

IN THE DISTRICTS

A newsletter published by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission

Volume II, Issue 2 • Summer 1996

■ GUIDELINES

Paint Colors: Keeping True to Your House

Paint color is the “voice” of a house. A well-chosen palette can make a dramatic statement about a building’s architecture, and its history. Problematic schemes, however, can reduce that conversation to a babble or a shout. In addressing color change proposals, the commission *Guidelines* seek a balance between the

historic and the contemporary.

Unlike other communities, Raleigh does not require that historic district buildings follow a set color palette. Instead, the commission assesses how well a color change

acknowledges the house’s architectural style, and its larger neighborhood context.

Style dictates that colors stay true to the house. The Greek Revival and Italianate houses of the mid-1800s typically displayed pale colors. The pendulum swung toward deep, rich tones in the late 1800s, culminating in the multi-color schemes of the ornate Queen Anne style. By the early 1900s, however, light body and trim colors returned with the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles. Bungalows re-introduced earth tones in the ‘teens and ‘twenties, while white predominated during the Depression years.

Color analyses of early Raleigh buildings indicate that extremes such as the “painted

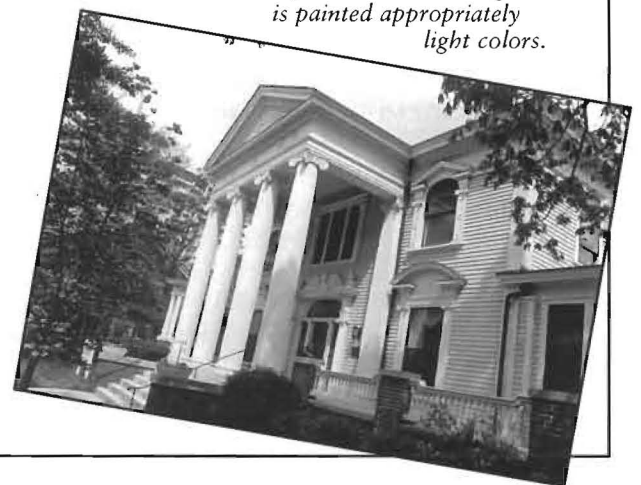
ladies” schemes popularized in San Francisco were rarely encountered here. Whether due to more conservative local temperaments or the fact that dark paints quickly fade in this climate, excessively deep colors were avoided.

Strong precedent also exists for a natural hierarchy of placement — a basic body (siding) color, darker foundation and roof, a trim color, and perhaps, as Victorian detailing, an accent color. Generally, if sashes are painted a different color than the trim, they should be darker.

Within this basic framework, there is still substantial room for personal expression. Most often, the search for balance means that historical fact supplies the ground rules (e.g., a Classical Revival house should be *con’t on p.3*)

Corner turret, elaborate trim, rich colors: the style of 327 E. Jones Street (left) is unmistakably Queen Anne. In contrast, the neoclassical Goodwin House, at 220 Hillsborough St. is painted appropriately light colors.

The *Guidelines* seek a balance between the historic and the contemporary.



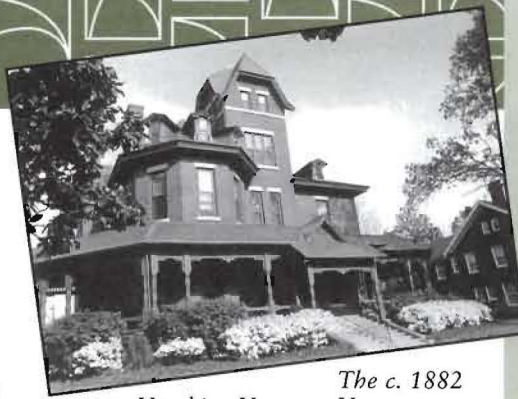
■ PROFILE

Blount Street Historic District: Back from the Brink

It once was Raleigh's most fashionable neighborhood. From the end of the Civil War through the early 1900s, the area immediately north of the capitol evolved into an enclave of elegant town homes.

But times changed. Eventually, other locations became the addresses of choice, and the grand homes of Blount Street declined. By the 1960s, when the state government eyed the area for expansion, demolition of the area was being equated with renewal. A succession of houses fell to the bulldozer; there was even talk of razing the Executive Mansion. In 1976, however, after a concerted effort, the Blount Street area was designated the second Raleigh Historic District.

The district stands as a monument to the concept of adaptive use.



The c. 1882
Hawkins-Hartness House now serves as the Lt. Governor's office.

Today, the district stands as a monument both to the city's past, and to the concept of adaptive use. Many of the former residences now house state offices. Several homes were moved into the district to prevent their demolition, and to rejuvenate the historic streetscape.

Development pressures still exist, and parking lots still line much of Blount Street. Yet hopes are high that through creative planning and open dialogue, a positive future awaits this unique historic resource.

■ UPDATE

Revised COA List

The commission has updated and clarified portions of its Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) List. The list delineates which exterior changes are considered routine maintenance (no review required), which are reviewed by staff, and which are reviewed by the COA committee. The revisions mean more large-scale changes (for instance, taller decks and major landscaping additions) will be considered by the committee in public hearings, thereby allowing greater public input in the design review process. A copy of the revised list is available from the commission office.

White-Holman House

Last year, as part of foreclosure proceedings, the 1799 building was sold at public auction. The new owners plan to reside in the landmark property, thereby returning it to its original use (previously, the building served as office space). The commission, which administers a preservation easement on the interior of the building, recently provided guidance regarding the design of a new kitchen area. The house is located at 206 New Bern Place.

■ TECH

CORNER

Q. My wood windows need help. Is repairing them worth it?

A. Absolutely! A historic building owes its significance to its original parts.

Window repair can be divided into three categories—basic maintenance, remedying slight deterioration, or addressing major deterioration.

Maintenance involves solving simple problems, like stuck sashes, separated joints, and broken sash cords. In most cases, the sashes should be removed. Failing or built-up paint can then be easily stripped, joints reglued, or glaz-

ing replaced. And you'll be amazed at how much easier the window operates with sash weights re-hung.

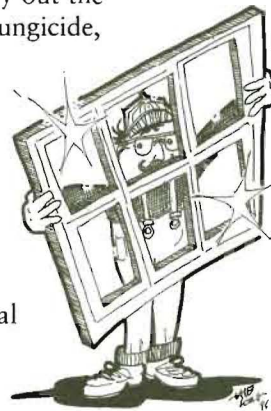
Deterioration demands closer attention. Moisture is nearly always the culprit; treatment means first addressing the water's source, and sealing it off. Then dry out the wood, treat it with a fungicide, and waterproof with linseed oil. Fill any cracks or holes with wood putty, and finally coat with paint (caulking joints where needed).

Major deterioration may call for partial replacement. Wood epoxies can work wonders; more

extensive rot can require partial replacement. A close match is crucial; some millwork outfits can duplicate original parts exactly, so check around.

Consider total replacement *only* as a last resort. If it comes to that, always match the original in size, detailing, and materials (avoid vinyl!). If energy conservation is your concern, remember that storm windows are usually the most cost-effective move in this climate; the payback on a big thermopane job may take years.

For additional details on window repair, check with the commission staff, or consult the RHDC library. ■



Matters of Enforcement

District property owners and the RHDC have a shared interest in preserving district character. When a question of change arises, the established course is to consider it in advance through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process, as well as to obtain any necessary building permits. Occasionally, however, an unapproved, inappropriate change is made, and preservation becomes a matter of enforcement.

The RHDC is not an enforcement agency; its role in the historic districts is one of design review. Since historic overlay districts are a form of zoning, enforcement of the city historic district ordinance falls to the zoning section of the city Inspections Department.

If unapproved work is in progress, staff or another official representative of the commission may ask the owner to cease work, noting that a COA application must be completed and approved before the work continues. Inspections can deliver a written, legally-binding Stop Work Order, which remains in effect until a COA decision is rendered. Following commission review, if the application is denied, the work must permanently cease. If the work has altered a property in ways contrary to the *Guidelines*, it may be required that the original appearance of the property be restored by a specified date.

If an owner does not comply, civil penalties can be imposed. A daily fine of \$100 may be assessed until violations are corrected; if, after ten days, there is still no compliance, the matter is referred to the City Attorney for legal action through the court system.

Enforcement is the end point of a "worse case" scenario. It is undertaken out of fairness to the historic district property owners who submit COA applications for commission review. Addressing renovation questions in advance through COAs is both legally correct, and far easier, less damaging, and less costly than the alternative.

■ AT YOUR

SERVICE

Signposts to the Past: RHDC's Plaques Program

The final step in the designation of any Raleigh Historic Landmark is also the most public. After research, reports, and an act of City Council, a city historic plaque is mounted on the building, or in the adjacent street right-of-way.

The commission's plaque program dates back nearly 25 years. Its purpose is to bring added public recognition both to a building's historic significance, and the fact of its official designation.

All plaques are cast bronze, and measure 12"x14". Each features raised letters noting the name of the building, and the date of construction. Hyphenated names mean a building was substantially altered or enlarged by a later owner (whose name appears

after that of the first owner's). Multiple dates reflect the year of construction and each major change.

The wording of the top two lines may vary from one plaque to the



next. A building is listed as a Raleigh Historic Site, Property, or most recently, Landmark, depending on the language of the legislation in effect at the time of the building's designation.

Plaques are meant for public viewing. Have a look! They offer a quick and easy introduction to the city's most historic buildings. ■

The plaques program brings public recognition to historic buildings.

(con't. from p.1) painted lighter colors) while personal taste directs the details (e.g., the exact color choices).

In contemplating a new paint scheme, first study your house. Note its style and detailing, and that of its neighbors. Narrow your choices to specific color families, then give the commission staff a call. They'll be happy to provide additional guidance.



FURTHER READING (available in the commission library):

- Moss, Roger W., and Winkler, Gail Caskey. *Victorian Exterior Decoration: How to Paint Your 19th-Century American House* (Henry Holt & Co., New York, NY: 1987).
- Moss, Roger W. *Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820-1920* (American Life Foundation, Watkins Glen, NY: 1981).

"Special Issue: Exterior Painting." *The Old House Journal*, April, 1981. ■

■ AROUND THE RHDC

RHDC Meetings

RHDC Business meetings:

6/18; 7/16; 8/20; 9/17; 10/15; 7:30 AM,
Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Certificate of Appropriateness Comm.:

Application deadline & meeting date:
6/17 for 7/1; 7/22 for 8/5; 8/19 for 9/3;
9/23 for 10/7*; 4:00 PM, Rm. 305,
Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex (*Rm. 303)

Public Relations/Education Comm.:

6/20; 7/18; 8/15; 9/19; 10/17; 8:30 AM,
Rm. 317, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Research Committee:

6/6; 7/11; 8/1; 9/5; 10/3; 12:00 Noon,
Rm. 317, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Contacts

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RHDC staff:	
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Historic Oakwood:	
David Philbrook, Pres.	834-0887
Boylan Heights Association:	
Rhonda Maurer, Pres.	834-6991
Downtown Raleigh Development Corporation:	832-1231

■ CASE IN POINT

Adding to the Additions

How do you build onto a pair of gabled additions? That was the dilemma recently faced by Jim and Karen McKenzie, of 515 Oakwood Ave. Their house originally was a small L-shaped cottage (with a decorative front gable), to which a similarly-proportioned rear wing and a shed-roofed "bump-out" had later been added (see photo). With the help of the commission's Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC), a design was developed which set a new wing perpendicular to the existing twin-gabled rear. The bump-out was replaced by a low-roofed "connector" section (see sketch). The design successfully preserved the earlier double-gabled roof, while translating the original roof pitch and building form to the new addition.



■ A B R O A D E R

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W

Preservationists across the country have a dedicated ally in the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Since its charter in 1949, the non-profit organization has been at the vanguard of the preservation movement. The Trust provides technical and

financial assistance to local non-profits and public agencies, including below market rate loans and matching grants. It sponsors educational programs, an annual national conference, and technical workshops, and frequently serves as a preservation legal advocate.

Its publications include the magazine *Historic Preservation*, professional journals, and a variety of books (many of which are

available from the RHDC library). It also owns 18 landmark properties, open to the public as house museums.

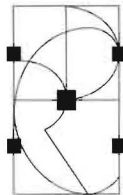
Based in Washington, DC, the organization maintains eight regional offices, each staffed with "on-call" preservation professionals. The Trust's Southern Regional Office in Charleston can be reached at (803) 722-8552.

COA Tally

	January 96	February 96	March 96	April 96
Major work (comm. review):				
Approved as submitted		2	1	3
Approved w/conditions	1	3	2	1
Deferred	1	(1)*	(1)*	(1)*
Minor work (staff apprvd.):	7	14	14	11

**(same application deferred from January)*

Staff support for the RHDC is provided by the City of Raleigh Planning Department



RALEIGH HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION

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The mission of the RHDC is to serve as City Council's official historic preservation advisory body to identify, preserve, protect and educate the public about Raleigh's historic resources.