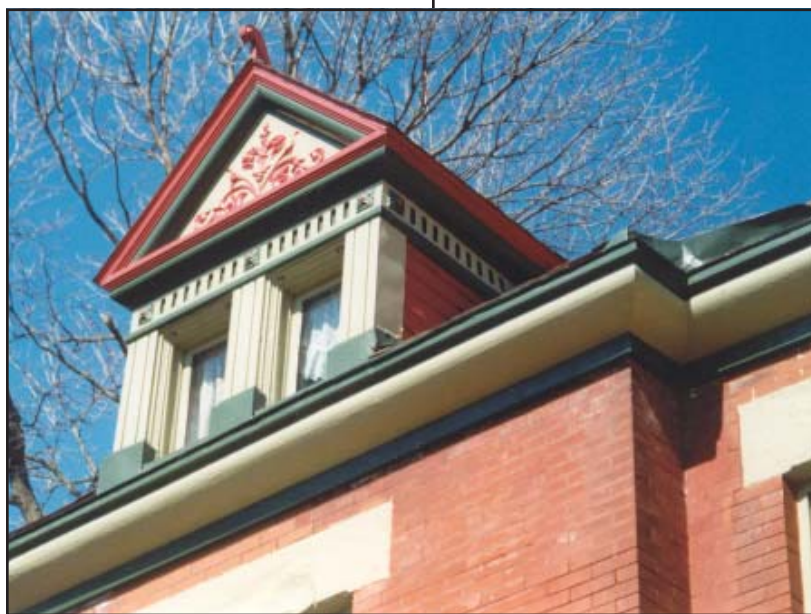


Architectural Metals



St. Joseph Landmark Commission

St. Joseph's historic districts contain a variety of different elements that are fabricated from architectural metals. Fences, gates, roofs, rooftop appurtenances such as cresting and finials, gutters, downspouts, hardware, railings, decorative panels, entire storefronts, columns and cornices are but a few of the building and landscape elements that are cast, wrought, pressed, or rolled of iron, copper, cast iron, tin, sheet metal, aluminum, steel, or bronze. Many architectural metal features were made locally by manufacturers such as Seaman and Schuske Metal Works Company, which is still in operation today. These traditional building materials add a visual and textural richness to the historic districts and should be preserved.



Maintenance and Repair

Architectural metals are particularly vulnerable to corrosion and rust when left exposed to air and moisture. Maintaining a sound paint layer on the surface of the metal is an essential means of preserving metal features. Metal surfaces should be inspected routinely for signs of flaking or rust. Proper cleaning of the surface is necessary prior to repainting.

Cleaning techniques will vary according to the specific metal. Hand sanding and wire brushing may be used on hard metals such as steel or cast or wrought iron. Low pressure, dry-grit blasting is generally not acceptable due to its potential to destroy delicate detailing. However, this more abrasive method may be employed if gentler techniques prove unsuccessful and if a test area produces no damage to the metal surface. Chemical solutions/strippers are typically used on soft metals such as lead, tin, copper, zinc, and terne plate. Applications of the solution on test areas in inconspicuous locations are recommended to monitor reactions. Chemical solutions/strippers should be properly neutralized to avoid further deterioration. Copper and bronze finishes, in time, will develop a protective greenish patina on the surface that need not be painted. Metals such as brass should be routinely polished.

The cleaning of metal surfaces should be followed immediately by the application of a metal primer to minimize exposure of bare metal to the air. Rust retardant paints specifically designed for metal should be used on all metal surfaces that require a paint finish. Lacquer may be used on brass to preserve polished finishes.

Replacement of metal architectural and site features should take place only when the elements are too damaged to repair. Replacement sections should match the original in terms of style, detail, form, shape, size, and material. Replacement in kind is essential to avoid corrosive galvanic reactions where the metal joins.

Architectural details such as those found on the roof dormer of the J.C. Wyatt house, 1309 Felix Street, Museum Hill Historic District, were fabricated of pressed metal.



Architectural Metals



Maintaining a sound paint layer on metal surfaces is essential for preventing rust and corrosion caused by exposure to the weather.



The 1905 Burnette-Leibowitz building at 819-821 S. 8th Street has a rare surviving stamped metal facade.

Architectural Metals: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve original architectural metal features on historic buildings and at sites such as cornices, cresting, finials, balustrades, balconies, gutters, downspouts, fences, hitching posts, hardware, etc. Refer to ROOFS for guidelines on metal roof component preservation.
2. Retain and preserve the finishes and colors of original architectural metals, whenever possible.
3. Repair original architectural metal features by patching, splicing, consolidating, or by reinforcing deteriorated sections.
4. Replace architectural metal features when too deteriorated to repair. The replacement should match the original in terms of profile, style, size, and, if possible, material.
5. Maintain a sound paint film or other compatible coating on materials that rust or corrode.
6. Clean metals to remove corrosion prior to repainting. Use the gentlest means possible to clean architectural metals, including appropriate chemical solutions/strippers for soft metals and hand sanding and wire brushing for hard metals. If hand sanding and wire brushing prove ineffective, use low pressure dry-grit blasting if, after testing, it does not damage the metal surface. If using a chemical solution/stripper, ensure chemicals are properly neutralized to avoid deterioration.
7. Do not use sandblasting to clean architectural metals.
8. Paint previously painted metals in colors appropriate to the historic building or site and in the historic district.
9. Avoid replacing wooden porch supports and railings with iron/metal supports and railings.