

## Painting Hackettstown's Historic Homes

Hackettstown's historic district is graced by many grand old Victorian homes. Have you ever wondered what goes into the restoration of one of these fabulous Painted Ladies? Steve Dimiceli,



proprietor of Dimiceli Painting was on hand at the Hackettstown Historical Society's meeting on February 7, 2007 to talk about his first hand experiences.

There are several distinct stages to painting any house, especially a house with a lot of history, and lots of layers of paint! Choosing the colors is the first, and some will say the hardest step, and most Victorian homes are typically three or more colors; body, trim and accents. After the colors are chosen, it's important to map out the house and identify which colors will go where. "Taking a lot of pictures, of every angle and architectural feature, really helps with this," Dimiceli told the group.

Step three is the removal of the old paint, which helps to remove the dirt, mildew and algae that can grow on a house over time. Scraping is the most common way of doing this, but new chemical peels can strip multiple layers of paint simultaneously and take the exterior surface down to the bare wood. "You should never use a heat gun or a torch on an old house," Dimiceli chuckled, "and I hope I don't have to tell you why!"

Restoration is next, and Dimiceli stressed the importance of repairing bad wood and having a clean and neutralized surface to paint. After the repairs are complete, the house is ready to be primed. The primer stage allows the paint crew an excellent opportunity to find any holes or cracks that may remain, and get them fixed before the finish coat goes on.



The finish coat is put on in stages, with the body or main color first, followed by primary, secondary colors and trim colors. Decreasing the contrast of trim colors creates a subtle effect; increasing them creates a more dramatic look. Attractive architectural features should be accented as well. Punch colors are applied last. These colors bring more attention to the home's natural focal points and should be used sparingly.



When painting the porch, risers are typically done in white or one of the trim colors, and the treads are done in the same color as the porch flooring. Finally, the finishing touches; cleaning the windows, hanging shutters and returning the hardware, like house numbers, mailboxes, planters, brackets and more. "There's a lot that goes into this, and a lot going on at once," Dimiceli quipped. "It's like being a director in a movie."

Steve Dimiceli has been painting houses in Hackettstown and the surrounding areas since 1995. He has been featured in NJ Monthly Magazine and received Painting Contractor Magazine's Honorable Mention award in June 2003.