

All buildings are made of materials that will deteriorate over time, caused by the effects of rain, wind, sunlight, temperature changes and pollutants in the air, and by damage from insects and vegetation. However, not all deterioration requires *replacement* of historic material. In many cases, *repair or simple maintenance* are all that is needed.

Many historic buildings in Columbia have already survived for centuries. Older buildings will often last longer than modern buildings since they were constructed with more durable materials and with a higher level of craftsmanship. They have already stood the test of time. Their fate now is in the hands of the current property owner, and the proper care and treatment received.

The key to survival of old buildings is **regular inspection** and **regular maintenance**. Many homeowners address a problem only after something fails. If a component needs to be replaced entirely, it usually means that someone waited too long to repair it or paint it. This approach does not protect the building. Periodic inspection will help to identify problems before they cause damage.

Inspection should be followed by regular maintenance to stop minor deterioration before it becomes a major problem. This approach is like car maintenance -- changing the oil on a regular basis doesn't take too long or cost too much, but neglecting it until you have serious engine problems will mean a major repair bill.

The following checklist can help you keep track of maintenance tasks, or help you develop a schedule that is appropriate to your property.

If major building faults are identified through the use of this checklist, a building inspector, contractor, engineer or architect should be consulted for professional expertise and assistance in addressing and correcting the problem.

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

any repair work,  
call the Borough's  
Code Enforcement Office  
at 717-684-2467  
to determine whether  
your project requires a  
building permit or HARB  
review!

#### **ROOF**

- Is the ridge of the roof level, or does it sag?
- Do the rafters show signs of deterioration and moisture penetration?
- Is paint peeling or blistering at the cornice, especially on the underside? Does the edge of the roof overhang show signs of ice dams and water damage?

#### **SHINGLES**

- Look for signs of severe wear, warping, lumps, curling, splitting, and loose, broken or missing pieces
- Are asphalt shingles losing the mineral coating (granules)?

#### **CHIMNEY**

- Is the chimney sagging, leaning or bowing?
- Are bricks or stones cracked, loose or missing? Are the mortar joints tight?
- Is the chimney cap rusting or missing?
- Is the metal flashing at the chimney loose, missing or rusted?

#### **GUTTERS**

- Are there loose, rotted or missing gutters or downspouts?
- Do the gutters slope uniformly to the downspouts?
- Are the gutters clean and free-flowing? Are the elbows of the downspouts blocked?
- Is rainwater properly diverted away from the base of the building?

#### **MASONRY**

- Are any bricks loose, missing, chipped or crumbling?
- Is the mortar loose, flaking, or crumbling?
- Are there any major cracks in the masonry?

#### **FOUNDATION**

- Does water drain away from the foundation? Does water collect excessively in any areas?
- Is vegetation growing on the foundation, causing water infiltration?
- Is the foundation wall bulging or bowing?
- Are there vertical or diagonal cracks in the concrete or masonry?

## WINDOWS & DOORS

- Do windows and doors open and close smoothly? Do they stick due to swelling or excessive paint buildup?
- Is the window sash (the movable part of the window) loose in its frame?
- Is the putty around the panes of glass firm? Do the glass panes fit securely?
- Does the caulking and weatherstripping need to be repaired or replaced?
- Are all wood window and door components in good condition and painted?
- Do the exterior sills, frames or sash show signs of decay or insect damage? (Sills are particularly vulnerable.)
- Is the door's threshold worn or rotted?
- Are storm doors and storm windows available for use during winter months?
- Do storm windows fit tightly?
- Are the screens damaged?
- Does condensation build up on interior or exterior storm windows during winter months? (Some condensation is normal, but high amounts of condensation can deteriorate wood quickly.)

On the Internet, take a look at the National Park Service's on-line program titled "From the Roof Down & Skin Deep: What Your Historic House Really Wants From You." This fun and user-friendly program explains how parts of a house are interconnected and how to maintain those parts to prevent damage. [www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/roofdown](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/roofdown)

## Historical Architectural Review Board

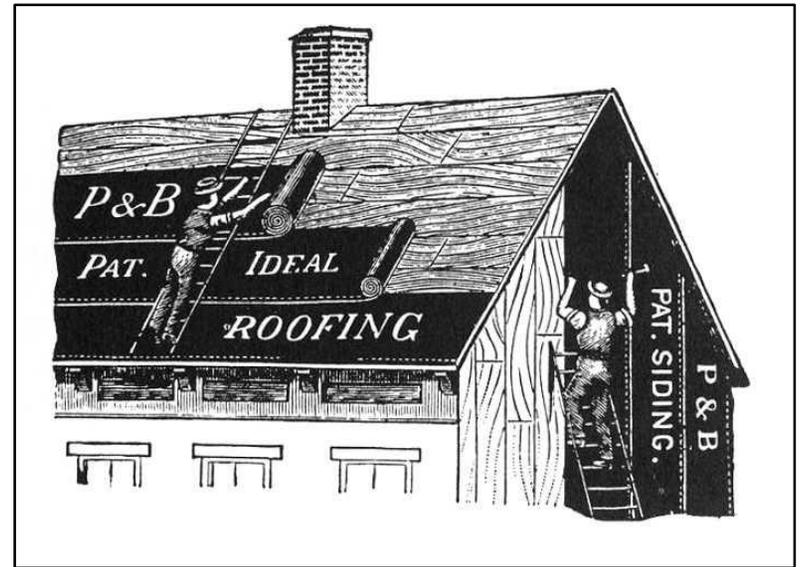
Borough of Columbia  
308 Locust Street  
Columbia, PA 17512



### Other pamphlets in this series:

*Caring for Wood Windows*  
*Caring for Bricks*  
*Caring for Porches*  
*Painting Old Buildings*

# MAINTENANCE is PRESERVATION



## Maintenance Checklist For Older Buildings

**BOROUGH of COLUMBIA**  
308 Locust Street  
Columbia, Pennsylvania 17512