

Roof Detail Change Philosophy

Roofs are a sacrificial layer that provides long term weather protection for the building. Additionally, roofs are an important element of the building as they often provide details of original building decisions and techniques as well as present the evolution of the technology available and the need for changes to accept additions and modifications of the underlying structure. Roofs are a major part of the overall character and interpretation of the structure and site. Changes to roof coverings may result in the change of details – both significant and minute. Care should be taken to understand and document the impact of any changes during any roofing project.

Guidelines for Material or Detail Change:

- The first approach is to replace the roof “in-kind”, matching extant materials and details. The roofing system and appearance of the roof is part of the overall interpretation of the site and part of the historic record with respect to material changes over time.
 - If it is determined that the roof style or material was changed after Historic New England’s acquisition and/or a change to a more historically appropriate roofing system is desired the following steps should be followed:
 - Document the roof type and details used during the period of interpretation through the use of measured drawings, photographs, and detailed observation notes.
 - If a change of roof material or detail is preliminarily agreed upon in consultation with the team leader of Property Care, then the Proactive Preservation and Interpretation Planning committee (PIIP) is consulted.
 - If it is determined that a detail is contributing to the deterioration of a resource the following steps should be followed:
 - Document the original detail and the reason(s) for failure.
 - Determine the treatment for the detail. The preferred treatment would retain the visual appearance of the detail. Any modifications should be reversible (re-treatable) and hidden.
 - Get approval for the treatment from the team leader of Property Care.
 - If it is determined that a new material or a proven construction technique would be in the best interests of the resource the following steps should be followed:
 - Document the extant detail, materials or technique.
 - Determine the new treatment with preference given to treatments that are reversible and do not change the overall character of the site.
 - Get approval for the treatment from the team leader of Property Care.
- Material replacements should match type and style as best as possible.
 - Architectural shingles are not an acceptable change from three tab asphalt shingles as they drastically change the aesthetic look of a structure.
 - Synthetic or reproduction slate will not be used in replacement of actual slate.
 - Species change for wood shingles is acceptable as long as basic appearance and texture is maintained.

Details of Importance for Roofing

The following is a list of details to be considered as part of a roofing project whether replacing the extant roof in-kind or restoring a roof from the period of interpretation.

- Composition of roofing material;
- Size and shape of shingles;
- Installation patterns and exposures of shingles;
- Details such as ridge caps, rake boards and flashing.

For more information see: Preservation Brief #4: Roofing for Historic Buildings and Preservation Brief #19: The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs.