

Managing Maintenance

Use the four steps of maintenance programming: Assess, Plan, Maintain and Evaluate, to reduce deterioration. Learn to set priorities, schedule work and control the costs of maintaining your building.

In caring for an old building it is easy to become overwhelmed with everything that needs to be done. A common reaction is to do what you can to make the place look good and hope for the best.

Often the need to get serious about maintenance is recognized only after disaster strikes. Several times I've been called to a house when owners wake up in the morning to find their gutters and cornices laying in a decayed heap on the lawn. Decades of ignored maintenance finally claims their undivided attention.

After dealing with the emergency they realize there is a huge backlog of other maintenance to be done: peeling paint, stuck windows, a broken screen door to fix, and on and on.

If this sounds all too familiar, and you wonder if you can give your building the care it deserves with your limited resources, step back and take a deep breath. It is time to establish a maintenance program.

A maintenance program enables you to develop a plan that gives you a fresh perspective and the confidence you need not only to put your building back in shape but to keep it that way.

Jargon

In this report the words "institution" and "owner" are used in the broadest sense. An institution that owns a building might range from a homeowner, to a business or museum with a staff of dozens of people. Most of this report applies to small and large owners alike. When the difference is important distinctions will be made. The term "element" is used to mean any part or system of a building. The term "treatment" is used broadly to mean anything that is done to an element. The treatment of an element could range from simply scheduling the future inspection of a roof, to replacement of a single shingle, to complete reroofing.

Limited funds is no reason not to do maintenance programming. Throughout this report I'll show how to develop a program consistent with your building's needs that is respectful of your limited time and money.

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In this report I'll introduce you to some basics about how buildings deteriorate. We will examine the hypothetical case of a decayed cornice to see how it fits into a maintenance program. In this case a leaking wooden gutter has decayed the cornice of a large Victorian house. Over the years water washing down the outside has damaged the wall. During a severe winter rain storm the cornice fell off the building letting water pour into the walls damaging costly reproduction wallpaper and flooding a parquet floor in the parlor. I'll show you how the recovery from this extensive damage fits into a maintenance programming system.

You will learn to control deterioration by rethinking how you deal with your building.

Part One provides a background in maintenance programming, its theory, and how it applies to historic buildings. Part Two describes the four major steps of maintenance programming and guides you through the development of a model maintenance program. A model is something to study and emulate. The model maintenance program described here is a hypothetical one based on several real buildings.

In both parts you will follow the cornice, paint, screen door and window examples mentioned above to see how they fit into the model program. Along the way special sections headed "How To" and "Caution" explain how to develop your own program and pitfalls to avoid.

The appendix includes sources for further information and blank forms for you to copy and use in developing your own maintenance program.

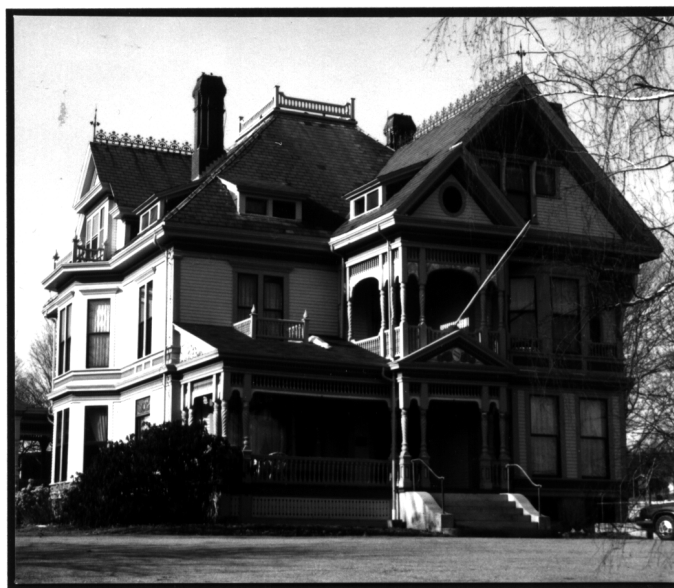


Figure 2. *The rich variety of textures and shapes on this fine Victorian house are what make it so visually interesting yet difficult to maintain.*



Figure 1. *The cornice (top of photo) is damaged by water pouring over and through deteriorating gutters that leak due to decay.*