



## Inspection Techniques: Historic Fire Protection Features

No. FP-2009-25 June 23, 2009

**Learning Objective:** The student shall be able to identify fire shutters used as opening protectives.

Before the advent of modern construction techniques and fire protection systems, building owners explored a variety of ways to protect their property. One of those means is illustrated today: manually operated fire shutters that covered windows to minimize the likelihood of heat from an exposure fire getting into the building through the windows.

While not a common means of exposure protection in today's building techniques, fire shutters still are recognized in the codes and standards as "opening protectives."

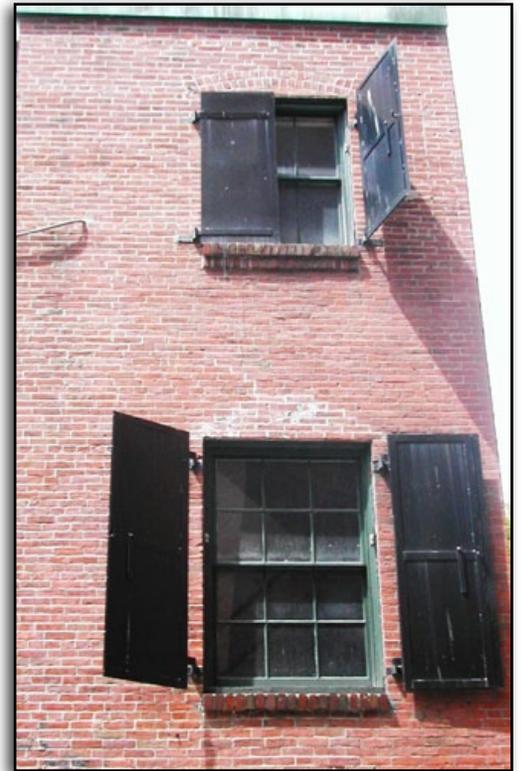
Fire shutters generally occur in three types: swinging door, horizontally or vertically sliding door, and rolling steel door.

Shutters may be installed on the inside or outside of an opening or between jambs but preferably are located on the inside or between jambs for ease of maintenance and protection from adverse weather conditions. Where rolling steel horizontally or vertically sliding fire shutters are installed on the exterior of a building, they should be protected against the weather to ensure operation.

Manually operated window shutters like these should not be used since improved automatic releasing technology exists. The excessive time needed to close or activate them at the time of a fire, and the fact that the building could be vacant or uninhabited when they are needed make them marginally valuable. In some cases, the shutters remain only as quaint reminders of the past or for historic architectural treatment.

Fire shutters are valuable only if they properly maintained so that they close or are closed at the time of fire. The property owner or tenant has an important responsibility to conduct periodic inspection of doors, shutters, and fire windows, and make immediate repairs and correction of any defects that could interfere with the shutters' operation. Fire inspectors should require that shutters be tested and maintained like any other opening protective unless it can be shown they no longer are required.

For additional information, refer to NFPA<sup>®</sup> 80, *Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives* or NFPA<sup>®</sup> 80A, *Recommended Practice for Protection of Buildings from Exterior Fire Exposures*.



The fire shutters on this historic building are a means to keep heat from exposure fires from entering the building.

