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# **Tracking The Origins Of The Sash Window To Its English Roots**

The origins of the sash window are generally thought to be in England, since there the earliest examples were seen in elegant houses. Windows, designed to let in light while shutting out the elements, were formerly fixed panels or casement windows, which were hinged at the sides, pushed outward to open and pulled in and latched to close.

A sash refers to a panel of glass (or today it could be plastic) that is set as one or more panes of material into a frame which slides up and down, or side to side, to open a room to the outside or shield its interior from the weather.

Robert Hooke, a brilliant man born in England in the 1600s, was both a practical man skilled in clock making and surveying, a skilled architect, a biologist, and a physicist. He studied gravity, the properties of glass, and invented a balance spring that led to the development of the watch. It is easy to see how these studies contributed to his window, moving up and down with a weight to offset the pull of gravity, with muntins (strips of wood holding individual panes of glass in a frame) to relieve stress on the amount of glass needed for large panels, and attractive enough to grace a stately home.

Over time, sash windows made of wood will loosen in their frames, as continual opening and shutting wears the jambs and tracks, and the wood itself expands and contracts with the changing seasonal temperatures and shows the effects of weather. Older windows may rattle in the wind and let air leak in or out around the joints. They also may refuse to open as paint builds up in the seams, or refuse to stay pushed up when the sash cords get brittle and break with age.

New houses have this style of window as well, although the materials may be more modern. Either soft or hard wood is still seen in many houses, since it gives a traditional look and is a good insulator. Modern commercial buildings and cement block houses may have more informal vinyl or metal windows, often using aluminum which does not rot or corrode. Another durable material is fiberglass, which has the advantage of expanding and contracting the same as the glass panes. It is stronger than vinyl or aluminum, neither rots or corrodes, may be painted, and has a higher insulation rating than metal or plastic.

Wooden windows may be repaired; the work is time consuming and requires some expertise and certain tools to take the sashes from the frame and examine and replace such things as stops, cords, corroded pulleys, and missing weights. Many homeowners repair their own windows, while others resort to propping them open with sticks and stuffing the cracks with folded paper to stop rattles. Full replacement is an option, as well.

The origins of the sash window in England may account for its popularity in other areas which were once English colonies.

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