

# Old-House Journal

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1989 \$3.95

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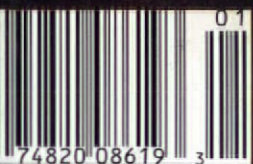
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Bekka Lindstrom

Technical Editor/Illustrator  
Jonathan Poore

Contributing Editor  
J. Randall Cotton

Circulation Director  
Rosalie E. Bruno

Customer Service  
Jeanne Baldwin

Advertising Associate  
Ellen M. Higgins

Advertising Director  
William J. O'Donnell

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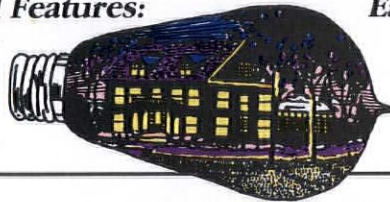
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Cover: Home lighting in a 1911 Craftsman house. Photo by Ray Stubblebine.

## READER'S PAGE

*Answers to Our Informal Survey in OHJ's 15th Anniversary Issue*

**In our September-October 1988 issue, we left a page blank and headed it "Reader's Page." It had doodle space for cover design ideas. It also had a rambling assortment of survey questions. The big, enthusiastic response from readers was great fun for the editors to paw through. So to everybody who wrote, thank you for your opinions and suggestions — some of which have already been taken! Read on.**

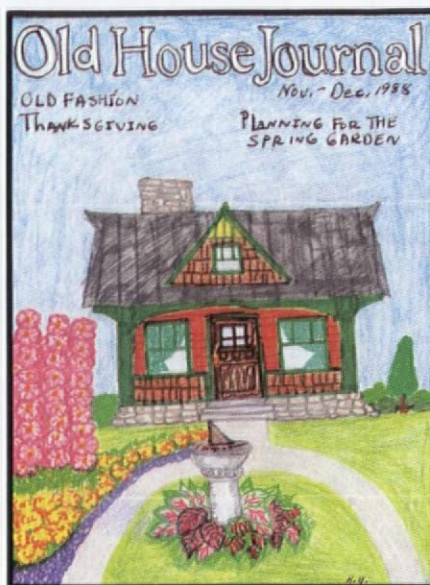
— Patricia Poore



**One reader wants a column devoted to house moving. . . .**

**W**e asked what past OHJ article has been the most useful. Your responses were as varied as the articles, from *Cisterns* to *Post-Victorian Built-Ins*. If any type of article got more votes than others, it was paint (both applying it and stripping it off). Technical articles were generally cited more than decorative ones, but past articles on kitchens and bathrooms get honorable mention. (OHJ readers amaze me with their insatiable appetite for tough technical topics; a reader in Whitestone, N.Y., named a technical topic in all but one question. Even under "decorating articles wanted," he wrote, "Restoring a Plaster Ceiling.")

One reader thinks what's most useful is "the where-to-buy-it info! I got hexagonal floor tiles when con-



**Design a magazine cover?! Fun with magic markers.**

tractors said 'you can't get those anymore,' and also cast-iron radiators, balusters, etc."

Probably the most useful insights we got were from hearing what technical and how-to articles you want. You're reading our minds (or we're reading yours): You asked for articles on *Old Wiring* and on *Marbleizing* (both in this very issue). And you asked for *Setting Up a Home Shop*, *Chimney Repairs*, *Stencilling*, and *Choosing a Contractor* — all coming in 1989.

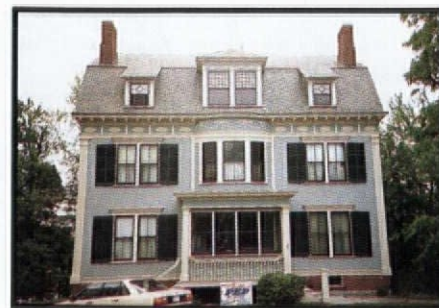
We'll get to work, too, researching *Moving Old Buildings* and *Salvaging House Parts*, because these two topics came up several times.

Newer readers mentioned lots of topics that *have* been covered in the past few years. One person asked for an alphabetical listing of past articles. Just a reminder: OHJ has a Cumulative Index to all articles 1973-1986, and the back issues are available as Yearbooks. (See page 71 for more information.)

**R**eaders' suggestions for Departments are great! Perhaps thinking of our "outdoors" issue, May-June 1988, many people asked for regular coverage of outdoor stuff. So

we added a new department: *Outside the Old House* premieres on page 16. It'll cover topics requested: period gardens and landscape, gazebos, arbors and trellises and pergolas, stone walls, walks and drives, fences, and outbuildings.

Some of you, on the other hand, want OHJ to be a humor magazine. (Come on! you know we're dead serious about restoration.) We had calls for "a humor section" and a "tacky new product award." One reader wants stories about The Mushroom Factor in every issue. (The mysterious force that causes any old-house project to expand endlessly until the limits of time and budget are exceeded.) And somebody else suggests a department with the simple



**The owner of this 19-room house is coping with weekend guests.**

heading, "Funny Restoration Stories." (I get the feeling the line between comedy and tragedy would be a fine one.)

Period decorating, interiors, and furnishings got a lot of attention. Readers supplied potential subjects for decorating articles, and asked for regular departments on furnishings and interiors. Articles requested ran from high-style Victorian to the budget-conscious. Among the titles: *Affordable Period Decorating*; *Re-creating Colonial Interiors*; *Practical Period Bathrooms*; *Civil War-Era Interiors*; *Decorating in the 1930s*. Some people were very specific: *Furnishing for Low Ceilings*; *Window Treatments for Arch-Top Windows*; *Sizing a Victorian Chandelier to the Room*; *Nurseries of the Early-20th*

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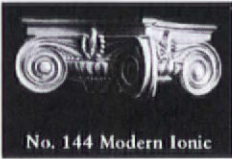
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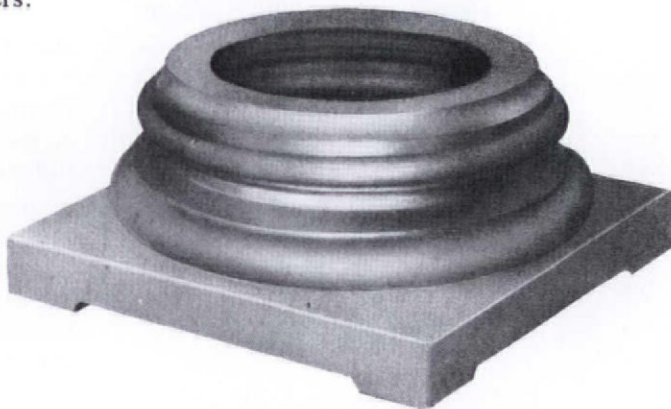
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Century; Old Laundry Rooms. (A couple of you asked for an article on gas/electric and early electric lighting; it's in this issue.)

We'll take the hint and increase our practical coverage of interiors and furnishings.

As I mentioned before, landscaping and gardening got as much attention as did decorating articles. Again, requests ran from the grandiose to the practical: *Landscaping a Large*



**House plans: request for an adapted Viking longhouse. Hmmm. . . .**

*Montana Yard; Grand Landscape for a Small Lot; Outdoor Patio/Dining Rooms; Historic Sidewalks; Victorian Garden Follies — Sham Ruins, Etc.* One subscriber asked for an article on topiary; it's coming in the May-June issue.

**T**he most open-ended question on the survey was "what type of article should we do that we don't do now?" Well, I asked for it . . . and

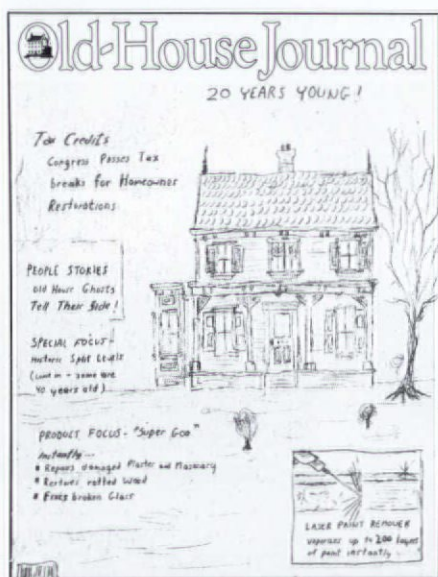


**A response to our recent coverage of post-Victorians?**

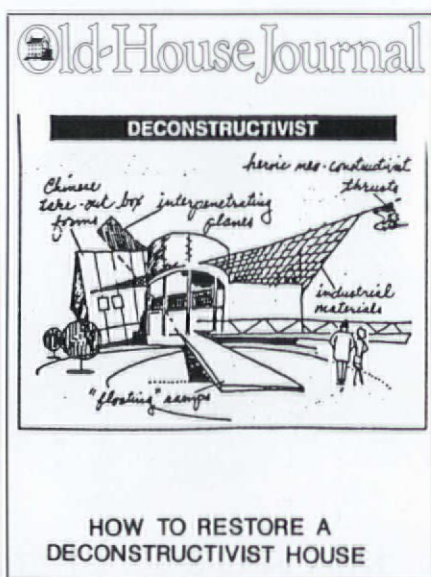
some of it, I'm not sure what to do with. These are the most idiosyncratic requests, calls for help in whatever is close to the reader's heart. How about: *Moving a Historic House When the Neighborhood Goes Back Down Again; Interviews with Salvage Dealers; Miniatures; The Restoration Job Market; Computer Applications for Old House Restoration; and The Positive Impact of Gay People on Historic Cities.* More: *What To Do with Children Aged 1-3 When You're Trying to Work on the House, How to Get More Sunlight Without Modernizing* [cut down trees? — ed.]; *How to Build a Cement Fish Pond*, and finally *Vacuum Tubes for Radios*.

I can't make any promises on the above, but you never know: Once in an editor's consciousness, themes often present themselves in print.

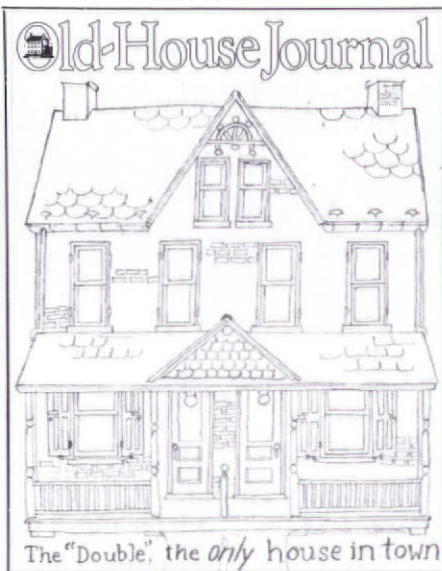
**R**equests for house style articles were right on target with editorial plans. It's worth mentioning that more readers are interested in vernacular or "hybrid" styles than high-brow houses. (Judging by your letters, the word "vernacular" has become a regular part of the old-house vocabulary — something new since the introduction of our back-cover



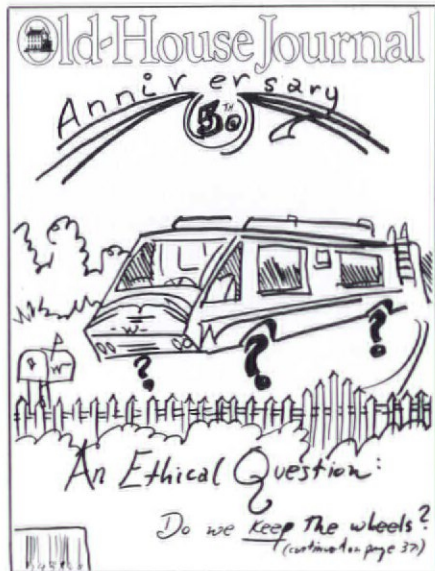
**Cover lines describe every restorer's wishful thinking.**



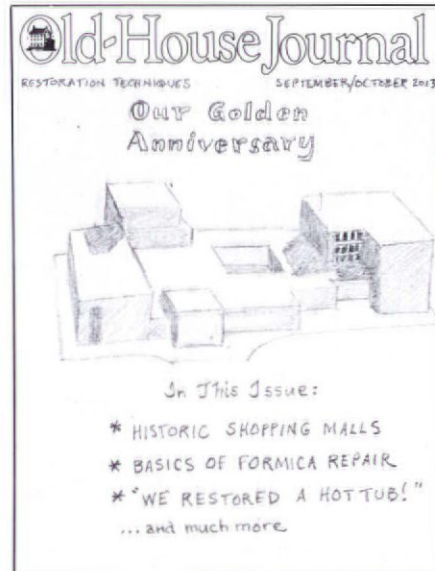
**An architect sent this — the inevitable future of OHJ?**



The "double house" is a vernacular form in Coatesville, Penn.



Here and right: proposed 50th anniversary covers. Who knows?



Formica repair. Why not? — we've already done linoleum.

feature in 1986.)

Only one reader complained about the new Historic House Plans department (and another said "chuck Remuddling — it embarrasses me"). But many others were happy to put in their two cents on what styles should be featured. One subscriber unabashedly wrote "MANSIONS!" and one scrawled "Victorian, Victorian and VICTORIAN," while another said "smaller homes — and not everybody likes Victorian, you know." There's a big call for post-Victorian house plans — Prairie houses, Four-squares, Tudors, and Bungalows (which we may develop ourselves, because they're so hard to come by). Three requests were for brownstones or row houses (imagine the construction cost!), four were for out-buildings, and two asked for plans for compatible additions.

The best part about opening this mail was seeing your cover designs — great entertainment for a magazine staff! Magazine covers are a real challenge: a strong graphic image has to co-exist with cover lines and the whole thing is supposed to relate to what's inside. Not an easy task, but yours met all the criteria. An award for best cover lines should go to the

one shown on page 4, bottom left. How's this for a dream issue: *Congress Passes Tax Breaks for Homeowner Restorations. Product Focus: Super Goo — Instantly Repairs Damaged Plaster and Masonry, Restores Rotted Wood, Fixes Broken Glass.* For old-house intrigue, *People Stories . . . Ghosts Tell Their Side.* And best of all, *Laser Paint Remover — vaporizes up to 200 layers of paint instantly.* (Don't you wish. . .?)



This reader assumes ghosts (& Bob Vila) will still be around.



OH NO!! — not those #@!+&\* binder holes again!



## Early Concrete

Dear OHJ:

The Norton Presbyterian Church of Darien, Connecticut, is planning the restoration of their historic chapel. The chapel dates to 1866 and is believed to be designed by architect Gage Inslee of New York City.

Much of the edifice was constructed from a very experimental type of concrete block composed of natural cement, the forerunner of portland cement. The chapel may be one of the earliest examples of this construction in the country.

From our research, we have concluded that the concrete block is Foster Block type (patent 1855). The block is 10" long, 5" high, and 5" deep; it has a single core and is of buff color. Over the 120-odd years of the building's life, the block has shown signs of severe erosion and spalling — a common problem, we understand, with this material.

Our architectural firm is in charge of the restoration. We're conducting an exhaustive research of the material so as to carefully restore the chapel and to document an unusual and rare material.

If anyone knows of other natural-concrete-block churches or buildings

or has any information concerning restoration techniques for historic concrete block of this type, please contact us.

— Kelly Ryan

Richard Bergmann Architects  
63 Park Street  
New Canaan, CT 06840

## Classified Meetings

Dear Patricia,

I could write and tell you how the technical articles in *Old-House Journal* have helped us save thousands of dollars. I could tell you that the information on house styles, preservation, products, etc., that OHJ has provided is invaluable. I could tell you about the inspiration and laughter the magazine has given my wife and me when we were in the depths (and debts) of despair. But you have heard all that before. Let's face it, *Old-House Journal* is the most beneficial publication available to anyone interested, or living, in an old house.

However, there is one area of OHJ which has not gotten the recognition it deserves: the Emporium section. We have had the opportunity to use it twice, once as a buyer and once as a seller. Both times, it has given us a most rewarding and heart-warming experience.

One time about two years ago, there was an ad for some gas lamps and other stuff. The phone number was in the same area as ours, so we called. Unfortunately, the lamps were sold. We went to visit anyway, and ended up having a delightful afternoon with a young man who was restoring an 1860s row house in a depressed city. It is always nice to meet another old-house person, but more than that, we got to hear his experiences as an urban pioneer trying to turn a neighborhood around. It was very rewarding — and we did walk away with a nice oil lamp that is now hanging in our front room.

The second time we used the Emporium, we were the advertisers. We

had tried to sell some antique furniture in the local paper. Most of the callers had no idea what Eastlake or Victorian was. We got tired of people coming over to the house and saying "It's not quite what we were looking for." Then the idea struck: Let's advertise in *Old-House Journal*. Not only is the Emporium free, but also OHJ readers would know, right off the bat, what Eastlake is. Sure enough, not long after the ad appeared, a woman who lived outside Philadelphia called. She lived in an 1882 Stick Style house and was in the process of furnishing it with period antiques. She came over the next evening with her two children. We had a nice visit talking about antiques and sharing the "joys" of old-house living. And the Eastlake chairs were just what she was looking for.

The Emporium is a classified-ad section, for crying out loud — something every magazine has. Still my experience says that there is something special about this one. Maybe it is the common bond that the buyers and sellers share. After all, old-house living is a way of life. Maybe it's the fact that *Old-House Journal* is a special magazine with a special personality. Those of us that subscribe to it are kind of special too.

— Richard Lewis  
Medford, N.J.

## Aw, Shucks. . . .

*We've gotten an unusual number of heartwarming letters lately. Here are a few that didn't make us blush too much. The encouragement feels terrific. Thank you very much to all of you who write. — P. Poore*

Dear Ms. Poore,

My first exposure to *Old-House Journal* occurred with your July/August 1988 issue.

I was indeed surprised to find a periodical such as yours existed, with its excellent coverage of architecture. . . .

*continued on page 8*



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# LETTERS

*continued from page 6*

You have helped further the understanding and appreciation of our culture and traditions in architecture.

— Craig B. Kelford, AIA  
Rolling Hills Estates, Cal.

Dear Patricia,

In your October 1985 issue, you published "Seduction in South Dakota," the story of my "conversion" to preservation. You may remember that I mentioned in the article that I had bought all your Yearbooks from 1976 up to the time I started the actual work on my house in June 1985.

Whenever I would find a person who claimed he could do what I wanted done, I would ask how he intended to do the particular project. Then we would see what OHJ recommended, and whatever his earlier plans, we still did it *your* way. And I have continued to subscribe and



read every issue, even though my efforts are done and the house — now considered a local showplace — is up for sale.

I am certain that my self-confi-

dence came mostly from what I had read in your publications. I learned to be obstinate and insist that the woodwork be stripped of old, darkened shellac. I learned to ignore the derision when it was noised around town that "that woman is actually going to wallpaper her front room with peacocks." I began to trust the hours of research I had put in and the previously untapped sense of color which surfaced from somewhere in my being just when I needed it most. (Those peacocks looked utterly ridiculous to me when I first saw them, too!)

But I knew very early that I could not take credit for all of it. Although my house possesses nothing that "goes bump in the night," it definitely does have its own personality. When I tried to ignore its idiosyncracies my house told me of my error,

*continued on page 10*

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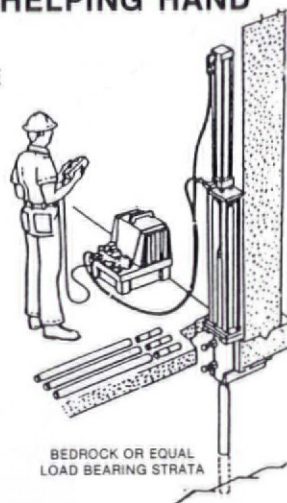
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# LETTERS

continued from page 8

and I would set to work to make things right.

As was bound to happen, articles in recent issues of OHJ tell me things I wish I'd known three years ago. And I wish I'd known that I was acting as my own general contractor — I thought I was just hiring an assortment of people to do the rewiring, the new heating system, the new roof, and the myriad types of carpentry and decorating which had to be done.

While the neighbor ladies tut-tutted at the hard labor I was putting in — there were times when I simply could not get out of bed the next day — I denied that it was really work because it was all so satisfying.

Now I must rest from my labors. I'll soon be 66, and so it is time to sit back, survey what I have done, and say to myself, "It is good."

Thank you so very much for all your help.

— Betty Dove Wright  
Deadwood, S.D.

Dear Ms. Poore,

I continue to find your magazine a fascinating mix of romantic visionary ideals and hard-headed common-sense solutions. Keep it up!

— Donald L. McKinsey  
Charlotte, N.C.

## Colonial Revival

Dear OHJ:

I was interested in reading George Wilkinson's inquiry in the November/December '88 issue [*"Colonial Revival," Ask OHJ*]. His house was designed by Boston architect Royal Barry Wills, who, prior to World War Two, built numerous houses in the Colonial Revival style on the east side of Melrose, Massachusetts. He was



particularly fond of designing Cape Cod cottages, and there are many examples of his designs in New England.

I have lived in several of his houses — I grew up in one in Needham, which won the *Better Homes & Gardens* prize. Later, he designed a colonial center entrance for me, which his oldest son built while his younger son supervised the building.

Mr. Wills wrote several books, including *Homes for Good Living*,

continued on page 12

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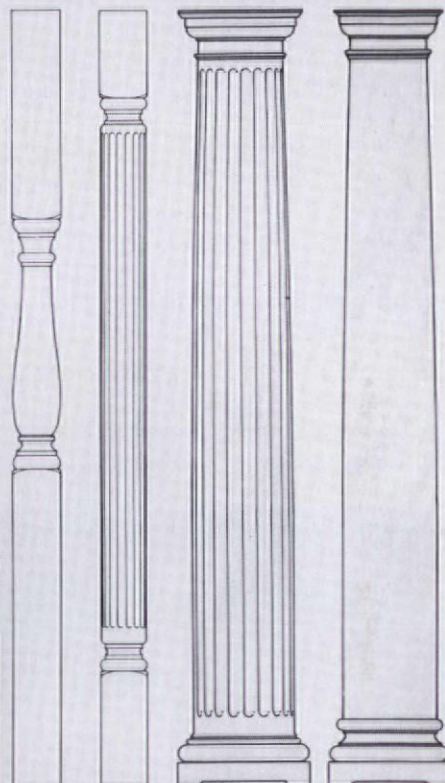
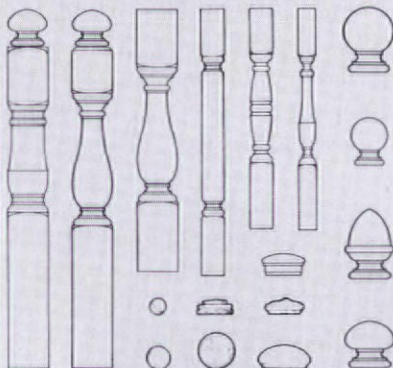
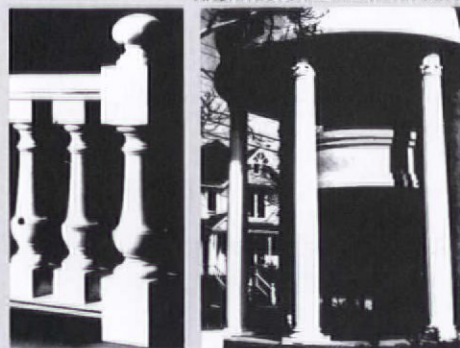
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*continued from page 10*  
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— George Williams  
 Kensington, N.H.

[A plan for a similar Georgian house with bipped roof appears on page 58.]

## A Pegged Floor

Dear Editor,

Sometime last spring, my wife and I decided to embark on a modest cosmetic change in the living room of our 1727 Saltbox home. All the woodwork, including the large mantel, had several layers of paint over varnish. After considering the alternatives, we felt it best to remove the woodwork and strip it before applying any new finish.

The Mushroom Factor took over, and now our living room is, well,

primitive. The plaster has been removed from the ceiling, revealing the very unusual summer beam and joists, and the fireplace wall has had the plaster removed, revealing the original, beautiful paneling. In addition, all the brick creating a modern fireplace have been removed, revealing the large stone fireplace.

Now we have also removed the 1950s tongue-and-groove oak flooring, revealing the original flooring. Other "old-house nuts" have visited, oohing and aahing over the fascinating craftsmanship and details. A restoration expert was also consulted, and as a result the project is stalled. The problem is that there are several unique features that demand professional documentation and analysis, and these require time and funding. We can live for a time with the room under construction, with plastic over the doorways, and living room furniture scattered to other rooms, but

how long will it take to get these preliminary and important tasks done? As yet, no one knows.

To do what needs to be done requires professional help, or at least professional consultation, and is beyond the means of my wife and me. (She's a teacher and I'm a clergyman.) Historical groups find it all very interesting and want us to preserve this early record of housebuilding, but no one is offering any financial help. Who knows where all this will lead!

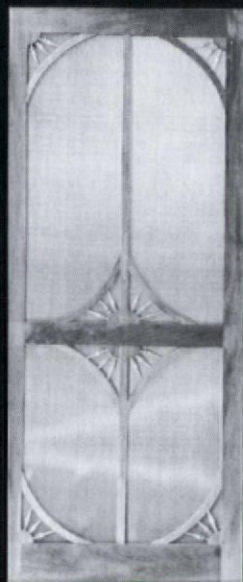
I went back to the March/April '88 issue of OHJ and re-read "The Bare Facts About Early Floors," and the other related articles. After our old flooring was revealed, the articles proved even more interesting.

Specifically, I want to add to the information provided by Mr. Cotton. While white pine may have been the favorite wood, our floor appears to

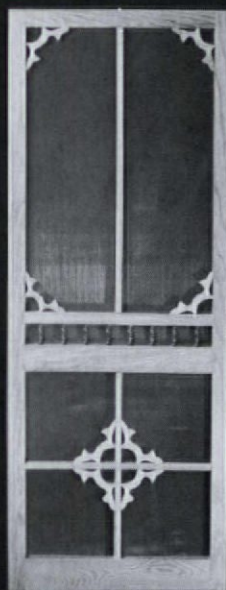
*continued on page 14*



## Creative Openings

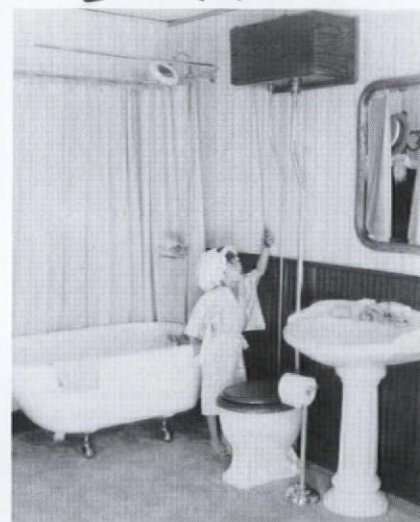


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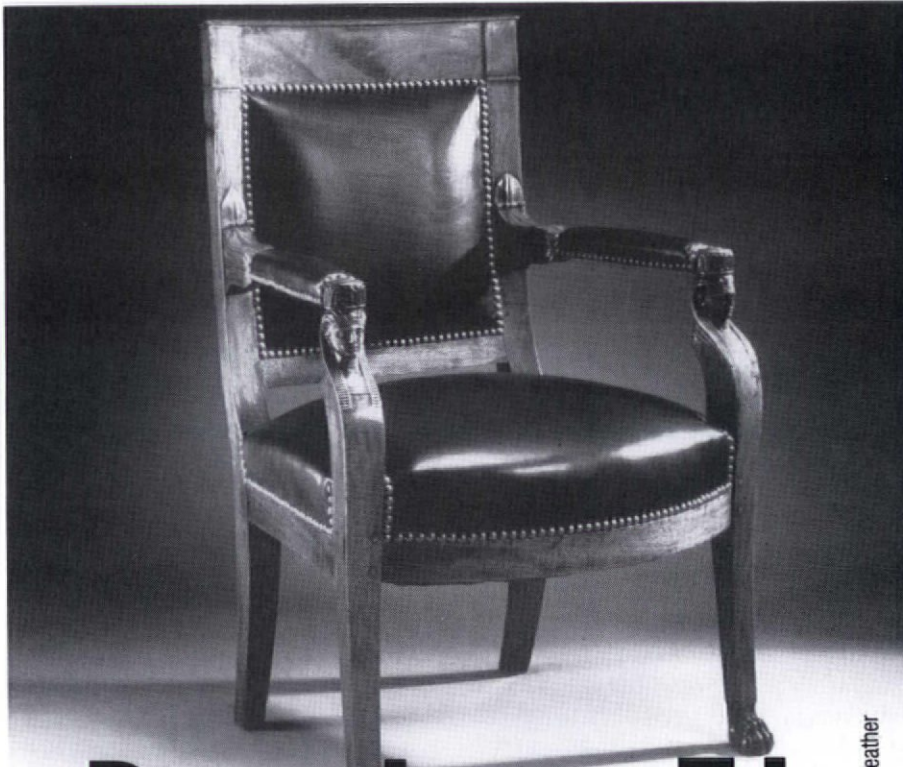
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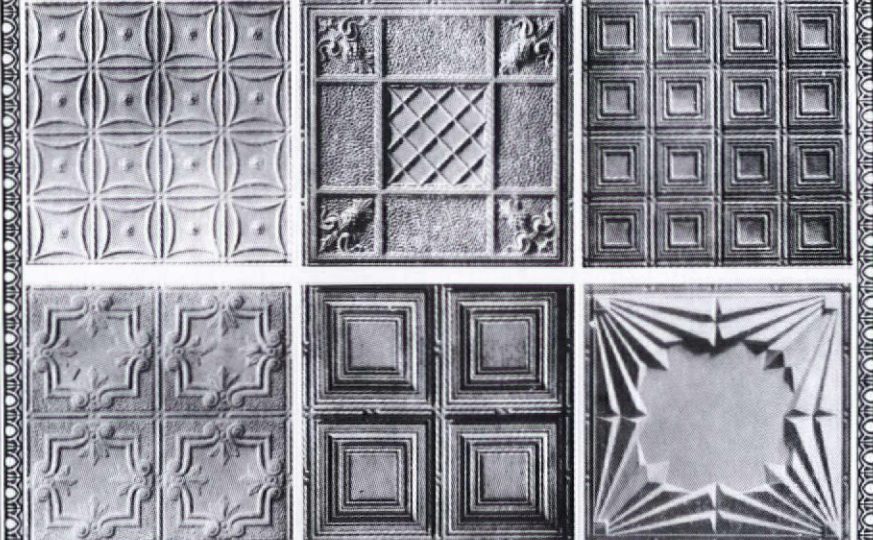
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*continued from page 12*

be oak — apparently, from one tree. (Flooring on the second floor and the attic was yellow pine and chestnut, with an occasional oak board.)

And here is the most interesting discovery of all. Our oak floor was *pegged* with pegs 1" to 1¼". To date, no one who has seen our floor has ever seen any other pegged floor. This may be at least one "historical precedent," though the size of the pegs is very different from the plugs used to cover the countersunk screws mentioned in the article.

We don't know what we're going to do yet, but we need to proceed, and want to do so without destroying the unique aspects of our "living museum."

— Robert D. McNaughton  
Cromwell, Conn

*We showed your letter to John Obed Curtis, director of the Curatorial De-*

*partment at Old Sturbridge Village. He found this floor to be "perfectly extraordinary. A pegged floor in a stable is rare enough; but in my 30 years' experience, I've seen no precedent for its domestic use. I urge the McNaughtons to cover and protect the floor — even a simple ¾" plywood overlayment and something over that, building in a trap door so that at least part of the original floor can still be viewed."*

*Andrew Ladygo, Architectural Conservator at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, was equally impressed. He seconded John's recommendation and added: "J. Frederick Kelly's Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut discusses oak as a favored early flooring, but we haven't seen much of it. And pegged floors have usually been restored based on hearsay, not physical evidence — until now. It's very important that they do nothing to alter*

*or remove the original materials."*

*Obviously, all the experts agree that the original floor should not be removed. If you don't want to donate your living room to museum science, it seems the advice to overlay the floor — but allow access — is most sensible. — ed.*

## Architectural Specter

Dear OHJ,

The Ghost Stories were interesting and believable, and a fun way to celebrate your 15th anniversary [OHJ, Sept./Oct. 1988]. But I hope you'll keep doing what you do best: the how-to restoration stuff I can't find anywhere else.

Otherwise, you'll have to change your name to *Fine Housebaunting* or *Wooden Ghost*. Or *Historic Premonition*.

— N. Tropy  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

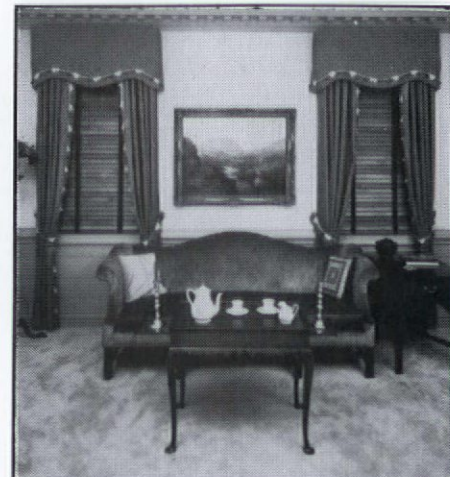
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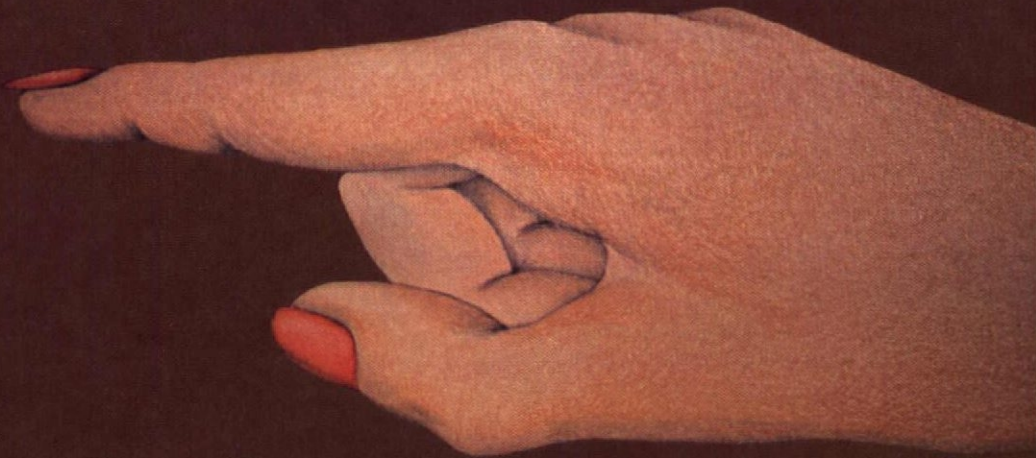
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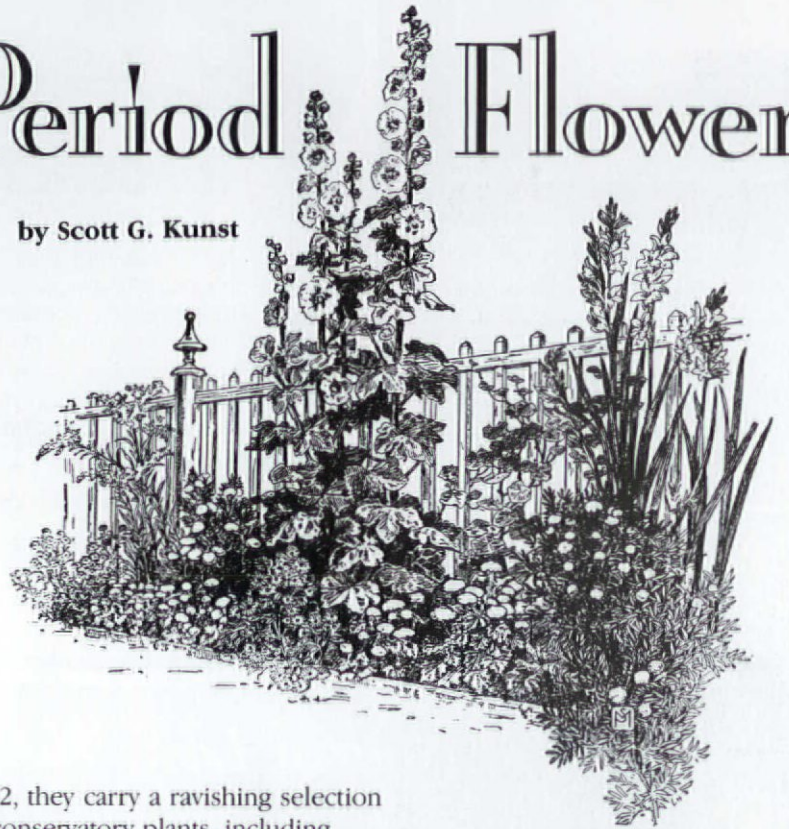


# Where to Find Period Flowers

**M**ail-order plant catalogs arrive daily on gardeners' doorsteps at this time of year because *now* is the time to plan for spring planting. Commercial nurseries carry mostly modern hybrids, but some antique varieties can be found buried in their catalogs. The 1851 "Festiva Maxima," for example, is still a ubiquitous bestselling peony.

No one nursery will meet all your needs. (There is, alas, no "Williamsburg-in-a-Can.") Curl up in front of a roaring fire with some of these catalogs, which are especially useful to the old-house gardener.

by Scott G. Kunst



**The Fragrant Path, PO Box 328, Dept. OHJ, Fort Calhoun, NE 68023. Catalog, \$1.**

In an engagingly personal catalog, the Fragrant Path offers "seeds for fragrant, rare, and old-fashioned plants." These range from tiny creepers to 75-foot trees and include prairie flowers, herbs, and enough vines to please Victorian tastemaker A.J. Downing.

**Historic Plant Center, Monticello, PO Box 316, Dept. OHJ, Charlottesville, VA 22902. Free catalog.**

Thomas Jefferson was an avid gardener, and the caretakers of his estate, Monticello, recently established an ambitious Historic Plant Center. The center's short but growing seed list includes the striking hyacinth-bean vine with rosy-purple flowers and reddish pods.

**Logee's Greenhouses, 55 North St., Dept. OHJ, Danielson, CT 06239. Catalog, \$3.**

To fill a porch basket or cast-iron urn, turn to Logee's. Established in

1892, they carry a ravishing selection of conservatory plants, including many antiques. Try the Victorian geranium "Mrs. Cox" with leaves of yellow, green, and red, or one of a dozen passionflowers.

**Roses of Yesterday and Today, 802 Brown's Valley Rd., Dept. OHJ, Watsonville, CA 95076. Catalog, \$2.**

Carefree, fragrant, and lush, old roses are making a big comeback. Mainstream catalogs offer a few, but specialist growers offer hundreds. Roses of Yesterday and Today is a top-notch source with an informative catalog.

**Select Seeds, 81 Stickney Hill Rd., Dept. OHJ, Union, CT 06076. Free catalog.**

Select Seeds got its start when owner Marilyn Barlow went looking for historic plants for the garden of her 1830s house. Now in its third year, it's the country's only nursery devoted exclusively to antique flowers.

**Thompson and Morgan, PO Box 1308, Dept. OHJ, Jackson, NJ 08527. Free catalog.**

Enormously comprehensive, the catalog of Thompson and Morgan, a British-based firm, offers seed for everything from ornamental bananas to 42 pansies. Only a few are historic, but that still adds up to a lot.

**Wayside Gardens, Dept. OHJ, Hodges, SC 29695. Catalog, \$1.**

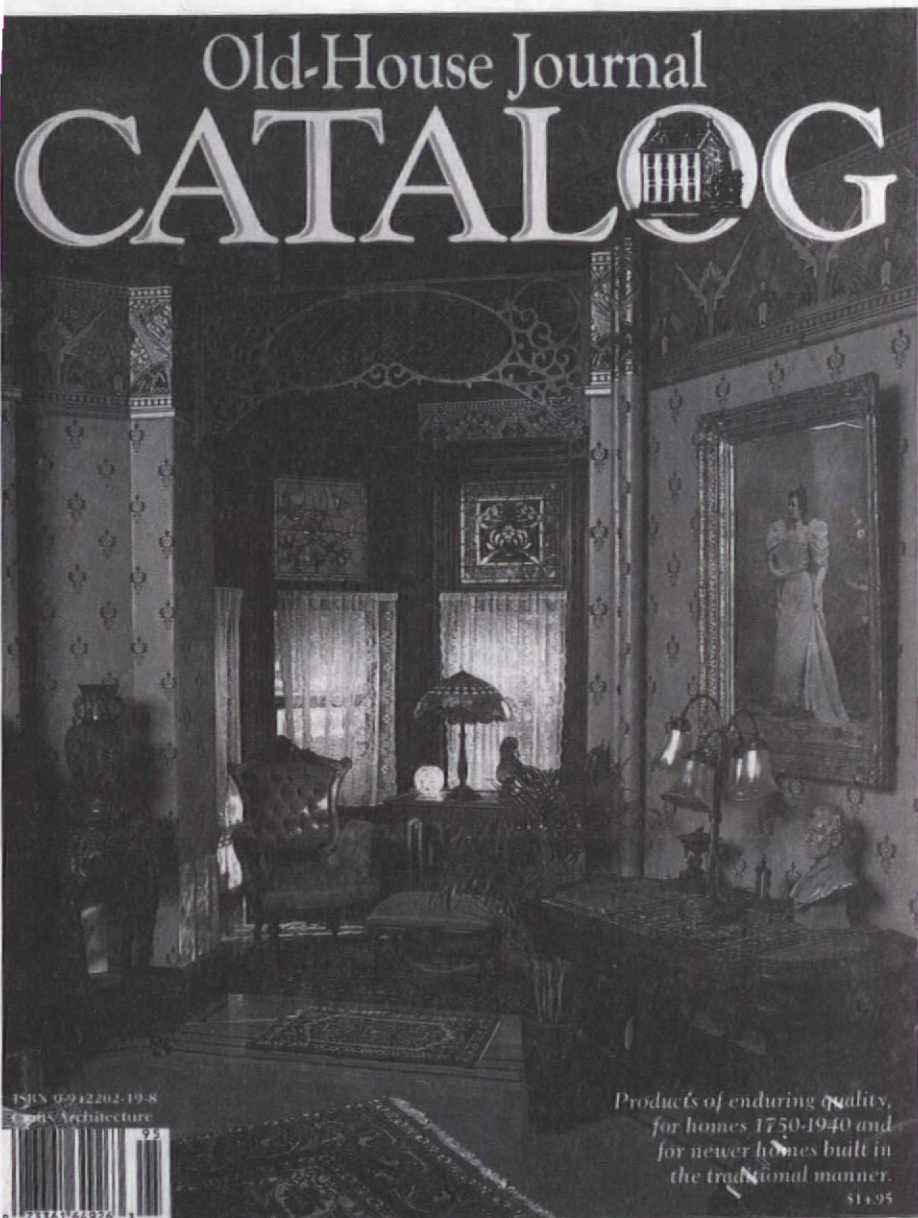
Wayside Gardens highlights the new and unusual, but their broad offering of nursery stock includes historic plants as well — "Distinction" hyacinth, "Rock's Variety" tree peony, and others. Their color photographs are useful, too.

*Scott G. Kunst heads a company that designs period landscapes: Old House Gardens, 536 Third Street, Dept. OHJ, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. (313) 995-1486.*

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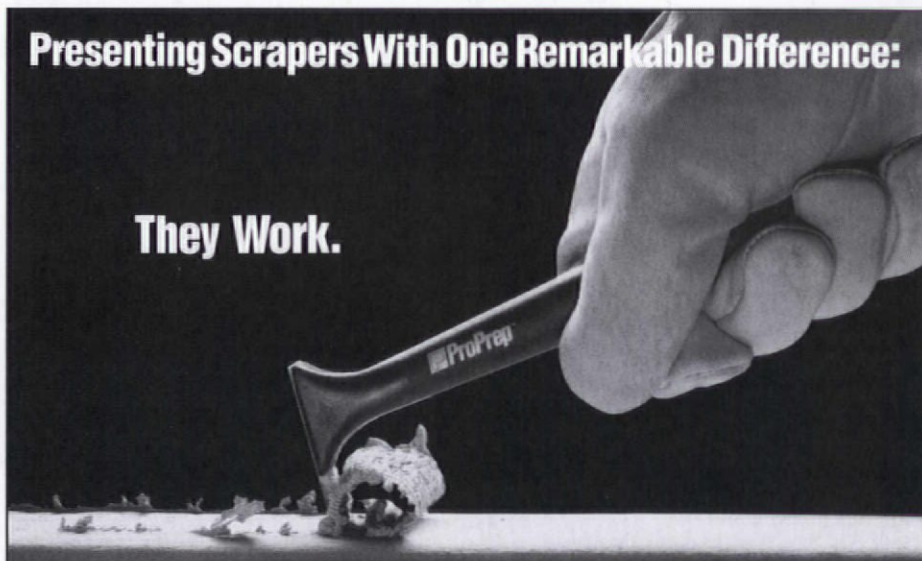
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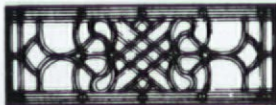
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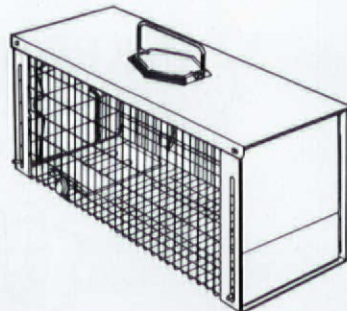


### Animal Pests

**Q** I'm writing for advice about a serious squirrel problem we are having here at the Valentine-Varian House Museum. What route would you suggest for their removal? To whom can you refer us for help?

— Joseph D. Connors  
Manager, Valentine-Varian House  
Bronx, N.Y.

**A** There are no magic solutions to getting rid of animal pests. The most successful — and humane — method is to trap and relocate the critters. You can get live-animal cage traps of varying sizes (squirrel/chipmunk, rabbit/muskrat, raccoon/woodchuck, etc.) from Woodstream Corp., Box 327, Lititz, PA 17543; (717) 626-2125. Their catalog of Havahart®



traps is free (as is a catalog of humane rodent traps).

We'd also like to recommend Richard A. Patterson's book, There's a Bat in the Attic and a Woodchuck in the Garden. He's written a knowledgeable and thorough explanation on how to cope with a range of animal troublemakers, from rodents and snakes to birds and bats. It's available for \$5 ppd. from Indian Creek Nature Center, 6665 Otis Road SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401.

To keep them from coming back, of course, you'll have to do a thorough inspection of the attic, basement, and crawlspaces for points of entry. Seal 'em all up.

### Sill Fungi

**Q** My house was built around 1830; about 1900, it was disassembled and moved to another site. The building is now on a stone foundation and the basement is damp. I cannot change this construc-



## Big Bed, Narrow Stair

How do you get a queen-size boxspring up that Victorian stairwell? My wife and I recently moved into an early Victorian cottage, and we met with this predicament. Our favorite bed would not make it through the stairwell or through any window. A friend suggested cutting the boxspring in two. I removed the fabric underneath and some of the staples holding the quilting. My friend kept the quilted side away from the saw as I cut all the framing running the width of the boxspring. It folded very nicely, and I spliced the framing back together with 12-inch-long boards after it was in the bedroom. (Don't use any glue on your splices; you'll probably need to take the boxspring apart if you ever have to move it downstairs.)

— Tom Elliott  
Richmond, Virg.

## Foil with Oil

A great way to remove tar or oil-based paint from your hands and tools is to use cooking oil or baby oil instead of harsh solvents that can damage your skin. Just put a little oil in your hands and rub them together; the paint will come right off. The same goes for your tools. It sometimes will remove paint spots from your clothes, too!

— Michael G. Cohan  
Oak Lawn, Ill.

## Floor Stripping

Some floors in our old house had been heavily painted with green enamel. Previous owners sanded the floors, gave up midway, and varnished over the whole mess!

Wanting to restore what we knew to be wide-board, honey-toned pine floors, we used many trusted chemical removers — all to no avail. Even our beloved heat gun failed to make a dent in the glass-like enamel finish.

Enter a product which worked and was pleasant to use, with only a faint peroxide odor: Brookstone Paint

Stripper #08793. We ordered it from Brookstone, 5 Vose Farm Road, Peterborough, NH 03458; (603) 924-9541.

Our procedure:

- 1) Mix and apply as directed on the container.
- 2) Cover the coated floor with strips of Saran Wrap to keep the paste moist.
- 3) Wait two hours. Then, working in areas about 3' x 5', remove the plastic wrap, lift and discard loosened paint gunk with a putty knife.
- 4) Scrub the floor with a brush and hot water. Wash and rinse with rags and clean water.
- 5) If necessary, repeat the process on areas where paint still remains.
- 6) When the floor is clean, rinse with white vinegar and water.
- 7) Allow the floor to dry for a few days before sanding and finishing.

Dorothy and Larry Serravalli  
High Falls, N.Y.

The door is supported on a nail through each of the supports, so it can be rotated and secured with another nail on the top brace. Then you strip one side, flip it over, and do the other side. When it's dry, re-finish it and let it dry just for a half hour or so; then flip it over and do the other side.

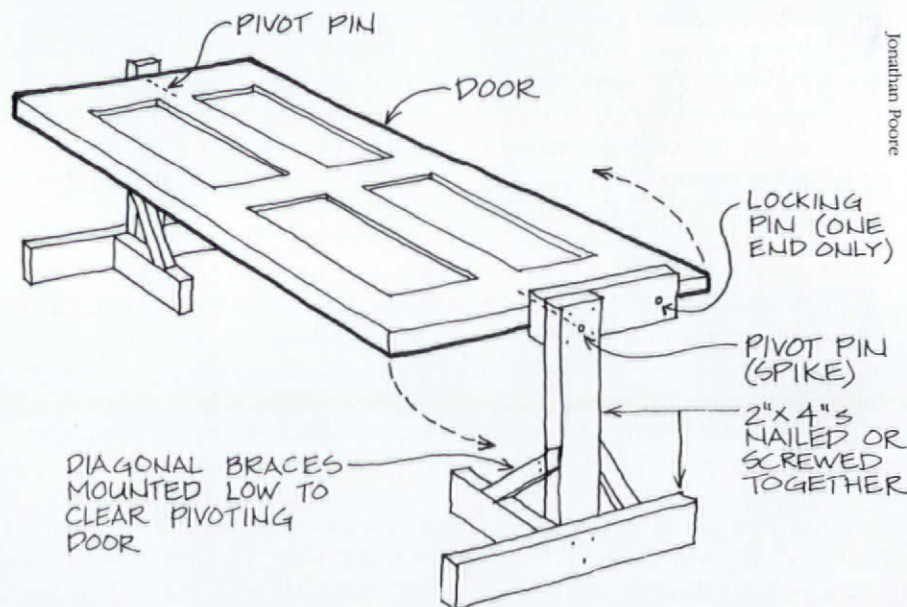
With the door supported horizontally, the finish won't run. Moulding can also be stripped and refinished with several pieces fastened to both sides of a large plank of plywood (or even an old door) with finishing nails.

If dust is a problem, let the finish dry completely while the door is turned over; then do the top side. My doors now have a beautiful, smooth, speck-free finish.

— Irvin Aaron  
Birmingham, Alabama

## Support Your Door

I used some scrap pieces of 2 x 4 to build two supports to strip the beautiful old heart-pine doors in my 1904 house. It's easy to build and easy to use — and makes the job easier if you have to work on a lot of doors.



Jonathan Poore

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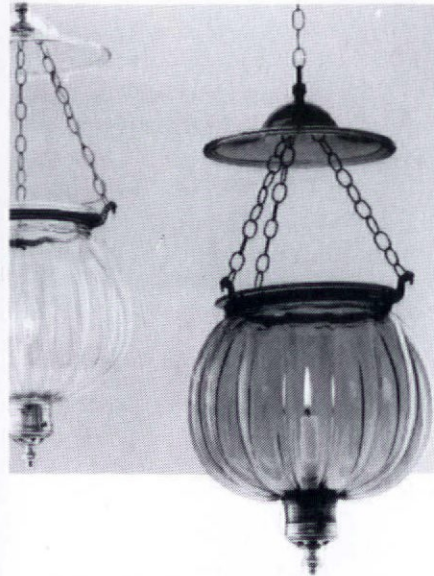
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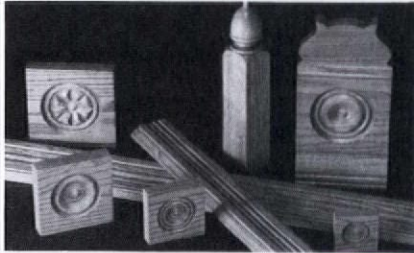


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OLD  
HOUSE  
LIVING

# A Family Homestead Lost

by Penny Waring



ince the turn of this century, the house we knew as Matthew Pines has presided quietly over a North Carolina hilltop. My grandmother kept the pine saplings meticulously topped, a sort of hedge lining the county dirt road that circled past our driveway. Those pines now tower 20 feet in the air, but from the front porch, you can still see the mountains.

Matthew Pines was built as a boardinghouse for Charlestonians fleeing the summer heat. A dining room, now a great room, was centrally placed for access from the back kitchen and from the back and side porches. Upstairs, four very large, high-ceilinged bedrooms, each with its own fireplace, provided grand accommodations for the visitors from the city. (Altogether, there were 23 rooms and 11 working fireplaces!)

My grandfather and grandmother, Charles and Eloise Matthew, had planned to purchase the property with

DuBose Heyward, the Charleston author of *Porgy*; they would name it Matt Heyven. However, Mr. Heyward (known to us as "Uncle Bo") died before it could be bought. Weese and Gramp bought it anyway in the 1930s, and named it Matthew Pines.

For more than 40 years, this graceful old house sheltered my family. It was a place for cousins to be reunited in summer. It was the place I brought my children and my cousin Chad brought his.

In 1976, after Gramp died, Matthew Pines was put up for sale. By then, even my mother's generation was elderly and living in Florida, and Mother and her four brothers and sisters needed the money from the sale to help out with retirement. My five cousins and I couldn't afford to buy the house, as much as we wanted to. So there was an estate sale — the kind where antiques dealers come in and tag everything, then thundering hordes of strangers come through the house, grabbing and carting off the stuff your life is made of.



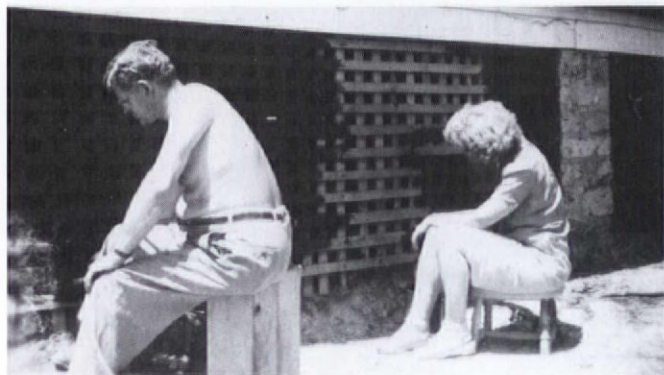
*Weese and Gramp in front of the flagpole on the porch.*

Matthew Pines' four-and-a-half acres included an apple orchard, woods, and a cleared slope where my grandfather planted crabapples and a few silver birch trees. (Silver birches reminded Gramp of his boyhood in Nova Scotia.) I remember that, in spring, violets colored most of the slope purple, and yellow jonquils lined the driveway, competing for attention with the pink azaleas and Gramp's "Red Emperor" tulips. By summer,

Gramp's rose trellis at the front porch would be laden with large red roses, and his small vegetable and flower gardens behind the house would be overflowing with dahlias, grapes, tomatoes, and squash.

Wide stone steps led up to Matthew Pines' large, welcoming front porch. As you entered the front hall, our dining room was on the left. It was used only on holidays. When I was young, I used to love the beautiful mahogany china cabinet in that room. It had mirrored sides, glass shelves, and carved pineapple finials. From the time I was in high school, I polished this cabinet, carefully removing the set of Royal Doulton's "Old Leeds Sprays" piece by piece.

Down the front hall on the right, just before the stairway, was the room that was my grandfather's and then my mother's. It had built-in cedar cabinets that Weese used for linens. A piece of linoleum was tacked over the fireplace to keep out the draft; a gas heater was used to heat the room. Over the heater, a hole was cut into the ceiling and



*Rev. "Doc" and Gigi Rollins, family friends, treat the lattice to a coat of paint.*

the floor above it, and a register was put in so that my room on the second floor could be heated — more or less. Because it led from the front hall through to the big room (as we called it), Weese called that bedroom "Highway 66."

**There was an estate sale — the kind where antiques dealers come in and tag everything, then thundering hordes of strangers come through the house, grabbing and carting off the stuff your life is made of.**

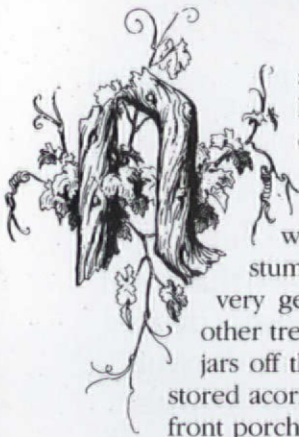
The house was built with indoor plumbing (so much for rustic living). But that didn't stop Gramp from using the shower on the back porch in all but the bitterest weather. Gramp's shower is gone now. The set tubs are



*The mortgage-burning party at the Pines.*

still there; we used to bathe in them as tots. On that same porch, a neighbor who worked for my grandmother did the laundry year after year, using an old wringer-washer, before hanging out the clothes under the fragrant pines to dry. My grandfather would often take the clothes down in the evening, singing, "Bringing in the sheets, bringing in the sheets," in his powerful baritone voice.

Originally, I'm told, Matthew Pines had mustard-color clapboard, with white trim. But I only remember it with white asbestos shingles, with dark green trim. There was a wonderful tin roof upon which the rain would patter and thump, especially in summer. You could hear it best in the breakfast nook/canning shed at the back of the house. Gramp made home brew, Weese canned beans and preserves, and we used to eat back there. The awninged window looked out at the mountains. Gramp's blue morning glories climbed the window and peeked at us at breakfast.



s children, we were very fortunate to have this warm family retreat to nurture our imaginations. We had a wishing rock, almost hidden by mountain laurel, where we could sit and wish for what children wish for. We had a bunny stump — a hollowed tree stump where a very generous bunny would leave candy or other treats for us. We collected water in Mason jars off the back porch during downpours, and stored acorns from the oak trees in jars under the front porch. We caught fireflies on warm summer evenings, running around the lawns until it was too dark to see, while our parents sat on the front porch talking and laughing in the old cypress-knee furniture my grandmother found in Florida.

That porch holds so many memories! There was an American flag on one corner that we always waved when visitors left. They could be way down the county road and



*Here I am at 18 months.*

came to steal the seed. He kept a detailed log of the weather, as well as a daily journal of plantings and goings-on about the house. A former Canadian woodsman, Gramp would regale us with his tales of the Kennebecasis River. His brother Harrison ("Uncle Hatch"), who remained in Canada, would send us maple leaves, letters written on birch bark, and dubious seaweed delicacies that none of us children could stand.

Gramp's screened porch off the cottage near the main house was wonderful for family gatherings, when we didn't picnic or barbecue on the lawn below. (The brick barbecue area is falling down now. My uncle John Lewis, an artist, designed and built an ultra-modern barbecue, and Gramp never missed a chance to make fun of it. Of course, he was joking.) When that porch was being built in the 1950s, my cousins Margo and Charles narrowly missed being hit by lightning, which burst from a summer afternoon sky, hit



*The front porch steps — always a favorite for family photographs.*

still see us, standing on the porch railing, furiously waving that flag. They'd blow their horns, and streamers of dust would unfurl behind the cars as they turned the bend in the road toward the paved highway.

And the attic. Eventually a pull-down staircase was installed, but you used to have to climb a ladder to get up there — which kept me out for a long time. There were old trunks and old documents up there (I found one signed by George Washington that allowed a relative, Asa Tyler, to pass safely over a bridge during the Revolutionary War), as well as old clothes, jet beads and jewelry and hair combs, long, trailing ball gowns, tiny white kid shoes and gloves, and everywhere, books. Grampa Tyler was a doctor who went to Harvard when he was 15 years old. His picture hung in the upstairs hall.

Gramp was the family naturalist. At the feed store in town, he'd buy cracked corn and sunflower seed for the birds, and he waged constant war against the squirrels who

a large pine and a metal whirligig, ran up the side of the porch, knocked off shingles, then was gone.



*Today, those front steps are deserted.*



o Matthew Pines was sold for \$36,000 to a California contractor who remodeled the house and sold it shortly thereafter for three times as much. But first he changed the dark-green trim to avocado and added "decorative" shutters. He bricked up the fireplace in the big room, up to the ceiling. The old toolshed beyond the breakfast nook was torn down and replaced with a large picture window.

The California contractor sold Matthew Pines to a family from Michigan who owned several other properties. Unfortunately, the husband died shortly thereafter. As far as I know, his wife has never lived there. Now Matthew Pines falls prey to vandals.

I visited the house last May with my cousins John and Margo and my son Sean. We found that Gramp's little hill-top gardens are now a 15-foot-tall mass of primrose bramble. You can't even see the grape arbor Uncle Lyon built from pine saplings anymore. The back porch floor is rotting away. A kitchen had been installed in Gramp's bedroom, and someone had kicked in the appliances. A kerosene lamp had been smashed on the floor of the big room. The beds upstairs had been slept in and left rumpled. Glass in a front-hall door had been smashed. The glass is still on the floor, with plaster from the cracking wall. Dead birds and squirrels are everywhere. Brambles tangle among the oak leaves and pine needles covering the front steps. The old cypress-knee porch furniture is gone. English ivy (from a cutting from Westminster Abbey, Mother says) now overruns the side porch and threatens to climb the door to the big room. The rose trellis is barren. The tiny cedar I planted when Sean was two now towers in front of the flagpole on the front porch.



*The back porch is now rotting away*

The pink azalea I planted when my son Chris was born is gone. The holly tree we planted over my grandmother's ashes in the woods is 12 feet high; we could barely find it for the underbrush.

**I can smell the pines and feel the sun on my face, as if I were there on the front porch. That house has my heart and soul in its cracking plaster. . . .**

As we drove up the driveway, tears welled up in my eyes. No one has lived in this house for four years, and only renters lived there for years before that.

I've written to the current owner, but she's never replied. I've been told the house is for sale for more than \$100,000 — much too much for me to afford. Neither can my cousins



*Left to right: Earle Waring and Mary Matthew Waring (my mother and father), Lyon Tyler Matthew, Betse Matthew Lewis, Douglas DuBose Matthew, and Frank Sweetman (Betse's husband then) in the 1940s.*

afford it; John just bought a house for his growing family; Alice, his sister, works with street kids in Columbia, South Carolina; Chad lives abroad; Chad's sister Margo isn't getting rich working for a small Southern newspaper.

I think of Matthew Pines so often. Sometimes I can almost smell the pines and feel the sun on my face, as if I were there on the front porch. That house has my heart and soul in its cracking plaster and even in its remuddled avocado-colored shutters. If there's any way on earth, I'll have Matthew Pines back in our family. If I can't get it back, I'd be happy to see the house lived in and loved.





# EVALUATING ELECTRICAL WIRING

BY GORDON BOCK

Compared to water and gas, electricity is the youngest service, and the one that truly makes the modern house possible. In its short hundred years, domestic electric wiring has undergone a technical metamorphosis every two decades or so, and has grown from a temperamental novelty to a highly reliable resource. For owners of houses wired with one of these old systems — and most pre-1940 houses are — the big question is: *Where do I stand?*

The answer is not always simple and has at least two sides: legality and safety. The legality of existing wiring has to be determined case by case. The National Electrical Code (begun in 1897) is a set of model electrical safety requirements published for building and insurance inspectors and electrical contractors, and has no legal power of its own. Most cities and towns adopt the code as their standard, but they are also free to interpret and enforce it according to their needs. The result is that many an obsolete system that would not be permitted in new work is allowed to remain in service if deemed to be in safe

condition. A pass or fail depends on the local codes, and the judgment of the inspector.

The safety of old wiring, then, is the most important issue. The best remedy for any questionable circuit is, of course, disconnecting the system and installing new materials. In fact, electric wiring of any age has a finite life and might have to be replaced in the future.

While old wiring is in service, its safety can be improved by understanding what the system is and inspecting it with an eye for its known problem areas. Old houses are frequently wired with combinations of systems (for in-

stance, cleats *and* knob and tube *and* BX cable). Understanding the age and specific shortcomings of each type is important in determining whether it is workable, in need of repair, or completely obsolete. In addition, much old wiring falls short of the modern standards for insulation, current-carrying capacity, and grounding. Applying some basic practices, though, can keep these systems operating within their designed limits and help them run safely.

## PRE-1940 WIRING SYSTEMS

Electricity had no purpose in houses until it became a means to light them. The change came in 1879, when Thomas Edison built upon the experiments of many others to produce a practical incandescent lightbulb. Tom, also something of a businessman, realized that the market for his bulbs would be soft if no one had access to the energy that made them work. By 1882 he was operating the first plant specifically designed to supply electricity on demand to any consumer: Pearl Street Station in New York City.

Tom's power was DC (Direct Current), a cumbersome first choice for domestic electricity. Direct current is not transmitted easily over long distances, and buildings had to be wired

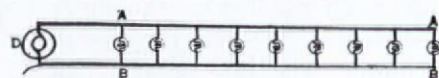


fig. 1

in the "tree" fashion (fig. 1) to feed early power-hungry bulbs. That is, the wire diameter was gauged down from the bottom to the top of the house by load. *Exposed* systems became the popular choice for finished buildings. The wires were stretched between cleats or knobs spaced about four feet apart, and run in open view on walls and up staircases to reach the next floor.

### CLEATS AND INSULATORS

**Wooden cleats** (fig. 2) supporting an exposed system, the earliest (and cheapest) wiring method, had disadvantages that were recognized early



fig. 2

on. First, the exposed wires were easily abraded and broken. Second, the wood could become an electrical conductor when it got damp, and might short-circuit the lines if splinters on the cleats had cut into the primitive insulation. They were obsolete by 1900.

**Porcelain cleats** (figs. 3 & 4) were intended to make a safer exposed system than wood and started to appear in the 1880s. Single or tandem wires

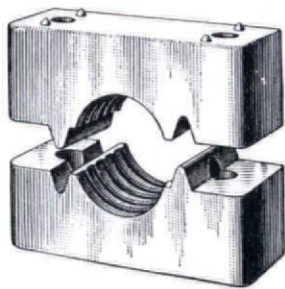


fig. 3

could be carried by mating ceramic halves that were superior to wood as insulators and eliminated the threat from splinters. Porcelain cleats were well adapted to high-voltage and industrial installations: they could be

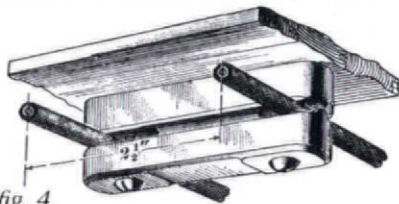


fig. 4

changed readily for repairs and alterations, running them high on walls and ceilings (out of harm's way) improved their safety, and they were inexpensive. Always ugly, they saw less use in houses, and were usually restricted to hidden areas such as basements and attics. In addition, they were considered unfit for wiring in damp places or outdoors as early as 1911.

**Porcelain and glass knobs** (fig. 5) were also used in exposed wiring, though the latter versions were more breakable and never as popular. Spacing was, again, required to be no more than four or four-and-a-half feet to make sure that parallel lines didn't sag and touch. The National Electrical Code now allows exposed wiring on



fig. 5

porcelain cleats or knobs only in industrial and agricultural installations, subject to local requirements.

Direct current systems survived into the 20th century in pockets around the country, but the seductive advantages of alternating current (you didn't need a generating station every three blocks or so) made it the preferred power after 1890. Much of the equipment designed for DC could also be used for AC, but as electricity became more popular, there was a demand for better-looking (and, secondarily, safer) wiring.

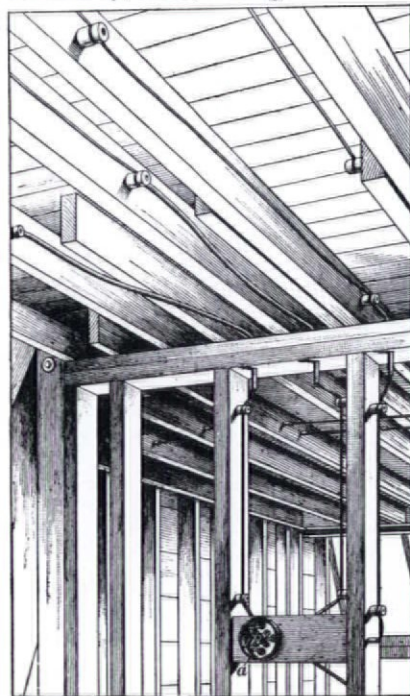


fig. 8

#### KNOB AND TUBE

**Knob-and-tube** wiring was a *concealed* (hidden in walls and under floors) version of the exposed knob system. Porcelain knobs (fig. 6) carried individual lines along open runs (such as the length of a floor joist), while tubes of the same material (fig. 7) were inserted through the wood as protectors when making runs perpendicular to framing (fig. 8). Knob spacing was still a maximum of four-and-a-half feet,

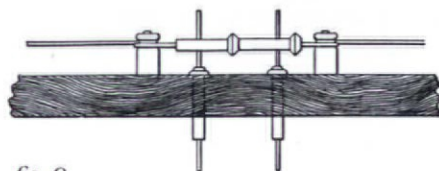


fig. 9

and wires had to be located at least one inch off the carrying surface and five inches from other wires. Where wires had to cross each other in close proximity, tubes were also employed as protective sheathing by taping them in place on the wire (fig. 9). Loom (made of woven fabric) was usually slipped over wire ends where they connected with switches, outlets, fuse boxes, or other terminations.

Knob and tube could be installed cost-effectively in both new and existing construction, and thus was highly popular, despite its flaws, from the 1890s until after 1920. The considera-

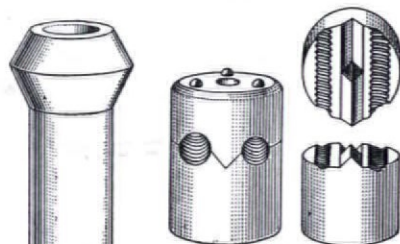


fig. 6

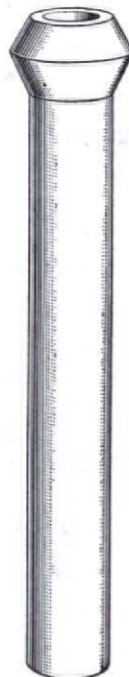


fig. 7

ble in-air isolation of the wires was the system's biggest attribute, making accidental bridging of the lines (with a misplaced drill bit or nail, for instance) unlikely. The system was plagued by most of the drawbacks of exposed cleat or knob work, though, and kept these problems hidden in an environment of wood and sawdust where fires start easily. Completely unprotected from mechanical injury, the copper conductors were essentially naked except for the electrical insulation. Rubber or other insulating material was easily removed by rodents (or nicked by humans while doing alterations), producing a great potential for disaster (fig. 10). Poorly soldered connections

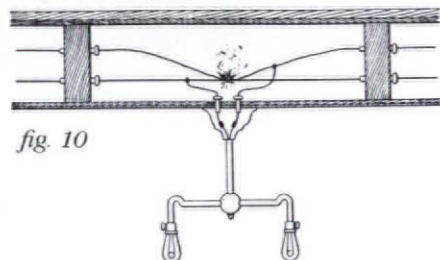


fig. 10

Short circuit in the floor above chandelier.

on tap lines could heat up to the combustion point, a threat recognized before the turn of the century. Dampness, too, was still an enemy, particularly when parallel knob runs were laid out — contrary to most regulations — on the same rafter or floor joist. Although it saw later use in rural areas, there was a strong call for the outlawing of knob and tube by 1921.

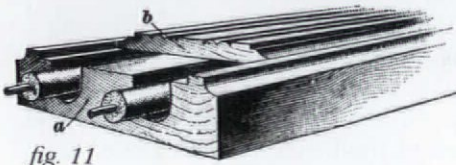


fig. 11

### MOULDING

Wood and metal surface mouldings were a solution to the aesthetic problems of exposed wiring systems. Retrofitting existing houses with the new power was a big chunk of the early electrical business, but a concealed system was prohibitively expensive for some customers. Mouldings, however, made it possible to wire a building with a non-concealed system that didn't look like railroad tracks, and at about 50% of the cost of concealed.

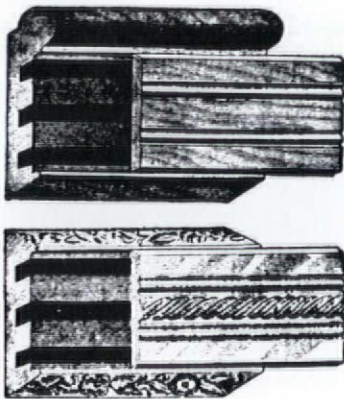
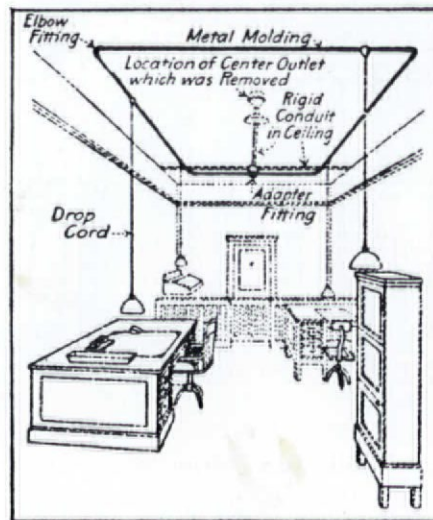


fig. 11a

**Wood mouldings** (fig. 11) were decorative, inexpensive, easy to use, and a big hit early on. They were assembled from two weatherproof-painted pieces: a base strip channeled to accept either two or three wires, and a cap that was usually beaded with some ornamental design. Layouts could be planned so that they harmonized with a room by following its lines (much like interior trim) and still service lights and other electrical apparatus.

Convenient as this system was, it had safety drawbacks. Wood moulding offered the wiring it carried little protection from impact, and could even attract trouble by being mistaken for solid wood and having nails driven into it. The wood was so close to the wiring, it ignited readily if there were overload problems, and like wooden cleats, could short the lines if it became wet. Money-saving installation shortcuts often made this system even more dangerous. Mouldings were intended to be made of hardwoods, but softwoods could be substituted at half the price — and with even more vulnerability to water. Another economy was eliminating the base strip and just using a grooved version of the cap. This practice didn't guard the wiring, it just hid the problems. By 1911, use of wooden moulding in damp locations was not permitted, and it was not recommended for any application in most communities by the '30s.



Metal moulding installed in a panel effect.

**Metal mouldings** (fig. 12) appeared shortly after 1900, and were outselling wood by the 1920s. Also a base-and-cap design, they were made from galvanized sheet metal and were usually large enough to hold four #14 wires. Metal moulding was slim and took paint well, and thus was relatively inconspicuous. As a safety measure, all mouldings had to be grounded at at least two points.

Despite its many advantages, metal moulding had limitations. It could not

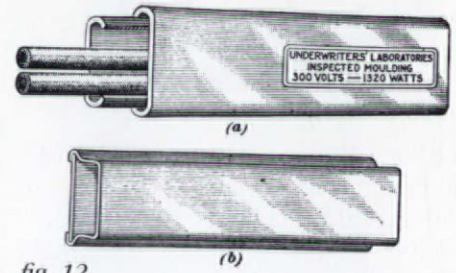
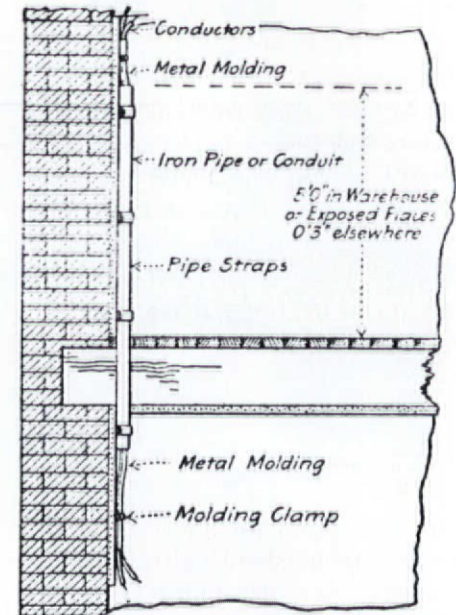


fig. 12

be used where dampness was a threat, and the National Electrical Code restricted its use to surface wiring. Early types had no galvanizing along the cut edges of the metal, which opened the possibility of either sharp edges or rust compromising the wiring insulation and causing shorts. Improved versions of metal mouldings are still on the market today, and are approved for most dry, surface installations.



Metal moulding through floor protected by iron pipe.

### PLASTER

Embedding wiring in plaster or masonry was, both figuratively and literally, a short-lived technique. Even in 1897, the Edison Illuminating Company noted it was "peculiar to modern fireproof building construction, and is rather more popular than its merits deserve."

**Wiring in plaster** was supposed to produce a high-quality concealed job. The method was straightforward: insulated wires were simply mortared



over while running cornices, repairing or finishing walls, or laying brickwork. Besides making faults nearly impossible to locate and messy to repair, this kind of wiring was doomed technically. The lime in either plaster or brick mortar decomposed the insulation, rendering the system highly dangerous. The National Electrical Code stopped recommending wiring in plaster by 1901.

## CONDUIT

Conduit and pipe, always considered the best wiring methods money could buy, had a limited appeal for houses because they took, roughly, twice the money to buy.

**Rigid conduit** (fig. 13), made from nonmetallic fiber for a brief early period, was primarily iron or steel piping. The plumbing of gaslight systems undoubtedly spawned the idea of protecting electric wiring with pipe and, indeed, wires were snaked through defunct gas pipes in countless retrofits. In time, the same gauge pipe and fittings, galvanized or enameled on their interiors, were also used for new work.

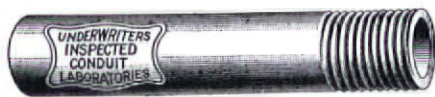
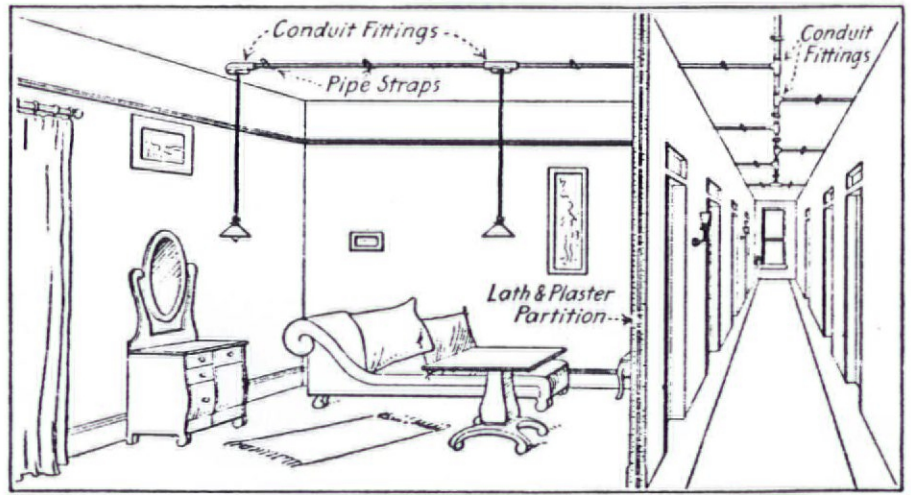


fig. 13

Rigid conduit provided excellent mechanical protection for the wiring, but it could develop electrical faults. Plumbing that once served as gas lines might retain moisture that would rust the interior of the pipe. This in turn would deteriorate the electrical insulation of the wiring (rubber with a double fabric braid), and the bare copper conductor would come in contact with the metal pipe. If the pipe was resting on damp wood, a short was likely and fire possible. For this reason, all conduit systems were required to be grounded at two locations. Coating the interior of pipes to inhibit rust was a step toward improving this safety problem, but highly reliable conduit wiring had to wait for the introduction of vinyl insulation after 1940. The acceptability of early rigid conduit systems for use today is dependent upon local codes.



An exposed conduit installation.

**Flexible steel conduit** (fig. 14), also known as **Greenfield** after the inventor of one model, was manufactured from galvanized steel strips assembled in a manner that allowed the finished "pipe" to be readily articulated in almost any direction. In use, it was first run through walls and voids, secured at bends, and then snaked with wiring to complete the installation.

Flexible conduit appeared at the turn of the century, and seemed to be

provide an unbroken electrical path (as a continuous wire or pipe might), and rust or poor connections along the way could become high-resistance "hot spots" that might heat to the point of combustion. Modern versions of flexible conduit are extensively used, subject to local code requirements.

## ARMORED CABLE

Similar in concept to flexible conduit, armored cable (fig. 15) came prefab-



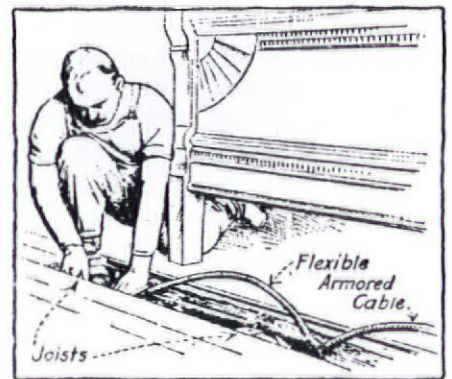
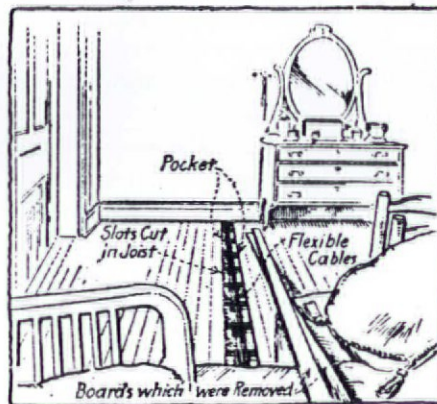
fig. 14

an ideal means to wire a finished building. It provided good mechanical protection for the wiring, it was well adapted to retrofit installations and it was easy to work with. Like rigid conduit, though, there was a potential for problems if the wiring insulation failed and sought a ground through the steel. The multiple flexible sections did not



fig. 15

ricated with the wiring in place and protected by a continuous spiral galvanized-metal strip. Cable was made practical by (and relied upon) improved insulation compounds that stayed intact when bent in tight turns. The popular versions were known as BX and BXL (which had an interior lead sheath for damp applications).



Rust, again, is early armored cable's worst enemy. The sheet-metal armor was ungalvanized along its edges after cutting (much like metal moulding), and rusted over time. Like flexible conduit, hot spots and sparks were found to develop along the spiral if it should accidentally become a ground path. Years later, the problem was compounded in many installations by hooking up the armor as a working, "third wire" ground — a job it was

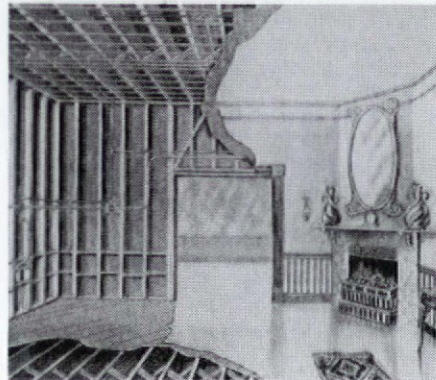


fig. 16

never intended to perform. The dangers of this practice led to code restrictions for BX in the past. Today, armored cable is manufactured with continuous ground conductors and rust-inhibiting armor, and is approved by the National Electrical Code for dry, residential applications (fig. 16).

## INSULATION, CURRENT-CARRYING CAPACITY, AND GROUNDING

### INSULATION

Electrical insulation, always the Achilles heel of early wiring, is no less of a problem as these systems age. Mr. Edison resorted to cloth strips soaked in linseed oil, asphalt, and wax after laying bare wires in wood tracks (underground) failed miserably. Prepared papers and varnished cloths in the 1800s had a fair tolerance to heat (about 150 degrees), but succumbed to moisture. Natural rubber compounds stood up to water, but melted in heat and oxidized (dried out and cracked) in air. Care and caution can improve the safety of old insulation still in use.

■ No old insulation can withstand the effects of moisture. Old wiring in damp locations should be replaced.

■ Rubber insulation (the standard before 1930) seems to have a life of about 25 years, so any such system still in use is operating beyond its expectancy. In this light, disturbing old wiring is very risky, as it can crack or break off insulation that is no longer supple, exposing bare copper wire. Extreme care should be taken when altering or even inspecting old lines.

■ Rubber insulation deteriorates more rapidly in open air than when confined in a conduit, say, or armored cable assembly. Therefore, most of the insulation on open wiring systems (like knob and tube) is frequently very brittle and a potential hazard. Confined wiring, on the other hand, may only be cracking where it leaves its enclosure to make connections at switches and outlets. These leads can be improved by wrapping with vinyl electrical tape or covering with heat-shrink tubing. In the case of armored cable, it is often possible to cut back to fresher insulation if there is enough slack in the cable. (Power must be disconnected before performing either of these operations.)

### CURRENT CARRYING CAPACITY

Old wiring has limited current (amperage) carrying capacity. Most pre-1940 systems were only intended to power lights and the odd radio, refrigerator, waffle or curling iron. Their branch lines are commonly #14 AWG wire, which is rated to carry no more than 15 amperes of load. (In contrast, the general service wiring of contemporary houses is frequently #12 — a size larger.) To avoid a fire hazard, it is important to make sure that old wiring isn't overloaded by today's complement of air conditioners and microwave ovens.

■ The combined wattage of all the lights and appliances on a branch circuit should not exceed the wattage rating of the fuse (or circuit breaker) protecting that circuit. For example: watts = amperes × volts; therefore, a 15-ampere fuse (multiplied by 115 volts, the usual figure) should not have to handle more than 1,725 watts.

■ The fuse protecting any circuit should be appropriate for the gauge of the wiring. Oversize fuses (installed in an attempt to get more capacity from the circuit) allow a line to carry more current than it is designed for, with overheating and fire as a potential result. To determine the correct fuse size for old wiring, first disconnect the power, then measure the diameter of the copper conductor with a wire gauge (fig. 17) and apply this table:

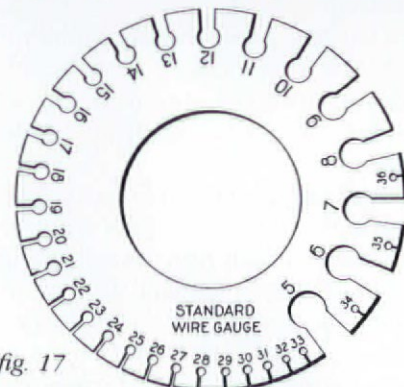


fig. 17

Wire Size	Maximum Fuse Size
#14	15 Amperes
#12	20 Amperes
#10	30 Amperes

■ The current-carrying capacity of concealed knob-and-tube systems depends on the circulation of free air around the wiring; it should not be surrounded with weatherproofing materials. When wall and attic spaces containing knob and tube are packed with rolled or blown-in insulation, the wiring is forced to conduct at a higher temperature that can break down old electrical insulation and start fires.

### GROUNDING

A ground-continuity test is valuable for determining if the safety leg on three-pin outlets actually is connected to ground. Since the 1950s, the National Electric Code has required that new domestic wiring be three-wire/grounded, but many three-pin outlets have also been retrofitted to old BX and conduit systems using armor or pipe as the ground conductor. To make sure the electrical path is not interrupted by breaks or loose connections, the ground can be checked either by an electrician, or by using simple test devices like those on page 70.

# WIRING TIPS FOR THE DO-IT-YOURSELFER... WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ELECTRICITY

BY DAN MILLER,  
ELGIN, ILLINOIS



... the newly-educated do-it-yourselfer completes the perfect splice.

**A**fter installing 6,000 feet of new electrical wiring in our 1875 Italianate home and carriage house, I might have been awarded a doctorate from the School of Hard Knocks. I learned many things nobody writes about . . . and I'd like to share them with other restoration enthusiasts.

Read everything you can on the subject. You're just as intelligent as the electrician but lack his specific knowledge and experience. I read three books. Reading those parts of the National Electrical Code book which apply to residential wiring is a must. (Your library should have a copy; a good electrical supply house can sell you one.) I spent an afternoon reading the library reference copy. Later, I broke down and bought my own as I had to refer to it so often. I caught our inspector projecting his biases without code backing. When I quoted the code book, he backed down. Read the code book to put yourself on an equal footing with your inspector.

After your crash course, go to City Hall, buy a permit, and talk to the electrical inspector concerning your city's possible variances from the National Code. View the inspector as a valuable consultant provided by your town — not as someone out to restrict your rights. His help and final inspection could prevent a major disaster. If ever you have doubts on how to proceed, call your inspector before going forward, to avoid having to redo your work later. Do not have a negative confrontation with him. Know what you're talking about, but keep him on your side.

Get bids from licensed contractors. Bids of \$5,000 forced us to do the job ourselves, but while the electrician was here, I learned a lot about how he would proceed. Before signing a contract, ask for names and addresses of previous clients whose houses are similar to yours. Call these references and ask them about the contractor's workmanship and reliability. Get permission to actually inspect the work.

At this point, you'll either hire the contractor or, if it's allowed and you're up for it, you'll do the job yourself. A middle ground, helpful to both the electrical contractor and your budget, is to have the electrician do the technical work while you do the rest — opening walls, cleaning up, etc.

**D**o-it-yourselfers must buy or rent the correct tools and supplies. I'll mention only those not covered in a typical wiring manual:

- First, you must have knee pads. You don't know your knees are sore until it's too late. In my case, it was worse. I knelt on a sharp piece of plaster while crawling above our cistern. For \$100, a doctor told me that I had pre-patella bursitis. Two weeks of my valuable vacation (i.e., wiring) time were lost as I lay on my back or in a splint. It's surprising how much the loss of a working knee can limit what you can do around an old house.

- The second most important tool is a *variable*-speed reciprocating saw. Milwaukee makes one with a blade for every purpose. A reciprocating saw can, for example, cut the tongue off tongue-and-groove flooring to facilitate lifting the first board. With a hacksaw blade, your saw cuts old gas pipes or rigid conduit like butter. At a slow speed with a plaster-cutting blade, it makes short work of cutting holes for new outlets. (The slow speed is crucial: It avoids shaking the lath loose and spreading dust.) While I cut holes in finished rooms, my wife stood by like a dental assistant, sucking away the dust with a shop vac — yet another important tool. Don't use the reciprocating saw to notch floor joists.

Notching a joist or beam compromises its load-bearing capacity. If you must cross a joist, drill a hole at least 1½ inches below its top surface.

- Another invaluable tool is a variable-speed reversing drill. (It's nice if it's cordless.) Attach all of your boxes and conduit fasteners with self-starting hex-head sheetmetal screws. A magnetic bit on the drill holds the screw for you. The drill/screw is held with one hand and the box or fastener with the other. It's very quick and easy. (With a hammer and nail, it takes three hands.) The real beauty of the screws is that if you misplace a box, you can take it down in seconds by reversing the drill — instead of beating on it with hammer and pry bar. Buy self-feeding bits to drill through joists or studs. Without them, energy and time expended is multiplied by ten. Buy an inexpensive spade bit to drill through plaster; plaster dulls steel in a hurry. If it gets hard to drill, sharpen the bit with a grinder. I kept a small, hand-held grinder close by and sharpened it frequently.

- Don't buy a standard ribbon fish line for fishing through conduit or flexible conduit: A Sparks aviation fish line will cut work and frustration in half. There are places where a standard fish line won't go. The Sparks is expensive — about \$1 per foot — but it'll go anywhere. The money is well worth the time and aggravation saved.

- I found a huge tool belt invaluable. Without it, I spent too much time looking for tools. Get in the habit of putting each tool back in its place.

- Buy several rolls of colored electrical tape. It's very handy to label different circuits for your use now, and for the benefit of future owners. I taped each splice with the color of the circuit it belonged to for further clarification.

- Buy two or more rolls of each color of wire so that multiple circuits can be pulled through conduit at the same time. Many electricians feel that #14 wire is marginal for tomorrow's electric use. It might be preferable to use #12 wire throughout; ask your local

inspector what he recommends.

- Walkie-talkies are great. Borrow or buy a set. My wife (and co-fisher) couldn't yell loud enough for me to hear her in the attic.

- Last tip on supplies: Buy them in quantity from large supply houses. Prices will be better than at the local hardware store and the salespeople's savvy will be useful. Don't be afraid to ask for a contractor's discount. You *are* the contractor, and you're buying in contractor quantities. While waiting for your parts, look around. You're probably surrounded by electricians. Casually pick their brains while waiting. I've been known to take a list of questions with me. If the salesman couldn't answer, the electricians always piped in to show off their knowledge. I learned as much at the counter as I did from the books I read.

- If you take up floorboards in the attic, number them and their accompanying joist on masking tape. When replacing the boards, don't nail them down. They'll jiggle a little but, left loose, they'll afford easy access for you and future owners. If the boards must be secured, attach them using screws. (Try to plan your attic work for nights or winter. I lost 15 pounds in three weeks spent in the attic in July.)

I highly recommend that you try doing your wiring yourself. So much of it is tedious grunt-work — drilling holes and fishing wire. Why pay someone \$40 an hour (or more) for grunt work? If you feel you can't do it, at least look for a contractor who will let you do some of the tedious work. I saved \$5,000 on the installation of our forced-air system by cutting the holes and removing the old steam system ... every night, my contractor left me a note listing things I could do to help.

*Try it yourself!* Experience the exhilaration of a major accomplishment and money savings.



Dan Miller

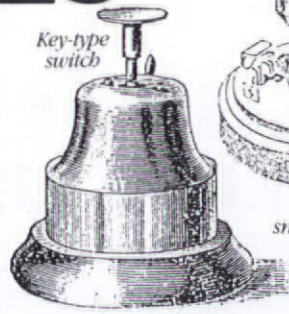
# SWITCHES

BY IRA P. GOLD

Early wall, ceiling, and table fixtures were operated by a **key-type switch** built into the fixture (similar to lamp sockets today). In the 1880s, builders began encasing the wires in specially designed wood or metal mouldings attached to the wall. A few of these disguised circuits used porcelain-covered knife switches on the wall. Then the surface-mounted **rotary snap switch** made its debut.

As the '90s approached, the **push-button switch** was introduced. This switch was soon the most heavily promoted of all residential switches (those used in 110-volt circuits), and remained the most popular switch for the next 40 or 50 years.

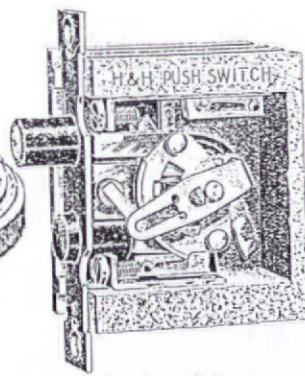
Most electrical systems in use at the time utilized DC. Direct current has the effect of "holding onto" something once it comes in contact. That made it necessary to design spring-loaded switches so that a certain amount of tension could build up before causing the blades to "snap" away from the contacts quickly enough to avoid drawing out a long and potentially danger-



Key-type switch



Rotary snap switch



Early push-button



Reproduction push-button

ous arc. This resulted in the distinctive click or "snapping" sound — a sound some find as nostalgic as the slam of a screen door.

The trade catalogs of 1898 showed a selection of tumble switches — the great-granddads of today's toggle switch. They apparently did not gain the popularity of the push-button switch until after AC became the standard. It would seem that breaking the hold of DC was more easily accomplished by pushing, than by lifting with the side of a finger. But, sometime before World War II, the industry decided that the elaborate mechanisms were becoming too costly and unnecessary. For whatever reasons, the tumble switch was the one chosen to be redesigned and made practical and compatible with the new wiring and codes.

Except for farm and some industrial applications, DC was all but superseded as the war began. In the mid-1950s, Leviton Electrical Co. produced the last of their push-buttons.

The restoration boom of the 1970s created a new interest in the push-button switch. In 1985, Peter Brevoort of Michigan began manufacturing new push-button switches that he and an electrical engineer had redesigned to meet all modern codes. The new switches retain the same outward appearance — and the mandatory *snap* — of the originals.

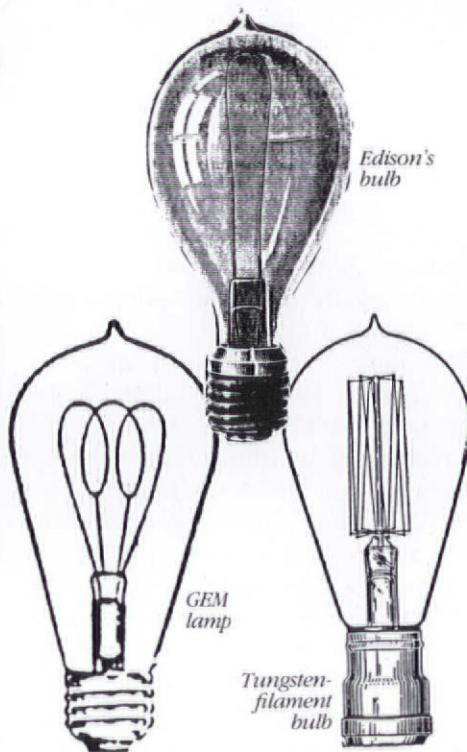
**Push-button switches and compatible switch plates are available by mail from Classic Accents, PO Box 1181, Dept. OHJ, Southgate, MI 48195; (313) 282-5525.**

# BULBS

The incandescent lightbulb evolved in stages, too. At first, glass envelopes were hand-blown, and even after machine manufacturing took over, they remained "tipped" and unfrosted until the 1920s. The light changed as well, growing whiter and brighter as better filaments were invented. A quick history:

**Edison's bulb** was typical of most lightbulbs up to the turn of the century. Its carbon filament gave off yellow-orange light at roughly the intensity of today's 25-watt bulb.

**GEM lamps** (for General Electric Metalized) appeared in 1905, with an improved filament that burned about 30% brighter than carbon alone, and didn't blacken the envelope as it aged.



Edison's bulb

GEM lamp

Tungsten-filament bulb

These were sold for 25 years at \$.25 per bulb.

**Tungsten filament bulbs** were widely available by 1911, and had more than double the light output of the GEM lamps. They were produced with clear envelopes (both tipped and untipped) and characteristic zigzag filaments into the 1930s.

Early electric fixtures were often designed for the bulbs of the era, and so become overly bright with modern bulbs. To simulate the old-bulb look, you can use low-wattage ornamental or special-purpose bulbs that are unfrosted. You can also reduce the light output of lamps or chandeliers with a dimmer.

**Reproduction period lightbulbs with carbon and tungsten filaments are available from Bradford Consultants, PO Box 4020, Dept. OHJ, Alameda, CA 94501; (415) 523-1968.**

— Gordon Bock

# HOME LIGHTING

## 1880-1930

### A HISTORY OF EARLY ELECTRIC FIXTURES

BY JANET MARINELLI



The Craftsman, 1905

Yecch, it looks like an upside-down bedpan!"

"It's so kitschy!"

To the c. 1990 sensibility, some early-20th-century lighting fixtures are hard to take. And how many of us would be caught dead with a naked lightbulb dangling, turn-of-the-century-style, from the ceiling in the middle of the living room?

To post-Victorians, electricity in any form was worth showing off. One early tastemaker absolutely gushed over the possibility of having electric hall and staircase lights with one switch at the bottom to turn them on, and another on the bedroom floor to turn them off. The extra expense of this wiring arrangement, she calculated, would be

repaid by savings on the hall carpets, "as I am sure the man does not exist who can carry a bed-candle upstairs without spilling the grease."

Electricity had other advantages. Since they no longer had to deal with fuel pipes, fuel wells, and the other accoutrements of gas, oil, and kerosene fixtures, designers were free to create lighting in virtually any shape or material that struck their fancy. Electricity sparked what has been called the single most creative period in the annals of domestic lighting — an incredibly inventive period that produced lights that were extraordinarily imaginative if at times, er, bizarre.

If you're looking for lighting fixtures for your turn-of-the-century house,

there are three things to keep in mind. The most important is the year your house was built. A house constructed c. 1900 originally would have had fixtures that look a lot different from those in a house constructed in the 1920s, or even 1910. A second consideration is the style of your house. Although homeowners were far from pedantic about putting only, say, Arts and Crafts fixtures in their Craftsman house, you certainly can't go wrong by letting house style guide your choice of fixtures. And turn-of-the-century Americans were most fussy about fixtures for their living rooms and dining rooms. For kitchens, bathrooms, and basements, they made do with more functional lights.

Turn-of-the-century  
gasolier-electrolier

Gasolier-electrolier  
c. 1910

Functional fixtures  
c. 1915

Pan light c. 1925



## EARLIEST ELECTRIC LIGHTS

The earliest electric lights looked a lot like gaslights, and for good reason. In its infancy, from the early 1880s until about 1910, electricity was not the most reliable energy source, and gas companies lost no time telling homeowners it was only prudent to have both gas and electric fixtures. Fixture manufacturers began supplying lights that made use of both energy sources.

This didn't require much in the way of redesign. Like typical late-19th-century gas fixtures, the combination fixtures, called gasolier-electroliers when they hung from the ceiling, consisted of metal fuel pipes and fuel wells and decorative glass bowls to diffuse the light. The one concession to the Elec-

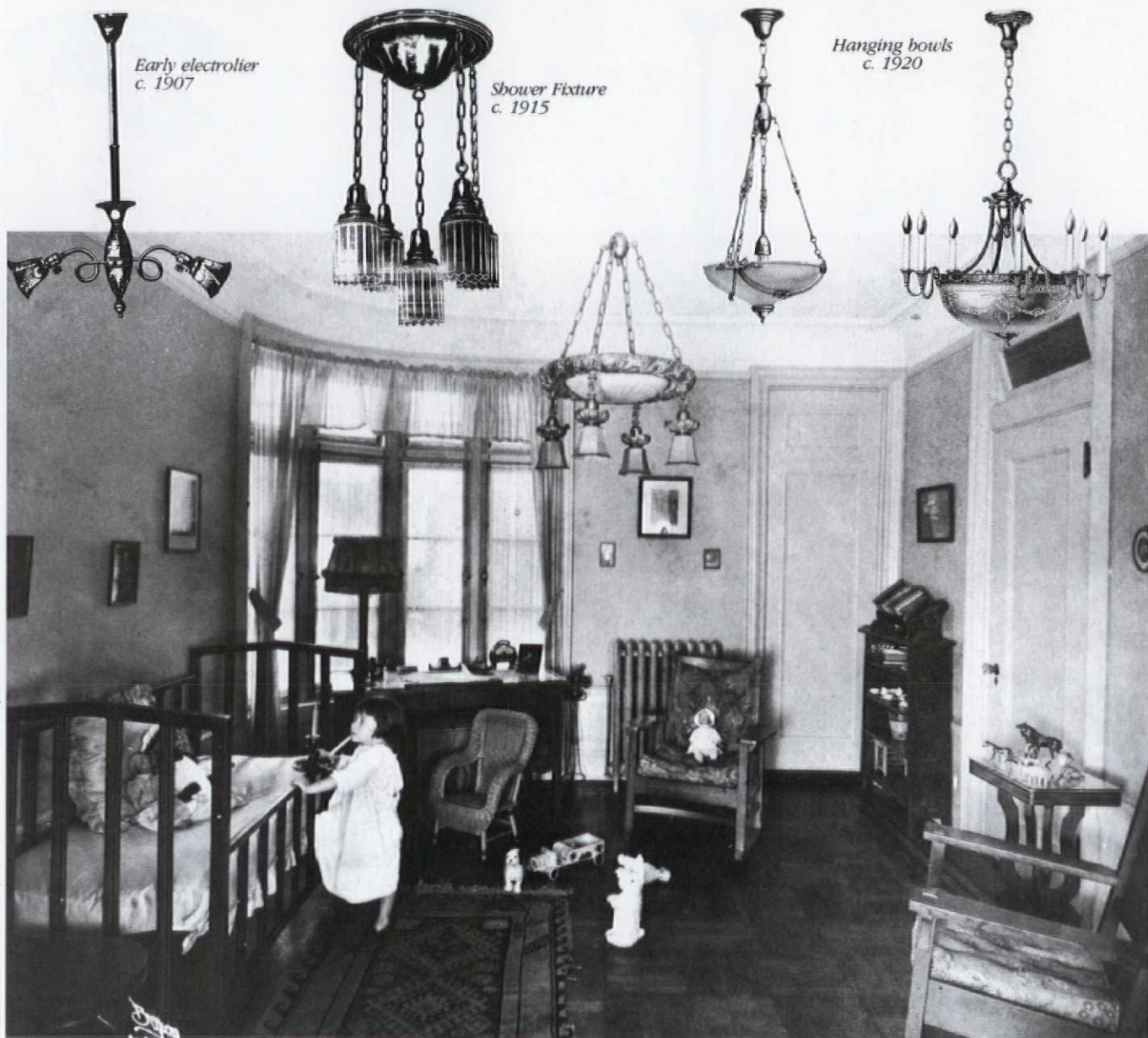
tric Age was a redesigned bell-shaped glass shade more in keeping with the contours of the electric lightbulb. While the larger gas globes faced up, the bell-shaped shades were angled down.

As the gas component of the fixture became little more than an emergency feature, gas "candles" began replacing the large gas bowls (see illustration above, second from left). Reflecting the eclectic tastes in interior decorating, the combination gas/electric fixtures were available in a plethora of period styles, from Greek to Empire to Colonial.

From the beginning, some intrepid souls were willing to risk all-electric fixtures in their houses. A favorite fixture was a bare bulb, either screwed

into a plain socket or dangling from a wire attached to the ceiling. This quintessential, functional fixture continued to be standard in many interiors well into the 1920s, especially in kitchens, bathrooms, and other utilitarian rooms. After 1910, when the intensely bright tungsten-filament bulb became available, these fixtures often had frosted bowls or globes to soften the light.

Since hanging light fixtures were impractical in the low-ceilinged interiors of many early-20th-century houses, manufacturers came up with truncated fixtures, including pan lights (see illustration above, far right). Pan lights were almost ubiquitous in bedrooms and less formal family rooms from about 1910 to 1930.



Early electrolier  
c. 1907

Shower Fixture  
c. 1915

Hanging bowls  
c. 1920

## EARLY DECORATIVE FIXTURES

If your house was built after 1910, it should be restored with lighting fixtures intended exclusively for electricity, unless there's solid evidence that electricity was not yet available; in most areas, it was. In fact, as early as 1900, electricity had become so dependable and so widespread that all-electric fixtures, or electroliers, began replacing the gas-electric styles. But manufacturers were reluctant to design anything too drastic, so early electroliers looked the same as their gas-electric counterparts — "gas" pipes, fuel wells and all.

Sometime around 1905, manufacturers began to venture from the rigid, pipe-style suspension of the old gas-

lights. Flexible chain suspension became the rage, and so did "shower" fixtures — fixtures consisting of a number of electric lights hanging by chains from a plate attached to the ceiling (see illustration above).

But it was the tungsten-filament bulb that really revolutionized electric lighting. Glare was always a bit of a problem with the downward-facing bulbs of most electroliers. In an 1891 book, Mrs. J.E.H. Gordon described a dinner party she'd recently attended: "There was a round table seating 10 guests, and 10 lamps with lemon-yellow shades were hung . . . so that the light was focused into the eyes and face of everyone sitting at the table, like a horrid detective little bulls-eye, showing

up every wrinkle and line in the face. No one over the age of 18, should be asked to sit beneath such a light!" "Eye strain!" became the battlecry of champions of the "indirect" lighting fixtures which appeared around 1908 and worked by reflecting light off the ceiling. There was a brief flurry of true indirect fixtures c. 1910-1915, opaque bowl-shaped fixtures suspended from chains. But most "indirect" fixtures in the 'teens and the 1920s were really semi-indirect. The translucent bowls used in these fixtures reflected light off the ceiling and also cast it directly downward. There were also hybrid bowl-and-shower fixtures and bowl-and-chandelier designs (see illustration above right, and photo above).

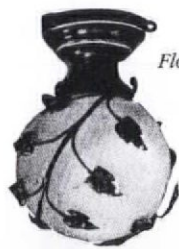




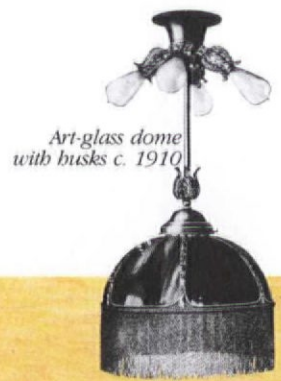
Tiffany lamp  
c. 1900



Femme-fleur  
c. 1907



Floral lamps  
c. 1907



Art-glass dome  
with husks c. 1910



Bosch Wallpaper catalog, 1909

## ART NOUVEAU

The flexibility of electric wiring and the development of new materials like Louis Comfort Tiffany's hand-made opalescent glass for lampshades coincided with turn-of-the-century design movements, resulting in some exquisite lighting fixtures — *and* some real howlers.

Art Nouveau, a style inspired by nature, particularly the plant world, was the first design movement to sweep the lighting industry off its feet. Art Nouveau's most prominent practitioner was Louis Comfort Tiffany, whose lamps, with spectacular leaded-glass shades, were first offered to the public in 1895. His most famous master-

pieces, including the wisteria lamp (see illustration above left), were created by 1900.

Suddenly, mass-produced fixtures in the form of lilies, morning glories, and tulips were in virtually every American parlor. The lightbulb was the flowerbud, shades and sockets were the leaves and petals, and other parts of the fixture functioned as vines, stems, and trunks. One bizarre hybrid table lamp was comprised of a female form sprouting leaves and blossoms. This came to be called the *femme-fleur*.

The most common mass-produced Art Nouveau lighting fixture between 1900 and 1920 was the "husk," a stem-like socket for an exposed lightbulb "bud." In more elaborate variations on

the theme, multiple husks, clutching their lightbulbs, dangled from the chains of shower fixtures.

Art Nouveau aesthetics, popularized, also resulted in "art glass" table lamps and ceiling fixtures, but these weren't as painstakingly designed and detailed as their high-style Tiffany prototypes. Many were edged with deep, beaded fringe.

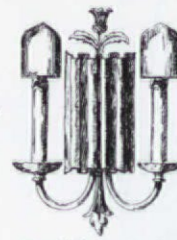
Art-glass fixtures were *de rigueur* from about 1900 to 1915. By 1913, Elsie de Wolfe, decorator for the rich and famous, was turning up her nose at this "vulgar fashion of having a huge mass of colored glass and beads suspended from near-brass chains in the dining rooms of certain [read "middle class"] apartments and houses."



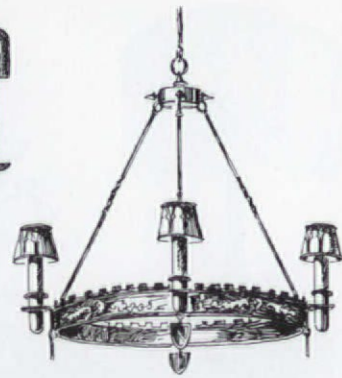
Craftsman lights  
c. 1905



Craftsman table lamp  
c. 1905



English Revival  
fixtures c. 1925



New Ideas in Home Decoration, 1930

burn oil, but Stickley, California-based Dirk Van Erp, and other Arts & Crafts designers also made electrified table lamps. A favorite Craftsman way to light the dining room was to use a row of lanterns hanging from the beam above the dining table.

## ENGLISH REVIVAL

Like Arts and Crafts interiors, the English Revival interiors of the Tudor Revivals, English Cottages, and English Country Houses so popular in America between about 1900 and 1930 were based on simplicity. "There is no pretense about the English House," wrote Curtis and Companies in their 1920 mail-order catalog. "Its charm lies in its informality and its simplicity. It is built for comfort, not for show."

Timbered ceilings like the one in the illustration at left, which appeared in the 1930 publication, *New Ideas in Home Decoration* by Hazel Dell Brown, were a hallmark of English Revival interiors. Large, circular, wrought-iron or bronze chandeliers, recalling those found in the medieval English houses that were the prototypes of this revival style, were hung from the exposed beams or rafters. However, these medieval-looking chandeliers usually held round electric lightbulbs, not candles.

Candlestick-style sconces, also electrified, often illuminated the paneled rooms that were another common feature of the Tudor Revival house. The Tudor sconce and "Early English" ceiling fixture illustrated above right were designed by M. Luckiesh, director of General Electric's Lighting Research Laboratory. He added parchment shades to both fixtures to minimize glare from their electric bulbs.

## ARTS & CRAFTS

While *femme-fleurs* and those "dreadful domes," as Elsie de Wolfe called art-glass ceiling fixtures, were appearing in dining rooms and living rooms across the country, Arts and Crafts designers were trying, in Gustav Stickley's words, "to place within the reach of the middle class purchaser, articles of practical use, which are at the same time, works of art." The sparsely ornamented geometric outlines of Arts and Crafts furnishings were a stark contrast to Art Nouveau's wavy lines and stylized ornament in floral and female forms.

Stickley believed that lighting was of utmost importance in the Craftsman in-

terior and his fixtures, made mostly of hammered copper (though iron, brass, and fumed oak were also used), were rough-finished to avoid a highly polished, machine-made look. The metalwork designs were rarely very intricate, since Stickley urged his readers to make the fixtures themselves at home. The shades on Craftsman and other A&C lighting fixtures were made of mica, colored glass, or woven willow.

The illustration on page 34, from a 1905 issue of *The Craftsman*, shows a favorite Craftsman method of lighting a room: Lanterns hang from exposed ceiling beams, and sconces are used on each side of the recessed window-seat. The table lamp was designed to



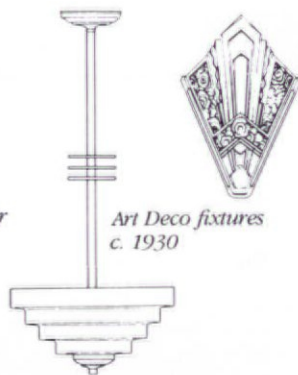
Turn-of-the-century  
Colonial Revival



Hanging bowl  
and shower  
c. 1920



Sconce and chandelier  
c. 1920s



Art Deco fixtures  
c. 1930

## COLONIAL REVIVAL

By the turn of the century, there was afoot a great patriotic feeling that America should have her own house style. Most historians trace this change of heart back to the New England log-house kitchen, complete with spinning wheel and candlesticks, that was exhibited at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Georgian style became the symbolic house of America — no matter that it was imported wholesale from England; by the 1890s, it had been here long enough to be considered native.

Early Colonial Revival houses often had Victorian massing, with a few Colonial details grafted on. The average interior probably had neo-Georgian woodwork, painted white, with perhaps a reproduction Windsor chair and a spinning wheel in the midst of Victorian clutter. The Colonial Revival gas-electric fixtures in these houses were also essentially Victorian, with a veneer of Early America in their scrolled arms and garland motifs (see illustration above left). Some wealthy Americans, however, were doing painstaking restorations and using antique 18th-century lighting fixtures or faithful reproductions.

Colonial Revival houses of the 1920s and '30s included their own, all-electric versions of 18th-century lighting fixtures. Colonial-looking "chandeliers" with electric lightbulbs, not candles, were favorite dining room fixtures. (The Colonial Revival dining room at right, complete with imitation Georgian chandelier, is from the 1927 *Universal Design Book* for builders.) Electrified candlesticks and sconces

Universal Design Book, 1927



were also extremely popular. So were "Colonialized" generic fixtures such as hanging bowls and showers (see illustrations above: second, third, and fourth from left).

## ART DECO

By the mid-1920s, Art Deco, America's first industrial design vocabulary, was catching on. During Deco's heyday, objects in the streamlined style could be

found in every room, closet, and cabinet — and hanging from the ceiling or wall (see illustrations of an Art Deco sconce and ceiling fixture above right).

Art Deco kitchens and bathrooms were particularly slick, sleek showcases of the style. Deco baths were often clad in gleaming Vitrolite in patterns of different color. Bullet-shaped faucet handles, angular shower heads, and futuristic lighting fixtures added to the Deco look.

# BUYING PERIOD LIGHTING

Turn-of-the-century lighting fixtures and lamps are available today — and they're a relatively inexpensive yet dramatic way to give period ambiance to interiors. Most of the following companies offer reproduction gas-electric fixtures. (The gas components of these all-electric fixtures are, of course, just for show.) Reproductions of early electroliers are also easy to find, as are functional fixtures suitable for bathrooms and kitchens. Showers and hanging bowls are rarer, although a handful of companies have begun reproducing them in the past few years.

Colonial Revival is the most popular style in reproduction right now, especially in its turn-of-the-century designs. If you're trying to furnish a later, 1920s- or '30s-vintage Colonial Revival, you might use the generic fixtures of the era — hanging bowls with Colonial Revival motifs, for instance. Or consider one of the many 18th-century reproduction lighting fixtures now readily available.

An increasing number of companies now offer reproductions of Arts and Crafts and Art Deco fixtures. We know of no one reproducing specifically English Revival lighting fixtures; your best bet would be to use a generic period fixture or look around for a restored antique.

No matter what the style of your house, don't assume that reproduction lighting is your only option. Reconditioned early-20th-century fixtures aren't hard to find, and in many cases they're quite competitive in price with reproductions. In fact, so many dealers across the country sell reconditioned antique lighting that we decided to limit the following list to those who offer reproductions.

## Arroyo Craftsman

2080-B Central Ave., Dept. OHJ  
Duarte, CA 91010  
(818) 359-3298

A variety of American Arts and Crafts lanterns made of solid brass with a verdigris patina finish.

Arroyo Craftsman's  
Mission  
lantern



"Glasgow" table lamp,  
Boyd Lighting



Classic Illumination's  
Art Deco sconce

## Art Directions

6120 Delmar Blvd., Dept. OHJ  
St. Louis, MO 63112  
(314) 863-1895

Art Deco fixtures and functional fixtures suitable for kitchens and other utilitarian rooms.

## Boyd Lighting Company

56 Twelfth St., Dept. OHJ  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 431-4300

The "Glasgow" table lamp, ceiling fixture, and pendant, in the style of Scottish Arts and Crafts designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

## Brasslight, Inc.

90 Main St., Dept. OHJ  
Nyack, NY 10960  
(914) 353-0567

Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces.

## Brass Light Gallery

719 S. 5th St., Dept. OHJ  
Milwaukee, WI 53204  
(414) 383-0675

The "Goldenrod Collection" of American Arts and Crafts lighting, including sconces, table lamps, and ceiling fixtures.

## Classic Illumination, Inc.

2743 Ninth St., Dept. OHJ  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
(415) 849-1842

Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces, a c. 1920 hanging bowl fixture, and Art Deco fixtures. Trade only.

## D'Lights

533 West Windsor Rd., Dept. OHJ  
Glendale, CA 91204  
(818) 956-5656

Turn-of-the-century gasoliers, electroliers, and sconces, a variety of pendant fixtures (plain models as well as models with silk fringed shades and glass shades with beaded fringe), a pan light, and several Art Deco fixtures.

## Frombruche

132 N. Main St., Dept. OHJ  
Spring Valley, NY 10977  
(800) 537-6319

Electroliers, sconces, and utilitarian pendant fixtures.

*Pan light  
by D'Lights*



**Metropolitan Lighting Fixture Co., Inc.**

315 E. 62nd St., Dept. OHJ  
New York, NY 10021  
(212) 838-2425  
Art Deco pendant fixtures and sconces made from original moulds.

**Nowell's, Inc.**

Gate Five Rd. at Harbor Dr., Dept. OHJ  
Sausalito, CA 94966  
(415) 332-4933  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces.

**Ocean View Lighting**

2743 Ninth St., Dept. OHJ  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
(415) 841-2937  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces, a c. 1920 hanging bowl fixture, and Art Deco fixtures. Retail sales.

**Progress Lighting**

Erie Ave. and G St., Dept. OHJ  
Philadelphia, PA 19134  
(215) 289-1200  
A Colonial Revival gasolier-electrolier reproduced from a c. 1900 design of the Gibson Fixture Works, plus a hall fixture and sconce adapted from the same design.



*Art Nouveau table lamp, Renaissance Marketing*



*Bowl-and-shower fixture, Victorian Reproduction Lighting*

**Rejuvenation Lamp & Fixture Co.**

901 N. Skidmore, Dept. OHJ  
Portland, OR 97217  
(503) 249-0774  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces, abbreviated shower fixtures, c. 1920-style hanging bowl fixtures, utilitarian pendant fixtures, and "The Craftsman Collection" of American Arts and Crafts ceiling fixtures, sconces, and table lamps.

**Renaissance Marketing, Inc.**

PO Box 360, Dept. OHJ  
Lake Orion, MI 48035  
(313) 693-1109  
A reproduction of Louis Comfort Tiffany's 12-stem Lily table lamp and several table and stand-up lamps, ceiling fixtures, and sconces based on this design, as well as other Art Nouveau-style table lamps.



*Victorian Lightcrafters' shower fixture*

*Colonial Revival sconce, Progress Lighting*



**St. Louis Antique Lighting Company**

801 N. Skinker, Dept. OHJ  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
(314) 863-1414  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces, and utilitarian fixtures.

**Victorian Lightcrafters, Ltd.**

PO Box 350, Dept. OHJ  
Slate Hill, NY 10973  
(914) 355-1300  
An interesting selection of turn-of-the-century electroliers, including showers, as well as gasolier-electroliers and sconces.

**Victorian Lighting Works**

251 S. Pennsylvania Ave., PO Box 469, Dept. OHJ  
Centre Hall, PA 16828  
(814) 364-9577  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces.

**Victorian Reproduction Lighting Company**

PO Box 579, Dept. OHJ  
Minneapolis, MN 55458  
(612) 338-3636  
Turn-of-the-century gasolier-electroliers, electroliers, and sconces, a utilitarian fixture, a c. 1920 hanging bowl and shower fixture, and stand-up lamps.



*The tile is real marble.*



# MARBLEIZING

BY JAMES L. JANSEN

Marbleizing is the painting technique that gives a representation of marble. This decorative effect, also known as marbling or *faux marbre*, has probably been around as long as people have been admiring natural marble. Some of the earliest known marbling was found in the villas of Pompeii. Marbleizing was then, and still is, an economical alternative to the real thing. But it's also a stylish put-on in its own right, and has been since the Renaissance — by which time it had attained such cachet that it graced even the grandest palaces, whose occupants surely could have afforded real marble.

In America, marbling was a part of the decorator's bag of tricks throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The technique was especially popular in the early to middle decades of the 19th century. In Georgian, Adam, Greek Revival, and Italianate interiors, marbleizing was used on columns, wainscot, even entire walls.

Whether you choose to meticulously copy a particular marble or loosely interpret its "spirit," the first step is the same: Become a student of marble. A good place to start is the local tile shop. Its inventory of 12" x 12" samples will include a vast array of marble colors and patterns. Carefully examine the similarities and differences. What are the color combinations? Is there a grain? How do the veins run? Are there chips, cracks, particles, or quartz patches?

The tile store will probably have one or two marbles in stock that you can buy by the tile. Others must be ordered, usually in bulk. The temptation is to get the tile store to let you borrow a sample tile. Try to resist: You'll drive yourself crazy attempting to copy from such a small piece. You need to scrutinize larger samples.

Large expanses of marble aren't hard to find. Check the Post Office, town hall, the neighborhood school, bank, or church, your favorite department store or ice-cream parlor. Go to the opera. Study floors, tabletops, counters, dados. Note the distances between veins and between large patches of color.

Magazines are another good resource. Whenever I come across color photographs of marble, I clip and file them.

Fashion and decorating magazines and tony Christmas catalogs are the best places to look.

Once you've decided on a marble to mimic, note its background color, as well as the colors comprising the veins. If you want to try your hand at something purely interpretive, simply select hues in your color scheme and tint your paints and glazes accordingly. (See page 44 for glaze formulas.)

Whether you decide on exact reproduction or imaginative interpretation, the prep work is the same — getting as smooth a surface as possible on which to apply your paint. Since you're striving for the highly polished surface of real marble, this is of paramount importance.

Whether you're marbling a moulding or a mantel, then, the first step is to sand. Then sand some more. (If you're working with bare wood, you may want to apply a sanding sealer first. On extremely grainy wood like oak, you might want to use wood filler or gesso.) Vacuum and wipe with a tack rag. Now prime with an alkyd- or shellac-based primer sealer. Pay particular attention to knots in the wood.

Fill imperfections with a high-quality, non-shrinking filler (I use Spackle Lite), not ordinary spackling or joint compound, which may shrink. One thing to consider is how much to "work against your surface" and how much to "work with it." While recently marbling an old mantel, I decided not to caulk the joints. (If caulk fails, it tears, spoiling the illusion of marble.) Instead, I used the joints as places to stop and start my marbling. In other words, I didn't try to make the mantel look like one huge hunk of marble but rather a construction of smaller slabs. I also didn't fill corner imperfections, instead disguising them as chips and cracks in the "marble."

Apply at least two coats of primer. Sand between coats. If it's still not like glass, sand and apply another coat of primer. Use a good, soft brush. Some people advise using a short nap roller to eliminate brush strokes, while others recommend using a lint-free cloth to lightly "pat" brush strokes away. You can tint the final prime coat close to the background color of your marble-to-be.

## Marbleizing With Glaze

The way it's usually done, marbleizing is just another glazing technique. (See OHJ January/February 1988). There are other ways to marble, which I'll discuss later, but glazing is the easiest. Here's an overview of how it's done:

### 1) The Ground Coat

After the last prime coat is dry and has been sanded smooth and wiped with a tack rag, paint on two top coats of a semi-gloss alkyd paint the color of the darkest shade of the undertone, or background color, of your marble sample. (The glaze that will be applied over this base should be tinted the lightest shade of the undertone. Therefore, when the glaze is "distressed," all varying shades in between will appear.) To simulate some marbles — white, for example — it's best to paint the base in the lightest shade of the undertone. Use a high-quality paint and one that takes a long time to dry, since the longer a paint takes to dry, the more time it has to level out. Thinning with mineral spirits can help achieve a flatter, smoother finish.

### 2) The Undertone Glaze

When the ground coat is dry, prepare a glaze the color of the lightest shade in the marble's undertone.

a) Begin in an inconspicuous spot — when you're marbleing a baseboard, a good place to start is behind the couch. But start the job only after having spent some time practicing on a piece of scrap wood or in a closet. Work on a 3-foot section at a time.

b) With a brush, daub on the glaze. Leave some areas exposed while spreading it on thick in others.

c) "Rag" the entire area with a bunched-up, clean, and lint-free cloth. This will mottle the background, creating lights and darks, bare spots and shadows. Be sure to turn the rag frequently and bunch it rather than roll it into a

ball. You can create different textures using other materials to distress the glaze: paper towels, plastic wrap, newspaper, burlap, terry cloth, and so on.

d) Soften the uneven, dappled ground by lightly dragging a soft, dry brush over the entire surface. A badger blender brush works best but is expensive. Any soft, two- or three-inch brush will suffice. Work in all directions, but be careful not to work so long that you erase all the shadows and make the glaze uniform.

e) To expose more ground color, remove excess glaze by pouncing gently with a rag dipped in paint thinner while you continue to soften with your dry brush.

### 3) Broad Veining

Mix a glaze tinted to match the broad veins in the marble that you're using as your sample. Apply this glaze with a medium-sized brush, in long, parallel squiggles, varying thickness and direction.

I can't stress enough that the biggest problem in marbleizing (temptation, I should say) is to put "10 pounds of veins in a five-pound piece of marble." Chances are you'll start with something small, a mantel perhaps, yet try to cram in every sort of vein or quartz patch you've ever seen. Plant the phrase "open space" in your mind. And remember that the veins should never be evenly spaced, or they'll look like stripes.

a) Pounce lightly with a rag to "hush" the veins. Distress some areas more than others; afterwards, blend with your dry brush, going with and against the direction of the vein to soften the edges. (Do *not* dip the brush in paint thinner at this point or you'll end up with streaks in the color.) One option is to soften with a goose- or turkey-wing feather; the feather's variegated edges will slightly drag the glazes over one another to create hairline veins.

b) Constantly step back as you go along to examine your work. Remember what it was you liked about the marble



*Tools of the trade: a variety of feathers for different veining effects.*

## Glaze Formulas

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A) McCloskey's Glaze coat   | E) 3 parts glaze coat<br>1 part alkyd paint<br>1 part mineral spirits     |
| B) Flating Oil  | F) 1 part raw linseed oil<br>1 part alkyd paint<br>1 part mineral spirits |
| C) 5 parts mineral spirits<br>3 parts raw linseed oil<br>2 parts Japan dryer<br>2 parts McCloskey's Glaze Coat<br>2 parts varnish | G) 3 parts glaze coat<br>5 parts alkyd paint<br>2 parts mineral spirits   |
| D) 1 part boiled linseed oil<br>1 part varnish<br>1 part turpentine   | H) 2 parts alkyd paint<br>1 part mineral spirits                          |



you're trying to imitate. If need be, pounce with a rag dipped in thinner and blend some more to remove color, or apply more glaze to add color.

#### 4) Fine Veining

Mix the glaze or glazes to match the smaller veins of the marble. They may be all the same color, or many colors. Some may be relatively thick; others, hairline thin. Instead of mixing several glazes, you can purchase artists' tube oils in the colors of the small veins (or in the colors that can be mixed for these veins). Apply the oils by first dipping a brush into a clear glaze mix and then into a squeeze of the artists' oil color. Styrofoam meat trays make good palettes. (Never use universal tinting colors for this purpose.)

a) Apply the finest veins with a thin-pointed lettering brush, feather, or sword liner. Paint in the veins by following shadows in the undertone and larger veins (see page 47). Hold your painting tool loosely, allowing it to dance about, twist, squiggle, and dart back and forth as it travels across the glaze.

b) Dip a toothbrush into the tinted glaze. After spraying off the excess, hold it a few inches from the surface and draw your thumb across the bristles. Splatter to the extent dictated by the marble you're mimicking.

c) Soften with the blender brush in the direction of the fine veins. This blurring of lines will mimic depth. (You never want sharp edges.) If the vein is too dark, brush in a perpendicular direction and pounce with a rag. Practice beforehand to discover how long to let the glaze set up before brushing, how much pressure to apply with the brush, and how long to brush and in what direction.

d) Continue to add veins, criss-crossing them, connecting them, letting them run astray. Some white glaze can be added when you want to mimic quartz. Apply in thick patches here and there, connecting the patches with fine white veins. Blend and soften.

Formula "C" is best used as a clear base or in conjunction with artists' oil colors. Formulas "E" through "H" are progressively more opaque, because the more paint you add, the more opaque the glaze becomes. Formula "H" is really just thinned paint, but it will still distress like a glaze. Generally, the more transparent formulas are best for the undertones; the more opaque ones, for veining. Some of the most complex marbleizing is created by first applying an undertone, letting it dry, then going over the entire surface again with a different-color transparent glaze. The underlying glaze tones will show through, enhancing the illusion of depth.

To tint glazes, it's easiest to simply

purchase an alkyd paint in the desired color and add it to your formula. If you prefer, you can use white alkyd paint and tint the formula with universal tinting colors from individual tubes. A more foolproof method than mixing your own colors is selecting a color at your paint store, then asking the dealer to give you a small quantity of its tint mix. Some colors, however, are created using a "dark base." Added alone, tint mixes for those colors will not darken your glaze adequately. Consult your paint dealer when choosing a color. (See "How to Glaze Walls & Ceilings," OHJ January/February 1988, for more tips on tinting and working with glazes.)

—James L. Jansen

e) Dip a toothbrush in some paint thinner. Spray out the excess. Then, holding the brush a few inches from the surface, splatter a fine mist onto the freshly marbleized surface. The result should be a dappled effect. Blend if necessary. (Be very careful on vertical surfaces, or you may end up with drips and runs.)

f) Using the end of the small brush, a toothpick, or your fingernail, draw in hairline cracks. Wider, crystalline fractures can be simulated with a finger wrapped in a rag or by dragging a brush or feather dipped in paint thinner across the surface.

g) Some decorators apply additional fine white lines after the entire surface has dried completely. They argue that this enhances the three-dimensional effect. Keep in mind that you can always add more veins once the surface is dry. So try initially to put in too *few* veins.

#### 5) The Finish

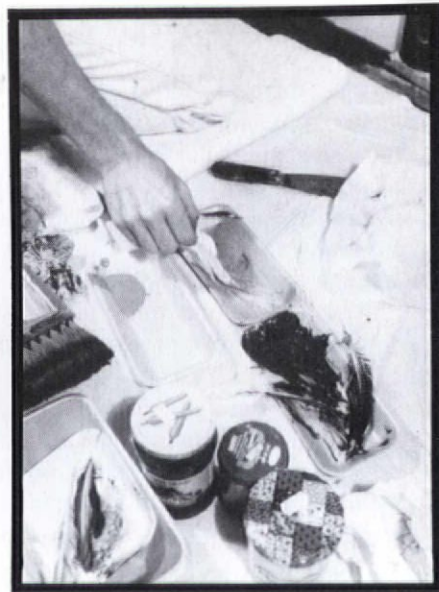
Allow two to three days for the glaze to dry. Then apply at least two thin coats of an eggshell or semi-gloss oil varnish or polyurethane. This not only will protect the glaze, but it'll also further enhance the illusion of depth while contributing the high polish of real marble. The more coats you add, the greater sense of depth you get.

a) Use a heavy-duty varnish or polyurethane for floors; a bartop varnish for counters and tabletops.

b) Some folks add a small amount of white alkyd paint to the varnish to prevent "ambering." Similarly, you can change the color of your marbling slightly at this point by tinting your varnish accordingly.

c) Beware of drips. Continuously look over the varnished surface, casting the light from side to side in an effort to catch the runs.

These are only guidelines; feel free to improvise. Bear in mind that no two pieces of natural marble are alike. So who's to say your imaginative marble is incorrect?



Jars and Styrofoam meat trays are great for mixing glazes.

## Marbleizing With Latex

If you absolutely cannot stand the messy clean-up, long drying time, and noxious smell of oil-based products (or if you live in southern California, where they've been banned by air-quality authorities), take heart: Marbleizing can be done with latex paints. And with latex, you can conceivably marbleize something in a single day. However, I've found that latex is more difficult to manipulate into a convincing counterfeit. Practice is the key.

Do not use a latex primer on bare wood; it may raise the grain. Instead, prime with a shellac-based primer. It can be sanded and recoated in an hour or less, and you can clean up with household ammonia and/or Fantastik. Sand and prime repeatedly until the surface is absolutely smooth.

When the last coat of primer is dry, apply the first latex top coat in the undertone color of your marble. (Working with a semi-gloss is easier, but any sheen will do.) As you go along, pounce out the brush strokes and lightly rag the wet latex to slightly expose the white primer in spots. (Remember, different materials used for pouncing — a rag, paper towel, newspaper, etc. — will distress the paint in different patterns, so experiment first.) Let dry. Repeat this procedure for a second top coat. It helps to slightly lighten or darken the second coat by adding some white paint or color. You can begin veining while this coat is still wet, but it's easier to let it dry before proceeding.

For the veins, any latex paint works. I recommend tube acrylics (Liquitex, for example) because they're available in small quantities and they can be purchased from your local art supplier. Begin with the larger of the fine veins. Combine the color or mixed colors with some water until the consistency is creamy.

The wetter the vein, the easier it is to blend. Concentrate on one vein at a time. Working diagonally, outline some of the undertone shadows. Immediately soften with your blender brush, using rapid light strokes in all directions. Rag to lighten some areas.

Wet and wring out a natural sponge, daub some of the vein color, then blot the sponge on newsprint to remove excess paint. Using the sponge, darken areas along some of the veins to create the broad, coarse veins and large areas of color. As you go, blot with a dry rag to soften. If necessary, blot with a second moist sponge to remove and blend the wet paint.

With a smaller brush dipped in the appropriate hue, go over the veins a second time, following them roughly. Twirl the brush, letting it go astray occasionally to connect up with other veins. Pounce some areas with a rag before softening with the blender brush.

Using a small, pointed brush, draw in the finest veins. Some should be thick with paint, others watered down, to create the illusion of depth. After painting each vein, blend with the dry brush — never a wet brush, which will wipe everything out.

Paint in contrasting fine veins connecting with the larger veins. Depending on the marble look desired, you may or

may not want to blend these fine veins. Step back and assess your work. To lighten an area, daub with a moist sponge. Let the water sit for a few seconds, then blot with a rag. Repeat the entire procedure if you need more veins. (You most likely don't.) Add fractures by running a line of water with the thin brush across the surface. Wait a few seconds before lightly rubbing in the direction of the run with a rag.

Finish with two or more coats of varnish. There are now latex varnishes that are water soluble and that will not amber.

## Mechanical Techniques

There are other techniques that allude to marble, without seeking to be convincing representations. Chief advantage: they're quick. Chief disadvantage: they're messy. Unless you're marbling a large, flat, preferably horizontal surface, you're better off using one of the techniques discussed above.

### STRING LASHING

This method makes use of several pieces of string of varying lengths and thicknesses.

- 1) Over a prepared undertone, spread a thin, clear coat of glaze.
- 2) Take your pieces of string (perhaps even a rope) and dip them into the prepared glaze(s).
- 3) Let the string drain. Blot on newsprint.
- 4) Using the string like a whip, lash the surface. The color whipped onto the glaze becomes the veins. Repeat as necessary with different colors and string sizes. Try to run the veins roughly parallel, with a few branching off in other directions. Pounce away any unwanted veins. Blend and soften with a dry brush.
- 5) Protect with two coats of varnish.

(Personally, I wonder about people who enjoy this method.)

### TEMPLATE MARBLING

This technique utilizes a template made of bits of rag and string.

- 1) Take a one- or two-foot-square piece of heavy brown wrapping paper (a grocery bag will work), and lay it flat.
- 2) Cut pieces of cotton waste, plastic wrap, paper towel, and sponge. Dip the pieces into one of the vein colors, wring them out, and place them indiscriminately on the paper backing. Follow the same procedure with string, connecting the rag pieces.
- 3) Sew or otherwise secure these bits and pieces to the wrapping paper.
- 4) Using the resulting template like a rubber stamp, press it against the surface to be marbleized. Rub over the sections with the string. Gently pull the template away from the wall. Repeat. Letting the template slide on the surface just a bit will broaden the veins. Turn the template frequently, and overlap some sections.
- 5) Protect with two coats of varnish.



*After applying a black ground coat, Jim brushes on the undertone glaze.*



*Ragging the undertone glaze with a bunched-up paper towel creates bare spots and shadows.*



*Here, green-tinted glaze is applied with a feather to create broad veins.*



*Fine white veins are added, following shadows in the undertone and larger veins.*



*Jim "busbes" each vein before it dries with a badger blender brush to blur sharp edges and add depth.*



*It's possible to draw in hairline cracks with the end of a small brush, toothpick, or even your fingernail.*



To simulate white marble, Jim applies grey broad veins over a white ground coat.



Here, he "busbes" the broad veins with a bunched-up, lint-free cloth.



Black glaze is feathered on to create the white marble's fine veins.



Wiping off the glaze in selected spots exposes some white ground coat, creating "quartz patches."

## LATEX AND OIL

This method takes advantage of the fact that latex and oil-based products do not mix.

- 1) Over a ground coat of latex paint tinted to match the predominant undertone of the desired marble, apply a coat of turpentine.
- 2) Flicking a brush, splatter streaks of thinned latex paint in the vein color. (As water and oil do not mix, the turpentine serves as a shield.)
- 3) Dip a sponge in denatured alcohol and sponge the latex droplets over the turpentine. The alcohol mixes with the turps to create streaks. Splatter again. The latex paint will take better where previously sponged. Drag a sponge

across for more texture. Daub the veins with a dry brush to create shadows.

- 4) Once the surface has dried completely, scrub off any undesired streaks or shadows by firmly rubbing with a clean rag.
- 5) Repeat steps 1 through 3 for more effect.
- 6) Protect with two coats of varnish.

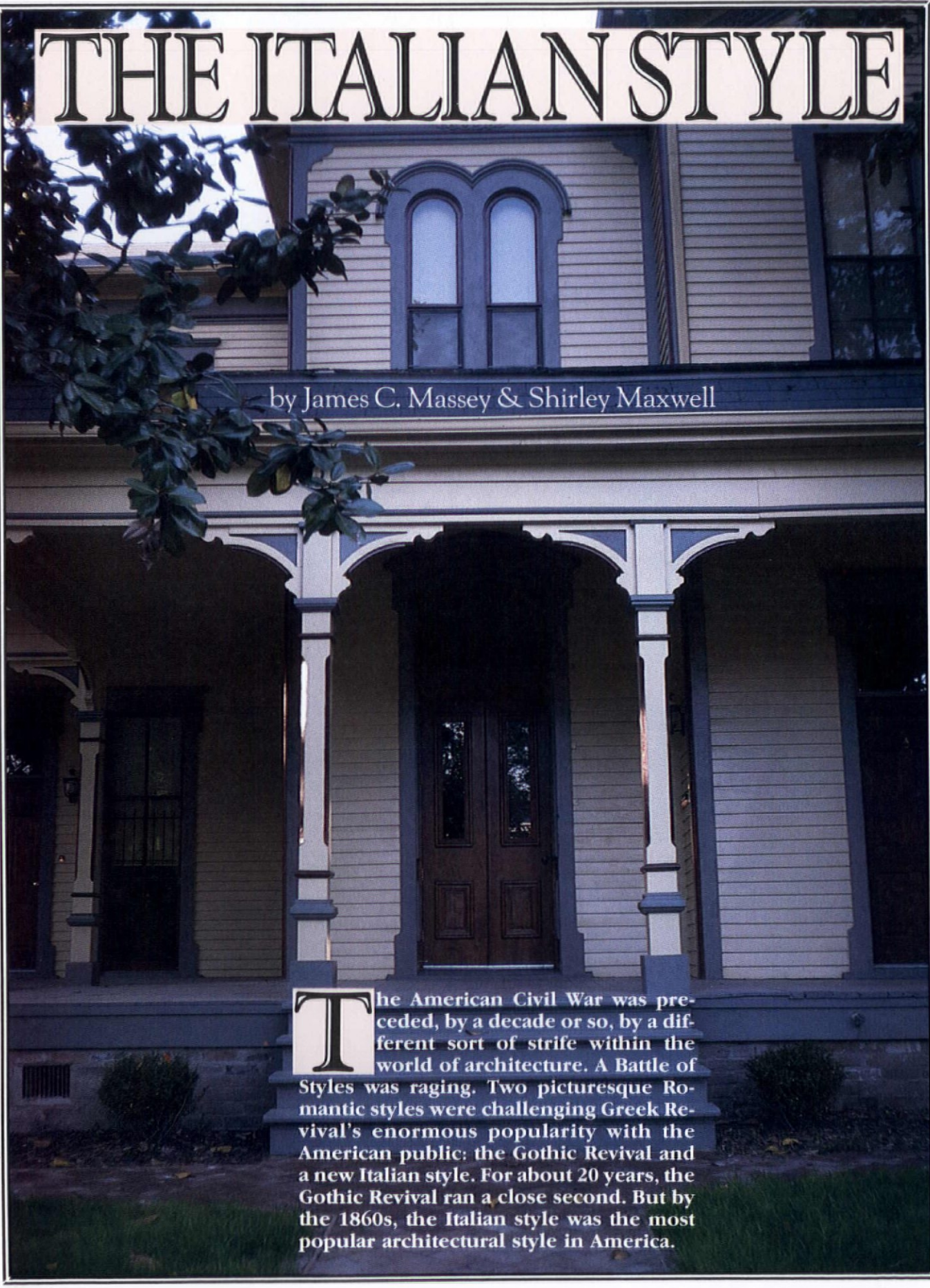
In the interest of full disclosure, I should say that although I've seen this technique performed successfully, I've yet to master it myself.



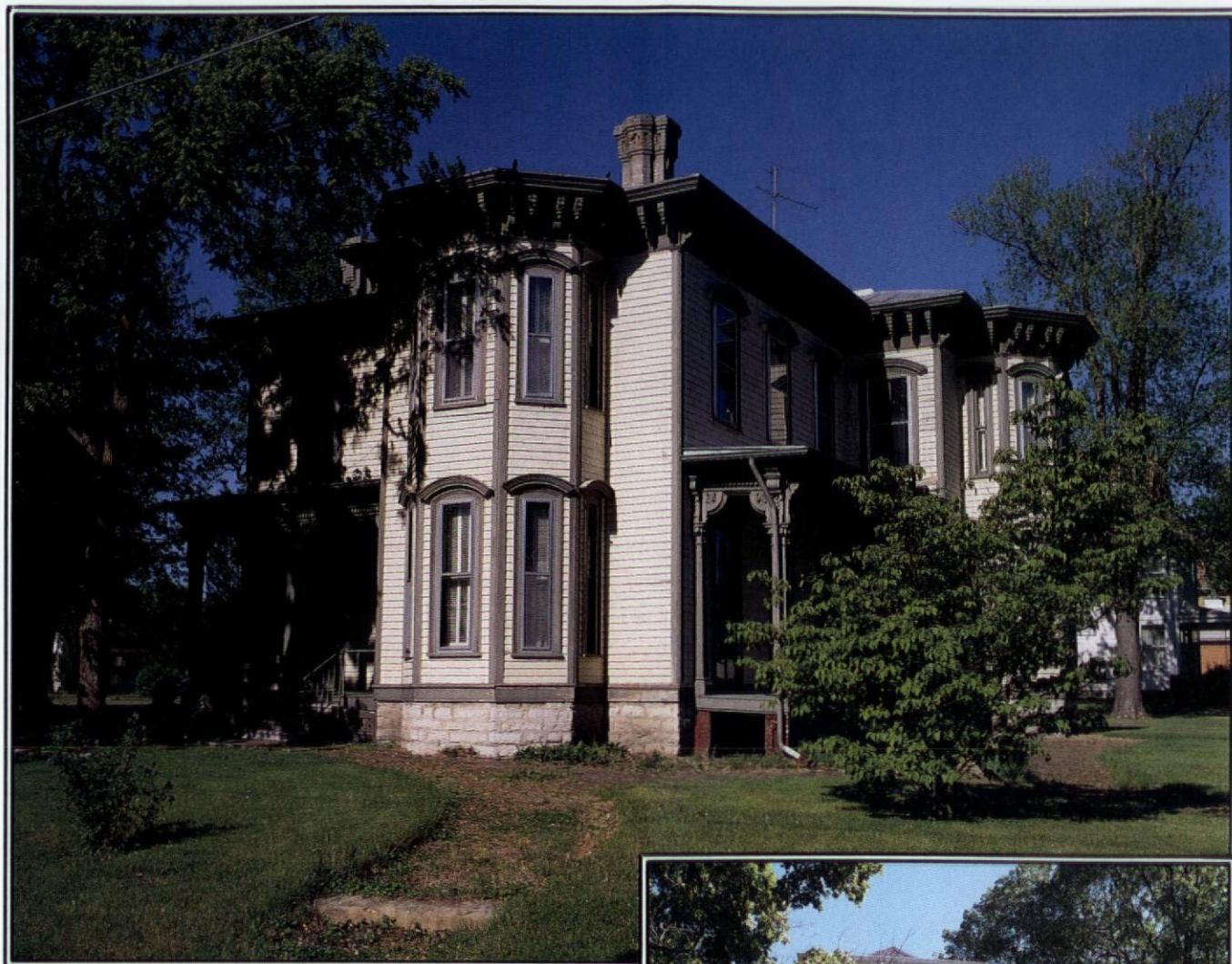
*James L. Jansen is a self-employed decorative painter working in the Greenwich, Connecticut, area.*

# THE ITALIAN STYLE

by James C. Massey & Shirley Maxwell

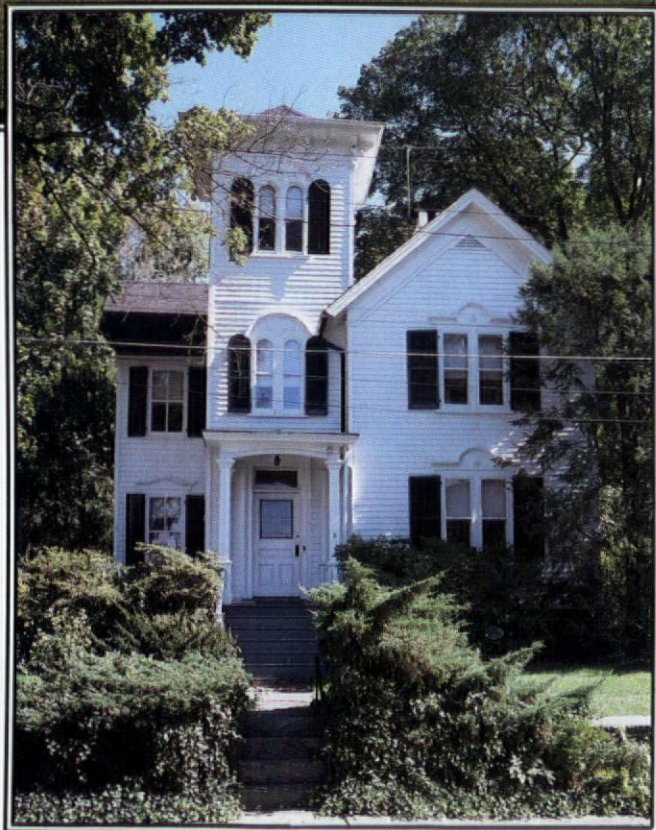


**T**he American Civil War was preceded, by a decade or so, by a different sort of strife within the world of architecture. A Battle of Styles was raging. Two picturesque Romantic styles were challenging Greek Revival's enormous popularity with the American public: the Gothic Revival and a new Italian style. For about 20 years, the Gothic Revival ran a close second. But by the 1860s, the Italian style was the most popular architectural style in America.



*The heavy, bracketed cornice and other details make this Mendon, Illinois, house unmistakably Italianate. The house is painted in muted, stone-like colors.*

There are all sorts of Italian-style houses — together they comprise one of the most common old-house styles in this country — but they fall into three basic categories: the Villa, Renaissance Revival, and Italianate styles. Villa-style houses were designed to look like farmhouses and villas built in Italy during the Renaissance. Two types of villas were built here: the irregularly shaped Italian Villa, and the Tuscan Villa, a simpler square building with deep, bracketed eaves. The Renaissance Revival style was based on the formal, highly symmetrical palaces, or *palazzos*, built during the Renaissance in Tuscany and northern Italy. It was used for mansions as well as townhouses, and can be recognized by its formal, symmetrical shape and heavy cornice. The more vernacular Italianate houses aren't strictly villas or *palazzos*, but they do include many of the architectural details found on both types of buildings. Italianate houses weren't built until the Villa styles were well established, and their popularity persisted until the late 1800s. All of the above Italian styles reached America by way of the British, who were building their own Italian-style houses in the 1830s and '40s. They did not come directly from their Mediterranean source.



*This Tarrytown, New York, house has the telltale irregular shape of the Italian Villa. Note its 3-storey campanile and round-arch windows.*

**W**hy was the Italian style so popular? English Romantic poets Byron and Shelley lived in Italy early in the 19th century, and their well known works glorified the Italian landscape, particularly its picturesque ruins. Popular 19th-century American landscape painters like Thomas Cole looked to Claude Lorraine and Nicholas Poussin, 17th-century European painters of Italian landscapes, for inspiration.

What's more, the romance of Italy captivated America partly because the growing prosperity of the middle class enabled more and more Americans to travel, and a tour of Italy was an essential part of any educated person's itinerary. But even those who could not afford a trans-Atlantic trip could read about the Italian countryside in such novels as Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit* (1857), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860), and Henry James' *Daisy Miller* (1879).

Many early proponents of the Italian style were the same tastemakers who advocated the Gothic Revival (and various other revival styles as well). Without Andrew Jackson Downing's influence, for instance, Gothic might never have gotten off the ground. (See "Gothic Revival," OHJ, November/December 1988.) But Downing's two extremely popular books, *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), included detailed plans for Ital-

ian villas as well as Gothic cottages.

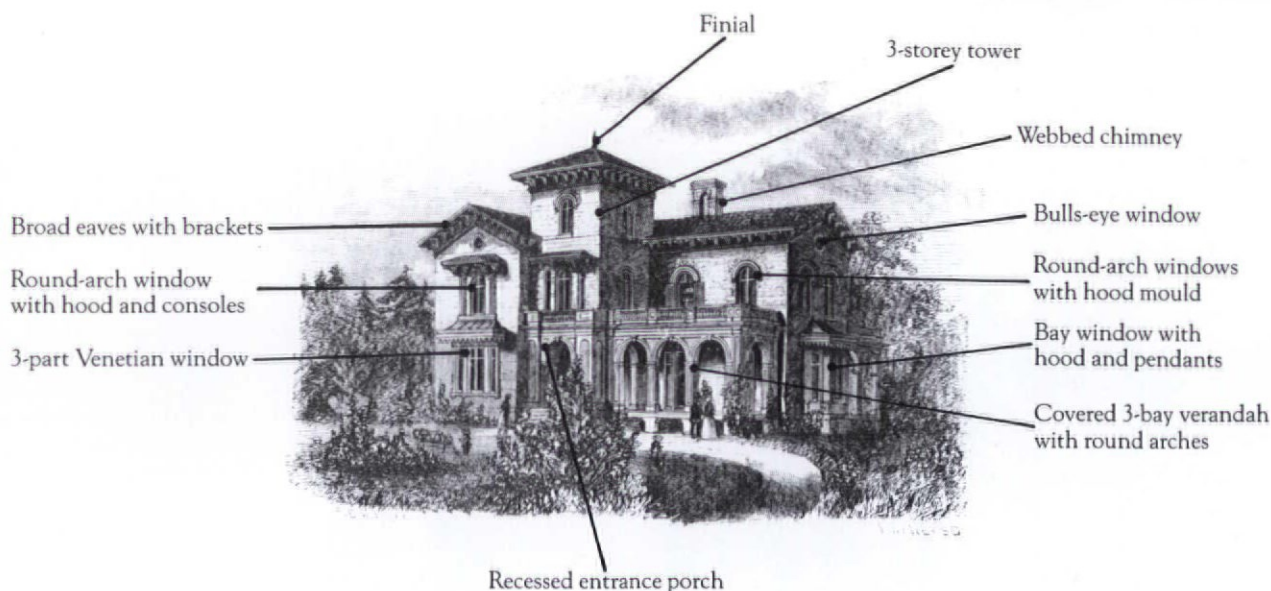
Downing was very particular about what constituted a "villa." A villa was the large country house of a cultured person of leisure — a person with enough money to maintain the place with "taste and elegance." Considerably larger than a cottage, which could be cared for by a family, a villa required the attentions of a small army of servants. As for architectural considerations, Downing deemed an irregular plan most suitable for a villa, so he preferred the "Italian" form to the square, symmetrical, and (to him) more pedestrian "Tuscan."

The Italian Villa's asymmetrical shape meant that architects no longer had to sacrifice convenience for the sake of symmetry; floorplans could be designed to allow human traffic to flow easily throughout a house. Aside from asymmetry, the telltale signs of the Italian Villa include a low-pitched roof and deeply overhanging eaves supported by heavy, decorative brackets. Sometimes these houses have a center gable, relatively low-pitched, with overhanging eaves. But the Italian Villa's defining feature, according to Downing and his circle of Romantics, was its square entrance tower or *campanile*, ideally placed somewhat off-center to enhance the building's asymmetrical charm. It was usually tucked into the angle of an L-shaped plan and extended a storey or so above the rest of the house (see illustration below).

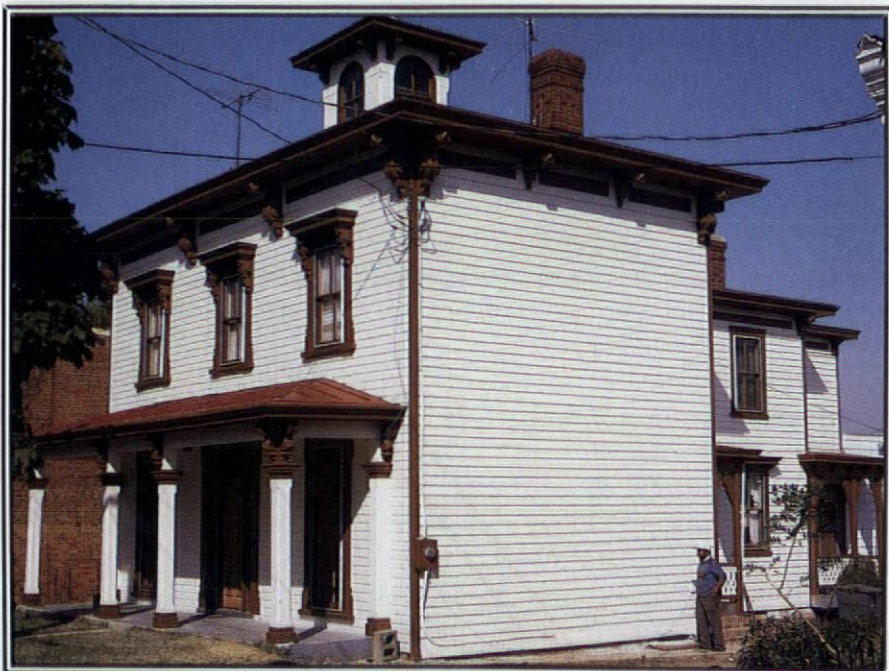
## A TYPICAL ITALIAN VILLA

**Keys to the Italian Villa:** informal layout, picturesque appearance, asymmetrical, Italian-derived ornament, including broad eaves with brackets or consoles, square tower higher than house, round-arch windows and doors, balconies, & window hoods.

READING  
THE  
OLD  
HOUSE



Source: Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages* (1857)  
(This design credited to Downing and Vaux)



The much simpler Tuscan Villa was built far more frequently. Like Italian Villas, Tuscan Villas have heavily bracketed cornices. What distinguishes the Tuscan from the Italian style is its extremely symmetrical box shape and its flat roof with a *belvedere* centered on top (see photos left, top and center).

Renaissance Revival was a favorite style for city rowhouses of this era. Formal and symmetrical in shape, these townhouses feature a heavy, bracketed cornice and a stair or stoop to the *piano nobile*, or main (second) floor. The basement level of Renaissance Revival rowhouses is usually rusticated. Quoins, or heavy corner blocks, are another prominent form of exterior ornament. Entrance doors are heavily hooded, and there are often keystoned arches above the windows.

In its purest form, the Renaissance Revival *palazzo* was used more for public buildings than for houses, but a number of architects, including John Notman and Richard Upjohn, did produce some handsome mansions in the style. True *palazzos* were always built of masonry, either stuccoed brick or stone. Quoins typically set off the main building sections. Ornament is generally more restrained and classical in feeling than in the Italian Villa. Renaissance Revival eaves, for instance, are more likely to display sedate dentils and modillions rather than big, showy, paired brackets. The c. 1855 P.L. Hay House in Macon, Georgia (see opposite page, top), with its dignified semi-circular entrance porch flanked by slim Corinthian columns, its grand sweep of stone stairs, and its balustraded balcony, is opulent proof of how impressive the style could be.

A Tuscan Villa in Richmond, Indiana, top. Its square shape and flat roof with a belvedere centered on top are characteristic of the style. The Nutball House in Washington, D.C., center, is a vernacular Tuscan Villa. Woodland Terrace, a row of more citified villas in an early west Philadelphia suburb, bottom. Semi-detached houses and early suburbs made their debut during the heyday of the Italian style.

Photos: James C. Massey, except where noted



**T**he overwhelming majority of Italian-style houses, however, were vernacular, not high style or architect-designed. All a builder had to do was flip to one of the many Italian-inspired plans in one of the many pattern books published during the period. Even more often, builders started with a familiar-shaped house and simply added a few of the very fashionable Italianate details.

It would be impossible to list all the stylistic details of Italianate houses built in the United States during the 19th century. Because the Italian style was so popular, and because it was used for houses all along the East and West Coasts and throughout the Midwest, the variations are almost endless.

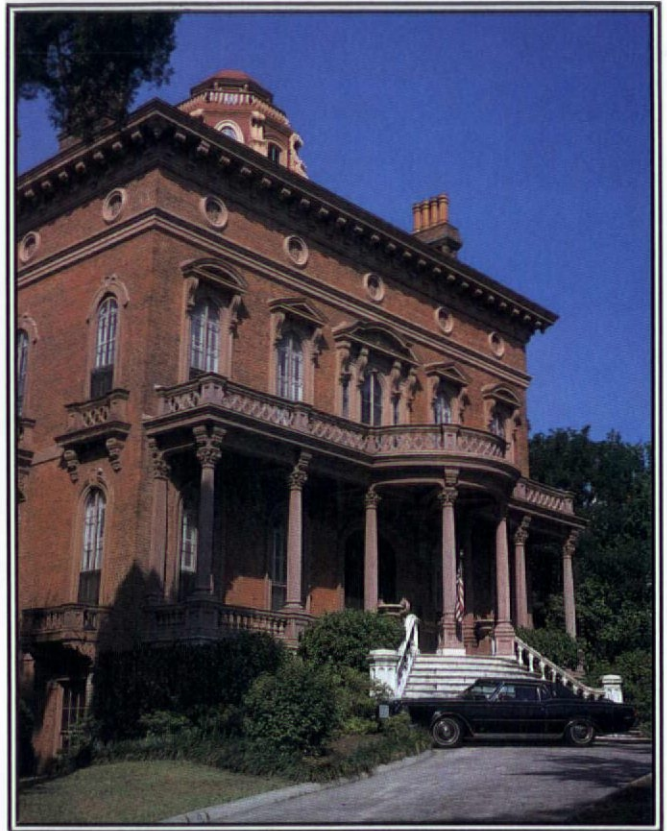
Italian-style houses were made of any available material, from brownstone to brick to wood. Generally, though, the materials were used in a way that would mimic the stone of their Italian Villa and *palazzo* models. Exterior surfaces were usually flat, often stuccoed, sometimes "pencilled" or scored to resemble masonry blocks, and painted in muted, stonelike colors.

As a rule, Italianate windows were large, using double-hung sash with two large panes of glass set one-over-one. Bay windows and oriels were common. So were windows with round-arch tops, and they frequently appeared in groups of two or three within a single frame. Windows were almost always shielded by flat-topped, rounded, or pediment-shaped hoods, or they were framed at top, sides, and bottom with wide, flat, scrolled trim.

Porches were a nearly universal feature of the Italianate house, especially small, one-storey, front-entrance porches. Larger one-storey porches, properly called verandahs, became more and more popular as the century progressed. No matter what the size, the porch was always a major focal point of the facade. It led to double front doors, usually with round tops and moulded trim; round-arched panels produced a similar effect. Porch supports, most often square or with chamfered edges, appear frequently in pairs. Bracketed tops rather than column capitals are also distinctive to the style.

Since Americans were always willing to add a pinch or two of newfangled ornament to bring their houses in line with architectural fancies, the appearance of transitional houses at either end of the Italianate period was almost guaranteed. In the Westchester, New York, house pictured bottom, right, for instance, the concave mansard roofline of the *campanile* presages the Second Empire style just then becoming popular.

The Italianate style remained all the rage for several decades. It finally began to ebb in the 1880s, a victim of circumstance. For several years during the 1870s, post-Civil War economic troubles put a big dent in the number of homes being constructed in this country. By the time homebuilding resumed in full force, an entirely new repertoire of architectural styles — Romanesque, Queen Anne, Shingle-style, Stick-style, and Colonial Revival, a revival style based on our own early dwellings — had captured the American imagination.



*The urbane, highly formal Hay House in Macon, Georgia, above, is an example of the Renaissance Revival style. Note its impressive sweep of stone stairs and balustraded balcony.*



*Transitional houses like this appeared at the end of the Italianate era. Its campanile has a mansard roof that presages the Second Empire, the style soon to sweep the country.*

Photo: Gordon Bock

# HISTORIC HOUSE PLANS



Mail-order plans have a long history in shaping the residential architecture of the country. Of the thousands of house plans available today, few exhibit good design and a grasp of historical proportion and detail. So, in response to requests from OHJ readers, the editors have "done the homework": We've hand-picked plans. In each issue, we offer the most attractive, authentic, and buildable of the historical designs, from all periods of American architectural history. Let us know what plans you're looking for.

You can order actual blueprints for all the houses featured. Plans conform to national building-code standards — however, *modifications are usually necessary for your site and local requirements, so you'll probably need the assistance of a professional designer (your builder may qualify) or an architect.*

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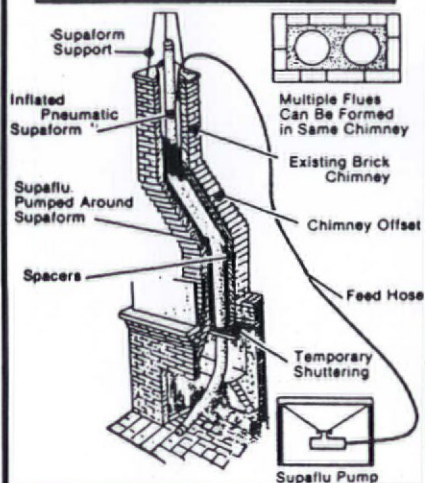
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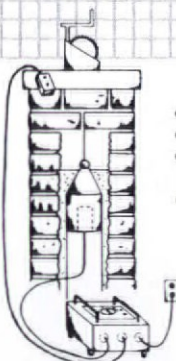
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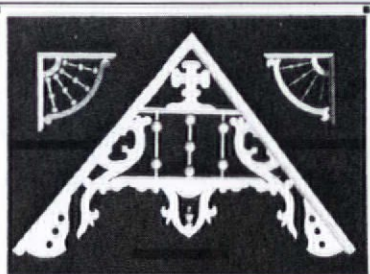
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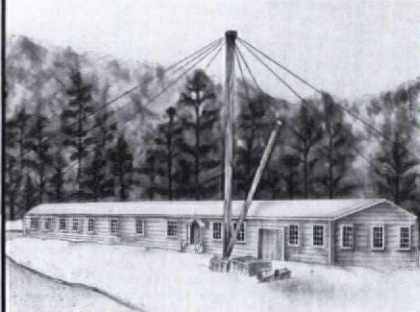
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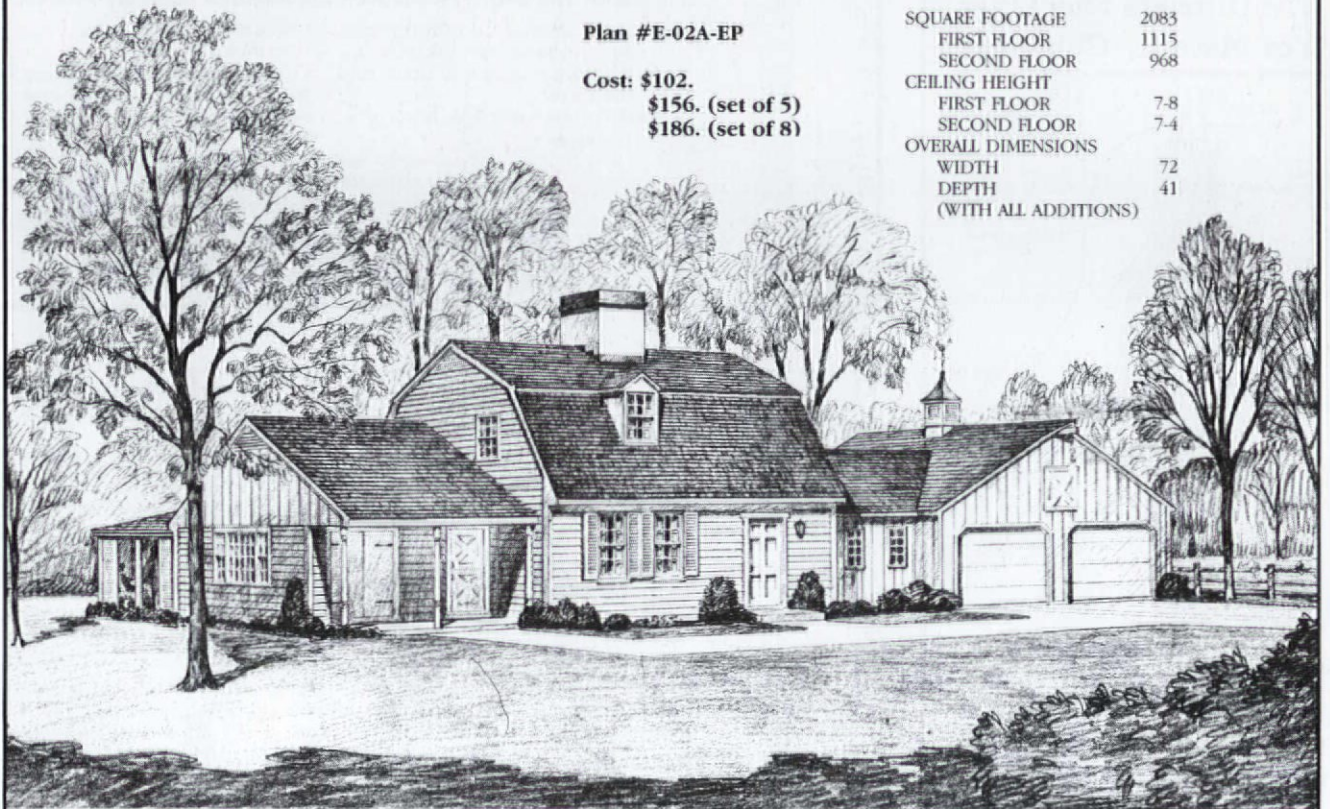
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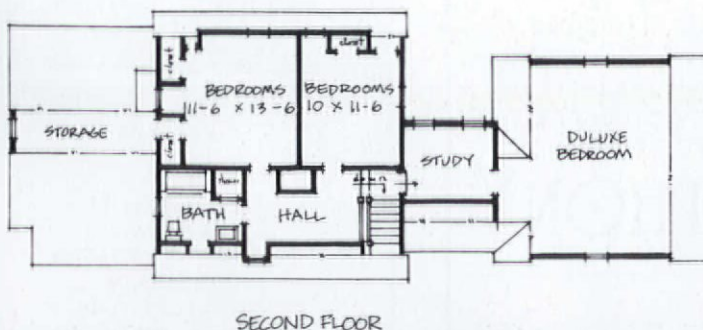
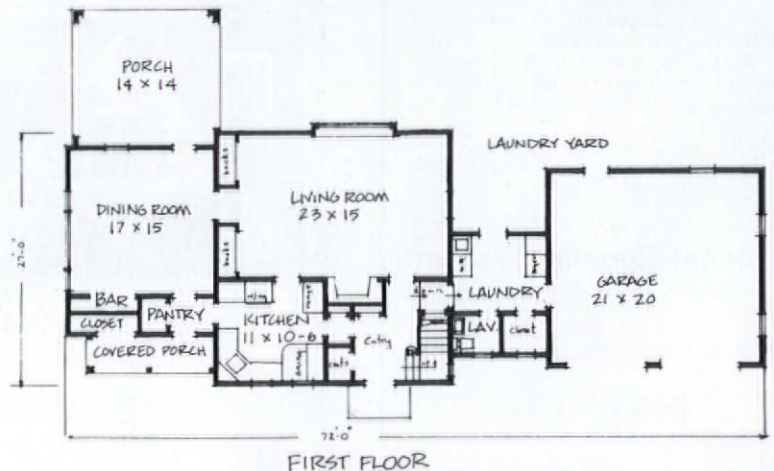
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SQUARE FOOTAGE	2083
FIRST FLOOR	1115
SECOND FLOOR	968
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	7-8
SECOND FLOOR	7-4
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	72
DEPTH	41
(WITH ALL ADDITIONS)	



We picked this plan in honor of OHJ's Gloucester office. Those of us on the lookout for such things have seen just such compact New England gambrels tucked into the landscape of Cape Ann. Some are hardly recognizable for the modifications and endless additions; others are unchanged. The illustration below right shows the house in its original form of the late-17th or early-18th century. The larger illustration depicts the house with additions, any or all of which can be constructed from the plans provided.



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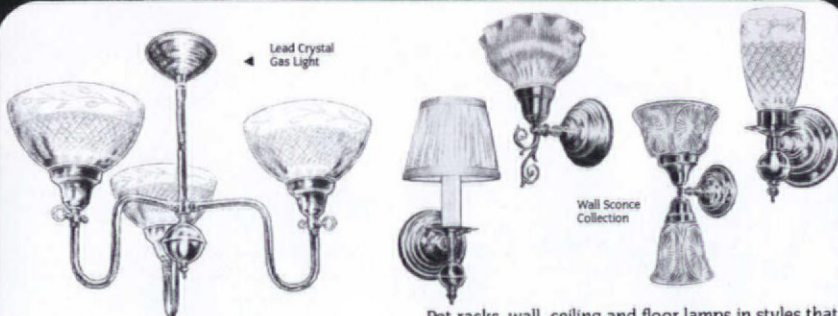
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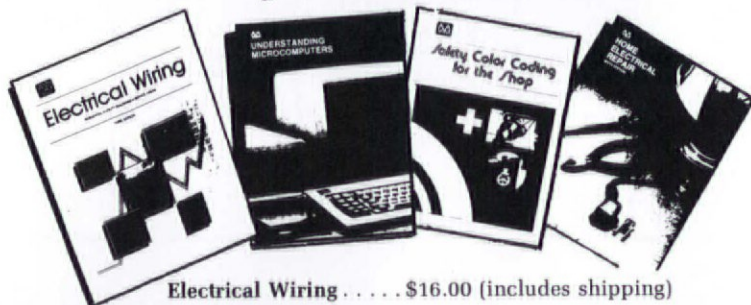
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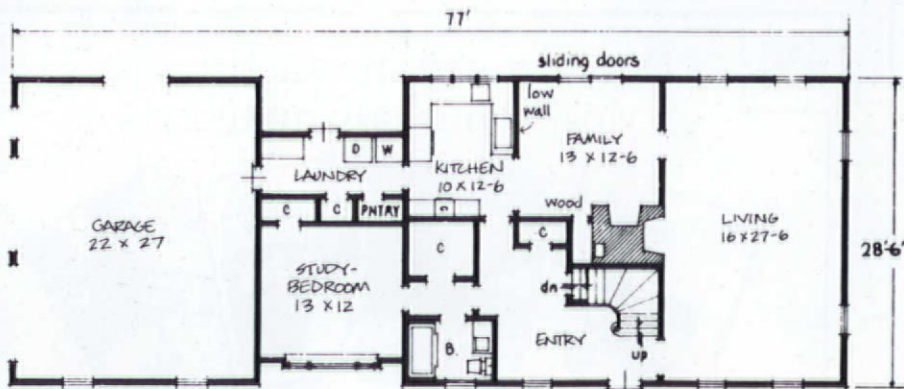
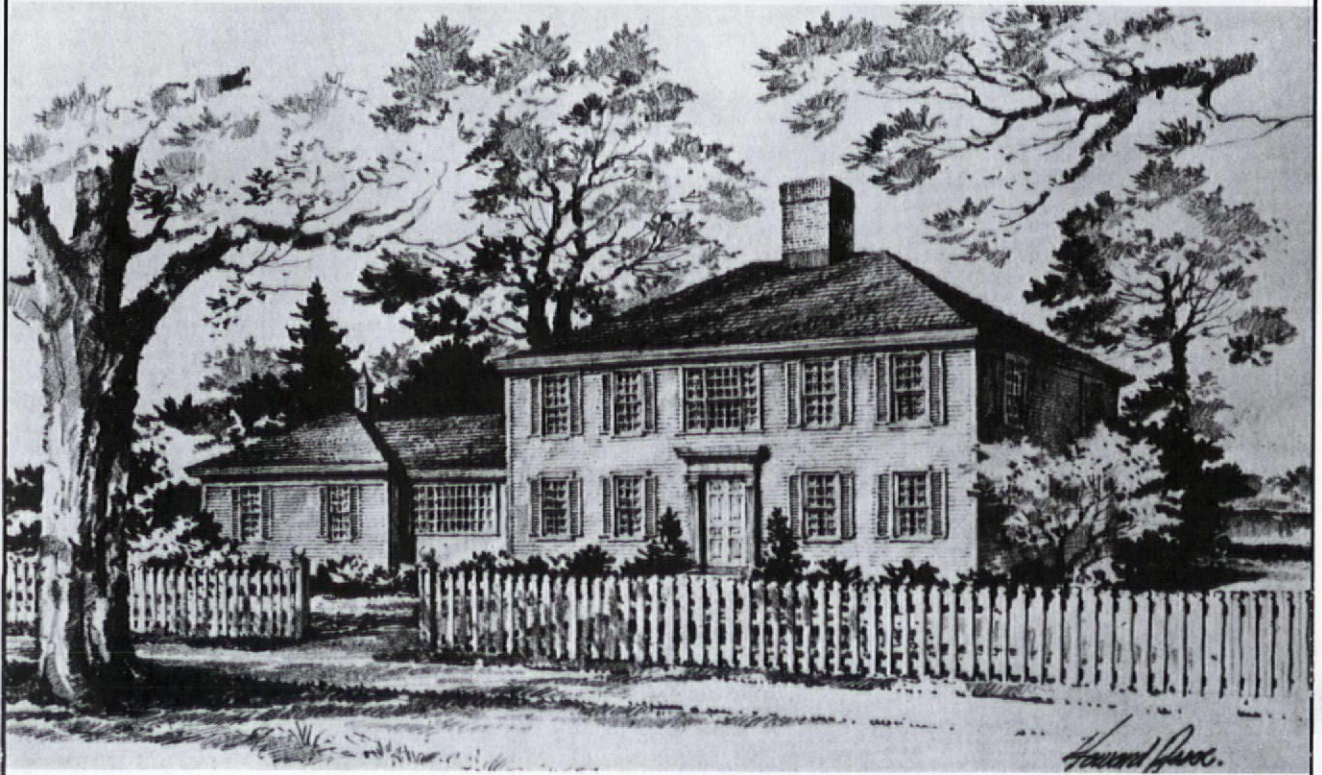
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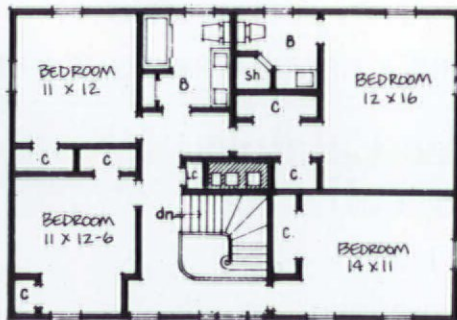


FIRST FLOOR

Plan #E-03A-EP

Cost: \$102.  
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SQUARE FOOTAGE	2609
FIRST FLOOR	1441
SECOND FLOOR	1168
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	7-8
SECOND FLOOR	7-6
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	77
DEPTH	28-6



SECOND FLOOR

More formal than the house on the previous page and a century later, this exterior is a reproduction of a historic house in eastern Massachusetts, begun about 1825. This is a house type that was popularized again during the Colonial Revival period of the 1920s and '30s. This architect planned a study/guest room downstairs with its own full bath that can also be entered from the stair hall. The family room-kitchen and living room each have a fireplace. Upstairs, there are seven closets serving four bedrooms and two baths.

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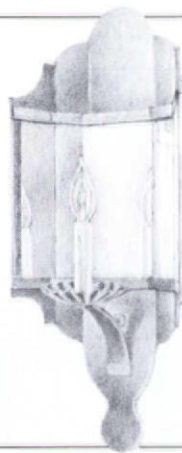


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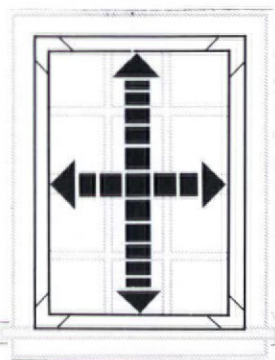
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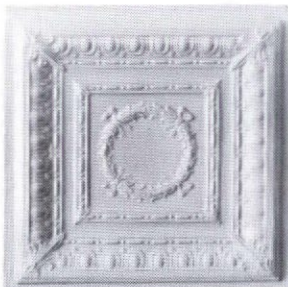
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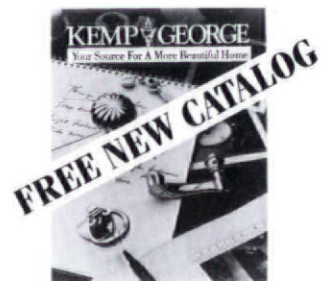
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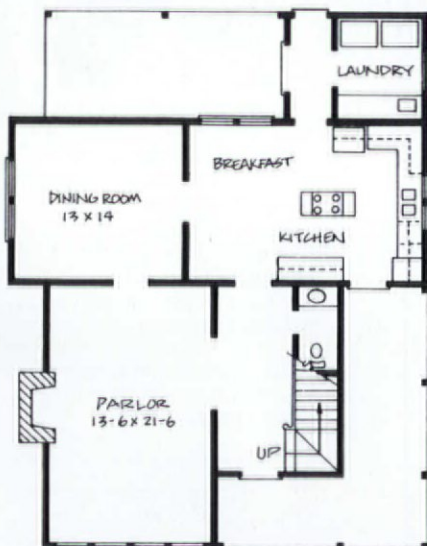
Plan #V-04A-HR

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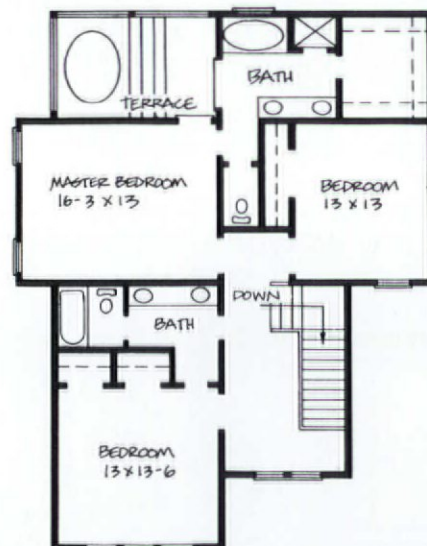
SQUARE FOOTAGE	2175
FIRST FLOOR	1085
SECOND FLOOR	1090
CEILING HEIGHT	10
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	35
DEPTH	45

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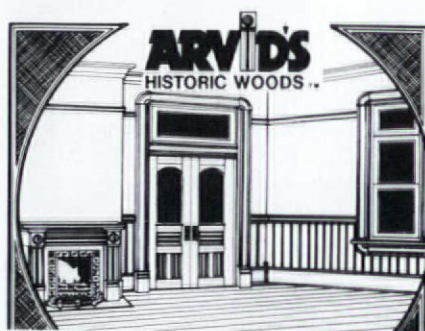


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Each of these books offers a treasure of usable information. The first volume reviewed is an indispensable resource for the do-it-yourself electrician. Roger Moss' guide sheds light on a subject every old-house enthusiast eventually must confront — choosing appropriate lighting fixtures. And if you've ever contemplated trying your hand at a fancy painted finish, you'll want to take a look at Nat Weinstein's book.

### Electrical Wiring: Third Edition

by Thomas S. Colvin. 188 pages with 364 color illustrations. AAVIM, 120 Driftmier Engineering Center, Athens, GA 30602; (800) 228-4689. (Ask for manual no. 305.) \$16 ppd.

Written with both the vocational student and do-it-yourself electrician in mind, *Electrical Wiring* is a hands-on course in wiring houses, utility structures, and farm buildings. Actually only the textbook portion of a larger teaching package, it starts with the electrical basics (understanding circuits, reading plans, description of terms and materials), and goes on to cover every aspect of new wiring with friendly, knowledgeable prose and large, uncluttered drawings.

The book doesn't miss a thing. There are pages on safety practices, selecting tools, bringing power into a building, grounding and working

with conduit, as well as such standard topics as adding switches and fixtures. Each subject is exhaustively discussed (there are 13 pages on receptacles alone). Sections on locating appliance and general purpose circuits are right in step with the demands of modern households.

All the practices outlined comply with the National Electrical Code (exceptions for the Canadian code are also noted), and important "non-electrical" information — from estimating wiring costs to the best way to pull cable from a box — is not overlooked.

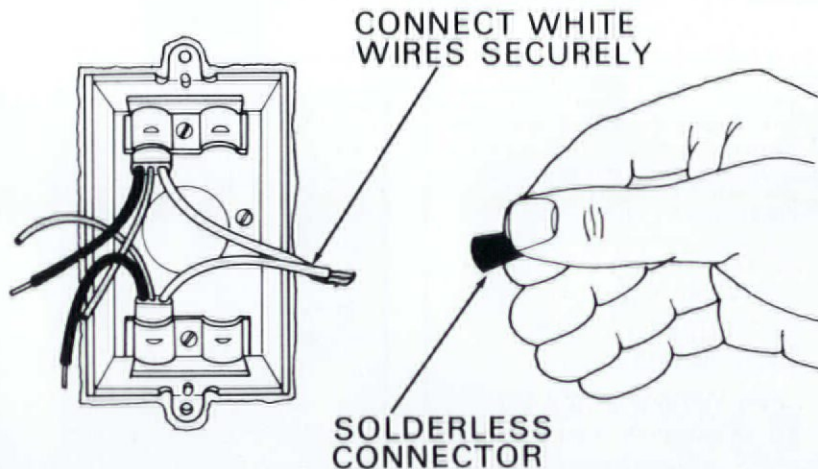
### Lighting for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproductions

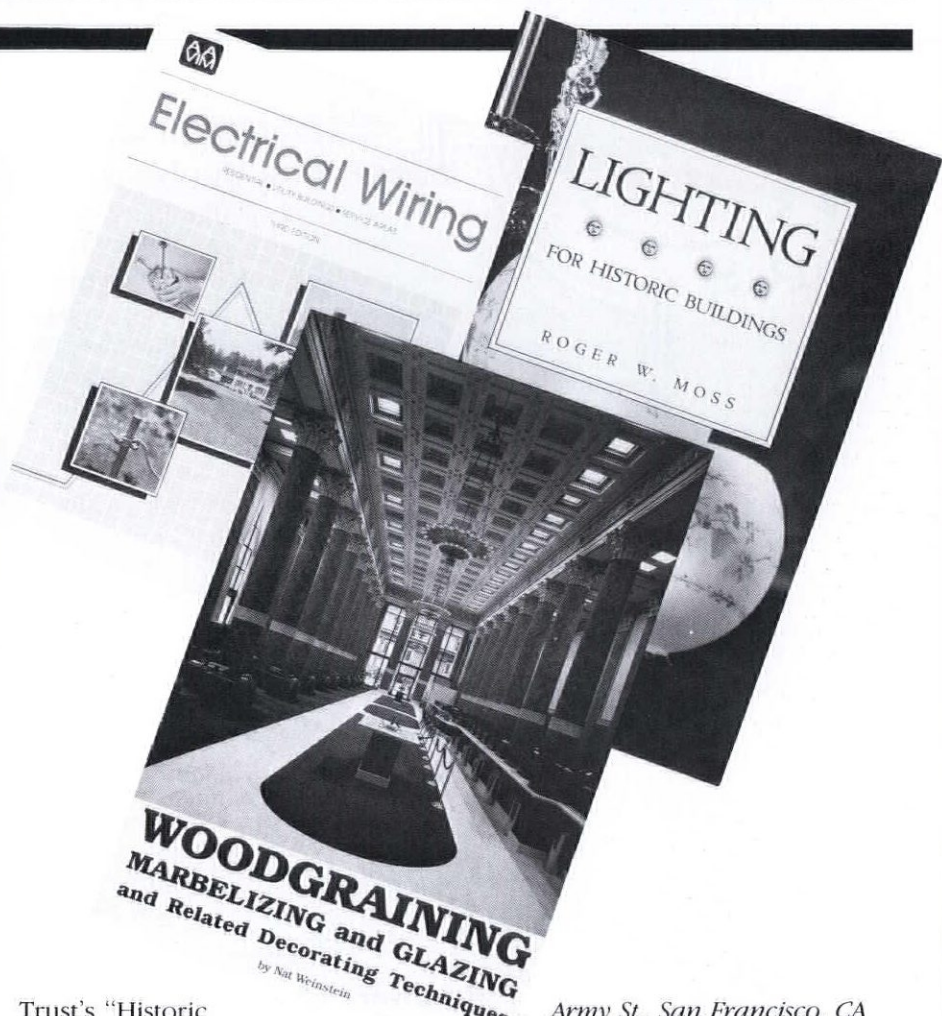
by Roger W. Moss. 192 pages, soft-bound, with black-and-white photos and illustrations throughout. The Preservation Press, Mail Order Division, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1600 H St., NW, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 673-4200. \$15.95 ppd.

As Roger Moss points out, compared to other areas of restoration decorating — wallcoverings, fabrics, paint colors — the field of historic lighting is still in the Dark Ages. Moss' guide goes a long way towards providing homeowners with information that's illuminating as well as useful.

*Lighting for Historic Buildings* is the latest addition to the National

Illustration from *Electrical Wiring*





Trust's "Historic Interiors" series. It divides the history of home lighting into five periods: candleholders (1620-1850); whale-oil, lard-oil, and burning-fluid fixtures (1783-1859); kerosene fixtures (1854-1934); gaslights (1817-1907); and electric lights (1879-1930). Another chapter deals exclusively with streetlights.

Each section begins with a discussion of typical fixtures and ends with a lengthy and well illustrated list of what reproductions are available and where you can find them. There's also an introductory chapter on lighting historic structures and what sorts of choices and compromises you're likely to face.

### Woodgraining, Marbelizing and Glazing and Related Decorating Techniques

by Nat Weinstein. 126 pages, soft-bound, with line drawings throughout and 15 color photographs. Walnut Publishing Co., Inc., 3435

Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110. \$34 ppd.

Nat Weinstein was one of OHJ's original contributors. He's also a nationally known craftsman who's specialized in decorative painted finishes for more than 35 years.

If you're looking for a basic, easy-to-understand primer on the art of the faux finish, take a look at Nat's new book. He concentrates primarily on two closely related techniques: woodgraining, the painting technique for simulating woods, particularly walnut and oak; and marbelizing, the painting technique that gives a representation of marble (see the article on page 42 in this issue). He also covers the more basic glazing techniques such as stippling, striating, and combing.

Nat describes each technique in plain English, step-by-step. He tells you how to mix the glazes and where to get the tools you need. He also tells you how to improvise hard-to-find tools for more exotic effects.

## VINTAGE WOOD WORKS

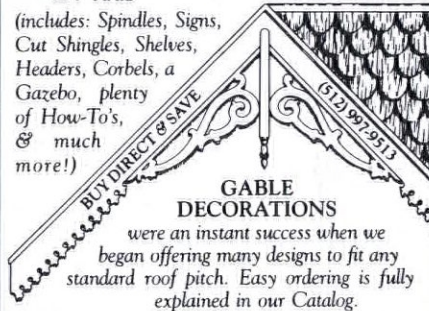
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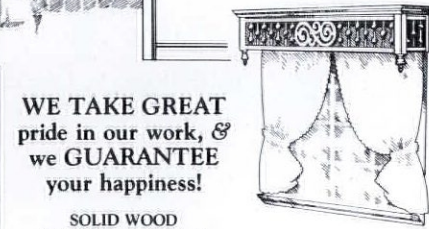


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REVIEWED BY  
JANET MARINELLI

# Thibaut WALL PAPERS

Jim Massey, co-author of OHJ's house-style series, is also Executive Vice President of the National Preservation Institute in Washington. Over lunch a few weeks back, he told us about NPI's latest collaboration with Richard Thibaut, Inc., America's oldest wallpaper manufacturer. Later this year, they'll be adding a batch of new period wallpapers to Thibaut's Historic Homes of America line, and they're now looking for wallpaper samples from American houses of the 18th, 19th, and early-20th century to use as the "documents."

Most of the 23 designs already in the collection came from privately owned old houses, not museums. So if there's some old wallpaper hidden under layers of newer papers in a closet, behind a large mirror, or tucked away in your attic, give Jim a call! If your paper is selected for inclusion in the new collection, you'll get a free room's worth, and a photo and brief history of your house will appear in the 11,000 sample books that Thibaut distributes to dealers and decorators.

For more information,  
contact Jim Massey,  
**National Preservation Institute**

National Building Museum  
Judiciary Square, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 393-0038.

*We found the above illustration in a Thibaut ad that ran in a 1920 issue of House Beautiful — ed*

EDWIN R. SWADACK

## Period Mouldings

OHJ reader Greg Ahmann recently tipped us off to an Everett, Washington, company called Arvid's Historic Woods. Arvid's, wrote Greg, "has excellent mouldings for Victorian and post-Victorian houses. And they will custom-mill for you."

The company's catalog currently includes 568 moulding profiles. About 150 new profiles are added every year: Every time a customer asks them to custom-duplicate a moulding, it goes into the next edition of the catalog. There is a \$50 reproduction charge for custom work. All mouldings are made of hemlock, fir, mahogany, or oak. Arvid's will also custom-make mantels and doors.

Arvid's Historic Woods, 2820 Rucker Ave., Dept. OHJ, Everett, WA 98201; 1-800-6-ARVIDS. Catalog, \$5.50.

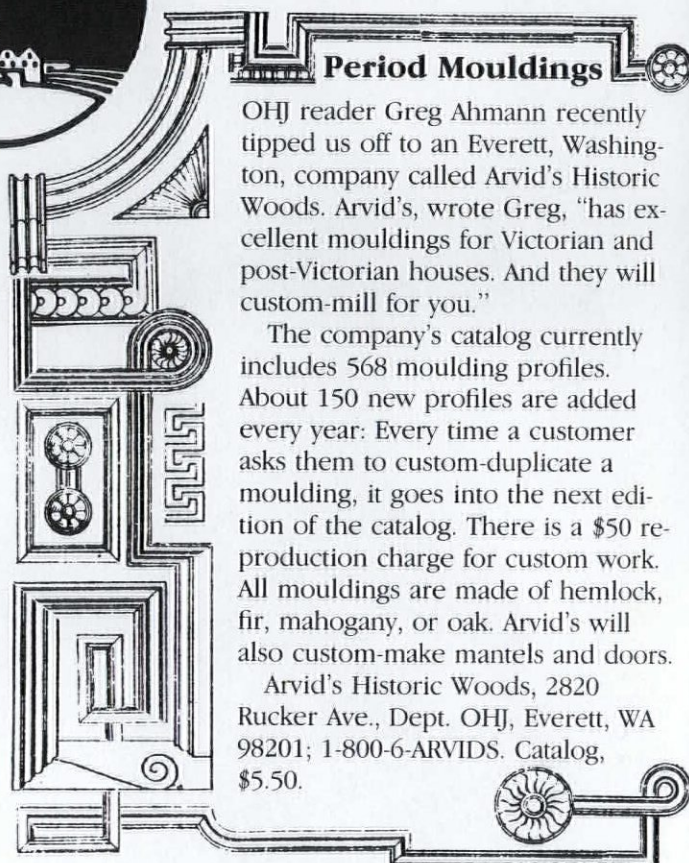
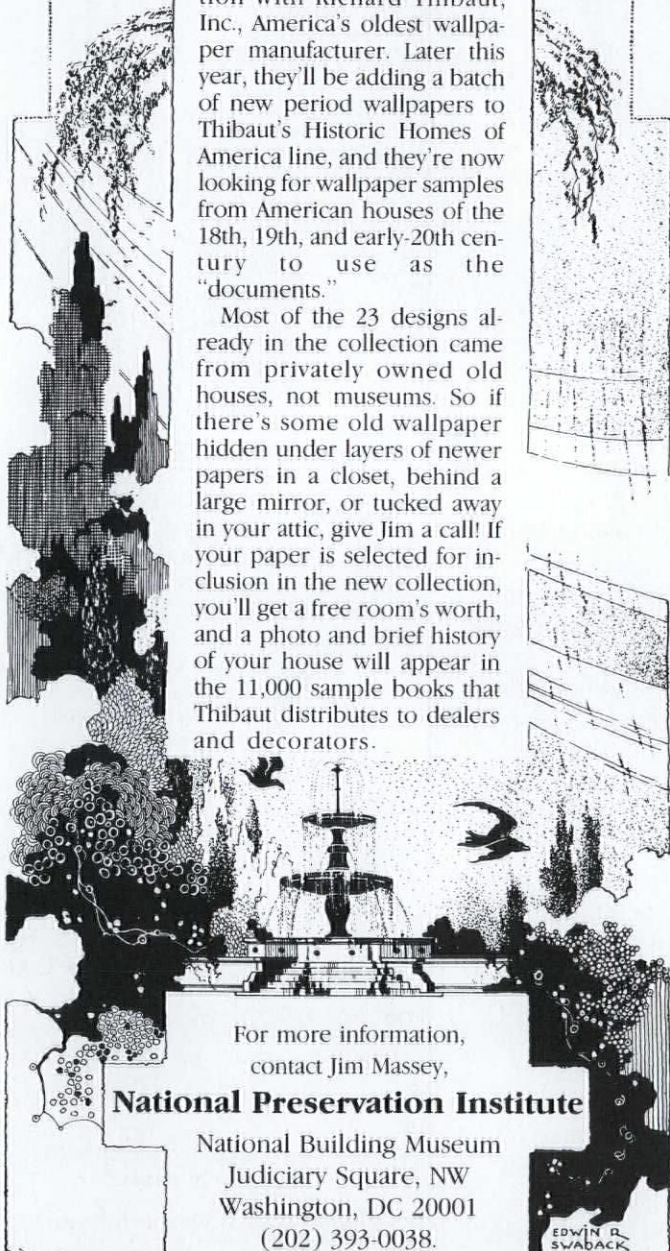
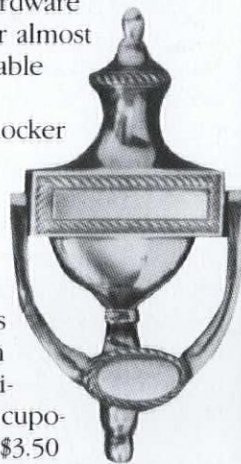
## Hardware Closeout

Hardware Plus recently acquired a large inventory of solid-brass, reproduction Victorian and Georgian door and cabinet hardware, and is offering it to the public at prices below wholesale. The hardware, which was to be the grand-opening stock of a new hardware store in Texas, sat in a warehouse for almost five years when the owners were unable to launch the business.

The collection includes the urn knocker at right, which usually retails for about \$20; Hardware Plus' special closeout price is \$5. A free closeout flyer is available.

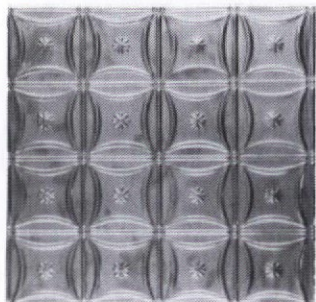
Hardware Plus specializes in products for restoration professionals at discount prices — everything from plumbing and lighting fixtures to residential and commercial hardware to cupolas and wallpapers. For details, send \$3.50 plus a business card or letterhead for a copy of their new, 200-page 1989 catalog. Owner Andrea Ridout says Hardware Plus will also sell to homeowners, but discounts will be based on the number of each item purchased.

Hardware Plus, 701 E. Kingsley Rd., Dept. OHJ, Garland, TX 75041; (214) 271-0319.



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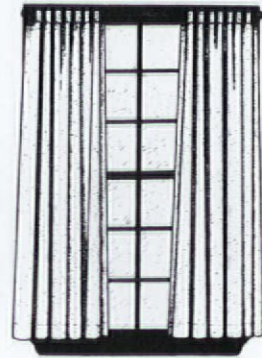
### Tab Curtains

The Vermont Country Store offers the curtains illustrated at right. They're based on the simple window treatments found in many houses in the New England and Pennsylvania colonies.

Called tab curtains because they're designed to hang on a simple rod from fabric loops or "tabs," they come 80" wide and in six lengths, from 36" to 84". The curtains come



in natural muslin, muslin with a Colonial floral print, or Osnaburg, an old-fashioned, loosely woven cotton fabric, in blue or beige. Depending on the size and fabric chosen, the curtains range in price from \$19.95



to \$39.75. For more information, contact The Vermont Country Store, PO Box 3000, Dept. OHJ, Manchester, VT 05255; (802) 362-2400. Free catalog.

### Documented Carpet



### Petite Rococo

If you're trying to furnish a foyer or small parlor, the scaled-down loveseat pictured below may be just what you're looking for. Offered by Martha M. House, it features intricate rococo carvings, including cut-through carvings on the back. The loveseat measures 64½" wide × 31" deep × 43" high and costs \$1,299 freight collect.

Martha M. House, 1022 South Decatur St., Dept. OHJ, Montgomery, AL 36104; (205) 264-3558. Catalog, \$2.

Family Heir-Loom Weavers has come out with the new stair and hall carpet above. Based on a c. 1870 carpet from the Goldy Paley Design and Resource Center in Philadelphia, the 22½"-wide, wool ingrain carpet is available in a tan ground with the pattern in either reds, greens, browns, or blues. It costs \$70 a yard. Send \$1 for a brochure and a swatch of the carpet.

Family Heir-Loom Weavers, RD #3, Box 59E, Dept. OHJ, Red Lion, PA 17356; (717) 246-2431.



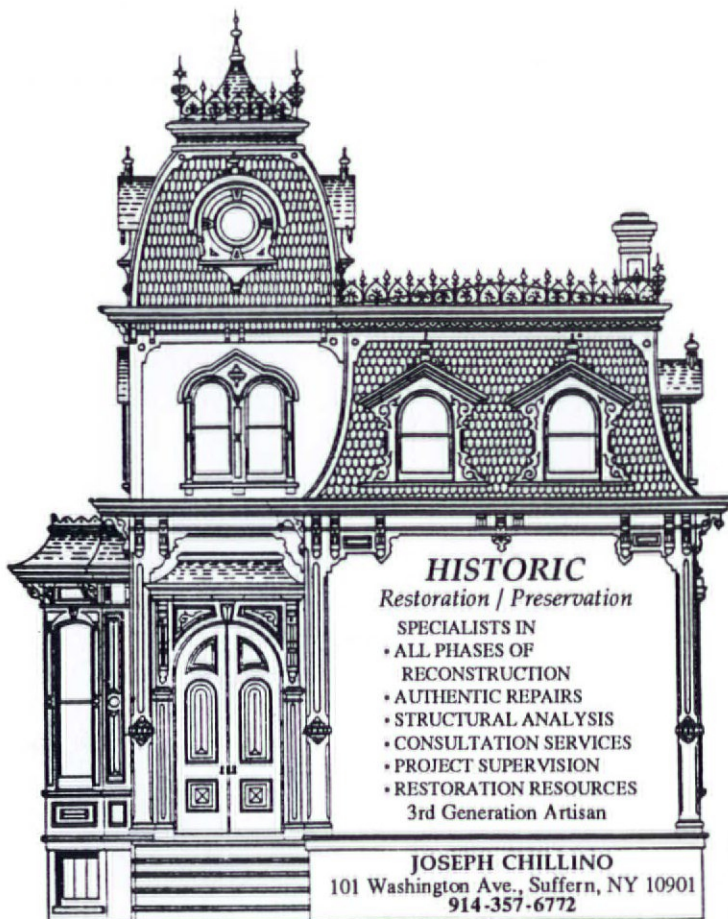


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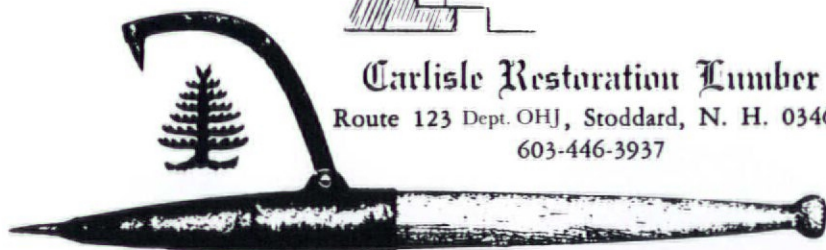
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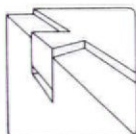
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### Renaissance Revival Furniture

How do you decorate an Italian-style house?

Renaissance Revival was a favorite furniture style for villas, *palazzos*, and Italianate houses. Reproducing this massive, architectural, and often highly carved furniture gets expensive, but one reliable mail-order source for antique pieces is Antiquaria in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The Renaissance Revival cabinet at right is an example from Antiquaria's current inventory. The walnut cabinet, though large (it measures 47½" high × 33½" wide × 18½" deep), is smaller than most formal cabinets in the style. It features a profusion of walnut burl veneer and incised decoration. It's available for \$1650.

For \$4, Dan and Lisa Sotak-Cooper, the owners of Antiquaria, will send you a copy of their quarterly mail-order catalog, which includes photos and descriptions of their changing inventory of Renaissance Revival and



other American Victorian antiques.

Antiquaria, 60 Dartmouth St., Dept. OHJ, Springfield, MA 01109; (413) 781-6927.



### Italianate Colors

What color should you paint your Italianate house?

The American Seal Division of Monsey Products Company, in collaboration with the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation in New York, recently introduced "Saratoga Colors," 100 shades of authenticated exterior paint for old houses. An entire series of these colors is designed specifically for Italianates (other colors are for Federals, Greek Revivals, Second Empires, Queen Annes, Colonial Revivals, Carpenter Gothics, or Bungalows).

Saratoga Colors are available in both oil-base and acrylic-latex formulations, and can be applied to wood, masonry, and metal. The latex paints retail for \$17 to \$18 per gallon; the oil-based paints, \$20 to \$21 per gallon.

A foldout brochure with color chips is available free from Monsey Products/American Seal Division, PO Box 309, Waterford, NY 12188.

### Fulper Revival

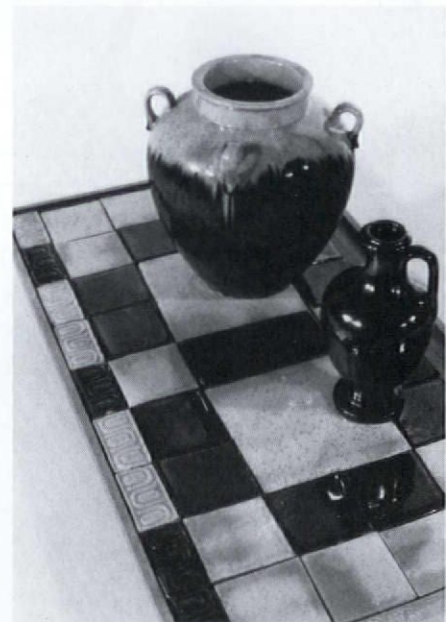
From 1909 until 1928, William Hill Fulper II produced an artware line at his Fulper Pottery in Flemington, New Jersey. Today, the Fulper artware line is prized by collectors for the vibrant color and texture of its glazes. Fulper died in 1928, and the following year, fire completely destroyed the pottery.

A few years ago, William Fulper's four granddaughters discovered six notebooks containing formulas for 65 of the coveted glazes, hand-written by the master potter himself. They recently established a new company, Fulper Glazes, to produce hand-crafted tiles bearing their grandfather's famous glazes.



The photograph at right shows two of William Fulper's pots and new tile featuring his "Flowing Ivory" and "Mirror Black" glazes. Ten other glazes are currently available, and others are in the works. The tiles come in standard sizes, from 2" × 2" to 12" × 12"; 4" × 4" tiles retail for \$40 per square foot. Three standard trim sizes are also available. According to Rada Fulper, the company is happy to do custom work.

For more information, call or write Fulper Glazes, Box 373, Dept. OHJ, Yardley, PA 19067; (212) 966-9772.







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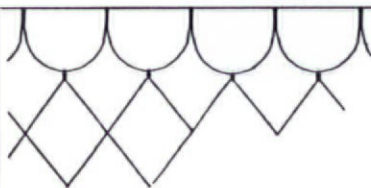
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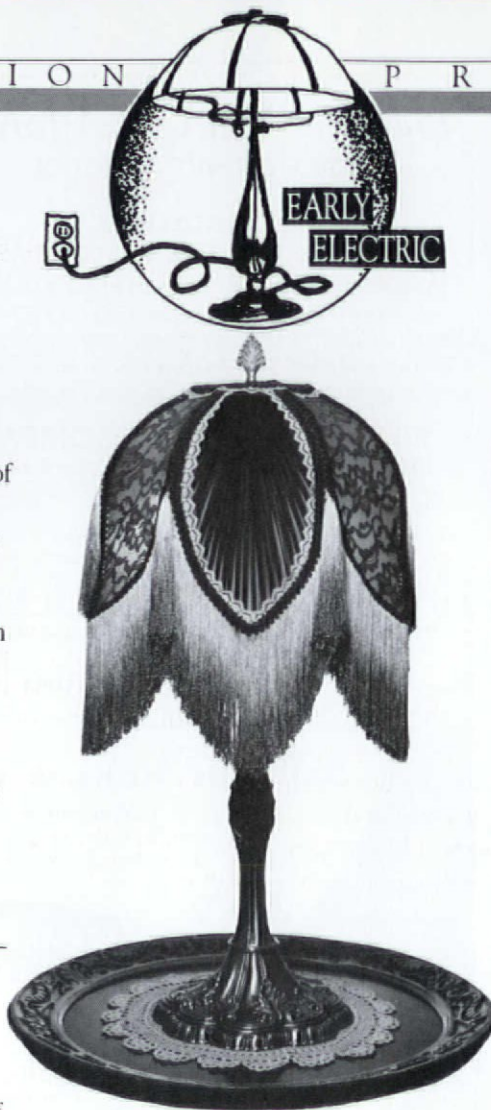
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### Lampshade Kits

To help cut down on glare from the new electric bulbs, homeowners at the turn of the century often put ornate fabric shades on their table lamps. Some shades were embellished with hand-dyed lace, fringe, and a variety of trims.

Turn of the Century Lampshades of Bend, Oregon, now offers 10 styles of lampshades in kit form, including the "Tulip" lampshade pictured at right. Everything you need to make the shade is included in the kit, from wire frame to fabrics to needle, thread, and glue. Each kit also includes a 60-page booklet with step-by-step instructions.

Owners Tom and Patti Byram also sell more than 50 finished shades. Assembled, the Tulip lampshade



costs \$160; in kit form, \$78.

Turn of the Century Lampshades, Inc., PO Box 6599, Dept. OHJ, Bend, OR 97708; (503) 382-1802.

### Finished Lampshades

The following companies also manufacture ready-made lampshades in turn-of-the-century styles:

Burdoch Silk Lampshade Co., 1145 Industrial Ave., Suite E, Dept. OHJ, Escondido, CA 92025; (619) 745-3275. Color flyer, \$3, plus a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Shady Lady, 418 E. 2nd St., Dept. OHJ, Loveland, CO 80537; (303) 669-1080. Catalog, \$3.50.

Yestershades, 3824 S.E. Stark St., Dept. OHJ, Portland, OR 97214; (503) 235-5645. Catalog, \$3.50.

### Lamp Cord

Over the years, we've gotten scads of calls from readers searching for the pale-green and yellow, fabric-covered, twisted lamp cord that was used for early electric ceiling fixtures and table lamps. OHJ reader Chuck Brasher of Grass Valley, California, tracked down one manufacturer, Carol Cable Co. of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The company doesn't sell directly to the public, but one of its distributors, Tony Sirico of Industrial Solar in Burlington, Kansas, has been making the old-fashioned lamp cord available in small quantities to OHJ readers for the past several years. The 16-gauge, rubber-insulated, copper-strand conductor wire clad with cotton braid is UL-listed and costs \$.57 a foot plus shipping.

For more information and a sample, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Tony Sirico, Industrial Solar Co., PO Box 117, Dept. OHJ, Burlington, KS 66839; (316) 364-2662.

### Electrical Code Book

If you're grappling with the wiring system in your house, a copy of the national electrical code is a good thing to have on hand.

You can get a copy from the National Fire Protection Association in Quincy, Massachusetts. The *National Electrical Code*, a paperback edition, costs \$23.38 ppd. However, you may find the hardbound *National Electrical Code Handbook* more helpful, since it includes the entire code, plus explanations and illustrations. It costs \$45.38 ppd.

Both editions include the 1987 code, the most recently revised standard. They will be current until the code is updated again in 1990.

For more information, call or write the National Fire Protection Association, Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269; (800) 344-3555.

### Circuit Testers

Cable Electric Products makes the Snapit Circuit Tester illustrated below. You can use it to determine whether there's power in an outlet, whether the outlet is grounded, and whether "hot" and "neutral" contacts



are wired to the correct terminals. It costs \$1.79.

The Snapit 3-Wire Circuit Analyzer, below, performs all the same functions.

It's easier to use than the Circuit Tester (all you do is plug it in — you don't have to worry about which lead goes where). The suggested retail price is \$5.95.

Both tools are sold at hardware and electronics stores.



# Classic OHJ, Bound Into Books.

"Dear OHJ," the letter began, "I followed up on an offer of OHJ back issues which was listed in your Emporium section — but alas, they'd already been sold. I really want to buy all the back issues I can get my hands on. Do you know of anyone else who might have some? Or could you sell me any old issues you have lying around?"

We can do better than that! Unlike other magazines, our back issues aren't "collector's items" with premium price tags. We keep back issues in print, bound into handsome books that we call OHJ Yearbooks.

Over the years, as new readers signed up, they worried about what they'd missed. They knew that the how-to information already published in OHJ wasn't out of date — and that topics covered recently probably wouldn't appear again for years. The demand for single-copy back issues

became so great that we invented the Yearbooks: sturdy bound volumes meticulously indexed for easy use.

This year we're offering a full set of 1980s Yearbooks — eight volumes that include every article, every source, every tip published in OHJ from 1980 through 1987 — for \$89. That's \$48.55 off the cost of the Yearbooks purchased separately, and it includes a free copy of our Cumulative Index. We're also offering a four-volume set of the most recent OHJ editorial, 1984-1987, for \$49 — \$14.80 off the cost of the volumes purchased one by one. And our Cumulative Index is available too — for \$9.95.

Know someone who just bought an old house? Our Yearbooks make great gifts for these folks, as well as for your house. To get the Yearbooks, just mark the right box on the envelope order-form and enclose a check.



## OHJ Yearbooks

## These are the tools OHJ editors reach for when we strip paint from our own houses.

We can't count the number of times we've been asked which method is *really* best for removing paint. Well, we've seen "miracle" paint removers come and go. We've watched chemical paint strippers almost triple in price in the past 15 years. We've tried just about every heat tool on the market. In our opinion, if you've got more than a door or two to do, heat is the way to go. And the heat tools we reach for when stripping paint from our own wainscot and newel posts are the Heavy-Duty HG-501 Heat Gun and the Warner Heat Plate.

Heat is a fast method because all the paint bubbles and lifts as you go along. There's no waiting for chemicals to soak in, no multiple recoatings, and far less clean-up. Unlike stripping with chemicals, you can remove all layers of paint in a single pass. And because these tools are long-lasting, industrial products, their initial expense is more than made up in savings on the \$18- to \$22-per gallon stripper you're no longer buying in quantity.

The Heat Gun is the most efficient paint-removal tool for heavily painted porch parts, mouldings, or other or-

namental woodwork. Some chemical stripper is needed for clean-up, but 95% of the paint comes off during the heat-and-scrape. The Heat Gun is not recommended for use on hollow partitions or for stripping entire exteriors.

That's where the Heat Plate comes in handy. It's the most cost-effective and easy-to-use tool for stripping paint from broad, flat surfaces: doors, panelling, baseboards, and exterior wooden clapboards. And it's safer for use on hollow partitions and exterior cornices because there's no blown hot air that could ignite hidden dust. Neither the Heat Plate nor the Heat Gun are recommended for removing varnish.

Both the Heat Gun and the Heat Plate come with complete operating and safety instructions, and are backed by the Old-House Journal Guarantee: If your unit should malfunction for any reason within two months of purchase, simply return it to us and we'll replace it.

To purchase either or both heat tools, use the envelope order-form. The Heat Gun costs \$77.95 ppd; the Heat Plate, \$47.95 ppd.



## Paint-Stripping Heat Tools

# Our New Catalog is the "Yellow Pages" for your pre-1930 house.

Used to be, old-house folks had to waste an awful lot of valuable time tracking down the right trowel or terra-cotta tile — time that could be better spent actually plastering or repairing the leaky roof! But the days of fruitless phone calls and wild goose chases are over: You'll find more than 10,000 products and services in the revised and updated 1989 edition of **The Old-House Journal Catalog** — including all those things hardware store clerks insist "just aren't made anymore."

The Catalog is the most complete, up-to-date, authoritative guide to high-quality restoration items around. It includes house parts you won't find anywhere else: push-button light switches, porch ornament, iron roof cresting, reproduction lighting fixtures, hand-blocked wallpaper, Victorian tile. Unusual services too: Where else could you find companies who will custom duplicate your millwork and hardware, paint your house in historic colors, repair your stained glass, reline your chimney, and recreate a period garden? What's more, most of the companies listed sell or distribute nationally, so you can do business with the firm that meets your needs, whether you live in Manhattan or North Dakota.

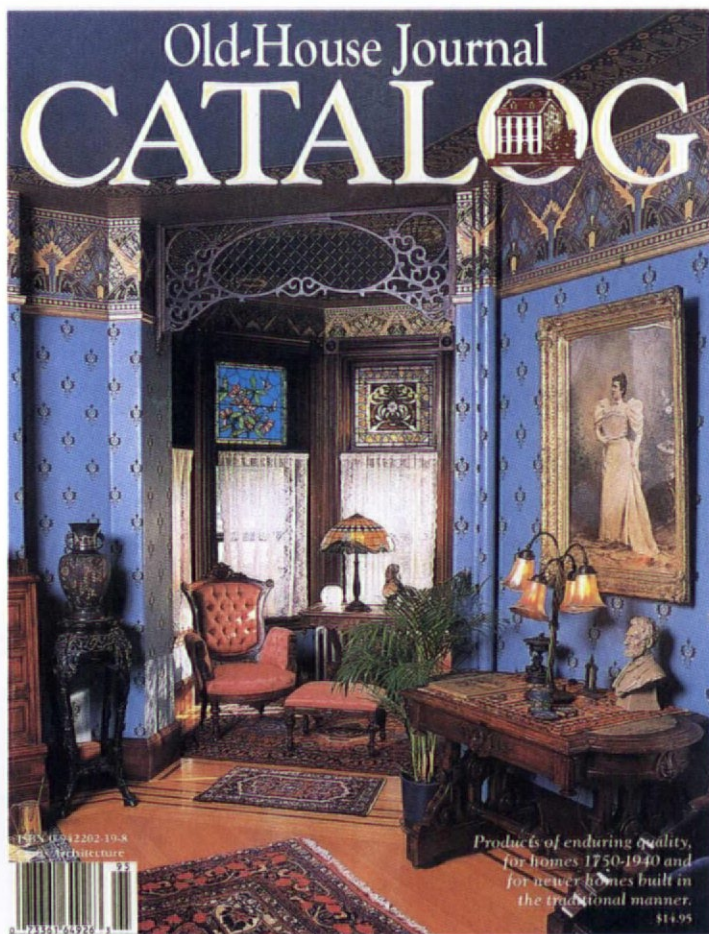
The 1989 edition of **The Old-House Journal Catalog** is

cramped with important *new* information: There are more than 200 *new* companies which didn't appear in the 1988 edition. Also, hundreds of the other listings contain *new* products, prices, literature, addresses, and phone numbers which were added or changed since the previous edition. We spent a good part of the sweltering summer of 1988 personally contacting each and every company listed to make sure that our Catalog is as accurate as it is useful.

**The Old-House Journal Catalog** is organized for easy use. Each company entry includes complete address and phone number, and lets you know what kind of literature

is available (and the price, if any). The Catalog Index has been meticulously cross-referenced; you won't go crazy trying to find "bulls-eye windows," say, because the Index tells you they can be found under "windows, special architectural shapes." Another great feature: a State Index that groups companies by city and state, so you can locate old-house suppliers nearest you.

To order this 8½-x-11-inch, 248-page, soft-bound book, enclose a check for \$12.95 (a special subscribers' price which includes postage) in the envelope order-form. **The Old-House Journal Catalog** has got what it takes to bring your house from "has lots of potential" to "looks great!"



## Old-House Journal Catalog

## HOW TO REACH OHJ

### Call Our Main Office:

To order subscriptions (new, gift, and renewal), books, back issues, and other merchandise; or if you have a problem with your subscription, an address change, a missing issue, or just a question, call Monday-Friday, 9 AM TO 5 PM, EST:

(718) 636-4514

or write:

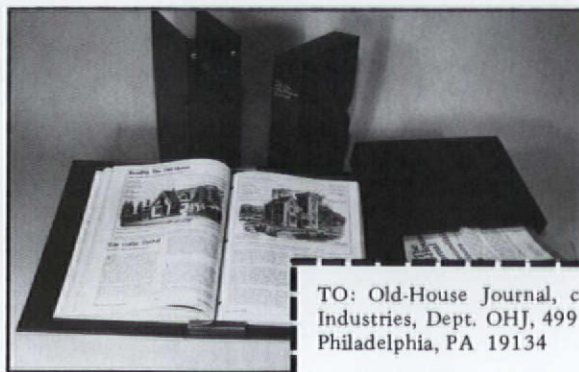
**The Old-House Journal**  
69A Seventh Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

### To Contact Our Advertising Office:

The Old-House Journal  
123 Main Street, Suite 25  
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See page 87 for Advertising Sales Offices.

## How To Save Your OHJs



Save your copies the same way the OHJ staff does. Use a file case (8-5/8" x 11-1/2") or a binder (9-1/4" x 12-3/4"). Binders have a wire for each issue, so you can open issues flat without removing them. Each binder or file case holds a year's worth of issues; both are library quality — handsome deep maroon leatherette with the OHJ logo embossed in gold.

NOTE: For fastest service, call toll-free 1-800-972-5858 and charge to VISA or Mastercard (\$15 minimum).

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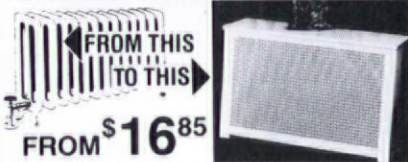
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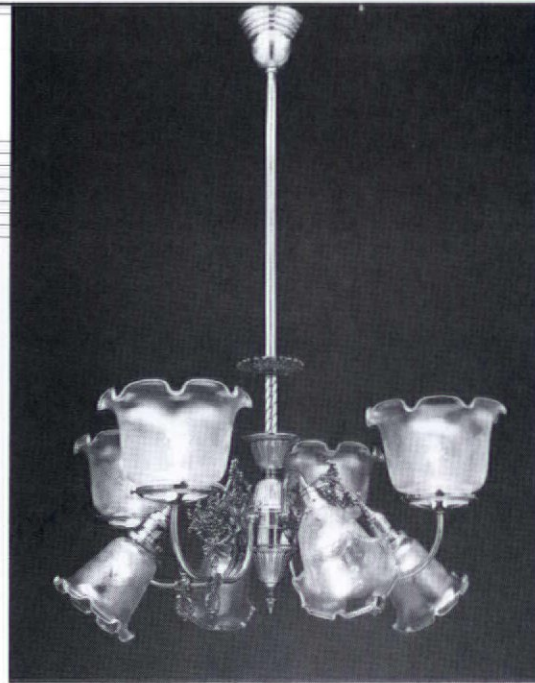
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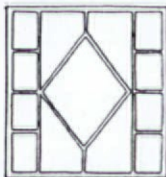
Provides a wealth of information about woods and their proper finish, staining, varnishing, shellacking, refinishing, French Polishing and old stain formulas.

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RADIATORS: See Sept/Oct 1988 OHJ article. Three 1870 wrought iron; two 1880 early steam, one circular; nine 1926 slim, 4/6 tube. Details on request. R.F. Binder, 31 Fairmount St., Nashua, NH 03060. (603) 882-5384.

CRANE PEDESTAL SINK from 1930s, similar to Nov/Dec '87 OHJ, p. 60: \$500 or BO. 2 wall-hung china toilets, one dated 1926, other 1938, Art Deco: \$350 each or BO. Edison Ediphone dictating machines, two w/ patent of 1910, two from 'teens or '20s, & one Art Deco: BO. Crating, shipping extra. Appleton, WI. (414) 734-1714 after 6 PM, CST.

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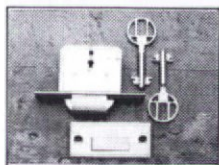


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(Net Press Run): 148,140. B. Paid circulation: 1. Sales  
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sales: 12,106. 2. Mail subscription: 109,620. C. Total  
paid circulation: 121,726. D. Free distribution by mail,  
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free copies: 2,855. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D):  
124,581. F. 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled  
after printing: 2,759. 2. Return from new agents: 20,800.  
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Press Run): 145,199. B. Paid circulation: 1. Sales through  
dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales:  
13,603. 2. Mail subscriptions: 102,193. C. Total paid  
circulation: 115,796. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier  
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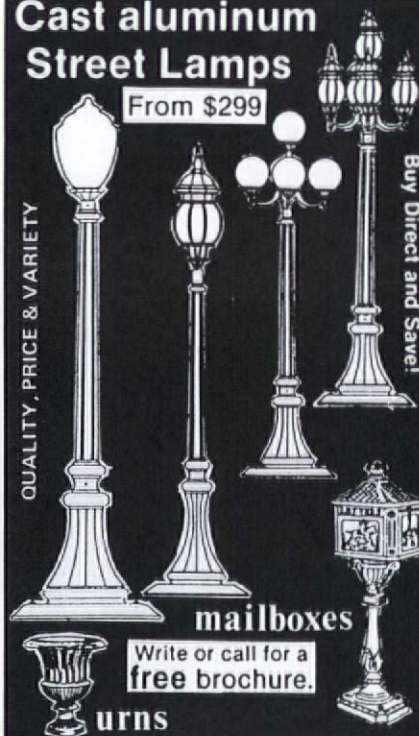
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**1989 WINTER WORKSHOP SERIES** of the Preservation Institute for the Building Crafts will be held from January to April in VT & NH. Topics range from architectural woodworking & repointing brick masonry to painted finishes & slate-roof repair. For registration information, contact Charlotte Barrett, Director, PIBC, PO Box 1777, Windsor, VT 05089. (802) 674-6752.

**"STYLE IN THE 18TH CENTURY: Straightlaced Or Unlaced?"** is the topic for weekends in Colonial Williamsburg. Find out what clothing was fashionable & what was not in colonial VA. This three-day, two-night package focuses on this & other issues related to style in the 18th century, & is offered on Jan. 27-29; Feb 3-5 & 10-12; March 10-12. For more information, contact Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, PO Box C, Williamsburg, VA 23187. (804) 220-7255.

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25 to Feb. 17. Through a series of lectures, discussions, & small group sessions on social & design history, participants will have a chance to study furniture, metals, glass, ceramics, textiles, paintings & prints in both workshop & period room settings. For further information, contact Doris Smith, Winterthur Museum & Gardens, Winterthur, DE 19735. (302) 656-8591, ext. 243.

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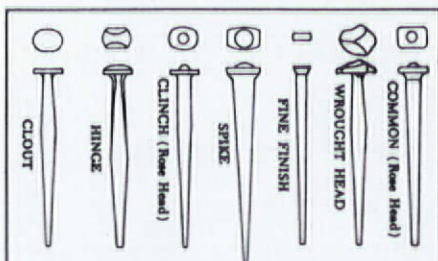


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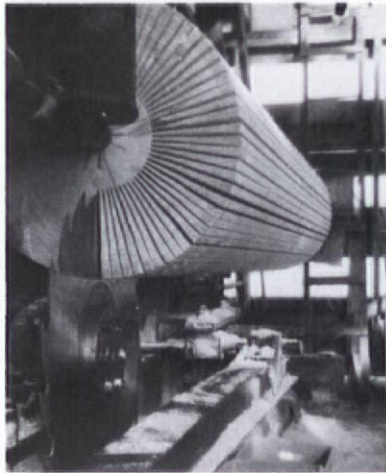
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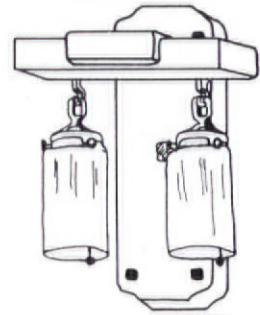


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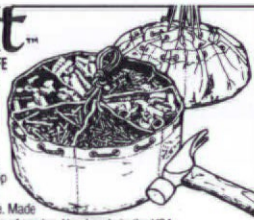


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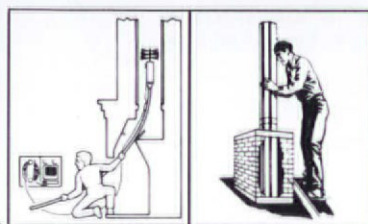
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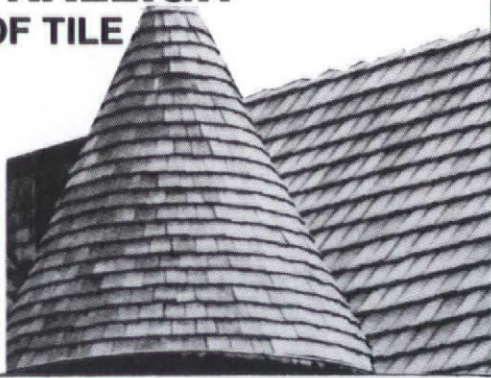
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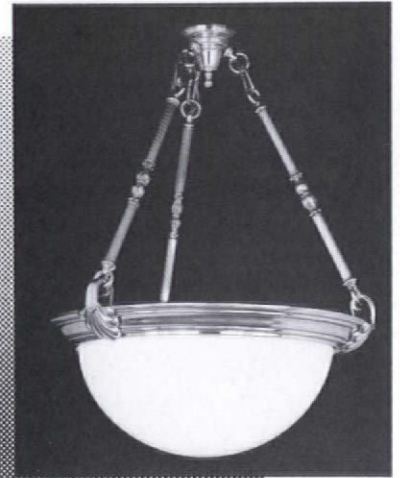
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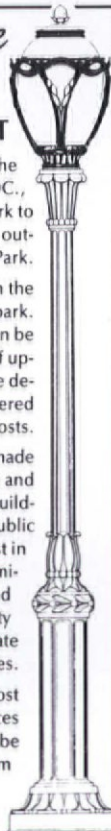
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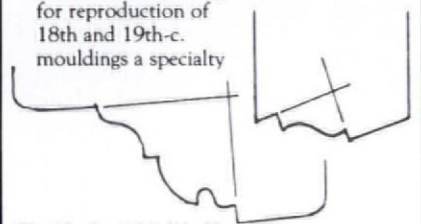
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**27. Victorian Roomset Wallpapers** — A complete collection of Victorian wallpapers that you can

combine in infinite variations. Color catalog shows 7 roomsets including: Neo-Grec; Anglo-Japanese; Morris; Aesthetic Movement. **Bradbury & Bradbury.** \$8.25.

**47. Tin Ceilings** — 18 patterns of tin ceilings ideal for Victorian homes and commercial interiors. Patterns from Victorian to Art Deco. Comes in 2-ft. x 8-ft. sheets; cornices in 4-ft. lengths. Illustrated brochure. **Chelsea Decorative Metal.** \$1.25.

**128. Tin Ceilings** — Using original dies, this company produces richly ornamented metal ceilings in turn-of-the-century patterns. Includes center plates, borders, corner plates, cornice and filler plates. 72-pp. catalog. **W. F. Norman.** \$3.25.

**223. Tin Ceiling Replicas** — Exact replicas of tin ceilings available in polymer styrene. Price, weight, ease of installation, and durability make these products suitable for traditional homes. Free brochure. **Old Jefferson Tile Co.**

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**53. Wooden Screen Doors** — Wooden screen and storm doors range from highly decorative Victorian to plain classic styles. Available option: traditional white stenciling on screen. Catalog. **Oregon Wooden Screen Door Co.** \$3.25.

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**166. Custom Doors** — Company specializes in doors of virtually any size, shape, and species of wood. To discuss your needs, simply call: 516-486-6788. **The Doormen.**

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**279. Custom Windows** — Custom replacement windows that look old, but meet current commercial standards. Can be fitted within old frames and mouldings. Windows have class-A air infiltration and structural load performance. Also distributes authentic hand-blown cylinder glass. Free bro-

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**209. Victorian Oak Furniture** — Three big barns full of antique furniture. One of New England's largest collection of American oak and Victorian furniture. For current selection, call (413) 527-1022. **Southampton Antiques.**

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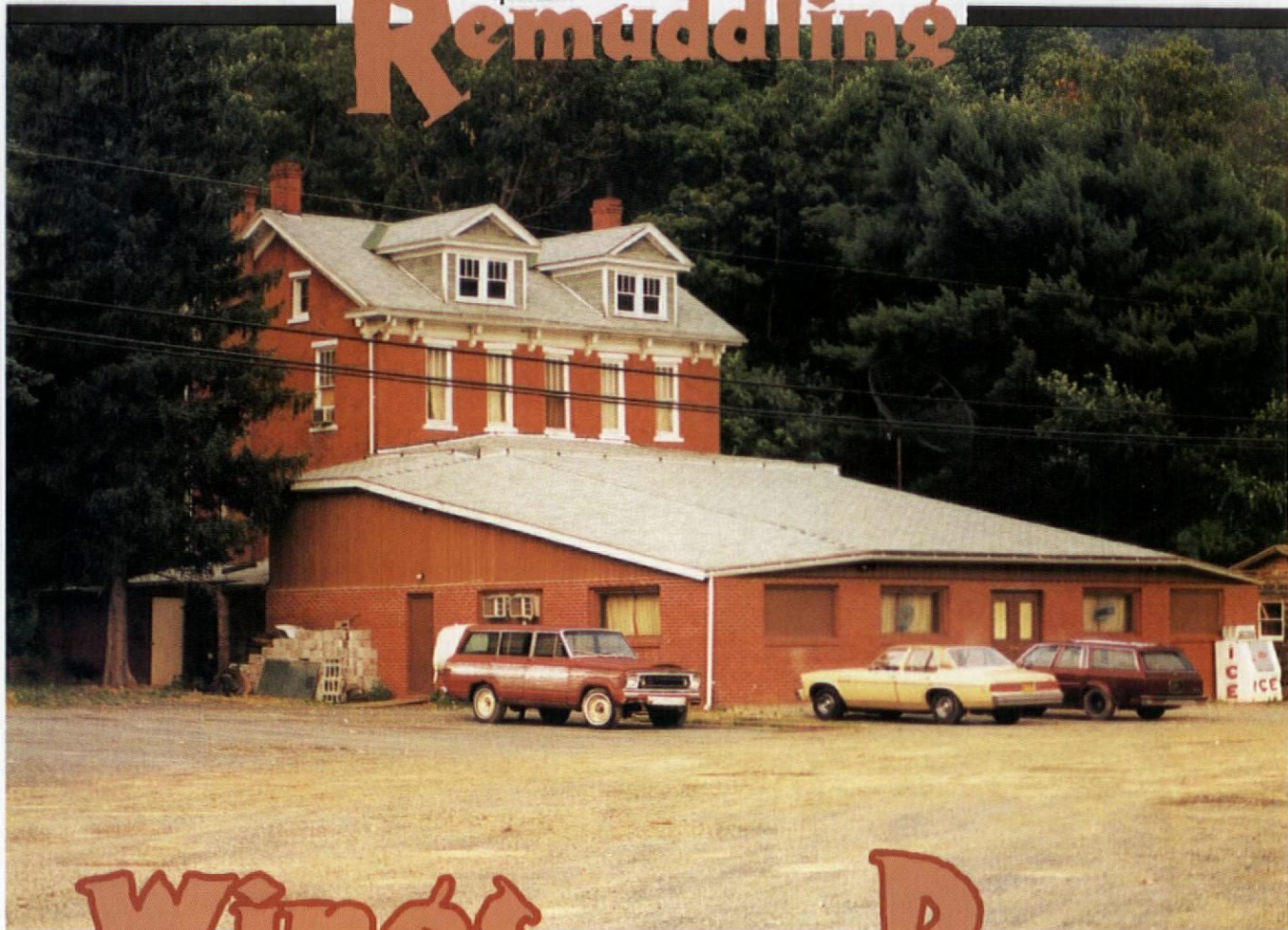
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opinion...  
**Remuddling**



# Wings that don't fly

**D**id someone once say, "more is less?" That's an appropriate maxim for the two remuddlings shown on this page. New use or not, the decision to graft on such incongruous extensions has drastically distorted both houses. You can file these sad stories under "Additions That Subtract" — or, if you prefer, "Wings That Don't Fly."

The photo at left is from Muriel Kupper of Downers Grove, Illinois (the house is in Ontario); the photo above is from Sue Goddard of Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania. Our thanks to these OHJ readers.



**WIN FAME AND \$50:** If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color slides. We'll award \$50 if your photos are selected. The message is more dramatic if you send along a picture of a similar unremuddled building. Remuddling Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.



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# BONANZA HOUSES

photos: Bruce Nall/Select Image



Vernacular Houses

**T**he gable-front-and-wing house is a familiar sight in the Northeast, South, and Midwest United States, and every region calls it by a different name. [OH] has called turn-of-the-century suburban examples 'the Homestead house.' Colorado's name for it refers to the boom of the 1880s, when houses such as these in the mining town of Pitkin (elev. 9,200 ft.) were built.

Most of these Colorado workers' cottages feature the bay window and two entries — one to the formal room in the gable, and another to the wing room (which was often the kitchen). Such standardization suggests that they were built from catalog plans, or even pre-cut house "kits." (The railroad — and settlement — usually pre-dated establishment of a sawmill.)

Unlike the Greek Revival derivation apparent in Northeast examples, these houses show more the influence of the later Victorian Italianate. Both one-story and two-storey forms exist:

— William Patrick O'Brien  
Historian, National Park Service  
Denver, Colorado