

Old House JOURNAL

Origins of Arts & Crafts Interiors

Colors and Crafts from Anglo-Japanese to Aesthetic

Classic Medallions
Tips for Top Plaster Ornaments

Atomic Wallpaper
Finding Patterns That Fit the '50s

Big Column Carpentry
How to Fix Pillar Problems

PLUS

The Story on Simple Greek Revival Houses

New HOW-TO SECTION
In Step with Floor Repairs

February 2007
A Restore Media Publication

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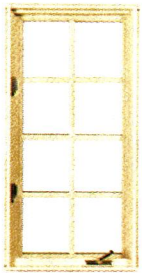
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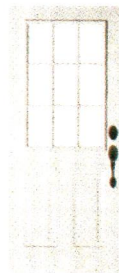


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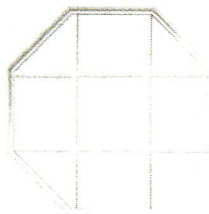
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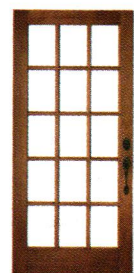
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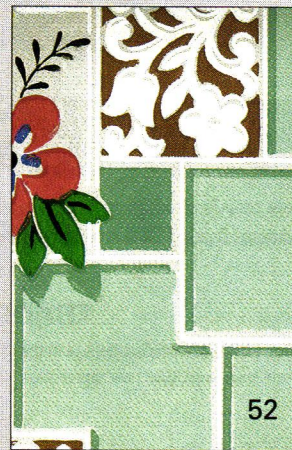
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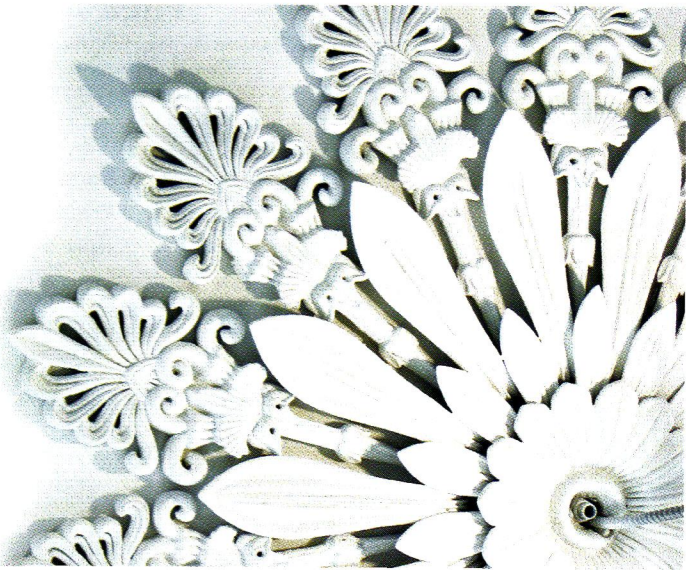
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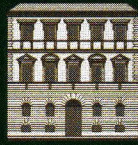
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An art-tiled hearth, walls divided into panels of color, and a spacious open plan link this Arts & Crafts room in Milwaukee to the ideas of the Aesthetic movement and its Japanese inspiration. Photo by Linda Svendsen.

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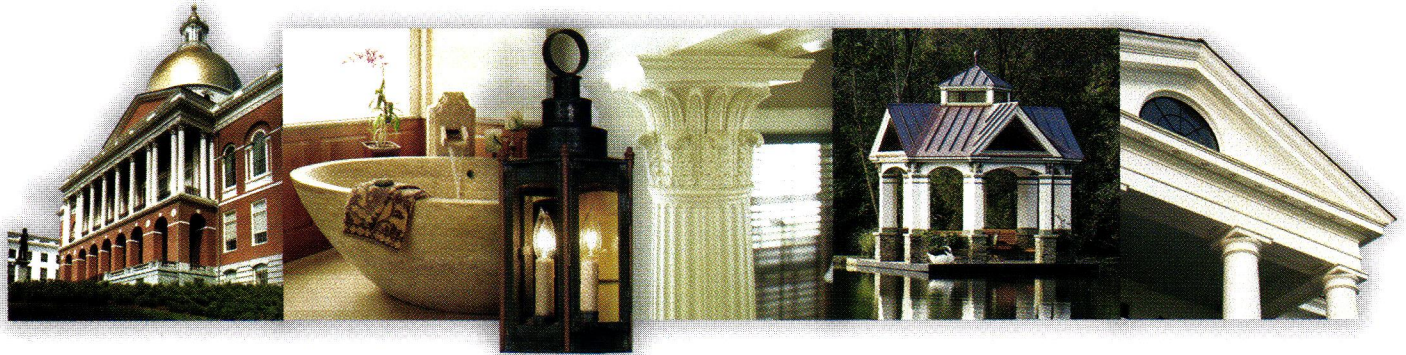


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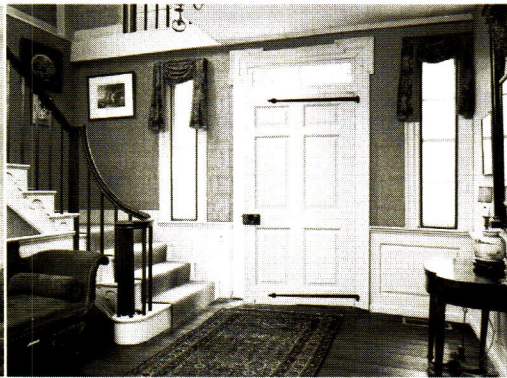
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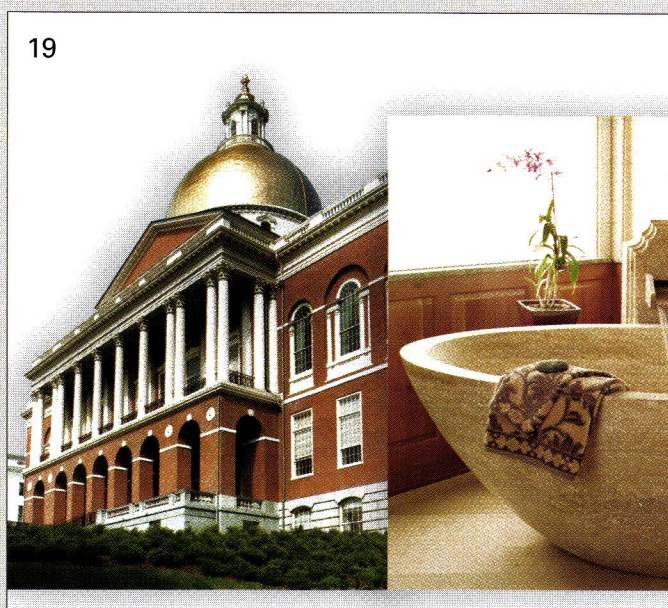
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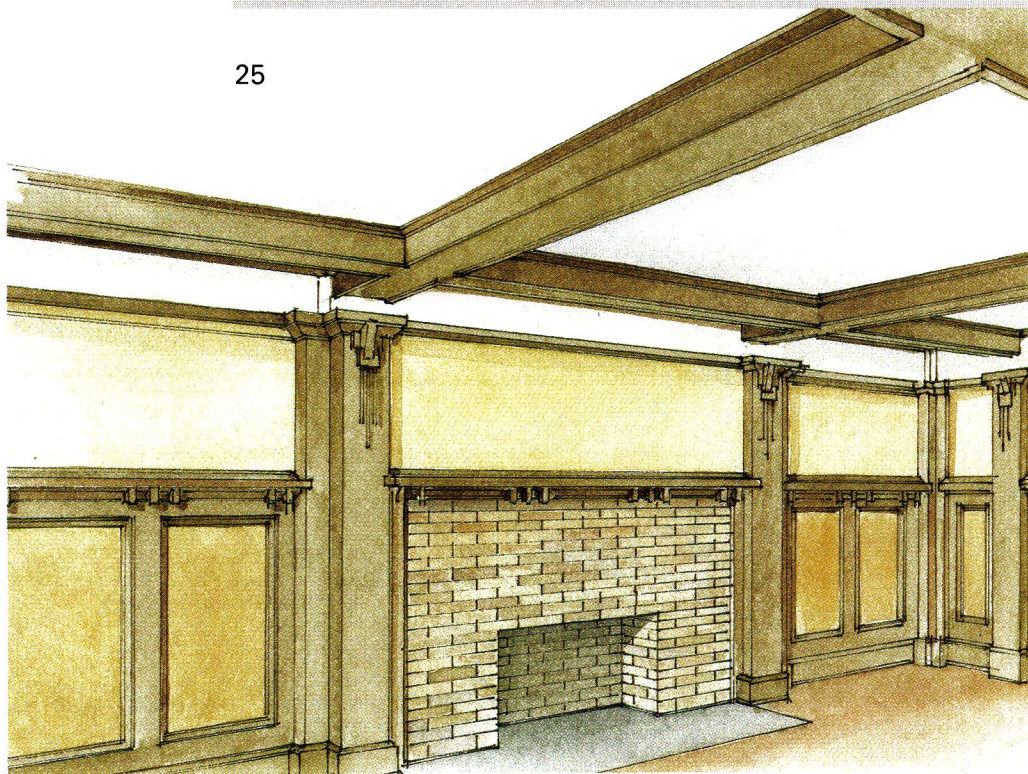
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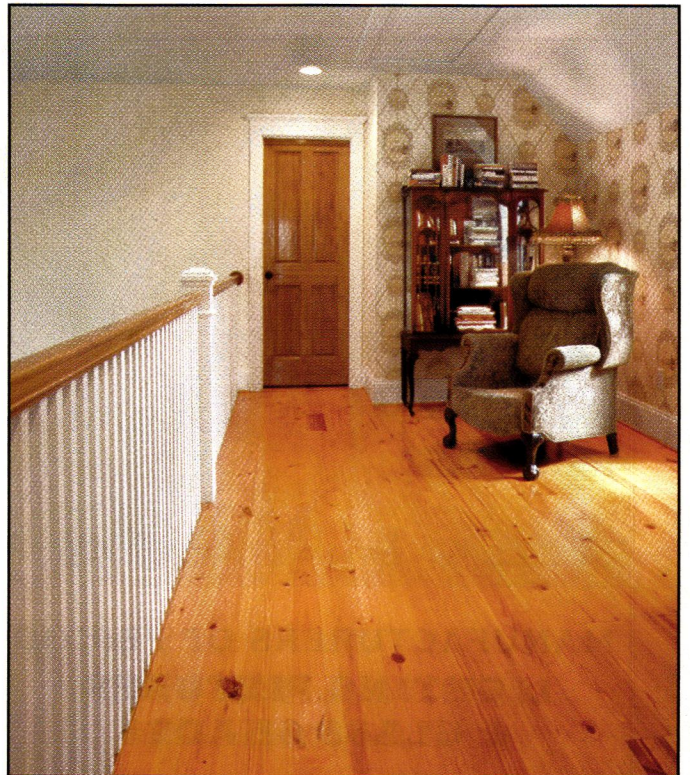
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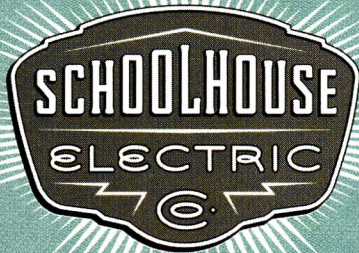
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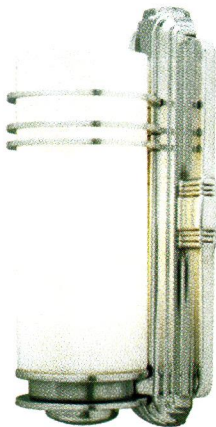
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A Private Eye

By fusing form and function, figured glass added beauty, light, and privacy to houses. Go to the home page for a full report on this unique and still very useful material.

Deco Lights the Way

When it comes to illuminating bathrooms of the 1930s and '40s, a little Moderne design goes a long way. Go to the home page for a look at the glories of Art Deco lighting.

Talk

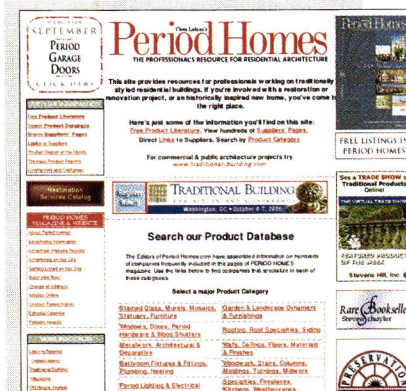
Have a question? Got a problem? Need some advice? *OHJ's* bulletin boards, divided into six separate topics, are the perfect place to exchange information about old houses with fellow owners and enthusiasts.



Period Homes

www.period-homes.com

Looking for a wide array of old-house products? From the publisher of *Old-House Journal*, this website, edited for architects, interior designers, and restoration contractors, is also a treasure trove of information for the ardent old-house owner in search of traditional styles and designs.





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Here's to How-to

One of the many reasons I enjoy working on *Old-House Journal* is that it strives to be a journal of practical information for readers who really do restore and care for houses 50 or more years old. At first blush, this would hardly seem unique. Like many things in life, though, appearances aren't always what they seem.

For example, years ago I interviewed for an editor's job on a house construction magazine at a large publishing company with many other how-to hobby titles in the same mold. After attempting to impress the interviewer with my grasp of his company, particularly its magazine on carving and cabinetmaking, he turned and asked, "Who do you think the reader is?"

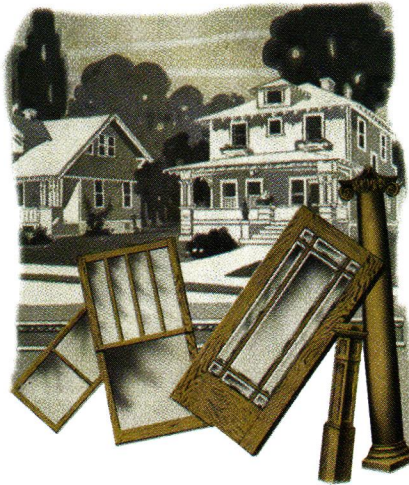
"Why, men and boys," I replied confidently, "people who make furniture or carve bowls out of exotic wood, as a pastime or even as a small business."

"Some of them, sure," he agreed, "but many more of these people buy the magazine not to learn how to carve bowls out of exotic wood, which is time-consuming and takes a lot of skill, but to read about how *someone else* carves bowls out of exotic wood." I was quiet for a moment and then offered, "You make it sound like some kind of how-to voyeurism." He gave me a slow nod of acknowledgement.

Since then, there has been a veritable explosion of how-to voyeurism in the media. Many home-oriented magazines still take a do-it-yourself approach to their subject matter, but the real growth is in cable TV shows that skim through the stages of remodeling an apartment or even rebuilding a house in the span of an episode. This treatment is fine if all you're looking for is entertainment or topics for light conversation. However, if you're actually interested in understanding a process, be it cooking or carpentry, you'll probably want to get in deeper, and this is where *Old-House Journal* has filled the gap for old-house owners for more than 33 years.

Some say you can't get enough of a good thing, so on top of *OHJ's* popular editorial mix of how-to and technical articles, for 2007 we are presenting a new feature called In Step, which debuts in this issue. In this two-page spread, we plan to offer a variety of concise, classic techniques specifically applicable to old houses in a step-by-step format that mates words and pictures in the best tradition of service journalism. The subjects of In Step will vary; in one issue it may be a traditional woodwork repair, in another a period-decorating method. At the same time we hope to have a little graphic fun with the pages. (Hint: Have you ever eaten at a seafood restaurant with diagrams of "how to eat a lobster" on your place mat?)

Let us know what you think of this new feature, as well as any other part of *OHJ*, and here's to how-to.



Gordon Bock

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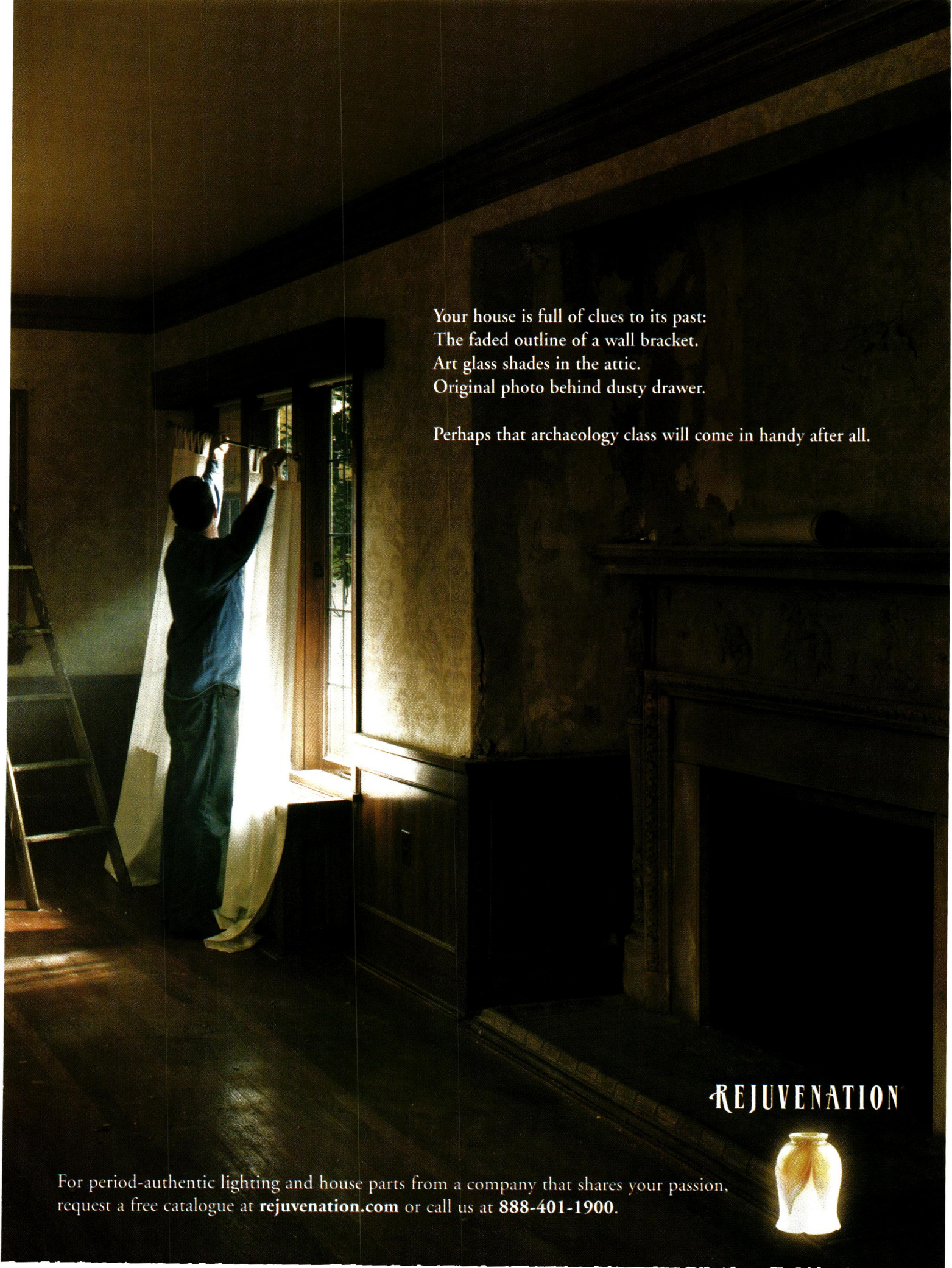
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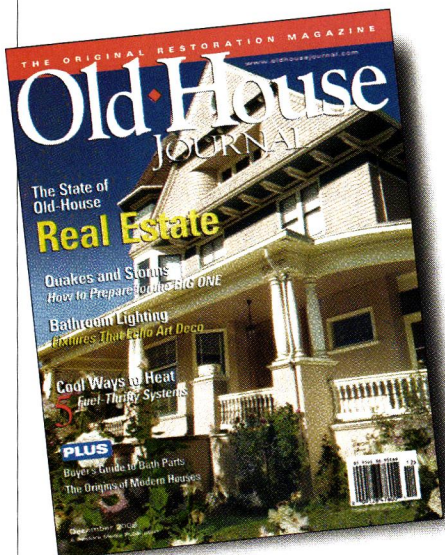
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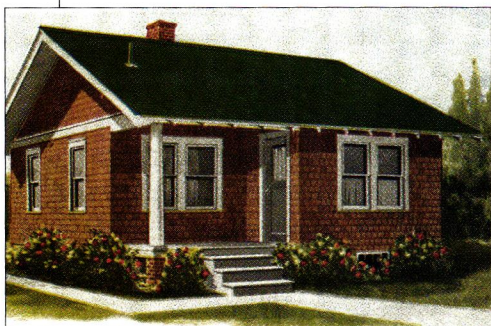


Letters



Aladdin Déjà Vu

On the November/December 2006 Editor's Page, there is a picture of a shingled cottage that looks just like the building my aunt, Emily Groom, put up in 1917 in Genesee Depot, Wisconsin. She was an artist, and the cottage, which was prefabricated and called an Aladdin, was her studio; it remained so



NATIONAL ARCHIVES ASSOCIATES

for almost 50 years. My aunt's cottage was a charming place. It sat on one acre of land and was surrounded by flowers, fruit trees, grape arbors, flowering shrubs, and bountiful gardens, all of which flourished thanks to the wonderful fertilizer from the adjoining dairy farm. Can you tell me more about your cottage?

Mary Poser

Via e-mail

Your sharp eye is right on target. That is indeed an Aladdin cottage from 1927,

called Thelma (with a price tag then of \$525), and it's interesting to hear it was sold as early as 1917. Aladdin, based in Bay City, Michigan, began selling ready-cut houses by mail around 1905, and though less well-known today than the legendary Sears & Roebuck, Aladdin was the Chicago giant's prime competitor, remaining in the business well into the 1960s, decades after Sears pulled out. Look for a feature article on the Aladdin story in an upcoming 2007 issue of OHJ. —Eds.

A Gem of a Plumbing Store

I have been reading your magazine for years and especially like the articles about old plumbing fixtures, such as "Bath Parts Lost & Found" in the November/ December 2006 issue. Through all the years that I have been following your magazine, I've never seen mention of a gem of an old plumbing store we have here in Minneapolis: Frank Sales Company Plumbing Fixtures & Supplies. You can find almost anything there—old, new, and antique. I think they must have the largest collection of toilet tank lids anywhere, and the folks that work there go out of their way to help you.

William Murtaugh
Golden Valley, Minnesota

Arts & Crafts by Numb3rs

As a new subscriber, my first issue was September/October 2006, and I loved every page. I even learned from the advertising. I grew up in South Florida, and for 60 years I have lusted after houses that have true character. I came to love the Arts & Crafts movement and packed as many Craftsman details as I could afford into my newly constructed mountain retirement home.

The real hoot for me was the Essay, "Scene-itis." I made my sister read it, and she said it was me to the letter.

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Ever since I was about 10 years old, I've had a problem following a story line in a movie or TV show because I am so absorbed in the architectural and interior details. My favorite aspect of the *Numb3rs* TV show are the final scenes, which are usually shot inside that gorgeous Arts & Crafts home. I drove all of my relatives crazy at a recent week-long family reunion because I kept saying, "Look at that column... porch... railing... beam!" ad infinitum. I love your magazine. It's better than dessert.

Betty DeWitt
Hiawassee, Georgia

Elusive Compendium

I have a copy of *The Old-House Journal Compendium*, which was published in 1980. Can you tell me whether a second compendium was ever published?

I find reference to a *New Compendium*, circa 1985, but twice when I tried purchasing it from Amazon, I was sent to your 1985 *Product Catalog*.

Pam Attardo
Helena, Montana

OHJ has been behind several books of collected article material over the past 30 years, the 1991 *Guide to Restoration* being the most recent and popular. In the 1980s, there were two editions of *The Old-House Journal Compendium*, based on 1970s materials. Though we have reports of the latter being reissued (presumably by the then co-publisher), to our knowledge all are out of print. The *Guide to Restoration* does pop up sporadically at used book stores, however, and folks tell us they've found used copies on Amazon or Ebay.

If you want a good single-volume reference by many OHJ authors (but not specifically OHJ material), get a copy of *Caring for Your Historic House* (Charles E. Fisher and Hugh C. Miller, editors; Harry Abrams, publisher).
-Eds.

We're pleased to announce a new medium for submitting letters to *Old-House Journal*. You may send your contributions for the Letters page to OHJEditorial@restoremedia.com.

Please note that, owing to the sheer volume of mail we receive, we are unable to respond to every letter that is submitted to us. In addition, we reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity.
-Eds.

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Calendar

January 5-6

RIVERSIDE, CA

Victorian Twelfth Night

Horse-drawn carriages shuttle visitors to vintage homes in the Heritage Square Historic District for a four-course dinner. Tickets: \$85 per person. To purchase, visit www.olddriverside.org, or call (951) 683-2725.

January 8

MEMPHIS, TN

Birthday Celebration at Graceland

Celebrate Elvis Presley's birthday at his 1939 mansion, which became a National Historic Landmark last year. A special evening tour of Graceland also includes an optional scavenger hunt. Admission: adults, \$25; children ages 7-12, \$12.50; and children under 7, free. To purchase tickets, call (800) 238-2000, or visit www.elvis.com.

January 10-13 or 14-17

WILLIAMSBURG, VA

Woodworking Workshop

A choice of two dates is given for this workshop on making 17th-century cabinets, chests, cupboards, and other furniture. Tuition: \$250. To register, visit www.history.org/history/institute/institute_about.cfm, or call (800) 603-0948.

January 19-21

KING OF PRUSSIA, PA

Historic Home Show

More than 70 exhibitors of house parts display their wares, including millwork, mouldings, windows, and items of architectural salvage. Show admission: \$12.



Residential Series Debuts at Boston Show

Whether you have an old house or a new old house, the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference to be held March 7-10 in Boston is putting on a show just for you. The exhibition produced by *Old-House Journal's* parent company, Restore Media, has long been a magnet for homeowners and building professionals, but this spring, it will feature a separate program and conference for homeowners

alone. Within that program, there will be two tracks: historic home restoration and the new old house, both inspired by the content of *Old-House Journal* and *Old-House Journal's New Old House*.

The program for old-house owners is packed with workshops and sessions taught by the people who know old houses best: architectural conservators and historic preservationists. Learn

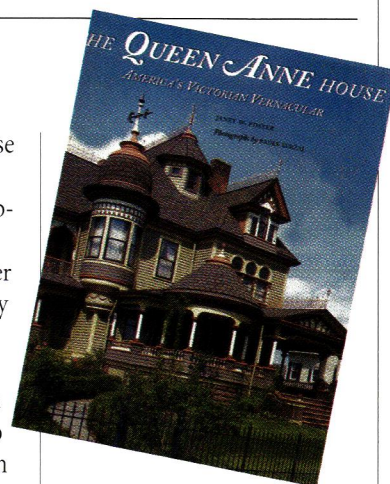
from them the best ways to repair old windows, paint plastered walls, or create period kitchens and traditional gardens for historic houses.

If it's a new old house you're interested in, get tips about using period hardware or see how traditional architecture is inspiring the designs of new homes. For more information, visit www.traditionalbuildingshow.com, or call (800) 982-6247.

Books in Brief

It's only fitting that a nation of immigrants should embrace an architectural style that was a melting pot of design elements. The Queen Anne house may have originated in England, but it could thrive only in 19th-century America, where brash young architects and bold immigrant businessmen, striving to make a name for themselves, saw this ornate, adaptable, even flashy architectural style as a way to announce they had arrived.

Through its generous use of photographs, depicting sumptuous interiors and elaborate exteriors, *The Queen Anne House* by Janet W. Foster pays homage to the versatility of these buildings, from a modern-looking suburban Chicago home, designed by a young Frank Lloyd Wright, to a turreted California mansion capped by onion domes straight out of *Dr. Zhivago*. Foster brings these houses to life with photographs and details about the owners, archi-



itects, and builders, as well as the families who first lived there. What emerges is a common theme of independent

Calendar

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February 20
PASADENA, CA
Architecture of Schindler
The Gamble House hosts this lecture on Rudolph Schindler's architecture, with reception to follow. General admission: \$25. For details, visit www.gamblehouse.org, or call (626) 793-3334, ext. 52.

Arts & Crafts Show Enters Third Decade

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Arts & Crafts Conference at the Grove Park Inn, February 16-18, is proof of the enduring appeal of the Arts & Crafts movement. Each year, this stellar show in Asheville, North Carolina, brings together craftsmen, curators, authors, dealers, and bungalow owners at the famous 1913 inn. Besides having the largest Arts & Crafts antiques show in the country, the conference also offers hands-on workshops, such as fundamental metalworking or stenciling techniques, that teach the craft side of the Arts & Crafts movement. Conference and show admission is \$135. To register, visit www.webteek.com/arts-craftsconference, or call (828) 628-1915.

thinkers who pushed architectural boundaries to merge the best of traditional building with new ideas in design. The results were surprisingly modern houses with bathrooms on the second floor and bedrooms with built-in closets. Equally impressive is how Queen Anne houses transcended class and geography in the late-19th century, appealing to wealthy New Englanders, humble Midwestern farmers, and middle-class suburbanites on both coasts.

The book is divided so that each chapter features houses built for a particular setting or purpose. Within each chapter, several examples, often of geographically diverse buildings, are discussed separately, with plenty of photos to illustrate Foster's clever commentary: For instance, a summer mansion surrounded by more modest dwellings is described as "a queen among commoners."

Whatever their station, these buildings are survivors,

sometimes of cataclysmic events—a deadly Galveston hurricane in one instance and two devastating San Francisco earthquakes in another—as well as the hazards posed by a 20th-century society often bent on destroying these quintessentially Victorian-era structures. So far, they've turned out to be as sturdy and resilient as the brash architects and bold businessmen who built them.

—Catherine Siskos

Winterthur's Objets d'Art Offer Lessons in Design History

An exhibit debuting February 18 at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts will showcase a collection of decorative household objects from one of this coun-

try's most well-known houses. The 300 items on exhibit through May 6 include art, furniture, and glass, but represent only a fraction of the 85,000 fine household objects collected by Henry Francis du Pont and permanently displayed at Winterthur, his country estate in Delaware.

Like the permanent Winterthur collection, the Minneapolis exhibit spans the same time frame, displaying furnishings made or used in the United States between 1640 and 1860 to illustrate how taste and design were shaped during the period. Through five themes, the exhibit covers many of the top influences on American taste: colonial settlement, classicism, mid-18th-century urban centers, Pennsylvania German culture, and the Far East. For



information about the exhibit, including how to purchase tickets, call (888) 642-2787, or visit www.artsmia.org.



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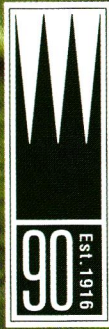
DID YOU GUESS WHICH PIECES ARE ANTIQUES? FROM THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTOS 1, 8, 9 & 11.

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Prairie or Foursquare?

Reading about Gothic Revival houses in the recent *OHJ* got me wondering how a historian would classify our 1906 home. Any ideas?

Craig Black
Denver, Colorado

Your attractive brick house was built at a fertile time in terms of residential architecture, and it clearly shows the cross-pollination of two strains of design ideas coming together under one roof, as it were. Although the house is not, strictly speaking, square, the basic two-storey massing has all the proportions of many larger houses of the era that fit the mold of the Foursquare house form, especially when built with typical Foursquare features such as that full-width front porch.

Beyond this Foursquareness, however, there's a clear hint of the Prairie influence—not surprising for the date and western location. The rectangular



Though the house is basic, even Foursquare, in form, subtle characteristics, such as the brick belt course, hipped roof, and horizontal proportions, show signs of Prairie styling.

plan gives the house a horizontal emphasis that is enhanced by the eave lines of the main roof and porch roof, and the ground-hugging solidity of the brick construction. Though exterior details are few, there's a brick belt course running just under the second-storey windows and a prominent chimney with an abstract decoration at one side of the house, both common features on Prairie-

influenced houses. Other characteristics consistent with Prairie houses and Foursquares alike are the hipped roof, the deep eaves with open rafters, and the strong, clean treatment of the windows and porch. Though the flat area at the ridge of the roof and the change of pitch at the eaves were flourishes popular in the 1890s, they also appear on some modern-styled houses built before 1910.

Bungalow Building Background

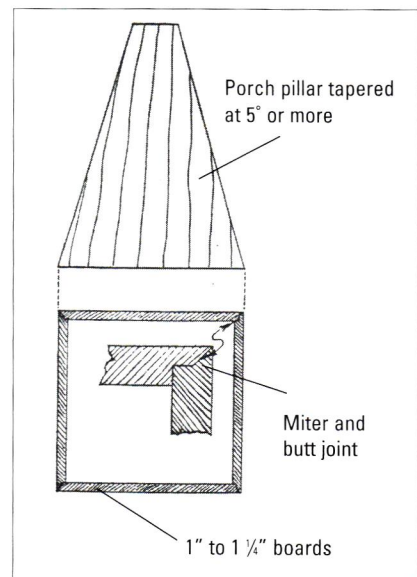
We're planning to rebuild the tapered supports on our bungalow porch, which was hacked apart and closed in by 1960. I've researched a design but haven't found a clue about the best way to do the actual carpentry. Can you help?

Alice Wilson
Portland, Oregon

Though builders' and tradesman's manuals have been common for about 150 years (and increasingly available today as good reprints), compared to modern texts, they mostly spend time describing the most complex projects because the details of day-to-day construction were common knowledge. A

case in point is your porch pillars, which were built by the thousands a century ago (if not ordered prefab from a catalog millworks supply).

Nonetheless, a text from the 1920s offers some insights. While the four-sided pyramid of a pillar could be constructed with miter joints, they tend to open up, allowing water to enter in time. A better method is to use a combination of a miter and butt joint, a standard joinery method fairly easy to produce on a table saw that creates a stronger, more weather-tight connection. The same text also recommends a plain base for the pillar, which will shed water more readily than a moulded one. 🏠





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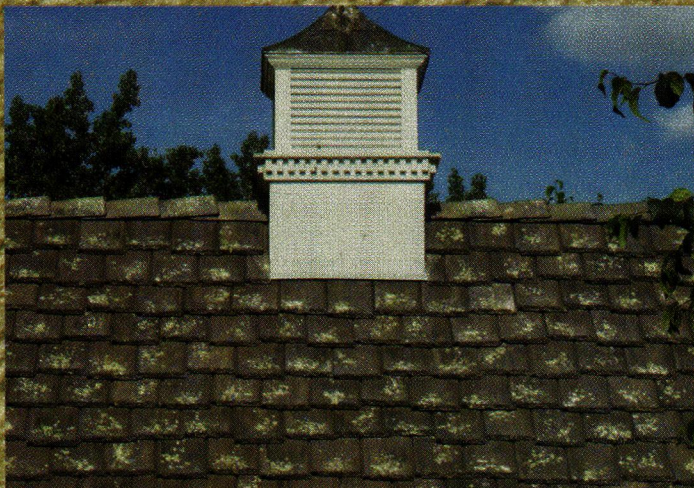
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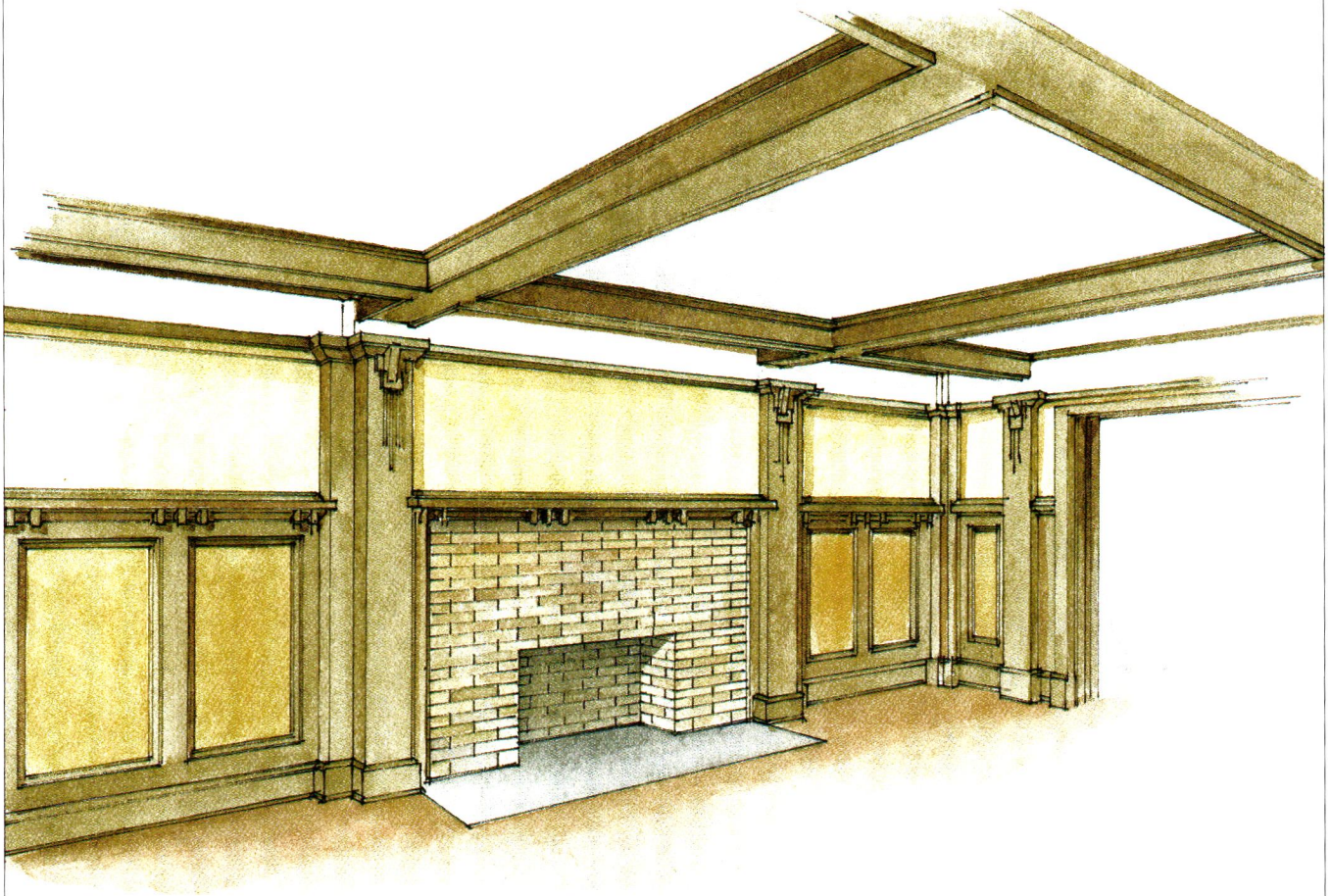


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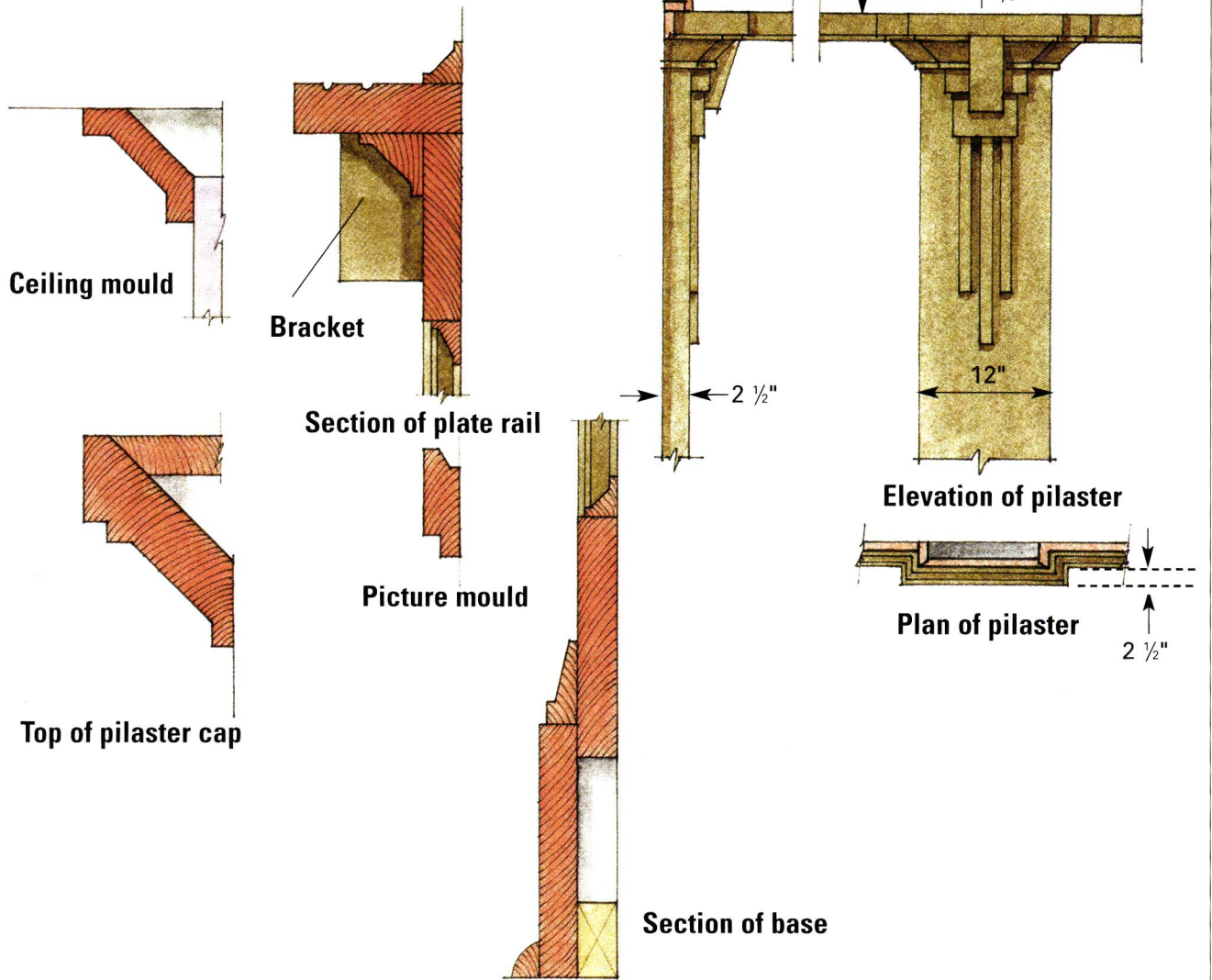
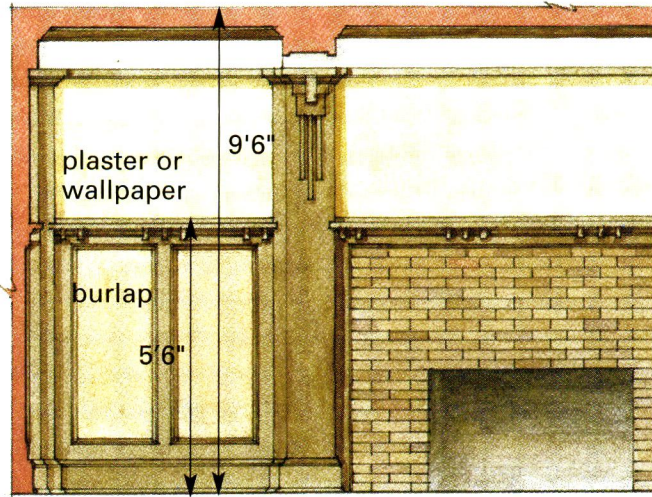
Arts & Crafts Dining Room


DRAWINGS BY ROBERT LEANNA



A decade before World War I, the word *modern* could represent many things, but in interior finishes it referred to the straight-line style or what we would broadly call Arts & Crafts today. The signal feature was the extensive use of woodwork with angular surfaces—flat panels and square or beveled mouldings lacking curves or historical patterns. This set of details from 1911 is a good example. Based on designs appearing in *American Builder* magazine, a trade publication from Chicago, this design exhibits a bit of the Prairie influence in the flat, plaster pilasters with triglyph-like ornaments that add a bit of twist to the usual all-wood interiors common in California bungalows. Otherwise, the woodwork is right at home in any progressive dining room across the continent, from the plate rail dividing the wall into a high wainscot to the obligatory box beams straddling the ceiling.

Like the best Arts & Crafts-inspired woodwork, the finishes here cleverly create an attractive and cohesive ensemble using basic materials. Most of the mouldings are built up or cut from 1x stock, particularly the box beams, which are hollow and attached to cleats on the ceiling. The box beams extend to a cornice mould at the wall, which is actually a partial version of the beam, and the panels in the wainscot are of stretched burlap or other coarse fabric. Final dimensions and actual construction are up to the builder, but choosing oak for the woodwork and finishing it with a brown stain and light wax will help pull off the original intent. 🏠





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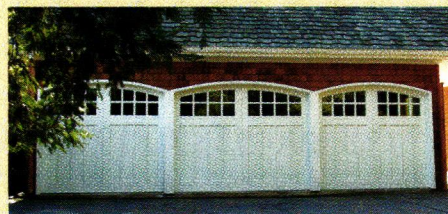
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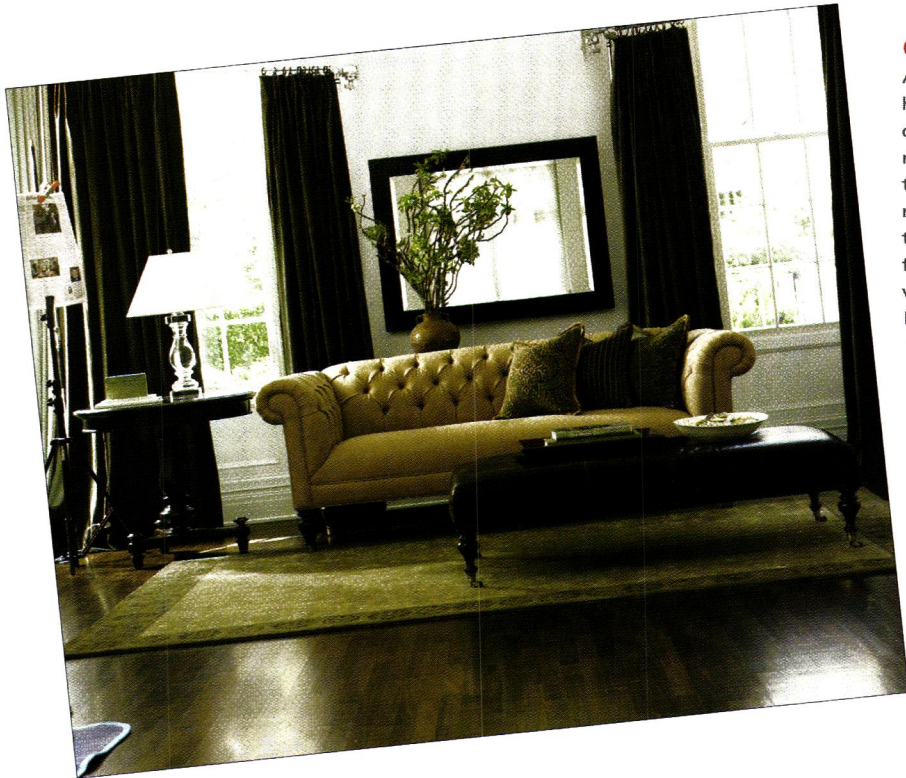
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Chesterfield of Dreams

A classic fixture of English country houses, Chesterfield sofas have changed little from the 19th century, when they first appeared with their distinctive bench seat and upright rolled arms level with the button-tufted backrest. This Chesterfield sofa from Restoration Hardware's Barclay collection comes in leather upholstery for an authentic 19th-century look or in assorted fabric upholstery, a treatment more common by the turn of the 20th century. The cost ranges between \$2,275 and \$4,270, depending on the upholstery. For details, visit www.restorationhardware.com, or call (800) 762-1005. Circle 10 on the resource card.

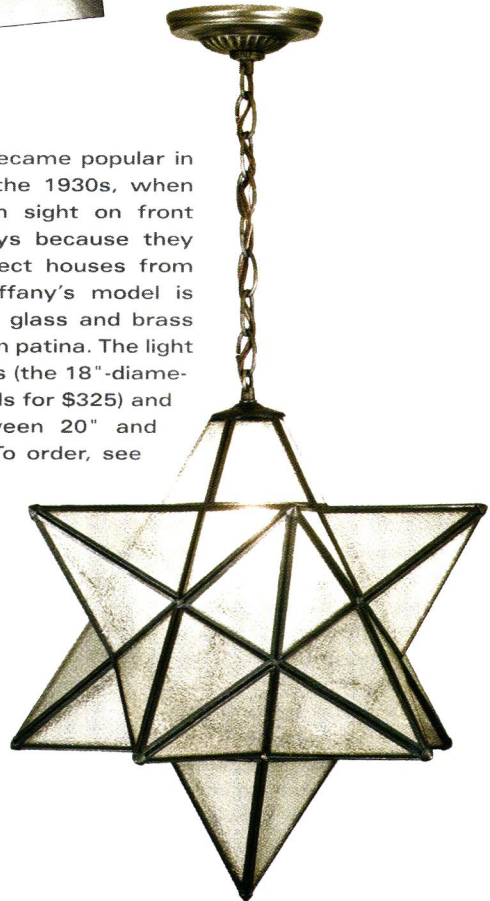
XM on the Wireless

FDR never sounded so good. Crosley's Explorer 1 radio is vintage 1930s in appearance, but the technology is pure 21st century. In addition to playing AM and FM radio stations in stereo, the Explorer, which retails for \$249.95, also connects to an MP3 player or tunes in to more than 150 channels on XM satellite radio. To purchase, visit www.crosleyradio.com, or call (866) 276-7539. Circle 11 on the resource card.



Star Light

Moravian star lights became popular in the United States in the 1930s, when they were a common sight on front porches and entryways because they were thought to protect houses from evil spirits. Meyda Tiffany's model is hand-crafted of seedy glass and brass finished in a dark brown patina. The light is available in four sizes (the 18"-diameter fixture shown retails for \$325) and adjusts to drop between 20" and 54" from the ceiling. To order, see www.meyda.com, or call (800) 222-4009. Circle 12 on the resource card.



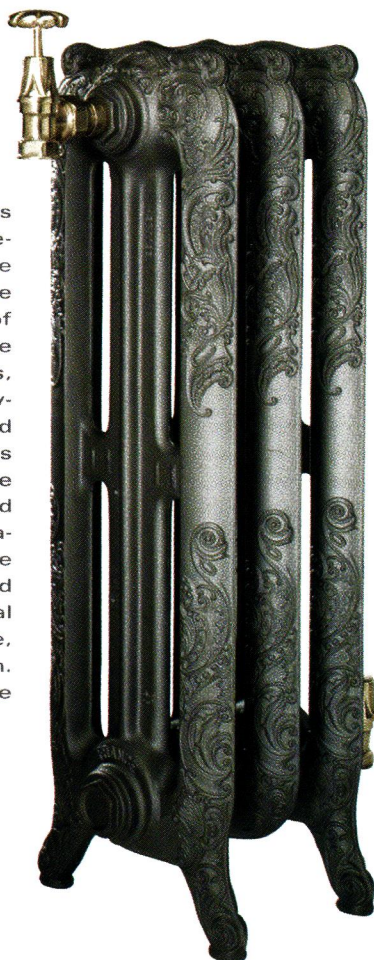
Let 'Em Hang

With few built-in cabinets for storing cooking implements, early 20th-century kitchens made use of overhead space with pot racks often placed above a central worktable. Made of cast iron and shaped in a classic oval, this \$149 pot rack from Estancia Iron is reminiscent of those used in the 1910s. It has eight double hooks, measures 30.5" in diameter, and hangs from two 24" chains. To order, call (800) 922-5507 or visit www.potterybarn.com. Circle 13 on the resource card.



Historically Hot

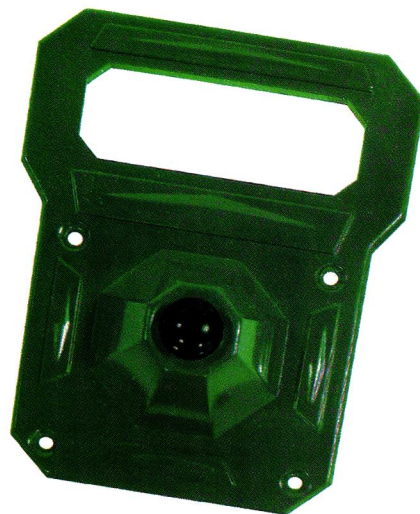
Replacing the radiators in your house doesn't have to involve a trip to a salvage store. The Classic Radiator from Burnham Hydronics is based on historical designs but is much more energy efficient than the original models. Made of cast iron with filigree detailing, the radiators, which feature brass levers, can be easily painted and are available in sizes ranging from three to nine sections (the one pictured retails for \$400, installation not included). The radiator must be ordered through a professional contractor. To find one, visit www.burnham.com. Circle 14 on the resource card.



Bakelite Revival

At the height of the Deco era, Bakelite doorbells bearing angular geometric lines were all the rage. Today, Vintage Hardware offers true reproductions of this emblematic accessory, which is made using the original manufacturing methods—by baking phenolic resin in a mold under pressure. Available in an eye-popping array of hues (yellow, cobalt blue, and red), the doorbells retail for \$32.31. To order, visit www.vintagehardware.com, or call (360) 379-9030.

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For the Love of Pancakes BY AUDREY MEDINA

Glancing out the kitchen door, Mom spies the cookstove on the back porch.

"You could store tools in it," she quips, noting the covering of paint cans, old magazines, flower pots, and a box of empty wine bottles.

"I'm going to hook it up and use it!" I snap back. She's heard this reply before—for ten years, in two towns, and in five different apartments, to be exact. Now that I finally have my own house, I'm running out of excuses.

The gas stove is one of those fantastic old white-enamel and chrome models built in the 1950s, with four black burners and a griddle in the middle. There's a door beside the oven for storing pots and pans and a chrome-framed clock with a black face and brass numbers. Little brass letters spell out O'Keefe & Merritt across the top, just above the light.

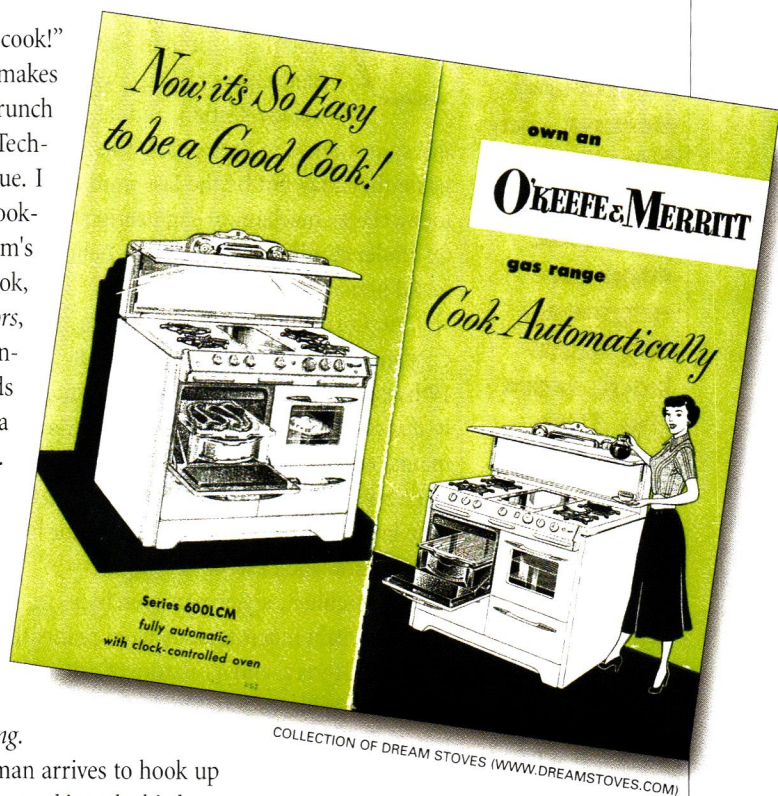
The range worked perfectly when my friend owned it. She was a talented cook who made pancakes shaped like taxis, picnic baskets, and snowmen. Then she got a job managing a stage off Broadway and left the hulking metal work of art in California with me. Now it's caked with hardened grease and has a plastic bread wrapper melted onto the griddle; a family of spiders lives in the oven.

Since I got it, I've hauled the range from basements to garages and finally to the porch of my tiny house. Built in the 1930s, the house has only three rooms, one closet, and a woodstove for heat, but it does include a large yard and double-hung windows that look out onto oak- and pine-covered foothills. I've never owned a house before, and I'm excited about peeling away the layers of carpet, linoleum, and paint left by previous residents and making the place my own. I also dream about putting a gas line in and, well, cooking.

"You can't even cook!" says my sister, who makes eggs Benedict for brunch every weekend. Technically, that's not true. I have a Girl Scout cooking badge and Mom's scout leader cookbook, *Cooking Out-of-Doors*, which devotes an entire chapter to foods you can bake in a hole in the ground. The recipe for Bean Hole, for instance, suggests lining the hole with non-exploding rocks. You won't find advice like that in *Martha Stewart Living*.

When the gas man arrives to hook up the stove, which I've moved into the kitchen, he brings a small propane tank that hides nicely outside, next to the house. He installs a line that extends to the kitchen floor, where there's a red lever you push to turn on the gas. I decide to spend the weekend scrubbing the grime and dirt off of the stove and relocating the spiders. I buy some chrome polish and go to work, and pretty soon it's gleaming like an old Buick.

I find a shop that creates custom stoves and buy a flash tube to fix the gas feed on one of the burners as well as some springs for the oven door. My boyfriend rewires the clock, and it keeps perfect time. I just know I'll figure out how to set it someday. The spring-wound four-hour timer sounds a slow, mechanical *CHING-whir, CHING-whir*. I replace the bulbs inside the oven and polish the little chrome drawer beneath the griddle that collects grease. I open and close the oven door several times to be sure the light is working.



I paint the kitchen walls white, install cream and mint linoleum in a checkered pattern, and replace some cabinets with open shelving while the range sits there, waiting. I begin a little collection of vintage kitchen tools.

Now and again, I play with the range. Cautiously, I turn on the burners. I practice, making little pots of boiling water. I turn on the griddle and hear the *fffffwhooosh* of the flame lighting beneath it. I watch as the little red bar on the griddle's thermometer moves to center position. I turn it off and go to bed.

Later, in the middle of the night, I get up and see the pilot lights glowing beneath the burners, soft little lights, quiet and warm, waiting for me to get up and fix breakfast. In the morning, I make pancakes, but in my imagination, I am cooking eggs Benedict and baking gingerbread shaped like mountain ranges and wild horses. 🐾

Read Any Old Books Lately?

BY DAN HOLOHAN

To understand the reasoning behind old-house heating systems, read an engineering handbook from the 19th century.

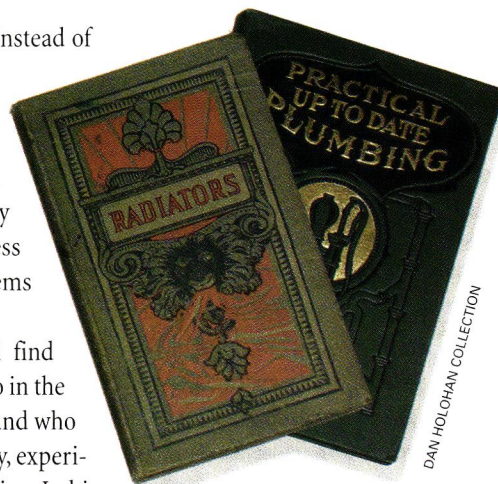
The next time you pass a dusty old book store, instead of walking by, drop in. Breathe that thick air that hangs like a tapestry, wander over to the technology section, and let your eyes play across the spines and bindings. Each title was a life's work, and while they may not be the last word on science or industry today, classic mechanical engineering handbooks are priceless for understanding the reasoning behind the heating systems in old houses.

At Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, you will find Carpenter Hall, a building named for Rolla C. Carpenter, who in the 19th century was a professor of experimental engineering, and who in *this* century is mostly forgotten. At the turn of his century, experimental engineering applied to subjects such as central heating. In his 1895 book, *Heating and Ventilating Buildings*, Carpenter spends a long time laying out the basics of heating for his students. In doing this, he tells a story I had never heard when I went to school:

"Fahrenheit, a German merchant, in 1721 was the first to make a mercurial thermometer. Fahrenheit took as fixed points the temperature of the human body, which he called 24 degrees, and a mixture of salt and salt-ammoniac, which he supposed the greatest cold possible, as zero. On this scale the freezing point was eight degrees. These degrees were afterwards divided into quarters, and later these subdivisions themselves were termed degrees. On this modified scale the freezing point of water becomes 32 degrees, blood-heat 96 degrees (as determined later, this should be 98 degrees), and the point of boiling water at atmospheric pressure 212 degrees."

Americans still use this unscientific instrument today, despite its awkwardness and foreign roots, a practice that perplexed the professor even a century ago. "Except for the fact that it has been long in use, it has not a single feature to recommend it," he concluded about the Fahrenheit system. I used to wonder why we say 32 degrees instead of 30, why it's 212 instead of 210, and now I know, thanks to Carpenter. Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit made it all up as he went along, and today we treat it as though it were written on a stone tablet.

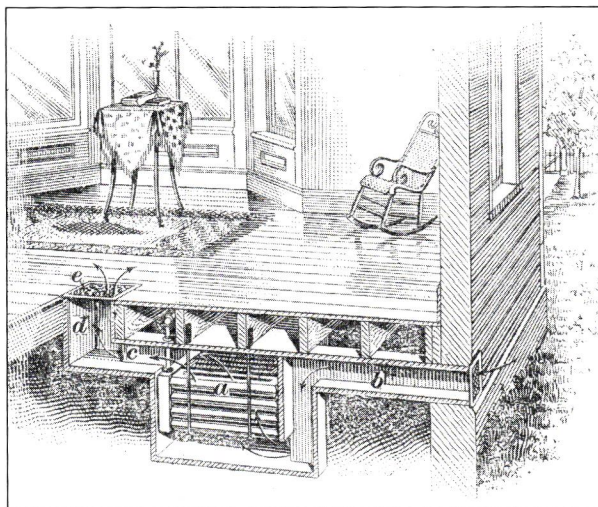
Old books breathe life into engineering. Not only do they make you stop and think, they often explain the reasoning beyond modern imponderables. Edward Richmond Pierce, who wrote *A Practical Manual of Steam and Hot Water Heating* in 1911, included a section where he delved into the then-mystical world of heat loss. Noted Mr. Pierce, "I have given this subject of the specific heat of walls a quite full discussion for the reason that it has not heretofore received the attention it deserves, especially, now that the craze for sleeping in rooms with the heat off and windows open is spreading so rapidly."



DAN HOLOHAN COLLECTION

Old engineering texts, including these two volumes from around 1900, not only describe how heating systems were designed to work, they also put them in the context of the times, such as the widespread public health crisis of the early 20th century—tuberculosis.

Improving the quality of indoor air is not a new concern. In the 1930s, some experts worried that indirect heat from under-floor radiators could circulate hot air contaminated by dust and dirt particles.



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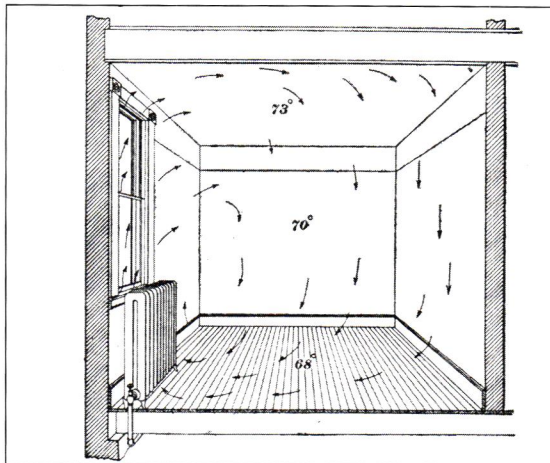
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Preservation Perspectives



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There was a logic behind oversized apartment radiators. Knowing that people slept with the windows open, heating engineers increased the size of their systems 40% in order to heat buildings quickly each morning.

not, were holes in the ground, dug in the sunless places where children played. Gaslights, in the homes of the more fortunate, traded oxygen for yellow light. Tuberculosis seemed to be worst where there were lots of people, and children died everywhere at an alarming rate, although no one knew exactly why. The idea of sleeping with the windows open and the heating system turned off started with the wealthy and caught on. Soon, everyone was doing it.

Heating engineers responded by sizing their systems for the coldest day of the year and then adding an additional 40% so they could bring these brick and plaster buildings up to temperature by burning coal in huge boilers each morning. It was crazy. I think of this every time I look at an oversized radiator in a New York City apartment building. Why so big? Because they had to heat with the windows open, of course. Everyone knew that. There are always reasons for the way buildings are built, but sometimes you have to look back in time to find them.

In 1938, T. Napier Adlam spoke to the Illinois chapter of the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers. Adlam was, at the time, an authority on radiant floor heating. Listen to what he had to say to our grandfathers:

"I would like to ask my hearers if they have ever taken the trouble to look inside some of the recesses where concealed heaters are hidden to see the amount of dust and dirt that collects. I know many of these are provided with means for cleaning, but on the other hand, there are thousands built-in so that they cannot be cleaned properly without taking down some of the building. Even with those provided with means for cleaning, how many are cleaned from year to year? We may go back two-thousand years, only to find that the Romans had a more healthful heating installation than many of those we are making today."

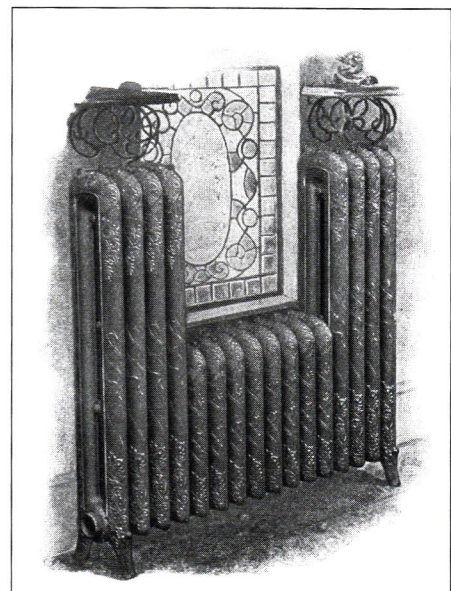
Nowadays, we call this issue indoor air quality, and full-day seminars and entire companies have sprung up around it. More than 60 years after Adlam's address, we seem to be discovering air quality for the first time, but we shouldn't be. Listen to experts of the past, and in their confusion, we find answers and at the very least, perspective. 🏠

Dan Holohan is the author of *We Got Steam Heat, A Homeowner's Guide to Practical Coexistence*, available through www.HeatingHelp.com.

Well, this passage sent me jogging off to the library where I wound up spending a few days trying to figure out why people were sleeping with the heat off and the windows open. I followed this trail for heating and watched, amazed, as it veered toward medicine and finally settled on sociology. It turns out the folks were afraid of the air.

At the turn of the 20th century, many American cities teemed with immigrants who lived in tenements where the conditions weren't much better than the steamship steerage that brought them to the New World. People slept, stacked like cord wood, in tiny rooms as cooking stoves fouled the air with noxious fumes. Toilets, more often than

Heating with the windows open was considered so important that some manufacturers even designed radiators to fit around a window.



Dress Rehearsal for the Arts & Crafts

BY LYNN ELLIOTT



THE MARK TWAIN HOUSE & MUSEUM

Japan's gifts to the Aesthetic movement are visible in this 1881 dining room at the Mark Twain House, which features inlaid

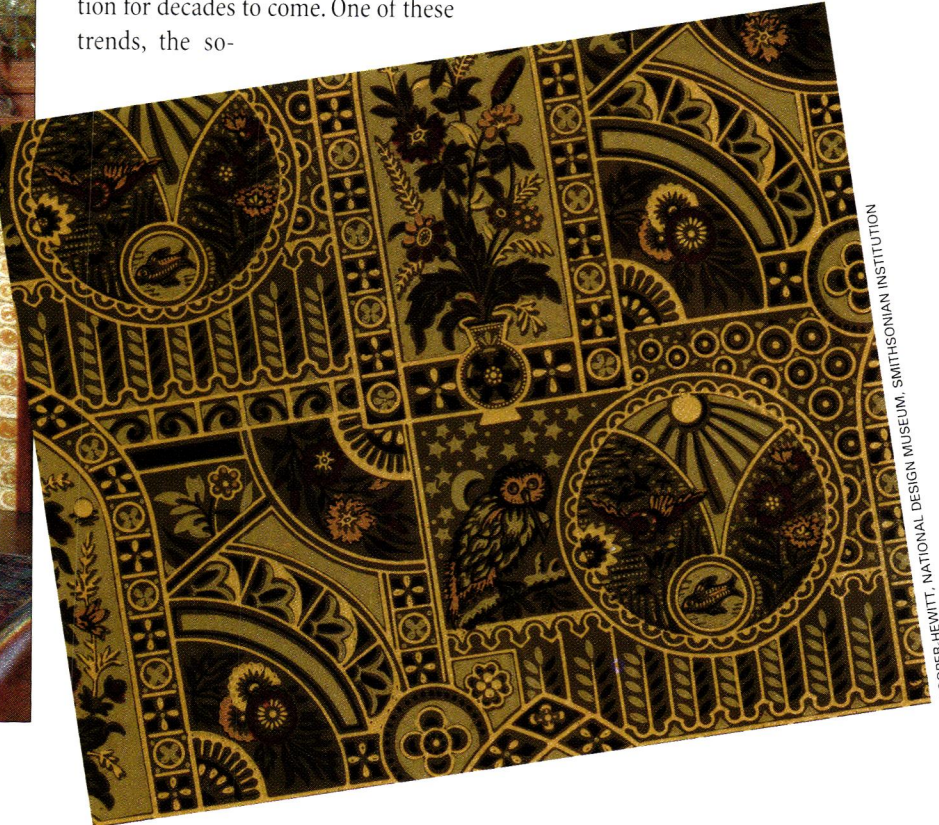
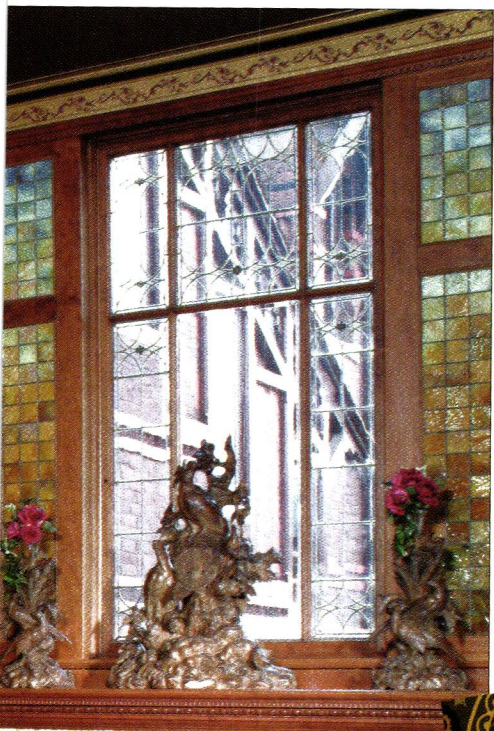
From the Anglo-Japanese style to the Aesthetic movement, the originality of Japanese design in the 19th century inspired new ways of looking at furnishings and laid the groundwork for the Arts & Crafts movement.

Hear the word *Japonisme*, and you might assume that it's connected to the Asian animated films or comic-book

novels so popular today, but long before sophisticated cartoon characters began captivating American teens (and adults too), the exotic appeal of Japanese design had already cast an enduring spell. When Japan opened its ports to the world in the 1850s, it astounded Europe and America with unheard-of treatments of line, shape, and color that would inspire revolutions in fine art, architecture, and particularly interior decoration for decades to come. One of these trends, the so-

Japanese imagery abounds on door push plates (above) featuring bamboo, reed, and floral themes displayed in geometric patterns. Such ornament was a common sight on Aesthetic movement hardware—from hinges and doorknobs to eating utensils. Wallpapers of the day (below) were similarly patterned, often in the same earth tones as Japanese prints.

COURTESY OF HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE



COOPER HEWITT, NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

folding screens and incised wood.



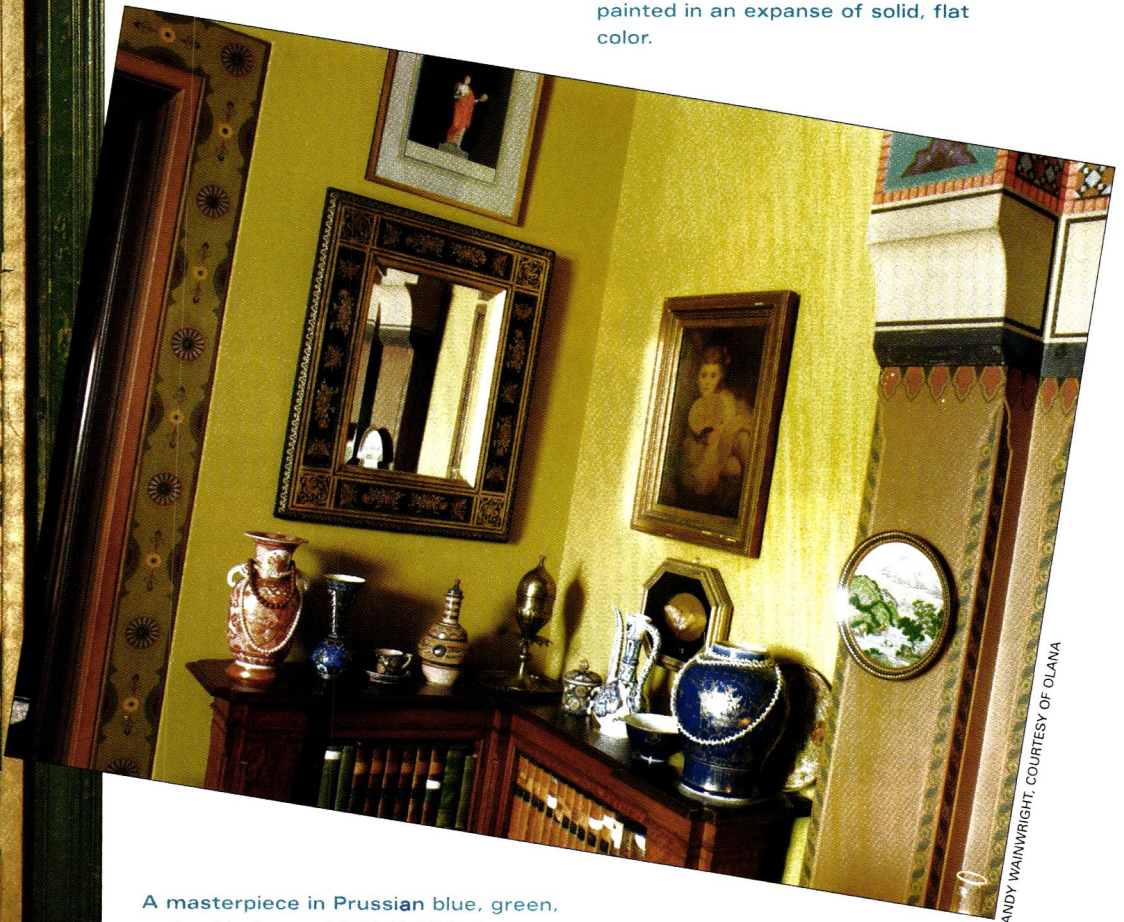
This cabinet by the Herter brothers, famous furniture makers, displays a masterful use of inlay, gilding, and natural themes inspired by Japan.

called Aesthetic movement of the late-19th century, carried the appreciation for Eastern design ideas to new heights and set the stage for the Arts & Crafts era that flourished a short generation later.

The Cult of Japan

In 1853, after nearly 250 years of self-imposed isolation, Imperial Japan yielded to the cannon threats of American commodore Matthew C. Perry and almost immediately let loose a flow of Japanese goods to the West. Consumers in London and Paris were fascinated by handicrafts such as wooden jewelry boxes with artistic brass hinges and incised geometric patterns; delicate ceramics with complex glazes; tiny, intricately carved sculptures called *netsuke* made of ivory, boxwood, or coral; and wood-block prints depicting

Fascination with all things Japanese is evident in this room at New York's Olana, where delicate ceramics line a shelf, a butterfly is framed, a plate features Mount Fuji, and the wall is painted in an expanse of solid, flat color.



ANDY WAINWRIGHT, COURTESY OF OLANA

A masterpiece in Prussian blue, green, and gold, James McNeill Whistler's Peacock room is considered the ultimate expression of Aesthetic movement style.

natural or everyday subjects composed with surprising juxtaposition of forms or colors. Most striking, perhaps, were boxes inlaid with flowers glittering in silver and gold over glossy red or black lacquer, a finish unknown in the West that used sap from the *urushi* tree as a protective coating. A few examples of furniture trickled out, too—dark wood chairs with spare, tall backs and folding screens with panels of fretwork or rice paper painted with murals.

Part of the allure of *Japonisme*—the taste for the arts of Japan—was the culture's different perspective on design. Patterns and compositions were often asymmetrical, the polar opposite of the mirror image symmetry familiar to Europeans and Americans still wrapped up in the Greek and Gothic revivals of the early 19th

century. Many Japanese motifs were based on conventionalized forms of the natural world, such as flowers (especially chrysanthemums), birds (cranes), and insects (dragonflies and butterflies). Most importantly, Japanese artisans were masters in the use of strong lines, open or undecorated space, and restraint and understatement in general, treatments that were utterly unlike the over-complicated and profusely decorated furnishings in vogue during the Victorian era. The originality and high quality of Japanese wares quickly caught the public's attention.

At first, the West absorbed only the products and not the aesthetics underlying Japanese design, in part because of what was being introduced. In 1862, the sensation of the International Exhibition in London was the Japanese Court, a dis-

play of lacquerware, bronze, and china from a private donor. Unfortunately, the collection emphasized curiosities, so that the public's view of Japanese artifacts and interiors was skewed toward novelties.

The exhibition led to a craze for all things Japanese, but the exotic new ideas made for bric-a-brac on walls rather than a design revolution. Upscale homeowners collected and displayed fans, objects d'art, and porcelain, particularly the blue and white china made popular by the artist James McNeill Whistler, but furnishings remained uninspired. As historians Charlotte Gere and Michael Whiteway observed in *Nineteenth Century Design*, "Western appreciation of Japanese art was to be of its quaintness at the expense of its subtlety. Entrepreneurs bought Japanese objects without any critical connoisseurship, but



The staircase at the Mark Twain House shows striking geometric lines—from lozenge-shaped mother-of-pearl inserts on the back wall to incising on the newel—that bear the imprint of Japan.

simply to satisfy the demand for items conforming to a preconceived idea of Japanese exoticism.” However, a change was coming.

The Anglo-Japanese Style

After the 1862 exhibition, British designer Christopher Dresser (see sidebar, opposite page) began to collect objects from Japan. He admired their simplicity of execution and sought to reflect it in his own work. Dresser promoted Japanese art and set up import companies, eventually traveling to Japan himself. He created innovative designs in materials ranging from wood to glass to metal. His vases, like later Arts &

Crafts pottery, were rooted in Japan’s centuries-old tradition of hand-crafted ceramics. Dresser is perhaps most famous for his sleek, silver teapots with ebonized handles, which would still look fresh in a modern loft apartment.

Another Englishman, architect E. W. Godwin, was one of the first to manipulate Japanese aesthetics into a new and exciting style eventually called Anglo-Japanese. Godwin’s early commissions were usually in the Gothic Revival mode, but he decorated his own home in a Japanese manner with artifacts and wood-block prints on plain-colored walls, an unheard-of scheme at the time. Using his firsthand knowledge of Japanese design, he merged its elements with British household furnishings to create geometric, abstract-looking cabinets, armchairs, and side tables ebonized with stain to emulate Japanese lacquer, as well as textiles bearing Japanese-inspired circular designs and bamboo wallpaper. God-

win was not interested in imitating Japanese creations, he wanted to go beyond the details to grasp their spirit, and his designs had a direct influence on the functional forms of early modern furniture.

Elsewhere, other elements of Japan’s design vocabulary were being transposed into Western versions. Japanese family crests called *mon*, which feature stylized, repeating plant shapes wound into a tight circle, began to appear on tiles and fabrics. Incising and even some gilding showed up on large pieces of furniture. Paint palettes drew from the bold, flat tints of Japanese prints, and their use in large, solid areas of color would anticipate the nature-hued walls and glazes of the Arts & Crafts home.

Between 1870 and 1900, these ideas came together in Britain in a new design philosophy called the Aesthetic movement. Although it was a mixture of many styles, Aestheticism drew greatly from Japanese elements. With art for art’s sake as their principle, Aesthetes emphasized art over everything else. They favored strong, simple colors: bright blues, greens, and especially yellows (which may explain their fondness for displaying stuffed peacocks). Those colors were used in interiors set off with black furniture, clearly inspired by the lacquered wares from Japan. The sunflower was a popular motif because its bold color and simple shape could be stylized, much like the chrysanthemum of Japanese art.



Dark earthy colors from Japanese prints influenced the Aesthetes, as did circular patterns, called *mon*, visible on this woman’s garments.

A Design Visionary

Christopher Dresser is widely regarded as the world's first industrial designer. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1834, Dresser started his career as a botanist and taught at the University of London until 1860, when a lost bid for department head set him on a new career path. He began applying botany's fundamental principles—that every beautiful thing in nature has a clear function and simplicity of form—to his new vocation. Soon he was creating teapots with elegant swan's neck spouts and trapezoidal bellies. His designs, many of which reinterpreted shapes found in nature, met with instant success.

Dresser designed wallpaper, ceramics, furniture, and an astonishing array of household necessities such as toast racks. Many of his housewares continue to look completely modern today more than a century after they were created. He believed that beautiful surroundings affected people's health and well-being, and that art should be available to everyone. The thinking propelled Dresser's tireless work to make everyday items that could be mass-produced for the general public, a long list of goods that included watering cans, egg coddlers, soup tureens, and vases.

Not content to simply design for the public, Dresser wanted to educate them, too. He authored several books on how to properly integrate design into everyday living. The first, *The Art of Decorative Design*, changed the way the public outfitted their houses. He later wrote the influential book, *Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures*.

—Demetra Aposporos

MASON & WOLF WALLPAPER; INSET: THE WALKER ART GALLERY NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL



Christopher Dresser's angular teapots were influenced by Japanese design traditions and still look modern today. His wallpapers (backdrop) often bore repeating natural themes and soothing, earthy palettes.

Crossing the Atlantic

America was not immune to Japanese mania, and objects from the exotic island were displayed for the first time at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Simultaneously, a design reform movement promoting simpler treatments for interiors was spreading across the country, and Japanese ideas fit this vogue to a tee. Until then, French décor had dominated American taste, but the public was ready for something else. British critic Charles Eastlake gave shape to those new ideas.

In *Hints on Household Taste*, published in America in 1872, Eastlake drew from the work of luminaries such as John Ruskin and William Morris to present a design vision for the average homeowner in the new industrial age. Eastlake believed that a home should have a cohesive style. He advocated well-made furniture with

low-relief carvings, tracery, incised lines, and geometric ornament on flat surfaces that were easy to keep clean. Applied decorations were eliminated. He intended his designs to be constructed with wood joinery for solid, long-lasting pieces, and he advocated using oils instead of stains for natural finishes. The public embraced Eastlake furniture. The flat motifs from Japanese ornament and the asymmetrical arrangements of patterns were a welcome departure from busy Victorian fashions, but when manufacturers quickly picked up on the popularity of Eastlake's book, the picture changed. Many of the mass-produced desks, sofas, tables, and chairs churned out in the Eastlake style were elaborately turned and carved with little incising, and often varied greatly from Eastlake's concepts of simple elegance, much to his dismay.

Soon Japanese designs began appear-

ing on American glassware, silver, hardware, lighting, wallpaper, and fabrics. After the public got a glimpse of imported bamboo furniture, faux bamboo caught on as a less expensive alternative. Usually made of maple (particularly bird's eye), faux bamboo furniture was stained yellow, with legs and spindles carved and turned to look like the real thing. Faux bamboo was a favorite by the 1890s for furnishing Shingle-style summer homes.

As much as Victorians absorbed Japanese motifs and the concepts of asymmetry, they still didn't completely adopt the uncluttered serenity of Japanese interiors. Tripartite walls, a three-part decorating scheme using paint or wallpaper, were still in vogue, except now they were embellished with fan friezes and bamboo-inspired dados. Rush matting—the poor man's tatami mat—was underfoot. The Victorians rejected Shoji screens in favor



Some interiors, such as this room in the 1887 Glessner House in Chicago (above), featured more subtle interpretations of Japanese themes: a piano with inlaid wood and incised decorations, the placement of an Asian tea set, and earth tones on walls. Aesthetic movement lights, such as the gaslight on this antique trading card (right), often featured filigree and shades evoking Japanese lanterns.



of shades painted with Oriental themes. Accoutrements included blue and white porcelain and ornamental tiles in the Japanese style. Hinges, doorknobs, and doorplates had motifs of geometrical birds and bamboo. Shelves displayed lacquerware as well as paper fans and traditional Japanese lanterns, which were never lit. Folding screens featured panels of painted silk and gilded circular patterns. Layers of furnishings were all packed into one room, completely missing the point of the spacious Japanese originals.

An Arts & Crafts Inspiration

By the turn of the 20th century, though, a new generation of architects began taking note of the serene planes and clean simplicity of Japan's buildings and interiors. The horizontal lines of Japanese architecture visible at Chicago's World Fair in 1893



As 19th-century design ideas evolved into the Arts & Crafts movement, Japanese concepts morphed yet again. Like the art tiles of this fireplace surround and the open space used in wall treatments, Japanese design influences would continue to be seen for decades to come.

inspired Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright to create designs that led to important characteristics of the Prairie School.

However, Japanese design found one of its true American incarnations in the California bungalow. Though the architect brothers Charles and Henry Greene never traveled to Japan, they were drawn to the fundamentals of Japanese design, and they reinterpreted it with an American twist in their remarkable early bungalows. Like many of their contemporaries, the Greene brothers studied Japanese sources, such as the stack of Japanese architecture prints kept in their offices, and they may have visited exhibits of Japanese design on dis-

play in San Francisco or Chicago.

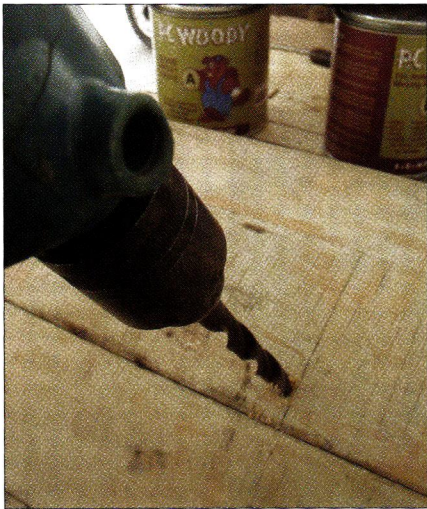
With these new architectural ideas, the 20th century would usher in open-plan interiors that visually united the living spaces of a house and streamlined movement between them. Gone were three-part wall divisions and applied ornament. There was less embellishment and more emphasis on the essential lines and forms of furniture and furnishing, all in keeping with the original source of inspiration: Japanese design. 🏠

Lynn Elliott, a former editor at Old-House Journal, writes frequently about interior design and historic architecture.

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**For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 82.**



Severing each stave meant making a blind cut in the middle of the column, starting with a $\frac{3}{8}$ " hole.



Sawing from the hole along the scribed line completed the cut. The scheme of 24" and 12" cuts was planned to take advantage of existing joints in the staves.



A cradle constructed out of plywood, saw-horses, and cribbing became the operating table for repairing the columns, laid head to foot. A long pole tent protected the columns and tools during the weeks of work.



While a screw-jack system supported the porch, Toupin Rigging of Lowell, Massachusetts, re-installed the 18' columns using a crane and a custom-made collar, basically the reverse of the removal process.

Fixing Column

Creative carpentry and inventive engineering help

Problems from

rebuild two-storey columns for another century.

the Ground Up

BY GEORGE YONNONE AND GORDON BOCK

PHOTOS BY GEORGE YONNONE

When Jim Raynor of Lowell, Massachusetts, called me in the fall of 1998, he asked if I would come look at a column restoration project that had intimidated every other contractor he knew, because it went far beyond standard carpentry. I told him I was booked up for a year and that I really specialized in structural work and timber frames, not this kind of project. Six months later, Jim called again, asking me to reconsider. The columns, he reported,

were compressing into their plinth blocks, and the roof they supported was settling—signs that the situation was becoming an emergency.

Though the columns were huge and stood 9' off the ground on a porch, the real challenge was figuring out how to repair the damage, which was at the bottoms of the shafts carrying major structural loads. Another puzzle was obtaining materials; you don't simply run into town and buy replacement parts for century-old columns. On the two-hour ride home from

the inspection, I had plenty of time to think about the solution. Here's how we addressed some of the problems.

Getting to the Bottom

The three-storey house, which dates to 1902, is a good example of early Colonial Revival architecture incorporating many fine classical features. It is an impressive house, built by William Henry Sprague, a manufacturer active among the mills in Lowell, who later became a successful banker. Sprague died in 1918, and over the ensuing decades, subsequent owners cut the house up into apartments. As a result, it fell into disrepair.

The area that troubled Jim Raynor the most was the southwest side of the south addition. The bases and plinth blocks of the two columns sit on the first floor of the house and support the roof of the overhead porches. Over time, the bases and plinths had deteriorated severely, leading the columns to compress and the roof corner of the addition to settle. As if this wasn't enough, sometime in the past this deck floor, which formed the roof of the lower apartments, had been covered with sheet metal right over the column bases, captur-

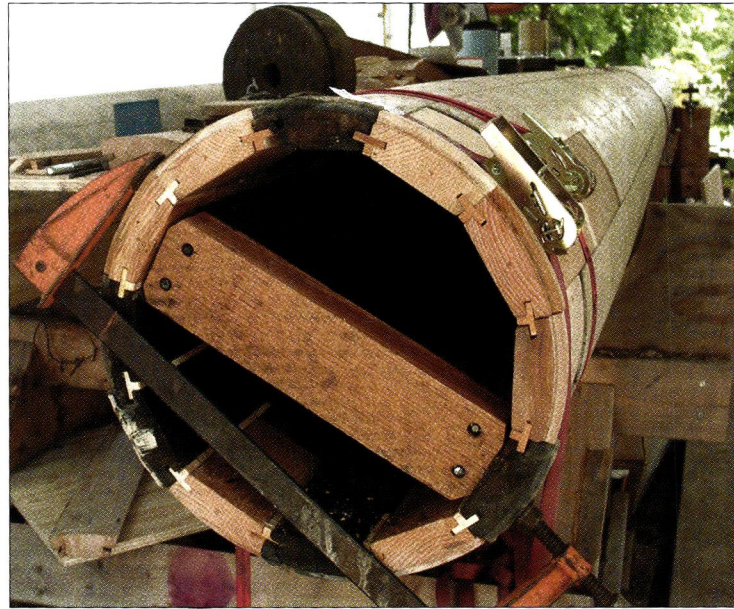
Once the columns were removed from the building, the extent of the damage was obvious. The bottoms of many staves were not only unsalvageable, but also missing wood in some areas.



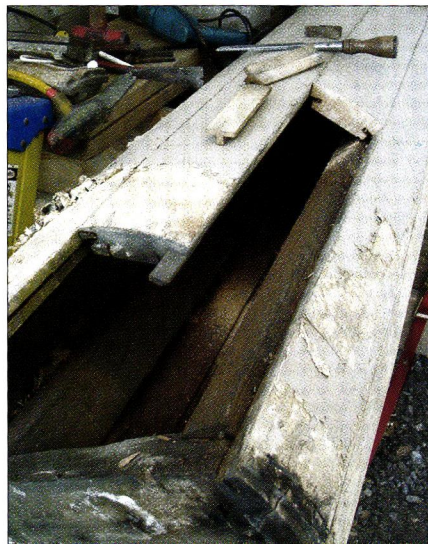
Each of the column staves is connected to its neighbors by T-shaped splines, which also had to be replaced once the repaired stave sections were in place. In the past, each column manufacturer had its own locking system.



The new stave ends were fabricated to replicate as closely as possible the dimensions of the originals so that they slid into place neatly between existing staves, retaining the structural integrity of the column.



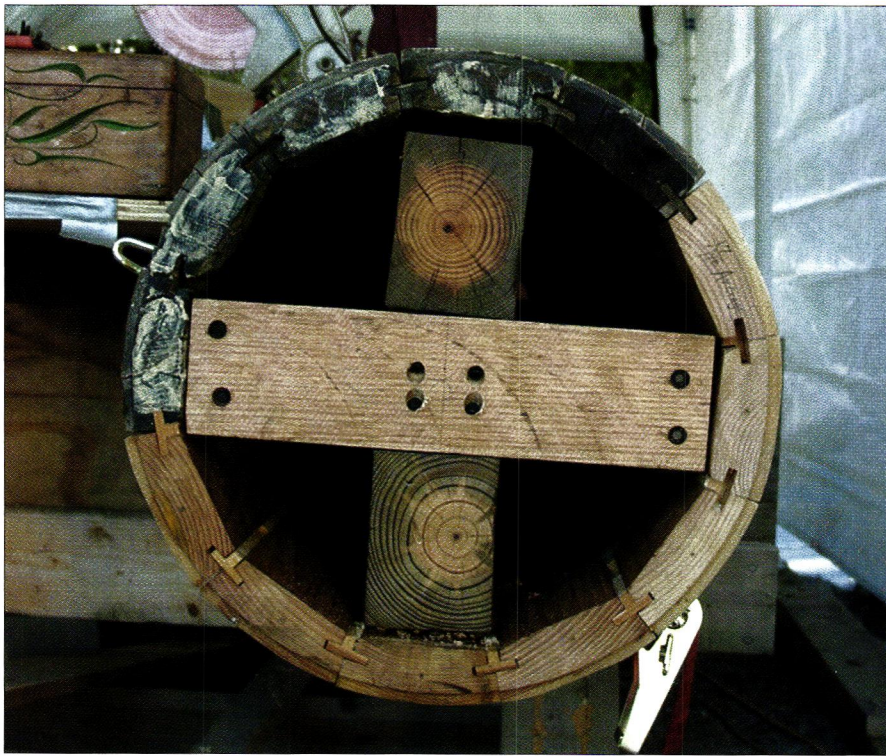
Removing the defective wood meant cutting back staves on a 12", 24", and 12" scheme around the shaft so that old and new material would knit together.



Belt and bar clamps were essential for maintaining the original dimensions and accuracy of the column bottoms as the stave ends were replaced.

ing water in driving rains. As the bases compressed in this saturated environment, the column bottoms got closer to the water, causing them to wick up moisture, deteriorate, and sink more, bringing new wood into contact with the moisture.

This continuing cycle of deterioration was slowly resulting in actual loss of material at the bottoms of the columns, lowering parts of the building as the columns shrank fractions of an inch every year. As part of the overall repairs, it was clear that these two big columns would have to be



Beefing up the post system inside the column included adding two 4x4s as well as a second bar across the bottom to make an X platform.

removed from the building so that we could rebuild their bottoms and return all the mating parts to good condition. The next question was how.

The Real Work Begins

Though figuring out how to remove the two-storey columns from the porch without upsetting the building was an interesting project on its own (and a tale best saved for another time), in essence we jacked the porch roof back up into its proper location and then supported it with a specially constructed screw-jacking system. Next, we tied each column to a line using a timber hitch, a logger's knot, and raised them slightly with a crane to remove them from the deck. Once free of the building, the crane lowered each column to the driveway to be placed in a cradle on the lawn where the real work would take place.

To make the cradle, we traced the top-and-bottom circumference of the two 18"-diameter columns before cutting these half-circles out of two sheets of plywood. When attached to sawhorses, this setup allowed us to support the columns, aligned

in opposite directions from head to foot, at working height, where they were ready for closer inspection and repair. Because the work would be ongoing, we erected a pole tent over the columns to shelter them and provide a covered work space during the changeable New England weather.

Each 18'-long column was assembled from a dozen staves made of white pine, with each staff connected to its neighbors by angled splines—thin strips of wood that slide into slots at the sides of the staves. Each staff is very long and fitted together with other staves using staggered joints to form the entire length of the shaft. Once assembled, the whole shaft had been turned to produce a column with pronounced entasis—the gradual convex curving built in at the tops and bottoms of tall, tapered columns to help them appear straight at the sides from a distance.

Once we had the columns under the shelter and fully open for inspection, our suspicions were confirmed. While the tops of the columns were in good shape, there was no wood worth saving on the bottoms, so we planned to repair them by splicing-in new material. If we staggered

the new staff ends into the column shaft so that the new wood would be interlaced with original wood like locked fingers, the new and old parts would knit themselves together into a structural whole that would be able to carry the structural loads.

The first step was to remove the decayed wood. Because we needed to leave support material on either side of the new parts, not just remove decay up to sound wood, we decided on a scheme that alternated staff cut-backs between 24" and 12" from the end of the shaft. To sever each staff, I first laid a flexible straightedge across the column and scribed a line. Next, I bored a $\frac{3}{8}$ " hole to start the cut and then completed it by carefully sawing along the scribed line with a saber saw. Once the staff end was severed, it was a relatively simple matter to pull the defective piece straight out of the column, like removing a piece of tongue-and-groove flooring. I continued around the column in this manner, cutting back every other staff 24" and the others at 12".

Staving Alive

The next question was where to get replacement staves. It was no surprise that phone calls to column manufacturers had proved a dead end. Fortunately, we found a local millwork shop that was up to the challenge of finding a way to make the staves. The owner, Dave Sacco, began the process by first cutting staff material out of pine to the exact width, thickness, and length of the original staves. Next, he cut each staff edge at the original angle, measured from samples of the original staves. Then he made new splines out of sticks of hardwood and slotted each staff on these edges to accept the splines.

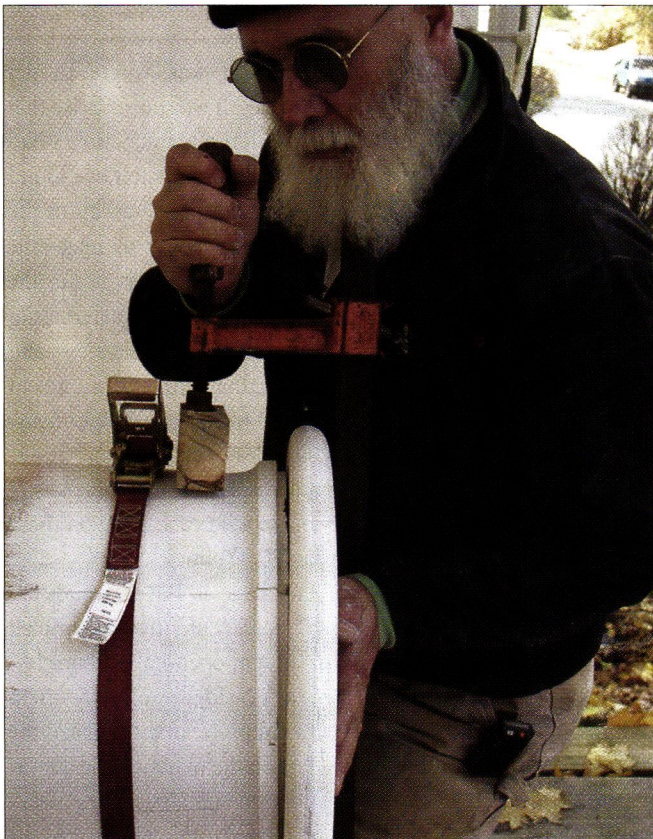
Once the folks at Dave's woodshop had all the pieces cut, they assembled them into a rough, open-ended barrel—technically, a 12-sided polygon—held together with straps. Next, they turned the barrel on a large lathe to obtain the curvature of the column shaft, based on measurements of the existing column radius. The columns taper noticeably at the bottom, so Dave also took pains to replicate this taper at this stage. The last step was to



Decay below the column shafts was extensive. The plinths and bases had to be completely rebuilt out of mahogany.



The circular rabbet or channel that was added to each plinth holds the staves together.



Assembling each plinth rabbet onto the column was a matter of carefully coaxing the pieces together with clamps.



The columns, waiting for reinstallation, show a rebuilt bottom with vent holes, next to a top, still in good condition.

shape one end of the barrel in a ½"-thick, square-cut lip designed to drop into the circular rabbet in the new plinths.

With the replacement stave parts in hand, we cut each piece to the correct lengths. To insert a new piece, we tapped it into place working up from the bottom of the column. Then we took newly made splines and tapped them into the slots using a mallet. Because the column staves have to be free to expand and contract, no epoxies or other adhesives were part of the installation process. Though the new staves exactly replicated the parts of the shaft they replaced, there were still anomalies, so we used sanders, an antique compass plane (which planes curved surfaces), and epoxy fillers to blend the old and new wood.

Final Touches

It was our good fortune that the woodshop was game for making the staves as well as the base parts, because these two worked together as critical components. The bot-

tom of each column locks into a channel in the plinth, which not only holds the two in proper alignment but also keeps the staves from spreading. When we had the new bases back from the shop, we placed them on the column ends, scribed the outline of the stave ends, and then sent the bases back to the shop for a final turning of the circular rabbet. Even with careful measurement, there was much testing and fitting of pieces to make the two mate smoothly.

Before the columns were ready to be reinstalled, we took one more step. As built, there was a post composed of two 2x4s running top to bottom inside each column that ended in a block at each end. As a precaution we added two 4x4s to each post to increase its strength. Should the column shaft ever be compromised in the future, these interior posts would now be strong enough on their own to help carry the loads of the porches. Though there was a sufficient ventilation path through the columns the way the house

was originally built, we took the same belt-and-suspenders approach when we reinstalled them by adding shims under the bases to increase the vent opening.

Despite the fact that the scope and details of this project were so specific to the building that no one else wanted to consider the work, the basic problems—water leading to wood deterioration in hidden places—are common to many old houses, and something we address every day. If you take the attitude that anything made by humans is capable of being repaired, all you really need is to be inquisitive and creative enough to find a solution. 🏠

George Yonnone is the principal at George Yonnone Restorations in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts (www.gyrestorations.com).

Seeing a massive, like-new column deftly lifted into place atop fabricated base parts explains why other contractors passed on the job. The project required not only problem solving and a measure of engineering, but also teamwork among three companies.



Atomic Wallpaper

BY DEMETRA APOSOROS

Wallpaper designs proliferated in the 1950s in patterns that ranged from bold and brassy to surprisingly subdued.

Botanicals were big in the 1950s, and so were geometric themes. This 1953 wallpaper (right) combines both in vibrant colors. A complicated pattern by the designer Vera (below) is hyped in a 1950's-era ad.

CHARLES RUPERT DESIGN'S ARCHIVES



F. SCHUMACHER & CO. ARCHIVES

The post-World War II building boom had a thundering impact on wallpaper designs of the 1950s. As young couples and returning veterans moved out of cramped urban apartments into roomy new houses in the suburbs, they didn't want to take their traditional cabbage rose wallpapers with them. "People wanted modern papers for more modern houses," says Suzanne Lipschutz, owner of Secondhand Rose, a New York City antiques store with a mid-century paper collection. Consumers were suddenly offered a lot of choices by a wallpaper industry rebounding from a wartime manufacturing slump, when many print-

ing rollers were melted down for the war effort. Eager to get business flowing again, paper companies started producing a flood of new patterns designed to appeal to a wide spectrum of consumers, so there were plenty of modern options.

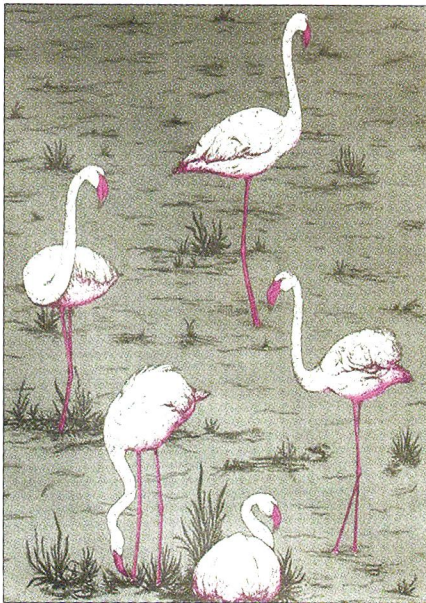
For many homeowners, modern meant subtle. "The typical wallpaper was probably so low-key that it blended into the background," says wallpaper scholar Robert Kelly. Small, repeating floral motifs were big in the 1950s, as were plaid patterns. Grass cloth wall coverings, which were textured and made of woven plant fibers on a paper backing, were a big hit and a fitting backdrop for tiki bars. Subtle geometric patterns repeating square or circular themes across a predominantly plain background were also common. For a time, there was even a resurgence of so-called traditional designs loosely based on patterns out of Colonial Williamsburg, thanks to the Colonial Revival craze. But you can't wrap the wallpapers of any era into a neat little package so that it defines a decade, cautions Kelly, because papers had to appeal to such a broad range of consumers. Average homeowners likely bought mass-produced wallpapers at mom and pop shops or at huge retailers like Sears, while those with high-style houses often sought out designer wall coverings. And in the

ATOMIC RANCH, GIBBS SMITH

Grass cloth weaves brought subtle textures to mid-century walls, and their horizontal lines created a spacious feel. Often nondescript and in earthy colors, grass cloth papers were a perfect backdrop for artwork.

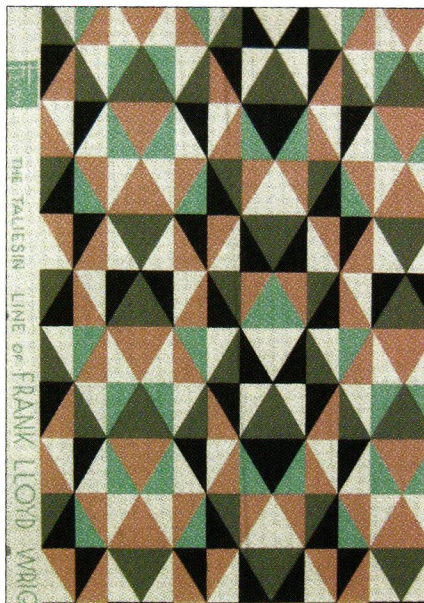


CHARLES RUPERT DESIGN



Advances in dyes introduced vibrant new colors to walls, such as the hot pink accenting these flamingoes (above). The wallpapers in Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin line (right) featured repeating patterns that played with visual perceptions. Repeating small patterns were popular, including this circle and square design called Hollywood Squares (below), which is still in production today.

F. SCHUMACHER & CO. ARCHIVES



1950s homeowners had plenty of designer wallpapers to choose from.

Everybody's Doing It

"The 1950s was the last time that everybody used wallpaper. It was a high point for wallpaper design," says Gregory Herringshaw, assistant wall covers curator at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. Fabric designers such as Vera and Elsa Schiaparelli had their own lines with wallpaper manufacturer F. Schumacher & Co.; Vera's line featured her signature oversized botanical themes. "Vera was a real trendsetter, with designs resembling op art 10 years before that was even a word," says Avodica Ash, Schumacher's archivist.

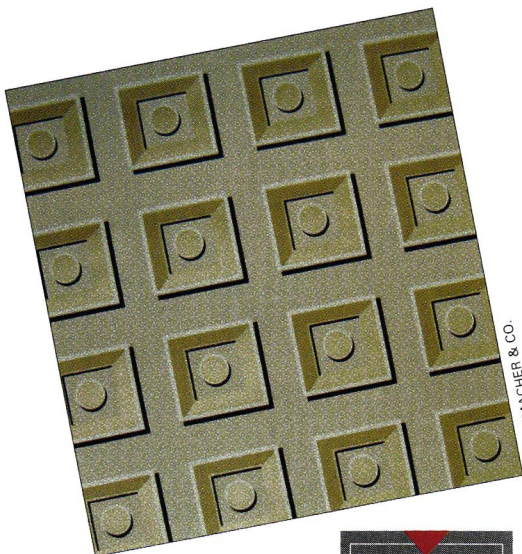
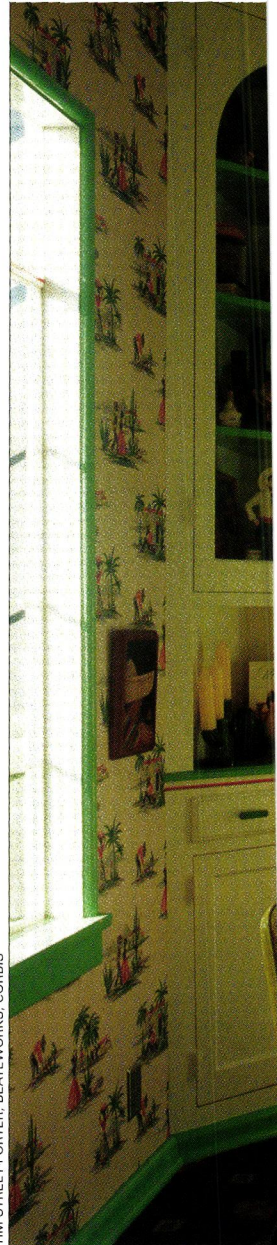
Some famous architects jumped on the wallpaper bandwagon, too. Le Corbusier created a bold wallpaper graphic resembling a giant checkerboard, with alternating black and white squares that seemed to fade into each other; the effect was nearly three dimensional. Frank Lloyd Wright designed a collection of papers called the Taliesin line. One of Wright's designs bore a repeating triangular theme that played tricks on the eyes. A different spin on geometric themes evolved from a growing fascination with nuclear fission, resulting in papers with atom-inspired graphics of concentric ovals or ameba shapes that seemed to be moving.

A visual impact of another sort was made with fine art murals. These took the

masterpieces of famous avant-garde artists — Henri Matisse, Joan Miro, and Antonio Matta, to name a few—and pasted them on the wall in sizes ranging from 4' x 6' to 6' x 9', creating striking conversation pieces. Likewise, papers printed in complementary patterns that were meant to be mixed in one room—a bold graphic on a high-light wall, accessorized with three walls of color-coordinated, subdued prints—were actually called conversationals by their manufacturers.

It wasn't just the designs that were noteworthy, but the papers themselves. Technological advances in wallpaper manufacturing during the 1950s changed the way that decorating was done. Pre-trimmed paper, which eliminated the selvage edges, appeared for the first time, and it made hanging wallpaper much easier for the average homeowner. Washable papers, coated with a durable varnish, were available in unlimited quantities and practical for high-traffic areas such as kitchens and bathrooms. Some manufacturers created paper that was meant to be hung horizontally for a more streamlined effect. Some even experimented with papers that could hang in any direction, making it possible to alternate the pattern around the room for a personalized décor. Colors changed in the 1950s, too. Wallpaper companies learned to print intense shades such as hot pink and chartreuse, as well as glittery metallics, which were an instant hit. Other popular color

TIM STREET-PORTER, BEATEWORKS, CORBIS



F. SCHUMACHER & CO.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 82.

MORE FROM OLDHOUSEJOURNAL.COM

For related stories online, see "6 Ways to Survive a Wallpaper Project" and "Wall-Prep Primer." Just click to "The Magazine" section, and go to the alphabetical list of recent features.



The southwestern theme of this 1950s paper is typical of landscape patterns, which told stories in four or five scenes that repeated across a wall.

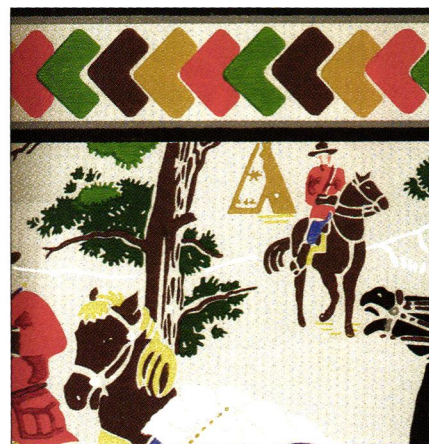
combinations included earth tones mixed in unexpected ways, brown combined with pink and orange, for instance.

Kitsch Is King

The category most associated with the 1950s has come to be known as kitsch papers—bold, brassy graphics with informal themes intended to be fun. A kitchen paper might feature chickens and eggs or a pan frying bacon. The kitsch papers, formally known as novelty papers, had over-the-top, playful designs and were meant for children's rooms, kitchens, and sometimes game rooms or bars. One 1950s Schumacher ad shows Desi Arnaz in his

living room with walls papered in a pattern of oversized liquor bottle labels. Wallpaper for a child's room might have cartoonish astronauts, nursery rhyme characters, or giraffes and monkeys playing leapfrog. French poodles were a popular theme, as was Paris. One pattern even combined the two, showing poodles sitting in cafes and strolling down boulevards.

Many novelty papers were landscape designs, patterns bearing four or five different scenes that repeated across a wall. Landscapes virtually told a story: cowboys riding horses, cowboys lassoing cows, cowboys at a campfire, followed by a sunset over cacti. The most outlandish landscape patterns were reserved for children's rooms and kitchens, and in the latter case featured tableaus of the perfect cocktail party or barbecue in vignettes.



CHARLES RUPERT DESIGNS ARCHIVES

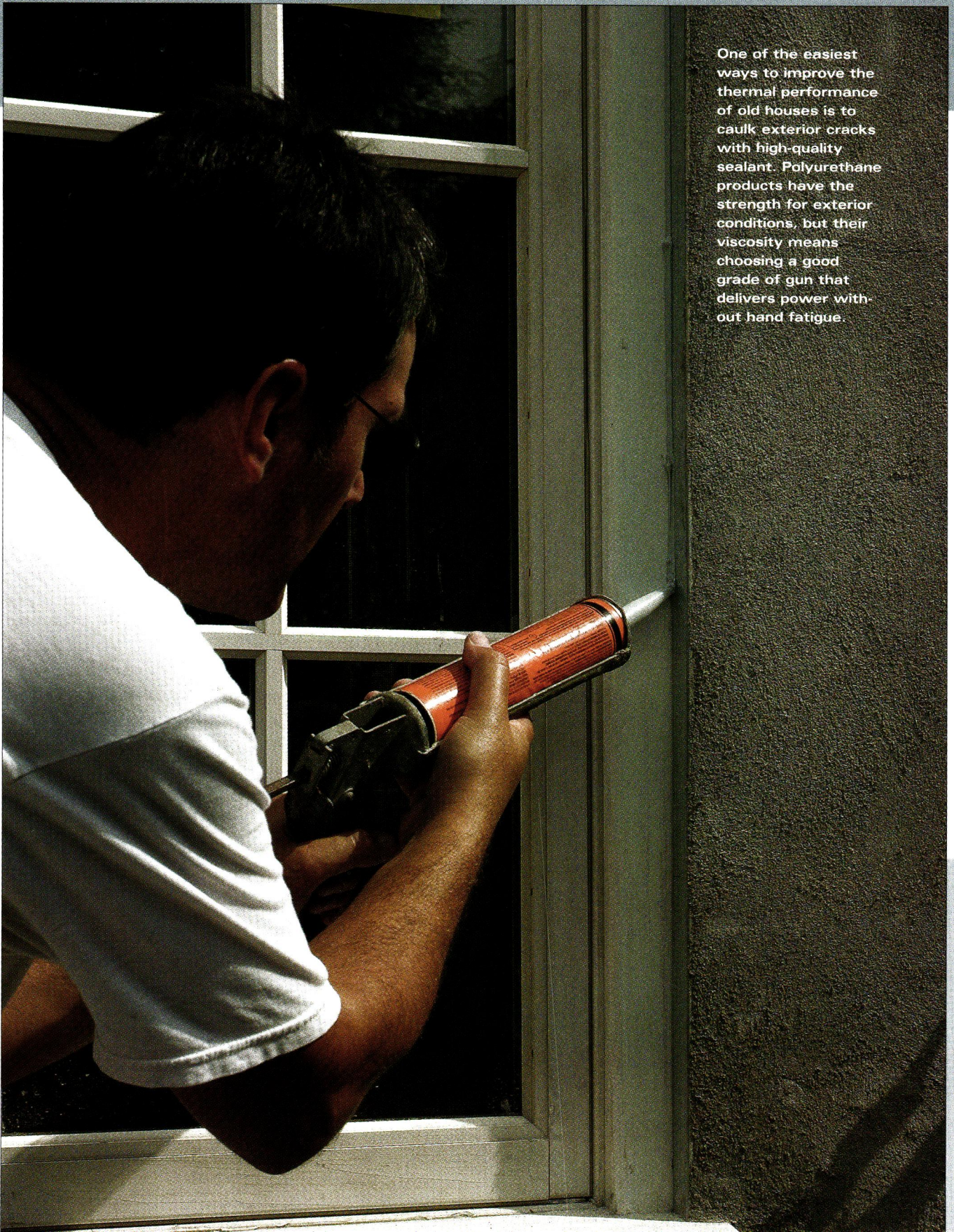
Children's rooms often featured bigger-than-life characters, such as the colorful Mounties and horses in this 1953 paper.

Art world trends made their mark on designs, too. Many wallpapers with floating, geometric shapes owe their existence to the popularity of Alexander Calder's mobiles. The influential, ground-breaking styles of artists such as Matisse and Miro were also knocked off in wallpaper patterns.

In 1995, Cooper-Hewitt put together an exhibit on 1950s wallpapers called *Kitsch to Corbusier: Wallpapers from the 1950s*. The range of the collection was extensive and included a popular wallpaper series of black and white calligraphic line art by Saul Steinberg, who illustrated covers for the *New Yorker* for half a century, proof that bold papers weren't always about funky colors and funny landscape patterns. The exhibit also emphasized the enduring impact that abstract expressionists of the day had on wallpaper designs. As a review of the show in *The New York Times* put it, "The most important quality the often anonymous wallpaper designers absorbed from these modern masters was the sense of individual forms floating freely in a shallow but open-ended space."

It's ironic that novelty papers are remembered as the décor of the decade, despite the great variety of wallpapers more commonly used in the 1950s, but it's not surprising. Poodles on the wall made an impact that was hard to forget, unlike the plaids, tiny florals, and grass cloth weaves that faded from memory as easily as they blended into the background of most suburban ranch houses. 🐶

The Short Course on



One of the easiest ways to improve the thermal performance of old houses is to caulk exterior cracks with high-quality sealant. Polyurethane products have the strength for exterior conditions, but their viscosity means choosing a good grade of gun that delivers power without hand fatigue.

Caulk

*There's more to an
EFFECTIVE caulk job than
just pumping any **OLD GOO**
into a gap.* BY NOELLE LORD

To caulk or not to caulk is a big question around our old house. Peter, my husband and co-restorer, would caulk the window fans in place if he could. He's all about stopping drafts and keeping moisture and debris out of cracks and joints. That sounds reasonable enough, but I continue to balk whenever I see a caulking gun. Try as I might to lay the product where it belongs with a nice clean finish, whenever I caulk the stuff oozes all over everything (especially me), and I don't like the hairline cracks that inevitably appear after a few years. Beyond my issues with its aesthetics, I reluctantly admit that caulk is

useful for many old-house conditions.

Whether your mantra is "if it gaps, caulk it," or like me, you avoid the stuff except for basic needs, using the right caulk type for every application is critical. You need to consider where you're working (on the interior or exterior), what you're trying to achieve by caulking (weatherproofing, blocking drafts, or closing up unsightly gaps), and how much movement you expect. There are a multitude of products on the market, many of which combine basic ingredients in different ways to enhance characteristics such as longevity, flexibility, cure times, and ease of cleanup. To help, here's a refresher course on which caulks



to consider for old houses and how to make the best use of them.

Caulk Talk

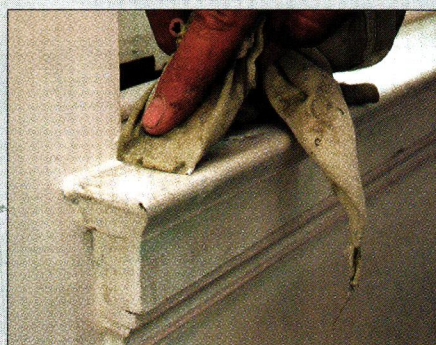
Caulking is not a new concept. For centuries, natural materials, such as pitch and

A nice, tight bead is sufficient for sealing the joints between building materials, such as wood trim and stucco. Many polyurethane products now come in tints that can be chosen to blend with exteriors, such as this stucco, eliminating the need for painting.



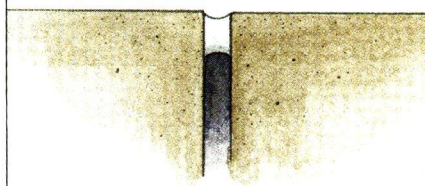
Caulking is a two-step process, and tooling the bead is the important second half. A thinner-soaked rag held in a gloved hand not only pushes the bead into the joint, it also dresses it with a concave surface that completes the hourglass shape of the bead.

Caulk alone is ineffective for filling gaps more than ¼" wide. Instead, first insert a length of backer rod, poking it below the surface to leave room for the proper proportion of caulk.

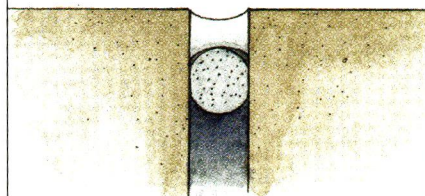


After laying in a bead of caulk, tool it to shape. Flexible latex caulk fitted this interior window stool project and was easy to work with and clean up using a water-soaked rag.

Keeping Sealants Supple



For gaps no more than ¼" wide, applying caulk in an hourglass shape (viewed in cross-section) allows the caulk to remain thin enough in the middle to be flexible.



For gaps more than ¼" wide, fill the void with backer rod and then tool to achieve a caulk depth in the middle of about 50% of joint width, but no more than ½".

bitumen, have been used to fill gaps in all kinds of structures. However, what really separates today's building caulks, or joint sealants, from earlier materials is the use of synthetic polymers, first developed in the 1930s. Polymers are substances formed by inducing small molecules of one kind to link up and make large molecules of a similar nature; they are the chemistry behind the rubber-like characteristics of modern caulks. Though the dozens of different tubes on a lumberyard shelf may present a daunting selection, the residential caulk market can be boiled down to five common caulk chemistry types.

Butyl. Based on a man-made rubber, butyl is one of the oldest and most affordable caulk types. Butyl caulk is solvent-based and characteristically stringy, which makes it difficult to apply in a finish-quality joint, but its admirable adhesion and weather resistance continue to make it popular for sealing gutters, chimney flashings, walks, and other exterior joints.

Latex. A general term for a rubber-based caulk that is applied as a liquid, latex caulks are usually water-based. Because basic latex caulks have the least ability to

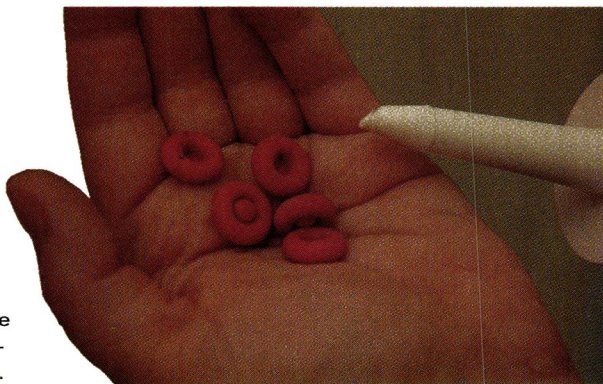
stretch (rated around 7% to 10% elasticity), they work best in interior applications where little movement is expected. These days, latex is often combined with another caulk type, such as acrylic, to enhance performance (see below).

Acrylic. In caulks, acrylics are a family of synthetic resins that are clear as well as water-soluble. Like latex caulks, acrylic caulks are easy to work with because they can be painted and cleaned up with water, making them good for touch-ups and for filling small gaps. Elastomeric caulk, a generic term for high-performance acrylic caulk, is designed for greater elasticity and is quickly becoming a favorite in a market that values ease and speed.

Generally, acrylic and latex caulks have a life span of five to 10 years, depending on environmental exposure, such as temperature shifts, ultraviolet light, weather, and building movement. These caulks can usually be removed by simply pulling them up or by using a utility knife to cut them away. Acrylic latex hybrids might

For a list of **SUPPLIERS**, see page 82.

Plugging half-used cartridges of caulk until the next project has long been the job of tape or screws, but for those who like accessories there are now various manufactured caps on the market.



You'll get a much better bead with less waste if you cut the nozzle at a bias and to just the diameter of caulk that you need. Start small; you can always increase size later.

include more solids, such as butyl, to offer greater product strength and integrity.

Silicone. Silicone caulk is formulated from silicone elastomers, or in simple terms, linear polymers of silicone “oils” that can be coaxed to cross-link in a couple of ways. For residential use, this means incorporating chemicals that induce the polymers to “room temperature vulcanize” or RTV. (This process releases acetic acid as a by-product, producing a vinegar scent.) Silicone is virtually non-porous so its big advantage is to make something watertight, and it’s most often used in plumbing applications (shower and sink installations) and some glasswork. Silicone is extremely rubbery (50% elasticity) but does not stick as well as other caulking and in its pure form, can’t be painted. There are now some hybrid siliconized acrylics that offer greater elasticity and a paint-friendly surface; they may be worth a try in an indoor setting where flexibility is critical.

Polyurethane. Polyurethane caulk,

which is based on the reaction of a glycol with an isocyanate to form a compound, is preferred for outdoor applications, with high-quality products having an exterior life span of 10 to 20 years, depending on exposure. Polyurethane products bond to most surfaces, including masonry and metal, hold up to heavy movement (25% elasticity), and can be painted. These traits also make these products great for filling indoor gaps in floorboards because polyurethane can take the high-traffic stresses of floors.

The products are overkill for other indoor applications, however, because the material is much harder to control and takes longer to set up in situations where acrylic latex would be perfectly suitable. Polyurethane caulks have tremendous bonding ability—so much so, that they can also be used as adhesives in some circumstances—but this tenacity does make them more challenging to work with.

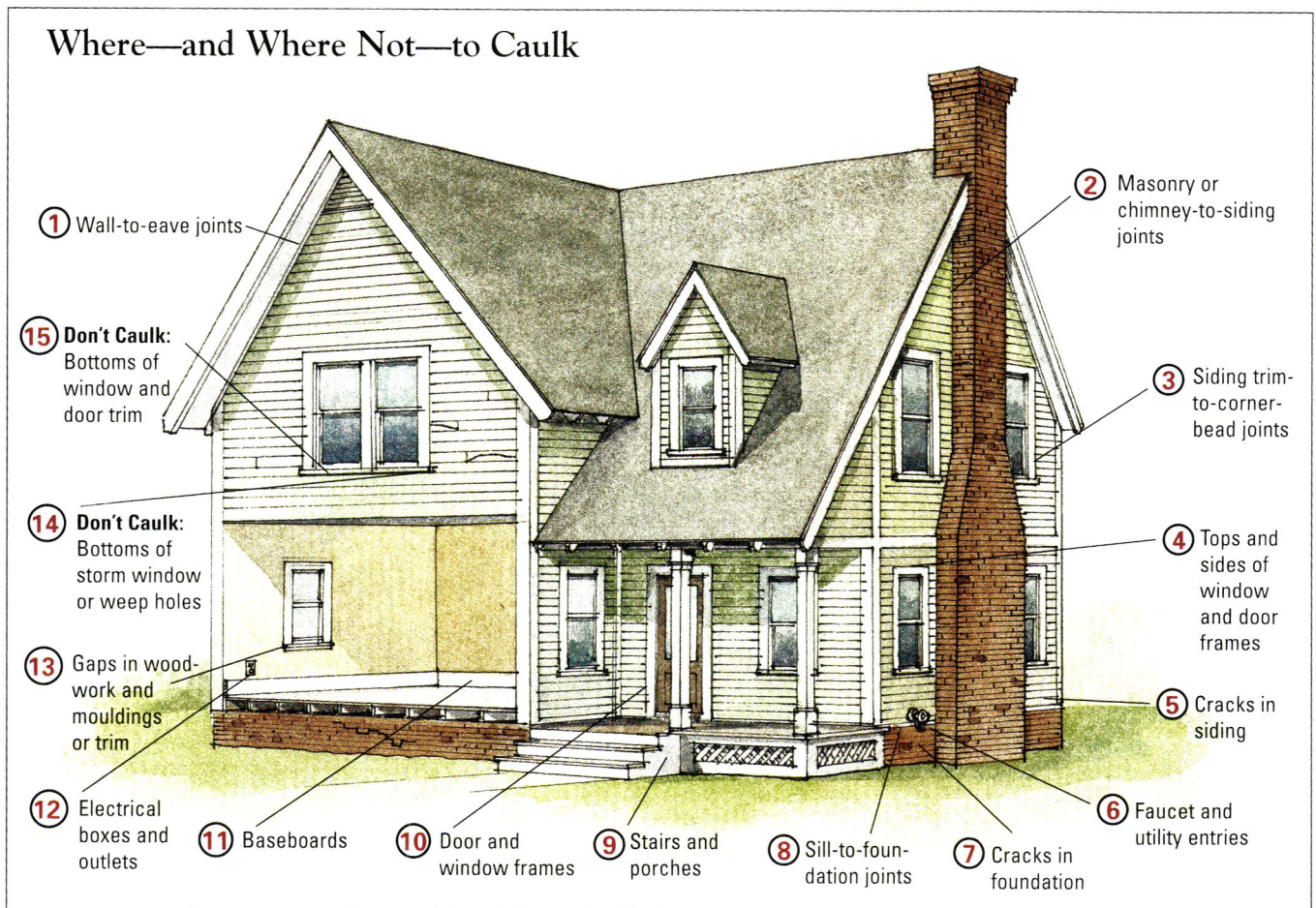
Polyurethane is solvent-based, meaning that you must use paint thinner for

cleanup. Early polyurethanes had to be mixed from two parts in the field like epoxy, but the new products come in one-part formula tubes ready to use. Due to their adhesive strength, removal usually involves cutting out or sanding off unwanted caulk.

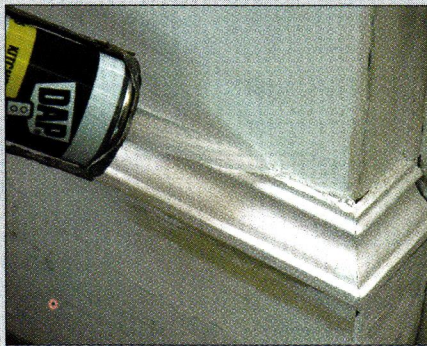
Always read the product label carefully for application purposes, and take advantage of product websites and contact numbers before making a sticky mistake. Like most purchases, you get what you pay for, so the cheaper the caulking is, the less-solid components it will contain, resulting in a poorer performance and more shrinkage. Because we’re talking about a jump from \$2.00 to \$7.00 a tube here, the investment is well worth it.

Where to Caulk

Caulking closes up the cracks and gaps that allow air and water to infiltrate your old house. Even the smallest voids exposing the inside of your home to the outdoors can be a threat to building materials



Most people think of caulking baseboards as a way to a nicer paint job, but in old houses these cracks along outside walls are also a common source of drafts from the sill plate.



Water-based caulks smooth nicely with a water-dampened rag. Mask off paint or open-grain wood as you don't want to risk getting excess caulk on these hard-to-clean surfaces.

and permit a tremendous amount of air flow. Remember not to go caulk crazy, though; houses do need to breathe to provide healthy air exchange and accommodate heating system and appliance requirements. The primary goal of exterior caulking is to shed water and to make your house more weather- and draft-resistant. Interior caulking seals against drafts along exterior walls and at intersections and prevents water intrusion at plumbing fixtures, but it also has an aesthetic purpose. A thin bead of caulk can hide unsightly gaps and make joints easier to keep clean.

It is always best not to depend on caulking as a fallback for haphazard workmanship. Cut trim and clapboard joints tightly, or scarf them with overlapping miters so they don't gap excessively. Also, never caulk around panels in woodwork, such as a raised panel door or wainscot. These panels are designed to move freely in their framework during seasonal changes—as much as 1/8" for a 12" panel. Caulking them in place could spell disaster because today's stronger caulks will often allow the wood to split before they break their bond. If you absolutely cannot

stand to look at a gap that is expected to move seasonally, run just a slight bead of caulk along the surface, but never inject it underneath the joints of the paneling.

Perfecting the Perfect Caulk Job

The secret to an attractive and long-lasting caulk job, especially indoors, is good preparation and meticulousness. Always clean surfaces well before caulking so there is no dust or debris to compromise the bond. Brush or vacuum interior gaps. Around bathtubs and kitchen sinks, wash

MATCHING TOOLS TO THE JOB

Sealing against water intrusion around fixtures in bathrooms and kitchens is one of the most common caulking jobs. There are many products made especially for this purpose, and whether you choose a pure silicone type or one of the acrylic hybrids, most are fluid enough to apply with a simple gun.



OSI SEALANTS



RYOBI POWER TOOLS

For viscous caulks or tough jobs, such as working overhead, several cordless caulk guns are on the market. What these power tools add in weight and cost, they make up for in speed and saved labor.

Always keep cleanup materials handy, especially for polyurethanes and caulks that require solvents. Test beforehand to ensure that thinner will not discolor the finished surface.



Ceiling mouldings are another subtle source of drafts, as well as unsightly cracks, that can be improved with a quick bead of interior-friendly caulk, such as acrylic or latex.



carefully to remove any soap residue, and then follow with an alcohol wipe to catch any water.

Microorganisms are always growing on exterior surfaces, so an important preparation step is to wash them well with a bleach and water solution or a commercial house cleaner in a pump sprayer, using a bucket and brush. Power washing is okay if done carefully (don't drive water up under the siding and trim work) but isn't necessary. After washing, rinse surfaces with clean water, and allow them to dry completely. Like painting, caulking should be completed no more than one week after washing or the organisms will begin to grow again. When painting is involved, the best time to caulk is after you have applied primer to new wood or before applying the final coat of paint.

Caulking may not be brain surgery, but it isn't child's play either. As I have complained, this sticky stuff sure gets around, and if you don't stay on top of the cleanup as you go, you'll have a permanent mess. To help produce a clean, even job, don't hesitate to mask off the surrounding area with tape and paper. Rushing never pays off because getting excess caulk out of wood grain and cracks is tough to do. Caulks that are solvent-based, such as polyurethane, need to be cleaned with paint thinner, which can leave stains on nearby finished surfaces. Always have cleaning materials ready: a bucket of water and rag for latex and acrylic products, or a cup of paint thinner and a rag for polyurethane.

The most important tools for caulking are your fingers and a caulking gun, which is worth the investment. Whether

you opt for a frame-style gun with double bars or an open-cylinder-style gun, the better models have far more mechanical advantage than cheaper models and are worth the extra money. If you are using stiff caulking, purchase a gun designed for applying polyurethane, or your fingers will get mighty tired. If you have a lot of caulking ahead of you, consider one of the cordless caulking guns on the market. They're heavier and a little bulkier than a manual gun, but the ability to select (and change on the fly) bead size and control the caulking for precise starts and stops, all finger-fatigue-free, almost makes caulking a pleasure.

There's more to an effective caulk job than just pumping goo into a gap, too. When viewed in cross-section, the ideal caulking bead has an hourglass shape—in other words, the sides need maximum surface area for adhesion, and the center is kept thinner so that the caulk has maximum flexibility to move with building materials. You achieve this shape by using a tool or your finger to create a concave surface when you clean excess caulk off the bead surface.

Never depend upon caulk alone to fill a gap any wider than 1/4". If the joint is bigger, first insert backer rod (foam cording) in the gap, and then fill to the surface with the caulk of your choice. Caulk alone simply cannot stretch enough on large openings, and the crack will inevitably open up if you skip this step.

Caulking for Energy Savings

We're all looking for ways to improve the thermal efficiency of our houses by keep-

ing heat in or out, and in this quest caulking has the advantage of being low cost and virtually invisible. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, caulking drafty areas of a building can cut energy costs 10%; furthermore, about 50% of the average fuel bill is the result of heat loss from air infiltration. If that sounds hard to believe, *Old House Journal* once speculated that if all the cracks in a typical old house were combined into a single opening, it would total nine square feet or more, about the area of a window opening!

Any time you make a building more vapor-tight, you risk trapping high moisture levels inside, which we all know have the potential to lead to serious problems, from peeling paint to rotting wood. When caulking exteriors, remember that water primarily travels down, not up, so don't caulk the undersides of window trim, door trim, or siding such as clapboards. This practice creates a path for some moisture migration out of the structure.

Obviously, caulk isn't a cure-all, and it will do little to solve a draft problem if you have major structural failures, such as damaged or missing siding and trim, or if an open fireplace damper or an uninsulated attic is creating a chimney effect inside your house. However, along with insulating and ventilating your attic, and making sure your windows and doors are tight and fitted with proper storms and weather seals, caulk can be a cost-effective way to improve old-house comfort and performance. 🏠

Noelle Lord operates *Old House C.P.R., Inc* (www.oldhousecpr.com) and writes from her own old house in Limington, Maine.

IN STEP WITH

Wood Floor DUTCHMEN

BY ERIC DACHSSCHULER
PHOTOS BY BARBARA
KRANKENHAUS

One of the charms of vintage wood floors is that they increase in character as they age, but one of the challenges of maintaining that character as something attractive is that floors inevitably are subject to uneven wear. Some areas, typically those in the center or in corners, stay as good as the day they were laid, while other places—around doors or under often-used furniture—take a beating every day.

What do you do, for instance, about localized damage, such as an old pipe hole or a deep scar worn by a bed caster? One approach that can improve the floor without replacing large amounts of material is to repair it with a Dutchman wood patch.



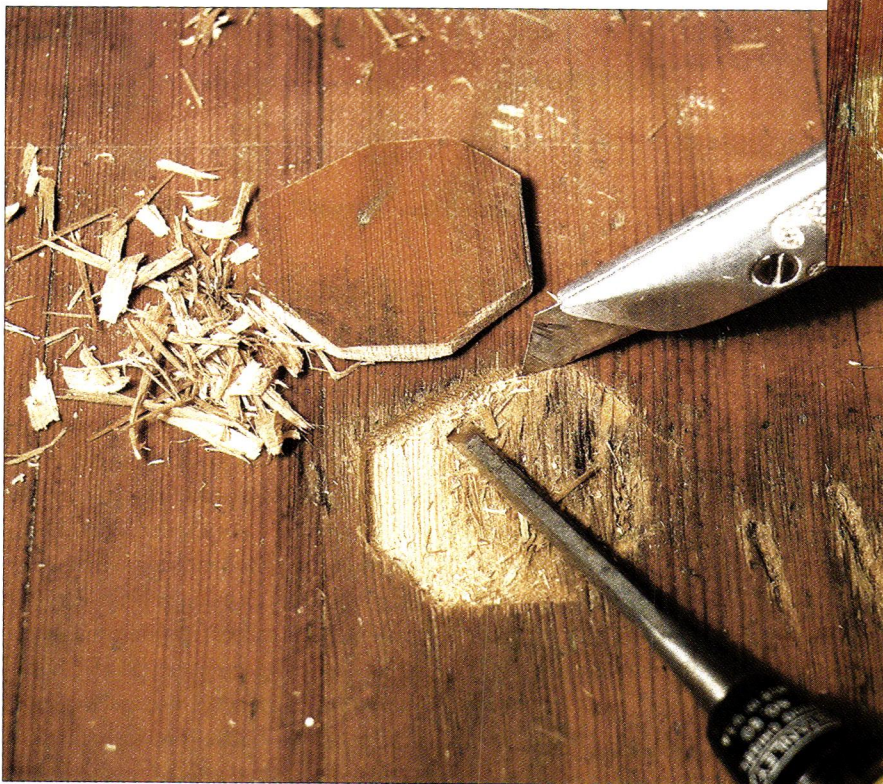
Step 2: Cut the stock into a geometric shape—but not one as obvious as a square or circle—that is slightly larger than the patch area and resembles as much as possible the grain or joints in the floor. Trapezoids and hexagons are good.



Step 1: Obtain a piece of repair stock of the same wood species, cut, and appearance as the floor. A scrap of the actual floor, perhaps grafted from a closet or other sacrificial area, is ideal.

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For related stories online, see “A Clearer View of Floor Finishes,” “Old and Underfoot,” and “Wood Flooring Q&A.” Just click to “The Magazine” section, and go to the alphabetical list of recent features.



Step 3: Next, place the patch material over the damage, and score the outline into the floor using a sharp razor knife and chisel. Then excavate within this outline using a chisel. Be careful to work with the grain and remove only small shavings at a time to avoid splintering beyond the scored outline. Turn the chisel over so the bevel faces away from you, and use it as a plane to flatten the bottom of the hole.



Step 5: Apply carpenter's wood glue to the hole, and put the patch in position. Adding a few pounds of weight on top helps hold the Dutchman in place until the glue sets, but avoid overclamping as that squeezes out all the glue.



Step 6: For deep but small gouges, such as animal scratches that might accompany a major defect, try a wood-colored epoxy filler. If the epoxy is darker than the wood, it will look more like a sap mark or other natural wood aberration, than if it is light colored.



Step 4: Test the patch in the hole, and finesse any edges or high spots in the bottom so that it fits snugly and comfortably, leaving it a few fractions of an inch proud of the finished surface.



Step 7: When the wood Dutchman is fully cured, plane and sand it down so that it's flush with the rest of the floor, and finish as necessary to blend in with the surrounding surface. Your goal is not to achieve an invisible repair but to leave the floor with a smoother surface and better appearance than if you had left the damage untouched.



COURTESY OF THE CAMPBELL HOUSE MUSEUM

Centers of Atte

When choosing a plaster medallion, let

As a bull's eye that draws your attention upward, nothing quite compares to the artistry of a plaster medallion. First introduced into American houses in the 1700s, these ceiling centerpieces, whose designs often included leaves radiating from a central rosette, reached a pinnacle of popularity in the 1800s, when they added panache to the formal rooms of town and country houses alike, before petering out of favor in the 1930s.

But medallions weren't just about ornamentation; they were a kind of status

symbol for the upper and middle classes, making a statement about the homeowner's wealth and aesthetic sensibilities. Not all homeowners wanted or could afford medallions, of course, but their widespread use is a good indication that many people aspired to having them. For that reason, ceiling medallions are a justifiable way of adorning rooms in an old house today even if it never had such plaster ornamentation before, provided that the same advice that guided homeowners more than a century ago is observed.

Style and Substance

Because plaster is what homeowners used then, it's the appropriate material to use for an old house today. Then as now, plaster medallions were sold either ready-made (as one piece or in several parts) or were custom-made by an ornamental plasterer. Today's ready-made medallions often replicate original designs or evoke them by using similar motifs.

Those designs deliberately mimicked the changing architectural fashions of American houses. Thanks to critics such as A.J. Downing, the importance of harmonizing décor with the house style had been drummed into the heads of the American public so that it was widely understood that a ceiling medallion, like the furniture, should match (or at least not clash with) the architecture. In the early 1800s, that typically meant classical emblems to suit Federal or Greek Revival houses. Like the veneered furniture of the period, medallions in Federal houses contained bellflowers, ribbons, and rosettes with radiating palmettes or other leaves. The motifs be-

Large chandeliers and high ceilings called for bigger medallions, which grew mostly through the addition of multiple borders. Befitting its four-storey height, the foyer of the Waverly Mansion in Columbus, Mississippi, features a grand medallion with a central rosette surrounded by concentric circles, framed by several octagons.



PAUL ROCHELEAU

DOUGLAS KEISTER

ntion

By CATHERINE SISKOS

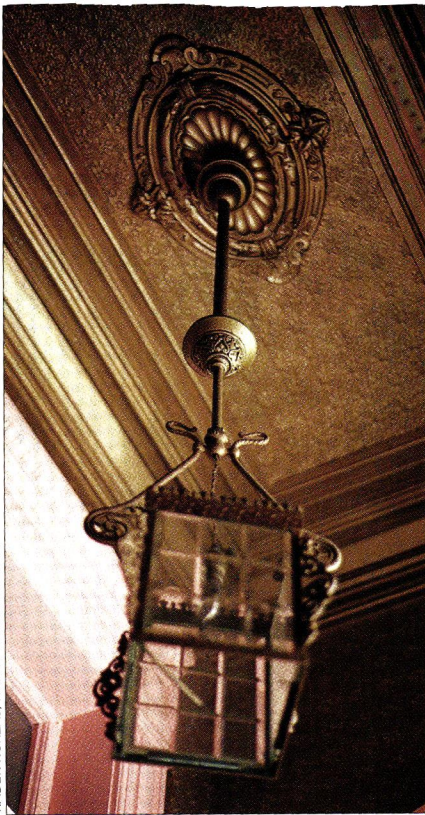
old-fashioned advice and common sense be your guide.

Many of the same designs used for cast-iron ornament were adopted for plaster medallions, which tended to be most elaborate in public rooms such as parlors.





Square medallions were unusual and may have emerged in Queen Anne houses so that the boxy shape could be incorporated into a coffered ceiling.



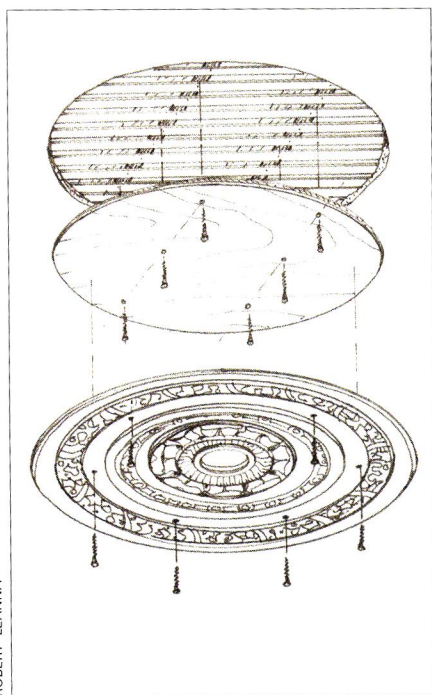
Ellipses worked best in long, narrow spaces, such as foyers. Although mostly white, medallions were painted or gilded to contrast with the room.



Greek Revival medallions were nearly always round with a border that contained classical motifs such as this Greek key or fret.

came noticeably more Greek in Greek Revival houses, with the flower often an anthemion surrounded by a border in a Greek key or acanthus leaf design. In any period, the border often matched the cornice, and it's not uncommon for a medallion to be ringed with beadwork or an egg-and-dart motif, for instance.

A three-step solution for securing a medallion: Cut a slightly smaller hole in the plaster and fill the space with a round piece of plywood screwed in through the lath to the joists. Then attach the overlapping medallion to the plywood in as many places as needed.



ROBERT LEANNA

Compared with the rimmed discs of earlier periods, however, medallions in the Victorian era looked like they were on steroids. The series of romantic architectural styles that came into vogue mid-century, along with the Victorian mania for unfettered nature, transformed medallions into robust mounds of plasterwork depicting a

tangle of vines, leaves, and flowers. Rims were abandoned to mimic nature more convincingly. Without a border, "Rococo medallions looked like they were growing out of the ceiling," says John Ferguson, a former architectural historian in New Orleans. Although the rims came and went in the Victorian era, they returned for good toward the end of the century, when

interest in Colonial architecture revived, lasting into the 20th century.

Whatever their architectural style, medallions weren't placed in every room, and even when they appeared in different parts of the house, a hierarchy was generally observed. The most elaborate medallions decorated public rooms, such as the foyer, parlor, and dining room, in order to dazzle and impress the guests. Wealthy city dwellers may have dressed up a bedroom ceiling with smaller and less ornate centerpieces, in part because few people outside the family would be likely to see them. Some homeowners went so far as to institute a hierarchy for decorative ceilings even upstairs. The front master bedroom in the Merchant House in New York City, for example, has a more elaborate medallion than the rear bedroom, says David Flaharty, a sculptor and ornamental plasterer, but generally, "the higher up you go in the house, the less ornate a medallion is."

Size and Shape

The same room hierarchy that dictated the extent of the medallion's ornamentation also played a role in its size, with larger medallions appearing downstairs in the pub-

For a list of SUPPLIERS, see page 82.

lic rooms. Those rooms tended to be larger anyway and demanded a bigger bull's eye. Certainly, 19th-century tastemakers consciously proportioned medallions with the surrounding space. Writing in *The Practice of Architecture* in 1833, Asher Benjamin devised this rule of thumb for a medallion's size: "In a room of about 18 by 20 feet, the diameter should be about three feet, or one sixth of the width of the room, exclusive of the architrave which encircles it."

Although Asher Benjamin doesn't mention it, the height of the ceiling was a factor, too. A large medallion in a room with a low ceiling would loom over the occupants and dominate the space overwhelmingly. As a result, medallions tended to shrink in size as the ceiling height decreased. Jim Garvin, an architectural historian with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, speculates that

finely incised, delicate designs may have been reserved for rooms with low ceilings, while the plasterwork in, say, a two-storey foyer needed to be coarser and more robust to compensate for the distance between the medallion and the human eye.

Because medallions often had a practical purpose, other concerns also dictated size. Medallions often disguised chandelier hooks or connections for gas lighting and sometimes doubled as a register for an air duct. They may also have functioned as a soot catcher, says ornamental plasterer Ken Wildes. "The medallion would be placed above an oil or gas chandelier so that when the soot rose up it would dirty the medallion and not the ceiling." That tactic presumably spared the homeowner from having to repaint the entire ceiling each year when only the medallion needed to be refreshed instead. If so, the medallion

had to be at least as large, if not slightly bigger, than the chandelier to absorb the sooty fumes rising from an oil or gas lamp.

As for shape, most medallions were round, although by the second half of the century, catalogs featured hexagonal, octagonal, and even star-shaped medallions. Round medallions worked best in square rooms, while a rectangular room called for an elongated shape in the form of an oval. "You want contrast with the geometry of the room," says Garvin.

Ceiling Reinforcements

Less of a concern was the condition of the ceilings, but those same houses today may have mechanical issues that need attention before any ornamental plaster is added. A solid 36" plaster medallion can easily weigh 40 pounds, which may be more than an old ceiling can handle. (Some medallions have hollow centers making them much lighter, but you should still assess the ceiling's condition.) To find out if the ceiling is sound, gently push up on it. A strong ceiling doesn't budge, but if there's any give at all, get professional advice.

Even a sound ceiling, though, may have problematic lath. Houses in the 19th century secured a plaster ceiling to wood lath, which was nailed to the joists, "the worst system for applying plaster," says Flaharty. "In the early 20th century, they switched to stronger metal lath." Replacing the wood lath with metal is certainly one option. Another is to cut out of the ceiling a hole half an inch smaller in diameter than the medallion and fill the space with a round piece of plywood that matches the hole's size and the ceiling's depth. When screwed to the joist, the plywood should be flush with the ceiling, creating a large, strong surface where the medallion can be anchored in many places, instead of just to the lath's narrow strips. The overlapping medallion hides the plywood, and any gaps can be sealed with plaster. Wildes uses a pastry bag for the job before smoothing over the seam with a putty knife. The effect when viewed from below is the same one that has captivated the human eye for more than two centuries: the drama of artistry in plaster. 🏠



PAUL ROCHELEAU

Radiating palmettes and the fluted outer ring were classic design elements of Adamesque medallions in Federal houses during the early 19th century.

The Sands of Time

One family's history is closely linked to a house that has been passed down for seven generations.

BY CATHERINE SISKOS

Letters written by the colonial Sands and their descendants span two centuries, giving Ann Jensen (opposite) insight about her ancestors (opposite at far right). The family home is full of belongings from earlier generations, including this quill and ink stand that was used to pen some of the letters.

PHOTOS BY J. BROUGH SCHAMP EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



At the dawn of the Revolutionary War, John and Ann Sands were raising their five children in a house they had just purchased in Annapolis, Maryland: a two-storey, wood-frame building that doubled as a tavern, the family's livelihood. The year was 1771, and Annapolis, the colony's capital on the Chesapeake Bay, had been abandoned by much of its social elite, British loyalists who sensed the approaching war and departed for safer ground.

The solidly middle-class Sands, however, supported the budding nation's bid for independence. John, a former mariner, supplied provisions to the troops fighting the British. Ann marshaled the women to sew shirts and overalls for the soldiers. And William, the eldest son, fought with his vastly outnumbered Maryland regiment in Long Island, doggedly holding the line against the advancing British forces. In a letter written to his family in August 1776, just days before the battle, William describes the situation: "About 200 sail of the king's ship lay close by us. We are ordered to hold ourselves in readiness and expect an attack hourly."

That was the last letter the Sands received from their 19-year-old son, who died in battle. More than 230 years later, the house and the letter, along with hundreds more written by the colonial Sands and their descendants, survive. John and Ann could not have envisioned it, but their house continues to remain in the family after

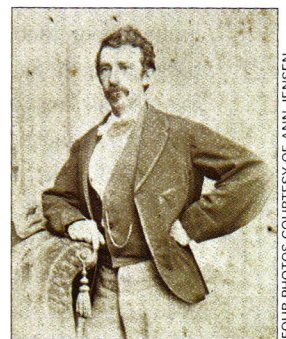
more than two centuries. The letters, in addition to other documents, tell a story about a family through the ages and the house they came to regard as their heritage.

Prosperous Beginnings

Even in New England, houses kept in the same family for 200-plus years are uncommon. Only 15 Historic New England houses once belonged to families who held the property for at least 200 years, and in Maryland, the number is smaller still, fewer than six. Unlike most of those families, the Sands were neither wealthy nor prominent, and their house, with its center hall separating two rooms on each floor, was modest and "much more representative of how families in the 18th century lived," says Jean Russo, a historian with the Historic Annapolis Foundation.

Ann Jensen, the current resident and a Sands descendent, is the seventh generation to call the Sands House home. She grew up there, left to marry and raise children, before returning in the late 1980s, when the house was emptied for badly needed repairs. That's when Jensen began to catalog

Built as early as 1681, the Sands House ranks as one of the oldest buildings in Annapolis, Maryland. The house has been in Ann Jensen's family for 235 years.



FOUR PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANN JENSEN

From top, Susannah Sands, her parents Jane and James Sands, and her husband Martin Revell, who courted her for 17 years. Revell bore a striking resemblance to the infamous John Wilkes Booth.

and read the many letters stored in boxes, drawers, and trunks, a project that took years. "The letters would transport me to another time, like reading a novel," says Jensen, a writer working on a book about her family. "You'd reach into a box and these people would develop like characters."

Although its exact age is unclear, the house may have been built as early as 1681 and certainly predates John and Ann, who bought it from another owner. John was worth about 400 pounds in colonial currency, placing him in the top 27% of Annapolis wealth, and had run a tavern

The original 17th-century house had a center-hall plan with two rooms on each floor and an attic. The long sloping addition on the left was added in the 18th century and the entry porch in the early 20th century.

Below, four generations of Sands descendants are pictured in this photo taken in 2000. Ann Jensen is on the left holding her grand-daughter.



COURTESY OF ANN JENSEN

before, having applied for a liquor license in 1767, four years before buying the house. His wife Ann probably helped out in the tavern, a room on the ground floor that would later become a parlor when the Sands turned to shopkeeping instead. Ann could read and write and even kept a journal. Although the entries were often brief, they paint a picture of hard-working parents who tried to educate their children, says Jensen. "I think they were aspiring to higher status." Ann, however, needed some refining. Digging through archival records, Jensen discovered that the feisty Ann was once fined 10 pounds for beating another woman, the provocation still a mystery, one of many concerning Jensen's ancestors that may never be solved. "Ann Sands was rough," says Jensen, "but she was trying to make something of herself."

Ann's children and grandchildren did better. In the late 1700s, the house expanded to one side when a store-room was added. The addition covered over a portion of the house's original 18th-century fishscale shingled roof, which can still be seen fully preserved from the attic. By the 1840s, the house had passed down to James, the great-grandson of Ann and John. A prosperous merchant, James also helped his brother run a steamship transporting goods to Baltimore, owned other property nearby, and had married into money. But through a quirk of geography, the Civil War would change his family's comfortable life.

Under Siege

Like the rest of Maryland, Annapolis was divided in its loyalties, its citizens split between Union and Confederacy. President Lincoln, though, couldn't afford to lose control of the town or the bay, an important resource for transporting men and munitions. In June 1861, the Union army swept in, taking over key buildings, abolishing the rights of citizens to bear arms, and then turning a blind eye to the criminal behavior of the troops. For four and a half years, Annapolis was an occupied town, under military control but hardly an orderly place. "There was a kind of lawlessness—



The 18th-century addition was built over the existing roof, preserving its wooden fishscale shingles, which can still be seen from an attic space on the second floor.

murders, people beaten, locals who were attacked and robbed,” says Annapolis historian Jane McWilliams.

It was even more dangerous for the Sands, who were so pro-South that they brazenly sang Confederate songs within earshot of Union troops. The family lived under the constant threat of arrest. In a letter dated June 2, 1861, Susannah, James’s 18-year-old daughter, writes, “I would not be surprised if they take Pa.” One man who was arrested and released was Martin Revell, the man who would tirelessly court Susannah for 17 years until she finally agreed to marry him. The letter notes his arrest and reports that telegrams were being seized and read. “The Yankees,” Susannah continues, “are mean and low enough to perpetrate any ugly trick.”

The Union army was particularly concerned about spies and as a condition for voting in elections, required the townspeople, including the Sands, to sign an oath pledging that they wouldn’t help the Confederacy. Though James Sands didn’t fight in the war, his Confederate sympathies put him at odds with one of the town’s leading citizens, John Randall, a pro-Union banker at the same institution where the Sands had a mortgage. Jensen speculates that the ill will between the men may have caused the Sands to lose their other property, but they clung tenaciously to the family home.

A Lasting Legacy

From the late-19th century on, the fate of the house rested squarely in the hands of the Sands women, who outlived their husbands and brothers in each generation. In 1889, when James died, the house went, not to his children, but to his three unmarried sisters, the maiden aunts as they were called. One by one, they began to die of old age, until by 1901 only the last aunt, Sarah, remained, and she was not on good terms with her Sands relatives.

Susannah Sands Revell, by this time in her fifties and newly widowed, was keenly aware of the house’s importance and its uncertain future. “It grieves me to think that the dear old home will fall into the hands of strangers,” she writes to a friend that same



Artifacts from Ann and John Sands include books, eyeglasses, and even a journal.

year. For 150 years the house has been in the family and “in all that time never occupied by any but a Sands,” she wrote.

A year later, when Sarah died without a will, the house stayed in the family, but the heirs included all 16 of her nieces and nephews, Susannah among them. She had both the means and the determination to buy off the property from the other heirs, and by 1904 the house was hers. That year, the house was raised 18 inches to accommodate a higher grade in the newly improved street, and Susannah took the opportunity to make other changes. She enlarged it at the back, added a bay window in the parlor, and a small covered porch in front, and four years later, wired the entire house for electricity. When Susannah died in 1917, the succession was assured: Her son and two daughters would inherit.

Ann Jensen is Susannah’s great-granddaughter. In a house crammed with the personal effects of so many of her ancestors, Jensen’s own belongings are hardly visible, but one photo stands out. Taken in 2000 shortly before Jensen’s mother died, it shows four people. On the right is Jensen’s mother, in the center her daughter, and at left, Jensen holds her grand-daughter. They are four generations of Sands descendants and possibly the best assurance that John and Ann’s family legacy will prevail. 🏠



This winding circular staircase is an unusual feature that is original to the house. Flanking the staircase are two rooms, one of which served as a tavern during the colonial period.

Just Plain Greek

Beyond the occasional columned mansion, America's first national style really took hold in the countless small and simple Greek Revival houses built coast to coast.

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

What puts the Greek in Greek Revival architecture? It's tempting to say it's the columns, because multiple sets of classical columns are so often prominent in large and important Greek Revival buildings. Even simple houses might sport a pair or two of these in one of the Greek orders—most often Doric, sometimes Ionic, but seldom Corinthian. As it happens, though, the United States has many more Greek Revival houses built without columns than with them. These dwellings are usually simple in shape and ornament and certainly not accurate portrayals of buildings that might have been erected in ancient Greece. Rather than being the work of noted architects (of whom there were few in the first half of the 19th century), the buildings are likely to be from the hands of skillful local builders or



Small, second-floor eyebrow windows are typical of Greek Revival cottages. This house in Rhinebeck, New York, has larger windows in the end gables.

PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

This Topsfield, Massachusetts, house has a splendid entry with sidelights and an entablature that recalls the main cornice. The bracketed cornice and the slightly raised window lintels over a six-over-six-light sash are a common arrangement.

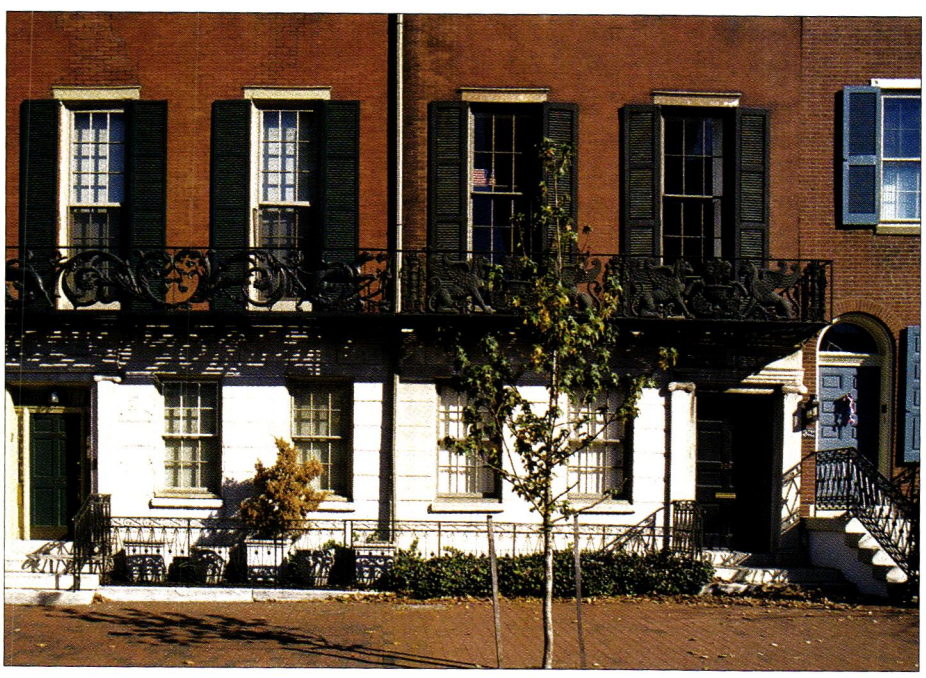


carpenters with access to one or more popular pattern books with Greek Revival building plans and ornament.

Although such houses may be taller in cities, they are generally a modest one to two storeys high. Often constructed of wood, or brick in cities, they frequently display regional hallmarks indicating that they were built in mid-Atlantic, northeastern, midwestern, or southern locales. Yet whatever their form, they are always unmistakably Greek Revival houses.

The Genesis of Greek

Americans began casting about for a national architectural identity as soon as they had convinced themselves and the rest of the Western world that the United States actually was a nation—largely by surviving the War of 1812. Shortly thereafter, world events presented them with a



The 1843 Winder houses in Philadelphia are notable for their ornamental cast-iron balconies, with floor-length windows behind, a common feature of the era.

splendid model for their new building style: the post-and-lintel architecture of the golden age of Greece. Americans connected the Greek war of independence from the Ottoman Empire (1821-1823) with their own recent war of independence from Great Britain; then they tied both struggles to the buildings of Greece's ancient democracy. This conclusion was not entirely logical or universal. Thomas Jefferson, for example, developed his own theories of ancient Roman, or republican, architecture as the one most apt for American buildings. But then what great love affair has ever been based on logic?

Politics and the Monroe Doctrine, which forbade U.S. intervention in foreign affairs, prevented the nation from offering much material support to the Greek revolution. Still, Americans were quick to express their admiration and interest in other ways: through the architecture of their houses and public buildings, for instance, and by attaching Greek names to the new towns and cities popping up across the United States. (Haven't you ever wondered how Ypsilanti, Michigan, founded in 1823, came by its unusual moniker? You guessed it, to honor Demetrios Ypsilanti, a Greek revolutionary.)

At any rate, the idea was not only to separate the new nation from British ideas of monarchy and aristocratic privilege, but also to provide buildings that would encourage democratic and republican ideals among American citizens of all social and economic levels. Public buildings and private homes in the Greek mode seemed to provide the kind of democratic symbolism the new nation craved.

What Makes It Greek?

If it's not columns, what is it that entitles the unpretentious little houses we are discussing here, which sprang up across the country in the wake of expanding settlement between the 1820s and the 1850s, to be considered part of the great Greek Revival movement that is noted for huge and imposing mansions? Rather than focusing on columns, it's more appropriate to look at the following features:

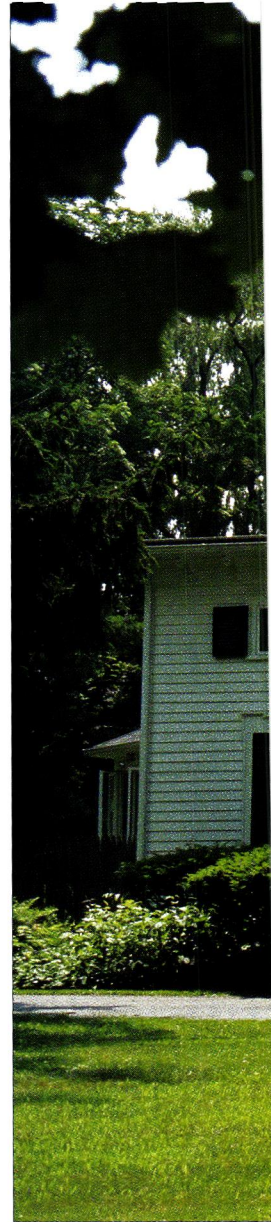
Symmetrical massing and bold proportions. The front façades of ver-

nacular Greek Revival houses tend to be heavysset. They may be broad or narrow, depending on the size of the lots on which they sit, as well as whether they are detached, semi-detached, or row houses. Nonetheless, the massing is invariably symmetrical: a door on the left balanced by one or more windows on the right, for instance, or a center door flanked by identical windows. Additionally, there are few protrusions on the footprint.

Rooflines. Broad, low-sloped roofs are characteristic of Greek Revival houses. Even roofs that appear flat have gentle slopes concealed behind parapets and balustrades, except on entrance porches, which may be truly flat. Square or rectangular cupolas occasionally sprout from the roofs, with windows that may be arched, suggesting a bit of Italianate influence, or pointed, recalling the Gothic. (Remember, American buildings are seldom one style from roof to foundation!)

Pediments. These triangular features associated with the entablature in classical architecture were commonly used in Greek Revival houses, both on front-facing gables or on the gabled ends of simple houses. They could be either full pediments with a defined triangle outlined by a heavy frieze and cornice, or broken pediments with short, straight

Greek and Italianate details are often found in the same design, as here in Rhinebeck, New York. Eyebrow windows, fretwork porch posts, and the doorway's transom and sidelights are all Greek, while the casement windows and wide console cornice are typically Italianate.



A fine marble entry enlivens a plain 1832 brick façade on New York City's Washington Square, home to some original Greek Revival row houses. Doric columns and entablature frame the door, transom, and sidelights, replete with Ionic columns, while marble steps complete the urban composition.

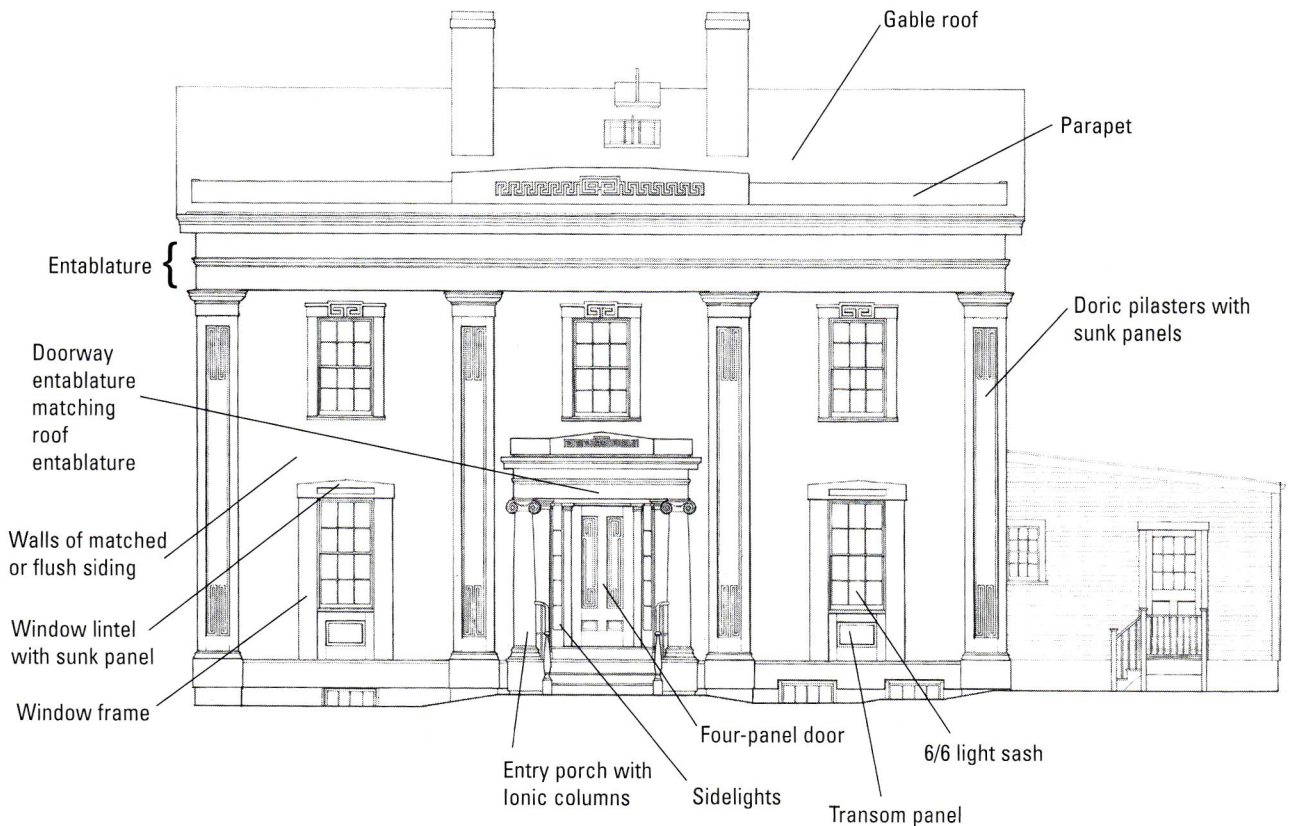




The façade of the 1858 Sanford House at Old World Wisconsin is enriched by corner pilasters and a partial cornice return across the gable, as is characteristic of the style. One-storey side wings with a shallow porch are a common Midwest feature.

Plain Greek Revival Forms and Features

The rich vocabulary of Greek architecture leaves plenty of details for a façade beyond columns, as seen in the 1838 Levi Starbuck House in Nantucket (HABS).



A portico isn't needed for elegance, as this example from Newport, Rhode Island, shows. The pilasters, cornice, and columned entry porch produce a fine house.

returns extending only a few feet across the gable (though not to be confused with the fancy swan's neck broken pediments of the Georgian and Federal styles).

Windows. Look for tall, large windows, either double- or triple-hung, and sometimes floor-length. They may open onto narrow balconies or railings. The windows are usually six-over-six pane, and the panes are somewhat larger than in earlier years (reflecting advances in glass-making technology) while the muntins are narrow. Windows are often framed at the top by rectangular features called labels that extend downward along the sides or by plain lintels, sometimes with decorative corner blocks.

Eyebrow windows (small, horizontally rectangular windows placed high in the frieze under the eaves along the front of



Corner pilasters and a pedimented gable make this small Providence, Rhode Island, corner house somewhat stately. The lunette window in the gable adds to the composition, which is typical of both Federal and Greek Revival houses.

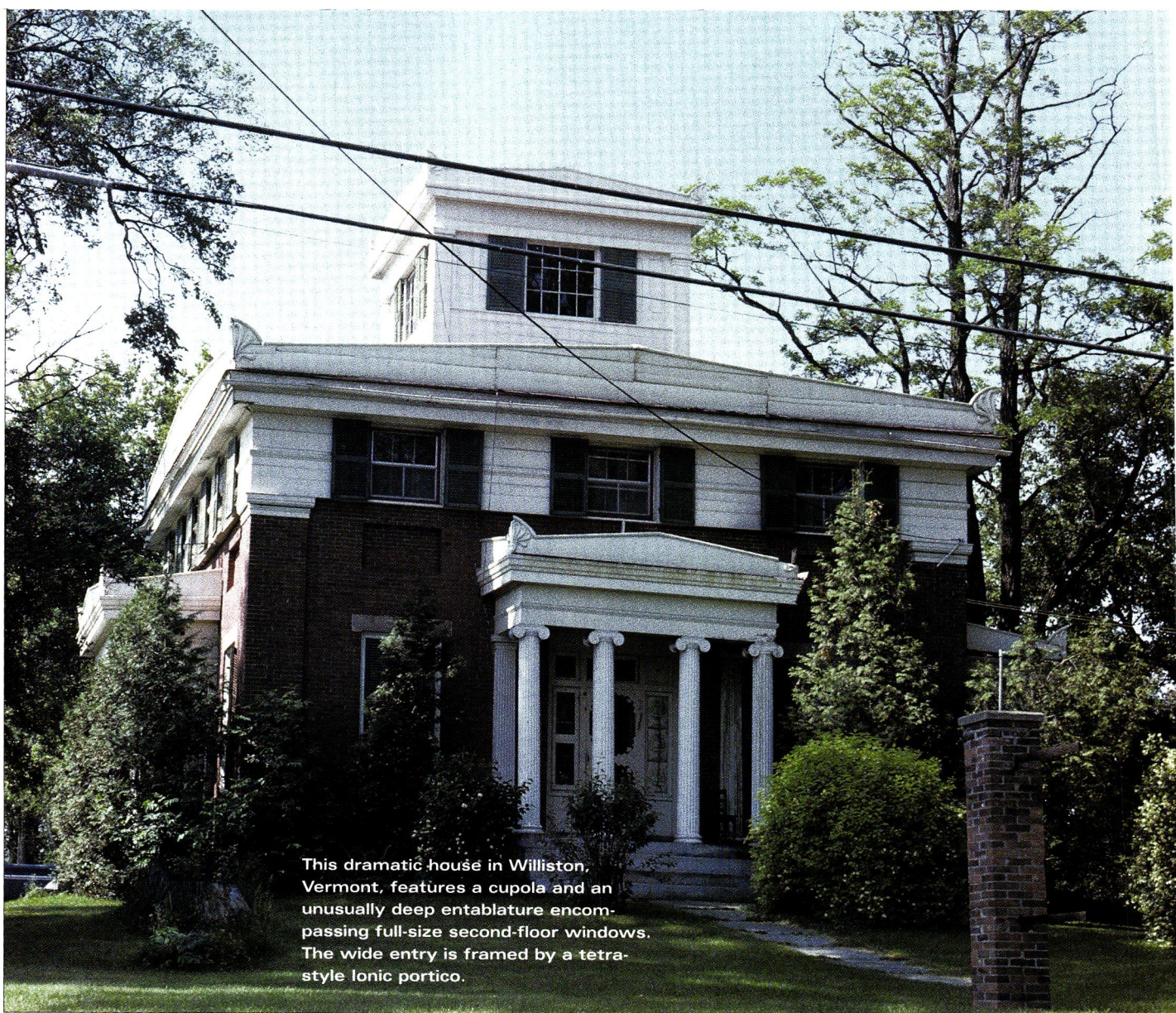
the house) are clear indications of Greek intentions. These windows may be faced with cast-iron ornament or wooden grillwork. Dormers are not as common on Greek Revival houses as on earlier styles, but they do appear. Like the main roof, dormer roofs are most likely to take pedimented gable forms or to be low-arched.

Pilasters. Appearing more frequently than columns in small or vernacular houses are pilasters—shallow, rectangular supports that project at most a few inches from the wall. Pilasters are treated as round and freestanding columns might be, with capitals and bases in a Greek order. Plain pilasters are often paneled but may also be fluted or reeded, with entry porches as the exception (see below). Pilasters may be found at the corners and between bays.

Well-defined entryways. Even in



A plain, square, low-roofed stone Greek Revival in Unadilla, New York, has the entrance on the left side of the façade, usually indicating a side-hall plan within. Construction of the Erie Canal helped carry the Greek fashion westward to Ohio as well as provide skilled masons to build many stone examples along the way.



This dramatic house in Williston, Vermont, features a cupola and an unusually deep entablature encompassing full-size second-floor windows. The wide entry is framed by a tetra-style Ionic portico.



The General Phelps House (circa 1830) in North Colebrook, Connecticut, is boxy, with corner pilasters and a pedimented gable front. In back is an attached stable.

small Greek Revival houses, entryways are well-defined, often with small entry porches. Any columns or freestanding posts are most likely to be found there. Usually, these columns are treated in the Doric or Ionic order. Entry porches may have flat roofs, broad entablatures, and pilasters. Entry steps may be embellished with beautifully designed cast-iron railings, and the steps themselves may be made of cast iron. Doors are paneled and usually flanked by sidelights and elliptical or horizontal, rectangular transoms.

Cornices and friezes. Heavy cornices and deep friezes are ubiquitous in Greek Revival buildings, no matter how small or unpretentious.

Flat wall surfaces with restrained ornament. The average Greek Revival house has relatively little ornament, but what's there is big and bold. Dentils and



PAUL ROCHELEAU

Small eyebrow windows under a low gable in the wing are among the period's most distinctive features. The main block of this Holmdel, New Jersey, house features an Ionic-columned porch across the full width in front.

modillions on the soffits, plus paneled pilasters at the corners of the building, are often robust to the point of chunkiness.

Layout and plan. Greek Revival buildings generally have center-hall or side-hall layouts, sometimes with rear wings. City versions were likely to be built with side-hall plans to compensate for narrow lots.

Distinction from Federal Style

By now, you may be wondering how to tell a Greek Revival house from one built in the preceding Federal style (common until

about 1830), which is also a simple, symmetrical style with flat wall surfaces and restrained classical ornament. The surest clue here is proportion. No matter how large it may be, a Federal-style house tends to appear delicate and slimly proportioned for its size. Conversely, no matter how small and simple a Greek Revival house is, it tends to be, well, assertive.

Until the 1850s, the chief competitor of the Greek Revival style during the mid-19th century was the picturesque Gothic Revival. The ornamental Gothic cottage championed by A. J. Downing (and Alexander Jackson Davis, Downing's favorite architect) for its sharply pointed, non-rectangular, anti-symmetrical outlines was a protest against classical orderliness. The American public, however, was generally too independent-minded to swallow advice whole, so they often found ways to

blend the two ideas. Thus, many a country Greek house has a bit of Gothic tracery in the cast-iron trim on its entry steps or even pointed windows.

The popularity of the Greek Revival style died with the Civil War and was replaced afterward by the exuberantly eclectic styles of the Victorian era. Yet, even today, a myriad of small Greek Revival houses in countless towns, villages, and city neighborhoods continue to remind us how this sturdy architecture became our country's first truly national style. 🏠

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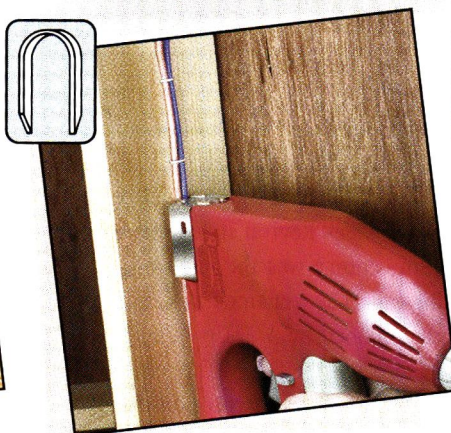
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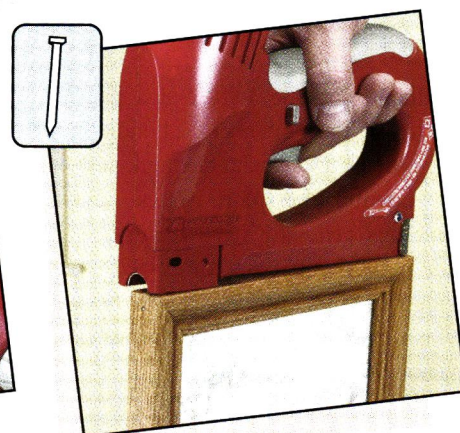
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Canada: Jardel Distributors, Inc., 6505 Metropolitan Blvd. East, Montreal, Quebec H1P 1X9

United Kingdom: Arrow Fastener (U.K) Ltd., Unit 5 ZK Park, 23 Commerce Way, Croydon CR0 4ZS, Surrey

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Old-House Products



Denailer Debut

These days, there are power tools made to install screws in decks and anchors in masonry or steel. However, the task of removing nails, the most common fasteners, has always been a manual operation—until now. The Nail Kicker is a handheld pneumatic tool specifically designed to speed the process of backing nails out of wood so that the lumber can be efficiently reused. Working from the point of the nail, the operator first uses the tool to bend the nail straight and then drive it out of the wood with power from an air compressor by pressing the trigger. The manufacturer estimates that the Nail Kicker is up to four times faster than using a hammer and claw. For more information, visit www.nailkicker.com. Circle 16 on the resource card.



Putting Rust on the Run

If you face removing the rust on cast-iron hinges and other ferrous fittings, check out B-P Metal Cleaner from Bradford Derustit Corp. The concentrated formula, which is harmless to skin and metal, replaces brushing, sanding, and blasting or using harsh chemicals. Instead, soak your hardware in the solution until the rust melts away; then rinse and buff to ready them for oiling or paint. Good for tools and equipment, too, the cleaner prevents further corrosion. For more information, call 877-899-5315, or visit www.derustit.com. Circle 17 on the resource card.

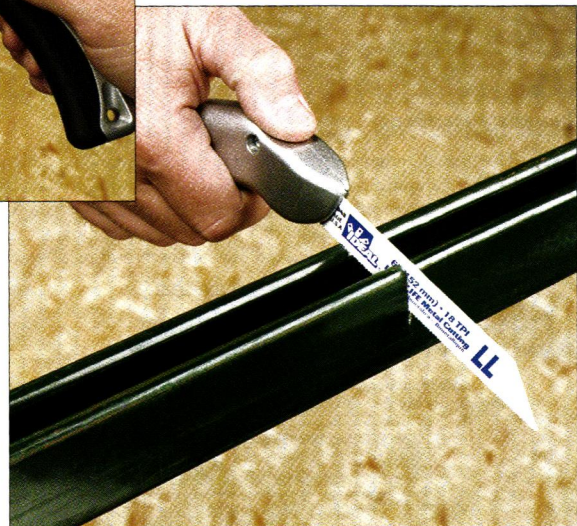


Dream Power Tool

Lest you think that you missed the era of classic corded power tools, you'd better sign up fast for the Chrome Worm Drive Circular Saw from Bosch. Released in October in a limited production run of 15,000 tools, the 7 1/4" saw is a fully functional collectors' edition of the workhorse worm drive design—one of the original portable construction saws and to many minds still the best. Bosch Power Tools is offering the saw with a 15-amp motor and special chrome upper guard in two kit options (one with a 25' extension cord) as long as supplies last. To get on the list, call Bosch at 877-267-2499, or visit www.boschtools.com. Circle 19 on the resource card.

Quick Draw Saw

For years, old-house owners and other handy people have been turning saw blades into slim, impromptu tools by wrapping an end in tape to make a handle. Ideal Industries, Inc., takes this idea to the next level with the Ideal Folding Saw, a heavy-duty, die-cast handle that, when coupled to a blade, extends for use or collapses for storage much like a pocket knife. The Folding Saw accepts all 6" reciprocating saw blades, enabling it to cut building materials such as drywall, lumber, or pipe. A two-position switch on the handle locks the blade in place while a rubber grip adds ergonomic comfort. To learn more about the Folding Saw, call 800-435-0705, or visit www.idealindustries.com. Circle 18 on the resource card.



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Suppliers

Listed below are a number of resources and suppliers for the old-house restorer. For an in-depth compilation of companies serving the old-house market, go to the "Restoration Directory" on oldhousejournal.com.

Atomic Wallpaper, page 52

Charles Rupert
107-401 Garbally Road
Selkirk Waterfront
Victoria, BC V8T 5M3
Canada
(250) 592-4916
www.charlesrupert.com
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Interior 1900
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Sweden
46511 341100
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www.secondhandrose.com
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Centers of Attention, page 64

Ceiling Medallions
Decorators Supply Corp.
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Felber Ornamental Plastering Corp.
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(continued on page 84)



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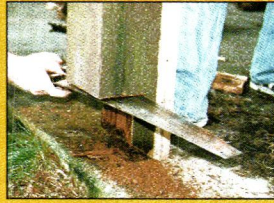
MasterMold 12-8: liquid version of MasterMold 12-3.

AboCast 4-4: liquid moldmaking and casting compound. Machinable.

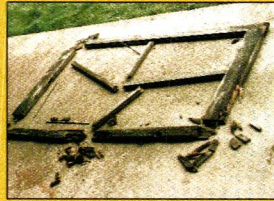
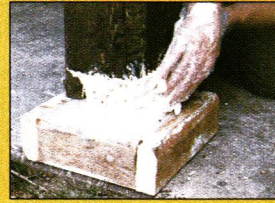
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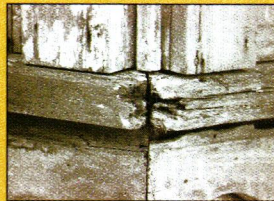
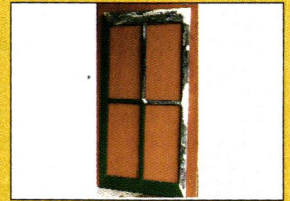
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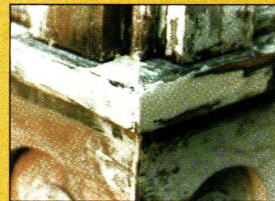
Rotted loadbearing column base sawed off and replaced with **WoodEpoX**.



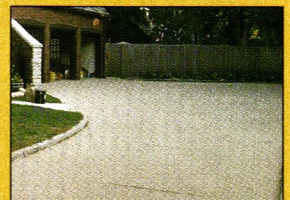
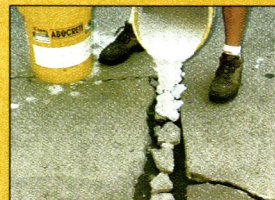
Antique window sash consolidated with **LiquidWood** and rebuilt with **WoodEpoX**.



Consolidation and rebuilding of rotten windowsill with **LiquidWood** and **WoodEpoX**.



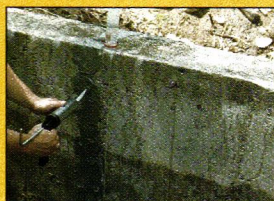
AboCrete is much stronger than concrete and bonds permanently.



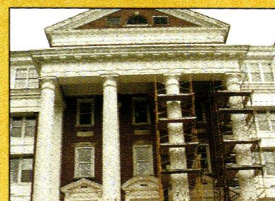
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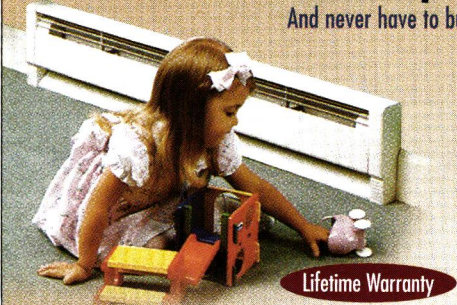
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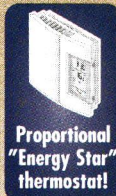
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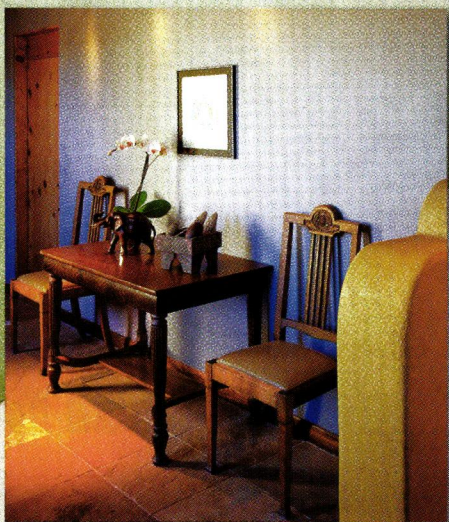
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Dress Rehearsal for the Arts & Crafts, page 38

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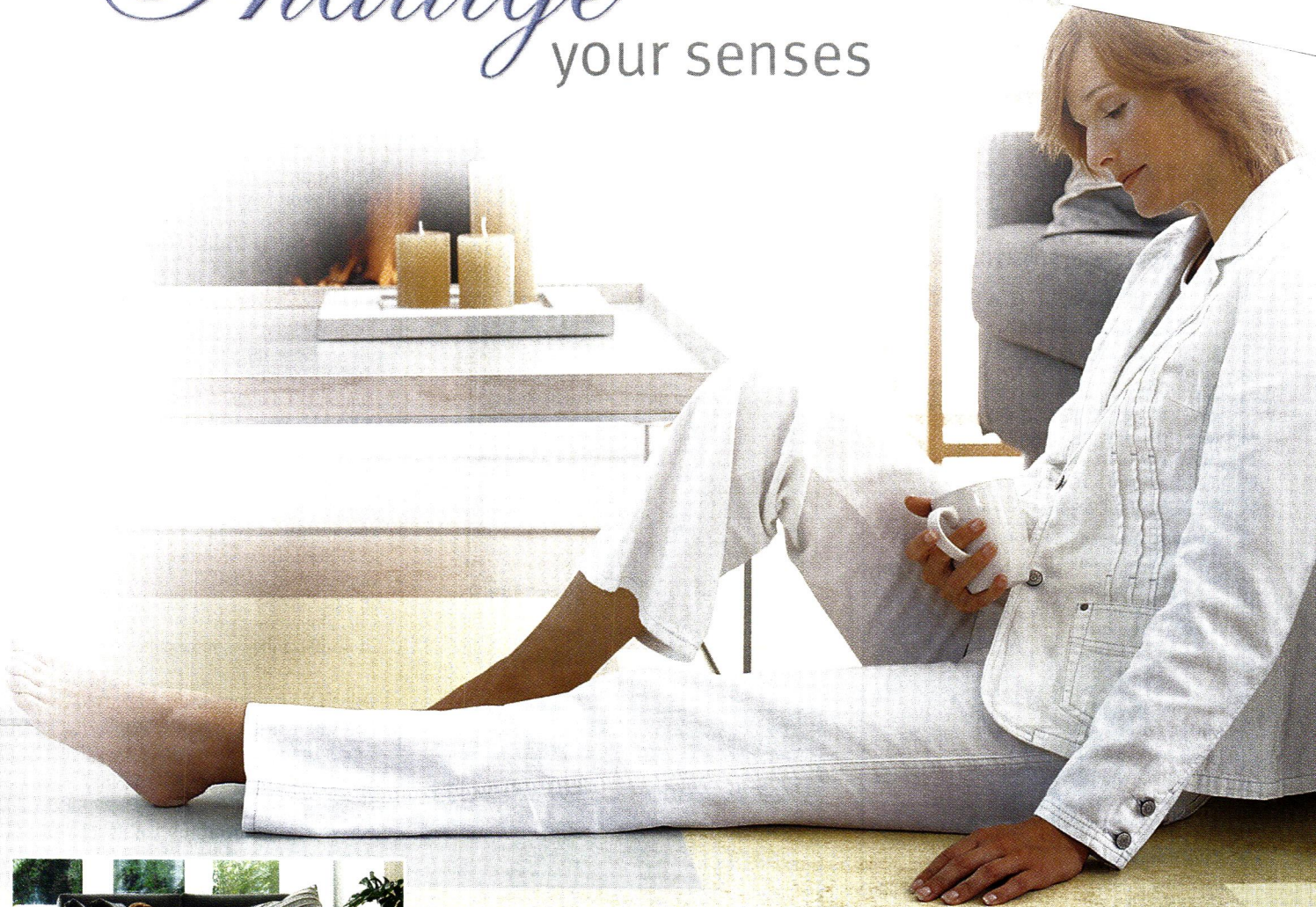
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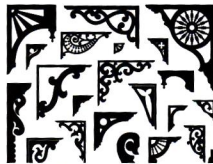
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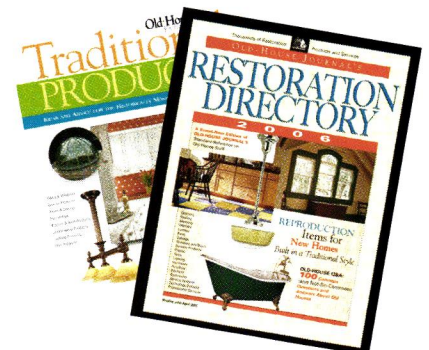
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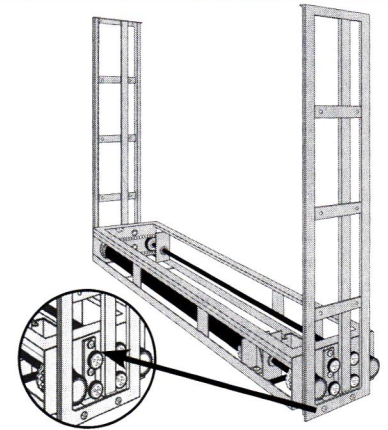
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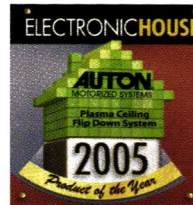


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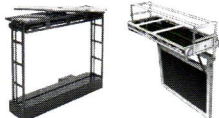
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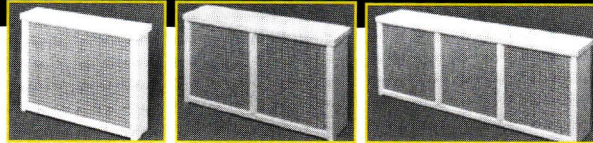
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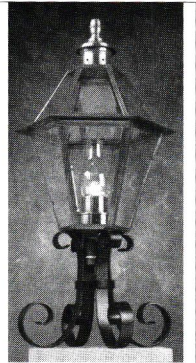
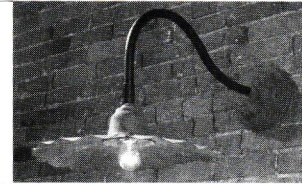
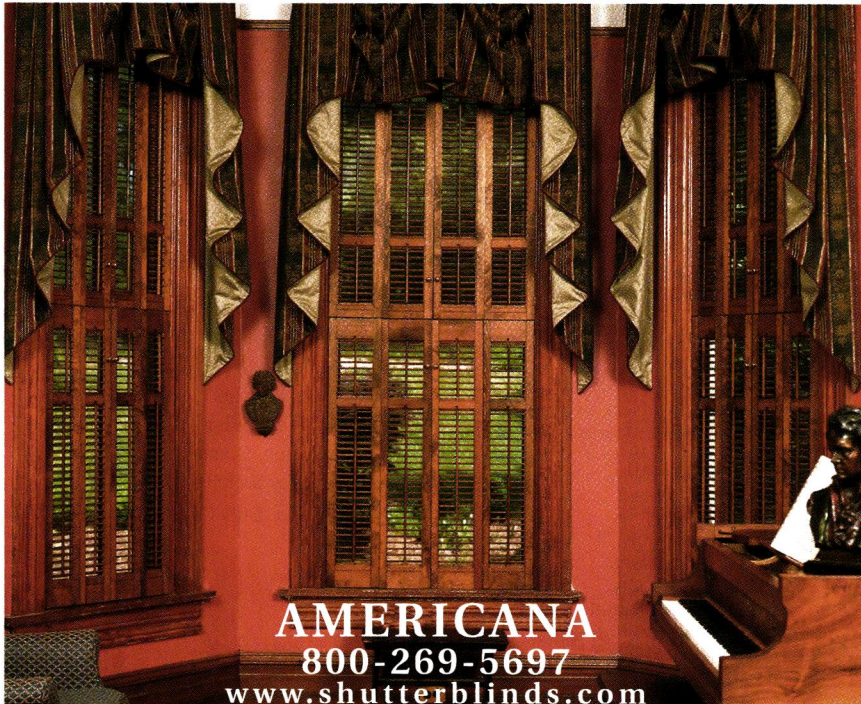
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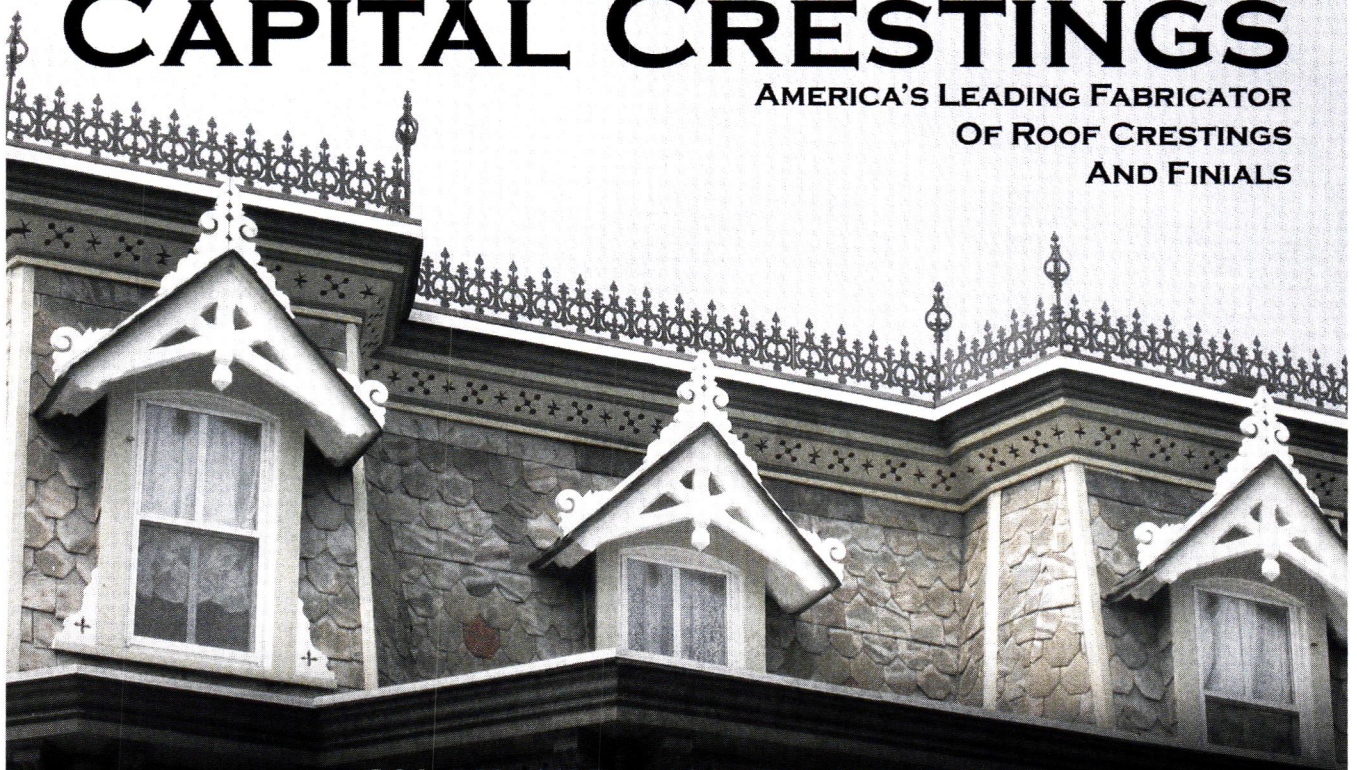
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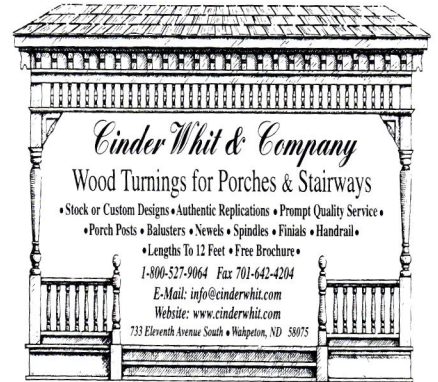
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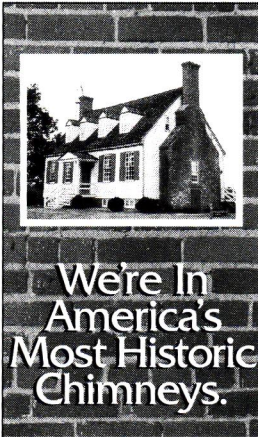
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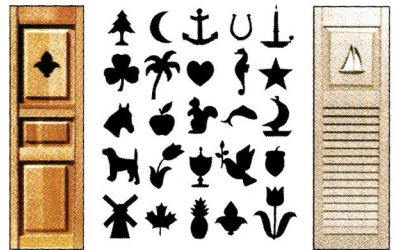
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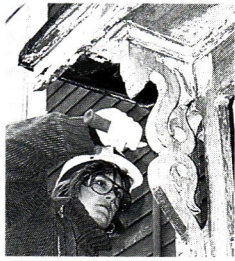
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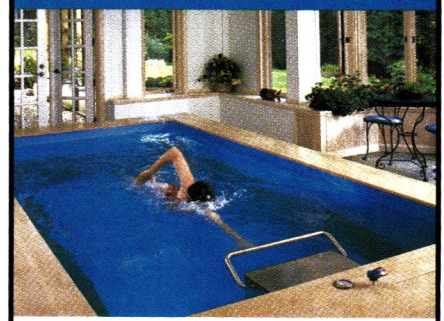
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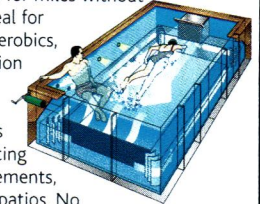
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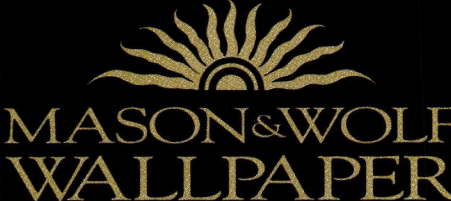
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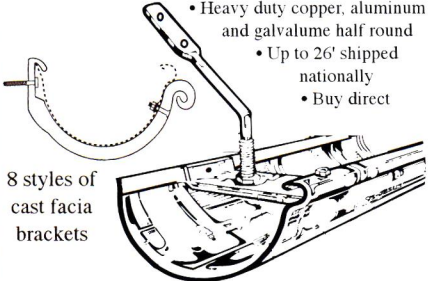
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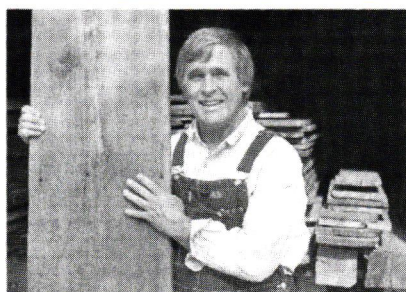
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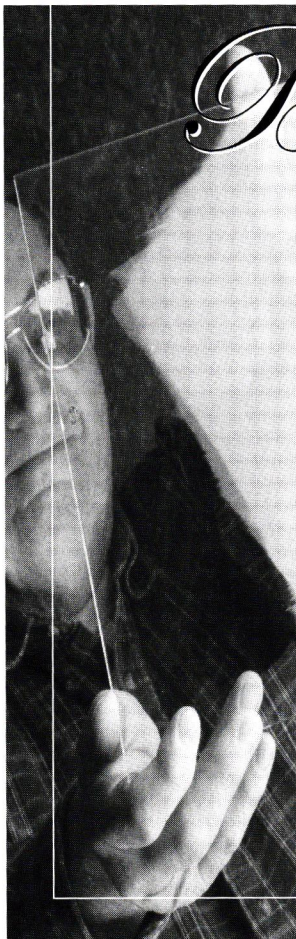

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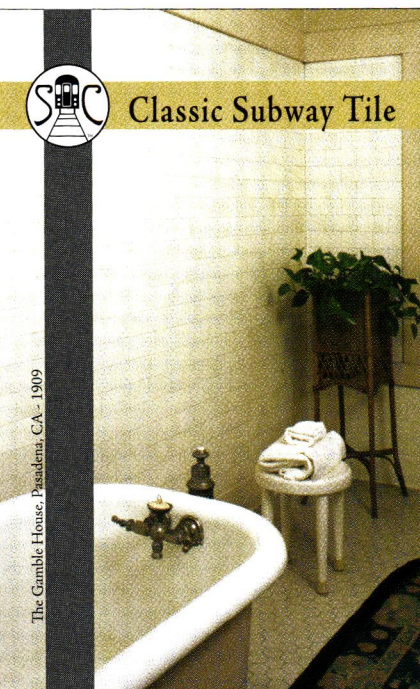
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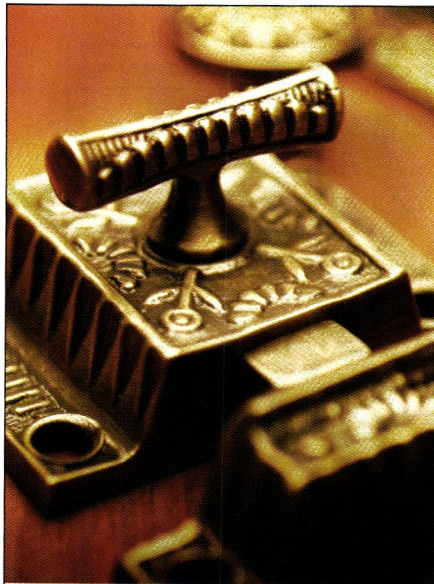
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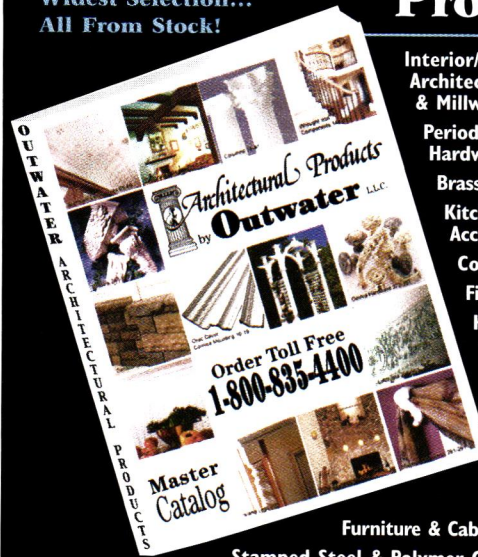
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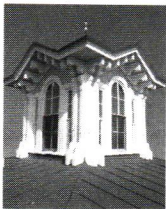
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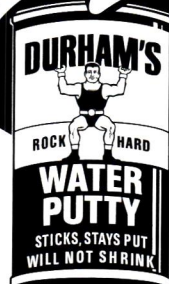
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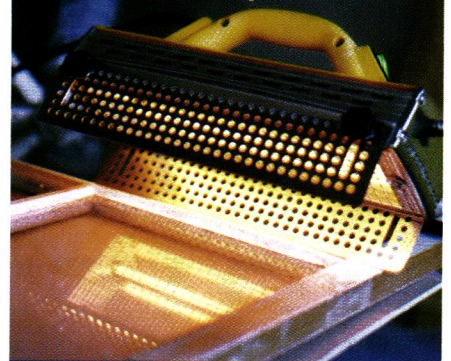
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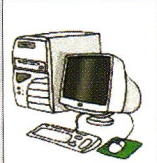
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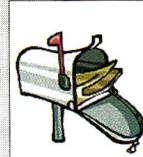
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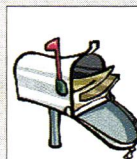
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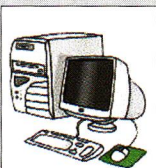
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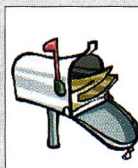
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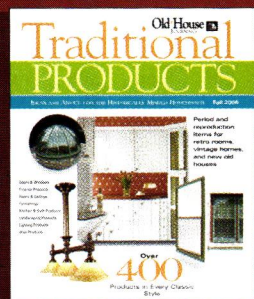
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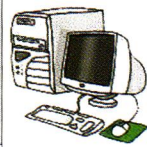
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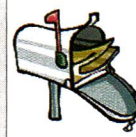
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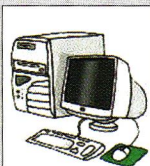
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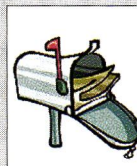
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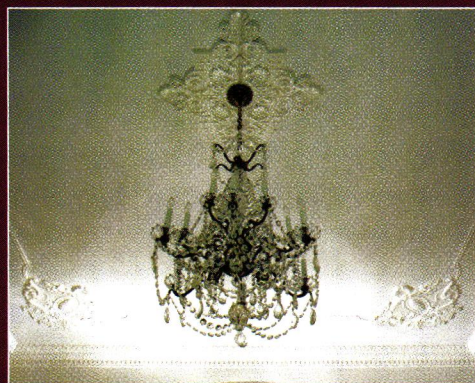
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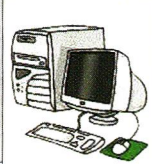
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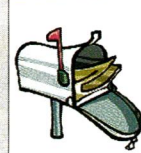
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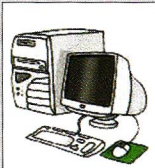
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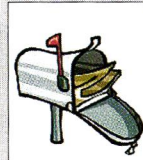
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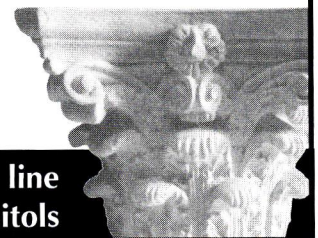
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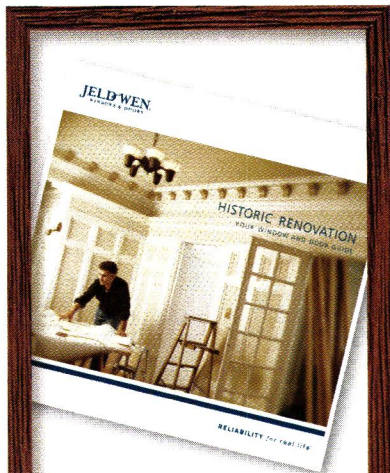
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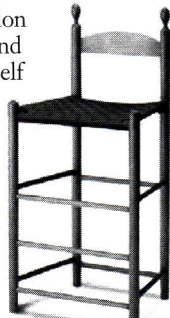
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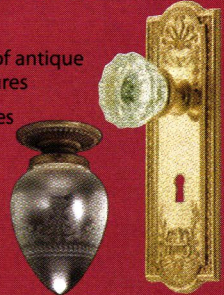
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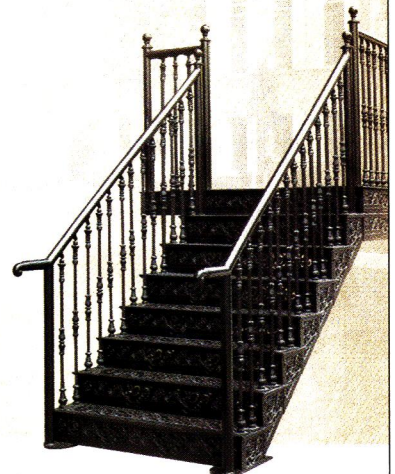
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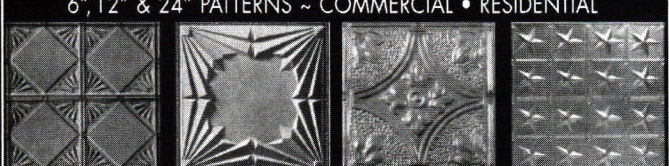
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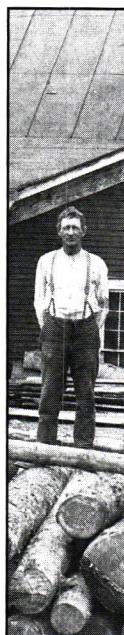
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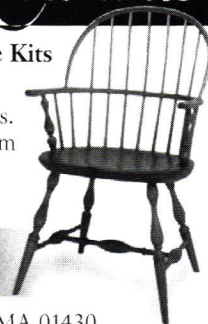
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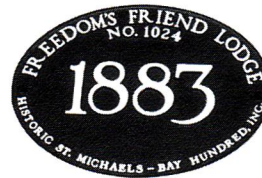
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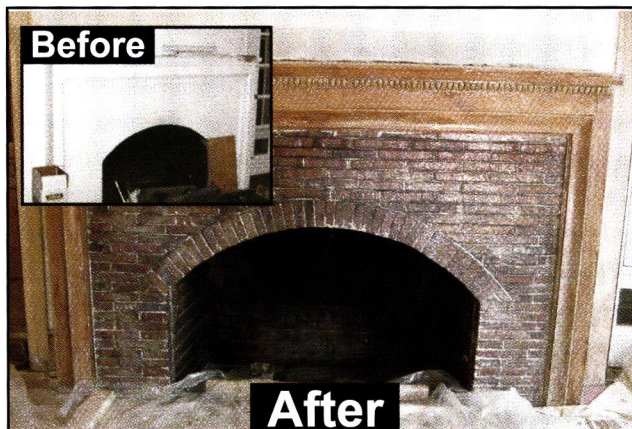
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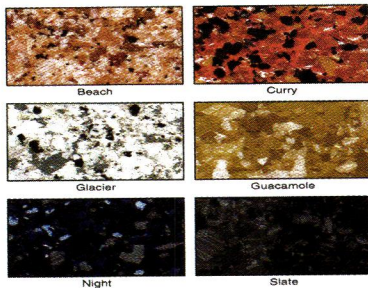
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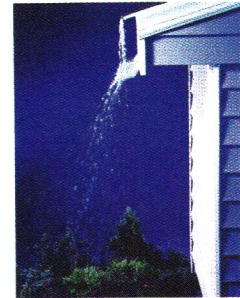
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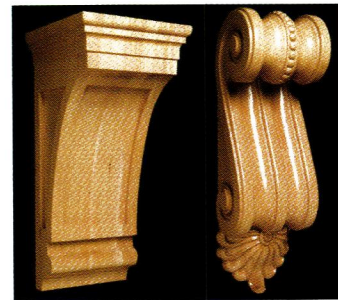
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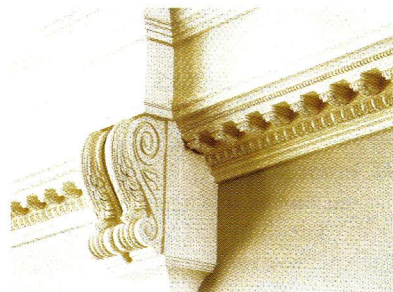
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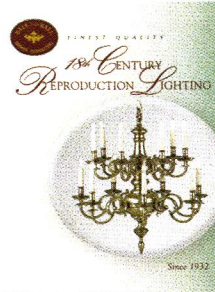
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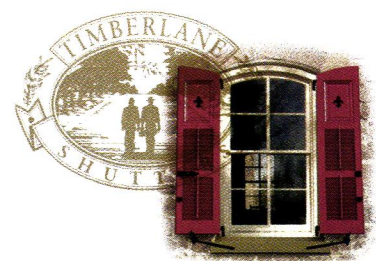
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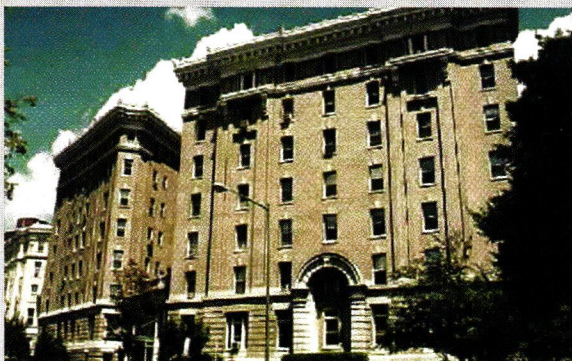
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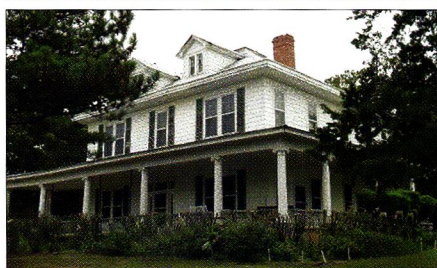
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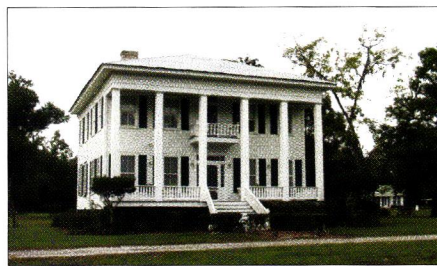


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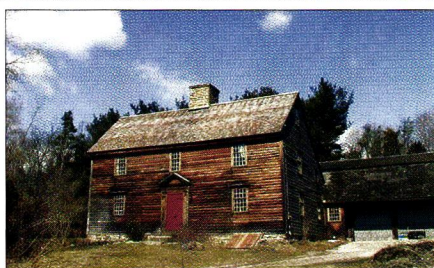


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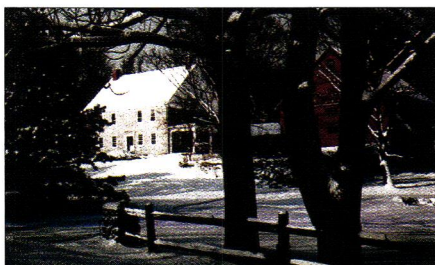


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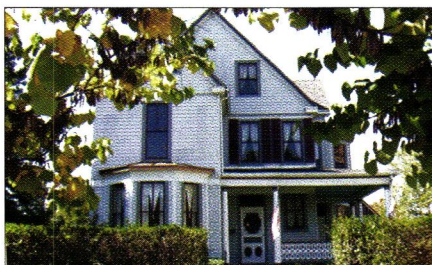
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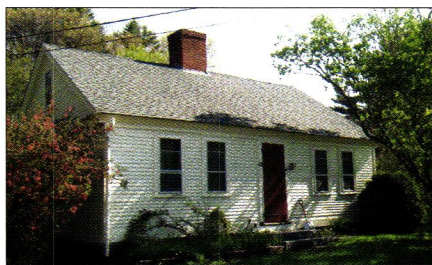
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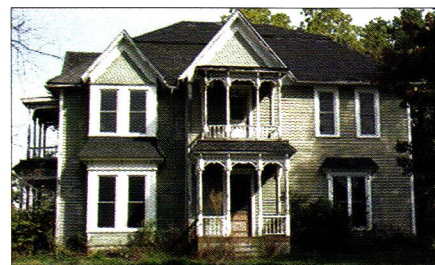
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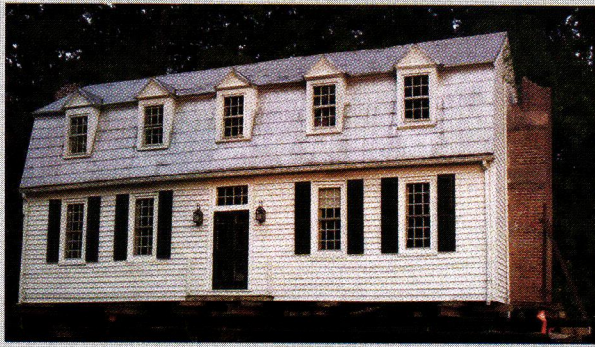
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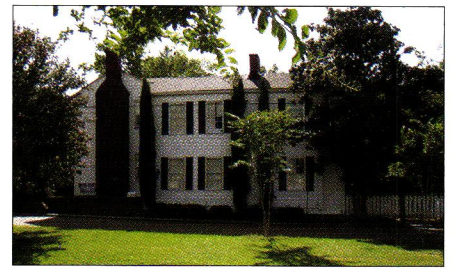
LINNEUS, MO — Ready To Finish - 4 bedroom, 2 bath, Victorian home with some updates already done! Hardwood floors, pocket doors, 10 ft ceilings, basement, 2 verandas and more. On 1 acre. \$62,500. United Country - 1-800-999-1020, Ext 108. www.unitedcountry.com/old

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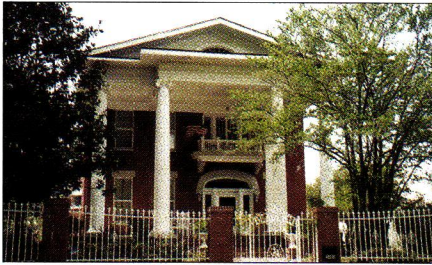
SPOTLIGHT HOUSE



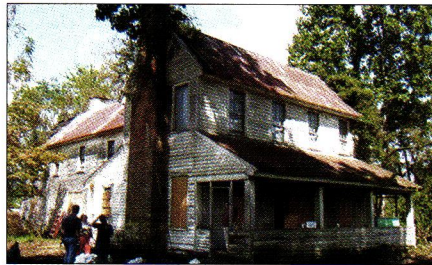
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA — Late 1700s Dutch Colonial saved from demolition by HistoricProperties.com. Purchase it on 10.5 or 16.9 acres, beautiful setting with large pond and woods. Selling at cost! Original moldings, wainscoting, Chippendale staircase, Cross and Bible doors with H and L hinges. Needs foundation, kitchen addition, chimneys rebuilt, septic, water, and mechanicals. Covenants will convey to assure perpetuity of home. Call Sharon Hinson or Marjorie Ellena, 888-507-0501 or 804-387-4903. sharon@historicproperties.com. View more photos and details on HistoricProperties.com.



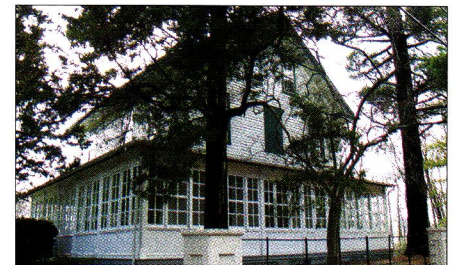
VICKSBURG, MS — Beautifully and completely renovated income producing B&B known as the Governors Inn. Built in 1826, it is one of the oldest homes in Vicksburg. It has 7 guestrooms, 3 are VIP suites and 2 full kitchens. The Lt. McNutt House and a darling antique shop are located on the grounds. Visit LiveInTheSouth.com for more details. Call Jamee Carter, BrokerSouth Properties, 601-218-8200.



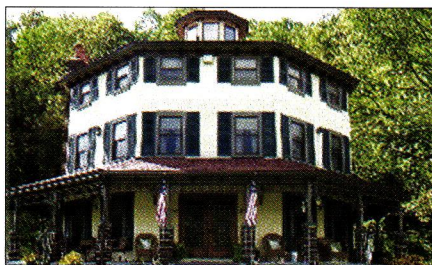
VICKSBURG, MS — An elegant historic home known as the Columns-Beaulieu has been beautifully and lovingly renovated. 6 bedrooms, 5 baths, 5000+ sq.ft, formal dining and living rooms, sunroom, 3 stories w/ balcony. Magnificent ornate brick and iron fencing. It is patterned after the antebellum plantation homes with 6 huge wooden ionic columns gracing the large front portico. \$695,000. Jamee Carter, BrokerSouth Properties, 601-218-8200. Visit LiveInTheSouth.com.



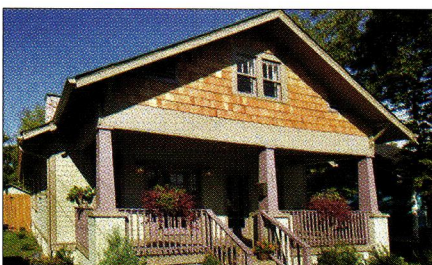
PISGAH FOREST, NC — Elizur Patton House. Early mountain heritage, built around 1846 with large 1860 ell addition. Believed to be second oldest house in Transylvania County. Features unusual interior curvilinear walls. Requires extensive rehabilitation. National Register study list; may be eligible for tax credits. 0.82 acre. 5 minutes from Brevard; one hour from Asheville. \$25,000. Preservation NC, 919-832-1651. View on HistoricProperties.com.



MOUNT LAUREL, NJ — Completely restored, remarkably intact 1850 property w/livability of new construction. Originally a schoolhouse. Home is 3000 sq.ft. - 9 rooms, 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths. New period kitchen and baths, 10-ft ceilings, refinished red pine plank floors, enclosed wrap-around porch. New mechanicals, dual HVAC systems. New 4-5 car carriage barn, large 170 x 175 lot with well house. \$699,000. View on: HistoricProperties.com. 856-866-7409.



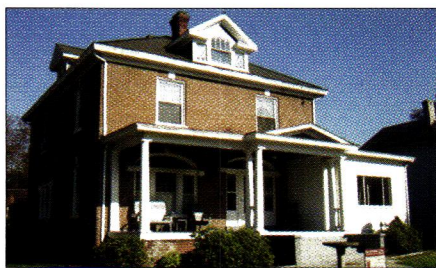
STARRUCCA, PA — 3 Story Fowler-Octagon Home, built 1993, 3500 sq. ft., 5 bedrooms, 3.5 bath, 15 rooms, 2 fireplaces, full basement, central A/C. Detached 1800 sq. ft. 2-Story Gothic carriage house. 50+ acres with pond & stream. Located in N.E. PA. Incredible details and amenities throughout. Visit www.mmpiercy.com for more details and images. \$985,000. Call: 570-253-4191, Peter McGinnis, Chant Realty, Honesdale, PA.



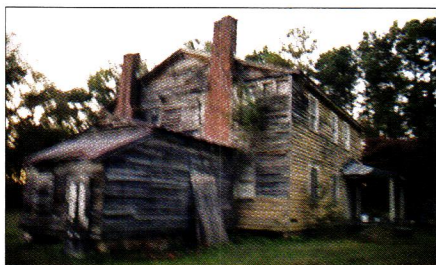
NASHVILLE, TN — 318 S. 11th Street, circa 1920. Adorable cottage with lots of charm. Original wood floors, fireplace, glass doors, formal dining, new granite kitchen with stainless appliances, 3 custom tile baths, large master suite up with slipper tub. Fenced yard with two-car garage, basement too! \$289,900. Karen Hoff, Broker, CRS. Historic and Distinctive Homes, 615-228-3723 ext. 22 or 615-228-4663. www.HistoricTN.com.



NASHVILLE, TN — 1523 Douglas Avenue, circa 1925. Remodeled beautifully top to bottom. Owner finishing up last minute touches right now; granite ordered for kitchen countertops. Spiral staircase to master suite up, refinished hardwood floors, formal dining, tile baths, sunroom or office, warm colors. 1986 sq. ft. with 3 bedrooms. \$244,900. Karen Hoff, Broker, CRS. Historic and Distinctive Homes, 615-228-3723 ext. 22 or 615-228-4663. www.HistoricTN.com.



CREWE, VA — The McSadder Homestead. All brick 3200 sq. ft. Four Square circa 1921 with many original features. 1/3 acre lot on a private cul-de-sac. Four fantail windows and natural woodwork and trim, pocket doors, and hardwood floors. Eat-in kitchen with stainless-steel appliances. Florida room and game room. New HVAC. Large deck, 2 garages. Full basement. \$199,900. Max Sempowski, Realtor, Antique Properties. 434-391-4855. www.oldhouseproperties.com.



GLOUCESTER, VA — "Tippecanoe" circa 1836. Grand Greek Revival waiting to be restored. Has mostly original floors, mantels, doors, wainscoting, and windows. 4 fireplaces. Good roof, grand entry hall, large rooms. Appears structurally sound. 2,800 sq. ft. 5 acres. \$199,000. Dave Johnston, "The Old House Man"® Antique Properties, 804-343-7123 or Barbara Bowen at RE/MAX Select, 804-815-0231.



WARSAW, VA — "Belle Ville" circa 1830 Federal. Elegant, mostly restored brick two-story on English basement. Original paneling, floors, mantels, windows, plaster, etc. High ceilings, large rooms, 3,740 ± sq. ft. 3 baths. 6 relined fireplaces. 2 kitchens. 23.15 acres. Restorable brick office, schoolhouse, smokehouse and garden. 30 X 60 new metal building. \$695,000. Dave Johnston, "The Old House Man"® Antique Properties, 804-343-7123.

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Stick 'Em Up

Like the victims in vintage Western movies, some old houses are forced to reach for the sky. While expansions above the roofline are a popular way to add room these days, in old houses they can open up more than space. Take the third-storey addition on this Folk Victorian house, which stands above the original roofline like a ten-gallon hat, changing the building's proportions. The house's window pattern, once orderly, is now as random as blowing tumbleweeds, and third-storey vertical siding doesn't hitch up with the original clapboard. Even the roofline has been altered, going from gable to shed.

By comparison, the house next door is still a vision from the OK Corral, riding high in its original form. As our contributor notes, "The addition seems an impractical solution for the house's size." Time, perhaps, to circle the wagons. 🐾

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