

# Painting Your Historic Home

by Marshall McClintock

Here are some resources that may be useful for choosing historically appropriate exterior color schemes for your home. Many North Slope homes built before about 1920 would have had a minimum 3 paint colors and more likely 4-5 colors. Houses with distinct banding, such as a watermark, a bellyband, changes in building material (such as clapboard on the first floor and shingles on the second), or bands of different shingle shapes usually had different colors or shades to highlight these different body areas. Major architectural elements such as corner boards, cornices, bands, window and door trim and porch elements were defined by the trim colors, which could range from one to upwards of eight colors. Window sashes and muntins (including the storm windows) were another color and usually the darkest, often black or near black.

Here are some resources available to help you develop a color scheme for your home:

*Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings 1820-1920.* (1981). While it covers a broader period than is relevant to the North Slope, it provides excellent paint history, examples and guiding principles.

*Victorian Exterior Decoration: How to paint your Nineteenth-century American house historically* (1987). This book provides many photographs and an excellent chart mapping Victorian paint names to contemporary paints from Sherwin-Williams, Benjamin Moore, & Glidden.

*Bungalow Colors: Exteriors.* (2002). This new book focuses on the period from 1900 to 1920 and is a much-needed supplement to Moss' books. The book covers most house styles of this period, not just bungalows.

Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen published a series of books on the detailed color schemes known as "painted ladies". These include *Painted Ladies: San Francisco's Resplendent Victorians* (1978), *Daughters of Painted Ladies: America's Resplendent Victorians* (1987) and *How to Create your own Painted Lady* (1989). While some North Slope homes have the architectural detail for these elaborate color schemes, most will find these books a source for identifying complementary trim colors.

The Heritage Foundation of Vancouver, B.C., has a palette of historical colors based on paint matching research from over 50 historic Vancouver homes. Historic Seattle is currently working on a similar project. < [www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org](http://www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org)>

Both Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams have developed their own historic palette cards to help you select colors. Other manufacturers may have them as well.

*Consumer Reports*, (June 2004), p. 30. This article evaluates brands of paints for their appearance over time, ability to resist dirt build up, color change over time, and mildew resistance.

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