

PRESERVATION GUIDELINE 14

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

NEW ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic districts in the Virgin Islands are continually changing places, requiring constant, periodic alterations to their physical character. This and other guidelines recognize this factor and have been designed with the dynamic character of the districts, and of isolated historic properties as well, in mind.



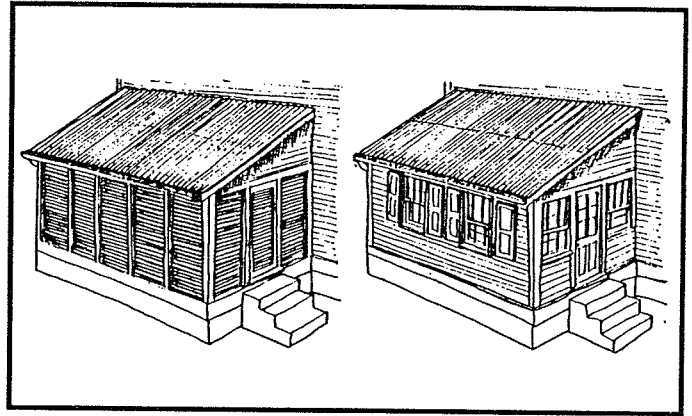
Government House, Christiansted. While this building appears at first glance to be a single, unified building, in fact, it represents a historic combination of several private dwellings, unified by additions. When replicating historic detail in an addition, the designer should ask -- Does the addition fool the viewer into thinking the addition is original? Generally, a clear line between new and old should still be perceptible.

Design Choices

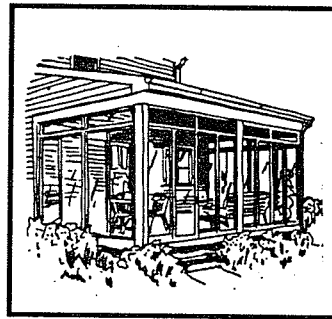
When considering new additions, two main choices face the designer or owner: either to attempt to create an older, more traditional appearance for the addition, or to design a new, more contemporary addition that is somehow "compatible" with the old in terms of form, massing, materials, and so on. In general, the first choice is often easier in that examples exist for comparison and new designs can be drawn from them. More historic-looking additions, however, are inherently deceptive and are often frowned upon in historic districts. Good new design is, therefore, ideal; but it is often difficult to accomplish.



Simple details borrowed from historic buildings such as these can often be incorporated into new additions. If taking a lead from historic examples, the designer should generally try to simplify the details.



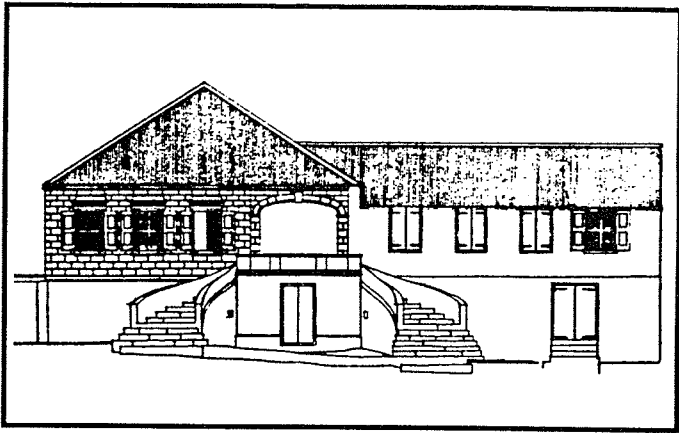
New additions can be either contemporary (left) or traditional (right). Additions should generally be placed at the rear or sides of historic buildings and detract minimally from the main building. Details, such as roof pitch, wall and roof materials, window and door arrangement, can all help to tie an addition into the main building. Simple additions such as these can often accommodate new requirements such as kitchens and baths.



Modern, glazed additions are acceptable on rear elevations. Again, continuities of roof shape and siding materials can help to tie the addition in.

Designers often attempt to imitate aspects of older buildings, such as masonry arches or hipped roofs, but in carrying these features out in new materials -- reinforced concrete instead of rubble stone, for example -- often create a very different appearance. Modern design also differs in many important details from traditional design: window and door openings are different, roofs are generally flatter, materials are different, relying mostly on concrete or steel.

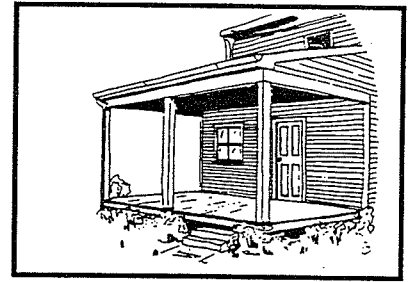
The best solution, is probably to be as "low-key" as possible in a new design. Existing features such as massing, arrangement of doors and windows, and the roof pitch of the building, should be taken into account and incorporated into new additions. Often details can be more contemporary -- meaning simpler -- in character, but these should still respect traditional design characteristics, often a simplification of existing details.



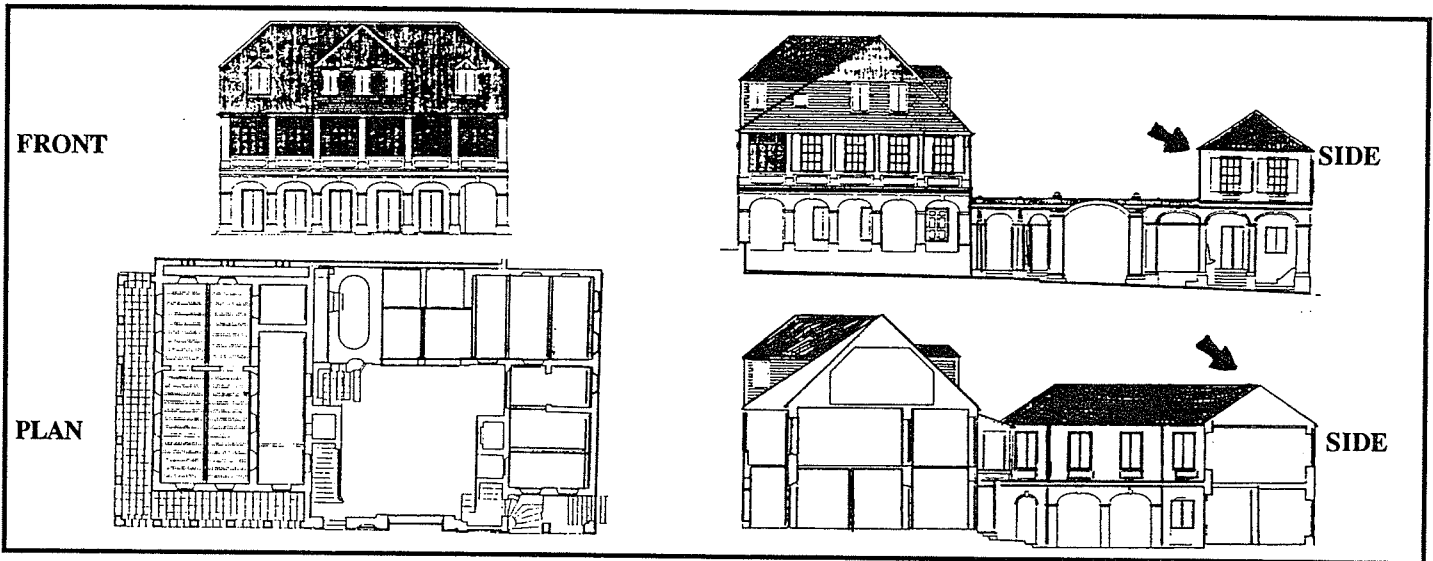
Whether contemporary (modern) or historic in character, new additions should be placed at the side or rear of historic buildings.

Location

New additions to historic buildings should nearly always take place at the rear or at the side of existing structures. Principal elevations, or building fronts, are generally considered the most significant. Every effort should be made to retain the character and appearance of the main elevation.



New porches should follow the same general guidance as that set out for new additions generally.



The historic precedent of courtyard additions -- as shown here -- can be followed for new additions.



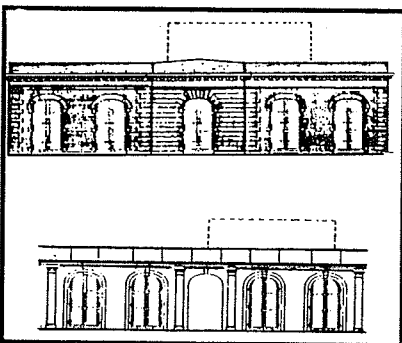
Often, a new addition can take the form of a separate building.

Roof-top Additions

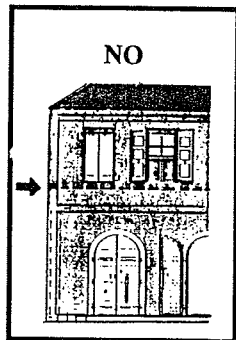
Roof-top additions to existing historic commercial buildings are generally discouraged in historic districts. Original building shapes and heights are important to the character of all of the historic districts in the Virgin Islands. Periodic additions of stories, or new blocks over existing buildings detract significantly from the overall value and appearance of historic areas.

If roof-top additions are required, every effort must be made to locate the addition in such a way as to minimally detract from the original building. Additions to parapet-roofed buildings should be set back sufficiently to prevent visibility from sidewalks opposite the building. The design should be simple and in-keeping with the existing historic building.

Additions to non-historic buildings are more often appropriate. Consult the guideline for a new buildings, which applies more strictly to such proposals.

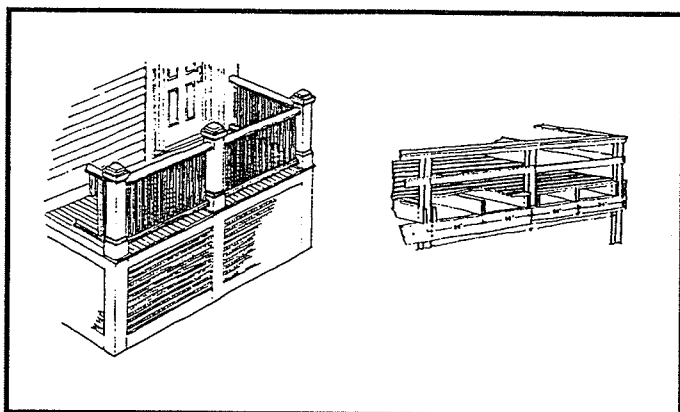


Additions to parapet-roofed buildings such as these two examples are highly discouraged. If additions are made, however, they should be set back significantly from the main plane of the facade and should not be visible from across the street. The style should contrast sufficiently with that of the original building to convey a distinction in age.

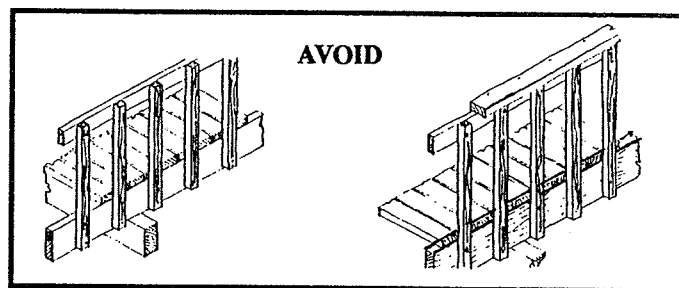


Simply adding an additional story to what was once a one-story building is generally not an appropriate solution.

To ensure the best possible work, always consult a professional architect. Designs, moreover, must be brought before the Historic Preservation commission for review.



Decks can be either "traditional" in character or more "contemporary". Always they should be added only to the rears of buildings.



Avoid more modern uses of balusters and rails when adding decks. Generally look to historic porches for precedent and inspiration for deck rail designs.

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