

As 'Paneless' as Possible. Window Restoration in the Turnblad Mansion

Curt Pederson, ASI's Senior Curator of Historic Properties, explores what it takes to keep the Turnblad Mansion's windows in tip-top shape in a special new video series.

When the Turnblad family built their mansion in the early 1900s, they spared no expense to make sure their castle was of the highest caliber in craftsmanship and design. This included ensuring that the building's 100+ windows were of the best quality. Crystal clear quarter-inch thick glass panes — many of them curved in impressive form — illuminate nearly every room. Each window was built with old-growth white pine that was then coated to a gleam in natural shellac imported from India. Built directly into each window are unique



Curt Pederson



hand-operated steel and copper locking mechanisms called a mortise barrel bolts. More than 100 years later, the Turnblad's design choices continue to add to the visitor experience — especially for those visitors curious about the building's architecture. They also require ASI to employ a complex web of specialized preservation activities to maintain this historic asset. If a window begins to show some wear after more than a century of Minnesota weather, any work needed to restore the window to its original glory requires the expertise of highly skilled and specialized conservators.

In 2019, as part of a long-range plan to restore and preserve the Turnblad Mansion and Carriage House in their entirety, ASI launched a project to restore the Mansion's many windows. To do so, ASI contracted with Fresh Air Finishers, a Twin Cities-based restoration company whose expertise and experience were a perfect fit.

Their work embodies ASI's commitment to preserve the historic Turnblad Mansion in its original state and has already yielded impressive results, with two of the Mansion's more heavily damaged windows now gleaming as if new. Fresh Air Finishers restored weather-damaged wood through a specialized technique that keeps the original wood material intact instead of replacing it with new wood. They removed the

historic panes of glass, re-glazed them, and returned them to their original frames. The original mortise barrel bolts, long frozen by corrosion, have been cleaned, restored, and now work as if installed yesterday.

This window project is the focus of the first episode of a new short video series called Mansion Musings. For each video, Curt Pederson, ASI's Curator of Historic Properties, will be joined by a host of historic preservation specialists to explore (and boil down!) a quirky, complex or little known activity that takes place as part of ASI's long-range campus restoration plan. For the first episode, Curt was joined by David and Jamie from Fresh Air Finishers.

For 90 years, ASI and the community have worked to preserve the Turnblad Mansion for the future. With your support, this historic building — and all it represents — will remain a gathering place for all people for another 100 years.

Watch the first episode of Mansion Musings, As 'Paneless' as Possible, today at [ASImn.org/mansionmusings](https://www.asimn.org/mansionmusings).

If you are interested in contributing to the preservation of the Turnblad Mansion, please contact Christiana Stolpestad at christys@asimn.org, or Eric Wilson at ericw@asimn.org. Or, as staff are working remotely, please call ASI's offices at (612) 871-4907 to be connected by phone.