04. Condition Report of Historic Cladding

Given the complexity of the building with its bays, gables, turret, window groups, changes in plane, and dormers, all of the vinyl siding was removed to better investigate the underlying historic cladding, its design, materials, ornamental configurations, and conditions

Note: This application addresses only the restoration of the front (north), east, and west façades. The south façade and the garage area will be addressed later in a separate application.

Summary of cladding types:
Basement — Parged brick at foundation with exposed brick piers beneath the columns of the wraparound porch. Framed lattice panels exist between some of the existing front porch piers.
Level 1 — Wood clapboard with 4 ¼” exposure. Clapboard is woven in the east and west bays, and at Level 1 of the corner tower.
Level 2 — Wood clapboard with 4 ¼” exposure at flat planes. Straight-cut cedar shakes, set in a linear pattern, on projections and the tower.
Level 3 — Cedar shakes, in a linear pattern, in gable ends at the east and west, around dormers, and encircling the tower.

The siding was inspected by an architect and two different contractors. Their findings are outlined below:

There is wet rot in many areas from decades of water penetration, especially at window locations where rotted sill pans caused water damage from behind the cladding. The wood cladding is spongy and fibrous in many locations. Elsewhere, cladding is severely cracked/split, shows signs of extreme dry rot, cupping and curling.

In addition to the cladding, these conditions are also found in the facia, barge boards, ceiling bead boards, porch floors, columns, rails, balusters, and bas reliefs. The property has suffered decades of deferred maintenance, and the resulting damage is extensive. Even in areas beneath the porch roof, the cladding is cupped, curled, split, and shrunken (damage likely exacerbated by the application of vinyl siding).

Clapboard immediately surrounding the front entry under the porch roof, was, according to the former owner, replaced with new boards in the 1970s.

Vinyl siding is often applied atop already deteriorated cladding as a cheaper alternative to repairing the original wood and the previous owner stated this was the case when he installed vinyl in the early 2000s (“It was too expensive to fix what we had so we covered it.”) However, installing vinyl results in extensive damage to cladding caused by the countless nails being pounded into already compromised boards and shingles. Such holes often lead to water penetration at all elevations of the building.

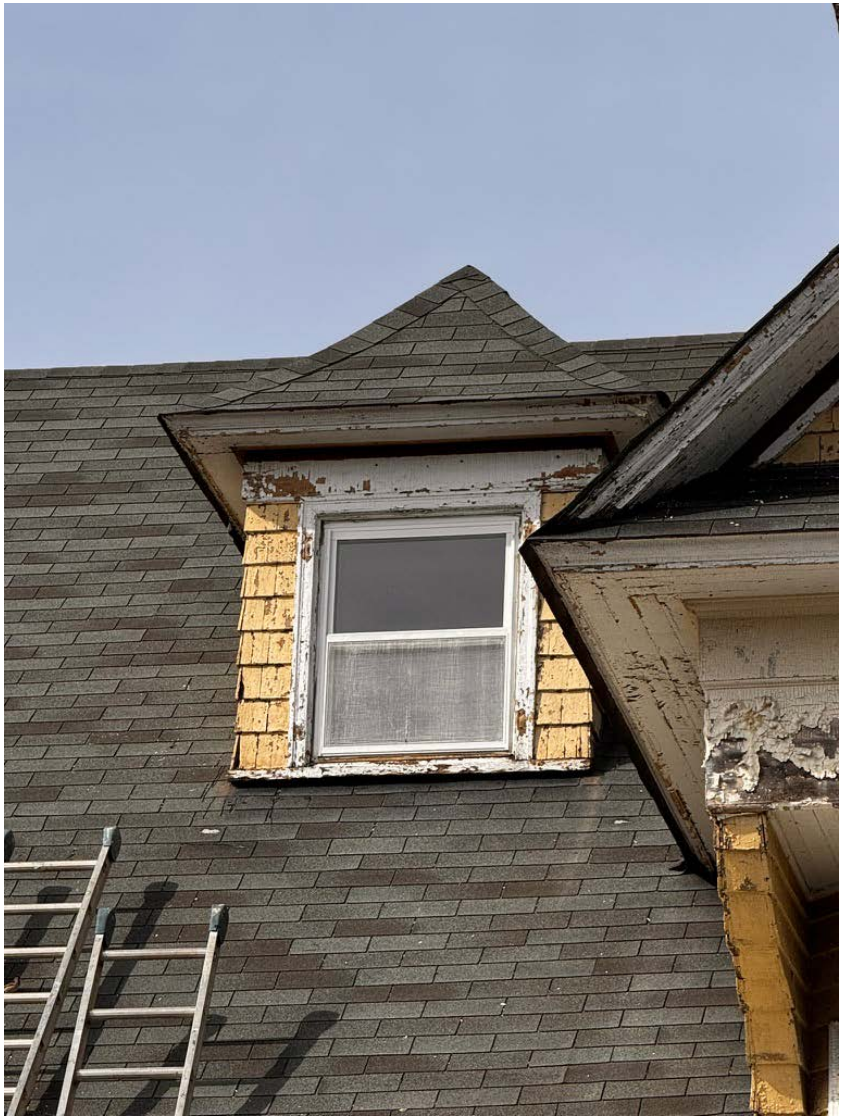
The consulted professional all arrived at the same conclusion: the degree and type of damage, to both the exterior materials and the underlying structure, makes restoration or repair impossible. The extent of the damage precludes these materials from being restored *in situ* and they are unlikely none of them are likely to survive removal.

The following photos illustrate the conditions summarized above:

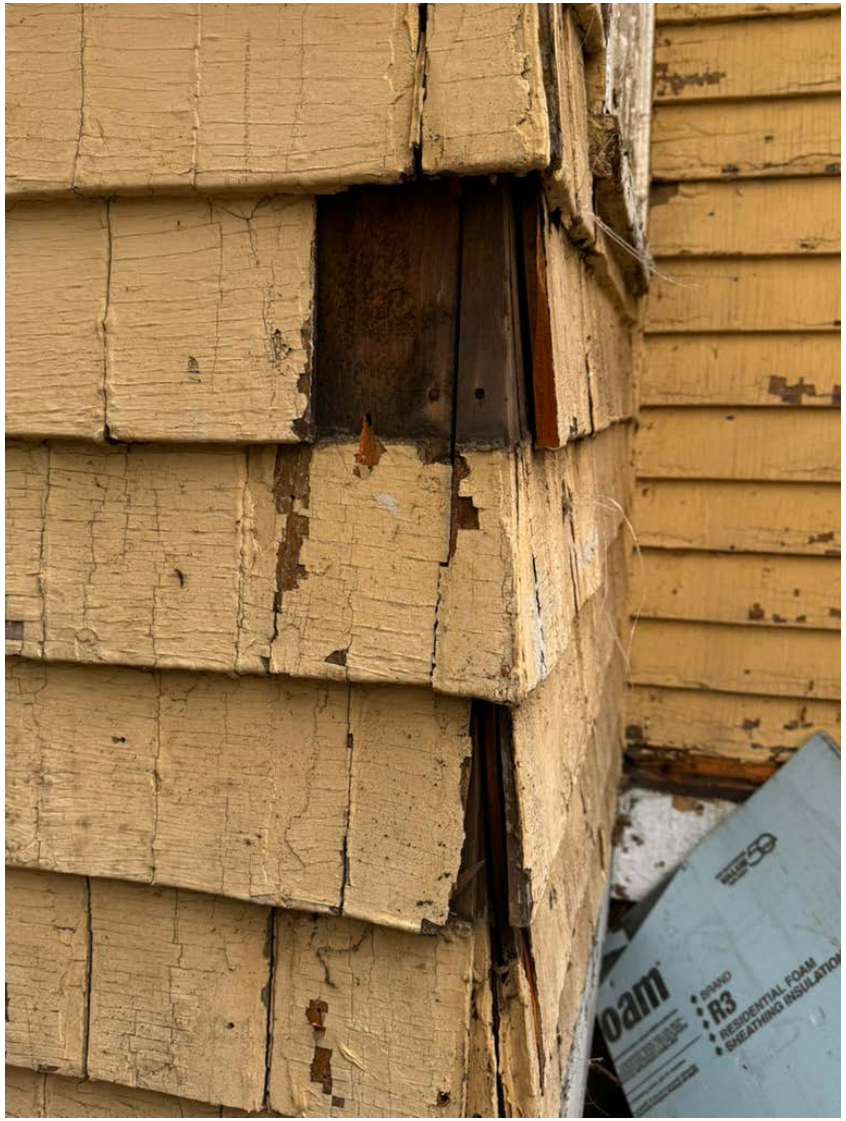
Initial impressions suggested all that was needed was some scraping and painting of the existing cladding.

Closer inspection revealed multiple coats of paint disguising the countless split shingles and rotted wood.

Severely cracked and rotted shingles are held together and in place by many layers of old paint. Non-conforming, non-original, mitered window trims of indeterminate age are broken, rotten, and have had all of their sill ears lopped off.

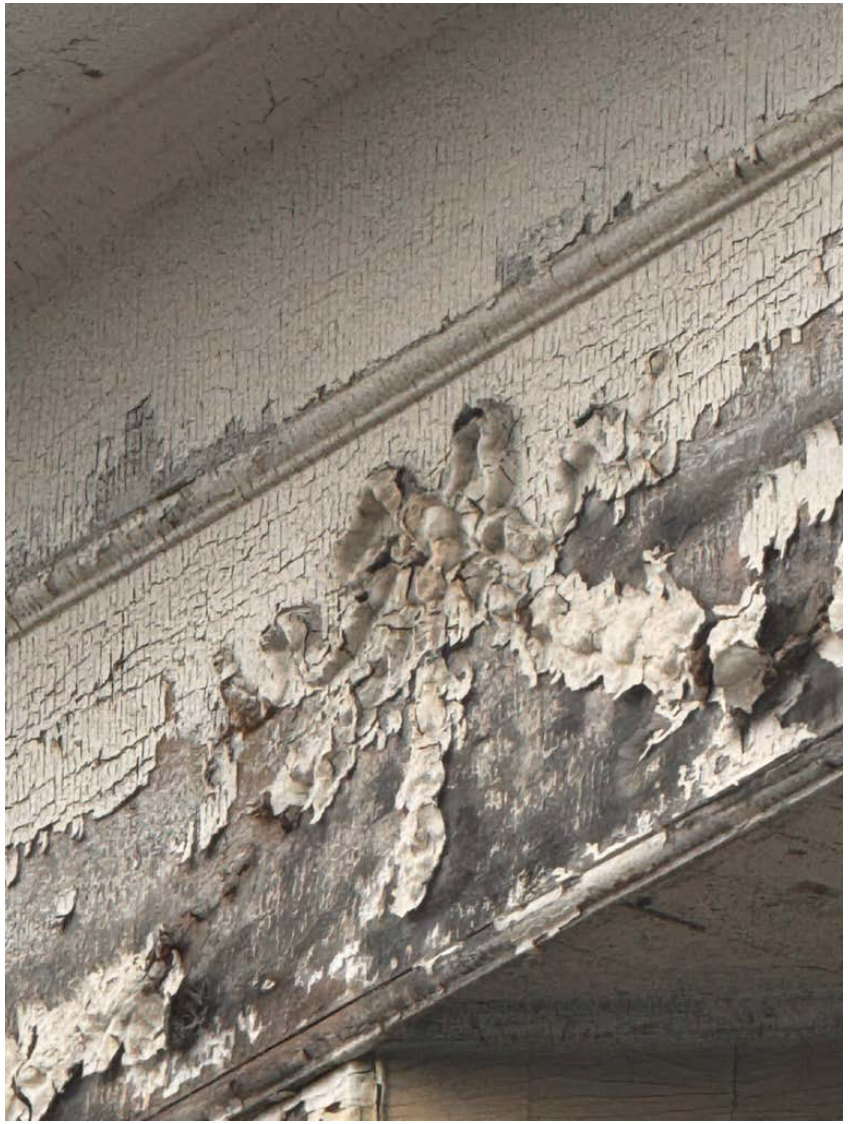


Dormers are clad in similarly damaged shingles. Water damage visible inside the building attest to the long-term water penetration around existing rotten wood window frames, and bottom sills.



A detail of shingles at one of the woven corners.

Original plaster bas-relief ornamentation in the pediment over the entry stairs is crumbling. The underlying supports appear to have been undermined by years of water penetration into the plaster and horsehair material.



The bas-relieve ribbons and swags of the ornamental frieze are almost complete deteriorated, with elements completely missing in areas where material has flaked off and been lost. The wood appears to have mold in areas.

The west elevation is representative of the condition of clapboard throughout: split, cracked, cupped, and spongy with moisture (wet and fibrous as seen in the lowest course of boards, above).

Lower cladding revealed to be wet after removal of vinyl cladding. Parged foundation is cracked in areas and basement windows rotted in the frames.

A detail of the condition of one of the basement windows.

Level 1 of the east elevation bay. Note how clapboard is woven at edges around the bay bends.

A detail of the woven corners. Such craftsmanship is found on both the east and west bays.

It is only upon close inspection the true extent of the deterioration beomes evident.

In areas clapboard has dried and shrunken so much the boards no longer overlap.

At the west elevation which gets the worst weather and blazing evening sun, the damage is even more pronounced with large gaps opening across the entire elevation

Window, trim, and cladding share a similar degree of decay.

The trim around this ornamental window-set at the west elevation is rotting. Water is also penetrating behind this trim from the rotted sill pans.

A view of the Level 3 tower showing deterioration in the crown and dentil molding beneath the dome of the turret.

At the north elevation, under the porch roof (and area normally protected from weather and water) signs of severe damage near the roof indicate water penetration from above.

To the west of the entry doors (at window #21) damage exacerbated by nails used to attach vinyl siding the underlying clapboard is evident. Sill ears have been lopped off.

In a small area at the north elevation, beneath the porch roof where the clapboard is not obviously split, there are signs of pronounced cupping, suggesting underlying water penetration.

A short run of siding in the enclosed portion of the porch, though protected from weather, still show signs of deterioration caused by water penetration from turret windows above.