

Design Guidelines: Masonry

M1 Historic masonry walls, foundations, and architectural elements such as chimneys, corbelling, cornices, columns, wall panels and arches should be preserved and maintained.

M2 If a section of masonry is missing or deteriorated beyond repair, the replacement should match the historic materials in type, coursing, color, size, strength, and mortar size and profile. Bricks should always be ‘toothed-in’ to historic brickwork to disguise the joint between old and new.

M3 Make sure that any exterior replacement bricks are suitable for exterior use – some bricks were never meant to be exposed to the elements.

M4 Do not replace sections of soft historic brick with new brick that is substantially harder and stronger. As the wall goes through seasonal cycles of expansion and contraction, the softer brick will be the first to ‘give.’



This brick corbelling is an important architectural detail on these North Capitol Avenue commercial buildings and should be preserved.

M5 Masonry that has not previously been painted should not be painted.

M6 Painted masonry buildings should be repainted as necessary. Remove only deteriorated or flaking paint, to ensure a good finish; complete paint removal to bare brick is not recommended.

M7 Use a ‘breathable’ masonry paint that is compatible with and can create a strong bond with existing paint. Latex paints are generally more ‘breathable’ than enamels.

M8 Avoid the use of silicone-based sealers on masonry.

M9 Cleaning masonry is generally not recommended. If it is to be done, it should be done using the gentlest means possible. Start with water and a mild detergent and gradually work up, if necessary. Chemical cleaners should be a final alternative.

M10 Potential cleaning methods should always be tested first in a small, inconspicuous test patch, to determine the effects of the cleaner on the masonry.

M11 Sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods are prohibited.

M12 Sandstone should not be cleaned.

M13 Stucco should not be removed from existing stuccoed buildings.

M14 Deteriorated stucco should be repaired by replicating the original in color, texture and application technique. Synthetic stucco and other new materials that have not stood the test of time are discouraged in Corydon’s historic district.

M15 Stucco or other applied coatings should generally not be applied to existing buildings if they have never previously had such coatings.



Sandblasting has damaged these bricks (top), pitting their surface and removing the hard, outer fireskin. At bottom, the Portland cement-based mortar used to repoint does not match the historic mortar to the left, and will eventually lead to the deterioration of the brick.

M16 Glazed terra cotta should not be painted.

M17 Heavy-duty acidic cleaners should not be used on terra cotta.

M18 Replacement of deteriorated terra cotta units should match the original in design, size and glazing.



These soft bricks were meant for interior use and will deteriorate rapidly once exposed to the elements.

M19 Use a mortar mix that is compatible with the historic masonry. Historic mortars were high in lime content and much softer than today’s Portland cement-based mortars. Repointing mortar should be equivalent to or softer than the original mortar.

M20 Repoint only those mortar joints that are no longer sound. Do not remove all joints in an effort to achieve a uniform appearance. Large-scale removal of mortar joints often results in damage to the historic masonry.

M21 Remove unsound mortar joints carefully with hand tools that are narrower than the joint. Power tools should never be used because of the danger of damaging the masonry. The deteriorated mortar should be removed to a depth of 2½ times the width of the joint or to sound mortar, whichever is greater.

M22 Match historic mortar joints in color, texture, joint size and tooling when repointing.

M23 Do not attempt to remove mortar that is too hard or has been applied in an improper manner until natural weathering has begun to weaken it. Removal efforts prior to that time would likely cause masonry damage.

M24 Caulk is not an appropriate substitute for mortar.

*Kintner House, 1918
From the collection of the
Indiana Room, Floyd County Library*

