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JOURNAL

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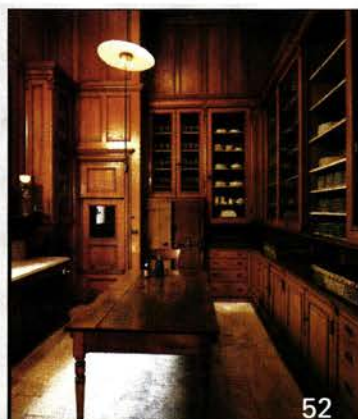
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Photo by Linda Svendsen for *Bungalow Kitchens*. A 1919 model Quick Meal, the first stove manufactured by the American Stove Company, has six gas burners, two ovens, a broiler, a warming oven, and cabriole-style legs. Note that the gas piping beneath the burners is exposed, typical in early gas cookers.

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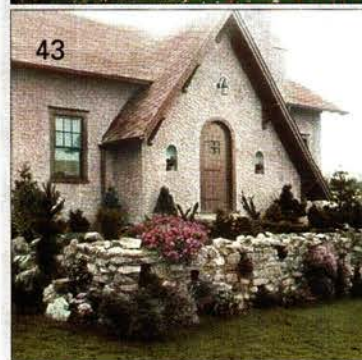
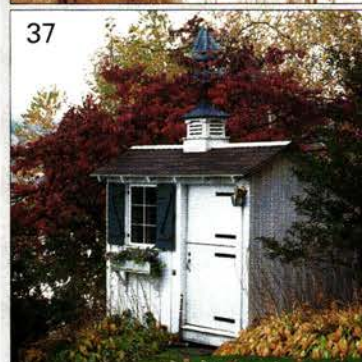
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Of Witches and Queens

Recently, I was pleased to enjoy—yet again—a TV screen-

ing of *The Wizard of Oz*. By now, there's almost no one who hasn't seen this 1939 film classic that depicts the adventures of a schoolgirl from Kansas who does battle with a wicked witch in an exotic land far away. Anyone who has ever studied *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* may remember that there's even more behind the story than this.

Some have speculated that when he wrote the book in the 1890s, author L. Frank Baum had an economic axe to grind. They say his fairy tale of a little girl and her trusty friends, multiple witches, and a yellow brick road is actually a parable for the debate over the gold standard that was raging in the United States at the time.

Whatever the truth, the movie reminded me that, in a slightly different way, some of the terms and concepts in the world of old houses and historic architecture actually were created for quite different reasons than what we use them for now—and often with a very pointed agenda. Here are the classics that come to mind.

Balloon frame—A top question in any old-house trivia contest is why “balloon.” While experts debate the actual meaning, it's generally agreed that balloon frame was originally a slight. In the 1830s and '40s, when buildings were first being erected with light, mill-sawn lumber, it seemed that houses went up as quickly as blowing up a balloon—or that might collapse like a balloon.

Gothic—By the time the “pointed” or “church” style of architecture made its way to North America in the 1830s, it was on at least its second revival and well accepted in England. That was not always the case, however. When the term was first applied to medieval cathedrals by Europeans who were rediscovering classical antiquity, Gothic meant barbaric, as in the tribes of Goths who overran the Roman Empire.

Queen Anne—To most historians, the Queen Anne style dates to the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714) and relates to English Country houses in dignified brick. The exuberant American houses of the latter 19th century were built during the reign of Queen Victoria, and actually relate more to Elizabethan architecture. Nonetheless, they were almost immediately labeled Queen Anne—in part, no doubt, simply because it rolled off the tongue a little better than those other Queens.

Back in the mid-1970s, I was fortunate enough to hear Gene Roddenberry, the creator of “Star Trek,” lecture about the making of the legendary series. He told many anecdotes, showed some outtakes of the episodes, and then quipped that, in case we were curious, the show had nothing to do with science fiction. I buy it, and when I make the connection to old houses, you'll be the first to know.



Gordon Bock



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Steamy Article

In the last OHJ January/ February, Dan Holohan wrote a detailed article about how to add a new hot-water zone to an existing steam system. It was written in a manner that a homeowner can both understand and show to a reluctant contractor to prove it can be done. It was nice to see this technical substance in the magazine.

Corey Snow
e-mail

All Fired Up

Dan Holohan's Hybrid Hydronics was a good article and I was excited to see it. As a homeowner who spent years reading his books about steam, I found the article almost not technical enough! Truthfully, my wife and I are faced with this exact problem and the article answered our questions perfectly.

Craig Flowers
via e-mail Dan Holohan's Web site,
www.heatinghelp.com

You say Tuscan, I say Doric

I enjoy James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell's many articles. The information, illustrations, and photographs in their wonderful "Greek Revival in America" (January/ February) are insightful. However, I was puzzled by the caption addressing the 1837 Heil Brockway House, which says to note the "Tuscan

columns." To my amateur eye, the columns appear to be excellent examples of the Greek Doric order. This assessment is based on the proportion of the lower drum diameter to the shaft height. It has the more squat and heavier appearance of a Greek Doric column rather than the normally slender Tuscan column; the shaft is fluted rather than smooth; and a recessed annulet separates the neck from the shaft. Can you please confirm?

Bill Randall
Herrin, Illinois

Oops! You're right; the defining characteristic of the Tuscan order is simplicity: a minimum of mouldings on the pedestal and entablature, and a smooth shaft on the column. The columns on the Heil Brockway



House are indeed Doric, an order that typically includes triglyphs in the frieze as well as fluted columns.—Eds.

Lead Levels

As a certified risk assessor for the state of Pennsylvania and a registered nurse overseeing its Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, I enjoyed "Looking Out for Lead Paint" in the (November/ December). However, I noted some inaccuracies in the stated threshold levels that should prompt cause of concern following "Swipe Tests." These tests are customarily performed to monitor lead dust content. The appropriate levels that would raise a red flag are: floors, 40mg/ft²; window sills, 250mg/ft²; and window wells,

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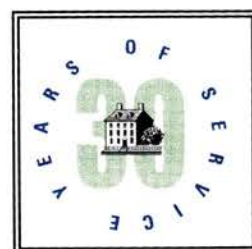
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Letters

400mg/ft². These levels are contained in the present HUD guidelines. While the article was quite informative, I felt obligated to correct this discrepancy. Kudos to your magazine for raising awareness to an important issue that is too often overlooked.

Wendy T. Spiga

Marshall's Creek, Pennsylvania

Lead Assessment

As a contractor certified by the Maryland Department of the Environment for the abatement or containment of lead paint, I congratulate Marylee MacDonald for her article on lead abatement. I have given a copy to each of our employees as part of their continuing education program.

I would like to point out to readers that the "Risk Assessment" she mentions is generally inexpensive and well worth the investment. In most localities, professional risk assessors are separate from contractors such as us, thus avoiding any possible conflict of interest. They'll also retest the identified problem areas once stripping or encapsulation is complete and provide a lead-free or lead-safe certificate, depending on whether you did a complete abatement or the less expensive containment.

Your article should be standard reading for everyone who wants to own or work on a home built before the late 1970s, to help protect those who can't protect themselves. I've seen lead-affected children, and their conditions won't improve over time.

Dan Webber

Frederick, Maryland

No Unhuggable Trees

I was pleased to see Guy Sternberg's "Living History," the article on preserving trees (November/ December). I'm always astonished when people cut down large old trees because they're inconvenient or interfere with parking. There is such hubris in destroying an object that was living before the owner and in the normal course of events would last far after.

Your magazine has fostered a view of ownership that rests upon a concept of temporary custodianship. We have a responsibility to future owners not to mess things up too much.

On the subject of trees, however, you were a bit too quick to dismiss certain species. Your list of "expendables" included every tree at my Great Lakes summer cottage: cottonwood (poplar), willow, box elder, and ash. These native trees thrive in that sandy shoreline and should not be disdained but regarded as good neighbors. The cottonwood that shades my cottage is magnificent, sturdy in our high winds. Yet it's true that textbooks give it, along with many of the poplars, a fairly short life span. I did some calculations using old photographs and came to the startling conclusion that my fine tree was nearing the end. My brother, a botanist, reassured me that those tables are considerably less accurate than human mortality tables, and that my tree's size and good health suggest it will take a place at the high end of the range, at any rate.

The tree does have some annoying characteristics. In spring the sticky seed husks cling tenaciously to feet, shoes, and floors. The cotton can be tiresome. The fall leaves are a dull brown. But it's a small price to pay for having such a handsome shade tree. I'd hate to think someone else might take down such a fine native species just because you've declared it "expendable."

Chris Campbell

Traverse City, Michigan

Guy Sternberg responds: Chris Campbell raises a good point, and perhaps other readers made the same mistake. Despite the use of "expendable" as a column heading, there is no such thing as a "bad" tree in my subjective, tree-hugger viewpoint.

Some trees are better than others in certain ways, but the reverse can be true as well, if different factors are considered. Everything is relative. The table was a side-by-side comparison chart of "good" versus "not as good" for each factor being consid-

"What is the victory of a cat on a hot on it, I guess, as long as she can..."



tin roof? I wish I knew. Just staying
- Margaret, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

HE MADE HIS TIN ROOF IMMORTAL. NOW WE'VE DONE THE SAME FOR HIS FRONT PORCH.

When the great playwright Tennessee Williams wrote *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, he created formidable, enduring roles. But, when the Columbus, Mississippi, Chamber of Commerce decided to restore his birth home, one thing was clear - Williams' front



{Tennessee Williams' home ~ Columbus, Mississippi}



porch hadn't been built of the same stuff as his characters. Restorers looked into possible materials. Most would require aggressive maintenance, something the Columbus Chamber of Commerce really wanted to avoid. Enter Tendura®.

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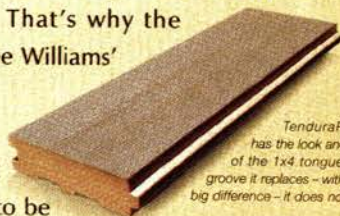


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Letters

ered. It was meant to emphasize the factors themselves, rather than the necessarily few examples used, and did not disrespect any particular tree overall. That's why I intentionally used some species as examples in both the "keeper" and "expendable" categories.

If you want a tree that will live for 500 years, you should plant (or preserve) an oak or bald cypress, not a cottonwood or willow. Cottonwoods seldom live more than about 200 years, and willows much less than that. The former National Champion cottonwood had germinated on a spoil bank created by the digging of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in the 1830s-40s, and thus was about 150 years old when it died in 1991. Not many cottonwoods grow older, and nobody ever measured one bigger than that great tree.

The largest (but not oldest) tree in our arboretum here in Illinois, and one of the most picturesque as well, is a beautiful cottonwood nearly 150' tall and as big around as a minivan standing on end! Some of our most graceful and resilient trees are willows, and our best wildlife den trees are some rotted old box elders down by the creek. Many historic houses on the Great Plains were surrounded by plantings of cottonwood, willow, and box elder because they could survive where few other trees could. (The same could be true for Chris Campbell's sand dune.) A faithful landscape restoration in a difficult climate or soil (for trees) would consider that as an additional factor.

Sprechen Sie Wallpaper?

To learn more about Hembus wallpapers and borders, featured in the January/February "Fine Design," readers should visit www.historical-wallpapers.com, which has both English and German, rather than the Web site listed.

Milt Watkins
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Tile Seeker

In the January/February letters column, Chris Barbanica and Catherine Mahoney of Berkeley, California, wrote about renovating their bathroom. They mentioned they bought the 3" x 6" green field tile at "Expo Design." Do you have Expo Design's address?

Keith Moore
e-mail

Expo Design Centers are owned by Home Depot and are springing up in many major cities. The importer/distributor does not sell directly to homeowners. You can look for one near you at www.expo.com.

Send your comments to "Letters," OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, 1000 Potomac Street NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007. Please include your name and city.

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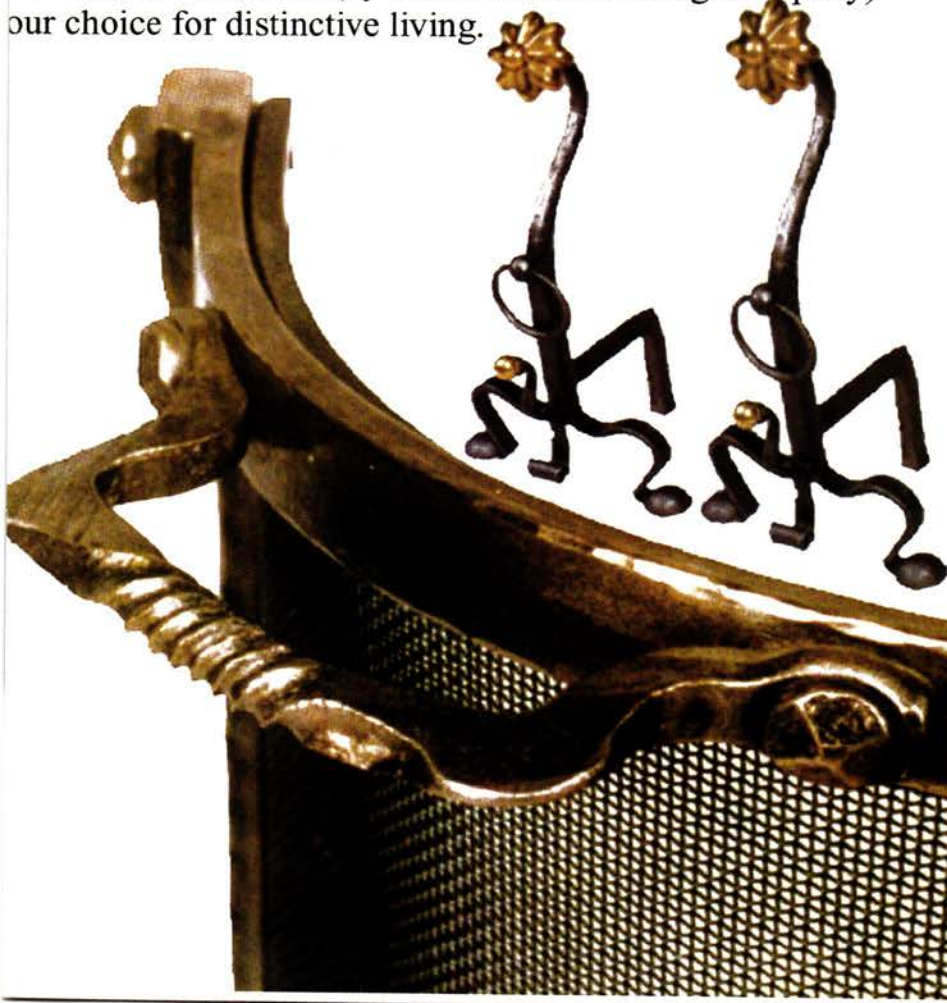
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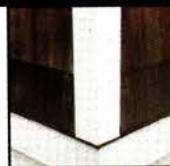


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Building Codes and Historic Rehabilitation Conference

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March 14–July 20

Light Screens: The Leaded Glass of Frank Lloyd Wright

The Smithsonian Institution's Renwick Gallery presents the innovative leaded-glass windows designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The exhibition gathers a number of Wright's most important windows, along with prints and original photographs that reveal the remarkable evolution of his artistic language. www.lightscreens.com

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20th-Century Exterior Architectural Metals Conference

Held at the Cambridge Marriott, the conference focuses on design, preservation and care. Sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. For conference registration information visit www.aia.org.

Putting the Magic Back in Carpets

Traditional textile crafts are alive and well in Boston's South End at Kybele Collection, a small boutique specializing in carpet imports from northwestern Turkey. Tucked away on the bottom floor of a handsome brownstone, among piles of traditionally inspired hand-knotted, naturally-dyed Konya kilims and Ushaks, Theresa India Young restores decade's-old flat-weave and pile carpets with the patience and precision of a surgeon. "My grandmother taught me basket- and rug-weaving techniques though folk songs," says Young, "Each rhythm represented a different design pattern—it really is a skill that has been handed down through oral history."

Young won scholarships to study textiles at Parsons School of Design in New York and Boston University's program in artisanry. After her studies, Young traveled extensively throughout the world researching textiles from the different countries she visited. Today, she is an adjunct lecturer at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and at Harvard University's Peabody Museum.

"So many people will restore the structural elements of a house but often forget they can save textiles as well," says Amy Kelliher, owner of Kybele Collection, who saw a need for her business to include restoration when a friend was about to toss out an 80-year-old Caucasian carpet that had a bit of wear.

Rugs are damaged over time when they're placed in high-traffic areas or are exposed to chronic dampness or moths. Carpets became popular in this country at the end of the 19th century—many of



PATRICIA KELLIHER

Theresa India Young learned the art of weaving as a child. Among her many endeavors, she restores carpets at Kybele Collection in Boston.

the pieces Young repairs are 100 years old.

Before Young begins to work on a piece, she tries to decide what the damaged area might have looked like before. "It's really like working on a crossword puzzle—filling in the blanks," Young says. Most recently, she worked on a 70-year-old Ushak. Before beginning work the carpet was cleaned to reveal its true colors. Young examines the carpet's warp—the undyed threads that make up the foundation of the rug—then selects threads that closely match the original fibers' color as well as texture. Most dyes used in the last 100 years were chemical unless it is a rug of superior quality. In this case the wool was naturally dyed.


She then uses the common Turkish "Ghiordes" knot to repair the worn spots. For this knot the yarn is looped around two warps with the ends pulled up through the middle. "In many cultures this was the

work of children and women; their small fingers were able to work the yarns more easily," says Young.

While Young focuses on restoration, Kelliher scours ancient Turkish cities such as Assos for weavers who are replicating the ancient process of rug making. This involves hand-spinning wool with a high-lanolin content, using vegetable dyes, and hand weaving. "Natural dyes don't bleed or fade like chemically dyed carpets" she says. Kelliher tells her customers to touch the wool. "You want the wool to be durable yet soft. Because of their high quality materials and craftsmanship, these carpets will someday be heirlooms themselves," she says.

If you have an old carpet in need of some TLC or are looking for a traditionally crafted carpet for your old house, contact Amy Kelliher at Kybele Collection (617) 262-5522 or e-mail kybelecollection@earthlink.net.





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Calendar

ENGLAND

April 5–13, 2003

Tour of England's Grandest Houses of the A&C Period

This study tour sponsored by the Foundation for the Study of the Arts & Crafts Movement @ Roycroft will start in Chester before traveling north into the Lake District and MH Baillie Scott's Blackwell, considered one of England's most important houses and only recently opened for viewing by the Lakeland Arts Trust. Next, a tour of the Cotswolds visiting Kelmscott Manor, Rodmarton, and Wightwick. Concluding in London to see examples of English Arts & Crafts architecture, such as Standen, Little Holland House, and the Red House. Sponsored by the Foundation for the Study of the Arts & Crafts Movement @ Roycroft. For information call (800) 785-7785.

MOUNT VERNON, VA.

April 19–May 4

Annual Garden & Gift Sale

Mount Vernon hosts its outdoor garden and gift sale including perennials and annuals, books, and plants propagated from historic cuttings. For information call (703) 780-2000 or visit www.mountvernon.com.

BUFFALO, N. Y.

May 21–24

The Victorian Society in America's 37th Annual Meeting and Conference

Join fellow Victorian lovers at the Hyatt Regency as they visit historic buildings, homes, theaters, churches and more. For more information visit www.victorian-society.org.

Tudor Place

When this country was founded, Neoclassical architecture was modern design. Beginning April 9, Tudor Place in Washington, D.C., looks at this American style that evoked the social, economic, and political climate of the day in an exhibition called *1816 Georgetown: Building a Modern House*. It will showcase rarely seen architectural drawings, early city maps, and archeological finds. For more information on Tudor Place and the exhibition, call (202) 965-0400 or visit www.tudorplace.org.



Tudor Place was designed in the Neoclassical style between 1808 and 1831 by William Thornton, architect of the U.S. Capitol, for Martha and Thomas Peter, a prominent Washington family.

Reality TV meets Upstairs, Downstairs



COURTESY OF PBS

If you think running a household in the 21st century is hard work, tune in to PBS's latest hands-on history series *Manor House*. The show takes 19 participants back in time to the rigid social hierarchy of Edwardian Britain, dividing them into members of an aristocratic family, their upper servants, and their lower servants. The setting is Manderston, a 109-room cottage in Scotland built in 1903. Among its opulent features is the world's only silver staircase, 56 acres of formal gardens, heated stables, and a marble dairy. See how these modern-day participants cope with the class distinctions as well as their archaic roles within the magnificent surroundings. The six-part series premieres this April; check your local listing for dates and times or visit www.pbs.org.

Keynoters at R & R in Baltimore

If you're like most old-house owners, your concerns about restoration go far beyond your front porch. Two cases in point: the deterioration of our cities, and sustainable design—how we can encourage “building green” to make the most of Earth's resources. These topics will be the focus of keynoters at the Restoration & Renovation Exhibition and Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, March 19 to 22. Keynote lectures are free and open to the public and all attendees.

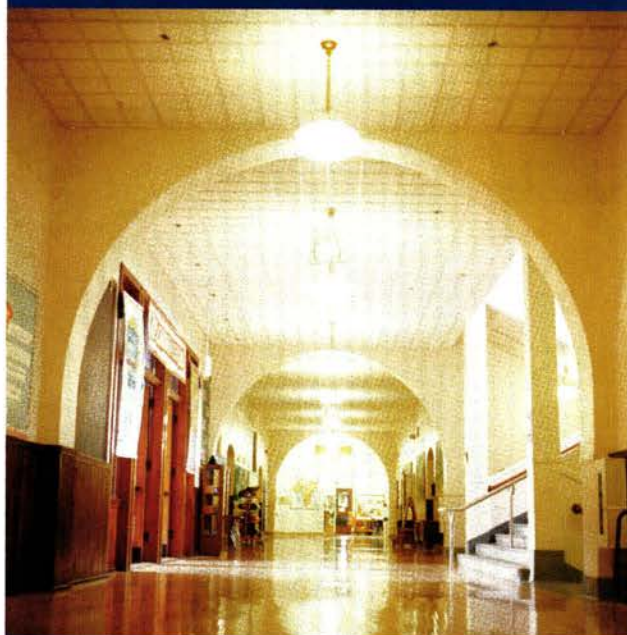
At 8:45 a.m. on Thursday, March 20, Kennedy Lawson Smith, director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center, will look at trends that she sees looming over older commercial districts. After attending graduate school in architecture, Smith became the director of Charlottesville, Virginia's, downtown business association. She has directed the staff of the National

Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center since 1991.

At 8:45 a.m. Friday, March 21, the keynote will be Penny Bonda, director of Environmental Communications for EnvironDesign Works, producers of *Interiors and Sources* and *Green@Work* magazines, as well as EnvironDesign, the annual environmental design conference for the building and business communities. She'll explore sustainable design strategies that enhance the quality of life for everyone. Bonda chairs the U.S. Green Building Council committee for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. This spring's program is loaded with presentations that will appeal to homeowners, from repairing roofs and windows to Victorian lighting and choosing historic paint colors. For information visit restorationandrenovation.com.

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More Continuing Education Credits — through Expo Education in the exhibit hall (AIA/CES).

CAPS™ Certified Aging-in-Place Seminar — for designers, architects, builders, and contractors. Earn the CAPS™ designation and take advantage of the fast-growing market of residential retrofit for seniors who plan to stay in their homes.

Second Annual Palladio Awards — for excellence in traditional design.

Interactive Demos at R&R Live! — see centuries-old artisanry and craftsmanship, performed by experts across a multitude of trades.

To get complete information on the show and program/registration details, visit our Web site, www.restorationandrenovation.com, or call us at 800-982-6247 or 978-664-6455.

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OHJ's 30th Anniversary Countdown

May the Source Be with You

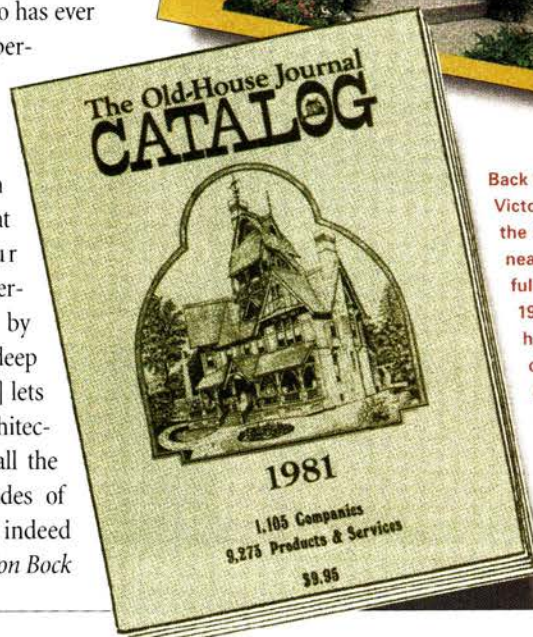
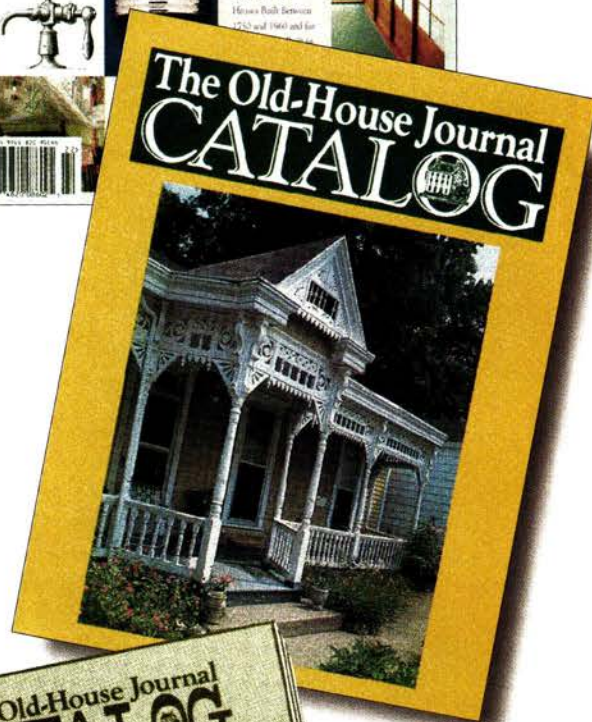
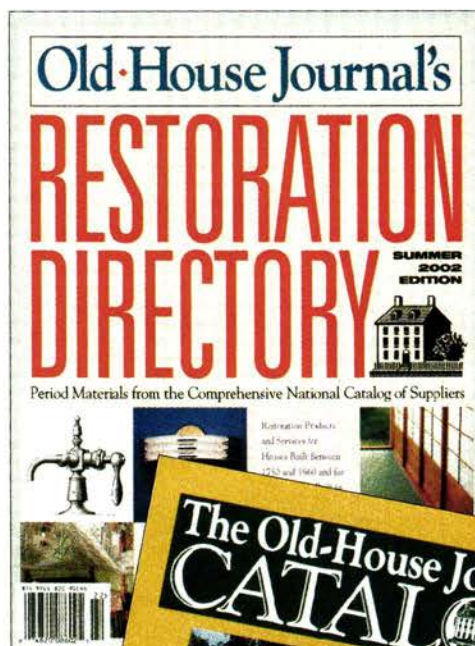
Of all the laments old-house restorers have voiced like a broken record over the last 30 years, "They don't make that anymore" surely tops the list. Be it a decorative lamp bobèche or some critical mechanical widget, everyone at some time has faced contractors or store clerks who shake their heads in dour despair over ever finding a viable source. Like the gold vein Clementine of storied song, innumerable old-house parts, it seems, are "lost and gone forever."

Fortunately, the readers of OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL have always known different. For decades, one of the strengths of the restoration movement has been the way people network and share information about hard-to-find parts and materials, as well as specialized manufacturers and contractors in their area. Shortly after the birth of OHJ in 1973, the editors decided to take the idea beyond the index-card level by bringing out a publication that offered some of this collective wisdom between two covers.

Known then as the OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL *Buyer's Guide*, the first slim volume grew and evolved steadily with the movement itself through three name changes and several formats to become the OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL *Restoration Directory*. What started out as a place to find the few solitary sources of Victorian fittings like gingerbread trim and ceiling medallions is now a comprehensive database of

products for any house built in the last 250 years—or, as it turns out, not a few new-old houses being built in period styles today. What's more, it stands as clear evidence of the increasing size and scope of the restoration movement. Where once restorers were on their own for finding or making materials as common as historically appropriate wallpaper or roofing, the *Directory* has become the *Yellow Pages* of a sophisticated industry supporting any architectural style or era, helping to make restoring an old house easier and the results better.

Soon to be a major motion picture? Probably not, and in an age of color newspapers and electronic books, the venerable print version of the *Directory* remains a prosaically black-and-white tome on paper—and readers love it that way. Portable, practical, and to-the-point, summed it up by the *Washington Post* in 2001 as a reference "Anyone who has ever struggled to find the perfect Art Deco door-knob or match a missing tile will want to make shelf room for." Now also online at www.oldhousejournal.com, the virtual version was blessed by *Forbes.com* as "A deep product catalog [that] lets users track down architectural oddities." We call the *Directory* three decades of proof that they do indeed "make it." —Gordon Bock



Back when disco reigned and Victorian was still a dirty word, the *OHJ Catalog* (bottom) was nearly a decade old and chock full of specialty suppliers. By 1989 (middle) color covers had come to OHJ and the catalog alike—many shot by top architectural photographers. Today's incarnation, the *Restoration Directory*, is also online.

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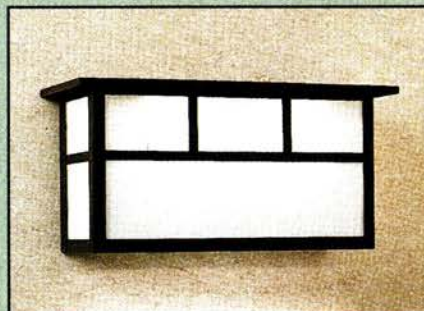


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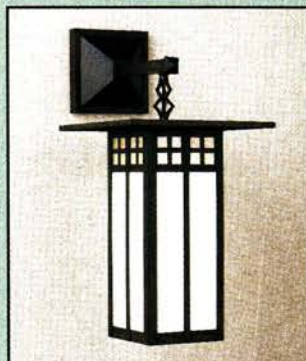
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Rainy Day Devices

My 1928 Tudor has a copper-gutter system with a dozen of these decorative boxes that I believe are called conductor heads. Two of them are missing and 10 are badly corroded. Do they serve a practical purpose? How hard would it be to replace them, and what will it cost?

Patricia Mack

Brookline, Massachusetts

Often seen on large houses, conductor heads are funnel-like components of the roof drainage system that direct fast-moving water into the downspouts and admit air. These devices go by a whole plethora of names, including collectors, collector heads, leader heads, scupper heads, and rainwater heads, according to Don Miller, a California-based copper artisan. You can buy stock heads from a number of sources for about \$200 for a streamlined model to well over \$1,000 for a custom design with grillwork and stamped figures of lions or gargoyles. Your design is simple enough that you should be able to find something in stock.

Bob West, operating officer of CopperCraft in Keller, Texas, says the devices date back centuries to scuppers used to drain water from behind parapets on European buildings. Here they became fashionable in the late 19th to early 20th century, when some of the first were made of zinc.

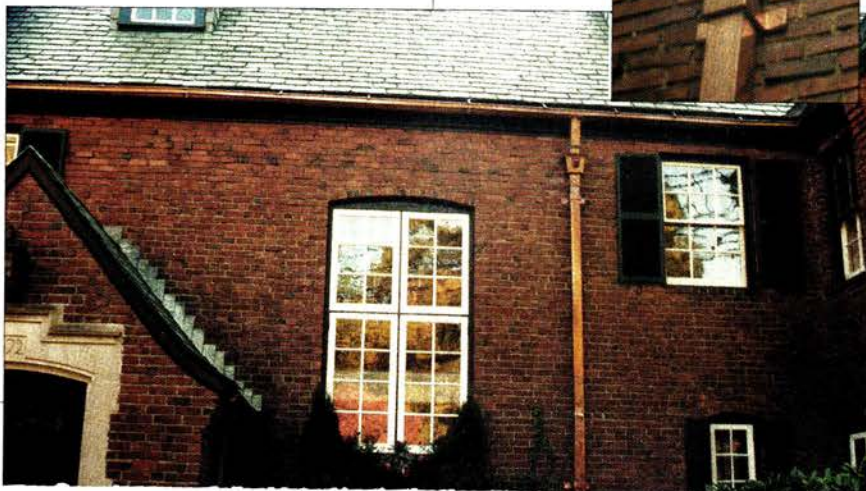
An issue where you live, although not in either California or Texas, is snow and

ice. West says the collectors give frozen precipitation extra room to expand, thus putting less pressure on the gutters themselves. But Augustine Crookston, owner of Classic Gutter Systems in Kalamazoo, Michigan, says ice and snow can be a problem in the collectors, as can debris. "And they can be a real Taj Mahal for animals." For that reason, he urges getting the lids that are available for them.

Miller believes that with tall downspouts such as yours, the collectors can help serve as a "vacuum break" that aids drainage in the downspout under heavy water flow, but says that most of his clients do buy them purely for ornamental purposes. In addition to the complexity of your design, your price will vary according to material, which in addition to copper can be zinc, lead-coated copper, aluminum, or paintable steel. Says Miller, "We find that simple geometric forms are better done in heavy 24-ounce copper sheet, and more complex forms are better cast in 1/4" thick bronze."

Suppliers vary in how much custom work they do. You may be able to send them pieces of your existing collector to duplicate. For anything more complex

Conductor heads are just one of the many names for these gutter-system accessories, which may be ornamental as well as practical.



than a stock design, you'll be urged to contact a local sheet-metal fabricator, who you will also need to install the heads. To contact the suppliers mentioned here, call Copperworks at (877) 633-9308, www.copperworks.net; CopperCraft at (800) 486-2723, www.coppercraft.com; Classic Gutter Systems at (616) 382-2700, www.classicgutters.com.

Managing Magnesite

After we bought our 1930s bungalow, I discovered that the flooring on the stairs and entry, which had been carpeted, is magnesite. In addition to the nail holes from the carpet, it has been painted and has some minor cracks. Is it restorable?

Jeff Keen

Westwood, California

Frank Lloyd Wright used this material, which is magnesium oxychloride cement, colorant (usually tan, brown, green, or red), and a filler, such as sawdust or wood chips, in several of his houses and other buildings in the first decade of the 20th century, but it probably saw its greatest popularity between the 1930s and '50s.

It's amazingly durable—noncombustible, resistant to oils and grease, and more resilient under foot than regular cement because of the woody filler. It can be finished with tung oil or wax. Wear gives it a patina similar to well-worn leather. It can also be sloped for drainage and has been used extensively in California for outdoor decking.

Considered economical in Wright's day it is now rather expensive to have installed new, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find craftsmen with the skills and patience required to make

Ask OHJ

repairs. The material is troweled on top of wood flooring and wire mesh (sometimes separated with felt) to a thickness of only 1/2" to 3/4". Setting time is crucial to magnesite repair because the material is easily "trowel burned." Ambient conditions, such as humidity, can affect setting time. Matching the stain can be a challenge, as can finding aggregate small enough to fill small nail holes. To strip paint off your flooring, begin with a gen-


tle approach. In a couple of test spots, try buffing with detergent, being careful not to get the magnesite too wet. For several layers you may need a strong chemical stripper, but be sure to follow safety warnings on the label. Magnesite flooring the age of yours—just like linoleum of about the same age—often contains some asbestos, so don't try to sand or paint any flooring that is chipped or crushed—this can release asbestos fibers

and should be handled by contractors licensed to do such work. New material for installing and repairing magnesite contains no asbestos. Although magnesite fell out of popularity in homes and public buildings after World War II, Adams notes



JON MILLER, HEDRICH BLESSING, COURTESY OF THE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT PRESERVATION TRUST

Above: The magnesite floor in Wright's studio entry. Left: Restorers attempt to match a 1905 flooring sample with raw ingredients.

that it's still popular on ships and military applications for its insulative and nonconductive properties. One company that sells magnesite repair products and may be able to help you find professional help is Hill Brothers Chemical Company in Orange, California. For more information visit www.hillbrothers.com. 



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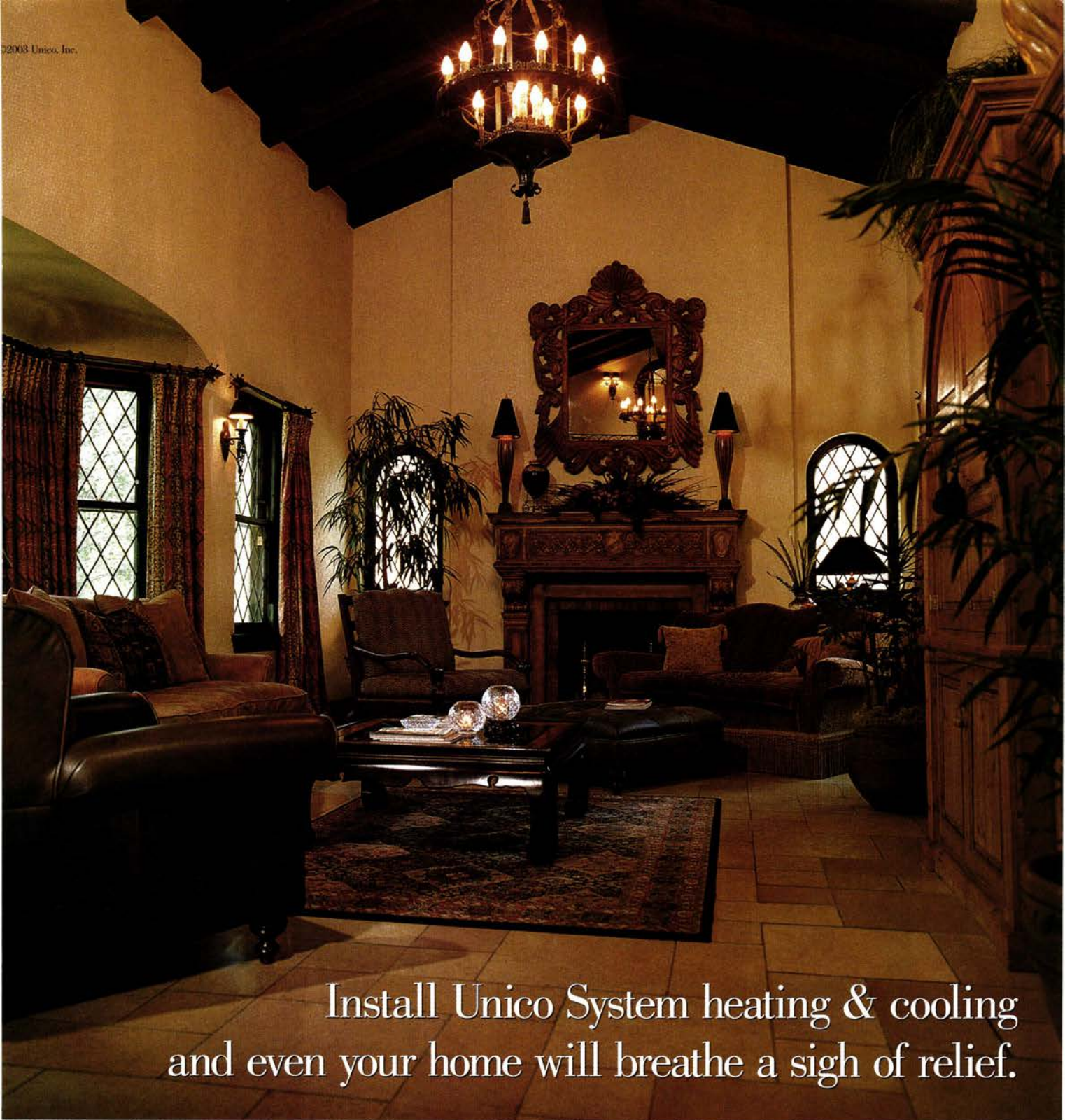
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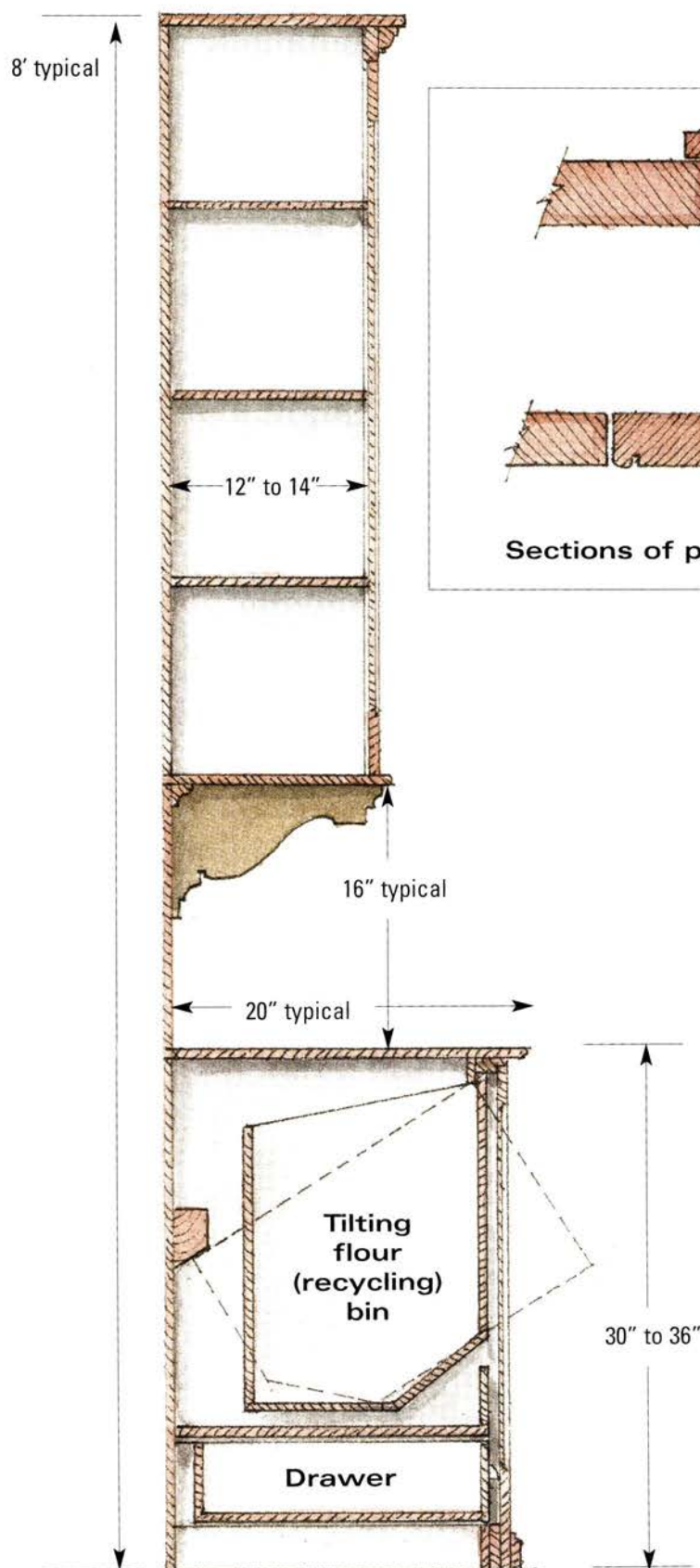
Victorian Kitchen Dresser

Drawings by Rob Leanna



The ancestor of the modular, prefabricated cabinets ubiquitous today, the kitchen dresser was a large, site-built closet with a shallow counter shelf that held dishes and tableware in the top half, equipment and food stores in the bottom half. Dressers were most often seen in the pantry, but

examples like this plan from the 1910s were designed for use in either the pantry or kitchen proper, and are well adapted for the modern needs of a neo-Victorian kitchen. Top cabinet doors can be sheet or leaded glass (ideal for viewing contents); bottom space is still practical for pots and pans.



The section view of the dresser highlights the outline of the decorative supporting knee, a characteristic feature of such cabinets. Note, too, the suggested large flour bin in the bottom compartment—a convenience easily adapted to pet food or recyclables today. The reserved counter and cornice profiles are in keeping with the late-Victorian era and would look good in clear finished oak or other hardwood. Note the construction of the door panels and jambs.

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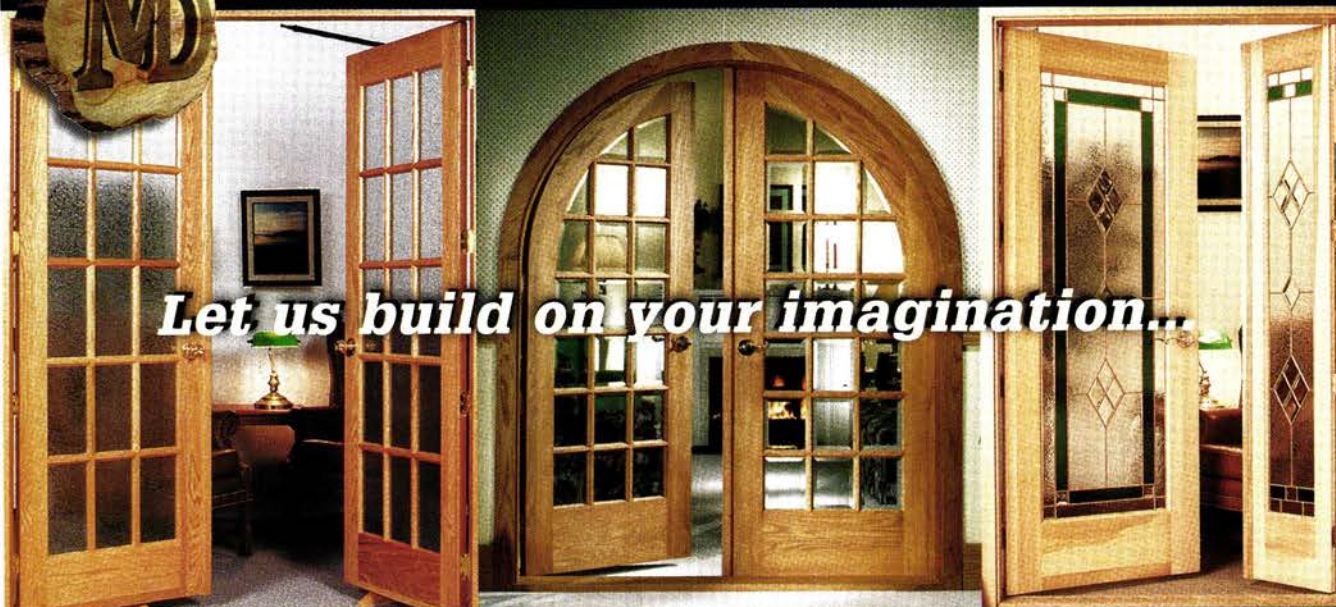
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What's Restoration Worth?

Q: Friends report that in their community a sensitively upgraded old house with paint on original clapboards sells for more than a similar house with 1970s re-siding. Does restoration increase house value?

William Polk, Lincoln, Nebraska

Whether it's an old house or a recent house, almost any improvement will increase value. The more relevant question, perhaps, is whether it's possible to recoup all the investment in home-improvement projects—including restoration projects—when it's time to resell the house.

For example, if a homeowner invests \$50,000 in restoration work, will the future selling price increase by at least that amount? An answer to this question is hard to come by, primarily because there are so many—often interrelated—reasons why residential property values appreciate. Among the more common factors are location (and location and location!); the reputation of the local

school district; community amenities and services; accessibility to transportation, jobs, and shopping; local taxes; lot size; and the safety of the community (or at least the perception of safety). Nonetheless, there are studies and anecdotal reports indicating that historically minded home-improvement projects do indeed pay off, though not always on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

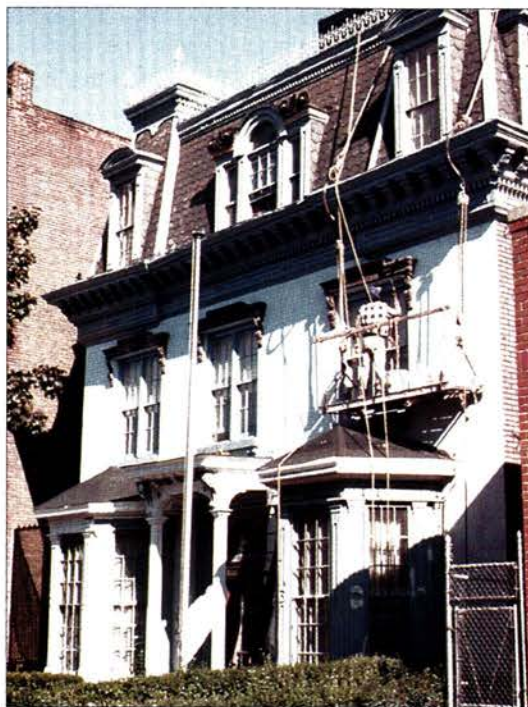
Crunching the Right Numbers

The magazine *Remodeling* conducts an annual cost vs. value report that determines the average national return on investment, upon reselling the house one year later, for common, specific, home-improvement projects. At the top of the list are bathroom additions (94 percent return on investment), bathroom remodelings (88 to 91 percent), kitchen remodelings (67 to 80 percent), basement remodelings (79 percent), and family room additions (79 percent). A similar national survey by the Appraisal Institute of Canada reveals practically the same results.

The problem is that such surveys rarely, if ever, encompass typical restoration projects. OHJ readers might be dismayed to learn that some activities specifically discouraged by the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines still consistently rank near the top of the lists. For example, siding replacement recoups 79 percent of investment after one year; window replacements garner a 74 to 77 percent return. What is not known, however, is how these generic remodeling projects compare to the return on investment for sensitive restoration work—say, restoring (instead of replacing) the original siding or window sash and frames.

Another issue complicating any comparison of restoration and remodeling economic benefits is the “do-it-yourself” factor. In many residential restoration projects, the homeowner provides the free “sweat equity” of his or her own time, so the actual out-of-pocket costs reflect only part of the investment. Restoring original clapboards, for example, might just require buying paint, sandpaper, and the occasional new clapboards, compared to the remodeling expense of hiring a contractor (time, materials, and profit) to install man-

By J. RANDALL
COTTON



While curb appeal always counts for a lot in building resale, historically appropriate exterior colors and details can also enhance an old house's architecture.

GORDON BOCK ARCHIVE

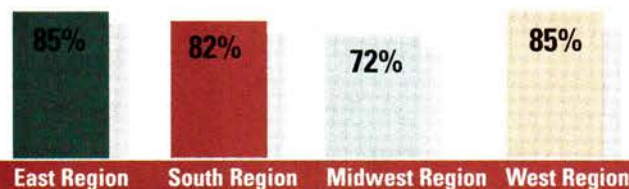
Preservation Perspectives

COST vs. VALUE Major Kitchen Remodel

Region	Job Cost	Resale Value
East Region	\$39,253	\$33,486
South Region	\$36,532	\$29,798
Midwest Region	\$39,682	\$28,394
West Region	\$39,608	\$33,697
National Average	\$39,769	\$31,344

COST vs. VALUE Major Kitchen Remodel

Cost Recouped



Government and industry surveys take a broad view of work on existing houses—a useful yardstick for general trends, but trickier to apply to the economics and aesthetics of restoration.

original features, finer craftsmanship, and higher-quality materials embodied in an older house. Agents report that buyers regularly look for fireplaces, tongue-and-groove floors, solid-wood paneled doors, rich hardware, and old window glass.

• Although the overall condition of a house on the market will obviously affect the asking price, we all know that buyers of old houses are often more willing to accept less-than-perfect conditions. In fact, some investors specifically buy a “fixer-upper,” make necessary improvements, and then sell it at a handsome profit. Anyone tempted by this kind of short-term investment should bear in mind two time-tested axioms: 1) Buy the least desirable house in the most desirable neighborhood, and 2) Don’t overimprove for the neighborhood.

Restoring for Resale

This being said, most old-house buyers will expect certain basic elements of the building to be in good condition. Therefore old-house owners/sellers should first consider investing in these key areas:

• Fix structural deficiencies, such as rotted sills, bulging walls, insect damage, sagging beams, wood rot.

• Replace worn-out roofing materials.

• Remove or encapsulate potentially hazardous materials, such as asbestos.

• Repair, upgrade, or replace outdated heating, plumbing, or electrical systems.

(Wholesale replacement, however, is not always needed. For example, the original branch-circuit wiring might be perfectly acceptable, but “heavily up” to 100-amp service and a modern circuit-breaker box may be a good investment and even required by code for sale of the house.)

• Remove architecturally insensitive and incompatible remodelings, “particularly from the 1970s era,” advises one sales agent.

• Keep up with routine maintenance, such as cleaning out gutters, painting exterior woodwork, or repairing broken fixtures.

• Upgrade the kitchen and bathrooms to modern standards. The styling of these improvements can be within the spirit of the home’s historic period, or even thoroughly

made siding.

Despite the difficulty in obtaining empirical evidence of the direct economic benefit of home restoration on property values, real estate agents specializing in the sale of historic homes, as well as published studies, agree on some market observations:

• Not everyone wants to buy an old house, so the pool of potential buyers for older houses might be smaller than that for comparable new homes. However, this smaller pool consists of more motivated and more discerning buyers who are willing to pay a premium to get what they want.

• Furthermore, many old-house buyers have very particular preferences—say pre-1820s homes or the high ceilings of Victorian homes—and will pay for just the right architectural era.

• Serious old-house buyers value the



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Best of all, *OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL* chronicles the real-life successes of fellow restorers. Their advice for living in an ever-changing renovation environment, and a subscription to *OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL* mean you're never alone. Together, we'll work to give your older home a brand-new beginning.



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Preservation Perspectives



GORDON BOOK ARCHIVE

Like antiques, rich interior woodwork and finishes are what bring some buyers to pay more for old houses in good condition.

next buyer. Few folks are going to pay extra for custom wallpaper, expensive decorative finishes, or top-of-the-line fixtures they will change anyway.

- Authenticity can be irrelevant. You may know that the painted crown moulding in the parlor has been meticulously re-created using hand planes and the highest-quality clear pine, but will the next owner know or care? Solid-brass replica doorknobs may be more authentic than brass-plated versions, but for strictly investment purposes the latter may suffice.

On a broader level, being in a historic neighborhood may be as important for determining property value as the amenities of a particular house. A study by the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association found that the prices of houses in historically designated neighborhoods exceeded those in similar nonhistoric areas, in part because home buyers were willing to pay a premium “for the assurance that the neighborhood surrounding their houses will remain unchanged over time.”

Similarly, a study commissioned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1991 found that houses in Galveston, Texas, historic districts appreciated two to five times the rate of residential properties in the city as a whole, and that property appreciation of historic-district properties in Fredericksburg, Virginia, was 75 percent higher than the appreciation of similar properties citywide. Real estate agents report that there is increased demand for homes in older, established neighborhoods that provide a sense of community, character, walkability, and convenience to services.

So what's the bottom line? First, restore an old house principally for your own personal satisfaction. Then, if you're still concerned about return on investment, pay attention to the basics and don't “overimprove.” Ask local agents what buyers are looking for and, if your old house is in a stable historic neighborhood, pat yourself on the back for what seems to also be a good economic bet. 🏠

J. Randall Cotton is associate director of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.

contemporary.

On the other hand, there are some restoration projects that may return relatively little on investment. Many old-house restorers can be notorious perfectionists, investing inordinate amounts of time and money in authentic period details—an admirable goal to be sure. There's nothing wrong with this dedication, so long as the primary payback you expect is the sense of accomplishment derived from preserving and restoring a piece of history. In fact, if you intend to live in and enjoy an old house over a long period of time, one agent encourages “pulling out all the stops and going top-shelf for your own enjoyment.” Personal satisfaction and historic authenticity aside, though, don't expect to recoup much of your investment in some cases:

- Decorating tastes are highly personal, and what you admire—alas, even well-researched, authentic period décor—may not be to the liking of the

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Asian Flavor

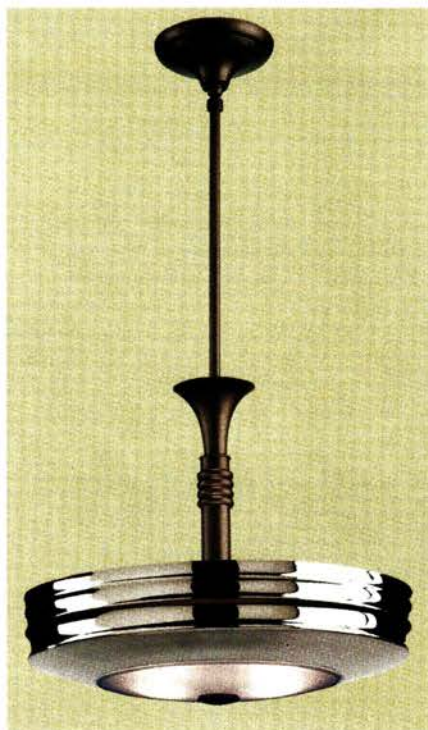
Asian motifs appear in many Arts & Crafts creations, from architecture to textiles, in the early 20th century. Appalachian craftsman Jim Probst revisits this tradition with his new cherry and bird's-eye maple sideboard worthy of contemplation in any bungalow dining room. Selling for \$4,400, it's 62" wide x 32" high x 22" deep. For more information call (614) 488-7263 or visit www.americanfurnishings.com. Circle 2 on resource card.



Made for the Shade

Architects through the ages have graced outdoor spaces with garden structures called pergolas that offer a bit of relief from the hot sun. At the turn of the 20th century, McKim, Mead and White used pergolas in many of their Colonial Revival summer-house commissions. Whether you'd like your pergola to be free-standing or supported by a wall, Fine House offers all the components (columns, lintels, trellis, rafters, purlins, and hardware) to build these classic constructions in your own backyard. Prices vary depending on size. For more information call (540) 436-8080 or visit www.finehouse.net. Circle 3 on resource card.





Diffused Deco

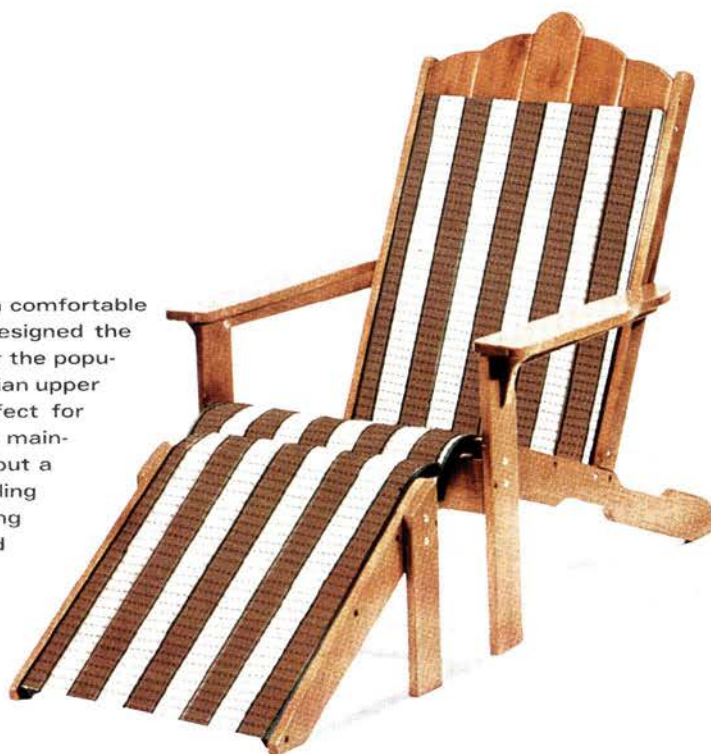
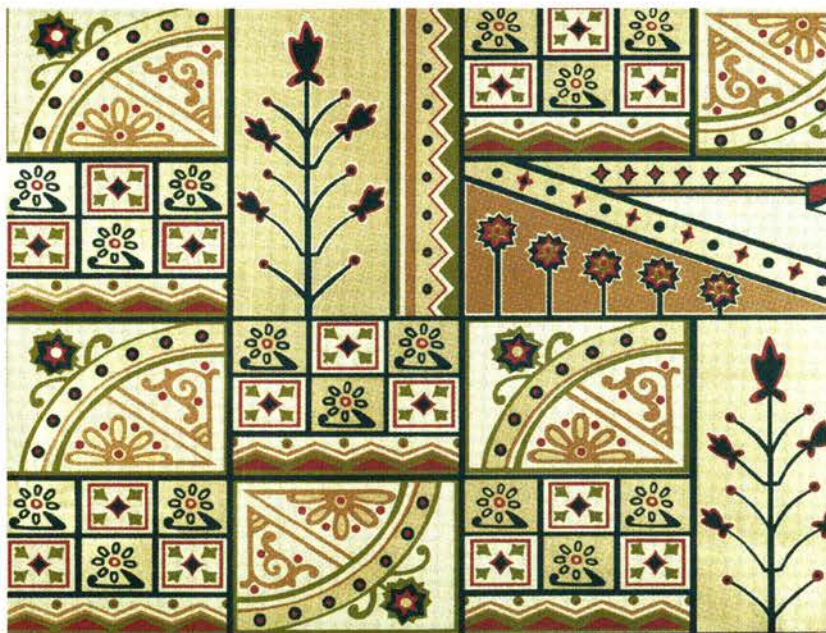
Need to jazz up a 1940s living room? In 1941 the Montgomery Ward catalog featured the Manning light fixture, "the last word in diffused lighting...modern, streamlined, and lovely...reflect[ing] most light against your walls and ceiling, the rest softly filtered through the frosted bottom." As brought back by Rejuvenation, the Manning is 17" to 30" long and 16" in diameter. The price for the version shown, in a bronze gilt finish, is \$238. For more information call (888) 401-1900 or visit www.rejuvenation.com. Circle 4 on resource card.

Lap of Luxury

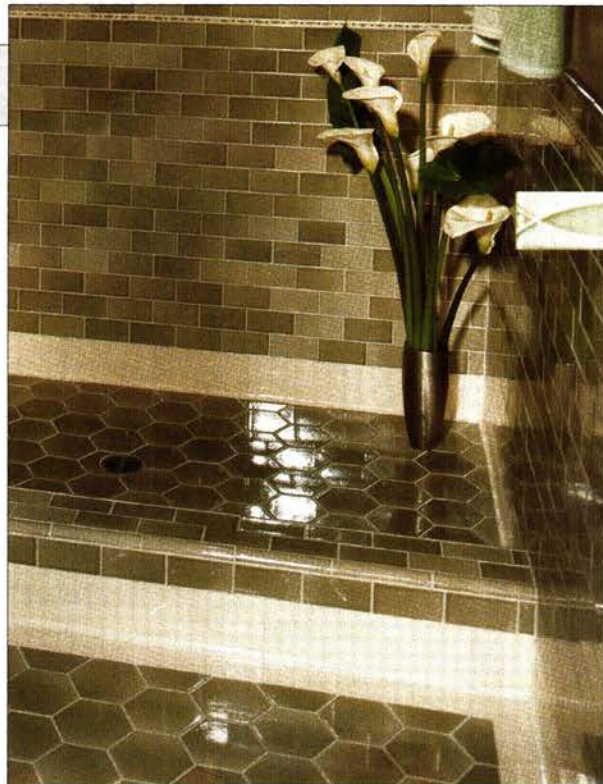
Adirondack native Thomas Lee, looking for a comfortable lawn chair to furnish his summer home, designed the original Adirondack chair in 1903. Named for the popular "wilderness" vacation spot for the Victorian upper crust, the chair with its broad arms—perfect for resting a cool drink and a book—became a mainstay in garden furnishings. GPI Casual has put a twist on this old classic with its Catskill Sling Adirondack. The water- and UV-resistant sling material is resilient, easy to clean, and comes in a variety of patterns, colors, and textures; the hardwood frame is stained in either Warm Cedar or Antique Jade. The cost is about \$150. For more information call (800) 666-4044 or visit www.gardenpals.com. Circle 6 on resource card.

Oriental Mystique

Carvings on Eastlake furniture inspired Wolff House Art Papers to create its Oriental Garden Collection. Comparable to styles popular in the 1870s and 1880s, the designs are hand screened with burgundy, sage, teal, metallic gold, and copper inks onto a light olive background. The border has a 20 5/16" repeat, is 15" high, and sells for \$30 a yard; the wall filler has a 22 7/8" repeat, is 26 5/8" wide, and sells for \$103 per 33.25 sq. ft. roll. Custom colors are also available. For more information call (740) 392-4947 or visit www.wolffhouseartpapers.com. Circle 5 on resource card.



Fine Design



Roaring Revival

Inspired by bathrooms of the 1920s and '30s, Mission Tile West introduces its new line of decorative tiles called Revival, which combines geometric simplicity with period-appropriate colors and finely crafted mouldings. Shown to the left is Old Bone, one of its color choices; above is the bath tile liner, Fish, measuring 1/2" x 6". For more information call (626) 799-4595 or visit www.missiontilewest.com. Circle 7 on resource card.

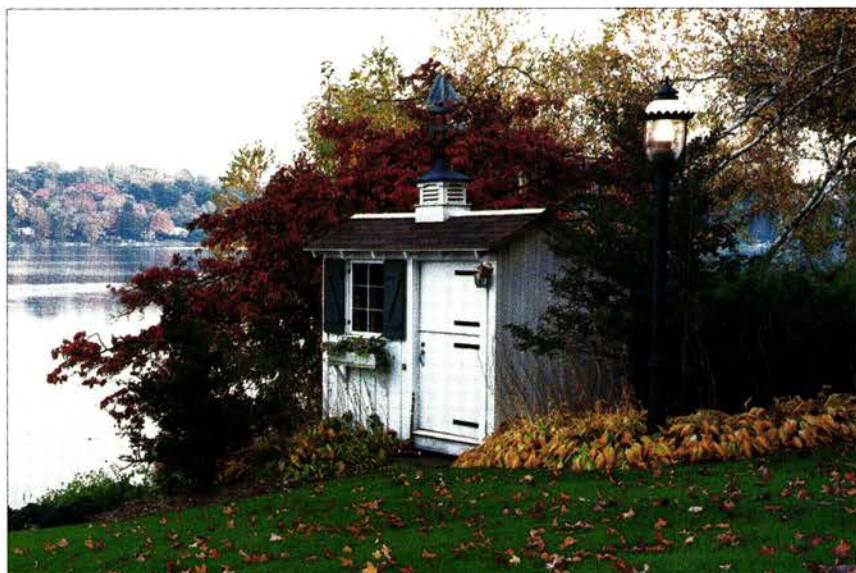
A Real Turn-off

Is the "drip, drip, drip" from your bath faucet driving you mad? Check out Moen's new Kingsley faucet with its patented one-piece washerless cartridge, ensuring a dripless spout. Modeled on a 1900 design and finished in wrought iron, this fixture would be both stylish and silent in any Victorian bathroom. For more information on this product call (800) 289-6636 or visit www.moen.com. Circle 8 on resource card.



Royal Design

Need a pretty little place to store your garden tools this spring? Walpole Woodworkers' outbuildings, originally designed by renowned New England architect Royal Barry Wills, can be used as storage sheds, working studios, stables, or playhouses. Shown here is the 6' x 8' Saltbox Garden Building, perfect for a potting shed or tool storage. You can buy most styles in sizes ranging from these diminutive dimensions to 15' x 40', with the option of customized window and door placement. For more information call (800) 343-6948 or visit www.walpolewoodworkers.com. Circle 9 on resource card.



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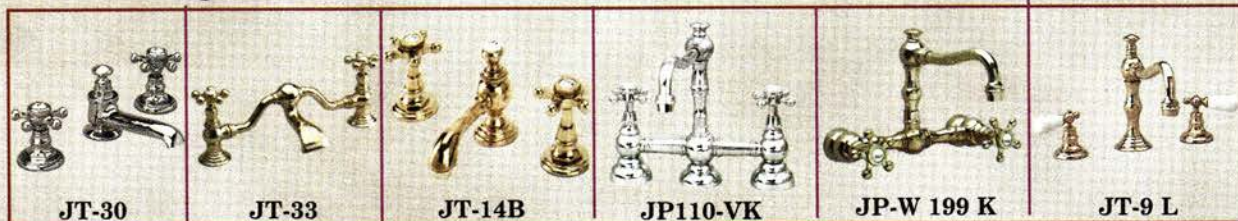
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Playing Garden Sleuth

BY NAN CHASE

Just as with your house, researching your old landscape can be half the fun.

Imagine the day has come at last. You've finally finished restoring your old house with every architectural detail authentic, from the chimney pot down to the mud sill. You hoist a glass of champagne to celebrate your hard work, glance out the window...Oops. Been avoiding the garden? You're not alone. Many homeowners with superb plastering skills or an intuitive grasp of interior decorating don't know where to start when it comes to historic garden design—that is, matching the look of a garden to the time and place their house was built.

It's no crime to take the easy way out, opting to install the most readily available new plants from the local garden center. But by bringing back the impression of a period landscape—either through general shapes and textures or specific rescued features and heirloom plants—you can create a sense of harmony that begins

at the front gate, whether the setting is a Hudson River mansion, an Appalachian cabin, a prairie cottage, or a Southwestern adobe rancho.

Landscape historians disagree heartily about details, but are unanimous in advising homeowners to honor the spirit of the past. "I think the question is less what people 'install' at their period house than what they rediscover and save of the real historic garden that is still there, no matter how difficult for modern eyes to see," says Scott Kunst, owner of Old

House Gardens, an antique bulb supplier in Ann Arbor, Michigan. "A new garden is always richer, I'd say, when it honors and builds on its past lives."

For example, Kunst retained what was left of an iron grape arbor that once stretched across his entire property, dividing the more formal front garden from the work area in back. He initially saw it as a rusty, teetering structure that blocked the view from his office; it's now a shady retreat and the heart of the Kunst landscape.

While "hardscape" features like the arbor or a brick path may have marked a garden for generations, the same isn't true of plants. Says Wesley Greene, garden histo-

Visiting house museums of an age similar to your home's, or historic re-creations, can help you capture the feel of landscapes past. The parterre garden at Colonial Williamsburg's Custis Tenement features formal paths edged with boxwood and overflowing with larkspur.



COURTESY OF COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

Groups like the Heritage Rose Foundation can lead you to old plant varieties such as 'Maggie,' carefully preserved by Mattie Breedlove of Washington, Texas. But you may not want to emulate all old traditions, such as the swept earth landscapes that ostensibly deterred critters around rural homes.



G. MICHAEL SHOUPIANTIQUE ROSE EMPORIUM

Outside the Old House

Like online research? The Smithsonian's Archives of American Gardens slide library offers a cornucopia of inspiration. Below, the Gruppenger rock garden in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, from 1929.



COURTESY OF SUSAN HITCHCOCK



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION/ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN GARDENS

rian of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "The historic garden was not a static affair during its heyday, and I think it is a mistake to try and freeze it in time today. A healthy garden is one that is going through continuous change; the old plants come out and the new go in. On any historic site, when you claim to duplicate history you do a disservice to the people who actually lived at this time."

Greene points out that plant fads are nothing new. "There were 18th-century gardeners with good taste, bad taste, and no taste, just as we find today. They did not all walk lockstep with current fashion." Greene quotes from a 1736 letter written by John Custis, a wealthy Williamsburg planter whose son was Martha Washington's first husband. Custis expressed his admiration for a striped boxwood and other variegated plants. "I am told those things are out of fashion; but I do not mind that I always make my fancy my fashion."

Gardens change from year to year, so you can interpret loosely. Above, a pale pink palette of heirloom foxgloves, peonies, dianthus, and violas follows the timeless rule of planting from tallest in back to shortest in front.

Susan Hitchcock, a landscape historian for the National Park Service, believes that very few gardens can truly be restored. "A feature in the landscape such as an alley of trees, a fountain, edging, or a drainage swale can be restored in many cases," says Hitchcock, "but to restore an entire landscape is very problematic. I think at best I can have a few historic varieties maintained within a garden that I hope will be appropriate to the architecture of the house."

Where's the average homeowner to start? Take inventory of what's already there. That goes hand in hand with careful cleanup, and the process should take a year—a complete growing season. "It could be you're sitting on some treasures," says Thomas Durden, a garden designer whose current project is replanting the grounds of Nuits, an 1853 Hudson River villa. Herbaceous perennials, such as peonies and bulbs like daffodils and lilies can be invisible fall and winter; an heirloom shrub may not be identifiable until it blooms in spring. "If you have an old wisteria stump that sends up an occasional shoot," says Darden, "it could actually be of some interest to nurture it back to health."

Peggy Cornett, director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello, agrees. "I would say one of the most common mistakes is to 'clean up.' I've visited many sites where they've gotten a diligent gardener or landscaper working away for

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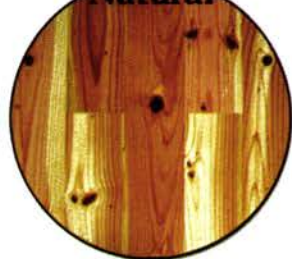
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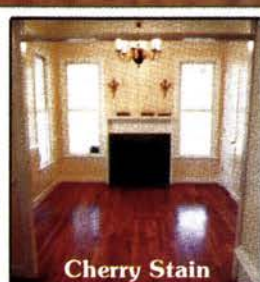
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Outside the Old House

Books of Note

California Gardens: Creating a New Eden by David C. Streatfield

The Heirloom Flower Garden by Jo Ann Gardner

History of Horticulture in America to 1860 by U.P. Hedrick

Keeping Eden: A History of Gardening in America by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society

Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings by Rudy J. Favretti and Joy P. Favretti

Old Time Gardens by Alice Morse Earle

Passalong Plants by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing

Southern California Gardens by Victoria Padilla

months, mowing, pulling up weeds, cutting down the overgrown areas... and by the time I get there it's a complete blank. Just vast expanses of nice, neatly mowed lawns. They've been manicuring for so long, there's no chance of anything from the past still surviving. Years of benign neglect is usually better."

Don't just sit and wait through this year-long discovery process. Begin your research into what the garden might have looked like in the past and which appropriate plants are available today.

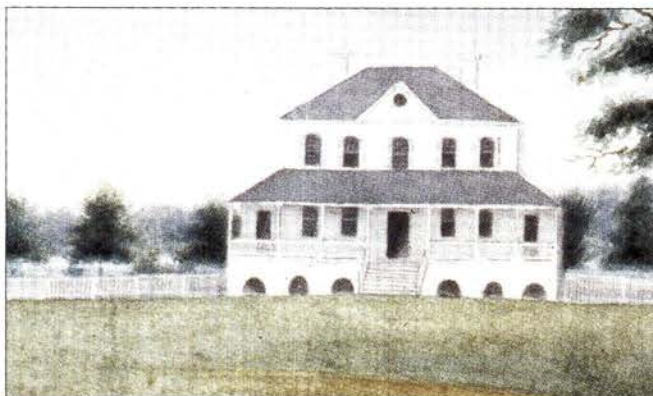
Photography goes back more than 150 years, so that's a rich resource. Old family photos, illustrated magazine articles, local newspaper photos as well as nursery ads, and archives of state and local historical societies all can help. Then there are such sources as garden club documents, state arboretum records, and personal correspondence and diaries. For gardens that existed before photography, it may help to visit an art gallery.

Read up on garden history in general. You'll learn not only about changing fashion—the popularity of Asian landscapes or rock gardens at certain periods, for instance—but also about horticultural advances over the centuries (plant exploration, the use of greenhouses) and what they meant for garden design. Garden history also explains how certain practical considerations shaped the way a garden looked.

"Sometimes I think we can put too much emphasis on the specific plant material and not enough emphasis on the processes, the living context, the needs, the limitations and advantages of a particular time and place," says Bill Finch, who writes about garden history and restoration for Alabama's *Mobile Register*. "The processes that created many historic landscapes were fundamentally different than the processes that lead to the creation of modern gardens, everything from the tools—or lack thereof—for maintenance and propagation, to the sources of plants, to the use of the landscape for grazing, cooking, laundry, and fire protection."

Other garden practices are largely archaic: hauling all water from a well, keeping yards bare against snake infestations, using scythes instead of mowers, letting bugs live on—and munch on—plants, and letting plants die during droughts. Williamsburg's Greene adds, "Few people are willing to go so far as to put the streets back to mud and manure, rip up the brick walks, return the lawns to dirt, wood shavings, clinkers, and broken pots."

Instead, landscape historians urge home gardeners to aim for reinterpretation. "If you are just interested in having a garden that matches the historic period of the style of your



GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART/CAROLINA ART ASSOCIATION

If your garden predates photography, visit an art museum. This 1800 Charles Fraser watercolor of a South Carolina estate reflects an early American version of the natural landscapes championed in England.



COURTESY OF TUDOR PLACE

Old family photos tend to be of people rather than plants, but with luck you'll catch a former path, flower bed, or even outdoor furniture you can replicate. Here Agnes Peter poses on a rustic bench outside Tudor Place in Washington, D.C., in 1906.

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Outside the Old House



THOMAS JEFFERSON CENTER FOR HISTORIC PLANTS

Don't be in a hurry to clear out your newly acquired grounds. These phlox popped up in a circa 1800 plantation south of Charlottesville, Virginia, originally owned by a friend of Thomas Jefferson.

well what remains or might have been and document it, even if it means photographing an old pool before filling it in. Says Kunst, "Just as we protect historic buildings and particularly historic districts because those structures and environments are part of our collective inheritance and not just personal property, we need to encourage all historic property owners to consider their landscapes as just as worthy of preservation.

"If we can help people see what they have in their own yards that is historic—be that plants, constructed features, or simply design and layout from the past—I think they will be less apt to rip it all out and do something else that erases all that history."

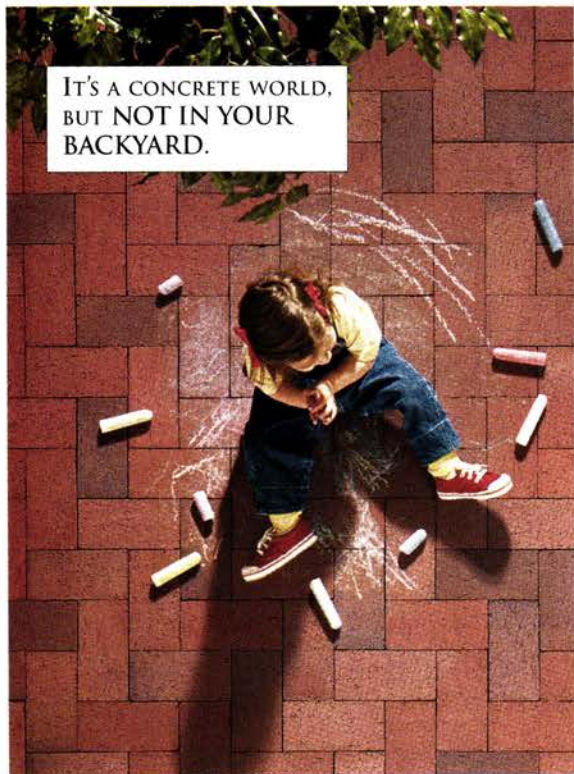
Nan Chase is reinterpreting her own old garden in Boone, North Carolina.

house and you enjoy gardening, I think you shouldn't miss the rare opportunity gardens give you to actually work with an art form," says Chuck Gleaves, director of Kingwood Center in Mansfield, Ohio, which reflects the underpinnings of a garden first designed in 1926. "They should study the historic period and style that they think would be appropriate and then install a garden 'in the style of' what they chose."

Nevertheless, while the plantings at Kingwood have changed a lot since 1926, the basic layout and most structures are the same. That's where all of these experts agree—research

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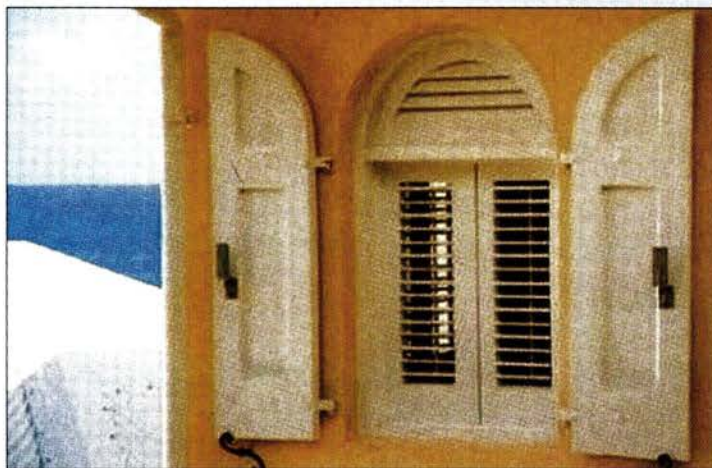


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Li'l Buggers

BY KATHLEEN FISHER

I try to avert my eyes. Sometimes this works. More often, they're like the itch you know you shouldn't scratch or the funny bump in your mouth that your tongue just has to explore.

A house of any age has them: Those odd little imperfections that loom out of all proportion to their actual size, those missing parts that could dance on the head of a pin yet yawn like the Grand Canyon in terms of the time and energy it will take to actually deal with them. But old houses have oh so many more. That's because the manufacturer of that one missing switch plate closed its doors in 1931, or the window stop that was destroyed by inserting an air conditioning unit had been carefully shaped with a hand plane. My own weekend project—a 1924 farmhouse—is a virtual cakewalk compared to an intricate Queen Anne with seven bedrooms and two parlors. Yet it harbors a healthy enough collection of examples, many of which have haunted me since our purchase more than (gasp!) nine years ago.

As befits a simple building, it boasts few fanciful flourishes. One exception is the dining room ceiling light, a three-tiered confection of a glass globe and an inverted bowl that appears to have begun life as an oil lamp, trimmed in copper lace and dripping with 38 crystals. The problem is that it should have about 50 crystals, and the additional eight are missing in rows that make it look like a dowager with no dental plan.

Now these are not rare crystals. A year or so ago I plucked an exact match from among discarded vodka bottles and other detritus in an urban park. Yet when I happen upon crystals in an antiques shop they're invariably of another shape and size. (I dimly recall entire Saturdays of

wandering among Louis XV armoires and Shaker hutches just to while away the time. Today, when there are pressing and practical needs—epoxy to halt railing rot or a gasket to make a noisy toilet pipe down, so to speak—a 10-minute sprint through a flea market is a rare treat.) In an upstairs bedroom is another chandelier a bit out of character with this sober-sided structure. In perfect condition when we took over, it lost a bobèche one evening when a fierce rainstorm unleashed a fire-hydrantlike torrent into a window and my well-meaning son, then 11, ran in swinging a heavy towel. The only bobèches I've found since have a hole too big and hooks for one dangling crystal too many.

And so it goes. We took down two brass bells from the front and back porches in order to paint, and when it came time to put them back up, the bracket for one was missing. In repositioning the upstairs commode so it was more than an inch away from the outside wall we created a 6" hole in the otherwise salvageable flooring, which is far narrower and much thinner than anything made today, except perhaps for Cheez-Its.

I know what you may be thinking: I work at OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL. Surely I can find anything! It's not so much that these things aren't out there—it's the hassle factor. We all have much bigger fish to fry, like entire kitchens to gut, collapsing porches to resurrect, slate roofs to replace. And perhaps also jobs, families, and occasional dirty clothes to wash. In my case, I spend a



ILLUSTRATION BILL FIRESTONE

certain amount of time wringing my hands over our readers' dilemmas: Can you help me replace my mechanical doorbell? My 1895 wood stove is missing its feet, my 1908 Hoosier cabinet is missing its head. I feel your pain.

This phenomenon deserves a name. Like "The Mushroom Factor"—coined by OHJ two decades ago to describe the way a seemingly modest repair quickly balloons into something all-encompassing and monstrously expensive—it seems to beg for a catchy buzzword that let's us communicate our angst in shorthand. The Pinhole Problem? The Molehill Menace? Both of these imply something that grows or even threatens. My gap-toothed chandelier, on the otherhand, just hangs there—silently, endlessly, mocking me over Sunday brunch. I keep my eyes positioned on my soft-boiled egg. 🍳



This cover illustration from an 1868 London magazine depicts a butler diligently polishing silver. These types of publications were not meant for the servants but rather to help the lady of the house deal with managing her household.

How The Butler Did it

A pantry dedicated to domestic service epitomized Victorian home design.

By NANCY E. BERRY

*A*s ubiquitous in late 19th-century houses as bathrooms became in 20th-century floor

plans, the butler's pantry was both a practical place to store china, fine linens, and silver and a final staging area for food preparation—the ultimate service area of the Victorian household. Well-heeled families expected three squares a day served formally in the dining room by butlers (or servants currently acting that part). With more complex storage spaces and devices than even the kitchen—handsome built-in

cabinets, metal sinks, ice chests, safes for silver, and warming ovens—the pantry aided “Jeeves” in his daily tasks. Looking back at this room’s design can provide historically appropriate details and ideas for today’s pantries and kitchens and help old-house owners revive this storage area in their own Queen Anne or Georgian Revivals.

Social order was important in the Victorian era, and middle- and upper-class houses were built to reflect this ideal. No home would be complete without a maze of servants’ rooms—a laundry, a scullery (a food-prep area), and a butler’s pantry—each designed for specific servants’ tasks

within the household. The butler’s pantry, always located between the kitchen and dining room, acted to buffer the master of the house and his guests from cooking odors and noise. “The character of the house would determine the size and formality of the pantry,” says John Tschirch, architectural historian and director of academic programs for the Preservation Society of Newport County in Rhode Island. In larger homes the pantry might have been separated into two rooms—one for storage and one for washing dishes. The pantry at the Breakers in Newport, for example, encompasses two floors and was equipped with a dumbwaiter to transport



The butler's pantry at Staatsburg House in the Hudson Valley was renovated in 1896 by McKim, Mead and White. A large silver safe flanks the dumbwaiter; a notice on the opposite wall spelled out the servants' dress code.

china from one level to the other. Many of these pantries were in the front of the house so the staff could watch for arriving visitors. In more modest 19th-century homes, the butler's pantry could simply have been a storage closet with open shelving for china.

Cool Cabinetry

Grand or unassuming, the pantry's primary feature was an abundance of ingenious, site-built cabinets called dressers whose clever cubby holes and conveniences set the standard for today's high-end kitchens. They were constructed of durable maple, oak, or yellow pine with drawers to protect precious heirloom porcelain, crystal, silver, and linen. Typically rising to the ceiling, the upper portion of the dressers were fronted with glass doors (for viewing contents) that slid open on a track—a space saving technique that allowed the servants to maneuver unencumbered in the small room. A wood or marble countertop was typically lower than today's standards at 2' 8" high, and its 28" width made a perfect spot for resting wine decanters or a tea service. Drawers below the counter stored flatware and linens, with one long drawer for tablecloths and a shorter one for napkins. Drawers for silver often had separate built-in compartments for forks, knives, and spoons. Wide cupboards under the drawers held large platters and soup tureens. There were thin slots for small trays and narrow, deep cabinets for table leaves. Dressers were at first varnished to match the rich wood tones of the dining room, but by the first decades of 20th century many were painted white for a more "hygienic" look.

Accoutrements

A well-equipped butler's pantry would also incorporate a sink for washing china. Varying from deep, rectangular kitchen sinks, pantry sinks came in all shapes and sizes. Square was the preferred shape over oval because in the latter dishes had a tendency to slide down in a heap towards the drain. In most cases the pantry sink was a large copper or German silver (zinc alloy)



TOM RIDER

Above: The glass-fronted cabinetry at the Dunsmuir House in Oakland, California, was painted white for hygienic purposes. Right: More modest butler's pantries may have open shelving such as this house in Maine that was built as a summer cottage.



BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



Built in 1885 for Joseph Hodges Choate by McKim, Mead and White, Naumkeag is a 44-room mansion located in the Berkshires in Massachusetts. Its butler's pantry includes an original electric Simplex food warmer, a knife cleaner, and a call box. The floor is marbled green linoleum. Ambassador to Great Britain between 1901 and 1904, Choate brought back an English butler to run this country house.

PAUL ROCHELEAU

basin. German silver was an especially practical choice because it neither tarnished nor required polishing like copper. Older pantry sinks from the mid-1800s might be soapstone or slate, but it was believed that stone would more easily chip the fine dishware. As they are today, some sinks were partitioned so dishes could be washed and rinsed at the same time.

Flooring also varied from other spaces in the house. Linoleum, introduced in American homes by the 1880s, was a practical choice in the pantry due to its ease of maintenance. Though a more expensive material, rubber was popular for its soundproofing attributes and ability to save china from breaking when dropped. Many

wealthy homeowners installed terrazzo or tile floors, while more modest houses had oak or maple planks, maple being the sturdier of the two woods.

Because the pantry was a transitional space between private and public rooms, it needed to be soundproofed. Canvas cloth would sometimes be fastened to the pantry ceiling, and the door to the dining room (often swinging) would be covered in green baize—a wool cloth similar to felt—to muffle the clanking of dishes. A folding screen in the dining room shielded guests from workspace noises and sights.

Along with innovative drawer and cabinet designs, pantries were equipped with a host of the latest domestic devices.

Iceboxes chilled wine and puddings while warming ovens kept plates and bread hot. A call box or annunciator alerted the butler that service was needed elsewhere in the house so he could dispatch the appropriate servant. A knife cleaner kept steel knives from rusting. By 1880 homes were beginning to be wired for electricity, and in the pantry task lighting consisted of a ceiling bulb. If the kitchen was in the basement, a dumbwaiter operating on a cast-iron pulley carried dishes effortlessly to the pantry.

Bygone Era

Although houses in popular builder's plan books from 1850 to 1890, such as those by A. J. Bicknell and William T. Comstock, fea-

THE BUTLER'S ROLE

In the Middle Ages the job of yeoman of the buttery, or butler, was to brew and serve beer to his master. By the 18th century, his role expanded to looking after the wine and cutlery, serving daily meals, carving the meat, and washing dishes.

By the Victorian era, aside from being in charge of the domestic staff, a butler had custody of the "plate" or silver. Quite often the butler's room was placed next to the pantry to keep dishonest servants from pinching a fork or two. Later a safe was installed in the room to help ward off thieves.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 107.

Right: A view from the Arts & Crafts kitchen into the butler's pantry at Greene and Greene's 1909 Gamble House reveals a window for passing dishes from one space to the other. The cabinetry in both rooms is bird's-eye maple, counter tops are sugar pine, and the flooring is maple.



JONATHAN WALLEN

Above: The Hoyt House in the Hudson River Valley has a pantry used solely for dish storage.



LINDA SVENDSEN

Above: Copper sinks were a popular choice for butler's pantries.

Right: Sliding glass doors front the cabinetry at the Mount in the Berkshires. Marble was another popular choice for work surfaces. Ridges in the stone allowed water from dishes to drain more easily.



JOHN CRISPIN



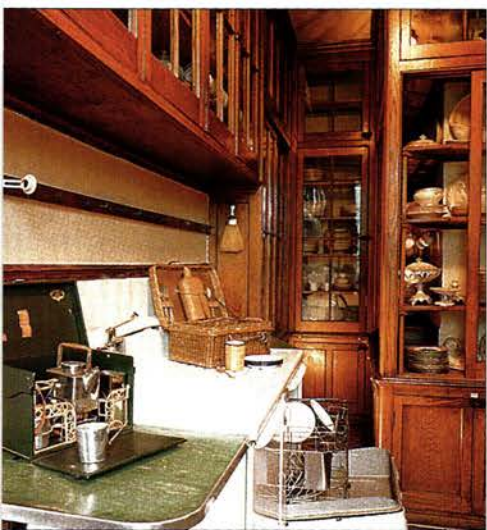
LINDA SVENDSEN

ture elaborate servants wings including the butler's pantry, only four of Sears's house plans after 1908 included a butler's pantry—one from 1912, two from 1913, and the Magnolia from 1918. Lifestyles had changed dramatically—fewer servants, many technological advances, and shifts in the social order rendered the butler's pantry obsolete. By the second decade of the 20th century, the butler's pantry began to disappear from all but the grandest house plans.

Today's Pantries

A largely forgotten space in the mid-20th century, the pantry is making a strong comeback. Richard Preston, a kitchen designer at Crown Point Cabinetry in Claremont, New Hampshire, sees butler's pantries being resurrected in old houses as well as introduced into the floor plans of historically inspired construction. Although wine coolers have replaced iceboxes and microwaves stand in for warming ovens, the concept of the space is still the same. "We see a lot more people entertaining at home these days, and the butler's pantry offers the extra service space for mixing drinks or serving coffee; it's also practical storage for formal dishes," says Preston. The company often reintroduces beadboard and transom cabinets with glass doors into its pantry designs. Instead of following the dining room design, the cabinetry echoes the kitchen more closely, using maple, mahogany, cherry, and stained quarter-sawn oak.

"Fortunately, many old pantries have survived," says Dave Leonard, co-owner of the Kennebec Company in Bath, Maine, "and if the original pantry no longer exists, old-house owners are installing historically appropriate cabinetry." Leonard studies house museums, antique joinery books, and existing pantries as points of reference for the company's cabinet designs. The most unusual cabinet Leonard has seen was a radiator enclosure used as a plate warmer. Although most homeowners today don't have a "Jeeves" at their disposal, the butler's pantry is a still practical and handsome space to revive in a Victorian-era house. 🏠



CAROLYN BATES

Vermont's Park McCullough House pantry features the original 1865 white oak cabinets as well as a later addition, a 1940s dishwasher.



LINDA SVENDSEN

The original icebox in the Dunsmuir House is sheathed in glass and nickel-plated straps and sits beneath a tray-storage cabinet.

The Full Range of Cookstove Issues

BY CAROLYN MURRAY

Getting the right stove in the right place in old-house kitchens.

Every old house has a story. Did your old house grow up in the city or country? Were there servants in the kitchen preparing meals for the owners? Is it a simple house or a grand mansion? Was there even a kitchen in the house when it was new? When you renovate a kitchen in an old house, you should balance your cooking requirements with the historical and architectural needs of the building. The story your stove tells should add a new layer to the story of your house. As you shop for your stove, considering the following issues will help you make the best choice.

Understanding the Story

Yes, stoves have a lot to say. Think about it. What image comes to mind when I mention a classic commercial range manufacturer like Viking? What about other venerable products like Wedgewood, Heartland, or Kenmore? What do you see? Size? Color? Finish? Old? New? How does this image fit your own kitchen's proportions, age, or look?

Do you have to have a cast-iron, coal-burning stove if you live in an Eastlake Victorian? Heavens, no. You simply need to consider the effect your choice will have on the way your kitchen will look when it's done. A kitchen that has no historical or visual reference to the rest of the house feels disjointed. The stove is often the focal point of the kitchen, so even while you bring the most modern technology into the space, you can use the stove to keep the conversation going between the new and the old.

Before you begin shopping, you should understand your options for a stove. Ahh, so many choices (see box below). One obvious solution might be a restored antique stove, which will become an immediate focal point for your kitchen. Another would be a reproduction stove. These days, there are even mid-20th-century repros from manufacturers such as Heartland or Elmira Stove Works.

Then there are new stoves that look like what they are. In the oven you can have a choice of radiant or convection heat. On the cooktop there are drop-in modules and ceramic or glass tops, in addition to the familiar coils and burners. With a new stove, though, be careful to avoid the siren call of what's in vogue now. Your house may not support this choice either stylistically or structurally. Also, a decade from now you may wish you had made a more timeless selection. Once you've determined how



Stove Options

These brand-new appliances replicate the styling of late 19th- and early 20th-century stoves, but have all the technology of modern stoves. You can still buy actual wood- or coal-burning stoves in this category, or you can go 1950s retro with one of the new recent-past models.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEARTLAND



REPRODUCTION



A restored stove like this 1920s cabinet range is an excellent choice for an old-house kitchen, as older units are made with heavy metal parts, better insulated, and usually warranted by the restorer. You'll spend \$1,500 to \$30,000, though, depending on the nature of the original and the amount of restoration needed, so be sure the stove is compatible in style and mechanics with your house.

LINDA SVENDSEN

These are vintage appliances—everything from 19th-century cast-iron, wood/coal-burning stoves, to 1960s-era electric and gas ranges—that have been cosmetically refurbished and mechanically updated to meet current codes. Sometimes pricey, they make an ideal kitchen focal point.

LINDA SVENDSEN



RESTORED ANTIQUE

COURTESY OF MORICE

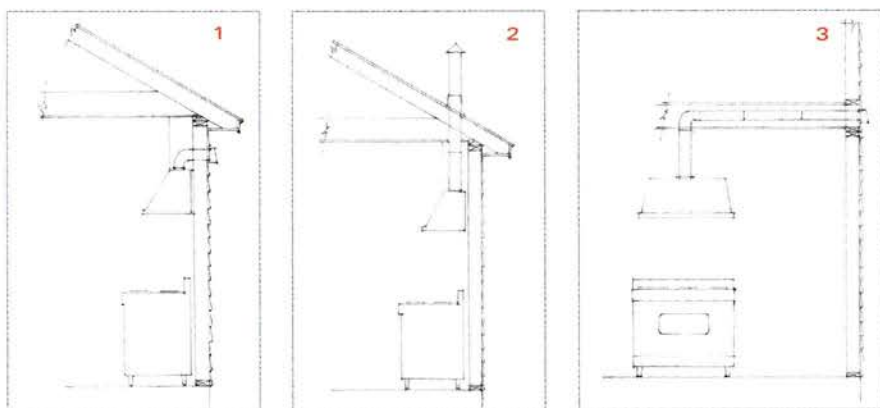


NEW

New stoves offer a wide range of fuel sources, some combined within the same unit. You can stick to a simple four-burner stove or, if you want industrial-strength BTUs, investigate commercial ranges or European imports that tend to have traditional styling and shapes.

Vent Options

The most efficient scheme is to 1) duct straight outside, but this requires placing the stove against an outside wall, which isn't always the best location. The next best thing is to 2) vent straight up, but that requires no obstructions above the chosen location. Other schemes often require 3) rafters running the right way and conforming to local codes for maximum length of ducting.



you want to cook, what your fuel source options are, and how much you want to pay, the choices will narrow considerably. Keep these historical guidelines in mind.

- If you live in a house where the original kitchen was in an outbuilding or the construction predates 1820 (when meals would likely have been cooked over an open fire), it's useless to try to effect a true restoration unless you plan to live in a museum. In this situation you face an interpretive restoration—that is, renovating with the original context, rather than the literal chronology, of the house in mind. This view gives you the opportunity to have the working kitchen as modern as

you like, with all the bells and whistles of today's technology. Regarding your stove choice, the design elements of color and scale will be what contribute to or detract from the finished kitchen.

- In general terms, all stoves were black or dark green (from stove blacking or Japan paint) until about 1910, when porcelain enameling became common. From then to the early 1930s, the color choices would have been black, white, or grey. Color arrived in the 1930s and has varied along with stove fashion ever since.

- Stainless steel became popular as a material for domestic use in the 1940s. Monel metal, its rustless precursor, was

widely advocated in the 1930s but, being expensive, appeared in high-end kitchens.

- Don't forget to consider the style, finish, and scale of the cabinetry relative to the stove. For example, if you choose a simple, 30" four-burner stove, you will want to keep the cabinetry simple too. Avoid elaborate door styles and high-end natural wood finishes. When you get into the grander stove choices, the door style can go from simple to elaborate, the finish can be rustic or fine, but the scale of the cabinets should match the scale of the "cooker" so that it doesn't overwhelm the kitchen.

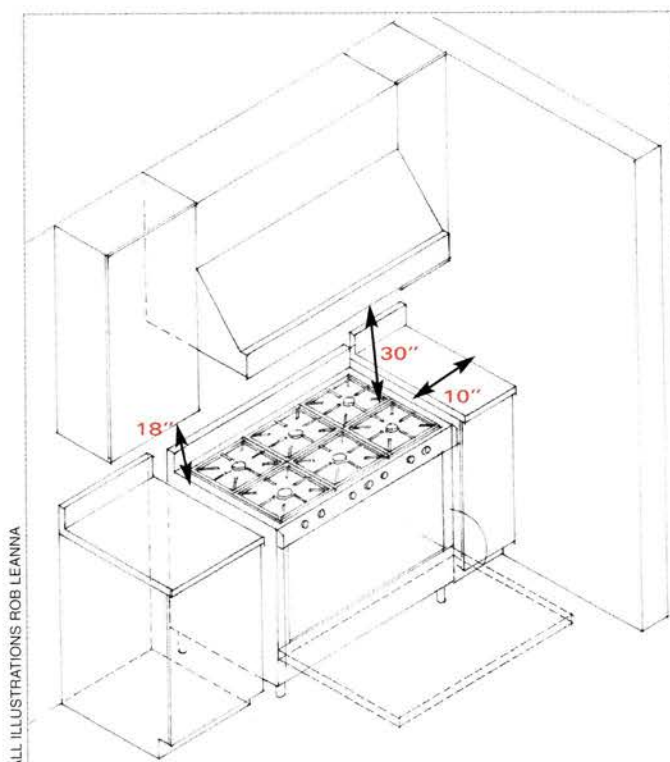
Mechanical Conundrums

Suppose what you really want is a commercial range, or a big, cast-iron enameled stove like an Aga, Rayburn, or La Cornue? How do you balance this choice with the overall scheme of your older home? The first and foremost issue is weight. The typical 48" commercial range weighs in at 500 to 600 pounds. Be sure your floor joists are strong enough to support this load. (You might have to reinforce the floor from below with masonry.) Are your door openings large enough to carry the stove into the kitchen? Can your fuel supply handle the demand? What about fire safety? Remember big stoves get hot, and local codes often list minimum clearances to combustible materials—such as cabinets.

Speaking of BTUs, is your kitchen big and well-ventilated enough to mitigate excess heat from your stove in warmer months? You will need a hood and vent system of some kind, even if there isn't one there now. The vent removes moisture and

Combustible Clearances

The minimum vertical clearance in most areas is 30" for commercial-style stoves. With refurbished stoves, some areas require a 2" minimum clearance on the sides and 6" behind, and some require venting into a chimney flue. Check with your local planning department before making a final stove decision or drawing up plans.



ALL ILLUSTRATIONS ROB LEANNA



Many new stoves are following the functional, industrial look of commercial ranges—styling that often fits comfortably with period kitchens. Many also demand hood and vent systems.

odor generated by cooking and improves air circulation. It should have a high air-flow capacity. People often lose focus here because the stoves displayed in showrooms can be too modern-looking, and the hood ends up detracting from the rest of the kitchen. There are more options than meet the eye. Hoods can be hidden in the kitchen's structure in cabinetry, and with the right shape, size, and material, made to look like they belong to the house.

Before you purchase your ventilation system, you have to know what your house can handle regarding the movement of air to the outside. Which way do the rafters run? Where can the ducting exit the house? Perhaps there's a chimney flue with room to hold an 8" or 10" duct? Check out all these conditions, along with your local codes, before finalizing your plans. Also make sure your fan can move adequate amounts of air.

If you decide to hide the hood inside cabinetry or building framing, you only

need to buy a hood liner. This is an insert—the mechanics of fan, vent, and lights without a cover. It will save you some money, so be sure to bring up the possibilities with your dealer. If the liner is going into the cabinetry, have it shipped to the cabinetmaker so they can build around it.

Once you have decided on your stove and hood options, you'll be ready to plan the rest of the kitchen. Here are a few parameters to follow:

- Be sure there is at least 15" of countertop on one side of the stove and 18" on the other. The more you have—at least on one side—the better.
- If you can, use a heat-resistant surface on the countertop (at least on one side of the stove) for resting hot pots.
- Consider flow in your work triangle. Whenever possible, locate your stove closest to where you will eat, with plenty of adjacent counter space. This way you can take food off the stove and prep it for serving without too many steps.

When choosing a stove for an old-house kitchen, there are likely to be one or two conflicting issues. By prioritizing your list, you'll determine what is most important to you. The decisions you make about the style, size, finish, and location of your stove will affect the outcome of your project. Taking a look at all of these factors and balancing them with your cooking needs before you begin will save you money by avoiding mistakes, and will keep that conversation going when your project is complete. 🐶

Carolyn Murray specializes in the design and restoration of kitchens in historic homes at Heritage Design Group (21 Penryn Way, Rockport, MA 01966; 978-317-1790 email:heritage_ccm@yahoo.com).

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 108.

Katherine Van Meier and friend strike a pose before the classic Greek Revival front entrance of the Mower House. Katherine saved the house from oblivion when she and her husband, Dr. Henry Van Meier, bought it in the 1930s.



**Dewatering
and
resupporting
a piece of
Minnesota
history.**

BY RICHARD L. KRONICK

High and Dry

The ever-wet basement, shown shortly before lifting the house. The hole knocked in the rubblestone foundation is for inserting an I-beam across the framing as a bearing point for the mover's jacks.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARCOLA MILLS HISTORIC FOUNDATION EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



RICHARD L. KRONICK

By the early 1800s, many Americans had their eyes firmly fixed on the region around the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix River Valleys that later became part of Minnesota. Everyone who had traveled this wilderness area could see that it was a loggers' bonanza just waiting to happen.

Two of the opportunistic lumbermen who took note of the region were the brothers John and Martin Mower. They moved from Maine in the early 1840s and, on the banks of the St. Croix, established Arcola Mills—a sawmill with aspirations of townhood. At its height in the 1850s, a few dozen people lived at Arcola Mills.

Though most of the original buildings are gone, the centerpiece of the Mower fiefdom has survived: a straight-laced, 2 1/2-storey Greek Revival house, built in 1847 and expanded in the 1870s. Placed on the National Register in 1977, the house is one

of the oldest in Minnesota still on its original site—though a far from ideal one. By the 1990s, a century-and-a-half of groundwater intrusion had eroded the foundation and critically undermined the building to the point that the only way to save it was to construct a new foundation, basement, and water control system under the existing structure. Looking at the methods and materials used to build these systems can offer ideas for other old houses with chronic groundwater problems.

Designing the Dream

When Katherine Van Meier, the last private owner of Arcola Mills, died in 1991, she decreed in her will that a nonprofit organization should be created as the new owner of the house and its 53-acre site. She further stated that this organization should convert Arcola Mills into a retreat center and a museum honoring Minnesota's lumber industry. While Van Meier left no money for these purposes, history-minded

The Mower/Van Meier House in winter 2003 with recently restored shutters. While much of the structural stabilization is in place, work continues on the plan of a museum and retreat center.

St. Croix Valley residents have formed the Arcola Mills Historic Foundation to carry out her grand vision.

In 1999 the foundation published its Historic Structures Report, laying out a comprehensive renovation plan. The exterior and first-floor public rooms will look as they did in the 1870s, but in most other ways the house is being fundamentally changed to realize Katherine Van Meier's dream of a retreat center and museum. There's a big new institutional kitchen, and the upstairs has been reconfigured as eight bedrooms with private baths to accommodate overnight retreats.

These ambitious plans faced a soggy start. When general contractor Rolf Dittmann of River Valley Restoration first inspected the house, he found plenty of

Right: As the new foundation was completed under the house, its exterior was covered with asphalt waterproofing, then sheets of drain-board insulation that direct any moisture to the drain tiles along the footings below.



Below: In this early view of the house under restoration, it's easy to see the three sections. The main block (at left) was built in 1847. The Mowers added on at the back of the house in the 1870s. The Arcola Mills Historic Foundation erected the last section in 1999, bringing the house to about 6,500 square feet.



trouble—mostly caused by water. The Mowers had proudly located their home on a raised bank, a site that afforded views up and down the scenic bluffs of the St. Croix along with numerous springs to power their lumber mill. They also had purposely allowed water to run right through the basement of the house and then into the river. Dittmann's inspection suggested that the Mowers probably used this basement stream as a crude sewage system. Consequently, free-ranging water had been infiltrating and rotting the sandstone foundation walls and wood structural members for 150 years. Some floors were as much as a foot out of level, leaving the house severe-

ly racked and on the brink of collapse. Dittmann determined that he would need to demolish and replace the foundation.

One of the board's most far-reaching decisions was to place offices and the museum in the basement. To achieve this, plans called for increasing the ceiling height in the basement from 6' to about 9'. This would be accomplished by excavating the basement 18" deeper and by permanently raising the house another 18".

A House Raising

It took Dittmann and his house-moving subcontractor several weeks to prepare the house for lifting. First they constructed

temporary bearing walls in two places to stabilize the shaky structure. To provide bearing points at the rear of the house, they also added a temporary sill under the floor joists. There had never been a sill in that position; in the original construction, the joists had been set directly into pockets in the stone foundation. Dittmann and his crew also removed all lath and plaster from the house (much of it affected by racking). That significantly reduced the weight to be lifted and gave the timber-frame members a chance to naturally straighten and recover from racking as the crew took steps to stabilize the structure.

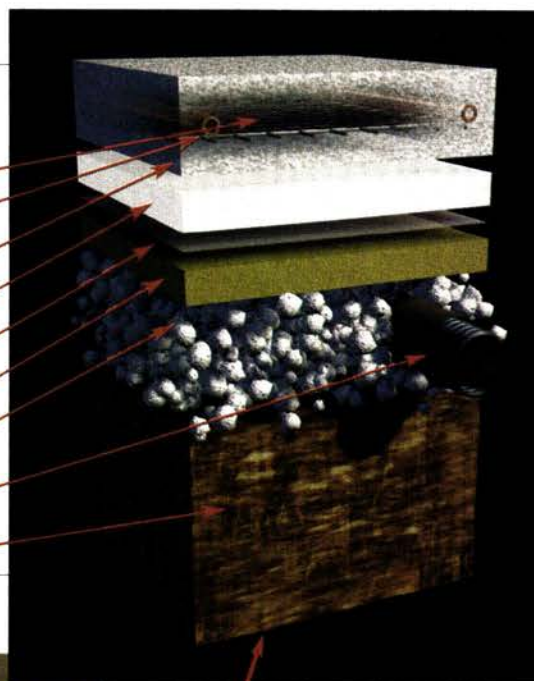
In the next phase, the subcontractor

Basement Details

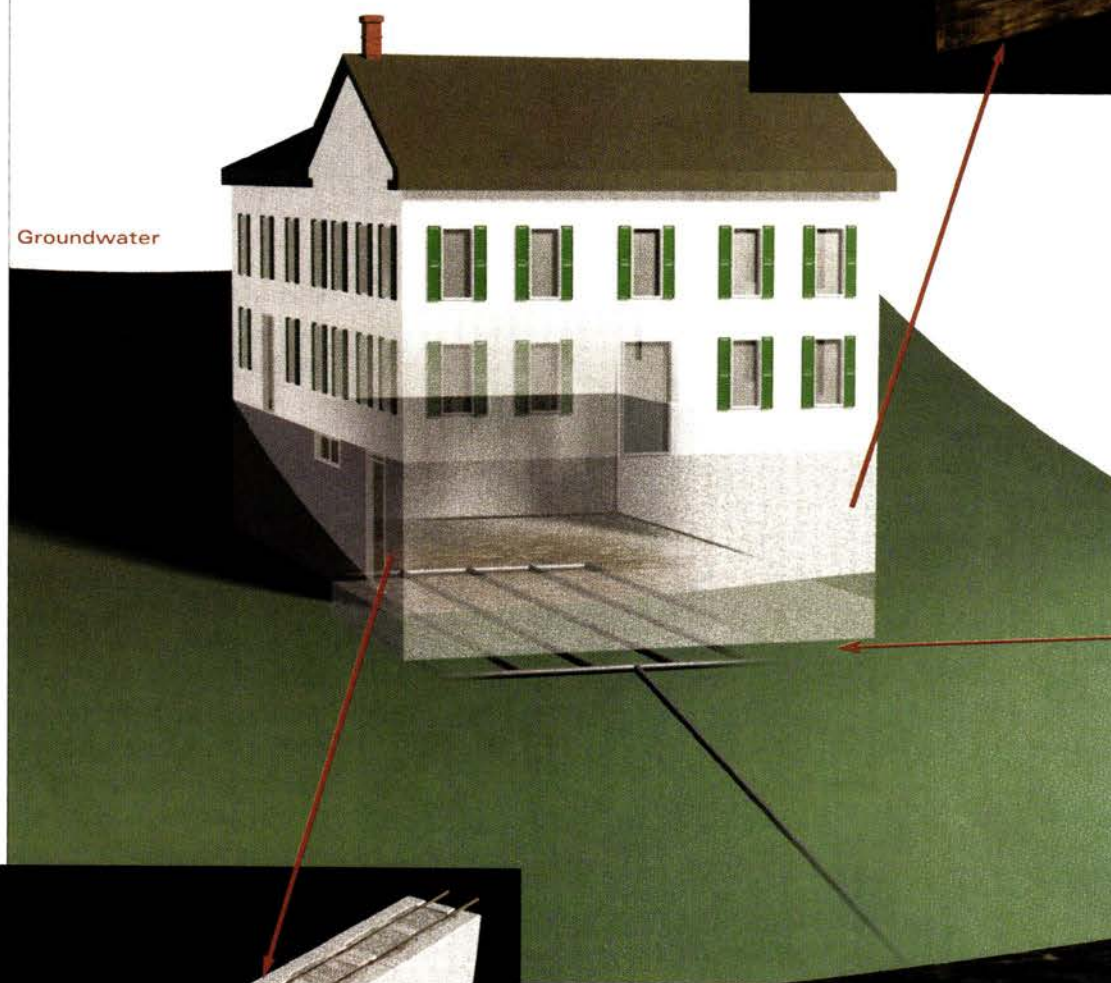
A sandwich of materials keep the floor dry and warm, while reinforced masonry strengthens foundation walls.

Floor Layers

- 6" remesh
- Heating tub is tied to remesh
- All one slab
- 2" extruded polystyrene foam
- 6mil sheet
- 2-3" compacted sand
- 1" limestone
- 4" pipe (put in sock—keeps small materials out.)
- Compacted earth



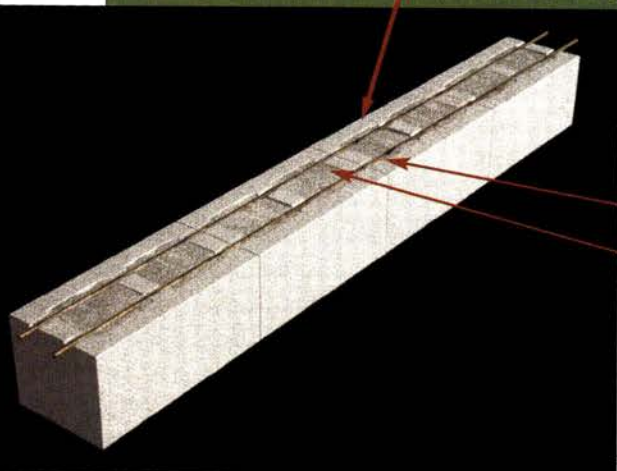
Groundwater



Drain tile

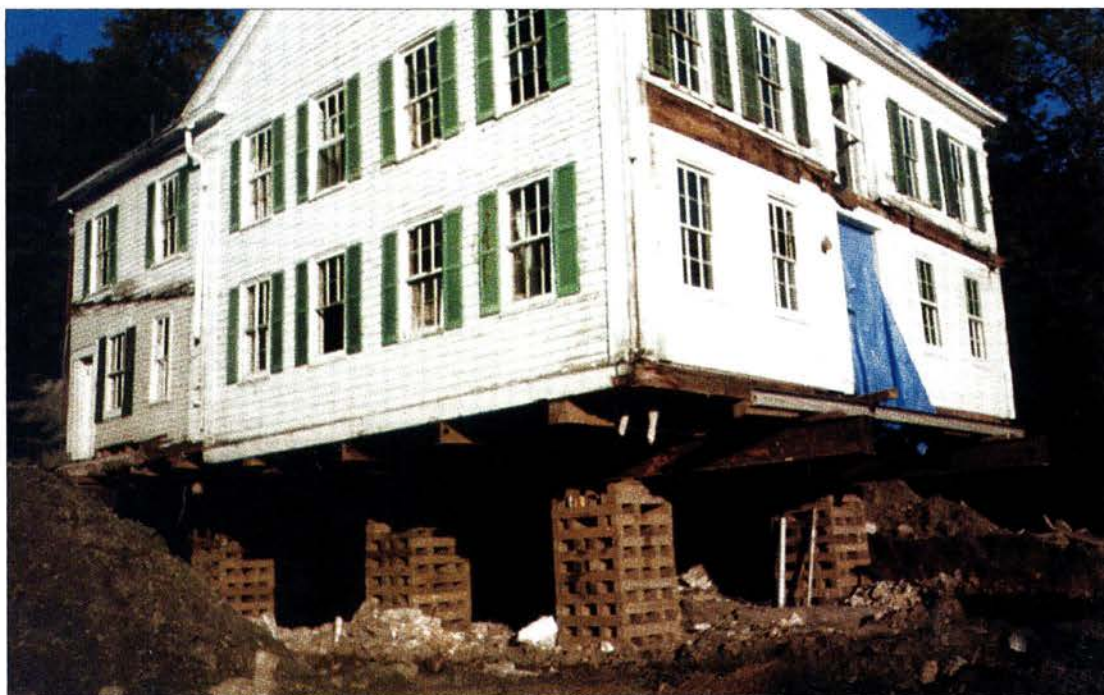
Foundation Bond Beam

- Rebar
- Concrete fill



ILLUSTRATIONS BEAR WEITER

After lifting the house, the old foundation—which had been patched beyond saving—was demolished. The site was then excavated for a new foundation to be built under the house. Springs constantly pour water into the site.



COURTESY OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

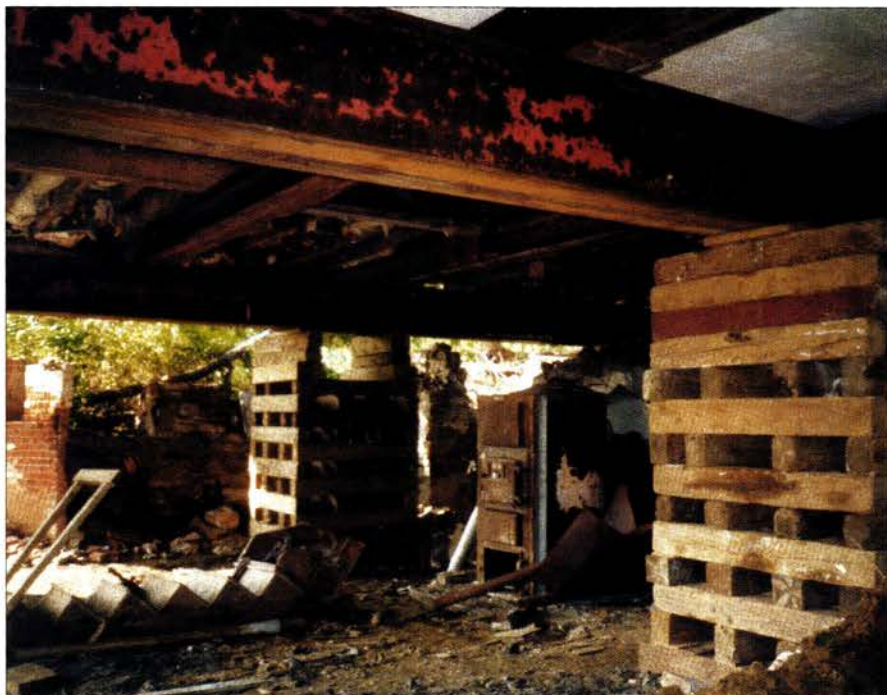
The Mowers helped to transform the St. Croix Valley into the lumber capital of the world. By 1869, at the height of its prosperity, Arcola Mills sawed 5 million feet of lumber, 1.5 million feet of lath, and 1.5 million feet of shingles—and it was just one of hundreds of sawmills in Minnesota. The region's vast virgin forests could be inexpensively cut, sawn, floated down the Mississippi, and immediately sold to eager settlers streaming onto the nearly treeless prairies. This, in part, was why the United States entered into the Treaty of 1837 with the local Ojibway Indians, which transferred 13 million acres of land to the federal government. Though there were promises of perpetual annuity payments to the Native Americans, historians agree that the transfer was more a theft than a purchase.

inserted four steel I-beams through the foundation under the first floor framing as bearing points for jacks. Two of these I-beams were 54' long, running under the two main bearing walls near the center of the house. The other two I-beams were placed under the 1870s addition. These ran perpendicular to the first two because the floor joists in the addition are perpendicular to those in the 1847 house.

The house mover then deployed eight hydraulic jacks to raise the house. Each jack stood atop a cribbing tower—6"x6" timbers stacked so as to spread the load on the concrete floor below. The jacking process took several days, with one man operating the jacks from a central control panel while others monitored the jack points for level. The operator could raise one jack at a time when needed or all jacks simultaneously. Dittmann says the jacking process proceeded very smoothly.

Finding Better Footing

After lifting the house, the crew demolished the old foundation and constructed a new one that rests on a continuous 24"-wide concrete footing around the perimeter of the house. Minnesota's building code requires that footings be 42" below grade



Left: During lifting, the house rests on four I-beams and cribbing towers that distribute the load. The contractors also had to build a temporary bearing wall indoors between the living room and stairwell. Below: Two of the immense I-beams run 54'—the length of the house.



to avoid frost heave. To accommodate a walk-out basement facing the river, the footings on that side were placed several feet lower than those under the rest of the foundation. In addition to the perimeter footing, the crew poured 36" square x 12" deep footings for the posts supporting the two main bearing walls of the 1847 house.

The foundation walls are core-filled concrete block with a code-required "bond beam" every 48" of height. The bond beam consists of horizontal rebar lying in the notches of blocks specially molded for this purpose. Vertical reinforcement, composed of core-filled blocks with rebar, was placed every 6' to 8' along the wall. For added strength, reinforcing pilasters were placed at 12" intervals around the three sides of the house that have taller foundations to accommodate the walk-out. Each pilaster is an 18"-square column of core-filled block with vertical rebar.

The foundation waterproofing system employs several elements. First, Dittmann sprayed conventional asphalt waterproofing on the outside of the block wall. Next came 4" diameter perforated drain tile laid at the base of the wall's exterior. Then, open-cell R-10 drainboard was applied to the exterior of the wall to conduct water

directly into the drain tile. Limestone fill was laid around the tile. Finally, the crew landscaped earth in berms against the building. The berms slope into wide swales that drain surface water toward the river.

After constructing the foundation walls, Dittmann waited for a year. "We wanted to see what conditions would be like in all seasons. We wanted to judge how much water there would be and how much the foundation walls would move due to frost heave."

Overbuilding the Basement

After his year of observation, Dittmann began excavating for a new basement floor. "When we got down to bedrock," he says, "we found a spring near each of the back corners of the house—and each spring was producing about as much water as a full-on garden hose." In response, he installed a drainage system proposed by a consultant: a drain tile running around the perimeter and another tile down the center of the house. Once this system was in place, Dittmann says he could see that it was insufficient; the ground was still soggy. So he was forced to remove the tile and start over. At that point, he could find no one willing to specify what would be needed to

truly dewater the site, so he decided to greatly overbuild. "We installed six 4"-diameter drain tiles under the house. They all feed into a single pipe that exits on the river bank." He then poured crushed limestone around the drain tiles and covered that with a 2" layer of sand. Dittmann says, "We know there will always be water under this house, but this system is keeping the water table below the level of the footings."

With all of the water and construction challenges he has faced, Dittmann maintains that his biggest problem has been monetary. "We totally run out of money every so often. At one point, we had to stop construction for nine months. You have to build a different way when you know you're going to run out of money. You plan each step carefully so that, if the house has to sit that way for a while, it won't adversely affect the later parts of construction." 🐾

Richard L. Kronick is a writer and architectural historian based in Minneapolis. Arcola Mills Historic Foundation has raised about two-thirds of the funds it seeks to complete construction. Contributions are gratefully accepted at PO Box 107, Stillwater, MN 55082.

Old Houses,

Issues and ideas on making old-house living better in the golden years.

Most folks who own vintage houses have learned the value of planning ahead—for new roofs, new wiring, new plumbing, new kitchens and baths. New stuff in old houses pretty clearly calls for careful forethought to ensure a happy fit between modern lifestyles and aging buildings. But what about the fit between aging houses and aging owners?

Too often, we forget to consider what will happen when we find ourselves needing a bit of rehab. Leaving aside the broken bones and damaged spinal cords that can befall anyone at any age, most people will, sooner or later, need some help from the built environment. Millions of Americans have low vision, crippling arthritis, ailing hearts or lungs, problems with balance, flagging energy, or one of dozens of other physical disabilities that make living independently in their own homes problematic. If you, like many old-house lovers, intend to live in your treasured antique building for many years to come, understanding and addressing some of your future needs now, while you're active or the building is under construction, can make it an even better place to enjoy a full and independent life.

The Aging Game

In the year 2001, 3.5 million baby boomers joined the ranks of Americans over the age of 55. Furthermore, AARP (formerly

known as the American Association of Retired Persons) tells us that fully 82 percent of people over age 50 want to spend their golden years in their own homes. Presumably that includes many houses that have been around for half a century or longer. As more and more people ask themselves how their existing houses can provide the safe, convenient surroundings older folks need, two new catch phrases have entered the remodeler's vocabulary: aging in place and "universal design." The National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) is advising remodelers that they can't afford to ignore the aging-in-place market—that is, the one made up of old

people in old houses. It's the innovative use of universal design—the design of environments to satisfy the needs of many types of users—that makes staying in their old houses a viable option for aging owners.

No matter what your age, it's never too soon to start thinking about how your house will work for you during the years when you're most likely to need its help. Experts agree that the best time to consider changes to your living space is before—not after—you're also being forced to think about hip replacements or live-in caregivers. In fact, many real estate agents advise that there's nothing about a



Right: Access ramps don't have to be unattractive and clinical looking. This sensitive addition to this old house was constructed right into the porch.

JAMES C. MASSEY

Aging People

BY SHIRLEY MAXWELL AND JAMES C. MASSEY



Left: An older couple purchased this pair of tiny historic "Trinity" houses in Philadelphia, as their retirement home. When one partner suffered a stroke and began to use a wheelchair, the couple had to rethink their living space—down to entering the building. Below: Their back garden serves as a pathway to the house.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: DAVIDDUNCANLIVINGSTON.COM FOR THE NEW CITY HOME/TAUNTON PRESS

Right: The Philadelphia house passage-way accommodates the turning of a wheelchair—complying with accessibility codes. No threshold between rooms makes for a smooth transition.

Advice on Independence

While common sense can mitigate many of the negative aspects of old-house living, only thoughtful planning can handle the most challenging ones. Old-house owners undoubtedly still need to make their own informed choices, but professional help with the planning process has never been easier to find. Louis Tennenbaum, a remodeling contractor and consultant in Potomac, Maryland, with 20 years of experience in redesigning living spaces for the disabled, thinks of himself as an “independent living strategist.” His goal is to foster the dignity and autonomy of his clients. As he sees it, his job is not only to remodel buildings to make them work for the specific needs of each client, but to make the changes aesthetically acceptable. He’s convinced that most old buildings can be adapted in ways that respect the buildings’ historical character.

Until recently Tennenbaum’s area of specialization has been remarkably uncrowded, but that seems to be changing. The NAHB’s Remodelers’ Council recently established a certificate program called CAPS (Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist) for contractors who specialize in projects that help to keep older owners in their existing homes. Another new program, the National Center for Seniors’ Housing, funded by the U. S. Administration on Aging and private sector funds, is working to develop ways of removing barriers to independent living by seniors.



DAVIDDUNCANLIVINGSTON.COM FOR THE NEW CITY HOME / TAUNTON PRESS

thoughtfully designed accessible house that’s likely to make it worth less when resale time rolls around. After all, even young people meet with the occasional temporarily or permanently disabling disaster. Even young people have friends or family members with disabilities whom they’d like to entertain comfortably and with dignity in their own homes. (Lugging visitors like sacks of potatoes from one floor to another may be well-intentioned, but it is definitely neither comfortable nor dignified for the lug-ees.)

So whatever your age, before you restore, rehab, or remodel an old house—preferably before you even buy one—consider these factors:

Location. If you’ve already bought your dream house, this may no longer be a negotiable issue. Generally, however, you want a neighborhood that is likely to be safe over the long haul for older folks, as well as for younger people and their children. You’ll want it to be convenient to the places you visit frequently, such as bus stops, libraries, food stores, your friends’ and families’ homes, doctors’ offices, and hospitals. Naturally you’ll want it to be affordable, too, both now and especially later, when your income is likely to be fixed at a considerably reduced level. With luck



JAMES C. MASSEY

Above: Many old row houses had trunk lifts, narrow elevators to convey heavy loads to top floors—a handy helper for any age.

and some help from like-minded fixer-upper types, the rundown neighborhood you bought into because of its inexpensive housing stock will stay on the upside of the real estate market—in which case, so probably will your property taxes. That’s when a reverse mortgage on your lovingly rehabbed old house could make any amount of long-ago sweat equity and forethought seem like a very smart investment.

Access, Outside and Inside. Just getting into many old houses presents prob-



BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



BRIAN VANDEN BRINK

Above: This kitchen allows the cook to do all food prep while seated at a sturdy country farm table or at pulldown shelving next to the stove.

lems for all but the fully mobile. Not all exterior stairs have treads deep enough to accommodate an adult-sized foot, and the risers are often too high to be safe for either small children or older people. Add to those hazards the fact that many stairs lack handrails—much less on both sides, which is essential for people who are strongest on just their left or right due to stroke, injury, arthritis, or other disabilities.

Improving exterior access can be relatively easy or extraordinarily challenging. If there's enough space around at least one entrance (front, rear, or side), there may be several options for improved access. If the space is constricted, as on a tight, urban lot, the options may be far fewer.

Wheelchair ramps, when they are carefully thought out and installed, don't have to be the mile-long stretches of raw-looking lumber that all too often identify the homes of the elderly. (Muggers and scam artists, take note!) The standard, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved ramp is at least 36" wide, with a grade of 1" per 12' of ramp, and with a railing on each side. (Note that not all persons with disabilities are in wheelchairs;

some use crutches, canes, or walkers, or have poor vision. Wheelchair ramps are not necessarily the safest or most comfortable means of access for these people.) As it happens, some of the best ramps hardly register visually as ramps at all, because they are artfully concealed within porches or landscape features. Accomplishing that kind of efficient yet attractive design often takes time, money, and the services of a professional—all good reasons to start early and do it right while you can shoulder at least part of the work yourself.

Mechanical lifts are trickier and generally expensive, but they also may be installed unobtrusively behind landscape features or concealed by the building. Or they may be placed at the side or rear of the building, with an accessible path leading to the parking or sidewalk area.

If there's room, probably the best solution for exterior access is to regrade the entrance into a gentle slope so that there are no steps to climb except, of course, for those who wish to climb them on their own. Regrading circumvents the possibility of destroying or defacing a historic, character-defining entry with a lift mechanism or ramp. It is also an excellent way to make the garden—which many an old-house dweller considers the true heart of the

Above: Wall ovens that swing out rather than down eliminate crouching and bending.

home—accessible to visitors who must use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, or canes. You might even put in a few raised beds; sore backs attack gardeners of any age.

Indoors, old houses can present other obstacles: narrow doorways, narrow stairs, narrow halls, inadequate turnaround space for wheelchairs, steps up or down to additions, even raised thresholds. One or more of these impediments could turn your cozy castle into a prison. Doorways can be widened, of course, but in an old house that's usually an unappealing idea. Hallways also can sometimes be widened, although the structural risks would need careful consideration. Narrow stairways could be reoriented to allow the use of stair glides (an inventive architectural feature made for this purpose). Even with a stair glide, there still needs to be room to rotate a wheelchair at the top of the stairs. Often there also must be room for a helper to stand and assist the disabled person.

One alternative to a stair glide is an elevator, which can sometimes be installed in a surprisingly small space. Some old houses already have elevators, usually in the small versions that once served as

Left: The bath was broken into two separate spaces—the shower and the lavatory. When both doors are open a full 90 degrees they can be locked together screening the sitting room from the bath.



COURTESY OF DELTA FAUCETS

This e-Flow faucet from Delta works on a sensor and requires no levers or handles.

trunk lifts. Though these are typically too small to hold a wheelchair, if you have such a lift by all means keep it. Toting packages up and down stairs doesn't get any easier with age! Modern, one-person elevators take up minimal amounts of living space. Sometimes it's possible to add a vertical access corridor on a secondary façade at the rear or side of the house.

Bathrooms and Kitchens. Relatively few people will spend much of their lives in wheelchairs, but for those who must do so, bathrooms and kitchens can be frustrating places. Even nonwheelchair types can have trouble with counters that are too high or too low, cabinets and shelves that are too deep, faucets and door knobs that defy arthritic hands, tubs and showers that are impossible to get safely into, toilets that can't be used without the help of another human being, or water that suddenly runs hot or cold when it should be just soothingly warm. There are remedies for all these problems, some cheap and common sense, some more expensive or complex.

The truth about kitchens and bath-



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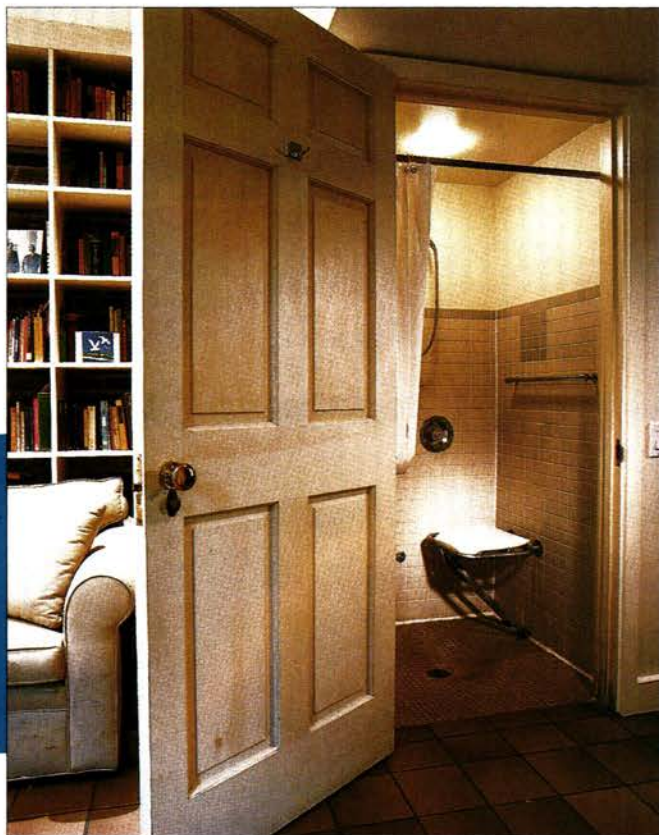
rooms in old houses is that they are the most frequently and drastically remodeled rooms in the house (the average kitchen remodel is said to be in the \$30,000-plus range these days). This being said, if you're going to drop a bundle on modernizing these spaces anyway, why not plan ahead for accessibility? Adjustable-height shelving and counters, located within easy reach of a seated person; lazy Susans that make cabinet corners usable; wall ovens with doors that swing out rather than down; flat stove surfaces that make moving pots and pans about less hazardous; rounded corners and softer materials on counter tops, lessening the chance of injury in the event of impact—these are all simple ways to make these utilitarian rooms safer and more usable for everyone, not just the elderly or the disabled.

In the bathroom, features such as roll-in, lipless showers and swing-out tub sides, while they may be essential to the disabled, are helpful to many other people as well. Mothers of young children, for instance, might well appreciate not having to hoist wriggling tots in and out of the tub. Sturdy grab-bars firmly attached to studs around tubs and showers (on all three sides of the fixture; not just on one wall) are just good

sense for everybody.

Lighting and Electricity. Electrical service is a common source of frustration—and sometimes danger—in most old houses. By all means, bring the wiring up to code, but go a step further and make it convenient as well as safe. For instance, there never seem to be enough receptacles, and they're never in the right locations—"right" being in the waist-to-shoulder level, definitely not in baseboards or even, as in many old houses, on the floor. Wall light switches are too often missing or inconveniently located, and conventional toggle switches are sometimes hard to locate and operate. Sliding switches that can be activated with an elbow or a shoulder are cheap and easy improvements. Remote-control switches can eliminate the need to enter a dark room. Stairs and steps should certainly be well lighted to reduce the possibility of falls. However, it isn't necessary or even safe to use the same high level of light at all times in all places. The sudden flash produced by turning on a 100-watt bulb in a dark room can lead to several minutes of blindness in a person with macular degeneration. Night lights may work better.

In the same way, exterior light and



DAVIDDUNCANLIVINGSTON.COM FOR THE NEW CITY HOME/TAUNTON PRESS

This shower stall includes built-in seating and a hand-held shower head.

outside views are vital, but unshaded windows can become glaring sight dimmers and can also shatter privacy. Furthermore, conventional window shades and blinds can be difficult to operate. Fortunately, there are remote-control devices that can make this problem go away. Security systems and fire alarms are important components of safe old-house living for the elderly as well as for younger occupants. Since many older people are hard of hearing, alarms need to incorporate both bright, blinking lights and loud sounds.

Finally, the electrical service to the old house not only needs to be fully compliant with modern building codes, but it also should take into account that seniors are as computer reliant as younger people. Often, in fact, the Internet is a genuine lifeline for those who have trouble getting around outside their homes, offering the opportunity for dozens of activities that range from shopping for gifts and groceries to contact with doctors and pharmacists (not to mention family and friends). Old houses need to be wired for the ever-increasing demands of the electronic age.

Flooring. Falls are the leading cause of injury among the elderly, and the home is the most frequent site of falls. It seems obvious, but floors should be reasonably level and have nonslip, nonglare surfaces. Even small changes in floor levels will be safer when marked by a change in color or light. Thresholds are a frequent cause of stumbling. If necessary, they can usually be removed without permanent damage to the house, then replaced later, if desired.

Heating and Cooling. They are significant both from an economic and a health standpoint. Obviously, if you had to, you could retreat to just one or two rooms during very hot or cold weather, but efficient insulation and well-planned HVAC systems are crucial not just to the comfort but to the safety of older people. Furthermore, heating and/or cooling costs could make the difference between the ability to remain in a beloved old house and the need to move to a modern facility.

Among the many joys of old-house living is the fact that the house itself provides almost endless opportunities for change and growth. A bit of foresight can make those opportunities last a lifetime. 🏠



PHOTO: BRIAN VANDEN BRINK / AXEL BERG BUILDER

Above: No stepping into or out of a slippery tub here. A walk-in shower offers easy accessibility. Grab-bars are firmly affixed to studs along the shower stall.

Further thoughts from AARP

First, if mobility is a problem, consider the possibility of living completely on the first floor. This is where the most important and attractive rooms generally are, as well as the most convenient access to the front and rear doors, the street, and the garden. (Moreover, historically there was often a first-floor bedroom in houses.) Obviously if you're going to use the first floor as a living area, you'll need an accessible bathroom on that floor.

Second, think about the possibility of carving out or adding on an apartment (possibly in the basement or attic) that could be used for a live-in caregiver or rented to provide additional income.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 109.

Covering Contingenci

Insurance for old homes costs slightly more, but you'll save thousands if there's a fire.

When you're young and healthy, insurance is easy to come by, but as you age, the premiums rise and agents are less interested in your business. The same is true for old houses. To provide peace of mind and protect your property, you should compare the special provisions of policies for historic dwellings with standard homeowner's policies. Your home's special features become part of the contract, guaranteeing that you can replace damaged building elements without an argument from your agent or digging deep in your own pocket.

Insurance programs for historic buildings have been around since the early 1990s. The policies run 5 to 20 percent more than a standard policy, but they can save you thousands in the event of a loss (see "Comparing the Fine Print," at right). One reason the policies are more expensive is that they set a higher limit on the home's value, often exceeding its market price. While details of individual plans vary, companies that specialize in old-house insurance follow the

Comparing the Fine Print

	Typical Old-House Policy Coverage	Typical HO-3 Coverage
Building Perils	All Risk	All Risk
Extended Replacement Cost	Included	Not Included
In-House Underwriter	Yes	N/A
Full R.C. Cash Option*	Yes	N/A
Other Structures		N/A
Percent of House Coverage	20%	10%
Extended Replacement Cost	Included	Not Included
Full R.C. Cash Option	Yes	N/A
Loss of Use		N/A
Percent of House Coverage	Unlimited	20%

Extra Coverages

Lock Replacement	\$500	No Coverage
Debris Removal	Unlimited	5% of Coverage Limit
Rebuilding to Code	Unlimited	Not Included
Backup of Sewers and Drains	Included	Not Included
Incidental Business Property	\$10,000	\$2,500 on premises/\$250 off premises
Personal Computer Data	\$5,000	Not Included

Special Limits

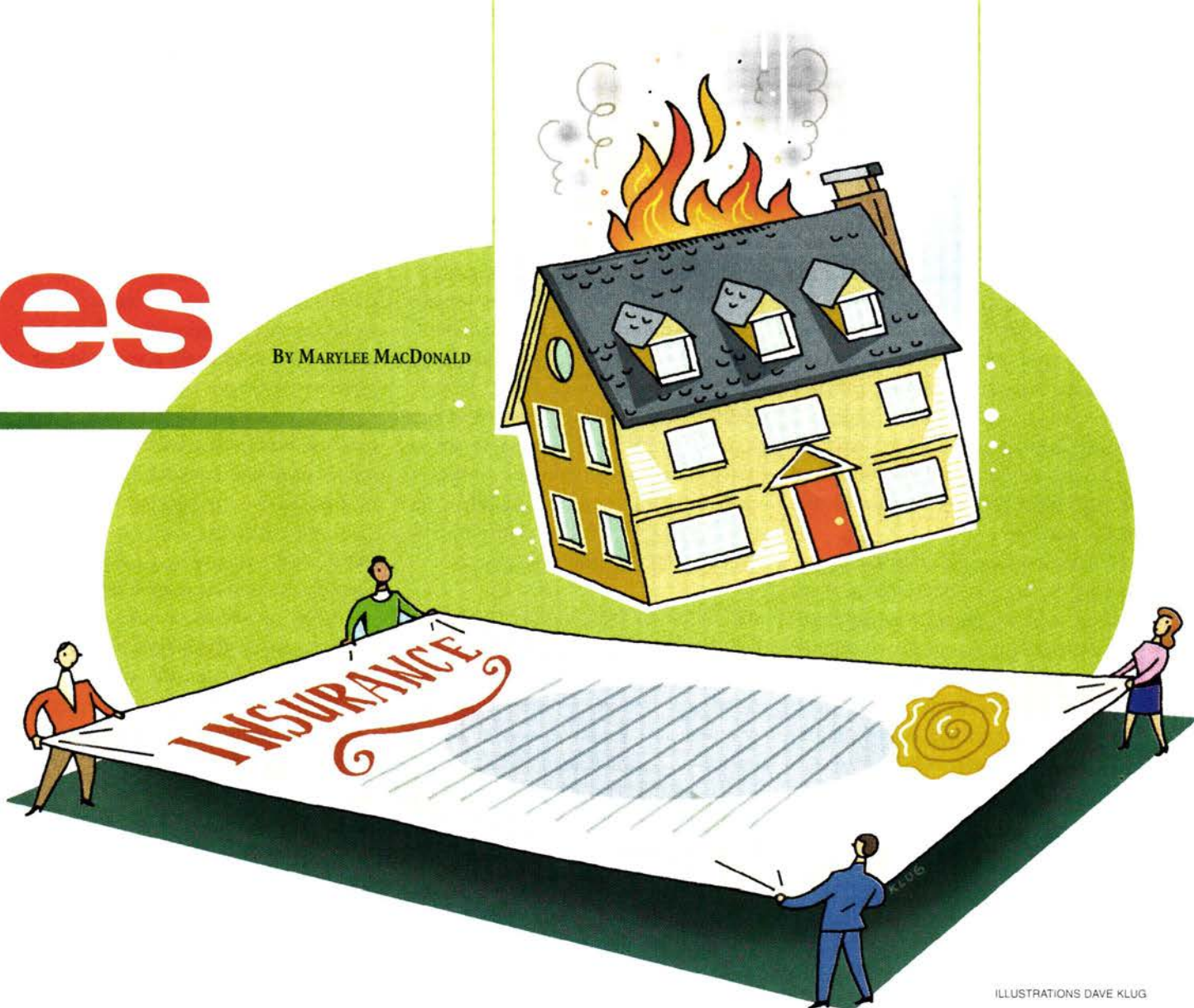
Money	\$1,000	\$200
Securities	\$5,000	\$1,000
Jewelry	\$5,000	\$1,000
Silverware	\$5,000	\$2,500

Valuable Articles

Fine Art Coverage	Worldwide	U.S. & Canada only
Breakage for All Fine Art	Included	Not Included

*R.C.: REPLACEMENT COST





ILLUSTRATIONS DAVE KLUG

same general script when you apply (see "Insurance Programs," page 77).

You'll first speak to a local insurance agent who will send out an appraiser to look at your property. The appraiser is a person specifically trained to place a value on your home's distinctive features. Companies specializing in old-house coverage often hire graduates of historic preservation programs to measure rooms, photograph millwork, and note unique items. Standard policies (called HO-3 policies in the insurance industry) send an appraiser too, but the value the appraiser places on the home is based solely on room count, square footage, type of construction (wood frame, masonry, or masonry veneer) and determined from a database of prices in today's new construction. In settling a claim, the company sticks to those standard prices and will not pay more.

In contrast, appraisers for vintage-home policies know the difference between a *trompe l'oeil* painting and a one-coat cover-up, between a 15' ceiling (where the repair crew needs scaffolding) and an 8' ceiling (where a ladder will do), between a Ludowici-Celadon ceramic tile roof and fiberglass shingles. The unique architectural elements of your house become part of your insurance contract.

Valuing the Home

Once the appraiser determines the value of the dwelling, he or she will set a price that is realistic for rebuilding in kind. This price may come in higher than the market value of the house. You could not begin to replace most older homes for their market value. To compensate for this, old-house policies generally provide *extended replacement cost* cov-

erage. Make sure you understand whether your insurer is providing "unlimited coverage" (where the sky's the limit if there is a loss) or whether they cap coverage at 120 or 150 percent of the policy. The company will, however, insist the home be insured to value, or they will not write the policy. Once you and the appraiser agree on the home's value, you purchase a policy equaling that amount.

The key here is to make sure the appraiser is knowledgeable, the inventory complete, and everything is down in black and white. Your final contract and agreement should include pictures of your house and detailed notes on rare or hard-to-replace items.

Settling Up After a Loss

If your house is partially damaged in a natural disaster, most standard insurance poli-

cies require you to rebuild at the same site. In the aftermath of such a loss, your surroundings could be burnt out, treeless, or flood-ravaged, and you'd be locked into a charred, denuded landscape. With some old-house policies, however, you can take the money and build elsewhere or buy another old house to restore. What you do with the money is up to you. If 65 or 75 percent of your home is damaged, will your company allow you to relocate or pay for temporary lodging? To avoid hassles about partial loss, make sure your home is *insured to value*. If it's not, insurers will reduce the size of your check accordingly.

When a building is severely damaged, restoring it may also mean that the home will have to be brought up to current building codes. Let's suppose you have a summer house near the coast. It cannot be rebuilt unless you raise the building and put it on stilts. Or, let's say you have a house in the city with a narrow hallway; code might dictate that you widen the hall. In New England, where homes are built close to roads, you might be required to move the house back.

A standard policy will not include *the ordinance or law cover-*

age to pay for these extra costs, unless your agent recommended it. Most likely, you'll receive a cash settlement far below the realistic cost of repairs. Old-house policies, though, offer ordinance or law coverage as a standard part of their packages. If an architect is needed to help figure out how to make the hallway wider, the insurance pays for it. If the project is involved and needs a site superintendent, the insurance pays for it. In addition, clients are free to hire whichever builder or architect they prefer. Some insurers, such as Chubb, can provide extra help in addition to the money; these companies can put you in touch with skilled craftsmen, thus easing your worry in time of stress.

Personal Property and Fine Arts Coverage

Most homeowner's policies provide *all risk* coverage for your dwelling, but only cover your personal property losses for *named hazards*—fire, lightning, and so on. Suppose you misplace a diamond ring or spill paint on an oriental carpet? A standard policy would not cover these losses.

The policies designed for old houses provide all

risk coverage for personal possessions as well as for property. The companies that underwrite these policies figure homeowners will have antiques and other valuables.

Similarly, a standard HO-3 policy limits coverage for items of *antiquity* or *rarity*. If your antique is damaged or destroyed, you would get the replacement cost. That cost, however, will either be the depreciated cost, based on the item's age, or a functional replacement cost. You might get the cost of a new desk or a new door, but the replacement will not match the rest of the house. In contrast, the old-house policies provide replacement in *like kind and quality*. If you lose a 300-year-old door, you'll get a 300-year-old door (or a handcrafted equivalent).

While the old-house policies provide generous coverage for antiques, if you have a houseful of rarities consider adding a fine arts floater or valuable articles coverage to even the old-house policy. Find out if the company aggressively tries to find stolen valuables, beyond writing you a check. Chubb, for instance, tracks missing items through a nationwide art-theft database.

Reducing Risks and Premiums

Companies insuring homes take a critical look at the house location and condition. Risk management data has shown that dwellings close to fire departments have lower risk than homes on rural sites. Because of this, Chubb offers lower rates to insure the architectural assets of row houses and brownstones. Its "City Homes" insurance is available in six states and the District of Columbia. Because rural homes are more isolated and have a greater fire risk, an appraiser will inventory the home's risks as well as tally its rooms and possessions. The appraiser may try to help reduce the company's risk (and your risk) by suggesting that you install a central fire-alarm system or add a cistern. To prevent wind or hurricane damage, the appraiser might ask that branches above the roof be trimmed. If your home is one that has a number of past claims—and the claims need not be large ones—the home may be difficult to insure.

Even if you are new owners with no history of being eager claim-filers, your particular dwelling may be identified as a bad risk



Insurance Programs

Chubb Group of Insurance Companies

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Chesapeake, VA 23327

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(800) 523-9500

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Middlesex Mutual Assurance

213 Court St.

Middletown, CT 06457

(877) 569-4530

Insures homes built before 1930 in Connecticut and Maine only. Its consultants also prepare National Register nominations and document a home's history.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Historic and Valuable Homeowner's Insurance Program

7585 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 588-6000; contact Teresa McDowell

The plan administrator is MIMS International

901 Dulaney Valley Rd., Suite 610

Towson, MD 21401

(800) 899-1399; contact Bob Bounelis
Insures dwellings 50 years old or more through an insurance underwriter.



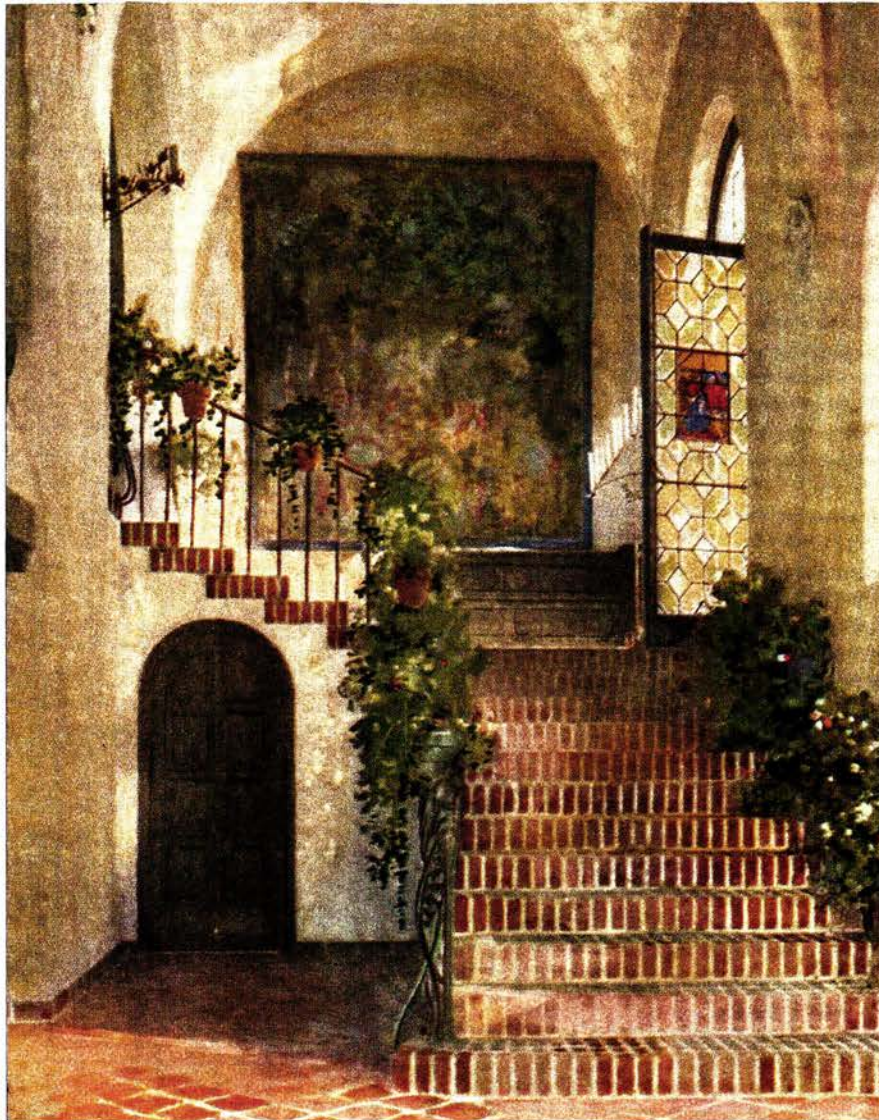
and tracked through a nationwide insurance database. In certain areas of the country, it is very hard to obtain coverage, period.

If you want to keep premiums low but still have the advantages of old-house coverage, you can take additional measures to protect your property. Reducing theft by installing motion sensors on individual paintings or by installing whole-house alarms can reduce your premiums. Fire prevention systems can also reduce premiums, and some companies require these on homes valued at \$1,000,000 or more. In high-value homes, raising the deductible from the stan-

dard \$250 or \$1,000 to \$5,000 or \$10,000 can lower the premium. Finally, once you have purchased your insurance, review the coverage every three years. If the value of your house or possessions has changed, or you have made major improvements, you may need to adjust the policy accordingly. Insurance cannot prevent a disaster, but the better the policy and program is tailored to your circumstances, the better it can protect your old house and its contents. ■

Marylee MacDonald is a contributing editor to *OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL*.

Funky plaster reached new heights of popularity in the 1920s for romantic Gothic, Spanish, Renaissance, and Oriental effects in English and Mediterranean revival houses—so much so it spawned specialized textured plaster and paint products to produce them.



Tackling Textured Plaster

BY PETER AND NOELLE LORD

Steps to analyzing and repairing low-relief finishes.

Mention textured ceilings or walls and many of us flash back to those glittery, perlite-speckled ceilings of the 1970s or cringe at the memory of spraying on “popcorn” to hide a bad dry-wall job. Thankfully, these are only distant relatives in what is a large family of rich, traditional finishes. Raised interior surface textures actually go back to the very origins of plaster, appearing everywhere from Roman palaces and Egyptian tombs to English cottages. Textured plaster in an older North American house could very

likely be original to the building and hold historic significance and value.

Repairing textured plaster is part mystery, part misery. The mystery lies in analyzing how the texture was created and unfolds as you attempt to deduce the methods available for re-creating it. The misery comes in trying to pull off an invisible repair, as matching textures is very tricky. However, by patiently deciphering the steps to produce the effect and then trying your hand at duplicating it, with practice you can achieve a nearly seamless repair. Here are some ideas and techniques to help you on your way.

PHOTOS BY JON CRISPIN/ ARCHIVAL ART
COURTESY OF TIM HANSEN



Deciphering Textures

Instead of diving right into matching plaster mixes and materials, it pays to carefully analyze the texture first. Your analysis should run from micro to macro—that is, from close-up surface inspections to studying the overall appearance at various distances. Remain open to unusual possibilities, as many textures involve more than one tool (sometimes unconventional) and usually several steps. The toughest part is usually figuring out how the texture was executed or what the plasterers were thinking.

It's important to consider broader questions about the building, as well as the specifics of the plaster itself. Knowing

any background on the age, history, architectural style, and designer or builder of the house can help you to determine techniques. What were the geographic origins of owners? What other decorative approaches appear in the house? Establishing the historic time period, for example, will give you insights into the choice of tools and materials. Is it 150-year-old lime-and-sand plaster or post 1920s plaster that could include gypsum?

To determine some of the specifics of the texture itself, select a damaged area and carefully remove a section, layer by layer. By closely studying the texture, you will determine how it looks and feels, the

Deciphering Textures continued on page 80

Left to right, four of eight effects promoted by the U.S. Gypsum Company for its Textone product in 1924. Colonial: White Textone applied as a thick paste, stippled with a brush, then lightly sanded. Spanish: Very thick Textone paste worked with the back of a large kitchen spoon, then wiped with a palm. Modern European: Tinted Textone applied as a thick paste with a large brush, then patted gently. Moorish: Tinted Textone applied with a brush, smoothed with a window squeegee, then brushed through a stencil.

Deconstructing Textured Plaster

Textured plaster can be generally defined as any surface that is not polished perfectly flat, and includes brushed, combed, knock-down, sand-raised, and hand-tooled patterns—to name just a few of the many variations.

Textures have been used for centuries to decorate surfaces and disguise irregularities. Some have official geographic origins and titles, though many evolved from necessity, whimsy, or the artistic expression of their creator. Tools and techniques varied widely as well, with many patterns

being the product of more than one step or implement. Typical tools could include pointed or flat trowels, wood and sponge floats, combs, bristle brushes and brooms, rugs, sand or aggregate, and even fingers and palms.

There are basically two approaches to repairing textures. You need to either 1) recreate it, using the same or similar plaster recipes, number of coats, techniques, and tools, or 2) replicate it using some sort of mold. Particularly ornate plaster finishes of the Victorian era often require taking a mold of a representative section of the pattern, then casting one or more duplicates



Matching the arcane—and often unique—patterns of textured plaster takes technique and creativity: testing to determine the best plaster mix and experimenting to find an appearance that looks right.

Deciphering Textures continued

number and thickness of the plaster coats, and the role of the texture layer. The texture may be employed as the top-coat of the plaster system, or perhaps the texture coat is strictly decorative "icing" on an otherwise complete surface.

Step back and look at the pattern to see if you can find indications of tools and techniques used: trowel marks flatten to a degree and usually leave a line somewhere, while brush marks look like striations. Are there ghosts of hand or finger marks? Are there wakes or a softness to the pattern that indicate the wetness of the plaster mix? (Stiff mixes leave a more defined impression than wet mixes.) Also note the number of accumulated paint layers since these tend to soften and change the texture from its original

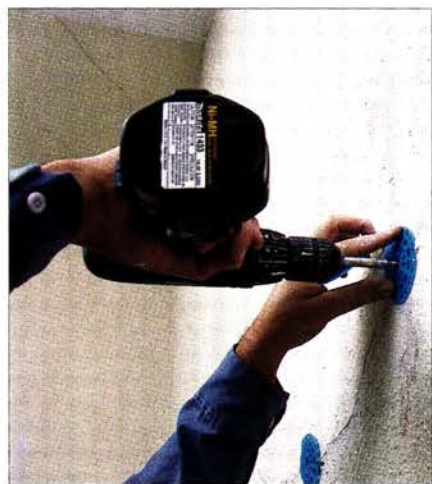
appearance. Since your patch will have only a few layers of paint, you will need to plan accordingly.

When it comes to matching the plaster mix, tools, and techniques, you need to break down the process into its multiple steps in order to effectively duplicate a look.

There are many options in plaster, each affecting set-up times and workability of the mix. For example, the older the historic plaster, generally the slower the set-up time, meaning the plasterer would have had more opportunity to work with the mix. If you are duplicating a combed texture, you may find the edges around the pattern are usually soft and curled over slightly. If your new plaster is too dry it will set up too fast, and the lines will be square instead of round. Instead, try

using a mix of gauging plaster with lime for more workability, and some gypsum retarder to slow the set. With a thinner mix (the consistency of thin yogurt) a comb can move easily through the mix, and it is fluid enough for edges to roll over and look as soft as the wall. Carefully inspecting your pattern's subtleties will help you decide what mix to use and how "loose" to make it.

The wide range of tools and implements also creates vastly different outcomes. Wooden tools and sponges are like floats, working with the plaster fluids and grabbing any aggregate and bringing it to the surface of the mix. Metal trowels and tools are slipperier and push aggregate down into the mix. Knowing the difference can guide you to the right tools. For instance, a granite building we once



Above: Peter screws on large plastic discs as temporary plaster anchors during repairs.

Right: A synthetic block sponge (green) and soft plastering sponge are the tools for final sand-float finishing.



that you attach to the surface like wallpaper to make a repair. The first approach is what we'll concentrate on here.

Before attempting to repair a textured surface, prepare a sample board where you can practice matching the texture; a scrap of drywall or blueboard is easy to work with and inexpensive. If analysis reveals that your texture is several plaster coats thick, it is unlikely that you can re-create it by skipping the basecoat, so plan to include one on your sample board.

You can also record the pattern by laying a piece of paper on the texture (large

enough to cover a complete "repeat" of the pattern) and rubbing it with a soft crayon or charcoal pencil. Take this impression of your texture along as you search for tools—when matching comb tooth sizes, for example, or sand grains, broom bristles, and the like. You can also refer to this rubbing as you work to match techniques on your sample board.

If the repair is to be inconspicuous, you will need to match the existing plaster in terms of both approximate plaster mix and the number of coats. For instance if the plaster you're duplicating derives some of its texture from additives like sand, add them to your sample plaster. Use different plaster mixes with different setting times and different consistencies to see how the texture is affected. Most textures are created in stages as they set up, so you will probably need to put the texture coat on, work with it, let it set up some, tool and work it again, possibly let it set up even more, then complete the final tooling, sponging, or blending. Don't be tempted to add one really thick layer to infill your patch before texturing. Sometimes it's possible to make repairs in less than three coats by adding wire lath over wood lath and then applying

worked on had an aggressive knock-down texture from the early 1900s, and tools we were using did not achieve the same look. After running out of ideas to try, finally a light bulb came on: Perhaps the masons who built the house also did the plaster? Trying masonry tools worked, and the texture began to emerge.

Most of all, figuring out textures takes trial and error. Your mindset must be flexible, creative, and "out of the box." Armed with answers to some of these broad and specific questions, you can then begin to narrow down your choices for plaster mixes, possible tools, and how you will begin to approach the matching process.

two-coat plaster.

Cracks can be easier to repair than large patches since you are only trying to blend and match a little texture rather than a large area. Often you can improvise a match with hand tools and avoid totally recreating a technique. Whatever the case, as you plan your repair bear in mind that some textures are easier to match and blend by working from the existing area into the new patch; others are better working in the opposite direction.

When infilling any area, always leave the final plaster coat—the one you will texture—standing "proud" above the existing surface. The biggest mistake in matching textures is to not allow enough plaster to tool, creating a repair that is recessed below the original plane of the surface and therefore obvious. You want the final coat as high or higher than the top of the texture, regardless of the pattern of the texture, so that it can take whatever compressing or finishing technique required to complete it. Infilling a patch or crack usually takes two coats to bring it to this point. Especially if you are matching a texture with swirls, curves, or tooled effects, you have to start with more plaster than you will ultimately

Good Repair Basics

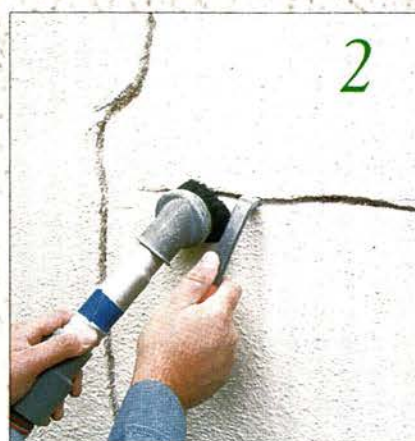
Plaster damage occurs for a reason, so be sure to determine and eliminate its causes before attempting any repairs. Some minor deterioration is to be expected as a building ages, but often structural shifting, material degradation, or water intrusion can cause interior damage and should be remedied before investing in labor-intensive repairs.

Before beginning any plaster repair, always stabilize your substrate and the surrounding plaster by either removing crumbling plaster or reattaching plaster that is sound but breaking away from the

lath or masonry substrate. Using a utility knife, carve cracks into a V-notch that goes down to the substrate (see "Repairing Plaster Cracks" September/October 2001). If you're infilling and patching, you may need to stabilize lath by further anchoring it to the support framing or strapping, or you might want to wire or screw a piece of wire lath in the patch for added support. Use a similar plaster mix, number of coats, and coat thicknesses for your infill. Always familiarize yourself with the mix, plaster set-up times, and your abilities before using them on a repair. Practice first!



Repairing the raised-sand finish begins with the same basic preparation used for any plaster crack or patch job.



Dig cracks down to lath, bevel edges for good adhesion of new plaster, then vacuum up all dust.



Thoroughly wet plaster edges, lath/substrate, and surrounding area so they don't pull water out of the new plaster.

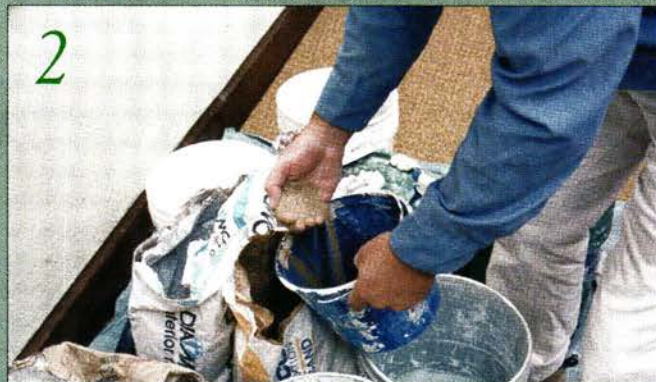


Apply acrylic bonding agent to aid adhesion of new plaster; follow instructions (agent can only get wet once).

Repairing Raised-Sand Texture



Peter's basic mix is gauging plaster added to about 1 quart water until the water disappears. Adding lime putty (about 1/3 volume) or dry lime aids workability.



Sand comes last. Like the original, the repair mix uses masonry sand, with grains of several different shapes and sizes, to strengthen the plaster as well as add texture.



Since the original plaster is only 1/2" thick, Peter uses just two coats. He makes the first coat thick (within 1/8" of the surface) because it will shrink some as it sets up.



The second coat fills in the patch/crack completely and also serves as the final texture coat. Peter makes sure there is plenty of plaster left above the original surface.

need. With a knock-down finish, for example, your topcoat must be higher than the surrounding surface because, as you knock the plaster down, you will lose height.

Repairing Raised-Sand Texture

On a recent project we were called in to repair a raised-sand finish. Even on quick inspection it was obvious that the plaster had sand of several different grain sizes and shapes in the mix, and this component was floated to the surface to create the finished effect. Starting in a damaged area where the paint was flaking off, Peter first estimated the size of the sand grains by visual inspection. Since the building was

approximately 100 years old, and the plaster had such a mix of aggregates, it was likely the plasterers used masonry sand. The next challenge was to determine how much sand was used in the mix. To do this, Peter worked up a sample area, gradually adding measured amounts of sand to each mix until he achieved the right look.

The original walls were traditional three-coat plaster over wood lath, with sand included in each coat. Because the plaster was only 1/2" thick in this instance, Peter was able to complete the repair in two coats. For each coat he used a mix of lime, sand, and gauging plaster, a premixed gypsum product formulated for finish work. Since gauging plaster sets up in approxi-

mately 20 minutes, it was only possible to complete roughly 20' of cracks. Though not essential, Peter likes to add lime putty (lime slaked with water) or a few handfuls of dry lime to make the mix closer to old plaster.

After preparing the repair areas, Peter applied bonding agent to the plaster edges so that the new infill will adhere to the original plaster. Typically acrylic-based, bonding agents are designed to help new plaster adhere to old plaster and are ideal for crack repairs. Then he applied the first infill coat, using a plaster trowel to fill the cracks to 1/8" below the surface plane. As Peter pushed the plaster into the crack for a solid fill, some plaster seeped under the crack's edges to help reattach the existing plaster.



The infill rises 1/8" or so above the original surface—a surplus that is obvious now, but necessary to provide enough material for final finishing.

Peter likes a synthetic block sponge for working away the excess plaster at the rubbery stage, but any large-pore, soft sponge will work. Since wiping the plaster often disturbs the sand layer, Peter prefers to sponge in light arcs and turns.



Final finishing requires a softer sponge that removes only small particles in the binder (plaster)—not the sand or larger particles. A hard sponge would wipe away all material.



In this close-up of the nearly completed repair, the different colors and sizes of sand are nicely exposed at the same level of the old plaster—a seamless match at a distance.

After the first infill coat had set up and hardened, Peter applied the final topcoat which, in this case, also happened to be the final texture coat. First, Peter applied the final coat using a trowel, leaving the plaster approximately 1/8" proud of the surface. This allowed the layer of raised sand to be even with the original surface after final tooling. Next, he wiped the excess plaster away from the edges, allowing the topcoat to set up until it became "rubbery." Then, using a large-pore, soft synthetic sponge as a float, Peter worked away the excess plaster. In this process he always begins from the outside edges, removing the excess plaster on the surface surrounding the repair area, then he works carefully into the

repair area. Peter applies very little pressure to the sponge during this cautious step so that the damp, soft sponge can allow the sand to rise and remain on the surface.

Using the sponge very gently, Peter removed the excess, rubbery plaster. It is important to do this step in increments, taking off plaster little by little while paying careful attention to the original height of the sand-grain texture and watching how much sand remains exposed. Peter works in light, figure-eight, arching movements because they allow him to see his working area better, judging where he needs to go back and where he should leave alone. Through trial and error, Peter has also discovered that these movements work away

the plaster better than wiping movements, while still leaving aggregate in place.

The devil is always in the details, and this is patient, careful work. You need to step back occasionally to get an overview of your finishing and tooling; once you have removed too much plaster, you can't bring it back. It pays to take your time with these finishing steps since they are what determine a successful matching job. 🐼

Peter and Noelle Lord operate *Peter Lord Plaster & Paint, Inc.*, specializing in the preservation and restoration of historic surfaces and all plaster systems. (www.plasterlord.com; 207-854-5156; 151 Mast Road, Westbrook, Maine, 04092)

Stoned Soul

BY DELILAH SMITTLE

Massive masonry walls and chestnut beams spelled “built to last,” but making the structure livable wasn’t always a picnic.

Bicycling through the east central Pennsylvania countryside in the late 1970s, newly graduated electrical engineer Dave Fessler passed an abandoned 19th-century stone farmstead that triggered a yearning. He’d grown up quite happily in a spanking new ’50s tract house, but had longed for the timeless solidity of a stone farmhouse since the first time he’d set foot in one. “I don’t even remember where or when that would have been,” he admits, “because none of my parents’ friends lived in one.”

Hiking by the place again in the winter of 1981–82 he spotted a “For Sale” sign, and after a short bidding war, bit the bullet and paid \$67,000 to buy his dream house and 15 acres. The property included the 1811 main house, a summer kitchen, slaughterhouse, carriage shed, a combination smokehouse/outhouse, springhouse, and a big stone bank barn.

Age and six years of vacancy had taken their toll. The buildings were filled with debris and not up to electrical or plumbing codes—totally unlivable. But even as Dave stood in the attic of his newly purchased property, surveying the piles of snow that had drifted in, he was envisioning the hearth-warmed great room below just as it looks today.

Right: The Colonial-inspired tree house that Dave Fessler (with wife Anne in swing) built for Jared, 10, and Noah, 6, is linked to shade trees throughout the yard by a series of aerial bridges.



PHOTOS BY ROB CARDILLO EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Above: The main house’s full 2 1/2 storeys are evident from the back.



First Things First

The main house and summer kitchen needed a new roof and septic system, and they were the first, among very few projects Dave contracted out. His plan was to restore the two-room summer kitchen, install a bathroom there, and live in it while he tackled the main house.

The house's energy conscious builder had set it into a hill, so that the north side, which faces the road, is half under ground and appears to be a modest 1 1/2 storeys. The sunny south-facing back towers 2 1/2 storeys above a brick patio. Still, as with many early stone houses, the total interior

space was small. There was only one 32' x 20' finished "great room" downstairs, adjoined by an unfinished fieldstone cold-storage room of equal size and an attached stone woodshed. Four tiny bedrooms on the second floor were accessible only by ladder. Although the former occupants in their old age installed a lone, free-standing toilet in the great room, they continued to use the bicentennial two-seater outhouse until infirmity forced the last one to move in with relatives in 1976.

Dave, a longtime woodworker who had learned his skills from his father, had just finished renovating a turn-of-the-



COURTESY DAVE FESSLER

Failing epoxy-based exterior paint had to be removed. The roof was replaced at the same time.



COURTESY DAVE FESSLER

Top: The Fesslers created their family room in a cold-storage room off the kitchen. Dave modeled the tavern cage bar (behind the chair) after one in a nearby historic inn. **Above:** Gutting the great room exposed hand-hewn chestnut beams.

20th-century house and felt he was up to the task. Still, he concedes, “I learned a lot as I went along, cutting my teeth on the plumbing and electrical wiring, and learning the electrical code.”

In the Meantime

The wood-frame summer kitchen had a ground-level room with a massive walk-in fireplace and enclosed staircase, which left about 18' x 21' of living space. Adding a full bath in an upstairs bedroom of similar dimensions and a wood stove downstairs let Dave settle down comfortably. Initial tasks included reroofing with a concrete-based slate look-alike, removing rotted floors, and gutting the great room. On one occasion when the plaster dust cleared, “there at my feet I saw two perfect Indian arrowheads that must have been in the sand the builders took from the stream to mix plaster for the walls.”

One day two and a half years into sharing the summer kitchen with his cat Otis, he was in “full demolition swing” and about to mark the door to indicate his

105th wheelbarrow of removed plaster and debris when a woman he’d been dating decided to take him up on his offer to drop by. While he’d tried to impress others with his architectural treasure, “Anne was the only woman who didn’t think she was entering a war zone. In fact, she offered to rent the summer kitchen if our relationship didn’t work out.”

Once married, they shared the cozy quarters for another seven years, making do with a toaster oven, crockpot, and refrigerator, and doing dishes in the bathroom. In 1992 son Jared increased the population of the summer kitchen by one, and in 1996, another impending addition spurred Dave to step up the pace in the big house and complete a real kitchen.

Frustrated in his efforts to find an affordable copper sink of high quality, Dave made one himself and inadvertently spawned his own weekend cottage industry, SinkWorks, which since the early 1990s has offered custom copper sinks based on historic designs.

To replace the great room floor, Dave

dug a crawl space, installed a moisture barrier and subfloor, and laid heart-pine planks cut from "sinker logs" raised from a southern swamp. Dave discovered where the great room's original walk-in fireplace had once been when he pulled a sooty hand from an exploratory hole in the wall. He and Anne commissioned a stone mason to rebuild the fireplace and Dave made a mantel from salvaged chestnut.

The End in Sight

Uniting the house is an 18" wide squared-off chestnut tree trunk that forms a central ceiling beam, starting in the kitchen and narrowing only slightly as it spans 40' through the cold-storage room. The latter room, roughly the same size as the kitchen, gave the Fesslers a clean slate for their family room. Dave installed a vapor retarder and laid a new subfloor topped with more wide-plank rescued heart pine over sleeper studs on the concrete floor. He repointed the stone wall on the kitchen side of the room and left it exposed.

On either side of the fireplace, Dave commissioned raised-panel bookcases. He diligently copied the dimensions of the bar in a nearby historic tavern and had it reproduced at the entrance to the wood shed, which he converted to a brick-floored wine cellar. Here and throughout the house Dave used his collection of antique hand tools to plane and installed raised panels for the window wells, wainscoting, and baseboards—his records show he used about 2,500 board feet of poplar.

Fate nudged the direction of the restoration when the ladder to the second floor collapsed under Dave and he fell, breaking a toe. Inspired by a magazine photo of a colonial staircase, he rescaled it to fit the space and installed it from the dining room to the second floor central hall, tucking a bathroom under the stairs.

Now safer upstairs, Dave and Anne removed a wall between two bedrooms and created a modest-sized master bedroom with a full bath, installed a second bath for the boys at the end of the hall, and finished a third bedroom for the boys and the fourth as Dave's study. A door at the other end of the hall opens onto the gallery that runs the length of the second floor.

Future Plans

Dave and Anne plan next to finish the attic with a big walk-in closet, a bedroom, and a third bath for one of the boys. The former slaughterhouse, which houses Dave's woodworking shop, will get a new addition to serve as SinkWorks headquarters and they're redecorating the summer kitchen as a guesthouse.

Restoration of the bank barn and re-creation of the 1810 springhouse will commemorate the original owner's beginning and their own completion of Pheasant Hollow Farm. Dave increased the farm to a total of 60 acres, put the fields into a protective state agricultural program, and rents them to a local farmer.

Dave reflects that he has achieved his childhood dreams. "I always wanted two things: to live in an old stone farmhouse and to own an old pickup truck. The truck is parked in the former carriage shed." 🐾

Delilah Smittle is restoring a 1948 owner-built brick Tudor on a Pennsylvania mountainside. SinkWorks can be reached at (877) 746-5967 or www.sinkworks.com.

Below: Unable to find a quality, low-priced copper sink, Dave made his own, which led to a weekend cottage industry. **Bottom:** The couple commissioned raised-panel cherry cabinets from a craftsman in nearby Nazareth, and gave an old butcher block "feet" to raise it to island height.



The Cape Cod *Revival*

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND
SHIRLEY MAXWELL

Reinventing vernacular cottages for modern suburbs.

A 20th-century Cape Cod to its core, even with an addition, this simple half-Cape house in Summit, New Jersey, features a minimum of windows, clapboard siding, the barest of central chimneys, and no gable dormers in the roof.



PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Original Capes built at the dawn of the Greek Revival era in the 1830s were often embellished with classical details, such as the corner pilasters, frieze board and returned cornice, and side-lighted entrance in this Kennebunk, Maine, house.



“**Y**es, of course,” vouch the real estate people in almost any community, “it’s a Cape Cod.” Certainly the Cape Cod—both the New England original and the mid-20th-century revival—is one of the most popular house types ever. But are those homes-for-sale ads always right? What is it that distinguishes a genuine Cape Cod from classified listing hype?

For generations the buying public has admired the Cape’s picturesque, small-cottage scale and its straightforward simplici-

ty. In its revival forms, it has retained its popularity far beyond the peak years from around 1940 through the post-World War II building boom. Curiously, the Cape Cod was one of the last house types of the American colonial era to be revived, despite its beguiling form and idealized reflection of a simpler past. Although the Colonial Revival was well underway in the 1890s, becoming the predominant style after World War I, architects and builders alike overlooked this little gem until the late 1920s, when a few Cape Cod designs

The dominant image of 1940s suburbia is the freshly minted, bare-bones Cape—the iconic starter house for thousands of returning veterans and their families. Equally representative of the era are the picture window on the left (colonialized with muntins), man-made shingle siding, and TV antenna sprouting from the roof.



JOSEPH SCHERSCHER/ TIMEPIX



Already popular with the home-building public two decades before the neo-Cape Cod took off was the "hall-and-parlor" Virginia colonial—a Capelike house with gable roof and centered door, but end chimneys and authentic gable dormers.



Compact, ground-hugging, and grey-shingled, preindustrial Cape Cod houses like this classic half-Cape on Nantucket are a vernacular response to the maritime conditions of the Massachusetts Bay colony.

made it into pattern books. Perhaps the small, winsomely plain house was an answer to building needs during the Great Depression, as the nation downsized its houses. Yet the southern equivalent—the "hall-and-parlor" Virginia colonial—found favor with the public in the early 1920s even before the Depression.

Humble Models

Despite its good reputation, the original Cape Cod was little noted by early students of the colonial period, and the first book on the subject didn't appear until Alfred Easton Poor's *Colonial Architecture of Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard* in 1932. The original Cape Cods were small cottages of 1 or 1 1/2 storeys, with steep gable roofs but devoid of dormer windows. Exterior walls were usually shingled and left unpainted, but sometimes had painted clapboards on the front. Originals almost always featured a very large central chim-

ney. The houses varied extensively in width, from a "full" or "double" Cape (either term indicating there was a central door flanked by two windows), to a "half" or "single" Cape (with a door at one side and two windows only), to a "three-quarter" or "one-and-a-half" Cape (with a door flanked on one side by one window and on the other by two windows). Yes, the double nomenclature is confusing, but architectural historians have long used both systems for describing the Cape.

Doorways are plain, often with a simple transom; later perhaps a simple frontispiece. Each side has one or several windows under the steep gable. A distinctive variation was the bowed gable, showing a gentle outward camber thought to be derived from shipbuilding. Some people consider gambrel-roof houses to be Capes, while some do not. There was generally no cornice or projecting eaves on the ends. The front windows extended close up to the



Though departing from the original, wood-based building vocabulary, Capes were built in brick by the thousands in the 1940s and '50s, adding solidity and visual interest to houses often with little flourish beyond the doorway.

roofline, a distinctive feature marking the low interior ceiling that began to change around 1800. The house is found from coastal Maine to Connecticut, although it is most frequently seen on Cape Cod itself. It dates from the early 18th century to about 1830, when Greek Revival details began to appear and the scale expanded. Sometimes the gable made the front of house, enriched with pilasters and a sidelight at the entry door.

New-Century Capes

Interest in reviving the Cape Cod blossomed quickly at the end of the 1920s, when the style began to appear in house design books such as the massive *Home Builders Catalogs*, in Sears Roebuck's *Modern Homes* readi-cut catalogs starting in 1931, and in popular home magazines. Home-design competitions throughout the 1930s broadened the market even more. The Cape Cod Revival's champion, though,



A good example of the Cape reinvented for modern lifestyles is this brick house in Alexandria, Virginia: a half-Cape with a recessed wing for a garage that also adds living space upstairs. Modest but thoughtful touches are the 12/12 windows (12/8 in the dormers) and detailed brick chimney top.



was architect Royal Barry Wills of Boston, whose name became synonymous with this style and other New England regional house types.

Many architects designed "Capes," but few caught the essence of their quaint charm. Wills uniquely understood the simple, picturesque appeal of these small houses, managing to include the modern necessities of heat and utilities while producing design after design that captured the preindustrial aura of the originals. He deftly incorporated side or rear wings—even garages—so effectively that the average viewer would almost consider them historic, while never losing sight of the basic Cape form. Wills led the revival from its start until his death in 1962, and his firm continues today.

Wills had a knack for publicity, writing widely read articles, entering home magazine competitions, and publishing his

designs and suggestions in a successful series of books beginning with *Houses for Good Living* in 1940. For example, in 1938 *Life* magazine and *Architectural Forum* joined forces in a competition for moderately priced houses, with a choice of modern and traditional designs in each price bracket. In the category of homes for people with \$5,000 to \$6,000 incomes, the two winners were a modern design by Frank Lloyd Wright and a traditional one by Royal Barry Wills. Since these designs were intended for a real client, the client had to choose which he would build—and Wills received the nod over Wright. Needless to say, the Wills design was a Cape Cod with a wide wing and garage.

Most of the custom commissions by Wills were in the Northeast, but his published designs were used across the nation. Indeed, a Wills Cape Cod design recently came to light in Jacksonville, Florida!

Mercurial Revivals

Just as it is tricky to neatly define the original Capes, so it is with the revivals. Most important, latter-day Capes usually incorporate concessions to modern living that are modifications of the original cottages. The most common examples are 1) dormer windows that add light to the constricted second floor; 2) larger scale, 3) wings, and 4) a garage—all invaluable for 20th-century lifestyles. Even so, the basic concept holds steadfast: a small and picturesque dwelling with a fairly steep roof for a second floor. The single to one-and-a-half to double Cape (or one-half to whole) rule remains, but wings are common to provide much needed additional living space. These may be at the side or at the rear, but the central block of the Cape retains center stage. Sometimes the rear of a Cape is expanded to two full storeys with a contin-

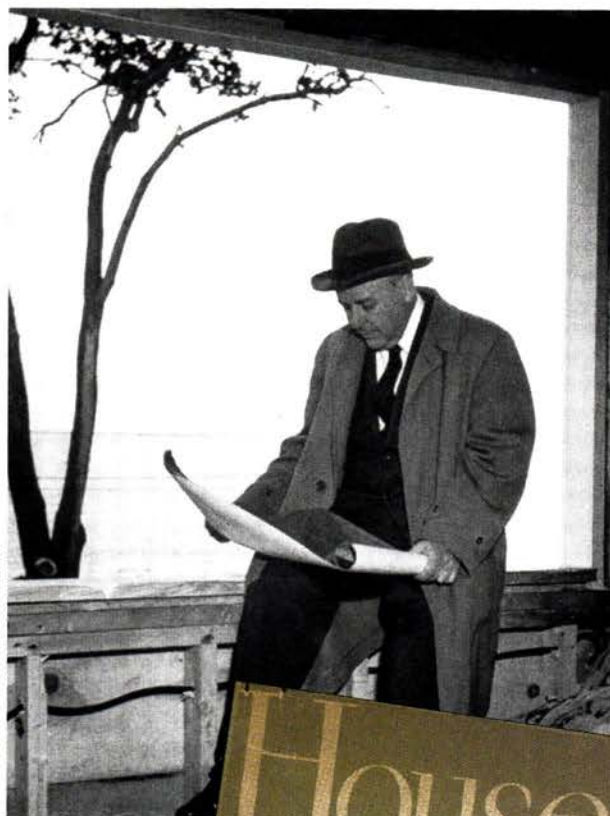


Above: With probably twice the floor space of an original—not to mention an uncharacteristic bank of four windows—some might call this attractive house on New York's Long Island more Ranch than Cape, even with the symbolic shingle siding and solid center chimney.

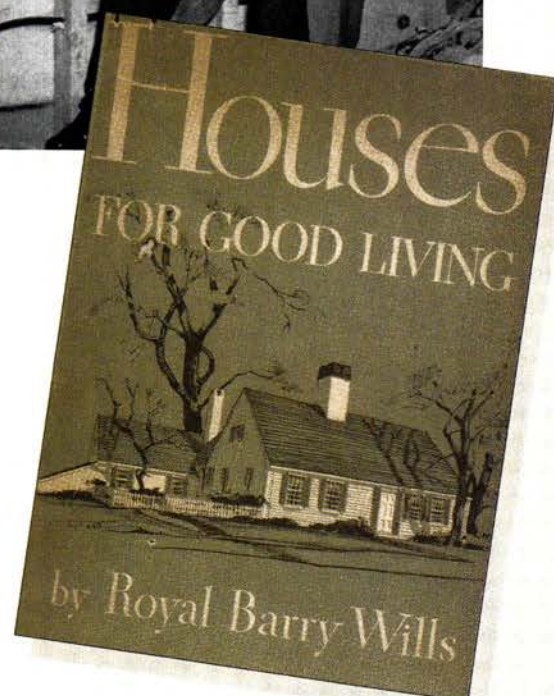
Left: Even before the vast proliferation of postwar Cape Cods, many houses stretched the concept. This 1933 Sears version in Garrett Park, Maryland, sticks to the full Cape format, while extending the plan with a wing addition.

uous dormer. Shingles and clapboard siding predominate, either in the hybrid 18th-century manner or uniformly of one or the other cladding, but there may be modern siding like Amazonite or cement-asbestos boards and shingles. Brick walls are also often seen. There may now be a simple cornice, and the roofline may be above the window lintels rather than directly atop them. Roofs are often covered in asphalt shingles rather than dressed-wood shingles. The large, central chimney is almost always retained, though some end-wall chimneys may be found. The door may have a transom, plain or elliptical, and perhaps sidelights and a frontispiece—or even a canopy. While the originals are ground-huggers, the revivals are typically larger in scale and taller, to allow for modern room height and to raise the building off the ground. Façades may include bow or bay windows or even picture windows.

The acknowledged master of the 20th-century Cape Cod house was Royal Barry Wills, who found in the common dwellings of his native New England both an ideal model for an attractive, efficient small house and a vehicle for propelling his practice. Starting in commercial work in the 1920s, he concentrated on residential design after his winning entry in the *Better Homes* in America Small House Competition brought him national attention in 1932. With a knack for explaining housebuilding to the layman through light-hearted prose and illustrations, by the 1940s Wills enjoyed a second career as author and architectural sage in the popular press. Though no less adept at designing houses in the International/Modern idiom, it was Wills's gift for Cape Cods that set the standard.



LISA LARSON GRAPHIC HOUSE / TIMEPIX

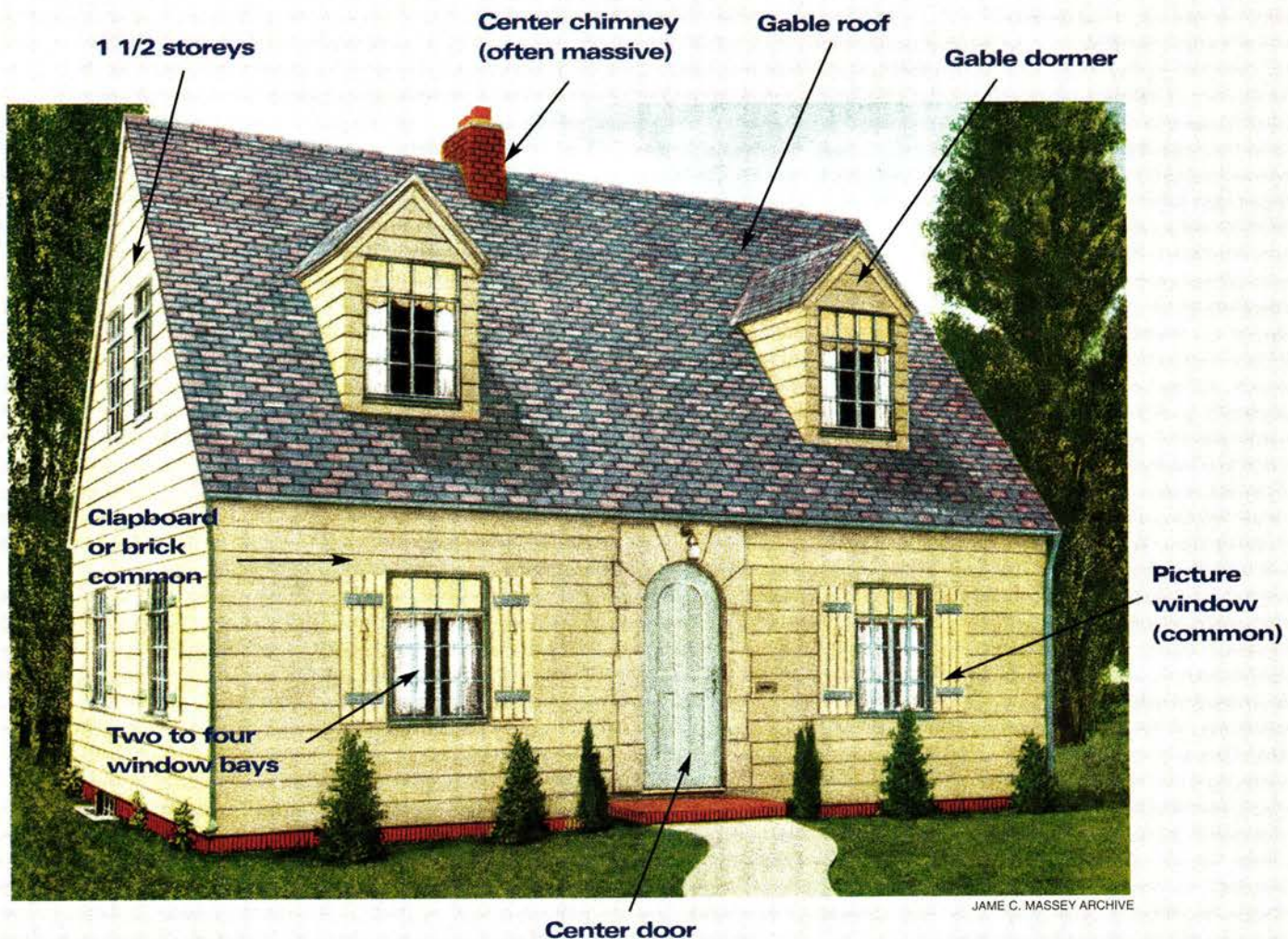


GORDON BOCK ARCHIVE

At its height, the appeal of the Cape was so universal that it took root literally anywhere—here in Reno, Nevada, perhaps as far from Cape Cod geographically and culturally as one can get. Though the chimney, siding, and entrance say mid-20th-century, the essential “Capeness” remains.



The Cape Cod Revival





JOSEPH SCHERSHEL / TIMEPIX

The unparalleled propagators of the Cape Cod house were the Levitt brothers, William and Alfred (shown here).

Expanding their father's system for quick house construction to factorylike production, they built the first mass housing developments, starting with Levittown, New York, in 1947. Though later communities offered different styles, the original model was the basic Cape—even though some 17,000 of them.



TONY LINCK/TIMEPIX

Cellars—once small storage spaces, usually circular—may be fully excavated today.

The plan of the original Cape varied, except for the central chimney mass that serviced all fireplaces and a central but tight space for stairs. The new Cape is usually planned more freely with wings, but retains a central chimney as a vestige of the past if nothing more. Wills, in particular, was most successful in thoughtfully planning interiors with compact kitchen/dining rooms to suit modern living.

The popularity of the Cape Cod house increased after World War II, as the number and variety shown in home magazines will attest. It may be open for discussion whether these dwellings can be called revivals of the Cape Cod. Beyond the gambrel roof controversy, houses that have large projecting front entrances or continuous dormers on the front may be Capes only in the minds of real estate agents. As always, the picturesque cottage is the basic requirement.

Nonetheless, the concept of a small, 1 1/2-storey cottage met the mass pent-up need for new houses in the 1940s and early '50s, while the size fit within the limits of the public's lean budgets and the nation's immediate postwar shortage of construction materials. Continued variations on the original produced the basic five-room, postwar veteran's house—plain to a fault. This version was soon slightly modernized in the huge Levittown developments that

changed the concept of the middle-class suburban house around 1950. While continuing with its own picturesque success, the new branch of the Cape Cod tree grew farther away from its roots to a life all its own, with low gable roofs, carports, and large, steel picture windows. By 1960, the age of the Cape Cod was passing, yet even now some are custom-built for people who remember the charm of the original Cape Cod and its 20th-century revival. 🏠

Trim & Proper




A little molding can make a big difference for a typical Cape Cod



Redecorating can work wonders on a room, but so can another enhancement that's quicker and easier: new trim. Molding gives a room richness and dimension—something seriously lacking in most cape cods—and allows the play of light and shadow

across its sharp lines to add detail and interest. It defines windows and doors within an elegant frame and anchors wall to floor with the baseboard. A shapely crown eases the transition from wall to ceiling, and a simple chair rail creates proportion. In the project shown here, a dining room needed a style upgrade that only new molding could create. Around the windows, plain clamshell molding was replaced by fluted casing, highlighted at the corners with rosettes. The passageway got the same treatment. A bull-nosed chair rail strikes the right line along the walls, as does the crown molding with its classic dentil motif. First, the pine was pre-treated with Minwax® Pre-Stain Wood Conditioner. Next, the wood was stained with Minwax® Wood Finish™ Cherry and protected with Minwax® Fast-Drying Polyurethane Semi-Gloss. With minimal time and expense, a cape cod dining room was transformed into a warm, classic showcase.





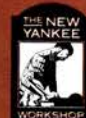
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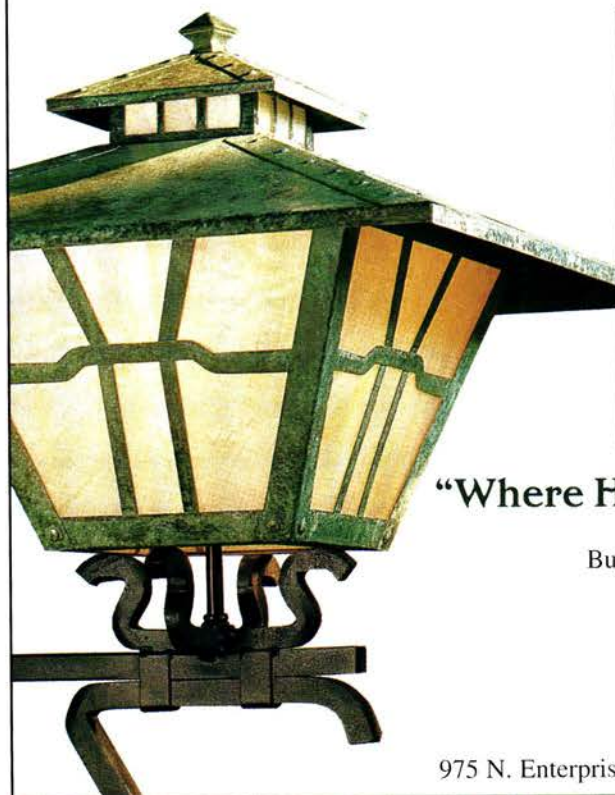
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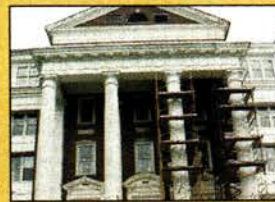
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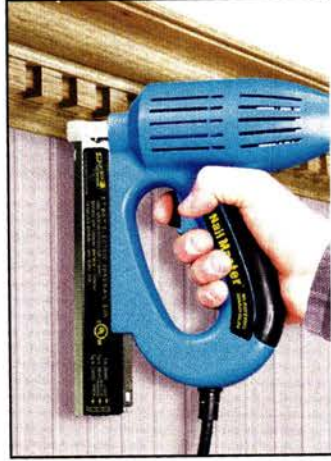
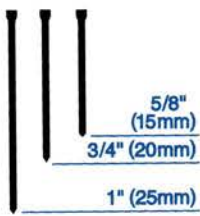
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Rev. 700

Flat Out

BY GORDON BOCK

The on-going search for seamless roofing started with row houses.

By the mid-19th century, it was becoming clear that the growing construction of new kinds of urban buildings—row houses in particular—called for a new kind of roofing. What these buildings had in common were roofs that were so low in slope that traditional wood- or metal-roofing methods, with their many pieces and seams, would not suffice. What was needed was a material that could be installed in sections to form a continuous, essentially seamless covering across the nearly flat surface. The answer was a system that developed over several decades during the heyday of the Industrial Revolution, giving rise to many modern roofing materials and still evolving today.



CAROLYN BATES

Since the 1970s, rolls of rubber roofing, such as EPDM, have been lapped and cemented together for a single-ply membrane on flat roofs.

Composition Roofs

As early as the 1840s, builders and entrepreneurs pioneering the then new industry of man-made roofing were covering buildings by saturating rolls of textile or paper with some sort of water-repelling liquid, then laying on a final coating of crushed granules. While all had the same general idea, the ingredients they tried ran the gamut of conventional construction materials. Textiles included felt, canvas, or flax; saturants might be fish oil, mineral tar, pine pitch, beef tallow, or animal blood. Granules were most often sand, but also marble dust, china clay, ground shells, even crushed glass. Of the many men who dabbled in the alchemy of perfecting a new roofing, the ones to hit on a true philosopher's stone were Samuel and Cyrus Warren of Cincinnati.

Ever in search of better components, Samuel began experimenting with coal tar, a byproduct of the gas industry. Back then, the illuminating gas just beginning to be widely piped across the country for street lighting was made by heating coal in large receptacles. Gas companies had to pay to get rid of the noxious, sticky waste resulting from the process if they couldn't dump it in a convenient river. When Warren discovered that coal tar worked as well or better than pine tar on roofing, he struck a deal with the gas company to haul away their tar for nothing, thereby securing a better ingredient at next to no cost. As their company expanded, the Warrens arranged similar contracts with other gasworks—at first, even receiving a fee for removing the hard-to-get-rid-of tar.

The Warren brothers continued to make improvements to their roofing product, switching to felt for the textile base and crushed gravel for the coating. They mechanized the process of saturating the textile by passing it through rollers, instead of hand-dipping it in vats as their competitors had been doing. By the 1860s they were looking for a substitute for coal tar, which they could no longer get for free, and their attention turned to asphalt. Naturally occurring asphalt deposits had been used on a limited scale for waterproofing since biblical times, and the largest source in the world happened to be relatively nearby in Pitch Lake in Trinidad of the West Indies. Throughout the 1880s and '90s the Warrens imported Trinidad asphalt, mixed it with petroleum tar—another conveniently free byproduct, this time of the emerging oil distilling industry—to produce roofing, roof pitch, and paving products—all still used in their advanced forms today.

Roofing by the Roll

The Warrens, like their competitors, not only had their own contracting business, but they also sold their composition roofing to other contractors who installed it in a variety of ways. Working on pitched roofs in the 1870s, these contractors were laying rolls of composition roofing—either saturated on-site or beforehand at a plant—in lapping courses with nails, then coating the finished surface with the chosen gravel or mineral. From here it was a short step to the mineral-coated roll roofing sold ready to use in lumberyards and mail-order suppliers in 1900. For the flat roofs of row houses, they found it effective to lay the saturated roofing in five or so layers, mopping between each layer with liquid asphalt to cement the mass together. A coating of gravel came last, like the frosting on a bituminous Napoleon pastry. Generally called a “hot-mopped” or “built-up” roof, this method has been in use for over a century and is still in service on countless buildings today.

Our tale might end here if the quest for the perfect flat roofing didn't change with the times. In the 1960s, the builders of Chicago's O'Hare Airport tried a new material for covering its great stretches of roof. Known as single-ply roofing, it was assembled with a man-made rubber, EPDM, that is now widely used on all kinds of flat roofs—from strip malls to row houses. The original use of EPDM, however, dates to the 1940s when it was developed as a pond liner during World War II. The Warren brothers must be smiling. 🏠



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Outside the Old House

page 43

Web sites for historic garden research:

<http://web.syr.edu/~jryan/infopro/hs.html>

State historical societies, which may provide access to old photos of landscaping.

www.gardendigest.com

A garden history timeline with year-by-year developments.

www.oldhousegardens.com

A site with numerous research links listed under "Great Groups to Join and Learn From."

www.cr.nps.gov

A guide to National Park Service resources of cultural landscapes.

www.monticello.org/chp/ and

www.history.org/history/CWLand/index.cfm Sites for the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

www.ahlp.org

The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation provides many useful links.

www.siris.si.edu

On this Smithsonian site, click to search Archival, Manuscript, and Photographic Collections then "browse images" and choose the repository of the Archives of American Gardens to see hundreds of historic garden photos.

Web sites for heirloom plants:

www.oldhousegardens.com

A site with Old House Gardens' own plant material and numerous links under "Other Great Antique Plant Sources."

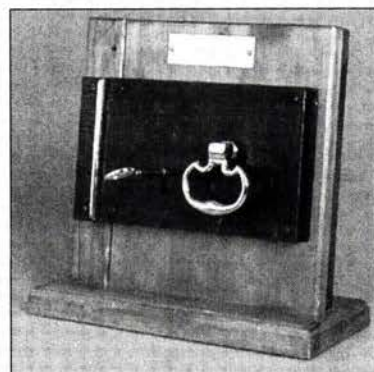
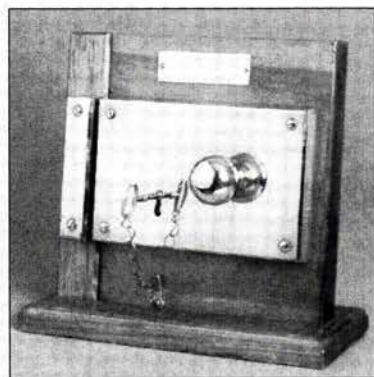
www.combinedroselist.com

A source of information about nurseries carrying old rose varieties.

www.antiqueplants.com

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A site for the National Agricultural Library, with an heirloom plant link.

www.twinleaf.org

A site for bulbs and seeds from Thomas Jefferson's historic Monticello.

How the Butler Did It

page 52

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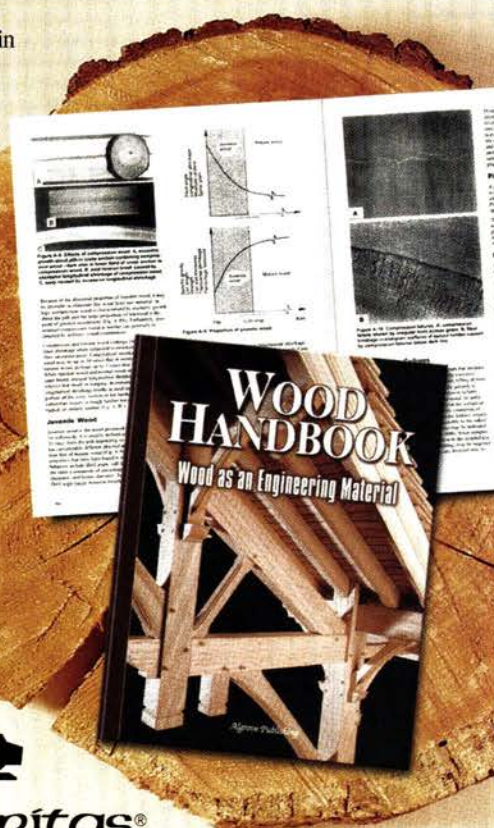
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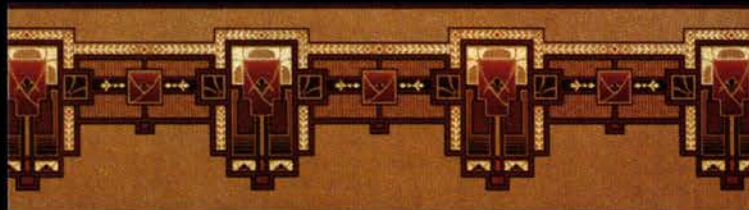
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5. Apply second coat of saturant to wet mat.



9. Remove mat strips on both sides of cut.



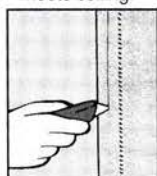
6. Apply 1st coat of saturant to adjacent area.



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



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



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



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Useful Internet sources:

AARP

"Does Your Home Meet Your Needs? A Checklist;" "Universal Design: A Home for All"

aarp.org/universalhome/checklist

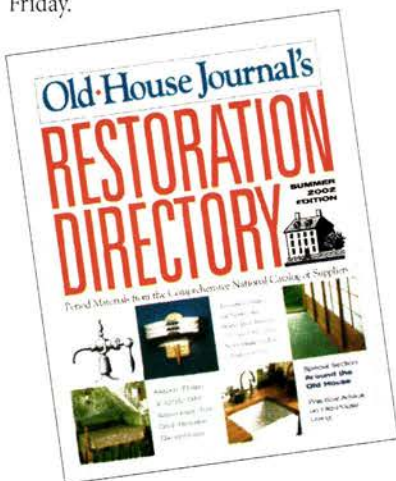
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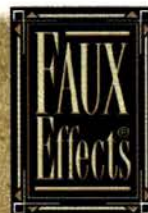
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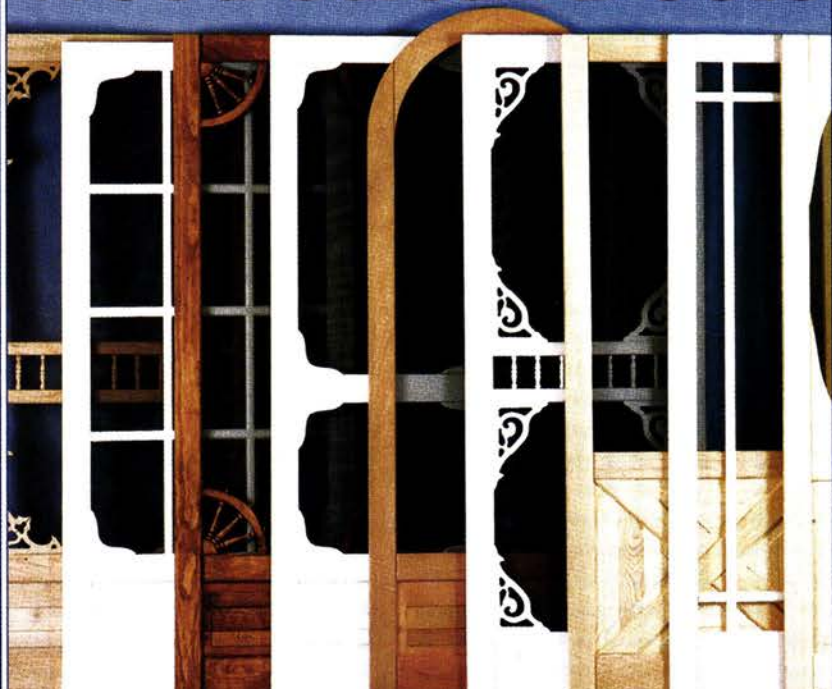
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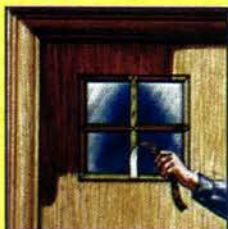
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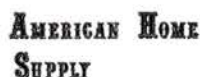
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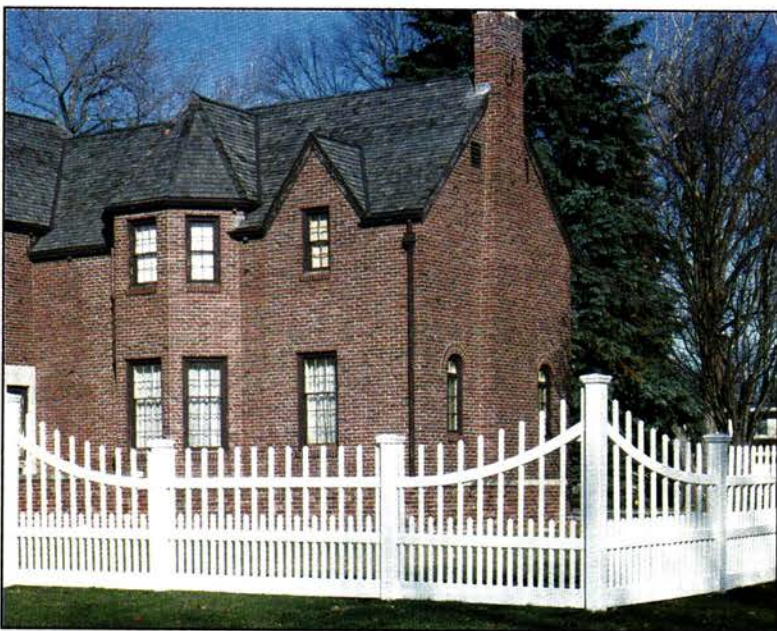
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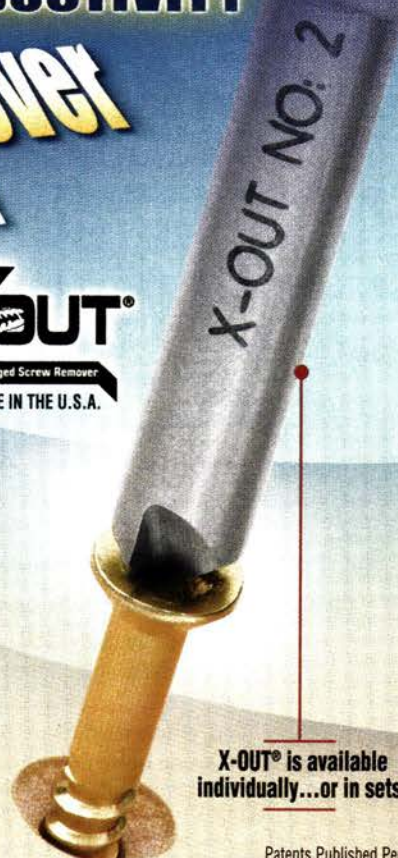
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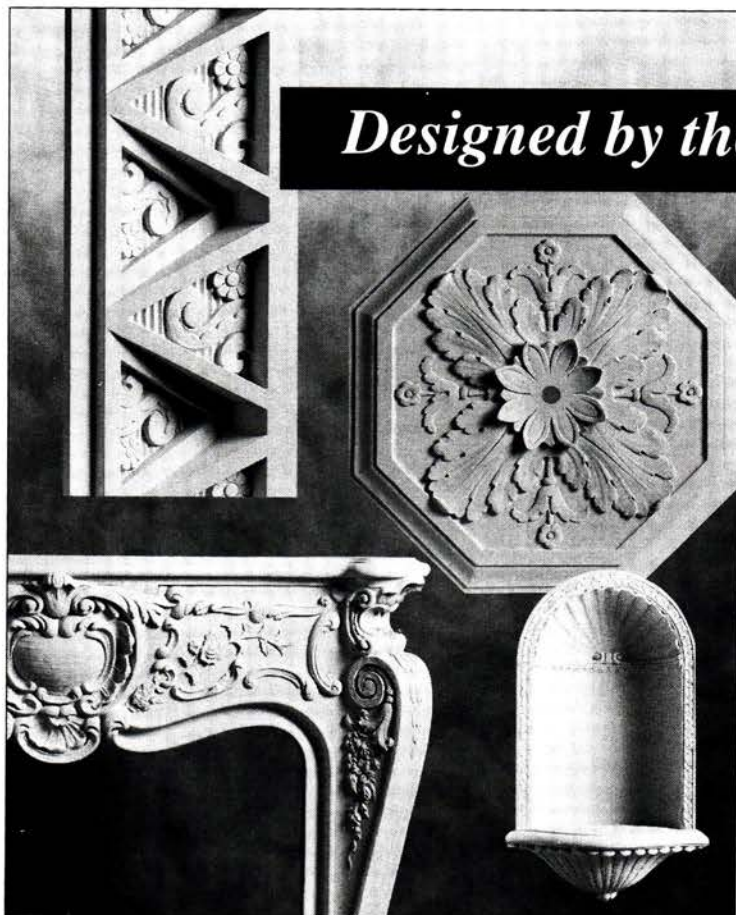


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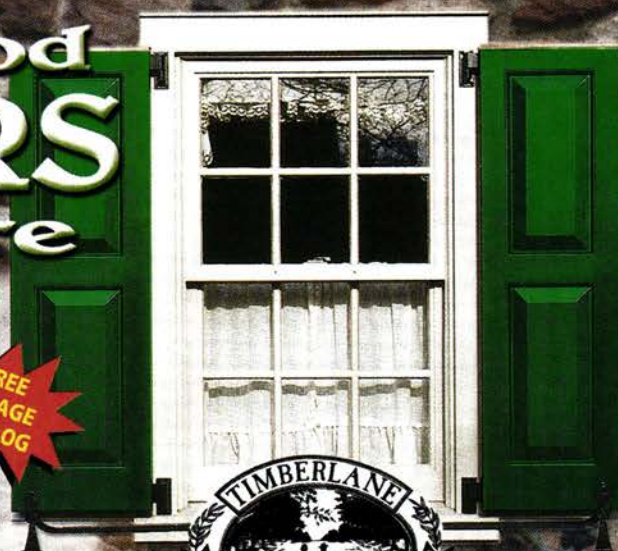
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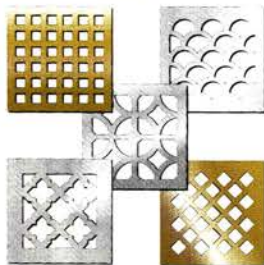
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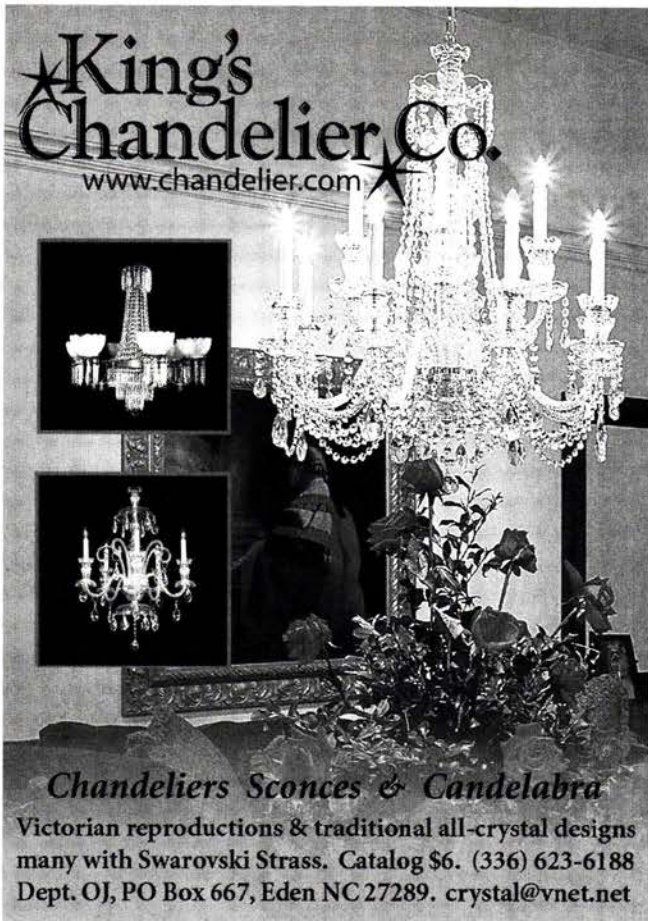
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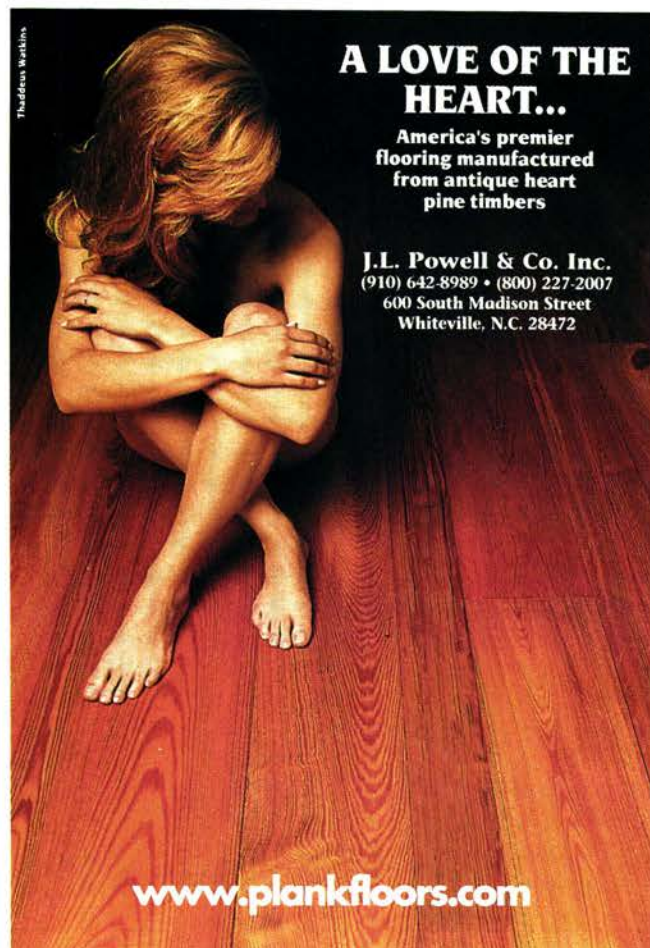


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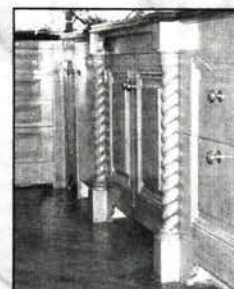
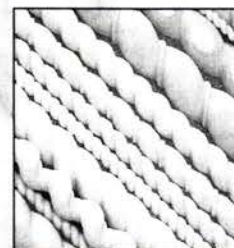
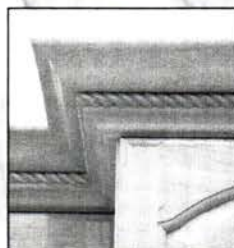
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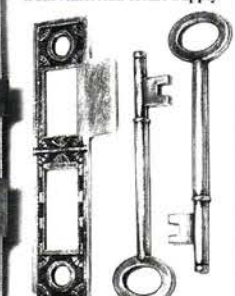
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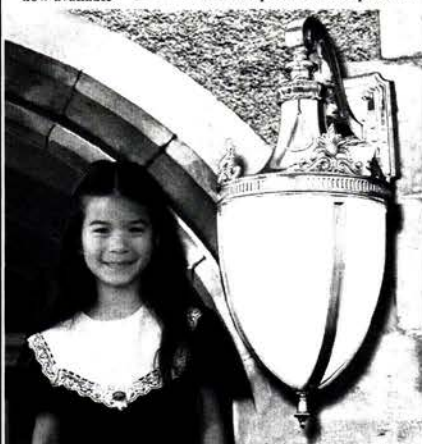


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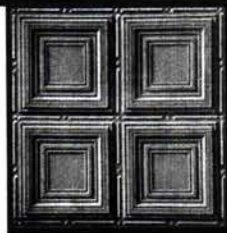
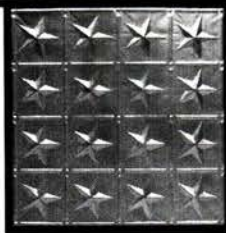
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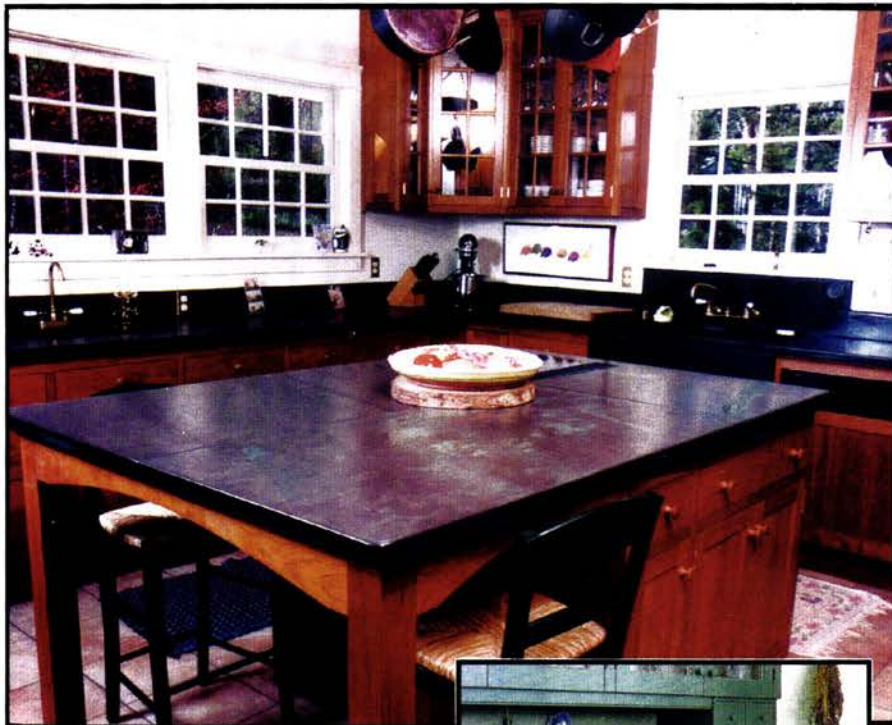
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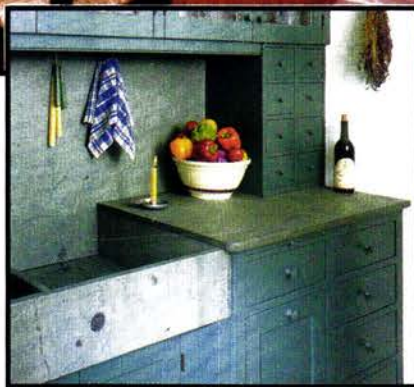
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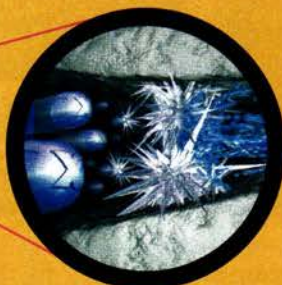
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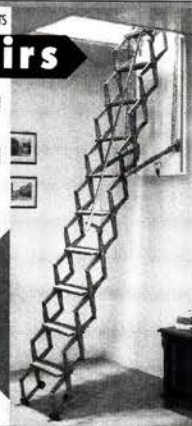
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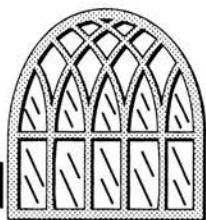
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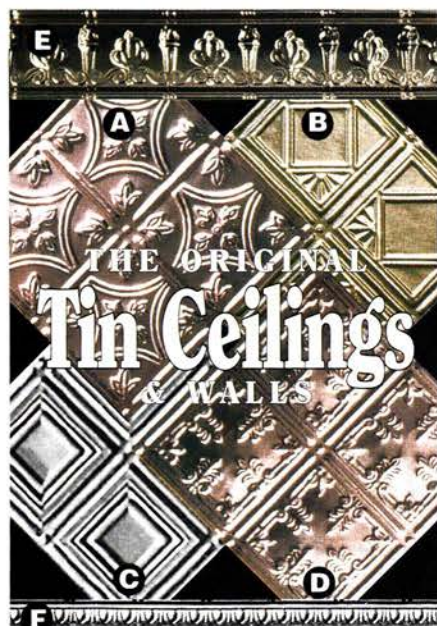
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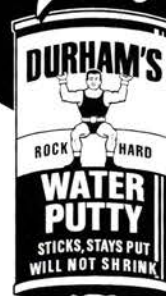
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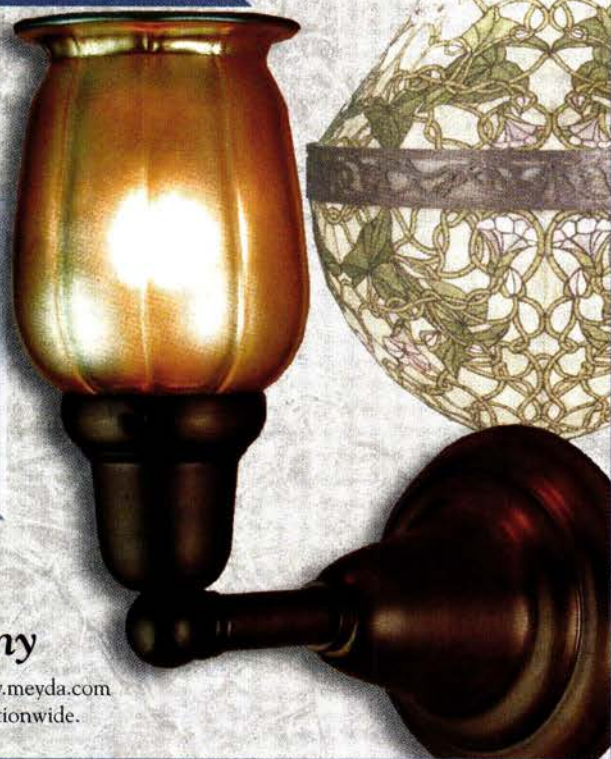
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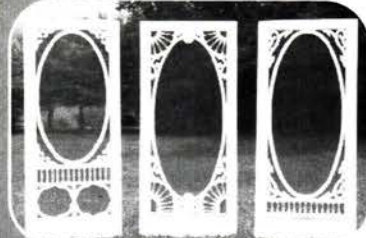
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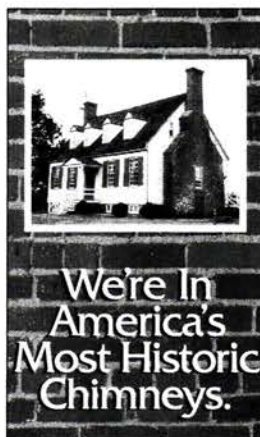


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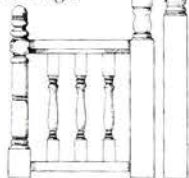
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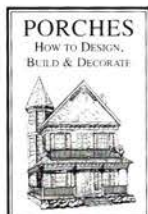
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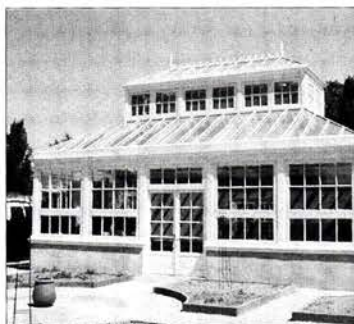
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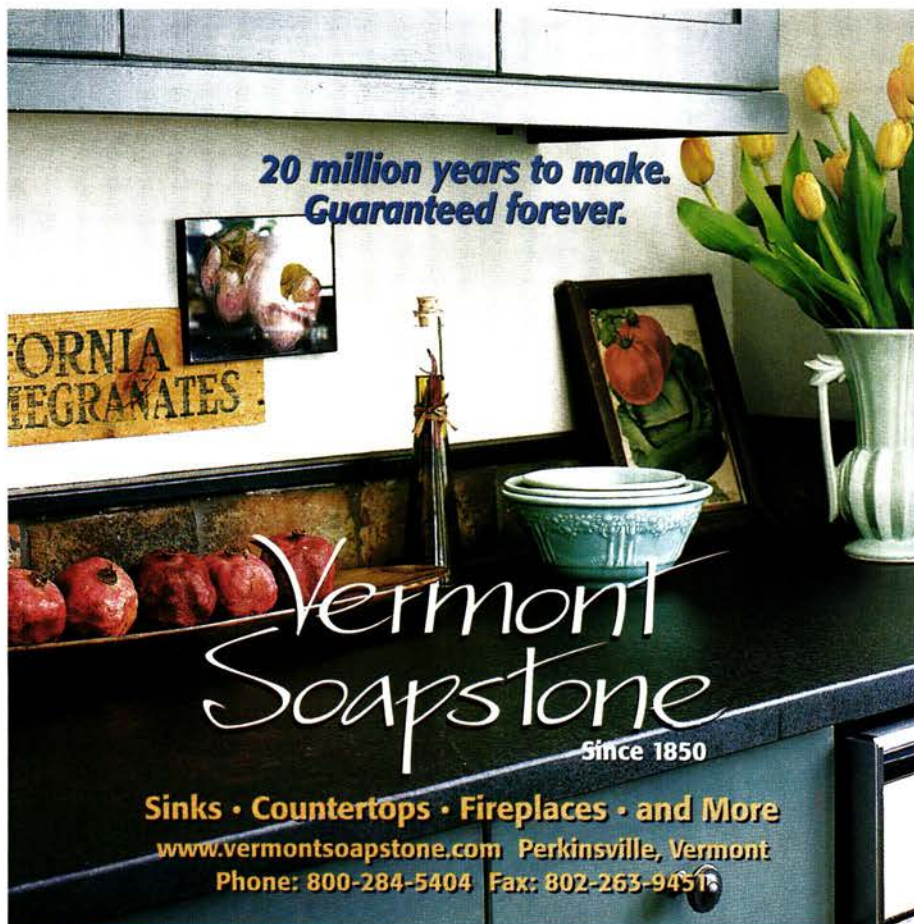


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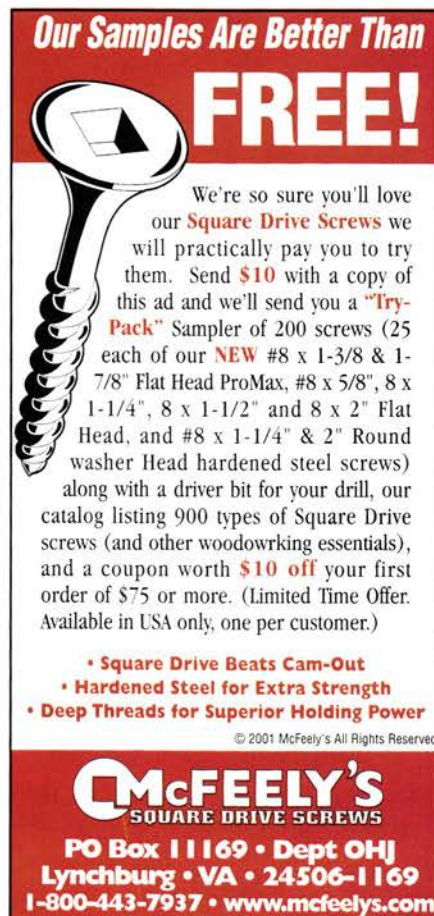
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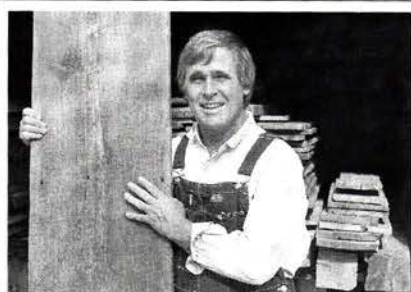
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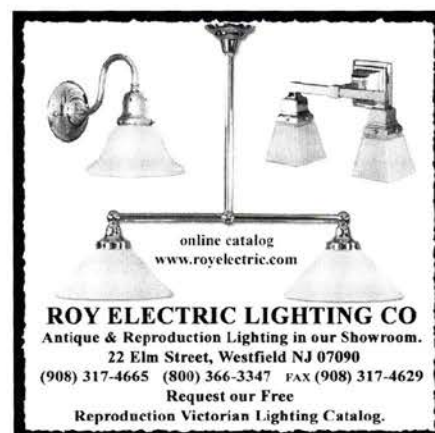
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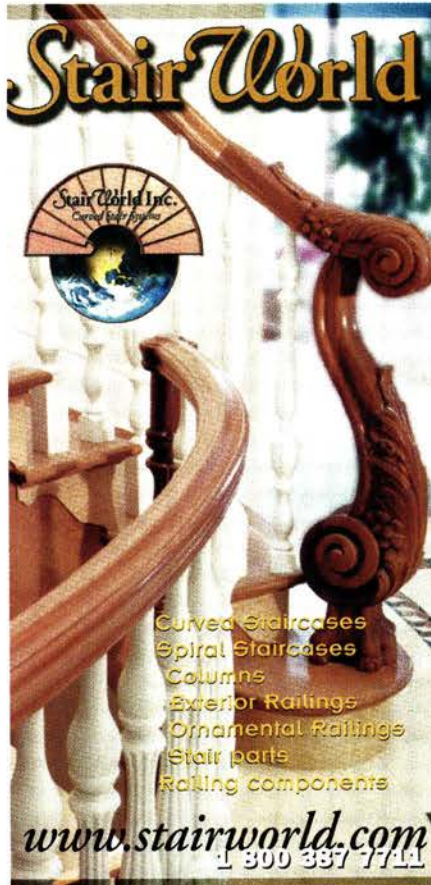
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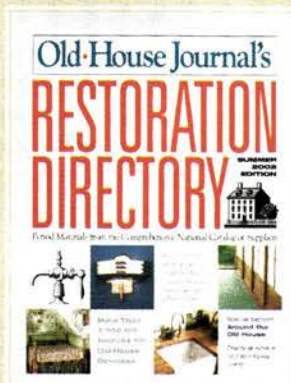
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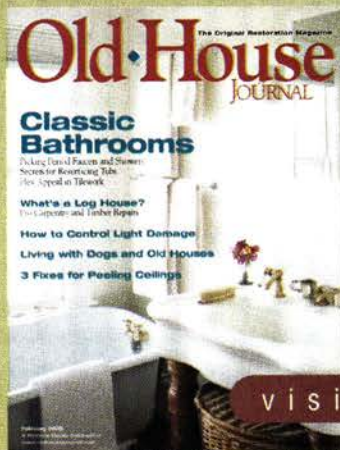
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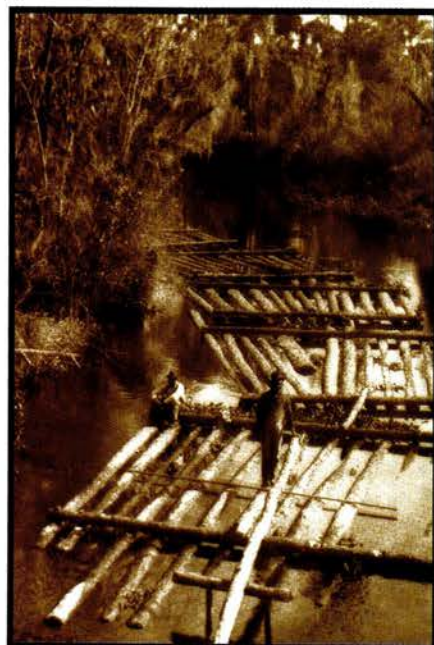
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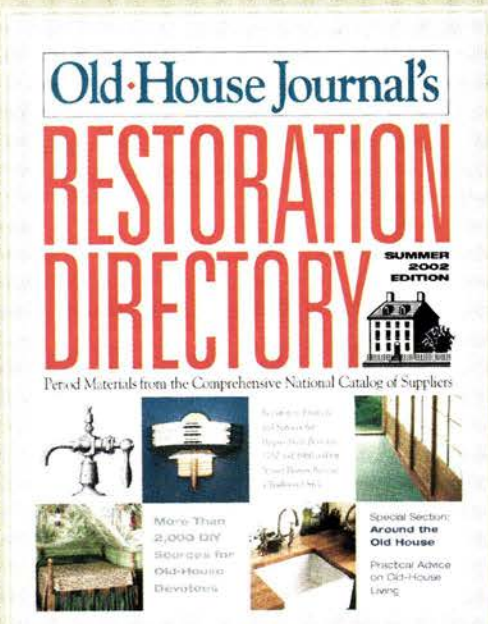
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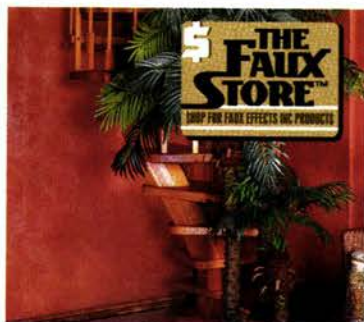
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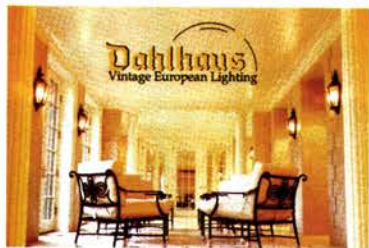
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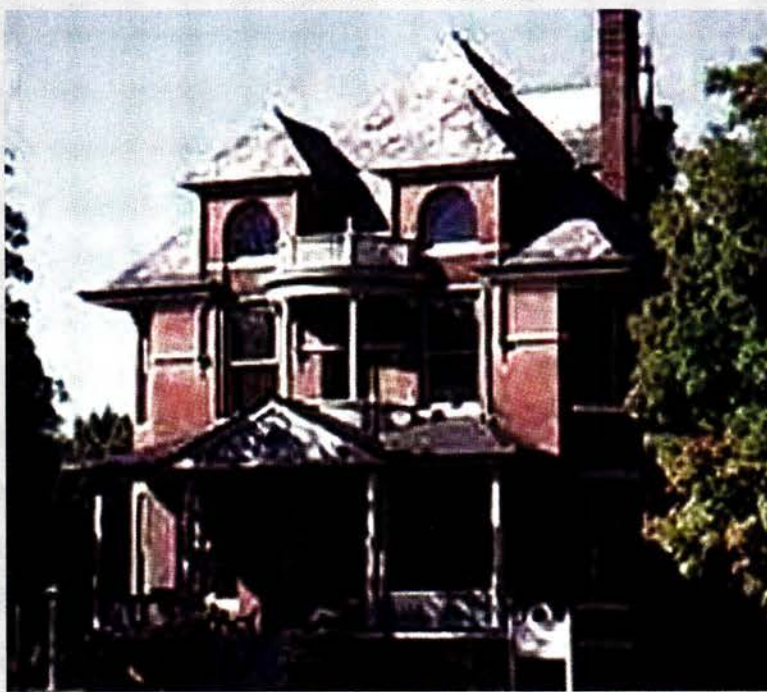


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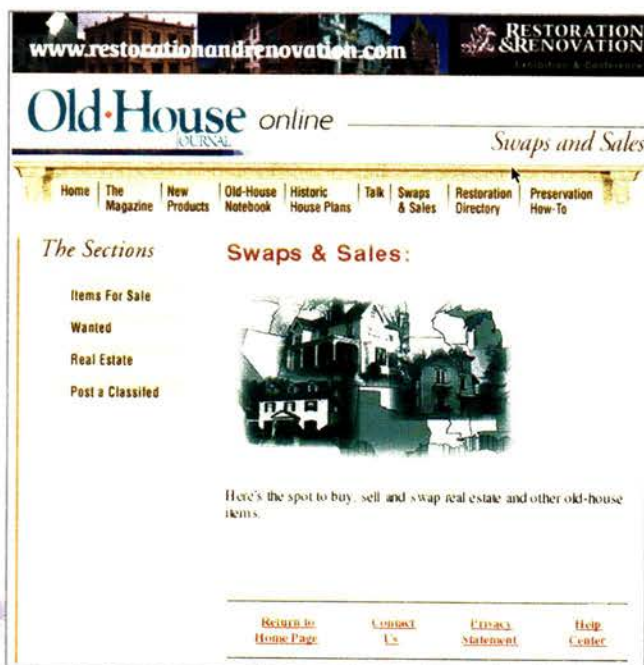
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Follow the submission rules for "Remuddling" as outlined below.



This issue's contributor tells us that the town of Waxahachie, Texas (south of Dallas), is nicknamed "The Gingerbread City" for its many ornate turn-of-the-20th-century houses. The house at bottom is largely devoid of filigree and frippery, but the one at top may have flaunted one too many shingle patterns in its now barely seen dormers. We all know what happened to the uppity Little Gingerbread Man when he taunted the neighbors with his "Catch me if you can!" He got swallowed by the wide, gaping jaws of a hungry fox.

Win \$100 If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color prints. We'll award you \$100 if your photos are selected. The message is more dramatic if you send along a picture of a similar unremuddled building. (Original photography only, please; no clippings. Also, we reserve the right to republish the photos online and in other publications we own.) Remuddling Editor, OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, 1000 Potomac Street, NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007.

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