Unlocking the Benefits of Historic Windows

Historic Preservation Month 2010

Old is the New Green

Thinking about replacing your windows? You might want to consider your options. Windows are an easy target and are all too often blamed for energy loss. However, only between 10-25% of energy loss actually comes from windows. People commonly jump to replace their historic windows because of promises that replacement windows will not only save them time and money, but that their products and services are the "green" thing to do. In fact, a thriving industry has grown around the perceived need to consume and replace rather than to reuse. Many windows that have been on the job for 50 or 100 years (or more) can continue to do so, and can be just as energy efficient during the winter as a new window, when properly maintained, weatherstripped, and combined with a storm window.

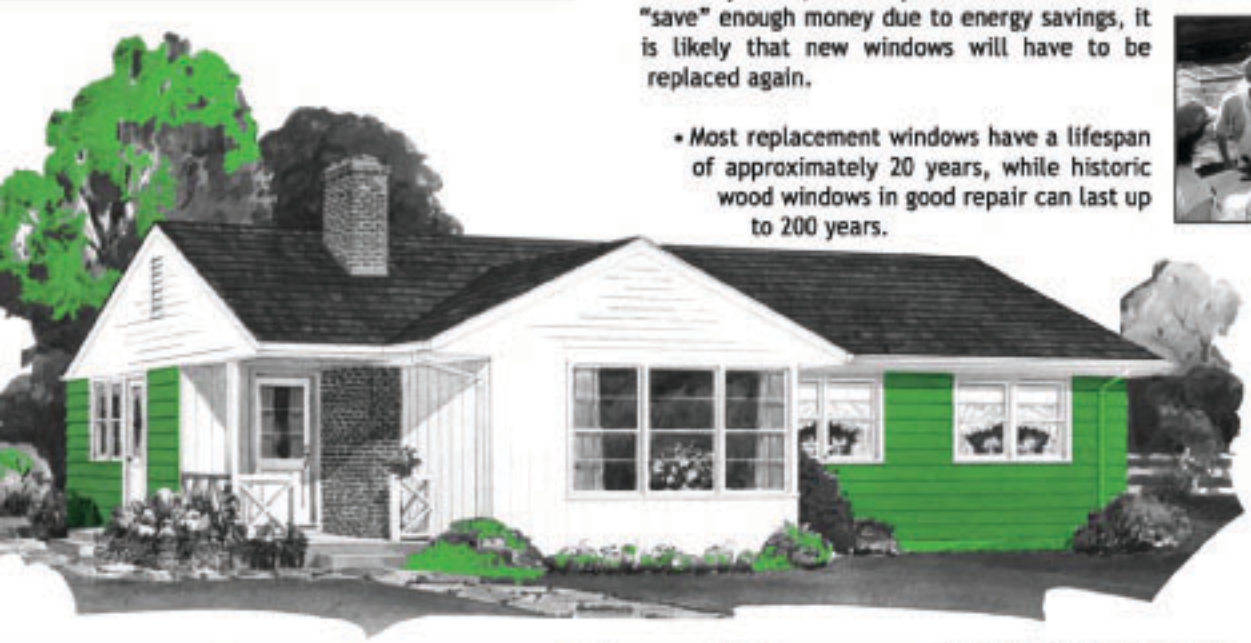
Historic windows are disappearing at an alarming rate, and we in the preservation movement have had enough with the onslaught of misinformation about window replacement! Most property owners are simply not aware that by maintaining and repairing their existing windows, they can achieve higher levels of energy efficiency.

- Window replacement is rarely cost-effective due to the high cost of new units when compared to the energy savings cost.

- The typical payback period for replacement windows can be anywhere from 30 to 100 years.

- In many cases, in the span of time it takes to "save" enough money due to energy savings, it is likely that new windows will have to be replaced again.

- Most replacement windows have a lifespan of approximately 20 years, while historic wood windows in good repair can last up to 200 years.



While being very beautiful, original historic windows also serve a great purpose – they impart a building's inside-outside connection. They provide ventilation and light. Above all, they offer clues to a building's history because they are integral aspects of architectural design. By saving an old house—or its windows—you are preserving a piece of history, conserving natural resources, and being environmentally responsible by not contributing debris to a landfill.

Do

- Vinyl windows are not green! They contain poly vinyl chloride (PVC), which can emit harmful gases into your home, and their manufacture creates toxic by-products.

- The cost of new "energy-efficient" windows may have less impact on actual energy use than spending a much smaller amount on more insulation in the attic.

Don't

- Fireplaces with ill-fitting, missing or open dampers can raise heating costs by 30%. Plus, much as 30% of warm air may escape through a poorly insulated attic.

- When done properly, simple weatherization projects other than complete window replacement can save home owners as much as several hundred dollars per year on heating bills.

Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

For more information on windows and weatherization, please visit our website at www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/historicarttax/windowstax.htm

Poster designed by Megan Duvall, DAHP