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JOURNAL

JUNE 2000

ORIGINAL
Restoration
Magazine

Rehab Guide

- WHERE TO START
- PRACTICAL POINTERS

PERIOD BATH TIPS

Sink Basin Source List

Restoring Doorbells

SPECIAL SECTION (PAGE 75):

The American House—

GEORGIAN COLONIAL

Their northern California Queen Anne
now snugly restored, Glenn and
Gail Giaimo plan their orchard.

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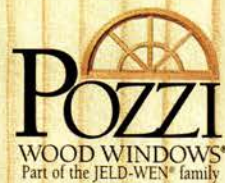


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ON THE COVER: On a beautiful day in Ferndale, a quiet farming community in northern California, Gail and Glenn Giaino discuss landscaping plans to complement their 1901 Queen Anne home. After an extensive exterior restoration, the couple added a brick patio and walkway on the protected eastern side of the house. **Photo by Linda Svendsen**



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56 From Slum to Plum

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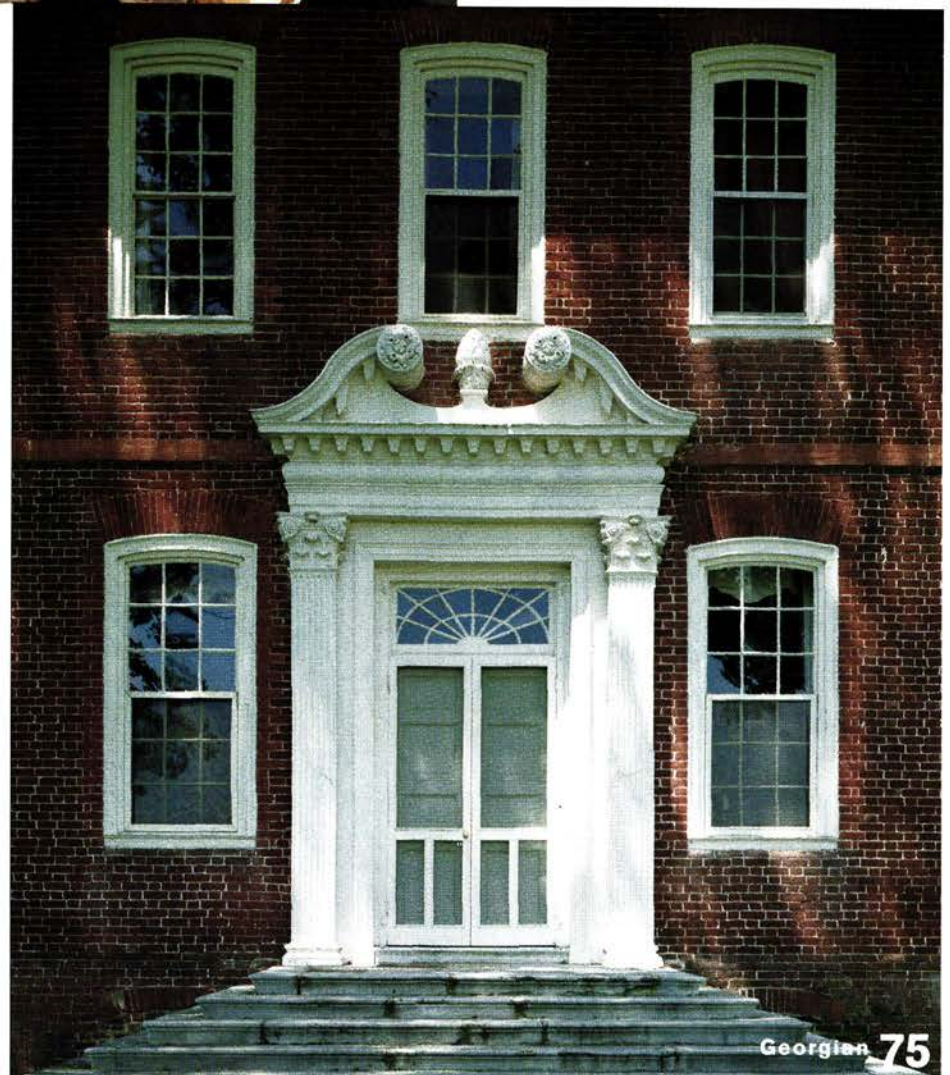
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How a rainbow trout hooked Chad Harris.

After just one bite, Chad knew he was tasting food like he had never tasted it before.

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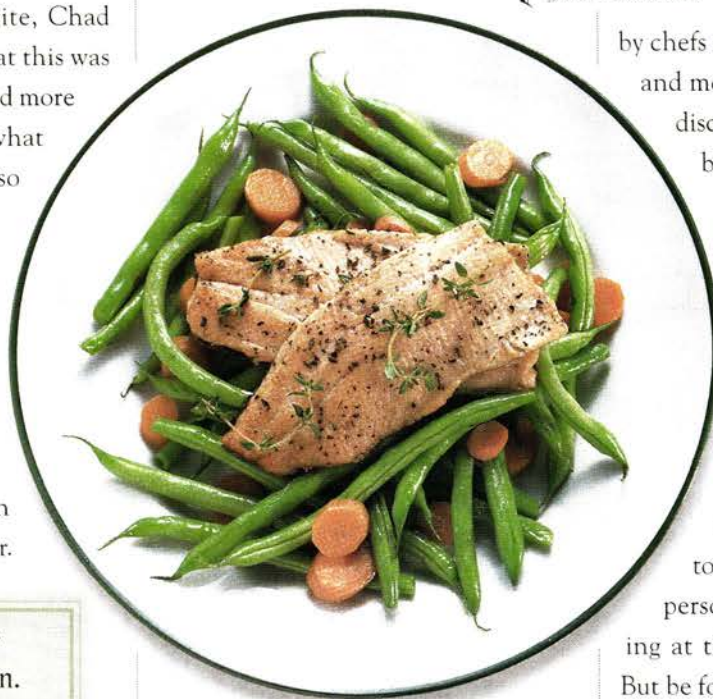
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Of Splanches and Sporks

ANYONE WHO'S SHOPPED for an old house—or pretty much any house—knows that reading listings and other written descriptions can be a semantic funhouse. No matter what the building's age or style, if it has a central door and hall, it's sure to be summed up as a "Colonial." Such one-size-fits-all handles raise a knowing eyebrow with OHJ readers. However, I get an even bigger kick out of the unofficial, but still very real house names that are the unlikely matings of established terms.

My favorite is *splanch*, a mid-20th-century hybrid of the split-level house and the ranch house. Though the term does not appear in any of the official real estate guides that I can find, it's a regular part of the newspaper-listing lexicon—and I think it's great. Splanch gives an identity to those dwellings with the low roofs and deep eaves of a ranch house, but living space on more than one floor. What better moniker for a house spawned by the same era that gave us the *spork*—that cross between a spoon and a fork you sometimes see on airlines?

Hybridized terms are by no means limited to realtorspeak of course. Students of suburban architecture have long identified buildings that are best described as *Tudorbethan*. In the mix-and-match architecture of 1920s English Revival houses, the carefree cross-pollination of Tudor, Elizabethan, and Jacobean elements pro-

duced a new strain of the English Revival style. The Tudorbethan is a medieval-looking house that took root in suburbs all across North America, but never existed in the British Isles. Historian Alan Gowans finds Tudorbethan a "ponderously cute name . . . so well deserved."

Our own synergy-obsessed age has no monopoly on this kind of wordplay either. Nearly a century ago when that new house type, the bungalow, promised both better living for homeowners, and bigger profits for developers, the building trade was giddy with creative spins on the basic house. Architects and critics alike promoted head-scratching combinations like the *semi-bungalow* and the *bungalowette*. When marketing people realized the word itself would sell a building, suddenly there were *Colonial bungalows*, *Italian bungalows*, and *Spanish bungalows*. Stretching the concept even further, an apartment building penthouse was magically a *roof bungalow*. Perhaps the best was a garage grafted to a bungalow to yield the legendary *garlow*.

Over time, many such mongrel terms become commonplace—even approved terminology. What fun reading them until they do.

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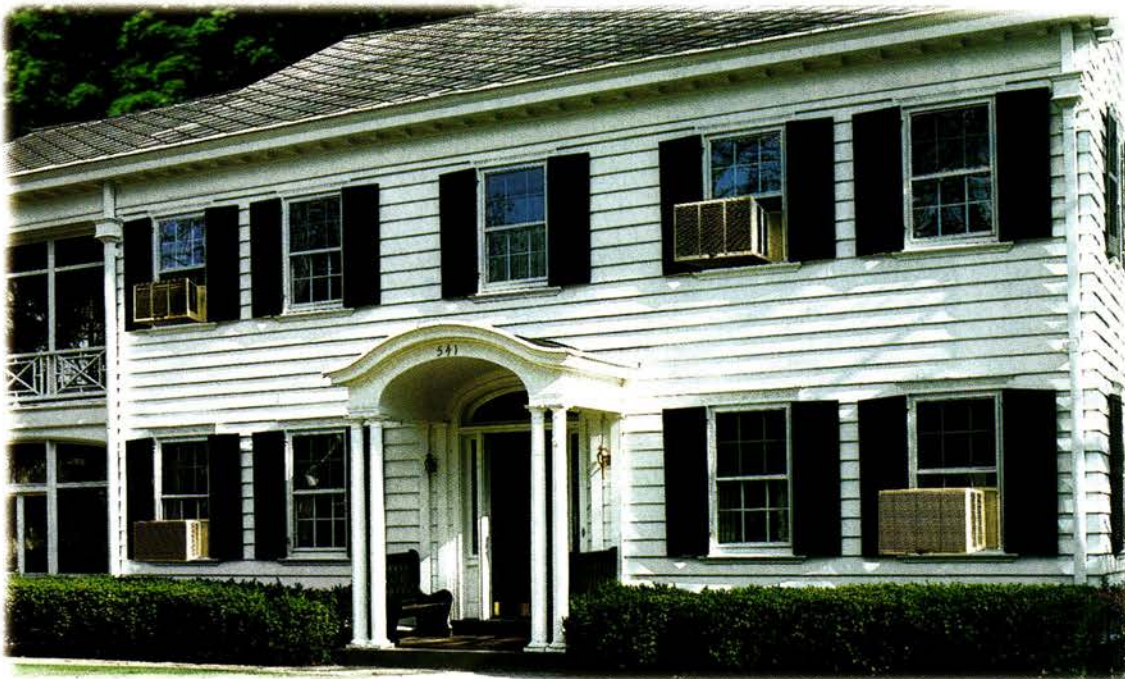
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—GARY COOKE

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VINTAGE VENT

RIDGE VENTING is nothing new, you know [see "Ventilating an Attic," April 2000]. This illustration accompanied an 1898 announcement in *Carpentry & Building Magazine* that began: "... the Globe venti-



lated ridging, recently patented and now being introduced to the trade . . . is designed to exhaust the heat from attics and ventilate residences [etc.] without breaking the sky line or disturbing the artistic appearance of the building."

—GERALD F. BURTON
Hudson, N.H.



BACK IN SEATTLE

YOUR APRIL ISSUE seemed aimed at us! The article on the Mother's Day Tour in Monrovia, California ["Monrovia on Mothers Day," Journal, April '00] brought back the thrill of showing off our Painted Lady on the 1986

tour. People would stop by and ask what paint we'd used, and soon the same color scheme popped up all over the foothills. One brazen woman banged on the door demand[ing] to know the exact paint numbers we'd used!

An interesting facet of Monrovia that you might want to explore is the casual frequency with which houses were moved in the 1920s.

Our move from Monrovia to Seattle was job-forced and, as much as we loved our Queen Anne house in California, we longed to get back to Seattle. Little did we know how trendy Seattle would become after we succeeded in returning in 1988. With real estate soaring, we realize how lucky we were to get a big Arts and Crafts house overlooking Lake Washington.

We hope our Monrovia house is as happy with its current owners as we are to be in Seattle once more.

—MARGARET AND HAM CARSON
Seattle, Washington

SORRY ROOF

FOR YEARS I'VE WALKED and biked past an unkempt house with what I thought was the ugliest roof in America. It has beat-up,

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Shown: Bucks County Southern LedgeStone. In background: Lakeshore River Rock



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red asphalt shingles laid with too much exposure for each shingle and clumsily wrapped around all the eaves. Good lord, I've always thought, the roofer must have been drunk. He couldn't see the edge to stop shingling. Must've shingled gutters and all!

Now, however, I know what this house is all about, thanks to your eye-opener on "Thatch in America." [This feature in the April 2000 issue describes steambent and wrapped wood shingles, a romantic device popular during the 1920s. —EDITORS] I spent a good quarter-hour last Saturday really studying the house. Yep, it's pseudo-Elizabethan—with tiny-paned casement windows and a few dark timbers. I imagined the stucco (now filthy and portland-patched) its original dark ochre. And the roof! It should have wood shingles (or even

asphalt) tightly laid in a wave pattern. American thatch!

Isn't it amazing what neglect can do? This house (unique in the neighborhood) was once artfully medieval, cozy rather than dingy. I'm going to leave your issue on the doorstep. The owners probably don't even know what they have.

—KERRY MASTERSON
via e-mail

OH THE THRILL

IT WAS SHEER DELIGHT to see the wonderful spread about our house in the February issue. ["Old-House Living," page 14] Peter's cousin in Iowa, whose wedding present had introduced us to OHJ, said that she couldn't help but scream with excitement as she stood at the magazine rack in the bookstore. The Old Northside neigh-

borhood association passed the magazine around at their monthly meeting.

We continue to be busy working on the house. Since you were here, we have stained and polyurethaned the woodwork in the family room. Shutters have been ordered. The library is scheduled to be papered in March.

—PETER AND DONNA MICHAEL
Indianapolis, Indiana

OLD-HOUSE MAGS

MAYBE YOU CAN HELP me locate a magazine I believe is related to *Old-House Journal*. I am about to tackle my second restoration and decorating project and need design tips. I've been an off-and-on subscriber to OHJ since the late 1970s, and have watched its evolution through various incarnations with interest. I thoroughly



enjoy the current format—beautiful job.

The other magazine I'm seeking is called *Old-House Interiors*. I saw an issue a year or two ago but cannot locate it on the newsstand. I recall that it had a similar feeling to OHJ, but featured period rooms and advice on paint color, rugs, furniture, etc. Is it available through your company?

—MICHAEL GUIDRY
Montreal, Quebec

Although they now have separate owners, the two magazines are indeed related. Old-House Interiors was launched five years ago by the editors of OHJ, and many of the same writers and editors contribute to both publications. You can order Old-House Interiors by calling (800) 462-0211.

—PATRICIA POORE

GUARANTY'D WRONG

THE SHORT PIECE ON Louis Sullivan ["Who They Were," April 2000] does a great job of introducing your readers to this visionary but oft-overlooked architect. Those seeking to view firsthand the beautiful office building pictured at the top left of page 42 should, however, go to Buffalo, New York, and not to St. Louis, Missouri. The building in question is the Guaranty (now known as the Prudential) Building, and not the Wainwright Building.

—ROBERT W. HILTONSMITH
Radford, Virginia

All I can say is Ouch! I hate making mistakes this embarrassing, and you're kind



to note that the point of the caption still holds. The buildings are indeed much alike architecturally (especially when seen in b&w proofs). But of course we noticed the gaffe, too late, as soon as the issue arrived from the printer.

—GORDON BOCK

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Kevin & Lisa O'Neil
Switched to Cabot in 1999.

Radiant in Ferndale *by Mary Ellen Polson*

WHERE DO YOU GO when you've just sold a successful software business, and you can live anywhere you want? Glenn and Gail Giaimo enjoyed a 180-degree view of the Cascade Mountains north of Seattle, but they dreamed of small-town life in the country, as seen through the rosy glow of Queen Anne windows.

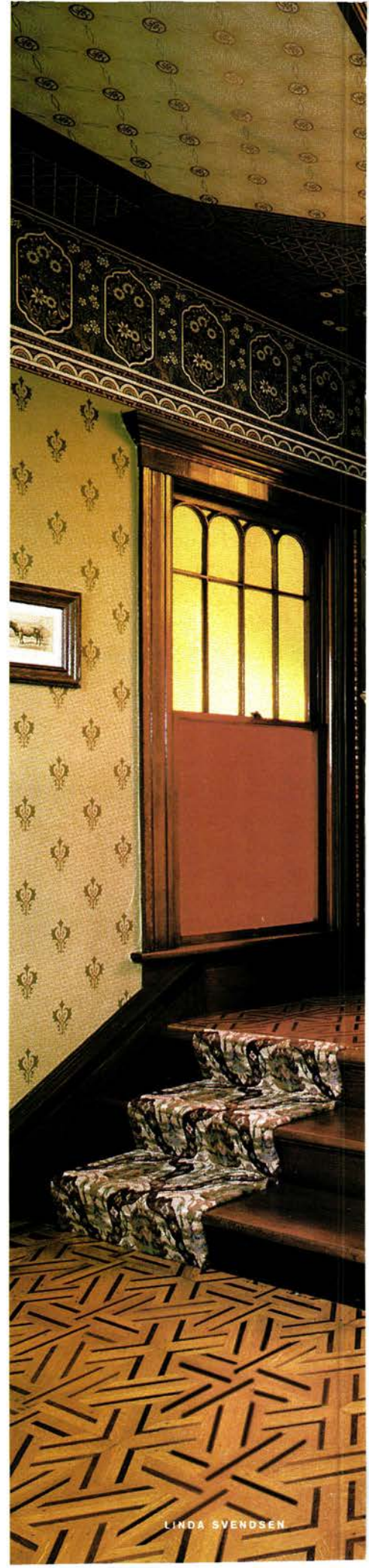
Worn out by urban congestion and smog, the Giaimos were tired of timing their lives to the rhythms of the rush-hour commute rather than the seasons.

"I think we wanted to live in a rural area for several years," says Gail as a vintage clock softly chimes in the background. "We wanted to find a community that isn't going to change overnight, like what's happening all across America. Ferndale is one of those little jewels that I hope will stay the way it is."

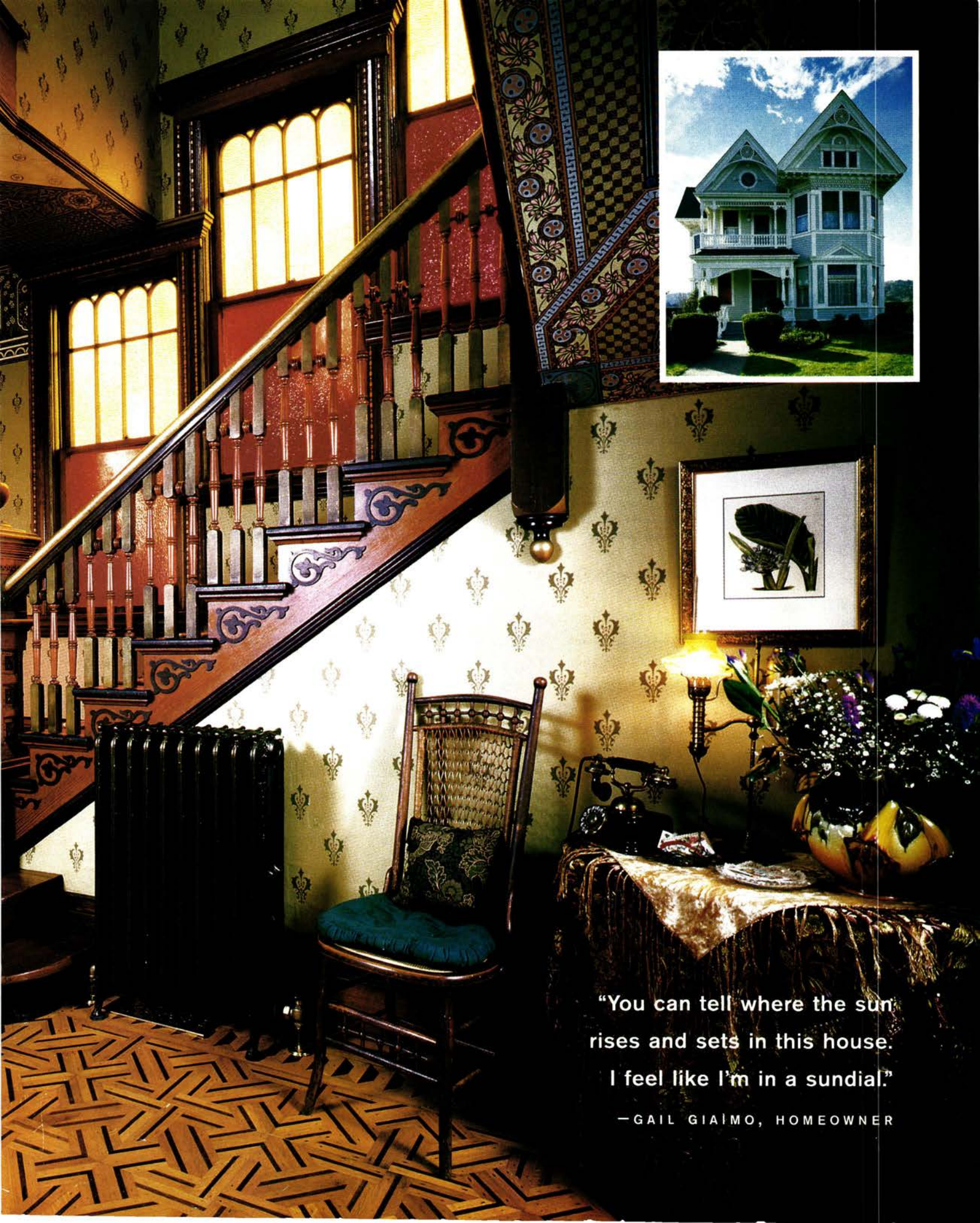
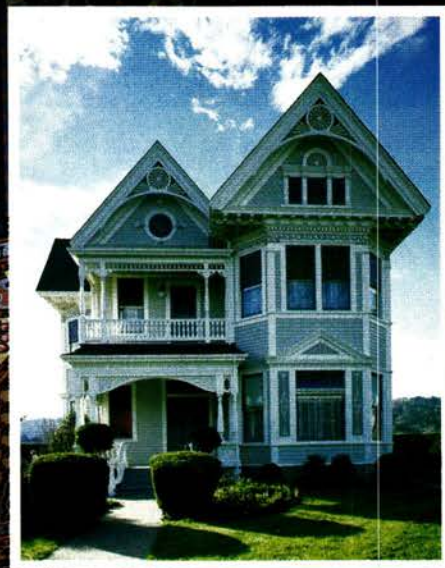
Gail and Glenn didn't find Ferndale right away. At first they searched for an old house with acreage in Oregon and Washington state. By the time they reached a bed & breakfast in the San Juan Islands, they were thoroughly frustrated. "There was a man at the breakfast table who overheard me whining about not finding what I wanted," Gail says. "He asked us if we'd checked out Humboldt County. It's in true northern California. 'You've got to look at Ferndale,' he told us. 'You are describ-



Glenn and Gail Giaimo traded one kind of challenge for another when they sold a business and bought a 1901 Queen Anne on 20 acres.

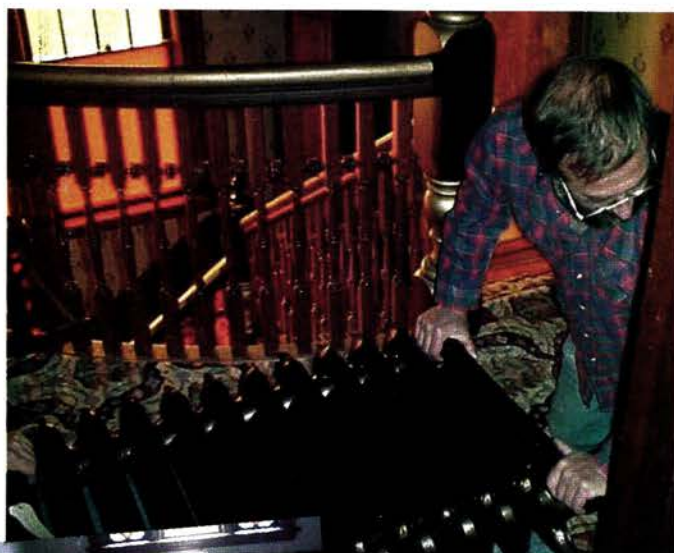


LINDA SVENDSEN



"You can tell where the sun
rises and sets in this house.
I feel like I'm in a sundial."

—GAIL GIAIMO, HOMEOWNER



Top, left to right: Polyethylene tubing ready to go under the floorboards. A workman slides a radiator through the upper hall, while a crane delivers another to the second storey. Bottom: Glenn and Gail found time to do up a period bathroom.



QUEEN ANNE

OWNERS: Glenn & Gail Giaimo

LOCATION: Ferndale, California

DATE OF HOUSE: 1901

ON-GOING PROJECTS: Completing the barn, which features matched sets of vintage hardware restored by Glenn and adaptations of period entry and roll-up doors designed by Gail.

OF INTEREST: Gail designed the walkway on the east side of the house, using a combination of old and new bricks, and agates "from 15 years of agate hunting on the Oregon coast with Glenn."

ing Ferndale. They call it behind the redwood curtain."

Quiet little Ferndale, a pristine Victorian town of 1,400 souls 300 miles north of San Francisco, is certainly remote. The only road into town crosses a narrow bridge. Despite the physical limitations—the town sits in a floodplain and also lies in earthquake country—the Giaimos fell hard for Ferndale. "It's really the townsfolk that attracted us," Glenn says. "Ferndale is a very friendly community."

Once the Giaimos found the right town, they waited for the right house. Ironically, the 1901 Queen Anne they ultimately bought had been on the market for months, billed as a potential bed & breakfast. The house had all the elements Glenn and Gail were looking for: it was beautiful and historic, surrounded by rural countryside, and most of the interior work is period. "When our realtor faxed us the listing, we got so excited we flew down that day," Gail says.

"In the spring and summer, it is extraordinarily beautiful here," says Gail, as birdsong mingles with the sound of wind chimes on the protected east side of the house. To the south is a grandmother's garden with flowers timed to

bloom in waves with the seasons, and in one corner, a gazebo trellised with roses. "I made the gazebo extra fanciful, because once the roses start growing they're going to cover three-quarters of it. When you walk underneath, it will be like a Japanese lantern."

Since moving in two years ago, Glenn and Gail have diverted the energy they once poured into their business into the property. The couple left no stone unturned—and no window unwashed—in a mammoth restoration focused primarily on the house's exterior. When they chemically stripped the exterior paint (a



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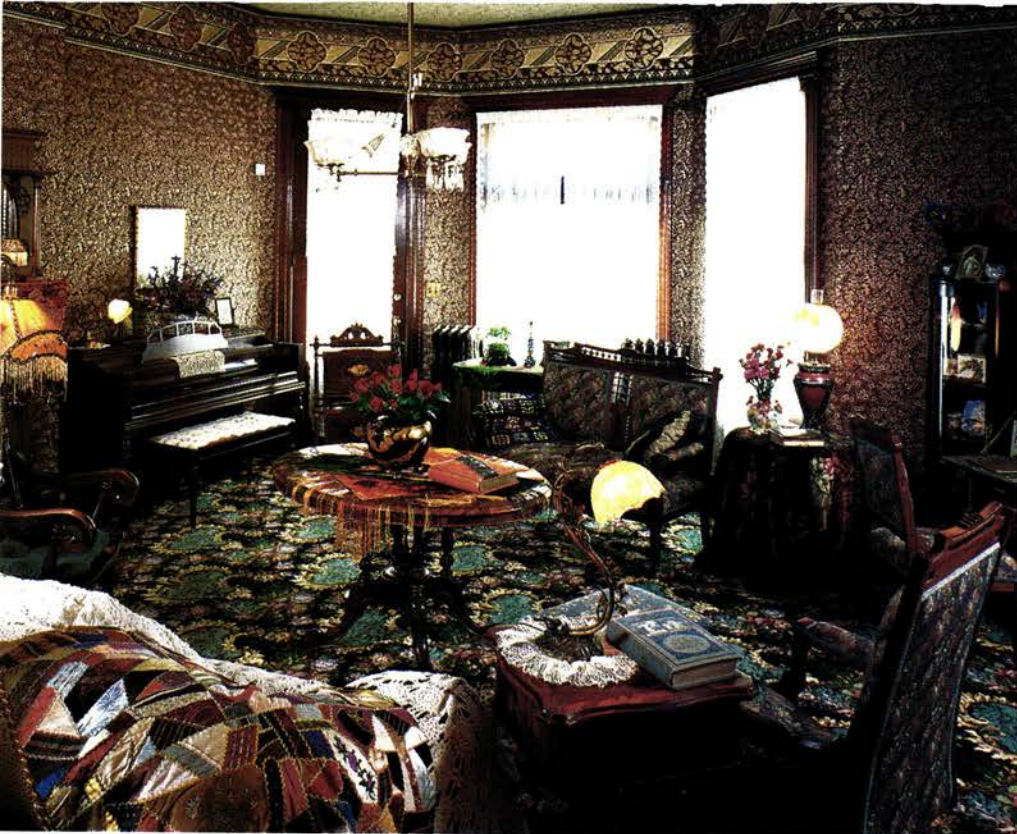




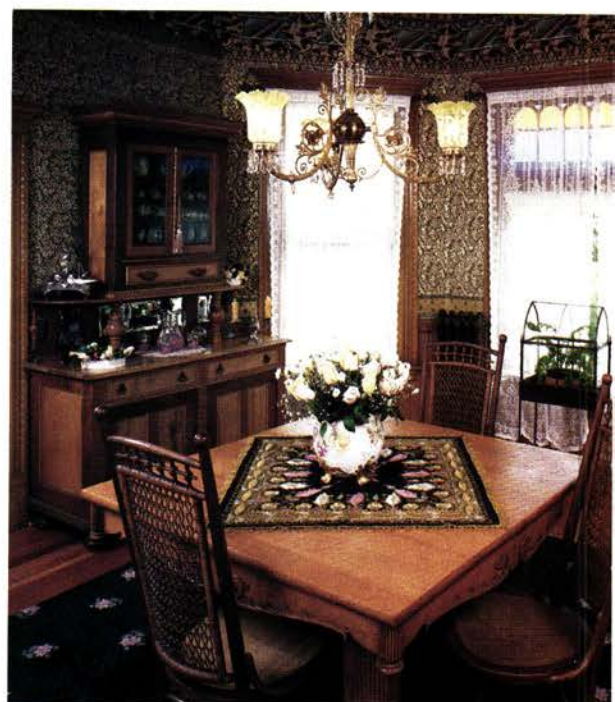
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Top left: The west parlor, furnished with Victorian antiques and collectibles. Top right: The table set and sideboard are original to the dining room. Below: Gail designed and helped lay the walkway on the east side of the house.



Placing the radiators “was like a three-dimensional puzzle. I figured out which ones would look good in the same room.”—Gail Giaimo

procedure they don’t recommend), they discovered rot everywhere. The Giaimos enlisted a team of carpenters to repair or rebuild every stick of millwork on the lavishly decorated three-storey house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“Two-thirds of the bottom window sashes had to be rebuilt,” Gail says. “We have 775 individual panes of glass here. Every one was pulled out. Whenever it was glass day, which was about two or three times a week, Glenn and I would wash them in the kitchen, hand them back to the glazier, and then cut into his backbed glazing and clean every single pane individually.”

With the exterior carefully repaired and painted, Gail and Glenn turned their attention to another project: the house’s decidedly awkward forced hot air heating system, supplemented by pellet stoves. “We hauled in 160 pounds of pellets every day just to heat this house during the winter, and ran the forced air heat on top of that,” Glenn says. “We were spending over \$600 a month on heat.”

The Giaimos wanted a more efficient system that would also look appropriate in the

house’s high Victorian interior. They decided on hot water radiators. Hot water systems tend to be more efficient than steam systems, and with vintage radiators, look just as appropriate in a 100-year-old house. A local company calculated the BTUs required, then converted that figure to give them a count of radiators of a certain size.

Now all they needed were enough vintage hot-water radiators to heat the 4,000-square-foot house. Glenn bought the first batch from



LINDA SVENDSEN (TOP)
GLENN GIAIMO (RIGHT)

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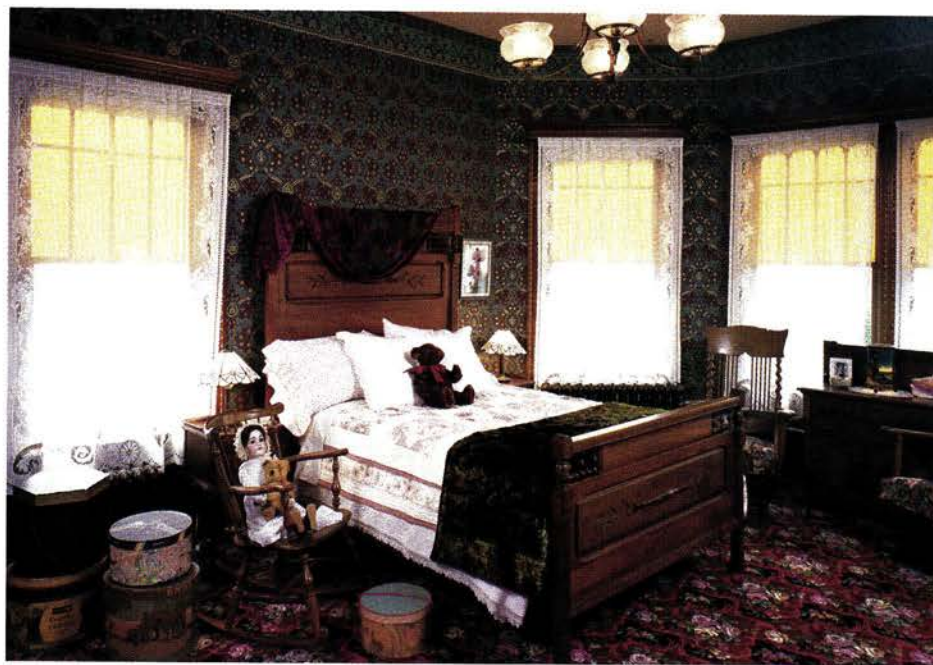
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OLD HOUSE LIVING



Glenn and Gail put old quilts to good use in the master bedroom. The Giaimos began collecting Victorian antiques before they bought the house, then added more after they moved in.

an old hotel in Eureka. "I'd get them home and half of them would leak," he says. "You have to spend hours pressure-testing them."

Then he found a Massachusetts company—A-1 New & Used Plumbing & Heating Supplies in Somerville—that would do the testing for him. The Giaimos ordered 34 radiators—totaling 7,500 pounds—and had them shipped across country. The radiators are all different. For example, one has an asparagus motif, another is patriotically decorated with stars and stripes. Each radiator was powder-coated: electrically charged, sprayed with fine gold powder, then fired at about 600 degrees F. The results are beautiful to behold.

Gail knew how many cubic feet of radiators she needed in each room, but because the radiators varied in size and style, placing them was a challenge. "It was fun—like a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. I figured out which radiators would look good in the same room."

A team of plumbers and helpers spent more than 600 hours routing polyethylene cross-link tubing through baseboards and under floorboards to link the system. A high-efficiency hot water heater pumps

water heated to 180 degrees F through the tubing to radiators on all three floors. The result is a pleasant, even heat. "It's working wonderfully," Glenn says. "A-1 deserves some credit here, because there's no way we could have figured this out on our own. We've had people walk into the house and say the radiators look like they've always been here."

Now the Giaimos are immersed in an even bigger project: creating and enlarging an old dairy barn on the property. Sympathetic to the original design, the new structure incorporates hundreds of board feet of salvaged old-growth redwood, matched sets of Eastlake hardware refurbished by Glenn, and windows glazed with vintage glass. It will house Gail's studio, an auto restoration workshop for Glenn, and a memorabilia room, complete with an 1892 soda fountain.

"We've got the old ice cream bins that go in here, strawberry and chocolate and all the different flavors," Glenn says. "There are 10 of them, and we hope to use them again."

"Oh boy," says Gail. "Another adventure."



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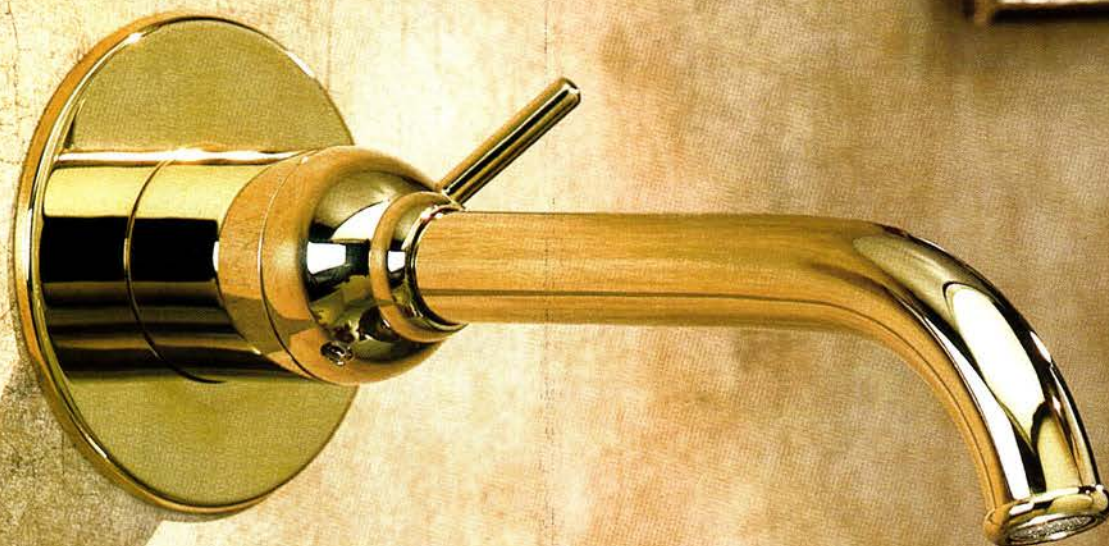
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Selling a Historic Review Board

MELANIE WERLING of Park City, Utah, had a successful track record with her town's historic district commission. After all, she and her husband had restored their 108-year-old home with matching grants from the city, a process that required the preservation board's approval for each phase of the project.

So Werling was surprised when her application for an 1,800-square-foot rear addition was turned down by the same board. In a year's time, the makeup of the commission had changed, and so had its attitudes about additions. The Werlings had stumbled on a common problem facing homeowners in historic districts: no matter how closely you follow the rules and guidelines, approval is never a foregone conclusion.

Local historic review boards have unrivaled power in many historic neighborhoods. Whether the moniker is architectural review board, historic preservation commission, or historic district commission, the bottom line is the same. The board—usually made up of volunteers—reviews anything from the width of the siding you propose to the color you intend to paint your shutters. If you fail to make a strong case for your proposal, this citizens' board may turn down your application, derailing your plans.

While the Werlings certainly don't fall

into this category, the most common mistake homeowners make is failing to consult review boards and support staff *before* they finalize plans with an architect or contractor.

When you're dealing with an agency that's the only game in town, it pays to be prepared—and to keep in touch, if that's what it takes to win approval. Here are some suggestions for getting your act together before you face the music.

- Begin working with permitting boards and agencies early and proactively. Before you even apply, attend a couple of board meetings and watch the proceedings. Meet with the key people and survey the lay of the land. Are there issues that traditionally bother the board members?
- If there are standards, what are they? Get a copy of the most recent review guidelines, and discuss how they may effect your plans with review board staff members.
- Talk to the neighbors about your plans. People like to hear the news straight from the source. It puts

them in a sympathetic frame of mind. If the folks most likely to be affected by the change don't object, gather signed statements from them.

- Understand what you're asking for and be able to justify your request. If you're asking the board to bend a well-

[continued on page 28]



lady bugs

fly away home more often than ever these days. Spring weather now brings record numbers of the Asian species, which swarm on sunny surfaces such as windows and doors. Scientists believe the bug boom tracks an explosion in aphids, their favorite food. (The aphid excess, in turn, is linked to that all-purpose ecological whipping boy, El Niño.) Whatever their source the bugs are benign



as child's verse; they don't bite humans or eat building materials. In fact, ladybugs are beneficial to agriculture and should not be harmed. The best evicting tool is a vacuum cleaner. Hold a piece of cloth over the nozzle to gather them alive, then release the bugs outdoors.

[REVIEW BOARD continued from page 27] established rule or guideline, be able to explain why you can't comply and why it's in the best interest of all concerned that you be granted a waiver.

1,800-square-foot

Werling was surprised when her application for an rear addition was turned down by the same board. In a year's time, the makeup of the commission had changed, and so had its attitudes about additions.

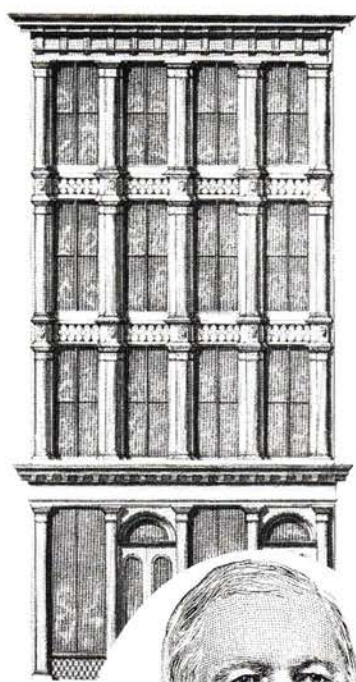
■ When you're ready to face the board, prepare a strong case for your project. Include pictures of your home and the project area, drawings

and elevations, relevant specifications, samples of proposed materials, and supporting documents—especially pictures of homes with similar renovations. Explanatory materials should be highly graphic; make the package available, in advance, to anyone who asks. Last but not least, be sure your proposal complies with all application requirements.

■ Prepare the information in a way that makes it simple for board members to explain to others why they voted the way they did. Even if the board members like the project, these volunteers have to be able to answer challenges from neighbors.

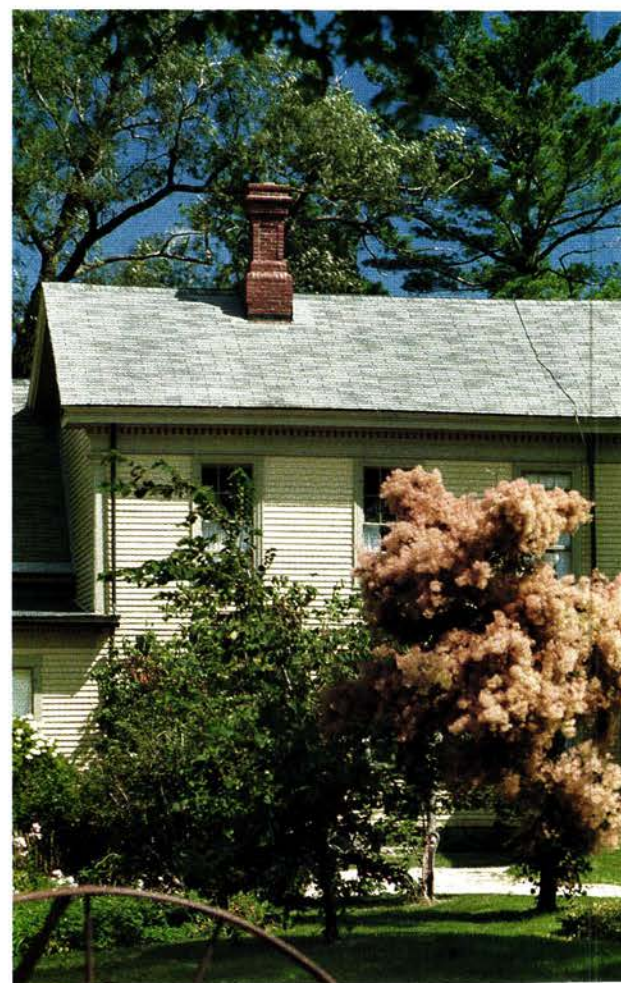
■ If all else fails, appeal—a strategy that ultimately worked for Werling, but only after her town review board once again changed its membership. Don't expect an appeal to be easy or cheap, though. At this point, you need the best legal advice you can find.

— CELIA K. LEHRMAN WITH JENNIE L. PHIPPS



who they were . . .

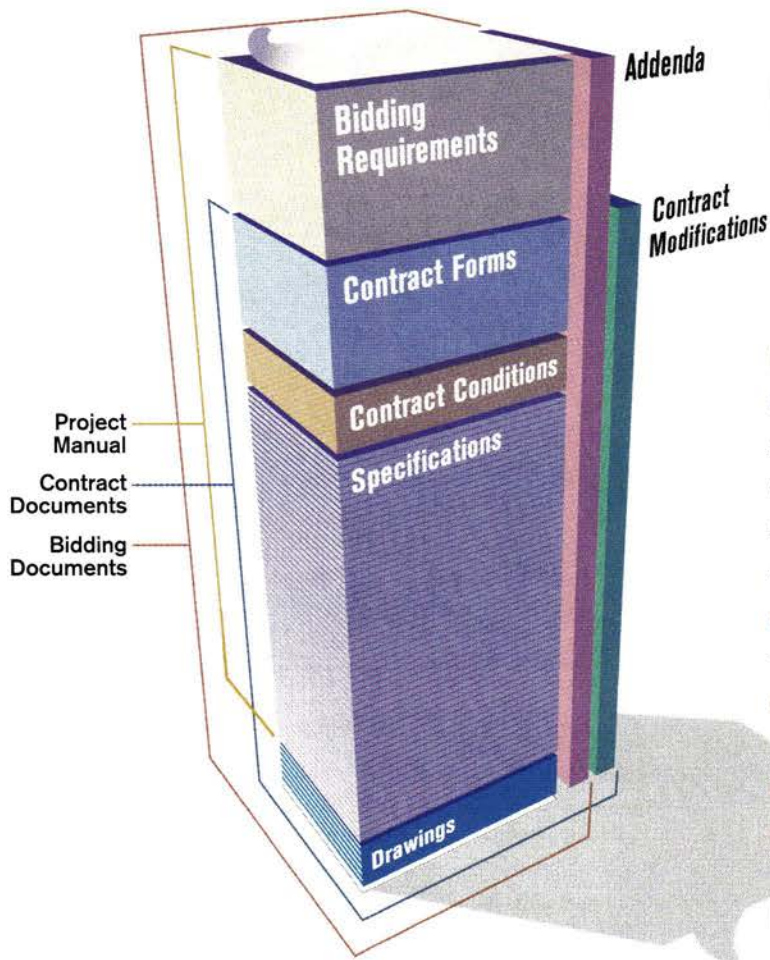
If cast iron was the marble of the Industrial Revolution, then Bogardus was its Michelangelo. Trained as a watchmaker, **James Bogardus (1800-1874)** soon expanded into inventions of all ilks, from grinding mills to printing and textile machinery. By the late 1840s he was an expert ironmaster with his own foundry in New York and a genius for exploiting the metal. Early on, Bogardus grasped iron's plastic potential beyond the mechanical needs of locomotives and bridges, or decorative uses like fencing. Calling himself an "**Architect in Iron,**" he pioneered a system of modular, cast-iron building fronts that could be mass-produced in a factory, then bolted together on-site. Bogardus-style storefronts still stand in cities across the continent, and his concept led the way to skyscrapers of the 20th century.



Deconstructing Construction Documents

More than a stack of papers, construction documents are the records and similar items that form a contract for a construction project. The exact contents may vary according to the type of work and the local requirements, but most construction documents will include:

- **OWNER-CONTRACTOR AGREEMENT** (essential terms of the construction contract)
- **CONTRACT CONDITIONS** (contract terminology, responsibilities of parties)
- **PLANS AND DRAWINGS** (project graphics)
- **SPECIFICATIONS** (written descriptions of materials, workmanship, etc.)
- **CHANGES TO THE ABOVE**



Wither the Widow's Walk?

Unmistakable among the features topping many old houses is the widow's walk. A narrow platform or walkway corralled by a railing, the origin of the widow's walk is hard to pin down. The term itself of course is romantic, painting the image of a rooftop wife scanning the horizon for a seaman who will never come home.

More down-to-earth are the practical facts. Though widow's walks are popular on the New England coast, they appear far from the shores of any sea. In the 1880s they were the height of fashion for Colonial Revival houses. They have clear ancestors in the top railings of flat-roofed Adam houses of the 18th-century, where the grille of the railing rides like a crown. Or maybe the widow's walk is closer to its Victorian cousin: cast iron roof cresting. Here the perforated band of building material becomes fencing for the roof, for the simple purpose of softening the line between house and sky.

Summer School for Old Houses

THIS JUNE, James Massey and Shirley Maxwell, OHJ's longtime Contributing Editors, will present their annual intensive short course, "The Restoration and Preservation of Historic Houses and Buildings," at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. The course can be taken as a credit-bearing part of the Certificate Program in Historic Preservation at Drew, or simply for personal education.

As in the past, Jim and Shirley will supplement their engaging lectures and readings with a hands-on study of a building on the Drew campus. This year's "living laboratory" will be Sycamore Cottage, an early house that was once part of the local Gibbons estate. During the study, the class will break into teams to measure, photograph, and record the building to produce a mini Historic Structures Report. Students will also make recommendations to the University for the preservation of this historic property.

The course starts June 6, 2000 and continues on a rolling schedule to accommodate classroom and field study: June 8 (7 to 9 pm); June 10 (9am to 4 pm); June 13 (9am to 2pm), and June 14 and 15 (7 to 9pm). For more information on the course or the Certificate Program, contact Pat Peek at Continuing Education (973-408-3185).

VERNACULAR HOUSES



SOUTHCOTT HOUSES

Two great fires and a family of builders gave St. John's, Newfoundland, its characteristic house. Builders John and James Southcott arrived in the capital city to help rebuild soon after the first fire, in 1846. By the time of the second conflagration, in 1892, the brothers' version of the Second Empire style was so popular that most residential streets were rebuilt with Southcott houses. Southcotts usually feature two bay windows on the first storey and a bell-cast, mansard roof with three bonnet-topped dormers. The most unusual feature is the lack of a front door; the main entrance is at the side. Southcotts remain popular in St. John's today.

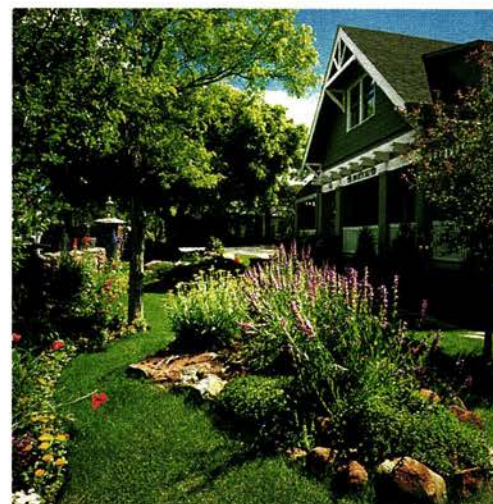
— Katherine Ashenburg, Toronto, Ont.

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Just over 100 years old, the Inn at 410 has been through a lot of changes. It began life as a Folk Victorian farmhouse in 1894, then went big time when a millionaire banker gave it an Arts & Crafts makeover in 1907. By the 1970s, it was a fraternity house. "After the frat left, the house was turned into student apartments, so it had been pretty roundly neglected," says Howard Krueger, who bought the inn with his wife, Sally, in 1993. "We're just so happy that the common areas have historic character." **4 suites, 5 rooms, \$125-175, 410 N. Leroux St., Flagstaff, AZ**

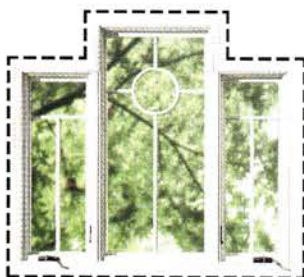
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The Culture of Grass *by Nina A. Koziol*

IN ALL ITS LUSH GREEN, velvety splendor, the lawn sets the stage for the American residential landscape. Often manicured to perfection and free from weeds, thanks to dotting homeowners and landscape services, the lawn provides an attractive setting where children play and adults enjoy park-like vistas that sweep across property lines. What would summer be without the familiar buzz of lawnmowers and the constant “shushing” of sprinklers?

Surprisingly, the lawn as we know it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Before the close of the Civil War, only the wealthy had lawns. Enamored of the rolling turf of English manor houses, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson sowed seas of green around their estates. One 19th-century visitor to Monticello recalled a “beautiful lawn of two or three acres, where his grandchildren used to play a great deal.” Most early Americans, however, were too busy maintaining their households and farms to think about creating lawns for pleasure.

In colonial times, “mowing the lawn” meant setting livestock on the tangle of wild grasses and native flowers that comprised the home landscape, or infrequent shearings with a sharp scythe. Since it took three skilled workmen a full day to scythe an acre of ground in the 19th century, the manicured lawn remained a fallow idea until about 1870, when the first push-type, reel mowers were introduced. Coincidentally, that

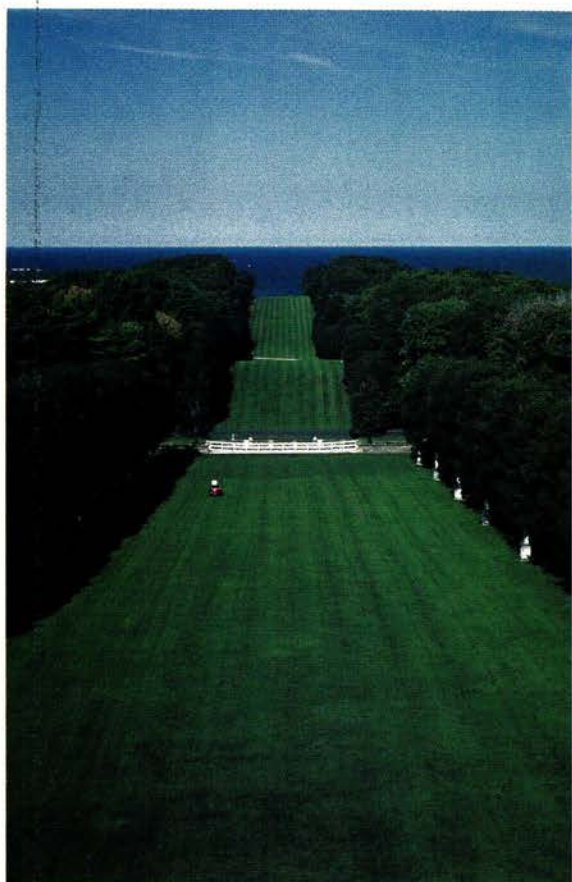


was also the year that Frank J. Scott advocated the lawnmower in his seminal book, *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds*. Advertisements touted the Excelsior lawnmower as “so simple and safe a child can use it.”

Armed with more leisure time, homes in suburban settings, and disposable cash, Victorian homeowners quickly embraced the lawn for its aesthetic and practical virtues. Well-tended turf became a status symbol and the perfect frame for properties small or large. Servants hauled tables and chairs outdoors and placed them on the living green carpet in what became the “outdoor parlor.” Later, mass-produced iron chairs and settees and rough-hewn rustic benches replaced hastily moved indoor furniture, and the lawn became a refuge where homeowners played cro-

*In colonial times,
“mowing the lawn”
meant setting livestock
on the tangle of wild
grasses and native flowers
that comprised the
home landscape.*

Opposite: Maintaining a manicured lawn at Drayton Hall, an 18th-century plantation near Charleston, S.C., would have required intensive labor. Top: Jefferson’s grandchildren played on the lawn at Monticello.



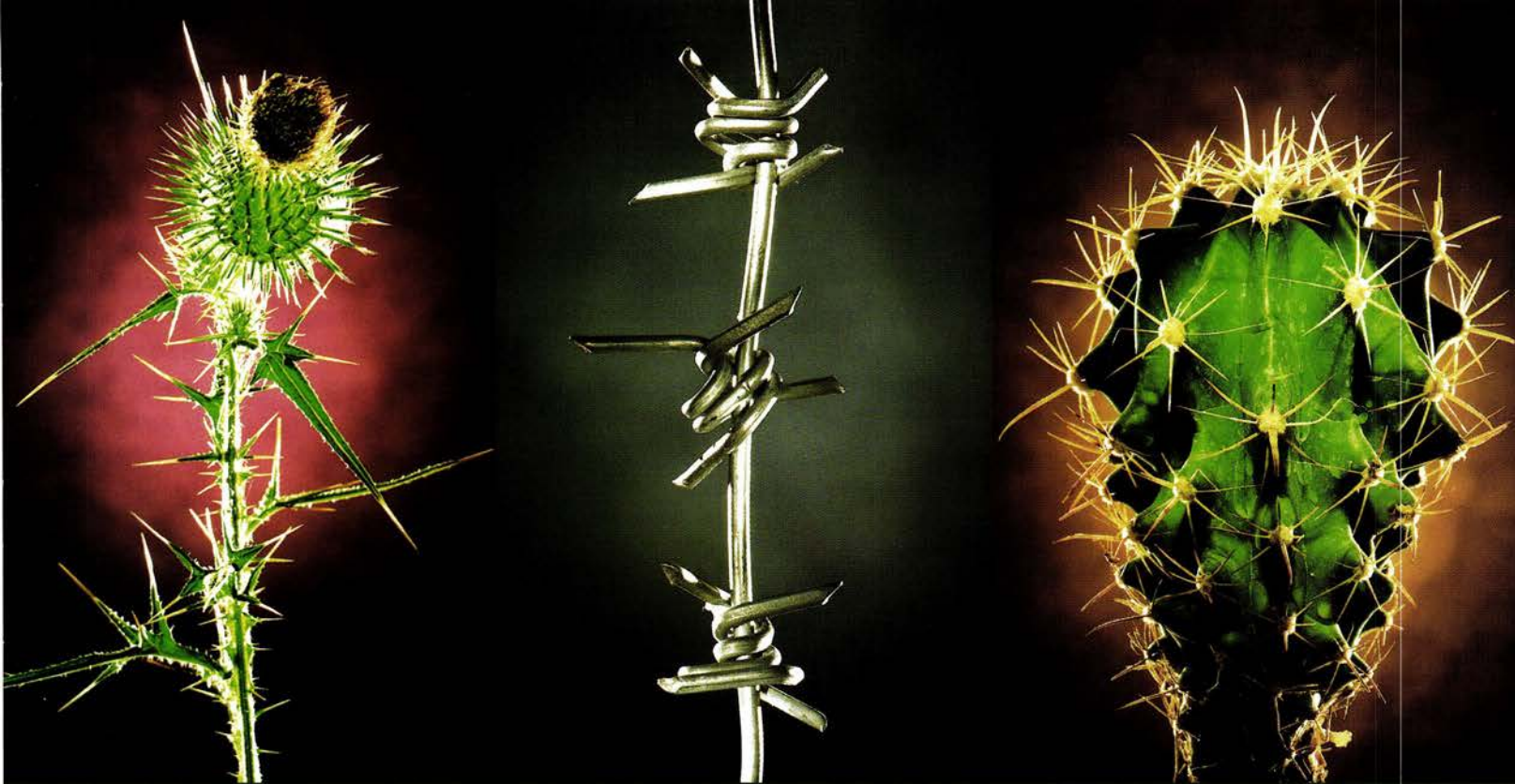
Clockwise from top left: The Grand Allee cuts a green swath to the sea at the Crane Estate in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Freshly mown grass was a status symbol to lawn-proud Victorians. Before the Civil War, rural lawns would likely have been scythed. A neatly kept circle of grass is the centerpiece for an early-20th-century driveway.



quet, badminton, or simply lolled on the grass.

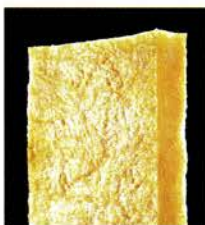
In spite of watering and mowing, however, the lawns of yesteryear little resembled the uniform, green, pristine lawns we know today. Victorians sowed seeds of coarse pasture grasses to cushion the ground and prevent erosion. Sod, lifted from nearby meadows or prairies, contained numerous weeds and an assortment of tough native grasses. Homeowners overlooked the presence of dandelions, clover, plantain, and other invaders as long as they contributed to the illusion of a flat, verdant surface.

Enterprising homeowners achieved the effect of a sweeping green carpet by frequently rolling the lawn with cement rollers or metal cylinders filled with water for extra weight. A



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JM Johns Manville



"The smooth, closely shaven surface of grass is by far the most essential element of beauty on the grounds of the suburban home." —FRANK J. SCOTT, 1870

well-kept lawn, in Frank J. Scott's view, was as important as a well-kept house. "Neatness and order are as essential to the pleasing effect of ground furniture as of house furniture," he wrote. By the 1920s, homeowners pitted lawn as well as house against their neighbors' in "home beautiful" competitions.

After World War II, the well-manicured lawn became a fact of life in America. The quintessential post-war suburb, Levittown, required tenants to cut the lawn at least once a week during the growing season. Meanwhile, the popularity of golf led to the development of fine-textured varieties of Kentucky bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass, cultivated for uniformity of color,

shape, durability, and hardiness.

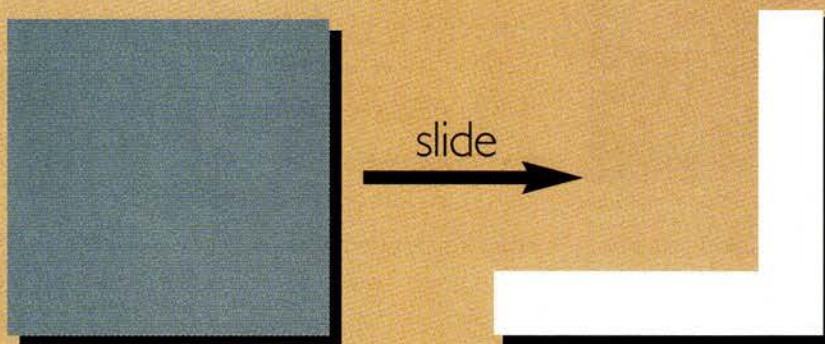
A far cry from the roughly cut lawns of the colonial past, the 20th-century lawn is a truly artificial creation, dependent on the lawnmower for its health and good looks. Here are a few tips to keep your grass green as a dollar bill.

- Rake up leaves, debris, and dead grass before the first spring mowing.
- Select grass seed suited to local conditions to reseed bare areas. Most grasses require full sun to maintain a rich green hue.
- Set your mower blades so that the grass remains about 2" to 2 1/2" tall. Cutting grass too short will stress it and encourage weeds. Aim to cut not more than 1/3 the height of

the grass blades with each mowing.

- Grass growing in shade requires less fertilizer and less mowing than grass in full sun. Where trees cast dense shade, consider replacing thin or poorly performing grass with mulch or shade-tolerant ground covers, such as ivy, pachysandra, or periwinkle.
- Vary your mowing pattern once a month. Running the mower in the same direction each time can compact the soil in the wheel tracks. Sharpen mower blades regularly for crisp cutting.
- Leave grass clippings where they fall to help return nitrogen to the soil.
- Lawn rolling in the spring can help push grass roots heaved upward by freezing and

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thawing back into place. Roll when the ground is moist, but not soggy.

- Water thoroughly to develop strong, deep root systems. Avoid occasional light sprinklings, which causes shallow roots and can make the grass more susceptible to disease, insects, and drought. Water early in the day rather than at night. Night-time watering can encourage fungal disease.
- If there is no rain, provide 1" of water each week. Use a small bowl in the center of the lawn to help measure. When the weather is hot and sunny, apply 1" of water every three days.
- Use a de-thatching or aerating machine in spring or fall, when the lawn has time to recover. The dead, spongy layer of grass at the base of the blades can prevent water from reaching the roots.
- Diseased lawns are often the result of poor drainage and over-fertilization. If in-



ROGER FOLEY PHOTO

Once shunned as an invader, clover is making a comeback.

sects are causing the problem, the local cooperative extension service or garden supply can help you identify the pest and suggest a control method.

- Take it easy with chemicals. Avoid "all-purpose" pesticides that can be toxic to many beneficial creatures, such as earth-

worms. Take a cue from the Victorians — lawns don't have to be perfectly weed-free and green year round. Use spot applications of herbicides to treat specific weeds, and avoid using pesticides on drought-stressed lawns.

- Fertilize and seed lawns in late summer or early fall when they face less competition from weeds. A soil test kit will help you determine what nutrients to add to the lawn.
- Renovate an existing lawn by mowing it to about half its normal height. Use a metal rake to remove clippings and thatch, and to expose soil and pull up weeds. Sow seeds, rake the entire area and spread with a thin layer of topsoil. Water newly seeded areas frequently.

NINA KOZIOL is a garden designer in Palos Park, Illinois.

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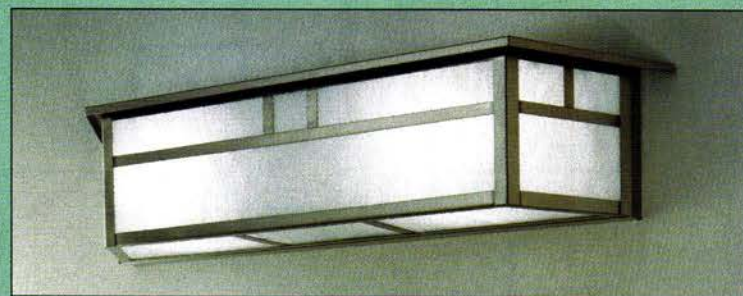
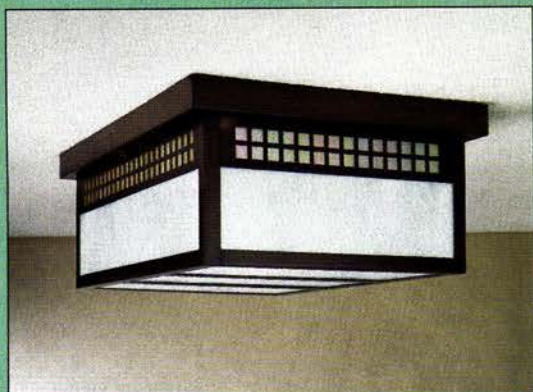
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For Fans of Attic Fans *by William T. Cox Jr.*

BEFORE REFRIGERANT air conditioning grew common in houses, when you flipped a switch to “turn on the air” that’s just what you got. An attic fan circulates outdoor air—be it dry, humid, dusty, or all of the above—throughout the living space, while purging the upper floors of hot, stale atmosphere. Even on a tropical night, the power of an attic fan pulling a breeze through the bedroom window can drive you under the covers. Attic fans—or whole house ventilation systems as they are called today—are original fixtures in many pre-1950s houses. They can still be effective once you become familiar with their needs and ways.

To Air Is Human

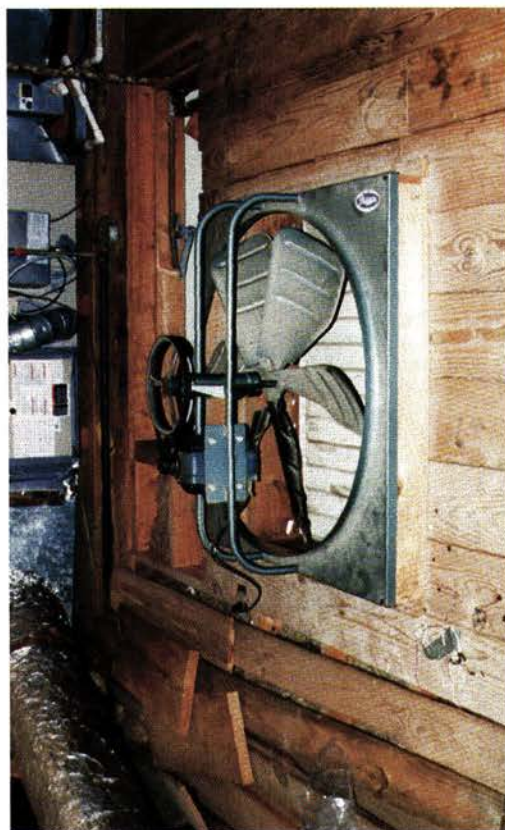
AN ATTIC FAN should circulate at least one complete air exchange through the house very two minutes. By doing so, it can lower the indoor temperature an average of 7 degrees F, depending upon the outdoor air temperature. In addition, the movement of air over skin aids the body’s own cooling system, perspiration. An attic fan also helps extend the life span of the roof by keeping its underside cooler.

Generally, an attic fan is economical—about a nickel an hour to run compared to 50 cents for an air conditioner. (Check your local rates.) In northern areas, a \$300 attic fan investment may eliminate the need for air conditioning altogether. It may even save you money if you try this trick. Close off the house, then run the fan briefly to search for drafty windows

and gaps in the building envelope that leak heat during the winter months.

Get Familiar with Your Fan

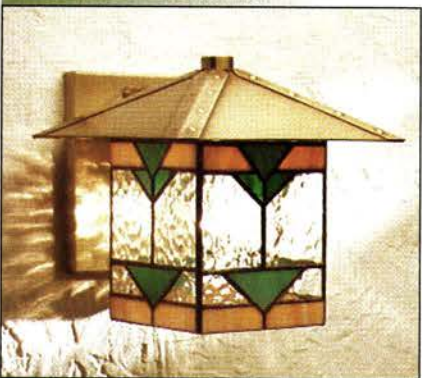
ATTIC FANS RANGE in size from 22" in diameter up to . . . well, the biggest I’ve ever seen was a little over 6' across. Look for a name plate on the motor or frame stamped with the specifications: speed (RPM), power output (HP), power consumption (AMPS or WATTS), and even the cor-



Attic fans vary widely, but they are such simple devices it only takes a little mechanical dexterity to fix or maintain them.

The typical attic fan is a simple assembly of blades, belt, and motor mounted in a gable end. The free vent area is the wall opening minus the exterior louvers.

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*Using an attic fan, you'll learn what doors to crack or windows to open—
Should it be the top sashes in the morning or bottom sashes at night?*

rect direction of rotation. Yes, I've seen fans running backwards because someone tinkered with the wiring. Older, larger fans should spin at around 700 rpm or lower, moving air at 8 to 10 mph. Most pre-1970 fans are belt-driven; today there are more direct-drive models.

Before you get anywhere near an attic fan, be sure to cut the power at the circuit panel. This way the motor will be de-energized, and no one will unknowingly start the fan while you're working on it.

CHECK THE BEARINGS Rotate the blades by hand, being careful not to place your fingers between the belt and the pulleys. If the fan is difficult to turn, the bearings may need lubrication. Look for oil cups on the fan shaft and the ends of the motor casing. They should have spring loaded caps on little cups. Add a drop or two of all-purpose oil, no more. Newer motors have sealed bearings and can't be lubricated. Very old motors may have grease cups that require bearing grease—not oil.

CHECK THE BELT Look for fraying, cracking, and splitting—all signs of fatigue. Also, check the pulley rims for rough or sharp edges and groove wear. If the belt is on the way out, take it to an auto parts store for an exact replacement. Belt tension should be similar to that for an automotive fan belt—about 1/2" of deflection

when you push the belt midway between pulleys. Many fans have self-adjusting motor mounts, but if the old or new belt needs tightening, loosen the motor mount bolts and reposition the motor accordingly.

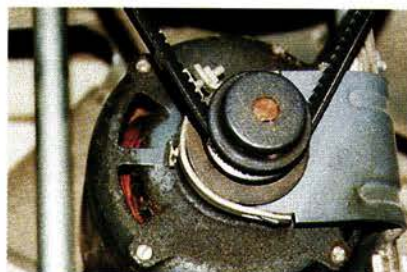
CHECK THE BLADES If the shaft, bracing, and blades are covered with a thick coat of gunk (oil plus many years' worth

of dust), it's a good idea to clean everything. Cleaning will remove the extra weight that can unbalance the blades and strain the motor. Unless the oil is excessive, don't worry. Years of use often produce a slight leak in the fan shaft that will require more frequent oiling.

CHECK THE OPERATION Turn the electricity on and flick the switch. If all you get is a hum, the starting capacitor or the motor may be burned out. These parts can be rebuilt by an electric motor shop (check the Yellow Pages) or replaced by an electrician. The only way to check for blade bal-



ance is to run the fan. If the fan vibrates to the point of rattling the windows throughout the house, a blade or bearing could be defective, and you may want to replace the entire unit. When in doubt, let an electrician look the fan over.

Attic fans are sized to the living space. The net free vent area must also be correct to prevent back pressure. If the fan cannot exhaust properly, it will run as noisy



Top: Look for oil caps near the motor bearings (center in photo) and on the blade shaft. Above: Plywood or insulation blocks heat loss through the vent in winter.

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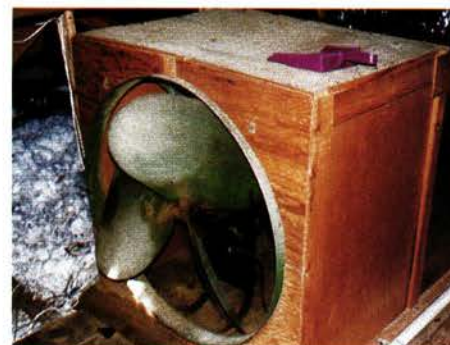
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Shrouds and cowlings are common. This fan draws from a second-floor ceiling register.

as a helicopter and strain the motor. Use a loose, simple formula to calculate both. Take the square footage of the living space to be cooled and multiply by three (four in warm, humid climates) to determine the fan capacity in CFM (Cubic Feet per Minute). Dividing the CFM by 750 gives you the required vent area in square feet, minus any obstructions.

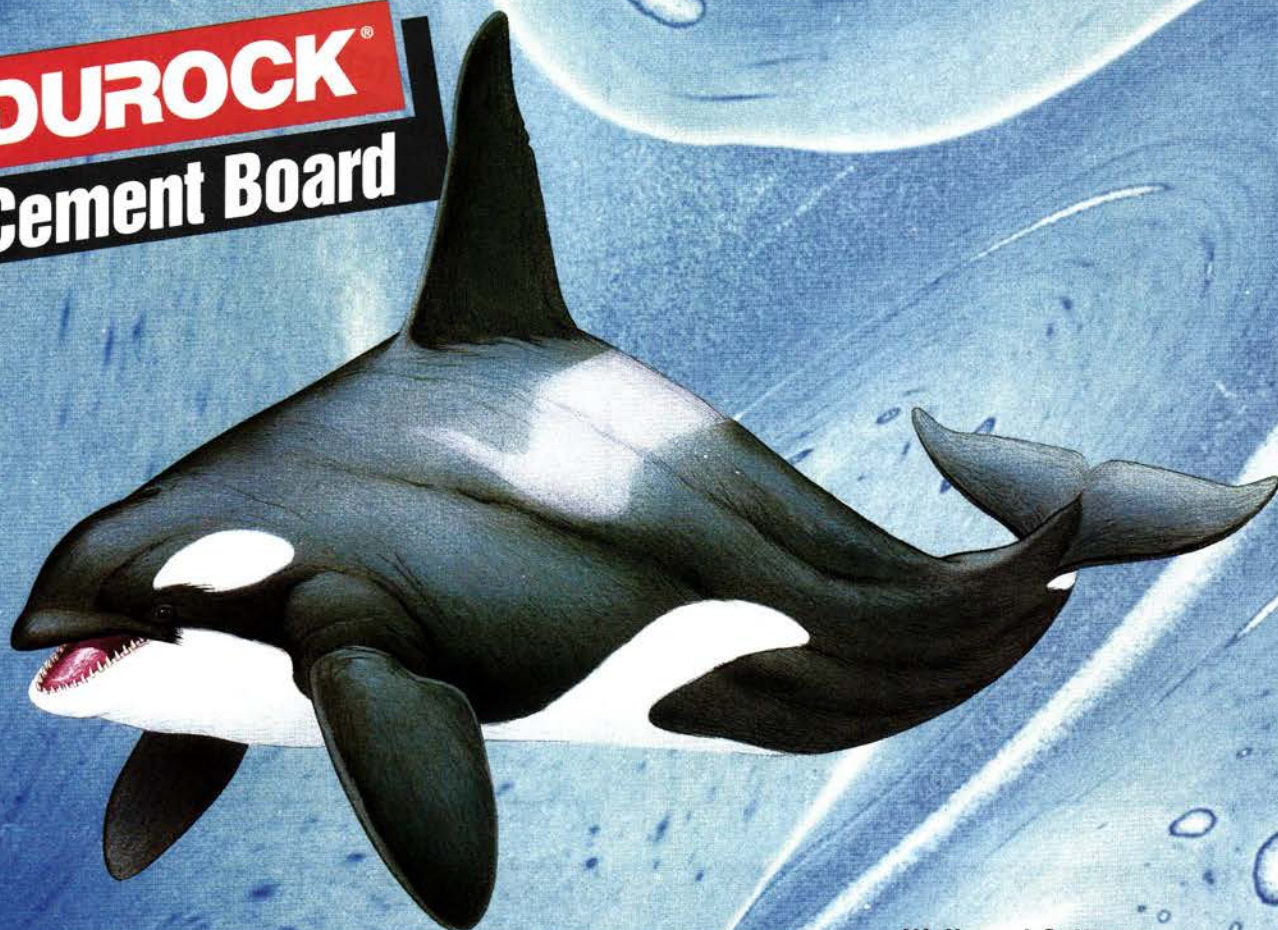
Safety First, Always

SEVERAL SAFETY DEVICES should always be installed with an attic fan. In the event of a fire, a fan can act like a blast furnace before it stops. Louvers on the exterior of the building are supposed to have fusible links that close the vent in case of fire. The motor should be wired with a thermostatically controlled switch and firestat (rated for 204°F) to interrupt power. Consult the local building codes or building inspector for the requirements in your area.

When winter comes, you'll probably want to disconnect the power and insulate the fan vent opening to avoid giving those summer savings back to the weather gods. Till then, try the old attic fan for one summer. You may forget the icy world of ducts and filters, and find yourself living in a warmer atmosphere while feeling cooler.

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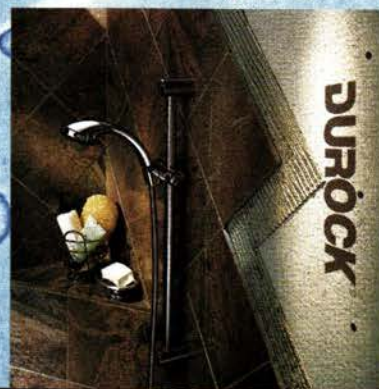
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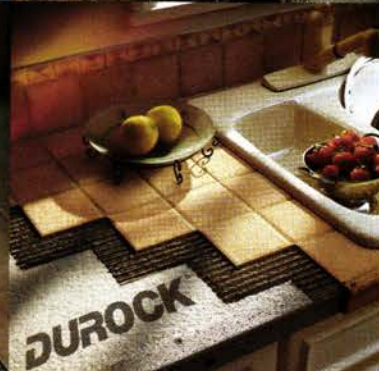
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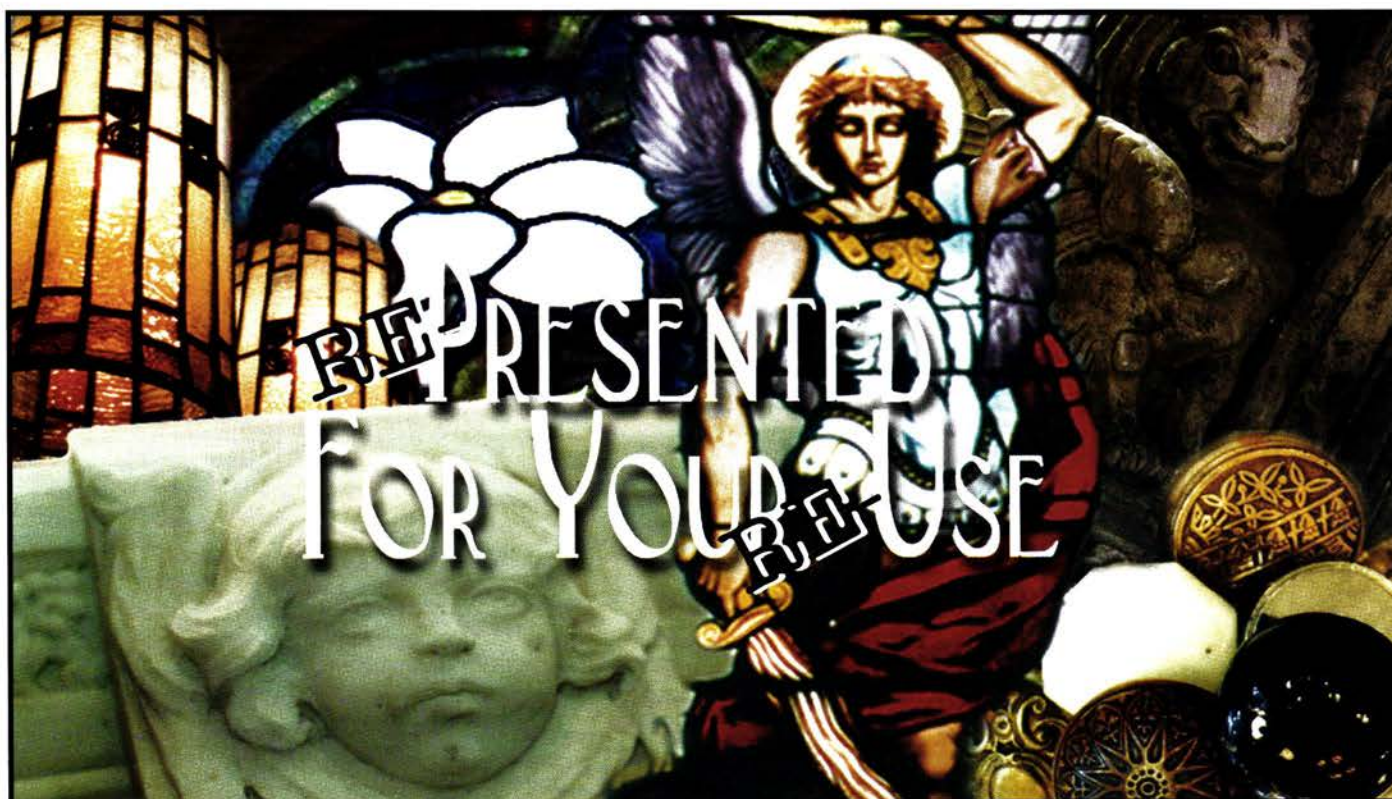
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Mechanical Doorbells *by Brian D. Coleman and H. Weber Wilson*

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MEAN a lot and a mechanical doorbell can be a charming first contact with an old house. Like vintage buildings, however, most vintage doorbells need attention. Here's a quick course in how the various types operate, and what to look for if you find an old doorbell that needs repairs.

Mechanical doorbells came into fashion in the 1870s, before the dawn of the ubiquitous electric doorbell, but after the heyday of exterior pulls that operate a bell on a spring. Typically an iron case with a flat back and two screw tabs, mechanical bells mount on the interior side of the front door. A mechanism of springs and levers rings the bell via one of several types of exterior activators.

CRANK BELLS—Early bells from the 1870s have a fancy crank handle of decorated bronze, sometimes topped with a large, white porcelain knob. The crank extends through the door to the bell, like a door knob spindle through a lock. It turns in either direction to set off a series of short, sharp rings.

T-LEVER BELLS—These bells are activated by T-shaped levers cast with a long post that extends through the door. When you pull the lever, it trips the bell springs, causing the hammer to strike the bell—usually on both the down and up strokes. Visitors of the past often confused these bells with twist types, so it is unusual to find them without a slightly wrenched profile.

TWIST BELLS—Popular at the turn of this century, twist bells use clockworks to spin two or three tiny, iron nuggets against the bell's gong. Visitors would work the thumb twist back and forth, creating a long, multi-noted jangle.

The mechanics of crank and T-lever bells are basically the same. Remove the gong and you will see a straightforward set-up of levers, springs, and trip hammers. The cast parts are invariably iron, and while they may show wear, usually don't break. Springs, however, can break. You can replace springs with needle nose pliers. Look for substitutes in the assortments at good hardware stores or auto parts suppliers.

The gong rarely exhibits any problems beyond overpaint, which can be stripped with commercial products or softened by soaking in a solution of hot water and TSP. Gongs are usually brass and often nickel-plated—a popular pre-1920 finish that requires infrequent polishing. Nickel should be preserved or replated, not stripped.

Gongs mount to the mechanical base with either a small, threaded rod soldered to the underside, or with a threaded nut that extends through a square hole. Unfortunately, these specially threaded bolts were often replaced with modern bolts that use different threads, often damaging the tapped hole in the base. Make sure the nut is original; only another old doorbell will yield a replacement.

When buying a vintage doorbell start with a complete unit. Open it up and study the parts to make sure they are intact and properly functioning.



Top: This fancy T-lever gong from 1879 sits on a threaded cast iron post—a part that is often stripped. The acorn bolt has special flats that fit the square hole. **Right:** A T-lever actuator in the Aesthetic style.

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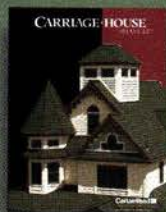
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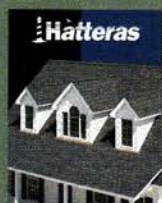
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Left: Note the missing washers (arrow on ringer arm) in this clockwork bell. Above: Poor gong seating muffles the bell. Right: Allen wrenches will fit the thumbturn post socket.

Note that when the gong is poorly seated it may touch other parts of the mechanism, damping the rings. It is also not unusual to find antique doorbells with mismatched gongs that do not allow the hammer to hit the bell. Moreover, when an antique bell doesn't function properly it's often because you have a Frankenstein of components from other bells—the typical source of spare parts.

The steel hammer head is the one part that can be welded. In fact, it pays to see if it already has been repaired; the bell's value will be lower. Cast iron is more difficult to weld, so be prepared to live with most damage. Cracks or chips in the base may not be obvious once the bell is mounted, and they often don't affect the function of the bell. Broken mounting screw tabs may make it difficult to mount.

Twisted T-levers should be heated by a professional to bend the bronze back into shape. You may also find that in the past someone trimmed the trip rod that extends through the door. It is difficult to extend the length of a trip rod, so be sure to measure the thickness of your door or

wall before you cut holes for the bell.

The biggest problems in clockwork bells are overworked gears that strip or jam. These gears, usually made from soft brass, are nearly impossible to repair and equally hard to replace. If the gears turn smoothly, but the bell doesn't ring properly, remove the gong and see if the ringer is complete. This mechanism is a little arm with tiny washers at each end that spin

around and hit the gong. Missing washers can be replaced with patience and ingenuity.

The key component of any clockwork bell system is the thin, square rod that connects the outside thumb twist and the inside bell works. Without this

rod the bell will not operate. Fortunately, you can fashion a new rod from an Allen (hex) wrench. Just find the wrench size that fits and hack saw it to the proper length.

It is relatively easy to find good examples of T-lever bells at antique shows and salvage shops. In fact, many bells and T-levers can be mixed and matched. Reproduction twist and T-lever bells are usually undecorated brass and much lighter in weight than the originals, but even easier to obtain.



Crank-type bell, 1871.

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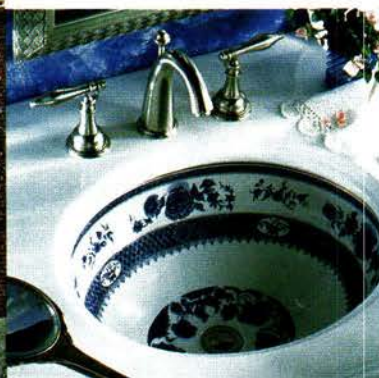
"You should always keep resale in mind when restoring your house, even if you intend to live in your dream bungalow or Queen Anne forever."

—page 56



May/June 2000

"By the door a graceful, partially enclosed staircase wound up to the second floor. Every room could be warmed by a fireplace—every room save one. The lack of one fireplace and a few important stones in the south foundation became latent defects in this otherwise solidly built brick house. Nearly 200 years later these long-term time bombs would bring one wall close to collapsing and threaten the entire house." —page 68



"'The whole surface of your body may be gone over with one wash bowl full of water,' admonished Eliza Rotch Farrar in The Young Lady's Friend (1837). 'By practice you will become so expert as not to make any slop on the carpet.'" —page 66

**Restoring an old house may
be a labor of love, but that
doesn't mean you should ever
lose sight of the bottom line.**

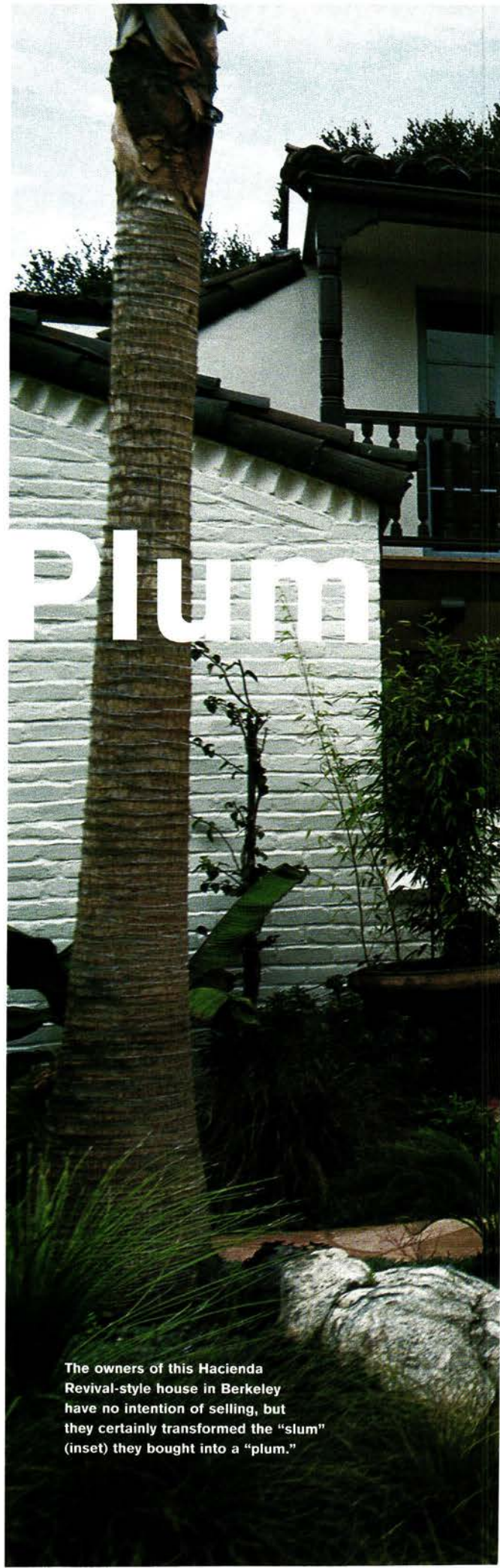
From Slum to Plum

By Jane Powell | Photographs by Linda Svendsen

ALL MY LIFE I've had this weakness for run-down old houses. It's like taking in stray animals; I want to save them. To make my addiction socially acceptable, I started fixing up bungalows and reselling them for profit. Since I suspect that there are more people out there like me, and since I can't save every old house in America, I want to encourage others to do the same by sharing some of the things I've learned. You should always keep resale in mind when restoring your house, even if you intend to live in your dream bungalow or Queen Anne forever. Circumstances change, and you might have to sell. Most of the rules I've formulated in a decade of renovating for resale make good sense whether you plan to turn the place over immediately or live there happily ever after. Here's my punch list.

BUY THE RIGHT HOUSE AT THE RIGHT PRICE. All of the real estate clichés about location are true: Buy the worst house in the best neighborhood; avoid houses on busy streets and other undesirable locations; don't buy in a run-down neighborhood unless it has started to turn around.

Some additional rules apply to old houses. Don't buy a house with an awkward floor plan, and there's no such thing as a cosmetic fixer-upper. Because charm is expensive to put back, I only buy houses where most of the architectural elements are intact. Contrary to the advice of many real estate experts, it's OK to buy a house with structural problems, but only at the right price. Granted, there's no profit in rebuilding the foundation, but if you can get \$25,000 off the price to cover the cost of repairs,



The owners of this Hacienda Revival-style house in Berkeley have no intention of selling, but they certainly transformed the "slum" (inset) they bought into a "plum."



How much should you pay?

First, research the potential selling price for the house you intend to fix up. Ask the real estate agent for an estimate, or look at "comparables"—similar properties in good condition that have recently sold in the area. Decide how much profit you'd like to make (I try for \$25,000 per house), then figure out the cost of needed repairs. If you're not going to live on site, calculate the carrying costs for the time it will take to renovate the house. Here's my formula:

\$250,000	Sales price of renovated house
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-\$50,000	Fix-up costs
-\$7,800	Carrying costs at 6 months principle, taxes, and interest

\$152,700 Maximum price to pay

Obviously, the tricky part is determining how much the renovation will set you back. You can get an estimate from a contractor, but it helps to have an idea of the dollar value for specific jobs and fittings. Here are some items that usually have to be included as part of the renovation. (*Starred items add value above their cost.)

- Exterior paint*
- Interior paint*

you may come out ahead. Try to avoid houses with significant drainage problems, however; these can be complex and expensive to resolve.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT. Many home renovators have a misguided tendency to rip out the old and do it all new—new plumbing, new wiring, new windows, and new drywall. These improvements may



Reglazing the windows will more than repay the cost of labor and materials.

- New electric service/adding wiring
- Floor refinishing*
- Window repair/sash replacement*
- Structural repairs/rot
- Bathroom re-do*
- Kitchen re-do*
- New deck or porch*
- Plaster patching*

The following items won't be needed in every house, but some fixer-uppers will need them:

- New roof
- New foundation
- New central heat/AC
- Fireplace repair
- New plumbing
- Drainage

be well and good, but they do not add value to the house. My advice is to repair what is repairable, replace what is not, and spend your extra money on the kitchen.

PATCH ALL THE PLASTER CRACKS. Prospective home buyers believe that every plaster crack represents a huge structural problem—even though most plaster cracks are cosmetic. A few plaster washers, tape, and

deft application of spackling compound or putty will work wonders on superficial cracks and holes.

ENHANCE THE ARCHITECTURE. Each style of residential architecture has its own vocabulary of design elements and materials. These details are what make the house "read" as Greek Revival, Arts & Crafts, or Shingle style. As you renovate, let the house be what it is. Don't try to turn a bungalow into a Queen Anne by adding spindle work. If the house is stucco, don't cover it with wood siding, or vice versa. Maintain the original window configurations and patterns. Since the roof is a major character-defining feature of the house, avoid any alterations that affect the roofline.

THERE'S NO PROFIT IN STRIPPING PAINT.

On the exterior, scrape off loose paint, then prime and re-coat. On the interior, just refresh the paint if the woodwork is painted. (If it's clear finished, don't paint over varnish or shellac in an attempt to make the house "light and bright.") The only surfaces worth stripping are hardware or other metals—they're small and easy to strip, and polished hardware is like jewelry for the house.

Spend your money on details with impact. Potential buyers respond positively to gleaming wood floors, an attractive fireplace, polished hardware, appropriate light fixtures, and most important, color. All are relatively inexpensive to add to a house, and when done well, they create a more favorable impression than a \$5,000 kitchen refrigerator.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ROOM IS THE KITCHEN.

People want the following amenities in a kitchen: a built-in dishwasher (you don't need an expensive European model), disposal, frost-free refrigerator, gas stove, and sufficient cabinets and electrical outlets. As long as these elements are present, I've always found that the house sells quickly,

even when the kitchen looks as old as the rest of the house.

This doesn't mean you should overspend. Period-appropriate cabinetry and countertops have more impact than expensive appliances. Unfinished, custom or semi-custom cabinets that you paint are not terribly expensive if you find the right cabinetmaker. Finish the counters with inexpensive tile (\$5 per square foot). Appropriate drawer pulls and cabinet knobs are also relatively inexpensive if you buy them at builder's supply stores. A nice-looking faucet shouldn't cost more than \$150. Simple light fixtures with brass canopies and glass shades are appropriate to most house styles, since old-house kitchens tend to be fairly utilitarian.

BATHROOMS PAY YOU BACK. A single bathroom is usually adequate for a two-bedroom house, but a house with three or more bedrooms should have at least a bath-and-a-half or two full baths. Adding a second bath to a three-bedroom house will more than pay for itself in the next sale.

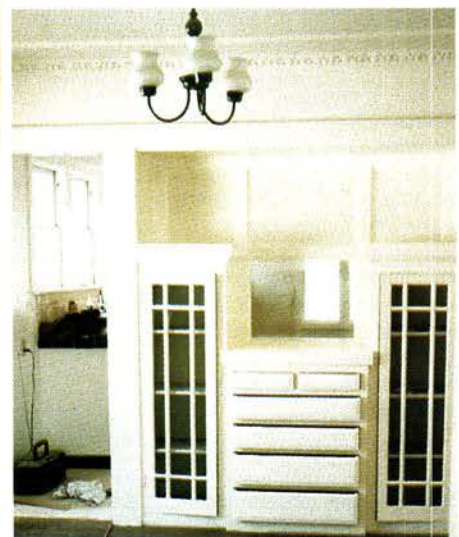
Bathrooms need a shower, tub (or shower-tub combination), sink, toilet, and some storage space. With old houses, it's important to make bathrooms look like they belong in the house. A bath with a hexagonal tile floor, tile or beadboard wainscoting, clawfoot tub (with shower), wall-hung or pedestal sink with porcelain-handled faucets, and a simple wooden medicine cabinet would fit into any house built up until about 1930. (Obviously, houses built in 1820 did not have indoor plumbing, but in that case, the idea is to put in a bathroom that could have been added in 1885.) Houses from the 1920s or '30s can have fabulous combinations of colored tile: lavender and green, peach and black, and so forth.

PAINT IS YOUR FRIEND. Nothing else improves the house so much and yet costs so little—only 4 cents per square foot. I use



the same interior color scheme on every house I restore. I paint the formal rooms and bedrooms a color I call "nebulous peach." The peach color has more warmth than the typical off-white that experts recommend, yet it is neutral enough to go with most decors. I use a lighter tint of the wall color above the picture moulding and on the ceiling. If the woodwork is painted, give it a fresh coat of cream-colored semi-gloss. I paint kitchens and bathrooms a creamy off-white or vanilla.

A good coat of exterior paint is extremely important for curb appeal. Since it's impossible to make a good choice from a paint chip, buy test paints in quart or



All it took to revive the charm of this bungalow dining room with original built-ins was a little fresh paint and an appropriate light fixture.



Keeping old kitchen casework (inset), but adding newly milled flat-panel doors, tile countertops, and fresh paint enhances value at low cost. Moulding patterns for the glazed upper cabinets come from originals in the dining room (previous page).

sample sizes and experiment with different colors. In my experience, the body color should be darker than the trim, and sashes and doors should be a dark or deep color. The trim should be lighter than the body color, or a different color with the same value. (Two different colors with similar values will appear in roughly the same po-

sition on the strip paint chips you get at the paint store.)

Generally, warm and muted colors work best. Avoid blue, which is difficult to get right. Other choices to shun are bright primary colors, clear pastels (pastels need to be greyed), and drab colors like olive or mustard. Don't use white or beige with

brown trim—every other house on the street will be that color, and you want yours to stand out. Here are a few tried-and-true combinations, arranged by 1) body color, 2) trim color, and 3) sash or accent color):

- chamois, cream, and maroon
- terra-cotta, cream, and eggplant
- terra-cotta, sage green, and burgundy
- straw, pale yellow, dark green
- gray-brown, rust, and dark green
- gray, white, and maroon
- rust, chamois, and teal blue.

PLANT FLOWERS IN THE FRONT YARD. Use as many as you can reasonably fit around

the foundation or in planting beds. Flowers are colorful, welcoming, and add to the curb appeal. I buy my flowers entirely by size because I don't have time for the landscape to mature; whether your restoration takes six months or two years, it's a good bet that landscaping will be the last item you address. I buy specimens that take up a lot of visual space for \$3 or \$4 a piece: cosmos, euryops, marguerites, snapdragons, salvia (sage), coreopsis, agapanthus (lilies-of-the-Nile), alyssum, petunias, and geraniums. While you can use my list as a guide, always choose flowers that grow best in your part of the country.

STAGE THE HOUSE FOR SALE. First of all, the house should be spotless. Wash the windows and get rid of excess junk. The house should look spacious. Pack up everything personal: family photos, refrigerator magnets, political posters—these make people uncomfortable in subtle ways. Contrary to the fresh-baked-bread school of thought, give up cooking. The only universally acceptable smell is lemon. The house needs to look homey and inviting, but not like you live there. Like a nice hotel room, the house should be welcoming, but neutral. Put away all the detritus of daily life: hair dryers, newspapers, dirty dishes. Even in a Victorian-era house, the decor should be simple. If you've already moved out, leave a few pieces of furniture and some rugs behind. Since most people can't figure out whether or not their bed will fit in the bedroom unless there is a bed present for comparison, a furnished house usually sells better.

COMPROMISES. If you want to sell your house for profit, a museum-level restoration is probably out of the question. Keep in mind that the house doesn't have to be perfect, just good. Choose the right places to compromise. For instance, I never hide the dishwasher, and I often use inexpensive tile, reproduction light fixtures, and




Color Correction

When exterior colors are properly balanced, paint becomes a device for enhancing architectural detail. New colors of grey, terra-cotta, and dark green accentuate the back-to-nature theme you would expect to find in a California bungalow (top). Here, the terra-cotta trim brings out the full structural effect of the handsome rafter tails and gable cross-brace, while the dark-green sash color plays up the cottage pattern Arts & Crafts windows and sidelights. Before sensitive renovation (above), the Arts & Crafts lines of this hipped-roof Oakland bungalow were all but buried under a monochromatic blanket of drab blue paint.



used appliances. On the other hand, if there's millwork missing, I would spend \$350 to have a knife made so that I could match the existing moulding profiles with the new millwork. Some choices can be difficult; for instance, should you spend \$850 to replace missing shades for the original Art Deco chandeliers, or should you take them out and put in reproduction chandeliers at \$250 each? Ultimately, such decisions are up to you.

In the end, renovating a house in a

respectful way is a public service. We are the caretakers of these houses. They were here before us, and they will be here after we're gone. Restoring a house to useful life will not only improve your neighborhood and your community, but it can also improve your bank balance. 

JANE POWELL is the author of *Bungalow Kitchens* (Photographs by Linda Svendsen, Gibbs-Smith, 2000). She lives in Oakland, California, with her four cats.

Resurrecting a Tile Shower

For an Oakland couple, bringing a magnificent sunken tub back to life meant finding a craftsman willing to save the tile.

by Mary Ellen Polson



AS SOON AS MIKE and Marilyn McConnell saw the master bathroom in the 1930 *hacienda* in the Oakland hills, they knew they had to buy the house. With its step-down, sunken tub, the bath was a floor-to-ceiling shrine to California art tile of the 1920s, from the bisque field tile to the large, richly colored bas relief scenics lavished over the walls. There was only one problem: the shower leaked. "The tub hadn't worked in 10 years," says Mike McConnell. "It was completely unusable."

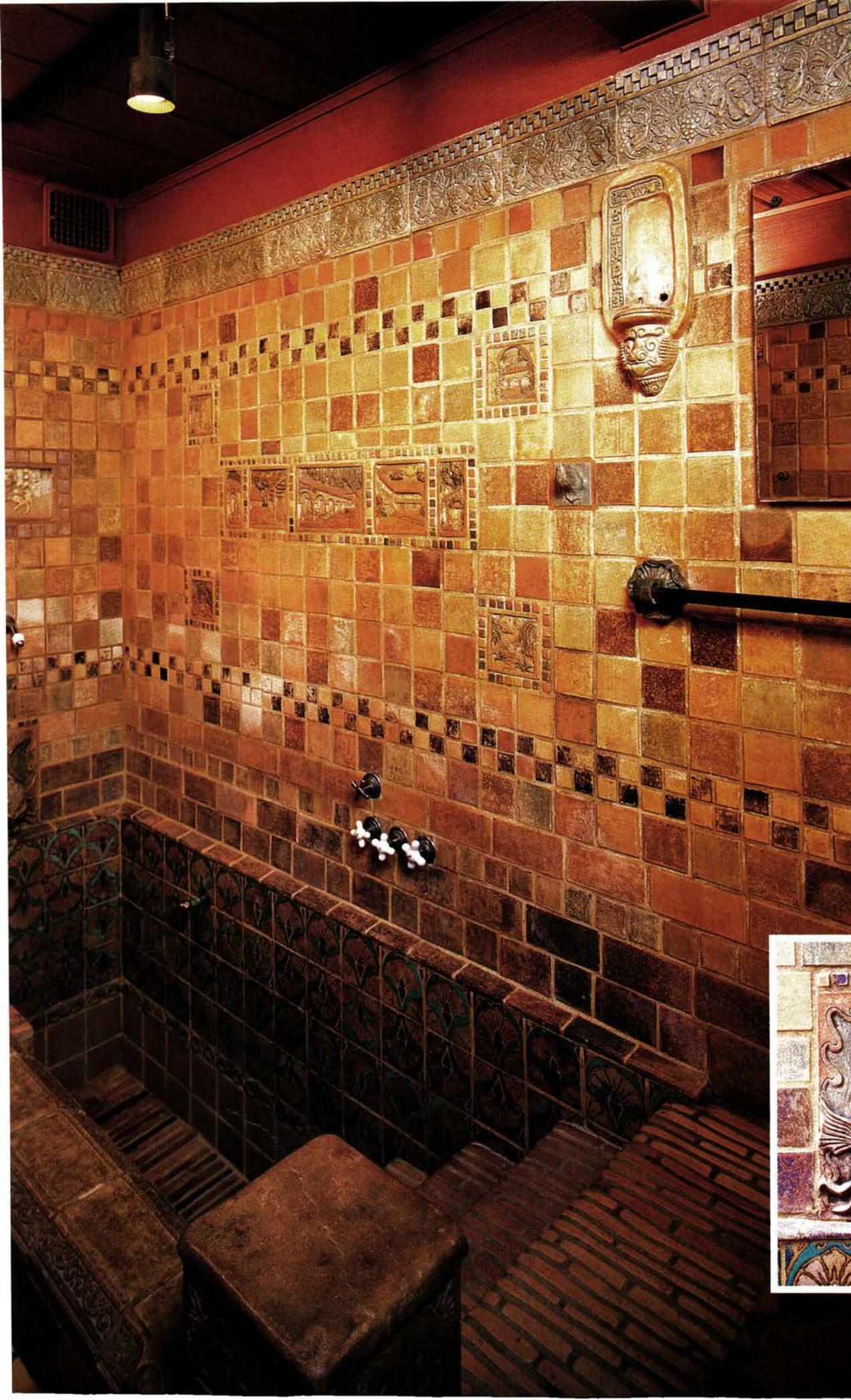
The McConnells bought the house anyway, deciding to find someone willing to restore the sunken tub without destroying the irreplaceable tile. Their search led them to Riley Doty of Doty Tile in Oakland, who specializes in projects involving art tile. Since restoring the bath for use as a tub would have meant ripping out most of the tile, the McConnells quickly agreed to convert the sunken portion into a stall shower, leaving the majority of the tilework intact.

Rebuilding the failed shower bed—a 5"-thick layer of mortar with a tarpaper liner—was the most straightforward part of the job. Much more intricate was selecting replacement tile to blend with the old, and re-creating the original floor pattern out of mostly new tile.

"My approach is to decide which tiles are going to be lost," Doty says. "Like a surgeon, I carefully mark out where that will be. But I don't like to cut until I have the replacement tile picked out."

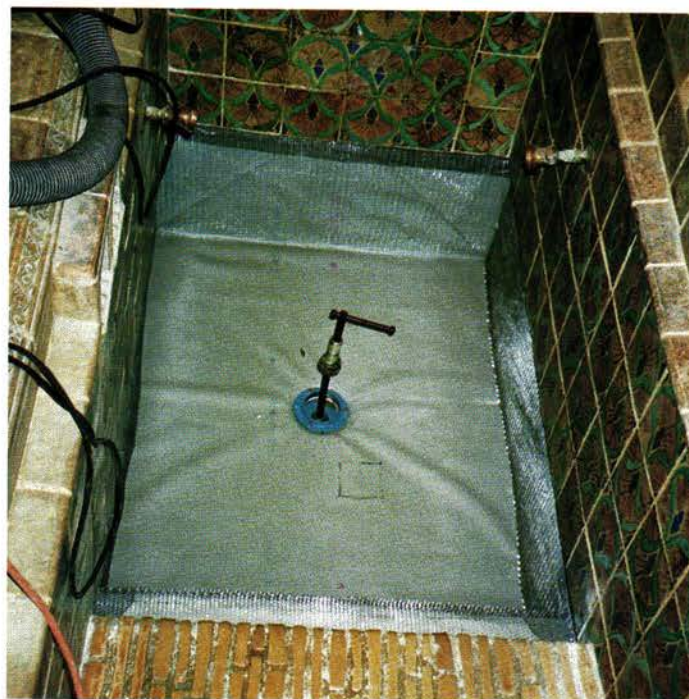
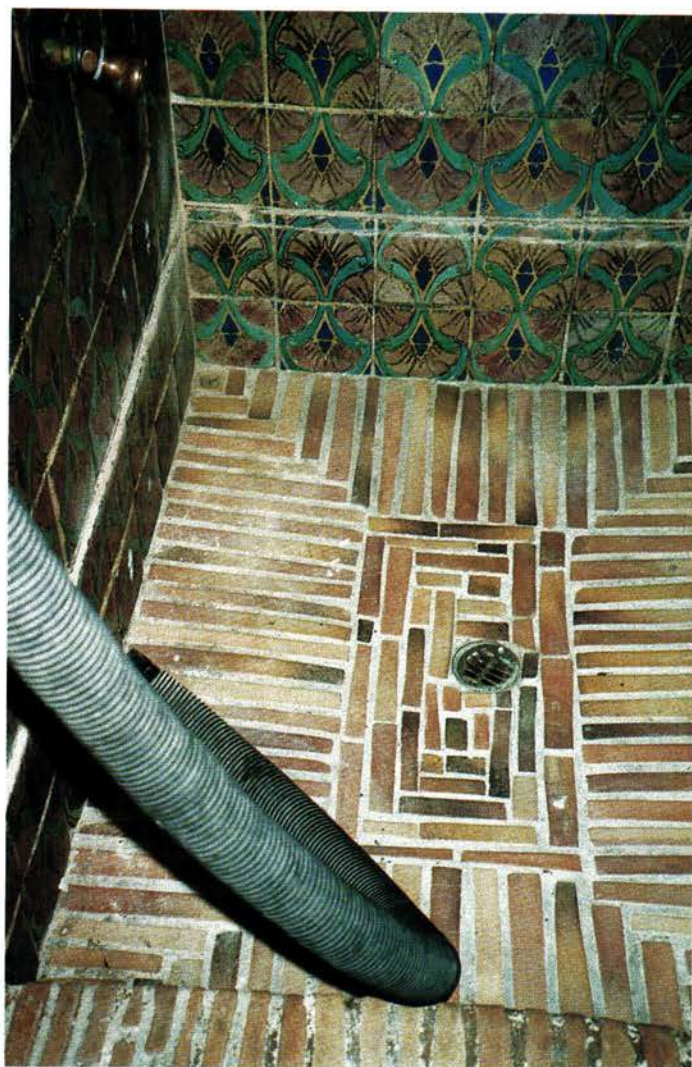
Most of the tiles in the McConnell's bath-

Top: Mike and Marilyn McConnell fell for their 1930 *hacienda* with one glance at the bathroom (opposite). Had they been unable to repair the shower, they would have kept the room intact "as a beautiful thing."



Muresque Tiles manufactured the fantasy tiles in the McConnell bathroom not long before the company went bust in the 1930s.





Clockwise from left: Two score marks on the tile wall separate what's to be sacrificed from what's to be saved. The new shower pan, an impervious membrane, gets the water test. Diamond lath sets the stage for the scratch coat and dry-pack mud bed.

room—one of four so decorated in the house—were manufactured by Muresque Tiles, an Oakland company that produced handmade art tiles for only a brief period in the 1920s and '30s. The floor tiles in particular “have a wonderful gradation of color,” Doty says. “They’re a mix of buff and red clays, with some burning from the kiln.”

Since Muresque was long gone, finding replacement tile meant picking over the “boneyards” of different tile companies. For this job, Doty found simple but workable replacements at Handcraft Tile in Milpitas, a company that’s been producing handmade art tile since the 1920s. None of the dimensions matched, however, so

Doty and his team cut the new tiles down to roughly the correct dimensions. To recreate the round-edged look of the originals, the crew shapes and contours the new tile with an alpha grinder, a tool used to polish marble.

With the replacement tile stacked and ready, Doty makes his first cut, working slightly below the edge of the top row of tile he plans to remove. He uses a high-speed 4½” mini-grinder mounted with a dry-cutting diamond blade. “Then we cut a second kerf about ½” below that line,” he says. “We cut it twice, then pop the narrow band out between the two cuts. That leaves a ¾” kerf, and we’re on our way to successfully isolating the part we’re going to

destroy from the part we’re going to save.”

With the wall tile removed, Doty takes up the floor tile. “I did this for years by hand, but it’s actually faster and gentler with an electric chipping hammer.”

Because the shower bed will be sealed to a depth of 10”, he installs a two-part drain with an extra-long flange. Next comes the liner, an impervious membrane made of chlorinated polyethylene. Doty sandwiches the membrane in between the two-part drain, then bolts the mechanism in place. The drain has three small weep holes that allow water to drain, but it’s also sealed to keep water from penetrating to any permeable surfaces or materials.

After water-testing the membrane

for 48 hours—a plumbing code requirement—Doty attaches diamond lath to support the first scratch coat of mortar. Doty trowels “deck mud”—4½ parts sand, 1 part cement and just enough water to hold it together—to a depth of 3½”.

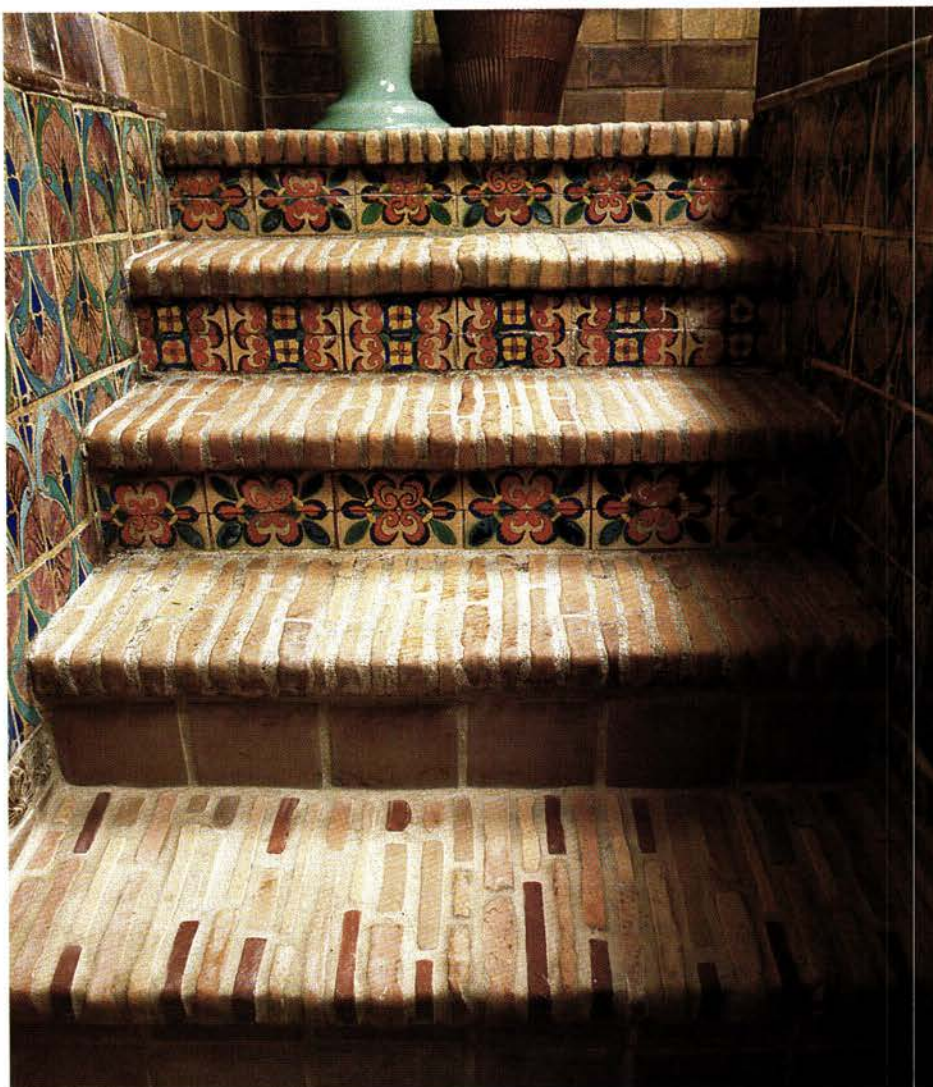
Since he’d already created the replacement tiles for the shower floor, relaying the pattern is a matter of copying the original design as closely as possible. The narrow tiles around the perimeter mesh in a herringbone pattern at the corners, so that part of the job is fairly predictable. The tiles around the drain, however, were pieced together in haphazard and asymmetrical fashion. “The new pattern may not be identical, but it’s the same in spirit,” Doty says.

Unable to find anything approaching the blue, pink, and lavender fleur-de-lis tiles lost around the base of the shower, Doty sets two rows of neutral, bisque-colored field tile. As a transition between the new tiles and the fantastic originals, he adds a band of scalloped tile—a complimentary nod to the large bas relief fish tile at the head of the shower.

Another trick was spacing the replacement tiles in a style reminiscent of period installation. California art tiles of the 1920s and ’30s were undulating and irregular, laid with grout joints of ¼” or more. “If you simply space industrial tiles ¼” apart, you’ve gone about halfway towards convincing the eye that the new tile is actually old,” he says. “In that case, the color of the mortar is the only giveaway.”

While the McConnell’s shower restoration isn’t museum-level, the couple gained a working shower without sacrificing the unique qualities of the bathroom that drew them to the house in the first place. “If you can keep 85% to 95% of the original tile-work, you get to the point where the new material doesn’t stand out,” Doty says. “It allows the original to be what it is.”

That’s a trade-off the McConnells are more than happy to make.



Top: Although the glazed floral tiles on the shower risers had to be replaced with plain, bisque-colored tile, the more visible tile on the treads mimics the original look. Above: Doty lays out the pattern and numbers each tile. Left: The new shower floor is a dead ringer for the old one (opposite, far left).



Return of the ARTFUL BASIN

by mary ellen polson

BEFORE BONE WHITE became a bathroom basic, Americans splashed their hands and faces with water from freestanding basins brimming with delicate color and floral design. The sparkling white bath fixtures of the early-20th-century Sanitary Movement would eventually take the country by storm, but for much of the 19th century, the humble bowl and pitcher was the only way to wash.

As early as 1837, Eliza Rotch Farrar advised young Victorian women to bathe daily in her etiquette book, *The Young Lady's Friend*. "The whole surface of your body may be gone over with one large wash bowl full of water," she admonished. "By practice you will become so expert as not to make any slop on the carpet."

The Victorians soon made a thing of beauty out of a basic necessity, creating matched bowl and pitcher sets in fine china. The wash-bowl set rested conveniently on a marble-topped dresser or washstand in one corner of the bedroom or dressing area. While bowls tended to be plainly shaped, with occasional fluting, pitchers and ewers ranged from the sturdy and utilitarian to gorgeously sculpted works of art. In any case, both bowl and pitcher bore a strong dec-

orative resemblance to the fine china dinnerware, porcelain vases, and ceramic knicknacks displayed throughout the house.

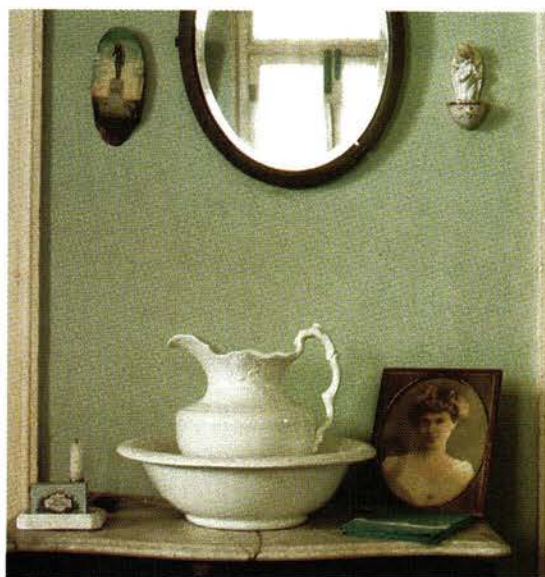
Many of these basins were probably hand-decorated, especially after the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia gave hand-painted ceramics a boost. Others were transferware, a decorative glazing method first produced in 19th-century England.

Transferware was the preferred means

of producing scenics and pastorals on dishware. To create a piece of transferware, a factory worker would transfer a pattern from a copperplate engraving to tissue paper, and then apply the paper to the ceramic surface of a pitcher or bowl. Transferware patterns could be underglazed or overglazed, and typically appear in a single color—light blue, mulberry, brown, and "Flow" blue were favorites. While transferware patterns were usually finely detailed, overglazing produced a sharper, crisper pattern; underglazing (the method used to create the much-admired smeared look of Flow blue pieces) tended to blur the design.

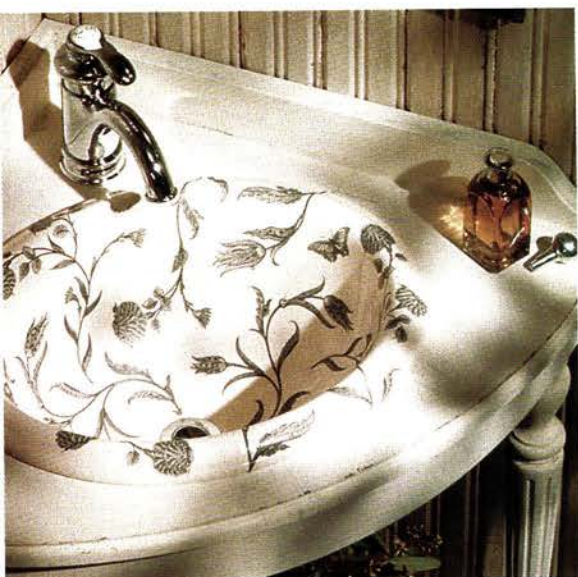
As soon as bowl and pitcher sets reached the apex of style, the advent of indoor plumbing in the late-19th century eliminated the need for a pitcher. The next logical step was to drop the basin into the marble-topped washstand. Drop-in basins didn't immediately lose their pretty colors, though. The 1888 J.L. Mott Ironworks catalog, for example, features page after page of decorated porcelain wash basins.

Most of these English imports sport a broad, finely patterned band with a floral or fruit motif just below the interior rim. Since most feature more than one color, they may have been hand-painted, although



Above: Victorian bathroom basins often resembled fine china, like this design from the 1888 J.L. Mott Iron Works catalog.

Top: Before the advent of piped-in water for washing, the wash bowl and pitcher kept things clean in Victorian bedrooms.



*By 1913, artfully
decorated porcelains
were headed out the door,
along with other
Victorian clutter.
The white porcelain
pedestal was ascendant.*



some of the checked and flower-sprigged patterns suggest transferware. Mott's basins came in two oval sizes familiar today (19" x 15" and 17" x 14"), plus a 14" round bowl.

The run of the decorated basin would soon come to an end, however. Hand-decorated china fell out of favor as an art form with the turn of the new century. In 1901, the Paris World's Fair barred American hand-painted china from competition. By 1913, the year Elsie de Wolfe published her influential volume, *The House in Good Taste*, artfully decorated porcelains for the bath were headed out the door, along with the other Victorian clutter. Sleek,



elegant, and easier to keep clean, the white porcelain pedestal sink was ascendant. The next year, Mott's 1914 catalog offered not a single decorated sink, instead favoring pedestal and wall-hung sinks in ivory-white imperial and vitreous china. Not until the late 1920s would color reappear in American bathroom fixtures.

Today's decorated lavatories meld the best ideas from the porcelains of the past with modern, high-fired ceramic technology. It's no coincidence that Kallista's Blue Dynasty basin (below, left) resembles fine Chinese porcelain, or that Ann Sacks' Ramela (center) is a take on the look of hand-thrown pottery from the Arts & Crafts Movement. No longer merely white, these basins are as clean as the Sanitary Movement fixtures of the teens and '20s, and as artful as the hand-decorated porcelains of the Victorian Age.



Clockwise from top left: A botanical study by Kohler. The classic white pedestal sink, like this one by Toto, became the standard as early as 1914. Ann Sacks' earthy Ramela, and Kallista's take on Chinese porcelain

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A Case History in Masonry Reconstruction

Saving the Structurally Challenged

by Douglass C. Reed

AROUND 1815, a prospering farmer selected a site for his new two-storey house in a valley of south central Pennsylvania. On an exquisitely dressed-and-laid blue limestone foundation, tucked into a hillside north of a spring, he built a fine, five-bay brick house. Inside, he trimmed the first floor in the latest styles of mouldings. By the door a graceful, partially enclosed staircase wound up to the second floor. Every room could be warmed by a fireplace—every room save one.



Deep shadows on the stone foundation show how far the wall had bellied by April of 1999—fractions of an inch away from total collapse.

The lack of one fireplace and a few important stones in the south foundation became latent defects in this otherwise solidly built brick house. Nearly 200 years later these long-term time bombs would bring one wall close to collapsing and threaten the entire house. Engineering a way to keep this “structurally challenged” building intact, while correcting the inherent flaws became a challenge of its own for our company. Here are a few of the methods we devised to carefully and economically repair the building. They are a good example of why it’s valuable to analyze the chain of causes behind most structural problems, and what is possible in the reconstruction of historic masonry.

SERIOUS SYMPTOMS

In April of 1998, I had a phone call from the owners who were concerned about a bulge in one of their walls. As soon as I saw the major protrusion extending over a large portion of the south gable, I called an engineer colleague, Merle Saville. Though we’ve worked on many historic structures together over 15 years, neither one of us could fully explain why the end wall was still standing. The “belly” protruded 12" to 13" out of plumb—a distance equal to the thickness of the brick wall. Moreover, there was no obvious reason why the wall had moved in the first place.

We started to find answers to these questions as we began to work on the house (see sidebar page



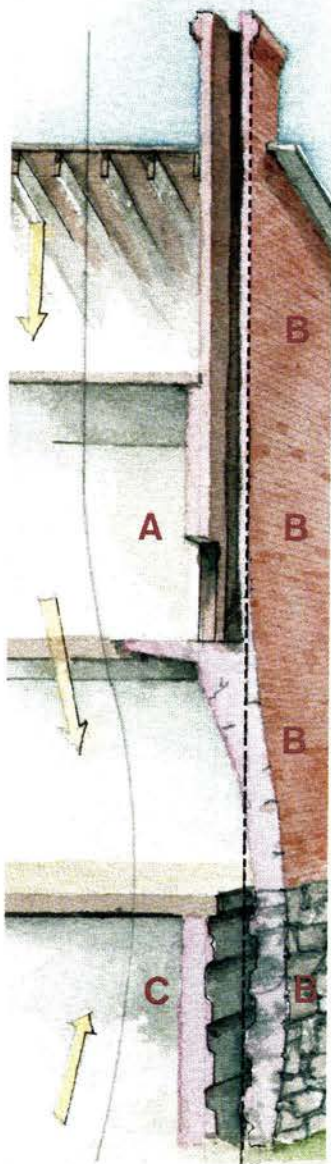
70). Evidence suggested that the bulge appeared very slowly, and continued to grow over the life of the building. When the current owners purchased the property in 1974, they partially remodeled the gable end rooms to hide the gaps already showing between baseboards and flooring. As we removed the hard-board paneling in the first floor, it became clear that the weight of a cantilevered chimney put more load on the wall than it could handle. Later, when we partially dismantled the brick and stone walls, we noticed the lack of tie rocks in the foundation. Not good signs, but why was the wall still standing at all? Looking further, we realized that the central masonry mass

of the south gable wall rested on the ends of the second floor and attic floor summer beams. Had the masonry rolled past its last bearing on the summer beams, the wall would have collapsed.

STABILIZING THE GABLE

Before we could start extensive work, it was essential to relocate one family member out of the south end of the house and move all belongings to safer areas. Engineer Saville and I believed that if the south gable wall did collapse, it would not destroy the remainder of this large dwelling. However, the wall failure would most certainly damage the room interiors

Across the second storey, heavy plank whalers hold in the upper gable—with its decorative burned bricks in the peak—while the crew rebuilds the American bond masonry. The outermost window edges became the reference point for the undistorted wall.



Behind the Bulging Bricks

Three shortcomings in the original masonry act together to slowly force the gable end into a severe bulge.

A Directly above the rear first floor room—which never had a built-in heat source—sits a fireplace in a second-floor bedroom. This fireplace rests on brick corbelling that starts a few feet below the ceiling of the first floor, and rises up through the attic to join the main flue. This cantilevered mass of masonry is, in effect, a lopsided weight hanging on the interior side of the brick gable wall.

B Immediately adjacent to the second floor chimney stack, and where a chimney would have been on the first floor, is a four-storey set of vertically aligned windows with jambs only 30" off the corners of the building. The small basement windows, two large first and second floor windows, and the small attic windows create weak points near the corners, allowing the center portion of the gable wall to roll outward.

C The third factor contributing to the bulge is a poorly tied together foundation wall. With finely chiseled and laid-up stone on both exterior and interior faces, but only stone chips and weak bedding mortar in between, the foundation is actually two stone walls built back-to-back. It doesn't help that the 12" thick brick wall sits on the outside half of the 20" to 22" thick foundation wall.

immediately adjacent to the bulge.

Our next task was to design and install a system to stabilize the building. More than a set of shores, this system would have to fill three requirements: 1) support from inside the building; 2) prevent the endangered wall from collapsing; and 3) carry the gable wall, floor, and roof loads as various sections of the wall were dismantled and rebuilt. Our solution was to install a system of posts, beams, and 2 x 6 stud frame running from the basement floor to the attic floor—in essence, a new interior wall 6' back from the failing gable wall.

In addition to vertical support, we also designed the post-and-stud walls to stabilize the bulging gable wall. By taking advantage of all the existing window open-

ings, then carefully boring a few strategic holes in the masonry, we were able to pass threaded rods from the stud wall through the masonry wall, then anchor them on the outside with wall washers and 2 x 6 whalers. Later we added through-bolts across the width of the house, to keep the front and back walls from spreading. Hanging rolls of clear plastic on the temporary stud wall kept dust under control, while sheets of drywall protected all finished floors in the work areas.

With the indoor stabilization system in place, we moved outdoors. On the right half of the gable end we set up a pair of shores: 20' posts set into holes a yard deep and aligned vertically on the exterior. Then we heeled a pair of 6" x 6" props into the



Above: Outside, timber shores and an earthmover stabilize the bulge while dismantling begins. **Below:** Inside, stud-walls and rods carry the floor and roof loads.

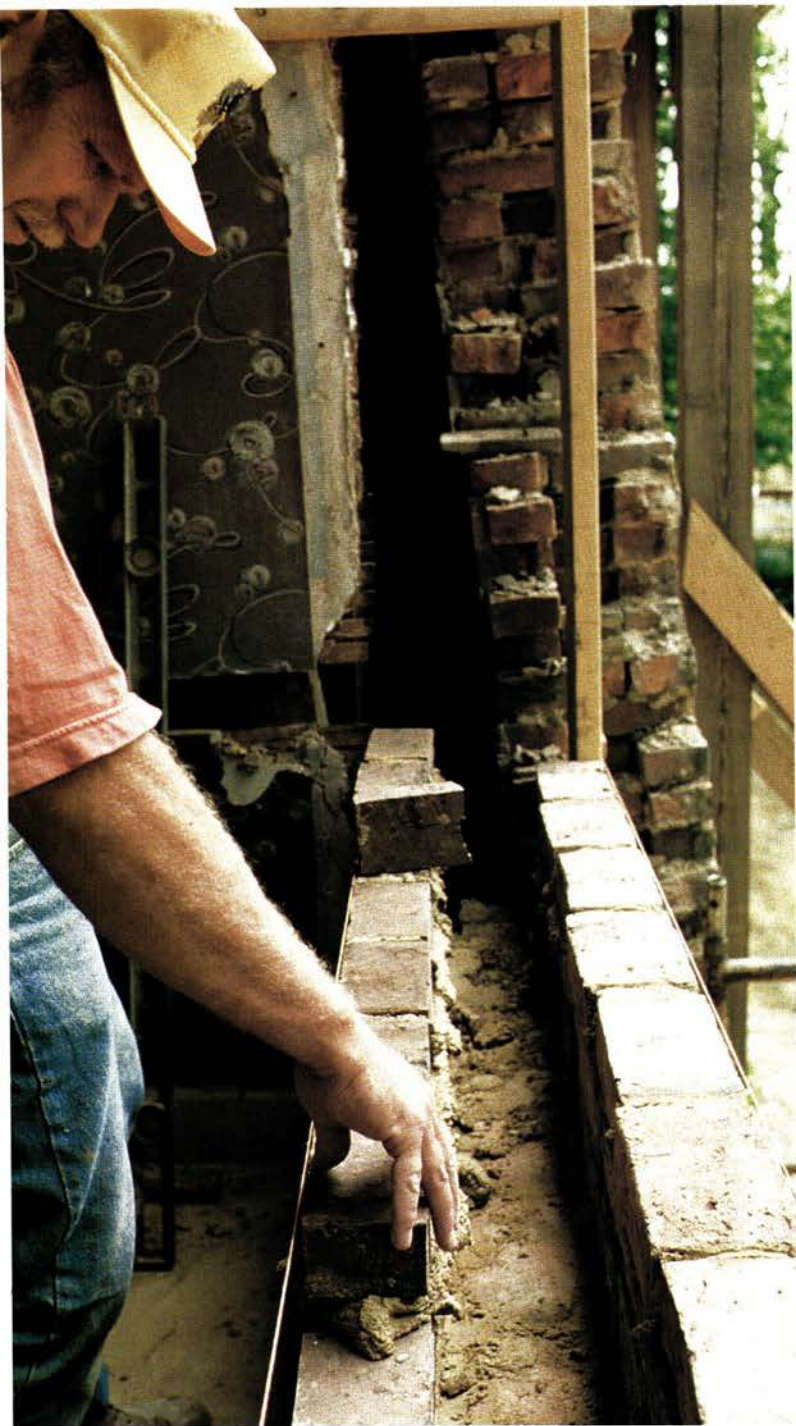


ground and braced them with pinned 6" x 6" posts. To add a little psychological safety net, we moved a bulldozer in front of the left side, maneuvering its large bucket up against the worst area of the bulge.

BRICK BY BRICK

After taking all possible precautions, we began the slow process of dismantling one half of the south gable wall. No one was permitted to work from the scaffold. If the wall did collapse, we felt the men would fare better on the interior side of the wall than on the exterior side.

Over the years we've found that reciprocating saws are ideal for dismantling historic brickwork. When chucked with an 8" woodcutting blade, you can start a hole



Above: Paul Wade prepares to set a brick with one hand as he "butters-up" the course with mortar using his other. Left: He taps each brick flush with a string line that marks correct wall position. Far left: Steve Fox adjusts each mortar joint so new brickwork will meet the old without resorting to partial bricks. In the background, note the massive gap between the plaster lath and bulging masonry—nearly equal to the thickness of the three-brick wall.

with the saw, then literally slice through the soft mortar with minimal shock to the wall or loss of brick. (The dust is hard on electric motors, however, so we ultimately sacrifice the saw.) With this method we can recover 75% to 85% of the historic brick in re-usable condition.

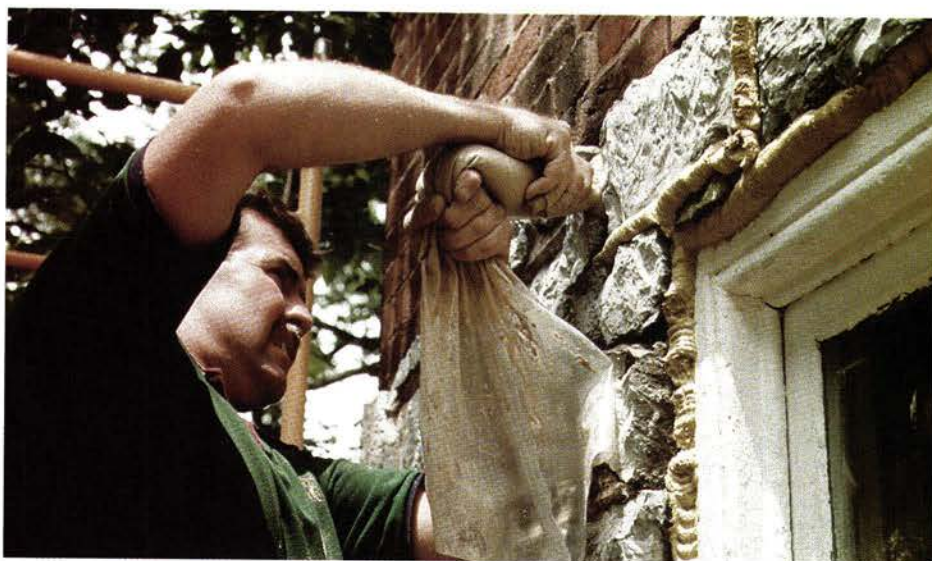
As each brick comes loose, a man picks it off the wall, then carefully knocks it clean of old mortar with a trowel before stacking neatly nearby. It's important to keep the different types of brick separate. Face brick is fired in the hottest part

of the kiln, making it hard enough to withstand exposure on the outside of the wall. Fill brick (also called salmon brick) is fired in a cooler part of the kiln, leaving it softer and only usable for protected parts of the wall.

We dismantled the west half of the south gable wall from the headers of the second floor window down to ground level, just below the basement floor. As the wall came down around each window, we took it to the shop to restore and ready for reinstallation. Tarps covered the large

hole in the wall to protect the interiors.

Immediately after we finished all dismantling, a crew of three to four men started relaying the stone foundation. We laid the exterior and interior wythes of stone flush, plumb, and in their original positions, but with one major exception. We laced the wall with new tie rocks, staggered 4' to 5' apart. These rocks span the full 20" to 22" width and hold the two faces of the wall together. In addition, we modernized the bedding mortar. For almost all our historic masonry projects we start with



Top: Using a mason's "pastry bag" Paul Wade fills joints in the dressed-limestone foundation with finish mortar. **Above:** To match the inverted-V pointing, he sculpts the mortar with a small trowel. The new mortar will weather to historic colors. **Left:** A stock item, the bag is faster for filling irregular joints than pushing mortar off a trowel.

premixed mason's mortar (50% lime, 50% portland cement) Then we combine 1 part of the mason's mortar with $\frac{1}{4}$ part mason's hydrated lime, and 3 parts sand. We find this mortar is a good match with historic masonry units, and has a higher tensile strength to better bond the stones.

After topping off or leveling the stone foundation, we used the same strategy to rebuild the first storey brick wall: one half at a time. Using the cleaned original brick we relaid the firebox and chimney flue system in all the original sizes. Here our mortar mix for the softer bricks is 1 part mason's mortar, $\frac{1}{4}$ part lime, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 parts sand. We tied the brick wall with header courses the same as the original three-

brick-thick wall. The restored windows were reset into their original locations.

CLOSING THE GAP

Even after the west half of the gable wall had been completely rebuilt, there still remained areas of badly sheared brick joints in the east half. As a result, there were two small collapses—one of about 80 bricks and another close to 250 bricks—while the east half of the wall was carefully dismantled. In each case the men sensed the problem and managed to move out of the way in time. Since the floors were protected with drywall, there was no damage to the surfaces.

Except for the west firebox and flue

that cantilevered to the interior side of the wall, we also rebuilt the second floor as originally constructed. However, as we restored the east half chimney system from the basement to the attic, we took the time to key and tooth it to the rebuilt south gable wall. This way the chimney now acts as a stabilizing masonry stack for the wall.

Throughout the masonry reconstruction we left all the original closets and doors in place. We reset all baseboards, chair-rails, window jambs, and casings that had to be removed. Once we restored all the finish woodwork and reapplied it to the exterior gable wall, the interior brick was plastered to a smooth white finish coat. The ceilings in the rooms were also refinished.

DOLLARS AND SENSE

Only after dismantling and rebuilding both halves of the south gable masonry were we sure the wall could be salvaged. The two-stage process allowed us to retain a higher percentage of good wall components than wholesale demolition. For example, the entire brick gable end at the attic level was not rebuilt but left in place. Much interior woodwork—notably the four narrow closets—was salvaged untouched. Had we chosen to dismantle the full gable end, we would have been free to rebuild without working around some of the support structure needed to keep the gable in place. Ultimately, however, we feel we saved the client some \$15,000. The other value, of course, is that more of the house remains original.

The entire project cost roughly \$83,000. Divided over the entire useful floor plan of the dwelling, the cost of this dangerous wall and four-room restoration was \$13.65 per square foot of finished floor space. If the house had been bulldozed, and then reconstructed on the original site, the new house with some 6,290 finished square feet would cost nearly \$865,000. Even so it would never match the priceless quality of the original structure.



Above: The exterior shores are triangles planted deeply in the soil. Right: Working half a wall at a time, the crew knits new stone and brick masonry seamlessly into old while using all historic materials. Below: The difference between fill or salmon brick (center in photo) is clear when compared with face brick (left) and modern brick. The fireplace lintel iron is made from a wagon wheel tire.

It takes comparisons to decide whether or not a structurally challenged older building is worth saving. First calculate the total net livable square footage of the building, then determine the costs for comparable-sized new housing in your area. Also look at the construction values of a new house versus the quality of the older building.

The owners of the old brick house are very happy to remain in their beautiful 1815 home. After exploring all the alternatives, their choice to restore the south gable wall gave new life and usefulness to the dwelling. Do you face similar decisions with a structurally challenged old house? Believe it or not, a good building is usually cheaper to restore than to replace. 🏠

DOUGLASS REED is President of Preservation Associates, Inc. specializing in restoration of log, stone, and brick structures across the country. (449 N. Prospect St., Hagerstown, MD 21740; 301-791-7880)



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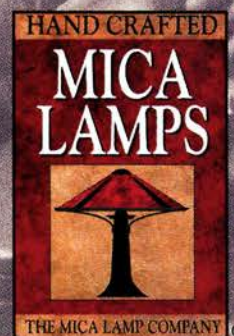
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BASICS

Parting Ways

BY MARYLEE MACDONALD

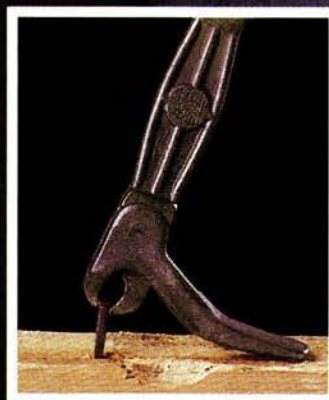
SOMETIMES THE HARDEST part of replacing cabinet hinges, repairing broken door hardware, or restoring interior trim mouldings is getting the darned things loose. Often layers of paint cover the screws or bolts, so you can barely see where they are, much less get a screwdriver on them. Or, they're frozen by rust and graced with those nasty spin marks from a stripped head.

Getting uncooperative screws, bolts, and nails to budge is not a pure science—it may take several methods to gain success—but you're not totally on your own either. Here are some time-tested methods for undoing typical old-house fasteners.

Pulling Common Nails

BECAUSE MOST COMMON nails have smooth shanks, they're undoubtedly the easiest fasteners to remove. When you're gutting a remuddled basement or attic, and you don't care about protecting the plaster walls or preserving existing

No nail defies this 19th-century patent puller. You pound the slide handle to grab the head, then rock the tool to pull the nail (inset).





Always remove finish nails from salvaged trim by pulling from the backside of the board. Grip the nails with a pincer nail puller or Vice-grip pliers, then pull by rocking the tool. (Sharp claw hammers also work.) The head will come clear through the wood leaving a neat, stackable piece of trim.

1950s trim, use the rough-and-ready approach of hammers, prybars, or cat's paws.

CLAW HAMMER Slide the claws of a hammer around the nail's head, then place a block of wood under the hammer's head to increase leverage. The pulling hammer I like is a 16 oz. rip or framing hammer. The straight claws slide like the tines of a fork around the nail head. The long handle also increases leverage. If you have a tough time grabbing the nail head, use another hammer as a striking tool to get the pulling hammer to grab. You can also use the straight claws of two hammers positioned head-to-head to pry apart 2x4s that are nailed together.

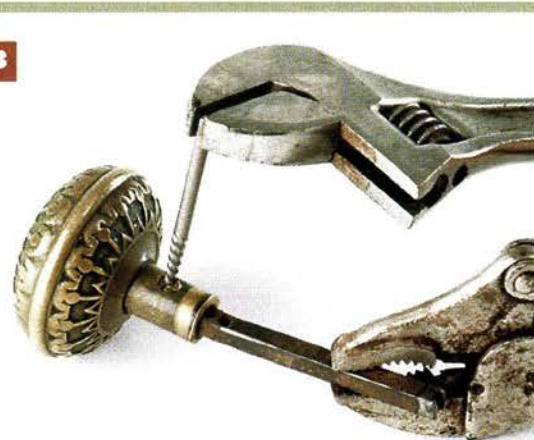
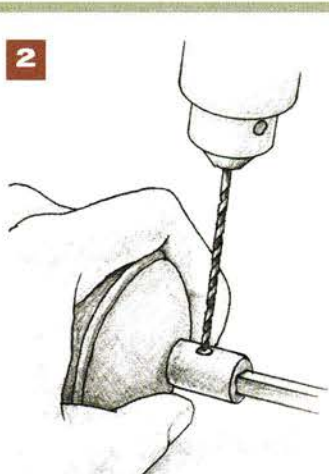
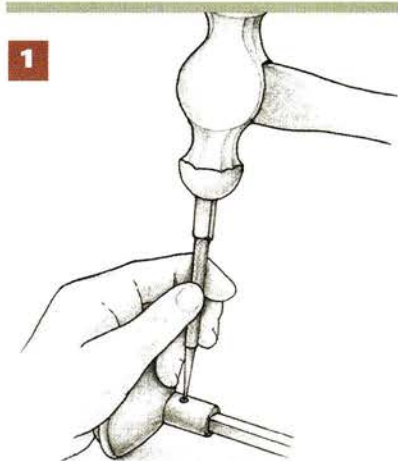
PRYBAR Every carpenter has a favorite prybar, and if you're into heavy demolition you'll rely on the wrecking bar. The hooked end is forked, but you may have to use your hammer or a cat's paw to pry up the nail head. A 3' or 4' wrecking bar pulls out big cut nails and spikes, and is long enough to let you work floors standing up. To remove lath, old cabinets, and the like, the best all-around tool is an 18" straight prybar with a round or hex, 1"-thick shank. It's nice and stiff, plus you can use either end to get under nails and pry them up.

CAT'S PAW The first cat's paw I remember came out of my boss's nail apron when I was a carpenter's apprentice. I was astonished, as much by the name as by what this small, innocuous tool could accomplish. Cat's paws scoop the nail out of the wood, and they work even if the nail head comes off. When the inside, gripping wedge of a cat's paw slides around the nail, it carves a groove in the nail shank. There is literally no nail that a cat's paw cannot remove. It will also gouge the wood, but the nail will come out.

DECAPITATORS When it's critical not to put pressure on the material under the nail, you can grind off the head using a burr bit or rasp attachment chucked in a cordless drill or Dremel tool. Contractors who want to salvage roofing tiles or slates sometimes call on this technique. The brittle roofing material would break under any prying, so they grind away the nail heads, then simply lift the tiles off the headless nail shanks.

Finessing Finish Nails

WHEN YOU REMOVE trimwork you intend to replace, such as window stop mouldings or casings, you must use methods that protect the surfaces—both the wood and the walls. Never slide



Using Screw Extractors

Suppose you must remove a decorative doorknob, but a stripped grub screw holds it on the spindle. Saturate the threads with penetrating oil, then follow with these steps.

- 1) Prick a dimple in the precise center of the screw with a machinist's punch. This keeps the drill from wandering.
- 2) Choose a drill bit based on the size stamped on the screw

extractor. Position your drill bit, using the guide provided in the extractor kit to keep your drill bit vertical, and bore. (Make sure you wear eye protection for close-quarters drilling.) 3) Insert the extractor in the hole and turn it counter-clockwise to unthread the screw. If the screw still won't budge (extractors aren't foolproof), bore out its shaft.

the claw of your hammer around a trim nail on the finish side of the woodwork, and never pry against a naked plaster wall.

THROUGH DRIVING Since finish nails have very small heads, if you can see their positions—as when the trim has a clear finish—you can drive the nails all the way through the wood with a hammer and nail set. For built-up mouldings, work from the outside in or the top down. The small, outer moulding sections won't be nailed every 16". They'll be fastened to the flat, 1x4s or 1x6s that frame the opening.

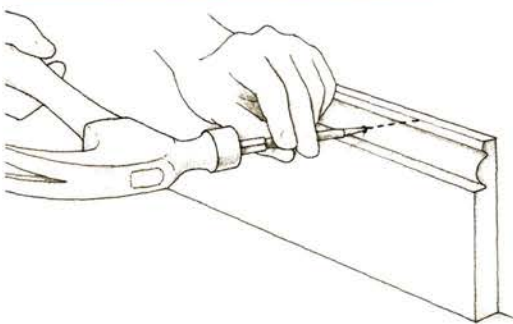
CUTTING FROM BEHIND When you can't see the nail heads because the trim is painted or the shellac has darkened, slide the blade of a 6" putty knife between the wall and trim. Next, slide another putty knife behind the first. Work the two knives until you open a slight crack between the wall and the woodwork. Then slide a hacksaw blade into the crack, and move it along the opening until you find the nails. Moving the free end, work the blade up and down until you sever the nails. After you've cut the first two or three nails, you can wiggle the board away from the wall for more room.

It's important not to let the nail heads pop above the finished surface. When the carpenter installed the trim, he set the nail heads below the wood's surface, and filled the holes. This hardened filler will lift splinters of wood if the nail head pops out the finished side, leaving a damaged surface that will be obvious under a new clear finish.

Wayward Wood Screws

DON'T TRY PULLING OUT a stubborn screw with the claw of your hammer; you'll snap off the head, making removal even harder. Instead, get a proper grip on the head, but if that's impossible work on the shank.

USE THE RIGHT TOOL Make sure your screwdriver blade is the proper size for the screw head or you will waste valuable turning power. The width of a slotted screwdriver blade must match the screw sided-to-side, and the blade thickness must fill the slot. The same is true for cross-pat-



tern screws. The heads of Phillips screws look very similar to Reed and Prince screws, but Phillips screwdrivers are angled at 30 degrees, while Reed and Prince screws are angled at 45 degrees. That said, try giving the screwdriver a couple of good solid whacks with a rubber mallet (or a wood block to protect the screwdriver's handle) while you're turning and the screw should come out.

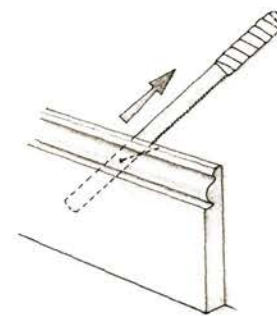
CLEAN OUT THE SLOT If the screw head is paint covered (often the case with door and cabinet hinges), daub it with paint stripper, then clean out the slot with a utility knife. When you remove the paint, you'll also remove its adhesive effect. If the slot is caked with rust, run a piece of hacksaw blade or an emory board (fingernail file) back and forth in the recess.

TURNING WITH A PUNCH A machinist's prick punch is made from tool steel, which means it will dent any other metal. For a screw or bolt with a stripped head, drive the punch into the center of the old slot to create a new hole. Place one corner of a screwdriver firmly in this new hole, and the blade on the undamaged half of the original slot, then turn.

DRILLING OFF THE HEAD Let's say you're pulling the original cabinets off the wall, but not plan-

Tools for Nails

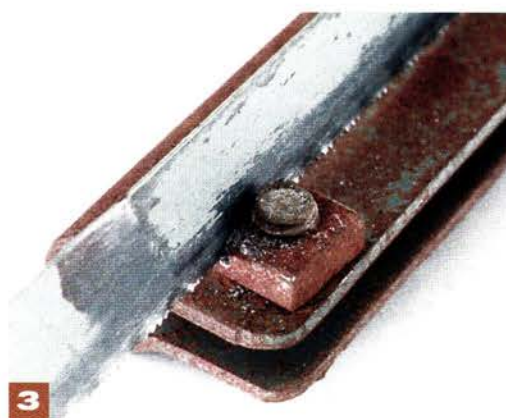
Left: A cat's paw bites below the wood's surface to clinch the heads of common nails. Most cat's paws have right-angled claws on one end to add pulling leverage. Below left: A nail set will drive finish nails right through most trimwork. Below right: Or you can cut the nails from



behind with a hacksaw blade. Use a blade marked *hardened*, 10" or 12" long depending on the width of the trim. (Blades marked *tempered* have only hardened teeth.) Insert the blade in a handgrip made for holding hacksaw blades, or wrap one end with electrical tape. If the teeth point towards the handle, the blade will cut on the pull stroke—often easier for blind cutting.



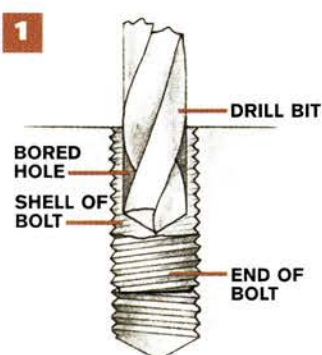
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3



4



Machinist's Methods

There's more than one way to conquer bolts and nuts. 1) When a head snaps off, you can bore away the shaft. Start with a punch-dimple in the center, followed by a pilot hole. Then increase bit sizes until the shell of threads comes free. 2) If you can get a grip on the head—because it's a pan-head or partly backed out—you can often turn the bolt or screw with a sharp pair of Vise-grip pliers. 3) Frozen nuts will free-up when you cut off one side just into the threads. 4) Sometimes you can back out a stripped stove bolt with a machinist's prick punch. Start with a sharp point, get a toe-hold on the circumference of the head, then gently tap the bolt counter-clockwise.

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ning to put them back in the same place. If you don't mind leaving part of the screw behind you can drill off the head of the screw.

Mastering Machine Bolts

RUSTY OR FROZEN threads holding bolts and nuts often loosen with heat, shock, or lubrication. When these forces fail, attack the fastener.

PENETRATING OIL Before advancing to tougher methods, soak the bolt or screw in penetrating oil, such as WD-40. Apply the oil several times, shooting in between the threads, and let it sit overnight. Don't be afraid to continue daily applications for a week. If you're trying to remove a nut, wire brush the threads clean, then oil.

IMPACT Sometimes a hard knock will break loose a bolt locked up by rust. Give the bolt shank—or the parts it fastens—a good whap with a brass hammer, being sure to protect threads or finished surfaces. You can also try an impact driver. This is a hammer-actuated screwdriver

that shocks and turns the bolt at the same time.

HEAT If you can heat the frozen bolt with a propane torch, the metal may expand enough to break the rusty bonds. Heat followed by impact will coax many a stuck bolt out of its hole.

SCREW EXTRACTORS If the head of your machine screw or large wood screw is too damaged to turn, you might have luck with a screw extractor. These little implements, sold at good hardware and auto parts stores, are made with a left-hand "thread" and in stepped sizes (see page 84).

DESTRUCTION If you work accurately with sharp tools, it's possible to bore the center out of a bolt. First, prick the center with a punch. Next bore a small diameter pilot hole. Then return with successively larger drill bits until you can dig out the thread fragments of the bolt. The same process works for rivets.

MARYLEE MACDONALD is a building consultant in Evanston, Illinois.

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OLD HOUSE ADVISOR

A WEAVE APART

Do you recognize this wallcovering? It's from the living room of an 1893 house.

— THOMAS WALTERS
ROCHESTER, N.Y.

COARSE-WOVEN FABRICS became fashionable for walls starting in the 1890s, and were nothing short of *de rigueur* for Arts & Crafts houses up to World War I. Similar to grasscloth these textiles appeared frequently in conjunction with wainscots in halls, dining rooms, and dens—either to decorate the frieze in the top portion of the wall, or to fill panels in the bottom portion.



Most any fabric with a pronounced weave and rough texture filled the bill. Burlap was popular in several grades less liable to sag than the kind common today. Canvas, buckram (a linen or hemp fabric used in bookbinding), and linen union also came in wider selections. Plus, manufacturers such as Art Ko-Na and FABRIK-O-NA got into the business with their own versions. Burlap

and jute might work fine in their natural state, or they could be dyed green or red. Check the Yellow Pages for industrial fabric suppliers of buckram, heavy canvas, and fine burlap; for linen union in colors contact Charles Rupert Designs (2004 Oak Bay Ave. Victoria, BC V8R 1E4 Canada; 250-592-4916).

UNRESTRICTED ITALIANATE

I see many houses that look like our 1874 home in Colorado. Was it a catalog plan or is the similarity just coincidence?

— JOYCE PEDLOW
NEWPORT BEACH, CALIF.

PERHAPS A LITTLE OF BOTH. Plan books with plates of designs and details for builders and homeowners alike were widely sold by the 1870s. Coupled with coast-to-coast rail service, they helped disseminate the popular house styles of the day—which begs the question of the style of your house.

The basic box massing and three-bay façade fit the mold of the Italianate style still popular at this time. Your house does



Roughly one-third of Italianates are simple two-storey cubes with three ranks of windows.

not appear to have the round-top windows or window hoods that were common trimmings, but those eave brackets are right on target. So too is the rear bay window—a device to bring light into the back part of the house.

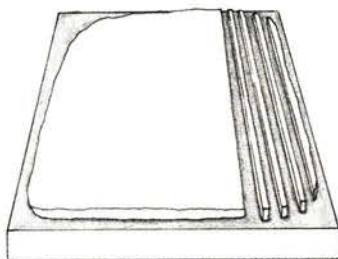
While your roof is not exactly hipped—the typical Italianate type—neither is it a true mansard. Research may reveal that the roof was rebuilt in the 1890s with those kicked eaves, or it once had a central cupola so characteristic of these houses.

POINTERS ON PUTTY

After restoring some 44 windows in our old house, I've come up with a few methods to share that increase efficiency and improve quality.

First, always work the glazing compound in your hands to soften it and homogenize the ingredients. Next, using the palm of your hand, press a large mound of compound into a 1/4" thick layer on a 12" x 12" ceramic tile or similar surface. Then, using a

5-in-1 tool or putty knife, cut the compound into 1/8" wide strips and lay them into the



Slice glazing compound into thin ribbons on a tile to speed backputting.

glazing rabbets for backputting the glass. I find these strips work much better than forming the compound into a long "silly putty" rope.

— MICHAEL THIES
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI

POST TIME

I searched for a center-bored wooden porch column to use as an outdoor electric lamp post. Unfortunately, such posts are getting difficult to find and increasingly expensive. So I

purchased a solid-wood turned column for about \$5, and cut a 1 1/2" deep dado running its length. (One method is to kerf away a dado by making repeated passes with a circular saw.)

Next I inserted exterior-rated electrical cable, then filled the channel with epoxy filler. After sanding, priming, and painting the channel, the \$5 lamppost looks great.

— ROB LILIEHOLM
PROVIDENCE, UTAH

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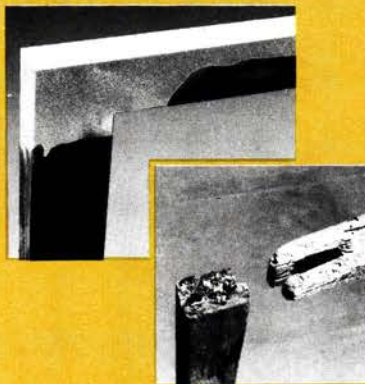
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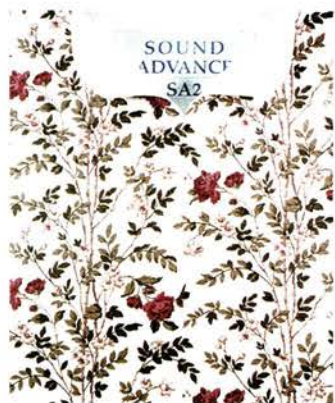
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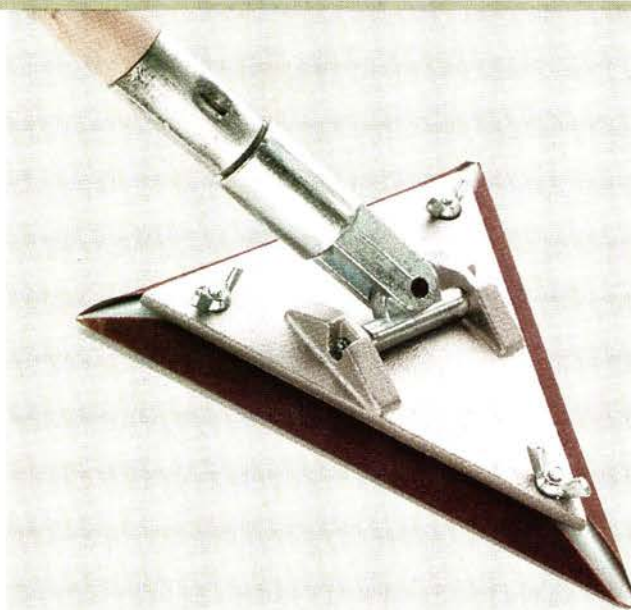
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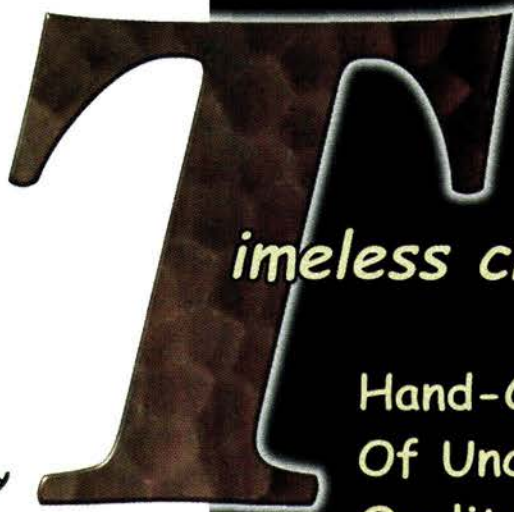
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The Garden in History *reviewed by Patricia Poore*

TWO BOOKS ON gardening that couldn't be more different: One is "important," historical, largely European, and lavish with color, the other earnest, pragmatic, all-American—and black-and-white. I'll start with a review of the latter; the old-house crowd will probably want to own both.

For decades we've been looking to Rudy and Joy Favretti's books on historic landscape and garden practice to guide us toward style- and period-appropriate gardening. Their groundbreaking *Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings* and *For Every House A Garden* (also b&w), kept in print by old-house owners since the 1970s, spoke to academic and amateur alike. But they are slim volumes, read and absorbed

ful of the past, that fits its purpose and its owner's personality. In clear language full of real-world examples, he tackles the basics: how to discover which type and style of garden is right for your house; how to analyze the archaeology of an old garden to re-create some of its past; how to work with front, side, and back yards and sight lines; how to embrace the concept of formality as it pertains to the structure of the garden; how to create colonial-period, Victorian, Arts and Crafts, and cottage gardens. Foundation plantings, flower borders, and period shrubbery are covered; so is the arrangement of appropriate walls and fences, and the layout of graceful walks and drives. There is even a section on mini-orchards and rediscovered fruit varieties.

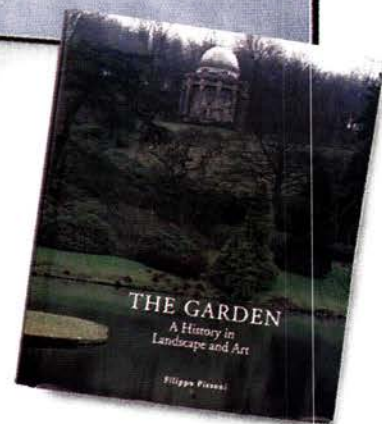
"We need beauty in our lives—whether the man-made beauty of a well designed home and garden; the natural beauty of meadows and woodlands; or the still-wild beauty of untouched nature."

by now and . . . well, historical-sounding. Now we can move on to the next generation. *The New Traditional Garden* is historical but not stuffy; practical, comprehensive, and addressed to real questions we all have. Michael Weishan possesses formidable knowledge, plus good taste and common sense—and with them he wrote a useful, fun-to-read book.

In it, he describes the underlying principles for creating a domestic landscape, respect-

The presentation of historic houses and gardens is especially successful in this book. Sprinkled throughout—not as an academic tour but to illustrate specific arguments in the text—are plot plans and historical background on such sites as Monticello.

How does one produce a black-and-white gardening book? you may wonder. With superb organization, pithy advice, and 200 illustrations on salient points. I came to feel that the absence of color was the key to the book: it kept the how-to focus. All those beautiful, inspirational garden books have their place. But they present the finished project, not the means for getting there. Captions often describe flower names instead of



THE GARDEN

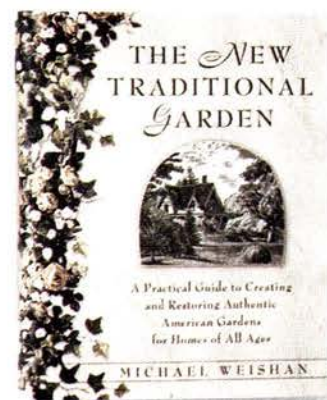
A HISTORY IN LANDSCAPE AND ART

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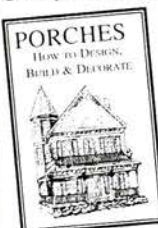
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principles and rules-of-thumb. And—to me at least—they are daunting. I look at the pictures and think, “My garden will never look like that.” With Weishan’s book, I found myself thinking, “Oh good—I did that right,” and “Oops, never thought of that.” Encouraged and corrected, I can take appropriate action.

The author is a man with a mission, though he’s subtle about it: a man fed up with ugly development, a man who optimistically predicts that the dark age of gardens (which began during the war years) are over, that a revival of interest in both landscape preservation and personal gardening began ca. 1990 and is gathering steam right now.

THE OTHER BOOK, MORE colorful and philosophical, has a lofty message: that garden design has historically been influenced by architecture and painting, theater design, poetry and philosophy—and as such is an art form as seen in landscape masterpieces all over the world. *The Garden: A History in Landscape and Art*, by Filippo Pizzoni, presents garden design century by century, beginning in the Middle Ages. You will encounter the grottoes of the 16th century, the 18th century Arcadian ideal, English garden style as it emerged in Russia, Scandinavian naturalism, and Luis Barragan’s architectural landscapes in Mexico.

Two different threads run through this volume: the gardens themselves, and also their artistic depiction through time. Illustrations go beyond photographs to illuminated manuscripts, watercolors, engravings, and more. It is as much an art

book as a garden book, a provocative departure from the garden genre. The text is clear and educational. It focuses not on design or plants, but on what garden design and the depiction of gardens has to say about a culture, and the evolution of man’s relationship with the natural world. It’s often fascinating reading.

This is a survey, of course, and in no way a guide. Still, several sections illuminate the impact of historic gardens on the American landscape. The descriptions of Italian and English garden design have ap-

plication. In addition, one chapter covers the Americas; here you’ll find A.J. Downing, the interpreted gardens at Colonial Williamsburg, John Paul Getty’s reconstruction of the original garden at Herculaneum in Malibu, the Italian garden at Vizcaya, Beatrix Farrand’s work at Dumbarton Oaks, and Thomas Church’s California Style. The chapter on the 20th century is eerily historic.

Both of these garden books, I’ve decided, belong in my permanent library. *The Garden: A History* now shares

a shelf with books about famous painters and architects. Michael Weishan’s book *The New Traditional Garden*, already dog-eared, currently resides not far from the kitchen table. I’m taking notes.

MICHAEL WEISHAN, host of public radio’s *The Cultivated Gardener* and a contributor to *Old-House Journal*, also publishes the quarterly *Traditional Gardening* for those interested in historical gardens and heirloom plants. \$24 per year; preview and subscribe at www.traditionalgardening.com



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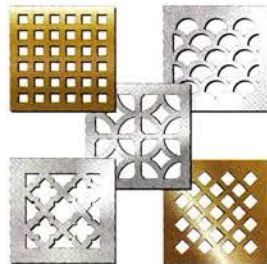
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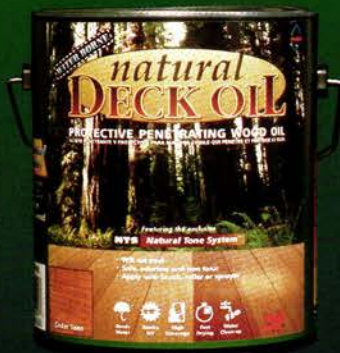
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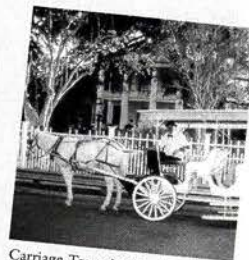
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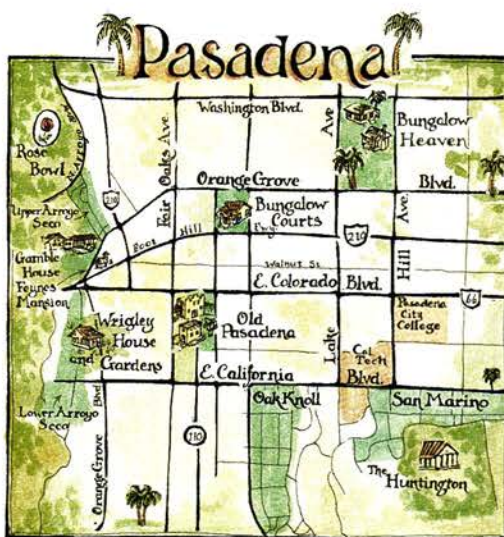
THIS IS AN EXPOSÉ of sorts—no, not the mystery type that writer Raymond Chandler penned when he made Pasadena the setting in *The High Window*, but rather, an aficionado's guide to the epicenter of all things Arts & Crafts in southern California. After all, this is where Ernest Batchelder molded his famous art tiles, and where Greene & Greene built their ultimate bungalows. The Gamble, Blacker, and Duncan-Irwin Houses are all here in Pasadena, as is Charles Greene's own Oakholme.

In spite of its modest size (134,824 residents), Pasadena is Big League. Beyond being the home of the famed Rose Bowl and its annual parade, Pasadena also enjoys a reputation as keeper of the flame for much of Southern California's cultural and architectural heritage. That said, a visit to the city requires a certain organizational discipline apart from the *mañana* attitude practiced elsewhere in California. In Pasadena, advance reservations are a way of life,

whether you need hotel rooms, meals, tickets to a show at the Pasadena Playhouse, or simply want to go on a house tour. That's not to say the locals aren't spontaneous; it's just that so much of what Pasadena has to offer is popular far beyond the town's borders.

A visit to Pasadena requires a certain organizational discipline that's apart from the mañana attitude elsewhere in California.

BY THOMAS SHESS



No longer a sleepy suburb of LA nestled among orange groves, Pasadena is a destination in its own right. Its collection of "ultimate bungalows" is world-class. Above: The Renaissance Revival-style Pasadena City Hall and Public Library complex is arguably the crowning glory of this small city full of architectural wonders.



Clockwise from top: The Duncan-Irwin House is considered a Greene & Greene masterpiece, even though the original house wasn't designed by the two brothers. The annual Rose Bowl Parade is a Pasadena tradition. A strong Japanese influence is evident in the Austin House, built in the Lower Arroyo Seco in 1909. (Note the Elizabethan diamond-paned windows.) Charles Greene kept enlarging and embellishing his home in Pasadena, begun in 1901, until he moved to Carmel in 1916.



Speaking of house tours, Pasadena has more of these than writer Raymond Chandler had mystery plots. Seemingly, there's a significant tour every month, with the dates, times, and featured houses in constant flux. That's part of the charm. To keep track, contact Pasadena Heritage (626-441-6333) or the Pasadena Office of Historic Preservation and Design Section (175 N. Garfield, Room 111, 626-744-4228). Two major events are the Spring Home Tour, held in March, and Craftsman Weekend, held this year in October. Pasadena Heritage also sponsors a walking tour every second Saturday at 9 a.m. Tickets are only \$5, but if you don't make reservations in advance (626-441-6333), remember you were warned.

■ **OLD PASADENA** Pasadena did things right in the early 1990s when the city's mamas and papas preserved the original merchant quarter along West Colorado Boulevard between Pasadena Avenue and Arroyo Parkway. There are enough antique shops on South Fair Oaks Street alone to sate an Arts & Crafts lover for a weekend. Because traffic can be absurd, do yourself a favor: call a taxi or hop on the free ARTS bus.

■ **UPPER ARROYO SECO** North and west of Interstate 210—along the dry bed of what was once the Los Angeles River—is an extraordinary enclave of Arts & Crafts architecture. Although architectural icons Henry and Charles Greene designed half a dozen houses in the Upper Arroyo Seco, the brothers' crowning achievement is undoubtedly the Gamble House, built in 1908 for a scion of the Proctor and Gamble empire. Now a house museum (626-793-3334), it encompasses an entire block on Westmoreland Place. Also in the neighborhood is La Miniatura, a privately owned, 1923 Frank Lloyd Wright design on Prospect Crescent, and the Beaux Arts-style Fenyes Mansion, built about 1910 and now the home of the Pasadena Historical Museum (470 W. Walnut St., 626-577-1660).

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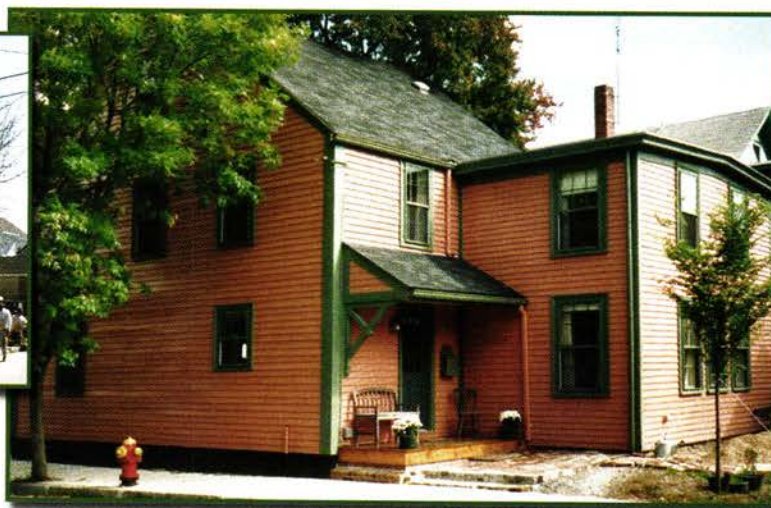
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The Arts & Crafts influence percolates through a large Foursquare (top left) and a half-timbered Tudor (below left). Top right: One of Pasadena's bungalow courts. Inset: A signpost on the way to Bungalow Heaven.

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■ **LOWER ARROYO SECO** South of the Ventura Freeway is the Lower Arroyo Seco, the neighborhood where Ernest Batchelder chose to build his house (now privately owned) in 1909. To the west is Highland Park and the historic Garvanza neighborhood. To the east is Millionaires' Row, a promenade of late 19th- and early 20th-century homes along South Orange Grove Boulevard. Don't miss the Italian Renaissance-style Wrigley Mansion (391 S. Orange Grove Blvd., 626-449-4100, call ahead for tour times). Completed in 1914, it's now the headquarters for the Tournament of Roses Association.

■ **BUNGALOW HEAVEN** This 29-square-block landmark district is Bungalow Central in America's most famous bungalow community. As you would expect, virtually every house in the neighborhood between Washington and Orange Grove Boulevards is a bungalow.

■ **BUNGALOW COURTS** Pasadena has a huge selection of historically designated California bungalow courts. You'll find many of these in the colorful South Marengo Historic District. The most famous is prob-



ably Bowen Court (North Oakland Avenue at Villa Street), enclosed with a "peanut brittle" (river rock and clinker brick) wall.

■ **OAK KNOLL** Originally platted in the 1880s, this East Pasadena neighborhood didn't begin to develop until

after 1905, when a trio of developers (including Henry Huntington) revived the Frederick Law Olmsted-inspired plans. Imposing mansions, including the privately owned Blacker and Culbertson Houses on Hillcrest Avenue, were built along curvilinear streets that follow the canyon rims.

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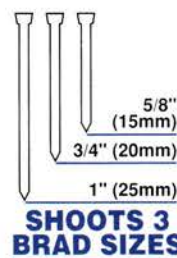
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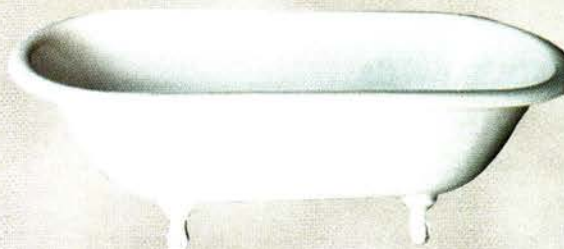
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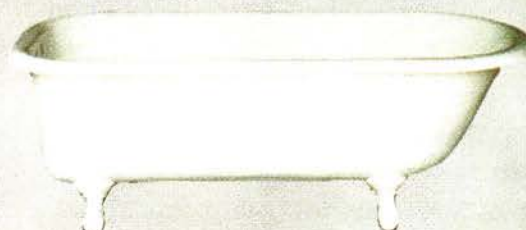
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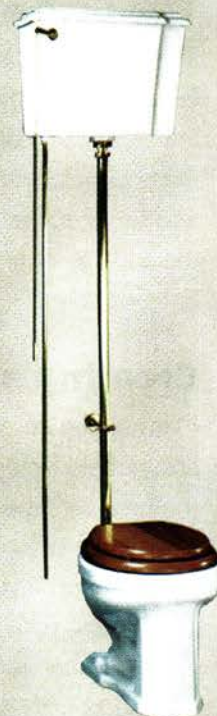
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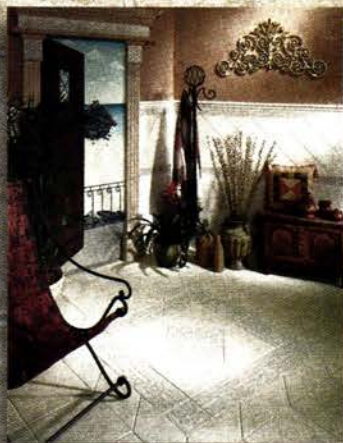
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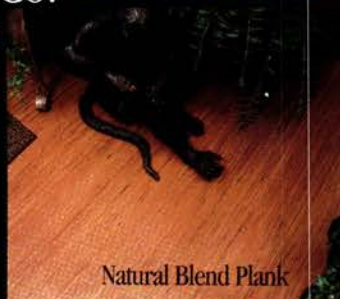
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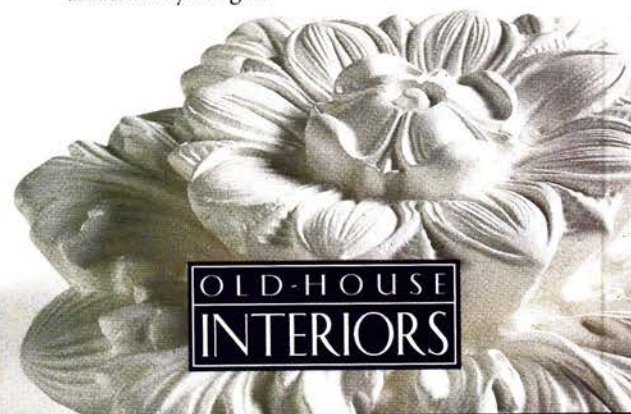
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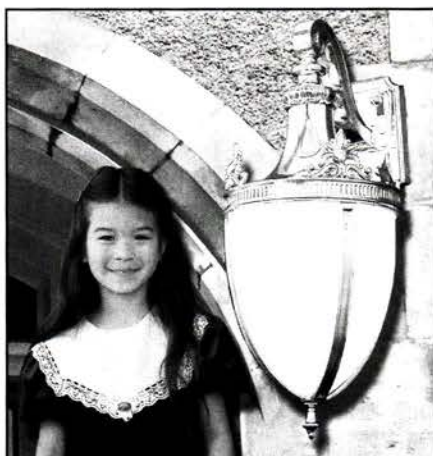
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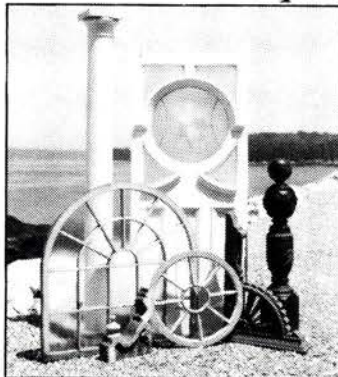
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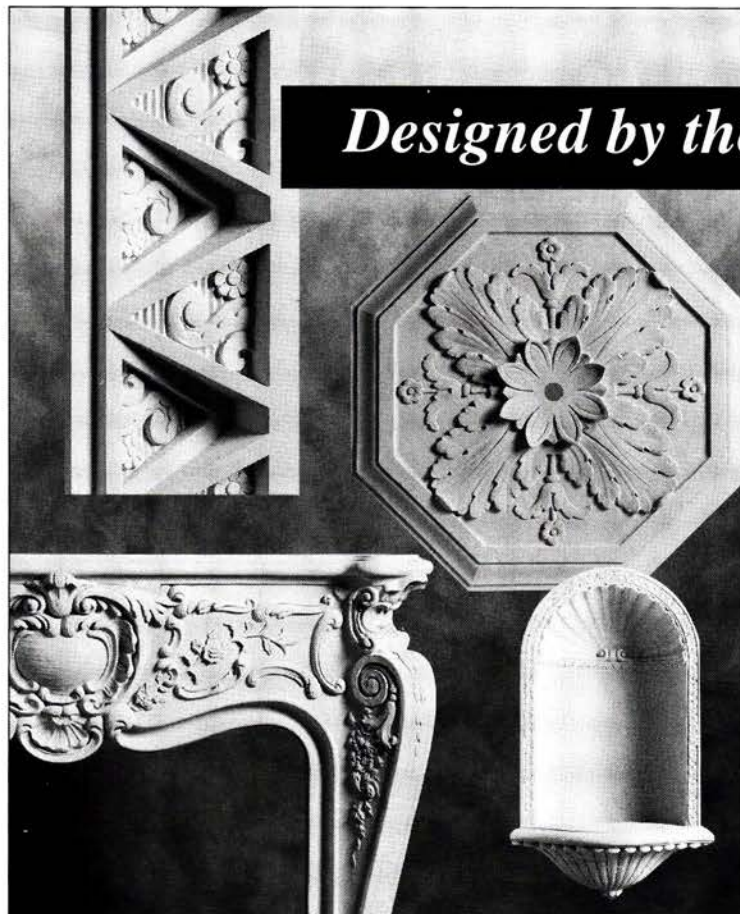
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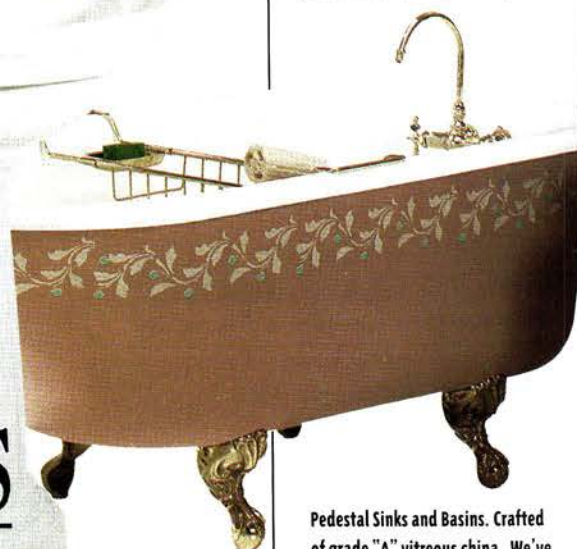
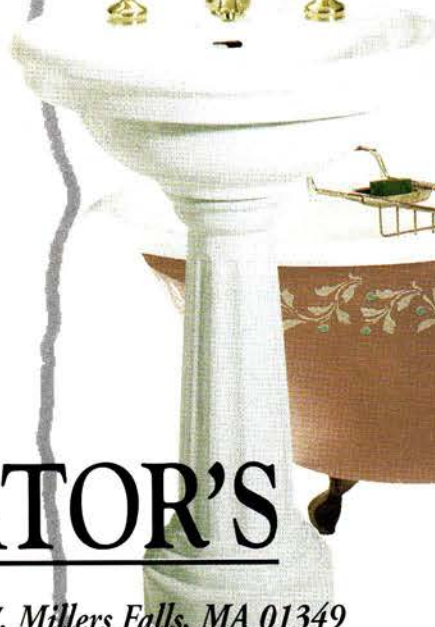


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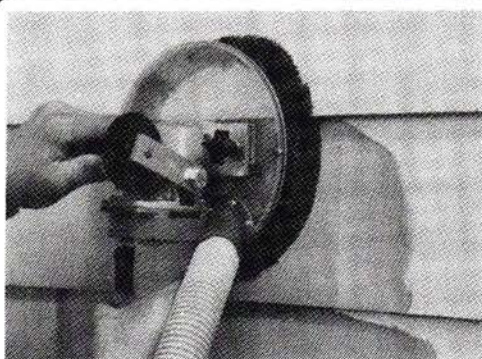
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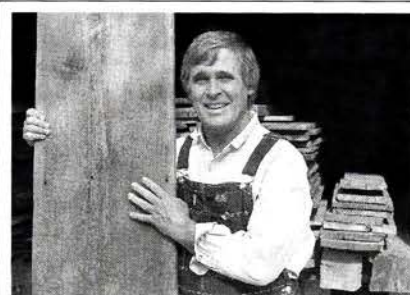
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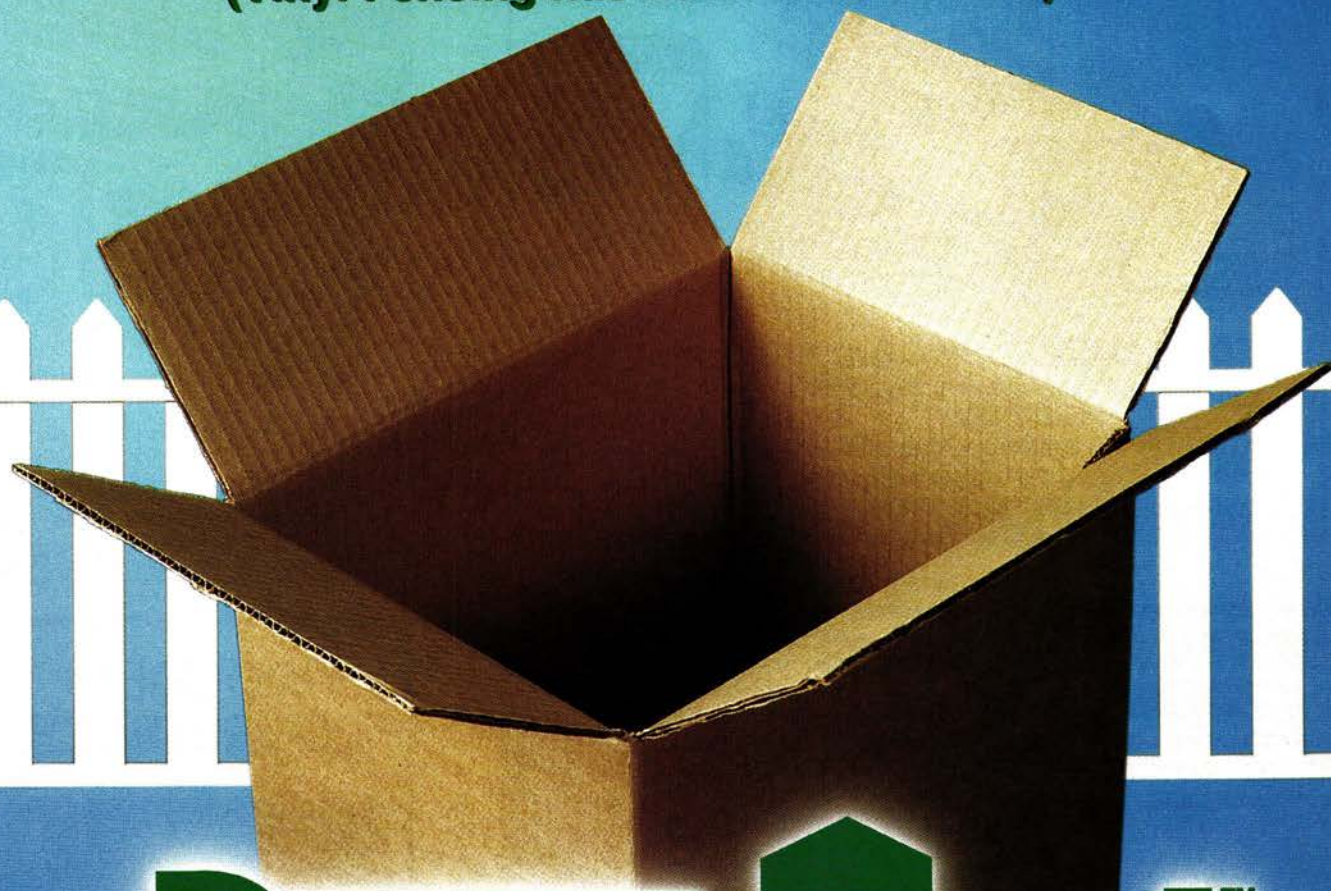
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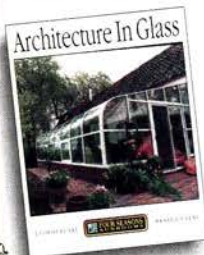
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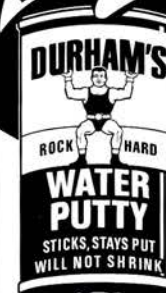
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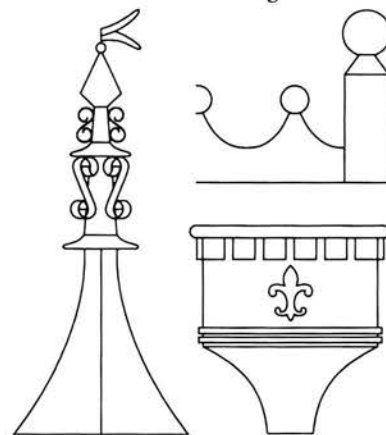
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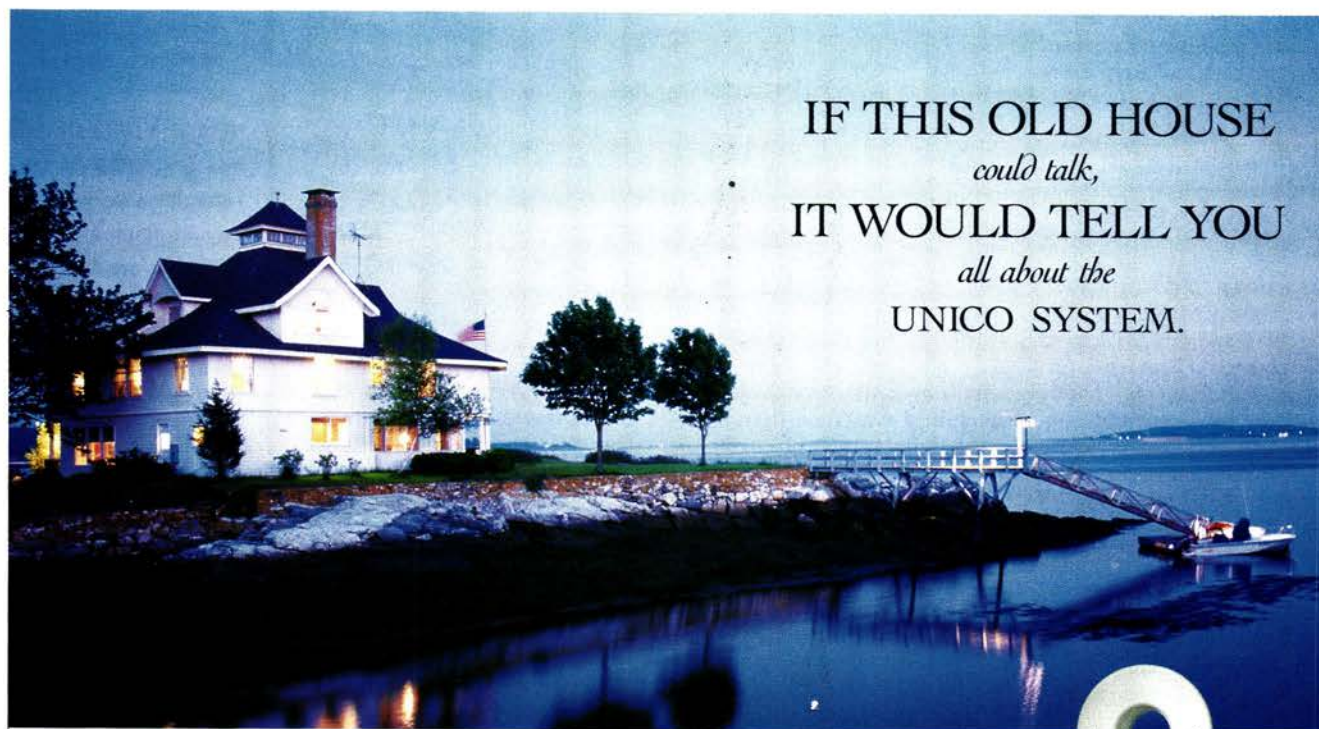
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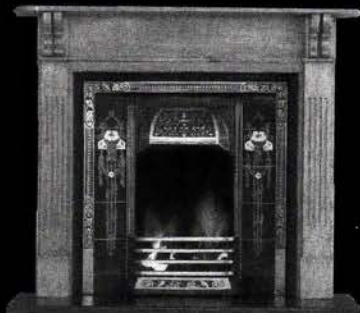
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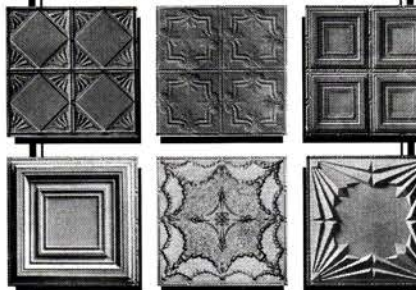
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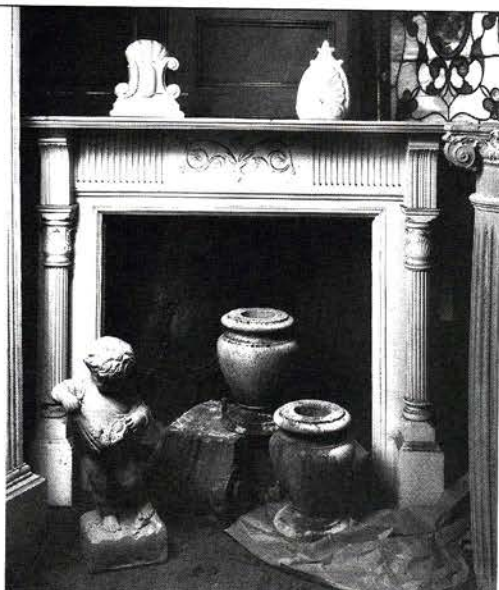
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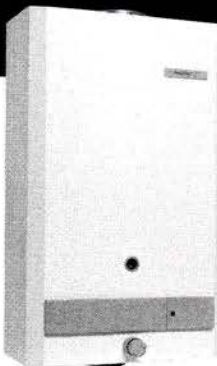
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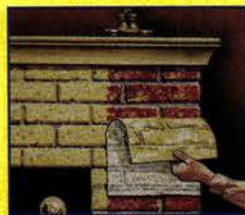
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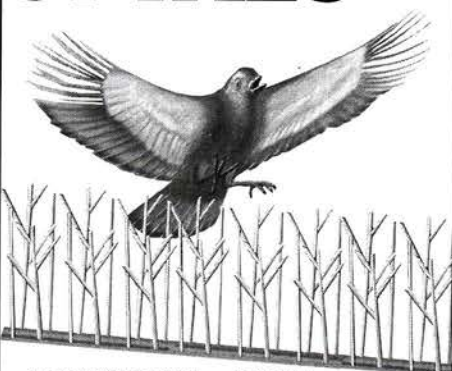
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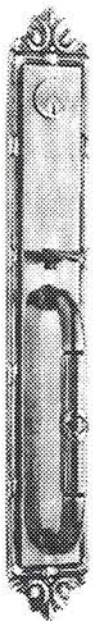
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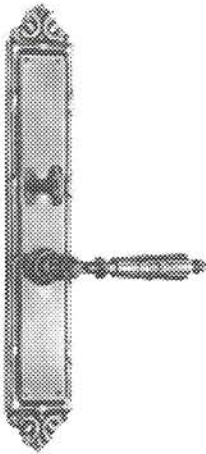
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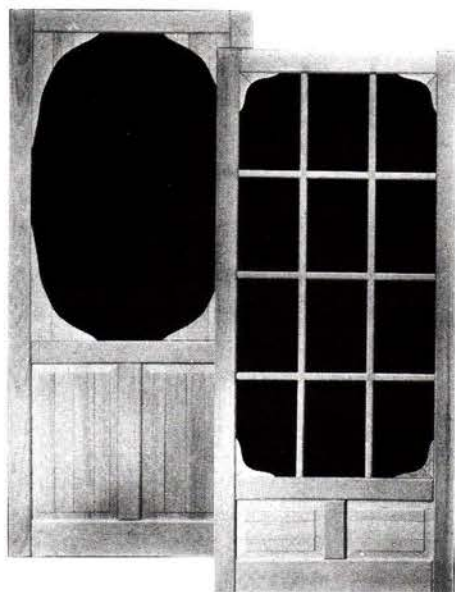
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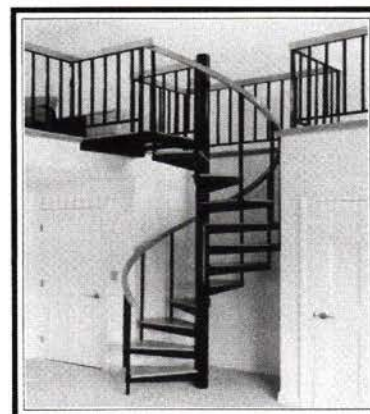
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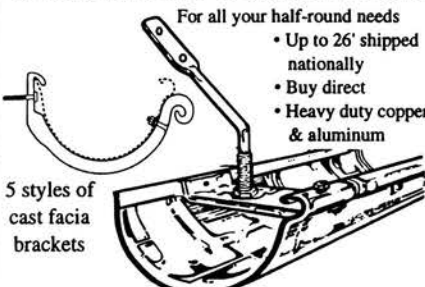
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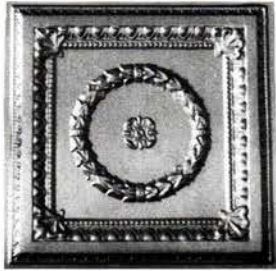
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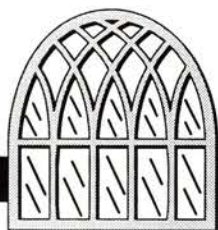
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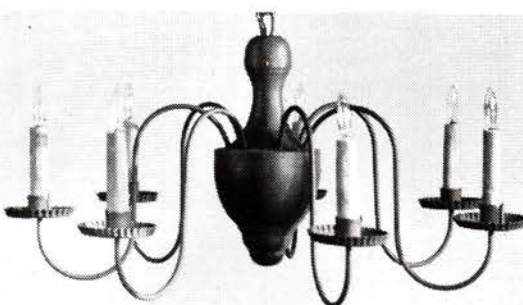
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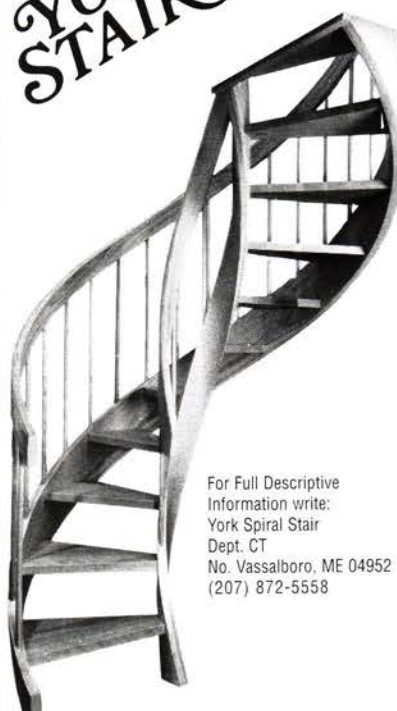


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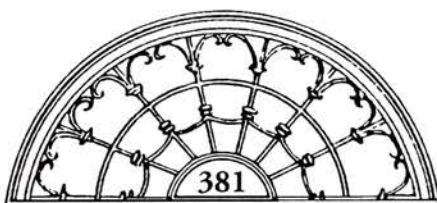
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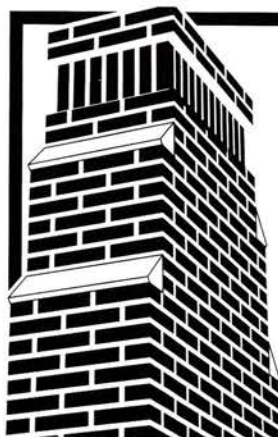
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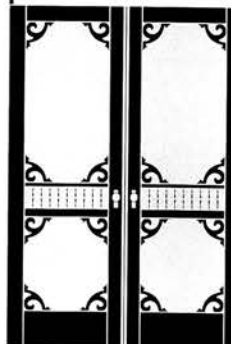
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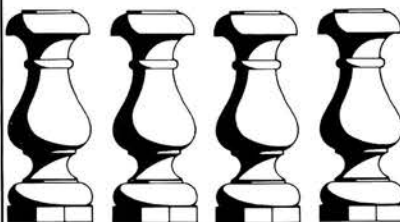
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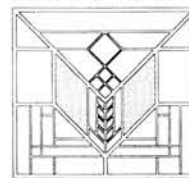


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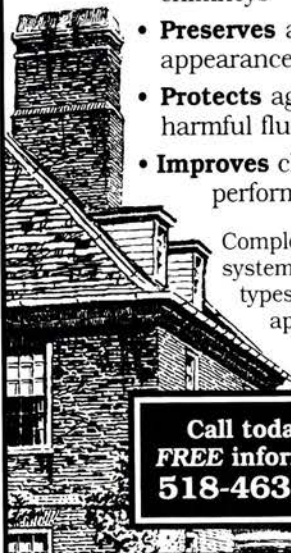
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