GREAT IDEAS FROM THE TV SHOW'S Makeover of a Run-Down Victorian

KITCHEN OF THE FUTURE: Design breakthroughs to use today

BEFORE & AFTER:

How to transform a ranch-style house

NEW: OUTTAKES

Behind the scenes with Norm, Steve and the guys

This Old

A

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GLORIOUS

OVATIO

MARCH 1999

Sometimes you forget the milk. Sometimes you forget



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The Chrysler Concorde was respectfully ranked "Best Premium Midsize Car in Initial Quality" by J.D. Power and Associates:

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*The Chrysler Concorde was the highest ranked premium midsize car in the J.D. Power and Associates 1998 Initial Quality Study 2.⁵⁹ Study is based on a total of 58,117 consumer responses indicating owner-

Sometimes you forget the bread. the store altogether.

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reported problems during the first 90 days of ownership. **Base MSRPs include destination, exclude tax



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E N S T T N \bigcirc

MARCH 1999



Watertown Finale, p. 75 As Norm Abram, Tom Silva, Richard Trethewey and their crew apply the

finishing touches to a stunning Queen Anne, the renovation may go down as the costliest in This Old House historyand also one of the most spectacular. BY BRAD LEMLEY

features

A New Old House A family of five builds a house that possesses quality workmanship, modern convenience and—thanks to lovely architectural details salvaged from period structures—plenty of historic charm. By RICHARD CONNIFF	86
An American Craftsman Tree framer Jack Sobon builds storybook houses using curved timbers known as crucks. By BRAD LEMLEY	94
Dream House: Stone-Faced At This Old House magazine's project in Wilton, Connecticut, dressing a concrete foundation with a fieldstone veneer gives the illusion of a solid-stone pedestal supporting the rambling Shingle Style house. By JACK MCCLINTOCK	102
Classical Grandeur Melrose, a gracious Greek Revival in Natchez, Mississippi, embodies an appealing combination of elegance and hospitality. And with its cross-ventilated design, the mansion even evokes practicality. By JACK MCCLINTOCK	110
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Check out these fancy threads as we go nuts for bolts. By PETER JENSEN



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ROCK ON, P. 102



BEFORE AND ... P. 75

COVET A sitting area off the kitchen in the Watertown project house, a restored Queen Anne in all her majesty. Photograph by Pascal Blancon. See story, p. 75.





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C O N T E N T S



"An eave is to a house what an eyebrow is to a face."

up front

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ALL ABOUT EAVES, P. 61

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Susan Miller, Specials Detailer

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Despite an escaped corn snake and other mishaps, **RICHARD CONNIFF** survived to write "A New Old House" (page 86), an account of the construction of his four-bedroom Shingle Style house in Connecticut. The little orange serpent, a low-maintenance pet, had been placed in the house before the renovation was complete. But Ricky slipped out of his cage and didn't reappear for two months. "I had to tell the subcontractors, 'If you see a snake, be



nice to it," says Conniff, who boldly served as general contractor of the 11-month project. "One of them muttered something about making a leather belt. My daughter finally found Ricky in my office." Fascinated by creatures that scurry, crawl and buzz, Conniff is the author of *Spineless Wonders: Strange Tales From the Invertebrate World* (1996) and *Every Creeping Thing: True Tales of Faintly Repulsive Wildlife* (1998), both published by Henry Holt and Company. Last fall, he hosted *Underdogs: Prairie Dogs Under Attack*, part of a new Turner Broadcasting System television series that features first-person accounts of once-in-alifetime experiences with the natural world.



Photographer GUY KLOP-PENBURG decided that he approved of the concept of "A New Old House" (page 86). "I really liked the moldings and old doors. Some of them came from salvage yards," he says. "My favorite thing was the mudroom door. You could open the top and bottom halves separately, and there must have been 20 or 30 panes of glass in the top one." A

Connecticut native who has lived in New York City since 1986, he also does photography—as well as some lighting and set construction—for the Castillo Theatre. The Manhattan community theater is currently producing *Sally and Tom*, a play about the relationship between the slave Sally Hemings and President Thomas Jefferson. Kloppenburg also uses his spare time to visit local dance salons, where he and a partner engage in the Argentine tango, a 19th-century dance that has recently been enjoying a resurgence around the world. Kloppenburg is a frequent contributor to *Saveur, Vogue* and *Travel/Holiday* magazines.

-Rebecca Reisner

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Be sure to join us every week on your local PBS station. Check local listings. www.pbs.org





Radiant Reviews

I have a radiant floor heating system and enjoy it ["Take a Walk on the Warm Side," November 1998]. But I feel you've shortchanged the advantages of such systems. You compared it to hot-water baseboard and forced hot-air heating. These are both convection heating systems: The former heats water that then heats the air in each room, and the latter heats air directly. No mention was made of why it is called radiant hot-water floor heating. Most of the heat transfer can be compared to the way the sun heats us: via radiant transfer, directly from one body to another. Radiant floor heating systems heat people (and solid objects like chairs and beds-another advantage). But the bulk of radiant floor heat is the radiant effect. It's like having a woodstove in every room. Lizards on a rock in the sun never had it so good. And just think of our canine friends lounging about on these floors too.

CHRISTOPHER D'AMICO, Brewer, Maine

I market energy-efficiency programs for a utility company and promote radiant floor heating to my customers as both an energyefficiency measure and as the highest quality form of heat for their home or business. I was very happy to see "Take a Walk on the Warm Side." It was an excellent article that covered most of the important features of radiant in-floor heating. There is, however, a way to avoid the condensation problem experienced with gas- or oil-fired boilers. Many of my customers use two different forms of electric heating systems to heat radiant floors: electric boilers and geothermal heating. They're cheaper to operate than gas- or oil-fired boilers and do not cause condensation problems.

TIM DOHERTY, Ramsey, Minn.

The article "Take a Walk on the Warm Side" discusses the advantages of comfort and energy efficiency associated with radiant floor heat but fails to mention some of the significant benefits related to this system. When the floor itself becomes the "radiator," the terminal device distributing the heat in most conventional systems is eliminated. No baseboard radiators, no cast-iron radiators,

and no grilles or diffusers are required to distribute the heat. The banging noise and gushing of hot water or—worse—steam through metal piping are also eliminated. More usable floor space becomes available, and no awkward bumps in front of windows interfere with the furniture layout. In smaller homes, these space savings can have considerable functional and aesthetic impact.

DAVID HALPERN, Westport, Conn.

I just finished reading your article about the benefits of in-floor radiant heating. I have lived with it and am in the position to know that you are wrong-it is the worst form of heating ever invented: The floor is hot, and the room is cold. Air circulation is absent. For those of us in the "Sun Belt of California," the system doesn't provide the quick heat we need in the morning and the cooloff we need in the hot part of the day. I lived with radiant floor heating in Marin County for eight years. I was never warm when it was cold. You cannot have rugs, because they block the heat flow. Wall-to-wall is a no-no for sure. The system needs bleeding regularly. The water becomes fetid and smells when you do the bleeding. Bubbles will shut off entire sections of the system for no good reason. As the system ages, galvanic corrosion steps in to make each new day an adventure. Good old hot-water or cast-iron-pipe-connected radiators, with some forced air to move things around, are much better options for the highly seasonal requirements of most of the United States. My wife and I had a laugh about the "wonders" of your various installations.

EDWARD M. BARRALL II, San Jose, Calif.

Deadly Trap

The article on eradicating mice ["When There's a Mouse in the House," November 1998] was very informative. However, two of the mousetraps pictured, the Log Roll and the Deadly Gangplank, could be deadly to more than just mice. Both use a container of antifreeze into which the mice are dumped to drown. It must be pointed out that antifreeze is a deadly poison. Household or neighborhood pets and children could easily ingest the antifreeze from either of those two traps and suffer fatal results. Please alert your readers to this hazard.

RICK MORRISON, Phoenix

kudos

A few issues back, we commended Japan Woodworker for its cheerful and timely customer service. Since then, we've heard all sorts of anecdotes from This Old House readers who've had similarly positive experiences with other manufacturers. Here's one of our favorites:

Delta Delights

I purchased a Delta Unisaw last year from a mail-order company in North Dakota. Just a week after I had placed my order, massive floods hit that state. I inspected the machine upon delivery and found that it was in good condition except that certain parts had a coat of rust on them.

The mail-order company was temporarily out of business because of the flood, so I called Delta directly. They were wonderful. They sent me the parts immediately, free of charge. A year later, the saw runs great, and I have since purchased a 14-inch Delta band saw.

RICHARD KAUTZ, Pelham, N.Y.

punch list

definition: a list of items incorrectly done or remaining to be finished on a construction job January/February 1998

In the Classics Program Guide, under "Week 20," the name of the architect was misspelled. He is Norm Lacayo.
In the Cape Cod section of Directory, the phone number to call for Evan Pollit's plans should have been listed as 203-268-5955. To purchase the book Colonial Houses: 181 Classic Early American Designs, call Home Planners Bookline at 800-521-6797.

Address mail to Letters, *This Old House* magazine, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Please include your full name, address and daytime phone number.

Published letters will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media.

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OUTTAKES

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THIS OLD HOUSE



MISSION CONTROL

THE WRAP PARTY IS A VENERATED THIS OLD HOUSE TRADITION AND, AT THIS SEASON'S, JUST BEFORE NEW YEAR'S EVE, EVERY-ONE—FROM ASBESTOS ABATERS TO DECORATIVE PAINTERS—

WHO TRANSFORMED THE WATERTOWN HOUSE CAME TO MARVEL AT THE RESULTS WITH NORM ABRAM, STEVE THOMAS, RICHARD TRETHEWEY AND TOM SILVA. BY THE TIME THE GUESTS ARRIVED, THE GLEAMING QUEEN ANNE LOOKED COMPLETELY FINISHED (SEE "WATERTOWN FINALE," PAGE 75). BUT FRESH SAWDUST IN THE BASEMENT TOLD A DIF-FERENT STORY. TOM HAD YET TO DISMANTLE HIS IMPRESSIVE ON-SITE WORKSHOP, WHICH HAD BEEN CRANKING VIRTUALLY NONSTOP FOR MONTHS AND WHERE TOM WAS, UP UNTIL A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE FESTIVITIES, STILL WHITTLING DOWN HIS PUNCH LIST.



WATERTOWN WRAPS UP

 CUCKOO! TOM INSPECTS A HOLE HE'S SAWED OUT FOR THE RANGE-HOOD VENT.
 CAMERAMAN JOEL COBLENZ ANGLES IN FOR THE PERFECT SHOT AS NORM AND

TOM TRY TO MAKE INSTALLING THE HOOD LOOK EASY. 3 AT THE WRAP PARTY, NORM MAKES A CURIOUS SARTOR-IAL STATEMENT: A SLING ON HIS RIGHT

ARM. NO, HE'S NOT RE-COVERING FROM THE GREAT STAIRCASE MIGRATION (SEE "A STAIRWAY THAT'S HEAVEN," PAGE 80) BUT RATHER FROM SURGERY ON HIS ROTATOR CUFF, WHICH HE TORE WATERSKI-ING TWO YEARS AGO. THE PARTY WAS HIS FIRST MAJOR OUTING AFTER THE OPERATION. UP UNTIL

THEN, HE'D BEEN RELAXING AT HOME. HE EVEN FOUND TIME TO CLEAN OUT HIS CLOSETS. "YOU KNOW WHAT?" HE SAYS. "I'VE GOT A LOT OF PLAID SHIRTS." **3 4 5** THE *T.O.H*. CELL-PHONAHOLICS GET A FIX.







\$100 DOLLARS A FOOT

This Old House landscaper Roger Cook found the perfect path to privacy: three abandoned Christmas trees. Overlooked for 25 years, the 30footers were scooped out of a Boston-area Christmas tree farm and hauled to the Watertown project's back yard, where they were plopped in holes and doused with 400 gallons of water. "They're thriving," says Cook. "Christian and Susan couldn't be happier."







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HOTOS:



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OUTTAKES



KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

IF YOU'VE EVER PLAYED WITH TONKA TRUCKS, YOU'RE GOING TO WISH YOU'D SPENT THE DAY WITH *T.O.H.* HOST STEVE THOMAS WHEN HE WENT TO THE BINGHAM CANYON COPPER MINE TO CHECK

OUT THE SOURCE OF THE MATERIAL USED TO ROOF THREE PORCHES AT THE WATERTOWN PROJECT. (SEE "BRILLIANT!" PAGE 69.) BINGHAM CANYON, HALF AN HOUR OUTSIDE SALT LAKE CITY, IS THE LARGEST OPEN PIT IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, SO THE TRUCKS THAT TRANSPORT THE ORE TO THE INITIAL CRUSHER HAVE TO BE HUGE. THEY'RE TOO BIG AND HEAVY, IN FACT, TO DRIVE ON A PAVED ROAD. THE PARTS—INCLUDING THE 2,300-HORSEPOWER DIESEL ENGINE—GET SHIPPED

> IN AND ASSEMBLED ON-SITE. AND IT TAKES A FIRE HOSE TO WASH OFF ALL THE MUD AND DIRT THEY PICK UP ON THE JOB. AFTER JUST A DAY AT THE MINE, THOUGH, STEVE GOT PRETTY USED TO THEIR GARGANTUAN SIZE. WHEN HE GOT HOME, HIS OWN FORD RANGER SUDDENLY LOOKED, WELL, TONKA-SIZED.

AW, SHUCKS

Was that Norm blushing behind his beard recently? Perhaps he'd taken a gander at a *Mirabella* magazine article in which writer Gerri Hirshey confesses she's long fanned a flame for the "TV hunk" aka our favorite master carpenter here at *This Old House*. After all, she says, "Who can resist a solid, plain-talking Yankee who knows the business end of a stud finder, who can shim a door level, who can even build a working rolltop desk?" What's more, she says, "Norm does talk dirty: Dry rot. Mildew. Lead-based paint." Ooh-kay.

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OUTTAKES











A STORM OF NORMS

"HI GUYS, I'M NORM." "NO, I'M NORM." "HEY, I'M NORM. NICE TO MEET YA!" SO WENT THE CONVERSATION RECENTLY AT

A CHICAGO RESTAURANT, WHERE A SEA OF PLAID-CLAD, BEARDED AND BESPECTACLED MEN VIED FOR AN INVITATION TO THE FIRST-EVER "NORM LOOK-ALIKE" CONTEST, WHERE THE FIRST PRIZE IS \$10,000 IN PORTER CABLE TOOLS. THE WOULD-BE CLONES, ALL FROM ILLINOIS, TRIED TO ONE-UP EACH OTHER IN THEIR NORMNESS. "IT'S MY SMILE-IT'S JUST LIKE NORM'S," SAID DAN PETERSON. "HE ALWAYS SEEMS HAPPY, AND I'M THE SAME WAY. MY MOTTO IS: WHAT'S TO BE UPSET ABOUT?" BRAD DYLHOFF, A CARPENTER, GOES BY "NORM" AT WORK. HE ARRIVED ONE DAY TO FIND THE NAME EMBLAZONED ON HIS HARD HAT AND HAS ANSWERED TO IT EVER SINCE. "PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS COMING UP TO ME, ASKING FOR ADVICE AND AUTOGRAPHS," DYLHOFF SAID. "SOMETIMES I TELL THEM I'M NOT NORM, AND THEY DON'T BELIEVE ME." BUT IN THE END, IT WAS STEVE SZY-BOWICZ WHO TOOK THE FIRST ROUND. HE MET NORM SIX YEARS AGO AT A HARDWARE SHOW AND HAS SINCE PERFECTED THE LOOK. "MY MOTHER-IN-LAW CALLS EVERY WEEK AND SAYS, 'I SAW YOU ON TV AGAIN," SZY-BOWICZ SAID, "DO YOU THINK NORM NEEDS A STUNT DOUBLE?" LOOK FOR THE WINNER IN THE APRIL ISSUE

OF THIS OLD HOUSE MAGAZINE.

PAST PROJECT UPDATE: SALEM

This Old House watchers may remember the struggle Deborah and Kevin Guinee endured to get a carriageway approved for their Salem, Massachusetts, Federal house in 1995. The town's historical commission never did give them the OK, so the Guinees used the money and space for another amenity: a family room. Ironically, Deborah (right) was recently appointed to the commission, replacing the member who mounted the strongest opposition to her driveway. But the Guinees are leaving well enough alone. "Now that we have a family room, I couldn't possibley give it up for a driveway," Deborah says. "I guess it all worked out in the end."



1. Brad Dylhoff, 43, a carpenter from Villa Park: "I wanted to know what it felt like to be a piece of meat—to be exploited for my looks."

2. Dan Peterson, 36, a building inspector from Lake Zurich: "My buddy and I dressed up as Norm and Steve and kissed for Halloween."

3. Semifinalist Steve Szybowicz, 39, a sheet-metal worker from Melrose Park: "I entered for the \$10,000-in-tools grand prize. With that, I could finally have a workshop like Norm's."

4. Craig Racette, 43, a carpenter from McHenry: "I was just going in for a couple of hand tools, and the guys at the hardware store dragged me over to the Norm cutout and made me enter at gunpoint."

5. Mike Straub, 38, a paramedic and former carpenter from Rock Falls: "Between the beard and the nose, Norm and I could pass for twins."

The day we found a monster in our mailroom

This happened in Tokyo. A Japanese mother returned a kid's parka to us. And somebody in Shipping discovered a toy in the pocket – a goofy, 4-inch monster.

Well, figuring some little kid would miss it, he sent it back.

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Seems that goofy monster was her kid's *favorite* toy.

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A lady in Germany wrote that she ordered a necktie for her son – who usually doesn't wear ties – asking us to send him instructions on how to tie it.

Instead, one of our people tied one to show him how. And sent it in a gift box, for extra measure.

And then, there's the English chap who sent back one of our Original Attaches – well worn –

asking us to repair a broken zipper. We sent him a brand new Attache. He wrote back that not only was he delighted by the replacement-he even likes the new color better. Wherever Lands' End customers are. we try to do right by them, just as we do here at home. Only here, we've been doing it for thirty years and more.

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OUTTAKES



EVER SINCE THE *THIS OLD HOUSE* PROJECT ON NANTUCKET, STEVE HAS PROVIDED A REALITY CHECK ON NORM'S SELF-PROFESSED FISHING PROWESS. SO WHILE TOURING KEY WEST—WHERE THE *T.O.H.* WINTER PROJECT IS UNDER WAY AND WHERE THIS MARLIN WAS HANGING AT THE TOWN PIER—STEVE



TOLD NORM THAT IF HE CLAIMED HE CAUGHT THE TROPHY HIMSELF, HE'D HAVE TO EAT IT FOR DIN-NER. BETTER BRING A RECIPROCATING SAW— THE FISH IS FIBERGLASS.



In Key West, where real estate is dear, home owner and architect Michael Miller plans to sacrifice one side of the back veranda, left, and turn it into a state-of-the-art kitchen. The front porch of his conch captain's house, right, will remain intact, although the palm trees may wind up in another location.



If you'd like to know more about our founder, and his Tennessee Whiskey, drop us a line.

THIS OLD SAFE didn't fall on Jack Daniel, but it may as well have.

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THIS OLD HOUSE



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BA DRAUGHT BEEP	R	9 Key West house gets a custom-made library	10		12	13 Tom flies to Indiana for the Homebuilders' Association of Greater Terre Haute Home Show
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28	29 Scout one candidate for next project: a clapboard row house, right, in Boston's North End			APRIL 1 Norm gives Steve free run of the work- shop while Tom takes a day off— April Fools'!	2	

MANUFACTURERS · MATERIALS · PRODUCTS · RESOURCES - PAGE 119

ILLUSTRATION: TOP, FROM "COAST TO COAST"1991, PUBLISHED BY ABBEVILLE: PHOTOS: LEFT, ANDREW KAUFMAN; CENTER AND BOTTOM, JOE YUTKINS.



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ASK NORM

"Insulating a ceiling with fiberglass or cellulose will do little to block out noises overhead. Polyicynene, an expanding foam, is a more effective sound barrier."

WIDE-PLANK FLOORBOARDS

I have a 1790 Cape Cod house in the middle of cranberry country, and I need to do some repairs to the joists. What's the best way to remove the old wide-plank floorboards so I can reinstall them later? What tool can I use that will pull out the nails, with the least amount of damage?

F. SCOTT SEITZ, Carver, Mass.

A hammer, either a nail set or a punch and some pry bars are what you need for this finicky work. To get the first board up, just drive the nails all the way through. That will give you access to the ends of other boards, which you can pry up gently and carefully, bit by bit. Prying from the ends is harder work than prying along the sides, but you're less likely to split the boards. Be prepared for some breakage, though. I can't think of a single such job where we haven't damaged at least a few planks. Invariably, we run out of not only luck but also patience as lower-back pain begins to set in. Sometimes damaged boards can be glued or saved by trimming off broken edges. Still, if you rip up floors in four rooms, you'll be lucky to have enough usable boards for three. If the job involves just one room, you'll undoubtedly come up short. You might take some boards from closets. Or you can try staining new or salvaged wood, but you'll never get a perfect match. The trick is to put the replacement boards in spots where they can be hidden by furniture and go unnoticed.

BOTHERSOME NOISES

The situation we want to talk about is noise. Our house is just three years old but, when we're in the basement, we can hear every little sound made upstairs. There is no insulation between the joists, and the basement ceiling is finished with drywall. Would insulation help?

NANCY AND GRANT COGGAN, Washington, D.C.

We're doing a major rehab on a turn-of-the-century house whose previous owner told us there were old pine floors beneath his carpet and linoleum. We'd like to restore these floors but are concerned about noise. Do sound-absorbing ceiling tiles really work? If so, could we cover them with drywall without sacrificing their sound absorption?

LESLIE GARDINER, Baltimore

Trying to contain or muffle noise is never easy. Insulating a ceiling with fiberglass or cellulose will do little to block out footsteps or other noises overhead. Polyicynene, an expanding foam, is a much more effective sound barrier but is expensive and has to be installed by experienced workmen. Acoustic tiles will cut down on echoes within a room. But they won't go with Victorian decor, which is why you want to cover them up. The sticking point is that a layer of drywall will render the tiles useless, and the echoes will be back. You can reduce the noise level somewhat by putting down lots of scatter rugs. Then again, you may discover that the tap tap tap

> of footsteps on an old pine floor is not so bad after all. The sounds of life are part of the charm of a house. It's unrealistic and, in my view, undesirable to create an atmosphere of tomblike silence.

PLUG UGLY

Blowing in insulation left holes in our aluminum siding. The plastic plugs the contractor provided are unattractive, and we'd like to do away with them when we paint the house. What do you suggest?

> ROBERT J. FANKHAUSER, Perrysville, Ohio

PHOTO: KOLIN SMIT

I'm sorry to say I have no answer for you. If it'll make you feel any

MISMATCHED COUNTERTOP

r want to build an oak-andceramic-tile countertop with sections of tile separated by 1-inch oak strips and use cement board as a base. Any suggestions? WALTER M. LEKWART,

Washington, Pa.

Such a countertop would be nothing but trouble. It's one thing to put an oak edge on a countertop but something else to use dissimilar materials on the same work surface. The wood could expand enough to pop the grout—or even the tiles—and absorb moisture. Also, dirt and moisture would get trapped in the seams.



better: Your letter will warn other readers considering a blow-in job. The drill-and-plug method is one I don't like. It's easy to pop off aluminum and vinyl siding and pop

it back later, leaving no scars behind, and there's no good reason not to do the job that way.

SIMPLE MATH

I'm going to replace the roof on a small garage. Is there a way to figure out how many shingles I'll need? LAWRENCE SMITH, *Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

Roofing materials are sold by the square, a unit that's equivalent to 100 square feet. All you do is measure your roof and divide its square footage by 100. Then add a little for waste. For a straightforward gable roof with no valleys, the wastage factor would total about 10 percent.

SLOPPY GLUE

I have watched you apply glue to

wood—with reckless abandon—and then wipe up the excess with a damp sponge. And you always get great results. Not me. I usually end up with a mess. I don't know what I'm doing wrong. Please help.

PAUL J. KINGCAID, Fountain Hill, Pa.

Me reckless? You should see This Old House contractor Tom Silva. He uses his fingers. But here are my secrets for working with glue. I try to sponge up as much glue as possible without rubbing it into the grain. Once in the grain, glue is hard to get out and, because it fills the pores of the wood, makes for uneven staining. Or I just let the glue dry and sand it off later to remove any residue. Of course, you can finesse the job by staining first and then gluing, but that doesn't allow you to do any finish sanding afterward.

BUDGET WOES

Can you tell me how to put an addition on my home, without going over budget? We're six in our family, and we're currently cramped for space in our three-bedroom ranch. I have borrowed as much as I could, but I still don't have enough for the simple addition that an architect designed for me. ROBBIE PENNA, Iselin, N.J.

If the financing can't be expanded, either the renovation design has to change or your choice of materials—including finishes, carpeting and the like—has to be reassessed. There's no magic that can get around that reality. It's why the words "cold" and "hard" are seldom far away from "cash." Once you've settled on a plan you can afford, staying on budget



entails two things. One is to hire a reliable contractor who will work for a fixed contract price. The other is to avoid making changes once the work has begun. Nothing wrecks budgets faster than sentences beginning: "While we're at it, why don't we...."

DRY SHEATHING

I've heard that cedar shingles for roofs should always be installed over skip sheathing. But then why is siding fastened directly to solid sheathing?

JOHN STEPHEN CAREY, Melbourne, Fla.

The reason is simple: After prolonged rain, cedar roof shingles will be soaked all the way through. If the shingles are nailed to solid sheathing, they will dry unevenly and curl at the edges because no air flows underneath them. The solution is to nail the shingles to skip sheathing, narrow wooden strips laid across the rafters, with spaces between each board.

WINDOW SASH

We need your advice about how we can repair the doublehung windows on our 1935 house in Tennessee. The ropes on the sash weights have all broken and need to be replaced. RAY AND RHONDA COMPTON, Coral Gables, Fla.

The steps are simple. Remove the side stops, the lower sash, the two parting beads (which hold the sash in place) and then the upper sash. Next, open the sash pockets at the bottom of the frame, reeve new cord or chain over the pulleys and attach it to the weights. Put everything back in reverse order. Then proceed, triumphantly, to the next window.

LAMINATED FLOOR

My grandmother is remodeling her kitchen and wants a laminated floor. Personally, I think she will be better off if she uses solid wood. What do you think?

CHRIS GRINCH, Bellefontaine, Obio

There's nothing wrong with laminated floors. They can't be refinished as often as solid wood, but how much wear and tear is your grandmother likely to cause? Just be sure that the floor she installs in her kitchen has a moisture-cured urethane finish or is prefinished with a high-tech acrylic, which can stand up to all the normal kitchen spills.

ASBESTOS COVER-UP

I have asbestos shingles on my vacation house on the Jersey Shore. They're in good shape but require constant repainting, so I'd like to cover them with vinyl siding. Is that possible and, if so, how do I go about it?

JONATHAN M. BOSTON, Philadelphia

Tom and I are of two minds on this. I'm for taking the shingles off in order to take care of potential underlying problems such as rot and insect infestation. Unfortunately, the process can be expensive because you'd have to hire a licensed abatement contractor trained in the removal and disposal of hazardous materials. Tom, on the other hand, says you can hang vinyl siding over asbestos shingles with a roofer's nail gun that has a special setting so the nails aren't driven home. That allows the vinyl to float (expand and contract freely) in response to temperature changes. You'd still need to check to see if there is a long-forgotten original layer of siding under the asbestos. If so, the asbestos shingles must be removed. Also, be forewarned that vinyl siding added on top of shingles will project forward and make windows, doors and eaves look recessed.

COLD COMFORT

I have three salvaged double-glazed double-hung windows with 12 lights above and 12 below. The outside panes are fastened with glazier's points and putty while those on the inside are held in place with thin strips of wood nailed to the muntins. How can I keep condensation from accumulating between the

panes? Up here in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, that would block my view for much of the year—and contribute to deterioration of the sash. DAVID FERCH, Groton, Vt.

You're battling nature here, and you're going to lose. You'll never be able to seal the space between the exterior and interior panes thoroughly, so moisture will always be a problem. One partial solution is to install new window sash with insulated glass. But high humidity levels in the house could still cause condensation buildup on the inside of the windows.

VENERABLE WOOD

I've just purchased my first house. It's in the Victorian style, built in 1905.

The hardwood floors still have a pretty good finish on them, but they have quite a few separations between the boards. Is there anything I can do about that, without pulling up the old wood or covering it with new? Also, the high-ceilinged rooms have crown moldings that appear to be in good condition but have been covered with layers of paint over the years. I'd like to strip them down to bare wood. Is it possible to remove the moldings, or should I strip them in place?

CAROL DOUGLAS, Yale, Mich.

Your floors have been expanding and contracting for 94 years and will continue to do so. That's the nature of wood floors, so don't worry about them. As for the crown moldings, it's hard enough putting them up, let alone take them down, and you might in the process damage them and the walls. You'd be better off stripping the moldings in place. Check at your home center to make sure you get an environmentally friendly stripper, and then prepare yourself for a long, miserable job.

HILLSIDE CABIN

Our 10-year-old cabin is built into the side of a hill. The basement is buried on three sides, which are cement block, but you can walk out the front, which has siding and sliding glass doors. I smell mold, but my husband doesn't. I think we need more air circulation. He says we should just keep the basement warm, summer and winter. What do you suggest?

JUDY A. MATTHIAS, Bloomington, Minn.

Whether or not you have mold now, warmth isn't the solution. If you've got moisture, warmth won't get rid of it and may only foster mold growth. The key is plenty of air circu-

lation to keep the humidity down. If the cabin is closed all winter and shaded, you're going to have some mildew. If only one of you smells it and the other doesn't, maybe all you have is "summer-place smell," that traditional fustiness that most of us associate with such cabins.

FLOOR BEDDING

I'm building a house with subflooring of tongue-and-groove plywood. It's mostly 1 ¹/₈ inches thick, but there are slight differences in thickness—not much, but too great to sand out. I need a good self-leveling bedding material that will allow me to lay vinyl tile and carpeting. Do you know of anything that would provide a suitable base?

THOMAS W. ALSOBROOK, Wellston, Okla.

PHOTO: KELLER & KELLER.

If the differences in thickness are truly slight, don't worry where you're laying carpet. Any good padding should serve as a sufficient base. As for the other areas, I don't know of any product that is truly self-leveling. Most vinyl-floor installers simply trowel out the bedding material, then massage and smooth it to feather those edges.

Send questions to Ask Norm, This Old House magazine, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, 27th floor, New York, NY 10036. Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity.



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USE CALLS WITH STEVE

Building better kitchens and baths

BY STEVE THOMAS



Steve Thomas mans command central. the work island at the Rhode Island School of Design's "universal kitchen, left. If he wanted to run the dishwashers (mock-ups here), be'd press a button on the control panels, bottom, at either end of the island.

y interest in cooking stems from my interest in eating. As the oldest of six kids, I learned at an early age to fend for myself in the kitchen. My first significant culinary experiment was a stupendous Dagwood sandwich utilizing all the food groups. I was 10 years old, home alone, and the result-

ing bellyache taught me about the compatibility of various ingredients. In later years, I turned to the masters-Julia Child, Marcella Hazan,

James Beard-and to the cuisines of the world.

Cooking pleases me, but so does enjoying the fruit of my labor. Maybe that's why the way the space functions interests me more than the way it looks. So, when the Rhode Island School of Design invited me to Providence to test-drive a rule-breaking "universal kitchen," I couldn't say no.

For my test dish, I chose one of my family's favorites, fish soup. Although simple, it creates something of a mess because of all the prep: cleaning the fish, making stock,



Got a problematic kitchen or bath? Tell This Old House host Steve Thomas. He'll visit a reader's house in every issue to help work out a renovation plan. Write to House Calls With Steve, This Old House magazine, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, 27th floor, New York, NY 10036.

HOUSE CALLS WITH STEVE

chopping and sautéing 24 ingredients and finally making a potent garlic and pimiento paste that pulls all the other flavors together. The only hitch was that the kitchen was a prototype, a mockup built to illustrate design concepts created after five years of research by RISD interior architect Jane Langmuir and a team of architects, appliance and materials manufacturers, industrial designers and students. As a prototype, the kitchen had no running water or functioning stoves, so we relied on Providence chef and author Nancy Barr to do much of the actual cooking on portable burners set up at a side table.

Langmuir gave me step-by-step instructions on using this new design as we did the preparation. The first thing I did was to put away the contents of my shopping bags, and I noticed right off the lack of massive centralized appliances—in most kitchens, the refrigerator, range and dishwasher. Instead, two cabinet-sized refrig-

While project head Jane Langmuir dries bread for croutons in the above-counter oven, Steve commandeers the rolling cart to chop pimientos and basil for the bouillabaisse. If he makes a mess, he can sweep it right into the bin that opens drawerlike on one side of the cart. The cart's other side has a kneehole to accommodate a cook sitting in a chair. Steve works standing, so he cranks up the adjustable surface—which has a range of 28 to 40 inches in height—to 38. Standard counters are 36 inches high, designed with a 5-foot 6-inch woman in mind.

No more wrestling with the crisper at the bottom of the fridge. A modular refrigerator compartment keeps Steve's fruit and vegetables in the "comfort zone" between knee and eye level, reducing the amount of stooping and reaching that cooking usually entails. (According to a RISD study, preparing even a simple meal involves about 400 steps in a conventional kitchen, whose basic design hasn't changed much in the past half century.) Most of RISD's innovations aren't vet produced commercially, but modular refrigerators and freezers are already.



erators flanking a "snack center" were intended to hold soft drinks, milk, wine and so on, with chiller and freezer drawers for veggies and frozen goods below. The above-counter oven surrounded by built-in storage for cake pans, cookie sheets and cookbooks occupied a dedicated baking area.

Once we'd stocked the shelves, Langmuir pointed me and the fish toward the kitchen's centerpiece, a 4-by-9-foot island comprising sink, work surface, cutting board, cooktop, pasta cooker, steamer and three small pop-up dishwashers. The appliances, of course, were mock-ups. What did work, though, was a feature I think is the most important innovation of the project, a motorized height adjustment that raised or lowered the whole island. I discovered immediately that the 36-inch standard countertop height is too low for me; 38 is perfect. It's not hard to envision preset controls such as one finds on the driver's seat of some cars: Press your button, and the counter rises or lowers to your preferred elevation. A sturdy rolling cart, which provided extra counter space, had a crank to raise and lower the top. All the counters were solid surfacing polished smooth, with a lip rimming the edge to contain spills and with no sharp angles to collect spooge. This edge treatment makes everything a dream to sponge up afterward.

As I went through the motions of cleaning the fish and chopping the tomatoes and onions, I did find the work space limited. But Langmuir pointed out that one of the kitchen's design concepts was to eliminate wasted space and motion. Thus the counter (*continued on page 38*)



Why are these folks smiling? Because filling huge pots and pans with water just got a whole lot easier, thanks to the work island's bar-type spray nozzles. Each nozzle comes with buttons for hot and cold water, so Steve doesn't have to maneuver that unwieldy stockpot under a faucet, then cart the heavy pot from sink to cooktop. Langmuir watches as he drops a cod head and frame into the water. If he were making spaghetti instead of soup, he wouldn't even need a pot. The island also comes with an in-counter pasta cooker.



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HOUSE CALLS WITH STEVE

New and Improved

Your kitchen doesn't have this layout. In 10 years, it might.



(continued from page 34) and sink were intentionally narrow and easily reached without stooping or by someone in a wheelchair. The dishwashers were envisioned to be small, efficient and quiet, intended for more or less continuous use, in place of a washup sink. As the *batterie de cuisine* get dirty, they go right into a dishwasher. With three machines, one can be running while the others wait to be filled. The more I tinkered with this setup, the more I liked it.

The island was loaded with ideas. There were pull-out vents right over the smoking or steaming pans, sealed touch-button panels to operate dishwashers, an infrared sensor to activate the sink's washing jets and touch buttons on the sprayer to turn it on and off and adjust the temperature. While the idea of touch buttons for the plumbing violates my credo of KISS (Keep

It Simple, Stupid), the project as a whole is meant to stimulate our imagination and challenge our preconceived notion of "kitchen."

Does the mock-up have any bearing on a kitchen I'd build or renovate now? You bet. I'd motorize my main work island to accommodate people of different heights. While this would take some engineering, it could be done with off-the-shelf parts from any industrial catalog. I'd also avoid any extremely high or low cabinets, reserving space for a walk-in pantry to store canned and dry goods, serving platters, lobster steamers and that espresso maker I swore I'd use but never do. Finally, I'd decentralize the appliances. Refrigerators similar to the project's "deconstructed" ones (separate chiller and freezer drawers and cabinet units that

A key design concept for this kitchen was to eliminate wasted space and motion. can be placed throughout the kitchen) are already sold right off the showroom floor. Similarly, separate hobs, steamers, deep fryers, woks and warmers for bread and plates are commercially available, as are—of course—cooktops and ovens. And I'd take a close look at the drawer dishwashers now being imported from New Zealand. The prototype I test-

drove, formally called the Rhode Island School of Design Universal Kitchen Project, is on display at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York City through March 21. If you're planning a kitchen project, my advice is to grab your sketchbook, and pay a visit. *Bon appétit.*

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Saving the Ranch

A new kitchen is the key to the makeover of a 1950s suburban classic

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hile Laurie Leitner loved the privacy of her white-pine-filled yard in northern New Jersey, her house enthralled her considerably less: The brick-faced raised ranch had been built in the 1950s, and although roomy—with five bedrooms and three bathrooms—it lacked a certain flair. "Make that total flair," says Leitner. The gray metal cabinets in the kitchen "looked like they belonged in a diner," and the pastel green, blue and gray tiling in the three bathrooms was downright anemic. But it wasn't just a problem with decor. Leitner and her husband have three children between the ages of 5 and 13 and craved such 1990s amenities as a family room, an eat-in kitchen, and a master bedroom suite with a bathtub rather than just a shower. "When we bought the place five years ago, we knew some day we would have a lot of work to do," she says.

BY CURTIS RIST

Just how much, she could never have imagined. Sitting down with an architect last spring, Leitner mentioned that she wanted "something prettier" in a house, while her husband wanted to make sure whatever they did was "not

too flashy." For his part, the architect, Bill Kaufman of Wesketch Architecture in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, wanted to make sure the renovated house would blend in with the neighborhood. "Just to build a two-story bomb on top of everything would have overwhelmed the street," he says. After eight months of work, the result-

ing house looks lavishly different. It contains a remarkably changed floor plan downstairs and an all new upstairs and has grown from 3,200 to about 5,000 square feet. But it still nestles comfortably on top of the original house's foundation—and even retains much of the landscaping.

Radical as it is, the project didn't begin as a whole-house makeover. The couple set out to simply spruce up the kitchen and add a family room. But, because the backyard sloped up a steep hill, "we The newly renovated 400-square-foot kitchen, which adjoins a 400-squarefoot family room, displays antiquewhite glazed cabinets topped by crown molding repeated throughout the house. A dark-stained cherry island contains the sink and dishwasher. Beneath it all, the floor is covered with travertine marble cut into 18-inch squares—just the right scale for a space of this size.



IT'S GREEK THEM TO

To add a touch of elegance to the Leitner house, architect Bill Kaufman leaned on an ancient Greek tradition by adding classical columns. He chose the simplest design—a couldn't just put on an addition with a master suite above and be done," says Leitner. That would have destroyed the parklike setting, the very thing they liked most about the place.

Instead, they re-configured the house from the inside. In the original floor plan, there were two tiny bed-

variation known as Tuscan-and used them liberally both inside and out. A pair of columns fashioned out of redwood frame the house's mahogany front door, where they both support a portico and conceal a leader draining from the gutter above. Another pair made of ponderosa pine stand in the dining room, where they mark a passage to the living room and "define the table area as sepa-



rate from the main walk," says Kaufman. In the new kitchen-family room combination (top photo), Kaufman bumped out the back wall by 12 feet and added a laminated beam supported by steel columns for strength.



These industrial-looking pillars were then sheathed with Tuscan columns that arrived precut. All carpenter Chris **Potocek of Hunterdon** Builders had to do was glue them together and hammer in 21/2-inch-long finishing nails with a pneumatic gun. "The columns are there to hold up the house, but they also create a little bit of a definition between the family room and the kitchen," says Kaufman. Columns for the overhanging back porch required more Samsonesque measures (bottom

photo). A jack had to be inserted to hold up the roof while a temporary support was removed. Then, the column, which was intentionally ordered a little bit longer, had to be cut to the exact length before Potocek inserted and caulked it into place. "You get one chance to cut it right," says project manager Al Stewart. "If it's too short, you've blown the whole thing." And at \$1,000 per column, that's one mistake sure to stir the wrath of Zeus. rooms upstairs and three downstairs; finding space for a family room meant moving the master bedroom up. "Which was fine, except I have three children and you can't have

TOM SILVA SAYS:

"The four most expensive words in renovation are, "While you're at it..." Before you know it, a simple kitchen turns into a 1,000-square-foot addition with all new bathrooms, new plumbing and new heating. Just be prepared for it: It happens all the time."

one down and two up," says Leitner. "We thought about taking over the upstairs ourselves, except then you'd have three kids on the first floor basically running the house and we didn't like that." Like a domino chain, the renovation spread from room to room. The family room and a new entrance hall ended up replacing two of the bedrooms, and

two more were added upstairs. Along the way, every detail in the house—from windows to floorboards—changed. Says Leitner, "Once we started fixing some things, we decided to fix everything."

In redesigning the house, Kaufman made only minor changes to the original brick facade on the front and sides but replaced the wide cedar shingles on the back with clapboard as well as shingles cut into a wavy

pattern on the gables. The house originally had a slate roof—unusual in a raised ranch—but it could not be salvaged during construction, and the cost of replacing it was too high. "Somebody mentioned \$75,000," says Leitner, who with her hus-

The core of the new kitchen fits neatly into the space occupied by the old one. But the room is now open to an adjacent family room and breakfast area.



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The rear of the house shows a dramatic change. Aside from a shared foundation and some interior framing, there's barely a whisper of the original house, above, in the new one, right. Doors from the patio (middle of photo, right) lead into the breakfast area.



band opted instead for asphalt shingles with a slate look. "We're not crazy about them, but we sure didn't want to spend that much money on a roof." Kaufman gave the whole roof a fancier look by using copper flashing, and even coined the term Brick Shingle Style for the house's design. "It's traditional but a lot of fun," he says.

As in all renovations, some surprise discoveries nearly tripped up the grand design once the work began. While excavating for a wine cellar that was to lie beneath the new front steps, contractor Paul Cucco of Hunterdon Builders of Whitehouse, New Jersey, discovered a 5-foot-thick plug of concrete that had been dumped during the original construction. "We spent a couple of days jackhammering that out," he says. But an even larger problem lurked elsewhere: Kaufman had conceived a spectacular roof that rose up in a shallow pyramid above the twin gables in the front of the house. During the framing of the second floor, Cucco discovered that the rear wall of the house was 8 inches longer than the front—throwing the whole house off square. "Somebody added an extra cinder block back in the '50s," he says. That could have made the roof unworkable if Cucco hadn't come up with the idea of concealing the problem by building a brick column at one corner of the house. At 8 inches wide, it erased the problem, and looks as if it belongs. "That literally saved the roof," says Kaufman with a breath of relief.

As the renovation proceeded, the Leitners became pragmatic about just how much of the old house could be salvaged. Oak floorboards they had planned to save in the living room and dining room got rained on and had to be ripped up. Much of the framing on the first floor also needed replacing. In terms of cost, says Kaufman, there may have been some savings in the

Expanding a Ranch

The original plan of the house's first floor, below, contained a few flaws namely, no family room, no eat-in kitchen, and an entry all but invisible from the street. By shifting the entry to a central location, right, and moving the bedrooms upstairs, architect Bill Kaufman reordered the traffic flow: Formal dining room, living room and den are grouped at one side of the house; kitchen, family room and the guest room—which is actually used as a computer room by the children—at the other. "What this house needed—in addition to some extra space—was a clear sense of direction," says Kaufman.





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everything but lunch. Of course, it does have a place to hold a drink.



CRRETSMAN CONTRACTOR



Venting a kitchen stove is an essential—but often noisy proposition. To cut down on the jet-enginelike sounds emanating from the Leitners' kitchen, the builders installed the fan in the attic, rather than attaching it to the vent hood itself. "It's even more powerful than the typical vent," says construction supervisor AI Stewart. "And when you turn it on, you don't bear a thing."

masonry but, in the overall scheme of things, it was "probably a wash" compared with building a new house.

As with many whole-house renovations, an entire team of design professionals—in addition to the architect—became necessary. The Leitners turned to interior designer Frank DelleDonne of Sum-

TOM SILVA SAYS:

"Home owners can avoid nasty surprises by keeping on top of costs. The easiest way to do this is to insist on weekly updates on expenses from the builder. It'll save everyone a lot of headaches." mit to take charge of the house's finishes, materials and furnishings, and hired Joan Picone of European Country Kitchens in Far Hills to design the kitchen. Designers can be pricey. Someone like DelleDonne charges between \$10,000 and \$30,000 to pick out bathroom tiles and wall colors and shop for furni-

ture for a house this size. For her part, Picone charges a lawyerly \$175 an hour to plan a kitchen. "We spare home owners a lot of headaches," says DelleDonne. Leitner calls the two indispensable. "Without them," she says, "I would have gone mad."

Besides planning how each room will look, DelleDonne made

sure that the look carries over from room to room. This subtle uniformity can be seen in the pale white travertine marble on the Leitners' kitchen floor and the limestone of a similar color in the lavatory, as well as the antique-white glazed terra-cotta tiling in the downstairs guest bathroom. "The goal is to have the interior design of the house act as a subtle reflection of the exterior architecture," says DelleDonne. "That's a task home owners in the middle of a whole-house renovation just can't achieve alone."

After eight long months of living in a rented house with many of their possessions in boxes, Leitner and her family revel in their new surroundings. While Leitner takes charge of the marble-tiled kitchen, her children tune into the media center in the adjacent family room. She and her husband love the privacy of their upstairs master suite, and their 13-year-old daughter even has a mahogany-trimmed balcony projecting from her room "so she can feel like Juliet."

"It's perfect," says Leitner, and all new—except for the whitepainted mantelpiece in the living room, the only interior detail that survived the makeover. "I always liked it," says Leitner. And now, it reminds her of a house's remarkable journey. It was a dark and stormy night.

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MATERIALS

Brick goes perfectly with a garden's greenery. For the walls and paths of this peaceful outdoor retreat in Birmingbam, Alabama, landscape architect Nimrod Long used a machinemade wood-molded brick that mimics the irregular shapes and textures of old handmade brick.

Feat of Clay

Brick's earthy elegance adds grace to patios and pathways

BY JACK MCCLINTOCK

m standing on a brick—a rough, pinkish-tan rectangle of baked clay with a chip off one side and a chunk of mortar stuck to the end. This is a common brick larger, softer and rougher than the tough-skinned face brick used on building facades—and it's surrounded by hundreds more that make up my patio here in Miami. These brick (brick folk never say "bricks") were made long ago somewhere in the Midwest, possibly near Chicago, where my brick man got them. Probably stood as part of a factory wall, he said. Now they're lying down, retired under the palm trees in a Florida backyard. When I decided to extend my outdoor leisure area into a lush but too-often-muddy dead zone out back, brick was the only material that really made sense. I already have a wooden deck. Concrete doesn't drain through, and why pave paradise? Flagstone or bluestone, common for Northern patios, looks dumb in south Florida. Keystone, a native rock cut from ancient coral reefs, would have looked grand, but I couldn't justify spending \$6 a square foot for the material alone. That left brick, which—to my eye at least—has an earthy naturalness that beautifully complements green plants and bright flowers. And brick is relatively affordable: In all, I paid just over \$2,000 for my 700-square-foot patio. I went with salvaged brick even though they cost a bit more than new. I think used brick have a gentle, antique warmth often lacking in their more pristine cousins.

Three hard-working Guatemalans laid my kidney-shaped patio in two days. First, they dug out 8 inches of topsoil and replaced it with 8 inches of sifted builder's sand, scraped with enough pitch—roughly an inch over 10 feet—to drain water away from the house. Then, with a gas-powered tamper, the three of them wet the sand and pounded it into a firm base. After they wheelbarrowed a ton



1. Water-Struck: Lubricating the mold with sodium silicate (water glass) imparts an antique patina and weather-resistant smoothness. Used in New England since the 17th century. 2. Salvaged Common: This porous wall brick, popular in the South, won't survive many winters on Northern ground. 3. Beveled Edge: Beveling accentuates patterns and reduces the chances of chipping. 4. Custom-Made: A waterstruck stair nosing was designed for a house in Bristol, Virginia. 5. Sand-Struck: Sand dusted into a mold keeps the wet clay from sticking and gives brick a gritty texture, and can alter the clay's color. 6. Salvaged Paver: From the era before asphalt, this jumbo 10-pounder shrugs off cold weather. 7. Iron Spot: A monthlong firing fuses the iron in the clay, leaving purplish spots on the surface and a dense interior that can withstand the worst winter freezes. 8. Roll Lock: A one-piece cap for pillars and the ends of garden walls helps speed the work. When the grooves are filled with mortar, this roll lock looks like five separate brick. 9. Bullnose Coping: Extruding clay through a steel die produces a smooth-finish brick used for edging pools. Manganese powder creates the metallic color. 10. Wall Cap: Hollow coring makes the brick lighter, decreases firing time and gives the mortar a keyway for anchoring pieces to each other.

of brick into the backyard, the big guy tossed them to the two smaller guys, who laid the brick out on the sand bed in a basket-weave pattern. For hours on end, I could hear the dry *click click chank chank* of fired clay bumping against fired clay.

This was basically the same material workers toiled with in Mesopotamia 10,000 years ago, which makes brick the world's first modular building unit. About 7.8 billion brick emerge from kilns in the United States every year, enough to build two Great Walls of China. Most are blended, extruded and fired in highly automated factories, hardly touched by any human until a mason smears them with mortar. Then there are brick like mine, made long ago, often by hand, and rescued from demolished buildings. Nobody knows how many salvaged brick are used each year, but the appeal of recycled material keeps the demand high. (See "Mining the

TOM SILVA SAYS

Brick isn't just about aesthetics. It's about durability, particularly when building patios and walkways. "On the ground, you definitely want to use a hard paver brick," says This Old House contractor Tom Silva. Paving brick rated SW ("severe weathering") are fired longer and hotter than face brick, which are used to build walls. Unfortunately, manufacturers don't stamp ratings on brick, so consumers have to trust their contractors to trust their suppliers to furnish the appropriate materials. Midwest," page 52.)

Scarred, mortar-stained and irregular, used brick have a certain battered charm. Many even have names. When I pry up my brick and turn it over, I see the words "Chicago Brick Co." stamped into the clay. The label, although less evocative than some I've seen—Snowball, Gem City, Diablo, Mutton Hollow Extra, Fire Ball—is exotic enough in Miami. The brick is odd-sized too—2³/₈ inches thick by 3³/₄ wide by 8 long. (A standard brick is slightly smaller:

 $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $3\frac{3}{4}$ by $7\frac{5}{8}$ inches.) At the turn of the century, there were at least 30 different sizes in common use, but the number has shrunk to about a dozen today, which makes replacement and repair easier.

The crew edged my patio with side-by-side brick, following the curve I'd laid out with a hose. A low berm of concrete poured just outside the rim now holds everything in place, and sand swept over the patio fills the

cracks and lets the rain drain through.

Laid on the ground up North, these soft, common brick would spall and disintegrate as water seeped inside and froze. Cold climates require hard, "severe weathering" paver brick, and they need to be installed on a deeper base to forestall frost heaves. In Massachusetts, *This Old House* landscaping contractor Roger Cook usually digs down 8 to 12 inches, then installs a 3-to-4-inch blanket of gravel topped with a setting bed of stone dust. "Stone dust packs firmer than sand," he says.

Here in Miami, the problem is humid heat, not freezing. Falling bananas,

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JOHN MCENROE NOVEMBER 1998

JOHN MCENROE MAY 1997

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papayas and avocados quickly decay into black messes. (The key limes just bounce and roll off into the sur-

rounding ferns.) At least that mess can easily be hosed away. What's worse is the fungi and algae that grow on the damp brick, turning them ugly, slippery and dangerous to walk on. So every six months, I sluice down the patio with pool chlorine mixed 50-50 with water in a pump sprayer, and the old brick are new again, with their lovely pinkish-tan color and perfect imperfections the makers never intended.

Hefting my brick again, I turn it over and notice something new. I hose the brick off and squint. Pushed 1/2 inch into the "a" in Chicago is the print of a human thumb. Even the delicate whorls are there. I think of the men who made these brick so long ago and of the masons who methodically slathered them with mortar



last bits of mortar from a Chicago Common. Laid out in a basket-weave pattern 1,400 miles south, these same salmon-colored brick add character to a lush Florida backyard, below.

and built entire buildings, now pulled down and carried far away. And then, when I hold this brick exactly right, my own thumb fits neatly into the hollow.

Mining the Midwest

A brick salvager, above, hammers the

Chipped at the corners and speckled with mortar and old paint, salvaged brick may look homely, but to Luis Palacios these old hunks of clay are a valuable commodity. Palacios, a brick distributor in Miami, says south Floridians are clamoring for brick salvaged from buildings demolished thousands of miles away, in Detroit, St. Louis and Chicago. "I get a rail car of 33,000 Chicago Commons, and I can't keep them in stock for more than a day," he says. These coveted salmon-colored brick come to Palacios via Jeff Finucane, owner of Windy City Antique Brick in Chicago. Last year, Finucane shipped nearly 150 boxcar loads of Chicago Commons to Southerners who wanted to build patios, walkways, and garden walls. There is almost no market for the brick locally, Finucane says: If left in contact with the ground, they will suck up water and disintegrate after a few hard freezes. Finucane hires piece workers, many of them homeless, to do the backbreaking work of salvaging. They scour demolition sites for unbroken pieces or use picks, axes and crowbars to hammer at crumbling buildings. Then, brick by brick, the workers chop off the old mortar-a few wellaimed hammer blows do the trick-and stack the brick on a pallet. "Each 2,200-pound pallet holds 530 brick and takes about 45 minutes to fill," says Finucane. Some salvaged brick-Savannah Grays, for instance-have become so scarce that they sell for \$1.50 apiece. Michael Hopping, a landscape architect in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, says one client bought a warehouse and then demolished it to get all

the Old New Orleans Hard Tans. But Finucane isn't worried about running out of Chicago Commons, which retail at 35 cents each. "There'll always be buildings to wreck," he says. -Hope Reeves



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Got Lead? Smart ways to deal with layers of risky paint

hen it comes to working with lead paint, Tom Silva admits he's done plenty of things wrong. "I used to burn it off woodwork and sand it until the air was filled with dust," says the This Old House general contractor, who's been in the business for 33 years. "The damage, if there is any, has already been done."

Now, Silva's day of medical reckoning has arrived. He has volunteered for a study by the Harvard School of Public Health to calculate how much lead his bones have sopped up. (Lead mimics calcium, so bones become the record of past exposures.) Using a sophisticated X-ray fluorescence analyzer, Harvard researchers have already found dangerously high levels of lead stored in the bones of dozens of other contractors and hapless home owners; their levels registered high enough to put them at long-term risk of hypertension, anemia, kidney failure and memory loss. What will they find in Tom? Sitting in a chair at Boston's Channing Laboratory, he flips through a magazine as the X-ray analyzer zooms close to his shin. In a half an hour, he will know. BY CURTIS RIST

Lead paint, long recognized as a health threat to young children in blighted urban housing, is now

affecting a newly recognized set of victims: home renovators. "Some of the worst cases of lead poisoning I've seen involve whole families in which the parents buy a wonderful Victorian, roll up their sleeves, pull out the belt sander and grind away," says Dr. Howard Hu, an associate professor of occupational medicine who is running the Harvard study.

The full extent of the problem is not clear; no one keeps national records on poisonings caused by house paint. But in Massachusetts, a state known for its strict lead regulations, a report documented 380 cases of severe lead poisoning in construction workers from 1991 to 1995; 101 were housepainters; 172 were professional lead-paint abaters. Another 38 were home owners renovating their own houses. Richard Rabin, who coordinated the report, says this "grossly underestimates" the numbers of home owners likely to have high levels of lead in their blood. "If they're not tested, there are no statistics," he says.

Such poisonings are completely avoidable. Left undisturbed, leadbased paint is not a health hazard. You can rub your hand over it without danger; lead cannot be absorbed through skin. But sanding, scraping or burning off the paint creates clouds of lead-laced dust that can be inadvertently inhaled or swallowed. Rabin found that many people-even professionals-worked without respirators, ate their lunches without washing their hands and faces, and smoked cigarettes coated with lead dust. And the

With its rhino-bide durability, ease of application and self-leveling smoothness, lead paint was the premier coating of its day. Those qualities came from powdered lead carbonate, which made up more than half the weight of some paints. Although lead was banned from use in house paints in 1978, a few industrial coatings, such as those for striping roads, above, contain a small proportion of the toxic metal.

They Got the Lead Out

In the middle of a renovation blitz on their house in Belmont, Massachusetts, Katharine and Michael MacPhail got a nasty shock. A routine visit to the pediatrician revealed that their 2-year-old daughter, K.C., had a blood-lead level of 17 micrograms per deciliter, well above the 10 mcg/dl level the federal Centers for Disease Control considers

risky for children. K.C.'s doctor prescribed an iron supplement and a diet high in calcium and iron, and the MacPhails halted work, yet six weeks later, the girl's lead level rose to 20 mcg/dl. A lead inspection showed they had lead everywhere, so they hired Dec-Tam, a

A tarp taped to the foundation is ready to catch any leadpaint chips scraped from the MacPhail house. In Massachusetts, exterior scraping can be done only when the breeze blows 4 mph or less.

state-certified contractor that has also de-leaded several T.O.H. projects. Looking like the cleanup squad from Chernobyl, with their full-body suits and HEPA-filtered face masks, Dec-Tam's crew sealed off work areas with two layers of 6-mil



plastic sheeting and duct tape. After three weeks of scraping paint down to bare wood, they disposed of everything as toxic waste, then mopped the house with trisodium phosphate (TSP). A final wipe test by an inspector confirmed that the contaminated dust was gone. The MacPhails' abatement totaled \$21,000, more than double the cost of a rip-and-replace job, but they have no regrets. "We didn't want hollow-core doors and flat molding," Katharine says. "And we didn't want to gamble with our children becoming brain damaged." -Curtis Rist

main dust culprits were power sanders: "With one of those, you can really do a job on yourself in a day or two," Rabin says.

Paints made before 1950 pose the greatest threat. Dr. Thomas Matte, an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and To find out how much lead is

Prevention, says these paints often contain so much lead that the dust from a pulverized chip just one sequestered in Tom Silva's bones,



centimeter square can pollute a 10-by-20-foot room. "It's easy to see how a room could quickly be contaminated many times above the safe level," he says.

The ones most vulnerable to reckless renovating are not the guys

with belt sanders but kids. A New York study showed that remodeling work was responsible for 10 percent of the elevated blood-lead levels in children statewide. Those less than 6 years old are most at risk; lead passes easily from their blood into their brains, causing long-term learning and hearing disabilities and reduced growth. Fortunately, our bodies naturally excrete lead, so blood-lead levels will gradually drop after exposure to the metal ends. Only in cases of serious poisoning is an expensive and protracted

treatment called chelation used to quickly rid the bloodstream of lead. Unfortunately, there's no magic way to purge it from bones.

Given the dangers, getting a professional lead test is crucial. (See Heavy-Metal Detection p 58.) If lead is present, a home owner faces three basic choices: Live with it (and take some basic precautions), seal it off, or remove it. In many ways, this first approach is the best. "If your paint is in good condition, leave it alone." says Nick Farr, executive director of the National Center for Lead Safe Housing in Columbia, Maryland. "That's the surest way to protect yourself." Painted doors and windows need the most attention because they create minute amounts of lead-laced dust each time they rub against their jambs. Farr's organization has (continued on page 57)

UPDATE



(continued from page 56) found, on average, about 11,000 micrograms of lead per square foot trapped in the troughs between the sash and the storms. "We've even found it as high as a million," he says. (A level below 800 micrograms is considered safe by HUD.) Farr recommends wiping inte-

rior sills with a wet cloth at least once a month; using an ordinary vacuum could spread a plume of dust inside the house. (See Living With Lead, p. 58.) Old windows, often labeled as lead hazards and hauled off to landfills, can be retrofitted with plastic jamb liners or soft-pile weather stripping, both of which virtually eliminate the abrasion that generates paint dust.

The second option is encapsulation: burying lead in place. This involves coating woodwork with special lead-barrier paints or covering walls and ceilings with drywall or wainscoting. Merely applying a few coats of regular house paint is not sufficient. Although less expensive and less dusty than full-scale abatement, encapsulation does have its downside: The thick paints obliterate crisp architec-

when the This Old House Crew began renovating this 18th-century farmhouse in Acton, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1994, home owners Terry and Sima Maitland (inset, with family) did the safe thing: They took their three children and moved out. Even so, a routine blood test that fall showed their youngest child, Ethan, then 6, had an elevated lead level probably from dust ingested before renovations started. "We made a quick decision to de-lead," says Terry Maitland. The \$30,000 abatement involved replacing 30 windows and scraping paint off much of the woodwork inside and out. Ethan's lead levels returned to normal; now 10, he's had no further troubles. Terry Maitland says he's glad he went ahead and got rid of the lead: "It's given us peace of mind."

> ject. Even if you are protected with the right respirator, and disposable gloves and clothes, your family and neighbors are still at risk. A qualified lead-removal contractor has the equipment and, most important, the experience needed to do the work quickly and safely.

tural details, and the panels leave the poi-

most expensive, and if a remodeling is

planned, the safest. This is a job for a state-

or EPA-certified lead-abatement contrac-

tor-de-leading is not a do-it-yourself pro-

The third route-lead removal-is the

son for future renovators to uncover.

Complete removal is not always necessary: If a renovation is planned, only those surfaces that will be disturbed need to be stripped. Farr says remodeling contractors should take a cue from their lead-abatement brethren: "Create as little dust as possible, contain whatever is generated, and clean up well afterward." Then, once the work is completed, a final series of independent wipe tests should confirm that everything is safe.

That's basically the approach Tom has taken in the last 10 years.

Living With Lead

Although the amount of lead in paint began dropping in the 1950s as manufacturers used less-hazardous ingredients, houses built as late as 1980 may still be lead-tainted. A professional lead test is the only way to know for sure. If an inspection uncovers lead, that doesn't

automatically mean that all paint has to be stripped: With disciplined maintenance, one can safely forgo the expense of total abatement. When remodeling, however, don't take chances: Have lead paint professionally removed from any areas where it might be disturbed.

Maintenance Strategies

 Focus on doors and windows, the two biggest generators of lead dust. Maintain an intact coat of new paint over the old. Isolate sash from jambs with weather stripping or plastic liners.

 Wet-mop floors and woodwork with TSP or allpurpose cleanser. Do not sweep with a broom.

• Use vacuums with HEPA filters.

• Send rugs, upholstery and drapes out for professional cleaning. Wipe furniture with tack cloths or damp rags. Wash children's toys.

• Check the blood-lead levels of children under 6 years old with every pediatric checkup.

 If soil is contaminated, remove or wipe shoes before entering the house.

• Never power-sand, dry-scrape, grind or burn off old paint. Use paint deglosser to give old paint enough tooth to accept a new coat. Let a licensed lead abater take care of peeling paint.

Remodeling Strategies

• Test all painted surfaces that will be affected by a remodeling. If there is a lead hazard, hire a certified contractor to remove it before the remodeling starts. Do not attempt such work on your own.

• While remodeling, keep children, toys and pets away from work areas. Better yet, leave the premises until the project is finished.

 Have the remodeling contractor seal doorways, windows and work areas against dust, and wet-mop completed rooms with cleanser.

 Wipe-test for lead dust when the remodeling is done. —Romy Pokorny

"If there's a lead problem—and there almost always is—I tell the home owner to get a licensed de-leader, and have him deal with it. I don't go near

it," he says. If woodwork needs stripping, he prefers to have it removed and cleaned off-site; he avoids grinding, scraping or sanding painted surfaces as much as possible. On the *T.O.H.* renovation in Watertown, Massachusetts, he chose to rip off and replace the siding, rather than try to sand it smooth. "Why take the risk?"

With a burst of cadmium-109 X rays, Donald Pesce's \$14,000 XRF causes any lead in the paint to emit its own signature X rays, which the device then detects.

"If I go to work on an

owners are expecting or

have little kids around,

I strongly recommend that they have their paint tested for lead."

old house, and the

TOM SILVA SAYS:

Heavy-Metal Detection

Finding lead has gotten faster, easier and more accurate, thanks to new testing technology. Time was, inspectors relied on a lab-

> oratory or a chemical-saturated cotton swab to locate lead paint. Those methods are still used but have their drawbacks. Lab tests, although highly accurate, can be expensive-sometimes as much as \$3,000-and removing the sample leaves woodwork pocked with little squares. Swabs are cheaper and faster: Just rub one on suspect paint, and see if the tip changes color. But swabs can be hard to interpret, leading to false positives and false negatives. Also, a swab only detects the lead it touches; an inspector or home

owner will still have to gouge surfaces to find hidden layers of toxic paint.

Now, all an inspector has to do is rest a cellphone-sized X-ray fluorescence analyzer (XRF) against a painted surface and push a button.

> In a second, the device displays how much lead the paint has and how deeply it is buried. The cost for a whole-house inspection with an XRF runs between \$200 and \$600 and does not harm woodwork. —*R. P.*

> Finally, the silent XRF aimed at Tom's leg has finished its scanning. With a click, the machine's shutter closes and a nearby computer screen

flashes: 13 micrograms. "That's well within the normal range," says researcher Steve Oliveira. (A reading above 35 micrograms per gram of calcium would have been a problem.) Tom takes a momentary breath of relief—then smiles. "I knew it would be," he says, as he heads off to another lead-safe day on the job.

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All About Eaves

The most beautiful part of a roof

BY CURTIS RIST

hether designing a new house or reworking an old one, architect Robert A.M. Stern pays careful attention to the eaves, the overhanging portions of the roof that add shelter, shade and a measure of romance to what might otherwise be a stark facade. "An eave is to a house what an eyebrow is to a face," says Stern, in a memorable architectural analogy. "You can have bushy, projecting eyebrows, or they can be plucked thin and flat. But I've never heard anybody advocate the no-eyebrow look."

Beginning early in the 18th century, eaves roared into fashion on Georgian houses and remained popular in nearly every subsequent architectural style. Elaborate bracketed eaves reached a peak during the Victorian Italianate period; rustic Adirondack mansions fairly bristle with wide eaves. In this cen-

On a Robert A.M. Stem-designed house in Marblehead, Massachusetts, a gracefully curved 18-inch-wide eave accentuates a conical porch roof, providing shade as well as style. tury, eaves extended from petite bungalows and grand Shingle Styles. Yet shortly after World War II, builders of America's new, sprawling suburbs put up millions of eaveless houses—and not for reasons of good design: The advent of ready-made gutters took over the eave's original purpose, keeping water away from the house. "Builders thought, *Why spend all this* money on soffits when we could just pull

things back, tack on a gutter and be done with it?" says Duo Dickinson, an architect in Madison, Connecticut.

Putting function ahead of form doesn't always work, however. Gutters can fail. They can clog with leaves and overflow and in winter often plug up with ice and flood ceilings

and walls. Eaves, on the other hand, help keep runoff from splashing back onto siding, ruining paint and rotting wood. "Eaves are an element you can't be without if you want a low-maintenance house," Dickinson says.

They're fair-weather friends as well. In summer, when the sun rises high in the sky, a roof overhang blocks the intense rays and keeps them from heating up walls and penetrating windows. This makes for a dramatically

cooler house, even without air-conditioning. Come winter, when the sun stays closer to the horizon, the rooms will again be warmed by direct light, without any interference from the eaves. "In every climate I can think of, you want the roof to project as far away from the house as possible," says Dickinson.

Eaves do their job beautifully. Shingle Style, Arts and Crafts and Prairie Style houses owe much of their appeal

TOM SILVA SAYS "Adding eaves to a house is easy. They look great but, more important, they help keep the foundation dry." Style houses owe much of their appeal to the wide spans that radiate from the exterior walls and often flow naturally onto covered porches. Some of Frank Lloyd Wright's creations contain long, flat roof extensions that give the houses an almost sculptural dimension. Even the comparatively slender eaves projecting from the roofs of Georgian and Greek Revival houses afford, if not summer shade, at least a

place to build an elegant cornice. "An eave creates distinctive shadows and makes the outside of a house much more interesting," says Stern.

When New York City architect Dennis Wedlick begins designing a house, he shapes the eaves almost as soon as he picks up a pencil and a roll of yellow sketch paper. "There are only a few exterior components that an architect has available for making a dramatic impression," says Wedlick. "One of them is a massive roof, and that's where the eave comes in. With wide eaves, you have a good chance of coming up with a design that has real character."

Wedlick likes their almost limitless variety. "No two are ever exactly alike," he says. Eaves can vary in width from 1 to 4 feet or more and can be plain, faced with flat boards or embellished with intricate moldings. Wedlick often covers the soffit, the exposed underside of an eave, with bead board that mimics the traditional finish on porch ceilings. "I think it's nice to have the quality and richness of the boards as opposed to flat plywood," he says. "And it doesn't matter if the house has wood siding or masonry. I've used bead boards on both." For a finishing touch, Wedlick frequently specifies sky blue paint for the soffits. It helps brighten the interior, he says, "by giving the impression of sky coming right down to the house."

Dickinson relies on eaves as a way to break up boring boxiness, especially when renovating a survivor of those eaveless postwar years. Fortunately, it's easy to add eaves to a house that has none, particularly when a roof needs re-shingling. (See "Eave Ho!") "You can create a wonderful counterpoint between the line of the eaves and the

mass of the house," he says. "The magic comes in taking something born out of rude necessity and turning it into one of a house's most important features."

NEW FASCIA OLD FASCIA OLD FASCIA OLD FRIEZE BOARD OLD FRIEZE BOARD

HO!

EAVE

To spruce up the exterior of a 1960s house in New Canaan, Connecticut, architect James Schettino went straight to the eaves and designed a foot-wide extension. After stripping off shingles and



built into gables but, Schettino says, "The soffit-ridge vent combination is far more efficient. And if you're adding a room that has a cathedral ceiling, it's the only way to go."

plywood sheathing at the edge of the roof, carpenters nailed 3-foot-long 2x6s to the exposed ends of the rafters, then sheathed and roofed the extension, attached a fascia board, built a soffit, put strips of decorative molding under it and attached a new gutter. "It's really simple," says Schettino. "But the look is polished, more elegant."

In addition to a better appearance, the new eave gave Schettino a place to add soffit vents, the air intake for the roof ventilation system. Air entering the vents flows up between the rafters and exhausts through ridge vents at the roof peak, taking excess heat and moisture along. Exhaust vents can also be

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minor renovation, chances are good that the job will go well. Even so, disaster scenarios like the following play out all the time: With high hopes of getting a quality job done on time and on budget, a home owner signs a contract and makes an initial payment. But soon after work begins, the project deteriorates before the owner's increasingly anguished eyes. The contractor's crewmen, once civil and workmanlike, turn surly and appear at odd hours. They dump pallets of drywall on the flower beds. At some point, the contractor decides to ignore the

> architect's plan—saying nothing to the owner—and starts building his own botched design. Disgusted, the owner fires the contractor midway through the job, refusing to pay another cent. The contractor storms out of the house, dragging metal toolboxes across antique pine floors. Deeply disappointed and left with a mess, the owner is nonetheless relieved to be rid of his problem. Or so he thinks.

A couple of days later, a grizzled process server appears at his door and hands him a crumpled paper reading "Notice of Mechanic's Lien." Having only a vague idea what those words mean, he calls his lawyer and quickly learns that the contractor he came to loathe could cost him his house.

Thanks to a legal instrument rooted in 18th-century American law, court files bulge with lien notices, and many a time it's the contractor who has a legitimate gripe with the home owner. But whatever the cause and no matter who's really to blame, contractors, subcontractors and even suppliers routinely file mechanic's liens to get money

BY MICHAEL SHAPIRO

hen a home owner hires a contractor for a major or

they believe they deserve. Under the terms of a lien, a contractor can seek to prove in court that the client owes him money and—at least in theory—to collect on that debt by forcing the sale of his house. At the very least, a lien makes refinancing difficult and selling impossible because it shows up on the title report. Worse, failure to clear the claim could result in a default of the owner's mortgage note, entitling the lender to demand immediate and full payment.

Few liens, however, actually result in home owners losing their houses or having to pay off mortgages. Warring parties either settle their differences before litigation begins or obey the court's decision, whichever way it goes. But home owners embarking on renovations must be wary: The mechanic's lien remains a powerful contractor's tool for hammering out dollars even when the work is shoddy or incomplete.

Home owners have been dealing with liens for more than two centuries. In 1791, President George Washington, poised to build America's capital on the shores of the Potomac, directed Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson to organize a commission to run the huge effort. The commission thought it necessary to protect the many laborers working on the new buildings and convinced the Maryland General Assembly to enact the first mechanic's lien law.

Today, similar laws protect contractors in all 50 states and mostly come into play when there's a valid complaint. However, disreputable operators use the same laws to perpetrate fraudulent scams and wring money from unsuspecting home owners. (See "Lien, Mean Home Improvement Scams" on the next page.)

In addition to the disgruntled contractor or the predatory scam artist, seemingly unrelated third parties can also file a lien against a home owner. Bitsy and Allan Maraynes of Chappaqua, New York, thought their garage addition was progressing nicely until they received a call from a local lumberyard. Seems the contractor hadn't paid for materials delivered to the Maraynes's job, and if the bill wasn't cleared up, the couple might get slapped with a lien. The Marayneses were shocked. "I'd just given the contractor a progress payment, and he was about halfway done," says Allan. "But we had no idea that we were responsible to the contractor's supplier."

When questioned, the contractor admitted he'd used the Maraynes's money to pay off other debts. Pressured with being forced off the job and having his reputation ruined, the contractor wrote a check to the lumberyard. From then on, the Maraynes paid all suppliers directly and the contractor for his labor only.

For even more protection, home owners should get subcontractors and suppliers to sign partial waivers of liens as they complete work or make deliveries. By signing a waiver document, which is available in any stationery store that carries standard legal forms, the vendor acknowledges that he has been paid. Final waivers can be issued when the project is finished.

Robert Bowmar, a professor at Albany Law School, says that before signing a contract, home owners should consult with an attorney to weed out clauses that could make it easy for a contractor



to file a lien. If this isn't possible and a lien is filed, Bowmar suggests inquiring whether state law permits so-called bonding around the lien. Home owners with good credit and sufficient assets can purchase a bond from a surety company for a minimal cost (in New York, \$1,000 of bond value costs \$20) and deposit it with the court or municipality. Should the contractor prevail, he could only collect against the bond, not the house. The owner would be responsible for the full value of the lien, but it wouldn't show up on the house's title report, freeing him to sell or refinance before settling the claim.

Home owners can employ other tactics to avoid the sting of a mechanic's lien, but much depends on the laws of a given state, says Washington, D.C., lawyer Spencer Stephens. For example, he says, a court may not enforce a lien if a contractor files too late, lists the wrong work dates, doesn't formally notify the owner when the work started or isn't licensed. Stephens adds that the best strategy may be to stretch out negotiations with the contractor. Litigation on a lien must commence within strict time limits, and a contractor deep in settlement discussions may neglect to meet the deadline. However, some states allow deadline extensions of up to a full year.

Legal maneuvering notwithstanding, it simply may not make sense to contest a lien in court unless the dollar amount is huge. To avoid getting bogged down in a complicated, expensive battle between lawyers, the best strategy may well be to reach a settlement with the contractor, however wronged you feel, and have the job completed by someone else.

Lien, Mean Home Improvement Scams

Any profession has its ne'er-do-wells, and renovation contracting is no different. A less-than-forthright contractor might overwhelm an unsuspecting home owner with high-pressure sales tactics that end with the demand to sign some nebulous paperwork. Having failed to read the entire document, the home owner may have committed to high-interest financing or even put his very ownership at risk. If he then refuses to pay for poor-quality or unfinished work and the contractor files a lien, the real trouble begins. Some filings, however, are illegal because the work isn't covered by lien laws. Thomas Gade, an attorney who specializes in construction law, says that most curtain and carpet installations don't qualify for lien protection because they aren't permanently affixed to the house. Here are other ways to protect yourself from scam artists:

 If the contractor asks you to sign a security agreement, which is similar to a mortgage or trust deed, refuse and find someone else.
Never hock your house for draperies.

 If it's a big job, insist that the contractor get a payment bond, which shields your house from mechanic's liens from him, his subs and his suppliers.

• Make sure everything is in writing. Spoken promises aren't worth the paper they're not written on.

 Understand everything about the contract before you sign, and take it to an attorney if you don't. Just because the contract is in fine, neat print doesn't mean the language is safe to agree to.

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Copper shingles keep a roof in mint condition

vision projects. But come on—a solid gold roof? "It does look like gold," says T.O.H. contractor Tom Silva, squinting at the reflected glare as he nails down another shimmering shingle. "But in a few weeks, I think this stuff will be even prettier."

This "stuff" is copper, and Tom is right. In just a few weeks, it will weather from gaudy bullion-brilliant to the lovely matte brown of an old penny. After installing copper shingles on the roof of the front

porch of T.O.H.'s Queen Anne Victorian in Watertown, Massachusetts, Tom is perched on a scaffold, laying the final courses on the side porch. Watching Tom's progress, home owner Christian Nolen is delighted. "There's just nothing more beautiful than weathering copper," he says.

And there's nothing more durable, at least in the roofing-material world. "We guarantee it for 50 years, but the fact is it will usually outlast the house," says Anne Schade, architectural products representative for Revere Copper Products in Rome, New York.

For centuries, those virtues—elegance and durability—have made copper a natural roofing choice

BY BRAD LEMLEY

around the world, topping built-for-the-ages structures from European cathedrals, Roman temples and Japanese shrines to government

buildings, museums and some 19th-century American houses. Copper roofs have traditionally been made of standing-seam or flat-seam panels. Although copper shingles existed in the early 1900s, demand has increased dramatically over the last two decades, thanks to mass production, national distribution, aggressive promotion and consumer demand for quality materials. Properly installed, a copper shingle roof never leaks: The shingles have curled lips-J-shaped-that hook under and over each other, creating a solid roofing system that efficiently sheds water. Shingles cost more per 100 square feet (a "square" in roofer's parlance) than panels but are less expensive to install, so total cost is often roughly the same. "The shingles don't require the specialized equipment and highly skilled metalworker that standing seam does," says Schade. "For a carpenter, the installation technique is familiar." The shingle



New copper shingles, above, make a porch roof at This Old House's project in Watertown, Massachusetts, look gilded. But they're not just for show. The most durable roofing material, copper doesn't rust, rot or break.





revolution is one of the reasons that the tonnage of copper sold for roofing has risen an average of 8 percent a year since 1992.

However, because copper shingles have little historical precedent on Victorians, Chris Dallmus, an architect in Cambridge, Massachusetts, feels that completely covering the Watertown roof with them may not be the best choice. "I can see using them for architectural banding at the ridge of a house to cap off another material or for a small roof, a cupola, a ventilator, something like that. The copper can really bring a level of detail, richness and elegance to a house."

Nolen agrees, which is why he chose copper shingles for the porches but will leave the old slate intact on the main roof. "These shingles would be obscenely expensive to use over the entire roof but, as an accent, they're worth it and really charming," he says. In this situation, they'll also have a utilitarian value. In winters past, cascading chunks of

ice smashed the porches' original slate roofs to shards. Similarly battered, the copper shingles may dent but won't shatter.

The blinding effect of a new copper-shingled roof begins to

dim just a few days after installation. But the roof may need from five to 30 years to turn Statue of Liberty green, depending on variables including steepness of pitch, rainfall, sea air and pollutants such as atmospheric sulfur. Schade emphasizes that the patina is simply a layer of copper salts, and the color transformation doesn't mean

1. Tom Silva pounds a 1¹/4-inch ring-shank copper nail into one of eight nailing slots on a copper shingle. He installs the shingles over a peel-and-stick waterproof membrane that protects the roof while he works. The membrane also serves as a moisture barrier in lieu of a layer of 30-pound felt paper or two layers of 15-pound felt. "You need some barrier because there's a small air space under these shingles, and you can get condensation there." 2. Tom nails down preformed copper hip-and-ridge caps. 3. Copper nails go through copper shingles, which hook over a copper drip edge and copper flashing where roof meets house. Note the theme: copper on copper, no other metals involved. Copper corrodes less noble metals it touches. During a three-year restoration in the 1980s, the Statue of Liberty's castiron frame had to be replaced with low-carbon stainless steel, which is unaffected by touching the monument's copper skin.

the copper is failing: "The green isn't at all comparable to rust, which goes into the heart of the metal. With copper, the patina actually protects the surface from further weathering."

Good thing too. While the shingles on the Watertown house don't cost as much as gold, they are sufficiently expensive that Nolen will appreciate their longevity. The retail price of enough copper shingles to cover a square is \$465. With installation, that climbs to at least

TOM SILVA SAYS:

"To make sure you don't mix metals, the manufacturer supplies copper nails in the shingle box. Use them."

\$700. By comparison, a standard asphalt shingle roof comes in at about \$150 per installed square.

Tom takes the long view. "You're looking at a sizable chunk of money, but this is basically an indestructible product. It's going to look great for a long time."




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TO THE RESCUE

nothing charming about outdated kitchens and bathrooms. So it's no surprise that the driving force behind most renovations is the need to update these rooms. Virtually every *This Old House* project—including our current one, a Classical Revival cottage in Key West, Florida—has sprung from this need. But not only are kitchens and baths the most renovated rooms in a house, they're also the toughest to do, not to mention the costliest. Consider the mind-boggling array of kitchen choices. Brawny commercial-style ranges or sleek Euro ones. Electric self-cleaning convection ovens, microwaves or bread-proofing ovens. Built-in woks, warming drawers and modular deep fryers, steamers and griddles. Mammoth built-in refrigerators or modular units with separate freezer, refrigerator and chiller compart-

EK

ments. Stainless-steel or porcelain dishwashers. Trash compactors. Reverse-osmosis water filters. Low-voltage lighting. Countertops in granite, marble or concrete. The bath is only slightly less daunting, with both American and European manufacturers offering a wide variety of fixtures, faucets, showers and lighting. Sound intimidating? It is. And we haven't even begun to talk about the really tough part: design. It's enough to make a lot of readers and viewers wish the *T.O.H.* team would magically appear on their doorsteps and resolve all the dilemmas that kitchens and baths inevitably entail.

Wish granted. This month, we're launching House Calls With Steve, highlighting a reader's project in each issue. Just send photos of your problem kitchen or bath to the magazine, along with a brief description and budget breakdown. We're going to tackle large and small renovations with both lavish and modest budgets, so don't be shy if you don't



From This Old House

Sending out an SOS on your kitchen or bath? I'll be there to save the day.

have megabucks to spend. If we choose your kitchen or bath, I'll drop in on you personally, anywhere in the country. Along with one or two local experts, we'll discuss the pros and cons, deciding on a look and the appliances and fixtures that will help you achieve it, all in a package that fits your budget. For starters, you might pick up a few tips from the first House Calls With Steve (page 33), in which I put the Rhode Island School of Design's experimental kitchen to the bouillabaisse test. We hope RISD's innovative appliances, work surfaces and storage units inspire you to send us an entry. Good luck, and we'll see you next time—at *your* old house. —Steve Thomas

Send details on your project to House Calls With Steve, This Old House magazine, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, 27th floor, New York, NY 10036.



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A QUEEN ANNE REBORN IN ALL HER MAJESTY



WITH THE HELP OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION CON-SULTANT ANDREA GILMORE, THE WATERTOWN HOUSE RETURNS TO A VICTORIAN PALETTE: MOSS GREEN CLAPBOARDS AND SAWED SHINGLES, TERRA-COTTA-COLORED FISH-SCALE SHINGLES ON THE ATTIC GABLES AND EGGSHELL TRIM. "THE COLOR SCHEME SOUNDS NUTS BUT LOOKS GREAT," SAYS HOME OWNER CHRISTIAN NOLEN. "I CAN'T IMAGINE IT ANY OTHER WAY."

BRAD LEMLEY PHOTOGRAPHS BY PASCAL BLANCON

BY

This was supposed to be the easy one. Last May, when the *This Old House* crew poked, measured, sniffed, thumped and otherwise inspected the 1998 television project house in Watertown, Massachusetts, the guys were heartened. The 110-yearold Queen Anne seemed structurally solid, so this promised to be a welcome "rest" after last year's ambitious, grueling revamp of a decaying 270-year-old house and barn in Milton, Massachusetts. As *T.O.H.* master carpenter Norm Abram put it, "When you've got a good base to start with, projects tend to go well."

Now, with the final dollop of skim-coat plaster persuaded into a corner and the last scrap of fluted molding nailed around the windows, it seems even the all-knowing Norm got it wrong. This renovation is likely to prove the most expensive in *T.O.H.* history.

But step back for the larger view, and—surprise— Norm's prediction was dead on. If a project is judged by its outcome, the overhaul of this 5,000-square-foot house



not only went well: It went spectacularly. The cost ratcheted skyward largely because home owners Christian Nolen and Susan Denny, inspired by the house's potential and the skills of *T.O.H.* contractor Tom Silva and his subs, decided not to cut a single corner. Day by day—often in response to nasty surprises such as termite damage and an impermeable backyard—the home owners expanded their original, fairly modest goals, creating a true dream house.



"The original idea was to add a new master bedroom, new bathrooms, a new kitchen and basically leave the rest untouched," says T.O.H. host Steve Thomas. "That's not what happened, and that's why the house is so fabulous."

"My thought was: Sixty years from now, carry me out feet first," says Nolen. "I realized this is it. This is our lifetime house, and

we wanted it to be right. Now, when I drive up to it, my heart skips a beat."

The exterior transformation is a perfect example of doing it right. When painting contractor Steve Kiernan first contemplated the vast task before him, the paint was not only a painfully iridescent yellow but also leaping off the clapboards in oak-leaf-sized TOP: The lovely bowed walls of the former music room now harbor an informal dining nook in the kitchen. LEFT: Home owners Christian Nolen and Susan Denny put the restaurant-grade range to use. RIGHT: Dominated by a 3-by-8-foot island—"It's more of a continent," says Nolen—the kitchen mixes colors and textures: moss green cabinets, mottled granite counters and stainless-steel appliances.

pieces. "Stripping would have been only a temporary fix. The paint was so far gone—removing the siding was the only sensible alternative," Kiernan says.

Tom and his crew ripped off every scrap of siding and replaced it with new cedar clapboards and shingles, many of them painted and tacked up by Nolen and Denny. Now, says executive producer Russ Morash, the facade is the "hero of the street."

"When you go past, you think, What a



Around the main island in the kitchen, the original quartersawn white oak floor gives way to terrazzo, tinted cement mixed with an aggregate that comprises chips of marble, glass and seasbells. Although it took a week to pour, cure and grind down the material to a silky sheen, the result is one of the most durable, low-maintenance floors around.

"My thought was: Sixty years from now, carry me out feet first. This is our lifetime house, and we wanted it to be right."



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Denny and Nolen stock their new cherry custom cabinets. The storage nook, which contains the dishwasher, is located where the old rear staircase, inset, used to stand conveniently between the new kitchen area and dining room. *beautiful old house*," Tom adds. "Virtually every surface is new, but that fact doesn't register. It looks uplifted not rebuilt, and that's the ultimate in renovation."

Strolling to the backyard, Morash notes that Tom's crew rebuilt major portions of all three porches but says the truly Herculean task performed out here is invisible: "The lot's drainage system was awful. It was a poisonous situation for plants. Willows and weeds were virtually all that would grow." With a subterranean network of perforated plastic tubing and dry wells, *T.O.H.* landscaping contractor Roger Cook vanquished the backyard wasteland. Such work may seem decidedly unsexy, which is why some general contractors skip it, Morash says. "But it was crucial. To grow a decent lawn here, it had to be done."

Circling around to the front and striding through the door, Morash waves a hand at the project's single biggest challenge: relocating the ornate oak stairway from the back of the house to its center and ripping out two superfluous stairways in the process. "We'll always remember this project as the one where we



For pure luxury, it's difficult to beat the master suite's 6-foot-wide marble shower. "Certainly, you can say, 'Who needs a \$20,000 shower enclosure?'" Russ Morash says. "But you look in there, run your hand along the real marble, and suddenly it seems worth it."

episode of the television show, Steve, Norm and Tom made no secret of their distaste for the \$3,500 overhead window that Nolen insisted Tom install. In the crew's view, any light provided would be swallowed by the stairwell's turns long before reaching the ground floor. And there was concern because the 3-by-4 ½-foot skylight had to fit into a dicey spot on the complex roofline: just above where a low ridge intersects a roof plane. "It was a little tricky," says Tom in a characteristic understatement. Before sawing through roof rafters to make room for the skylight, he used engineered lumber beams, spanning from one interior bearing wall to the other, to prop up the ridge beam on one end. "Otherwise, that ridge would just be hanging out there, waving in the breeze," he says. The result justified the effort. The skylight amply illuminates the heart of the second and third floors, which was Nolen's primary aim. "The skylight works. I'm hoping to film my revenge," he says with a good-natured grin. "I think the guys were unduly harsh." Tom nods in agreement and says, "We played with Christian a little bit. But we did an experiment where

says with a sigh.

moved the stairway," he

Aside from cosmetic work, the front parlors didn't change. But the circa-1910 rear addition was radically altered-and incontestably improvedby a kitchen flanked by a sitting area and a reinvented butler's pantry. Originally, the kitchen was dim and forbidding, crowded on the house's dark north side. Now, the room stretches 27 feet across the back, or east, side of the house, where light floods in each morning. No fewer than 18 overhead recessed lights bathe the space in a subtle, variable glow. "It's my favorite room," Nolen says.

His penchant for casting out the house's Victorian shadows led to the project's most controversial extra: the now infamous skylight over the stairwell. On one When home owners Christian Nolen and Susan Denny decided they wanted to replace the Watertown house's three spacewasting stairways with a single central one, *This Old House* contractor Tom Silva hatched a unique plan. He would move the grandest set of stairs—13 marvelous steps of quartersawn oak with an irreplaceable, golden patina of crackled shellac—from the back of the house to its core. R

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"Whoever built this staircase took pride in his work," Tom says. "It was all hand tools in those days. This stairway represents a lot of sweat. The old-growth lumber is still strong, and it's so dry that it's completely stable. In all our jobs, we're always looking to reuse anything we can."

Such a policy saves trees and beautifies a house, but the major advantage in this case was financial. Moving the stairway took about as much time as building and installing a new custom-



WAY THAT'S HEAVEN



or shrink, they stay locked together."

Extracting the stairs from their original spot proved surprisingly easy. Tom's first step was vital-and one that many remodelers skip to their ultimate dismay. With masking tape and a marker, he meticulously labeled each part's location. (The balusters, for instance, were labeled 16 4 37 through "39.") "It's tedious but it helps you avoid a guessing game later," he says.

During the actual

With the first flight in, the next job is the trickiest: rejiggering one of the old landings to fit the new location. Once the new stairs are serviceable, what had served as the main staircase (seen in the rear of this picture) will be history.

milled one but saved \$10,000 to \$15,000 in materials and labor.

T.O.H. master carpenter Norm Abram likes the fact that the original stairway had four stringers

Relocating the main staircase was the key to the new floor plan, which turned a labyrinth of tiny rooms into a light, open, easily navigable ensemble of large spaces, in keeping with the scale of the house. "Originally, the house presented you with an impenetrable maze," says This Old House producer Bruce Irving. "Now, with this beautiful stairway just inside the front door and a hall that runs from the front to the back door, you get the sense of the house the moment you step inside."

(2-by-10 beams sawed in a zigzag pattern, undergirding the stairs) spaced just 12 inches on center. "Today, you'd mostly see just three," he says, and they'd be

> spaced at least 16 inches on center, which makes for a bouncier, creakier stair. He also finds the joinery exquisite: The risers and treads meet with a precise dado-and-rabbet joint, so "even if the tread and riser move

dismantling, Tom says, "The secret is thinking of how it was built. Then you take it apart

in reverse." Wielding a reciprocating saw, he slipped its metalcutting blade between the trim and skirtboard, between the rails and newels, anywhere that he could sever nails—the roar of metal on metal signified that the blade had found its mark. Finally, he sliced through the big nails holding the stringers to the floor joists above and below and to the two landings.

Reinstallation was the real challenge. The stairway that had originally wound through the house's center was a humble, cramped servants' passage, the smallest of the original three stairways. After ripping that out, Tom and his crew built a rectangular shaft to receive the wider stairs. An intricate operation, it involved moving a bearing wall about 18 inches south. "We started by building a new concrete footing in the basement. Then we built a new bearing wall structure on each floor, from the cellar to the roof," Tom says.

The stairs themselves also required rejiggering. While the original well had had a squared "J" configuration, the new well required them to form a squared "U." The original three bottom steps remained at the bottom in their new location, but the second set of three steps became the top flight. Simple enough, but the old stairs had been custombuilt in place-meaning that the 1910 carpenter had cut the two landings to hug the out-of-square idiosyncrasies of their first location. "It took a lot of relocating, repositioning, reworking to make the landings fit," says Tom. "Actually, I had to get rid of one landing altogether. I built a new one and re-covered it with the oak from the old landing."

With the newel post, rails and balusters reinstalled, the new stairway opens the heart of the house—especially with sunshine pouring through the new skylight, making the honeyed oak glow. "Before, these wonderful stairs were hidden in the back of the house," says T.O.H. host Steve Thomas. "Now they're celebrated, as they should be."



we covered up the skylight, and it made a huge difference. Putting it in was the right thing to do."

In typical T.O.H. fashion, top-notch structural and systems upgrades undergird the visible improvements. Descending into the fieldstone-walled cellar, Tom points at the southwest corner, where he and Norm tore away and replaced 21 feet of termite-riddled sill. To

stop water from leaking into the basement, Tom had a trench jackhammered around the inside perimeter and a french drain installed and connected to a two-pump tank. From there, water travels to a dry well consisting of a perforated concrete barrel, 6 feet wide by 4 feet deep, sunk in a bed of gravel.

T.O.H. plumbing and heatcontractor Richard ing Trethewey and his crew removed the two circa-1972

gas furnaces and the rusting hot-water tanks and extracted every foot of lead, galvanized steel and brass pipe running through the house. Richard and master plumber Ron Coldwell installed copper supply and cast-iron drainpipes for water, plus a complex heating

system. Two-inch-diameter "microduct" forced air heats the second and third floors, while radiant-heat tubing keeps the kitchen's terrazzo floor a welcoming 82 degrees Fahrenheit. "This will be a barefoot kitchen, yearround," Richard says.

The gas boiler that powers everything is, Richard says, "sized right for the house. Originally, the house had a total of about 400,000 Btus for both heat and hot water. That was ridiculously oversized and inefficient. Most of the time, this system will run at just 120,000 Btus. I'm confident that the gas bill will be cut in half." He adds that the heating, cooling and water systems are all "utterly silent. That's the mark of good work."

"The dining room was a real surprise to me," Denny says. "When we bought the bouse, it didn't look like much. but now-with it overlooking the formal garden-I can see myself wandering in each morning, looking out the big bay window and just soaking in the sunlight."

"The house looks

uplifted not rebuilt,

and that's the ultimate

in renovation."

Allen Gallant, the electrician, upgraded the service from 100 to 200 amps and snaked 6 miles of new wire through the building. Nolen originally wanted the breaker box in an upstairs hallway, Gallant says, "so he could get at it easily if a breaker tripped. I told him what I tell all

this place, you ever trip a circuit breaker, call me-I will personally come to your house and flip the switch for you.""

"I'll take you up on that," says Nolen.

"I mean it," Gallant says. "If you're paying \$50,000 for a new electrical system, why not make it right?"

Nolen's rapport with Gallant-and every other contractor on the job-was forged during the course of 12-hour days spent side by side with the workers. Nolen and Denny were on-site almost every day, sledgehammering walls, painting the garage, stripping woodwork and schlepping supplies from the first to the third floor. "The home owners have been just marvelous," Tom says. "They really worked hard,

> and they were right on the scene when decisions had to be madewhich made our job a lot easier."

"We loved every minute of it," Nolen says, and that's fortunate. While Nolen and Denny's exertions did save money, their sweat equity pales before their out-of-pocket expense, which Nolen pegs at more than \$550,000-\$150,000 more than the original budget. Tacked onto the \$670,000 purchase price, the house cost roughly \$1.2 million.

That's hardly small change. But for a seven-bedroom, threeand-a-half-bath, four-fireplace, dream-kitchen, ready-for-the-next-100-years house 3 miles from Harvard Square-where comparable houses go for \$2 million—it's not bad.

my customers: 'If, after the way I have wired



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Denny savors awakening in the master suite on the second floor. One of the bouse's most distinctive charms is the bedroom's south wall, which bows out 3 feet. "In a cold Boston winter, the warmth and sun come through all day," she says. In the spring, the bow's two windows will usher in a green panorama of trees. INSET: To create this spacious room, Tom removes three bearing walls and installs a laminated veneer lumber beam to support the master suite area.

How to avoid breakdowns. Nervous or otherwise.

When you're out for a long drive on a lonesome highway, the last thing you want to experience is a breakdown. Especially if it's the kind caused by so thoughtful, practical and reliable, it's an automobile that can help make your commute, and life, a lot less stressful. (Just think of it as therapy on wheels.) emotional baggage, quite comfortably. For your convenience, and sanity, we've included thoughtful touches just about everywhere. The controls and



high levels of stress and anxiety. But don't worry. That's something you won't have to think about when you're in the safe, comfortable confines of the 1999 Accord V-6 Sedan.

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The saga of a family that wanted all the modern conveniencesand character too

A NEW OLD HOUSE

BY RICHARD CONNIFF PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUY KLOPPENBURG

The classic wraparound porch at Richard Conniff's new house evokes warmth and tradition but was constructed with modern, rotresistant materials including pressure-treated joists, aluminum brackets, radius-edged cedar decking and hollow fiberglass columns.

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t was the last hour of the last day we lived in our old stone ship-captain's house, and we were about to shut the door behind us after 15 years of gutting, stripping, salvaging, sanding and painting. The house, a ruin when we moved in, was now perfect. It had history (built in 1825). It had character (we'd found shredded love letters, from an Italian countess, in a squirrel's nest in the attic). It even had closets-by the time we were done. I'd given the new owners solemn instructions on the care and feeding of our house, plus a small to-do list. And now my wife, Karen, and I and our three children-Jamie, 14, Ben, 12, and Clare, 8, raised in the security of an old stone

house-felt suddenly homeless. In a nearby town, we had a piece of land suitable for construction and, just around the corner, we had a house rented for the next

nine months. It had been my bright idea to sell our old house first-and see what our sweat equity was actually worth-before undertaking something new. Now our life as a family seemed to hang in the balance.

Just then, with perfect timing, our architect, Scot Samuelson, showed up and laid out the plans for our new house. All five of us knelt around him in an empty room in our old house and began to work through the blueprints. Samuelson's design had all the defining elements of an 1880s Shingle Style beach house-steeply raked roofs, intersecting ridgelines, a tower with a witchhat peak, an open-plan interior and a long wraparound porch.

Our building site was a wooded lot on the Connecticut shoreline, looking across a salt marsh to Long Island Sound. The idea was to build a house that felt as if it belonged there, a house

room." When we bought the old place in 1982, it was a late-Federal beauty gone badly to seed. The former tenants seemed to have vented their frustrations by kicking down doors, applying ball peen hammers to moldings and intermittently setting rooms on fire. But nothing came close to the special dreadfulness of the icky room on the first floor.

The house was built into the side of a hill, and the icky room was largely below grade. It was a warren of walls with a monstrous steam boiler blocking the window and massive steel pipes crossing at eye level. The wood floor stood on fungal, termite-raddled joists, which stood on loose stone piled on bare earth. The weekend that we bought the house, the worst rain in 100 years hit, and we could hear little waterfalls gushing through the stone wall in back.

I've tried to block out the memory of old-house squalor. But

one weekend I spent using a sledgehammer to smash Conniff and his family apart the old heating sysspent 15 years fixing up their old house, left, tem while our son Jamie, which once had gaping who was then two months holes in the eaves and a old, suffered through an slumping porch. The famear infection upstairs. The ily's new house, below, presents a different chalhouse gave me recurring lenge. "We probably have nightmares in which I 15 years of work ahead of opened the door from one us again," Conniff says. icky room only to dis-"But this time, we got a clean start. The job now cover another and then is to add details and another, with rats frolicking in the walls.

Karen still reminds me of

But memory lingers on the finished product and, by the time we moved out, the icky room had become one of the prettiest in the house. The solution was simple though costly. Rip out everything, and build a new room inside the stone walls but with surface details suitable to the period. In place of the rotten floor, Karen and I dug french drains around the room, then put down gravel, a plastic vaporbarrier, concrete, 2x4 sleepers, insulation, a ply-

that had as much character as the one we were leaving behind. We wanted an old house-but without the asbestos, the lead paint, the dank indefinable smells emanating from rotten corners. Maybe it was a contradiction in terms. We wanted all the modern conveniences-and character too. At least on paper, Samuelson's drawings gave us hope in the bleakest moment of our departure. So we said good-bye to our old house, moved into our school-year rental and hunkered down for nine months of construction reality.

Our thinking about the new house was shaped largely by a part of the old house we'd referred to affectionately as the "icky wood subfloor and finally 16-inch-wide pine boards salvaged from the attic. Everyone thought the pine had been there forever. And thus the pernicious thought took root: Why not skip the icky phase and just put the period details on top of a solid, modern foundation? Why not, in short, build a new old house?

The idea took root, I should say, in my wife's head. To me, the great satisfaction of living in an old house was knowing that, at some point, I had puzzled over each newel post and dentil molding, tended to its illnesses and made it well again. I doubted that anything in a new house could ever give me the same satis-





faction. But I'd already lost this argument many years before, somewhere around that sledgehammer weekend.

As the new house started to go up, we began to marshal our period details. Karen's mother had salvaged a stained-glass transom window and all the door hardware when her great-grandparents' house was demolished in the 1960s, and this collection had been moldering in our attic. These relics were mostly from the 1880s, perfect for the late-19th-century feel of the new place. One day, my daughter, Clare, found me at the workbench, wire-wheeling paint and black crud off the door hinges. She asked if she could help, so I fitted her up with a face mask and safety glasses, and together we began to expose the elaborately molded leaf-andvine patterns, rampant dragons and leaping hounds. Watching her restore a salvaged piece of her great-great-great-grandparents' house,

I began to think it might be possible to invest even a new house with history, character and a sense of personal connection.

We spent all our spare time at the building site, doing the stuff for which sensible people pay a general contractor. The first thing that struck me was how much better builders do things these days, though it may be heresy for an old-house aficionado to say so. Engineered joists, though they aren't chestnut beams, have a loveliness, a levelness, of their own. We found that we could take an old stained-glass window, handsome but no longer fit to stand up against a good northeaster, and set the piece snugly inside the frame of a modern, low-E window-the best of both worlds.

Our framing carpenter, Ron Garner, was a careful, concentrated worker, and his language of cripples, skirtboards and bastard hips seemed to give the house the character of a living thing. The language of outsiders was also different. At our old house, in the early days, people passing by used to think it was encouraging to shout, "I don't envy you!" (The smarter ones did so only when

safely out of hammer range.) As the new house began to take shape, what they said was, "Do you know how many people get divorced doing this?" Instead of nightmares, I now woke up every night and made long lists of things that were going to cost us \$8,000 each.

We quickly discovered that general contractors do not earn their money merely as marital counselors. I spent one whole day, for instance, comparing well-pump bids and learning about the differences (which I have since, thank God, forgotten) between 160 poly pipe and schedule-80 PVC. Being a general contractor requires a willingness to ask stupid questions (for which, as a journalist, I have a lifetime of experience). Another requirement is a knack for getting people to do a job right—even when they think you don't know what you're talking about. My insulator repeatedly managed to avoid insulating the space between some angled wall studs. He only did the job right after the third time I pushed my putty knife through his surface caulking to reveal the vast uninsulated spaces beyond.

Being general contractor also meant that I spent days on the phone, seeking bids, negotiating prices and checking final bills. (It's tempting not to bother comparing billed-versus-bid prices on a long list of supplies. But one such stupefyingly dull day saved us \$941.) At the old house, I couldn't have survived without a paint scraper. At the new house, my most valuable tool turned out to be a budget. We were aiming to keep our overall costs to around \$110 a square



The Conniffs, from left: Karen, Jamie, Ben, Clare and Richard. "The kids all helped design their own rooms," says Conniff. "Jamie got the best view. Ben, who plays drums, got soundproofing. And Clare, whose old bedroom was so small that the new owners are using it as a closet, got the biggest room of us all."

foot, so the need for a budget might seem obvious. But we only sat down to the task because our mortgage lender made us do it. Until then, we were operating with an old-house mentality: Wait till there's a little money in the bank before starting the next big project, and never, never add up the total cost, because it's just too awful to think about.

Budgets and new houses were both alien territory for me. But just as construction was about to begin, a friend showed me how to use a database. After 10 minutes of instruction, I was able to make a computerized work sheet for each section of the job (floors, plumbing, exterior doors and so on) and record every payment. The work sheet automatically totaled these payments. It also automatically sent the totals to a master sheet, a single page with one column showing how much Karen and I had budgeted and another showing what we were actually spending-with a bottom line on both. I should emphasize that this kind of meticulous organization is utterly unlike us. But it gave us at least the illusion of control to have all

this information at hand. The money was still flying out, but it was flying out systematically.

Amid the welter of decisions, it was always the little things that broke us. "Where's the contractors' file?" I asked Karen one day, not bothering with some polite preamble such as, "Could you please look" She began to search for the file, sighing and noisily shuffling papers.

"Don't sigh at me. I didn't take it," I snapped.

"I certainly didn't lose it," she said.

We began in short order to call each other names, which led to



IN SEARCH OF SPARE	PARTS
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tears from her and storming out to the garage for me. At the house site, Karen stared out at the water, arms folded, and did not talk to me. I didn't tell her that the contractors' file had turned up on my desk.

On the other hand, we often resolved our real disasters with equanimity. For instance, the engineer had opted not to include footing drains in the foundation plans, but the building inspector insisted. So one morning, we wound up doing the job ourselves, cutting perforated plastic drainpipe and laying it around the outside of the foundation. Holes down. Gravel around the sides and on top. Filter fabric over the top to keep out dirt. Karen carefully worked her way down the footing, making a mark on the concrete every 10 feet, each mark an inch lower than the one before, so the drains would have the requisite pitch. I slung the gravel.

It was a beautiful day to work outdoors, sunny and almost 60 degrees Fahrenheit, with the light glinting off Long Island Sound. "We're getting intimate knowledge of our foundation," Karen said cheerfully.

"A lot of people pay specifically to avoid having intimate knowledge of their foundation," I said.

"I like it," she said. "It's like gardening. Maybe I just enjoy getting down in the dirt."

I grunted noncommittally.

A house grows the way a garden does, she said. The building has a life of its own. The wall studs are the stakes, and the pipes and wires twine upward like vines. Most of the real work was being done by contractors, but the mistake with the footing drains at least let us lay on our own hands. We could invest not just our money but also our sweat, which had always been our means of true ownership. In a few more months, we would find out what fruit all our labor had produced. I flung down another load of gravel, patted it into place, then leaned on my shovel. It reminded me suddenly of one day years before, when we were digging the french drains in the icky room, and the memory filled me with hope for what our new house might yet become.

So in the end, has the pernicious

One day, I was hanging around an architectural salvage place, with my eye on a brass 1890 Bradley & Hubbard gas chandelier I could not afford, when Brian, the manager, made a casual reference to fixing up old houses as a "hobby."

"A hobby?" I said. "I thought it had something to do with shelter."

"People can live in boxes," he explained. "They don't have to do this." He indicated the chandelier. "It's a hobby." I still couldn't afford the chandelier, but I began to feel better about all the time and money I was frittering away on houses. A hobby. Of course.

My wife, Karen, and I were making the rounds of architectural salvage places, hunting for details to make our new house feel old. Another day, our search took us to an unheated chicken coop in northeastern Connecticut, home of Brooklyn **Restoration Supply. Inside,** scores of salvaged mantelpieces hung from chains, like carcasses in an abattoir. We shivered and thought about the hearths the mantels had once framed and about the ghosts of the people who had warmed themselves by the fires. I asked the price of a granite sink tilted against a wall, and the owner, a small, whiskery house wrecker named Rudy Rzeznikiewicz, told me politely that he couldn't sell me that sink because he was holding it for a woman who didn't know it was there. "She thinks I get things like that every week," he said. "So I'm hanging onto it for a while to teach her a lesson."

Rudy agreed to sell us a Dutch door for our side

entry. Elsewhere, at Vermont Salvage Exchange Company in White River Junction, we acquired a large double front door from an 1890s town house and a dozen interior doors from a monastery. The monastery doors were mortised together out of nutbrown poplar, which would show off the silver door hardware Karen's mother had rescued from her childhood home. They were prehung and cost only \$75 each, which I gleefully calculated was half the price of a new door. Back home, my electrician, who was a spoilsport, remarked that we would need to spend a month stripping paint (probably lead) or pay somebody \$175 a door to do the job for us. This was a lesson we knew by heart but couldn't get into our heads: Lovely old things always end up costing double what you'd pay for something new.

To the electrician, architectural salvage wasn't a hobby—but a form of insanity. I sometimes thought he had a point. One emporium Karen and I visited was selling a mantel from a Vanderbilt mansion, and I was tempted by a circular stairway from the mansion of Henry Holt, founder and namesake of the company that publishes my books. Unfortunately, the stairs cost more than my last advance. Another salvage firm advertised "elements of Battle of Gettysburg Field Hospital Barn. Blood-stained lumber. No gimmicks!" I figured I'd rather bloody my own lumber.

We were content with our double entry doors, even if they had merely opened and closed, in anger or love, on 10,000 unknown souls. We took the doors home to our finish carpenter, John Eaton, who spent the better part of a week to nurture them back to health and fit them with weather strip and our old hardware. The doors gave the whole front of the house a new character. But the electrician just rolled his eyes. "For what they cost," he said, "you could've got nice new doors with thermal glass."

I nodded. Then I shut the doors in his face with a thunk. "It's a hobby," I explained. I slid the refurbished dead bolts into the sill and the lintel. "And with what it's costing me," I added, "I'm not gonna get to your bill till sometime next year."



Conniff says salvager Rudy Rzeznikiewicz, above, has a "classic house-wrecker profile: eccentric and with a barnful of treasures."

idea suggested by the icky room worked out? Is it possible to build a new old house, and should anybody really want to? A degree of skepticism seems warranted on several counts. Back in the 1980s, a housewright in our area collected old houses scheduled for demolition, relocated them and rebuilt them on solid modern foundations. The project failed. The housewright (a word that can be loosely interpreted to mean finished construction costs of \$350 a square foot) had blown out the backs of the old houses to accommodate the spacious kitchens and bedrooms that upscale buyers expect. But walking through the cozy little front rooms of a center-chimney colonial and down about 2 acres of forest and, while forests are renewable, I went into this project believing that some forests—old growth, for instance—should be cut only selectively or not at all.

I made a point of avoiding tropical rain-forest woods. For instance, ipe, a dense, durable hardwood, would have been perfect for the porch deck—except that most ipe is illegally harvested in the Amazon. I used Port Orford cedar instead. But I had no way of knowing whether the cedar, any more than the ipe, was coming from well-managed forest or from an old-growth clear-cut. These are not distinctions the average lumberyard makes, at least not yet. But suppliers of sustainably harvested lumber are becoming more

then out into a kitchen the size of a handball court felt fake. So we worried about the balance of old and new in our house.

The housewright had the advantage in purity of materials. Our budget obliged us to use wallboard, for instance, where he used plaster. But it seemed to me that this mattered less than getting the proportions right and, in that regard, we had a distinct edge: Whereas an 18th-century farmhouse has small rooms and a degree of inconvenience, flowing open space was the heart of the Shingle Style movement. It was a much easier model to adapt for modern living.

A critic with an eye for architectural history might quibble that the kitchen and family room are too large for the 1880s. But the day the wallboard taper finished up, visitors started to ask, "Is this a new house or an old one?" The front doors, which we'd acquired from architectural salvage, seemed in particular to trigger the timewarp response, and the first thing any visitor to the house touched was genuinely old: the family door hardware, which we had sent out



Clare looks on while Jamie planes a desktop to fit a specially designed alcove in his room. All the Conniff kids had a hand in making their own desks, using pine wall planks, 2 inches thick and 16 inches wide, salvaged from the "icky room" in the family's old house.

common in this country. (I've listed some sources in the Directory, on page 119.) If I were to do it over, I'd include them in the planning well before breaking ground.

Timing was the other thing we got wrong. We allowed just two months between our first look at the blueprints and groundbreaking. But the choices that go into a new house are tantalizing and almost endless. A first-time builder is a bit like a Russian bread-line refugee making his first visit to the Stop & Shop. There is a product for every possible need. For instance, one built-in refrigerator has a light that can be set to shut off on a weekly schedule to conform with Orthodox Jewish observance of Shabbat, the Sabbath. This is probably a frill for an Irish Catholic. (My mom thinks we should have a fridge that says, "It's Friday. Eat fish.") But the natural tendency is to wallow for a while in all these options. It seems logical not to choose faucets or floor tiles or countertops until you have a clear picture of the room in which they will be featured. But waiting till

hardware, which we had sent out to be re-nickeled.

Because these details mattered so much, we hired our finish carpenter, John Eaton, by the hour. We knew from his work on our old house that he could be fussy and slow. But he also had a good eye, a knack for solid work and a way of politely ignoring my attempts to get him to do a faster or cheaper job. Sometimes, to my horror, he would rip out the work he'd done the day before, announcing that, in the middle of the night, he'd come up with a better way. His standards were much higher than ours. But I find that I like living with small details done right.

Inevitably there were also things we did wrong. In particular, I liked the feeling, at our old house, that salvaging old materials and bringing life back to a beautiful building were more or less environmentally sound. A new house builder has no such reassurance. The lumber for a merely average new house comes from cutting construction begins is like making that first visit to the Stop & Shop in a go-cart. The plumber needs to install a sink, so you grab the first decent vanity you can lay your hands on—and live to regret the choice long afterward. Choosing finishing touches early is particularly important with a new old house. If you find a perfect old set of pocket doors, or if you want to use a stained-glass transom over the living room door, your framer needs to know before the walls of the house go up.

So now we are living in our house, with a long list of jobs still to do and newel posts to puzzle over. As in our old house, the more we work, the more the new house seems to become ours. This morning, Jamie and Ben were putting a second coat of paint on the kitchen ceiling. I offered to help, but they wouldn't let me. "This ceiling belongs to us," said Ben.

I nodded and backed away. "I know the feeling," I said.



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OPPOSITE PAGE: "I'm trying to revive the concept of the master builder, the guy whose knowledge and skill encompassed the entire process," says Jack Sobon, perched on the unfinished frame of Tom and Ellen Graham's house in Lenox Dale, Massachusetts. THIS PAGE: A crotch of ash in the Grahams' house supports a collar tie and a curved timher known as a cruck. Sobon has two similar crotched timbers in his own house. "My daughters like to climb up and sit in them all the time," he says. "They call them the 'trees."



TREE FRAMER

Jack Sobon builds storybook houses that celebrate nature's unpredictable curves

The house is full of trees. With half the frame erected, untamed tree-pieces already abound. In what will be the living room, the crotched trunk of a great elm holds a 400-pound pine beam aloft with its two 5-inch-thick arms, like Atlas supporting the universe. On the second floor, four pairs of gracefully angled timbers— two of pine, one ash, one black cherry—arch 20 feet and clasp at the ridge, resembling



the ribs of an inverted schooner. In the future entryhall, bathroom and laundry, posts of Eastern hop hornbeam bulge with burls, inviting fingers to explore their swirling grain.

On a sparkling morning in the Berkshire foothills of western Massachusetts, 120 volunteers have shown up to help Jack Sobon raise an extraordinary house of his own design, the frame undulating with twisted, bent, forked, knobbed and otherwise idiosyncratic tree trunks and branches. Now, a team of 25 men and 5 women—including a railroad engineer, a landscaper, a well driller, an attorney, a nurse and an antique-toy store owner—stands up the last of four 2,000-pound assemblies of posts and beams that will support the main part of the house. Each 24-foot-long structure, as it drops with a *thunk* into pockets chiseled into the deck, incorporates a new surprise, a new curve asserting itself against a rectilinear world.

Sobon is a big, robust guy, 43 years old, his fair skin perpetually sun-and-wind-burned by a life lived outdoors. After pressing a level against a pine post and grunting as he pushes the timber plumb, he tips back his Shaker-style straw hat and runs a hand across the tight white grain of a forked ash branch. The ash will never be finished with paint, stain or oil; time will bestow its patina. In most of the 50 buildings Sobon has designed and erected since 1980, the tree-forms become as smooth as obsidian as hands compulsively caress them through the years. "People are starved for romance, for texture, for something real," Sobon says. "That's why they come to us."

He calls his style Organic Medieval Revival. "I make storybook houses. I've actually had clients bring in children's books. They will show me a picture of the rabbit family living in a warren with treeroots everywhere and say, 'Something like that.'"

Sobon happily obliges, incorporating various treeparts into nearly all of his structures. Sometimes he harvests them from his own 73-acre wood lot near the western Massachusetts town of Windsor. Sometimes—as in the case of the elm—he takes them from the land on which the house is built. Sobon frames many of his houses with crucks: the old English term for curved or doglegged timbers that form both walls and roof. He makes room dividers out of whole trees. He makes collar ties out of beams with sweeping curves. He makes balusters out of peeled sticks. In his own house, even the toilet paper holder is a tree-part: an L-shaped pine branch perfectly angled to support a roll of Charmin.

Out of reverence for these natural forms, Sobon prepares them for assembly almost entirely with hand tools. The time and effort expended for today's raising is typical of all of Sobon's projects. After an ox team hauled the logs out of the woods, Sobon, his assistant, David Bowman, and apprentice, Neil Godden, spent seven months hewing, notching, boring and planing the 330 pieces of this frame, using tools gleaned from flea markets and antique-tool dealers: drawknives, spokeshaves, broadaxes, bitbraces, boring machines, hand planes, cleaving tools known as froes, and huge timber chisels called slicks. A grim but noble ordeal? Sobon laughs. "Not at all. We'll actually argue over who gets to work on a certain piece."

Sobon, then, bucks a trend. While he celebrates nature's unpredictable curves, nearly all of the modern building profession acts as a high-powered curve-exterminating enterprise. The logger harvests only the straightest trees in the forest. Carpenters, cursing boards for even the subtlest warp, encase them in floors, walls and ceilings, employing dozens of tricks to nail, screw and glue them into reluctant, perfect linearity. Lately, the battle to vanquish trees' curves has intensified such that the spruce in the forest and the spruce in the wall bear no resemblance to each other. Now trees

are chopped, resin-

coated and pressed

into identical I-joists,

laminated veneer lum-

ber and oriented

strand board, straight

as a taut string. All

that survives of the

tree's original integrity

is the fiber, and in the

case of particleboard,

says Sobon. During a

break, eating his veg-

etarian lunch of beans

and macaroni salad, he surveys the frame

with obvious pleasure.

Already, the crowd of

volunteer house-rais-

ers is charmed. Kids

peek through the

crotches. Their par-

ents gently rub the

But it's all wrong,

not even that.



The finished frame fulfills a longtime dream of owner Tom Graham. "I'm a tree guy," be says. "To me, the house feels natural."

burls. Owner Ellen Graham, who will live here with her husband, Tom, and their four kids, is almost beside herself with delight. "Do you think anyone who visits my house will ever be able to forget it?" she says. "Jack is amazing."

"In houses, in architecture, everywhere in this age, everything is mirror flat, straight, perfect, coated with thick urethane," Sobon says. "Most houses nowadays are like hospitals or like motel rooms. I honestly think that's why people move every three or four years. They have no connection to their home. It's just another impersonal, anonymous box. It isn't enhancing their lives.

"We go into the woods with the clients, pick the trees and cut them down. They get to see the oxen grunting and snorting. They see us working on these curved members with hand tools. They're just amazed, thrilled by the whole experience. The house comes to them with a context, a history that they're buying as much as they're buying the house itself."

But the truly transforming experience, Sobon says, is living in daily, intimate contact with the wild tree-forms. "Humans don't have sharp edges and perfectly machined surfaces. Our houses should be like we are. We need to move toward graceful, curving members with subtly mottled colors. Your psyche likes natural forms, the look of a wave, a mountain, a snowdrift, a tree branch. Who doesn't feel better walking on a forest path instead of down a corridor in an office building?"

Kathleen Williams, whose house received a Sobon-designed addition in 1989, is more succinct. "It feels like the trees are still alive," she says.

Back to work. Bowman directs the ground crew to lift a 500pound 36-foot-long top plate into position for installation. The fact

that Sobon embraces natural forms doesn't mean preparing these timbers was simple; it was, in fact, considerably more challenging than traditional timberframing, as each curved or serpentine member had to be custom-scribed and carved to join its neighbors. And when the group lowers this plate onto a complex room divider made of tree parts and Sobon whacks the top with a huge wooden mallet he calls a "commander," 18 mortises slide over 18 tenons.

Perfectly.

"Whoa," says one worker. "Precision fit."

All day, never once does Sobon glance at the plans as he directs placement of a mind-bending assortment of parts: sill girders, principal posts, story posts, tie beams, jowled posts, purlin plates, lean-to ties, valley rafters, dormer ties, cruck packing, and lean-to rafters. "What plans?" he says. "I've built this place a dozen times in my head."

A commotion on the house's west side draws his

Wielding a 20-pound maple mallet, Sobon drives home a hand-carved oak peg. He offsets connecting holes by ¹/₈ inch, so that pounding in the pegs draws the joints snug.

attention. "Be careful with those crucks," Sobon says as eight men begin to manhandle one up to the second floor. "It's better to take the skin off your knuckles than to scratch one of them." The guys chuckle, but their movements become more delicate, respectful. When they hammer home the hand-carved oak pegs that fix the crucks at the floor and roof peak, they've left nary a mark.

Sometimes, as Sobon frets over his precious timbers, he has to marvel at the irony. Growing up some 25 miles north of here in Adams, Massachusetts, the son of a heavy equipment operator, he loved to sprawl on a hillside on a lazy summer afternoon watching his dad demolish old timber-framed mill buildings. "He'd grab them with that crane clamshell and rip them apart, and now I'm putting them back up by hand," he says with a wry smile. "Back then, I thought what he did was so cool. It was the '60s, and everyone knew those places were archaic. Smash 'em!"

Always a compulsive builder, at age 10 Sobon spent weeks recreating the downtowns of Manhattan, Boston and Albany out of plastic blocks, poring over encyclopedias and maps to make sure every detail was perfect. From age 12 on, Sobon dreamed of design-

scarf joint. Most modern timber framers put it over the post, but that's absolutely wrong. I found dozens of things like that."

Increasingly, Sobon found himself identifying with craftsmen from a bygone era. On his own as a contractor in 1980, he decided to construct a 12-by-15-foot toolshed in Richmond, Massachusetts, using only hand tools. "Everyone told me I was crazy, but my suspicion was it couldn't be as hard as we think it was. People had built structures this way for thousands of years, and they weren't super-

ing gleaming skyscrapers or mile-high dams, his imagination fired by geewhiz futuristic visions in *Popular Science* magazine.

But midway through his architectural training at the Rhode Island School of Design, he grew disenchanted with the pretentious edifice of postmodern design. "I realized that there was nothing real about it. It was all just for effect. Students would follow like sheep. There was a whole crowd-the black-clothes, pointy-shoes, wire-rimglasses people-and they would copy whatever strange idea was taught." One professor, he recalls, mentioned a particularly tortured landscape treatment called a bosque, which involved planting trees in a grid and shearing their tops and bottoms to form perfect planes "like a hung ceiling," says Sobon. When students were the assigned to dream up a landscape for a town on Martha's Vineyard, he



Joined by some of the 120 volunteers who helped raise his house, Tom Graham pays tribute to the trees that make up the frame by affixing a pine bough to the peak. "We need more community activities in this society," says Sobon. "Too many Americans drive into their garage at night and just close their door."

adds, "Everyone's plan but mine featured a bosque. It was nuts. The town was laid out during the picturesque movement, so an artificial landscape like that was completely inappropriate."

Intrigued by the nascent revival of post-and-beam architecture, Sobon took a summer job in 1976 with timber-frame-barn specialist Richard Babcock, dismantling old barns and then reassembling them into homes "mostly for wealthy artist types," he says. "I had originally thought these old barns were so primitive, but the more I delved into them, the more I saw that those guys knew more than we did." One example: Sobon noted that the scarf a lapped joint used to splice two or more short beams into one long one—was never placed directly over a post, but rather over a post's diagonal brace. "It doesn't seem sensible, but if you do the loading equations, that turns out to be the optimum place for a he asks. Scattered applause breaks out among the crew. They've erected the frame of a five-bedroom, three-bath, 2,500-square-foot house in one day, and the sun still hangs just above the foothills.

Sobon wanders through the ground floor. Many modern timber-frames are made from a single species of wood—oak or Douglas fir, usually—but he follows the old practice of mixing species to maximize their strengths and create visual variety. This house incorporates white pine, red spruce, balsam fir, Eastern hemlock, red maple, sugar maple, American beech, white ash, black cherry, American elm, Eastern hop hornbeam, white birch and yellow birch—it's an Eastern mixed-wood forest in a house. Timber framers also tend to use just a few beam sizes—only 8x8s and 8x6s, for example—but Sobon employs at least a dozen sizes, crafting the more delicate structures such as dormers with pieces

human. I built it, and I made money on the job. I learned to respect the old tools. A writer friend once said, 'Power tools are a veil between you and your work,' and I think that's exactly right."

In 1984, Sobon erected a cruck-framed cottage for his girlfriend, Susan, reviving the medieval practice of forming both walls and roof with boomerangshaped timbers. As perhaps the ultimate satisfied-customer endorsement, Susan married him. He went on to build six more cruck structures. The Grahams' will be his eighth.

"I guess I'm Mr. Cruck," he says. "I've certainly built more than any other living human being."

At 5:17 p.m., Godden smacks the last peg into a rafter's tenon with his rawhide-faced mallet. Sobon, directing the activity for the last eight hours, suddenly finds himself literally spinning on his heel in the center of the frame, seeking something else that needs doing. "Is that it?"

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Sobon chisels a mortise in a pine beam for a house frame. More than a decade of chiseling, peeling and planing timbers has transformed the yard in front of his workshop. "The shavings are 3 feet deep now," he says.

as small as 3x3. "That's how the old places were built," he says. "And it's how bones work."

Americans, he says, don't ask nearly enough of the people who design and build their houses. "If you move out of your house, that house is a failure. Forget about job changes. That shouldn't matter. If people had the right house, they would change careers before they changed houses. A good house will inspire you. It will encourage you to put down roots. You'll build a garden and orchards. Maybe you've met people who live in a house like that, and you've said, 'These people are go-getters, they're so energetic. Wow, look at what they've done here.'"

Sobon looks through the framework into the trees.

"Maybe they're no different from you," he says. "Maybe they just have the right house."



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Rocks lying randomly are finessed into place by skillful stonemasons to create a carefully fitted veneer over the Dream House's poured-concrete foundation. Before Delfim Ventura and his coworkers are finished, they'll have selected, shaped and mortared into place at least 50 tons of rock, lifting each stone four or five times as they chip and fit, chip and joint, in pursuit of the perfect contour and a tight fit. "It's an easy job," Ventura says with a slight grin, knowing you've seen that it isn't easy at all.







When stonemason Delfim Ventura steps up to the concrete wall and lifts his right hand, he has no idea someone is watching, so what he does next is doubly absorbing. Eyeing the stones he's already put in place, he traces the thin flowing line of a mortar joint with his fingers, moving them back and forth on the wall swiftly, graceDressing a foundation with rocks gathered from fields and riverbeds gives bland concrete a lively expression

fully, rhythmically, swaying his body like a conductor in front of a silent orchestra. When he knows how the stone melody will continue, Ventura picks up a nearly 2-foot-long rock, hefts it into place, checks the fit and marks it with a bit of rubble. Then he lowers the 50-pound hunk back to the ground and begins chipping at the edges with a mason's hammer. By the end of the day, he'll have done all of this 100 times.

Ventura is laying up stones along the wall that forms the long, south-facing porch at *This Old House* magazine's Wilton, Connecticut, Dream House. When the job is done, most of the exposed foundation will gain a fieldstone veneer and project the illusion of a solid-stone pedestal

Retro Rock

Plain-faced foundations often hide behind shrubs and flowers but, with a stone veneer, they can stand out on their own. The recipe for a retrofit includes not only the stone and a way to support it but also a cover over the top course to keep water from seeping in behind it. At the Dream House, a 4-inch-by-4-inch angle iron bolted to the concrete with expansion anchors will support the stone on foundation walls that rise no more than 5 feet. The framed walls will flare out over the top of the 6-inchthick stone, a common Shingle Style detail. On a house where a flare isn't practical or appropriate, the stone can be sliced into 1-inch slabs to reduce the siding-to-stone transition to a minimal bump-out that can be covered with flashing. "When you look at thin stone on a wall, you can barely tell if it's 1 or 8 inches thick," says Bob Rizzo, a general manager at O&G Industries, a Torrington, Connecticut, stone distributor. "Only the outside corners give it away." Whatever its thickness, the stone must be held to the wall with aluminum ties (inset) fastened with masonry-piercing nails about every square foot.





supporting the rambling Shingle Style house. Ventura's work will come close to matching the real thing: the turn-of-the-century foundations that

Chippers, Breakers, Brushes and Trowels

Masonry work starts with heavy-duty rock-busters and finishes with lightweight trowels and a brush. A mason's bammer (1) scores and chips a stone into its final shape. The masons use a standard hand sledge (2) and a long-handled sledge (8) to break off big pieces, sometimes with belp from the masonry chisel (3). Triangular trowels (4, 6) load mortar onto joints and fill the gap between the stone and the concrete wall. The narrow pointing trowel (5) finishes the joints. A beefy brush (7) whisks away loose mortar, leaving the joint clean and smooth.

inspired this look. "In the earliest Shingle Style houses, stone would have been the first choice when the designer's aim was to suggest a rustic house growing out of the landscape," says Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully. Today, a stone foundation would be far more expensive and difficult to build and potentially weaker than poured concrete. So laying up a 6-inch-thick veneer—what Scully calls a "wallpapering of the foundation"—is a sensible compromise.

Eighty feet away from the wall, two piles of rock sit atop the

muddy ground. One consists of veneer stones, which are larger and flatter and have straighter edges than those in the pile of rounds, which in reality are far from round. Ventura and coworkers Paulo Rodrigues and Tony Morais will save the veneer stones for the wall's perimeter and corners and cover the rest of the concrete with the others. Rodrigues has hauled and dumped some of each, seemingly at random, along the foot of the wall. From this rocky cacophony, Ventura creates new music. A couple of days ago he laid a bottom course of large veneer stones to suggest stable support for those that followed. He set them on a 4inch-deep shelf of concrete block built up from the footing to support the veneer's considerable weight, about 60 pounds a square foot. Then he began adding stones of various sizes and shapes, maintaining a generally horizontal bias by setting them on their longer sides. To keep the face flat, Ventura used a length of mason's twine as a guide, keeping it tightly stretched across the wall, about 6 inches out from the concrete.

Now, every foot or two, Rodrigues bangs a wall tie into the concrete with a power nailer. The short aluminum straps sit between joints and anchor stones to the wall. As Ventura shapes each stone and mortars it into place, Rodrigues fills in the space behind it with Like a pool player setting up his shots, Ventura thinks ahead as he works, by at least two stones and sometimes by as many as five. "Most good masons know what combinations work," says *This Old House* stonemason Roger Hopkins. "So you set aside corners and tops and the ones you know will make good V-valleys" (a Vshaped joint above which another stone would neatly fit). Ventura hasn't set anything aside; he seems to have done it in his head. When he needs a stone, he strolls over to it, passing up many others, as

> if he'd marked it on a mental map. He varies the shapes and sizes, but keeps the joints consistently tight with recessed mortar, which he scrapes out with a homemade tool, a 16d nail driven into the end of a bit of broomstick. After Ventura scratches out the mortar with the nailhead, Rodrigues or Morais cleans and smooths the joint with a big brush. With the wall near completion, the mortar lines flow along it in thin waves. "Every good wall has a rhythm," Hopkins says. And it's different for each wall, the result of a stonemason's particular style.

more mortar. Ven-

tura prefers the dri-

est possible mortar

because it's stronger,

dries quicker and

doesn't run out of

the joint and dirty

up the stone.

Connecticut fieldstone costs \$100 to \$125 a ton—which covers 30 to 35 square feet plus \$20 to \$30 a square foot to install. With a bigger budget, Cromwell might have chosen a different look, perhaps using stones with more jagged faces or a greater range of colors. "The Shingle Style is a rustic style, and that's the look you want in the stone." says Dream House project architect Gary Brewer. "It's all about natural materials that work together

because of their textures-sawn shingles and rough stone."

Not to mention the careful, high-spirited labors of the stonemason and his friends. As Ventura tools a joint and Rodrigues mixes mud, Morais looks up from shaping a stone and smiles as all three of them spontaneously burst into song.



To fine-tune a stone so it makes a tight joint, Tony Morais chips away at an edge, checks the fit and hammers on it some more.

PATTERN LANGUAGES

here's no single right way," says Dream House project architect Gary Brewer of the infinite variety of patterns and looks that can be achieved with veneer stone. Yet whatever the pattern and the shape of the rock—rounded, squared off or irregular—Brewer believes in following some basic rules as to how it should be arranged on a wall. "You want to avoid long vertical or horizontal joint lines by using a mix of sizes and placing them so they don't appear to



In the renovation of a 1906 Colonial Revival in Massachusetts, architect Robert A.M. Stern designed new stonework, left, to echo the original pattern on the right.

stone outward, but it's often appropriate and more rustic to use the jagged side. And you want a very narrow, deeply recessed joint profile that reveals more of the rock. The way it's laid is almost more important than the stone itself."

be formally coursed like brick," he says. "And with Shingle Style and other traditional designs, the rougher the stone the better. Masons tend to face the smoothest side of the LEDGEROCK



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Antique bouses usually display their fanciest features out front, where passersby can stop and admire them, but the foundation at This Old House's fall project in Watertown, Massachusetts, didn't follow that tradition. Dressed in a granite veneer along the sides and back, the brick foundation facing the street wore a plain concrete finish (inset), and T.O.H. executive producer Russ Morash had a theory as to why: The front porch, which now spans only half the facade, originally extended the whole way across, and the builders sensibly decided not to spend money on stone that would never be seen. But now the faceless concrete was an eyesore, and it was up to T.O.H. mason Lenny Belliveau to fix it by removing the concrete and an outer layer of bricks and replacing them with granite blocks that matched the originals.



First, Belliveau bad to find the right stone, so be brought a chunk of the old veneer to a distributor who quickly identified it as Milford Pink granite. Faintly rose-colored with black flecks, it's found all around Boston, from suburban houses to the massive walls of the city's main library. Belliveau ordered enough to fill the gap, which measured about 2 feet high by 12 feet long. The granite had to be as thick as the bricks it was replacing and also had to come in three face widths—4, 8 and 12 inches—to match the variety in the original pattern. After removing the brick to several inches below grade, where it formed a shelf to support the granite, Belliveau cut the stone to varying lengths. Then he shaped the exposed faces with a sledgehammer and a carbide-tipped chisel, chipping away the edges to create the same convex profile as that of the old blocks.

When he started placing the stone, Belliveau mimicked the irregular pattern of the other walls and made the mortar joints no thicker than ³/₈ inch. After laying up the last of the 40 blocks, he tooled every joint with a thin pointing trowel and meticulously brushed away the last bits of loose mortar. Then he stepped back and, with evident satisfaction, surveyed his day's work: "Looks like it's been there forever." —Elena Kornbluth

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Melrose, a gracious Greek Revival in Natchez, Mississippi, embodies an appealing combination of elegance and practicality

IF HOUSES HAVE FACES, THIS ONE IS OPEN, INVITING AND RICH—A GLORIOUS GREEK REVIVAL PORCH shading gracefully lacy cast-iron railings and warm, red-brick walls covered with painted stucco. From a distance on the front lawn, the rear outbuildings appear to be attached, broadening an already generous facade. The balustered widow's walk is like a crown. Anyone arriving would feel welcome—and impressed.

That's just what John T. McMurran intended. His house was built to display its owners' wealth and social standing. McMurran, a clever Pennsylvanian, studied law in Ohio and sought his fortune in Natchez, Mississippi, epicenter of the cotton-growing antebellum South. He married well and, in 1841, hired architect-builder Jacob Byers to create a showplace atop a breezy 133-acre hill 3 miles east of town. McMurran, of Scots ancestry, named the house for Melrose Abbey, the setting of Sir Walter Scott's romance *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Construction took four years and, when Melrose was finished, people rode for miles to admire it. And its reputation grew. In Byers's 1852 obituary, the house was called the "best edifice in the state of Mississippi."

Today, Melrose survives as a splendid example of a style that swept not only Natchez but also the nation. During the early 1800s, Greek Revival was virtually the American national architecture. The generous proportions, the formal serenity taken from Greek temples, the columns, pilasters, porticoes, pediments, cornices—all said we Americans took ourselves seriously, saw ourselves as inheritors of a noble tradition. By 1842, Greek Revival was so widespread that the architect Alexander Jackson Davis remarked that it was hard for visitors in American

towns to "distinguish between a church, a bank and a hall of justice." He might have added

BY JACK MCCLINTOCK PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL GRIMM the houses of Natchez gentry, for whom the style held special appeal. "Classical architecture like this—so clean, bright, stern and rational—can mean anything you want it to mean," says Vincent Scully, an architectural historian at Yale. "To the South, it represented Greek democracy, which was slaveowning democracy."

Behind the facade of classical ideals at Melrose is a harsh historical reality: The house was built and maintained with slave labor. Nearly a century and a half after the Emancipation Proclamation, however, what is most striking about the McMurrans' hilltop mansion is the appealing combination of elegance and practicality in the design. "The high ceilings and scale give the house majesty, but they also help keep it cool," says Kathleen Jenkins, Melrose's museum specialist from the National Park Service, which bought the property in 1990. "You had to have comparably scaled furnishings, which add to the grandeur of the interior. There's a constant play between the simple forms and rich surfaces. Greek Revival is very sophisticated but also very serene. It

The portico at Melrose breasts the afternoon sun. The house seizes attention quietly, like a modest person in a fine suit. "It isn't anxious or excited," says Kathleen Jenkins, the museum specialist at Melrose. "The architecture is like the original owners: calm, quiet, tasteful."



A pocket door framed with fluted Ionic pilasters leads from the drawing room to the parlor at left. The rococo-revival furniture here—and in most other rooms is original to the house.



makes people feel good in a harried world."

The full-height columned portico at Melrose supports a classic pediment, Greek to its bones as well as apt in Mississippi. "The overhanging porches suited our hot, humid climate, and so did the brick, because there's no stone in Natchez," Jenkins says. Sparing no expense, the McMurrans hired a mason to lay fine, locally fired brick for walls that are up to 2 feet thick. Doors are topped with horizontal transoms and surrounded by narrow sidelights of rectangular panes—two more Greek Revival elements. Parts of the facade were stuccoed, scored to resemble stone blocks and then tinted and veined like marble, "one block cream, one rose, with white in the cuts," Jenkins says.

Craftsmen hand-made the moldings, columns, windows and other details

from fine local cypress, and other craftsmen faux-painted some of the cypress to resemble the golden oak of England. The finish looks quite real—except that the metal hinges and screw heads are wood-grained too. An ivory medallion is set into the newel post of the central staircase. "There's a myth that this is a brag button to show the mortgage was paid off," Jenkins says. "But there never was a mortgage on this house."

Neatly dividing the space inside are a deep foyer and a great hall beyond it. Underfoot, these grand rooms have something rare: original English floor cloths, woven of hemp and block-printed to look like tiles or carpet. The floor

cloths are believed to be the only ones in America still in their original location.

Paralleling these central rooms to the right, from front to rear, lie the drawing room, parlor and library.

Pocket doors separate them but, when the doors open, the rooms combine to form a huge, richly furnished salon. Much of the McMurrans' furniture is still here, some made by Joseph Meeks of New York City and Charles White of Philadelphia. It is plush rococo-revival stuff, the chair arms carved with elaborate swirls of leaves and creatures' faces—wacky-looking faces with oddly contorted bills. Jenkins taps one fondly with a finger. "They're not really ducks and not really dolphins," she says. "Just whimsical."

To the left of the foyer is the dining room and, hanging above the mahogany and cherry table, the house's oddest feature: a punkah. It's a fly fan—an imperial English affectation from India via the West Indies—a large, flat, carved mahogany paddle that sweeps back and forth above the table, whisking away flies and cooling privileged diners, powered by a slave hauling on a rope. In every room, large windows admit the muggy air. Also in some rooms, a crank rings a bell outside to summon a slave.

When T.K. Wharton, a British architect, visited Melrose in 1859, he described the grounds as "looking for all the world like an English park." Near the house, the land was manicured, civilized by an ornamental cypress pond and formal garden with urns. Gardeners had sculpted the more distant land into romantic pastoral vistas in the English manner, with meadows, fences, streams and grazing cattle, plus an American touch, the slave cemetery.

The McMurrans left Melrose after the Civil War, having suffered financial reverses. "You wonder how a man who owns so much goes broke," marvels Fred Page, relaxing beside a white Doric column. Page, a black American, came to Melrose five decades ago, a teenager fresh from a Louisiana farm. He has worked here ever since as butler, driver, overseer and now National Park Service tour guide.

In the late 1800s, Melrose was unoccupied except for two former slaves, Jane Johnson and Alice Sims, who lived in an outbuilding. But when a New York socialite couple, George and Ethel TOP: Classical moldings, transoms and sidelights add visual richness to an upstairs ballway. BOTTOM: In the dining room hangs a carved mahogany punkah, or shoo-fly fan, once ropepowered by slaves. The punkah, 3 feet wide at the base and 8 feet tall, features an anthemion motif, a classical Greek interpretation of honeysuckle.





TOP: An outbuilding, where dairy products were made downstairs and slaves boused above, was modernized in the early 1900s. The double doors were added, and the west wing was converted into a garage complete with a grease pit. BOTTOM: Fred Page, now a guide for the National Park Service, has worked at Melrose since 1950. "I love to tell about it," he says. OPPOSITE: In contrast to the welcoming front porch at Melrose, the rear gallery projects a stem, blank visage. The columns here are square, flat and strictly utilitarian. Only the oakgrained cypress doors convey a sense of luxuriousness.



Kelly, took up residence in 1901, they decided to preserve the house in its original form and to use the original furnishings, by then more than half a century old and decidedly out of style. Their decision was remarkable for the time—and lucky for posterity. Most Natchez manor-house owners were fashion chasers and, by the 1930s, only nine of the great suburban villas retained any significant amount of their original decorative art. But the Kellys simply whipped the dust covers off the furniture and moved in, even keeping the original drawing room drapes.

The couple did have to do some work on the house, though. They gabled the formerly flat roof deck to shed water. They painted over the faux-marble stucco, which had deteriorated badly; there were no trained artisans to restore it. When cars became available around 1908, the Kellys bought one, built a driveway to the dairy building out back and installed garage doors. "Then of course they had to have a gas pump, an air compressor and a full-time mechanic who traveled everywhere with them unning." Jenkins says.

to keep it running," Jenkins says.

Whenever the Kellys opened Melrose to the public, Page led the tours. He has a prodigious knowledge of the house the location of the original kitchen, the identity of a little girl in a blurry daguerreotype. Page can give a crisp 15-minute spiel on the economics of cotton planting and its relationship to European trade in the 1850s and 1860s, including the numbers of acres, bales, slaves, ships, miles and dollars in profits and taxes involved. He maintained the house, keeping the slave bells in working order for demonstration purposes. (Ethel Kelly used to summon him on an intercom.) And he served meals—always formally, elegantly, in multiple courses. Ethel Kelly, Page says, "lived a high, aristocratic life."

When oilman John Callon and his wife bought Melrose in 1976, they kept Page on. The house was "structurally perfect," Callon said later, and he—a seventh-generation Natchezian—tried to respect that while conducting his \$2 million restoration. In 1978, he installed Melrose's first central air-conditioning. "They switched it on, and the sound

> of the wood cracking was like gunshots," Jenkins says. "It'd never been that dry." Some baseboards and the punkah were damaged. Callon also installed 52 stereo speakers throughout the house, hooked up with 7 miles of copper wire. But he carefully stripped paint on the main entrance and the grained doors, and he tried to re-paper walls and re-cover furniture in historical approximations of the original fabrics.

> During the Callons' renovation, workmen found a 100-pound Civil War cannonball and playfully rolled it around the yard for days. And Callon noticed what he called "dark brown

somethings" on the floors of the foyer and great hall. These "somethings" turned out to be the rare and priceless floor cloths, almost unrecognizable because Ethel Kelly had been having them varnished annually, creating a preservation paradox. "You couldn't see the pattern," Jenkins says, "but the varnish was protecting them."

The National Park Service eventually bought Melrose to use, Jenkins says, as a "vehicle for interpreting the planter class of Natchez and the slaves who lived alongside them." The park service removed the 52 speakers, installed sprinkler heads in the speakers' place and put on a roof of Vermont purple slate. Inside, the parlor drapes,

Cool Ideas From a Grand House

Modern home owners can take a few cues from Melrose about how to get a bit of air whispering past a sweaty cheek. A shady porch facing the prevailing westerly wind cooled air before it entered the house as well as sheltering the large windows and doors so they could remain open for continued air flow even when it rained. And the symmetrical Greek Revival floor plan incorporated a feature still prized by architects: cross ventilation. Windows and doors were set on an axis—one opposite another—making it easy for air to move through.

The original owners of Melrose kept shrubbery away from the house not only to protect the foundation from invading roots but also to encourage air flow. Another clever landscaping trick was to vary large, open, sunny areas with shady glades, which actually created air currents-the sun-warmed air rose, pulling cooler air from the shade. The home owners also manipulated the indoor air flow. "Downstairs windows and doors were opened before bedtime and the exterior shutters were closed and locked for security. Then they'd go to the attic and open the clerestory windows. The accumulated hot air that had built up all day rushed up and out, pulling the cool air up the stairwell and cooling the house," says museum specialist Kathleen Jenkins. "In the morning, once the house had cooled, the windows would be closed to keep the cool air in."

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which had turned a muddy brown after hanging since the late 1850s, were taken down and replaced with green-and-gold brocatelle just like the original—adding an intense and glorious moneycolored richness to the room.

A housewide search for artifacts led to several tantalizing discoveries. In the attic, researchers found a cistern to capture roof runoff for a gravity-fed water system, which may even have flushed early indoor toilets. The cistern was lined with lead, perhaps the source of health problems among the McMurrans, whose daughter Mary Elizabeth Conner was a frail child and died at age 29 of anemia. In the joist bays between the first and second floors, a foot of sawdust acts as soundproofing, a clever idea that unfortunately created a fire hazard in the early days of electrification. Power came to Melrose in 1923, when a movie company illuminated the house's exterior for a film, *The Heart of Maryland*. Half a century later, the antebellum epics *Beulah Land* and *Freedom Road* were filmed partly at Melrose—the perfect setting for slave-era melodrama.

Fred Page knows the difference between movies and history. During his early years at Melrose, he slept in the old slave quarters and kept the slave bells ringing in memory of the blacks who once worked on the property. But he says he has never lost the sense of awe he felt when he first set eyes on Melrose and imagined what life must have been like for the masters of the house: "I thought it was a grand style of living, that's for sure."



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WHE, Sun. 6 a.m.

WFWA, Sat. 10 a.m

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• WBND, Sun. 7:30 a.m.

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Sat. 1:30 p.m. • WHO, Sat. 5 a.m.,

KYIN, Fri. 6:30 p.m.

KHIN, Fri. 6:30 p.m.,

KRIN, Fri. 6:30 p.m.,

KOOD, Thu. 7 p.m.,

KSWK, Thu. 7 p.m.,

KSNT, Sat. 6 a.m.

KPTS, Sat. 10 a.m.,

WKAS, Sun. 5 p.m.

WKGB, Sun. 4 p.m. WKYU, Tue. 1 p.m.

WCVN, Sun. 5 p.m.

WKZT, Sun. 5 p.m.

WKHA, Sun, 5 p.m.

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KIIN, Fri, 6:30 p.m., Sat. 1:30 p.m.

KSIN, Fri, 6:30 p.m., Sat, 1:30 p.m.

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KAWF. Thu. 7:30 p.m.

KAWB, Thu. 7:30 p.m.,

WDSE, Sat. 6:30 p.m.,

KAAL, Sun. 7:30 a.m.

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KRWE, Sat. 6:30 a.m.

WMAH, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

WMAE, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

WMAU, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

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WMAO, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

WMPN, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

WMAW, Sat. 6:30 p.m.

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KLTL, Sun, 10 a.m.

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KTBS, Sun, 6:30 a.m.

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WCBB, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

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WMEM, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

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WMPB, Sat. 4:30 p.m.,

WFPT, Sat. 4:30 p.m.,

WWPB, Sat. 4:30 p.m.,

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WCPB, Sat. 4:30 p.m.,

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WGBX, Sun. 9 a.m. WFXT, Sun. 10 a.m.

WCML, Sat. 2:30 p.m.

WGBH, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m.

WGBY, Thu, 8 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m.

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SALISBURY

BOSTON

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WFIQ, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 8 p.m.

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JUNEAU KTOO, Fri. 8 p.m., Sat. 8 a.m. KJUD, Sun. 3 p.m.

ARIZONA

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PHOENIX KAET, Thu. 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. KNXV, Sun. 10 a.m.

TUCSON KUAS, Sat. 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. KUAT, Sat. 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. 6 KTTU. Sat. 9 a.m.

ARKANSAS

ARKADELPHIA KETG, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

FAYETTEVILLE KAFT, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

JONESBORO KTEJ, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

LITTLE ROCK KETS, Sat. 12:30 p.m. KTHV, Sun. 10:30 a.m.

MOUNTAIN VIEW KEMV, Sat. 12:30 p.m

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MONTEREY/SALINAS KCBA, Sun. 8:30 a.m.

PALM SPRINGS KPSP, Sun. 8 a.m.

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REDDING KIXE, Sat. 10:30 a.m. ROHNERT PARK

KRCB, Sun. 7:30 p.m., Wed. noon SACRAMENTO

KVIE, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 8:30 a.m.

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SAN MATEO KCSM, Tues. 6:30 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.

SANTA BARBARA KSBY, Sun, 6 a.m.

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KBDI, Wed. 3:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 4 p.m. COLORADO SPRINGS

• KRDO, Sun. 11:30 a.m. DENVER

KRMA, Sat. 2 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m. • KCNC, Sun. 1 a.m.

GRAND JUNCTION • KJCT, Sat. 1 p.m. PUEBLO

KTSC, Thu. 7:30 p.m., Sat. 2:30 p.m.

CONNECTICUT

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Sat. 7 p.m., Sun. 10:30 a.m. • WFSB, Sat. 6:30 a.m. NEW HAVEN

WEDY, Thu. 11:30 p.m., Fri. noon, Sat. 7 p.m., Sun. 10:30 a.m. NORWICH WEDN, Thu. 11:30 p.m., Fri. noon,

Sat. 7 p.m., Sun. 10:30 a.m.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WETA, Sat. 9:30 a.m. WRC, Sun. 5:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

FLORIDA BONITA SPRINGS WGCU, Sat. 12 p.m., 12:30 p.m.,

Sat. 1:30 p.m., Sun. 5 p.m. DAYTONA BEACH WCEU, Tue, 8 p.m.,

Sat. 5:30 p.m. FORT MYERS • WTVK, Sat. 5:30 a.m.

GAINESVILLE WUFT, Sat. 9:30 a.m.,

1:30 p.m. WCJB, Sat. 2 p.m. JACKSONVILLE

• WJXT, Sat. 4:30 a.m. WJCT, Sat. noon

WLRN, Sun. 10 a.m. WPBT, Sat. 11 a.m. WRZL Sat. 4:30 a.m.

• WKCF, Sar. 4 a.m. WMFE, Sar. 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.,

Sun. 9 a.m. PENSACOLA WSRE, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

and 6 p.m. SARASOTA • WWSB, Sun. 11:30 a.m.

TALLAHASSEE WFSU, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

and 6 p.m.

WEDU, Sat. 11:30 a.m. WUSF, Wed. 9 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m.

WEST PALM BEACH

• WPTV, Sun. 6 a.m., 12:30 p.m.

National underwriters on PBS are:

GEORGIA ALBANY • WGVP, Sun. 9 a.m. ATLAHTA WGTV, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m. WFBA, Mon. 8 p.m., Wed. 2 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m. • WXIA, Sat. 5 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. CHATSWORTH WCLP, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., San. 7 p.m.

COCHRAN WDCO, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m.

COLUMBUS WJSP, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m.

WACS, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m. MACON

• WMAZ, Sat. 1 p.m. PELHAM

WABW, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 8 p.m. SAVANNAH WVAN, Thu. 8:30 p.m.,

Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m. WTOC, Sat. 2 a.m. WAYCROSS

WXGA, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m WRENS

WCE5, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m.

HAWAII HONOLULU KHET, Sat. 7:30 a.m. • KHNL, Sat. 4:30 p.m.

WAILUKU KMEB, Sat. 7:30 a.m.

BOISE

KAID, Sun. 4:30 p.m. KTRV, Sun. 6:30 a.m.

COEUR D'ALENE KCDT, Sun. 3:30 p.m. MOSCOW

KUID, Sun. 3:30 p.m. POCATELLO KISU, Sun. 4:30 p.m.

TWIN FALLS KIPT, Sun. 4:30 p.m.

ILLINOIS CARBONDALE WSIU, Thu. 7 p.m., Fri. 12:30 p.m., Sat. 12:30 p.m.

WAND, Fri. 5:30 a.m. WHLL, Thu. 7:30 p.m.,

Sun. 3:30 p.m. CHARLESTON

WEIU, Sat. 8:30 p.m. CHICAGO WTTW, Tue. 7:30 p.m.,

Thu. 1:30 a.m. WFLD, Sat. 6:30 a.m. JACKSONVILLE

WSEC, Thu. 10 p.m., Sun. 1:30 p.m.

WMEC, Thu. 10 p.m., Sun. 1:30 p.m.

> MOLINE WQPT, Tue. 7 p.m., Sat. 5:30 p.m. OLNEY WUSI, Thu. 7 p.m., Fri. 12:30 p.m. Sat. 12:30 p.m.

PEORIA
WTVP, Fri. 5:30 a.m., Sat. 12:30 p.m.,
WHOI, Fri. 5:30 a.m.

WQEC, Thu. 10 p.m.,

Sun. 1:30 p.m.

OUINCY

State Farm

Insurance

Companies

KARSAS CITY KCPT, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 12:30 p.m. & KABC, Sat. 6:30 a.m, St. LOUIS KETC, Wed. 12:30 p.m., Sat. 6:30 p.m. & KTVI, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

SEDALIA KMOS, Sat. 12:30 p.m. SPRINGFIELD

KOZK, Sat. 12:30 p.m. KSPR, Sat. 6 a.m.

MONTANA

KULR/KYUS, Sun. 9:30 a.m.
 BOZEMAN

KUSM, Wed. 11:30 p.m., Sat. 11:30 a.m. MISSOULA KUFM, Wed. 11:30 p.m.,

KUFM, Wed. 11:30 p.m Sat. 11:30 a.m. NEBRASKA

ALLIANCE NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m BASSETT NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m HASTINGS

NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. LEXINGTON KLNE, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

LINCOLN NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

• KHAS, Sat. 5 p.m. MERRIMAN

NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. NORFOLK

NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. NORTH PLATTE NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

OMAHA • WOWT, Fri. 5 a.m.,

Sun. 6 a.m. NETV, Sat. 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

NEVADA

LAS YEGAS KLVX, Sat. 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m. • KTNV, Sun. 8:30 a.m.

RENO KNPB, Sat. 10:30 a.m.,

Sun. 5 p.m. KAME, Sat. 10 a.m. NEW HAMPSHIRE

DURHAM WENH, Thu. 8:30 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m. KEENE WEKW, Thu. 8:30 p.m.,

Sun. 10 a.m. LITTLETON WLED, Thu. 8:30 p.m.,

Sun. 10 a.m. MANCHESTER

• WMUR, Sat. 6 a.m

NEW JERSEY

WNJS, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m.

MONTCLAIR WNJN, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat 8 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m.

NEW BRUNSWICK WNJB, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m.

TRENTON WNJT, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 5:30 p.m.

NEW MEXICO

KNME, Sun. 7 a.m. and 10 a.m., Thu. 7 p.m. KOB, Sun. 6:30 a.m. KRWG, Sat. 11:30 a.m.

Sat. 4 p.m NEW YORK ALRANY • WXXA, Fri. 1:30 a.m., Sun. 11:30 a.m BINGHAMTON WSKG, Sat. 8 a.m., Sun. 7 p.m. WBNG, Sat. 6:30 a.m. BUFFALO WNED, Sat. 6:30 p.m. WNEQ, Sun. 7 p.m. WIVB. Sat. 6 a.m. FLMIRA · WYDC LONG ISLAND WLIW, Sat. 10:30 a.m., Sun. 8 p.m. NEW YORK CITY WNET, Sat. 5:30 p.m. WCBS, Sun. 7:30 a.m NORWOOD WNPI, Sat. 10:30 a.m. PLATTSBURGH WCFF, Sun. 11-30 a.m. ROCHESTER WXXI, Sat. 10:30 a.m., Sun. 5:30 WHEC, Sun, 6 a.m. SCHENECTADY WMHT, Sat. 10:30 a.m. WMHQ, Sun. 9:30 a.m. SYRACUSE WCNY, Sat. 10:30 a.m. • WSTM, Sun. 8 a.m. WATERTOWN WNPE, Sat. 10-30 a.m. NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE WUNF, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. CHAPEL HILL WUNC, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. CHARLOTTE WAXN, Sun. 12:30 p.m. • WSOC, Sat. 6:30 a.m. WTVI, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. WUNG, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. COLUMBIA WUND, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Thu. 8 p.m. GREENSBORD • WGHP. Sat. 6:30 a.m. GREENVILLE WUNK, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m.

PORTALES

KENW, Wed. 10:30 p.m.,

WLOS, Sat. 7 a.m. JACKSONVILLE WUNM, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. LINVILLE WUNE, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. LUMBERTON WUNU, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. RALEIGH • WTVD, Sun, 6:30 a.m. ROANOKE RAPIDS WUNP, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. WILMINGTON WUNJ, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. WINSTON-SALEM WUNL, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m. NORTH DAKOTA BISMARCK KBME, Thu, 7 p.m., Sat, 6 p.m. DICKINSON KDSE, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m. FLLENDALE KJRE, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m. FARGO KFME, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m. WDAY, Sun. 6:30 a.m.
 WDAZ, Sun. 6:30 a.m. GRAND FORKS KGFE, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m. MINOT

KSRE, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m.

WILLISTON KWSE, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m.

OHIO AKRON WEAO, Sat. 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Sun. 4 p.m.

ATHENS WOUB, Sat. 5 p.m. BOWLING GREEN WBKO, Sun. 6:30 a.m. WBGU, Sat. 1:30 p.m.,

Mon. 3 p.m. CAMBRIDGE WOUC, Sat. 5 p.m. CINCINNATI WCET, Thu. 8 p.m.,

Sat. 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. • WCPO, Sun. 9:30 a.m. CLEVELAND WVIZ, Sat. 1 p.m., Sun. 12:30 p.m. • WEWS, Sun. 6 a.m. COLUMBUS

WOSU, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 4:30 p.m. • WSYX, Sun. 9:30 a.m. DAYTON WPTD, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m. • WHIO, Sat. 5:30 a.m. • WHIO, Sat. 5:30 a.m.

WPTO, Mon. 7:30 p.m. Sun. 12:30 p.m. PORTSMOUTH WPBO, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 4:30 p.m TOLEDO

WGTE, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 1 p.m., Sun. 1 p.m. WTVG, Sun. 7 a.m. WHEELING (W.V.) WTRF* YOUNGSTOWN

WNEO, Sat. 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Sun. 4 p.m. • WFMJ, Sun. 10 a.m.

OKLAHOMA

KWET, Sat. 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. EUFAULA KOET, Sat. 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. OKLAHOMA CITY

KETA, Sat. 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. KPSG, Sat. 9:30 a.m. TULSA

KOED, Sat. 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. KTUL, Sun. 12:30 p.m.

BEND KOAB, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m. CORVALLIS KOAC, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m.

EUGENE KEPB, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m. KMTR, Sun. 9 a.m.

KLAMATH FALLS KFTS, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 10:30 a.m. LA GRANDE

KTVR, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m. MEDFORD KSYS, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 10:30 a.m.

KOBI/KOTI, Sun. 4 p.m.
 PORTLAND
 KOPB, Thu. 8 p.m.,
 Sat. 5 p.m.

• KATU, Sat. 5:30 a.m., Sun. 12:30 p.m. PENNSYLVANIA ALLENTOWN

WLVT, Fri. 7:30 p.m., Sat. 12:30 p.m. ERIE

WQLN, Sat. 6:30 p.m. • WJET, Sat. 6:30 a.m. • WFXP, Sun. 6:30 a.m. HARRISBURG WTTF, Thu. 8 p.m.,

Sat. 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. • WGAL, Sun. 11:30 a.m. johnstown

• WATM, Sun. 10:30 a.m. PHILADELPHIA WHYY, Sat. 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.,

Sun. 7 p.m. WTXF, Sat. 5 a.m. PITTSBURGH

KDKA, Fri. 5:30 a.m.
 WQED, Sat. 5 p.m.
 WQEX, Sat. 5 p.m.

WVIA, Thu. 8 p.m., Sat. 5 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY PARK WPSX, Sat. 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Sun. 4:30 p.m.

WILKES-BARRE WILF, Sun. 10 a.m.

RHODE ISLAND PROVIDENCE WSBE, Tue. 8:30 p.m., Sun, 6 p.m.

WLNE, Thu. 1:30 a.m.
 SOUTH CAROLINA

ALLENDALE WEBA, Sat. 4 p.m. BEAUFORT

WJWJ, Sat. 4 p.m. CHARLESTON • WCSC, Sat. 5:30 a.m. WITV, Sat. 4 p.m.

WLTX, Sat. 5:30 a.m. WRLK, Sat. 4 p.m.

WHMC, Sat. 4 p.m.

FLORENCE/MYRTLE BEACH WJPM, Sat. 4 p.m. WPDE, Sun. 7 a.m.

GREENVILLE WNTV, Sat. 4 p.m.

GREENWOOD WNEH, Sat. 4 p.m. ROCK HILL

WNSC, Sat. 4 p.m. SPARTANBURG WRET, Sat. 4 p.m.

SUMTER WRJA, Sat. 4 p.m.

ABERDEEN KDSD, Sat. 4 p.m.

BROOKINGS KESD, Sat. 4 p.m. EAGLE BUTTE

KPSD, Sat. 4 p.m.

KQSD, Sat. 4 p.m. MARTIN KZSD, Sat. 4 p.m. PIERRE

KTSD, Sat. 4 p.m. RAPID CITY

KBHE, Sat. 4 p.m. KCLO, Sat. 4 p.m. SIOUX FALLS

KCSD, Sat. 4 p.m. KELO, Sat. 5 p.m.

VERMILLION KUSD, Sat. 4 p.m.

CHATTANOOGA WDNN, Sat. 11 a.m.

WTCI, Sat. 1:30 p.m. COOKEVILLE WCTE, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

KNOXVILLE WKOP, Sat. 1:30 p.m. WSJK, Sat. 1:30 p.m. WATE, Sat. 5:30 a.m.

This Old House is a production of WGBH Boston

LEXINGTON-MARTIN WLJT, Thu. 9:30 p.m., Sat. 12:30 p.m. MEMPHIS

MARION

NORFOLK

NORTON

WMSY, Fri. 11 p.m.,

• WVEC, Sat. 7:30 a.m.

WSBN, Fri. 11 p.m.,

WCVF Sar 8:30 a.m.

WCVW, Fri. 8:30 p.m.

WTVR, Sat. 6 a.m.

WBRA, Fri. 11 p.m.,

KCKA, Thu. 7 p.m.,

KWSU, Mon. 7:30 p.m.

KTNW, Thu. 7 p.m.

KCTS, Sun, 5 p.m.

KIRO, Sun. noon

KSPS, Sat. 9:30 a.m.,

KBTC, Thu. 7 p.m.,

KYVE, Sun. 5 p.m.

WSWP. Sat. 1:30 p.m.

WCHS Sun, 6 a.m.

WPBY, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

WNPB, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

WPNE, Wed. 7:30 p.m.,

• WFRV Sun 5-30 a.m.

WHLA, Wed. 7:30 p.m.

WHA, Wed. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 4 p.m.

WEAT Sun 9 am

• WISC, Sat. 6:30 a.m.

WKOW, Sun, 6 a.m.

WHWC, Wed. 7:30 p.m.,

WMVS, Thu. 7:30 p.m.,

WHRM, Wed. 7:30 p.m.,

Sun. 4 p.m. • WJFW, Sun. 10:30 a.m.

***CHECK YOUR LOCAL LISTINGS.**

123

WLEF, Wed. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 4 p.m.

• WTMJ, Sun. 6 a.m.

WEST VIRGINIA

Sun. 5:30 p.m. KXLY, Sun. 9:30 a.m.

Sat. 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

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Wed. 7:30 a.m., Sat. 2 p.m.

Sat. 2 p.m., Sun. 4:30 p.m.

Sat. 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

WASHINGTON

CENTRALIA

PULLMAN

RICHLAND

SEATTLE

SPOKANE

TACOMA

YAKIMA

BECKLEY

BLUEFIELD

· WOAY

CHARLESTON

HUNTINGTON

MORGANTOWN

WHEELING

• WIRF

GREEN BAY

LA CROSSE

MADISON

MENOMONIE

Sun. 4 p.m.

Sat 8-30 a m

MILWAUKEE

PARK FALLS

WAUSAU

WYOMING

KCWC, Sat. 5 p.m.

RIVERTON

un. 4 p.m.

WISCONSIN

Sat. 1:30 p.m. WSLS, Sat. 6:30 a.m.

Sat. 1:30 p.m.

RICHMOND

ROANOKE

WHRO, Sat. 8:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Sat. 1:30 p.m.

WKNO, Thu. 7 p.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m. • WPTY, Sat. 5 a.m. NASHVILLE

WDCN, Sat. 4:30 p.m. • WKRN, Sat. 5:30 a.m. • WKAG, Sun. 10 a.m.

• WKPT/WAPK, Sat. 10:30 a.m.

TEXAS AMARILLO KACV, Sat. 12:30 p.m. • KCPN, Sat. 10 a.m.

AUSTIN KLRU, Sat. 5 p.m. KTBC, Sat. 7:30 a.m. KVC, Sun. 5 a.m.

BEAUMONT KBMT, Sat. 5:30 a.m.

COLLEGE STATION KAMU, Sat. 12:30 p.m., Mon. 10 p.m., Wed. 2 p.m.

KEDT, Sat. 12:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

DALLAS/FORT WORTH KERA, Sat. 9 a.m., 6:30 p.m. KDFI, Sun. 10:30 a.m.

 KDFI, Sun. 10:30 a.r
 EL PASO KCOS, Sat. 5 p.m.

KCOS, Sar. 5 p.m. HARLINGEN KMBH, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

• KVEO, Sun. 6 a.m. HOUSTON KUHT. Sun. 11:30 a.m.

• KTRK, Sun. 11 a.m. KILLEEN

KNCT, Sat. 12:30 p.m., Sun. 9:30 a.m.

LUBBOCK KTXT, Thu. noon, Sat. 12:30 p.m.

 KLBK, Sun. 5 p.m.
 ODESSA KOCV, Sun. 12:30 p.m.

KLRN, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

KLPN, Sat. 10 a.m.

KCTF, Mon. 12:30 p.m.,

KXXV, Sun, noon and

KBYU, Sat. 9:30 a.m.,

KUED, Sat. 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. KTVX, Sun. 11 a.m.

SAN ANTONIO

Sat. 6:30 p.m.

12:30 p.m.

Wed. 11 p.m.

SALT LAKE CITY

VERMONT

BURLINGTON

Sat. 11 a.m.

Sat. 11 a.m.

ST. IOHNSBURY

Sat. 11 a.m.

Sat. 11 a.m.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

FALLS CHURCH

HARRISONBURG

WINDSOR

VIRGINIA

RUTLAND

WETK, Thu, 8 p.m.

WVER, Thu. 8 p.m.,

WVTB, Thu. 8 p.m.,

WVTA, Thu. 8 p.m.,

WHTJ, Sat. 8:30 a.m.

WNVT, Sat. 2:30 p.m.

WVPT, Sat. 1:30 p.m

WVPY, Sat. 1:30 p.m.

WCAX, Sun, 8:30 a.m.

TYLER

WACO

UTAH

PROVO



Acton Like a Charm A well-tanned crew heads home to a house that evokes simpler times

REBECCA REISNER BY

"It was a pleasure to work on one of the last remaining old-fashioned Hawaiian bungalows," says T.O.H. producer Bruce Irving. Above, the completed living room.

Week 25 (March 6-7)

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As the crew continues renovating Christiane Bintliff's house in Honolulu, Steve Thomas gives a lesson in Hawaiian ancient history. Richard Trethewey ogles a \$2,000 aloha shirt at a local store. Back at the jobsite, tradespeople are poring over their punch lists, getting ready to complete the project. Steve gets a look at the kitchen's solid-surface counters, and Norm Abram admires an especially skillful wiring job. Also: a solar hot-water system that saves \$600 a year. Watch and learn: Exterminating termites

Resources: Bailey's Antiques and Aloha Shirts, Kapahulu Ave., Kaimuki, HI; 808-734-7628. Painter: Tom McCall Interiors-Exteriors, 322 Iliwahi Loop, Kailua, HI 96734; 808-254-3718. Solidcore interior doors: Bello's Millwork Inc., 401 N. Kane, Unit 9, Wahiawa, HI 96786: 808-621-7282. Solid surfacing for counters and sliding window track: DuPont Corian, distributed by Aloha State Sales Co., 2829 Awaawaloa St., Honolulu, HI 96819; 808-833-2731; installed by Hawaii Woodcrafts, 730-F

The sparkling remodeled kitchen proved so attractive that owner Christiane Bintliff started to cook more often-and even rented out the house for catered events.



Moowaa St., Honolulu, HI 96817: 808-841-4737. Solar heating: Inter-Island Solar Supply, 345A N. Nimitz Hwv., Honolulu, HI 96817; 808-523-0711. Split-system air conditioner: Mitsubishi Electric, installed by American Air-Conditioning, 500 Ala Kawa St., Building 204, Honolulu, HI 96817; 808-847-0851. Bathroom fixtures: American Standard Inc., 1 Centennial Ave., Piscataway, NJ 08854; 732-980-3000.

Week 26 (March 13-14) In the last days before the house's completion, landscaper John Mitchell makes final



"It's a rarity," Bintliff says of the Honolulu house's new, 1930s-style wood-shingled cap. "People are always talking about the roof. It's spectacular, an architectural landmark."

improvements to the lawn. Steve views an active volcano from land and air and learns about lava flow. Bintliff shows Steve her new oven, dishwasher and burners-and the little countertop "garage" for stowing her blender and coffeemaker. Then it's time for a look at the bathroom fixtures, the clothes closets and the track lighting in the hallway-gallery. Finally, the wrap luau commences

Watch and learn: Hiding a television via an electric lift.

Resources: Landscaper: Landscape Systems, 1126 Loho St., Kailua, HI 96734; 808-262-5164. Landscape design: Loriann Gordon, A.S.L.A., 1335 River St., Suite 207, Honolulu, HI 96817; 808-524-3900. Luau producers: Perry-Dugan-Sutherland Event Production, 3023 Kalakaua Ave., Honolulu, HI 96815; 808-922-0188. Studio track lighting and wall switches: Lightolier, 631 Airport Rd., Fall River, MA 02720; 508-679-8131. Refrigerator and gas cooktop: Kitchen Aid Consumer Assistance Center;

800-422-1230; www.kitchenaid.com. Appliances: Miele Appliances Inc., 22-D World's Fair Drive, Somerset, NJ 08873: 800-843-7231: www.miele.com. Decorative painting: Angela Adams Designs, 273 Congress St., Portland, ME 04101; 207-774-3523. Closet system: Truwood by Closet Maid, Box 4400, Ocala, FL 34478; 800-874-0008; installed by the Closet Space, 720 Iwilei Rd., 285, Honolulu, HI 96817; 808-528-1610. Mirrored bath cabinet: MP 1640. Robern Inc., 7 Wood Ave., Bristol, PA 19007; 215-826-9800. Wool sisal carpet for guest suite and master bath: Karastan, Mohawk Industries, Box 12069, Calhoun, GA 30703; 800-241-4494. Bathroom fixtures: American Standard (see week 25). Overhead fans: Casablanca Fan Co., 761

Corporate Center Dr., Pomona, CA 91768; 800-715-0393. Room divider: Kamani Woodworks, 545 Kamani St., Honolulu, HI 96813; 808-523-1913. TV lifter: Auton Motorized Systems, Ave. Crocker 405, Valencia, CA 91355; 805-257-9282.

Week 1 (March 20-21)

Steve arrives in Acton. Massachusetts, where he meets Sima and Terry Maitland, owners of the latest project: a 1710 house that needs expanding to suit the Maitlands' family of five. Situated next to a 50acre truck farm, the house has a beautiful view of the open landscape. Inside,

however, the view includes a kitchen with practically no work space, a dishwasher in the dining room, a half bath that also serves as a recycling and laundry room, a full bathroom with unsightly, leaky shower tiles and a master bedroom badly in need of additional closets. Outside, Tom Silva and Norm assess the degree to which the old house is leaning and speculate on the causes. The Maitlands' budget for the entire project: \$150,000. Watch and learn: Assessing the problems of a 284-year-old house. Resources: Truck: F-150 XLT Lariat.

Week 2 (March 27-28)

Having determined that the milk shed, a sweet little outbuilding, must be relocated to make way for a new ell, Tom and the crew jack up the shed and use a truck and wooden runners to pull the structure away from the site, to another part of the yard. Back inside the house, Richard assesses the house's heating needs, then heads



The new fall project: Built in 1710, the Maitland family's house in Acton, Massachusetts, is the oldest the T.O.H. crew has ever taken on.

down to the basement for a look at the old boiler. The architect, Chris Dallmus, reveals his drawings for additions and reconfigurations. To learn how much room a central chimney such as the Maitlands' one occupies, Steve takes a side trip to Minuteman National Historic Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, where historical architect Larry Sorli shows him a mammoth 18th-century chimney standing alone-preserved after a fire destroyed the surrounding house. The imposing structure once served six separate fireplaces throughout the house and included a baking oven on the ground floor.

Watch and learn: Calculating a house's heat loss.



Norm Abram and Steve Thomas are building an ell onto the Acton bouse, where Terry and Sima Maitland share cramped quarters with sons Eli and Ethan and daughter Rebecca.

Resources: Plumbing and heating consultant: Richard Trethewey, R.S.T. Inc., 19B Thompson Street, Dedham, Massachusetts 02026; 781-320-9910. Architect: Chris Dallmus, Design Associates Incorporated, 432 Columbia Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02141; 617-661-9082.

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OUTTAKES pp. 17-26

\$100 a Foot!: Roger Cook (landscape contractor), K & R Tree and Landscape, Burlington, MA; 781-272-6104. Reported by Mark Feirer. Calendar: March 18-Builders Home and Detroit Flower Show, Cobo Center, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.; 248-737-4478. March 6-7-Orchard Supply Hardware How-To Fair, Alameda County Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, CA; 408-365-2421. Mar. 19-Builders Home and Detroit Flower Show, Cobo Center; 248-737-4478. Mar. 20-Wolohan Builders Expo, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio; 800-626-0241. March 6-7-N.J. Home Remodeling and Furnishings Show, N.J. Convention and Expo Center, Edison, NJ: 732-417-1400. March 13-Home Show, Civic Center, Terre Haute, IN; 812-234-5736. March 26-27-Spring Atlanta Home Show, Georgia World Congress Center; 770-998-9800.

TRANSFORMATIONS pp. 40-46



Architect: Wesketch Architecture, Liberty Corner, NJ; 908-647-8200. Contractor: Hunterdon Builders; 908-284-0221. Interior Design: Frank DelleDonne, Summit, NJ; 908-598-1670. Kitchen Design: Euro-

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MATERIALS: FEAT OF CLAY p. 49-52



 Waterstruck brick, Vermont Brick, Highgate Center, VT; 802-868-5354.
 Salvaged Common, Windy City Antique Brick, Chicago, IL; 800-669-5304. 3. Bevelled edged paver, Pacific Clay Brick Products, Lake Elsinore, CA; 909-674-2131. 4. Stair nosing, Vermont Brick. 5. Sand-struck paver, Belden Brick Co., Canton, OH; 330-456-2694. 6. Salvaged paver; Renaissance Rock Island, Rock Island, IL; 309-788-6311. 7. Iron Spot Paver, Endicott Clay Products Co., Fairbury, NE; 402-729-3315. 8. Rolllock, Belden. 9. Bullnose Coping, Pacific.
 Wall cap, Belden Brick.

> UPDATE: GOT LEAD? p. 55-58



Lead Paint Tester: Covino Environmental Associates Inc., Woburn, MA; 781-933-2555. Lead Abatement Contractor: Dec-Tam Corporation, Andover, MA; 978-470-2860.

Maintaining a Lead Safe Home by Dennis Livingston, 1997, \$14; Community Resources, Baltimore, MD; 410-727-7837. National Lead Information Center Clearinghouse, 800-424-5323; www.epa.gov/lead/nlic.htm.



0405. Dennis Wedlick: 212-614-9147. Copper shingles: Revere Copper Products

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Inc., Rome, NY; 800-448-1776.

p, 75-83



Custom made furniture: Charles Webb/CI Design, Cambridge, MA; 617-547-2100. Upholstered furniture: Workbench; 800-656-7891. Bed linens and towels: The Company Store; 800-285-3696. Kitchen accessories: Crate & Barrel; 800-473-1626. Bedroom and office accessories: Pier 1 Imports; 800-245-4595. Architectural design: Toby and Sandra Fairbank, Fairbank Design; 617-497-0693. Plumbing and heating consultant: Richard Trethewey, Trethewey Bros., Inc.; 617-

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325-3283. Master plumber: Ron Coldwell, Trethewey Bros. Inc. Electrician: Allen Gallant, Gallant Electric; 781-893-4636. Painting contractor: Steve Kiernan, S.L. Kiernan & Co.; 617-698-6129. Landscape contractor: Roger Cook, K & R Tree and Landscape; 781-272-6104. Oven: Gaggenau: 781-255-1766. Oven hood and diswasher: Thermador; 800-735-4328. Refrigorator: Sub Zero Freezer Co.; 800-222-7820. Microwave: Sharp, 800-237-4277. Cabinetry: Woodmeister Corp., Worcester, MA; 508-753-5343. Granite: Fletcher Granite Co. Inc., North Chelmsford, MA; 800-253-8168. Skylight: Andersen Skywindows. Heating and cooling: Unico, St. Louis. Drainage: Cultec Inc., Leo Lessard Environmental Consultant Service, Auburn, MA; 508-755-6914. Cultec Contractor: Chamber Systems; 800-428-5832. Shingles and clapboards: Liberty Cedar; 800-882-3327. Exterior Paint: Light Olive #1504, Straw Trim #1102, and Pumpkin Red #105, Benjamin Moore. Basement waterproofing: B-Dry System M/E Inc., Lexington, MA; 800-696-3356. Lighting products: Wolfers Lighting, Waltham, MA; 781-672-4200. American Fluorescent Corp., Waukengan, IL; 847-249-5970. Fiber Optic Lighting: Lucifer Lighting Company, San Antonio, TX; 210-227-7329. Sonoma Lighting, Sonoma, CA; 707-996-6906. Tech Lighting, Chicago, IL; 773-883-6110. Lighting designer: Doreen Le May Madden, Wolfer's Lighting, Allston, MA; 617-254-0700. Radiant heating: Radiant Technology Floorwarming, Bellport, NY; 800-784-0234. Heating, ventilation and AC .: Carrier Corp., Syracuse, NY; 315-432-6000. Subcontractor: Gale Force Mechanical, Dedham, MA; 781-251-9400. Valves: Urell Inc., Watertown, MA; 617-923-9500. Boiler and hot water storage tank: Viessmann, Warwick, RI; 800-288-0667. Dry well: Shea Concrete Products Inc., N. Wilmington, MA; 800-696-7432. Victorian Tile: Tile Barn, Lebanon, New Jersey; 908-236-9200. Marble and tiling contractor: Ferrante Tile, N. Reading, MA; 508-664-0729. Tile: Tile Showcase,

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Architect: Scot Samuelson, Lyme, CT; 860-434-7767. Carpenters: Ron Garner,



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AMERICAN CRAFTSMAN p. 94-100



Jack Sobon, architect and builder, Box 201, 613 Shaw Road, Windsor, MA 01270; 413-684-3223.

STONE FACED p. 102-108



Dream House Builder: Walter Cromwell Jr., New Canaan, CT; 203-966-5550. Architect: Robert A.M. Stern Architects, New York, NY; 212-967-5100. Stone supplier: O&G Industries, Torrington, CT; 203-337-5119. Watertown: Lenny's Masonry, Stow, MA; 978-897-6256. Granite: Fletcher Granite Company, N. Chelmsford, MA; 978-251-4031.

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THIS OLD HOUSE

BY BEN KALIN

PRICE \$1

L O C A T I O N 57 Grove Street, North Brookfield, Massachusetts

In North Brookfield, Massachusetts, a rural town 35 minutes west of Worcester, the trim 2½-story house on Grove Street has been a neighbor to St. Joseph's Church for more than a century. The house's longtime owner died in 1997, and the church, desperately in need of more parking space, snapped it up. Now St. Joseph's is looking for someone to buy the house and move it off the property.

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Little is known of the house's history. Sometime in the 1950s, the 2,000-square-foot residence was split into two apartments, each with two bedrooms, a dining room, a bathroom, a living room and a kitchen. There are two finished rooms in the cozy slope-walled attic. Only a few original elements remain: the front-porch columns, the six-panel wood doors and the stairway banister.

"The structure is extremely sound," says Paul Cigal, a local home builder. He estimates that jacking the house off its foundation and moving it within a 2-mile radius would cost about \$25,000. Even better, Cigal figures the house could be moved in one piece: "We wouldn't even crack the plaster."

CONTACT

Father Richard Carey St. Joseph's Rectory North Brookfield, MA 01535 508-867-6811



A 110-year-old Victorian, top, which now stands in the way of a new parking lot, begins its second century in remarkably good, ready-to-move shape. Vinyl siding sheathes the exterior, but most of the original windows remain. A well-preserved staircase, right, provides access to the second-floor apartment and the attic. In the dining room, left, wide-plank floors set off a built-in china cabinet. Building contractor Paul Cigal says that, in addition to the moving costs, a new owner would have to spend about \$50,000 to remove asbestos from the basement, fill in the basement hole, dig and pour a new foundation and upgrade the house's outmoded electrical, plumbing and heating systems.

If you know of a house that should be saved, please write to: Save This Old House, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, 27th floor, New York, NY 10036.

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