



Village of Roslyn Historic District Board

GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR PAINTING



Paint colors can highlight architectural features such as the case of the contrasting bargeboard and trim.

PURPOSE

These *Guidelines* were prepared to assist property owners with information when considering the exterior painting. They are not intended to replace consultation with qualified architects, contractors and the Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB will be happy to provide a preliminary consultation addressing design or materials issues to potential applicants free of charge.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the Incorporated Village of Roslyn's Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB reviews Permit applications for proposed exterior alterations to properties within the Historic District. The applicant is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Zoning and Building Codes at the time of application. The applicant must obtain all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work. For more information, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Building Department at (516) 621-1961.

Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at Village Hall and on its web site at www.historicroslyn.org.

EXTERIOR PAINT

Exterior paint provides a layer of protection to a building by adding a barrier that limits moisture infiltration and damage from the sun, pests and other forms of deterioration. This is particularly true in places like Roslyn where a majority of the buildings, particularly the residences, are wood framed, and susceptible to moisture-related wood deterioration of the exterior envelope and underlying framing. Although exterior paint is an important protective layer to improve the longevity of a historic resource, it must be viewed as a temporary barrier the is subject to deterioration through cyclical temperature and humidity changes that requires re-application every five to eight years to maintain its shielding properties.

In addition to providing a protective layer, paint colors can highlight a building's architectural features and style, visually tie the parts of a building together, in addition to reflecting personal taste. A building's style, period of construction, materials and setting all contribute to an appropriate choice of paint color.



The exterior colors at the Snedecker House on Old Northern Boulevard were determined by paint analysis. The earth-toned colors are typical of the Gothic Revival style and highlight the varied materials and key features of the house.

PAINT PROPERTIES

Paint is one of the most common ways to protect exterior materials, particularly wood, from the elements. When the painted surface has been compromised, moisture and the elements can infiltrate the underlying material and accelerate potential deterioration.

In general, exterior surfaces should be repainted every 5 to 8 years, with potential touch-ups of high traffic, worn or deteriorated areas. If the frequency of complete repainting is greater, there might be an indication of another problem such as:

- Presence of excessive moisture
- Paint was applied with inadequate surface preparation or under adverse conditions
- Paint is not compatible to underlying material or previously applied paint

Please refer to the appropriate *Guideline* brochures for information regarding the painting of various materials and painting as a form of maintenance.

REPAINTING

When considering repainting, the following five steps are recommended:

1. **Determine whether painting is necessary:** Prior to beginning a painting project, it is appropriate to determine whether complete repainting is required or if cleaning and/or spot repainting is more appropriate. By painting more often than is necessary, paint layers can build up, increasing the potential for future paint failure. A dingy finish might only require washing with a mild detergent solution and natural bristle brushes to freshen the appearance.
2. **Inspect existing paint for causes of failure:** To assure the new paint will last as long as possible, property owners should inspect the existing paint for causes of failure. Some common paint problems are:
 - Peeling – possible causes are painting under adverse conditions, inadequate surface preparation or moisture infiltration
 - Blistering – cut into blister, and if wood is visible the problem is probably moisture related; if paint is visible, the problem area was probably painted in direct hot sun
 - Wrinkling – typically the result of the top coat drying before the underlying coat; sand surface smooth and repaint

- Cracking or crazing – typically the sign of a hard surface that does not expand and contract with underlying material; sand and repaint if cracking and crazing is limited to the surface; remove paint if it extends down to the wood
- Alligatoring – severe cracking and crazing; remove all paint down to bare wood

3. **Repair causes of failure:** Before repainting, causes of paint failure causes should be repaired. A substantial amount of paint failure is due to moisture problems such as: areas near rooflines, gutters and downspouts; areas near the ground; horizontal surfaces such as window sills; and moisture migration through exterior walls from kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms.

Remediate areas of moisture and repair any damaged wood or substrate material prior to repainting. Remediation of moisture can include repair of gutters and downspouts, reducing moisture migration through the walls by installing an interior humidifier, improving perimeter drainage away from the building foundation, and removing perimeter shrubs and other vegetation. Refer to the *Guideline* brochures, in particular the *Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance* and *Guidelines for Exterior Woodwork* for additional information.

4. **Prepare surface:** To insure a long-lasting painted surface, appropriate surface preparation should be undertaken before repainting.
 - Begin by washing the painted surfaces with a mild detergent solution and natural bristle brushes, then carefully scrape and sand for a smooth finish, removing any paint that is not tightly bonded to the surface
 - Putty or caulk countersunk nails, window glazing, gaps, joints and openings
 - Allow substrate to thoroughly dry before applying primer or paint
 - Spot prime bare wood, areas of repair and wood replacement
5. **Repaint:** High quality paint applied in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations should improve the longevity of a paint job. In general, it is best to use compatible primer and paint from the same manufacturer, and apply two coats of paint to previously base wood.
 - Apply paint during appropriate weather conditions, generally 50°F and 90°F, less than 60% relative humidity, avoiding direct sunlight



The paint on this door has alligatored, and severe cracking is visible. Removal of paint down to bare wood and proper door repair are recommended prior to repainting

COMPLETE PAINT REMOVAL

It is important to remember that any method of paint removal can result in harm to historic building fabric. Therefore, complete paint removal from a surface should only occur under limited circumstances.

Complete paint removal might be necessary in circumstances in which the existing paint on a surface has completely failed. Examples where complete paint removal would be appropriate include:

- Wholesale blistering or peeling that revealing the underlying substrate
- Continuous patterns of deep cracks in the surface of painted wood
- When windows, doors or shutters have been painted shut
- To achieve a smooth transition when a new wood element or Dutchman is being installed as a repair
- To prevent deterioration of historic building features
- To prevent deterioration of masonry for historically unpainted masonry surfaces

STRIPPING PAINT

If the existing paint has failed, it might be necessary to strip all or portions of the paint from the surface. Although there are a variety of tools and chemicals available to strip paint, many of them are potentially hazardous and can cause significant damage to exterior surfaces. All manufacturers' recommendations should be followed during the paint removal process.

The HDB encourages:

- Hand washing with a mild detergent and natural bristle brushes
- Hand scraping
- Hand sanding

The HDB suggests great care if using:

- Rotary tools – disks can leave circular marks and wires can tear into surface
- Heat guns and heat plate – can ignite paint or underlying surface if left in one location too long
- Chemical paint removers – can raise grains of some woods, be expensive and potentially volatile; runoff is potentially hazardous and should be collected to prevent harm to children, pets, vegetation and storm water

The HDB strongly discourages:

- Flame tools such as blowtorches to soften paint – smoldering sparks can start a potentially devastating fire; lead components in paint can vaporize and create highly toxic fumes
- Sandblasting – can be abrasive to surface and wear away protective exterior coating
- High pressure water wash – forces water into open joints affecting interior finishes and structural framing; can be abrasive to exterior surface

PAINT REMOVAL SAFETY

Paint removal is potentially hazardous work. Keep children and pets clear of work areas. Property owners should consult a professional for work that is unfamiliar or potentially unsafe.

- Always wear safety goggles and a dust mask
- With heat tools, always wear appropriate clothing and keep a fire extinguisher nearby
- Paint dust from older buildings can contain lead – wear a dust mask, avoid open food or beverage containers in area of paint removal, and thoroughly clean exposed skin and launder work clothes



The Roslyn Landmark Society will utilize paint analysis to determine the appropriate colors for the Eastman cottage.

PAINT COLORS

The selection of color can be a daunting task for many property owners. Although there is no single way to pick paint colors, there are some general guides that can help in the process.

1. **Identify the Architectural Style:** Selecting colors that were intended for a building's particular style tends to show the building in its best light. It is important to keep in mind, however, that many houses include elements of more than one style and it might be necessary to define the prominent style when selecting a palate. Additionally, house styles tended to be constructed after their typically identified period, so it tends to be most appropriate to select paint colors based upon the stylistic elements than the specific date of construction.
2. **Study the Details:** Study the general arrangement and details of the building including the shape, mass, type of roof, arrangement and type of windows, shutters, porches, bays and other projections to better understand the role that different colors will play. For example, a white Greek Revival house with white trim appears very different if visually contrasting green or black shutters are installed.
3. **Understand the Givens:** Some elements at the exterior of a building have intrinsic color and are typically not painted. These elements include brick

and stone foundations and chimneys and roof surfaces. Therefore it is recommended that the colors of the non-painted surfaces be considered when selecting the painted finish colors.

4. **Color Balance:** It is important to distribute color evenly over a building to achieve visual unity between the top, middle and base as well as horizontally across the façade. For example, a building with a light colored base and dark top might appear top-heavy, or a dark bay projecting from an adjacent light-colored wall might make the building appear to be vertical striped.
5. **Light and Color:** Colors tend to appear to vary in different light. It is therefore important to select exterior colors in natural daylight, in sunny, shaded and clouded conditions, rather than indoors in artificial light. Also keep in mind that the shadows caused by direct sunlight tend to highlight irregular surfaces. This can be beneficial to draw attention to a unique shingle pattern but negative if attempting to minimize the appearance of surface irregularities such as cracking.
6. **Start with the Body:** Begin by selecting body colors that are durable and neutral to minimize large surface areas that can have a faded appearance that is typically associated with bright, pure color tones.
7. **Accent Colors:** Accent colors, often a more saturated color, can enhance surface texture and increase visual depth. Since they tend to fade, they generally should be utilized for smaller areas where they can age more gracefully within a larger neutral body color.
8. **Experiment:** Before undertaking a major painting project, particularly if contemplating a color change, painting a sample area with the proposed colors can be very informative and give a better sense of the finished appearance than paint chips.

For a better understanding of Roslyn's building styles, please refer to the *Guidelines for Architectural Styles*.

PAINT ANALYSIS

Paint analysis is a useful tool to accurately determine the colors of historic paint and finishes through microscopic analysis. Paint analysis specialists can analyze finish samples and identify previous colors to allow duplication, accounting for intermittent fading and dirt layers.



In some cases stain is a more appropriate finish than paint such as at this shingled residence.

OIL AND LATEX PAINTS

Essentially there are two types of paint for buildings: oil and latex. Both types consist of three principal components: a pigment, a binder to adhere the pigment to a surface as the paint dries, and a solvent that makes the mixture loose enough to apply with a brush. Although latex was developed in the mid 1940s, oil was the dominant paint type until about 1970, and it can be found on many historic homes.

Oil and latex paints act differently when applied to surfaces. Oil paint forms a tough plastic film as the binder reacts with oxygen in the air. The binder can be natural oil, such as linseed, or oil modified with alkyds. Earlier latex paint used synthetic rubber as the binder, while latex paint today uses acrylic, vinyl-acrylic or vinyl acetate binders. As the water evaporates, latex paint forms a flexible film and the binder and pigment move closer together and forms a protective surface.

Critical differences between oil and latex paints are that they do not cure in the same way and they adhere differently to substrates. As oil paint ages it continues to cure and oxidize. It becomes more and more brittle to the point it can no longer expand and contract through temperature and humidity cycles with the underlying substrate. By contrast, latex cures in about two weeks and remains more pliable.

Oil paint generally adheres better to problem surfaces because the oils are small enough to seep into the wood or microscopic openings in old, even chalky paint. The resins in latex paint are generally too big to seep into the substrate, allowing water vapor to pass through. This makes latex less likely to peel from homes with excessive interior moisture, although multiple layers of paint can result in an impermeable moisture barrier. Another characteristic of latex paint is that it can apply surface tension to underlying layers of paint, particularly oil, and pull the paint away from the substrate.

STAINS

Exterior stains are typically applied to woods and come in many varieties: semitransparent and opaque; oil or latex; and preservative or weathering. As their popularity increases, the number of color options has also increased to include many colors more commonly associated with paint.

Visually, stains generally fall into one of two categories, semitransparent and opaque. Semitransparent allows some or all of the wood's color, grain and texture to show through while opaque provides a consistent color finish but allows more texture than paint.

Some stain products include wood preservatives and mildewcides that prevent wood deterioration and could be appropriate to apply to areas such as wood roofs in a clear or semi-transparent finish. There are also weathering stains that appear to weather the wood to a soft gray finish and natural stain that keeps the wood looking new.

Generally speaking, exterior stains weather differently than paint because they do not build up into a thick film that can peel off, but rather slowly fade when exposed to weather conditions. This fading will be more apparent in south-facing surfaces that receive more sunlight. In addition, there is less preparation required when re-staining of surfaces is needed since loose paint layers will not require removal.

Since stains are less forgiving than paint and allow the underlying wood texture and any blemishes to show through the finished surface, it is recommended that the body and trim of all houses, with the exception of stained shingle houses, be painted. However stain can be considered at high traffic areas such as porch floors, fences and other garden elements.

Ideally stain should be applied to clean bare wood. Similar to paints, oil-based stains will penetrate wood while latex based stains form a clear, flexible film. For the best results for deteriorated wood or semi-transparent finishes, oil based stains, particularly linseed-oil-based stains, will provide a more even appearance. The use of opaque latex based stains tends to be more limited to new or semi weathered wood.

Because stains rely on an even application of the pigment to obtain a uniform appearance, they are more challenging to apply than paint. This is particularly true where there is a change in color, such as a body to trim color. Therefore, application must be completed more carefully, maintaining a wet edge to avoid lap marks and a more concentrated application of pigment.

COLONIAL ERA

Colonial homes represent some of the earliest homes in the country. Available finishes of the period were limited to those that could be derived from natural pigments including the earth and stone. Earlier buildings of the period tended to have matching colors at the body of the building and the trim. Later buildings of the period tended to be lighter and paler shades of color, with a trim rendered in a contrasting color.



The c. 1750 Valentine-Losee House has characteristics of a later Colonial style house.

| A. BODY | B. TRIM | C. DOOR | D. PORCH |
|-----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Shades of white | Dark green | Dark green | Similar to body |
| Pale blue | Red | Medium blue | |
| Yellow | Brown | Black | |
| Gray | Black | White | |
| Buff | Off-white | Dark red | |
| <i>Later</i> | | | |
| Lighter colors | | | |

GREEK REVIVAL

The colors of Greek Revival buildings are strongly influenced by the nineteenth century understanding of classical buildings and the “temple” form. Similar to the Colonial period, the development of paint colors was limited to materials that were locally available. As such, the majority of Greek Revival buildings are painted white with contrasting color typically limited to shutters and doors, which were most typically painted dark green or black.



The colors of c. 1830 George Allen House typifies the Greek Revival style with its white body and trim, and contrasting shutters and doors.

| A. BODY | B. TRIM | C. DOOR | D. SHUTTERS | E. PORCH |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Shades of white most common | White trim with white siding | Dark green Medium blue Black | Dark green Black | Similar to body |
| Pale blue Pale yellow Pale pink Gray | Non-White siding: Gray/blue Olive green Buff Dark bottle green Black | Natural wood | | |

VICTORIAN ERA

Victorian buildings have the most complex multi-colored palate. Early Victorian buildings had light earth-toned palates that blended with the landscape and were in sharp contrast to Greek Revival buildings. As the period progressed and with the industrial revolution, ready-made paints in a multitude of colors were readily available providing more options. In addition, paint was used to highlight specific architectural features and details.



The trim of this Second Empire contrasts with the body color.

The chart to the right divides the Victorian Style into early, mid and late periods. Generally speaking, Early includes the Gothic Revival, Mid includes the Italianate and Second Empire, and Late Victorian includes the Queen Anne modes of architecture

| A. BODY | | | B. TRIM |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Early <i>Lighter Colors</i> | Mid <i>Medium Colors</i> | Late <i>Deeper Colors</i> | Early, Mid & Late |
| Pale gray | Pale gray | Dark green | Similar contrasting shade of body color |
| Mossy green | Deep gray | Brown | |
| Olive | Blue gray | Red | |
| Tan | Mossy greens | Gold | Darker than base color when light |
| Ochre | Tan | Gray | |
| Fawn | Ochre | Ochre | Lighter than base color when dark |
| Straw | Sand | Maroon | |
| Mustard | Buff | Pumpkin | |
| | | Rose | |



Early in the period, typically represented by Gothic Revival buildings, body colors tended to be lighter in color with darker trim. The Italianate and Second Empire periods body colors in the beginning of the Mid-Victorian period were earth tones, with more vibrant with greater contrast as the period progressed. During the Late Victorian period, typically associated with Queen Anne architecture, deeper colors were used to emphasize the mass and variety of the body.



The trim is in a darker contrasting shade than the body, with the shutters in an even deeper shade.

| C. DOOR | D. SHUTTERS | | E. PORCH |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| Early & Mid | Early | Late | Early & Mid |
| Natural wood | Deeper shade than body | Green | Lighter or deeper shade than body |
| Black | | Red | |
| Burgundy | Mid | Blue | |
| Late | Deeper shade than body | Grained | Late |
| Grained | Red | Varnished | Deeper shade than body |
| Varnished | Brown | | |
| Composite colors of the house trim | Black | | |

Paint color for Victorian buildings was most often earth tones, with the trim, shutters, doors, and porches of similar but contrasting colors than the body color. In addition, it was not uncommon to paint different materials in the body different colors, such as contrasting colors for wood clapboard and wood shingles located at upper floors or within gable ends.

Contrary to popular belief, most Victorian buildings were limited to a three-color color palate. In rare circumstances, as many as five colors were used.

COLONIAL REVIVAL

The colors of Colonial Revival buildings tended to reflect impressions of the Colonial period. The colors were generally light, contrasting with the deeper colors of the later Victorian period. The body color of Colonial Revival buildings typically included white and muted colors such gray, gray-blue, grey-green or yellow in the body, with white trim and sash and dark shutters and doors being the norm.



The trim is typically lighter than the body in Colonial Revival style buildings.

| A. BODY | B. TRIM | C. DOOR | D. SHUTTERS | E. PORCH |
|--|---|--|---------------------|----------|
| Shades of white most Pale blue Yellow Gray Cream Tan Green Red | White Lighter shade of body color | Dark green Medium blue Black Natural wood | Dark green Black | White |

BUNGALOW

Bungalows represent one of the few building styles in which stain is an appropriate finish for the body color. Because the bungalow style is greatly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, bungalows tend to express materials in their natural state, harmonizing with the landscape. As a result, natural shades are most appropriate for the building with contrasting colors for the trim.



This bungalow features dark natural shades for the body with contrasting trim.

| A. BODY | B. TRIM | C. DOOR | D. PORCH |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Stained shingles | Dark reds | Varnished wood | Similar to trim |
| Brown | Browns | | |
| Gold | Light yellow | | |
| Green | Gray | | |
| | Green | | |
| | White | | |



Paint can be used to highlight a building's architectural style, emphasizing its details.

PAINTING GUIDE

The repainting of a building can be a daunting experience representing a large investment in time and money. The HDB strongly suggests the following when considering repainting:

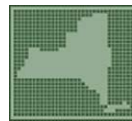
- Determine whether painting is needed by cleaning an area to see if the appearance is improved.
- Determine the required level of preparation. An easy test is to clean and dry an inconspicuous surface and apply some paint. Apply tape to the surface and remove quickly. If the tape is clean, it is safe to repaint. If paint is removed to bare wood, stripping is required. If new paint is removed, the old paint is chalky and an oil based primer might be needed.
- Oil paint is most likely to crack when it is more than a sixteenth of an inch thick, about 16 to 30 coats.
- Repair and treat any causes of paint failure such as moisture infiltration prior to repainting.
- Select treatments such as water repellent preservatives that are compatible with the paint and material. Consult paint professionals who can recommend the appropriate paint for the specific conditions.
- Follow all manufacturers' preparation, application and safety instructions. Verify the weather is compatible with the guidelines on the paint label.
- Apply finish paint soon after oil primer. Surface compounds affecting adhesion can form in 2 weeks.
- When adding new elements to historic buildings that were traditionally painted, such an addition, the paint should complement the historic building.

- Before undertaking a major painting project, particularly if contemplating a color change, painting a sample area with the proposed colors can be very informative and give a better sense of the finished appearance than paint chips.
- The colors represented by the same names produced by different manufacturers are not consistent.
- Regardless of the style, porch floors were generally gray and porch ceilings were often painted sky blue.
- Historically stained buildings, such as at bungalows, should not be painted; clear finishes and stains are not appropriate for historically painted surfaces.
- Better quality paints generally cost more initially, but can last significantly longer, saving money long term.
- Pressure treated wood should be painted after weathering for approximately 6 to 12 months.
- Oil paints are better for high-traffic areas.
- When possible, use oil paint over oil and latex paint over latex; Oil paint should not be applied over latex paint, if oil paint is desired, all latex paint must be removed down to the base wood. Latex paint can sometimes be applied over older oil paint when an oil based primer has been applied to completely cover the old oil paint. If using a latex primer over the old oil paint, all dirt, chalk and gloss must be removed from the surface prior to applying the primer.
- At locations where a masonry and stucco surface has been damaged or was historically painted, use vapor permeable masonry paint rather than sealers to minimize moisture-related deterioration.

PAINTING REFERENCES

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NYSCA

New York State Council on the Arts

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