

Early 20th Century Veneered Doors

The crown jewel of your historical home

Around the turn of the twentieth century a new process of door manufacturing emerged. Traditional door construction involved solid wood frames with traditional mortise and tenon joints with flat or raised panels filling in the spaces.

The new process used three alternating layers of wood or block substrate and a layer of thick veneer on the outside, creating an extremely strong stable structure.

The exterior veneer was, typically, quarter sawn white oak or a veneer meant to be painted. The interior veneer would be matched to the interior millwork/moldings such as gumwood, Douglas fir, or Philippine mahogany or simply paint grade veneer.

Veneered slab door cores were made up using wood with visual defects or scraps from other millwork manufacturing. This may well have been an early attempt at recycling and repurposing. These generic slabs were created the same but could then be cut into radius or elliptical profiles. Openings for glass panels or speakeasy doors could also be added. With this construction the same "generic" slab could create a Craftsman, Spanish Revival or English Tudor door. This type of construction continued into the 1930s.

After 80-100 years the primary problems with these doors are veneer failure on the exterior face. South and west facing homes as well as many years of deferred maintenance. Glue in 1915 was still relatively primitive by today's standards.

Many of these doors have moved on to the landfills in the name of remodeling, upgrading, flipping, or just lack of knowledge of the right thing to do. This might be the most important question you might ask your potential contractor.

Modern day veneer is about the thickness of paper where as 100 years ago door veneer averaged 1/8" or (6-8 times thicker) typical door faces are composed of matching pieces averaging 6 inches in width.

We restore these historical doors by removing damaged veneer, replacing them with custom milled correct veneers. These are finished with a multi step oil based stain and UV resistant varnish locksets and decorative hardware are usually refurbished as well.

We offer a free evaluation and estimate, not all doors are good candidates for this process. We will not accept your door if we do not feel it can be correctly restored and good for another 100 years (with proper maintenance).

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