

THE MILLS ACT HANDBOOK

A Guide to Your Commitment to Preservation



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Peres House, 1936

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Napa, California
Revised Edition - August 2026

This handbook may be updated periodically. For the most
current edition, contact the author or visit the
Napa County Landmarks website.

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

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 has a continual ten-year term, automatically renews 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 provides examples of eligible and ineligible work for the Mills Act Ten Year Rehabilitation Plan consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Final eligibility is subject to documentation, site-specific conditions, and City of Napa review. Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards does not, by itself, make a project eligible for inclusion in

the City of Napa's Mills Act Ten Year Rehabilitation Plan. Mills Act work generally preserves or restores surviving historic materials and features or reconstructs documented missing features. Work undertaken primarily to add new features or remodel a property for convenience, appearance, or personal preference is not an eligible Mills Act preservation project - even when designed to look appropriate for a historic property. Safety, code, or building-protection work may also qualify when historic materials and character are preserved.

The plan should include realistic costs for each eligible project or phase. Major work may occur in the early years, followed by lower-cost projects, but total ten-year expenditures should approximate or exceed anticipated tax savings.

Understanding eligible and ineligible work helps develop a Ten Year Plan that supports the long-term preservation of the historic 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 helps prevent deterioration while maintaining the building's original character and appearance.

- *Example:* Remove deteriorated paint as needed, repair or replace damaged wood in-kind, prime, caulk, and apply finish coats to ensure protection of the underlying historic materials.

WINDOW AND DOOR RESTORATION

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

- *Example:* Comprehensive restoration of an original wood window, including wood repair, reglazing, refinishing, and repair or replacement of sash cords and hardware as needed.

WINDOW REPLACEMENT

Eligible: If original historic windows are beyond repair, replacement may be considered. Replacement windows must match surviving original windows or property-specific historic

evidence in type, material, operation, dimensions, sash proportions, muntin profiles, pane configuration, trim, and overall appearance. Non-historic windows may also be replaced using these same standards.

- *Example:* Replace aluminum sliders with all-wood windows matching surviving original windows or property-specific historic evidence in type, proportions, detailing, and finish.

Ineligible: Replacing repairable historic windows or using vinyl, vinyl-clad, composite, tinted glass, between-glass grids, or other visibly modern materials or details.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Eligible: Original stained glass windows are significant character-defining features. Repairing and conserving them rather than replacing them maintains the 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: 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, cornices, or other architectural details without property-specific evidence that they historically existed.

HISTORIC SHUTTERS AND LOUVERED PANELS

Eligible: 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 and repair original shutters. Replace only when beyond repair, matching the original design and material.

Ineligible: Installing shutters where none historically existed, installing shutters that are out of proportion to the window, or mounting shutters in a manner that would not allow them to appear functional when closed.

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: 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:* Repair original historic stairs whenever feasible. Where deterioration requires replacement, match the original materials, dimensions, configuration, and detailing.

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

FOUNDATION

Eligible: 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 the 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: 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: Restore surviving historic fixtures or replace lighting when necessary as part of preservation work, using fixtures

compatible in scale and design and installed with minimal alteration to historic materials.

- *Example:* Remove recessed ceiling lights, repair the historic ceiling material, and install an appropriately scaled fixture compatible with the home's historic character.

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.

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, physical evidence, or surviving original examples.

STRUCTURAL PEST MITIGATION AND REPAIR

Eligible: 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

Ineligible: Solar panels are optional energy improvements rather than necessary building-system or historic preservation work and should not be included as a Mills Act expenditure. Owners may install solar at their own expense, preferably on less-visible roof areas or secondary structures and without damaging historic materials.

CHIMNEY REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT

Eligible: 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: Repair existing roofing when feasible. When deterioration requires replacement, new roofing should be compatible with the building's historic character in color, texture, profile, and scale. Historic roof forms and features, such as eaves, cornices, gutters, downspouts, and decorative elements, should be retained and repaired.

- *Example:* Replace a deteriorated composition-shingle roof

with new composition shingles compatible in color, texture, profile, and scale with the historic building.

Ineligible: Replacing serviceable or repairable roofing unnecessarily or replacing surviving historic roofing with a different material that alters the building's historic character.

- *Example:* Replace an original red clay tile roof with composition shingles rather than repairing or replacing deteriorated tiles in-kind.



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: Upgrading mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems to address safety concerns, code requirements, or protection of the historic structure, 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: Electrical or plumbing alterations undertaken primarily for remodeling, convenience, or installation of new amenities.

HVAC SYSTEM REPLACEMENT

Eligible: Replacing an outdated or unsafe HVAC system may be eligible when it supports the continued use and preservation of the property. New systems should minimize alteration to historic materials. Exterior equipment should be located in screened or non-visible areas where feasible. Removal of visible window A/C units is encouraged.

- *Example:* Replace an obsolete floor furnace with a discreet system installed with minimal impact on historic materials.

Ineligible: Removing intact historic heating elements, such as radiators, registers, or grilles, that contribute to the property's historic character. Installation that unnecessarily removes or alters historic materials or features.

FLOORING

Eligible: Repair of original historic flooring. Portions that are damaged or deteriorated beyond repair may be replaced in kind with the same material, pattern, size, and style, while retaining the remaining original flooring.

- *Example:* Replace water-damaged floorboards with new boards matching the surrounding historic flooring.

Ineligible: Replacing original historic flooring for convenience, appearance, or modernization, or installing new flooring over it in a manner that damages or permanently alters the original flooring.

- *Example:* Modern wood-look vinyl or light-colored “French oak” flooring are examples of inappropriate replacements for historic flooring.

HISTORIC KITCHEN AND BATHROOM RESTORATION

Eligible: Preserve and repair surviving original cabinetry, fixtures, flooring, tile, and finishes. Missing features may be reconstructed when property-specific evidence establishes their historic design and location.

Ineligible: Kitchen or bathroom remodeling, including replacing or changing cabinets, countertops, flooring, tile, sinks, or fixtures for convenience, appearance, modernization, or personal preference. Creating a new “historic” look where one did not previously exist is also considered remodeling, not historic restoration.

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: Repair or restoration of surviving distinctive original features such as decorative plaster, stair newel posts, balusters, handrails, or built-in cabinetry. Missing features may be reconstructed when supported by property-specific evidence.

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

RESTORATION OF HISTORIC FIREPLACES

Eligible: Repair or restore original mantels, hearths, tile, brick, and other historic fireplace materials. Replace missing or deteriorated elements in kind based on surviving or documented evidence.

- *Example:* Replace missing or damaged tile to match the original material, design, color, and pattern.

Ineligible: Remodeling a fireplace for appearance, convenience, or modernization, or installing a new fireplace where one did not historically exist.

PAINT REMOVAL AND WOODWORK RESTORATION

Eligible: Original woodwork is a character-defining feature of the home's interior. Careful removal of later paint layers and appropriate refinishing can preserve historic materials, craftsmanship, and appearance.

- *Example:* Carefully remove non-historic paint from original interior woodwork, including moldings, baseboards, window and door trim, and mantels. Refinish the wood based on surviving evidence where available, using appropriate paint or a stained or clear wood finish.

Ineligible: Sandblasting or other aggressive techniques to remove paint.

HARDWARE AND FASTENERS

Eligible: Original hardware is an important historic detail that should be repaired and retained whenever feasible.

- *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.

PUSH-BUTTON LIGHT SWITCHES AND PLATES

Eligible: When outdated switches require replacement, reproduction push-button switches and compatible plates may be used as an alternative to modern switches when appropriate to the historic property and installed without damage to historic materials.

APPLIANCES

Eligible: Restoration of an appliance documented as original to the property may be eligible.

- *Example:* Restore an original built-in icebox or stove documented through historic photographs, records, or other property-specific evidence.

Ineligible: Newly purchased or replacement stoves, refrigerators, and other appliances are not eligible, even when antique, vintage, or period-appropriate.

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

Eligible: Interior painting may be eligible when necessary to complete an eligible preservation or building-system project involving historic finishes.

- *Example:* Repair plaster walls and repaint areas affected by an eligible electrical rehabilitation project.

Ineligible: General interior repainting for appearance, maintenance, or personal preference.

SUMP PUMP

Eligible: Repair or replacement of a sump pump when necessary to prevent water intrusion and protect the historic foundation, structure, or materials from deterioration.

Ineligible: Routine inspection or maintenance when no preservation-related repair or replacement is needed.

ALARM SYSTEMS

Eligible: Fire detection or alarm systems may be eligible when installed to protect the historic structure and with minimal impact on historic materials and finishes.

Ineligible: Security systems installed primarily for personal or property security rather than protection of the historic structure from fire or deterioration.



Thomas Earl House, 1861

LANDSCAPING AND HARDSCAPING



HISTORIC LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

Eligible: Restore historic landscaping documented through property-specific evidence, such as historic photographs, plans, records, or surviving trees and plantings.

- *Example:* Reestablish a documented historic hedge, orchard, or garden planting.

Ineligible: When there is no property-specific historical evidence. New landscaping, even when plants or designs are appropriate to the period, is a new landscape design and does not qualify as historic landscape restoration.

EXISTING LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Eligible: Care of documented historic trees or plantings when necessary to preserve their health or pruning of established trees when necessary to protect the historic structure from damage.

- *Example:* Prune a documented historic tree to maintain its health, or trim branches that threaten the historic roof, siding, or foundation.

Ineligible: Routine landscape maintenance, such as mowing, trimming, replanting, or general garden care, is normal upkeep rather than historic preservation.

HISTORIC HARDSCAPING

Eligible: Repair or restoration of existing hardscape features that are original to the property or are significant to its history or development, including walkways, patios, steps, walls, and paving.

- *Example:* Repair an original brick walkway or restore a historically significant retaining wall using in-kind materials where feasible.

Ineligible: New decorative hardscape or incompatible materials, including stamped concrete, manufactured pavers, artificial stone, or faux-historic finishes.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Eligible: Repair or modification of an irrigation system may be eligible when necessary to protect a documented historic landscape or prevent damage to the historic structure.

Ineligible: Routine irrigation maintenance, replacement for efficiency, or installation serving new landscaping.

ORNAMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Eligible: Repair or restoration of a documented historic ornamental landscape feature.

Ineligible: Adding ornamental or landscape features without a documented historic basis is considered an improvement rather than historic restoration.

- *Example:* New fountains, ponds, statues, decorative garden structures, or artificial turf.

FENCING AND GATE REPLACEMENT

Eligible: Repair or reconstruction of documented or surviving historic features. New or replacement fences or gates for privacy, security, or enclosure may be eligible when simple in design and constructed of traditional materials compatible with the historic property, without implying they are original.

- *Example:* Replace a deteriorated or incompatible fence or gate, or install one needed for privacy, security, or enclosure, using a simple design compatible in scale, materials, and character.

Ineligible: Modern, visually intrusive, overly decorative, or faux-historic designs and materials that detract from the historic property.

HISTORIC SIDEWALK RESTORATION

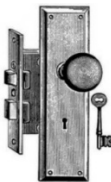
Eligible: Repair or restoration of a surviving historic sidewalk documented as part of the historic property may be eligible.

Ineligible: Sidewalks within the public right-of-way are generally ineligible because they are not part of the privately owned historic property.



George Horton Triplet, 1886

TEN YEAR PLAN BASICS



Documentation

All work must be thoroughly documented with “before” and “after” photos, receipts, and permits to demonstrate compliance. Documentation should 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

Plans that are vague or do not explain how the tax savings will be used for eligible preservation work over the ten year term are not acceptable. Using vague terms like “annual maintenance and repairs” needs clarification.

Blank entries on the Ten Year Plan

Each year needs to contain at least one eligible task.

Previous work

Qualifying work completed within the twelve months before submitting the application may be included in Year 1 of the Ten Year Plan, provided it meets preservation standards. This recognizes that necessary work, such as correcting safety hazards, repairing a leaking roof, or addressing active deterioration, may need to be completed before an application is submitted. Completed work should be identified and include the actual cost.

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 19TH TO EARLY 20TH 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, strong symmetry, and substantial 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 a 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.

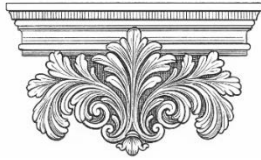
Mission Revival (1890-1920)

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 20th 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 to identify wavy glass is by looking at the reflections in the glass; if they ripple slightly, it's likely 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 Phillips-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 help inform the detailing of a feature when there is evidence that the feature existed on the subject property.

- *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.

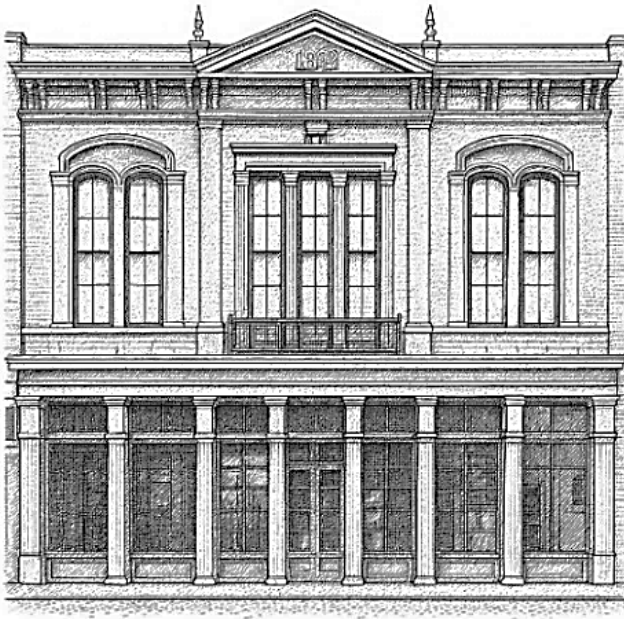
- **Sources:** Try searching a variety of sources - historic newspapers from the period your home was built may include a photo or description, longtime neighbors might have old snapshots that capture your property, and your local Historical Society may keep archival images on file. The County Assessor's 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.

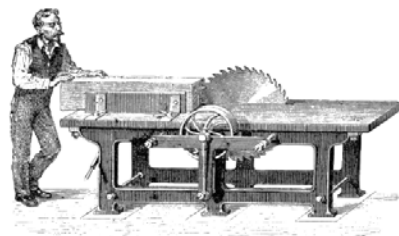
MAILING LABELS

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 and two sets of printed labels to 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, 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 (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 Required - 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

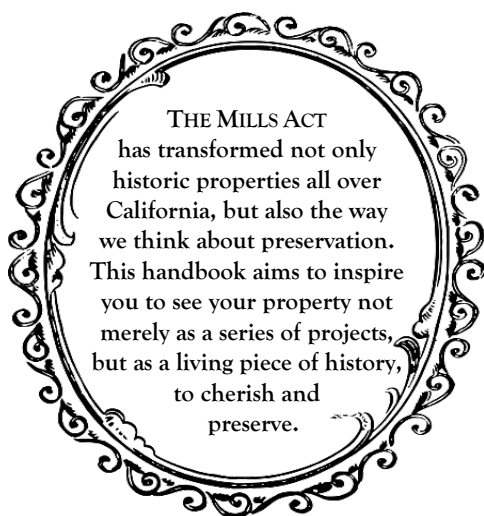
This handbook represents an independent guide intended to assist property owners in understanding potential projects that may be included in a Mills Act Ten Year Plan. It provides general information and examples based on accepted historic preservation practices and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

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.

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.