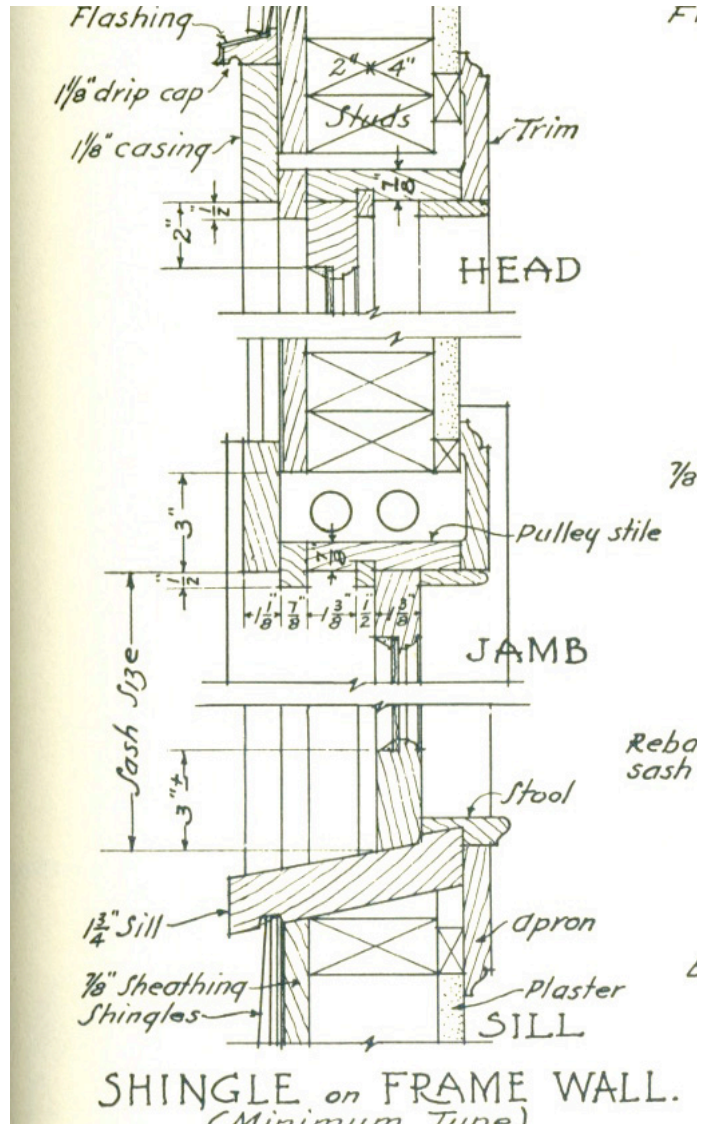


Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess



Central Astoria has a seemingly endless variety of historic wood-sash windows. While there may be a variety of double-hung, casement and fixed windows, they do share certain details. The size of sashes, depth of recess, profile of muntins, size and style of casings--while varied--all fall within a handful of configurations.

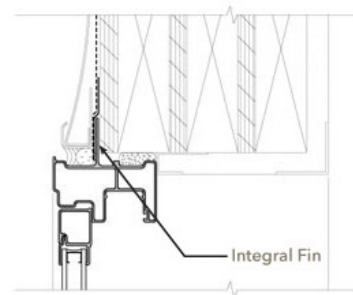
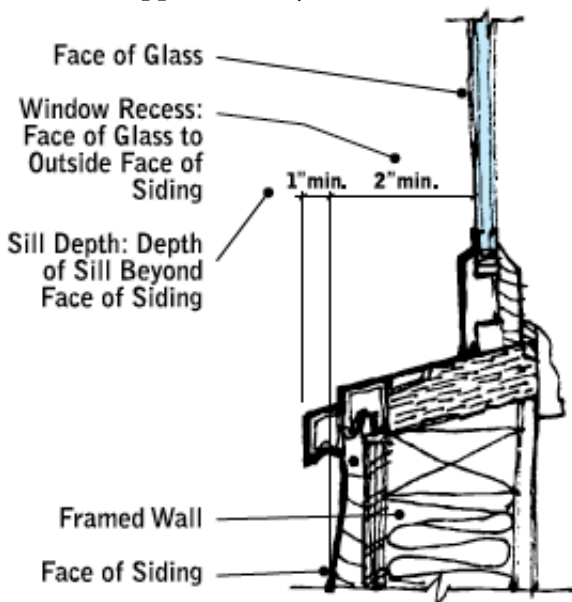
Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess



Measuring depth of recess

When undergoing historic review, the City of Astoria has required new double-hung windows to be recessed a minimum of 2" from the face of siding to the face of the glass on the lower sash (below). If the window is fixed or casement, the window is required to match the recess found on the upper sash of a typical double-hung window--approximately 1".

Standard wood, double-hung windows were historically recessed approximately 3" from the face of siding to face of glass on lower sash (above).



By contrast, some fiberglass double-hung windows project beyond face of siding (above). The integral fin or flange prevents moisture from entering wall. It also dictates how deep the window may be recessed.

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Measuring from siding versus casing

The depth of a window's recess is measured from the siding's face rather than the casing's face. The depth of siding varies less from one style to another than the depth of casings.

For instance, houses with Italianate features (above left) frequently have deep casings with decorative details. They also tend to use drop siding. Casings are usually applied over the siding, increasing the window's perceived depth.

Houses with craftsman features (below left) have simple casings (sometimes with banding around the outer edges for additional depth/shadows). Casings are usually butted into the siding rather than over the siding. Typical siding includes clapboard or wood shingle.

Modern windows are frequently installed without true casings (below). The siding is butted to the side of the window. In this case, the glass is nearly flush with the siding.



Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess

Casement window recess varies

The recess found on casement windows varies within Central Astoria. Although they are typically recessed 2" or more from the siding, there are less typical, more shallow examples. One example found is recessed less than 1".

The two windows to the right likely exceed 2" in depth.

The window below right is less than an 1". The sash appears to be flush with the inside of the casing. It is not known if the windows are original to the house (which has undergone two significant renovations). The windows appear to be a part of an interior window seat and that maximum interior depth is desired.

The window below is recessed approximately 2".



Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess

Use of replacement windows

The City of Astoria encourages its property owners to retain the historic wood windows on their buildings. Wood windows will last for more than 100 years if properly maintained. The windows provide character defining details within Astoria's historic districts.

A quick review of windows illustrates the success or failure of replacement windows.

Paired double-hung wood sash windows are retained (upper right). Identical windows were removed from a neighboring house and replaced by aluminum windows (center right). The replacement windows lack the depth, breath of sash, lugs, and ability to paint. They are also less energy efficient.

A vinyl single-hung replaced a wood sash double hung (lower right). The replacement window does not fill the original window opening, and the once deep muntin is reduced to a flat vinyl strip.

A vinyl replacement window is significantly smaller than the original window, and it is nearly flush with the siding (below center).

Besides a lack of casing and window depth, the flange was removed, allowing moisture to enter the building (below left,)



Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess

New construction

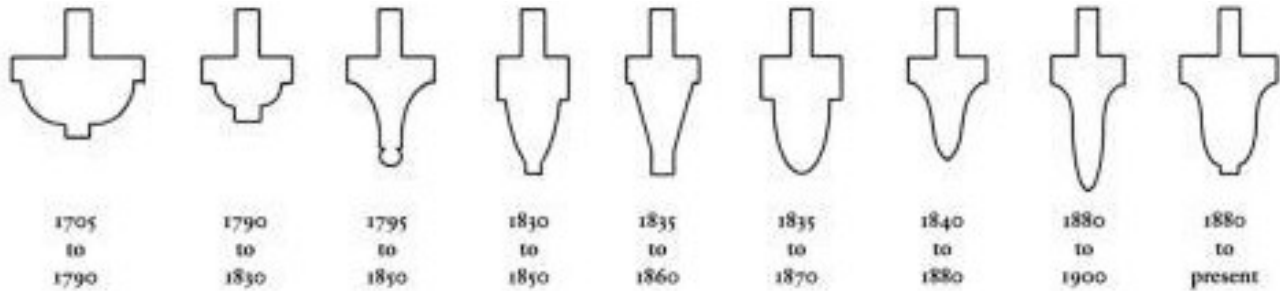
The Mill Pond Village uses a separate criteria from the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) and has its own review board. Their criteria for new construction, while based on historic sensibilities, does not specifically respond to a historic context.

A variety of window treatments are found within the development. There are traditionally recessed and detailed windows (above right), and contemporary windows with shallow recesses.

Contemporary window frames frequently project as much as 1/4" from the casing. In some cases, the sash are flush with the casings and the windows are flush with the siding (center and below right). In other cases, while the frames are "proud" of the casing, the windows are an inch or more recessed from the siding (below).



Windows in Central Astoria: Their depth of recess



Conclusion

Window technology continues to evolve. That evolution can be seen in the size of window panes, for instance. As machinery developed the capacity to roll large sheets of glass, expansive windows became a show of wealth for homeowners. The profile of muntins and window sashes changed, too, reflecting not only differences between handmade and machine-made (illustrated above), but the size of glass it supported. These changes are seen throughout Astoria's historic neighborhoods.

Contemporary windows continue to evolve. Vinyl and fiberglass-clad windows are seen by some as alternatives to old-growth or high quality wood windows. In some cases, their muntins are more narrow or without substantial profile. In other cases, they lack casings. Or, they are set flush to or project beyond the siding. In the end, some fall short of looking "historic".

The City of Astoria's HLC is charged with determining how much change is acceptable or appropriate within a historic setting. Should a building represent its period of construction, or the neighborhood's Period of Significance? Can new construction be less about looking "historic" and more about being high quality design and materials? The criteria for New Construction, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior, and adopted by the City of Astoria, provides the HLC a platform for this debate.

In the past, the HLC has determined that a minimum 2" recess from the face of siding to the face of glass (on the lower sash of a double-hung) is an appropriate standard. This same standard is adopted by communities throughout the nation. Is there reason to change that standard?

Has experience shown that good quality design can be achieved with a more shallow recess? Are there ways to detail the building to mitigate the contemporary nature of new windows? Or, are shallow windows simply an acceptable new technology and appropriate for new construction?

Astoria is not alone in this debate. It is useful to have an informed discussion and either reaffirm its standards, or adapt them according to new information.

