

# Wood Window Workshop

by JOHN LEEKE,  
American Preservationeer

**Save your wood windows.** The window replacement industry does not want you to know that 30 percent of the windows replaced are less than 10 years old and some are only two years old. Plastic parts fail that cannot be repaired, insulating glass unit seals fail, the glass fogs up, and the usual response is to sell you another replacement window. The window industry thinks a window that lasts 15 years is adequate, but many old-house owners are smarter than that. Your wood windows have lasted a century and can last another.

**Consider the needs of each window.** You don't have to do the same thing to all the windows in the house. You might carefully restore the front windows and add interior air panels seasonally, around the sides add weather-stripping and exterior storms, and out back in the 1980s addition replace the rotting out windows--you decide, some windows may need nothing at all.

**Your good old windows can be as energy efficient as replacement windows** if you add weatherstripping and keep your storm windows. Add an interior air-panel and curtains or roller shades for comfort and even greater energy dollar savings.

**A round of simple maintenance and minor repairs** will pull your windows through another decade or two. Spot paint maintenance for the peeling paint at the lower joints and a few inches of putty are easy to do and may be all that's needed. Minor repairs can loosen stuck sash and strengthen weak joints. Complete refurbishing, saving old wood and glass with all new paint and putty, will set them up for the rest of this century. You can do it yourself, or hire one of the experienced historic window specialists now emerging in every state.

**Enjoy your fine old windows.** The original molding profiles and old wavy glass provide authentic character that cannot be reproduced. They keep weather outdoors when it is wet and cold, yet let weather indoors when it is hot and you need a cooling breeze. They give you a view of the world outdoors and the moon beyond.



**Assess: What have you got? What is its condition?**

- Survey architectural character and conditions.
- Determine original construction details and materials.
- Investigate later changes and past maintenance.
- Most common problems:
  - Heavy paint buildup limits operation.
  - Weak joints in sash.
  - Weather beaten sills.
  - Broken glass.

**Plan: Who will do it?**

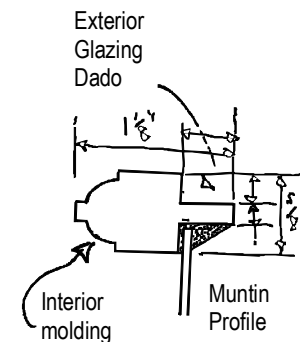
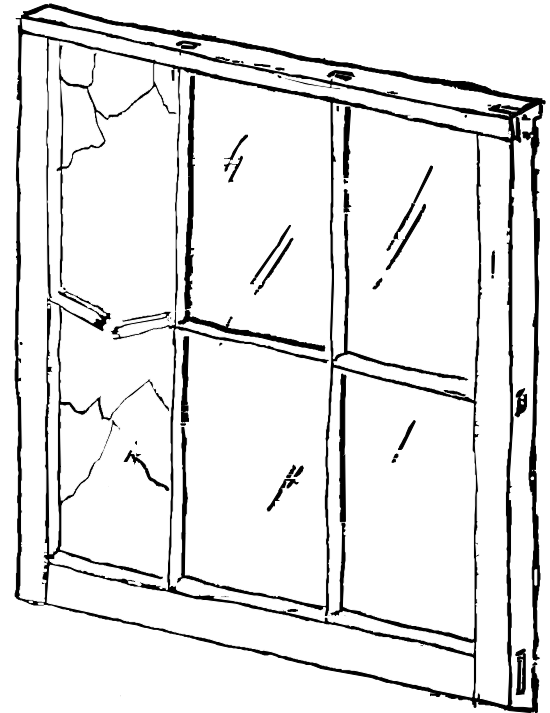
- Select treatments: materials, methods, and procedures.
- Write work scope, specifications and project plan.
- Seek experienced contractors & tradespeople.
- When you cannot find experienced ones, educate & train those who are capable and responsive or learn to do it yourself.

**Implement: How will you control the work?**

- Sample work and make the sample part of the specification. Do one window complete before starting work on the rest.
- Use knowledgeable supervision.
- Use intermediate and final inspections and approvals.

**Evaluate: What are the results? How did it hold up?**

- Check the details one year and five years later to determine what worked and what did not.
- Implement routine maintenance every 3-5 years with paint and putty touchup if needed.



*These are illustrations from the book **Save America's Windows** (140 pages, 230 illustration.)*

John Leeke, Preservation Consultant, helps owners, planners, tradespeople, contractors and architects understand and maintain their older and historic buildings. He is well known for his sensitive and practical approach. He has been saving historic buildings for 40 years and has personally repaired, restored, and preserved hundreds of windows and helped others save thousands more.

His motto: By Hammer and Hand Great Works Do Stand

For more help with your windows go to John's website:

**<http://historichomeworks.com/forum/viewforum.php?f=16>**