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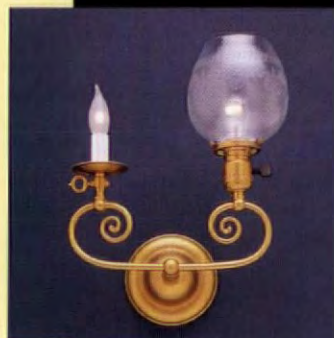
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The sloping gables and broad-skirted porches of weathered frame cottages at Nag's Head, North Carolina, almost seem to spring from the dunes and waves of the windswept Outer Banks.

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BUILT BETWEEN ROUGHLY 1890 and 1940, the wood-shingled cottages in the Nag's Head Beach Cottage Row Historic District are the survivors of a resort tradition that began on North Carolina's remote Outer Banks in the 1840s. These seasonal retreats were constructed for wealthy tidewater families who migrated to this barrier island by ferry with children, servants, and even the family cow in tow.

The most common house type is a one-and-a-half-storey frame cottage. Built across the front and back are nearly full-width dormers that expand these buildings close to the two-storey level. Another, older type is a simple gable-roofed, two-storey cottage. A third variation is a two-storey cottage with a hip or pyramidal roof. Deep, slope-roofed porches



A typical Nag's Head cottage with nearly full-width dormers, enclosed on three sides by expansive porches.

are characteristic of all three types. Many porches skirt all four sides of the house; others stick to the three sides on the east, south, and west to catch prevailing sea breezes. Most houses have another distinctive feature: "lean-out" benches set into the porch balustrade. Equally functional

are the board-and-batten hurricane doors and single-leaf window shutters that serve as awnings in summer and shut tight in winter.

Originally built only a few steps above the sand, these cottages have been raised at least 8' on timber pilings over the years. These open foundations are high enough to keep the houses above storm overwash and allow enough headroom for hammocks, outdoor showers, and clotheslines.

With their stark, undecorated exteriors and bare, heart-pine interiors, these cottages remain treasured summer homes for the descendants of the original owners. Other variations of this vernacular are at Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, and Pawley's Island, South Carolina.

—DREW C. WILSON
Nag's Head, North Carolina

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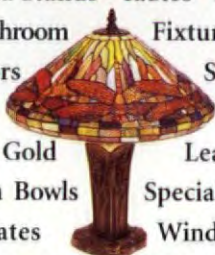
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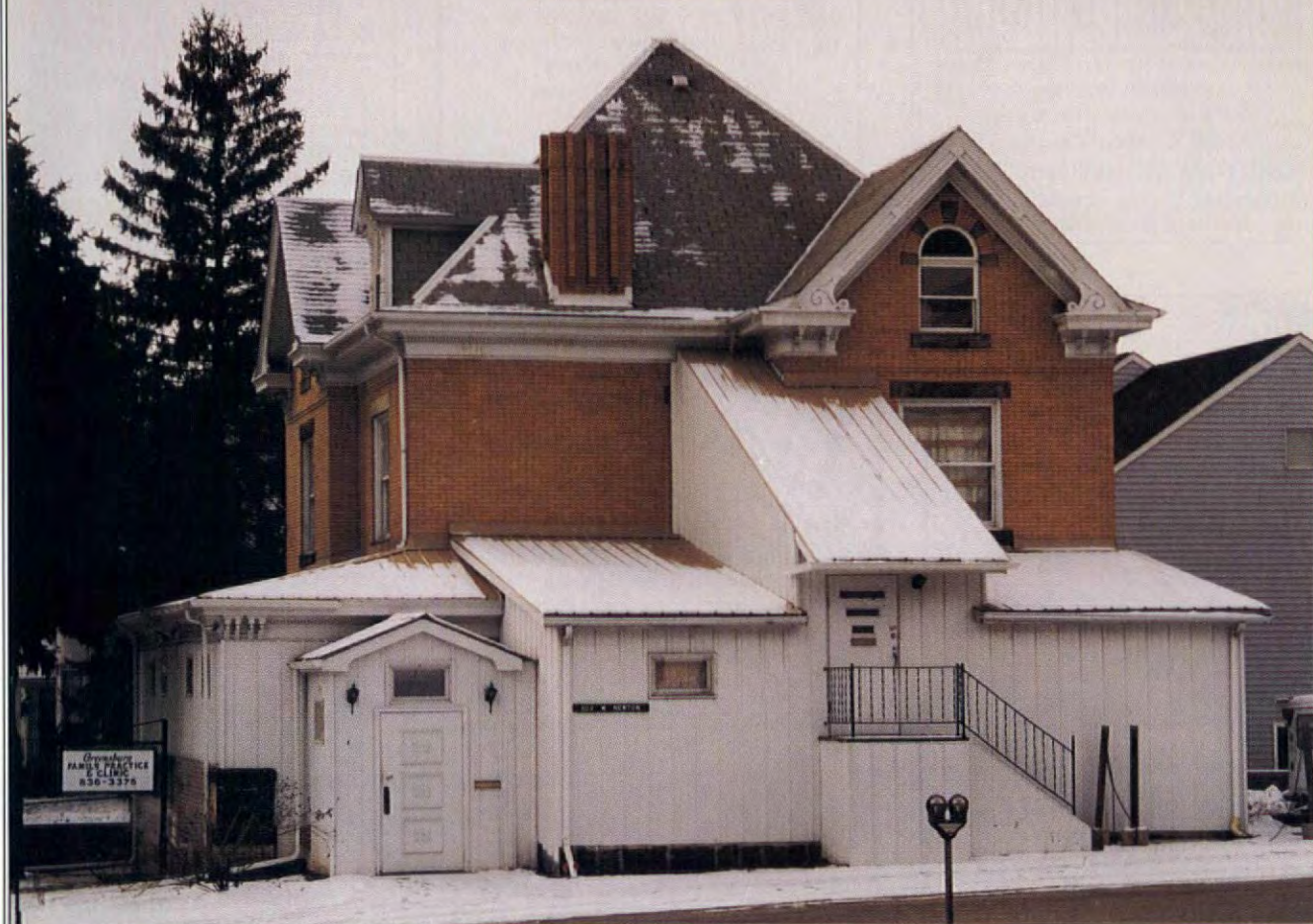
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RE M UDDLING

OPINION



Rx: It's Gotta Come Off

BY CYNTHIA BOMBACH, GREENSBURG, PENN.

CALL A SURGEON! THIS DOCTOR'S OFFICE IN MY PENNSYLVANIA TOWN needs a multiple lumpectomy. The yellow-brick house appears to be suffocating under numerous closed-in entries, stairwells, and former porches. Only removal of the offensive growths could restore vigor to this once-tasteful Victorian building, which owes both its economic survival and its aesthetic ruin to a location on a busy street near the town hospital.

One wonders why the doctor who bought it didn't choose a larger house to begin with, as the lawyer in the red house down the street did. The law firm needed to add only a small vestibule to the back of the building (right), preserving the street façade. Greensburg is filled with Victorian-era houses now being used as professional offices. Fortunately, most of them do retain their original elegance, and contribute both economically and visually to our town.



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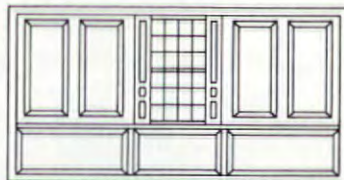
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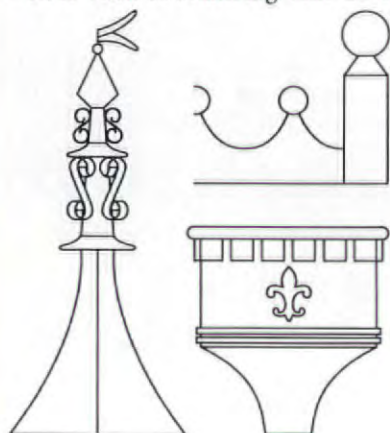
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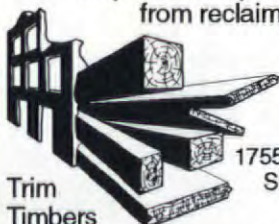
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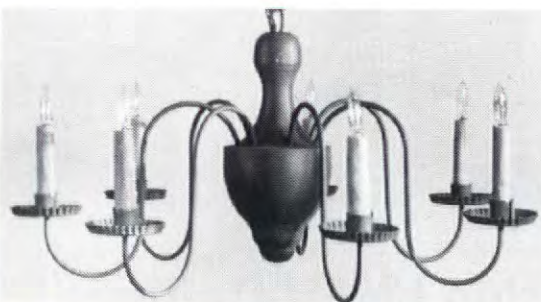
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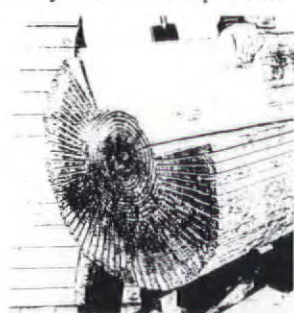
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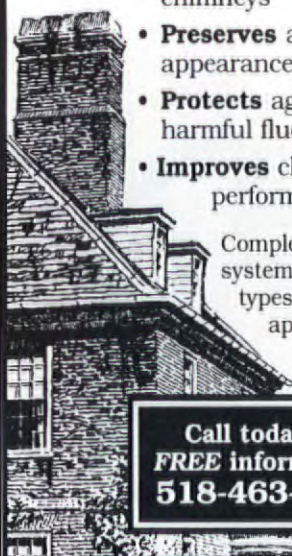
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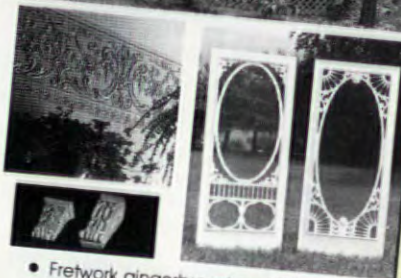
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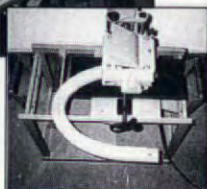
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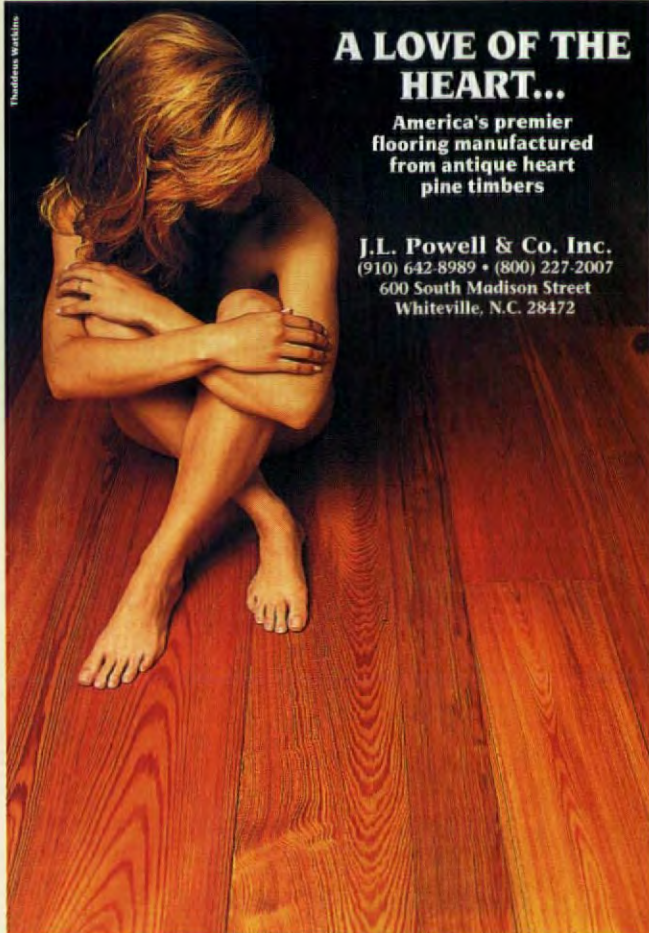
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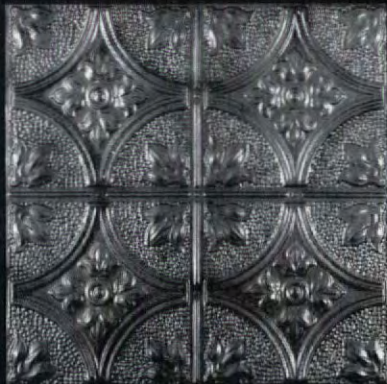


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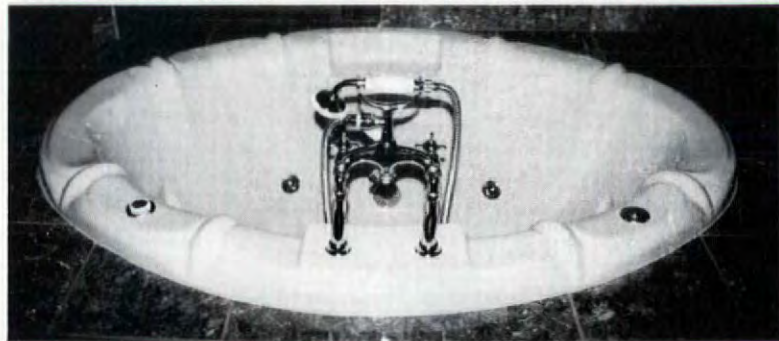
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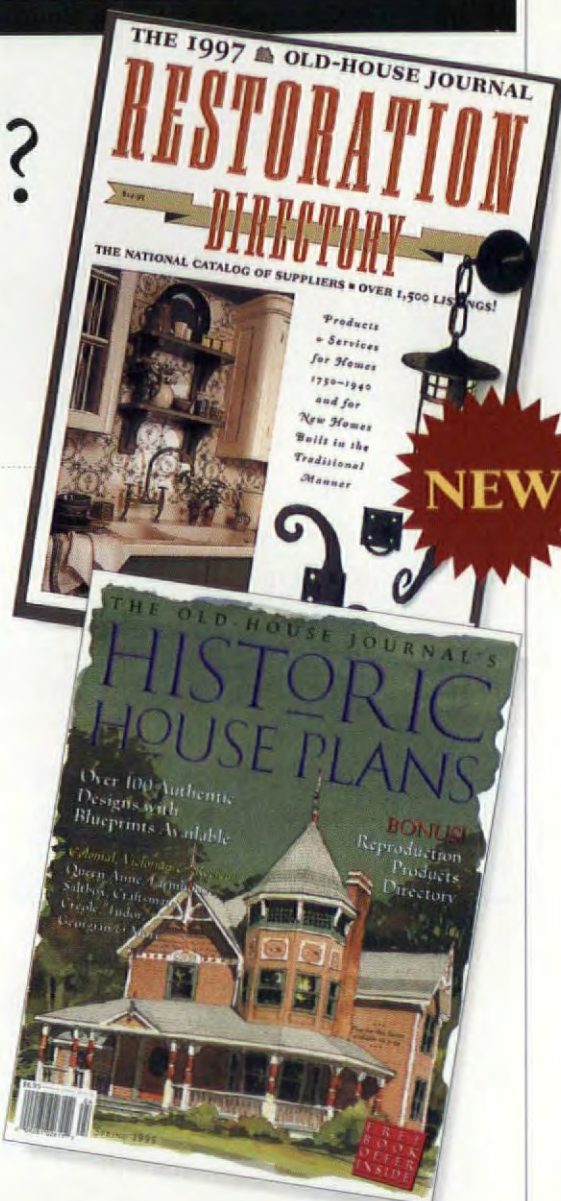
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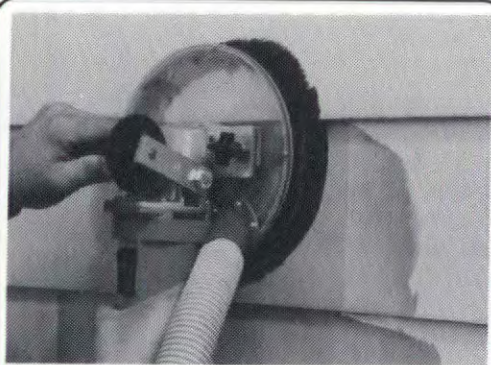
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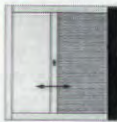
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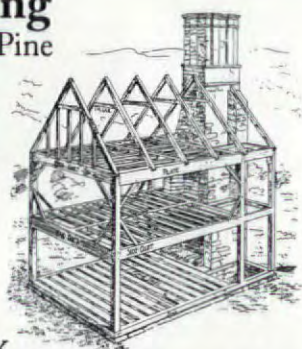
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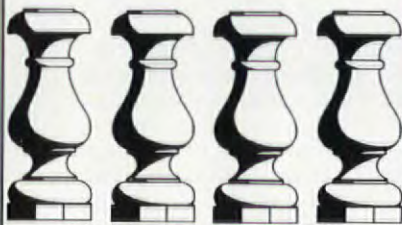
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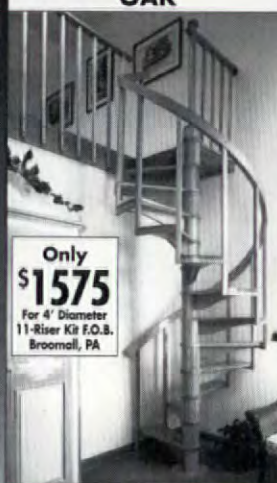


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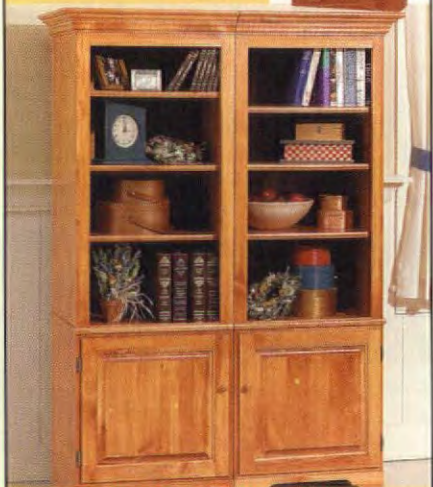
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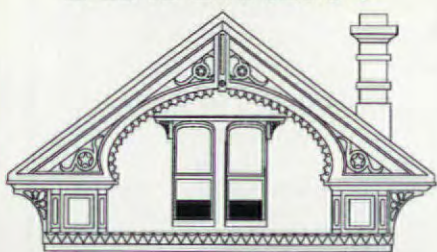
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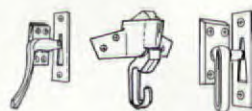
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UNION, WV— Elmwood, 1838 Greek Revival home and brick barn listed in Nat'l Register. Three story, 14 rooms on 15 acres. Black marble fpls, elegant woodwork throughout. Rural location 30 minutes from world-famous Greenbrier Hotel. Brochure available. \$490,000. Tom Mitchell, PO Box 311, Union, WV 24983. (304) 772-3670 or 3379 night number.

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For Sale/Swap • Real Estate • Events

Real Estate

DUNSMUIR, CA—1903 "Railway Hotel" on Nat'l Register. Cafe, bar, nine hotel rms and living quarters near Mt. Shasta in Shasta-Cascade wonderland. \$250,000. Photos and information available. (916) 235-0532.

EUREKA, CA—Historic houses owned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will be sold by sealed bid over the next two years. The houses represent a remarkable array of 19th C. architectural styles, including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Stick Style. Sealed bid sales are scheduled for Feb. 6, 1997, with additional sales planned for May and September 1997. Excess Lands Office, California Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 3700, Eureka, CA 95502-3700. (707) 445-6428.

CROMWELL, CT—1727 saltbox, post-and-beam (chestnut and oak) home is the oldest structure in Cromwell. Town setting, 1 mile to major highways; 5 fpls, original paneling, 4 bdrms, 2 full baths, \$189,000. (860) 635-4288. 12 Bellaire Manor, Cromwell, CT 06416.

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HOWELL, MI—1890 Eastlake Queen Anne, 2200 sq. ft., 3 bdrms, 2 baths. Original ornate exterior with 3 porches, fully restored first-floor original woodwork, new mechanical and electric systems, including A/C. Commute to Lansing, Ann Arbor, Detroit. \$194,900. (517) 545-0356.

CARROLTON, MO—Two-storey, all-brick, ca. 1896 Foursquare home with 3,650 sq. ft., 5 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, 2 fpls, tiger oak woodwork and floors, 3 bay windows, pocket sliding doors, box beam ceiling. Sixty % refurbished. Upper/lower decks. \$80,000 (816) 542-1258.

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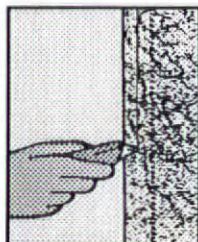
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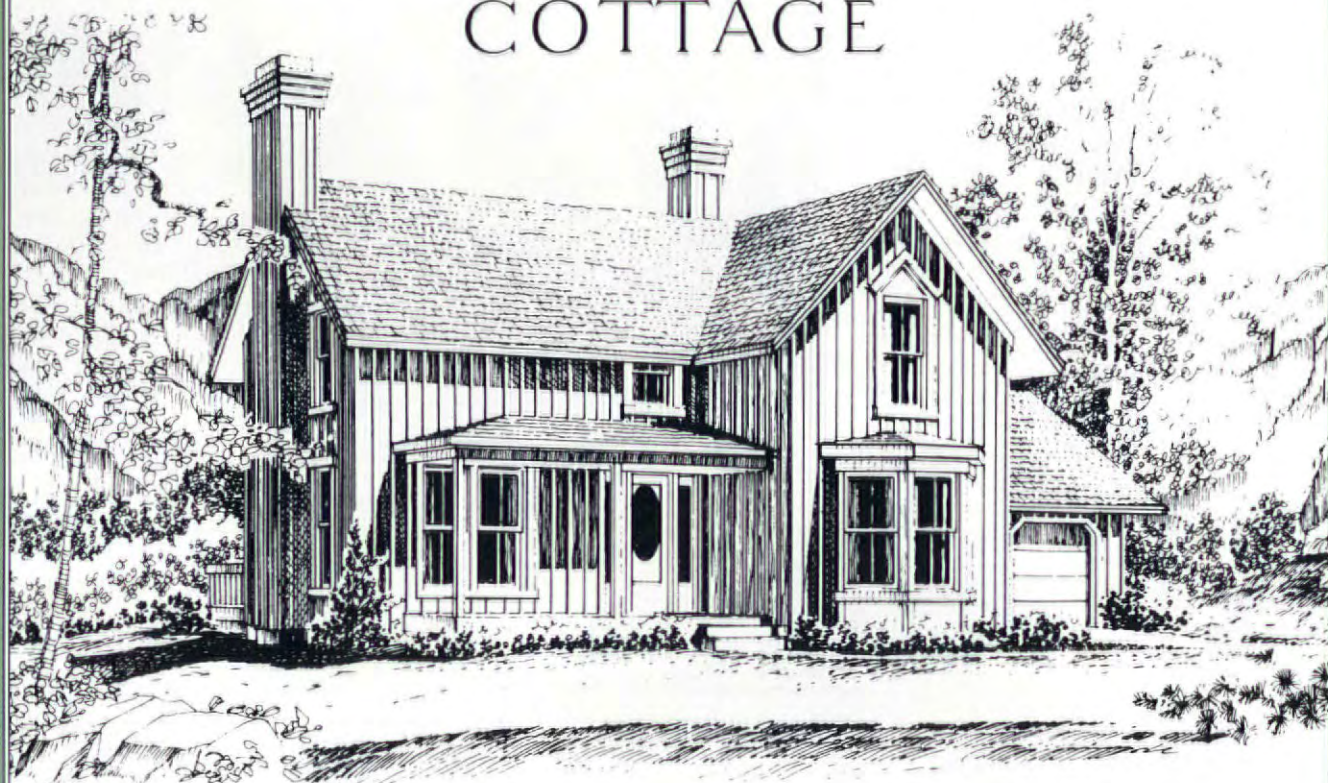
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Bathrooms2½

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Second Floor925'

Ceiling Height

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Second Floor8'

Overall Dimensions

Width37'

Depth38'



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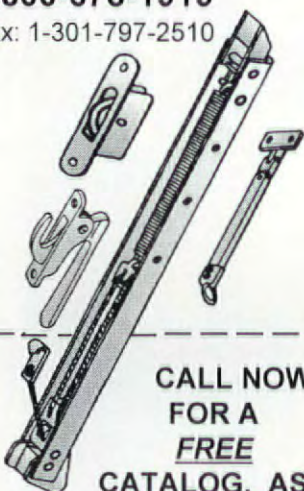
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First Floor



Second Floor

Plan PP-09-VI

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Bedrooms3

Bathrooms2½

Square Footage3,135'

First Floor1,750'

Second Floor1,385'

Ceiling Height

First Floor9'

Second Floor9'

Overall Dimensions

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Depth49'

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You can order actual blueprints for all the houses featured. These plans are designed to conform to national building-code standards. However, the requirements of your site and local building codes mean you'll probably need the assistance of a professional designer (your builder may qualify) or an architect.

For the houses shown in this issue, blueprints may include:

- Detailed floor plans showing dimensions for framing. Some may also have detailed layouts and show the location of electrical and plumbing components.
- Interior elevations are included in some plans, showing interior views of kitchen, bath, fireplace, built-ins, and cabinet designs.
- Building cross sections: cornice, fireplace, and cabinet sections when needed to help your builder understand major interior details.

- Framing diagrams that show layouts of framing pieces and their locations for roof, first, and second floors.
- Energy-saving specs, where noteworthy, are included, such as vapor barriers, insulated sheathing, caulking and foam-sealant areas, batt insulation, and attic exhaust ventilators.
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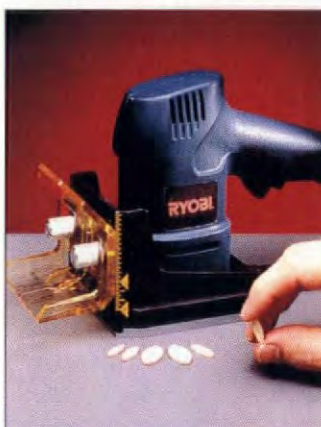
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A 1920s Spanish Revival row of galleries, coffee shops, and restaurants in the Paseo neighborhood is thriving, as is the annual arts festival.

door. Of the 300 occupied houses in Paseo, 57 are crack or prostitution houses. The 1990 census shows 120,000 vacancies in a metropolitan area of 900,000 people. No wonder no one wants little frame bungalows. Our real estate taxes actually fall. The new rate is \$11.18 per year!

By 1991, we no longer joke about the neighborhood being everything it's cracked up to be. Our nightly citizen's patrols, in combination with aggressive police programs, move the crime, crack, and prostitution elsewhere. After nine years of community activism, it's time for new leadership for Positively Paseo! and the Paseo Neighborhood Association. I need a break. I've got to finish our house.

We decide to replaster every wall in the bungalow. Our one concession to the modern era is to use drywall on the ceilings. We move into one room and put most of our furniture in storage. We hire two crews to do the work, with the second shift on duty in the evenings. These men sing in a gospel choir. They never break into song, but a steady, spiritual-sounding humming accompanies the rhythmic swish of the trowels

on the walls, as though they are blessing the house.

After 10 years and \$54,000 in restoration costs, we're finally ready to paint. Real estate taxes drop to 92 cents per year. We have only two rooms painted when we learn that twins will arrive in the spring.

In May 1993, Mary and I are written up in the local paper: "Couple Awaiting Historic Twins." Not only are "the guys" arriving during National Preservation Week, but Frank and Tom are to be the first infants born to neighborhood homeowners in 31 years. We soon realize the house is too small for a family with two children, four cats, and three dogs. In January 1994, we decide to sell, expecting the process to take at least two years.

Amazingly, the house sells in 35 days, for \$49,500. We scramble to find a new place to live. In April, just before the moving van arrives, I finish the last bit of work: installing a freshly painted kitchen cabinet. As the moving van pulls away, a neighbor stops to tell us we were right to believe in the house and the neighborhood. After twelve years of restoration, that vote of confidence is worth all the effort we put into our old house.



The next year, the state hits bottom. House prices plummet. There are 27 arson cases—an average of one per block.

While crime escalates around us, a group of neighbors decide we need to take back the neighborhood: We form Positively Paseo!, a community action group. Old-timers are invited to socials to share their stories and pictures of earlier times in the neighborhood. We throw Christmas parties for kids, and end up starting an after-school program for latchkey children. We hold house fairs to encourage people not to tear out their old windows and redwood siding, and Saturday workshops to encourage outsiders to buy the old homes that line our streets.

We keep the original redwood siding and sash windows on our two-storey bungalow and urge neighbors to do the same. Inset: The house in the untroubled '50s.

All in the Neighborhood

I MANAGE TO RECRUIT ONE NEWCOMER TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD when, in 1988, I meet Mary. She's definitely the right one. Who else would take a half-refinished bungalow in a sliding neighborhood, stacks of broken-down Mission Oak furniture, a rusted pickup, three cats, four dogs, and me?

Every morning, we wave hello to the prostitutes catty-corner across the street. The grandfatherly neighbor behind us sells crack cocaine through a hole in his front

Rich As Oil In an Oklahoma Bungalow

BY RONALD FRANTZ

When you fall in love with an old house, you aren't necessarily thinking about what might happen to the neighborhood. Here's one man's chronicle of boom and bust.

IT'S MARCH 1982 AND THE OIL BOOM ROARS IN OKLAHOMA CITY. Home mortgage interest rates hover in the high teens, but as a brash, 24-year-old architectural intern, nothing bothers me. For \$18,000, I buy a 1912 Craftsman-style bungalow in Paseo, a street-car suburb. When I read the deed, I snicker. The 1910 plat for my block requires that all houses built cost at least \$1,500. Mine was a good house built at a price right out of the history books.

I want to move in right away, but something has to be done about the plumbing. The cast-iron drain pipe in the kitchen is relatively easy to replace, but the gas line it damaged isn't. The main rambles under two other houses, two driveways, two garages, and several large sycamores. Two weeks and \$3,600 later, the new lines pass inspection and the meter is properly housed in my basement.

I stage the ceremonial flush of the new pipes just as the state's economy goes down the Art Deco toilet. Penn Square Bank collapses, signaling the bust of the oil industry.

Down, But Not Out

FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS, RECESSION SWIRLS OUT OF control. I slide along with it, slipping on the ice and breaking my elbow. Without work, money, or elbow grease,

I live in a ghost neighborhood full of vacant dwellings. My \$18,000 house sits among houses selling for \$1,500. Seventy-four years after the plat for my block was recorded, we are back where we started.

I know I've got a jewel, though: Virtually untouched, the bungalow is full of turn-of-the-century woodwork and copper-finished brass hardware. The 1940s-vintage kitchen is pristine, even to the original pop-design metal dishcloth racks, and in the basement,

I find the original Art Deco chandeliers.

The next year, I refinance the mortgage to put on a new roof and install new mechanical systems. I also replace two basement walls that were set on a foundation of sand. Ironic? At the time, I don't think so.

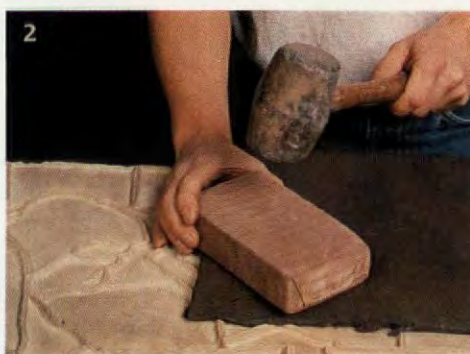
New "neighbors" move into the vacant dwellings. Since they have neither keys nor leases, they enter and exit through side windows. One of these squatters wakes me each morning with boisterous renditions of "Happy Birthday," aimed mainly at bushes and trees. Another, wearing a Boy Scout uniform, entertains a succession of men in Mercedeses, BMWs, and Ferraris. I decide to serve as president of the Paseo Neighborhood Association—who else will do it? I'm only the second new homeowner in more than a decade.

In 1986, I get my first real job with a steady paycheck.

My house appears on the cover of the *Oklahoma City Times'* new real-estate section. Maybe that's because it's the only house in the neighborhood with a fresh paint job and the lights on.



As property values in Paseo plummet, houses topple with them. Meanwhile, I stick out the oil bust in my 1912 bungalow.



Mosaics

Mercer's mosaic tiles are often designed for floors. (1) Making the series "Woman Dipping Candles" starts with a single large plaster mold. (2) Next comes a slab of wet clay, pressed and tamped into the outline. (3) The tilemaker cuts the mosaic apart. (4) The various pieces may be individually stained or made from colored clay. After firing, they are reassembled on a concrete backing to complete the pattern. They'll be grouted as if they were laid separately.

Over time, however, even glazed tiles can get dirty or stained. The Preservation Services folks at the National Park Service recommend cleaning with non-oil, non-soap-based, neutral floor cleaner (diluted according to instructions), followed by a clean water rinse, and hand drying. Do a test patch first.

[You can order Preservation Brief #40, *Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors*, from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250. (202) 512-1800. Stock No. 024-005-01169-2, \$1.25 per copy.]


More stubborn dirt or stains may yield to the gentle action of plastic (not metal) pot-scrubbers. Mold or mildew can often be removed with a neutral household detergent or trisodium phosphate. Other than conventional floor waxes, protective coatings are not recommended.

In some cases, moisture can damage ceramic tiles, especially if the source of the moisture is from behind or beneath the tile. Track down and eliminate the source of the moisture.

Unless they have become loosened, cracked tiles should probably just been left alone. The same holds true for worn tiles or crazed glazing. Loose tiles should be carefully removed, and reset in a mortar bed that matches the original in color, material, and texture. Sometimes, small corners

or chips can be reattached using epoxy, mixed with colored enamel in order to match the surrounding material.

The art of tile making combines both experience and trial-and-error methods. The final appearance of a tile can range greatly depending upon such variables as the nature of the clay, the ingredients that go into the glazing mixtures, or where and how the tiles are stacked in the kiln. Despite the random results possible with these variables, the present-day operators at the Moravian Tile Works imitate to the extent possible the procedures of the original mechanic, Henry Mercer, including the imperfections and irregularities.

The Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, incidentally, is open from 10-4:45 daily. Call (215) 345-6722 for further information. Tiles are available for sale in the gift shop or by mail order. True students of tile should know about the Tile Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 1850, Healdsburg, CA 95448. (707) 431-8453. This non-profit publishes a quarterly bulletin and sells books and reprints. For other sources, see "The Ceramic Circus," March/April 1995. 

About Henry Mercer...

A turn-of-the-century Renaissance man, Henry C. Mercer studied archaeology, anthropology, history, building technology, and historic preservation (see "Who They Were," Jan./Feb. 1995). Despite his folksy interests, Mercer was no idealist. He (like fellow Arts & Crafts figures Louis Tiffany and the Stickley brothers) was a capitalist, who called his tiles "artistic enough to rival the old ones, but cheap enough to sell."

Contributing editor J. RANDALL COTTON is a vice-president of Preservation Alliance in Philadelphia, (215) 546-1146. Thanks to Vance Koehler, Curator at the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, for providing information for this article.

Hand Painting

Arts & Crafts tilemakers relied heavily on surface decoration for their tiles. This could be in the form of embossed or impressed designs, but it also included the use of glazes, which they brought to a new



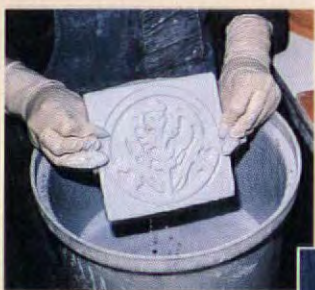
sophistication. Many potteries perfected their own specialized glazes and formulas, for which they were famous.

At the Moravian Tile Works, polychrome glazes, such as those used to detail the "Avalon" tile shown here, are hand-applied to brocade tiles. Mechanics use small paint brushes to add glazes of different colors—

commonly called enamels in the industry—to individual surfaces of the bisque-fired tile. Once the glaze has dried, the tile will be passed back to the kiln for its final firing.

Dip Glazing

Hand-painting can produce elaborate, multi-hued decoration in a tile, but it is labor-intensive to produce and not the only way to add color.



To achieve a two-tone effect, mechanics dip the tile in glaze (above) and then wipe the coating off raised areas (right). Glazed tiles stacked on saggars inside of one of the Tile Work's gas-fired kilns (below), ready for a second, high-temperature firing.



Lightly fired bisque tiles are treated with a transparent underglaze and then a colored finish glaze. The most common method of glazing tiles at the Moravian Tile Works is by dipping. This technique is used for low-relief tiles, which rarely receive more than two colors.



Here the bisque tiles are first completely immersed in the liquid glaze, which is usually opaque, traditionally made from tin oxide.

Next, while the glaze is still wet, the raised relief areas of the design are wiped free of the excess glaze using

a soft sponge or similar tool. This step leaves the glaze only in the recessed areas of the relief tile design, so that it contrasts with unglazed brick red of the tile body. The finished tile has an appealing two-tone effect that highlights the impressed pattern. After the glaze has dried, the tiles are fired in a 2200° kiln.



A 1916 Mercer tile fireplace surround in a private residence in Oswego, New York. In typical Arts & Crafts fashion, the decoration is provided by the shapes, sizes, and colors of the tiles, not by their individual designs.

Victorian tiles—especially those produced in England—were primarily unglazed, and often relied on different clays to achieve colored designs. *Encaustic tiles*, which employ inlaid patterns of clay, were the prime examples of this method of decoration.

Arts & Crafts tilemakers used a number of glazing techniques. Some tiles are dipped in slip (liquid clay) before the initial firing. This provides a matte finish. Low-relief tiles are dipped into liquid glaze and then cleaned, wiping the glaze from the raised relief areas to contrast with the glaze in the recessed areas. For brocade and mosaic tiles, brightly colored opaque glazes are hand-applied with a paint brush.

Glazes impart color to the tiles because of the metal oxides in them: cobalt for blue, copper for green, manganese for purple, and iron for reds and browns. Other common ingredients were ground-up white lead, flint, and china clays.

Maintaining Arts & Crafts Tiles

ARTS & CRAFTS TILES ARE VERY DURABLE. Routine maintenance usually involves nothing more than dusting, sweeping, or vacuuming with a soft-brush attachment.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN HOENSTINE (TOP LEFT); MORAVIAN POTTERY AND TILE WORKS (SERIES); CLEOTA REED (RIGHT)



An original Henry Mercer wall fountain (above) has a frog spout. Mercer's tiles also found their way to countless homes across America, for floors, vestibule walls, fireplace hearths and surrounds (right), ceilings, and inglenooks.



cloistered area of the complex. Today, gas-fired kilns have replaced the originals.

Mechanics arrange the greenware in containers called saggars, protective boxes made from refractory clay that protect the ware from kiln debris. These are stacked in columns called bungs. Temperature variations within the kiln can influence the final tile and glazing colors, so properly loading and firing a coal-fired kiln was a science. Of course, some variation was prized; Mercer sometimes added crushed coal and wood to the kiln which resulted in an intentional and distinctive staining of the tiles.

The tiles are fired lightly the first time; after cooling, they are ready for either glazing or hand decorating. These once-fired tiles, called bisques, are hard enough to handle, but still porous and fragile.

Glazing the Surface

ARTS & CRAFTS TILEMAKERS OF THE LATE-19TH and early-20th centuries did much to resurrect and advance the art of glazing as a crowning part of the tile-making process.



Quarry Tile

The simplest Arts & Crafts tiles, plain quarry tiles are the basic building blocks for typical installations, especially floors. The Tile Works still produces 3"-square quarry tile using a two-part wood and metal cutter designed by Mercer. (1) Mechanics roll clay out onto special boards and push the cutter into the clay. This cuts individual tiles and holds them until (2) the worker depresses wooden plungers to push the fresh tiles onto boards for drying.

Hand Molding

(1) Molding an individual tile of the city of "Avalon" starts with the plaster production mold. (2) Once wet clay is pressed into the mold, (3) it is tamped to ensure a clean and even impression. (4) A toggle wire trims the clay flush with the mold top, and (5) the greenware is unmolded.



Plaster Molds

Mercer used plaster because the porous material absorbs moisture from the wet clay. This enhances the drying process and causes the clay to shrink slightly as it releases its moisture. The shrinking process separates the clay from the plaster and makes separating the tile from the mold easy.



tains an inventory of hundreds of original Mercer's masters (sculptures used to cast plaster molds) each of which can be used up to a hundred times.

Tiles by Type

IN A BUILDING, RELIEF TILES ARE PLACED among fields of plain, *quarry tiles* (see page 47). Some relief tiles are made in a mold, others are cut to shape and impressed only on the surface. *Brocade tiles* have bold, high-relief designs and shapes. They are best used in wall, ceiling, or fireplace installations. Brocade tiles are made with cavity molds, which form the entire tile when clay is pressed into them. *Low-relief* tiles have indented surfaces, and are flat enough for floors. These are produced from a clay slab, which is treated with a mold pressed onto the surface.

The most intricate Arts & Crafts tile installations are *mosaic tiles*, which are akin to jigsaw puzzles: individual tiles are assembled to form a larger scene or picture. Despite their apparent complexity, the entire mosaic is made from a single mold. Mechanics press a slab of wet clay onto the mold and lightly tamp it, as with individual relief tiles. Next, the slab is cut along the impressed dividing lines with a potter's knife to separate the pieces. After the individual pieces are painted and fired, they're assembled on a concrete backing. When installed, the spaces between the mosaic tiles are grouted just like individual tiles. The results can be as intricate as Mercer's 400-mosaic depiction of the history of Pennsylvania at the Statehouse.

Mechanics press the clay and molds together in one of two ways: by hand and wooden mallet or by a hand-operated press, which looks and acts much like an early printing press. They cut excess clay from the mold with a toggle wire, and release the tile from the mold by gentle tapping with a mallet. The tiles—at this stage called greenware—are placed on racks to air-dry for up to two weeks. This process helps prevent warping and cracking during firing.

Firing the Wares

THE MANY CHIMNEYS SPROUTING FROM THE Mission-style Tile Works are connected to brick kilns. Originally, the kilns burned coal, tons of which were stockpiled in the



The U-shaped Moravian Tile Works (opposite) consists of an arcaded cloister and other hallmarks of California missions, such as a bell tower and curvilinear parapet gables. Although the coal-fired kiln is still stoked up, tiles manufactured today are fired in gas-burning kilns.

Hearth

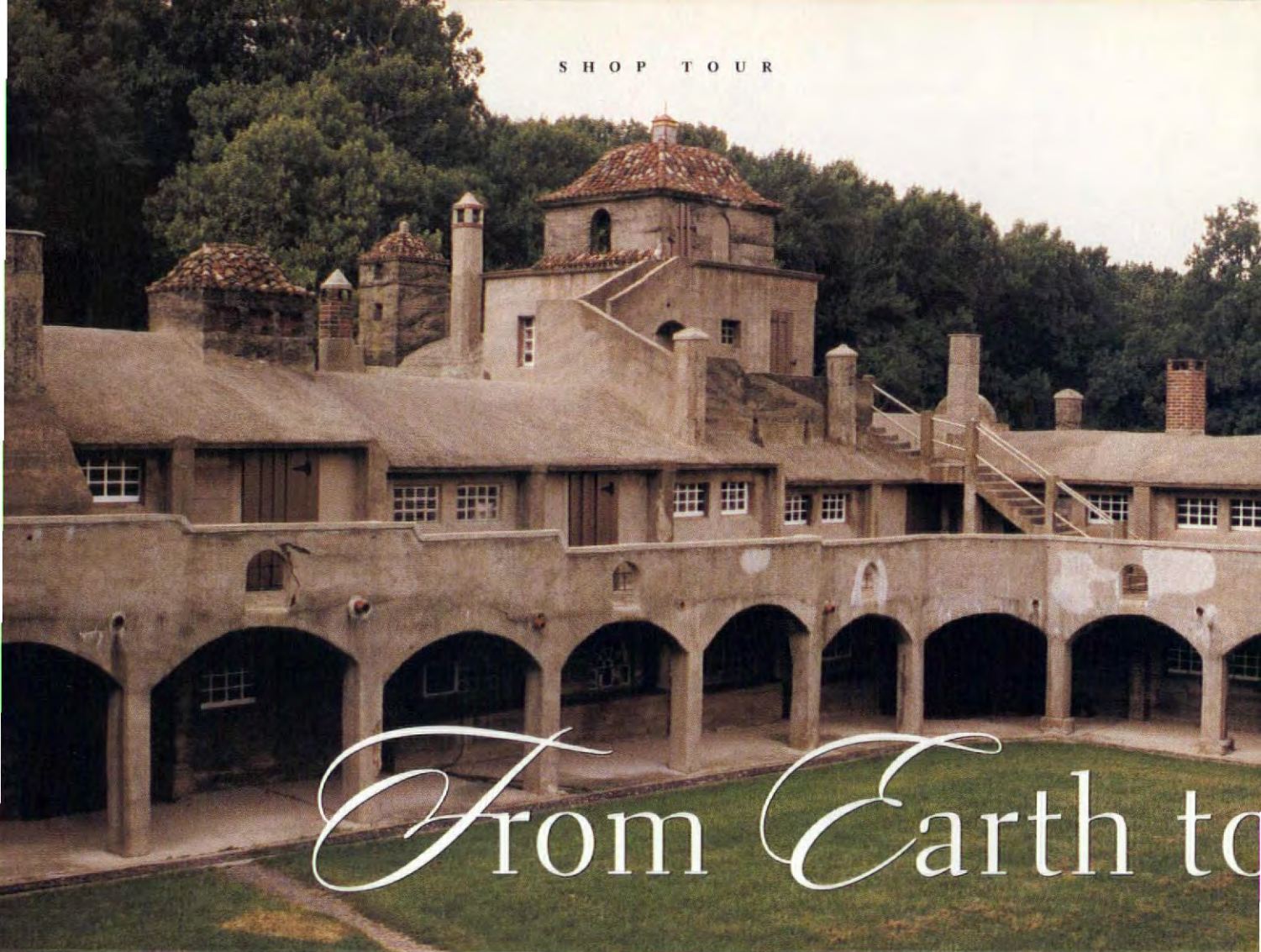
Understanding the Nature and Manufacture of Arts & Crafts Tile BY J. RANDALL COTTON

Tile making is a straightforward procedure. The raw material—clay—comes from the earth, and Arts & Crafts tiles bear the regional coloring of the clay from which they were made. Mercer's original 1903 pug mill is still used to screen out stones and twigs and to homogenize and knead the clay. Water is added to make it more workable. In a nod to modernity, the pug mill is now powered by electricity, although the Tile Works retains the original steam engines. The extruded clay is cut and formed into blocks and then bagged and stored in a subterranean chamber at the Tile Works until needed.

In contrast to Victorian tiles, which were decorated with multiple-color clays or fine, realistic painted scenes, Arts & Crafts tiles often relied on simple, symbolic impressions on their faces. These *relief tiles*, a Mercer specialty, are made by pressing clay into plaster molds. The Tile Works main-



Mercer got his clay locally, primarily from the farmlands of Bucks County, which yielded a reddish-hued tile. The Tile Works still obtains local clay, supplemented by commercial products. The original pug mill processes the clay.



From Earth to



Henry Mercer turned to history for his designs. The 18th-century stove plate depicts "Miracle of Oil," a Biblical story (top). Mercer's reproduction can be seen at the Mercer home, Fonhill, in Doylestown, Penn.

CERAMIC TILE TOOK A STEP backward a century ago. The fledgling Arts & Crafts movement rejected the intricate, mass-produced European tile of the Victorian era. A different kind of tile making developed in North America—one that turned to simple, hand-moulded ceramics evoking the pre-industrial past.

The early leaders in this industry were William Grueby in Boston, Ernest Batchelder in California, Mary Chase Perry in Detroit, and perhaps most prominently, Henry Chapman Mercer of Pennsylvania. Mercer's Moravian Pottery and Tile Works opened in 1912 and produced tile for such settings as Harvard University, the Pennsylvania Statehouse, and hotels from Atlantic City to Cairo. The Tile Works, now a working museum run by the Bucks County Parks Department, continues to produce

Mercer's designs using original methods and, in many cases, original equipment. It provides a unique opportunity to learn about Arts & Crafts tile, and how the tiles were made more than 80 years ago.

Clay into Tile

MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, ARTS & CRAFTS tiles were handcrafted ceramics. The new aesthetic favored tile with abstract designs and matte finishes and the (oft-exaggerated) irregularity of handcrafted art. Even during its heyday in the 1920s, the Tile Works was largely a manual operation, employing only 12 to 14 tile makers. Imperfections in the tiles were celebrated, not obliterated. Glazing colors might be uneven, tile sizes irregular, and surfaces imperfect. This tradition is carried on today at the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, where tile-makers prefer to be called mechanics rather than ceramicists or artisans.



To adjust for a bowed door, start by scribing the door's shape along the stop (left). Then chisel the stop back (see p. 41), and finally use a rabbet plane to finish the adjustment (right).

hinges from a parts door (a closet or unused door) or with new reproduction hinges.

TRIM TOP OR BOTTOM OF DOOR. With a framing square, transfer the low point of the head jamb or the high point of the floor to the edge of the door. Allow at least $\frac{1}{8}$ " space for clearance. From this mark, lay out a straight line across the face of the door that tapers to the opposite corner. Take the door off the hinges and set it up on sawhorses. If you use a circular saw, use a combination blade. I saved pieces I trimmed off our doors to use for testing stain and finish samples when I strip and refinish the doors.

ADJUST STRIKER PLATE. To mark where the latch bolt is hitting the plate, rub a lumber crayon on the plate and close the door. The latch bolt will scrape off the crayon showing how close it comes to the hole. Check vertical alignment by slipping in a thin steel ruler to feel the bolt.

If the bolt is within $\frac{1}{16}$ " of the hole, you can simply unscrew the plate, file the hole a little larger with a metal file, and replace the plate. If this exposes some wood inside the hole beneath the plate, trim it with a sharp chisel. (Do not file the latch bolt.)


For larger misalignments, you'll have to shift the location of the plate—tricky because of the existing gain and holes, and because the wood may be split or damaged. If so, start by repairing the jamb with a wood dutchman or epoxy paste filler.

Position the plate on the jamb so the hole surrounds the bolt location. The outer vertical edge of the hole must be even with the outer edge of the bolt when the door is against the jamb. Scribe around the outside

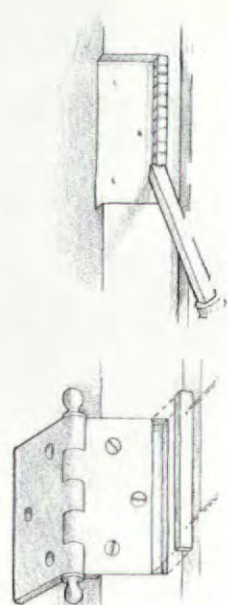
of the plate with a sharp pocket knife, and around the inside of the hole with a pencil. Drill or chisel out the bolt hole. Chisel out a gain equal to the thickness of the plate. Start the screw holes with an awl. Check to make sure the latch-bolt sinks easily into the striker plate hole when the door is closed. Lubricate the striker plate and the end of the latch bolt by rubbing with paraffin (candle wax).

STRAIGHTEN BOWED JAMBS. Minor bowing ($\frac{1}{16}$ " or less) can sometimes be corrected by drawing the jamb closer to the structural framing beneath with wood screws. Jambs are usually installed with a gap between the back of the jamb and the structural members beneath, except where the jamb is nailed to the studs. Major bowing can be corrected with the same method except the casing should be removed to check for obstructions. Predrill screw holes with a countersink.

BUMPERS, STOPS, AND OIL. Some other simple problems solvers include adding felt where the door hits the stop, adding a door bumper, and oiling hinges with a light-weight machine oil.

Now all the doors in our house operate in quiet perfection with no more noise than a simple clink of the bolt sinking home—all except the parlor door. I left that to open with its ghostly squeak. 

JOHN LEEKE is a preservation consultant who helps homeowners, contractors, and architects understand and maintain their historic buildings (26 Higgins Street, Portland, ME 04103, 207-773-2306 or e-mail: johnleeke@aol.com).



Top: Shifting a hinge toward the stop requires widening the gain. First outline the cut with a sharp knife or chisel. Next, chop up the waste material with cross-grain cuts from the chisel. Then turn the chisel so it rides the existing gain and carefully remove the waste. **Above:** Shifting a hinge away from the stops means extra gain is left behind. This must be filled to support the hinge. Use material that's a little thicker than the gain, glue and nail in place (with finish nails through pre-drilled holes), and then sand it flush with a palm sander.



Lay masking tape on the surface to protect it from the saw plate. Score along the cut to prevent splintering.



If the door is catching along its edge, check the hinges first. If they're sound, plane down the offending spot on the door. Bevel the edge toward the stop.



The pin collars on an old hinge may loosen, causing the door to rub on the latch edge, but the hinge can generally be fixed by tightening it in a vice.



• **Bowed jamb.** The *latch jamb* may be bowed out, although this is rare. Check it with a straight edge. Straighten the bowed jamb.



BINDING AT THE HINGE EDGE. When the door is closed there should be a $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{8}$ " space between the edge of the door and the stop. If not, it will spring back open a little after you pull it closed.

• **Paint buildup.** Excessive paint buildup on the stop and on the edge of the door (and, worse, on the hinge leaves) fills the space needed for the door to close (see p. 41). Remove the paint.

• **Loose screws.** Sometimes a door binds on a hinge screw that has backed out of its hole (see p. 41). Reset the hinge.

• **Hinges out of vertical alignment.** If the hinge pins are not directly above each other, they'll bind, and the door will spring open. Reset hinges.

• **Bowed jamb.** The *hinge jamb* may be bowed. Straighten the jamb.

Repair Methods

THESE AND MOST OTHER DOOR WOES CAN BE fixed with the techniques I used at my house. (Fix ongoing house problems—from structural damage to excessive humidity—before addressing their effects on doors.)

TRIM LATCH-EDGE OF DOOR. Most trimming can be done while the door is hanging. Stabilize the door by wedging it to the floor with shakes or hold it with your foot.

First remove paint in the area. If trimming is still needed, use a sharp hand plane to shave the edge until the door fits with a $\frac{1}{8}$ " gap. If you're trimming at the middle of the door, remove the lockset first: you may have to deepen the *gain* (a mortised pocket that holds door hardware). Bevel the edge slightly toward the outside of the door.

GLUE UP LOOSE DOOR JOINT. Lay the door across sawhorses. Clean out any paint, glue, or debris from the joint. Spread wood glue in it, and use bar-clamps to ease the joints together. You can also insert screws (predrill the holes) through the edge of the door into the rail tenons.

TRIM STOP. It is usually possible to trim as much as $\frac{1}{4}$ " off the stop without making the face of the jamb look too uneven. Close the door and scribe against it on the jamb. Then trim right down to the line (see top right).

RESET HINGE. Tighten loose screws. If the holes in the jamb won't hold, use longer cabinet screws. If the wood jamb is split or chewed up from previous hinge work, the jamb may need to be repaired with a standard wood dutchman or epoxy filler. Often there is a hollow space behind the jamb so there is nothing solid to screw into. Remove the *casing* and slip a block of wood behind the jamb. Or predrill a shank hole in the jamb that angles back into the wall so the screw can catch the *jack stud*. The edge of the angled screw head will stick out past the face of the hinge. File or grind it flush with the face, but try to leave enough for later removal. Replace broken or extremely worn hinges.

SHIFT HINGE. Shifting a hinge toward the stop is easily done by removing the hinge, chiseling out the gain for the hinge a little wider and reinstalling the hinge with new screw holes.

Shifting a hinge toward the hinge pins is trickier because it moves the screws further away from the solid backing of the studs. Also, extra gain is left next to the hinge. The hinge depends on a tight fit for much of its strength, so fill the space with a thin strip of wood.

REPAIR OR REPLACE HINGES. If they are slip-pin hinges, grind and fit washers to take up the slack between the knuckles. You may also be able to squeeze the hinges tighter around the pins using a vice. If the hinges are beyond repair, replace them with salvaged

I RECENTLY SET ASIDE MY PROFESSIONAL work as a preservation consultant to repair the doors in my own Victorian house. Just about every one needed treatment—the coat closet door wouldn't close; the back door was falling off its hinges; and the parlor door opened with an eerie creak whenever someone walked down the hall. My project was comprehensive, and I used it to develop the following manual for the simple carpentry required to repair old doors.

Conditions and Causes

DOORS GET A LOT OF HARD USE AND THE FACT that they hold up to abuse year after year is a real testament to their practical design and the rugged strength of their solid-wood construction and steel hardware. Eventually though, whether by injury or lack of upkeep, they're bound to run into a jamb.

Typically, door trouble falls into four basic categories, each with a number of potential causes. Use this key to determine what's causing your door problems and the best fixes for them. Then refer to "Repair Methods" (later in this article) for step-by-step instructions on each procedure.



JAMMING OR RUBBING AT THE TOP OR BOTTOM EDGE. This is usually caused by structural shifting. Use a framing square to check all four corners of the door opening at the *stop* (sometimes there's no stop but a rabbet in the jamb).

- Door jamb out of square. When the building settles, the opening may shift into a parallelogram. Trim top or bottom of the door.
- Uneven floor. Shifting in structural floor members can cause humps in the floor, lifted floor boards, or lifted *thresholds* that the door catches as it swings. Trim the bottom of the door.



DOOR WILL NOT LATCH. Misalignment of the latch and the striker plate will prevent the bolt from mating with the plate hole.

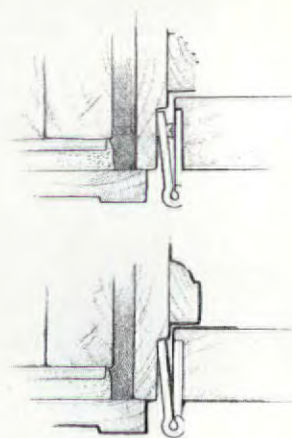
- Door twisted or bowed. This is most often caused by different environmental extremes on either side of the door. Adapt the door jamb and hardware to account for doors that "wind out" as much as 1 1/2". Trim stop. Adjust striker plate. (Trying to flatten doors rarely works and never lasts.)

- Door jamb out of square. Trim top or bottom of the door. Adjust the striker plate.
- Loose or worn hinges. The hinge knuckles can wear down enough to cause latch misalignment. Adjust the striker plate. Reset, repair, or replace hinges.



JAMMING OR RUBBING ON THE LATCH EDGE. Perhaps the No.1 door problem, the trick is to determine its cause.

- Expansion. High humidity can expand vertical boards across their width. (Panel doors are designed to take some seasonal expansion; board-and-batten doors can absorb very little.) If the moisture is related to seasonal changes in humidity, trim the latch edge during the high-humidity season.
- Loose joints. The mortise-and-tenon joints between a door's *stiles* and *rails* can come loose and spread open. This is most common after flood waters have weakened the glue that holds the joinery together. Glue up the loose joints.
- Loose, worn, or broken hinges will let the door fall over against the latch stop. Reset, shift, or replace hinges.



Top: A loose screw head blocks the proper closure of the hinge and pulls the hinge out of its gain. **Above:** Paint buildup on the door, the jamb, and the hinge blocks proper function.



If the diagnosis is a bowed door, forget about straightening the door. The best fix is to trim back the stop to account for the shape of the door.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Troubleshooting Interior Doors

BY JOHN LEEKE



and missing muntins. Fortunately, the more complicated elements are typically in the upper sash, so they are less vulnerable to the water absorption and exposure problems of lower sash. Here are some common concerns:

FASTENERS—Replacing or even mending major sash members involves disassembling the mortise-and-tenon joints to release stiles and rails. If the sash uses wood pegs, they can be pried or knocked out with care, especially if the joint is loose. Use replacement pins that are squared-off—not smooth, rounded dowels—so the sharp edges hold the fastener in place. If heavy corrosion hasn't reduced steel pins or nails to the crumbling point (a blessing), it usually makes them troublesome to remove. Try prying with diagonal wire cutters over a putty knife (for protection). Wood lost in the process probably means the joint will have to be resecured with glue.

ADHESIVES—While two-part resorcinol wood glues have been used in the past for sash repairs, many window restorers are moving into epoxy adhesives. These products bond tenaciously with wood and wood consolidants, plus they have good gap-filling qualities. Be sure to square-up the window before clamping for regluing or you'll have a hard time reinstalling glass in the sash, or the sash in the frame.

MUNTINS—Split or broken muntins usually respond well to gluing if there is no lost material. Remove glass and paint first. When parts are missing through storm damage or vandalism, they can be cannibalized from other windows or made new (see "A Window on Sash Repair," May/June 1995 OHJ). When replicating a small number of parts with a router, it may be more economical to shape the moulded surfaces with matching stile-and-rail bits than a sash bar bit. (Shape unmoulded areas on a table saw, or attach them separately.)

FINISHES—Before working on windows, remove all failing paint. Next, make repairs and glue-up the frame, if necessary. Then, before reglazing, treat all rabbets with a 1:1 mixture of boiled linseed oil and turpentine. Paint the prep on as long as the wood continues to "drink" it up, then allow to dry for 24 hours. Continue the prep anywhere the wood is weathered, especially at weatherprone open-grain areas such as stile bottoms and through-tenon ends.



Houses in the Prairie School mode (above) made the most of intricate, almost crystalline muntin patterns that came close to the abstract stained-glass designs then popular. Late-Victorian houses often favored lozenge shapes (left and below) where the building had a vertical emphasis.

SUPPLIERS

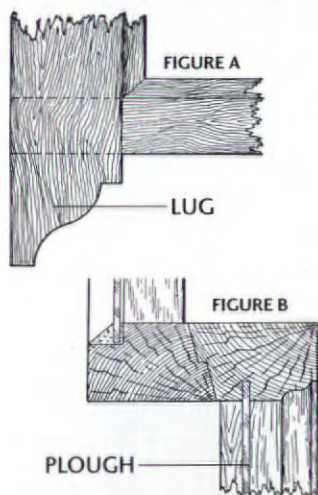
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Wood casement windows, which were just starting to come into their own by 1900, were also designed with muntins that created a "divided top" appearance.



Focus on Frames

To the insensitive, the only value of sash "lugs" at the bottoms of stiles (Figure A) is that they offer a convenient spot for nailing the window shut. In reality, this extra wood increases the strength of the stile mortise while adding an opportunity for decoration—typically an ogee double curve (photo above). The meeting rail of basic bottom sash is fairly wide (1 3/4") to provide sufficient wood for a glazing rabbet. By the turn of the century, however, sash factories had devised a way to set the top of the glass in a thin plough or groove, a practice still in use today. The savings in wood reduced the member by 1/2" and created a svelter meeting rail. Adding a small rabbet where rails met helped cinch the seal.



only would several mortises weaken the already-slight members, but such intricate construction also becomes complex to assemble.) Usually, only major muntins and bars were anchored with mortises (typically into perimeter frame members). Smaller, subordinate bars were carefully coped to meet their mates, then nailed in place with brads.

JOINTS—Wood sash rely on cunningly engineered joints to be light and strong at the same time. Around 1900, mortise-and-tenon joinery with through tenons (extending completely through the stiles) was still in common use. However, some manufacturers were favoring haunched tenons (that penetrate only part of the stile), probably for ease of construction. To secure these joints, traditional wood pins were giving way to metal pegs and nails, which could be machine-made and -installed.

Doing Windows

THE ISSUES ENCOUNTERED IN RESTORING picturesque windows are pretty much the same as for standard wood sash: bowed or decaying meeting rails, loose joints, broken



Millwork catalogs claimed that “vertical and horizontal lines may become tiresome,” so their solution was to offer manifold diagonal patterns. Twelve-light lattice sash (left) was a standard and highly popular. A change in matrix dimensions (below) or adding vertical bars (bottom) further varied the lights.

dows. When the meeting rail was proportioned above-center in a double-hung window, or the same appearance was built into a single sash, the result was a “cottage front” window or sash.

Turn-of-the-Century Construction

WINDOW MAKERS A CENTURY AGO DIDN'T reinvent the construction of wood sash as much as update it for mass production and improved performance.

STILES—Whether they were called “lugs” or “ears” (or sometimes “sash horns” and “drop stiles”), extended stiles were popular in many areas by the late 19th century. Here, the two vertical members of the frame do not end at the sash corner but as much as 2" beyond the bottom (see sidebar, page 38). This extra wood adds strength to the sash at a chronically weak joint. (The top sash rides in the exterior channel of the frame, so its bottom edge tends to get some of the worst weather exposure on the window.)

RAILS—By this time many sash shops were revamping the detailing of meeting rails (also called check rails). In earlier windows, it was customary to square-cut the rails where the upper sash laps the lower sash—a design that was simple to build, but made for rattling, drafty sashes as they aged. Milling



mating bevels in the rails kept the sashes tight and added weather integrity. Some millworks went even further with a rabbeted bevel intended to improve the seal.

MUNTINS—The myriad small lights contained in most picturesque sash designs require multiple muntins or glazing bars to hold them. Construction methods varied from manufacturer to manufacturer, and design to design, but in most cases it was impractical to tenon every joint. (Not



Cottage front sash (left) made use of a high-waisted meeting rail. The heavily horizontal accent of this nine-light pattern was a classic with many foursquares and bungalows.



HISTORY

New Century Sash

The Fashions and Features Behind Post-Victorian Windows

BY GORDON BOCK

EVERY OLD-HOUSE OWNER KNOWS the short story of wood sash windows in the last century. Basically, as better manufacturing made bigger sections of glass more affordable, windows went from many small lights—that is, the multiple panes of six-over-six, nine-over-nine, and twelve-over-twelve versions of pre-1840s windows—to the large, single-light sash common by 1900.

Yet, just when there finally came an opportunity to do away with small lights and complicated sash bars, they seemed to have bounced back in earnest. Some novel design features coupled with improved construction methods produced a different kind of sash—picturesque, yet modern. Since these once-ubiquitous sash are no longer stock lumberyard items, we'll look at how they went together and what they require for repairs.

A Little Light Reading

BY THE 1890S, DESIGNERS AND HOMEOWNERS alike were increasingly enamored of decorative patterns, particularly for the top of the window. "Plain windows with small lights above and a single, large light below are always practical," pronounced architect Charles B. White Jr. in 1914. "The upper sash can be divided into six or eight equal lights, with small lights at the side and larger lights in the center." Such windows were quite different from those in newly popular Colonial Revival houses. Inspired by Georgian models, standard colonial windows reinterpreted an 18th-century grid of six or more identical, rectangular lights, typically repeating them in both upper and lower sash.

Not so the picturesque breed. These were basically ahistorical—and horizontally asymmetrical—patterns created for a new effect. Along with stock-design, art-glass windows, they were the stuff of late Queen Anne-style houses and mass-market post-Victorian house types: bungalows, foursquares, and Prairie School-style houses.

Manufacturers' catalogs grouped the scores of inventive patterns under some basic headings. Double-hung windows with equal-sized sash were variously called "divided top," "fancy top," or "cut up" win-

Contrast between upper and lower sash was the architectural order of the day a hundred years ago. It found a home in all manner of turn-of-the-century houses.



sign now answered, we were able to complete our mock-up feeling that we had done a good job in reproducing the parlor's elaborate trim.

Perplexing Pilasters

EVERYBODY INVOLVED IN OUR PROJECT AGREED we were on the right track, so we moved ahead with the real trim. Inside the parlor we set up a production line to fabricate as many components as was practical (see sidebar, page 34). Soon the first pilasters were ready to be set in place. To our great surprise, however, we discovered that once they were up against the wall they did not project far enough. Right under our noses—or feet to be most accurate—were a set of wood “ghosts.”

Many years ago, before the Greek Revival trim was taken down, someone had installed a hardwood strip floor over the original floor. When the trim was dismantled, the resulting voids in the floor—the squares where the pilaster bases had been seated—were patched in with pieces of wood.

These makeshift patches were not especially noticeable until we placed our pilasters on them. Then it became obvious our base was an inch too shallow. Moreover this meant that the capital and stiles of the pilasters should also project an inch further. We were so preoccupied with the ghosts on the walls, it seems we had overlooked the ghosts on the floor—quite possibly because they were of a different nature.



Chagrined at having missed such critical evidence, Craig and I set about remaking the faulty pilaster components. Fortunately, we suffered no great loss of material, only a little time and a fair amount of pride. The installation thereafter went quickly and smoothly.

Though the profile of the capital, taenia moulding, and panel moulding might vary slightly from the original, the restored parlor trim at the Brewster House is pretty accurate. As is often the case with restorations, our work had to address pragmatic concerns as well as historical accuracy. We used stock mouldings whenever it made economic sense. Many parts of the entablature were made of redwood because of its quality, workability, and cost. We used clear pine for everything else, as did Walter Brewster.

Restoring the Brewster House parlor was a unique experience for us. Craig and I not only learned a lot about Greek Revival architecture, but also discovered first-hand the importance and challenge of historic clues like paint and carpentry ghosts.

They aren't always obvious, and they aren't always what they seem. But finding them, and deducing what they can tell you, adds yet another wonderful dimension to the art and fun of old-house restoration. 🏠

We used a finish pneumatic nailer (above) to install the strings of individual dentils. Craig tacked up a ledger strip to keep the dentils even and set their spacing, which was laid out beforehand on the strip. The completed cornices and capitals (left) may not be precise duplicates of what was there in 1850, but they are remarkably faithful to the evidence and architecture in the house.

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Anatomy of a Capital

Reproducing the capitals on top of the pilasters was the most difficult part of the trimwork. Cutting and fitting the crown moulding required three steps:

I. CUTTING THE CROWN To get the closest fit possible, the crown moulding should be cut in the identical position it will take when it is installed. Even the slightest variation will open the joint; the wider the moulding, the wider the potential opening. (See "Crafting Interior Cornices," September/October 1996 OHJ.)

If you don't have a compound miter saw, place the crown in the miter box exactly as it will be installed on the building. With large mouldings, you may need to raise the back with a wide board clamped to the fence, or you may have to build a box for a hand saw.

II. JOINING THE PIECES Gluing crown mouldings together can be very difficult. Why? Because the wet glue acts as a lubricant that causes the pieces to slide around. We used biscuit joinery to spline the pieces for structural integrity and prevent them from slipping.

Angled glue blocks placed behind the crown aid nailing by giving solid support that does not require an exact size. If necessary, you can always shim behind the crown with small wedges.

III. CREATING A PRODUCTION LINE Once all the angles and installation features are figured out, it's worth setting up a production line:

- 1) Cut all the mitered angles for each piece of moulding.
- 2) Cut all pieces to the same exact length.
- 3) Cut all of the angled backer boards.
- 4) Assemble all pieces for each capital and glue-up as a unit.

Stop blocks clamped onto the saw table assure that each piece is cut to the same length. If multiple cuts on the same piece are required, multiple stop blocks can be clamped to the table. A simple shop jig, such as a small hinge attached to the stop block, allows the stop to be lifted clear of the work piece as it is moved down the table in preparation for the next cut.



Clockwise from top:

- 1) Assembling a cornice return in the production line.
- 2) We used modern biscuits as reinforcing splines.
- 3) Reverse-moulded blocks aid clamping on irregular surfaces.
- 4) Water-based carpenter's glue swells biscuits for optimum grasp.



chimney wall ghost clearly showed a rectangular area beneath the cornice. Elsewhere, the rectangle disappeared but the ghosts pointed to a rounded bead moulding. We did some preliminary research in historic pattern books and other literature to try and clear up some of the confusion, but to no avail. So we decided to move ahead with a mock-up of the trim based on what we knew for certain.

Predictions from Prototypes

OFTEN, THE PROCESS OF BUILDING TRIAL versions of house features—a cardboard kitchen counter, for example—will provide realistic answers to questions of volume and appearance. Why? Creating a mock-up allows you to transform an abstract idea or rough sketch into a concrete form that is easily viewed and tested. In effect, the mock-up, which should be constructed of materials similar to those used in the final product, lets you see if all the parts work together as a cohesive whole.

For our mock-up we started by building the components we were relatively sure about: basically the pilasters, entablature, and cornice. A field trip to a local house of the same period and style provided insights on interior panel moulding and pilaster construction. When it came time to deal with the unknowns of the soffit—curved or sloped—we decided to mock-up the sloping version, simply because it was easier to construct.

In building the corner for the return, it dawned on us that a cross section of a partial return—necessary because of the proximity of the window to the chimney—would create a profile with an obtuse angle. That profile, we deduced, could easily be softened into a concave outline by a painter's brush that got up between the trim and the chimney wall. We were aware that some trim had pulled away from the walls over the years, making such a possibility likely.

That logic, in turn, provided the key to solving the moulding mystery. We deduced that the crisp outline on the chimney, indicating there was a dentil below the soffit, was correct. The contradictory outline had simply resulted from the painter being unable to get a brush completely behind a dentil, which ended $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the wall surface.

The shadows on the chimneys were



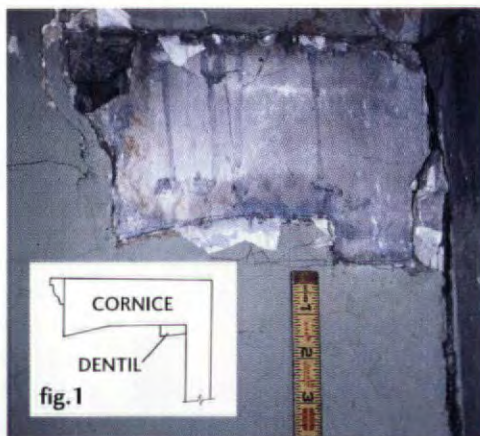
After prefabricating the major components from redwood and pine (above), Craig began the installation. The basic framework is anchored with cleats and screws; mouldings and pilaster panels are applied later. Because the walls were so uneven, I had to scribe each cornice to the plaster (left) for a good fit.

especially useful in providing clues. Because the chimneys were so close to the windows, they prohibited a full return (right-angle continuation) of the mouldings in the window cornice. Thus the ghosts or outlines of the cornice on the chimney gave us a different perspective and information we could not have found elsewhere. For example, it was impossible to determine the thickness of the frieze from the ghosts left by the cornice returns. But the differences between those ghosts and the cornice ghosts on the chimney told us the frieze was 2" thick.

With these major questions about de-



The crux of the cornice mystery was the soffit. On a chimney wall ghost (above and right) the soffit seemed to be curved or double-angled (fig. 1). At other locations, the ghost appeared sloped (fig. 2). We concluded the rectangle (above the ruler) was probably a dentil. Pilaster ghosts (bottom) yielded the height and other useful details about the base mouldings, but didn't hint at their thickness.



parlor trim was designed to follow the Roman Doric order. The Greek Revival style draws its details from classical architecture, choosing with more or less accuracy among the five common orders—architectural modes used for decorating and proportioning columns. The Doric order (which has both Greek and Roman versions) is the simplest and adapted well to Greek Revival houses built in wood. The capital we had was a simple crown moulding, not the elaborate ornament you would find with other classic orders such as Ionic or Corinthian capitals. The original trim's ghosts also told us about the width and taper of the pilasters, the profile of the baseboard moulding, and the size of the entablature.

Obtaining specific details about the cornices and the soffit, however, was not as easy. While there were many ghosts, the information they contained seemed contradictory and confusing. For example, an outline on the side of a chimney indicated a curved soffit; another outline on a nearby wall suggested a sloping soffit—that is, a flat board angled downward at a 12-degree pitch. Moreover, there were questions about what went on just inches below. The

Unfortunately, not a scrap of it remained when we undertook our project.

Ghosts in the House

AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, WE COULD NOT find a single historic photograph that might supply clues about any of the parlor trim design details. In the 19th century it was common for a builder to employ one millwork pattern in two or more rooms, but in the Brewster House the trim did not re-appear in any other area. We were lucky, however. The trim had left clear paint ghosts.

Among building preservationists, the words *ghost* or *shadow* are often used to describe the incidental outline left by a feature, such as a bookshelf, after it has been removed. Ghosts can be created by almost any kind of material or force. Paint, stain, and plaster are the most widely seen, but agents like dirt, pressure, abrasion, and weathering have a similar (though subtler) effect.

For example, suppose a handrail was added between two porch posts when a house was remodeled in 1890. Then, a generation later, the rail fell off. The remodeling paint around the rail has created a ghost of the rail's cross-section where it attached to each post. These silhouettes—"negative space" to an artist's eye—offer direct evidence about the rail's shape, location, and even its history.

Ghosts can be very revealing clues for an architectural investigator, but interpreting them is an inexact science subject to limitations and "red herrings." Like looking at the patterns left by siding nails and hardware screw holes, it's not always clear how the ghost was produced or, if there are successive ghosts, which came first. As with so many other aspects of old-house work, they have to be taken in context. Comparing their evidence with historical research in drawings, deeds, oral accounts, and similar sources gives a fuller framework for understanding how a building has changed over its life.

Contradicting Clues

ON THE WALLS, UNDERNEATH PANELING installed years ago, we found paint ghost outlines created early on when the plaster had been painted one color, the trim another (see page 32). This rich legacy proved invaluable. From the outline of the pilaster capital, for example, we deduced that the



An Imposing House, Nearly Lost

Walter Brewster built his house in 1850 near the center of a New York village that he founded and that today bears his name. All four sides of the house feature classic cornices supported by massive Ionic columns, giving it the appearance of a "Temple on a Hill" and reflecting Brewster's imposing role in developing the village. Brewster worked as an apprentice carpenter



All around the Brewster House (top) runs a columned portico—a favorite feature of Greek Revival plantation houses in the South—that provides views of the nearby Croton River. We set up shop inside the 14'x 34' parlor near the two mantel-less, but still massive, fireplaces (above).

and later studied architecture for a year at Yale University. When he returned, he and his brother—with family help—launched a number of local enterprises including iron mines, saw mills, and freight handling.

Following the death of his wife, Brewster moved to a small cottage he had designed and built near the river. He briefly rented his "Temple" to the Borden family, local milk processors, then sold it to a priest who first used the mansion as a residence, but later divided it into apartments.

In the 1960s, the Knights of Columbus (owners of the house since the 1920s) announced plans for expanding the building and making major interior and exterior alterations. The village's Landmark Preservation Society even-

tually purchased the Walter Brewster House, and the restoration began with a team of local artisans and volunteers.

It was a daunting task. Bearing walls had been removed. The central staircase had been relocated. Ceilings had been "dropped." Pressed-wood paneling had been installed over windows and walls. The marble mantels and facings had been removed and, even though shattered, were found—miraculously—in the paneling contractor's dump. All the interior trim had been destroyed. The total restoration took several years.

Ghost Story

Re-creating Lost Parlor Trim in a Greek Revival Mansion **BY MASON LORD**



When restored, the parlor was once again the most elaborate room in the Brewster house (above). In the 1980s, however, little was left of the original classical trim except our mock-up (top)—and some tantalizing ghosts.

SOME OLD-HOUSE RESTORATION projects are straightforward. Much original building fabric exists to guide repairs and reflect the intent of the architect and builder. Other projects aren't as simple. Whole sections of the building are missing, so the restorer has to search for clues about materials, designs, and dimensions, as well as any nuances added by the craftsman.

Such was the case when my partner Craig Marchessault and I accepted the challenge of restoring the parlor trim in the Walter Brewster House in upstate New York. The ca. 1850 Brewster House is a classic example of Greek Revival architecture. Clearly, the trim had once dominated the parlor. Each of the eight parlor windows is surrounded by a 3"-wide beaded casing, and is framed by pilasters on a base with a capital that supports a Greek entablature—an architrave, frieze, and cornice with a sloping soffit and dentils.



charitable donation and may also be entitled to some local property tax abatement. Within limits, the easement can be tailored to fit the specific concerns of the owner—keeping the right to develop or sell certain portions of the property, for instance. In some states, the property owner must agree to allow the property to be open to the public on a limited basis—perhaps one day a year. But this requirement has caused so much dissent that it is being abandoned in some states and is routinely unenforced in others.

If your state is not yet among those offering help to the historic-home owner, don't give up hope. State legislation is currently being considered in Michigan and New York. And, although House and Senate bills calling for a federal tax credit failed in 1995, similar legislation will be presented in 1997, according to Preservation Action, which is lobbying for the bill. Whatever their outcome, this is an idea that doesn't seem likely to wither for lack of interest. 🏠

Above: This 1765 house sits on a few hundred prime acres on a peninsula in the Chesapeake Bay. It's zoned for one-acre lots, so an easement that prohibits any development provided a significant federal income tax break. **Below:** The owners of this 1773 Providence, Rhode Island, home received a state tax credit for 10% of their costs for restoring the private residence.



Puerto Rico's provisions for property tax abatement for restorations in the Old San Juan Historic District are not only the most generous, but were the first such benefits given to property owners in the United States.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

State and local preservation tax breaks are covered in greater detail in the new publication, *Smart States, Better Communities*, by Constance E. Beaumont, Director of State and Local Policy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The book costs \$30 plus shipping and is available from: National Trust for Historic Preservation, Information Series, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 588-6286.

To find out whether any of these programs are applicable in your area, contact your state historic preservation officer. If you don't know how to reach yours, call or write the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, 444 N. Capitol Street NW, Suite 342, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 624-5465.

If you decide to apply for a tax credit, don't go it alone. You'll need the expertise of a good tax lawyer or tax accountant.

percentages of either the property value or the cost of the rehab. It should be noted that in "local-option" states—which allow but do not require local governments to offer abatements—most localities choose not to offer them. The abatement usually applies only for a few years (as few as one or two and usually no more than ten).

Among the most generous states, Arizona allows a reduction of up to 50% in property tax assessment in return for a 15-year, renewable agreement to maintain the rehabbed property. The state approved 439 abatements for residential projects in 1995. California allows assessments of qualifying properties to be reduced up to 50% for ten years, with no state-mandated rehabilitation-cost minimum. Florida, a local-option state, allows exemptions up to the full value of improvements, which must equal at least 50% of the assessed value of the property.

In Illinois, the tax abatement program is mandatory for all taxing districts, and applies to condominiums and co-ops as well as single-family houses. Washington State and Washington, D.C., allow property to be assessed according to its current use rather than its "highest and best" use; a residence in a commercial district might not be taxed for its income-producing potential.

Not all states have embraced historic preservation tax breaks, however. Some, including Oklahoma and Tennessee, have even declared such property tax abatement unconstitutional.

Preservation Easements

EVEN IF NEITHER THE STATE NOR THE TOWN offers tax breaks, there may be another way to win a tax cut for your restoration efforts: a historic-preservation or open-space easement. An easement is a partial interest in the property and "runs with the land," meaning it becomes part of the deed and continues from owner to owner forever. A historic preservation easement prohibits alterations to the property that are not specifically approved by the easement holder. Customarily, the easement holder is either the state (or sometimes the county or city), some other government agency, or non-profit organization.

In return for giving up some rights to the property, the owner is allowed a federal and/or state income tax deduction for a

Even the most highly committed owners of historic properties sometimes conclude that the time, effort, and expense aren't worth the financial return. Yet, however imperfect and unevenly applied today's incentives for restoring historic residences may be, they do represent a well-placed foot in a long-closed door. To determine whether you can get tax relief for your project, take a look at the three types of tax breaks available for resident homeowners.

State Income Tax Credits

UNLIKE TAX DEDUCTIONS, WHICH ARE TAKEN from taxable income, preservation credits are subtracted directly from your tax bill. Nonetheless, since state taxes are considerably lower than federal taxes, state credits are less valuable. Also, the potential savings correlate to income levels, so the credit programs have the most potential for high-income families and may not offer much assistance to low-income families.

State preservation officials across the country are disappointed that relatively few owners take advantage of the credits. They hope that the word simply hasn't gotten out yet about these fledgling programs. In Rhode Island, which allows credits of 10% of qualified costs for major maintenance and repairs (such as new roofs or siding), only 27 income tax credit projects (averaging \$1,100 in credits per project) were submitted in 1995.

Virginia's program, which begins in 1997, requires rehabilitation costs amounting to at least 50% of the cost of the building before rehab, in return for tax credits that will begin at 10% of the rehab costs and rise to 25% in the year 2000. In New Mexico, which has no minimum investment requirement and allows 10% tax credits on rehab costs, most qualifying rehabilitations are in the \$2,000 to \$10,000 range—some are as little as \$200. Colorado currently allows a potential tax credit of up to \$50,000, or 20% of qualifying rehab costs.

Property Tax Abatements

YOU MAY ALSO QUALIFY FOR PROPERTY TAX relief. Some states allow municipalities to offer abatements to resident owners of historic houses who have rehabilitated their homes. These programs may freeze assessments at pre-rehab levels for a certain number of years or reduce them by specified



Commercial properties, such as this one in Philadelphia, may be eligible for a federal tax credit for 20% of the project costs.

Federal Income Tax Credits

If your historic building produces income, it might be eligible for federal tax relief. A 1976 law (actually an amendment to the Historic Preservation Act of 1966), provided that the income-producing portion of a historic property qualified for tax credit amounting to 25% of some rehabilitation costs. Although it imposed significant burdens on owners who applied for

it, the 25% credit gave a big boost to urban rehabilitation of old apartment houses and single-family dwellings that were converted to such uses as offices, bed-and-breakfasts, inns, and apartments.

But new legislation in 1984 lowered the credit to 20%. It was followed by a more-than-corresponding decline in restoration and rehabilitation efforts by developers and individuals. To complicate matters, developers can get a 10% credit for rehabbing any



Federal tax credits spurred inner-city restorations like this Washington, D.C., apartment building.

commercial building 35 years of age or older which is not on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, without the need to seek National Park Service certification. (Owners of buildings that are National Register-listed or -eligible can't opt for the 10% credit—it's certification or nothing if they want a tax credit.)

Probably the most daunting feature of the credit program, however, is that it requires a large financial outlay over a relatively short period of time. The amount spent on rehabilitation must equal the adjusted basis of the property (the total amount paid for the property, less the value of the land, plus the cost of improvements) or \$5,000, whichever is greater. Additionally, the work must usually be completed within 60 months or in pre-approved "phases."



Killahevin, a bed-and-breakfast in Virginia, required major restoration. The project—except for the living quarters, which do not produce income—was eligible for a federal tax credit.

A Bed-and-Breakfast Story

Susan and John Lang own a sprawling 1905 house in Front Royal, Virginia, from which they run a bed-and-breakfast. Because Killahevin is an income-producing property, the Langs qualified for federal tax credits, the largest preservation tax relief available (see "Federal Income Tax Credits," right). Yet even this is hardly a windfall.

Like many inn hosts, the Langs live on the premises, and their private apartment on the third floor was not eligible for the federal tax credit program. However, an adjacent guest house-cum-water tower at the rear of the property did qualify, and it now contains two deluxe guest suites overlooking a 1930s swimming pool converted into an oversized fish pond. (Swimming pools, alas, are also ineligible.)

"The tax credit was wonderful and a big help, but it certainly didn't cover everything," Susan says. She points out, however, that the tax savings did go a long way toward

paying for restoration of the screened front porch and second-floor sleeping porch (now a sunroom). This included the milling of new ceiling boards to match the old ones (broader than stock boards now available) and the painstaking removal, repair, and reinsertion of the sleeping porch windows and their non-standard 1930s wood sash.

The rehabilitation continued with the aid of a Small Business Administration loan, which covered work done on the parlor and dining room. The kitchen, although a less than state-of-the-art space, does come up to health and

safety codes and works well for preparing breakfasts, the only meal offered to Killahevin guests. The Langs have no immediate plans for improving it, since, as Susan allows, "Kitchens don't sell rooms."



The exterior required extensive repairs to the unique single-hung second-storey windows, which open by dropping into the wall.



Though no longer a residence, the John Wood Mansion, in Quincy, Illinois, is a good example of how costly restoration can be. The project came in at \$400,000.

Pennies from Heaven

New Tax Relief Programs Benefit Restorers of Owner-Occupied Homes.

Could You Qualify? BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

The exterior of the Haas-Lilienthal House, in San Francisco, is protected from alteration by an easement granted to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The owners received a federal tax break to compensate them for the gift.

FOR TWO DECADES, DEVELOPERS WHO RE-habilitated historic buildings for commercial uses—from restaurants to rental properties—often qualified for sizable federal tax credits. The only thing families who spent big bucks restoring their homes could count on, sure as death and you-know-what, were whopping property tax increases as a result of their improvements.

Now some state and municipal lawmakers are acknowledging the contributions to the community made by well-restored, -rehabilitated, and -maintained vintage homes. Many states and municipalities are starting to offer tax breaks to encourage investment in historic houses, particularly in places where substantial numbers are deteriorating. In return they require historically appropriate repairs and high-quality work.

Qualifying for Tax Credits

INCENTIVES DON'T APPLY TO EVERY PROJECT; the house must meet a high standard of historical significance. Often, that means the property must be on the National Register of Historic Places, or must be deemed eligible for listing. The programs often require heavy up-front investments of rehabilitation funds, and they almost always call for close oversight by state officials and strict adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, guidelines for the treatment of historic structures.

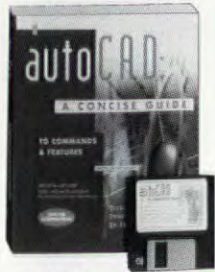
Among the states currently offering benefits of some sort for rehabbing historic homes are Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, and Wisconsin.



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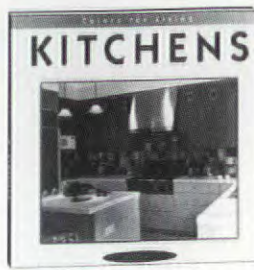
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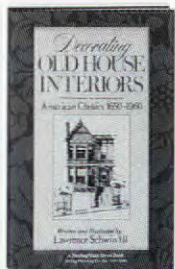
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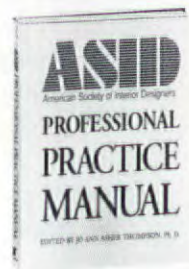
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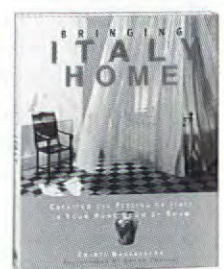
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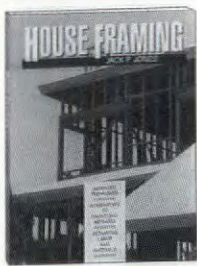
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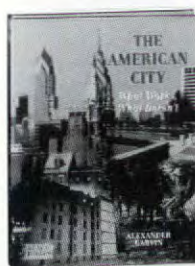
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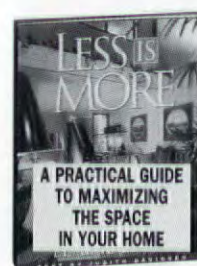
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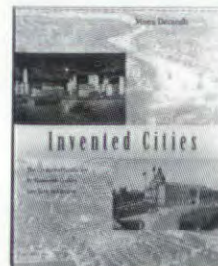
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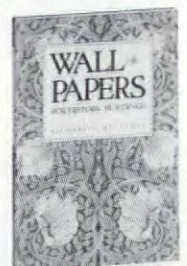
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NEWBRIDGE



GODDESS OF LIBERTY.

Stock designs from late 19th century weather vane manufacturer J.W. Fiske included the patriotic Goddess of Liberty (left), a whimsical dragon (center), and a banneret with an openwork ball (right).

on Greek Revival or Arts & Crafts houses, for example. If you are considering a weather vane, here are a few suggestions:

- Keep in mind that until the late-19th century, a vane was more likely to perch above the barn, where it could easily be seen from the house.
- Choose a vane that fits the age and style of your home. If your house was built in the colonial era, a style that mimics the rough-hewn look of early weather vanes—like a rooster cut from a piece of iron—would be a good choice. Safe bets for 19th-century vernacular houses include simple arrows and patriotic symbols, such as an eagle or the Goddess of Liberty.
- The fancier the house, the fancier the weather vane. The swell-bodied

trotters and scroll bannerets of the 19th century manufacturer's repertoire would likely suit a period Gothic Revival, Shingle Style, or Queen Anne home. Check your local library for reprinted catalogs

by historic weather vane makers, such as J.W. Fiske or A.B. & W.T. Westervelt.

Pay attention to scale. The taller the building, the larger the weather vane. A rule of thumb used by Kenneth Lynch & Sons of Wilton, Connecticut, is that a weather vane should be 2" to 3" in height for every foot of elevation. For large buildings, get the right proportion by drawing the house to

By the 1920s, the rage for polo and other leisure sports had caught on with weather vanes.



scale with the weather vane in place.

Choose symbols that have ties to your area. In James Fenimore Cooper country in upstate New York, for instance, American Indian weather vanes came into vogue soon after *The Last of the Mohicans* was published in 1826.

Consider symbols associated with the accomplishments of previous owners of the house—or even yourself. Just as a 19th-century railroad magnate might have chosen a swell-bodied locomotive from a manufacturer's catalog for his Neoclassical Revival house, you might choose a symbol that reflects your own form of pride and joy. When movie mogul Steven Spielberg built his new estate in East Hampton, New York, he commissioned a full-bodied velociraptor straight out of *Jurassic Park*.

Remember that the best weather vanes are handmade. The more life-like and accurate the modeling, the better the vane. "Look for fine detail, crispness of detail, and the number of parts it took to make something," says Travis Tuck, the Martha's Vineyard weather vane maker who created the Spielberg velociraptor. "That indicates someone spent a lot of time on it."

THE FORM OF A WEATHER VANE

Weather vanes come in three distinct types: silhouette, swell-bodied, or full-bodied.

SILHOUETTE vanes are two-dimensional and include the flat farm animals colonial artisans cut out of wood, and the bannerets and arrows factory craftsmen punched or cut from iron or copper.

SWELL-BODIED vanes look

three-dimensional from the ground, but are just a few inches thick. Made from sheet copper pounded into cast-iron molds, a typical swell-bodied horse or cow is essentially two sides of a figure done in relief and soldered together.

FULL-BODIED vanes are made of sheets of copper that have been beaten into shape and then

pieced together. Fully three-dimensional, a complex full-bodied vane might contain more than two-dozen individual parts. "A full-bodied pig would be just as round as a pig would be," says Al Denninger, a weather vane maker in Middletown, N.Y. "It's as if you took a pig and dipped him in a mold and made a model out of him."



The swell-bodied trotting horse was one of the most popular weather vane designs in late-19th century manufacturer's catalogs.

Vane as a Peacock

BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

WEATHER VANES ARE THE VANITY PLATES of earlier eras. A 19th-century farmer who raised prize cattle was likely to have a fine bovine on top of his barn. Along the New England coast, the codfish reigned supreme on steeples and public buildings. Out West, settlers romanticized the covered wagon on barns and windmills. A folk art form with a simple purpose, weather vanes reflect the aspirations and accomplishments of the people who raised them high above house and barnyard.

Before there was a Weather Channel, weather vanes brought a touch of personality to predicting the weather. Returning a vane to a gable or cupola not only brings back the flavor of the past, it offers present-day owners a chance to add their own form of personal expression to an old-house tradition.

Height of an Era

WELL BEFORE THE CIVIL War, any animal, abstract symbol, or mythological figure that could point to the four winds had been cut, carved, or hammered into a weather vane. Home-spun vanes were made of wood and painted; finer ones were handcrafted in iron, zinc, or copper. The best were gilded—a treatment that would stand up for decades. In 1860, commercial metalworkers in the Northeast began producing vanes in quantity from standardized patterns using the same painstaking methods as traditional craftsmen. The quality of manufactured weather vanes was so high that architects like H.H. Richardson and R.M.

Hunt chose stock weather vanes to top off imposing Newport “cottages” and Biltmore, the Vanderbilt chateau in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

The explosion in the popularity of weather vanes dovetailed with the rapid expansion in Victorian-era home building. With their elaborate roof lines and or-

nammentation, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Stick Style homes cried out for a crowning touch—the candle on the top of the cake. A favorite choice was a banneret, the direct descendant of the pennants nobles flew from the castle keep.

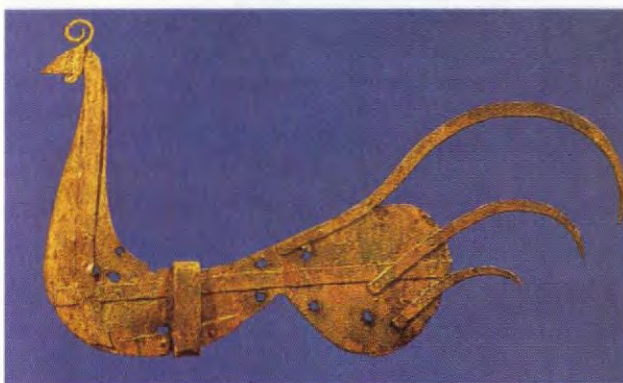
In the early 20th century, manufacturers swung back to the flat, two-dimensional vanes of early folk artists for ideas that would suit the scale of smaller single-family dwellings. Inexpensively produced, these silhouettes often told a story in miniature and reflected the new pastimes of the 1920s and '30s, such as sailing, hunting, and golf.

In the post-Victorian era, interest in weather vanes had finally peaked. Although some Tudor and Colonial Revival homes could carry a weather vane, builders were erecting bun-

galows and Prairie School-style houses that moved across the landscape horizontally, not vertically. The golden age of weather vanes had come to an end.

Sizing Up a Weather Vane

WHILE CHOOSING A WEATHER VANE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A matter of individual expression, they're not appropriate for all period houses. Weather vanes were seldom seen



An early silhouette weather vane (top). Contemporary artisans Al and Beth Denninger created this full-bodied copper cow from 27 separate pieces (above).

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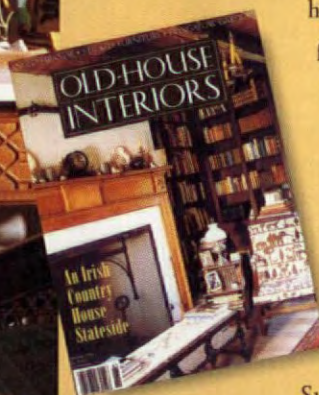
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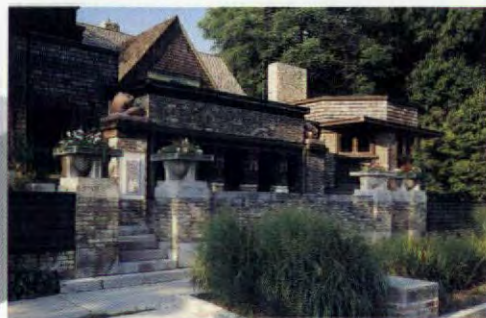


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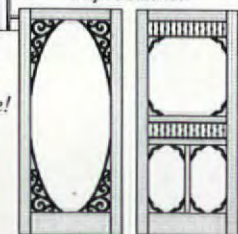
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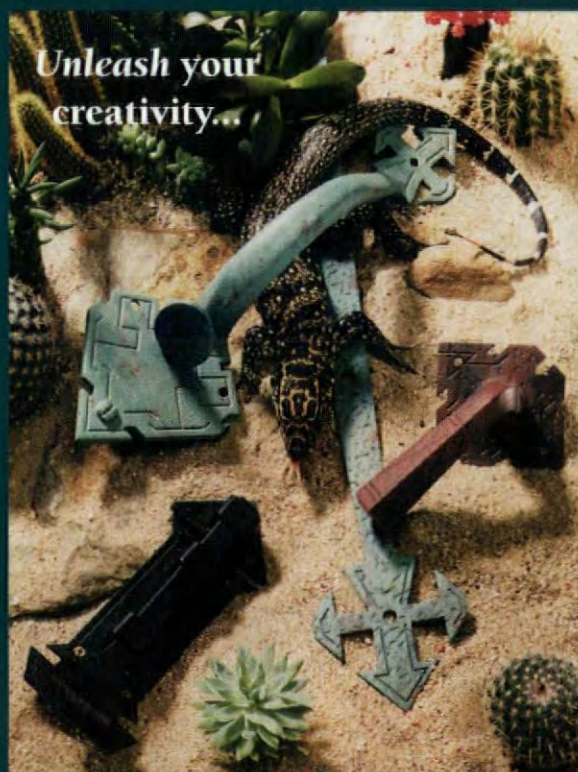
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RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK

BLUEPRINT BLUES

EVER SEE BLUEPRINTS SOAKED with coffee, trampled, or walled up in an addition? I have two thoughts on protecting important documents on the jobsite. First, use a length of PVC pipe to store or carry architectural drawings and other records. Use end caps, and run a rope through holes in each end for a shoulder strap. Label your new carrying case clearly with spray paint to avoid disposal. Second, build a plan desk with scrap plywood and 2x4s against

a stud wall in an out-of-the-way place on the jobsite.

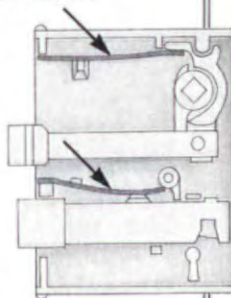
— KELLY MITCHELL
Coos Bay, Oreg.

SPRINGS RENEWED

AS IS TYPICAL WITH OLD mortise latches, the bolts in my 110-year-old house were stuck in the door and would not snap back to keep the door shut. After removing the mechanisms and opening them up, I discovered that the flat springs that activated the bolts were broken. My solution? I re-

placed them with sections of hacksaw blade cut to length and popped into place. The high-carbon steel has enough spring to force the latch bolt out but is malleable enough to bend when I turn the doorknob.

— PAUL PIETRZAK
Hamburg, N.Y.



STORMY WEATHER

IHAVE EXTERIOR WOOD STORMS for the arch-topped windows in my 1857 Italianate. Yet, because removing the 35-pound units from the upper storeys was an onerous task, we spent a hotter-than-comfortable summer without any ventilation in our second-storey bedrooms. Necessity being the mother of invention, I developed a method for making the lower pane of a divided-light storm removable from inside the house.

After numbering each storm according to its location, remove them and cart them to your workshop. Using a heat gun, remove the old putty and the glass from the lower light. With a jigsaw, carefully cut away the moulding that held the glass. Lay the foot of the saw on the wood frame to get a square cut, and plane or rasp it if necessary. Next build



A reader retrofitted his exterior storms with a removable lower pane.

a frame inside the opening to hold the storm and screen. Use wood or metal moulding, miter it at the corners, and fasten it securely. Caulk it, and paint it to match the storm. Put weatherstripping around the inner edge of that moulding and install Ludwig snap fasteners (available at hardware stores) to hold glass and screens in place.

Measure and order glass and screens. Use light aluminum frames and have them sit tightly but easily in the opening. Finally, reinstall the storm windows. When your new glass and screens are ready, you can simply lift the lower sash and pop in the inserts. The storms may have lost a bit of their insulating value, but that's better than a house that can't breathe in the summer.

— ZEV D. KIANOVSKY
Columbus, Wisc.

REVEALING TRICK

AFTER SOME RECENT CONSTRUCTION, I reinstalled many feet of mouldings. I wanted to be sure to match the original reveals (the exposed edges of door and window jambs). So I made a reveal gauge, a scrap piece of 1x stock with a rabbet of the proper depth cut into its edge. Then, as I installed the casings, I simply held the gauge in place to ensure accurate reveals.

— SAM HAMILTON
Rochester, Minn.

SIMPLE SIPHON

HERE'S HOW I MADE A HANDY SYRINGe to siphon the water from the toilet tanks when I winterized my summer home. Take a plastic soda bottle and drill a small hole in the screw cap. Replace the cap, squeeze the bottle, and place the tip underwater. Allow the bottle to reform. The suction will pull water into the bottle.

— ASHLEY PHAM
Wellfleet, Mass.

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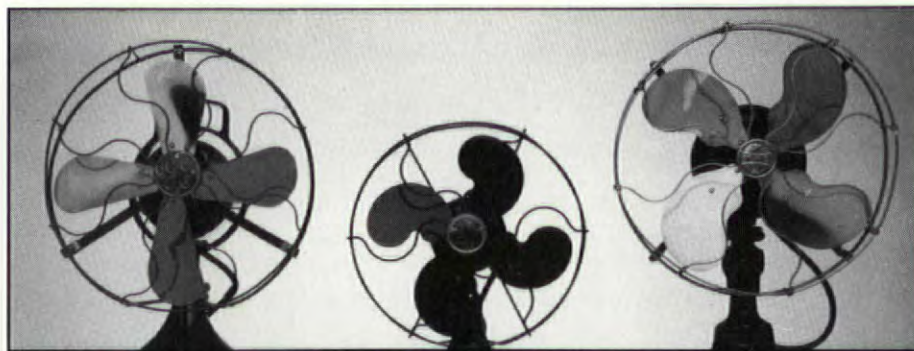
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References for Old-House Riddles

BY GORDON BOCK

SHOULD YOU THINK THE MOST MYSTERIOUS BUILDING materials come from the handmade era before 1840, think again. Here at OHJ, we field constant questions about the parts of 20th-century houses, from long-gone products like Zenith therm and eelgrass insulation, to pioneer versions of gypsum board and rubber tile. Flushing out the facts on these early modern elements can be as confusing as tracking down a distant relative—unless you have a copy of *Twentieth-Century Building Materials*.

The inspiration for this detailed yet lucid reference comes from the National Park Service, which recognizes that many structures from before 1950 are

now historic and may soon need care. It should come as no surprise. In the 1920s and 1950s house construction boomed, and the building products industry ballooned to meet the market. At first the goal was manmade substitutes for stone or wood—more standardized and less expensive than dwindling natural materials and escalating labor costs. Later came wholly novel materials, such as plastics. (Wars, it seems, not only make materials scarce, but they also add the technology to develop alternatives.)

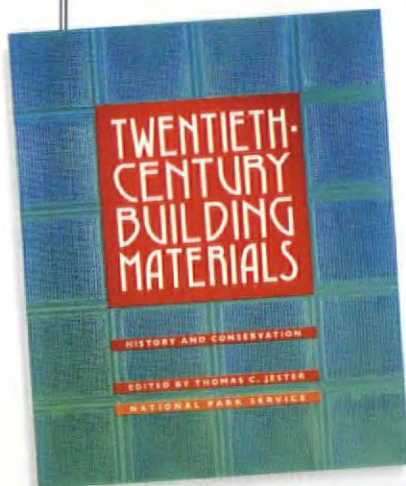
In the hands of editor Thomas Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials* serves up a concise, product-by-product encyclopedia contributed by an expert team of authors. Did you know, for example, that until the 1890s aluminum was too precious—as much as \$545 a pound—for architectural use? Read the section on metals. Ever wonder when the first asphalt shingles appeared on a house? Look it up in the roofing chapter. (It's about 1903.)

Historical trivia aside, there's contemporary advice in each chapter about how specific materials age, what problems to watch for, and the methods to address deterioration. Most beguiling is the keen use of period ads and technical drawings that support the text with visual style. At a time when so much of our modern world is no longer new, this book is a welcome guide to the stuff all around us.

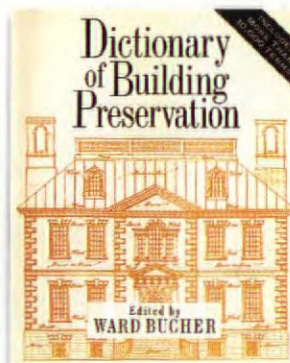
ANOTHER QUERY WE EDITORS OFTEN HEAR IS, "WHERE can you look up the meaning of words connected with old-house work?" Ward Bucher, a restoration architect and long-time OHJ contributor, wondered the same thing, so back in the 1980s he started compiling his own index of specialized terms. The project grew into the *Dictionary of Building Preservation*.

Though similar in appearance, this book is by no means a repackaging of *Dictionary of Architecture of Building and Construction*, the Cyril Harris standard. Instead of casting a wide net to cover all aspects of the construction arts, be it trade lingo or European architectural nomenclature, Ward's aim has been to focus on the vocabulary most useful—and most often encountered—in describing historic buildings. There are entries for scores of pre-1940 building materials, technologies, and features, from battleship linoleum to Stoney Creek granite, as well as the wealth of acronyms and titles spun by preservation organizations. At over 10,000 entries this volume is no pocket glossary.

Dictionaries of all sorts are highly popular these days, and you can't have enough good reference books. With the *Dictionary of Building Preservation* at your side, you may run out of screws on a project but you'll never be at a loss for words.



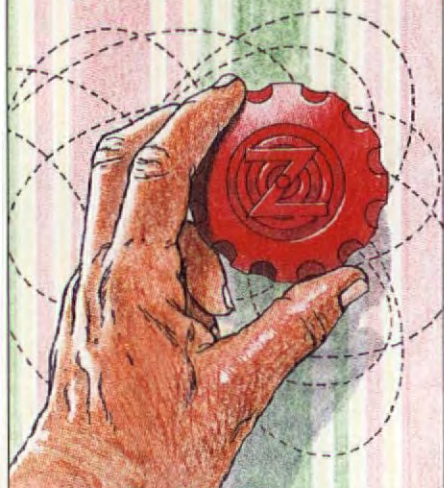
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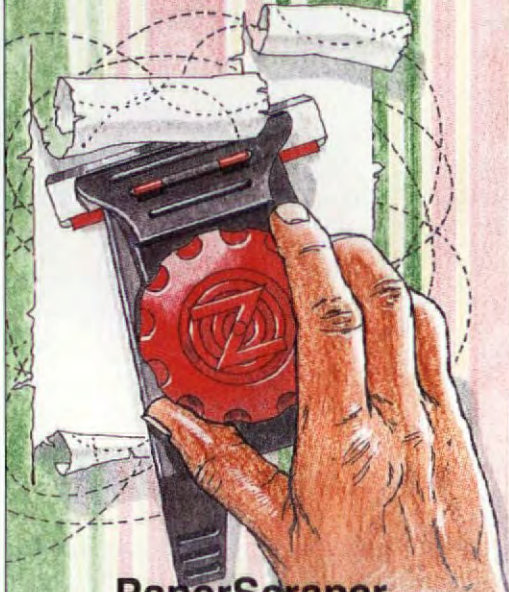
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Ask OHJ

[continued from page 10]

from the wood itself. When freshly installed, cedar, redwood, cypress, and to a lesser extent fir and pine, may bleed natural extractives. These chemicals, which provide the wood's rot resistance and color, may cause reddish-brown stains (rust stains are black), especially where the grain is cut—at end joints and at nail penetrations. The problem is most pronounced for wood that's installed while green (unseasoned), waterlogged from improper storage, or in humid climates. As moisture moves out of the wood, it takes the water-soluble extractives with it.

You cannot prevent leaching entirely, but always install seasoned wood and back prime it to avoid moisture absorption from the interior. Stainless steel is the best material for exterior nails, but for extreme conditions, consider 316 stainless steel nails, a slightly different alloy that costs a bit more but is practically rustproof.

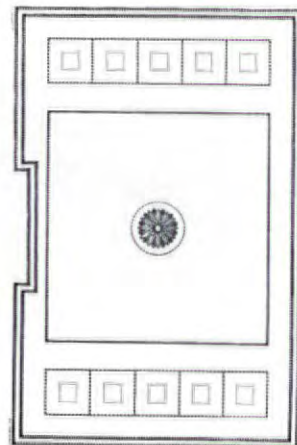
The good news is that your stains will wash off with soap and water (unlike rust stains). Also, once the initial moisture and extractive content is gone, the leaching will cease. Eventually, the stains themselves will dry up and turn to dust. Thanks for technical assistance to Mike McFarland, of Swan Secure Products, a leading nail manufacturer in Maryland.

Medallion Measure

Is there any rule of proportion for the size of a medallion in relation to the ceiling's size or height?

—Roger W. Little
Wilmette, Ill.

NO, ACCORDING TO DAVID FLAHARTY, renowned ornamental plasterer and OHJ author (see "Award Winning Medallions," Sept./Oct.



A plate from *The Modern Builder's Guide*, 1833, by Minard Lafever.

1995). "I've seen every rule of thumb broken," says Flaharty, "the key is a good eye."

For starters, measure from the outer edge of the cornice in front of the chimney breast to the midpoint of the room. You can use half that dimension as a trial diameter for the medallion, Flaharty says. Cut a template from cardboard and install it on your light fixture. Test larger or smaller circles if the first doesn't feel right. Or draw out your medallion design on a quarter-circle template. Then photocopy it to produce the complete mockup and reduce or enlarge as needed.

Perhaps most important, Flaharty says, is to follow the general ornamentation of the building. Pick up the cornice profile, enriched detail from mantels, and the overall scale of interior trim.

Asher Benjamin's 1827 *American Builder's Companion* offered a nugget of advice on the matter: "When a room is low, the ornaments should be finished with delicate strokes proportionate to the height. When a room is very high, there may be bold and well-placed strokes, without regard to a great deal of delicacy."

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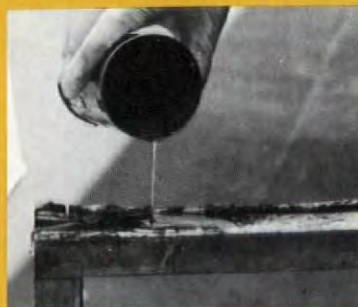
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Quest for Fireplace

We found this fireplace enclosed in a kitchen wall of our 1869 home. The opening is divided into three channels with cast-iron controls. The outer two are labeled "draft" and the center control is marked "dust." What is this?

— Angela M. Fierro
Lattimer, Penn.



The only hint of this fireplace behind a plaster wall was the stove thimble.

THE DIMENSIONS OF YOUR CHIMNEY indicate it was originally built as a wood-burning cookstove, according to fireplace historian Jim Buckley, of Port Townsend, Washington. Later, probably in the 1890s, the firebox was altered and a coal-burning cast-iron stove installed. This stove was fed by a downdraft from the two outer flues.

The "draft" controls on the chimney allowed the family to manipulate the air flow to two separate burners in the stove, thereby regulating the hot coal

fires, Buckley estimates.

The center channel, marked "dust," was probably opened when someone cleared out ash. As the burnt coal was shoveled out of the stove, the vent allowed the dust to escape up the chimney instead of into the house, Buckley explains.

The coal stove was, in turn, removed for a standard wood burning stove that vented through an opening higher up on the chimney. This change could have come as early as the turn of the century.

Spotting Rust

To avoid rust stains, I used stainless steel nails for the new cedar siding on my 1891 oceanfront house. I'm getting stains anyway. What can I do?

—Gerald R. Woodard
Daytona Beach Shores, Fla.

STAINLESS STEEL IS HIGHLY CORROSION resistant, so chances are that's not what's staining your siding. The discoloration is most likely coming

[continued on page 12]

Near Window

Under the asbestos siding on our 1880s farmhouse, we found the outline of a fake window. Presumably it was removed when the house was sided, but we can still see evidence of the trim-work. Interestingly, there's no ghosts for shutters, as on the rest of the house, so we are surmising that they were kept closed. Can you offer any insights?

—T.J. Araujo
Fairfield, Conn.

NOT ONLY IS YOUR BLIND WINDOW (also called a blank or false window) far from unique, such architectural sleight-of-hand was not limited to unsophisticated designers. The most notable cases occur in classically derived buildings, such as high-style Georgian or Neoclassical houses. Here, the call for symmetry is so strong that, on occasion, non-functional windows and doors (or their rudimentary features) are added for the sole purpose of balancing mirror

editions on the other side of the building. A famous example is Independence Hall in Philadelphia, which has two blind windows flanking the front entrance. Whether your builder's intent was preserving the fenestration rhythm of your house, or simply hiding a flaw in the floor plan, the result is part of a tradition.



The diagonal sheathing on the house runs uninterrupted through the window opening, and an original staircase is on the inside.

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more than 20 years, I've worked to design additions that blend seamlessly with the original. The greatest compliment is to hear that the finished project looks like it was not an addition. I'm willing to be educated on this matter, but it's going to be a hard sell.

—MARK EDWIN NORRIS
Salinas, Calif.

SQUEAKY CLEAN RADIATORS

I APPRECIATED DAN HOLOHAN'S ARTICLE on radiators ["Radiator City Study Hall," Nov./Dec. 1996], but as in-depth as it was, one question still burns in my mind: how do you clean behind the things?

—MARY DOUGLAS
Bexley, Ohio

Where a vacuum cleaner attachment won't reach, try canned compressed air (the kind used to clean computer keyboards). Radiator brushes in-

tended for painting jobs can also brush away dirt, as can aquarium scrub brushes. For tougher cleaning jobs, have at it with a soapy sponge. If the unit is really filthy, protect the walls and floor well and apply detergent and hot water with a tree sprayer. —THE EDITORS



George Bowers' cross-gambrel home near Baltimore.

UNWRAPPING A READER'S HOUSE

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I OPENED to "Victorians Plain and Popular" [Nov./Dec. 1996] and saw a picture of my cross-gambrel! I had been describing my house as a simpler Queen Anne style; now when friends ask me about it, I can flip out this article.

—GEORGE H. BOWERS
Pikesville, Md.

CURE FOR AN UGLY PORCH

I JUST BOUGHT A 1903 TWO-FAMILY that neighbors call the "Ugly Porch House." The porch has two rails faced with wide, pressure-treated boards. I intend to copy the grooved square spindles from an original back porch for replacements. Making the spindles won't be a problem—I plan to show my dad your article, "Moulding Your Own" [Sept./Oct. 1996]. He's a tool-and-die maker and has been making his own moulding cutters and router bits for decades.

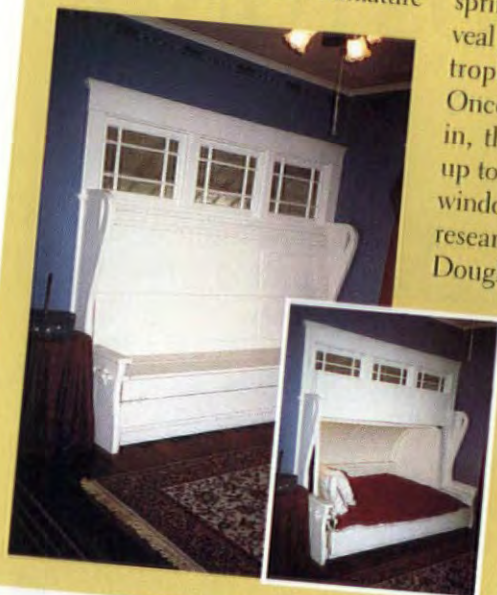
—KAREN PAULI
Milwaukee, Wisc.

BUCKING THE STANDARD

I READ "GETTING NEIGHBORLY ABOUT Preservation Regulations" [Nov./Dec. 1996] with great interest because our county is drafting a historic district ordinance. We have been told that these rules must be in line with the Secretary for the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which require that additions don't match the original house too closely. I must tell you that this is a new and uncomfortable concept for me. For

BIGGER THAN A BREAD BOX

WHEN I SAW "FOLDING FURNITURE and Secret Stairs" [Nov./Dec. 1996], I couldn't resist sending you these photos of this miniature



Arts & Crafts sleeping porch for early 20th-century aesthetes. The lower bench pulls up with a heavy, spring-loaded mechanism to reveal a cozy (some might say claustrophobic) sleeping chamber. Once the fresh-air fiend is tucked in, the settle's high back slides up to allow access to a screened window. I found these shots while researching my new book with Douglas Keister (*Inside the Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Interiors*, forthcoming from Penguin). —PAUL DUCHSCHERER
San Francisco, Calif.

This miniature sleeping porch dates to the fresh-air craze of the early 20th century.


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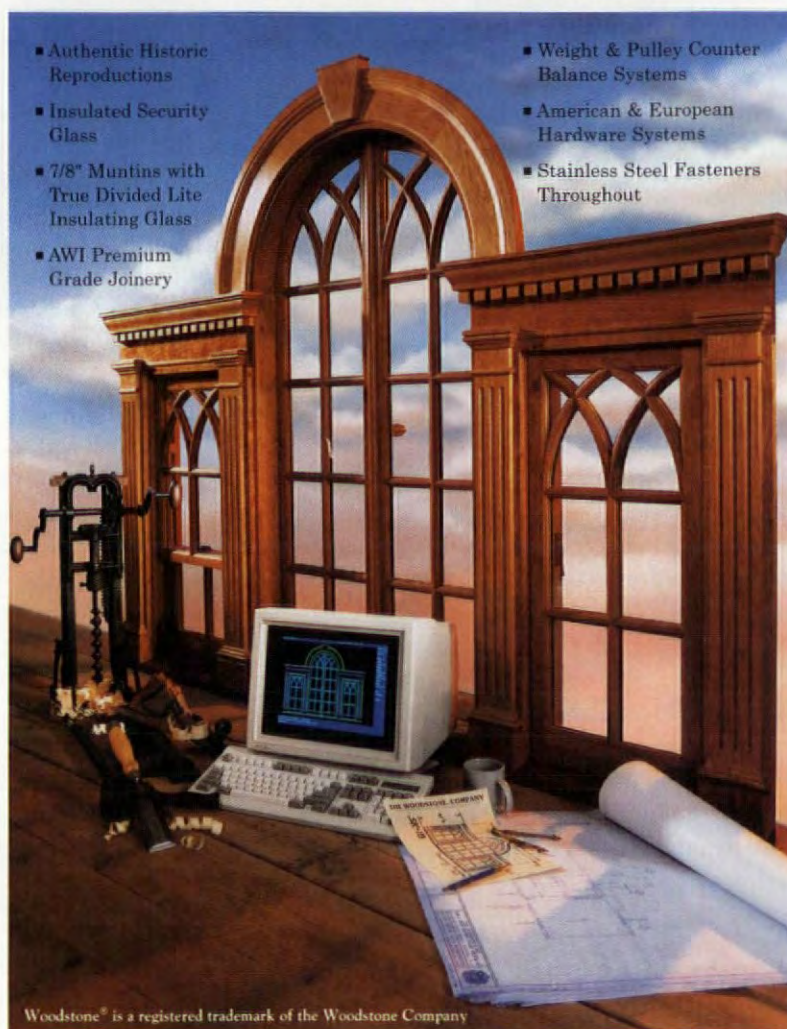
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WANTED: New Tricks for an Old Page

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR IS A TRADITIONAL occasion for self-improvement. We're taking the resolution idea to heart at *Old-House Journal*, having come to the conclusion that it's time to tune up Restorer's Notebook. And we need the help of our readers.

The Restorer's Notebook department—full of down-home tips—has been around almost as long as *Old-House Journal* itself. In our earliest black-and-white newsletter days, there was an occasional column of advice called "Notes From The Readers" which swapped space with the "Editor's Perspective" or other commentary. This lively bulletin board covered almost any topic—from dealing with floorboard gaps to early cautions about asbestos in building materials. Yet it always supplied the first-hand discoveries of pioneers in the urban homesteading movement.

By 1978 this shared wisdom had earned its own page, sometimes two (in a 12-page monthly, no less), and the snappier slug of "Restorer's Notebook." Today, Restorer's Notebook is still a page, still black-and-white (other than a color box or occasional photo)—and still a favorite with OHJ readers. The last time we asked, it averaged as popular as many feature articles. So, as they say back home, What's the problem?

The problem is, sometimes there's not much new under the sun—or, we feel, in Restorer's Notebook. I think I know why: Tips pages in practical publications go back at least a hundred years. In another age, when they were intended for tradesmen, they were called "kinks." Wrote one how-to author in the 1930s, "Job pointers, kinks, short cuts, and new methods of doing old jobs are always of interest to practical men."

What's more, such practical tips have never been more ubiquitous than in our own era, this age of the "sound bite" and learn-and-run education. Whole

books of how-to tips and tidbits line the crafts and home-mechanics shelves of chain bookstores. Mass-marketers have divined that, while most of the population doesn't want to read a chapter in a technical manual, almost everyone has time for insights they can swallow in one gulp and put to use within the week.

With all this encapsulated intelligence in circulation, it may be hard for anyone to feel he or she has a fresh idea to share. I think, however, that old-house restorers are by nature always cooking up unique solutions to specialized problems. So here's what we're looking for:

More sketches and photos—Tips that are accompanied by some sort of visual are more than welcome. Our artist can re-render a simple doodle as long as yours is clear and accurate.

Bigger scope—Just because the typical Restorer's Notebook entry is only 100 words or so doesn't mean the tip has to be on a micro level—say, how to fix old

screw holes with toothpicks. Don't hesitate to send advice about tile roof repairs or staircase problems.

Novel problems—Throwing a paintbrush full of latex paint in the freezer so you can thaw it out for reuse the next day is a clever idea, but it has been around as long as latex paint—better than 40 years. We'd like to hear more often how OHJ readers are dealing with late-20th century issues. What about making old houses safer for personal computers? Any new old-house uses for epoxy, PVC pipe, or other modern materials?

Good ideas that save time or materials are worth something, so we'll pay \$50 to \$100 for submissions. Send your ideas to Notebook Editor, *Old-House Journal*, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930. Thanks.

Gordon Boell

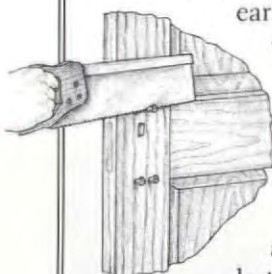


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With only paint shadows on the wall as a guide, two carpenters re-create Greek Revival window trim.

BY MASON LORD

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New Century Sash

A survey of the fancy-topped windows of the early 1900s.

BY GORDON BOCK

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Open Door Policy

A simple approach to fixing doors that jam, bind, and creak.

BY JOHN LEEKE

ON THE COVER: A San Francisco Bay Area bungalow showcases antique lighting, early California landscapes, and other collectibles of the Arts & Crafts period. The renovation represents the work of current craftspeople specializing in designs of the style. The ginkgo leaf-motif rug was designed and made by Nancy Thomas at Blue Hills Studio. This motif is echoed in the pillows by Dianne Ayres at Arts & Crafts Period Textiles.

COVER PHOTO BY DOUGLAS KEISTER,
FROM *INSIDE THE BUNGALOW:*
AMERICA'S ARTS & CRAFTS INTERIOR
(PENGUIN, OCTOBER 1997).



44 SHOP TOUR

From Earth to Hearth

Travel back in time to an early-20th-century Arts & Crafts tile company.

BY J. RANDALL COTTON

50 OLD-HOUSE LIVING

Rich as Oil In an Oklahoma Bungalow

An economic roller-coaster ride in an old-house neighborhood didn't deter this restorer.

BY RONALD FRANZ

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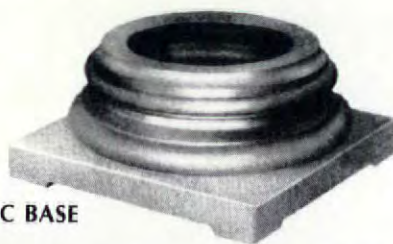


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