

ALBANY HISTORIC BUILDING NEWS

MARCH 2011

ALBANY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPT.

An interview with Skip Throop on the restoration of the 1886-1891 Conn & Huston Buildings

What drew you to purchase the Conn & Huston buildings? Quite frankly, I was getting bored in retirement and looking for a hobby. I've always been a history buff. My wife, Nancy Dunn, and I have thought about one day living downtown. So I thought that it would be fun to find a building downtown that had retail on the first floor and living space above. While volunteering at the carousel, I heard that the Conn & Huston buildings could be available for sale, so I put the wheels in motion and bought it.

Have you restored other old buildings before? We lived in a 1906 farmhouse that was completely updated on the inside and didn't need any work. I always loved the 1906 barn, which was put together with wooden pegs. Since I didn't have a lot of experience with old buildings, I did my homework before purchasing the buildings.



I hired an inspector to assess the building. The City building inspectors also provided very helpful information on building code requirements.

Even after all of the homework, you can never really know "enough." Everything was more complicated than I thought it would be and some issues weren't evident until we started into demolition or construction.

What was the biggest challenge of the project? I had no idea what would be waiting for me when I removed the lath and plaster from the walls. I was fortunate that the building did not have any dry rot. Unfortunately, we uncovered major structural issues on the front brick wall that became the project's biggest challenge. So I had to hire an engineer. Steel bracing was installed and extra bracing on the roof. It was challenging to figure out how to make the repairs and keep them hidden. Most of the bolts are hidden under trim.

The rest of the project went as expected. We reused all of the original trim, carefully marking it when it was removed so it could be put back in its original place. A few doors were missing and had to be made.

Interview CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

Residential Rehabilitation GRANT \$\$ info, page 2



Residential Rehabilitation Matching Grant Time!

Historic buildings are special places with special needs. They help create a unique “sense of place” in Oregon’s communities, but they can be costly to restore and rehabilitate to meet today’s building codes. Doing things the right way using the right techniques and materials can add cost. However, these higher up front costs almost always result in a longer life for the repair and a higher value for your home. (**Note:** The City of Albany regulates all changes to the exterior of historic buildings on the Local Historic Inventory built before 1946.)

Financial incentives are important tools in encouraging the preservation of historic buildings. The City’s residential rehabilitation grant program provides a financial incentive to historic homeowners to help defray the costs of exterior restoration and maintenance of Albany’s historic homes. Many of these projects have made a huge visual improvement to our historic districts through careful restoration and/or removal of incompatible features.

Grant Eligibility Requirements:

- The building must be constructed before 1946 and be in one of Albany’s National Register Historic Districts or listed in the National Register individually.
- The building must be non-commercial in use.
- Projects must be on the EXTERIOR, and cannot include new construction/additions.
- Window repair and restoration projects will receive priority and only require a 25% match.
- All other projects require at least a 50% match. Projects visible from the street will receive priority.
- Work must be completed by Monday, August 15, 2011.
- **Applications are due Monday, April 25**, by 5:00 pm. Applications can be emailed, mailed or hand-delivered to Anne Catlin at the Community Development Department.

Applications are online at www.cityofalabany.net/comdev/historic/grants.php and in the Community Development Department in Albany City Hall, 333 Broadalbin St SW, 541-917-5560.

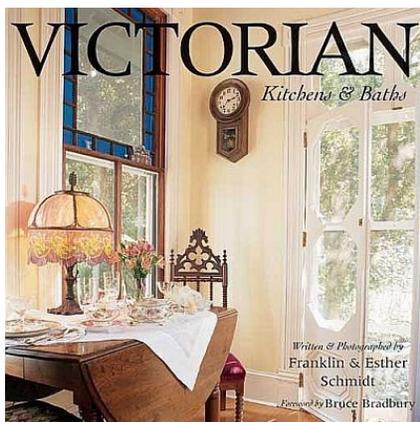
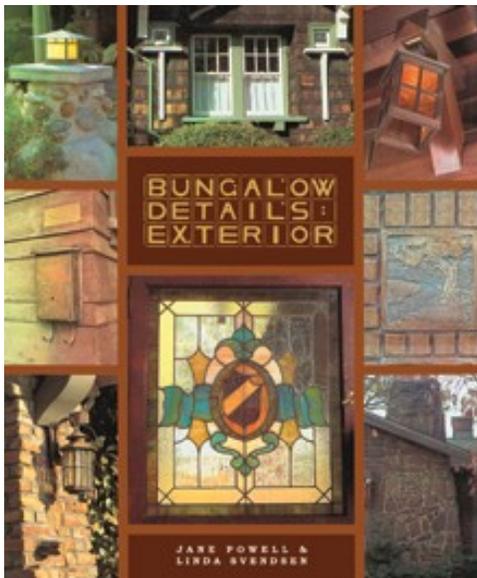
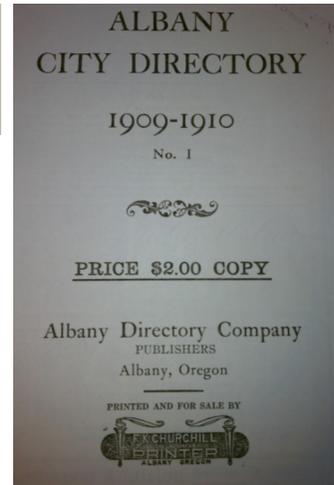
MEET THE LANDMARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION ONLINE:

WWW.CITYOFALABANY.NET/COMDEV/HISTORIC

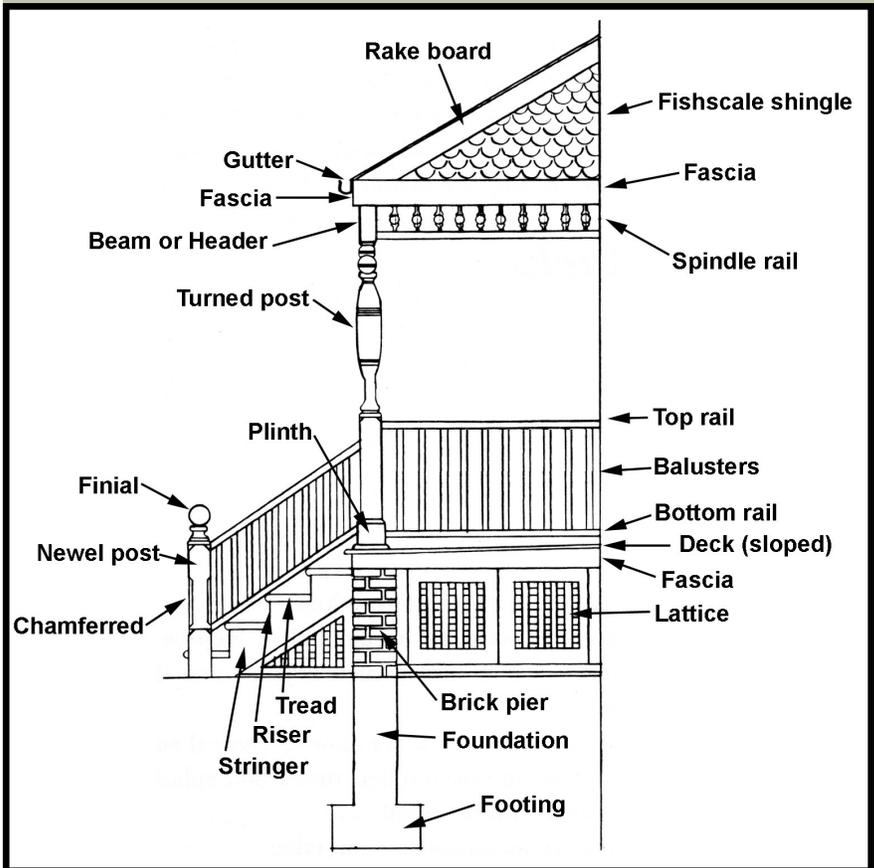


Downtown Carnegie Library's Preservation Resources

Albany's Downtown library boasts a tremendous collection of preservation books to help with rehabilitating your home or building. There are also many helpful "how-to" articles in the *Old House Journal* and other magazines. Several new books on Bungalows and house plans from the 1920s, 30s and 40s have been added to the collection. For those researching the history of your property, the City directories and Sanborn Fire insurance maps are great resources. We encourage you to "check out" the historic preservation collection.



Do you know your porch terminology?



This publication has been funded with a matching grant-in-aid from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C St NW, Washington, DC 20240. The content and opinions of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Interior.



Conn & Huston Building Restoration, continued from page 1

What was the most unique “find”? When the window sills were off, I found an 18-inch wood chisel stuck in the wall. It was obviously very old and likely used on the building originally. I gave it to my contractor, Paul Davis, for Christmas. Davis was thrilled to be the recipient of the find.

Another hidden treasure was discovered by our painter. He realized the wood grain finish on the doors was the original faux finish. Once I saw it, I wanted to make sure that any original finish was saved and what couldn't be saved, be recreated. This was a very labor-intensive project, but it was a special touch and gift to the building.

I also uncovered many layers of wallpaper and kept pieces of all of them. We were able to salvage the original linoleum in three rooms. It had to be carefully cleaned in order to not ruin the natural product with chemicals.

One of the most amazing features of the larger upstairs unit is two 6-foot by 8-foot pyramid shaped skylights. Paul Davis was able to rehabilitate one and rebuild the other.

What advice do you have for others? 1. Don't do anything until you have a plan and have done a thorough investigation of the conditions of the building. 2. Hire a good contractor and subcontractors who can problem solve in unique situations. It doesn't pay to skimp on contractors. 3. Assume the project will cost a lot more.

Being retired, I was able to work alongside my contractors. In fact, I restored and rebuilt every window myself. Two years later, Nancy and I are proud of the final results. We have two show-case apartments above the two retail spaces. The front façade is also restored. We have a high-end apartment if we decide to move downtown one day.

What's next? I'm enjoying re-researching the history behind the buildings and the occupants. I've got all of the deeds and transfers back to 1847 and have read all of the newspaper articles (available on microfiche at the main library).

A huge thank you to Skip and Nancy for bringing new life back to the Conn & Huston buildings!



You are receiving this newsletter because you own property that is on the City of Albany's Local Historic Inventory. We welcome your input on future newsletter articles. If you have a preservation success story, tip or question to share, please send it to anne.catlin@cityofalbany.net.

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS, including new windows and doors, on buildings built before 1946 REQUIRE HISTORIC REVIEW and approval.

Visit www.cityofalbany.net/comdev/historic/ or call 541-917-7550 for more info on Albany's preservation program.