

HELEN HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT FACT SHEET



D'Aigneau Cottage, 1983. Historic Saranac Lake Collection

Do you live in a cure cottage?

Cure Cottages are a specific building type that developed in Saranac Lake for the treatment of tuberculosis. The main feature of a cure cottage is a cure porch, where TB patients sat outside to breathe the fresh air. The Helen Hill National Register District was created in 2015 to encourage preservation of the neighborhood's many cure cottages.

What is the National Register of Historic places?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties deemed worthy of preservation for their historical significance.

What does the National Register mean for homeowners?

Property owners may be eligible for a historic preservation tax credit to help support the cost of home repairs. The National Register does not restrict homeowners from making changes to their properties.

How does the tax credit work?

To be eligible, you must own and live in the house. The repair costs must exceed \$5,000, and you must spend at least 5% on exterior work. All the work must be approved by the Division for Historic Preservation before you begin.

How to find out more?

Contact Historic Saranac Lake at (518) 891-4606

or email mail@historicsaranaclake.org

Learn more at historicsaranaclake.org/architectural-preservation.html

The National Register of Historic Places.

This is the first of 4 columns that Historic Saranac Lake is contributing to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on the topic of architectural preservation. March, 2012

Historic Saranac Lake was founded over 30 years ago as an architectural preservation organization. While our mission has grown to include many other tasks, such as operating the Saranac Laboratory Museum on Church Street and teaching area school children about our local history, we continue to work for the preservation of Saranac Lake's unique architecture.

Twenty years ago, Historic Saranac Lake nominated and listed approximately 170 village properties to the National Register. Now we are making a renewed effort to pay attention to our National Register buildings and to make new nominations to the National Register. Here are answers to some of the frequently asked questions about the program.

What is the National Register?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Why does the National Register matter?

- Now tax credits are available to help subsidize approved rehabilitation projects to National Register properties. Homeowners can receive a 20% tax credit. Commercial property owners may be eligible for credits up to 40% of the project cost.
- Municipal and not-for-profit owners of listed historic properties can receive matching state historic preservation grants. Local churches have received grants to restore their stained glass windows. Little Red, Union Depot and the Saranac Laboratory have benefitted from this program.
- Registered properties receive a measure of protection from the effects of government sponsored, licensed or assisted projects.
- Listing on the National Register is a source of pride, and it helps to raise awareness of the economic and cultural value of historic buildings.

What properties are eligible?

A property must meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. This involves examining the property's age, integrity, and significance.

Many properties in the village of Saranac Lake were listed because of their association with our special history as a center for the treatment and scientific research of tuberculosis. A preliminary survey completed over 20 yrs. ago identified some 900 possible cure cottages in the village. In 1992, 62 were chosen for the nomination under the cure cottage theme and many others were listed as part of 6 different Historic Districts. Historic Saranac Lake is currently assisting homeowners in applying to the National Register under the existing Cure Cottage Thematic Designation.

If you live in a home that once was a cure cottage, where the original architecture is substantially unchanged, and there are architectural features of a cure cottage, namely a cure porch, Historic Saranac Lake can assist you in applying to the National Register.

How can I find out if my home was a cure cottage?

Records in the Adirondack Research Room of the Saranac Lake free library can confirm whether patients cured in your home. A good place to start your research is the Historic Saranac Lake wiki website: hsl.wikispot.org. Type your street name into the search box. Houses are listed by old and new addresses. Photos of the majority of the homes in Saranac Lake can be found on the website. Those that were cure cottages will indicate whether “curing evidence” exists in library records.

How can I find out if my house is on the Register?

Properties on the Register are identified on the hsl wiki site. Links to the National Register forms are found on the site with each National Register property. You can also look up a property on the National Park Service site at nps.gov.

How can I apply to list my property on the National Register?

Forms must be submitted to the New York State Office of Historic Preservation. Historic Saranac Lake can assist you with this process. Call or email us to find out more: 891-4606 or mail@historicsaranaclake.org.

What are the restrictions of being on the Register?

There are no restrictions placed on private owners of registered properties. Private property owners may sell, alter or dispose of their property as they wish.

However we strongly urge all owners of historic properties to research the value of existing historic features of their homes before making alterations. Cure porches and cure porch windows are lovely and irreplaceable features of our community. South facing cure porches serve as solar heat banks, helping to save on heating costs.

Stay tuned to next month's article to find out more about saving our cure porches and historic windows! In the mean time, please contact us with any other questions about how we can work together to preserve the unique architecture of Saranac Lake.

NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC HOMEOWNERSHIP REHABILITATION CREDIT PROGRAM

Incentives for Owners of Historic Homes

If you are the owner of a house that is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places individually or as a contributing to a listed/certified historic district AND it is located in an eligible census tract, you may qualify for a state historic tax credit equal to 20% of the repair costs

PROGRAM QUALIFICATIONS:

- You must own and live in the house.
- The house must be listed in the State Register of Historic Places (individually or contributing to a district).
- The house must be located in a qualifying census tract.
- The repair costs must exceed \$5,000 and you must spend at least 5% on exterior work.
- All the work must be approved by the Division for Historic Preservation (DHP) before you begin.



Buffalo

QUALIFIED EXPENSES:

Exterior and interior work is eligible and you can undertake a variety of repairs and/or replacements as long as the work does not significantly change your house's overall historic appearance, including but not limited to:

- Structural systems, including foundations, floor joists and ceiling and attic rafters.
- Roofs, including roof coverings, rafters, fascia, soffits, gutters and downspouts.
- Interior work, including floors, walls, stairs, ceilings and trim around windows and doors.
- Utility systems, including heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical and plumbing systems as well as fire safety and security systems.
- Windows and doors, including glass, frames, shutters, hardware and storm windows.
- Exterior walls, cornices, porches and foundations, including siding, dormers, brackets, columns, railings, stairs, window and door trim, concrete or masonry walls and chimneys.
- Weatherproofing, including caulking, weather-stripping and some insulation upgrades.

Please note that the credit does not apply to work outside the footprint of the house, such as new additions, landscaping, driveways, fencing, or detached garages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If I want to apply for the credit, what should I do?

For more information, the application, or to find out if your house is eligible, please visit <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/tax-credit-programs/> or call 518-268-2213 to speak to the DHP staff member who covers your municipality.

Can I make my house more energy efficient?

Yes. As long as the work does not alter the house's overall historic appearance. High efficient heating systems, solar installation, insulation, and other weatherization projects may be eligible expenses. Please note that existing wood windows can be made more energy efficient with proper repair, including the installation of weather stripping and interior or exterior storm windows, which are additionally eligible expenses.

Can I replace my windows?

Window replacement is an eligible expense if the existing windows are not historic or cannot be repaired due to severe deterioration. You must provide photographs of the windows to show their condition and the proposed replacements must be approved by the division. Vinyl or vinyl clad windows are generally not acceptable. If you are approved for replacements, staff will request the product information for the proposed windows.

Can I install vinyl siding on my house?

Replacing repairable historic material is never recommended; however, if the historic material cannot be repaired because of the extent of the damage, we recommend that the material is replaced in-kind. The use of modern materials over existing wood or masonry may lead to future moisture damage to the structure and will diminish the historic appearance of the building.

Can I use the credit if I have a rental unit in my house?

Yes. Generally, only the work associated with the homeowner-occupied portion of the house is eligible. There is a formula to include repairs of the property to areas of the home that are shared with your tenants. Please contact your DHP representative for more information. Additionally, your house may be eligible for historic preservation tax incentives for commercial properties.

When can I take the tax credit?

This historic tax credit is taken in the year that the owner receives a Certification of Completion from the Division for Historic Preservation; the certificate is issued when work is completed and Part 3 of the tax credit application is submitted and approved.

What if I am unable to use all/any of the credit?

The credit can be carried over to subsequent years until it is used. If your household adjusted gross income is \$60,000 or below, the unused credit will be issued as a refund.

Can I pass the credit on to a new buyer?

Yes. If you receive certification for the completed work, or approval of Part 3 of the application, and want to pass the entire credit on to the first purchaser, you may. The buyer needs to live in the house, and needs to claim the credit within five years of certification. This can be useful if you are selling the house or for an organization that does not pay taxes to rehabilitate historic buildings and improve neighborhoods.

Save Your Windows!

by Amy Catania, Executive Director, Historic Saranac Lake

This is the third of four columns that Historic Saranac Lake is contributing to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise this spring on the topic of architectural preservation.

It's hard not to notice the advertisements for replacement windows. The ads claim that new windows will keep our houses warm, save us money, and make our lives easy. More and more people are replacing their old windows with new vinyl ones. We notice this especially in Saranac Lake, where so many of our older homes have (or used to have) beautiful glassed-in cure porches.

Here at Historic Saranac Lake, we often field calls about replacement windows. We always urge people not to believe the claims of the replacement window companies. It is always best to fix the old wood windows that you have, and if you have to replace your windows, replace with wood. It's not what people want to hear. We want to believe that we can be free of our old creaky and leaky windows. But the best way to solve your window problem is to repair the ones you have. Here are five good reasons to restore your wood windows, adapted from a similar list created by the New England Window Restoration Alliance.

1. Wood windows are more durable. Many of our old wood windows are already older than we are, but they have many more years left in them with the right care. They may be starting to show their age, but with some work they can be repaired to last another hundred years. The craftsmanship and dense old growth timber of antique windows makes them incredibly strong and weather resistant. Many replacement windows come with limited warranties that don't cover labor. Many carry warranties of twenty years. In the lifetime of a building, that is not a long time.

2. Wood windows fit better. Your old windows were made to fit your house. Over the years, they have expanded and contracted with the seasons and with the settling of your house. Weather stripping can help your old windows fit and seal even better. Replacement windows, on the other hand, have a rigid structure. They don't expand and contract with your house, and their fit will never be as good as your original old windows.

3. Repaired wood windows will give you the energy savings you want. In the winter, the cold air comes right through your old windows, and replacing them with new vinyl windows seems like an obvious answer. But studies have shown that you can drastically improve energy efficiency in old windows with minor repairs. A local repairman can do the work for less cost than you might expect, as it usually requires simple things like replacing broken glass, reglazing and weather stripping. You can save 30-40% on heating costs with these simple measures. One study compared the energy savings between a restored wood window with a good storm versus a new vinyl window. In one entire year, the vinyl window was estimated to provide only **60 cents** in energy savings.

4. Wood is the environmental choice. Replacement windows are made of poly vinyl chloride (PVC), a material that is becoming a big concern in the building industry. Its production creates

toxic environmental waste, and over time it emits gases into the environment. When it burns it releases toxic dioxins. With proper precautions, lead paint that you might have on your old wood windows can be safely managed. But you won't escape lead with vinyl windows, as it is used as a stabilizer in PVC. When you add up the energy use that goes into production, shipping, installation and removal process of replacing windows, keeping your old windows is the green choice. Instead of paying for new materials made elsewhere, it is much better for our local economy to put money into repairs and restoration done by local craftspeople.

5. Old wood windows look better! Pick out an old glassed-in cure porch and compare it to a neighbor with new vinyl windows. Clearly, the old windows look better, even when they are in need of some repairs. Craftsmanship went into old wood windows, making for many unique shapes that give our homes special character. Old glass panes have varieties of color and texture. Old windows are not only more beautiful from the outside. They are more pleasing from the inside, too, because they let in more light than vinyl replacements.

If you are lucky enough to still have your old wood windows, we hope this article has helped you decide to keep them and care for them. If you have already replaced your windows, but still have the old ones in your basement, we suggest hanging onto them for the day you need to replace the vinyl ones. If you live in a National Register home, a tax credit can help subsidize repair of your old windows and other rehabilitation of your home. If you live in an old cure cottage and would like to find out about getting on the National Register and accessing the tax credit, please contact Historic Saranac Lake at 891-4606.