

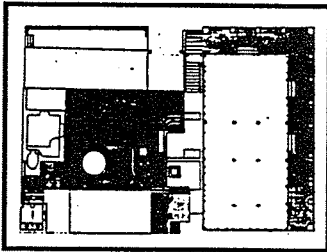
PRESERVATION GUIDELINE 12

Division for Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources

LANDSCAPE TREATMENTS AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Owners of properties are responsible for maintaining the walkway and yards around their houses and, in commercial areas, for maintaining the sidewalk in front of their buildings. Courtyards are also a concern, and frequently subject to change. All such changes are subject to review by the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission.

The main rule in making site changes is that original features, such as paving materials, especially early paving stones or bricks, be carefully preserved. If resetting is required, original materials should be safely stored and then reused. New sidewalk, alley, or courtyard paving should follow traditional practices whenever possible. Other features, such as retaining walls and gates, fences, even historic plantings should also be kept wherever possible. New Features should be sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, and overall texture to the historic character of the site.



Keep the existing characteristics of interior courtyards and sidewalk areas. Retain paving patterns, changes in elevation, and special features, such as kitchens, outbuildings, or wells.



Historic paving, both in courtyards and on public sidewalk contributes to the overall quality and texture of historic districts. Every effort should be made to retain historic paving materials or to duplicate damaged or deteriorated materials.

New Lighting, Planters, and Paving

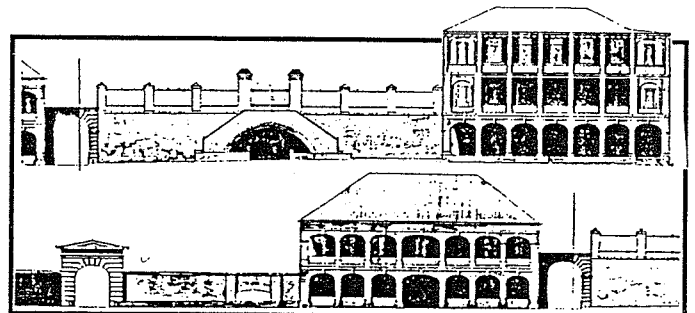
General:

Lighting, benches, planting and other additions to rear courtyards and side yards should be kept as simple as possible. Fake historic-looking, pole-mounted lamps should be avoided as should wall-mounted coach lamps. Free-standing, raised masonry planting beds are also discouraged, though larger planting beds, especially at the edges of alleys and courtyards, are often appropriate. Every effort should be made to retain the historic -- often utilitarian -- character of traditional interior courtyards.

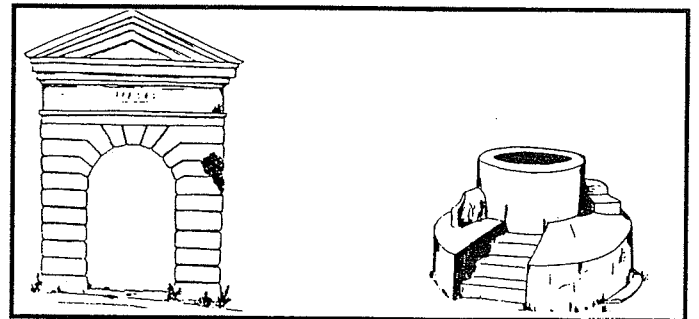
Use of concrete paving should be kept to a minimum. Gravel yards, bricks, or paving stones are recommended substitutes for harsher concrete. Moveable concrete or terra cotta planters are recommended for plant materials.

Historic Fences and Walls

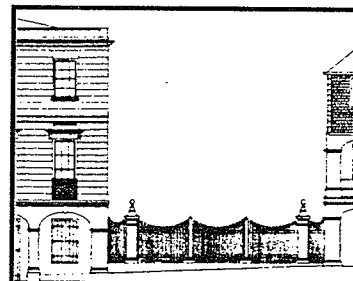
Fences -- either wood or masonry -- are typical features of historic Virgin Islands properties. Many town residences and businesses had fenced rear courtyards, which were also defined by outbuildings or secondary residences. Masonry fences, such as those of the old West Indian Company warehouse in Christiansted (now the U.S. Post Office) were constructed of brick or rubble masonry, or commonly, the two in combination. Usually, masonry fences (or walls) were stuccoed and extended from five to eight feet above grade. Many included gates, some of which are fairly elaborate, to provide separate access.



The character and qualities of existing masonry walls should be maintained.



Masonry gates and masonry wells are important architectural features that must be carefully preserved.

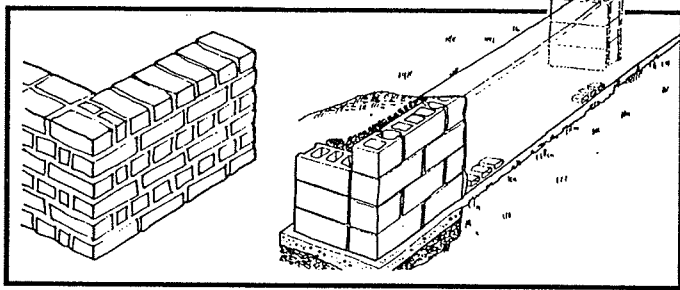


The few remaining wood fences must be preserved. Efforts should be made to duplicate the qualities of historic wood fences when building new ones.

In addition, many Virgin Islands properties had wood fences, to provide privacy and security. Vertical plank fences are common in historic pictures of the islands, as are wood picket fences. A few examples still exist, both protecting side yards and as decorative fences across the fronts of properties.

A final category of fences is iron or steel fences. Both were rare historically, though a few historic iron fences do exist.

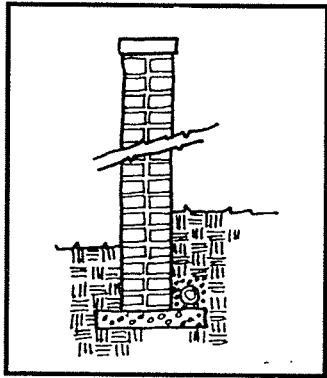
Any existing fences should be carefully preserved and repaired.



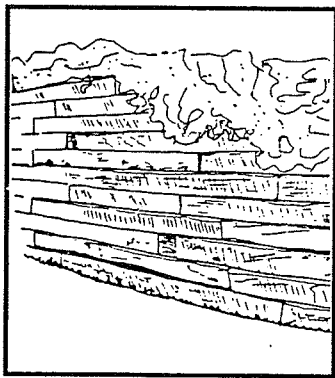
Whether constructed of brick, rubble, or concrete block, new masonry perimeter walls and masonry retaining walls should duplicate the qualities and textures of historic walls.

New Fences and Walls

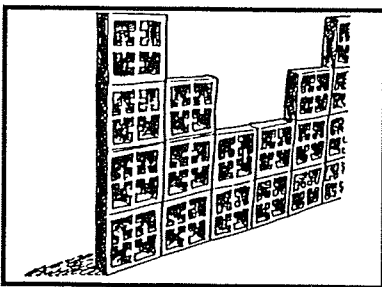
Generally, new fences and walls should follow historic examples. New masonry fences, however, should only be introduced following careful consideration of other alternatives; such fences are permanent features and can drastically alter the character of historic properties. New masonry fences or retaining walls for historic properties should convey many of the qualities of historic walls -- including the slightly irregular



Provide for adequate drainage when introducing new walls. Note the footing drain (a perforated pipe set in gravel) used to help drain the "high side" of this brick wall.



Modern "railroad-tie" retaining walls are not permitted in historic districts.

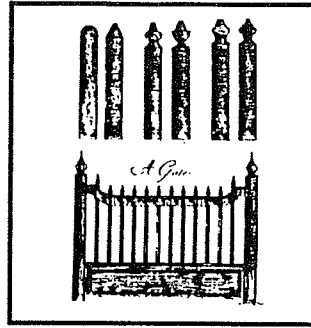


Pierced concrete block fencing detracts from historic areas. Use of this material is not permitted.

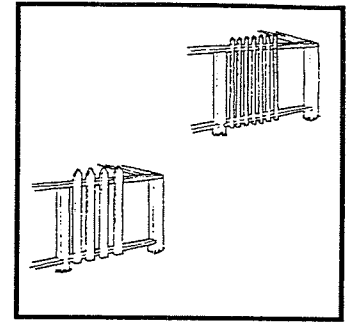
Wood fences can be built in a variety of patterns. Privacy or courtyard fences should generally consist of simple vertical planks attached to horizontal rails. Picket fences can follow a variety of patterns. Ideally, owners should look to historic examples for their design inspiration, though a number of standard designs are acceptable.

profiles of rubble masonry, even if constructed of concrete block. All should be stuccoed to resemble older walls.

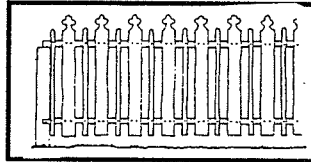
Wood fences can be built in a variety of patterns. Privacy or courtyard fences should generally consist of



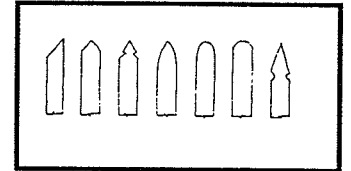
"Classic" picket fence designs - based on 18th-century pattern books.



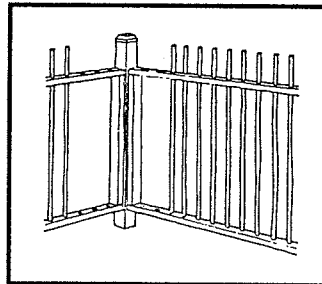
Wide and narrow pickets are acceptable.



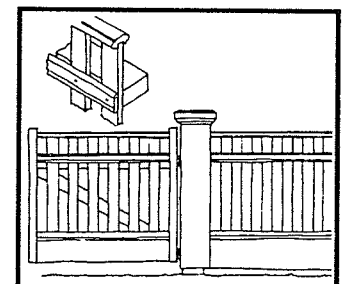
Fanciful pickets, such as these, shown above were common historically in the Islands.



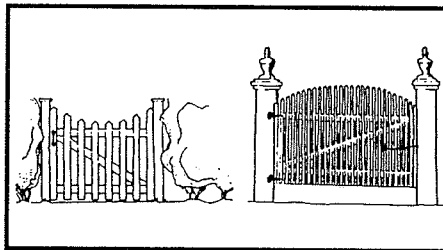
Some alternative picket designs.



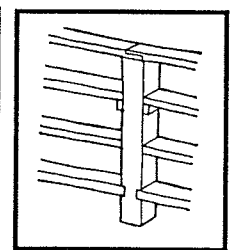
Wood dowells set in rails provide a historic alternative to wood pickets.



More complicated, "cased" fences can also be considered.



Gates should complement the fence design.

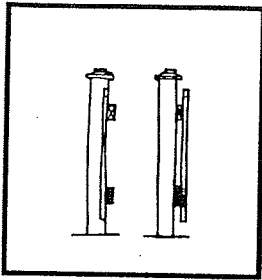


Alternative methods of attaching rails.

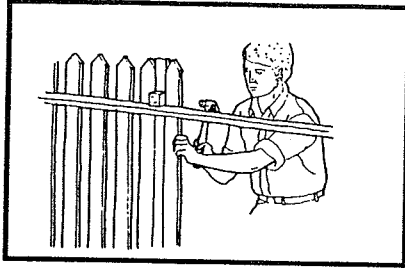
Plant Materials

Owners are encouraged to use native and traditional plant types within historic districts. A wide variety of plants are available and perform well in urban areas. Larger trees are especially encouraged for shade.

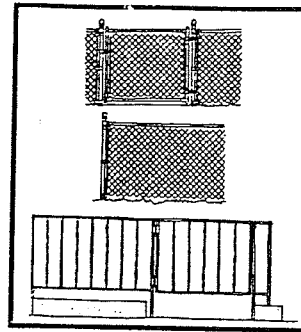
Among recommended specimens are: Golden shower (*Cassia Fistula*), Apple cassia (*Cassia Javanica*), Geige (*Cordia Sebestena*), and Black calabash (*Engallagma Latifolia*). Recommended palms include Thatch (*Coccothrinax Argentea*), Lady (*Rhapis*) and Royal (*Roystonea Borinquena*). Shrubs include Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea*), Orange jasmine (*Murreya Exotica*), Aralia (*Polyscias*), and Plumbago (*Plumbago Capensis*). A wide range of ground covers can be used for planting beds or yards.



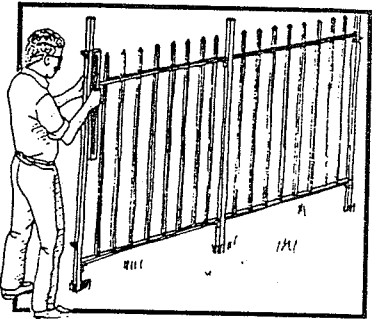
Pickets also can be attached in several ways.



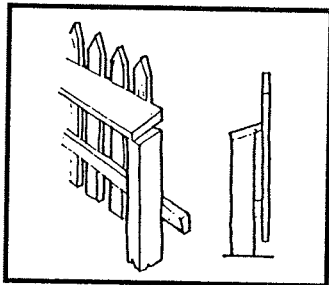
Use a "spacer" when installing.



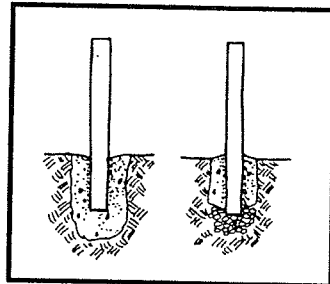
Modern metal fences: welded steel and chain link. Neither are appropriate.



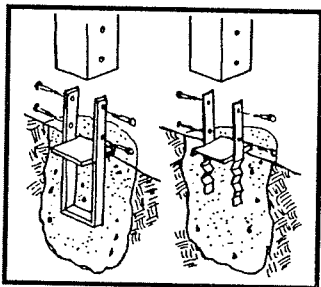
Steel fences such as this provide good security.



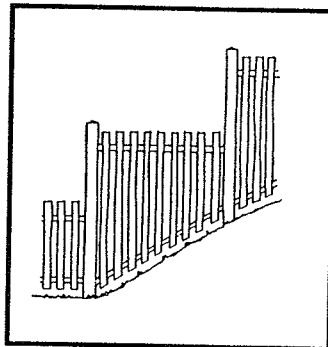
Consider refinements, such as sloping top rails, to help fences shed water.



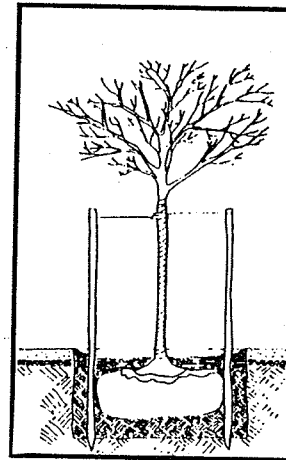
Be certain that fence posts can drain -- as in the example at the right. Always use treated materials.



Consider metal anchors for installation. Anchors reduce contact with soil and cut down on moisture penetration.



"Step" fences on hills.

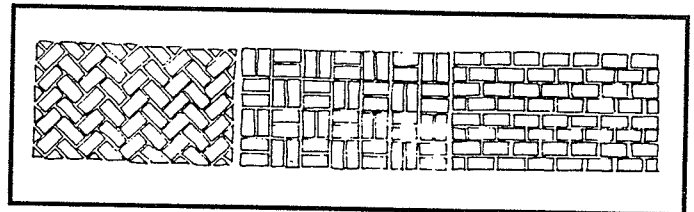


Provide adequately for new plant materials. Consider the variety, water needs, and drainage.

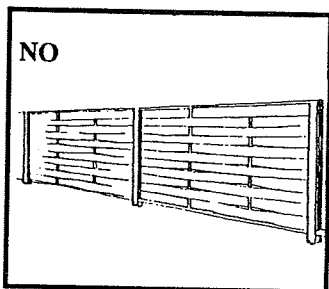
New Steps, Walkways, and Ramps

Changes to grading or other improvements often result in the necessary introduction of new steps or walkways. Handicapped requirements often dictate the need for ramps.

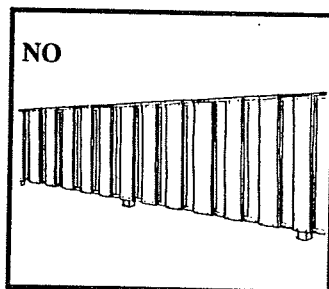
In each case efforts should be made to keep newer features as simple and unobtrusive as possible. Traditional materials, such as brick, tile or stone pavers, and gravel should be used whenever possible. Elaborate curbs, piers or masonry balusters are strongly discouraged. New designs should respect the original character and configuration of the site.



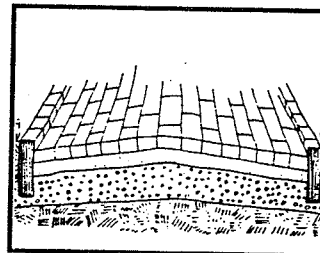
Some common walkway and courtyard paving designs.



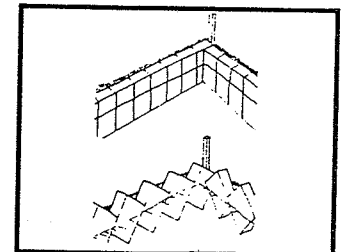
Wood fences to avoid: basketweave and "staggered" plank.



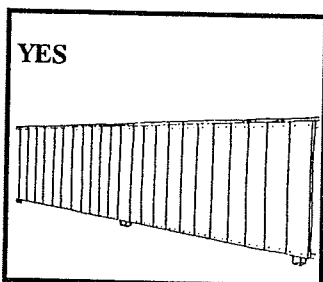
Both are modern "privacy" fence designs that should be avoided in historic districts.



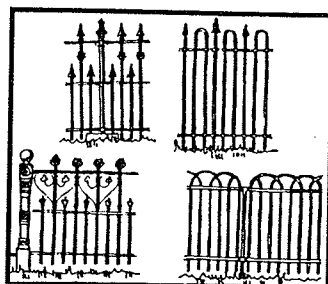
Bricks for walkways typically should be set in a bed of gravel and sand. A slight "crown" to allow for better drainage is recommended.



Two simple brick curb designs -- to be used for planting beds in courtyards.



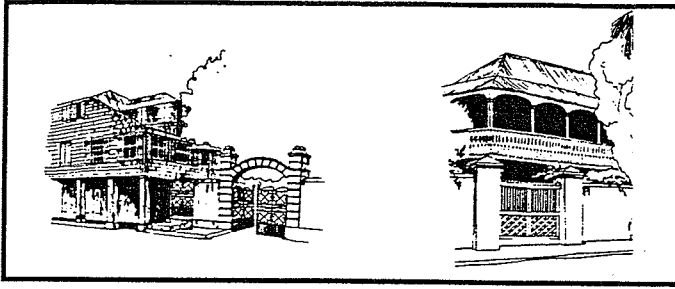
A simple plank privacy fence.



Some historic metal fence designs.

Gates

New gates should follow traditional examples. Both iron (steel) and wood (pickets or plank) are acceptable. Elaborate or overly decorative steel gates are strongly discouraged.



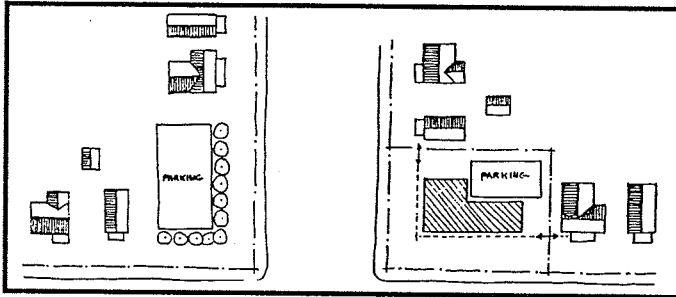
Both metal and wood are traditional for larger gateways. Keep designs as simple as possible (unless more complicated historic examples can be documented).

Benches

Permanently mounted wood, steel, or masonry benches are generally discouraged. Seating should be simple and detract minimally from the historic context.

Parking

Parking lots located in historic districts must be masked from public view. Masonry walls, wood fences, or vegetation should be used to hide multi-space parking. In most instances, parking should be provided at the rear of the buildings only.



Parking should be screened from public view. Place new parking at the rear of lots, or screen with plantings or fences.

For further information contact:

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