

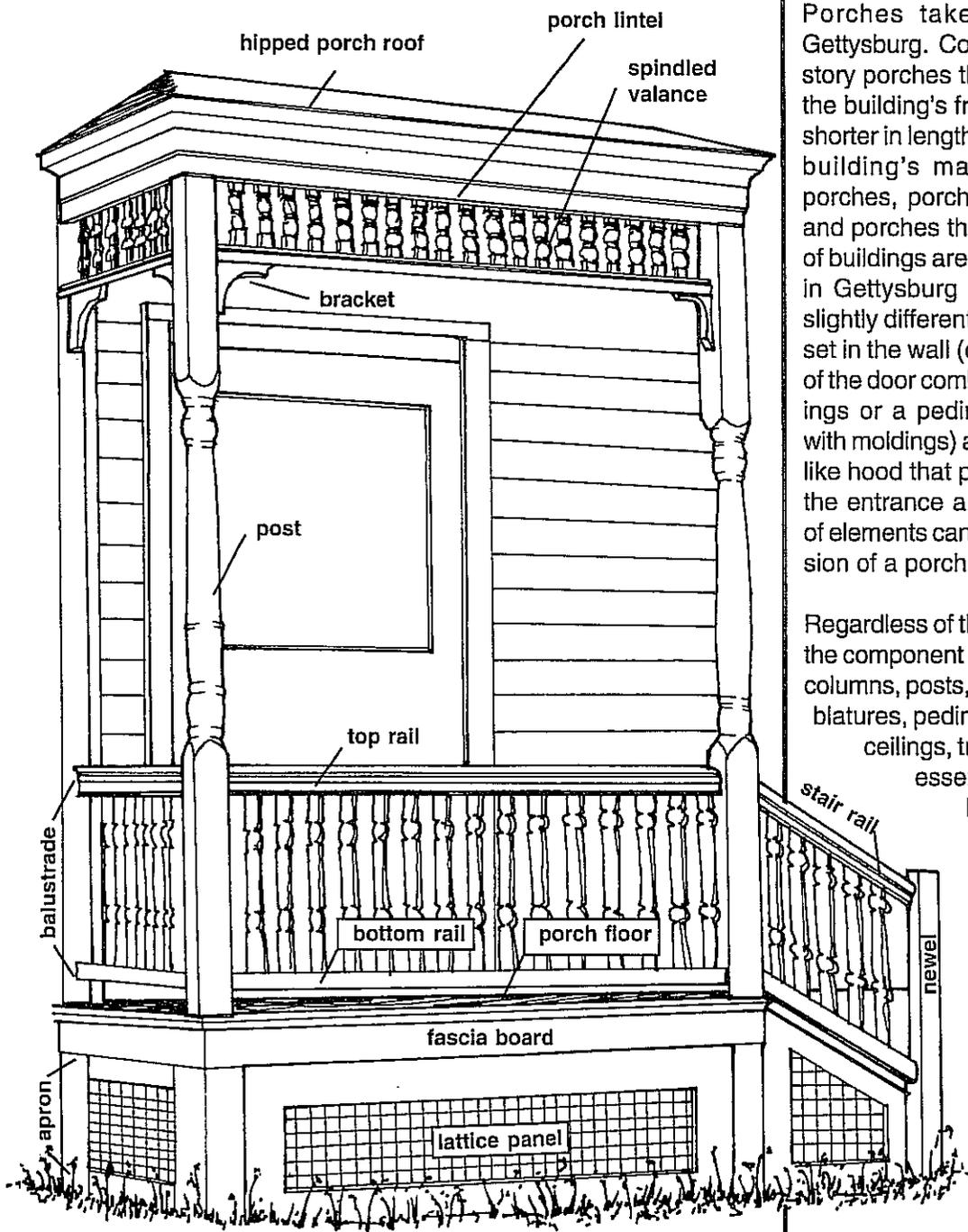


The building at 249 Carlisle Street, built in 1902.
Photo courtesy of the Adams County Historical Society.

PORCHES

PORCHES

THE PARTS OF A PORCH



The porch at 26 East Stevens Street.

Porches are among the most visible features of older houses in Gettysburg. They are also some of the most frequently altered features.

Porches take a variety of forms in Gettysburg. Common forms include single-story porches that extend the full length of the building's front wall and porches much shorter in length that extend just beyond the building's main entrance. Two-story porches, porches on side and rear walls, and porches that wrap around the corners of buildings are also found. Many buildings in Gettysburg have porch elements in a slightly different form. Columns or columns set in the wall (called pilasters) at the sides of the door combined with ornamental moldings or a pediment (a triangular element with moldings) above, or simply a pediment-like hood that projects from the wall above the entrance are also common. This use of elements can be considered a simple version of a porch.

Regardless of the size or scale of the porch, the component elements, which can include columns, posts, pilasters, balustrades, entablatures, pediments, stairs, railings, floors, ceilings, trim, and other ornament, are essential to the distinctiveness of houses in Gettysburg.

Many porch elements are protected from the weather by the porch roof. Other porch elements, like stairs and railings, have received hard use and exposure to weather for many years. Consequently, porches require careful maintenance to retain their unique character.

PORCHES

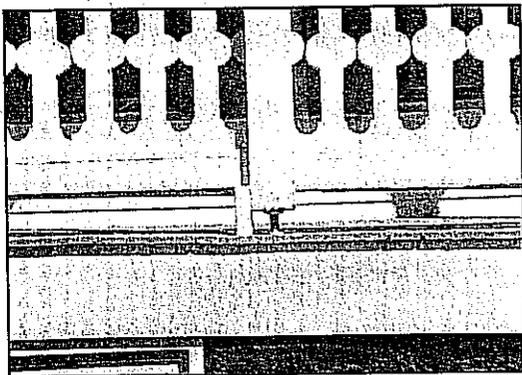
THE REPAIR OF PORCHES

Guidelines for Porch Repairs

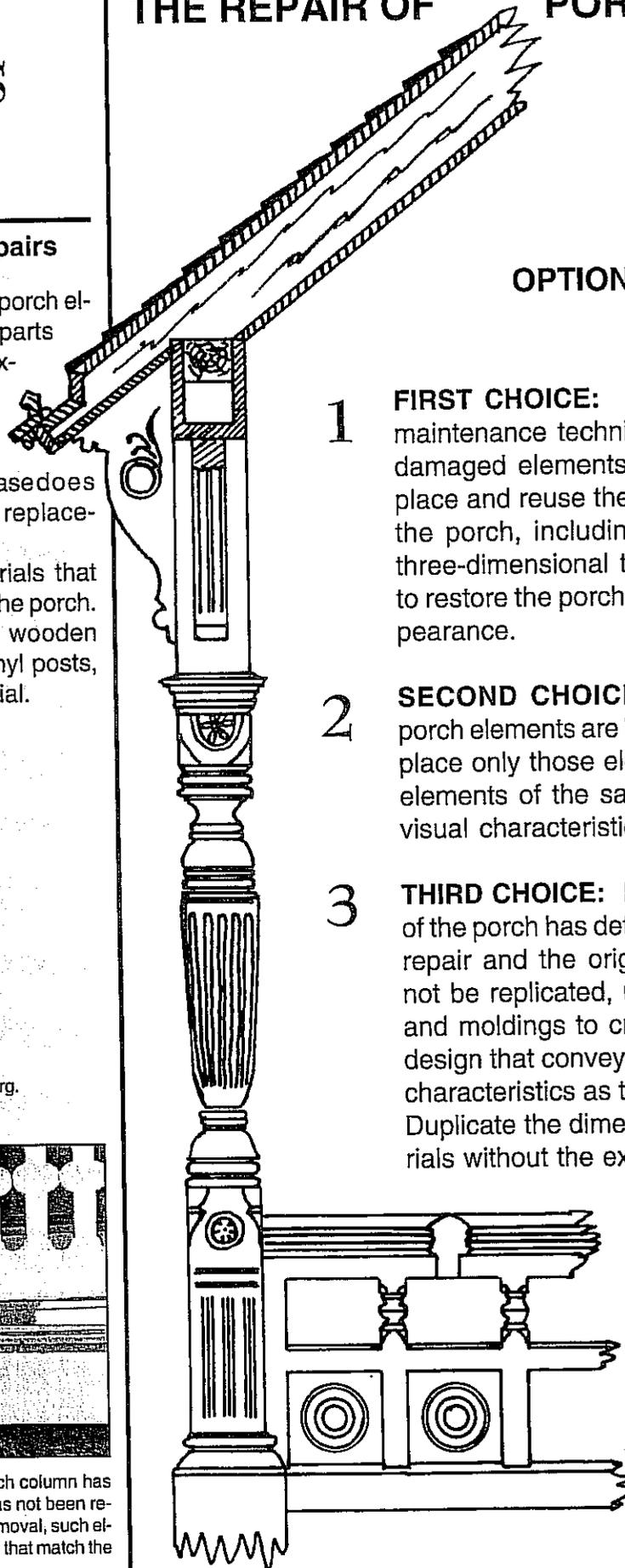
- Carefully inspect deteriorated porch elements. Replace only those parts that cannot be repaired. For example, the bases of porch columns are often a major site of extensive deterioration. But, a deteriorated column base does not necessarily require the replacement of the entire column.
- Avoid introducing new materials that were not historically a part of the porch. For example, don't replace wooden posts with brick, metal, or vinyl posts, or with other synthetic material.



A deteriorated porch in Gettysburg.



This condition, in which the base of a porch column has been removed due to deterioration and has not been replaced, is common in Gettysburg. After removal, such elements should be replaced with new bases that match the historic element.



OPTIONS

- 1 FIRST CHOICE:** Using standard maintenance techniques, repair the damaged elements of the porch in place and reuse the original parts of the porch, including moldings and three-dimensional turned balusters, to restore the porch to its historic appearance.
- 2 SECOND CHOICE:** If individual porch elements are beyond repair, replace only those elements with new elements of the same material and visual characteristics.
- 3 THIRD CHOICE:** If a major portion of the porch has deteriorated beyond repair and the original design cannot be replicated, use stock lumber and moldings to create a simplified design that conveys the same visual characteristics as the original porch. Duplicate the dimensions and materials without the extensive detailing.

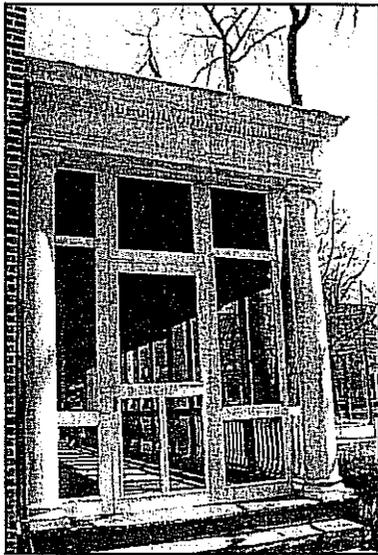
Nineteenth century drawing of parts of a porch by architect M. E. Stallsmith. Courtesy of the Adams County Historical Society.

ENCLOSING PORCHES

Porches were meant to be open exterior spaces. Enclosing them is a radical change on any side of a building, and should never occur on the front of a building. If a porch must be enclosed on a side or rear wall, the options and guidelines listed below should be considered.

OPTIONS

- 1 FIRST CHOICE:** Enclose a porch on a side or rear elevation using temporary elements, such as screens that can be removed at the end of the summer or windows that can be removed at the end of the winter.
- 2 SECOND CHOICE:** Enclose a porch that is on a side or rear elevation using recessed translucent materials with compatible framing. See the guidelines below.



An enclosed porch at 250 Carlisle Street. The recess of the enclosure behind the porch columns maintains the open character of the porch and preserves the integrity of the historic porch materials.

Guidelines for Enclosing Porches:

- Any changes or additions to historic porches should be reversible without damaging historic materials.
- The enclosure should be constructed primarily of translucent materials, such as clear glass or screen.
- Recess added materials behind the existing porch structure to assist in maintaining the open character of the historic porch.
- All added material should have minimal vertical and horizontal framing elements. Framing elements that are present in the added material should match the locations of existing horizontal and vertical porch elements.
- Screen framing members should be painted to blend with the screen rather than the porch framing.
- Retain all salvageable elements, ornament, and detailing in place.
- Ensure that the closed porch still appears to be a porch, not a closed room.

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Enclosed Porches of Gettysburg



By enclosing this porch with a wall and windows, the porch has been made to look like a closed room.



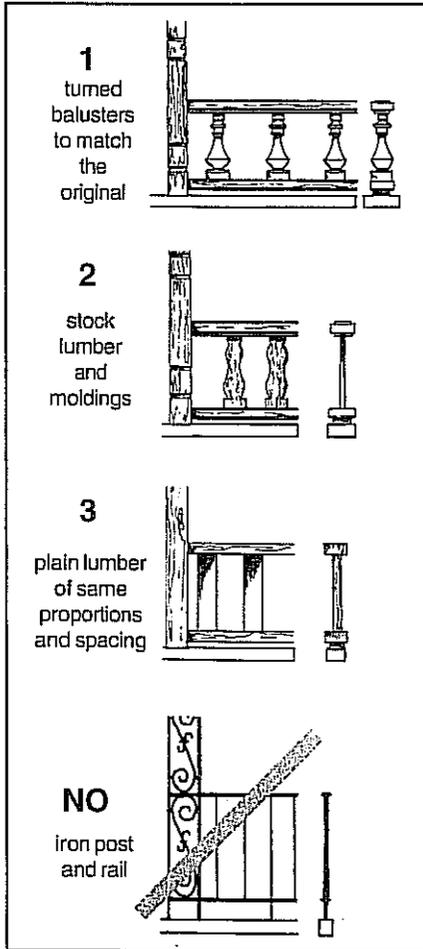
Although this screened enclosure at 123 West Broadway uses many framing members, the screening is recessed from the structural members of the porch, and the open character of the porch is maintained.

Remember:

A replacement porch of similar visual character is better than no porch at all.

PORCHES

Options for Replacement Balustrades



STEPS, RAILINGS & BALUSTRADES

Steps need maintenance because they receive heavy use, are constantly exposed to the weather, and are in close contact with the ground. If your steps are deteriorated beyond repair and must be replaced, follow these guidelines:

Rebuilt steps should continue the materials of the porch:

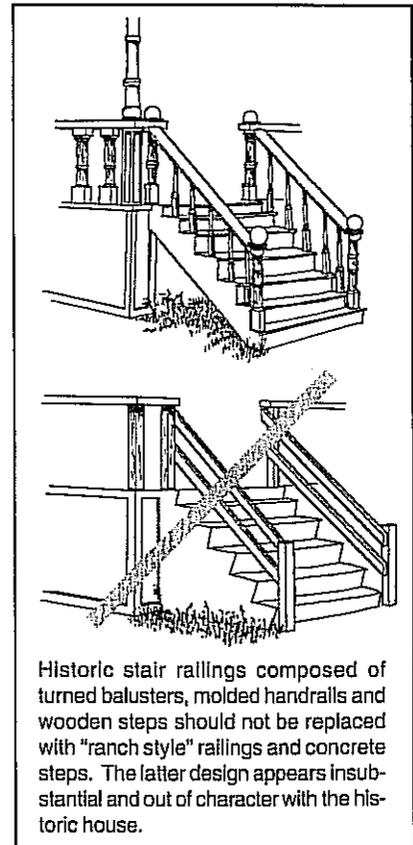
- Wood stairs for frame houses are historically correct. They should not be replaced with concrete.
- Brick steps are typically appropriate only for porches with brick posts and foundations.
- Stone steps are typically appropriate only for porches with stone posts and foundations.
- Concrete steps are rarely appropriate for historic houses.

Rebuilt steps should maintain the historic orientation:

- Steps were typically, but not always, positioned in line with the front entrance.

Replacement step railings should match the balustrade of the historic porch in material and detailing:

- Wrought iron or aluminum railings and columns are not good substitutes for wood elements. Their lightweight appearance is inappropriate.
- Most Victorian porches had step balustrades that ended in a newel similar to the porch columns.



Replacement balustrades should maintain the overall character of the historic balustrade:

- Don't replace a turned balustrade with latticework.
- Don't replace a turned balustrade with solid panels.
- Millwork to replace turned balustrades can be made. Check with HARB for a list of suppliers.



A wooden porch balustrade (right) and an iron stair railing (left) in Gettysburg.

When is a New Porch Appropriate?

1. When it can be documented by historical, pictorial, and physical evidence that a porch of the type to be erected once existed on the house.
2. When it can be determined that houses of similar type, style, and date of construction were originally built with porches of the type to be erected.

Determining if a Porch Existed:

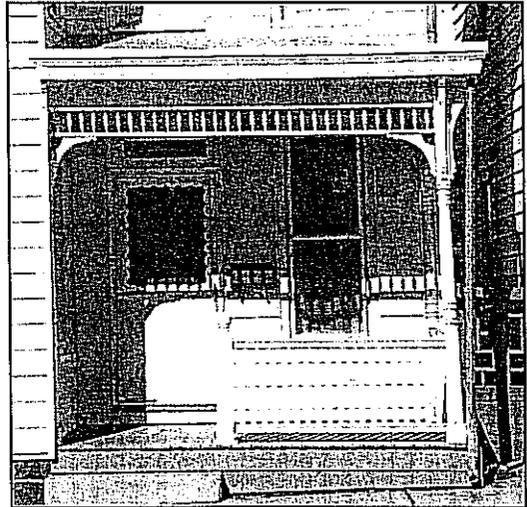
- Railings, floors and roofs may have left shadows on walls or trim. Check beneath newer siding.
- Historic maps and photos may show earlier porches or steps.
- Look for similar houses in your neighborhood and compare porches. But, remember that all porches are not necessarily original or historic.
- Check basements, attics, and other storage areas for original pieces.
- Ask your neighbors.

Guidelines for Adding New Porches:

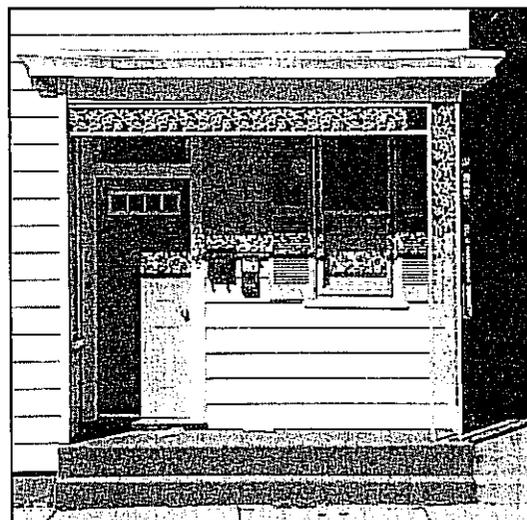
- Thoroughly consider the factors of size, shape, scale, profile, massing, materials, color, and texture in the design.
- Avoid hiding, damaging, destroying, or otherwise negatively affecting existing historic materials and features of the original building.
- Build a wood porch if the house has wood siding or wood shingles. For a masonry house, the porch may be wood or masonry. Check style guides and similar houses to determine which is more appropriate.

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Porch Alterations

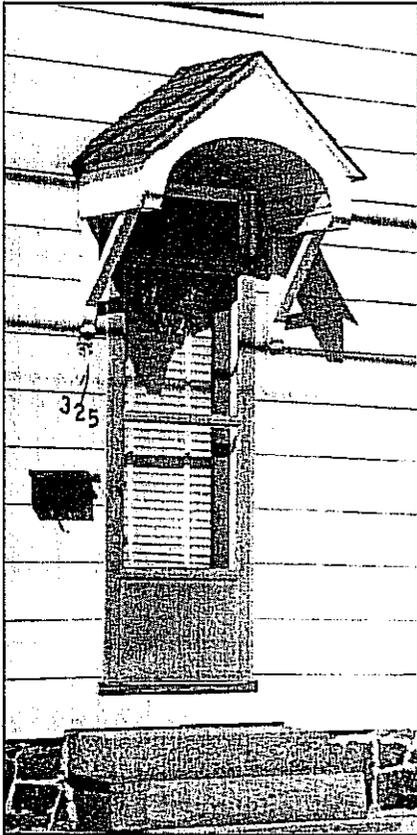


The porch at 243 Chambersburg Street features turned posts, a spindled valance and ornamental brackets.



Most of the historic elements of this porch have been removed and replaced with an iron trellis post and valance.

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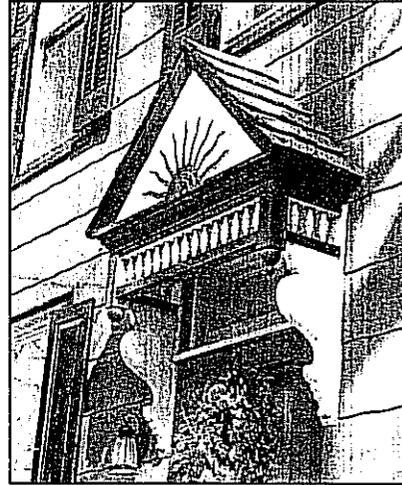
A door with a gabled hood.

Priorities for Gettysburg Porches

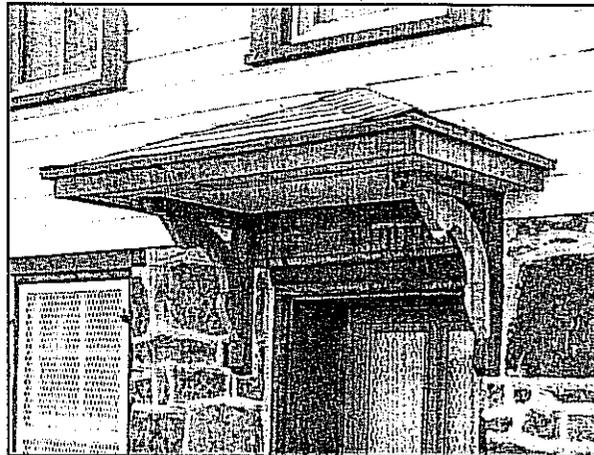
- Ensure that porches are never left unpainted and are not treated with a "natural" finish. Treated wood should be painted following its initial period of weathering.
- If a porch must be enclosed, ensure that the enclosure does not appear solid.
- Avoid constructing entrance porches or door hoods where they never existed. Such additions give buildings a false appearance and diminish the importance of the buildings that do possess those elements.
- If a new porch must be added, build it on a side or rear wall that is not visible from a public street or alley.

DOOR HOODS

Many buildings in Gettysburg have hoods over the entrance door rather than full porches. These hoods may be simple or highly ornamented. They may be rounded or triangular in shape. Such hoods offer a degree of shelter and add detail and interest to the entrance and the overall building. Remaining door hoods should be retained.



A pedimented door hood with sunburst ornament at 211 North Washington Street.



A door hood with a hipped roof at 48 North Washington Street.



An arched door hood at 218 Chambersburg Street.