

9 Preservation Briefs

Technical Preservation Services

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The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

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- » [Architectural or Historical Significance](#)
- » [Physical Evaluation](#)
- » [Repair Class I: Routine Maintenance](#)
- » [Repair Class II: Stabilization](#)
- » [Repair Class III: Splices and Parts Replacement](#)
- » [Weatherization](#)
- » [Window Replacement](#)
- » [Conclusion](#)
- » [Additional Reading](#)



Weatherization

A window which is repaired should be made as energy efficient as possible by the use of appropriate weatherstripping to reduce air infiltration. A wide variety of products are available to assist in this task. Felt may be fastened to the top, bottom, and meeting rails, but may have the disadvantage of absorbing and holding moisture, particularly at the bottom rail. Rolled vinyl strips may also be tacked into place in appropriate locations to reduce infiltration. Metal strips or new plastic spring strips may be used on the rails and, if space permits, in the channels between the sash and jamb. Weatherstripping is a historic treatment, but old weatherstripping (felt) is not likely to perform very satisfactorily. Appropriate contemporary weatherstripping should be considered an integral part of the repair process for windows. The use of sash locks installed on the meeting rail will insure that the sash are kept tightly closed so that the weatherstripping will function more effectively to reduce infiltration. Although such locks will not always be historically accurate, they will usually be viewed as an acceptable contemporary modification in the interest of improved thermal performance.

Many styles of storm windows are available to improve the thermal performance of existing windows. The use of exterior storm windows should be investigated whenever feasible because they are thermally efficient, cost-effective, reversible, and allow the retention of original windows (see "Preservation Briefs: 3"). Storm window frames may be made of wood, aluminum, vinyl, or plastic; however, the use of unfinished aluminum storms should be avoided. The visual impact of storms may

be minimized by selecting colors which match existing trim color. Arched top storms are available for windows with special shapes. Although interior storm windows appear to offer an attractive option for achieving double glazing with minimal visual impact, the potential for damaging condensation problems must be addressed. Moisture which becomes trapped between the layers of glazing can condense on the colder, outer prime window, potentially leading to deterioration. The correct approach to using interior storms is to create a seal on the interior storm while allowing some ventilation around the prime window. In actual practice, the creation of such a durable, airtight seal is difficult.