). Shrubs include Bougainvillea (Bougainvillea), Orange jasmine (Murreya Exotica), Aralia (Polyscias), and Plumbago (Plumbago Capensis). A wide range of ground covers can be used for planting beds or yards.

BENCHES

Permanently mounted wood, steel, or masonry benches are generally discouraged. Seating should be simple and detract minimally from the historic context.

GATES

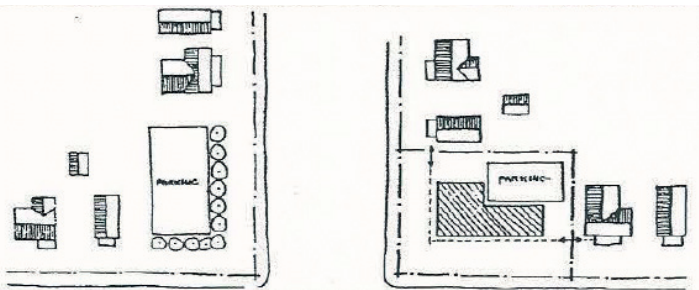
New gates should follow traditional examples. Both iron (steel) and wood (pickets or plank) are acceptable. Elaborate or overly decorative steel gates are strongly discouraged.



Both metal and wood are traditional for larger gateways. Keep designs as simple as possible, unless more complicated historic examples can be documented.

PARKING

Parking lots located in historic districts must be masked from public view. Masonry walls, wood fences, or vegetation should be used to hide multi-space parking. In most instances, parking should be provided at the rear of the buildings only.

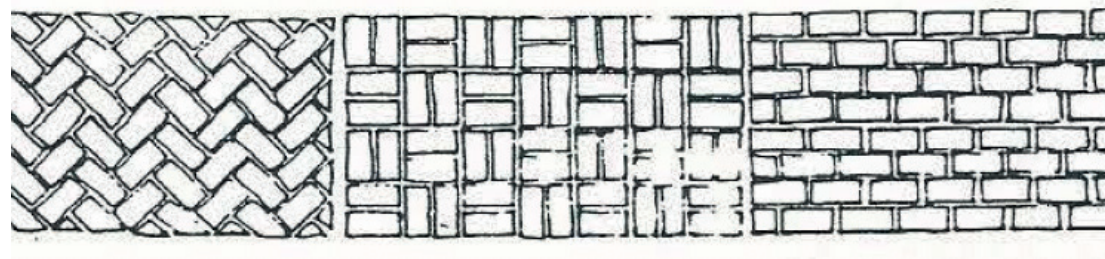


Parking should be screened from public view. Place new parking at the rear of lots, or screen it with plantings or fences.

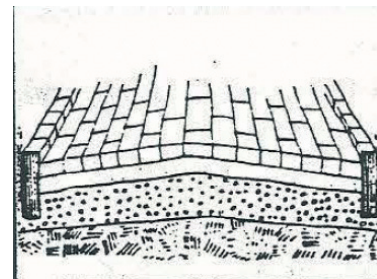
NEW STEPS, WALKWAYS, AND RAMPS

Changes to grading or other improvements often result in the necessary introduction of new steps or walkways. Disability requirements often dictate the need for ramps. In each case efforts should be made to keep newer features as simple and unobtrusive as possible. Traditional materials, such as brick, tile or stone pavers, and gravel should be used whenever possible. Elaborate curbs, piers or masonry balusters are strongly discouraged. New designs should respect the original character and configuration of the site

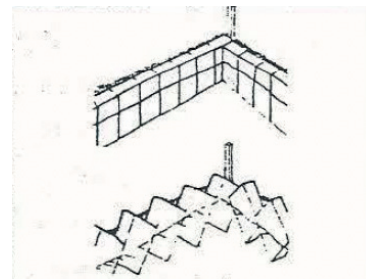




Some common walkway and courtyard paving designs.



Bricks for walkways typically should be set in a bed of gravel and sand. A slight crown to allow for better drainage is recommended.



Two simple brick curb designs -- to be used for planting beds in courtyards.



Example of landscaping using native plants

Preserving the Historical Architecture of the US Virgin Islands



Restored building with landscaping in Christiansted



HISTORIC EXTERIOR STAIRCASES & STEPS

The Virgin Islands possess many fine examples of historic staircases. These range from elaborate double-flight, welcoming arms stairs to simple, but often picturesque, arched steps over guts. Many of the staircases are masonry. Historic examples are usually brick and rubble stone, covered at least in part by stucco. Other examples are wood, including many wood staircases placed in arcades, which provide access to second-story residences.

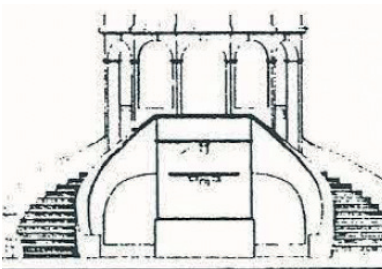


REPAIR & PRESERVATION

All historic staircases should be carefully repaired and preserved as part of any restoration or rehabilitation effort. If more substantial repairs are required, efforts should be made to carefully duplicate historic detailing.



Historic stairs and steps are found both at gates and to provide access to the principal floor of residences. Every effort should be made to preserve original examples. Drawing by Pamela Gasner, Historic Architecture of the Virgin Islands.



Historic details, such as this double flight staircase, must be carefully reproduced during major repairs.

PORTLAND CEMENT PATCHES

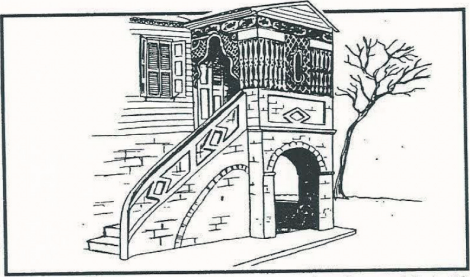
Generally, historic staircases employed more traditional and softer-lime mortars. Most, however, have been patched over the years with relatively modern, grey Portland cement. The best procedure is to remove the grey patches using a chisel. The new mortar may still rely on a proportionately high Portland content, but slightly more expensive white Portland should be substituted.

Mortar

- A Portland Cement**
ASTM C 150, Type 1, White
- B Lime**
ASTM C207, Type S, high plasticity
- C Sand**
ASTM C1 44, fine washed
- D Admixture**
Use a water reducing and plasticizing agent to reduce water content and drying shrinkage, "Omi-cron Mortar proofing," a product of Master Builders Company or equivalent. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use.
- E Potable Water**
Free of impurities and organic material.

Proportioning

- A** 1 part white Portland cement; 1 part lime; 5-6 parts sand, recommended mix.
- B** Sample areas should be tested and examined by the architect or supervisor prior to settling on the final mix.



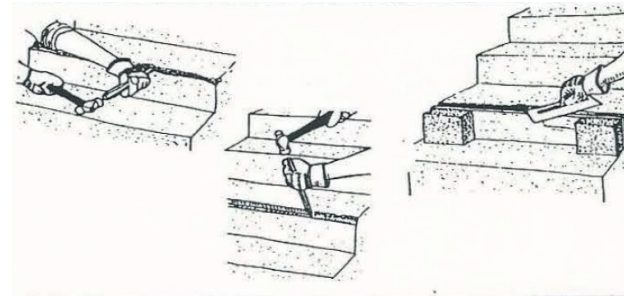
Details, such as relieving arches, lozenge panels and --especially in this example -- decorative porches must all be preserved during repairs.



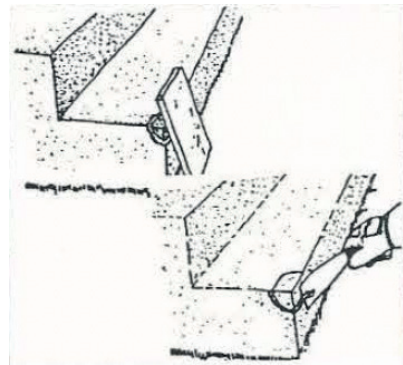
Many relatively modest houses have staircases demonstrating high levels of craftsmanship. The example on the above has long been lost. Drawings by Pamela Gosner, Historic Architecture of the Virgin Islands.

REPAIRS TO CONCRETE STEPS

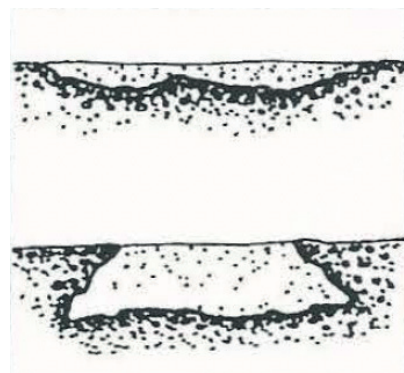
Many Virgin Islands buildings have concrete steps, often replacing earlier stone and brick steps or sometimes simply encasing them. Concrete steps often can be spot repaired. Be certain to undercut damaged areas. Do not “feather-edge” or overlap joints.



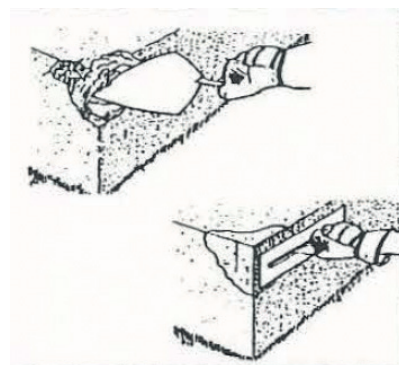
Simple repairs to damaged edges of concrete steps. Be sure to undercut damaged sections. Use a board as a form and do not feather the edges. Remember, if your staircase is a historic one or has brick treads, such repairs are not recommended.



Broken corners can be reattached using a proper modern cement.



Surface damage can be repaired in a similar way. Again, always undercut.



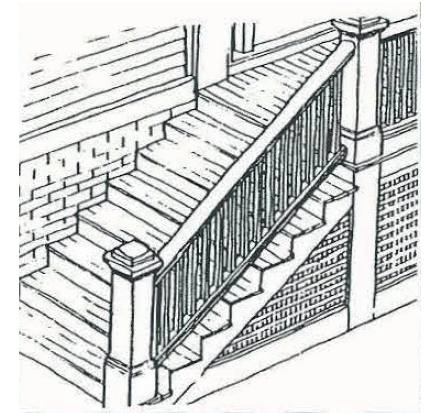
Missing sections can also be filled - again, being sure not to feather the edges. Always thoroughly wet the area to be repaired prior to adding mortar.



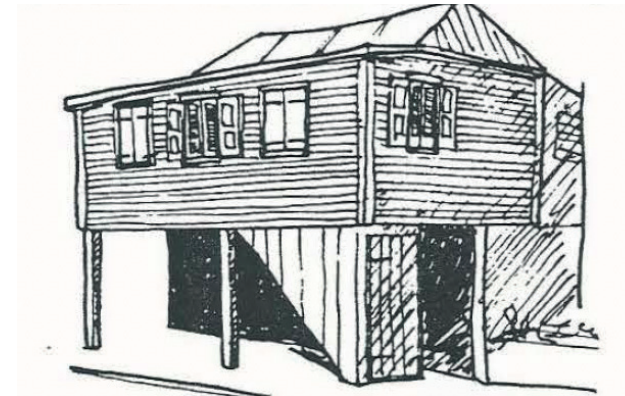
Severely damaged sections may need to be “built-up” and reinforced. Use stainless steel reinforcing rods.

WOOD STEPS AND STAIRCASES

Wood steps or staircases are relatively rare for historic buildings. Typical exterior stairs to second story residences of commercial buildings are masonry. However, there is some precedent for wood steps, both in alleys or courtyards or, especially in Christiansted and Frederiksted, within arcades. Whenever possible, historic enclosed wood stairs should be retained. Doors, panelling and other elements should follow historic precedent.



Simple enclosed wood stairs such as these are important to the character of historic districts. Be sure to use correct details - including historic plank doors - when making changes or repairs.



NEW ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic districts in the Virgin Islands are continually changing places, requiring constant, periodic alterations to their physical character. This and other guidelines recognize this factor and have been designed with the dynamic character of the districts, and of isolated historic properties as well, in mind.



DESIGN EXAMPLE

Government House, Christiansted. While this building appears at first glance to be a single, unified building, in fact, it represents a historic combination of several private dwellings, unified by additions. When replicating historic detail in an addition, the designer should ask -- Does the addition fool the viewer into thinking the addition is original? Generally, a clear line between new and old should still be perceptible.



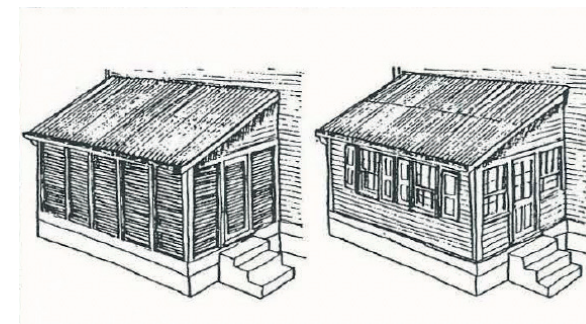
Modern glazed additions are acceptable on rear elevations. Again, continuities of roof shape and siding materials can help to tie the addition in.

DESIGN CHOICES

When considering new additions, two main choices face the designer or owner: either to attempt to create an older, more traditional appearance for the addition, or to design a new, more contemporary addition that is somehow “compatible” with the old in terms of form, massing, materials, and so on. In general, the first choice is often easier in that examples exist for comparison and new designs can be drawn from them. More historic-looking additions, however, are inherently deceptive and are often frowned upon in historic districts. Good new design is, therefore, ideal; but it is often difficult to accomplish.

Designers often attempt to imitate aspects of older buildings, such as masonry arches or hipped roofs, but in carrying these features out in new materials - reinforced concrete instead of rubble stone, for example - often create a very different appearance. Modern design also differs in many important details from traditional design; window and door openings are different, roofs are generally flatter, materials are different, relying mostly on concrete or steel.

The best solution, is probably to be as “low-key” as possible in a new design. Existing features such as massing, arrangement of doors and windows, and the roof pitch of the building, should be taken into account and incorporated into new additions. Often details can be more contemporary -- meaning simpler -- in character, but these should still respect traditional design characteristics, often a simplification of existing details.



Simple details borrowed from historic buildings such as these can often be incorporated into new additions. If taking a lead from historic examples, the designer should generally try to simplify the details.

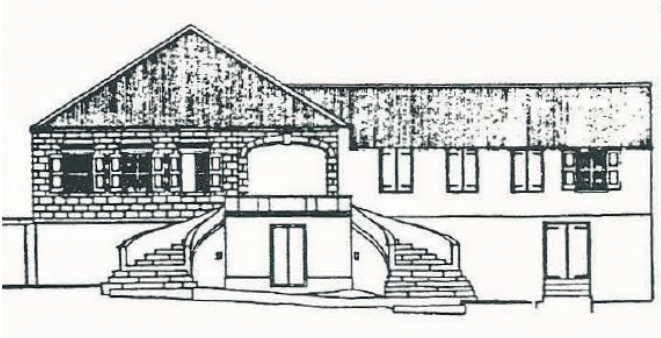
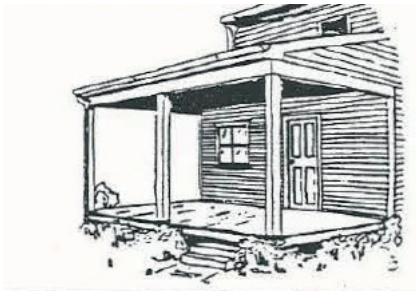


Modern glazed additions are acceptable on rear elevations. Again, continuities of roof shape and siding materials can help to tie the addition in.

New additions can be either contemporary (left) or traditional (right). Additions should generally be placed at the rear or sides of historic buildings and detract minimally from the main building. Details, such as roof pitch, wall and roof materials, window and door arrangement, can all help to tie an addition into the main building. Simple additions such as these can often accommodate new requirements such as kitchens and baths.

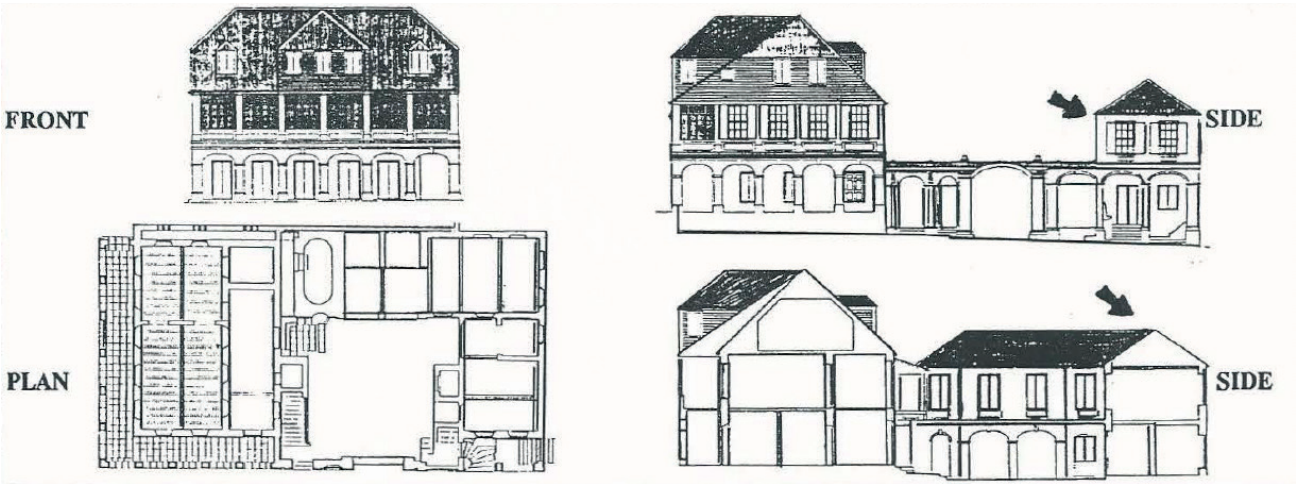
LOCATION

New additions to historic buildings should nearly always take place at the rear or at the side of existing structures. Principal elevations, or building fronts, are generally considered the most significant. Every effort should be made to retain the character and appearance of the main elevation



Whether contemporary (modern) or historic in character, new additions should be placed at the side or rear of historic buildings.

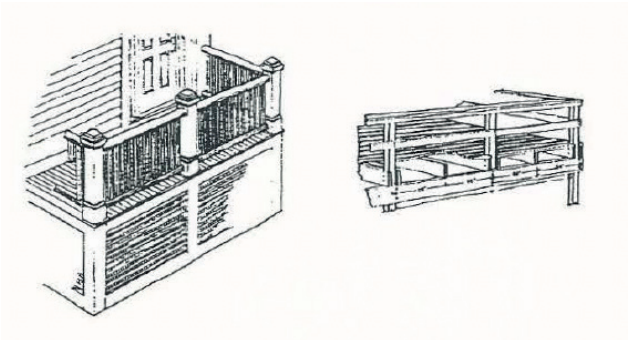
New porches should follow the same general guidance as that set out for new additions generally.



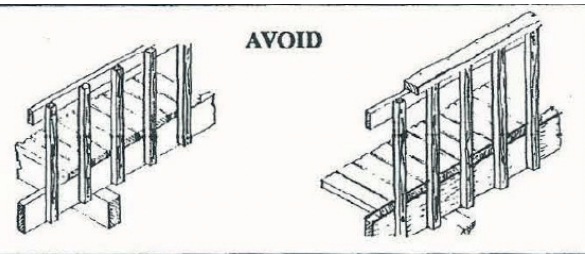
The historic precedent of courtyard additions – as shown here – can be followed for new additions.

ROOF TOP ADDITIONS

Roof-top additions to existing historic commercial buildings are generally discouraged in historic districts. Original building shapes and heights are important to the character of all of the historic districts in the Virgin Islands. Periodic additions of stories, or new blocks over existing buildings detract significantly from the overall value and appearance of historic areas. If roof-top additions are required, every effort must be made to locate the addition in such a way as to minimally detract from the original building. Additions to parapet-roofed buildings should be set back sufficiently to prevent visibility from sidewalks opposite the building. The design should be simple and in-keeping with the existing historic building. Additions to non-historic buildings are more often appropriate. Consult the guideline for a new buildings, which applies more strictly to such proposals.



Decks can be either “traditional” in character or more “contemporary”. Always they should be added only to the rears of buildings.



Avoid more modern uses of balusters and rails when adding decks. Generally look to historic porches for precedent and inspiration for deck rail designs.





NEW BUILDINGS IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The design of new buildings for historic districts is a complex and long-debated challenge. Historic districts are rarely “frozen” places; periodic changes are inevitable and anticipated. The main concern is that new buildings relate, in terms of massing or scale, height, setback, and materials to the majority of existing historic buildings and, especially, to buildings on adjacent sites.

Owners wishing to construct new buildings in historic districts are advised to hire trained architects for the preparation of their designs. Drawings and other details are a basic requirement for review.



HEIGHT

New buildings must conform with current Virgin Islands code regulations for maximum heights in specific zoning areas. In addition, new buildings in historic districts should conform with heights of surrounding structures, and not stand out as significantly higher (or lower). Steps should be taken to relate divisions marking stories to those of adjacent buildings. Windows, string courses (decorative molding), and cornices should be designed to match adjacent examples. If additional stories are necessary, various means of “masking” the difference should be explored, such as two stories sharing common window openings, or setbacks for upper stories. In some instances, higher stories should be relegated to the rear of lots to avoid changes in elevation along principal streets.

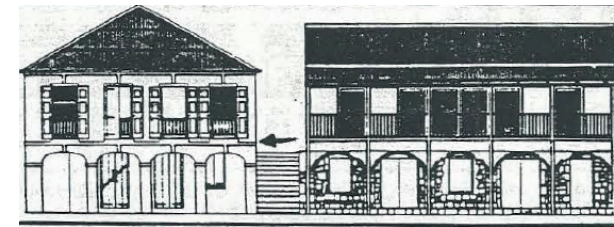


New buildings should respect the character and overall qualities of older buildings in historic districts.

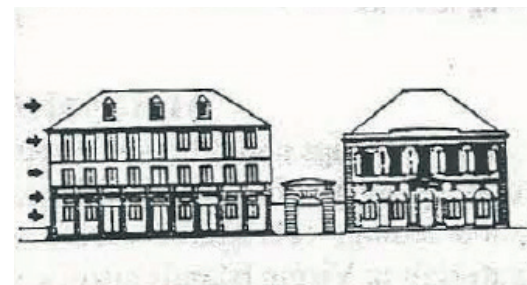
15 – NEW BUILDINGS



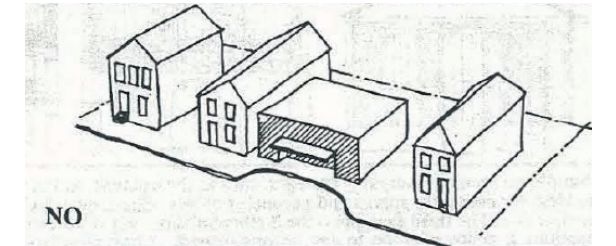
New buildings should reflect the height, massing, and overall scale of surrounding buildings.



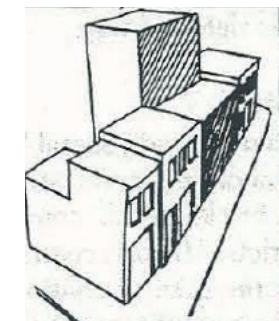
Elements such as arcades, windows, heights, cornices, moldings, and the rhythm of openings should all be used to integrate the historic buildings into the existing context.



Additional stories can sometimes be “compressed” into conformity with existing elevations. This hypothetical building (based on a now demolished earlier structure) compresses five stories into a height only slightly greater than the 2-story building adjacent to it.



Respect the existing massing, scale, and orientation of existing buildings.



Consider relegating additional stories to the rear of lots in order to preserve uniform streetscapes.

DESIGN

The design of new buildings is probably the most complicated issue. Generally, it is recommended that new buildings respect the overall character of historic examples without directly copying details. Wall planes, roof form or roof angles, materials, ratios of wall surface to window and door openings, colors, etc. can all be used as starting points for new design. The simple use of arches, hipped roofs, or historic looking shutters alone is not enough to create a sense of continuity.

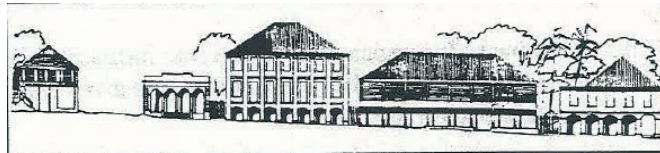
In some cases, particularly for modest buildings, more directly imitative designs can be more acceptable. Simple vernacular (everyday) wood cottages, and especially, wood secondary buildings can often take their lead directly from historic examples. Detailing, however, should be kept plain, and “gingerbread” decoration especially should be avoided.

MASSING/SCALE

New buildings should have comparable scale and massing to those around them. Enormous, bulky shapes are discouraged. Efforts should be made to break up the plane or facade or larger or longer buildings, in order that they might better relate to the size and scale of adjacent examples.

SETBACKS

New buildings must respect the existing setbacks of historic structures. New buildings should not, for example, be recessed if adjacent buildings face directly on the lot line or provide an arcade. Similarly, new buildings should not extend beyond the line created by other buildings on the same street -- nor should they encroach on public rights-of-way.



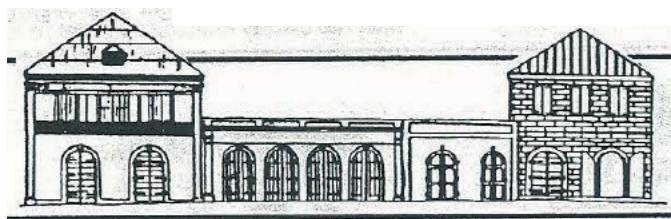
A new building should respect its overall context. Note the new building.

MATERIALS/COLORS

New buildings should respect the materials and general “textural” qualities of nearby buildings. Smooth or scored stucco, wood siding, corrugated metal, and brick are all common materials in Virgin Islands historic districts. Historic colors are outlined in a separate guideline. For the sake of continuity, every effort should be made to ensure compatibility of materials as well as colors.

DESIGN

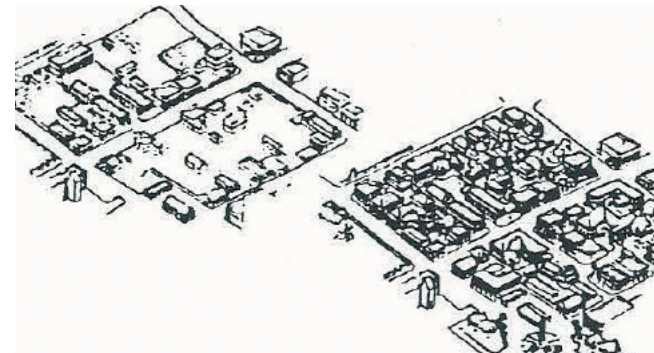
There is a considerable amount of philosophical basis for even larger new buildings more directly imitating historic examples as well. Reconstructions of known historic buildings is often justified. If newer buildings are intended to imitate older ones, documented recreations can be approved; other designs can be considered, as long as detailing, design, etc. closely conform with known historic examples. It should be re-emphasized that this practice can be taken too far, but “historically-replicative” buildings will be considered by the commission. However, half-hearted or “inaccurate” replicative type buildings will not be accepted.



Respect existing colors, textures, and materials.
Drawing, Pamela Gosner

Owners wishing to construct new buildings in historic districts are advised to hire trained architects for the preparation of their designs.

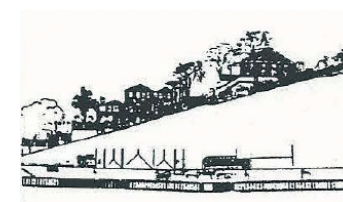
Drawings and other details are a basic requirement for review.



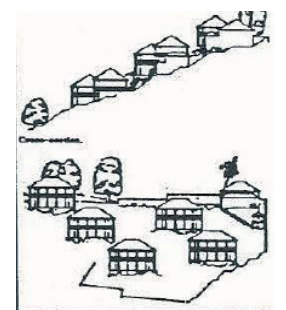
Many parts of historic districts in the Virgin Islands now lack their historic density, as demonstrated by their drawing of the former Hill Street Urban Renewal Area in Frederiksted. New in-fill construction to fill the many gaps in the historic districts, is strongly encouraged by the Historic Preservation Commission.

DEMOLITION

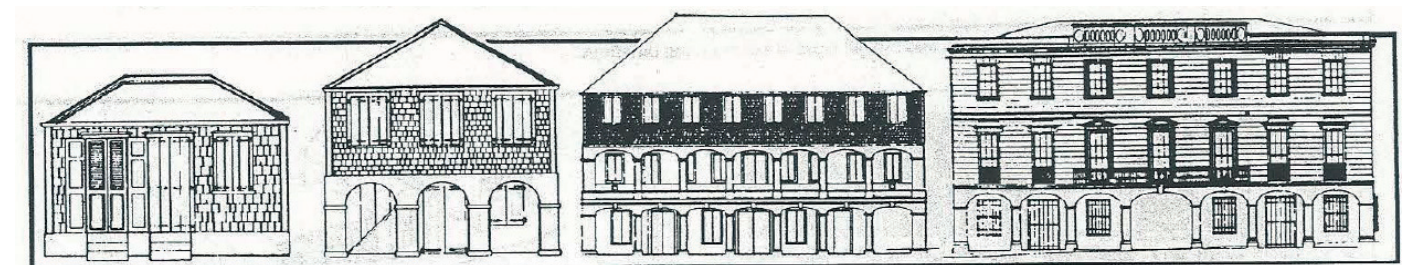
Demolition of documented historic buildings within historic districts is strongly discouraged by the Commission. In most instances, in fact, demolition is not approvable, unless a strong case can be made for the building's poor physical condition or the impossibility of economic return. All plans for demolition must be accompanied by designs or proposed replacement buildings or other proposals. If demolition occurs, the building must be documented by drawings and photographs prior to the demolition.



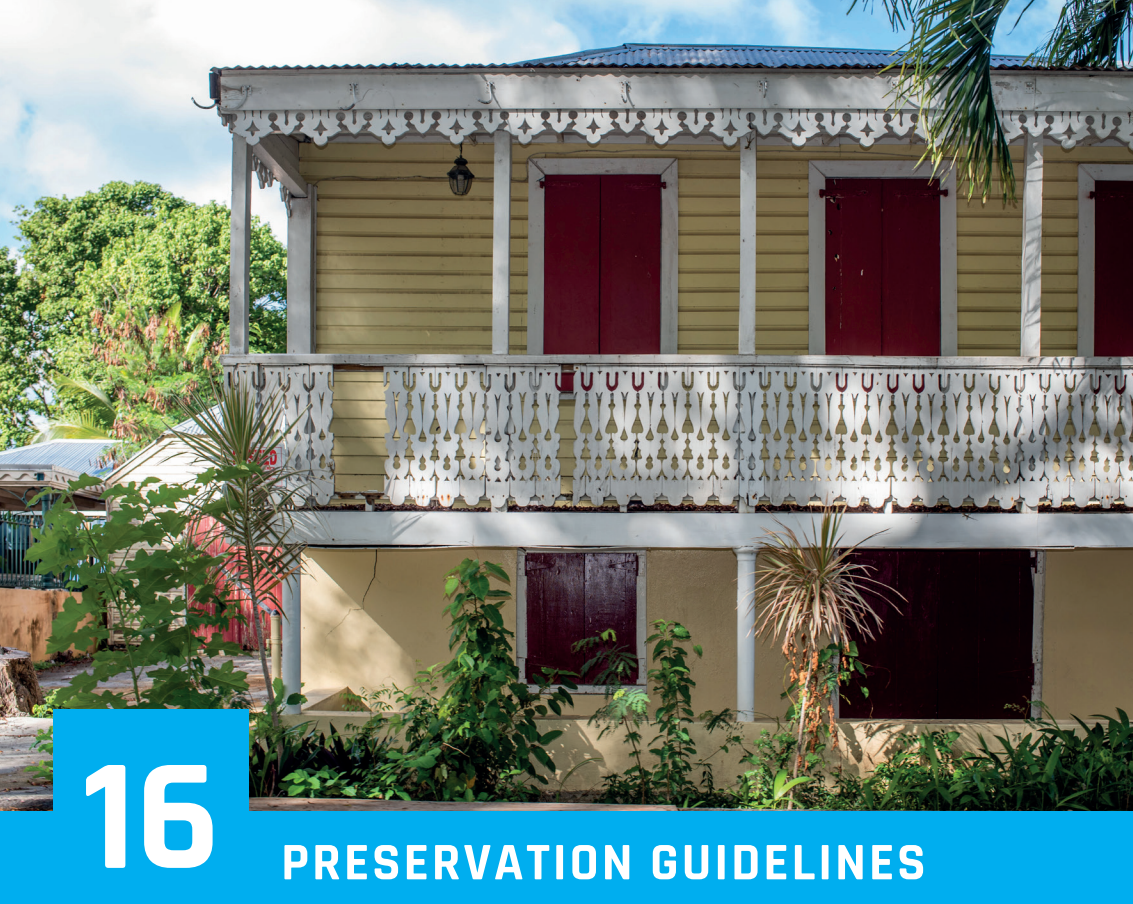
Hillside sites, as found in Virgin Islands historic districts, require special consideration.



New buildings on hillsides should respect the traditional pattern of development and not loom too prominently over the district.



Simple vernacular (everyday) cottages, such as the example on the left, can (and should) be reproduced when smaller structures are called for. Such buildings are ideal for courtyard spaces and perimeter of lots. Similarly, a 2-story vernacular building -- especially when detailing is kept simple -- can be justified for in-fill construction. The third example -- the 3-story building, might be justified in special instances. Generally, however, such a building by its very size and bulk would constitute a major addition to any historic district. Alternatives to obviously “replicative” details should be explored before accepting such a design. Finally, reproduction of an obvious “high-style” or fancy building should be avoided -- at least in historic districts. Such a building which copies in this instance an existing building, would compete with genuinely historic buildings and therefore detract from the overall quality of a historic district.

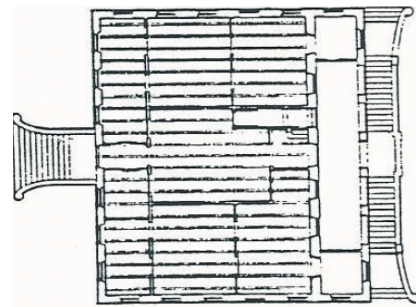


16

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

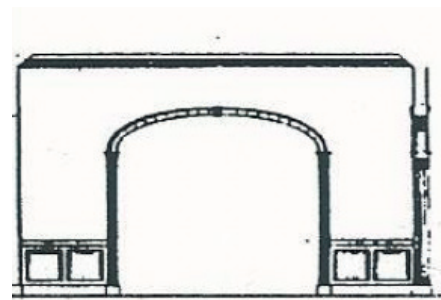
INTERIOR CHANGES

Changes to building interiors are not generally regulated by the Historic Preservation Commission. However, proposed changes to courtyards as well as changes to portions of buildings directly visible from public walkways, such as the ground floors of retail businesses, can and will be reviewed by the Commission for appropriateness. Also, owners of historic buildings should recognize that their properties are also an important legacy. Every effort should be made to retain the original or historic plan and materials of historic buildings, even if these are located in private areas.



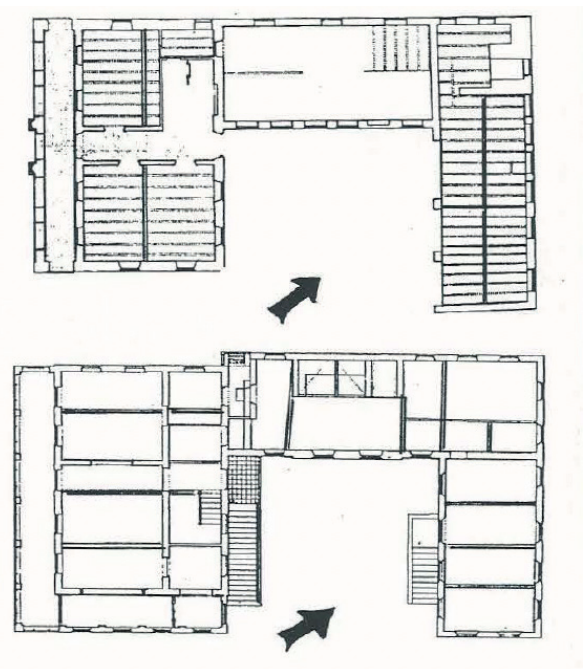
PLANS

Owners should respect the original or historic plans of historic buildings. The Virgin Islands possesses a number of significant plan types or types of room arrangement. Efforts should be made to retain existing door openings and passages, and avoid cutting up rooms for new requirements. Temporary or movable partitions should be considered when smaller rooms are required.

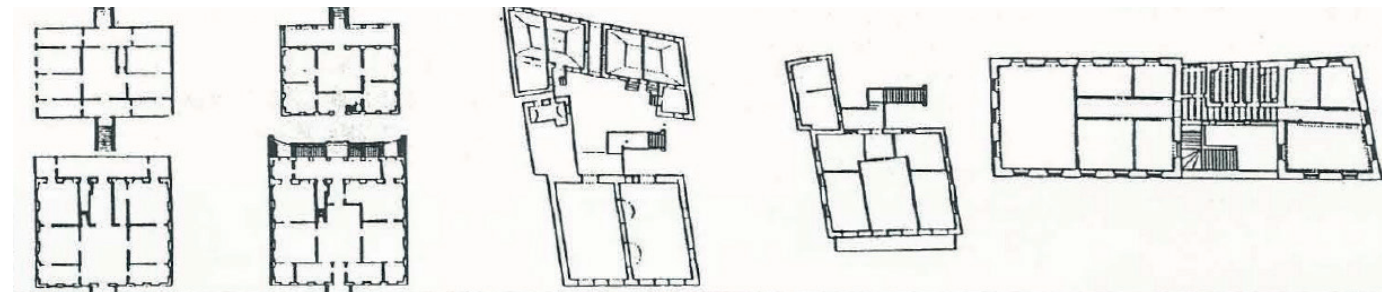


Interior details, such as plans, trim, ceilings, and floors, are often important to the value of historic buildings. While the Historic Preservation Commission is primarily concerned with exteriors, changes to interiors which have an impact on exterior appearance and clearly visible changes within courtyards and within visible ground floor spaces, are subject to Commission review.

16 – INTERIOR CHANGES



Visible areas in courtyards are subject to commission review.



Historic plans are significant to older properties. Whenever possible, owners should strongly consider retaining original or otherwise historic room arrangements when undertaking major changes.

INTERIOR CHANGES

SAMPLES

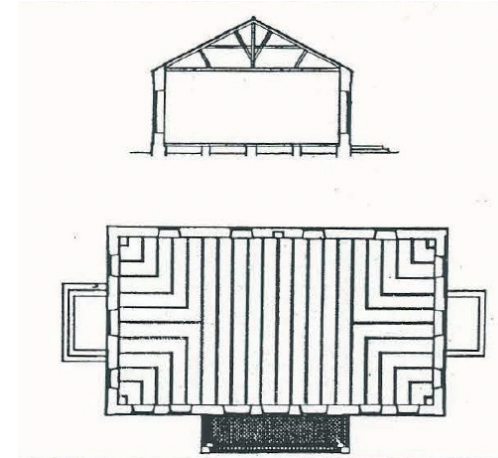


DECORATIVE DETAILS

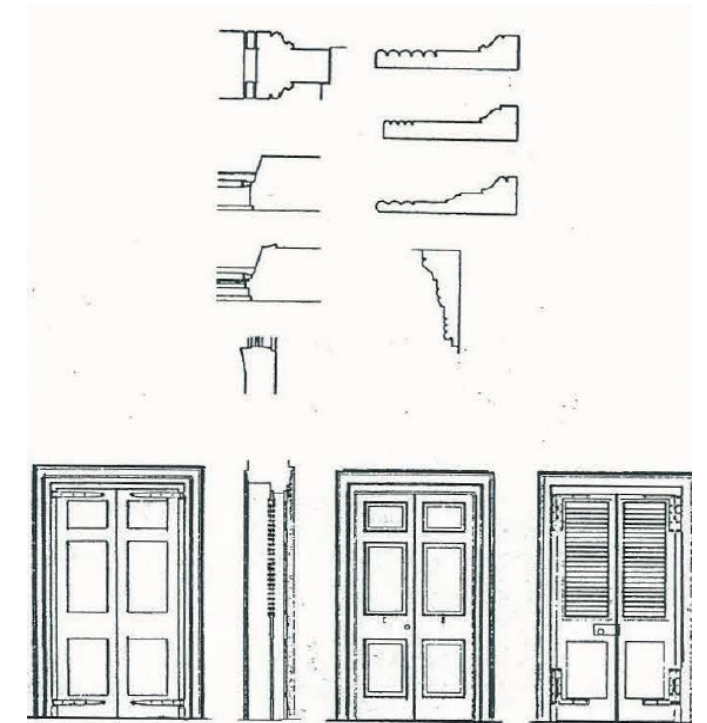
Decorative details, such as arched screens, molded door or window surrounds, original hardware, etc. should be retained whenever possible.

WALLS/CEILINGS

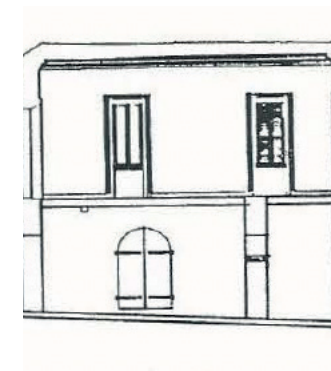
Existing wall treatments should be respected and repaired. Removal of plaster or vertical board paneling to expose rubble walls is strongly discouraged. (See the separate guideline on plaster-covered rubble walls). When materials are damaged, repairs "in-place" are recommended. Otherwise, replacement "in-kind" is an alternative approach. Wherever possible, exposed stud walls should be kept open. The same recommendations hold for existing ceilings.



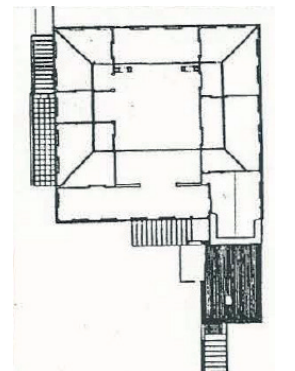
Exposed rafters and stud walls are typical of many Virgin Islands buildings. Whenever possible, such details should be retained and/or repaired in place.



Doors and windows and decorative trim should be carefully preserved



Original interior walls, both plaster and plank are important to a building's history and should be preserved.



Plank walls, and in this example, a single inverted tray ceiling over the separate rooms, are distinguishing characteristics of this building. Retention of such details is strongly recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission.

What's Next?

APPLY NOW

APPLICATION

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

An application packet for new signs or any other changes for properties within the Historic Districts consist of:

- Application form. This is to be filled out correctly, including the actual parcel number (not postal code) and e-mail address(es). Page Two must be signed at the bottom.
- A deed or lease. This is Proof of Legal Interest, to prove the applicant has the legal right for the desired project.
- A few photographs of the property, for members of the Committee to understand what the place looks like. Excess photos will not be accepted.
- For signage, the design and dimension must be given. Commercial sign companies provide their clients with a Design Sheet.
- If the purpose is for paint color, provide that color. This could be a photo or a commercial color chip. A commercial name and number are helpful. There is a notebook of pre-approved colors. However, an applicant can propose any color; the Committee can accept this, or not.
- If applicable, architectural, or other drawings.
- Any other item the applicant thinks will make the project understandable to the Committee.
- Materials must be provided in two (2) formats: digital (for virtual meetings) and paper (for filing).
- An application is not considered complete unless both formats are provided. Incomplete applications are not entered onto an agenda, and so will not be reviewed at a Committee meeting.

St. Thomas/St. John Historic Preservation Committee hold their meetings the second Tuesday of each month, beginning at 1:00p.m. The St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee holds their meetings the second Thursday of each month, beginning at 10:00am (unless otherwise noted).

The agenda is established two weeks or ten (10) working days before the meeting date. Applicants are advised to submit their application with supporting documents/plans/photographs two weeks prior to the meeting date. The application is deemed incomplete without the attachments. Inquiries should be directed to the:

Department of Planning & Natural Resources
St. Thomas-St. John Historic Preservation
Committee Fort Christian Museum
Charlotte Amalie, VI 00802
340-776-8605



Department of Planning & Natural Resources
St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee
Fort Frederik Museum
198 Strand Street
St. Croix, VI 00840
340-772-2021

DPNR.VI.GOV/VI-STATE-HISTORIC-PRESERVATION