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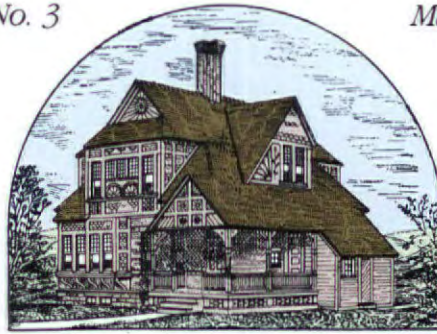
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Cover: OHJ reader Walter Clement's Victorian Gothic cottage, which he built from the barest
plans found in an 1850 book by A.J. Downing. (photo: Janet Marinelli)

GARBAGE

Is Not Fuzzy Bunnies

Nearly five years ago, I was being interviewed for a newspaper article about OHJ and the way its growth had paralleled the growth in house restoration. The reporter asked me if I had plans for any other magazines in the future. I told him I wanted to publish an environmental magazine someday. It was the first time I'd said it out loud.

Even then, I had a good idea of what I wanted: a magazine with the same kind of mix as OHJ. But I got little encouragement. (I suppose people heard bean sprouts/New Age/anti-nuke/save the whales.) For lots of reasons, personal and otherwise, the time had not come.

But now is the time. The environmental journal I've long considered has become a clear editorial vision. The growing staff here is strongly committed to its publication. And the world no longer looks at me cross-eyed when I mention it.

Our new publication will debut with a September cover date. I'm announcing it to family first, on this *Editor's Page* in Old-House Journal. Without "market studies" to back me up, I'm convinced that OHJ readers will be very supportive of the new magazine. What does being an old-house person have to do with having a practical concern about the environment? *Everything*, in my opinion; the same attitude prevails.

(In magazine marketing, that's called "psychographics." The big words are there when I need them. Mostly, though, we publish what *we'd* want to read. It's worked so far!)

The new journal has a somewhat startling title, to announce its down-to-earth, mainstream approach. It's called GARBAGE: the Practical Journal for the Environment. It is the first independent, privately-published national magazine entirely devoted to our relationship to the environment.



It is, of course, not supported by any environmental group, membership organization, lobbyists or activists. Because we are a publishing company, not a non-profit organization, the magazine won't be supported by dues or grants or subsidies. The only way it will survive is if people want to read what we write. That keeps editors very close to readers. And I believe that this give-and-take relationship produces a more progressive and lively publication.

GARBAGE is practical rather than political. It is non-radical, covering many perspectives. It's dedicated to exploring the truth about environmental issues, rather than furthering a "cause." It is a magazine as much for urban and suburban readers as

for country people. And it may be the first scientific environmental journal with a sense of humor!

GARBAGE is not a wildlife or animal-rights magazine. So much of the editorial that passes as environmental writing is really about animals. Pictures of threatened baby manatees and that sort of thing stir up emotion, of course, and I think that's why so many fundraising letters, as well as the non-profit magazines, use animal-rights issues as a hook.

(Human issues can take a back seat to that emotional response. Some people can be persuaded to act only if they're shown cute — or horrifying — animal pictures. As we've developed our own magazine, we've come to call this the fuzzy-bunny crowd.)

The animal-rights movement is important. It is about ethical issues and even about the quality of human life. But it is not the focus of our new journal.

GARBAGE is about where things come from and where they go. It's about choices we make every day, very often unknowingly, that put short-term convenience ahead of long-term maintenance of the planet (and therefore ourselves!). It's about filling in the incredibly poor coverage of environmental issues we've seen in newspapers and on television news.

Editorials in other media have soberly warned that solving the environmental crises we've created will be almost impossible, because it will require a change in *attitude*. Unlikely for us greedy Americans, they predict. You know what we say to that? "What garbage!"

You see, *we* remember when an old house was what you got when you couldn't afford a nice new one. Attitudes can so change.

Antucia Fone

A new department debuts in this issue: **WHO THEY WERE** is a biographical sketch of an architect, designer, craftsman, critic or tastemaker whose influence on American domestic architecture was profound. On page 53: A.J. Downing, 1815-1852.

OHJ's July-August issue features help for old-house kitchens:

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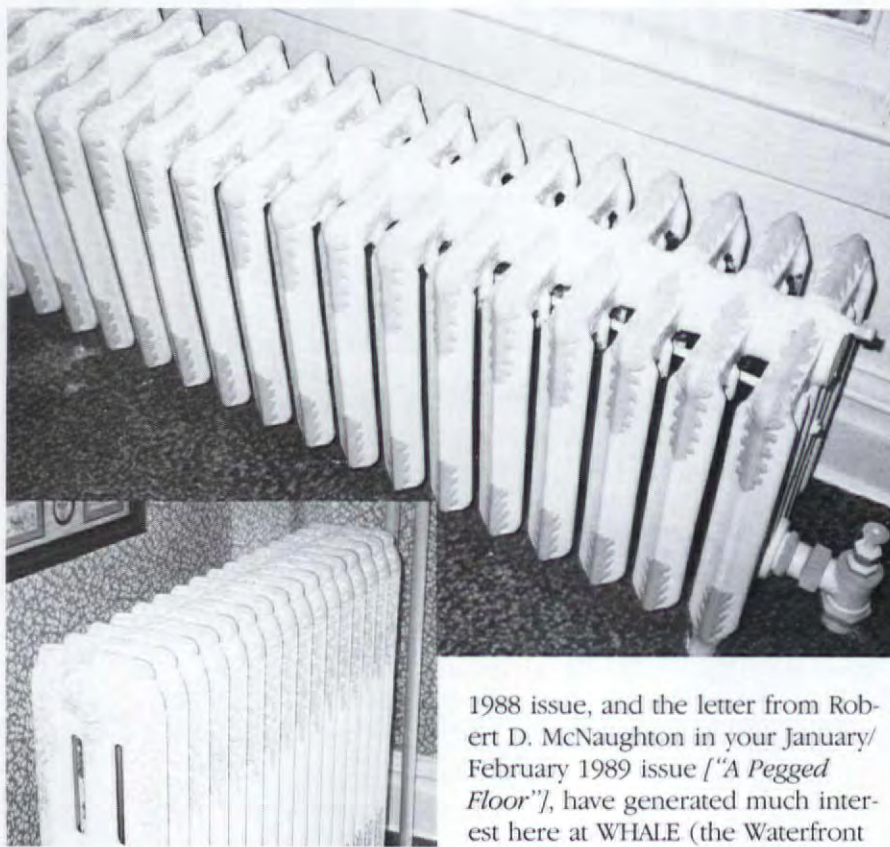


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Painted Radiators

Dear OHJ:

I am so pleased and excited to tell you how inspired I was by the "Radiators" article in your September/October 1988 issue. Enclosed are pictures that show the hand-painting I did to highlight the ornamentation on our radiators (one in the living room and one in the dining room) and coordinate their different designs with new wallpaper.

We are so pleased with the final results. We feel we have added a very worthwhile labor of love to the restoration of our 1904 Victorian house.

Thank you for one of many inspiring issues.

— Beth Cipolla
Beecher, Ill.

Another Pegged Floor

Dear Ms. Poore,

The article "The Bare Facts About Early Floors" in your March/April

1988 issue, and the letter from Robert D. McNaughton in your January/February 1989 issue ["A Pegged Floor"], have generated much interest here at WHALE (the Waterfront Historic Area League).

In Spring 1987, WHALE, an historic preservation organization, received as a donation the William Hart House, an early period gambrel-roofed farmhouse (circa 1718) located in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. The condition of the gift was that WHALE remove the house from the land which was slated for development. After a careful documentation of details such as the gunstock posts and the central stone hearth, WHALE commissioned to have the structure dismantled and properly stored until a suitable site is found for its reconstruction.

Now, we would like to join Mr. McNaughton in furthering the discussion about pegged floors in early-18th-century houses. The William Hart House has a pegged floor, a real one, of the round-hole, square-peg variety, made of hard pine. This unusual flooring was revealed when a layer of tongue-and-groove flooring was removed during the dismantling process. The floor was in a remark-

able state of preservation, which will fortunately allow for its proper reconstruction when the opportunity affords it.

We are pleased to read both the article on early floors and the McNaughton letter citing the existence of a pegged floor in his 1727 saltbox. Now, we can add the Hart House as a second historical precedent for the later simulated floors of the Colonial Revival period.

We thank OHJ for providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about historic houses.

— Therese S. Kelly
Executive Director, WHALE
New Bedford, Mass.

Garage Outrage

Dear OHJ:

When I turned to page 56 of the January/February 1989 issue [*Historic House Plans*, "Massachusetts Gambrel"], I thought I stumbled into the latest copy of *Suburban Living*. Old-



house garages look better when disguised as a carriage house and tucked in the backyard — so why not present it that way in the drawings?

Attached garages. Just say no.

— Mike Costanzo
Trenton, N.J.

Re-enameling Service

Dear Editor:

I read with particular interest the article in your November/December 1988 issue regarding refinishing

continued on page 6

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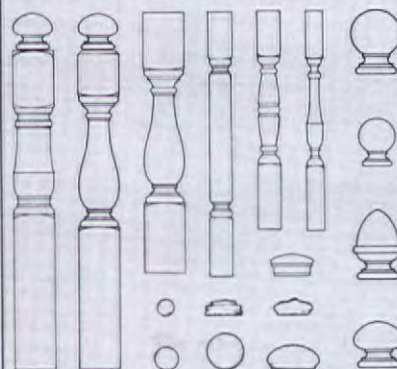
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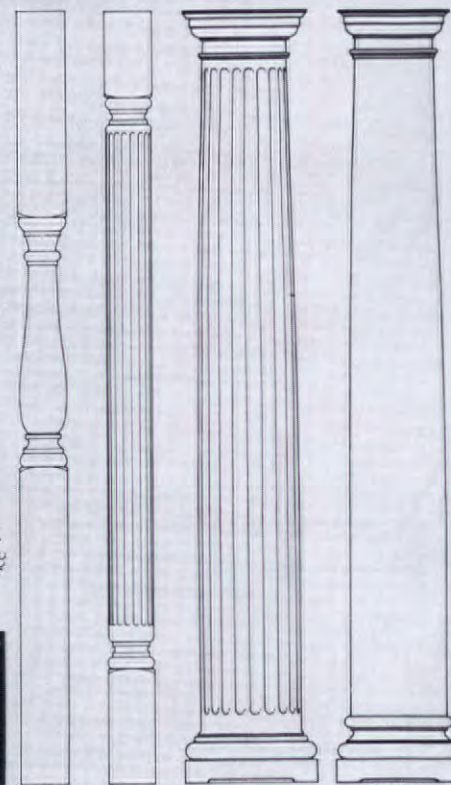
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continued from page 4

bathroom fixtures. It mentions that there is no known service for re-
porcelainizing/refiring these fixtures and,
generally speaking, this has been
true. Vitro Corporation is a porce-
lain-enameling company devoted pri-
marily to the glass lining of cast-iron
pipe, fittings, sinks, etc., for the in-
dustrial (sewage-treatment plant) and
commercial sanitary (restaurants,
hospitals, food-processing) markets.
While we have not pursued the resi-
dential market, we have full capabil-
ity for re-enameling both bathtubs
and sinks. Vitro (and its predeces-
sor, Ervite corporation) has done this
a few times in the past as a courtesy
to friends.

The three-part re-
porcelainizing process involves blast cleaning with
steel shot to fully expose the base
casting, a "ground" coat of enamel
which, during firing in an electric
furnace, bonds integrally with the
iron microstructure at the surface of

the casting, and a "cover" coat which
fuses with the ground-coat enamel
and provides the smooth, glossy sur-
face which is associated with durable
porcelain enamel.

The cost to do this generally
ranges from \$200 to \$300 for pedes-
tal sinks and \$500 to \$800 for bath-
tubs, plus freight to and from Vitro,
and is dependent on many factors.
These include the size, weight, and
complexity of the piece, as well as
the amount of surface to be enam-
eled (inside only or both sides), and
whether it has been previously refin-
ished with an epoxy material.

The standard colors we utilize for
our other projects are white and for-
est green. Refinishing in these colors
could be easily integrated with our
normal production work and would
allow us to complete the fixture ap-
proximately one month from its re-
ceipt at our plant. Other colors are
possible, but are not stocked and
could increase both the cost and, as

a special item, the processing time.
An alternate to uniformly applying a
non-standard color would be to pro-
vide a white porcelain enamel inter-
ior with a standard solvent-based
gloss enamel on the exterior.

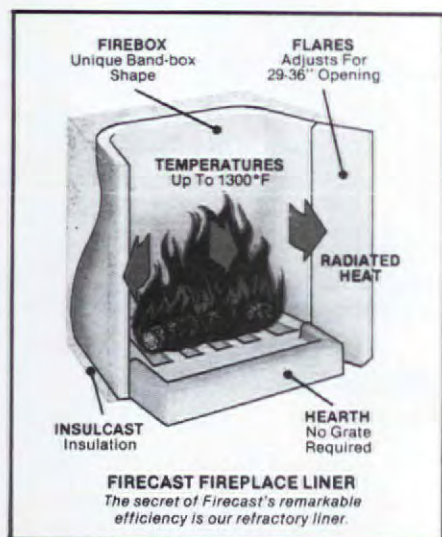
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— Thomas C. Vicary
President, Vitro Corp.
continued on page 10



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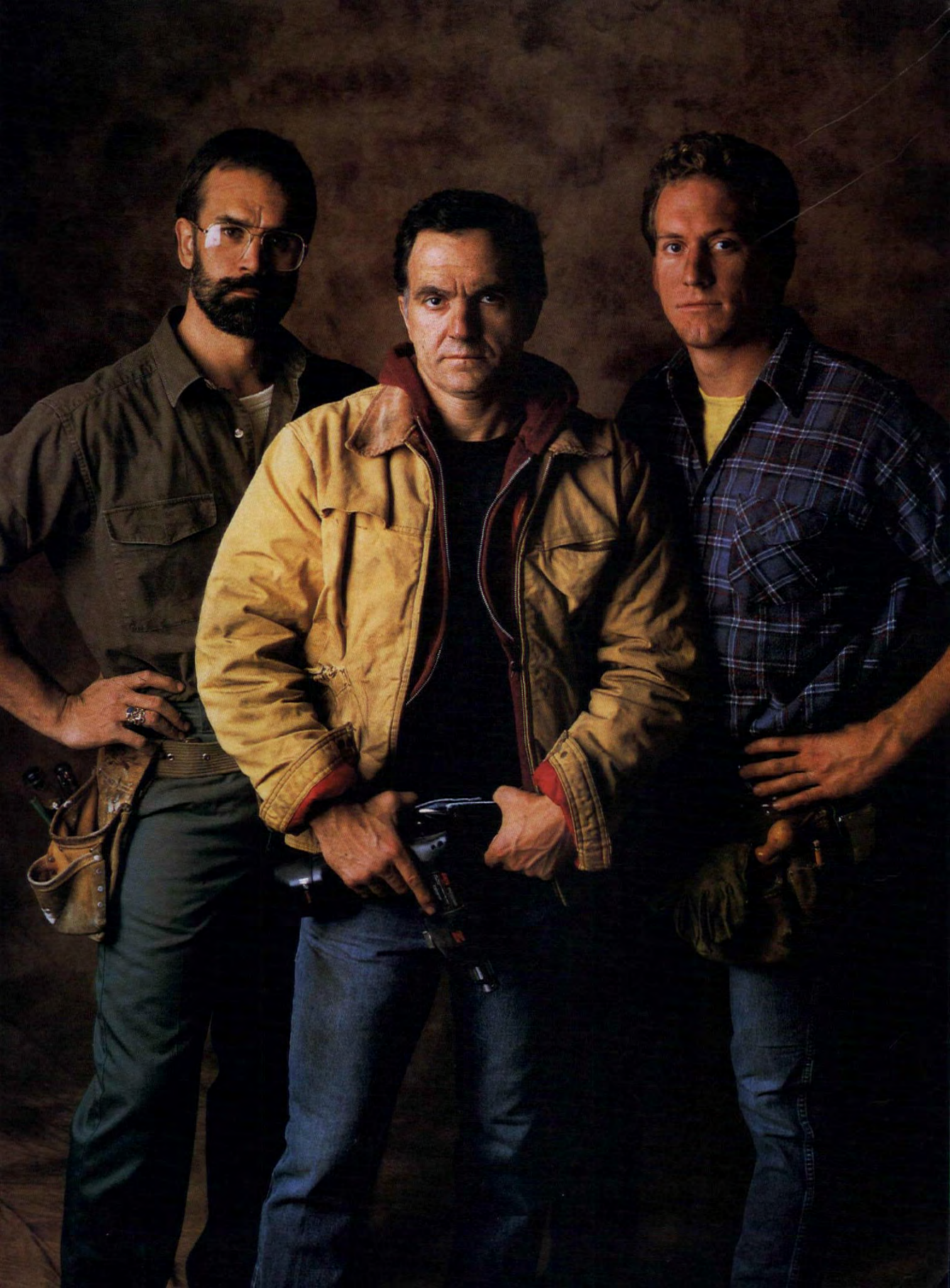
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Strippers Beware

Dear OHJ,

I am going to take advantage of some of your time to discuss a subject I have not seen printed in Old-House Journal.

Much of the woodwork in my house had been painted, and I decided I would use paint remover to strip it. Before I started, I got a new, energy-efficient gas furnace. The installers warned me that if I used the chemical strippers on the woodwork while the furnace was in operation, the chances were that I would ruin the furnace: Stripper fumes would be drawn into the furnace through the cold-air returns, and would burn and change into a highly corrosive agent much worse than battery acid.

I had just moved into the house and was anxious to get started on the woodwork, so I disregarded the advice. I shouldn't have, because that

winter I ruined the furnace.

This isn't a rare experience; I can cite two other examples of gas furnaces being replaced because of massive interior corrosion. They had been used in buildings in which chemical paint removers were used at the same time. I might add that this corrosive action will also work on metal chimney liners: After some time, the liners will disintegrate and allow furnace fumes to escape into the house.

I don't have any statistics, nor am I able to use proper terminology to express what happens to those fumes when they pass through the flames of a gas furnace, but there is no getting around the seriousness of the results.

— Robert A. Pashek
Council Bluffs, Iowa

[We were familiar with the perils of using chemicals to strip paint in a basement where there was an operating gas furnace — a pilot light is

enough of a flame to cause an explosion. But this is the first we've heard of the potential for ruining a furnace this way. Do any of our readers have more information on this subject? — ed.]

Old-House Dreams

Dear Ms. Poore,

I'm sure you are aware that your magazine is a great source of information and solidarity to old-house owners. But it also performs an invaluable service for people like me, who, while not fortunate enough to own an old house, are nonetheless avid lovers of old houses. Old-House Journal allows me to indulge this love I've had since childhood, when I used to daydream about the Victorian houses visible from my classroom windows.

An old house of our own is the dream of my husband and me, but
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continued from page 10

prices in our area have shut us out of owning a home. However, thanks to OHJ, I can share the joys and trials of old-house living, if only vicariously. Being able to daydream about someone else's Victorian has, at times, made living in a small apartment (with three children!) more bearable. It is still our hope to one day buy our own old house; against that day I faithfully read and save my Old-House Journals.

— Marji Stoddard
Linden, N.J.

Insane Hobby?

Dear OHJ:

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for about six years. During that time I have acquired a 1904 townhouse apartment building and an 1891 Queen Anne-style home, both of which I am restoring. I should note that these properties are in the center of Detroit, which prob-

ably boasts the most complete cross section of American architectural styles and periods in the country. Although I'm currently working for Ford Motor Company in Hiroshima, Japan, the restoration work on my property is still proceeding.

I have found your magazine extremely useful in my hobby — or, as some of my co-workers refer to it, my insanity. I should also report that the issues receive extensive review from my neighbors, who are also slightly insane

— R.S. Holcomb
Hiroshima, Japan

Period Plumbing Problems

Dear Editors:

Every month our office flips through OHJ, each person for his or her own reason. I love the refinishing tips, the stories of full restoration jobs, and the Remuddling feature. I am storing all this information away for the time I am fortunate enough

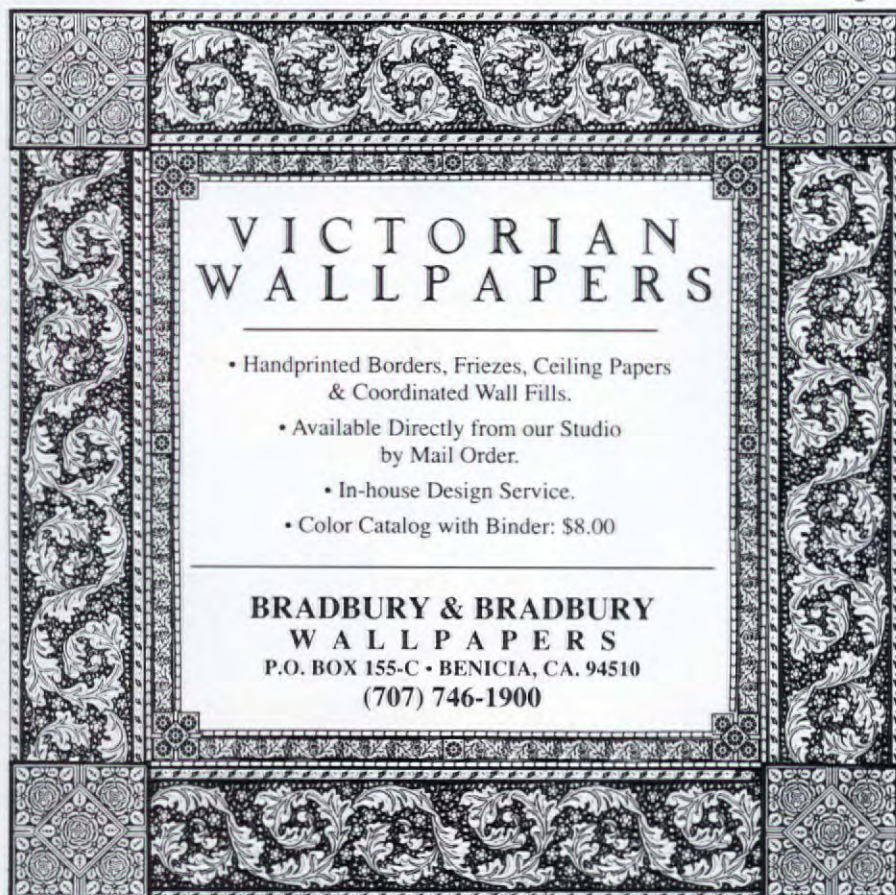
to find a house begging for restoration.

Always in the back of my mind was the hope for a feature on the history of plumbing. Life is good: Finally, in the November/December 1988 issue, you had an article on plumbing — with a photo of my specific interest, the c. 1890 toilet.

When my husband and I first moved into our Woodlawn-area apartment in Chicago, our toilet was a novelty with a little brass push-flusher and a wooden tank under layers of paint and contact paper. But the more I recognized the shortcomings of the early toilets, the less sentimental I became about the contraption. Let us say the early toilet bowls were not shaped quite right.

Lest there be fanatics in the reading audience who believe original is always best: Time marches forward and with good reason.

— Diane J. Hall
Chicago, Ill.



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LETTERS

The following letters and commentary are in response to "Fireplace Conversions" in the March-April issue. The article focussed on safe conversion of gas fireplaces to wood-burning, a common but potentially hazardous renovation practice.

The article included a very brief rundown of chimney-lining systems, and it is this information that has stirred controversy. The two letters here are from the principals at SOLID/FLUE and AHRENS Chimney Technique, two leading companies that sell and service cast-in-place cement liners. We've limited their comments to specific responses to the recent OHJ article. Both men, however, have extensive practical experience with old chimneys, and we urge readers to contact them for additional technical information.

Relining old chimneys and reacti-

vating outdated fireplaces will continue to be controversial because existing conditions almost never meet current code. Yet it is not practical to rebuild.

"Zero clearance" is the real problem. Too often, combustible material is in contact with fireplace or chimney masonry. Although inspectors will most often allow relining — because that's clearly safer than not relining — the work is an exception, not allowed for in the NFPA 211 chimney standard. Monte Lutz of AHRENS is one of four people asked by Underwriters Labs to act as an industry advisor; he hopes that eventually the standard will be changed to give consideration to real-world conditions (and to guide consistent practice for old chimneys). He tells us that, as the wording stands, chimneys cannot legally be relined. — P. Poore

Dear Ms. Poore,

I would like to make several points about the pumped chimney-lining products mentioned in your article.

A pumped chimney lining, as installed in the early 1980s, was hard to remove if improperly installed. However, as with most new products, time has a way of allowing solutions. There is (and has been for several years) a power tool that removes this lining and allows a new liner to be installed. This process is done with a chimney reamer that we market.

Pumped liners are recommended and installed in many multiple flues, as the liners are relatively light. When installed properly, there are no problems with either the weight or with the dividing wall. This wall, or wythe, is not in a large number of chimneys anyway, and the lining will form a dividing wall in any case (assuming all flues will be relined — ed.).

The weight of a pumped liner is less than 50 pounds per cubic foot, which is less than the weight of the tile that will be replaced in most cases ... certainly not enough weight

to cause any problems.

These multiple liners have been installed all over the United States and Canada, and in England for 30 years without any major problems.

By the way, we had our SOLID/FLUE product tested to both the UL and ULC (Canadian) standards to Zero Clearance to combustibles, including around the flue, the throat, sides, and bottom of the firebox, and the hearth. I am enclosing copies of the approval letters from the lab [from Warnock Hersey International, Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.]. At the present time, we are the only ones that have a listed system to allow restoration of the flue and the fireplace when combustibles are in direct contact with the flue and/or the fireplace.

— Joe LaFleur
Chairman of the Board
SOLID/FLUE Chimney Systems
370 100th St. SW
Byron Center, MI 49315
(616) 878-3577

Dear Ms. Poore,

Your article says "chimney wall thickness should be eight inches."

The chimney can be four inches thick if it has a liner; eight inches would be accurate according to some codes if it was left unlined. See NFPA 211.

You discuss the advantages of clay tile for relining a flue, but clay itself is a poor insulator. My opinion is that clay liners with dead air would fail today's UL 1777 standard. Clay tile was common in the past. Now it is close to unheard-of on a national basis.

The article also states, "Poured-cement liners are not generally recommended for chimneys with multiple flues, particularly in old chimneys where the mortar may be crumbly, because the wet cement could flow into the adjacent flue. Also, the additional weight of the cement lining could cause collapse of the brick partition." This is not a true statement of our product; the material used by Ahren's Chimney Technique is 0-slump, meaning it has minimal amounts of water.

You state, "Another type of liner is a poured-cement liner. In most such systems, a flexible, inflatable form is inserted. ..." Our procedure is not described! AHRENS uses a bell or slip-form system; there is no "pumping" of wet refractory cement.

— Monte Lutz
Vice President
AHRENS Chimney Technique
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Jonathan Poore responds:

Recommendations in *Architectural Graphic Standards* call for 8" minimum solid masonry on exterior walls to insulate against outside air and improve draft. I should have qualified my statement.

I do not agree that clay tile "is close to unheard-of on a national basis." My statement that it is still commonly used and approved by inspectors in no way challenges the usefulness and safety of other lining systems.

Squelching Squirrels

I noticed a question about removing squirrels from a house [*Ask OHJ*, January/February 1989], and would like to suggest a method we used.

Squirrels were in our attic and causing damage. We decided to make it so unpleasant for them that they would not want to come in. (The theory is that if their entrance is blocked, they will chew new holes to get back in; but if they leave voluntarily, they won't be back.) We took aluminum-foil roasting pans and folded bath towels into them. These were placed at several points around the edge of the attic and filled with ammonia. We renewed the ammonia morning and evening for ten days, although we did not see any squirrels after the first five days. After four months, we are still squirrel-free.

The bath towels hold the ammonia so it doesn't immediately evaporate. The smell in the attic was never overpowering to humans, and was not detectable on the lower floors. We have a large Victorian; the attic floorspace is probably close to 1000 square feet. We were afraid it might be too large for this to work, but it was successful. At one point, three squirrels were seen scratching on the window to get out!

— Gwendolyn Johnson
Galesburg, Ill.

There is in fact a "magic solution" to getting rid of squirrels in old-house attics! Forty years ago my father wrote to the Department of Agriculture about this problem and they recommended a liberal application of moth flakes in the attic. We tried it and the squirrels left, never to return (so did a colony of bees, but this might have been mere coincidence).

Three years ago, I used the same method to get rid of red squirrels in our attic; it drove them out within hours. We then put in moth balls too, for longer-lasting protection after sealing up the obvious entry holes. We found it also worked for



A base coat is applied to a radiator in a 1930 illustration from *The Home Workshop Manual*. Sponge stippling is shown in inset.

skunks under a wing of the house — but again, blocking up the entry hole afterwards is essential.

I have heard that double- and triple-reed instruments — bagpipes would be the best, I suppose — will also drive out rodents; but moth flakes are easier to come by for most people.

— Daniel D. Reiff
Fredonia, N.Y.

Stippled Radiators

I was very impressed with the information on painting radiators in the September/October 1988 *OHJ*. But here's a painting technique you missed, courtesy of *The Home Workshop Manual* (1930): "If the wall decoration is . . . paint-stippled or Tiffany two-tone blended effects, the ideal treatment for the radiator is stippling.

"Give the radiator two solid covering coats of flat wall paint of the desired foundation color. . . . The simplest method [of stippling] is to apply color with a sponge cut across the grain to give a good painting sur-

face. Pour some of the stippling color on a board or a piece of paper, dip the sponge into the color, tap it out two or three times on a piece of paper to remove the excess paint, then pat it straight onto the radiator without twisting or turning. Reload the sponge with color and continue the process until the entire surface has been covered. When the paint is dry, a second or even a third stippling color may be applied in the same way. The sponge should be washed out in gasoline and thoroughly cleaned with soap and warm water after it has been used with each color."

— Irene Walker
Los Angeles, Cal.



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An Aladdin House

Q We just purchased this beautiful 1922 Aladdin house. It has heart-pine, tongue-and-groove floors downstairs, two chimneys (on the other side of the house), clawfoot tub, and cast-iron toilet. We know that, being an Aladdin house, each piece was individually cut, numbered, and assembled on site. How can we get in touch with the company? Also, how would you describe the house? We've heard it called a neo-Colonial, A&C, and a few other names.

We were thinking of replacing the three small windows with stained glass. Would that be appropriate?

— Vicki Rice
York, S.C.

A Alas, the Aladdin Company of Bay City, Michigan, stopped manufacturing in January of 1983, after more than 70 years in the business. However, their Catalog No. 31 of 1919 has been reprinted by American Life Books (Box 349, Watkins Glen, NY 14891; \$6.95 ppd.), and it's a fascinating look at one end of house-building in the 'teens.

In his essay accompanying the reprint, John Crosby Freeman comments that Aladdin's catalog "had a limited stylistic vocabulary of little help to owners who want to know 'What Style Is My House?'" — and the same was probably true in 1922.



The Brentwood, from a later Aladdin catalog, shares elements such as the clipped gable and a sleeping porch with the Rices' house (inset).

Your house shares some elements of "The Brentwood," which, according to the description, is "of a quaint English type of architecture."

The jerkin-head or clipped gable roof on your house is often seen on Arts & Crafts houses, and was a favorite Aladdin treatment. The window mullions with their vertical emphasis are also A&C- and Craftsman-influenced, as is the sleeping porch. No house models in the Aladdin catalog show stained-glass windows. Aladdin buyers may have customized their kit houses with stained glass, of course; but keep in mind that the heyday of stained glass was in the Victorian period.

Lead-Paint Perils

Q When stripping all exterior paint from a 1735 center-chimney Colonial, we were ordered by the State Health Department to stop using heat guns; we were told they released lead vapors into the interior

of the house, which could pose a danger to a pregnant occupant. Other forms of paint removal, such as scraping or sandpapering, were not proscribed.

This was a surprise to us, because we thought that low-level heat would be the safest and most practical method of paint removal, superior to scraping, sandblasting (horrors!), sandpapering, etc. Warnings about the dangers to pregnant women were associated with interior paint removal, which was not being done here.

Can you tell us at what temperature lead vaporizes, and whether or not it would pass through the siding and plaster of an old house so as to pose problems for the occupants? What are the relative risks of lead vapors as compared to dust particles raised by sanding and scraping?

— John and Janice Champe
Lebanon, Conn.

A Lead melts at 621.5° F, and boils at about 3,171.2° F. The temperature for vaporization is even higher — and way above the operating range of even Master's heavy-duty heat gun (about 700° F) or a heat plate (about 1100° F).

Pregnant women are *always* at risk around lead-removal operations — by sanding, chemicals, or heat — and many other restoration procedures as well. Why risk it? It seems that every day more chemicals and materials, once thought to be innocuous or harmful only in large exposures, are found to be toxic and even lethal. Young life is most vulnerable to any of these agents. The best bet is to err on the side of caution whenever dealing with unhealthy materials or processes.

The greatest threat of lead poisoning comes from ingestion rather than breathing vapors. Studies continue to show that heat methods are safer than sanding methods, which create airborne dust that coats skin and mucous membranes and is ingested.

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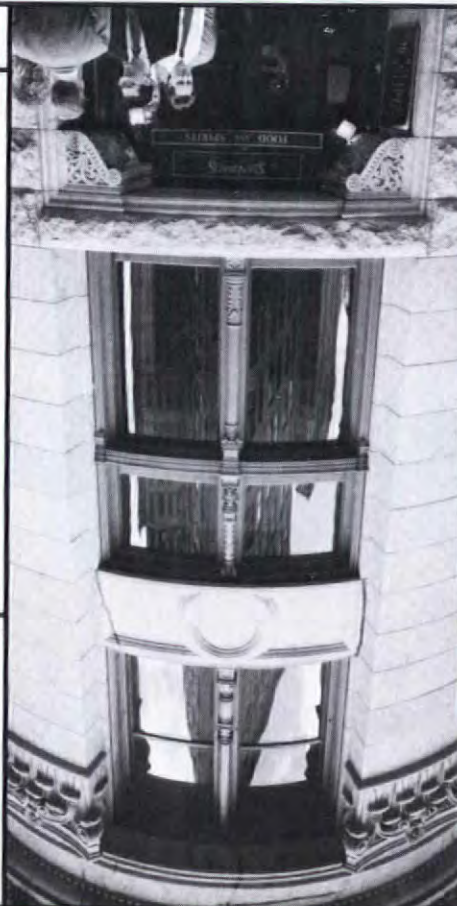
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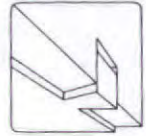
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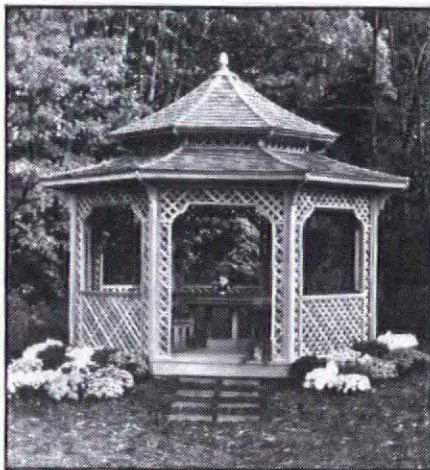
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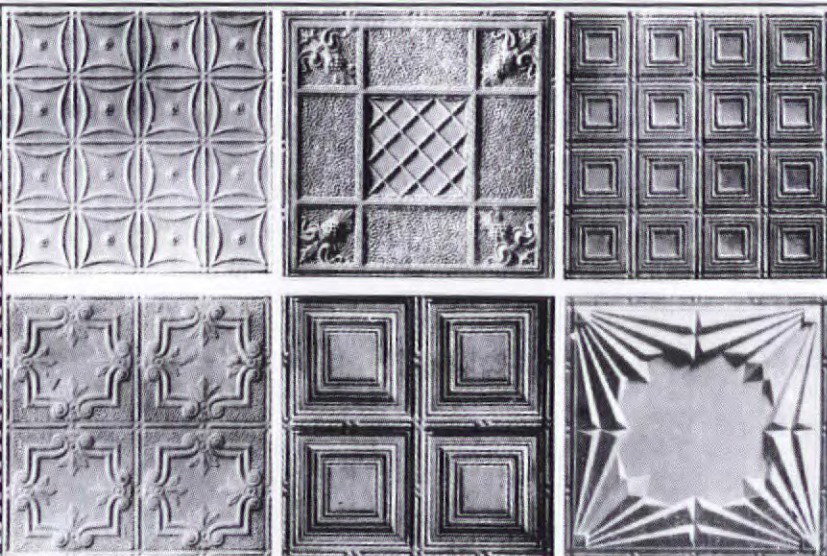


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Topiary standards, spirals, and poodles frame this Colonial Revival doorway.

nies, meticulously clipped boxwood edged flower and vegetable beds. As early as 1690, more imaginative topiary could be found in Williamsburg, Virginia, where shrubs clipped into various geometric forms dotted diamond-shaped knot gardens. John Lawrence wrote in 1776 that the wide, central walks characteristic of most colonial gardens often had one round bed in the center "filled with some curious Ever-green plant cut pyramidically or fluted." Topiary was used to frame doorways. Fruit trees shaped into standards were also popular in early gardens. (A standard is a globe of growth atop a single, erect trunk or stem — see illustration, page 18, bottom.)

Topiary was more common in the Southern colonies than it was in New England, though wealthy merchants in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York were apt to have topiary in their gardens. In the South, too, topiary was more likely to be found in the gardens of the well-to-do. And topiary was more popular among Dutch colonists in New Amsterdam, even those of modest means, than it was among English settlers.

Toward the middle of the 19th century, American horticultural tastes began to change. A.J. Downing and other early-Victorian proponents of "picturesque" architectural styles had romantic, "naturalistic" settings in

mind for their Gothic cottages and Italian villas. By 1870, however, a kind of architectural topiary was being espoused by horticulturist Frank J. Scott in *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds*. Scott didn't have much use for hedges, whether clipped or allowed to ramble ("one of the barbarisms of old gardening," he called them, "as absurd and unchristian in our day as the walled courts and barred windows of a Spanish cloister"). But Scott was quite fond of "verdant arches and bowers" — bushes clipped into fanciful shapes to frame garden gates (see illustrations at right).

By the early decades of the 20th century, standards and other topiary classics were making a comeback. Rich Americans were creating topiary extravaganzas. In 1929, for instance, Harvey Ladew bought a Maryland farm and began transforming 22 acres into a spectacular topiary garden, complete with fox-hunting scene and evergreen Buddha. In addition, both upper- and middle-class gardens of the early-20th century were often based on highly structured Italian-style gardens and included such architectural elements as balustrades, pergolas, statuary, and topiary pieces in terra-cotta pots.

The current infatuation with topiary has more to do with America's

romance with the English cottage garden than with the authenticity of sheared shrubs in period landscapes. But topiary does have a place in early American gardens, particularly the more elegant examples. It's also appropriate in the gardens of Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival houses, and in Italian-style gardens of the early-20th century.

For practical information on how to create topiary, see *The Complete Book of Topiary* by Barbara Gallup and Deborah Reich. It's available for \$12.95 ppd. from Workman Publishing, 708 Broadway, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10003; (212) 254-5900. The book also includes a list of nurseries where you can find box, privet, and other period plants, as well as pruning shears, metal frames for training topiary, and other supplies.



Victorian tastemaker Frank Scott was fond of fanciful topiary to frame garden gates.

from *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* (1870)

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EXTERIOR WOOD

PAGE **22** **Epoxy Repairs**
for porches, shutters, etc.

PAGE **27** **Ornamental Carving**
is just a matter of organization

PAGE **32** **Traditional Clapboards**
and weatherboards: types & installation



How to Use Epoxies *to Repair Rotted Exterior Wood*

by John Leeke

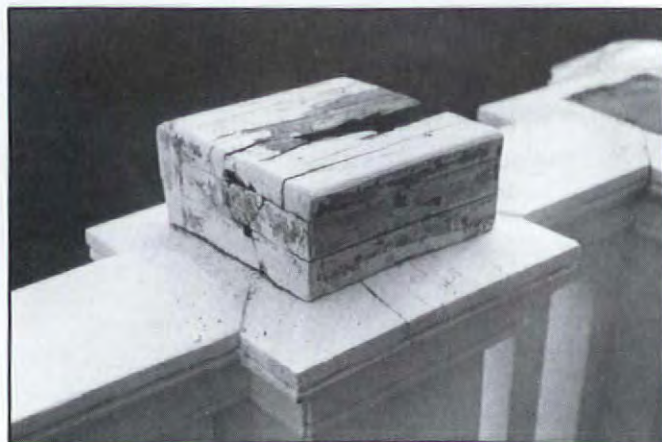
Modern high-tech epoxy materials are great for wood repairs on historic houses. Epoxies can save time and money when you know how to use them. You can restore and strengthen porous decayed wood by soaking it with liquid epoxy which then solidifies within the wood. Gaps and holes can be filled with an epoxy-based paste that hardens with characteristics similar to wood.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using epoxy; not every wood repair calls for them. If they are improperly handled during application, they can be a serious health and safety hazard. And they are not a miracle cure for all decay problems. When applied without regard to a few basic principles, epoxies can actually promote decay.

On the advantage side:

- It is easy to learn to use epoxies.
- Epoxy materials hold up well to the weather. They are waterproof, don't decay, and hold paint or stain very well.
- It may not be necessary to remove affected parts from the building.
- Epoxy repair saves as much of the original material as possible.

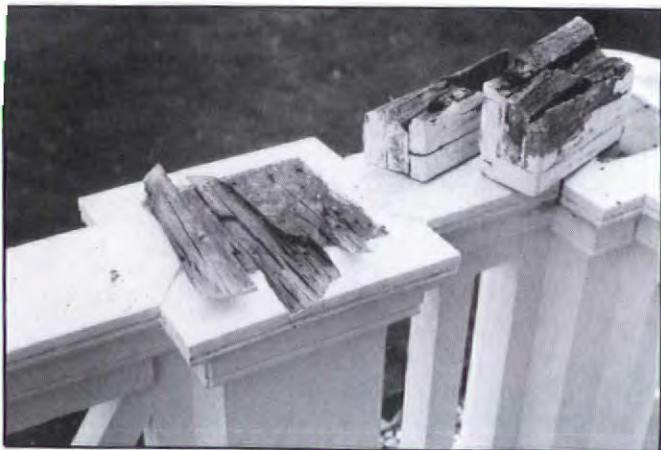
Don't confuse these epoxy materials with epoxies formulated for other uses, such as five-minute adhesives, bar-top coatings, paints, or structural-repair epoxy.



A porch railing: The decayed and broken cap atop the pedestal was not worth saving, as it was built up of ordinary 2×8 lumber in a recent repair.

Generally, the more special a part is, the more it makes sense to use epoxy. It is usually economical to use epoxies on fancy parts like mouldings, turnings, and carvings. Flat, straight boards and other plain parts can often be repaired less expensively using traditional methods such as wood dutchmen or complete replacement.

Because epoxy is such a long-lasting material, it should



It was economical and historically correct to replace the raised cap with a solid 3" piece of pine, shaped to match nearby originals. The pedestal top, however, was better treated in place with epoxy.



So that epoxy consolidant will penetrate, $\frac{3}{16}$ " holes are drilled to just short of the underside.

only be considered where long life is a goal of the project. Use other, less costly materials if you know you will be working on the area again within five or ten years.

Using epoxies to "gloss over" problem areas only leads to more problems in the future. You must find the root cause of the decay. Complete treatments often involve taking the problem area completely apart for access to hidden parts and surfaces.

The methods described here are good for repairs to most trim and other non-structural wood parts of a building. This includes railings, mouldings, doors and windows. Don't use these epoxies on parts that must carry a structural load. A good example is the base of a hollow wood column. If it has an interior column to support the load, these materials are fine. But if there is no interior column, then these epoxies may be too soft. They may creep and change

shape under the load. Harder structural epoxies are formulated especially for structural use.

Decay Process

When a baluster or railing cap decays, the loss of wood is progressive. At first, the mass of the wood diminishes but it still retains its original size and shape. As decay continues, the wood shrinks and then begins to crumble.

Epoxy consolidants replace the lost mass, restoring strength to the wood. Holes and gaps can be filled and built up with **epoxy paste fillers**.

Wood is a flexible material. It changes shape and size from season to season, mostly due to changes in moisture content. These changes take place no matter how well the wood is caulked or painted. Materials used to repair wood must be at least as flexible as the wood around the repair

TOOLS

My epoxy kit has all the tools and supplies I need. I can grab it and know everything I need is there. The kit has two parts. First is a "ready kit." It is a small tool tray that is easy to move around a job site. It has everything ready to go.

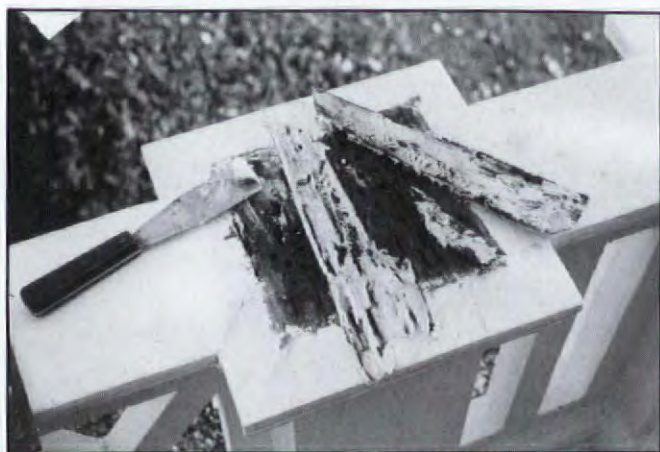
Second is the "backup kit." I use it to refill supplies in the ready kit. Everything fits into a 15" x 20" crater with the ready kit nestled on top.

Ready Kit

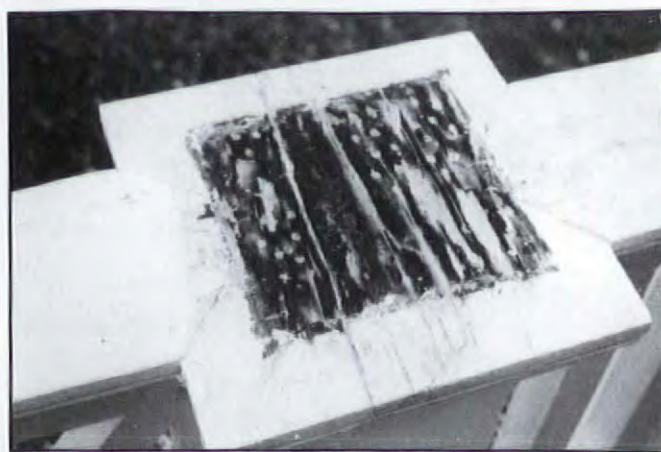
- two 10-fluid-oz. cans with snap-on lids, each labeled and filled with A- and B-parts of adhesive paste filler
- two 8-fluid-oz. bottles, each labeled and filled with A- and B-parts of consolidant
- a few empty bottles for mixing and application
- rags: dozens large and small, stuffed into an old sock
- gloves: several thin disposable, and 1 heavy-duty pair
- goggles and respirator
- oil clay (from a hobby store)
- putty knives
- mixing boards: several of $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 8" x 12" Masonite for mixing paste filler

Backup Kit

- epoxy materials: I usually buy by the gallon. So, I have a gallon each of A- and B-parts of both consolidant and adhesive paste.
- 2 dozen application bottles
- rags torn to size: I tear up rags ahead of time and stuff them into old socks for easy handling. Small ones are for one-time use wiping off spouts and caps; large are for cleanup
- mixing sticks: a bundle of thin wood sticks 8" long for scooping out paste and stirring consolidant
- gloves: 1 box disposable vinyl; extra pair medium-duty nitril rubber
- a package of oil clay (for stopping consolidant from leaking out of cracks)
- bottle cleaning tools: It's a toss-up whether it is worth cleaning out application bottles. I'm reluctant to just toss them after one use. So, I clean them which takes 3 to 5 minutes — barely worth it economically, but less wasteful.
- channel-lock pliers to open stuck caps
- allen wrench to clean out cap hole
- needlenose pliers to pull out hardened epoxy



After the decayed top and broken piece have been saturated with consolidant, the piece is glued into place with a mixture of consolidant and paste filler.



The top is now much more weather-resistant. Note that epoxy was not used in the railing joints, as this could make future repairs more difficult.

to be most effective. Auto body fillers such as Bondo are far too rigid to adjust to the movement of wood. They fall out sooner or later. Bondo, as well as common wood putties and "spackles," are not adhesive enough to stick to exterior wood if the paint fails.

Epoxy formulated for wood repairs is flexible and extremely adhesive. The stuff sticks well to all common building materials and is more weatherproof than most of them. (The only adhesion problems I've had were on dusty or greasy surfaces.)

If not applied carefully and effectively, epoxy consolidant can actually trap moisture, causing further decay. The decayed wood must be completely dry to its full depth, or the epoxy will form an impervious shell that traps moisture in the wood beneath.

Protect parts to be treated in place by covering loosely with poly sheeting. You might have to remove the decayed parts and set them aside for several days or weeks in a cool ventilated area.

Materials

Both consolidant and adhesive paste-filler epoxies come as two-part systems that you mix together. The mixture gels, or begins to harden, after several minutes to several hours. The length of time depends on the original formulation and on the surrounding temperature.

The mixture hardens due to a chemical reaction from within. The reaction generates heat. When large amounts are mixed or thick sections are treated, heat builds up causing faster setting and even more heat buildup. This cumulative cycle of heat can make it set sooner than you want, or even cause a fire, if you're not aware of it.

After several days the epoxy reaches its final strength and hardness. Depending on the original formulation, the epoxy will be more or less flexible, to match the characteristics of the surrounding wood.

Consolidants are syrupy liquids formulated especially to soak into fibrous materials such as decayed wood. Generally, a consolidant that is thinner in consistency and takes longer to gel will penetrate further than a thick, quick

setting one.

Adhesive **paste filler** is made of a two-part liquid epoxy very similar to consolidants. Powdery thickeners are blended in to make a paste that ranges from the consistency of mayonnaise to stiff mashed potatoes. Other fillers give the cured paste the strength and flexibility characteristics of wood.

You can formulate your own paste of epoxy consolidant with sawdust and a little cornstarch. But the commercially prepared materials are much more reliable.

Housekeeping

An important part of mixing and using epoxies is good housekeeping and cleanliness. I try to keep all of the epoxy in containers or in the wood I'm working on. If even small drips or traces of the stuff escape, I wipe it up with a small rag and toss it in a trash container.

Using rags only once may seem wasteful, but it is important to keep these hazardous materials out of your eyes and off your bare skin until they have cured.

Keep your work area organized. You are often working against the gel time of the epoxy, which seems all too short. You need to have all of your parts and materials at hand without tripping over a lot of clutter.

I even keep my storage and mixing equipment lined up with A-parts on the left and B-parts on the right to avoid mixing errors. Label caps and lids. If they get on the wrong container they will be glued there forever.

Have all preparation work complete before starting with the epoxies.

Retard setting of consolidant by mixing small amounts, working in the shade or during cool weather.

Be careful not to inadvertently glue parts together. Once I embarrassed myself by gluing a sliding sash into its frame when I installed it before the epoxy was set.

Although you don't need woodworking skills to work with epoxies, you do need an understanding of wood. Other aspects of your project may require woodworking skills for successful completion.



Treatment of this gable-end return cornice moulding will be easier if it's removed.

Mixing

Mixing requires some care. Proportions aren't super-critical, but you must follow these guidelines.

Use clean mixing equipment to avoid contamination. Don't use the same container again right away. Remnants of the old batch will accelerate the new batch, causing it to set much too quickly. Thorough mixing is necessary for the reaction to be complete.

Containers can be disposable, or flexible so that hardened epoxy can be broken out once it has cured.



Even with careful removal, the fragile end fell to pieces.

Mix only as much epoxy as you will use before it begins to gel. When working alone I seldom need to mix more than a cupful at a time. Working with small batches also helps avoid heat buildup.

I mix small amounts of consolidant by squeezing the correct amount from the part-A and -B bottles into a clean application bottle. I stir the mixture for four full minutes by hand with a thin stick or for two minutes with a bent coat hanger chucked in an electric drill.

I mix two-part paste fillers on a flat board. I use heavy sticks to scoop equal parts of the paste out of each container. The sticks are marked "A" and "B" so I don't con-

SUPPLIERS

Suppliers for epoxy materials are becoming more common. Check with your local marine suppliers or use the following manufacturers who make direct sales.

Conservation Services

8 Lakeside Trail

Kinnelon, NJ 07405

(201) 838-6412

These products cure more slowly than Abatron's (below). This makes them especially good for repairs to thick parts left in place for treatment such as window sills. The cured epoxy is also more flexible.

Con Serv (t) Flexible Consolidant 100

Slow cure allows 5-7 hours application time for deep penetration, cures to a rubberband-like hardness in 3-6 days; especially good for thick sections or when application is from only one side of the part.

Con Serv (t) Flexible Patch 200

Putty-like filler, comes in four parts; mixing in small amounts is more difficult than WoodEpoxy (below) but gives you more control of consistency and hardness; expands and contracts with wood when cured.

Nitril rubber gloves

Heavier than disposable gloves, but thin enough so you can feel what you're doing.

Abatron

141 Center Drive

Gilberts, IL 60136

(312) 426-2200

These products cure somewhat faster and harder than Con Serv — good for projects such as window sash where there is a lot of repetitive work and deep penetration is not needed because the parts are small.

LiquidWood-1 (consolidant)

Quick gel time allows 1-2 hours application time for higher production rate but less penetration.

WoodEpoxy-2 (adhesive paste)

Adhesive paste filler comes as two pastes you mix in equal parts which simplifies mixing; final hardness adjustable by varying the ratio. Can be thinned with LiquidWood but this makes it less flexible.

Your local drug store

Application Bottles

8-fluid-ounce hair-dye bottles are ideal for mixing and applying consolidant. They are inexpensive, have a liquid-proof screw-top seal, and measurement markings on the side which help in mixing. (ROUX Color Applicator, by Roux Laboratories, Jacksonville, Fla., is especially good if you're cleaning and reusing bottles.)

Disposable Gloves

Close-fitting vinyl gloves are good for light work. Available 50 per box for about \$7.



The porous, decayed wood at the end of the moulding was tacked to a piece of plywood covered with poly sheeting, to hold pieces in place as they are soaked with consolidant and glued. The final repair is a sturdy original moulding ready to nail in place without cutting or fitting.

taminate one supply with the other. With a 1½" putty knife I spread the paste out and then scrape it up into one lump, again and again until the mass is smooth and thoroughly mixed. It usually takes about five minutes.

When I'm done mixing I leave the paste spread out thin across the board. This helps prevent heat buildup until the paste is applied.

Consolidating

Maximum penetration is the key requirement for effective consolidation of decayed wood. Often, a thin layer of sound wood forms a shell over deep decay. Drilling holes in a honeycomb pattern speeds and increases penetration.

SAFETY

- ♦ **Epoxyes are toxic chemicals.** Read product safety warnings and directions *before* starting.
- ♦ **Avoid contact with eyes and skin.** Use goggles, gloves, long sleeves, and a heavy work apron.
- ♦ **Avoid breathing fumes.** Work outside or in a well-ventilated area. When sanding epoxy patches, wear a high-quality dust mask. For maximum protection, wear a vapor respirator with proper cartridge when mixing or applying epoxyes.
- ♦ **Watch out for spills and drips.** Mask off areas next to the repair. Clean up spills promptly with cloth rags. Avoid vapor hazard by placing all cleanup and mixing materials in a trash can outside the house.
- ♦ **Use soap or detergent** — *not* epoxy solvents — to wash epoxy off your skin.
- ♦ **Use disposable stir sticks and gloves.** Launder soiled clothing separately.
- ♦ **Epoxyes are flammable.** Store in a cool location. Don't smoke or use an open flame. Heat can build up when large amounts are mixed. Keep an eye on mixed batches, feel the container for excessive heat. Have a CO₂ extinguisher on hand.



Applying consolidant to a shutter: A hair-dye applicator bottle is ideal for mixing and applying small quantities. The narrow spout makes it easy to put a controlled amount of consolidant exactly where you want it. If the bottle is knocked over, little will spill.

Don't drill all the way through the part or the consolidant will just drain out the back before it soaks in.

Use plasticene oil clay to dam up cracks and holes where the consolidant will leak out. Allow time for epoxy to soak in by moving from one area of treatment to the next. Finally, come back to the first area, which will be ready for more consolidant.

Check for complete penetration of consolidant into decayed wood by drilling a hole or cutting out a small section of treated wood. Then you can see if any decayed wood has not been saturated with consolidant. The check must be done before the consolidant begins to harden, so more can soak in if needed. This is a messy business. But it is the only way I know of to be certain the treatment is complete and effective.

Filling & Gluing

Once the decayed wood is consolidated, missing wood can be filled in with adhesive paste filler. If you are filling wood not already treated with consolidant, apply some consolidant as a primer.

I fill large voids in layers up to an inch thick at a time, letting each layer harden before applying the next. More than an inch might cause excessive heat buildup.

After the filler is cured you can work it with ordinary woodworking tools and methods. It can be carved, drilled, rasped and sanded. A hand plane will make shavings that look just like wood, except for the color. The epoxy will hold screws and nails; I usually pre-drill a pilot hole.

I use a mixture of consolidant and paste to make an excellent gap-filling, weatherproof glue.

An epoxy surface planed or sanded smooth will hold oil-base paint without any problems. When making future repairs, new epoxy will adhere well to the old.

John Leeke, a contractor and consultant who lives in Sanford, Maine, helps homeowners, contractors, and architects maintain and understand their early buildings. (RR 1, Box 2947, Sanford, ME 04073; (207) 324-9597.)

Details such as this shell are what ultimately make a house interesting, so don't be afraid to try your hand. Mine may never be one of the great carvings of the 19th-century revival. But it does show that within each of us lies latent creativity. To get started, you need simply to organize.

— Gerard Cole

This manuscript from an OHJ reader gives clear, step-by-step instructions on how to carve a gable-end shell ornament and how to build a gable fan. But it's also about an approach to projects: Take time to know what you want, break the whole down into manageable parts, and do it.

I learned something from this article — even though my old house has no gable ends to decorate.

— P. Poore



CARVING

IS REALLY A MATTER OF ORGANIZATION

by Gerard MacLachlan Cole, Jr.

photos and illustrations by Gerard MacLachlan Cole, Jr.

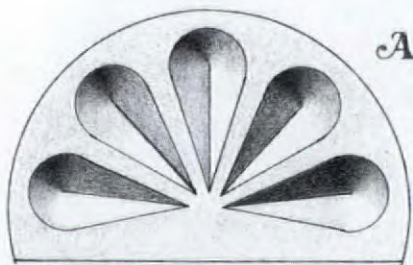
A time came in my porch restoration when I had to decide exactly how I was going to decorate the two gable-ends over the stairs. I wanted to rebuild the “sunrise” fan designs, but with something more attractive than the original plain half-circles at their centers. I was also determined to have first-class joinery.

Some simple designs came to mind but, having never done carving, I feared the project might fall into the “forget it, not me!” category. However, as I thought over the steps needed, I realized that carving is really a matter of organization.

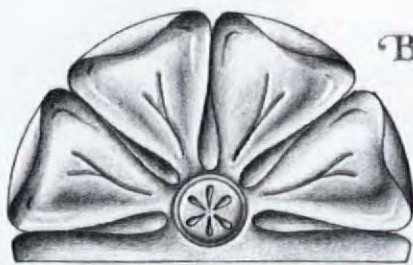
This is, of course, a “How to Carve a Shell” article, but I also hope to show how planning ahead and a step-by-

step approach to woodworking can be applied to any carving. Don't look at your project in its entirety or it will overwhelm you. Instead, try to see various shapes and planes and resolve each into an element within your capabilities.

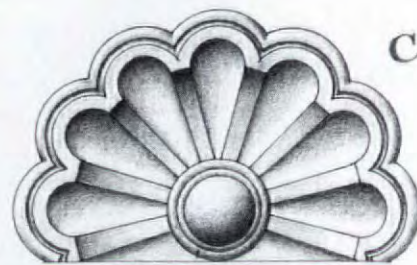
I make no claim that this is the only or even best method of carving. I chose electric rotary tools because they allowed me to be less concerned about wood grain direction and splitting out. I also like the way burrs and rasps that fit into a quarter-inch chuck can be run by flexible shafts connected to large drills or motors — a very handy setup. On a subsequent project I did use various carving chisels and sometimes found them to be easier and faster. Using both electric and hand tools seems right to me.



A



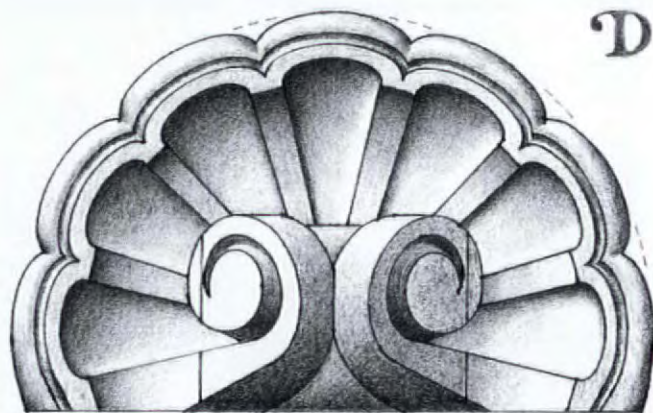
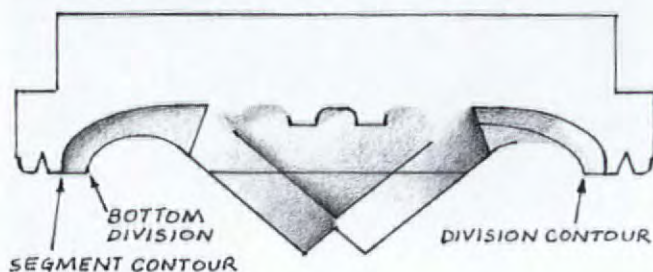
B



C

The Shell Section

1) Work out a design and make a full-sized drawing. Consider problems with perspective rising from the shell's location on the house. While designs A through D are based on perfect circles, the centers are a full inch above the bottom edge. This way the shell, partially hidden by the gable trim when viewed from below, does not lose its most interesting details and still appears semi-circular.

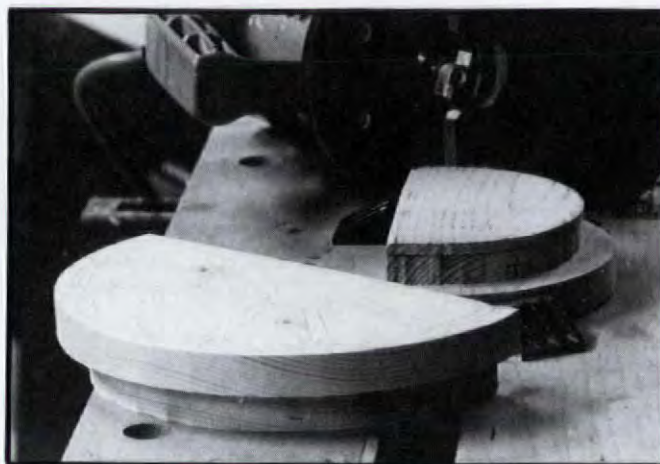


D

2) Obtain appropriate wood stock. Overall dimensions depend on the size shell you need (I'll talk about this later), but start with enough wood to produce a substantial deep-relief carving. I chose pine (for life and workability), 2-inch stock (1½ inches actual dimension).

3) Tape your drawing onto the stock at two places along one edge, like a hinge. Slide a piece of carbon paper under the drawing and trace the design onto the wood, omitting anything that will appear in the laminated part.

4) Using a bandsaw or sabresaw, cut out the rough semi-circle of the shell and sand smooth. Rout a rabbet around the back edge so that the ¾-inch-thick boards of the sunrise will go behind the finished shell rather than butt up to it — stronger than mounting to the face of the boards, and very weathertight when sealed with caulk. Use a bit with a pilot bearing and cut the rabbet ⅜- to ½-inch deep.



A rabbet on the back is neater, stronger, and more weathertight than just butting boards to the shell.

5) If you start your carving on the inner part (such as the top of the shell segments) and make a mistake towards the outside, you're committed to that dimension and unable to "fudge" your way out of the error. Start with the outside edge cuts first and work towards the middle. If you goof a little, you can follow through with your mistake as you progress and the error will be unnoticeable.

This said, the next step is to go over the outside edge of the shell with the saw and cut the scallops that define each shell segment. Re-sand to the final contour. Then round off the new edge using a quarter-round router bit chucked into your rotary tool. Sharp corners cause finishes to fracture rapidly (the wear factor from wind-borne water and dust alone is extremely high), so I make sure that there are no sharp corners on exterior work. Even a slight rounding of corners — say, ½-inch radius — will add considerable life to the finish yet retain the square corner appearance.

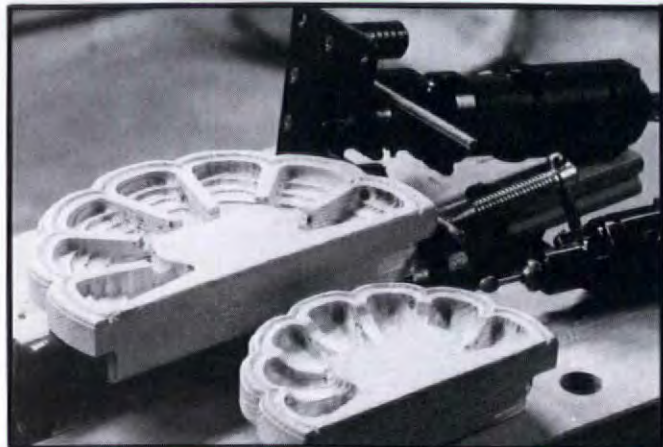
6) Change to a v-burr bit and carefully carve the shadow groove that follows the scalloped edge of the shell. (A v-shaped groove won't trap water that would freeze and split the wood.) Don't cut to the full depth all at once! Instead, start shallow and work your way down in four or five passes. Do one lobe at a time. Try to be firm on the last pass to produce a smooth, even contour. If some wiggles remain, go back and gently even them out.

After the basic groove is completed, the dips between lobes can be carved to a point.

7) Next, rout out the face. Use a ¼-inch round-end router bit; with only two cutting edges, it cuts faster and easier

than a burr. The round end makes less harsh cuts, making later correction easier should you over-cut. Start with the entire surface of the segment for the first few passes, then rout less and less to the outside as you cut deeper, creating "steps." Be careful not to damage the divisions, which you'll find are necessary to hold your router and maintain control over cutting depth.

After the segments have been roughed out, reset your bit depth and rout around the scrolls. This will carve a piece out of the divisions and establish their height near the center. Now judge the planes near the center of the work and, if necessary, cut deeper.



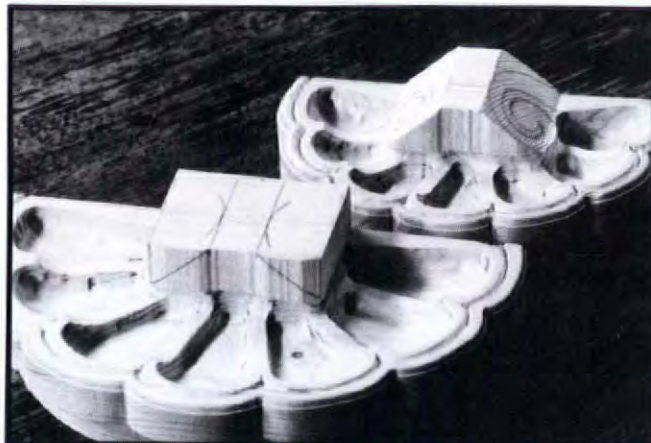
Don't be shy or your work will appear flat from even a slight distance. You want good shadows. Consider, however, the strength of the remaining wood.

8) Now you'll form the bottoms of the shell segments. Remove the router attachment and change the bit to a large oval burr. The burr is slower cutting, so a little too much pressure won't cause a drastic cut. Start with the step corners and work outward to the next higher step. After all of the shaping and smoothing is complete, reassess the depth. Draw a pencil line on the side of a division, approximating its eventual shape and depth, to guide you. (Once the divisions are carved down, it becomes a little more difficult to deepen the segments.)

9) When you're satisfied with the segments, form the divisions. Carefully mark the places where the divisions will break for their downward sweep. Run the burr across the division near this mark, but not up to it. Begin removing material from this place toward the center. After the entire curve has been roughed out, work outward to the mark and do the final forming of the division face. Do no carving on the bottommost division of each side; they will be formed after the scrolls have been carved.

10) To finish the shell portion, neaten-up the divisions. As you were cutting deeper, you probably noticed that the sides of the divisions were becoming increasingly uneven. Choose the narrowest division, and even-up the sides from the face downward about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Match the width of the other divisions to this first one. Now blend the shell segments into the division sides. Smooth as much as possible with power, then hand-sand. Don't forget to round all the corners.

The Scroll Section



Guidelines on the rough-sawn block (below) become the scroll faces when the block is cut (above).

1) Work can begin on the laminated scroll. Trace its outline onto a good tight-grained piece of 1-inch scrap. Also trace the curve of the scroll faces where they are closest to each other. Remove the pattern and, with the aid of a square, draw two vertical lines so that each is tangent to one of the curved lines. Draw a horizontal line between these vertical lines at the point where they touch the curves. This line will later be the only guide you will have for drawing the scrolls.

On the bandsaw, cut out the section, being careful not to cut inside the line anywhere. On the top of the cut-out section, draw two angular straight lines which will be the angular faces of the scrolls.

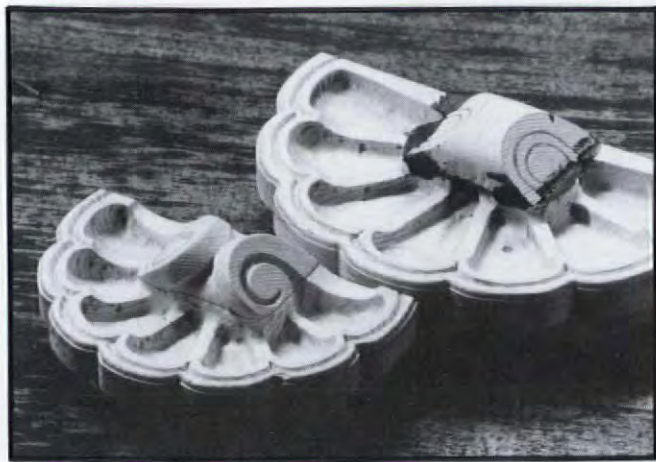
2) Go back to the bandsaw and carefully cut the angles you have just marked. Do not cut to the line, but leave room for error in case the saw-cut isn't square. Now sand to the line: The angled line on top, the vertical line on the front, and the vertical back corner are your guides.

3) Place the partially-formed block into position on the shell. With the pattern next to you, draw the scroll onto the angular planes. Start with the outside curves at the point where the horizontal line on the front plane meets the angular planes, and draw away from this point in both directions. Stay loose, light, and sketchy until the entire scroll is marked, then go back to correct and smooth out the form and proportions. Make sure that your drawing extends fully to the edges in all directions, or your scroll will be undersized when carved.

4) Using the sander, remove top and bottom corners across the front. Sand to the line, but not past top center, which could create a hollow that holds water.

5) This is as far as you can conveniently progress with the loose block, so the next step is to glue it in position on the shell. Choose a *waterproof* glue — or one day, after the paint is old and the seal is broken, you're likely to find the piece lying in the yard.

6) When the glue is hard, the laminated block is ready for carving. Start with the obvious. As material is removed, the next step will reveal itself. With the large oval burr still in



In forming the scroll edges, you will carve below your carving level of the previous step, and the recessed triangles between the back edges of the scrolls will have become elevated. That's fine; it shows that you didn't take out too much material when roughing out the shape. At this point, concentrate only on the scroll edges.

the rotary tool, begin roughing out the v at the junction of the scrolls. Work both up and down from this point. Stay well clear of finished edges, or you may create dips and hollows where you don't want them and can't correct them. You can take a little more material out of the recessed triangular areas between the back edges of the scrolls, but don't get too bold, and don't get too close to the shell.

7) Change to a straight cylindrical burr. Again starting at the junction of the scrolls, perfect the edges of the scrolls. Ideally, the edges should be at about 90° to the faces, but they can be somewhat less without ill effect, as seen in the top-view drawing, page 30. Below the junction, the relative angle flattens out considerably. The tops are already at right angles, so you shouldn't cut anything away from here; blend the front edges to these. For the moment, don't work behind top center.

8) After the scroll edges are formed into a smooth curve, change the bit to a small round burr and remove the tri-



I intended to nail these pieces onto the gable end, so I pre-drilled holes a couple of thousandths of an inch smaller than the nails. It'd be a shame to split the wood in its finest hour.

angular areas between the scrolls. Work down and out from the center by gradual degrees. Don't get too close to the scroll edges until your depth has been attained, then do your trimming. Be careful not to undercut the bottom v of the top triangle. Finally, trim the points of the vs with a knife or the v-burr. The v at the bottom of the top triangle must angle down to shed water.

9) Now, for the first time, shape and blend together the laminated scroll piece with the shell. Change bits to best suit the operation. Continue the outside edge of the scroll behind top center, but tilt the bit relative to the scroll face, rather than at 90°, to allow for water runoff.

Trim the small shelf on the shell piece (at the back of the scroll curve) to the scroll face angle. Smooth and perfect the curve. Undercut the scroll slightly at the second shell segment and at the division just below. This will create greater relief.

10) With the v-burr, carve out the scroll line. Start in the middle of the line and work towards both ends. As you approach the shell segment at the bottom end, carve deeper, but not to the full depth of the segment, yet. Form the faces of the bottom shell divisions. The outsides should have the same curve as the other divisions, then should blend smoothly into the plane of the scroll face. Trim the sides of these divisions, then blend with their segment bottoms. Now blend both to the incisions coming out of the scrolls, cutting these incisions wider and deeper as necessary to make smooth forms.

Finishing

First prime everything — front, back, edges. (I used two coats of a good oil-based primer.) Paint everything. (I used two coats of the best latex.)

The carving will look its best when the sun is striking it at an angle from the side. Optimum conditions are at best fleeting, however, and the rest of the time the carving will appear comparatively flat. To enhance shadowing, I shaded the form. Mix a slightly darker value of your paint color. Paint it on all planes which are perpendicular to the back, and all planes which face somewhat downward. Dry-brush the edges to blend into the original color.

Mix a slightly darker value still. Paint only the downward-facing areas, the shadow groove around the outside of the shell, and the grooves that form the scrolls. The end result will allude to lighting from top center. Do *not* shade so that it appears the light is coming from the side; you want your shading more universal, otherwise it could look strange during some lighting conditions.

Installation

Many observations around my area have led me to the following conclusions:

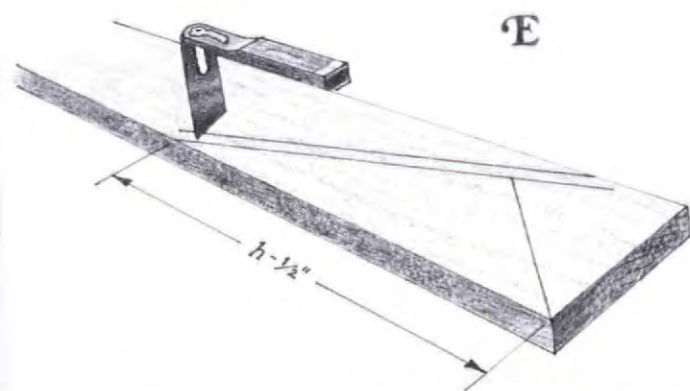
- ◆ Generally, an even number of boards was used to make the fan design, which means that the gable will be bisected by a joint instead of a board.
- ◆ The number of boards used depends on the widest



tapered board that you can take from a modern 1×6 (the originals were $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch true).

♦ The determination of the size of the center circular form seems to be $\frac{1}{5}$ of the distance across the bottom of the gable triangle, measured soffit to soffit. Where the carving is in deep relief, the size is increased to $\frac{1}{8}$.

Find what angle is needed to contain the taper within your longest board, then choose that or the nearest smaller angle which will multiply evenly to 90° . (Examples: 15° each equals six boards; 12.86° each for seven boards; eight boards would take an 11.25° angle each.) Place your center decoration into position and trace it onto the gable end. Measure up the center of the gable to the peak from the center of your design (which in this case was one inch above the bottom). With one side of a bevel square on the center line, record the roof angle.



Along one side of your 6-inch stock, measure from the end the height of the gable center, less $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. With a protractor, draw a line at the desired angle from this mark back to the end, forming a thin triangle. Lay the bevel square along the original side. From the corner of the board, draw the roof angle. Draw a line parallel to the diagonal line, leaving room for saw kerf and planing. This line will run off the board on the second side. From this point, measure the gable height less $\frac{1}{2}$ inch along the side of the board, mark, and draw the roof angle from this. You should now have two triangles which will be your middle pieces. After cutting them out, plane the edges, then bevel at 45° to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the back. (Don't forget to flop

one piece before beveling or you'll have something like two lefts and no right.)

Place one board into position with the long side exactly along the gable center line, making sure that the other side points to the center spot. Tack, using three nails driven no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch into the gable. Place the second board tightly next to the first. Mark the boards for the center decoration from the earlier tracing on the gable.

Measure the open side of one of the boards you tacked up. Place one leg of the bevel square against it and again record the roof angle. Proceed as before, board by board, until all of the pieces are tacked up with the cut-off place for the center decoration marked on each. Label each board: 1, 3, 5 for left, 2, 4, 6 for right.

Take them all down again to cut off the narrow ends as marked. Do not remove the nails, just pop off the boards. When the end is cut and the board put back, the nails will find their original holes for exact repositioning. Nail all boards and countersink the nail heads. I used 4d finishing nails, placed about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart along both edges of each board. Now prime everything.



If your center was above the trim as mine was, you will need two more boards to fill out the gable. Bevel these along the top edge only.

Even though the fascia board is a 1×4 , this seemed too heavy for under the eaves. I checked the original and found that a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch board was about right. Cut and mitre the two boards to fit and join properly. Prime the back sides, then install so that the nail heads will be covered by the crown mould. Make sure that the crown mould fits tightly along the soffit and at the mitre. Countersink the nails, then prime the frieze.

Let the primer dry for a couple of days, then fill the nail holes in both fan and frieze. I use glazing compound (modern window putty). Allow to dry for a day or two, then paint the frieze. After two coats, paint the fan.

Install your center decoration, countersink the nails, fill, allow to dry, and paint the fills. Caulking in the fan vs behind the center decoration and along the bottom of the gable will save you grief in the long run.

There you are: one decayed Victorian artifact restored.



CLAPBOARDS

Technical answers on horizontal-wood-siding types
and details of their installation

by Gordon Bock

Some articles are born in direct response to reader inquiries. This one got started trying to find answers to often-asked questions about clapboard and weatherboard siding — answers I soon discovered weren't even hiding in the back issues of OHJ! The solution was to do some primary research — in antique texts, travels with a camera, talks with mill owners, carpenters, preservationists — and present the results here.

Housebuilding methods vary widely across the U.S., so it's impossible to document every practice, or to accurately date those practices for each region. Even the meaning of terms like *clapboard*, *weatherboard*, *long siding* or *novelty* depends on where you are. The information I've gathered is a general consensus from many sources. While it won't be the last word on siding or have all the answers, I hope it will sort out some of the questions. I look forward to reading the inevitable mail from other experts.

photos: Gordon Bock, except where noted



Horizontal lapped siding can often be rectangular rather than beveled.

TRADITIONAL CLAPBOARD

What is clapboard?

Traditional New England *clapboard* is plain beveled, lap siding, a near-isosceles triangle, thinner at one edge than the other when viewed from the end grain. It has no shiplap edging or milled matching. Clapboard is always installed over wall sheathing.

There are many other types of horizontal siding, both beveled and non-beveled (see Glossary on page 33). *Weatherboards*, wide and common in the Southeast, are lapped like clapboard, and usually rectangular on their end grain. *Drop siding* (also called *novelty*) is non-beveled and non-lapped. Instead, it is edge-matched with a shiplap or tongue-and-groove so that it installs flat on wall framing without sheathing. It is also milled on the exposed face in a tremendous variety of patterns. Drop siding is an efficient, economical way to finish an exterior, and is seen more on barns, garages, and outbuildings than on houses.

Why are they called clapboards?

There are many explanations. Here are two:

clapboard: n, (For obsolete *clapbolt* derived from German *klappbolz*.) Orig., a size of oak board used for making barrelstaves and for wainscoting; — *The New Century Dictionary* 1957.

According to very old dictionaries published in England, clapboards were thin boards formed ready for the cooper's use for the manufacture of casks. They were originally "cloveboards," because they were "cloven" out by hand and not made with a saw as other boards are. In course of time the word was abbreviated to "cloveboards," "claboards," and "clapboards." — *Carpentry and Building* 1898.

MATERIALS

How are clapboards made?

There are three distinct ways, each with its own history:

RIVING

From the Colonial era until the early 1800s, New England clapboards were all hand *rived* from logs rarely longer than four feet. Riving is a splitting process where each board is pried radially out of a log by working with the grain, almost like cutting sections from a grapefruit. The result is a board that follows the tree's natural structure

A SIDING GLOSSARY

BEVEL SIDING

Rived Clapboard

Hand-split and hand-planed.

Riftsawn and Resawn Clapboard

Riftsawn clapboard has true quartersawn grain and is an isosceles triangle (when viewed on end) with a fine feather edge. Resawn clapboard has quarter- to flatsawn grain and forms a near-right triangle.

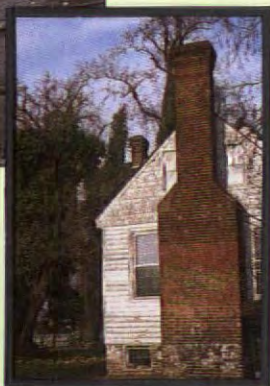
Bungalow

A thicker and wider variety of resawn bevel siding, known as "Colonial" in some areas.

WEATHERBOARDS



"Colonial" siding in Port Royal, Virginia, c. 1750



Generally, a wide, sawn, lapped siding layed parallel to the ground. Non-beveled weatherboards (called "Colonial" siding in some areas) are rectangular on the end and often incorporate a bead. Other types have a gradual taper less than true beveled siding.

DROP SIDING

Drop siding lies flat on wall studding and is usually $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. It has matched edges, either shiplapped or tongue-and-groove, to make tighter joints than bevel siding, and can be used without sheathing. By some standards, drop siding is only tongue-and-groove and in many areas all patterns are called novelty siding.

No. 177, sometimes nicknamed "Waterfall" (Sbobola, Pennsylvania, c. 1907)



The ubiquitous "cove" pattern, also called "novelty" in its own right. Cove siding was popular by 1880, and may have been patented fifteen years earlier.



A local variant of No. 113 ("The Mockert House," San Antonio, Texas, c. 1870)



A Few Patterns of Drop Siding

from 1926 (California White and Sugar Pine Manufacturers Association)

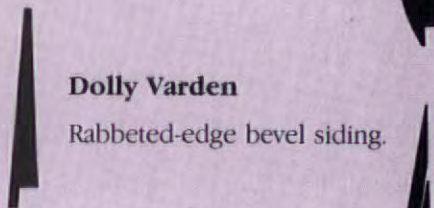


RUSTIC SIDING

Each of these sidings is milled so that their actual thickness is less than their appearance. This approach saves lumber and allows the use of extra nails on wide patterns to prevent warping.

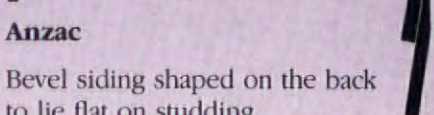
Log Cabin

A log lookalike with shiplapped joints.



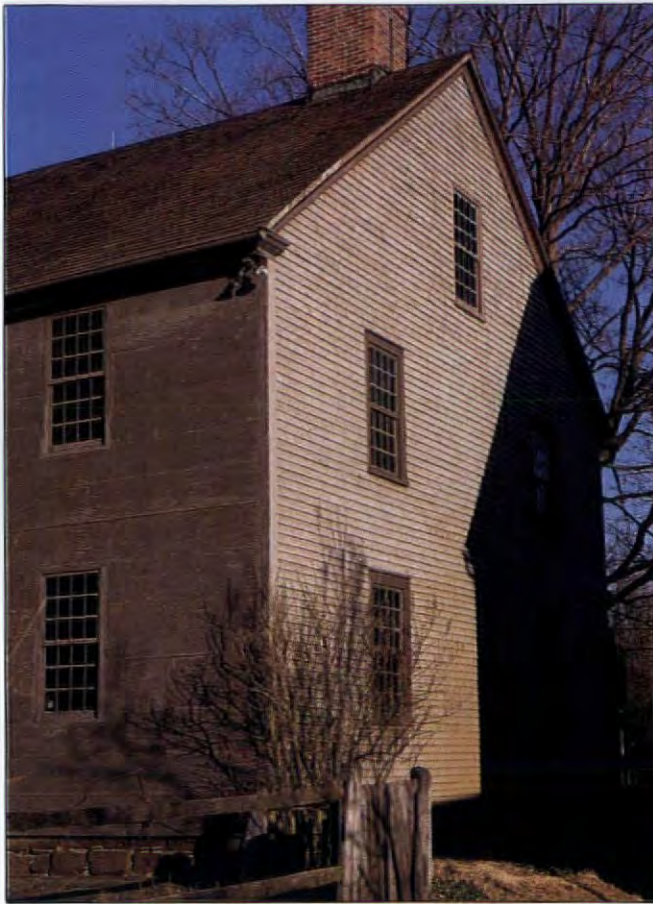
Dolly Varden

Rabbeted-edge bevel siding.



Anzac

Bevel siding shaped on the back to lie flat on studding.



Early clapboards were expensive, so sometimes the back of the house (which few people see) was left unsided.

(with grain running perfectly parallel to its length, and perfectly tangent across its edge), and one that is exceptionally stable. After boards were dried, they were hand planed for a smooth surface and regular dimensions.

Clapboard riving was a closely regulated trade in Colonial America. Always an expensive product, the price per linear foot of board was closely linked to a man's hourly wage. In 1641, the law of the Massachusetts Colony set the price of "clapboards" five feet in length at 3 shillings. There were also severe penalties for using top-quality pine (that could command better money as other products) as clapboard stock.

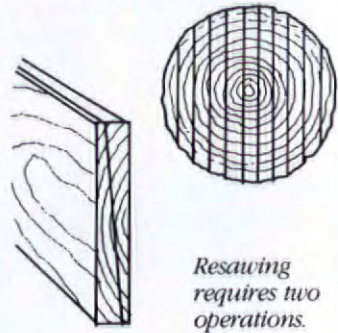


A hand-rived and -skived clapboard (Reuben Ball House, Corinth, Maine, c. 1808). Note the two-course nail holes.

RESAWING

Machine-made clapboards did not appear before the 1800s and the Industrial Revolution. An early true bandsaw was developed around 1830, and by 1890 machines specifically designed to saw clapboards were common, spawning clapboard mills in any town large enough to feed a business.

Machine-made clapboards are made by *resawing* rough lumber at a bias with a bandsaw to create beveled siding. The best product is *quartersawn-resawn* — that is, quarter-sawn stock resawn so that it approximates the grain orientation of rived boards. The least desirable is *flat-sawn-resawn*, where the grain can run in any direction, creating a board prone to warping. The pattern used to initially saw a log determines the proportion of near quartersawn to almost flatsawn lumber it can yield and thus much of the clapboard quality. After sawing, clapboards are edged and surface planed on one face in a power planer.



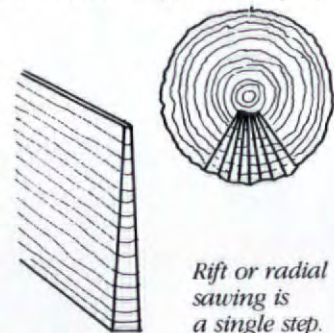
A mid-19th-century machine-made clapboard. The stamp "No. 1" or "No. 1 soft" always meant top-quality pine.

Resawing is the fastest — though not the only — method of making clapboards by machine, and is the most common process used today.

RIFTSAWING

Riftsawing is a machine technique that duplicates hand riving. While patents for this process date from the 1820s with many mills operating into this century, their heyday was the late 1800s. This era also witnessed the heyday of clapboarding and the simultaneous realization that the great pine forests were fast disappearing. Riftsawing was labor intensive, but it produced more siding from a log than any other process.

In a riftsaw mill, logs are suspended by spindles in a carriage over the circular saw blade, instead of alongside it as in a standard mill. Use of such a carriage means the log can be rotated, and beveled



CLAPBOARD INSTALLATION

What is the best way to nail clapboards?

On this point, debate rages, because there are *three* ways to nail up beveled siding, each with a specific application:

Nailing through two courses is at once the traditional method for hand-rived clapboards, and apparently the prevalent method for beveled siding in the 1800s and earlier. With this technique, nails are spaced $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch above the butt of the clapboard so that they also anchor the top of the board in the course below. Rived clapboards on buildings over 200 years old have survived without cracking or splitting using this method, undoubtedly due to the limited expansion and contraction of this kind of clapboard. Two-course nailing appears on houses with rift-sawn clapboard for the same reason, and is also seen on buildings with resawn siding. All current producers of rift-sawn clapboards we surveyed recommend this style of nailing, as do any carpentry references we found dated before 1915.



Nailing through a single course is the method recommended in much beveled-siding literature today. Here, nails are located a sufficient distance up from the board butt to miss the top of the underlying course entirely. This nailing practice does not hold the width of the board "captive" in the event of expansion, and may have become popular with the widespread use in this century of non-traditional siding stock such as Western Red Cedar. (Some argue this method increases the chances a board will split or cup.) Single nailing is also seen on lapped, rectangular, weatherboard-type siding where the boards are wide and fairly thick.



Blind nailing has been noted on some buildings with rived siding no wider than $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and is of more interest as a historical technique than a practical method. With blind nailing, nails are driven 10 to 12 inches apart only at the *top* of each board — much like shingles. The butt edge is left unattached with the result that no nails are left exposed in the finished job and nailheads are protected from weathering. In many cases, though, the butts wound up being spot-nailed years later anyway to close gaps.



How are clapboards laid up?

The two schools of thought are working from the bottom up and working from the top down.

clapboards cut complete in one operation by working radially around its circumference. Some early mills could work only with logs divided into quarters, but later designs were able to suspend an entire log. These latter machines typically sawed four-foot logs 16 to 20 inches in diameter, with six-foot models on record by 1902. Once cut, individual clapboards were pried off the log core, dried, and then planed and edged like the resawn product.

Riftsawing clapboards was slower than resawing and required large, prime timber, but it had many advantages. First, it made excellent use of the tree, turning out more siding and less sawdust. It also reduced waste from knots. Second, it produced a superior quality clapboard that was always truly quartersawn. This meant boards were highly stable and showed a minimum of shrinkage and warping. In addition, a quartersawn face took paint well and was highly durable when exposed to the weather because a minimum of soft summerwood was subjected to the elements (important with a species like pine).

What is the best wood for clapboards?

Traditionally, the best New England clapboards were made from #1 Eastern White Pine, a wood still in service on houses over 200 years old. When good pine was not available, hemlock or spruce were also used (hemlock's a little better), but this "poor man's clapboard" was found to erode between annular rings or "washboard" and wear out more quickly than pine. Northeastern cedar, although good for shingles, was a little knotty, had "sloped" grain, and tended to powder and flake as it aged.

Other regions developed siding from different tree species. Poplar had limited use in New England, but was very common in Southern states where it stood up well and was readily accessible. Cypress, back when it was plentiful, was also put to use in warm states. When railroads reached the big timber forests of the Northwest around 1900, West Coast products, specifically California Pine and Western Red Cedar, flowed out across the country to compete with local materials. The huge trees made possible very wide siding that was both appealing and economical. Although not the traditional stock for clapboards, these woods were highly popular during the building booms of this century.

What are the best nails for clapboarding?

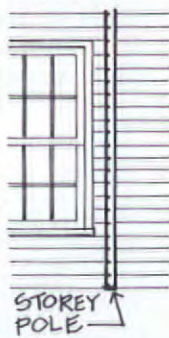
Before the Industrial Revolution, the 3-penny square or rose-headed nail was traditional. Today's choice would be a weatherproof, thin-shanked, 3- to 5-penny wire box nail. Hot-dipped galvanized nails are the easiest to find (and superior to electro-coated); aluminum, copper, monel, bronze, and stainless steel are excellent. If available, nails with ring or spiral-threaded shanks hold best, and blunt or diamond-pointed nails reduce the chances of splitting the siding. A large head is useful.

Working from the bottom up, as in shingling, is probably the most popular method and the one that comes first to most people's minds. Here, the initial board is started at the watertable or foundation line of the house, and each succeeding board is lapped over the one that preceded it. Any nailing method can be used when working from the bottom up, and it is the only technique where blind nailing is possible.

Working from the top down sounds awkward to the non-carpenter, but it may have originated as the easiest way to lay up longer courses of machine-made clapboards, which were eventually far longer than the hand-rived version. Those who swear by this method say it has three advantages: First, starting with the top board on a wall simplifies fitting this course in a weatherproof joint at the eave (usually in a rabbet under a piece of trim). Second, working from the top down means each new board is slid *under* the previous course, and will be cinched in position for nailing. This speeds installation and means a person can work alone without another set of hands to hold up boards. Third, "wedging" the courses together in this fashion produces tight lapping.

A unique advantage of clapboard and other simple lapped sidings is the flexibility in course spacing. Edge-matched siding (like drop) is committed to the same width in every course, which means boards will be notched somewhere in a wall when going around obstacles. Clapboard spacing, on the other hand, can be adjusted to fit neatly in whole boards around windows and doors.

Systems for determining spacing vary, but many carpenters start by dividing the height of a window into equal units that produce a likely weatherface exposure for the clapboards (for example, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches). This dimension is then used as the basic spacing for the area above and below the windows and adjusted where necessary to make the courses finish evenly on the wall. Many carpenters calculate these measurements on a *storey pole*, a piece of light lumber the height of a wall used as a gauge to standardize spacing on the walls. The storey pole is held vertically up snug to the frieze board (or other eave trim) and the spacings are transferred to the wall. Course lines are then snapped off with a chalkline.



How are clapboards joined in courses?

Where rived clapboards had to meet each other they were *skived* instead of butt-jointed. In skiving, the clapboard ends are shaved with a swipe of a drawknife to produce a feathered edge that laps with the next board. The skived area was roughly four times the thickness of the butt (the thick edge), and could be cut at an angle to the board end as well as parallel to it. Skiving was not only an efficient way to produce very weathertight joints, but it also eliminated the problem of fitting handplaned boards of irregular thick-



ness so that they looked uniform. It also meant a joint could be made with one nail instead of two — a serious saving in the days when everything was handmade.

With machine-made clapboards, it is good technique to avoid joints in courses as much as possible by careful planning and using long lumber for stretches under windows. Where joints are necessary, however, a butt joint is used with ends cut at a slight bevel to improve the fit. Ends can be painted with prime or preservative, but use of caulks or sealants is not recommended. In the best quality work, joints are planned so they land on a wall stud. This way, the ends of both clapboards can be nailed to framing and the joint is less likely to shift and open.

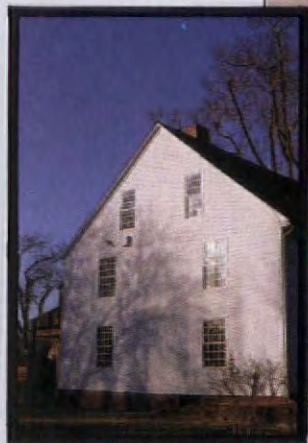
How wide should the weatherface exposure on clapboards be?

"Wide enough to do the job" is the only answer that applies in every case. From what we could find, it appears that clapboard exposure in the past 200 years follows no strict rule, but is instead determined by two factors: the maximum width of the board and the intended visual effect of the completed siding. The latter varies by region and architectural period.

Traditional clapboards and most bevel siding have to be lapped by 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to be weathertight, and this has a big influence on the exposure. Hand-rived boards could be split to a maximum width of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, so the resulting exposure was typically 3 inches. Machine manufacturing of clapboards in the 1800s made 5- and 6-inch riftsawn clapboards possible, along with larger sizes for resawn versions. These products allowed exposures of $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches and greater. When the broad West Coast woods grew popular in this century, siding with an exposure as large as 9 inches became both feasible and fashionable.

Even when clapboard that permitted exposures of 3, $4\frac{1}{2}$, or 9 inches was available, it was not always used to its full capacity. As mentioned, course widths were often varied to side evenly around windows and doors. They were also compressed in hard weather areas (such as the Atlantic Coast) to make a thicker, more weather-resistant cladding for the house. Also, there is strong evidence that exposure was governed by "look." On the Maine coast are examples of solidly massed Adam houses with very narrow clapboard

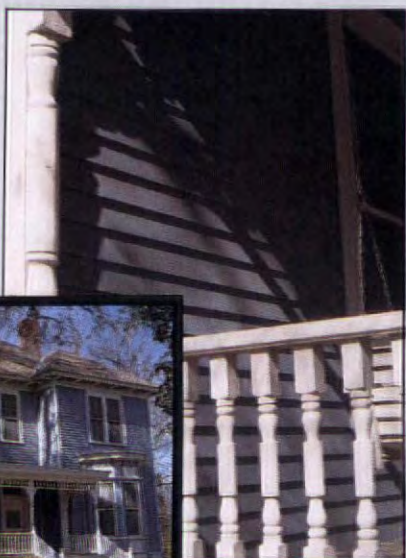
Silas Deane House, Wethersfield, Conn. (c. 1766). Skived clapboard, 3-inch exposure.



EXPOSURE SURVEY

A quick tour
with a ruler produces
some interesting data.

The Crenshaw House, Auburn, Al. (c. 1890). Rectangular weatherboards, 4-inch exposure.



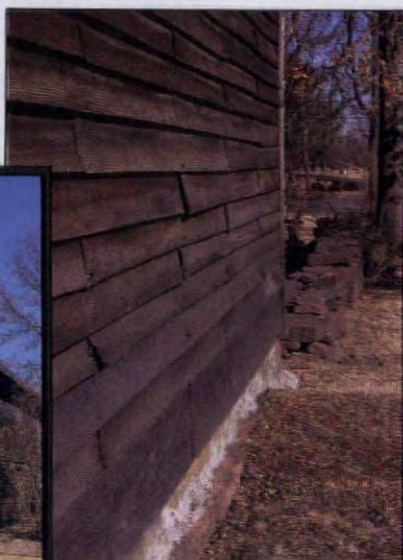
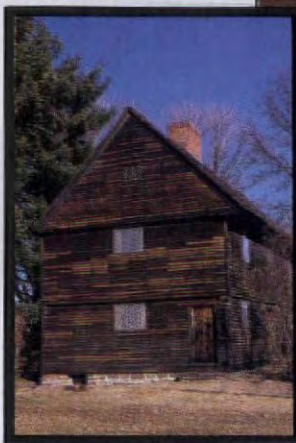
The Honold Homestead, Greeley, Penn. (c. 1880). Rectangular weatherboards, 4 1/2- to 5-inch exposure.



Henry Vassal House, Cambridge, Mass. (1746). Skived clapboard, 3 1/2-inch exposure.



Buttolph Williams House, Wethersfield, Conn. (1692). Skived clapboard, 3 3/4-inch exposure.



exposure, undoubtedly intended to make a visual statement with a great number of shadow lines. Buildings of the same style and vintage with substantially different exposures (such as the examples shown directly below) are not hard to find, either. Exposures can even differ on a single building facade and be graduated up the height of the wall (once again, like shingles) to achieve a foreshortening effect. In the 18th century, this kind of spacing might be used only on the front face of the house — the side where an aesthetic statement would have most impact.

Photo: Bryan Butts



Photo: Bryan Butts



Two Illinois Queen Anne towers a block away from each other and a year apart (c. 1894), yet radically different exposures ($2\frac{1}{2}$ inches versus $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches).

MAKING RIFT SAWN CLAPBOARDS

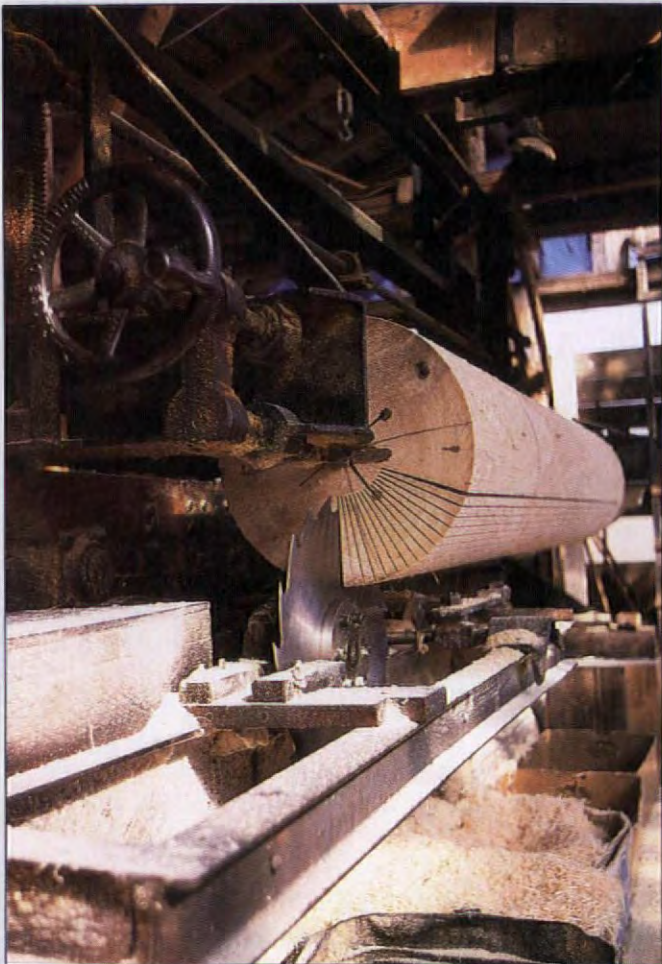
At Donnell's Clapboard Mill,
Sedgwick, Maine



Located on Penobscot Bay, this family-run business produces top-quality, radially-sawn clapboards on the only known eight-foot mill. Bill Donnell is the sawyer (friends call him "the Gucci of clapboards") and Mayra Donnell (outside) is business manager and grader. Here, prime Eastern White Pine logs (no less than 16 inches in diameter) are stacked waiting to enter the mill.



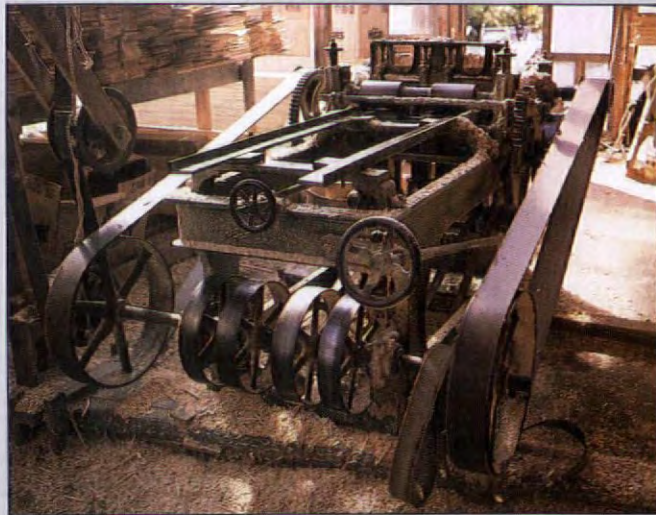
A spin of the flywheel from Bill Donnell starts "John," the mill's powerplant — a 1939 John Deere make-and-break engine — and production can begin. First a log is hoisted into place on the "rosser," a giant lathe. The rosser removes the bark from the log and turns it down to a giant dowel.



After turning, the dowel is hoisted over to the sawmill carriage. With the overhead carriage, individual clapboards eight feet long are cut from the log one at a time. After each cut the log is rotated and a new board is started. Then, a small spade-like tool called a slick is used to pry freshly cut clapboards off the log. The green wood of the fresh boards is so evenly cut you can sometimes see light through them.



After sawing, clapboards are air dried (rather than kiln dried) to retain the natural resins that give the wood its longevity. A Donnell saying is "Cook your food — not your wood (and not too much)."



Once the boards are dry they are sent through the 1889 Lane clapboard planer for surfacing on one face and dressing on both edges. Modern planers are faster, but they also compress the wood, making it harder for paint to hold. The Lane planer operates both planing knives and edge cutters at the same time, and can mill two boards at once.



End trimming and grading are the last steps before the clapboards are packaged for shipment.



The final product has beautifully clear, straight grain across its face, tangential grain on its edge — a perfectly quartersawn clapboard.



Between logs there's time to consult with the foreman.

Donnell's Clapboard Mill can be reached at:
County Road R.R. Box 1560
Sedgwick, ME 04676
(207) 359-2036



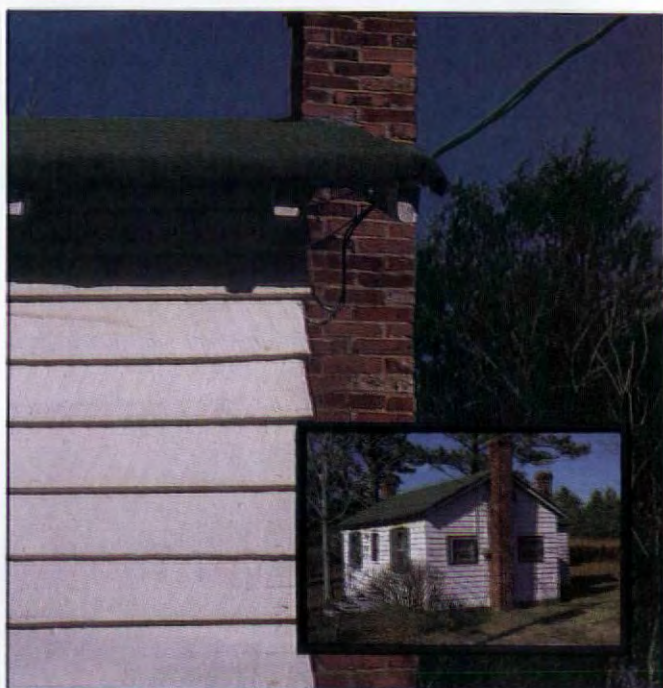
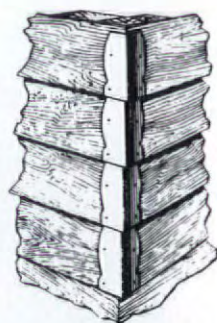
Typical practice on the New Hampshire seacoast: exposure graded from 2 1/4 inches at the bottom to 4 inches at the top (William Pitt Tavern, Portsmouth, 1766).

CLAPBOARD DETAILING

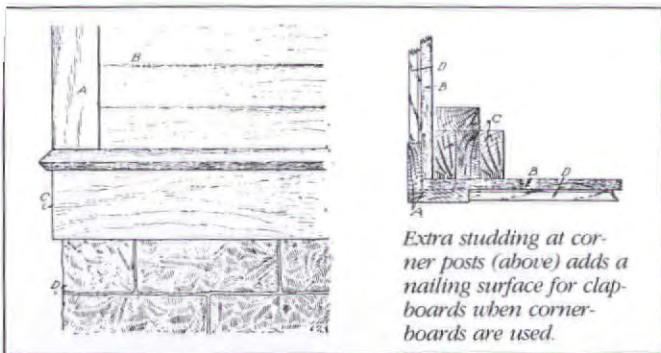
How do you deal with corners in clapboarding?

The two classic treatments for outside corners are mitering and corner boards.

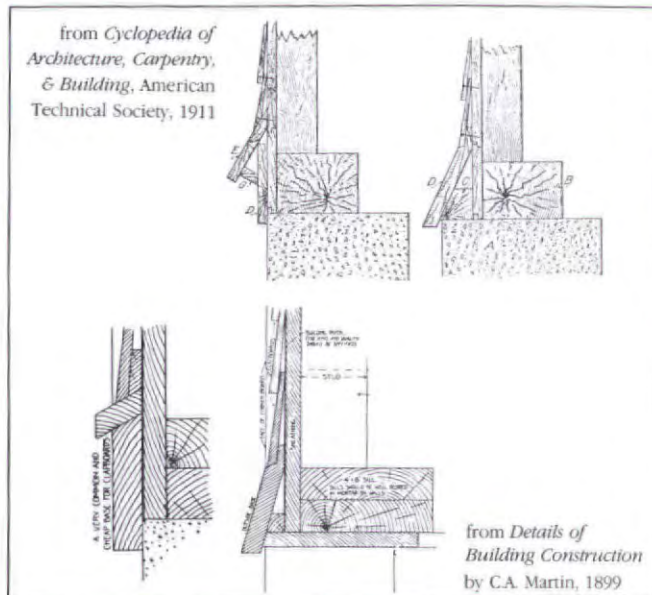
In mitering, the boards in the same course are simply cut at 45° where they meet, and then nailed to the cornerpost of the framing. Manufactured corner caps are an alternative to plain mitered corners (which can open up as they age and let in water). Historically, mitering was probably an economical way to finish a corner because it didn't require additional hand-cut lumber.



Mitered corners on a Virginia cottage.



Cornerboards are the preferred corner treatment, both for appearance and weathertight integrity. Here, appropriate trim is nailed to the cornerpost first (usually two lapped boards of different widths), then clapboards are butted to this lumber. Cornerboards can be designed to appear the same width on both walls, or substantially wider on the main facade to have a pilaster effect. The pinnacle of cornerboard treatments perhaps was in the Georgian and Greek Revival eras, when corners were detailed into



An assortment of turn-of-the-century watertables.



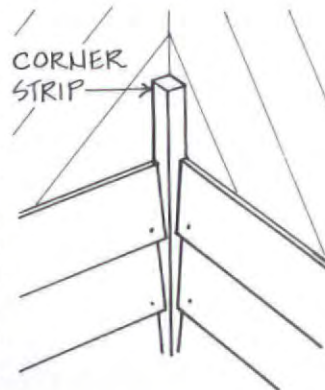
The striking impression of a 3-inch exposure on a large building (The Carleton House, Camden, Maine).



Wooden "quoins" that mock stone corners.

full-blown pilasters and wood quoins.

Interior corners, never as involved as outside corners, also make use of cornerboards. A single square stick (often $\frac{3}{4}$ inch by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch but dependent on the thickness of the siding) is nailed in the corner first. Then clapboards are fitted so they finish at the board.



What about ending clapboards at eaves and foundations?

As mentioned, clapboards are usually tucked into a rabbet under a frieze board or other trim at the eaves. (This is also the best way to install clapboards under windows.) The treatment for gables is a matter of taste, and could mean hiding the clapboards behind rake boards, or just ending them at the rake.

Last, foundation treatments also vary according to taste and building style. Early Colonial houses were sometimes clapboarded right down to the soil line, a straightforward method that promoted wood rot. Where masonry foundations were used, the first clapboard might instead begin at the sill with just a starter strip to support it. A better arrangement was some form of trim designed to throw rainwater running down the wall away from the foundation — the watertable. These treatments ranged from a simple drip cap to a widely flared skirt. In addition to deflecting water, the foundation detailing also anchors a house to its site in an attractive finish.



ROMANESQUE REVIVAL STYLE

by James C. Massey & Shirley Maxwell

The Romanesque Revival (and, a decade later, Richardsonian Romanesque) is such a formal style that you would hardly expect it to turn up in ordinary houses. Yet how else to explain all those city brownstones with shadowy entrances set back deep behind low-slung arches embellished with terra-cotta jungle growth? What of the dark masonry fronts on block after city block of late-19th-century row-houses? Romanesque's reign was short — as a residential style, it first appeared in the 1870s, hit its stride in the late '80s, peaked in the '90s, and was virtually gone by 1900 — but its impact on the faces of our Victorian cities was deep and lasting.

Much like the Gothic Revival, the Romanesque Revival began in the 1840s and 1850s as a historical revival of medieval European and English church architecture — and it was used primarily for churches and public buildings. Richardsonian Romanesque, on the other hand, was a truly American style, adapting Romanesque forms and decorative motifs in innovative ways. Architects began to use the style for houses in the 1870s.

Henry Hobson Richardson, the young architect who domesticated the Romanesque style and brought it into the American vocabulary, was no slave to history. Far from it. His interpretation of the medieval Romanesque was so fresh and powerful that in the United States the style became inseparably linked to his name. Richardson's talent catapulted Romanesque Revival to architectural stardom in the late 1880s. Ironically, its wide popularity began only after Richardson's untimely death in 1886, at the age of 47, when an influential monograph praising his work was published. But perhaps Richardson would not have liked or even recognized a lot of what spun off from his ideas.

At the beginning and at the end of this brief architectural episode was the masonry arch. Not a tall, pointed Gothic arch, but a sturdy, rounded, Roman one (after all, the Romans invented the arch), somewhat like those found earlier on Italianate buildings, but generally broader and shorter. A masonry rainbow firmly rooted at each end. It was weighty. Solid as a rock. Down to earth.

THE ROMANESQUE REVIVAL

READING THE OLD HOUSE

Hipped roof —
usually in slate or tile

Large double stone dormer
with foliate decoration in
tympanum and
battered (sloping) cheeks

Turret with conical roof

One-over-one light
double-hung sash

Wall of rock-face
ashlar stonework,
laid in broken range bond

Recessed entrance porch
with large round arches
on squat short colonettes
— most typical of this style

Round front three-storey
bay window projecting
above cornice

Cornice

Frieze

Windows with
typical transom,
lights and heavy
lintels between

Battered base

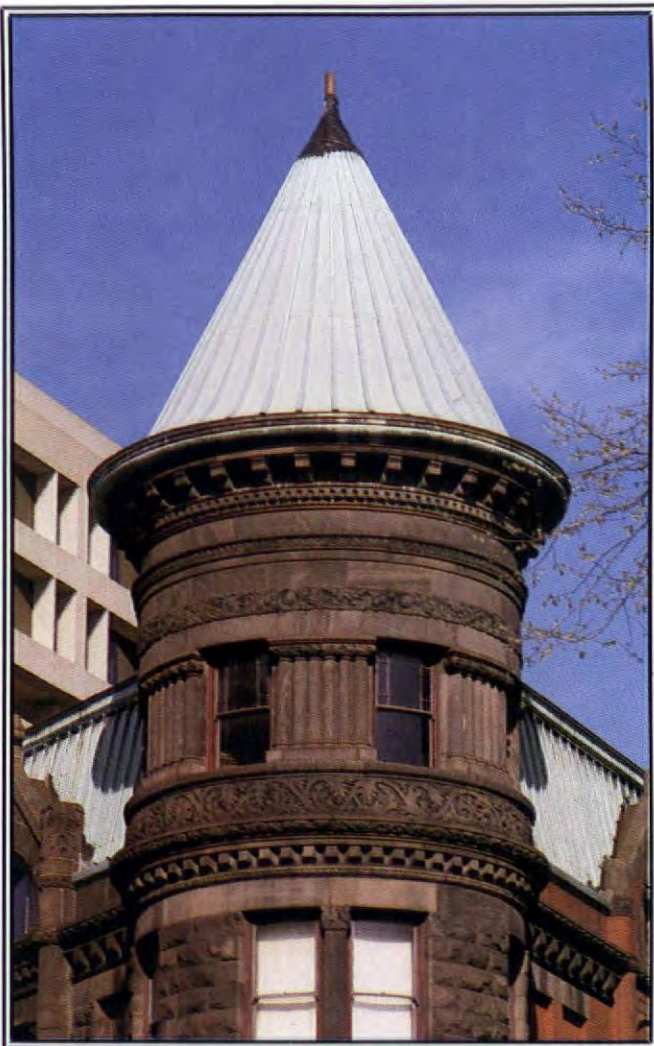


HOUSE FOR S. M. KENNARD ESQ. ST. LOUIS, MO.

WALBERT MASSEY ARCHITECT

J.C. Massey, '89

Source: American Architect (May 16, 1891)



A typical Romanesque copper "witch's hat" caps the ornate tower of this Washington, D.C., mansion.

This was not a poor man's style. The Romanesque was a style of *substance*, a reflection of what many well-to-do Americans felt about themselves at the end of the 19th century: substantial, prosperous, and very sure of their places in the world. A man's home was his castle — his fortress, in fact — and the Romanesque Revival was the perfect building style to drive that point across. Thick, impenetrable walls; round, corner-tower lookouts; turrets and tall, half-round bays. About the only thing these edifices lacked was a moat and drawbridge.

And these were urban, not country, castles. For the most part, they were built in the big cities of the Northeast and Midwest. They were not often found in small towns, where any Romanesque buildings that were built most likely were churches, libraries, jails, or courthouses.

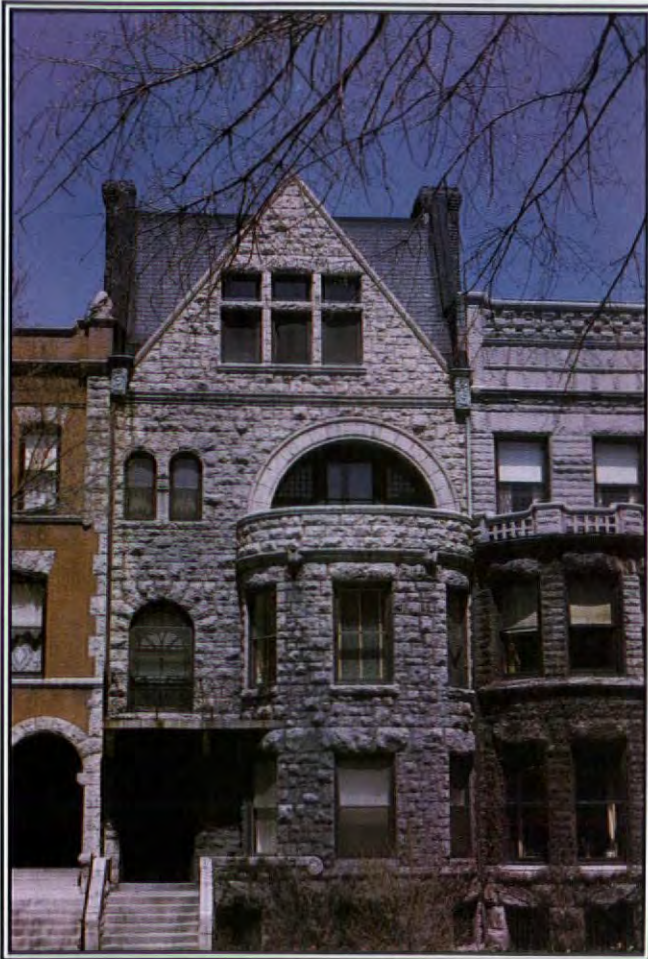
The building material of choice — and it was really the only choice — was masonry, preferably ashlar (square-cut) stones, generally with rough, or "rock-faced," surfaces set in broken-range (uneven) patterns. Brick and terra cotta also made a strong impression at lower cost. Because the technology for applying veneer layers of stone or brick as a facing had yet to be developed, walls were solid in reality as well as in appearance. To provide variety in texture and color, architects commonly specified two or more kinds and hues of stone. Brownstone (the popular term for a reddish-brown sandstone) was used so frequently that its name became synonymous with the townhouses of this era. It was a soft stone that could readily be carved into the intricate shapes late Victorians loved. They were especially fond of half-formed, viney foliage that seemed to be heaving itself bodily out of the rocky surfaces of lintels and column capitals. Not only were the building materials relatively expensive, even for urban row-houses, but if they were to be used to full effect, they also required expert craftsmen and generally more skillful designers.

The irregular surfaces of a Romanesque house trapped city grime, most of it generated by the coal-burning central furnaces of the houses themselves. This created considerable cleanup problems for later owners, who sometimes compounded their woes by painting over or, worse, sand-blasting the dirty stone. (Anyone fortunate enough to own one of these treasures today undoubtedly understands the gentler ways of handling such housekeeping chores, such as low-pressure water cleaning, with or without mild chemical additions.)

Main rooflines were often gabled, sometimes very steeply gabled, although on row-houses they tended to be flat. Towers and turrets wore conical "witches' hats." Slate was the preferred roofing material. Corbeling (projecting rows of brickwork) along the eaves replaced the brackets



Visitors to H.H. Richardson's residential masterpiece, the Glessner House, generally entered through the round projection on the left of its rear brick-and-granite courtyard facade.



This Chicago row-house is teeming with Romanesque features: rough stone walls, recessed entrance porch, a mini-arcade of two arch-topped windows, a linked row of windows with transoms, and a Syrian arch.

of the Italianate and Second Empire styles.

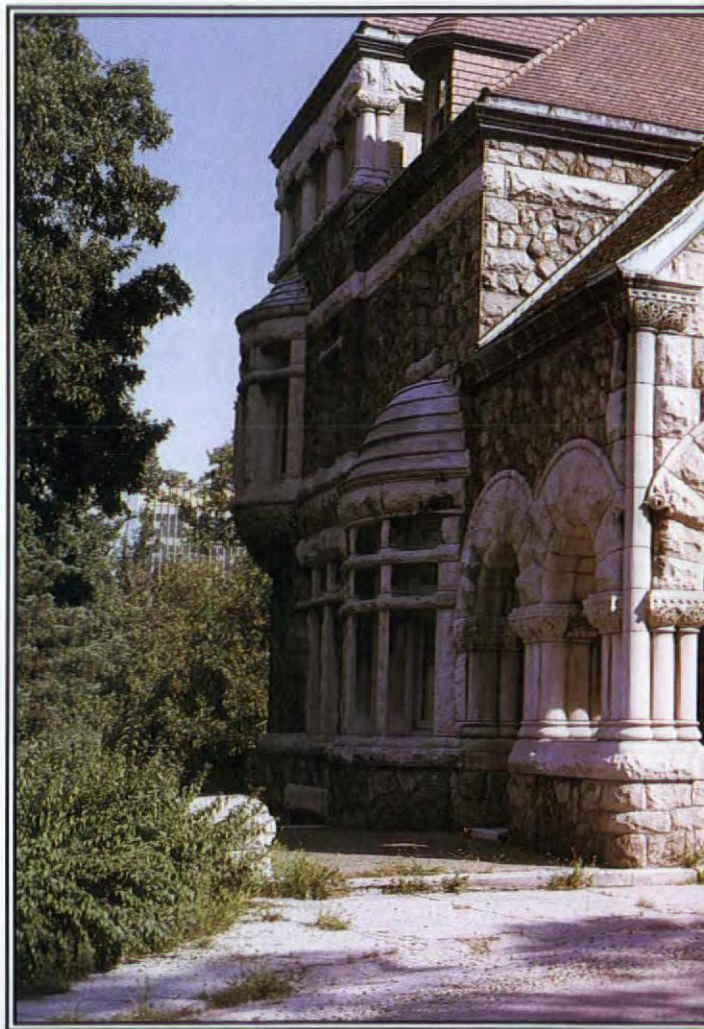
Windows in a Romanesque building were most likely to have round-arch heads or, failing that, straight, heavy lintels, usually of rock-faced stone. The windows were deeply recessed, often grouped in sets of two or three and unified by a common stone lintel or a linked row of arches. By this time, one-over-one-light windows, with a single pane of glass in each sash, were universal in "modern" buildings such as these. Often a rectangular transom ran in a band across a set of square-headed windows. Arcades (rows of arched openings, windows, or doors) were a feature of the style. Usually three or four storeys tall, buildings often had dormers to light the upper level.

Romanesque doorways sank even deeper into the wall surfaces than windows did, protected from ill winds and prying eyes behind heavy stone arches. Porches became internal affairs, tucked under the second floor as part of the ubiquitous recessed entry. The *porte-cochere* (covered carriage entrance) was an important feature of many free-standing houses of this era, and chances are that it too would have had its very own, very impressive arch.

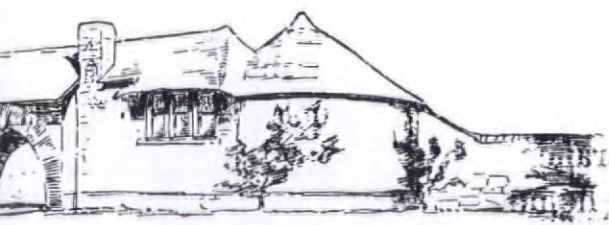
The use of arcades was not confined to window and door openings. In earlier Romanesque Revival buildings, "blind" arcades (recessed slightly into, but not through,



Richardson's Ames Gate Lodge, North Easton, Massachusetts. smooth roofline with a row of curved eyebrow dormers -



Detail of the Studebaker Mansion, South Bend, Indiana; colonettes supporting the arch, is typical of the style. The limestone trim contrasting with a



the horizontal lines, strongly textured rock walls, and a deep, shadowed entrance that Richardson often used on his Shingle-style homes.



Ives Cobb, architect. The entrance porch, with clustered Romanesque porches and porte-cocheres. The stone walls is also typical of the style.

the wall surface) took the place of eave brackets, even marching up the sides of the "A" on gable-roofed buildings. They were sometimes the only real point of difference between Romanesque and Italianate buildings.

All those arches required some form of support, of course, and it usually came from columns or piers. The columns might be grouped in pairs or in clusters of little columns (colonettes); they might be tall or short, stout or slim, plain or decorated. The most popular were short, stout, and decorated. The low, wide Syrian-style arch that came into use at this time was virtually all arch and no column. If piers were used, they were likely to be squat. Often the arch was built right into the wall surface, as it was over the entrance to Chicago's Glessner House, H.H. Richardson's master residential work, which is pictured on page 43, lower right. The only columns on its imposing front wall are the rather small ones flanking the second-storey windows, and none of them is connected with an arch at all.*

The Richardsonian Romanesque was intended to be used for large, grand, freestanding buildings. But when this style reached the popular level — in party-wall townhouses, for example — it was inclined to lose some of its dash and dignity. The logical overall composition of Richardson's own buildings led to a rather subdued decorative scheme, stripped of any unnecessary ornament. Everyday houses, based on vaguely Richardsonian and Romanesque ideas, were liable to be more of a hodge-podge. They might have a tower here, an arch there, a bit of figurative ornament on a column or a lintel — all these elements would be tacked onto standard spec-house plans to produce a picturesque effect. Finding round corner towers unworkable in continuous facades like row-houses, local builders were more likely to substitute flattened-out bays or oriels. There was no reason to forego arched windows and entryways, however, and Romanesque ornament was far too tempting to pass up. Those easy elements often were called upon to stand in for the whole style.

Richardson also worked in the Shingle style, which some view as a wood version of Romanesque (conversely, others see Romanesque as a masonry version of Shingle style). Similarities certainly exist, particularly in the bulky massing. But there are enough important differences to warrant a separate article on Shingle-style houses.

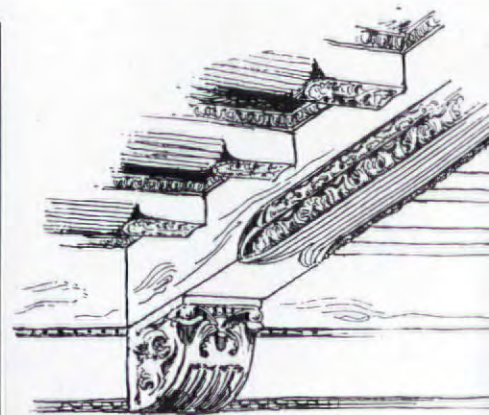
The Romanesque style possessed all the faults inherent in its virtues. In uninspired hands, its weightiness came across as just plain gloomy. Its claims to dignity might have seemed pretentious; its formality felt stiff. Other styles popular at the time, namely the Queen Anne and Shingle, were lighter baggage to carry in the journey toward a new century. And only a few short years later came the promise of even more architectural freedom and greater stylistic difference in the Bungalow and the all-American Colonial Revival.



*Glessner House is open for one-hour tours (1800 South Prairie Ave., Chicago); schedule varies by season. \$4. (312) 326-1393; groups, (312) 922-3432.

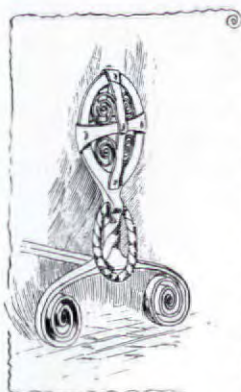


A bronze tone dominates the Ballantine House dining room shown here, from moulded papier-maché paneled ceilings and floral tapestry chairs and curtains to gilded and varnished German imitation-leather wallcovering.



CEILING OF HALL, HOUSE OF JOHN HAY, WASHINGTON

ROMANESQUE REVIVAL INTERIOR



SKETCH FOR AN ANDIRON.

Most of us cannot claim the privilege of owning a baronial Romanesque Revival home, not to mention one that is Richardsonian Romanesque. Nevertheless, we can all learn something about late-19th-century interiors by looking at Richardson's influence. Although H.H. Richardson himself designed relatively few homes, his residential interior work had significant impact on other high-style interiors. If you own a house built in the 1870s or '80s, quite possibly it was influenced by the Romanesque Revival.

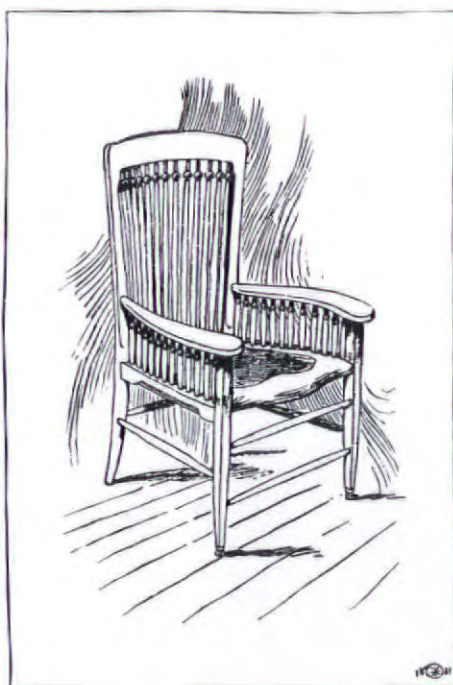
While Richardson's work is remembered for its elaborate and massive elements, it can also be appreciated for its dignity and warmth, characteristics that humbler homes can enjoy. Richardson himself was not beyond designing modest homes. He designed in both masonry and frame construction and, for the most part, the interiors of his shingle-clad homes are far less extravagant than those of his masonry works.

What are the telling characteristics of a Richardsonian interior? Richardson treated the building interior as the architectural equal to the exterior, each inseparable from the other. He combined aesthetics with utility. He insisted that windows be beautiful, for example, but introduced them only where actually needed for light, air, or view. He re-established the generously proportioned, medieval-style hall, or living hall, as the residence's core space, centered around a grand staircase and fireplace. Surfaces were often

ornately carved or embossed with medieval motifs, but no one element took precedence over another. Particularly where he kept surface decoration simple, he used color as an important dimension by employing the natural hues of different types of stone, in addition to color provided by wood, glass, ceramic, and metal. This does not mean that Richardson was opposed to bright colors, however. On the library walls of the Glessner House, for example, he used a vibrant blue glaze over yellow paint, which gave a rich green. Richardson integrated the horizontal and vertical planes, his signature round-arched openings, the many textures, colors, and delicately sculpted surfaces to form a rich and harmonious whole.

While other high-style architects of the period may have lacked the genius of Richardson, their work provides yet more clues for interior decoration today. The Ballantine House at the Newark Museum is an ideal example. George Edward Harney (1840-1924) designed the home in a combination of late-19th-century styles for the New Jersey brewery baron, and the museum has meticulously restored its interiors to their 1885-91 state.¹ (The museum found the original drawings of the house as well as the specifications of D.S. Hess Company of New York, the original decorators and furnishers.)

The decor is elaborate, but a mixture of styles — primarily Renaissance and Colonial Revival with a feel of the Romanesque — lends warmth to the interior. Floors of major rooms range from herringbone-patterned oak and cherry parquet to stained pine; woodwork from patterned ash to maple. Soft-red painted plaster walls in the library contrast with the deep brown, German imitation leather-paper and embossed borders on the walls of the reception



CHAIR IN LIBRARY, MALDEN.

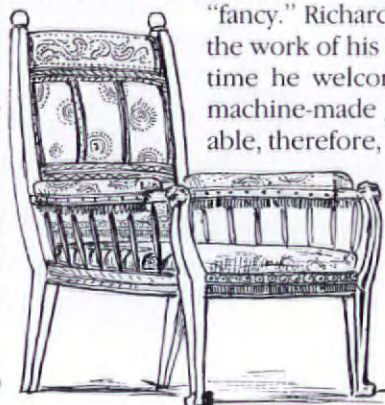
by Margaret Latimer

room. Ceiling designs include deep-red painted plaster beams and gilded plaster panels as well as canvas panels in *grisaille* (a monochrome painting technique related to *trompe l'oeil*), with painted and gilded plaster cornices.

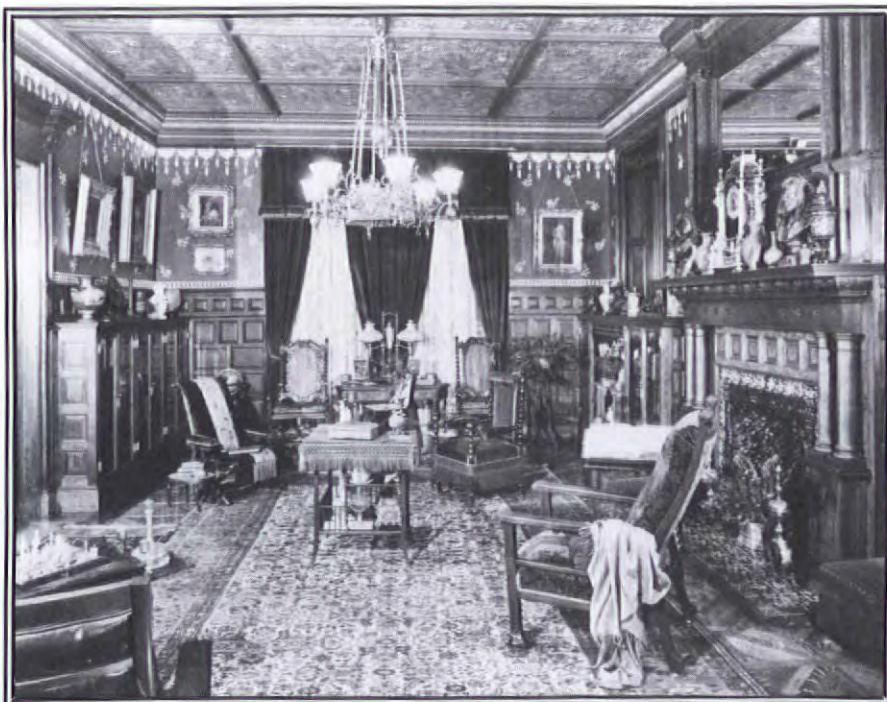
Richardson was one of the first American architects to involve himself with furnishings down to the last detail, something that we see later in the work of architects of the Arts and Crafts movement and that of Frank Lloyd Wright. Richardson made numerous sketches of chairs, andirons, lamps, and other furnishings. His earliest biographer, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, commented: "No feature was too small, no object too simple to engage his thought." He did not seem to differentiate between his most ornate public buildings and his most humble house. His chairs for the elaborate State Capitol in Albany, New York, for example, could easily show up in the relatively unelaborate living hall of a private residence. So you do not need to be concerned about whether something is too

"fancy." Richardson had great respect for the work of his craftsmen, yet at the same time he welcomed the development of machine-made goods. It is perfectly suitable, therefore, to mix the two or use machine-made items with a crafted look.

Richardson was influenced by other designers such as the English tastemaker Charles Eastlake.² So Eastlake furniture in a Romanesque home is quite fitting.



SKETCH FOR CHAIR IN CAPITOL, ALBANY.



The appropriateness of mixing styles is evident in the Ballantine library: Renaissance Revival with Japanesque touches (such as in the detailing of the gilded plaster ceiling panels). Urns, busts, and plants abound.

Richardson was also fond of English Arts and Crafts designer William Morris, and often recommended Morris & Co. wallpapers, curtains, rugs, and lighting fixtures to his clients. Not only, then, are Morris reproductions appropriate but so are the less high-style (less expensive) Morris-influenced furnishings that were already available in the late 1880s.

Richardson seemed to relish a mix of seemingly incompatible styles, from the ancient to those closer to his period. On occasion, he even adapted features of American Colonial furniture, a trend that came into vogue with the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Under Richardson's guidance, a Windsor armchair seemed just as compatible in a Romanesque interior as did a medieval center table.

No matter whether your house is Richardsonian, or quasi-Romanesque, or just plain late-19th century, maybe the most useful lesson to learn is that an amalgamation of styles was a quality treasured in this period. We could relax and do well following the advice in a popular general style guide of the time. After cautioning against the discordance resulting from the mingling of diametrically contrasting styles, Harriet P. Spofford exclaimed in her 1878 book *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture*, "A room where absolute purity of style is insisted upon in every trivial point — window, glass, andirons, wall sconces — is like a strait-jacket, and its rigidity destroys all the comfort of home, and seems mere affectation."



1) Ballantine House is located at 43 Washington St., Newark, NJ. Open: Tues.-Sun., noon to 4:45 PM; 20 min. tours, Sat. & Sun., 1:30 PM. Many thanks to Ulysses Dietz, curator of decorative arts.

2) Eastlake's best-known work is *Hints on Household Taste*, 1878. A 1986 reprint is available: Dover Publications, Inc., 31 E. Second St., Mineola, NY 11501; (516) 294-7000. \$6.95 plus \$1.25 postage (or \$3 UPS). (NY State residents add tax.)

A TREATISE
ON
BUILDING A NEW-OLD
DOWNING COTTAGE

ADAPTED TO THE
Late-20th Century

IN
South Alabama

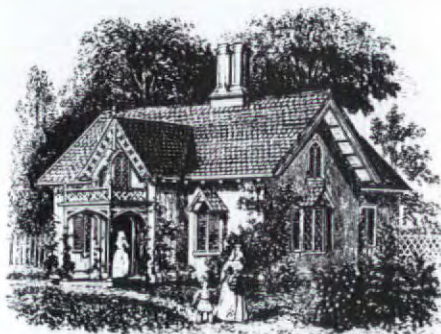
INCLUDING A
DOWNING DOGHOUSE

by **WALTER B. CLEMENT**

FORMER PROFESSOR OF ENGINEERING

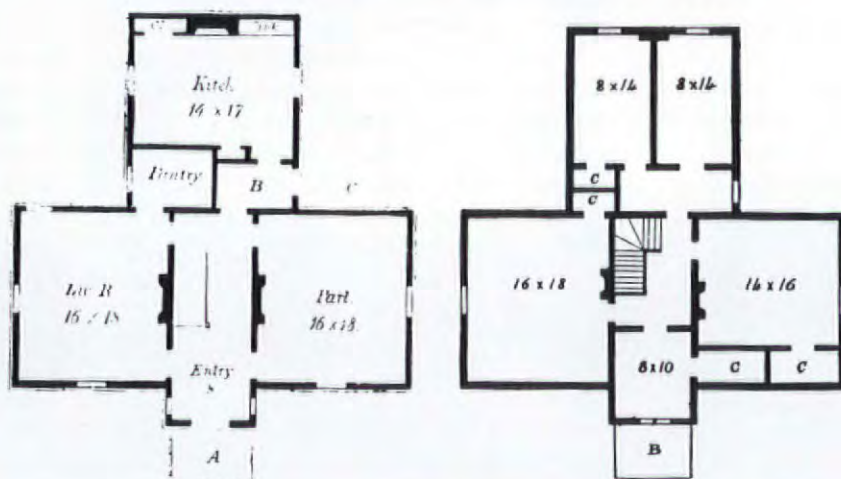
WHOSE HOBBIES INCLUDE:

LETTERPRESSES, STEAM ENGINES, FIRE ENGINES,
DALMATIONS, PERIOD MOULDING AND MILLING.



Whoever loves symmetry and the simpler kind of cottage beauty, including good proportion, tasteful forms, and chasteness of ornament, we think, cannot but like this little design.

— A.J. Downing



As soon as I heard about Walter Clement, I knew I had to go to Alabama. This former professor of engineering at Auburn University, we'd been told, had built a Gothic cottage using only the bare-bones plans in one of A.J. Downing's books.

It was a winter day but as warm as June in Brooklyn when I drove down a rural road bound for Notasulga, not far from the Old Federal Road where pioneers streamed into Alabama after the War of 1812 and carved a path through pine forests, skirting swamps with ancient oaks draped in Spanish moss, building their log cabins and Greek Revival plantation houses. As I turned onto Walter's drive, his cottage appeared from behind a new pine forest and a magnificent old magnolia. This was definitely not Downing's beloved Hudson River Valley, but it was as picturesque as I'd ever seen.

Walter Clement radiates an engineer's love of building and tinkering as well as an old-house enthusiast's appreciation of craftsmanship and romance with the past. (He also has a sense of humor: As we drove off in his Blazer for a lunch of Southern barbecue in nearby Waugh, Walter confessed he'd considered meeting me at his door barefoot, wearing a straw hat. Yankees aren't that dumb, I said.)

Walter spent hours showing me both his house and his collection of period machinery: two steam engines, a meticulously restored, hand-cranked fire engine (hence Pepper and Tabasco, the two Dalmations who have shared his house), two antique letterpresses, and an old linotype he calls "the beast." Since he's retired from teaching, Walter's print shop helps keep him afloat and, he says, "accounts for the bizarre letterheads I sometimes use." Walter also has a woodshop, a small affair with some 19th-century moulding and milling equipment he bought about eight years ago — too late, alas, to use on his own house.

How did a guy who loves steam engines, letterpresses, and Victorian milling equipment end up with a new-old Downing cottage? I'll let Walter tell that story.

—Janet Marinelli



PHOTOS: JAMES MANNING, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

In a spring day fourteen years ago, I began building a reproduction Downing cottage. But the origin of this house goes back much further, about 39 years, when my high school art teacher took the class outside with instructions to sketch our surroundings. Adjacent to the school was a lovely home dating from the 1870s, in a style best described as "eclectic." Up to then, my interest in sketching had been limited to fire engines and locomotives, but something about this house made me want to draw it. Before I was finished, I had fallen under the spell of Victorian architecture.

Years later, I found myself with a 40-acre tract of land in rural Alabama with several Victorian outbuildings. It seemed logical to build a house there. A facsimile of Downing's beguiling book, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, had recently been published by Dover. It thoroughly convinced me that a Victorian country cottage was exactly the kind of house I wanted. I began looking for a cottage to move to the site. Nearby Auburn was going through an era of wholesale demolition, and the houses available were either too large for a bachelor or unsuitable in some other way.

About this time, friends of mine were involved in restoration in Columbus, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama. As I observed their efforts, I realized that, before restoration, a badly treated old house had little to offer beyond its basic form, and that I could build myself.

Design VII from the Downing book appealed to me: It was handsome but modest in size, and I liked its interior

layout. Early Victorian Carpenter Gothics are much simpler than later Victorians, so I figured interior and exterior carpentry work would not be too difficult. And salvaged mouldings, bargeboards, and tracery faithful to Downing's original design were an option; at the time they were even available at reasonable cost.

In May 1975, aided and abetted by students and amenable friends, I dug the footings by hand and poured ready-mix concrete delivered by truck. Masonry is not my forte, nor is it a very forgiving medium, so I contracted out the job of laying the foundation walls. A trip to a local salvage yard produced cast-iron foundation wall vents. It also produced circular, cast-iron gable vents — but it would be some time before I needed those!

Part of the fun of building the house was searching for mantels, doors, plumbing and lighting fixtures, and other interior details. Fourteen years ago, the supply of Victorian reproductions was much more limited than it is today. But the urban-renewal era was coming to a close, so local salvage yards had a good stock of original pieces. I was fortunate to find most of the items I needed in an old house that was being demolished in nearby Opelika. The danger in using either reproductions or salvaged materials is ending up with a hodgepodge of pieces unfaithful to the style of your house. I confess that I managed to avoid this trap largely because most of my finds came from one house of the correct vintage. I was sorely tempted by elaborate grillework that was exactly the right size, but Queen Anne detailing was definitely too late for a c. 1850 Downing house.

With the help of students and a fellow Auburn University professor, Walter, pictured here, dug footings and framed the bouse. "Where else could you find foundations dug by a PhD?" he jokes. It took most of a spring and summer to get the cottage "in the dry."



photo courtesy Walter Clement



Walter built a Downing doghouse, complete with bay window and board-and-batten siding, to match his Downing cottage. It's painted yellow like the bouse. "The people at the paint store thought I was building a dairy out here, I got so much Jersey Yellow paint."





he project was extremely time-consuming, but structurally not that different from building a modern house. Framing the house was simple enough. I held to the dimensions of the original floor plan, so

there was a fair amount of cut-and-fit work — no precut studs for 9-foot ceilings around here! A local contractor installed central heating, but each principal room has either a fireplace or a flue thimble for a stove. Plumbing and wiring were done with some good help. After agonizing about appropriateness, I settled for Sheet-rock covered with reproduction wall-papers. In some rooms I also used wainscoting made from beaded ceiling.

A search for period mouldings and door and window casings had been futile, but luckily I found in a neighbor's house beaded moulding that could be turned out using a table saw with a moulding head. My neighbor cheerfully cooperated with my note- and measurement-taking. The mouldings were made of 1-inch stock with corner (plinth) blocks of slightly thicker 5/4-inch stock. They are typical not only of the Downing era but of this area of south Alabama as well.

The cottage is furnished with salvaged mantels, Victorian furniture, and some attic treasures. The bed was made by Walter's great-grandfather in 1866. Walter reproduced a neighbor's moulding using a table saw with a moulding head. In the photo below, Tabasco relaxes in the parlor.



photo: Ann B. Pearson



Two years later, the house was finished and I moved in. Twelve years later, I'm still pleased with the design. I do my daily living on the first floor, which in keeping with the Downing plan has a parlor and kitchen. The kitchen is large enough to use as an informal living area. Where Downing suggested a living room, I located my bedroom. I modified Downing's plan to include a downstairs bath. Upstairs consists of two sunny guest rooms and a bath. The house is air-conditioned, but Downing's design provides for good natural ventilation except in the hottest, most humid weather. The full-width porch shelters the downstairs front windows so they can be kept open in rainy weather.

To anyone contemplating doing a Downing cottage from scratch — or any kind of historical reconstruction — I say go ahead, but get yourself some good help first. From mantels to bargeboards, decent reproductions are readily available today, and there are builders competent enough to construct a period cottage with minimal supervision — but they are rare! Even rarer are architects who understand the Victorian era. The plans in books by Downing, Woodward, Bicknell, and other architects of the mid-19th century usually are not detailed; have a good set of working draw-

ings made before beginning construction. Some modifications will no doubt be necessary for modern living, and this is where a sensitive architect can help. I was fortunate to have an architect-friend, Bill Speer, who was both familiar with Carpenter Gothic and sympathetic to it. He went over the plans and made several sensible suggestions. For instance, Downing's plan included a small room over the front entry. Bill thought I should keep this area open, creating a two-storey entrance. Since then I've observed the work of architects whose lack of knowledge of style, detailing, and the availability of restoration products resulted in expensive yet inappropriate work. In hindsight, I appreciate Bill's advice even more.

I would make one change if I were doing it over: I used casement windows built by a reputable firm, but they have lattice inserts instead of individual "lights" or diaper panes. The inserts are wood, not plastic, but they are not the real thing. This bothers me to no end now, and I would insist on windows with individual panes.

Would I do it again? YES! Even now I have a scheme in mind to build a cottage somewhere with a more agreeable summer climate than south Alabama. Let's see — Design XXI in Woodward's *Rural Architecture* looks like a good one to attempt. . . .



The cross gable was part of the original Downing plan. The full-width verandah and the gabled dormers were adapted from another Downing cottage. They help make south Alabama summers more livable.



A.J. Downing

by Jeff Wilkinson

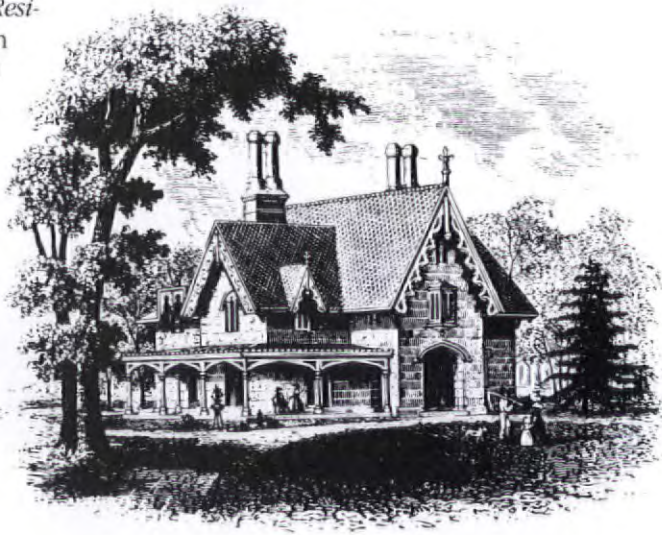
activity.

Downing's concern was for the high-achieving individual, and he spent much of his life trying to hide his humble beginnings. His early training consisted of helping his older brother Charles run a nursery which had been started by their father. At age 16, he met one Baron de Liderer, the Austrian Consul General to the United States who owned a country home in Newburgh. The Baron introduced the young man to interesting currents of thought and influential people, including Raphael Hoyle, the English landscape painter through whom Downing became familiar with the great English landscape designers. In 1837 Andrew took over the nursery from his brother and the following year he married Caroline De Windt, the great-niece of John Quincy Adams. In 1841, at the age of 26, Downing published *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*. The book was an immediate success and launched the obscure nurseryman from Newburgh into the national spotlight. The following year he published *Cottage Residences*, which was even more of a success, and Downing was soon a highly regarded authority on both architecture and landscape design.

Though little of Downing's built work has survived, his influence continues. No book concerned with the development of the American house is without mention of him. But it is important to note that Downing's influence

is a result of his gifts as a popularizer and tastemaker, not as a designer and originator. He drew heavily upon the work of established landscape artists and contemporary architects he admired, including Alexander Jackson Davis (with whom Downing is often confused), Richard Upjohn, and Gervase Wheeler.

In 1850 Downing published what was to be his last work and left for his first trip abroad. While in England he was introduced to a young architect named Calvert Vaux. (Vaux was later to work with F.L. Olmsted on the plan for Central Park, among other significant projects.) Downing persuaded Vaux to move to America, where the two formed a partnership. The firm was short-lived. On July 28, 1852, Downing and his wife were travelling to New York City aboard the steamboat "Henry Clay," which was engaged in a race with its rival, the "Armenia." A fire broke out on the "Henry Clay" and there was an explosion. An able swimmer, Downing was last seen throwing deck chairs to the survivors who had jumped into the water. His wife survived the accident.



From *Landscape Gardening*.

Born in 1815 in Newburgh, New York, A.J. Downing lived only 36 years, yet within his short life he published three significant books on landscape and architecture, edited a magazine "The Horticulturalist," maintained an architectural practice, and helped turn America's taste away from the bold and stoic Greek to the pastoral and picturesque Gothic.

Downing's greatest achievement was his role in formulating an American Cottage style, a style we know today by its brackets, board-and-batten siding, trellises, and verandahs. Yet Downing's vision reached beyond mere details. The message Downing preached with such conviction was the need to shape America's countryside into a landscape of romantic country houses of Italian, Norman, or Swiss descent nestled amidst trees and gardens, orchards and meadows, overlooking a river or lake, far from the smoky grey city — in essence, the picture-perfect suburban house that is still the American dream.

One might imagine America's most popular country architect as a serene, peaceful Thoreauvian. A poorer description could not be made! Downing's reputation was that of a haughty sophisticate with a well known disdain for anything "common." It was said he would have his lawn mowed only at night so family and guests would never witness such loathsome

REVIEWED BY
JANET MARINELLI

Patina Green

Ever wonder how architects and craftspeople create "antique" verdigris finishes on objects from door-knobs to domes? They use copper-sulfate solutions, which duplicate in minutes the effect that years of exposure to the elements have on copper and other metals. You can get the same effect using Patina Green, a copper-sulfate solution packaged in

handy, one-pint containers and now available at Pottery Barn stores across the country.

Patina Green can be used on switchplates, doorknobs, lamps, candlesticks, and other decorative objects made of copper, brass, and

bronze. The one-pint containers cost \$18 plus tax and shipping.

If there's no store nearby, you can order Patina Green by calling Pottery Barn's San Francisco-based mail-order division at (415) 421-3400. Five-gallon containers of Patina Green (\$200 plus shipping) can be ordered directly from the manufacturer, Modern Options Inc., 888 Brannan St., Suite 567, Dept. OHJ, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-2752.



Early American Fixtures

Another manufacturer of handsome reproduction 18th-century fixtures, as well as some early-19th-century designs, is McLean Lighting Works.

Owners Mac and Nancy Moore offer more than 75 hand-made lanterns, post lights, sconces, chandeliers, and foyer lights, many based on documented originals.

The lanterns and post lights are made of copper or brass, in a choice of natural, aged patina, or verdigris finishes. Sconces, foyer lights, and chandeliers come in tin or brass in natural or aged patina finishes. Turned-wood chandeliers come with or without gold leaf or painted centers. The turned-wood center of "The Crumpler," below, for example, is painted black with gold gilding. The fixture is an exact reproduction of an 18th-century chandelier found in a church in upper New York State.

You can buy McLean Lighting Works' fixtures direct from Saltbox, the Moores' retail store in Greensboro, North Carolina, or by mail order. Saltbox, 500B State St., Dept. OHJ, Greensboro, NC 27405; (919) 273-8758. Catalog, \$3.50.

Colonial Lighting

If you're looking for lighting for your 18th-century or Colonial Revival house, send for a copy of Period Lighting Fixtures' catalog. We saw these fixtures in person recently and were impressed by their beautiful proportions and detail — and their antique finishes, which are not phoney-looking.

All chandeliers, sconces, lanterns, and student lamps are entirely hand-made and can be used with candles or wired for electricity. Most are meticulous reproductions of 18th-century originals. Three finishes are available: hand-rubbed pewter (a dull medium-to-dark grey), aged tin (a dark, rusted, dull oil finish), or painted (shellac dry colors with an umber paste glaze). Exterior lanterns are solid copper and come in a verdigris finish, painted flat wrought-iron black, or unfinished (natural copper rapidly turns a dull bronze color).

The fixtures range in price from \$53 for a simple sconce to \$2500 for a two-tiered, turned-wood-center chandelier. A single-tiered version of this chandelier, above, costs \$795.

Period Lighting Fixtures, One Main St., Dept. OHJ, Chester, CT 06412; (203) 526-3690. Catalog, \$3.



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Horn Furniture

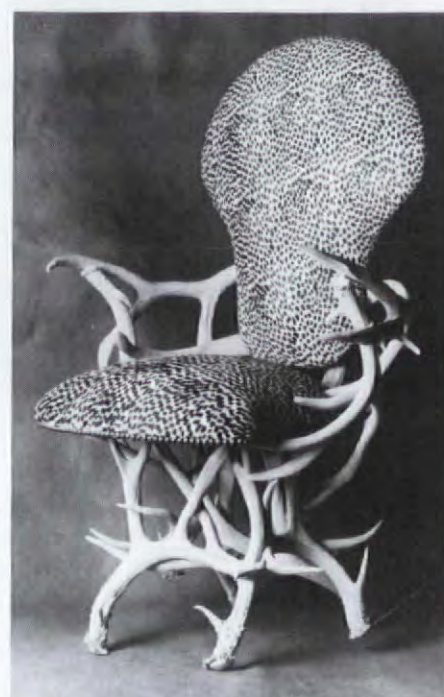
Horn furniture has been traced back as far as the Middle Ages in rural Europe. In the late-19th century, this vernacular form of furniture became very fashionable in parlors across America as Victorians longed for picturesque reminders of the vanishing frontier.

A century later, horn furniture is making a comeback. Nineteenth-century pieces are relatively rare, but a few companies offer new horn furniture in the Victorian spirit.

The chair, right, and double-tiered chandelier, left, are available from Flynn-Devereux. The chair is approximately 45" high and covered with stencilled pony hide. (Other fabrics are available.) It costs \$3495. The chandelier has 12 lights, is internally wired, and measures about 4½' high by 4½' in diameter. It costs \$5680. Single- and triple-tiered versions are also available, as well as an ottoman, a wall bracket, candlesticks, and several other pieces. All of Flynn-Devereux's horn furniture is made in the backyard of owner Gail Flynn in Tucker, Georgia, from naturally shed mule deer antler.

Free literature is available from Flynn-Devereux, 3927 Oberlin Ct., Dept. OHJ, Tucker, GA 30084; (404) 491-0929.

You can also find horn furniture at



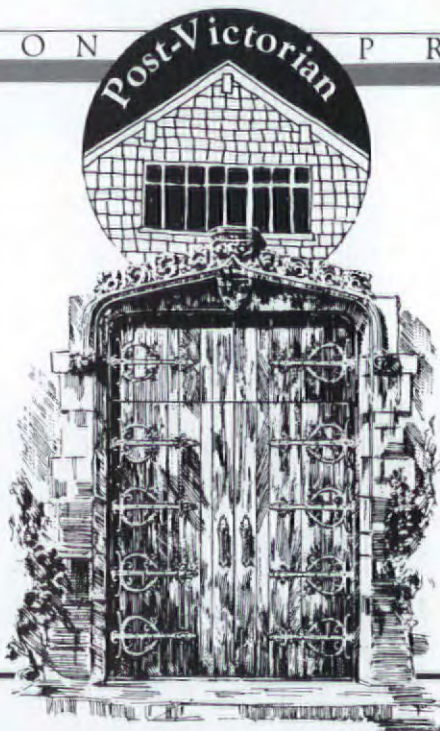
David Barrett, a Manhattan-based shop. These pieces are made in England of deer antler and include a chair which retails for \$3750 and an eight-light chandelier, for \$3000.

Write David Barrett, 232 E. 59th St., Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10022, or call (212) 688-0950 for photos and more information.

Warwick Hardware

Forged-iron hardware in Colonial styles has become widely available in recent years. However, strap hinges, doorknobs and handles, push plates, escutcheons, and other reproduction hardware in designs suitable for the Tudor Revivals, English Cottages, and English Country Houses so popular in America between about 1900 and 1930 are still relatively rare.

The Acorn Manufacturing Co. of Mansfield, Massachusetts, is now making a line of reproduction forged-iron interior and exterior



hardware, called the Warwick line, based on hardware at Warwick Castle in England. The line includes scores of pieces, from key plates to door pulls. Most are hand-made. The rough-finished strap hinges in the Tudor doorway illustrated at left come in two sizes, 24" and 28", and cost \$87.95 and \$94.95, respectively. The company also makes a complete line of American Colonial reproduction hardware.

For more information, write Acorn Manufacturing Co., PO Box 31, Dept. OHJ, Mansfield, MA 02048, or call toll free 1-800-835-0121. Acorn's profusely illustrated catalog costs \$5.

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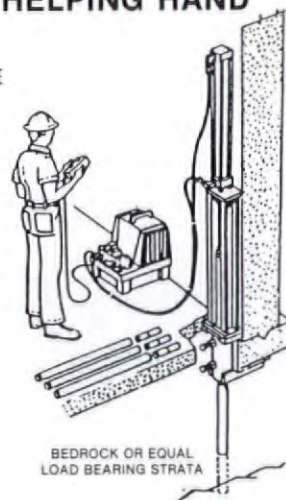
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Garden Reading

We recently told you where to find old-fashioned flowers (see "Outside the Old House," OHJ January/February 1989). Two newly published volumes can tell you more about which varieties to look for. In *Antique Flowers*, Katherine Whiteside profiles 40 historic species, among them shrub roses and pinks, sweet rocket and poet's narcissus. Mick Hales' 150 color photographs are handsome. *Antique Flowers* is available for \$31.95 ppd. from Villard Books, a division of Random House, 400 Hahn Rd., Dept. OHJ, Westminster, MD 21157; (800) 638-6460.

Old Garden Roses is a spectacular collection of Josh Westrich's photographs of 83 classic roses, from c. 1630 'Rosa Mundi' to 'Pax' (Latin for "peace"), developed during the First World War. An introductory chapter charts the history of the rose, and notes on each variety are provided. You can get the book for \$51.50 ppd. from Thames & Hudson, 500 Fifth Ave., Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10110; (800) 233-4830.



Garden Curbs

From about 1860 to 1910, decorative brick, ceramic, and terra-cotta curbs edged Victorian garden paths. The curbs were made in clay-rich regions of Georgia and South Carolina; different potteries specialized in different patterns. The diamond-within-a-sunburst pattern above, for instance, was probably made at the Brumbelee Brickworks in the village of Chalker, Georgia, as early as 1860.

This curb and seven additional designs are being reproduced by Barbara Bauer, an Athens, Georgia-based potter and sculptor who spends most of her time restoring or recreating such architectural ornaments as capitals and cornices. Over the years,

Barbara has found antique garden curbs at flea markets, and she's always looking for other surviving examples to photograph in period gardens and cemeteries. She started making the reproductions in hopes of reviving this disappearing form of garden ornament.

The reproduction pieces are made of concrete colored to look like slate and terra cotta. All the curbs are approximately 8" long and cost about \$7 apiece plus shipping.

For more information, write to Barbara at Bauer Casting Design, PO Box 385, 118 Main St., Dept. OHJ, Lexington, GA 30648. You can reach her by phone at (404) 743-3268 or 546-0068.

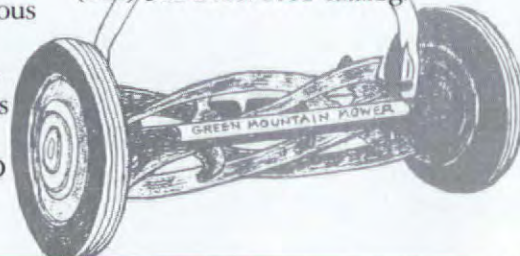


Hand Mower

After World War II, almost every red-blooded American homeowner longed for a power lawnmower. Power mowers got bigger and bigger; today, four-wheel-drive turbo-charged models manicure turf not only on vast country estates but also in (once) placid old neighborhoods in town.

If you'd rather mow your period lawn the old-fashioned way, consider the Green Mountain mower, available from the Vermont Country Store. The hand mower is made of cast iron with rubber tires. It comes in two sizes: a standard 16" width for average-sized lawns (\$115), and a 14" model for small lawns and for mowing around shrubs (\$89.95). A grass catcher is also available.

Vermont Country Store, 668 Main St., Dept. OHJ, Weston, VT 05161; (802) 362-2400. Free catalog.



Bat Guano

Nineteenth-century Americans relied on organic substances, not today's high-tech petroleum-based products, to make their gardens grow. For instance, guano was a favorite Victorian fertilizer. Chances are remote that

you'll find it at your neighborhood nursery, but you can mail order guano from Full Circle Garden Products in Redway, California. The company sells two kinds of bat guano: a high-nitrogen formulation for good leaf growth, and a high phosphorous version for healthy flowers. A 25-pound bag costs \$31.20 plus shipping; 5-pound bags cost \$9.95 plus shipping.

Full Circle Garden Products, PO Box 6, Dept. OHJ, Redway, CA 95560; (707) 923-3606.

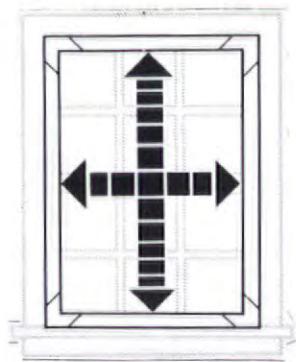
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Old-House Jewelry

Not long ago, we got a call from OHJ reader, old-house restorer, and master goldsmith Bob Kelley.

"I'd like to stop by and show you the 14-carat-gold corner-bracket earrings and gaslight pendant that I make. They're based on documented pieces in my 1895 parlor."

"We're into plaster and paint strippers 'round here, Mr. Kelley. Perhaps you should try Tiffany?"

"You really have to see these. I designed them for my wife."

The next day a package arrived on our doorstep, bulging with color photos of Bob Kelley's jewelry, each lovingly composed.

Hmm. We wondered, could this be a trend? Intrepid reporters, we rushed to the phone.

"Hello. Is this the National Trust? Do you sell, er, *old-house jewelry*? You know . . . What? Cloissone earrings based on Frank Lloyd Wright windows? And Prairie-style pins?"

The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation would have something to say about this. We gave them a buzz.

"Hi. This is the Old-House Journal. We've got a good one for you guys," we guffawed. "Frank Lloyd Wright in *cloissone* . . . Whassat? You sell cloissone pins? Eight different styles, all based on documented windows by

Wright?"

In comes the afternoon mail. On top of the pile is a flyer from Wm. J. Rigby Co., purveyors of documented reproductions of late-19th-century sparkling tin Christmas tree ornaments. Seems Rigby now offers fish earrings in the same style. "A Perfect Gift For That Unique Person," the flyer reads. "No documentation. JUST PLAIN FUN."

Bob Kelley's gaslight pendant (see above, right) is custom-made from 14 separate components, including ivory shades. Each one takes about twelve hours to make and costs \$445. His bracket earrings are entirely hand-made, and cost \$149. Write Robert Kelley, Goldsmith, Box 15454, 1500 Main St., Dept. OHJ, Springfield, MA 01115, or call (413) 737-1741 evenings.

For more information on Frank Lloyd Wright earrings and pins, write the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Decatur House Museum Shop, 1600



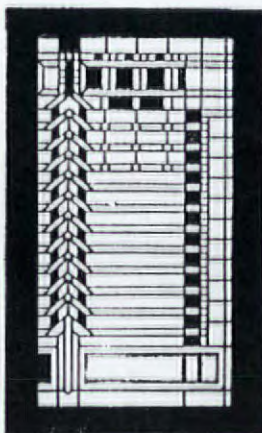
Robert Kelley's gas-light pendant.

H St., NW, Dept. OHJ, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 842-1856.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation's Martin House pin (\$55) and Coonley Playhouse pin (\$43) are illustrated below, left. Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation, 951 Chicago Ave., Dept. OHJ, Oak Park, IL 60302; (312) 848-1606. Free catalog.

Wm. J. Rigby's earrings (see below) are for pierced ears only and cost \$15 ppd. Wm. J. Rigby Co., 3672 Richmond Rd., Dept. OHJ, Staten Island, NY 10306.

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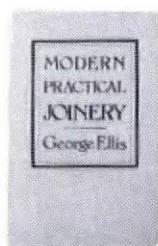
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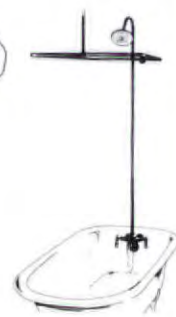
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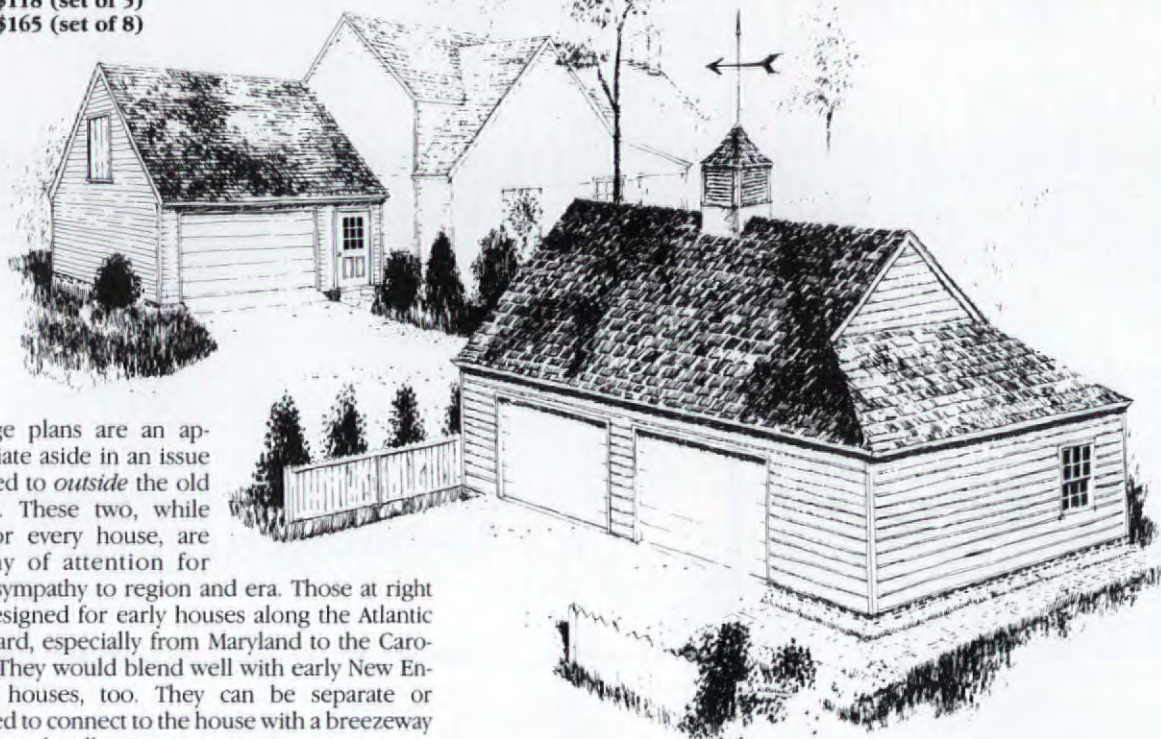
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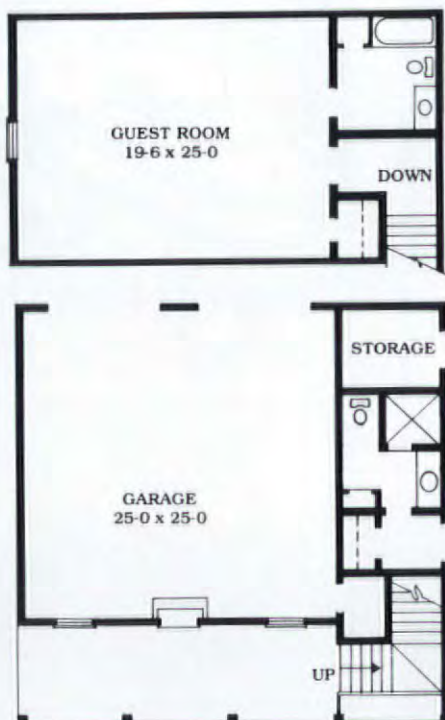
REGIONAL GARAGES

Plan G-01A-TA

Cost: \$75
 \$118 (set of 5)
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Garage plans are an appropriate aside in an issue devoted to *outside* the old house. These two, while not for every house, are worthy of attention for their sympathy to region and era. Those at right are designed for early houses along the Atlantic seaboard, especially from Maryland to the Carolinas. They would blend well with early New England houses, too. They can be separate or adapted to connect to the house with a breezeway or covered walkway.



Plan G-01A-HR

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OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
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DEPTH	34

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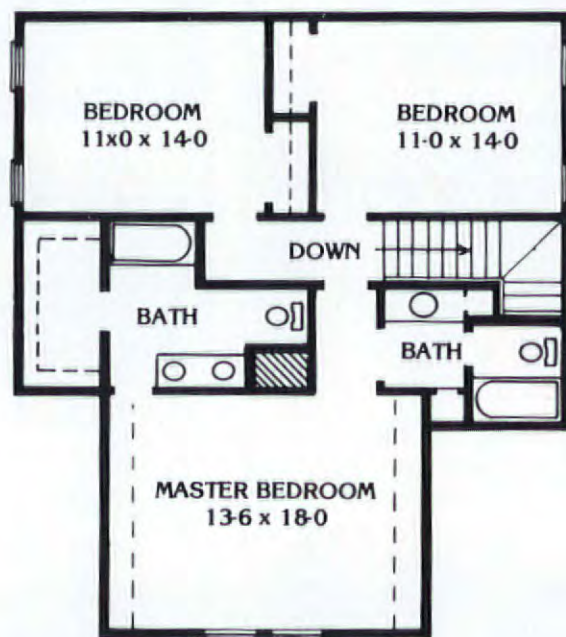
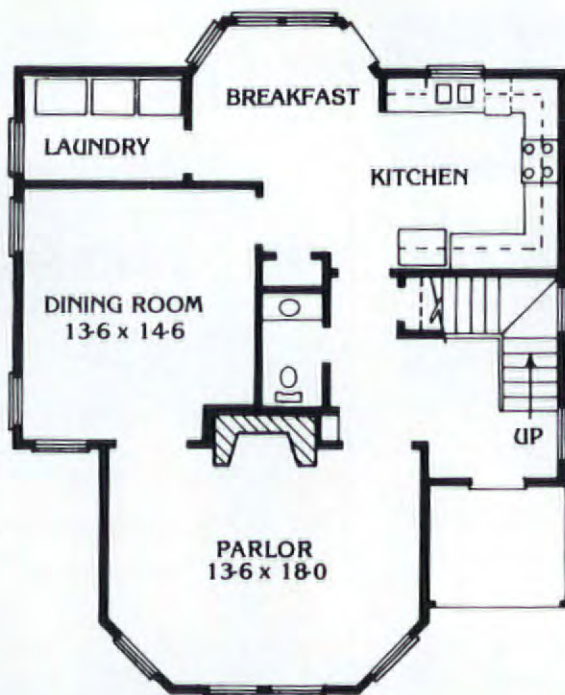
SQUARE FOOTAGE	1924
FIRST FLOOR	991
SECOND FLOOR	993
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	9
SECOND FLOOR	8
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	32
DEPTH	39

Plan V-06A-HR

Cost: \$200

\$250 (set of 5)

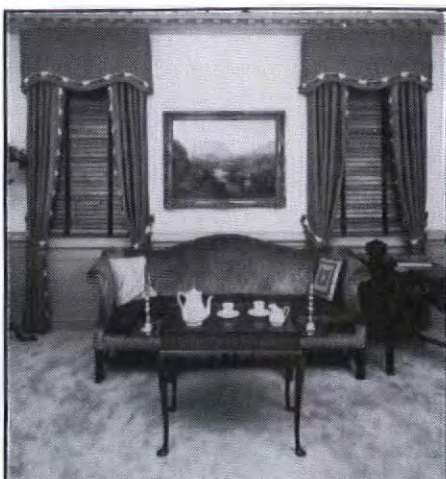
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et al of the 1880s.

The entry hall features a nicely detailed staircase lit by two windows; stained glass in the landing window would be very appropriate. Each bedroom has a section of coved ceiling, sloping from 8 to 6 feet.



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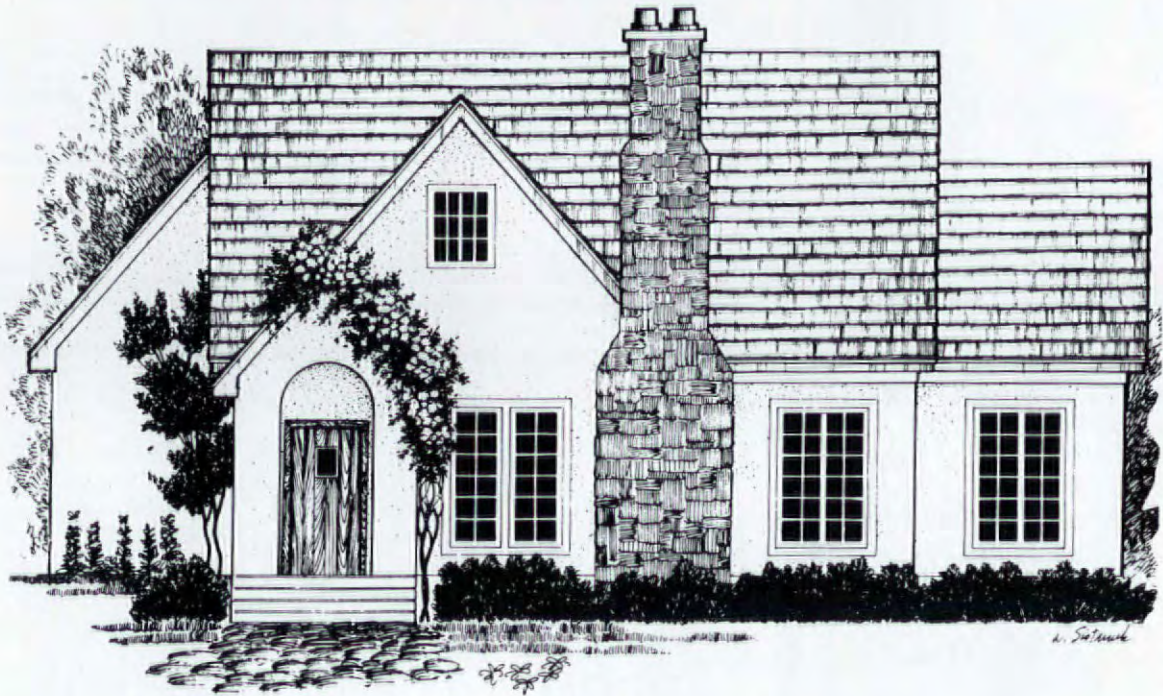


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OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

67

ENGLISH STUCCO



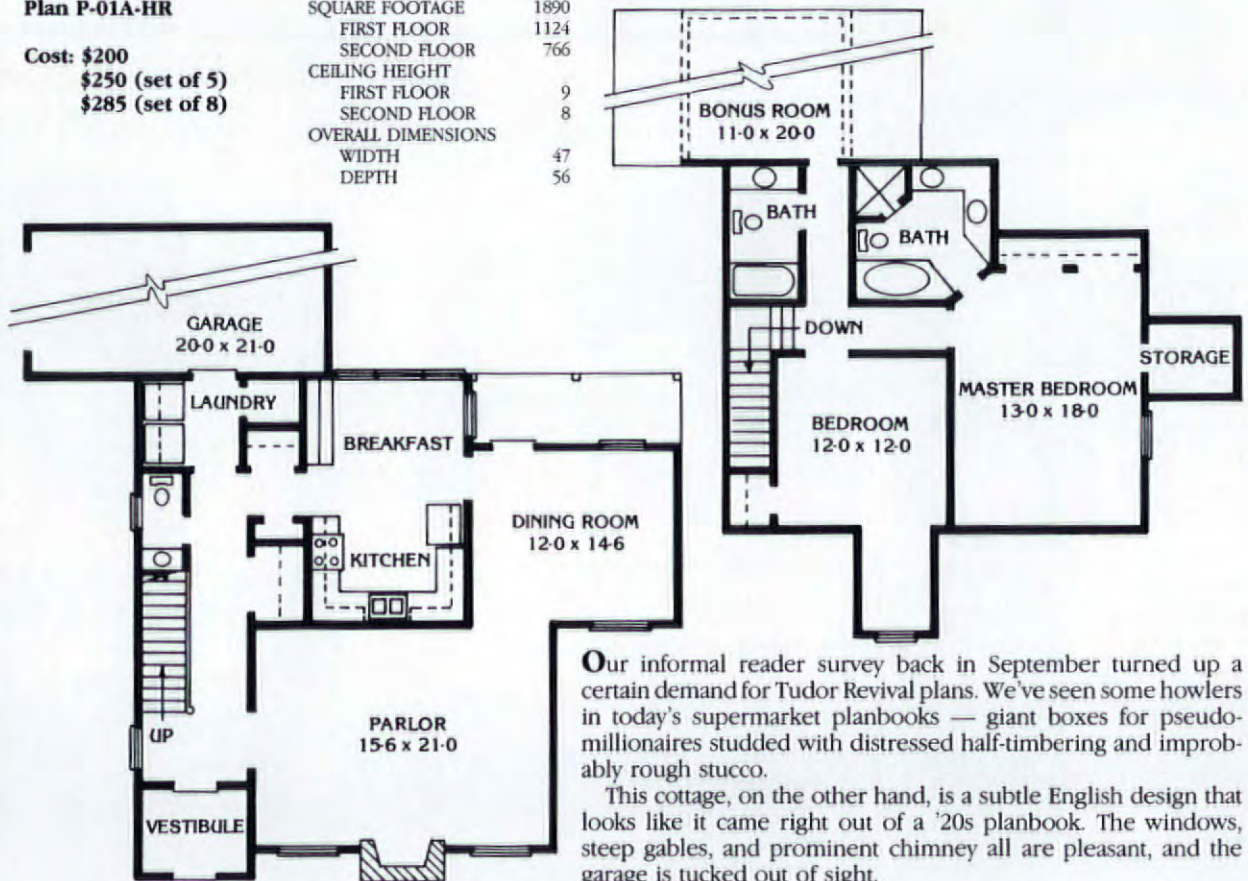
Plan P-01A-HR

Cost: \$200

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SQUARE FOOTAGE	1890
FIRST FLOOR	1124
SECOND FLOOR	766
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	9
SECOND FLOOR	8
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	47
DEPTH	56



Our informal reader survey back in September turned up a certain demand for Tudor Revival plans. We've seen some howlers in today's supermarket planbooks — giant boxes for pseudo-millionaires studded with distressed half-timbering and improbably rough stucco.

This cottage, on the other hand, is a subtle English design that looks like it came right out of a '20s planbook. The windows, steep gables, and prominent chimney all are pleasant, and the garage is tucked out of sight.

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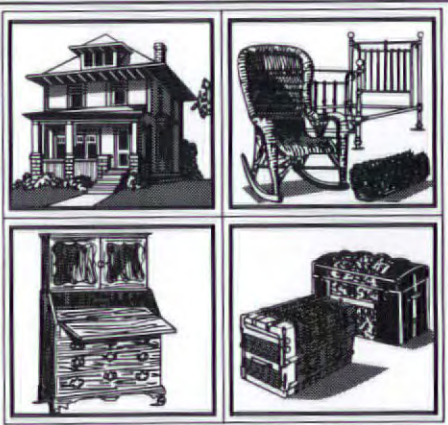
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These are the tools OHJ editors reach for when we strip paint from our own houses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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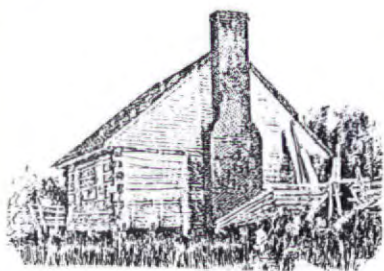
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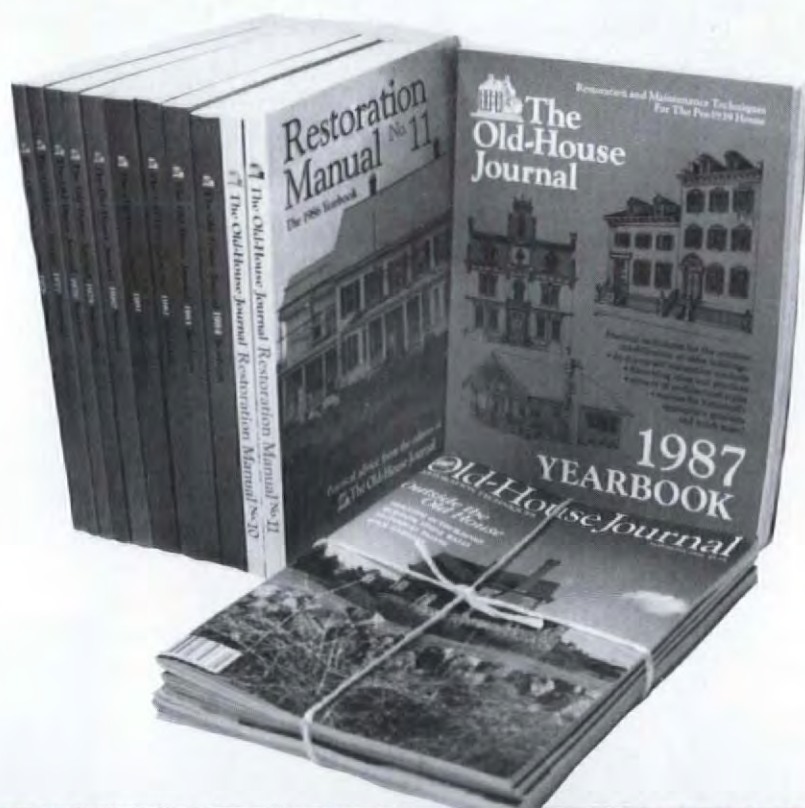
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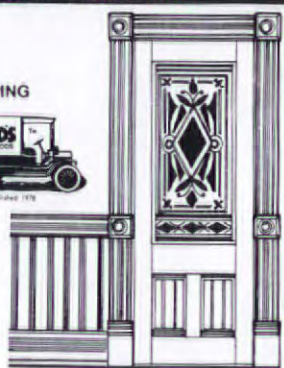
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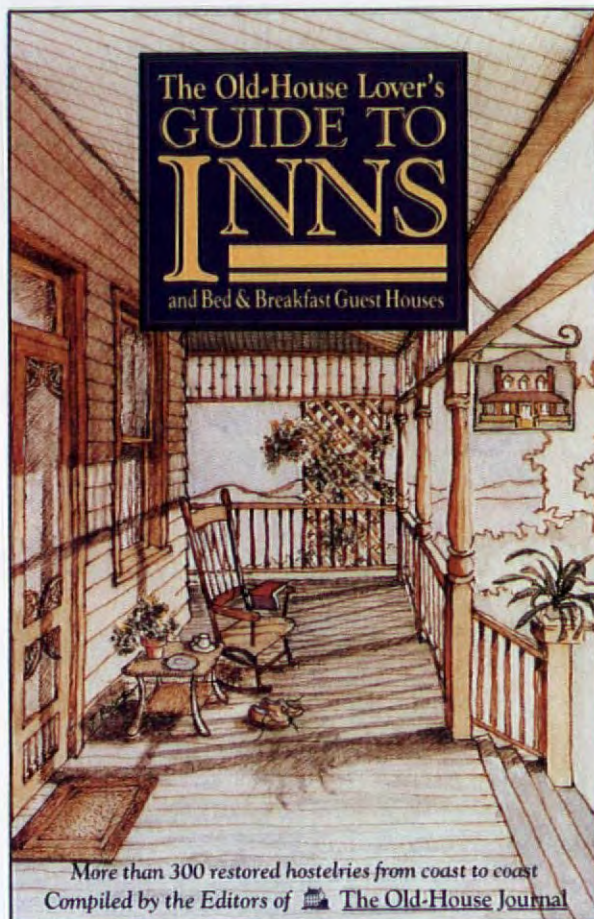
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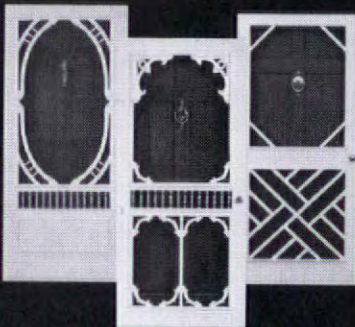
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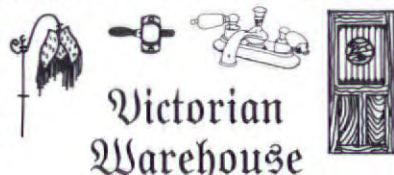


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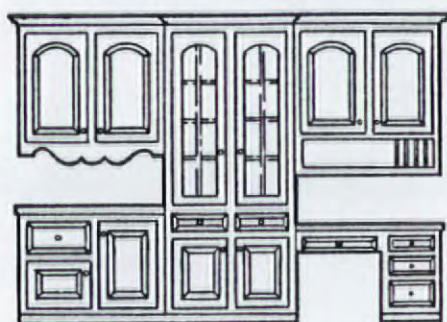
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OLD BARBER CHAIR — Theo Koch model on pedestal stand, heavy, \$175. Old butcher block, table height on legs, from butcher shop — wavy, chopped-on surface, \$200. "New Method" gas range, green & white, from the 1920s-30s, \$300. Glynn, 278 Sterling Place, Brooklyn, NY 11238. (718) 638-5739.

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2 CLAWFOOT TUBS, 26"X53" and 29"X60", in good condition. Original enamel inside, painted outside. Also steam radiator, 32" high X 27" long. Best offer. Brooklyn, NY. Call Stephen during business hours, (212) 924-2324.

2 ORNATE RADIATORS, c. 1901, Atlantic Radiator Co., Huntingdon, PA. Both are 5 tubes wide by 45" high. \$125 each or BO. Mr. R. Burnip, 78 Willoughby St., Apt. 501, Brooklyn, NY 11201. (718) 852-8750 — leave message.

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MEETINGS & EVENTS

HYATTSVILLE HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR, Sunday, May 21, 1 to 5 PM. Tickets \$5, available day of tour only. 10 beautifully restored homes in the Nat'l Register Historic District. Information available from the Hyattsville Preservation Association, PO Box 375, Hyattsville, MD 20781.

15TH-ANNUAL "WRIGHT PLUS" HOUSEWALK, Saturday & Sunday, May 20-21, from 9 AM to 5 PM, in Oak Park, IL. The tour will include 11 buildings, 5 designed by Wright: his first home & studio (1889-98), the Walter H. Gale house (1893), the Frank Thomas house (1901), the Mrs. Thomas Gale house (1909), & Unity Temple (1909). Tickets cost \$25 & are limited. They can be charged if ordered by phone: (312) 848-1978. For information, call (312) 848-1500.

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TOUR THE DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD, Saturday May 7, 11 AM to 5 PM, featuring Nat'l Register homes and Drake University campus buildings. Entertainment & refreshments. For information, call (515) 274-5579 or write The Drake Neighborhood Assn., 1153 24th, Des Moines, IA 50311.

14TH-ANNUAL NEEDLEWORK EXHIBITION, May 13-21: 10-4, daily; 1-5, Sundays. Belle Grove Plantation, 1-1/2 miles south of Middletown, VA, on US #11. \$3.50, adults. For entry form and information, write PO Box 137, Middletown, VA 22645.

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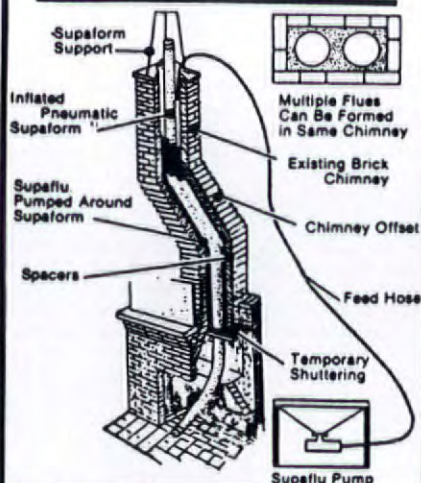
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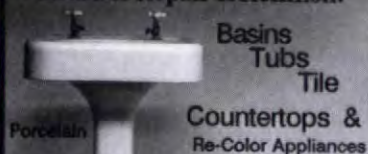
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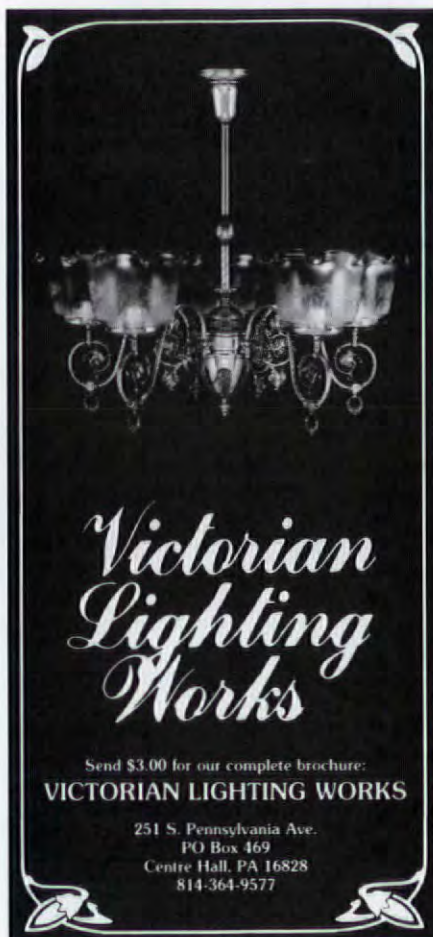
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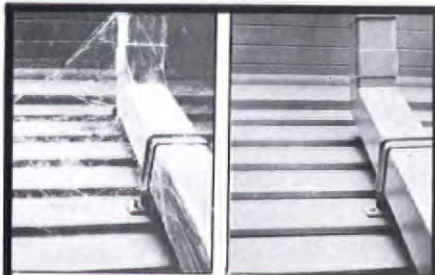
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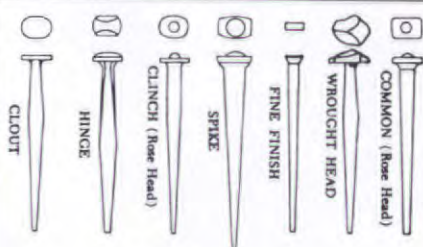
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opinion... Remuddling



The remodelers "simply got carried away," Ms. Bick suggests. So did the house.

Carried Away

There's a story behind every remuddling.

Maybe, for instance, there's a town ordinance that prohibits new building close to lot lines — but allows remodeling as long as three exterior walls are preserved.

Coincidentally, three brick bearing walls remain within the new frame walls in the house shown here. With the brick walls now exposed on the interior, the house has been turned

inside out.

Or another story could be told. Maybe remuddling on this scale isn't intentional. Maybe it's simply the cumulative result of changes made one at a time. This transformation, for example, took place over five years. First the rear addition was demolished. Then the roof was removed and a basement excavated. Then the front porch disappeared to allow a new concrete foundation to be

poured. Only then were the exterior walls "constructed."

What was so special about this little house? Built in 1887 by a locally prominent architect, it was part of a related *group* of buildings (including the big house next door and a carriage house) that had survived in the Helena South-Central Historic District. It's gone now.

— Submitted by Patricia Bick
State Historic Preservation Officer
Helena, Montana

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



GREEK REVIVAL IN OHIO'S WESTERN RESERVE

The Western Reserve region of northeastern Ohio was once part of the Connecticut Colony. Although it became a separate area after 1786, when the land was designated to be sold to Connecticut citizens, it was not until after 1815 that settlers arrived from Connecticut and other New England states. With prosperity came a demand for graceful homes. Trained craftsmen came west, bringing current builder's guides. The development of the Western Reserve took place just as the Greek Revival (1825-1860) was sweeping the country. Our Western Reserve vernacular is the region's interpretation of the style.

These one-and-a-half storey, wood-frame houses are easily recognized by the central front doorway (with one or two windows on each side) and their Greek Revival details. A distinctive feature is the line of small rectangular windows across the front of the second floor. In the house

shown, these were covered over when siding was added in the 1940s. All of these houses have been unfortunately altered in some manner, the most common changes being the addition of siding, front porches, and numerous rooms, as well as the removal or relocation of the windows and doors.

In all of the houses, the ground floor had a large room on each side of a spacious center hall. Open, wide front stairs led to bedrooms. A small ground-floor room at the rear may have been part of the original plan.

It can be assumed that thousands of these houses were built, because many hundreds remain. The house in the photo is in southern Trumbull County; the same family has lived there for nearly 60 years. Of all the examples I observed in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties, this one had suffered the fewest changes. The inside of the original structure had not been altered since it was built.

— *Bette Ann Axe*
Youngstown, Ohio





GARBAGE

The Practical Journal for the Environment

The publishers of OHJ announce the first independently published magazine exclusively on environmental issues.

Let's face it, we're all in this together. But the "garbage dilemma" is bewildering. Even those of us with a strong sense of responsibility feel it's beyond the individual to grasp it — let alone fix it!

The editors of **GARBAGE** are fed up with the sensational (or mollifying) headlines; the half-told stories; the sense of impotence we have about changing things. **GARBAGE** will be the magazine we'd like to read. (Sixteen years ago, that's just how OHJ started: The editors wrote about restoring our own old houses — and pretty soon we had a network of people sharing knowledge.)

GARBAGE is not a wildlife magazine or a country magazine. It's a down-to-earth journal that brings home such subjects as:

- Designing your kitchen for recycling
- Alternatives to harmful products
- Gardening without pesticides
- Swamp-ecology sewage treatment
- Good plastics vs. bad plastics
- Big Mac boxes and atmospheric chemistry
- Ocean dumping and the food we eat
- Bottled water fads and facts
- Personal food and health issues
- The recycling economy
- Water conservation abroad
- The life cycle of a disposable product

GARBAGE is not a "cause" magazine. It's about understanding what's going on. And doing something about it (if you're so inclined).

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT NOW. We are not going elsewhere for financing, because the editors want control of the magazine's content. And unlike non-profit environmental groups and activist organizations, we can't procure grants or ask for donations.

We're betting the kind of people who preserve old houses are the same people who will preserve the planet. Please let us have your early support to build on.

SPECIAL TO OHJ READERS: Get a Charter Subscription to **GARBAGE** for only \$18 (regular price \$21) if you order by July 15.

Thank you!

Patricia Moore