

Vandalia Heritage Foundation, a 501 c3 non-profit committed to economic revitalization through historic preservation, offers many services to many communities but one is unique solely to Fairmont. The restored Hutchinson House, while being the headquarters for Vandalia, whose service area is North Central West Virginia in its entirety, also houses the PRC, more formally know as the Preservation Resource Center. The PRC offers a wealth of resource materials to neighborhood residents as well as to small contractors, tradespersons and others interested in historic preservation and redevelopment.

A key component of Vandalia's program targeted to historic neighborhoods in Fairmont, the PRC provides the public with reference books, periodicals, supplier information, funding and tax credit applications, technical preservation briefs and various other publications and resource information. Counseling, design and technical assistance will be offered on an appointment basis. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, and by appointment. Individuals are strongly encouraged to make an appointment to use the PRC in order to maximize the effectiveness of their visits. Please call the PRC at 304-368-1555.

As part of Vandalia's ongoing community outreach efforts, we strive to bring the PRC to the public. The following, outlined by our Design and Technical Assistance team, offers basic guidelines for addressing house maintenance along with struggles Vandalia has faced in repairing the Hutchinson House. General maintenance on homes, historic or otherwise, is a very important subject and can be a daunting task and a few visual inspections can save both time and money.

### **The Importance of General Maintenance for Historic Properties**

The restoration of historic properties often requires a large investment of time, money and hard work. The satisfaction of seeing a property restored to its original glory is, for the owners, worth the many sacrifices they endure. Sadly, this is not the end of the process. To keep the property in its restored state, a rigorous maintenance program is necessary to avoid future deterioration and costly repairs. Regular inspection, particularly of exterior features, is vital. The following areas should be part of this inspection with problems addressed as soon as possible:

#### **Roof**

Leaks that appear in the ceilings of a home are obvious signs of a roof problem. Even before leaks occur though, future roof problems can be detected by a visual inspection. Any missing or damaged tiles or shingles should be replaced before water infiltration occurs.

### **Gutters**

Gutter systems should be kept clear of leaves and other debris. Sagging gutters can be a sign of a clogged system or can indicate rot in the underlying support structure of the roof.

### **Wooden Siding**

Paint will inevitably age and require re-painting; however, if paint prematurely cracks or bubbles, it could be a sign of a hidden problem. Warped or obviously rotted siding should also be dealt with immediately.

### **Masonry Exterior**

Newly formed cracks can be a sign of foundation problems. A white, perhaps powdery, appearance on the masonry, called efflorescence, is an indication of moisture inside the wall. As the moisture evaporates, it leaves behind the telltale white powder.

### **Other**

Look for any other signs of deterioration in decorative trim, railings, windows, doors, and woodwork and repair as necessary.

The restored Hutchinson House, serving as Vandalia Heritage Foundation's headquarters, has several side porches with flat copper roofs. Due to improper installation of the copper panels, the roofs have had leakage problems that began soon after the restoration was completed. One porch leaked severely despite several attempts made over the years to remediate the problem. However, this issue was not addressed properly soon enough to prevent serious rot problems in the porch ceilings and support systems. After finally finding a suitable fix for the leak, repairs began. A sag in one of the support beams between the columns was indicative of a serious underlying problem. What had been perceived as a small repair that involved some trim work and beadboard replacement, soon turned into an almost total rebuild of a large section of the roof that resulted in a very expensive repair. This case is a perfect illustration that even seemingly small repairs cannot be put off and must be dealt with as soon as they are discovered.

The restoration of historic properties is a noble pursuit with dividends that are well worth the effort. Neglecting to have a regular maintenance program can undermine even the hardest of efforts. In this regard, the old saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" could not be more appropriate.