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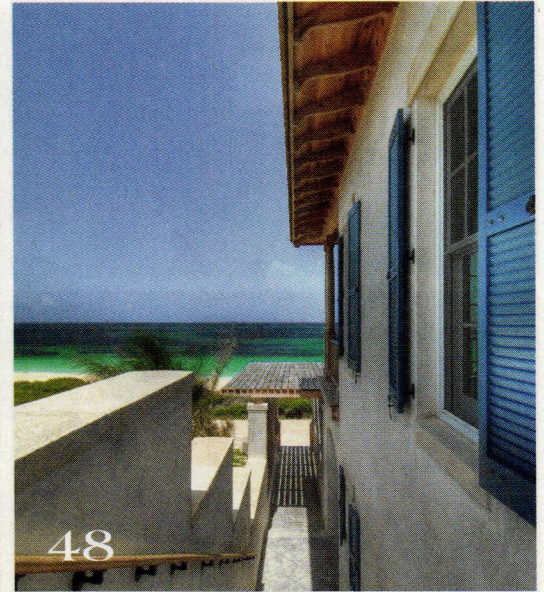
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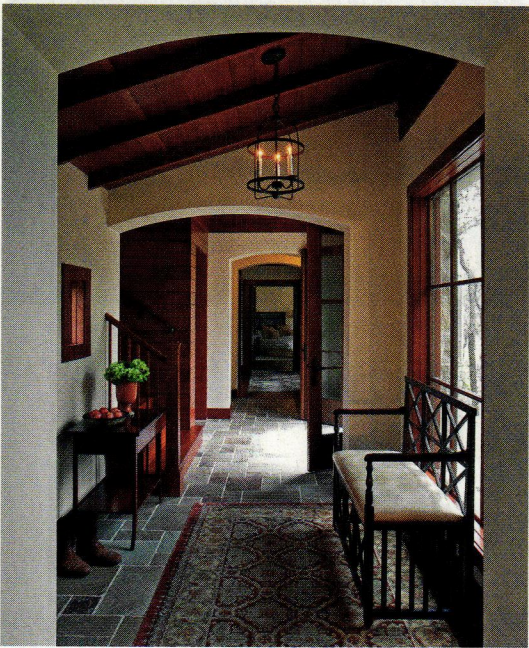
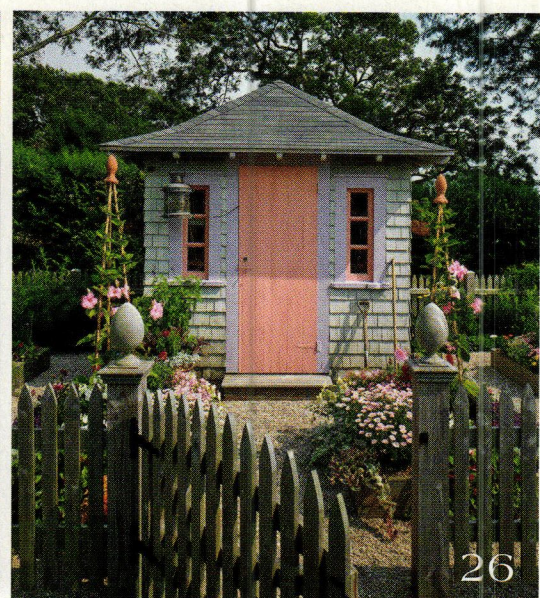
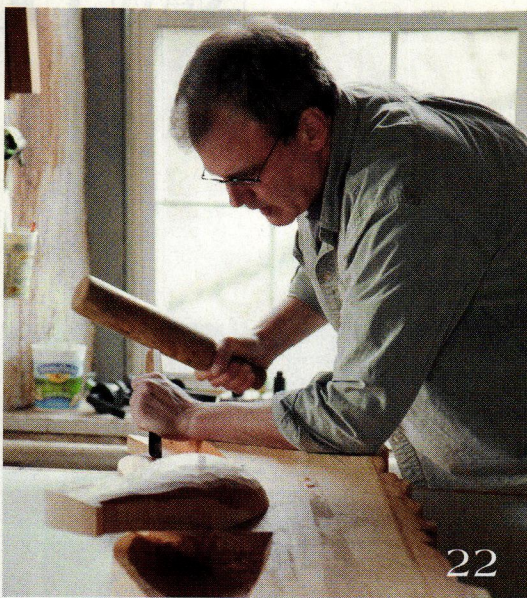
By Janice Randall Roblf

A couple's appreciation of old houses but love of modern amenities brought them to architect Michael Imber, who designed a traditional home with contemporary conveniences.

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The garden gate.

Cover photo by Eric Roth.

In a San Antonio home designed by architect Michael Imber, the entryway unfolds into a gallery accented by French doors and a series of arches.

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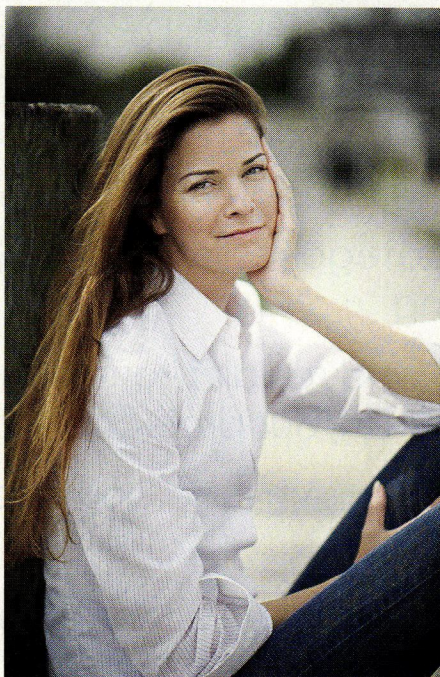
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Leaner and Greener

I don't think I know anyone who hasn't been affected by the state of our economy in the past couple of years. With the term "downsizing" becoming the norm rather than the exception, we are all getting more creative—and frugal—when it comes to building our homes. And as Russell Versaci points out in his article "Building Lean" (page 10), one of the simplest ways to reduce building costs is by building smaller homes, which is not only a more economical but also a greener way to build. By cutting down the square footage, your material costs go down, and your maintenance costs—such as heating and cooling bills.

I had the pleasure of meeting a retired couple recently who has taken the concept of downsizing to a whole new level. They had owned a 7,000-square-foot grand Victorian bed-and-breakfast in Chatham, Massachusetts, for years, and upon retiring hired a local builder to construct a 900-square-foot half Cape. The charming little house has six-over-six windows, two dormers, and a roof deck off the master bedroom. The layout is simple: A front hall leads to a cozy living room with Federal trim detailing and a wood-burning fireplace. The kitchen and eating area open onto a small terrace for alfresco dining. There is a home office with built-in shelves and desk. Upstairs are two bedrooms; the master has a modest full bath, built-in shelves, and a built-in bed—just the right size for two. I was impressed at how the couple worked with the builder to create such a character-filled house with so much efficiency.

Architect Peter Zimmerman also takes downsizing to the limit in the design of a Pennsylvania Dutch fieldstone house in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. The home was constructed on an exist-



ing footprint that could not be altered. Zimmerman used every inch of space, creating a functional and efficient home. An upstairs hall's knee walls receive rows of built-in shelves to create a library. The great room offers a sitting and dining area to optimize space. And the home has both open-air porches and a glassed-in porch, which can be converted into a screened porch depending on the season. All this smart design is wrapped in a traditional package of salvaged stone and period-inspired details.

Nancy E. Berry
Editor

P.S. *New Old House* is no longer available by subscription. We will publish another issue this fall, so please continue to look for the magazine at your local newsstand or order copies at oldhousebookstore.com.

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 PRODUCTION ARTIST Mark Sorenson
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 EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES Home Buyer Publications
 4125 Lafayette Center Dr.
 Suite 100
 Chantilly, VA 20151
 TEL (703) 222-9411
 (800) 826-3893
 FAX (703) 222-3209

HBP HOME BUYER PUBLICATIONS

GROUP PUBLISHER Laurie Vedeler Sloan
 DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS Patricia S. Manning
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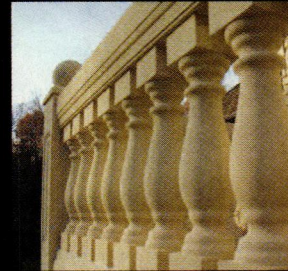
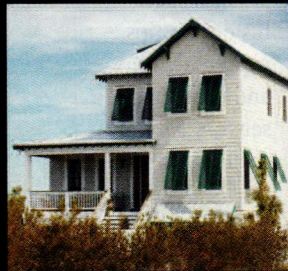
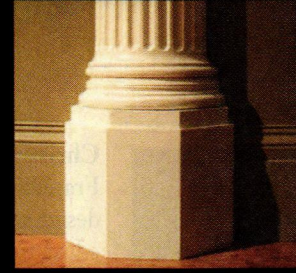
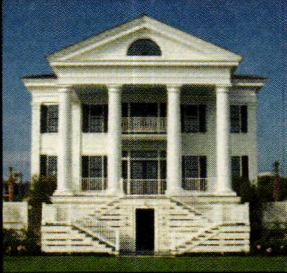
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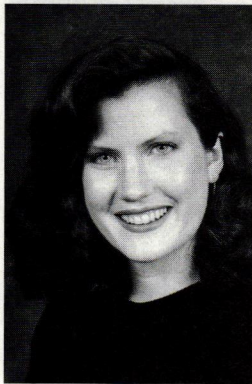
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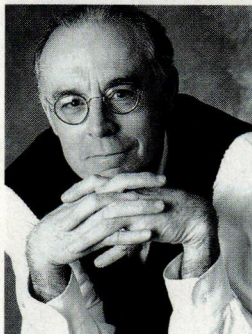
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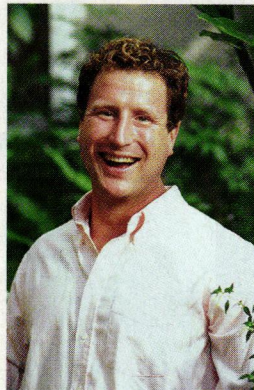
Christine G.H. Franck is a designer and educator with a practice in New York City. She is the former director of the academic programs of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical

America (ICA&CA). She sits on the board of directors of the ICA&CA and the management committee of INTBAU and holds a master of architecture from the University of Notre Dame. She was honored by the Prince of Wales with the first Public Service Award of the Prince's Foundation for her outstanding contribution to the study of architecture and design.



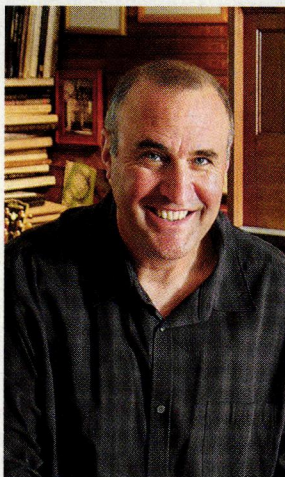
Editor-at-Large **Russell Versaci** is a residential architect who has spent two decades designing traditional houses. He attended the Harvard University

Graduate School of Design in 1973 and received his graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Fine Arts in 1979. He has designed traditional country houses, cottages, and farmhouses, as well as restorations and significant additions to period homes. Versaci is also the author of *Creating a New Old House* and *Roots of Home* (Taunton Press).



Michael Weishan is host emeritus of PBS's "The Victory Garden" and has shared his design tips, expert advice, and trademark sense of humor with gardeners of all levels. In addition to head-

ing his own design firm, Michael Weishan & Associates, which specializes in historically based landscapes, he has written for numerous national magazines and periodicals and authored three books: *The New Traditional Garden*, *From a Victorian Garden*, and *The Victory Garden Gardening Guide*. Weishan lives west of Boston in an 1852 farmhouse surrounded by three acres of gardens.



For more than 30 years, **Eric Roth** has been capturing life through the lens, which has guided him on local, national, and international journeys. He has shot for such publications as *Traditional*

Home, *Metropolitan Home*, *Elle Decor*, and *Coastal Living*. He lives in Topsfield, Massachusetts, and has two lovely daughters.

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Home Buyer Publications

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Chantilly, VA 20151

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Building Lean

Six ways to build character on a budget. BY RUSSELL VERSACI PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH

The recession has ushered in frugal times. We have changed from impulse spending and conspicuous excess to careful consideration and prudent savings in everything we do. That includes building a house.

Not long ago, home building was an exuberant display of confidence and luxury, but lately, harsh realities born of necessity have humbled the process. Now lean is the new luxury.

To build lean means adapting our assumptions of what we want and need to homes that are smaller, smarter, and simpler. While the basics of creating a new old house remain the same, they are tailored to a new ethos. Downsizing means rethinking both the physical and emotional dimensions of building a home: what is necessary, and what can we do without.

Since the recession, we are seeing new types of clients in our architecture practice. While enthusiastic about building a new old house, they no longer come to us with a wish list that includes 7,000 square feet, a commercial range, and a soaking tub. Nearly every conversation boils down to this: Where can we save money? This new mantra of pragmatism trumps everything else.

Our clients are changing, and we are, too. From smaller footprints to eliminating rooms to cost-benefit product selections, we are rethinking the ways in which we approach design decisions.

Without sacrificing the essence of a new old house, we have determined six guiding principles for building character on a budget:

- Think smaller: space costs money
- Nix the trophy rooms
- Scrap the quirky roofs, curves, and corners
- Design like a yacht: every inch counts
- Specify choices as good, better, best
- Mind the clock: fees add cost



Rick Roy Construction built this 900-square-foot house on Cape Cod using the basic principles of building lean.

Think smaller. The home-building industry uses “dollars per square foot” to gauge building costs, but that number can be deceiving. Does square footage include the total building area, net usable floor space, heated and cooled interiors, or some cost-factoring formula? While total cost-per-square-foot may be a dicey calculation, one thing is certain: Fewer square feet means a less expensive the house. Thus, the simplest way to reduce cost is to reduce square footage.

I have been surprised by how quickly our clients have come to understand that space costs money and that they don’t want or need as much as they once thought. Most are sick of oversized McMansion houses and the budget required to build and maintain them. Today the most frequently requested house size is 2,500 square feet. Architects can design a perfectly comfortable, functional home within such limits.

Nix the trophy rooms. Get rid of rooms that are purely for show or rarely get used, such as the grand foyer, home theater,

and wine cellar. These are relics from a bygone era, like the homework room that never saw homework or the sitting room that no one ever sat in. These one-time must-haves are now do-withouts in a climate of lean living.

People tend to live in their kitchens, family rooms, bedrooms, and bathrooms. By concentrating your resources on a few primary rooms, you add quality rather than quantity. Ditch the extraneous spaces, and you can cut the house size in half.

Scrap the quirky roofs, curves, and corners. Complexity adds cost to construction, and simple design is less expensive to build. A house embellished merely to add interest or curb appeal is a house with a major design flaw, one that substitutes window dressing for design skill. Real traditional styles are simple. They have their own beauty and elegance, and they don’t need to be gussied up with excess.

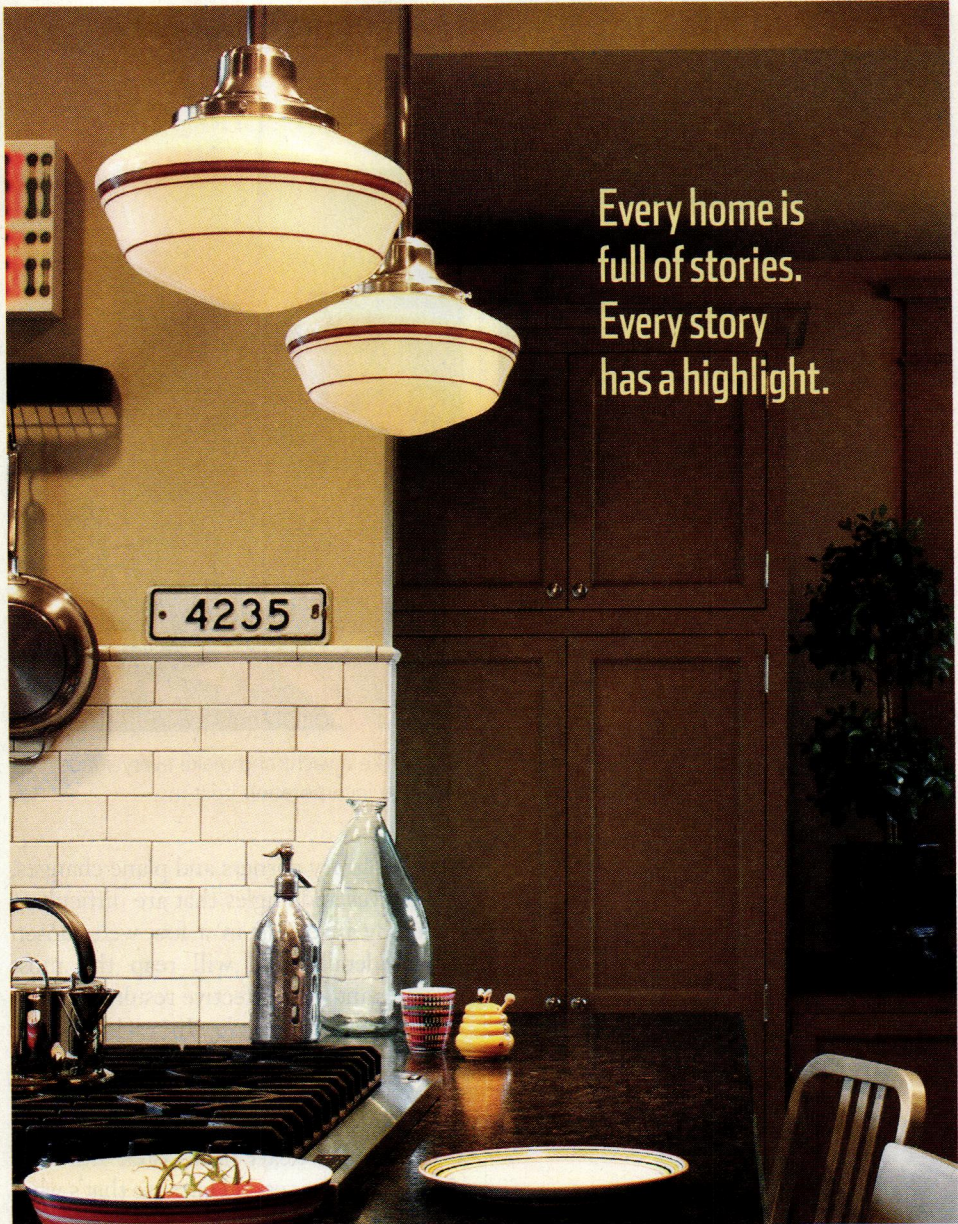
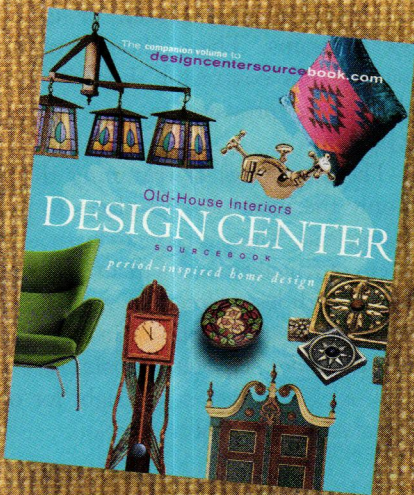
Here are some basic no-nos that will jack up the cost of home building: multiple roofs where one will do, bump-outs and

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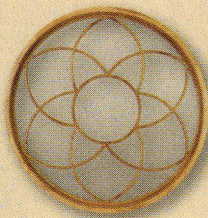
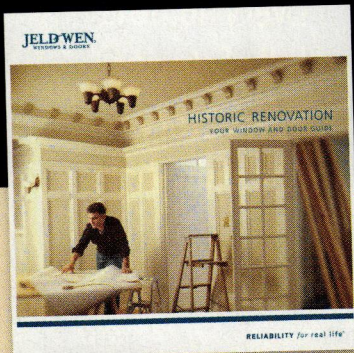
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ARCHITECTS' PRINCIPLES



Design like a yacht and make every space count by incorporating built-ins.

bays, arbitrary corners and plane changes, and curves and angles that are difficult to build. By investing in a few well-chosen design details, you will reap the most pleasing and cost-effective results.

Design like a yacht. In yacht design, there are two guiding principles: beauty of line and maximum efficiency. Beauty of line comes first because that's what makes a yachtsman's heart beat faster. But efficiency is a close second because that's what makes a boat go fast and run smoothly. In close quarters, every inch of space counts. When downsizing a home, the same principle of maximum utility must be applied to design. How can a limited amount of space be put to the best use?

One way is to make rooms and spaces multifunctional. A living room outfitted with bookshelves becomes a library, making two underused rooms into one viable space. A blank hallway can be filled with shallow cabinets to store linens, china, games, or even a sound system. You can carve built-in drawers into unused areas under the roof eaves. By making an effort to compound a home's usable spaces, you can stretch livability in imaginative ways.

Good, better, best. Not every room in a house needs to get first-class treatment. Certain rooms make up the heart of the house, while others are supporting char-

acters, and some are purely utilitarian. Ranking the importance of rooms is a vital first step in lean design. With a well-ordered list, you can decide where to invest in quality and where to save pennies.

In the 1950s, Albert Sack used a ranking system of "good, better, best" for grading antiques, and it can be useful in home building as well. The idea is to apply aesthetic design standards to rooms on a sliding scale of construction, craftsmanship, and finish. Invest in "best" quality for places that are most deserving, like a kitchen or master bedroom; use "better" in important second-tier rooms, like a home office or family room; and save the "good" for utility spaces like a laundry room or bathroom.

Mind the clock. Architects have another important role to play in downsizing decisions: their fees. Architectural fees make up a significant percentage of a home's final cost. We designers love to draw and detail because we are convinced that it will make a better-built product. But not everything we throw into a drawing set is worthwhile or cost-effective. How much direction do we really need to give the builder? In our practice, we have abbreviated our drawing sets by determining what we need to draw versus what we want to draw. This often means not drawing things like wood framing details, brickwork patterns, firebox construction, or cabinet work diagrams. These chores are best done through contractor shop drawings and solutions provided by craftsmen on the job.

These six ways of trimming the fat are only the most obvious places to start building lean. There is more to learn as the new era of frugality settles in and we adapt to living with less. Along the way, we will discover living within our means in houses that are smaller, smarter, and simpler—in a new old house that is just right for our physical and emotional needs. **NOH**

Russell Versaci is the author of Creating a New Old House and Roots of Home (Taunton Press). His e-mail address is russell@russellversaci.com.

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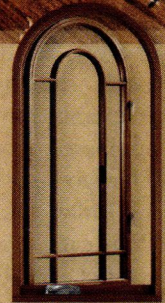
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Façade Facelift

Designer Miles Redd and architect Gil Schafer work together to revive a town house in New York City's Little Italy.

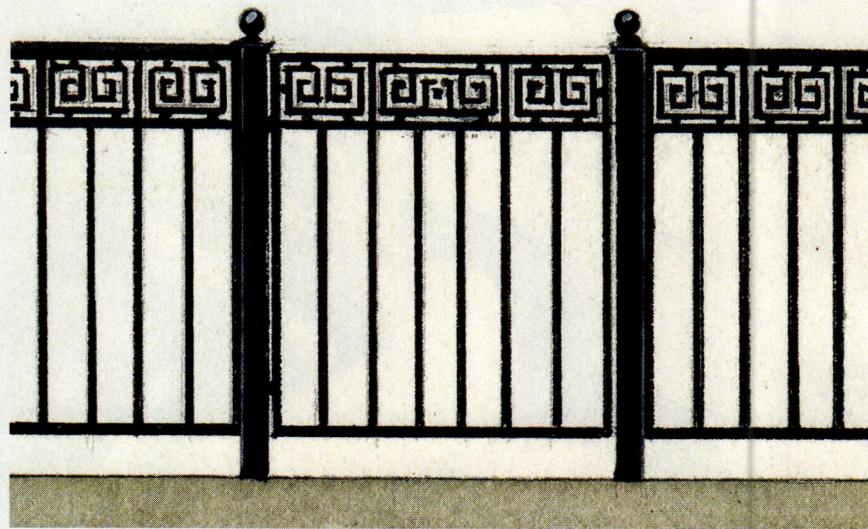
BY JEFF HARDER ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROB LEANNA

Designer Miles Redd heard the criticism: "You can't have both awnings and shutters. Never mind that revered French decorator Madeleine Castaing had the same features on her house—it just shouldn't be done." But rather than heed the advice of naysayers while planning the restoration of the façade of his town house in New York's Little Italy, Redd went to Gil Schafer, III, of G.P. Schafer Architect, PLLC.

"With the shutters and awnings, Gil was one of the few that said, 'Okay, I get it. It's not what I would do, but it's a great photo op,'" Redd says with a laugh. Schafer adds that the tension between his academic approach and Redd's self-described "idiot savant" sensibilities can produce wonderful results. "Sometimes the tension between those two forces can yield something more interesting," Schafer says. "Just to be perfectly correct all the time can be really boring."

Completed over roughly two months in the summer of 2009, the façade restoration on Redd's 1826 home was the final stage of the one-and-a-half-year overhaul of the town house, and the most recent in a series of collaborations by Schafer and Redd. The duo had previously worked together on an apartment in Greenwich Village, a Greek Revival house in Millbrook, and a home in upstate New York.

Though Schafer wasn't involved in work on the interior, Redd says the inside—highlighted by the addition of a mammoth David Adler bathroom purchased from a salvage warehouse in Chicago—set the bar and influenced the meticulous attention paid to the façade. "You can't have these glamorous spaces and not care about the outside," Redd says. "That was my impetus for going the extra



Architect Gil Schafer created the wrought-iron fence design (shown above) for Miles Redd's town house (shown opposite) in New York City's Little Italy.

mile, whereas in New York, most people don't tend to do that quite as much."

The restoration of the town house, which has been Redd's residence for about 10 years, was completed under the auspices of the New York Landmarks Commission. The philosophy toward the restoration was fairly simple, Schafer says. "Preserve the bones' of the town house to keep its character in tune with the rest of the neighborhood, but add a flair unusual for a New York town house with a variety of layers on top."

Redd adds, "The idea was to be true to certain Federal details—the lintels over the windows. And the surround around the door is original. But I wanted to have a little bit of a French feel." Among other sources, Redd consulted a book from the 1930s titled *The Small Outbuildings of Versailles* and explored a litany of French homes. Redd had formed most of the concepts before

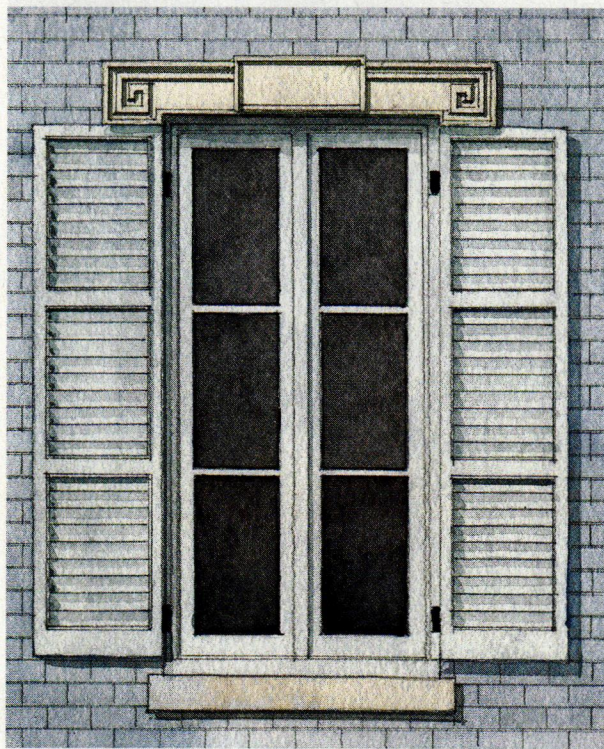
speaking with Schafer. "He had a very clear vision, and it was really just up to us to help execute that," Schafer says.

To add some vibrance to the town house's façade, which was originally natural brick, Redd painstakingly scrutinized the soft blue-gray he intended to use, adapting it to more or less match that of a similar home down the street. But more important, the color scheme was intended to contrast with its stark brick neighbors on either side. "I've never really been a fan of brick, and our brick wasn't particularly pretty," Redd says. "I definitely come from the school of painted finishes and surfaces, but it works and is well integrated into the street."

The windows needed the most work. "They were hideous metal windows with bars across them, probably left over from a 1970s renovation," Redd says. In their stead came French casement windows with Greek key lintels.



MARTYN THOMPSON PHOTO



Schafer designed new lintels that incorporate the Greek key pattern found in the iron fencing. New casement windows were also custom constructed.

“The lintels were more historically appropriate with the Greek key motifs,” Schafer adds. And then, of course, there were the shutters and retractable awnings. “I actually do use the awnings from time to time in the summer. They pull all the way down, and it gives the house such an Italian feel,” Redd says. “And it creates such an interesting light inside, kind of soft...you just feel like you’re in a different place.”

Inspired by a similar piece on the McCormick Blair House, the restoration also involved the addition of a railing and a small black-and-white door that leads into an English basement. One of the most eye-catching elements of the façade is also a relatively subtle one: an enormous E.R. Butler door knob with a rose-shaped backplate attached to the three-paneled French front door. “It’s not nickel. It’s actually silver, so that has a lot of impact,” Schafer says. “But it’s something you see when you get up close.” An Adler-inspired lantern and a wrought-iron hanger loom over the door and the front steps, which,



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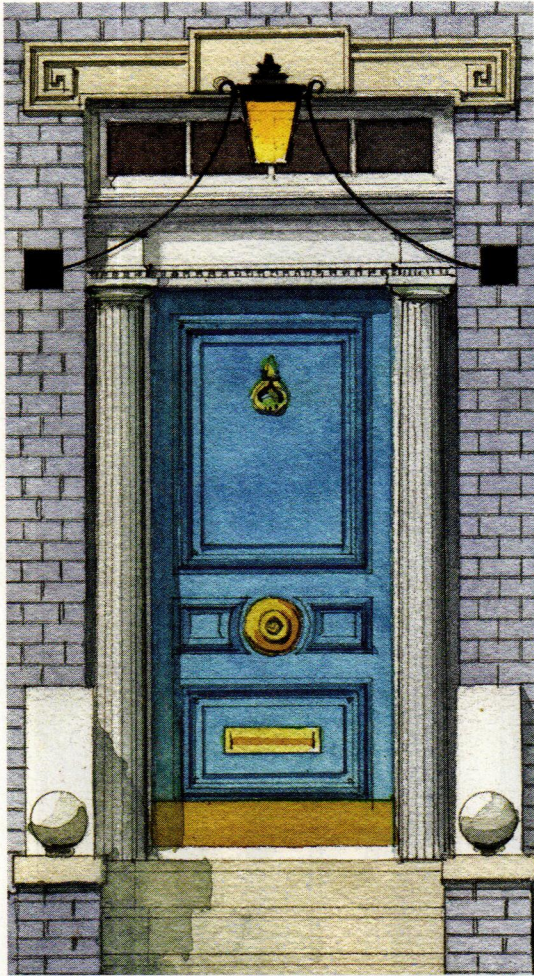
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Schafer added a David Alder-inspired lantern to the front door. Other accessories include a silver door knocker by E. R. Butler.

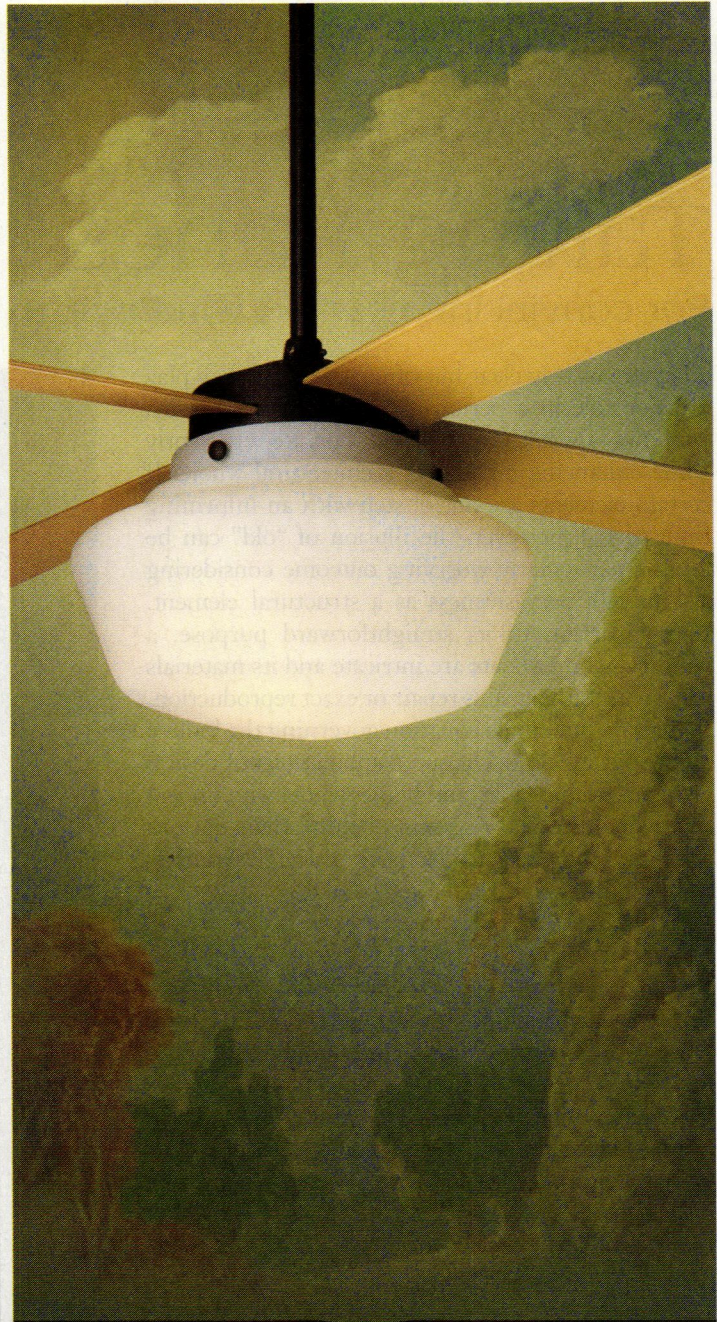
with the exception of the caps and large stone spheres, were left untouched.

Schafer also initiated the design of a black garbage enclosure with Greek key fretwork to keep the unsightly refuse out of view. "He just told me, 'You're going to have a big, beautiful, black box,' and it all worked so perfectly," Redd says.

Instead of stemming from any sort of architectural epoch, Redd says his sensibilities come from emotional responses. "Every day, I wanted to feel as I walked into the house that I was happy to live there," Redd says. "Every time I look at this house and see that the lantern is lit, or it's covered in snow, or the apple tree in the front is starting to flower, all those little parts of living in a house and seeing it through the seasons are inspiring to me." **NOH**

Jeff Harder is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Massachusetts.

For Resources, see page 68.



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Taking Panes

For convincing new-old windows, every detail counts. BY JENNIFER SPERRY

They are mostly clear but often seen, and they play a major role in a period-appropriate look. Ideally, windows appeal visually and operate efficiently while enhancing a cohesive architectural whole. If certain elements are out of step with an informing time period, however, the illusion of “old” can be lost—a particularly worrying outcome considering a window’s pervasiveness as a structural element. In comparison to its straightforward purpose, a window’s components are intricate and its materials vary. Unless the goal is repair or exact reproduction, there is no one single equation governing the look of a new-old window. Unique combinations of design elements are possible, and homeowners who understand the historical reasoning behind their options are best equipped to navigate through window rights and wrongs.

In Proportion

Before tackling the window itself, architects first consider a home’s percentage of glazed area. “Determining how much of a building’s façade is taken up by windows greatly determines the character of a building,” explains Michigan-based architect Marc Rueter. The size of handblown panes and their availability in the United States affected proportions over time. Glazing allotment in a Greek Revival is much smaller than in a Victorian or Craftsman-style house, for example.

Another consideration affecting historical accuracy is the placement of windows in a building. “Modern houses are designed from the inside out based on a client’s lifestyle,” continues Rueter. In comparison, he adds, Greek Revival features were positioned in accordance with the style’s “perfect temple” ideal, whereas early frame construction necessitated windows arranged directly above one another in multiple stories. As a general rule, throughout the nation’s past, construction techniques and architectural authenticity—not lifestyle requirements—determined window placement.

Addressing the proportion of a window itself is next in a designer’s decision-making progression. A window’s height and width are governed by a 2:1 ratio, explains architect Sandy Vitzthum of Sandra Vitzthum Architects in Vermont. She notes that, for example, windows in the South are often taller than 2:1, a telltale characteristic that



Connor Homes designed this Palladian window for a home in New York using classical detailing such as dentil molding and fluted pilasters.

makes a structure look Southern. “It’s important to know the proportions in a particular area,” she explains.

General Guidelines

The extent of a new-old window’s period appropriateness varies depending on a home’s location and its owner’s goals. Customization tactics and historical knowledge vary even among architects and designers, points out Vitzthum: “It’s really important for homeowners to know their options in

Connecticut-based firm Whitten Architects incorporated a transom over these six-over-six sash windows.



BRIAN WANEEN BRINK

terms of customizing a window order so they know the right questions to ask. Even small order adjustments to stock windows can make a big difference when it comes to historical accuracy.”

Many window manufacturers have incorporated a variety of upgrades and options into their new “historic” windows. Marvin, for example, offers single glazing, authentic divided lights, and custom wood sills, as well as wood screens and storm windows. Depending on the level of preservation required, there are also specialty manufacturers and millwork companies that replicate original designs exactly or even piece together clues to re-create size and muntin profiles when originals no longer exist.

Glass type is a vital consideration: Designers desiring true authenticity select handblown sheet glass from restoration glass companies like Bendheim. Depending on the origin and craft method, this antique glass is also known as crown or cylinder glass and is the only accurate representation of glass produced during the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Shaped by hand, it is characterized by waviness and small imperfections—homeowners worried about visibility should inquire about light distortion levels.

Maryland-based architect Anne Decker, in reviewing her do’s and don’ts of new “historic” windows, summarizes: “It’s key to do an all-wood window with wood jambs.” If a window will ultimately be painted, Decker recommends fir or pine. Mahogany, typically stained, is especially appropriate for larger windows and doors. “Pine can shrink and warp with extreme weather changes; sometimes muntins can actually separate from a window,” she says. “Mahogany is a much more stable wood for anything oversized.”

Small in stature but important in a window’s overall appearance is hardware. Many manufacturers offer upgraded lines, notes Decker, who recommends oil-rubbed bronze or unlacquered brass for historical authenticity. Hardware for casements should not be overlooked: “We tend to use a push-out handle for in-



Maurer and Shepherd Joyners makes historically accurate windows, such as this seventeenth-century lattice window with diamond panes.

swing and out-swing casements versus a crank. The push-out is very period appropriate,” she says.

Early Construction Techniques

How a window was originally made and what types of materials were available inform correct selection. Hap Shepherd, co-owner of Maurer & Shepherd Joyners, explains that the country’s earliest versions were lead came casement windows, an improvement over oilcloths reinforced by wood shutters. “Back then, colonists used pre-made lead with glass diamonds in sheet form from England. Then they would turn around and make their own frames,” he says. These sheets were later crafted into double-hungs.

Shepherd’s Connecticut-based company specializes in preservation and millwork and is known for crafting historically accurate windows, from eighteenth-century twelve-over-twelves to more ornate Palladian windows. Noting that, in any house, windows may have been replaced one or more times throughout

the years, Shepherd uses his knowledge of early American construction techniques to investigate not only the original windows’ sizes but also their muntin profiles.

His firm places reclaimed cylinder glass into true divided lights—individual panes of glass between muntin bars—mirroring historic construction. Another detail his firm prioritizes is the wood’s finished texture. “There was no sandpaper in the eighteenth century,” he points out. “All of our surfaces are made by machine and then hand-planed. When the wood is painted, you can see a slight ripple.”

Efficiency and Maintenance

Jeff Hoffman, an architectural consultant with Marvin, is well versed in window options that blend older aesthetics with a dose of high tech. Individual panes of glass between muntin bars can be mimicked using simulated divided light (SDL), whereby grid work is applied to both sides of a sill. Spacer bars between the two glass layers complete the illusion of individual panes even though the window is double-glazed.



ERIC ROTH

Thin muntins in this two-over-two window offer a historical look.

“Historic districts are typically concerned about keeping the same daylight openings, and SDL maintains these openings with the upgrade of insulated glass with the latest low-E technology,” says Hoffman. SDL also works with tri-pane glass; however, this option is rarely approved in historic districts and an uncommon choice for historical applications.

“Another consideration is the lack of weatherstripping in older windows,” Hoffman adds. “Our stripping performs, but is concealed as much as possible.”

Aluminum cladding is increasingly used for window exteriors when maintenance is an issue. Marvin uses a commercial-grade aluminum that “simulates painted wood and also exhibits much cleaner, crisper edges than vinyl, which can’t be machined to high tolerances,” says Hoffman. He references a recent project in St. Paul, Minnesota, with seven stories in a strict historic district. “We used all wood for the first and second stories, but aluminum cladding was allowed on floors three through seven.”

When selecting period-appropriate windows for a new-old house, addition, or renovation, no consideration is too small. Careful planning and research ensure that the sum of a window’s parts communicates the craftsmanship of past eras well into the future. **NOH**

Jennifer Sperry is co-owner of Sperry Communications (sperrycomm.com) and a freelance writer based in New Bedford, Mass.

For Resources, see page 68.



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Transitional Perseverance

Life for woodcarver Eric Bogdahn has taken some turns, resulting in a higher level of personal awareness and professional accomplishment.

BY STEPHEN T. SPEWOCK PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH



Woodcarver Eric Bogdahn creates works of art in wood in his Rhode Island studio.

For most of us, a prospective trip to Nantucket Island—whether for business or pleasure—comes with a certain level of exuberant expectation. No matter the season, the whaling port of old offers visitors the opportunity to step back in time to an authentically preserved maritime community—a community that, despite the fairly recent sprawling development of massive summer homes, continues to offer a glimpse of and refreshing appreciation for the beauty of a past era preserved.

Yet for woodcarver Eric Bogdahn, a first-time visit to Nantucket came disguised as a haphazard whim. Five years of working in the office of registration at the Center of Adult Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had begun to take its toll. “I think I just needed a break to figure out which direction I was headed. A friend’s parents had a room available on the island, so I decided to go down just for the summer and paint houses.”





Bogdahn carves the Nantucket sleigh ride into a mantelpiece.

Change in Class

Unfulfilled with more monotonous labor, Eric decided to enroll in a woodcarving class at one of the local wood-working shops. The class he selected just happened to be taught by Paul McCarthy—the same man whose proficiency at woodcarving in Scituate, Massachusetts, garnered him a feature article in an issue of *Fine Woodworking* in the early 1980s; since that time he has gone on to teach literally thousands of aspiring woodworkers in various disciplines. Early on in the course of his classes, Eric discovered an overwhelming passion for the craft of woodcarving. “Not only did it come naturally to me under Paul’s instruction, but I really enjoyed the creative freedom it offered.”

Additionally, it seemed woodcarving wasn’t the only thing Eric was excited about, as a classmate named Noelle had caught both his eye and his heart. “We started dating, then quickly married,” says Eric.

Family Business

Noelle, who had already established a small clientele before meeting Eric, was well-accomplished at a multitude of woodworking techniques. “Honestly, Noelle had all the finishing skills when we started out,” Eric says with admiration. It was her attention to detail that inspired Eric to dive into the meat and potatoes of most aspiring woodcarvers around the island: milling and carving quarterboards. “They’re those little

signs carrying a property’s name that owners place over the doorway or gable end of their home,” Eric explains. “A very popular item around Nantucket and Cape Cod.”

Each fully carved quarterboard received two coats of oil primer, followed by three coats of enamel paint, then a gold-leaf overlay. Eric estimates that in their busiest year they probably made about 150 quarterboards. “That directly translates into thousands of hand-carved letters,” he says.

Over the next ten years, the couple doggedly pursued their own woodcarving business, with much success. The quality of their shared labors helped secure further commissions for larger projects, such as fireplace mantels



Bogdahn got his start making quarterboards on the island of Nantucket.

or surrounds, and some architectural furniture such as cabinets and built-ins. Additionally, some of their most popular commercial pieces welcomed the thousands of seasonal visitors ambling off island ferries into town, most notably the Ralph Lauren Polo clothing store on Main Street and the Nantucket Nectars snack depot on Straight Wharf. “Talk about great exposure,” says Eric.

Island Fever

Despite the couple’s success, the work schedule—which averaged 12 hours a day, six days a week—kept them from truly enjoying the fruits of their labor. “Living on Nantucket was similar to

living in a small town,” confides Eric. “There’s not much else to do, especially during the winter season.” That’s when they first considered the need for a change of pace.

Noelle, who had a bachelor of fine arts degree from Carnegie Mellon University, was yearning to do something different, so she decided to go back to school to get a masters in elementary education from Lesley University in Boston. Once finished, she taught on the island a full year before they decided to resettle elsewhere.

On the Move

Eric and Noelle chose to relocate

to Providence, Rhode Island, where Noelle was able to secure a teaching position, and where the expectant parents could be closer to Eric’s retired parents in nearby Charlestown. Before leaving, Eric had lined up some large commission projects to help smooth the transition. “I didn’t want to turn my back on those big jobs,” he recalls, “nor did I want to have to commute to and from the island to work on them.”

After completion of those projects and the relocation of his family, Eric decided to set up a small shop in an artist compound in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Past clients and repeat customers continued calling from Nantucket, requiring four to five trips back to the

island over the first year. Although Eric enjoyed the work he missed working with others.

Seeking Solace

Search for a new work environment brought Eric to the door of Rick Cantwell of Fairhaven, Massachusetts. An established woodworker for more than 25 years—complete with an actual degree in furniture making—Rick immediately hit it off with Eric. “Rick’s work is fantastic, and it’s completed with such amazing efficiency despite higher levels of difficulty and detail,” Eric says. “He has made a profound impact on me and my work in a professional sense.”

Now Eric splits his time between his commission work and furniture making. “I’ve been very fortunate to learn from guys like Paul and Rick,” says Eric. “Both have helped me push my work toward a higher level of quality.” Not only that, but Eric now savors more satisfaction from the craft than ever before. “Learning to work more quickly and efficiently, I can produce in one hour what used to take me two days,” he recalls. “Carving small details now comes very naturally, without even thinking about them, and that gives me a great sense of joy and pleasure.”

Fully Settled

Now more secure in their surroundings, Eric and Noelle have purchased a 100-year-old Craftsman-style house in neighboring Rumsford, Rhode Island, with plans to renovate as they go, starting with the home’s mechanicals and then finishing with fine woodworking—the “real fun stuff,” as Eric calls it. Their daughter, Ella, turns seven this year, and everyone’s happy. “We have easier access to more diverse activities, which we can all enjoy doing together,” Eric says.

Commission work continues lapping at his doorstep, as Eric describes some of the projects he’s completed over the past year: hand-carved rosettes with a crab relief, an eighteenth-century reproduction fireplace mantel the owners wanted hand-carved out of chestnut, and an architectural rendering of a furniture-grade cabinet. “I just recently finished a 52”-tall heron with fine feather detail and jeweler-grade glass eyes that free-stands on the client’s carpet via use of an internal wire frame and magnets,” Eric says excitedly. “It came out absolutely perfect!” **NOH**

Stephen T. Spewock is a freelance writer who lives in Massachusetts.

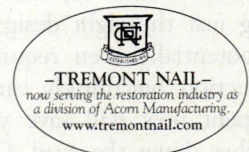
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Stylish Sheds

When choosing outbuildings for your garden, consider the design, adaptability, and placement. BY MICHAEL WEISHAN

A few weeks ago, I was at one of the big home stores, stocking up on some gardening supplies, and happened to notice the gardening sheds for sale. Various boxy prefab structures, by and large constructed of real wood but some made of composite or vinyl, were lined up along the edge of the parking lot like so many bits of flotsam on a beach. Expensive flotsam. When I went over to investigate, I was shocked to discover that the majority of these structures, 8' by 10' or so, were \$1,500 or more. Personally, I wouldn't accept one of these structures on my property for payment, let alone purchase one, and I began to think about why my reaction was so viscerally negative. It wasn't so much that they were ugly (they were—all built in mock country-barn style), but that they were also expensive. It seems to me that if you're going to spend more than a thousand dollars on a structure for your garden, you should at least get something that doesn't look like it was dropped randomly by some Oz-like tornado into the middle of your garden.

So what should you look for when choosing a garden shed? First of all, style. Those of you who've read my column on a regular basis know that I continually advocate making sure every element in your garden is cohesively chosen to conform to the style of your house. If you have a New England Colonial, your shed should share that theme. If your house is a Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired ranch, your shed should be, too. Of course, finding just the right design often isn't easy, potentially even requiring custom construction, but frankly, care and attention spent now will save you a lot of headaches down the road. Customizable designs are readily available from online sources, which then can be handed off to a local carpenter to build. Or if you're



Landscape Architect firm Horiuchi & Solien of Falmouth, Massachusetts, incorporated this shingled garden shed into a fenced vegetable garden (shown left and opposite).

handy by nature, consider purchasing one of the many kits available from numerous suppliers across the country and building your own. These kits come in a far greater variety of styles than you'll find for sale locally and are surprisingly easy to construct. The hardest part is forming and leveling the base; after that, it's simply a giant Erector set. All the parts come pre-cut; assembly requires only a power screwdriver. I built all the structures in my yard from such kits, with a minimal amount of fuss, each in about a day.

When buying a shed, be sure to choose one that's as adaptable as possible. Remember, well-built sheds have long lives and may change function over time.

In my garden, I have two outbuildings. Both structures started life as off-the-shelf kit sheds but were eventually converted to other purposes as my gardening needs and interests changed. As I became involved in raising heirloom chickens, for example, my slope-roofed shed ceased housing tools and, with the addition of some ventilation, became instead home to several dozen hens. The other, which I call the "bee house" because I store my apiary supplies there, was provided with a mini-deck after I realized it would make the perfect place to sit on a spring evening and enjoy the scent of apple blossoms. These alterations were possible only because both were built of quality



ALL PHOTOS THESE PAGES BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



PHOTOS COURTESY OF COUNTRY CARPENTERS

Above and left: Country Carpenters designs garden sheds and outbuildings appropriate for traditional New England properties. Opposite: Historically inspired hardware can enhance the traditional look of your garden shed, as these iron strap hinges and thumb latch by Acorn Manufacturing demonstrate.

materials from a good design. An earlier structure I purchased before I knew better, made of cheap pressed wood, rotted out and had to be demolished rather than reused.

Both of my outbuildings share another element that has greatly increased their usefulness and longevity: ample light. It may sound strange, but good lighting is crucial to the proper utilization of a garden shed. No matter what your intended purpose, if you can't see what's within, you can't use it. And since most structures in the garden are far from an electricity source, ample natural light is key. My bee house possesses a sliding door with a glass window and two medium sidelights that can be opened as needed, flooding the interior with light and making it easy to find whatever I'm looking for. The coop actually has plastic panels built into its roof as a type of skylight that brilliantly illuminates the interior. Intended by the manufacturer as a gardener's shed with potting bench where seedlings were meant to sprout, now heirloom hens con-

Concomitant with purpose goes size: You would be surprised how much room a mower, a few lawn chairs, and a small collection of tools can consume. Add a bit of workspace for the odd garden chore or project, and suddenly you're talking about a considerable amount of space. Decide in advance what you plan to store in your shed, calculate the square footage, and then double it. I'm not sure why, but it's a truism that sheds attract equipment like moths to a flame; the second you build one, it will be full. I've found from long experience that 8' x 6' is the smallest practical storage area for most home gardeners.

Finally, the old real estate adage of "Location, location, location!" really comes into play on the subject of sheds. Storage facilities have to be strategically placed near where their contents will be used; otherwise, their utility is severely compromised. Think about where the maximum amount of gardening takes place on your property, and locate your shed logically in this area—as a focal point at the end of a vista, for instance, or

centered along the side of your vegetable garden space. This prominent location is another reason why your shed needs to look good: It's now become a centerpiece of the garden. This often means additional construction in the form of pathways to provide access, fencing to frame or enclose the space, and planting to settle the structure into the garden, proving yet again that building a shed is not something to be undertaken lightly. But believe me, the first time you're surprised by a spring shower and take refuge in your shed, surrounded by neat rows of implements snuggled safe and dry from the drops pitter-pattering on your new little roof, you'll relax, look out over your tended plot, and breathe deeply of the sweet smell of gardening success. After all, a good shed is like a good friend: It's always there when you need it. **NOH**

Michael Weisban is the author of the New Traditional Garden. For more tips and techniques of traditional gardening follow Michael's Old House, Old Garden blog at michaelweisban.com/gardenblog

For Resources, see page 68.



ERIC ROTH PHOTO

Exterior Elements

Whether off-the-shelf or custom-built, there are a plethora of companies creating traditional outdoor architectural components for the new old house.

PRODUCED BY NANCY E. BERRY

1 Tuscan Style

Jeffrey L. Davis, owner of Chadsworth Columns, collaborated with designer Christine G.H. Franck to design his home on Figure Eight Island in North Carolina. The porch, shown here, features Polystone Tuscan capitals and bases with plain tapered shafts measuring 32" x 19'. For more information, visit columns.com.

2 Pretty Porch

Traditionally inspired, Correct Porch decking offers a low-maintenance solution to wood. It is made from recycled plastic and waste wood fiber, which means no new trees are cut down to manufacture it. For more information, visit correctporch.com.

3 Garden Gate

Walpole Woodworkers worked with landscape designer Mary Leblanc to introduce this spindle-top arbor gate to a traditional coastal home in New England. Made of cedar, the arbor is handcrafted of half-lap construction. For more information, visit walpolewoodworkers.com.

4 Cottage Door

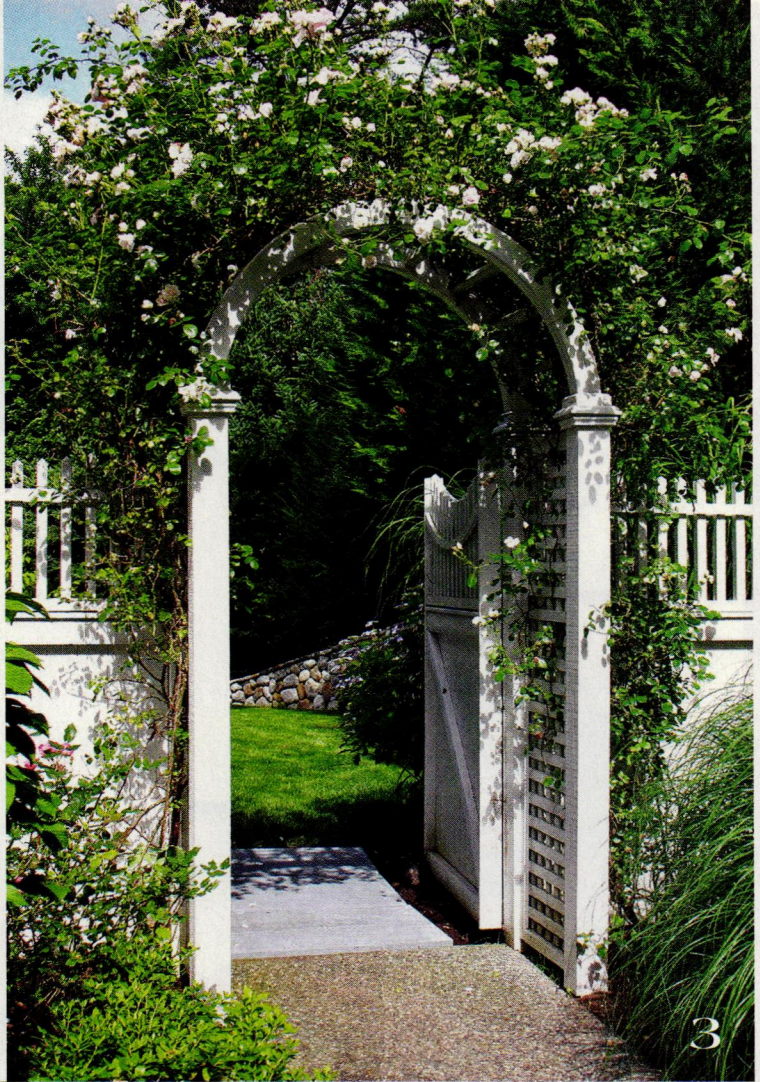
Historic Doors creates custom works of art in wood. Shown here is its six-paned cottage door, built with frame and plank construction. For more information, visit historicdoors.com.

5 Dutch Design

Architectural Components designed this Dutch Colonial clinch nail board-and-batten door with a true divided-light window with insulated glass for a new-old house in Ulster County, New York. For more information, visit architecturalcomponentsinc.com.



ERIK JOHNSON PHOTO; OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE, COURTESY CORRECT DECK, COURTESY ARCHITECTURAL COMPONENTS, INC., COURTESY WALPOLE WOODWORKERS; COURTESY HISTORIC DOORS



Inspired Interpretation

A photograph of a staircase interior. On the left, a tall, ornate grandfather clock stands against a wall of vertical wood paneling. A staircase with dark wood treads and white balusters and a handrail leads up from the center. On the wall to the right of the stairs, a large, rustic, circular clock face is mounted, featuring Roman numerals and the text 'RADIEBOLD'. Below the stairs, a cane chair with a white cushion sits on a dark wood floor. A small framed picture and a candelabra with two lit candles are also visible on the wall.

Shingle-style beach cottages dotting the coast of Southern California inspired Architect Stephen Giannetti in the design of his own home. The interiors are casual and full of comfy furnishings that his wife (interior designer Brooke Giannetti) has gathered over the years.



Based on California's coastal beach bungalows from the 1930s, architect Stephen Giannetti designs his home in an established neighborhood in Santa Monica—and his wife, Brooke, an interior designer, adds the finishing touches.



BY LAUREL KORNHISER
PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH

A sun porch doubles as a dining room in the Santa Monica house.



The best beach houses evolve over time. They often start as simple shingled structures, solid and shuttered for when the waves whip to a froth. As seaside memories are made, as more sand is tracked across the floors, as more dripping swimsuits leave their marks, as more wicker is added and more books are left behind, the beach houses accumulate their character. Textures become densely layered, shells and stones scramble for space on shelves and windowsills, dining tables extend to accommodate friends of friends, and flea market finds and hand-me-downs fill the spaces.

When Los Angeles-based architect Stephen Giannetti and his wife, Brooke, an interior designer, decided that rather than remain in Brentwood, a city district of L.A., they preferred to raise their three children in the more family-friendly coastal community of Santa Monica, they went in search of the perfect site to build their interpretation of a beach house. They found just what they were looking for—a tired, moldy tear-down in an ideal location, warmed and backlit by the western sun, in an established neighborhood that was situated just north of an area with shopping and dining amenities. As they sought inspiration for their new home, they cast their eye not toward the Spanish-style bungalows built in the area in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, but to the Shingle-style cottages closer to the coast and built in the 1910s as retreats for residents of downtown L.A. and Pasadena. The couple took their cues from those earlier models but updated their design to suit twenty-first-century living. “Most of those homes



Clockwise from right: Family dog Fraiser relaxes in the living room. Steve and Brooke's daughter Leila plays the piano in the living room. Steve at his drafting table.



were broken up into tiny rooms," Brooke comments. "We wanted an open flow with one big kitchen and family room in the back of the house."

At the same time that he and Brooke were working on the design for their own home, Steve was conducting research for PCH, a sprawling beach house to be built on three adjacent lots in Malibu. At first, Steve's client wanted him to draw on his Maryland background, and the initial plans reflected that influence. In fact, he so well channeled the East Coast that the owner asked if he could instead design a seaside home based on California-style cottages. "At the time," Steve says, "I did not know what those were. There were not many, so I looked at summer cottages in Crystal Cove, in Laguna, and in Santa Monica." He applied their beach aesthetic to the Malibu design and culled from what he learned to create his own home. "All of the beach houses are done the same way. They are made of wood and have a beach vibe." Steve's design represented a contrast to the new homes being built in the Santa Monica community, homes which he describes as "stucco boxes with tiled roofs, grand entries, a big hallway down the middle, and no detail."

The Giannetti home is all about detail. Borrowing from the past, Steve shunned the clunky 2x10s favored today and (like his

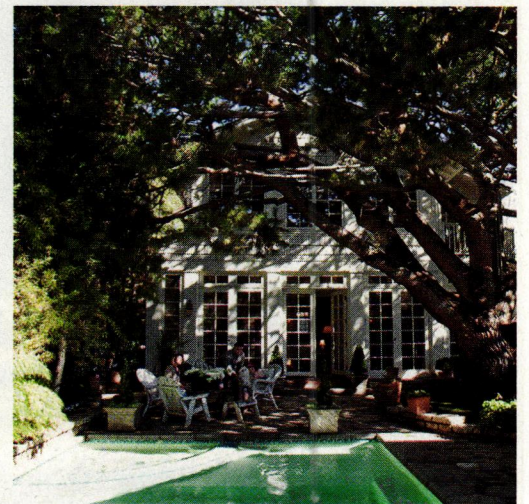
forebears) chose lighter 2x4s for the rafters, sans insulation. The windows likewise contribute to the home's cottage feel. The single-pane casements are divided by $\frac{3}{4}$ " mullions and framed by shutters. He added eaves as well as overhangs to protect the windows and front porch and to add "an Old World feel." He designed interior walls and ceilings as 1x10 v-groove. While these details evoke early southern California cottage style, Steve went even further back in the past for his dimensional scale. The son of a Washington, D.C.-area ornamental plaster artist who did commission work at Monticello, Steve based his home's design on the golden section, a ratio employed in the Renaissance and (some



Left: The kitchen is open and airy, with white cabinetry and wood floors.

Below: Steve and Brooke collaborated on the landscaping. Brooke introduced English cottage garden plants such as roses, thyme, lavender, and sage.

Opposite: Brooke works in her office space, where antiqued brick and bead-board ceiling add a layer of authenticity to the beach house.



house as well. Built seven years ago, the house belies its age. Adding patina are the antique architectural elements: columns standing as sentries to the living room, blue corbels adding a flourish to the stairwell passageway, another set of corbels decorating daughter Leila's room, and a Victorian cutout screen embellishing the pantry door. The light fixtures evoke an earlier era as well. There is not a recessed light to be found; instead, wall

argue) even as far back as classical Greece and adopted by cottage builders in the 1920s. "The three-to-five ratio is particularly noticeable from the front view," Steve says. "The proportions give it a harmonious balance."

Inside and out, the home mixes traditional structural elements with a bit of the unexpected. The landscape offers one example. Frequent professional collaborators, Steve and Brooke worked on the landscape's design together, Steve creating its structure and Brooke introducing what she calls "a little bit of chaos" in the form of favored English cottage garden plants like roses, lavender, thyme, cabbages, and sage. Paired urns flanking the home's entrance and two stacked cement pillars standing guard at a pathway add order to the chaos.

This impulse toward balanced elements—formal and casual, old and new, masculine and feminine—is evident inside the

sconces, table lamps, and ceiling lights, as well as old school-house fixtures in the kitchen, illuminate spaces with character and warmth. As is found in the most authentic beach houses, the furnishings include antiques and flea-market treasures, such as the Swedish grandfather clock standing by the stairwell, the old French church tower clock occupying the stair wall, Brooke's antique dressing table in the master bedroom, and a capital from a Corinthian column that serves as the dining table base. New furnishings, many designed by Steve—the living room sofa, dining room chairs, and family room sectional, for instance—have their place as well. While Steve has his own architectural firm, Giannetti Architects, and Brooke has her Velvet and Linen design site, the couple joins forces as Giannetti Home, which sells Steve's designed furnishings and Brooke's finds, including "whatever I fancy at the moment," she says.





A farmhouse sink and tin ceiling add period touches to the bright kitchen.



Having two creative owners, the home is often the subject of experiments. “I think we look at our house as a science lab,” Steve offers. The neutral foundation, including wood floors and white walls, kitchen cabinets, counters, and backsplashes, allows for changes. “We can alter the feeling of the house by changing the couch covers and the pillows,” Brooke says. Recently, the couple has been adding industrial elements—a zinc-top table and medical-supply-store island stools—to balance some of the interior design’s more feminine qualities. “I think I lean toward industrial,” Steve says, “and Brooke leans toward European vintage. It’s a marriage of aesthetics and styles that creates a third look.”

“It’s like yin and yang,” Brooke adds. “Too much of either, and it’s too harsh or too soft and sweet.”

The spaces themselves—from the white wooden lockers just inside the front entry to the back porch where the family gathers for meals—are decidedly elegant yet are absolutely family-friendly. Though originally open, the porch was enclosed in windowed walls and French doors when the Giannettis realized that Santa Monica’s year-round temperate weather is a bit on the chilly side. An attic loft, lined with an aluminum radiant barrier, makes for a cool playroom; the garage, fashioned to look like a petite cottage, has been host to birthday parties, with cars parked outside

Center: Steve incorporated cabinets without back panels over the kitchen windows to allow more storage space while not sacrificing natural light. Left and right: Pewter pots, antique cutting boards, and ironstone line the kitchen shelves.

and melted ice cream and spilled drinks easily hosed out after the festivities. Even the master bedroom, occupying the back length of the second floor, feels a bit playful, with treetops hovering over it, creating a secret hideaway.

Built with tongue-and-groove walls and ceilings, floored with pine, furnished with pieces old and new, and designed for an active family of five, the Giannetti home represents the best of beach cottage style—not too cute but not too studied, casual and comfortable, solid yet light. Brooke is proud that people really love her home and recognize that she has created a happy place to raise children. For Steve, gratification comes from the success of the architectural details: “People walk in and think it is an old house.” NOH

Laurel Kornhiser is a freelance writer and editor of La Vie Claire magazine. She lives on Cape Cod.

For Resources, see page 68.



Suspension of Disbelief



Peter Zimmerman Architects creates a stone farmhouse in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, in step with the region's rich building history.

BY NANCY E. BERRY PHOTOS BY TOM CRANE

Peter Zimmerman Architects designed this stone house following the vernacular style of the region—Pennsylvania Dutch. Salvaged stone and brick were used in the construction of the building.



Nestled in the bucolic countryside of Chester Springs sits a fieldstone house that appears to have been resting in that spot for centuries. Sturdy and comfortable in its woodland surroundings, the house stands as testimony to the clever and creative genius of its architect, Peter Zimmerman of Peter Zimmerman Architects. “One day I noticed a piece of property for sale. The home was not much, a 1960s contemporary in pretty bad shape, but the land it sat on was private and beautiful,” says Zimmerman. He immediately called his clients, a retired couple who had been looking for a site on which to build. The couple had called Zimmerman after seeing a home that he had designed published in *New Old House* in 2006. They loved the layout of that particular project—a small single-story wood farmhouse—but they wanted a different vernacular: a Pennsylvania Dutch fieldstone structure.

The challenge for Zimmerman was to create an authen-

tic design that had most of its living space on the first floor. “I didn’t want the house to look too long or too low,” he explains. “That layout would not fit into a traditional design.” Another challenge Zimmerman and project architect William H. Johnson III faced was working within the existing house’s footprint; the zoning codes in the area did not allow for the house to be sited differently. To meet these goals, the team created a design where 70 percent of the living space was located on the first floor. “We were able to manipulate the volume so that it didn’t look like a single-story house,” he states. The dormered stone structure is composed of a story and a half with two wings—one wing is a story-and-a-half gabled stone structure, and the other is a story-and-a-half clapboard structure. He leveled the existing structure to the first-floor plate and slightly modified the foundation, which is on a steep slope, to keep the footprint within the zoning boundaries.



Opposite: The staircase came from a historical building that was dismantled. Zimmerman re-created the trim details.

Left: An upstairs gallery offers a series of balconies that look onto the great room, shown below at left.

Below, right: New balusters, newel posts, and railings were incorporated in the antique staircase.



Below: A glassed-in dining porch off the kitchen transforms into a screened porch during warmer weather. Right: Zimmerman prefers to use dormers rather than skylights for additional illumination into the house. The light is softer, and the look is more traditional.



To create a suspension of disbelief as to the age of the house, Zimmerman weaved a plausible story of how the house may have evolved over time. He layered details within the volume of the house, such as a change in materials from stone to wood. This alteration makes the clapboard wing appear as if it had been added by a later generation. He also juxtaposed different time periods, adding to the illusion of the passage of time. The French doors and a sun porch also would have been “later” additions to the home. One can imagine that these architectural elements were incorporated to update the “antique” house to reflect twentieth-century fashions.

“There is a strong German influence in the area’s building traditions,” says Zimmerman, who clearly borrowed from the region’s eighteenth-century vernacular stone houses. Germans often built in stone, as they had done in their native land. Immigrant farmers would plow the rocky soil and remove the stones from the field to use as building materials, along with old-growth timbers. “Authentic stone veneers are about 8½” thick,” explains Zimmerman, who used salvaged stone from a local historical building being demolished. “The thickness of the walls creates deeper windowsills and door openings.” Many of the window jambs are splayed to admit additional natural light. “Antique brick was used sparingly in limited and controlled areas of the







Views from the porch reveal an enchanting private woodland.

Opposite: The home is flanked by deep porches for the family to enjoy the outdoors.

house because in the past, a stonemason would have to be hired to lay the brick," continues Zimmerman.

Zimmerman, who is an advocate for using salvaged and reclaimed materials, did not stop at the home's façade when incorporating recycled items into the project. "I have to applaud the homeowners, who found many of the salvaged items we used throughout the house," says Zimmerman, referring in particular to the salvaged interior staircase. Zimmerman designed new trim detailing and got permission from the zoning board to use the original 34" rail rather than replacing it with a standard 36" rail, which would comply with today's standard building codes. "Salvaging old materials or preserving old structures doesn't get enough credit in the green movement," states Zimmerman. He believes that more often than not, contemporary structures that are LEED certified won't last more than 25 years, whereas homes built using traditional materials and methods will last 100 years plus. "This house has locally milled lumber, resawn salvaged heart pine, and antique brick terraces, and it was even built on an existing foundation—you need to look at the total impact on the environment when discussing sustainability," says Zimmerman.

Another important design factor for the homeowners was the relationship between the inside and the outside. The couple really wanted the house to be light and have a sense of openness to the surrounding woodland landscape. Zimmerman also wanted to create a nice visual connection between the front and back of the house. "There is a front hall through which you enter into the great room—this room has views to the south," explains Zimmerman. Open porches flank both the front and back of the house, offering ample spaces to enjoy outdoor living. The windows in the dining porch fold back on themselves with sash hinges so the whole room can seemingly open up to offer alfresco dining.

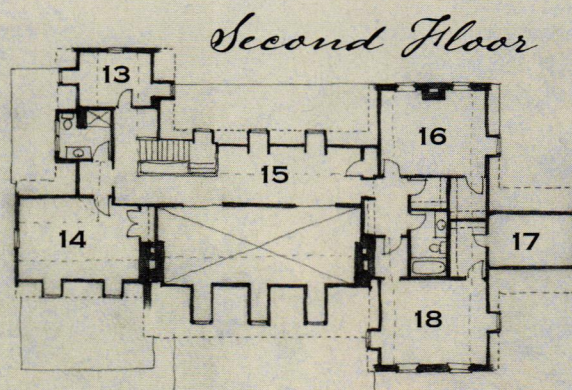
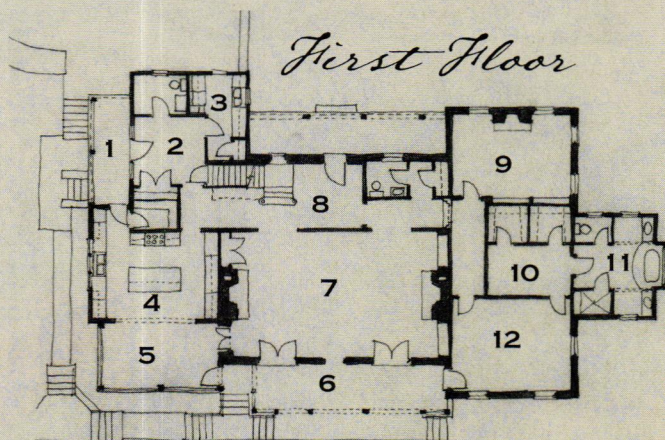
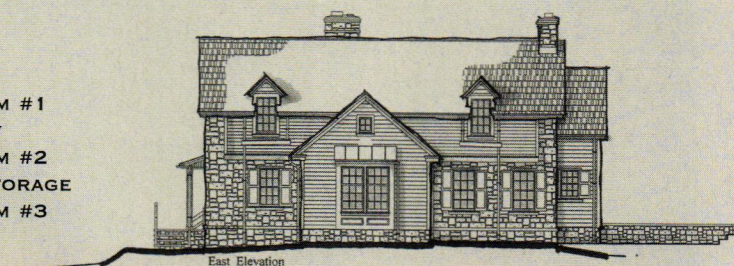
The public interior spaces also open onto each other. The main structure is essentially one great room where the family gathers for relaxing and formal dinners. A series of balconies



look from a second-story gallery onto that room, and this second-floor gallery has shelves tucked into knee walls for the couple's extensive book collection. "No space was wasted in the house," says Zimmerman. One wing is reserved for the kitchen, family room, dining room, laundry room, and mudroom, while the master bedroom, dressing room, master bath, and study are tucked into the other wing. Zimmerman added three bedrooms, along with two full baths and an office, to the upstairs. The dormered six-over-six wood windows allow the spaces to flood with natural light. The home is full of light, open, and airy—perfect for twenty-first-century living wrapped into the building traditions of centuries past. **NOH**

For Resources, see page 68.

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|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 PORCH | 7 GREAT ROOM | 13 OFFICE |
| 2 MUDROOM | 8 MAIN ENTRY | 14 BEDROOM #1 |
| 3 LAUNDRY | 9 STUDY | 15 GALLERY |
| 4 KITCHEN | 10 DRESSING ROOM | 16 BEDROOM #2 |
| 5 DINING ROOM | 11 MASTER BATH | 17 ATTIC STORAGE |
| 6 COVERED PORCH | 12 MASTER BEDROOM | 18 BEDROOM #3 |



SUPERBLY SUBLIME

An architectural firm produces a
winning design by keeping a keen eye on
the surrounding environment.

BY STEPHEN T. SPEWOCK

PHOTOS BY HARLAN HAMBRIGHT



Cooper Johnson Smith
Architects designs beach
houses for a new community
on Ambergris Cay, part of the
Turks & Caicos Islands chain.





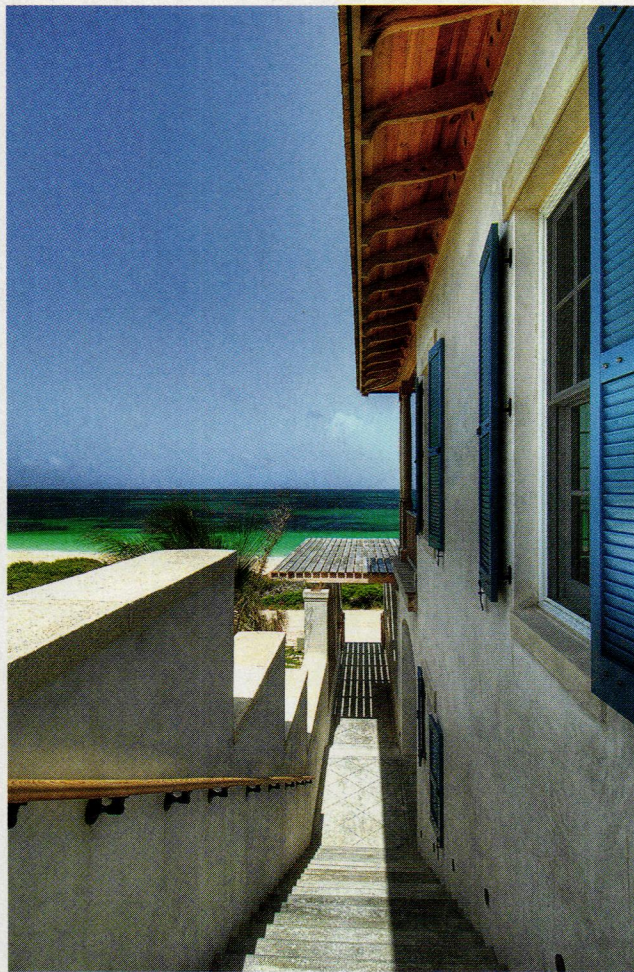
“A picture of a house we designed in Anna Maria Island, Florida, landed in an image book to guide architectural style for a new Caribbean island development,” recalls architect Don Cooper. “One thing led to another, and we were hired to design the beach houses for the property—the first thing I noticed about the island upon arrival was how wild, rocky, and windswept it was.” The island was the remote Ambergris Cay, which falls under the province of Turks and Caicos—all part of the British West Indies—and is world-renowned for its white sandy beaches. The 1,100-acre island is covered with vegetation such as gumbo limbo, Turk’s Cap cactus, milk tree, and green buttonwood, while iguanas, lizards, osprey, and egrets inhabit the cay.

Cooper, a principal of the firm Cooper Johnson Smith Architects of Tampa, Florida, wasn’t new to the Caribbean architecture. Having designed numerous award-winning coastal

homes—many among some of Florida’s most prolific developments, such as Seaside, Alys Beach, and Rosemary Beach—the firm had built a highly regarded reputation of studious architectural interpretation of all things tropical. Yet, he confesses how taken aback he was by the small cay’s completely wild surroundings and remoteness.

“We arrived in a little five-seater airplane landing on a small, rocky airstrip,” he says. “During the stay, I slept in a small one-room cottage with wood louvered windows (no glass) and a bath open to the sea and sky.” In this perfect tropical cottage, Cooper set about recording some keen observations of the small island.

“This cay was very dry; there wasn’t a lot of rain,” he says. “Strong trade winds blew through every afternoon—sometimes averaging 30 miles per hour.” It was a new focus for someone



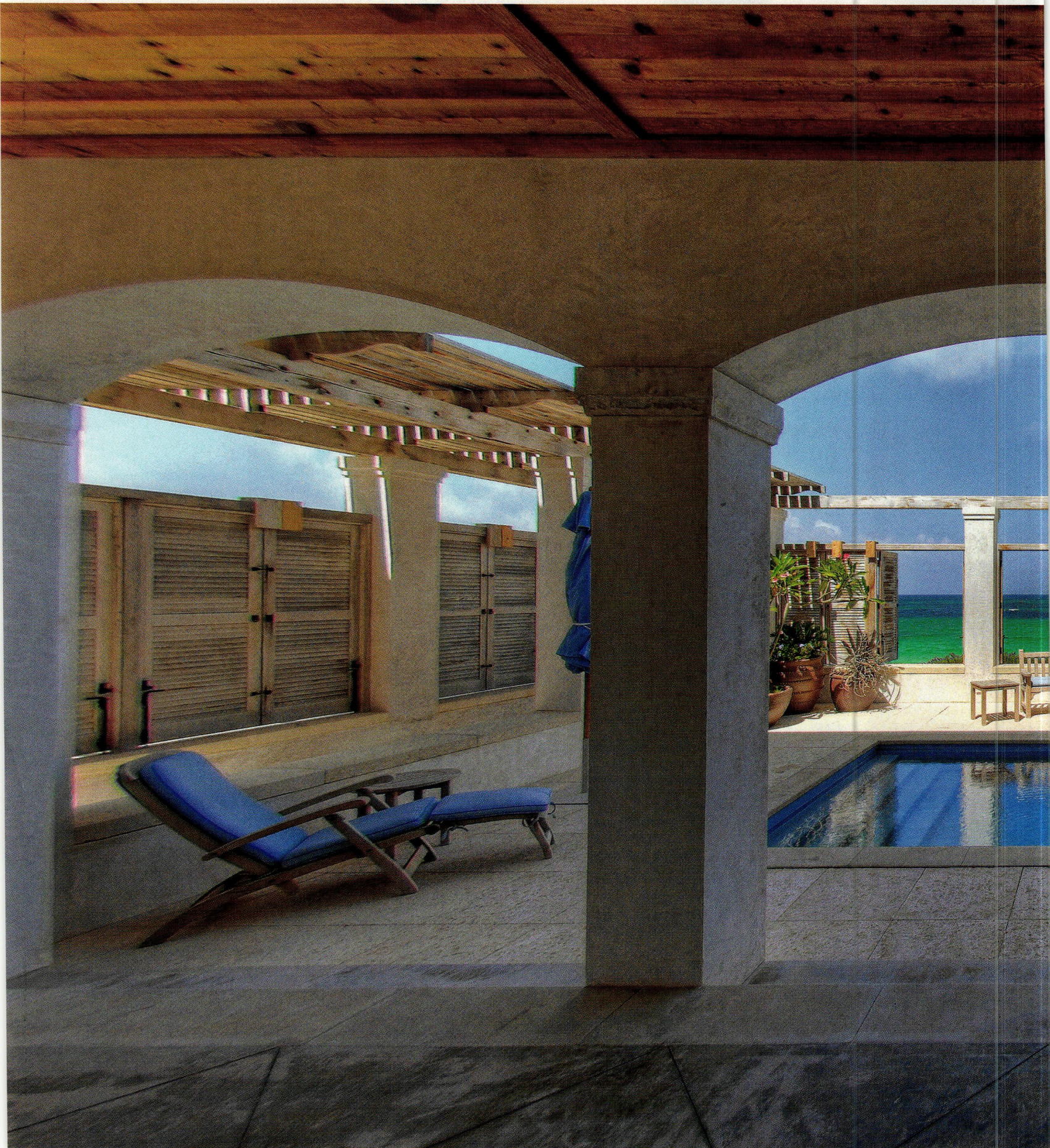
Far left: The interiors are just one room deep so sea views can be enjoyed from every room. Left: The walls are masonry with a stucco overlay. Below: The cottages' garden walls are inspired by houses in Granada.



whose firm was recently selected to design a fire station for Disney World, a Catholic church for Celebration, Florida, and fractional multi-family cottages for the Ritz Carlton in Abaco, Bahamas. But the genius of his weather observations helped secure the cornerstone design for the cay's new development. These high winds suggested a plan that would include a courtyard protected from the wind but open to the sea.

Le Grand Cottages

After a year of meetings with developer Doland, Pollock, and Schramm in New York City, two basic designs were sketched out. At the request of the developer, both house types have a low



Operable shutters protect the courtyard from the island's prevailing winds.





Ceiling fans and high ceilings keep interiors cool.

silhouette to maintain ocean views from the ridge above. The two-story cottage has its lower floor—which opens to the courtyard—cut into the rock. The one-story cottage has a low profile and lofty interior. “Both utilize a tropical courtyard layout,” relates Cooper, “with all spaces only one room deep, thus maximizing breezes.” Other requisite items for the tropical cottage are high ceilings with fans, shutters, soffit overhangs, and outdoor showers.

“We wanted to make the courtyard environment as calm as possible,” stresses Cooper. “This was to contrast with the wild windswept beauty of the island. And we accomplished that calm by surrounding the courtyard with louvered walls to keep

out the wind without losing views of the ocean.” The outside surroundings were left as natural as possible to help provide additional protection from the wind and sun.

The firm chose natural materials for the structures, such as stucco on masonry for durability. Cedar shake roofs were chosen for their good performance in a salt environment and their beauty when they age. To help offset this minimalist palette, Cooper incorporated an entry garden with masonry piers, mirrored by one in the rear that uses more wood in its makeup. “I call it Tropical Gothic,” muses Cooper. When pressed for its origin, Cooper reflects for a moment: “The entry court garden wall was inspired by a church in Granada. The cottages draw from Anglo-Caribbean architecture—part of the Turks and Caicos’ architectural heritage. The style is common to many Caribbean islands and can be seen in the United States as far north as Charleston.” European influences are found throughout the Caribbean—from English to Spanish to Dutch. “Over time, what’s developed is a style that changes to fit the environment,” says Cooper.

Terra Firma

Over the past 20 years, Cooper and his partners have adapted the same mantra into many of their award-winning designs. “As a company, we like undertaking types of projects that we haven’t done before,” he says. “We prefer an owner’s ideas to really describe the project, ensuring that we won’t do the same thing twice. This helps keep a fresh approach to building new within a practice based on traditional architecture.”

This fresh approach keeps Cooper’s firm juggling multiple projects of various objectives through diverse places. They’re currently project planning as far away as Anguilla and have designed a ski resort in Park City, Utah. Then there is a low-income community project in Bradenton, offset by a sprawling farmhouse near Tampa.

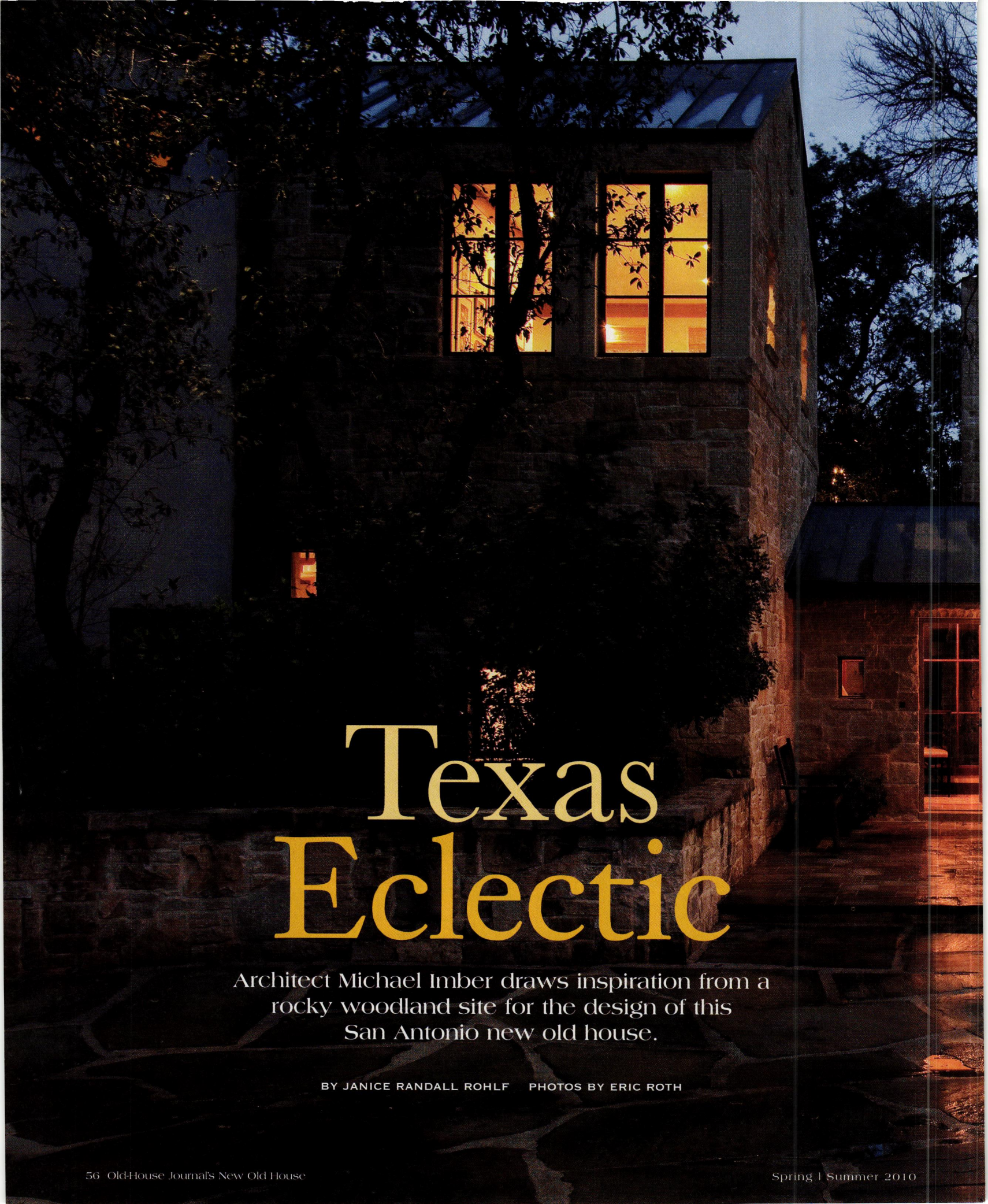
“They are all examples of doing things well the first time,” he reflects. “If you’re a good architect, you can do something pretty well the first time.” **NOH**

Stephen T. Spewock is a freelance writer living in Massachusetts.

For Resources, see page 68.



Above: Inground pools are accessed from the courtyards. The landscape around the cottages is left natural. Left: A bank of French doors floods the interior with light.



Texas Eclectic

Architect Michael Imber draws inspiration from a rocky woodland site for the design of this San Antonio new old house.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH



Michael Imber designed this home for a Texas couple to look like it has always been in its woodland location. The rustic design is influenced by the German vernacular prevalent in Fredericksburg.

The entryway unfolds into a gallery. Underfoot is a cool Oklahoma Sugarloaf stone floor.

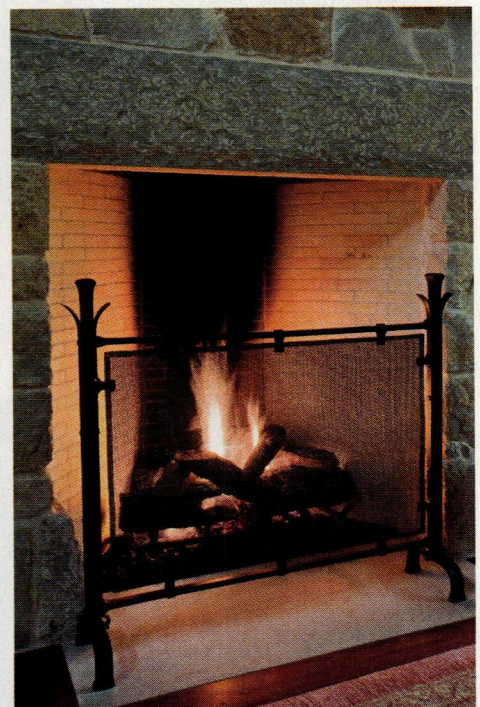
Opposite, top: The living room has 20' ceilings made of stained vertical-grain fir. The walls and fireplace are made of Leuders limestone, which is locally quarried.

Opposite, bottom left: Imber included a sitting alcove off the gallery. Opposite, bottom right: The family enjoys cozy fires in the living room.

A big place like Texas can accommodate a variety of architectural styles. The Monte Vista District of San Antonio, for example, features house styles that range from Queen Anne to Prairie to Spanish Colonial Revival. It was from one such character-drenched house that a particular couple decided to move 10 years ago. "We really love old houses," insists the husband. "I just got tired of things not working." So they packed up their three young children and moved a bit farther north to a house that was both bigger and newer. "Everything worked," says the husband brightly. "But," he continues with far less enthusiasm, "it had no personality."

Taking heed of the lessons learned from these houses—one pretty but prone to falling apart, and the other the exact opposite—the couple knew the third time would be the charm. Starting from scratch with a house lot of four and a half acres in Hill Country Village, a small agrarian suburb 25 minutes from downtown San Antonio, they started to envision their dream house and, approaching it academically, drew up fairly detailed plans. They knew they wanted a big but not gigantic house, one that would feel cozy even after the children left for college. The husband wanted a house that was "fairly masculine, where you can hang deer antlers and







they look good.” (He’s not a hunter, but his son is.) Most of all, the couple yearned for “a house that looks like it’s been here forever”; however, “here” proved to be somewhat vexatious.

“They had a nice sloping wooded site with good exposure toward the southeast,” says architect Michael Imber, whom the couple found through a friend. “But the house had to be oriented around a rocky ledge, a ravine, and several specimen trees.” Imber took the challenge in stride. His firm, Michael G. Imber Architects, “is sensitive to culture and environment and the way we build in response to that,” he asserts.

Recognized in 2009 as a “Top Mountain Architect” by *Mountain Living* magazine, the firm embraces the rough and varied landscapes of the western United States as a natural palette for its structures.

Indeed, this house was designed to work itself into the Texas hill country landscape—rolling, somewhat rugged hills that consist primarily of limestone. “There is a lot of topography here,” says the husband, a geologist, “and we wanted to situate the house to take advantage of some of the lot’s drama.”

In response to the topographic quirks of the site, the

5,000-square-foot house is an amalgamation of major blocks and low-slung connectors, all of which follow the natural outline of the woods. To the north of the entryway sits the master bedroom suite, including a large office, and on the south side of the entryway are the interconnected kitchen and living, dining, and family rooms.

The entryway itself opens into a gallery, beyond which the living room, with its 20' ceilings, "is reminiscent of a barnlike structure," Imber says. At one end, a large picture window looks out at the woods.

Adjacent to the living room, the dining room is a more intimate space with 9' ceilings that is oriented toward the outdoor living area provided by a screened-in porch. "We use the porch every evening from March to October," say the homeowners. "It's like another room." San Antonio is often referred to as "a place where the sunshine spends the winter," and an outside fireplace has become a common feature of Texas homes. This family also has a grill area out near the pool, which is intentionally hard to find. "We wanted the pool to be something people would come upon, like a rock pond, not a focal point of the landscape."

One of their other favorite spots in the house is a small sitting area outside the husband's office. A triangular space that juts out into leafy treetops, it is "a perfect little viewing area looking toward the rocky ravine below," says Imber, adding that it was "a good way to capture space." With two wing chairs facing one another, it also provides an ideal setting for parent-child conversations, the adults have discovered.

"There is no organizing aspect to the floor plan other than working the masses around features of the site," observes Imber, noting a very large cedar elm in front of the house, one Virginia cedar, and other trees, primarily live oak, that the homeowners insisted on preserving. As a result, in several rooms of the house, especially the children's upstairs wing, trees are at eye level, producing the effect of living in a tree house.

Country lovers, the family plans to build a barn for horses on an adjacent lot they own and have also decided not to deer-proof their property with unsightly fences, even though the animals, they say, "are a bit of a nuisance." Landscape architect John Troy used native plant choices, eschewing the type of formal landscape design that would contradict the organic nature of the house. "John attempted to accentuate the architect's vision," say the homeowners. "The house looks like it's growing up out of the landscape."



From top: The first floor master bedroom walls are finished in plaster. The family preserved many of the trees on the property while the house was under construction. The master bath is finished in mahogany.





Left and opposite: The owners love to spend Sundays reading the paper on the screened porch, which is adjacent to the kitchen and dining rooms.

Building materials, too, were chosen with an eye to blending the house with its natural setting. During the Paleozoic era, this part of Texas was underwater. Dense, crustaceous Leuders limestone, quarried nearby, was used extensively for both the exterior and interior of the house. Described by Imber as “a very rich caramel-colored stone that gives a warm palette,” this particular mix includes some rather large fossilized gastropods that were culled out and used to accent the entry and rear porch, a special feature for the geologist homeowner. Together with the stone, a copper roof, warm-toned plaster, and cypress with a weathering stain, it creates a naturally inviting exterior that ages well. “All the materials are traditional,” says Imber. “We’re just using them in a new, fresh manner.”

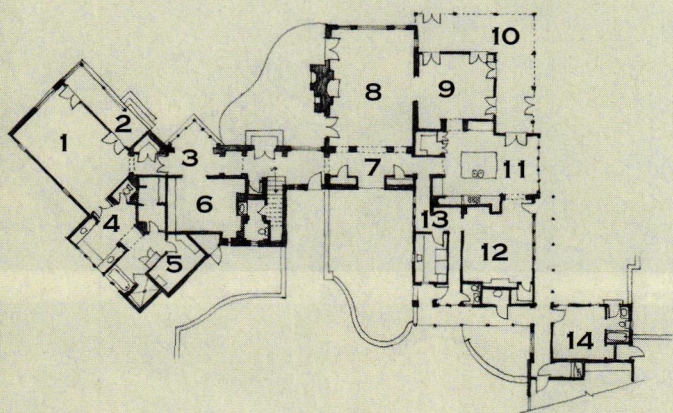
Inside, more Leuders limestone harmonizes with warm woods, particularly the handsome stained vertical-grain fir that is used for all doors, ceilings, cabinetry, and most of the trim. The floors, with the exception of the Oklahoma Sugarloaf stone floor in the gallery, are reclaimed longleaf pine. Mahogany distinguishes the master bath.

While observing that their house leans more toward the German vernacular of Fredericksburg than Spanish Colonial architecture, with perhaps a few Texas frontier-like elements, the owners of this rustically sophisticated hill country gem are adamant that the house “has its own style. It can’t be pigeonholed into a regional architectural category.”

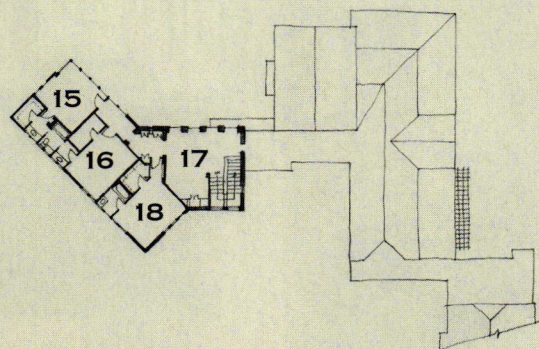
What’s clear is that the family cares less about labeling the house than living in it. “We don’t lead a particularly peaceful life,” says the husband, “so the house is like a retreat. I would much rather stay home, have coffee and a plate of pancakes on the screened-in porch, and read the newspaper than go on vacation.” This begs only one question: Do they take reservations? **NOH**

Cape Cod-based freelance writer Janice Randall Roblf writes frequently on lifestyle topics, including art and architecture.

For Resources, see page 68.

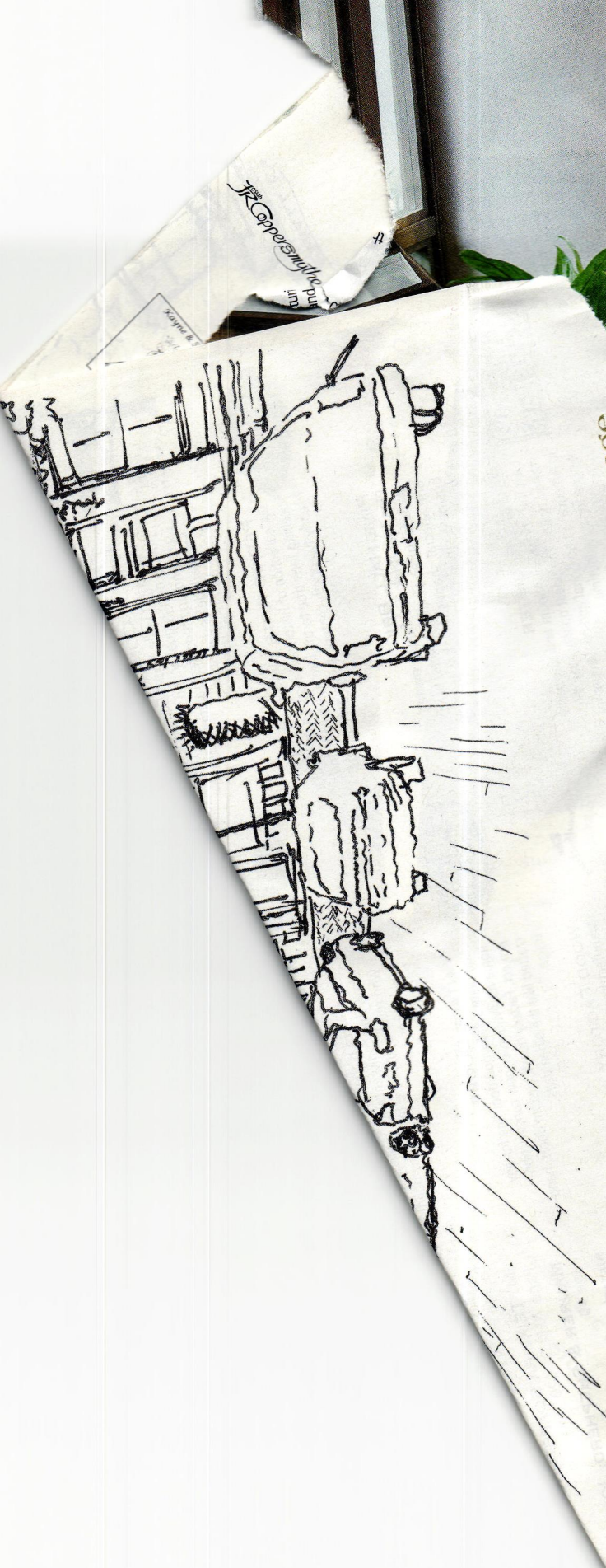


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|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 MASTER BEDROOM | 7 GALLERY | 13 MUD ROOM |
| 2 MASTER PORCH | 8 LIVING ROOM | 14 SHOP |
| 3 SITTING ROOM | 9 DINING ROOM | 15 BEDROOM #1 |
| 4 MASTER BATH | 10 SCREEN PORCH | 16 BEDROOM #2 |
| 5 WALK-IN CLOSET | 11 KITCHEN | 17 GAME ROOM |
| 6 OFFICE | 12 FAMILY ROOM | 18 BEDROOM #3 |





Old-House Journal's New Old House 63



Stellar Students

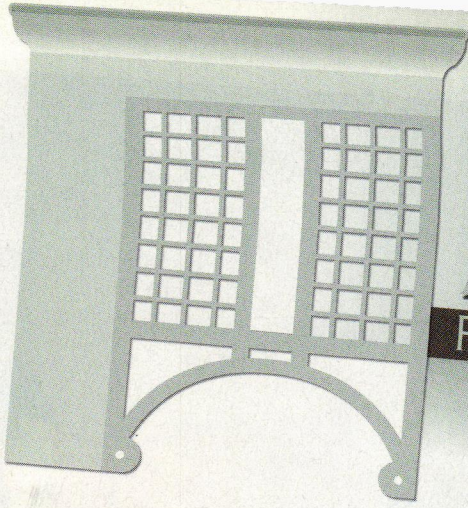
Students of Notre Dame were the winners of the 2009 Design Challenge, held at the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference in Baltimore.

The Notre Dame team members—Anne Barker, Dan Hackett, and Nicole Davis—bested professional architects in this unique competition. Participants were asked to design a rowhouse that would sit comfortably in the historic Fell's Point District, a colonial maritime community in Baltimore. Over the course of a day and a half, the teams drew not only a rendering of an appropriate building but also floor plans. The students designed a brick row house with 1700s, and these

design flourishes would fit nicely into the period environment. The winning team's design incorporates a two-story approach. The first floor offers retail space and two apartments. The first floor can be accessed by a ramp to the street. The retail space can be accessed by a ramp to the street. The retail space, following ADA compliance codes, is dedicated living space, consisting of two apartments. The facade is striking and appropriate for seeing w

community. We can look forward to seeing what these students produce in the future. NOH

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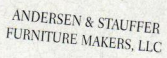
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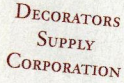
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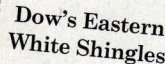
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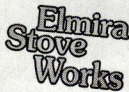
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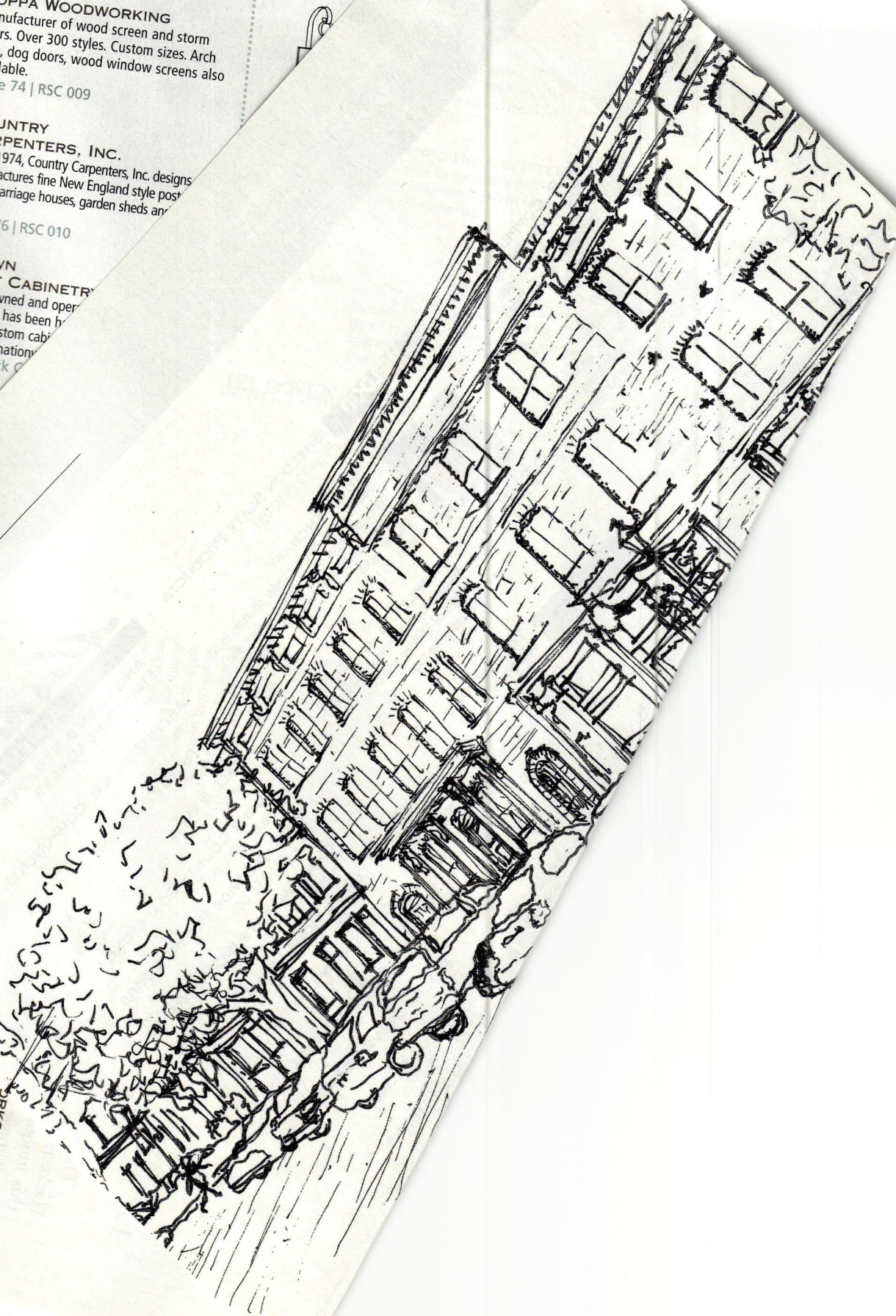
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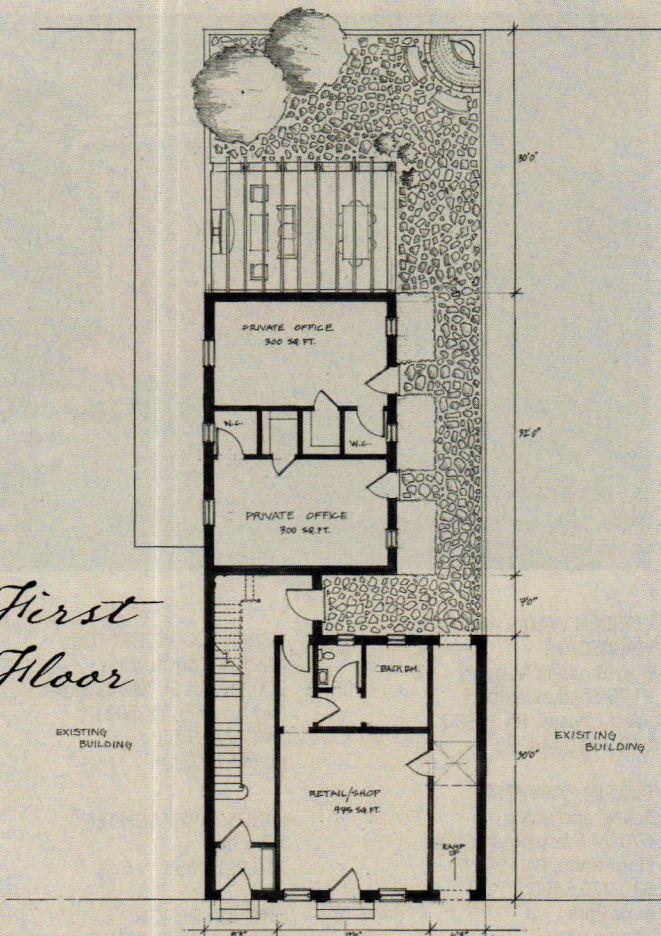
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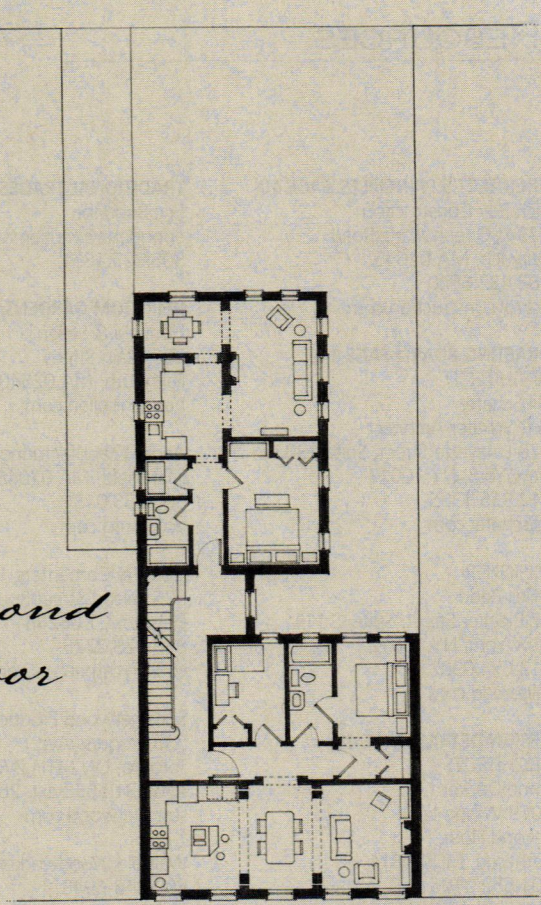
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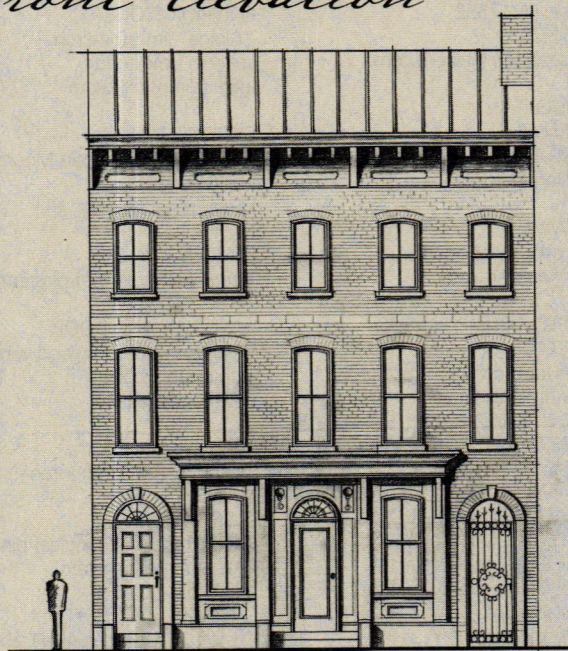
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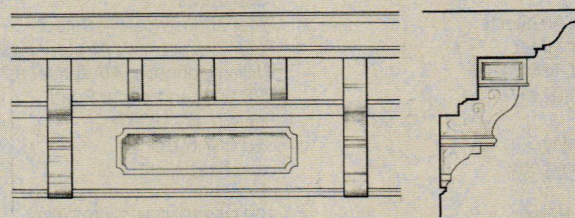
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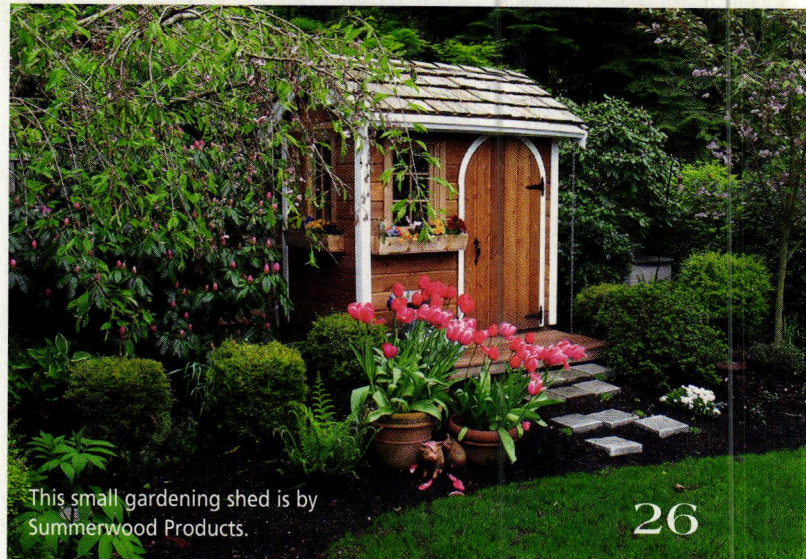
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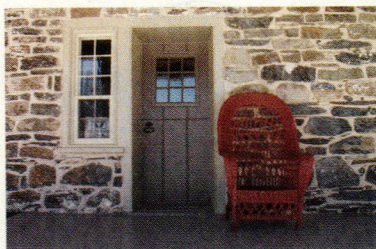
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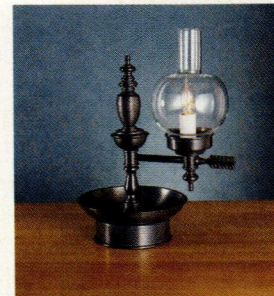
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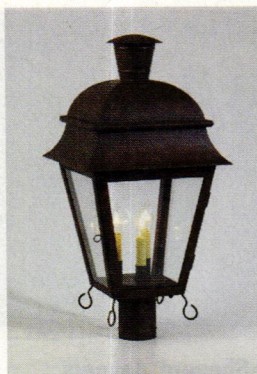
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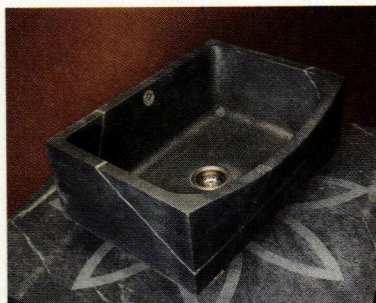
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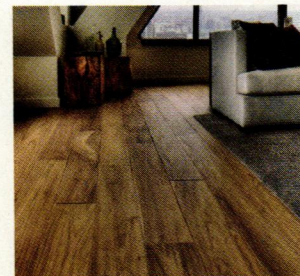


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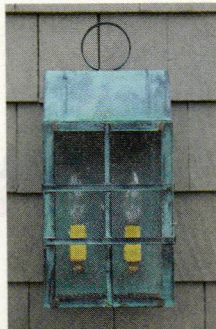


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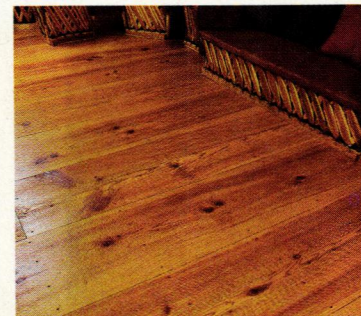
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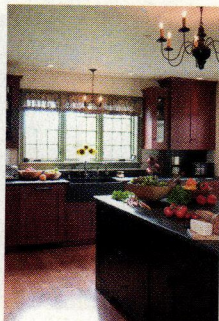
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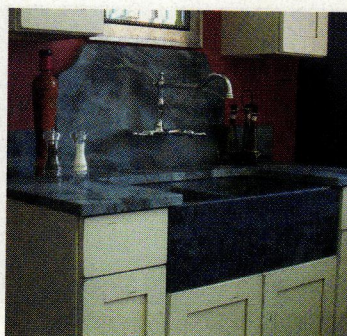
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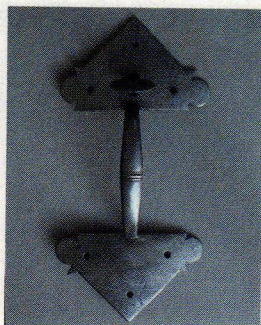
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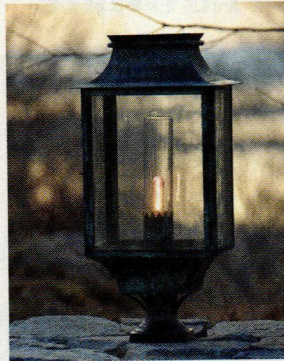
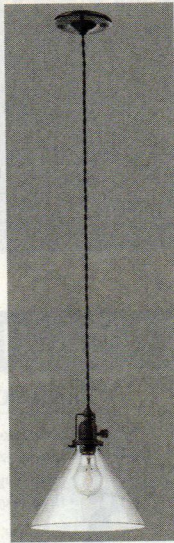
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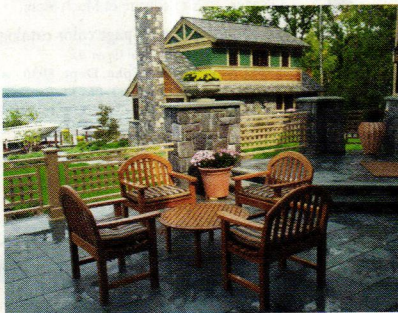
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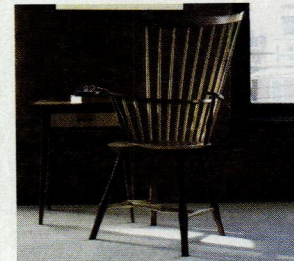
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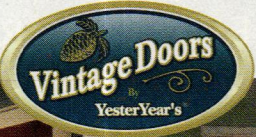
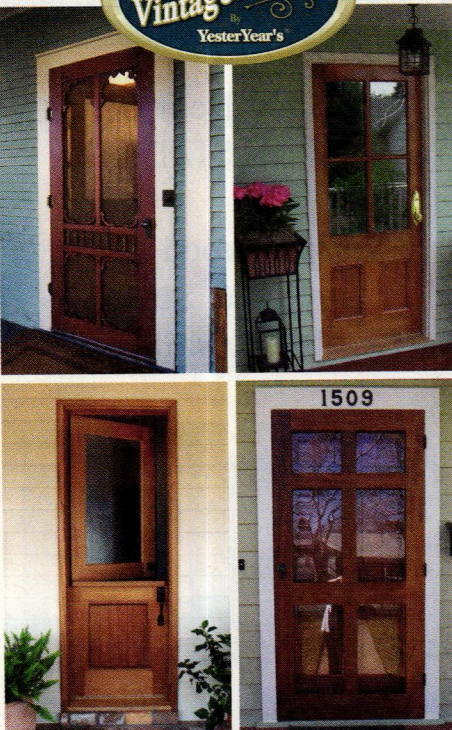
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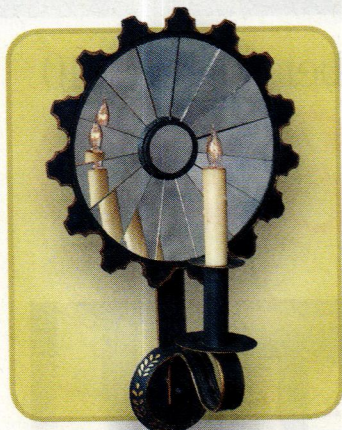
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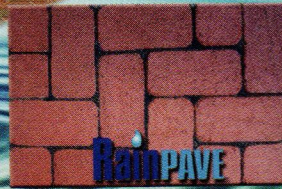
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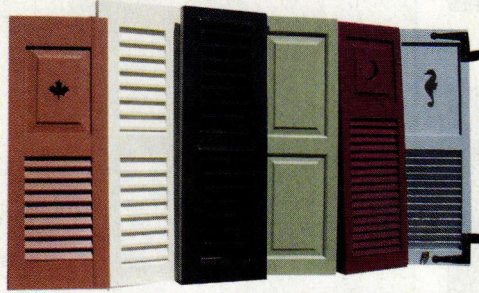
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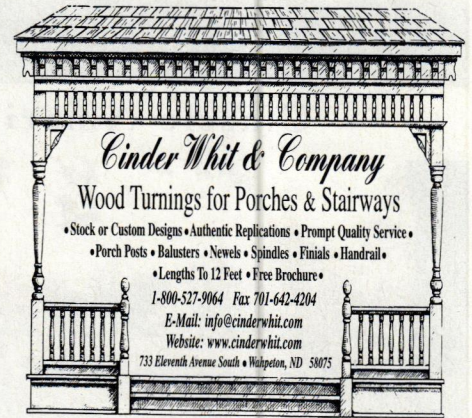


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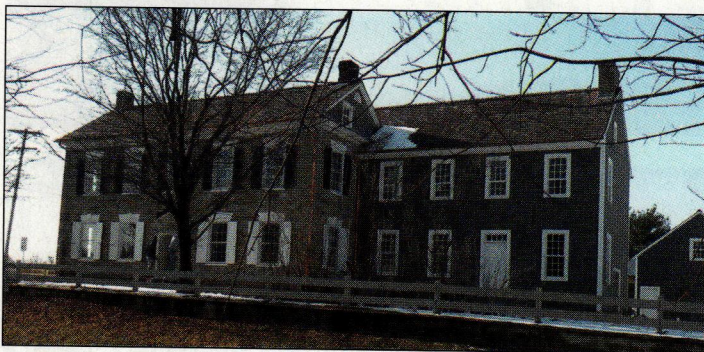
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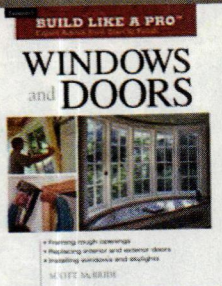
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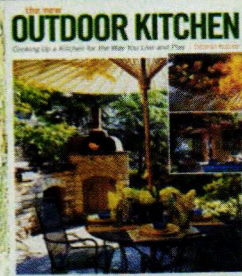
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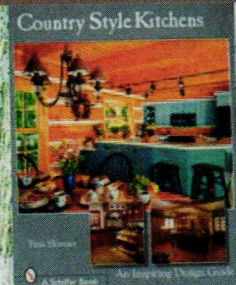
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backdrop to greens and colors,” says landscape designer Mary LeBlanc of Cotuit, Massachusetts. “The fencing and arbor create a wall and doorway—much like walls and doorways on the interior of a house create separate rooms that define edges and enclose spaces.” Thus, a fence defines “rooms” in the garden, becoming a visual frame that guides your view toward a beautiful vista. **NOH**



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