

7 Ways To Love Your Older Home KINGSTON, NEW YORK



Background photos: Will Faller

The border design used throughout the brochure is based on the tracery in the front door sidelights of the 1818 Ulster County Courthouse at 285 Wall Street in the Stockade District of Kingston.

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*Design by Marian McCorkle
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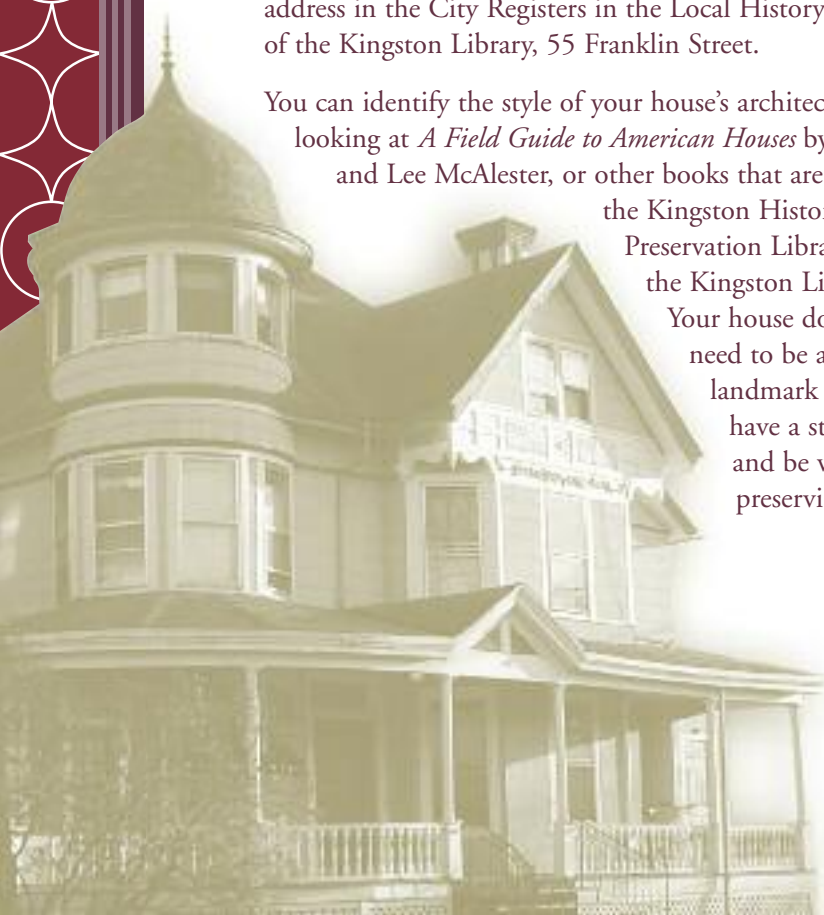


1. Get to Know Your House a Little Better

Find out when your house or building was constructed and give it a birthday party! The Kingston Water Department can usually tell you when the water system was extended to your street and when your house was connected to it. If you know your house was built after the water system was on your street, the “tap-in” date can help you date your house.

Your deed may tell you the names of all or many of the people who used to own your house. You can often learn their businesses or occupations by researching your address in the City Registers in the Local History room of the Kingston Library, 55 Franklin Street.

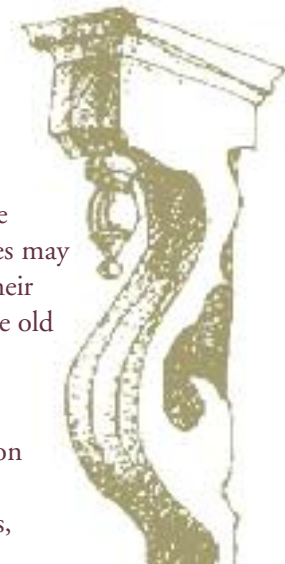
You can identify the style of your house’s architecture by looking at *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester, or other books that are in the Kingston Historic Preservation Library at the Kingston Library. Your house doesn’t need to be a historic landmark to have a style and be worth preserving.



2. Love Those Details!

In older houses, it’s those little details that make it distinctive and, as some real estate people will tell you, more valuable. The original front porch gingerbread, porch railings, door knobs, the brackets underneath your roof overhang, bluestone walk, and even the wooden window sashes may need your attention but not necessarily their replacement. It’s often cheaper to repair the old than it is to replace it with new, especially when it comes to windows and doors.

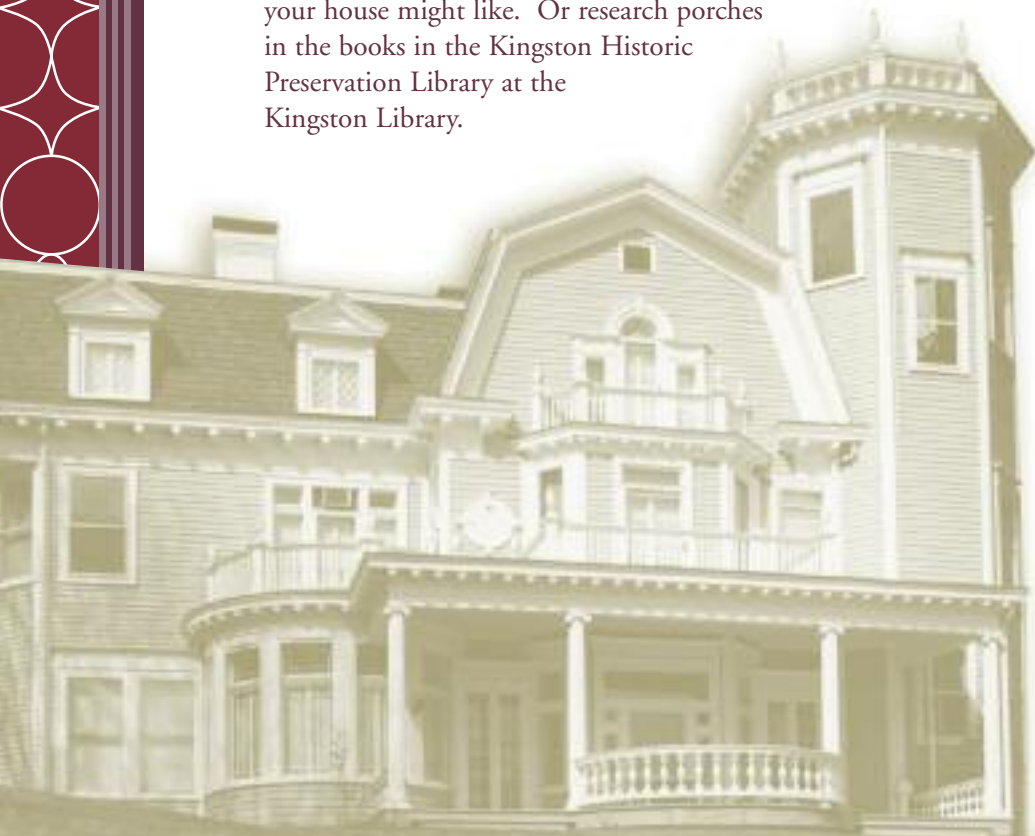
You’ll find all kinds of detailed information about how to restore every detail in your house in one of the many reference books, such as *Renovating Old Houses* by George Nash and the National Park Service *Preservation Briefs*, that are in the Kingston Historic Preservation Library in the Kingston Library.



3. Fix the Front Porch Up

Why the front porch? It happens to be one of the most obvious features of your house's appearance. It's also likely to be the part of your house that has been changed the most from the original and also the most apt to need fixing up from time to time. Whatever you do though, try to match the old-fashioned shapes of railings, posts, and spokes and to preserve the fancy trim. Don't cheat your house by replacing the older porch with newer so-called weather-impervious unpainted wood and two-by-four stair railings.

Drive around the city for examples of updated porches your house might like. Or research porches in the books in the Kingston Historic Preservation Library at the Kingston Library.



4. Use Natural Replacement Materials

If you really want to love your older home, use replacement materials that were used in it originally, such as wood. Although wood does need painting every seven or ten years, you can choose the exact color you want to paint it. Apart from the temptation to remove a lot of your house's original details, artificial siding of whatever form just doesn't let it look like an interesting older house any more. Note that wooden replacement windows typically cost no more than artificially-clad windows – and they look like “real” windows. After a time, artificial siding is also likely to need replacement or repainting, which defeats its purpose, of course.



For why our Secretary of the Interior doesn't approve much of artificial (vinyl, aluminum, or other) siding, read *Preservation Brief 8, Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings*. Copies are available in the Kingston Historic Preservation Library at the Kingston Library and also in the City Planning office.

5. Restore the Front Door



Some people see the front door as the “eye” of the house. Certainly, it’s the component of the front of your house that you and others look at most often. To fix up or restore your front door, consider finding out what it looked like originally. It may cost you more, but hiring a carpenter to make you a replica of the original front door may greatly improve your house’s appearance.

The Ulster County Department of Records may have a picture of what your house looked like as part of its tax record. If not, the Kingston Historic Preservation Library at the Kingston Library offers hundreds of pictures of front doors that a house like yours might love.

6. Paint It

Your house will love to be painted and here is where you can get “creative.” Ideally, you might consider using colors somewhat close to the colors it might have been painted originally, although this will likely be hard to know.

You may get a good idea of what the original colors were or some ideas for color schemes that others have used by consulting *Authentic Color Schemes for Victorian Houses – Comstock’s Modern House Painting 1883* by Rossiter and Wright and similar books in the Kingston Historic Preservation Library at the Kingston Library.

7. Get a Grant or Low-Cost Loan

Depending on your income, you may be eligible for a low-cost loan up to \$10,000 through Kingston’s Economic Development program.

If your building is used for income-producing purposes and your building is eligible for or designated as a national and state landmark, you may qualify for a 20% Federal tax credit for approved restoration.

Need More Information?

Contact: Building Safety Division, 5 Garraghan Drive,
Kingston, NY 12401 • phone: (845) 331-1217
email: buildings@ci.kingston.ny.us
website: www.ci.kingston.ny.us

