



Replacing original wooden pegs is just one of the techniques taught to students in the Wood Window Repair class.

THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

# A New Way of Learning How to Preserve the Past

Barry A. Loveland



There is one question that Carole Wilson, historic preservation specialist for the Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC), is repeatedly asked by historic home owners: “Where can I find someone qualified to do this work?”

Many owners of historic houses and buildings throughout Pennsylvania wrestle with the same dilemma—where do they find someone who possesses the necessary skills and knowledge of historic preservation to work on their buildings? While there are some individuals in the building construction industry with these skills, they are often difficult—if not impossible—to find in many communities. And for contractors seeking to acquire these specialized skills, few educational opportunities exist.

The problem is not limited to the Keystone State. Throughout the country, only about a dozen programs are devoted to hands-on training in historic preservation. In many places, contractors with expertise in historic preservation are scarce.

In 2007, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) resolved to address this problem. LCPC had recently produced its comprehensive heritage plan, a landmark document that provides the county with a blueprint for the future of preservation policy. Included in that plan was recognition of the need for more people trained in preservation trades. The document laid out the objective of creating preservation trades training opportunities in the Lancaster region. PHMC and the LCPC convened a meeting with interested organizations and institutions in the Lancaster area to develop solutions to the problem.

It was from this partnership—which eventually included PHMC, LCPC, Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board (LCWIB), Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, and Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology—that the Preservation Trades Technology Program emerged. LCPC provided seed money to develop an overall curriculum and detailed curricula plan for the first two courses in preservation carpentry to launch a trial run in the winter of 2008, which was successful. PHMC added in-kind services to develop several courses. Despite limited resources, the program has continued to grow. An additional grant this year from LCPC and a grant from the Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C., have given the program an added boost.



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

Students in the Wood Repair course (right) practice techniques using epoxy fillers and removing excess wood filler (above) to repair a historic shutter.



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

The curriculum plan and the detailed curricula were developed by preservation education consultants John N. Fugelso and David Mertz. Fugelso, chief of preservation construction for PHMC before retiring in 2006, was the founder and director of the nation’s first preservation trades education program, at Durham Technical Institute (renamed Durham Technical Community College in 1986) in Durham, North Carolina. Fugelso is actively involved in the Preservation Trades Network, an international organization dedicated to education in the preservation trades, and in 1999 received its Askins Achievement Award for his lifetime achievements in preservation trades education and practice. Mertz is the current director of the historic preservation program at Belmont Technical College in St. Clairsville, Ohio, one of the leading preservation trades education programs in the United States. Other courses are being developed by experts in various aspects of preservation theory and practice.

Based on the campus of the Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster, the program offers a series of short courses in preservation trades. Students take three core courses in preservation theory, including Fundamentals of Historic Preservation, History of Pennsylvania Architecture, and Pennsylvania Building Technology. They can then specialize by enrolling in at least three hands-on workshop courses in preservation carpentry or preservation masonry, leading to a certificate of completion for the program.



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

Students spend most of their class time in the workshop learning by doing and practicing on surplus building materials.



LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, Lancaster, has been educating students in building trades for more than a century.



Students learn to remove decayed wood and use epoxy wood fillers to restore original historic window sashes and frames.

Preservation carpentry courses include Wood Repair, Wood Window Repair, Preservation and Repair of Porches, and Complex Moldings. The porches and moldings courses are in development and will be offered in 2010. Also in development are preservation masonry courses, including Mortars in Preservation, Masonry Repair and Repointing, and Masonry Cleaning, which will be available in 2010.

The target audiences for these courses are building industry workers who want to expand their skills into preservation work; students already enrolled in construction trades education programs similar to those offered by Thaddeus Stevens College, who want to further specialize in preservation; maintenance employees of institutions and organizations that own historic facilities; and individuals who have some basic trade skills and want to learn how to preserve historic buildings.

"Stevens College is a perfect location for a program like this," says Eric Pellegrino, the school's vice president of academic affairs. "We have been delivering education in the building trades for more than one hundred years, so we have an appreciation of both history and education for technology and trades." The campus includes a mix of historic and contemporary buildings, and the college owns a number of older residential structures in the surrounding neighborhood that it maintains for student housing. "We think this program meets an important educational need for our students and the local workforce," adds Pellegrino.

The larger community adds to the students' educational experience. "Lancaster County has a rich collection of architecture that can serve as a real laboratory for a program like this," Wilson notes. "We have such a diverse mix of urban and rural architecture, as well as buildings and structures in many different styles and from different centuries. There is a strong tradition of preserving the heritage here."

LCWIB has been an instrumental partner in attracting workers to the program by providing tuition subsidies to incumbent workers for skills advancement training. "We believe this program fills a definite need in Lancaster County," says Scott Sheely, LCWIB director.

One of those students who has benefited from the program is Kevin Sypien, who completed the Wood Repair course. Sypien, a self-employed remodeling contractor in Lancaster, took the course because he believed it would benefit his knowledge and increase his skills. "I have been able to pinpoint different types of rot and make the repairs using the correct historical way," says Sypien. "I have been able to work on wood repairs at two barns



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

dating to the 1860s and the 1880s. Without the course, I most likely would not have known how to do it the right way. It was well worth taking the course." Sypien hopes to have the opportunity to do more preservation work. He plans to take more courses in the program as time permits.

PHMC is currently considering expanding the initiative by developing partnerships with other schools and organizations in the Commonwealth. The committee working in Lancaster may also turn its attention to training other audiences in preservation trades.

"We know there is an interest among homeowners for do-it-yourself workshops and courses that will give them enough information that they will be able to know when a contractor is doing the job correctly or not," Wilson says. The committee had envisioned an approach to preservation trades training that would reach incumbent workers, post-secondary building trades students, homeowners, and secondary school trades students. "We had to start somewhere, and it made sense to us to try to reach those already in the building trades and those about to enter the trades to have the most immediate impact," Wilson added. "We know we have a long way to go, but we think that we have a good comprehensive strategy to follow for the future to create a steady supply of people who can do the hands-on preservation work that is needed here."

*Barry A. Loveland is chief of the Division of Architecture and Preservation at PHMC, where he has worked since 1983. He currently serves as the chair of the preservation trades education committee that is developing this program at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster.*



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO

Repairing historic wood window sashes (above), proper use of tools (right), and working with epoxy are just three of many techniques taught. Overall, the Preservation Trades Technology Program teaches the fundamentals of historic preservation, history of Pennsylvania architecture, and Pennsylvania building technology.

## Preservation Trades Technology Program

For more information about the Preservation Trades Technology program at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, visit [www.stevenscollege.edu/317146.ihtml](http://www.stevenscollege.edu/317146.ihtml) on the Web.

Additional information on the program is available by visiting PHMC's Web site at [www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us) and clicking on "Public Programs."

The program also has a Facebook page, Preservation Trades Technology Program at Thaddeus Stevens College.

For a listing of preservation trades education programs around the country, as well as workshops and other related events and programs, visit the Preservation Trades Network online at [www.iptw.org/education.htm](http://www.iptw.org/education.htm).

Listings of preservation education programs and many other resources are available at:

- The Preservation Directory, [www.preservationdirectory.com/PreservationOrganizationsResources/OrganizationCategories.aspx](http://www.preservationdirectory.com/PreservationOrganizationsResources/OrganizationCategories.aspx).
- PreserveNet, [www.preservenet.cornell.edu/edu/index.html](http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu/edu/index.html).
- National Council for Preservation Education, [www.ncpe.us/chart.html](http://www.ncpe.us/chart.html).

To contact the author for additional information, e-mail [bloveland@state.pa.us](mailto:bloveland@state.pa.us).

*Hands-On History illustrates the importance of history and PHMC's commitment to educating staff, volunteers, students, teachers, and the general public about traditional skills and crafts, often in partnership with other state agencies, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and museums and historical sites.*



THADDEUS STEVENS COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY/PHOTO BY JOHN N. FUGELSO