



Subject: Treatment of Interiors in Industrial Buildings

Applicable Standards: 2. Retention of Historic Character
5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes and Craftsmanship

Issue: Industrial buildings with their expansive interior spaces offer great flexibility and exciting possibilities for rehabilitation within the framework of the existing structure. The interiors of these utilitarian buildings should not be regarded as devoid of character or as an open slate for the creation of an interior that could be found in any modern office or commercial building. The structural systems, open spaces and finishes are important character defining features of this resource type. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings call for the retention and preservation not only of the exterior architectural features, but the distinctive interior spaces, features and finishes. This issue is illustrated in the successful rehabilitation of two industrial buildings that are part of larger complexes.



Tin can factory following rehabilitation.

Application 1 (Compatible Treatment): This 1895, three-story brick warehouse with its stepped gable façade, corrugated metal monitor roof and distinctive ventilators was originally built as a tin can manufacturing plant. The long vacant building was recently rehabilitated for use as research and office space for the world headquarters of a major manufacturing company. The creative design used in the rehabilitation for the interior underscored the building's industrial character by using materials, such as corrugated metal walls, steel beams and exposed wooden columns. Any required partitions were constructed to retain an open view of the character-defining latticed I-beams and metal trusses. The windows in the roof monitor over the center aisle were reopened and restored. The result is an open, contemporary office space that successfully retains the character of this utilitarian building.



Second and third floor truss system before rehabilitation.



Interior following rehabilitation showing exposed latticed I-beams and metal trusses.

Application 2 (Compatible Treatment):

This monumental, three-story mill building with its prominent four-story, mansard roofed stair towers is more than 400 feet in length. Constructed from 1878 to 1881, this building serves as the entry to a former flour/cotton mill complex. Recently, this mill building was rehabilitated as part of a mixed-use residential and commercial complex. While the exterior of this imposing building is highly ornamented, the interior was historically utilitarian manufacturing space characterized by exposed brick walls, wooden-chamfered posts, beams and planking, void of any decorative detail. The rehabilitation retained these character-defining features while accommodating the necessary subdivision of the large expanses of space for the new use. The large number of columns were retained by leaving some free standing in hallways and public spaces, while many remain visible engaged as part of partitions. The exposed beams, original flooring and exposed brick also preserves the industrial character of the mill's interior in the new use.



1878-1881 Textile Mill



Exposed structure of the mill building prior to rehabilitation.



Interior after rehabilitation retains the exposed structure and finishes characteristic of the mill building with subdivision of the space for the new use.