Paint-Encrusted Plaster Woes

by Clem Labine

If you live in an old house, you know the problem: plaster walls, ceilings, or decorative mouldings that are gloppy with old paint. The thick layers of paint probably obscure the detail in mouldings and cast ornaments. Worse yet, the paint may be cracked, alligatored, or peeling -- leaving a surface that cannot be repainted successfully. What can you do?

The answer is you can live with it, cover it, or strip off the paint. While lots has been written on stripping wood, virtually nothing has appeared in print about stripping plaster. On the following pages we’ll review all of your options when dealing with paint-encrusted plaster.

continued on page 124
Do Opaque Stains Really Work?

A FEW YEARS AGO, opaque exterior stains were being heralded as The Answer to paint peeling problems. Old-house owners who had painstakingly stripped the paint off the house, or who had chronic paint failure, or who lived near the seashore, hoped that opaque stain would provide an appropriate, easily maintained finish that would never again blister, peel, or alligator. The manufacturers even claimed that opaque stains could be applied over existing paint!

WE'VE NEVER SEEN an unbiased report on the effectiveness of opaque stains -- but rumor has it that some users are disillusioned. We've heard complaints of poor coverage, chalking, and short life on the building. Still, opaque stains do offer an appealing alternative to paint in some cases.

WE'D LIKE to publish more than rumors. We're especially interested in your response if you applied an opaque stain two or more years ago. If you've used an opaque stain, you're our only source of good information -- so please take a moment to reply.

YOU CAN Xerox this page or write your answers on another piece of paper. Send to Patricia Poore, OHJ, 69A Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11217. Thanks!

OPAQUE STAIN SURVEY

1. Your exterior opaque stain has been exposed to how many years of weathering? ______ years

2. Over what surface was it applied?

- Preservative-treated wood
- Stripped wood
- Stained wood
- Painted wood

3. How was surface prepared before application of stain?

4. What stain did you use?

(brand) (color)

5. What is your best estimate of the time between re-applications? ______ years

6. Are you happy with the overall performance of the stain? Yes No

7. Other comments about current condition:

8. Name & address (optional)
I MADE UP MY MIND that, as I was lucky enough to land a lacy old Victorian house, I would carry out all the house fantasies I'd ever conjured. One of these middle-class dreams of grandeur was to have a real wall-painted mural. It seemed a natural avenue to pursue, with my Washington mania being the basis of what was to be the decor in this Victorian manse.

NOT LONG AFTER we'd taken occupancy of our 1891 Victorian home in Santa Clara, Cal., I realized that I'd have problems displaying my collection of George Washington memorabilia. You see, I've been at this collection for more than 25 years, and you can't imagine the amount of visual materials I've acquired.

TAKING INVENTORY, I noticed that my rooms were plentiful but lacking in wall space. Victorian architecture so often means rooms chopped up by doors, windows, architectural shapes, more doors, cabinets, and still more doors. I felt that these broken wall spaces needed more than just picture groupings and mirrors or plaques to give them interest. (And having steamed at least a million miles of wallpaper in my day, I can tell you that more paper was not in my plans for the house!)

WELL, IN MURAL SELECTION you live and learn, just as you must with everything else. The first muralist we called in for an estimate arrived with both an agent and an insatiable taste for red wine. He assessed that he could do the central hall and up the hallway walls for only $11,000. After I recovered my denticles from the floor and offered solace to my partner (who was sinking fast), we smiled bravely and said we'd think it over. We did
Also, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, could they paint us in as members of the crew... just for fun? They said they'd think it over.

WE NERVOUSLY AWAITED their reply (although we'd been hardened by our first visitor and his $11,000 'bargain'). They called the next day and said they'd do it for $350! We made no effort to conceal our glee, and of course accepted. They used a projector to throw the painting outline on the wall, and then added in the remainder of the detailing. They did a great job on our very first mural... and they gave us the insatiable need for MORE!

I "NEEDED" to have the walls in our dining room painted as though the room were a forest. Victorian rooms often had themes, and I saw no reason for us not to follow suit (although I was going to be generous and keep Washington out of that room). Earlier we'd met Paul

so over many martinis, and realized that if murals were to be the ticket, we had to find a starving artist.

STARVING ARTISTS, we discovered, painted things we weren't starving to see. Their forte seemed to be trees that looked as though they should be painted on ties. "Deeper" subjects included lonely barns, lonely glens, lonely houses, and very lonely seascapes. But I wasn't discouraged. I'm a firm believer that wanting something badly enough can make it happen, so I began wanting something badly enough to make it happen.

WE FOUND TWO FELLOWS, Herrick Tam and Peter Lee. They had graphic arts backgrounds and were interested in doing a little moonlighting. We met with them and showed them the wall space under the stairwell, explaining that we'd like to have painted there a rendition of the famous Leutze painting, "Washington Crossing the Delaware." Also, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, could they paint us in as members of the crew... just for fun? They said they'd think it over.

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Lee, a young artist who'd already proven his enormous abilities with tapestry work. He did one for me of Washington at Valley Forge; it measures 3 ft. by 5 ft. and is a combination of crocheting and embroidery. I asked him if he knew any artists who could do some additional murals for us. He couldn't think of anyone, so I decided to turn my attention to other restoration priorities.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER our young friend called us and said he'd like to try the murals himself. We were delighted and trusted his abilities right off. In no time he created a forest motif that worked in its entirety almost. One corner with a fireplace on it had been "restored" using a mantelpiece that really didn't make it in the room. We were faced with the problem of what to paint in the space left by the mantel. After a few unsatisfactory experiments, my penchant for Washington won out, and I declared I wanted an event from his life painted there. (After all, he was a great outdoorsman.)

WE FOUND AN OLD ENGRAVING of Washington rafting on a Pennsylvania river during one of his first adventures inland with scout Christopher Gist. Once again we employed the projection method to lay out the mural, but this time it was used more casually as the artist did most of his own painting. The final result is a perfect solution to a problem corner, enhancing the forest scene with some live action, instead of just sticking with four walls of landscape.

THE MURALIST was still in the mood to create. (Always be willing when your artist wants to paint; he may not be there the next time!) We still had some areas that deserved special attention, including the stairwell, with a space about 6 ft. wide by 14 ft. high. I wanted a scene that would work from the perspectives of both the main-floor entry hall and the upstairs landing. We found just what we needed in a travel magazine: a picture of

Taking his cue from General Washington, the author decides to tickle the ivories himself. As the forest scene over his head indicates, this is the room highlighted by the painting of Washington and Gist seen above.

Why have just a window when you can have Washington? Especially when the representation can be as elegant and detailed as this stained glass portrait of the General at Valley Forge.
Native Americans looking down into a valley where, off in the distance, settlers were coming in covered wagons (something with both live action and trees!).

WE PUT UP three layers of scaffolding in that hallway so our muralist could walk around at different heights as he painted. For months we had to squeeze past this scaffolding, but the sacrifice was worth it; we now have a spectacular mural that brings the out-of-doors to an otherwise flat hallway space.

ONE WALL is a full eight feet long, uninterrupted (except for one door, of course). It's in the front parlour, the place for special company in Victorian days. It is to remain special as the main "Washington Gallery" (or, more simply, the room in which I'll place most of my Washington stuff!). On this wall we used a scene from Washington's life, depicting him at his headquarters at Valley Forge. The occasion is a visit from Martha Washington. The mural works so well that when you first enter the room, you really feel that George and Martha only just preceded you.

THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER little personal instances I could relate -- but I'll save those for my memoirs. Mostly, I wanted with this treatise to give you confidence in trying other alternatives to the sometimes boring options of what to do with the matter of wall coverings. Murals don't have to be a luxury belonging to only the idle rich. All of the work we had done -- four major murals covering many, many square feet of wall space -- cost us under $2000. I think this is a miracle.

YOU CAN WORK the same kind of miracle if you want it badly enough. We should all use our wildest imaginations when we are creating (or recreating) our respective castles, and it can still be done on a budget. There's nothing painted on our old walls that couldn't have been painted in 1891, had the original occupant been a Washington buff (or any other sort of a buff) who aspired to have scenes on his walls to help make his day. So, when in the course of human events you are looking for more wall space ... the sky is the limit and your wildest dreams can provide the canvas.
Rebuilding Cellar Stairs

by Jonathan Poore and Patricia Poore

Stair Consultant: Harry Waldemar

Dilapidated cellar stairs are a universal old-house problem, yet the job always ends up at the bottom of the priority list. Too bad, because safety is of the utmost importance -- cellar stairs are usually narrow, steep, poorly lit, and used for carrying heavy or bulky items to and from the cellar. The most obvious safety hazards are broken or missing treads. More insidious, though, is a stair with unequal treads or risers resulting from years of ad-hoc repairs. The stairs look normal and may appear safe to walk on, but treads and risers of different dimensions can make you trip. In many cases, rebuilding the entire stair is the only way to make it safe and easy to use.

By "cellar stair," we mean the simplest kind of stair, having closed strings and open risers. (See the drawing above.) If the stair is wider than 2 ft. 8 in., there is a cut center carriage. Treads may be fastened to the strings with cleats, or the strings may be housed (preferred). Basic layout instructions given in this article can be applied to other straight-run stairs, as well.

The first rule in stairbuilding is that all the treads must be of equal depth, and the rise between steps must be equal. The second rule is that the treads (run) and rise should fall within certain size limits:

Rise: 6-5/8 to 7-3/4 inches
Tread: 9 to 12 in. run, plus 1 to 1 1/2 in. nosing

The exact rise and run are determined by the amount of space available for the stair. The rise is found by equally subdividing the cellar floor-to-first floor height into a rise that falls within the allowable limits. The run is determined by subdividing the available horizontal length of space into a run that falls within the allowable limits. It is also necessary to maintain 7 ft. head clearance.

If head clearance is a problem, it may be necessary to make the stair run shorter. However, it's always preferable to make the stair opening larger rather than making the stair steeper.

The individual run for each step is found by dividing the overall run by the number of treads. Normally, for ease of measurement and layout, the individual run is rounded off to the nearest 1/4 inch. This then increases or decreases the overall run accordingly. (That usually presents no problem; the bottom step will merely move an inch or two one way or the other.)
THE INDIVIDUAL RISE, on the other hand, is a fixed number which may not be rounded off. This is because the floor-to-floor height is a fixed, unchangeable dimension.

ANOTHER consideration in the layout is whether the top and bottom landings are level. If the cellar floor slopes, that may affect the overall rise. If the floor is out of level, measure the floor-to-floor height at the bottom of the stair to get the critical dimension.

WITH OVERALL rise and run established, as well as individual tread and riser dimensions, next make a story rod. (Note: Square up the stairwell opening before doing any layout.) To make the story rod, cut a piece of 1½ x 1¾-in. dressed stock slightly longer than the floor-to-floor height. Stand the rod up in the well so that it's plumb and mark the floor-to-floor height on the rod. Then divide the rod into equal parts corresponding to the number of risers. (14 equal parts for 14 risers) This can be done using a pair of dividers: Figure it to the fraction of the inch mathematically, then use dividers to make the divisions exactly even. Marking out the story rod in this way gives the exact dimensions required. Now number each rise from the bottom, as shown.

A STORY ROD is important because the riser dimensions must fit into an existing floor-to-floor dimension. The overall run dimension is not critical unless the stair must fit into a confined, pre-existing space -- not likely in the cellar. Most of the old stairbuilding books, therefore, say a "run rod" is rarely necessary for a simple stair.

The Pitchboard

THOUGH A SIMPLE cellar stair may have open risers and plain closed strings, it's always best to house the strings for the treads. It is possible to mount the treads on wood cleats, but inserting them in housings is a better practice and really doesn't take much more work. Cleats always seem to loosen up over time.

A PITCHBOARD comes in handy to mark out the housings on the strings. It can be made of any rigid, dimensionally stable material, such as plywood. The actual riser dimension is taken from the story rod, and the run dimension (rounded to the nearest ¼-in.) is used to find the other leg of the triangle. The hypotenuse gives you the "step length." Multiplied by the number of risers, this gives the minimal length of the string (allow some additional for waste). Mark "rise" and "run" on one side of the pitchboard.

THE PITCHBOARD is used with a wood gauge, which is slid against the top edge of the string to maintain an even margin during layout. There are other methods for laying out strings, but the pitchboard requires no special equipment or tools to make. Professional stairbuilders also prefer to use a pitchboard because it's so versatile. It can be used as a square and a gauge to mark out and assemble other elements of the stair, including handrail.

Laying Out The Strings

USE 2x10 (that's 1½ x 9-1/4 actual) planks for the strings; a spruce scaffold plank ensures strength. Get lumber dressed on two faces only. Use two-inch material for lateral stability. Note: one edge of the plank should be jointed (made straight and true) so there is a straight edge to mark against. For a closed string, join the top edge to maintain an even top margin (the
visible margin). Run one edge through a jointer, or true the edge with a jointer plane.

MAKE A TRIAL layout to determine appropriate margin width. This margin is most often dictated by visual design requirements of the stair; just be sure to allow room for the nosing projection. Layout should also be shifted along the length of the plank to minimize the number of knots that will show.

TO LAY OUT the string, start at the top and work towards the bottom. It's best to leave a two-inch overhang at the top to bear on the landing header. Mark out the rise and run, then mark the starting point for the next step (as shown in the photo below). Repeat for each step. Sketch one nosing onto the layout for orientation, so the string doesn't get routed upside down.

MARK THE OPPOSITE STRING in the same fashion, but be sure to flip the pitchboard over so you get a mirror image of the first string. (This gives you a right-hand and a left-hand string.) Having written "rise" and "run" on only one side of the pitchboard aids in this orientation. Now check the two strings against one another by marking corresponding lines on the strings with a square, to see if they align. Do this BEFORE routing!

Routing The Strings

REMEMBER, a cellar stair has open risers, so no wedges are used in the housings. You can use a single homemade "template" for routing the tread thickness into the housings. The template consists of a board with a slot cut in it (for the tread) wide enough to compensate for the collar width on the router.

THEREFORE, add two "collar widths" to the tread thickness to determine how wide you should actually make the slot in the template. (See photos on the next page.)

THE TREAD should fit snugly in the slot. Try out the template on a piece of scrap before using it on the actual string. Clamp the string to the bench. Mark the nosing length inside the template slot. Clamp, nail, or screw the template in position so that the nosing mark lines up with the rise line. This is so that the full depth of the tread -- run plus nosing -- gets routed into the string. Try to keep the screws or nails in to-be-hidden parts of the stair stringer.

THE TOP of the template slot should be placed along the run line. When the string is routed, the slot will be one collar width off the mark. Each step is done the same way, however,
so every step gets shifted the same amount. The individual and overall rise and run remain the same. Therefore, subtract a collar width from the top of the string, and add a collar width to the bottom of the string.

A WAY TO AVOID confusion with collar-width shifting is to make a spacer block which is one "collar width" thick. Offset the template (from the mark) with the spacer. This conveniently compensates for the collar-width shift. Again, mark the nosing length on the template. For each cut, align the mark with the riser line. This assures that every nosing will overhang equally. The depth of the groove cut by the router should be 7/16 to 5/8 in. depending upon the actual thickness of the material (1-1/8 to 2 in.).

We've placed the template and a tread on the router to show why the slot must be wider than a tread; to compensate for the router collar, which keeps the bit from going to the edges of the slot.

Because no spacer was used, the routed housing falls one router-collar width below the run line — which presents no problem as long as the stairbuilder remembers to compensate, shifting the registration downward on string by the width of the collar.

A registration mark inside the slot represents the nosing length. The slot is aligned with the run (tread) line, and the rise line on the string is aligned with the nosing registration mark. (We're not using a spacer block; see text above.)

The string is clamped to the bench and the template is screwed to the string. Now set the router to the right depth of cut and go to it!
An Alternate Method

THE METHOD of laying out the strings described so far assumes the use of a router to cut the housings into the string. It is possible to make a housed-string stair without the use of a router. The layout must be modified slightly, although all of the same principles are followed.

INSTEAD of leaving a margin between the edge of the string and the housing, the housing is cut from one edge of the string to the other. This way, the housings can be cut with a portable circular saw and finished up with a chisel.

THE EASIEST WAY to lay out this type of string is to allow the nosing to project beyond the edge of the string.

TREADS should be clear 5/4-in. stock. Tack nail a few treads in place after assembling the entire stair, and test fit the stair in its well. If everything fits, is level, and all the risers are equal in height, then finish nailing the steps.

THE STAIR STRINGERS should be toenailed to a structurally sound header at the top, and secured to the floor at the bottom. Since we are talking about cellar stairs, most floors will be concrete, in which case lead anchors should be set into the floor for secure fastening. If the floor is dirt, pour a concrete pad and fasten with lead anchors.

IF THE STAIR has one or both strings against a wall, it’s not necessary to anchor it to the floor. Fasten securely to the wall instead. For a wood-framed wall, simply nail through the string. If the sidewall is rubble stone, attach wood blocking to the wall, then secure the wall string to the blocking.

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FINALLY, for safety, the top landing should have the same nosing projection as the stairs. This may mean adding a nosing to the landing.

THIS TYPE of string is laid out by running the pitchboard along the edge of the string. Tack or clamp a wood guide string to the edge of the string to be sure that the pitchboard is always aligned with the edge of the string.

TO CUT the housings into the string, set the circular saw to the proper depth of the housing and make several passes, being careful not to cut the housing too wide. Use a chisel to clean up the housing.

Assembly

IT IS ALWAYS easier to pre-assemble the stair if there is room to maneuver the completed stair into position. The stair can be laid on its side and assembled. Make sure each step fits snugly into its housing. If it's loose, shim the step with solid blocking, cut to fit the gap. (DO NOT use wood shingles as shims, because they will crush in a short time under these conditions.)

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AN ALL-SEASON SCREEN DOOR FOR POST-VICTORIAN HOUSES

by Walter Jowers

THE FIRST TIME I saw my 1923 bungalow, two aluminum storm doors stared down from the entrance. And the first time I walked into the house, one of the storm door handles broke off in my hand. Worse yet, these cheap, flimsy aluminum doors covered a pair of elegant French doors. Aluminum is fine for jet bodies and horse trailers, but I didn't want it on my house. The storm doors had to go.

AFTER REMOVING the storm doors and their frames, I uncovered hinge mortises in the outside edge of the door jamb; these mortises indicated that the house had a pair of double screen doors in front. Screen doors are particularly desirable here in Tennessee—every spring breeze carries the scent of lilac, honeysuckle, and mock orange. And any relief from the summer's humidity is welcome.

I DECIDED that the house should have screen doors again, but didn't know what a 1920s screen door looked like. So I explored my neighborhood (where almost all the houses were built between 1908 and 1930) for some authentic screen doors. I spotted several and was surprised to see one basic pattern repeated frequently. I was even more surprised when I came upon a neighborhood house that had four of these now familiar doors stacked on its front porch. This house had aluminum storm doors like mine, and I thought surely the owner was planning to remove the aluminum doors and install the screen doors.

BUT the exact opposite was true: The owner had only recently installed the aluminum doors, and was glad to sell me the old screen doors. Not everyone will be this lucky, but there are discarded screen doors around in basements and attics. Homeowners who have "enriched" their facades with aluminum are good sources for them.

MY ANTIQUE DOORS (circa 1910) needed a lot of work. The many layers of cracked paint had to be removed; the screens were rusty, rotten, and useless; the ornamental metal push guards needed to be scraped and painted.

GETTING THE PAINT OFF the doors was not easy. I tried a chemical stripper, but it could not remove the original primer coat from the poplar wood. While poplar is considered a hardwood, it is still soft enough to completely absorb seventy-year-old primer. I tried a heat gun and got somewhat better results, but even the heat gun couldn't separate all the primer from the poplar. Until this point, I had been debating whether to stain the doors or paint them. The tenacity of the primer settled this question—I would have to paint.

I PRIMED THE DOORS with oil-based primer, then applied a latex topcoat. I wirebrushed the guards, applied a coat of red iron oxide metal primer, and then topcoated the guards in their original gloss black color.

NEXT came the selection of new screen fabric. Local suppliers had a broad array: aluminum screen, coated aluminum screen (black), fiberglass screen (black), and bronze screen. I chose bronze for several reasons. First of all, I didn't want black screen. Second, bronze wire is much more durable than aluminum wire (piano strings are wound with bronze wire), so it can withstand the abuse of children, pets, and do-

![Diagram of screen door joinery](image)

Left: Basic joinery for a wooden screen door. Anyone with moderate carpentry skills should be able to construct a mortise and tenon joint.

Above: Four traditional styles of push guards. These push guards are ornamental and also help protect the screening from abuse by animals, children, and raging adult tempers. They are suitable for most any post-Victorian home.
it-yourself installation. Though bronze screen costs about two-and-a-half times as much as the cheapest aluminum, it is worth the extra expense. Anyone who is going to the trouble of rebuilding a proper wooden screen door should not scrimp on the screen.

INSTALLING THE SCREEN FABRIC is a little tricky. The screen has to be kept straight and taut while you nail in 1-in. x 1-in. wood splines; it’s best to have a helper keep the screen pulled tight while you nail. I got good results by tacking down the short sides of the screen (at the top and the bottom of the door) first, then working on the long sides. It’s easier to keep the screen straight this way.

I DIDN’T HAVE TO BUY much hardware, but I was pleased to find that a lot of good screen door hardware is still available. Your local hardware store will probably stock most everything you’ll need, including brass screen door latch sets, 3-in. brass hinges, and tension rod/turn-buckle braces (these braces are mounted diagonally on the door to keep the frame from warping). For double doors like mine, brass slide bolts or transom catches are appropriate for latching the fixed door. I even found new moulding in the same pattern as the original moulding on my 1910 doors.

THE ORNAMENTAL METAL PUSH GUARDS were the only pieces of hardware for which I couldn’t find an excellent reproduction. Push guards for screen doors are still manufactured, and though some of them are quite similar to the authentic ones, they are now made out of aluminum. The original push guards were made from a heavy-gauge steel wire. But primed and painted, the aluminum guards can pass for the steel wire.

THERE IS ONE traditional piece of screen door hardware that I don’t care for—the spring closer. My doors had them; they gouged out little channels on the edges of the doors. Spring closers are probably a big reason why screen doors fell out of fashion. They cause the doors to slam shut and shake apart the joints of the doors. I substituted a small, hydraulic rotary closer (manufactured by the Ives Division of Lehigh Products, New Haven, Conn. 06508). This closer shuts the door slowly but firmly; and, unlike the piston-type closers on most modern storm doors, allows the door to be fully opened. (Piston closers allow a door to open only ninety degrees.)

ANOTHER REASON screen doors fell from grace is that they don’t do anything to conserve energy in the winter. Well, contrary to popular belief, aluminum storm doors don’t do much good there either. In fact, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) does not consider storm doors to be cost-effective. A TVA paper called Elimination of Non-Cost-Effective Measures states: "Installation of a storm door cannot significantly reduce air infiltration because of the high air leakage rate ..." Those aluminum storm doors don’t work any better than they look. The same TVA document concludes that in any area that has 3500 heating degree days, a storm door would not pay for itself until it had been in place for 46.3 years! [Most other energy-conservation reports agree that storm doors are not effective. Heat loss can be cut by the use of weatherstripping at frame and threshold, and by an air-lock vestibule when possible.—ed.]

IF YOU WANT TO CONSERVE ENERGY, take your aluminum storm door down to a local recycler and let it be reborn as a hubcap. If you want to see, hear, and smell the delights of spring and summer, catch those welcome breezes, and leave the architectural detail of your old house unmuddled, a wooden screen door is the way to do it. Replacing those aluminum storm doors with screen doors was like taking down a cell door and putting up a garden gate.
Leave It Alone

EASY PAINT BUILD-UP won't necessarily ruin a subsequent paint job. As long as the existing paint film is not splitting, you can paint over it without great risk of cracks showing up in the new paint film. If the existing paint is lumpy from sloppy paint jobs, smooth it by sanding. For a lump here and there, a hand-held sanding block is adequate. You may want to use a belt sander if there are lumps all over the surface. Just don't use a coarse paper that will leave scratches in the paint. NOTE: The sanding dust may contain lead, so observe all precautions (see OHJ, May 1982, pg. 98).

AND, OF COURSE, wallpaper (or lightweight liner paper plus wallpaper) will look fine over heavily painted walls, as long as you scrape peeling paint and knock down lumps.

Cover It Up

WHEN EXISTING PAINT on flat plaster is splitting and alligatored (a rectangular cracking pattern that resembles an alligator's skin), don't add another coat of paint. The underlying cracking pattern will show up again within a few months. Instead, consider covering it with canvas or similar fabric to create a new surface -- just like old-time decorators did.

WALL CANVAS (or a modern substitute) is a tough fabric that's applied to walls and ceilings in the same manner as wallpaper. A few well-stocked paint and wallpaper stores (such as Wolf Paints; see OHJ Catalog) still carry wall canvas. Canvassing provides a fresh, unblemished surface for paint or other decorative finish. It changes the surface texture only a little, and prevents minor paint cracking from spoiling the new paint job.

IF YOU'RE LIKE many old-house owners (including members of the OHJ staff), you may consider filling in and skimming the surface of alligatored paint with a thin coat of joint compound. However, this is NOT a recommended procedure (as we found out). The underlying crack pattern shows up again through the skim coat and the new paint within a year or so.

Take It Off!

MOVING PAINT from fancy plaster is much more laborious than stripping flat plaster. Hardest of all is cast plaster: those elements that have sculptural detail, such as dentils, egg-and-dart moulding, acanthus leaves, and medallions. Somewhat easier are straight-run mouldings: those made by running a form through wet plaster.

USE CHEMICAL PAINT REMOVER to strip mouldings. Even when you buy paste-type removers, additional thickening is desirable. The best thickener is Cab-O-Sil, a fumed silica made by Cabot Corp. in Boston. (It's available through some art supply dealers and epoxy distributors.) You can also use cornstarch and whiting, but they are less effective. Add thickener until you get the consistency of Jello.

WHEN THE PAINT IS VERY THICK, or when there's a lot of detail, cover the thickened stripper with aluminum foil or polyethylene sheeting after it's applied to the molding. By wetting the stripper prevents the methylene chloride from evaporating, and allows it to "cook" for several hours. A long soak permits the stripper to work its way through thick layers, especially at the bottom of grooves.

ONCE THE PAINT IS SOFT, you've got to get it off -- and here the trouble starts. Sharpened screwdrivers, sculptors' tools, linoleum knives, nutpicks, wooden tongue depressors, and hundreds of other ad-hoc tools have been used to lift softened paint out of depressions. It's time-consuming, labor-intensive work, especially when you're working overhead.

IF YOU HAVE TO STRIP a ceiling medallion, it's sometimes easier to remove it from the ceiling and strip it on a bench. See August 1980 OHJ for details on removing and stripping a medallion by the water-soak method. The chart on the next page provides an at-a-glance guide to various plaster stripping problems.

SPECIAL THANKS for technical advice to Andy Ladygo, Workshop Director at The Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Splitting, Alligated Paint On Flat Walls &amp; Ceilings</th>
<th>Peeling Paint On Ceilings, Coves, &amp; Mouldings — Underlying Calcinine</th>
<th>Thick, Encrusted Paint On ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrasion: Belt Sanders, etc.</td>
<td>Sand off all splitting, cracked paint. Advantages: cheap, relatively fast. Disadvantages: danger of lead poisoning; very dusty; possible scratching of plaster.</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Strippers</td>
<td>Soften paint with chemicals and scrape off. Advantages: simple. Disadvantages: expensive and messy; labor intensive; scrapings may contain lead.</td>
<td>Chemical removers can strip overlying paint; hot water will then be needed to remove the calcimine. Advantages: It will work. Disadvantages: See left; more effort required than moisture method.</td>
<td>PREFERRED METHOD: Thickened stripper is applied, covered, and allowed to soak. The softened paint is lifted off with scrapers. Advantages: It works. Disadvantages: messy; expensive; very time-consuming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moisture: Steam, Hot Water</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>PREFERRED METHOD: Steam can penetrate &amp; loosen calcimine, if overlying paint is thin. If paint is too thick, work from edges of flaked area. Advantages: least effort of all the methods. Disadvantages: may not work.</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moulded Elements: Medallions, Egg-&-Dart, Acanthus Leaves, etc. Not Applicable
Bed & Breakfasts

I AM IN SEARCH of a publication listing Bed and Breakfast accommodations in the mid- and northwestern part of the country. Do you know of any?


INTEREST IN BED AND BREAKFASTS is on the upswing. More and more people are taking advantage of these beautiful and charming inns. We just ordered several books from the East Woods Press, 429 E. Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203, each of which covers bed and breakfasts in specific regions of the United States. Bed and Breakfasts in North America by Norma Buzon is available from Betsy Ross publications.

Stripping Radiators

WHAT METHOD do you recommend for removing paint from cast-iron radiators? I tried the heat gun with very poor results; I assume the cast iron absorbed the heat. At this point I'll consider removing them to have them stripped if you recommend it.

—Marianne Buccellato Milton, N.Y.

YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT -- the cast iron absorbed the heat from your heat gun. Though we often advise against sandblasting, in the case of removing paint from a cast-iron radiator sandblasting is the best answer. Sandblasting makes it possible to remove the paint from inside the radiator fins. You will have to remove the radiators, which is backbreaking work. Reinstalling them will require a plumber in order to get them properly balanced.

Water Weight

HOW CAN WE TELL whether or not the floor in our upstairs bedroom will support our waterbed? We know our old brick home is solid, but since we can't see under the floorboards, how do we determine the stress factor? They say waterbeds weigh about 1500 pounds. I wanted to make sure before we woke up in the kitchen without having gotten out of bed...

—Eva Young Bangor, Penn.

IT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA to guess the amount of weight a floor can hold, or to guess the weight of your waterbed. You should have your house examined by a qualified structural engineer to determine whether or not your bedroom floor can support your particular bed. He'll be able to calculate the size and spacing of your floor joists. If the floors are weak, he can tell you what, if anything, can be done to make them stronger.

Etched Glass Patterns

WE HAVE A MAGNIFICENT front door with a large glass window in it. We would like to have an oval with filled-in edges and corners etched on it. We've tried finding designs for etched windows without much success. Please advise us on how we can obtain or make a pattern.

—R.J. Stech Suisun City, Cal.

WE DON'T know of a book that specifically shows etched glass patterns, but many of the 19th-century pattern books reprinted by the American Life Foundation contain samples. For a list, write to John Freeman, 1601 Sheridan, Norristown, PA 19407.

Also, the Old-House Journal Catalog lists several companies that sell etched glass supplies, kits, or finished art glass.

Old-House Mold

I'VE JUST MOVED my family into a 96-year-old Colonial and I think my wife and I are allergic to the house! The allergist ruled out previous dog/cat tenants and is still doing tests. A neighbor recently mentioned that another family had to move out of their new-old house because the wife was allergic to "old-house mold." Is there anything to this?

—Charles Tsang Summit, N.J.

IF CLEANING THE DRAPES and shampooing the carpets doesn't help, check the house for high-moisture areas. Allergies to mold and mildew are not uncommon. If you find damp spots, dry them out and keep them dry -- a dehumidifier might help, as long as you're not dealing with standing water. One of our editors says a vet once told him that it's fairly common for dogs to develop allergies in new homes -- but after a month or so their immune systems build up a tolerance. You don't mention where you moved from, but perhaps the problem is nothing more complicated than developing an immunity to dust or airborne agents in your new community.

Water Weight

IT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA to guess the amount of weight a floor can hold, or to guess the weight of your waterbed. You should have your house examined by a qualified structural engineer to determine whether or not your bedroom floor can support your particular bed. He'll be able to calculate the size and spacing of your floor joists. If the floors are weak, he can tell you what, if anything, can be done to make them stronger.

General interest questions from subscribers will be answered in print. The Editors can't promise to reply to all questions personally--but we try. Send your questions with sketches or photos to Questions Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

The Old-House Journal 126 July 1984
New Period Style Plumbing Hardware

Driving through the canyons of Manhattan one Sunday, I spotted a store window full of what I thought were restored Victorian brass bathroom faucets. A closer look introduced me to a new line of French plumbing taps and accessories. Called Swiss Express, the handsome and carefully turned heavy brass faucets appear to be early designs coupled with modern stainless steel valving to produce super high-quality hardware which comes with a ten-year guarantee through the U.S. importer, Classic Faucets.

While individual hot and cold faucets are available (handy if you have a period marble sinktop with three mounting holes), most of the taps are of the more convenient mixing type. The faucet handles come with porcelain inserts that say Swiss Express and chaud and froid (hot & cold).

The bath and shower combination taps are quite massive and would look great on a big ball-and-claw-footed tub. The shower portion is the European type, with a flexible metal hose and hand-operated shower head. Wall mounted shower heads are also in the line. With the taps is a matching line of accessories: tub drain, towel rack, toilet paper holder, toilet brush holder, electric wall sconce with etched shade, soap holder, and wall shelf. The soap holder and shelf are white crazed porcelain with heavy brass wall mounts.

The Swiss Express line is available in a wide variety of finishes. You can order polished brass, old copper, old bronze, chrome, and gold. The prices run from $167 (for a chrome single faucet) to $1224 (for the gold-plated bath/shower combination). The fittings are of exceptional quality and good period design. I believe this is the first time that period style plumbing hardware has been offered in such an extensive, coordinated line. For more information and a free color brochure, contact Classic Faucets, PO Box 827, Dept. OHJ, Kenner, LA 70063. (504) 469-6921. (Incidentally, Classic Faucets is looking for sales representatives.)

Outdoor Furniture

The natural point of view, are the garden benches and armchairs that Barlow Tyrie produces. At first glance, these chairs have a Craftsman-style look about them, with massive arms and legs. But don't let the heavy weight fool you into thinking that the furniture is uncomfortable.

The furniture isn't cheap, but you definitely get what you pay for. The benches range in price from $795 for the 8-ft. Rothsay to $275 for the Braintree. Both benches are highest quality, but the latter is less massive. The lighter benches and chairs would be appropriate for porches and verandas. The armchairs range in price from $340 for the Glenham to $200 for the Braintree. The London chair has great wide arms—which make perfect little tables.

Coupled with their benches and chairs Barlow Tyrie produces a full range of outdoor tables, loungers, and tennis-court benches. Commemorative bronze plaques and hand-carved inscriptions are offered.

Next to experiencing this fine outdoor furniture in person, the best way to fully appreciate the solidity and craftsmanship is to send for their free color catalog. The U.S. distributor is Clapper's, PO Box A, Dept. OHJ, 1121 Washington St., West Newton, MA 02185. (617) 244-7900.
Renovation Products

Whenever I go home to Dallas, I try to stop by Renovation Products to see what's new. The last time I was there, they'd added an excellent line of reproduction front doors. Now entering a fifth year as purveyors of architectural ornamentation, the company has expanded to carry items for colonial era and Prairie Style houses as well as Victorians. With the expansion, they changed their name to Classic Architectural Specialties, but their address is the same: 5302 Junius, Dallas, TX 75214. (214) 827-5111. $2 will get you their complete catalog.

Style Book

Many old-house owners (and aspiring owners) have found the National Trust's book What Style Is It?—A guide to American Architecture to be the perfect style primer. Now the book has been revised and enlarged to 112 pages of concise architectural history, covering 22 styles. Architectural details common to each style are discussed and illustrated in this handy paperback pocket reference.

Many photos and fine drawings from the Historic American Building Survey were used to illustrate this edition—which is dedicated to HABS. What Style Is It? is a good book at a reasonable price.

To order send $6.95 plus $2.50 postage and handling to Preservation Shops, 1600 H St. NW, Dept. OHJ, Washington, D.C 20006. Catalog is free.

Red Devil

Good news for old-house maintenance: Red Devil has just taken seven of its most popular caulks and spackling and adhesive products and packaged them in 5½-fl. oz. tubes. The newly packaged products include Lifetime White and Clear Caulks, Spackling Compound, All-Purpose White Latex Caulk, Acrylic Tub and Tile Caulk, Tile Paste Adhesive, and Premixed Tile Grout.

The smaller sizes are easier to carry around, they can be recapped and used again, and best of all you're not stuck with a big tube of goop after a small job. I think the Tile Paste and Premixed Tile Grout are the handiest items; they allow you to make small spot repairs where tiles or grout have come loose. The tubes sell for around $3 each and are available at most hardware and home centers nationwide. For further information, contact Red Devil, Inc., 2400 Vauxhall Road, Dept. OHJ, Union, NJ 07083.

Lincrusta and Anaglypta are really wonderful products—they'll give your walls an authentic period look and even cover up minor plaster problems, too. Chances are you've already seen original Lincrusta in old buildings; read up on it in Bruce Bradbury's Oct. and Nov. 1982 articles in OHJ.

We are happy to announce that Crown Decorative Products has just pulled out all the stops: They are reproducing all five Lincrusta patterns for which they still have original rollers. The last pattern added to the line looks like bevelled oak paneling.

Lincrusta, the strongest of the embossed wallcoverings, was designed to resemble tooled leather, cast plaster, or carved wood. A professional paper-hanger should be hired to apply Lincrusta. It requires painting, staining or glazing with an oil-based finish.

One of the most beautiful Lincrusta designs is no. RD 1950 (shown below) which consists of five 21x36-in. panels for $70. The oak panel design (no. 1650) comes in a roll 33-ft.x20½-in. for $70.

Supaglypta, a heavy embossed paper, is not as indestructible as Lincrusta, but it can be applied by homeowners. Periodically, Crown reintroduces old, original designs back into their product line, as most of the original embossing cylinders still exist. Supaglypta is good for masking uneven 'problem' walls and can be painted with semigloss latex paint or oil glaze and stain. It comes in double rolls, 33-in.x20½-in., and sells for $25 per roll.

Crown Pelmets (shown above) are embossed narrow friezes or borders designed to go between the picture rail and ceiling. The Pelmets sell for $20-$30 in double rolls, 33-ft. long, in widths of 4-15/16 in., 5-5/16 in., and 7-1/8 in.

Also available from Crown are Anaglypta and Anaglypta Vinyl, a lightweight series of embossed paper and vinyl wallcoverings in a wide variety of designs. The increased demand and availability of these wallcoverings has resulted in a big reduction in their prices. There are currently two American distributors. For a catalog and samples of each type of wallcovering, send $2 to Bentley Brothers, 918 Baxter Ave., Dept. OHJ, Louisville, KY 40204. (502) 589-2939, or to Mile Hi Crown Inc., 1230 South Inca St., Dept. OHJ, Denver, CO 80223. (303) 777-2099.

The Old-House Journal 128

July 1984
Do You Have A Retail Shop?

If you sell to old-house people, your customers would also be interested in The OHJ Buyer's Guide Catalog and Yearbooks. Stocking these volumes will enhance your reputation as an old-house products and information center. Very attractive dealer discounts are available. For more information, write or call:

Joan O'Reilly  
The Old-House Journal  
69A Seventh Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
(212) 636-4514

WANTED

WROUGHT IRON FENCE and posts, Victorian, 100 ft. Please send photo, description & price to Dan Benes, 10600 North Hwy., Surfside, CA 90240.

1-TO-10 PUSH BUTTON light switches — all I can get within reason. Not in need of fancy looking, just the plain "on" switch itself. Dan McCarthy, 19603 Redwood Dr., Monte Rio, CA 95462.

SLIDING DOOR HARDWARE: 1 pulley-rider wheel assembly needed to complete the re-hanging of a pocket door. Wheel is 3/4 in. diameter, hanger assembly is 8 in. I, with a screw type in/out adjustment. Fred Waite, 121 N. Pine Ave., Albany, NY 12263.

2 PR. SHUTTERS (4 pieces) for old Penna Farmhouse. 3 raised panels, 5 1/2 in. thick, 84 in. center, 22 in. bottom. Overall size 56 in. X 14 in. each panel. O.R. Bade, PO Box 951, Buckingham, PA 18912.

DRAINERS (sometimes called "Turkey trivets"). Oval pieces of china that fit in 19th-century sinks. Holes are part of their function! Prices are negotiable, depending on size of drainer, condition, & china pattern. D. Potter, 1304 Oak Lane, Lynchburg, VA 24503.


WALNUT MURPHY BED, Eastlake design, beveled mirror, wire grained. Send info, photo, & asking price, Thomas Hay, Box 805, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034.

GARDEN URNS, Victorian, any size or shape. Send picture, price, & condition. C. Schramek, 500 Bethlehem Pike, Philadelphia, PA 19118.

GENESEE CO., NY residential property with Natl Register potential. We’re willing to consider a variety of alternatives. W.R.C. White, Jr., c/o The White Agency, 79 Main St., Batavia, NY 14020. (716) 434-0937.


ASTRA GLOBES for 1850 s Italianate light fixtures. 2 or more for hanging from ceiling. G. McGee, 935 9th Avenue, Apt. 5, Oakland City, OH 43205. (614) 239-7312.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPES. Professional consultation & design by John Sabatino. Historian whose experience includes museum properties, historic sites, & private homes. Based in New England, but “have expenses, will travel!” Send fee for free brochure. Historic Landscapes, 945 Washington Rd., Rye, NY 10573.

RESTORATION CLASSES in marbleizing, graining, antique repair and historic preservation. 1-10 session classes, weekend & mid-week. For schedule & class description, write: John Sabatino, 1 Elm St., Great Neck, NY 11021. (516) 487-2270.

RESTORATION SERVICES

ANTIQUE WOOD & COAL stoves bought, sold, & restored. Parts available. Send photo & description, or call Doug Pacheco, Box 472, W. Barnstaple, MA 02668. (617) 362-9913.

WOODSTRIPPING, a safe, sensitive treatment (solvent only, no heat or hot water) for fine, older wood. Much experience, many references. Min. contract $800. Mr. D. (212) 727-0461.

RESTORATION CONSULTANT — restoration & adaptive re-use of historic buildings, tax benefit projects, historic structure reports, surveys. Clifford W. Zink, 10 Bayard Ln., Princeton, NJ 08540.

REFIRING to remove rodent remains. Also custom ceramic tile design & duplication. Susan Parks, Box 316, Pleasantville, NY 10570.

RELINING, repair, & reline chimneys. Specialize in PermaFlue Relining: it seals, strengthens, insulates, & restores. PermaFlue surpasses UL 185 & is recognized by BOCA. Lifetime conditional guarantee. Nationwide service. Homestead Chimney, PO Box 5182, Clinton, NJ 08809. (201) 735-7798.


HISTORIC LANDSCAPES. Professional consultation & design by John Sabatino. Historian whose experience includes museum properties, historic sites, & private homes. Based in New England, but “have expenses, will travel!” Send fee for free brochure. Historic Landscapes, 945 Washington Rd., Rye, NY 10573.

FOOTNOTE: This advertisement is for restoration and repair services specifically mentioned in the text.
CHENANGO CO, NY — Late 1800s Victorian 2 family entrance, 3 matching stained glass windows. Car, chair accessible, porches, 2-storey garage, village water & sewer. $40,000. (607) 967-8901 (easily reopened to one). Quiet village, walk to setting. Jonathan Ehvell, Gallinger Real Estate. (315) 389-2589.

BOULDER CITY, NV - Restored 1931 Mission home, 2 stores. Carpeted, original woodwork, insulated, new kitchen, bath, wiring, plumbing. Excellent for kids and families convenient to 35W & 35E. 80% restored, modern amenities. $350,000. 1.5 acre, ridge line, historic district. Pictured in OHJOct.

MAPLEWOOD, NJ - 1775 historic home. 3 BR, full basement, 8 rooms, 3 1/2 baths, handcarved mantels. Purchaser includes lots for bed & breakfast, B&B, 30 mature oaks, 140 azaleas, dogwoods: a gardener’s delight. House structurally sound, needs updating, restoration. Listed National Register. Land there is not with developers, unless alternative found. 490-2794, pm, 594-3377.

25 MILE CREEK, WA — Historic 1913 Hale Estate. Unique log home overlooking Lake Chelan on 7 acre retreat. 3 BR, 3.5 BA, 2 stories plus stone FP in garage. Over 1600 sq. ft. stone basement plus 2 sleeping porches. $65,000, possible financing. D. Hale McKellar, 502 N. Western Ave., Wenatchee, WA 98801. (509) 662-8224.

MARLOWED, NJ — 1775 historic home. 3 BR, 1 1/2 bath, 2 magnificent stone FP, one with original cooking oven. New kitchen with breakfast nook, separate DR. Very private deep lot with perennials and vegetable garden. Just $125,000. Burgdorf Realtors, Short Hills, NJ. (201) 376-5209.

OAKZ MTNS. — 100 year old structure restored 2-storey home, 22 miles SE of U. of Ark, Fayetteville. 2.5 fenced acres, terraced stone FP in garage. Over 1600 sq. ft. stone basement plus 2 sleeping porches. $65,000, possible financing. D. Hale McKellar, 502 N. Western Ave., Wenatchee, WA 98801. (509) 662-8224.

GETTYSBURG, PA — Stylish Queen Anne Victorian on 1.7 acres within borough limits. Handsomely preserved with scars of Civil War fighting. Randall R. Inskip Real Estate, Historic Houses and Gardens, GETTYSBURG, PA (717) 371-5475.

FULTON, NY — Completely restored 1850s brick Federalist on 22 acres. 4 BR, 3 1/2 baths, woodstoves, and large barn. Beautifully landscaped, quiet, country setting. Jonathan Ewell, Gallinger Real Estate. (315) 458-9100.


HISTORIC RUGBY PILGRIMAGE - 14 public events are NOT eligible. CONTACTS: Freeman, Inc., PO Box 72, Rugby, N.D. 58272. (701) 365-5600.

MEETINGS & EVENTS


HISTORIC FILLMAN FOUNDATION & the Fillman Civic-Organization’s 11th Annual House Tour will take place Oct. 13-14, 11 am - 5 pm. Tour will include a slide show, the Hotel Florence, the Greenstone Church, and 6 private homes. Tickets $7. (315) 660-1276, 785-8111.

GERMANTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 3rd Annual Quilt Show Sun., Sept. 10, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Quilted Bear Restaurant & Hall, N111 W16611 Mequon Rd., Germantown, W1. $1 at the door. Send LSASE to GERMAN­TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO Box 31, Germantown, WI 53022.

INNS & HISTORIC HOUSES

COLONIAL REVIVAL HOME — centrally located to Berkshires and close to downtown Pittsfield. 2 BR with FP, full breakfast served in formal DR. Call for reservations. Summer season $60 per room, double occupancy, $10 each additional person. (413) 443-3669.

BOECHWOOD, an elegant Victorian inn on Cape Cod. Private hot tubs, furnishing, ocean views, breakfast & afternoon tea. Located in historic district, close to beaches, restaurants, & antique shops. 2839 Main St., Barnstable Village, MA 02630. (617) 352-6618.


BARRIE INN — 1886 landmark, completely restored Victorian country inn. Located in central MA Quabbin Valley, 1 mile to swimming & boating. Special packages & events. Rates from $55 to $85. Advance reservations required. 1454 N. Dearborn Pkwy., Chicago, IL 60610. (312) 787-9015.

BAILEY HOUSE, elegant Victorian B & B Inn on Nat’l Historic Register in 30 block historic district. Private antique baths, heat & air, all conveniences. Short walk to shops, restaurants, tennis; 5 min. to golf, beaches. Rates from $55 to $85. Advance reservations required. 1454 N. Dearborn Pkwy., Chicago, IL 60610. (312) 787-9015.

HISTORIC RUGBY PILGRIMAGE — 14 public & private Victorian buildings open for tours in scenic, rural village. English Morris dancing, history on film, Victorian railroad bookshop. 1892 Bear Restaurant, Rugby, N.D., PO Box 8, Rugby, ND 57773. (615) 628-2441.

HISTORIC HOUSES

PARA IN - 1886 landmark, completely restored Victorian country inn. Located in central MA Quabbin Valley, 1 mile to swimming & boating. Special packages & events. Rates from $55 to $85. Advance reservations required. 1454 N. Dearborn Pkwy., Chicago, IL 60610. (312) 787-9015.

FREE ADS FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Classified ads are FREE for current subscribers. The ads are subject to editorial selection and space availability. They are limited to one-of-a-kind opportunities and small lot sales. Sporting goods and commercial products are NOT eligible.

Free ads are limited to a maximum of 50 words. The only payment is your current OHJ mailing label to verify your subscriber status. Photos of items for sale are also accepted—free—space permitting. All ads must be submitted on a clear black & white photograph along with your ad copy.

The deadline for ads is on the 5th, two months before the issue date. For example, ads for the December issue are due by the 5th of October.

Write: Emporium Editor, Old-House Journal, 59A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.
THE TWO BEST HEAT TOOLS FOR STRIPPING PAINT

Different paint-stripping projects require varying tactics. Refinishing experts agree that, whenever practicable, hand stripping wood pieces is preferable to dipping them in a strong chemical bath. Heat guns and heat plates are often the best overall tools for taking paint off wood surfaces. They make paint removal safe, quick, and economical.

Heat is a fast method because the paint bubbles & lifts as you go along. There is no waiting for chemicals to soak in, no multiple recoatings, and far less cleanup. Unlike stripping with chemicals, all layers of paint are removed in a single pass.

As for economy: These tools are long-lasting industrial products, so the initial expense is made up in savings on the $18 to $22 per gallon stripper that you're no longer buying in quantity. Even after heavy use, a worn-out heating element on a gun can be replaced by the owner for about $7.

The Heat Gun
Ideal for moulded & turned woodwork!

Over 10,000 OHJ subscribers have purchased the Heavy-Duty Heat Gun, and discovered the best tool for stripping paint from interior woodwork. (A small amount of chemical cleaner is suggested for tight crevices and cleanup, but the Heat Gun does most of the work.) It will reduce the hazard of inhaling methylene chloride vapors present in paint removers. Another major safety feature is the Heat Gun’s operating temperature, which is lower than a blowtorch or propane torch, thus minimizing the danger of vaporizing lead. The Master HG-501 Heat Gun operates at 500-750°F, draws 15 amps at 120 volts, and has a rugged, die-cast aluminum body — no plastics!

The Heat Plate
For any flat surfaces — even clapboards!

After testing all of the available heat tools, the OHJ editors recommend the HYDElectric Heat Plate as the best tool for stripping clapboards, shingles, doors, large panels, and any flat surface. The Heat Plate draws 7 amps at 120 volts. Its electric resistance heating coil heats the surface to be stripped to a temperature of 550-800°F. The nickel-plated steel shield reflects the maximum amount of heat from the coil to the surface. And among the Heat Plate’s safety features is a wire frame that supports the unit, so you can set it down without having to shut it off.

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

The Heat Gun is available for only $77.95; the Heat Plate for only $39.95. (These prices include fast UPS shipping.) You can order either or both by filling out the Order Form in this issue, or by sending a check or money order to The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.
The Old-House Bookshop

Old-House Woodwork Restoration

This is the first book we've found that deals exclusively with restoring architectural woodwork. The author is a skilled restoratonist, and his book combines a sensitive attitude toward preservation with practical advice & step-by-step instructions. It has the best information of any book we know on stripping paint from wood and then selecting a finish. If you have to get to work on your doors, trim, siding, staircases, floors, etc., this book is just what you need.

Softcover, 200 pages, 8½ x 11
$14.95, includes fast UPS shipping and handling

WALLPAPERS and FABRICS — Those two books hold carefully screened, valuable information for those who are ready to decorate their homes. They list a range of sources for materials that are appropriate to the period of your old house. Wallpaper styles from 1700 to 1910 are represented; fabric styles from 1790 to 1900. Total 287 pages. Softbound. $21.90.

THE AMERICAN HOUSE — Comprehensive guide to house styles, covering formal as well as folk building genses from the 17th century through contemporary vanguard architects. A beautifully produced book with original renderings, this is both a style manual and visual treat. By Mary Mix Foley. 299 pages. Softbound. $16.95.

TASTEFUL INTERLUDE — Rare photos of original interiors from the Civil War to World War One. Of great value to anyone decorating in a period style. Written by William Seale. 284 pages. Softbound. $14.95.

THE OHJ COMPENDIUM — Collection of the most helpful articles from the OHJ's first 5 years of publication (from 1973 to 1977). 390 pages. Hardcover. $29.95.


GAZEBOS — With this book, you can order plans for 7 pergola-arches, 15umbrellabrellas, 18 birdhouses & feeders, and 55 gazebos. It has dozens of design styles, from Victorian to Rustic, Asian to European to Americana. A treasure trove for all do-it-yourselfers! 96 pages. Softbound. $9.95.

MODERN CARPENTRY — An outstanding textbook that clearly explains building materials, tools, & construction methods, and the planning and sequencing of major home repairs. 592 pages. Hardcover. $19.95.

ANTIGUES & ART — CARE & RESTORATION — This book focuses on the toughest challenges facing a do-it-yourself restorationist. It contains invaluable secrets for restoring ceramics, mirrors, marble statuary, oil paintings, photos, books, clocks, coins, and reed organs, as well as furniture, stencilling, and gliding. 255 pages. Hardcover. $19.95.

The 1984 OHJ Buyer's Guide Catalog

This book is the 'Yellow Pages' for pre-1939 houses: a comprehensive buyer's guide listing 1,251 companies. That's almost 10,000 hard-to-find, old-house products & services at your fingertips. From hand-printed wallpapers to marble mantels, wooden porch ornament to brass lighting fixtures — all meticulously indexed and cross-referenced. All listings have also been carefully screened by the OHJ editors.

Softbound, 208 pages, 8½ x 11
$9.95 for current OHJ subscribers
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You can include more names on a separate sheet of paper.
Earth to Mars, Earth to Mars . . . No, these are not radio stations communicating with other planets. They're two American Foursquares in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, that qualify as "technological trashing" for this month's Remuddling.

Although the satellite dishes don't damage the structure of these buildings, they do mar the appearance of what were once handsome old houses and, in fact, change the face of a neighborhood.

If we ignore the high-tech gear for a moment, we see that the house on the right has been typically remuddled. The aluminum siding and windows, the removal of the railing, and the closed-in porch all hide the house's original character. The addition of a satellite dish is not too surprising. The house on the left, however, appears to be sensitively restored down to the detailed polychrome paint job, which makes a satellite dish seem even more incongruous than it does on the remuddled house. While we appreciate the owner's need for better television and radio reception, we wonder why he has chosen to wear his hardware in such a prominent position. (Our thanks to Roger Pence of Cazenovia, WI, for submitting this photograph.) --Sarah McNamara