

Old House JOURNAL

The Original Restoration Magazine

On the House

Making **Metal** Roofs

Buying **Slate** Pretenders

Shutter Do's and Don'ts

Are **Stains** for You?

Plus:

Sears Houses

5 Wood Fillers

Garden **Cannas**

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August 2002

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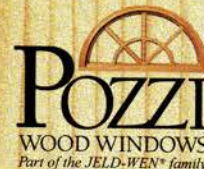
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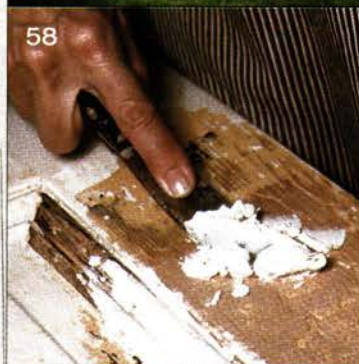
By Susan Davis Price
Inspired by nature, a St. Paul couple enlists talent and flea-market finds to rejuvenate a once barren house.

On the cover:

Cover Photo by Brian Vanden Brink
Located in the downeast coastal town of Milbridge, Maine, this towered Queen Anne with its trigabled roof is made sumptuous by half-timbering, ornate spindlework, frieze cutouts, and clipped dormers.



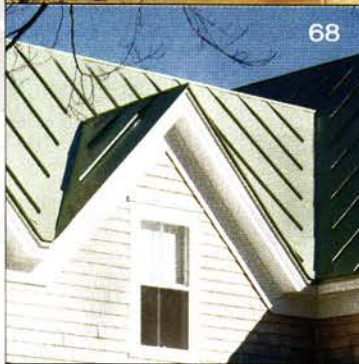
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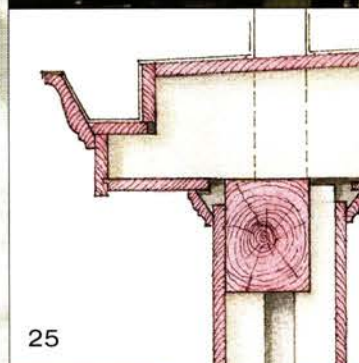
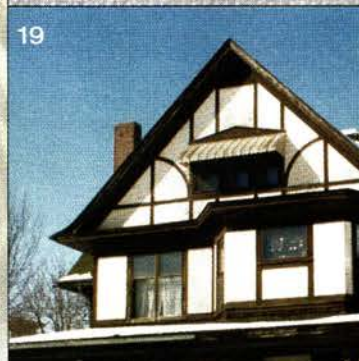


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Old-House Journal Online

OHJ's readers are always looking for *something*. Something big—like that next old place. Or something small—like the right Arts & Crafts light fixture for a restored dining room. The next time you're in the market, visit the "Swaps & Sales" section, where you'll find a comprehensive collection of stuff, from the largest old houses to the tiniest ceramic tiles.

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At a family gathering last year, I asked one of my nieces what she thought of our old house. Just turning five years of age, she was visiting our work-in-progress 1890s Queen Anne for the first time but that didn't stop her from offering a prompt and mordant opinion. "Well," she pronounced with the conviction of a hanging judge, "you should take the floor off the ceiling!" I agreed we probably should.

What she was referring to with the perception of a preschooler was the grid of acoustic tiles plastered wall-to-wall across the top of our kitchen. Probably the legacy of a 1950s remodeling, they looked a lot more like flooring than the photo-printed red-brick surface we were walking on—especially from 28" off the ground. In fact, there are a lot of features in our kitchen that seem like they're in the wrong place at best, in the wrong century at worst. That make-believe brickwork, for example, runs right up to the back of an original chimney. The flue is defunct, but the brick is very real and a jarringly different pattern than the floor.

Then there are the kitchen cabinets, also of the Elvis era and built of "knotty pine." This is the grade of lumber marketed half a century ago to evoke 1700s craftsmanship, despite the fact that most colonial carpenters had both the resources and sense to build interior finishes with clear pine, purposely free of knots and their stains. The cabinet handles and hinges are all black mock-forged hardware, the kind peppered with impossibly small hammer marks. (They remind me of those canned stews full of miniature burgers cooked on what must be Lilliputian grills.) Though an anachronism, the stainless steel of the sink and counter is genuinely hammered with the dings and scratches of decades of food preparation. Just in case the Early American motif doesn't come through loud and clear, all these materials swim in a wall-paper backdrop of spinning wheels, coffee jars, and spice boxes that repeat the hues of brick and pine with all the subtlety of a fire engine.

We bought our Queen Anne as soon as we spied it, and we suspect everyone earlier had passed it up because they eventually saw The Kitchen. In a market where words like "updated" and "turn-key" are what sell, this maelstrom of kitchen kitsch was no doubt simply "dated" and "turn-off." Too busy since then to focus on what might be better, we've mentioned to one restoration contractor friend that the kitchen may go someday. "Don't chuck the cabinets!" came the instant reply, "I know folks with a ranch house who need them!" Do tell? "Sounds awesome," reported a historical architect in Manhattan. "They get big bucks for 1950s here!" Hmmm. Maybe an 1890s house full of eclectic furniture (and hitched to a 1918 addition) can also embrace a Baloneyial Revival kitchen. Maybe the floor stays on the ceiling after all.

Gordon Bock

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Greek Gothics

Nice job, as usual, on your May/June issue. I noticed something a little off kilter, though, in one of the photo captions in "Preservation Perspectives." It states that the house in the photograph "was later 'Gothicized' in the fashion of the day..." Actually, unless I'm a mile off the mark, the house was built that way.

The Greek Revival and the Gothic Revival were almost exact contemporaries, and it is by no means uncommon to find



Gothic elements, such as pointed windows and curved window tracery, in otherwise Greek Revival houses. In fact, Bryant Tolles' *New Hampshire Architecture: An Illustrated Guide* (1979) specifically mentions this particular house as one of several originally constructed in a combination of these styles. Other examples can be found all over northern New England; I can think of two in my hometown of Winchester, Massachusetts. This Greco-Gothic mix is even more common on small, mostly rural New England churches.

Interestingly, the house does appear to have been altered, but probably not until the end of the 19th century or early in the 20th. The dormer that interrupts the cornice to the left of the porch is a relatively common form from that period and differs stylistically enough from the rest of the house that I think the probabilities favor its being a later change.

Houses like this point out the profound wisdom of the article's author J. Randall Cotton in advising "Be conservative" and "Resist the urge to 'early up.'" Allen C. Hill
Woburn, Massachusetts

Double Trouble

I'm responding to the March/April letter from Jean SmilingCoyote of Chicago in regard to the different regional names for single-base, two-unit houses.

Here in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area of northeast Pennsylvania, true natives and real estate agents call doubles/duplexes double-block houses. This term is confusing to others who use the term block to indicate a street division in larger cities.

In central and western New Jersey and the Philadelphia area, we called identical-twin buildings double houses and remuddled older mansion-sized buildings duplexes or triplexes.

The term "flat" has been so rarely used in the United States that, not until the British mysteries and sitcoms began airing on public television did anyone use that term for a separate apartment in a bigger building. Also, from the 1950s to the 1980s I never heard anyone in that west New Jersey/Philly area use the term twin. It's now crept in, although still uncommon.

Give us all the regional terms you can! They would be especially useful to people who are relocating.

Marcia Walls
Nanticoke, Pennsylvania

If Walls Could Walk

I've taken OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL ever since it started and love the magazine in any form. You've written in the past about things people have found in their walls, so I thought you might be interested in this picture. It shows parts of three shoes I found in a space under the eaves of our 1837 pioneer cabin.

My great-great-grandmother's brother built this house and it has always belonged in the same farm family. I've lived in it for 41 years; I'm 90 years old. Around 1850-60 it had a full two-storey addition. I tore off an old kitchen that wasn't an integral part of that "newer" structure and built

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one with what I think is a more authentic-style timber frame.

Owners of a nearby house that is being reconstructed found a zinc lady about 12" high in their wall. We believe she may have been the post of an oil lamp.

Thais H. Heinzerling
Garrett, Indiana

An old superstition held that hiding shoes in a house as it was being built would ward off evil. They are most likely to be found near

openings, such as windows, doors, and chimneys. In some instances, each member of the family contributed a piece of footwear. According to the Historical Society of Wayland, Massachusetts, which records three instances of such concealed shoes in its town, one theory holds that the tradition dates to a prehistoric custom of placing a sac-

rificed human being in a building's foundation as assurance that it would hold together. Shoes are thought to have gotten the nod as stand-ins because a well-worn shoe retains the shape of the owner's foot and thus, his or her spirit. The Northampton Museum in England has an international index of what it calls concealment shoes. Some of the shoes date back to the 14th century.

Gold in Them Thar Pages

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Your magazine has been my saving grace while restoring my 1908 two-flat, and I'm always glad I hang on to my back issues. The article on vintage finishes ("Finish Revivers," May/June 2001) was exactly what I needed. I had estimates of \$3,000 to \$6,000 to remove the old finish from my oak woodwork. After reading your article and experimenting with different solvents I discovered that the old shellac came off easily with a sponge or kitchen scrubbing pad and denatured alcohol. It's actually rewarding to see the old alligatorated finish come back to life. The money I'm saving is going towards the down payment on another building. (When will I ever learn?)
Ken Janssen
Chicago, Illinois

Duplicate Ornament

What a surprise to open the March/April OHJ and see on page 23 a drawing show-



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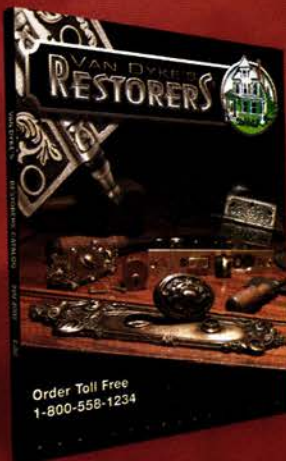
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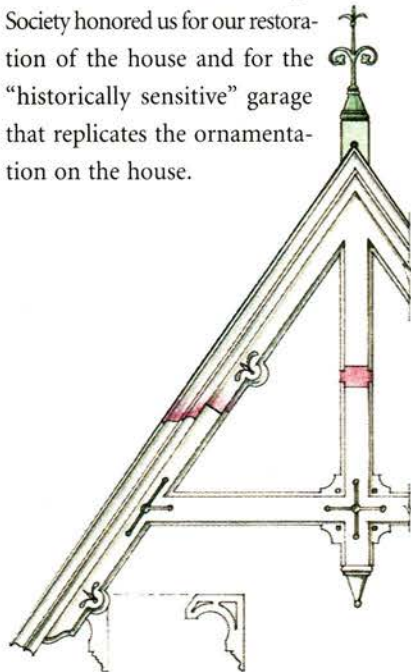
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ing Victorian ornaments that clearly resemble those on my house! The decorative features are almost identical, but our finials are different and made of wood.

Our house, the Howell House, was built in 1872, and I have owned it since 1976. It is situated on the Setauket Mill Pond in the Setauket Historic District in the Three Village area of Long Island, New York. The house has been featured or highlighted in numerous local publications. The *Three Village Guidebook* notes: “Jesse Smith Howell, a sea captain, has his monogram placed on the arched floral glass panel on the front door of this Victorian home. There are seven arches between the columns on the front porch and a tombstone window in the gable peak in front of which is an ornate crossed wooden pendant and Gothic finials on the roof.”

About 10 years ago the house was part

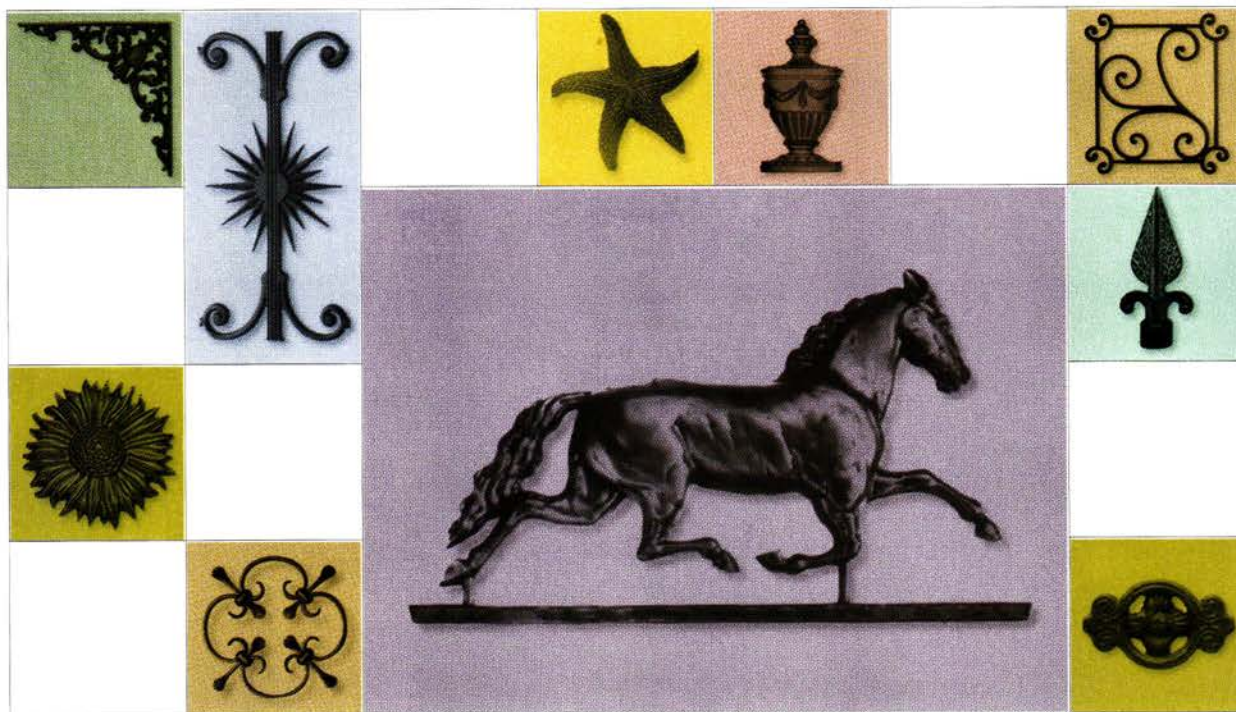
of our local Holiday Candlelight Tour, and a picture of it hangs in our post office. Last month, the Three Village Historical Society honored us for our restoration of the house and for the “historically sensitive” garage that replicates the ornamentation on the house.



The house has been a treasure to own and a pleasure to live in. It is solid, comfortable, and constructed both inside and out with attention to detail. Our living room and foyer are decorated with paintings, drawings, watercolors, and photographs that have been taken of the house over the years. I hope it doesn't sound too boastful to say it is one of the most photographed and well known homes in our area. Just last night we returned home to find two photographs in our mailbox taken last summer by two local residents who walk by the house frequently and wished to share them with us. We have never met these kind people.

I hope you enjoy hearing about a house that replicates the drawing you featured.

Julie Robinson Parmegiani
Setauket, New York



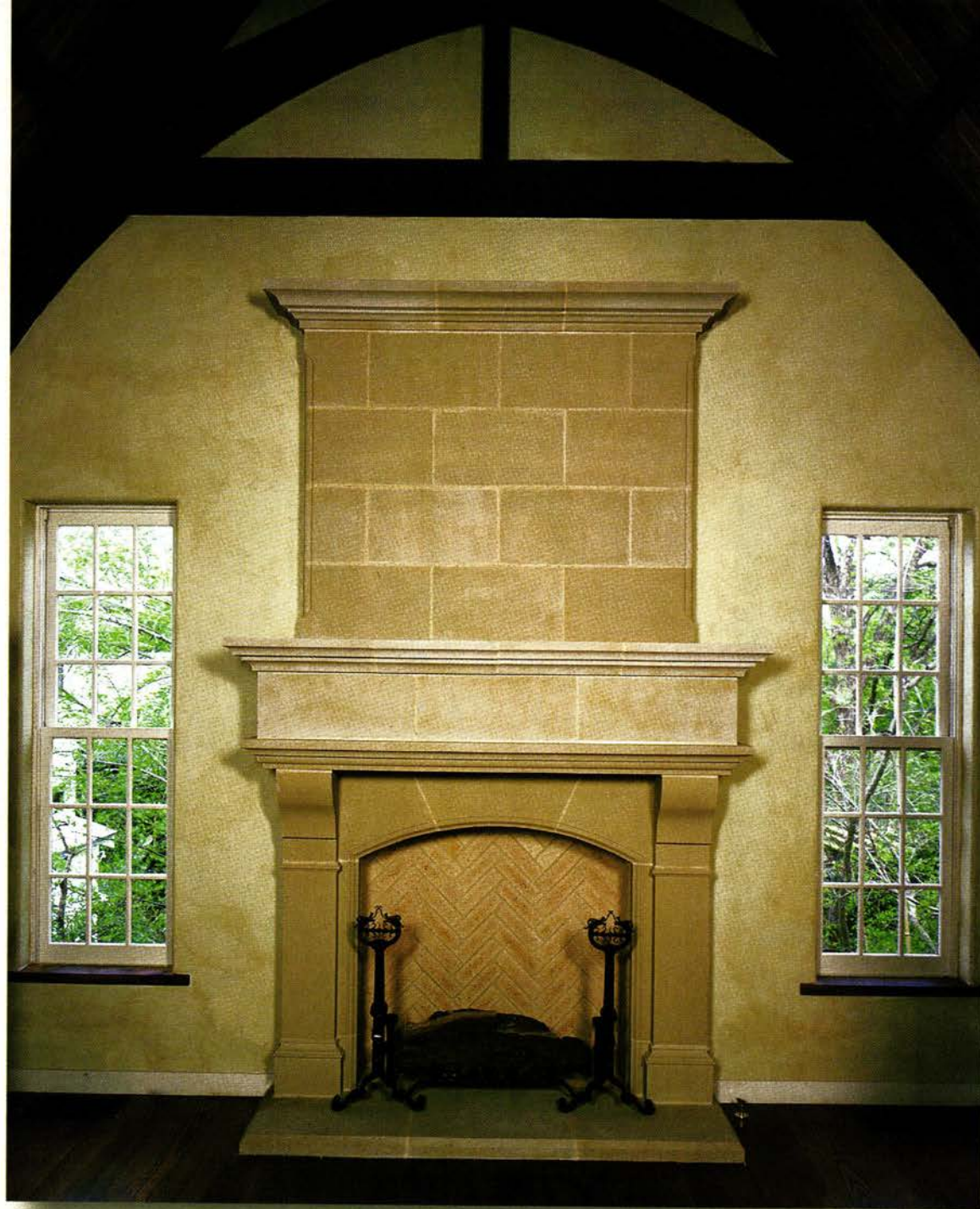
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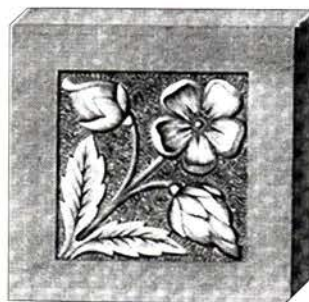
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Through October 6
An American Vision: Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum
Winterthur, a country estate in Delaware's picturesque Brandywine Valley, is known for its museum, garden, and library. Open to the public since 1951, it displays Henry Francis du Pont's (1880-1969) magnificent collection of American decorative arts. In celebration of Winterthur's 50th anniversary, 300 masterpieces from Winterthur's collection of 85,000 objects, including furniture, textiles, paintings, prints and drawings, ceramics, glass, and metalwork, all made or used in America between 1640 and 1860, are on view at the National Gallery of Art. For more information visit www.nga.gov.

New Ipswich, N.H.
Through October 15th
Lost Gardens of New England
Visit the Barrett House for a traveling exhibition of town, country, and suburban garden images from 1790 to 1930, based on material in the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities library and archives. Admission is free. For more information call (603) 878-2517 or visit www.spnea.org.

Concord, Mass.
August 24
"Welcome to Our Home" A Living History Tour
The 1700 Orchard House, believed to be the setting for Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, was home to the Alcott family from 1858 to 1877 and remains largely unchanged. Costumed staff portray members of the

Hull of a Catalog

In the course of collecting more than 70 vintage millwork catalogs for a book he's writing (*Historic Millwork 1870-1940*, to be published by John Wiley & Sons), Brent Hull realized how many of these handsome, even sinuous moulding designs, once available to anyone who could pay the freight, had been lost in the intervening decades. Modern mouldings, says Brent, are thinner than the originals, so they offer less interplay of light and shadow.



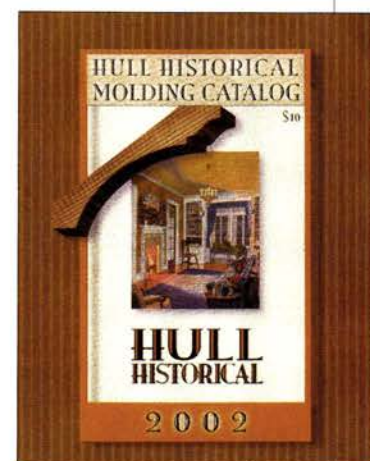
A Victorian corner block.

Brent and his team at Hull Historical Millwork in Fort Worth, Texas, picked about 500 of what they consider the best designs, reproduced the original drawings, and now offer

them in an 80-page catalog. The mouldings are organized by date of their first appearance in the trade, along with notes about style and use. In addition to crown, base, and panel mouldings there are casings for doors and windows, dozens of rosettes and ornate corner blocks, and moulding packages in Victorian, turn-of-the-century, Arts & Crafts, and period revival styles.

"We've had an incredible response," says Brent. "People seem really excited about it." He estimates that 40 percent of purchasers are homeowners, the rest architects and contractors. "Some of them are definitely buying it for educational purposes, so they can walk through a house and identify the moulding and see how old it is. There is no doubt it's a great resource. In fact, we have to educate people that it's not just a reference, but that we sell this stuff!"

Those old catalogs assigned numbers to each moulding design for ease of ordering, as



does Hull Historical. For old-house restorers lucky enough to match a desired moulding to one of Hull's numbered designs, the catalog eliminates mailing Hull a piece of moulding to be copied. In other cases the catalog will be a starting point for a somewhat altered design. "We're getting orders from all over the country," says Brent. "A company like ours is really a find for people who don't have anyone they can go to locally."

Catalogs sell for \$10. Call (800) 990-1495 or visit www.hullhistorical.com.

Cleveland Bargain

Mark your calendar for a preservation "two-fer" in Cleveland. Full registrants to the Restoration & Renovation Exhibition and Conference October 10 to 12 will receive complimentary registration to all sessions of the Annual Preservation Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation October 8 to 13. National Trust delegates can also visit the Restoration & Renovation seminars at no additional charge. Coreregistrants can learn about the latest products, services, and restoration methods at the Restoration & Renovation event, being held at the Cleveland Convention Center. The National Trust conference, with presentations on the political, legal, and financial aspects of effective preservation programs, will be headquartered in the nearby Renaissance Cleveland Hotel. For more information visit restorationandrenovation.com.

Steve Long of Protective Coatings demonstrates epoxy use at the Boston R & R show last March.



Calendar

Alcott family or notable neighbors. Adult admission is \$10; senior citizens and college students are \$9; children (6–17 years old) are \$7. “Friends of the Alcotts” are half price. Reservations and prepayment suggested. For more information call (978) 369-5617.

Woodstock, Conn.

July 14

Upstairs/Downstairs: The Victorian Household from Attic to Basement

Behind the scenes tour of the public spaces of the Bowen House, the 1846 Gothic Revival summer home of Henry C. Bowen. Illustrated overview of the Bowen family and community. Informational packets include lists of servants’ duties, house plans, heating system, chronology of inventions and innovations along with a bibliography. Admission is \$12 for SPNEA members and \$15 for nonmembers. Prepaid reservations are requested. For more information call (860) 928-4074 or visit www.spnea.org.

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Judging by the letters and e-mails OHJ receives, Betsy J. Green’s *Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood* (Santa Monica Press, 2002) could be a runaway best-seller. Old-house owners want to know the age of their house, what it looked like

originally, and the name of the ghost haunting the third-floor bedroom. Green compares house-sleuthing to genealogical research—you will have to comb through dusty library stacks, badger the volunteers at the local historical society, and get seasick whizzing through microfilm.

Green begins by explaining that all her tips aren’t for everyone. Some are just for urban houses, others only for houses of a certain vintage. Some of the nitty-grittiest information: The lingo used in deeds; buying pencils, paper,

and containers that will keep artifacts and records from being damaged; and how to read surveyor records that describe properties as “...north 15 degrees east 13 chains.” City residents will benefit from the tips about

Sanborn fire insurance maps and rural folks from land ownership maps and “non-population census schedules.” Green also includes addresses for regional branches of the National Archives, state historical preservation offices, regional depository libraries, state libraries, and state vital records offices.

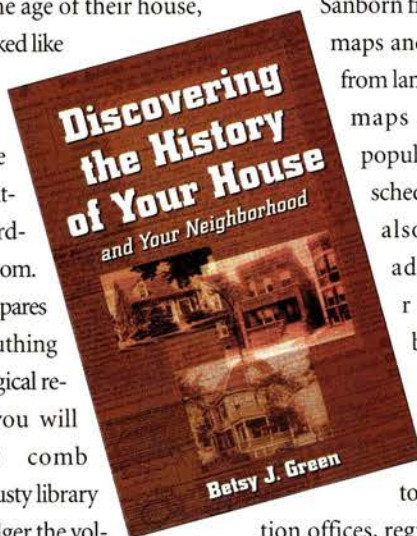
The text is interspersed with anecdotes about some of her memorable house detecting capers and black-and-white snapshots (don’t bother to record your own in other formats, she says, since color fades, tape degrades, and technology changes) of the sort we all hope to find

Books in Brief

in documenting our own old houses.

For an in-depth look at one house discovery and renovation project there’s *A Small Yellow House*, a small (84-page) paperback by Helen McCann White (Beavers Pond Press, 2001). White lived in 28 houses in four countries with her husband, a U.S. Forest Service employee, before founding *The Dalles Visitor*, a historical newspaper for tourists in an area on the Minnesota/Wisconsin state line.

The 1857 house she rescued as a combined office-home is noteworthy in its modesty, on one hand, and the wealth of information she was able to unearth about it on the other. Walls contained such artifacts as a Civil War songbook, dolls and playing cards, and sewing paraphernalia. The local historical society, newspapers, court and cemetery records, military and pension files shed light on previous owners. If anything the material on former owners may be too extensive, but it bears out the value of legwork as extolled by Betsy Green.



Cost-Effective Windows Course

If learning to restore windows is on your to-do list, look into the new program at the Pine Mountain School for Practical Historic Preservation. “Cost-effective Wood and Steel Window Restoration,” offered September 15 to 26, is an intensive course with particular emphasis on the business side of the process. Located in the Appalachian Mountain town of Pine Mountain, Kentucky, the program is based at the Pine Mountain Settlement School, a complex of structures built in the 1910s and ’20s, now a national historic property.

The lineup of instructors includes Bob Yapp, longtime historic building contractor, author, and PBS TV host, who will cover the wood window segment. John Seekircher of Seekircher Steel Window Repair, a specialist in steel windows (“Repairing Wright,” May/June 2002 OHJ), will lead the other half of the course. Enrollment is limited to 20 students, who will learn through hands-on repair of windows throughout the site. “Our motto,” says Yapp, “is ‘Learn to make your wood and steel windows energy efficient and completely functional for less money than replacements.’” For more information, contact the school at (606) 558-3571 or visit pinemountainsettlementschool.com.



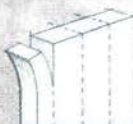
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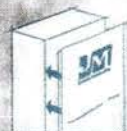
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Baby It's Bolts Outside

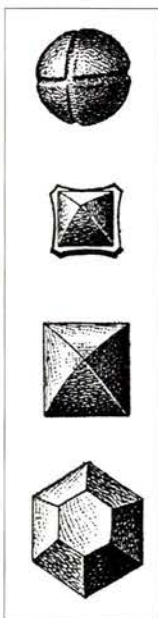
I'm looking for decorative bolts to hold strap hinges on a 1920s, thick oak entrance door. The heads are pyramid shaped, 5/8" square with a distressed finish—any leads?

Don Burns

Birmingham, Alabama

Your door sounds like one of the mock medieval board-and-batten types popular from 1910 to the 1940s for all manner of English-revival and Tudoresque houses, as well as many Art & Crafts houses built in the same vein. Such doors would swing on large, black, hammered-finish hinges meant to emulate hand-forged hardware. The best of them were attached with ornamental, preindustrial-looking fasteners that completed the conceit.

Nails and bolts with large heads were basically unnecessary on even large doors by the early 20th century, but they remained popular embellishments available in many stock designs, metals, and finishes (see above). In fact, some of these fasteners are technically studs: little more than an ornamental head attached to a projecting spur that grabs the wood. The pyramidal head bolt you describe is a favorite motif becoming more widely available again with the growth in reproduction hardware. Check the OHJ's *Restoration Directory* for suppliers, such as Craftsmen Hardware Company (P.O. Box 161, Marcelline, MO 64658; 660-376-2481; www.craftsmenhardware.com).



An Angle on Outbuildings

We have a former smokehouse, about 12' by 12', that we're using as a storage shed for tools and bikes. It desperately needs residing but has developed a pronounced lean that we will need to correct before we do so. How do we get it upright again?

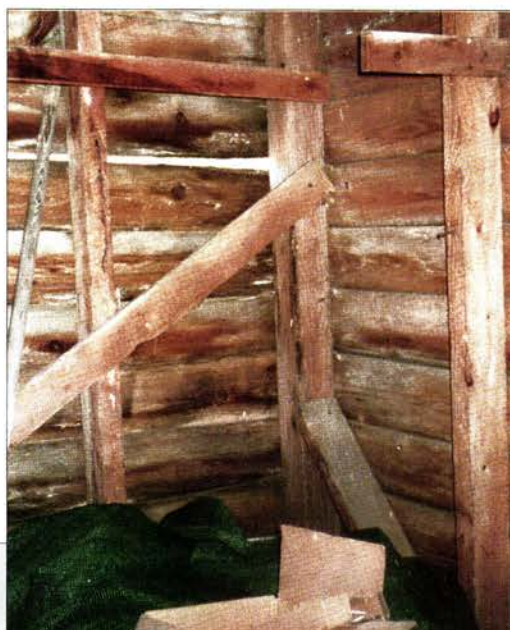
Kerry Hart

Reedville, Virginia

First, check the original construction. Measure the studs on the two side walls from the roof plate to the sill to make sure they're still the same length. Also make sure the foundation stones haven't slipped and that your sills haven't rotted (in which case you will have to replace them with pressure-treated timbers).

Older outbuildings were often simply clad with clapboards, with no plywood sheathing to help prevent racking, or distortion of the frame. Adequate bracing will also prevent racking. OHJ contributing editor Steve Jordan, who wrote about analyzing and correcting structural problems in our April 2002 issue, notes that three of your corners show 2x4 braces between studs, with a flimsier substitute in the fourth corner. This could be part of the reason your shed has gone out of square.

First try pulling the shed back into square with a come-along winch, fastening one end of the winch to the corner support near the roof line and the other to the opposite support post at the sill. If this fails you may need to rent screw jacks to lift the wall toward which the shed is leaning. Then before you put on new clapboards, add some plywood sheathing or well attached braces that go from sill to roof.



This old outbuilding has two heavy diagonal braces in each corner except this one (left), which is the rear left corner in the photo above. Once the shed is winched back into square, it needs to have heavy floor-to-ceiling diagonal braces or plywood sheathing before the deteriorated clapboards are replaced.

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Ask OHJ

Pipes a' Piping

We love our Victorian-era house except for the plumbing. The pipes set up a hair-raising screech for a full minute every time we use a sink or toilet. This has been going on for at least a year.

Ingrid Ellis
St. Joseph, Missouri

Plumbing sounds—which can also include the banging called water hammer—can make you wonder if your house is haunted. When pipes are whistling or squealing your first suspicion should be that a valve has a loose or worn stem or washer, so that it vibrates when water flows past it. Try following the problem to its source. Next time the wailing begins, try shutting off the water supply to the most likely valve; completely closing or opening the valve should also make the racket stop. (Try this with your toilet's fill valve, for instance.) If this works, replace the washer or the valve.

Since you mention both sinks and toilets, it sounds as though more than one valve could be involved. If inspection indicates that they are in good shape, your problem may be that your water pressure needs adjusting. If it is too high, you may be able to solve this by partially closing shutoff valves in your supply lines.

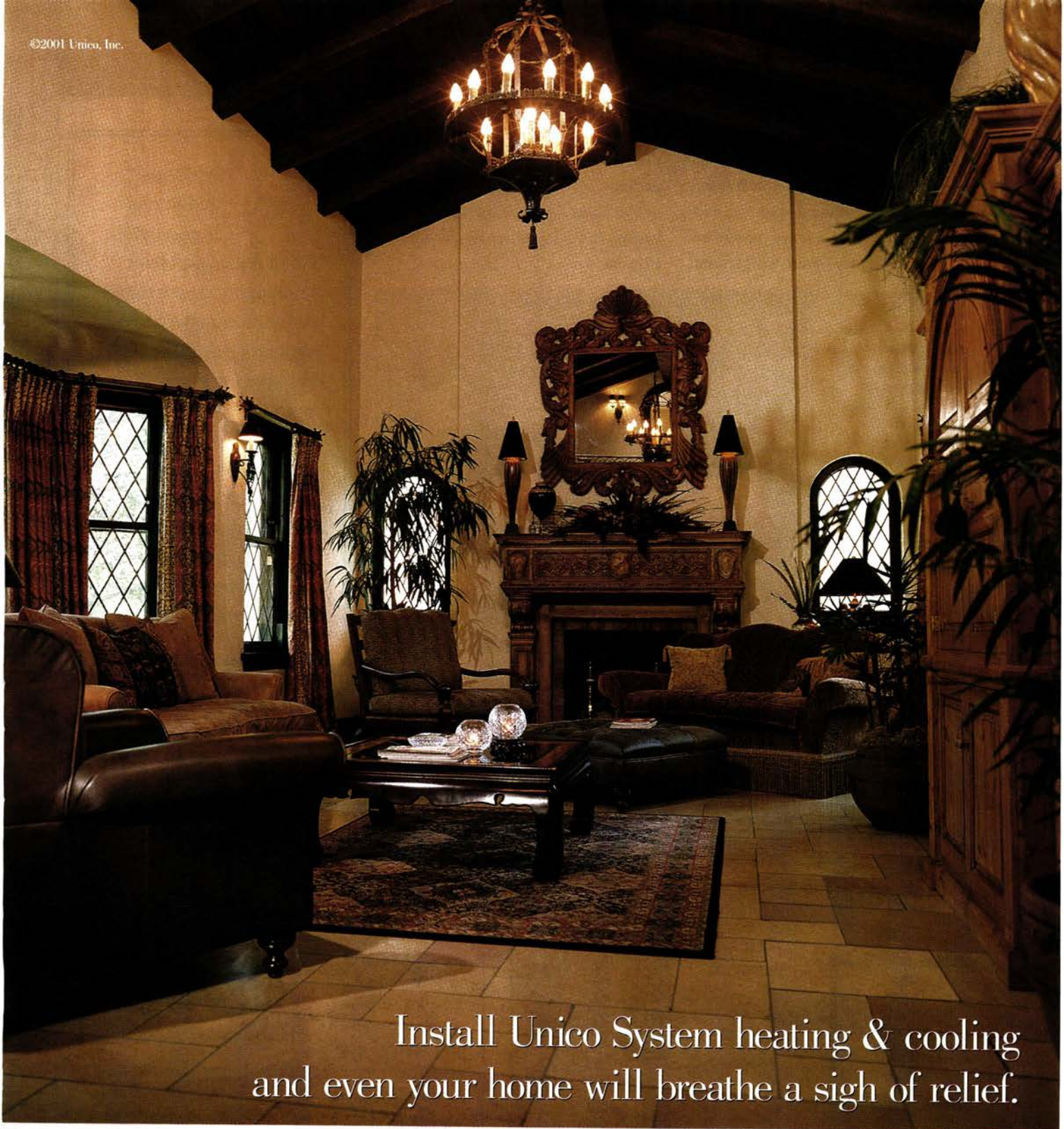
Many houses have pressure-reducing valves for their entire plumbing system, which would be a more expensive way to solve your problem if you don't already have one. These devices, which adjust with a set screw, can reduce the flow of water to upper storeys, however. If the pressure is set too low, that can also cause squealing in the pipes through cavitation, which introduces air into the system as the water is forced through a smaller diameter opening.

Too Tudor?

We are moving into this house built in the 1880s. Would it be appropriate to paint it in colors other than this Tudor-Re-vival brown and cream color scheme? We want to be historically correct but would prefer something different.

Megan Hinze
Janesville, Wisconsin

Although 20th-century half-timbering always yells "Tudor," the first wave of Queen Anne houses in this country were inspired by English medieval buildings and often incorporated decorative half-timbering in the gables.



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nant colors during the 1880s, they were used in multiple combinations, with perhaps two or three colors on the body of the house, another for the half-timbering, and yet another for the window trim. 🏠

Early Queen Anne houses often included medieval details such as half-timbering that were picked up later in 20th-century Tudors. For tips on paint colors for pre-1900 house styles look for *Victorian Exterior*

Decoration: How to Paint Your Nineteenth-Century American House Historically by Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler.



Wondering about your house style?

Got a repair problem? Looking for a source for restoration materials? Write to: Ask OHJ, 1000 Potomac Street, NW, suite 102, Washington, DC 20007. Including photographs that you don't need returned may help explain your problem. We regret that we can't respond personally to all letters.



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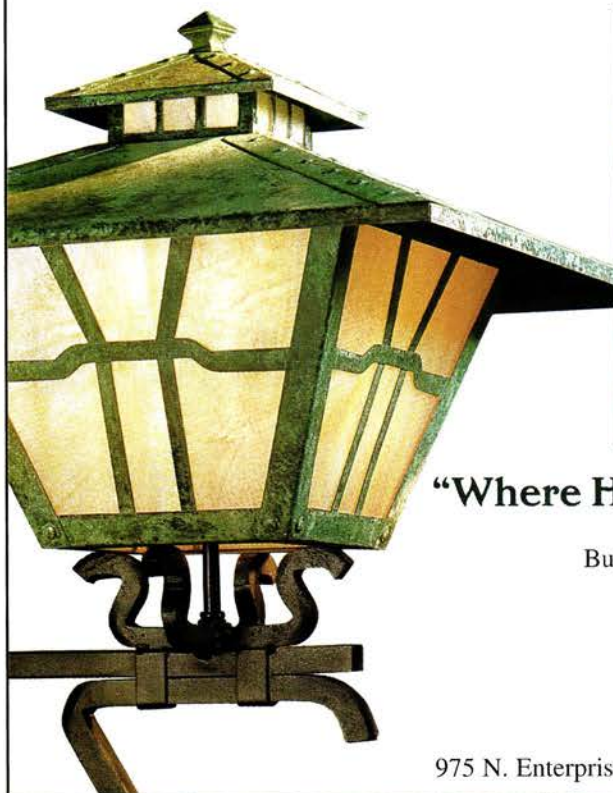


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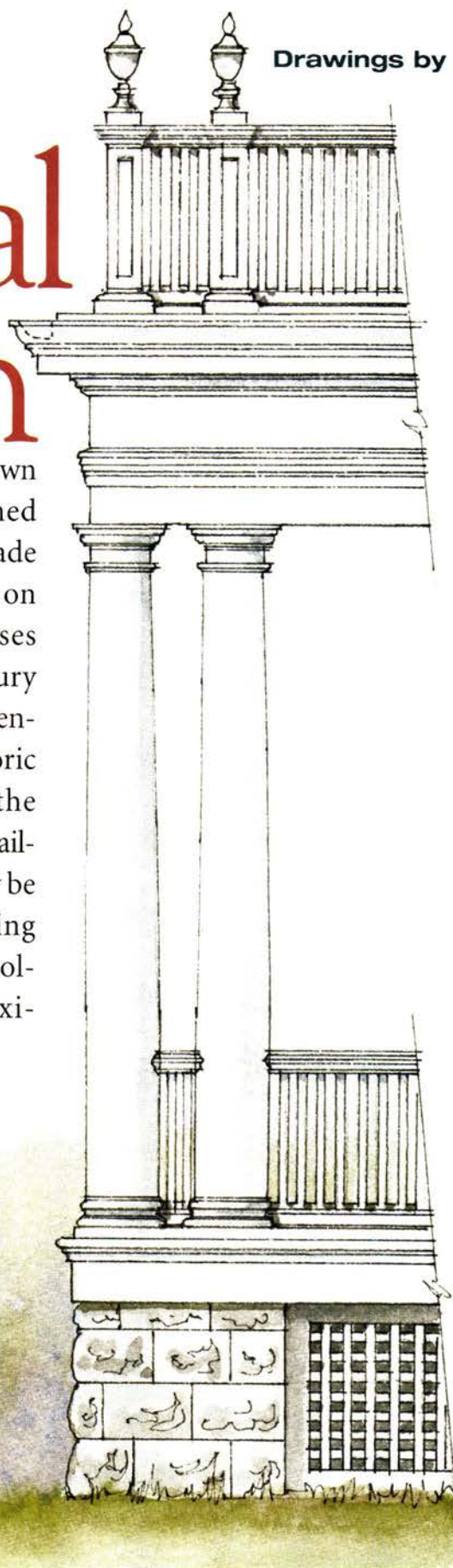
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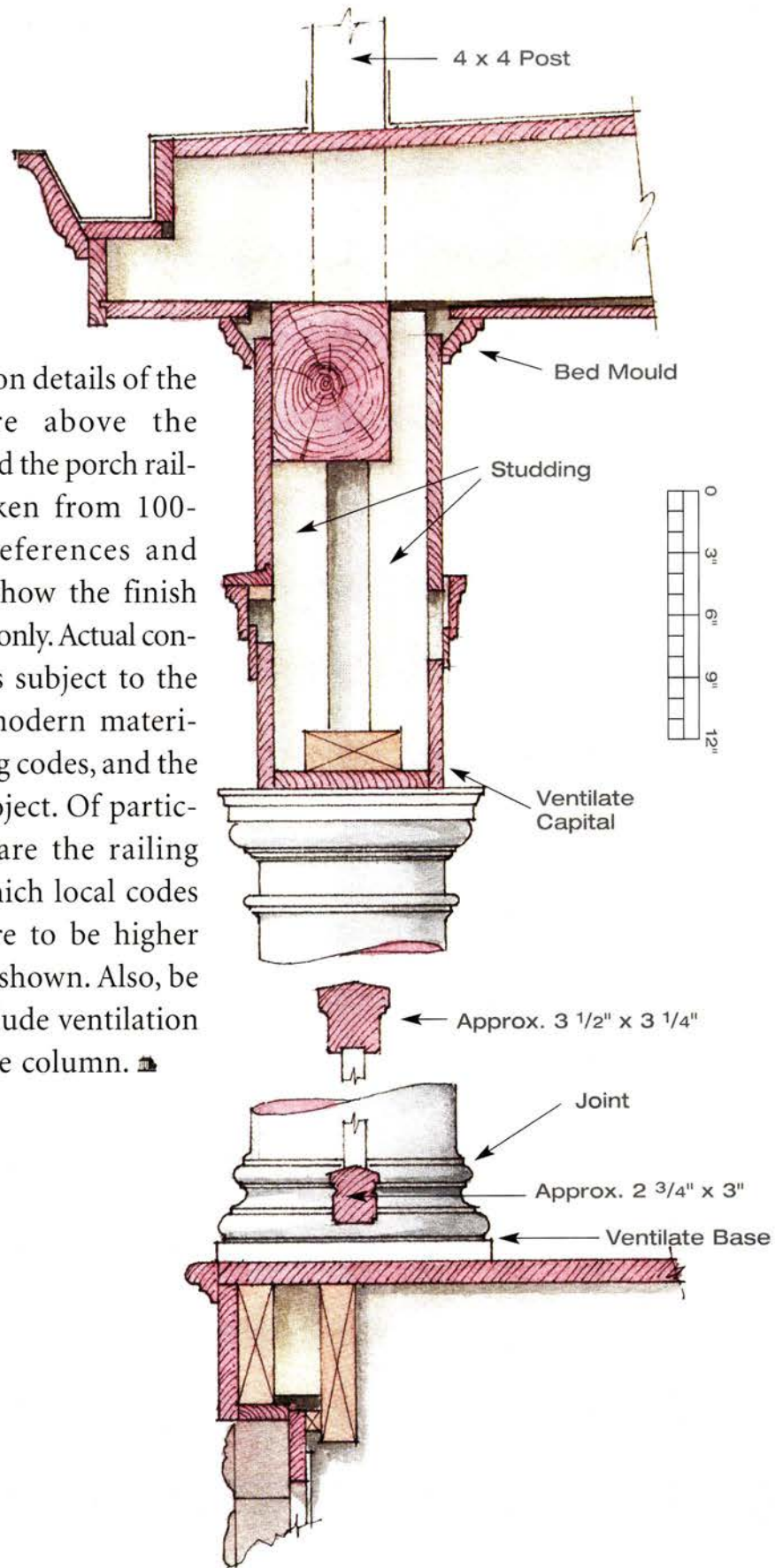
Drawings by Rob Leanna

Classical Porch

The decorative details shown here are for an attached porch with roof balustrade typical of the kind seen on Colonial Revival houses from the late 19th century well into the early 20th century. Note the double Doric columns—typical of the 1890s—and the straight railing design. Features may be scaled from the drawing using a base-to-capital column height of approximately 9 1/2'.



These section details of the entablature above the columns and the porch railing are taken from 100-year-old references and meant to show the finish appearance only. Actual construction is subject to the needs of modern materials, building codes, and the specific project. Of particular note are the railing heights, which local codes may require to be higher than those shown. Also, be sure to include ventilation paths in the column. 🏠



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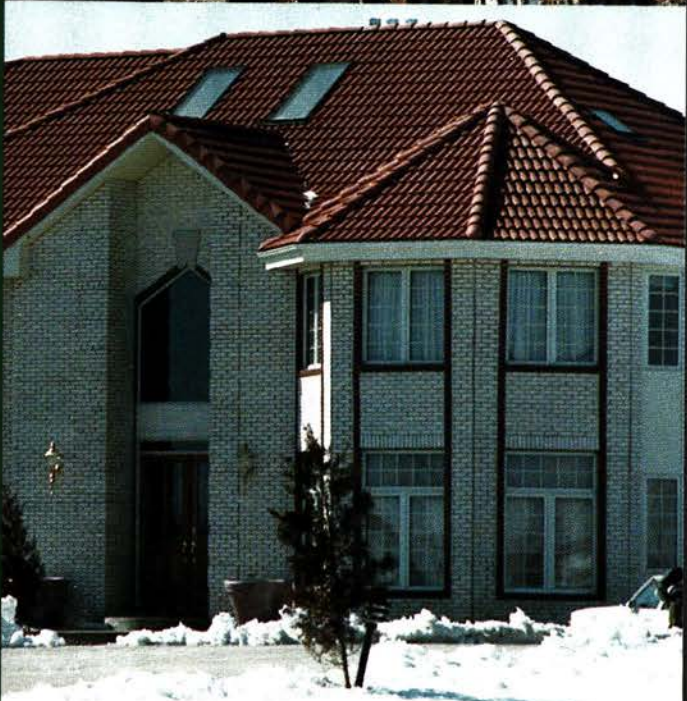
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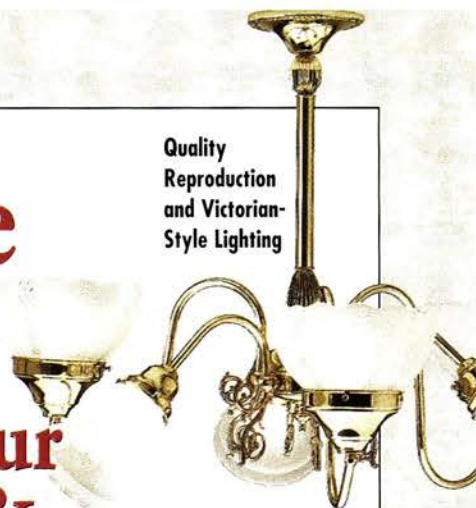




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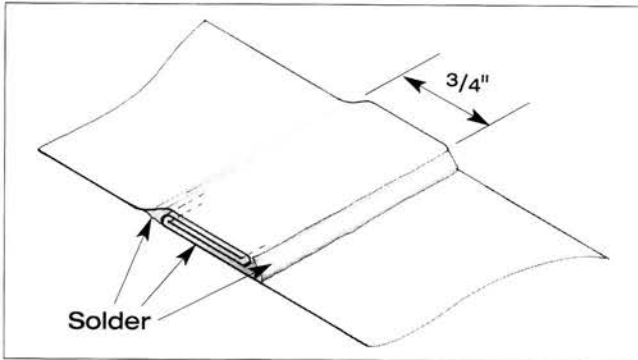


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Soldering That Stands

By JEFFREY S. LEVINE **O**ne of the most critical steps in installing many types of sheet metal roofing and flashing is soldering seams. Nevertheless, you can find many contract specifications that call for nothing more than that "all seams shall be thoroughly soldered to produce watertight joints." The watertight integrity of, say, a flat-seam roof depends upon the complete and proper soldering of each and every seam. Unfortunately, without destructive testing it can be very difficult to determine if a seam is watertight once it is complete. To help contractors produce seams that



Above: In a properly soldered locked-and-soldered seam, the solder is sweated through all layers of metal and is visible at the back end of the seam. The exposed portion of the seam is nicely "stitched" together with solder.

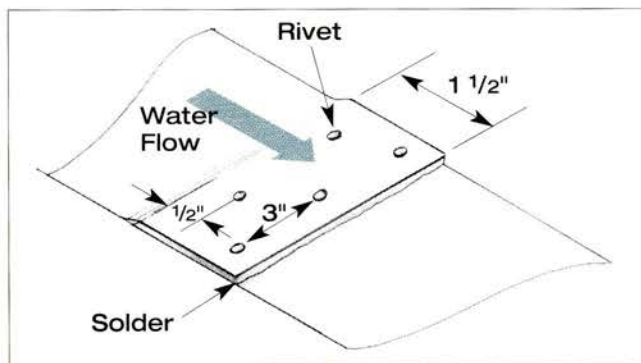
will remain watertight for the full serviceable life of the roof, here are some of the practices and specifications we use both in project documents and on the job.

Preparation Before joining metals, prepare areas to be soldered by cleaning with flux down to bright metal. When soldering lead-coated copper, first mechanically clean seams to a bright finish. In both cases, clean the metal beyond the actual joint dimension. Brush liberal amounts of flux into the seam just prior to soldering. Then thoroughly wash the flux off the metal after soldering is complete.

Materials Solder for copper and traditional terne should be 50 percent block tin,



Right: This contractors' sample shows a well soldered locked-and-soldered seam. Note how the surface of the seam is nicely "stitched" and the solder is fully sweated through all layers of metal.



Above: Proper soldering is critical in a lapped, riveted, and soldered seam because rivets provide only a mechanical connection. Solder rivet heads to make them watertight and lap the seam in the direction of water flow—that is, so water flows over, not into, the seam.

Pretinning The edges of copper sheets should be tinned with solder on both sides prior to soldering. Pretinning helps ensure fully sweated, stronger seams. Note, however, that pretinning is not required when soldering lead-coated copper.

Soldering Making proper solder joints in the field is a technique that takes considerable skill and practice. The goal is to liquefy the solder so that it flows completely through all layers of metal, the full width of the seam. This process requires working slowly with well-heated, heavy irons so that all layers of metal within the seam are thoroughly heated to above the melting point of the solder (414 degrees for 50-50 solder). For the metal to heat properly and the solder to flow, the heated iron must be placed on top of the prepared seam, not on the bar of solder. “Cold joints,” where the solder melts but never truly flows through the metal, will fail.

Wherever possible, solder joints in a flat, horizontal position. Seams on slopes greater than 45 degrees should be soldered a second time to help ensure that the solder has flowed fully. In some situations, it is also necessary to first spot puddle the solder, then fill in between the puddles. This helps distribute the heat over a larger area.

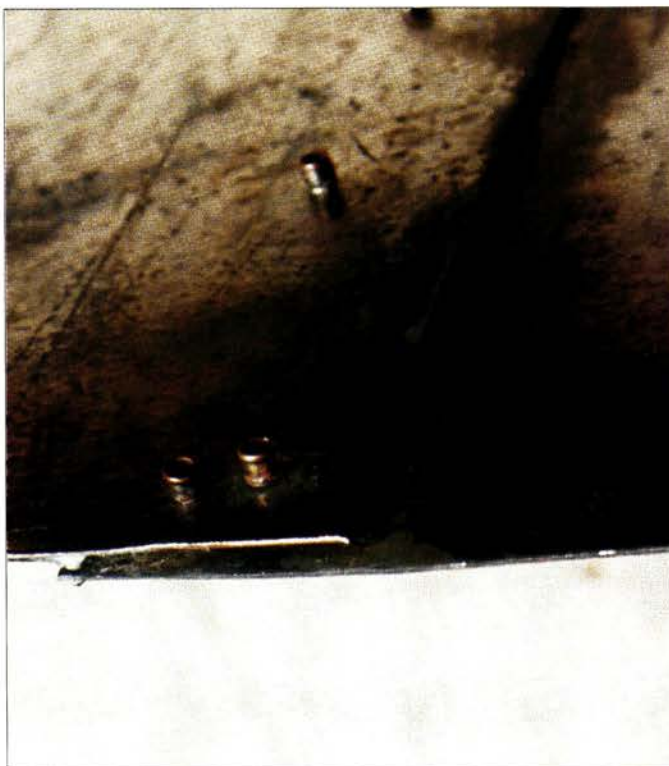
Timing Solder all joints the day they are formed on the roof to prevent dirt, water, and moisture from entering the joint. If a joint cannot be soldered the same day it is formed, it should be covered to prevent contamination.

Samples If you are hiring contractors, at the very least have your project documents require sample submittals of each type of metal joint needed for the project—for example, locked and soldered, or lapped, riveted, and soldered. Then the contractor should submit sample seams by each of his roofing craftspeople so the samples can be cut in half to verify that they are fully soldered. Roofers whose seams do not pass inspection should not be permitted to work on the project. 🏠

Jeffrey S. Levine is a principal at 1:1:6 Technologies (103 N. Jackson Street, Media, PA 19063; 610-658-0200).

50 percent pig lead (labeled 50-50), complying with standard ASTM B32. For lead-coated copper, use 60 percent block tin, 40 percent pig lead (60-40). For Terne II and TCSII, Follansbee Steel’s new zinc/tin alloys, use pure tin solder. For flux, use a commercial brand approved for copper and lead-coated copper, or muriatic acid neutralized with zinc. Use rosin flux for terne, Terne II, and TCSII.

Below: This sample of lapped, riveted, and soldered seam has been poorly soldered. Note how the solder is merely surface applied and not flowing or bonding to the metal. Seams such as this will fail within months after installation on a roof.





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Pining Away Over the centuries and in different cultures the pine cone has been a symbol for everything from eternal life to royalty, confidence, and possibly fertility. One theory even holds that it was the pine cone and not the pineapple that served as a sign of hospitality on so many Colonial gatepost finials. Arts & Crafts design philosophy includes a reverence for nature, so it's fitting that Meyda Tiffany chose a pine cone and pine needle filagree to decorate the art glass shade on this mission lamp. Part of the company's new Craftsman Signature Series of lanterns, it has a solid brass double column base, stands 20" tall, and sells for a suggested retail price of \$390. Other lamps in the series have copper frames. For more information on this series or other historically inspired Meyda Tiffany lamps and fixtures, call (800) 222-4009.

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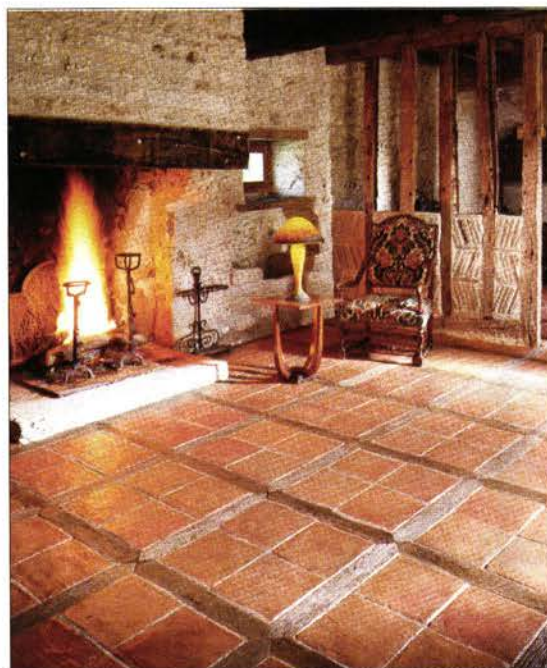
For Wild and Crazy Knights

In the early 19th-century, English architects such as Augustus Welby Pugin and William Burges pioneered the revival of the Gothic style. Today the British are resurrecting that medieval charm in interior design. The folks at Andy Thornton Ltd. in Elland, West Yorkshire, who maintain an immense catalog of period reproductions and also sell architectural salvage, decided to toast the trend by creating this Gothic home bar. Made of solid mahogany with hand-carved pointed arch appliques and frieze, it measures approximately 8 1/2' tall, 6 1/4' wide, and 6' deep, and retails for \$7,255. Call +44 (0) 1422-376000 or visit www.andythorntonltd.co.uk. Circle 3 on resource card.





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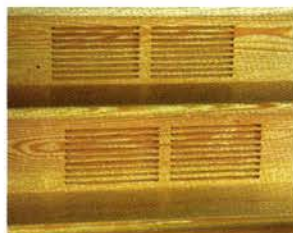
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Benediction

BY BOB KATZ **E**ven before we moved in, I was haunted by our house. I was a relatively young first-time buyer and the 1810 Colonial seemed very, very old. The price we offered was several thousand dollars above our sworn ceiling. The neighborhood, while congenial, was a tad more settled than I was feeling at the time. But none of that spooked me as much as Marianne, the owner. A striking, white-haired, dignified lady in her mid-70s, she had proudly greeted us at the door the day we came to look. To the obvious annoyance of the real estate agent, lurking a few steps back, Marianne was evidently intent on accompanying us every step of the way. "This," Marianne said, ushering us into a high-ceilinged room off the front hallway, "was my husband's office. How he loved working in here!" The commandingly stylish agent tried to assert herself. "It could make a super playroom. For the kids." Her emphasis on this last word was made in obvious hope that Marianne would get the message, which of course was that Marianne's husband was dead, her children were grown, and her once vital role in the unfolding lives of a family was down to a whisper.

Our tour resumed, with Marianne in the lead. She drew our attention to the sunlit living room where, she noted, her daughters had the habit of curling before the fireplace on long winter afternoons. "How long have you lived here?" I asked. "Forty years." I slumped

against the wall, feeling short of breath and claustrophobic. Forty years hence this could be me—or more likely, my wife—and it would all have vanished. Our bounteous future would have drained into the receding past. Our two boys, now just 4 and 5, would be far away, calling on Sundays if we were very lucky.

To escape this onset of sorrow, I asked to see the basement. I'm no Mr. Fix-it, but I'd been briefed that basements were somehow important. We opened the cellar door. There, etched onto the frame, was a column of notches ascending like ladder rungs: Chris, 1968. Alice, 1970. And so on, topping off at about 5'4" in 1982. Oh yes, at the bottom was "dog," measuring a bit over 2 1/2'. Did the girls grow no taller? Or was 1982 the year when each small increment ceased to matter? When, I worried, would that dread year arrive for my family?

The closing was held in the conference room of a small law office. Marianne was seated stiffly, stoically, with her lawyer. The mortgaging bank's attorney was present, as were my wife and I, plus our lawyer. The table was cluttered with piles of docu-

ments. Our attorney, an affable fellow who had three other closings that day, swiftly perused each pile, mumbling an occasional comment to let us know he was on top of everything. Marianne remained somber. Her utter irrelevance to the process appeared to depress her. It was all like some heav-

ily ritualized religious ceremony conducted in an untranslatable tongue. Obediently, we signed each and every dotted line.

The lawyers exchanged paper-clipped copies. Extraneous documents were wedged back into manila folders. Briefcases snapped shut. Done deal. Marianne abruptly stood. "My lawyer," she announced, "said I shouldn't do this." Her lawyer scowled, confirming this fact. "My daughter had the idea to write something. About our lives in the house and all it has meant to us." The attorneys nervously consulted their watches. Time was money and maybe their clocks were running. Mine stood stone still. The paper trembling slightly in her wrinkled hand, Marianne began to read. As a young couple, she and her husband had moved in with their babies. Virtually everything she hoped would happen in this house had come to pass. It was more than a house; it was a place where life occurred. Now it was time for her to move on. Marianne gazed directly at me and my wife. In a voice husky with emotion, she said, "May the new owners enjoy a full and rewarding life." With that, her eyes teared up.

Suddenly, all the procedural trivia of the closing dissipated. This was a benediction, not just a transaction. There's a deeper realm to this construction of lumber and lawn we call property. As when the fog burns away to reveal a vista, I finally saw clearly what was happening. Time would indeed sweep by far too quickly. My wife and I would raise our children and in what might seem like the blink of an eye, we would grow old. But thanks to Marianne, I would not be haunted. It would all be okay. 🐾

Bob Katz is a writer living in Lexington, Massachusetts.



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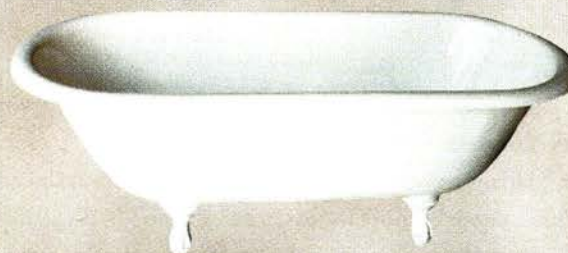
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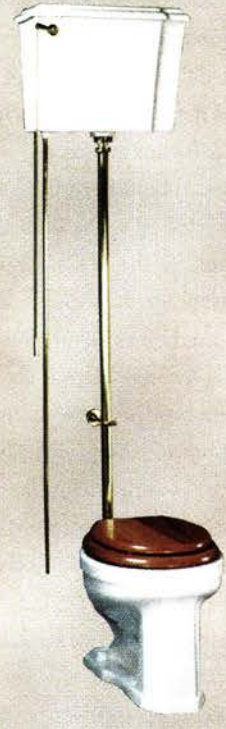
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You Canna Too

With a little pluck, anyone can work these bold Victorian bulbs into the landscape.

BY KATHLEEN FISHER **A**fter decades of being dissed, cannas—like bell-bottom jeans and clogs—are back in style. These flamboyant bulbs, native to the West Indies and the subtropics, served as the exclamation points of many a Victorian bedding scheme, but fell out of favor shortly after 1900 with the shift to more naturalistic landscapes. Now they're "haute" again, although sometimes a challenge to work into the flower border.

Part of that problem may relate to our narrow perception of cannas. Ian Cooke, author of *The Gardeners Guide to Growing Cannas*, calls them "the clowns of the plant world." It's not merely that they tend to bloom in hot colors—ripe tomato red, sunset orange, canary yellow—or that the leaves of many, like those of 'Phaisom' (sometimes called 'Tropicana'), are striped with similar hues. Stereotypical cannas also parade around on stilts. The immensely popular 'Roi Humbert' (often sold as 'Red King Roy') from 1902, for instance, grows to 8' or more, with 2'-long leaves 6" across.

Plants, like people, can fall prey to generalizations. Some cannas are comparatively stumpy at a mere 3' or even half that height (although the shortest are admittedly rare), and quite a number sport flowers that are blushing modest, like 'Oiseau d'Or' from 1918, which is pale yellow with the faintest pink freckles.

Cultivation of cannas dates to the 1600s, but they were bred with the greatest zeal in the last half of the 19th century. Before then they were less clowns than they were Ichabod Cranes—long and lanky with almost negligible blooms. Even the first hybrids reached 10' tall and were grown mainly for their bold, frequently reddish purple foliage. What a difference a few decades made! Gardeners of the 1870s could buy dwarf varieties with flowers in the shapes that collectors still use to categorize them: gladiolus, orchid, and iris.

The English incorporated cannas into beds of subtropicals along with palms and castor bean plants (*Ricinus communis*). Americans accorded them a major launch

'Pretoria'—also known as 'Bengal Tiger'—is relatively new to the United States, having first been imported from India in 1963. Growing on 3' to 4' stems, its variegated foliage is topped by Kool-Aid orange flowers.



'Centenaire de Rozain-Bourcharlat' is the aristocratic title of this deep rose pink canna, believed to date to the 1920s.

SCOTT KUNSTOLD HOUSE GARDENS



Some gardeners like to pair cannas with other tall plants like the ornamental grass at left, whose slim blades make a dramatic contrast with the canna's bananalike leaves. Bright-flowered annuals like salvias and zinnias are also favorite companions.

for his potato and the Freestone peach, also tried his hand at cannas during this time.

Many of these historic varieties were lost forever, and not just because the canna fell out of horticultural fashion; the combination of two world wars and the Depression put an end to much ornamental plant growing and to the vast greenhouses that these tender plants required. Still, they had loyal fans who kept some cultivars alive by digging and storing the bulbs each year and passing them along to neighbors and friends. Scott Kunst, owner of Old House Gardens in Michigan, carries 19 cannas dating to 1920 and older. His favorite is 'Semaphore' (1895), with narrow bronze leaves and golden saffron-orange flowers. A crowd-pleaser among his customers is the 1893 'Florence Vaughn'. He describes the petals as an orange blotch that breaks into spatters at the edges, "like leopard spots;" the leaves are purple bronze.

Landscaping with Cannas

While smaller cannas work into a perennial or mixed border with relative ease, the stature of an 'Omega', rising up to 14' in fertile soil, can make a lone specimen look like a college basketball player trying to blend in among preschoolers. Make room for a team—at least three massed together.

Kunst compares cannas to Victorian architecture, with similarly gaudy colors and bold details that were mocked for decades. If you have a painted lady, it would be appropriate to use a trio of cannas in the center of a pattern bed of annuals—red salvia, geraniums (pelargoniums), coleus—in the middle of the lawn.

But such bedding schemes, like lace doilies and beribboned sun bonnets, aren't for everyone. Without a deft touch, combining cannas with wimpy low growers can make these genial clowns

at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, displayed in a series of beds the length of a football field. A French immigrant, Leon Wintzer, labored for three decades in Pennsylvania to create new varieties and had almost 100 to his credit when he died in 1923, although he never achieved his ultimate goal of a pure white canna flower. Famous breeder Luther Burbank, best known

The soft pink flower heads of the ornamental grass *Pennisetum 'Rubrum'* echo the blossoms of the 'Constitution' canna.



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look like bullies. Let's say you have a brawny bungalow in Southern California. You might want to plant cannas with other big bruiser subtropicals such as elephant ear (*Colocasia esculenta*). Strong sun will burn elephant ear's big leaves, so give that combi-

nation high dappled shade. Cannas, especially those with pastel flowers, can take some shade in southern climates.

Judy Glattstein, author of the upcoming *Consider the Leaf: Foliage as a Foundation for Garden Design* and numerous bulb books, is in the "go big" camp. She suggests such companions as Joe-pye weed, a tall native that has fluffy domes of mauve flowers, or hibiscus, which flaunts tropical-looking flowers in both hot colors and pinks and white. Those plants, like cannas, grow best with full sun and lots of water. In fact, Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, has bred several cannas intended to be grown in shallow water at the edge of ponds. Don't plant cannas with tulips or other plants subject to rot in damp soil.

Smaller cannas do well in containers—perhaps two stately pots flanking an entryway with other sun lovers. Here a trailing plant is a nice foil to the canna's upright shape. For color contrast as well, try a variegated vinca with a bronze-leaved canna, or a purple *Tradescantia pallida* with a striped canna.

If you live in USDA Zone 8 or south (Zone 7 is borderline), you can leave cannas in the ground all winter. Otherwise, if you hope to see them again the following summer, you'll need to dig them up. Kunst dusts his lightly with garden sulfur to prevent rot, then stores them in plastic bags packed with vermiculite; wood shavings or peat moss will also prevent their drying out. Ideally their storage place should be between 40 and 50 degrees. Here's a chance for that drafty back porch or unheated basement to be a boon instead of a bane. 🏠

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When in doubt, you can always plant cannas with each other. From left to right, golden orange 'Semaphore' (1895), speckled 'En Avant' (1914), pink 'Shenandoah' (1894), and red-and-yellow 'Königen Charlotte' (1892).



Some cannas will grow directly in ponds and other water features like this pool at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

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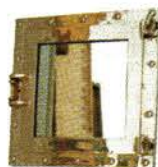
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Sears, Roebuck and Company left its stamp on the American landscape not only by dint of the sheer numbers of houses it produced, but also through the amazing ubiquity of its most popular designs. A prime example is the "Westly," shown here in Washington, D.C., a bungalow the public found as attractive and workable as it is unpretentious. Featured in catalogs from 1912 to 1929 (right), it still shines in countless towns across the country by the hundreds if not thousands.

BY SHIRLEY MAXWELL AND JAMES C. MASSEY

Remember Frank W. Kushel? No? Well, you're not alone. And more's the pity, we might add, for the uncelebrated Mr. Kushel may have had as much impact on American housing as his famous contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright.

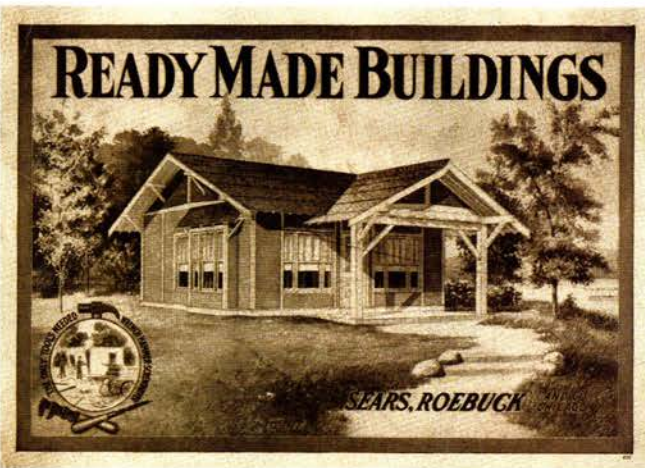
Kushel wasn't an architect. He was a merchandising genius credited with inventing Sears, Roebuck and Company's Modern Homes program, which provided well designed, well constructed, economical shelter for perhaps 75,000 American families between 1908 and 1940. Today, buyers are still snapping up vintage Sears houses just as eagerly as they did 80 years ago.

Kushel was managing Sears's china department in 1906 when he was given the dismal task of overseeing the dismantling of the catalog company's unwieldy, money-losing building materials department. Sales were down, and there was too much inventory sitting in expensive warehouses. It seemed time to unload the lot.

Then, hmmm . . . Kushel had an idea. He was convinced that the building supplies could be sold at a profit if storage could be centralized and the goods distributed more rationally—and if there was a little extra incentive for buying them. Instead of abandoning the sale of millwork and other building parts, why not change the way these goods were sold? What if customers could pick a plan for their dream house from a Sears catalog? Then, instead of selling building materials in random bits and pieces, Sears could market them in a coordinated package—one containing exactly what was needed to build a particular house and shipped directly to

the railroad station nearest the building site. One order could include everything—nails and screws, paint and roof shingles, windows and doors, woodwork, staircases, and mantelpieces.

Of course, since Sears's big general merchandise cata-



The five-room portable cottage on its cover is the closest structure to a house in the 1913 Simplex catalog.

The Story on Sears

Houses by Rail and Mail



JAMES C. MASSEY ARCHIVE

JAMES C. MASSEY ARCHIVE

logs were already selling everything needed to furnish a house—from beds and chairs to toilets, sinks, and kitchen ranges—the sales of all these items would increase too!

Kushel's boss, Richard Sears—himself no slouch at merchandising—recognized the plan's potential immediately and so did the buying public. Sears's reputation for quality, low prices, and reliability, carefully nurtured since the company's founding in 1886, was like money in the bank for its customers. The company's first, 44-page *Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans*, issued in 1908, brought an immediate and enthusiastic response.

Kushel wasn't the only or even the first person to come up with a scheme to sell houses by catalog and ship them by rail. In 1906 the North American Construction Company (soon to become known as the makers of "Aladdin Houses" and "Readi-Cuts") of Bay City, Michigan, had begun selling rail-shipped precut buildings—small cottages, garages, and boathouses—out of a mail-order plan book. It wasn't until about 1911 that Sears included framing lumber in its package, and the company didn't begin to offer precut and factory-fitted lumber until 1914. Before then, the lumber still had to be cut to fit at the building site. Montgomery Ward, Sears's foremost catalog competitor in general merchandise, was even slower to jump on the bandwagon, waiting until 1910 to sell house plans from a catalog and 1918 for ready-cut houses. Sears and its competitors all depended on rail service, which by the early 20th century covered most of the continent, and regional lumber mills where the wood could be centrally processed.

In 1911, Sears added an irresistible new twist. The company decided not just to sell house-building packages, but to finance them as well. The nation's booming population was straining the seams of a tight housing market, yet the huge and fast-growing middle and working classes (many members of which were recent European immigrants) had been largely ignored by a

conservative banking community. If Sears could offer reasonable interest rates and low down payments, the market seemed endless. Although the financing package initially included only building materials, it soon expanded to cover the building lot.

Not only were the terms easy—a down payment of 25 percent of the cost of house and lot, as little as 6 percent interest for 5 years, or a higher rate for up to 15 years—but the application form contained no questions about race, ethnicity, gender, or even finances. Thousands of formerly ineligible buyers were absorbed into the new-home market.

Catalogs by Category

There is a tendency to think of the "Sears House" as a monolithic entity, but there were actually many different Sears catalogs that offered houses and auxiliary buildings, such as garages. Others continued to sell just lumber and building parts, which had been a Sears staple. Distinctions among the buildings offered, the quality of the materials, and the construction methods used can be confusing.

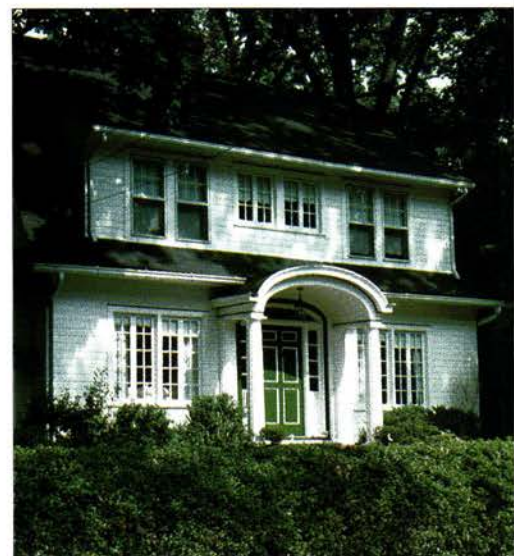
On one level was what Sears called a house kit. For these, Sears provided building plans and specifications, along with the lumber and any other materials needed. The shipment included everything from nails, screws, and paint to prebuilt building parts, such as staircases and dining nooks. It did not include masonry, such as bricks and cement blocks, which would be cheaper to procure locally than to send by rail. The lumber was cut to size at the building site before being assembled by a local builder.

Ready-Cut The true Ready-Cut House package, first offered about 1914, included plans, specifications, and detailed assembly instructions, along with precut and factory-fitted lumber and all other building materials except masonry. The lumber was stamped with the Sears name and numbered on the ends of the boards to correspond to numbers on the floor plans, so that mistakes in

Neither Sears nor its customers sought to push any architectural envelopes, so many models were middle-of-the-road revivals. Perennial bestsellers were suburbanized versions of the center-hall Colonial house, replete with full-width dormers and suitably Early American names, such as the "Puritan" (right) and the "Martha Washington" (below).



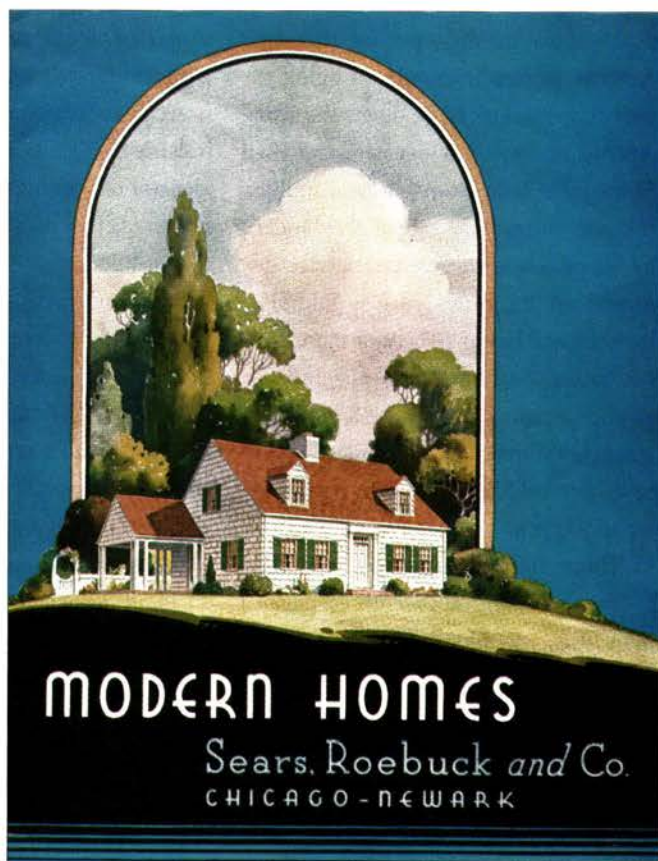
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By 1938, two years before Sears left the house business, the Modern Homes catalog (below) still carried the odd Foursquare and bungalow among 60 pages of Colonial and Tudor designs. Sears established its Architectural Division in 1919, and many of the Modern Homes designs were produced in-house. However, they also hired outside architects who worked on contract (and were usually not identified).

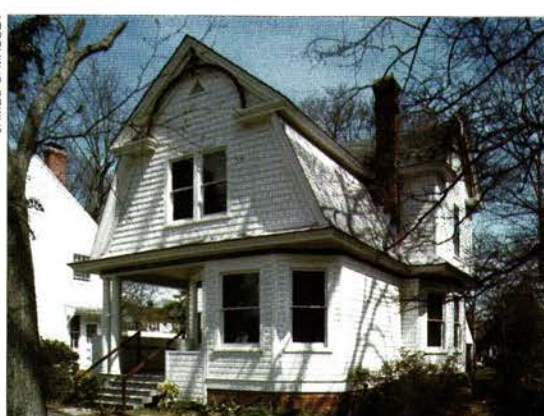


JAMES C. MASSEY ARCHIVE

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This early Sears house in Williamsburg, Virginia (above, #122 from 1911 to 1913) not only predates the catalog name system, but also still carries many vestiges of the Victorian era, from bay windows to the "horseshoe" gable ornament. Pocket-sized English cottages (left) were a Sears staple in the 1930s. Like many the "Bellewood" (1931) is rendered in wood.

assembly were less likely—though far from impossible, as many extant Sears houses testify by their otherwise inexplicable deviations. Sears estimated that using their precut and fitted lumber could save 40 percent on labor costs.

In theory, really handy homeowners could—and some did—put together their own Sears houses with only the aid of the instruction manual. More often, the actual construction was left to—or at least required considerable help from—a local builder. Over the 30-year lifespan of the Modern Homes program, the various service systems within the house—such as plumbing, electricity, and heating—became more complex, so that owners were more likely to call in trade specialists. At any rate, Sears always furnished estimates of the finished cost of the house, including labor (not part of the Sears package).

Honor Bilt Among Ready-Cut Houses, the Honor-Bilt line (apparently established about 1918) was the standard setter. Honor Bilt houses used high-quality materials and heavy framing. They had double floors (a sub-floor and a 13/16" thick finish floor of maple or oak), oak wall paneling, doors, trim, and cabinets, three coats of exterior paint, and higher-grade hardware.

Sears encouraged Honor-Bilt buyers to specify the more deluxe bathroom “out-fits”—sets of tubs, sinks, and toilets—and kitchen sinks, all of which were optional and separately priced. Electrical systems, water heaters, and furnaces were also separate options. The Honor Bilt houses were generally larger, more elaborate houses than the ones that Sears called “Standard Bilt.”

In a few cases, Honor Bilt houses were not precut. Sears furnished wood lath for plaster walls, but not the plaster. Alternatively, customers could opt for “sheet plaster” (gypsum board, an early form of wallboard) at considerably greater expense. For roofing, they could choose between red cedar shingles or the costlier “Oriental Asphalt” shingles, which came with a 17-year guarantee.

Standard Bilt Less expensive than

the Honor Bilt and of correspondingly lower quality was the Standard Built House (also known as Econo Bilt or Lighter-Built). The lightly framed Standard Bilt houses were most often used for summer cottages, hunting cabins, and very small dwellings, and were generally recommended for warm-weather situations. Some designs were offered in both Honor-Bilt and Standard-Built versions. Sears advised potential buyers that, because the Standard Bilt houses had only a single layer of flooring and the walls were not plastered, they were harder to heat than Honor Bilt houses. Nonetheless, these little lightweight houses sometimes turn up even today as year-round residences. They were usually not precut or fitted.

Simplex The Simplex was a prefabricated, panelized, one-storey building that could easily be taken apart. Demountable and portable, it was most often used for garages, summer cottages and cabins, and small, utilitarian buildings that the owner might wish to move from place to place. There are separate Simplex catalogs dating from as early as 1911.

What Styles When?

Modern Homes catalogs were issued most years (apparently sometimes twice a year) from 1908 until 1940, although there are a few years for which no catalogs are presently known. In the beginning, Modern Homes designs were assigned numbers rather than names, but soon titles—often suggesting a style provenance—began to accompany the attractive illustrations. Sears knew its audience well and its designs were those most popular at the time. The styles were deliberately conservative rather than innovative.

Beginning with a simplified Queen Anne, Modern Homes styles ranged from Arts & Crafts bungalows and Foursquares in the 1910s and '20s, through the various European revivals of vaguely French, English, and Spanish (usually Mission) styles in the 1920s, to the Colonial Revivals, Cape Cods, and Dutch Colonials found mostly

If there had been no Foursquare, Sears might well have invented it as the perfect design for its market. Straightforward to build and practical to own, houses like the “Woodland” (right, 1913 to 1933) appear in almost every catalog. Below: Few details mark a Sears house like this porch column decoration, a regular feature on Foursquares and bungalows of all flavors.



CHARLES STECK

Staircases were often the visual centerpiece of the two-storey models, and their design reflected the era in which the houses were constructed, varying from rectilinear Arts & Crafts in the 1910s, such as in the “Woodland” (right), to Spanish and Old English in the 1920s to Colonial or Early American in the 1930s.





CHARLES STECK



DAVID SHARPE



Inventory and assembly stamps and labels on the backs of woodwork or parts help pin down the provenance of a Sears house. Remember though that initially, the one essential material not in the Sears package was the framing lumber—only building parts were included. Later, Sears bought a lumber mill in Mansfield, Louisiana, a lumberyard in Cairo, Illinois, and a millwork factory in Norwood, Ohio.

Why It Isn't Always Easy to Know If You Have a Sears House

One of the most frustrating aspects of owning what seems to be a Sears house is the difficulty in finding proof of its provenance. Sometimes the origins of a house that nearly, or, for that matter, exactly, matches a catalog illustration can't be traced beyond all doubt.

The first problem is that in more than 32 years of catalog sales, Sears offered 447 different designs, according to the "Sears Archives." Because most of the houses are small and simple in style, they often resemble those found in the catalogs of other ready-cut companies—or even from enterprising local copycat builders.

Then, too, Sears encouraged potential buyers to customize their designs with the aid of Sears's architectural department—flip a floor plan; change a roofline; add or subtract a room; a porch, or a window; use a different entry detail, etc. Or, the houses may have been altered during construction, either inadvertently or by the owner. And because these were often small "starter" houses, many were altered and added to long after construction.

Another mystery: While many Sears pre-cut and fitted wood pieces (rafters, beams, sills, lintels, woodwork, and mouldings) are stamped with the Sears name and/or numbered for ease of assembly, sometimes there are no markings to be found. This could be because Sears encouraged customers to buy lumber locally if it was cheaper than shipping from a Sears mill.

Sears door and cabinet hardware, lighting and plumbing fixtures, and other building parts were also marked but might have been bought for a non-Sears house.

Finally, although Sears houses consistently display certain construction details (five-piece eaves brackets, front porches, and small attic windows, for instance) so do other well-designed ready-cut and conventional houses of the

period. So unless the paperwork (mortgage agreement, floor plans, materials list, correspondence, building permits listing Sears as the "architect") or a credible family or neighborhood oral history exists, it may be hard to know where the house originated—though it's always fun to keep digging.

in the 1920s and '30s.

Modern Homes catalogs often carried designs well past what is generally considered their peak years. Bungalows, for instance, were among the most frequently built of all of Sears house types (and along with the Colonial Revival and the Cape Cod cottage the longest-lived), appearing in every catalog from 1908 onward. As late as 1939 the "Winona," which first appeared in 1916, is shown with another, rather stodgy five-room example, the "Plymouth," which first appeared in 1934.

Although most designs were conservative, there were some large and elegant surprises. One of the most elaborate (described in the 1918 and 1921 catalogs as bearing "a close resemblance" to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Cambridge, Massachusetts, residence) is the three-storey, eight-room neo-Georgian "Magnolia," with its two-storey columned portico, porte-cochere, and sleeping porches. The "Aurora" and the "Carlton," both of which appear in 1918, are sophisticated Prairie School designs, and the flat-roofed "Bryant" is in the International style. The 1933 to 1939 catalogs feature several early split-levels, including the "Concord."

Sears's later catalogs included a number of Sears-built exhibition houses, including two reproductions of Mount Vernon (one for a 1931 exposition in Paris and one for a Washington Bicentennial celebration in Brooklyn); a reproduction of New York City's Federal Hall, the first capitol of the United States (also for the Washington Bicentennial); a "dream home" for Warner Brothers (erected in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania); and a fully furnished model house exhibited at the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago.

Insider Information

Sears prided itself on offering floor plans that were both efficient and attractive, maximizing the usability of very limited space. The smaller houses sometimes combined living and dining rooms, while the smallest made do with a built-in eating nook or the kitchen table.

Most of the houses had two or three bedrooms, although some had four or even five. The majority had only one bathroom, and some, especially in the early 20th century, had none, since many rural and even some suburban areas lacked piped-in water and sewers or septic fields. By the 1930s, though, quite a few of the larger houses had two (or even two and a half bathrooms) or a full bath and a "powder room." Buyers had their choice of two different "outfits," depending on their tastes and pocketbooks and on the requirements of the bathroom layout. Kitchen sinks were included in the specifications.

The Sears house was often equipped with the most sought after conveniences of its time, from built-in china cabinets, mirrored closet doors, dining nooks and kitchen cupboards, to built-in ironing boards, telephone niches, and medicine cabinets. Some of these amenities came as part of the package, while others were options.

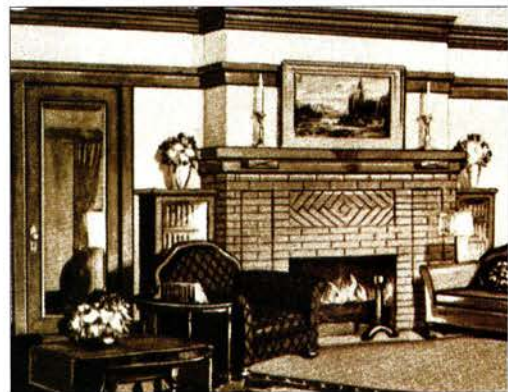
Sears houses were often built in multiples, creating entire homogeneous neighborhoods. A number of these still exist, many in industrial towns. One of the best known Sears house locations is in Carlinville, Illinois, where Standard Oil of Indiana built a million-dollar development of 192 Honor-Bilt houses for employees of Schoper coal mine (156 intended for miners and other workers, an additional 28 nearby and somewhat more deluxe meant for supervisors). The five- and six-room houses of what became known as the Standard Addition, which included many bungalows and Foursquares, cost roughly \$3,600 to \$4,600 and were regarded as unusually fine examples of worker housing.

On the other end of the socioeconomic scale are places like Cheverly, Maryland, or Crescent Hills in Hopewell, Virginia, both affluent neighborhoods of "strictly high-class [Sears] homes" built by private developers in the 1920s. (Hopewell also has a large group of Aladdin houses built during World War I for workers at the DuPont Corporation's gun-cotton factory there.)

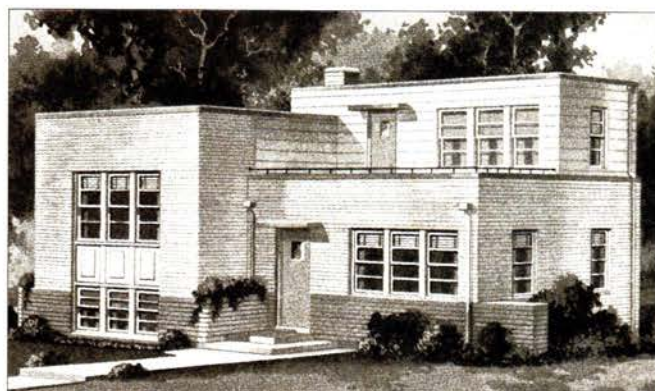
The Modern Homes mortgage pro-



PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS THESE PAGES JAMES C. MASSEY



Catalogs carrying the Mission-style "Alhambra" (top, 1918 to 1929) often featured interior layouts, such as this "comfortable and attractive" living room (center). A 1919 "Alhambra" living room in Cheverly, Maryland, shows how closely local builders might follow the Sears designs. Note the herringbone decoration on the fireplace.



Ever the savvy marketers, Sears debuted its long-running bungalow, the "Avondale" (above, 1911 to 1922) with a promotional postcard and a model at the 1911 Illinois State Fair. Trolling for interest in International-style houses, Sears sneaked a truly modern home, the "Bryant," (left) into its 1938 and '39 catalogs. This Arlington, Virginia, house (below left) is the "Fullerton," which appeared from 1925 to 1933.



Still Curious?

If you're burning for more information, you can log on to the Sears Archive's popular Modern Homes Web site (www.modernhomes.com), where users are invited to register their Sears houses and ask questions. (Typical queries: "How can I tell whether my house is a Sears model?" and "Where can I get authentic reproduction Sears furniture for my 1920s Sears house?") All 447 designs are listed, along with the years in which they were produced, and many are illustrated. (More illustrations will be added as time goes on.) The text pages are printable.

The classic study of Sears houses is *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company* by Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, published in 1986. The most recent is *The Houses That Sears Built: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sears Catalog Homes* by Rosemary Thornton, which came out in March 2002.

gram peaked in the late 1920s but showed increasing signs of strain as the full effects of the Great Depression hit. Sears withdrew from the Modern Homes and mortgage loan market in 1934, but was selling houses again a year later, after the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration and its federally insured mortgages fueled a brief upsurge in the housing market. The Modern Homes program was finally defeated by tens of millions of dollars in mortgage defaults, as well as pre-World War II shortages of building materials. The last Modern Homes catalog was issued in 1940.

By the time the Modern Homes project folded for good, Sears houses were a staple of the American landscape. Frank Kushel continued to head the Modern Homes program until the end, by which time he was still hardly any better known than he had been in 1906. And Frank Lloyd Wright? Interestingly enough, Wright—who always had a strong interest in designing houses for Everyman—entered the pre-cut home market himself when he produced a number of designs for prefabricated houses, American System-Built Houses, for the Richards Company of Milwaukee between 1911 and 1916. 🏠

Slate Roof

BY JAMES C. MASSEY Long the pride of homeowners by virtue of its beauty, stability, and longevity, slate reached peak popularity as a roofing material around 1915. As early as 1906, though, manufacturers were already experimenting with man-made alternatives, such as asphalt shingles and asbestos-cement slates, that could be made lighter, cheaper, or easier to install. The search for the perfect slate substitute continues today. The choice of products grows wider every year, while the list of manufacturers changes an-

nually as new players enter the market and old ones leave. Since modern slate substitutes may be one of the options for old-house owners replacing or extending a natural slate roof—or an ersatz slate installation from, say, the 1930s that is now historic in its own right—OHJ has put together the following buyer's guide to help sort out the many products, materials, and makers that represent the state of the art in this evolving industry.

Simulated Slate Suitability

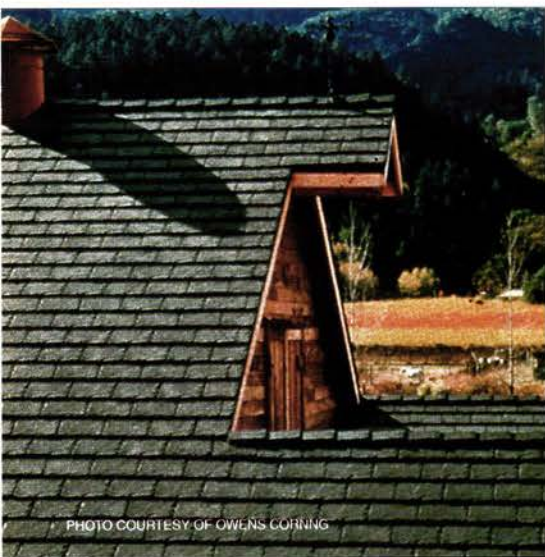
Natural slate is famously long-lived. Nonetheless, many old houses are at the point where their original slate roofs have reached the end of their useful lives. New slate is readily available, but it is expensive to buy, expensive to install and, as a natural piece of split stone, unforgiving of mistreatment. While the variety of man-made substitutes on the market includes some adequate to very good replicas of the real thing, these substitutes are just that—their shape, thickness, size, color, and longevity are not the same as the original material.

If you must reroof an old slated house, by all means do so in slate when possible. If enough of the slate is still in good condition (see "Slate Weathering," May/June 2002 OHJ) consider removing it, repairing the underlying sheathing and flashing, then reusing the good original slates on the principal

roofs—that is, the ones that show. You can then use new slate or a substitute on the rear or subordinate roofs.

After a shaky start, simulated slates are finding growing acceptance for restoration projects because of better quality replicas and good performance on historic buildings in Europe (where they have been extensively used for several decades). Though these are still substitute materials as defined by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, some of the better products have garnered cautious federal government endorsement for preservation use. Sharon Park, FAIA, senior historical architect for the National Park Service Technical Assistance Division, recommends checking with your local historical commission, if there is one, and with your State Historic Preservation Office concerning the appropriate substitute slate for your project. This is obligatory if you hope to cash in on tax credits for home rehabilitation in states that provide them.

Losing the character and patina of an old slate roof is always regrettable, but Park acknowledges that there are circumstances when a new or man-made roof becomes necessary. Regarding replacement materials in general, the National Park Service stresses that they "be compatible with historic materials in appearance." As outlined in Preservation Brief number 16, "The Use



In the quest to clone stone, manufacturers bring creative roofing products to the market every year. Among the latest is a molded resin composite (MiraVista by Owens Corning; circle 27 on resource card) that includes ground slate as an ingredient.

Stand-Ins



A buyer's guide to man-made substitutes for natural stone

Deep shadows and shades of grey are the essence of slate roofs and the appearance manufacturers emulate with asphalt shingles. Using multiple layers of laminated asphalt shingles in convincing slate-like shapes (Capstone by Elk; circle 24 on resource card.) reinforces the impression.

Slates in Transition

Nothing lasts forever. Since 1994, when OHJ last looked at imitation slate roofing, several major manufacturers have left the market or gone out of business. Like many building-product manufacturers, the roofing industry has seen its share of company sales and consolidations in recent years, and with them a loss of the specialty or “back catalog” product lines that often best fit the needs of old houses. However, some of the recent changes have also been related to product performance, particularly cosmetic issues (discoloration, fading) as the products aged in certain environments. The ranks of fiber-cement producers—among them Supradur and most recently Eternit—have been hit particularly hard by such events. What’s the message for old-house restorers? One for certain: Man-made slate is still a developing field.

JAMES C. MASSEY



Top: It’s tough to beat Mother Nature. The degrading effects of sunlight, as well as extremes of temperature and moisture, can take their toll on man-made slate as much as any building product. For example, these fiber-cement slates, the modern alternative to the asbestos-cement products popular in the 1920s and ’30s, show some fading on an otherwise sound roof. Right: Asphalt shingles can also evoke slate by using laminates with color blends that add visual depth (Berkshire by Owens-Corning; circle 27 on resource card).

of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors,” the new, substitute material “should match the details and craftsmanship of the original, as well as the color, surface texture, surface reflectivity and finish of the original material. The closer an element is to the viewer, the more closely the material and craftsmanship must match the original.”

Shopping for Slatelikes

How do you evaluate the appropriateness of a slate lookalike installation for your project—especially when it may be a material that is totally different than stone? As with any major expense, you should choose carefully, do some homework, and ask detailed questions. Here are some key considerations that may affect your eventual decision:

1. Look for compatibility with the old slate roof in size, color, finish, and in-

stalled appearance.

2. Evaluate the color permanence. Is the color applied to the surface or integral to the material? Some slate replicas have faded badly over time.

3. Follow the manufacturer’s installation specs carefully; each product is different. Don’t forget that you will still need good underlayment and flashing.

4. Be certain your selected product is compatible with your climate. Not all replicas serve well in very cold, windy, or otherwise stormy climates.

5. The installation on the valleys, peaks, and ridges should be the same as on the original roof. Most manufacturers make special shapes for these applications.

6. Consider the weight, which can exceed 1,000 pounds per square (a 10’ x 10’ area) and may require roof reinforcement.

7. Make sure the material is fire rated.

8. Ask the supplier about expected longevity and any warranties the product might have.

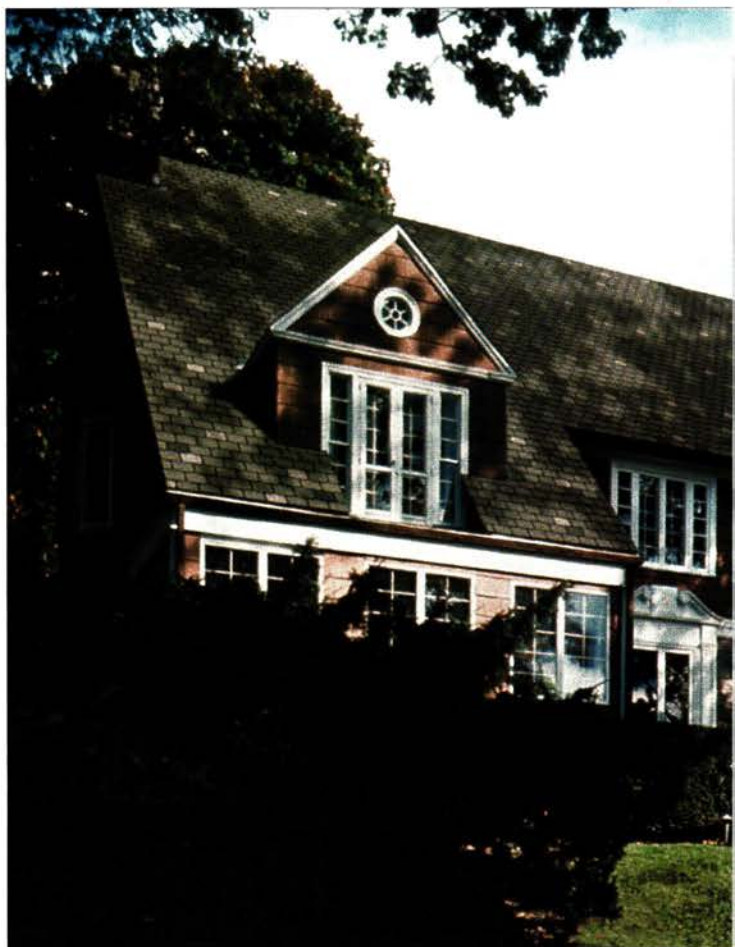
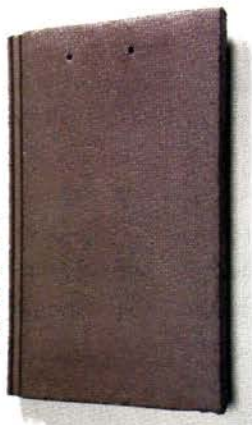


PHOTO COURTESY OF OWENS CORNING

Material Differences

Concrete Tile—typically rough surfaced and thick with square edges; installs like tile with locking groove.



Asphalt Shingle—creative tab shapes, often in multiple layers, with colored mineral surface; installs in strips.



Recycled Rubber—thin, flexible individual shingles with molded surface and edges; installs like slate, sometimes with spacing tabs.

Composite—large, rigid slate with molded surface and edges, recessed underside; installs like slate.

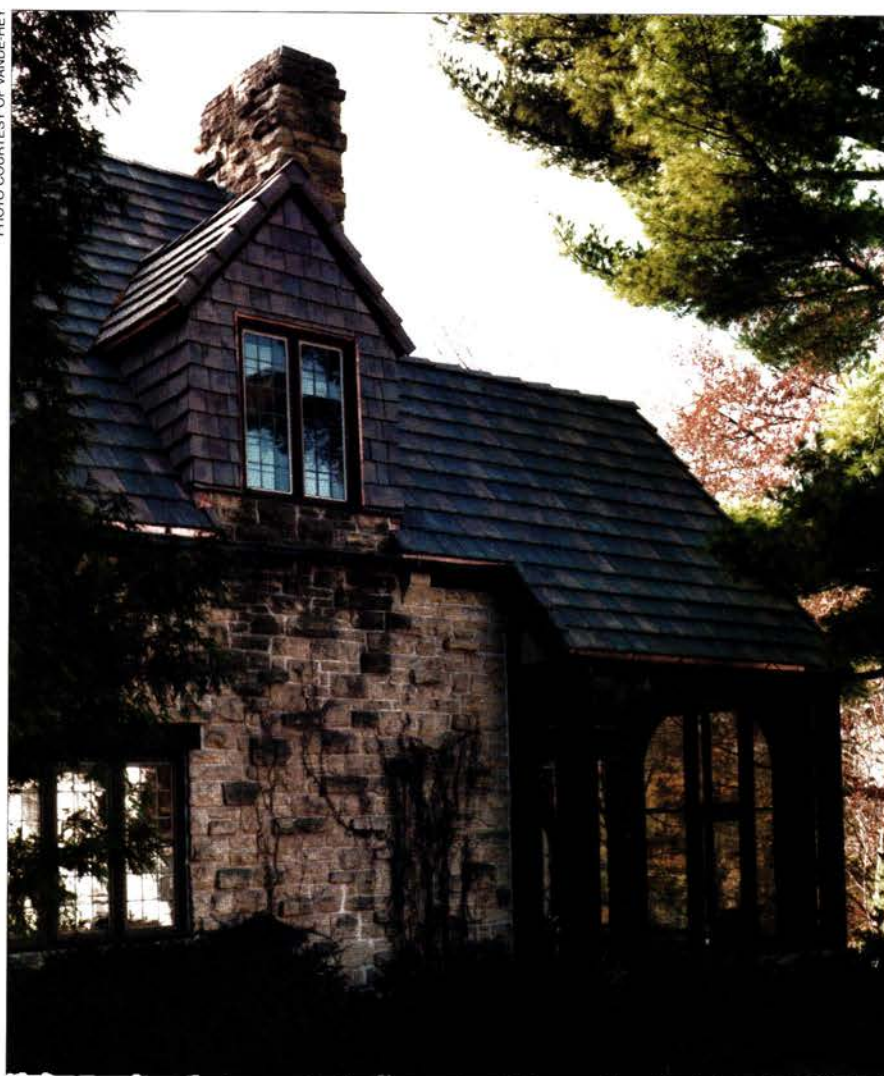


Clay Tile—plain or molded surface, typically with square edges, recessed underside; installs like tile with locking groove.

SLATE SAMPLE PHOTOS BY DAVID SHARPE



PHOTO COURTESY OF VANDE HEY



Concrete tiles, with their thick butts and rich, textured surfaces, offer another way to obtain the picturesque character of architectural slate roofs. Installing colors in a random pattern (Cotswold by Vande Hey-Raleigh; circle 16 on resource card) enhances the effect.

The latest breeds of simulated slates come in several quite different materials, from the old standard concrete tiles to new ceramics and recycled rubber.

Fiber Cement This is the oldest type of substitute slate (and also of wood shingles), dating in its original form to the first

decade of the 20th century. Modern versions, made with nonasbestos cellulose or man-made fibers, have wide use on roofs, on mansard dormer cheeks, and as siding. Most fiber-cement slates bear close resemblance visually and physically to the real thing. Manufacturers may specify the use

of storm anchors. A major consideration is that installation labor costs are roughly the same as with real slate, making the lower material cost the only savings.

Concrete Tiles Concrete slates have been around for a long time but aren't as well known as other materials. They em-

Suppliers

Manufacturer	Phone/Web site	Product	Material	Weight per Square
Re-Con Building Products Portland, Oreg.	(877) 276-7663 ☎11 re-con.com	FireFree Plus Quarryslate	Fiber Cement	570 lbs.
Auburn Tile, Inc. Ontario, Calif.	(888) 984-2841 ☎12 auburntile.com	Auburn Tile; Auburn Lite	Concrete Tile	1100 lbs. 780 lbs.
Columbia Concrete Products Canada	(877) 388-8453 ☎13 crooftile.com	Columbia Roof Tile Northwest Slate	Concrete Tile	1050 lbs.
Monierlifetile Irvine, Calif.	(800) 273-7663 ☎14 Monierlifetile.com	Slate and Split Slate (standard & light weight)	Concrete Tile	600–1030 lbs.
Richmond Precast Concrete Products Richmond, Va.	(800) 276-8262 ☎15	Hendricks Tile; Continental Tile	Concrete Tile Concrete Tile	1250 lbs. 1250 lbs.
Vande Hey- Raleigh Little Chute, Wisc.	(800) 238-8453 ☎16 vhroof-tile.com	Modern Roof Tile; Cotswold Lightweight Slate	Concrete Tile Kadant Composites	1100–1320 lbs. 245 lbs.
Celadon New Lexington, Ohio	(800) 699-9988 ☎17 ludowici.com	Celadon Ceramic Slate	Ceramic Tile	500 lbs.
Gladding McBean Lincoln, Calif.	(800) 964-2529 ☎18 gladdingmcbean.com	Placer Interlocking Lincoln Interlocking	Ceramic Tile	900-960 lbs.
Crowe Building Products Canada	(905) 529-6818 ☎19 authentic-roof.com	Authentic Roof 2000	Recycled Rubber TPO	223–260 lbs.
EcoStar	(800) 211-7170 ☎20 www.ecostar.com	Celestial Slate Celestial Colonial	Recycled Rubber TPO	258–300 lbs. 199–231 lbs.
Royal Building Products Canada	(604) 291-8171 ☎21 royplas.com	Dura Slate	Recycled Rubber	240–280 lbs
Welsh Mountain Slate, Inc Canada	(800) 885-8784 ☎22 welshmountainslate.com	Welsh Mountain Slate	Recycled Rubber	189–220 lbs.
Certainteed Valley Forge, Pa.	(800) 782-8777 ☎23 certainteed.com	Grand Manor Shingle; Carriage House	Fiber Glass-Asphalt	425 lbs. 355 lbs.
Elk Dallas, Tex.	(800) 945-5545 ☎24 elkcorp.com	Capstone	Fiber Glass-Asphalt	290 lbs.
GAF Materials Corp Wayne, N.J.	(800) 223-1948 ☎25 gaf.com	Slateline Shingle	Fiber Glass-Asphalt	270 lbs.
IKO Wilmington, Del.	(888) 456-7663 ☎26 iko.com	Regency	Fiber Glass-Asphalt	360 lbs.
Owens Corning Toledo, Ohio	(800) GET-PIN ☎27 owenscorning.com	Berkshire MiraVista	Fiber Glass-Asphalt Composite	425 lbs 450 lbs.

☎ For more information on these products, please circle the numbers on the resource card.

ploy basically the same binder (cement) as fiber-cement slates but leave out the fiber component. Instead, they are made like concrete, with aggregates (such as sand and perlite) and sometimes metal reinforcement. The resulting slate is thicker than fiber cement and very heavy—sometimes more than 1,000 pounds per square. For that reason, concrete often requires heavier than usual roof framing and is less than desirable for steep slopes. Concrete slates require special installation in areas subject to 125 mph winds.

Clay Tile The most promising among the newer forms of roof tiles, slatelike and otherwise, clay tile is hard and strong, with integral color or glaze color. Much used in Europe, it is rapidly gaining ground in the United States. There are some color limitations, and the product does not have the irregular edges of true slate. The tiles are generally interlocking.

Asphalt Shingles The standard house roofing, made for a century in one formulation or another, asphalt shingles are affordable, efficient to install because they

come in strips, and available in almost endless variety. In recent decades, the industry has moved into making what are called architectural or laminated shingles. These employ two or more layers of roofing material to produce a more textural effect with softer lines and deeper shadows. First popular in wood-toned shingles, these techniques have been turned to emulating the appearance if not the actual form of slate roofing, with appropriate colors and shadow lines. An added benefit of some of these products is that they are thicker and therefore longer lasting than the standard three-tab strip shingle of yore. Many companies now make asphalt slatelike shingles—none perfect imitations but all relatively inexpensive and easy to install.

Recycled Rubber The latest class of competitors in the slate lookalike market are composed of recycled rubber (from industrial waste to automobile tires) and polypropylene. Most are updated, slatelike versions of the time-tested asphalt shingle, following in the path of wood-toned architectural asphalt shingles. The materials are too new to com-

ment on life span, but their light weight and slight flexibility are good news. Each product generally strives to look like slate, with realistic surface textures, chipped edges, and authentic colors. Compared to real slate, they are also relatively inexpensive. Manufacturers claim the roofing is good in high wind conditions.

Slate/Resin Composites Another new and promising material, pioneered so far by just one manufacturer, is best called a composite slate. This product is an amalgam of likely components—ground slate, resin, and fiberglass—bonded under high pressure to form a realistic-looking slate substitute. The process produces good modeling of the irregularities of slate itself with integral color and typical unit sizes, paired with the appeal of light weight.

Examine several kinds of man-made slate to choose the best material and color for your use. You may decide that the slate look isn't for you at all, in which case the firms that make slate reproductions also make wood-grain and various tile reproductions as well. 🏠

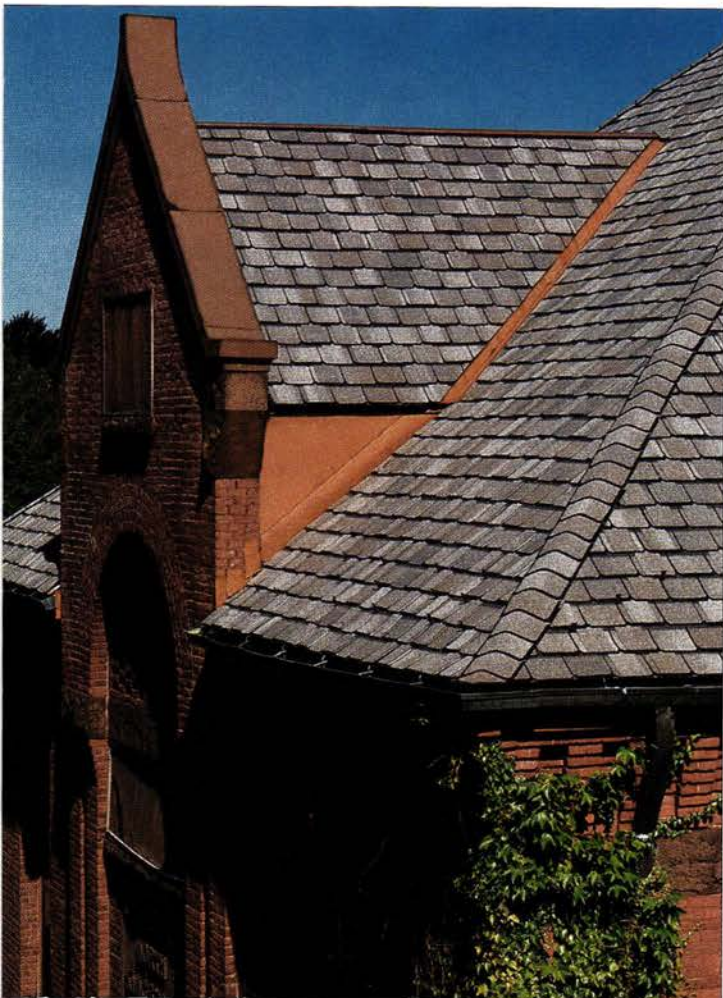


PHOTO COURTESY OF CERTAINTEED

Left: Another asphalt approach uses heavy base shingles and clever color placement to play up shadow lines and random butt lengths (Grand Manor Shingle by CertainTeed; circle 23 on resource card). Right: The molding properties of recycled rubber allow manufacturers to replicate the actual tooled edges and thickness of natural slate (Dura Slate by Royal; Circle 21 on resource card) while providing integral color.



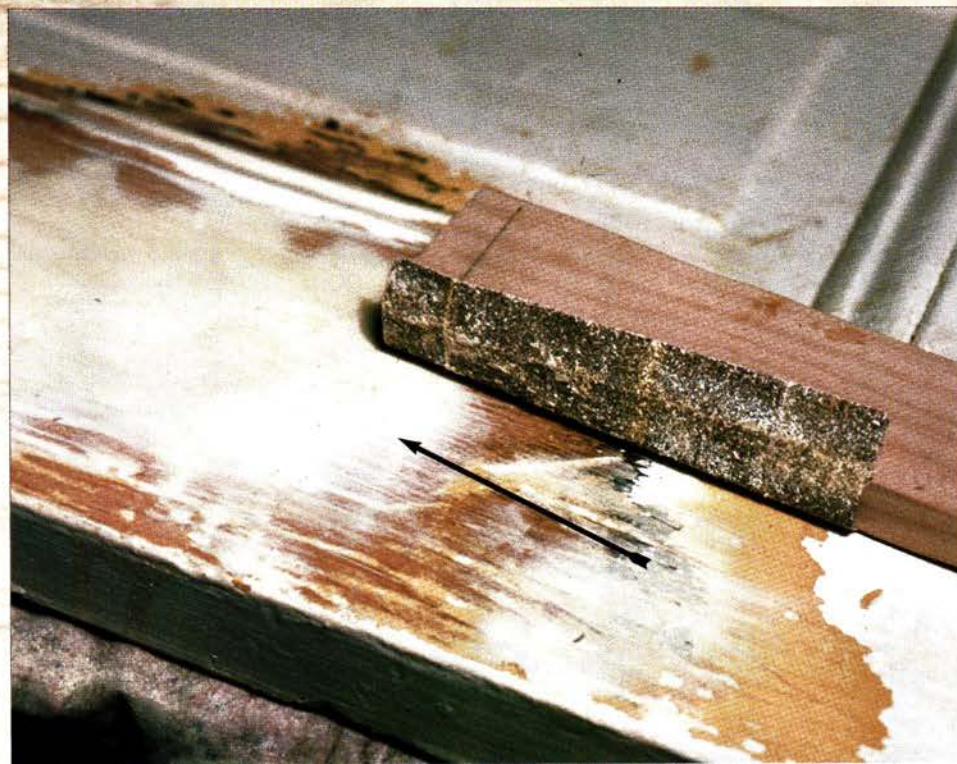
The Facts on

BY THE OHJ TECHNICAL STAFF **W**hether you're trying to resuscitate a porch floor that's gone code blue from rot or need to camouflage the tiniest nail hole, you'll eventually find yourself puzzling over the hardware store's display of wood fillers.

It's a good place to start. As with checking nutritional data in the grocery store, you can learn a lot by reading labels. For instance, just as you can't get your minimum daily requirement of vitamins from a box of jelly doughnuts, you won't be able to invisibly patch a fine mahogany mantel with a super-strength filler that is difficult to sand and impossible to stain.

In-store research may not be enough to help make your final selection, however. On the job it becomes even clearer that no product is right for every project. In this article we take a closer look at several broad categories of fillers sold for wood and what they can and can't do when it comes to old-house projects.

Above: When dogs left deep gouges in this door and chewed out half a moulding, epoxy filler came to the rescue. The filler adhered well to the broad, thin gouges and could be built up, then sanded, to re-create the moulding. Right: Invisible patches under paint require "feather-edging" by sanding *into* the filler. Opposite: To rebuild screw holes, fill the area with a strong filler, let it harden, then rebore or reposition the hole.



Fillers

Picking putty for woodwork projects

Noncommercial Fillers

Traditionally, carpenters and woodworkers made their own fillers, and this is still a viable practice. It's easy to make your own filler with fine sawdust from the same wood as your project, mixing it into a paste with carpenter's white or yellow glue, shellac, or hide glue. Shellac and hide glue fillers sand better than the carpenter's glue mixes, and hide glue stains best. When the filler is dry, sand and seal with a coat of shellac or diluted hide glue, depending on which you have used.

Glazing putty—a mix of linseed oil and chalk or ground limestone used to set window glass—has a long history as an exterior wood filler under paint. Conservators at George Washington's Mount Vernon used linseed oil putty to fill cracks in the mansion's cupola—according to analysis, the same type of filler used for the last repairs some 55 years ago. Glazing putty is also good for filling and protecting set nails in clap-

boards and window trim.

Modern day building and object conservators often custom-blend their own epoxy fillers by combining premixed resin and hardener with dry filler, such as phenolic microballoons. Specific products are marketed for the conservation or boat-building industry, but the methods are not complicated (see "Making Epoxy Fillers" OHJ July/August 1999).

Cellulose Based

A class of products that has been around for a long time, cellulose-based fillers are combinations of wood fiber and binder that come in three general types: 1) dry formulas that need to be mixed with water by the user; 2) solvent types that are premixed with ketones and petroleum distillates; 3) water-soluble premixes.

Dry formulas are popular because they're inexpensive, have a long shelf life, and you can mix as little or as much as

Right: Fillers from top down: DAP vinyl spackling, Bondo epoxy, Minwax Wood Putty in colonial maple and red mahogany, Color Putty in butternut, Minwax Wood Putty in cherry and walnut, and Famowood Professional Wood Filler in oak.

INSET PHOTOS GORDON BOCK



Tips for Hiding Patches

If you need to match a stain, test the product beforehand on a piece of scrap wood the same color as your project. The degree to which "stainable" wood fillers absorb color varies greatly.

Product labels will tell you if you can use water-based stains (all fillers seem to work with oil-based stains) and whether you should stain the filler before or after you apply it. Makers of prestained fillers may recommend that you mix two or more of their

products to attain your desired hue, others suggest using stain to vary the color.

For example, we followed label directions to add stain (in this case red mahogany) to two cellulose products, DAP Plastic Wood ready mixed in a tube and Savogran, a dry filler. We then used them to fill holes on a board stained with one coat of red mahogany and not pre-conditioned for stain (which you should do on a real project to get a more even coat). The Plastic Wood took

on the desired color quickly, while the Savogran at first showed through as a somewhat mealy gray. The next morning, however, the latter was a nice, solid color actually a shade darker than we might have liked.

Elmer's sells an interior/exterior Carpenter's Wood Filler and also offers Fill 'N' Finish in light and dark shades for interiors only. Stained after the fillers dried, as recommended, the dark filler was by far a better match (see page 61).

only where you intend to paint, since manufacturers make no claims about stainability, and only indoors, since these materials will absorb water and spall off the surface.

Vinyl Based

Most of these products are calcium carbonate (chalk) mixed with a polyvinylacetate dispersion or emulsion as the vehicle or binder. As lightweight and fluffy as marshmallow crème (though without the sticky texture), they're easy to handle, and clean up with water. While they quickly dry to the touch, this can be deceptive. Hallock advises using them only for thin coats (1/4" or less) because thicker coats can crack as the solvent continues to fully dry, which can take months. These fillers are probably best used for small repairs to plaster or plaster board, but they also work on wood that will be painted. They won't take stain, however, and tend to "ghost" (leaving a white residue around the filled area), shrink considerably, and sand to a rough, porous surface.

Epoxies

Most of us are familiar with these two-part, petroleum-based resin products, either as adhesives or wood consolidants. When this technology is adapted and combined with other materials, the result is an exceptionally strong and durable wood filler. Epoxy fillers by nature require thoroughly mixing two components in accurate (often equal)

you need. While solvent types have the advantage of quick drying time, they also dry in the can unless you seal it airtight after use. Labels may recommend adding solvent to keep them workable, and cleaning up with acetone. These petroleum-based mixtures are flammable and emit vapors that may cause dizziness and headaches. Water-based products are odorless and clean up with water before they dry.

Both solvent and water-based fillers are sold in tubes as well as cans. The tubes, while containing only small quantities, make the filler easy to apply without a putty knife or other tool (especially in long, narrow cracks) and don't dry out as readily in their containers.

Cellulose products tend to be rather coarsely porous so they don't all sand as smooth as wood, but some stain amazingly well. The newest ones look like their venerable cellulose cousins, but the wood fiber or powder they contain has been modified with chemicals to give them some advantages. Bob Hammond, category director for Minwax, says the company's new Stainable Wood Filler was developed to meet a demand for a filler guaranteed to color well with either oil- and water-based stains. Although older water-based fillers were unsuitable for use on exteriors or in damp environments, newer formulations like Minwax Stainable and Famowood's water-based

filler are said to stand up to outdoor applications if given a protective finish.

Gypsum Based

Another old standby, these mineral powders are mixed with water to form a crystalline filler that doesn't shrink or pull away from the edges of the filled area. Conservators sometimes use Polyfilla, a gypsum-based product that also contains some cellulose (not to be confused with an English vinyl product of the same brand name). It can be difficult to use since, rather than shrinking, it actually expands as it dries. This means it adheres tightly to wood but can pop out as wood undergoes seasonal expansion, says Gardiner Hallock, restoration manager at Mount Vernon. Use gypsum-based fillers

proportions so that they will harden properly through a chemical reaction. The resin-hardening process typically takes several hours. Epoxy fillers won't take stain, but they can be sawn, nailed, and sanded—even sculpted before the filler sets hard. Because they bond tenaciously to wood and resist moisture, epoxies are the fillers of choice for exterior features that

Suppliers

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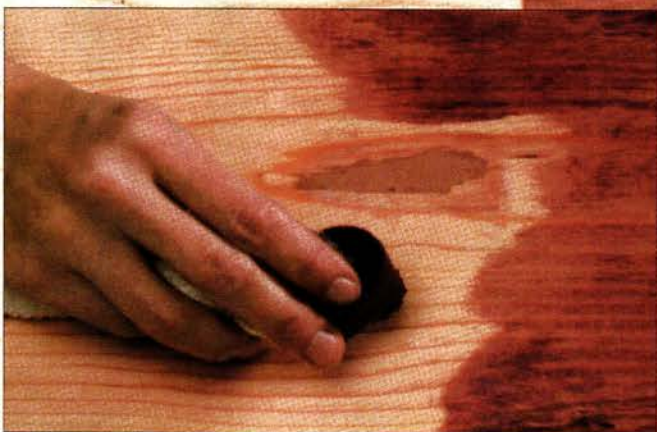
will be painted. When built up in layers, they can even be used to essentially reconstitute huge chunks of missing wood in windows, porches, and other weather-beaten areas. Available in large quantities via mail order, they're becoming more accessible in small amounts in hardware stores.

Cosmetic Fillers

Oil-based Crayons and Colored Fillers

These nonhardening fillers are for tiny dings and nail holes. They don't shrink and come in a rainbow of wood colors, so that when you can find a reasonable match they're a snap to use. Those in cans will dry out but the crayons, like the ones we used in kindergarten, go on forever.

For large indentations, most fillers work best if they're applied in several layers, allowing each layer time to dry. Drying time until products are ready to sand (top) can range from 15 minutes to overnight. Check label directions for staining. We've given our damaged area an irregular edge (center) to make it less visible. The patch will blend in even better if you can give it some faux graining with a small, sharp tool (bottom). On the display board to the right are four unstained fillers, first unstained, then immediately below, colored with red mahogany stain. From the top, DAP Plastic Wood, Savogran dry filler, Elmer's Fill 'N' Finish for dark woods, and Elmer's Carpenter's Wood Filler.



Pastes

Also called pore fillers or floor putty, these have a consistency similar to paste floor wax. Furniture makers use them to give open-grained woods like oak a smooth surface; try them when refinishing a floor. (They are applicable primarily to horizontal surfaces.) Some people use a color different from the wood to make the grain stand out. They come as either oil- or water-based. Oil is difficult to stain once applied (although you can tint it before you apply it or look for a prestained product). If you've sanded down to bright wood chose a clear or neutral water-based paste. Then you can stain it within a day (before it's fully cured) with an alcohol-based stain.

GORDON PHOTO



PHOTOS THESE PAGES: DAVID SHAPPE

Shutter Do's



Although we most often see shutters in pairs, a single shutter like this board-and-batten style at the Henri Penne House in St. Martin Parish, Louisiana, may be used in small windows or where a second shutter would interfere with an architectural element like the door shutter on the right. Opposite: These homeowners may be beating the heat but their shutters are decidedly uncool.

When mounting exterior blinds, it's good to have some hang-ups.

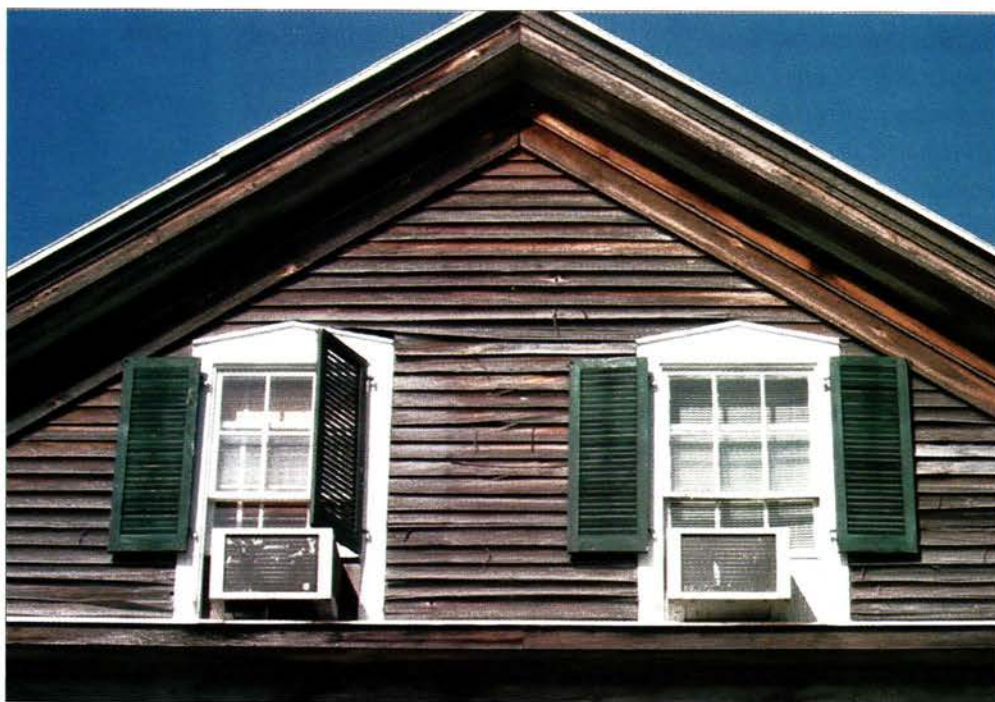
BY PAUL KELSEY WILLIAMS **S**ome people will go to extreme lengths to research the original colors of their Queen Anne or re-create lost bungalow woodwork. Yet many of these same old-house devotees flunk the historical accuracy test when it comes to exterior shutters, installing the wrong shape and even mounting them backwards.

To avoid such blunders, it helps to review exactly what these devices were originally meant to do and how they're supposed to function and to revisit an often overlooked rule contained in the word itself—shutters should shut! Then you'll be ready for an analysis of your existing window openings for clues as to whether your house once had shutters and what you should look for in replacing them.

Shutters 101

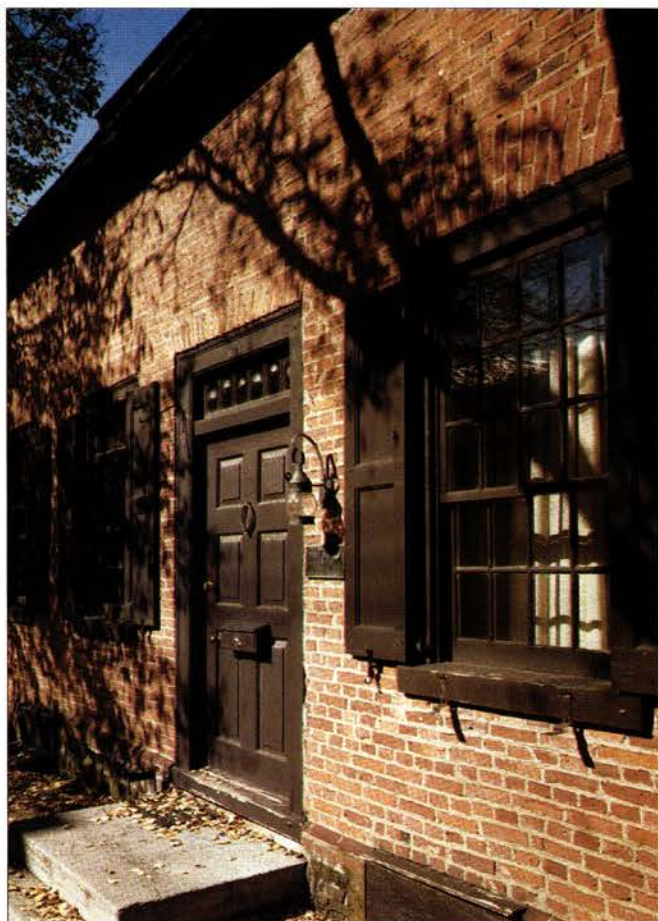
Before window glass was available for every house, exterior wall openings posed a challenge. People needed shelter against inclement weather, privacy from nosy neighbors, and security against hostile natives. The popular and practical solution was to attach solid wood panels or framed wood slats to the sides (occasionally the tops) of the exterior window openings where they could be opened wide for maximum air and sun, closed tight for protection, or left somewhere in between. In summer they could block hot sunrays or the lashings of thunderstorms; in winter they kept out cold wind and blowing snow. When glazed sashes became more common, they also gave the glass added protection.

These panels and slats have been called shutters or blinds pretty much interchangeably since the founding of the country. Even Thomas Jefferson, in a 1796 letter, couldn't decide among shut-



PAUL KELSEY WILLIAMS

and Don'ts



PAUL KELSEY WILLIAMS



Do's: These paneled shutters (above left) and the board-and-batten reproduction shutters from Timberlane Woodcrafters (top) swing on pintle hinges and sport shutter dogs to hold them open. Awning or Bermuda hinges (above) are popular in the subtropics where they block sun while letting in breezes. For more information on Timberlane, circle 30 on resource card.

ters, blinds, Venetian shutters, and Venetian blinds. However, only “shutters” seems to have been used in describing a solid panel, and “Venetian” eventually attached itself to the popular interior treatment.

Styles and Hardware

The key to understanding how to properly size and mount shutters—whether you’re re-creating long lost originals or repairing survivors found on site—is their historical functions, which in turn called for different styles.

On upper floors you’d be likely to encounter louvered blinds, which let in nighttime breezes. Solid shutters gave additional security to the first floor. Moveable louvers could be closed at night with a tilt rod, providing ventilation and privacy simultaneously. In some installations, known as Dutch shutters, the shutters were split so the lower half could be closed while the top half was left open; the room would have fresh air and infants were less likely to fall out or intruders to break in.

Although hardware varied in style and placement, all shutters required some type of hinge to allow them to move and a hook or “shutter dog” to keep them closed. (Often decorative, shutter dogs rotate to hold the shutter fast). A common hinge style was a strap-and-pintle, in which the metal strap pivots on an upright pin. Sometimes seen, although more common on interior shutters, were H and HL hinges, named for their shapes. Mortise hinges sometimes have a catch-and-release feature that locks the shutter open or closed and allows easy removal when it comes time to paint.

The shutter was hinged to the outside edge of the window opening in such a way that it closed into the window recess. Although shutters were most commonly paired on either side of the window, some were the size of the window opening itself and mounted only to one side. This might have been the case where a projecting architectural feature, such as a chimney, would interfere with a shutter on one side.

Awning-style shutters, mounted at the

top of the window, were held open with a wooden dowel, protecting the interior from the sun even when the shutter was completely open. This makes them a popular style for subtropical areas, and they're sometimes sold under names like Bermuda or Bahama shutters.

The Missing Shutter

Some shutters came and went with the seasons, especially after the advent of storm windows. Photographs from the early 20th century showed that the shutters on my parents' 1891 upstate New York house disappeared each winter, with wood storms taking their place in the window recess. Presumably the owners did this to avoid having to close all 56 windows during a blizzard. Like robins, the shutters came back every summer.

If you're not lucky enough to locate vintage photographs of your own old house, you may still find evidence of old shutters, and what type they were, in and around your windows. If the top center of your

window sill has one or two metal brackets or a recessed niche, chances are this was where shutters with hooks could be latched closed from inside the house. Similarly, look for holes or even hooks or catches on your exterior walls not far from your window sills. These would have been used to hold your shutters open. The most telltale sign would be hinge brackets or plates remain-

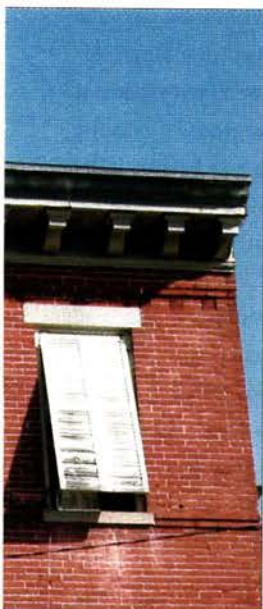
ing on your window frame. You can also look for screw holes or a mortise where the hinge may have been removed long ago.

Irregular lines in the paint on your siding are additional evidence of shutters past. Once they installed permanent storm windows, homeowners grew less likely to close their shutters and the more lackadaisical didn't even bother to paint behind them.

Don'ts: Shutters should be neither too narrow (below) or too long (right). Shutters that are attached to the side of the house—with screws no less (bottom right) make no attempt to fool anyone. If these were fastened to the window moulding, as workable shutters should be, they would be too wide to close.



PAUL KELSEY WILLIAMS



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PAUL ROCHELEAU

Don'ts: You can have shutable shutters and a window box (below) if you mount the box well below your window opening. But even if the window box below were moved, the shutters wouldn't come close to meeting. Not only are the shutters (right) sized to fit below the decorative brickwork, but they're also far too narrow and the "louvers" would appear as mere slits from the opposite side.



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Visit the Restoration Directory at OHJ's Web site, oldhousejournal.com, for more suppliers.

Dirt and leaves caught behind shutters for years may have also left their mark on your siding, and sun can fade siding color if your house hasn't been painted in a long time.

Replacing Shutters

Keeping in mind our rule that shutters should shut—whether or not you ever do so—you should use the window recess as your guide to selecting shutters of the appropriate size. A square peg doesn't fit a round hole, as they say, and square-topped shutters don't fit a rounded or even slightly curved window opening—perhaps the most common mistake. Shutters should be equal to the actual width and length of the window opening: not shorter, not taller, not wider, not narrower! So the shutters can close, or look like they can, they should be mounted with their hinges on the window-surround moulding, never on the house wall.

It's also important to match the original material of the shutters you're attempting to replicate. Plastic shutters won't fool even the most nearsighted observer;

some with fixed molded louvers are one sided and can't be fastened to a hinge. Although most shutters were wood, metal was sometimes used in regions of extreme weather. Louvered shutters, whether of the movable or fixed variety, should be hinged to the window so the louvers angle down and away from the building when the shutters are closed, directing away rain and snow. This means that when your shutters are open, the louvers are angled toward the house. The bottom of shutters were usually beveled so that they matched the pitch of the window sill, closing tightly and keeping out water.

A Note on Color

Early architectural aesthetics often dictated dark colors for shutters. Replicating the dark void of the window opening maintained a similar appearance on all windows of a building when some shutters were closed and others were open. Color choices have changed with the generations, however, and your house may have had white shutters if

built in the 1920s with a brick façade, maybe with a cutout such as a pine tree in the upper panel.

The shutters of your Queen Anne may have taken on painted-lady rainbow hues during the Victorian era. Some acceptable options in the 19th century included using a darker or lighter version of the house's body color or, a bit more daring, painting the rails in the house's trim color and the panels or louvers in its body color. If you want to be on solid, conservative ground go with green, which whether verdigris, forest, or hunter was pretty much a cliché throughout the 1800s. In fact, we could say that the case for painting old shutters green is pretty much open and shut. 🏡

Paul Kelsey Williams is president of Kelsey & Associates, Architectural Historians, (202) 462-3389; washingtonhistory.com.

Shutters, by George

A hurricane scare a few summers ago convinced staff at George Washington's Mount Vernon that the mansion's shutters, installed around 1880, "didn't serve their original purpose," in the words of Dennis Pogue, associate director for preservation. Ten pairs of the shutters are adjusted daily in spring and summer and did a yeoman's job of protecting furniture and textiles from sun damage, but wind and rain were another story.

All that opening and closing had skewed their alignment, and in addition, recent research had shown that their styles were inappropriate to Washington's lifetime. Around 1796, the former president had apparently started changing all the shutters from panels to the louver-style then becoming more popular. He failed to complete the task, however, so that when he died, those on the east front were still panels,

rather than the louvers put up in the late 19th century. According to paintings of that time, he never had shutters on the second storey.

The hardware was all wrong as well. Examination of the window frames and stripping of the six surviving original shutter pairs showed that the louvered shutters were hung on strap-and-pintle hinges (see below) and the panel shutters on HL hinges (named for their shape) rather than the butt hinges then being used.

New paint was also in order. "Green" and even "verdigris" cover a wide spectrum, and simultaneous research at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello showed that since the verdigris paints of the 18th century tended to fade, the original green on both mansions' shutters was a much brighter hue.

Although the six original pairs had been stripped and stained many times, there was

just enough original paint surviving in minute cracks to lend itself to color analysis by consultant Susan Buck.

It took about four months and cost about \$65,000 to replace 24 pairs of handmade, heart pine shutters in the time-appropriate style with the correct hand-forged hardware. "People just assume that a place like Mount Vernon is static," says Pogue. "But as time goes on, we're often given opportunities to apply new research to make things even more authentic."

COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON



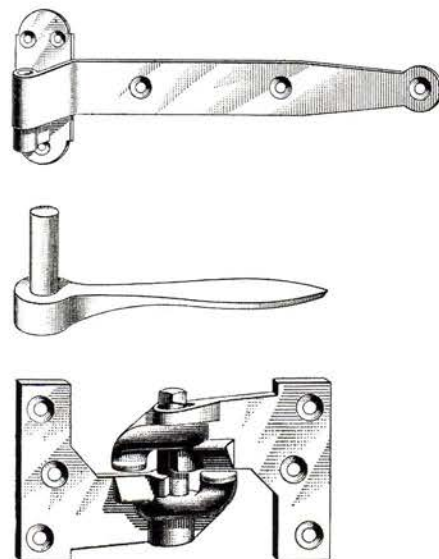
Stripping the parlor window casings on the mansion's east-side revealed clues to the original hinge style.



Do's: Odd-shaped windows will require custom-made shutters—but then so will almost any shutters that will actually close over old-house windows.



PHOTOS BY PAUL KELSEY WILLIAMS



Strap hinges (top) are popular because they help support the shutter. Note the offset strap (to clear brick window jambs). Staple pintles (middle) anchor to wood blocks in masonry. The Acme Lull & Porter hinge (above) allows shutters to lock into either closed or open position.

BY GORDON BOCK **A**mong the most common roofs on old houses, standing seam metal roofs have been used with almost every architectural style since the basic materials became widely available in the mid-19th century. An ingenious system of metal sheets crimped together in seams that jut an inch or more above the surface, standing seam roofs are attractive and highly durable as the primary roof and one of the few options for low-pitched, secondary roofs over porches and bay windows. They are also relatively easy to install, especially on houses with a minimum of ridges and valleys, requiring only a few specialized hand tools and the average mechanical skills of an old-house restorer. If you are smitten by the appeal of metal roofs, here are the basics to get you started on your own.

Preparation Makes Perfect

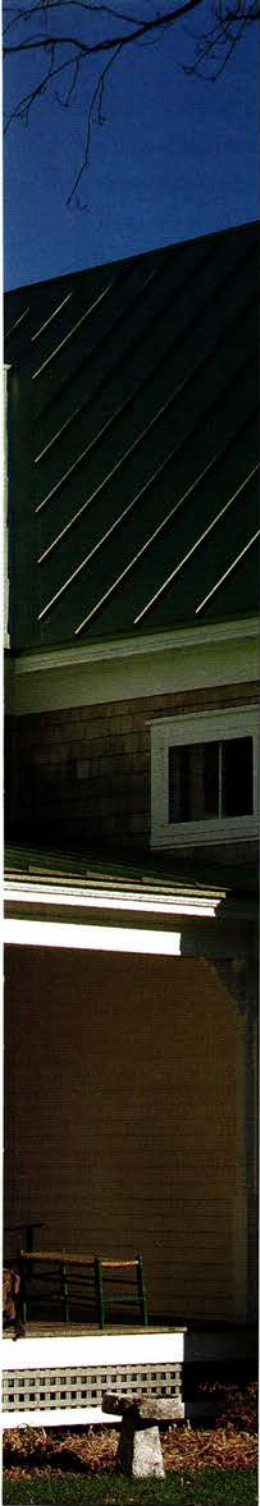
Begin with a clean roof deck. Strip off all old roofing and pull all old nails, making sure that the surface is scrupulously free of anything that can puncture or blemish the new roof. On simple houses and secondary roofs, steel-based standing seam roofing is often installed over spaced decking or skip sheathing—boards laid with gaps of 1 1/2" or so—but all three commonly used materials work equally well over closed-board or plywood decking.

The next step for roofers using steel or the alloy terne is to underlay them with red rosin paper; never use black roofing felt or tar paper with these metals, since the asphalt will corrode them. Copper manufacturers do recommend a roofing felt



Make Mine

Steps to installing standing seam roofs



Left: With parading parallel pans that intersect in eye-catching angles at valleys and ridges, standing-seam metal roofs have been a standard for main roofs in much of the country for more than 150 years and are even more popular for porches.

Right: Steps in making pans:

- 1) When measuring the metal, account for seams at ridges and ends; 2) Metal clips that are nailed to skip sheathing (shown here) or plywood deck will anchor pans and seams; 3) Pans ends get cut and crimped over metal drip edge where they meet the roof eaves and rakes; 4) Some patent roofing tongs can be used for making seams as well as bending up edges; 5) Jaws are either preset for proper bend dimensions or adjusted with bolts.



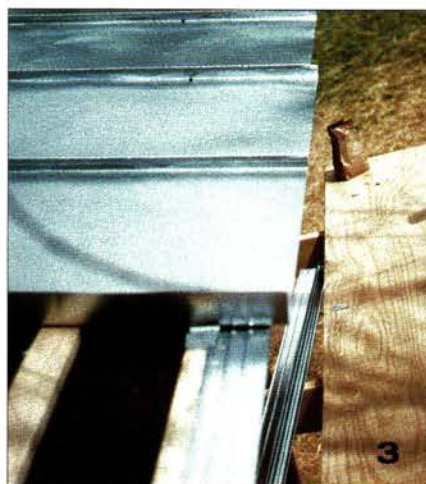
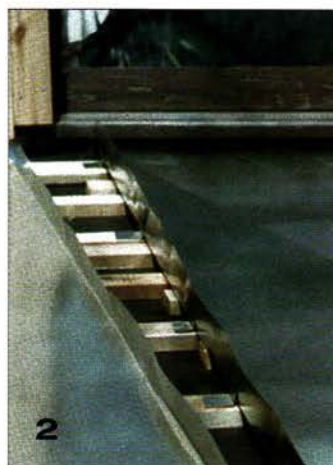
underlayment topped by rosin building paper to keep the saturated felt from bonding to the copper.

In any event, before starting, you should install metal edging around the perimeter of the roof to support the 1/2" to 1" overhang of the sheet metal to discourage water from running back under the edge. Use standard, prefabricated steel drip edge for Terne II and galvanized steel; use copper locking strip for copper (see drawings next page). Nail the edging every 10" along gable ends and edges—anywhere that water will run off.

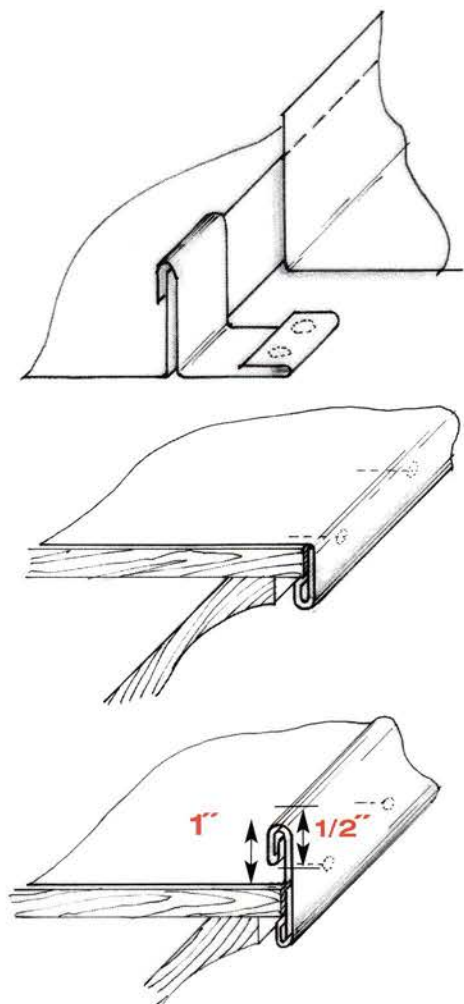
Start Your Sheets

Each length of roofing sheet metal—called a pan—must be bent up at the edges to make seams. Thoughtful planning of the layout and careful measuring of the materials will help make an attractive, smoothly executed installation in the long run. Sketch the layout of your roof, calculating for symmetrical seams and avoiding awkward or unusually narrow pans. Many old-house roofs are built with less than even dimensions, so be prepared to work your layout from the middle of the roof to split up any odd spacings. If you will be making seams along ridges where two roofs meet, remember to offset the pan spacing so that the seams in one roof meet the center of the pans in the other roof. This way, you won't have too much metal to bend into a uniform, tight ridge seam.

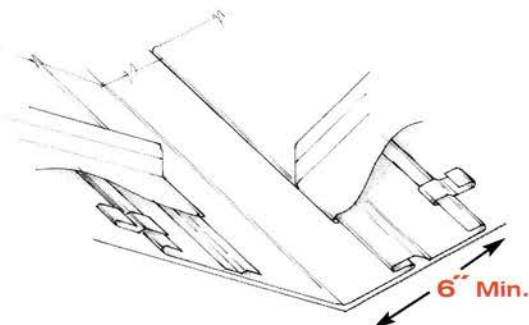
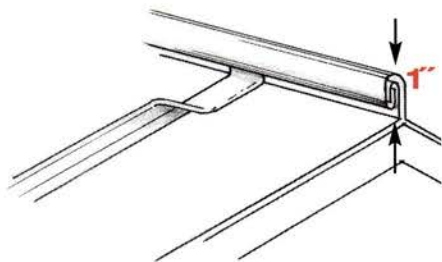
To make pans, measure from 4" above the roof ridge (to allocate metal for a seam)



Metal



Top: Anchor clips bend over the edge of one pan, then fold into a seam with the adjacent pan to secure the roof with no exposed fasteners. Middle: Detail of rake locking strip, especially for copper. Above: Alternate rake detail.



Top: At ridges, seams are folded over flat on the pan, then bent into the seam with the rest of the metal; flatten seams the same way to run pans under siding where they meet a wall. Above: Detail of typical valley installation.

and 1" beyond the roof edge, then cut your metal to this dimension with metal shears or tin snips. Next, bend up the long edges of the pan, 1 1/2" on one side, 1" on the other. (On a simple gable roof, the outboard first and last pans will have one edge—the one that runs along the roof rake—bent down 1" so it can be crimped to the drip edge or locking strip.) The tools made for this purpose, called pan benders, come in several styles—typically simple universal types that work like a giant pair of locking pliers, and patent types that employ foot pedals to speed the bending process (see photos page 69). On some you must first set the jaws to the desired seam depth by adjusting stops and bolts. Generally, it pays to bend an edge in two stages. First bend the entire edge to roughly 45 degrees, then return and bend to the full 90 degrees, taking pains to make sure you have a nice sharp crease in the metal. Don't discard small pieces of scrap metal; instead, cut them into 1" by 2 1/2" strips to make clips for fastening the pans to the deck.

Installing Pans

When you have bent all your pans, you can begin laying the roof. Start with an end pan, fitting the 1" downward bend up snug to the roof rake. (When working on old houses, some roofers like to start laying pans in the middle of the deck and work out to the ends to make sure the pans lie square.) Next, secure the pan to the deck by bending clips over the upright edge every 10" or so, then nailing the clips to the deck. Again,

keep all the creases sharp; they will have to be folded into a seam with the adjacent pan.

Once your end pan is secured, you need to bend the edges around the locking strip or drip edge at the roof perimeter. On the rake, you can simply crimp the metal together using locking pliers. On the bottom edge, however, you will need to cut the pan back 1" or so at the up-bends that make the standing seams. Then you can bend the metal around the drip edge or locking strip.

With the end pan installed you can start laying the rest of the roof and making seams. Take a common pan and lay it with the 1 1/2" edge next to the 1" edge you just clipped down. Fine-tune its position, so the bottom and top edges line up with the previous pan and make sure the pan is snug against the decking. Then clamp both pans together every 2' with locking pliers.

Start seaming between the first two locking pliers at the top of the roof using a seaming iron. Place the iron against the 1" upturned metal edge then, using a soft-faced mallet, bend the 1 1/2" metal edge over the iron to 90 degrees, sliding the iron along as you hammer (see photos next page). When you have bent roughly 2' of seam this way, remove the iron and tap the metal down another 45 degrees using just the hammer. Then move the iron to the opposite side of the seam, place it against the metal, and hammer the seam closed into a tight crimp, making sure that the longer metal edge completely covers the shorter edge and that all the clips are well covered and crimped too.

Seamly Metals

Copper A reddish-brown metal that changes color to shades of brown or green as it develops a self-protecting patina that requires no painting. A high-end material, it is both easily worked and long-lasting.

Terne II An alternative to traditional terne roofing, Terne II (a propri-

etary product of the Folsom Steel company), is copper-bearing sheet steel coated with a tin-zinc alloy. The manufacturer recommends painting Terne II to extend its life.

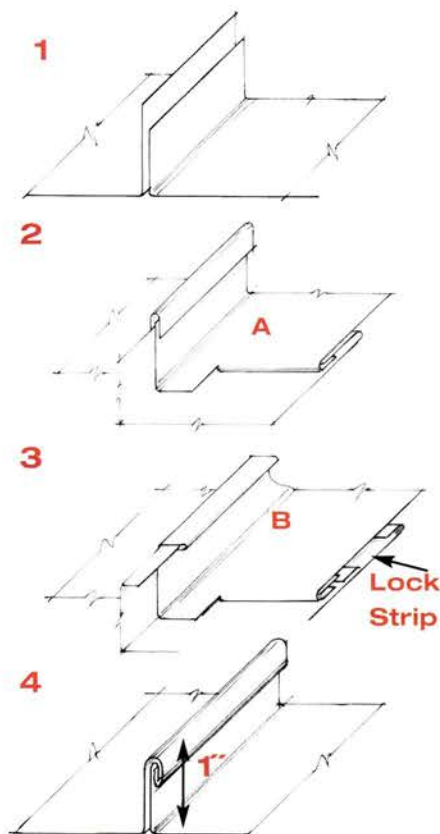
Galvanized Steel

The stiffest and most prosaic of the three common residential metals, galvanized steel is sheet

steel either electroplated or hot-dipped (the thickest coating method) in zinc. Galvanized steel should be painted with good metal paint a year after installation (once manufacturing oils have weathered away). Some manufacturers also offer prepainted galvanized sheet.

At this point you have completed a bend, but you will need to repeat this process to join the pans in a double-lock standing seam. Starting in the middle of the section you just finished, place the shorter side of the iron against the same edge where you began and bend the metal down to 90 degrees. Continue with the rest of the steps on as much seam as possible between the locking pliers, then move on and do another section. After you have completed an adjacent seam section, you can remove one of the pliers and fill in the seam underneath it.

Once you have mastered the basic bending and seaming methods, you can employ these skills to make roof and hip ridges, valleys, and other details that may be called for on more complex roofs (see drawings at left). When you're done, paint your Terne II roof immediately in a historic shade of black, red, green, or silver, then stand back and enjoy the traditional lines of a standing seam roof. 🏠



PHOTOS BY CAROL Y. MOATES



Above left: Steps to basic double-lock standing seams: 1) Bend up pan edges at appropriate heights, typically 1" and 1 1/2"; 2) Bend higher edge over lower edge; 3) Begin second bend of seam; 4) Complete seam into double lock. Note: Where long runs of pan metal need to be joined end-to-end, use transverse seams A or B, with locking strip for low pitch. Above right: A seaming iron is a low-tech roofing tool, easily made by a welder. Use one side (top) for forming the first bend, the other side (above) for forming and completing the double lock.

Suppliers

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The success of the standing-seam roof rests on the height and integrity of the seam. It typically projects 1" or more above the surface and is therefore higher than any running water.

The Stain Decision

BY STEVE JORDAN **W**hen painting contractor Mike Ryan came to estimate a job for Joyce Sudak and Chris Carretta six years ago, he was surprised at the project they had in mind. To restore the exterior of their early 20th-century Colonial Revival house, Joyce and Chris had decided to remove the aluminum siding, strip the multiple coats of old paint, and renew the finish with solid-color stain. Chris had been pleased with the results of using stain on a troublesome side of a previous home and was convinced stain was the best option for this house, too. Joyce and Chris were aware that stain might have to be applied more often than paint, but were convinced that long-term costs would be less because preparation and maintenance tend to be easier. Solid-color stain is frequently pitched to new-house owners as a solution to exterior paint problems and a less labor-intensive coating to apply and keep up. For old houses, stain can certainly be an alternative to paint, but it is not a panacea. Looking at the nature and use of exterior stains can help you decide if they are right for your old house.

Answers to questions on alternative exterior coatings

What are Stains?

Exterior stains have been around for well over a hundred years. Early stains, used to protect and decorate wood roof and wall shingles, were often formulated with durable but toxic creosote bases. Painters dipped shingles into buckets of stain to ensure the best possible absorption into the wood and also to treat the backside of the shingle prior to installation. Inexpensive asphalt shingles eventually re-

placed wood on roofs, but various types of shingle siding remained popular throughout the 20th century. Staining regained status in the 1970s with the advent of rough-sawn board and sheet siding, especially unplaned cedar and textured plywood. These modern stains are generally divided into two types:

Semitransparent stain formulated with a low pigment-to-vehicle ratio is a translucent coating that allows the grain and texture of the fiber to show through. Available in water-based and oil-based formulas, semitransparent stain is especially attractive on new wood, but it offers little protection from the effects of UV exposure and must be renewed frequently. Often, exteriors that



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY STEVE JORDAN





Mike Ryan's crew took the Sudak/Carretta house through important preparation steps for staining: stripping off all the old paint with heat guns (far left) and applying tinted primer (left). Fading was a problem with the oil-based stain, however, and now the house gleams in a two-year-old coat of acrylic stain (above).

ANDY OLENICK



Expect stain applied to quality vertical-grained clapboard to weather with some initial unevenness (left). Always apply two coats of stain. The stain has faded on most of this wall (center), which was given only one coat, but color survives where the stain was overlapped during application. Stain, just like paint, can peel, as it has on this low-quality, plain-sawn clapboard (bottom).

PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK



start out with semitransparent stain are eventually recoated with solid stain or paint. In situations where wood surfaces are allowed to weather for extended periods without recoating, if they are darkened by water stains, or if weathered boards are randomly replaced, semitransparent stains may no longer provide an acceptable appearance.

Solid-color stain is a heavier bodied opaque stain that covers the grain of the wood but allows the texture to show. Also available in both water- and oil-based formulas, solid-color stain is, simply stated, thin paint. It performs exceptionally well on new or old rough-sawn surfaces, but its use on the smooth clapboards and trim of older houses is a recent practice.

Some authorities believe that staining an old house is never appropriate. They argue that paint is the only acceptable coating because its durable film is the best protection from UV and rain exposure. Nevertheless, many homeowners and painting contractors point to the success they've had with stain.

To Prime or Not to Prime?

Proper surface preparation—the key to best results for any finish—is particularly important for successful staining. To stain the exterior of a house that has formerly been painted, you need to remove all old paint down to bare wood. Unpainted weathered wood that has not been painted for decades (the kind often found under replacement sidings) should be sanded to a sound substrate. This means sanding until the weathered wood resembles the golden color of new wood.

Old paint can be removed by scraping, sanding, chemicals, heat guns and plates, or a combination of these methods. If the removal leaves a rough surface, it must be smoothed with a random orbit or pad sander. At the Sudak/Carretta job, Mike and his crew removed the paint with heat guns—which in experienced hands are clean and quick and inflict minimal damage—before sanding. Stripped areas should not be exposed to the weather longer than necessary.



COURTESY OF SAMUEL CABOT INC.

In 1910 stain pioneers Samuel Cabot Inc. mounted this trade show exhibit (above), only two years after its first Chelsea, Massachusetts, plant was destroyed by fire. Exterior stains still have their place a century later. This recently reapplied stain (below) is free of any blemishes or signs of weathering.



ANDY OLEWICK



In the 1910s Lowe Brothers, a premier paint producer, marketed these brown, green, and grey stains expressly for the rough-sawn shingles and siding that "lend a rustic air to a house."

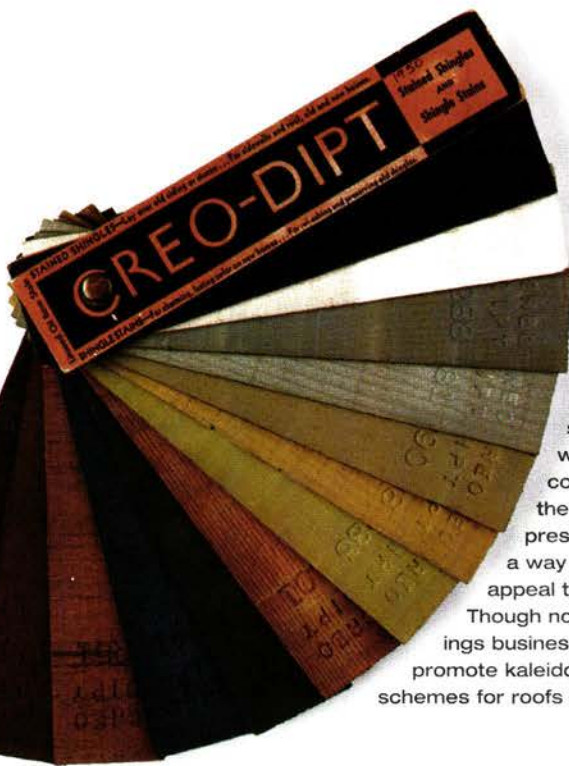
It's best to prime or stain the day of stripping so the coating can bind to fresh wood fiber, not a dirty or oxidized surface.

Oil-based stains, which predate water-based stains by many decades, don't require priming. Two coats of solid-cover stain will block disfiguring stains (say, from rust) and provided a uniform coating. Priming is important, however, when topcoating with water-based or acrylic stains, says John Stauffer, technical director of Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute, a raw materials supplier and testing agency. Priming seals tannin stains, water stains, and knots that often blemish water-based stains, especially those that are light colored. Whether you are using oil-based or water-based stain, you need to coat any potential sources of new rust stains, such as nails, with a rust inhibitive primer.

You can apply the primer by brushing, rolling, or spraying. When rolling, you might need to go over the surface again and "back-brush" the stain to remove roller marks and runs or sags. If spraying, back-brush or roll the primer to work it into the wood.

Choosing and Applying Stain

Before you buy, review the pros and cons of paint versus oil- or water-based stains. The surface film of paint offers more



By the 1950s, the Creo-Dipt Company of Tonawanda, New York, offered customers a rainbow of over a dozen stain colors. Creo-Dipt was just one of several companies that, starting in the 1920s, manufactured prestained wood shingles as a way to add both life and eye-appeal to a mature product. Though not in the paints and coatings business per se, they helped promote kaleidoscopic stain color schemes for roofs and wall treatments.

protection so it will last longer. Stain will have to be recoated more often but once applied usually goes on more easily than paint. It's a forgiving coating that rarely shows brush marks.

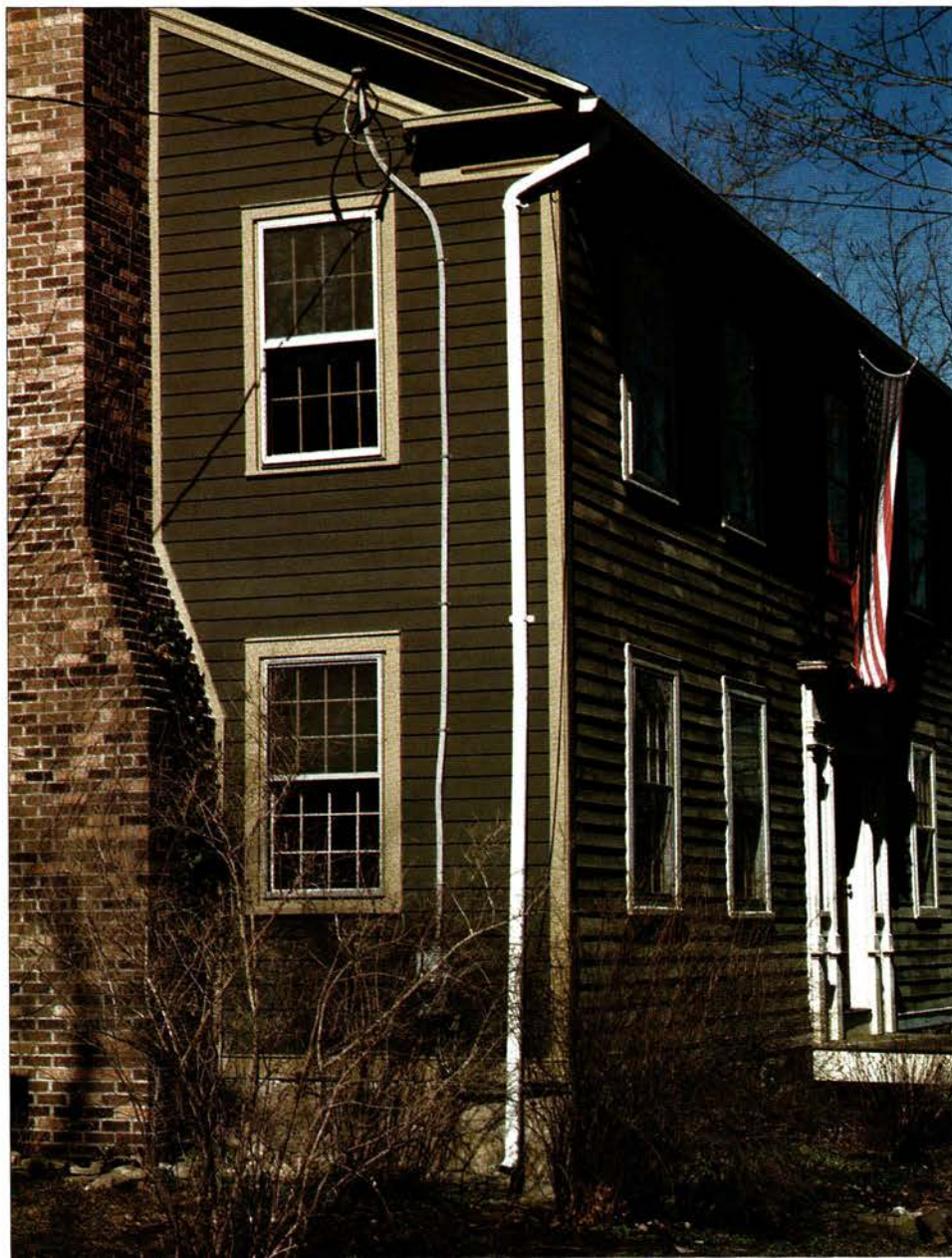
High-quality stain is also slightly less expensive than the best exterior paints. Always select a top-of-the-line stain for your project. Shelling out a dollar or two less per gallon might cost you a year or two in the life of the stain, cancelling out any savings on the original material.

Oil-based stains feed the growth of mildew so if you've had a mildew problem, it might be better to use a 100 percent acrylic stain. You should also consider a pure acrylic if your house has had a peeling problem related to interior moisture, as moisture can pass through the acrylic film more readily

Exacerbating Problems

Homeowners who consider staining their houses are often reacting to years of frustration with peeling paint and frequent repainting. Yet if there are conditions in your old house that prevent the success of a quality paint job, it's unlikely that stains will fare any better. Conditions that adversely affect the life of an exterior coating include leaky or misaligned gutters, leaking roofs, ice dams, splash-back, excessive indoor humidity, and inappropriate or poorly installed materials. These problems and any others must be addressed before painters arrive on the scene. Some homeowners also believe that stains will not peel. This is not true. If the film layer becomes excessively thick or stain is used over plain sawn siding, peeling will occur the same as with paint.

An oil-based stain applied to this house 10 years ago can still be seen on the front; the side has just benefited from a new coat of oil-based stain in a slightly different shade.



PATTON'S TOR-ON SHINGLE STAIN

For description, see page 40



RUSSET

362



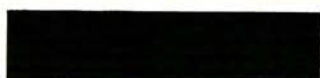
MAROON

360



IVY GREEN

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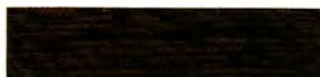
ROOF GREEN

353



INDIAN RED

343



WALNUT

363



MOSS GREEN

354



SLATE

366



Tor-on Shingle Stain will make this type of building last many years longer by warding off sun and rain, thus preventing warping and splitting of the shingles.

In the 1930s, Tor-On was marketing its stains for protecting shingles, while more subtly pointing out the aesthetic enhancements of its eight color choices.

than through oil film. Acrylic stains also retain their color longer and maintain flexibility in the coating film much better than the oils. An advantage of oil-based stains, in addition to not requiring a prime coat, is what at first appears to be solely a disadvantage. Although they fade more quickly than acrylics, this deterioration of the coating film prevents excessive film build-up in areas exposed to the sun and rain. Initially, Mike and his crew primed the Sudak/Caretta clapboards with oil-based primer and stained the house with two coats of oil-based solid-color stain. He inspected the house every year and usually recoated one side, thus working his way around the house every four years. The goal was to

ensure a pristine appearance and spread out the maintenance costs.

Although the oil stain held up well, the medium- to-dark color faded, especially on the south. Two years ago to remedy the problem, Mike lightly sanded and washed the existing stain and switched to a 100 percent acrylic, which today looks freshly painted. It appears that the acrylic stain will need touching up only every three to five years.

Many manufacturers claim that one-coat coverage is possible, but whether you go with oil or acrylic stain, you'll get a more uniform appearance and more weather protection with two coats.

The first coat should always be brushed

or rolled over the bare wood or primer to cover every nook and cranny. Working the stain into the substrate prevents random failure around cracks, board joints, nail heads, and other breaks in the surface. If you apply the second coat within a few days of the first you can spray it on the second coat without back-brushing or rolling.

Staining an older house may or may not be the best solution to solve paint problems or to restore the appearance of a historic exterior. The cost to strip off all the old paint and prepare the siding is a major expense. On the other hand, paint is also most durable when applied to bare wood, and stain will give you easier preparation and application when you recoat. In any case, the expense of materials isn't the deciding factor; the cost of top-quality stain is insignificant compared to the labor. Your decision may come down to assessing your own personality: If you tend to procrastinate and put off chores, paint might better adapt to your schedule. If you're a stickler about maintenance who keeps up with every job that arises, stain might be the choice for you. 🏠

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Bungalow



Thrill

A Minnesota couple expand their house-style savvy from a Beatles tune to Arts & Crafts-inspired décor.

BY SUSAN DAVIS PRICE **W**hen Julie Baugnet and husband Carter Clapsadle first drove by the ho-hum bungalow in St. Paul they didn't want to look inside. It appeared especially unpromising from the alley, recalls Carter. "Julie couldn't imagine that we'd like the interior." But after losing several other properties in bidding wars, the couple made an appointment to view the house up close.

Their first look inside was equally discouraging. "There were baby pink miniblinds and black valences on the windows," says Julie, "plus grey walls and dirty shag carpet. All the windows were caulked shut with thick ropes of visible putty." The kitchen floor was covered in large black and white vinyl squares; one bathroom sported brown wallpaper and green shag carpeting.

On the plus side was the open configuration of the living and dining rooms. They pulled aside the blinds and found a wall of beautiful wavy-glass windows that allowed sun to pour in. There was room for each to have a studio: Julie is a painter and graphic designer, Carter is a landscape designer. The backyard was large enough for a garden. Best of all, the price was right.

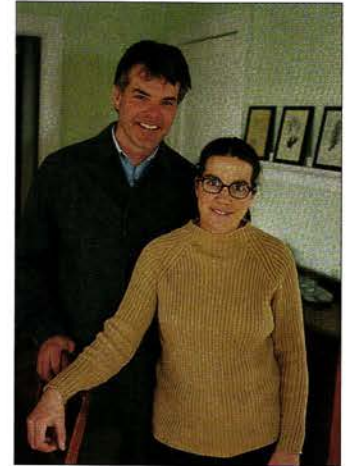
At the time neither knew much about the American bungalow style although as artists, they were familiar with the Arts & Crafts movement. Carter jokes that his knowledge of bungalows was pretty much limited to the Beatles' song "Bungalow Bill"—which is not at all about houses but a not-so-great white hunter who goes stalking tigers with his mother.

As it turned out, nothing could have suited the couple's personalities and philoso-

Carter Clapsadle and Julie Baugnet (above right) furnished much of their house with flea-market finds. Of the three living room chairs that they had reupholstered in different fabrics, two came from salvage shops and the third from a dumpster. The couple stripped paint from the brick on the façade and built new steps (right), but still need to restore eaves, soffits, and siding.



PHOTOS BY JOHN GREGOR





phies better than this 1920s bungalow. They fell in love with its handcrafted quality and immersed themselves in learning the skills needed to bring back the initial charm of what they now call Bluestem Cottage. "When this was built," Carter says, "all the work was done with hammer and nails, with paint brush and with saws. There were no nail guns or paint sprayers. You could see the gentle brush strokes on the wall. We like that look."

In keeping with the Arts & Crafts tenet that residents should decorate and maintain their own homes, Julie and Carter have done most of the restoration themselves. "We have only hired workers twice," Julie says, "to reroof the house and for a major plumbing job."

They've stripped wallpaper, painted walls, dismantled chain-link fencing, built cabinets, installed retaining walls, repointed brick work, and laid terracing. "We didn't know how to do many of these jobs at the beginning," Carter comments, "but we bought the tools, read the books, and watched all the home repair shows. We just figured it out as we needed to."

Along the way, the two have reused

and scrounged as much as possible. "We try to recycle everything," Julie says. "There was an ugly deck off the kitchen. We tore that down and built our fence out of the wood." They found their pedestal bathroom sink driving through a nearby alley. Most of their furniture came from antique and second-hand stores. They rescued a favorite living room chair from the dumpster of a local college, then reupholstered it.

In the best Arts & Crafts tradition, the two have not been content merely to repair and renovate but have personalized their space with items they love. "We learned that many of the Arts & Crafts pioneers painted words on their walls," says Julie. In the library, the couple painted a frieze just below the ceiling with the names of their favorite authors. The list begins with "Aristotle" and ends with "John Updike."

Carter's studio contains a similar frieze—the Latin names of his best-loved plants. In the ceiling's center, he painted a circle of famous landscape designers' names. Against one wall he built a floor-to-ceiling bookcase to hold his tomes on plants and landscape design. To the right of his drafting table is a view out to the garden.





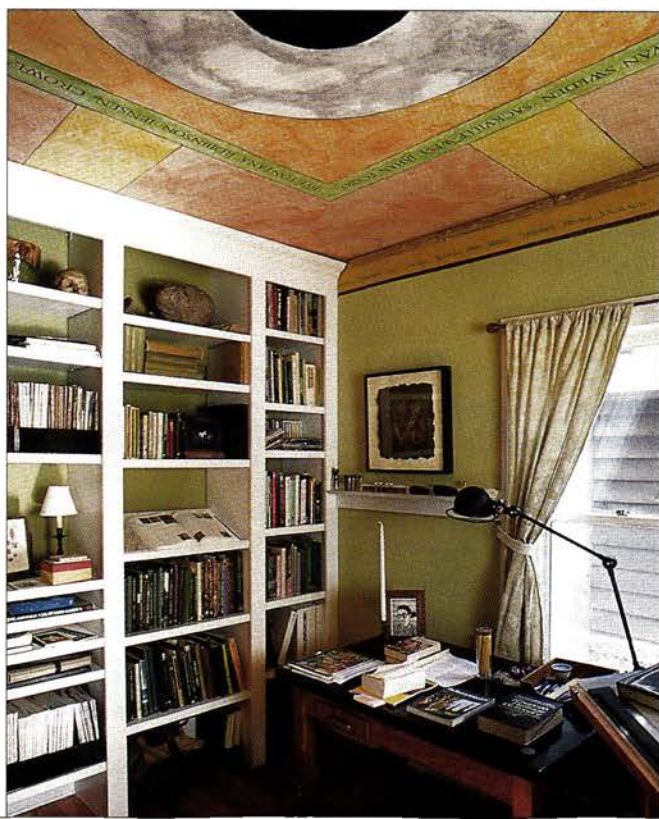
Arts & Crafts proponents advocated a strong connection with nature, through design that would bring the outdoors in and living areas into the out-of-doors. Carter and Julie held this view even before moving into Bluestem Cottage. Both are hikers, environmentalists, and lovers of the green and growing world. Carter uses many native plants in his designs; Julie paints portraits of leaves, twigs, birds, and bugs.

Their home is a sophisticated reworking of these interests with subtle reminders of the natural world throughout the house. They painted the walls in tones of green, cream, and brown and reupholstered several chairs in muted fabrics with small leaf patterns. Julie painted an acorn on the fireplace, leaves in her studio, and insects that crawl across doors. In the kitchen she created a mural with the tree of life at its center with birds and tiny edible plants scattered against the yellow background.



Julie and Carter did virtually all the work on their bathroom—plumbing, tile, wainscoting, fixtures—after removing the brown wallpaper and green shag carpeting. Carter built the screen in their dining room and Julie oil painted its design. She also painted the insects on the door

to Carter's study, where the botanical names of plants form a frieze and those of famous landscape architects decorate the ceiling. Seating throughout the back garden beckon visitors to relax and enjoy its many views.



Even the name of the cottage is a reference to nature. Big and little bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii* and *Schizachyrium scoparium*) are grasses, native to the prairie, that once covered the north central states.

To further strengthen their connection to the outdoors, Carter created views that would be framed by the uncovered windows—a terraced garden at the rear, a slope of grasses, conifers, and shrubs in the front. He designed the backyard for spring and summer interest using bulbs, perennials, and flowering shrubs. Trees arch over the space, providing a canopy. The front yard takes center stage in fall and winter with blazing foliage and bright berries. Golden grasses wave in the wind; aster and golden rod add shots of color. All season, weeping junipers, globe spruce, and pine provide a backdrop of green and grey.

In true bungalow style, the back garden is an outdoor living room. Benches in several spots let visitors see the landscape as a series of vignettes. One bench stands in the side garden, a meditative area of Asian and Islamic influences. Just outside the kitchen, a table and chairs make for easy, all-summer alfresco dining. Julie and Carter like to entertain here near the side of the garage where they've mounted a large screen for showing their travel and garden slides. "By living outside, you become more attuned to your community as well as to the seasons," says Carter. "We've met many of our neighbors as we work in the garden. Many of them will walk by to see what's in bloom."

Today the house and yard that were once smothered under '60s and '70s frills glow with warmth and original detail. Wood and brick and stone have replaced the vinyl and chain link. "The landscape architect of the Prairie style, Jens Jensen, used to tell his clients to ask the land what it wants to be," notes Julie. "So we just kept asking this house what it wants to be." 🏡

Susan Davis Price lives in an old house in St. Paul's twin city of Minneapolis.

Kit Parade

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parts, complete with assembly instructions and a bottle of glue. Put it all together, apply Minwax® stains and finishes and you'll have fine furniture made from top-quality wood as the above two kits illustrate.

For instance, if the daily mail ends up all over the place you can easily give it a handsome home with a British-style mailbox, *above left*. This unique table-top piece took only a couple of hours to complete. It was stained with a quick coat of Minwax® Gel Stain Walnut to give the wood a deep rich tone, followed by two coats of Minwax® Polycrylic® Protective Finish in a gloss sheen.

The recent revival of Mission and Arts and Crafts-style furniture hasn't gone unnoticed by kit manufacturers. With the high prices of antiques, reproductions offer a realistic way to bring home this style's strong, simple lines and rich woods. This end table, *above right*, started as 26 pieces of white oak. Minwax® Wood Finish™ Golden Pecan stain, followed by two coats of Minwax® Fast-Drying Polyurethane in satin, brought out the best in the oak grain by adding a subtle sheen.

Minwax Tips For Kits

The great thing about kit furniture is that it comes unassembled. That's good news when it comes to applying stains; sometimes you'll find it much easier to apply the stain before everything goes together. And Minwax® Gel Stain is the perfect choice. Like the name suggests, Minwax® Gel Stain has a thick, jelly-like consistency that allows you to wipe on color right where you need it—without drips or runs. Work on a small area at a time, using a soft, clean cloth. Be sure to avoid joints and other sections that will need to be glued later, or use tape to mask off these areas. Once you've achieved the depth and tone of color you want, use another clean cloth to smooth the surface and wipe off excess stain. Now, assemble your stained furniture pieces, and you are ready for the final topcoat of Minwax® Polycrylic® Protective Finish.



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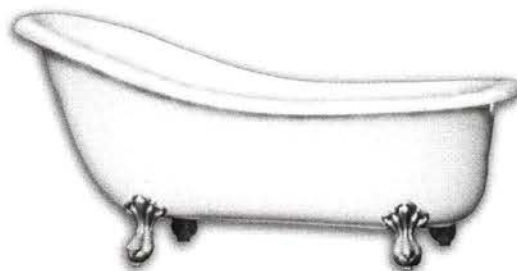
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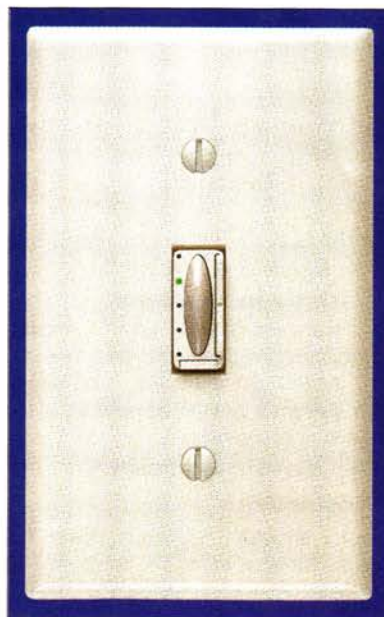


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How Cheeky!

Okay, maybe you could achieve the same, ahem, end by merely wearing a beat-up man's dress shirt, but it's hard to resist this

marketing gimmick. Duluth Trading Company is peddling these long-tail T-shirts to help those who, when bending over in the course of their restoration work, find themselves plagued by what Duluth calls "the age-old problem of 'plumber's butt.'" We're tempted to make some additional smart-aleck cracks, but instead, we'll just flash you the facts: With a taped neck, shoulder seams, and pocket, the shirt is a durable 5.5 ounces of 100 percent cotton, comes in orange, navy, and ash grey, and sells for \$10. For women, who might not experience this exposure problem, it makes a swell sleep shirt. Call Duluth at (800) 505-8888 or visit www.duluthtrading.com. Circle 10 on resource card.

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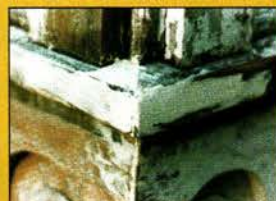
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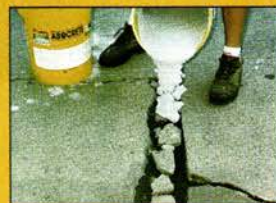
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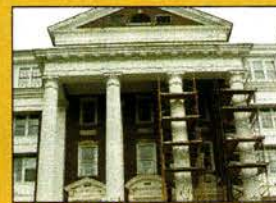
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Making an Entrance

Question: I'm looking for information on historically accurate flooring for the vestibule of my mid-1800s Second Empire row house. I have read about encaustic tiles, but are there any alternatives? Leonie Haimson, New York

Marble added entryway panache to 1850s row house vestibules.

BY NANCY E. BERRY **I**f you're not enamored with the look of encaustic tiles—decorative Victorian ceramics popular from 1850 to 1870—marble is another historically accurate choice for your vestibule. As Americans moved from the restrained aesthetics of Federal and Greek Revival styles in the early 19th century to the ornate Second Empire and Italianate styles of mid-century, more sophisticated building materials—including marble—went into the house design. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, even the burgeoning middle class could afford to add rich decorative finishes to their homes, and what better place to start incorporating these materials than in the entryway?

Simply a transitional space that offered refuge from the elements upon entering the house, the vestibule and its décor had been largely ignored in 18th- and early 19th-century row houses. The flooring at this time would most likely have been yellow pine planks protected from tracked-in water and dirt with plain rush mats covered with oil-cloths. The dramatic shift in architectural styles fueled by the 1840s Romantic Movement in architecture gave Victorians the chance to show off new-found wealth and status through their home's decoration. The once overlooked entryway now offered homeowners the luxury of marble underfoot—along with ornate arched doorways, etched glass, and scrolled door-jambs.

The opening of commercial marble quarries in America about this time made the material widely

The birthplace of President Theodore Roosevelt was reconstructed after his death in 1919 and is now open as a museum. The Italianate-style row house showcases a black and white marble foyer, much like the original.



PHOTOS BY ROB KASSABIAN

Whacking at Wax

One of the biggest challenges that homeowners face when restoring marble flooring is removing old wax finishes. Fred Hueston, director of the National Training Center for Stone and Masonry Trades, advises that stripping a marble floor with commercial alkaline strippers will require a floor buffing machine and a wet vacuum, both available through janitorial rental supply companies. Before beginning, protect painted surfaces such as baseboards with plastic. Mix the stripper solution in a bucket following the instructions on the label. Apply the mixed solution with a string mop to one small section at a time. Let the stripper sit for several minutes to allow the material to break up the coating. If the stripper begins to dry, add more solution.

Scrub the floor using a 175 rpm standard buffing machine equipped with a black stripping brush. Continue scrubbing until the coating breaks up. Some soft marble may be scratched by stripping pads and brushes, so always test a small area first before proceeding with your entire project.

Pick up the solution with the wet vacuum and rinse immediately. Use a separate string mop, bucket, and wringer for your rinse water. Examine the area and restrip any residual coating. When the job is finished be sure to rinse the floor thoroughly; most alkaline strippers have a tendency to leave a film. Adding several ounces of a good neutral cleanser or stone soap to the rinse water will help neutralize the stripping solution. Allow at least 24 hours before applying a sealer.

Fred Hueston is the director of the National Training Center for Stone and Masonry Trades; (407) 834-4880, www.ntc-stone.com.

available. Vermont was one of the first states to supply this cool stone to builders. The western slope of the Green Mountain chain in Vermont and Massachusetts offered some of the most important limestone formations in the country. Those of West Rutland, Vermont, were extensively mined, yielding coarsely granular grey and white marble. Isle of Motte marble from the Champlain Valley was solid black and often chosen as floor tiles, notes 19th-century geologist S.M. Burnham in his book *The History and Uses of Limestones and Marbles*. New York also had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of marble. White and black marble, abundant on Staten Island, was easily ferried over to Manhattan for the city's housing construction boom.

Another boost to marble consumption came from improvements in stone-cutting machinery. The introduction of "ready made" marble tiles revolutionized the marble industry. Once quarried, the stone

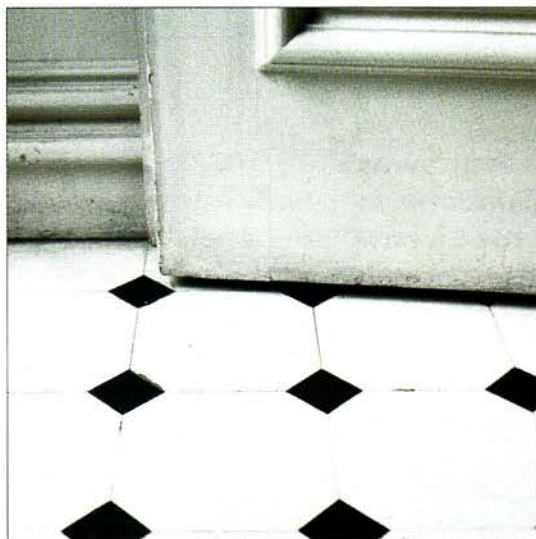
was cut with gang saws and given a honed finish with water-powered rubbing beds, says Robert Pye, director of the Vermont Marble museum. Before this time, marble was hand hewn, making it expensive and available only to the very wealthy.

Marble was not only durable and easy to clean, it made a great first impression on guests. The stone was such a fashionable commodity, Theodore Roosevelt's mother went so far as to station a marble receptacle in the family's entryway to collect "calling cards" from visitors vying for social status in the city. Many callers would not be admitted any farther—Mrs. Roosevelt was home only for those she felt were both her social and moral equals.

Italianate and Second Empire vestibules would have been a few feet long and usually all white marble, or a combination of black and white marble tile, with a honed finish. Although many tastemakers and architects of the time believed encaustic tiles to be more durable and more attractive, a floor highly decorated with these ceramics would often cost more than one of marble according to historian Charles Lockwood in *Bricks and Brownstone*. Nevertheless, marble was widely used throughout the rest of the 19th and early 20th century. 🏠

For more information on the history of marble visit the Web site of the Vermont Marble museum at www.vermont-marble.com.

For information on the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace museum, call (212) 260-1616 or visit www.theodore-roosevelt.com.



Marble floors of the mid-1800s would have had a honed rather than polished finish.

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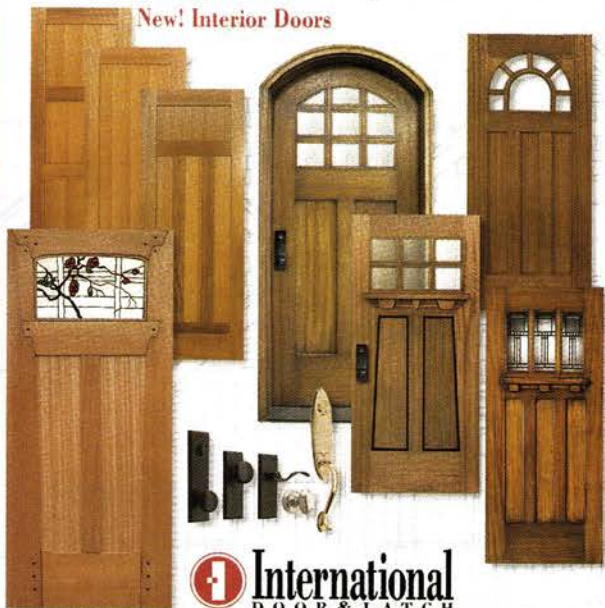
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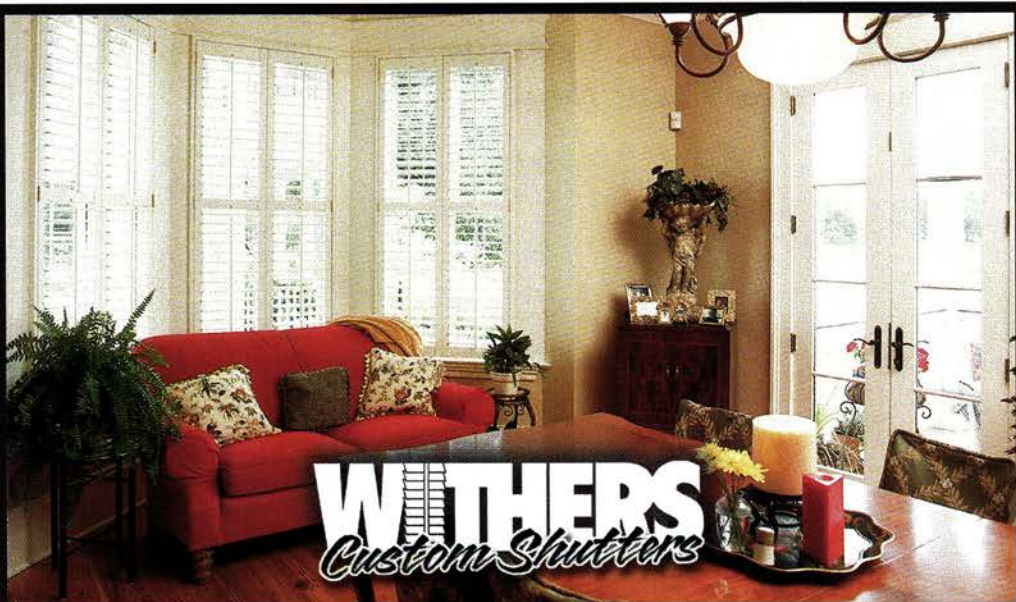


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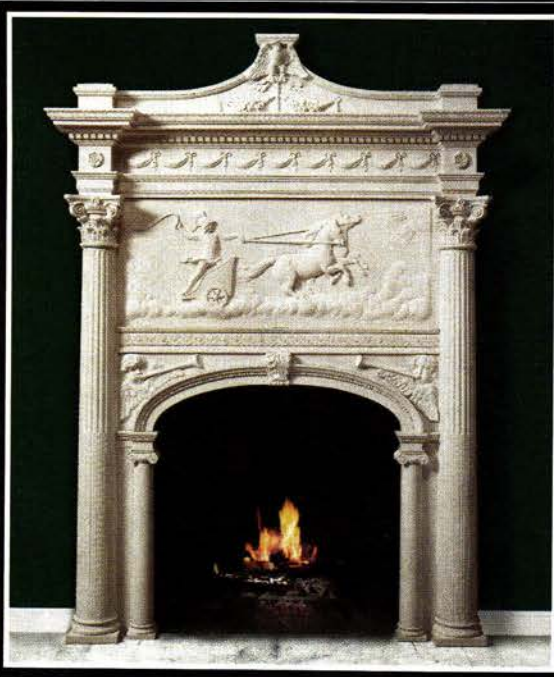
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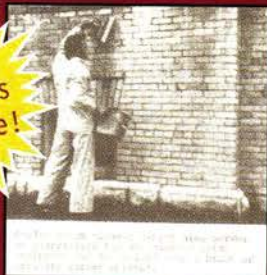
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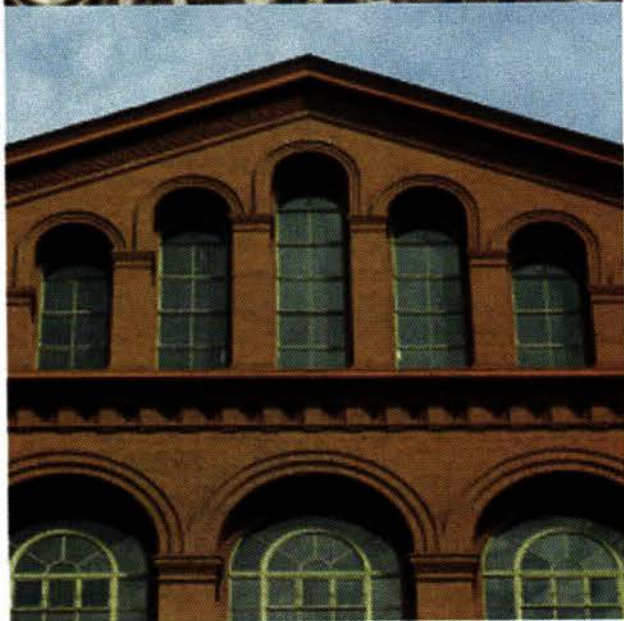
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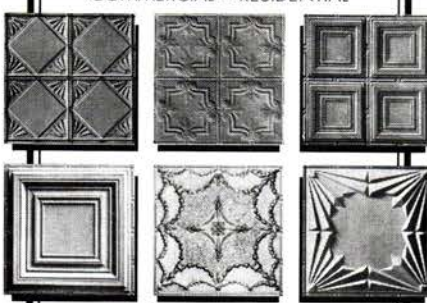
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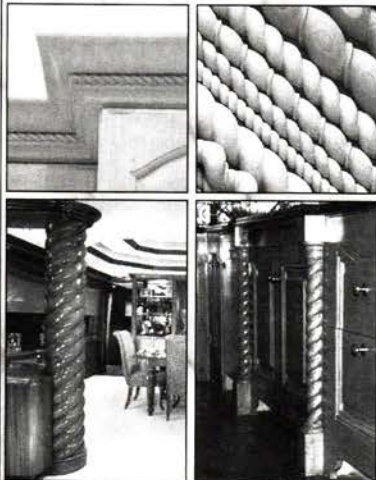


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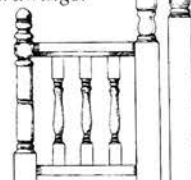
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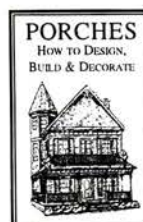


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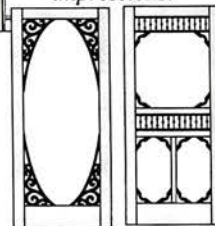
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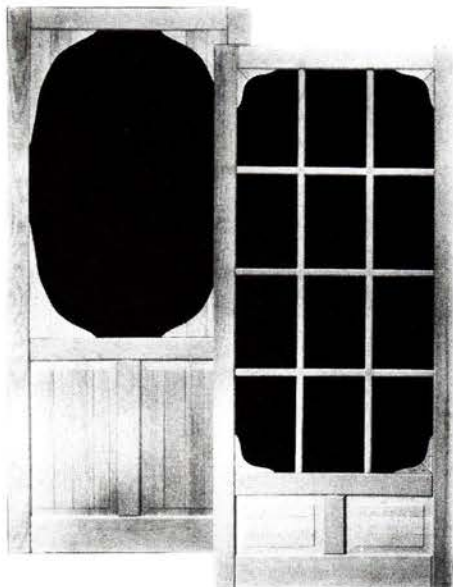
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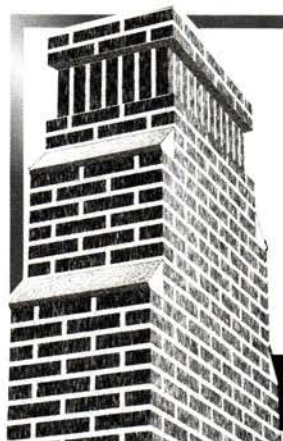


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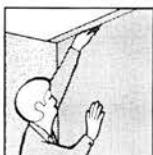
1. Cut fiberglass mat 2" longer than height.



2. Apply saturant to area to be covered.



3. Apply fiberglass mat to wet surface.



4. Trim excess mat where wall meets ceiling.



5. Trim mat at baseboard and window.



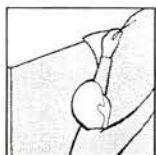
6. Trim mat at outlets, switches, etc.



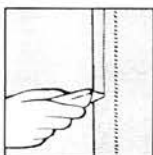
7. Apply second coat of saturant to wet mat.



8. Apply 1st coat of saturant to adjacent area.



9. Apply mat to 2nd area, overlapping by 1".



10. Cut down center of overlap (both layers).



11. Remove mat strips on both sides of cut.



12. Apply 2nd coat of saturant (include seam)

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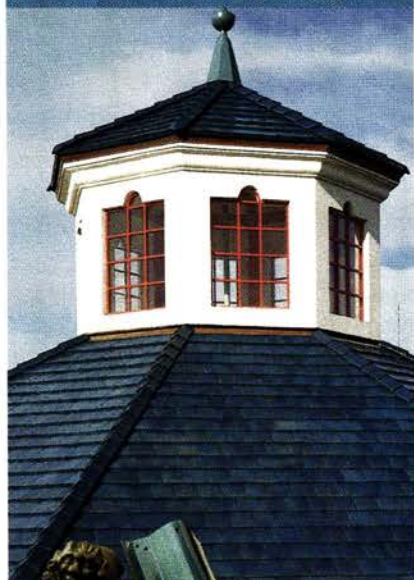
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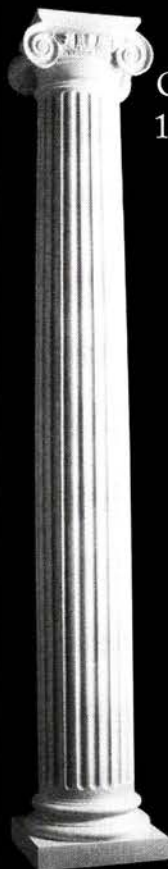
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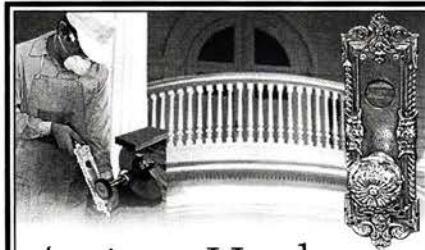
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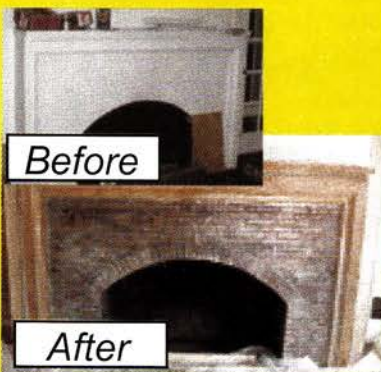
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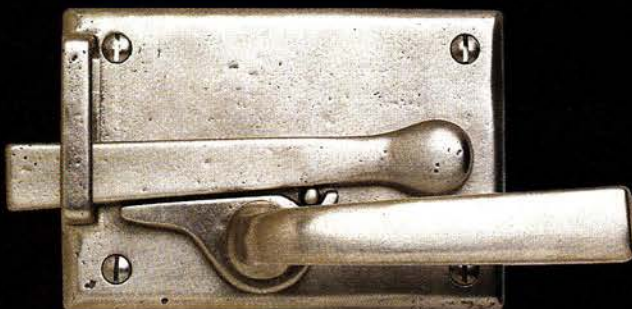
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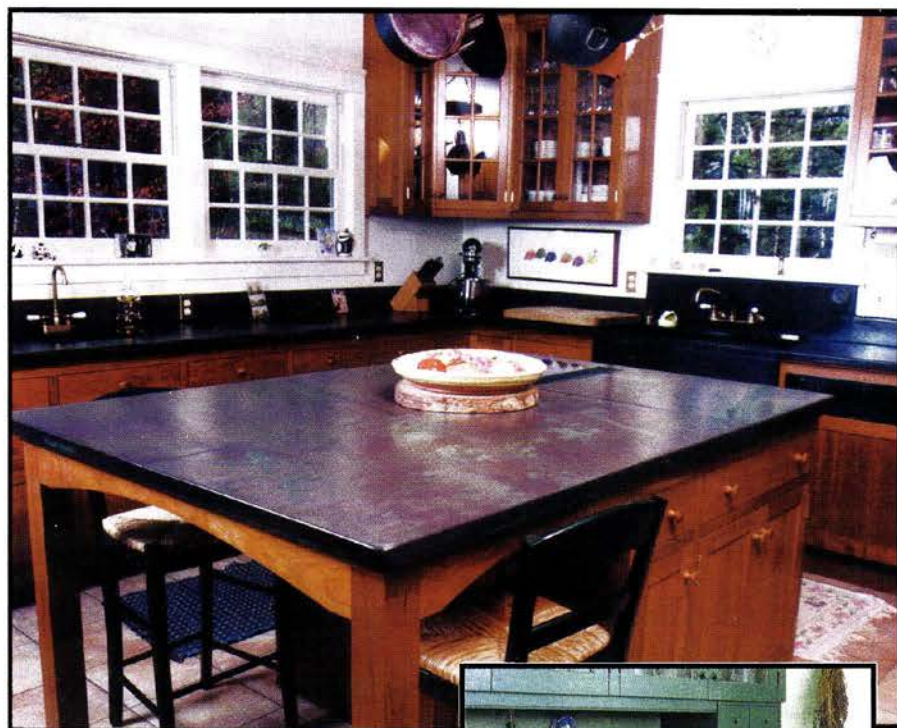
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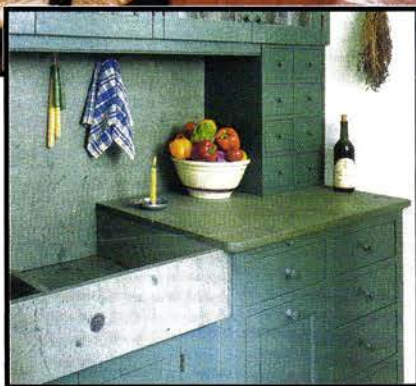
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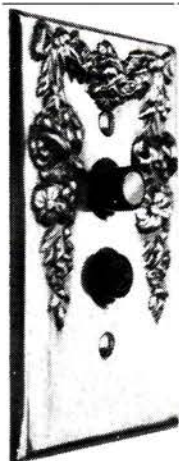
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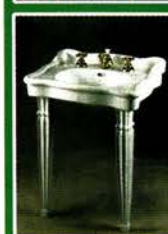


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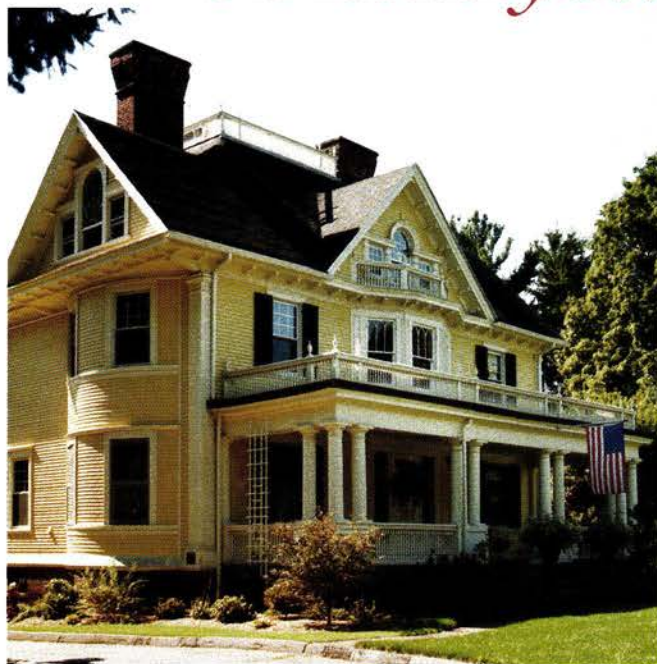
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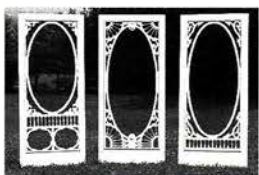
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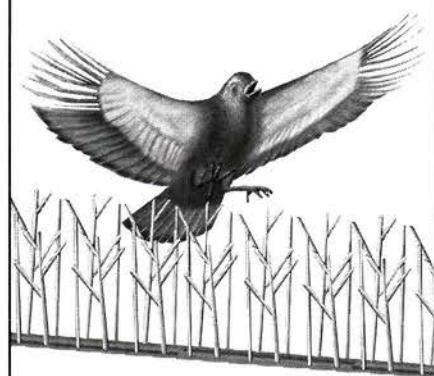
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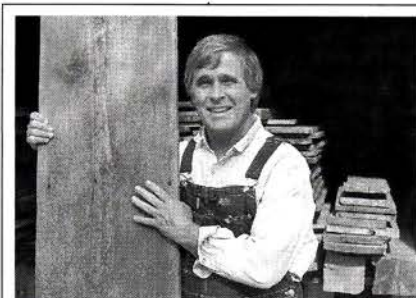
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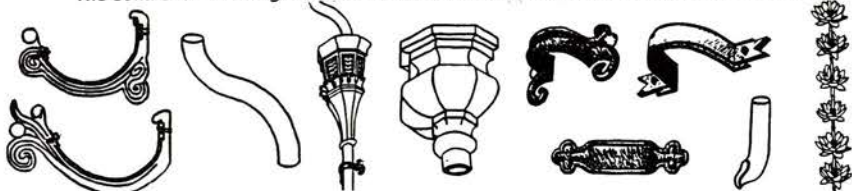
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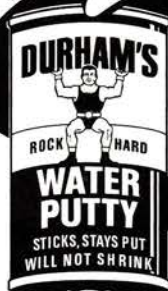
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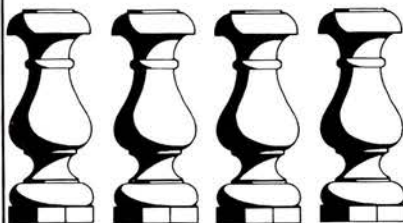
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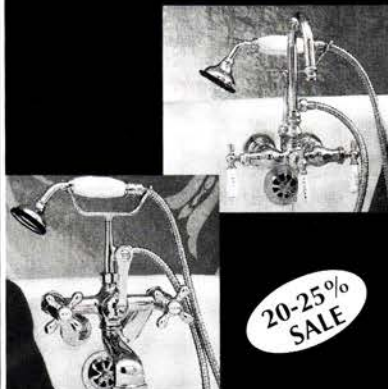


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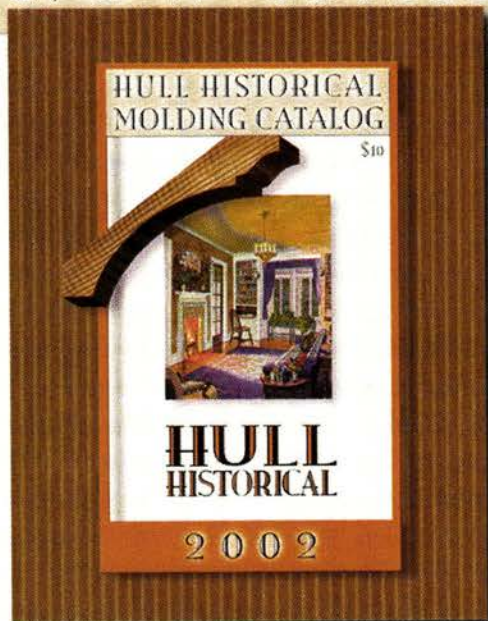
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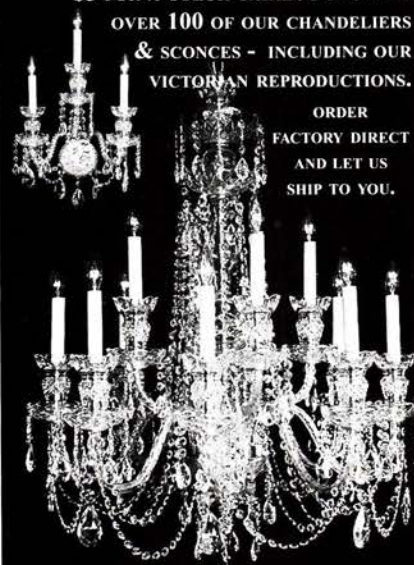
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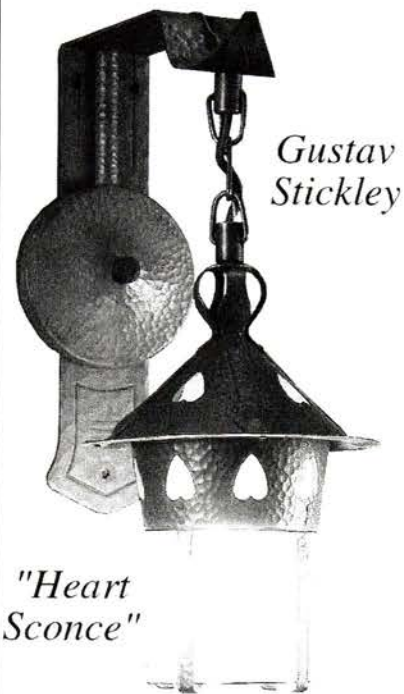
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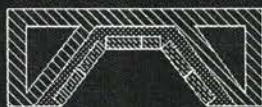
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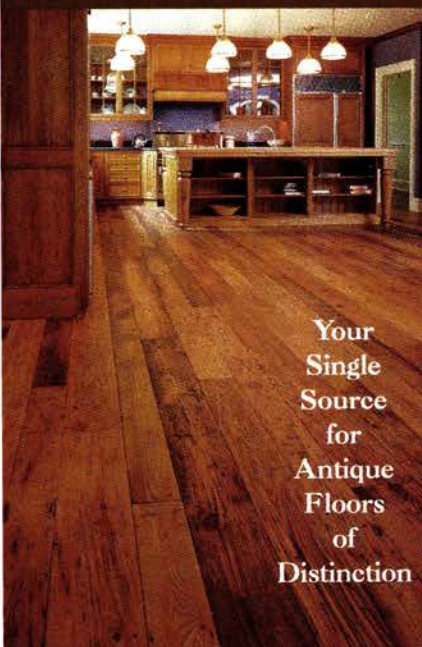
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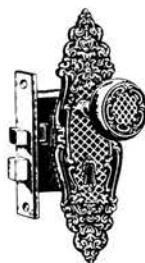
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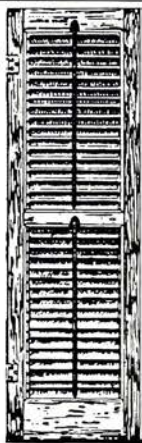
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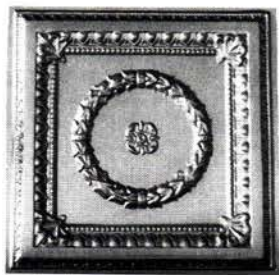
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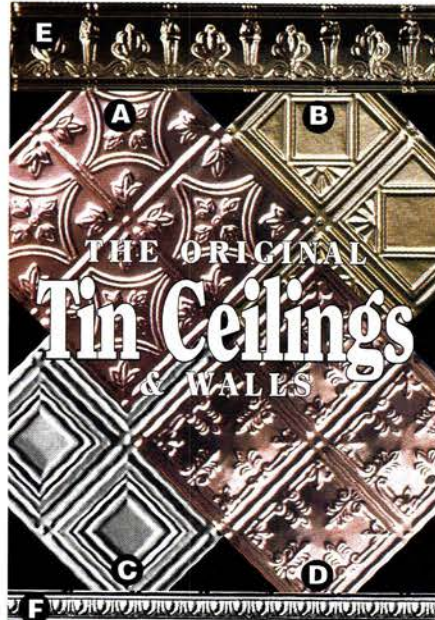


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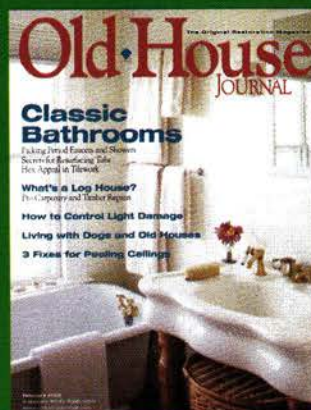
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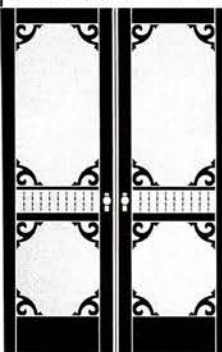
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Where Eagles Dare

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