

Technical Guides for Exterior Alterations

A Practical Series for the Preservation and Maintenance of Rockville's Historic Resources

12: Color Selection and Exterior Paint

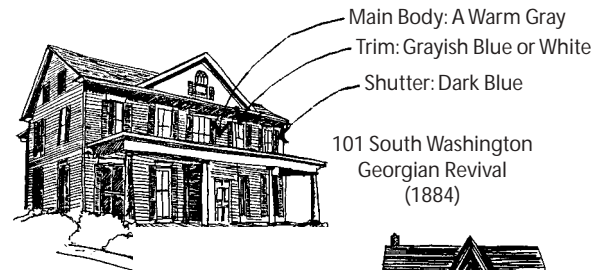
Background

The Historic District Commission does not review paint color selection. Most buildings that have been painted in the past have several layers of different colors, reflecting color choices by owners of the day. For a wood-clad structure, or a masonry structure built with soft brick, paint is an integral element that protects this exterior layer from weather and decay. If a brick or stone building has never been painted, however, or if an owner wishes to remove paint from a masonry structure, a Certificate of Approval is required. Such proposals are evaluated in terms of conservation of the historic resource. Paint removal can be very damaging to the exterior surface of brick or soft stone and must be avoided.

Although the Historic District Commission does not review color choice, property owners frequently seek guidance on the proper color and types of paint to use. A variety of pigments were available and/or popular at different times through history, and there is general guidance available that reflects this relationship between color selection and the architectural styles.

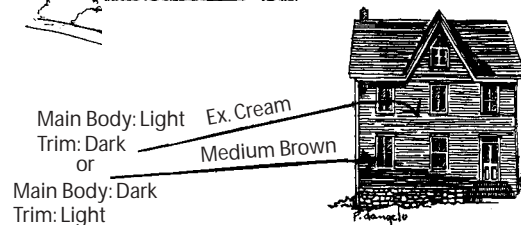
HDC Policy

- Unpainted masonry structures (brick and stone) shall not be painted.
- Paint removal shall be avoided for masonry structures that have been painted in the past.
- High-quality paints are worth the extra cost and have a longer life.
- Rigorous preparation of the surfaces prior to the application of the new coats of paint will add years to the paint job.
- Avoid blown-in insulation into the exterior wall cavity as this can affect paint adhesion. Undertake other energy measures first and assess their impact.
- Avoid visual confusion by using too many colors on a structure; aim for no more than three. The wall color should predominate. It is best to choose a muted tone for the main body of the house and reserve bright colors for trim features and details.
- Consider your building in relation to other buildings on the street.



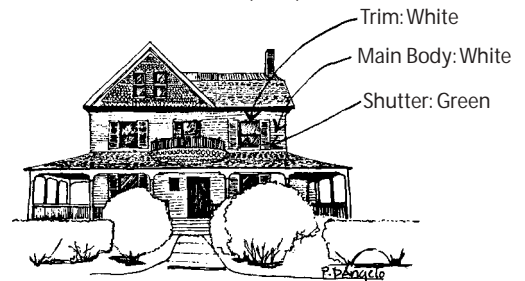
Main Body: A Warm Gray
Trim: Grayish Blue or White
Shutter: Dark Blue

101 South Washington
Georgian Revival
(1884)



Main Body: Light Ex. Cream
Trim: Dark or Medium Brown
Main Body: Dark
Trim: Light

1080 Copperstone Ct.
Gothic Revival Farmhouse (1874)



Trim: White
Main Body: White
Shutter: Green

108 Forest Ave.
Vernacular House with
Queen Anne Detail (1890)

Tax Credit Information

Tax credits may apply. To maintain eligibility, please have before and after photographs of the work. Obtain HDC approval prior to undertaking the work if a COA is required, and make sure you follow all zoning requirements. Work done without a required HDC Certificate of Approval is not eligible for the tax credits. Forms are available on the City Web site or at the CPDS information desk.

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Changing tastes for popular base and trim colors for broad architectural styles:

	Siding	Trim	Shutter
1820 - 1850 Greek Revival	White	White	Green
1830 - 1860 Early Victorian	White Buff Warm Gray Red-Brown Light Gray Light Yellow Light Brown Old Oak Oak	White Cool Dark Brown Dark Brown Gray Oak Oak	Dark Green (Slats, Panels of Verges) Cool Dark Brown Oak Dark Oak Gray
1840 - 1875 Italianate	White Light Brown Gray Light Olive Yellow Tan Dark Tomato Soup Sand Dark Tan	White Light Blue Gray Dark Olive Dark Tan Brown Tan Dark Sand Sand	Medium Green Medium Green Dark Red Dark Red Sand Dark Tomato soup (Panels) Dark Tan
1860 - 1880 Second Empire	White Light Gray Yellow Tan Slate Gray Dark Red Light Tan Gold Tan Red Tan Light Brown Green	White Dark Gray Olive Tan Dark Red Dark Gray Green Dark Tan Green Tan Light Gold Tan Dark Gray Green	Dark Green Dark Green Dark Red Dark Gray Green Dark Gray Olive Dark Tomato Soup
1875 - 1895 Queen Anne	White 1st fl.: Dark Olive 2nd fl.: Medium Olive 1st fl.: Medium Mustard 2nd fl.: Light Green Tan Light Olive Medium Dark Brown	White Slate Gray Dark Black Green Medium Dark Brown Light Brown Mustard	Dark Black Green Dark Balck Green Dark Brown Red Mustard Medium Dark Brown
1873 - 1890 Eastlake	Dark Olive Dark Mustard Slate Gray Dark Red Light Peagreen Light Peagreen	Dark Gray Green Dark Tomato Red Dark Red Dark Gray Green Dark Peagreen Dark Peagreen	Dark Red Dark Gray Dark Gray Green Reddish Mustard Dark Gold-Green Dark Gold-Green

Contact Us

For additional information and questions, please contact:
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Additional information

Adopted Architectural Design Guidelines for the Exterior Rehabilitation of Buildings in Rockville's Historic Districts, September 1977, Rockville Historic District Commission, pp. 3-18, 70-73.

Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation*, (1995), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of Interior, www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standguide.

Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork, NPS Preservation Briefs: #10.

Exterior Decoration: Victorian Colors for Victorian Houses, Athenaeum Library of Nineteenth Century America, introduction by Samuel Dornsife, 1976.

For other information on the maintenance and rehabilitation of older homes, see www.cr.nps.gov/architecture/htm.

For suppliers and product information, see www.oldhouseweb.net.

For review of paint products and materials, see Rohm & Haas Paint Quality Institute at <http://paintquality.com/diy>.