



TOWN OF OCCOQUAN

Town Hall, 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
www.occoquanva.gov | info@occoquanva.gov | (703) 491-1918

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, January 10, 2017

7:30 PM

TOWN HALL - 314 MILL STREET

1. Citizen Comments
2. Approval of October 11, 2016 Meeting Minutes
3. Review for Certificates of Appropriateness
4. Town Council Report
5. Town Manager Report
6. Chair Report
7. ARB Design Guidelines

Brenda Seefeldt
Chair, Architectural Review Board

Architectural Review Board Meeting
Minutes for October 11, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 7:29 p.m. by the Chairman, Brenda Seefeldt.

Attendees: Brenda Seefeldt, Carol Bailey, Kathy Alden, Daniel Braswell, Matthew Dawson and Bryan Reese. Deb Cruz was excused absent.

There were no citizen comments.

The minutes for August and 2 meetings in September were moved to be approved by Bryan Reese and seconded by Matthew Dawson. All ayes.

ARB 2016-022 - Application for Exterior Elevation at 302 Commerce Street. The owners were applying for approval to build a wood storage building. It would be 8'x12'. Bryan moved to approve as amended with picture. Kathy seconded the motion. All ayes.

ARB 2016-023 Application for Exterior Elevation at 303 Union Street. The roof on the garage and the gazebo would be replaced to match the roof on the house. The owner also was seeking approval to replace the current brick and wood fence with a PVC/Vinyl. Photographs of requested replacement materials were presented. A motion was made by Bryan to approve the application. Daniel seconded, all voted ayes.

ARB 2016-024- Application for an Exterior Elevation for replacement of shingles at house located at 188 Washington St. The replacement shingles would be cedar shake. Bryan moved to accept this application. Carol seconded and all voted aye.

COA's will be presented to:

205 Commerce St.

Gaslight Landing

Tastefully Yours

Secret Garden

Good News Community Kitchen

Town Council Report from Matthew:

Approved Project Agreement with the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation for the State Project VRT-297, Canoe and Kayak Ramp.

Asked consultant with VA Association of Chief of Police to provide a needs assessment for the Town's Police Department.

Town Manager Report: For sign Reports go to November Public Hearing and Approval.

Chair Report:

Our next meeting is November 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54.

Minutes submitted by Carol Bailey.



TOWN OF OCCOQUAN

Circa 1734 • Chartered 1804 • Incorporated 1874
314 Mill Street • PO Box 195 • Occoquan, Virginia 22125
(703) 491-1918 • Fax (703) 491-4962 • info@occoquanva.gov
www.occoquanva.gov

TOWN COUNCIL
Elizabeth A. C. Quist, Mayor
Patrick A. Sivigny, Vice Mayor
J. Matthew Dawson
Jim Drakes
Cindy Fithian
Joe McGuire

TOWN MANAGER
Kirstyn Barr Jovanovich

Town Manager's Report Architectural Review Board July - December 2016

The following activities were performed by the Town regarding Zoning Code Enforcement:

- Sent several zoning violations out in regards to illegal banners.

Sign Ordinance Update:

- New sign ordinance was adopted during the July 2016 Town Council meeting. One noted change is the process for reviewing and approving signage. The ARB will continue to provide guidance through ARB design guidelines; however, the review and approval of signage is performed by the Zoning Administrator or his/her designee. The ARB is still responsible for reviewing and approving exterior elevations within the historic district.
- The revised sign ordinance is available on the town's website at www.occoquanva.gov.

Sign Approvals:

- Approved Permanent Sign permits:
 - Harrington Counseling Services, LLC - 204 Ellicott Street
- Approved Temporary Banner permits:
 - 199 Union Street
 - 402 Mill Street
 - 308 Commerce Street

New Businesses:

- Hometown Go, 304 Mill Street
- Harrington Counseling Services, 204 Ellicott Street

Submitted January 10, 2017

Merchant
Design Guidelines
For the Historic District
Town of
Occoquan, Virginia

Prepared by the Architectural Review Board

September 2012

Welcome.

The Occoquan Architectural Review Board would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your business. As we all can agree, few places have as many wonderful attributes as Occoquan. Our historic buildings, vibrant waterfront, arts, cultural activities, parks and recreation make our town a very desirable place to live, work and play. We congratulate your choosing this special place to open your business, and look forward to working with you for many years to come.

All of us on the ARB fully understand and appreciate the fact that your business, like Occoquan itself, is unique. Our goal is to help create and maintain a positive image of the town and its businesses through the use of adequate, well-designed signs. To help us achieve this goal, we ask that you carefully examine both the frontage/exterior view of your business location, and the building's overall appearance. If the exterior of your business is visually attractive, physically accessible, clean and well-maintained, customers will take notice and will want to see the inside of your business as well!

One must always remember that every great relationship, be it personal or business, begins with a great first impression. The ARB is here to help you achieve just that and we'll be happy to provide you with whatever advice, guidance and resources you may need to get your business off to a great start. In closing, perhaps Robert Lehto, former President of the Occoquan Historical Society, said it best:

“With a history spanning a period almost as long as Virginia itself, Occoquan provides a unique mixture of pre-revolutionary, Victorian and modern aspects of life resulting in the living charm which no restoration or modern city can equal.”

Welcome to Occoquan...we're very glad you're here!

A Brief History of Occoquan

Occoquan derived its name from the Dogue Indian word meaning "at the end of the water." It is believed that the Dogues had settled next to the Occoquan River due to the abundance of fish and ease of travel by canoe. It was the river and its location at the head of the tidewater that eventually made Occoquan a natural location for water-borne commerce. The "falls" of the fall line prevented ships from sailing further upstream, and because the river is at its narrowest point, it became a natural spot for river crossings between Fairfax and Prince William Counties. Early records indicate that agents of Robert "King" Carter hauled copper ore from the Frying Pan Copper mine near present day Dulles Airport. A tobacco warehouse was built as early as 1736, and an industrial complex began in 1750. In the 1790's, Oliver Evans established and patented a milling process at the Merchant's Mill; thus making it the first automated gristmill in the nation. The mill remained in operation for 175 years until it was ultimately destroyed by fire. The only remaining structure, the Miller's Office, is now a museum operated by the Historic Occoquan, Inc.

By 1828, Occoquan had one of the first cotton mills in Virginia, and by 1835, several mercantile stores and various mechanics had established themselves here. Farmers and traders came from as far as the Blue Ridge Mountains to patronize the town's businesses, and those who traveled here often stayed overnight at the Alton or Hammill hotels (the latter of which still stands today).

Prior to the Civil War, shipbuilding began in Occoquan, specializing in schooners and longboats. In addition to products from the cotton and gristmills, there was a lucrative trade in cord wood, fish and river ice. Occoquan also built the first commercial ice storage house in this area. River ice, railroad ties and large logs were shipped upriver from Occoquan to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York.

A mail stagecoach route was established through Occoquan in 1805. During the Civil War, both Washington D.C. and Alexandria were under blockade, and as a result, the Occoquan Post Office played a key role in passing letters and packages between North and South. During one winter, the Hammill Hotel served as temporary headquarters for Confederate General Wade Hampton.

The dawn of the 20th Century saw a town bustling with grocery stores, a lumber and hardware store, drugstore, millinery, churches, school, jail, blacksmith, barber, undertaker, doctor, and pharmacy. The Oddfellows Hall became the first opera house in the area, and the Lyric Theater

brought people to town by car, thus making Occoquan the social and commercial center for the area. For Occoquan, the twentieth century also unfortunately suffered one economic disaster followed by another. In 1916, a devastating fire destroyed many of the structures located in the historic center of town. The coming of the automobile, and silting of the river heralded the end of shipping as the main commercial highway of the area.

With the opening of Route 1 in 1928, Occoquan no longer stood astride the major north-south travel route. The construction of Interstate 95 in later years caused an explosion of residential and commercial building in Woodbridge, and as a result, the town's standing as the area's primary center of commerce was no longer. Then in 1972, the ravaging waters of Hurricane Agnes destroyed buildings, sidewalks, streets and the iron truss bridge that crossed the Occoquan River.

Any one of these events could have meant the demise of our small riverside town, but Occoquan is a town destined to survive. After every tragedy, townspeople and merchants alike repaired, rebuilt, and restored it, creating a unique place that offers boating, fishing, shopping, and pleasant dining in a historic atmosphere. Antiques, collectibles, fine art, crafts, clothing, gourmet food, and unique gifts have replaced mills, ice houses, lumberyards, and shipyards. Through good times and bad, Occoquan is a town that refused to die. As history has shown time and time again and with each passing year, Occoquan shall remain as it has always been...unique, special and unforgettable.

Signs and Flags

Each business is allowed a maximum combination of four (4) signs and flags. While many businesses do not need the maximum, that number was designated to allow the flexibility to create the desired message.

A sign is your business identifier. A list of the sign definitions is located at the end of these guidelines.

A flag is a flexible material flown from a pole that helps draw attention to your business



through the use of distinctive colors and/or designs. If you would like to use a flag to communicate your business, the example on the left would be considered a commercial flag, as it contains the store name or logo. This flag counts as one of the signs you are allowed to have and must receive ARB approval.

Non-commercial flags and decorative flags are also an option. These types of flags cannot contain a commercial promotion or advertise a specific business. Please be aware that governmental agency, religious, charitable, public or nonprofit organization flags are exempt.

All flags must be secured to your building at an angle varying between 45 and 90 degrees, and ground flags of any type are prohibited. Please also keep in mind that only three flags are allowed per zoned lot.

Please be advised that signs and/or flags cannot exceed 16 square feet in area. The size of your sign should complement the exterior of your space, but please keep in mind that no sign or flag shall cover, cross or otherwise hide columns, railings, belt courses, or other decorative architectural features of a building, including balconies. In addition, no sign or flag can have more than two sign faces and shall have at least 50 percent of total sign area as blank space. All signs, flags and components shall be maintained in good repair and in a safe, clean and attractive condition. All flags must have 7ft height clearance and cannot obscure other businesses or architectural features of the building, including balconies and railings.

Businesses are also allowed up to two A-frame signs. Both must be a chalkboard. If you decide to go with an A-Frame sign, the sign must never be located in the public right-of-way. Please note--only black chalkboards are allowed. Dry erase whiteboards or marker-boards are not permitted.

Open/Closed signs are exempt and may be in placard or flag form. They also cannot include your store identity, logo, or name. In keeping with the ambience of Occoquan, each business is challenged to use creative ideas rather than purchasing commercially-sold open/closed signs or flags.



Some businesses have chosen to use vinyl lettering on their



windows, which is a nice touch. The posting of fliers, notices, handouts, etc., on windows is discouraged. Also, please note that window signs must cover no more than 25 percent of the window.

You may want to use a directional sign to guide pedestrian traffic. Keep in mind that you may make use of these types of signs to help guide customers to the direction you wish but the sign(s) must be on your premises and cannot include your store identity, logo or name.

Off-premises signs are not allowed. This would include billboards, popsicle-stick signs, directory signs and handbills attached to utility poles.

If you want to illuminate your sign, you may do so with external lighting sources only. It must not be internally lit. Be further advised that any lighted signs that flash, blink, or turn on and off intermittently are not allowed unless they are inside your business and cannot be viewed in any way from the outside through a window.

Restaurants and food-service businesses are allowed to have a menu box. A menu box is a permanently affixed, enclosed frame used to display menus.

You are allowed to affix a sign on your vehicle as long as the vehicle is used in the daily operations of your business, is properly parked in a legal parking space for no more than 12 continuous hours, and the vehicle is in working order with a valid inspection sticker. Vehicle signs are not allowed to be used as off-premise signs.

Banners

A banner is a temporary sign of flexible material designed to be installed with attachments at each of the four corners. All banners must be installed in a taut manner to restrict movement and shall be maintained in this manner at all times.

Special events banners do require the issuance of a permit by the Town Manager prior to their display. All other banners, including those promoting commercial products or with logos, are prohibited. Banner colors should be consistent with those in the Historic District palette (see Colors below). The applicant is limited to four (4) colors per banner; however, two (2) of these colors must be black and white. The final decision on the appropriateness of a banner rests with the business owner. Banners are discouraged in the Historic District if other signage will appropriately convey the merchant's message.

Banner permits shall always include the requested length of time the banner is to be displayed. Please keep in mind that the time limit for such displays is twenty (20) consecutive days for grand openings or closings, ten (10) days for "featured artist" and "book signings" and ten (10) days per business twice during the calendar year for other special events, such as anniversary. But again, banners are discouraged if other signage will better appropriately convey the merchant's message.

All banners must be attached to the existing principal structure with a clearance of at least twelve-inches (12") from one edge of the storefront, building or sign pole. They must not obscure architectural features of the building (such as windows, railings, or ornamentation). The banner size cannot exceed 16-square feet in total area, and may be hung in a horizontal or vertical manner as long as all four (4) corners are attached in a taut manner. Banners must be removed within two (2) days following the end of the event—per permit regulations. The Town of Occoquan may remove any banner and charge the cost of removal to the applicant if it has not been removed by the permit's expiration date.

The Town of Occoquan may erect a banner without a permit, but similar to a merchant banner, said banner must be removed within two (2) days following the end of the event.

Colors

Occoquan, as you know, is a Historic District. To enhance this atmosphere, we respectfully request that your choice of sign colors consist of historic shades. As a reference, the book *The Century of Color* is recommended, and a copy is available at Town Hall for your use. Or the following color chart which is taken from the website [Archive.org](http://teenyblings.wordpress.com/2009/10/26/timeless-historical-colors-for-interiors/) and the document "Every Man His Own Painter!" which was originally written in 1872. Another palette can be found at <http://teenyblings.wordpress.com/2009/10/26/timeless-historical-colors-for-interiors/> We hope these palettes are helpful in selecting sign or flag colors.



Fonts

As with color, your choice of font should reflect the style and design of the Historic District. Below are some suggested font styles. Keep in mind that Occoquan caters to pedestrian traffic, so your sign's readability is imperative to potential customers and visitors alike.

The Town of Occoquan

Times New Roman

The Town of Occoquan

Engravers

The Town of Occoquan

Copperplate Gothic

The Town of Occoquan

Century Gothic

The Town of Occoquan

Cabria Bold

The Town of Occoquan

Arial Rounded Bold

The Town of Occoquan

Century Schoolbook

The Town of Occoquan

Goudy Old Style

The Town of Occoquan

Franklin Gothic Medium

The Town of Occoquan

Impact

The Town of Occoquan

Perpetua Titling

Non-Sign Marketing Methods

Marketing methods for businesses typically consist of signs to inform customers of the business location and/or products. Storefront businesses in historic towns sometimes use different types of marketing to get potential customers to patronize their shops. While the use of word sign is one method, there are many more creative means of capturing visitors' attention. In conjunction with signage, several businesses in Occoquan have used various non-sign marketing methods to successfully convey their product line or provide a welcoming atmosphere.

Below are some visual examples:

Ice Cream Flag at MJ's Ice Cream and More



Rocking Chair and Products at Glory Be



Plants and Products at Golden Goose



Window displays at LaBella Bridal



Gossip Bench and Plants at Off the Beading Path



Quirky Windows at Polka Dot Divas



Product Display at Hawthorn House



Garden Settings at Pink Bicycle Tea Room and TJ's Hair FX



External Appearance

As you already know, each business is allowed a total combination of four (4) signs and/or flags. While four may be the maximum amount, you may find that less may very well be more. Outdated and excessive signage not only detracts from the beauty of the town, it negatively impacts how the entire business community is perceived, making it less attractive to potential new businesses and customers alike.

Please be advised that no matter how many signs and/or flags you choose to display, the overall appearance and installation of your signage must be of professional quality, and remain in a good state of repair at all times.

Holiday Decorating: Decorating for the holidays is highly encouraged as it creates a unique and memorable experience for visitors and customers. Please be advised, however, that these types of displays are not considered permanent, and cannot remain longer than 30 days from the original installation date. The only exception to this rule is during the Winter Holiday season, beginning 1 November and ending on 15 January when an extended display time of 45 total days is allowed. Please note that generic or non-holiday-specific colored light strings outlining property lines, sales areas or any portion of a structure are not allowed other than the Winter Holiday season.

Balloons: Balloons are an option but please keep in mind that the maximum allowable balloon size shall be no more than 50 inches in circumference, and shall be displayed only on your premises, and no higher than 10 vertical feet from the ground.

Outdoor Merchandise Displays: Outdoor merchandise displays by businesses with first floor frontage are permitted during business hours only, and shall be moved indoors immediately after the close of business. Merchandise displays shall not be placed in, nor in any way impede the public right-of-way, nor shall they obscure the architectural features of a building, or extend past the length of the storefront. Furthermore, no signs may be placed upon or hung from outdoor merchandise.

Permanent exterior display tables, merchandise, racks or other permanent display pieces are prohibited. Lastly, all outdoor displays shall be structurally safe, sturdy and stable with no risk of overturning or upset due to weather conditions or accidental customer contact.

Sign Application Process

A Sign Permit is required from the ARB for the following signs:

- Awning sign
- Commercial flag
- Ground-mounted sign
- Projecting sign
- Wall sign

Sign permit applications are available at Town Hall or online at:

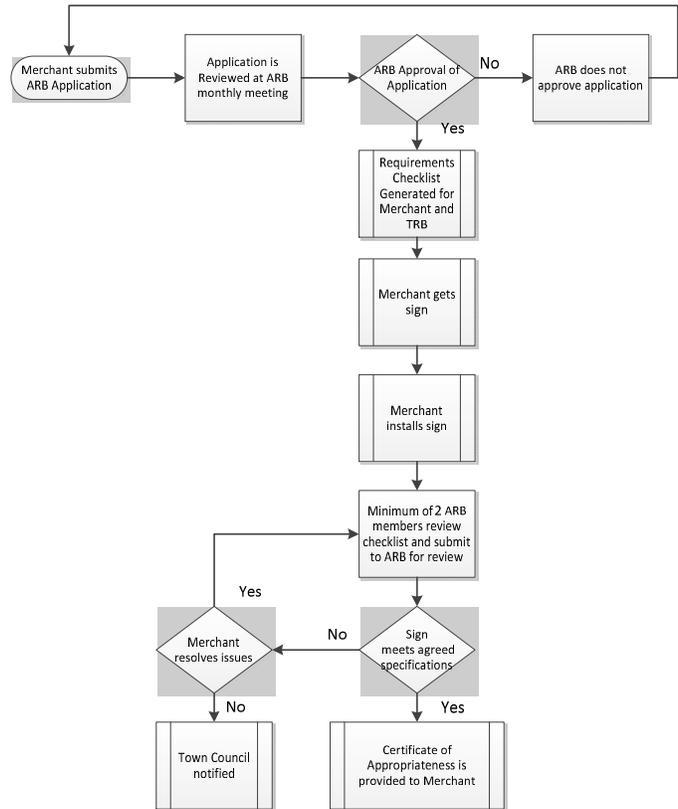
www.Occoquan.org

There is an application fee of \$10.00 per sign, and both the form and fee can be filed at Town Hall. Please be advised that the ARB meets on the second Tuesday of each month; therefore, all applications must be submitted before the Friday prior to the ARB meeting date.

Each application is reviewed to ensure that the design of your sign meets specified ARB ordinances. In addition, all

applications need to include the sign design, measurements, true-color samples, and pictures of the placement location. Please be advised that either the business owner or their designated representative must attend the ARB meeting. If the business owner or representative is not in attendance, their application is postponed until the next ARB meeting date.

After your sign application is approved, the ARB will confirm the sign is consistent with the application and is installed as specified in the application. If so, a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued to you. If your sign does not meet specifications, the issue will be turned over to Claudia Cruise, Occoquan Town Manager, for resolution.



Sign Definitions

A-Frame sign: A two-faced chalk-board sign with supports that are connected at the top and separated at the base, forming an "A" shape; also referred to as "sandwich board" signs.

Animated sign: A sign or part of a sign that moves or appears to move. These are not allowed.

Awning sign: a sign placed directly on the surface of an awning. This also includes canopy signs. The sign location must be parallel to the building face and not projecting above or below the face of the awning.

Banner: A temporary sign of flexible material designed to be installed with attachments at each of four corners.

Changeable copy sign: A sign or part of a sign that is designed so that characters, letters or illustrations can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or surface of the sign. These are not allowed.

Directional sign: An on-premises sign designed to guide vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic by using such words as "Entrance," "Exit," "Parking," "One Way," "More Shops" or similar directional instruction, but not including any advertising message. Directional signs to help guide customers to your location are allowed, but the sign must be on your premises and cannot include your store identity.

Directory sign: Sign on which the name and locations of occupants or the use of a building is given. This is not allowed.

Flag: A flexible material that communicates via distinctive color and/or design and is flown from a pole; this includes pennants.

Flashing sign: Used for identification, direction, advertising or promotion that includes lights that flash, blink, or turn on and off intermittently. These are not allowed unless they are inside your business and cannot be viewed from the outside through a window.

Ground mounted sign: Sign that is supported by structures or supports in or upon the ground and independent of any support from any building, also referred to as a Pole sign.

Identification sign: Displays only the address, telephone number, web address, business hours, QR code and name/crest, insignia, trademark, occupation or profession of an occupant or the name of any building on the premises.

Illuminated sign: A sign illuminated internally by an artificial light source. These are not allowed.

Menu box: A permanently affixed, enclosed frame used to display menus for a restaurant or food-service business.

Neon sign: An electric sign containing exposed tubes filled with fluorescent gas. These are not allowed.

Off-premises sign: A sign that directs attention to a business, at a location other than the premises on which the sign is erected. This includes billboards. All types of off-premise signs are not allowed.

Paddle sign: A sign which is attached to an original sign.

Projecting sign: Any sign, other than a wall, awning or marquee sign, affixed to a building and supported only by the wall on which it is mounted. The sign must project at a 90 degree angle and maintain a 7-ft ground clearance.

Roof sign: A sign erected or constructed, in whole or in part, upon or above the highest point of a building with a flat roof, or the lowest portion of a pitched roof. These are not allowed.

Vehicle sign: A magnetic or otherwise permanently affixed sign on a vehicle. These are only allowed if the vehicle is used in the daily operations of the business, properly parked in a legal parking space for no more than 12 continuous hours, and in working order displaying a valid state inspection sticker. Vehicle signs are not considered to be off-premise signs.

Wall sign: A sign attached to a wall, or painted on or against a flat vertical surface of a structure, which displays only one advertising surface.

Waterfront sign: A sign facing the river on riverfront property. Only businesses on the waterfront are allowed to have a Waterfront sign.

Window sign: A sign attached to or applied directly onto the internal surface, or set back less than one foot from the interior surface, of any window in view of the general public from outside the structure.

TOWN OF OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA

HISTORIC DISTRICT

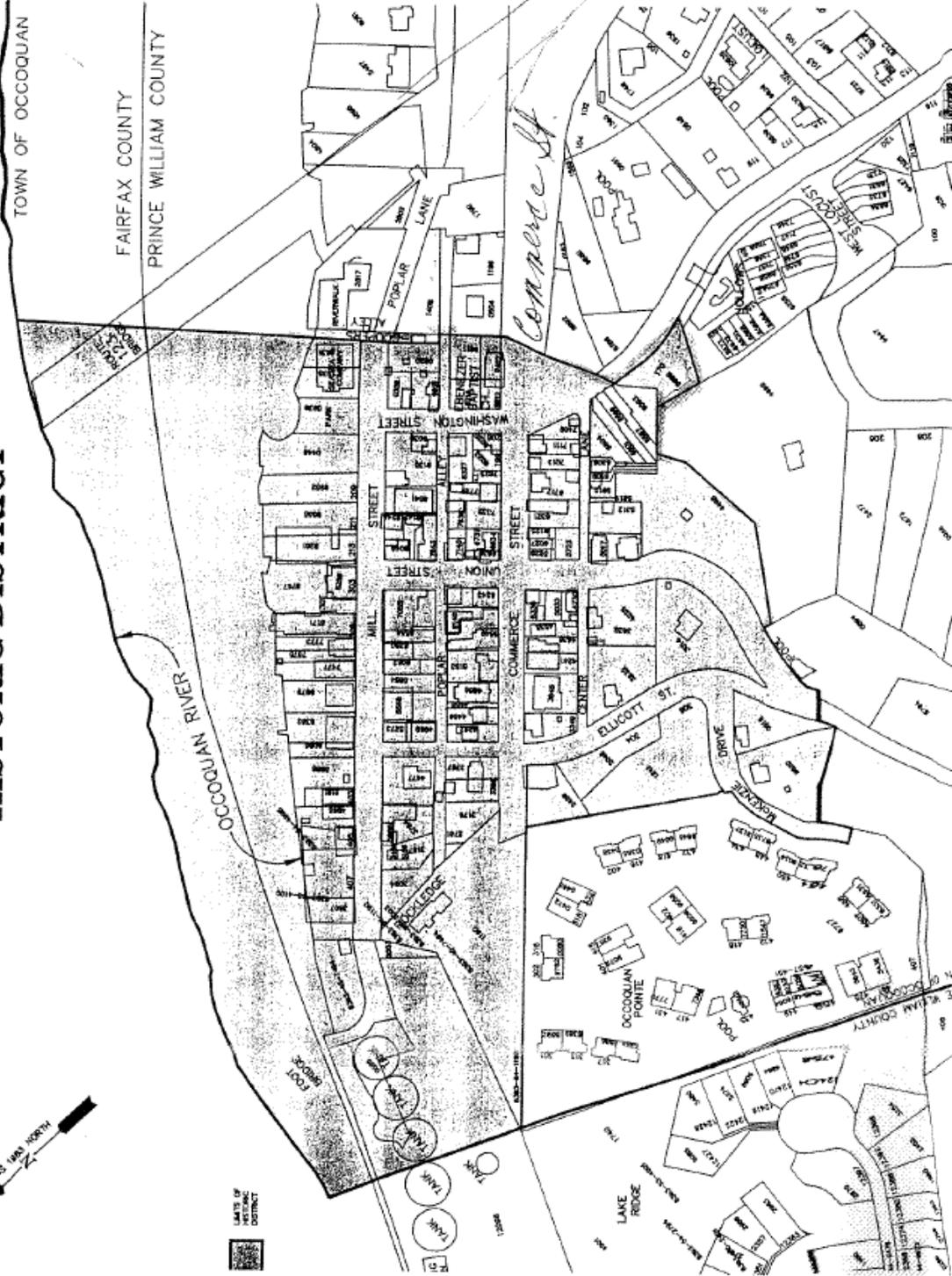
DESIGN GUIDELINES MANUAL

Prepared by the
Architectural Review Board
November 2005

In 1983, the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, after conducting a survey of structures within town, designated 13.25 acres in the Town of Occoquan as a historic area. Consequently, the United States Department of the Interior's National Park Service added the town to the National Register of Historic Places. The Occoquan Town Council enacted ordinances which created an Architectural Review Board to "preserve the unique cultural heritage represented by the original section of the town..." and gave the ARB certain powers to regulate rehabilitation and new construction in the historic district, as well as the right to approve or disapprove signs within the business district. The Board works to uphold the intent of the ordinances and to further the aims set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

The ARB's guidelines were created to inform members of the Board, builders, merchants, residents, and the public to protect the historic character of Occoquan. It is the hope of the Board that this booklet will assist in the application process by better informing and preparing applicants for the Board's review of their plans.

TOWN OF OCCOQUAN HISTORIC DISTRICT



HISTORY OF OCCOQUAN

OCCOQUAN derived its name from the Dogue Indian word meaning “at the end of the water.” It is believed that the Dogues stayed close to the Occoquan River because of the abundance of fish and ease of traveling by canoe. It was the river and its location, at the head of the tidewater, that made Occoquan a natural site for water-borne commerce. The “falls” of the fall line prevented ships from sailing further upstream but since the river is at its most narrow at this point it became a natural spot for river crossings between what became Fairfax and Prince William Counties. An early important example of this is its use by agents of Robert “King” Carter who hauled copper ore from the Frying Pan Copper mine near present day Dulles Airport. A tobacco warehouse was built as early as 1736, and an industrial complex began in 1750. Before the turn of the century, Occoquan had forges, water gristmills, tolling mills, a bake house, sawmills, storehouses and dwellings. In the 1790’s Oliver Evans patented a process whereby the Merchant’s Mill became the first automated gristmill in the nation. Grain was taken from the holds of ships and off-barges, processed, and returned to these carriers by machinery operated by only one man. It was then transported to markets from Alexandria to the West Indies. The mill operated for 175 years until it was destroyed by fire. The only remaining part, the miller’s office, is now a museum operated by Historic Occoquan.

By 1828, Occoquan had one of the first cotton mills in Virginia, and by 1835, several mercantile stores and various mechanics. Farmers and traders came from as far away as the Blue Ridge Mountains. Those who came to town by horse and wagon stayed overnight at the Alton or Hammill hotels (the latter building still stands). A day was spent shopping for necessities. An 1874 ledger from one of the general stores shows 260 charge accounts on the books, including at least two steamer companies.

Prior to the Civil War, shipbuilding began in Occoquan, specializing in schooners and longboats. In addition to products from the cotton and gristmills, there was trade in cord wood, fish and river ice. Occoquan had also built the first commercial ice storage house in this area. River ice was harvested every winter and stored for shipment to Washington, D.C. A marsh at that time, Washington also needed pine log pilings. These were rafted up the river from Occoquan. Railroad ties and large logs were shipped to Philadelphia and New York.

A mail stage route had been authorized through Occoquan in 1805. During the Civil War, the Occoquan Post Office played a key role in passing letters and packages between North and South since Washington and Alexandria were blockaded. During one winter, the Hammill Hotel served as headquarters for Confederate General Wade Hampton.

The mill race, used to power the mills, also provided recreation for the townspeople and a swimming hole for youngsters. Washington residents soon discovered the natural beauty of the area and cruised down on excursion boats on summer weekends to picnic along the water’s edge. Circuses and traveling shows set up at the public wharf in summer and ice skating was a favorite winter pastime.

The dawn of the 20th Century saw a town bustling with grocery stores, a lumber and hardware store, drugstore, millinery, churches, school, jail, blacksmith, barber, undertaker, doctor, and pharmacy. The Oddfellows Hall became the first opera house in the area, and the Lyric Theater brought people to town by car (if gasoline was available), row boat and yacht. Occoquan became the social, as well as the commercial, center for the area. The twentieth century was punctuated by one economic disaster followed by another. In 1916, a devastating fire destroyed many of the structures that occupied what has been designated at the historic center of town. The coming of the automobile heralded the end of the river as the main commercial highway of the area. Silting of the river had already reduced the navigable channel of the river in the 19th century so that larger ships were eventually not able to reach the town.

With the opening of Route 1 in 1928, the town no longer stood astride the major north-south travel route. The railroad bypassed the town, and trucks began carrying cargo. The building of 95 Highway caused an explosion of residential and commercial building in Woodbridge which resulted in the town being severely reduced as the area's focus of commerce. Supermarkets began replacing small grocery stores. Then, in 1972, the ravaging waters of Hurricane Agnes destroyed buildings, sidewalks, streets and the iron truss bridge that crossed the Occoquan.

Any one of these could have meant the demise of a small riverside town. But Occoquan is a town destined to survive. Townspeople, merchants and those interested in history repaired, rebuilt, and restored, creating a unique town which offers boating and fishing, unhurried shopping, pleasant dining, casual strolling, and an opportunity to meditate on it all in a small town museum or under a flowering cherry tree in the Town Park. Antiques, collectibles, fine art, crafts, fashions, needlework, pleasure-craft, gourmet food, and unique gifts and services have replaced mills, ice houses, lumberyards, and water-borne commerce.

Robert Lehto, past President of Historic Occoquan, says it best:

“With a history spanning a period almost as long as Virginia itself, Occoquan provides a unique mixture of pre-revolutionary, Victorian and modern aspects of life resulting in the living charm which no restoration or modern city can equal.”

DISTRICT CHARACTER

Geographically, Occoquan is bounded to the north by the Occoquan River and to the south by wooded bluffs. The streets are laid out in a simple grid pattern that stretches up a light sloping hill to the south. Five major streets - Mill, Union, Commerce, Washington, and Ellicott - comprise the district.

The potential value of the site on a river that opens into the Potomac River was recognized as early as 1755 by John Ballendine, who hoped to establish forges, mills, stores, and dwellings on the site. As early as 1804, Occoquan achieved the status of an official town. A map which survives from that date illustrates a street pattern nearly identical to the present layout. Over thirty structures are noted on the map, including a mill and cooper shop. Few buildings constructed during the town's settlement years stand today. Most notable survivor is Rockledge, constructed by Ballendine in 1760. The Georgian two-story, stone house with elaborate woodwork rises from a hill overlooking Mill Street and the river.

The most widely recognized structure in Occoquan was a flour mill owned by Nathaniel Ellicott. Illustrated in Oliver Evans' The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide, the building was destroyed in 1924. However the miller's house, or Mill Museum, still stands on Mill Street immediately southeast of the mill site. The small one-story, stone and brick structure above a raised basement covered by a gable roof was erected in the late 18th century or early 19th century. The house is presently occupied by Historic Occoquan, Inc., which uses the building for exhibition space.

Occoquan continued to flourish throughout the 19th century. Both commercial and residential structures remain from the mid-19th century. The ca. 1830 Hammill Hotel, located in the center of the district at the intersection of Commerce and Union streets, is a square, three-story building constructed of five-course American bond brick beneath a hipped roof.

Evidence of Occoquan's continued prosperity during the late 19th century survives in the large number of residences that line Commerce and Union streets. Constructed primarily in the building vernacular of folk Victorian tradition, the two-story, frame buildings frequently display German siding and decorative porches. Buildings in the 200 through 300 blocks of Commerce Street are examples of this type. Typical of these houses is 202 Commerce Street, a two-story, frame, five-bay building with a gable roof, the façade decorated by a porch consisting of stylized Doric columns and sawncut balustrade. Dating to the same period is 306 Commerce Street, a two-story, frame, three-bay house with a shed roof fronted by a porch supported on chamfered posts with scroll brackets connected by a sawnwork balustrade. A non-residential building constructed at this time is the one located at 308 Commerce Street. Built in 1889, the two-story, three-bay building is oriented with its gable end facing the street. A variety of simple unornamented buildings also exist in the district, including 209 Commerce Street, a two-story, frame house covered in German siding beneath a gable roof, and 304 Commerce Street, another two-story, three-bay building sheathed in weatherboards.

Fire swept down Mill Street in 1916 destroying many of the town's major commercial structures. However, a few residential structures which date to the late 19th century still stand at the west end of the street and have now been converted to shops. Among these is 406 Mill Street, a two-story, five-bay building with a porch consisting of turned posts and a decorative sawncut balustrade. The residence at 402 Mill Street, now a commercial enterprise, is a good example of early twentieth century craftsman or bungalow architecture several examples of which can be seen in the historic district. Most of the commercial buildings on the street are simple commercial vernacular structures built after the fire.

The district contains few public buildings. Two churches, both dating to the 20th century, are located within the boundaries. The Ebenezer Church, built in 1924, stands on Washington Street. The Methodist congregation constructed their church at 314 Mill Street in 1926, which now serves as Town Hall. The simple one-story brick building is embellished with a wide overhanging roof supported by strut brackets.

Toward the end of the last century improved economic conditions in town and an increase in the population of Northern Virginia combined to create an atmosphere favorable to new commercial and residential construction. Keeping true to the tradition of eclectic design in Occoquan, these buildings reflect Federal and vernacular, even Tudor influences. Several townhouse developments have dramatically changed the landscape of the town.

Thus, each major period of Occoquan's history is represented in its buildings. Well-kept, shaded yards surround many of the residential structures on Washington, Commerce, and Ellicott Streets, while the shops and commercial buildings on Mill Street are tightly knit and open directly onto the paved streets. The lawns and decorative details of the residential structures, in contrast with the density of the commercial core, create a unified, yet varied, combination of buildings and building types within the district.

“District Character” by Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

REHABILITATION AND CONSTRUCTION

Attribution illustrations come from
A Field Guide to American Houses;
Virginia and Lee McAlister; Alfred A Knopf; New York, NY; 2004

Authority for the Architectural Review Board can be referenced in Chapters 2, 34, and 42 of The Code of the Town of Occoquan, Virginia. This Design Manual was prepared for use within the Town of Occoquan's Old and Historic District.

ADDITIONS

An exterior addition to a historic building may radically alter its appearance. Before an addition is planned, every effort should be made to accommodate the new use within the interior of the existing building. When an addition is necessary, it shall be designed and constructed in a manner that will not detract from the character-defining features of the historic building. The following are recommended:

Locating the attached exterior addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of the historic building.

Limiting the size and scale of the addition so as not to compromise the integrity of the historic building nor the surrounding structures.

Using materials, windows, doors, architectural detailing, roofs and colors which are compatible with the historic building and surrounding structures.

AWNINGS

The use of attractive awnings and canopies is encouraged in the Historic District. Subdued colors shall be utilized, rather than bright, attention-getting colors. Fabric shall be limited to canvas or similar cloth. Vinyl, plastic, and aluminum are not compatible materials for use in the Historic District.

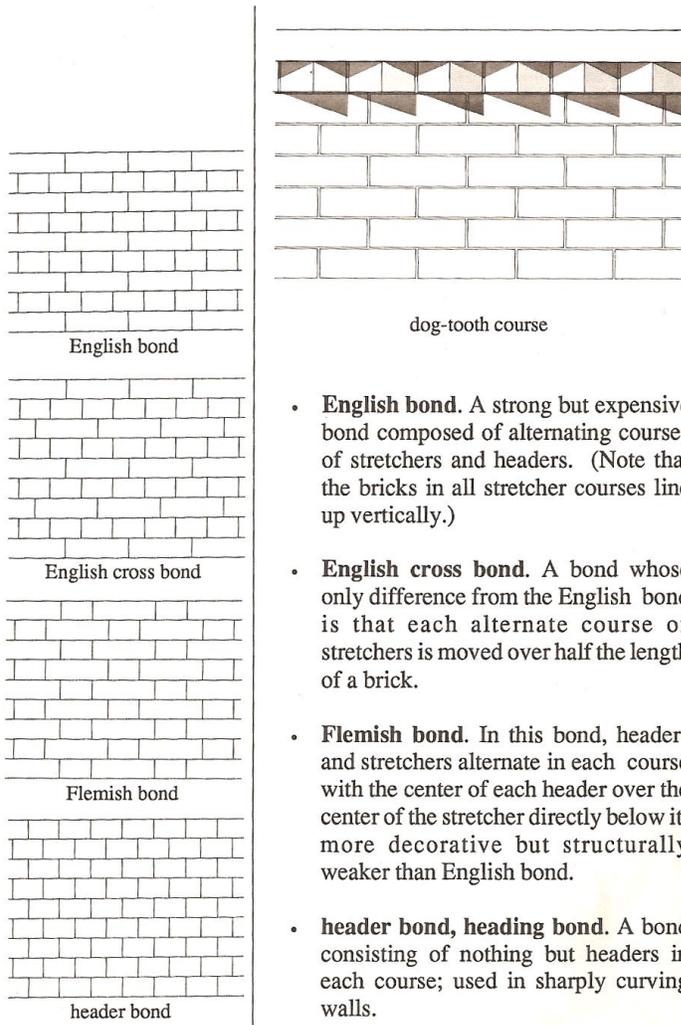
BRICKS

18th and 19th Century bricks were much larger than 20th Century bricks and the use of the oversized bricks is encouraged. Brick color shall be in the terra cotta or reddish-orange tones. Colored bricks were unknown in the 18th and 19th centuries. All bricks were made from natural clays, and varied in shade depending on the region of origin. Burned or black bricks were usually used only on the gable ends or chimneys.

Mortar shall be sand colored. "C-73" is a modern mortar which most closely resembles historic mortar. Blue Bond or grey mortar is prohibited. Mortar joints were "grapevine" or other patterns rather than the smooth joint used in modern times.

Bricks were laid to form patterns, i.e., Flemish bond, English bond, common bond, rather than modern-day running bond. A "water table" course was built about two feet above the foundation to deflect rain running off the roof.

Examples of Brickwork



- **English bond.** A strong but expensive bond composed of alternating courses of stretchers and headers. (Note that the bricks in all stretcher courses line up vertically.)
- **English cross bond.** A bond whose only difference from the English bond is that each alternate course of stretchers is moved over half the length of a brick.
- **Flemish bond.** In this bond, headers and stretchers alternate in each course with the center of each header over the center of the stretcher directly below it; more decorative but structurally weaker than English bond.
- **header bond, heading bond.** A bond consisting of nothing but headers in each course; used in sharply curving walls.

CHIMNEYS

Chimneys shall extend at least six (6) feet above the roof ridge, corbelled and be of a design appropriate to the architectural style. Suitable materials are brick or stone.

COLORS

Exterior paint colors shall be appropriate for the architectural period of the building. Colors of a building shall take into consideration roof and foundation colors. The book A Century of Color is an excellent reference and a copy of this work is available in the ARB library for builders who wish to refer to it. Painting of brick or stone is not recommended unless the surface has deteriorated substantially. Existing paint may be removed if done in a manner which will not damage the surface of the structure. Methods such as sandblasting, chemical application and heat guns tend to damage the structure.

DOORWAYS

The placement and proportions of windows and doors are of paramount importance in achieving a historic reproduction.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 18 TH Century | Six-panel (Cross and open Bible); Small glass light above door Solid wood or stone header over top of door 1775 – 1800 – very elaborate doorways, with sidelights and fanlights above front door and columns beside door or entry porch |
| 19 th Century | Wide variety of elaborate doorways Stained glass in doors Double doors Columns |

Original doors should be repaired and rehabilitated rather than replaced. Storm doors shall allow visibility of the original door. Sliding glass doors are not considered to be in keeping with the character and architectural detail of the Old and Historic District, and are prohibited if visible from the street.

FENCES AND WALLS

If fences or walls are to be used as screens or accent elements, the design, colors, and choice of materials shall be consistent with the design and materials of the building. Landscaping can be used in conjunction with these structures to strengthen their screening properties. Chain link, stockade, and snow fencing are not considered appropriate.

FOUNDATIONS

Foundation walls shall be covered with brick, stucco, stone, aluminum, vinyl, or wood siding. Paneling and exposed cinder or concrete block or monolithic concrete walls are not considered appropriate.

HANDICAPPED RAMPS

Handicapped ramps, when required, shall be at the rear or side of a building, if possible.

LANDSCAPING

Trees, shrubs and flowering plants contribute greatly to the character of an area; therefore, existing vegetation, especially trees, should be preserved if at all possible. In new construction projects, plants suitable to the site and climate of the area should be selected.

LIGHTING

Exterior lighting for structures in the Historic District shall reflect the style and era of the building. For example, colonial lantern replicas on a modern building are not appropriate. Fixtures shall utilize an incandescent lighting source whenever possible. Freestanding lights shall not exceed 15 feet in height, and all light shall be directed downward into the site. A combination of freestanding and wall-mounted fixtures is recommended in order to yield varied levels of lighting. Appropriate decorative fixtures are desirable over utilitarian fixtures or bare bulbs. Sodium vapor lighting is inappropriate in the historic district. Existing light fixtures shall be utilized where possible.

New light fixtures shall be compatible with the building's design and era.

Freestanding parking area lighting fixtures shall be placed as low as possible, and shall not exceed 15 feet in height.

An exterior lighting scheme should be pre-planned in its entirety. Fixtures and focusing shall be included.

Lighting sources shall be incandescent where possible. White light may be used where more intense light is needed.

Light intensity shall be kept at the minimum necessary.

MATERIALS

Siding – Original siding materials shall be repaired to retain the original character of the surface rather than removed or covered. When original material is so degraded that it is impractical to repair, wood, brick, stucco (sand finish) or stone are preferred. Lap siding of wood with or without a molded edge, may be used for 18th and 19th Century design. Simulated wood siding such as James Hardie products may also be used. German siding was not used in the 18th Century.

Brick, stone, or masonry walls shall be cleaned and repaired to retain the original character of the surface. Original siding materials shall be repaired and retained rather than removed or covered. Covering wall surfaces with materials such as vinyl, aluminum or hardboard siding is discouraged. Preferred materials are wood, brick, stucco, and/or stone.

Exterior trim – Dentil molding and crown molding were simple in the early part of the 18th Century, and elaborate in the later, with columns added. 18th Century trim consisted of dentil and crown molding on the fascia boards, corner moldings, and lentils above windows. Lentils were of brick, stone, or a solid piece of wood. Brick lentils were laid to form an arch, either a “jack” arch or “segmented” arch. The segmented arch was curved rather than straight.

In the 19th Century, trim was elaborate. The mid- to later part of the 19th Century has often been called the “Gingerbread Age” with immigrant skilled laborers providing elaborate trim on fascia boards, soffits, rake boards, windows, doors, and porches at low costs. Brackets attached to the soffits were commonplace.

PORCHES

Porch posts shall be at least 6” x 6”, round or square, so the correct scale between the building and the porch is achieved. In the 18th Century square posts were chamfered on the corners. Victorian porch posts were decoratively turned on a lathe or trimmed in a decorative manner. Victorian porches, often up to three per house or wrapped around three sides of the house in a continuous line, were widely used and elaborately trimmed with spandrels, brackets, and often flat, lacy balusters. Porches in the latter part of the century were decorated with “gingerbread” on rake boards, and spandrels and brackets, as well as flat, lacy spindles were often used.

PROPORTION AND SCALE

In order to retain the “small town atmosphere” of Occoquan, structures in the historic district should be designed in relation to the size of the majority of buildings in the district and, where necessary, various design details should be used to mitigate the impact of new construction.

ROOFS

Pitch - The pitch of a roof shall be a minimum of 8/12 unless a parapet with trim is erected above the roofline (such as a store or Italianate Victorian), hip roof, mansard, or gambrel (barn).

Materials – Cedar shingles were widely used during the 18th Century (approximately 90 percent), and the remainder of the structures most often had oak shingle roofs. Shakes were used on outbuildings only. During the 19th Century, roofs were standing ridge (metal) or slate shingles. Modern composition shingles shall be chosen in colors to match the color of weathered historic roofing materials and, where appropriate, dimensional shingles shall be used. Wherever pressed tin or standing seam style roofs exist, an effort should be made to preserve and/or refurbish. The same roof style shall be extended on any addition to buildings with existing pressed tin roofs.

ROOFTOP SCREENING

If roof-mounted mechanical equipment is used, it shall be screened from public view on all sides. The screening material and design shall be consistent with the design, textures, materials, and colors of the building. The screening shall appear as an integral part of the building.

SATELLITE DISHES

Satellite dishes are not considered appropriate in the Old and Historic District.

SCREENING

All outdoor utilities, transformers, meters, trash dumpsters, and mechanical units shall be screened from the public view by walls, fences, or landscaping. Where landscaping is used, it should provide a year-round screen. When parking is under a building, there shall be no “open-ended” walls unless required by state or federal regulation. A breezeway effect is discouraged, and side walls shall be enclosed so as to camouflage the parking area.

SIGNAGE

Before a sign is planned within the Old and Historic District, every effort shall be made to insure that the sign will not detract from the character-defining features of the building. The size, location, color, lettering style, height, construction, mounting brackets, compatibility with surrounding landscape/streetscape, compatibility with the architecture of the building to which the sign is to be mounted, as well as surrounding buildings, shall be considered. The sign shall be legible and appropriate to the activity to which it pertains. See Chapter 42 of The Code of the Town of Occoquan, Virginia.

STREETSCAPE

Town standards must be adhered to when sidewalks are placed on public right-of-way. Benches, trees, trash receptacles, and streetlights may not be placed on public right-of-way unless considered appropriate by the Architectural Review Board and having express approval of the Town Council.

VENDING MACHINES

Vending machines shall be screened from the view of the passing public. Vending machines may not be placed on public right-of-way.

WINDOWS

The placement and proportions of windows and doors are of paramount importance in achieving a historic reproduction. Original window materials shall be repaired and rehabilitated rather than replaced. In new construction, simulated true divided light windows in the appropriate style shall be used. Storm windows shall not be used unless the design allows the original window to show through. Window air-conditioning units are discouraged. If used, units must be placed in a side or rear window.

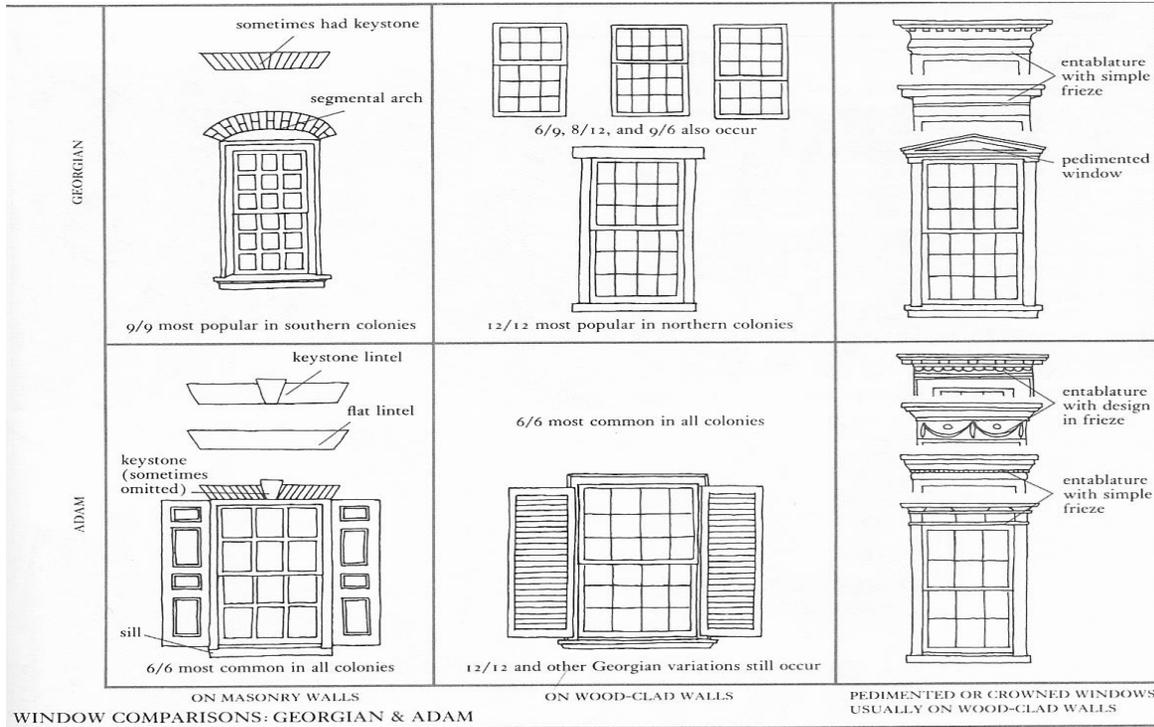
| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 18 TH Century | Small panes; six over six window lights and up (i.e., nine over six) 1775 – 1800 – Arched at top; shutters Proportions – One-half the width of the height Placement – Lined up one above the other and over doorways Headers – Wood, solid beam; stone; brick; jack arches or segmented arches; lighter brick often used around windows |
| 19 th Century | Windows in the early 19 th century were usually six over six. The emergence of styles such as neo-Gothic, Italianate and Queen Anne |

led the use of two over two, one over one and in Queen Anne a multiplicity of combinations. By the end of the 19th century two over two dominated and this is the pattern most often seen in 19th century houses in Occoquan.

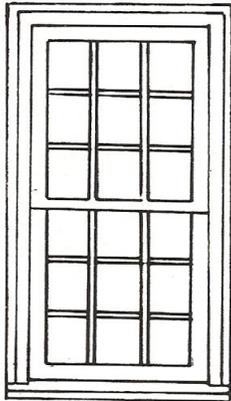
Proportions – Usually, one-half width of height

Headers – Elaborate; eyebrow; segmented and jack arches

Examples of Windows

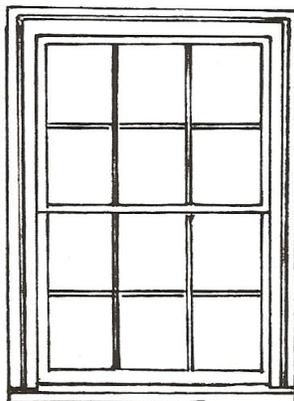


1760 s GEORGIAN WINDOW



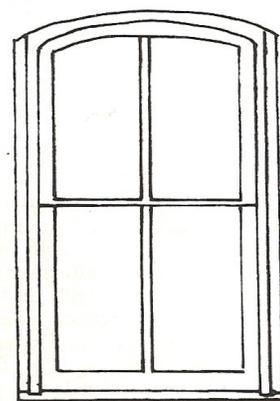
Sash Opening: 29" X 69"
Sash Division 9-over-9

1820 s HIGH FEDERAL STYLE WINDOW



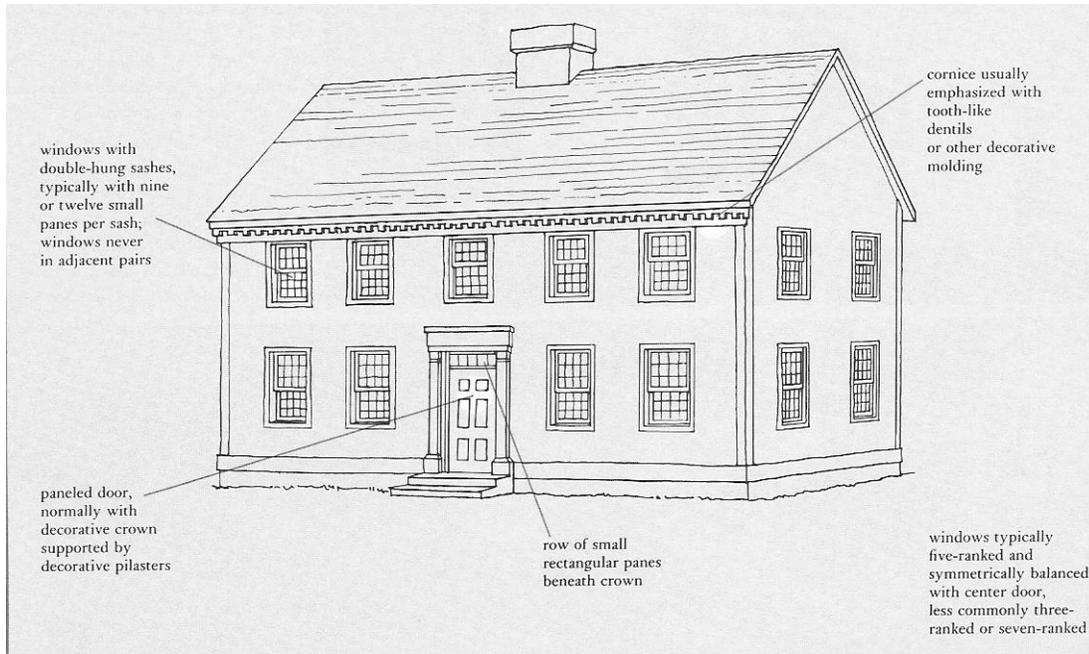
Sash Opening: 40" X 69.5"
Sash Division 6-over-6

1860 s ITALIANATE WINDOW

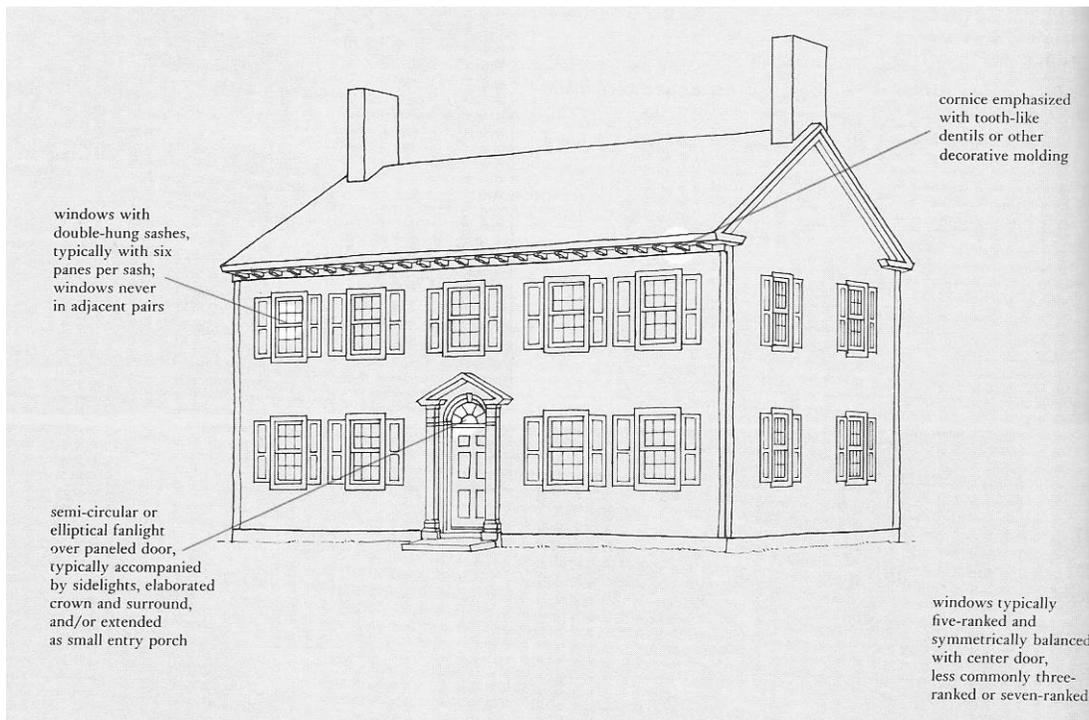


Sash Opening: 44.5 X 96.5
Sash Division 2-over-2

Examples of Structures



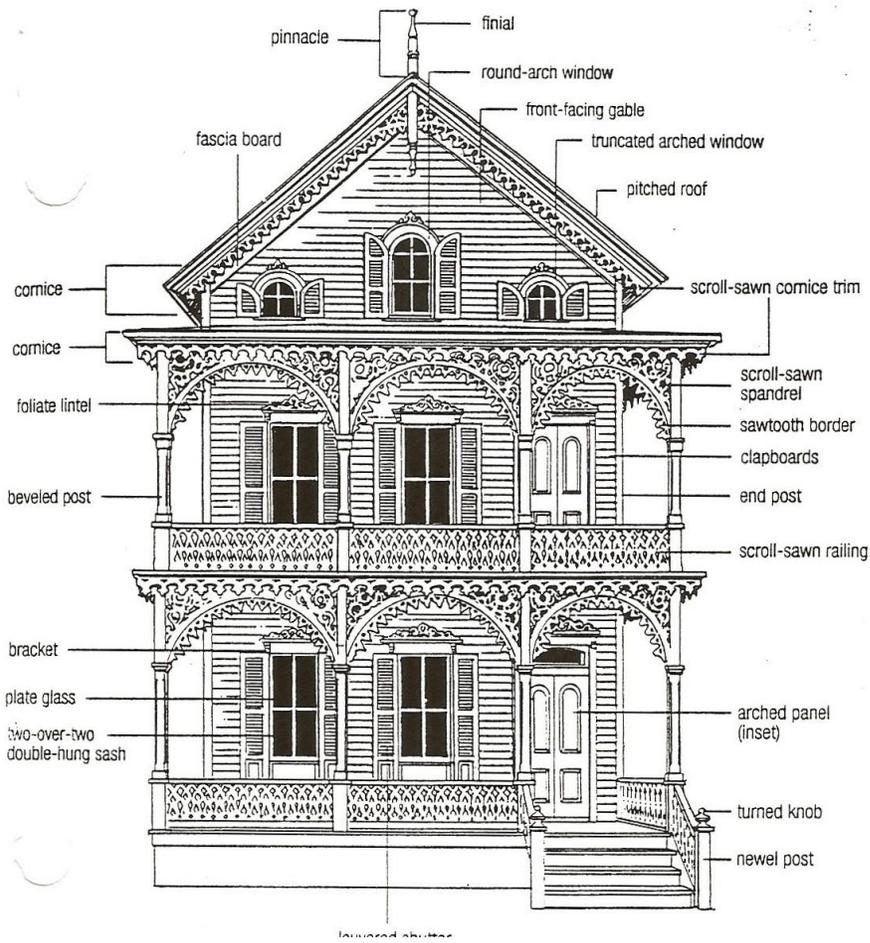
Georgian 1700-1780



Adam (Federal) 1780-1820



Folk Victorian ca. 1870-1910



Queen Anne ca. 1880-1910



Queen Anne 1880-1910



Craftsman 1905-1930

Occoquan Buildings

Mill Street

Since its beginning in the early eighteenth century, Mill Street has been the commercial center of Occoquan. Today, the riverside street exhibits a variety of architectural styles and influences. Nineteenth-century vernacular style with later porch and stairs are shown in the building at 206 Mill Street. Italianate brackets, also seen across the street at 301 Mill Street, decorate the nineteenth-century commercial structure at the corner of Mill and Union Streets. Former drug store and bank respectively, the buildings at 306 and 308 Mill Street reflect late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century vernacular commercial design. The Occoquan Town Hall, formerly the Occoquan Methodist Church, at 314 Mill Street is an example of ecclesiastical architecture in the Arts and Crafts style. Next door, 402 Mill Street is a former residence and another fine example of Arts and Crafts design. Both 404 and 406 Mill Street display characteristics of nineteenth-century vernacular design, while the recently built structures at 414 and 416 Mill Street have several English-inspired influences, including Tudor and nineteenth-century touches. Rockledge, built in 1757, and the Mill House of 1765 are the two structures built in the Georgian style.



206 Mill Street



302 Mill Street



301 Mill Street



306 Mill Street



308 Mill Street



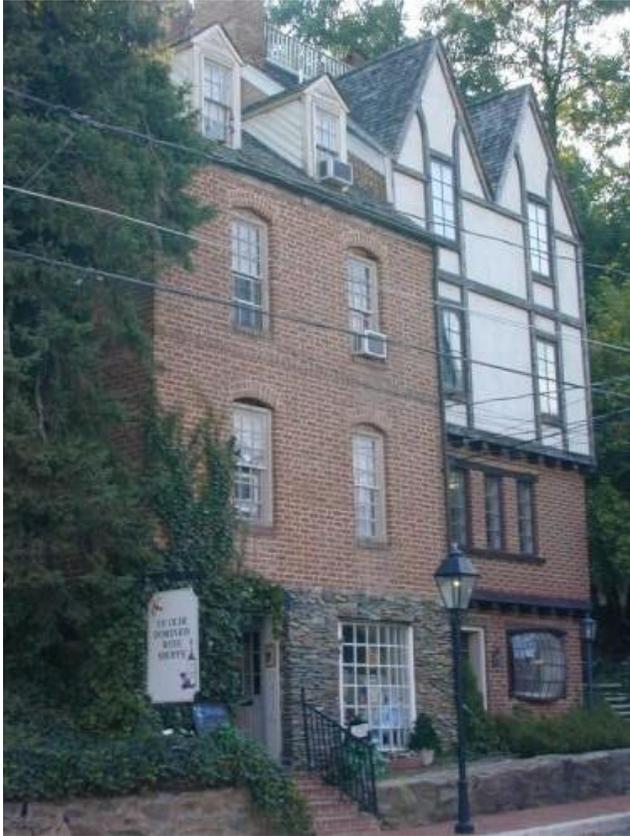
**314 Mill Street
Occoquan Town Hall - Originally a Methodist Church**



**402 Mill Street
A fine example of Arts and Crafts**



404 Mill Street



414/416 Mill Street - Tudor elements



Rockledge

Commerce Street

Most Occoquan residents believe this pleasant thoroughfare gives the best sense of nineteenth-century Occoquan, though, even here, the mix of styles reflects our history of fires and reconstruction. At 202, 204, and 303, there are good examples of vernacular residential construction known as Folk Victorian, ornamental balusters, bargeboards, and brackets add interest to these former homes. Next door, at 301 Commerce and also at 304, we see plainer vernacular construction. Late twentieth century remodeling has completely changed the appearance of 306 Commerce, a late nineteenth century building. The addition of a matching porch upstairs gives the old Odd Fellows Hall of 1889 an elegance missing in the original design. The nineteenth century residence at 312 Commerce Street, displays interesting vernacular design details. The twentieth century is represented by these two Colonial Revival residences at 307 and 309 Commerce Street.



202 Commerce



301 Commerce



303 Commerce



304 Commerce



308 Commerce Street
Odd Fellows Hall before renovation



Odd Fellows Hall after renovation



306 Commerce Street



307 Commerce Street



309 Commerce Street



312 Commerce Street

Union Street

The old Hammill Hotel at the corner of Union and Commerce has been altered several times since it was built in the early nineteenth century. The former residence at 203 Union Street shows typical vernacular construction of the nineteenth century.



203 Union Street

Washington Street

Ebenezer Church is another example of Arts and Crafts ecclesiastical architecture. Across the street is another vernacular building of the nineteenth century.



Ebenezer Church - Arts and Crafts Elements

206 Washington Street

Ellicott Street

This Arts and Crafts cottage at 204 Ellicott Street is now used for commercial purposes.



204 Ellicott Street

BUILDER'S FLOW CHART

Usually, the ARB will not accept an application from a builder until the applicant has received approval from several officials and boards in the town government. An orderly process resolves construction related problems prior to this last step.

Zoning Administrator/Town Engineer/Subdivision Agent (as applicable)

Planning Commission

Council (preliminary approval)

Architectural Review Board

Council (final approval)

Since the ARB is charged with maintaining Occoquan's historic and cultural integrity, it is vital builders in the historic district provide the board with sufficient and timely information. The chairman of the ARB and members of the town staff can provide assistance during the period leading up to the appearance before the board. A small library located in the town hall may be of help determining historic suitability. The ARB requires the following from applicants:

1. Seven copies of the exterior elevation
2. A schematic showing the proposed structure in relation with neighboring buildings (new construction only)
3. Samples of all paints and materials to be used on the exterior of the building

These should be submitted to the Town Hall a minimum of seven days prior to the regularly scheduled monthly ARB meeting. New construction approval usually will require a fourteen-day period for the members of the ARB to make a final review of the plan.