

Zoar Historic Preservation Standards

Roof *Construction*



During some periods in the history of architecture, the roof imparts much of the architectural character. It defines the style and contributes to the building's aesthetics.

But no matter how decorative the patterning or how compelling the form, the roof is a highly vulnerable element of a shelter that will inevitably fail. A poor roof will permit the accelerated deterioration of historic building materials masonry, wood, plaster, paint and will cause general disintegration of the basic structure making repair costs extremely expensive.

ROOFS, GUTTERS, AND DOWNSPOUTS

Before any repair work is performed, the historic value of the materials used on the roof should be understood. Owners of buildings are encouraged to repair or replace slate roofs with slate, wood shake roofs with wood shakes, and tile roofs with tile, if such materials were part of the original buildings or were used during the historic period.

It is important to contact a professional, either an architect or a reputable roofing contractor, familiar with the characteristics of the particular historic roofing system involved. A complete internal and external inspection of the roof should be planned to determine all the causes of failure and to identify the alternatives for repair or replacement of the roofing. However, if replacement of the roof is necessary, modern materials which give the appearance of materials used during the historic period may be used. Repairs to, or replacement of gutters and downspouts should match as nearly as possible the appearance of the originals or those used during the historic period. Aluminum or other modern materials may be used so long as they are colored or painted to blend into the color scheme of the roof and the building.

ROOF SYSTEM

The roof structure should be examined on the exterior

and on the interior of the roof. Failure of the flashing system is usually a major cause of roof deterioration. Next the roof substrate, the sheathing or the battens, should be examined for water penetration or insect infestation. Condensation on the underside of the roofing is undesirable and indicates improper ventilation. The gutters and downspouts need to be evaluated for damage as well.

HISTORIC ROOFING MATERIAL

With some exceptions, most historic roofing materials are available today. Roofing materials such as slate are expensive to install, but if top quality slate and flashing are used, it will last 40-60 years with minimal maintenance. Good design and quality materials for the roof surface, fastenings, and flashing minimize roofing failures.

ALTERNATIVE ROOFING MATERIALS

In a rehabilitation project, there may be valid reasons for replacing the roof with a material other than the original. The historic roofing may no longer be available, or the cost of obtaining specially fabricated materials may be prohibitive. But the decision to use an alternative material should be weighed carefully against the primary concern to keep the historic character of the building. The alternative material should match as closely as possible the scale, texture, and coloration of the historic roofing material. But on roofs with a high degree of visibility and patterning or texture, the substitution may seriously alter the architectural character of the building.

TEMPORARY STABILIZATION

It may be necessary to carry out an immediate and temporary stabilization to prevent further deterioration but this must be used for a reasonable time or be liable to citation and fines by the Zoning Inspector.

MAINTENANCE

Although a new roof can be an object of beauty, it will not be protective for long without proper maintenance. At least twice a year, the roof should be inspected and the gutter system cleaned and/or repaired. Periodic checking of the underside of the roof from the attic after a storm or winter freezing may give early warning of any leaks. Specific instructions for the maintenance of the different roof materials should be available from the architect or contractor.

Construction Permit

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service Cultural Resources
Heritage Preservation Services

PRESERVATION BRIEFS
Roofing for Historic Buildings
by Sarah M. Sweetser

Summary

The essential ingredients for replacing and maintaining a historic roof are:

- Understanding the historic character of the building and being sympathetic to it.
- Careful examination and recording of the existing roof and any evidence of earlier roofs.
- Consideration of the historic detailing and reproducing them wherever visible.
- Supervision of the roofers to assure preservation of historic fabric and proper understanding of the scope and detailing of the project.
- Consideration of alternative materials where the original cannot be used.
- Maintenance program to assure that the owner understands how to take care of the roof and of the particular trouble spots to safeguard.

Resource

Per the
Village of Zoar, Zoning Ordinance
any roof construction requires a
"Certification of Appropriateness" (COA)
Issued by the Zoar Historic
Preservation Commission in order to obtain a
"Project permit"
Approved by the Zoning Board and
issued by the Zoning Inspector.

