

## News and Notes for Historic Homeowners - October 2009

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### Sustainability in your Older or Historic Home

#### Breaking News!

#### Access the National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Preservation Conference Online

You can "tune in" as a Virtual Attendee of this year's annual conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation by clicking on this link

<http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/training/npc/2009-nashville/virtual-attendee/webcasts.html> anytime this week (October 12- 17) to hear proceedings from the National Preservation Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

#### Friday, October 16, 10:30 a.m. - 12 noon: Help is on the Way: Greening Your Historic Home from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Preservation Conference

On Friday morning, Preservation Specialist Sally Zimmerman will be presenting "Energy Retrofits and Historic Homes: Weighing the Risks and Opportunities" as part of a panel discussion on greening historic homes. To join as a Virtual Attendee, see the link to online programming above.

#### More Energy Issues for Old Houses:

#### Simple Improvements to Reduce Energy Consumption

As heating season starts up, thoughts turn to the thermostat. You can add a sweater or a pair of wooly socks to your daily routine, but there are other simple steps you can take to make your older house a bit more comfortable and energy efficient this winter.

Windows are often blamed for drafts in an old house but studies show that old wood windows match the energy performance of a replacement double-glazed sash if they are kept in good repair and have a good quality storm window. For more on repairing old wooden sash so they operate smoothly and efficiently, take a look at the New England Window Restoration Alliance web site

<http://www.windowrestorationne.org/>.

Even if your windows aren't in tip top shape, you can easily cut down on leaks and drafts with a few simple measures. Once you've lowered your storm windows, make sure to close the sash lock. This tightens the seal around the top and bottom sashes to help them fit more snugly and reduce drafts; if your windows don't have sash locks, consider adding them.

If drafts are escaping at the pulley openings of sash cords, small pulley seals are available to close up this opening without affecting the use of the window. A company called Anderson Pulley Seals (not the same as Andersen replacement windows) sells these on line at <http://www.andersonpulleyseal.com/>. Finally, old fashioned rope caulk (putty) is an inexpensive way to seal gaps around loose sash.

Other inexpensive energy-saving interventions around the old house include weatherstripping doors, insulating the hot water heater and hot water pipes, and sealing and wrapping heating ducts. Don't forget to close the dampers on chimneys if you have had these open for summer ventilation!

For a comprehensive look at energy saving tips and techniques, check the National Trust for Historic Preservation's newly-launched "Weatherization" page

<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/weatherization/> .

#### Greening the Older Home: Historic Preservation Meets Energy Conservation Sunday, October 25, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m., Newburyport, Mass.

You may also be interested in attending an upcoming workshop on "Greening the Older Home: Historic Preservation Meets Energy Conservation" Sunday, October 25, 1:30-4:30 presented by the

Newburyport (Mass.) Preservation Trust. Sally Zimmerman, Historic New England preservation specialist will participate along with Christopher Skelly, director of local government programs at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and Rebecca Williams, field representative at the Northeast office of the National Trust. To register, contact the Newburyport Preservation Trust via: Mary Harbaugh, 978-499-4440 or email [mary@strongstreet.com](mailto:mary@strongstreet.com).

### Upcoming "Ask the Experts" Old House Clinic:

**Caring for your Modern House, January 31, 2010, 2:00 - 5:00 pm, Lexington, Mass.**

Twice a year, the Historic Homeowner program offers an in-depth seminar with a question and answer discussion on a topic relevant to owners of older and historic houses. These "Ask the Experts" old house clinics provide a chance to hear a panel of expert speakers on the program topic, become more familiar with the preservation challenges for that topic, and most importantly, get questions about addressing the topic in your home answered by professionals knowledgeable and experienced in the field.

The next "Ask the Experts" will look at the issues confronting owners of modern houses. While we tend to think of historic houses as much older, the Boston area was a hotbed of modernist residential design in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. Many of these designs reflect important and historically significant new ways of living, and present special challenges in their maintenance and operation. "Caring for your Modern House" looks at the range of issues owners face when dealing with innovative materials and designs that may have deteriorated or no longer meet current energy demands. "Caring for your Modern House" is a partnership with the Lexington Historical Society. Details to follow.

### "They aren't making any more old houses . . ."

Have you ever heard someone say this? On the surface, it seems ridiculous: just as we all get older every day, so do all of the houses around us! But in some important ways, this statement is true.

If you take a close look at the 2000 U. S. Census records for a breakdown of the nation's dwelling units by age, you'll find that only about 7% of the country's housing stock was constructed before 1919. That means that we only have about 9.1 million "old" houses in the country. While that might seem like a large number, remember that every day, old houses are demolished, destroyed by disasters like fires and storms, fall into ruin from abandonment or lack of maintenance, or are irretrievably denatured through insensitive or inappropriate renovations.

So, it's true: old houses are an ever smaller and diminishing part of our cultural landscape. All the more reason to become better informed about old houses and their unique qualities, to take care and proceed slowly when making changes to your own old house, and to support the many public and private organizations that work to protect and preserve old houses.

### Contact Sally Zimmerman with questions about your older or historic house!

Your Historic Homeowner membership gives you access to Historic New England's experience dealing with old house preservation questions. Don't hesitate to contact Sally Zimmerman at (781) 881-4882, ext. 226 or [szimmerman@historicnewengland.org](mailto:szimmerman@historicnewengland.org) if you have a question to ask or decision to make about your old house!

And thank you for your support of Historic New England, the nation's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive heritage organization!