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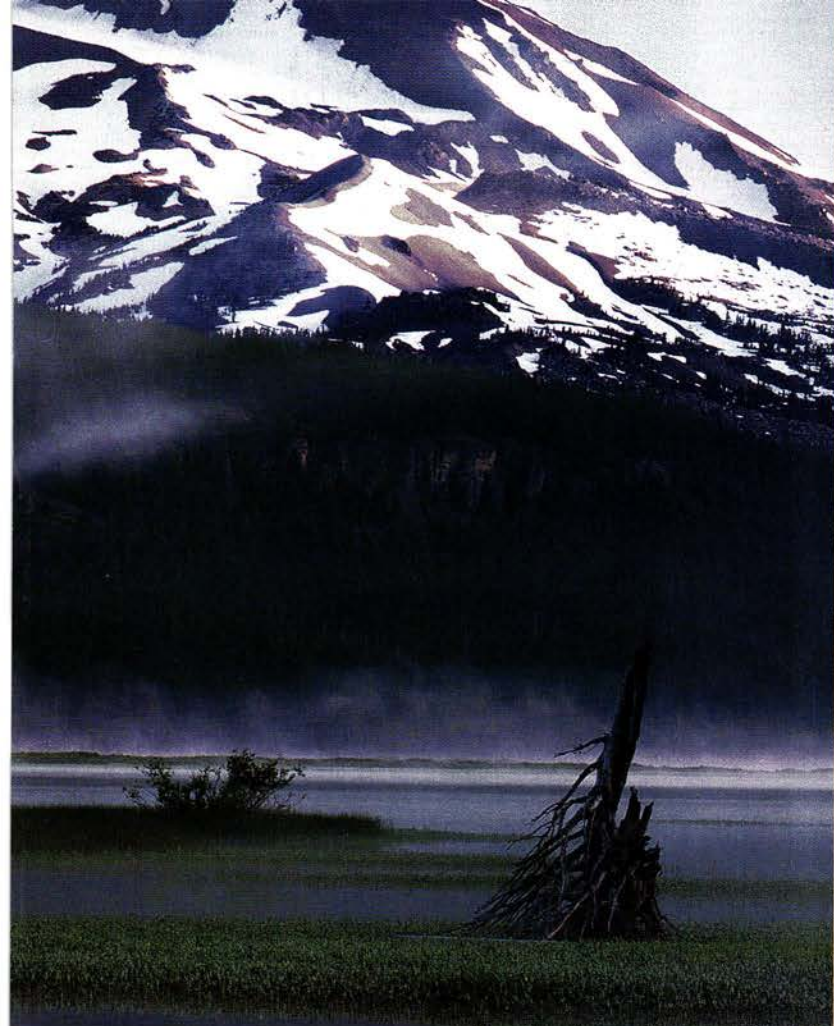
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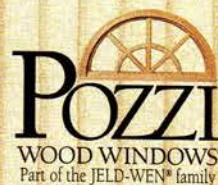
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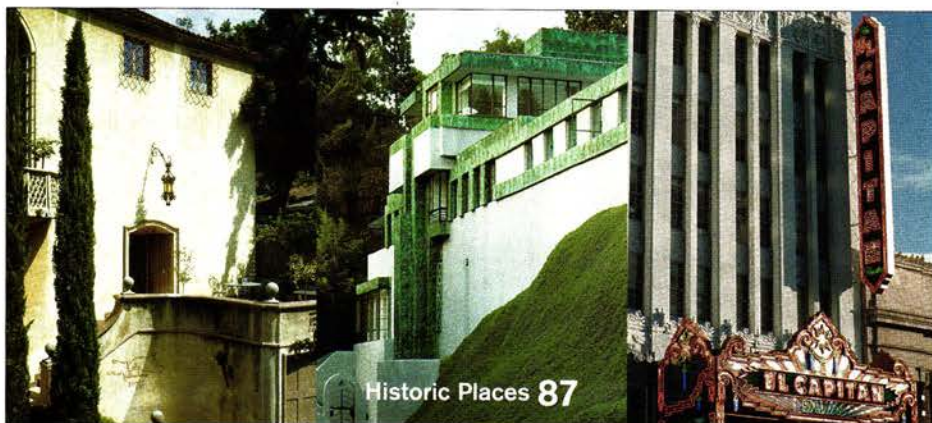
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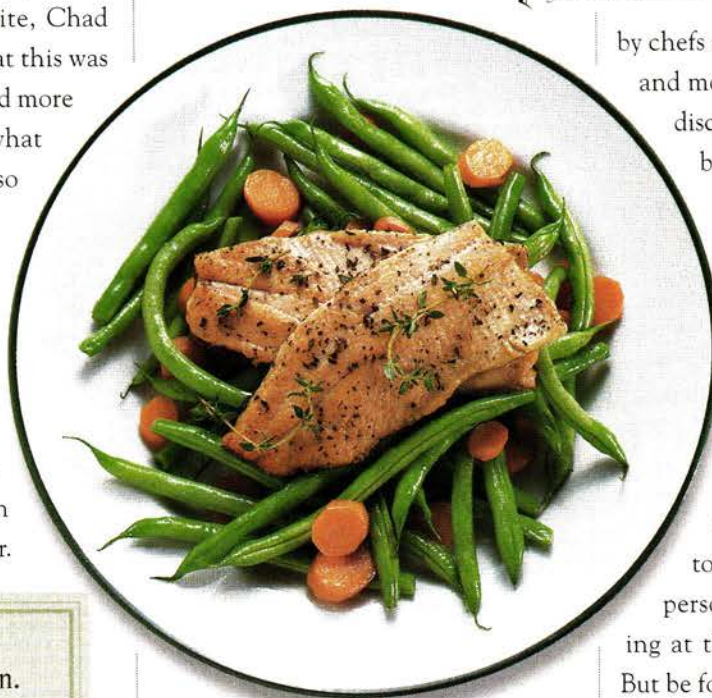
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## Good Houses Are Hard to Find

Just last weekend, my wife and I had a visit from some of her relatives, a young couple with a new baby on the prowl to buy their first home. They had decided to focus their search on a house built before 1940, something with time-tested construction and styling—an old house, as it turns out. Though they had good incomes, their search wasn't shaping up to be the piece of cake they thought it would be.

"Good houses are hard to find," as a friend once told me, and that goes double for old houses in a tight housing market. Beyond locating a house that fits your tastes or lifestyle, how do you find one that is in good condition, a good investment, or not remuddled? There are no sure-fire techniques, but some bits of advice from other old-house owners help.

First be creative in your search—that is, look for leads beyond the usual venues of real estate brochures or brokers. By way of example, there's an old bit of urban wisdom in New York City (and other towns, no doubt) that says if you're trying to find an apartment to rent in a tight market, look in the obituary pages of the newspaper. The clammy logic behind this move is that when one tenant moves on to their final resting place, they make room for another, and you can locate a potential flat before it goes on the open market.

In terms of old houses, try to tap

into alternative methods of communication, such as the neighborhood newsletter. If you're local, put the word out that you're old-house shopping. Watch for and investigate estate sales (signs of migrating empty-nesters).

Second, size up the history of your chosen area, and get to know the historic development patterns. Most towns and even suburbs have grown like the layers of an onion over the last century or so, especially since the advent of the automobile. It's hardly a science, but you're more likely to find a Victorian house closer to the center of a city and rail lines (or former rail lines) than several miles out. (You may also be more likely to encounter a house richer with details and finishes.) Conversely, don't expect to wade through blocks of 1910 bungalows in a district that was close to built-up by the 1880s—or an area that was still farmland in the 1930s. They just weren't doing any bungalow-style building in those parts at those times.

Finally, even if you think your perfect house has just been bid right out from under you (or over you in this market) don't despair or give up hope. Before you know it, another house will tempt you and, much to your surprise, it will be an even better old house.

## OLDHOUSE JOURNAL

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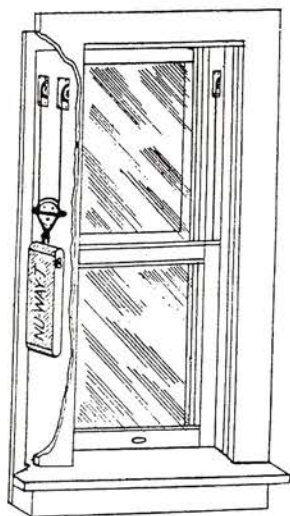


## SASH WITH A PAST

READING "SASH WINDOW CLINIC" (Sept/Oct 2000 OHJ) reminded me of an interesting weight assembly I found while fixing the windows in my current house. When I removed the stop and sash and took the cover off the weight pocket, all I saw was concrete. Puzzled, I removed the interior casing and found a brick-like weight made of concrete, with a hook in the top holding a pulley. This served as the weight for both sashes. I thought

it was weird, so I took a photo of it to save for the next owners.

Several months later, while researching a walking tour of my neighborhood, I came across an advertisement for this weight system in a 1923 magazine put out by the builder of my house (and most of the other homes in my neighborhood). Mystery solved! I don't know how widely these



The "Nu-Way-T" Balance, 1923

weights were actually sold—possibly only in the Bay area—but perhaps there are a few other puzzled old-house owners out there who found concrete in their weight pockets.

I'd also like to share a couple of other window fixing tips. There's a special cording available at fabric stores designed for weighting the hems of draperies that makes an excellent snake for getting to the bottom of the weight pocket. Also, modern parting bead is generally not as thick as what was used in the past, and may need to be nailed in place.

I hope you will continue in this vein and run an article about replacing cracked glass. I'm still waiting for a really efficient way to take out old rock-hard glazing putty.

—JANE POWELL  
Oakland, Calif.



## BETTER SHELLAC STRATEGIES

I normally agree whole heartily with the advice given by your editors and contributors in the "Old House Advisor" column, but I have to take some exception to the response made to the query by Arlynda Lee Boyer on the cleaning of painted finishes (July/August 2000).

While it is true that alcohol will melt a shellac finish quite readily, the same can be true of varnish finishes, particularly if the finish is crazed. Alcohol easily soaks beneath the varnish layer and can liquefy the underlying glaze coats. In general terms, the more refined the alcohol, the more dangerous it can be to use. Denatured alcohol, lacquer thinner, and methyl ethyl ketone should be avoided altogether unless the intent is to actually strip the surface.

Instead, we recommend a product called Soilax to clean wood finishes and painted finishes; it is a product widely used by furniture conservators that is reasonably safe and effective in removing dirt, wax, and grease.

Mix Soilax with warm water as specified on the package. Dip a ball of cheesecloth in the mixture, wring it out only slightly, and then apply in small areas at a time with a circular motion. Do not scrub the surface, but rub with gentle pressure only. Work from the top down, and sponge the cleaned areas with a wet (not dripping

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## LETTERS

wet) sponge or clean piece of cheese cloth.

If a hazy white area appears while rinsing (called "blush"), it means that moisture has penetrated the varnish layer and is trapped beneath. If so, allow to dry, then dip a cotton ball in rubbing alcohol, squeeze out the excess, and gently dab the effected area to remove the blush. Allow to dry thoroughly before proceeding further.

Once the surface of the area is completely cleaned, apply at least two coats of paste wax to protect the renewed surface.

I think that you will find this product to be much less invasive than cleaning surfaces with alcohol. It has the added advantage of removing dirt and wax in one step with one product without leaving the residue that mineral spirits can leave behind.

Soilax can generally be found in most traditional hardware stores.

—JOHN LINN HOPKINS  
HOPKINS & ASSOCIATES  
Memphis, Tenn.

## PASSING THE BOOK

As a 'forever' subscriber to Old-House, I particularly like the way you folks manage to keep coming up with articles that are useful as well as interesting to read. A friend of ours just purchased a 100-year-old house, but was not familiar with OHJ. Since he said he'd like to see one, so I showed him one of our back issues. (I always loan OHJs but they never come back!) I think you have found a new subscriber.

Incedentally, do you still publish an annual cumulative index of all the past articles? It would be very helpful for those

of us who archive our OHJs and turn to them for reference months or years after they arrive in the mail. Thanks for a great magazine.

—JON MAXWELL  
Long Beach, Calif.

*Good question. No, OHJ has not published a comprehensive cumulative index in bound pamphlet form in over a decade. However your request is one we've heard before. One of the ideas that has been suggested is to update the index and make it available to readers on the OHJ website ([www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com)). If you'd like to see such a resource let us know.*

— EDITORS

## BEYOND BUFFALO

AS RESIDENTS OF an 1890s Buffalo streetcar suburb, we were delighted to see the wide





coverage of Buffalo architecture in the July/August 2000 OHJ. However, the Historic Lodging sidebar overlooked the beautifully restored Victorian Beau Fleuve Bed & Breakfast (242 Linwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14207). This establishment is within walking distance of at least half the places mentioned in the article. In addition, there is a B&B association directory available that lists many others in the area (it is not necessary to go as far as Niagara Falls). For reading, look up *Buffalo Architecture* by Reyner Banham (MIT Press).

—GREGORY AND CAROL STEIN  
*Kenmore, New York*

#### COMBATTING CUPPING

I am a recent subscriber to your magazine, and I enjoy it very much. The "Bark Up, Bark Down" conundrum described in Journal

(Sept/Oct 2000) can be addressed by combining bark-down installation with the application of deck adhesive to the floor joists. I routinely use a product such as DAP or Macklanburg-Duncan adhesive in conjunction with power deck screws, and it has greatly reduced cupping, even on exposed decks. Adhesive is especially helpful where blind nailing is required. (If you are using pressure-treated lumber, choose a specially formulated adhesive.)

—DON PESCHE  
*Waco, Tex.*

#### MID-CENTURY KUDOS

I'm glad to see that OHJ continues to move in step with the times through your increasing coverage of mid-20th century house styles and architects, such as William Wurster (Sept/Oct 2000). As a longtime reader of your magazine, I always felt that when I

could finally afford to buy my own home, it would be the type featured in OHJ. But when we actually went out to buy, the older homes were either outside our commuting distance, or cost two to three times what we could afford - even the "handyman's specials". So we ended up buying what I think is the true-value home in our area: a 1950s split-level daylight Rambler. No remuddling here. The original owner sold it to us pretty much as it was built over a generation ago.

Maybe my house isn't what many of your readers have in mind when they think of old houses, but my house is as old, perhaps, as some of the houses you featured when I first started reading OHJ in the 1970s. I'm looking forward to more articles about "nifty fifties" old houses.

—MATT MENDON  
*Evanston, Ill.*

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## First Person, First Period *By Regina Cole*



When she bought the Riggs House, Barbara Lambert surprised everyone—even herself. Five years later, she loves to welcome guests to the oldest house in town. She calls herself this house's "caretaker."

**W**HEN BARBARA LAMBERT SHOWS OFF HER OLD house, including a room she added five years ago, the response is never subtle. "Wow!" guests will exclaim. "This is incredible!"

It is impressive. Massive rafters arch far overhead. The far wall is mostly a triple leaded-glass window, and from another wall French doors open to a garden. Light streams in, illuminating the mellow surfaces of old furniture.

"This is very special," Barbara smiles as she walks to a grain-painted box prominently displayed atop a massive Welsh dresser. "It was under a bunch of stuff in the woodshed, full of metal parts. I could barely lift it." The "it" is a document box, the repository for important papers in a substantial 17th-century man's life. Shortly after Barbara Lambert bought this house, a historian friend was sorting through the municipal archives and unearthed the bill of sale of just such a box to Thomas Riggs. "As the town clerk for 51 years, I imagine Riggs kept the town records in it," Barbara says.

From the new room, a narrow hall leads to a wall covered with silvery gray shingles; a door opens into a very old room. "Now we are in the Cape-style section Thomas Riggs added in 1700 or so," Barbara says, passing through several plain-paneled rooms, wide floorboards gently sloping underfoot. "He bought the house from the three adventurers who built it. As close as we can determine, that was about 1645." A house built by the earliest settlers in New England; that makes it a first-period house.

The group of visitors arrives in the original part of the house, a room used as a library. Bookshelves line the walls, a photocopy machine does double duty as an end



PHOTOS BY SANDRA AGRAFIOTIS





In colonial times, the Riggs family knew the main room, with its massive open hearth, as the *hall*. Here it has evolved into what we call the living room. The kitchen was once a lean-to mud room.





Above: "Wait before making changes," Barbara counsels. Her addition is invisible from the front. Above Right: The 1645 house, a library today. Far Right: A spacious new room was framed with old barn timbers. Right: A guest bedroom dates to ca. 1700.



## FIRST PERIOD CAPE ANN THE THOMAS RIGGS HOUSE

**OWNER:** Barbara Lambert

**LOCATION:** 27 Vine Street, Gloucester, Massachusetts

**DATE OF HOUSE:** 1645, with 1700 and 1995 additions. Minor alterations in 1753 and 1910.

**ONGOING PROJECT:** To learn more about the beautifully detailed sailboats scratched into the wood paneling in several rooms.

**OF INTEREST:** William Sumner Appleton, a pioneering preservationist, told the Riggs family not to remove original plaster. Hence, a section is displayed in the library.

table, and the couch is drawn close to a ca. 1910 fieldstone fireplace. Track lights on the ceiling beams shine down onto Barbara's reading materials, but new additions and technology don't matter here. The room feels ancient.

"This is the log house Riggs bought in 1661," Barbara Lambert explains. "He and his wife, Mary Millett, brought up seven children in this 16' x 16' room. Besides being the town clerk, he served as a selectman for 20 years, was a schoolmaster, a surveyor, and he was a representative to the Great Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In fact," Barbara's eyes sparkle, "he and several others protested the tax policies of Governor Andros." An archivist and historian, Barbara relishes the notion that her home has connections to a colorful bit of history. (Sir Edmund Andros was so hated by colonists that they threw him into a Boston jail in 1689.)

But Barbara didn't set out to own the oldest extant house in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a seaport about thirty miles north and east of Boston. Originally from Ohio, she was working in Boston, first at the Mu-

seum of Fine Arts, then as curator of the Shirley-Eustis House.

"I was living in the kitchen wing of a Federal house in Charlestown, with an enclosed garden, and gas lamps...it was charming, and I loved it. The "buy-me" catalogues always came to my door, and I always threw them out. This house caught my eye, but I had no intention of moving, although the realtor handling the sale kept calling me up. The house included 6½ acres and developers were licking their chops. The zoning here was ¼ acre: they wanted to raze this house and put up tons of new ones." Barbara shakes her head.

"Still, I wasn't about to buy, until England's Landmarks Trust got involved. They wanted the house, and intended to take off the dormers and install heated towel bars in the bathrooms.

"Well, that was it. I suddenly heard myself saying, 'Wait a minute—I saw it first!'"

And so Barbara Lambert saved the 1645 Riggs House from destruction by developers and desecration by towel bars. She bought it from the last, childless member of the Riggs family, who had made amaz-



ingly few changes over the years.


Nonetheless, she did want the comforts they had never installed: modern heat, air-conditioning, electricity, plumbing, and a working kitchen. She designed an addition that brings natural light and utilities into the old house without undue disturbance. When an ominous bulge in a ceiling turned out to be the result of powder post beetles, she opted not to replace it. "We jacked the ceiling up so it was level, vacuumed the plaster, and poured a high-grade epoxy over the lath. It sealed those bugs, and I still have the lovely old plaster. And I didn't put cement liners into chimneys built of old, soft brick—I used clay.

"Hiring carpenters is the hardest part. They all love nail guns," she shudders. "One was good, but slow as molasses. Another was incredibly arrogant. A third, said he knew what he was doing, but he couldn't shingle the log house roof properly."

There was the carpenter who never showed up at crucial times, leaving plumbers stalled on the job. One brought in a crew she believes were involved with drugs. Some carried off her tools and materials. But Barbara has coping mechanisms. "If you're not sure a carpenter has the skills and appreciation needed for old houses, present him with a problem and ask how he'd handle it. If you don't agree with his approach, see whether he's flexible and willing to consider other ways.

"Scribing is really important, since in this house nothing is flat, or at right angles. Fit and peg in the old style, instead of relying on nail guns and glue. Don't use polyurethane as a clear finish; linseed oil is more compatible. In fact," she pauses for emphasis, "use materials as close to the originals as possible, and do what is reversible whenever possible."


Barbara is now happy and comfortable in her old house. She runs it as a bed and breakfast inn and yes, she has found a good, sensitive carpenter. Who is he? "No one gives out his name, and he has an unlisted phone number," she says. "Among the people who hire him, he's our secret." 🐾



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## Eight Saved in New Orleans

**A** YEAR AGO IN THESE Journal pages (Nov/Dec '99 OHJ), Virginia McAlester reported on a 66,000-square-foot Albertson's food store poised to land like a spaceship from another galaxy in New Orleans' Central City Historic District. Blighted with vacant lots, abandoned buildings, and chronic unemployment, Central City lies just to the northeast of the famed Garden District but, unfortunately, prosperity has passed it by. Two influential churches lobbied on behalf of the store, and the city council gave developers the go-ahead after the store made design changes. As a goodwill gesture to preservation groups,

*continued on page 22*

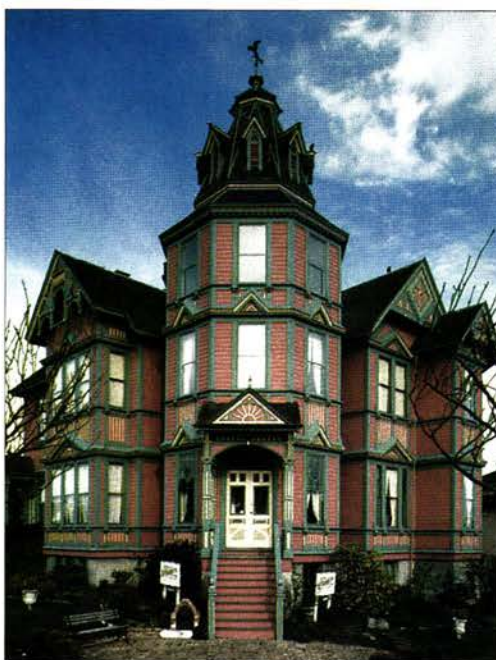


A camelback double shotgun house, newly severed from its Baronne Street site, rests on a trailer ready for the ride to Central City. It will house Parkway Partners, an environmental non-profit group.

## B&B Focus

THE ANN STARRETT MANSION, PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Classic Victorian details abound inside and outside the Ann Starrett Mansion. Built by wealthy contractor George Starrett in 1889 as a wedding present for his wife, Ann, the mansion includes frescoed ceilings, elaborate mouldings, and a three-tiered, free-hung spiral staircase that rises up a 70'-tall octagonal tower. The dome ceiling is solar calendar centered around a ruby red glass that lights up at the beginning of each season; frescoes in the dome portray the four seasons and four virtues. Outdoors, each gable features singular decoration. **4 suites, 4 rooms, plus cottage accommodations, \$95-225, 744 Clay St., Port Townsend, Wash. 98368 (800) 321-0644, [www.starrettmansion.com](http://www.starrettmansion.com).**



Paul Boyer



## femme fleur

More than bronze babes playing with petals of metal, femme fleurs represent the unlikely mating of late Art Nouveau styling and early electric lighting. The height of taste to ca. 1914 (and unforgivably tacky thereafter), these delightfully eccentric, shadeless fixtures were often found dancing on tables or—even more implausibly—perching atop staircase newel posts. Femme fleurs could be the scale of a desk lamp or (with proper feeding, perhaps) as large as a child. This lovely lady stands 30" tall and hails from the private collection of Roy Electric Co., specialists in antique and reproduction ceiling and wall fixtures (800-366-3347; [www.west-fieldnj.com/roy](http://www.west-fieldnj.com/roy)).





Photos courtesy of Preservation Resource Center

A parade of houses—one, two, three—moved down the street as police cordoned off the area and men in hard hats stood by, waiting to check the power lines. The double-gallery apartment building (far left) may have been designed by James Gallier. The double shotgun's camelback (far right) just cleared a line.

Albertson's put \$150,000 into the kitty so that eight historic houses could be saved.

Preservation groups bowed to the inevitable. The Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans tackled the complex job of obtaining permits, drawing up legal agreements, and arranging financing. Director of "Operation Comeback" Stephanie Bruno says, "There's a risk of developers applying the lessons of this project incorrectly. In Central City, established voices had their hopes and dreams tied to the store. Ordinarily, a behemoth like this would outrage the community." And, unlike other neighborhoods, Central City had a large number of vacant lots, so there was an alternative to demolition. "Moving houses is a last resort," Bruno says. "It's not just about the individual houses. The irreplaceable commodities are the 19th-century neighborhoods."

Geoff Coats, historian and project manager for Felicity Street Redevelopment, a nonprofit group that matched up buyers and vacant sites, says, "Moving these houses is an imperfect solution. We can't just move whole neighborhoods. It's disruptive and costly."

Just how costly? Although utilities and police ended up donating their services, the first estimates for moving phone and power lines came in at \$185,000. Because so many houses were moved at one time, the utilities cooperated in ways that might not have been possible if just one house were being whisked out of harm's way. Fees for new founda-

tions and the move itself totaled more than \$300,000.

Bruno says, "Extra line had to be spliced in to lower lines while the houses passed. Cox [Cable] might have lines way up high on a pole and Bell South's lines would be below, so they'd have to drop together; but it made a difference who dropped first because they didn't want to knock each other's lines out. We were dealing with fiber optic cables carrying 300

fibers each, and if one got damaged, an entire town could be cut off."

Crews timed the line drops to coincide with the passage of the tallest buildings. Three were moved on August 8, and three more on August 10. (Two had been moved earlier.) The biggest was a double-gallery apartment, described as an architectural gem. When it passed, the smiling utility linemen shook hands from their elevated bucket trucks.

Bruno says the move proved how well the homes were built. The PRC had intended to remove windows, but time ran out. Warren Davie, from Davie Shoring, with assistance from Florida mover Kim Brownie, did such a great job, says Bruno, "that the plaster medallions survived intact, and there was no broken glass."

On their new sites, the buildings will fill in vacant lots and provide momentum for the neighborhood's revitalization. Parkway Partners, a nonprofit landscaping firm that supports the city's parks and parkways department, will take over a camelback, double-shotgun house. They plan to erect greenhouses and demonstration gardens in the block next to the Pontchartrain Expressway. With help from city grants, two churches—First Emanuel and New Home Missionary—will renovate three homes for low-income housing.

Buildings in private hands include one bought by George and Daris Scott, who'd already acquired one abandoned

*continued on page 24*

**After estimates  
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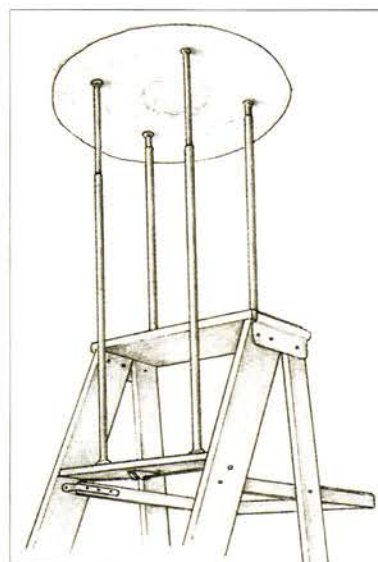
## RESTORERS' NOTEBOOK



When my wife and I decided to install a ceiling medallion in the living room of our 1910 brick Foursquare, we soon found that the ceiling was not a perfectly level surface. I realized we would need to apply pressure to several spots along the medallion once we coated it with adhesive and set it in position.

After considering many options, I remembered that we had some closet extension poles (with springs inside) that you twist to make them shorter or longer. Using a step ladder as a base, I twisted the rods to produce just the right length and pressure at the appropriate points on the medallion. Since this procedure worked perfectly - almost as if the rods were made specifically for this application - I now see how they could be used for numerous other jobs where it becomes necessary to hold objects in place while adhesives dry.

—Brian Beisel  
Yorkton, Saskatoon, Canada



Kathy Bray

## May the Forcing be With You

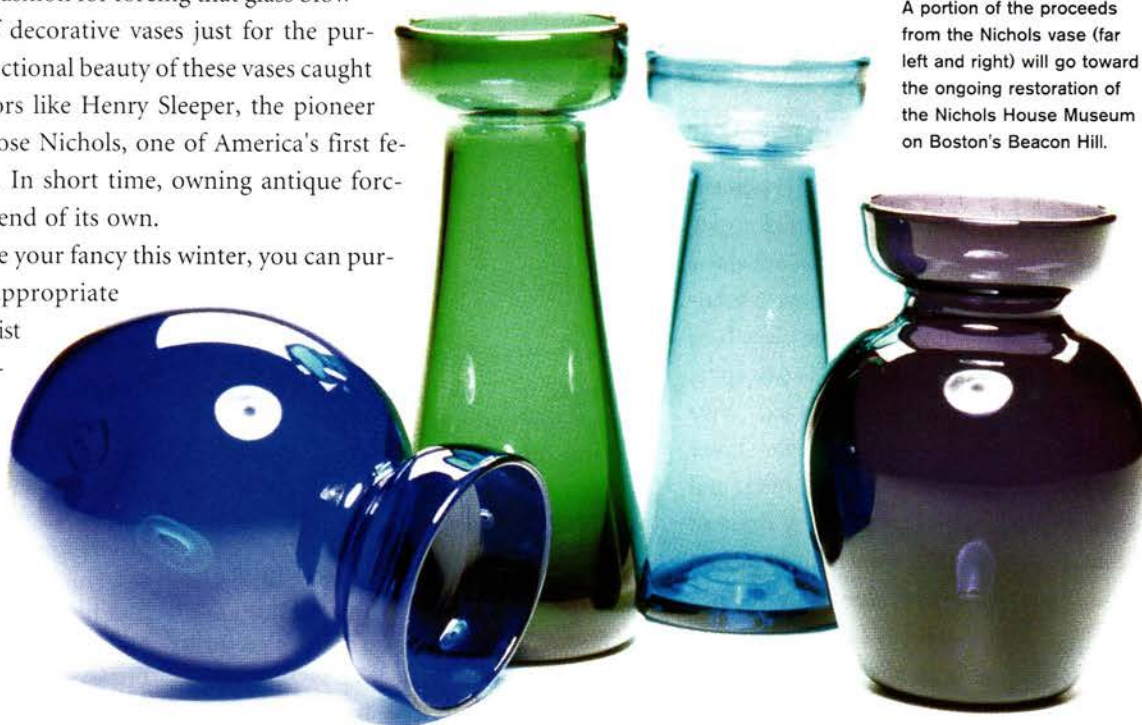
THE TECHNIQUE OF FORCING—that is, coercing spring-flowering bulbs to bloom in winter—became all the rage in the mid to late 19th century. By rooting bulbs indoors, and thereby fooling Mother Nature, Victorians brought the vibrant colors and fragrance of fresh flowers to wintry rooms. Easy-to-force hyacinths were special favorites. All one needed was a cool, dark storage space, just enough water to touch the bulb's roots, and the proper vessel.

So popular was the fashion for forcing that glass blowers produced a variety of decorative vases just for the purpose. By the 1920s, the functional beauty of these vases caught the eyes of astute collectors like Henry Sleeper, the pioneer interior decorator, and Rose Nichols, one of America's first female landscape designers. In short time, owning antique forcing glassware became a trend of its own.

Should forcing strike your fancy this winter, you can pursue it with historically appropriate style. Heirloom bulb specialist and long-time OHJ contributor Scott Kunst is reproducing two authentic designs in hand-blown glass. The Beauport, named for Henry Sleeper's summer home (now an SPNEA museum) is a classic Victorian

vase, already considered a bit passé by the 1870s, when it was known as the "common" or "old style" vase. The Nichols design comes from the collection of Rose Nichols, the Boston-based garden authority and peace activist. The vases are blown in a variety of colors and sell for \$36 to \$44 apiece - a fraction of what antiques command. For vases or bulbs, contact Old-House Gardens (734-995-1486; [www.oldhousegardens.com](http://www.oldhousegardens.com)).

A portion of the proceeds from the Nichols vase (far left and right) will go toward the ongoing restoration of the Nichols House Museum on Boston's Beacon Hill.



David Sharpe





## The Renovation of Old Places

By Frank C. Scott (1876)

**W**HATEVER OBJECTION MAY BE urged against buying and renovating old houses will not apply to the purchase of ground stocked with old trees and shrubs. Many a rickety, neglected place is filled with choice old materials, which, with small expenditures in clearing away the superfluities, and polishing the lawn, will group at once into pleasing pictures. Such neglected places may be compared with a head of hair all uncombed and disorderly, which needs but to be clean and arranged with taste to become a crown of beauty to the wearer.

Old yards are generally filled with mature trees of choice species, but so huddled together, and filled in with lank neglected shrubs and tangled grass, that one observes only the shiftlessness and disorder. As in music a single note given purely and clearly is more pleasing than the greatest variety of sounds making discords together. But a week's work among these medleys of trees and shrubs—the bold cutting or digging-out of the poorest trees, the re-arrangement of the shrubbery, so that the sunlight may play with the shadows of those that remain—and there will stand revealed a mass of beautiful home adornments that the place bare of large trees and mature shrubs will envy.

Sometimes old fruit-trees that have had an air habitually expressive of hard times and low living, with a little pruning, and extra feeding, will assume a new dress of foliage, and wear it with such luxuriant grace that they become the most pleasing of trees—scarcely recognizable as the same which so lately wore a dejected air.



James C. Massey

### Victorian Square House

In the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, as in many areas of the eastern United States, there's a common mid-19th century house type characterized by a symmetrical main facade and squarish shape. A descendant of the earlier Greek Revival "cube," the Victorian Square House might also be seen as a precursor of the early 20th century Foursquare. These houses are two stories high and (generally) three bays wide, with a hipped or pyramidal roof that may or may not sport a low, square cupola or flat deck.

What distinguishes this cube from its Greek Revival predecessor is the mid-Victorian Italianate ornament—particularly scrolled, bracketed eaves—and a prominent front porch. What sets it apart from the later Foursquare is the center-hall plan and centrally located entrance. With either two chimneys tightly spaced at the core of the house or four stationed near its outer corners, the Victorian Square House fits with equal comfort at the center of a large farmstead or on a small town lot.

—James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

*continued from page 23*

property. They moved an Albertson's building to a nearby vacant lot. The large apartment building, now sited across the street from the Scotts' two properties, may have been designed by James Gallier, architect of New Orleans City Hall. The building's owner is Tulane Medical School alum Dr. John Pozar, who was in town for a meeting and fell in love at first sight. The vacant lot next to Pozar's is being

reserved for a trapezoidal house that was dismantled, not moved. Designed by A.T. Wood, architect of the Customs House (at one time the largest building west of the Mississippi), the dismantled structure was his only remaining residential building. Speaking about the 1200 block of Baronne Street, Stephanie Bruno says, "It's shaping up to be architects' row." —Marylee MacDonald



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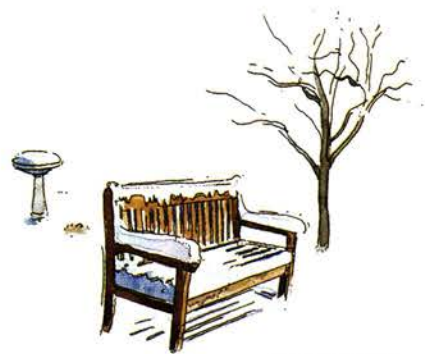
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*A garden designed  
to look good in winter  
will look just as appealing  
during other seasons.*



James Noel Smith

## The Garden in Winter by Nina A. Koziol PHOTOS BY KEN DRUSE

WHEN THE SUMMERTIME explosion of brilliant flowers and rampant greenery is only a memory, and the north winds begin to blow in earnest, you can usually find wheelbarrows, lawn mowers, and trowels tucked safely indoors along with their owners. It's this winter landscape, however, that provides some of the most spectacular and resplendent settings for an old house. Whether it's a dusting of snow on an arbor or sundial, crabapples glistening with frost, or the stately wheat-colored plumes of ornamental grasses, the garden in winter can dazzle any pair of eyes that takes the time to enjoy it.

### Structure, The Garden's Bones

AS TREES AND SHRUBS shed their leaves, they expose the garden's skeleton. The emphasis, no longer on bright flowers, shifts to unusual shapes, patterns, forms, contrasts, shadows, and textures. In winter a garden must rely on its hardscape—walls, fences, walkways, benches, arbors, and trellises—as the primary features of interest.

An attractive perimeter is key. Whether it's created by a fence, neighboring walls, or groupings of shrubs, the perimeter conveys a sense of tranquil enclosure and privacy. Winter is also a good time to analyze the missing structural links in your garden. Take a critical look at the sight-lines from the windows of your house, upstairs and down. (Dur-



The winter-blooming flowers of the Christmas rose (*Helleborus*) contrast with its black-green leaves (far left). Named for the color of its branches, the redbud dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) proffers year-round color (left). *Viburnum* (below) flaunts berries that turn black in the fall and last up to two months.

ing the colder months, most people enjoy their gardens from indoors.) Perhaps you'll see where an obelisk, statue, or ornamental tree could work as a focal point. Outdoor lighting is particularly effective during winter months. Lit from below, the branches of a small tree become a work of art.

Evergreen trees and shrubs have long brightened a dreary winter in northern climes. In the 1850s, Illinois nurseryman John Kenicott noted that evergreens were not only good windbreaks, they provided necessary color on the bleak winter prairie. Species such as spruce, fir, Austrian and white pines, larch, and hemlock were all favorites in farmhouse dooryards. The graceful native hemlock, with its soft, drooping branches, will shelter birds during winter storms. Planted in groups, it softens the garden's edges and serves as a backdrop for perennials come summer.







Crabapples' petite red fruit hang on into winter (above); the evergreen sedum tends to require little maintenance (right).



## OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

New or unusual conifers, from the diminutive Blue Star and Blue Chip junipers to the weeping chartreuse-needled *Chamaecyparis* (false cypress), are evergreens that provide an exclamation of color. Glossy hollies and rhododendrons, with their bluish-green foliage, also provide consistent color in shrub borders and foundation plantings. Boxwood is another old standby for winter interest in formal gardens.

### Bark, Berries, and Birds

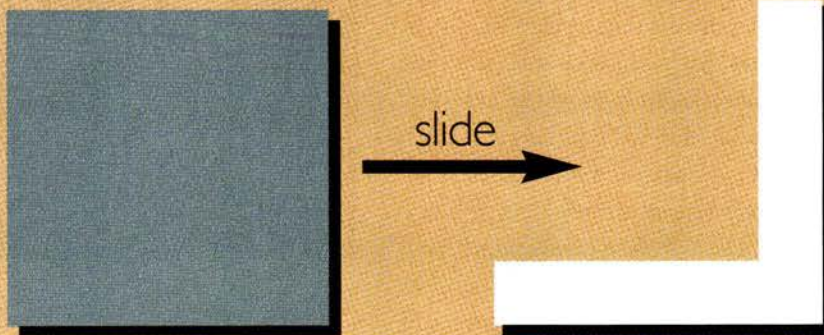
TREES OFFER ENDLESS possibilities for winter interest. There are the tan-colored exfoliating bark of river birch, the shagbark hickory's vertical ribbons of peeling bark, and the checkered trunk of the pawpaw tree. With its attractive horizontal branches, the pagoda dogwood casts interesting shadows in the soft winter light. Conelike catkins seem to dance as they hang from the branches of alders. Not readily seen in summer, the smooth, sinewy trunks of musclewood and

the glossy bark of Pekin lilac make a statement on a gray winter day.

Winter-blooming witch hazel becomes another highlight in the garden. Its flowers appear along with the brown, woody seed capsules from the previous year. The fragrant, strap-shaped petals unfurl on balmy winter days and curl up when the air turns cold. Admired for their red, yellow, or purple stems, shrubby dogwoods lend a touch of color and are especially effective in groupings of three or more plants.

Although winterberry holly drops its leaves in autumn, the bare branches are festooned with a dramatic display of scarlet red berries that last long into the season. "All the hollies are worth growing...their red berries warming our home grounds all winter," wrote Wilhelm Miller in the December 1906 issue of *The Garden Magazine*. The berries on crabapple, serviceberry, and viburnum attract hungry finches, waxwings, and cardinals. Several varieties of shrub and rugosa roses

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feature red hips that persist long into winter. Even the yucca, with its stately stalks, can fill a gray winter day with color.

### Tips for Winter Interest

- Take stock of what is in your garden. If you don't have a prized specimen that you can enjoy from indoors, or as you come and go from your home, consider adding one that has an interesting shape, unusual bark, or attractive berries.

- Look for service structures, such as refuse containers or utility meters, that may need camouflaging once shrubs drop their leaves.

- Add winter bloomers such as waxy leaved Helleborus (Christmas rose) and witch hazel. Winter need not be a drab, barren time of year.

- Group arborvitae or lacy hemlock to create a colorful backdrop for ornamental grasses and perennials.

- Don't cut perennials back until spring. They add interest to the snowy landscape, and

many, such as purple coneflower and black-eyed Susan, provide food birds.

- Use evergreen-leaved perennials, such as bergenias, in planting beds near doorways.

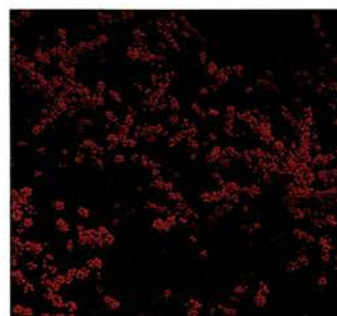
- Protect the broad leaves of holly, rhododendron, and boxwood from curling in bitter weather by spraying them with an antidesiccant.

- Make an architectural statement by adding a few ornamental grasses that you can see from indoors.

- When selecting ornamental trees, consider those that have interesting shapes. After the leaves fall, the tree will provide an eye-catching silhouette.

- Gently shake or brush away heavy snow that collects on shrubs and small trees before it freezes. Don't attempt to remove ice; you might damage the plant.

- Plant bulbs that bloom in late winter, such as the miniature daffodil, February Gold, and snowdrop.



The scarlet berries of winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) will outstay its bright green leaves (top); foliage of blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*) endures until early winter (bottom).

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David Sharpe

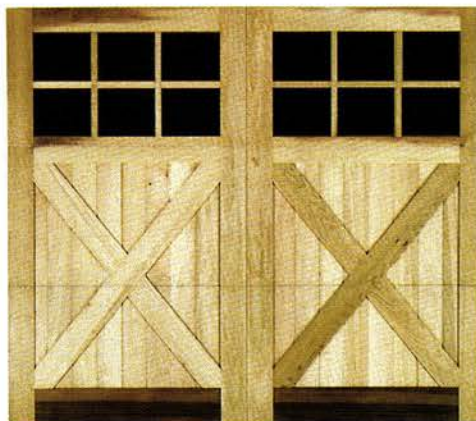


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Hand-formed clay tiles, with their irregular edges and surface variations, are an aesthetic fit with house styles from Spanish Colonial to Arts & Crafts. Seneca Tiles specializes in handmade tiles in 27 colors and three types of glazing. Old World, for example is a traditional opaque glaze with variations in shading (shown in Peacock field tile); Shapes run the gamut from 3" and 4" triangles to rectangles, pentagons, hexagons, and octagons, to 3", 4", 6", 8", and 12" squares. Molded mosaic patterns are also available for use as inserts or border patterns, and can be made to order. Contact Seneca Tiles, (800) 426-4335, [www.senecatiles.com](http://www.senecatiles.com). Circle 5 on the resource card

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Summit's wood sectional garage doors operate like standard overhead doors but look like swinging types from the early 20th century. Nine styles include two with traditional cross-buck bracing. The Colonial Collection doors are made of red oak, plywood, cedar, mahogany, knotty pine, redwood, Douglas fir, or eastern hardwood; facing and trim can be of different species. All doors have true divided lights. Options include ornamental iron hinges and pulls, custom glass choices, and custom trim designs. Contact Summit Door, (888) 768-3667, [www.summit-door.com](http://www.summit-door.com). Circle 4 on the resource card.





## ON THE BALL

The classic features of this roll-rim bathtub begins at the bottom, where ornate cast iron ball-and-claw feet emulate the turn-of-the-century originals. But it took modern research to come up with the integral lumbar support.

The tub is 36" wide; its interior is white, and the exterior can be almond, sandbar, white, or biscuit. It's part of the company's Iron Works

Historic Suite, which includes lavatories, toilets, and bidets, and comes with a limited lifetime warranty. Contact Kohler, (800)

4kohler, [www.kohlerco.com](http://www.kohlerco.com). Circle 6 on the resource card

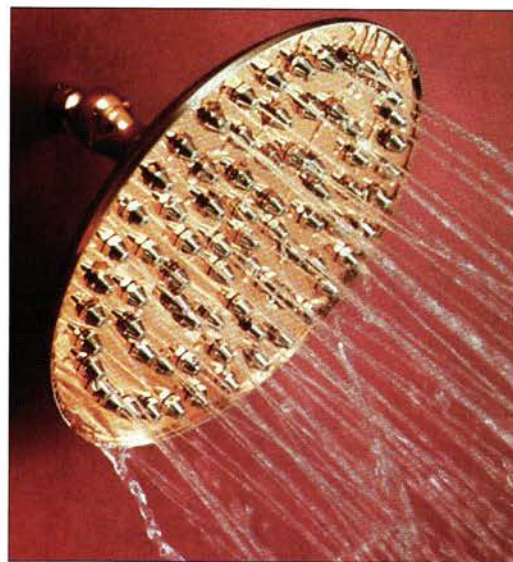


## WARMING UP

There's no better way to blend an HVAC register with a period interior than to make it out of wood. All American Wood Register makes them in 39 species, as well as wall-mount and surface-mount models. The grooved frames on flush registers are designed to let them smoothly mesh with the tongues or splines of both hardwood and laminate flooring. The damper control is recessed to make sanding easier and to eliminate the danger of stepping on an exposed control. Wood mouldings and accessories also are available. Contact All American Wood Register, (815) 728-8888. Circle 7 on the resource card.

## FLOORED

Wide planks of white pine have proved ideal for both flooring and wall paneling for over two centuries of housebuilding. Tuckaway Timber Co. kiln dries their traditional wide white pine flooring, then they plane two sides and straight-line rip the edges (unless otherwise requested). Flooring and rough lumber boards come in random lengths between 6' and 16' and random widths between 12" and 29". Three grades are available. The company stocks hardwoods and specialty woods, too. Contact Tuckaway Timber Co., (603) 795-4534, [www.tuckawaytimber.com](http://www.tuckawaytimber.com). Circle 8 on the resource card.

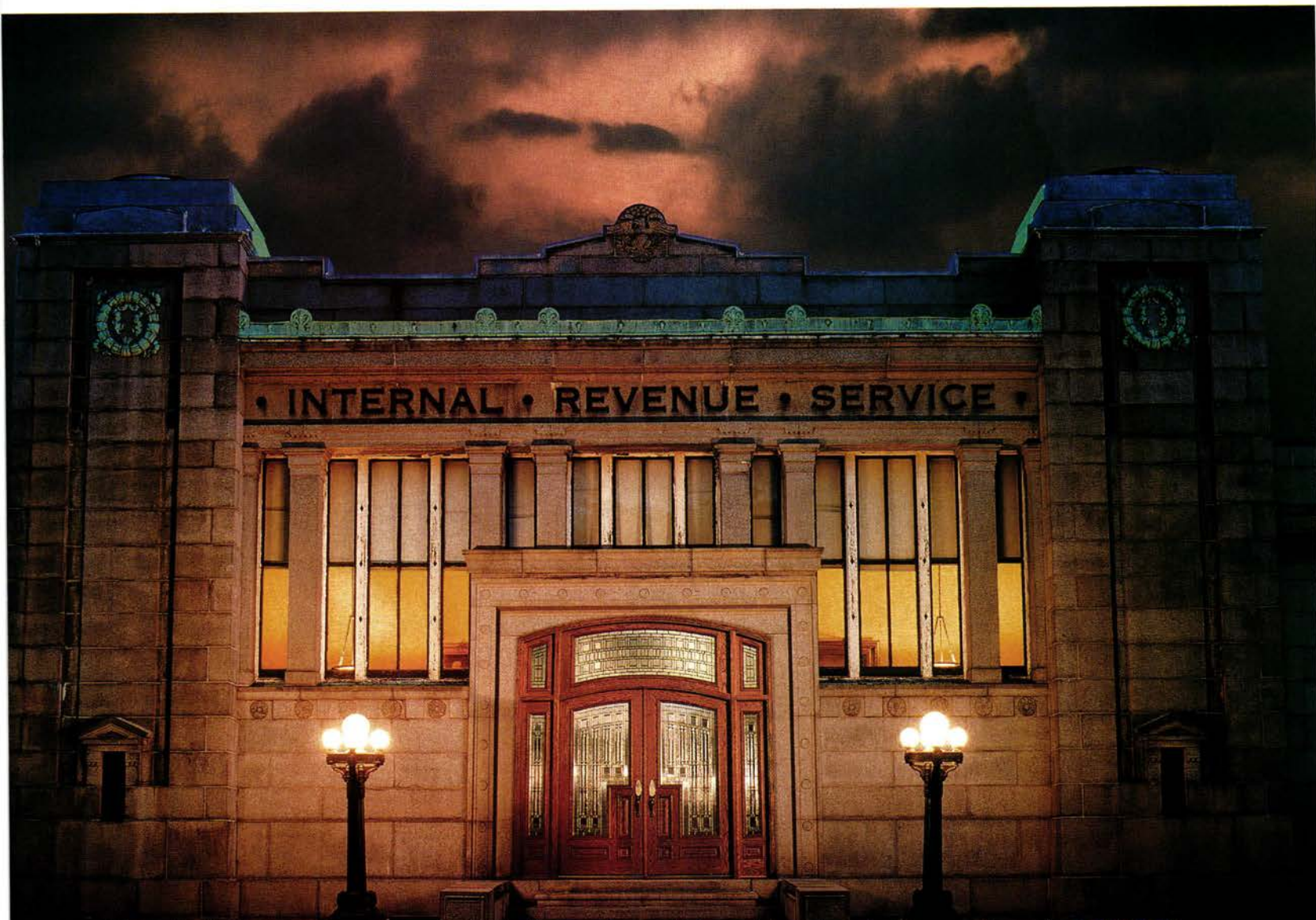


## SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

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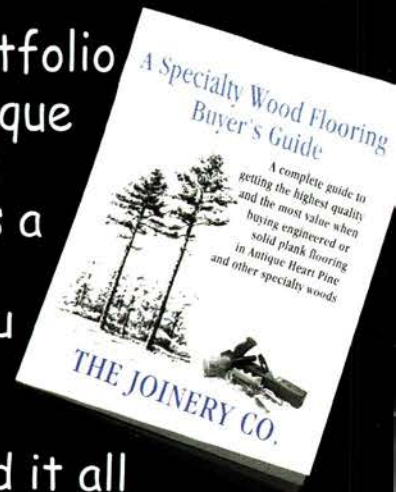
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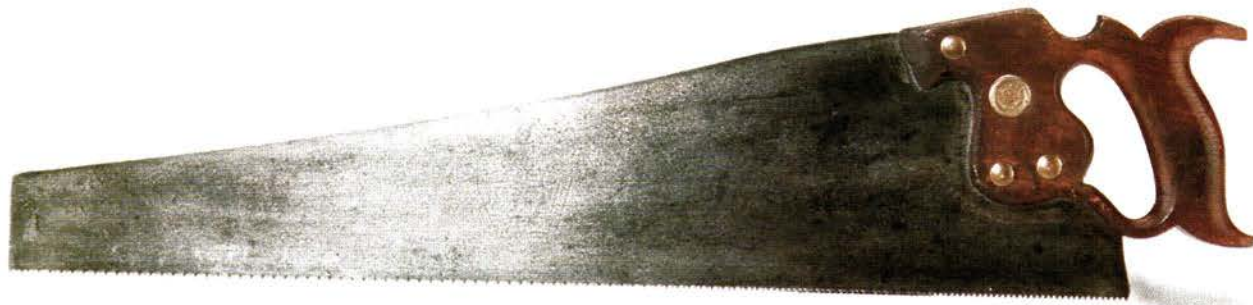


Cherry



Walnut





David Sharpe

## Handy Saws Old and New *by William T. Cox Jr.*

**T**IME WAS A CARPENTER carried at least four hand-powered saws in his toolbox. There'd be two crosscut saws for framing, a finer-toothed version for trim work, and then a rip saw for cutting wood with the grain. One could rummage around the rest of his scrap iron and perhaps also find a coping saw, keyhole saw, nail-cutting saw, straight-handled hacksaw, or maybe even a stiff-backed dovetail saw. Have these saws gone the way of the manual typewriter? Yes, in a few instances. More often the saw's principle, as well as its application, remains as common as ever, except in a modern form. Let me share a few useful examples.

The building booms after both World Wars sparked many innovations in construction materials, work techniques, and, inevitably, tools. Small electric motors led to early portable power tools in the 1920s and the beginning of the end for hand-powered tools. Among the first was the portable circular saw or "builders' saw." Though this tool operates like a miniature table saw, it quickly took over much of the laborious up-and-down cutting of the handsaw. Any older carpenter can tell you why: Hand-ripping long boards or plywood sheets all day is hard work—and was often an apprentice's first job in order to learn handsaw skills.

### Surpassing the Handsaw

CIRCULAR SAWS ASIDE, the Wellsaw is the first true motorized handsaw I can remember

from back in the 1960s. An unwieldy device back then - with several pounds of motor mounted on the handle of a blade up to 24" long - it saw little use except on the largest of jobsites. The Wellsaw was best at gang-cutting lumber and very good for cutting the 2x4 plates out of doorways. However, for general residential construction, the circular saw ran it off the jobsite years ago. The Wellsaw is still being manufactured today, mostly for use in manufacturing plants and the meat cutting industry.

Carpenters are not the only tradespeople who need to cut holes, so the motorized reciprocating saw quickly replaced the keyhole saw. Then, as manufacturers developed better metal-cutting blades, the reciprocating saw all but sent the hacksaw to its grave. For woodworking, the motorized jigsaw or saber saw cuts rings around the coping saw, and it is still being improved. Recently, one manufacturer (Collins Tool Co.) introduced a V-shaped coping foot. This device is designed to allow the saw to make the copes, scribes, and undercuts that are a carpenter's stock techniques for fitting complex mouldings together without gaps.

Another manufacturer has put its own innovative twist on the handsaw. The Fine-



Courtesy Bosch Power Tools

**Top:** Though the muscle power that drives handsaws may be obsolete, the cutting concepts behind them are still effective. **Above:** Motorizing the hand saw idea produces versatile tools. Mounting the blade to one side, as in the Finecut Power Handsaw, simplifies flush-cutting door casings where they meet new flooring.



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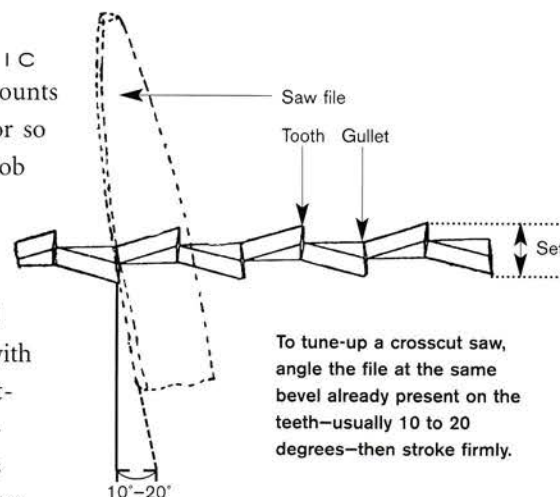
OLD HOUSE MECHANIC cut Power Handsaw (Skil-Bosch) mounts the blade to one side of the motor so that it fits in tight places. On the job it will double for a floor layer's flush-cutting saw—a very expensive circular saw turned on its side for trimming casings around doors. The Power Handsaw comes with three blades, plus a miter box attachment that operates like a full-sized power miter box. Versatile as this tool is, the handle is also the motor housing. Therefore, on some projects you would need fists like Andre the Giant to grip this saw with one hand.

### Handsaw Tune-ups

WHETHER IT'S POWER or manual, always be careful when using any sharp-edged tool, such as a saw. Even more important, always work with sharp tools. There's less chance you'll be cut by a sharp handsaw because you're not forcing the tool. Crosscut saws are easy to sharpen - especially to put a quick edge back on a blade in otherwise good condition. Here's how I was taught to do it.

First, buy a 6" single-cut, three-sided, extra-slim tapered saw file. (Trust me, this is the shortest description I can find.) The exact file you need depends on the number of teeth per inch on the saw you want to sharpen. Next, clamp the saw teeth-up between two 1x4s at a height that feels comfortable for filing. Study the teeth, noting the degree-of-angle and bevel of each tooth. Then lay the file between two teeth to get the feel of the angle. Go ahead and push the file firmly across and against the tooth, thereby sharpening the tooth, gullet, and the back of the adjacent tooth. Don't let the file chatter against the metal.

After one stroke, the tooth should be



To tune-up a crosscut saw, angle the file at the same bevel already present on the teeth—usually 10 to 20 degrees—then stroke firmly.

just a little shiny - that is, a little sharper. Do four or five strokes on every other tooth, then turn the saw around and repeat the operation on the alternate teeth. Tune-up done! Don't worry about the set (splay) of the teeth.

If the saw starts binding in the cut - the sign it needs setting - let your professional saw-sharpener have his way with it.



Courtesy Collins Tool Co.  
The curved coping foot replaces the standard flat baseplate on a jig saw, allowing the agility of a coping saw.

Handsaws may not be state-of-the-art tools anymore, but there are still lots of types on the market. If I had only one choice, I would buy a toolbox saw with fast-cutting tooth design. These saws are short enough to fit in almost any toolbox and quick-cutting because of their wide set and shark-like teeth. I haven't used my handsaw in years, except to defend myself from a nest

full of yellow jackets or to break the back of a long piece of trim to get it into the van. However, if I have an opportunity to cut out a few stringers, that old handsaw (my grandfather's, then my father's) is easier to grab than breaking out my jigsaw. Maybe it's a cordless world after all.

### SUPPLIERS:

COLLINS TOOL CO, P.O. Box 417, Plain City, OH 43064; (888) 838-8988. Collins Coping Foot, Circle 1 on reader service card. • BOSCH POWER TOOLS, 4300 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60646-5999; (877) 267-2499 Finecut Power Handsaw Circle 2 on reader service card.





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# OLDHOUSE JOURNAL



*"Upon close inspection, I found the antique panel material to be a type of canvas with a simulated black leather surface - just the rage for wall coverings in the late 19th century."*

—page 46



## November/December 2000

"Today we old-house lovers appreciate the stylistic integrity and distinctive features of each architectural era, but this was not the case in the Victorian period. Since each style became more animated, complex, and colorful, as the decades progressed, by the 1880s a simple Greek Revival house would indeed appear old fashioned, out-of-date, and even dull."

—page 50



*"The new fire code intends to give all parties responsible for the preservation of the property—the owners, the local code official, and any designers—a list of options to consider, including alternative measures."*

—page 40



*Preserving History From*

# FIRE

**Bridging the Gap  
Between Safety Codes  
and Historic Buildings**



Lambert / Archive Photos



**W**HEN ASKED ABOUT WHAT they value most, the majority of people would say friends and family. After all, family and personal relationships take time, effort and, sometimes, patience to build into strong, lasting associations. When asked about they value next, often the reply is the material things in everyday life that provide a certain comfort level, or even a sense of accomplishment. Owners of historic homes often value their properties in both these ways.

Regardless of the age of your old house, it is not immune from the various hazards that can inflict major damage—some of which you can manage more easily than others. For example, damage from natural events such as wind, hail, extreme snow loads, and seismic events cannot be easily controlled. In other cases, such as theft, you have the opportunity to take defensive measures to keep your house more secure.

Another major hazard that can affect nearly any type of building, old or new, but also presents the opportunity for defensive measures, is the threat of fire. While fire-safety codes and equipment are generally designed to protect human life, when properly employed they will also have benefits for the safety of the building. However, since most codes and standards relate to new buildings and new construction, sometimes their implementation is at odds with the nature and construction of older buildings. Fortunately, this situation is due to change,

### Sensitive Standards

TWO MAJOR FIRE PROTECTION codes, NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code* and NFPA 914 (Proposed), *Code for Fire Protection of Historic Structures*, recognize that modern techniques, methods, and rules can not be easily applied to any existing building, especially a historically significant structure. While both codes contain requirements that can be applied to existing buildings, NFPA 914 is specifically targeted to historic buildings.

When NFPA 914 was being developed, the technical committee responsible for the new edition took a different approach than previous committees. The earlier version of NFPA 914 did ad-

dress historic and cultural properties, but it was a **guide** on fire protection, and therefore did not have the ability to be legally enforced. When the committee completes its work in November 2000, NFPA 914 will be a **code** instead of a recommended practice. This change in approach will produce clear guidance instead of just good ideas, and allow for the document to be adopted by law into a state or local jurisdiction.

Traditionally, fire safety codes and standards mandate any number of fixes or solutions, regardless of the consequences to the building—for example, adding equipment or changing interiors. In this case, the committee always kept the fire protection needs balanced with the impact on the historic fabric or integrity of the structure. Rather than try to "shoe-horn" in an abatement plan for a given fire safety deficiency, the new code intends to have the impact of the deficiency evaluated. How severe is it? What impact is possible on the character of the building should a traditional code solution be imposed? Is there some ameliorating or compensatory feature present in the building that may offset the deficiency?

Sound extreme for an existing, historic house? Not necessarily when you think of the alternative. Code requirements for new construction can be applied when you renovate or make alterations to an older home. Generally speaking, the new work must meet the requirements for new construction. This includes the impact that the new work will have on adjacent areas or spaces that may not otherwise be directly affected by the work.

For example, have you replaced a stove or furnace appliance recently in a historic property? If so, the chances are you may have encountered a local building code or fire code official who may have required—and rightfully so—that you make additional changes based on current code provi-

### What is the NFPA?

The NFPA is a 104-year-old organization that has been interest-



ed in the problems of fire protection and fire safety in all manner of historic buildings and structures, as well as cultural resource properties, since the mid-1940s. Their codes and standards, such as the National Electrical Code, are model safety requirements published for building and insurance inspectors and other authorities. Most cities and towns adopt these codes as their standards, but they are also free to interpret and enforce them according to their needs. Upon publication, NFPA 914 - Code for Fire Protection of Historic Structures can be purchased online or by phone: <http://catalog.nfpa.org> 1-800-344-3555.

For more information on NFPA fire safety publications and services, visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org), and [www.homefiresprinkler.org](http://www.homefiresprinkler.org).





Albert Rose / Archive Photos

Since most old houses are built before 1940, an owner may believe, "My house has survived 60 years or 200 years without a serious fire; it can't happen here." This is a good track record, but it is not a guarantee.

sions. Over the years, the standards for clearance distance between a potential ignition source and combustible construction materials have been increased. Perhaps you were told that the cooking surface of the new appliance is now too close to the historically significant wooden cabinets. Perhaps you were also told that you can no longer vent natural gas-fired heating devices into the same chimney as a wood burning appliance or a fireplace. Rather than mandate a specific requirement, the new code, NFPA 914, intends to give all parties responsible for the preservation of the property—the owners, the local code official, and any designers—a list of options to consider, including alternative measures.

In code parlance, these alternatives are generally referred to as *equivalencies*, and they are a bona fide way to meet the **intent** of the code without necessarily meeting the **letter** of the code. Equivalencies are not always an easy thing to achieve. You may require the services of a code consultant to help you identify the specific code deficiency, determine what, if any, equivalent designs or approaches may provide the same outcome, and then act on your behalf to see if the code official will agree to the equivalency. These consultants naturally charge a fee for their services. Therefore, you will have to decide if the desired equivalency is worth the additional fee from another consultant.

One of the more difficult tasks in the world of cultural resources is determining what makes up a historic structure. Character defining features and finishes include, but are not limited to, distinctive architectural details, wainscoting, parquet flooring, picture mouldings, mantels, and arches, as well as windows, doors, and trimwork. A building survey may be valuable to establish what are the important characteristics and features in the structure.

As a performance-based code, NFPA 914 will list a series of compensatory features that may help

counter or offset some of the typical problem areas found in historic buildings, especially when they involve important historic features. A sampling of this list (see box page 45) shows possible solutions to potential fire ignition or fire propagation scenarios.

## Protection Systems

BEYOND THE USE OF compensatory features, managing fire risks in a historic property also includes protection systems. Whenever the opportunity presents itself in an old house—especially during a gut rehab—always consider installing built-in safety features. First on the list is a residential fire sprinkler system. Residential fire sprinkler systems can utilize a variety of piping materials, including steel, plastic, and copper, each with their own visual impact. Copper tube is an especially attractive material because of the ease with which it can be handled and the ability it has to blend in with nearly any type of woodwork. The sprinkler itself can be color matched to any background by the manufacturer.

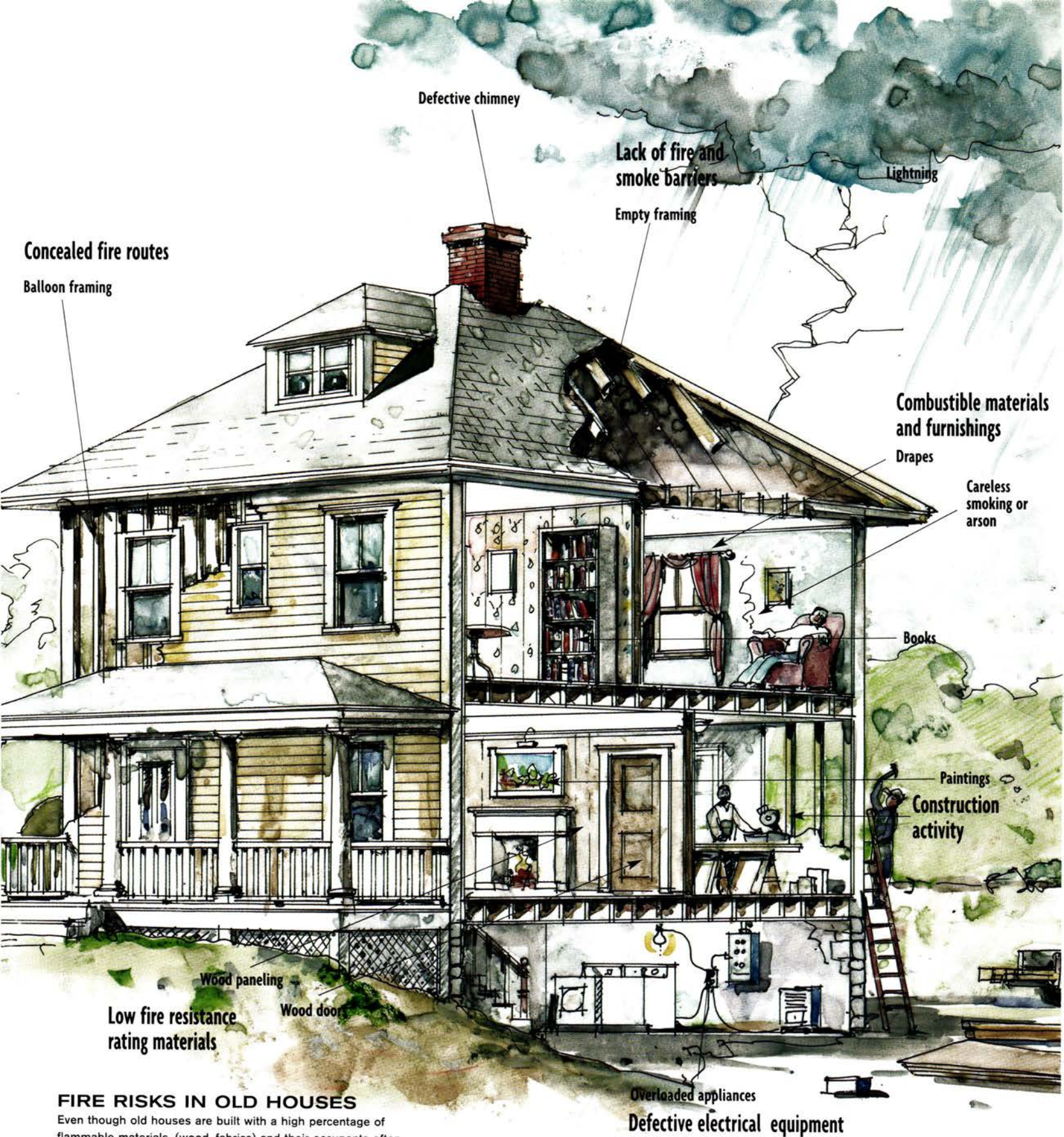
While residential sprinkler systems are predominately used in new construction, retrofit projects can still be completed for between \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot. Remember, the sprinkler system is a one-time capital cost. It will normally result in some reduction to your insurance premium and, in the scheme of things, it may be compared to the renovation of a kitchen—but perhaps at only one-fifth of the cost. Most importantly, sprinkler systems are a proven technology with over a century's history of protecting people and property.

Water mist fire suppression systems, a derivative of the automatic fire sprinkler system, have shown promise in a variety of applications, including historically significant and culturally sensitive properties. Like an automatic sprinkler system, water mist application uses water as the extinguishing agent medium. However, water mist droplets are generally five to ten times smaller than sprinkler system droplets, and therefore are able to be entrained into the base of the fire. The smaller droplets also convert to steam more readily in a fire event, thus making them more effective in some cases at controlling the fire. Water mist systems can use substantially less volumes of water. Testing of this technology in one- and two-family residential buildings

**"Tolerances allow for flexibility by relaxing the many 'magic numbers' in code requirements, e.g. 50 people, 32" wide, one hour fire resistance, etc. Reasonable dimensional tolerances should be permitted in applying prescriptive treatments to historic buildings."**

**—NFPA 914 (Proposed)**





## FIRE RISKS IN OLD HOUSES

Even though old houses are built with a high percentage of flammable materials, (wood, fabrics) and their occupants often have many combustible possessions (books, artwork), the main fire risks still remain common activities, such as construction, cooking, and overloading electrical equipment.

Illustration by Rob Leanna





Ed Carlin / Archive Photos

Wide, open spaces, such as attics, are often found in old houses and can allow a fire to spread rapidly. Adding fire-rated partitions or sprinkler systems may reduce this risk.

## 10 Tips for Home Fire Safety

### 1. Install Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms save lives by warning you about a fire while there's time to escape. Install alarms on every floor of your home, including the basement, and outside each sleeping area—inside as well, if you sleep with the door closed—and test them once a month. Smoke alarms lose their sensitivity over time. Replace alarms 10 or more years old.

### 2. Automatic home fire sprinkler system

Consider installing an automatic home fire sprinkler system in your home. Sprinklers can contain and even extinguish a home fire in less time than it takes the fire department to arrive.

### 3. Plan your escape

If there's a fire, you'll have to get out fast, so be prepared. Draw a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of each room. Go over the plan with your household so that everyone knows how to escape if there's a fire, then physically walk through each escape route.

Decide on an outside meeting place in front of your house where everyone will meet after they've escaped. Practice your escape plan by holding a fire drill twice a year.

### 4. In a fire, crawl low under smoke

Smoke and heat rise, so during a fire there's cleaner, cooler air near the floor. Always try another exit if you encounter smoke when you're escaping a fire. But if you have to escape through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees with your head 1' to 2' (30 to 60 centimeters) above the floor.

### 5. Smokers' safety

In North America, more fatal fires start from smoking than from any other cause. Don't smoke in bed or when you're drowsy. Give smokers large, deep, non-tip ashtrays, and soak butts and ashes before dumping them. If someone's been smoking in your home, check on and around furniture, including under cushions, for smoldering cigarettes.

### 6. Cook safely

Always stay with the stove when cooking, or turn off burners if you walk away. Wear clothes with snug—or rolled up—sleeves when you cook to avoid catching your clothes on fire. Turn pot handles inward where you can't bump them and children can't grab them, and enforce a "kid-free zone" 3' (1 meter) around your stove when you cook.

### 7. Keep matches and lighters out of sight

Keep matches and lighters away from children. Lock them up high and out of reach, and use only child resistant lighters. Teach young children to tell you if they find matches or lighters; teach older children to bring matches and lighters to an adult before they fall into young hands.

### 8. Use electricity safely

Know the warning signs of problems for electrical appliances: flickering lights, smoke or odd smells, blowing fuses, tripping circuit breakers or frayed or cracked cords. Check carefully any appliances that display a warning sign, and repair or replace. Don't run extension cords across doorways or where they can be walked on or pinched by furniture.

### 9. Space heaters

Keep portable and other space heaters at least 3' (1 meter) away from anything that can burn—including you—and turn heaters off when you leave home or go to bed. Have chimneys and furnaces inspected by a professional at the start of each heating season.

### 10. Stop, drop, and roll - cool and call

If your clothes catch fire, stop—don't run. Drop gently to the ground, cover your face with your hands, and roll over and over or back and forth to smother the flames. Cool the burn with cool water for 10-15 minutes. Call for help.

## Products for Protection



AFCIs (arc fault circuit interrupters) are panel box devices that cut power in the event of electrical arcing.



Sprinkler heads that recess behind decorative caps are less obtrusive in interior finishes.



Fire extinguishers and hoses can be installed in built-in compartments.



Smoke/CO2 alarms detect both these hazards and are increasingly inconspicuous in design.



has been minimal thus far so it is likely that this technology may be years away from becoming a mainstream option in historic homes.

A properly trained operator can fight small, contained fires with a portable fire extinguisher. Incipient stage fires can be managed with the proper extinguishing agent and technique. Make sure that you have the training and that you understand the type of fires that your particular extinguisher can be used on.

The final—and perhaps easiest—measure to apply is common sense. To this day, the leading causes of home fires continues to be cooking and heating equipment. Although codes cannot regulate human behavior, they can be used to remind all of us to be aware of actions or events that are likely to result in a less-than-desired outcome. Codes typically try to address these behaviors by making many building construction features and systems infallible, yet this is not a perfect system. Each one of us can influence our chances of being in a fire in our own home. Seemingly simple, everyday actions can prevent a fire or can help prepare us to take the most appropriate action should a fire occur. With these practices in mind, prevention of an unwanted fire is the best form of protection.

*Robert E. Solomon, PE is the Chief Building Fire Protection Engineer at the National Fire Protection Institute.*

*Special thanks to Nicholas Artim of Fire-Safety Network (P.O. Box 895, Middlebury, VT 05753) for help with this article.*

**“ In historic buildings, it is not always practical to strictly apply the provisions of the prevailing code. Physical limitations may require disproportionate effort or expense with little increase in fire safety.”**

**—NFPA 914 (Proposed)**



Courtesy Copper Development Assoc. Inc.

Sprinkler piping has a big impact on appearance. Where lines must be exposed, the color and flexibility of copper is often more compatible with historic finishes, such as in the Pennsylvania State Capitol Building, than other metals.



Nicholas Artim

Poorly planned sprinkler installations can seriously detract from a historic interior.



Nicholas Artim

A sensitive installation, using colored sprinkler heads (in cornice) and hidden piping is almost invisible.

## PROBLEM

**Large expanse of open attic or concealed areas**

**Highly combustible wood paneling used as interior finish**

**No method for early warning to fire event**

**Older electrical system**

## COMPENSATORY FEATURE

**Utilize** fire retardant treated lumber if wood joists, wood ceilings, or wood flooring is being replaced. Subdivide attic space with fire resistive construction into smaller areas to help with containment of fire.

**Replace** with similar quality paneling with low flame spread rating. Apply topical treatment to panel surface (provided it does not alter the appearance) to reduce flame spread rating. No method for early warning to fire event

**Provide** fire alarm system, activation based on smoke alarms.

**Upgrade** wiring system and related components, including installation of circuit breakers.

1. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home as well as just outside of each sleeping area.  
2. AFCI's will be mandated for use in new residential construction beginning in 2001 by NFPA 70, National Electrical Code. AFCI technology causes the electrical circuit to open should an electrical arc of any origin occur. It is being mandated for use in the Vermont Electrical Code provisions, for existing residential buildings effective in August of 2000.



HANDS-ON METHODS  
REVIVE A VICTORIAN  
WALL TREATMENT

# Making a Full Recovery

By Karen Bonadio

Photos by Karen Bonadio,  
Christopher Ver Plank,  
and Chris Van Raalte  
unless otherwise noted.

**M**Y FIRST VISIT to the Haas-Lilienthal house was not as a craftsper-son but as an old-house lover touring one of San Francisco's best-preserved Victorian mansions. After the docent explained the brief history of the house (see sidebar, page 78), she guided us to our first stop—the indoor/outdoor vestibule located at the entrance of the house. In between the beautiful, hand-carved woodwork, I noticed panels of a leatherlike material that were coming free from the walls and ceilings. When I asked the docent why these panels hadn't been restored, she told me the staff had tried to fix them many times, all without success. Since I install and conserve many kinds of wall coverings in my work, I knew immediately I could re-adhere and restore the panels. Here are the techniques I used.

## Background on an Entrance

SINCE THE OFFICES of San Francisco Architectural Her-



Above: Reaching out from its deep lot on Franklin Street, the Haas-Lilienthal house is a landmark survivor in a neighborhood once filled with Victorian mansions. Houses just a block away were lost to the 1906 fire and earthquake. Left: The exterior pocket door that leads to the vestibule.

Both photos this page: Douglas Keister





### steps 1, 2

Far left: Even at an awkward angle, it's easy to see the varied geometry of the ceiling panels, and the loose surface under the delaminating coverings. Left: Bold woodwork defines the vestibule walls and a few intact panels.

itage, the organization that oversees the Haas-Lilienthal House, are located on the upper floors of the building, it took no time for me to approach them with my plan for restoring the vestibule panels. They agreed to let me do the work, and when the room was prepared, I returned to the house. Upon close inspection, I found the antique panel material to be a type of canvas with a simulated black leather surface—all the rage for wall coverings in the late 19th century. These panels were able to last over a century in the San Francisco climate because William Haas, the original owner, installed pocket doors at the entrance to the vestibule.

When the weather was less than favorable, he could close these doors and shut the vestibule off from the outside elements completely.

The panels themselves vary in size according to the design layout of the vestibule and its beautifully carved mouldings. Because the vestibule has angled walls on its sides, suggesting the feel of an octagon, the carpenters placed the mouldings strategically and evenly around the room to fit the angles. In this way the mouldings defined the size of the panels. While the panels rise about 3' on each wall, their width varies from 12" to 24" to accommodate the an-

gles in the vestibule. The ceiling also varies in size in the areas where there are angles, from roughly 14"-square sections to thin pie-shaped pieces that meet the curves.

### Panel Prep

BEFORE BEGINNING ANY actual work, I carefully drew a map of the vestibule, numbering the panels and corresponding map sections so that I could re-install the panels accurately. There were a few panels in the vestibule that were intact and, since it is my policy not to touch sound areas, I marked them to be left alone. However, all of the panels that were falling off needed



### steps 3, 4, 5

Left to right: I carefully scraped, filled, and skim-coated the exposed plaster to prepare the level and even surface I needed to re-apply the ersatz leather wallcoverings.



### step 6

Starting in the upper corner of each panel made it possible to position and smooth the wallcovering accurately.



### step 7

Where there were gaps between woodwork and wallcoverings, I painted a black border around the panel—an old carpenters' trick—to camouflage the shrinkage.



Douglas Keister

## A Singular Victorian

**T**he Haas-Lilienthal House is a remarkable example of the Queen Anne style in a city renowned for exuberant Victorian architecture. Built of fir and redwood like a row house to fit San Francisco's long, rectangular lots, it combines windows, bays, and a tower with a long hallway running down one side. Constructed in 1886 for merchant William Haas and his new wife, Bertha Greenbaum, it remained the home of their youngest child, Alice Lilienthal, until 1972. The Haas-Lilienthal House is now a museum operated by San Francisco Architectural Heritage and is open to the public for tours and private functions (415-441-3000; [www.sfheritage.org](http://www.sfheritage.org)).

to be gently removed by hand. The most important thing to remember when handling any antique wall covering of this kind is to avoid tugging or pulling. Excessive force or stress can damage, if not destroy, the material. Instead of using sharp metal tools that can slip and accidentally tear antique fabric, I worked a soft rubber kitchen spatula under the panels to help ease them off the walls and ceiling.

Once I had each panel of material down, I proceeded to scrape away the loose plaster and old adhesive from the walls and ceilings. Then I primed these surfaces with an oil-based primer-sealer. I decided to use an oil-based product because it would penetrate the wall surface and resist the moisture that is a large part of the San Francisco climate. When the primer dried, my next step was to skim-coat all the areas where old plaster had come away from the walls and left spalls and shallow depressions. Here I use a vinyl-based wall-surfacing compound (Spackle is one brand). Since the vinyl type does not shrink as it dries, it works well for filling areas that are not too deep, and it eliminates the need to skim-coat the entire surface on a project like this. The vinyl prod-

uct also enabled me to complete this part of the prep work in one application. When the compound was dry, I gently sanded the walls to remove excess compound and smooth the walls, then I carefully brushed up all the dust with a clean paintbrush. This step was very important because the walls would next get more primer-sealer, as well as one of fabric adhesive, and neither of these coatings bonds well to dusty surfaces.

## Fabric Fixes

While the top coat of primer was drying, I brought my attention to the wall coverings themselves. In order to clean the backs of the panels, which were thick with plaster and old adhesive, I placed each section of material face-down on a flat surface. Since I do not recommend chemicals for cleaning historic fabrics, I felt that a mechanical method would be the safest way to remove the debris. Starting with a coarse-grit sandpaper, I gently sanded bits of plaster and glue away from the backs of the panels, switching to finer grits as I approached the original canvas backing. This technique proved very successful and safe.

When I had taken down the panels,





## step 8

Far left: Working just outside the vestibule in ample air circulation I sanded the back of each panel covering clean and applied the adhesive. Left: The finished vestibule shows no signs of the sags or bulges that had worked their way into the wallcoverings.

Douglas Keister

I had noticed that they appeared to have shrunk back from the mouldings, or possibly the wood mouldings themselves had contracted over the decades. Either way, the movement left a gap of 1" or so around each panel. Since I could not make up the difference with wood or fabric, I realized I would have to camouflage the gap somehow.

I decided to brush on a 1"-wide black line around the inside perimeter of the wood mouldings, using acrylic artist's paint. Because products are available that dry matte, leaving no noticeable shine or surface alteration, acrylics work well in a situation like this. Plus, you can use them to infill-paint color into wall coverings, both old and new. Since acrylics are water-based, they're also removable until they dry, giving you time to decide if the color is correct.

## Remaking an Entrance

WHEN IT CAME TIME to re-install the wall covering panels, I knew I would not have much of a choice in adhesives. Because the panels had been in a state of partial detachment for so many years, the material had taken on drooping and sagging shapes.

This "memory" meant that many panels no longer lay flat on the walls. Even more important, conventional clay adhesive would not have strong enough tack to hold the rather heavy canvas panels in their original positions.

My solution was to use a heavy-duty contact adhesive called Spray 90 (made by 3M Co.). Of course, it's always a good idea to judge the effects of cleaners, solvents, and adhesives on surfaces before you use them, so first I tested the Spray 90 on a small back corner of an out-of-the-way ceiling panel. The results were fine, so I started with my first panel installation.

Before spraying on the adhesive, I took each panel over to the vestibule and checked the fit on its appropriate spot, using my map. This way, I knew ahead of time if there were any changes or slight adjustments to be made prior to applying the adhesive. After I sprayed the back of my first panel, I immediately went to its counterpart in the vestibule and sprayed the wall surface. When the suggested set-up time has elapsed, there is only a short time to position the panel on the wall, so I knew I would have to work quickly with a strat-

egy. My method was to position the panel slightly away from the mouldings, using the top left corner of each space where the panel would go back as my guide. Then I would measure out about 1" from the top moulding, and the same amount from the left-side moulding.

Since the adhesive grabs very quickly, I kept most of the panel away from the wall until this part of the installation was secure, then I slowly smoothed down the panel using a flexible plastic smoother. The adhesion was perfect. If any excess adhesive got too close to the wood mouldings, I removed it with WD-40 on a cotton swab. (Penetrating oil/ water dispersants are great for removing these kinds of adhesives - one of my favorite tricks.)

It's been over two years since I put back the panels at the Haas-Lilienthal House, and I'm happy to say that they look as if they have been just installed. It's as if the clock in the vestibule has been turned back to the year 1886; I'm glad I have helped in some way to keep that history alive. 🏠

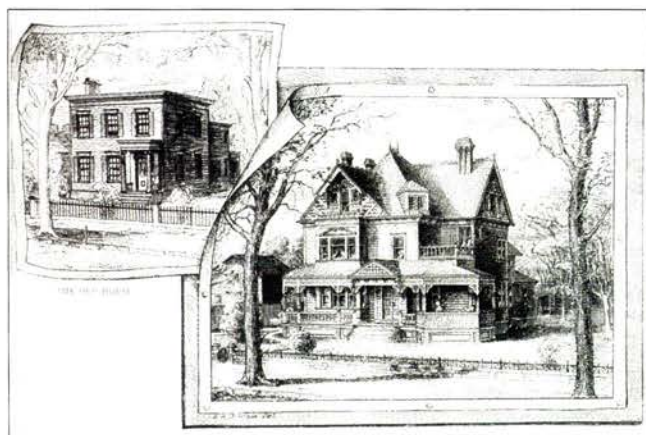
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THE SURPRISING STORY  
OF RADICAL REMODELING

# Switching Styles

By Daniel D. Reiff



All photos Daniel D. Reiff

Architect Robert W. Shoppell, an early master of house-plan publishing, found magazines an equally fertile medium for promoting remodeling. In this 1886 plate, he has a dowdy Greek Revival house graphically morph into a then-trendy Queen Anne.

SHOULD YOU THINK THAT the vogue for transforming older houses into more stylish dwellings didn't exist before the magazines and television shows of our own era, think again. From the 1840s on, many popular pattern books promoted the idea of architectural updating. For example, in 1886 *Shoppell's Modern Houses* showed how a boxy, forthright Greek Revival side-hallway dwelling could be completely recast as an elaborate Queen Anne mansion. However, architect Robert W. Shoppell was hardly unique. In fact, one notable volume, William M. Woollett's *Old Homes Made New* (1878), was entirely devoted to this kind of radical remodeling.

Were such projects carried out with any frequency? By carefully studying many houses in an area for tell-tale signs in both the dwelling and its historical records, we often find that a surprising number have in-

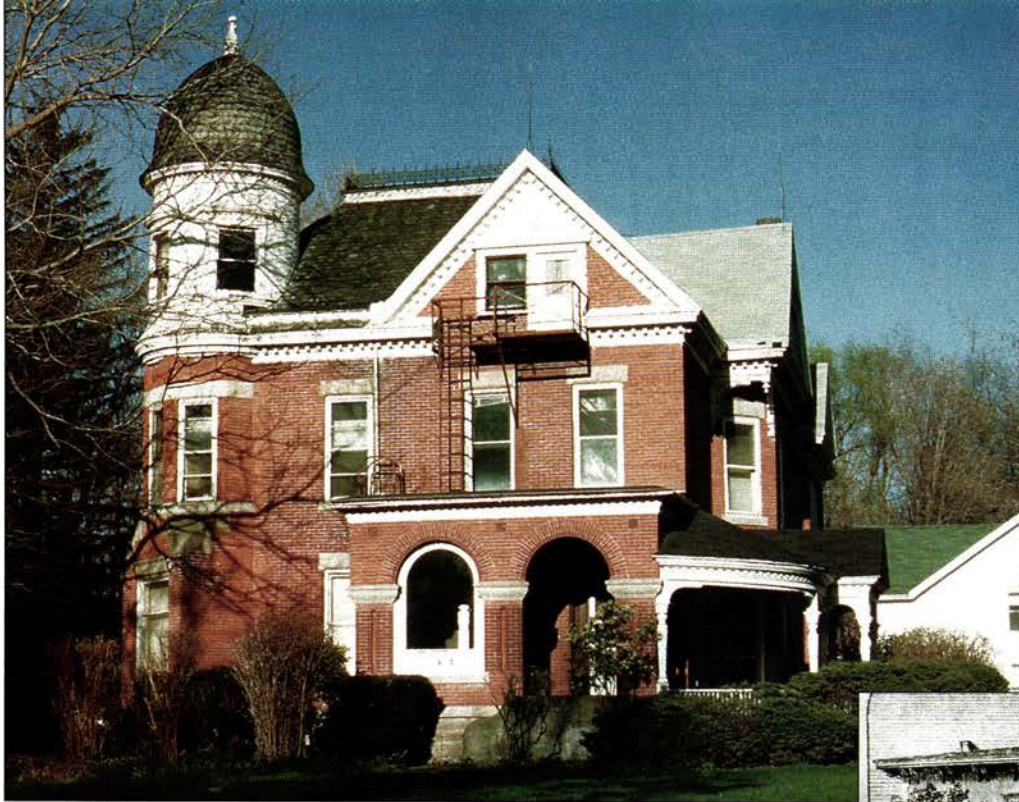
deed been radically remodeled. Here's the background behind this remarkably widespread practice, along with ideas on what to look for if you suspect your old house has been transformed from one style into another.

## The Rage to Remodel

TODAY WE OLD-HOUSE LOVERS appreciate the stylistic integrity and distinctive features of each architectural era, but this was not the case in the Victorian period. Since a driving influence behind 19th-century architecture was the Picturesque movement—that is, a reaction against classical proportions and toward houses with complex roof lines and walls that move in and out—each style became more animated, complex, and colorful as the decades progressed. Thus by the 1880s a simple Greek Revival house would indeed appear old-fashioned, out-of-date, and even dull.

A good place to study this kind of old-house updating is a vil-





lage like Fredonia, N.Y. For example, subtle but discernible changes in brickwork reveal that the home of John A. Waterhouse, which took its current form in 1888, was originally a modest Italian Villa of 1853 (see plate at right). Dr. Waterhouse, a physician who apparently owed his wealth to the oil business, expressed his affluence, taste, and social prominence by expanding his mansion in all directions. Moreover, at least four other houses and several public buildings were likewise dramatically transformed during the Victorian era in Fredonia.

With the turn of the 20th century and the growing prominence of restrained architectural movements, such as the Colonial Revival and the Academic Revival, one might expect such radical remodeling to cease. To the contrary, it continued unabated as the choice of historic models increased. Victorian houses in their turn became fair game for

contractors and architects to recast into the up-to-date styles of the teens and '20s—the various strains of Colonial, Tudor, Elizabethan, Bungalow, and Foursquare houses.

While pattern books of the mid- to late-19th century provided appealing examples of radical remodeling, early 20th-century publications literally sold the idea. The 1927 Home Builders Catalog, an encyclopedic compilation of 604 mail-order house plans published in Chicago, included 20 pairs of photos illustrating the successes of remodeling "out of date" houses into stylistically modern dwellings. To make the argument even more convincing, these "before" photos were often retouched to look run down.

### Material Makeovers

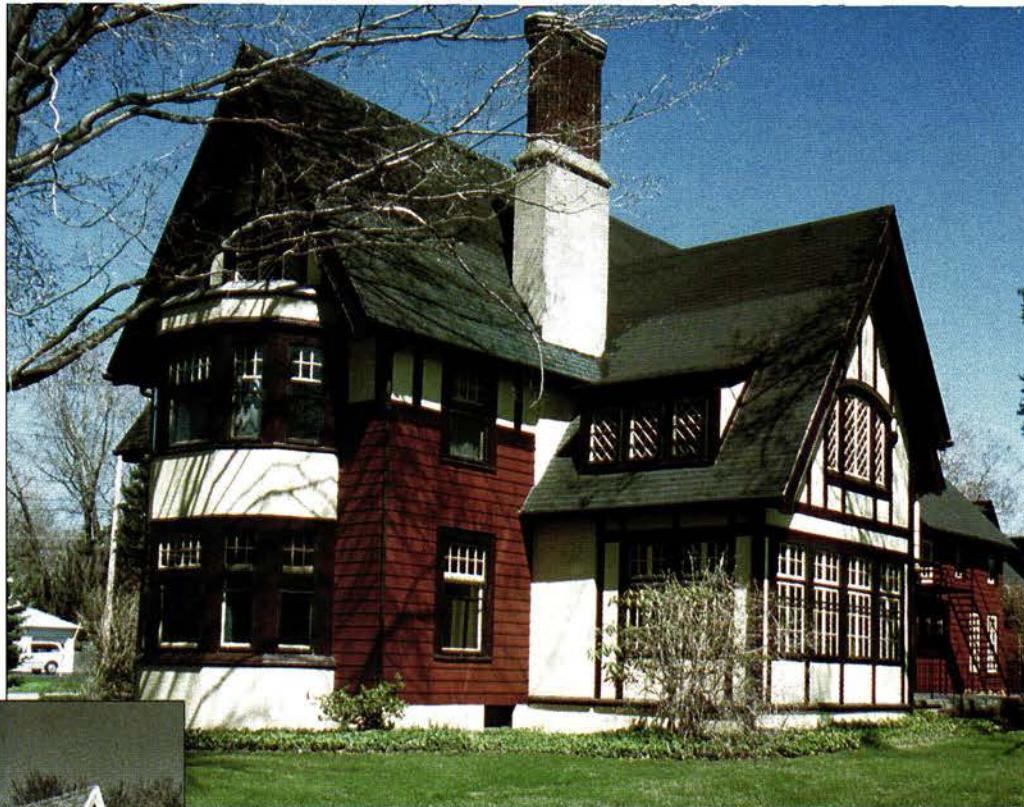
NOT SURPRISINGLY, manufacturers specializing in siding materials did their best to tout the benefits of transforming "old fashion" houses



The towered home of John A. Waterhouse in Fredonia (photo above) looks right in step with scores of Victorian mansions built in the 1880s—until we inspect the brickwork and foundation. Subtle clues confirm that it was a garden-variety Italian villa in 1853 (inset plate).

*If the job is successful,  
a radical remodeling  
is hard to see without  
careful examination.*





Another transformation from Fredonia begins as a rather simple vernacular house erected in 1866—the identical twin to a house nearby (above). Though it was remodeled in 1916 into a convincingly evocative English Tudor mansion (top), we can still imagine the lines of its original form.

into contemporary styles. One of the most effective was Creo-Dipt Co., a shingle firm in North Tonawanda, New York, that published a flyer series promoting such drastic recastings in the 1920s. With the aid of Creo-Dipt shingles, Buffalo architect James William Kideney converted a grand Italian Villa (with its front porch already removed) into a Colonial-style building—the Ladies' Locker House of the Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club.

Particularly fascinating to our eyes is the similarity between these transformations and the houses found in mail-order and ready-cut catalogs of the era. The Ladies' Locker House, for example, turned out looking a great deal like Aladdin's 1922 Westwood model (see page 53). While it may be that such popular, well-designed stock houses actually inspired some of these remodeling projects, the resemblance does confirm that Sears Roebuck, Aladdin,

and other mail-order house companies were producing thoroughly up-to-date models.

Taking this idea a step further, evidence suggests that some houses that at first glance appear to have come from a catalog may in fact be remodeling projects. For example, in Silver Creek, New York, there's a house on Main Street that looks for all the world like the sort sold by mail-order house and plan companies, such as Bennett Homes' Stratford model. However, research shows that this particular house dates from 1903, and was recast in the 1920s in its current form. The change in foundation materials from stone to glazed hollow block is one of the giveaways.

Carpenters who worked in the 1920s confirm that remodeling had become an important part of the residential construction industry by this time. Nelson Kofoed of Silver Creek, who worked with his father,





#### Simple changes will transform the box type house

Even the square "box" type of house lacking elbow room on either side is an easy subject for modernizing. Transformed in either of the ways suggested here, this house would quickly sell at a good price. The money thus liberated could be used for a new home. WEATHERBEST Stained Shingles laid over the old siding at a cost of very little more than to repaint will hide all trace of patching and give the same new colorful beauty that WEATHERBEST give to new homes.



Companies selling shingles, the rediscovered siding of the 1920s and '30s, created some of the most emphatic remodeling promotions. For instance, the Weatherbest Stained Shingle Co. of North Tonawanda, New York filled their 1929 catalog with 28 examples of buildings "updated" with their durable product, as well as several pages suggesting the alternate styles suitable for transforming a house.

Carl, up and down the shores of Lake Erie, says that they did a lot of remodeling and additions during the '20s and '30s—over half of their many jobs. Often the project was just a new wing on a house, but occasionally they were called on "to do the whole house over."

#### A Double Case History

THE NOTION THAT 1920S architects and carpenters studied the designs

in house catalogs gains support from another Fredonia remodeling. The Queen Anne house on Central Avenue, at the entrance of one of the premier residential streets of the village, was first remodeled about 1890 by local contractor Thomas L. Higgins. So pretentious was the mansion Higgins created for himself that it was almost impossible to discern the boxy Federal-style building of 1829-30 that lay at its core.



When the Creo-Dipt Co. took this photo, the asymmetrical, picturesque 1870s Italian villa had already lost its porch.



Now tamed and refined—the two-story porch helps balance the wing at the right—it meets the new tastes of the 1920s.



In a final twist, the reborn Italian villa is really a near-clone of the Colonial-style plan by Aladdin from the same years.

## Transformation Tip-Offs

If you suspect your house has been radically remodeled, look for:

### 1. Anomalies in structure and style

- Corner posts and plank walls (common in the 1820s and 30s) inside but Gothic or Italianate details (1840s and 50s) outside suggest a vernacular house given a later, high-style veneer.
- Timber frame construction in one part but balloon frame construction in another suggests two stages of building at different times.

### 2. Evidence of a different house plan/footprint on old maps

- Old maps (local and county atlases, Sanborn Atlases, etc.) that show a different, often smaller outline for the house than currently configured suggest radical remodeling. (Tracking these plans, and how they change, can also pinpoint when the transformation took place.)

### 3. Anomalies of date and style

- If your deed indicates the house was built about 1890, yet the exterior is a stylish Foursquare of the type popular in the 1920s, it may have been a vernacular house that was transformed in the 20th century.

### 4. Visual documentation

- Old photographs and prints from local and regional maps or atlases can show the house in an earlier form.

### 5. Changes in foundations

- If one portion is old fieldstone, another brick, a third concrete block, and a fourth poured concrete, for example, it suggests four different building campaigns even if the upper portion of the house appears of one style.





Just as a clever carpenter could copy a ready-cut house without actually buying the "kit" of materials, he might turn to mail-order plans for remodeling ideas. Though this house in Silver Spring, New York (top) looks like it came from a 1920s Bennet Homes catalog (above), it is known to be built in 1903.

However, this Queen Anne mansion lasted only until 1923 when a new owner, Albert F. Dohn, metamorphosed the building into a grand Colonial Revival home. In 1921 the village directory listed Dohn as vice president and general manager of Atlas Steel Corp. in the neighboring city of Dunkirk; in 1925 he is listed as president. As a man of prominence abreast of contemporary trends, he must have felt he needed an up-to-date house, and so the old-fashioned Queen Anne features were swept away.

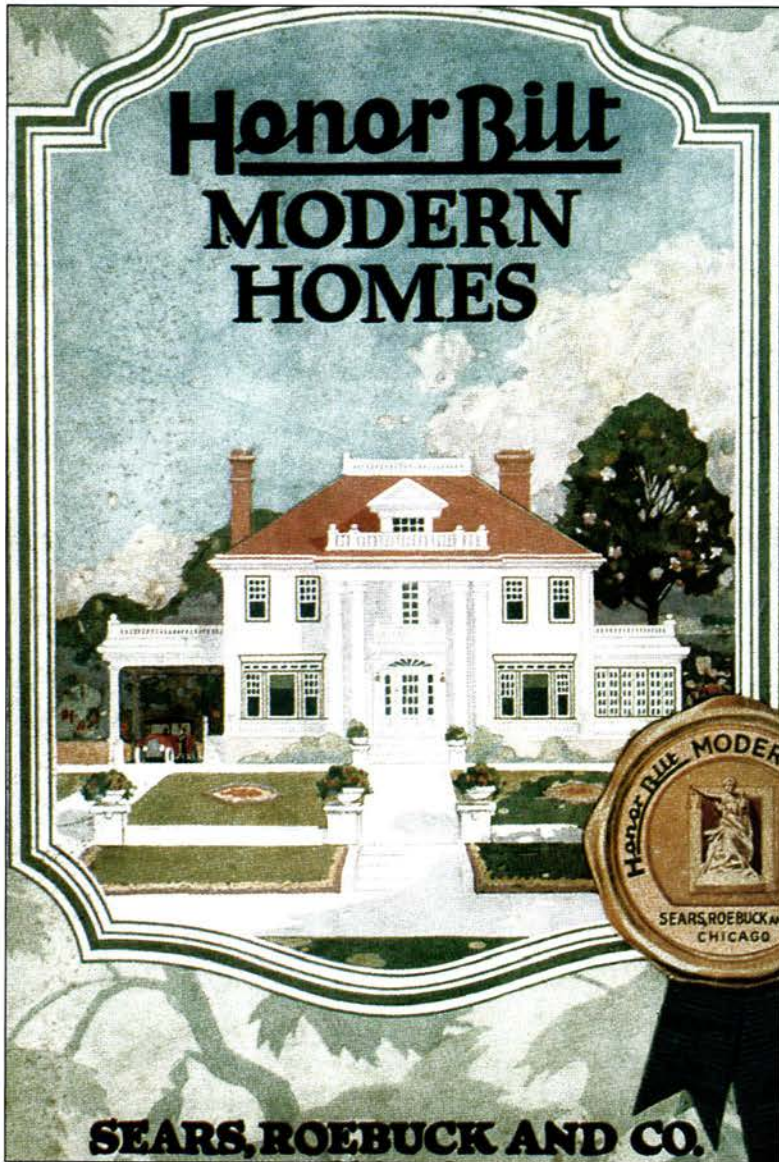
What is amazing is that Dohn's contractor seems to have based his work on the Sears Magnolia model offered between 1918 and 1921. This was one of Sears' most elaborate and costly mail-order houses, and a good deal calmer in composition than the Queen Anne home. Were we not privy to the house's earlier incarnation, we might think, seeing Dohn's mansion today, that it ac-

tually was a mail-order house.

Radical remodeling, be it from the Victorian era or the first decades of the 20th century, reminds us of how cautious we need to be when speculating about the earlier appearance of an old house. Just as in the 19th century, the 20th century had many books advocating the stylistic overhaul of houses. For instance, *Redeeming Old Homes* (1923) by Amelia Leavitt was still in print in 1937 and is full of amazing transformations—some so unusual we might today consider them remuddlings. Careful examination of the physical evidence in an old house, combined with photos, insurance data, and other documentation, will help uncover the cultural and artistic surprises that may hide within its walls.

*Daniel Reiff, PhD, is the author of the forthcoming Houses from Books: The Influence of Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in America, 1738-1950 (Penn State University Press).*





When contractor Thomas L. Higgins bought a Federal-style house for himself on Central Avenue, he remodeled it into a flamboyant Queen Anne (top)—perhaps emulating Dr. Waterhouse's impressive home just down the street. In 1923 industrialist Albert Dohn updated the house to a sedate Colonial Revival mansion (above) clearly modeled on the Sears Magnolia model (at left).

### *Architectural pattern books*

*such as Holly's Country Seats (1863),*

*Woodward's Architecture and*

*Rural Art (1867), and Palliser's*

*Model Homes for the People (1876)*

*all depict radical remodeling projects.*

At the peak of the Roaring Twenties, the Home Builders' Catalog pushed radical remodeling as well as new-house construction. Before-and-after photographs, doctored to look as dramatic as possible, helped make the case that old houses were an eyesore.



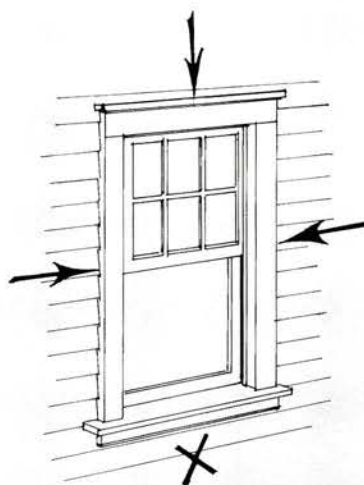


# SEVEN WAYS *to*

WHEN COLD WEATHER SETS IN, old houses tend to feel it first. Given their seasoned construction, some lose heat through conduction (transfer through materials), but even more escapes via infiltration (air movement through cracks and joints).

The secret—if there is one—to making an old house more thermally efficient and comfortable in cold weather is limiting the opportunities for these losses. It's picky work, but low-tech in terms of skill and materials. Plus, it more that pays for the minimal materials costs. As you work your way around the building this fall, look to improve the following key weatherizing areas—and keep your caulking gun handy.

*by The OHJ Technical Staff*



## 1) Seal window and door exteriors

Caulking all around the frame, especially where trim edges meet shingles or clapboards, helps prevent air and water infiltration through these joints and gaps in the building envelope. (It improves the paint job too.) Also caulk joints between dissimilar building materials, such as where wood meets stone. However, do not caulk the undersides of windows or doors, or where clapboards lap. These spaces are important exits for moisture vapor. Clear silicone or polyurethane caulks are good for this work; where the surface will be painted choose good-quality acrylic-latex caulk.

## 2) Point up foundations

Many old houses sit on stone, brick, or concrete block foundations. As this masonry settles slightly or wood sills shrink, gaps can appear at the sill line. Before addressing any large air leaks with caulk, trowel them closed with mortar.





# WEATHERIZE

## 3) Inspect weatherstrips on doors

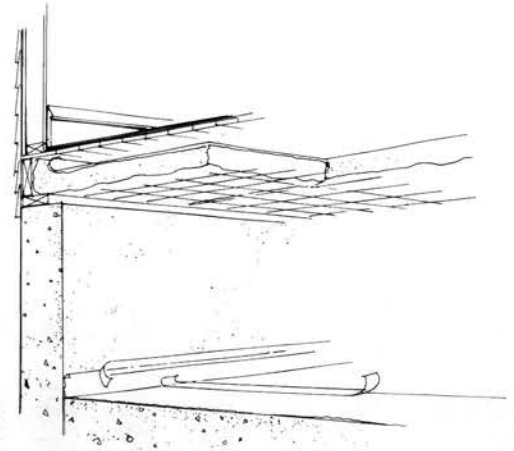
If your exterior doors have surface-mounted weatherstrips, such as rubber bulb seals along the jamb or sweeps along the floor, check their seal by looking for drafts with a lighted stick of incense. Then adjust if necessary. Inspect integral spring-metal weatherstrips for bent or missing sections and repair.

## 4) Check fireplace dampers

Most fireplaces built since 1900 have dampers just above the firebox that close off the flue to limit heat loss when it's not in use. Make sure the damper is not damaged by age or stuck open (or shut) because of fallen debris. Call in a chimney sweep for major problems.

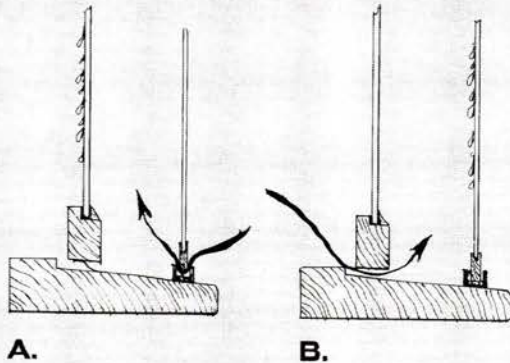
## 5) Insulate unheated crawlspaces

Install rolls of batt insulation in the bays between upper floor joists. Staple wire mesh or rabbit fencing to the joists to hold the insulation in place. Though it's been said many times before, place the vapor retarder (foil or other facing) towards the living space, not towards the ground. Also, install batts so there is an air space between the vapor retarder and the subfloor, and block the ends (to prevent moisture from entering the air space). Finally, lay medium-weight polyethylene sheeting across the ground (to block moisture migration) and tape joints.



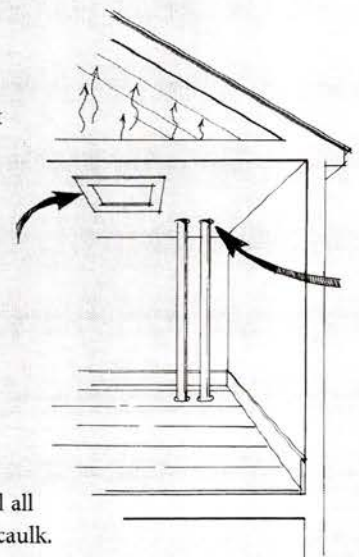
## 6) Check storm windows and sashes

Storm windows not only protect the main window from winter rain and snow, they slow heat loss by creating a dead-air space - however, only if they are tight enough to limit air movement. Make sure storms fit snugly all around the window frame, leaving only a small weep hole to permit moisture vapor to escape. Loose storms are not only ineffective, they promote frost on the indoor window surface (A). Sashes should be equally tight or they will lead to frost on the storm window (B).

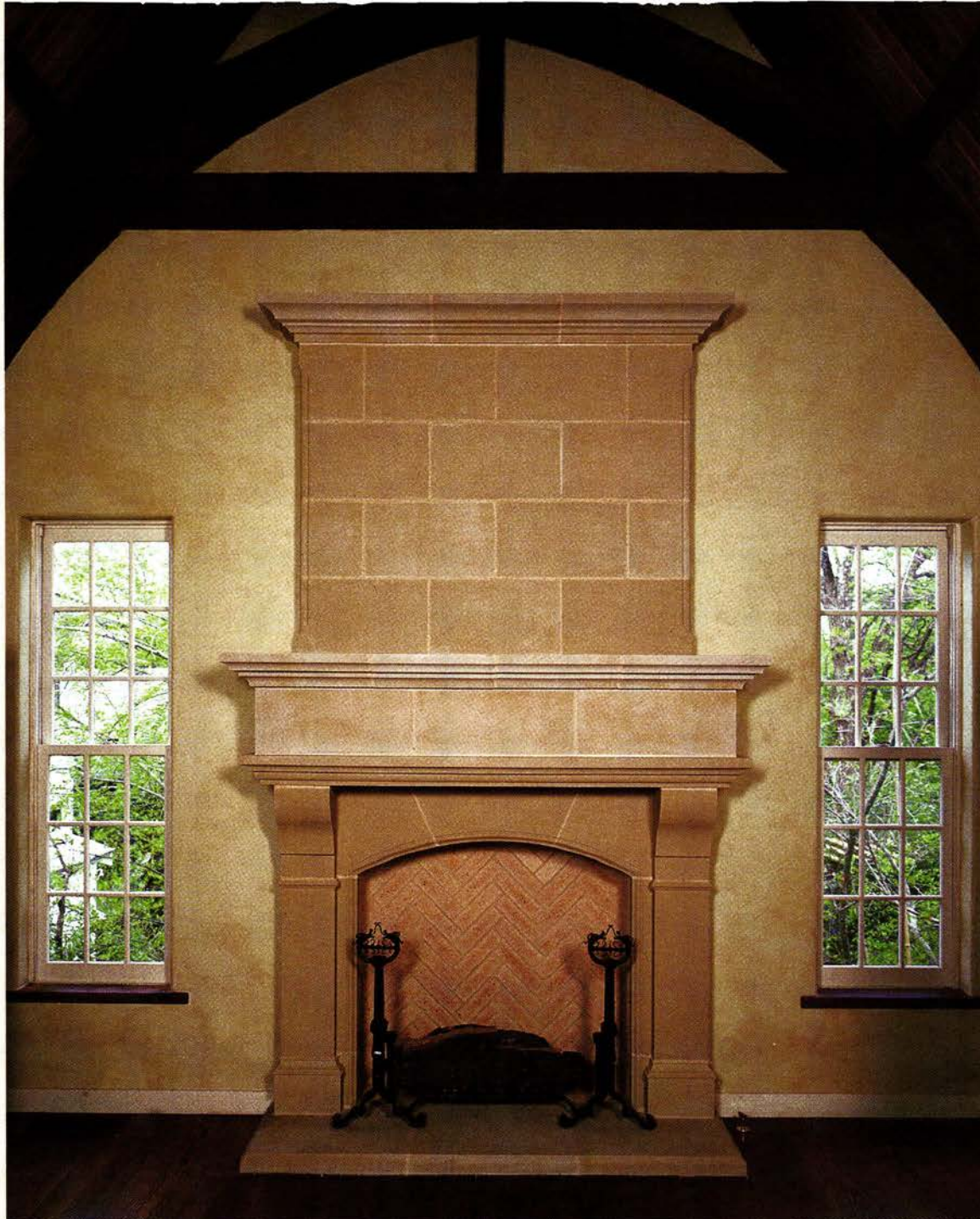


## 7) Seal all attic penetrations

Pipes, vents, hatches, recessed lights, and cracks that penetrate the second-floor ceiling are easy avenues for heat loss. Even more important, they allow moisture vapor to migrate to the attic, where cooler temperatures cause it to condense into liquid water that saturates insulation or freezes into frost. Close off large penetrations with plywood or wallboard, then seal all joints and cracks with clear caulk.







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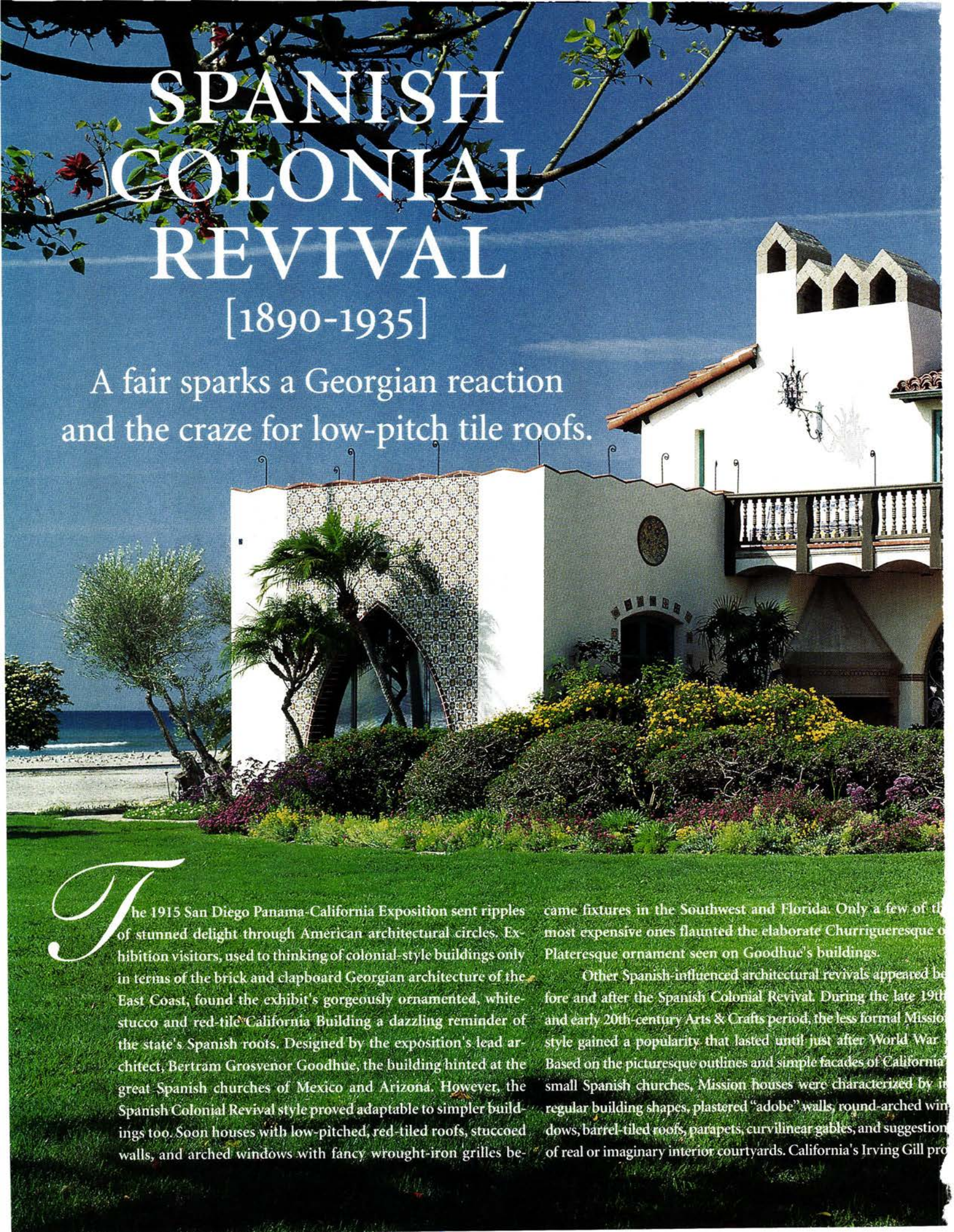
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# SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL

[1890-1935]

A fair sparks a Georgian reaction  
and the craze for low-pitch tile roofs.



The 1915 San Diego Panama-California Exposition sent ripples of stunned delight through American architectural circles. Exhibition visitors, used to thinking of colonial-style buildings only in terms of the brick and clapboard Georgian architecture of the East Coast, found the exhibit's gorgeously ornamented, white-stucco and red-tile California Building a dazzling reminder of the state's Spanish roots. Designed by the exposition's lead architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, the building hinted at the great Spanish churches of Mexico and Arizona. However, the Spanish Colonial Revival style proved adaptable to simpler buildings too. Soon houses with low-pitched, red-tiled roofs, stuccoed walls, and arched windows with fancy wrought-iron grilles be-

came fixtures in the Southwest and Florida. Only a few of the most expensive ones flaunted the elaborate Churrigueresque or Plateresque ornament seen on Goodhue's buildings.

Other Spanish-influenced architectural revivals appeared before and after the Spanish Colonial Revival. During the late 19th and early 20th-century Arts & Crafts period, the less formal Mission style gained a popularity that lasted until just after World War I. Based on the picturesque outlines and simple facades of California's small Spanish churches, Mission houses were characterized by their regular building shapes, plastered "adobe" walls, round-arched windows, barrel-tiled roofs, parapets, curvilinear gables, and suggestion of real or imaginary interior courtyards. California's Irving Gill pro-





duced some of the most sophisticated Mission designs, but the style appeared in many areas far removed from Spain's early colonies and became a staple in the mail-order catalogue house market.

Following World War I, the Mediterranean style, blending high-style Italian and Spanish features, was used by architects for mansions and substantial residences—and by tract builders for many humbler ones. Particularly popular in Florida, California, and the Southwest, it also turned up in suburbs and country houses nationwide. A close look at almost any American town, in fact, will uncover at least one house whose stucco walls and red-tile roof hint at Spanish ancestry. — JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

**ADAMSON HOUSE (1930)  
MALIBU, CALIF.**

Textbook tile roofs, decorative vents, arched walls, and elaborated chimney tops hold their own with glorious Malibu tilework. The house and nearby beach are part of Malibu Lagoon State park.





AMERICAN HOUSE STYLE

See foldout for more.

# SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL

## CASA DEL HERRERA (1925)

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

With carefully researched details and the finest materials, Casa del Herrera represents the ultimate expression of Spanish Colonial Revival houses.

Nonetheless, the style worked equally well in houses of much smaller scale and budget using little more than stucco and tile.

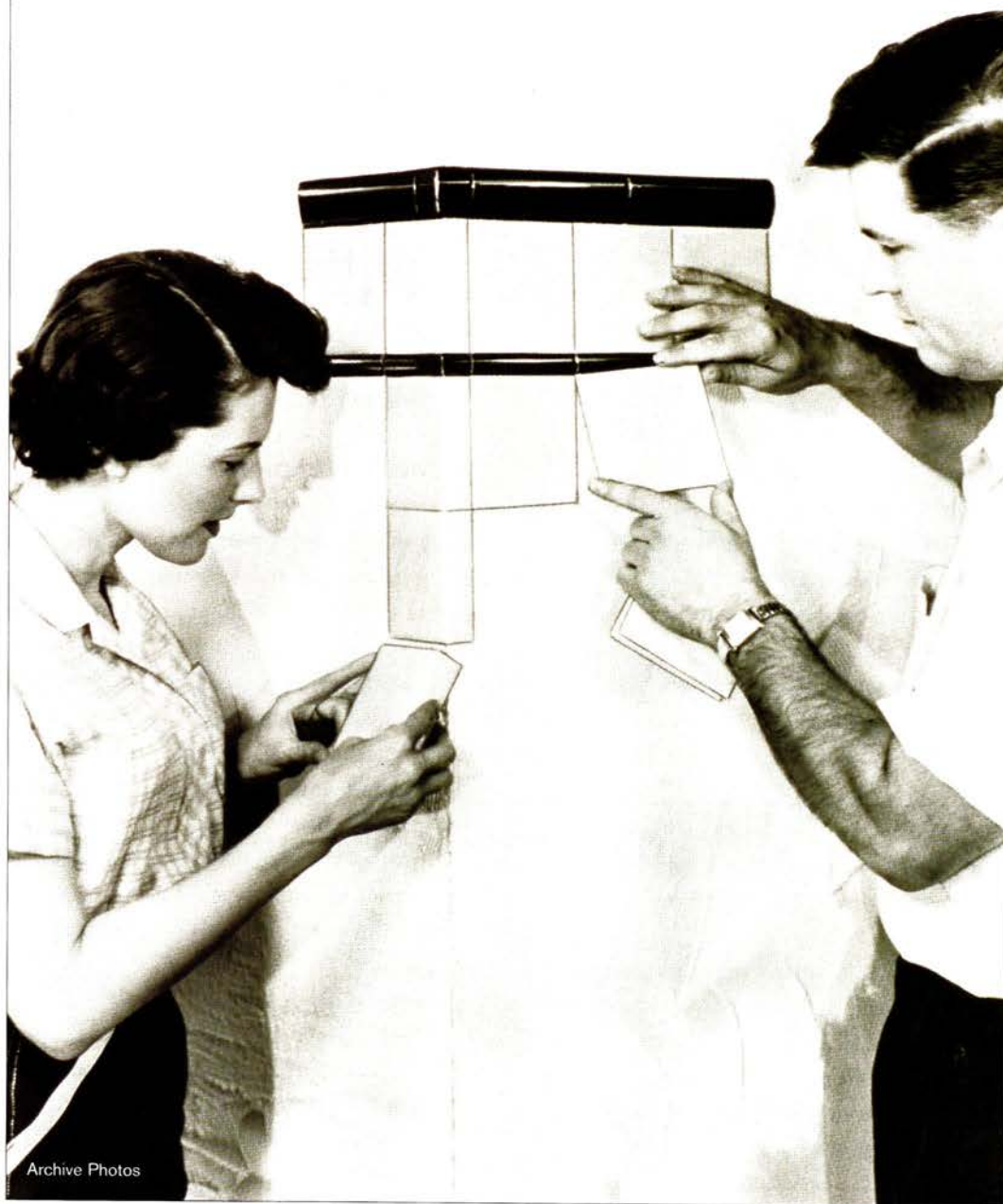


BASICS

## The Six R's of Tile Repair

By Marylee MacDonald

DRAWINGS BY KATHY BRAY



Archive Photos

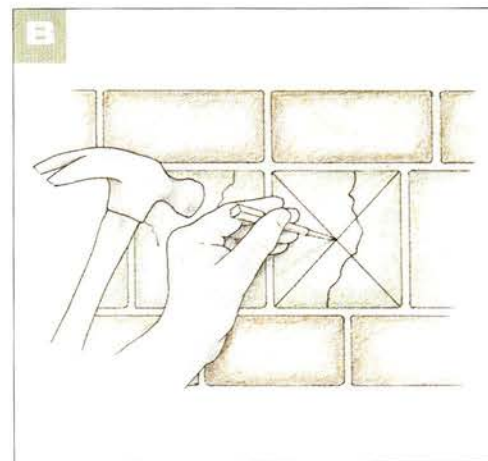
**U**NDER MY FRIEND'S pea soup-green vinyl floor, I discovered the original bathroom's white hex tile. Eureka! I thought. It's still there. But next to the W.C., a plumber had pulled up three rows of tile and filled the trough with a concrete patch—the beginning of the tile's untimely demise.

Many unsightly tilework patches begin with the rush to fix leaky pipes. In a typical old bathroom most of the tile will be intact except for damage below the sink, between the shower head and faucets (where the shower riser has been replaced), or below the tub spout. At their best, such patches use whatever tile generally matches the color of the adjacent tile. At their worst there's no attempt to make the whole ensemble mesh. If this sounds like your bathroom, cheer up. There are battle-tested ways—six steps the way I do it—to remove and replace those unsightly tiles or any similar spot damage in a field of tilework.

*continued on page 68*



**(A)** If you have a tile that is loose on its base, but otherwise in good condition, try gently tapping to free it from the mortar, then carefully prying the tile free. **(B)** To remove solidly attached tile without disturbing the surrounding work, first score the surface with a glass cutter, then punch the center and bore a hole with a masonry bit. **(C)** Next, working with a small cold chisel, break the tile out in pieces. **(D)** Repair damaged backing by securing metal lath behind the wall, using a pencil and wire, then patch the hole flush with the wall - that is, just below the tile. **(E)** Use spacers for setting new tile to establish grout lines.



## GETTING READY

ALTHOUGH TILE installed on a traditional bed of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " sand-lime-and-cement mortar will stand up for decades to the onslaught of showers, cracked grout can trap moisture inside the wall. Or perhaps no one has thought to Quik-Seal the rim of the tub in years. When the mortar base crumbles, tiles detach. As long as you have the original tile, however, you're in great shape. Remove the grout, lift out the loose tile, clean the back, then duct tape 4-mil plastic sheeting over the damp area until it's dry.

Matching grout is as tricky as matching tile. To remove old grout you might get away with a "church key" can opener for one or two tiles, but the serrated blade of a grout saw works better. For narrow joints, you'll have to resort to a metal nail file or hacksaw blade. If you're only regrouting the patch, matching the original color is crucial. Start

with clean grout. Tilex cleaner works extremely well to remove mildew stains on walls. Use undiluted bleach on floors.

If you're going to regrout the bathroom—the best way to disguise the patch—invest in a tile and grout router (see Suppliers). Standard  $\frac{1}{16}$ " router blades remove grout from most joints, but if the joints are tight, remove the grout by hand or you'll risk chipping the edges of the tile.

## REMOVE LOOSE AND MISMATCHED TILE

**STEP 1.** Rake out the joints, freeing problem tile from adjoining tile.

**STEP 2.** For tile that is not solidly attached, tap lightly with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " carbide chisel or small pry bar. The goal is to create a loose square of mortar behind the tile (depending on how mushy the mortar has become and how much room you have to slide a tool

into the grout joint). Then pry gently to lift out the first tile.

**STEP 3.** For mismatched tile, do not pry. Instead, score the tile with diagonal lines using a glass cutter. Use a center punch or nail set to dimple the surface. Then drill through the center point with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " masonry bit.

**STEP 4.** With a  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", carbide-tip, cold chisel, strike the diagonal lines, working outward. Check for any remaining grout before prying loose pieces along the edge.

## REPAIR BACKING

IF YOU DISCOVER water damage—punky, soft mortar—chip out the bad stuff behind adjacent tile and keep removing mortar until you reach solid ground. If the repair spans two studs, I find Dens-Shield tile backer easier to work with and more moisture-resistant than either green drywall or concrete backerboard. For smaller repairs, use a method similar to that used for patching plaster walls.

**STEP 1.** With wire cutters, cut a section of aluminum lath, the kind plasterers use on inside corners. Thread tie wire through the holes.

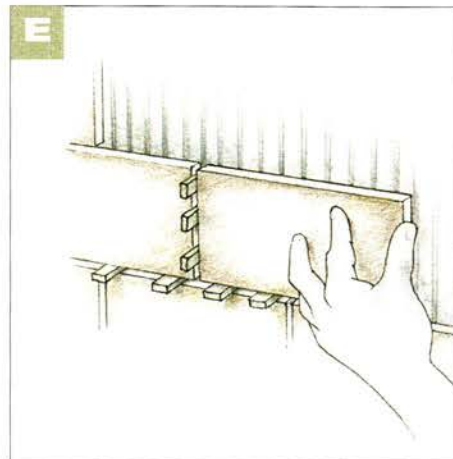
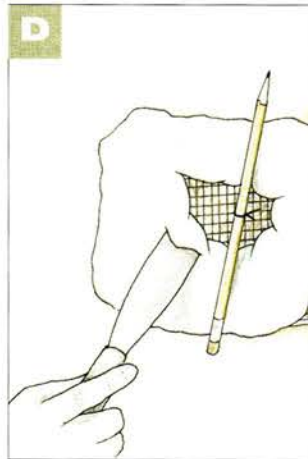
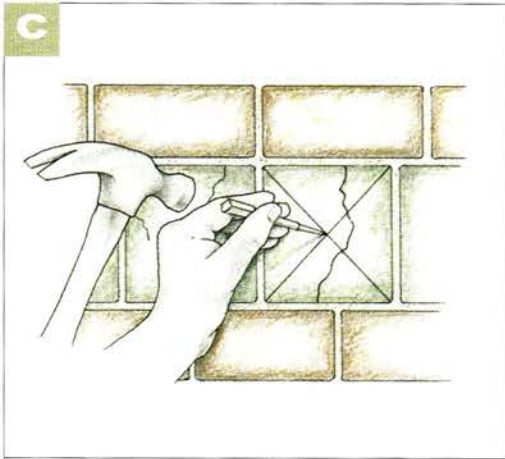
**STEP 2.** Push the lath into the opening. With a pencil, twist the tie wire to position the lath 1" from the tile's surface.

**STEP 3.** For one tile, mix 2 cups of Durabond 20 adhesive with water. With a 1" plastic putty knife, push the Durabond through

## The Ceramic Search

Matching the color, sheen, and thickness of original tile takes research. Bring tile samples home. Pick through the "bone piles" at tile stores. Order samples from importers. For one job, I found white  $\frac{5}{16}$ " wall tile in the original 3"x 6" dimensions from Nemo Tile, a company I'd located over the Internet ([www.nemotile.com](http://www.nemotile.com)). They also carry hex tile and 1" penny rounds used on floors. Large tile can be cut to fit as long as the color is right. Or, if you have tile with an Arts & Crafts glaze, check tile from a reopened factory, such as Highgate Tile Works, imported by H & R Johnson Tiles. When all else fails, custom tile shops can recreate specialty shapes and glazes.





the lath. Form a key behind the original mortar. Get as much around the edge as possible. (If you're repairing the damaged subsurface of a floor, use a cementitious filler/leveler.)

**STEP 4.** Remove the tie wire. Fill the middle, leveling the surface even with the original mortar. Crosshatch the Durabond to provide "tooth" for the tile adhesive.

#### REPLACE TILE

NOW THAT YOU'RE READY to set tile, you'll find professional tilesetter's tools reduce breakage:

- $\frac{5}{8}$ " carbide-tipped, tile nipper for making round cut-outs around pipes;
- tile cutter (a rental tool) or an electric tile saw (also a rental tool);

- 60-grit rubbing brick to smooth rough edges;
- tile spacers to maintain uniform grout lines;
- 12" carbide hacksaw blade for square cut-outs.

You'll also need a notched spreader to apply adhesive, a rubber tile float or squeegee, a sponge, and a toothbrush to finish the grout joints.

**STEP 1.** Mark tile for cutting with a strip of masking tape. For cutting with an electric tile saw, transfer the cut line to the back, using a wax crayon to prevent the line from washing off. Shave rough edges or plane them with a 60-grit rubbing brick.

**STEP 2.** To make square notches, clamp tile

on a rubber pad and use a 12" diamond, hacksaw blade or rod saw.

**STEP 3.** For round holes, place tile on a rubber pad (such as a mouse pad), and outline a circle with holes drilled with a masonry or ceramic-tile drill bit. For rare tile, consider using a "hole breaker tile vise." This tool reduces breakage. Then cover holes for pipes with escutcheons.

#### REATTACH THE TILE

WHILE THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES of adhesive, from solvent-based to epoxy, the one I prefer for wall tile is a Type I, acrylic. (Type I means the adhesive is water-resistant.) Super-Tek Dual Purpose Adhesive can be used on almost any subsurface, and a tile

Grout Saw



Carbide Hacksaw Blade



Ceramic Hole Saw



Courtesy BonTool Co.



Courtesy Porter-Cable

#### Tools for Tile working

Far left: The serrated edge blade of a grout saw will shave away the mortar between tiles. Use a carbide hacksaw blade for straight or curved cuts in tiles. For making holes, try a ceramic hole saw. Left: Motorized tile saws are worth the money to rent or buy if the project involves more than a few tiles. Tile saws are particularly practical for dividing or trimming new tile to match the dimensions of older tiles.



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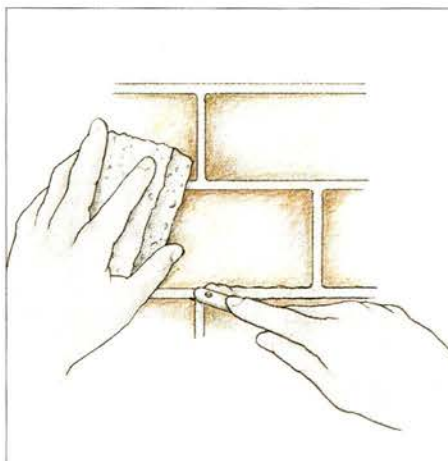
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The finishing touch on a tile repair is pressing the grout into the joints with a toothbrush to compress the mortar, while sponging the glazed surface clean. Return and polish with a soft rag once the grout starts to dry.

pressed in place, top or bottom first, won't slide down. It also has a long "open time," which allows you time to place additional tile, clean tools, and remove the excess that squeezes up through the grout joints.

On floors, use a cementitious, thin-set adhesive (with an acrylic or latex additive, depending on the product). Thin-sets support more weight, so they're needed for floors. To set fixtures, such as soap dishes, use a fast-setting adhesive, such as Super-Fixset, which hardens in 10 minutes. Hold the fixture in place meanwhile with duct tape.

**STEP 1.** With a notched, plastic spreader, apply Type I ceramic tile adhesive from edge to edge over the patched subsurface.

**STEP 2.** Position tile, using plastic spacers to maintain joint width. Tap lightly on a padded 2x4 to flatten high spots.

## REGROUT

GROUT YOUR TILES 24 hours after they have been set. Use the waiting period to make up trial batches, working with powdered colorant and sand until the dry sample matches the original. Use teaspoons and measuring cups to keep color uniform. Scale up, if you're regrouting a large area.

**STEP 1.** Working diagonally, push grout between the tile with a rubber tile float. Wipe off excess with squeegee or float.

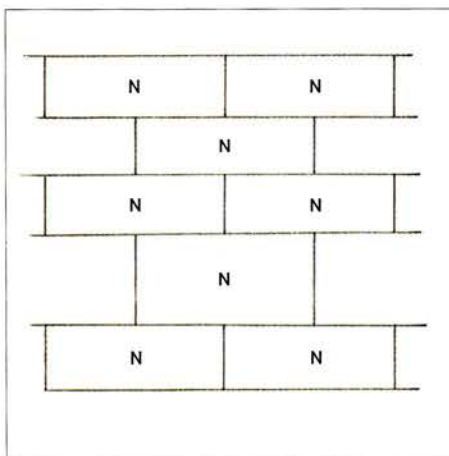
**STEP 2.** Sponge tile, rinsing frequently. Run a toothbrush handle down the grout joints to compact them. When a powdery film forms on the tile, polish the haze off with a soft cloth.

*Contributing Editor Marylee MacDonald is based in Evanston, IL.*

## What To Do About Hairline Cracks

There are two cases where you don't want to replace tile. The first is if there are hairline cracks in the glaze. Over time, glaze develops craze lines like those on Raku pottery. Your eye can adjust to, and learn to appreciate, these character flaws. Leave the tile alone.

The second case is if there are hairline cracks caused by structural settling. They are a different story. These lightning bolts zigzag across the walls, reminding you to check for mine shafts. If the tile is firmly bonded, plain in design, and not historically significant, you might consider having the entire surface refinished. (See "Bathtubs & Sinks-Repair & Refinishing" in the Yellow Pages.) Replacing cracked areas tile by tile takes painstaking effort and rarely yields a perfect match. Only replace tiles when they are loose or where a previous replacement screams to be redone.

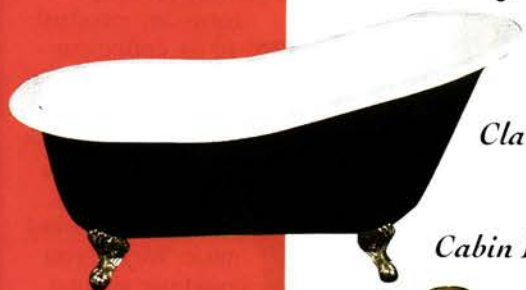


As you remove damaged or inappropriate tiles, do your best to avoid straight lines or unusual configurations. Instead "knit" the new tiles (N) into the existing pattern.



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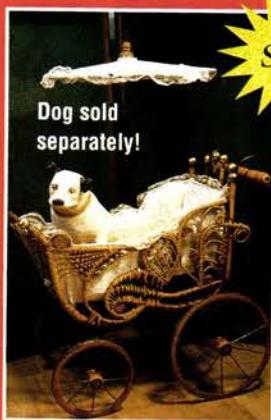


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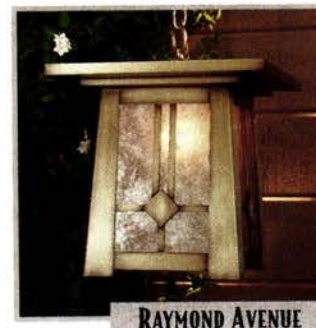
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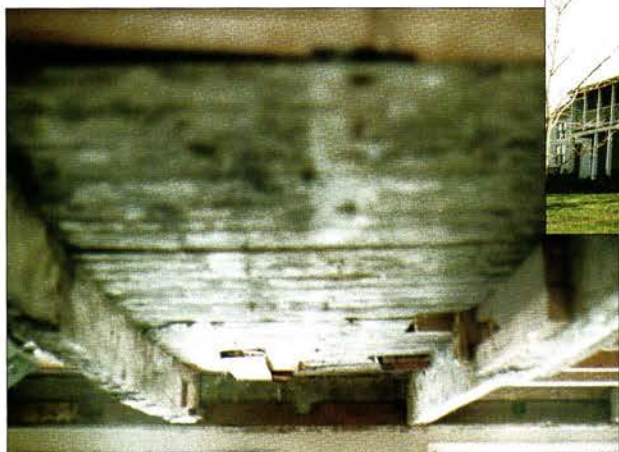
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# OLD HOUSE ADVISOR



The deflecting floors in this 1770s log house (inset) may be the result of missing joists (note pocket in bottom center of photo).

## HITTING THE CEILING

In the ceiling of our 1770s log house are beams that span the 20' width of the house. They are 6 1/2" wide, spaced 32" to 40" on-center, and several sag significantly under dead load. We have been given different opinions about how to reinforce the floor above. Any suggestions?

—DARYL M. LARUSSO  
BUNKER HILL, W. VIRG.

YOUR LOG HOUSE IS BEAUTIFUL, large, and relatively early, so the problem is specific to the building. While you will need to address the conditions on a case-by-case basis, also consider these general approaches.

First determine if there is an on-going problem. Generally, minor dips in floors and cracks in walls are expected signs of age in an old house. If the movement stopped long ago, you may consider these conditions simply something to live with. However, if there are signs of continuing move-

ment, you should call in a structural engineer.

Second, note that early buildings are sometimes under-engineered, or altered to leave them under-engineered. The joist spacing you note is very wide by modern standards (from 16" to 24" on-center over the last 100 years). Rather than cutting the joists to add steel supports, which would change the historic design of the building, look into reinforcing the existing system.

For example, consider sistering the existing joists by adding new lumber of the same dimensions right next to the old. This is a common reinforcing technique any good carpenter will know how to execute. Or you might investigate adding new joists spaced between the existing joists. For that matter, are you sure there were not originally more joists where the pockets and paint ghosts appear (see photo). On-site advice will help clear up many of these questions.

## SOURCING MISSING BALLS

Our ca. 1900 house has over 40 of these carved wooden torches decorat-

ing the interior. Do you know how to replace the lost hemispherical balls?

—JOHN JEFFREY  
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Applied "carvings" are often actually composition ornament.





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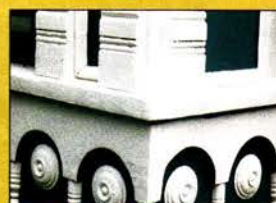
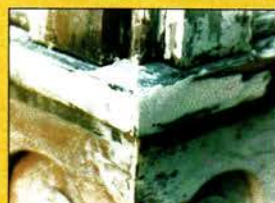
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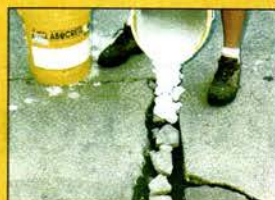
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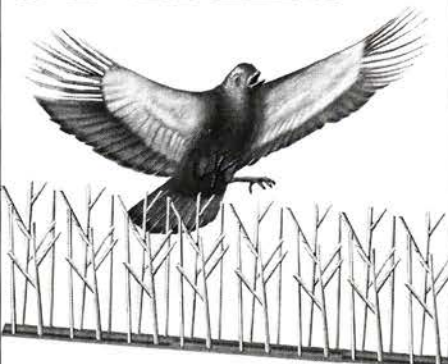
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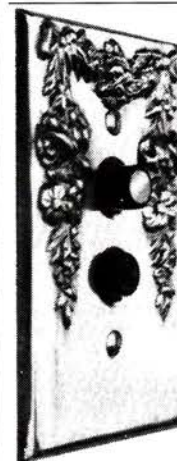
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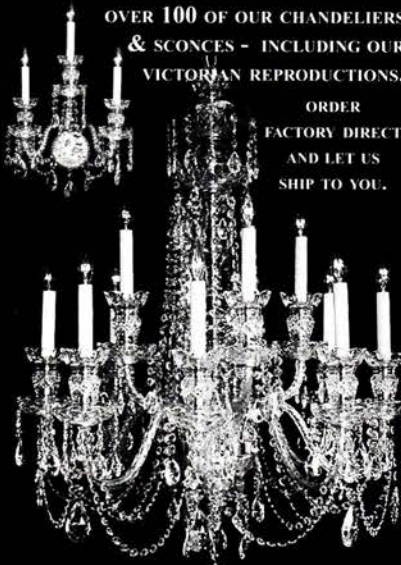
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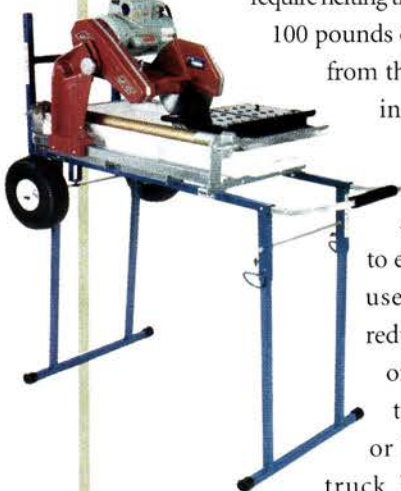
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include steel tube construction, 10" pneumatic tires, and a sturdy handle. The TLS-24 works with most major brands of tile saw and may also be used with heavier brick saws. Contact Trojan Mfg., (800) 745-2120, [www.trojantools.com](http://www.trojantools.com). Circle 10 on the resource card.



## EASY AS 3,4,5

THE A-SQUARE is a layout tool that helps make sure that any type of project, from framing to masonry to tile to cabinets, is on square. Unlike a T-Square, the A-Square is a right triangle with sides that are 3', 4', and 5' long. Made of aluminum and weighing 3 pounds, the tool unfolds from a 5'-long stick and locks into position. This triangle form makes it possible for one person to check the accuracy of layout quickly and without assistance. Contact Ercon, (201) 327-1919. Circle 11 on the resource card.



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IF YOU'RE FACING a lot of detail sanding or polishing projects, check out the new MasterFile finishing tool. Powered by compressed air, the MasterFile can be ordered as a kit with three interchangeable



15"-long contact arms plus the necessary belts and wrenches; or you can simply order the tool with one of the arms. The three arms are a 3/4"-wide standard arm, 1/2"-wide standard arm, and an offset arm. The kit also includes eight coated abrasive belts and

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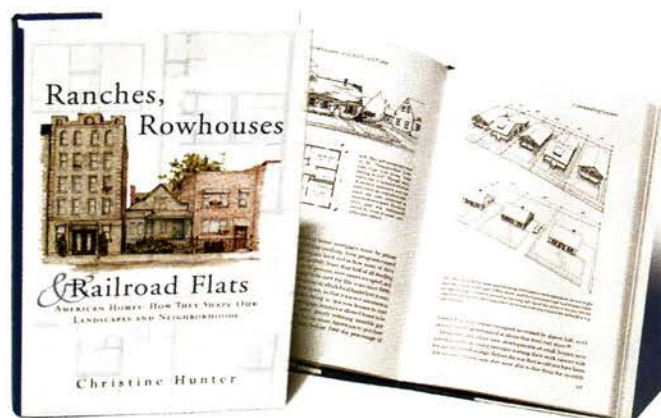
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CHRISTINE HUNTER has a lot to say about shelter—what is truly necessary for survival versus what merely squanders open space. In *Ranches, Rowhouses & Railroad Flats*, she locates the house in the context of a neighborhood and shows how building codes and zoning ordinances brought about changes in the way we live. The book's line drawings beg us to compare the logic of a claustrophobically narrow, freestanding house with the benefits of attached dwellings that share a common firewall: improved fire safety, lower building costs, and flexible use of interior space. Examples from an early Tokyo house and an American farm prove the efficacy of compact, multi-function space. But design was only one force shaping our homes and neighborhoods.

New technology, building codes, and zoning ordinances made older housing obsolete. Buildings with smoky gaslights became "substandard" as soon as a city finished its electrification program. Reformers lobbied for the first building codes, targeting such housing to correct inhumane living conditions for the poor. This indirectly led to widespread slum clearance, leaving no place for those living on the economic edge to go. Similarly, in 1916 the first zoning ordinances brought widespread social change.

Buildings were required to have minimum setbacks, and only those on major thoroughfares could have first-floor retail space. Hunter writes, "A middle-class widow with grown children and an empty house could no longer take in boarders or open a shop on the first floor to help pay her bills."

Technology promoted the development of orderly new neighborhoods. Close-in suburbs took root along electric trolley lines. In Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., "porch houses" offered a gallery-like public space. Elevators provided a "vertical neighborhood" of apartments with light and air. During the Depression and World War II, building continued, but at a slow, evolutionary pace.

Then, flush with victory, returning GI's started families and fell in love with cars. Increasing dependence on the automobile led homeowners to rapidly abandon old neighborhoods—people in crowded city neighborhoods had nowhere to park. Subdivisions sprang up on green space. In Levittown, N.Y., the long axis of the house faced the street, with a concrete drive and parking place. To save money, the builder eliminated the eaves, porches, and built-up moldings that had provided character to bungalows and Foursquares built just a few years before. This small, unadorned shelter "aimed at young veterans starting their work careers" became the basic postwar house, according to Hunter, with an impact that still ripples through house design today.—MARYLEE MACDONALD

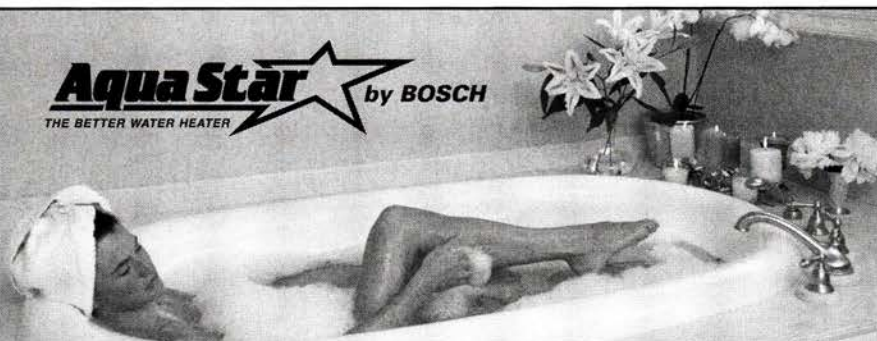
### **RANCHES, ROWHOUSES & RAILROAD FLATS** **AMERICAN HOMES: HOW THEY SHAPE OUR LANDSCAPES AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

BY CHRISTINE HUNTER

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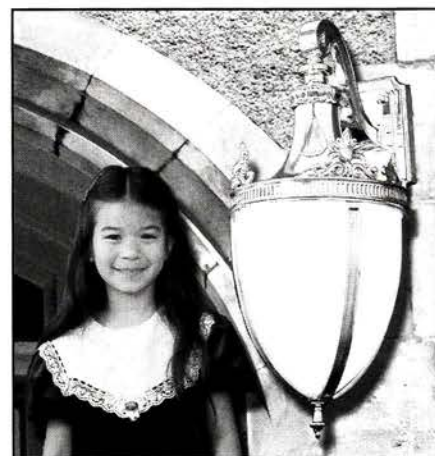


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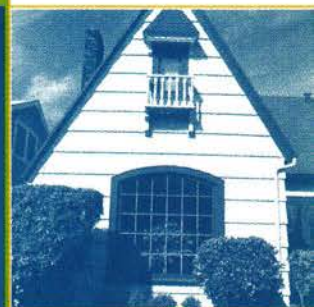


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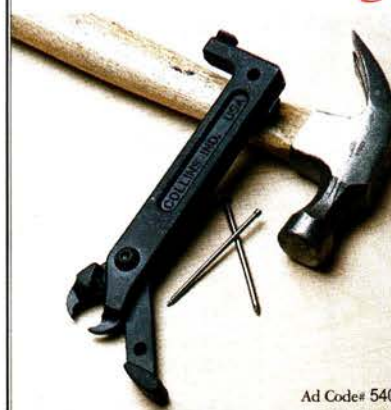
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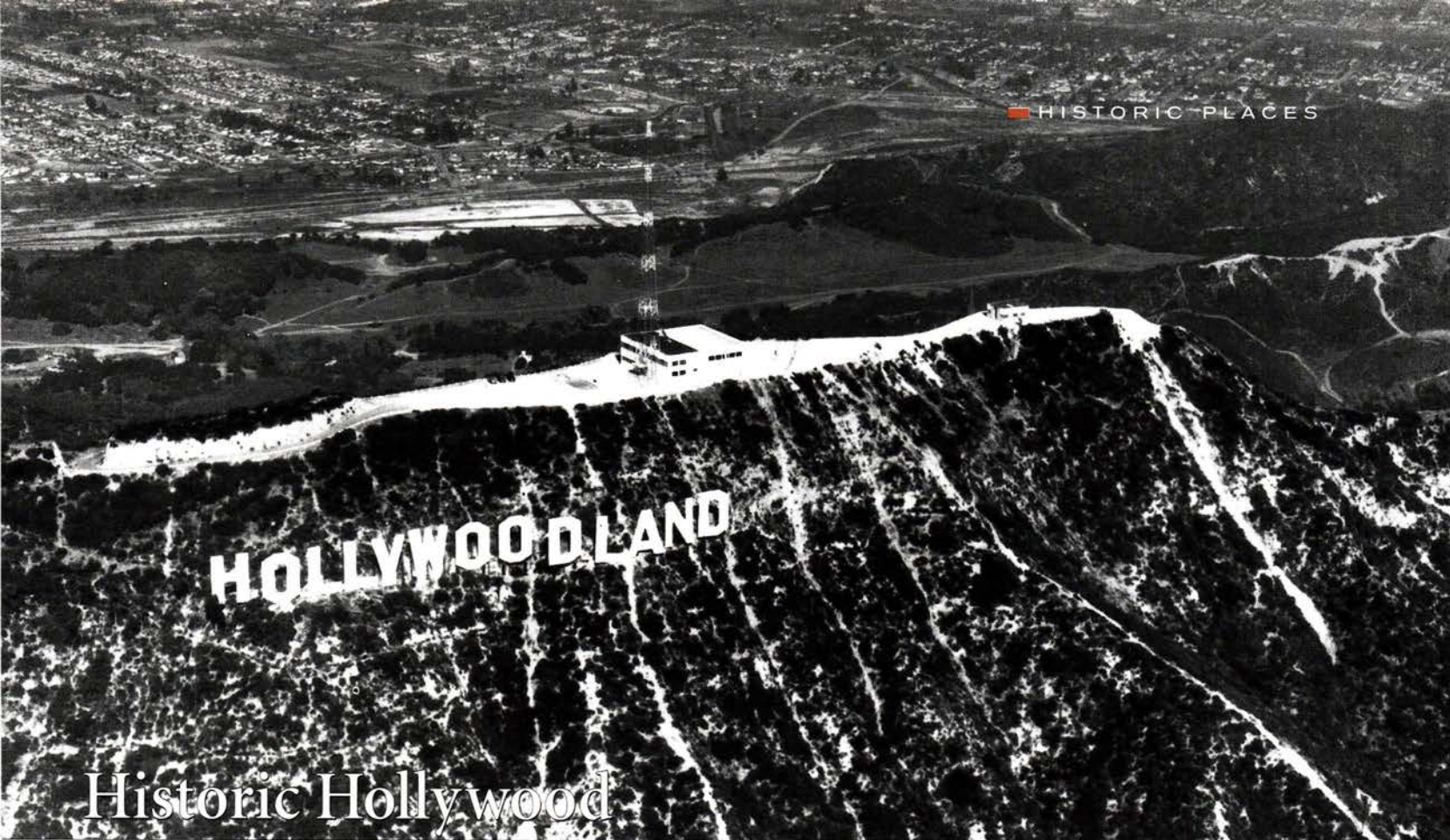
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## Historic Hollywood

**H**OLLYWOOD IS THE NORMA DESMOND of towns, a wilted, jilted caricature of her early days. So why visit? Beneath Hollywood's crumbling stucco you can still make out her classic features, her survivor's smile. Hollywood, like Miss Desmond, is eternally ready for her close-up.

That close-up will be more photogenic now that Hollywood is finally getting the facelift it's been promised for so many years. Construction and restoration projects are under way at a level the downtown hasn't seen since the 1920s. That's not to say that today's Hollywood is the one you see in classic films. A few years of spit and polish (or nip and tuck) can't make up for decades of hard living. If you haven't been here before, you may be disappointed in how far the Hollywood of the imagination differs from the real world of working gals, remuddled buildings, and T-shirt shops. For those willing to look above the flats of Tinseltown and beyond the packaged tours, however, Hollywood still is a realm of beautiful villas and castles designed by great architects for movie stars.

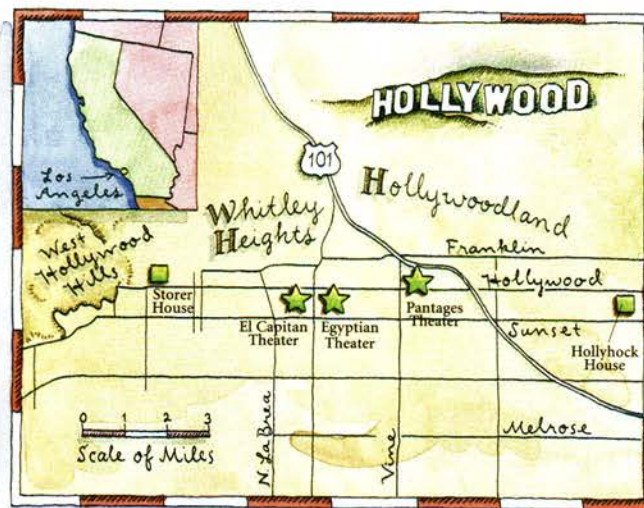
### Hollywood Before Flickers

TODAY THE NAME HOLLYWOOD is synonymous with the film industry and the town is part of Los Angeles, but there were only orange groves when Kansas prohibitionist Harvey Wilcox platted it in 1887. His wife dubbed the community "Hollywood" just because she liked the way it sounded.

To get a feel for Hollywood's early years, start your tour at the Wattles Mansion (1824 N. Curson Ave.). Omaha businessman Gur-

*Hollywood isn't exactly all glamour, but she's still an architectural star well worth a visit—and that has a future.*

BY JENNY CUNNINGHAM



Hard to believe that, prior to pictures, Hollywood was a community of gaslight-era estates and orange groves. The famous sign actually advertised a development in the 1920s.

Photo by Archive Photos, Illustration by James Noel Smith





High on a hill overlooking the city, the Villa Vallombrosa dates from the early days of Hollywood as a movie mecca. Whitley Heights is a national historic district.

## HISTORIC PLACES

don Wattles was typical of the wealthy Midwesterners who built spectacular winter homes in rustic Southern California. In 1905, Wattles commissioned noted architects Myron Hunt and Elmer Gray to design the handsome Mission-Style mansion.

The Wattles Mansion is now Hollywood's prime pre-movie colony property because it is one of the few old estates in Southern California that remains unconsumed by subdivisions. The city of Los Angeles owns it. Standing in the center of its original 49 acres, the home overlooks a venerable avocado grove and lush Italian gardens. The gardens are public, and Hollywood Heritage (323-874-4005) offers home tours by appointment.

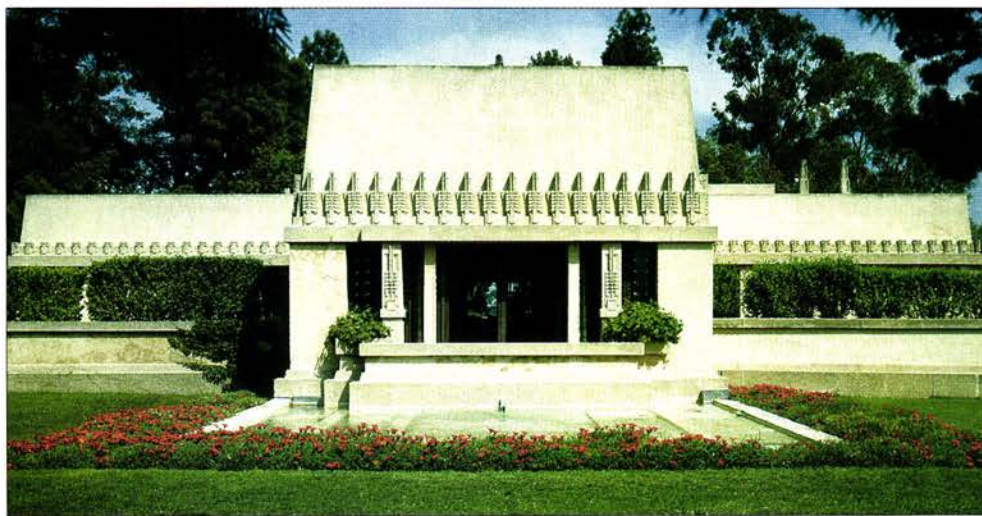
Just east of the Wattles Mansion you'll find two more rare relics of pre-film Hollywood. The Magic Castle is a Queen Anne mansion complete with corner turret. Built for a banker in 1909, the house has served for decades as a private club for magicians. It won't take anything up your sleeve to

visit Yamishiro, an exact replica of a Japanese palace. Constructed in 1911 as a private residence, it's now a restaurant with knock-out views of the city's hazy auburn sunsets.

## The Golden Age of Films

IN 1911, when a few pioneer filmmakers discovered they could work more efficiently in sunny California than in New York, Hollywood, the movie colony, was born. The closest you can get to the cradle of the California film industry is the Lasky-DeMille Barn in the 2100 block of Highland, where Hollywood's first feature-length film was shot in 1913. Today the barn is a nifty little museum with fun flotsam from the silent film age, including Cecil B. DeMille's intact office and an original slapstick.

To see how the early stars lived, go to the steep hill behind the Lasky-DeMille Barn: Whitley Heights, one of Hollywood's first housing developments. Most of the mansions there are period revival fantasies rooted in Spanish Colonial design. Jean Harlow's home (2015 Whitley Terrace) is particularly lovely and more understated than you might expect from the vamp whose braless torso helped inspire the call for movie censorship. The elegant Villa Vallombrosa (2000 block of Watsonia Terrace) has housed a host of stars over the years, including Janet Gaynor, the designer Adrian, and conductor Leonard Bernstein. The Spanish Eclectic home across the street is where Gloria Swanson ("Norma Desmond") lived while filming *Sunset Boulevard*.



Photos: Tim Street-Porter

Hollyhock House has a traditional name but a decidedly untraditional look both inside and out. It was, in fact, Frank Lloyd Wright's first project in the city, built for oil heiress Aline Barnsdall, a free spirit with deep pockets.



## Wright Turn

AT THE SAME TIME that developers were looking to the past for inspiration, entirely novel approaches to housing began to rise in Hollywood's hills. Contrary to Woody Allen's contention that California's only contribution to Western civilization is "right turn on red," early modern design got its big break in Hollywood. Frank Lloyd Wright arrived in 1916 determined to add architectural meat to this "ice cream, cake and



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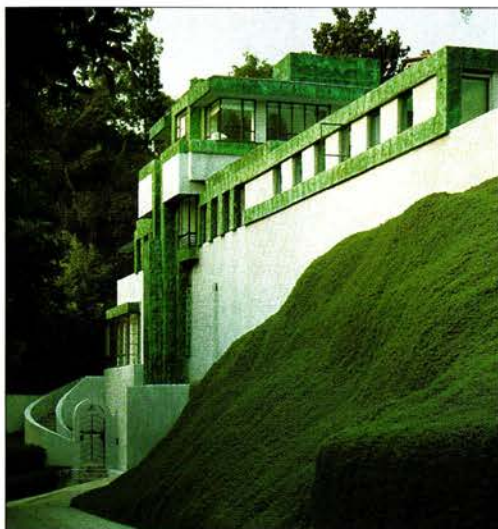
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The Storer House (right) represents a rare opportunity to see one of Frank Lloyd Wright's textile block houses, since only four were ever built. However, it is not open to the public. It was an actress—Diane Keaton—who resorted Lloyd Wright's Samuel-Navarro House (above), located deep in a canyon southeast of the Hollywood sign.



Photos: Tim Street-Porter

## Historic Lodging **HOLLYWOOD**

*Oddly, there aren't many average places to stay in Hollywood. The three hotels listed are amazing but expensive. For affordable B&B options, try Pasadena, Santa Monica, or West Los Angeles. To guide you around Hollywood and beyond, contact Hollywood Visitor Information (213-869-8822) or LA Conservancy (213-623-2489).*

### THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL

7000 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028, (800) 950-7667, [www.hollywoodroosevelt.com](http://www.hollywoodroosevelt.com). Built by and for Hollywood stars in 1927, this Spanish Colonial Revival hotel is where the first Academy Awards were held.

### CHATEAU MARMONT HOTEL

8221 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046, (800) 242-8328. Billy Wilder lived in this legendary hotel; John Belushi died here. The main building (1929) is patterned after a French castle.

### THE ARGYLE

8358 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, (800) 225-263, [www.argylehotel.com](http://www.argylehotel.com). The National Register Art Deco façade of the Argyle slows traffic on the Sunset Strip, it's that gorgeous. Expensive? You better believe it!

soda water corner of the world.”

Wright's first Hollywood project, Hollywood House, represented a career sea change and a new vision for architecture. Beyond its Mayan temple lines, the compound Wright created (4808 Hollywood Blvd.) defies description. Barnsdall Art Park is open to the public (213-485-4581). The house interior is currently closed for restoration.

Wright's next innovation was the textile block house, which he believed would create “boundless new expressions in Architecture.” In fact, just four of the graceful geometric homes were ever built. The three in Hollywood—the Ennis, Storer, and Freeman houses—are all worth a look, but only the Ennis can be toured (by appointment with the owner/curator; 323-668-0234).

Other avant-garde architects followed Wright to Hollywood, including his son Lloyd Wright, who stepped out of his father's giant shadow with his copper-clad masterpiece, the Samuel-Navarro House. Dip your toe into West Hollywood for a trip back to the future. At first glance, Rudolph Schindler's low-slung, multi-paned home looks like a lot of LA estates. Then, when you realize it was built in 1922, see it as the shape of mid-century Modernism to come. Be sure to take the tour (8355 North Kings Road; 323-651-1510).

## Decline and Fall

ABOUT THE TIME ranch houses began sprouting in new suburbs, Hollywood's reputation as the glamour capital of Los Angeles slumped. Many stars moved to Beverly Hills, taking along the elegant shops, restaurants, and clubs they supported. The ghost town that moviemakers left behind makes for a fascinating mini-tour, starting with Villa Carlotta on Franklin at Tamarind.

If Hollywood is the Norma Desmond of towns, this is her heart: the crumbling Mediterranean hulk that was once Hollywood's grandest residence hotel and is now an apartment building. The sloping Romeo and Juliet balconies outside don't prepare you for what lies indoors. Blinking in the darkness of the grand lobby, you begin to make out the burly sofas, medieval fireplace, and overgrown courtyard garden. It looks as if the residents stepped out for tea in 1922 and never came back.

While stars lived in residence hotels or hilltop homes, Hollywood's working-class “grips” had a tough time finding housing. So film bosses built bungalow courts in the flats off Hollywood Boulevard, like the survivor on the corner of Grace and Franklin financed by DeMille in 1929. The Spanish Revival building was itself the star of a re-





Billy Vasquez

Four years ago, Disney started the movement to fix up Hollywood when it bought and beautified the El Capitan palace (left) at Hollywood and Highland. In contrast, the Villa Carlotta apartment building (above) looks much as it did some 80 years ago when it was a palatial residence hotel.

cent feature film. Call it typecasting; the story was about a romantic old bungalow complex slated for demolition.

Nearby, you'll find Bela Lugosi's former home (1730 N. Hudson Ave.). At the height of his career, the actor famous for creating Count Dracula lived in this Arts & Crafts bungalow just off Hollywood Boulevard. Now faded, the house was featured in *Architectural Digest* in the 1930s. Heading south, you'll hit Hollywood Boulevard, where you'll have to look hard to find the Janes House, nearly obscured by a forest of souvenir kitsch. The Queen Anne house is the sole survivor of the grand homes that once lined Hollywood Boulevard.

## Rebirth

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD was the black hole of Hollywood's decline, but these days speculators are betting \$1 billion that the street will be the center of Hollywood's future. Walking between Vine and Orange, you'll see that Hollywood Boulevard is still a work in progress, a patchwork of champagne dreams and muscatel hangovers.

Sticking with the bubbly on your tour of movie palaces, start with the Pantages at Hollywood and Vine. Disney just completed an extensive renovation of this first Art Deco

movie theater in America, where it opened its Broadway hit "The Lion King." Walking west, you'll find the Egyptian Theater, where the world's first star-studded movie premiere was held in 1922. The theater, restored and reopened in 1998, is the home of American Cinemateque, a nonprofit group that screens classic films (323-466-FILM).

Across the street, the most famous movie theater in the world has not been restored. And that's okay. Be sure to step beyond the famous footprints and into the dim red interior of the Chinese Theater, built by Sid Grauman in 1927. Final stop: Tomorrowland. At the northwest corner of Hollywood and Highland, the future house of the Oscar is under construction. The \$94 million Premiere Theater will bring the Academy Awards back to Hollywood in 2002. The theater is part of a huge \$430 million retail complex some preservation groups worry is the beginning of a "Disneyfied" Hollywood.

The bottom line is that the next few years may bring the last chance to experience the sweet sorrow of Old Hollywood, with artifacts of dreams lost and found at every turn. You may even feel compelled to return to this faded beauty. Mark Miss Desmond's words: "Nobody leaves a star!" 🌟



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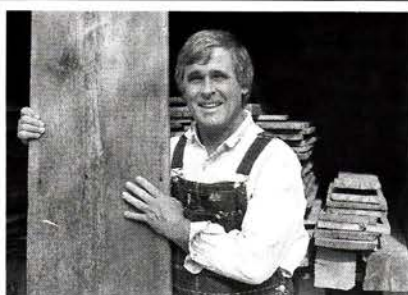
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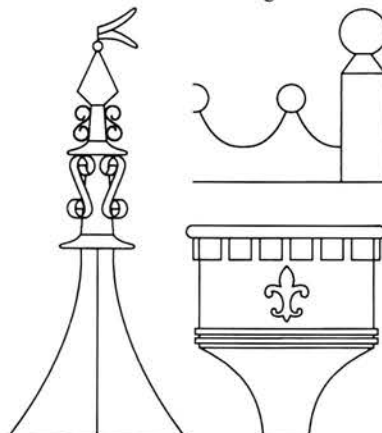
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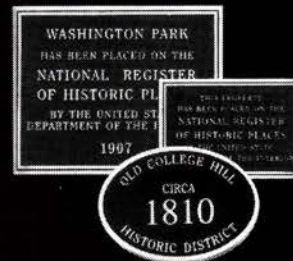
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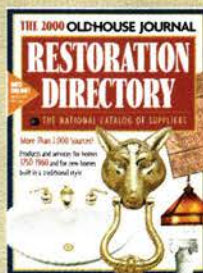
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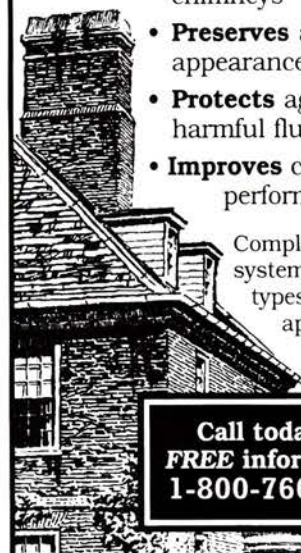
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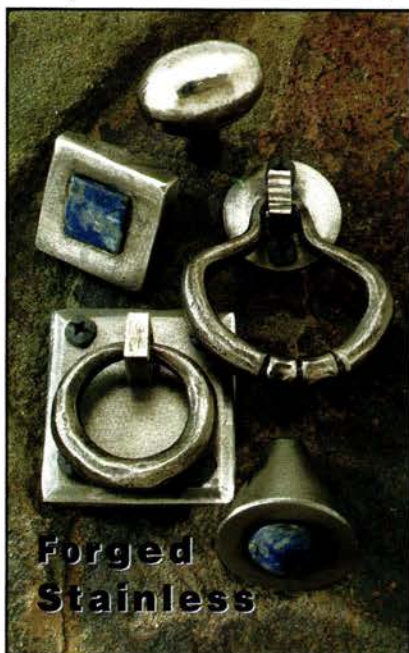
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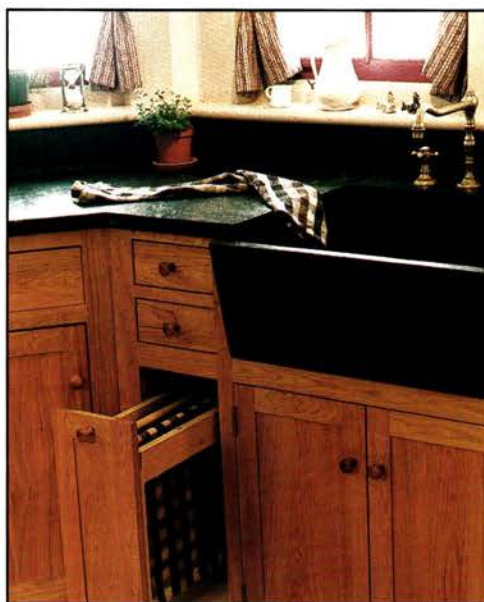


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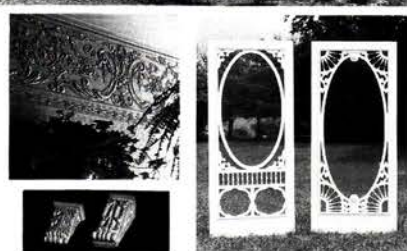
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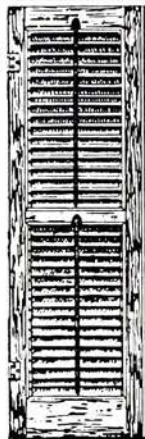
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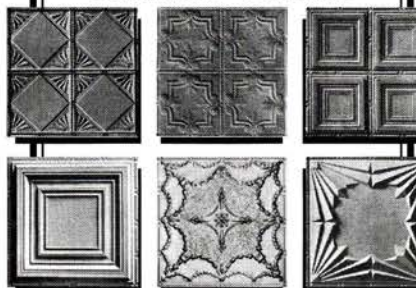
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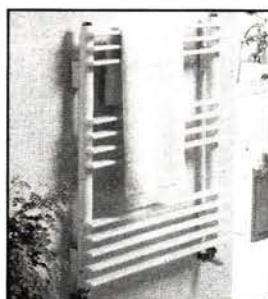
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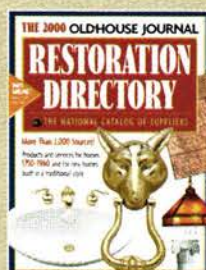
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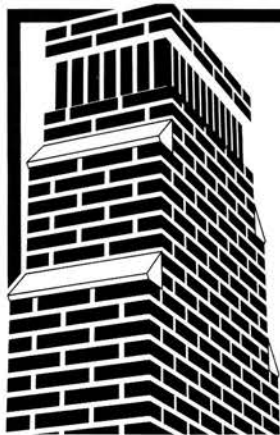
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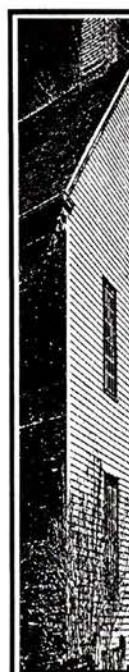
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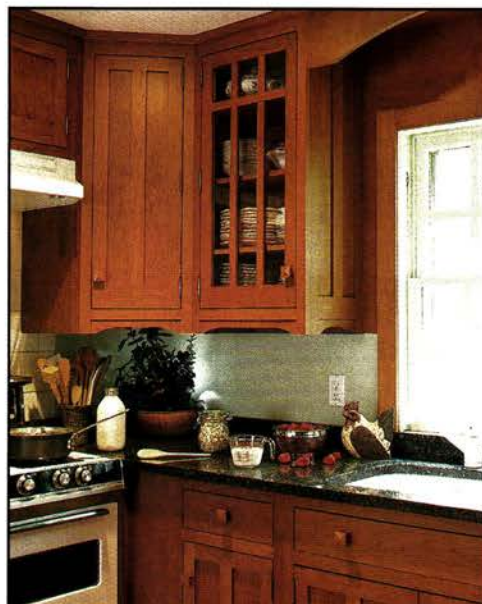
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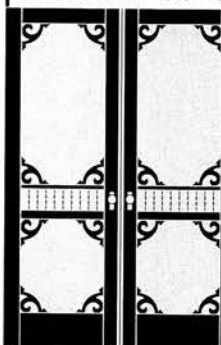
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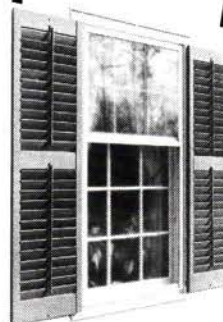
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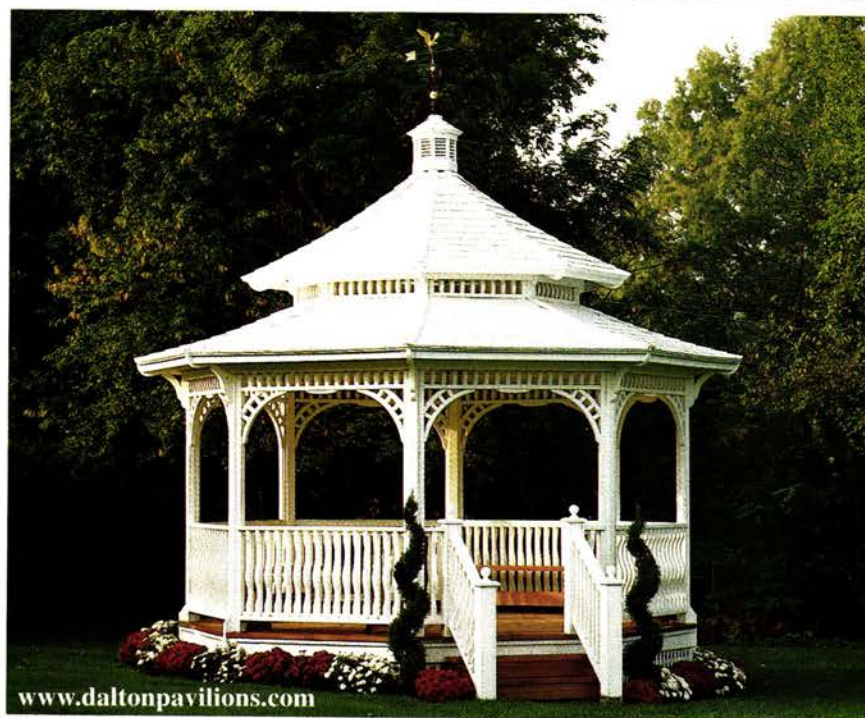
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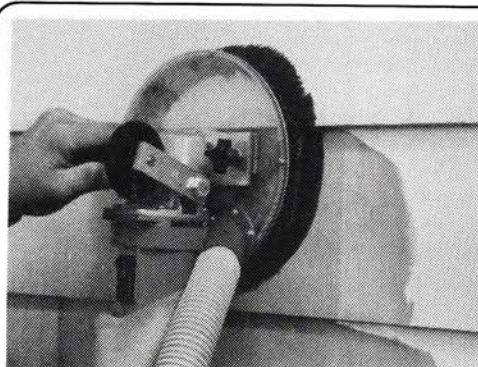
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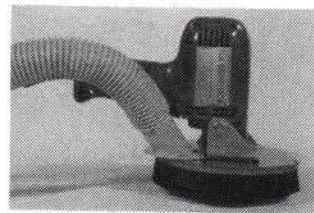


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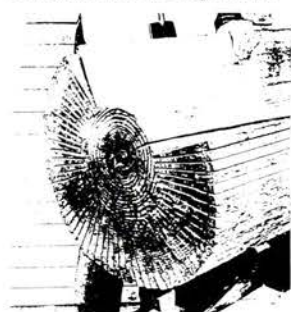
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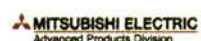
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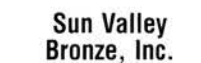
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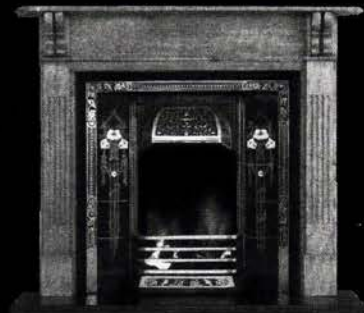
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Statement of Circulation: During the period November/December 1999 through September/October 2000, the average total number of copies printed per issue was 236,686. Of this total, an average of 23,761 copies was sold through vendors and counter sales and an average paid of 132,303 was mailed to individual paid subscribers for an average total paid of 156,064. An average of 1,443 was mailed as complimentary or free, and an average of 3,015 free copies was distributed outside the mail for a total average free distribution of 4,458. Total distribution averaged 160,522. Copies not distributed (office use, spoilage, storage and returns from news agents) averaged 76,164. For the July/August 2000 issue, 221,925 copies were printed. Of this total, 23,512 were sold through vendors and counter sales and 127,362 copies were mailed to individual paid subscribers for a total paid circulation of 150,874. 220 copies were mailed as complimentary or free, and 2,682 copies were distributed outside the mail for a total free distribution of 2,902. Total distribution was 153,776. Copies not distributed (office use, spoilage, storage, and returns from news agents) were 68,149.

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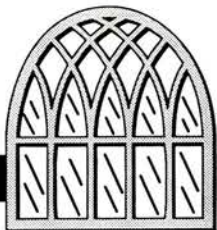
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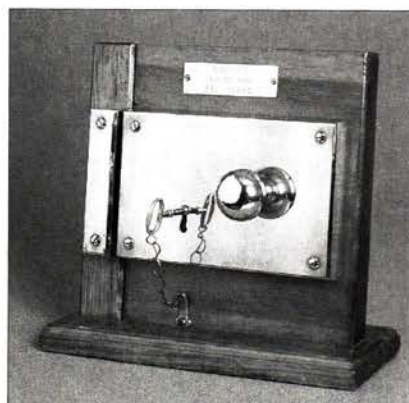
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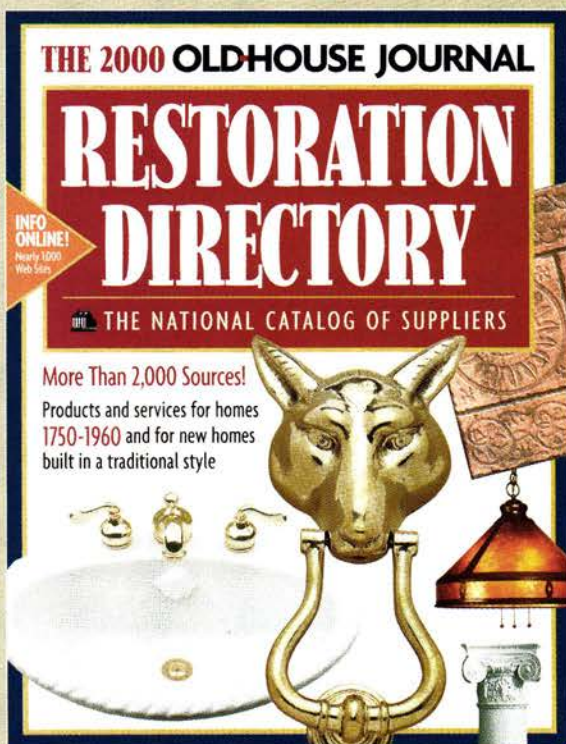


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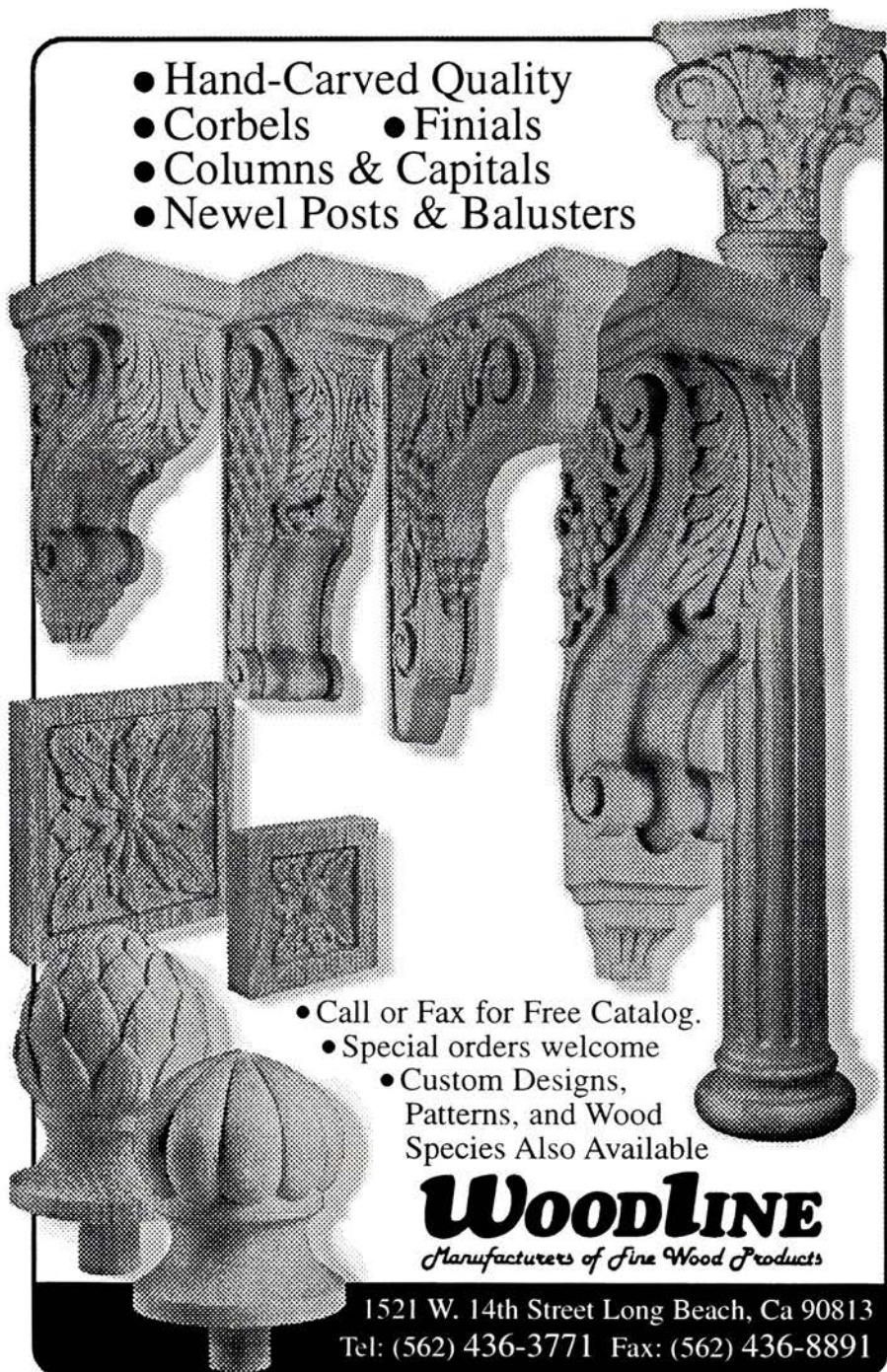
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