

# THE MILLS ACT HANDBOOK

*A Guide to Your Commitment to Preservation*



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# THE MILLS ACT HANDBOOK



Peres House, 1936

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Cover – The Horrell House, 1856

# INTRODUCTION

This handbook serves as a practical guide to understanding the Mills Act Program - California's most significant property tax incentive for historic preservation. It is designed to help property owners of qualified residential and commercial properties create a clear and thoughtful Ten Year Rehabilitation Plan while understanding the principles that guide authentic preservation work.

Organized into concise sections, it introduces the fundamentals of the Mills Act, outlines eligible and ineligible work, and provides hands-on tips for maintaining and restoring historic features. A comprehensive resources section lists suppliers, craftspeople, preservation professionals, and organizations offering materials, expertise, and support for your restoration projects.

Drawing from firsthand preservation experience, this handbook offers practical guidance to help property owners approach restoration and rehabilitation with confidence and clarity.



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Luther T. Hayman, 1879



Sarah L. (Stone) Hayman, 1880

## LEGACY

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Connecting with the past reminds us that historic properties are more than structures - they reflect the vision of those who built them. Your commitment to preservation honors their work and ensures that the structure they created endures. Researching your property's chain of title will reveal the names of the previous owners and dates of ownership. With this information you may be able to find newspaper articles about the construction of your building, details about the owners, and even historical photos of your property or the owners. An 1889 Napa Register article about the Ackerman Heritage House (shown on the opposite page) reported that the Luther Turton designed home was commissioned to be built in just ninety days. Further research uncovered photos of the first owners, Luther and Sarah Hayman.

# THE MILLS ACT PROGRAM



Ackerman Heritage House, 1889

The Mills Act Program encourages the preservation of California's historic and architectural heritage by providing property tax relief in exchange for a long-term commitment to preservation. Owners of historic properties that are listed on the City of Napa's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI), and that are participating in the Mills Act Program, are required to maintain, repair, and rehabilitate their properties in a way that preserves their architectural integrity, historic character, and original materials.

The following guidelines reflect the preservation principles established by the California Office of Historic Preservation, the California Historical Building Code, and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. These principles provide the basis for determining which types of work may be considered eligible or ineligible under the Mills Act.

# PRINCIPLES



## **Preserve historic character**

Protect and maintain the original design, materials, and craftsmanship that define the building's appearance and significance.

## **Repair rather than replace**

Historic features should be repaired whenever possible. Replacement should only occur when original materials cannot be reasonably repaired, and any new work must match the original in appearance and detail.

## **Maintain authenticity**

Avoid changes that create a false sense of age or history. Additions or alterations should be compatible with the original design but clearly identifiable as new work.

## **Apply the California Historical Building Code (CHBC)**

Use the CHBC to meet code requirements in ways that protect historic materials and features. It provides flexibility for safety and accessibility compliance without compromising integrity.

## **Integrate modern systems sensitively**

Modern upgrades such as mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and/or accessibility improvements should be installed in a minimally invasive and reversible way that preserves original materials and finishes.

**Preserve the setting**

Maintain documented historic landscape features, pathways, fences, and outbuildings that contribute to the property's historic significance, character, and context.

**Document all work**

Maintain photographic and written documentation of all rehabilitation work to be submitted annually to ensure compliance with the plan.

**Ensure reversibility**

New interventions should be designed to be reversible, allowing future restoration of original conditions without damaging historic fabric.

**Use appropriate materials and craftsmanship**

Employ traditional materials and construction techniques consistent with the property's era. Substitute materials should only be used if they accurately replicate the historic appearance, texture, and quality.

**Ongoing compliance**

All work is subject to the City of Napa's Historic Preservation Ordinance (NMC Chapter 15.52) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, with eligibility determined by the City on a case-by-case basis. Listing work in the plan does not constitute City approval or guarantee eligibility; owners should check with the City to ensure proposed work qualifies. Owners are responsible for maintaining the property in good condition throughout the contract. A Mills Act contract maintains a continual ten-year term, automatically renewing each year, is transferable to future owners, and includes penalties for early termination.

# ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE WORK

## TEN YEAR REHABILITATION PLAN



Hennessey Estate, 1889

This section outlines examples of eligible and ineligible work for inclusion in the Mills Act Ten Year Rehabilitation Plan that is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Final eligibility is subject to available documentation, site-specific conditions, and City of Napa review. The focus of preservation work and the examples in this section

emphasize repair, restoration, and the long-term care of historic materials rather than modernization or comfort upgrades, which generally do not qualify unless they directly support the structure's integrity.

The plan should include a realistic cost estimate for each eligible project or phase. A major restoration project undertaken in the early years of the plan may be followed by lower-cost work in subsequent years, but the total projected expenditure over the ten-year period should still approximate or exceed the anticipated tax savings.

Having a clear understanding of what work may be eligible and ineligible for your Ten Year Plan allows you to develop projects that are both aligned with preservation standards and effective in maintaining the historic character of the property.

# BUILDING EXTERIOR



## EXTERIOR PAINTING

**Eligible:** Repainting protects and prolongs the life of historic materials by shielding them from moisture, sunlight, and decay. Using appropriate preparation methods and historically correct colors helps prevent deterioration while maintaining the building's original character and appearance.

- *Example:* Repaint with historically appropriate colors, remove deteriorated paint as needed, repair or replace damaged wood in-kind, priming, caulking, and applying finish coats to ensure protection of the underlying historic materials.

## WINDOW AND DOOR RESTORATION

**Eligible:** Restoring and preserving original windows and doors are essential to maintaining the historic character, craftsmanship, and architectural integrity of a building.

- *Example:* Comprehensive restoration of the original wood, double-hung windows, including wood repair, reglazing, painting, and rope replacement.

## WINDOW REPLACEMENT

**Eligible, with conditions:** Replacing non-historic or incompatible windows with historically accurate ones that match the original design and materials. This helps restore the

building's architectural integrity and reinforces its historic character. Front windows require strict adherence to historic detail and material; less visible elevations may have slightly more flexibility.

- *Example:* Replace existing aluminum sliders with historically accurate, all-wood, double-hung sash windows informed by historic documentation, physical evidence, or surviving original units.

**Ineligible:** Replacing original, salvageable wood windows with modern, vinyl-clad or composite windows.

## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

**Eligible:** Original stained glass windows are significant character-defining features. Repairing and conserving them rather than replacing them maintains historic integrity of materials, design, and craftsmanship.

- *Example:* Inspect and carefully repair existing stained glass windows to stabilize loose sections, secure leading, and preserve the original glass, framing, and craftsmanship.

## REVERSAL OF INAPPROPRIATE ALTERATIONS

**Eligible:** Removing non-historic or incompatible alterations and restoring original features is generally eligible. Such work helps recover the building's historic integrity by reversing changes that conflict with its period or craftsmanship, using physical or documentary evidence to guide accurate repair or reconstruction.

- *Example:* Remove non-historic porch enclosure and reconstruct the porch to its original open-air design based on historic photographs.

## INSTALLATION OF MISSING HISTORICAL DETAIL

**Eligible, with conditions:** Installing a missing architectural feature, such as a cornice, corbel, or decorative trim, when the

intent is to restore the historic character of the property based on documentation or physical evidence, rather than creating a new decorative element.

**Ineligible:** Adding decorative corbels, brackets, or cornices that were never part of the original building or period, purely for aesthetic enhancement or personal preference.

## **HISTORIC SHUTTERS AND LOUVERED PANELS**

**Eligible, with conditions:** Original window shutters and ventilation or screening louvered panels are important character-defining features that enhance the historic appearance, proportion, and rhythm of the building facade.

- *Example:* Inspect, repair, and restore original shutters. Replace with same design and material as needed.

**Ineligible:** Installing shutters out of proportion to window size. Installing shutters that were never historically present.

## **HISTORIC CARRIAGE HOUSE DOORS**

**Eligible:** Carriage house doors are a prominent and character-defining feature that reflects the property's historic function and craftsmanship.

- *Example:* Inspect and repair the existing original carriage house doors to retain as much original material and detailing as possible.

## **STAIR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT**

**Eligible with conditions:** The work must be intended to preserve, restore, or replace in-kind the historic design, materials, and character of the stairs. Safety upgrades may be included if they are minimally invasive and reversible.

- *Example:* Replace missing or irreparably damaged steps with the same material, design, and dimensions as the original.

**Ineligible:** Removing a historic wooden staircase to install wide contemporary concrete stairs with stainless steel railings.

## FOUNDATION

**Eligible, with conditions:** Foundation repair or replacement is eligible when necessary to stabilize and preserve the historic structure. Work should retain as much of the original foundation as feasible and match original materials and appearance when visible. Any new concrete, venting, or reinforcing should be done with minimal alteration to historic structure.

**Ineligible:** Cosmetic upgrades, unnecessary replacements, or changes that alter the building's historic appearance - such as raising the structure for convenience, removing visible stone or brick, or adding decorative treatments not historically present.

## SEISMIC RETROFIT

**Eligible, with conditions:** Seismic strengthening work is generally eligible when it is necessary to protect the historic structure and is designed to minimize visual and material impacts on original fabric. Reinforcement methods should be reversible where possible and should not obscure, damage, or remove historic finishes or features.

**Ineligible:** Work that unnecessarily alters or conceals historic materials, changes the building's appearance, or uses invasive structural techniques without consideration of preservation principles.

## LIGHTING INSTALLATION OR REPLACEMENT

**Eligible, with conditions:** New or replacement lighting is eligible when it is done to maintain, enhance, or restore the historic character and function of a property.

- *Example:* Replace a modern porch lantern with a historically appropriate fixture.

- *Example:* Remove modern recessed ceiling lights - patch and repair original ceiling material and finish to match adjacent surfaces. Replace with a period-appropriate light fixture that reflects the home's historic style and era.

**Ineligible:** Installing modern, oversized, or decorative lighting that conflicts with the building's historic style or placing fixtures in locations that damage or obscure historic materials. Recessed lighting is a modern addition that alters the ceiling plane and detracts from historic integrity.

## REPLACEMENT OF HOUSE ADDRESS NUMBERS

**Eligible:** Replacing existing modern address numbers with new numbers that match the period style of the house, based on historic photographs, catalog references, or typical examples from the home's era and style.

- *Example:* Install house numbers - materials and finish will be selected to complement the historic facade. Installation will be in the original or most historically appropriate location, using minimal and reversible attachment methods.

## HISTORIC IDENTIFICATION SIGNAGE

**Eligible:** Providing informative signage promotes public awareness of the building's historic significance and encourages preservation stewardship. Installation to be noninvasive and reversible.

- *Example:* Install a small plaque compatible with the home's architectural period and materials, on the exterior front wall or walkway, identifying the property's historic name, construction date, or other identifying information.

## MAILBOXES

**Eligible:** Mailboxes, though small, are highly visible elements of a home's exterior and contribute to the period character of the facade. Repairing or replacing the mailbox with a

historically compatible design enhances the home's integrity of design and materials, improving the overall historic streetscape.

### **HISTORIC FOUNDATION VENTS**

**Eligible:** Decorative foundation vents are small but defining features often contributing to the building's architectural style and craftsmanship. Their restoration maintains the home's integrity of materials and design.

- *Example:* Inspect and repair existing decorative foundation vents to preserve original materials and patterns. Where vents are missing or deteriorated beyond repair, install accurate reproductions based on historic photographs, surviving examples, or period-appropriate designs.

### **STRUCTURAL PEST MITIGATION AND REPAIR**

**Eligible, with conditions:** Pest activity threatens the integrity of original materials and historic fabric. Mitigating infestations and repairing resulting damage ensures long-term preservation of the property's design, materials, and workmanship.

- *Example:* Inspect and secure the building against rodent and other pest intrusion to protect historic materials and finishes. Repairs may include sealing openings, reinforcing foundations or framing, and repairing any wood, plaster, or finishes damaged by pests.

**Ineligible:** Routine extermination alone (e.g., monthly pest control service) is generally not eligible.

### **SOLAR PANELS**

**Eligible with conditions:** May be eligible when the panels or systems do not affect the historic character of the property, are reversible, and are not visible from the public right-of-way.

- *Example:* Install panels on a rear slope or detached garage, not visible from the street and preserving historic features.

**Ineligible:** When it alters or diminishes the building’s historic appearance or requires removal of historic materials.

### CHIMNEY REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT

**Eligible, with conditions:** Work on chimneys is eligible when it is done to maintain, repair, or restore the historic materials, design, and proportions of the chimney, rather than as a general modernization or complete redesign.

- *Example:* Repointing brick mortar on a historic chimney using a mortar mix that matches the original in color, texture, and strength, or rebuilding a deteriorated chimney with bricks and dimensions that replicate the original.

**Ineligible:** Replacing a historic masonry chimney with a modern prefabricated metal or concrete chimney that alters the appearance, size, or style of the historic structure.

### ROOF REPLACEMENT

**Eligible, with conditions:** Eligible when the work restores or replicates the roof’s historic appearance such as composition shingles in place of wood shingles. The roof is a major character-defining feature and critical to the preservation of the structure.

**Ineligible:** Replacing a roof with a material that clashes with the historic style (e.g., modern metal on a historic Craftsman home) is not appropriate.



Late Victorian Cottage, 1900

# BUILDING SYSTEMS & INTERIORS



Interior work is eligible only when it preserves, repairs, or restores documented character-defining features and does not create a false sense of historical development, consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

## SYSTEM UPGRADES

**Eligible, with conditions:** Upgrading mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems to address safety concerns or code requirements, while protecting historic materials, reusing existing vents or fixtures, or integrating modern components discreetly without altering visible historic features.

- *Example:* Replace outdated and potentially unsafe knob-and-tube wiring throughout the house.

**Ineligible:** Installing exposed conduit or piping that visually detracts from historic finishes or any work that cuts through, or damages historic finishes.

## HVAC SYSTEM REPLACEMENT

**Eligible, with conditions:** Replacing an outdated or unsafe heating, ventilation, or air-conditioning (HVAC) system may be eligible when it supports the ongoing preservation and use of the property. Proper climate control can prevent damage from moisture, mold, or temperature fluctuations, helping protect wood, plaster, and finishes. New systems should be installed with minimal alteration to historic materials. Exterior condensers should be placed in screened areas or out of view. Removal of window A/C units from visible areas is ideal.

- *Example:* Replacing an obsolete floor furnace with a discreet,

energy-efficient system installed in a non-visible location.

**Ineligible:** Removing intact historic heating elements, such as radiators, registers, or grilles, which contribute to the home's character. A new system primarily for comfort, modernization, or energy efficiency when there is no demonstrated preservation or building-protection benefit.

## FLOORING

**Eligible, with conditions:** For original flooring, repairing it is an excellent preservation project. The guiding principle is to repair rather than replace historic materials whenever possible. If the original historic flooring is so severely deteriorated that it cannot be repaired, replacement may be considered.

- *Example:* Replace deteriorated floorboards that are beyond repair - replacement boards will match the original wood species, width, grain, and finish.

**Ineligible:** Modern wood-look vinyl flooring and light-colored "French oak" flooring are recent and distinctly modern trends that clash with the aesthetics of historical periods.

## HISTORIC KITCHEN AND BATHROOM RESTORATION

**Ineligible, with conditions:** General cosmetic remodels of non-historic kitchens or bathrooms are not eligible. When these spaces have been previously altered and no longer retain historic materials, design, or configuration, additional remodeling and updating them again generally would not qualify under the Mills Act.

**Eligible:** Work on kitchens and bathrooms are considered eligible only when it restores original historic elements or accurately replicates documented original conditions. This includes rebuilding built-in cabinetry, period-correct fixtures, and finishes that use historically appropriate materials and details. Updating utility lines when needed.

## LINCRUSTA AND WALL COVERINGS

**Eligible:** Original Lincrusta and similar embossed wall coverings are important character-defining interior elements that convey historic craftsmanship and design.

- *Example:* Inspect, clean, and repair existing Lincrusta or other historic wall coverings. Work may include stabilizing areas of lifting, cracking, or peeling, in-kind patching or replication of missing or damaged patterns.

## RESTORATION OF INTERIOR FEATURES

**Eligible:** Restoring distinctive original features such as decorative plaster, stair newel posts, balusters and handrails, or a built-in dining room buffet based on historical evidence.

- *Example:* Repair and restore decorative plasterwork in the parlor referring to existing remnants of original design.

## RESTORATION OF HISTORIC FIREPLACES

**Eligible, with conditions:** Original fireplace mantels and surrounding materials are classic character-defining features in historic homes.

- *Example:* Replace missing or damaged tiles and hearth with in-kind materials that replicate the original historic design, color, and pattern.

**Ineligible:** Installing a new fireplace for energy efficiency, heating, or convenience rather than historic preservation.

## PAINT REMOVAL AND WOODWORK RESTORATION

**Eligible, with conditions:** Original woodwork is a character-defining feature of the home's interior. Removing later paint layers and restoring the original finish preserves historic materials, craftsmanship, and appearance.

- *Example:* Carefully remove non-historic paint from original interior woodwork, including moldings, baseboards, window and door trim, and mantels. Restore the wood to

its original finish using historically appropriate stains, varnishes, or clear finishes.

**Ineligible:** Sandblasting or other aggressive techniques to remove paint.

## **HARDWARE AND FASTENERS**

**Eligible:** Original hardware and period-accurate fasteners are important details that convey the home's craftsmanship and authenticity.

- *Example:* Repair, clean, and conserve original door, window, and cabinet hardware throughout the home. Where hardware is missing or beyond repair, install historically accurate reproductions that match the original style, material, and finish. Replace modern Phillips-head screws with traditional slotted screws.

## **PUSH-BUTTON LIGHT SWITCHES AND PLATES**

**Eligible:** Although late-19th-century houses were built before electricity, reproduction push-button light switches are generally considered an appropriate and reversible alternative to modern switch plates when chosen in a style compatible with the home's historic character.

## **APPLIANCES**

**Ineligible, with conditions:** Freestanding appliances, such as vintage stoves or refrigerators, are generally considered personal property and are not eligible since they can be removed from the home. Tax benefits apply to the preservation of the historic structure and its integrated features.

**Eligible:** If the appliance is built-in, historically integral, or contributes to the historic significance of the kitchen's design, such as original cabinetry designed around a specific range or a built-in icebox, then restoration may be justifiable as part of preserving the historic fabric.

# NAPA ARCHITECTURAL PORTRAITS:



Hammerich House, 1870



W. H. Corlett House, 1891



Gordon Building, 1929



Queen Anne Cottage, 1900



Henry Brown House, 1890

# PROPERTIES UNDER THE MILLS ACT



Italianate, 1875



George E. Goodman, Jr, 1891



Napa Register Building, 1905



Queen Anne Cottage, 1890



Blackbird Inn, 1905



Victorian Cottage, 1895

## INTERIOR PAINTING

**Ineligible, with conditions:** Generally repainting interior walls that have no historic significance is considered ineligible. Most interior painting is considered cosmetic maintenance or a matter of personal taste.

**Eligible.** Repair plaster walls and repaint areas affected by the knob-and-tube replacement project.

## SUMP PUMP

**Eligible, with conditions:** Replacement, maintenance or annual inspection of the basement sump pump to protect the historic foundation from water damage.

**Ineligible:** Routine maintenance alone not tied to structural preservation.

## ALARM SYSTEMS

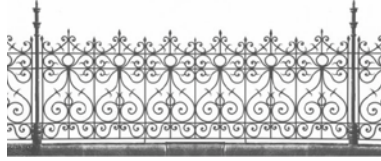
**Ineligible, with conditions:** A security alarm system is generally viewed as a modern convenience and does not directly contribute to the historic fabric of the structure.

**Eligible:** This might include a sophisticated fire alarm system that protects the historic building from damage and is installed with minimal intrusion to historic finishes.



Thomas Earl House, 1861

# LANDSCAPING AND HARDSCAPING



## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

**Eligible, with conditions:** Restore a historically significant documented landscape with period-appropriate materials that contribute to the property's overall historic character.

- *Example:* Restore the front yard landscape to its historically correct design and remove contemporary structures and non-historic plantings.

**Ineligible:** When there is no documented historical evidence or it does not directly contribute to the preservation of original, character-defining features. Because vegetation is living and continually changes over time, such efforts are considered interpretive or maintenance activities rather than true rehabilitation.

## EXISTING LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

**Ineligible, with conditions:** Routine landscape maintenance is not eligible unless the landscape itself is historically significant. Tasks like mowing, trimming, or replanting are considered normal upkeep, not preservation.

- *Example:* Installing artificial turf or synthetic lawn surfaces, as they do not reflect historic landscape design or materials.

**Eligible:** If it directly supports the preservation of a documented historic feature or prevents damage to the historic structure or setting. To qualify, the work must serve a preservation purpose - not routine property maintenance.

- *Example:* Pruning and care of original or historic trees and shrubs to maintain their health and intended form, especially if they frame or accentuate a historic structure.

## **HISTORIC HARDSCAPING**

**Eligible, with conditions:** Repairing or replacing historically significant hardscape elements such as driveways, paths, walkways, or steps using materials and designs consistent with the property's historic period. Limited new hardscape may be considered when required for function or accessibility and designed to be compatible with the historic setting.

**Ineligible:** Replacing a driveway or walkway with modern, non-compatible materials such as a stamped concrete or manufactured pavers.

## **IRRIGATION SYSTEM MAINTENANCE**

**Ineligible, with conditions:** Routine maintenance is generally not covered.

**Eligible:** Maintenance of an efficient irrigation system as part of an approved historic landscape restoration.

## **NEW ORNAMENTAL FEATURES**

**Ineligible:** Installing new ornamental features, like fountains or decorative elements made of modern materials, are not appropriate because it conflicts with the core principles of historic preservation as it changes the perceived history and character of the property.

## **FENCING, WALL, GATE, AND TRELIS REPLACEMENT**

**Eligible, with conditions:** Work may be eligible when it restores or reconstructs a historically documented fence, wall, gate, or trellis, or introduces a new feature that is compatible with the property's period and setting. New fences may define boundaries or provide privacy if designed in a simple,

traditional manner that complements the property without implying a feature that was historically part of the site.

- *Example:* Replacing a modern chain-link fence with a wood or metal design of traditional proportions suited to the home's period and site setting.

**Ineligible:** Constructing fences, walls, gates, or trellises of an incompatible design for the character of the building, use modern or visually intrusive materials, or otherwise alter or distract from the property's historic appearance.

## HISTORIC SIDEWALK RESTORATION

**Ineligible, with conditions.** Sidewalks within the public right-of-way (i.e., city property) are generally ineligible. The program applies solely to privately owned historic properties and is intended to preserve character-defining features rather than address public maintenance.

**Eligible:** It may be eligible if the sidewalk is historically significant or was originally constructed as part of the property's design, contributing to the site's historic setting.



George Horton Triplet, 1886

# TEN YEAR PLAN BASICS



## **Documentation**

All work must be thoroughly documented with “before” and “after” photos, receipts, and permits to prove compliance to be included with the annual report to the Planning Department.

## **Changes to the Plan**

Changes to the Ten Year Plan can be made annually by submitting them to the Planning Department. Any added or updated work must meet preservation standards and qualify under the Mills Act program.

## **Lumped projects**

For large, multi-year projects (e.g., historic facade or window restoration), break the work into annual phases rather than lumping it together, so each year’s tasks are clear and manageable.

## **Vague plans**

Unspecific or vague plans that fail to detail how the tax savings will be used for eligible preservation work over the ten year term is not acceptable. Using vague terms like “annual maintenance and repairs” needs clarification.

## **Blank entries on the Ten Year Plan**

Each year needs to contain an eligible task(s).

## Previous work

Qualifying work completed within the twelve months preceding the application date may be included in the Ten Year Plan as a separate addendum, provided it meets preservation standards. The Ten Year Plan should reference this addendum and the associated costs, while still outlining planned work for each year to reflect the property's ongoing maintenance and preservation needs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

City of Napa Mills Act Application

*cityofnapa.org*

Mills Act Property Tax Incentive

*assessor@napacounty.gov*

California Office of Historic Preservation

*ohp.parks.ca.gov*

Secretary of the Interior's Standards

*nps.gov/tps*



Hayman Cottage, 1907

# ARCHITECTURAL STYLES: LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> TO EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



## **LATE 1800s**

### **Italianate (1840 - 1885)**

Tall, narrow proportions with low-pitched roofs, wide eaves supported by decorative brackets, and arched window crowns.

### **Gothic Revival (1840 - 1880)**

Characterized by steeply pitched roofs with decorative bargeboards, pointed arched windows, and vertical emphasis.

### **Second Empire (1855 - 1885)**

Distinguished by a mansard roof with dormer windows, heavy ornate detailing, highly symmetrical, and strong massing.

### **Stick Style (1860 - 1890)**

Wood-framed houses with decorative stickwork emphasizing the structure, steep gables, and overhanging eaves.

### **Queen Anne (1880 - 1910)**

Asymmetrical facades, turrets or towers, wraparound porches, decorative shingle work, with a mix of textures and patterns.

### **Folk Victorian (1870 - 1910)**

Simple house forms with front facing gables, Victorian trim, patterned siding or spindle work added to gables and porches.

### **Shingle Style (1880 - 1910)**

Shingled surfaces on walls and roofs, asymmetrical rooflines, prominent porches, and variety of window types and sizes.

## **EARLY 1900s**

### **Colonial Revival (1890 - 1940)**

Symmetrical facades, pediments, double hung windows with shutters, centered front door, and classical detailing.

### **Tudor Revival (1890–1940)**

Steeply pitched roofs with single or multiple gables, decorative half-timbering, tall narrow windows, and prominent chimneys evoking medieval English cottages.

### **Craftsman / Arts and Crafts (1905 - 1930)**

Low-pitched gabled roofs, exposed rafters, wide eaves, and wide, open front porches held up by thick tapered columns.

### **Prairie Style (1900 - 1920)**

Low, horizontal houses with broad overhanging eaves, flat or hipped roofs, and bands of horizontal windows.

### **American Foursquare (1895 - 1930)**

Boxy, two-story homes with hipped roofs, central dormers, wide front porches, and restrained decoration.

### **Neoclassical (1895 - 1950)**

Large-scale columns, symmetrical facades, and formal classical detailing derived from ancient Greek and Roman architecture.

### **Spanish Colonial Revival (1915 - 1940)**

Stucco walls, red clay tile roofs, arches, and decorative ironwork inspired by Spanish and Mediterranean traditions.

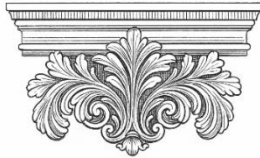
### **Mission Revival (1890 - 1920)**

Simplified adobe-inspired forms with curved parapets, smooth stucco, deep windows and doors, and red clay tile roofs reminiscent of early California missions.

### **Dutch Colonial Revival (1900 - 1940)**

Gambrel roofs with flared eaves, dormers, and symmetrical facades often with shingle or clapboard siding.

# TIPS & TECHNIQUES



This section provides preservation-minded guidance for maintaining and restoring historic features, planning rehabilitation projects, and carrying out hands-on work in a manner consistent with historic preservation principles.

## STRIPPING HARDWARE

Painted historic metal hardware can often be stripped without harsh chemicals, preserving both the metal and its original detailing.

- **Crock pot:** Use an old crock pot designated solely for this purpose and place it outdoors or in a well-ventilated area. Submerge metal hardware in water, ensuring at least one inch of coverage. Set to *low* heat (do not use high) and allow the hardware to soak for several hours or overnight. Monitor the water level to prevent evaporation below the hardware.
- **Paint removal:** Turn off the crock pot and allow the water to cool if needed. Wearing gloves and a mask (older paint layers may contain lead), remove one piece at a time. The heat should loosen most paint layers, though a few areas may still need extra attention for complete removal.
- **Tools:** Use gentle tools such as a putty knife, very fine steel wool, a soft brass wire brush, or dental picks for tight areas. Different metals and levels of ornamentation require different levels of care. Clean slotted screws at the same time to maintain a consistent finish.

- **Finishing:** After cleaning, protect the metal with microcrystalline wax. Lightly oil hinges and moving parts, then buff with a soft cloth.

## OLD WAVY GLASS

Early window glass, often called cylinder or crown glass, was hand-blown and naturally formed ripples and bubbles that give historic windows their distinctive depth and catch the light differently throughout the day. Modern float glass just cannot replicate it. These irregularities are a hallmark of pre- and early 20<sup>th</sup> century craftsmanship and an important feature of a building's original character. Using wavy glass helps maintain the home's authentic historic appearance.

- **Salvage yards:** Old wavy glass can be found at salvage yards that specialize in architectural material reuse. Most likely you'll need to purchase a vintage window sash that still has the old glass installed. One way you can identify wavy glass is by looking at the reflections in the glass - if they ripple slightly - it's old glass. Tip - sometimes salvage yards have wood sashes, with wavy glass, that are in very poor condition, and they sell these at a big discount.
- **Removal of glass:** You can carefully remove the glass by chipping away very carefully the old glazing. It takes some practice, but it can be done. Beware of the glazing points. The internet can provide tips on removing the glass.
- **Clean:** You'll need to clean the glass as it will most likely have old paint on it, paint overspray and grime. To remove paint, spray a generous amount of window cleaner on the glass and glide a flat razor over the glass in one direction very carefully. Old glass can scratch easily. There may be scratches along the paint edges from people removing paint from the glass in the past. The edges need to be removed in the process of installing your "new" old wavy glass.

## RELEASING PAINTED-SHUT WINDOW SASHES

Many old wood window sashes have many layers of paint preventing them from operating correctly.

- **Window zipper tool:** To safely free them, use a window zipper - a thin, serrated metal blade designed to cut through layers of paint between the sash and frame without damaging the wood. Gently run the tool along all painted seams, then use a thin putty knife to ease the sash loose. Avoid prying with force, which can crack old glass or damage the wood joints.

## SCRAPING PAINT TO FIND ORIGINAL COLORS

This process helps guide historically appropriate repainting and preservation choices.

- **Scrape:** To uncover a home's authentic color history, gently scrape through paint layers in a small, inconspicuous area using a sharp metal scraper. Work slowly to expose each layer, noting color changes as you go. The earliest layer, closest to the wood is typically the original finish.
- **True color:** Oil-based paints can yellow with age, so the original color may appear darker or warmer - compare scraped layers to paint samples with that in mind or consult a conservator to approximate the true historic hue.

## PROFESSIONAL COLORIST

When selecting exterior or interior paint colors, consider hiring a color consultant or architectural colorist who specializes in historic homes.

- **Analyze:** These professionals can analyze existing paint layers, research period-appropriate palettes, and recommend colors that align with your home's architectural style and era. Their expertise helps ensure that new finishes complement the building's historic integrity while meeting your planned preservation goals.

## REPLACEMENT SCREWS

Replacing Phillips-head screws, which date to the 1930s, with traditional slotted screws can help restore the authentic appearance of vintage hardware.

- **Screws:** Slotted screws can often be found at your local independently owned retail hardware store. They sell screws individually. Just take your hardware and the Phillip-head screws to the store to find the best fit and metal type in a slotted screw.

## CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL BUILDING CODE

The CHBC allows flexibility in applying modern building codes to qualified historic structures. It helps preserve original features - like railings, stairs, and windows - while still meeting safety standards and maintaining a building's historic integrity.

- *Example:* A newly constructed porch normally requires a 42-inch-high railing under the California Building Code (CBC). However, under the CHBC, alternative compliance is allowed when existing or proposed features are consistent with the building's historic character and do not pose a distinct hazard. A proposed 36-inch-high railing better reflects the proportions and detailing typical of the property's historic period. Given that the reduced height provides a reasonable level of safety and meets the intent of the code, it is considered acceptable under the CHBC.

## STRIPPING WOOD

When removing paint or varnish from historic woodwork, always use the gentlest means possible.

- **Process:** Begin with gentle hand-scraping to remove loose paint, avoiding aggressive sanding that can release lead dust. Use chemical or heat-assisted stripping methods only

when necessary, and select low-VOC, biodegradable, or water-based products that comply with state air quality and safety regulations. Test a small area before proceeding. Wear protective gear for possible exposure to lead paint.

- **Retain finish:** Retain as much original wood finish as possible. Sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods are not appropriate for historic materials.

## **MISSING DETAILS – LOOK IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

If a decorative feature is missing from your property, nearby buildings of the same era may retain the original design and can serve as reliable references for accurate restoration.

- *Example:* A nearby property of the same era has a design detail of the alternating high and low horizontal pieces, now missing, but once part of your porch balustrade, providing an accurate pattern for restoring your historic railing.

## **OLD PHOTOS OF YOUR PROPERTY**

Old photographs can be invaluable when researching how a missing or altered detail once looked - for example, an original front window later replaced with an aluminum version.

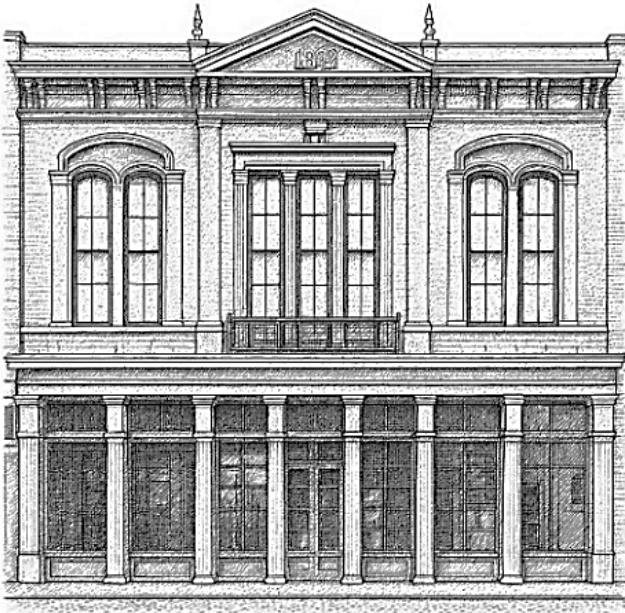
- **Sources:** Try searching a variety of sources - historic newspapers from the period your home was built may include a photo or description, longtime neighbors might have old snapshots that capture your property, and your local Historical Society may keep archival images on file. The County Assessor's Office sometimes has property photos dating from the 1960s or 1970s, and even Google Maps could provide helpful past views if the change occurred more recently. This visual evidence can be an excellent guide during a restoration project.

## **ESTIMATE OF MILLS ACT PROPERTY TAXES**

You may request a Mills Act property tax estimate from the Napa County Assessor's Office, for a fee, before submitting your application to determine whether the program would be beneficial for your property.

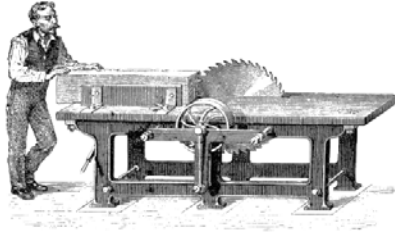
## **MAILING LABELS**

Mailing labels, required for the Mills Act application for the 500-foot buffer zone around your property, can be obtained from the Napa County Assessor's Office for a small fee. They will provide a list formatted to an Avery label template, making it easy to print labels and include with your application.



Opera House, 1879

# HISTORIC MATERIAL AND PRESERVATION RESOURCES



When restoring a historic property, finding materials and guidance that reflect the original period is key to maintaining authenticity. This section provides a suggested list of resources for locating historic or reproduction items including hardware, doors, windows, wavy glass, and other architectural details - as well as architects who specialize in historic preservation, a list of research resources, and local preservation organizations.

## **ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE YARDS**

- Local architectural salvage yards often carry doors, windows, mantels, hardware, bricks, flooring, and decorative woodwork from historic buildings. Also, wavy glass can be found in old wood sash windows.
- *Resources:* Urban Ore, PlaceMakers, Building ReSources of San Francisco, Heritage Salvage

## **HISTORIC HARDWARE SUPPLIERS**

- Companies that reproduce period-accurate hardware such as door sets, hinges, window locks, drawer pulls, grates, switch plates, and antiquing solutions.
- *Resources:* House of Antique Hardware (sign up for their sales which are usually 20-25% off storewide several times a

year), Rocky Mountain Hardware, Nostalgic Warehouse, Rejuvenation, Antique Hardware Supply

## **GLASS**

- Old wavy glass is often found at salvage yards, usually still set in its original window sashes. Colored glass can be found at specialized stained glass shops and online. You may also be able to find window specialists who provide glass that replicates the appearance of historic old glass.
- *Resources:* Urban Ore, Stained Glass Garden, eBay, Etsy

## **CUSTOM WINDOWS AND DOORS**

- There are some local shops that can handcraft historically correct replacement wood windows and doors.
- *Resources:* White Owl Woodworks, Kirk Brown Wood Products

## **TRIM**

- Custom millwork shops can replicate missing pieces using historic profiles or duplicate to match your existing trim.
- *Resources:* North Bay Plywood, The Moulding Company

## **ONLINE MARKETPLACES AND AUCTIONS**

- Specialized auction houses or online marketplaces list vintage or salvaged architectural elements.
- *Resources:* eBay, Etsy, Facebook Marketplace, Nextdoor

## **LIGHTING PARTS**

- When restoring historic lighting fixtures, replacement parts can often be found online or at local hardware stores that carry standard components.
- *Resources:* Antique Lamp Supply, Grand Brass Lamp Parts, B & P Lamp Supply, My Lamp Parts, eBay, Etsy

## **PRESERVATION & RESTORATION CONTRACTORS**

- Many contractors specialize in historic homes and can source or replicate historically appropriate elements or details. Be sure to ask about their experience with historic restoration projects.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION ARCHITECTS**

- Some architects specialize in historic preservation and are knowledgeable about the California Historical Building Code (CHBC), ensuring that restoration work meets both safety standards and preservation guidelines.
- Certain landscape architects specialize in preserving and restoring historic landscapes and site features consistent with a property's historic character.
- *Resources:* Page & Turnbull, Napa Design Partners, Studio 1515 Landscape Architecture

## **SANBORN MAPS**

- Sanborn fire insurance maps show building footprints, materials, and uses, helping property owners trace alterations and understand how their property developed over time. Maps of Napa's historic districts date from 1886 through 1949.
- *Resources:* Napa County Library (under All Databases – you'll need a library card to access online), The Library of Congress (they have colored versions of the maps)

## **CHAIN OF TITLE**

- The chain of title, a sequence of recorded deeds, traces a property's ownership history showing who purchased it and when ownership changed. You can then research past owners by name.
- *Resources:* Napa County Assessor's Office (where you can research property records on their public computers)

## ONLINE RESEARCH

- Many online resources can help you uncover the history of your property and the people who lived there. Some sites are free, while others offer access through memberships. The Napa Valley Genealogical Society & Library offers many sites you can access at their library for a small donation per visit.
- *Resources:* Free - FamilySearch.org, California Digital Newspaper Collection, Napa County Library (Napa County Newspaper Archive), Find A Grave, calisphere.org  
Membership Fee - Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, genealogybank.com

## LOCAL PRESERVATION AND HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Local organizations may be able to help you research your property, uncover its history, and gather information for your Mills Act application.
- *Resources:* Napa County Landmarks, Napa County Historical Society, Napa Valley Genealogical Society & Library



Napa Steam Laundry, 1884



This handbook represents an independent guide intended to assist property owners in understanding potential projects that may be included in a Mills Act Ten Year Plan. It provides general information and examples based on accepted historic preservation practices and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The content presented does not represent the official policies, approvals, or positions of any city, organization, or governmental body. Eligibility of specific items for a Mills Act Ten Year Plan may vary, and property owners should consult with the City of Napa's Planning Department before submitting any plan.

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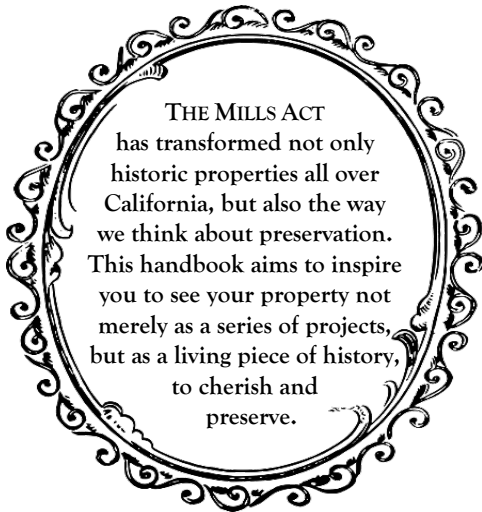
The properties featured in this handbook represent a selection of Mills Act properties in Napa, but may not reflect every architectural detail.

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Some illustrations and content were developed or refined with the assistance of AI tools to enhance clarity and presentation.



THE MILLS ACT

has transformed not only historic properties all over California, but also the way we think about preservation. This handbook aims to inspire you to see your property not merely as a series of projects, but as a living piece of history, to cherish and preserve.