

Window Anatomy

Architectural Elements

Article and Photographs by ZoAnn Campana,
Architectural Historian

Editor's Note: *This is the first of a series of Elements articles about windows, to be continued through the year.*

In the last installment of Elements, we covered what makes old windows special and why they are priceless components of your historic building. What I neglected to include were the many resources available to help you restore your wooden windows. John Leeke's book *Save America's Windows: Caring for Older and Historic Wood Windows* is considered the gold standard for window restoration. The internet offers a treasure trove of free resources, including the Craftsman Blog (www.thecraftsmanblog.com). The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office created a five-part video series with step-by-step instructions for restoring historic wooden windows, *Simple Steps to Working Windows* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUSGILSfzWE>).

If you are looking for a professional, I must warn that window companies with historic preservation expertise are few and far between in our neck of the woods. Many will encourage you to simply replace your windows. Although HRPS cannot make recommendations here, I can say that Reyman Brothers has completed several HRPS-funded projects through our Neighborhood Preservation Fund, and their work consistently adheres to preservation best practices.

In this installment of our window series, we will cover window anatomy and define the terms used to describe the basic

components of a window. This will give us the vocabulary we need to understand different window types, which will be covered in the next issue of FootPrints. There are many parts and pieces to windows, and this list of terms is not all-inclusive. This glossary includes most terms important in describing windows and facilitating their repair.

Casing/Trim – The finished visible framework surrounding a window.

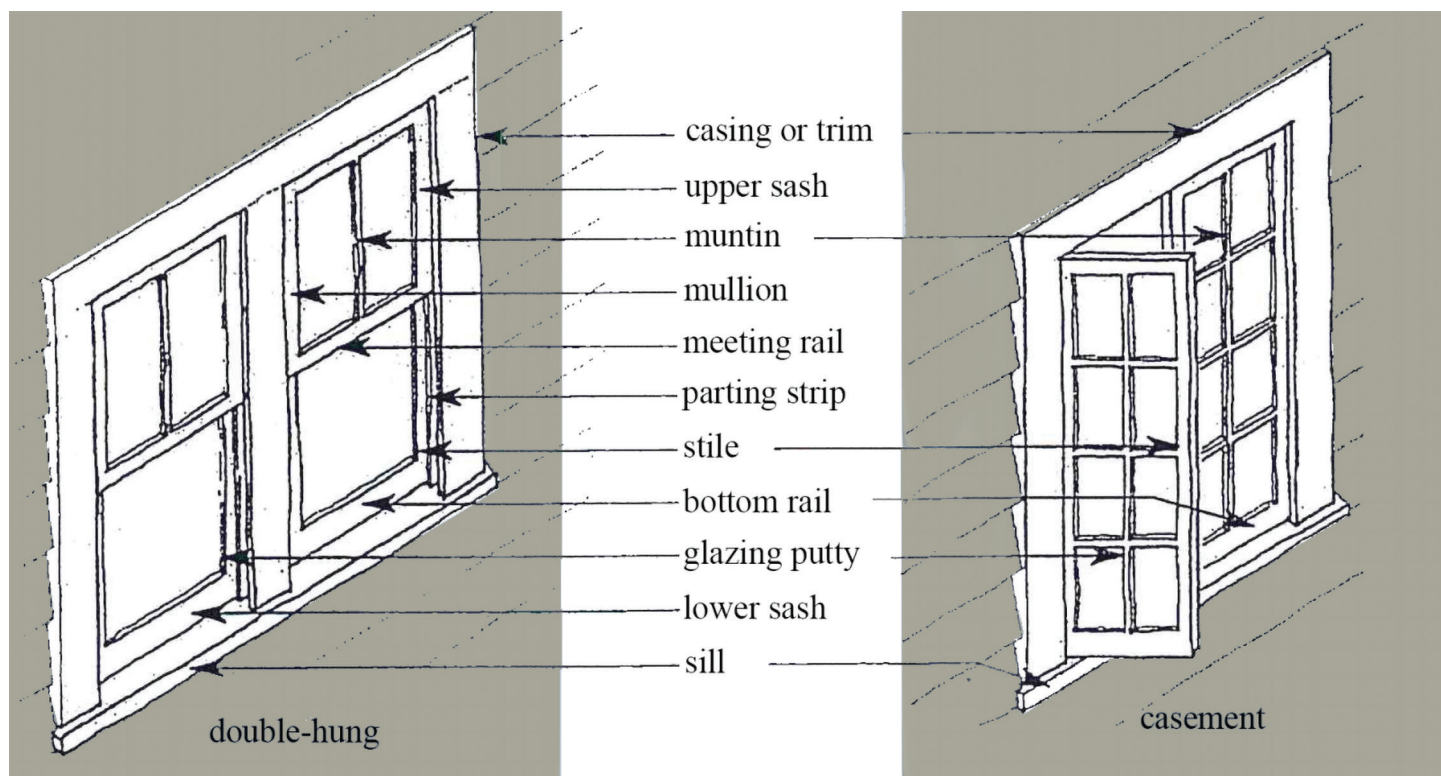
Glazing – Glass fitted into a window.

Glazing Putty – The material that holds a window pane in place.

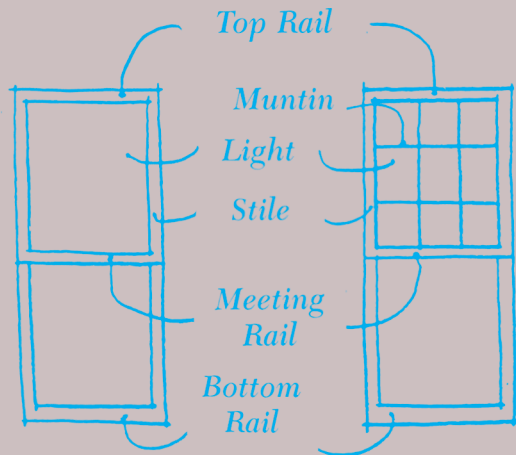
Light (Pane) – A single piece of window glass. Windows are often described by how many lights of glass they have. A window with four panes of glass may be called a “four-light window.” The illustration of the double-hung window depicts a “two-over-one” window, as the upper sash has two lights of glass and the lower sash has one light. The casement window illustration depicts a pair of eight-light casements, each with four rows of two lights.

Lintel – A horizontal piece of timber, stone, or brickwork installed over a window to support the superincumbent weight of the wall in which a window is installed. (illustration)

Mullion – The vertical bar separating coupled windows,



SASH



multiple windows, or two casement windows. Not to be confused with muntins, mullions are larger members that separate distinct windows, whereas muntins separate glass panes within a single window.

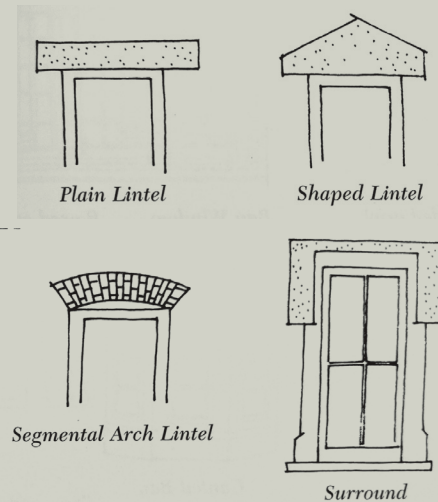
Muntin – Thin strips of wood used to hold lights of glass within a window. In a “divided light” window, the muntins are the members that divide the panes of glass.

Parting Strip – A vertical strip of wood used to separate the sashes of a window.

Rail – The cross or horizontal pieces of a window frame. The bar that at the bottom of the upper sash, separating it from the lower sash, is called the meeting rail. The bottom rail defines the horizontal member at the bottom of the lower sash.

Sash – The framework into which panes and muntins are set. This applies only to sash (i.e., single-hung and double-hung) windows. When the onlooker in *The Night Before Christmas* “threw up the sash,” he was opening the window.

LINTELS



Sill – The framing member that forms the lower lip of a window opening. Often, a sill projects outward from the wall.

Stile – The vertical pieces of a sash.

Take a look at the windows in your neighborhood and see if you can identify their different components.

Next issue, we will examine the different types of windows, from jalousies to hoppers. You will learn the difference between the oft-confused double-hung and single-hung sash windows, and what distinguishes a transom from a fanlight.

Sources include Gottfried and Jennings’ *American Vernacular: Buildings and Interiors, 1870-1960* (2009) and Phillips’ *The Old House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture, 1600 to 1940* (1992). 

ZoAnn Campana is an architectural historian. She is a HRPS Tour Guide and serves as Vice President of the HRPS Board of Directors.

In Memoriam - Folsom/Acheson House

In Spring 2020 *FootPrints*, we wrote that the Folsom/Acheson House “was formerly surrounded by other Victorians of its vintage, and is now sitting amid a barren expanse of dirt, stoically awaiting its own demise.”

On June 1, 2020 the beautiful Folsom/Acheson House was demolished.

Folsom/Acheson House built c. 1895, demolished June 1, 2020.

The Armstrong/deLongchamps House and the Riegg/Green/Stamley House are both up on blocks waiting to be moved. The Garat/Humphrey House was moved to Arlington Avenue in 2019. All the other properties between Eighth and Ninth Street and between N. Virginia and N. Center Street have been demolished.

