

Commercial Signage

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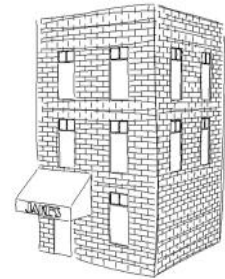


Standard

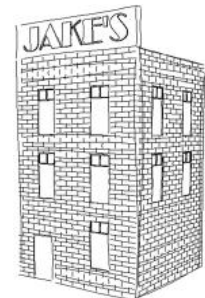
Per SRC 230.056, new signage for historic structures should be designed with respect to the building's size, character and features. Significant historic materials and features should be preserved. The new sign should not compromise the historic character or integrity of the original resource, and care should be taken when attaching the sign to the building in order to prevent damage to the structure. Sign design and placement must be compatible with the buildings within Salem's Downtown Historic District.

Placement

- New signs should respect the size, scale and design of the historic building.
- New signs should not obscure significant features of the historic building. Signs above a storefront should fit within the historic signboard, for example.
- New signs should also respect neighboring buildings. They should not shadow or overpower adjacent structures.
- Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Materials characteristic of the building's period and style, used in contemporary design, can result in effective new signs.
- New signs should be attached to the building carefully, both to prevent damage to historic fabric, and to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Fittings should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick, for example, and sign loads should be properly calculated and distributed.



Correct Signage Application



Incorrect Signage Application

History of Signage

Historical signs were used then as they are today – to advertise and encourage people to enter commercial establishments. There have been many types, and like archeological layers, signs reveal different periods of human occupancy and use.

Fascia signs, placed on the fascia or horizontal band between the storefront and the second floor, were among the most common. The fascia is often called the "signboard," and as the word implies, provided a perfect place for a sign – then and now.

Hanging or projecting signs, both lettered and symbolic, were also common in the nineteenth century. Projecting signs were often paired with another at a 45-degree angle for increased visibility. Occasionally, a sign would stretch out from the building across the sidewalk, supported by a post at the street.

Gold leaf signs, and signs painted or etched on glass in windows, doors and transoms were also

quite common. Porcelain enamel signs were very popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century. Signs carved from stone or wood appeared frequently, especially on institutional buildings. Painted shutters and even window shades provided additional advertising space.

Historically in Salem’s downtown there was a predominance of signs designed with light letters on a dark background traditionally painted on wood or metal. Flags, particularly hung from the upper floors, and banners, sometimes stretching across the sidewalk, also appeared on buildings.

Rooftop signs appeared with greater frequency in the second half of the nineteenth century. Earlier rooftop signs tended to be relatively simple – often merely larger versions of the horizontal signs typically found on lower levels. Late in the century, signs became more ornate as well as more numerous. These later rooftop signs were typically found on hotels, theaters, banks and other large buildings.

Signs have also changed to reflect trends in architecture and technology. For example, Art Deco and Depression Modern lettering were popular in the 1920s and 1930s, as was use of electricity and neon in signage of the 1940s and 1950s.

Additional Reading

Preservation Brief #25: *The Preservation of Historic Signs*. Washington D.C.: Technical Preservation Services (TPS), Heritage Preservation Services Division, National Park Service. US Department of the Interior. Rev. 1991.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Assistance Division. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, rev. 1983.

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