



ITS
NUMBER 56

Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Alterations without Historical Basis

Applicable Standards:

2. Retention of Historic Character
3. Recognition of Historic Period
6. Repair/Replacement of Deteriorated or Missing Features Based on Historic Evidence
9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations

Issue: Alterations to a historic building made during rehabilitation for a new or a continuing use must not alter the historic character of the building. Distinctive historic features in one location should not be replicated in another portion of the building without documentary or physical evidence. Conjectural changes create a false sense of historical development and are contrary to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. When there is no record of the historic appearance of a building, the rehabilitation should take into consideration its historic use and remaining evidence to design a compatible new or replacement feature.

Application 1 (*Incompatible treatment*): This early-twentieth century tobacco and cotton warehouse is sited on the main commercial street in a historic district. Prior to rehabilitation the front of the building featured one-over-one windows, two pedestrian doors and an incompatible recessed storefront that had been added in the mid-twentieth century. Original large, arched openings on a side elevation that had provided access to the warehouse area were still extant. When the warehouse was rehabilitated for retail use, one of the objectives was to create large display windows on the primary elevation. The owner chose to base the design of these new shop windows on the historic arched openings located on the side of the building. The front was further changed by the addition of a heavy new cornice to the stepped parapet. These conjectural changes—the new arched openings and the large cornice—diminish the historic utilitarian character of the property and convey a false sense of historicism. This project does not meet the Standards.



Clockwise from top left:

A. The primary elevation of the ground floor of this historic warehouse, which had been altered prior to rehabilitation, featured double-hung windows, two pedestrian doors and a recessed storefront.

B. Historically, the warehouse space was accessed from the side via large arched loading bays.

C. During rehabilitation, the original arched masonry openings on the side of the building were replicated on the front and a heavy cornice was also added to the parapet. These treatments resulted in a false sense of the historic appearance of the building.



Application 2 (*Incompatible treatment*): This 1866, three-story, commercial building was first altered in 1914 when the façade was redesigned in the Neo-classical style. During the 1960s, the 1914 fenestration on the second and third floors was replaced with incompatible windows separated by an aluminum panel. As there was no historic documentation to guide the recent rehabilitation of the building, the decision was made to install a two-story, curtain-wall glazing system rather than to retain the existing separation between the second and the third floors. The installation of this two-story curtain wall went hand-in-hand with the removal of a portion of the third floor to create a two-story atrium. Taken together, these changes give the building an appearance at odds with its historic character on both the interior and the exterior and, thus, the rehabilitation fails to meet the Standards.

Clockwise from top left:

A. The historic windows on the second and third floors of this historic building had already been replaced in the 1960s with an inappropriate glass and metal panel system.

B. During rehabilitation, an incompatible curtain-wall window system was installed creating a two-story appearance rather than retaining the three-story historic appearance of the building.

C. The removal of a portion of the third floor gives that space the appearance of a mezzanine overlooking a newly created two-story space behind the new curtain wall.



Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service

These bulletins are issued to explain preservation project decisions made by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The resulting determinations, based on the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#), are not necessarily applicable beyond the unique facts and circumstances of each particular case.

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