

2.9 Entrances:

Porches, Doors, Decks, and Lighting



Entrances and porches are quite often the focus of historic buildings, particularly when they are located on primary elevations. Together with their functional and decorative features, such as doors, steps, balustrades, pilasters, and entablatures, they can be extremely important in defining the overall historic character of a building.

Recommended

- ✓ Identifying, retaining, and preserving entrances, and their functional and decorative features, that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building.
- ✓ Protecting and maintaining the masonry, wood, and architectural metal that comprise entrances and porches through appropriate surface treatments.
- ✓ Repairing entrances and porches by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include the limited replacement in kind- or with compatible substitute material – of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of repeated features where there are surviving prototypes such as balustrades, cornices, entablatures, columns, sidelights, and stairs.
- ✓ Designing and constructing a new entrance or porch if the historic entrance or porch is completely missing. It may be a restoration based on historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the building.



Not Recommended

- ❑ Removing or radically changing entrances and porches and therefore diminishing the character of the building.
- ❑ Replacing an entire entrance or porch when repair of materials and limited replacement of parts are more appropriate.
- ❑ Using a substitute material for the replacement parts that does not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the entrance and porch.
- ❑ Removing an entrance or porch that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new entrance or porch that does not convey the same visual appearance.
- ❑ Enclosing porches in a manner that results in a diminution or loss of historic character such as using solid materials such as wood, stucco, or masonry.
- ❑ Installing unframed lattice between foundation supports.

Continues on following page

Recommended Continued

- ✓ Wood floors should have wood tongue and groove flooring running perpendicular to the facade.
- ✓ Patios and terraces with masonry or poured concrete floors may use poured concrete steps.
- ✓ The open areas between porch foundation support columns should be filled in with decorative wood framed skirting, vertical slats, or lattice panels. Lattice panels should have a frame constructed around them and should not be touching the ground. Use a design with which compliments the architectural style.
- ✓ Columns and railings should be preserved and maintained. Where repair is required, use materials to match the original in dimensions and detailing.
- ✓ Columns and railings on front porches should be rebuilt in historic designs if the original columns and railings have been removed or replaced.
- ✓ New balusters may be required for the railing. Porch balusters, also called spindles, should be appropriate for the building's style and period.
- ✓ Stairs added to a dwelling should have newel posts and balusters, treads and risers, to match original porch construction.

Not Recommended Continued

- ❑ Nailing lattice to the surface of the foundation.
- ❑ Replacing original wood porch components such as wood steps with brick or concrete. Repair should be with materials to match the original.
- ❑ Removing staircases that are original or rebuilding and replacing in a different location and configuration.

An example of an appropriate repair/restoration of existing porch. This porch was reconstructed using original components and duplicating those that were beyond repair or missing.



Architecture and Porch Design

Knowing the style of your home and the appropriate porch design elements are important. What looks good on one home may not look right on another. The book “A Field Guide To American Houses” by Virginia & Lee McAlester is a good reference for porch types appropriate to a specific style of home.



This curved open porch design with thick columns is commonly used with Gothic Revival designed homes.



This arched porch design is commonly used with Italianate designed homes, but would not be appropriate for an Arts & Crafts designed home.



Craftsman, Arts and Crafts, or Bungalow style homes often feature a wide, open front porch across the front elevation, with thick support posts and bracket details. Many are similar to the porch shown above, which is integrated into the main roofline of the house.



This Folk Victorian cottage has a modest porch design. Although some additional modest detail could be added, significantly more decorative detail would not be appropriate for this style of house.

Front Porch Options

Partial front porches or covered entries/porticos and stoops are appropriate alternatives to a full front or wrap around porch.



Partial front porch



Portico and Stoop

Points To Consider When Constructing A New Entrance or Porch

- ✓ If evidence does not exist, base the design upon historic porches of similar dwellings from the same time period and architectural style.
- ✓ Designing enclosures for historic porches when required by the new use in a manner that preserves the historic character of the building. This can include using large sheets of glass and recessing the enclosure wall behind existing scrollwork, posts, and balustrades.

Porch Design Details



Frame Lattice Panels

Lattice panels should have a frame constructed around them and should not be touching the ground. Use a design with which compliments the architectural style.



Highlight Details with Color

The use of multiple colors on some porches that compliment each other and the main house color can be appropriate and adds curb appeal .



Provide Route for Water to Drain

Be sure to leave a slight gap between the floor of the porch and the bottom of the rail system to allow for water run off thus assisting in preventing rot.

Enclosed Porches

Some porches historically were built enclosed or were enclosed many years ago to provide additional usable living space. Here are a few helpful hints when facing repair /replacement of enclosed porches.



If enclosing an existing open, porch all the original decorative elements and design should be maintained including railings, columns, shape of original openings and steps. See through materials like glass and screens should be used as much as possible.



When building a new enclosed porch constructing walls that would be approximately the height of a typical rail is appropriate.

Doors

Doors and door surrounds are highly visible and significant in defining the style and character of a dwelling. Original doors, door surrounds, and hardware should be preserved and maintained. Original features should be repaired rather than replaced. Doors available from most wholesale hardware and home improvement stores generally are not appropriate for front entrances. The majority of these doors do not have panels or glass lights which match historic door designs.

Other door types such as screen and storm doors can be appropriate for historic dwellings. New screen doors should be full view design or with minimal structural framing/dividers to retain the visibility of the historic door behind the screen door. Storm doors can assist in lowering energy costs. Doors should be of a color complementary to the house. “Raw” or shiny aluminum doors are not recommended in visible locations.

Security doors are non-historic additions to dwellings. While the installation of security doors on fronts of buildings is discouraged, they may be installed if they are full view design and have minimal structural framing to allow the viewing of most of the historic door behind them.



Recommended

- ✓ Use wood panel doors with or without windows which match existing exterior doors and which are appropriate style for the structure.
- ✓ Repair, restore and maintain entrance doors original to the building.
- ✓ If repair and restoration is technically prohibitive, replace door with a close duplicate in material and style.
- ✓ Screen doors should be full-view design or have minimal structural framing.

Not Recommended

- ❑ New door designs should not replace original doors at the front entrance or at side entrances which are readily visible from the street.
- ❑ Replacing original entrance doors with new door designs which are inappropriate for architectural style.
- ❑ Replacing original wood entrance doors with new doors fabricated in steel, vinyl, aluminum, or other inappropriate substitute material.

Examples of Original Doors and Surrounds



Original doors, door surrounds, and hardware should be preserved and maintained. Original features should be repaired rather than replaced. Replacement doors available from most wholesale hardware and home improvement stores generally are not appropriate for front entrances. Many of these doors are made of fiberglass and do not have wood grain appearance, nor do they have panels and/or glass lights that match historic door designs.



Arched doors are typical of mail-order homes. These doors are very significant to home and should be retained. If replacement is needed, the new door should be made to match the original door in design, material and size.

Some double-door units have highly-detailed designs and some also have transom windows.

Storm/Screen Doors



Screen doors should be full view design or with minimal structural dividers to retain the visibility of the historic door behind the screen door.

Door Casings

Regardless of the type of siding on your home and the door being used, retaining or adding casing around the door is an important element, because it highlights the entrance.



New Door without casing



New Door with casing

Decks

Decks were generally not used prior to 1945 on St. Charles' older homes and as such are not appropriate additions on the front facade. However, as in the case of any type of addition, a wood deck may be acceptable if placed at the rear or side of a dwelling. Deck railings should be in traditional forms rather than in contemporary designs.

Porches or verandas, as they were called in Victorian times, can be utilized the same way as a deck is used in modern architecture.

More appropriate outdoor sitting areas for back yards are; 1) stone or brick terraces (or patios, as they are now called) next to the house or built under the shelter of a large tree; 2) summer houses or gazebos, especially popular in the latter half of the 19th century; and 3) pergolas, either attached to the house or freestanding, which were popular after the turn of the century.



Recommended

- ✓ Decks should be stained with an opaque stain or painted to blend with the colors of the dwelling.
- ✓ Decks should be kept simple in design. Wood decks are recommended to have traditional style wood balusters complimentary to the design of the building.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Locating decks on the front façade elevation or in areas readily visible from the street.

Lighting (For Porches and Exterior Walls)

Many of St. Charles dwellings retain original exterior wall and porch ceiling light fixtures. Distinctive globes and the “box” shaped fixtures of the Arts and Crafts Style are part of a building’s character and should be preserved and maintained. If the original light fixtures are missing, light fixtures with simple designs and detailing are preferred to large, ornate ones. Many companies now provide light fixtures based upon historic designs and the addition of these types of period fixtures is appropriate and encouraged.

Recommended

- ✓ Fixtures original to the dwelling should be preserved and maintained.
- ✓ Fixtures introduced to the exterior of a structure should be compatible with the style, scale, and period of the structure, based on traditional designs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and mounted on porch ceilings or adjacent to entrances.
- ✓ If freestanding fixtures are installed, they should also be compatible with the character of the house.
- ✓ Install small security lights in inconspicuous locations. Consider locations under the roof eaves or at side elevations.

Not Recommended

- ❑ Mounting security lights, like flood lights, on the front façade of a dwelling in a conspicuous location.
- ❑ Using oversized flood or security lights where they will be readily visible when viewed from the public right of way.



A utility light with a traditional design.

Distinctive globes and the Arts and Crafts “box” shaped fixtures add character to porches and entry ways. If replacement is necessary, the new fixture should compliment the architectural style and era of the home.