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Stick-Style Facades

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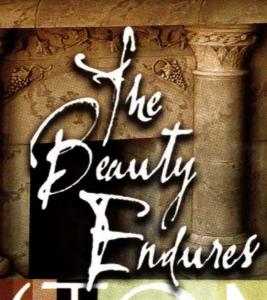
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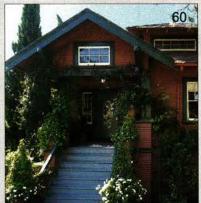
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# Old House



May / June 2003 Volume 31 / Number 3 Established 1973





ON THE COVER: Photo by Brian Vanden Brink. A coastal Maine 1840s Greek Revival sports Gothic Revival-style verge board—a later addition. For more on verge boards check out this issue's "Plots & Plans" on

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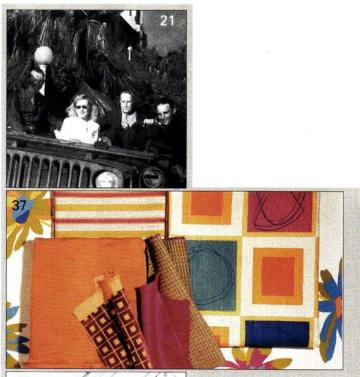
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# Old-House

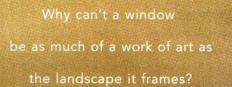




#### **Good Stuff**

Visitors to OHJ Online spend more time in the "Magazine" section than in any other part of the site. Small wonder. It boasts some of the best features from past issues of OHJ, conveniently archived in alpha order. Though our stash of back stories isn't close to being complete-a more extensive archive is on the way-it does contain plenty of compelling content, including great pieces for this time of year: "Choosing Exterior Paint," "Making Sense of Paint Strippers," and "Projects That Pay You Back," among many others. Stop in, and you'll see what we mean.

Go to: oldhousejournal.com

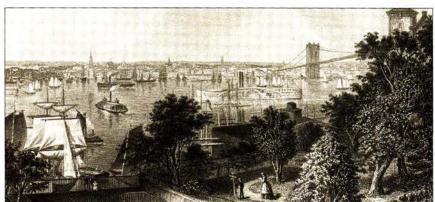


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# Editor's Page

# **Twin Tower Reflections**



ailing from the New York City suburbs, with friends and relatives in Manhattan, I knew the World Trade Center well enough from a distance. I remember its construction during the many turbulent events of the late 1960s and the fanfare when it was finished in 1972. Like so many tall buildings, the now iconic double towers were viewed more as "cathedrals of commerce" than breakthroughs in urban design, more notable for their record height and economic impact than any breadth of beauty. Yet that's often the way in New York as elsewhere. A recent headline about the competition for the WTC replacement noted the obvious currents of politics and real estate in the proposal designs. As they say back home, "This is news?"

In the early 1970s, when they were still incomplete, the Twin Towers affected millions of local lives far beyond the thousands of people who worked on or in the structures. As the latest tallest buildings downtown, they played havoc with the TV transmitters that were then atop the Empire State Building. Folks in living rooms from Connecticut to New Jersey spent hours adjusting and readjusting their rooftop antennas or rabbit ears (Remember rabbit ears?) to vanquish the double ghosts of signals echoing off the towers. By the late 1970s, when the towers had settled in to a familiar silhouette on the Manhattan skyline, I learned they had roles as reflectors of a different sort. Their immense height—scores of storeys above the next highest building in Manhattan—meant that they could be seen for an extraordinary number of miles before being eclipsed by the curvature of the Earth. Ships approaching New York Harbor quickly discovered how to find a landfall from as much as 40 miles at sea by keeping radar watch for the tower tops as they poked over the horizon. The towers doubled as a point of welcome perhaps equal to the Statue of Liberty.

The pit where the towers once stood is surrounded not by the mundane stuff of mall America but by a rich tapestry of structures that makes lower Manhattan a treasure trove of historic architecture. A stone's throw from Ground Zero is Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church, a Gothic Revival landmark that replaces two earlier churches on the site. Just blocks away there's the 1913 Woolworth Building—the original "cathedral of commerce" with its own reign as the tallest skyscraper in the world. Among my favorites are Century 21, a sharp department store housed in a stunning Art Deco former bank—a model of adaptive reuse—and Brooklyn Bridge, the prototype for all modern spans. Buildings have the power to affect our lives, even when they're miles away. Even after they're gone.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Gordon H. Bock
ART DIRECTOR	Karen Pollard
SENIOR EDITOR	Kathleen Fisher
MANAGING EDITOR	Nancy E. Berry
	James C. Massey
	Shirley Maxwell
	Marylee MacDonald
	Steve Jordan
EDITORIAL OFFICES	1000 Potomac St., NW
	Suite 102
	Washington, DC 20007
TEL	(202) 339-0744
FAX	(202) 339-0749
SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES	(800) 234-3797
PUBLISHER	John A. Pagliaro
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR	Venus Bazan Barratt
RETAIL SALES DIRECTOR	Mark Harris,
	National Publisher Services
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Katie Peyton Mason
DIGITAL IMAGING CONSULTANT	George Brown
	Restore Media, LLC
	1000 Potomac St., NW
	Suite 102
	Washington, DC 20007
	(202) 339-0744



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The last two issues of OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL are the best in years. The magazine once again has informative and helpful articles. Thank you for returning the magazine to an educational and entertaining resource rather than coffee-table decoration.

R. Kent Kellams Wichita, Kansas

#### Electrifying!

I read with interest your information on linoleum ("Soft Shoe'n," November/ December 2002).

A year and a half ago, my husband and I bought a 1951 house with a kitchen floor that was composed of old vinyl tile and bare spots. For a year we investigated flooring in home stores, specialty stores, workshops, and other sources. We ended up using Armstrong Imperial Texture tile in shades of light and dark green.

Because our kitchen is long, my husband installed a "thunderbolt" pattern. We've received lots of compliments on it, and, while no one has ever seen a similar design, I don't think it detracts from the 1950s look.

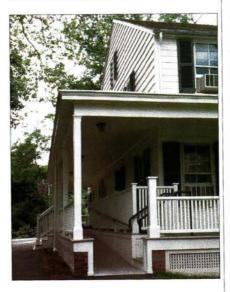
Heather Ince Rogers Biloxi, Mississippi

### Accessible Design

The March/April issue of OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL shows a perfect example of an attractive access ramp. What a beautiful idea!

This picture in OHJ is such a great example of what can be done with a little forethought and good planning. The end product is innovative and useful and shows total respect for an old house and its inhabitants. *Mary C. Lambert* 

Havre de Grace, Maryland



### **Basement Springs Eternal**

I wonder if some comments on the Mower House ("High and Dry," March/April) may be incorrect. My parents owned such a building in western Pennsylvania and, as I understand it, springs in the basement were not used as a crude form of sewage system. Many houses constructed over springs used the cool water to provide cold storage for milk, butter, eggs, and other perishables. Springs may also have been used as a source of fresh water all year long. *John Francis Zeedick Kershaw, South Carolina* 

Naturally running water has been used for many purposes throughout history from running taps in Rome to food storage in the pre-Frigidaire era. Small spring houses often served as a place to fetch fresh water, right as it bubbled up from its underground source, as well as to keep bottles of milk and the like fresh by submerging them in the icy water. It was a tremendous



#### ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

HEADQUARTERS

PUBLISHER John A. Pagliaro 1000 Potomac St., NW Suite 102 Washington, DC 20007 TEL (202) 339-0744, ext.102 FAX (202) 339-0749 jpagliaro@restoremedia.com

EAST COAST Robert P. Fox 27 York Ave. Rye, NY 10580 TEL (914) 777-1898 FAX (914) 777-0099 bfox@restoremedia.com

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### Letters

way to assure that food stayed fresh, even in scorching weather. Running water has also been used as a form of sanitation control through the ages, with notable examples in the ancient Egyptian privies found by archaeologists and the waste control at Pompeii. We may never know how the



springs in the Mower House were intended to be used. Although similar houses may have used spring water for comestibles, the inspections at the Mower House provided some suggestion that it may have been used for sanitation, at least a possibility. Thanks for sharing the other, perhaps more common, uses of springs with our readers. —Eds.

### Going for Bronze

Thank you for your article on bronzing radiators (November/December 2002). You mention stripping off built-up paint. What method of stripping is suitable for radiators? *Jim Racine Montclair, New Jersey* 

With the exception of heat tools, which lose much of their heat to the mass of cast iron, almost any paint-stripping method is worth trying on radiators. If your radiator is disconnected and readily moved, consider having it sand blasted at shops that do this work. Small radiators might lend themselves to dip-stripping in a homemade tank with a caustic solution (see "Radiators in the Rough" November/December 2001). —Eds.

### Home Sweet Cape Cod

What a great look at the history of the ubiquitous Cape Cod ("The Cape Cod Revival," March/April ). Given their history as a starting home for many World War II veterans, it is no wonder why so many of us look so fondly on the Cape Cod style. While commonplace in all of our childhood (and current) neighborhoods, there has always been enough variation in the Cape Cod styles to make each one seem unique. It just goes to show that similar, affordable houses don't have to be carbon copies of each other. but instead can speak to the style of the family that lives there. Rose Allen West Roxbury, Massachusetts



### Keeping the Lead Out

We have been OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL readers since the very beginning. As restoration contractors, we have also had the pleasure of working with Marylee McDonald on a few writing projects. We were pleased to see her thorough article on lead (November/December 2002). We have often thought of her in regard to raising children in the midst of our own project. When we purchased our 1876 Victorian ten years ago, we monitored both daughters' lead levels very carefully. One area that caused great concern was the soil around our home. It was lead contaminated because the building had been



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Letters

sandblasted in the 1960s. We have been told that lead never leaves the soil. Costly lead abatement was not a realistic option. We researched some ways to safeguard children that we think are worth sharing.

Prevent little ones from digging in the dirt.

 Plant grass and ground cover to leave fewer "digging" areas that might attract them.

• If you suspect lead contamination, do not grow food plants, especially tomatoes. My research showed that lead has systemic properties in tomato plants, which in turn could be introduced into the bloodstream.

• Small children are more susceptible to lead poisoning. Absorption is greater and, thereby, more dangerous.

As we monitored our daughters' lead levels, the older one's never changed. The younger one (then 18 months) showed elevated levels after we remodeled the kitchen in the fall. It was determined that she was not harmed, but better precautions were in order. We were also told that incidents of poisoning/exposure are more common in the winter months. Our indoor fall remodel had created more dust because of the closed environment, and therefore increased the chances of exposure by our children. Our county health department was a terrific resource and pointed us in the right direction for further information.

Pete and Mo Nicolazzi Burlington, Wisconsin

### **Cooking Additions**

I'm renovating the kitchen in my Colonial Revival home. I read with great interest your story on outfitting houses for people with physical limitations ("Old Houses, Aging People," March / April). Many appliance doors, handles, countertops and drawers are not suited for those with handicap or injury.

I was therefore pleased to see a wonderful-looking wall oven on page 71 of the article. What a great idea to have the door swing open to the side, instead of cantilever down toward a person who may not be able to bear the weight Joan Edwards



well! Where can I find such an oven? Joan Edwards Charlotte, North Carolina

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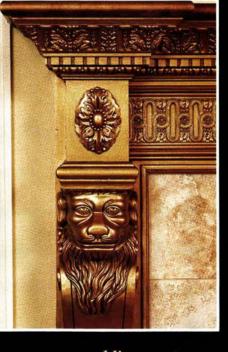
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### Letters

We have had many questions regarding this article and the ideas it offers. The oven shown is the Country Charm wall oven by House of Webster. You can find out more about it and other appliances from: House of Webster (800) 369-4641 www.houseofwebster.com-Eds.

### **Fitting Fixture**

Help! My husband and I own a 1920s house in the Philly suburbs. The main bathroom has the original wall subway tile and bathtub in white.

Sometime in the 1970s, the previous owners put in a "lovely" pink floor, pink loo and sink, and replaced the tub/shower fixtures, all of which we want to undo back to something more historical.

We'd like to replace the fixtures in a

1920s style for the tub/shower. The layout is two lower handles for the tub with a separate spout, and two upper handles for the shower head above. We do have access to the plumbing through the backside via a nifty removable curio cabinet.

Didn't I see an article in OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL recently about bathroom faucets, handles and materials? When was it, and would it have sources that could help me on my search?

Maggie via e-mail Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Take a look at the October 2002 issue for a peek at repair and upkeep of vintage faucets. You'll also find a list of suppliers that may provide you with the exact faucet make-up you are looking for. -Eds.

#### Corrections

In "Converging Contingencies" (March/ April) the correct number for Chubb Group of Insurance Companies is (800) 252-4670.

In that same article, the current agency administering the National Trust's Homeowner's Insurance Program is Maury, Donnelly and Parr. The contact there is Brian Phoebus at (800) 638-9202.

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



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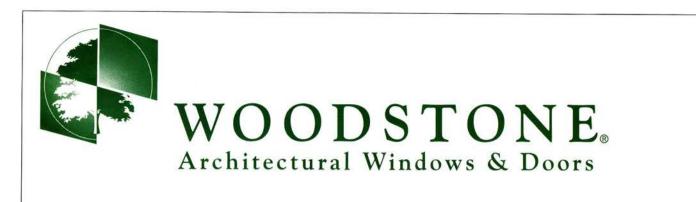
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## Annunciator

### Calendar

#### PASADENA, CA. May 10 Old Pasadena Walking Tour

Tour Pasadena's historic downtown. Tour begins at 9:00 am and includes a slide presentation and a 90-minute guided walk. Visit one of the best examples of revitalization in the country. The cost is \$5. For more information call (626) 441-6333 or visit www.pasadenaheritage.org/ walking tours.html

#### MANCHESTER, N.H. May 10–11 Old House and Barn Exposition

This one-stop-shopping trade show is designed to help old-house and oldbarn owners find appropriate and affordable solutions to their preservation and restoration issues. A focus on traditional crafts and services, as well as in-town buildings, outbuildings, and landscapes. Sponsored by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, the event is located at the Manchester Armory. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children. For more information call (603) 224-2281 or visit www.nh preservation.org

#### DEARBORN, MICH. May 17–18 *Greenfield Village Antiques Show and Sale* The event hosts more than 40 exemplary art and antiques exhibitors in the country. This year's event welcomes HGTV's Kitty Bartholomew who will lecture on using antiques and

## Castle Keepsakes

Did your grandparents hang out with the Beautiful People of their day? Or perhaps they attended a once-in-a-lifetime soirée at the California coast's most famous estate, and a photo of the event lies moldering away in the attic.

If so, this is your chance to help the folks at Hearst Castle with their plans for a major landscape restoration. Just as with houses owned by lesser mortals (see "Playing Garden Sleuth," March/April OHJ), William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon can use the evidence provided by oral histories, fading family photos, and flickering film footage to substantiate existing evidence for what its gardens used to look like.

Like everything else at Hearst Castle-from the over-the-top mansion itself to the reindeer for its famous zoo-the gardens came about as collaboration between the newspaper magnate and architect Julia Morgan. Hearst hired Morgan in 1919 when he received an \$11 million inheritance, and retained her until 1947, when he left San Simeon for the last time. Little was done to the estate or its gardens after 1937-when Hearst experienced financial difficultiesalthough much of the character of the gardens had been established by that time.

In the intervening half century, the processes of change have





William Randolph Hearst and actress Marion Davies enjoy a jeep ride on the grounds of the Hearst Estate with two GIs at the end of WW II.

affected the vistas at San Simeon. Garden features, such as flagstone walkways and Japanese boxwood parterres, have deteriorated. Citrus and cypress trees have reached the end of their life span, and live oaks have succumbed to disease or have blown over. The survivors shade out historic shrubs and perennials. Many of the antique rose varieties have been replaced by modern hybrids. Shrubs have grown out of scale appropriate to their champagne-and-caviar years.

John Horn, historian for the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, says the staff is particularly interested in documentation from the 1940s and '50s, to help relate the landscape's appearance then to what

is known about earlier periods. They would love color photographs—although black and white could also be helpful—as well as old film footage.

A 1946 photograph of an employee at the Hearst residence as she enjoys the estates gardens while off duty.

Horn says the horticultural staff plans to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, taking three to five years to make the garden more historically accurate and developing a long-term maintenance plan. To do so, they need clues to its appearance throughout Hearst's ownership. "We need a more accurate chronology of beds around the house, but especially of obscure areas farther away from the house, for which we don't have records."

As with a structure, the staff will preserve and restore when possible and rehabilitate when necessary. They will keep mature and healthy plants, and replace dead or diseased species with the same varieties if they are still available. In other cases, where the original plants are no longer available or are unsuitable because of the changed environment, the staff will choose a modern equivalent that is compatible with the original design. Contact Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument historian John Horn at (805) 927-2094.

### Annunciator

### Calendar

color in the home. The event will take place at Lovett Hall, which is adjacent to the Henry Ford Museum. Admission to the show is \$10. For information call (313) 982-6001.

### MADISON, WIS. June 7

#### Wright and Like

Visit five private homes dating from the early 1900s to the 1950s designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and other significant architects who either influenced or were influenced by Wright. For more information call (608) 287-0339 or visit www.wrightinwisconsin.com

#### WOODSTOCK, VT.

#### June 7-September 7 Byrdcliffe Arts & Crafts Exhibition

A collaboration between Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University and the Woodstock Guild, this centennial exhibition will showcase the most extensive collection of furniture, ceramics, metalwork, pottery, fine arts and textiles designed and produced at Byrdcliffe. Held at three art institutions in Woodstock: the Kleinert James Arts Center, the Woodstock Artists Association, and the Center for Photography at Woodstock. For more information call (845) 679-2079 or visit www.woodstock guild.org/fact\_sheet.htm

MADISON, N. J. June 9-20 **Restoration** and **Preservation of Historic** Houses and Buildings An introduction to basic

### Our Kind of Town

Chicago, the site of this fall's Restoration and Renovation Exhibition & Conference, is in many ways the quintessential 20th-century metropolis. Its downtown, home base to the school of architects spawned by Louis Sullivan, is rich with examples of Beaux Arts and Modernist wonders. Its neighborhoods, replete with every residential style in the books, include the Oak Park home of Frank Lloyd Wright and literally thousands of that uniquely Windy City house style known as the bungalow.

The varied and sometimes conflicting styles and trends of the past century will be focal points of the event, which will take place at the Navy Pier on Lake Michigan, September 18 - 20.

Delivering the keynote

address on September 19 will be David Garrard Lowe, considered one of the world's leading authorities on architectural history and social criticism. He is author of such critically acclaimed books as Lost Chicago, which sold more than 60,000 copies in hardcover, Beaux Arts New York, and Stanford White's New York, which its editor, Jackie Onassis, dubbed her "favorite book."

His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, American Heritage, and House & Garden, and he lectures at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the



Mies Van Der Rohe's glass-walled apartment house on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago.

Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and the American Academy in Rome, where he is their most popular lecturer, selling out weekly audiences of more than 500 people."

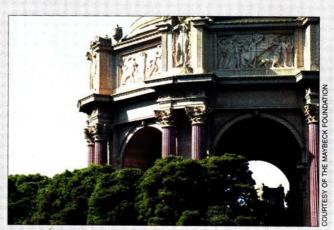
For more information, call (800) 982-6247 or visit restorationandrenovation.com.

### Arts & Crafts in San Francisco

The 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition featured many artists representative of the American Arts & Crafts movement: ceramics by California Faience, Arequipa and Newcomb potteries; murals by Florence Lundborg and Arthur Mathews; metalwork by Harry Dixon, Lillian Palmer, and Dirk van Erp; and the architecture of Willis Polk, Louis Christian Mullgardt, and Bernard Maybeck. Taking

and locally in the San Francisco Bay

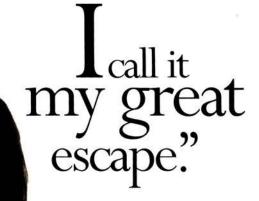
area. Edward R. Bosley, executive



Bernard Maybeck designed the Palace of Fine Arts in 1915 for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco.

the International Exposition as its point of director of the Gamble House, and Bill departure, the 2003 New York University Marguand, executive director of the Maybeck conference on American Arts & Crafts, Foundation, are just two of the speakers June 19-22, studies the depth and range included in the program. The conference fee of this movement, examining its longevity is \$475. For more information call Programs in as expressed internationally, nationally, the Arts, New York University SCPS at (212) 998-7130; e-mail tm376@nyu.edu or pav3822@nyu.edu.

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### Annunciator

### Calendar

standards, analytical methods, technologies, and terminology guiding the maintenance and restoration of 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century buildings. In the preparation, participants become familiar with the techniques for analyzing changes and alterations, identifying and evaluating historic building materials, deciding on practical policies of reuse, replacement, and repair. Instructors James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell. For information call (973) 408-3400.

### NEWPORT, KY. Garden Walk

June 21–22 The tour runs from 10 am to 4 pm each day in the East Row Historic District. Among the gardens featured is a hillside garden, which offers a panoramic view of Cincinnati—just across the river. Each garden will feature musical performances. Tickets are \$15. For more information call (513) 588-4600 or visit www.eastrow.org

#### BOSTON, MA. June 21–27 *New England Studies*

**Program** The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) is holding a week of lectures and workshops by specialists in history, architecture, preservation, and decorative arts. The cost is \$1,200. For more information call (617) 227-3957 or visit www.spnea.org.

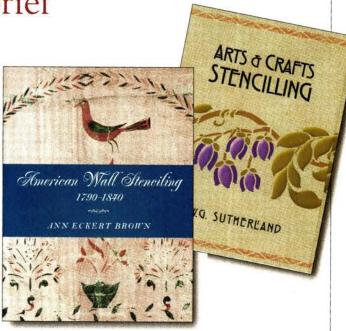
## Books in Brief

Whether you're already a passionate hands-on stenciler, or merely admire the work of long-gone masters on occasional tours of house museums, you may find yourself hooked on the art if you indulge in a recently published pair of books on the topic. They focus on separate time periods, come at the subject from far differing perspectives, and don't even agree about whether the activity should be spelled with one "I" or two.

Ann Eckert Brown, who has been studying, executing, and teaching 18th- and 19thcentury decorative painting techniques for almost 40 years, has produced a thoroughly researched work in American Wall Stenciling, 1790-1840 (University Press of New England, 288 pages). Brown presents stenciling as it's exhibited in some 250 individual structures. As a result, the reader learns about not only the decoration on their walls but also how the various regions came to be settled and, in some detail, the lives of the original owners.

She broadly divides the book into two stenciling styles: a folk group, born in the Boston area in the late 18th century from a mating of ancestral folk art and designs from locally made wallpaper; and what she calls a classical group, "inspired by the same neoclassical craze that gave birth to Federal-style architecture" and practiced by an influx of European artists who traveled the Eastern seaboard.

She then divides those stylistic distinctions geographically, which allows her to explore the work of some known sten-



ciling artists such as J. Gleason, who plied his trade in Rhode Island, and Moses Eaton and his son, whose handiwork can be seen in northern New England.

Of course she doesn't fail to discuss recurring motifsoak leaves, hearts, swags, pineapples, daisies, bells, cabbage roses-and overall patterns and uses, such as borders, over-mantel murals, and dados, plus furniture and floor decoration. She also comments on other decorative techniques, such as marbleizing and faux graining. There are 162 color illustrations, some of which are Brown's renderings of historic stencil patterns now too faded to be discernible.

About a half century after the last of Brown's artists laid down their stenciling brushes, others were taken up by the likes of W.G. Sutherland, a British sign maker, decorative painter, and author of *Arts & Crafts Stenciling*, a 1910 classic that has just been reissued (Gibbs Smith, 92 pages).

As Brown's book gives you the when and what, Sutherland offers the how, with page after page of stencil designs for ceilings, friezes, "borders and spots," in popular motifs such as birds and others intended for the nursery. His step-by-step directions begin with how to cut a stencil, and go on to brush use and care, the ideal thickness of paint, how to deal with corners (best to avoid them lest you end up "expressing your feelings"). For specific designs there are even instructions for appropriate colors, and, for professionals, some reflection on working quickly, based on a project in an American hotel "in the days when they had bars."

As with any reprint, there are places where modern readers—especially those whose crafts experience is limited would want some explanation and definition. For instance, what is the patent knotting he suggests that we burn to apply to torn ties (the connections between cutouts) on the stencil? Could I just use duct tape? Neither of these books has an index, which can be especially frustrating in a big, information-rich book like Brown's.



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# OHJ's 30th Anniversary Countdown Life in the Old-House Lane

as OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL is one of its most popular departments, "Old-House Living." In the very first installment in October 1973, founder Clem Labine shared some of the trials and tribulations he'd faced in his own Brooklyn brownstone. As if to quickly prove that the joys and pains of working on, and residing in, a vintage building aren't limited to New York City or even the East Coast, the very next OHL, as they quickly came to be called by the staff, focused on an adapted schoolhouse in Kentucky.

early as old

For three decades now readers have enjoyed "Old-House Living" because it reflects the heart and soul of its name—not the nuances of refinishing woodwork or the niceties of mending a rotted porch, but the classic oldhouse love story. Though people and places always change, they share a remarkably similar

Old House Living. Did House Liv

scenario: from the initial connection of house and owner (Boy Gets Girl?), to their inevitable disillusionment (the equivalent of Boy Loses Girl), to triumph over obstacles and naysayers (Boy Rewins Girl). Invariably these tales tend not to end on a surreal note of living happily ever after, since we all know better, but a list of the next projects: (Boy Takes Out Girl's Stripped Wallpaper and Other Garbage for a Lifetime). And of course-don't we women know it-vice versa.

The first generation of OHLs were largely reader-written and, like the rest of those earliest magazines, reflected the passionate zeal of a new and somewhat fringe movement: the converted talking to the rest of the highly suspect converted. Eventually though, they came as often from third parties and the OHJ editors themselves, bringing a broader geographic perspective to the stories, while striving to keep them from sounding too much alike ("all the things that could possibly go wrong in an old house and how we solved them"). Over the years OHL has featured the unremuddling of tiny bungalows, beginners' experiences with rehabilitating Victorian-era mansions, the moving and restoration of old farmhouses. Texas the rehabbing of log cabins in West Virginia, a band of restorers in north-



ern California, a Mediterranean Revival in Florida, the creation of B&Bs here and there, and, at one point, the total reconstruction of a Maine mansion from the original blueprints.

Want to make your own house an OHL? Send a brief letter with a story idea that gives us something unique to focus on, something about the interface of people and building-whether it's your neighborhood, one particular project, something you learned from your house, or the lifestyle it embraces, as in this issue's OHL. After all, when you put down the tools at the end of the day, an old house is a way of life. 🏛

"Old-House Living" has touched on a lot of the ups and downs of the restoration experience, as well as many shared insights and personal revelations, such as balancing house and spouse (top), re-restoring one's own work (above), and keeping chin up and goals clear (left). If you have an idea for an OHL, send a brief outline to Old-House Living Editor, 1000 Potomac Street, NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007.

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### Ask OH7

## Hip Foursquare

I hope you can shed some light on this 1914 duplex that I recently purchased to restore. Located on Capitol Hill in Denver, it's unlike anything else I've seen here. The "clay tiles" are actually metal, as is the decorative treatment at the second level balconies. The duplex seems quite modern for its day, with central heating, no fireplaces, electricity run throughout in hardwall conduits, with the exception of gas to one ceiling light. *Wayne Johnson Denver, Colorado* 

our duplex is based on one of the most popular early 20th-century house types, the Foursquare. They were so popular in Denver during the first decade of the 1900s that, according to Tom Noel, author of Buildings of Colorado (Oxford University Press) and Denver Landmarks and Historic Districts (University Press of Colorado) the locals often call them "Denver Squares." Although Foursquares were generally single-family homes, quite a few in Denver were built as duplexes, which often involved stretching the style either in dimensions or in stylistic elements. Noel says yours is one of the more interesting and little altered examples of this vernacular trend.

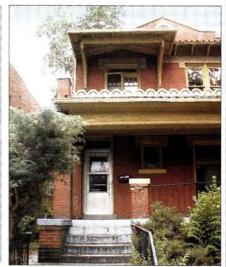
In fact, Foursquares were so adaptable, builders often jazzed them up with new elements, especially in the latest styles. After 1900, the rising popularity of Hispanic, Spanish Colonial, Pueblo Revival, Mission Revival and other Mediterranean and southwestern styles inspired folks like this house designer to enhance a western Foursquare with new and romantic Spanish elements. Those on your duplex include the red roof tiles, the curvilinear porch parapet, the second-storey balcony with its ornate rooflet, the wide-eaved roof, and the façade's roof parapet with its inset brick blind quatrefoil design. The use of Mission-style scrolled brackets as seen



Left: The exposed rafters, metal Spanish tile roof, and Mission Revivalinspired parapet are popular early 20thcentury details that give a Southwestern Colonial feel to this Colorado Foursquare. Below: Note the porch on each storey, also evocative of Mission Revival.

on your roof was especially common on Foursquares. A more unusual touch is the Art Nouveau-ish stained-glass floral window in the entry's transom window.

Your house would have been built as the availability of electrical power was spreading to the "interior" from the East. In 1891, central stations had the capacity to light only about three million individual incandescent fixtures; by 1921, eight million houses were wired for power. But as the new technology became available, many homeowners hung on to fixtures that would run on gas in case the "fad" was a bust.



### Pebbledash Low-down

Our 1909 farmhouse is covered in a stuccolike material that our contractor calls pebbledash. He doesn't know how it was done—do you? *Matt Pedro, Atlanta, Georgia* 

Pebbledash is flat stucco embedded with smooth, round pebbles or similar aggregate for a texture effect. Along with spatterdash and dry dash, it has a long history on this continent and in Europe, and is widely adapted to the needs, traditions, and tastes of the applier. Although 19th-century dash is likely to be all-lime mortar, versions after 1905 used portland cement. Like stucco, dash starts with a mortar scratch coat applied to wire lath or masonry base. After the brown coat comes a standard sand-and-cement top coat. To create the pebbledash texture, the mason typically mixes small pebbles (1/8″ to 1/4″ in diameter), portland cement, and water into a soft mix; no sand is used. The mix is then thrown across the fresh mortar top coat with a scoop or bucket to produce a uniform, pleasing texture—a skill that takes practice to master.

### Ask OHJ

## A & C Fence

Our architectural firm has been restoring and expanding a 1906 house with strong Arts & Crafts influences. The local heritage board required us to replace the original timber paling fence, which is low and leaves the property exposed to passersby. We would like to set a second fence back about 4' from the first and encourage plants to grow around and over the fence. It would be of black steel for both low visibility and security. Can we argue that this is an appropriate solution? *Lorraine Bochsler Melbourne, Australia* 

he wonderful thing about Arts & Crafts is that it isn't a prescribed style but a set of ideas and philosophies that vary in execution depending on the project and the locale.



Those philosophies include drawing influence from nature, building houses that blend into their landscapes, using indigenous materials, and reflecting local craftsmanship.

As a result, fences around Craftsman bungalows in Pasadena (like their foundations, chimneys, and porch pillars) were often made of large rounded stones from the nearby arroyos. The Japanese tradition of drawing inspiration from nature led to Far East flourishes in gates and in the pergolas that often played a role in dividing gardens into outdoor rooms. These bungalow fences were often both lower and more open than fences we see today, because their owners tended to be both budget-conscious and less concerned about privacy than we are. Depending on the orientation of the house's windows, the idea of camouflaging the fence with plantings would go a long way toward the goal of bringing the outdoors in.

Arts & Crafts fencing is often lower

and more open than today's designs.





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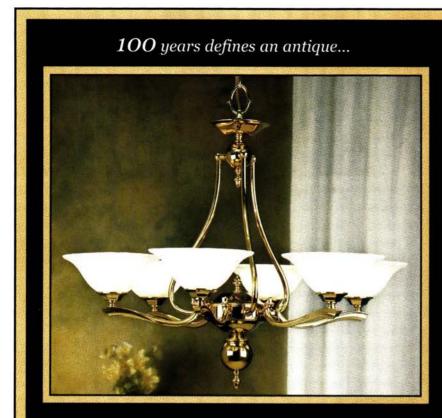
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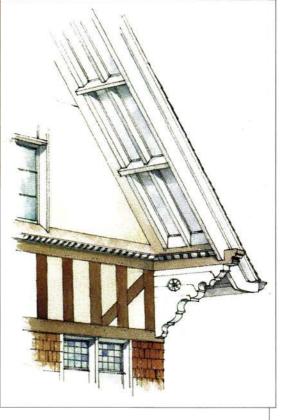
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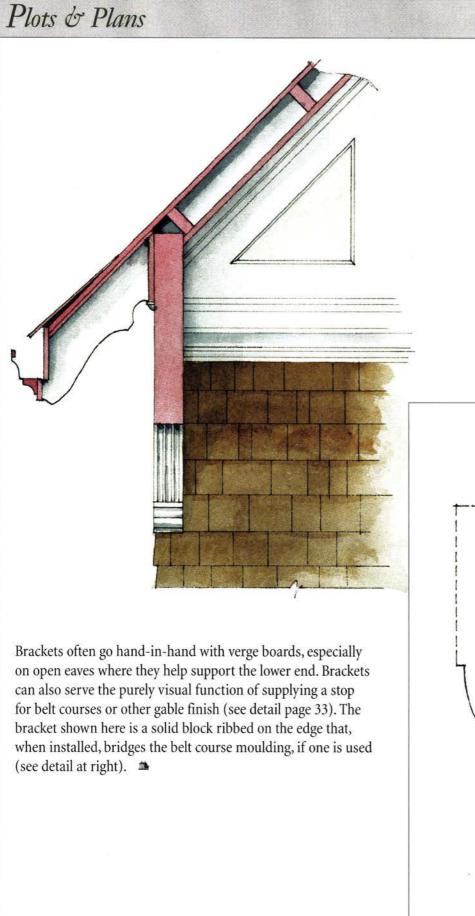
### Plots & Plans

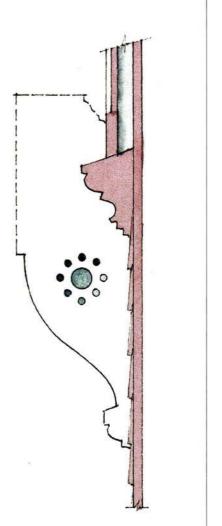
Verge Boards & Brackets

**Drawings by Rob Leanna** 

Verge boards—sometimes called barge boards—are pieces of trim running along the rake of the roof that decorate the gable end. Derived from medieval English and Germanic houses (see inset), they are common features of the Gothic Revival, Stick, and Queen Anne styles, and can run from plain, chamfered boards to elaborately sawn or carved panels. The design shown here has Eastlake-inspired incising typical of the late 1890s and would work on many Queen Anne or Tudor houses with medieval detailing.









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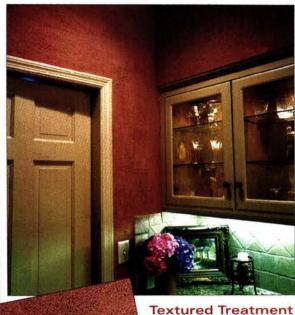


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## Fine Design



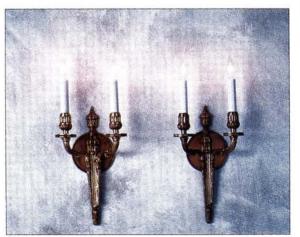
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## Fine Design

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## Fine Design



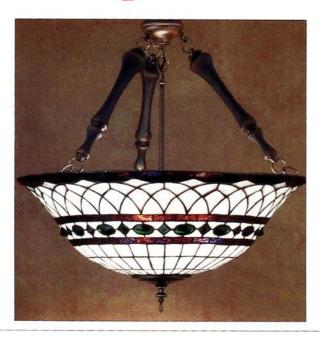
#### **Documenting Damasks**

The National Preservation Institute joins Thibaut Wallcoverings to introduce the 7th edition of "Historic Homes of America," a collection of wallcoverings based on papers and fabrics found in private homes and historic museums in the United States. Shown here is Historic Damask, a grand-scale damask design of floral bouquets surrounded by a leafy scroll, which retails for \$43 per roll. For more information call (800) 223-0704 or visit www.thibaut design.com. Circle 7 on resource card.

#### Lazy Days

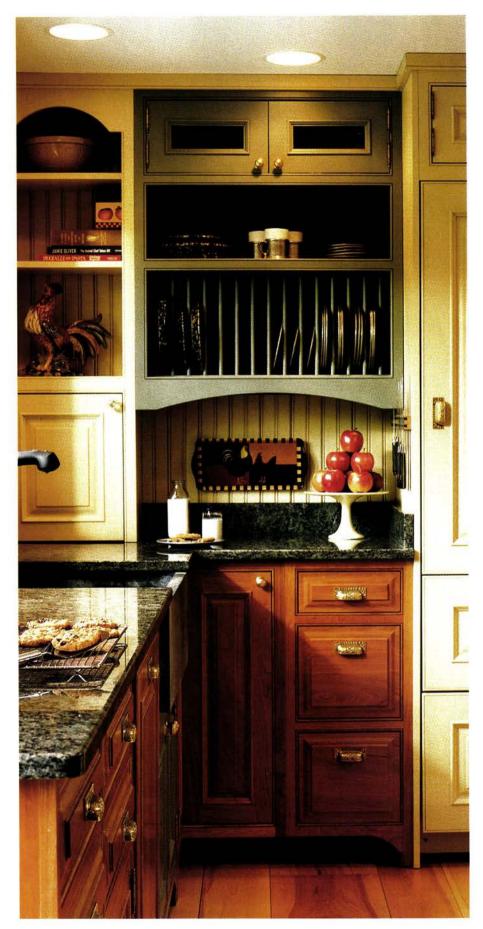
An afternoon nap would be a treat on Maine Cottage's Shutter Settee. Shown in sunny ochre, this handcrafted pine daybed works perfectly in a small space such as a home office and retails for \$1,665. Available from Sawbridge Studios. For information call (312) 828-0055 or visit www.sawbridge.com. Circle 8 on resource card.





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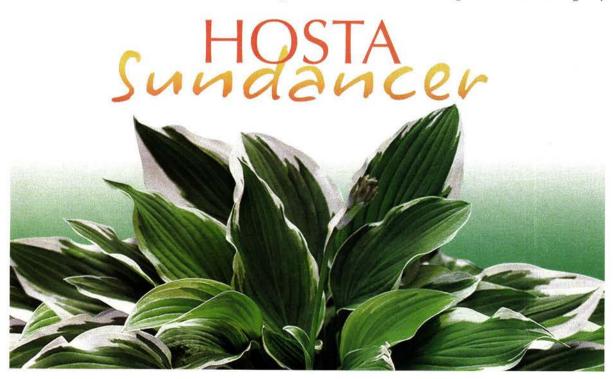


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## Outside the Old House

## Renovating a Flowering Shrub

How to prune new life into antique bushes. hen you buy an old house you're likely to inherit some old, flowering shrubs, sometimes valuable for both historical interest and beauty—or potential beauty, if the plants have been neglected. Flowers on neglected shrubs are often sparse and frequently borne too high to appreciate with either your eyes or nose. That overgrown shrub might also be stealing a window view, crowding a doorway, or getting in the way of a home renovation.

Still, because shrubs are always producing new stems near ground level instead of

developing permanent trunks as trees do, most forgive fairly heavy pruning and can be restored to the flower and form they displayed in their prime. The procedure, appropriately enough, is known as renovation. In this case it's done with only three hand tools: a pruning saw, a lopper, and hand shears.

Any pruning, by temporarily cutting off a plant's food supply, is more or less stressful to the plant (and perhaps also to you). Before undertaking renovation, make sure your shrub has healthy green leaves and no insect or disease problems. If the plant is weakened, coddle it for a year by keeping it well-fed and well-watered, mulching with some organic material such as wood chips or straw, and, if necessary, dealing with pests.

Lee Reich studies an overgrown lilac to decide where to begin pruning. His goal is to remove unproductive old growth and reduce spindly new growth so that the shrub bears foliage and flowers nearer the ground.

DTOS LEE REICH EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Keep in mind that this article deals with flowering shrubs, not conifers, some of which, like junipers, can't recover from a severe cutback. There are also a few flowering shrubs that don't take at all well to heavy pruning—broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), woodwaxen (*Genista* spp.), and false spirea

(Sorbaria spp.)—but fortunately they aren't among the more popular.

The optimum time to renovate deciduous shrubs is sometime between the latter half of winter and late spring, since the bare branches make it easier to see just what to cut. But you need to balance this advantage against the decreased flower show you'll see

on spring-flowering shrubs such as forsythia and weigela, which bloom on some of the older stems that you'll be removing. And there's no advantage to winter pruning evergreen flowering shrubs such as A freshly pruned lilac plump with new stems and leaves. Next spring it should be loaded with blossoms more accessible to both eye and nose.

BY LEE REICH



### Outside the Old House



mer-flowering shrubs, such as Saint-John's-wort and butterfly bush (see page 46), that flower on each growing season's vigorous new shoots and can be

> rificing any of the annual display. The decision of whether to prune in winter or spring is moot if you opt for *drastic renovation*, which entails simply cutting all stems right down to within a foot or so of the ground. Although such pruning leaves a gaping hole in your landscape, the old shrub's established root system will fuel rapid growth of new stems. It will help to think of your drastically renovated shrub as a new planting, albeit one with supercharged growth. Drastic

> pruned, almost to the ground in winter without sac-

rhododendrons and azaleas. If you can't bring yourself to sacrifice any flowers, wait to prune these shrubs until right after they flower in spring. On the other hand there's a long list of sum-

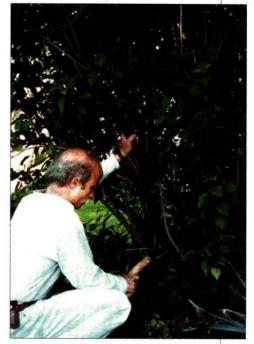
> A folding saw lets you get into tight places to cut smaller limbs, then tucks into its handle.

A bow saw is the tool for thick old limbs, like this one that is heading growth toward the horizontal.

pruning is most appropriate for shrubs whose stems are severely damaged or are in the way during a home renovation, as well as those shrubs that put their best shows only on lanky new growth.

*Gradual renovation* taps into most shrubs' natural tendency to renew themselves with new stems, called suckers, at or near ground level. With gradual renovation, you get to enjoy flowers on your shrub every year and, in time, your shrub will no longer be burdened by any decrepit old stems. Begin gradual renovation by sawing or lopping one or two of the very oldest stems right down to the ground, with an eye toward leaving the lustiest young stems originating near ground level. This pruning leaves room for growth of the fresh replacement stems and lets the remaining "middle-aged" stems bask in light and air. While you're at it, also cut back any diseased or dead branches you may notice, as well as any that simply look too much out of place.

Depending on the plant, the next step in gradual renovation may be to take your hand shears, crawl under the bush, and cut away some of those young suckers. This is because shrubs vary in their tendency for natural renewal by suckers. PeeGee hydrangea, for example, rarely produces new suckers, while you'll find a lot of new



Loppers, good for limbs up to about 1 1/2", give you an extended reach. Here Reich shortens a too-long, droopy branch.



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### Outside the Old House

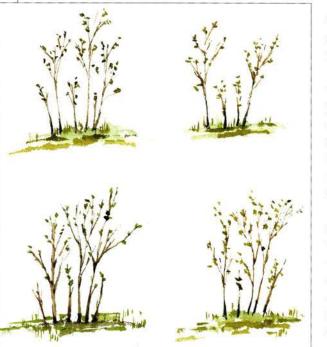
In the first year of a gradual renovation (top row), you should thin the youngest stems and cut away some of the oldest. In the second and subsequent years (bottom row). repeating the sequence will keep new growth filling in the base of the plant.

ones every year at the base of a lilac. Some old shrubs develop suckers farther and farther away from the base of the plant. Even if your intention is to let them knit together into a hedge or wildlife thicket, you need to selectively remove these wanderers as well as those that are spindly or sickly. The more suckers a shrub has, the more you'll have to cut away so that those that remain have enough room and light to thrive. Gradual renovation takes a few years of repeatedly removing some of the oldest stems and thinning out of the youngest suckers.

Another option in renovation, useful in some sites and with some plants



(see chart below), is to convert a scraggly, overgrown old shrub into a picturesque small tree. In so doing, your goal is to thwart your shrub's natural bent for growing suckers and low branches, so this option is best applied to shrubs with less of this tendency.



B LEAN

Stand back and pick out one of the oldest stems having pleasant form and growing from ground level to as high as the proposed crown of your tree-to-be.

Cut away all other growth from the base of the plant as well as branches growing off the lower portion of the new trunk or trunks—high enough so the plant looks like a tree. Finally, shorten some

stems and completely remove others up in the crown to give it good shape.

There is, of course, one more option always worth consideration when dealing with an old shrub: Grub it out completely and replace it with a new plant or nothing at all. Not every old shrub was original-

ly planted in a congenial spot in terms of what's good for the plant or will look nice years down the road. If you do decide to replant, choose a plant that is appropriate in terms of appearance and adaptability to site conditions. And whether you replant or renovate, plan on regular pruning from now on to keep the plant looking good.



Lee Reich is a horticultural writer and consultant whose most recent books include The Pruning Book (Taunton Press) and Weedless Gardening (Workman Publishing).

number of slim new branches in the center of the plant, as well as suckers on the periphery, will give a shrub more breathing room.

Reducing the

SHRUBS THAT CAN BE GROWN AS TREES Aralia spinosa (devil's walkingstick) Aronia arbutifolia (red chokeberry) Chaenomeles spp. (flowering quince) Corylus avellana (European filbert) Cotinus coggyria (smokebush) Hibiscus syriacus (rose-of-Sharon) Hydrangea paniculata 'Grandiflora' (PeeGee hydrangea)

*Lagerstroemia indica* (crape myrtle) *Ligustrum spp.* (privet)

#### SHRUBS THAT RECOVER FAST AFTER BEING LOPPED TO THE GROUND

Buddleia davidii (butterfly bush) Callicarpa japonica

(Japanese beautyberry)

Caryopteris spp.

(bluebeard, blue-mist shrub), Ceanothus americanus (New Jersey tea) Cornus spp.

(shrubby dogwoods, with the exception of Cornus kousa and C. mas) Diervilla sessifolia

(Southern bush honeysuckle)

Hydrangea arborescens `Grandiflora' (hills-of-snow)

*Hypericum spp.* (Saint-John's-wort) *Perovskia atriplicifolia* (Russian sage) *Vitex spp.* (chaste tree)



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## Wasting Away in Home TV-ville

Essay

very weekend morning, when other people are reaching for the coffee pot, I'm reaching for the TV remote. Normal folks may need caffeine to launch them into their home restoration projects, but I need a little television.

It seems I'm hooked on the hours of fix-em-up shows that air on Saturdays and Sundays. I crave them. I tell my wife they inspire me, but clearly I waste a lot of time watching them. Just ask her.

I've always done my own home renovations. But when we lived in a two-bedroom condo, "major work" meant satisfying my wife's redecorating whims, not rebuilding a load-bearing wall. Sure, I read OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL and some other magazines vicariously, but if I watched the TV shows at all, I would ignore the segments on porch building or rescuing a sash window and closely attend to the pieces on sponge-painting techniques.

Things changed dramatically two years ago when we bought an 1889 Queen Anne on the New Jersey shore. It had been reconfigured into a duplex, but it appeared that with minimal work it could easily become a one-family home again. By minimal, I mean work I could do with my own hands or the assistance of a talented friend. On weekends, of course.

Hesitant to embark on any task unprepared, however, when Saturday arrives I first have to watch my favorite home shows. They may be delving into the very chore I'm working on, or one I will soon have to tackle. I can't possibly be wasting time if I pick up a new hint about sistering that floor joint.

Of late, though, I've come to realize that I might have less positive motivations, clicking the channel changer to find fault, the way you keep up with some politicians you can't stand just to root out their misstatements.

Having spent literally hundreds of

hours absorbing such broadcasts, I've noticed that some of the shows tend to run together. Many, for instance, pair male and female hosts. There's Dean and Robin (although he used to be with Joanne). There's Pat and Jodi, who seem to make a nice couple, and Matt and Shari, an incredibly

perky pair. What gnaws me every time I tune in is wondering whether they're couples off the screen. So I spend the half-hour looking for little clues—a lingering of the eyes, a discreet brushing of knees. Speaking from experience, all of them seem to get along awfully well for a real-life couple working on a house together.

Then there's the issue of their tools versus my tools. Everyone on TV has better tools than the average homeowner. But do the hosts have to point out that they're walking over to their super-duper power planers to mill down horrific looking pieces of wood into something I might buy from my local home supply retailer?

I don't have a super-duper power planer. I'll never have one. Immediately I feel inadequate. Click. On to the next.

Here, a host is chatting with a fashion model about a new line of carpeting she's promoting. It might be the greatest carpet ever made, but I can't keep from obsessing over whether she knows what she's talking about. Does she really understand fiber and wear and installation, or even color ("This is our platinum blue," she intones breathily, "which goes with anything."), or is she just a paid shill? So around the dial I continue. I suppose what I'm looking for in these TV shows is people like me. I've yet



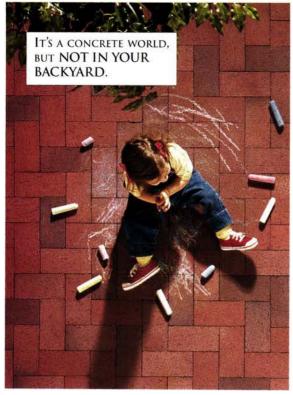
to see their mistakes, and I certainly make enough. I've never seen them start a project and realize they're short on wood, either having just come from the lumberyard or better, just after it has closed.

To that end, they never tell the other hosts, "Gee, I could really do this job if only I had a super-duper power planer." And just once, I'd like to see the host put a hole in the wrong place. Their seeming perfection may be annoying but it's certainly convincing. Why else, in the middle of an actual project, do I sometimes ask myself, "What would fill-in-the-blank host do in this situation?"

Before I know it I'm into the midday hours and the channels have switched to garden shows, so I obligingly redirect my concerns to landscape issues. By then I'm thinking about lunch and it's way too late in the day to start working on anything strenuous. The house has been here for more than 100 years and it will likely be here 100 more, whether I get around to redoing the kitchen or not.

I just wish I could figure out if those hosts are more than friends—and where I might have mislaid the remote.

**Richard Huff** is the television editor for the New York Daily News.

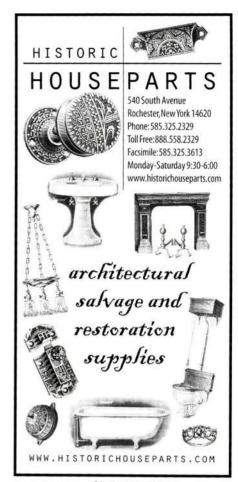


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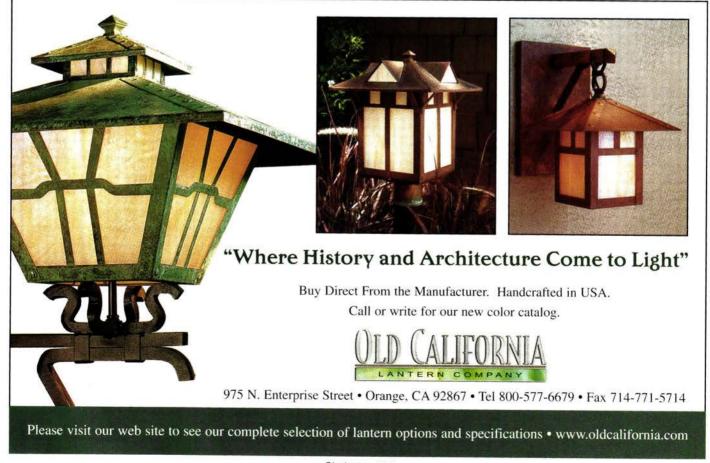


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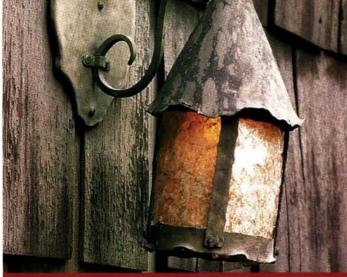


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Selected manufacturers still make shingles in historic patterns, as well as modern materials and finishes, such as resin colors (Kynar from Berridge), solid copper (W.F. Norman), and metallic coatings (Galvalume from Berridge).



Crimps at edges vary with manufacturers (W.F. Norman), but all shingles interlock side-to-side to shed water and resist wind lift.



CHARLES STECK

Vintage metal shingles, such as this circa1910 product (Montross) incorporated a wide variety of patterns and forms as well as the basic mechanism of interlocking.

### **Roofing in Victorian stamped**

hen Carolyn Grieve phoned the Landmark Society of Western New York in 2002, she was looking for help with her old house and her growing list of repairs. Her house in the rural community of Perry is an architect-designed Queen Anne built by her great-grandfather in 1885 and remains in nearly original condition. I visited Carolyn on behalf of the Society and, as we walked around the house discussing peeling paint and leaking roofs, she mentioned that, if it wasn't too expensive, she would like to install a metal shingle roof like the one originally on the house. I told her that I believed metal shingles were both affordable and still available in patterns similar, if not exactly identical, to her originals-that is, if I could locate them. Here's the background I found that can be of use to other old-house owners who want to install a new metal shingle roof or keep the one they have.

#### Industrialized Shingles

Metal roof shingles were a natural extension of the successful sheet- and corrugated-metal roof industry that flourished from the mid-19th century into the 20th century. Although metal shingles were used prior to the Civil War, the extensive developments after 1875 in building technology, mass production, and efficient railroad shipping created an ideal environment for their popularity. Simply small rectangles stamped from sheet metal and embossed with ornamental designs, early shingles came in a variety of sizes until standardization took hold in the 1880s. The





### steel and copper is still practical today.



Add a few decorative ridge crockets and metal shingles could bring eye appeal to an otherwise simple roof, Below: Metal Spanish tiles were generally stamped with deep relief on one side, flat on the other, and interlocked similar to flat shingles.



gles offered many advantages over traditional shingle-type materials. They were lighter and less costly than slate or tile, thereby enabling modest buildings to approach the look of more expensive structures. Unlike wood shingles, metal shingles were rot-proof and fireproof—the lat-

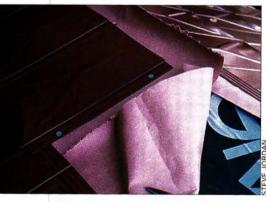


date for the first metal shingle manufactured or sold in the United States has not been established, but trade advertisements indicate they were available in the 1870s. They remained popular up to the 1920s, when they were supplanted by inexpensive, low-maintenance, fire-resistant asbestos-cement and asphalt shingles. The outbreak of World War II signaled the end of the metal shingle's heyday by diverting both metals and manufacturing equipment to the war effort.

Although quality varied and manufacturers' claims were often exaggerated, metal shinter, a key sales point at a time when roof fires in dense urban areas were common. Metal shingles could often be applied over old roofing materials, making them useful for reroofing as well as new construction. Clever, interlocking edge joints prevented shingles from blowing off in storms or high winds and allowed unskilled workmen to install them effectively without specialized tools. Many manufacturers offered integrated roofing systems that included flashings, ornamental ridge and hip caps, crestings, and finials.

#### **Stamped Style**

Most historic metal shingles imitated natural roof materials—wood, slate, and clay tile—but the decorative possibilities of



Curt Catalano installed the Grieve metal shingles over ice and water membrane, separating the metal with a slip of rosin paper. For this shingle, only one edge gets nailed.

#### **RETURNING TO METAL**

When roofer and sheet metal specialist Curt Catalano first looked at Carolyn Grieve's house, he lifted up two layers of asphalt shingles to expose some of the original metal shingles. The original roof had been manufactured by the Cortright Metal Roofing Company of Philadelphia, one of the industry's leaders, and the firm had, in fact, featured the Grieve homestead in their 1908 catalog. Cortright has been out of business for years, but Curt remembered seeing a video tape promotion from Berridge Manufacturing Company that included metal shingles. As luck would have it, Berridge had copied a shingle found on an old church in Texas, and this same pattern was a nearly identical match with the original on Grieve's home. With Curt's help, Carolyn selected

the "Classic" shingle in Galvalume (sheet steel coated with aluminum and zinc) and coated in a durable red Kynar 500 finish.

When the shingles, associated flashing, and instructions arrived, Curt's crew began tearing off the multiple layers of old roofing down to the wood deck boards. As is often the case, the original field shingles appeared to have been in good condition when first reroofed, but the original flashing and valleys were deteriorated. As on many houses built in the 19th- and early 20th century, the shingles had been applied over skip sheathing-boards (typically 1"x 6") that were spaced a few inches apart. This spacing promoted air circulation around wood and metal shingles, allowing condensation and other moisture to dry from both

embossing had its own appeal in an age that valued bold or unusual embellishment. Along with familiar motifs like crosses, chevrons, and teardrops, manufacturers might stamp shingles with symbolic patterns, such as the *fleur-de-lis* or maple leaf, particularly if they offered custom service to architects. Whatever the design, raised ornament added stiffness to the thin metal.

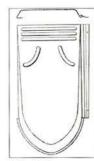
Shingles came in a variety of dimensions—typically  $7" \ge 10"$ ,  $10" \ge 14"$ , and  $14" \ge 20"$ . Different sizes allowed the builder, designer, or homeowner to choose a shingle compatible with the scale of the building. Just after 1900, the growing vogue for houses in a host of Mediterranean Revival and eclectic styles, as well as the appearance of new house types like the bungalow, spawned yet another form of metal shingle: the Spanish tile. These "shingles" were designed to simulate the alternating barrel tiles of the old world without the complexity, weight, or expense.

#### **Keeping Your Metal Up**

By 1900, metal singles were available in tin (actually, tin-coated steel), zinc, galvanized steel, copper, and bronze. Tin and galvanized iron or steel shingles were usually painted on both sides at the factory for rust and corrosion protection, and when adequately maintained, the shingles lasted many decades.

In fact, it isn't uncommon to see metal shingle roofs that are 100-plus years old and still in good condition. The secret to longevity for a metal roof is regular care. At the first sign of rust, wash the roof clean and paint it with a rust-resistant paint system. Wire brush away loose rust scale, and give any remaining rust a light sanding, but don't use any preparation method that will further deteriorate your shingles. If your roof already has a protective paint coating, your new coating must be compatible with the old one. Most paint stores stock rustresistant paint systems, or you can special order high-quality zinc chromate primers. Never coat your roof with asphalt cement or any asphalt- or tar-based roof coating. As these coatings fail, they trap water between the coating and shingles, accelerating deterioration.

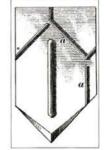
Though metal shingle manufacturing continues for the modern construction market, most of the distinctive shapes and quirky patterns of a century ago are long gone. Some classic designs, however, are still being made by a few companies, and these can offer a good option for replacing or adding on to a roof covered in historic metal shingles.



GOTHIC



DIAMOND



HEXAGON



Manufacturers also did their best to vary the form or outline of metal shingles. as well as their applications, and by the 1890s offered a cornucopia of categories. Gothic (fish scaleshaped) were designed mostly for roofing, but also appeared as a decorative treatment in mansard walls or gable ends. Depending on their construction, diamond and hexagonal shingles were intended for roofs and walls or just walls. No less common were giant square shingles, large panels of shingles for walls, and special shingles for conical roofs.



The next shingle is installed by sliding it into place on the previous shingle so that they interlock. This basic process is repeated across the roof and up, course by course.

sides. Curt's crew kept this sheathing, but they also installed a bituminous membrane (Ice and Water Shield by W.R Grace) along the eaves as secondary protection from leaks and ice dams. Flashing, valleys, and drip edges were all fabricated from 24-gauge steel with the same Galvalume and paint finish as the shingles.

Just like the originals, the new shingles interlock creating waterproof and windproof joints. For extra protection against leaks, Curt formed the valleys with a double-crimp in the shape of a "W" down their middles. In hard rains, this crimp helps prevent water from surging from one roof plane onto the adjacent roof plane and up under shingles. To complete the job, Curt touched up the exposed metal edges of all cut shingles using paint supplied by the manufacturer.



Typical of many old houses, completing the Grieve roof required flashing at valleys and intersecting gable ridges in matching materials supplied by the shingle manufacturer.



Adorning your roof and gutters with a host of accessories can prove aesthetically pleasing as well as practical.

By the 1860s, advances in metal fabrication permitted mass production of high-quality roofing products. Many of the ornamental roofing- and gutter-system accessories were made of copper or cast iron. This collection shows an assortment of historically inspired features appropriate for old houses. A funnel-like component, conductor heads (top, left from W. F. Norman) admit air to prevent a vacuum effect and collect water from gutters for discharge into downspouts. Downspouts should be constructed with conductor heads every 40'. The depth of a conductor head should be equal to two-thirds of its width. Much like an antique cistern system, the round downspout cleanout (top, right from Classic Gutter Systems) allows water to run off into a container and be re-used for watering plants. The cleanout also contains a screen that catches debris, preventing it from clogging an underground drain tile-piping that helps handle watersaturated soil by carrying water way from the house.

"Il a house needs is a good hat and a good pair of shoes." Old-house restorers might include roofing accessories in this adage. For centuries, metal gutter and roofing devices have added architectural character to a house

ewels

while they protected the building envelope. Today there are more historically appropriate products available than ever before. Often simply looking like decorative additions, these parts have specific functions. They carry moisture away from walls, prevent mold from growing on shingles, and stop leaves and other debris from blocking downspouts. Available either prefabricated or custom made, these accessories are typically copper, aluminum, galvanized steel, or bronze. When deciding what's right for your old house, remem-

ber that to avoid galvanic corrosion anything you add to your gutter system should be the same or similar metal to what's there. Here's a look at just a few of these roofing lifesavers.

rowning

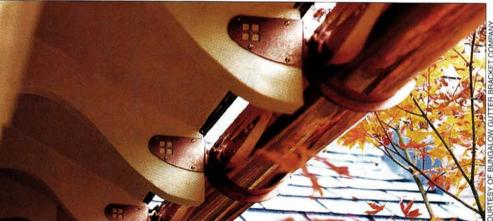


BY NANCY E. BERRY

A downspout boot (middle, right from **Classic Gutter** Systems) can enhance the appearance of the connection between the downspout and underground drain tile. Ornamental ridge tiles (right, bottom from W.F. Norman) were widely used in the 1880s and '90s to cover and protect the roof apex. Rain deflectors (bottom, left from Classic Gutter Systems) positioned on inside corners of valleys will help disperse large amounts of water channeling down a roofline valley.

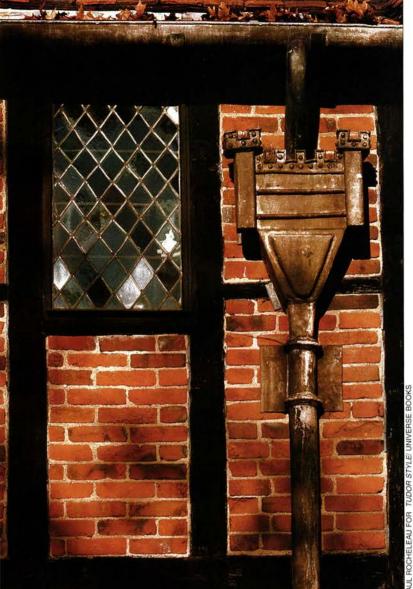
As long as there have been water collection systems, there have been devices to keep them debris free. Gutter screens have been a practical means of keeping large objects out of the gutter for more than a century. Classic Gutter Systems' screen (right) fits into the front lip of the gutter and slides under the first course of shingles. An 8" gutter screen fits either a 5" or 6" gutter while a 10" screen fits a 10" gutter. The screens should be cleaned periodically so leaves and twigs don't collect and shade the gutter trough. Screen should also be removable for cleaning.

Below: Architect H. H. Richardson's Austin Hall on the Harvard University campus incorporates several decorative accents, such as copper ridge tiles, gutters, conductor heads, and downspouts that contribute to the overall character of the building. Note the snow guards, a later addition. After the wintry storms that buried the Northeast and Midwest this past winter, snow guards would be a smart choice for any roof. Historically used on slate, snow guards allow snow and ice to drop off in small amounts or melt completely before falling to the ground, preventing that avalanching effect that can damage landscaping. Alpine Snow Guards offers more than two dozen styles. Shown here are the pad (right) and pipe styles (above), both of which can be added either when the roof is installed or later. The number of snow guards needed depends on the roof slope, rafter length, building orientation, and snow load. Pad-style snow guards are typically installed every 18" in two to three staggered interval rows.

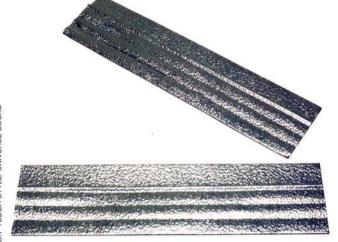


Fascia gutter brackets—or strap hangers—come in an array of whimsical shapes and sizes. Shown below from Classic Gutter Systems are the bronze angel, seahorse, and closed curl. Manufacturers have become so historically minded that Bungalow Gutter Bracket is making an Arts & Crafts bracket that solves the tricky issue of hanging a gutter on open rafter tails. They should be hung every 36" to support the weight of the gutter.





If a heavy foliage canopy blocks your roof from sun, you have an ideal environment for the growth of algae, fungus, and moss that can stain your shingles. Shingle Shield from Chicago Metallic is a metal strip inserted between roofing courses that releases zinc oxide, a fungistat, that inhibits growth. The company recommends one row at or near the ridge line for roofs less than 20' long—for more than 20' install a second row halfway down the roof. The product is EPA approved.



The Tudor Revival house (above) features custom-designed, crenelated conductor heads that befit its style.

Clockwise from top right: Late 19th-century houses often juxtaposed smooth slate roofs with ridge cresting (from W. F. Norman) that softened the visual transition to sky as it capped the roof. This shapely bullnose cap by Classic Gutter Systems fits snugly over a gutter end. Considerations for selecting a downspout bracket (from W. F. Norman) are type, size, material being used for downspout, and appearance. As with gutter and gutter brackets, downspout brackets must be made of material compatible with the downspout.

For a list of

SUPPLIERS,

see page 102

# for a New

## Picking exterior paint for post-Victorian houses.

s the flamboyant architectural styles and textures of the late Victorian period gave way to more austere tastes at the turn of the 20th century, the public's earlier preference for dark colors in kaleidoscopic hues shifted to favor "kinder and gentler" schemes in both

muted and bright colors. These colors were expressed on the exteriors of a new wave of houses competing for attention—Colonial Revivals, Arts & Crafts bungalows, Foursquares, Tudor Revivals, and a few combinations in between.

While this varied group of post-Victorian styles and types represents a rich building stock for old-house lovers, painting them in historically sensitive ways is often tricky. Early 20th-century designers and builders often mixed and matched architectural vocabularies, and paint manufacturers could produce pretty much any tint or hue desired, so you can't expect a rigid set of rules to guide you through exterior paint choices. Rather, it's best to





Early 20thcentury Colonial Revival houses made greater use of historically researched details and what were believed to be accurate colors—such as the ubiquitous "Colonial yellow" body with black shutters.

## Century By Steve Jordan



DOUGLAS KEISTER

house took both construction materials and color palette from the natural world, in the real world it could be more inspiration than rule. This sensitively painted California bungalow has a red body (evocative of brick or clay) and greenish trim (recalling vegetation or copper patina). Left: Paint companies regularly recommended new and different color schemes—which sold more paint in the past, and produced a wide range of historically appropriate choices for today.

Above: Though the ideal Arts & Crafts

JAMES C. MASSEY ARCHIVES

Styling YOUR HOME with Paint

**DU PONT** 

### Common Color Combinations

Ideas for Typical Schemes Recommended by Period Texts



#### FOURSQUARE

BODY *up						
BUDY *up	grey d	lk. green	dk. green	dk. brown		
*down	red brick	t. olive	straw	straw		
TRIM	grey v	vhite	white	straw		
SHUTTERS	grey v	villow green	green	green		
SASH	black g	ireen	green	white		
BUNGALOW						
BODY	copper brown	drab, u	p; amber br., dow	n amber br., u	ıp; brick, down	
TRIM	brick red	white o	white or off-white		tan	
ROOF	red	ivy gree	en	russet		
COLONIAL						
COLONIAL BODY	tan	Colonia	I yellow (ochre &	chrome yellow)		
	tan rich buff	Colonia white	EL	chrome yellow)		
BODY TRIM TUDOR	rich buff	white	EL	chrome yellow)		
BODY TRIM TUDOR BODY	rich buff stone color	cream	I yellow (ochre &	chrome yellow)		
BODY TRIM TUDOR BODY TRIM	rich buff stone color brown	cream green or m	I yellow (ochre &	chrome yellow)		
BODY TRIM TUDOR BODY	rich buff stone color	cream	A vellow (ochre & vellow)	chrome yellow)		



Changing materials and paint at the storey line the double-body look—was a Victorian idea that stuck with bungalows. Dark or woody colors in the upper half were not only natural, they helped the house hug the ground.

become familiar with the period color palettes, then adjust their loosey-goosey logic to your preferences, your neighborhood, and your part of the world. Looking at the kinds of colors and schemes recommended in the past, and adhering to a few common-sense principles, will help you on your way.

Although paint and placement are important, it's valuable to consider a few broader issues before pondering exact colors. The early 20th-century paint expert A. Ashmun Kelly, author of *The Household Painter* (1923), recommended principles that continue to make sense today:

• Color choices should not be made by personal preference alone.

• Exterior colors should be chosen according to the style of the house.

• Location of the house and the surroundings should weigh in on the decision.

• In suburban settings, colors should harmonize with nearby houses, not duplicate them—cooperate, don't compete.

• Large houses painted in medium to dark colors recede into the background.

• Large houses painted in light colors stand apart from the background.

Finally, remember that local and regional preferences frequently trumped the best advice of paint manufacturers and style mavens. Communities in the South



and on each coast often stubbornly maintained a nearly uniform "white" front. Though ready-mixed paints were introduced around the time of the Civil War, many old-time painters continued to concoct their own paints well past 1900. These colors undoubtedly varied from the standard of premixed colors and were also more adaptable to the owner's preference.

## Arts & Crafts Bungalow (1900 to 1935)

The popular bungalow adapted to both expensive—think Greene and Greene— and modest—say, Sears or Aladdin ready-

Along with real stone, brick, and mica-flecked stucco, Tudor Revival houses of all ilks made much use of stone colorsgreys, ochres, creams-on bodies. Most halftimber trim is assumed to be brown or black, but green and maroon were also popular.



cut-budgets to spread across the country, filling entire subdivisions with charming, practical homes. Known for their low roofs with generous overhangs, deep porches, and honest architectural elements, in their purest forms bungalows were intended to be built with natural, site-specific materials and to blend into the environment. Thus, it was no accident that the palette advocated for bungalows was often earth tones, woody stains, and other subdued, complex shades. Yellow trim on an oak brown shingled body was typical. Double-body schemes were equally common, such as the one depicted in the 1923 Morgan Building Woodwork Catalog with Assurance: a "Western" bungalow design with dark green shingles on the second floor and brown horizontal siding at the first floor, all trimmed in brown to evoke America's vision of a pine wooded West. The "natural look" was by no means law, however. To prevent regionalization that might limit sales, Morgan also showed similarly styled houses with pale yellow stucco and white trim-colors more suitable to the bright skies and white beaches of Florida or Southern California.

Colonial Revival shutters after 1900 were not solely black, but also deep greens, blue greens, and royal blues. Brick Colonials of the 1920s might sport myrtle green or white shutters.

#### Foursquare (1895 to 1940)

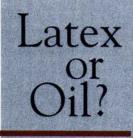
Coinciding with the popularity of the bungalow was its utilitarian alter-ego, the Foursquare—a two-storey, hipped roof house now so named for its boxy proportions. Recognized at the time as "the most house for the least money," Foursquares carried few exterior architectural embellishments except for siding details and front porch elements—columns, piers, balusters —that might be classically derived, bungalowlike, or so stark they lack any stylistic influence. Early versions often expressed a Victorian aesthetic with a subtle use of Different shades of the same color have been popular and practical in many stylistic eras. The two tones of mossy green on this bungalow play up the architectural details with cool, subtle impact.

dark colors and contrast, particularly on a solid-body Foursquare—for instance, a reddish-yellow body with brown trim and dark green sash. An even more striking combination recommended in 1915 was a dark brown body, white trim, and black sash. Though Foursquares built after the 1920s frequently lacked the earlier attention to harmony and subtlety of details, double-body cladding treatments still appeared. A common scheme incorporated dark green stained shingles at the second storey with tan or white horizontal siding at the first storey and white or tan trim.

#### Colonial Revival (1880-on)

Since the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the popularity of the Colonial Revival movement—or many a pastiche of Colonial Revival elements—has continued unabated. Whether it's a diminutive Georgian manse with dormers, dentiled bed mouldings, and columned porticos or gambrel-roofed Dutch Colonials, these homes evoked the romance of days-goneby, providing a traditional contrast to the earthy, progressive bungalow. Generally, Colonial Revivals were painted brighter and bolder than bungalows. Nearly every





Those of us interested in paint and old houses thought the latex-versus-oil debate would be over by now---after all, we've been told by manufacturers for 20 years that "oil-based paint will be off the market in the next five years." Nonetheless, oil-based paints are still available, so to choose the

right paint for your older home, it helps to understand the available products and their pros and cons.

Modern 100 percent acrylic latex paint out-performs oilbased house paint in color retention, gloss retention, film life, and vapor permeability. However, when switching from an oil-based system to an acrylic system, all experts agree you should begin with an oil based primer.

Oil-based house paint is still a viable option despite the formula alterations required to conform to the EPA's volatile organic compound rules. Oil-based paint adheres to dirty, chalky surfaces better than water-based paints. Oil-based paint is also extremely durable when used in areas of hard wear or abuse, for example on porch columns, porch railings, porch floors, and doors. When used on windows and doors, oil-based paint does not create the "blocking" (sticking) problems associated with water-borne paints. Here are a few

period paint brochure or pattern book at the turn of the 20th century began with recommendations for a body of "Colonial yellow" with white trim and dark green shutters. White was another popular body color with shutters and sash painted in a darker contrasting color to accentuate the white. In the 1920s and '30s, the Colonial Revival enjoyed an added burst of popularity, with many houses built in brick and, invariably, white or yellow trim. All-wood Colonial Revivals also lightened and whitened so that, by World War II and into the 1950s, a white body was prescriptive, highlighted by bright contrasting shutters or trim.

#### Tudor (1905 to 1940)

From the beginning of the century until World War II, the Tudor Revival-style house offered a romantic, vaguely medieval alternative to the symmetrical and clearly classical Colonial Revival. Tudor homes were commonly built side-by-side with other styles, often filling neighborhoods, subdivisions, or even entire suburbs, such as Shaker Heights, Ohio. Known for their steeply pitched roofs, half-timbering, and rules of thumb to help you decide which paint is best for your special old house.

 If your house has a minor accumulation of old paint (say, five coats or less) or it is stripped to bare wood, consider switching from oil-based paint to a 100 percent acrylic latex top coat. (After all, we won't have oil paints in five years.)

If you choose medium-to-dark colors for your house,
100 percent acrylic latex will resist fading and retain the original color far longer than oil-based paints.

 Use100 percent acrylic latex paint on new materials, additions, restorations, or repairs.

• When painting windows, doors, or cabinets, always use a top-quality paint that has excellent "blocking" resistance to prevent sticking.

 If your house has always been painted in oil, if the paint film is in reasonably good condition, and if the color is white or pale; continue using oil-based paint.

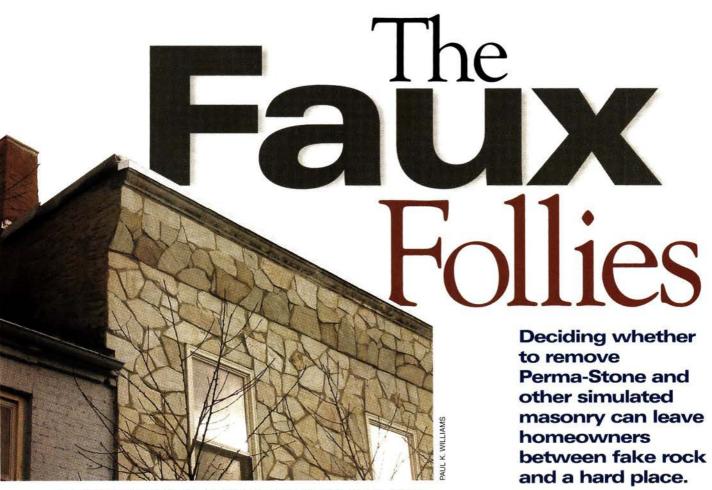
 If your house has thick coats of brittle oil-based paint, it is safer to repaint with oil-based paint. The application of modern flexible acrylic paints over thick layers of brittle oil based paints can create a paint peeling problem by pulling the old, brittle, oil-based paint away from the substrate.

Whatever paint you use, always follow sound painting principles and remember: Preparation is the first step to any quality paint job.



mix of unpainted stucco, brick, or stone, Tudors rarely displayed the diversity of colors seen on other styles. Dark brown (almost black) was the most popular trim color contrasting with lighter stucco that frequently sparkled with embedded mica or other minerals that created a subtle flair. Various browns were also favorite trim colors—and, yes, Tudor trim was occasionally painted white. A double-body scheme put the flair in many a Foursquare, especially when highlighted by a prominent or painted belt course. A darker upper storey adds visual mass to the building.





Installations that obliterate building features, like this bizarre rubble stone veneered cornice, are what bother preservationists more than the materials.

erma-Stone. Formstone. Rostone. By whatever trade name, the mere mention of simulated masonry can cause a wide range of reactions—from the rolling eyes of homeowners who want desperately to be rid of it, to passionate defense by preservationists of 20th-century building materials. Somewhere in the middle are those who think it should disappear from buildings that date before Perma-Stone's patent in 1929, but who fully understand all the pitfalls of the material's removal.

These simulated stone products shared common installation techniques, and by understanding them, homeowners who want to remove them can anticipate this deceptively simple job, and the damage these materials may have caused to their underlying masonry or wood façades.

Perma-Stone is such a common trade name that it's almost become generic for any of the cementitious materials applied to exterior walls and manipulated to look like stone. If you hail from Baltimore and environs, though, the name you probably know is Formstone, which native son and avant-garde film director John Waters called "the polyester of brick."

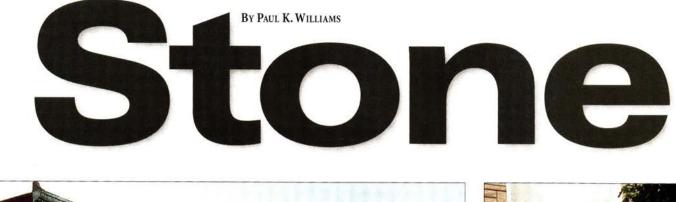
Patented by Baltimorean Albert Knight in 1937 for his Lasting Products Company, its use was so widespread in that city that in 1997 Waters made it the subject of a 30-minute documentary film *Little Castles: A Formstone Phenomenon*, told by the people who made it, sold it, bought it, and installed it. Coproducer Lillian Bowers (with Skizz Cyzyk) says she got the idea for the documentary when she dreamed that her father's gravestone was being covered with Formstone.

Other brands included Rostone, Tru-Stone, Fieldstone, Bermuda Stone, Modern Stone, Romanstone, Magnolia Stone, Dixie Stone, and Silverstone. It was applied in a manner similar to stucco, usually in multiple layers, to wire net or lath attached to existing exterior walls, then scored with simulated mortar joints to suggest individual stones. Adding to the illusion were often artful coloration and sometimes mica chips that would sparkle on a sunny day.

#### The Magic of Marketing

Perma-Stone was registered as a trademark in 1929 by a Columbus, Ohio, company of the same name, which trained and authorized local dealers and provided them with the molds and materials they needed to install it. Its immediate success spurred competitors to fill the desire for a maintenance-free covering for poorly constructed exterior walls.

At the 1933–34 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, the Rostone Company of Lafayette, Indiana, was among exhibitors using model houses to display what show sponsors billed as "a futuristic view of what architects predicted would someday be the norm." The Wieboldt-Rostone House was a steel-frame structure clad in Rostone's prefabricated panels of





In Baltimore, where it covers blocks of early 19th-century row houses, ersatz rock is considered both architecturally inappropriate and historically significant.



Removing faux stone can reveal detailing lost due to installation.

shale and lime. Later relocated to serve as a residence in Beverly Shores, Illinois, the house served more than anything to demonstrate just how wrong they were. The original Rostone failed and was covered in the 1950s with Perma-Stone, which has also now fallen apart.

The original use of Formstone, patented in 1937, was to apply a uniform exterior covering to suburban houses that had undergone additions with unmatched siding. However, it quickly became more popular for covering the exteriors of old row houses in Baltimore, built by the tens of thousands using porous brick that left them plagued by penetrating moisture. Formstone salesmen touted sealing qualities and a 20-year guaranty that, for the cost of three paint jobs, would virtually assure a lifetime free of leaking walls and peeling paint.

Eternal salvation from maintenance wasn't a lure that appealed only to homeowners. Many religious institutions chose simulated stone for new buildings, to side older rectories, and to match additions to real stone churches. Educational buildings also got the treatment. Father T. Byron Collins of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., wrote on July 14, 1955, that "In my opinion, this process called Tru-Stone makes a much superior job as far as appearance and durability as compared to shingling." At that point, though, faux stone was reaching its zenith, about to be overtaken by much cheaper aluminum and vinyl siding.

#### Putting It Up

Two types of simulated stone were available to homeowners, whether for remodeling or new-home construction: siding manufactured offsite in molds and applied somewhat like real stone and cementbased materials applied in layers on-site.

Rostone was probably the best known



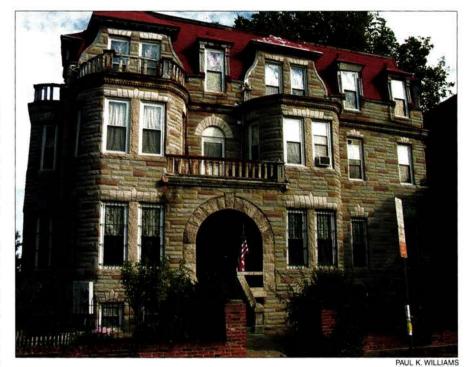
Aggressive marketing like this 1950s ad made the aesthetic Perma-Stone

The tools, colorants, and techniques of some processes could, in fact, convincingly simulate masonry. Cloning window lintels and keystone arches helped put the conceit over.

of the former group, shipped in inch-thick panels measuring 16" x 24" in a variety of natural colors and finishes, from matte to polished. Finely ground shale mixed with lime and water was poured into stoneshaped molds, and then heated to create a stonelike wafer that could be applied much like contemporary faux interior "bricks."

Perma-Stone and Formstone, among others, were created on the job site, much like interior plaster. Normally the first step was to nail up a lath to anchor the initial 1/4" to 3/4" rough, or brown, coat. The lath was usually metal but sometimes wood; chicken wire was commonly used with Formstone. Some products were sold as not needing lath, so workers applied the cementitious mix directly to the exterior walls—a cause of great pain to anyone trying to remove it decades later.

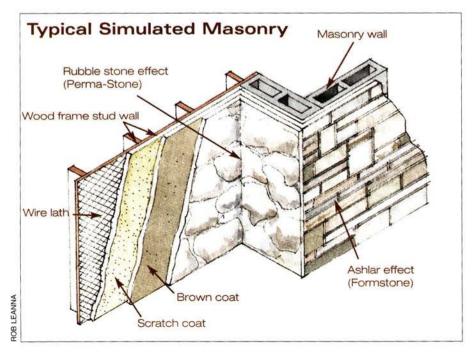
When the brown coat was dry, the installers applied a second coat of equal thickness and while it was still wet, some artistry could come into play. Like ambitious children building a sand castle, they could press the surface with molds, score it, or run an aluminum roller across it to create a crinkled surface. Faux mortar lines could be left or filled. A finish coat then



provided subtle coloration; a final membrane coating helped waterproof the layers.

#### **Nasty Surprises**

This on-site installation, plus the variation in skill levels and personal flourishes from contractors or homeowners, explains the wide variation often seen among even adjacent buildings. What's of greater interest if you're considering removal of the Perma-Stone is what you don't see. The installer could apply the coatings anywhere that chicken wire could be nailed—around



curves, up and over cornices, over sills and decorative brickwork. Thus the structure could be given large faux keystones, quoins, or other decorative touchessometimes far off center or out of scale. Worse, original architectural features were often entirely removed-chiseled off and not merely covered up. Mortar around damaged brick may be mismatched-or the bricks filled in with an entirely different material. Workers removing Formstone on an upper storey in the Fell's Point area of Baltimore found a layer of cement up to 6" thick that had been used to level out a brick wall that had bowed in. And while homeowners were "modernizing," they often elected to install new windows and doors-no matter that they were smaller. The surrounding areas were just filled in with nonmatching brick or cinder block before being covered with Perma-Stone.

Lost architectural features weren't just decorative. Cornices, belt courses, lintels, and sills that were chipped away had once done their share to divert water away from the exterior surface. Add to this the deterioration of the Perma-Stone itself—which after time can crack or pull away from the wall—and you create a pocket where water can seep undetected behind the faux masonry, leading to destructive freezethaw cycles. This is especially troublesome on wood-frame structures where the decorative cornice was removed, causing water damage around ceilings and windows.

In short, damage is inherent to the surface underlying simulated masonry. The question is how much? Steve Callcott, preservation planner for Washington, D.C., for 11 years, says the issue of whether to remove Formstone has arisen on only three occasions in that time. "My experience has been mixed. We would never discourage people from uncovering historical features," he says, "although Formstone had its own period of significance and, next year, some people may consider us heretics." Problems arise, he says, when people anxious to be rid of the stuff begin ripping, hammering, and chiseling-especially if theirs is faux stone applied directly to the underlying siding.

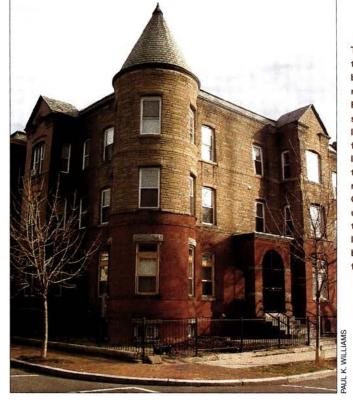
Ripping down your Perma-Stone can be a fast and inexpensive process—it can be taken off a two- or three-storey row house in a weekend—but restoration of what lies beneath can take weeks, in the case of wood surfaces that need nail holes filled and a new paint job, to months for masonry surfaces that have been severely defaced.

#### **Doing It Yourself**

Once you're satisfied with your test patches—and have assured yourself of a sufficient amount of matching brick or other material to replace damaged areas—you may want to tackle the removal yourself. The only tools you'll need are a pry bar or two, hammer, wire cutters, cold chisel, hard hat, goggles, and heavy work gloves. You'd be wise, though, to commit to scaffolding rather than a ladder, since cement layers up to 1 1/2" thick can be humongously heavy.

Work from the top down, since loosened sections will fall off the face of the building. For that reason you should also think about protecting windows with plywood. Rope off the area to keep away children, pets, and sidewalk superintendents.

Starting at a window edge or door frame, chisel away enough faux stone to let you wedge a crowbar behind it. Once you get started, you should be able to hammer in your crowbar and remove the stone and lath in fairly large sheets. Don't try to peel away bigger sections than you can handle, and use a narrow piece of plywood under



The owners of this Baltimore building stopped removing their Formstone at the second storey line when they found the brick looked worse than the mock rock. Below: Cement veneer is usually adhered to wire or wood lath nailed to the brick or wood facade.



your crowbar to avoid chipping into the brick or wood. On brick surfaces focus on nail points in the lath, usually placed in the mortar joints. In most cases the weight of the simulated masonry will break the lath or chicken wire; if not, you may need the wire cutters.

Once the Perma-Stone is off—and you are spared nightmarish surprises like shrunken windows and doors—the procedure isn't unlike a typical façade repair. If your Perma-Stone was applied with nails, you can anticipate replacing face bricks, especially around windows and doors. Even if the installers were careful to put nails into the joints, you may find that removal has broken them off or pulled them out, and you'll have to rake out the joints and repoint. You'll probably want to strip and clean previously painted brick or you may find that you need to paint it to mask damaged and nonmatching masonry. As with most restoration projects, you won't know for sure what lurks beneath your Perma-Stone until it's fully removed.

For some time now, the idea that simulated masonry may be worthy of preservation has been creeping into some historic guidelines. While the city of St. Louis prohibits its use on landmarks, the position of the Hamden Village Main Street Program in Baltimore is that "while Formstone removal may also be included as a façade improvement, applicants are encouraged to keep Formstone that is in good condition as it is a distinctive part of Baltimore's unique heritage." And many real estate agents, as they did more than a half century ago, readily advertise a faux stone exterior as value-added feature. The debate is likely to become even more heated as 20thcentury building materials leave their mark-in this case often all too literallyon American architecture.

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

# Taking Care of Investigating and repairing

An important example of the International style during the Modernist Period in architecture, the Gropius House embodies the architect's philosophy of design: economy of means with little ornamentation, expressive use of materials, and efficient harmonious solutions. It also reflects Gropius's appreciation of new technology through its factory-made materials. TTI COMMON

n March 17, 1937, Walter Gropius, a founding member of the internationally famous Bauhaus School in Germany, arrived in Massachusetts with his wife, Ise, and daughter, Ati, to accept a professorship at the Department of Architecture at Harvard University (one year later he became chairman). Wanting to settle quickly, Walter and Ise covered the Greater Boston area in search of a location for their permanent residence. Ironically, Gropius's first commission in America was his own house, and in 1938 he designed and monitored its construction.

In 1974, the house and its furnishings were transferred to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) under whose stewardship it now operates as a museum reflecting Walter Gropius's life in the late 1960s. Over the last few years SPNEA has been active in solving some of the more troubling issues affecting the building. In 1996 SPNEA asked our firm, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, to diagnose the water leakage problems

COURTESY



along the east elevation of the house and recommend repair solutions. The investigation and repair work we performed in collaboration with SPNEA, and the philosophy behind these solutions, is a useful study in the kinds of issues many preservationists will face in the future as we strive to preserve mid-20th-century buildings.

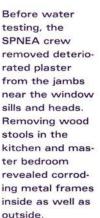
#### Initial Investigation

SPNEA's Gropius House archives contain copies of the original architectural drawings from 1938. During our review we noted the American platform frame construction, where single-storey stud walls support individual floors and roof systems. Instead of choosing a sloped roof, which is typical of most rural construction in the area, Gropius designed a flat roof that accentuates the severity of the rectilinear geometry.

We also noted that the windows are steel—a combination of fixed and operable sashes in "U" and "chair" shapes. The window frames are attached to the structure with anchors spaced 2′ on center at jambs and at the window head. While the drawings indicate flashing that extends over the top of a drip plate that has an upturned leg behind the vertical siding, they don't show waterproofing membrane between the vertical siding and sheathing, or flashing under the window sill.

When we surveyed the building to document the existing conditions, we found a limited amount of leakage occurring throughout the entire structure, with the greatest concentration in the rooms along the east-facing wall: the kitchen and maid's room on the first floor, and the master bedroom and dressing room on the second floor. Indoors, the most pervasive problems were deteriorated and damp plaster. On the exterior, the most wide-



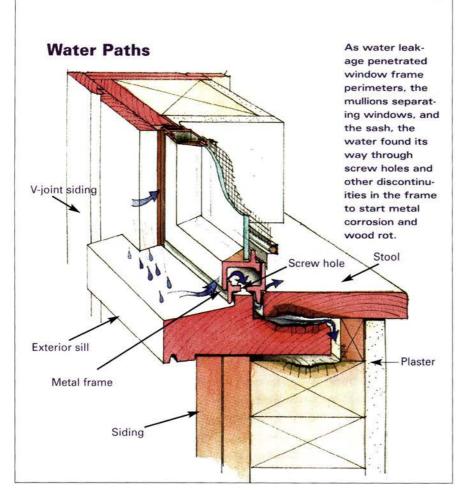


We chose to water test two wood mullion areas separating rooms, and a metal mullion between the fixed and operable sashes in the master bedroom. Under testing, water quickly flowed indoors at openings around window perimeters.

Water flow was also obvious at the wood mullions between rooms and through the operable sashes at their sills. However, no water entered the house at the window heads where there was lead flashing.









Coming from the windows, water bypassed the major waterproofing element in the walls—the asphaltic felt to deteriorate the framing and other materials behind it. Note the decaying studs and batts of Cabots Quilt, an early thermal insulation product made with eel grass (a kind of sea grass).

dows were a major source of leakage, so we decided to water test them to confirm this source.

problems

element

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#### Water Testing

Water testing is a gentle, fairly noninvasive procedure that lends itself to the diagnosis of leakage in historic structures. Basically, a water test involves placing a spray rack on a test area and slowly working it upwards as entry sources are defined. However, as part of any water test, some interior finishes must be removed to obtain a clear view of infiltration paths. Due to the architecturally sensitive nature of the house, we worked with SPNEA's carpentry crew to remove deteriorated plaster and wood finishes that could be detached and replaced without damage.

We started applying water to the house at the first floor window sill, and worked upwards along the jambs to the window heads. The water tests confirmed our suspicions. We found that water flowed quickly (in less than one minute) into the house through a variety of paths, particularly openings around window perimeters, at glazing corners, under mullions, between windows, and between the fixed and operable frames. Based on our experience, we felt that the concealed stud framing was at risk and needed to be evaluated, so the crew removed all the vertical siding from the east elevation. As anticipated, the wood framing below the window was deteriorated or nonexistent. We also found corroded electrical conduit and decaying eel grass insulation.

Even though removing the siding was very invasive, it allowed us to view hidden damage, permitted removal of the windows for conservation, and gave us the opportunity to find possible inconsistencies between the architectural drawings and the as-built conditions. Indeed, we found that the drawings corresponded well with the house construction, except in one area: a waterproofing membrane—asphalt impregnated felt paper—between the vertical siding and the sheathing where the drawings indicated none. This felt was in remarkably good condition after 60 years in service.

#### **Approaching Repairs**

Alleviating further water problems at the window perimeters would require adding flashing at the window jambs and sills. Philosophically, the structural framing damage would be relatively easy to correct, given that SPNEA is committed to in-kind replacement of materials that are beyond repair. The window repairs, however, would pose a greater challenge due to their intrusive nature and potential visual impact on the sheer walls and unornamented surfaces of the Gropius House.

As designed, the Gropius House win-





Our water test used a multiple nozzle spray rack hung from a ladder and calibrated to dispense a well-distributed film of water at a rate of 5 gallons per square feet per hour simulating heavy rain without the driving pressure of wind.

Despite corrosion distressing the glass, the operable sashes weathered remarkably well over 60 years. For any beyond repair, our back-up plan was to cannibalize similar, but abandoned, windows from a nearby Marcel Breuer House.

dows rely on the perimeter and glazing seals to be completely bonded and continuous-what engineers call a surfacesealed system. Often seen in contemporary construction techniques such as EIFS (the stuccolike insulation and finish system popular for residential construction and hotels), a surface-sealed system is one that does not incorporate any back-up water management. In other words, any water that breaches this outboard surface of the wall results in leakage. Our experience has shown that surface-sealed systems are difficult to maintain because the materials that seal the system are never completely bonded. This proved true at the Gropius House. Even though there was a waterproofing layer-the asphaltic feltbetween the sheathing and siding, much of the leakage around the windows found its way inboard of this major waterproofing element to the finishes and framing.

Before we could embark on any repair scheme, we had to have a clear answer to a fundamental question: What are we conserving? SPNEA is a leader in the United States preservation community, and their basic philosophical approach to conservation is, in part, continual maintenance, maximum retention of original materials, and in-kind replacement of materials beyond repair. Using SPNEA's philosophical guidance as a backdrop, we felt the answer to our question was twofold.

First, it was clear that the repairs had to respect the original details and elements, and retain as much building fabric as possible. Repairs would have to complement the original details without making any significant changes. Even if the changes could not be seen, the authenticity of the building had to be maintained. We were also committed to design details that were reversible and that had a limited effect on the original fabric.

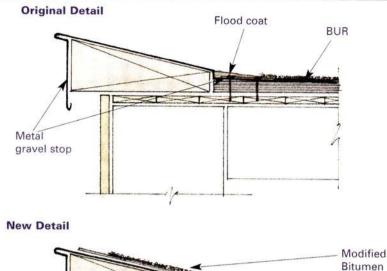
Second, and most important, we had to conserve the aesthetic. Symbolically, the Gropius House is very valuable to the architectural record. Moreover, it was the home of an architect who was influential in the development of a particular architectural philosophy. Therefore, our goal was to make no changes to the house that would impact the overall appearance of the façade or how it reads visually.

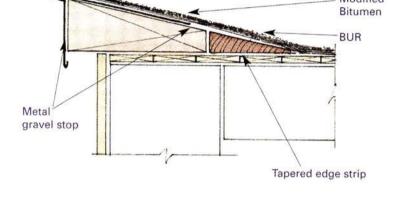
#### **Design Phase**

Working within the bounds of a clear conservation philosophy, most of the design decisions were straightforward. However, like any conservation work, we experienced dilemmas in our approach along the way.

The SPNEA crew repaired the damaged framing with new dimensional lumber—all in-kind except for adding shims at the bottom of studs to ensure a tight fit

#### **Roof Flashing**





The new roof at the Gropius House was another hotmopped built-up roof (BUR)—a sandwich of felt and asphalt layers superseded by rubber membranes for many structures, but an in-kind repair for this museum building.



The flat roof at the Gropius House presented another set of leakage problems, some precipitated by the gravel stop flashing. Originally the gravel stop along the roof edge was a continuous piece of flashing that joined the built-up roof in a lapped and flood-coated joint (top drawing). Years of thermal expansion broke this seam. Our solution was to add periodic expansion joints along the length of the flashing, and to bring the roof up to it over a tapered edge strip.



Much of the new gravel stop flashing was installed along the marquee that fronts the house.

and proper load transfer. Because SPNEA could not acquire replacements for the lost eel grass insulation, the crew included one other new material in the wall assembly: fiberglass insulation.

Once the glazing and hardware were removed, the window frames were extracted from the pockets and sent to a shop where they were gently sandblasted to remove paint build-up and corrosion. Generally, the bottom rail of the fixed sash and the lower 6" of the adjacent jambs were beyond repair. For those areas, the corroded steel framing was removed and replaced with rails of similar profile. The replacement rails were milled and welded to match the existing profile. Reconstructing the rails required care due to the tendency of narrow gauge steel to bend and warp during welding.

Originally, we were apprehensive about the chances of successfully removing this corroded framing and replacing it with steel of a similar profile. However, a local welder was able to accurately fabricate new rails and weld them to the originals. After the frames were repaired, they were again gently sandblasted then finished with marine grade paint in the original color.

#### **Focus on Flashing**

Of all the design work behind the repair of the east elevation, the window flashing was the most involved. Because good conservation practice limited us to complementing—not changing—the existing components, we had to design a flashing system that conformed to the existing geometry of the sills and jambs, while still being able to control water leakage. Before we began designing it, we knew that it would require a turned down drip edge at the sill level, and that it would be exposed. Since this edge would introduce a new line on the house, we knew we had to limit its visual impact as much as possible.

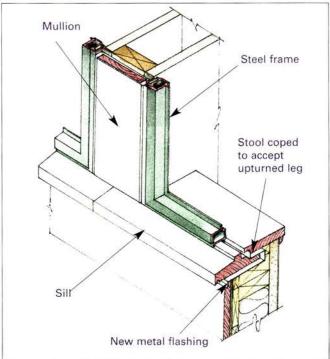
To fabricate the flashing, we used 16ounce lead-coated copper formed to the profile of the wood sill and terminated with end dams to contain any lateral movement of water. We set the upturned leg of the flashing back 3/8" from the inboard plane of the window, and coped the wood stool to conceal the upturned leg. Locating the flashing inboard of the window was important. If the upturned leg of the flashing was tight to the window, leakage around the frame could by-pass the flashing.

Normally, if we have to penetrate a sill flashing, we do so through the upturned leg to avoid leakage. This was impossible at the Gropius House so our only choice was to place a "gasket" of sealant around each penetration before the sill was installed. We also filled screw holes with sealant before securing the sill to the framing.

Because no modifications were made to the sill, such as installing "weep" grooves or sloping it to facilitate drainage, the wood sill might be contained in a damp environment for periods—possibly leading to premature decay. To ensure that the wood sill will last well into the future, the perimeter surface seals will have to be diligently monitored and maintained. As a secondary measure we coated the wood sills with wood preservative before reinstallation. We decided that the possible deterioration of the sill for the sake of authenticity was a reasonable trade-off.

The form of the Gropius House has survived well over the last 60 years. The exterior envelope, though, has long been problematic due to the limitations of some





Above: By 1998, projects at the **Gropius House** included repairs to the north end and work on exterior finishes. Left: The challenge in adding flashings under the sill and under mullions was making them effective yet almost invisibleall without altering the historic construction of the building.

critical design details—perhaps the result of a tight building schedule or an architect new to American construction. The modifications we made to some of these critical details will greatly prolong the life of the house. The drip edge of the flashing is almost indistinguishable, and the postconstruction water test revealed no water intrusion. Our pragmatic approach to understanding the Gropius House and its leakage problems, and having a very clear conservation ideology, allowed us to complete our repairs with the least amount of disruption to this 20th-century National Historic Landmark. 🌰

**Brent A. Gabby**, P.E., senior staff engineer, specializes in historic buildings at the Buildings' Technology Division of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc. (41 Seyon Street, Bldg. 1, Suite 500 Waltham, MA 02453). The Gropius House is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday, June 1 to October 15, and weekends, October 16 to May 31. For information on tour times, contact the Gropius House at (781) 259-8098.

## Old-House Living

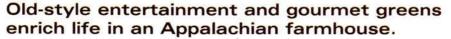
# Back-Road Rhapsody BY NAN CHASE



Bill Wilson has tamed his sloping streamside property with hundreds of feet of stone wall, leaving terraces perfect for entertaining.



As a renter, Bill farmed tobacco, but now his farm supplies area restaurants with healthful produce such as this spinach.



difficult to find Springhouse Farm even from the closest town, ten miles away. The 1890 farmstead lies near the end of a narrow, winding

dirt road in a shady hollow outside Boone, North Carolina. So imagine the navigational task facing visitors who make their way here each summer from as far away as Ireland, France, and Mexico...not to mention Seattle, Santa Fe, and New York.

But come they do-a hundred or more at a time-to enjoy the twice-yearly musical performances that have evolved as an institution since Bill and Carolyn Wilson moved in 30 years ago. As they rebuilt the once-derelict property into a rural showplace, they were also building a way of life that revolves around old-fashioned rural entertainment: choral performances, instrumental recitals, even stage plays. The Wilsons may live in an isolated hamlet but they have a lifestyle many city-dwellers would envy for its rich mix of companionship, culture, cuisine, and splendid scenery.

When the couple moved to the farm in 1972 as newlyweds and recent college graduates, rent was \$50 a month, barely half the rooms in the rambling 5,000square-foot frame house were finished, and heat came from a wood stove. The kitchen turned out to be sitting on an active spring, with predictable results."The back wall had fallen off. You would open a cabinet and see sunlight," says Bill. "We

didn't have to use the fridge in winter." Carolyn has a different perspective: "We put things in the refrigerator to keep them from freezing."

Still, the area's physical beauty and the draw of a simple, self-reliant country lifestyle were enough to hold them. They made friends, put down roots, and had two daughters. Bill began farming a tobacco allotment with a horse-drawn plow, and has since become a grower of specialty vegetables for leading restaurants in the region, as well as curator of a unique collection of American political papers in his upstairs library. Carolyn is a speech therapist for the local school district.

During an economic downturn in 1977, the farm's owner decided to sell and the Wilsons, suddenly Springhouse Farm's owners, could become its saviors. They



When the Wilsons moved in 30 years ago, an active spring had rotted away the back wall of the kitchen.

rebuilt damaged parts of the structure, finished a string of upstairs rooms once roughed out for an early 20th-century tourism boom that didn't materialize, and added such creature comforts as central heat and a dishwasher.

As with many old farmhouses, there had been some gerrymandering over the years, particularly in 1923 when an addition changed the house's orientation from front to back. Nevertheless, the Wilsons tried to keep any further alterations—a bedroom above the kitchen, an upstairs bathroom, an expansion of the political library, a back porch enclosure for a furnace and mudroom—within the old footprint and under the original broad tin roof.

All that activity still left time to relax, but television reception was poor. As the '70s gave way to the '80s, inspiration struck. "It was winter and people were bored," says Carolyn. "It all started with singing carols around the piano at Christmastime. At some point somebody said, 'Why don't we start a choir?""

At first there were eight or ten voices. Today the choir averages about twice that and gives two well-attended performances a year—one in winter, the other in late summer. Carolyn estimates that since its inception, some 50 different people have sung in the choir, while Bill puts the number closer to 100. Family and friends of choir members make up the audiences, and as the membership has widened so have the number and hometowns of fans.

Many audience members are accomplished musicians themselves, so impromptu concerts often go on all night after the scheduled events with guitar, banjo, hammer dulcimer, autoharp, and stand-up bass, in addition to flute and piano. A published poet who lives nearby often opens recitals with pithy readings; another friend is a composer whose original works are brought to life through the Springhouse Farm Choir. Musical styles range from medieval and baroque to Appalachian shape-note singing and modern melodies.

The house, with its large rooms and high ceilings, its unexpected nooks and crannies, easily absorbs the multitudes in winter. In summer the venue moves to the expansive brook-bordered lawn where an outdoor stage is the site of ambitious operettas complete with curtains, costumes, and singing damsels in distress; construction and sewing go on for months as the choir rehearses. The first outdoor performance was a freewheeling *Sampson and Delilah*, followed by several seasons of an original extravaganza called *Zirkus Maximus*—a lyrical dark comedy featuring the ghost of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The Christmas recital, including a visit from Santa, takes place in the music room, which holds not only a grand piano but also a harpsichord and an antique reed pump organ. Before recitals, chairs materialize to provide seating for 60 people, with dozens more listening from adjoining rooms. When weather permits, the crowd spills onto the wide verandahs and someone throws open the double sash windows for listening.

Summer or winter, recitals and concerts are always accompanied by a buffet dinner in the dining room, where family antiques dating from before the Revolutionary War line the walls. "The table has four leaves and can seat 22 people semicomfortably," says Carolyn, "so that gives us a place for choir rehearsal dinners." Additional diners spread out through the house; the now-cozy kitchen is a favorite spot.

As the house has taken shape, so have the 50 mostly wooded acres that surround it. Bill has erected stone walls to tame the steep slopes into a series of terraces for entertaining. Beyond them are a fruit orchard and a raspberry patch, 110-year-



An outdoor stage hosts summer dramas, but guests also enjoy other kinds of play, such as boccie and badminton.



For recitals and concerts, guests bring dishes to share at a buffet served in the 15' x 20' dining room.



old grape vines, a watercress pool, and an emerald sea of spinach. Adjacent to the house are billowing boxwoods, now reaching the base of the second storey.

"I didn't even know there was a creek in the backyard for at least a year," recalls Carolyn. "It was waist deep in weeds. Parts of it [the property] took seven or eight years to clean up after we bought it."

Bill's farm duties—from overseeing the spinach harvest to keeping bobcats out of the chicken coop—keep him close to home, so he thrives on the crowds that come to visit. All the maintenance and yard work go to one rewarding end. "It all comes down to music," he says. "That's the connective tissue of this farm."

Amateur flutist **Nan Chase** enjoys participating in the lively music scene near her home in Boone, North Carolina.



Upstairs is Bill's library with its collection of political books, scholarly articles, and memorabilia from the Cold War era.

### Interior features of a modern home.

By Shirley Maxwell and James C. Massey



Left: Built in 1931, this "Cedars" in St. Louis was a popular house design from the Sears Honor Bilt Modern Homes catalog. Below: The living room of the Cedars features an English colonial fireplace and plastered arches.

TS

Inside

House

the



obody's counting, but it seems that most of the hundred thousand or so Sears "Honor Bilt" ready-cut across the United

houses constructed across the United States from 1910 to 1940 are still being lived in today. What's more, today's owners feel just the way the original owners did about these mass-produced kit houses charmed and fortunate.

These folks know their vintage homes are attractive, well-built, and functional. Many of them are also convinced that each house is unique, at least on the inside. Looking at the interiors feature by feature, it would appear that the owners just might be right.

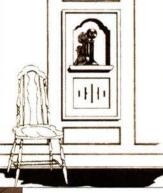
Sears' clients had an imposing range of options in details such as hardware, light fixtures, breakfast nooks, telephone niches, built-in ironing boards, kitchen cabinets, china cabinets, bookcases, windows, French doors, and room-dividing colonnades, as well as walls, flooring, doors, and trim. Potential buyers pored over Sears catalogs to customize their houses to suit their own tastes, incomes, lifestyles, and family size. Sears interiors were never in the vanguard of au courant design, but they did make a slow progression from Arts & Crafts or Mission style to Colonial Revival, with occasional digressions into Spanish and Olde English-and even Art Deco.

The choices began with the floor plans. Plans could be reversed or otherwise altered. Windows could be moved, removed, or added. Big closets could become bathrooms or sewing rooms. Sears' architects promised to turn a standard plan into anything the potential homeowner fancied.

Designed to make the most of every inch of floor space, "Honor Bilt" interiors still felt spacious because of their high ceilings— 9' on the first floor, 8' 2" on the second and their open floorplans, an economical choice that required fewer walls and doors.



Left: This telephone stand located on the stair landing was a convenient standard feature in the Cedars house plan—the catalog illustration shown below.





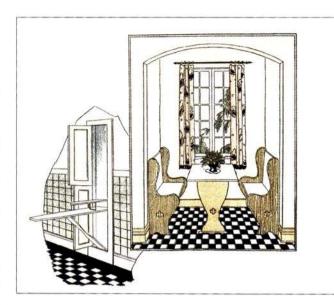
The Sears catalogs offered such extras as built-in china shelving (left) and this ironing board (above) that serves as a spice rack today.

ALL ARCHIVAL ART ROSE THORNTON

Buyers even had a choice of wall construction methods: locally purchased plaster over Sears wood lath, or, for \$128 more, Sears Goodwall "sheet plaster." Shipped in panels conveniently sized to fit snugly over the wall studs, sheet plaster was a fireresistant product made of gypsum.

One of the most appealing features of the Sears home was the high-quality wood used for floors and trim. The species of wood varied over time and according to the part of the country where it was milled. As Sears expanded its Honor Bilt division, the company opened lumber mills in New Jersey, Ohio, and Illinois. The New Jersey plant generally served Sears' eastern region with flat-grain fir or western hemlock flooring and fir or hemlock trim and doors. The Ohio and Illinois mills supplied the western region with yellow pine for floors and trim and white pine for doors. For an extra charge, oak floors could be ordered for entrance halls, vestibule, and living and dining rooms, and maple for kitchens and bathrooms. Oak doors, trim, and stairs were separately priced options. The house kit included enough varnish for two or three coats on every wood surface.

Sears boasted that their stairs were "of



the highest quality," and were "built by expert stair makers ... completely manufactured, ready to nail in place." The newels were sturdy, square pillars with flat caps, while balusters were either square or turned in a Colonial Revival style.

Interior doors changed from catalog to catalog. In 1929 they had two cross panels; in 1940 they had a single sunk panel. Other years they had five or six cross panels. French doors were sometimes used between halls and living rooms, or between living and dining rooms. More often The Sears catalog described built-in features as adding personality and convenience to the home. Shown left is a built-in ironing board and breakfast nook.

the large openings were simply "cased" and left open to create the illusion of more space.

Windows followed style trends typical of their decades. Window sash could be 4/1, 6/6, 1/1, or 2/2. Galvanized or bronze door and window screens were extra options, as were storm doors and windows.

Designs for doorknobs, backplates, and similar hardware were updated to suit changing popular tastes. Available in various finishes (copper, sanded brass, yellow brass), these items were usually of bronze





and guaranteed to be serviceable for years. Choices included the straight-lined "Chicago" style; the gently curving Colonial Revival "Stratford" of the 1920s and "Shefton" of the 1930s; the voluptuous banjo shaped 1930s "La Tosca;" the fluted oval backplate and faceted glass knob of the "Narcissus;" and the bold Art Deco lines of the 1930s "Rhythmic" pattern.

Electric lighting fixtures—which catalogs called the "jewelry" of the house were among the most striking features of the Sears interior. They included wall sconces and ceiling fixtures and ranged from the basic (a bare bulb dangling from a cord for the pantry) through the utilitarian (white glass or metal ceiling globes for the kitchen and bath) to the elegant (Colonial Revival or Mediterranean-style wall sconces and chandeliers for other rooms). Fancier fixtures were generally made of cast aluminum with metallic and polychrome finishes.

By the late 1920s, Sears kitchens were being scrutinized by a "woman adviser who understands the needs of the housewife." Those needs included popular kitchen accessories such as breakfast nooks and built-in ironing boards. Sans ironing boards, the shallow cabinets now provide convenient storage, or display, space.

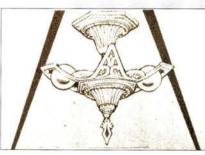
There probably are fewer surviving Sears porcelain over cast-iron "Hiawatha" sinks with integral drain boards, deep aprons, and porcelain legs or their economy model roll-rimmed, wall-mounted "Delaware." Sears kitchens didn't call for long walls of built-in cabinets until the 1930s. Porcelain bathtubs in one of Sears' two recommended styles (with feet or straight-sided) are probably scarce now, too, along with the Venetian glass medicine cabinets that adorned Sears bathrooms.

In the basement, Sears laundry tubs and hot-water heaters joined Sears massive Hercules hot-water or heating plants or their smaller gravity hot-air pipe furnaces.

Susan Englund's 1930s "Cedars" home and its fascinating trove of Sears details show what treasures a well-preserved Honor Bilt can hold. A delightful, archtopped telephone niche waits on the stair landing, convenient for calling upstairs or



## Lighting



down, while overhead, a Sears Hi-Glo light fixture proudly displays its bare bulbs. The doors sport original "La Tosca" hardware. And, oh, yes, Susan's turned *her* ironing board cabinet into a handy spice rack.

Suzanne and Fritz Kramer enjoy their 1926 "Woodland" model in Chevy Chase, Washington, D.C., where they've lived for 32 years. Although original door locks and handles were replaced years ago, the Kramers salvaged a few faceted-glass doorknobs in the Narcissus pattern. A simple, round ceiling light now in the living room once graced the front hall, greeting visitors with a waterfall of glass prisms. The Kramers removed the prisms but tucked some away as reminders. They kept their ironing board cabinet, too.

Now those are owner benefits that really make a house a home!

Special thanks to Rosemary Thornton author of The Houses that Sears Built (Gentle Beam Publications).

Top and left: The original bedroom light fixture from the Cedar plan was cast metal with a "hand-hammered" effect.



Stairs came completely manufactured and ready to nail in place. Every part of the stairs—newels, balusters, railing, risers, treads, and stringers—was keyed by number for easy assembly.

A textbook example of the Stick style for the average family is this house in Albany, Oregon, with its gable end nicely delineated by pronounced stickwork. The grid of vertical and horizontal boards seems to support the windows and wall, while diagonal boards in the eaves "brace" the roof.

KENNETH NAVER

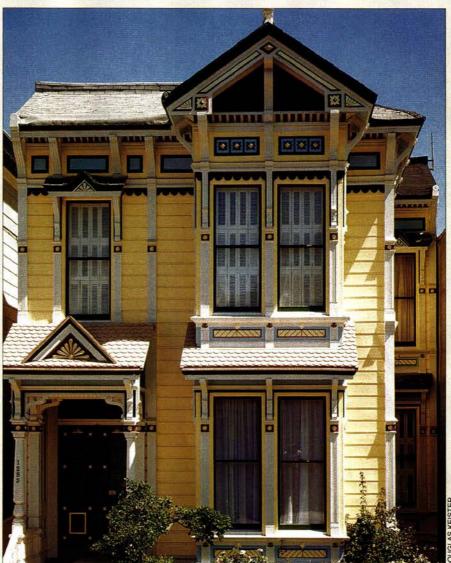


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Stick stayed stylish all through the 1890s in San Francisco, bringing intricate, Eastlake-inspired façade ornament to countless wood row houses.

BY GORDON BOCK

Novel carpentry creates the first "Modern" house of the Victorian age.

ust before the Civil War, when it seemed like residential iterations of Old-World architecture would parade on and on through the rest of the 19th century, there appeared a new house style that, while clearly influenced by history, also hinted at something different. The Stick style, as it is now called, represented the most innovative design concepts and building technologies of its time, yet it did not attract serious study-or even a widely accepted name-until a century later. Were it not overshadowed by the equally extroverted Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne styles by the 1880s, and through much of the 20th century, it's clear that the Stick style would have been recognized much earlier for its original identity and the totally American concept of a house that it presented for the first time.

Unlike Downing's ideal of sylvan, cozy, cottages, Stick-style houses are often large—sometimes very large. The 1887 Sherman House in San Diego upstages its neighbors with both its scale and its profusion of angles and ornament.



#### Making Them Stick

Today historians often call Stick a transitional style, a bridge between the picturesque Gothic of the 1840s and '50s and the full flowering of Victorian ideas in the Queen Anne houses of the 1880s and '90s. While such a perspective is academically accurate generations later, in its day the Stick house was nothing if not totally fresh, up-to-date and, most of all, modern. While some critics found them slightly vulgar, few could deny these houses were "inventive" and "vivacious." People of wealth and standing wanted them; the public accepted and built them. Stick houses were highconcept buildings that capitalized on the best resources of the era.

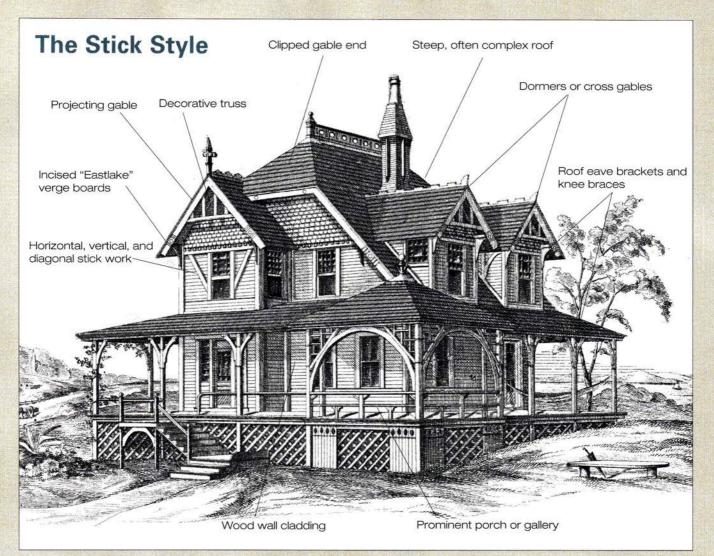
Many Stick houses were architectdesigned, and the brightest talents in the newly prominent architectural profession were attracted to the style. Richard Morris Hunt, the Ecole des Beaux Arts-trained architect to America's newly minted gentry, chose to work in the Stick mode for Newport "cottages." Early in his career he designed at least two: the T. G. Appleton House (1875) and the J.N.A Griswold House (1862), a textbook example of the style. Philadelphia's Frank Furness took readily to the idiom for the 1878 estate of Emlen Physick, a prominent bachelor physician who built a Cape May, New Jersey, house for his extended family. Other notables who tried their hand in the style include Richard Upjohn, famous for New York's Trinity Church, and Henry Hobson Richardson, the seminal designer of the Romanesque and Shingle styles, as well as his own Trinity Church in Boston.

What propagated the Stick house at the popular level, however, was the spate of new house-building plan books that appeared after 1850. Architect-publishers like Gervase Wheeler and Henry Cleaveland flashed the Stick look far and wide in their books *Rural Homes* (1854) and Village and Farm Cottages (1856) as part of a broad menu of building designs. These plans inspired local builders to erect Stick houses, or incorporate their details, on a truly national scale for the first time, from the established Northeast to the burgeoning cities of the West like San Francisco.

Ultimately, Stick-style houses are about carpentry—the latest advances in wood technology from a country that had lots to offer. Unlike chunky, ground-hugging Gothic and Greek Revival houses that emulated the massing of masonry even when built of wood, Stick-style houses are generally light and irregular in feel—a freedom of form made possible by the new system of balloon-frame construction with 2 x 4 lumber and nails. Rather than dividing the space within a simple rectangular or cross-shaped plan into rooms and halls, Stick houses seem to push the space beyond the footprint—so much so you can San Francisco's famous Westerfeld House (1889) is a good example of how a tower and repeated vertical stickwork enhance the verticality of an already tall building. The sawtooth board-ends on the olive-colored, secondstorey "frieze" are a classic Eastlake motif.

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Note how the dormers, deep eaves, and gallery of Richard Morris Hunt's T.E. Appleton House set up a rich interplay of light and shadow. Even the brick construction finds uses for Stick-style brackets and trusses.



often read the interior space from outside the building. Projecting bays, gables, and porches are common in Stick houses as are towers and dormers. Roof plans are complex-often very much so with intersecting gables and roof effects, such as clips, hoods, and kicked eaves-a regular repertoire in the most full-blown examples. Like the Queen Annes to come, Stick-style houses generally exhibit a strong vertical emphasis, with tall windows, multiple storeys, and surface ornament reaching skyward along with sharply pitched roofs and monumental towers. More than Queen Annes, however, Stick houses are angular. Window bays and towers are generally squarish, with roofs that are pyramids or similar polygons.

The defining feature of these houses, however, is stickwork: expressive wood facing and ornament that evokes the grids and angles of structural framing in their layout.

JAMES C. MASSEY



In Stick houses, the exterior clapboards and shingles are divided into panels by vertical and horizontal boards, bringing the symbolism, if not the actual position, of the underlying posts and joists to the façade.

Diagonals are common, enhancing the structural feel with a hint of the medieval. Often the beaded siding found within rectangular panels is also laid diagonally and mirror imaged in an adjacent panel. More diagonals pop up as pseudo-structural brackets supporting roof eaves or trusses spanning gable ends—woodwork that was easy to mass-produce with new steampowered machinery. Curves are rare except for the periodic semicircular porch bracket or window top.

#### Sticking to Sources

Though a mix of technical innovations and stylistic references all came together in the Stick-style house, architectural historians have often spied many precursors in the Gothic Revival houses of the 1840s. The noted scholar Vincent Scully, whose 1955 paper "The Stick Style and The Shingle Style" put both houses in the 20th-century landscape, traced many of these ideas particularly the growing embrace of allwood construction and the visual effects it made possible—to Andrew Jackson Downing.

Through his widely read books, Downing became America's first popularizer of the country house and the Picturesque movement—the romantic appreciation of the wild and rugged natural world. He did much to whet the architectural taste for bold features and striking outlines that would become an addiction by the 1880s. Downing was a particular advocate of Swiss cottages, which he deemed "the most picturesque of all dwellings built in wood." He liked the wideKENNETH NAVERSEN

In the Emlen Physick Estate, another ample Stick landmark, Furness makes distinctive use of quarter-round porch brackets and heavily clipped dormer roofs. The stickwork not only calls attention to the many shifting planes of the façade, it also unites them.

ly projecting roof, pronounced brackets, and abundant galleries and balconies of these mountain dwellings, and proposed that subdued versions were ideal for enhancing the comfortable quality of a house, even where a lack of heavy snowfalls or rugged terrain made them unnecessary.

Downing's soft spot for the Swiss way with wood extended to the shingles that clad the walls, a method he found as attractive as it was durable. Shingles cut in ornamental patterns produced a more "tasteful and picturesque effect" than common vertical-board siding, he said, adding visual interest and spirit to the building. In fact, the now famous Swiss-cottage design fea-

Stick houses, such as this hexagonal-towered example from 1891, broke away from the symmetry of earlier styles to explore the unbalanced massings and quirky, yet highly creative facades that would become standard in the Queen Anne and Shingle styles.

tured in one of his most popular books, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), shows a broadly roofed house finished in fish-scale shingles that are crisply divided at intervals by vertical boards—the prototypical cladding of the Stick-style house to come.

Downing was not alone. His vision of charming, picturesque houses with fanciful details continued to ripple through the 19th century long after his accidental death in 1851. While being versatile in a spectrum of exotic styles was good business for an architect in the 1850s, the expressive, honest use of wood in the Swiss cottage ty or theory, but a richness in individual personality or identity. The sharp angles, broad roof overhangs, and unexpected voids of the Stick style and the deep shadows they produced certainly filled the bill. Galleries and porches provided particularly ample opportunities for dark, cavernous recesses, giving these features a new importance in the design of a house.

No less an influence, especially later in the life cycle of the Stick house, were the ideas of the English tastemaker Charles Locke Eastlake. Though Eastlake's original critical remarks were directed at reforming the design of English furniture and fur-



and its homey, domestic scale and feel, struck a resonant chord with a building public that lived in a land of wood, and clearly bubbled up in the wood buildings to come throughout the Victorian era.

#### Stylistic Subtleties

Historians have also noted that Downing and his contemporaries coveted what they called "character" in a building—a quality about as removed from how we use the word today as calling an ironclad steamship "cool." In a 19th-century context, building character was roughly analogous to human character—not an ideal of beaunishings, by the time his widely read columns and book Hints on Household Taste (1868) had filtered across the Atlantic, they found traction not with the furniture industry, but the housebuilding public. His call for furniture ornament that was simple, finely crafted, and closely related to the structure of the object materialized as exterior building millwork that was aggressively turned, sawn, and carved-

a turn of events that appalled Eastlake himself. The Stick house was the first style to take this millwork to heart with incised verge boards, fret-sawn railings, and porches ringed with spindles.

A century after it first came into fashion, the Stick style rode the crest of a new, different wave of modernity during the psychedelic era of the late 1960s and early '70s. By then many of the once-patrician Victorian neighborhoods of San Francisco had become the low-budget, bohemian haunts of the counter culture. Scores of forgotten Stick row houses emerged from the doldrums emblazoned in electric paint col-



Even with a straightforward plan, this Haddonfield, New Jersey, house employs Industrial Age millwork-chamfered porch posts and eave brackets combined with fretsawn balusters and trusses-to delightful Stick effect.



#### JAMES C. MASSEY

ors that highlighted their nearly forgotten façades of crisp, contrasting patterns and lively, constantly shifting planes. The widely popularized rebirth of San Francisco's "Painted Ladies" not only catalyzed the growing interest in Victorian architecture, it also helped widen the appreciation of all old houses for decades to come.

Perfection of the power bandsaw is what made intricate cut-out work like this porch pediment not only possible, but affordable. Semiautomatic lathes could turn hundreds of identical posts, regardless of their complexity.



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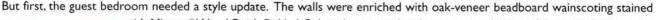


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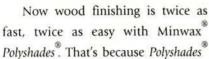


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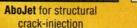




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## Raise High the Scarfed Beam

The timber scarf joint is one example of the superb ingenuity often found within historic buildings. uring the rehabilitation of 36 West Broughton Street, a high-style, Italianate commercial building here in Savannah, Georgia, our

builders discovered an ingenious joinery method in one of the ceiling joists. As the historic preservation consultant for the developer, I felt a brief look at the superior craftsmanship used to construct this building would be useful background for anyone who encounters a similar detail while working on a historic downtown structure.



In the course of returning the building

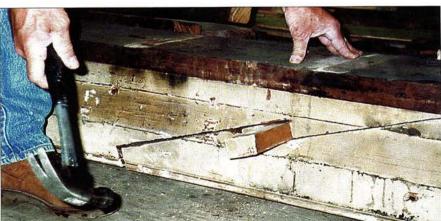
to its original design and materials, the current owners peeled back layers of linoleum, paperboard, and other later interior finishes that cloaked the substantial historic fabric. Removing a dropped ceiling on the first floor revealed two timbers made of heart pine, each spanning about 8', that had been combined to form a single massive joist weighing



approximately 350 pounds. In order to join the two timbers, the original carpenter hadn't used nails or bolts, but a simple and elegant system that relied on strategic cutting to essentially forge one joist out of two. This technique, described in the accompanying photos, is a variation of the scarf joint, a staple of 19th-century heavy carpentry.

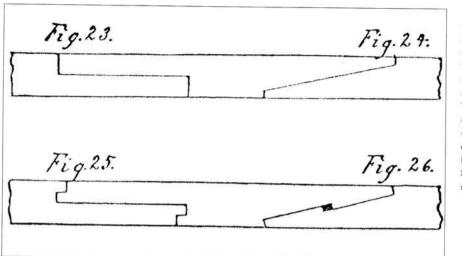
Unfortunately, one of the interior cast-iron columns that supported the scarfed beams had been moved from When the Broughton Street storefront was chopped into three different 1950s-era façades, the cast-iron columns, and the timber beams they supported, were completely obscured.

Some scarf joints use bolts or straps for reinforcement, but in this version the two timbers are simply tapered and notched.



Locking the joint only requires inserting two small, mating, wedge-shaped blocks, or keys, into the narrow rectangular void that remains when the two timbers are maneuvered into place.

#### Downtowner



By the 1870s, different methods for splicing timbers were a standard discussion in carpentry texts. The "keyed diagonal splice" (Fig. 26) is the one used in the Broughton Street storefront.

As project manager Bill Cantrell hammers the keys into the center void, he visibly draws the two timbers together with each blow.

its original location sometime in the past. Since our objective is to restore the building's original configuration, we opted to return the column to its former position. This would have left the ends of the timber beams unsupported, so our structural engineer required that we replace them with a new steel joist.

As work progresses, it is possible that we will re-use the timbers in some practical



application. For the time being, however, it seems likely that we will simply keep them around so we can marvel at the elegant historic carpentry performed by people who understood how to be inventive and resourceful.

Audra Brecher is a historic preservation consultant based in Savannah, Georgia (424 E. Liberty Street, Apt. B, 31401).

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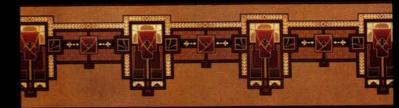
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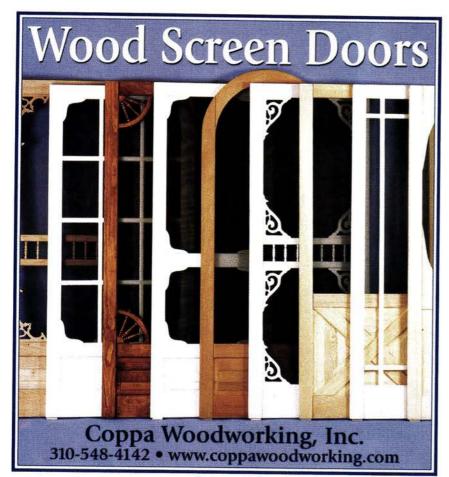
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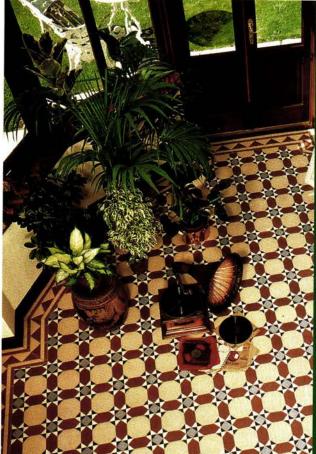
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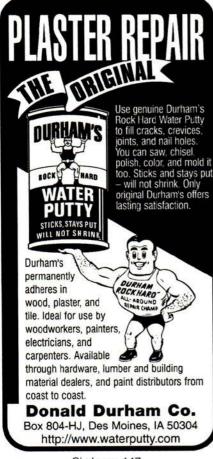
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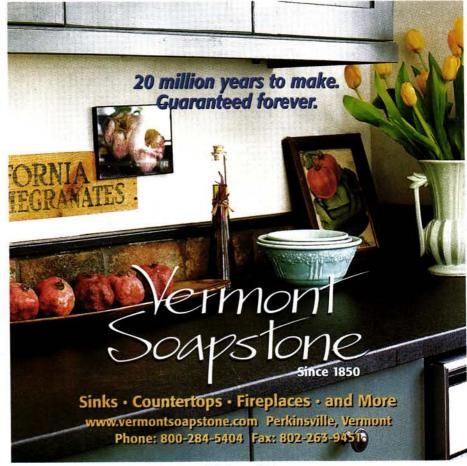
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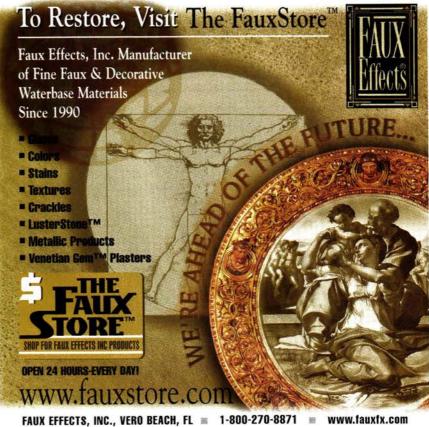
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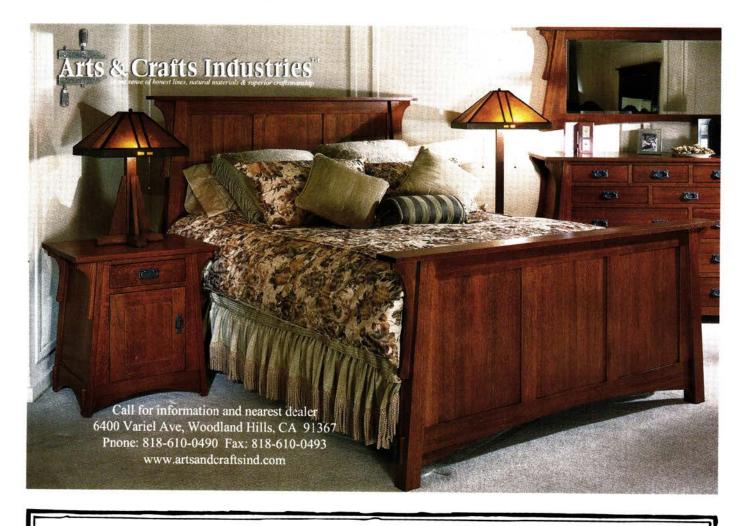
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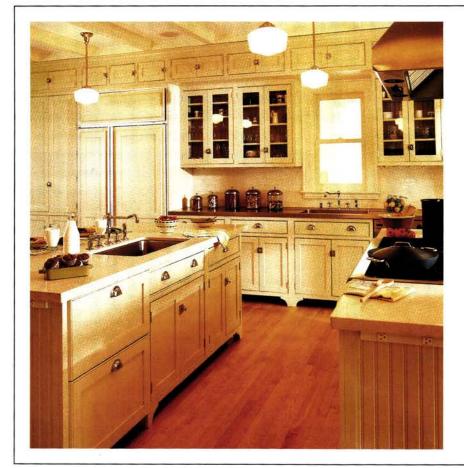


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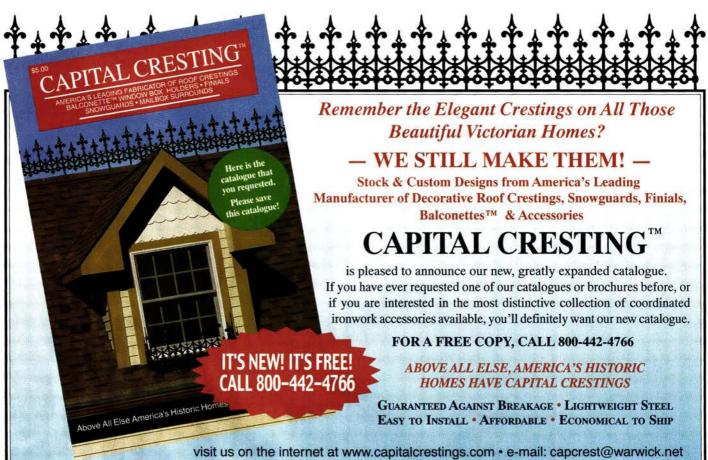
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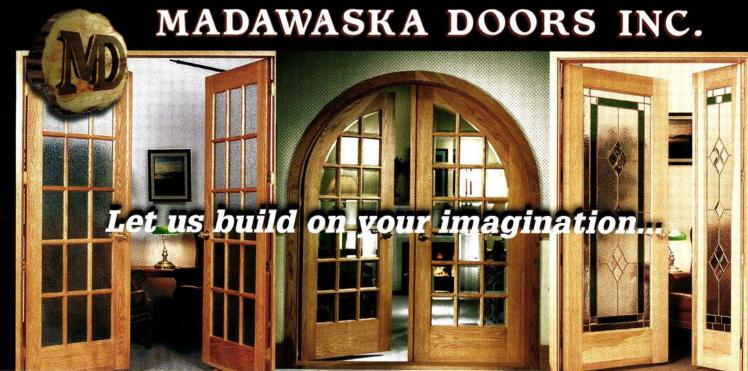
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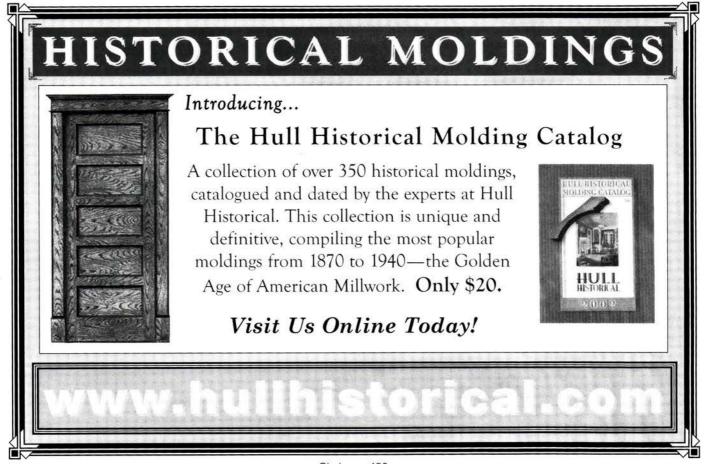
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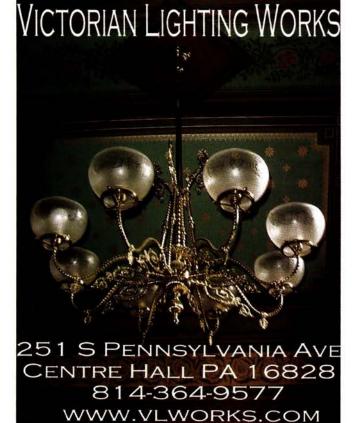




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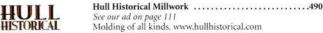


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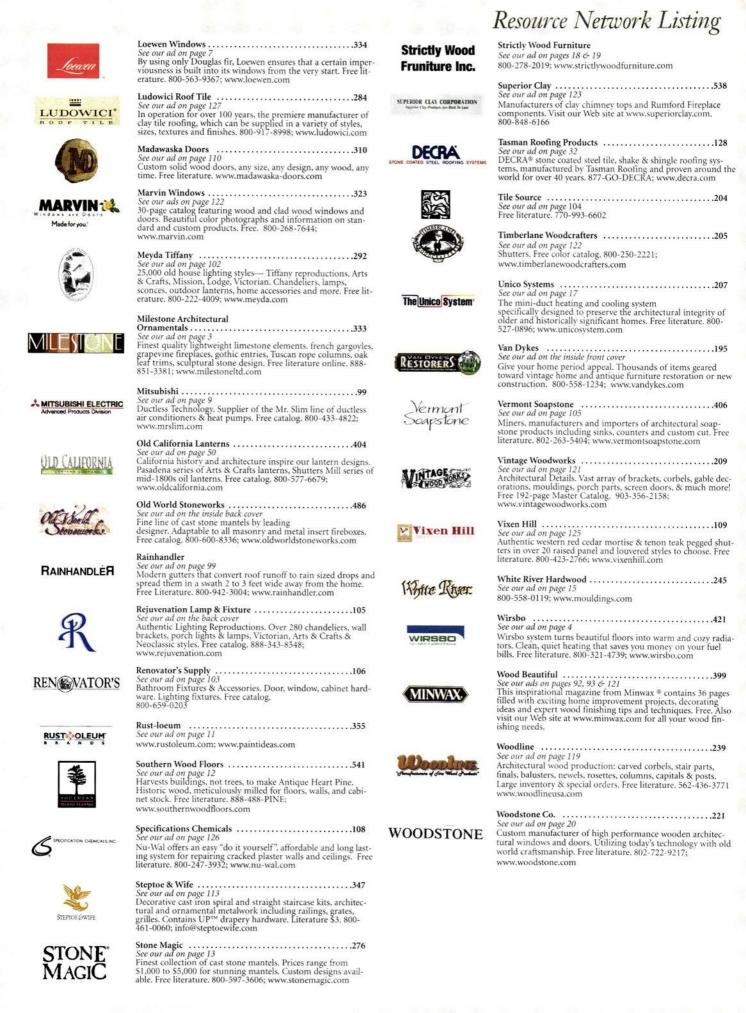




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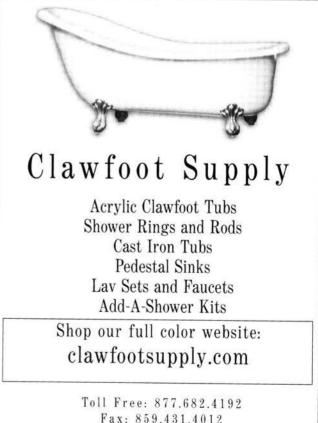
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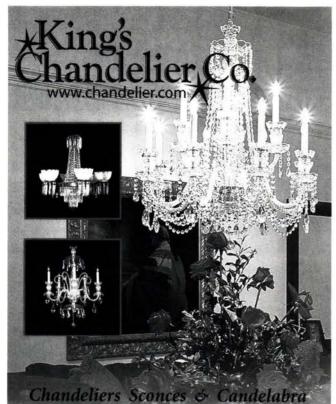


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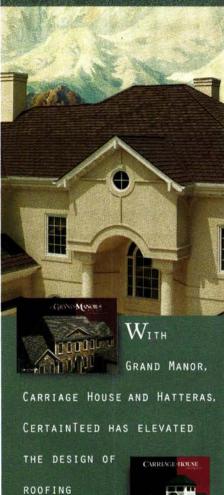






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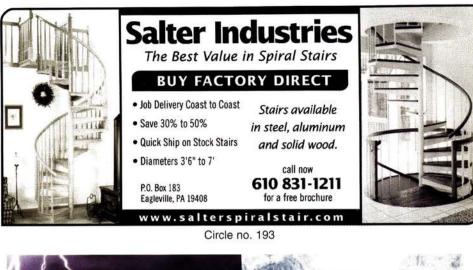
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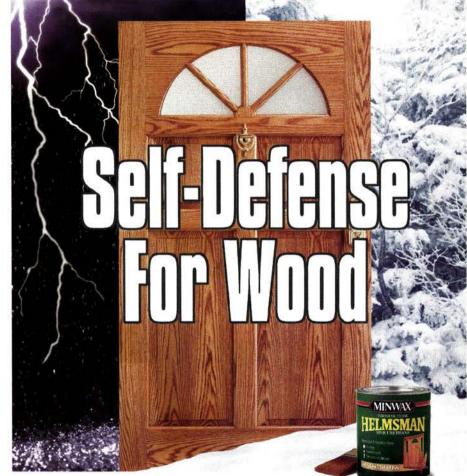


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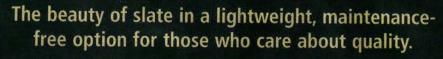
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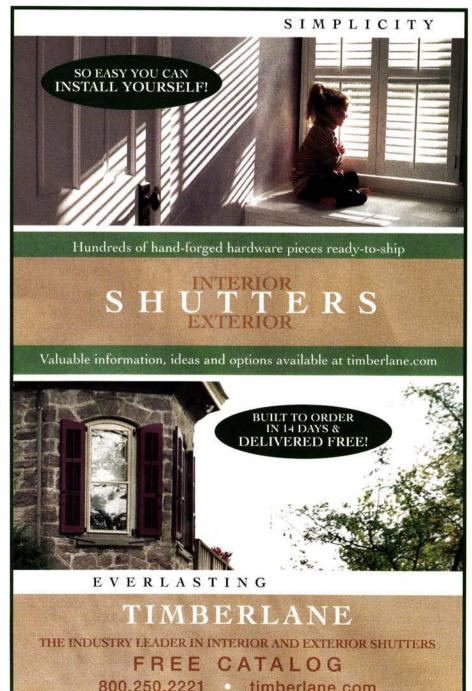
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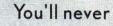
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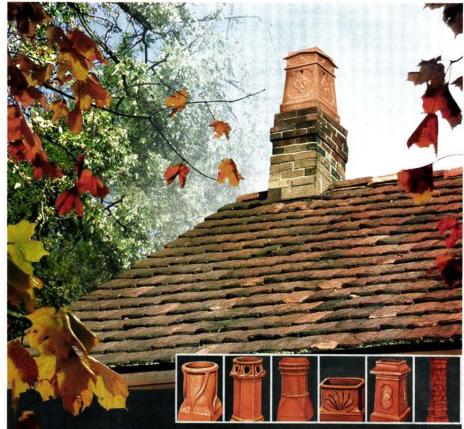




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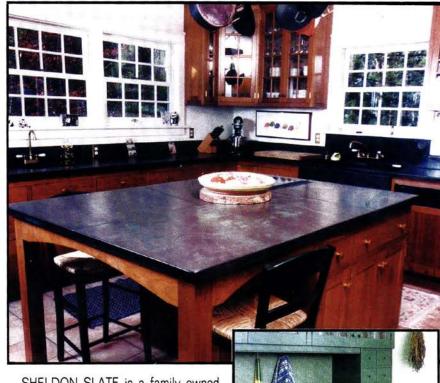
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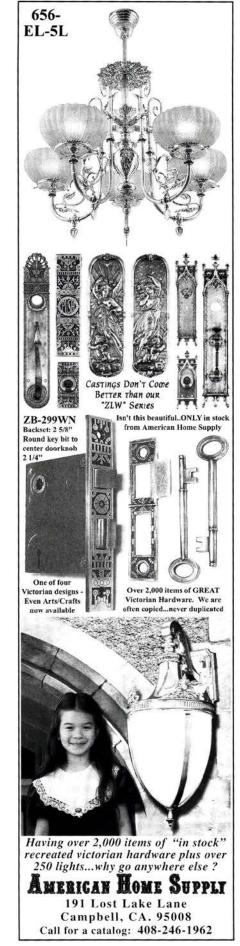
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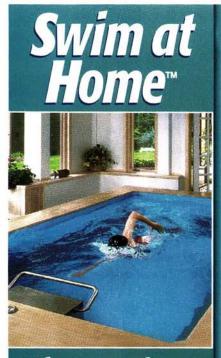
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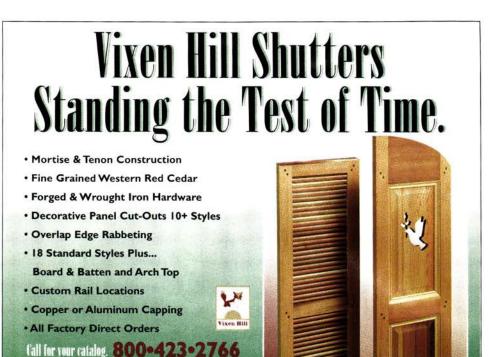
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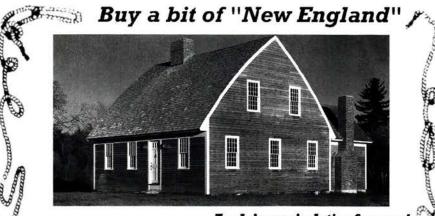


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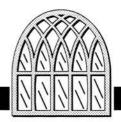


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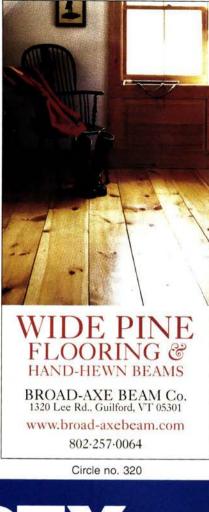


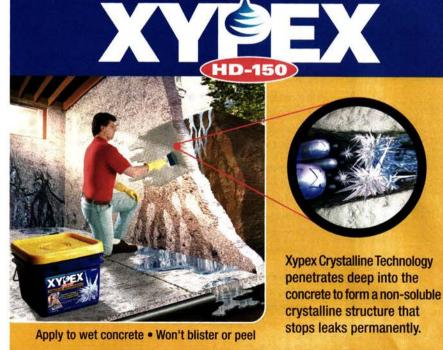
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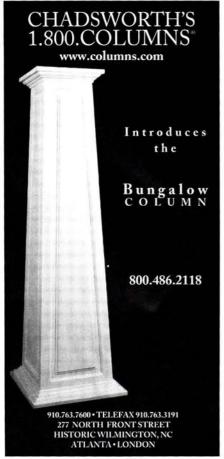
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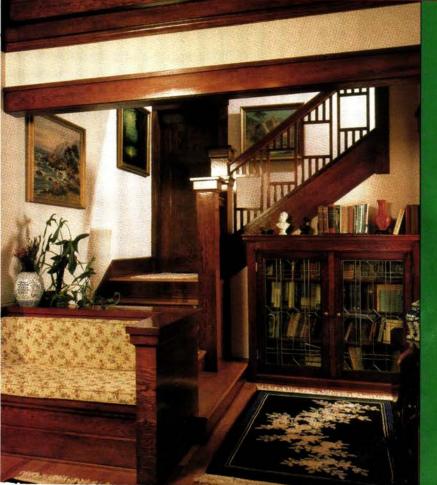
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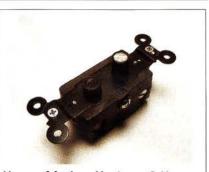


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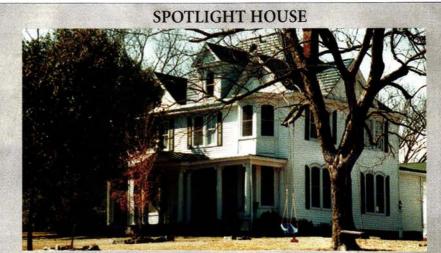
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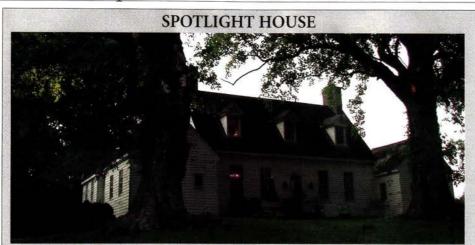
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LYNN, MA — Elegant Queen Anne Victorian (ca. 1880) 2-family has been lovingly restored. The owner's apartment is 3,300 sq. ft., (10 rooms) and the rental apartment is 1,500 sq. ft., (6 rooms). Original Victorian features throughout the house –Victorian Chandeliers, period wall sconces, 2 ornate gas fireplaces, and much more. If are looking for an affordable way to be surrounded by Victorian elegance, in the Boston area, this is a house you must see! See www.chuckandpurr.com for more pictures and info. \$469,000

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NANTUCKET, MA — A replica of Nantucket's oldest house (ca. 1686) but built in 1974. This 3 bedroom, 2 bath saltbox with "catslide roof" home is set on 1.3 private, tranquil acres with mature gardens and fruit bearing trees. Wide shiplapped floors, 3 FPs, large great room and eat in kitchen, living room, lovingly maintained. Wonderful views of Lighthouse and peaks of the ocean. Expansion, roof walk, or guest cottage possible. Garden, relax or retire in this wonderful property! Offered at \$895,000. Kathryn@maurypeople.com or call 508-221-0454.

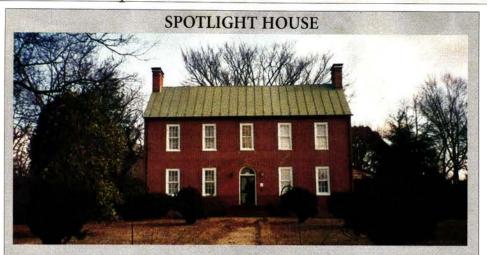


BLACKSTONE, VA - 4 BR Victorian Home ca. **BLACKSTONE, VA** — 4 BR Victorian Home ca. 1903. Nestled Among Huge Pecan Trees On 2.5 Acres Full Of Original Charm, Mouldings, High Ceilings, Fixtures, Bays & Gorgeous Floors. The Updated Kitchen, New Wiring, Oil Heat, CA, & 3 Renovated Baths Enhance The Enjoyment Of This Gem. Outbuildings Include Rented Duplex, Garage & 2 Workshops. Tim Hill, Long & Enctor

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MANASSAS, VA — Moor Green ca. 1790. Brentsville is a stately historical federal manor home on 12+ acres. Listed on the VA and National Historical Registers. Less than 45 minutes from DC in a quiet rural setting over 4,000 sq. ft. 4 bedrooms, 3 bath, large formal rooms, 10'+ ceilings, heart pine floors, original moldings and mantels, all new systems, large 3 bedroom, 2 bath guest house, in-ground swimming pool, hot tubs, vineyard. Offered at \$1,195,000 Deborah James Dendlter **Virginia Properties.** For more information please visit VirginiaAntiqueRealEstate.com or call 800-394-5059.



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MALAD, ID — Beautiful two-story hall and parlor built in 1895 was rescued in 1994. New metal roof, two rebuilt porches, rebuilt box window and repointed rock foundation. Inside, all of the lath and plaster has been removed. The kitchen area brick needs to be taken down. \$45,000. Adjacent lot also available. Mitch Butterfield of Smithfield, Utah, 435-563-3158 cricklewoodinc@hotmail.com

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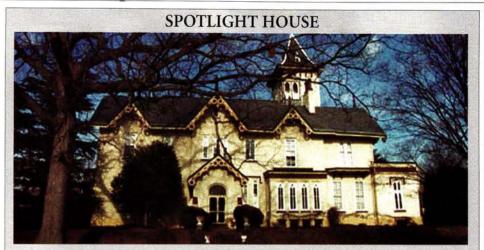
SAVANNAH, GA — The Ethel Tison House ca. 1908, a three-story Queen Anne/Victorian is from the Historic available Savannah Foundation through its revolving fund program. The Tison house with its wrap-around porch and turret is located on two lots in the Thomas Square Streetcar National Register historic district. Technical assistance and tax incentives available. Contact: Melissa Jest, Historic Foundation, Savannah 912-233-7787 www.HistoricProperties.com.



FREDERICKSBURG, VA -Historic Ingleside Conveniently located Farm. between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA., the current dwelling is circa 1900 & overlooks the scenic Rappahannock River. View the city lights of downtown Fredericksburg from the 50' long front porch. This waterfront estate boasts exquisite architectural details and appointments. The property also features other outbuildings, including an 1800s icehouse, and land to expand. \$1,275,000. Suzy Stone & Melanie Quann. www.Century21AdVenture.com 800-234-0210 or 540-847-0630



DANVILLE, VA — 4 acres, 100 + years old 3,568 sq. ft. Victorian home, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, formal dining room with wood beams and fireplace. Wrap around front and side porches plus a covered upstairs porch. \$168,500 — The Davis Company Realtors 877-575-1100; www.honeydavis.net.



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**PETERSBURG, VA** — Ca. 1840-1860, this beautiful Center Hall is considered one of the finest antebellum homes in Petersburg. It is salmon color pressed brick, with granite sills and lintels. 5 bedrooms, 3 full baths 1 half bath with all new copper plumbing and 3-heat/air systems. 5,200 sq. ft. in the main house (restored) and 1,000 sq. ft. in the detached two story kitchen house (stabilized but not fully restored), on an acre lot with beautiful gardens. The rooms are large and gracious with wonderful light from the oversized windows. Truly a treasure! Asking \$199,900. Call Jeannie 804-731-1468 or email tidyminds@earthlink.net



WINCHESTER, VA — "Willow Shade" ca. 1853, childhood home of Pulitzer Prize author, Willa Cather. Greek Revival brick, original door & window moldings, 11 rooms, 2.5 baths, 10 fireplaces with original mantels. 4.5 acres. highspeed internet cable. Listed on National Register of Historic Places, Virginia Landmark Register. \$410,000. Historic Properties, Inc., Winchester, VA, 888-830-2678.

www.historicpropertiesva.com.



**ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH,FL** — Oldest house, walk to beach 4BR/4BA, tile floors, screen room, and Jacuzzi. Extra lot, enclosed compound, new shed, new a/c, new water heater, warrantees, beautiful landscape. \$299,000 firm. 3% down conventional or 10% down - owner financing, survey and appraisal available. Sunstate Realty, Norbert Tuseo 904-825-1911, evening 904-461-3153. www.sunstatevacation.com



**CAPE COD, MA** — Charming 10 room 1820 cape with separate 3 room guest house in West Falmouth. Close to beaches on private setting in historic district of West Falmouth. Features country kitchen, large living room, cozy dining room, family room, study, and bathroom with laundry and conservatory with hot tub on first floor. 3 bedrooms, dressing room, home office area, bathroom, private deck on second floor — \$699,900. Act 1 Carol O'Loughlin Real Estate. Contact John Weyand at 508-245-1908 or jweyand@adelphia.net

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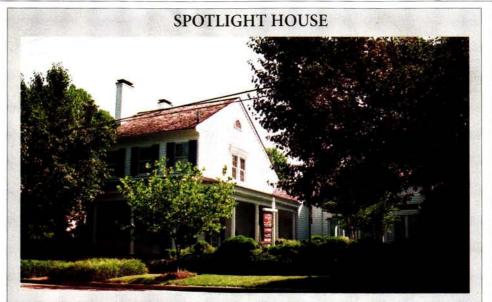
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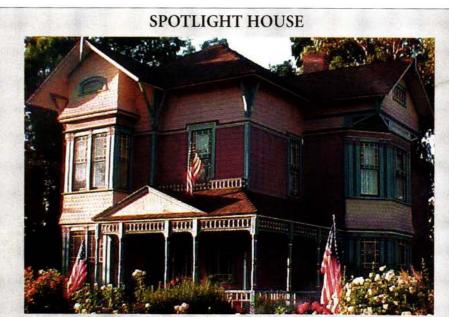
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**GRANADA HILLS, CA** — \$990,000. 4 bedrooms, 3.5 Baths, breakfast area, Conservatory, 1 Bedroom Guest House, Parlor, Formal Dining Room, Double Garage, workshop, library, family room. Restored 1887 Victorian charming front porch, stained glass windows & modern upgrades. 2 working fireplaces, custom wall and window coverings. Eleven foot ceilings with vintage light fixtures. Redwood trim and siding. Horse property on a 24,600 sq. ft. lot with park like grounds — 400 foot frontage. Additionally, producing vineyard plus basement/wine cellar. 3,760 usable square footage. Jim Hickman, **R.R. Gable Inc.** 818-993-1300.

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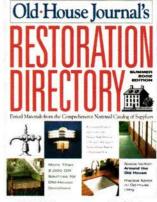
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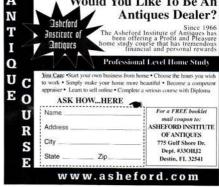
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# RemuDd ing



Between progressive annexations to Lancaster, Ohio, in 1888 and 1915, this street became filled with small, white frame homes, almost all of them gamble-end, storey-and-a-half or twostorey with much-used porches—dignified and simple despite a bit of gingerbread here and there: a working-class ideal worthy of worship. Somewhere along the way this humble town cottage was reborn—possibly around 1970 when Sally Field was a cultural icon as "The Flying Nun." Hats off to this issue's contributor, who along with her comments on "the importance of proportion and the right use of the classical orders" offered us divine inspiration with her phrase, "the purity of this remuddling."

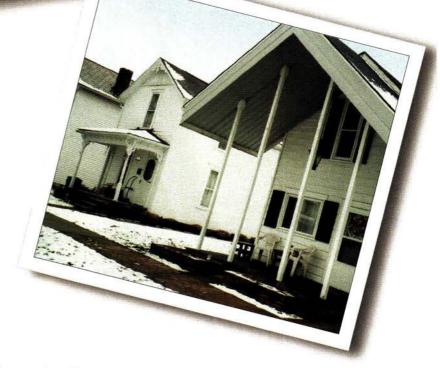
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If you know of a house that has been rescued from a callous re-siding job, obtuse addition, or other example of insensitive rehabilitation, send us photographs of the house in its unremuddled state.

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



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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