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RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE TECHNIQUES

MAY/JUNE 1991

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Old-House Journal

May/June 1991



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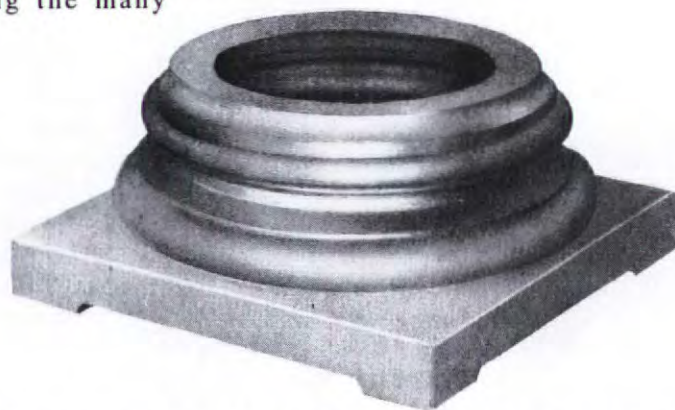
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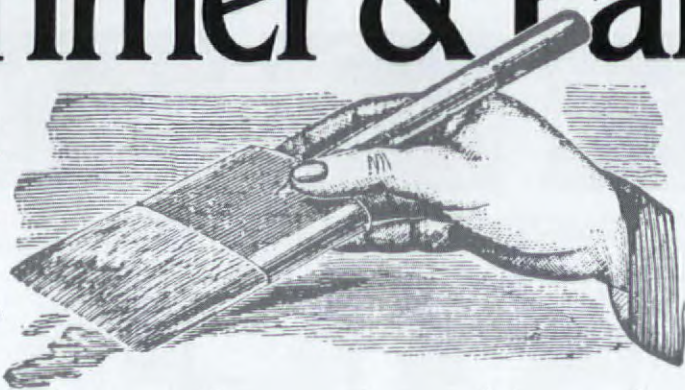
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Primer & Paint

It's spring and we decided to look outside the old house again for an issue — but not too far.

The focus this time is exterior paint. Housepainting is a phase of old-house work which comes around with warm weather. Painting is a project we all get involved with eventually, and there's a shade to suit everybody in this issue, from guidelines for a lasting job on wood, to techniques for an 18th and 19th-century sanded-paint finish, to color ideas suitable for post-Victorian houses.

"Putty and paint," an old saying goes, were part of a carriagemaker's bag of tricks for reviving worn wood-



work. Primer and paint, in their way, work the same for anyone restoring old houses. Paint, however, does more than renew the exterior surface; it "makes" an old house. Paint colors and their placement are part of the architecture. These expressions of style or era are as strong as roof shape or window size. The classicism of Greek Revival off-whites, the pastoral nature of Downing earth

colors, and the exuberance of Victorian polychromy all put the finishing touches on a building's design.

I enjoy housepainting. Good painting weather happens to be pleasant weather as well, and painting gets me outside in the fresh air and sunlight. Painting also brings a body up close to a

house and forces you to get intimate with every inch of exterior. You wind up in odd places, high on a ladder in the eaves, for instance, getting a view of some detail you had never noticed from the ground. You're drawn in to small things, such as watching thirsty wood drink up paint from a big old brush.

I also like what paint does for a house. Even though the prep work is boring, dirty, and requires no small amount of elbow grease, for me there's nothing else that delivers as much "bang for your buck" as a good paint job, particularly on carpentry that's been around a while. A fresh coat of paint seems to straighten the lines of woodwork almost as if it had been remilled or rebuilt. It makes joints look tighter and surfaces smoother. It unifies all the components of a facade and announces that they've had attention. It takes a house that's slouching a little and helps it stand up straight.

Right now, I'm itching to get back on some painting I started last fall. The porch floor I'm working on is turning out so improved, it even makes the ceiling look better. After I finish, I'll be able to start on the window trim — that is, as soon as the rain lets up.

Gordon Beck

OHJ Award Grants

This is also the issue where we announce the OHJ group subscription grant winners for 1990. As we have since 1981, OHJ will share subscription revenues with preservation groups, historical societies, block associations, and similar preservation-minded organizations in the form of unrestricted grants. The award winners are selected from the pool of participants in two ways. The first grant is earned by the group who sold the largest number of subscriptions, 113 for last year. The remaining four winners are selected by lottery under the supervision of Smolin and Yavel, Accountants. Starting from the top, the grant winners are:

- Gifford Park Association
Elgin, Illinois
- Preservation Guild of Hancock County

Findlay, Ohio

- Historic Charlotte, Inc.
Charlotte, Michigan
- High Street Association
Petersburg, Virginia
- Columbia Historic Preservation Society

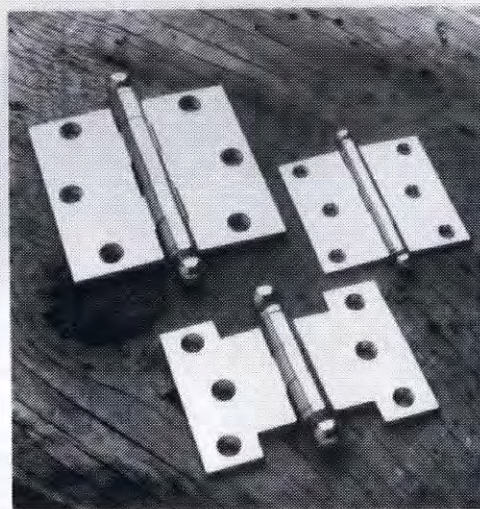
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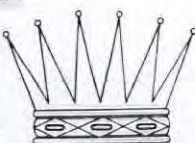
Each grant is for \$1000, a sum that has been used in a variety of ways in years past. The 1986 winner used their grant as seed money for a house purchase/rehab fund. Other creative causes have included relocating a doomed building, starting a Main Street rehabilitation project, and purchasing books on historic preservation for a university program. Whatever the specific goals, preservation as a movement has also gained.

Congratulations to the 1990 winners!

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Moving a house can sometimes result in that sinking feeling. . .

House Boat?

Dear OHJ,

I enjoyed your interesting article on house moving in the Jan/Feb 1991 issue. It reminded me of this photo that has been sitting in my desk drawer for years, of a house move that didn't make it.

Apparently, houses do not float!

— John J. Heyn

President, Heyn Home Inspectors
Towson, Md.

In Praise of Polyethelene

Dear OHJ,

Ward Bucher's excellent article, "Drying-In and Drying-Out" [March/

April 1991], condensed a lot of information into a small space. But please permit me a small quibble. His advice against using polyethelene to cover a damaged roof is correct, but for the wrong reason. It is true that clear polyethelene sheeting does deteriorate rapidly due to the effects of the sun, but *black* polyethelene is quite durable. I had occasion to cover a roof with it while awaiting the permanent roofing. It was still in good condition when removed nearly a year later. I also have used it to cover stacked materials and found it lasted close to two years in South Carolina's scorching summers.

The reason NOT to use polyethelene sheeting on a roof is *safety*: It is as slippery as glass, and remains so. On a roof of only moderate slope, it will send the unwary sliding toward the eaves in an instant. (If, as hap-

pened in my case, it collects pine needles, it is even more treacherous.)

I felt it worthwhile to share this with you, because others may realize as I did, that black polyethelene is sufficiently durable, without being aware that it is too dangerous to walk on when it's on a roof.

— Donald L. McKinsey
Charlotte, N.C.

Inappropriate Impatiens

Dear OHJ,

I've been meaning for a while to write you about Lanette King's letter in the Nov/Dec 1990 *OHJ* ("Impatiens for the Facts," p. 12) regarding my article "Neo-Antique Hanging Baskets" in the May/June '90 issue. She is right that impatiens were available in 1888 (as a very new plant), but they were an unusual conservatory — not garden — plant till after World War Two, and generally lost the slight toehold they had in catalogs after 1900 or so. "Available" is not the same as "appropriate," and I think you misled readers by publishing that letter.

— Scott G. Kuns
Ann Arbor, Mich.
continued on page 8

Moved to Write

Dear OHJ,

I enjoyed the house-moving article in the Jan/Feb 1991 *OHJ*. In 1978, I had a large house moved some nine miles. It was 28' x 48', stood over 40' tall, and weighed about 85 tons. If I remember correctly, the moving cost was \$6,800 plus a \$500 fee because the house had to be winched across fields for the last ¾ of a mile — using salvaged, portable aircraft runway under the wheels. It took six hours to move the house as far as the fields, and another 2½ days to winch it the last distance. (We also had to go under two high-voltage lines that could not be turned off and had to be raised 10' higher than the house. That was costly!)

— William Wragg
Oregon, Ill.



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continued from page 6

What About Bees?

Dear OHJ,

The article "Wood-Destroying Insects" by Frank Briscoe in the March/April 1991 issue left out one of the most common insects which we deal with in our construction work: carpenter bees, or *Xylocopa virginica* (Linnaeus).

My first experience with them was when I found a 1/2"-diameter hole and sawdust on the back of our house. We took off the siding and found a long tunnel in the 1" x 12" pine board sheathing. There were dozens of bees, each in their compartment, ready to leave their tunnel and forever call my sheathing their home.

Since then, we have found them in exterior-trim boards, porch beams, railings, etc., on almost every job. One pair of bees does not do exten-

sive damage, but when the tunnel gets long and many bees lay their eggs in it, they can be very destructive.

The Ohio Cooperative Extension Service recommends dusting the holes with boric acid, propoxur, diazinon, or chlorpyrifos, or removing the board and replacing it with treated wood where possible.

— Ann M. Antenen

President, Ann Antenen Restoration
Hamilton, Ohio

Editor Gordon Bock replies: "Carpenter bees are large — up to one inch in length — and significant pests, found in virtually all parts of the country (including Texas, where Frank Briscoe took many of the photos for the article). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has identified over 15 differ-

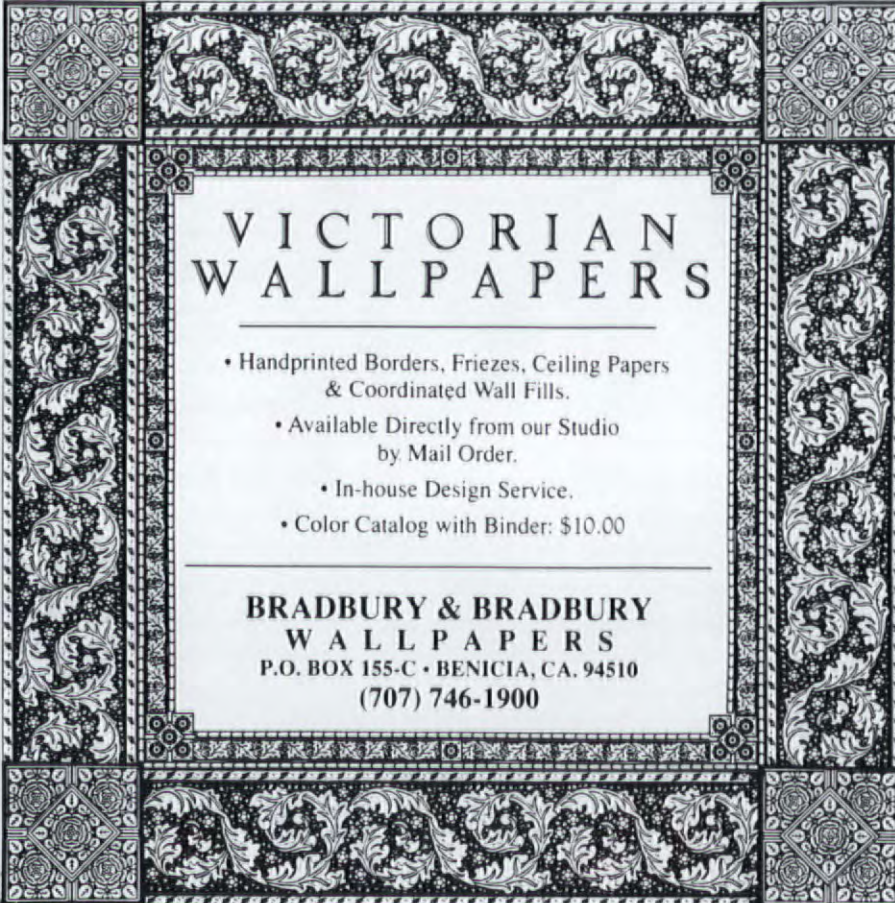
ent groups of termites, beetles, wasps, ants, and bees as being potential threats to the wood in houses and other structures. But for the scope of one article, we chose to focus on the three insect categories of termites, carpenter ants, and wood-boring beetles. These pests cause the most extensive damage to houses and are the insects that OHJ readers are most likely to see."

In Search of. . .

Dear OHJ,

The house search is on for our new book, *America's Painted Ladies*. As with *Daughters of Painted Ladies*, the book will include Victorian houses all over the United States, which are painted in three or more contrasting colors. As with *The Painted Ladies Revisited*, the book

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continued from page 8

will also include extraordinary interiors decorated in a personal or period style.

We are requesting that the Victorian Network please call and/or send photos with names, addresses, and phone numbers as soon as possible. Many thanks for your help.

— Michael Larson & Elizabeth Pomada
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Dear OHJ,

Your how-to magazine has helped us become a prize winner. In 1990, Brevard County, Fla., made the first annual awards (15 of them) for outstanding preservation of homes or businesses over 50 years old. We were happy to have our hard work

acknowledged and pleased that our county is becoming active in preserving our local history. Our house was built in 1875 and is one of the oldest in the county.

We have subscribed to *Old-*

House Journal for many years, and it has been very valuable in the restoration of our home. Thank you for your informative articles AND re-



The Brevard Heritage Council gave its award for outstanding preservation to the Hippensteels for their work on this 1850 house.

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— Ron & Marlene Hippensteel
Cocoa, Fla.

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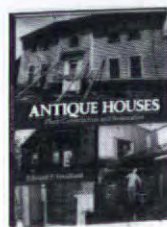
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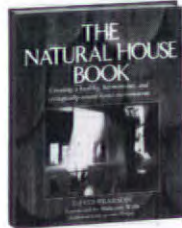
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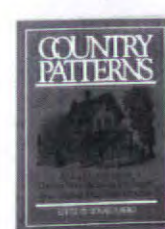
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Old House Journal 5/91



The mansard roof places the Dixons' 1886 house squarely in the Second Empire style.

Midwest Mansard

Q My husband and I are in the process of restoring our 105-year-old home. Could you inform us about its style? We have been told that it is Victorian, but we've noticed French influences in the structure.

— Kelly A. Dixon
Richmond, Ill.

A Judging by the photos and your house's age, we'd say you're on the right track. Your home appears to be a one-storey Second Empire house, a style highly popular from the 1850s to about 1885. These French-inspired buildings, with their unmistakable dual-pitched mansard roofs, are usually seen in two- and three-storey versions. Although one-

storey Second Empires as large as yours are not common, they are not truly rare either, with examples scattered around the country.

Mansard roofs come in several shapes (straight, concave, or convex, for instance), but most finish at the eaves more or less in line with the building wall. The roof on your house, however, exhibits a generous flair or "kick" at the cornice line, a feature which is echoed in the dormers, too. The projecting bay windows with their individual roofs are also rather dramatic and unusual. Aside from some possible missing cresting along the roof line, the house looks substantially unaltered and of-a-piece.

Electric Logs

Q In the 1950s, I once saw a display of electric logs in a fireplace in an old Victorian house. Can you supply info on this item?

— Theda French
Laurence, Kansas

A One source for electric fireplace logs is Danny Alessandro/Edwin Jackson, Inc., 307 East 60 Street, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY

10022; (212) 421-1928. This firm has been in business since 1879 and carries a broad line of antique and reproduction mantels, andirons, fenders, and other fireplace accessories. Their electric log units come in two sizes, 21" and 24", and can be ordered over the phone for about \$125. The logs simulate not only the glow of burning embers (with an orange light bulb), but also the crackle of burning wood.

Stucco Information

Q I'm trying to determine when the stucco was applied to the exterior of our kitchen. The house, circa 1810, has been changed many times over the years. In our area, many brick structures were stuccoed around 1900. I'd like to know if stucco enjoyed other periods of popularity during the 1800s. Also, do you know of any literature on stucco formulas, design, and technique?

— Karen N. Cartwright Nance
Barboursville, W.V.

A Stucco is exterior plastering with cementitious materials and, in one form or another, has been in use for centuries. The term refers not to the coating's composition, but rather to its use on the outside of a building, as there is more than one way to make and apply stucco. Until the tail end of the 19th century, stucco in North America was usually applied as a finish over masonry. The *lime stucco* highly popular in the late 1700s and early 1800s was generally composed of one part hydraulic lime and three parts sand. After the turn of the 20th century, *cement stucco* made from portland cement (then coming into wide use) was increasingly common as the Bungalow, Prairie School, and Tudor Revival styles became fashionable. This was applied in three coats over wood or metal lath on wood-frame buildings. A typical mix is 1 part portland cement, 2½ parts sand, and hydrated lime equal to not more than 15% of the cement volume.

A concise six-page publication on the history, restoration, and maintenance of stucco, with an excellent bibliography, has been put together by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701). The original briefs are out of print, but the Agency will make photocopies available to OHJ readers for \$1.

continued on page 14

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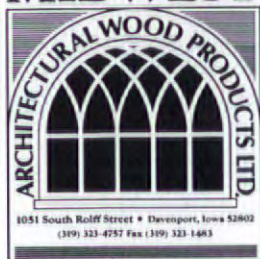
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continued from page 12

Mystery Chimney

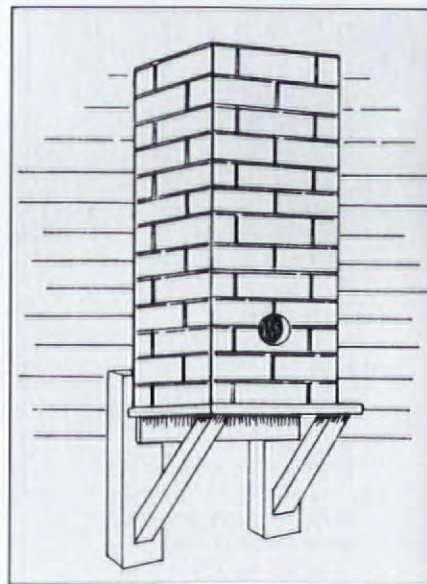
Q My question concerns the chimney in my kitchen, which seems to be made of brick, then lath and plaster, then brick again. The vent is above the top of the lath, which has square nails and I think is original to the house. I haven't tested all sides of the chimney — two are attached to walls — to see if there's lath all the way around.

Can you explain this chimney to me? Why was it built in this manner? What would its function have been?

— Sarah Buxler
Pasadena, Cal.

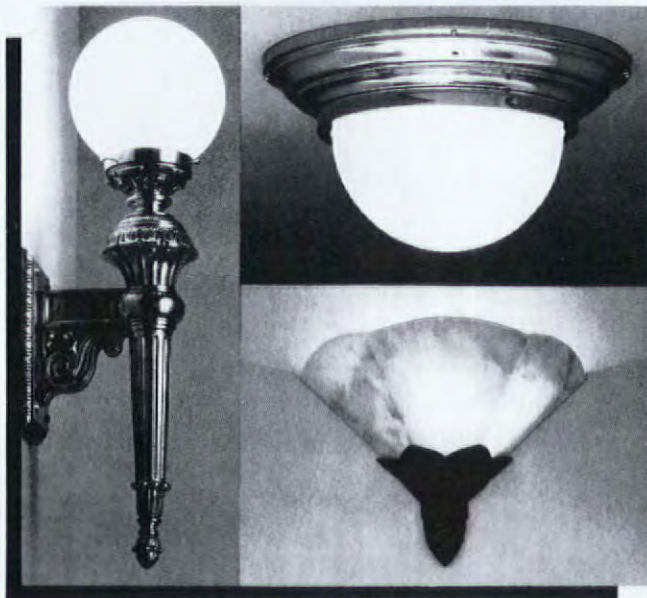
A It's possible that under the plaster and lath you have a *docked* or *dwarf* chimney, built for the patented airtight stoves that came into use in the 19th century. These stoves

required long, small flues rather than the broad flues of fireplace chimneys. In houses where converting or rebuilding the existing chimney was impractical, a new, smaller stove chimney was often added. Surprisingly, these chimneys are not always built up from a proper foundation, and may instead sit on a well-braced wooden shelf. Possible explanations for this construction method are 1) it provides a savings in brick and labor (especially when the chimney starts in the second floor, as they sometimes do), or 2) it avoids cutting through joists or other structural members in the floor below. Whatever the reason, the appearance is one of heavy masonry hanging in mid-air. In your house, the builder boxed in the space below the chimney to hide this odd arrangement.



Docked or dwarf chimneys are usually later additions and should be inspected for soundness and compliance with building codes.

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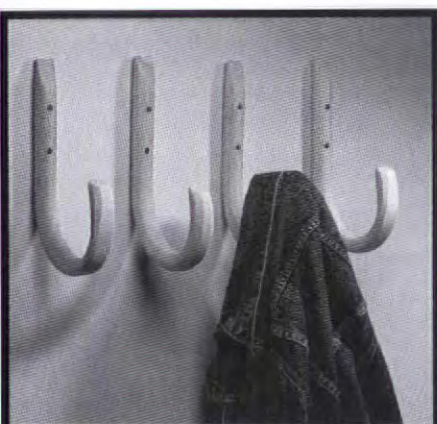
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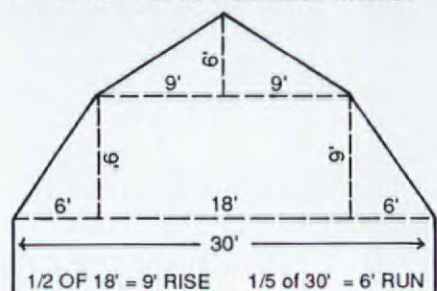


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Gambrel-Roof Formula

Our old house was badly damaged in a fire, and we had to have our gambrel roof completely rebuilt. We learned that this job follows a tried-and-true rule.

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ing one-fifth of the width of the house, and stand at a height equivalent to half the distance between them. For the top span, you reverse these measurements. As a result, both bottom and top rafters are the same length (except for any projections that may be added at the eaves).

— Jocelyn Halper
Columbus, Ohio

Silencing Squeaks

Is your old floor squeaking? It may be due to loose subfloor boards. If there's no ceiling beneath the offending floor, try one of these methods of silencing the squeaks.

If the squeak occurs over a floor joist, dip the tip of a shingle in glue and hammer it gently between the joist and subfloor. This wedge will tighten the board above and silence the squeak. If the squeak occurs between floor joists, silencing it requires an extra step. First, place a 2x4 crosspiece between the joists and against the subfloor and nail it into place at the ends. Then hammer the glue-tipped shingle between the crosspiece and subfloor.

If squeaks persist, at least you'll know your subfloor isn't to blame.

— Bill Leventon
Tuckerton, N.J.

Screwing into Plaster

I've never had much success with the standard methods for putting wood screws into a plaster wall. Everyone recommends either using a very long screw that can penetrate the wooden lath behind the plaster, or else inserting a wooden plug into the wall and then screwing into that. Either way, I always wind up with a lot of broken and crumbling plaster.

Recently, my Dad showed me an old trick he read about, and it worked like a charm. He inserted a 1/8" twist drill into a hand drill and coated the twist drill with soft soap. Then he held the drill *squarely* to the wall and very slowly made a hole in the plaster. After that, he took a screw (somewhat larger in diameter than the hole he'd just made), soaped it up the same way he'd soaped the twist drill, and just as slowly screwed it into the wall. The results were perfect, every time, with no fuss or muss.

— Arthur Toop
Birmingham, Al.

Stripping with 'Muscle'

Several years ago I discovered that "Mr. Muscle" oven cleaner is a wonderful paint stripper, and I've used it ever since. It sprays on and stays on, and is great for mouldings, even when they're still in place (although the surrounding area — especially floors — must be covered). It's water soluble so it can be scrubbed and worked into the mouldings with steel wool. Because it darkens wood, you should use it on wood that will be painted. After removing all the residue, the wood must be neutralized with vinegar. Then allow it to dry thoroughly, or the paint won't stick.

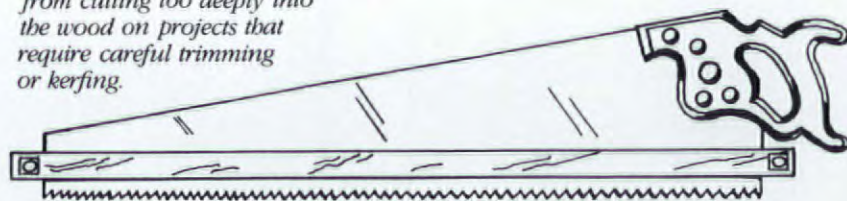
"Mr. Muscle" is cheaper than most chemical strippers, and there are no fumes to worry about with this lye-based product. Wearing rubber gloves when you use it is still a good idea, although this oven cleaner won't burn your skin as quickly as the other strippers will.

— Debby Athearn
West Tisbury, Mass.
continued on page 18

Saw Control

More than once I've had to begin a job all over from scratch because I had inadvertently sawed too deeply into the wood. But I finally came up with a solution that gives me an accurate depth every time: I attach a homemade gauge to my saw.

A gauge like this will keep your saw from cutting too deeply into the wood on projects that require careful trimming or kerfing.



I took two strips of wood which were square and straight, measuring 3/8" thick by 3/4" wide. I cut them both to a length 2" longer than my saw blade, and then bored holes in

the strips 1/2" from each end. I placed a bolt through each pair of holes and then slipped my gauge onto the saw. I tightened the bolts securely, attaching the gauge to the blade at a height that equalled the exact depth I wanted to saw. Then I could saw

without any chance of error — once the gauge touches the wood, the blade can't cut any further.

— Irene Walker
Los Angeles, Cal.

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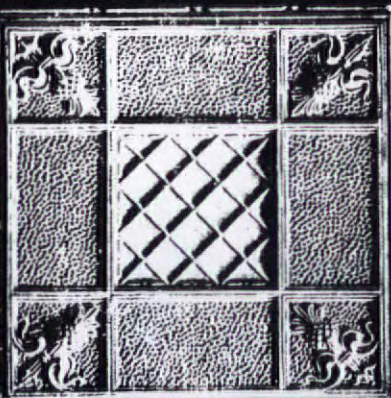
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RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK

continued from page 16

Dust-Free Holes

I was taught that the best way to remove dust from holes drilled into concrete or stone was to pour water into the hole. (I had learned the hard way that blowing into the hole just gets you a face full of dust!) My problem with this method is that, although the water does remove the dust, it inevitably splashes all over everything and makes a mess. It also isn't very useful for holes drilled into a vertical surface.

After giving this job some thought, my initial inspiration was to grab the bellows from our fireplace and shoot air into the holes. This trick worked, but it's not very practical to stick bellows in your tool kit and travel around with them. My solution? Use a bicycle-tire pump. I just insert the rubber tube into the hole and work

the pump for a dust-free hole. Whether the surface is vertical or horizontal, the pump works like a charm. When more dust gathers after you resume drilling, simply repeat the procedure.

— J.G. Gilmore
Louisville, Ky.

Patching Wallboard

I've devised a method for patching gypsum wallboard, which has served me well over the years. First I take a piece of wallboard and cut it to a size somewhat larger than the hole I'm repairing. I place this patch against the wall, over the hole, and mark around it with a pencil. Then I cut out a new hole in the wall, making a space into which the patch will just fit.

For the next step, I take a piece of

wood (preferably soft pine) a little larger than the patch, and cut a hole in the center of the wood. Gripping the wood by this hole, I slip it through the space and hold onto it as I nail it in place upright behind the wallboard. Then, when I insert the patch into the space in the wall, I can nail the patch directly into the wood. Afterwards, I just paint or paper over the patch, and it's completely invisible.

— Pat Roker
Taos, N.M.

TIPS TO SHARE? Do you have any hints or short cuts that might help other old-house owners? We'll pay \$25 for any how-to items used in this "Restorer's Notebook" column. Write to Notebook Editor, The Old-House Journal, 435 Ninth Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

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by Scott G. Kunst



Bearded
iris, circa
1633

ANTIQUE IRIS

The fleur-de-lis blooms of bearded iris have graced gardens for centuries. The cultivation of this easy-

to-grow perennial dates at least to the Middle Ages and perhaps to the days of ancient Egypt and Crete. Early settlers brought iris to America for its herbal "virtues." Starting about 1840, many new, ornamental varieties were developed, and by the early 1900s iris were wildly popular. Today, the American Iris Society is one of the largest plant organizations in the country.

Bearded iris blooms in May or June and is transplanted in mid-summer. The bare rhizomes — the thick, tuber-like roots — may look unpromising, but they will quickly re-establish themselves when planted in a sunny spot. Tough, beautiful, and often easier to live with than their flamboyant modern cousins, here are a few choice historic iris to enjoy in your summer garden.

'Florentina' (circa 1500) —

Among the earliest bearded iris to bloom each year, *'Florentina'* is a pale, silvery gray. Its dried rhizome, known as orris-root, has long been used in perfumes and cosmetics.

Iris pallida (circa 1596) — The light-purple, grape-scented *pallidas* are among the most common iris. A group of related varieties, they are generally vigorous and tall.

'Flavescens' (1813) — Pale yellow *'Flavescens'* lends its haunting presence to old graveyards throughout the Midwest. In 1927, irisarian E.P. McKinney identified it as one of the

"foundations" of her celebrated garden.

'Honorable' (Lemon, 1840) — With standards (upper petals) of brassy yellow and falls (lower petals) of reddish-brown, two-foot-tall *'Honorable'* is eye-catching — and still common.

'Mme. Chereau' (1844) — Enormously popular in late-Victorian gardens, *'Mme. Chereau'* is difficult to find today. Its wavy white petals are edged with a stitching of purple.

'Innocenza' (1854) — This big white iris from France looks anything but innocent, with tattoo-like red-

purple veining on its shoulders.

'Gracchus' (1884) — With butter-yellow standards and maroon falls, *'Gracchus'* looks decidedly antique.

Iris-breeder Bertrand Farr hailed it as "extra fine" in 1910.

'Crimson King' (1893) — The regal red-purple of this iris is accentuated by white at the beards.

'Rhein Nixe' (1910) — With white standards and violet falls edged in white, *'Rhein Nixe'* looks crisp and clean. Marion Shull in his 1931 *Rainbow Fragments* praised it as "exceptionally good."

'Zua' (1914) — A "sport" or mutation of *'Florentina'*, silvery *'Zua'* is noted for its crinkly texture.

'Sherwin-Wright' (1915) — Its deep, clear color made *'Sherwin-Wright'* the leading yellow iris of its time, and its small blooms on two-foot stalks can still enhance a garden. *'San Francisco'* (1927) — Looking something like an updated *'Mme. Chereau'*, white-with-purple *'San Francisco'* was the first iris to win the Dykes Medal, the highest honor of the American Iris Society.

To see many of these historic iris in bloom, visit the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, 474 Upper Mountain Avenue, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043. To learn more, join the Historic Iris Preservation Society, c/o Verona Wiekhorst, 4855 Santiago Way, Colorado Springs, CO 80917, \$3 per year. To obtain iris, look around and ask; many historic iris survive in old gardens. All of those listed here are also available — though rare — commercially. Top sources include:

Adamgrove, Route 1, Box 246, California, MO 65018; catalog, \$2

Iris Pond, 7311 Churchill Road, McLean, VA 22101; catalog, \$1

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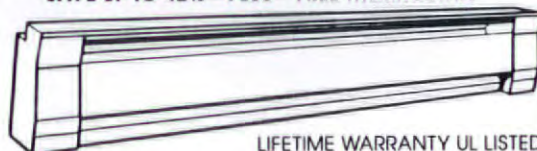
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WHO THEY WERE

by Jeff Wilkinson

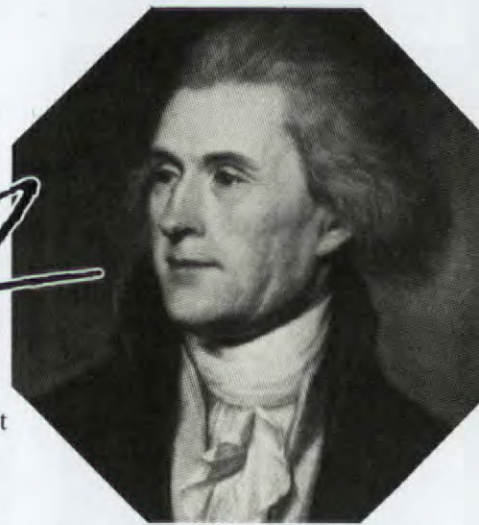
Th. Jefferson

By the time Thomas Jefferson completed Monticello, it was close to being an old house. Author of the Declaration of Independence, third President of the United States, and founder of the University of Virginia, Jefferson spent over 50 years on his "essay in architecture." Although he didn't design or build a great number of buildings, he became one of America's most influential architects, laying the cornerstone for a new style of classical architecture suitable for the young republic and marking the end of the Georgian period. Jefferson's design for the Virginia State Capitol (based on the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, which he visited while living in France) was the first to use a pure temple form for a public building. In the following years, Greek and Roman temples became symbols for public architecture in America. When Jefferson was not designing he was advising, and while serving as President he oversaw the construction

of the new Capitol Building. He also sponsored and recommended many younger architects who would later become influential, most notably Benjamin Latrobe.

Thomas Jefferson was born into Virginia's aristocracy on April 13, 1743. His father, Peter Jefferson, was a wealthy plantation owner who, when he died in 1757, left his son over 7,500 acres of land in or near Albemarle County. Jefferson studied to become a lawyer and attended William and Mary College in Williamsburg. After graduating in 1762, he was privately tutored by George Wythe, one of America's foremost scholars. Wythe's influence led Jefferson to classical literature and the writings of the Renaissance humanists — particularly Andrea Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture*, which, along with earlier writings of Pliny and Cato, inspired Jefferson's concept of the ideal villa.

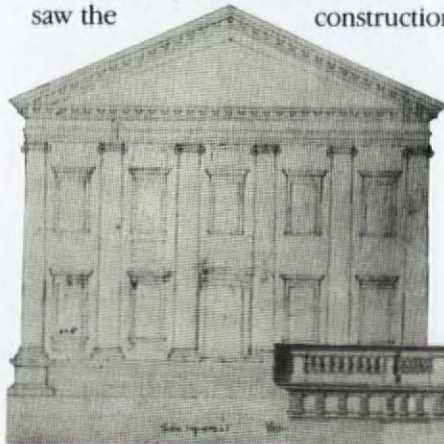
When Jefferson was barely 26, he began building Monticello ("little mountain" in Italian, a language he was studying at the time). Although his crowning achievement as an architect would be his design for the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Monticello is where Jefferson experimented



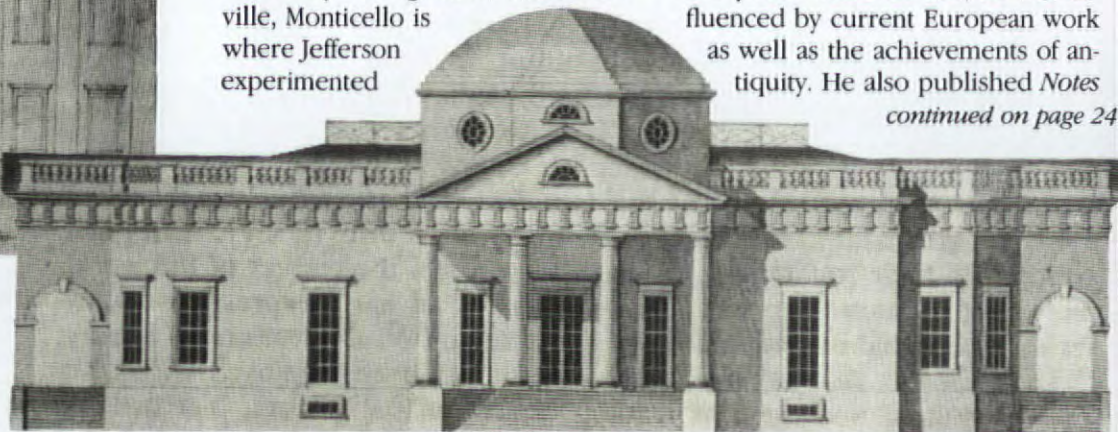
Jefferson at age 48, painted by Charles Wilson Peale in 1791.

with and tested his many ideas. The building with the dome and single-storey portico (so widely seen on the back of nickels) was originally much smaller, with a double-storey portico and a gabled roof. As he once stated, "Architecture is my delight, and putting up, and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements." The household, it seems, grew used to living among unfinished walls and scaffolding. Jefferson, however, lived elsewhere while much of the work was carried out. The initial design was built from 1768 to 1782, the year Martha, his wife of ten years, passed away. Following her death, Jefferson moved to France with his two daughters Maria and Martha. In 1785 he succeeded Benjamin Franklin as minister to France, a position he held for five years. While abroad, he was influenced by current European work as well as the achievements of antiquity. He also published *Notes*

continued on page 24



Jefferson's classical facades were inspired by Palladio. Above: the Virginia State Capitol. Right: the final version of Monticello.



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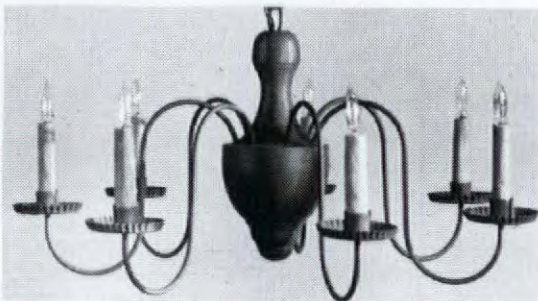
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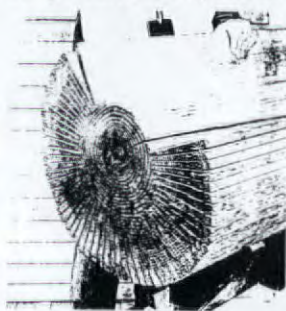
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continued from page 22

on the State of Virginia (1787), which contains many brilliant observations on 18th-century American life.

When Jefferson came back to the United States in 1790, he was appointed Secretary of State by George Washington. He remained in Washington's cabinet for four more years before resuming work on Monticello, which by then was in a sad state of neglect. He began radically altering his original plan, enlarging the main building, adding outbuildings, and erecting the now-famous dome. His work on the house continued until the end of his second term as President in 1809. (The porticoes were not completed until 1823.) During this time he also built a second country home near Lynchburg, Virginia, which he named Poplar Forest. After leaving the presidency, Jefferson threw himself into the design and organization of the University of Virginia, as well as the construction of its buildings. The University was conceived as an "academical village" and planned around a library based on the Pantheon. Jefferson was aided in the project by architects Benjamin Latrobe and William Thornton, and continued his efforts until the year of his death.

On July 4th, 1826, Jefferson passed away at age 83 in his alcove bed at Monticello. It was the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. (Coincidentally, John Adams passed away on the very same day with the parting words, "Thomas Jefferson still survives.") Sadly, Jefferson's last years were spent attempting to pay off the tremendous debts he had incurred; the man who kept meticulous household records unfortunately had a bad eye for the overall state of his affairs. Selling his massive library to Congress helped reduce his debt. It was not enough, however, and his beloved Monticello eventually passed from family hands.



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PAINTING EXTERIOR WOOD

BY GORDON BOCK

Wood, in one form or another, is the likeliest surface to find on the outside of an old house, and one of the hardest. Left untreated and exposed to sun and rain, exterior wood weathers naturally over a year or two to a familiar silver gray. This "finish," used on many colonial structures, can last for centuries under the right conditions. However, wood that becomes wet, even for short or sporadic periods, is vulnerable to erosion and decay — which is not the same process as weathering. For maximum durability, wood needs protection from ultraviolet rays that break down its binding lignins and water that washes the cellulose fibers away. Wood needs paint.

Paint is not a preservative, but it does create the necessary shield against sun and water. Paint, unfortunately, does not last forever, and repainting is probably the top old-house maintenance project. Most quality modern

paints hold up eight to ten years on average, so it pays to repaint exterior wood only as needed to renew old or worn coatings, or to occasionally change colors. More frequent repainting causes thick paint buildup that can crack, peel, and obscure decorative details. Simple washing alone

can often dramatically improve the looks of a painted surface. Where a new paint job is in order, though, keeping paint on wood is the trick. Here's a breakdown of the steps to a good paint job on wood.

Before Painting

If there is paint on the building, take a good look at it; analyze the old surface. Its "pathology" will be evidence of any ongoing changes or problems in the paint or the building, all of which can have a big influence on the success of the new work. After all, it doesn't pay to throw new materials and labor on top of failing paint. First, survey for the telltale signs of a paint job that needs attention:

Chalking occurs when weathering or aging of the paint exposes individual pigment grains that become fine dust on the paint surface. This condition makes an unstable surface for the new paint to adhere to (and can stain surfaces below the chalking paint). In some light-colored paints, a moderate amount of chalking is engineered in so that the surface "wears clean." A similar problem is *frosting*, caused by calcium-carbonate pigment extenders that leach out of the paint. In both cases, the surface will need thorough scrubbing with a detergent solution, rinsing, and a top-quality oil-based primer before recoating.

Cracking of the paint across the direction of the wood grain usually means the old paint coats have gotten too thick. Painting right over these defects just buys a little time before they reappear again. They can be eliminated only by complete removal of the old paint. Cracking



Far left: Peeling down to bare wood may be caused by water-vapor migration. **Left:** Poor preparation can lead to peeling between coats.

MAY/JUNE 1991

Photo by Gordon Bock

paint is usually seen in old houses that have been repainted over many years with oil-based paint.

Moisture problems are almost always indicated by paint blistering or peeling down to bare wood — the result of moisture moving from behind the paint film. A top source is liquid water entering from open joints in woodwork, leaky roofs, or defective gutters. A second, subtler source is water vapor migrating out of the building. Water-vapor movement starts problems when 1) the generators inside the house are large and many (such as humidifiers, plumbing leaks, or poorly vented baths and kitchens) and there is no vapor barrier on the living space side of the outside wall; 2) the paint coats are so thick or impermeable that they block vapor movement. The only real cure for paint-moisture problems is controlling the moisture source by fixing leaks, installing a vapor barrier, and similar measures.

Mildew is not the result of paint deterioration, but rather a fungus that grows on the paint surface and causes stains and discoloration. At times it looks like dirt, but when a few drops of fresh household bleach are applied it will lighten noticeably. Mildew can show up in most parts of the country and on any part of a house, though it is most common in warm, humid regions and shaded house areas where air movement is restricted (such as behind trees and shrubs). Flat paints are more prone to mildew than glossy paints, as are paints and stains containing linseed oil.

Mildew will grow through a new paint coat if it is not killed and cleaned off first. To remove mildew from painted or unpainted wood, scrub with a bristle brush or sponge using a solution of 1 quart household bleach (5 percent sodium hypochlorite), $\frac{1}{3}$ cup household detergent (do not mix detergents containing ammonia with bleach), and 3 quarts warm water. Using a paint that contains a mildewcide (a mildew poison) or adding an aftermarket mildewcide will discourage mildew growth on a new paint job. **Peeling between layers** is usually the result of poor preparation or incompatibility between paints (see below).

After surveying, test the old paint for "tightness" on the wood. Apply a Bandaid or similar adhesive bandage to the paint surface, then remove it rapidly as if you were taking it off skin. If the Bandaid comes off

clean, the paint coats are sufficiently anchored to the wood. If the paint parts between layers or from the wood itself, then the bond is poor and the paint may fail if not removed before repainting.

Prepare the Surface

Even when unpainted and new, exterior wood should get careful preparation shortly after installation. Begin by sealing knots and sap pockets with an appropriate product to



A quality paint job not only protects wood but also highlights its details.

All photos, except where noted, by Frank Terry

Good preparation produces like-new surfaces.

prevent bleed-through. Shellac is the traditional knot sealer, but stain-blocking primers also do the job. Then, fill cracks, blemishes, and nail holes and prime. It is also prudent to make sure the average moisture content of the wood is roughly what it will be during its installed life so that it will not change dimensions radically after painting.

Wood that is already painted and weathered or deteriorated will require more involved preparation — which is critical if the new

requirement for preparation caulks is that they be paintable. Latex products have been popular in the past and polyurethane caulks (now becoming widely available) have also shown promising performance. When assembling new or restored woodwork, many craftsmen prefer to caulk after backpriming mating surfaces.

Fillers are needed to cover set nail heads, holes, gouges, or other voids and to produce a smooth surface in the finished paint job. Window-glazing putty has long been used for this purpose but fails quickly once the protection of paint is gone. Better choices are appropriate caulks (for small holes) or epoxy-based wood fillers. Deeply eroded wood found in areas like neglected window sills is often very difficult to fill successfully. Here again, the adhesion of epoxy-based fillers seems to provide the longest lasting results.

Apply a water repellent — Bare or scraped wood that will be prone to exposure or standing water can gain from being treated with a water repellent or repellent/preservative before priming. Repellents block the penetration of water, particularly into end grain and joints, and so limit the movement of the wood. They should dry thoroughly for at least two fair-weather days before proceeding with priming, and be cleaned off if accidentally applied to painted surfaces. Water repellents can be storebought or homemade, such as this formula from the Forest Products Lab in Madison, Wisconsin: Dissolve 1 ounce finely shaved paraffin wax in 3 cups exterior varnish, then add enough mineral spirits, paint thinner, or turpentine to make 1 gallon of repellent.

Prime — Primers are intermediate coatings between the wood and topcoat intended to improve the paintability of the surface and provide the topcoat with better adhesion. Primers should be applied when the wood is dry (to achieve good penetration) and so that they cover the wood grain with good buildup. Oil-based primers are still favored for demanding conditions such as weathered wood or chalking paint surfaces. Whatever the application, the primer and topcoat should be compatible films, so select the primer recommended by the topcoat manufacturer.

Endpriming woodwork joints before installation is an old-time quality-painting practice that has much merit. Paint usually starts to fail first around the ends and edges of a board be-

paint is to perform well.

Scrape — Wood that holds blistered, flaking, or loose paint should be scraped clean so that only tight paint remains. For the smoothest appearance in the final job, "featheredge" the old paint where it meets a lower surface (such as bare wood) by sanding into the edges. Glossy surfaces should be sanded as well to provide an anchoring point for the new paint. Occasionally, large-scale stripping may be necessary where old paint is cracking and peeling, or where buildup is ugly or creates moisture problems.

Repair — Any damaged or deteriorated carpentry should be repaired or replaced at this stage.

Wash — Painting over a dirty or poorly prepared surface makes for a poor bond between new and old paint coats, one that usually shows up within a year as peeling between layers. Wash off accumulations of dirt, chalking, or deteriorated paint with a mild detergent before repainting (equipment for washing cars or boats often works well). Rinse the surface well and let dry thoroughly before painting. Pay attention to protected areas such as porches.

Caulk and fill — Any inside and outside corners, and joints and seams in carpentry are potential entry points where water can reach wood and lead to peeling paint. Caulking seals these gaps and keeps the wood dry. The big

Conditions that cause paint problems (left to right): temperamental woods such as redwood; cross-grain cracking; mildew; water damage from building defects such as roof or gutter leaks; heavy paint buildup.

cause the exposed end grain of wood absorbs more moisture than face grain. Sealing these pores before assembly can prevent blisters from outside water, usually appearing around joints in places like the lower siding courses.

Leaving oil-based prime coats for more than two weeks before applying a topcoat can cause peeling because it allows soap-like compounds to form and compromise the adhesion of the next coat. If prime coats must wait more than two weeks, they should be scrubbed and washed like old paint before recoating. For this reason, it is also a bad idea to prime in the fall and then finish the paint job in the spring.

Painting

Last, when it comes time to do the finish painting, pay attention to the materials you're working with — the wood and the paint.

Watch the wood — The nature of the wood itself can determine the success of a paint job. Smooth, quartersawn (vertical grain) lumber holds paint best because the grain orientation allows the paint maximum penetration of the surface. Flat-sawn (flat grain) lumber may not hold paint as long or as well. The species of the wood also plays a part, with the most paintable being lightweight woods like cedar, redwood, and cypress. (Northern white pine, western white pine, and Douglas fir are close behind.) Some species, notably western larch and hemlock, are temperamental. Southern yellow pine, in particular, is notorious for paint problems due to its density and tendency to absorb moisture. Using factory-primed lumber and coatings that allow the wood to breathe may help.

Some woods discolor paint due to the leaching of water-soluble extractives — trace materials that give individual woods properties such as color, odor, density, and insect resistance. These extractives are present in the heartwood cells of both hardwoods and softwoods and, coincidentally, are in large supply in many woods (like cypress and western red cedar) that are ideal for exterior use. Redwood is one of the most problematic because it is very porous and

high in water-soluble tannins. Controlling moisture is the first step in controlling discoloration.

Watch the paint — Cheap paint is a primary cause of endurance problems and a poor buy. At best, it is also a minor economy, as materials account for only 15 percent of the costs in most painting jobs — the rest being labor. Quality paint contains more solids (pigment and binder) than inferior products, and so delivers longer service and better coverage and easier application, traits that more than offset the additional expense. Oil-based paints are traditional coatings with a long track record, and still often the best choice for recoating existing oil-based paint. They are subject to air-quality restrictions in many regions, though, and this will continue to affect their formulation and availability. Latex paints are water-based coatings that have improved in the last decade and shown good long-term results in covering new and painted wood when certain requirements are met (see "Latex Paint," page 30).

Application is a large part of painting wood effectively, and following the manufacturer's directions is important. Generally, topcoats should be applied as soon as primer is dry, in about 48 hours for oil-based products. One coat of oil-based topcoat is normally sufficient over paint that is still holding up well.

However, two topcoats over prime is the standard system for new work, because one coat may have hidden misses and "holidays." Be sure to allow adequate drying time between topcoats. A few hours between coats for latex paints is fine, but give one to two days for oil-based paints. Add a day for oil-based paints if the weather is cold or damp.



Photo by Gordon Bock

The tradition of painting houses with oil paints goes back more than 200 years, when paints based on natural linseed oil were used on colonial homes. Around 1948, a water-based alternative — latex paint — was introduced. These early paints saw their first use in interiors and were based on two paint systems: styrene-butadiene (the “latex” component that has become a generic term for all water-based paints) and polyvinyl acetate. However, the first generation of latex paints weren’t as durable as their oil-based counterparts, so the use of traditional coatings continued.

Since then, there have been many improvements in latex paints, including the marriage of acrylic resins (used in many clear plastics) and latex technologies. The result has been a generation of coatings with advantages over oil- and alkyd-based paints:

- Their colors hold up well, resisting the fading effect of the sun’s ultraviolet rays.
- They are less prone to “chalking” — the formation of a powdery substance that whitens old, weathered exterior paint and can prevent fresh paint from adhering well to existing surfaces.
- Latex paints remain more flexible for the life of the paint, allowing them to expand and contract with the painted surface. Oil-based paints tend to oxidize and harden as the years go by, making these paints more likely to crack and peel.
- They dry faster than oil-based paints, which allows for quick recoating.
- They are much more *vapor-permeable* than oil-based paints, meaning they permit water vapor to pass more freely back and forth across

Aging oil-based paint on the 1785 Thomas Leiper House in Wallingford, Pennsylvania.

LATEX PAINT

Understanding the advantages



the paint film. This characteristic gives materials like wood or masonry a greater ability to “breathe” through the paint where moisture is a concern. Within latex paints, flat paints have the highest vapor permeability and gloss paints the least vapor permeability.

• Being water-based, latex paints have little odor and can be cleaned up easily with soap and water. Using water as the solvent, they also comply with VOC (volatile organic compound) air-quality restrictions.

Understanding Latex Paints

How easily a paint spreads, the completeness with which it covers a surface, and how long it lasts all depend on the paint’s formulation. The three basic components of latex paint are:

Binder (*vehicle* in an oil-based paint): a polymeric material which provides both the film’s adhesion and integrity.

Pigment: a powder-like substance that gives the paint its whiteness or color as well as its “hiding” power (the ability to obscure the surface).

Thinner: a liquid that provides the proper paint consistency, and evaporates as the paint dries, leaving behind the solid film of binder and pigment. In alkyd or oil paints, the thinners are typically hydrocarbon solvents. In latex paints, the thinner is primarily water.

Other ingredients include antifreezes such as ethylene glycol (so the paint doesn’t freeze when left overnight in an unheated vehicle or garage) and mildewcides (which fight mildew, an exterior painting problem especially prevalent in warmer, humid climates). Some paints also contain additives to reduce foaming and spattering and to improve leveling and lapping properties.

The most important part of the paint in terms of durability and color retention is

BY WALT GOZDAN

the binder. Typically, top-line exterior latex paints have a binder that is predominantly acrylic; interior latex paints are, generally, vinyl acetate products. Acrylic binders are also less water-sensitive and more alkaline-resistant. (The alkalies in masonry can break down the chemical "backbone" of some vinyl acetate and alkyd paints, causing them to fail in the first couple of months.) A high ratio of binder to pigment is also a big influence and means there is more binder covering the pigment in the dried film, increasing adhesion and resistance to chalking and cracking.

Since paint manufacturers are no longer required to put a label analysis of the contents on their products, price itself is usually the most obvious indicator of paint quality. Within a given brand, the top-of-the-line paint will typically contain higher-quality raw materials, resulting in better durability and overall performance.

Using Latex Paints

Before deciding whether or not to use an acrylic latex topcoat on an old house, it's important to determine two things: the type and number of existing paint coats on the surface. To determine whether the old paint is oil-based or latex, remove a piece with a scraper. If the paint snaps between your fingers, it's oil-based. If it's flexible and bends, the paint is latex. In many homes you're likely to find mixed layers: latex for the upper coats and oil-based for the older coats. The number of paint coats can be determined by examining the paint piece with a magnifying glass (easiest, of course, if color changes have been made).

If the surface has more than three or four coats of oil-based paint, it's often best to remove all old paint completely before recoating with an acrylic latex topcoat. After 100 years a building may have had six, eight, or more paintings, and over this time the paint coats have continued to go through chemical reactions. This process gradually reduces the flexibility of the paint, leaving the earliest coats the most brittle. An acrylic latex topcoat applied to this surface will have excellent adhesion, but also will tend to flex more readily with weather changes than the old paint. The topcoat's increased movement puts stress on the old paint layers and can cause them to fail and peel, typically at an interface between layers.

The choice of primer for acrylic latex topcoats depends on the surface to be painted and the manufacturer's recommendations. Generally, if the surface is sound and has been prepared properly, today's latex primers will do a good job. If the surface is weathered wood or very chalky paint, apply an oil-based primer, sanding the wood



The Federal-style, stone and stucco house in 1990, after being repainted with acrylic latex paint.

first for best adhesion. Special stain-resistant primers are available in either oil-based or latex-based formulations for use over staining woods like cedar, redwood, or mahogany. For severe cases, oil-based primers are the most effective.

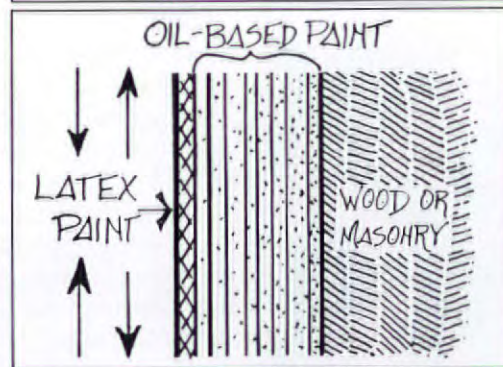
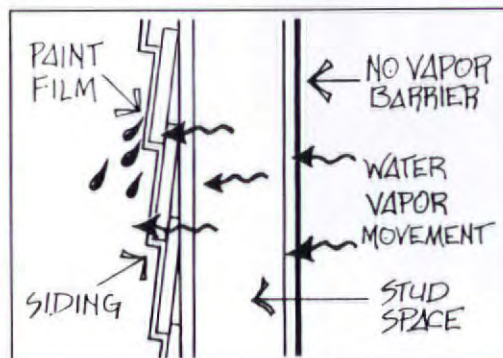
With proper surface preparation, acrylic latex exterior paints are also excellent for old masonry surfaces such as stucco, brick, or cement. If the surface has not been painted, it should be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water and wire brushed if necessary. On previously painted

surfaces, remove any loose or peeling paint and clean heavily chalked surfaces with a wire brush and water rinse. If the masonry is weathered and very porous, use of a masonry conditioner or sealer (water- or solvent-based) is recommended to ensure that the surface does not draw water out of the paint and reduce its durability. Misting with water prior to painting — say, by hosing down eight-foot sections at a time — is also a good idea for the same reason. Afterwards, apply two coats of latex topcoat for a good job.

The low vapor permeability of oil-based paints can cause them to blister where water vapor migrating from behind the surface disrupts the adhesion of the paint. This situation is much less likely with latex paints due to their increased vapor permeability. If latex paints do blister, it is usually the result of moisture coming from outside the paint surface, such as a morning dew or driving rain shortly after the paint has been applied. These blisters, however,

usually occur early in the life of the paint and tend to recover, particularly if they are small.

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Top: Latex paints allow water vapor to migrate through the paint film. **Above:** The flexibility of latex paints can loosen brittle layers of oil-based paint and cause them to fail.

SAND

BY JOHN LEEKE Sanded paint is a decorative finish that imitates stone by sprinkling dry sand onto fresh wet paint. The result gives the appearance of stone because the grains of bare sand are exposed to view — much different than the later practice of mixing sand into a pot of paint and then brushing it on, which leaves the grains of sand covered with paint.

Sanded paint was used on cornices, door frames, window surrounds, decorative porch elements, and similar wooden parts of masonry buildings from the late-18th all through the 19th centuries. While it was also recommended to soften the look and increase the durability of the paint, the primary purpose was to make a substitute material — usually wood — look like brownstone, limestone, or any one of the other easily worked sedimentary “freestones.” Sometimes it was used on metals like cast iron or even stones of different types to give a uniform appearance. Sanded paint even had humbler uses on concrete foundations and pedestals for urns and birdbaths.

A Case History

Our project was to repair the woodwork on the rear porch of the Victoria Mansion in Portland, Maine, and to recoat it with sanded paint. The mansion, also known as the Morse-Libbey house, was constructed of brownstone and brick masonry in the 1850s, and the rear entrance porch is one of several wooden porches and bays attached to the main building. When originally built, the wood was finished with sanded paint to imitate brownstone, but through the years, many coats of sanded and plain paint had been added.

Neither painter Peter Lord nor I had worked with sanded paint before, and we were more than a little apprehensive about how to proceed. Both the paint's appearance and its long-term ability to protect the wood were very important for this job. In addition, we had to use commercially available products so this special finish could be easily reproduced in future years. And, of course, the work had to come out right the first time.

While doing some reading on the topic, I learned how George Washington handled a sanded-paint project on his

Convincing in its appearance even at close quarters, this elaborate console is carved not from stone but wood, and then coated with sanded paint. The paint and sand for this special finish are applied over the normal paint coats needed to protect the wood.

ED PAINT

own house, Mount Vernon, from a note he wrote in 1796. He tested different kinds of sand on two freshly painted boards, let them dry, and then judged the results. If George did testing, so would we.

In the past, sand painters used oil-and-lead paint and sand made from crushed stone or collected at a nearby river bank or beach. They washed, dried, and sifted the sand and then tossed it by the fistful into the wet paint or rigged up a bellows and cup to blow on the sand. We found that modern materials and equipment work equally as well today: ordinary high-quality house paint (hand brushed, sprayed, or rolled on); ready-to-use sand from commercial suppliers; an air compressor to apply the sand. Here I'll show you how we developed our formulas and methods, so you can use the same general process in your own project.

Deciding what the final finish should look like is an important first step. The job is easy if all that is required is to come up with something that "looks good." It's more difficult to match an existing finish. Brownstone, for instance, is a natural sandstone that may have strips and swirls of subtly varied colors. Matching these swirls with different color sands is difficult over large areas. Early sanded paint often had a flat, even appearance over its whole surface. If this is the goal, the job is easier.

At the Victoria Mansion we took the basic approach of matching the original sanded paint rather than imitating the brownstone or two earlier sanded-paint restorations. We couldn't just match surfaces near the porch because our formulas and methods would eventually be used to maintain the whole building. As is common with old-house work, we struck a compromise. We came up with a single treatment that doesn't match anything in particular, but has a "default" appearance that compares reasonably with any part of the building.

Sample Panels

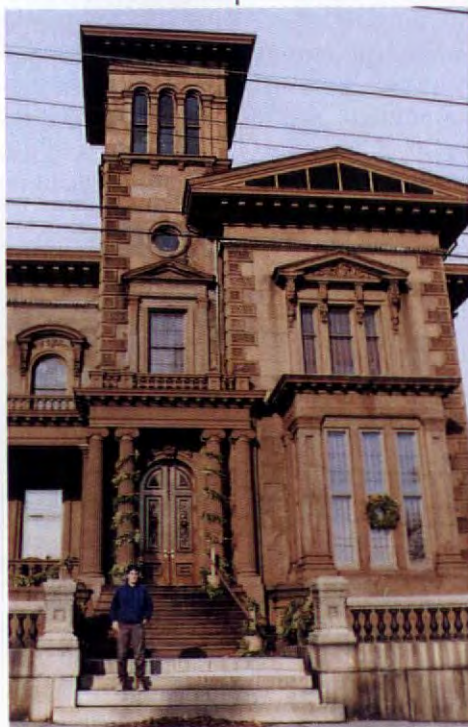
Not-so-subtle variations in a sanded-paint finish can be due to different lighting conditions such as direct sun-

light, deep shadows, or dim, overcast weather. The only way to judge their influence is with a set of sample panels that you can move around to various parts of the building at different times of day. Making sample panels first required gathering together all the special materials and equipment needed for the full-scale project:

Sand: To analyze the original sanded paint, a sample of the first layer was dissolved in a solution of lye and water. The sand was then filtered out of the mixture and dried, giving us a small sample of the original sand. Looking at the sample with a pocket microscope, we could see that the sand was made up of light brown grains in a range of sizes, medium-sized white oblong grains, and red grains with shiny surfaces.

I wrote to 20 sand quarries and manufacturers around the country likely to have the red and brown sand colors we would need (see sidebar, page 35). Six sent back samples, from which we selected four: purple crushed garnet sand; dark-red crushed garnet sand; yellow blasting sand; white silica blasting sand.

Paint: We used standard exterior oil-based (alkyd resin) house paint. For testing, Peter had the paint dealer make



The Victoria Mansion (left) was built of brick faced with brownstone in the Italianate villa style. Appendages such as the rear porch (right) were constructed of wood and then finished with sanded paint to match the stone veneer.

All photos, except where noted, Peter Lord

SAND MIX PROPORTIONS				MIX #		PAINT COLOR PROPORTIONS		APPLICATION		SAND HANDLING		RESULT	
YELLOW	RED	PURPLE	WHITE			BROWN	WHITE	PAINT COAT	THICKNESS	HANDLING	FEEL	PANEL	REMARKS
1	1	2	1										NEEDS PURPLE
2	1	2	2			4	1		10	0.0°		1	TOO MUCH PURPLE
2	1	2	2						10	0.0°		2	LOOKS LIKE ORIGINAL - MP
2	1	2	2						10	0.0°		3	TOO PURPLE
3	1	1	2						10	0°		4	TOO DARK
6	2	1	4	1					10	0°		5	NOT ENOUGH RED
12	2	1	6	2					9	0°		1	SAND GOOD

SAND:				PAINT:			
YELLOW = 040 (NORTHERN #000 SAND BLAST)				BROWN = KIMBER #718			
RED = 021 (BARTON 40W GARNET)				WHITE = KIMBER #710			
PURPLE = 060 (EMERALD #30-40)				APPLICATION:			
WHITE = 050 (US SILICA 2.6 MESH SHOT)				TROUGH = USED THROUGH SHOT			
→ ALL PROPORTIONS BY VOLUME 4				SHOT = USED SHOT CUP			

VICTORIA MANSION - REAR PORCH									
TEST + DEVELOPMENT PHASE									
SAND MIX + PAINT COLOR									
FIELD NOTES									

JOHN LEEKE PRESERVATION CONSULTANT SANFORD, ME 207 334-9597									
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A careful log of test materials, methods, and results gave us the data needed to reproduce specific finishes later on.

up three sample quarts. These were solid, rather intense hues that ranged from a rich brown to a brownish-purple. A gallon of the same paint in white was also purchased for blending with the browns.

Working with a good paint dealer is essential when developing methods and materials for a finish as unusual as sanded paint. Try to use a dealer who personally has had some years of painting experience and sells several brands of paint. The dealer's services for our work at the Victoria Mansion went beyond the ordinary, and included eight or ten attempts at color matching and finding special paint additives.

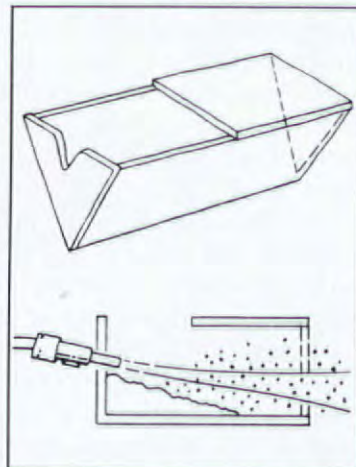
Panels: I cut a couple dozen one-foot squares out of 1/4" scrap plywood. Both sides were primed twice so the porous wood surface wouldn't affect our samples.

Equipment: Peter brought his air compressor and the usual brushes and mixing containers. We tried a glitter gun (a stock air tool used for special finish effects), but had more success with a V-trough made out of 1/4" Masonite™ and duct tape. The V-trough is roughly 10" long and 3" on a side. In use, you dump about a cup and a half of sand mix into the open top of the trough. Then you set a compressed-air nozzle in the small notch at the back end. A controlled blast of air flows across the top of the sand, carrying a light dusting out the open front of the trough.

Testing

We began our testing by mixing four parts brown paint with one part white paint for a medium tint, and one part of each of the four sands. Careful measurement of both sand and paint assures being able to reproduce the sample if it is needed for the actual work. In each testing step, we changed one of the dozen or so variables, applied that combination to a sample panel, and then moved on, judging the results as the panels dried. Peter worked at mixing and application while I kept written notes — invaluable for going back a step or two to pick up on an effect we had lost. I prepared a blank form that would chart the different sand-and-paint-mix proportions as well as application variables.

We did ten panels, trying out different sand-



The construction of a V-trough (top) and its operation when powered by an air gun (above).

Peter Lord tosses a handful of sand mix onto a test panel. The panels show the different effects obtained by changing sand-mix proportions and paint colors.



mix proportions. Then we focused on application methods, including blasting the sand into the paint with a sand-blasting cup. We tried different air pressures, distances from the paint, and uses of the V-trough. The first problem we encountered was light streaks showing up along each brush stroke, areas that had less sand sticking to them. We tried a variety of solutions (increased air pressure, for one) and found that applying the paint in two coats — and letting the initial coat "tack off" or dry a little first — gave us a thicker paint film that held enough sand. In all, we made over 20 sample panels.

Preparation

Quality results in any paint job requires good, thorough preparation — a phase

Sand

Sand is more than just disintegrated rock, especially for a process like sanded paint. Individual sand sources have a large influence on the surface character of the grains, and this in turn influences how the sand reacts with light and color. River or beach sand, for instance, is rounded with a frosted surface. Bank sand (deposited by glaciers) generally has sharp edges with dull surfaces. Crushed (manufactured) sand has sharp edges but smooth, glassy surfaces. The composition of sand determines its color: silica and quartzite produce "white" sands, feldspar is reddish tan, garnet ranges from brown and red to purple.

Sand size is important too and commercially purchased sands are usually sized through standard sieves. The sands we used ranged from those fine enough to pass through a No. 30 (30 meshes to an inch) sieve to a No. 40. On our next job, we may try sand ranging down to No. 50 or 60 to make coverage more even.

Moreover, the sand used must be clean (free of clay and organic matter) and dry so it is easy to mix and dusts onto the paint evenly. Sand marketed for use as a blasting medium is usually bagged and dry, but sand stored in piles outdoors will be wet, even if it looks dry. Wet sand must be dried before it is mixed and used. Sand can be dried by rigging up large sheet-metal pans and space heaters or by a local company that prepares crushed-stone products and will do the work for hire.

We applied 393 pounds of sand on 419 square feet of woodwork. This breaks down to 0.94 pounds of sand per square foot of area treated. A little over half of the sand was recovered, and could be reused for a savings in the total amount of sand needed. For our work at the Victoria Mansion, we sealed recovered sand into five-gallon plastic buckets and stored them in the cellar for future maintenance on the rear entrance porch. This will assure a perfect match when repairs are needed.

When looking for sand, first consider sources close to home; getting quantities of sand from great distances or large suppliers can be difficult. Start with local contractor or sandblasting suppliers. Don't overlook nearby beaches or rivers — very likely sources for original finishes — or sand made from sawing or crushing stone found elsewhere on the building.

that may wind up to be as much as 80 percent of the total work. A sound surface is especially important for a sanded-paint job because of all the effort invested in application. Adhesion is also more critical because the final paint film is less flexible. Preparation may be as simple as washing, or as difficult as complete paint removal down to bare wood. We used these steps up to our sanded paint coat:

- a. remove heavy buildup of paint down to bare wood
- b. clean surfaces by scrubbing with detergents or solvents
- c. repair all woodwork
- d. consolidate and seal porous weathered surfaces
- e. apply one coat of primer
- f. sand lightly between all coats



Top: Anne-Marie Lord prepares a wood balustrade by stripping heavy sanded-paint buildup with steel scrapers (which must be resharpened frequently) and a chemical remover. **Above:** Safe, stable scaffolding allows the team to concentrate on the sanded paint. Tarps control drying and overspray.

g. caulk joints between elements

h. apply one full topcoat of exterior paint (to protect the wood) and let dry.

Application

A team approach is necessary for sanded-paint application, both to make the technique work and to achieve a good rate of production. A typical crew consists of a painter who brushes on the paint and a "sandman" who applies the sand. An assistant is helpful to mix sand, adjust the air compressor, handle hoses, and reset scaffolding.

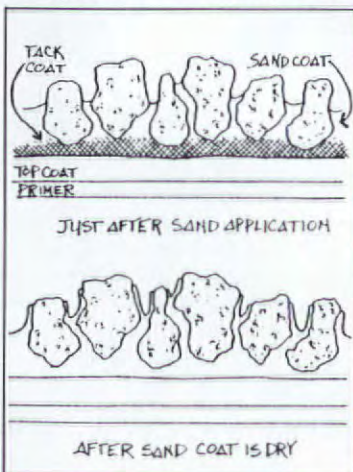
In setting up our work, we found that it was critical to prevent wind, warm air, and direct sunlight from drying the paint prematurely. A big help was to work during cooler weather and in the shade, using tarps when necessary. Paint additives (such as Penetrol, manufactured by The Flood Company) may also be used to retard drying. The main way we controlled drying, however, was to limit the work at any one time to areas that could be painted in five



Sand is blown onto the fresh wet paint of this console with a V-trough and compressed air. A sandblast cup at the end of the hose provided just the right control of air, but sand was still supplied from the trough.

minutes at an air temperature of 65 degrees. We also considered each building element as a separate treatment area. For example, a small, 18" x 24" framed panel would be a typical area, while a large, 30" x 84" framed panel would be divided up by its separate elements (stiles, rails, etc.). We settled on a routine that worked well for us:

1. Apply the tack coat. Lay on the paint in a thin to moderate



Applied over two dry coats, paint and sand start out as discrete layers (top) but dry into a coherent film (above).

wet-film thickness with a brush or roller, then give it time to dry until the wet sheen goes to matte.

2. Apply the full coat. Lay on the paint in a moderate to heavy wet-film thickness — in other words, as thick as possible without getting "curtains" or "drooling."

3. Apply the sand. Blow the sand into the wet full coat as soon as possible. Keep the front of the V-trough 12" to 14" away from the paint surface and avoid changing the distance as you move. Use enough air pressure

(around 50 psi) to dust the sand lightly onto the wet paint.

Sand flying through the air requires special protection. For personal safety, goggles are a must; respirators may be needed to protect lungs, especially if you are using silica sands. We made sure windows in the building were closed and other surfaces protected with tarps.

4. Wipe the wet edges. Peter was always careful to wipe the wet edge of the last treatment area with a rag. This helps define the line between elements and treatment areas and prevents overlapping which adds extra paint thickness and causes shadows and texture changes. Also check for

sags or bare spots in the work at this time. 5. Repeat the procedure at the next area. 6. Return for touch-ups. Before the surrounding paint has dried completely, look for sags and runs produced by the extra weight of sand, or places you accidentally bumped into. To correct these mishaps, first scrape off the sand and paint carefully with a putty knife and wipe the paint back to a sharp edge with a rag soaked in paint thinner. Then, reapply the tack and full coat paint using a small artist's brush, and resand as in step 3.

At times, it is difficult to get an even appearance with a single sand coat, especially on carvings and turnings. In these cases, a second sand coat — two paint coats and an application of sand — often produces better results because the texture of the first coat holds more paint. The tradeoff for improved looks is that the finish is less flexible, and its long-term performance may be limited. A good approach is to stick to one coat in all the areas not subject to close scrutiny, particularly details such as a rooftop balustrade where the severe exposure makes the weatherability of the coating most important.

As a final piece of advice on application, Peter suggests, "Say a prayer." By this he means that the results of a sanded-paint job are never completely certain. You can control only so many of the variables in methods and materials, and you end up using a good portion of artistic skill and judgment on the spot as the work proceeds. It's also important to keep in mind that you don't have to achieve perfection. The evidence suggests that early sanded-paint jobs were not flawless — and that's probably part of the look, too.



While the already sanded upper scroll dries, the lower leaves of this console get a thick touch-up coat of oil-based paint.

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ANYTHING GOES

An Approach to Exterior Colors for Early-20th-Century Homes
by John Crosby Freeman, *The Color Doctor*

Don't apologize to anyone if you own a home built in the 20th century — even if they own a spectacularly colored Queen Anne! The virtues of these homes are simplicity, restrained ornamentation, and colors blending into the landscape, but often they are as picturesque, eclectic, and energetic as any Victorian building.

Romanticism in American popular housing didn't die with Queen Victoria in 1901. During the continuing architectural combat between classical and medieval prototypes from 1900 to 1940, it was more like an old general fading away. Homes of the period, especially speculative housing, often had parts from different styles. When I look at these homes with the aim of selecting exterior colors, a bouncy tune from a 1934 Cole Porter musical rushes into my head. "Anything Goes" was the show's title song, and each refrain ends with "Heaven knows, anything goes."

As a professional architectural-color consultant, it has been my experience that color placement intimidates more people than color selection: "We know the colors we want; we don't know where to put them." I believe it's possible to include, within a harmonious scheme that honors its architecture, any colors that please the homeowners

— even when one partner wants a particular color and the other wants Monty Python's "Now — for something completely different."

What, you may well ask, is my preservationist argument for allowing the liberty of "anything goes" in choosing what should be, ostensibly, a near-historical color scheme? It is based on the common sense of architectural color relationships. Small buildings and small architectural features are more tolerant of vivid color than large buildings and large features, because the cumulative effect of color on small areas is weaker than that on large areas. This is why we have a tradition of light, semi-neutral (gray-tempered) body colors and darker, more positive trim colors.

For example, when people ask me to help them use a strong color like hot pink or raspberry, I suggest they put it on the widely spaced lines of sash, spandrel spindles, and railing balusters. Because these are the features best appreciated at close range, painting them with personal colors for private enjoyment is appropriate and does no injury to the balance of the architecture painted in more traditional body and trim colors. I don't like imperatives. I prefer architectural color opportunities and alternatives. My favorite precept is: *Colors are options — not obligations.*



A double-body bungalow from a 1915 Lowe Brothers Company ad in *The Craftsman*.



Right: Color ideas for a double-body color scheme (selected from Sherwin-Williams' Preservation Palette).

Scheme I	Placement	Scheme II
	1st-fl. clapp'ds	
Vellum		Suede
	2nd-fl. shingles	
Weathered Shingle		Brass
	1st-fl. window casings; 2nd-fl. sash	
Quartersawn Oak		Bronze Green
	1st-fl. sash, ceilings; 2nd-fl. casings	
Birdseye Maple		Craftsman Brown
	Eave brackets, rafter bottoms	
Copper Red		Bottle Green

A Double-Body Bungalow

Imagine you own the "modern combination cottage bungalow" shown above, built from a design in Frederick H. Gowing's *Building Plans for Modern Homes* of 1925. You know it's safe and authentic to paint it a light to medium, semi-neutral color such as yellow, brown, red, green, or gray and trim it with an off-white or a darker version of the body color. But you want a color scheme that's extra-ordinary as well, so you arrange for a house-call from "The Color Doctor." I like to invent dramas for houses, and for your house I imagine a Wizard-of-Oz tornado dropping the attic of a two-storey, saddle-roofed cottage on top of a single-storey, hipped-roof bungalow. This explains why the architect called it a "combination cottage bungalow."

Double-Body Color Principles

The two bodies and their different siding materials could be emphasized by two medium-to-dark, semi-neutral hues equal in value and contrasting in color — such as red and green. However, this late-Victorian scheme would make color the master of your 20th-century bungalow instead of its servant. Some guide-books of the period advise responding to apparent "weight" of colors by putting light, semi-neutral color on the second floor and a darker version of it on the first floor, but others put light body color "down" and darker body color "up." In this house, use the "weight" of the darker color to energize the drama of a sliced-off attic skewered on a fieldstone chimney, which popped up the shed-roofed dormer.

This combination honors the different colonial American color associations of the two wall coverings. Colonial homes of the 18th century often had clapboards painted in light colors. Colonial homes of the

17th century were rarely painted, hence the association with darker, natural wood colors.

Window Casing and Sash There is no rule that says that window sash have to be darker than window casings, or that sash and casings have to be different (or identical) colors. Your sash are in the Craftsman style. Since they are your wall's only ornaments, you might as well emphasize them.

Ordinary double-body homes don't require two color schemes for windows, but the drama of your architecture does. Try to select two colors, one of them darker than the other, that can be reversed on each body. On the lighter-bodied first floor, put your darker color on the casings and your lighter color on the sash. Reverse this placement on the darker-bodied second floor.

Rafters, Ceilings, and Brackets Color control provides elegant and practical results — that is, six colors doing the work of twelve means half the number of colors to buy and half the cans of paint to store. This goal merits the extra effort of selecting window colors that can be used on the exposed rafters and ceilings of the eaves and verandah.

Putting darker color on the rafters of the first-floor eaves and verandah and lighter color on the ceilings will echo the first-floor windows. Paint the second-floor rafters a very dark color and its ceilings the lighter window color. Select an accent color for the colossal brackets of the side gables as well as the bottoms and ends of the rafters, especially the decorative rafter tails clawing the ridge of the verandah's roof.

Odds and Ends Entrances can be given any color or colors you like because they are the symbolic as well as functional portals to interior fantasies. Sensible options are: natural finish, staining, graining, or painting in your darkest color. The accent color rarely

U

sing a Color Card

Observe in natural light and isolate your colors from the effects of surrounding colors. Brush out large samples of each color on sheets of white poster board. Study them in isolation and in relation to your building. Ornament painted in dark trim colors may require accenting, but if it "reads" in one color, it probably doesn't need help from an accent color. Dark colors make large buildings look smaller, and light colors make small buildings look larger — like the examples here.



works for entrances because its cumulative effect overwhelms adjacent areas of color. *Foundation boards* can be given your darkest color and used to "paint out" the basement window. *The oriel window* in the gable comes from the early-Victorian Gothic Revival and differs in style from those flanking it, so you have sufficient reason to reverse the second-floor window color placements. The oriel's cornice would be the very dark rafter color.

Dutch Colonial Houses

Basic to a Dutch Colonial home is the double-sloped or gambrel roof terminating its base in a pent eave or verandah. Many create second-floor living areas in the attic with dormers. The best do so with single-window dormers designed to preserve the lower roofline. Less successful are what I call "Dutched" Colonials, like "The Coburg" (inset) from *The Home Builders Catalog*, 1928. They are disguised, two-storey, rectangular boxes with the lower slopes of the gambrel tacked on as shallow strips against the gable ends of a saddle roof. "The Cromberg" (top of page), from the same source, is a better compromise. The side walls of the second floor have been recessed the minimum amount necessary to create the illusion of a gambrel penetrated by a large, shed-roofed dormer.

Ordinary color schemes for Dutch Colonials are either the lighter off-whites and grays of the Colonial Revival or the darker colors associated with Arts & Crafts. Typical of the latter, "The Cromberg" has been given a medium-to-dark body color, apparently to emulate the honest expression of weathered natural shingles. Typical of the former, "The Coburg" uses a light-to-medium body color. The trim was routinely white.

In this case, "The Cromberg" is badly served by its color scheme. Small buildings look smaller when they

are painted with dark colors. It is also important to understand that white "works" as a minor trim color for doors, window areas, and trellis but can fail as a major trim color for cornices, canopy brackets, and verandah pillars. White trim does not "lighten" body colors, it intensifies them. An improvement can be made by adding one color.

The new trim color would be a near-black version of the body color. It will make gutters look like cornice moldings. It will obscure downspouts and make them cease looking like bent drinking straws. It will strengthen canopy brackets and verandah pillars and make them seem better prepared to do their jobs. Applying it to the raking friezes of the verandah and gambrels will accentuate the rooflines.

Color also could be used aggressively in the area of the phony dormer to suppress it and thereby improve the illusion of a gambrel roof. Paint the windows the body color. This allows the eye to focus down on the first-floor windows with their pretty window boxes and the excellent example of a Dutch Colonial stoop. Painting the benches the near-black major trim color would integrate them with the canopy and entrance of the stoop.



The Lewiston," above, in Colonial Revival colors and the Foursquare, at left, with the late Victorian, double-body scheme are basically the same building. The gold dormers compromise the pyramidal roof and might also be painted the roof colors.

Foursquare Houses

Foursquares are not a house style per se, but a house type which came in many styles. What this means is that they are highly adaptable to your own personal outlook on color, using the stylistic detailing on the building as a take-off point. For instance, most any Colonial Revival color combinations would be appropriate for a building like "The Lewiston". Stucco colors such as standard yellow and red-dish-yellow would work for "The Atlanta," and so on. If you like Victorian colors you can still use them in a double-body scheme. Early Foursquares were very much a part of the late Victorian tradition, which did not truly fade until after World War One.

Perhaps the most popular type was the Double-Body Foursquare, like the 1903 color example shown. More than any other, it was designed for polychromy like the "Double-Body Bungalow." In addition to symbolically combining two traditions of American exterior-wall coverings and colors, two horizontal bands of color counterpoise the square wall shape and the hipped roof. The pyramidal roof design — a feature common to all these houses — tends to "verticalize" the building. A double-body scheme will emphasize the horizontality, a notion that is also key to the Prairie School style with which these houses share a kinship. Polychromy can even work for Foursquares with no distinct belt course but clapboards all the way up the wall. If you use color to romanticize, all romantic houses can be interesting.



John Crosby Freeman is co-author of the forthcoming *Joy of Color: Interior and Exterior Colors for America's Romantic Homes, 1900-1950*. He can be contacted at P.O. Box 430, Norristown, PA 19404; (215) 539-3010.



Clapboards and a front verandah with box pillars or Tuscan columns could make a Foursquare colonial, like "The Lewiston" (top right). Deep eaves without brackets and a high-waisted belt course made it Prairie School, like "The Arden" (middle). Adding Baroque parapets made it Mission, like "The Atlanta" (above).

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND
SHIRLEY MAXWELL

M

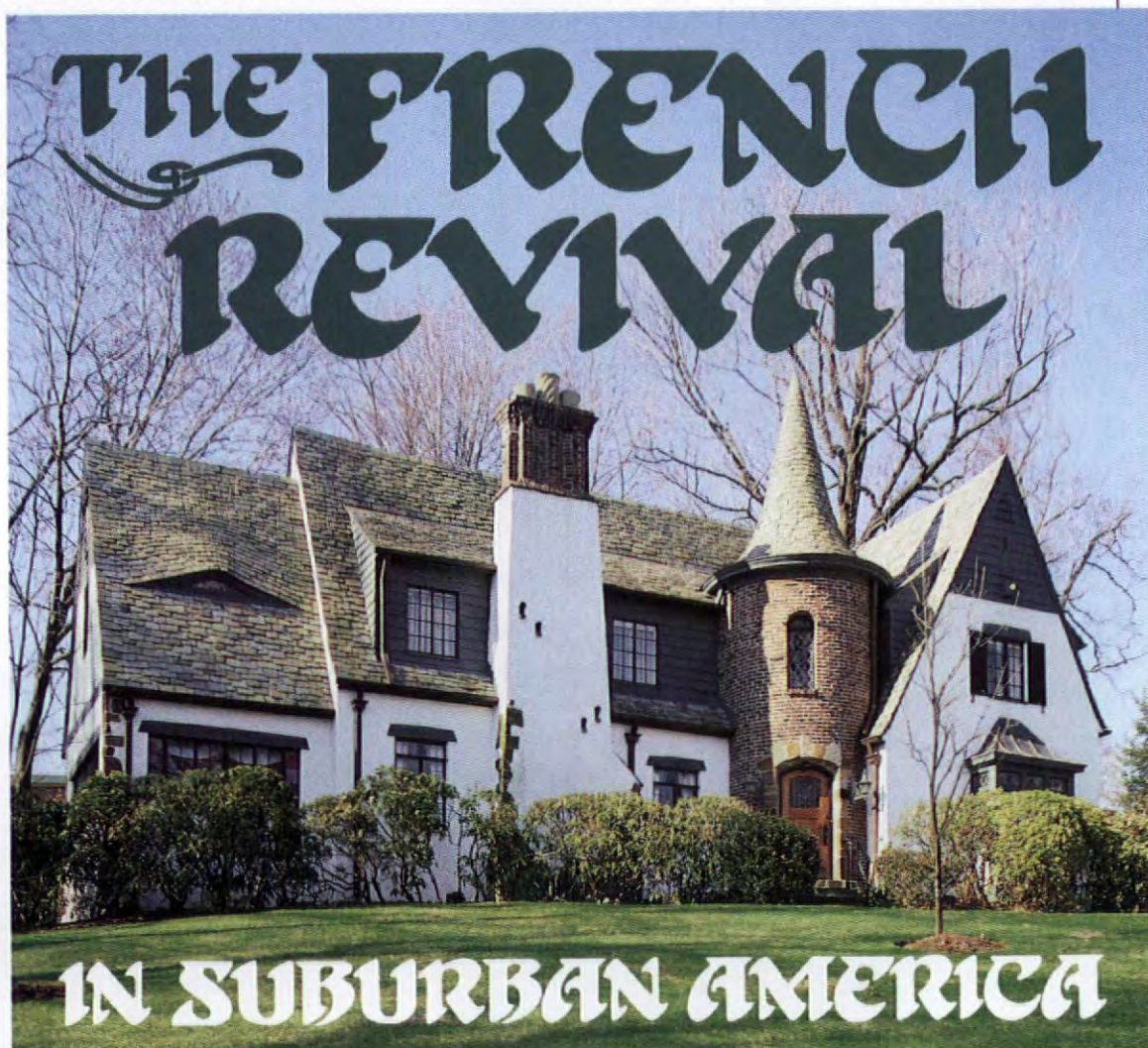
ost of the new houses built in the United States between the end of the first World War and the beginning of the second were inspired in some way, however small or unlikely, by "colonial" American designs derived from 18th-century American or English precedents. During the same period, however, there was also a lively trade in European "romantic" revivals of earlier centuries — English cottages, Spanish and Mediterranean villas, and French farmhouses.

In the years between the wars, two competing approaches to revivals were at work in American architecture. One was formal and academic, continuing the classical Beaux Arts influence of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The other was informal and romantic. This second strain was where picturesque elements left over from the 19th century came to rest, and most of the small houses, and many of the larger ones, which we discuss in this article, belong in this second group.

All the romantic styles were characterized by a picturesque quality that laid claim to faraway times and places, to a way of life both exotic and, somehow, simpler than that of the American suburbs to which they were being transplanted. Usually it was a rural ideal that captured the suburban designer's imagination — a half-timbered cottage in an English village, a medieval farmhouse or simple *manoir* in Brittany or Normandy, a sunny villa on some unidentified Mediterranean hillside. But formal townhouses based on chic French city precedents also were popular in their place.

This wasn't the first time Gallic ideas had inspired American buildings. The first wave of the French invasion, a purely regional phenomenon, occurred when French settlers built their raised Creole cottages along the Gulf Coast and up the Mississippi River. The second wave, begun just before the Civil War and signaled by the mansard roofs of the Second Empire style, affected the entire country by the 1870s. A third wave crested in the turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts school of academic classicism. Then, from about 1915 until about 1940, a romanticized, informal French style blossomed, based more on the farmhouse than on the mansion. It was at most an interesting footnote in the history of 20th-century revival architecture, which continued to be dominated by Georgian and Spanish traditions, but it was among the most appealing of the architectural styles of its period.

This French-inspired architecture was as widespread as it was picturesque. After World War I, buildings in the new



An entrance turret in brick makes a strong French statement in this stuccoed Summit, N.J., house.

French style could be found all across the continent. Mass communication and transportation systems made it easy for ideas to travel, and the war had enlarged the architec-

All photos by James C. Massey, except where noted

tural vision of many Americans. Young artists, architects, and historians who had had their first glimpse of French farmhouses during the war returned to Europe to sketch and study them afterward. Throughout the 1920s, dozens of books such as Samuel Chamberlain's *Domestic Architecture in Rural France* (1928; reprinted by the Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., 1981) and historian Harold Donaldson Eberlein's *Small Manor Houses and Farmsteads in France* (1926) were a rich source of ideas

for designers of small houses. Stanford White's sketches of buildings in Normandy and Brittany also were published in 1920, although they were drawn during a European tour that White made in the late 1870s, before he joined the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White.

Although there were still regional preferences — Spanish and Mediterranean houses found their largest audience in the south and west, for instance — all the romantic styles appeared in every section of the country. French-style houses were few, but they might turn up anywhere, even in California or Florida. Unlike Spanish-style *casas*, however, they did not necessarily show up very frequently even in the places they might have been most expected. New Orleans, with its vibrant French heritage, had to wait until the 1960s for a new French building boom. Mostly, the French building boomlet of the 1920s and '30s occurred in suburban areas of large eastern and midwestern cities — with, of course, a detour to southern California, where the style took on distinctly Hollywood airs.

For the sake of easy reference, let's divide all these French-inspired 20th-century buildings into four groups, two formal and two informal. Of the two formal ones, the first is based on a picturesque American version of an early chateau (the equivalent of the English castle), with or without towers. The Thomas T. Gaff House in Washington, D.C. (see page 45), is a good example of this type. The second group — chic, urbane, and academically correct — originates in the Parisian city house. Washington's Meridian House (see page 44) fits this mold. (Meridian House is so correct, in fact, that in 1929 one academic critic pronounced it "free from architectural regrets"!)

John Russell Pope and Jules Henri de Sibour were prominent among the formalist architects. Then there are two less formal groups: the first, the Norman farmhouse or small manor; the second, an American romantic, eclectic style that draws heavily on the image of French farmhouses but is basically stateless. Many houses of exquisitely picturesque design were built in well-to-do suburbs of Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and other large cities. Architects like Mellor, Meigs and Howe and Edmund B. Gilchrist in Philadelphia; and Delano and Aldrich in New York were among many around the country who perfected this American form. At the other end of the eclectic scale are the freely interpreted and often charming little houses that were picked up by house-plan and pre-cut-house distributors and local builders all across the nation. The one illustrated in the plate that accompanies this article (see page 43), taken from a mail-order plan catalog, is typical of that group.

As to the characteristics of the style, steep pyramidal or hipped roofs were the norm. Mansard roofs were also fairly often found as were, less frequently, very high gable roofs

Top: The romanticization of the French country house can be seen in this Villanova, Pa., house. **Middle:** Although more restrained, this stucco residence in New Orleans's early-20th-century garden district is also French. **Bottom:** This small New Jersey house features a cut-stone doorway.

Photo by Richard Longstrech



Note the round-arched dormer windows with casement sash and wrought-iron balconies of this c. 1930 French eclectic house in New Orleans.



R

like those on English cottages. The steep roof slopes were originally dictated by the necessity to shed water from thatch coverings, and the custom stuck even after the roofing material changed. All these roof types often were enlivened by a slight kick at the eaves. There was — and still is — a minor thatched-roof revival in its own right, but most roofs of the 1920s and 1930s were of slate or wood shingles. Round or polygonal turrets with conical roofs, often used at the front entrance, were intended to lend the air of a small chateau to a suburban dwelling. Usually found at the turn of the L of the building, these towers occasionally showed up at the corner instead.

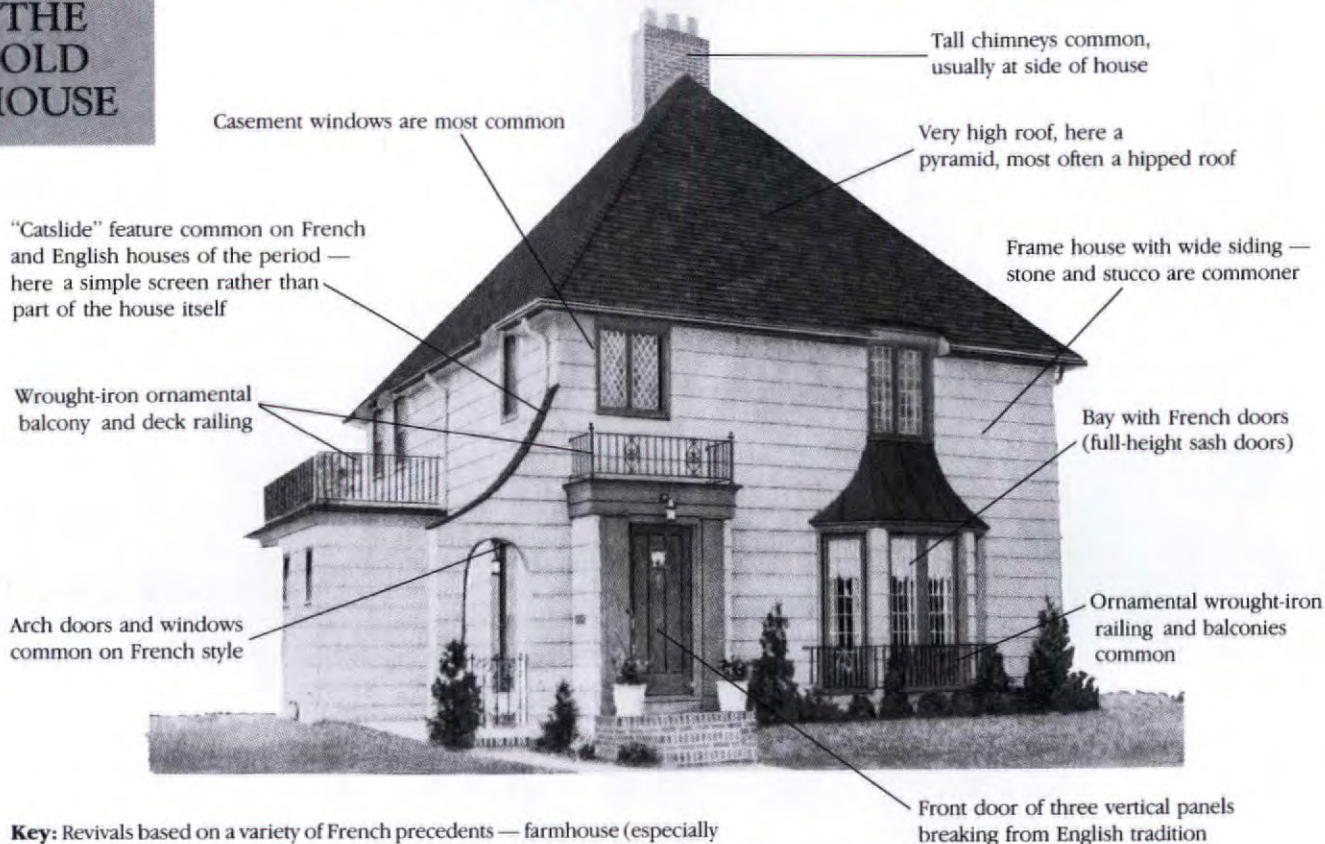
Most French houses were two-storey buildings, although there is an occasional one-storey mansard-roofed version. (These actually have one-and-a-half storeys.) City row houses and some large country houses might have two-and-a-half storeys. In small houses, round-arched entry doors were often protected by flared or polygonal metal hoods. Larger houses might have elaborate wrought-iron and glass marquees. Casement win-

dows, which persisted in France much longer than in England (up to the present day, in fact), were the most characteristic window form. The full-length casement — the popular “French” window or French door — was frequently used both inside and out, but it certainly was not unique to houses of the French Revival style.

The construction material was almost always some form of masonry: stone, stucco over hollow tile or frame, or sometimes brick, which might be whitewashed to suggest great age. Although our illustration for this article shows a small, simple French house in frame construction, very

READING THE OLD HOUSE

THE FRENCH STYLE



Key: Revivals based on a variety of French precedents — farmhouse (especially Norman), manors, city houses, and chateaus of the 17th to 19th century, and expressed in this 1927 design as a small, simple American suburban house.

few all-wood houses were built in this style. There was sometimes (although less often than in the English cottage style) a half-timbered effect, perhaps with vertical framing filled in with stucco, recalling a traditional French form of exposed frame construction, *poteau-sur-sole*. A catalog of the period suggested whisking the stucco on with a stiff brush or broom in an up and down movement to achieve a coarse texture. Other than white, the only stucco color variations allowed by this authority were pearly grays, light buffs, pinks, and yellows.

Often, windows set level with the wall surface rise straight up through the cornice line to form dormer-like projections with round-arch hoods or triangular pediments. Massive chimneys often occupied a prominent position on the front wall of the house, although they appeared more frequently on one side. Ornamental wrought-iron balconies (real or fake), gates, window and door grilles, and marquees are characteristic exterior decorations. Large houses might have wrought-iron railings on the interior as well. The interior appearance of large French style houses was similar to that of Mediterranean examples: rough plaster walls, ornamental ironwork, stone fireplaces. Floor plans for large houses were somewhat more likely to resemble those used in Mediterranean-style residences than those of formal and symmetrical Georgian. French houses were likely to be



Academic influences produced the correctly French Meridian House in Washington, D.C.

asymmetrically laid out in an L-shape or with varied wings, rather than in a single rectangular block.

Small houses (such as those in mail-order house catalogs) often had an L-shaped plan with a round turret at the intersecting exterior walls. But they also presented opportunities for symmetry. An "American adaptation of a small French chateau" shown in the Architectural Corporation's 1919 publication *Designs for American Homes* has a symmetrical facade and a pyramidal roofline. Its nearly square first-floor

plan is identical to that of "a frank copy of a Massachusetts Colonial," which also appeared in the same book: a three-room, center-hall plan with a sunporch at one rear corner filling out the square. It's a thoroughly typical small-house floor plan of the period.

Unlike Craftsman- and Mission-style houses, the French Revival house, at least at the popular level, seems to have had no distinct type of furnishings consistently attached to it. "One may furnish successfully with the usual items available," suggested the Architectural Corporation.

Other experts were more specific, however. Kathryn E. Ritchie and Margaret Haines (writing in "The Normandy Room," *Modern Homes: Their Design and Construction* Chicago American Builder Publishing Corp., 1931) suggested that the type of decoration most appropriate to French-style houses, or at least to those built in the informal, rather rustic mode known as "Norman," was — what else? — "French Provincial." This style, a countrified version of 18th-century French design with Spanish and Italian touches, leaned heavily to rough-hewn beamed ceilings and walls covered with smooth or sand-finished plaster or with wood paneling. Hardwood paneling was usually stained and waxed; softwood might be painted in any of several characteristic shades: daffodil yellow, apple green, lemon, pinkish or yellowish gray, or white. Wall



French or English? **Top left:** This Washington, D.C., house could be a Cotswold cottage — but there's a French kick to the eaves. **Bottom:** This Pasadena house has the French rounded entry door and through-the-eaves dormers.

Right: This turn-of-the-century "chateau" shows a truly Victorian exuberance. **Middle:** At Bryn Mawr, Pa., the French Revival is a starting point for a distinctly American, suburban house style. **Bottom:** Note the steep hipped roof, tall chimneys, and prominent stone quoins of the Thomas T. Gaff House in Washington, D.C.

panels often curved at the top and were enriched with low-relief carvings of flowers, birds, leaves, or fruit. (Favorite motifs were turtledoves' nests, the "torch of happiness," and Cupid's quivers — now, is that romantic or what!) Tile or slate floors were typical in provincial France, but in American homes wide boards of pine, cedar, or oak were acknowledged as a more livable flooring choice. Or, it was suggested, linoleum simulations of slate or tile could be used to good effect. A large fireplace "bespeaking heat and cheer" was strongly recommended for the living room, and if you could get your hands on an old armoire and a grandfather clock — preferably a curvy one shaped like a "violoncello" — you were well on the road to the best of French peasant living.

But there's a lingering question that pesters old-house observers: English or French? Tudor or Norman? Without the architect or builder's catalog in hand, it can be devilishly hard to tell the difference between houses based on English cottages of the Middle Ages and those based on French farmhouses of the same period. As a rule (a very general rule), French houses are more likely to have round-arch doors and windows. Steeply pitched roofs like the one pictured in our plate (sometimes called catslides), graced many entrances and bays of small 1920s and '30s houses. Most often viewed as "English" by contemporary observers, they were also occasionally found on houses described as "Norman."

The American romantic style developed by the Philadelphia architects mentioned earlier blended the picturesque features of French and English rural houses with local American building materials to form a distinctive new suburban form. The exact source may be a toss-up, but large suburban "farmhouses" such as those found in Robert Rodes McGoodwin's French Village in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, rank with the most creative 20th-century American architecture.

One of the strengths of the French Revival style was that it accommodated two very different urges on the part of the small-house public. People who were attracted to the formal, symmetrical lines of American Georgian colonial houses but who also wanted a touch of continental chic in their houses might opt for a sort of French box with an off-center doorway and a pyramidal roof. Homebuyers whose tastes ran to picturesque, irregular outlines could break out of the confines of the box with a Norman "farmhouse," with multiple rooflines and eccentric wings.

What killed the style prior to World War Two was probably competition from the Colonial Revival and other re-



vival styles, particularly the vigorous Spanish and Mediterranean. The post-war emergence of new house forms, such as the ranchhouse and the split-level, also did not immediately suggest ways to incorporate French styling. But in another decade or so, however — by the 1960s — the French romantic style would re-emerge with a fresh vitality.



Fine handknotted Oriental pile rugs — Sehna's, Sarouks, Caucasians, and the like — are things of beauty that grow lovelier with age, and signs of wear needn't be an automatic signal for restoration. In most instances, however, this should signal a closer investigation. You'll want to examine a rug with bare spots — especially one that sees heavy use — to determine the degree of pile loss and whether the rug foundation has deteriorated. In either case, traffic and the use of a vacuum, for instance, easily can cause pile on a worn rug to loosen or dislodge further, weakening the foundation as well.

Professional rug restorer Nancy Boombower points out that "people also do mean things to rugs. They place planters on them. They let the sun shine directly on them. They leave them in damp basements and attics or they dry them by hanging them from their knots, all of which can seriously harm a carpet. But although some types of damage can't be undone — fading, for instance, cannot be reversed — as long as the rug hasn't been horribly abused, chances are it can be restored."

Professional restoration of a rug is safest. If your rug is an important antique or a cherished heirloom, it's probably the only option to consider seriously. Undertaking a restoration yourself is an alternative if your rug is not extremely valuable, if you have patience, and if you recognize that the results will be less than perfect.

Proper tools also are required. These include tweezers, pile scissors, pliers, a tape measure, magnifying glass, rubber mallet, iron, thumbtacks, and an adequately sized wooden board (larger than the rug section being repaired). You'll also need tapestry or embroidery yarn and needles, and a #10 file cleaner (a wire brush, for which an ordinary dog brush may be substituted); these may be found at knitting or needlepoint stores (see "Suppliers," far right).

AN ORIENTAL RUG RESTORATION



BY CAROL JOHNSTON

Left: a Caucasian rug with replacement yarn. **Inset:** restorer Nancy Boombower at work.

1. Strengthening the carpet foundation is the first step. In rare cases this isn't necessary, but foundation instability almost always goes hand in hand with wear. Also consider that the foundation must be strong enough to withstand the stress that new pile will put upon it. With the carpet turned face down, make a close examination of the warp and weft threads around the area of loss for fraying or deterioration. These are the undyed vertical and horizontal threads that form the rug foundation, and around which yarn is knotted to create pile.

To strengthen the foundation, start with a length of warp or rug thread or, as a substitute, some sturdy string. In weight and material, the thread should match what was used in the original; usually, a foundation is cotton, but it also may be linen, wool, or silk. Thread a needle and insert it into the hole. Run the warp

thread through the weft about an inch or two beyond the damaged area in each direction, "sistering" it along a strong warp. Then zigzag the end threads at least three times so that they are secured in a structurally sound area of the rug. Repeat this procedure for each warp and weft thread. If needles break or pile makes it difficult to draw the needle along, pull the needle through with pliers.

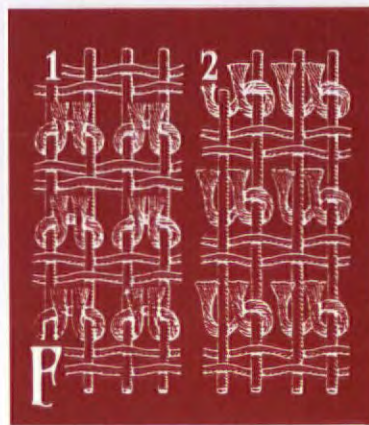
2. The next step is to wash the rug. This step is not always necessary, and should be determined by the amount of dust or embedded dirt that comes off on your hands during the first phase of restoration; embedded dirt can harm a rug. Never wash a rug prior to strengthening the foundation; dry rot, water damage, even chronic exposure to dampness may have weakened it seriously. For an older or antique rug, simply wiping it with a damp towel will suffice. Repeat several times, until the towel comes clean. Other rugs will sustain a more vigorous washing. In warm weather, wet the rug outdoors on an adjustable frame. Dip

a clean broom into a bucket filled with water and ¼ cup of mild dish detergent (like Ivory). "Sweep" the back of the carpet several times, then sponge clean or aim a garden hose at the rug and gently rinse until the water runs clear. Repeat the process with the carpet turned face up. In winter, it may be washed in a basement, with the rug set on a frame in a tub, but always finish by drying it with a fan.

3. After the rug has dried, lay it out on a table or work surface and, using a magnifying glass and tweezers, gently "clean" it by removing any bits of shredded yarn in the area of pile loss. Use these bits to determine the color and thickness of the replacement yarn. You'll also need to determine whether the yarn is cotton, wool, or silk, and the dyeing process. Most yarns used in the last 100 years are aniline or chemically dyed. Yarns that have been naturally dyed using plant and root extracts are less common today, but may be present in an older or better quality rug. Generally speaking, both types are available at fine knitting or needlepoint stores.

In purchasing replacement yarn, it's critical to match color and other characteristics, such as texture, as closely as possible. Naturally dyed yarn, for instance, should be replaced with a similar product, since these tend to be lighter in appearance than aniline dyed yarns, which becomes evident after knotting. A knowledgeable sales person should be able to ensure a close match.


4. Most tapestry or needlepoint yarns come three-ply. At home, untwist the yarn, then add a fourth strand before threading a length through a needle. If four strands look too thick or thin, adjust the number accordingly. Next, mount the worn rug area on a piece of wood, then pull it taut so that it mimics the tensile strength of the rug overall; secure the section with thumbtacks. Proper tensioning will keep repairs from putting too much stress on the foundation, and will help the restoration work resemble the



A. In reinforcing a foundation, dexterity helps. **B.** Tensioning a rug to a board keeps knotting quality consistent. **C.** Four yarn plies are used here. **D.** Brush tails to blend together. **E.** Scissors should be sharp for even trimming. **F.1:** a double-warp Turkish knot. **F.2:** a double-warp Sebna knot.

original carpet.

5. With the rug tacked in place, you are ready to begin knotting. Turkish or Ghiordes knots, also called symmetrical knots, are probably most common. For this knot, the yarn is first looped around two warps (see fig. F.1), with the ends, or "tails," pulled up through the middle. For Persian or Sebna knots, yarn asymmetrically encircles two warps (see fig. F.2); one tail is pulled up between two warps, while the other runs partially behind the second warp. Once you've determined the knot type by examining the face of the carpet with a magnifying glass, start knotting. Work one color at a time, following the knot direction, or nap, of the rug.

6. After you've completed a section of one-colored knots, brush the tails with the file cleaner, then snip them using scissors; trim to the height of the pile in non-worn areas. Iron the reknotted area, then pound it firmly but gently (severe pounding can cause fiber breakage), until pile is flush with the rest of the rug. After completing repairs in all colors, return rug to the floor. 

SUPPLIERS

Needleworks, 4041 Tulane Ave., Dept. OHJ, New Orleans, LA 70119, (504) 486-2880, *tapestry wool and needles*
Chatalbash Rug Co., Inc., 245 Fifth Avenue, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10016, (212) 532-5260, *rug scissors*
Elly's Yarn Shop, 4503 Logan Way, Dept. OHJ, Hubbard, OH 44425, (216) 759-9555, *handspun yarn*
Pocholo, 38 W. Liberty St., Dept. OHJ, Girard, OH 44420, (216) 545-1104, *cotton warp skein*

Nancy Boombower is a rug restorer specializing in historic textiles and Oriental rugs based in Girard, Ohio. Her telephone number is (216) 545-1936.

Bottles, Papers, and Other Treasures....

MORE TIME CAPSULES



The image far left developed from an 80-year-old glass negative.

Our time-capsules stories in the January/February 1990 *OHJ* produced such an overwhelming response that another article seemed in order. In this wave of letters, many readers found striking or revealing artifacts hidden in their homes — a special part of old-house living, which most saw as a rare glimpse of a forgotten era or a reward from the past. Many thanks, again, to all who wrote. — Lynn Elliott

≡ Forgotten Photographs ≡

Time capsules can lie waiting for years. These two finds "developed" unexpectedly after eight decades.

When we purchased our home, it was inexpensive and run-down, but in an excellent location. Because extensive renovations were needed, we stored many items in our big attic, which meant climbing up and down the stairs countless times. One day, in plain sight at

the top of the staircase, lay a magazine titled *The Housewife*, which was dated January 1909. I don't know how it got there, but I know it hadn't been there previously.

Our most prized discovery came when a carpenter was installing a banister leading to the second floor. He found a compartment-like shelf under the bottom stair, which we later realized was visible from the basement. On the shelf, in a battered box, were eight glass photographic negatives. Most were too dark to be printed, but two or three were discernible, so I had them developed. The first photo turned out to be of a young girl and a baby. We figured that they must have lived in our house about 80 years ago. The large bow on the girl is shown in the fashion pages of the 1909 magazine and the house they are sitting beside is definitely ours. In the second picture, the same baby is seen again on our front porch. That porch railing is now an ugly, rusty wrought-iron one, which I plan to restore similar to the picture. How long the negatives were there or who put them there is a mystery which will probably never be solved.

— Janice Poterack
Clarks Green, Pa.

≡ Tin Town ≡

Time capsules are often thought of as small items hidden under floorboards or enclosed in walls, but that isn't always the case. Here's one that is an architectural surprise. . .

We've discovered that our whole house is an inadvertent time capsule. We live in an old river cabin that has, over the years, been converted into a house by its series of owners. Rumor has it that it was originally built as a "clubhouse" during Prohibition. Natives in the area know it as the "Simm's Clubhouse" and it was apparently used that way for many years, even after Prohibition.

We first stumbled onto part of the house's history while exploring the woods. The house is on a bluff overlooking the Osage River in Missouri. Unfortunately, the scenery was marred by years of accumulated trash that had been dumped in the woods and along the river bank by previous owners. As we started cleaning up the site we noticed an unusual number of Missouri license plates dating from 1928 to 1931. At that time, we didn't have a clue as to how they got there.

Later, when attempting to drill a hole in the family-room wall for an antenna cable, Bob broke the bit on a metal sheet beneath the paneling. It had once been an exterior wall and we assumed it had been sided with tin.

Well, by now you may have guessed. Behind the old asbestos siding that now covers portions of the house, the original exterior walls are sided with 1930s Missouri license plates. Our neighbor later confirmed that the entire exterior of the original house was covered in license plates. Although we don't know for sure, the plates probably came from the penitentiary in Jefferson City.

Last summer we made another discovery while replacing the old roof. We found that the original roof planking was made from old shipping crates. At the same time, our neighbor told me that, as a small boy, he had helped do some work on what became the bathroom. He put letters, coins, newspaper clippings, etc., in beer and soda bottles and then hid the bottles in the wall and foundation. I hope we will find those time capsules when we remodel the bathroom some day.

— Bob and Linda
Hillemann
Jefferson City, Mo.

*This 140-year-old
horse skull came
with a note.*



The original, license-plate-covered clubhouse, and its roof (inset), constructed of shipping crates.

≡ Bryant's Surprise ≡

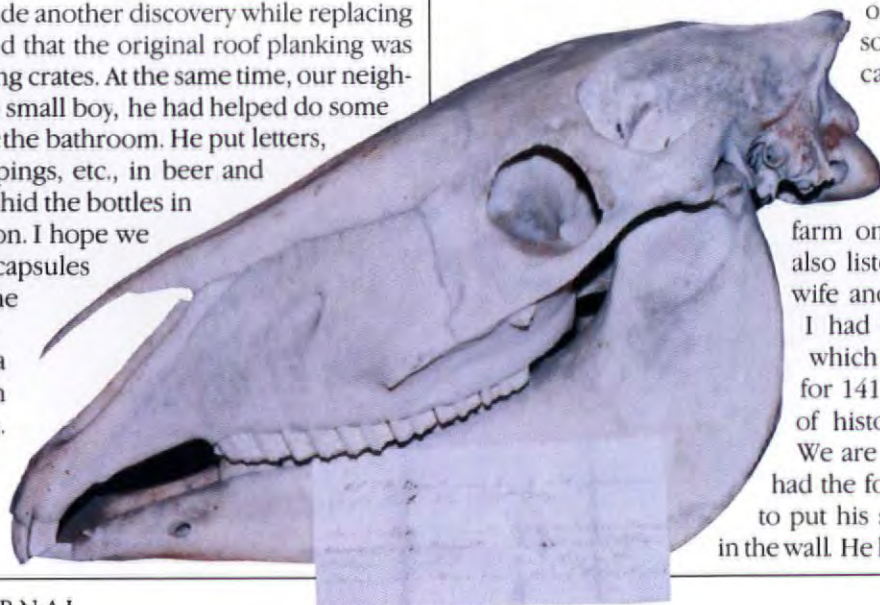
The unusual nature of some time capsules can create more questions than they answer. Why an early occupant chose to leave behind this next artifact will always be a mystery.

I may possibly have the strangest "time capsule" that you have heard of yet.

Our house, built in 1776, is known as the Bryant Homestead, as attested by the sign above the front entrance. It was in dire need of repair. The middle walls of the house are about two feet thick because they house chimneys. I was in the process of making a hole in one of these walls when something caught my eye. At first I thought it was just a pile of debris. When I brushed aside some of the plaster, I found myself face to face with the skull of a horse! My immediate thought was "please don't let me find the person who was riding him!" I think I was a little shook up because I didn't remove the skull from the wall for over 24 hours.

When I did remove it from the wall, I discovered a piece of paper in the eye socket. I unrolled it carefully and found this note: "Colonel David M. Bryant and Family took possession of this farm on April 29, 1848." It also listed the names of his wife and six children. What I had was a horse's skull, which was inside the wall for 141 years, with a piece of history.

We are glad Colonel Bryant had the foresight and wisdom to put his special time capsule in the wall. He has inspired us to find

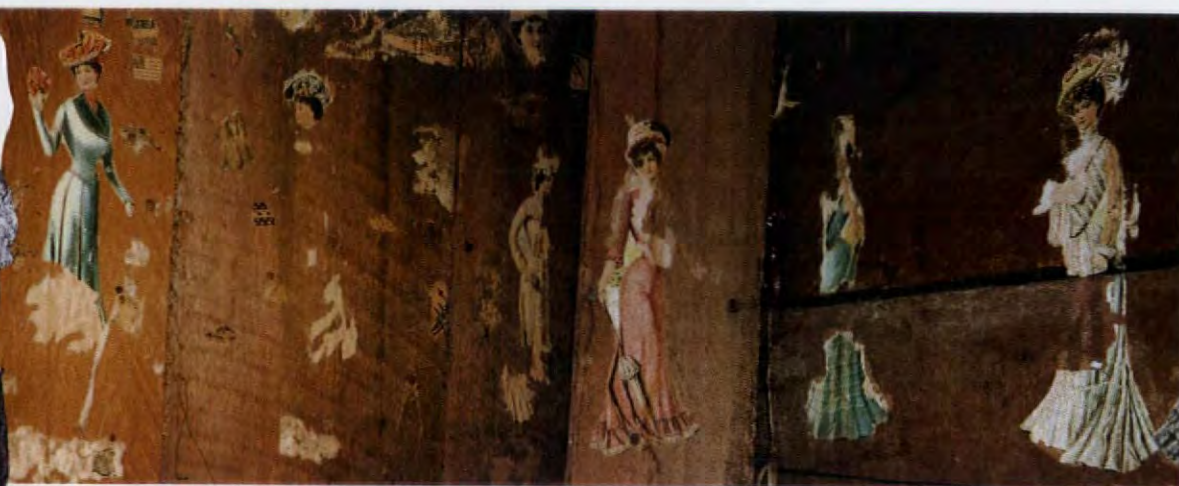


ish our renovations as soon as possible and to put a journal, a copy of the deeds, family pictures, and the horse's skull back into the wall for future homeowners to discover.

— Rocky and Kathy Foley
South Deerfield, Mass.

motorcycle, a 4×4 pick-up, baskets of fruit and flowers, a television with a football game showing, a local newspaper front page, and a original picture of the house in which the Mastersons are featured.

— Teresa Kolibaba
Port Orford, Oreg.



These colorful Victorian cut-outs were revealed under layers of wallpaper and canvas.

≡ Ephemera ≡

Cut-outs were all the rage during the turn-of-the-century. Victorians usually placed ephemera in scrapbooks and occasionally on furniture. But in this case, a family's passion for ephemera created a unique time capsule.

The original owners of our house were Mr. and Mrs. P.J. Masterson. In the early 1900s, after the couple divorced, it was converted to a rooming house so that Mrs. Masterson could support her children and herself. Later, it became the Seaside Hotel until 1944 when it again became a single-family residence.

We found carpenter's sketches under the paint. Under the cheesecloth and wallpaper in the parlor, we uncovered Victorian cut-outs pasted to the wall. It seems that in 1898, Mrs. Masterson and her children placed this ephemera on the wall before nailing and gluing on the wallcovering. In addition to ladies and children in fancy clothes, there were also cut-outs of pistols, rifles, cannons, steamboats, a victrola, barnyard animals, picnic settings, and U.S. flags with 46 stars pasted to the wallboards. From the backside of some of the cut-outs, it looked as though they were taken from a catalog. They weren't in perfect condition due to bugs, probably silverfish, eating them and also upholstery tacks mutilating them.

In return, we've left modern cut-outs under the sheetrock for some future person to find. We chose fashion models (male and female), modern power tools (table saw, drill, etc.), Fonzie on a

≡ John F. Kreps ≡

Often, the details of daily life in another time are brought vividly back by forgotten documents.

While checking the plumbing for leaks in our newly purchased home, my husband came across a box of dusty, discolored papers left by the original owners. From the extant records left by Mr. and Mrs. Kreps, spanning four years (1897 to 1901), I have learned more detail of what daily life in turn-of-the-century Walla Walla was like than I ever could hope to find in a history book. For instance, billings from the Walla Walla Water Company, for

Since 1902, a box of receipts lay undiscovered in the DeBeaumonts' basement.



\$1.50 per month, included a reminder of when one was allowed to water his lawn, depending upon the side of Third Street on which one resided. I have learned that the Krepses consumed much milk and bread — an average of 30 quarts of milk in a month (for the unheard-of price of \$2) and as many loaves of bread (costing \$1.25). The list of insights into daily life which these documents have rendered is endless.

I am forever indebted to the Krepses for providing the key that unlocked the doors of history to me. They helped me see the real significance of historical study: It does not consist solely of earth-shaking occurrences, but rather of real people. We forget that life has always been made up of the day-to-day happenings of individuals. This new focus made history relevant and alive for me.

— Shannon DeBeaumont
Walla Walla, Wash.

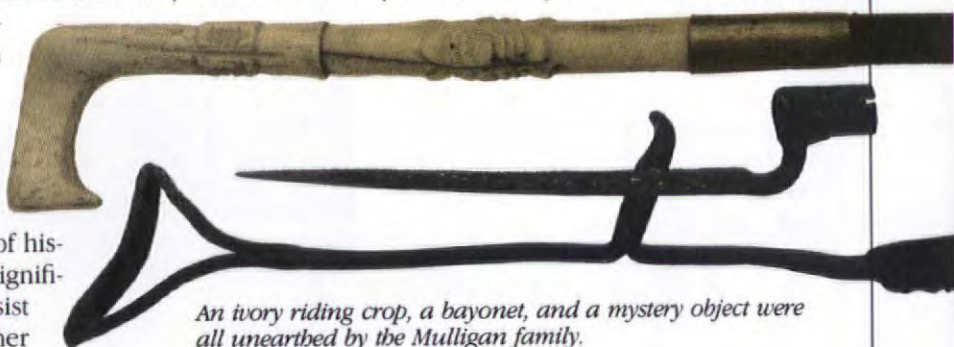
≡ Original Oil Painting ≡

Hidden artifacts inspire many old-house owners, such as in the next letter, to leave their own time capsules.

My husband and I are currently restoring a 1921 country general store in the farming village of Traunik, Michigan. While working on restoration projects throughout the structure, we have found numerous time capsules. The Historic Mikulich Building (our official register name) has given us a lovely view of the past as we have found each item. Behind the store's counters, there were coins from 1843, a license plate from 1901, and, funniest of all, a 1910 fortune-telling handbook called "Dr. Karr's Guide to Success and Happiness" — the instructions on how to read a crystal ball were most enlightening!

While wiring an attic crawl space, we found our most precious item. It was an oil-cloth window shade with a beautiful oil painting of Abraham Lincoln. This painting was done in 1915 by Louis Mikulich Sr., the first owner of our building.

As our time capsule to the future, I wrote a long letter detailing the early history of the store and its owners. Then, I told the history of our family and the dates and events



An ivory riding crop, a bayonet, and a mystery object were all unearthed by the Mulligan family.

of our restoration. I placed it inside the wall going into the butcher shop. I can only hope it will bring half of the joy to someone years down the road which my time capsules brought to me.

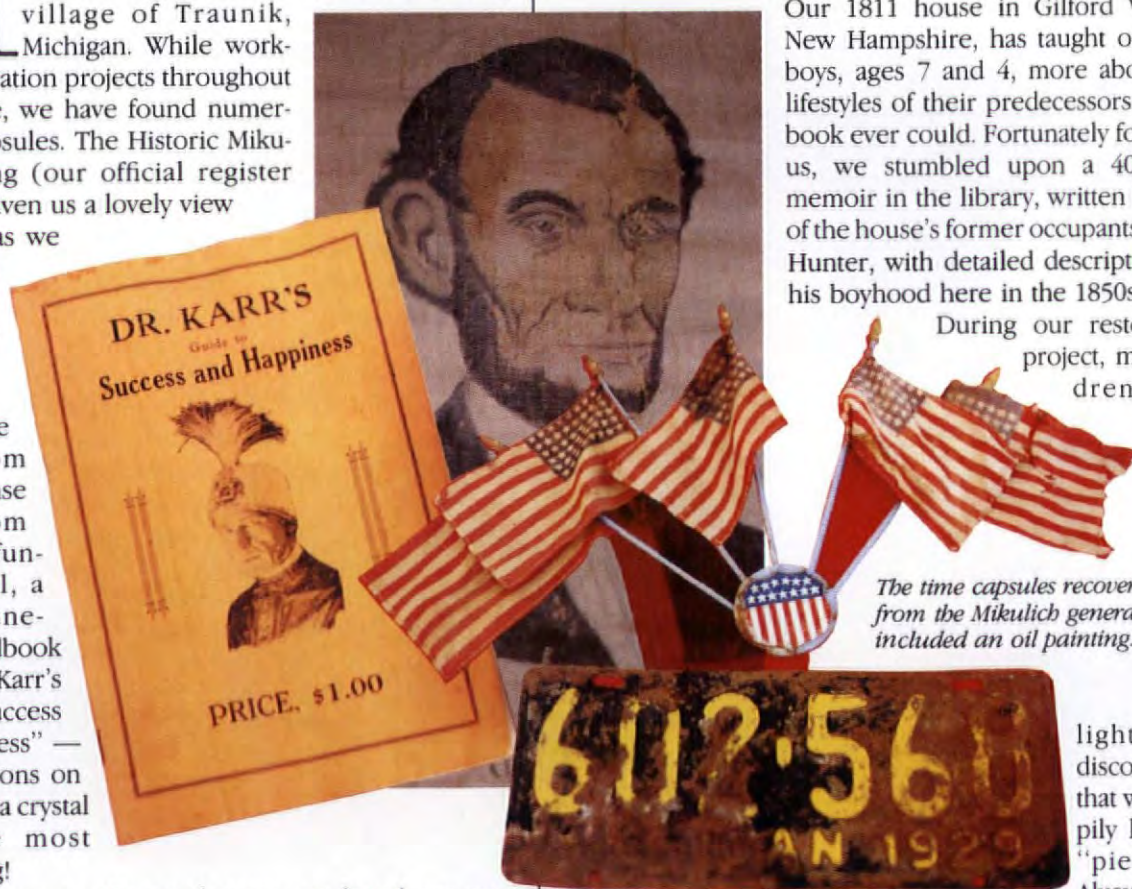
— Dee Morgan
Traunik, Mich.

≡ A Chip of Blue China ≡

The thrill of discovering — and leaving — time capsules is not limited to adults.

Our 1811 house in Gilford Village, New Hampshire, has taught our two boys, ages 7 and 4, more about the lifestyles of their predecessors than a book ever could. Fortunately for all of us, we stumbled upon a 400-page memoir in the library, written by one of the house's former occupants, Alvah Hunter, with detailed descriptions of his boyhood here in the 1850s.

During our restoration project, my children de-



The time capsules recovered from the Mikulich general store included an oil painting.

lighted in discoveries that we happily labeled "pieces of Alvey's cereal bowl," "a bit of Alvey's allowance" (a half-dime coin), or "something lost out of Alvey's father's toolbox." We eventually filled our treasure chest with chips of flow-blue china and salt-glazed pottery, coins, playing cards with a

picture of coy "Miss Demure" upon them, part of a toy gun, and the obligatory assortment of old newspapers and nails. A prize find was a riding crop with a carved ivory handle, which had slipped down near the chimney. My favorite was a tiny tin labeled "Lola Montez Cream," presumably a cosmetic sold by someone with a flair for marketing. The package noted that the local distributor was the comparatively homely "Nettie Harrison."

We decided to leave similar reminders of our life in the house for future occupants, our versions of some of the things we had found from the 19th and early-20th centuries. Into the box went a child's plastic drinking cup, some shiny 1989 pennies, a new playing card, a toy matchbox car, the front page of the local newspaper, a magic marker, and a car key (the closest we could come to the riding crop). A brilliant idea was a dated register from the grocery store which listed each purchase and its price. In years to come, someone may marvel at the prices I now consider shocking! With great ceremony, the children tucked the box into the addition before the plasterboard went on.

The concept of the continuity of history, at least within the four walls of this old house, had clearly gotten through to my family. All this from a chip of blue china.

— Adair Mulligan
Gilford, N.H.

≡ 1920s Ring ≡

For some, a time capsule is a house's way of repaying a restorer for their preservation efforts.

During the time I was watchman for Pinecrest, the house was broken into several times despite my best attempts at keeping it secure. Late one Saturday night, the mantel in the dining room was stolen. The next day, while sweeping the dust where the mantel had stood, my broom knocked a shiny object across the



Pinecrest's "thank you": a gold ring with an opal setting.

floor. It turned out to be a beautiful ring made of 10K white gold with an opal in the middle! Apparently it had fallen behind the mantel several decades ago. A jeweler told me that it seemed to be of a 1920s vintage.

While I was still watching the house, I decided to research Pinecrest. I found that Pinecrest was designed by the famed architect George Barber. His book *Modern Dwellings* lists Pinecrest as design No. 213 with floorplans, costs, and even interiors.

One day when new owners were restoring the main upstairs bathroom, they called me to come over to see something. On the wainscoting behind the old sink, a workman had written in pencil "Will Roddy Friday Dec. 8, 1899." Also, written behind the same sink was "Plumbing Done By W M Roddy 1899." This confirmed 1900 as the construction completion-date.

Today, Pinecrest's current owners have removed most of the signs of apartment atrocities and are slowly restoring the home. Every time my wife and I go by the house and see the new paint job, we are extremely satisfied with the work that has been accomplished. As for the "Pinecrest Ring," it has taken on a new meaning. It was as if Pinecrest was giving up one of its hidden treasures to repay us for helping it out in a perilous time of need.

— Tim Northcutt
Knoxville, Tenn.

≡ Bootleggers ≡

Bottles and newspapers, the most commonly found items, can also give insights about previous occupants.

My wife and I are in the process of renovating a turn-of-the-century house and have found many interesting items. While removing crumbling plaster off the downstairs walls, I saw where the previous occupants had put things in the ceiling, such as three full bottles of beer (Schlitz, Goetz Country Club, and Blatz), two shot glasses, and a handful of letters to the boy who had lived there. My guess is that the boy hid his beer and liquor from his parents there.

The beer containers are marked "Internal Revenue Tax Paid," which means they were made prior to March 1, 1950, and the letters are dated from the Second World War era. Under the linoleum, there were many newspapers from the Thirties. One from the now-defunct Omaha Bee News had the headline "Bootleggers fined \$105," which seems like a small fine today. An advertisement in one of the papers is for a \$39 Philco Cathedral-style radio that is about the same price a look-alike reproduction costs today!

— Cole Powers
Griswold, Iowa



This pre-1950 beer bottle and newspaper were found tucked under the floorboards.



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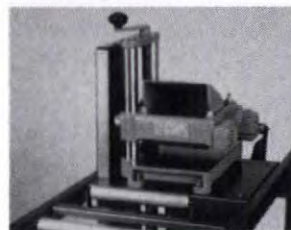
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Time was, whenever I rummaged through my painting gear, I'd notice a pair of \$12 sash brushes permanently embedded in a cake of antique white alkyd enamel. Not far away there inevitably would be a 3½" wall brush — which I thought I had taken great pains to clean — looking more like a cold chisel than a paintbrush. None of us likes to use inferior tools, so I'd replace them, but not without feeling a sense of loss. Quality brushes are an investment (costing as much as a gallon of quality paint) and many improve with age. However, they're a good investment only if you take care of them.

BRUSH CARE

Good care is wasted on a brush that's been misused, and so it's important to know something about brush application. All brushes belong to one of two broad categories: natural bristle (the traditional tools for oil-based finishes) or synthetic bristle (sometimes labeled "All Paints"). Natural-bristle brushes are made from animal hair, which resists most solvents, but they are, generally speaking, incompatible with water-based paints. The bristles absorb water and become distended, causing the brush to lose its shape

and thus its ability to lay on paint accurately. The acrylic polymers in water-based paints also tend to wear the bristle tips. Synthetic bristles (such as those made from nylon or polyester) were developed to overcome this problem, but some types may be affected by strong solvents, lacquers, or shellacs. For either type, knowing what constitutes a quality paintbrush is also part of brush care — after all, these are the characteristics you want to preserve through proper cleaning and storage.

• **Wooden handle** — The best paintbrushes are still

If properly cared for, quality paintbrushes, such as this natural-bristle sash brush, continue to perform well as the bristles wear down.

made with wooden handles contoured to fit the hand. Poorly formed plastic handles are often the earmark of a cheap paintbrush.

• **Nailed or riveted ferrule** — The metal ferrule (preferably made out of stainless steel or other corrosion-resistant metal) holds the bristles firmly to the handle. Ferrules that are attached solely with crimps may loosen over time and with use.

• **Strong setting** — Bristles should be anchored securely in vulcanized rubber, epoxy, or chemically inert cement to avoid losing individual bristles while painting.

• **Tapered ends** — The interior bristles are longer than the outer bristles, giving the brush a chisel-edge appearance. This allows the brush to be worked into tight spaces and to produce clean edges.

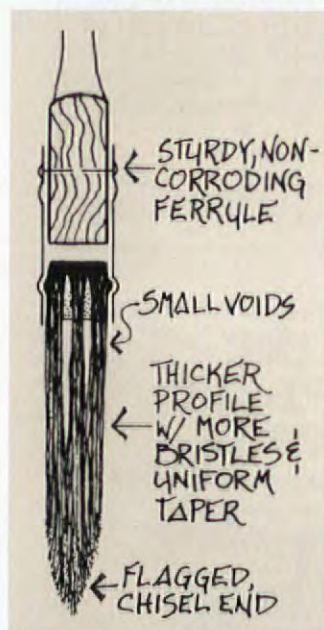
• **Flagged tips** — Quality bristle brushes are made with Chinese hog hair which is naturally *flagged* or split at the end of each bristle. These tips hold more paint through capillary action and leave fewer brush marks. In the best brushes, the flagged bristles are hand

cupped or positioned so that they are distributed uniformly along the tapered end. Good synthetic bristle brushes are mechanically flagged or exploded at the tips.

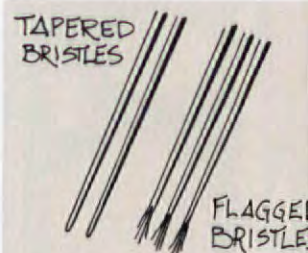
• **"Feel" and balance** — The end of a good brush should feel smooth, flexible, and resilient when run across your palm; the tightly packed bristles towards the base should be stiff and hold their shape when wet.

A good brush is also comfortably balanced in your hand and not tiring to use all day.

Brush cleanup is straightforward and pretty sure-
continued on page 56



Good brush construction (including a minimum of empty space inside bristles) becomes apparent in cross section.



Look for both tapered and flagged bristles (top) by fanning the brush (above).



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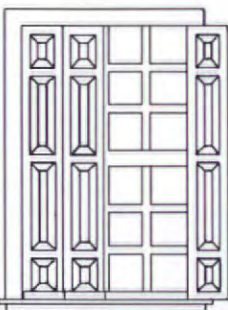
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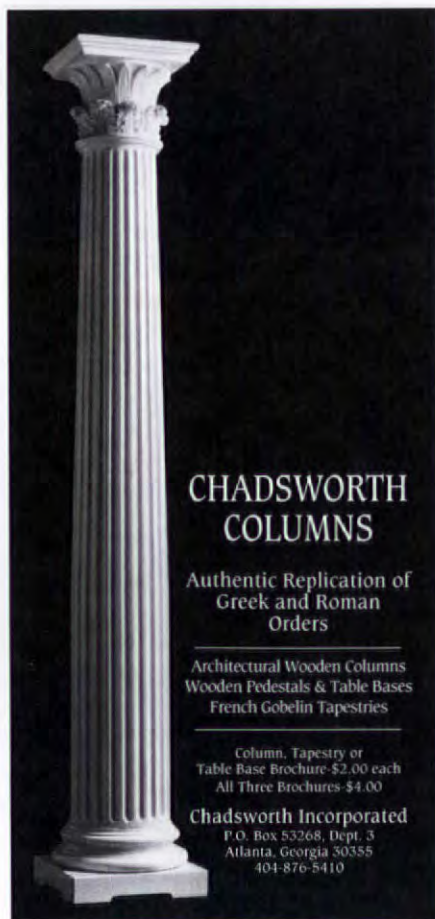
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continued from page 54



Top: Spinning a brush free of wash wastes. **Bottom:** Combing is beneficial before and after spinning.

fire if you take advantage of some simple methods and tools. First, brush out as much leftover paint as possible. ("Painting" successive pages of a waste newspaper or magazine is a convenient way.) Then wash the paint out of the bristles with an appropriate solvent. For water-based products, use a mild detergent like dishwashing liquid and cool water. Simply work the bristles between your fingers from the base to the ends. For oil and solvent-based coatings, wash the brush in a couple of inches of mineral spirits, turpentine, or paint thinner — basically, whatever solvent is recommended to thin the coating. Work the brush gently against the sides of the cleaning container to cleanse the bristles (more "painting out" also helps), and keep renewing the solvent until it no longer

gets dirty. Don't discard the soiled solvent; instead, store it in an old coffee can or other container with a tight-fitting reclosable lid. After a few weeks, the solids will settle out and the clear solvent can be transferred to another container for more brush cleaning. When switching containers, use a funnel with an old nylon stocking stretched over it to filter out stray particles.

To be really thorough in your brush cleaning, start by investing in two tools:

Brush Comb: This is nothing more than a thin wooden handle with steel teeth or tines, which costs about \$2 at any hardware or paint store. Brush combs are invaluable for removing paint buildup from the base of a brush and for combing out and straightening bristles.

Brush Spinner: About the size of a bicycle pump, this device spins a brush like an eggbeater after cleaning. The cost for this professional tool is around \$20 — the price of a great brush, some might

argue — but for me, this one item removed the hassle of cleaning oil-based paints and stains.

After washing a brush, comb it for further grooming (under running water, if appropriate) and then spin it to drive out any remaining residues. A good method is to operate the spinner and brush in a five-gallon plastic pail to protect your pants leg and the local environment from getting spritzed. (You also can spin a brush between your palms, but it's not as effective.) Afterwards, comb once more and then shape the brush while it is still a little damp. When dry, store the brush in its original "sheath" or fashion a holder from cardboard, newspaper, or wax paper to maintain the brush's shape.

As for those rock-hard brushes mentioned earlier, try soaking them in paint remover or a brush cleaner specifically designed for this purpose. Remember to suspend the brush in the liquid; if it is allowed to rest on the bottom of the container, the bristles will become deformed. When the paint has softened, comb it out; repeat the above cleaning steps as necessary. A trick to try on your nothing-to-lose, natural-bristle brushes is to soak them in lyewater (about 1 tablespoon per quart). Lye is not only a paintstripper, but a hair straightener as well, and it often takes out both hardened paint and "cowlicks" in the bristles.

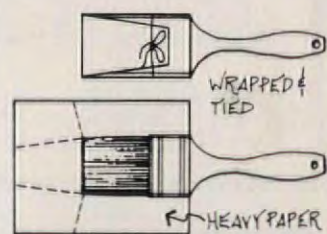
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A brush spinner operated by pumping the handle.



Wrapping in cardboard or paper (top) maintains brush shape during storage. Suspend brushes (above) during any soaking to avoid misshaping the bristles.

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Triangular Sander

If you have a lot of tricky sanding to do, you may want to invest in a power sander. Garrett Wade offers an oscillating power sander, called the Fein Sander (shown below), with a triangular-shaped pad that is useful for reaching into narrow corners.



The three-pound Fein Sander can be used on wood, plastic, or metal surfaces.

The pad can be turned on the drive-shaft in order to utilize the entire sanding sheet. It comes with a metal tool case that includes ten sanding sheets and a wrench. A dust extractor version of the Fein Sander costs \$325. For information, contact Garrett Wade Company, 161 Avenue of the Americas, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10013; (212) 807-1155.



On the (Brush) Mark

The quality of your brush can make the difference for your paint job. To those who paint for a living, brushes are tools that have to perform every day. A well-made line of professional brushes is Baker's Master Painter series (shown right). The line includes brushes made with natural China bristles (in black or white), nylon bristles, or ny-



Master Painter brushes are made with flagged tips, tapered bristles, and securely-fastened ferrules.

lon-polyester blends. All are made with flagged tips, tapered bristles, and securely-fastened ferrules, and are available with beechwood handles. The Master Painter series also includes specialty brushes (such as mason's wall, bent radiator, and long reach brushes), lambswool rollers, and painting accessories. The series can be found in home centers or building supply stores. For a list of distributors, write EZ Painter Corporation, 3400 South Clement Ave., Dept. OHJ, Milwaukee, WI 53207.

Sturdy Scrapers

Scrapers are key tools in paint removal and a well-made one can help to make the job easier. Pro-Prep scrapers are designed to more efficiently remove paint from hard-to-reach spots and are made in two models: the Universal scraper and the Contour scraper. The Universal scraper (shown below) is a general purpose model meant for flat surfaces; the Contour scraper is designed for grooves and corners. Pro-Prep scrapers have stainless steel blades

and plastic handles that can withstand heat tools and paint remover chemicals. Both Pro-Prep scrapers cost \$15.95 and replacement blades are available for \$7.95 each. For information, contact The Woodworkers' Store, 21801 Industrial Boulevard, Dept. OHJ, Rogers, MN 55374; (612) 428-4101.



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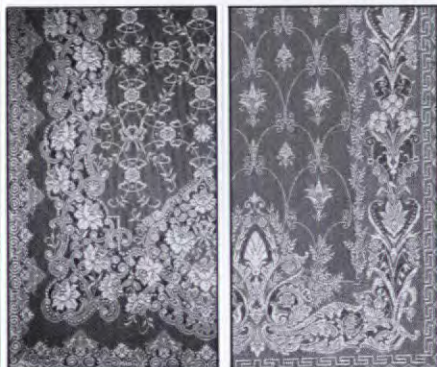
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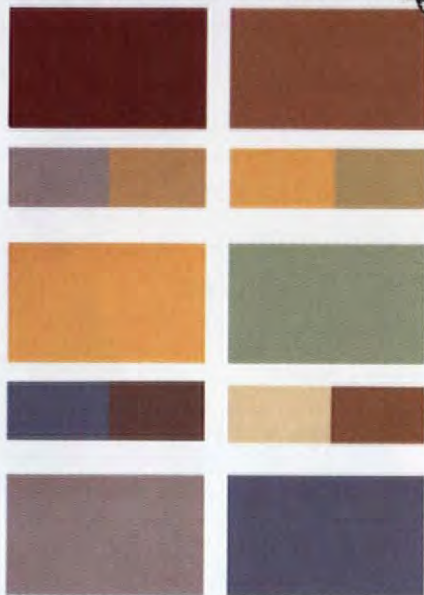
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continued from page 58

Colonial Color Line

Looking for authentic Colonial colors to paint your Saltbox? Finnaren and Haley Paint produces a Colonial color line called the Historic Colors of Philadelphia. Many of the 31 colors have been authenti-



Shown above: A variety of Colonial colors is offered by Finnaren and Haley.

cated by the National Park Service. One such color is "Liberty Gray," which was found in Assembly Hall and dates from the signing of the Declaration of Independence. One gallon retails for \$16.49. For more information, contact Finnaren and Haley Paint, 126 North Wayne Ave., Dept. OHJ, Wayne, PA 19087; (215) 688-7070.



Mildewcide

Mildew on paint surfaces is a common problem faced by old-house owners, particularly in humid regions of the country. It often outlines structural members under weatherboards and is usually worse on the north side of a house. Shaded siding and roof soffits also are favorite places for mildew to appear. To help inhibit mildew growth, a good preventive measure is adding a mildewcide, like Super Di-All, to paint. Although not a cure-all, including a mildewcide in paint will delay the appearance of this organism. Super Di-All, which is available in most hardware stores, is compatible with all exterior and interior oil-based or latex paints. It will not affect the color, finish, or durability of the paint. It also does not contain mercury, now banned by the U.S. government for use in mildewcides. One bottle of Super Di-All treats a gallon of paint and costs \$2.98. For a list of distributors, contact Diall Chemical Co. Inc., P.O. Box 14347, Dept. OHJ, Orlando, FL 32857; (407) 281-1444.

Worthwhile Waterproofing

Waterproofing sealers can be the first step when you have to paint areas such as porch decks and window sills, where standing water can create moisture problems. Okon Waterproofing Sealer (shown below) is a clear, water-based sealer that can be applied as a primer, top coat, or additive to latex paints. It can also be used over weathered oil-based paints. By reducing water absorption, the Waterproofing Sealer prevents damage and prolongs paint life on wood, concrete, or masonry surfaces. Okon Waterproofing Sealer retails for \$21.30 per gallon. For information, contact Okon, Inc., 6000 West 13th Ave., Dept. OHJ, Lakewood, CO 80214; (303) 232-3571.



Although white in appearance during application, Okon Waterproofing Sealer turns clear when dry.



Simply Red

Is red your favorite color? Have we found a paint for you! Falun Red (shown left), offered by Kron Enterprises, is a unique starch-based paint that is only available in red. It has been manufactured in Sweden since the 1700s and is very vapor-permeable, which makes it suitable for buildings without a vapor barrier, such as log homes. The paint won't peel because moisture isn't trapped. Falun Red paint is available pre-mixed in one-gallon pails for \$22. The powdered form costs \$65 and makes five gallons' worth. For information, contact Kron Enterprises, P.O. Box 348, Dept. OHJ, Canastota, NY 13032; (315) 697-8187.

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- **Interior elevations** are included in some plans, showing interior views of kitchen, bath, fireplace, built-ins, and cabinet designs.
- **A window and door schedule.**
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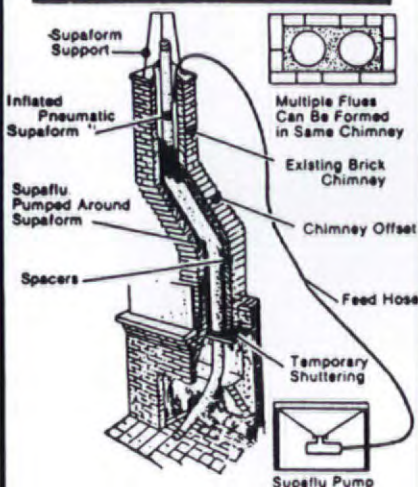
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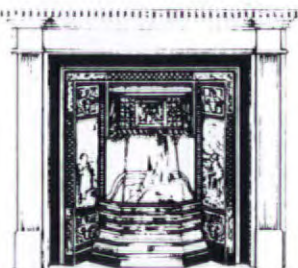
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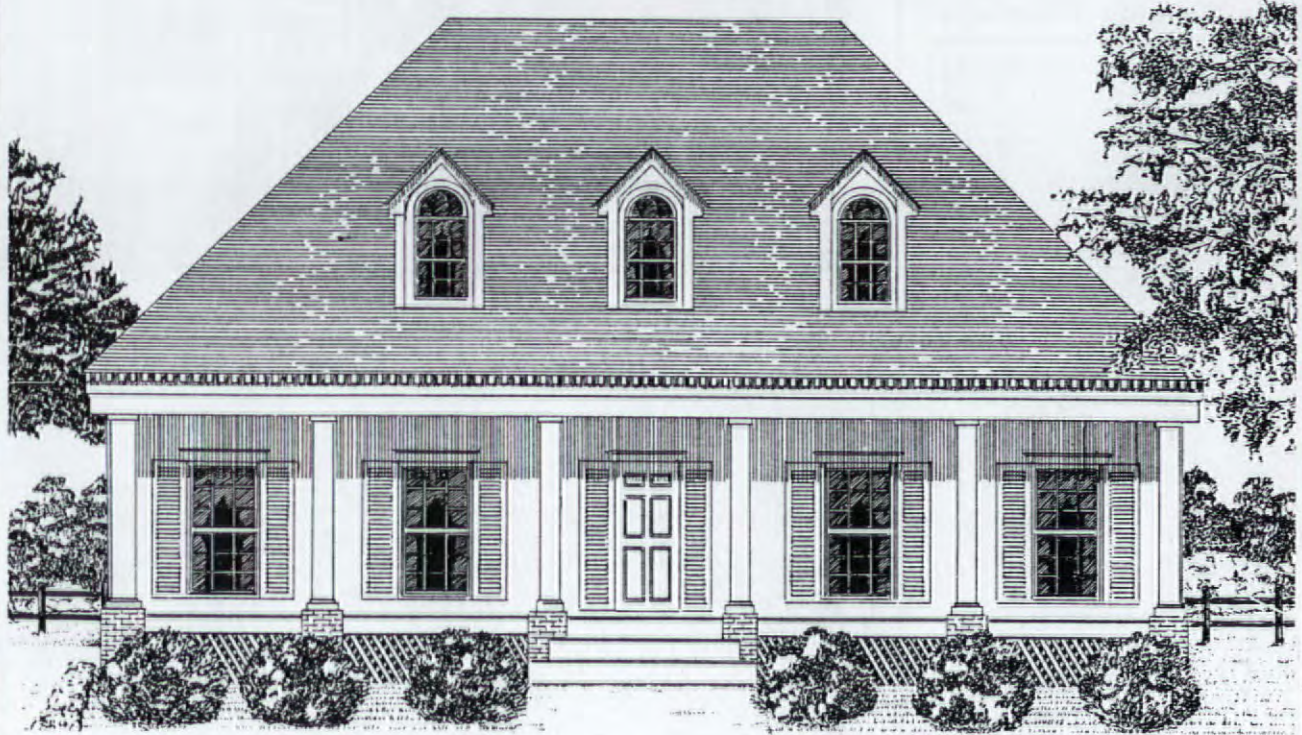


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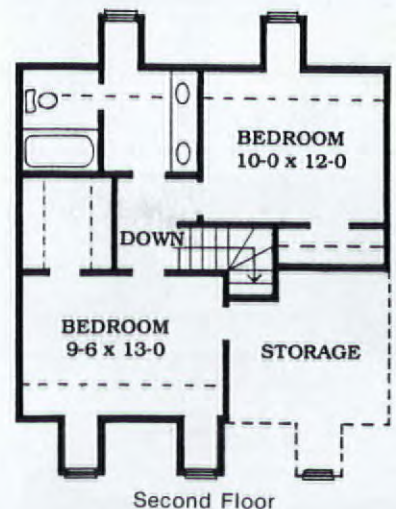
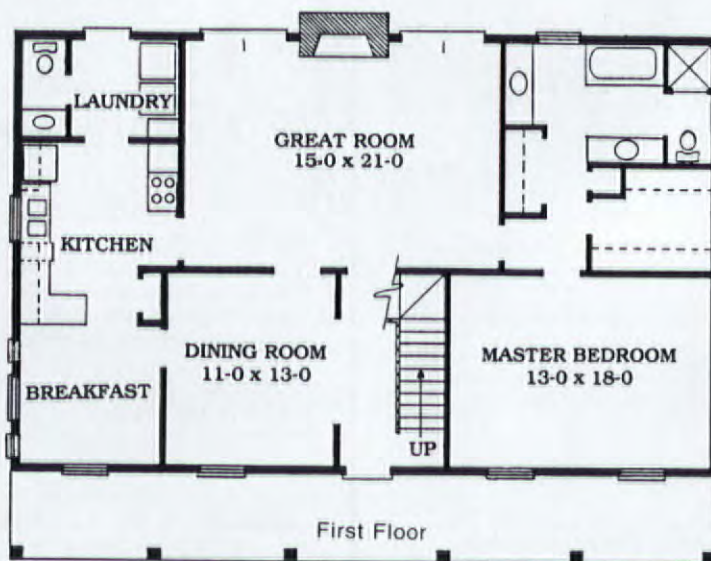


The French influence on house design in North America dates to the 18th century, and many prime examples still exist in and around New Orleans. This house is based on Catalpa near St. Francisville, Louisiana, and carries the steep hipped roof right over the full-width porch, in keeping with the French rural-house tradition. Other true-to-style details are the triple gable dormers and shuttered windows and front door. The plan places the master bedroom on the first floor and two additional bedrooms upstairs adjacent to a large storeroom or potential playroom.

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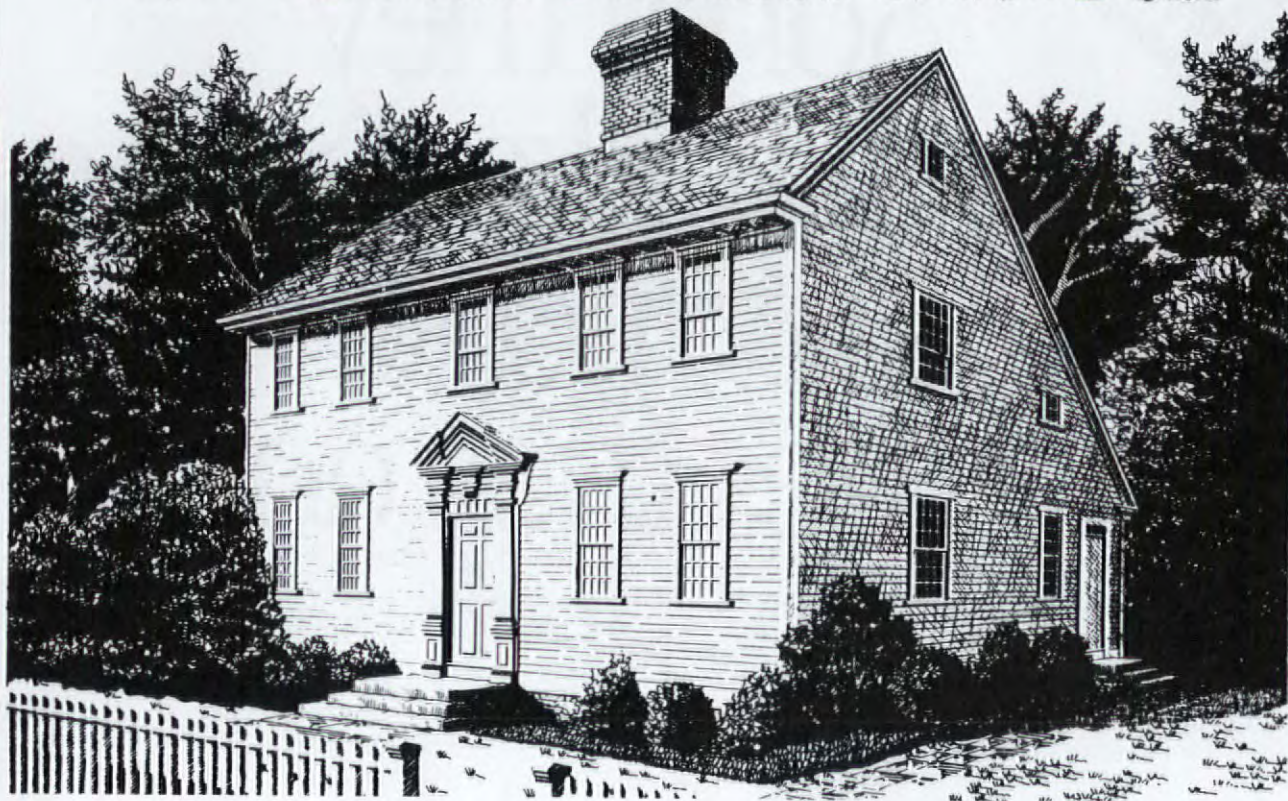
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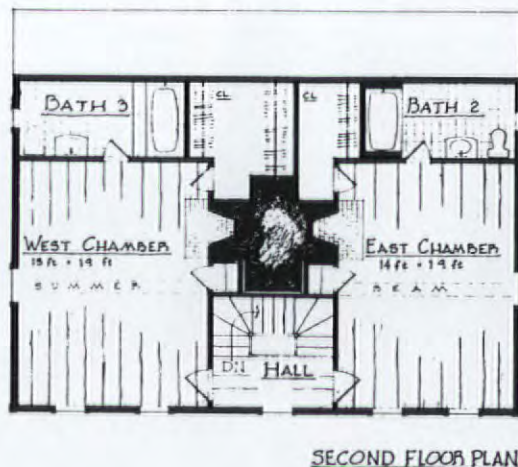
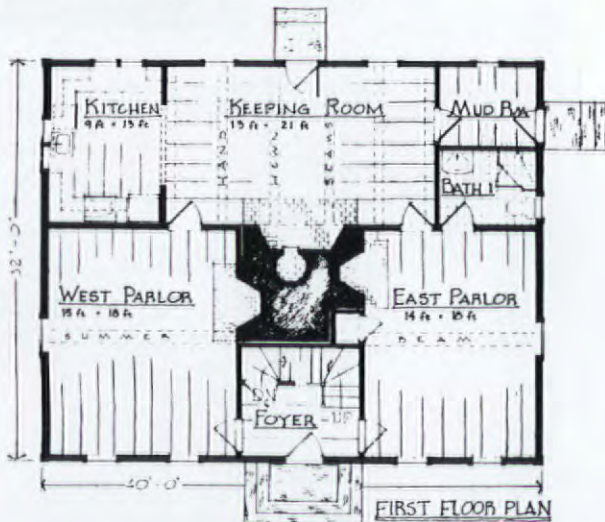


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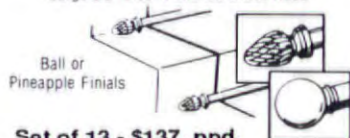


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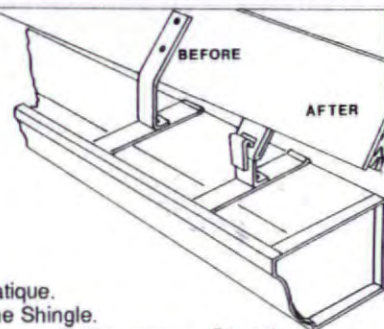
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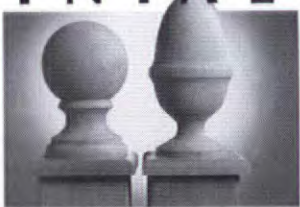
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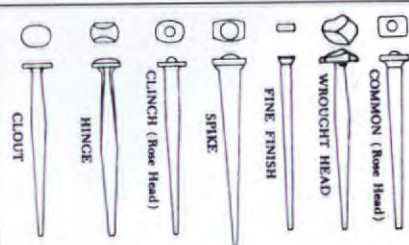
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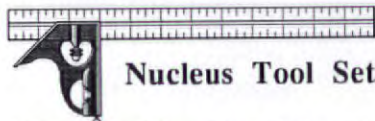
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PRESERVATION FAIR — Burlington, New Jersey. May 4, 10am-4pm. A preservation exhibition, a lecture series, and a tour of restored buildings. Call (609) 386-6953 or (609) 387-4332.

VICTORIAN HOUSE TOUR — Lafayette Square of St. Louis, Missouri announces the 22nd annual house and garden tour. June 1-2, 10am-5pm. Advance tickets available by calling the LSRC (314) 772-5724.

SHAWNEE HISTORIC PRESERVATION DAY — May 4, 1991 in Shawnee, Ohio. Media presentations, walking tours, entertainment, and lunch. Call (614) 394-2852 or (201) 781-7264.

RENOVATION SHOWCASE — Bay City, MI. May 3-19. Restorers, historical craftspeople, and interior design firms will be restoring an 1895, 15-room Victorian. For more information, call (517) 892-6530.

PRESERVATION CELEBRATION — New Bedford, MA. May 18-19. Lecture on Greek Revival architecture, tour of Greek Revival structures, guided walking tours, and more. Call (508) 997-1776.

AIA CONVENTION — The 1991 AIA National Convention and Design Exposition. Washington DC. May 17-20 at the Washington Convention Center. Call Lynne Lewicki (202) 626-7467.

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MOTHER'S DAY HOME TOUR — Monrovia, CA. May 12. Architectural styles range from Victorian to California Craftsman and English Tudor. Write: MOHPG, PO Box 734, Monrovia CA 91016.

HYATTSVILLE HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR — Hyattsville, MD. May 19 from 1-5pm. Sponsored by Hyattsville Preservation Association. Advance tickets are \$7. Call (301) 927-4514.

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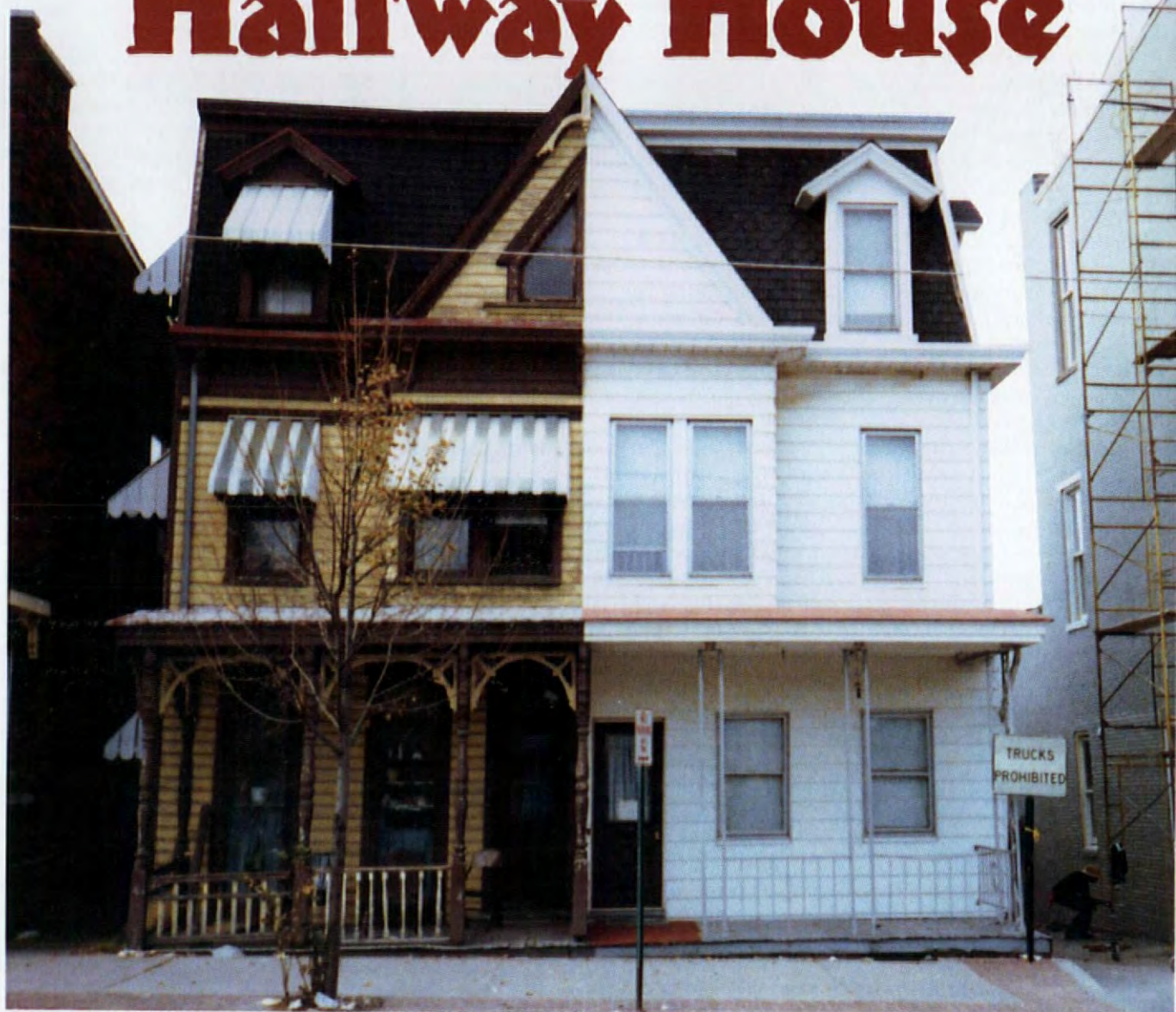
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Halfway House



Robert P. Thomas of Philadelphia, who submitted this photo, comments that "Seeing this macabre pair, one is reminded of the fairy tale of the 'evil twin.'"

Whoever said that half a house is better than none must never have seen this Victorian in the Mount Pleasant Historic District of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. History in this district is being rewritten by those who wanted to make their slice of this house 'maintenance-free,' 'weathertight,' and all the other come-ons promised by substitute-siding marketers. All that's been done, however, is to turn the entire struc-

ture into a risible — and considerably less valuable — oddity. But unlike the residents of Harrisburg, *OHJ*'s readers can improve the situation: Just fold this page in half!

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, 435 Ninth Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215.

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Vernacular Houses

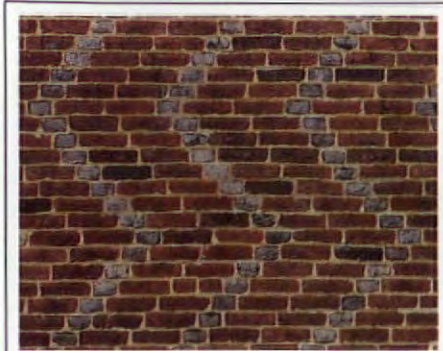
New Jersey Patterned-Brick Houses

Exceptional examples of colonial craftsmanship survive in southern New Jersey, where 18th-century masons decorated one of the most popular and persistent house forms in the mid-Atlantic region: the vernacular I-House. In at least six counties, bricklayers frequently alternated bluish-grey, vitrified headers — bricks that were intentionally over-burned in the kiln to create a glassy or glazed appearance — with red-colored stretchers in a Flemish bond. Now classified as folk art, in southern New Jersey these distinctive geometric patterns are usually seen in a single-gable end wall. More complex schemes may contain the initials of the owners (husband and wife), construction dates, or designs of bands, zigzags, or diamond shapes.

The patterned-brick tradition was brought to the colonies primarily by British masons and is documented in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. New Jersey examples date approximately from 1720 to 1785 and are strongly associated with English Quaker settlements. The most distinctive brickwork appears to be concentrated in Salem and Cumberland Counties, both rural areas. Probably fewer than 100 houses still exist, although additional examples are occasionally uncovered.

Theories abound on why the elaborate patterned-brick walls were built. It's safe to say, though, that these houses were built within a European cultural tradition by prosperous owners (mostly farmers) as a visual expression of their success and position within the community. It's also interesting to note that this building tradition lost favor soon after the Revolutionary War, when ties with England were severed and the new Federal architecture predominated.

— Michael L. Swanda
Office of New Jersey Heritage, Trenton



Salem County brick patterns, top to bottom: dramatic zigzag (William Hancock House); diamond or diaper (Abel Nicholson House); Flemish bond (Abel Nicholson House). Above, the typical I-House form of the John Dickinson house and, at right, its highly expressive end wall.

