

Just because the paint manufacturer says a color is historic doesn't mean it is appropriate for your building !!!! Combinations of colors and where they are applied are important decisions.

## Paint

Painting can drastically change the appearance of a building. Paint color is the most debated and sometimes the most controversial choice a homeowner can make. Finding a building's original color can be tricky, but is possible. Obscured places underneath trim or light fixtures, and long covered siding may yield some answers. These steps can be fun but are not required.

Rather, the commission encourages owners to paint their buildings in historically accurate colors appropriate to the period of the building. While color is a matter of personal choice and should reflect the owner's tastes, a paint scheme should be considered in conjunction with the style of a building. Color combinations of even historic colors can be inappropriate or unattractive. Most paint manufacturers offer suggested combinations of three colors for body, trim and shutters or accent, which is a good place to start but still needs to be approved by the HRC.

Many wood and iron elements (cornices, columns, window lintels, and sills) of historic masonry buildings were made to simulate stone by the application of colored sand to the wet paint finish. This process provides the appearance of stone and greatly increases to life of the paint.

After preparation, apply one coat of oil-based alkyd primer, followed by two coats of paint recommended for wood or masonry. Water-based acrylic paint may be used over an oil-based primer, but paint won't stick if oil-based paint is applied over a coat of water-based acrylic primer or paint.



Proper preparation and paint will ensure the longevity of this metal window hood, masonry wall and wood windows.



This steeple is painted to appear as stone.

**Italianate**, until about 1885: Base colors included white, buff, yellow ochre, green-grey, pale grey, dark brown, and medium red. Trim and shutters typically contrasted strongly, with colors including pale yellow, dark green, and medium grey. Door colors included black.

**Gothic, Italian Villa and other Early Victorian**, 1840–1870 The base color was usually in a pale earth tone, such as buff, grey, mustard, light brown, or light pink. Trim and shutters were darker than the base color, including black, chocolate, red, dark grey, dark green, or dark brown. The door was frequently unpainted wood, often oak.

**Greek Revival**, until 1850:

The base color was typically white, buff, pale yellow, green-grey, blue-grey, or pale grey. Trim and shutters were olive green, grey-blue, dark bottle green, green-black, buff, white, or black. The door color was dark green, black, or medium blue.

**Queen Anne Shingle Style**

Range of vibrant colors, including greens, oranges, citrine and olive. Trim done in starkly contrasting colors, typically darker hues. Two and three toned trim creates depth and relief.

**Federal**

Neutral, muted colors such as white, cream and pale grey. Wood trim should be similar, non-contrasting color. Green on window shutters.

### APPROPRIATE TREATMENT GUIDE

All paint colors are subject to HRC review and Planning Commission approval. Submit photos of your property with your application. Reviewers can help you in determining what colors are appropriate.

- Colors should complement the overall color schemes on the same street.
- Bright and obtrusive colors will not be approved.
- Good preparation is key to a successful, long-lasting paint job.
- Avoid using caustic strippers; some can cause illness.
- Use heat guns only when other methods are unsuccessful. They carry the risk of fire and exposure to gasses.
- Select 2 or 3 color combinations. Bring the paint chips to the HRC for approval.
- Apply colors to a small area to test how the colors look in context with the building and neighborhood.

**LEAD IS VERY COMMON IN OLDER BUILDINGS. MAKE SURE LEAD SAFETY IS PART OF YOUR RENOVATION PLAN**

**Owners:**

[Find a Lead-Safe Certified firm](#)

**Contractors:**

[Apply for lead safe certification/ recertification](#)

**Landlords:**

[Know your responsibilities](#)

**PLEASE NOTE:** If your home was built before 1978, there is a very good chance it has lead-based paint. In 1978, the federal government banned consumer uses of lead-containing paint. Lead from paint, including lead-contaminated dust, is one of the most common causes of lead poisoning. Lead can cause permanent brain and nerve damage in children, as well as learning and behavioral problems. Adults too can be poisoned.

Lead paint is still present in millions of homes, sometimes under layers of newer paint. If the paint is in good shape, the lead paint is usually not a problem, but deteriorating lead-based paint (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking, damaged, or damp) is a hazard and needs immediate attention.

Preparation and safe work practices will help you avoid generating lead dust. If you are hiring a contractor, check to be sure the firm has the required federal certification and training to follow lead-safe work practices. This federal requirement was enacted in 2008. The hazard of lead poisoning cannot be over emphasized. For more information, and contact Rensselaer County for a lead risk assessment at 518-270-2640 or <http://www.rensco.com/departments/public-health/environmental-division-programs-services/>