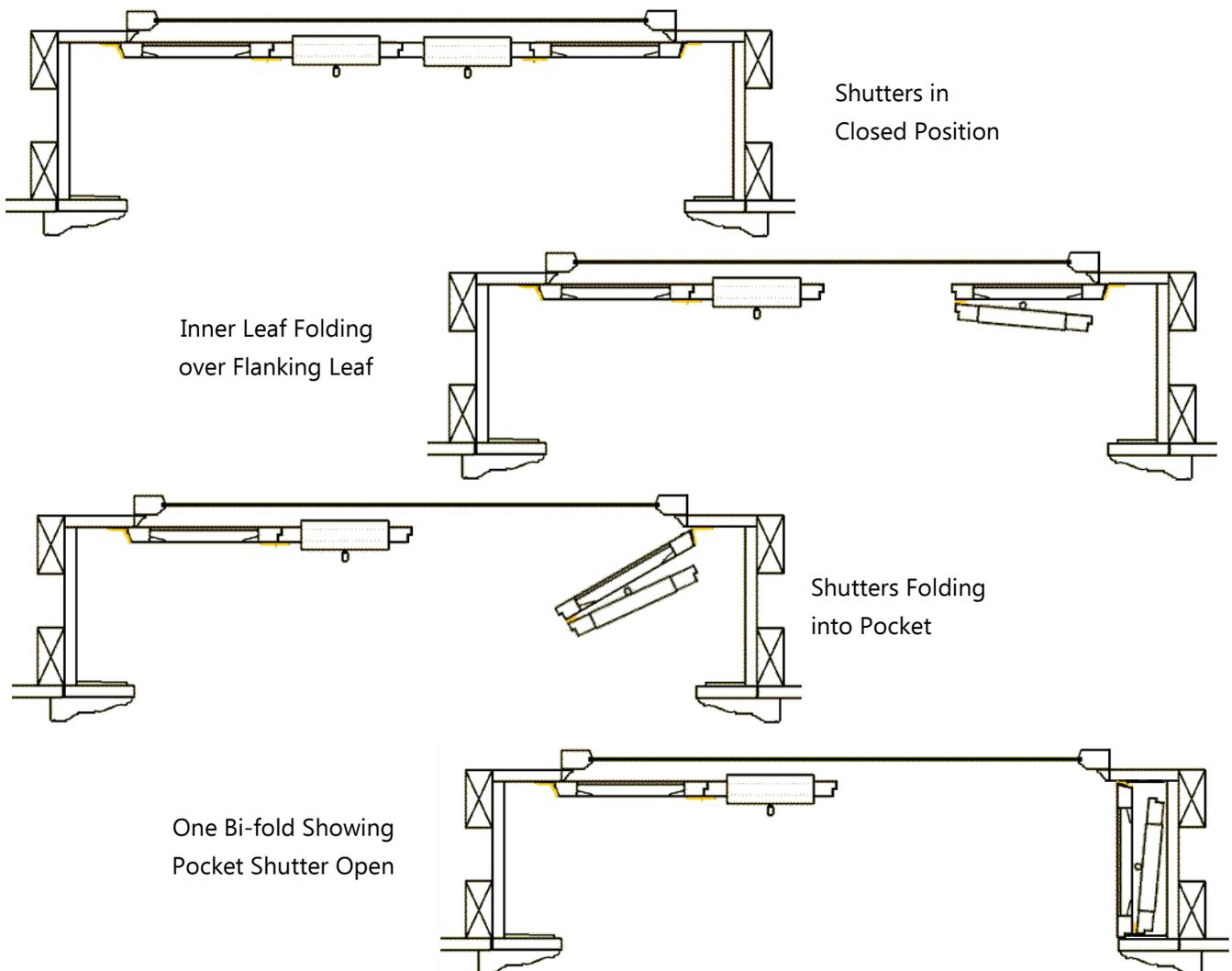


# Pocket (or Embrasured) Shutters

## What Are Brownstone Pocket Shutters?

Pocket shutters, formally known as embrasured shutters, are common to Brownstone townhouses. This unique architectural feature from the mid-1800s is seen in the Brownstones of Brooklyn, Back Bay, Boston, Baltimore and other east coast cities of that period. Many of these Brownstone Townhouses came originally with shutters that folded neatly into their own pocket built into the window jamb. The craftsmen of the day took great care to build out the window jambs to receive the shutters so as to show off the ornate casework and moldings. The notion was that a window with disappearing shutters would not need heavy draperies covering the millwork and window casing. Over the years this unique shutter design has assumed the name of Brownstone Pocket Shutters.

Through the years the shutters in these homes have often been discarded, leaving the windows bare and in need of replacements. In replacing the shutters to fit within the existing pockets, care must be taken in order to achieve a perfect fit not only across the window but also within the pockets. The shutters must function perfectly within these two constraints.



## Types of Window Jambs

There are three primary jamb designs with pocket shutters.

**1) Square Jamb**—First, and most common, is the square jamb with embrasures. Four shutter leaves are across the window with each pair bi-folding to a side and into the pockets. The flanking leaves close the pocket and the inner leaves fold to the interior and are hidden when the shutters are open.

**2) Splayed Jamb**—Additionally, one will find the splayed jamb embrasures in which the jambs (and pockets) angle outwards. This allows a wider shutter to fit within the thickness of the wall. Like the square jamb, there are four panels across the window, each pair bi-folding into the respective pockets on the sides.

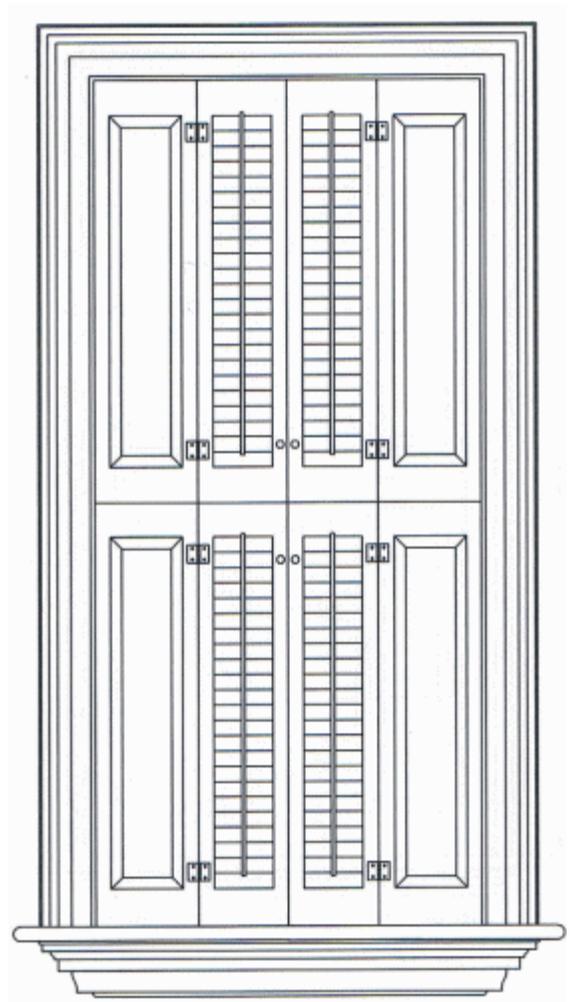
**3) Twin Window**—Finally there is the twin window, which is to say two windows that are mounted side by side. In this case, the shutters are often installed to each outside jamb generally with the use of three shutter panels hinging across each window and tri-folding into their respective pockets.

## Shutter Design

Brownstone shutters are comprised of solid raised panels and operable louvered panels generally installed in double hung fashion, meaning a set of four shutter panels hinged at the top and four panels hinged at the bottom. Double hung shutters allow the top shutters to hinge open separately from the bottom shutters. There are different designs, but this is most common.

**Intent of the Tradesman.** The intent of pocket shutters is, of course, to cover the window for privacy and protect from the damaging rays of the sun while adding additional millwork to the interior of the house. One benefit is that shutters offer a measure of insulation from the cold in the winter. When the shutters are open, i.e., folded into the pockets, the flank shutter panel (which is the raised panel) appears to be the interior jamb of the window. Typically, when the shutter is closed across the window, the back of the pocket may reveal an identical raised panel.

**Popularity of Pocket Shutters.** This clever carpentry was very popular in masonry buildings from the early 1850s through the early 1900s, though it is seen much earlier in Virginia and New England and earlier still in Europe. Monticello, the beloved home of Thomas Jefferson, has pocket shutters installed throughout the main level of the house.

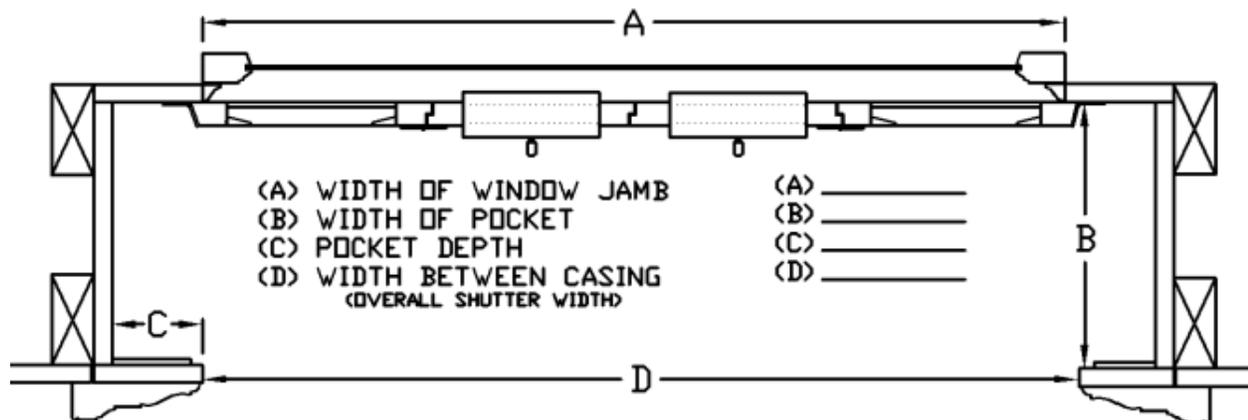


## Installing Pocket Shutters

If you have existing pockets, half of the work is done. The overall width of the shutters must match the width of the pockets on the front of the jamb (see D on diagram below). This is the near side of the pocket directly behind the window casing. From this dimension, you must deduct the diameter of the barrel of the hinge on each side and allow perhaps 1/8" additional clearance. The flank panel (solid raised panel) must be as wide as the pocket is deep (B). Again, deduct the diameter of the barrel of the hinge and allow an additional 1/8" for clearance. The two inner panels must total the remainder of the width of the window. The flank panels must be rabbeted in mirror image to one another with the long side of the rabbet fitting on the near side of the pocket. (See cross section diagram above.) A stop should be added to the inside of the pocket to allow the shutters to close into the pocket exactly perpendicular to the window and meeting the inside edge of the window casing.

The flank panels are hinged to the front (not inside) of the window jamb. This is actually the back of the pocket. The hinges are installed open face, barrel back. One leaf is attached to the outside beveled edge of the shutter, the other leaf is secured to the face of the jamb (the back of the pocket) The hinge should be mounted to the shutter first. The four shutters then should be centered in the window to assess the fit. The outside edge of the flank shutter should align perpendicularly with the front edge of the pocket. (Refer to cross section diagram for details.) The inner panel folds across on top of the flank panels. This means that the hinges must be surface mounted on the shutter stiles.

Generally, each of the inner panels will measure at least 1 1/2" narrower than its adjoining flank panel. These dimensions are dictated by the overall width of the window relative to the width of the pocket.



Craftsmen in the age of the Brownstone townhouses would know this design well, however those of the Twenty First century may be quite unfamiliar with the art. We can manufacture replacement shutters that very nearly replicate the original shutters from 150 years ago. We can stain or paint your shutters to match the color specified by you or your designer.

Call or email with your dimensions and a photo along with the necessary details, we will send a proposal for the shutters as specified. Manufacture typically takes approximately 6 weeks but may vary based upon the species, design or the season of the year.