

I'm Looking Through You, You're Not the Same. . .

Having worked on over two hundred historic renovations over the past several years, I have heard several things, but one recurring story that I heard from almost every homeowner revolved around their drafty, old, beat up windows.

The story would often turn ugly when I would explain to the individual that they were not going to be able to obtain the tax credits if they replaced their original windows with new windows. It wasn't until after I had done a few projects of my own that I realized that the old windows, while not as efficient as new windows, could, in fact, be rehabilitated to look and act new. There are contractors who specialize in making these original windows look brand new.

Additionally, one of the misnomers of the window debate is that you are not allowed to install either indoor or outdoor storm windows. Well as I said, this is a misnomer. You most certainly are allowed to install approved storm windows. Immediately you think back to sitting on your grandmother's plastic covered couch and looking through a foggy unattractive storm window. Well those days are long gone and just as technology moved us from the crank phone that hung on grandma's wall to the cell phone sitting next to you now, so it moved us to the high tech and much more attractive modern day storm window.

Now, this isn't to say that you always have to save windows that are currently in your historic home. There are many times when we find that the original windows were removed and replaced with something else, often vinyl windows. Now, as we move into this new periodical relationship with one another, me doing the writing and you the reading, you will come to learn one very simple, but *very important*, thing about owning a historic home and doing modifications: **VINYL IS NEVER AN ACCEPTABLE MATERIAL**. That means no vinyl windows, no vinyl siding, no cars with vinyl interior parked in the driveway, just get vinyl out of your head and definitely keep it off of your house.

"But, wait a minute, Tristan," you say, "With today's energy prices and the government's interest in energy conservation, surely they will allow us to install vinyl windows." Well, while I could go on for about three paragraphs here, I will merely state two things: One, see previous paragraph, and Two, wood windows can be purchased with the same high efficiency characteristics as vinyl and they look so much better.

One pitfall that many fall into is the purchase of new windows that are in the "wrong" or inappropriate configuration for their style home. For example, a simple rowhome in Canton is likely to have a one over one window. Woooooo. . . slow down, Tristan. What on earth do you mean by a "one over one window?" Well, my periodic friend, I am referring to the number of panes of glass in the top portion and bottom portions of the window. If the top of your window is divided into two separate panes of glass with a mutton down the middle, and has just one pane on the bottom, it would be considered a two over one window, two panes on top, one on the bottom. It is extremely important, in

doing a rehabilitation project, that you get the window configuration right. This can be done by looking around at your neighbors' homes and seeing if anyone with a similar style home has their original windows and then mimicking that style.

Once you have done this, you have only conquered half the battle. You still must select the proper type of window. "TYPE? What do you mean, TYPE?" Well what this means is that you must select a wooden window, for starters, and second, if it is appropriate for you to have a divided light window, it must be a true divided light window or *an approved* simulated divided light window.

By now you think that you are armed with all you need to know to conquer your window restoration, but look for next month's article when we will discuss the various moulding and sill types. But, as always, if you need help with any of your renovation questions as they relate to qualifying for Historic Tax Credits, please feel free to contact me at 410.837.5800 or via e.mail at [tristan@mdtaxcredits.com](mailto:tristan@mdtaxcredits.com).