

Old House

The Original Restoration Magazine

JOURNAL

Chilling
Ghost
Stories

Finishing Touches

Sourcing Classic
BATH TILE

Tips on Vintage
FAUCETS

How to
MARBLEIZE
Mantels

PLUS:
Watt's New in
CORDLESS TOOLS?

COPYCAT HOUSES
and Architectural Twins

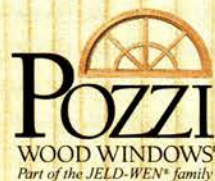
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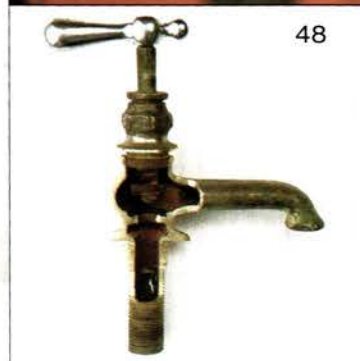
On the cover:

Cover Photo by Linda Svendsen

Formerly all-white bathrooms went colorful in the 1920s. This fixture arrangement was typical for bungalows of that period.



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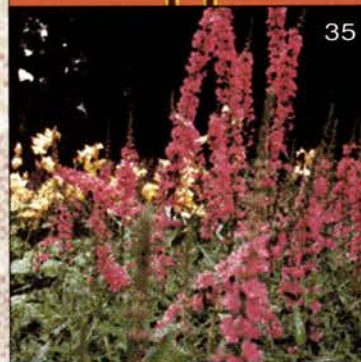
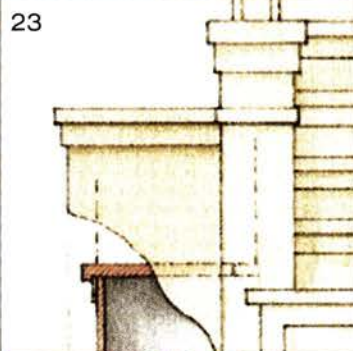
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By Gordon Bock

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"Talk's" Back!

Try out OHJ's new and improved online chat rooms. They still include the same dependable breakout by subject but now make it much easier to access and post messages and send replies speeding toward other old-house devotees. Just visit OHJ's award-winning Web site, and click on the "Talk" section at the top of the home page. You'll enter what we trust will become the Web's best spot for chatting about old houses.

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 **Uponor**

Calling All Unmuddlings

Remuddling—OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL's unique, lighthearted look at what *not* to do to an old house—has been a highly popular back-of-the-book commentary since the department debuted in October 1981. Readers far and wide report it's their favorite page and, indeed, here at the OHJ editorial offices we receive a steady stream of amazing letters and photos hoping to make it into print. This time, however, we're on the hunt for examples of rectified remuddling—or unmuddling, as it is sometimes called.



Despite the enthusiastic response to Remuddling over the last two decades, all the while we've also had regular queries asking to see more cases of houses that have been restored after being subject to remodeling that is *insensitive* to the original concept of the architecture—the general definition of remuddling. Certainly reversing inappropriate changes from the past is part of what historic preservation is about in the broad sense, and what case-history articles in OHJ often show in the course of some “before” and “after” photography. In fact, a recent Old-House Living story (“Remuddled No More,” October 1999) focused specifically on a forlorn Foursquare that graced the Remuddling page—not once, but twice—before being rescued and beautifully restored by new owners in the 1990s. Following in

this vein, we'd like to know if any of the houses from the last 120 editions of Remuddling have found a similar, better fate in the intervening years.

If you know of a house, now back to its original form and finishes, that was formerly remuddled—and featured on the Remuddling page—send photos of the house in its remuddled and unmuddled state to: Unmuddling, OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, 1000 Potomac Street, NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007. If we get enough interesting examples, we'll consider running them in a future issue.

Gordon Bock

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Shuddering at Shutters

"Shutter Do's and Don'ts" (July/August) is rather late to protect the horse in an unlocked barn. In my area, beautiful brick center-hall Colonials (circa 1940) have been ruined, first, by replacing windows with 6/6 lights with insulated 1/1. Then penury won out over repainting working shutters, which are replaced with either nothing or worse, with vinyl misfits nailed backward to the wall. When architecture makes exterior shutters impractical, as on circa 1900 Romanesque town houses, adding nailed-on vinyl splints on each side of windows is just plain tarting up.

Your invaluable article by Paul Kelsey Williams does not mention double windows in the '20s that had a single shutter folded over another single shutter by means of a hinge, so that the double windows would be fully covered by shutters that took up only half as much space on the exterior walls.

Edwin D. Johnson
Washington, D.C.

Those are usually called bifold shutters, since they work a bit like the bifold doors commonly found on closets. We did allude to them briefly in discussing hardware for shutters, but focused primarily on more common shutter styles. —Eds.

Tudor Come Lately

Just received my latest OHJ with great joy as usual. I was especially interested in the Tudor-style house ("Ask OHJ," July/August) and your advice about painting it.

Although I agree about the Queen Anne massing and feel, I don't think this house was an early Tudor Revival, but suspect it got "Tudored" at a later date. The round porch and Colonial Revival columns



speak to Colonial Revival of the 1880s to 1900. I would guess that gentle removal of the stucco in an inconspicuous place might reveal old clapboards with lath for plaster applied on top. Another indication of this is the narrowness of the half timbering and the third-floor triple window, which was likely a Palladian window before Tudorization.

Jim Boone
Springfield, Massachusetts

California Flats

Contrary to Marcia Walls' letter (July/August), in San Francisco the term "flat" has been clearly understood since at least World War II to mean an apartment comprising one whole floor of a building. The city has thousands of these units, usually in two- or three-storey wood-framed houses. A flight of steps leads from the street to a small first-floor porch from which each flat has its own independent entrance. Many have a small, sometimes illegal, in-law apartment tucked into the back of the basement.

Fifty years earlier in *McTeague*, author Frank Norris used "flat" to indicate a small building of cheap furnished rooms, let to individual lodgers by the week or month. These flats were distinguished from boarding houses, which furnished breakfast and supper; and apartments, which were essentially unfurnished, self-contained, and much more private. It appears that after the earthquake/fire of 1906, larger Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings took their place.

Here a "duplex" is a two-storey town-



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Happy Birthday OHJ!

Fall 2003 will mark OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL'S 30th anniversary, and we'll begin the countdown with the January/February issue. Highlights next year will include:

- Conserving Wood Finishes
- Installing Pressed Metal Ceilings
- A Modern Basement in an 1850 House
- Adapting Houses as We Age
- Exterior Paint Colors
- Sears House Interiors
- Historical Doors and Porch Millwork
- Victorian Lighting Fixtures
- 30 Best Restoration Tips
- Tile Roofing
- Mantels from Victorian to Arts & Crafts
- Rebuilding Chimney Flues



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house, sharing a common wall with its neighbor but with independent entry. Of course in New York, it's a pricey, usually luxurious, apartment taking up two floors of a large apartment house, with self-contained staircases within the apartment. I don't know how far back this usage goes, but Rex Stout used it without explanation in his novels of the 1930s.

I hope all these letters go to show the wonderful elasticity of building terms from community to community.

David Erikson

San Francisco, California

Now Here's Diversity

The caption accompanying the photograph of Hilton (not Helton) Village in "All Historic Districts are Not Created Equal" (Preservation Perspectives, March/April) says this first local historic district in Newport News, Virginia, is a neighborhood of diverse houses.

In fact it is a wonderful example of homogenous housing styles with only five slight variations on the basic English cottage/Builder's Tudor style. Readers can see photographs of these houses under construction by visiting the digitalization project of the Library of Virginia at www.lva.lib.va.us. (Click "What We Have," then photograph collections, and select Newport News.)

Going just 1 1/2 miles south toward downtown Newport News and the Northrop Grumman shipyard, you'll find North End Huntington Heights, a neighborhood of more than 500 houses ranging from Queen Annes to modern postwar styles. The area has been on national and state registers since the late 1980s and a local historic district since 2000. The area is truly a microcosm of the architectural, social, and economic forces at work in the first half of the 20th century; shipyard presidents lived along grand Huntington Avenue with

the doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. I live on one of the numbered side streets in a "school teacher's house"—a cute Builder's Tudor next to a bungalow and a Foursquare. Visit the North End Huntington Heights Historic Preservation Association at www.nehpha.org!

Carolyn C. Hughes

Newport News, Virginia

Corrections

In the July/August issue, the Web site for Sears Archive's registry of Sears mail-order houses should have been www.searsmodernhomes.com.

PPG Industries' self-cleaning glass, Sun-Clean, described in the May/June issue, is made by applying a titanium dioxide coating to the glass in its molten state. A similarly named product, StayClean, is a spray said to keep glass clean for six months.



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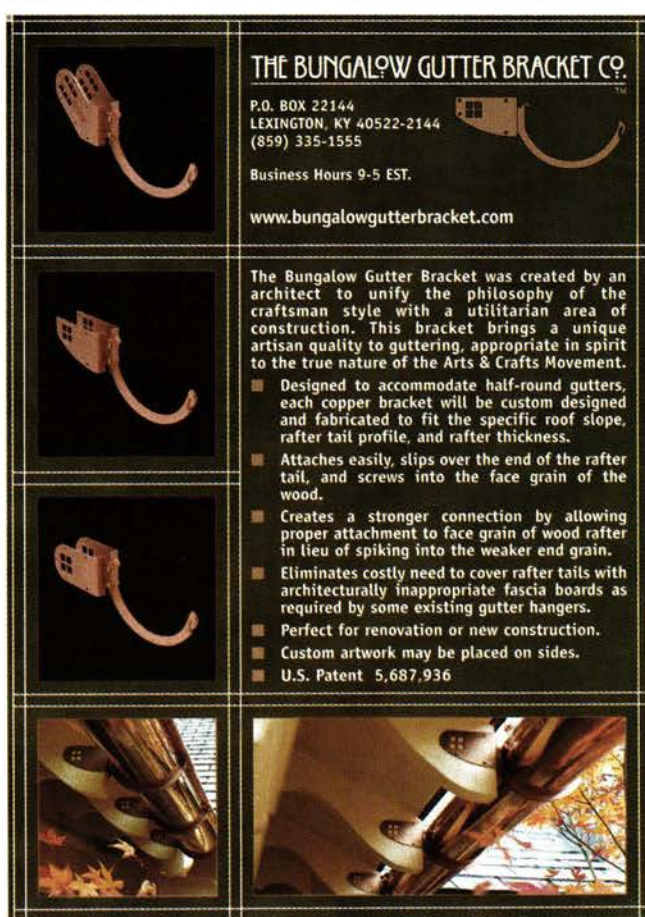
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Calendar

Toronto

September 12–14

APT International Conference

The Association for Preservation Technology will hold its annual conference at the Royal York Hotel. This year's title is *Extreme Impacts: Measured Response Conservation Practice Plans for Emergencies, Sustaining Urban Environments, and Leading Conservation Technologies*. For more information call (630) 968-6400 or visit www.apti.org.

Howell, Mich.

September 15

Howell Magical History Tour

Take a guided tour of historic Howell, including turn-of-the-century homes, the 1881 Opera House, the 1906 Carnegie Library, an 1889 county courthouse, and a one-room schoolhouse and depot museum. Tickets are \$20. For more information call Candy Parent, (517) 552-2824.

Parsippany, N.J.

September 21–22

Living the Arts & Crafts Lifestyle

Visit Craftsman Farms for the annual crafts fair and lecture series. The event will include a family activity corner and Saturday evening benefit dinner and silent auction. For more information on the program call (973) 540-1165 or visit www.parsippany.net/craftsmanfarms.html.

Cleveland, Ohio

October 8–13

The National Preservation Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

A Novel Idea

Several years ago publishing executive and comedy writer Jim Rosenau decided to minimize the use of new wood in his woodworking. Dumpster diving, primarily for old futon frames, but longing for more elegant materials, he recalled reading that the term "lumber" once referred to ideas stored in your head.

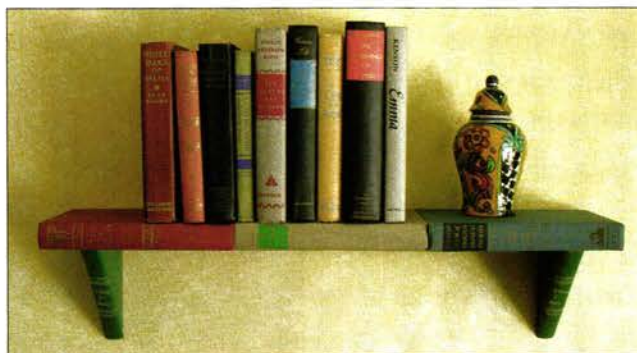
Discarded books, the lifelong bibliophile realized, are former trees temporarily storing ideas. Why not turn them back into lumber? Sure, first editions are cherished, but what about musty references and remaindered poetry tomes?

Stripped of their pages (which Rosenau recycles), the book covers became veneer for—what else?—book shelves. The wall-mounted display shelves have a wooden armature for strength, Rosenau says, "but these aren't something you buy to solve a storage problem. They're for dis-

playing something you care about."

Rosenau combines the covers based on size, color, texture, but especially topic. Old law manuals make popular gifts for lawyers, for instance. So what does he have for the preservationist or old-house restorer? How about perching Grandma's

Rosenau also builds bookcases, these from pre-1950 encyclopedias. "They have a consistent size and color, and usually rich bindings." He grew up with an almost religious reverence for old books, he says, and feels like he's giving his curbside finds a new life. "People are throw-



This two-bracket shelf is called "A Thing of Beauty."

crystal vase on the *Practical Handyman's Encyclopedia*, *Mister Blandings Builds His Dreamhouse*, and *Brave Pursuit*? Or Uncle Elmer's watch fob on *Our Father's House*, *The Bathroom Reader*, *Up the Down Staircase*, and *A Home for Keeps*?

ing these things away. Nobody can afford to store them, yet they're never going to be made again the same way."

The wall shelves sell for \$40 to \$250, bookcases start at \$400. Visit www.thisintothat.com or call (510) 845-7854.

Stylin' in Cleveland

The Restoration & Renovation Exhibition and Conference in Cleveland from October 10 to 12 may be the event's most "stylish" yet, with conference offerings on interior design, historic house styles, and aspects of architecture from windows to wallpaper.

A day-long training session, "Designing Domesticity: Re-creating and Interpreting Historic Interiors," will be held at the Kent State University Museum. Participants will learn to research the use of space, finishes, and furnishings, and to develop a comprehensive design for a historic interior. For those who can't absorb enough about house styles, there will be two sessions on diverse houses (exteriors and interiors) while two others will focus on key Midwestern styles, the Tudor and the bungalow. You can learn about such residential design topics as wallpaper in America from 1830 to 1930, how to work with an interior designer, and windows

from the 1700s to the 1920s. You'll get tips on window restoration as well as historical door styles and faux finishes.

On October 10, Elwin C. Robinson will explore vernacular architecture of the Midwest, using such examples as the village of Chagrin Falls, Ohio. The next day, landscape preservationist Charles Birnbaum will examine the relationship between design and historic preservation in America's downtowns. Saturday, Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell and Hunter Morrison, senior fellow in Urban and Regional Studies at Youngstown State University, will offer thoughts on historic preservation as a tool for revitalizing cities. This fall's event takes place simultaneously with the National Preservation Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, with reciprocal admission privileges. For more information visit restorationandrenovation.com.

Calendar

Presentations on political, legal, and financial aspects of effective preservation programs will be held at the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel. National Trust delegates can also visit the coinciding Restoration & Renovation Exhibition and Conference in Cleveland. For more information on the conference visit www.nthp.org.

Novi, Mich.

October 11-13

Fall Remodeling and Furniture Show

The show includes more than 200 exhibitors featuring the latest technology, products, and services for the home, from kitchens and baths to heating and electronics. The show will be held at Novi Expo Center. Admission is \$6 for adults (children are admitted free). For more information on the show call (248) 862-1019 or visit www.builders.org.

Pasadena, Calif.

October 18-20

Craftsman Weekend

Sponsored by Pasadena Heritage, the weekend will offer a tour of six Craftsman-era houses, exhibits by antiques dealers specializing in the Arts & Crafts Movement, modern craftsmen working in the period style, restoration workshops, lectures by nationally prominent Craftsman historians, plus special evening events at historic sites. For more information on the weekend call (626) 441-6333 or visit www.pasadenaheritage.org.

Making Gillette Look Sharp



Fiber wall coverings (at right in the living room, above) and hand-carved door hardware (right) were some challenges of the Gillette restoration.

The mushroom factor—that phenomenon whereby a simple old-house project expands into a much more complex (and usually costly) venture—struck restorers of the eccentric fieldstone Gillette Castle in Hadlyme, Connecticut. An estimated \$3.5 million restoration ballooned to \$5.9 million—\$11 million with a new visitors center and accouterments.

The 24-room retirement home of Victorian actor William H. Gillette (best known for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes), the Connecticut River estate on 184 acres was built in 1914 and acquired by the state in 1944. Gillette designed the craggy hilltop mansion to resemble a ruined European castle. Severe water damage since then had made it so unsafe that it was closed to the public in Sep-

tember 1998 and only reopened last Memorial Day.

In addition to practical matters like updating fire protection and wiring, the restoration team from Kronenberger and Sons had to deal with some of Gillette's quirky inventions, such as a dining room table that moves on tracks and a wood bar that locks into place, as well as his secret room and hidden staircase.

Gillette also designed the 42 heavy wooden doors, each with unique wooden hardware. Missing pieces had to be hand carved. Kronenberger removed and restored each of the 80 casement windows, repainting all their parts including mullions up to 4" deep; cleaned and restored 100 hand-carved light fixtures; and repointed the stone walls, including a dragon's head



near the main entry.

A textile restoration team, headed by Camille Breeze of Andover, Massachusetts, cleaned and restored 4,000 square feet (front and back) of a raffia-like wallcovering. (It was sold at the time for floors, similar to sisal.) Twelve yards of it were rewoven from raffia imported from Madagascar; bright colored stenciling and dyes had to be brought back to life. The wallcovering alone required the attention of four people—three of them full time—for six months. For more information call (860) 526-2336.

PHOTOS BY JACK MCCONNELL

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Diamond Anniversary for Copper Plumbing

Throughout history, many materials have been used to carry water to and through our homes. Wood, clay, lead, iron, and steel have all had their day—and their problems. Wood rots, clay collapses, iron and steel rust and, according to historians, water and food vessels made of lead may have contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. Plastic plumbing is the new kid on the block, but plastic still has to prove its value over the long haul.

Today, the vast majority of homeowners depend on copper to keep them cool, warm, and re-freshed. What many people don't

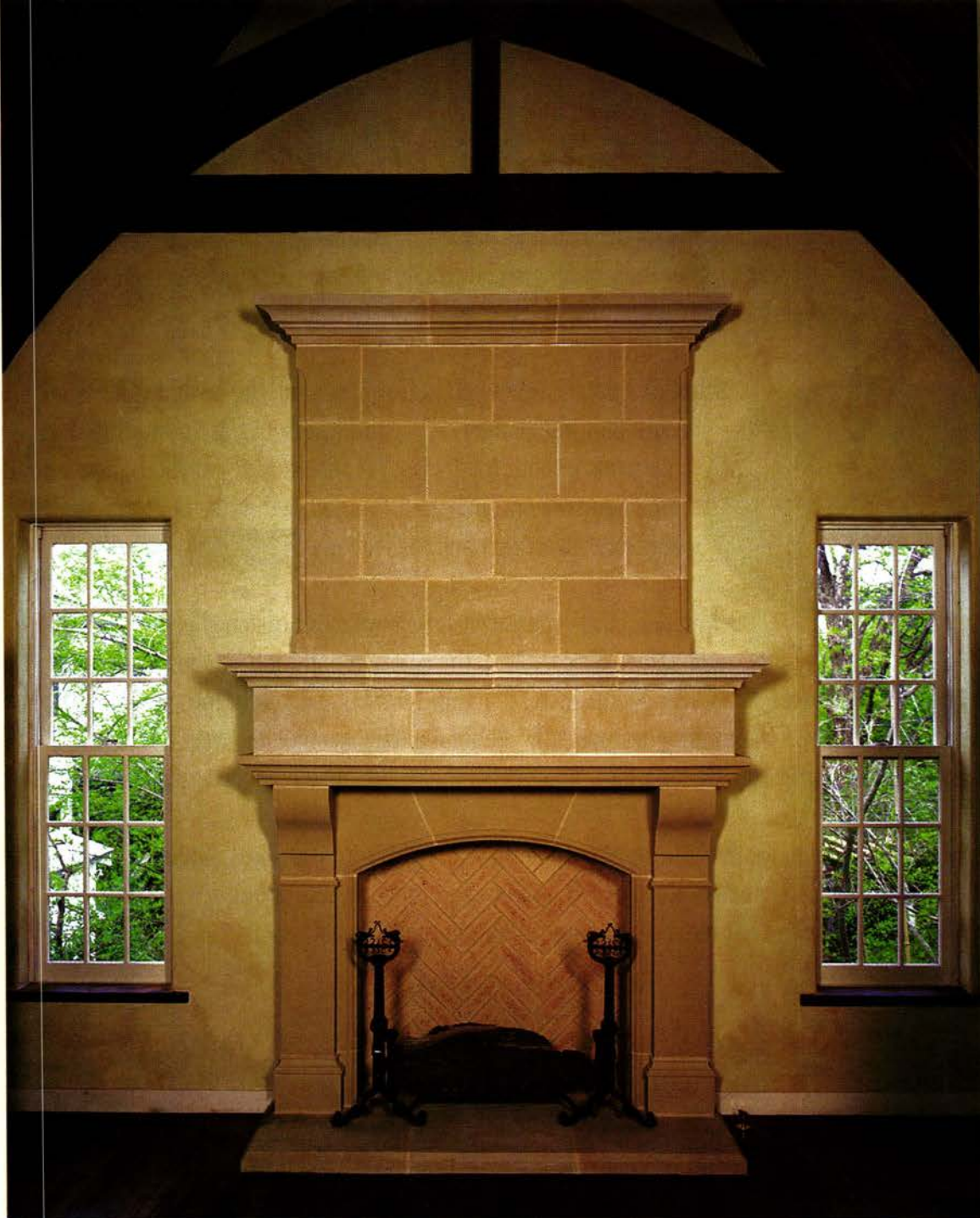


Is your copper plumbing more than 75 years old? The Copper Development Association is searching for early installations.

realize is that indoor plumbing, as we know it, began with copper here in the United States some 75 years ago, and it's still the most dependable material used for transporting water.

No one really knows where or when the first copper plumbing system was installed, but the evidence points to sometime around 1927-28. To commemorate this grand anniversary, the Copper Development Association is holding a nationwide search for historic, noteworthy, or otherwise significant copper plumbing installations from that era. It won't matter if the plumbing is in a castle or an out-house, as long as it's suitably ancient, still in service, and made of copper. If you've got a copper plumbing system that fits this description, tell them about it. Send the information (and photos, if available) to: Plumbing 75, Copper Development Association Inc., 260 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Indicate any existing records or verification of the installation date. Photocopies of documents are preferred; original documents and photographs can't be returned, and the association may publish submitted materials. All those who submit information on a qualified copper system will receive a certificate distinguishing their house as "A Copper Quality Home."



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Ski St. Louis

Our house was built by the Lemp Brewery family in 1910. The exterior is red cypress and the interior is Arts & Crafts style with a great deal of quartersawn white oak and cypress trim. Have you seen many others in this Bavarian mountain house design, and if so, in what other parts of the country?

Robert J. Moegle, St. Louis, Missouri

The English brought back the Swiss-chalet look from Alpine vacations, and it came to the United States via English pattern books beginning in the 1820s. Andrew Jackson Downing was particularly enamored of chalets, saying in his 1850 *Architecture of Country Houses*, "There is something peculiarly rural and domestic in the character of the Swiss farm-houses. Their broad roofs, open galleries, and simple and bold construction are significant of strength and fitness..."

Beginning in the 1870s railroad heir William West Durand built several sprawling camps of log mansions in the Adirondacks. Best known is probably Sagamore (1897), which he sold to the Vanderbilt family in 1901. The Great Lakes also saw their share of "rustic cottages," and the Adirondack style was reinterpreted in the West too, with construction of the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone Park over 25 years beginning in 1903.

The interiors of these houses were influenced by a mix of elements, but saw a particularly heavy dose of Arts & Crafts. That happened to be the fashion of the day and the people who built these strong architectural statements could well afford them.

The Lemp family seemed destined for such a flamboyant style—German, wealthy from their brewery, and eccentric, plagued as they were by a string of suicides and other untimely deaths. Your house would have been built when the family's fortune was already on the wane. Prohibition closed the failing brewery for good in 1919.

In 1990, Adirondack Architectural Heritage was formed to promote preservation of the structures in that New York state park (visit www.aarch.org). You can see the chalet style elsewhere in the country though, such as at the Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum in Rockford, Illinois.



This Bavarian design was just one of many twists on the rustic style.

Tub Trouble



COURTESY OF RUST-OLEUM

Rust-Oleum Tub & Tile is a new epoxy acrylic refinishing product.

Our Victorian house was one of the first in our small town to have indoor plumbing and gaslights. The original bath fixtures are in dire need of refinishing, but I've been unable to find anyone in the Midwest who does this kind of work.

Nancy Cruse, Hannibal, Missouri

Some franchises specialize in such work; check under "bathtub and sink—repairing and refinishing" in the Yellow Pages of the nearest big town. Also try calling salvage dealers; they often send out old tubs for refinishing and those same refinishers may be willing to come to your home.

Otherwise, your only option is to try one of the do-it-yourself refinishing products. In the past, users said they barely lasted until the bath water cooled, but some epoxy-based products on the market may be improvements.

Jan Healy, brand manager for Rust-Oleum, says its new Tub & Tile refinisher is an epoxy acrylic that has stood up to 1,000 hours of accelerated hot water testing, in which the painted material was scratched with a razor blade and soaked in hot water overnight.

Tough As Tile, a two-part epoxy offered since January by Homax, is available as a spray or brush-on. It requires initial scouring of the old surface to set up adhesion, applying two coats 12 to 24 hours apart, and curing for five to seven days. It costs about \$30 and is said to last for five years.

Obviously, both of these products are too new for anyone to know!

Abatron in Wisconsin has sold epoxy and polyurethane refinishing products for many years. Abatron's Marsha Caporaso emphasizes that the products require preparation of the old surface with acid etching or sandblasting, then three paint coats cured for at least three days—plus excellent ventilation. For more information call (800) 445-1754, or visit www.abatron.com.

No Foundation

I recall an article about foundation plantings in a past issue, but can't find it. It would be a great help in planning the landscape for our Gothic Revival-style country home.

Sandra Oczkowski, Embro, Ontario, Canada

The article was in our June 1999 issue, but don't be too hasty about installing foundation plantings. Again we look to A.J. Downing, who preferred vines and more natural plantings around Gothic country cottages. The more formal look of foundation plantings didn't come along until late in the 19th century, when owners of Queen Anne and Second Empire houses wanted to conceal their tall foundations. You definitely don't want a lot of



"A small cottage or gate lodge," from Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842).

evergreens clipped into geometric shapes. Consider flowering shrubs such as quince, deutzia, spirea, and weigela, or perhaps pearl bush (*Exochorda × macrantha* 'The Bride'). For vines, choose clematis, climbing hydrangea, old-fashioned roses, or Dutchman's pipe. You'll attract hummingbirds with native honeysuckle or trumpet creeper. All of these should be hardy in your Zone 5B garden. 🌱

Send questions to Ask OHJ, 1000 Potomac Street NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007. Please include your name, address, and phone number.

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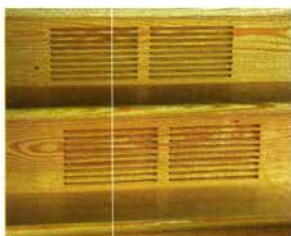
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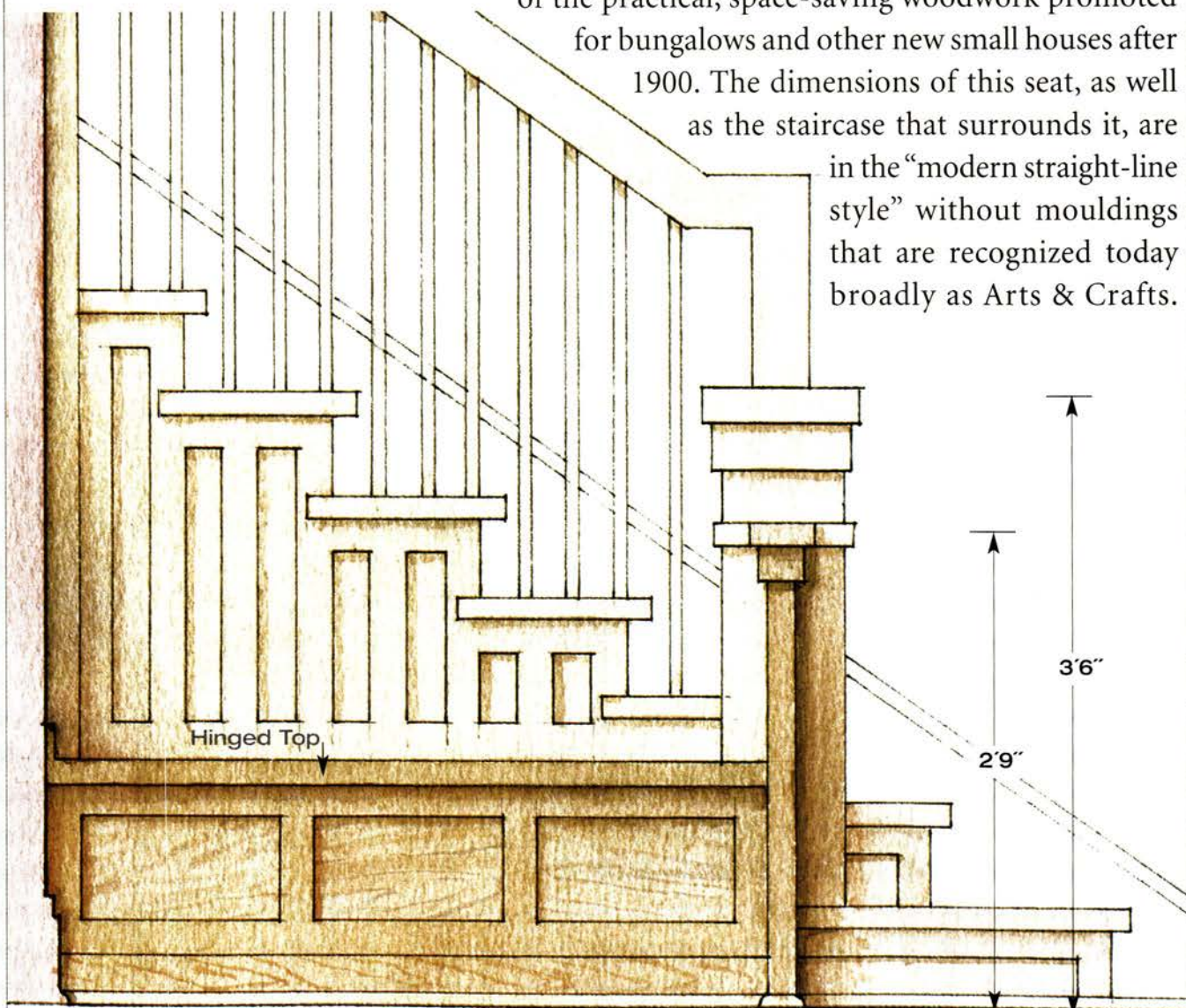
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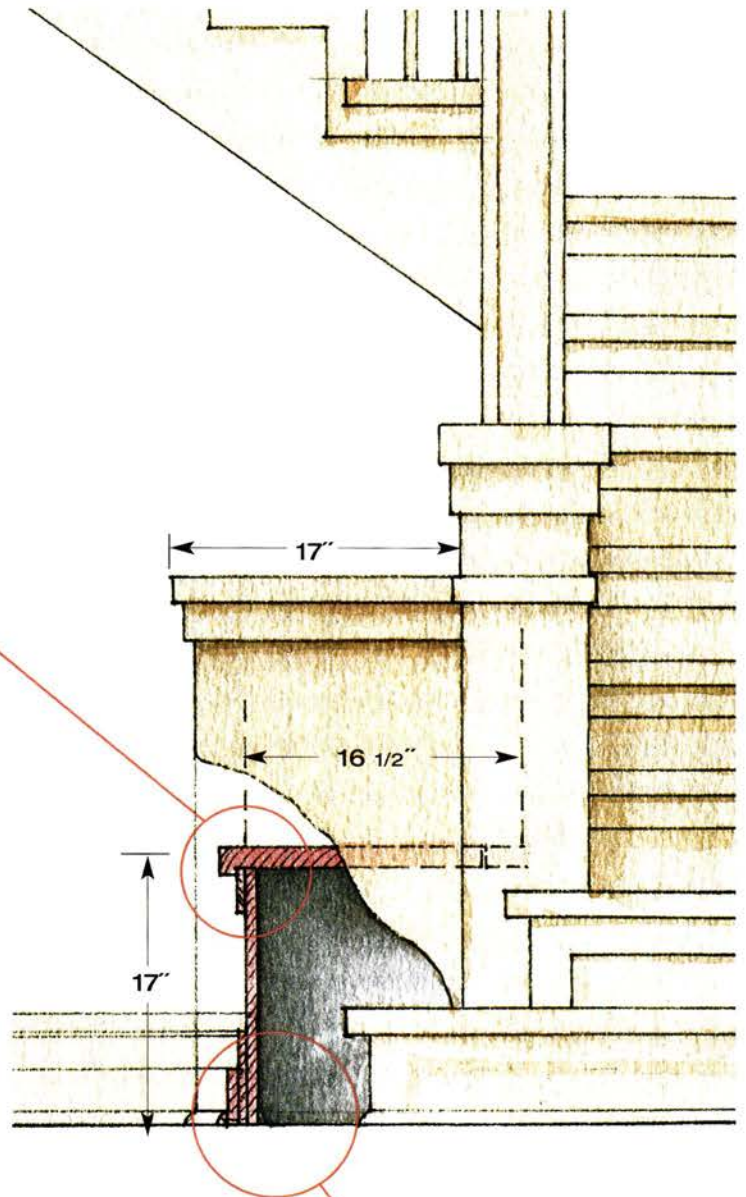
Drawings by Rob Leanna

Post-Victorian Stair Seat

Built-in bench seats tucked between a wall and newel post at a first-floor stair landing are classic examples of the practical, space-saving woodwork promoted for bungalows and other new small houses after 1900. The dimensions of this seat, as well as the staircase that surrounds it, are in the “modern straight-line style” without mouldings that are recognized today broadly as Arts & Crafts.

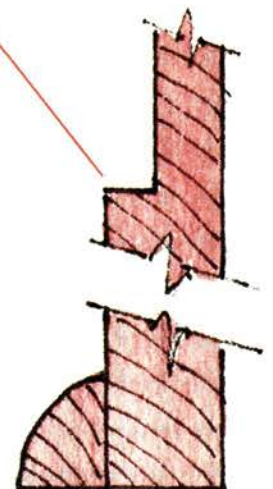


Top of Seat



Note how the bulkhead/divider extends from the newel to make an armrest for the seat, and that the bench top is hinged (say, with a piano hinge) to create a storage compartment. Solid-board construction in oak would have been common for this kind of bench in the 1910s, but oak-faced cabinet plywood, stained and clear finished to match existing woodwork, would be just as effective today. 🏠

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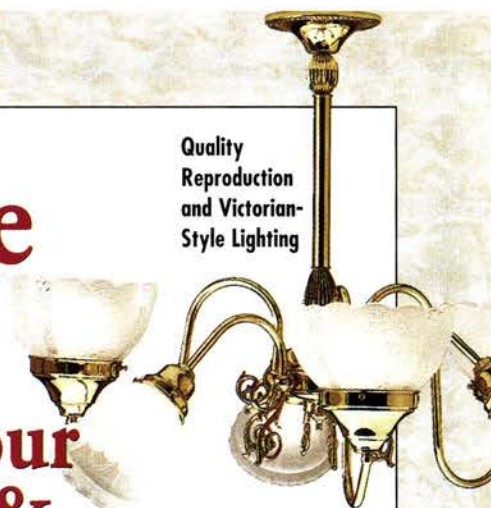
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The View on Reuse

QUESTION: "I may have an opportunity to purchase an abandoned 1897 church in my area. It has been a lifelong dream to convert such a building into a home. Have you any suggestions?"

—Louise Frishwasser, Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin

BY J. RANDALL COTTON **T**he kind of project you are proposing is known as adaptive reuse (or adaptive use)—that is, converting an existing, often historic building to a use other than that for which it was designed. In your case, you'd be converting a structure once built for religious purposes into a residence.

Adaptive reuse is an old practice. Early Christians, for instance, converted Roman basilicas, amphitheaters, and even shops into churches. Throughout history, new towns often rose on the abandoned ruins of old ones. In our time, countless historical structures have been rescued by giving them new, more practical uses. Washington, D.C.'s, old main post office now caters to tourists and office workers with shops and a mall-style food court. Vacant textile mills across the South and New England have been adapted to trendy "loft" apartments. San Francisco's old Ghirardelli candy factory is a waterfront festival market. In Ohio historical grain silos were even converted to a hotel!

Arthur Ziegler, president of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, once said, "You cannot hang a building on a wall like a painting; you have to find a use for it." In order to spur adaptive reuse, a successful federal program allows developers (and their investors) to recoup 20 percent of their restoration costs in the form of a federal income-tax credit. Tens of thousands of historical buildings have been saved in this way.

To qualify, one must invest a substantial amount in a rehabilitation project that respects the original character of a historically certified building. Unfortunately, residential properties that do not produce income (typically rentals) don't qualify for this program. Still, there are other advantages for converting an old nonresidential building into a private residence:

- Often the structure of an old building—the foundation, beams, walls, floors, and roof—is solid and can serve as the "skeleton" of a residential conversion. If not, you might face costly stabilization. Before committing to buying the property, have an architect, structural engineer, or building inspector check out the structure.

- Older buildings often have high-quality materials, exquisite architectural details, and dramatic spaces that can't be replicated on a modest budget.

- Since many historic buildings are located in older—often blighted—parts of town, you'll be contributing to the revitalization of these neighborhoods.

- Even though converting a historic building to your primary (nonrental) residence won't qualify for the 20 percent federal tax credit, there are often state and local tax-incentive and grant programs that will. Check with your state historic preservation office and local municipalities.



BOB GOTHARD

When two set designers turned this Dennis, Massachusetts, church into their home, they sensitively incorporated the open space and organ of the sanctuary into the building's new use.

Let's say you've found that picturesque, abandoned school building in an ideal location and determined that it would make a perfect house for you, your spouse, three kids, a dog, cat, and maybe even the in-laws from time to time. Keep these things in mind:

Ask an architect some key questions. Is the structure stable? Can it be reasonably adapted to a residence? Is it too big? Too small? Can the existing floor layout be jiggered to provide the necessary living spaces? Do load-bearing walls or beams need to be altered? How much will it cost?

Identify and retain the architectural features that define the essential characteristics of the building's original appearance and use. Strive to incorporate the spatial characteristics, as well as the architectural details and materials, in the new use. For example, the sanctuary of a church, or each floor of a warehouse, is wide, high space.

Instead of cutting them up with partition walls or dropped ceilings, take advantage of these open spaces for dramatic living rooms. If you need new partitions, consider "knee walls" that only rise partially to the ceilings. Consign essential but secondary uses, like bathrooms, closets, mudrooms, and passageways, to the less significant spaces.

Know your local building and zoning codes.

If the original use was a church or small industrial building the property might not be currently zoned for residences, and you'll need a use variance. Also, you will likely have to make numerous improve-

ments to meet life and safety codes, including addressing fire detection (and possibly suppression), accessibility, utility hook-ups, and curb cuts.

Be creative. Put a child's bedroom "loft" in an original church's balcony, or a bathroom in the steeple tower.

Expect to replace all the existing (or nonexistent) service systems. These include heating, air conditioning, electric, water supply, and sewerage. Rarely will the systems of the old building be sufficient for modern living needs.

Work with the existing fabric, not against it. Avoid the temptation to straighten everything out. Slanting floors, out-of-kilter corners, and worn and scarred stairs add character and preserve the history of the building. Don't strip away original plaster or finishes in order to "return" to bare brick walls or floor timbers. Whatever your changes, make sure they're reversible—that is, able to be removed in the future without impact on the original fabric.

Finally, there are two schools of thought regarding introducing modern features into old spaces. One school advocates making the new features as unobtrusive as possible, for example, hiding modern heating and electrical systems. New construction materials and details should mimic the old. The décor should be subservient to the original architecture. The other school says introduced elements should be obvious, so there's no confusion between what's old and what's new. By this thinking, heating ducts and sprinkler pipes can be hung from the ceiling for all to see. Materials, details and décor can be blatantly modern.

Both approaches have merit as long as the preservation of the original material is kept in mind. As long as you understand the challenges ahead, are flexible and creative, and willing to live with—and in—an often quirky old building, an adaptive reuse project can be wonderfully rewarding. 🏠



The Romanesque building that began as the Savannah, Georgia, Armory in the 1880s is now home to the Savannah College of Art and Design and its Historic Preservation Department.

J. RANDALL COTTON



The Hearth Collection



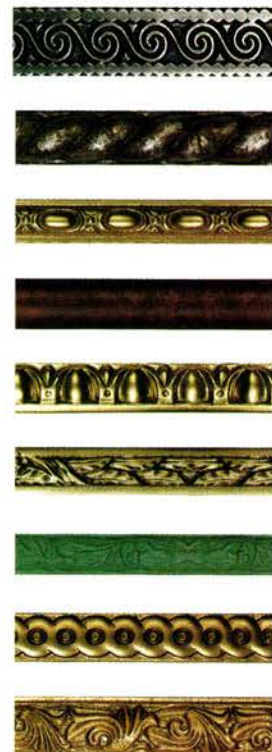
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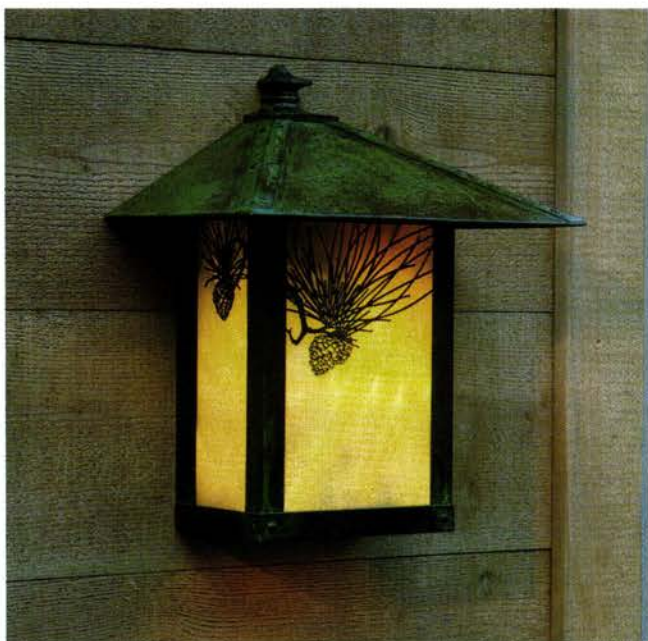
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Deep Storage In old houses where closet space is often limited—or even nonexistent—homeowners rely on furniture to store their clothing and linens. The Milling Road line from Baker has created a handsome 18th-century Georgian-inspired blanket chest for this very purpose. The alder chest is finished in a warm chestnut and features a classical egg-and-dart border and a half-star inlay, with alternating cherry and ebonized veneer work set into a mappa burl half moon. The chest is 42" wide, 24" deep, and 20" high. For more information call (800) 59-BAKER or visit www.millingroad.com. Circle 2 on resource card.



Thistle Set You Free No, it's not a William Morris design, it's a Burt Kallander. The owner of Burt Wallpapers says his Thistle Berry Frieze was inspired by two influential Englishmen: botanist-designer Christopher Dresser and Victorian illustrator Walter Crane.

Burt insinuated a row of gothic arches into an overall egg-and-dart pattern, with flora (wild artichoke and blackberry vines) and fauna (beetles and bumblebees) typical of the California Bay area in that period. Nineteen colors let it harmonize with many other papers as well as wood grains and paint. Priced at \$60 per yard. Call (707) 745-4207, or visit www.burtwallpapers.com. Circle 3 on resource card.



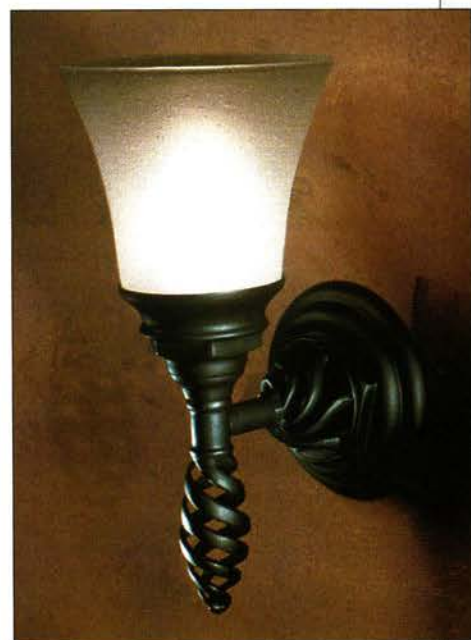


Virtual Stencils The age-old art of stenciling has gone high tech with Stencil Planet, an online catalog with more than 1,000 patterns and new offerings each month. The newest selections include Art Nouveau flowers and birds and Celtic-inspired designs; you can also choose Arts & Crafts and Victorian-inspired motifs. Want to customize your own stencil? Send them a sample pattern—an old swatch of wallpaper or fabric, a photo of ornate carpeting, a child's drawing, or a section of carved moulding. Prices range from \$13 for primitive, one-layer designs to \$50 for detailed stencils requiring four layers. Visit www.stencilplanet.com. Circle 4 on resource card.

The Wright Color Drawing from Fallingwater's natural surroundings—the deep green of moss-covered tree trunks, the rushing blue of Bear Run, and the light ocher of the rhododendrons' fading trusses—Frank Lloyd Wright created a unified, organic color scheme for this famous 1937 house. Wright's color palette for



Fallingwater inspired Pittsburgh Paints to re-create these colors for a new paint line, the Voice of Color Collection. The product has been authenticated by the Pennsylvania Conservancy, today the stewards of this landmark. For more information on these paints visit www.pittsburghpaints.com. Circle 5 on the resource card.



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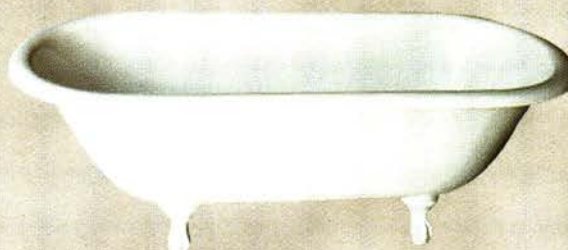
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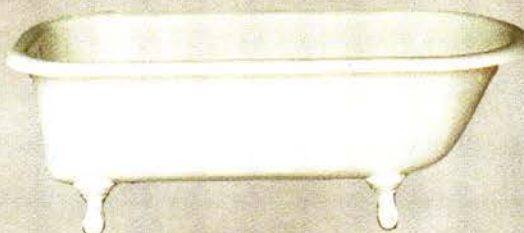
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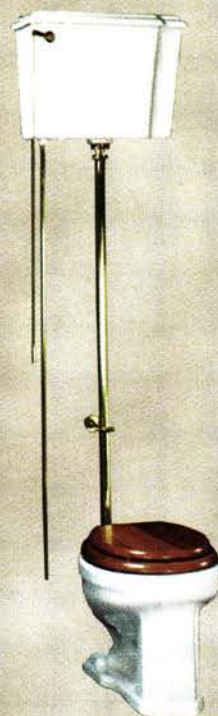
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Whacking Wicked Weeds

Don't let fiendish flora spoil your vintage landscape.

BY KATHLEEN FISHER **A**n old house usually translates to an old landscape. If you're lucky, you'll inherit some fine old heirloom shrubs that only need a bit of pruning. Depending on where you live, though, you may also fall heir to some of the terrors of the plant world—those becoming infamous as “alien invasives.” These go far beyond a few dandelions spotting up an otherwise flawless lawn; they choke out desirable plants, attack masonry and gutters, pull down large tree limbs, and escape into nearby parks or open fields that may have been one of your home's selling points.

For the last reason, these plants get a lot of attention from National Park Service biologists and others who serve as restorers of our natural landscapes. In these areas, alien invasives can wipe out native species that birds, butterflies, fish, and other animals depend on for food and shelter, not to mention tramping roughshod over ephemeral wildflowers like lady-slippers and trilliums. They also get attention when they interfere with commerce by destroying farm crops and waterways.

For the homeowner they can be simply an annoyance, but a persistent one, since they've made it to the “most wanted” list by dint of prodigious survival skills: production of countless tiny seeds, berries that birds spread, or roots that “sucker” to form thickets or reproduce from the tiniest piece left underground, like the brooms that Mickey Mouse chopped up in *Fantasia*.

Who are the bad guys in your neighborhood? It depends on your climate. Floridians can be overtaken by schefflera and jasmine—houseplants for the rest of us. In the West, pure botanical evil is represented by the tamarisk, a pink-flowering tree that is a mere curiosity in the Mid-Atlantic.

Old-house owners may find themselves beset by vegetation once deliberately planted for utility or beauty, and still sold by nurseries or recommended by well-meaning friends or even state agencies. No one today would be tempted to plant kudzu, the poster child of plants gone amuck. Yet after the Japanese included it in an ornamental garden at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, gardeners sought it eagerly for its huge leaves and fragrant flowers. Its rapid growth—up to a foot a day—made it perfect for shading big Victorian porches.

Wisteria is lovely when its lavender flowers bloom in spring, but ugly when it eats gutters, as it is above at the 1840 Mount Aventine in Maryland. Purple loosestrife (right) has grown in American gardens for 200 years; now it chokes wetlands throughout the Northeast and Upper Midwest.



KEN DRUSE

CHARLES STECK



CHARLES STECK



COURTESY OF NEW TRIBE



Marc Imlay (left) a coordinator of volunteer park weeders, uproots a tree-of-heaven with a spading fork. On the trunk of a larger specimen (top) he's hacked a "frill" with a machete before squirting it with herbicide. Viola Brumbaugh of New Tribe (bottom) demonstrates the company's Weed Wrench on a Scotch broom (a huge problem in the West).

The Japanese introduced the honey-scented vining honeysuckle as an ornamental in 1806; it cuts into the bark of young trees and can pull them to the ground. Along the ground it can spread a net of tripwires. Bush honeysuckle, with similar flowers and showy fruits, has also earned weed status.

You may hear English ivy (brought from Eurasia in Colonial times) recommended to control erosion on banks, or to serve as a lawn substitute. In the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast and on the West Coast it eats up forest floors and, by forming heavy mats on tree limbs, sets them up for storm damage.

Other garden plants that have become flora *non grata* in a wide swath of the temperate United States include Chinese privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*, used for hedges), oriental bittersweet (an orange-berried vine once recommended by A.J. Downing), vinca (the blue-flowered groundcover), and Japanese wisteria (see "Beauties That Have Become Beasts" page 38).

Control Methods

Fall is the ideal time to tackle these tough weeds because the plants' energy is going to their roots; in many cases, invasives stay green and grow longer than more desirable plants, so they're both more visible and more vulnerable.

Mechanical Means

These sometimes labor-intensive approaches should be your first line of defense. They're often more effective with fewer side effects than chemicals.

Mow and mulch This is a truly low-tech approach when you can't get around to something more permanent. Mow or weed-whack first if possible, then smother low-growing plants with heavy cardboard, multiple layers of newspaper, or black plastic.

Uproot by hand Dig it power can be surprisingly effective when the ground is wet. Pull annuals before they've set seed.

Uproot with hand tools A short-handled three-pronged claw

Sources and Resources

www.mdflora.org
The Web site of the Maryland Native Plant Society, this has links to other Mid-Atlantic resources but most important, to every other native plant society in the country.

<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu>
Affiliated with the Nature Conservancy, this site offers tips for weed eradication, including tool reviews.

Invasive Plants: Weeds of the Global Garden Published by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, \$8.95.

Describes invasive plants by date of introduction and regions where they are a problem. Order at www.bbg.org/gar2/topics/sustainable/handbooks/invasiveplants/index.html or call (718) 623-7286.

New Tribe, (866) 223-3371. Weed Wrench.

Lampe Design, (866) 334-9964. Root Talon.

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is useful for relatively tame ground-covers like vinca. For a more vigorous mass of vines like honeysuckle, chop into the tangle with shears, then remove the pieces with a long-handled claw or rake. Hand pull the root when you expose it.

For woody plants, some pros swear by the Weed Wrench, a tool that grips the stem of a small tree or shrub between clamps; the user rocks back and forth to pop the plant out of the ground. These come in four sizes and the biggest, which handles 2 1/2" stems, costs \$189. A lighter weight approach for shallow-rooted plants is the Root Talon, a pickaxe-like tool with a gripper that costs about \$50.

Girdling This cuts off water and nutrients to weed trees. Cut a strip about 2" wide into the bark and the cambium layer beneath it, all the way around the tree about 6" from the ground.

Chemical Means

Among a vast array of herbicides, weed warriors recommend two: glyphosate (Round-Up, less concentrated in Kleen-Up), which will kill any plant it drifts onto but won't persist in the soil; and triclopyr (Brush-B-Gone or Garlon), which kills only broad-leaved plants like shrubs and trees, but will leach into the soil. Round-Up isn't safe near bodies of water (within 10' or so); for that you need a related product, Rodeo.

Sprayers For large infestations buy a backpack sprayer; set it on a narrow stream to spare nearby garden plants or natives. Wear



Imley emphasizes that chemical spraying (far left) should be limited and done with care to avoid damaging desirable plants, such as the pawpaw displaying its huge leaves to his left. Hand weeding (left) is a better option where weeds are sparse and other plants—here black spleenwort growing on moss—are present.

Beauties That Have Become Beasts

Here are just a few old garden plants now deemed troublesome over wide areas of temperate North America. For more information on weeds in your region, see "Sources and Resources."

Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). This spiny shrub with red berries came to this country in the late 1800s and is a popular foundation plant.

Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*). Promoted for wildlife habitat and erosion control, it may tempt the gardener with its silvery willowlike leaves and fragrant late spring flowers.

Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*). A shrub introduced in the 1860s and still sold widely for its intense, almost magenta fall color.

English ivy (*Hedera helix*). Brought to America in Colonial days, it can damage mortar if you pull it from masonry walls. Clip back all you can and spray any regrowth.

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). Introduced in the early 1800s and popular for tall purple flower spikes that attract butterflies. Extremely damaging to wetlands and illegal in some Upper Midwest states.

Princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*). Introduced from Asia as an ornamental about 60 years ago for its big purple flowers.

Jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*). Not a widespread problem yet, it was a darling of gardens early in this century for its white spring flowers, shiny black fruits, and ability to grow in any soil, sun or shade, wet or dry, and reproduce easily. (Such selling points are often a red flag.)

Japanese spirea (*Spiraea japonica*). Still sold for "old-fashioned gardens," this has flat pink flowers rather than the white of some other varieties.

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CHARLES STECK



KEN DRUSE



Japanese honeysuckle can be a dramatic garden vine (below)—and a nuisance. Where it's ascended to tree tops in woodlands, I may uproot it, ties it up, and lets it die (left).

long pants and sleeves, rubber gloves, and boots. Avoid spraying on windy days and hot days. (Heat makes the chemical volatile so it settles on things other than the target plants—like your eyes.) To get in close on a few isolated weeds that are surrounded by valuable plants, look for a glyphosate foam called Sure-Shot or paint on the herbicide with a brush.

Stump and paint To prevent regrowth on a tree too big to pull, saw it off as flush to the ground as possible and paint it with concentrated herbicide (undiluted glyphosate or triclophyr).

Hack and squirt For trees too big for the tools you have at hand, chop several "frills" into the bark with a machete, then squirt in glyphosate or triclophyr.

It may take a few days for plants to look injured and several weeks to die. Watch for regrowth and keep whacking them back to deprive the roots of food: Thug plants didn't get their evil reputations by being wimpy adversaries. 🐱

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During the Victorian era, homeowners had an abundance of design choices when it came to builders' hardware. Today, several companies are reproducing or selling this hardware for old-house restorations. Right: Charles Eastlake was such an influential tastemaker that a whole style was named after him. Note the decorative detailing.



Fanciful Fittings

Victorian hardware opened doors to more artful interiors. A buyers' guide.

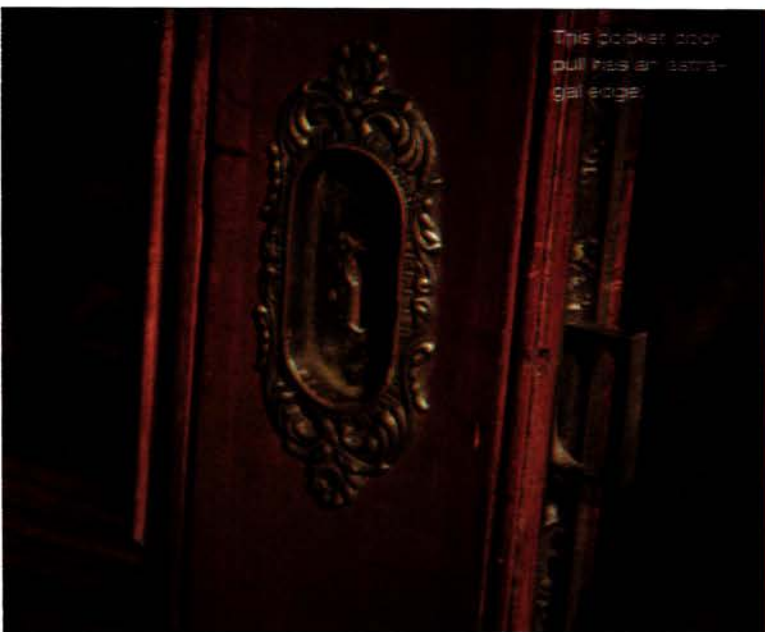


PHILIP CLAYTON THOMPSON FROM DECORATIVE HARDWARE

By NANCY E. BERRY Once the wallflower of house parts, builders' hardware blossomed in the late 1800s. The Industrial Revolution, new house designs, and Victorian artistic sensibilities gave rise to this decorative makeover. Today many of the florid ornamental styles from hardware's golden age are enjoying a renaissance. Several companies are selling or recasting historically accurate designs for old houses, and when it comes to fitting out old doors, windows, and built-ins with hardware, your choices are vast and varied. Do you choose antique or reproduction? Brass, bronze, or cast iron? What about all those design patterns and finishes? Here's a look at the industry's origins as well as some of players today dealing in these ornate yet functional fittings.

Hinging on the Past

Looking back at the hardware industry's beginnings can help you decide on appropriate replacements for your old house. Before the 1840s function, not fashion, dictated the design of architectural hardware. Simple porcelain knobs, hand-forged iron hinges, and heavy rim locks offered utility without flair. The most dressed up a knob might have gotten was a cloak of silver soldered or



This pocket door pull has an ornate brass edge.



Another example of Eastlake-style hardware. This cabinet lock dates from around 1870.

"sweated" onto brass. Innovative casting methods made possible by the Industrial Revolution enabled companies to mass-produce hardware at affordable prices. New technology allowed metals to be sand cast (see "Casting Call" page 45) from molds, creating hundreds of pieces a day, instead of hand forged, which could only produce a dozen or so in the same time.

Along with advances in production came changes in fashion and attitudes. In Victorian America, tastes had shifted from the conservative to the elaborate for every aspect of the home, and builders' hardware was no exception. Bold house styles began popping up in the new "suburbia," and these large expressive Queen Annes, Italianates, and Second Empires needed hardware to complement their architecture. The concept of extending a building's general design into its details and fittings was fairly new at the time. Following this philosophy, many renowned architects began designing suites of hardware for their own buildings. Among them was Louis Sullivan, who designed hardware for his architectural masterpieces.

In 1869 the Metallic Compression Casting Company, a small Connecticut firm, was awarded its first design patents for decorative hardware, and by 1870 the company offered a full portfolio of decorative knobs. This innovation sparked sev-

eral large hardware manufacturers, such as P. & E. Corbin, Yale and Towne, and Russell and Erwin, to follow suit. By 1872 Russell and Erwin had hired a "trained designer" to create fanciful patterns for its booming business.

Artful Expression

The ornamental inspiration for hardware designs came from every corner of the globe, as well as every period throughout history. The Byzantine Empire, Colonial America, 16th-century England, Amsterdam, ancient Egypt, and China were just a few periods and places tapped for their aesthetic sensibilities. Yale and Towne divided its hardware design categories into 24 "schools," and each school could have as many as 50 different decorative patterns. Names such as Lilbourn, Adams, Stratford, Brabant, and Osaka reflected the theme on the metal. In 1858 Japan opened up trade to the world after 250 years of isolation, and many Japanese motifs and symbols—Geisha girls, bamboo shoots, and chrysanthemums—were transferred onto knobs and hinges. America also looked to England's tastemakers for ideas. One well-respected talent was Christopher Dresser, today regarded as the first industrial designer. A pupil of Owen Jones (author of *The Grammar of Ornament*), Dresser de-

signed hardware patterns for a host of Birmingham, England, foundries, and copies of his work soon infiltrated America.

The Real Deal

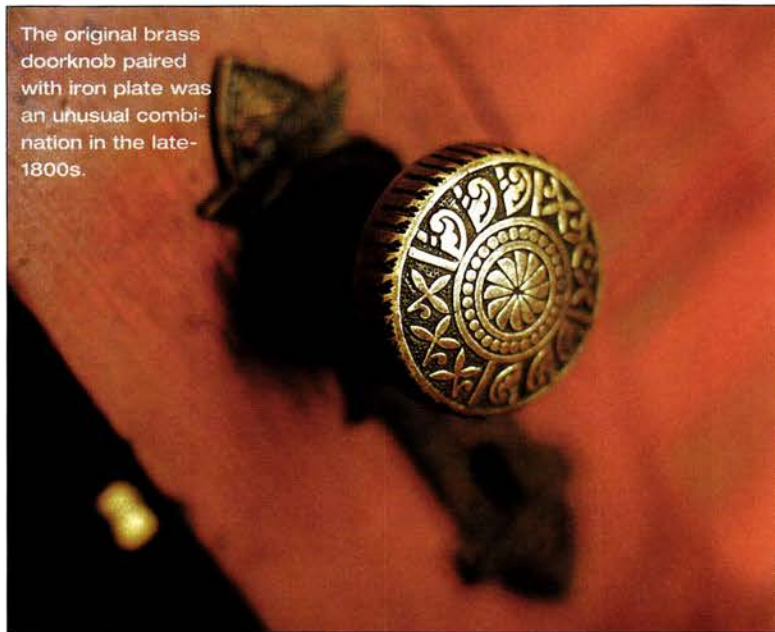
Antique decorative hardware is still plentiful in the marketplace, but many quality pieces have become scarce or command high prices as collectibles at auction. (Remember the original doggie doorknob that sold for \$4,000—reported in OHJ July/August 1998?) As with most materials, hardware was produced in different grades. In the late 1800s high-end decorative hardware was either cast in solid brass or bronze—bronze being the more popular material—while lower-end pieces were hollow cast iron with a veneer of bronze or brass. "Back then hollow cast-iron knobs would cost one fifth the price of a solid bronze knob," says Richard Perris of Crown City Hardware. "The materials were expensive and the labor was cheap—today it's just the opposite."

Perris admits it's tough to beat the quality of old hardware—even inferior pieces—but says to be sure to find the right match for your project. "You may come across a beautiful antique knob, but if it doesn't fit your door, you'll just have a pretty paperweight." Antique hardware can also be difficult to work with because you may not find all the parts you need—for instance,

An example of an antique nickel-plated "steeple-tipped" Eastlake hinge.



The original brass doorknob paired with iron plate was an unusual combination in the late-1800s.



PHOTOS THESE PAGES PHILIP CLAYTON-THOMPSON FROM *DECORATIVE HARDWARE*

set screws, spindle, rosettes, and escutcheons for a complete door suite.

On the other hand, Liz Gordon of Liz's Antique Hardware in Los Angeles says, "A reproduction may be easier to work with, but it's still a reproduction—it doesn't possess the beauty of a vintage piece." For Gordon's clients, wear is part of the attraction. Gordon has in stock more than one million pieces of antique hardware dating from

the Victorian era through 1950. On any given day she may have a P. & F. Corbin pressed iron "Holland" pattern knob circa 1905 selling for \$38 or a cast brass knob in the 1905 "Racine" pattern by Russell and Erwin selling for \$95. It might be easier to match reproduction pieces than antique, she says, but there's a greater variety of patterns seen in old hardware. When buying replacements for your house, buy the best

quality you can afford for the public spaces—the front entryway, living room, dining room—while leaving the less expensive pieces for the bedroom, closets, and bathrooms.

History Repeating Itself

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and few industries take this concept to heart more than historical builders' hardware. Several companies are producing copies of these Victorian designs for today's market, allowing old-house owners to purchase matching window latches or several suites of door hardware rather than the one or two they might find through an antiques dealer. "Many professional installers prefer to work with reproduction pieces because antique hardware doesn't always conform to contemporary building codes or regulations concerning access for the disabled," writes Gordon in her book *Decorative Hardware*.

Several companies are reproducing suites of hardware from historical pattern books or right from original pieces to replace fittings that have been lost through gut rehabs or just plain wear and tear. E. R. Butler of New York City references more than 2,000 trade catalogs dating from the 18th and 19th centuries and works with Boston-based W.C. Vaugh (successor firm

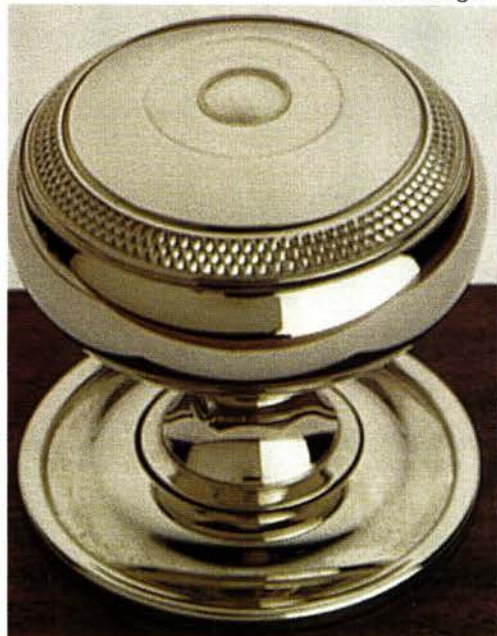
Casting Call

Sand Casting In the 1800s sand casting displaced more complex casting methods, and it was the most widely used method for creating builders' hardware during the Victorian era. Some manufacturers of reproduction hardware still rely on this process. A mold is made by packing sand around a wood model (called a pattern) carved in the design of the final casting. The mold is typically in two parts so the model can be easily removed, leaving a cavity into which the molten metal is poured.

Lost Wax Casting A few companies today use lost wax casting, a method not typically employed for manufacturing in the late 1800s but an ancient art all the same. Lost wax casting affords the most detailed reproduction but is an intricate process. A successful casting starts with shaping a wax pattern—if the pattern isn't finely detailed it won't render a good piece. The wax pattern or model is next hand chased by a skilled artisan to ensure the level of detail. The second step is making the mold from the pattern by dipping the pattern into an "investment liquid"—this material can vary depending on the metal that will be molded (it is typically clay). The combination is placed in a kiln where the wax melts away—or is lost—and only the ceramic mold remains. This mold is then filled with molten metal to produce the hardware.

Pressed Casting Pressed casting is a process in which the metal is pressed or stamped with a pattern. This method typically doesn't create fine detailing and is fairly inexpensive. In the late 1800s many pieces were produced this way, and today some companies still employ this technique.

Below: This solid brass knob plated in silver from E. R. Butler in New York echoes high-end designs of the mid-1800s. Right: The "Lily" door suite from Cirecast is an exact replica of an 1875 design.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE ANDY OLENICK



Below: Crown City produces hardware in different grades—superior (left) and rough (right)—so the company can offer different prices.



to four 19th-century Boston hardware manufacturers) to reproduce exquisite Georgian and Federal-style hardware as well as Victorian pieces. Owner Rhett Butler definitely gives a damn when it comes to reproducing hardware based on original shop drawings. All pieces are solid cast brass, bronze, or iron and all chasing (tooling) is done by hand. His father was a hardware restorer and installer, and that's where he got his first taste of the business. The company has 75 different patinas and a formula for prematurely aging hardware.

Peter Morenstein of Cirecast in San Francisco is known for his fanatical attention to detail when it comes to reproducing hardware. Making jewelry by the lost wax casting process back in San Francisco's hippie days, he discovered beautiful antique builder's hardware being ripped from the city's "painted ladies." Seeing these pieces as works of art, he began reproducing bronze, brass, and iron doorknobs using the same process. After years of perfecting his craft, Morenstein was awarded a job supplying hardware to the New York State Capital restoration project and from there the jobs came flooding in. Cirecast has even repro-

duced hardware for the Victorian home of 19th-century hardware manufacturer Philip Corbin on Martha's Vineyard. The company's hardware line consists of suites based on original designs in production in the late 1800s. You'll find faithful representations such as the Asian-inspired "Ekado" door suite, originally patented in 1885 by the Sargent Lock Company of Pennsylvania.

Crown City Hardware in Pasadena, California—an antique itself—has been selling hardware since 1906 and offers a wide assortment of hardware produced in both the sand and the lost wax casting methods. "The type of casting will often dictate the quality of a piece," says Richard Perris. "We offer different grades from rough to superior so there are price points for every budget." A recent addition to the Crown City line is the Gothic design, popular from the late 1880s through the 1930s. The company also has restoration and refinishing services.

Ball and Ball in Exton, Pennsylvania, will reproduce almost any builders' hardware you send them. The Ball family also has a metalworking past, which goes back to ancestors who were silversmiths in 17th-

century England. The company was established in 1932 by William Ball, and his sons Bob and Bill are continuing the tradition of creating hardware using the original sand-casting process. "Patterns are made directly from antique hardware pieces and not builders' hardware catalogs or shop books," says Bill Ball. The company's Web site also offers useful information on measurements and specs needed for ordering and installing hardware.

Finishing Touches

Each company manufacturing reproductions of historical hardware offers dozens of finishes for both reproduction and antique pieces. By the late 1800s hardware was electroplated, which allowed different metals—copper, bronze, gold, brass, silver, and nickel finishes—to be applied to cast iron easily and inexpensively. Even 100 years ago hardware dealers knew the value of making something look old. In his 1904 *Locks and Builders' Hardware*, Linus Towne of Yale and Towne wrote, "Perhaps the greatest achievement in the treatment of bronze is the imitation, by chemical process, of the patina, which is the result in antiques of



the slow [passing] of time.” It was this “antique” finish that gave the hardware its personality back then just as it often does now. Today decorative hardware artisans are creating antique finishes in brass, bronze, nickel, and copper as well as high polished and satin finishes. “You may find several pieces of antique hardware in a single pattern, but because there were so many different manufacturers’ finishes for Victorian hardware, the finishes on the pieces may vary greatly,” explains Gordon. “If you want all the pieces to have the same finish, send them to a plating company or hardware company to have them plated in a finish of your choice.”

Remember, builders’ hardware allows movement within the house. Whether it’s a hinge that swings a door, a pull that slides a drawer, or a crank that opens a window, function must exist along with decoration. So when choosing antique or reproduction Victorian hardware make sure it’s not just a pretty face but will keep your house ticking along for years to come. 🏠

For more information on antique builders’ hardware read Decorative Hardware by Liz Gordon and Terri Hartman.

Reproduction hardware comes in several different finishes: A) Ball and Ball’s loose pin hinge in brass; B) Crown City’s cast rope knob in nickel; C) Cirecast’s electric plate in copper; D) Crown City’s herringbone knob in chrome; E) Cirecast’s French Renaissance plate in bronze; F) Southwest Forge’s doorknob in antique silver; G) Southwest Forge’s bin pull in bronze; H) Upper Canada Specialty Hardware’s drawer pull in antique brass; I) Ball and Ball’s iron hinge; J) Ball and Ball’s sash lift in shellac.

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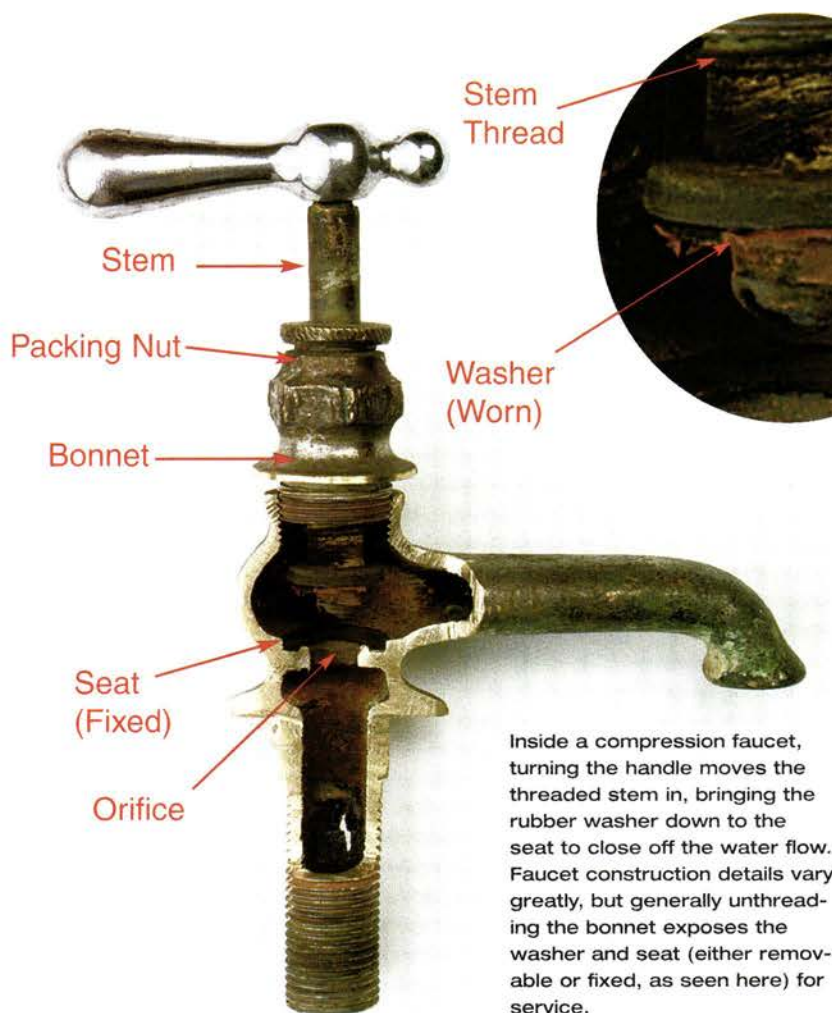
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Advice from pros on the care and feeding of vintage faucets.

Stems, Seats, and Handles



BY GORDON BOCK For an industry where “you’re better off replacing it with new” comes close to a mantra, George Taylor Specialties certainly bucks the trend. A renowned resource in the metropolitan area of New York City, this family-owned-and-operated company has been breathing new life into century-old faucets and valves, as well as making and selling reproductions, for more than two generations. After featuring their work on many projects in *OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL* since the 1980s, we jumped at the chance to visit Chris, Valerie, and John Christou in their Manhattan showroom and shop to learn more about the arcane art of keeping antique faucets in working fettle.

What’s Possible and Practical

What the folks at George Taylor Specialties say they service most in their business are sink faucets and valves. “Clawfoot tub faucets, while they may last no longer than sink faucets, can be replaced fairly reliably with one of the many good repro-

Inside a compression faucet, turning the handle moves the threaded stem in, bringing the rubber washer down to the seat to close off the water flow. Faucet construction details vary greatly, but generally unthreading the bonnet exposes the washer and seat (either removable or fixed, as seen here) for service.

ductions on the market," says business manager Valerie. In the same way, it's often possible to change out a shower body for new hardware, retaining the original trim rings and handles, without upsetting the appearance of the whole bathroom. Antique lavatories, sinks, and basins are another matter. Style aside, very often the faucets or valves are made for the fixture—particularly the critical dimensions such as hole diameters and spread (the hot-to-cold pipe distance) and cannot be retrofitted with modern hardware. Abandoning the hardware then means abandoning the fixture as well, and that can have a dramatic impact on the integrity of the bathroom.

While repairing or rebuilding a vintage faucet is likely to cost more than buying a reproduction unit, it may be more practical than replacing the entire fixture—especially if it is one of the many obscure or collectible designs or parts that abound in pre-1940s plumbing hardware. The working parts that the Christous see fail most often are the valve seats and stems in compression faucets (see photo page 48), the workhorse design in wide use for more than 90 years. Under normal use, the washer loses its sealing ability as it ages and needs to be replaced. If it is neglected, however, water will leak past the washer, eroding part of the seat, which will then have to be replaced (if it is the threaded, removable type) or resurfaced (if it is part of the faucet body). Forcing a leaky faucet shut can bend the stem, strip the threads, or break parts.

If you think that being in a specialty industry means making countless new parts, you're wrong. "We never make something we can buy," says president and patriarch Chris. "It becomes too expensive. The key is having good sources of supply—valve seats, for example, from firms who specialize in just seats." If the customer's pocketbook and needs allow, however, Chris and John can re-create the part originally made from round or hexagonal stock in the machine shop. When the economics or aesthetics make sense, the folks at George Taylor Specialties will go even further. A stripped valve stem

on a J.L. Mott valve is a typical complex job. Because the inside thread is all but destroyed, Chris will rebuild the thread by first building up the metal with silver solder. An expensive but very strong solder used in jew-

elry making, it bonds to the brass as if it were the same metal. When he has the bonnet cavity built up, he then rebores the stem hole and retaps the thread. Even this process is not as simple as it sounds. This valve stem



COURTESY OF GEORGE TAYLOR SPECIALTIES

George Taylor Specialties traces its origins to 1869 as fabricators of precision machine parts. In the 20th century the firm moved into bathroom hardware from repairing and rebuilding discontinued parts to custom manufacturing of unique designs. Pictured are Chris Christou (standing) and, left to right, Jason Hernandez, John Christou, and Valerie Christou.



GEORGE TAYLOR SPECIALTIES

Left: When these beautiful antique swan's neck tub faucets needed to be relocated, George Taylor Specialties machined the 24" extensions to connect them through a wall. Right: Chris holds a pair of 1880s Fuller-ball faucets—now with rebuilt internal working parts.



Though tricky to see, the groove on this J.L. Mott valve stem is actually a double thread. The mating tap is below.

has a double thread—two threads running inside each other similar to the double helix structure of a DNA molecule. This thread, typical for a lever faucet, allows the stem to close in less than a full turn. (Some old faucets have triple threads.) Chris and John also keep rubber and polyurethane sheets on hand for making washers for nonstandard parts.

Historic Faucetology

Why are old plumbing parts such a maze of “almost fits” dimensions and designs? Many players in a booming pre-1930s industry is one explanation; maybe clever old-time marketing too, according to the Christous. “Without regard to cost or consumer,” says John, “Meyer-Sniffen equipment appears to be purposely heavy—not so much as to be better mechanically than their competitors, but to be different.” Indeed their fixtures are unmistakable; massive but rich with voluptuous curves and thickness. “In fact parts that other manufacturers would nickel plate,” he says, “Meyer-Sniffen would make out of pure nickel.” What’s the point? “No matter how many

years a mansion, club, or hotel staffer polished this faucet, they could never wear off the shine.”

According to Chris, Crane was equally obsessed with distinction, but perhaps for canner reasons. “Crane always did things differently,” he says. “They wanted to be unique.” From designing faucet hardware that only fit Crane fixtures (and vice-versa) to picking offbeat thread specs for mundane nuts and flanges, that certainly seems to be the case. Was the reason vanity, like Meyer-Sniffen, or mere idiosyncrasy? Chris has



A Handle on Restoration

What’s their advice to owners of antique plumbing? “If it’s working okay, don’t touch it!” chides Chris. “Brass has a practical life of about 50 years, and any plumbing older than that—be it faucets or even pipes—is living on borrowed time.” Old brass, he notes, becomes brittle through structural changes in the metal itself.

John agrees with the basic concept, but is more sanguine about taking action. If old-house owners have faucets—especially handles—that are porcelain, he recommends attending to repairs and maintenance right away. He explains that unlike modern porcelain, which is low-fired, earlier plumbing was made with high-fired porcelain that can shatter like glass. Trying to make a stiff or leaky faucet operate by using excessive force stresses the metal parts, and it can cause old porcelain handles to break, especially if they have a hairline crack or two. The result is not only lost handles, but also potential harm to the user from sharp broken edges. (John recounts tales of hotels that replaced their



Note the toothed base on this five-point Crane handle, as well as the characteristic long faucet body with new stem.

porcelain faucet handles by the hundreds to avoid insurance liabilities.)

Suppose you’re missing a handle or two already. How do you begin the search for a match? “All porcelain handles are held to the valve stem with a screw; 99 percent of the time the screw is on the side of the metal base, but it can also be on the top under a button or metal plug that you pry off,” says chief technician John. Like so much with old houses, the mechanical connection between stem and handle is far from standardized. “Some are square, some have teeth, some are tapered; even popular brands like Standard had several patterns.” Nonetheless, a proper, tight fit is all important. It is this connection—not the screw—that carries the torque of turning the faucet. The screw merely keeps the handle from falling off. A screw on a sloppy handle will shear in half.

If there is a bright side to the needle-in-a-haystack search for matching faucet handles, it’s that old stems are generally slightly larger in diameter than modern faucet stems. If you encounter a nice pair of square-base handles at a flea market, it’s sometimes possible to file the old stem down to the new handle dimensions. The best approach, of course, is to take a sample handle with you—metal base and porcelain, if separated—for comparison when shopping.

Major Faucet Manufacturers 1900-1940

American Standard
Crane
J.L. Mott
Meyer-Sniffen
Kohler
Peck Bros.
Speakman

a more down-to-earth hypothesis: parts. “You had to go to Crane—not Kohler, for instance—for parts.” But wouldn’t this be small potatoes financially? “Let’s suppose you sold all the plumbing in a hotel—maybe for pennies over cost. There may not be big margins today but, down the road, you’d get all the repair business at a much higher profit.

A hefty Meyer-Sniffen lever, tarnished but solid nickel.

Most metal handles are screwed on from the top, whether they're levers, cross handles, or the less common five-point handles. "They're sometimes called sheriff's badge handles," says John. "Though everybody made them—Crane, J.L. Mott, Meyer-Sniffen—they started to disappear in the 1910s." Fortunately, several manufacturers are offering reproductions today.

Speaking of metal, what's appropriate for finishes? A decade or so ago, polished brass was popular for new period fixtures but, it's not a typical historic finish because exposed brass darkens quickly, notes John. "Prior to 1920, faucet hardware was protected with nickel plating. When you find an old faucet that is bare brass, that's what is left after the nickel has worn off." Chrome

became popular after 1925 because it is a much harder, and therefore more durable finish. Polished nickel was still sold side by side with chrome well into the 1930s, no doubt because of its softer, warmer luster. The beauty of nickel plating, according to John, is that "it stays shiny where you handle it—like the way blue jeans wear to your body." The appeal of polished nickel, he says, is strong for all kinds of hardware—a big boon for restorers who can now find the finish on "almost anything you might want in a bathroom." ■

Special thanks to the folks at George Taylor Specialties (76 Franklin Street, New York, NY 10013; 212-226-5369).



Left: Among the specialized products George Taylor Specialties manufactures are the hundreds of spring loaded valves that are on drinking fountains in New York City parks. The bronze castings are ordered from a foundry, but all machining and assembly is done in their shop. Below: The head of this turret lathe in the machine shop is set up with three tools for the three steps in manufacturing a part.



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This wood mantel (left) was installed in the 1840 Hoyt-Potter House in Rochester, New York, to replace one that had been stolen. The next step was to give it some character with a faux finish.

Simply Marble-ous

How to simulate stone with a classic faux-finish painting technique.

BY STEVE JORDAN **W**hen the Landmark Society of Western New York in Rochester decided to replace two missing mantels, they found an ideal model just across the parking lot. The original double parlor mantels of the 1840 Hoyt-Potter House, the society's office building, were stolen in the 1970s while the structure was vacant, and there is no record of their appearance or composition. Just a few yards away is the 1835 Campbell-Whittlesey House, a Greek Revival house museum with original first-floor mantels of black and gold portoro (or porter) marble and slate. In a second-floor bedroom are wood mantels painted to resemble portoro. When the Hoyt-Potter parlor restoration committee decided the new wood mantels would be marbled like those in the Campbell-Whittlesey bedroom, I offered to do the work. The steps I used to reproduce this historic stone finish are easy to master with practice.

Creating Portoro

Marbling was popular in the past because it provided a dramatic effect for far less money than the real thing. Today it's still an inexpensive project, since you don't need a lot of tools. For black and gold marble you'll want a good paintbrush for the base coat (china bristle, ox hair, nylon polyester, or foam) and fine- and medium-pointed artist brushes to create the figuring (see "Materials List" page 54). Try to get a sample of real marble from a flooring dealer, salvage yard, or other supplier to serve as your model. The genuine article makes clear the different depths at which marble figuring can occur. A good photograph is a close runner-up. If figuring is an important part of your imitation, as it is with portoro, sketch a small-scale version of your project on a piece of paper to work out an eye-pleasing marble pattern. Then before you begin, try going through





The only difference between this historical bedroom mantel in the 1835 Campbell-Wittlesey House and another on the first floor is that this mantel is not stone but wood painted to look like marble. Note the convincing veins and "wisps" so characteristic of portoro—a perfect model for a modern copy.

Materials list

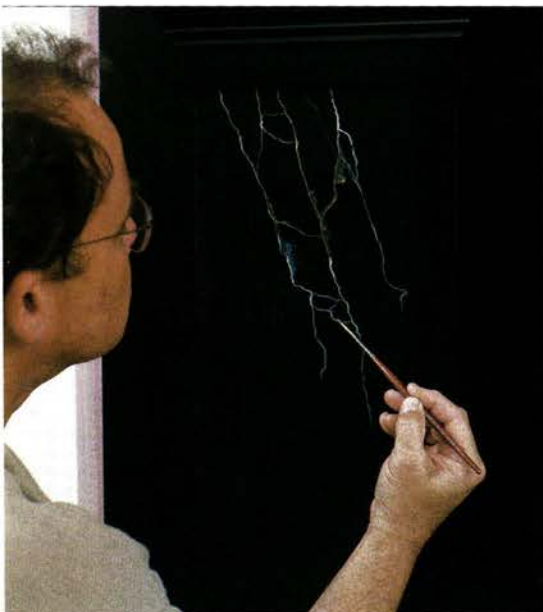
- Black paint, eggshell or satin sheen
- A small amount of white paint
- Yellow ochre artist's tube paint
- Mineral spirits if using oil based paints
- Water if using water based paints
- Stain
- Glazing liquid
- Varnish or polyurethane for sealant
- 320-grit sandpaper
- Tack cloth
- Cotton rags
- Small sponge



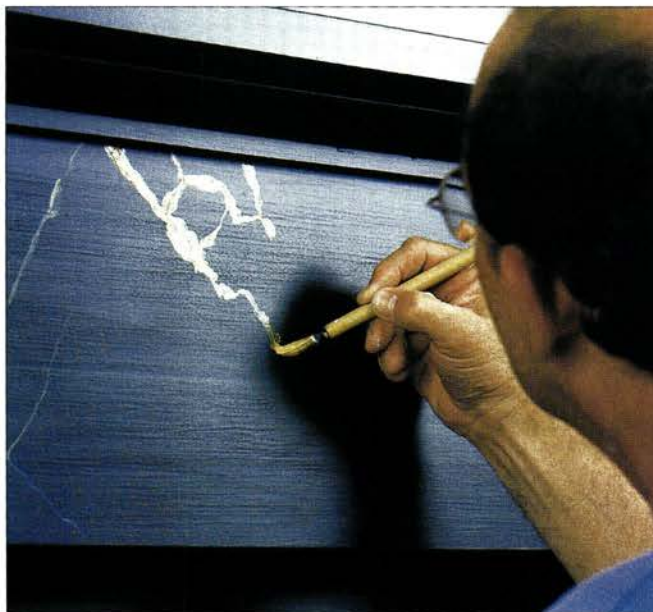
the techniques for all the following steps on a practice panel of wood, plasterboard, tagboard, or whatever material you'll be painting. You'll want to capture not only the principle veining in the marble, but also the "drifts"—cloudy, semitransparent color (usually white) that can run in the same direction as the veins or against them.

Step 1: Base Coat

For a wood mantel to present a convincing imitation of polished stone, you need a marble-smooth base coat in the dominant color of the marble. Begin by applying a flawless coat of satin- or eggshell-sheen black paint to create a furniture quality finish. A good china bristle brush helps, but so can a low-cost foam applicator. To avoid brush marks, don't work in hot weather (say 85 degrees or higher), and thin the paint a bit (with mineral spirits or naphtha if oil-based, water or Floetrol, a Flood product, if latex). If you're working on new wood or another porous surface, prime it first and follow up with two coats of black paint, sanding lightly with 320-grit sandpaper and cleaning with a tack cloth between coats.



Study real marble or a good photograph and perfect your pattern on a practice panel before beginning. Here Steve Jordan makes his initial strokes in white with the tip of a fine lettering brush.



A pencil brush, which tapers to a slightly heavier tip, is used here to create wider ochre veins. You can also produce wider veins by using the side of the brush rather than the tip.





This first-floor mantel in the Campbell-Whittlesey House is genuine portoro marble—a good example of “finer” materials being used in a house’s public rooms.

Apply the primer and paint using long sweeping brush strokes to smooth out the paint before moving on to another area. If brush marks are too prominent on the first coat, thin the paint more for the second.

Perfectionists may want to wet sand the base coat with 400-grit wet-or-dry sandpaper. Before applying the marble figuring, lightly sand off any grit or dust in the paint and wipe the surface with your tack cloth.

Step 2: Marbleizing

Apply your veining with a fine brush or feather. I used two brushes for the Hoyt-Potter project: a fine lettering brush and a larger pencil brush, both of which taper to fine points. Create fine veins with the tips; lay in wider veins with the sides of the brushes. A light touch is essential whether applying a thin or thick line. Thinning the paint to a good working consistency is also important; you don’t want your figuring to appear to rise from the surface. This is a great exercise for your practice board. On this mantel project, I chose to angle the veining from left to right and from the top down. As you work, step away and judge

Dabbling in Marbleizing

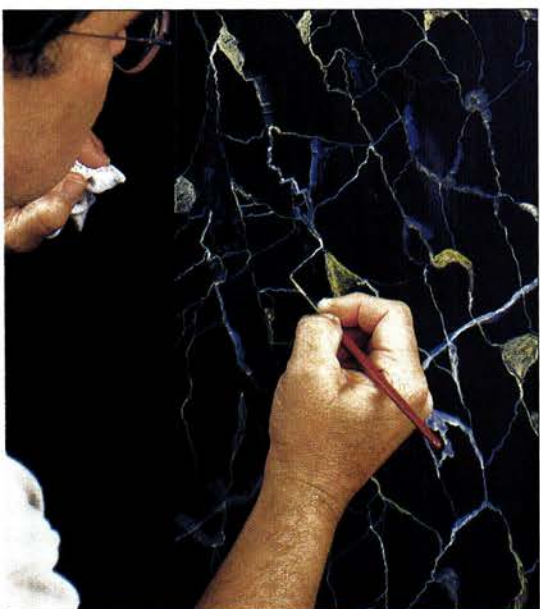
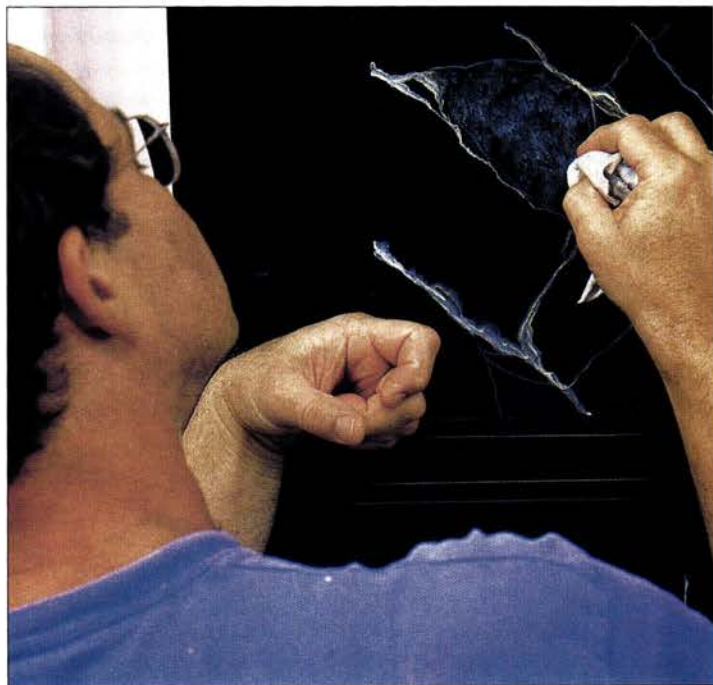
Marbleizing (called marbling in England and by old-time American painters) is a centuries old decorative painting technique that simulates marble or other architectural and decorative stones. It’s abundant at Louis XIV’s Versailles in France and many other grand European buildings, and was a common practice in America during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. If marble was costly or unobtainable for homeowners, the painted version would do, and if created by the hand of a master painter there was little visible difference. This seems normal today as we substitute photo-printed veneer for wood and asphalt for slate, but not so a century ago. Fake architectural materials furrowed brows and raised hackles among arbiters of taste, who believed that faux finishes were patently dishonest in their attempt to deceive. They argued and grandstanded against them. Meanwhile, frugal Americans continued to marbleize wherever needed. In addition to mantels, marbling was popular on baseboards, crown mouldings and, in Beaux Arts mansions at the turn of the last century, in entryways and halls.

In commercial buildings, primarily, you’ll see it on interior columns. Granted, some painted finishes can be passé—tired fads that have worn out their welcome. In many old houses, though, a good counterfeit is exactly what’s needed. For your own home, look for inspiration in other houses of your region. They may have imported marble from great distances if money was no object, or tapped into local quarries when the budget was a bit tighter. Pink marble, for instance, was quarried in east Tennessee. Common patterns are white marble with gray to black veining, green serpentine marbles, and sienna marble, which has a terra cotta background and white veining. Marbling on slate was also common, but this process involved dipping the mantel parts in a vat of water and pigments at a factory to create the desired effect.



Lines thick and thin, ocher and white, are interwoven in roughly parallel chains (left), with an occasional streak of paint applied perpendicular to the basic pattern (the strong diagonal line above) to add visual interest and depth.

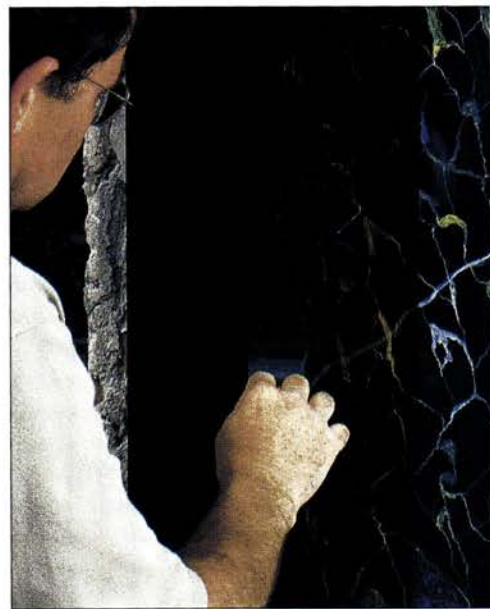
Further enhancing the illusion of depth, Steve simulates cloudlike drifts of minerals that seem to recede into the "marble." He first applies a white glaze (left) and then dabs at it with a damp cotton rag. The result is a subtle smoky appearance.



You need to use a light touch when painting small veins—and larger ones as well. Note that the lines form chains of closed and irregular shapes, not unlike the countries on a map.



Turning the corner! You'll need a steady hand here to continue your veins convincingly. Note the end results in the next photograph.



Once the veining and drifts dried, Steve applied a brown glaze to age their other-wise bright colors and now is dry brushing it to fine-tune the effect.

your progress from a distance. Oil-based paint will allow you to wipe off your work with mineral spirits and start over if you don't like your results. Water-based paints dry too fast to leave much room for error.

The figures in black and gold marble are wispy lines that form a chain or ladder across the dark background. The dominant colors are usually ocher (sometimes with a little umber) and white, but there can be hints of burnt sienna or dull red. In this example, I matched the colors in the next-door mantels. The basic ladder pattern of veins runs roughly parallel across the surface, but a secondary streak of white veining often appears, seemingly on a different plane. Secondary veining applied diagonally across the primary veining helps make the pattern less monotonous. To create additional interest, simulate drifts by applying a transparent glaze of white in selected areas, mottling it with a small damp sponge or cotton rag.

Step 3: Glazing

For added depth and a realistic interpretation of marble, apply a final glaze over

your dried work. On this project, I used Minwax Jacobean stain and a bit of oil-based glazing liquid to "age" the prominent figuring. You can also tint varnish or polyurethane with black and Van Dyke brown pigment to get a similar effect. Brush your glaze on evenly with a good bristle or foam brush. Then refine and lighten the glaze by dry brushing with a clean, soft brush or lightly wiping the wet glaze with a soft, lint-free cloth. If any vein or figuring appears obscure, wrap a clean rag around your finger and wipe the glaze from the vein with your fingernail.

Step 4: Protective Finish

When the glaze dries, apply a protective coat of satin varnish or polyurethane to add the appropriate luster to your work. Make sure your brush strokes follow those of the base coat. Before you clean up your tools and congratulate yourself on a job well done, shine a bright lamp or light on the project to make sure there are no "holidays" (skips) in your work. Most likely, you and guests will be admiring this effort for many holidays to come. ■

A close-up look at the finished project shows the three-dimensional impression achieved by these relatively easy techniques.



Resources

The past 25 years have seen a renaissance in traditional building crafts and trades, and no resurgence matches the newfound popularity of decorative painting. Once nearly obsolete, these skills were revived in part by the U.S. bicentennial and the historic preservation movement, and also by a few remaining craftsmen and dusty books. Today it's rare to peruse magazine racks without seeing an article on decorative painting, and inexpensive how-to books and video tapes just keep coming. Below are a few that convey the techniques well. If you favor hands-on instruction, search on-line for "decorative painting schools," some of which travel from city to city.

- *The Art of Faux*, Pierre Finkelstein, Watson-Guptill, 1997
- *The Complete Book of Decorating Techniques*, Linda Gray with Jocasta Innes, Little Brown and Company, 1986
- *Decorating With Paint*, Jocasta Innes, Harmony Books, 1986
- *The Handbook of Painted Decoration*, Yannick Guegan and Roger Le Pail, W.W. Norton & Co., 1996
- *Professionally Painted Finishes*, Ina Brosseau Marx, Allen Marx, Robert Marx, Watson-Guptill, 1991
- *Recipes for Surfaces*, Mindy Drucker and Pierre Finkelstein, Simon and Schuster, 1990

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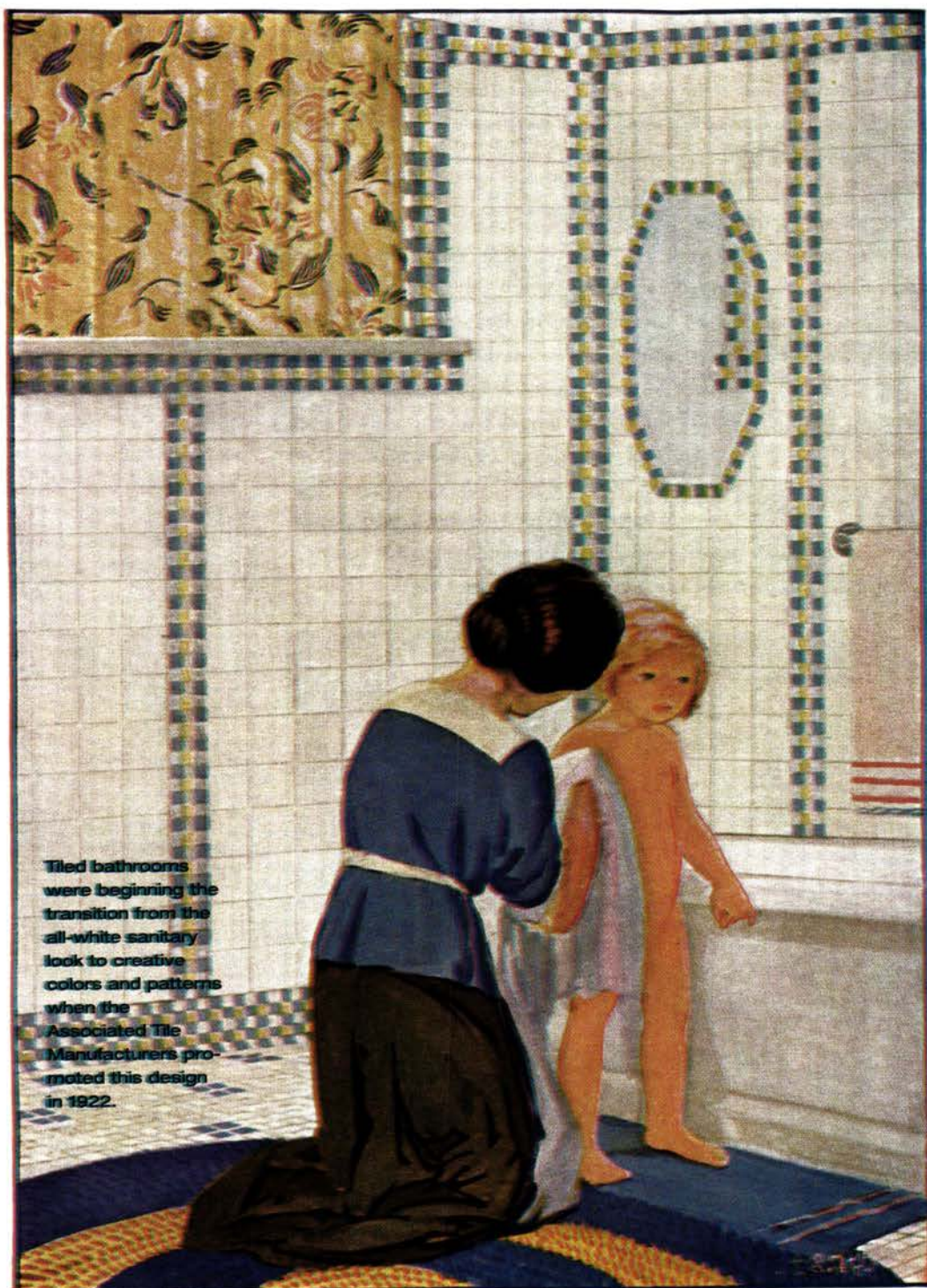
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Tracking Down



Tiled bathrooms were beginning the transition from the all-white sanitary look to creative colors and patterns when the Associated Tile Manufacturers promoted this design in 1922.

Historical Tile

BY MARYLEE MACDONALD **W**hen you're restoring a house, don't you sometimes wish you could slip a note to Sherlock Holmes? Put the great detective on the trail, and he'd find those six tiles you need to repair a hole the plumber knocked under the sink. I know I was ready for a helping hand after chasing from one tile store to another and finding nothing but Italian imports. Scores of OHJ readers report similar frustration: old-time ceramic companies with name changes; tile distributors with skimpy inventory. Once you stop thinking locally, however, you'll find that common historic tiles aren't as rare as they appear to be when you limit your search to sources within driving distance.

Though you'd never know it to talk to dealers in suburban strip malls, "subway" tile—the ubiquitous 3"x 6" glazed wall tile—is still made. The most common floor tile—hex shapes, 1" square porcelain mosaics, and penny rounds—are just a phone call away; the production of both the black-and-white standards and colored tiles is flourishing. Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau patterns have made a big comeback. To find the materials to re-create a period room or patch your existing tile, search nationally. The Internet is a good place to begin your sleuthing.

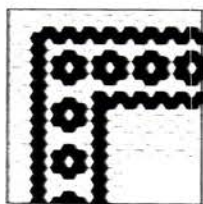
Replace or Repair?

Old tilework, with its narrow grout joints, lasts practically forever, except when pipes leak. Still, you can invest a lot of time and energy tracking down ceramic tile to match your existing room. Then if you do obtain, say, "white" tile locally, it may not be the same white as the tile on your wall. Basic tile colors from the same manufacturer change subtly from production run to production run, and year to year. Even if you had the original color, you'd find that aging, wear, and cracking of the glaze had changed the tile's appearance. Where a house is undergoing extensive restoration—say, floors and walls are opened to install new pipes or heating chases or to repair water-damaged framing—it makes sense to replace tiles with period ceramics.

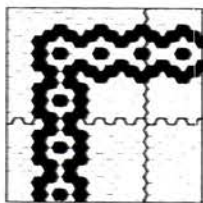
Unsure about what your tilework could have looked like in the past? Keep in mind that, from 1890 to about 1920, most kitchens and baths had an antiseptic look: white ceramic floors and walls. After 1920, though, the influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement introduced color. Hand-painted, enameled, pottery, and terra cotta tiles gained popularity, and tile manufacturers experimented with pastels and metallic glazes. The layout of walls changed, too, with tile sometimes turned diagonally and dados ending in a horizontal cap. The secondary bathrooms of the house might have retained the old white-on-white motif, but the master baths, beginning in the 1920s, had colored ceramics and ulti-

The right tiles and patterns are key for repairing or re-creating vintage bathrooms.

COURTESY OF MONTEREY CERAMIC TILE AND MARBLE



Above: These striking borders and bands are the product of simple geometric tile shapes that contrast with the basic field tile patterns.



Left: Hexagon mosaic tiles, the "hexessential" bathroom floor ceramic from about 1895 to 1930, can still be ordered in traditional field and border patterns. Small runs of borders like the ubiquitous "flower" can be practical to make.

COURTESY OF DAL-TILE

mately colored porcelain fixtures by the 1930s.

Floor Tile

White, nonslip mosaic tile is still practical today. Unglazed hex tile or porcelain squares, for example, are slip-proof and easy to mop with bleach. (Never put glazed tile on the floor, especially in a bath.) Both Dal-Tile and American Olean (now under the same corporate umbrella) still make the traditional black (ebony) and white tile, but each has a slightly different color palette (see "Suppliers" page 62). If local dealers can't obtain the tile you want from their distributors, try Nemo Tile in New York City. They stock American Olean's 1", 1 1/4", and 2" unglazed hex tile in white and ebony, including the classic "flower design" pattern.

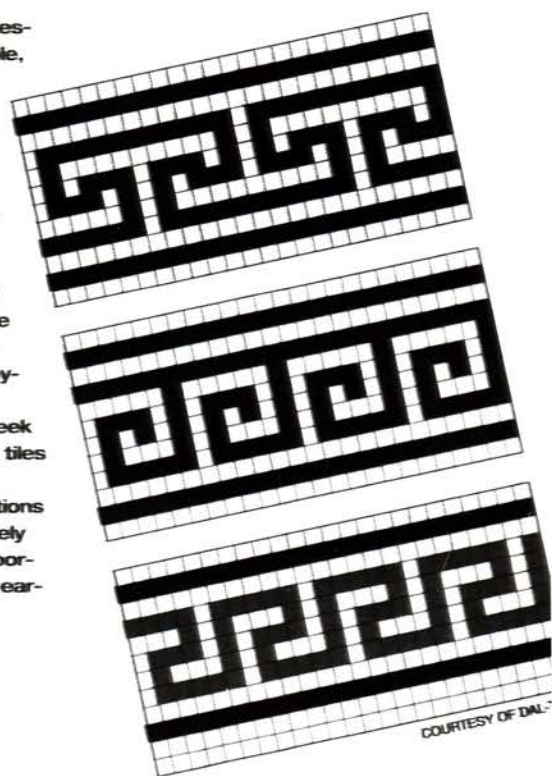
Dal-Tile also still makes historic borders for both squares and hex tile. The borders are designed to go with their field tile (so called because they form the "field" as opposed to the "border" of a tile job). Ordering prefabricated sheets of borders may be prohibitively expensive for a homeowner unless you are doing a large room or are lucky enough to find a distributor with a few boxes left over from a commercial job. You can make your own though, by purchasing sheets of plain black and white field tiles and rearranging them. Create your own designs using DalTile patterns for ideas.

You'll never find a tilesetter with the patience to pry up mosaic tiles and reposition them. However, if you supply the border tile, a pro will be happy to lay it for you. To determine quantity, first determine the center point of your room (see "Planning for Borders" page 61). Then, using graph paper, figure out how many sheets of field tile and border tile your room will need. Plan for corners. Make up sheets well in advance so the tilesetter can move quickly. Mastic or Thin-set mortar sets up too quickly to allow time for fussing with individual tiles.



LINDA SVENDSEN

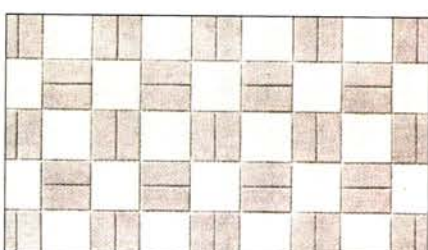
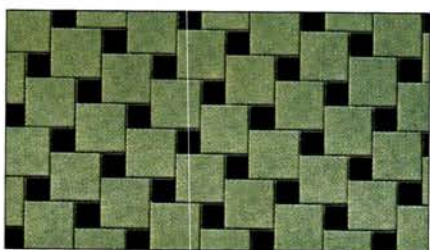
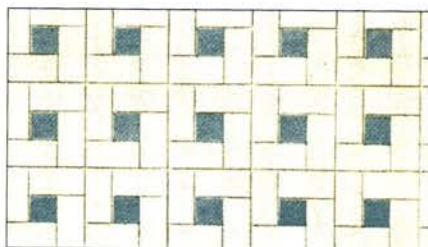
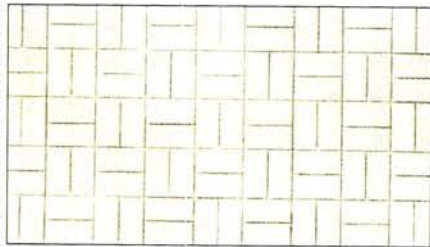
Above: The iridescent blue, purple, and black tiles in this 1928 Spanish-style house are right in step with the explosion of color that became popular shortly thereafter. Note the decorative band and honey-comb pattern floor. Right: Greek frets of square tiles in any of their many permutations have been widely used for floor borders since the earliest tiled bathrooms.



COURTESY OF DAL-TILE



COURTESY OF THE HAGLEY MUSEUM



Top: The influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement is evident not only in the mossy green color of this 1928 bathroom alcove, but also in the pictorial tile set in the wall. Details, such as the edge and corner tiles, contribute much to the period look.

Above: By the 1930s, manufacturers' catalogs were promoting floor tile in a wide range of patterns as well as colors and combinations.

Planning for Borders

To create borders, you will need to determine the center point of the room. Stretch string from one corner of the room to the other. Cross it with another stretched string. This is the center point of the room. Now, bisect each angle. These will be your center lines. Check with a framing square to make sure the lines are perpendicular. Imagine laying four sheets of field tile, one in each quadrant. The corners will touch at the center point.

Work out from there, using graph paper or making tick marks on the floor. Hex tile will come in 1' x 2' sheets. Mark or chalk lines where you want the border to begin and transfer the measurements to graph paper. You can let the area near the base of cabinets and walls "go wild." This means that the tile width at the outer edge of a border can vary. You might have two tiles at one point and three at another. But if the room itself is square, the differences at the edge of the room, which are usually covered by fixtures and furniture, won't be noticeable.

Sheets of mosaic tile come with either a mesh or paper backing. You can pry up tile selectively to make up your borders in advance. That way they'll be ready when it's time to lay the tile. Working on a card table, pull tile loose from the backing sheets to make empty spaces for the contrasting tile. Brush contact cement on the replacement tile. Contact cement dries quickly and will hold the tile long enough for the tilesetter to embed the sheet in mastic or Thin-set mortar. For large jobs, Dal-Tile has architect representatives who can help you calculate quantities and discuss availability of Dal-Tile's borders. If you're restoring an apartment building, this is the way to go, and you can find the names and phone numbers of the reps on the Dal-Tile Web site.

Wall Tile

What could be more historically appropriate above unglazed floor tile than tight-jointed 3" x 6" subway tile? When shopping, though, remember that "subway" is an unofficial term. American Olean's subway tile is sold under the "Greenwich Village" name; Dal-Tile's goes by the moniker "Rittenhouse Square." Unless you ask a distributor for these specific product lines, chances are you will strikeout. There are too many tile products for distributors to keep track of, and these are not the trendy ones. If you can't find a local distributor with the color or product you're looking for, don't worry. Nemo Tile stocks white and black, as well as many other colors. Remember that details are what make a historical look. Make sure your supplier or distributor can also provide the cove and base tile to help you complete the job. These generally come in dimensions of 2" x 6" or 3" x 6", and all subway tile is available in an assortment of colors: white, ebony, cobalt blue, ruby red, and sage are just a few.

If you're leaning toward color and want a wider selection, check out tile from sources such as Tile Restoration Center, Stratford

Tile Works, or Historic Tile. These companies make ceramics that rival Victorian wallpaper.

The Arts & Crafts Movement brought a whole new era in color. For those living in bungalows and Prairie-style houses, hand-formed, artisan tile was a key element in the home's design. The way tile was placed on the wall also changed. Rather than the bricklike bond of subway tile, you were likely to see interruptions in pattern—tiles set diagonally, tile with diamond-dots.

This ceramic artistry is booming today. Look at the line of "Arts and Crafts," "Malibu," and "Old World" product lines from Monterey Ceramic Tile and Marble. Another company, Designs in Tile, has an excellent Web site showing how ceramics can be assembled appropriately. There are so many good choices today that it's important to use some restraint. Don't go wild reinterpreting a room. First imagine what was there. Then if you like what you see in your mind's eye, you can use historically appropriate tiles and patterns to put it back the way it was. 🏠



A far cry from the institutional look of all white running-bond subway tile, these wall suggestions from 1928 use colored and iridescent tiles in creative wainscot patterns produced by placement, rather than shape.

Suppliers

AMERICAN OLEAN

Subway tile, hex tile, bullnose and corner pieces, plus specialty trim.

(214) 398-1411

www.americanolean.com

Circle 23 on resource card.

DAL-TILE

Subway tile, field tile, hex tile, bullnose and corner pieces, plus specialty trim pieces.

(214) 398-1411

www.daltile.com

Circle 24 on resource card.

DESIGNS IN TILE

Specialty wall tile.

(530) 926-2629

www.designsintile.com

Circle 25 on resource card.

HISTORIC TILE

Specialty wall tile.

(818) 547-4247

www.historictile.com

Circle 26 on resource card.

MONTEREY CERAMIC TILE & MARBLE

Specialty wall tile.

(626) 288-8693

www.montereyceramictile.com

Circle 27 on resource card.

NEMO TILE

Specialty wall tile.

(800) NEMO TILE

www.nemotile.com

Circle 28 on resource card.

SUMMITVILLE TILE

Tile distributor.

(330) 223-1511

www.summitville.com

Circle 29 on resource card.

STRATFORD TILE WORKS

See their Web site for a list of their distributors. They only sell directly to the public if there is no distributor within 30 miles of your house.

(609) 259-8453

www.stratfordtileworks.com

Circle 30 on resource card.

TILE RESTORATION CENTER

Specialty wall tile.

(206) 633-4866

www.tilerestorationcenter.com

Circle 31 on resource card.

TILE SOURCE

Specialty wall tile.

(770) 993-6602

Circle 32 on resource card.

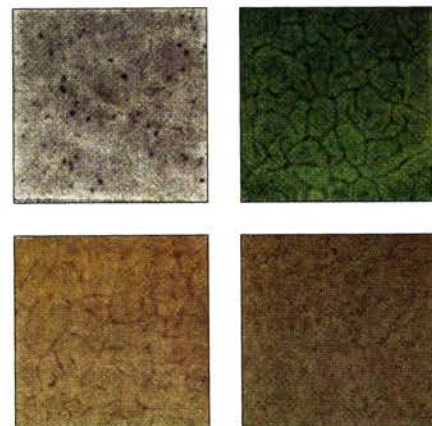
Resources

CERAMIC TILE DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION (CTDA)

(630) 545-9415

www.ctdahome.org

Circle 33 on resource card.



The Grueby Tile Company, a premier Arts & Crafts art tile manufacturer of the 1910s, ceased business in 1930, but its rich mottled glazes and designs lived on for another decade as productions of the Pardee Tile Company, spreading to bathrooms across the country.



Above: The Mosaic Faience Company offered this example of bathroom "color effects" in 1929 using 4 1/4" square wall tiles and 6" square floor tiles. Below: Austere or elegant, depending on the accent trim, coupling white tile wainscots with white hex floor tiles is historically appropriate for many pre-1940s bathrooms.



COURTESY OF AMERICAN OLEAN

Repairing Tile

Have one or two tiles to replace around a firebox? The Web is your friend. If you know who made the tile you're looking for, try a Google search (www.google.com) and enter the name of the manufacturer. There are a number of individuals selling one-of-a-kind salvaged tile over the web.

The more common problem homeowners confront is how to replace a few missing tiles. If most of the room is in good shape and the underlying mortar doesn't show signs of water damage, try to find a matching color. If water damage is extensive, though, I think it's best to start from scratch. A good tile job is no better than the surface beneath it. Here are some strategies to consider:

If you have only a few tiles to replace, you can probably get by with some from your local tile store. I've patched subway tile with 6"x6" tile that I cut down to size, orienting the cut edge downward so that it would be less visible. (Use a tile-cutting saw, or have the tile dealer cut the tile for you. A snapped edge will be too obvious.) Consider whether the tile is visible the moment you step into the room. If the patch is below a sink or beneath a toilet, will anyone care?

Matching tile color is a lot more important than finding the right size tile. I ran back and forth to several stores picking up samples of "white" before I found a close match. Even so the new piece, with its pristine glaze, didn't match the crackled glaze in the rest of the room. Good enough for who it's for, I said. The job was for me, and at that point, I was happy to avoid the expense of all new tile.

Don't even think about installing a few pieces of replacement tile if the mortar is not in good shape. Use tile mastic for walls (not Thin-set) and floor mastic for floors. Thin-set, which is a soupy 3/8" mortar, can be troweled over a concrete-board base or over a professionally installed mortar base. In my experience Thin-set won't bond well to old mortar. I think this is because the existing mortar is smooth, just like the back side of the tile. I prefer mastic for making these small repairs because it's a little more impervious to water.

Please try to tolerate cracked tile. If it's stuck tight to the mortar, leave it alone. But, when you absolutely can't stand looking at the cracked tile, drill around the edges. First, drill a pilot hole with a 1/16" bit, about 5/8" from the grout line. Then, enlarge the hole by using a 3/8" bit in your pilot hole. Use masonry bits and be sure to wear eye protection. Space the holes 3/8" to 1/2" apart. As you're drilling, squirt some 3-In-One oil into the hole to keep it from heating up. Have lots of bits because you'll go through plenty of them. Then, try to remove the grout, either with a grout-removing tool (available at most paint stores) or with the sharp end of a metal fingernail file. This should free up the tile. Now, with a 3/8" or 5/8" cold chisel—not a wood chisel—carefully tap out the tile between your drilled holes. Try not to chip the glaze on adjoining tile. Old grout, however, is often so firmly bonded to adjoining tile that trying to remove one tile damages the adjoining ones. That's why it's so important to remove as much grout as possible before trying to chip that tile out. Good luck!

Sharing ghost stories about old-house living is a longstanding tradition at OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, and in this issue the editors are pleased to present a sampling of the latest “spirited tales” from readers. This year’s crop contains numerous reports of radio music (sans radios), perplexed pets, and unexplained aromas—from roses to cookie dough to smoke from a long-quenched fire. As in the past, it’s clear from these letters that, rather than being spooked by unearthly presences, old-house folks are entranced or amused, viewing their specters as kindly caretakers or astral clowns. Many restorers look to them for signs that they approve of the work on the houses they can’t bear to leave.

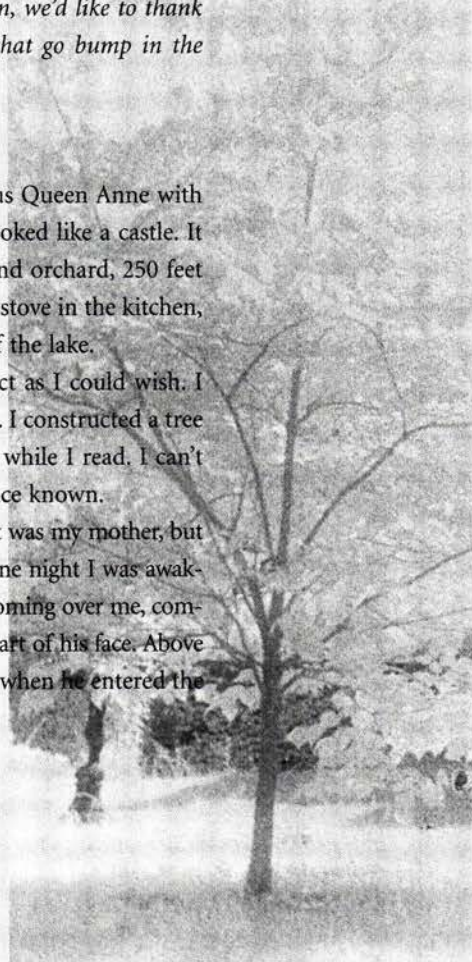
As we gather for a moment around this collective campfire of the imagination, we’d like to thank everyone who took the time to send in their particular experience with things that go bump in the night—and sometimes all day as well.

The Man in Black

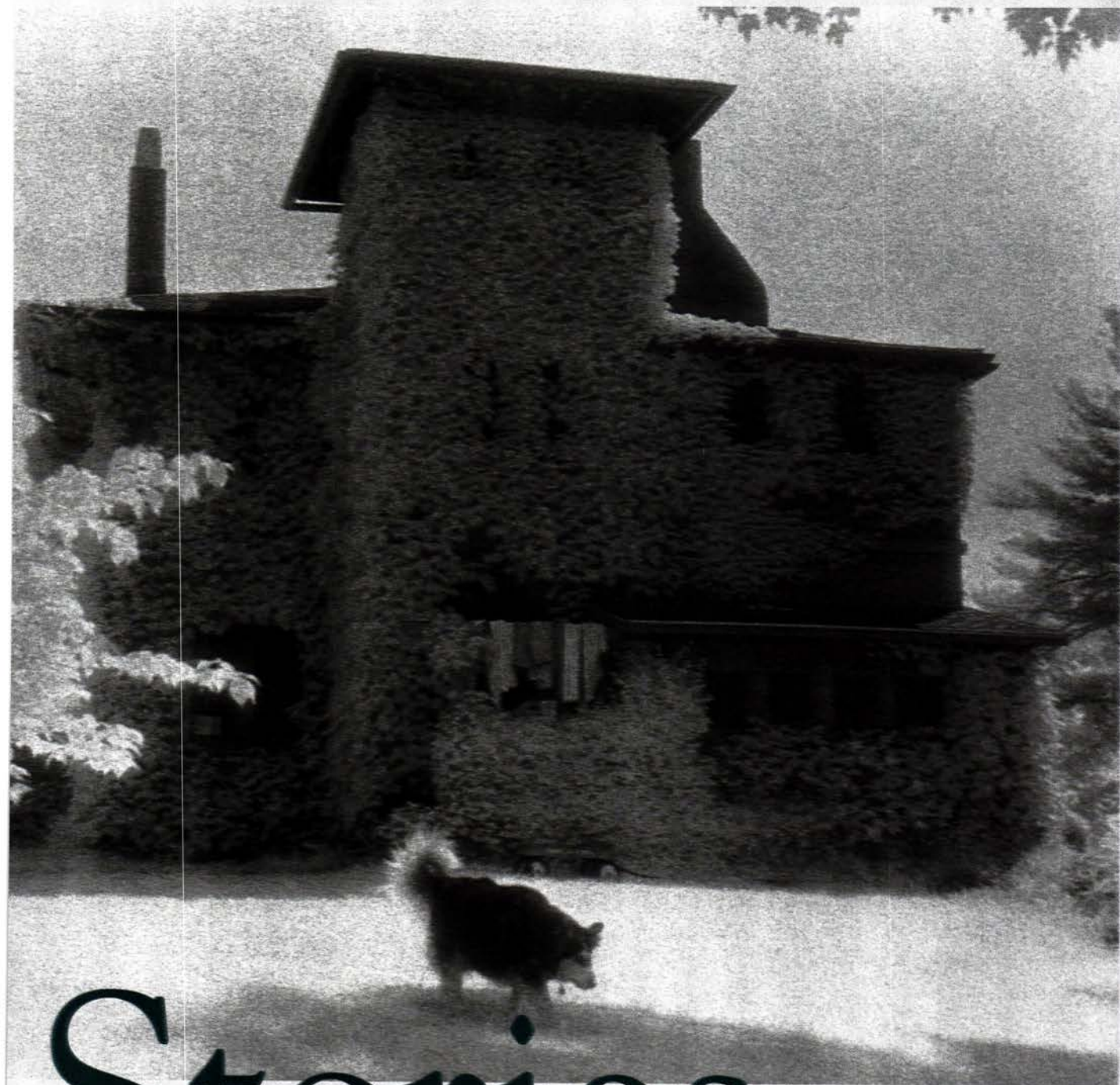
In the summer of 1942 as a pigtailed girl of 11, I stood gazing up at the spacious Queen Anne with awe. I had spent the first part of my life in a large city, and this hilltop house looked like a castle. It had everything a young tomboy could want—more than eight acres of woods and orchard, 250 feet of private lake front, and that amazing house with its wraparound porch, a wood stove in the kitchen, and best of all, a tower! I had been promised the tower bedroom with its view of the lake.

We set about refurbishing the house with enthusiasm. My life was as perfect as I could wish. I liked my new school, made friends, swam, hunted, fished, and prowled the woods. I constructed a tree house in the orchard where I spent many hours munching on apples and pears while I read. I can’t recall exactly how long we lived in the house before he began to make his presence known.

From my room I would hear someone walking in the attic. At first I assumed it was my mother, but I always found her in the kitchen or garden, denying she had been upstairs. Then one night I was awakened by a sensation of being watched. I opened my eyes to see an ominous figure looming over me, completely in black. He wore a tall hat and a cape or cloak that he held over the lower part of his face. Above high hollow cheek bones, sunken eyes glowered redly. I screamed for my father, and when he entered the room, the apparition vanished.



Ghost



Stories

***"All houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses."
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow***

Photographs by Jane Booth Vollers



home, peering from the window of my tower bedroom, was his face. My mother said it was only the reflection of tree branches. Two other snapshots taken at the same time from the exact same location showed only an empty window. When I had the photo enlarged, the darkroom technician refused to make more than one print, saying he felt uneasy working with it. I hadn't discussed the apparition with him.

My mother then admitted that our home was supposedly haunted. She hadn't wanted to upset me while we

The Pawnbroker

Several years ago, we purchased a wonderful 1913 Arts & Crafts house in Fort Worth, Texas—a gracious, spacious lady perfect for our large family.

We bought it from a very reluctant seller who at the time was a locally famous pawnbroker known as Uncle Mel. He adored the house but had been required to sell it off in a difficult divorce settlement. Long after the house was empty he continued to play cards with his friends there and made no effort to find a buyer. Certainly, he negotiated with us as if he were quite content to own it forever.

When we finally acquired the house we moved in with ambitious plans for a full restoration. One of the projects was to restore a handsome central oak staircase that had a passageway leading to our master bedroom on the second landing.

One night about three years after we moved in, we tucked all four kids into bed and retired to our bedroom to read. We were wide awake and the house was blissfully quiet. Suddenly, we both heard heavy foot-

The manifestations became more frequent, and my visitor became more visible and clearly defined. In warm weather I began dragging blanket and pillow out my window to sleep on the little mop porch outside my room. In winter, on weeknights when my father was in the city, I would feign cold and beg to sleep with my mother. On weekends I would again scream for my father. The apparition never appeared in any room but mine, but sometimes I could hear his heavy footsteps in the attic, especially if I was alone in the house. I made it a practice never to be alone in the house after dark. If my mother was out, I bundled up my homework and went next door, where a kind childless couple always welcomed my company, or I sat on the porch until her return.

No, I only saw the last of him when I grew up and left that house for good. Many years later my parents came to visit me, and we were looking through some old photo albums. There in a picture of our old

were living in the house because, she said, "You were such a nervous child." The ghost was rumored to be a judge who had either shot or hanged himself in the attic.

In the summer of 1996 I stood gazing up at the house once more. It had been "let go," as they say, but now had new owners who wanted my advice on restoring it. They were full of plans to strip paint from the golden oak woodwork, remove cheap paneling from the walls, and revitalize the gardens.

The husband greeted me outside with a warm hug, then looked a bit uncomfortable. He asked if I would mind answering a rather odd question before we went into the house where his wife and children awaited us. "My children believe they have seen a ghost in the tower bedroom," he said. "Is there a ghost in the house?"

My answer was, "Yes."

Patricia S. Orcutt

Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin



steps outside our door, thudding up the oak staircase—deliberate, fearless footfalls. We bolted up in bed. Bob grabbed a machete and we went to the door and cautiously opened it. Seeing nothing, we proceeded to each of the kids' bedrooms, checking to see that they were both safe and fast asleep.

We then searched the entire house with the machete at the ready. We opened every closet, looked behind the furniture and curtains, and even searched the dark basement. It was so strange. We found nothing, yet were both absolutely sure we had heard the footsteps of an intruder. Returning to our bedroom, we talked about our thoroughness. Finally convinced that no one could possibly be in the house, we turned out the lights.

The next morning Bob went out to get the paper and opened it while still standing on the driveway. The answer to our puzzle was right on the front page. Uncle Mel had been murdered on the previous night.

Robert and Beverley Camp
North Hero, Vermont

Charlie

I grew up in a 1905 Foursquare with two staircases, one from the front hallway and a second, much steeper, leading from the second floor to the kitchen. While living there I always felt cold spots and heard footsteps on the kitchen stair, but these sensations and noises never bothered me—I considered them signs that the house had life in it. My parents remained there until they died in the mid-1990s; I've been renting it out until my son, now 17, is in college, at which point I plan to move back in.

My first tenant mentioned that he heard footsteps on the back stairs. The second tenant reported that his cat hissed at the doorway of the kitchen landing. While washing dishes he felt cold spots in the air. Occasionally he saw a misty face peeking around the doorway, an apparition that he nonchalantly began calling "Charlie." Hearing this report on one of my visits, I went to the staircase and told Charlie the tenant was

Haunting Tales

Doorknobs

When my children were small we lived in a lovely Arts & Crafts bungalow. Unfortunately for us (and the house) we were merely renters. The owners offered to sell, but their asking price and the need for new electricity and plumbing put it out of our reach.

The day we told them we couldn't buy the house the doorknobs started to fall off. When I was taking my youngest to kindergarten, the inside knob came off the front door and I had to fix it before we could leave. The house definitely did not want us to abandon it to its fate—and a terrible fate it was.

First the owners cut the wisteria to the ground and then the evergreens where the doves cooed. (Did I hear a doorknob drop?) They tore out the mahogany wainscoting and window seat to enclose the porch, and replaced the bay window with a picture window. Rather than refinish the floor, they covered it in carpeting. There was a lovely little pantry with leaded, beveled doors on three sides. Gone. (How many doorknobs does that account for?)

When I expressed shock at the gold aluminum siding over the cedar shakes, they told me they were rotting. The workman said nothing was wrong with them and that it was a shame.

The doorknobs kept falling, even when guests were there. The owners never moved in and eventually sold the house. Maybe the doorknobs that seemed to be trying to keep us in were now trying to keep them out!

Hazel Decker, Brooklyn, New York



Something About Henry

In the early '60s we bought an 18th-century sandstone house on the outskirts of Birdsboro, Pennsylvania. It soon became evident that we weren't the only tenants of our home. Things didn't get moved around, banged, or tapped. There were no odors or slime dripping down walls. Rather, there was a definite warmth. When we returned from an evening out or a vacation, we always felt as though someone was there to welcome us home. We called it Henry.

The dog would wake from a sound sleep and turn her head to follow Henry's path across the room, her tail thumping the floor. The heavy walnut double doors to the 1901 living room closed on their own; they were far too well balanced to swing shut in a draft. On nights that I locked the attic door, with its heavy Victorian hardware that had to be rotated 180 degrees, I would find it unlocked again the next morning.

My husband enjoyed telling people Henry stories, but I was never sure he really believed them. Then one night I was the first to return from working late and when I walked in the house was empty—not of furniture but of warmth—dead, cold, empty. David came in a short time later, took off his jacket, and looked around quizzically before exclaiming, "Henry's gone!"

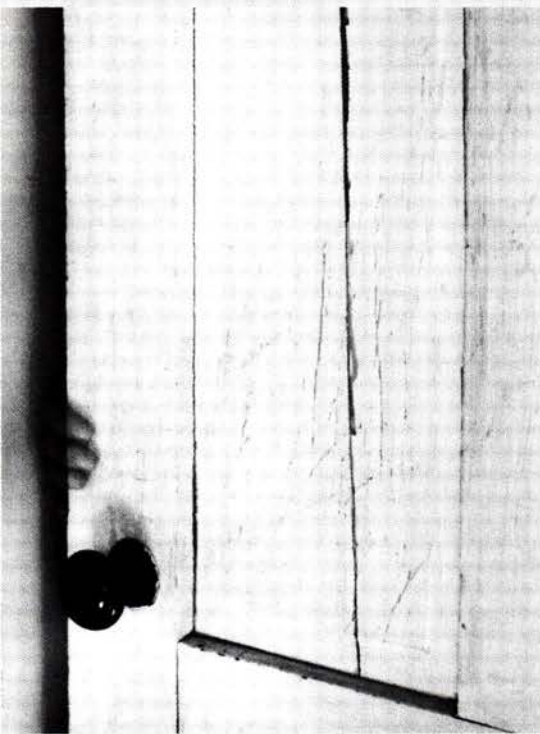
Candy Thun, Rumney, New Hampshire

An Unhappy History

We are the fifth owners of our house, which was built in 1853 and witness to some tragic events. A son of the second family hanged himself in the barn. A member of the third generation ran off with his own son's wife. The next family went bankrupt, and the last lived here only five years before an exceedingly nasty divorce.

Not knowing any of this when we bought the house, we went blithely ahead with our unremuddlings and improvements. About two years ago lights began coming on in the barn at odd times like late afternoon and early evening. It was a little disconcerting to leave for town and see lights on in the chicken coop. After spreading flour in front of the barn doors to see if anything would leave earthly footprints (no luck—I think raccoons ate the flour) we had our priest bless the house and barns. Things were noticeably quieter for a while, although one of the girls who now rents our barn and pasture for her horse swears she has seen a couple of our ghosts—one a little girl who seems to be hiding and the other a man.

Then the central vacuum system began to turn itself on in the middle of the



okay and I didn't want him scaring anyone.

Later, research in the city census showed that the house was built by a plumber named Charles Wheeler. The same day I made that discovery, a relative reminded me that my parents bought the house after Charles was killed, falling down the back stair and hitting his head on a radiator. I look forward to the day I return home and have Charlie as my roommate again.

Mary Ann Vlahac

Stratford, Connecticut

The Room

In the West Adams area of Los Angeles, the Jesuit order owned three side-by-side transition Victorian-Craftsman houses for some 15 years. Facing Menlo Avenue, they served as housing for priests. Unfortunately, they backed on a long empty lot that in the early 1990s became the site of a supermarket that needed their lots for parking. After several years' uproar, the market agreed to move the houses elsewhere on the block.

My wife, Jennifer, and I were curious about the now empty houses. One of her adult education students was their caretaker, and one Saturday he opened them to us and a few other members of the local historic preservation association.

At the largest house, Jennifer struck up a conversation in Spanish with the caretaker's 6-year-old daughter, while I moved on to the next. After a quick look at the first and second floors I climbed to the attic, which at first appeared to be a single unfinished room.

Then I noticed a small room, not more than 6' x 6', off to my right where the roof sloped toward the street. It was a pool of blackness, but I could see it was unfurnished with a bare light bulb hanging just inside the entrance.

As I took a step toward it, I was struck by an overwhelming sense of evil. "Five steps and I can pull the light cord," I thought. "This is nonsense." I managed one more step before freezing, then turned and bolted down the stairs.

When Jennifer and the caretaker's daughter started up the stairs to the second floor, the girl tugged on her sleeve and kept saying in Spanish, "This is a bad, bad place! Let's get out of here."

In February 1999 my work took me to Peru where a young Spanish teacher asked me to look up a former student, a Jesuit now living in Los Angeles on my return.

When Jennifer and I invited Father Tom to dinner, we learned that this big, genial priest had formerly lived in one of the Menlo Avenue houses. Fearing that he might think I was loony, I recounted the incident. When I finished he asked, "Who told you about the things that went on in that house?"

When the Jesuits bought the houses, he said, they found satanic carvings in one attic and unexplained occurrences were common. Objects disappeared. There were loud noises with no explanation. Some of the priests refused to live there. Police said there had been complaints about squatters in the late 1960s—squatters who were members of the infamous Manson family.

The cult broke up when several of its members were arrested for the August 1969 murders of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and her guests and the following night, Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. At their trial, members bragged that they had left bodies hid-

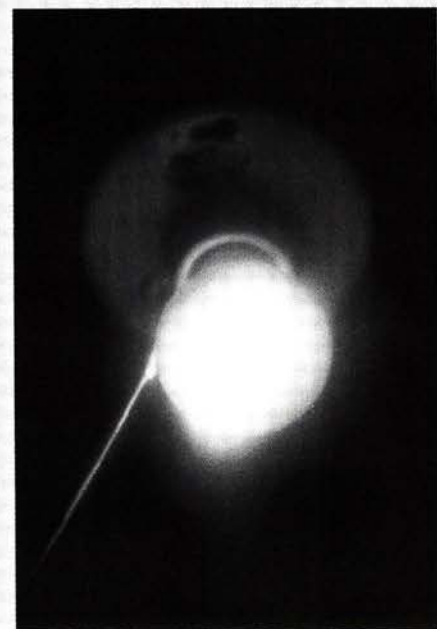


den at ranches where they had lived. What about on Menlo Avenue?

Around dusk the three of us walked over to look at the three houses, now relocated and being renovated as houses for the elderly. When I got inside my evil house I saw that the stairs to the attic had been removed and only a trapdoor provided access. I pulled over a piece of scaffolding, climbed it to open the trapdoor, and chinned myself up. Below the attic everything looked spanking new; in the attic, nothing had changed but for the installation of some ventilation ducts. The evil room was still there, off in its corner.

Why, in a full restoration, eliminate the possibility of finishing the attic for living space, and leave a room to which there is no access?

The seniors who move in will have no idea that, hidden in the ceiling above them, is an attic with a small dark room. Unlike me, they will have no cause to speculate on



what might have happened there in the days of the Mansons.

If this were a movie, it would begin with a hapless worker called to fix something in this refurbished building. Climbing through the trapdoor into the attic, he peers around the empty space he notices an odd little room in the corner. The soundtrack begins a sinister theme as he walks to the empty doorway. He steps inside and reaches for the light cord. Suddenly there is a scream...

Leslie Evans

Los Angeles, California

The Guardian Angel

When my husband, Mark, and I were newlyweds 16 years ago living in Charleston, South Carolina, Mark told me his dream was to raise our family in his hometown of Conway, 90 miles northeast. Since we both love old houses, I asked Mark to show me the old section of Conway.

We cruised past an abandoned, sorely neglected house with a yard that covered half the block. "Ooooooh," I said. "Who owns that spooky old place?" Mark remembered it as being apartments and had no idea. "If you buy me that house, I'll move to Conway," I said.

Five years later Mark found a job in Conway and, at the same time, that spooky old house came on the market. Built in 1864, it had been returned to a single-family home again, but the heating system for all 13 rooms consisted of four electric baseboards. For air conditioning, there were three window units. We considered it "luxury camping" and figured the kids, ages 3 years and 10 months, were too young to know better. It was livable and affordable.

August 13, two and a half months after we moved in, was our daughter's first birthday. I took the children to North Carolina to spend the night with my parents but Mark was unable to go. That night he was awakened by the cries of a baby, so life-like that he was at the crib before he remembered he was home alone.

A couple weeks later we were explor-

night. My husband works nights every other week and the spirit seemed to know when he was at work. Down to the basement I would go to unplug the base unit, hoping I didn't run into whomever or whatever had turned it on. After a year, it started staying on all the time. It's not exactly convenient to have a central vac that you have to plug in from the basement.

Nevertheless, we've made a pledge that the bad history of the house will end with us. I think we've made a good start. Many sick or wounded cats manage to find their way here, knowing it is a safe house where someone (me) will take care of them.

Susan Hodkiewicz, Columbus, Wisconsin

Music and Roses

About six years ago my husband and I moved into a Cape-style house in the picturesque coastal Maine town of Newcastle. Although neighbors told us the house dated to the 1840s, so many of its original features had been removed or changed it had very little antique feel. Only the basement and storage space under the eaves revealed the true age of the structure in their massive hand-hewn and pegged timbers. Like the well concealed old bones of the house itself, its ghost almost went unnoticed.

My husband is a public radio junkie and it's not unusual for him to play a radio in several rooms whether he's there or not. I'm forever turning off radios in empty

rooms in a futile effort to get some peace and quiet. Often after turning off all the radios I hear music and think the alarm in the guest room has gone off, only to enter a silent room. I fiddle with dials and even unplug the clock all together. A visit to the front porch confirms the sound isn't coming from the neighbors' house.

I never thought to mention this music to my husband until we had lived in the house three years and both of us heard it one night when we sat reading in bed. We accepted this musical spirit as playful and never felt menaced.

Two years ago we moved into another old house, an 1892 Queen Anne in Augusta, Maine. This house too seems to have a benign spirit. Occasionally when I'm alone removing wallpaper or working on plaster I'm momentarily overcome by the unmistakable, heady fragrance of fresh roses. I interpret this as one of the original owners showing gratitude that someone is finally taking care of this grand old house.

Nancy Peavy, Augusta, Maine

Danse Macabre

In the late 1940s our family moved into a slightly renovated log cabin on a lake in rural Eastern Washington State, built in the first decade of the 20th century. I was probably a rather strange child since the only dolls I ever played with were a family of rubber skeletons that I often put to bed in a basket on my night stand or under my bunk. They were always there... with one possible exception.

My room had no door, just a bamboo curtain that was wide open on the evening in question, some time prior to my eighth year. I had been allowed to stay in my parents' room, from which I could see my own through the open door. They were asleep and I was looking out into the living room when a light-colored something came skittering out of my room along the floor, turned a few erratic circles, and stopped. I wondered what it was until I fell asleep.

When I woke up in the morning I was surprised to find Marcella, the matriarch of my skeleton family, lying where the light-colored skittery thing had stopped. The official explanation was that, in "feeding" my skeletons, I had left a bit of food on Marcella's face and that one of the mice ever present in our old log walls had





ing our church's graveyard when we found the family plot of the man who built our house. Surrounded by an iron fence, it was big enough for six but occupied only by William Gurganus and his infant son, Norman, who had died in 1867—on August 13.

Further research showed that Gurganus came to Conway in 1860 at the age of 24 and took a 17-year-old bride, Lucy. They had three children—two boys and a girl—as we would eventually.

It took us five years to save enough money to begin renovation/restoration at which point we moved into a small rental house that adjoined our property. I was lying in bed one night, wide awake next to my sleeping husband, when a swirling white mist began to fill the room. I asked the apparition to let me know if it was William

Gurganus by making my sleeping husband lift his hand in greeting “hello.” He did so.

The following day, carpenters working on an upstairs wall found a time capsule containing the November 28, 1864, *Wilmington [NC] Daily Journal*; William Gurganus's signature; a letter from his brother, a confederate soldier stationed near Wilmington; a leather ledger book containing many local names; and a pencil sketch of a uniformed man declaring, “Mr. President, the people of my part of the country are starved and can't take it any longer and I mean to lay the bill on the table.” How did it happen that we found these items just then, especially since the house had undergone so many different alterations?

When we moved back into our completed house in November 1999, our 11-year-old son Luke claimed the upstairs—with the largest bedroom in the house, full bath, study, and music/playroom—as his personal domain. He lived large and loved it until one day at 6 a.m., when he returned from the bathroom to see a dark-haired, bearded man sitting on the twin bed next to his, looking out the window. The man turned to Luke, smiled, and disappeared. Luke immediately ran downstairs and jumped in bed with his sister. I tried to convince Luke that William is our guardian angel and means no harm, but not surprisingly he slept downstairs next to his little brother for the next couple months. He's back upstairs now, as long as I leave on a light in

the next room.

William died at only 34 and Lucy remarried a “top-hat totin' lawyer” who left her destitute. In Cheraw, South Carolina, we found the grave of William's oldest son, Hyman, buried at age 25.

We feel comforted thinking William must be happy with our family in his house.

Leslie Wilson

Conway, South Carolina

Maid Who's a Shade

From the day my husband, Bill, and I moved into our house in the fall of 1995, I felt from time to time like someone was watching me or following me down the hall. I've smelled perfume in rooms where no one has been recently, and we've both heard what sounds like a radio playing softly late at night.

Our town has an annual Christmas tour of homes, and since our 127-year-old house is on the National Register of Historic Places, it's a tour stop every few years. Getting ready for the November 2000 tour, a friend and I brought down a lot of items from the attic—things that had been up there for decades.

My husband and another friend were talking in the family room when they noticed that a nearly empty bottle of window cleaner was spraying on its own from its perch on a stepladder. We facetiously suggested that our ghost must be a maid who used to work here, since two antique Bissell sweepers were among things we took from the attic.

During the tour, a man and woman stopped in the kitchen to talk with us. We told them the story of the window cleaner and how we joked that it was the maid trying to help. How odd, the man replied, since the reason he'd come to the house that day was because his grandmother had once been a maid here. His wife spoke up, too, saying she had felt something as soon as she entered the house. “Something is here,” she told us firmly.

Since then, several things have happened to confirm her belief. Bill's tools get lost, and he finds them in places he knows



he never had them. We've come home to find one of our dogs locked in the downstairs bathroom. Another dog—who goes from the basement to the family room to the outdoors, always in a specific pattern—lost his collar. After looking everywhere for it, I finally said, “Okay, ghost, where’s the collar?” Immediately a thought came into my head: It’s in the laundry chute. I dismissed the idea, because the only way for that to happen would be for someone to

dragged her off before realizing that she wasn’t really edible. There were, however, no tooth marks.

Next summer I plan to begin stabilizing the old cabin in hopes of living in it again. I wonder what I might find under that particular section of floor?

Madilane Perry, Spokane, Washington

The Friendly Ferners

Shortly after moving into our 1906 house, my husband Paul was checking out all the doors that didn’t shut properly. When he tried to close the bedroom door off the dining room, he encountered so much resistance that he couldn’t pull it all the way shut with both hands. Sensing that someone was pulling from the other side, he called out, “Okay, I won’t close it,” and let go of the knob. The door slowly opened all the way, and he felt a cold rush through his body. Much later, while alone in our “ghost room” hanging Victorian-patterned wallpaper, Paul was jolted off the ladder by what felt like someone playfully shaking it.

It’s not the only room where strange things occur. The Hummel figurines I keep on top of a built-in buffet are always being moved around; one day I found four of them facing backwards. Our cat, Rosey, often stands on her back legs, touching something in the air with her front paws, and sometimes “talks” to whatever she sees. Both Paul and I often sense a presence; once when I was home alone and not feeling well, I felt a comforting hand on my shoulder.

Recently I told a woman who works in my building where I live and learned that her husband’s great-grandparents built our house. I didn’t tell her about our experiences but asked if she could supply me with information about the house and its owners. Several hours later I learned that Theobald and Margaret Ferner had built the house in 1906 shortly after their marriage. Margaret was a tiny woman whose fetish was “keeping all the doors open,” while Theobald was the family prankster. They both died in the ghost room. After Margaret died the roses in the backyard refused to bloom, but they do now, so maybe she likes us.

Sandra Tatarowicz, Sheffield Lake, Ohio

Haunted Antiques

Our spirit likes us so much that three years ago she moved with us to our present residence, an 1896 Queen Anne. We had lived in our previous house, a bungalow, for about 20 years before lights started going off by themselves, a cat became terrified of certain areas, lost items turned up where we’d searched several times for them, and a young blonde girl appeared at the window.

Could the ghost have come with one of the antiques we’d purchased? These things stopped happening at the bungalow and began anew at the Queen Anne when we moved our china cabinet and oak secretary from one to the other.

My husband would come home from work and hear someone opening dresser drawers upstairs. Suspecting an intruder, he grabbed a knife. Once upstairs he would find no one, but hear footfalls going slowly down the stairs; the outside doors were still locked when he got downstairs. At night he has heard someone walking around the dining room and parlors, heels clicking on the hardwood floors. The steps stopped when he got up to look but resumed for a half hour when he got back to bed.

Our spirit has spoken to us on a couple of occasions and also shows a sense of humor. I often find myself locked out of the house, knowing I have set the porch lock so I could get back in without a key. Once when I was taking out laundry I heard the door slam behind me. With a sinking feeling I returned to find the door ajar about a foot. She seemed to be saying, “See, I didn’t lock you out—I opened the door for you!”

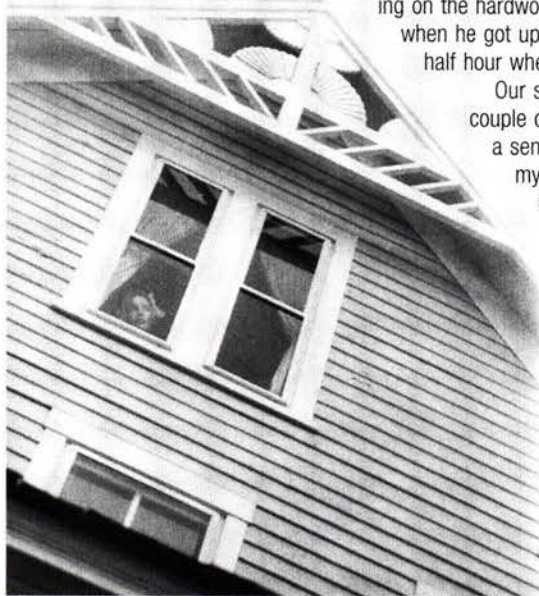
Anna Passante,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

take it off the dog, open the chute door, and throw it down. When I pulled a pile of laundry out of the chute a few days later, the dog collar fell out with it.

In 2001, we’d been sanding our downstairs floors for several days. The house was filled with noise, dust, and confusion. I plugged in a hand sander and it didn’t work. Then I plugged in a vacuum, and it didn’t work either. Thinking that we’d blown a fuse, Bill went to check the box in the basement and came back slightly rattled. The fuse wasn’t blown; it was unscrewed. The box was too far from where we were working for vibrations to have shaken it loose. Perhaps someone was tired of the noise?

We don’t feel scared or threatened by our guests; in fact, they keep us company. Since we are only the second owners of the house, we think we know who the spirits are. They’re friendly and playful, so we let them do their thing while we do ours.

Jennifer Boeye
Red Oak, Iowa



A look at the
state of the art
in rechargeable-
battery tools.

Cordless Update

BY GORDON BOCK AND KATHLEEN FISHER **A**n old-house owner doesn't have to be a vintage human being to remember when a "battery tool" packed more novelty than practicality. The first cordless drill didn't appear until the Kennedy Administration and, for a long time after, getting a few dozen 1/4" holes out of a charge was a lot to ask. A battery's recharge time was nearly equal to its owner's sleep cycle.

The industry has come a long way. Power and run time have increased steadily over the years, while creative design has reduced tool weight and improved "usability." The latest cornucopia of quality cordless tools includes several that, until now, were impossible to power without a cord. In fact, manufacturers offer such an array of new tools sizes, voltages, and power ratings—on top of earlier-generation tools that still sell well—that anyone working on a house can get confused about what all the numbers mean in terms of actu-

ally getting things done. If you're in the market for a cordless tool, here's a breakdown of the latest developments you'll encounter in this broad and growing industry as you survey your choices.

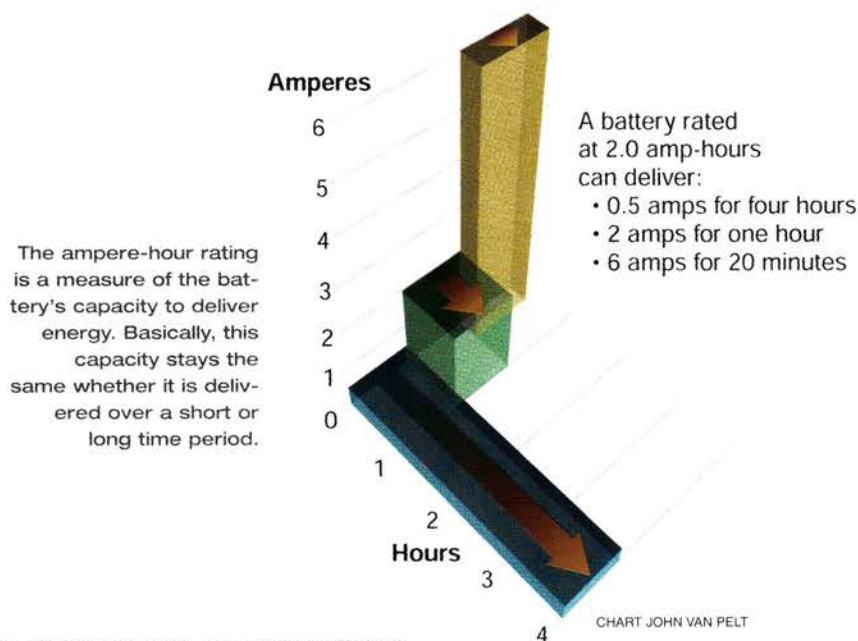
Vive la Difference The Race to Reincarnate All Tools as Cordless

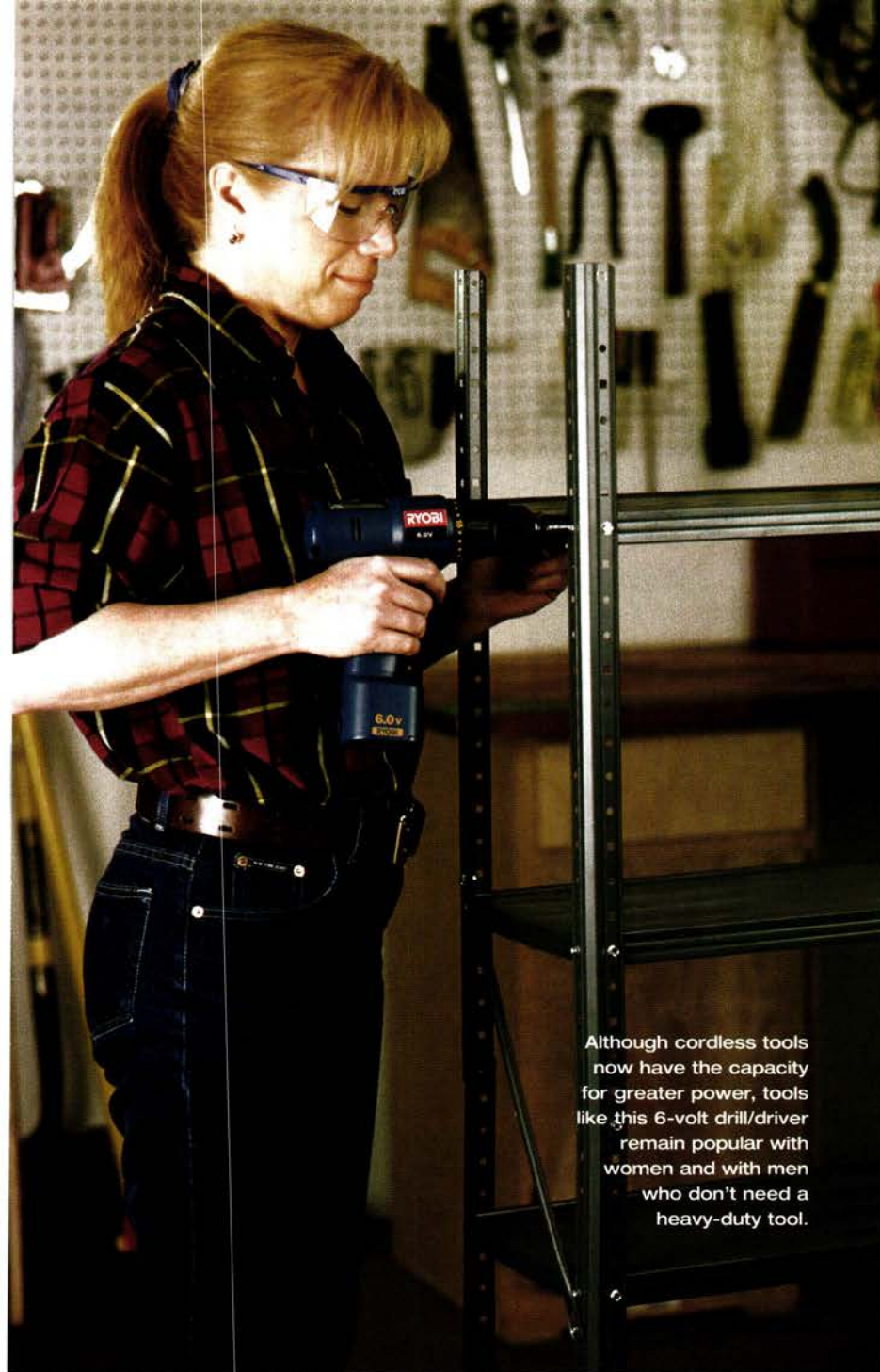
If there's one trend that's obvious to even casual shoppers it's the amazing variety of cordless tools. "A lot of traditionally corded tools are now going cordless," notes Jane Van Bergen, marketing director at Ryobi Technologies. Indeed, there seems no bounds to the jobs that sophisticated combinations of motors, batteries, and blades can do. Once limited to making light-duty holes or cuts in wood, cordless tools can now handle all-day use in framing lumber or dense building materials like plywood, metal, and even masonry. For working in tight spaces, such as attics, manufacturers have come up

with cordless reciprocating saws capable of rough-in work or demolition. Cordless routers are now a reality and at least two makers are breaking new ground with power miter saws—tools that were originally not only corded but also stationary.

The growth of the cordless tool market, as well as its technology, is even spawning some tools with no strict precedent in the corded world. What at first glance seems to be an unending proliferation of T-handled battery drills is, on closer inspection, the appearance of a related but different breed of tool: the impact driver. Popular for many years outside the United States (particularly in Japan) and rapidly adopted by American construction trades, cordless impact drivers are now coming on strong with consumers for all kinds of applications.

Sharing some mechanical principles, but little else, with hammer drills and air-





Although cordless tools now have the capacity for greater power, tools like this 6-volt drill/driver remain popular with women and with men who don't need a heavy-duty tool.

powered impact wrenches, impact drivers look like a svelte version of a cordless drill without the traditional three-jaw chuck or internal clutch. Unlike hammer drills, impact drivers help drive screws, lag bolts, and similar fasteners by adding rotational impact—that is, striking the fastener in the direction of turn, rather than into the surface—when the fastener reaches a certain torque (turning power) resistance. This percussive action makes the work easier to perform (you don't have to strenuously grip or brace the tool), and it helps seat the fastener head properly into the surface. Impact drivers quickly became the tool of choice for commercial installation work, such as driving heavy lag bolts for anchoring garage doors, but now are equally popular for anchoring decking and molded plasterwork.

Trying to analyze why rechargeable-battery tools are so popular has, interestingly, inspired at least one manufacturer to explore new directions in corded tools. While freedom from electrical outlets is certainly key, Craftsman believes that another cordless appeal has been the clutch, which lets users adjust the amount of torque—especially important for driving screws into soft material. As a result they've introduced some corded drills that feature clutches and dual-range gearboxes, but which are compact and lightweight to an extent difficult to achieve with cordless tools.



A Ryobi has freed the miter saw from the bonds of the electrical box. **B** Combo kits of cordless tools are popular sellers for many manufacturers. This kit from Milwaukee includes a circular saw, a reciprocating saw (The Hatchet), drill/driver, and a flashlight. **C** Impact drivers, such as the 14.4-volt MAKSTAR from Makita, reduce stress on the user by combining turn and thrust.



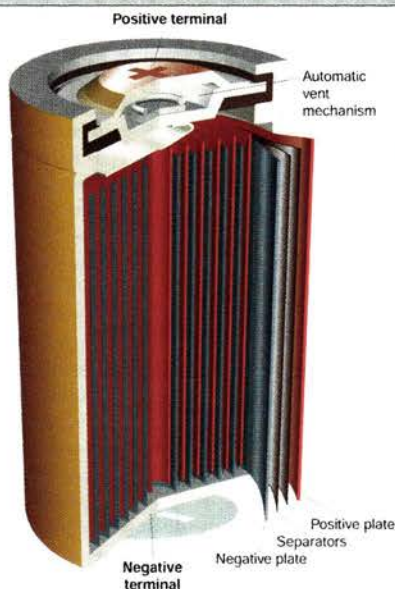
Battery Wars

Whether the end product is a video camera or an electric car, much of its performance relies on the battery. Different battery chemistries work well for different uses. Lithium-ion cells, for example, are good for laptop computers and other applications where there is a low drain rate, but not practical for cordless tools, which need a lot of current at one time. In the world of cordless tool manu-

facturers, the present debate is between two cell chemistries that are essentially identical in voltage output (1.2 volts): NiCd (nickel-cadmium) and NiMH (nickel-metal-hydride.)

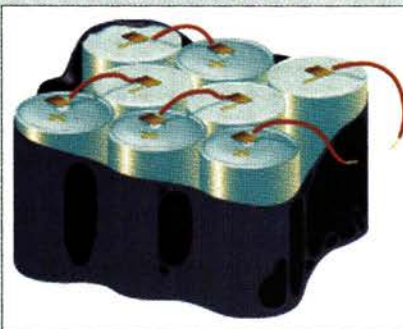
Many manufacturers are staying with NiCd because they feel it's the best power source in two key areas: better cycle lifetime (that is, the number of charges and discharges

battery, and is less prone to memory. Not to say that these batteries are the only game in town. At least two manufacturers—85-year-old Black & Decker and new player Igo—are bringing out tools powered by alkaline batteries for those who want featherweight tools plus freedom from plugs but don't feel the need for maximum punch.



possible over the lifetime of the battery); 2) better performance at extreme

temperatures. Other manufacturers (primarily Makita and Panasonic) are opting for NiMH however because it's more environmentally friendly (no cadmium), has a longer running time with the same size



Left: Individual NiCd and NiMH rechargeable cells share similar construction: plates and separators spirally wound into a cylinder. Above: Multiple 1.2-volt cells wired together make a battery: eight for 9.6 volts, 15 for 18 volts.

New Package Deals Tools Improve Ergonomic Bodies and Expand to "Families"

Because corded tools have to carry their power source with them, getting the most muscle and service from the smallest, lightest-weight package has always been a goal. While greater power was everyone's objective just a couple of years ago, the beefier motors, gearboxes, and batteries they required came at the cost of attendant bulkiness and heft.

Biggest may be best for some specialized construction professionals, who will need the newer 24-volt power tools with their greater torque and rpm capacity for, say, daily fence building. However, general-purpose users like old-house restorers, who are now

both more discriminating and more realistic about their needs, have helped establish 18 volts as an all-around comfortable balance between power and comfort. In fact many users, especially women, find 9.6-volt tools among the easiest to hold.

Ray Holbrook, portable power tools buyer for Craftsman, notes that about 32 percent of the shoppers in tool departments are women. "We do a lot of research with end users to find out what they're looking for. Power is their number one concern, but they also mention ergonomics—good weight and balance to make the tool easier to hold and use." Steve Cole, product manager for Bosch, says this improved ratio of greater power and lighter weight could go on indefinitely, in terms of currently available technology, but not without pushing tool prices beyond ac-



ceptability to potential buyers.

What today's consumer seems to be lapping up is the combo kit, says Christine Potter, production manager for DeWalt. The most common package includes a drill, a reciprocating saw or circular saw, and a flashlight. Cole says Bosch's new products will stress "commonality"—not only will all the tools in a kit be compatible with one charger, but buyers can power up a new drill/driver with the charger from a previously owned model. "We want to keep users in the Bosch family," he explains.

Assault on Batteries Improving Performance of Cells and Chargers

The Holy Grail for today's cordless manufacturers is not higher tool voltage per se, but battery performance or "deliverance"—how much work you can get done on one charge. While several characteristics

A Craftsman, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, has 53 cordless drill/drivers. This 7.2-volt model has a LED charge indicator. **B** This fall Bosch introduced two new cordless tools: this planer and **C** a jigsaw. **D** Black&Decker's 14.4-volt multi-tool functions as the router pictured here, as well as a circular saw, sander, jigsaw, and drill/driver. **E** The heat produced by recharging is an enemy of batteries. DeWalt employs a fan in the charger for its 24-volt batteries.



can contribute to this quality, the most closely watched number is the amp-hour rating. "Amp-hour rating is what continues to change," says Todd Craft, cordless product manager at Porter-Cable/Delta. "Everybody's going up." Vince Caito, marketing communications manager at Makita Tools, agrees. "The current ceiling [on voltage] seems to be 24 volts, while battery and charger run-time and performance seem to be the growth areas." As an example, manufacturers whose tools claimed a 2.0 amp-hour rating a couple of years ago are now offering a 2.4 amp-hour rating for the same voltage battery pack. The thing for tool buyers to remember is that while a manufacturer may have improved the amp-hour rating on its latest or most powerful line—its 19.2-volt tools—that does not necessarily mean its 18-volt or 14.4-volt batteries are upgraded as well.

How does a manufacturer squeeze more work out of a battery? In simple terms, by

innovations in the chemistry or construction of the individual cells and sometimes their chargers. One approach is switching from nickel-cadmium (NiCd) chemistry to nickel-metal-hydride (NiMH) chemistry, an area of great debate. Another is enhancing construction and electronics. Makita, for example, by reengineering the individual NiMH cell package, has reduced its size from that of a common C cell to that of an AA battery. To the battery package they've added a heat sink and an electronic chip that "talks" to the charger.

Heat—a byproduct of recharging—is the big killer of batteries, and manufacturers deal with the overheating issue in different ways. Some chargers contain a monitor that will say "yes" or "no" to recharging a too hot battery. Bosch's high-end computerized chargers use "fuzzy logic" to constantly monitor the battery temperature and adjust the current accordingly. DeWalt has

a fan-cooled system to charge its 24-volt battery. Chargers for its lower-voltage batteries employ what the company calls a "tune-up mode" that keeps the batteries from developing memory effect (a phenomenon, produced by repeated shallow discharging, that reduces the effective capacity of the battery).

Panasonic batteries are cooled while charging through the simple expedient of ventilation holes. Their self-diagnostic 45-minute charger shows the status of the charge through an array of LED lights.

One thing all manufacturers seem to agree on is that with new technologies and cordless tool use expanding every year, they will "continue to monitor the market." If the future is anything like the recent past, that means there are even more efficient and job-specific cordless tools to come.

Suppliers

BLACK & DECKER www.blackanddecker.com/default.asp	48
BOSCH www.boschtools.com	49
CRAFTSMAN/SEARS www.craftsman.com	51
DEWALT www.dewalt.com/us/cordless/	73
FEIN www.feinusa.com/	52
HITACHI www.hitachi.com	53
IGO www.igohomeproducts.com	54
MAKITA www.makita.com/Cordless_Tree_View.asp	55
MILWAUKEE www.mil-electric-tool.com/site.nsf/	56
PANASONIC www.panasonic.com	57
PORTER-CABLE www.porter-cable.com	58
RYOBI www.ryobitools.com	59
SKIL www.skil.com	60
RECHARGEABLE BATTERY RECYCLING CENTER 1-800-8-BATTERY	

For more information on these companies, circle the numbers on the resource card.

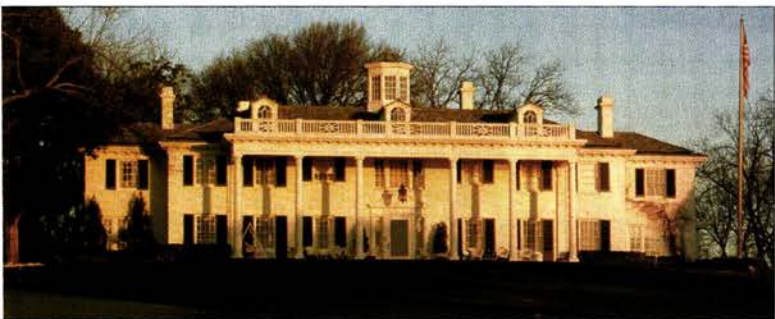
George Washington's Mount Vernon (right)—particularly the pillared piazza on what is actually its backside—has been a model for playhouses, banks, and cemetery administration buildings. Texas oilman H.L. Hunt was the longtime owner of a 1930s copycat (below) on White Rock Lake near Dallas. In Florida you could find the famous façade surrounded by palms instead of pecan trees (far right).



BY DANIEL D. REIFF AND THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL EDITORS **C**ontrary to popular belief, it's not unusual to come across houses in many a village or town that are duplicates of another house elsewhere in the area. The houses may be the same only in basic form and features, or they may be identical twins down to the details of materials and colors.

One explanation for this repeat construction is expedient builders who—whether from the 20th, 19th, or even the late 18th century—could save time or money by using the same popular pattern-book design or mail-order plan in the construction of multiple dwellings.

Another source of duplicates, however, is simply making a copy of an existing structure that either a client or a builder found appealing—a tradition that continues to this day. In fact, the practice was common enough in 19th-century America to lead a British builder, who had tried to establish himself in New York, to give up in 1834 be-



PHIL HOLLENBECK



Copycat

cause he found "the almost invariable practice is to fix upon a house already built, as a model either to be copied exactly, or with such variations as the proprietor may think fit." Apparently, the demand for original designs wasn't the highest!

What motivates this more complex form of builder-see, builder-do is harder to pin down. Research reveals that models for many copies are some of the most famous, as well as a few of the most original, houses in American architectural history. Some were cloned long after they were built; others immediately thereafter and, in some cases, more than once. Studying some famous examples can help shed some light on this curious side of American architectural history.

Gothic Envy

In a country whose rapid expansion was fueled in part by the fruits of the Industrial Revolution and mass production, it's not surprising to find that copies of admired "originals" are common throughout the 19th century. The



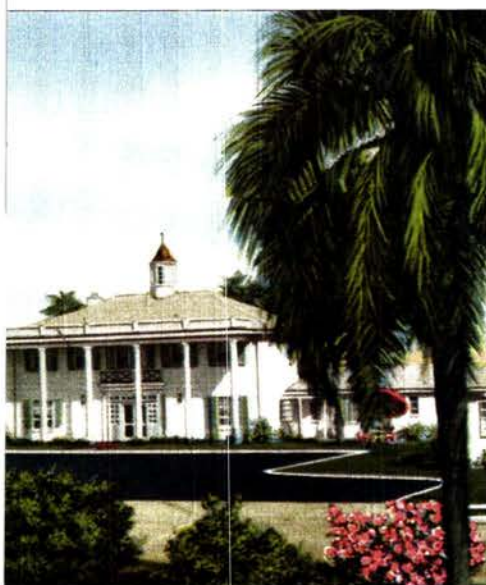
DANIEL D. REIFF

In the 1850s, books advocated the idea of updating a house to be in step with the current architectural style. One homeowner took the house across the street (above) as the guide for his remodeling (below).

following scenario was not rare. When a resident of Flemington, New Jersey, remodeled his Federal-style house at 188 Main Street in the early 1870s, he was in fact copying a recently completed Gothic cottage just across the street. What's more, the project seems to have been such a success that a copy of the remodeled house was erected shortly thereafter on a farm a few miles away.



DANIEL D. REIFF

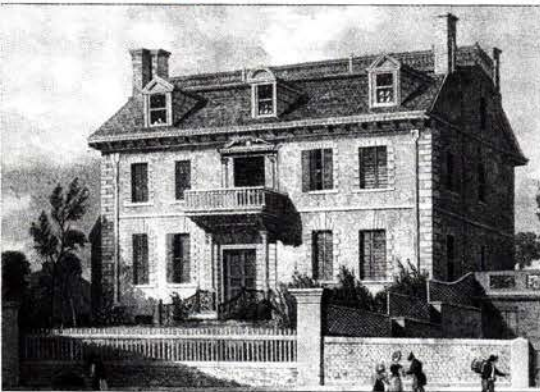


COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON

Houses

A look at architectural reproductions in North American history.

Reproductions of the Lost



ious drawings were used to build a duplicate in 1925-26 for the New York State Historical Association headquarters. Thanks to the skilled neo-Colonial craftsmen of the '20s, today we can experience a lost landmark in all its glory through a modern reincarnation.

The original John Hancock House, as it appeared in this 1830 engraving (above), was a Georgian house with refined window and door treatments typical of the style. The craftsmanship of the 1920s replica (right) faithfully follows the documented details.



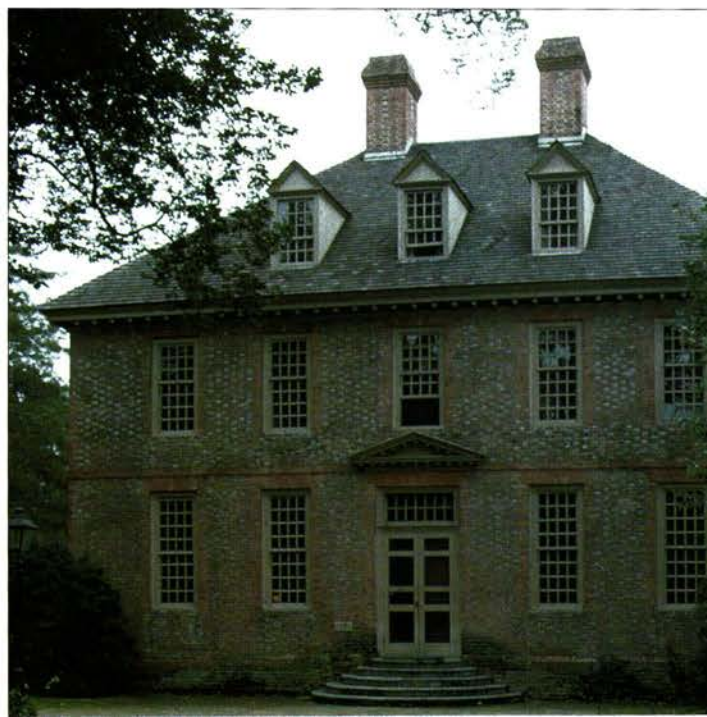
Classical Clones

There is no question that a copycat building often has a cost advantage. The design and plan of the building can be easily established and the construction costs readily calculated—as valuable a savings in the 18th century as it is today. In many cases it has aesthetic pluses too, especially for classically inspired structures. Take for example the President's House (1732) of William and Mary College in Williamsburg. It was built as a slightly enlarged version of the 1723 Brafferton building so that the two would form a balanced pair in front of the college's "Wren Building."

PHOTOS THIS PAGE DANIEL D. REIFF



Though slightly larger, the President's House (above) is a hipped-roof, classical brick dwelling identical to the nearby Brafferton (right), a building that helped establish this type of house in colonial Virginia.



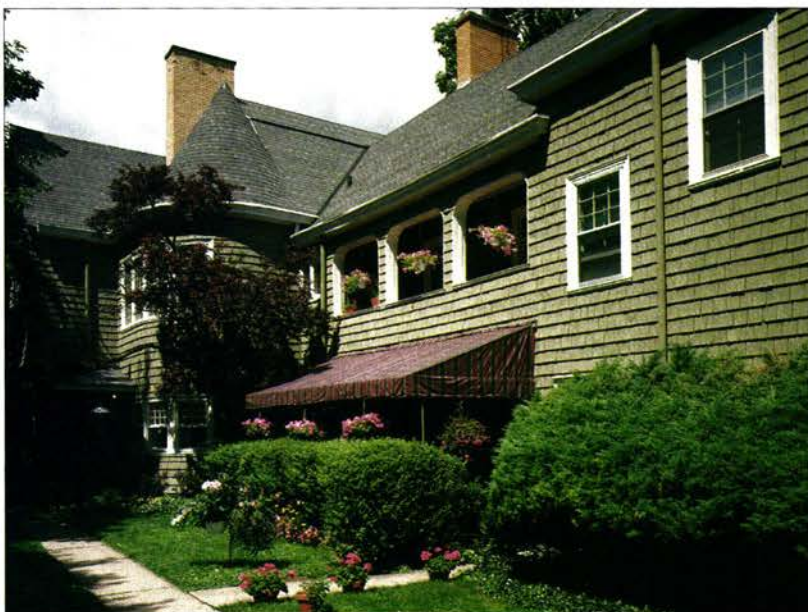
H.H. Richardson's Stoughton House (right) was already a published example of "shingle houses" by the 1890s. The Coatsworth-Pardee-Wright house (below) is such a literal copy, the record suggests that William Lansing made no pretense about the design's origins.



PAUL ROCHELEAU

Shingle Simulacrum

Artists and designers have long held that, at times, the only thing better than a great new idea is a great old one. When Henry Hobson Richardson designed the Stoughton House in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1880, he was among a group of architects creating a new kind of house that broke away from the typical Victorian houses of the day. Instead of elaborating the exterior in complex decorations and materials, they sheathed a sophisticated amalgam of shapes and spaces under a simple, uniform cloak of wood shingles. Today the Stoughton House is not counted as the first of its type—even Richardson had worked in the idiom a couple of years earlier—but it is considered one of the masterpieces of the Shingle style. Richardson was nationally famous at this time and highly



ANDY OLEWICK

influential, so it comes as no surprise that he had his admirers and imitators. The 1897 Coatsworth-Pardee-Wright House in Buffalo, New York, is a line-by-line copy of the Stoughton House by local architect William Lansing. (Legend has it that Richardson, who died in 1886, knew of or gave his blessing to Lansing's plans.) The house, originally sited in a park, was relocated in the 1950s.

Canned Classic



PHOTOS THIS PAGE DANIEL D. REIFF

Woodcarver-cum-architect Samuel McIntire is credited with creating one of the most sublime examples of the Federal style in the Gardner-Pingree House (above). Its importance was not lost on noted Boston architect Guy Lowell, who reprised the understated beauty in the President's House at Harvard (right).

Finding a preexisting architectural masterpiece to emulate was undoubtedly one reason why architect Guy Lowell chose to go the reproduction route. He selected Samuel McIntire's exquisite 1804 Gardner-Pingree House in Salem, Massachusetts, as the model for a slightly enlarged version built in 1911 for the president of Harvard University. No doubt, the desire for an indigenous "New England-style" house to fit with Harvard's many genuine Georgian- and Federal-style buildings must have been a factor too.



The Georgian-style Longfellow House (above) is famous as a cultural as well as architectural landmark. It inspired a reverent double (right) over a century later in one of Minnesota's twin cites.

Repeating the Past

Sometimes it's not just the architectural qualities but also the cultural associations of an original that instigate a copy. The immense local popularity of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *Hiawatha* in

the 1920s may have inspired the city of Minneapolis to build a library that is a two-thirds replica of the Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Built in 1759 by John Vassal, a Tory who fled the imminent revolution, the original served as George Washington's headquarters for 10 months in the mid-1770s. Longfellow rented the house from a Mrs. Craigie beginning in 1837, then received what he called "Castle Craigie" as a gift from the new owner, Nathan Appleton, when he married Appleton's daughter Frances. Longfellow descendants lived in the house until 1950. The Minneapolis copy, no longer a library, was relocated to nearby Minnehaha Park, an appropriate setting.



Déjà Mount Vernon

When the Commonwealth of Virginia erected its state pavilion at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, what better symbol of Virginia architecture could have been chosen than George Washington's

Mount Vernon? Souvenirs of the first president were on display inside.

Mount Vernon may be our most copied architectural icon, to the extent that next year the National Building Museum will launch an exhibit to honor 150 years of its preservation and interpretation. Even legendary architects McKim, Mead & White weren't immune to its charms, borrowing many of its famous features for one Long Island mansion.

The 1930s saw a spate of ersatz Mount

Howards. Howard Johnson's (left) tried to deny its blatant borrowing by calling the design of its restaurants "Colonial," but spoiled the charade with the slogan "Landmark for Hungry Americans."

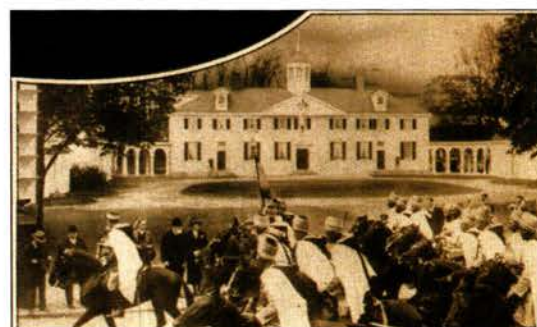


COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON

Vernons. For the 1931 International Colonial and Overseas Exposition, the U.S. government built one in Paris; it was later moved to the countryside as a private residence. In 1937 eccentric Texas oilman H.L. Hunt bought a 1930 copycat manse on White Rock Lake outside Dallas. You'll find other mock Mount Vernon residences on Long Island, in West Virginia, Connecticut, and Virginia, where every suburban tract house developer is a George Washington wannabe. Two Sears kit houses were Mount Vernon lookalikes.

The landing-strip side of the Washington National Airport terminal building outside the nation's capital (1941) reportedly pays homage to the Mount Vernon piazza, with the air traffic control tower serving as stand-in cupola. However, critics of the airport's recent renaming for Ronald Reagan failed to prove definitively that the airport had been named after George and not the city.

For some reason, California Mount Vernons have run toward banks while Floridians preferred to slap its signature pillars and cupola on motels. Howard Johnson's mimicked them—adding its own traffic-stopping orange roof—on its burgeoning roadside restaurant chain in the 1930s.

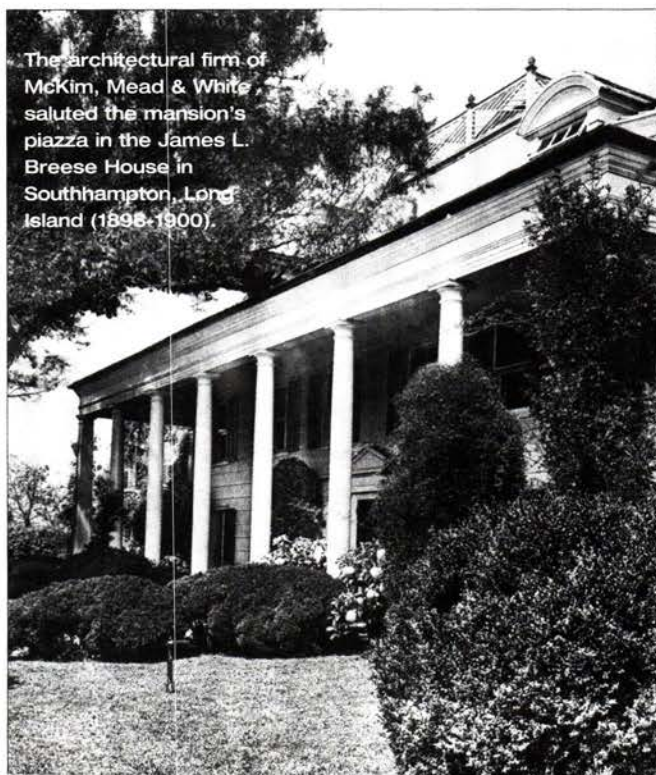


The 1999 builder of a residence in Wingina, Virginia (top), consulted with the estate staff on details down to materials and paint colors. The thundering hooves of spahis' mounts (Algerian cavalry) marked the opening of a clone at a 1931 Paris exposition (above).

In Fair Oaks, California, the administration building of Mount Vernon Memorial

Park (a cemetery) simulated its cross-continent inspiration. Omaha, Nebraska's Mount Vernon Gardens are a half-scale replica of the estate grounds, with the piazza standing in for the entire house and serving as a pergola. Planting beds are positioned in tribute to the first president's gardens and out-buildings.

For more reading on built houses and their emulations see *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950* by Daniel D. Reiff, Ph.D. (Penn State University Press, 2000)



The architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White saluted the mansion's piazza in the James L. Breese House in Southampton, Long Island (1898-1900).

IMAGES THIS PAGE COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON

Copy Cat Columns

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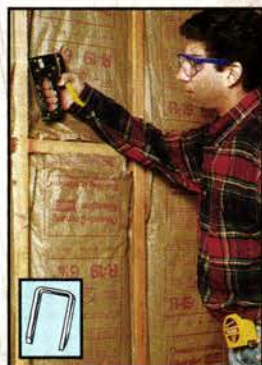
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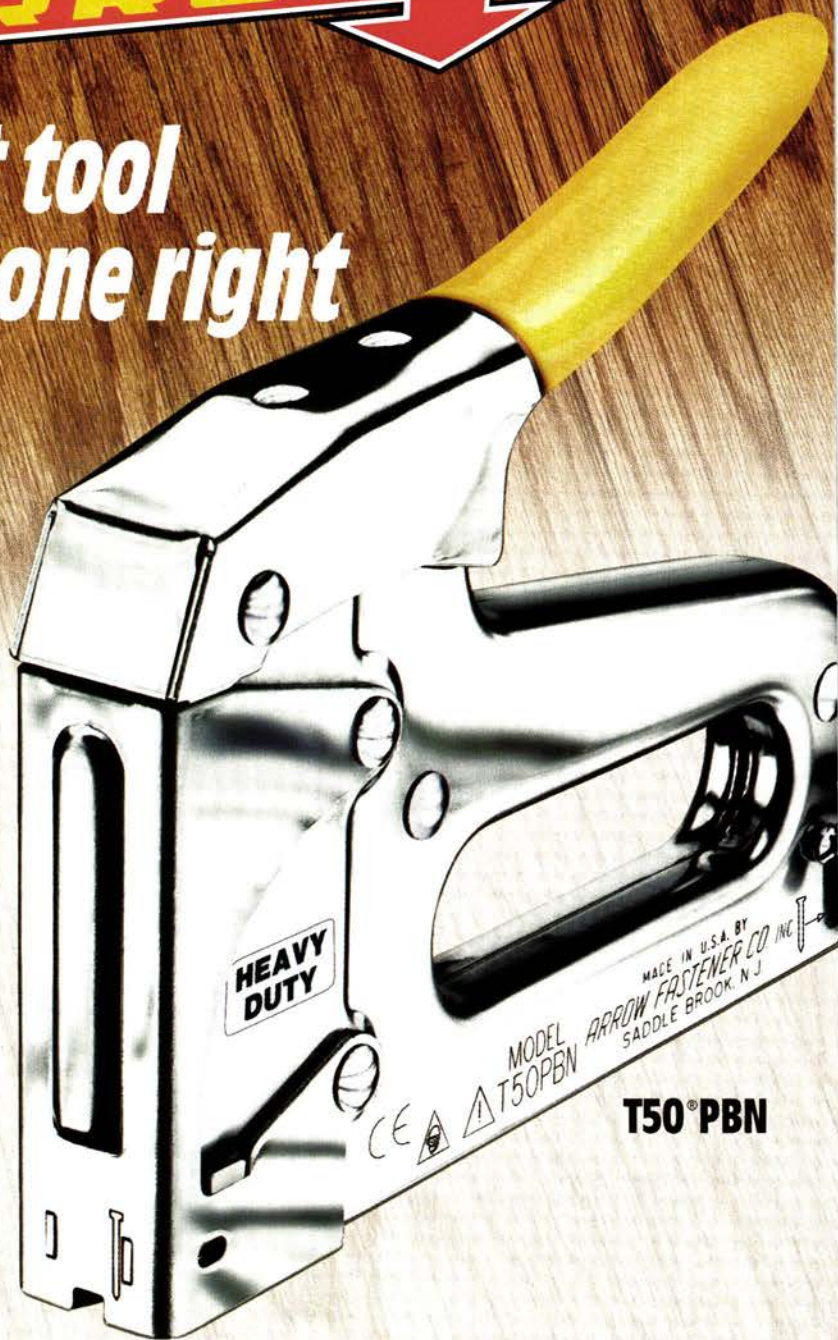
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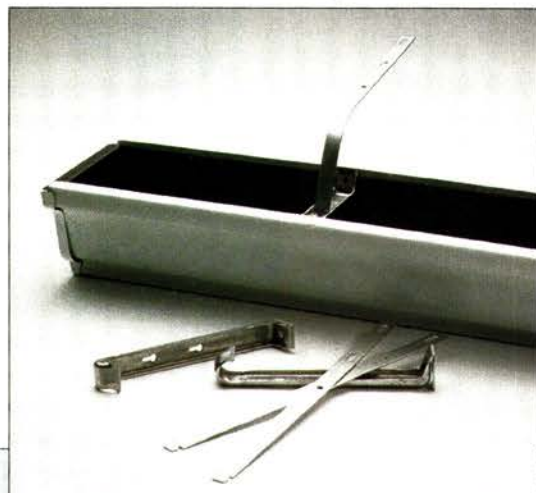


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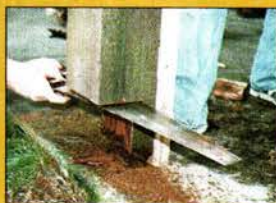
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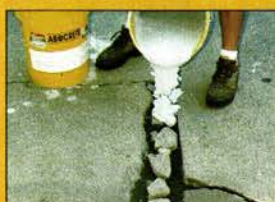
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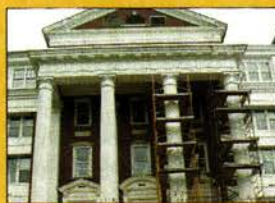
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Circle no. 228

Consider the Metal Cornice

The crowning touch on many a row house is cunningly crimped steel.

BY GORDON BOCK **N**ext time you walk down a block of late-19th-century row houses or light commercial buildings, ask yourself what contributes most to the buildings' distinctive character. Is it the tall windows and doors or the walls of brick or stone? Or is it the cornices? Pronounced sheet-metal cornices—some half a storey or more in height—are the visual caps of countless urban buildings from the 1870s to 1920s. No longer widely manufactured, they are important to understand as historic architectural features and worth protecting from the onslaughts of neglected maintenance and callous coverups or removals.

What is a Cornice?

Though the name is almost universally applied, the sheet-metal cornice is, to be architecturally correct, an *entablature*, even when the comprising elements bear only the vaguest resemblance to the original classical models. (By rights, the cornice is the part above the *dentil moulding*; the part below is the *frieze* and *architrave*.) Whatever their actual design, generally, sheet-metal cornices are composed of horizontal components (mouldings and courses) interspersed by vertical components (*dentil blocks*, *modillions*, and *brackets*) that section the frieze into panels. The major overhang is the *plancier* or soffit. Some sheet-metal cornices—particularly those capping buildings with projecting party walls—terminate at each side with end blocks called *heads* or *trusses*. Otherwise, a flank of row houses



PHOTOS BY ANDY OLEWICK

Individual sections of bent metal are assembled to make the horizontal crown moulding of this cornice. Vertical brackets, as well as heads at the ends (left in photo), are pressed metal often attached later.



When compared to their gable-roofed, neo-Georgian neighbors (left in photo), it's easy to see how the flat-roofed row houses along Rochester, New York's, Delaware Avenue played up their cornices with the increased heights and projecting features typical by the 1890s.

with identical heights and setbacks might be built with a continuous cornice so as to present a single, broad, imposing façade to the street.

Prior to the 1840s, it was common for houses built with gable or hipped roofs and classical details—particularly those in the Georgian and Greek Revival styles—to have a prominent decorative band or moulding where the wall meets the roof. This brick or wood cornice was a direct emulation of the stone cornice used on



Mercantile buildings often took the metal cornice to its limit with elaborate decorations, fanciful architectural forms, and commercial signage. Note the complex finials and central pediment.

house was protected by a low-pitched shed roof that sloped to the back. Rather than a transition between wall and roof, the cornice now became the uppermost architectural element on the façade—literally the cap of the house. By the reign of the Italianate style in the 1860s, row house cornices had grown to be not only the largest, but also the most stylish and elaborate feature on the façade, incorporating wide panels, deep relief, and large, thick brackets. Difficult, if not impossible, to build out of stone, they were regularly rendered in wood until advances in metallurgy and manufacturing offered a new, ideal option: sheet metal. Cornices made out of galvanized iron or copper were light, strong, and durable—well suited for an application where they had only to connect the wall to the roof and support merely their own weight. Because they could be assembled from prefabricated parts, metal cornices were also extraordinarily versatile. By the 1870s they were quickly displacing wood.

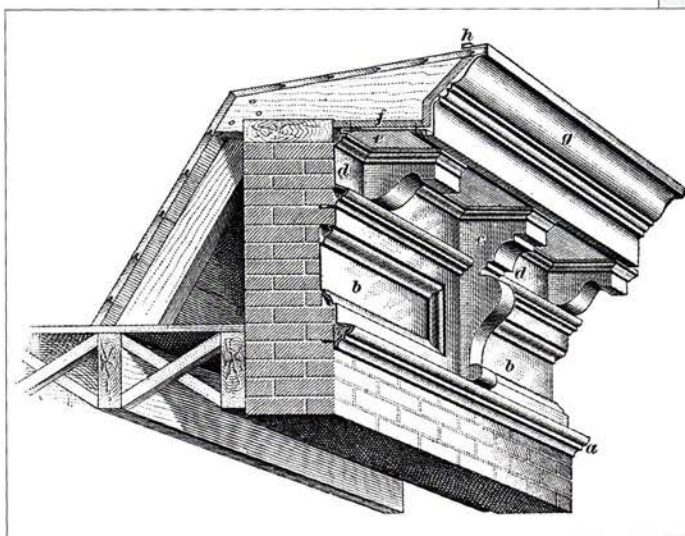
Installation

If the wide availability of rolled, galvanized iron and steel after the Civil War made sheet-metal cornices practical, the rapid growth of cities, particularly on the East Coast, made them desirable, spinning off a whole new trade (sheet-metal working) from traditional tinsmithing and feeding a growing heavy industry (pressed-metal manufacturing). Though some critics decried the imitation of stone in thin metal, by the 1890s sheet-metal cornices were the standard for row house construction with cities such as Philadelphia supporting 20 or more manufacturers. Though actual design and construction varied widely, cornices generally were assembled in three ways: 1) Custom-made parts were cut, bent, and then soldered and riveted together by a local shop. 2) Prefabricated catalog parts were factory-made by stamping metal sheets with large dies. 3) A combination of the first two. Shop-made cornice parts, which are cut and bent using power-driven shears and massive bending brakes, are by nature typically flat and angular, with panels and modillions not unlike the wood elements they superseded. Making curved elements and raised surface decorations, such as finials, rosettes, and swags, requires complex presses and dies. Therefore they're usually the products of a large manufac-

high-style English Georgian houses, which in turn imitated the entablature that capped ancient Greco-Roman temples. In Georgian-style row houses, where the gable roof was often steeply pitched toward the front, a cornice that extended slightly over the façade also offered a convenient place to hide a built-in gutter.

As the Georgian style waned in the early 19th century, gable roofs became less common, and by the 1840s the typical row

In the typical metal cornice, projecting features, such as the top moulding and overhanging plancier, are supported on wood lookouts. Framing often extends the roof up the back of the cornice and across its top. Vertical elements attach to wood grounds in the masonry.



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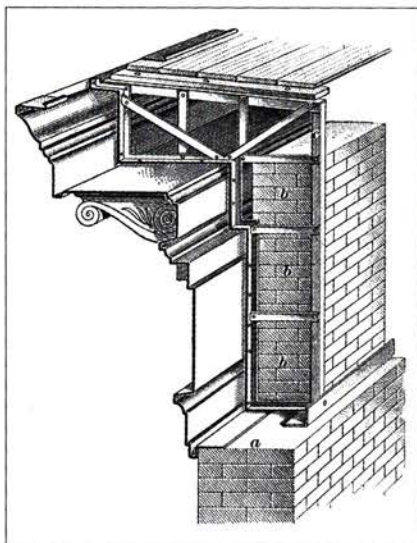
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Iron frames were preferred for better quality installations, particularly with terra-cotta façades. The angle irons are built into the wall during construction, with the sheet-metal cornice added later.

connect with the roof. By 1900, large cornices on well-constructed buildings were sometimes supported on an iron framework that was imbedded in the masonry as the wall was laid up. The rest of the smaller and subordinate elements are typically attached to wood *grounds* (blocks) embedded in the brickwork of the wall, with the bottom edge of the metal tucked into a *reglet* (slot) at an appropriate course line and mortared into place for a water-resistant joint. Depending upon the age and design of the cornice, in some installations it is common to find the frieze and even projecting portions of the cornice attached to boards that are merely spiked to the surface of the masonry.

Cornice Preservation

Like eave brackets, porch ornaments, and other exposed decorative elements, metal cornices are regularly sided over with substitute materials—typically aluminum sheeting—or removed altogether when they show signs of wear or fading fashion. Contrary to popular belief there are other options.

Contractors Though most of the sheet-metal shops that once thrived on cornices have shifted to HVAC ductwork and architectural drainage systems as their bread-and-butter businesses, many parts, such as panels, are similar and the skills and tools to make them are the same. The best craftspeople in the larger shops will often take on cornice part fabrication given good drawings or samples.

Stock parts As with custom sheet-metal shops, there are still manufacturers making cornice parts as a sideline to a larger pressed-metal products business (see “Suppliers”). Moreover, single or simple metal cornice parts and features, such as brackets, can often be fabricated faithfully out of wood, then painted to match the metal with no loss in character. 🏠

turer—often doing a national, mail-order business. By the 1910s the largest of these firms had the capability to stamp a complete cornice from a single sheet of metal.

The methods used to attach a sheet-metal cornice vary with the construction of the building and the cornice itself but follow some general trends. Since most sheet-metal cornices rise above the roof and living spaces of the building, their function is decorative rather than structural. They are usually applied to the rough-finished surface of the upper façade, rather than being constructed as an integral part of the roof or wall, as is the case with a brick or stone cornice. Basically, the continuous overhanging parts of the cornice—the uppermost plancier as well as bold mouldings—are supported on brackets or lookouts that project from the building. These are often wood members, part of a framing system that continues over the top of the wall to

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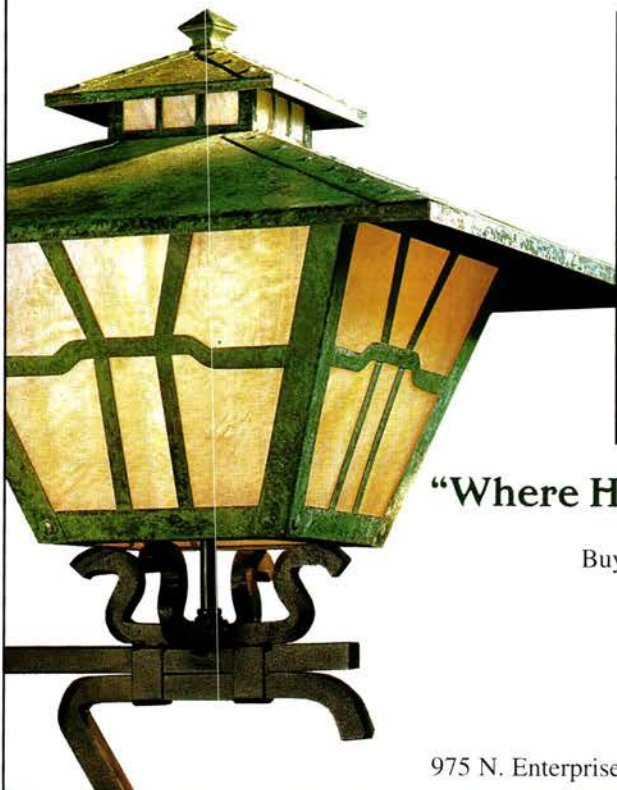
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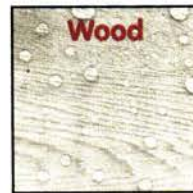
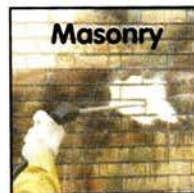
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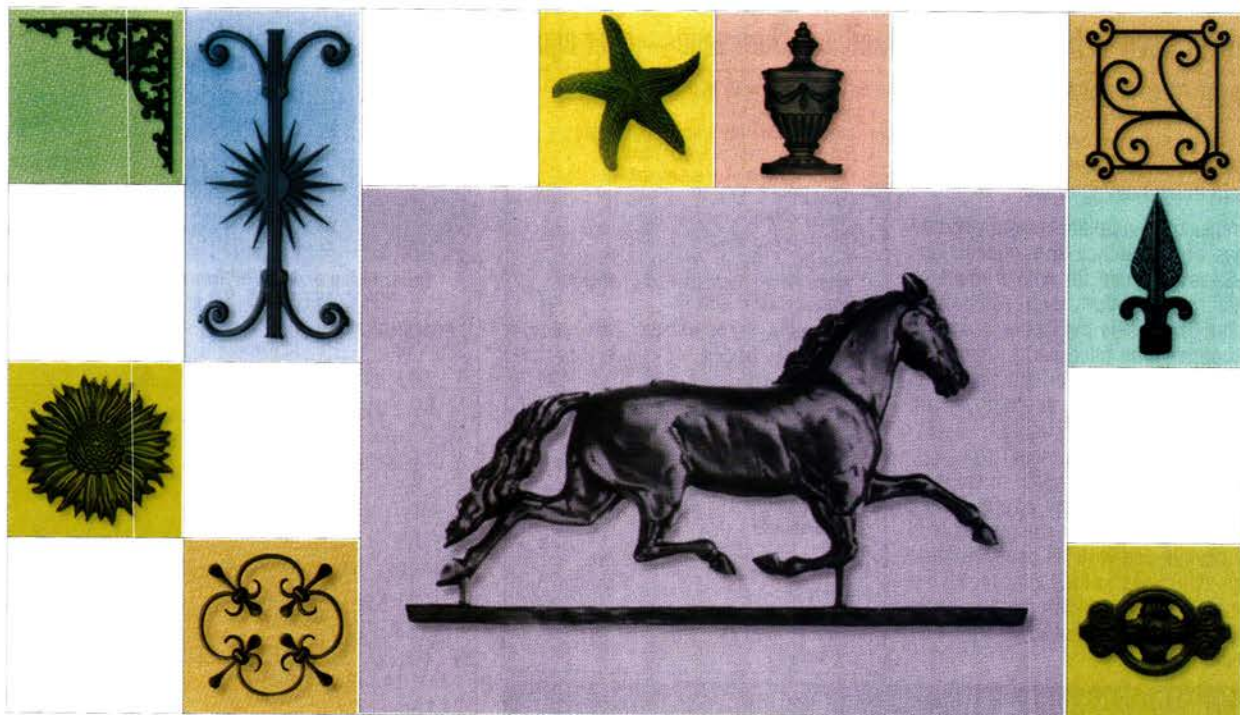
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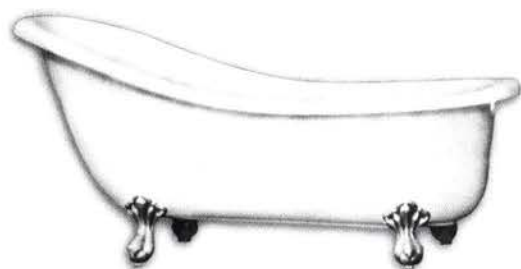


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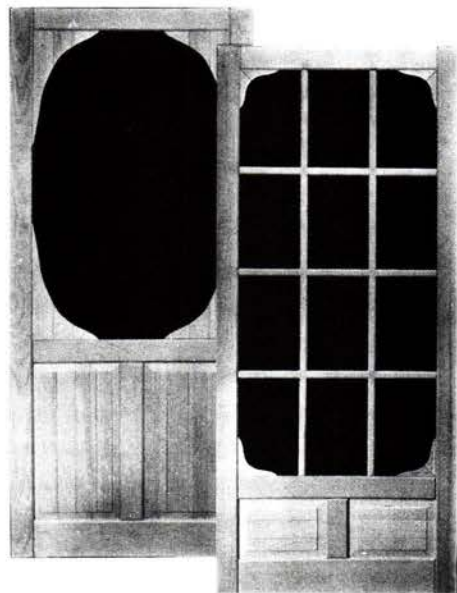
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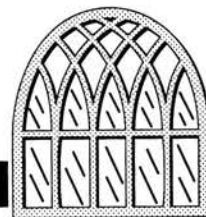
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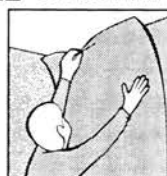
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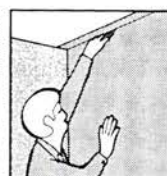
1. Cut fiberglass mat 2" longer than height.



2. Apply saturant to area to be covered.



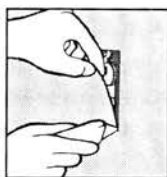
3. Apply fiberglass mat to wet surface.



4. Trim excess mat where wall meets ceiling.



5. Trim mat at baseboard and window.



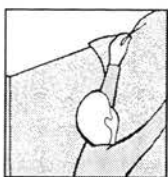
6. Trim mat at outlets, switches, etc.



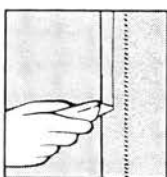
7. Apply second coat of saturant to wet mat.



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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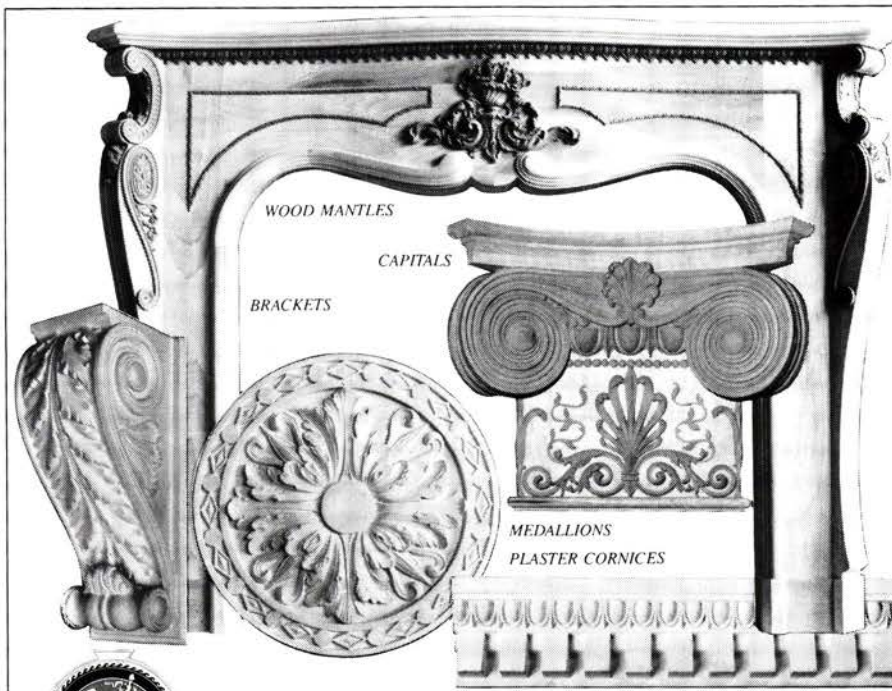
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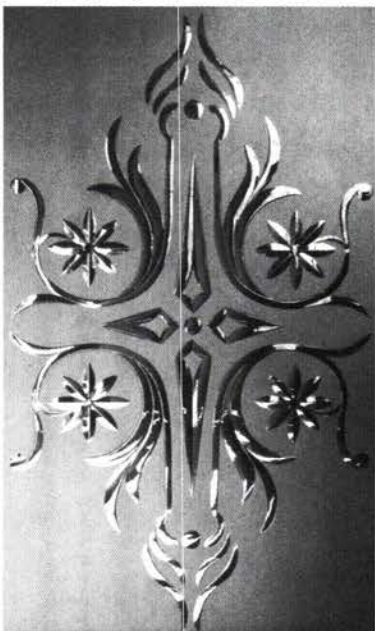
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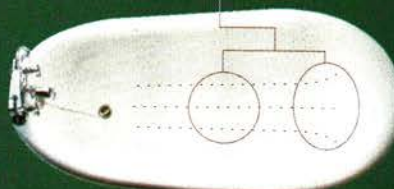


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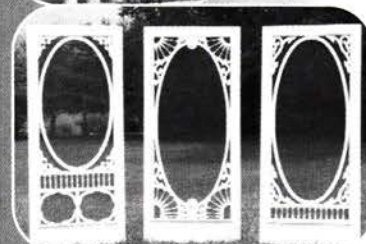
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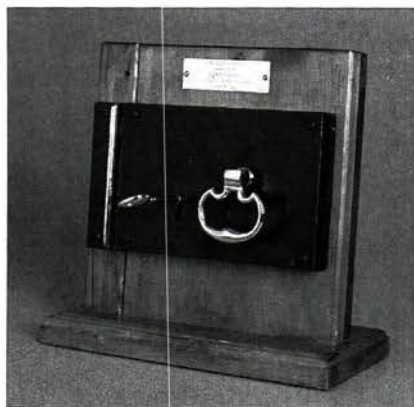
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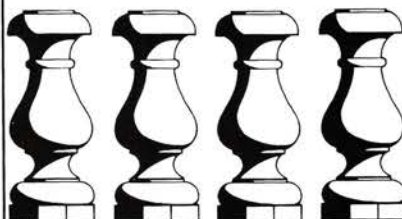
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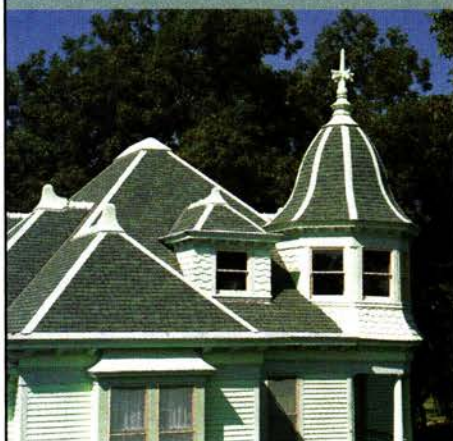
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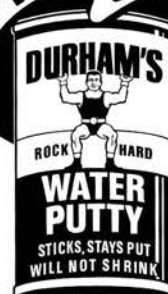
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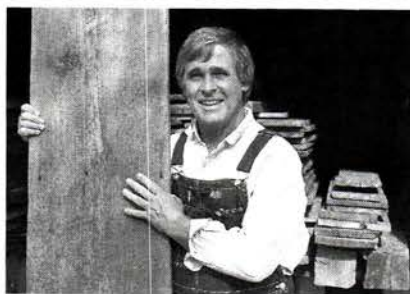
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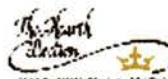
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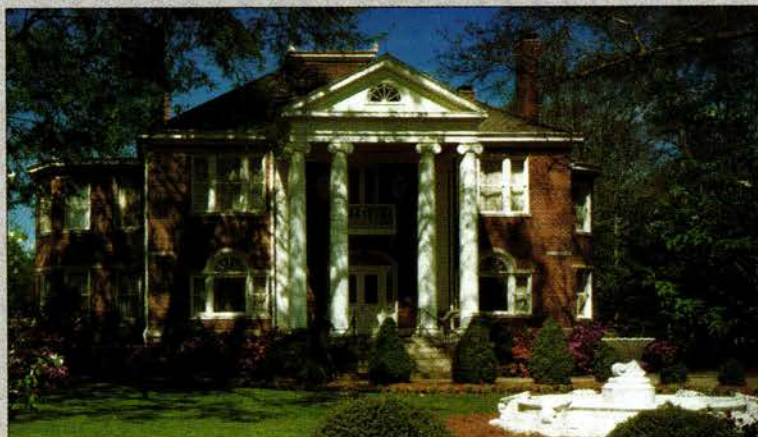
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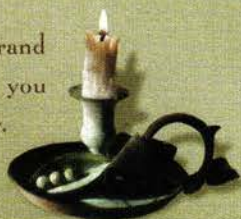


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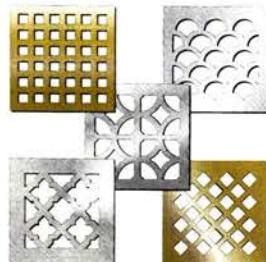
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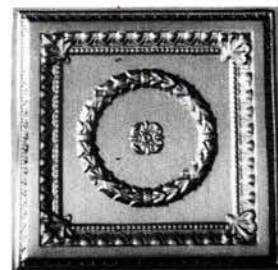
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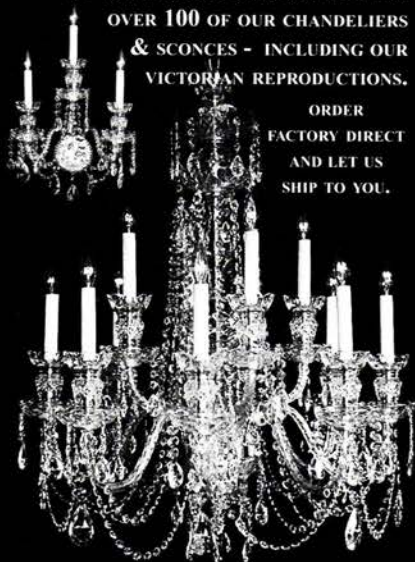
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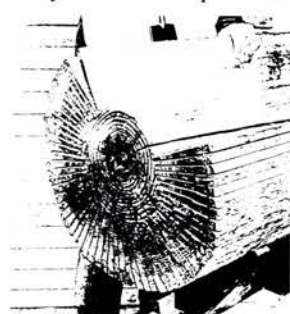
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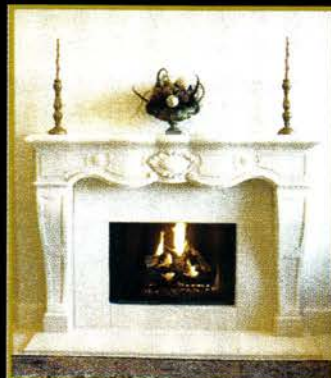
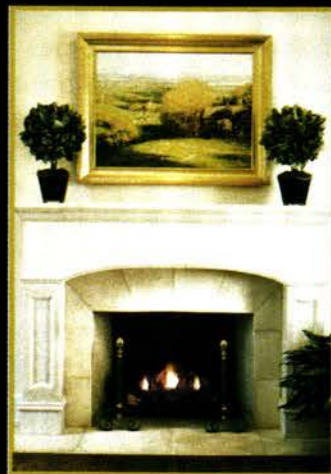
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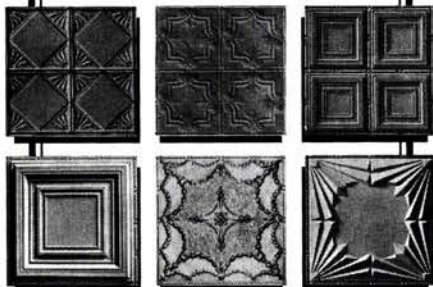
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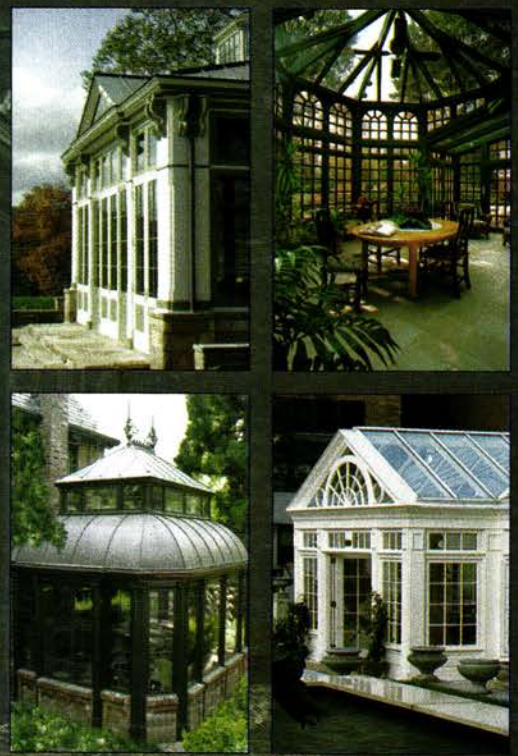
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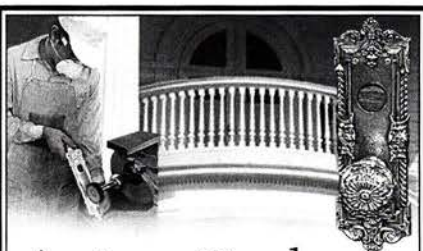
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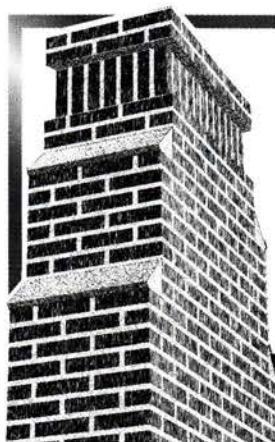
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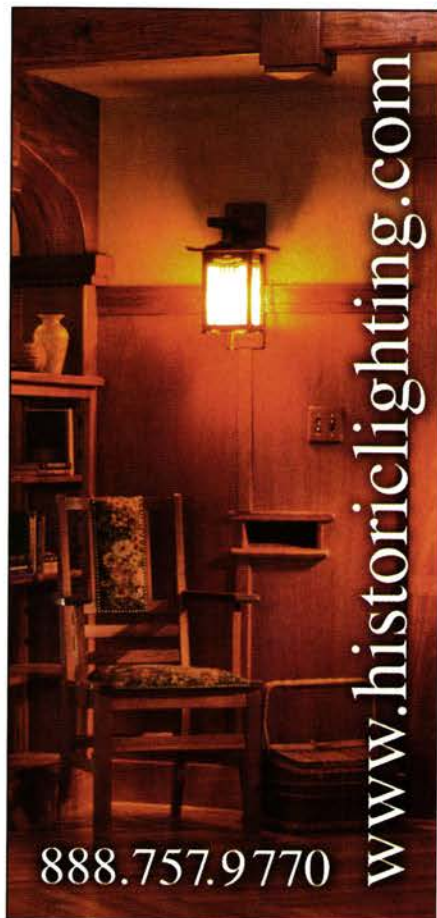
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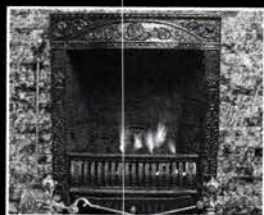
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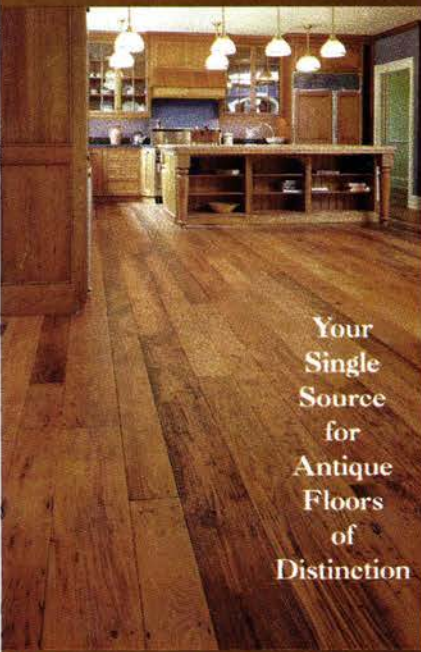


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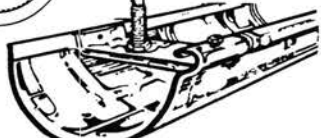
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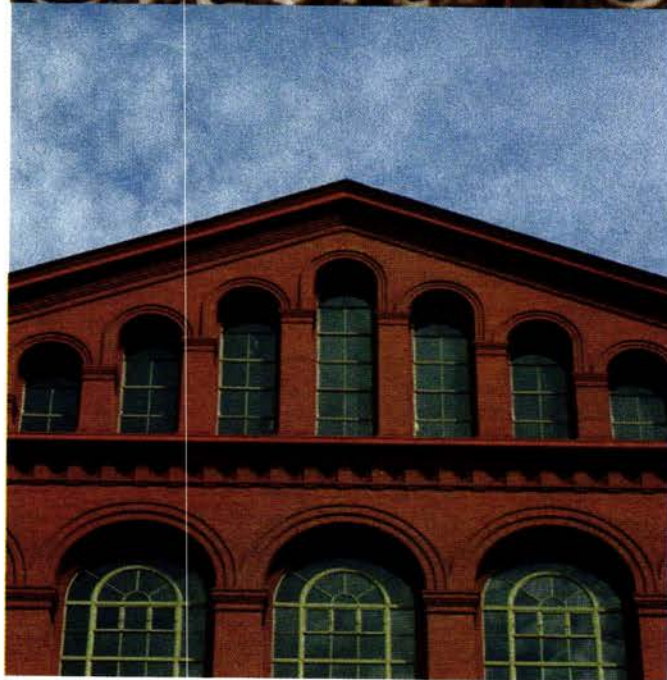


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OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL (ISSN 0094-0178) is published bimonthly for \$27 per year by Restore Media, LLC, 1000 Potomac St., NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007. Telephone (202) 339-0744. Subscriptions in Canada \$35 per year, payable in U.S. funds. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional entries. Postmaster: Send address changes to OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235.