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Volume XXI, Number 2



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New Life for an Early Doorway

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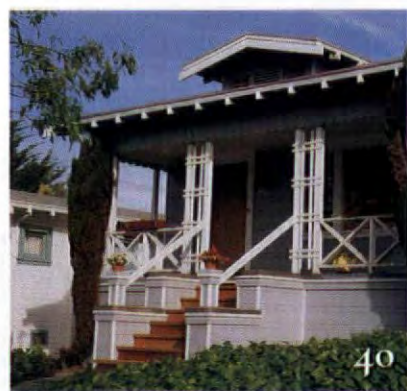
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ON THE COVER: In this issue, a c. 1800 door surround in Candia, New Hampshire, displays its original, exuberant color scheme once again. Photograph by Steve Marsel.

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Subscription service (800) 234-1797; Back issues (\$4.95/copy); (508) 283-8809; Advertising: (508) 283-4721. We are happy to accept editorial contributions to Old-House Journal. Query letters that include an outline of the proposed article are preferred. All manuscripts will be reviewed, and returned if unacceptable. However, we cannot be responsible for non-receipt or loss — please keep copies of all materials sent. ©Copyright 1995 by Dovecote Publishers. All rights reserved.



OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 1

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Old-House Journal (ISSN 0094-0178) is published bimonthly for \$24 per year by Dovecote Publishers, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930. Telephone (508) 283-3200. Subscriptions in Canada \$34 per year, payable in U.S. funds.

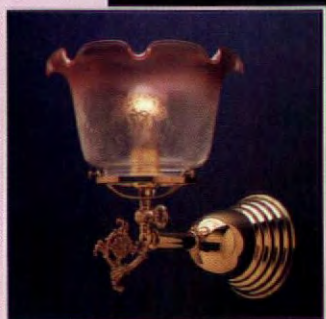
Second-class postage paid at Gloucester, MA and at additional entries. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Old-House Journal, P.O. Box 5807, Boulder, CO 80322-807.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Chill Out and Light a Candle

by Patricia Poore

"MY WHOLE HOUSE is beadboard!" I gushed. That got Gordon over to visit my latest folly, a remuddled Shingle cottage that's coming apart at the seams. No photo ops, however: I'd neglected to tell him that the beadboard has been cut into, water stained, and smothered under yellowing homasote.

Yes, dear friends, I have succumbed to old-house fever once again. After the last project, I swore I would spend my child-rearing years in comfort — if not a brand-new condo with wall-to-wall, then at least a well maintained house with no structural flaws, no falling plaster. I meant it! Life was too short to be consumed by a neurotic need to rescue abused buildings!

Yeah, well.

But I *have* learned something, and it is such a Key to Happiness that I must share it with you. The lesson didn't come easy; it might never have gotten through were it not for my husband Carl, who said, "Yes, we will buy this house and yes, I will work on it with you — but *only if you chill out!*"

By that he did not mean "slow down." Lack of money was going to slow us down just fine. He meant "settle in and live." Enjoy the house, not only for the restored gem it will be someday, but also for the crazy mess it is right now, and because it's *already* our home.

Carl had reason to take a

strong stand. When he met me, I was living (so to speak) not in a home, but on a job site. My living-room floor was covered with filthy kraft paper. There was no furniture and no lighting. Smears of dried paint stripper covered the plaster walls around the staircase. My logic was thus:



Guests arriving? Hang a lace panel over a "problem," place candles and photos bedside, and pile on the throw pillows. Don't apologize for the damaged beadboard. Most of all, don't let renovation postpone real life.

Anything that couldn't be final and perfect, wasn't at all.


You see, I had taken an ascetic approach to renovation (actually, self-flagellation comes to mind). Why put furniture into a room when we'd just have to move it again? Why pay an electrician to give us lighting,

a mere creature comfort, when the tile roof needed replacing? Why invite people over to that mess when the house didn't allow time for a social life anyway? Only a few months later, I rolled up the kraft paper, hauled out the shop-vac . . . and Carl and I bought a Christmas tree, which we plunked down right in the middle of the empty living room. It was a start.

.....

NOTHING LIKE AN ULTIMATUM FROM A loved one to push you into recovery. I did promise Carl that this renovation would be different. I even came up with a little slogan that flies in the face of my old ways: "Candles, fresh flowers, and throw pillows." It works great. When candles are flickering, who cares if somebody once patched the cracks in the exposed subfloor with plaster of paris? Add a casserole and a bottle of wine, and you can have a dinner party amid the ruins. Which is exactly what we do.

And so I cheerfully tell people the house will take ten years. I clean the rugs in unrestored rooms. Still, the house is so sad, it's often hard for me to "just live with it." Sometimes I have to take a deep breath and tell the Obsessive Renovator part of me that, indeed, at this moment, a walk on the beach with my two-year-old is *much* more important than plotting structural repairs to the leaning dormer. But it's getting easier and — surprise! — old-house living is a lot more fun.



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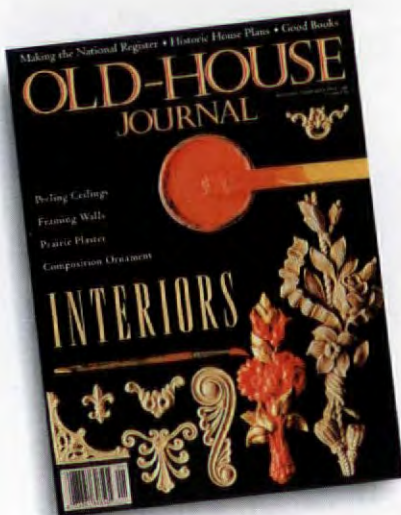
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LETTERS



A Point on the Register

Dear OHJ,

THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1993 ISSUE of the *Old-House Journal* was, as always, informative and well-presented. I read "Making the Honor Roll" with particular interest as I have worked on National Register nominations. The article was an excellent summary of what the Register is and why and how to get a structure listed. However, one pertinent and very important point was omitted.

On page 50, the authors say that "the total outlay for preparing a nomination for an individual property will likely be several thousand dollars." They should warn owners that this costly outlay may never result in the listing of the property. Even if the SHPO staff member visits and examines the property, states that he/she believes it is eligible, and encourages the owner and the preservation organization to nominate the property, it may still be rejected by the SHPO staff and/or committee after the nomination is submitted. Then the owner has wasted his money and the preservation organization its time.

I certainly do not mean to suggest that the SHPO deliberately misleads owners and organizations, but there is a subjective element in the process and

different people look at buildings differently. Since, as the authors pointed out, preparation of a nomination can take weeks or even several months, there may be some turn-over in SHPO personnel.

—NAME WITHHELD
New York

THE AUTHORS RESPOND:

There's a valid point here. Even with a well-prepared nomination and with well-trained, well-intentioned SHPO staff and other reviewers, there's always an outside chance a Register nomination could be derailed on the way to listing. There's simply no way to eliminate subjectivity entirely or to guarantee agreement at every level on the historical and/or architectural significance of a particular property. Some states do, as our article noted, require formal preliminary assessments by both the staff and the review board, with early, written notification to the property owners. However, since these preliminary assessments obviously must be based on less evidence than a full Register

nomination provides, they can not ensure a successful nomination (especially since, as the reader points out, there may be some staff turnover along the way). Nor is the National Register bound by the recommendations of the SHPO staff or review board; it may take a very different view of the property's eligibility for listing. There is a federal appeal process for both listing and delisting of properties, but be warned that unless convincing new evidence is presented, the outcome is unlikely to change — and appeals do cost additional time and money.

This being the real world, there is also, quite apart from valid differences of opinion, a myriad of political, bureaucratic, economic, academic, idiosyncratic, and/or downright egotistical considerations that have the potential to affect the registration of a property. All kinds of invisible agents could be (although fortunately they usually are not) at work on both sides of the issue — money, careers, reputations, egos, to name just a few. SHPOs are designated by their respective state governors; their appointments may be based on a) demonstrated com-



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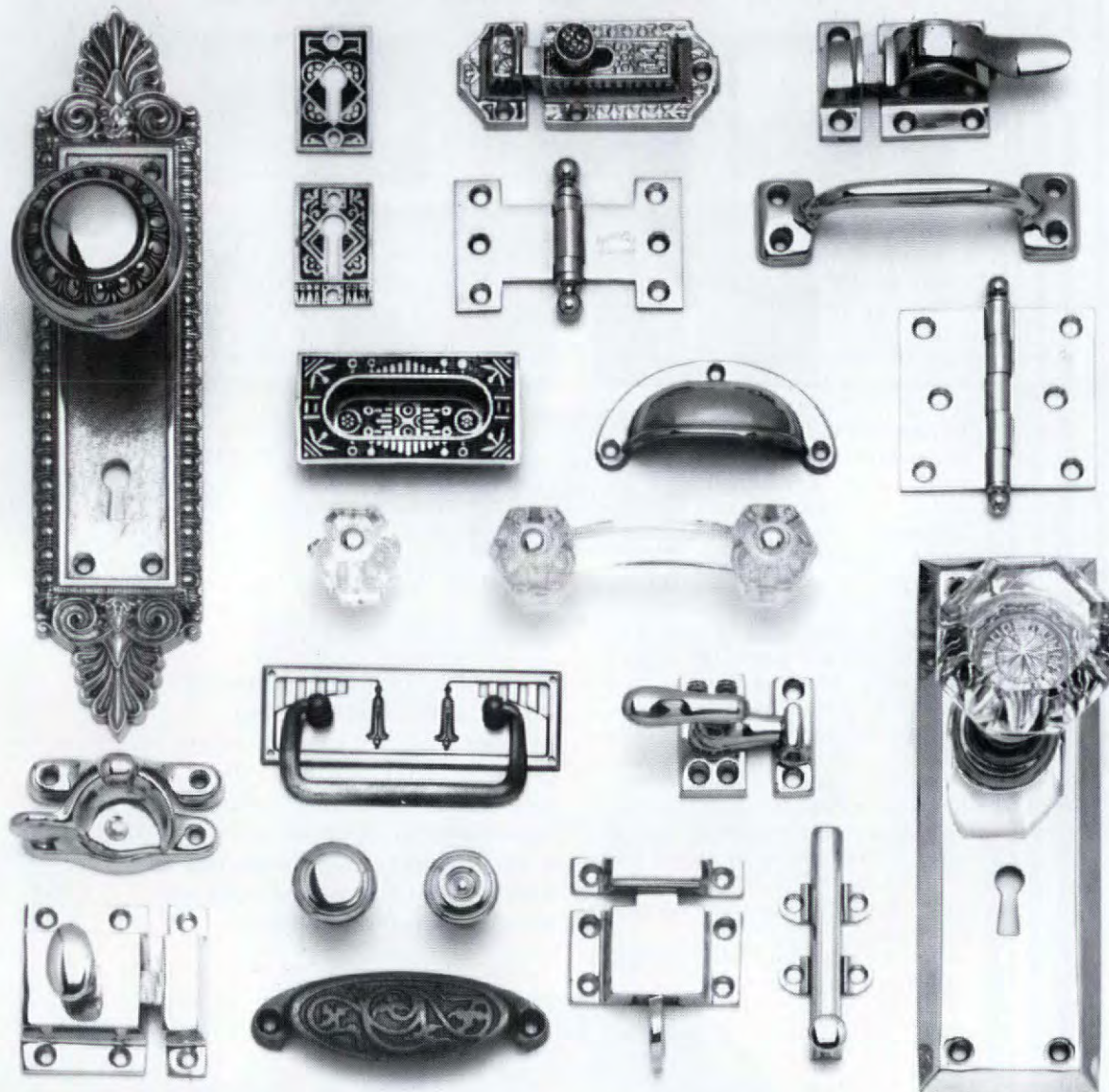
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LETTERS

should be aware that the National Fire Protection Association's Standard 211 (NFPA 211) requires the use of a non-water-soluble refractory mortar in the parging process.

Before beginning a restoration project of this type, the chimney should be evaluated. I would strongly recommend that your readers avail themselves of the evaluation services offered by a Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA) Certified Chimney Sweep serving in their area. (For information, send an SASE to CSIA P.O. Box 309, Olney, MD 20830.)

— JERRY ISENHOUR, CSIA
Olney, Maryland

Prairie Plaster Uncovered

WE READ WITH GREAT INTEREST THE recent article on "Prairie Plaster" (Janu-



In Riverside, Illinois, a luminous and colorful wall of Prairie Plaster is uncovered in the Tomek House.

ary/February 1993) by Maya Moran. While removing wallpaper in our Oak Park, Illinois, home, we uncovered orange-and-terra cotta colored, untextured plaster in the finish coat of the parlor and bedroom walls. We have no doubt that this colored plaster, which

matches the exterior sandstone, is original.

Our 1888 home was designed and inhabited by Wesley Arnold, a locally significant architect and precursor of Wright. His remaining works (circa 1888-1900) also include several churches in the Chicago area, composed, like our home, in the Romanesque Queen Anne style.

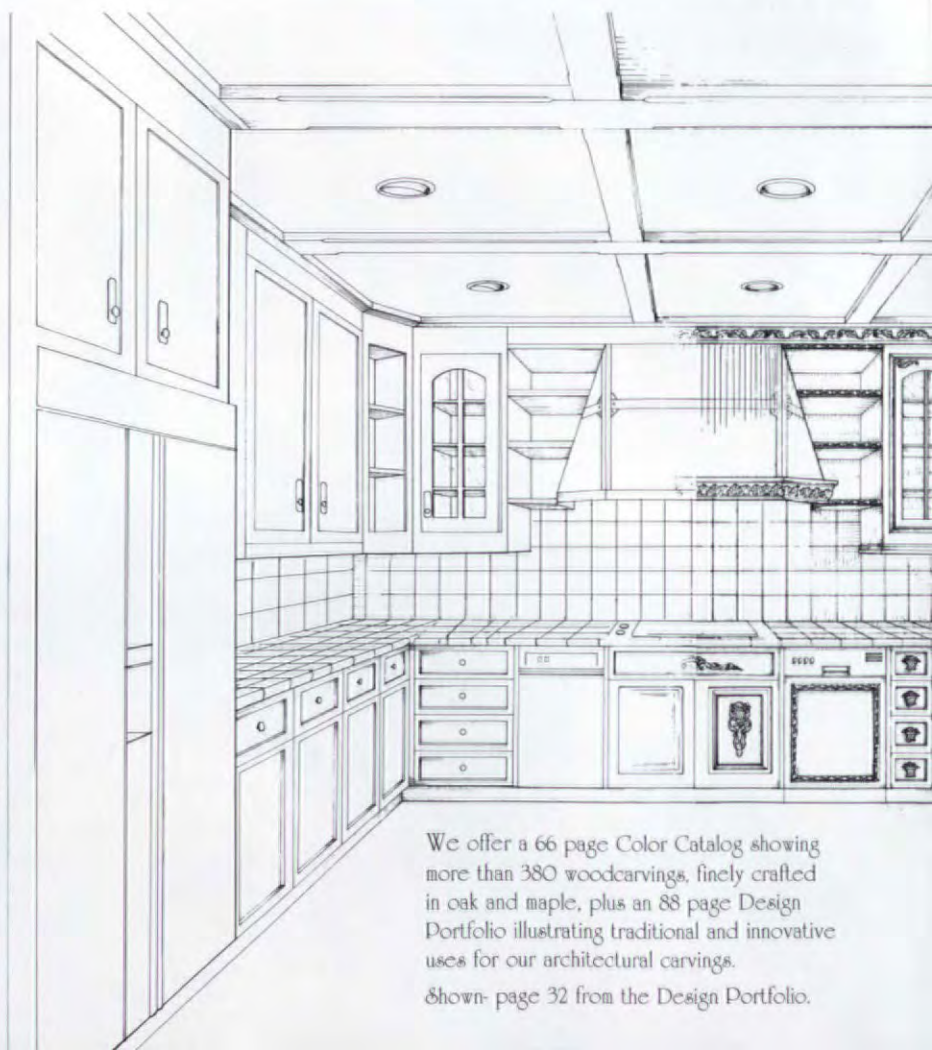
Oak Park is closely connected to the Prairie style, and there is no doubt that the use of colored and textured plasters gained wide acceptance through this style. The Wesley Arnold home suggests, however, that the use of colored plasters pre-dates the Prairie-style period.

— STEPHEN AND SUSAN KELLEY
Oak Park, Illinois

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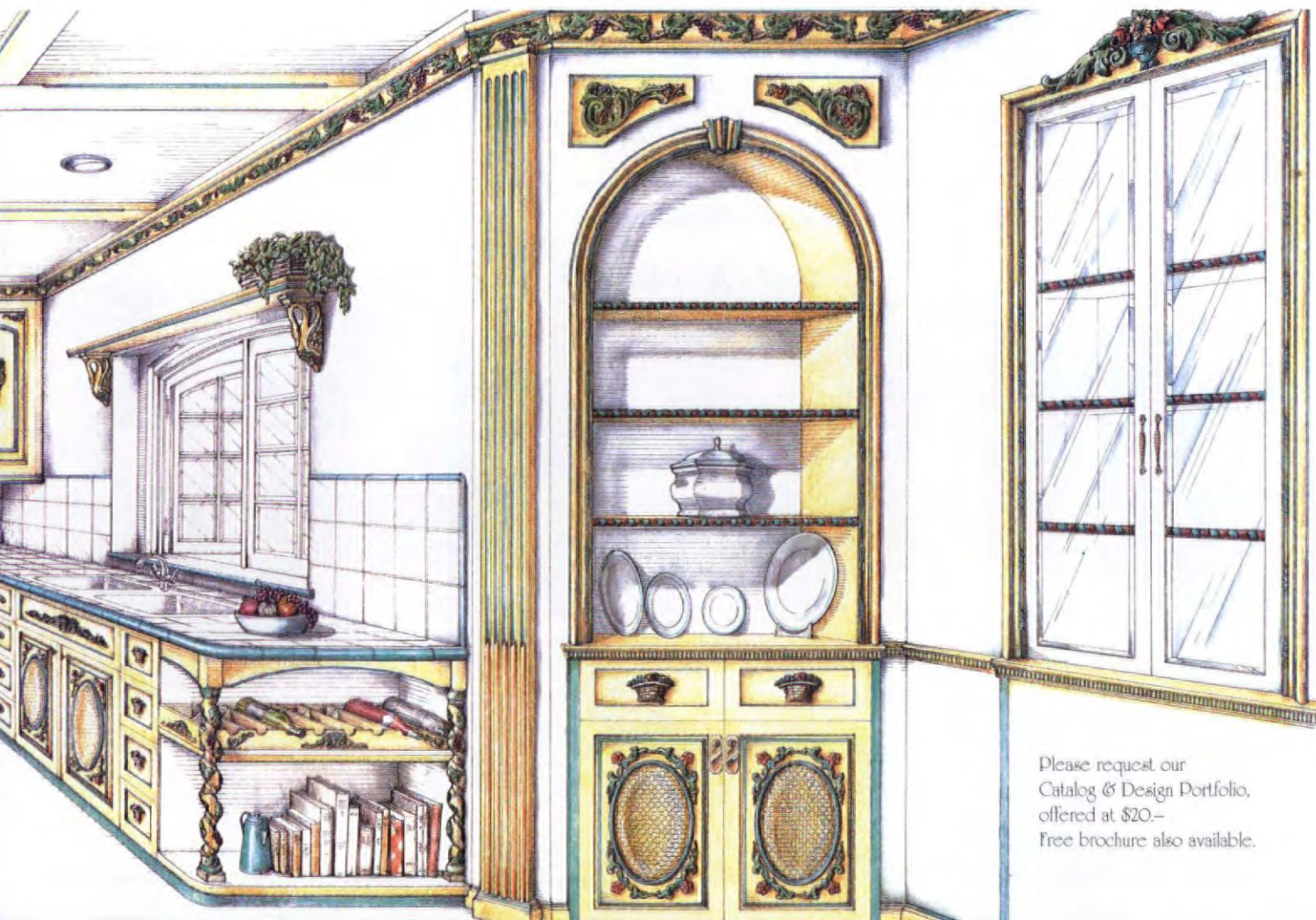
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LETTERS

Tinting rough plaster walls was a popular early 20th-century treatment, but by no means limited to Prairie School-style houses. Staining, in general, was a regular part of a decorator's bag of tricks at the turn of the century, so its discovery in a late Victorian building wouldn't be surprising. We'd love to hear from other folks with further evidence or information on this technique.

— THE EDITORS

Lustron Love

MY LETTER TO THE EDITOR IN THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1992 issue resulted in over 125 letters from your readers in 31 states and the District of Columbia. They sent information on Lustron units, and many enclosed photographs of the houses too. (Quite a few people have even volunteered to go out



"This is the kind of home most Americans want — spacious, permanent, easy to maintain and keep clean. It is an engineered home, far removed from the technique of hammer and nails," boasts this 1940s Lustron Home brochure.

searching in their areas if I could suggest towns with units or give them addresses.)

With the exception of Califor-

nia and Washington, which had no Lustrons, the replies tend to mirror the number of Lustrons [built] in each state. For the most part, your readers found plenty of the popular 02 Westchester, which has the notched porch cut out in the living room corner and two large windows in the front wall. But what was most surprising was the report of a whole town of the economical Newport model. Great Bend, Kansas, has at least nine of the Newport series in all four basic colors: Gray, Yellow, Tan, and Blue-green.

Thanks to you, *Old-House Journal*, and to your wonderful readers for expanding the list of known Lustrons by over 150 formerly unknown units.

—THOMAS FETTERS
Lombard, IL

VICTORIAN WALLPAPERS

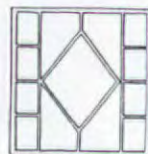
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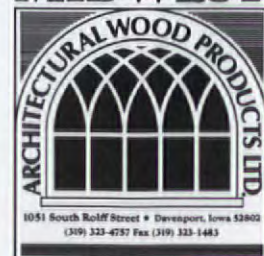
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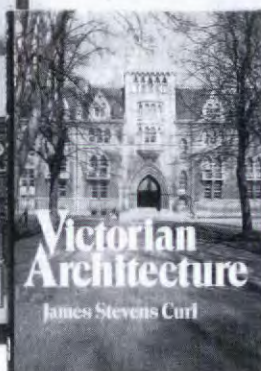
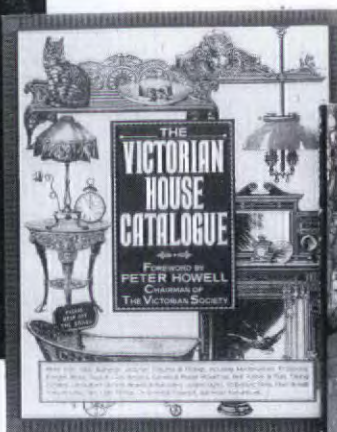


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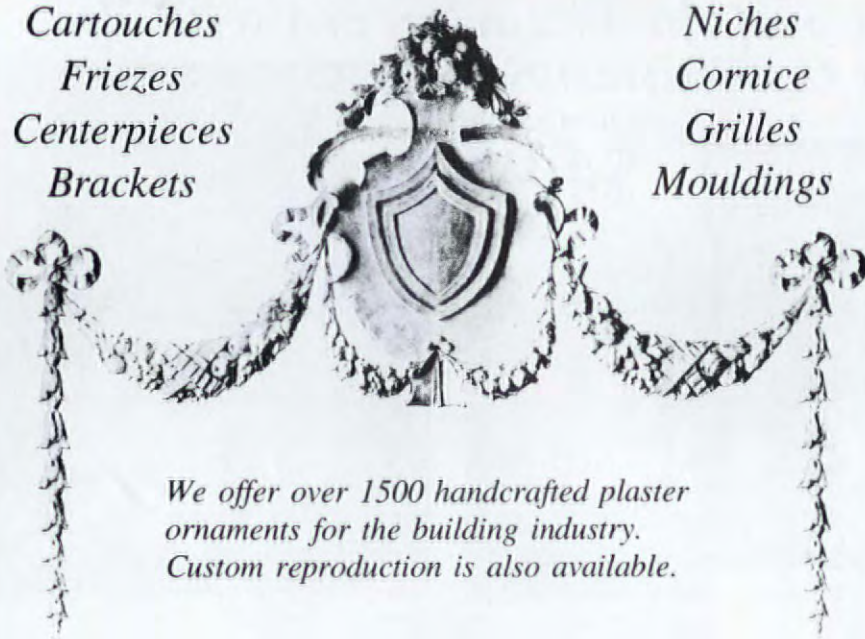
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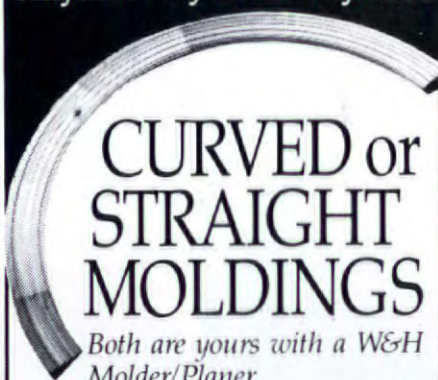
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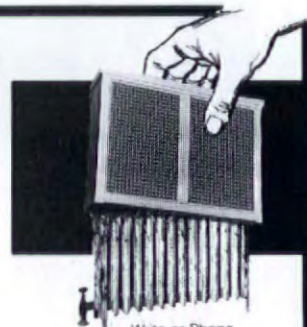
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READING THE OLD HOUSE

An American Princess?

by James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT STYLE of home we have. It was built in 1897 and today it looks exactly like the picture (below left), taken shortly after construction. I have done some research and think that the house is in the Princess Anne style. Can you confirm this?

— NANCY KLEIN
Olathe, Kansas

THIS IS THE KIND OF QUESTION THAT SETS architectural historians ruminating on the uncertainties of a career as experts on building styles. Some historic homes are very clear about their stylistic derivations — a “temple” that could only represent the Greek Revival, for example, or a 20th-century half-timbered English-Revival cottage. Most houses, though, are not so self-revealing. They don’t sing out either an unambiguous style or an obvious period of construction — or, for that matter, even a particular geographical location.



The key difference between this 1897 “Princess Anne” house, shown in an archival photograph (above), and this Queen Anne (right) in Springfield, Missouri, is the size and elaboration of the ornament.

Take this photograph of an 1897 house in Olathe, Kansas, for instance. Fortunately for our reputation, we are told the date and the place right off the bat. We say “fortunately” because this is a house that could have been found almost anywhere in the United States and that could have been built any time within a decade on either side of the actual construction date. The owners describe it as a “Princess Anne.” Now, “Princess Anne” is a lighthearted way of labeling small, simple, asymmetrical hous-

es of the late Queen Anne period. In fact, OHJ coined this nickname in the early 1980s. However, it is not a formally accepted style term.

The house is clearly of the late 19th or early 20th century and is very attractive, even without the ornamentation a Queen Anne house would display. (Incidentally, we are fascinated by the handsome woven-wire fence around the property that shows in the old photo.) Sometimes houses like this one are called “vernacular,” a term that has been [Continued on page 22]



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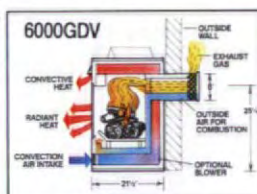


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READING THE OLD HOUSE

A recent photo of the Klein home shows the simple lines and unadorned facade of the late Queen Anne period, nearly unchanged in over a hundred years.



[Continued from page 20] used — not always helpfully — to mean anything that is not high-style or architect-designed.

All this discussion doesn't really answer the original question, but it does point out a major weakness in architectural terminology, since only a small percentage of houses are clearly related to a style. Here is where a catch-all term like "Victorian" starts looking good, although, as we all know, "Vic-

torian" is properly not a style either, but a period. Perhaps we ought to just call such a house "a turn-of-the-century, two-storey, multi-gable house with a porch"?

Style consideration notwithstanding, many houses require docu-

mentary research, such as this dated photograph, and a careful physical examination of the house itself to pin down the construction date and the dates of any alterations and additions. This kind of good solid documentation is often hard to find, but worth the search.

CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR HOUSE? We welcome questions about house styles, provided you include a clear photograph, approximate age, and an SASE for return of materials. Send letters to Style Editor, The Old-House Journal, 2 Main St., Gloucester, MA 01903.

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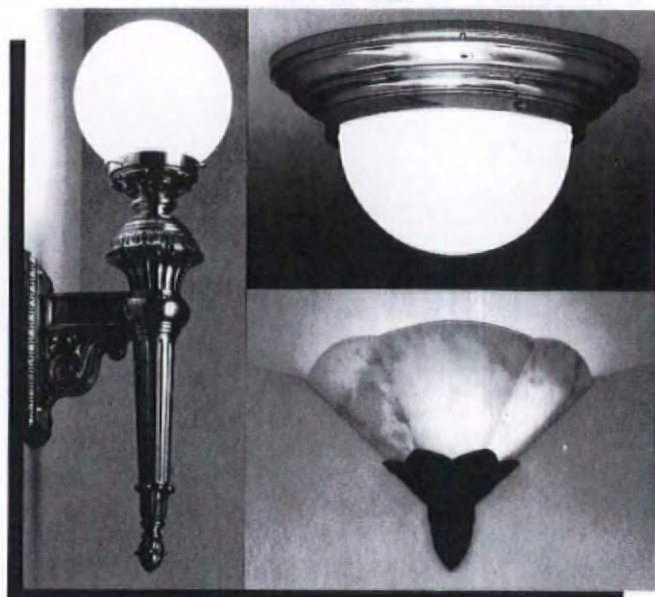
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OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

Antique Peonies

by Scott G. Kunst

TOUGH, EASY TO CARE FOR, and long-lived, peonies are among the best-loved historic plants.

Deep red European peonies have been grown as herbs since the days of ancient Greece. The most common of these, *Paeonia officinalis*, was brought to this continent by colonists. Blooming in May, this is the "old red piney" once so popular for Memorial Day. Two other species deserve passing mention: the Oriental tree peony (*P. suffruticosa*, actually a small shrub) and the fern-leaf peony (*P. tenuifolia*). Though wonderful plants, neither has ever been widely grown in America.

Most garden peonies here today descend from the Asian *P. lactiflora*. Cultivated in China for over a thousand years, garden forms of this species were brought to Europe around 1800. One variety — 'Whitley Major' — can occasionally be found today. In the 1840s, tastemaker A.J. Downing included "Chinese White" and "Rose Paeonias" among a dozen choice perennials for a small garden. By the 1860s, French nurseries had created scores of new varieties, followed by the British. Late in the century, elegant single forms of petal-like stamens were introduced from Japan.

The early-20th century was a golden age for peonies. Hundreds of

new varieties were created, many by American breeders. Whole books were published on the subject, and wealthy enthusiasts devoted entire gardens to them. For example, Clara Ford, wife of the automobile pioneer, planted 1200 peonies in a butterfly-shaped garden of nearly an acre. By 1942, the pages of *Standardized Plant Names* listed over 3000 varieties.



Introduced in 1872, 'Mons Dupont' is a classic French peony.

Planting Peonies

GROWING PEONIES TODAY is as easy as ever. Peonies do best where winters are long and frosty. In the South, consult a local nursery for advice.

The best planting time is early fall. Choose a sunny to lightly shaded site with good drainage, away from tree and shrub roots. Leaving a good three feet between plants, dig a generous "5 hole." Enrich the soil with well-rotted compost, manure, or peat

moss, and add a couple of handfuls of bone meal or bulb fertilizer.

Choose divisions with three to five pink "eyes" (buds) and several thick roots. These will reestablish themselves better than plants that are larger or smaller. Plant so that the eyes are no more than an inch or two below soil level — or, if you heed many old gardeners, so they show above the soil. Either way, refrain from deep planting, which reduces blooming (as does excessive shade).

Peonies require little care after planting, which is why so many of them survive at abandoned homesites and old cemeteries. Mulch through the first winter but not after that (peonies are hardy to minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit). "Peony rings" for supporting heavy flowers are sold at many garden centers, but inexpensive "tomato towers" cut in half work almost as well.

[Continued on page 26]

An explosion of color: bright pink peonies bloom in profusion.



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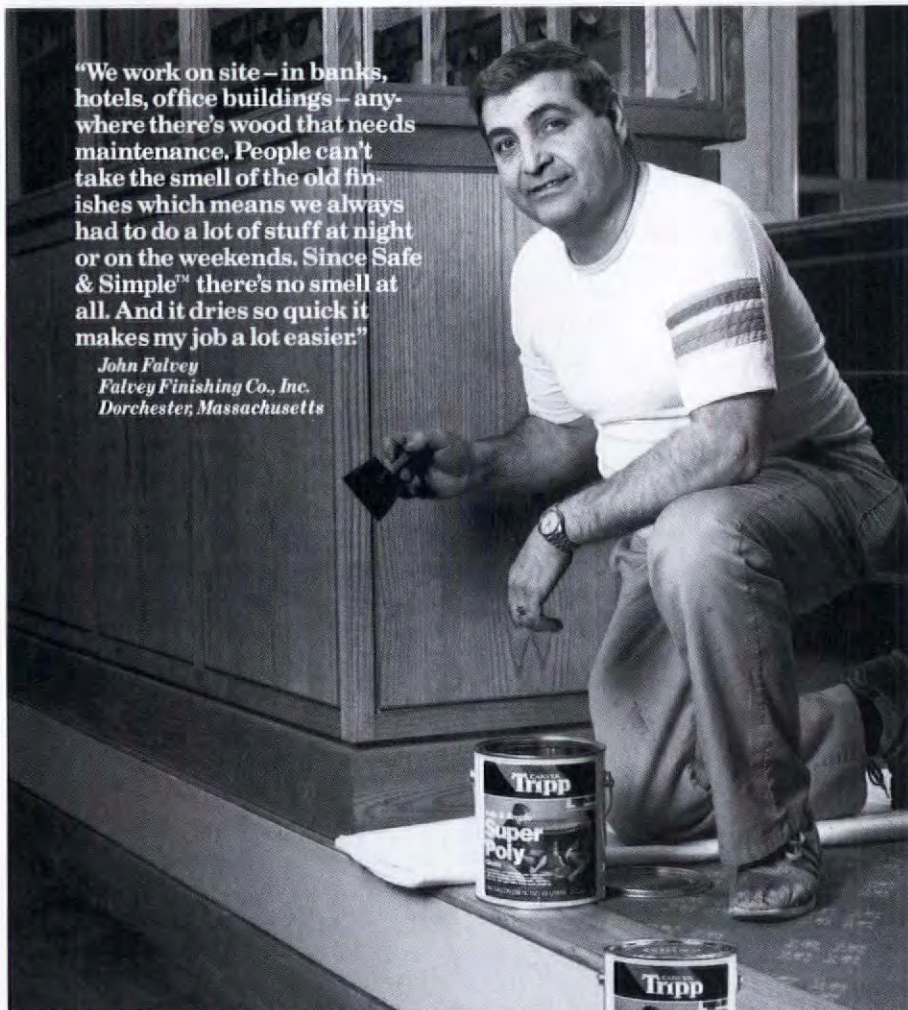
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OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

[Continued from page 24]

Ants are no problem — but no help either, despite the folklore. Sometimes a botrytis blight causes stems to brown and shrivel. To avoid it, cut all foliage to the ground every fall and destroy. If it strikes, cut out all diseased parts and burn.

Period Plumes

MANY FINE OLD PEONIES ARE available today, and these ten are a good start. Though many catalogs include dates of introduction, remember that most plants do not become common in gardens until decades later. *P. officinalis*; *Rubra Plena* (by 1600) — Double red 'Rubra Plena' is the most familiar of this species, but there are pink, white, and single forms as well.

Humei (1810) — Occasionally offered commercially, this is a large, late, cherry-pink double from the dawn of *P. lactiflora* breeding in Europe.

Festiva Maxima (1851) — The Queen of Antique Peonies, 'Festiva Maxima' is still a standard of excellence and a top seller. It has enormous white flowers touched with crimson.

Duchesse de Nemours (1856) — There is a mysterious glow of deep yellow in the center of this early blooming double white.

Mons. Jules Elie (1888) — Despite lax stems, this free-flowering silvery-pink double is still very popular today.

Mikado (1893) — The first Japanese peony widely grown in the U.S., 'Mikado' fit well with late-Victorian Japanese aesthetics. A few dark red petals frame a large golden center of petaloid stamens.

Philippe Revoire (1911) — Some peonies are notably fragrant. The dark crimson petals of this still-popular double are heavy with the scent of roses.



An illustration of
P. officinalis
from Gerard's
The Herbal
(1597).

Minnie Shaylor (1919) — A semi-double with an Arts & Crafts look to it, 'Minnie Shaylor' has a tuft of gold anthers surrounded by a delicate froth of pale pink to white.

Elsa Sass (1930) — One of the first peonies to win the American Peony Society's Gold Medal, 'Elsa Sass' is a wonderfully double creamy white.

"Unknown Favorite" (?) — Everyone seems to know one of these, a glorious beauty or family heirloom that has lost its name — as most old peonies have. No matter what the ancestry, enjoy, protect, and share it just the same.

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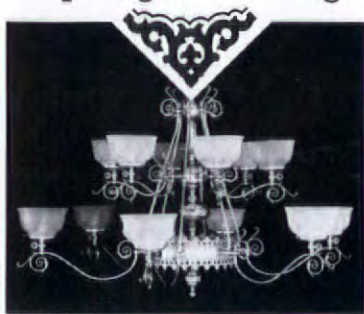
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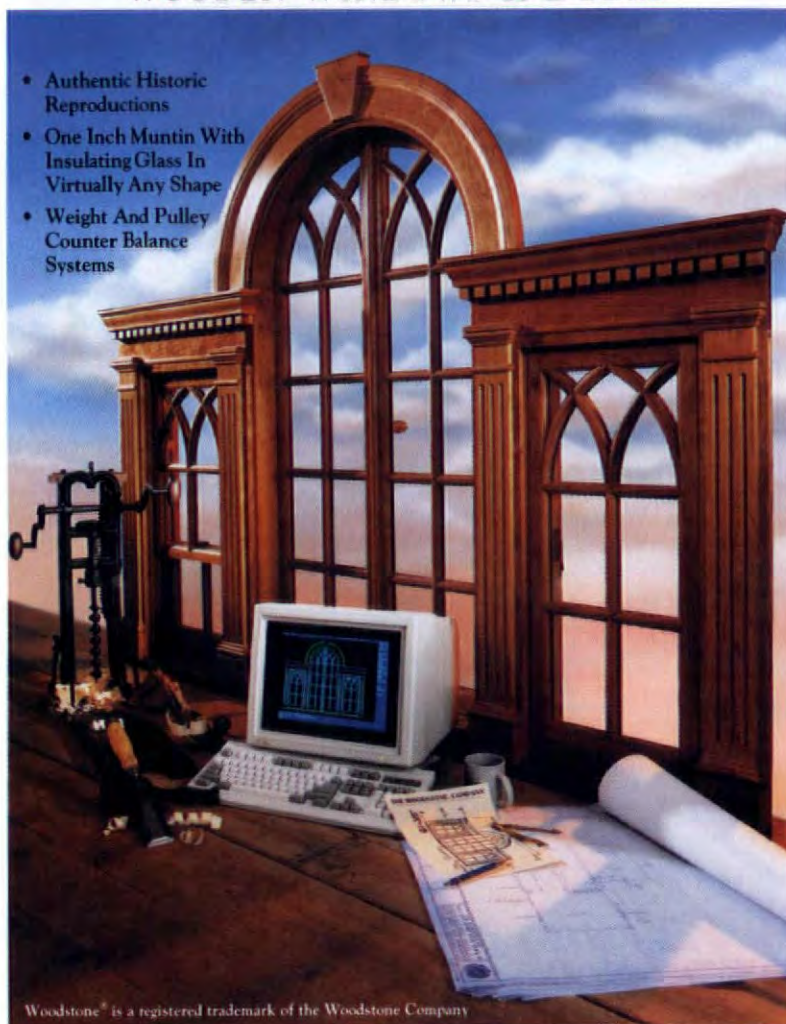
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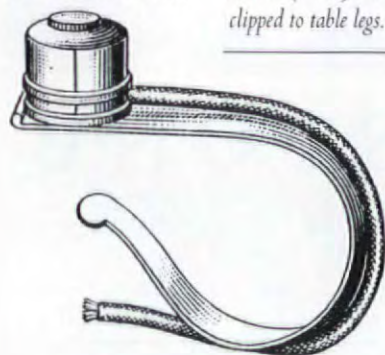
Q ANY IDEA WHAT THIS ROUND plug is/was? Two long metal prongs attach to the cap. It's in the dining room of our 1899 house — we're baffled.

— MRS. M.C. MILLER
Albert Lea, Minn.

A YOUR PLUG IS PART OF A 1920S-era electric call-bell system. Summoning devices such as buzzers and annunciators (display boxes using visual signals) were vital in the days when large houses were staffed like ships with cooks, maids, and other domestic help. These systems usually ran on batteries and included several stations. Ringing the kitchen from



Call-bell plugs (above) were wired to push buttons (below) that clipped to table legs.



the dining room was a top priority, and push buttons were often placed discreetly in the floor. Your model appears to be such a button, except mounted in the wall and fitted with an extension plug and wire that once ran up under the dining table.

Old Chestnuts

Q MY HOUSE, BUILT IN 1910, HAS chestnut mouldings. I've removed five layers of paint

and the grain is beautiful. I want to keep the grainy look when I refinish, but chestnut supposedly absorbs stain quickly. What should I do?

— KEN ROGINSKI
South River, New Jersey

A CHESTNUT IS A LIGHT WEIGHT wood with a coarse, very open grain. In order to produce a smooth surface, these large pores are often filled with a paste filler before applying a clear finish, but they might be left open if a Jacobean or Mission effect is desired. As for staining, it's always wise to test the results of stains on a scrap before proceeding with the full project. The cut and condition of some old-house interior woods — particularly if they've been resanded — means they'll take stains heavily or unevenly. If this is the case, first apply a pre-stain controller product such as McCloskey's Stain Controller & Wood Sealer or try brushing on white shellac diluted, say, 1:4 with alcohol.

Tanks for the Amenities

Q I OWN A TALL STICK-STYLE HOUSE with a large attic built around the turn of the century. In the attic is a 3' x 3' x 4' wooden box. When we tried to move this box we found

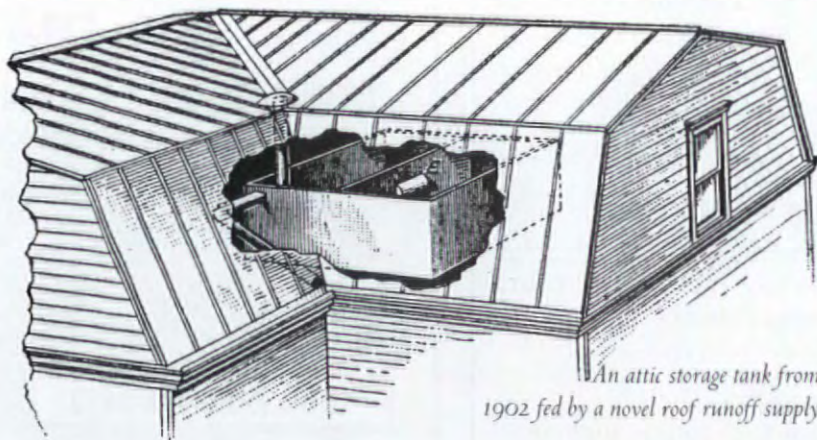
that it was completely lined with lead. It has a hinged wooden top and what looks like a 1/2" lead pipe that comes out one side. Was this box for a water system? If so, why is it in the attic and how would it have been filled?

— RICHARD REFFNER
Perry, New York

A ATTIC STORAGE TANKS WERE often a part of early fresh water plumbing systems. In houses not serviced by municipal water lines, placing a reservoir at the top of the system put gravity to work for on-demand water supply to the whole building. Such tanks were typically filled from a well or ground-level cistern by a manually operated force pump located near the source, but a few designs collected water from the roof as well. Stagnant water and leaks were regular threats with these tanks, and most were thankfully outmoded when electric pumps became practical.

Transom Trouble

Q I AM IN THE PROCESS OF RESTORING the kitchen in my 1920s Dutch Colonial house, which consists of two 10' x 12' rooms — an eating area and a cooking area. I wish to connect these two rooms with a door-and-transom set-up. My problem is that I have not been able to find pictures large



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enough to show how the door and transom are incorporated into one unit. Do you know of a source?

— CARL R. GEBAUER
Rockville Centre, New York

A INTERIOR TRANSOM WINDOWS peaked in popularity during the early-20th century, as a stroll through any 1920s or '30s office building will testify. The c.1927 *Builders Woodwork: Universal Design Book Number 25* catalog from the Roach & Musser Co. in Muscatine, Iowa, shows a good period example of the standard trim for a simple, two-panel door-and-transom unit. The transom bar, which can be a solid piece or built up, acts as a head jamb for the door and as a sill for the transom. If you decide to make an oper-



able transom sash, it can be hung from either the top or the bottom, or pivoted from a center point to turn vertically or horizontally. Since the transom window will be opening into adjacent rooms, choose the position that allows the best light reflection and ventilation. A good source for transom window hardware is Window Components Mfg., 3443 NW 107th St., Dept. OHJ Miami, Florida 33167; (305) 688-2521.

This birch interior door with transom is plain but typical for the 1920s.

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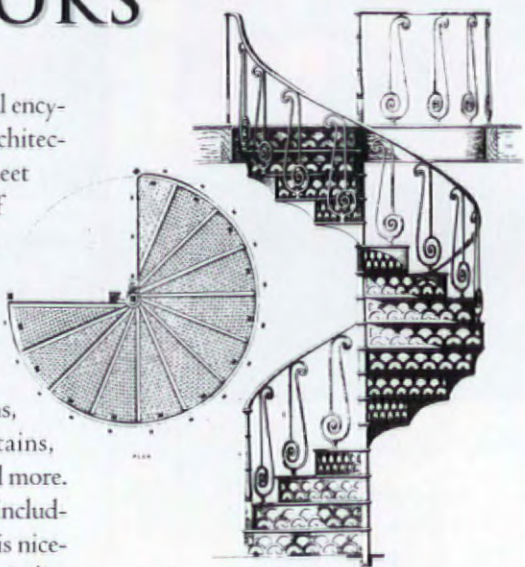
Macfarlane's Cast Iron Catalogue

Pub: Historical Arts & Casting, Inc.,
4130 West 1939 South, Unit F, Dept.
OHJ, Salt Lake City, Utah 84104;
(801) 974-0242; 1992, 700 pages
(illustrated in b & w). \$73.45 ppd. for
the two-volume set, hardcover.

EVERY FEW YEARS THERE COMES along a "labor of love" reprint that, while not everybody's cup of tea, is a must-have for those serious about the subject. Just such a book is the two-volume facsimile of *Macfarlane's Cast Iron Catalog*, from 1882. Walter Macfarlane & Co. was a premier Scottish foundry and supplier to most of the Victorian world, and the drawings

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— G.B.



From Glasgow to Singapore, Macfarlane's cast iron, like this graceful ornamental staircase, was found worldwide in the 19th century.



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THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS OFTEN THE SHOWPIECE OF AN OLD HOUSE. EVEN when the rest of a building lacked decorative details, early carpenters would invest extra effort at the front doorway. The owners of this c. 1800 late Federal-style house had such a door surround and knew it made a significant contribution to the architecture of their home. They wanted to preserve this character as well as improve the condition of the woodwork so it would be easier to maintain in the future.

It was clear this woodwork needed help. The heavy buildup of old weathered paint was very rough, and chipped off in places. At the surround bottom entire wood parts — notably the door sill and pilaster bases — were deteriorated and literally falling off. Sometime early in its history the entrance had gone without any paint maintenance for several decades. This weathered the surface of the once-flat boards in a deeply grooved, “corrugated” pattern highlighting the grain. Many grooves had developed into yawning checks or cracks, and a few went completely through the boards.

NEW LIFE FOR AN EARLY DOORWAY

Restoring a Federal Door Surround

The overall design of this rectangular surround is typical of the period in lower New Hampshire, but the mouldings and the unusual “sunburst” carvings around the louvered fan make it special. In restoring this doorway we took care to conserve these details by using a variety of wood repair, painting, and caulking methods that can be applied to many old-house exterior carpentry projects. Furthermore, we carried these methods a few steps beyond average needs in order to achieve a high level of weather resistance.

Unique carvings and surprising colors (above) added to the classic Adam-style elliptical fan and sidelights (right).

OLD-HOUSE
JOURNAL

— by John Leeke —



R E S T O R A T I O N P L A N

TO DETERMINE HOW EXTENSIVE THE DAMAGE REALLY was, we examined further. First, we carefully chipped and scraped away the paint at several spots to assess the moulding profiles and the condition of the wood.

High on the surround, where they were protected by the wide overhang of the cap, we found a few mouldings unweathered enough to provide the original profiles of mouldings used at other locations. Still, the lower panel mouldings on the door, the pilaster bases, and other original parts were completely missing. The existing bases were a 20th century replacement, as indicated by the wire nails and planing machine marks on the backs of boards and mouldings. A recent residing of the house front had obliterated any paint shadows or nail holes that might be clues about the original bases.

Even with careful preparation and additional coats the deteriorated paint surface would not provide an effective weather barrier for more than one or two years. Since the owners were hoping to reduce the maintenance needs of the woodwork, as well as improve its condition, we chose to completely remove the old paint in order to repair the woodwork and start anew with an effective three-coat paint system. The aged, weathered wood surface was now a part of the building so we decided to leave a lot of the texture showing. Preparation could then concentrate on stabilizing the weathered areas in order to make them more weather resistant.

Missing woodwork would be restored by making new parts of wood according to researched designs. All original and replacement parts would be back-primed before installation and caulked in place with modern flexible sealants. Parts prone to severe exposure, such as the pilaster bases, would be back-painted with a topcoat on all surfaces before

installation. These measures would assure at least moderate resistance to water and decay even if the joints opened up and nothing was done to reseal them.



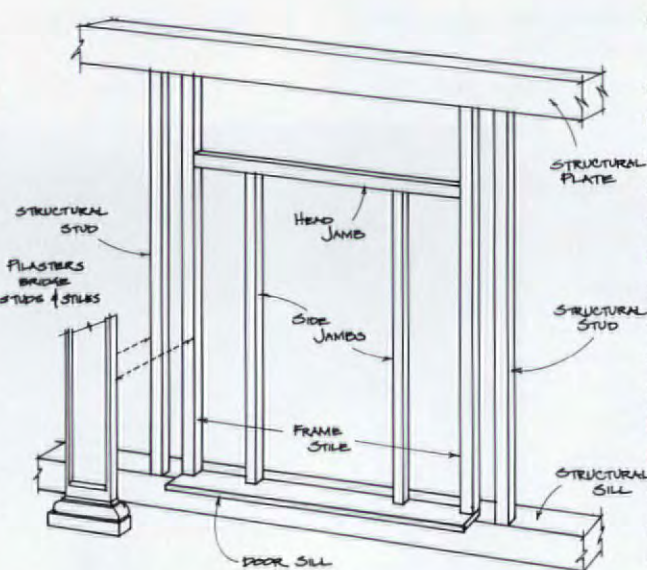
Work began with surveying the condition of the surround woodwork and carefully removing 200 years of failing paint.

Carpentry repairs were made at the building site (we considered removing the entire surround to work indoors), retaining as much of the original fabric as possible.

S I L L R E P L A C E M E N T

THE DOOR SURROUND is a framework that is independent of the house structure (see drawing). The frame fits into an opening in the larger timber frame of the house. In this surround the pilasters were tied to both the door frame stiles and the structural wall studs. Removing the entire surround to repair the worn sill would have meant taking apart the pilasters, so instead I decided to pull out the old sill while leaving the rest of the frame in place.

The first step in replacing such a sill is bracing both side jambs before removing the door or sill. I used boards 6" to 8" wide and drywall screws for their firm grip and to avoid shock to the woodwork from pounding nails. The jambs could also be braced to the house interior perpendicular to the door. The old sill is removed next. I begin with gentle prying and wiggling to locate nails, then I cut them with a hacksaw. If the old sill is not worth saving it can be cross cut with a circular saw and split out in small pieces with a heavy chisel and mallet.



In this house the door frame starts with the door sill across the bottom, a pair of side jambs, and the jamb across the top. Two frame stiles running from the door sill to the structural plate hold the head jamb in place. The pilasters bridge the door frame and the wall studs.

Afterwards I measure and lay out the size and location of the structural sill timber, surround jambs, and other parts on a scaled drawing. White oak makes a long-lasting sill because it is strong and dense and has a cellular structure that blocks water penetration. Red oak or maple are not as water-resistant and may succumb to the fungal decay common in exterior door sills. In my woodworking shop I joined, planed, and ripped the oak plank to size. I also fabricated a threshold of oak and glued both pieces together with epoxy adhesive formulated especially for

exterior woodwork.

Before installing this sill I strengthened the ends of the side jambs and frame stiles with epoxy consolidant and paste filler. Also, I fastened pressure-treated blocks to the structural sill to support the outer edge of the door sill. Next I tested the sill's fit in the opening, trimming slightly until it slid easily into place. Then I removed the sill and set it aside to be painted. Deck enamel holds up well to abrasion so we coated the sill bottom and all edges with this paint. (Some deck enamels perform best with no primer so be certain to follow the manufacturer's recommendations.) The interior thresh-

old was varnished to match the unpainted interior.

Finally, I slipped the sill in place and inserted sawn shingle wedges between the structural sill and the threshold. This raised the inside edge slightly, seating the ends of the side jambs and frame stiles against the threshold top. I fastened the outer edge of the sill to two of the sill blocks with countersunk stainless steel screws, filled later with epoxy paste. The side jambs and frame stiles were fastened with screws in pockets carved with a sharp gouge.



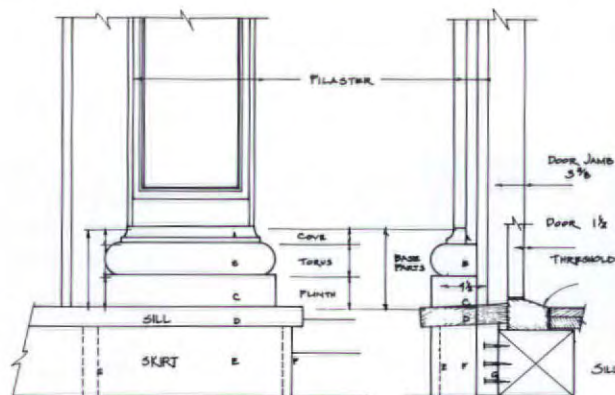
Top left: Bracing the side jambs to hold them in place until the new sill is installed. Bottom left: Cutting nails with a hacksaw frees the old sill. Above: Testing the fit of the new oak sill before final installation. Note the white epoxy treatment on the jamb and stile bottoms.

P I L A S T E R B A S E S

SINCE WE HAD NO PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF THE ORIGINAL pilaster base design we wound up researching ideas in early books. The owners had already surveyed the town in hopes of finding original bases that could be a model for our work. While there were similar doorways, they all had replacements so we went to the books.

From one source came a page from a builder's style book published about the time the house was built, and I had a later book that showed the classical orders, including some pilaster bases. We used ideas from both books and other door surrounds to arrive at the final design. I sketched out ideas until I had two that seemed appropriate, but I left the final decision up to the homeowner.

Back in the shop we fabricated the base parts from thick, solid Eastern white pine. After sizing the blocks on the joiner and



The final design of the pilaster bases draws on several period sources using the classical elements of cove, torus, and plinth.

table saw we shaped the rounded part on the bandsaw and with a hand plane — less than half an hour's work. Once the parts were done, I trimmed them to fit in place. Next, I scribed the back edges with a compass and trimmed the wood with a sharp chisel to form a 1/4" gap. Then the parts were back-primed and back-painted with one coat.

During final installation each part is sealed in place with polyurethane caulk. The gap made earlier allows the sealant to stretch and shrink with movement of the parts, yet still maintain an effective seal.

Top left: Shaping the torus curve by sawing out two 45 degree bevels, then planing these down with smaller bevels. Far left: Scribing the base parts creates a careful fit to the wall contour and a gap for sealant. Left: Flexible sealant fills all joints to exclude water as the wood moves.

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D O O R R E P A I R S

EXTERIOR DOORS ARE SUBJECT TO SEVERE CONDITIONS. Driving rain penetrates the smallest cracks and gaps, and the contrast between a cold, damp outdoors and dry, warm indoors puts the woodwork under tremendous stress. Besides

serious weathering and loose mouldings, this door had cracked panels and a weakened stile where a succession of locks and latches had been installed.

To begin repairs I removed the mouldings, carefully recording their positions on the door with a number system. After removing all paint I cleaned out cracks in the panels with my special scrapers. Then I soaked the cracks with epoxy consolidant to insure a good bond with the epoxy paste filler that followed. Epoxy filler is formulated to match the strength and flexibility of the surrounding wood. This is an important consideration since

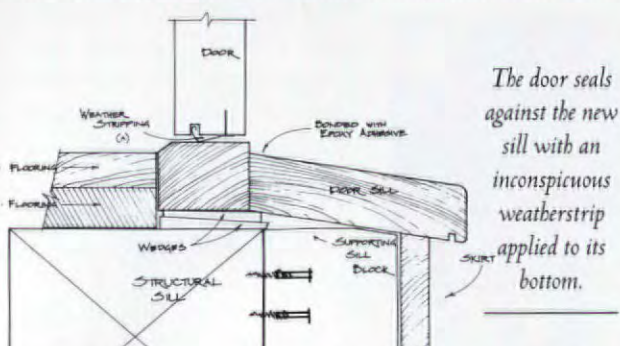
Final trimming on the bottom of the door to fit the new sill.

the wood panels will continue to expand and shrink with their inevitable changes in moisture content. In door or paneling repair it is critical that the epoxy does not bond the edges of the panels to the frame. They must float freely to swell and shrink without splitting.

Door frames and panels frequently deteriorate when water seeps in behind the mouldings. Soaking the end grain of the panels and penetrating frame joints causes panels to split and decay within the joints. To prevent this deterioration I seal these joints with polyurethane caulk. Round foam backer rod (available at building supply houses) forms the sealant into an hourglass shape that is thin and flexible. If the gap were completely filled the panel might split because the sealant would act like a stiff adhesive

bonding the panel to the frame. After all woodwork repairs are complete — but before the mouldings are reinstalled — I prime and paint the door.

When it came time to reinstall the mouldings I fitted each piece and just tacked it in place. I used galvanized cut brads similar to the original brads, placing them away from the original holes so they would hold better. Then I removed the mouldings, brads and all, and back-primed them. (The



nails provide convenient handles during priming.) When the paint was dry I nailed the mouldings back for good, applying sealant as I worked.

Since we were careful to keep the side jambs braced in their original positions hanging the door was an easy matter of fitting the bottom edge to the new sill. With the door in place and closed I scribed the lower edge to the new sill with a pair of dividers. I set the dividers to $1/4$ " — the thickness of the weather strip that would be installed — and then drew the dividers across the door, scribing the line. Next I used handsaws to trim off the excess wood. A power circular saw would mar the paint on the uneven surface or splinter off the edge of the door; hand tools give me more control. I used a fine-toothed crosscut saw (12 tpi) on the stiles and a rip saw along the bottom rail, finishing up with a hand plane.

A weatherstrip along the bottom of the door will keep rain and snow from blowing in and can be applied before the door is hung. For early doors I prefer spring bronze or stainless steel types that mount to the bottom because they are close to invisible.



Top: Cracks are cleaned with specially made tools, then primed with epoxy consolidant. Later, forcing in epoxy paste completely fills the cracks. Bottom: Wide gaps where panels meet the bottom stile were filled with backer rod topped with polyurethane caulk.

P A I N T R E M O V A L

EARLY SPOT SCRAPING AND CHIPPING PROVED THAT mechanical removal of the thick paint buildup would be difficult due to the rough and uneven wood surfaces, so we tested three different types of chemical removers: methylene chloride, solvent (without methylene chloride), and one of the new water-based di-ester ketone strippers. We

started with 6" x 6" patches of each stripper at the bottom of the pilaster. Then, we selected the best performing product and applied two larger patches above with different methods. As it turned out, painting on the methylene chloride stripper and removing it with a stainless steel brush

from deep checks, cracks, and joints.

Safety is an important part of any restoration project, but is especially critical when using hazardous chemicals. Methylene chloride is a suspected carcinogen so no safety precaution was overkill here, including protective clothing with long sleeves and pants, goggles, maximum fresh air circulation, and changing filter cartridges frequently when respirators were used. In addition to following the manufacturer's instructions, we obtained the Material Safety Data Sheets for the products and used their guidelines.

Stripping decorative carvings demands great care. We used wire brushes and shaped scrapers to remove the softened paint. The result was bare wood with only bits of paint left in the deep weather checks. Careful preparation makes wood repairs easier and assures good performance for the new paint coatings.



Shaped scrapers pick away softened paint without damaging the wood carvings.



An alcohol rinse removes the last residue of chemical remover while masking protects the adjacent surface.

worked better on the rough surface than spraying and scraping. I recommend this rather formal testing procedure because it saves much time, effort, and expense later. Special scrapers made from reground linoleum knives removed paint

F I N A L F I N I S H E S

PAIN'T IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE IN PROTECTING EXTERIOR woodwork from the weather. We used a full three-coat paint system on all parts of the door, with the careful preparation invested at the start of the project making up at least 90 percent of this paint job. Each coat was gone over lightly with 120-grit sandpaper to provide "tooth" for the next coat, and parts that remained on the doorway were coated in place.

Both new parts and parts that were removed and preserved were primed and back-primed before installation. Parts prone to extreme exposure, such as the pilaster bases, were additionally painted and back-painted with their first top coat. This provides extra protection from the weather when the joints between the parts deteriorate.

One of the surprises on this project occurred during initial paint removal when we discovered that the surround

originally had a multicolored paint scheme — an unexpected departure from solid green trim. While we didn't do a scientific investigation and documentation of the paint history,

we did save a few chips and make notes on where each color was used. For the first layer of new topcoat we tried these colors out just for fun. (If they weren't satisfactory, we could change the scheme in later topcoats.) Since we just wanted to see the overall effect on the entrance we didn't strive for a perfect color match, just the nearest standard colors in the local paint dealer's colors. The comments around town ranged from "Wow! We love your door!" to "When are you going to cover the primer?"



Experimenting with the early polychrome paint scheme produced an effect far different than the familiar green-on-white.

Contributing Editor John Lecke is a consultant and contractor who helps homeowners, contractors, and architects work with early buildings (RR 1, Box 2947, Sanford, ME 04073; 207-324-9597)

Rebuilding a Post-Victorian Porch Stairway ♦ by Jeff Greef

WHEN MY SISTER SUSAN GREEF AND HER FRIEND Sandee Reeds bought a circa 1920 Bungalow in Oakland, California, one of the projects that faced them was rebuilding the brick porch stairs. The wood supports had rotted and since they could not be replaced the brick had to go. This was no great loss, however. Brick stairs are rarely seen with wood-sided houses of this type, and these stairs were poorly designed.

To begin with, the last step was higher than all the other steps by one brick — one of the top no-nos of stair making. If the rise or run between steps is not consistent, the user becomes confused and can trip. Another problem was the bottom two steps, which slanted towards the house directing water into the wood substructure. It was no surprise to find rot beneath these steps and not others. Further inspection under the house showed that these stairs were not original.

We wanted the new stairs to be stylistically appropriate for the house. Since we had no evidence of what the originals were like, we looked around the neighborhood for ideas. Most of the porch stairs in the area are concrete with stepped walls, but we did see stairs with wooden walls that incorporated the same siding as the house. In Santa Cruz, where I live

workbook on stairbuilding that showed us how it's done in the trade, but this included nothing about constructing the walls or the special concerns of weatherproofing and stability. Water tends to collect where the stairs meet the walls and with time would cause rot. How to avoid this? Also, how do you make a wooden wall rigid when it is connected to nothing but stairs and a foundation?

A local contractor friend, Tim Folger, had some answers.

For stability, tie the walls into everything you can and sheathe them with plywood to make, in effect, a torsion box. For weather resistance, place flashing at heavy water points and build the stairs far enough away from the walls so that water can drain and air can circulate.



The Steps to Stairs

WE BEGAN THE PROJECT BY LAYING OUT THE STAIRS, AND TO DO this we had to determine the unit rise and unit run of the steps (see box, p. 43).

1) The unit rise, usually around 7" for a comfortable and legal step, is a fraction of total rise necessary to reach the next floor level. The ground beneath our stairs was not level so in order to find our total rise, we extended a level board out from the porch to over the area of the stair foot and measured between

West Coast Bu

about 70 miles away, there are many similar houses with wood-en-walled stairs. We concluded that this design would be our best choice given the information we had.

We opted to add concrete caps, in part because the porch floor is concrete. The edge of the concrete and the simple 1" moulding beneath it is visible along the perimeter of the porch and the best way to continue this significant detail was to use concrete on the walls. Concrete caps also seemed better for keeping water out of the walls than wooden caps, which would succumb to moisture and sun quickly. The owners wanted a handrail so the lower posts were necessary to accommodate it.

With our design determined the next consideration was how to build the two separate parts: the stairs and the walls. Our library produced a California State Department of Education

these points. The sloping ground made the total rise on one side of the stairs 1-1/2" less than the other side so we split the difference to arrive at a working figure. Our total rise of 61" when divided by eight gave us a unit rise of 7.625 — an even 7-5/8". When calculations don't work out so neatly, figure the rise to within 1/32".

2) The proportions for an average stair are often calculated by using one of several builder's rules-of-thumb. A common rule says that the sum of the unit rise and the unit run should be around 17-1/2. Subtracting the unit rise from this figure will produce the unit run, and multiplying this by the number of treads will yield the total run.

In practice stairway layout is determined by the situation as well, and porch stairs typically have wider treads than, say, interior stairs. Since we knew our total run had to be



Opposite: The brick stairs — a bad design and poor match for the house. This page: New wood steps were flanked by walls that continued the porch details in typical bungalow style.

n g a l o w S t a i r s

around 78", we divided this dimension by seven to produce a unit run, or tread depth, of just over 11-1/8".

3) Once the unit rise and unit run are calculated they are used to mark out the first stringer. It is customary to make notched stringers with 2x12 lumber, and for our stringers we used common construction-grade redwood. Redwood heartwood is highly rot resistant, a quality we needed because the stringers would be exposed to moisture. Pressure-treated yellow pine would also have worked. The stock contained few knots, and we were able to locate most away from the lower section of each stringer that carries the lion's share of the load.

Stringer length is determined not only by the number of steps but how the upper end of the stairway is anchored. There are three main methods (see drawing p. 43) and they can end the stringer with either a complete tread, a partial tread,

or no tread at all. After selecting an anchoring method, the rough stringer length can be calculated using the Pythagorean theorem if it is viewed as the hypotenuse of a right triangle. For instance, a total rise of 3' squared + a total run of 4' squared = 25; the square root of 25 = 5', the rough stringer length.

4) Stringer cuts are laid out by placing a framing square on the stringer and aligning the blade and tongue so that the unit rise and unit run dimensions fall on the edge of the stock. After the first step is marked, the square is slid along to layout the next, taking care to locate each step accurately. When the first stringer is cut out, it can be used as a template to lay out the others and keep them uniform. Tread and riser dimensions follow the stringer without altering the step proportions.

It is important to leave extra stock at the top and bottom of each stringer. Exactly where and how these ends are cut

depends upon how the stringer lands. The top anchor may require another 18" or so of stringer if it continues under the porch; if the foot lands on a finished floor or walk, the bottom riser will have to be "dropped" by the thickness of a tread to keep the steps consistent.

New Walls and Porch Repairs

WE WAITED UNTIL WE HAD A STRINGER TO USE AS A STOREY board before laying out the exact dimensions of the walls. We wanted the steps to stay within the walls and not interfere with the moulding or concrete. We also wanted the line created by the ends of each wall step to be parallel to the line of the stair steps, and we couldn't do this easily until we had a stringer.

The first phase of building the walls was assessing the condition of the existing foundations. They had been seriously banged up by the demolition men who removed the brick stairs, but despite an ugly appearance the concrete was still solid and capable of holding anchors securely. These foundations were 12" wide and about 10" thick, more than massive enough to support walls less than 5' high. We patched a mysterious void in one of the two foundations by preparing the concrete with a bonding agent and using ready-mix mortar. Then we bored holes in the foundations for expansion anchors to secure the sill plates.

The foundations slanted with the contour of the land, so, we constructed level

The porch floor (top) had rotted at the top step. We replaced deck lumber (middle) and reinforced the framing before attaching the stair walls. Flashing under the concrete caps (bottom) was an added precaution.



Each wall was two 2x4 frames tied together with plywood. Sills were treated lumber anchored to the old masonry footings.

reference boards from which we could take the necessary measurements. We then cut and installed the studs, securing the first set to the stud wall of the porch using galvanized dry-wall screws. Each stair wall was composed of two separate frames. When each of these frames was complete we attached plywood gussets inside to tie them together. We completed the framing by placing 4x4 posts in the walls for the handrails, then filling in the frames with short blocks. We used pressure-treated lumber for the sill plates and posts, as they would contact concrete and regular framing lumber for the frames.

As we worked we found there was deteriorated lumber on the porch where it met the stairs. The concrete above this point had cracked, probably due to foot traffic and lack of support, and moisture had gotten in at the crack, promoting rot. Luckily, we were able to replace the rotted sections of the concrete floor boards and install treated 2x4 blocking between the joists to reinforce the lead edge of the new board.

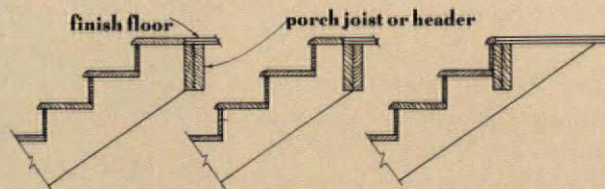
At this point we installed a 2x12 redwood plate against the studwall of the porch for the stringers to rest against.

Next we covered all sides, tops, and ends of the stair walls with 1/2" exterior-grade plywood, using screws every 8" or so. The plywood skin braces the box in every direction. After it was on, the walls were as rigid as if they had posts going into the ground. Then we covered the walls with a layer of felt paper and on top of the walls went caps of flashing. We had the supplier put in the 90-degree bend that fit the long wall edges, but we made the other cuts and bends ourselves with tinsnips and hand tools. The

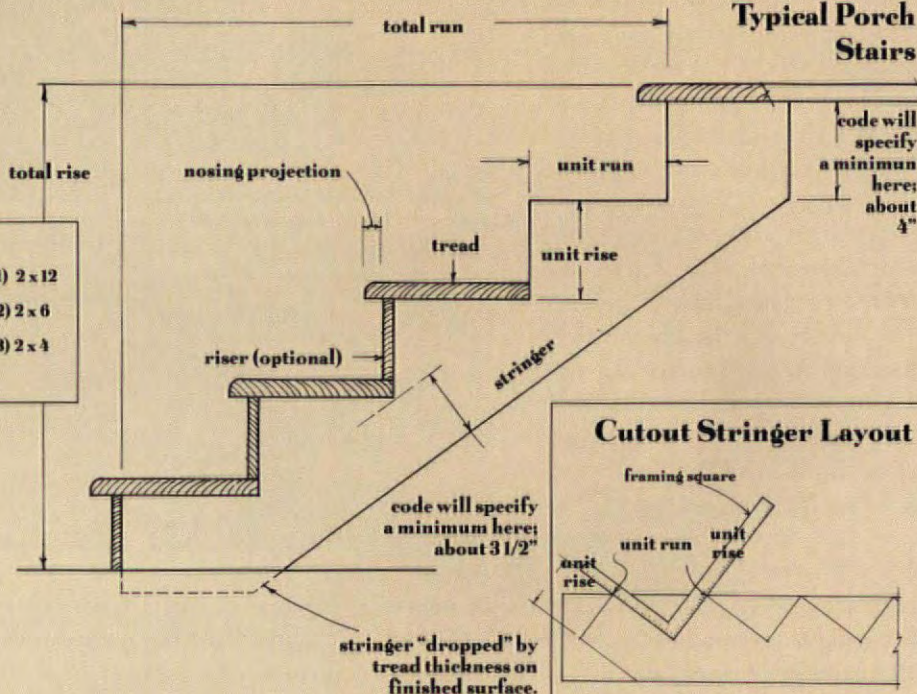
The Ways of Stairs

LET'S TAKE A QUICK LOOK AT STAIR BUILDING terminology. The *treads* are what you step on, and the *stringers* (also called *borses* or *carriages*) are the notched members that carry the treads. More finished stairs have *risers*, the vertical boards ahead of the treads. *Nosing projection* is the distance the tread extends out in front of the risers. The *unit rise* is the vertical distance between treads, *total rise* is the vertical distance from floor (or ground) to floor. The *unit run* is the horizontal distance from riser face to riser face, *total run* is the horizontal distance from first to last riser.

Upper Anchor Details



Typical Porch Stairs



Common Tread Options

- (1) 2 x 12
- (2) 2 x 6
- (3) 2 x 4

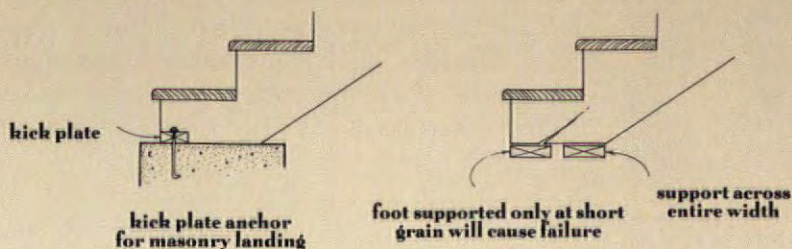
There are many ways to build stairs. In an *open stairway* the stringers are notched to hold the tread. In a *closed stairway* the stringers are mortised so that the ends of treads and risers fit into the

faces of the stringers (or they can simply sit on cleats). Mortised stringers are considered superior for interiors, but outdoors the joints may collect water. Exterior treads can be a single board or multiple boards, which aid ventilation and water runoff. Stringer anchors will vary to fit the conditions of site and building. Check local building codes to find the permitted dimensions and tolerances for unit rise (typically 7-1/2"), unit run (about 9" for interiors, 11" for exteriors), nosing projection, and similar features.

For maximum weather resistance, treat horizontal areas with a water repellant before painting, and backpaint all parts before

assembly. Caulk all joints. Ventilate the soffit area under the steps using grilles, lattice, or cut-outs in risers and spaces in treads. Cover any exposed end-grain in treads, floorboards, or posts with nosing mouldings, or caps. Design railings and stair treads with a slight pitch so they shed water.

Foot Details



flashing is in two pieces that lap in the middle. We would have preferred to use a single piece, but we hadn't finalized the size of the walls when we ordered the flashing. We used a top-quality exterior gutter caulk to seal the joint.

Last, we stretched chicken wire over the wall tops, and secured it to the walls with "poultry nail" staples. The chicken wire adds mechanical reinforcement to the concrete and ties it to the wall so the slab won't slide off.

For these stairs, we attached the outside stringers to the studs in the walls. We used lag screws spaced out about $\frac{3}{4}$ " with large washers to provide an air gap between stringer and wall. We also put flashing along the wall in this area. This arrangement was the wisdom of Tim Folger who held that you can't keep water from getting in there, so it pays to devise a means of letting it out. Two more stringers supported the stairs at the center.

On the ground all stringers rest on two 2x6 pressure-treated sills. If the stringer bears on just the short grain at the very end it will split in time, so I put in the second sill to support the entire width. I set these sills in fresh concrete on top of where the first step of the old brick stairs had been and left an inch channel at either end for water to escape.

Finishing Touches

WITH THE STRINGERS IN PLACE WE PUT IN THE TREADS AND RISERS. We opted for construction-grade redwood again and decided to wait a year or so to paint, if at all. Redwood heart lumber is used in many exterior applications with no finish, and it holds up well. We located the ends of the treads and risers about $\frac{3}{8}$ " from the walls for water and air clearance, fitting the siding over the treads and in front of the risers. We found



Four stringers formed the stair carriage (top), with more flashing where they met the walls. New siding adapted to match the old dimensions (middle) was attached with galvanized nails. Building out the handrail (bottom) made it strong enough for a 7' span.

clear kiln-dried redwood siding at the local building supply that matched the V-groove lap siding on the house, but they had only the 7" width. We needed 3" width too, and this was easy to make by ripping some of the 7" down and copying the lap detail with a few table-saw passes. Siding was nailed on to match the house.

We bought mushroom-style handrail at the local building supply, but

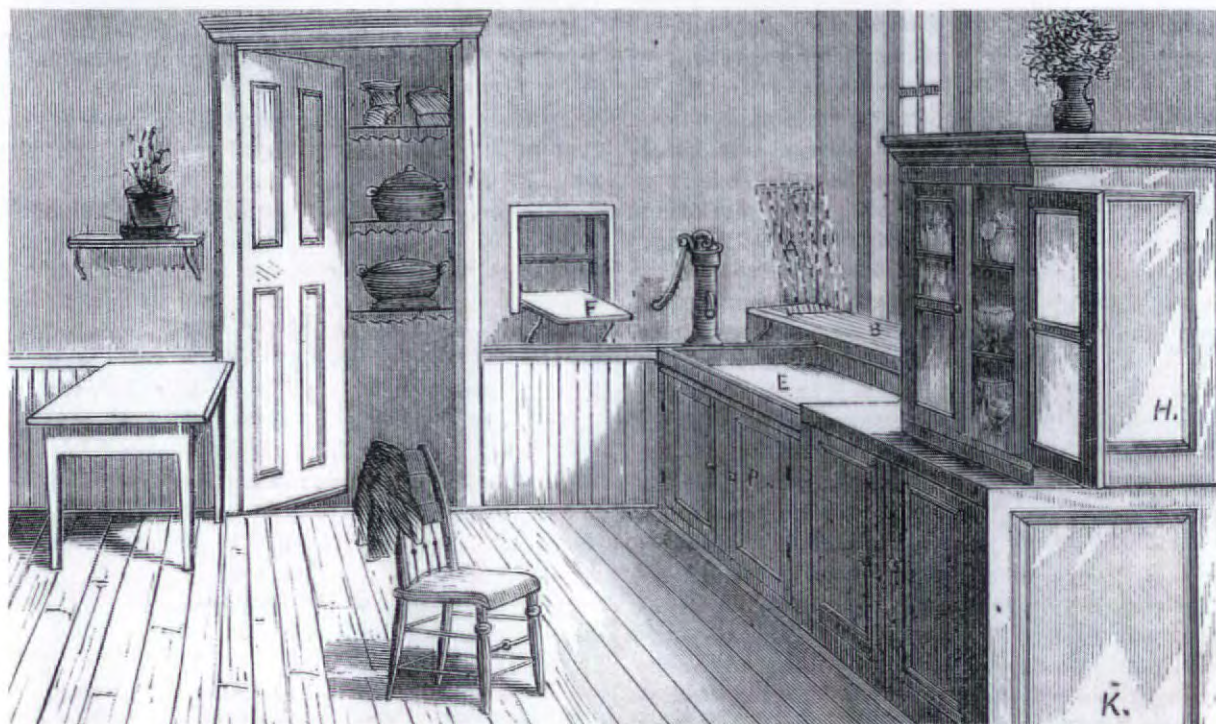
its small diameter was not strong enough to span the required 7' distance unsupported. Our solution was to glue and screw a 2x3 onto each rail using moisture resistant urea formaldehyde plastic resin glue. This not only doubled the cross-section, it made for a beefier appearance that was better proportioned to the solid dimensions of the walls. We lagged the rails onto the bottom posts and bolted them to the porch posts.

On top of the siding along the upper perimeter of the walls went the two stages of 1x trim. Then we nailed the concrete forms directly onto the trim and poured the concrete. Pouring concrete is another story, but what we learned is to mix the mortar just wet enough to work well, then trowel it back and forth repeatedly until it smooths out. Oil-based primer and a latex topcoat finished off all the bare wood.

Nearly a year later, the only problem my sister has found with the stairs is that they blend in so well, no one notices all our work.

After a full year, the finished stairs have yet to show problems and still blend well with the modest California bungalow.

BEADED BOARDS



Kitchen with beaded board wainscoting. (Woodcut from The American Agriculturalist, 1876.)

WHATEVER YOU CALL THEM, BEADED BOARDS are familiar to most old-house people. You may recognize this homey lumber from your porch ceiling, or from the walls of your unre-modeled kitchen. If your house used to be a summer-only cottage, beadboard may be hiding under virtually every interior surface, and peek out still in pantries, closets, and attics. Lumbermen and historians may call it different names, and different regions have their favorite names, too: beadboard, porch-ceiling lumber, tongue-and-groove, or just plain "wainscot."

Once, in the Victorian era of exuberant building and inexpensive wood, beaded boards, as moulding or panelling, were the ubiquitous finish surface, considered plain enough for kitchens, bathrooms, and servants' rooms. Over the years, old beaded board has mellowed from the effect of sunlight and dirt on its

ambered varnish or orangey shellac. Unpainted old beaded boards today are considered a treasure worth uncovering, preserving — or putting back new.

Although beaded boards were most popular after 1870, you might be surprised to hear that beaded lumber has been commonly used since the colonial era, for cabinets, walls, and ceiling panels.

Beaded boards are relatively thin pieces of lumber, or wood strips, that have a side bead or convex moulding along one edge. Where the individual boards meet, various joints including the common shiplap and matched tongue-and-groove maintain the integrity of the surface. As the wood expands and contracts seasonally, the joints between boards also swell and shrink, and those beaded edges distract the eye from irregular gaps. In all their forms, beaded boards are essentially a kind of elementary moulding employing the simplest of classic decorative cuts — a semicircle and quirk (furrow).

by Liz Pritchett

The characteristics of beaded boards changed with improvements in planing technology, evolving from wide, random-width, hand-planed lumber to narrow, uniform-width, machine-planed millwork that could be manufactured quite thin. By the turn of the 20th century, the side bead was occasionally combined with other mouldings.



Note the uniform, wave-like ridges (knife marks) on these cylinder-planed boards.

From the 1870s on, machine-planed boards were cheap and easy to produce, by comparison to earlier hand-planed boards. Widespread machine production and railroad distribution had made beaded boards available to most Americans at a relatively low cost. The lumber was popularized as an example of modern building technology, and the public wanted it. Beaded boards were particularly common in the service areas of the home, such as the kitchen, pantry, and bathrooms. They were employed, as always, as a wainscot finish on the lower half of walls below the chair rail, but now their use

spread to soffits and ceilings, to pantries, and even to kitchen cabinets.

By end of the 19th century, mass production and improved planing machines wasted less wood and could mill mouldings and beaded boards even faster and cheaper. Stock beaded patterns and related trim became uniform and were used everywhere, from modest homes to train stations, schoolhouses, and libraries.

The popularity of beaded boards spread to the South and West as planing-machine technology caught up with advances on the East Coast. Regional variants developed because different species of lumber were used. In Florida, for example, southern pine was abundant and a new variety of beaded-board patterns appeared following Florida's first boom in the 1880s. Local millwork catalogs today still carry many of the now historic profiles.

Southern pine and cypress were indigenous to Louisiana; beaded boards in these woods were common after 1900. Occasionally, 18th and 19th century vernacular Creole houses with French colonial *bousillage* walls (an adobe-like mixture of mud, Spanish moss and sometimes animal hair) were updated in the early 20th century with beaded-board interior paneling.

In New Mexico, beaded boards are known as "rail-

From Hand-Sawn Moulding to Machine-Made Ubiquity

Some perspective on the use and popularity of beaded boards

DURING THE MIDDLE AGES and the Renaissance, carvings were more popular for surface decoration than mouldings, but by the late 17th century tastes had changed. Emulating the then-popular fashion in London for late English Baroque architecture, newly prosperous merchants and planters in the New World began to favor an elaborate display of interior details and moulded panelling. In America, the interest in neoclassical details



Nineteenth-century American bead planes.

seen in the Georgian and Federal styles was a far cry from our early vernacular medieval architecture, where mouldings were generally limited to simple beaded or chamfered edges. The influ-

ence of builder's handbooks helped promote the widespread use of refined architectural details created with moulding planes and carving tools.

Hand-plane design has changed very little since the earliest Roman planes were made in Pompeii. American hand moulding planes of the 18th and 19th century typically were 9-1/2" long. Yellow birch was used to make the bodies until the supply was exhausted in the early 19th century and

craftsmen turned to beech and applewood. Boxwood inserts were usually added along the sole at the point of greatest wear. Bead planes generally had blades sized in 1/8" increments up to a 1" width. The earlier planes during these centuries cut a fine quirk—furrow—adjacent to the bead; by the middle of the 19th century, a wider quirk was characteristic. The plane body also would have a stop at one side to limit the depth or width of the



Simple edge-matched beaded boards were a common soffit finish, indoors and out, by the turn of the century.

historic New Mexican adobe architecture, with the exception of remote northern areas where there has been less reworking of period buildings.

In Minnesota, beaded boards are often referred to

as "boxcar siding" because of their association with buildings constructed between 1880 and 1900, during the railroad era. In Santa Fe, beaded boards were frequently used in working class adobe homes from 1900 to 1920. Typically, these tongue-and-groove boards are approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick and, as elsewhere, they were used for ceilings, porches, kitchens, wainscoting, and to enclose stairs. Little of this milled lumber remains in his-

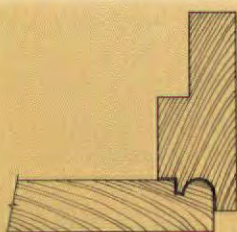
as "boxcar siding" because they are akin to the standard railroad-car siding used until around 1915, when the transition from wood to steel was made.

The thin (often only $\frac{3}{8}$ ") Victorian-era boards with flat, beaded edges endured for several decades in America. By the 1930s, however, beadboard in general was beginning to lose its appeal as modern technology brought affordable, excitingly new materials such as plywood, concrete, stainless steel, aluminum, and plastics. Now beadboard is back in style, both as an appropriate and available restoration material, and as part of the general love affair with wood products.

Restoring Beaded Boards

BEADED BOARDS MAY not be a fine or irreplaceable material, but often the patina on them is worth pre-

Heavily beaded and uniformly milled wall panelling in an 1890 railroad station.



The bead plane is held perpendicular to the face of the board.

cut as the carpenter shaped the board with repeated passes.

Architectural details created by moulding planes are found in the oldest extant buildings. Early beaded boards were used, not surprisingly, for wall panelling, wall partitions, doors, wainscoting (applied both vertically and horizontally), and as an ornamental trim detail

for the rounded edge of chair rails and open pantry shelving. Window, door, and fireplace surrounds, too, might have either the interior or exterior edge of the boards beaded.

The flat surfaces of such hand-planed boards are distinguished by shallow plane marks of varying width in the direction of the wood grain when viewed under raking light.

Industrial Revolution-Era Boards

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION in the late 1700s marked the beginning of a century of change in building technology. The transition from hand-planing tools to planing machines started in Eng-

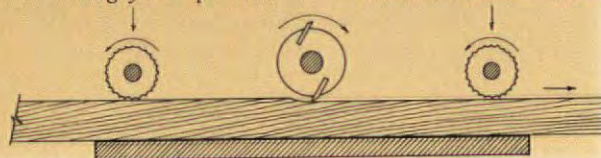
land with the invention of the first planing machine by Samuel Bentham in 1791. Bentham's Reciprocating Planing machine worked like a hand plane, employing fixed cutters to smooth wood on a bed that moved back and forth. The second stage in planing machine development occurred when Bramah invented and patented the Transverse Planer (also known as the Daniel's

Planer) in 1802. This machine worked by moving the cutters and the wood.

The Cylinder Planer, which uses cutters held in a rotating cylinder, was refined throughout the 19th century and is still standard today. In 1828, William Woodworth from Hudson, New York, patented a cylinder planing machine designed for planing, tongu-

(right) Whipple's reciprocating saw mill patented in 1857.

(below) The cutters held in a rotating cylinder planer.





A



B



C



D

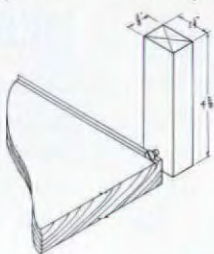
serving. Or the particular beaded pattern may no longer be available. For those reasons, and because it's also cheaper to repair than to replace, you'll probably want to keep your old beadboard. Beaded boards with a slightly damaged or partly missing beaded edge are often best left alone. However, you will have to splice in new material if the area of missing boards is large, or the damage is extensive.

To re-create a beaded edge yourself (on small or historical jobs), follow this sequence.

On hand-planed boards: An old bead plane with an appropriate size blade is ideal for re-creating a beaded edge. To re-create an irregular hand-planed beaded edge, another option is to make a "scratch bead" by drawing the sharply

filed edge of a screw along the wood. (See photos above).

To "dutch" in a new piece Paul Kebabian prepares a fresh edge by cutting away the rough wood with a backsaw (A) and cleaning out the corner of the cut with a chisel (B). Next, he cuts a replacement block to fit from wood that matches in species and grain. Then, he sets it in place on the board, marking the profile with a pencil and shaping it with a block plane.

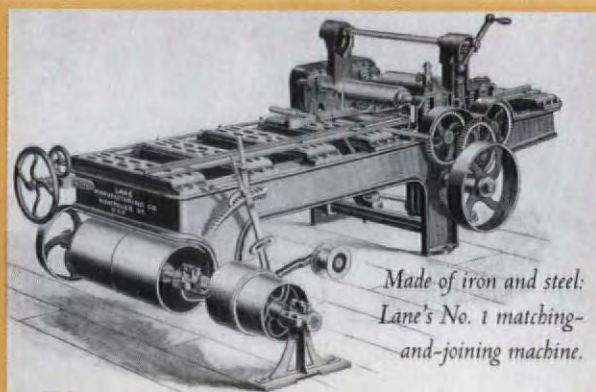


A simple scratch tool, like a wood block and sharpened screw, cuts a v-grooved bead.

The scratch beader (C) consists of a hand-size piece of hardwood with a screw secured near one end. Filing the screw on the front sharpens it to make a cutting edge. Paul makes the "scratch bead" by running the tool along the edge of the new wood (D). Changing the amount of pressure when making the

ing and grooving, and cutting boards in a sawmill. His patent was extended longer than any other, creating a monopoly on planing machine designs into the 1850s. Cylinder planed boards are distinguished by the uniform, parallel, shallow wave-like ridges or plane marks approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart and perpendicular to the wood grain. Careful milling with fine cutters, however, will leave few or no marks, and even when present, plane marks were sanded or scraped smooth in the best carpentry.

Further improvements followed and from here it was a short step to machines with specially shaped cutters, common by



*Made of iron and steel:
Lane's No. 1 matching-
and-joining machine.*

1860, that could mill moulded surfaces. The expansion of the Lane Manufacturing Company of Vermont was typical. In 1861, Dennis Lane, inventor and president, patented the revolutionary "Patent Lever Set" for feeding timber into a circular saw-mill by means of a hand lever. By

1870 the company was manufacturing an improved double-edger machine (to cut boards to a specific width after they came through the circular saw), and a matching-and-joining machine (for tongue-and-groove cutting). At the end of the century, the Montpelier-based compa-

ny had a worldwide reputation and was shipping their machines as far away as Brazil and Russia.

In the 1880s refinements to the planing machine allowed dimension lumber to be worked on three sides at once. Smaller moulding machines could mill four sides at a time and were capable of producing picture-frame mouldings. Machines, now often made entirely of metal, replaced hand planes for most shaping tasks except for fitting and high quality woodwork by craftsmen and master cabinetmakers.

Liz Pritchett is an architectural historian and conservator from East Calais, Vermont.




cut varies the depth of the bead.

Paul applies yellow (aliphatic resin) carpenter's glue that sets up in 20-30 minutes (E) and secures the new piece to the old with clamps (F).

When the glue is dry, he makes final touch ups with a veining and box chisel (G). Light sanding feather edges the bead and a slightly darker shade of paint distinguishes the new work from the old (H).

On machine-planed boards: The first step in reproducing machine-planed boards is copying the bead contour. Use a profile gauge made for this purpose, or trace the profile onto cardboard, placed at an open end or mid-board at a joint or saw cut. If stock knives in your area do not happen to match the profile of your old machine-planed beads, a custom knife can be ordered for a one-time

set-up fee. Experienced woodworkers with well equipped table saws or shapers sometimes grind their own knives, either from new blanks or old cutters, but this process requires making all knives identical and maintaining the steel temper.

It may be difficult and expensive to precisely duplicate machine-planed beaded boards. In fact, it may not even be advisable. If you like the museum approach or deem it appropriate to maintain the historical record, follow the current thinking of conservators: make your repairs or changes in a manner than will be evident in the future (aesthetic considerations notwithstanding). 

Special thanks to Paul Kebabian of Burlington, Vermont, and Woody Scovill of East Calais, Vermont.

Beaded Board Profiles



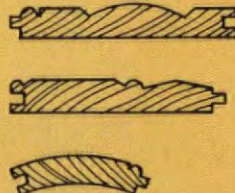
COLONIAL (COMMON UNTIL EARLY 19TH CENTURY):

Wide, hand-planed, random-width boards, about 1" thick with $\frac{1}{8}$ " to 1" side bead. Boards may be butted, shiplapped (detail), or otherwise matched.



MID-19TH CENTURY:

Machined-planed, random or uniform width with matched (tongue-and-groove) edges. Beads appear at edge and center of board and on one or both faces.



LATE-19TH CENTURY:

Machine-planed, uniform width with matched edges. Boards are thinner ($\frac{5}{8}$ ") and often mated other decorative profiles with bead. Curved boards available for special applications (stairs, for example).



TURN OF THE CENTURY AND LATER: Beaded boards most common as $\frac{5}{8}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " tongue-and-groove "ceiling" used to finish a wide variety of surfaces. Profiles of one-, two-, three-, and four-bead multiples widely popular.

Strip Flooring Kinks

Repair Tips for Tongue-and-Groove Floors

by The OHJ Technical Staff

WOOD FLOORS ARE SO COMMON IN OLD houses we tend to think of them only as surfaces and not what they really are — complex carpentry systems. Strip flooring, the narrow, interlocking tongue-and-groove boards produced by machines since the mid-19th century, is one of the most sophisticated types, creating a continuous wood “skin” that is strong, long-lasting, attractive, and widely used. Yet even strip floors get injured or wear out in spots and need a saw, hammer, and nails to set them right again.

“Kinks” are what they used to call carpenter’s or machinist’s tricks-of-the-trade in the days before income tax. Here’s an assortment of kinks that have been around for years and are still good to try when you’re repairing or fixing problems with strip tongue-and-groove flooring.

➤ Every carpenter has a favorite method for cutting a defective strip out of a whole floor. Essentially they all work the same way. First cross-cut the strip at either end of the damage with a chisel, drill, or saw. (If there is no subfloor make these cuts over joists so the patch can be supported.) Then split or saw the strip lengthwise with the grain so the tongue and groove are released and the pieces lift out.

➤ Mending a tongue-and-groove floor often involves inserting a new strip between two fixed pieces. The common method is to “shoehorn” the piece in by cutting the bottom shoulder off the groove (figure 1). Saw or plane off the shoulder at a bias so it clears the previous tongue as the piece arcs its way in place. Flattening the bottom of the replacement tongue a little helps to get the strip started. Once the patch is in place it can be face-nailed or anchored with a screw (see below).

➤ If cutting the shoulder off the patch strip won’t work, try removing the tongue (figure 2). The tongue is ripped off the strip at about a 45 degree angle and nailed to mate with the board ahead using 4d finishing nails. Then wood glue or epoxy cement is applied to the cut surface and the patch worked into place. This method avoids the cosmetic problems of facenailing and is serviceable for small repairs or low-traffic areas.

➤ Sometimes you have to reverse the lay of the floor in repairs or new work. In these cases, use a spline cut from a thin strip of hardwood to make a common tongue for two grooves (figure 3). This joint maintains the integrity of the floor.

➤ Avoiding nailing defects and blemishes, such as hammer “kisses” that show up on the top edge of the flooring, is an important part of good floor carpentry. Always drive the nail the last few blows with a nail set. The set can be used in the normal manner or, if it is a smooth cylinder, laid sideways right on the tongue. Drive nails into the tongue at about a 50 degree angle to draw the joints tight, and predrill oak and other hard wood to prevent splitting.



➤ First floors tend to develop the most problems because they see the most use. Fortunately, they are usually over unfinished basements, which means there is access to the underside of the subfloor. If you are lucky enough to have such access, try to anchor flooring patches from below with screws (figure 4). Work directly under the fault and drive in one or more round- or flat-head wood screws no further than halfway through the finish flooring. Screws are also good for squeaky or spongy floors. Have an assistant upstairs walk the floor to locate the problem, then stand on the offending spot while the screw is installed.

➤ The traditional nails used to install flooring are slender cut nails, which hold well in wood because of their rectangular profile. Though repairs are often easier with finishing nails, other fasteners such as barbed flooring brads, cement-coated nails, or rosin-coated nails are made to resist pullout and will increase the life of a floor repair.

➤ Many flooring patches have to be face-nailed from above (figure 5). This usually means predrilling nail holes, setting the nail heads below the surface, and covering them with wood-colored filler. Filler is rarely invisible, however, and often falls out over time. As an alternative, try a fine woodwork technique. Pare back a sliver of wood with a sharp, thin-bladed chisel and drive the nail in this pocket (figure 6). First cut both sides of the pocket parallel to the grain (a razor knife works well), then gently peel up the flap with a chisel. After the nail is set below the surface, glue the sliver and weight it down. Sand flush when dry.


➤ Single or multiple floor strips that have sunken slightly due to a defect in the subfloor or joist can be pried up by using a wood screw (figure 7). Turn the screw in as near as possible to the depressed area and just enough to grab well. Then place a wood block on a sound part of the floor as a fulcrum. Use a prybar to lift the boards back. Once the flooring is level, support it in place by driving one or more 8d finishing nails at an angle into the subfloor under the screw. Another approach would be injecting epoxy consolidant or silicone sealant if there is access above or below the fault.

➤ Squeaks are sometimes caused by subfloor boards that work against a joist because they are loose. When there is access from underneath, driving a shim or shingle dipped in glue between the joist and subfloor is often a fix. Stronger measures require anchoring the subfloor with a cleat. At the problem area attach a roughly 2"x2" block flush with the top edge of the joist using wood screws. Then screw the cleat to the subfloor while someone stands on the floor upstairs.

➤ If it is only possible to work from the top, finish side, sometimes toenailing the floor to the joist stops the noise (figure 8). Starting at the "heart" of the squeak, drive a pair of rod finishing nails towards each other in a V so that they grab the joist solidly (opposing nails resist pull out). Repeat



every half foot or so down the joist in both directions until the squeak is cured. Then set the nails and fill holes.

➤ Squeaks in strip floors can also result from joints where tongues and grooves work against each other, nails slide in their holes, or flooring fits loosely because the wood has shrunk. Provided there is a subfloor, toenailing into these joints with a pair of nails may silence them. 

ROWS AND ROWS OF ROW HOUSES

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

IN URBAN AREAS, WHERE LAND IS SCARCE AND DEAR, THE ROW HOUSE IS AMONG THE OLDEST AND most popular American residential forms. In old sections of our earliest cities — Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, New York — the row house still dominates the street scene. And today, in the suburbs ringing modern cities and towns, the great-grandchildren of the venerable row house, these newer ones universally called town houses, stand along countless cul-de-sacs, gathering small families, childless couples, and single householders into a familiar embrace.

The vertical, close-together houses in urban areas throughout the U.S. and Canada could properly be called row houses: San Francisco's embellished wooden ladies come immediately to mind. But for now we'll leave houses without common walls for another article. Here we'll celebrate party-wall houses: those with

per block. Cozying up to the neighbors at both sides also minimizes expensive heat loss through the walls.

The idea of a party wall shared with the next-door neighbor on one or both sides is older than America, as it is based on medieval English and European precedents. The first row houses (probably two separate houses built with no space between them) had a disconcerting tendency to go up in flames, sometimes taking whole blocks of neighboring structures with them. (That's what happened in London's Great Fire of 1666.) It wasn't long before urban building codes required the construction of firewalls — fireproof walls that project well above the roof line between adjoining buildings to discourage the sparks of a fire at one house from spreading.

In the United States, the row house is something of a regional phenomenon. The farther east and north you look for them, the more row houses you are likely to spot. However, the idea also made its way westward to industrial cities including Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Chicago, and even showed up on the west coast.



Above: Boston, 1870s: Late 19th century rows were often faced with stone in New York and Boston, while builders steadfastly stayed with local brick in Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore. These Back Bay Second Empire houses were rendered in both materials. Opposite: The unwavering line of a classic row: scrubbed marble steps tell us we're in Baltimore.

shared walls, especially those built in multiple-dwelling rows. It's easy to recognize the savings in square footage, and construction and maintenance costs, inherent in tall, narrow buildings without side yards. The street frontage of some antique row houses is as little as 12 feet, so many building lots could be sold



The earliest party-wall houses were designed and built one unit at a time, according to the architectural preferences of individual owners. The first builder on the block provided the walls his neighbors would later share. By the late 18th century, however, architecture began to reflect the philosophical influences of the Age of Reason. Acknowledging city dwellers' craving for more rational living conditions after centuries of unplanned chaos, speculative builders developed orderly blocks of row houses with a unified design. The houses stood along courts or squares, even marched down both sides of the narrow streets, like an artist's exercise in perspective drawing. Despite the density of site plans, row houses were quite different from tenements, the rental apartment buildings of the same era. Whereas a row house belonged to a single family, multi-storey tenements offered small, one-storey flats. (Tenements, by the way, could be perfectly respectable places to live; it wasn't until late in the 19th century that the word became generally synonymous with "slum.")

By its nature, the row house occupies the entire width of its lot at the front. (Occasionally, a narrow interior passageway at one side leads to the rear yard.) The house is one,



Gordon Row, Savannah, 1854: Most historic row houses are found in northern and midwestern cities; a few were built in the South, especially in Savannah, Richmond, and Charleston.

rarely two, rooms wide, plus a hall. The interior plan is generally either two or three rooms front to back in the main block; if a center room exists, it is windowless. A narrower rear wing, perhaps with a stair hall separating it from the main block, might be extended on the rear. Row houses range are most often two to four or five storeys (a very few are only one-storey). The bottom floor might be a raised basement (also called an English basement), and there might be a cellar and an attic, all of which were put to maximum use as living or working areas. Sometimes a small cold-storage room or coal bin was dug out under the sidewalk in front of the house.

Chicago, late 19th century: Row houses could be made to look like a single large mansion, allowing several householders to imagine themselves the owner of a grand establishment. These ponderous Romanesque-revival houses on State Street are among the most elaborate row houses in America.

THE ROW HOUSE IS A BUILDING TYPE RATHER THAN A STYLE, OF course, so its architecture varies with date of construction. Row houses have relatively little wall and roof surface visible from the street; nevertheless, they reflect most of the trends that



touched American building in the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. By the choice of wall materials, cornice elaboration, dormers, belt and string courses, basements and foundations, and, especially, varied door and window treatments, the builder could use the facade to make an architectural fashion statement. The width of the building, measured by the number of windows (later, bay windows) across the front, the number of storeys (the higher the better), and the elaboration of ornament, particularly in the doorway, all contributed to the elegance of the house, and hinted at the status of its owner.

The earliest American row houses built by English settlers are believed to have been constructed in Philadelphia around 1691. The ten half-timbered, two-storey buildings with face walls of brick, known as Budd's Long Row, were probably similar to those the colonists remembered from England. The end building was said to have been 12' x 22', probably one room wide and two rooms deep.

The surest clues to the date and style of a row house are its front door and windows. In the colonial era, windows were small and small-paned, the doors generally plain or with simple panels. Small rectangular fanlights brought daylight into the entrance hall, but sidelights were uncommon until the 19th century. Shed or gabled dormers lit the attic storey. Pedimented



Philadelphia, 18th century: Corner houses offered options in floorplan, with more light and air. The entry could be moved to the long side, too, providing a gracious center hall. A cornice return creates a neat pediment.

dormers were a mark of quality in more expensive houses.

Georgian houses tend to have rather elaborate doorways, or frontispieces. Some have pilasters and a pediment, perhaps even a massive broken arched pediment. Windows may have stone or brick lintels with keystones or (flat) jack arches, and stone sills. Decoration in the Georgian period, roughly from the 1740s through the 1780s, is generally heavy, projecting well out from the surface of the wall. Brickwork was sometimes laid in decorative patterns such as Flemish bond with dark glazed headers, for instance. Cornices at the roof line are bold, too, perhaps with toothlike dentils and modillions (decorative brackets). Double-hung windows became standard at this point, although only the bottom sash is movable. The sash configuration was generally nine-over-nine or eight-over-twelve panes. Gabled dormers, sometimes with their own pediments and colonnettes, were common.

Things calmed down considerably in the Federal (or American Adam) period, from about 1780 until about 1830. Walls were smooth and unobtrusive: brick with thin, barely noticeable



Alexandria, Virginia, late 18th century: brick houses in the Federal or Adam style, each three storeys tall and three bays wide. Note the projection of the fire wall well above the roofline.



Manchester, N.H., c. 1890: Despite differences in size and elaboration, row houses varied remarkably little as they were built over the centuries, for different social classes, and in far-flung cities. This row was built as mill-worker housing.

mortar joints. Panels carved with neoclassical motifs such as urns, swags, and garlands often appeared in the spandrels below windows. More often, the panels were simple, recessed rectangles with no decoration at all. Windows were larger, with larger panes and delicate muntins. Six-over-six double-hung windows made their appearance around this time. Entrances were still prominent, but less ponderous than in Georgian houses. Porticoes had slim Adamesque columns and details; doorways were framed by elliptical fanlights with spidery, leaded-glass patterns. Dormers and cornices, too, were more delicately drawn.

From the 1830s through the 1850s, Greek Revival styling predominated. Small but highly assertive square porticoes with heavy columns and cornices were typical. The front door generally was topped by a rectangular light with three or more panes, and sidelights brought additional light into the entry hall. Six-over-six windows remained standard.

Although there are relatively few row houses in the Gothic Revival style, this competitor of the Greek Revival could make a considerable style impact with pointed arches at the door or in the tracery of fanlights above the door. Other exam-

ples, with simple square hood moulds over windows, are more restrained.

Around the middle of the 19th century, the Italianate style ushered in the "brownstone era" as smooth walls of dark sandstone ashlar, accented by round arch doorways, became common. Later, Eastlake touches appeared in turned porch posts and incised decoration. Row houses in the Queen Anne style are relatively rare, but the examples that exist are striking. The Romanesque Revival style brought with it massive arches and a great deal of heavily carved stone and terra-cotta decoration. The formal lines of Academic Classicism — French or English influences played out in masonry — distinguish many a big-city row of the late 19th or early 20th century. Finally, in the early 20th century, the Colonial Revival style brought row-house history full circle. Even today, most town houses appear to be aiming at some form of Colonial Revival decoration.



Row House Living

IN MORE AFFLUENT HOUSEHOLDS DOUBLE PARLORS, WHICH COULD be thrown together as a single large space for entertaining or, for more intimate use, separated by hinged or pocket doors between the two rooms, occupied the first or second floors. In 19th-century Philadelphia row houses, kitchens were usually placed at the back of the house, in a rear wing if there was one; in New York houses of the Victorian era, they were likely to be located in a raised basement.

Family and servants' bedrooms were on the upper storeys. The higher the room, the simpler the decoration and the lower the status of the occupant. Alternatively, servants might sleep on the second floor of the rear service wing.

Staircases sometimes ran straight up from floor to floor; sometimes they were dizzyingly tight little "winders" corkscrewing their way upward one floor at a



Above: Colonnade Row by A.J. Davis, New York City, 1836: A rare remaining example of a monumental classical portico unifying a row of individual houses. Left: Park Slope, Brooklyn, 1880s: In the mid-19th century, the Italianate style ushered in the "brownstone era," named for the dark sandstone used for facades. These brownstones lean towards Romanesque.

time; most often they turned off a landing near the top or bottom. Invariably they were steep and narrow. Such vertical living must have been a daily test of strength, agility, and organizational skill for the women who were charged with the care of these houses, whether mistresses or maids. Imagine the wailing infant on the third floor, the kitchen in the basement, someone calling at the front door, the single bathroom (if there was one) somewhere in between—and Madame in transit, negotiating dark, narrow stairs in her billowing petticoats!

Dark they were; in comparison to freestanding houses, row houses suffer from a marked shortage of light and cross

ventilation. The situation was partially remedied in early houses by light wells for raised basements and sometimes, as in Philadelphia, “piazzas” in the center of the building to contain both stairs and a side door to the rear yard. Not surprisingly, such confined living frequently drove the inhabitants out of doors, to sit in privacy in their rear gardens or within hailing distance of neighbors. Baltimore’s famous white marble stoops, regularly scoured to shining perfection by conscientious housewives, were popular family gathering spots in fair weather. New Yorkers also took to stoop-sitting early on. By the early 20th century, front porches also were common in many row-house blocks; the vistas sighted past dozens of porch posts down the length of a city block are a particularly endearing aspect of row-house living.

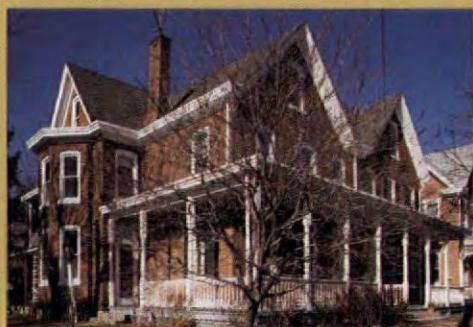


In the 20th century, rear wings became simpler and smaller. They disappeared altogether in the Airlite row house, which first appeared between the world wars and became almost universal after World War II. The Airlite’s greater width (16 to 20 feet) could readily accommodate two rooms across the back of the house. The living room spanned the front of the first floor, with a narrow dining room and kitchen behind it; the



Above: Philadelphia, 1894: Not all rows put conformity and rhythm first, as evidenced by this Victorian interpretation of Dutch architecture in brick, sandstone, and terra cotta. The grand scale allows an elegant center-hall plan, not common in row houses. Left: Washington, D.C., 1920s-’30s: Popular “between-the-wars” row houses grew wider. These are probably Airlite houses.

second floor had room for a big master bedroom in front and two narrow children’s rooms in the rear.



Carlisle, Pennsylvania, mid 19th century

has windows in one side wall as well as in the front, and a suburban-size yard (right).

Rowless Party Walls

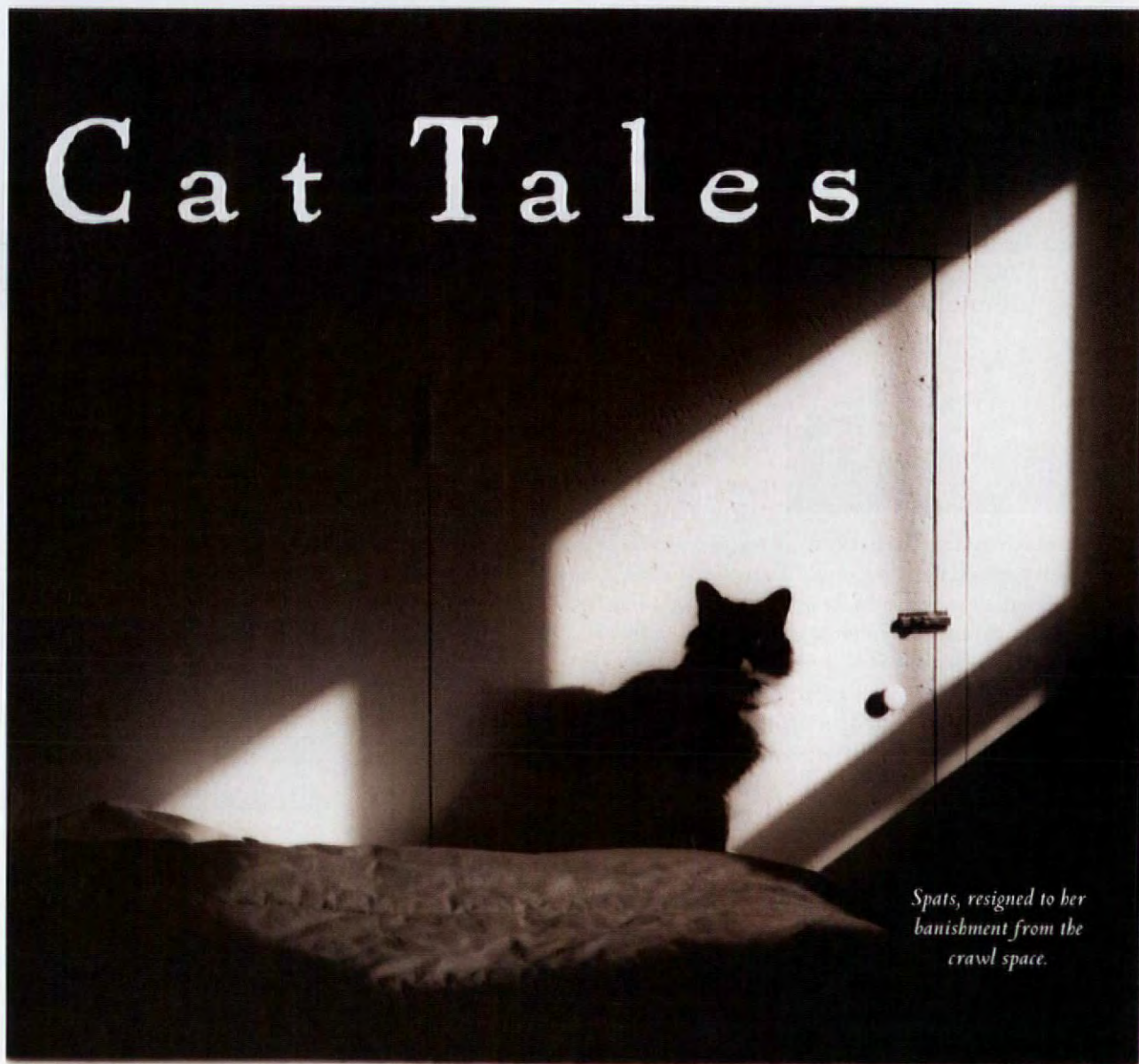
A less densely urban type of party-wall house was the double house, called a “twin” in Philadelphia. Two homes share a wall, leaving three sides of each unit windowed, as in the pretty example, left.

In the 1930s, Frank Lloyd Wright designed the “Suntop” houses on Philadelphia’s Main Line (to the new suburbs). His quadruplex variation followed a form found in Philadelphia from the early 20th century. The Suntop cube has a cross-shaped party wall at its center, with a two-storey residential unit in each corner. Thus, each dwelling



Ardmore, Pennsylvania, 1934

Cat Tales



Spats, resigned to her banishment from the crawl space.

WHEN WE ASKED FOR READERS' STORIES OF OLD-HOUSE LIVING WITH CATS, A DELUGE OF letters arrived: tales of tabby tumbling into the ductwork, trapped on the rooftop, or ruining a tiling project. Cats and their adventures are common part of the restoration experience. In fact, it seems there are very few parts of an old house that kitty won't investigate, and many distressed owners have spent hours rescuing them from their feline escapades. Fortunately, curiosity hasn't killed any of these cats — although from some of the experiences recounted here, it's a good thing that they have nine lives.

Cat On a Cold Roof

OUR THREE-STOREY VICTORIAN ROWHOUSE HAS no attic. Instead, the three adjoining houses share an undivided crawlspace spanning the 54' width above the third-floor ceilings. Since our house has but two skimpy closets, any found space, even the empty spot created by the 5' knee walls near the eaves, was immediately designated as potential storage area. Here we installed a trap-style door, inconspicuous to all but our cat Spats. In her continuing quest to escape the menacing advances of our two-year-old son, Spats had finally found the ultimate solution to her problem: a private place to hide and sleep. She became so obsessed with this area that she would paw endlessly on the doorcatch, meow loudly, and throw herself against the door when the bolt was on. We always gave in.

One chilly November day, she disappeared. Twenty-four hours later, when she was still missing, we got worried and checked Spats' third floor lair. Our calls were met with distant plaintive meows from somewhere way up above. Apparently, Spats had decided to explore the storage area and had climbed up the roof joists and through a cat-size opening directly into the roof.

She could have been anywhere in the rooftops of any of the three houses and there was no way a human being could get inside the roof, from either inside or out. Armed with a flashlight and a smelly bowl of cat food, my husband Terry squeezed his hand and arm through the opening and called. It was several hours before Spats came close enough for him to grab her and pull her down. She had been up there for two days.

Afterwards, we cleared out a nice space for Spats in a dining room cupboard, which worked for awhile. But every night around 3 AM she goes over to the door, paws at the door-catch, purrs loudly, and then flops into bed, in resigned acceptance of her lost territory.

— JERI DANYLEYKO
Toronto, Ontario

Cat-Astrophe

MY CAT STINKER HAS SUFFERED MUCH DURING THE RENOVATION of our c.1889 Victorian. Her grey-and-white fur is now grey and grey, thanks to our on-going demolition work. Besides the usual episodes of getting lost in the ceiling and locked in the corner cupboard, Stinker endured one particularly harrowing adventure.

We had removed the remuddled textured ceiling from an upstairs bedroom, and Stinker learned to amuse herself



Reader Joan Lee's cat Alice disappears into a plumbing hole — once a toilet, oddly situated in the middle of a hallway.

around in relative safety. Parts of her fur are even turning white again — although that could be due to some of her experiences here.

— CYNTHIA BOMBACH
Greensburg, Penn.

Cats At Work!

MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE TWO CATS, IO AND JORDAN. THESE CATS, who are not related but look strikingly similar, are involved in everything we do at home. It's impossible to operate otherwise. The cats survey every job and inspect progress as we go. Every project goes something like this: clear a work area and the cats appear immediately, knowing something is up. The sound of power tools doesn't faze them in the least. They'll even jump up on sawhorses and fall asleep as we hack away. Cut a hole, and blink! a cat tail is sticking out. Try to hammer a nail — pound, pound, push the cat away, pound, pound, push the cat away. Next thing I know, there's a cat on my shoulder.

We shut the cats away when the work is highly dangerous, but some projects take weeks or months to complete and the cats have to come out sometime. We've tried covering holes in the floor with everything short of 16-ton slabs of steel, and the



Alan Doyle and Io peer into the basement, trying to figure out how to support a new section of floor.

cats just push the stuff aside. We put them upstairs to keep them out of the mess on the first floor. Suddenly, loose plaster is raining down in the kitchen as a cat traipses around between the floors.

We've given up keeping them out of holes and debris. Now we do a head count before we close up any holes. We also introduce the cats to the contractors we hire and stress that we would like to see two whole cats each day when we get home from work. We try to keep the cats in a room or on a floor the contractors won't need, so we post Cat Status signs, like "Cats Inside!" or "Cats on 3rd Floor."

— LORI DOYLE
Troy, New York

Kitty Mortar

WE HAD JUST MOVED INTO OUR 1877 VICTORIAN AND HAD decided to tile the bathroom floor. In the early afternoon, we laid down the cement-mortar bed, so that by the next day the floor would be ready for ceramic tile. Before we went to sleep, my husband Don went to see how the cement was hardening. Feeling no great urge to gaze at hardening cement, I got into bed. Within a few minutes, I heard a good deal of expletives coming from the bathroom. I ran



The Brennans sent us this photo of Meergui snoozing on a ladder in their 1926 Colonial Revival.

to find out about the commotion. Apparently, our black cat had decided to use the entire cement floor as a giant litter box, clawing all the mortar up into a neat pile in the center of the room!

— AMY HANDFORD-CUMMINGS & DONAVAN CUMMINGS
St. Paul, Minn.

The Cistern Cat

THREE YEARS AGO, WE MOVED INTO OUR CIRCA-1879 VICTORIAN, and shortly thereafter gutted the current dining room, leaving bare studs and floor joists. Unknown to us, we apparently broke a foundation window.

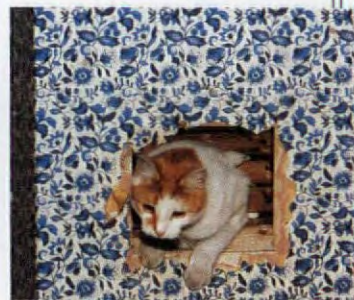
I usually leave home by 6:30 AM. I began hearing the cries of a cat in those early morning hours. This went on for several days, until my oldest daughter heard them, too. A search was conducted in the crawl space beneath the

kitchen, and sure enough, there in the bottom of a ten-foot cistern was a cat.

The cat had been there several days without food and water. There didn't appear to be any easy way to rescue it, so we lowered food and water and dropped a blanket over the side of the cistern in hopes that it would climb out. Twenty-four hours passed and the food and water were consumed, but the cat did not come out. Convinced that we had an extremely agitated alley cat, my husband and son-in-law, armed with long-sleeved jackets and welding gloves to protect themselves, crawled under the house, dragging a long-handled fishing net bolted to a wooden handle from a tree-trimming tool. While my husband held my son-in-law by his belt, they attempted to scoop the cat into the net, but it lay perfectly still on the bottom. To force the cat to run around the cistern, my husband doused it with a bucket of water. The solution was effective and the cat, soaking wet and extremely angry, was nabbed. With welding gloves on, my husband grabbed the cat at the back of the neck, and did a tightrope walk across an open joist (in the dining room where the floor was torn out) to a window and dropped the cat outside.

Two hours later, we saw a neighborhood girl carrying the same cat. Woops — the cat was a gentle pet, and declawed. She mentioned that it had been missing for a week. I didn't tell her what it had been through.

— CHERYL HUGHES
Greenville, Ohio



Reader Janet Slocum's cat Pebbles likes to use the old woodstove hole as a hang-out — even though it leads nowhere.

The Old-House Cat

IN JULY OF 1986, WE WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BUYING AN 1887 Italianate, and we were also in need of a cat. At the shelter we found a mature black one, whom we named Piewackett on the ride home. He adjusted to our mobile home and dogs, but remained aloof. Later, when we took possession of our grand old lady, Piewackett underwent a personality transformation. Curious about every nook and cranny of the house, he began to purr and shower us with affection. Was his original home a big old house? Whatever, he became a different "person." Our fat, fuzzy fellow seems to have Victorian tendencies, so we like to think of him as a real old-house cat.

— CHERI B. ANDERSON
Hudson, New York

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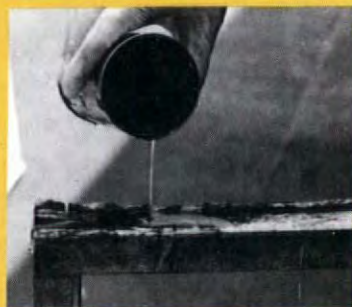
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OLD-HOUSE MECHANIC

Classic Clamps

by Gordon Bock

WHEN YOU NEED HELP holding things together for short time — say, when assembling and gluing finish carpentry or rigging a temporary set-up — clamps are champs. Along with vices, their close cousins, clamps (the Brits call them cramps) form an old and large family of tools, and one that is still growing as new speed mechanisms are developed. Many trades have their own specialized clamps but the basic types find use in almost any part of house construction.

Hand Screws (Parallel Clamps) — Hand screws are the original woodworking clamps and nice examples of woodcraft in their own right. In traditional screws the hardwood jaws are connected by an all-wood shoulder screw at about the center and a similar back screw at the rear. The shoulder screw passes freely through one jaw and is threaded through the other; the back screw is threaded through the opposite jaw and pushes against a socket in the mating jaw. In use, the jaws are adjusted up to the work with the shoulder screw, then forced tight with the back screw. Modern versions use steel spindles that swivel so the jaws can be closed in an offset or angled position, making it possible to clamp tapered or irregularly shaped work.

Hand screws are still widely used for cabinet work and similar carpentry. The broad wood jaws are gentle

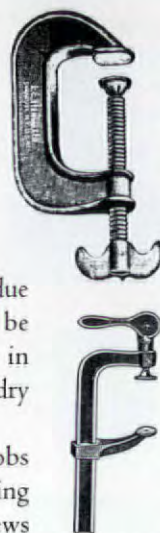
on soft materials and create a deep throat that can reach into a project or over several square inches of surface. If the threads of an all-wood hand screw become stiff, clean and lubricate them sparingly with wax — but never oil. Screws that have frozen due to moisture swelling should not be forced. Instead, place the clamp in warm sun or near a heat source to dry the wood gradually.

C-Clamps — On jobs

such as metalworking where hand screws don't have enough strength or are too large, C-clamps take over. These tools are all-iron frames resembling the letter C that have a fixed jaw at one end and an operating screw and swivel head at the other. C-clamps are identified by their throat dimension and are made in sizes from 1" to 16" and over. Variations on the C-clamp are G-clamps (where one jaw

adjusts by sliding on a bar) and eccentric clamps (that close the jaw through cam rather than screw action).

C-clamp threads must be kept lightly oiled and dirt- and rust-free for good operation. Swivel heads should operate freely too or replaced by prying open the crimps that hold



Iron C-clamp (top) and G-clamp with eccentric (below).

them to the ball on the screw end. Overstressing a C-clamp will bend the frame or damage the screw; always use clamps of adequate size.

Bar and Pipe Clamps — Assembling multiple boards or large items such as doors, windows, and furniture requires clamps that can span several

feet. Old-time cabinet maker's clamps were wood rails with a movable jaw at one end and a fixed jaw and screw at the other. By the turn of the century, steel versions were being made in lengths up to 10', and metal bar clamps are still common today in all sizes. Pipe clamps, which use owner-supplied black pipe as the frame, are popular because jaws can be mounted to custom-length pipes or moved between pipes. The weight of pipe clamps and older bar clamps can make them unwieldy, though, when several are attached; modern versions try to



Wood (left) and steel-bar furniture clamps.

Handscrews in wood (top) and with steel spindles (above).



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OLD-HOUSE MECHANIC

overcome this disadvantage by using lightweight metals.

Edge and Combination Clamps (Universal Clamps) — Made in many configurations over the decades, edge clamps are all designed for gluing mouldings and trim to the edges of doors, tabletops, and cabinets. Two opposed screws and swivel heads grab the work on its sides while the third screw holds the assembly together.

Combination clamps can do the same job plus hold large mitered frames together. In these clamps two arms with swivel shoes close in on the sides of the work like a metal mosquito while

the central screw applies pressure.

When using clamps in finish carpentry be sure to protect the wood from jaw marks. Broad wood jaws are less likely to cause marring but metal jaws need to be cushioned with leather flaps or pads made for this purpose. Plywood blocks also help distribute the force and protect the surface. As the saying goes, you can't have enough clamps. A dozen in each size is not a lot in a working shop, but for old-house work never buy less than two of a kind. Clamps are most practical in pairs (for even force and balance) and working with



*A c. 1900
combination clamp*

just one clamp is kind of like trying to use a lone bookend.

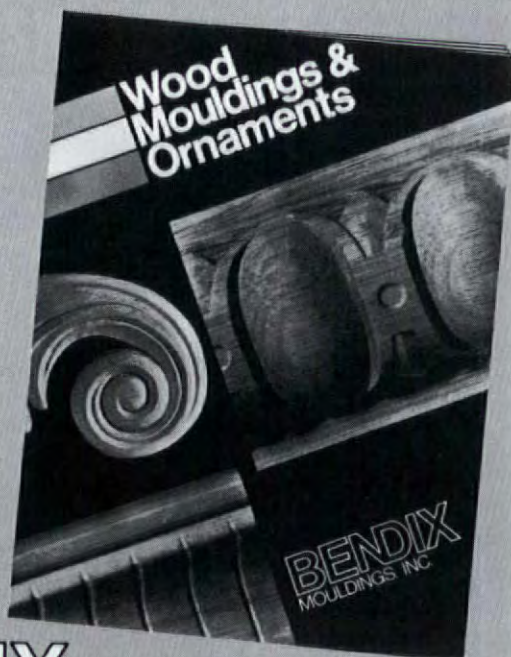
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In the process of searching for these "flawless" quilts, we also have the opportunity to buy many other beautiful antique quilts with minor imperfections. These quilts are in remarkable condition for their age (some are over a hundred years old).

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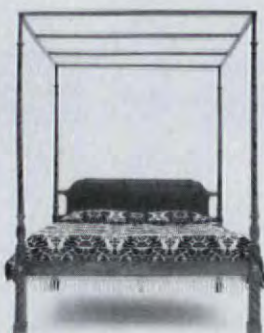
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RESTORATION PRODUCTS

Tool Time

by Lynn Elliott



Porter-Cable's Reversing Hammer Drill Kit features model #7751 in an extra-long, metal carrying case so the tool can be stored with the bit mounted.

Dynamic Drill

A GOOD-SIZED CARPENTRY JOB NEVER gets done without boring a few holes in thick wood or masonry, but who has room in their tool arsenal for a heavy-duty drill and a rotary hammer? That's where a versatile hammerdrill like one from the new line by Porter-Cable can be ideal for old-house work. The rotary hammers common for over a decade now are large and ten or more pounds heavy — much like a Gatling gun in looks and use — and overkill for small holes. Porter-Cable's #7751 hammerdrill is closer in size and weight to a pistol, making it

The hot putty remover's heated blade makes quick work of hardened window putty.



much easier to handle for holes $\frac{1}{2}$ " and under — plus it can work as two tools. A twist of a knob engages either percussive turning (for tough boring in concrete and steel) or the regular operation of a $\frac{1}{2}$ " drill. The Porter-Cable hammerdrills all pack hefty 6-amp motors and electronic trigger controls in a trim Euro-styled body and come in three models: #7739 (variable speed, reversing), #7751 (variable speed, reversing with dual torque settings), and #97751 (#7751 with steel carrying case). Prices range from \$210 to \$265. For the nearest distributor, contact Porter-Cable Corporation, 4825 Hwy 45 North, P.O. Box 2468, Dept. OHJ, Jackson, TN 38302-2468; (901) 668-8600.

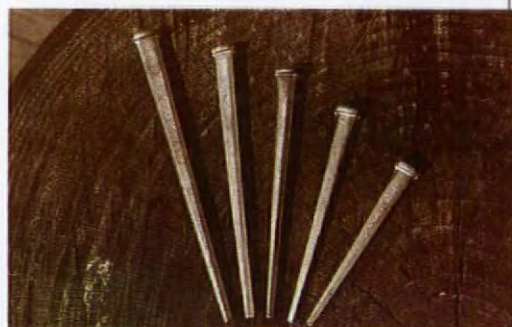
Putty In Your Hands

"I'M REMOVING OLD WINDOW putty," wrote an OHJ reader, "but heat guns and chemicals are slow and tricky. Any other methods you can pass along?" As a matter of fact, there is. The Milwaukee Hot Putty Remover is an 8- $\frac{1}{4}$ " long tool with an attached blade that heats to 200°F. It softens the putty, but won't shatter the window glass. The hot putty remover's light weight and narrow 2" width makes it handy for working on intricate, multi-paned sash, like the lattice windows on Queen Anne houses. Two replacement blades are included, and additional blades are available separately. MHT Products also carries other useful tools for restorers, such as a putty softener, cordless heat gun, and the

Rollerwash, which spins paint rollers clean and dry in two minutes. The hot putty remover retails for \$19.95. For a list of distributors, contact MHT Products, Inc., 2755 S.160th St., Dept. OHJ, New Berlin, WI 53151; (800) 558-8880.

It's Hip to Be Square

WHAT'S OLD, YET NEW? SQUARE-CUT nails made of stainless steel. Wheeling-Pittsburgh produces the La Belle nails, a new line of solid stainless



Square-cut nails displace wood fibers as they're being driven, so there's less chance the wood will split.

steel, square-cut nails — the standard machine-made nail shape until the 1880s. Although the modern metal is a historical giveaway, the combination of strong, rust resistant stainless steel with the superior hold of a square-cut nail is a winner, particularly for demanding exteriors, such as porch projects. The La Belle square-cut nails come in 8, 10, 12, 16, and 20 penny sizes. For information, contact Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corp., 1134 Market St., Dept. OHJ, Wheeling, WV 26003; (304) 234-2223.

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ORNATE CAST-IRON STAIRCASES WERE noted features on the facades of 19th-century rowhouses. For an authentic replacement, Steptoe & Wife has designed the Kensington cast-iron staircase. Made of modular components and assembled on site, the Kensington can be adapted to suit full or half-flight staircases and can also be custom painted. Each riser is decorated with floral scrollwork, and the treads are covered by open grates. Cast-iron balusters or railings in steel or polished brass tubes are available. Each standard 36" module, which includes a tread, riser, two sides, and the bolting system, costs \$250 ppd. For information, contact Steptoe and Wife

Antiques, Ltd., 322 Geary Ave., Dept. OHJ, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 2C7; (416) 530-4200.



The 19th-century style Kensington staircase is made of modular cast-iron components and has a low-maintenance, baked enamel finish.



Opening A New Door

IF YOU'RE UNABLE to enjoy ornate brass locksets because reproductions don't fit your replacement doors, Hardware +Plus has the solution for you: historically-styled door hardware sized for pre-drilled doors. Since the backplates for most reproduction door hardware are

The backplate on this ornate brass door hardware is slightly enlarged so it will fit pre-drilled replacement doors.

too narrow to cover pre-drilled holes, Hardware +Plus has recast vintage door hardware in lacquered brass, widening the backplates by $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Often another problem is that old-style lock latches aren't wide enough for the openings on replacement doors, so all pieces have been modified to function in either mortise or tubular lock applications — an asset for restoration projects because they can work on both old doors and any new additions. Backplates that are slightly oversized to cover existing $2\frac{1}{2}$ " borings are also offered. Entry sets, interior door sets, and even push-button privacy sets with emergency releases are available. The hardware ranges in

price from \$8.99 to \$39.99 for individual parts. For information, contact Hardware +Plus, Inc., 701 E. Kingsley Rd., Dept. OHJ, Garland, TX 75041; (214) 271-0319.

Pleasing Pediments

KENTUCKY MILLWORK HAS ADDED A new reproduction pediment design to its growing complement of architectural woodwork. The Ram's Head pediment can be custom made to any entryway's measurements in a variety of hardwoods and softwoods — from ash to zebrawood. The broken pediment design features crown and dentil mouldings with a center urn. When finished, the pediment can be stained or painted white. Kentucky Millwork also has a number of historically-appropriate entry frames, which include single or double doors with jambs, pilasters, heads, and pediments. A full line of architectural mill-



The crowning touch for your entryway: the 110" x 27" Ram's Head Pediment with classic Early American motifs.

work and casework, such as windows, staircases, mantels, and cabinets, are offered as well. For a catalog, send \$2 to Kentucky Millwork, P.O. Box 33276, Dept. OHJ, Louisville, KY 40232; (502) 451-3456.

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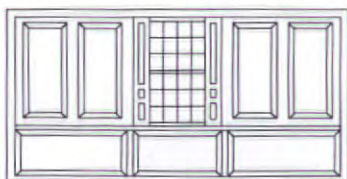
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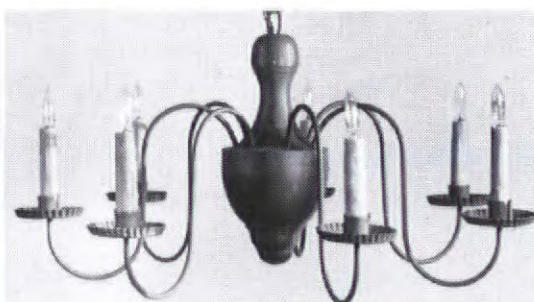
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RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

AS A FINISHING TOUCH TO A DINING room, a friend and I were asked to hang a framed, 19th-century mirror on the wall. The mirror measured 5' x 6', was very heavy, and the frame was somewhat fragile. Rather than try to secure hooks to the wall and actually hang the mirror, we found a way to rest the mirror on a shelf at the bottom.

We secured a piece of 4' long angle iron with several lag screws fastened into the studs in the wall, creating a place for the mirror to sit. Then, we

rested the mirror on the angle iron and tipped it back against the wall. Since the real weight of the mirror was distributed evenly along the angle iron, the top of the mirror only had to be secured to the wall with eye hooks and framing wire (strong and tight enough to keep it from tipping forward). Most frames will conceal the edge of the angle iron, but more importantly, this method places less strain on the corners of large frames.

— CHARLOTTE OVERBY
Columbia, Missouri

Glue Garotte

DETACHING THE 1960S AND '70S wall mirrors and mirror tiles that misguided do-it-yourselfers saw fit to glue directly onto plaster walls can be a challenge. Assuming that the mirror is attached with a non-hardening adhesive (which most are) it is possible to slice through this mastic without damaging the underlying wall. Using two short dowels for handles and a two- or three-foot length of 18-gauge solid wire, you can fabricate a sort of giant "cheese cutter" to slice through the adhesive. Simply slip the wire behind the mirror, pull tight, and work it gently down the length of the adhesive. Of course, another pair of hands is needed to catch the mirror, which can then be given to college-age relations as an artifact of the Disco Era.

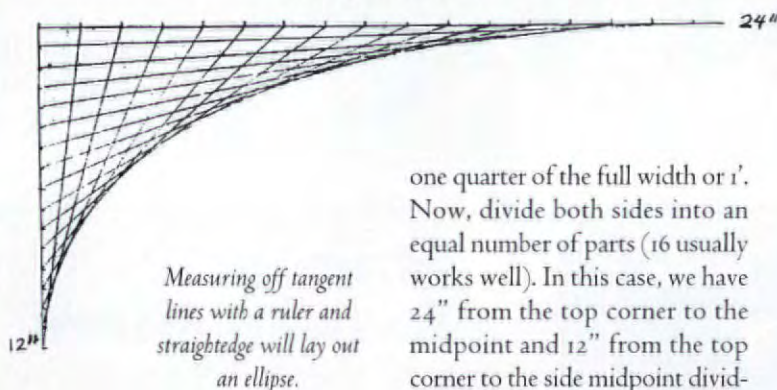
— PETER LEMOS
Eliot, Maine

On Your Mark

EVERYONE WHO REMOVES PLASTER lath has been bothered by the plaster marks that are left on the wood. An easy solution is to first dust off as much plaster as possible with a wisk broom or wire brush. Then, apply an oil stain to the wood. (You may have to mix a couple of stains together to get the color you want.) Since plaster dust absorbs stain readily, you'll forget you ever had plaster marks.

— TONY RUSSO
Tulsa, Okla.

Tangent Tricks



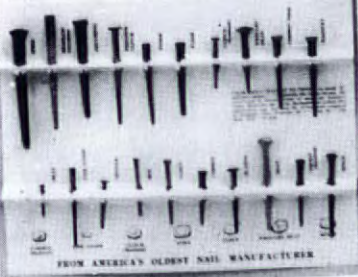
IN A PAST "OLD-HOUSE MECHANIC" (March/April 1992), Jeff Wilkinson shared a few tricks of carpenter's geometry. Here's a simple method for figuring out an ellipse. Portions of an ellipse or a circle can easily be approximated using only a straightedge and measuring tape. For example, suppose you wanted an elliptical curve at the top of a 4'-wide entryway. A common elliptical shape is proportioned so that the width is twice the height. We only want to work with half of the ellipse's width (2'), so the height would be

one quarter of the full width or 1'. Now, divide both sides into an equal number of parts (16 usually works well). In this case, we have 24" from the top corner to the midpoint and 12" from the top corner to the side midpoint divided into segments 1-1/2" (24/16) in length on the top and 3/4" (12/16) in length on the side. Mark these segments from the top corner to their respective midpoints. Here comes the fun part: Join the mark of the last segment on the side to the mark of the first segment on the top with a straightedge. Repeat this process with all the marks until you have a series of lines that map out a portion of the ellipse. What you have just done is drawn a series of lines tangent to the ellipse that will fit in a 2' x 4' rectangle.

— PAUL TUCKER
Newburg, Penn.

TIPS TO SHARE? Do you have any hints or shortcuts 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, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.

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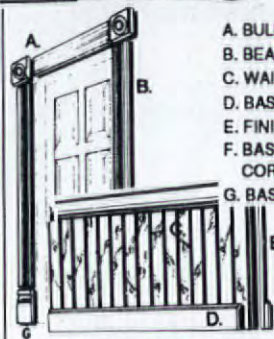
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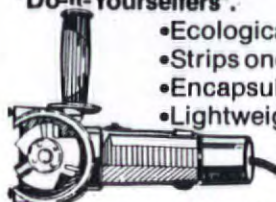
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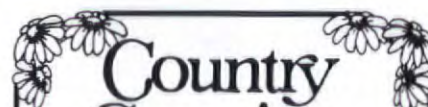
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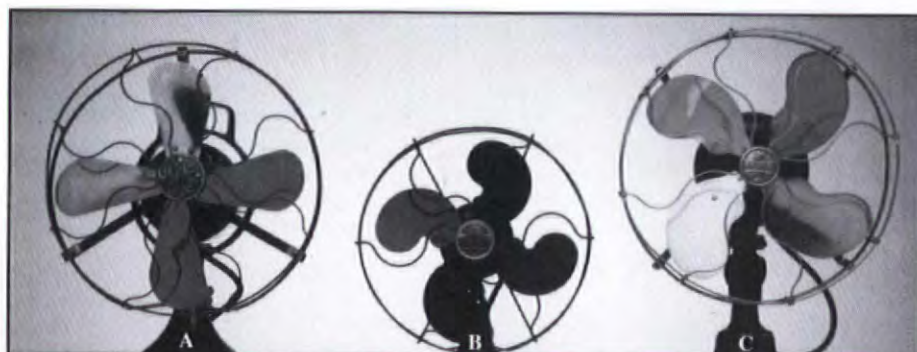
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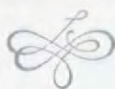
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Plan: BL-02-VI

Costs: \$250; \$330 (set of 5); \$375 (set of 8)

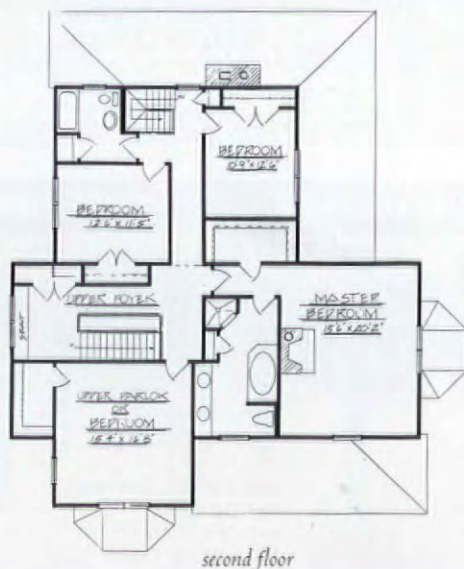
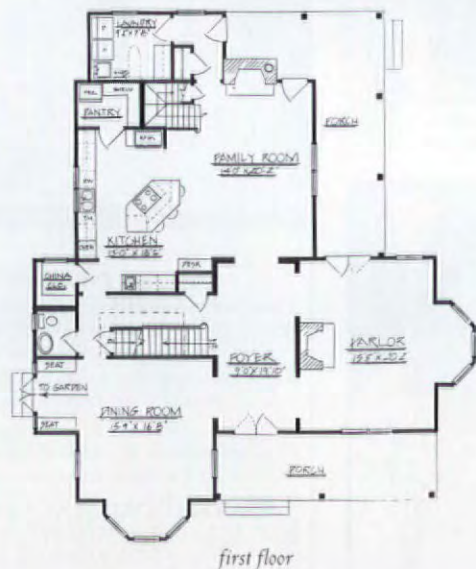
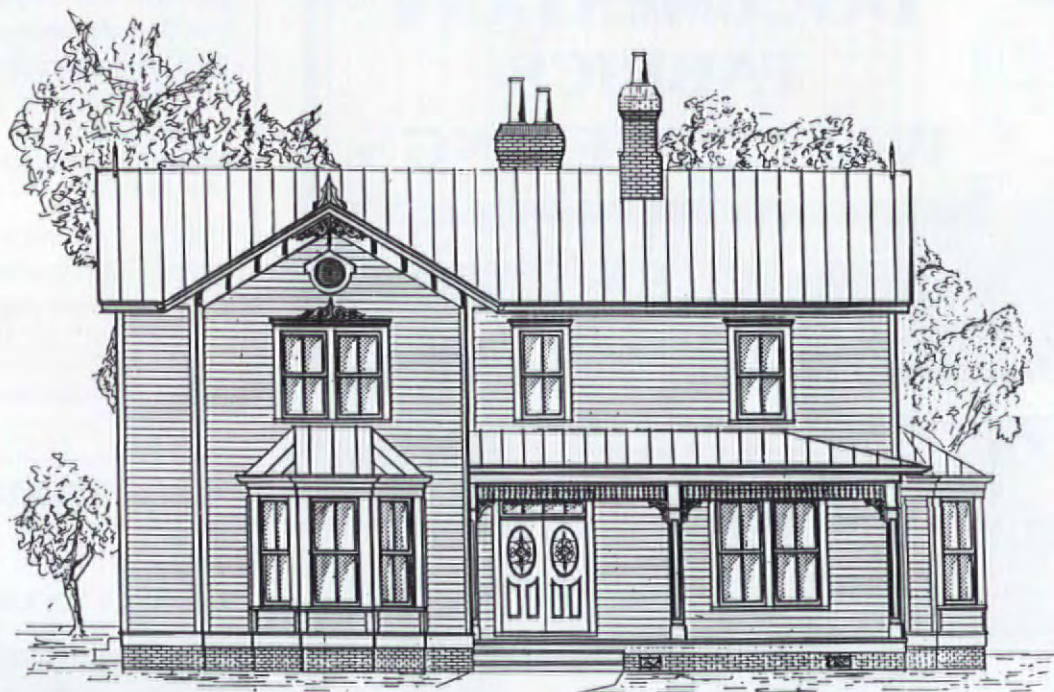
Square Footage: 3,517' (total), 1,851' (first floor), 1,666' (second floor)

Ceiling Height: 10' (first floor), 9' (second floor)

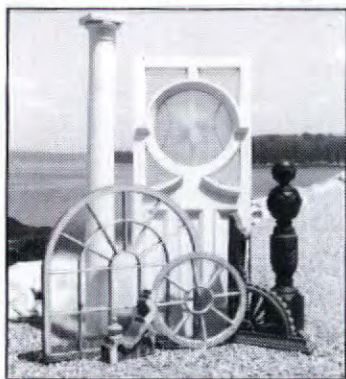
Overall Dimensions:

Width: 50'10"

Depth: 61'10"



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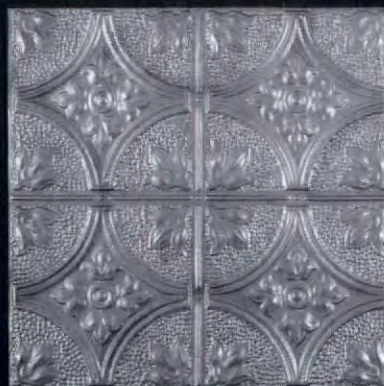
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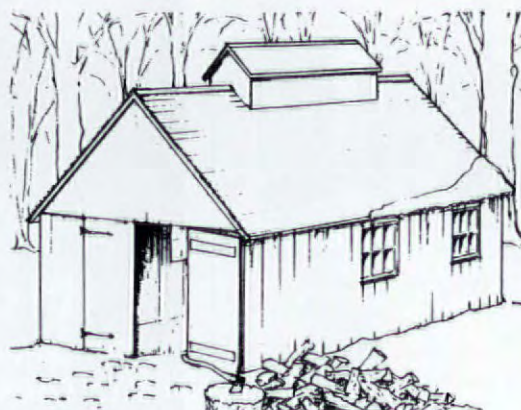
Plan: CD-09-GA

Costs: \$25

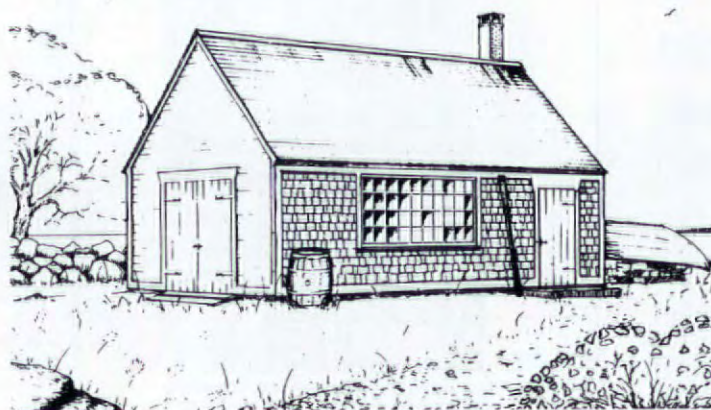
Square Footage: 216'

Ceiling Height: 16' (to ridge)

Overall Dimensions: Width: 12'; Depth: 18'



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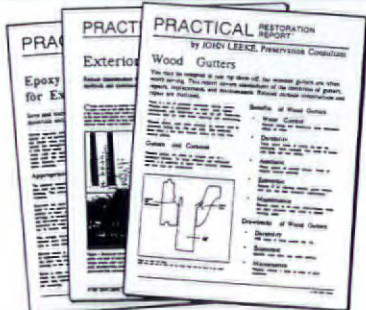
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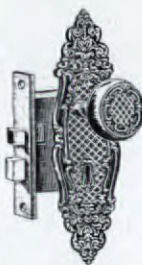
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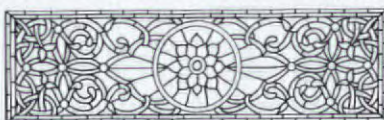
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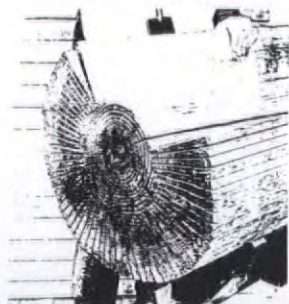


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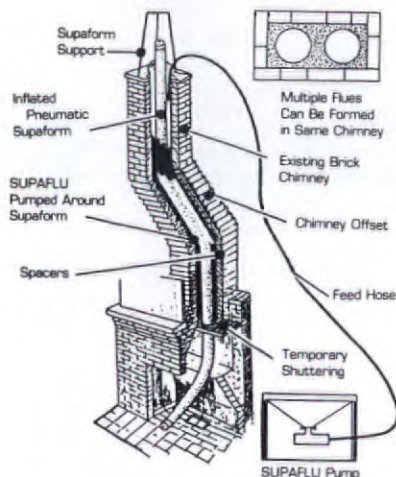
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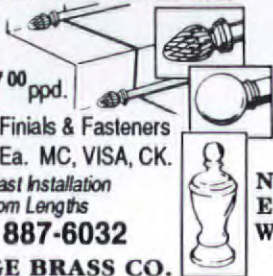
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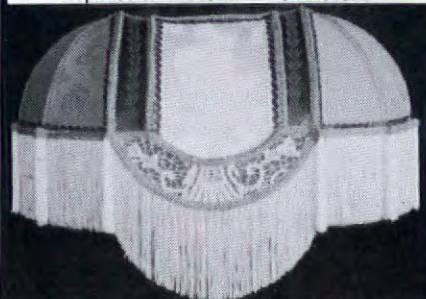
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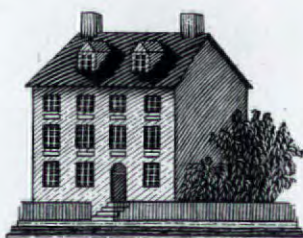
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EMPORIUM

Old-House Journal • March/April 1993

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ADAMS COUNTY, PA — near Gettysburg: historic 1-1/2 storey brick schoolhouse, bath, kitchen, cloakroom, outhouses, original 12/12 windows and woodwork, ready for restoration, skiing and stocked stream nearby, one acre, owner financing, \$62,500. P.O. Box 126, Charles Town, WV 25414.

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VISTA, CA — 1934 Early California-style ranch house on 1 acre. "U" shaped with courtyard and fountain. Decks, pond, and waterfall; distant ocean view. 3 brs, 3 bths, oak floors, beamed ceilings, 2 fireplaces, wine cellar. 2,300 sq. ft. \$395,000; (619) 945-9882.

MOUNT AIRY, NC — Alfred E. Smith House. Handsome 1905 Victorian/Colonial Revival on .58 acre city lot in foothills of Blue Ridge Mountains. Five bedrooms, five tiled baths. Restored kitchen. Marble mantel. Three-car garage. \$109,500. Preservation/North Carolina. (919) 832-1651.

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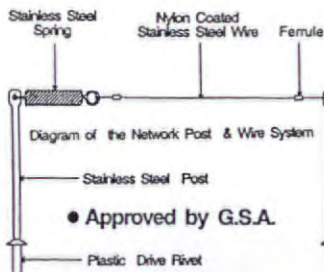
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Events

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HISTORIC HORTICULTURE LECTURE — March 15 in Montclair, NJ. The Victorian Society in America, North New Jersey Chapter will present Ellen McClelland Lesser, Historical Horticulturalist, speaking on Victorian gardens and how to reproduce them. \$3, refreshments served. (201) 743-9627.

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CREATING THE CLASSICAL INTERIOR SEMINAR — April 24 in New York, NY. The seminar is intended for architects, interiors designers, and property owners with an interest in classical design. Co-sponsored by The Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture and Traditional Building magazine. Call (212) 941-8088 or (718) 636-0788.

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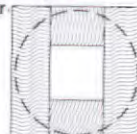


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REMUDDLING

[opinion]

Queen Anne Casualty

THIS MONTH'S REMUDDLING from Port Townsend, Washington, has gone over the top — literally. Scalped during a 1960s renovation by a previous owner, the original hipped roof of this 1880 Queen Anne was replaced by a dead-level lid. Not satisfied with just attacking the attic, the remuddlers also removed decorative mouldings from the windows and shingled over the shiplap siding to complete the motel-like makeover.

But there is hope for this flat-top folly. Current owner Julie Schachter

writes, "The house retains its dignity inside [with] the 11' ceilings, oak flooring, pocket doors, and wainscoting that escaped the obliterating hand of our predecessor. With the roof flat and the outside mouldings gone, the scale is very deceptive and people are always surprised when they enter the house for the first time. Some day we'll do this poor old home justice and give it a face to match its warm heart." Hats off to you, Julie!

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, Old-House Journal, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.

Without the original hipped roof and ornamental mouldings, it's difficult to tell that this decapitated Queen Anne (below) was once similar to its neighbor (inset).



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Vernacular Houses



(above) This squared-bay Washington Row exhibits the influence of the Queen Anne style in its corbeled cornice and pressed brick panels. (below) Built on narrow lots, the side-hall floor plan with recessed entryway economically uses the space.

bigger and very elaborate inside and out.) The influence of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles — immensely popular during the last decades of the 19th century — is only seen in diluted forms on decorative brickwork and cornices of the Washington row house. Many examples use pressed brick ornament to reflect the Queen Anne style, while others have distinctive cornices. But, most commonly, the Washington Row has such a minimum of ornament that it is considered astylistic.

— JUDITH CAPEN
Washington D.C.

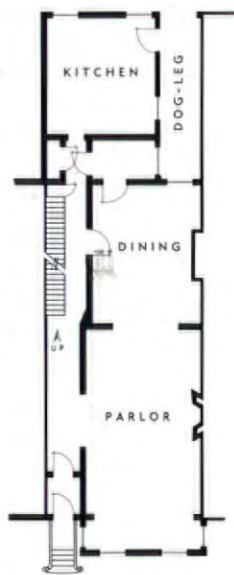
The Washington Row House



FLAT-FRONTED OR CANTED-BAY ROW HOUSES, ranging from the oldest Georgian- and Federal-style examples in Philadelphia to the grand versions of New York and Boston's Back Bay, are common on the East Coast. The distinctive, square-bay fronted row house, however, is only prevalent in Washington, D.C. Known as the Washington Row, over 8,000 of these modest houses were constructed in the slow-developing, industry-free Capitol.

The distinguishing feature of Washington Rows is the square bay, which projects into the public space front yards (bequeathed to Capitol residents by Charles L'Enfant's generously wide streets). The row houses are two storeys high plus a cellar and were mostly built during the late-19th century. Although they sit on narrow, 18'-wide lots, the economical side-hall, dog-leg floor plan allows for three large rooms on each level.

The essential modesty of the Washington Row, reflected in its size, cost to build, and absence of exterior stylistic ornamentation, was partly due to the city's poor economy. (Row houses in more affluent and thriving cities, like New York and Boston, were much



First floor showing dog-leg plan.