

Preservation Issues in the Patrick Tavern Porch Project

Preservation work relies on “era(s) of significance.” Patrick Tavern has two: the Settlement Era (from its building in 1793 to the mid 1830s, when its corner was no longer the commercial center) and the Dublin Hill Era (late 19th century, when the residential area to the east took its distinctive character associated with Irish and African-American worker families). The building’s interior depicts the first era; the west exterior with the porch, likely built around 1875-1885, depicts the second. No clear photo from that era has been found, but the ca. 1935 photos have been helpful, since the porch’s design is consistent with the earlier era.



Railing: The low porch railing does not conform to modern safety standards. Preservation Brief #45, an interpretive guide for the Sec. Interior’s Standards, suggests a simple additional rail above the railing to give the required height.

Railing/Balustrade Heights

Historic porches generally have handrails that measure 28 to 30 inches in height from the floor. Current code requirements for new construction generally mandate that railings be 36 to 42 inches in height (often 36 inches for single family dwellings, and 42 inches for multi-family dwellings and commercial buildings). Raising the historic railing by as much as 30% or more can have a major impact on not just the proportions of the balusters, but also on the overall appearance of a historic porch. Adding a simple rail above the historic railing and painting it to hide its presence as much as possible is generally the least intrusive solution when this safety requirement must be met. Similarly, an existing bottom rail is sometimes set too high off the deck to meet contemporary code requirements. The addition of a simple wood rail or even a narrow metal pipe below the bottom rail will usually suffice (Fig 19).

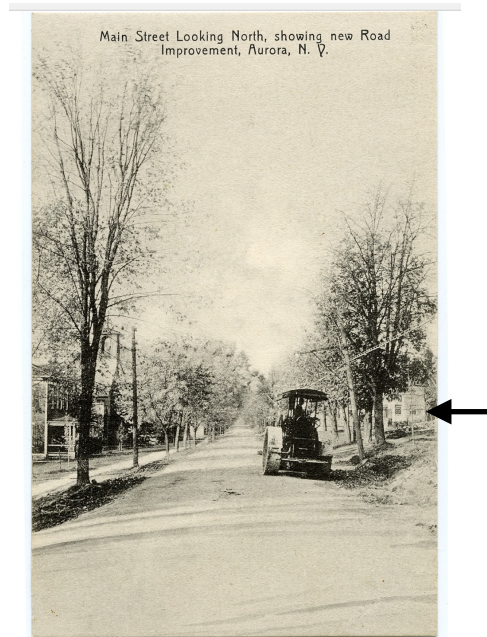
It is not uncommon to find historic porches with decks only several steps off the ground and with no railings. For owner-occupied residences undergoing rehabilitation, local codes usually will not require the



Figure 19. Historic porches generally have railings that measure 28 to 30 inches in height from the floor. When additional height is necessary for safety, a simple rail, added for illustration purposes in this photograph, can usually be installed above the historic railing. Not only does this treatment allow retention of the historic balustrade, but it also has a minimum impact to the appearance of the porch. Photo: Charles Fisher.

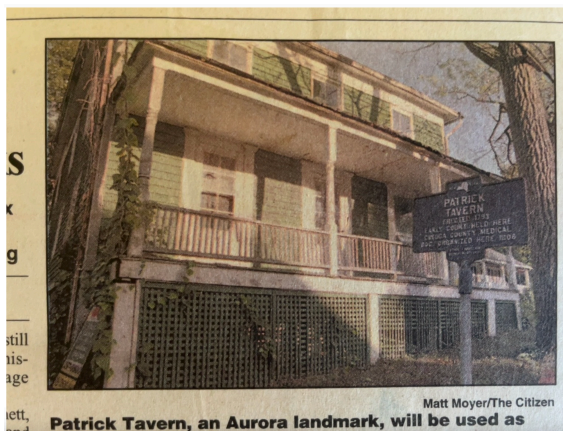
(From Preservation Brief #45. I encourage CPP to use and reference standard sources like Preservation Briefs in their decisions)

Windows: Early windows would have had small panes; the current new windows (6 over 6 and 9 over 9) replicate that. At some point before the 1935 photo, the windows were redone as 2 over 2). SHPO proposed that the 1875 windows were 2 over 2; however, there is no info on whether older windows were retained or new ones added then. This postcard, ca. 1900, shows the back end of the building, with 4 over 4 windows. This suggests that owners might have kept the older, small-paned windows throughout.



Paint: CPP asked how the current paint color was chosen. This color scheme, especially the light cream base color, is appropriate for the Settlement Era according to internet sources and historic paint collections. Although dark colors came into use in the approximate era of the porch, the above postcard, and one view of similar vintage from farther up Dublin Hill, show a light building. Dark paint (green?) first appears in a photo of St. Patrick's congregation in about 1915.

Lattice: Upon request, I found later (1992? and 1997) close-ups of the lattice under the porch. Unlike many of today's products, it had very small square openings. The contractor believes this product is still available.



Door: The door arrangement changed several times. Personal observation of the current central west side door suggested that the glazing might have replaced a solid panel. (I would like to have the contractor look at this for an expert opinion.) Having glass right next to the door's lock is an obvious security issue.

Signage: The most necessary sign is directional, indicating parking, entrance, and handicapped access. I propose that a sign on a rope, clipped at either end across the stair, could serve the dual purpose of giving the directions and indicating that the porch is not the primary entrance. Lettering should be a minimum of 4" tall, approximating a street sign (for roads with a speed limit of 30 mph; [https://nysltap.org/nysltap-local-roads/what-minimum-size-and-colors-allowed-street-name-signs#:~:text=The%20first%20letter%20of%20each, four%20\(4%E2%80%9D\)%20inches.](https://nysltap.org/nysltap-local-roads/what-minimum-size-and-colors-allowed-street-name-signs#:~:text=The%20first%20letter%20of%20each, four%20(4%E2%80%9D)%20inches.)) Text (draft): "Parking (HC logo) Entrance," or "Park (HC logo) Enter," with an arrow underneath.

A second desired sign is an interpretive sign, giving the building's history and context, wall mounted at the NW corner, to be read by pedestrians on Dublin Hill Rd., maximum size 18x32" (4 sq feet). To be determined if these signs qualify as "Governmental signs" per Zoning Law.

The 1935 photo shows a small sign on an arm, probably advertising the mother-daughter dressmaking business (census). This sign measured approximately 8.5x12.75". However, it was specific to the Stamp family ownership, not to the era of porch construction.

The Historical Society received CPP approval (2021) for a wall-mounted sign by the door. The proposed sign happens to date from 1874, which does fit with the presumed date of porch construction.



Respectfully submitted,
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