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Photo by Jonathan Wallen.
The open floor plan of McKim, Mead and White's Berkeley House (1884–86) connects the living hall to all public rooms.

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**New Old-House Journal's New Old House**

For a quick look at the latest magazine from Old-House Journal's growing stable, visit the home page and see for yourself how everything new can be wonderfully old.

**Talk**

Pop a quick question, get a fast answer, or just hang out reading the latest stuff in one of OHJ Online's hottest sections.

**Product Info From OHJ**

Now you can use OHJ's Web site to get product information directly from manufacturers. Go to the home page, and click on "Period Products From OHJ" under the "Quick Links" headline.

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**Twenties' Something**

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Welcome to 100 Years of Modern

When it came time to plan this year's editorial calendar for Old-House Journal, we editors decided to do something special. We wanted to bring a section to each issue that would open up a fresh subject within the world of old houses while also being part of an ongoing theme throughout the year. With this in mind, in this issue we begin the year 2005 with the first of a series of articles that explore what we are calling the Modern Century—a 100 years of design and materials innovation whose roots extend back well into the latter 19th century, yet embrace the most formative decades of the largest proportion of the houses built before the 1950s.

Of course, the term “modern” is a slippery one. With a capital M it is often taken to mean the architectural philosophy that produced minimalist, nontraditional buildings from the 1930s on. Spelled with lowercase letters, however, “modern” refers to what is contemporary or characteristic of the present—even slightly visionary. It is an adjective that has been claimed by every era since the heyday of the Industrial Revolution, and it is this “modern” that is the focus of our series. Our benchmark for the century is 1905—an auspicious year for breakthroughs from Einstein's theory of relativity to Frank Lloyd Wright's trip to Japan.

In this interiors-themed issue, we kick off the series with a photo essay on the origins of the modern interior as viewed through six houses by seminal architects on either side of the 20th-century mark. The article, which starts on page 50, is only a sampling of the many design currents that brought us to completely new paradigms for living spaces—not the least of which being the split-level house—and shows how a set of ideas can also be a source of comfort and beauty.

In March/April we change tacks to look at a modern material—specifically the origins and impact of the most ubiquitous of wonder materials, plastic. From light fixtures to laminates, manmade resins have left their mark on nearly every part of houses, first by improving on natural materials but soon thereafter by making possible new opportunities in shape, color, and service.

The course steers back to the intersection of materials and architecture in May/June for a look at the phenomenon of high-concept, technologically sophisticated houses that were promoted for developments in the years before and after World War II. Designed to look one-of-a-kind, yet planned to be replicated in large numbers, this group includes the legendary Eichler and "Tech-built" houses that have gone on to have devoted owner groups of their own.

In July/August we'll explore the evolution of asphalt roofing, from its humble beginnings as an upstart building material made from industrial byproducts, to its dynamic growth into the most varied and popular roof covering ever created. September/October will wind up our series with articles on Arts & Crafts walls and textiles, and a special essay on the groundbreaking modern developments that occurred in 1905. We hope you will enjoy reading the series as much as we'll enjoy creating it for you.
Inviting porches. Detailed woodwork. Stained glass. These touches make older homes beautiful, but are often spoiled by ugly air conditioning units hanging from the windows. With quiet Mr. Slim ductless air conditioning and heat pump systems from Mitsubishi Electric, any room in your home can be comfortable and beautiful. The systems don't require ductwork, making them easy to install in older homes and additions, while their sleek, wall-mounted design gives you your windows and views back. And every Mr. Slim system even comes with a handy remote controller. You love older homes for their craftsmanship. You'll love Mr. Slim ductless air conditioning systems for the same reason.
Cover Plan
I love the house on the cover of the December 2004 issue of Old House Journal. I was wondering if you happen to have the floor plans for that house on your Web site.
Christina Lewis
E-mail

Sorry to say there are no known existing floor plans for the John Truesdell House in Syracuse, New York.—Eds.

Quick Fix
In Steve Jordan's article "Strips and Storms" (November/December 2004), he reminds us (as we've all been reminded many times) that "a little help" is as good as or better than "the quick fix."

My turn-of-the-last-century Foursquare has the zinc-flanged weatherstrip he describes in his article. I was told somewhere that these were called "carpenter's weatherstrip," although I have my doubts about that. I would say that they were installed by the window manufacturer. Most importantly, they are tight and prevent drafts.

I have enjoyed your magazine for many years. Keep up the good work.
Paul Semmler
Hawthorne, New Jersey

Window Views
Thanks for Steve Jordan's lesson in "Strips and Storms" (November/December 2004). I used to work near a company that installed "weatherproof" vinyl replacement windows. I would cringe when the workmen would return daily with their pick-up trucks full of beautiful old wood-framed windows. Artists in the area routinely scavenged the pile of old windows to retrieve frames for their works. Just recently, I was at a friend's home where one such work of art was hung. I inspected the piece, a landscape of a meadow on a bluff with water in view, and wondered what view this "once window" had. I am always glad to see Old House Journal encouraging and informing homeowners to restore the originals when possible.

Richard Rauscher
Albany, New York

Wrapped Up for Winter
Thanks so much for all the tips for winter-proofing an old house (November/December 2004). My house is a shingled one-and-a-half-storey Cape circa 1940 in Connecticut, so we get all the joys and woes of winter—from the beauty of the snow to the drafts around doors and windows. Although the roof is fully insulated, the new windows that were added this summer showed us that we needed new insulation around them.

When a relative mentioned having her house checked for insulation, I referred
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Letters

her to your article so she could get an idea of materials available.

Thanks for helping us New Englanders keep warm and cozy as we start another winter.

John T. Walsh
Hartford, Connecticut

Cellar Access
I was very pleased to see the "Plots & Plans" (November/December 2004). I have an old, aboveground entrance to my cellar and want to replace it. Your article helped me to get moving on a project that has been an eyesore for a few years. It's like the old saying, "Out of sight, out of mind." Thanks for the tips. When it's finished my new entrance will be not only functional but also attractive.

Pat Canney
Newton, Massachusetts

our 1920s Tudor Revival: how to more efficiently heat this home. We had been thinking of switching from oil to gas heat to cut heating costs. But over the past three years, the cost of gas rivals, if not surpasses, what we would spend on oil heat. After reading your article we decided that before spending thousands to convert from oil to gas, we will implement your tips to help us weather this winter and reevaluate in the spring!

Please keep articles like this coming!

Bob Jenneman
Brookline, Massachusetts

Model House
On behalf of everyone at the Morris County Historical Society I'd like to thank you for putting our headquarters, Acorn Hall, on the cover of the September/October 2004

We wish you continued success with your outstanding publication. Thank you again for giving us this wonderful opportunity.

Bonnie-Lynn Nadzeika, Director
Morristown, New Jersey

From A to Zero
Thank you for having the foresight to feature a building type of the recent past—the A-frame—in your fine magazine (July/August 2004). Chad Randll's "Mania for A-Frames" mentioned an early design by Henrik Bull (below) built in Stowe, Vermont. Since I live near Stowe and my interest had been piqued, I tracked down the owner to see if I could visit the site. He had just purchased it a month earlier from the original owner, who sold it 52 years after building it. When I spoke to the new owner this week, the unimagined had happened: he had demolished the building and only bought it for the land it sat on.

Please continue to highlight mid-century designs along with older building types so that maybe, just maybe, this won't happen again and we won't lose any more important modern structures.

Devin Colman
Winooski, Vermont

Weathering Winter
I enjoyed your article "All Wrapped Up" (November/December 2004). You helped us finalize our approach in resolving the biggest issue we faced after moving into

issue. Although our building is owned and operated by a local historical agency, we feel strongly that it is a site of architectural merit beyond the scope of our immediate community. We were excited that you obviously felt the same way in choosing it for your cover.

We have received many inquiries as a result of the photograph, and attendance has increased. Our many members and volunteers, who have an obvious interest in historic preservation, were also thrilled to see "their house" on the cover of a national magazine.

We wish you continued success with your outstanding publication. Thank you

Correction: The photos in "Making Sense of the Mercurial Epoxy" on page 31 in the September/October 2004 issue were not taken by John Leeke. They were taken by Steve Swiat.
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Annunciator

Books in Brief

Unlike many company histories, Common Clay: A History of the American Terra Cotta Corporation, 1881-1966, by George A. Berry III and Sharon S. Darling (TCR Corp., Crystal Lake, Illinois), achieves much broader and more practical goals than its name might suggest. The book provides a well-illustrated explanation of the process of making terra cotta, from design to mold to firing and finally to glazing. Filled with old photographs, the 300-plus pages include a complete run of the company’s magazine, also called Common Clay, which was issued—with gaps—from 1920 through 1923. The magazine includes a wealth of illustrations of the firm’s ornamental work.

American Terra Cotta Corporation (ATC) did much decorative terra cotta for Chicago School architect Louis Sullivan and for his protégés, William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie, who were all noted for their intricate Art Nouveau-like designs. The book displays numerous color photographs of their individual decorative blocks as well as the buildings in which they were used. We also learn that ATC provided the terra cotta for Chicago’s first completely sheathed tall building, the 10-storey Luddington (1891), designed by William LeBaron Jenney.

Less well known to architectural historians is ATC’s Teco line of art pottery, which was especially noted for very large vases—some 7’ high—designed for architectural effect and most commonly wearing a matte green glaze. Teco also produced beautifully colored tiles.

Instead of detailing the minutiae of one firm’s corporate history, this handsomely produced book provides a fascinating mélange of art pottery, Sullivan ornament, and well-presented information on the production of terra cotta—all of which make it a useful volume for both research and visual pleasure.

—James C. Massey

To order call the Prairie Avenue Bookshop at (800) 474-2724.

Bye, Bye, Bradbury

Bruce Bradbury, founder and president of Bradbury & Bradbury Art Wallpapers, plans to close his Benicia, California, hand-print shop at the end of 2005. “We know that many clients currently have plans to use our wallpapers, so we are giving everyone a full year’s advance notice before closing the print shop,” says Bruce. “I will be here until we print our last roll of wallpaper, and we will give all our orders the same attention to detail as the first roll of wallpaper I printed over 30 years ago.”

The company will take orders for wallpaper until December 31, 2005. For ordering information call (707) 746-1900 or visit www.bradbury.com. “Both the print studio and customer service will remain open until the last roll of wallpaper has been printed and delivered,” says Bradbury.
Traditional Philly

Historic homeowners hungry for the latest information on techniques and issues in the traditional building market can choose from an extensive menu of programs at the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference, April 27-30, 2005, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia. Participants may select from up to 80 educational sessions divided into nine thematic tracks and spend hours on the exhibition floor chatting with the more than 250 representatives of specialty, hard-to-find products and services.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and keynote speaker Tom Hylton will set the tone for the event, as he describes his commitment to reshaping our attitude about the way we live on the land and the public policy that reflects that attitude. The author of Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, Hylton has been dedicating himself to the preservation of open space and the revitalization of cities and towns for more than 20 years.

Conference sessions will offer something for everyone, from homeowners just beginning to learn about traditional building techniques and the history that shaped them, to the seasoned building professional looking for the latest in technology and design. "Arts & Crafts Interiors" and "Updating the Colonial Home" will provide practical information on creating authentic period interiors. Owners of historic homes will also benefit from timely information on techniques for restoring and repairing the distinguishing features of historic buildings from top to bottom, including slate roofs, windows, wooden shutters, porches, plasterwork, and historic paints and finishes.

On the exhibit floor, attendees can view posters of preservation projects in a specially designated space, or be part of Traditional Building Live!, interactive demonstrations by modern masters of centuries-old building crafts. Then homeowners can put on their walking shoes and attend one of the hard hat tours or interactive field sessions to observe traditional building in progress. For more information, visit traditionalbuildingshow.com.

Charles E. Peterson Remembered

Historic preservation lost one of its founding fathers in August when Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, died at 97. His vision and accomplishments as a preservationist and historical architect garnered him a reputation as one of America’s most influential architectural leaders.

Peterson began his career with the National Park Service in 1929, and only two years later he saved the Moore House, a Revolutionary-era landmark, in Yorktown, Virginia. In 1933, he broke new ground as the creator of the Historic American Buildings Survey, a nationwide program of the National Park Service that documents and preserves historically important architectural, engineering, and industrial sites. The program was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal initiative and was founded to create work for architects, photographers, and draftsmen.

Peterson was named a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1962 and focused on construction issues and restoration of old buildings throughout his career. A native of Minnesota, he moved to Philadelphia in the early 1950s as a National Park Service architect for Independence National Historic Park. He also restored the city’s Society Hill neighborhood, where he lived and later began an architectural practice in his home.

He was the recipient of many awards and presided over the Society for Architectural Historians. He wrote a column for the Journal of the Society for Architectural Historians as well as The Life and Works of Robert Smith.
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Telltale Prairie

I have been attempting to identify the style of our home, which was completed in 1918. Aside from the enclosed windows of the second-floor sleeping porch, the façade appears to be mostly original.

Dennis L. Bishop
Wichita, Kansas

While at first this photo seems to offer few architectural details as stylistic clues, stepping back for a moment to look at the overall house presents a clearer picture—and that picture looks very Prairie. The first feature that jumps out from the snapshot is the dramatically deep eaves of the roof. This is a signature feature of what we now call Prairie School houses, which were popular especially in the Midwest from about 1900 to 1920, and one that is right in step with the very low pitch of the hipped roofs that were equally common on these houses. The second aspect is the horizontal massing and emphasis of the house. The horizontality of the rectangular main block is extended by the wing on the right and visually encouraged by the sharp roofline and widely spaced windows. Added to this is the classic Prairie School use of a pronounced belt course at the second-storey window sill line (now hard to see under the all-white paint job) and the parallel line formed by the watertable just above the foundation. Other subtle, but noteworthy, elements are the use of several windows ganged together (as seen in the wing), the long, thin “modillion strips” hiding in the shadows of the eave soffits, and the stucco cladding—all regular features from the Prairie architect’s design vocabulary.

Reboiler Things to Remember

We need to replace the hot-water boiler heating our 96-year-old home in the President Truman Heritage District, and want to know how to gauge the size of the new boiler. The old boiler has no markings for capacity, date, or even maker.

Tom and Vickie Kimmel
Independence, Missouri

Actually, it's fortunate your boiler has no data because this means you'll have to size your new boiler the right way—by having your contractor perform an accurate heat-loss calculation. This survey, which includes measuring all the walls, windows, and doors in the house, evaluates how much heat your old house will lose on the coldest day of the year, and is the only correct method for sizing a new boiler. The calculation used to take at least an hour to do by longhand but is often quicker with modern computerized heat-loss software. Either way, it is far better than boiler shopping by the “label method.” Checking the label of the existing boiler (especially an old one), and then buying the same thing makes no sense because it does not take into account any structural changes in the building that will affect heat loss, such as insulation or window weatherstrips.

Neither does letting a contractor use a quick “rule of thumb” for sizing your boiler—typically a conservative estimate designed to avoid problems for the contractor by giving you an oversupply of heat. With today's fuel prices, why buy more boiler than you need? For more on boilers, check out information from the Hydronics Institute (now GAMA; www.gamanet.org) or Heatinghelp.com

Many old hot-water boilers are actually upgraded coal-burners and, as relics from the days before insulation, would be grossly oversized if replaced in kind.
Retro Ranch

We’re excited to see that OHJ is starting to cover 1950s houses because we have many questions about our ’57 Rancher—beginning with ideas for historically appropriate paint colors. Any advice?
Beth and David Dunn
St. Paul, Minnesota

Whether they were individual designs from an architect’s drafting board, or the product of stock plans proliferated in suburban developments, ranch houses of the 1950s were a novel house form with roots in the Spanish colonial dwellings of the Southwest, but evolved for the automobile and new, open-air lifestyle exemplified by Southern California. When it comes to exterior paint colors, these dichotomies can be a general guide. Ranch houses specifically designed for their site often make much use of local natural materials, such as stone, shingles, and bare wood in the mode of many original ranch house architects or even the colonial models. Here, stains in wood and earth tones—particularly redwood—were widely popular.

On the other hand, ranch houses that use more man-made materials, such as aluminum windows or composition siding, might be said to have more in common with the automobile than the natural world, and historically were often painted, at least in part, in some remarkably carlike colors. One paint company of the era recommended “lapis green” for a body color to be accented by “salmon and white.” “Ocean green” was noted as a “cool, conservative color yet has sparkle and gaiety.” Other outgoing choices in the palette were “alpine blue,” “sunlight yellow,” and “clover pink.”

V-Board Education

My wife and I are restoring a Victorian farmhouse and need 4” inch, V-notch tongue-and-groove trim boards. Got a source?
Don Jackson
Indianapolis, Indiana

The material you describe has been made in a number of variations, and put to any number of uses, since the 1860s. When 6” wide and milled with either a tongue-and-groove joint or shiplap, it was sometimes called “V& CV rustic” (for the V-joints in the center and the ones formed by mating boards). Common applications were as horizontal siding or for porch roof sheathing where a decorative exposed underside was desired. In smaller dimensions, such as 4” widths and thicknesses of less than 1”, it could be installed as the finished ceiling in a porch—and known as “ceiling” in many areas. Though such materials are not stock items in every lumberyard as they once were, they can often be special ordered in areas where the local housing stock still makes it worthwhile for the yard to have it available. Since V-rustic is not difficult to make, the other approach is to have it custom milled at an architectural millworks—most cost effective when you are looking for significant quantities or trying to match an existing pattern. Though custom milling may require a set-up charge for making the knives to cut the pattern, the millworks may absorb some of this charge (on the order of $100 to $200) if they get to keep the knives. Consult the Old House Journal Directory (www.oldhousejournal.com) for companies who do this work.
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During the Depression, designers seized upon the decorative properties of glass to provide a new approach to common architectural applications—from structural glass facings for storefronts to glass-block walls in factories and residences alike. This doorway design, which dates to the late 1930s, follows a similar tack by inserting etched glass panes in the door panels normally constructed of wood, and reconfiguring the transom into a prismatic lantern with its own light source.

Drawings by Rob Leanna
The transom/lantern, like the rest of the doorway, is built of wood using conventional sash-frame construction. On one side the center light is hinged to make a door for servicing the light; holes above the door ventilate the space. Mitered corners accentuate the wide, reeded casing surrounding the door, a characteristic Deco flourish that also echoes the angular lantern. When the etched-glass door designs are not enough to obscure the interior, the paneled shutters at either side can be closed for total privacy.
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Circle no. 398
A look at the history and manufacturing of decorative metal ceilings explains their appeal at the turn of the last century—as well as today.

By Nancy E. Berry

A popular choice in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for both residential and commercial buildings, pressed tin-coated steel ceilings made an elegant, economical addition to many rooms. Early steel manufacturing companies cited the practicality of this material over wood and plaster, touting it as “perfect protection against fire, water, dust, vermin, and rodents” as well as advertising the metal as not “cracking, peeling, or shrinking.” Up until World War I, when manufacturing was diverted to war efforts, the same process was used to make sheet metal for roofing ornament and skylight casings—even children’s author L. Frank Baum created a character out of tin in his 1900 novel The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.

Dramatic, deep-paneled steel ceilings could be found in high-society townhouses, while simpler patterns were found in more modest homes. We’ll look at old and new technologies used to re-create this historical ornament.

Origins

Historian Ken Postlethwaite explains that although there is some controversy over where the first metal ceilings popped up in this country, it is believed that their use began in 1885 with the experimental installation of tin-plate squares used to patch a ceiling in Brooklyn, New York. Rope was used as a molding to cover the joints, and the corners were hidden by wooden rosettes. By the late 1800s, there were about two dozen factories pounding out tin-coated steel ceilings and sidewalls. “One reason for their popularity was cost,” explains Bill Perk, Jr., president of the contemporary tin ceiling manufacturer M-Boss, Inc. “Decorative plaster ceilings were expensive because a master craftsman would need to be employed to do the work—a homeowner could get a similar effect with pressed-metal ceilings at a fraction of the price.” When metal ceilings were painted white, they looked like expensive, ornate plaster.

They were also sold as the modern choice for ceilings. In the 1910s, Canton Steel Company advertised its steel ceilings as “an effective treatment in the living room of a modern home” as well as “in an up-to-date kitchen.” The material was also used as wainscoting and sidewalls in bathrooms and libraries. With improved machinery through time, companies were able to produce a higher-grade product at a more reasonable price.
Past Presses

In 1900, hand-operated machinery was used to mass-manufacture metal ceilings. Much like the process of repoussé, in which metal is stamped from behind with hand-held hammers to create a decorative pattern, ceiling panels were individually stamped by mechanical drop-rope hammers using dies. Dies were placed in a press with the “female” half set onto a cast-iron bed and the “male” half attached to a large cast-iron hammer hanging above the press bed. A sheet of steel was then placed over the die on the cast-iron bed and a press operator released the hammer to drop onto the bed, stamping the design into the metal by force when the die sets met. One company that reproduces steel ceilings using these old methods is the W.F. Norman Company, a 106-year-old sheet-metal factory in Nevada, Missouri. Resembling a medieval torture chamber more than a metal manufacturing shop, the company’s cavernous 1910 brick building is filled with antique contraptions such as its six original drop-rope hammers—similar to those used to make suits of armor in 17th-century France—plaster-of-Paris molds, 900-pound cast dies, and old shears and brakes. Fan belts whir as a rhythmic thump, thump stamps out the tin-coated steel panels into 140 original decorative patterns ranging from Rococo, Gothic, Empire, and Colonial.

In 1979, C. Robert Quinto purchased the shop, which had been in business since 1898 and in its current location since 1910. He intended to start a wood-burning-stove company, but once he spied the tin-ceiling presses that had stood silent for 60 years, he dusted off the old relics and put them back into service. Today Robert’s children, Neal, Mark, Sue, and Chris, run the business. “The metal used is similar to metal used to make coffee cans,” says Neal Quinto. More malleable than steel, zinc is also used when the relief of the design must be deep and sharp.

If a sample of a historic pattern has survived in relatively good condition, W.F. Norman can repair it and use it as a three-dimensional model for casting new dies. Since cast iron will shrink in casting as it cools from a liquid to a solid (approximately 3/16” per foot) a new die set will create a pattern that is slightly smaller than the original.

Modern Methods

Today many pressed-metal shops are run with automated hydraulic presses. M-Boss, Inc., one such company, stamps metal sheets into decorative patterns with 480,000 pounds of force. Many of the designs M-Boss creates are based on historical patterns that Bill Perk has found. The majority of ceiling panels are made of aluminum because it is rust-free and lightweight—less than a pound per panel. Whether old or new technologies are used, these ceilings are made to last. W.F. Norman’s offices still have the original tin ceilings. “Without water damage they can last forever,” says Quinto.
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When considering a house purchase, we all know the rules: Check for termites in the basement, click beetles in the framing, and algae on the roof. We also know that what the decision really boils down to is the psyche of the place.

In some 60 years of viewing movies and 13 of reviewing them, I've seen a lot of cinema houses and condos—including the fun pad in Predator 2 (1990), Mr. Blanding's 1948 dream house (really kind of boring architecturally), and in 1968, Rosemary's apartment at the Dakota (too big with unfortunate neighbors). But a few hold especially warm spots in my critic's heart for featuring an old dwelling so crucial to the plot or ambiance it might have been featured above the stars' names in the credits.

The Uninvited (1944) starring Ray Milland, Ruth Hussey, Gail Russell, and for readers whose provenance approaches the Victorian, Cornelia Otis Skinner. It's one of the best ghost stories ever filmed, with spirits residing in a beautiful abandoned mansion on the edge of a cliff in Cornwall, overlooking a usually seething Atlantic. It's a steal at 1,200 pounds, so a brother and sister snap it up from the daughter of the original owner, now living elsewhere with her grandfather. The house has large windows, great chandeliers, a magnificent staircase, and in color would be featured in House & Garden. They hear unexplained sounds during the night and see a wispy apparition accompanied by the smell of mimosa. But considering the original cost, well worth it.

Deception (1946) featured Bette Davis as concert pianist Christine Radcliffe; Paul Henreid as Karel Novak, the cellist she loves; and Claude Rains (who throws all restraint to the roof) as the world-famous composer Alex Hollenius. From the opening shots of Christine's marvelous apartment atop a warehouse to Alex's incredible abode on Fifth Avenue, Anton Grot, the production designer, wielded a grand brush. Metropolitan Home would drool as we follow Christine and Karel into the freight elevator, then up the stairs and through the fire door into a sprawling studio apartment with a huge skylight, Chinese dynasty chairs, a wall of windows with the Queens-Midtown Bridge in the distance, a kitchen you would die for (even today), a Picasso hanging over the original Smilow-Thielle chest, and massive brass pulls on the closet doors. When we finally arrive at Alex's townhouse, with its rococo iron-grill door, the Siamese cat named Shatzi and aloof cockatoo, we're almost inured to the chandeliers, the Louis XIV walls, the 10' palms, and the glints of silver everywhere. No wonder it all winds up in murder!

Sunset Boulevard (1950) not only had Gloria Swanson vamping her way down a 1920s staircase but also William Holden floating face down in the swimming pool. The house would be a place for anybody to die for and what makes it better is that it's an actual house (not a collection of sets), built in 1924 for William Jenkins and part of a divorce settlement for the second Mrs. J. Paul Getty. The address, 3810 Wilshire Boulevard, is now the site of a 22-storey Getty Oil Building. Strangely enough, although it was the perfect house for Swanson's washed-up-actress character Norma Desmond, there was originally no swimming pool, and once built for Holden's death scene, it sat empty and forlorn because no one installed a method of circulating the water. Oh, well, it was still a great place for a picnic! And it was such a popular spot that in 1955 the house was used again for the final scenes of James Dean's great Rebel Without a Cause.

That year also saw the end-all of adaptive reuse jobs, the old mill that Rock Hudson painstakingly remodels in Douglas Sirk's marvelous soap opera All That Heaven Allows. At first gardener Rock lives in a greenhouse so he can share life with his fledgling trees. Then he meets Jane Wyman, who tells him that the old mill is much too beautiful to be torn down for an orchard. So Rock hand planes the banister, makes hand-hewn oak shutters for the huge muntined window, and essentially creates from kitchen to living-room floor a house for all time—and most
desires. Then at movie's end, when you think you've experienced everything remodeling has to offer, a stag comes to the window to greet Jane's character so life can go on, even for a woman in love with a man 10 years her junior. (If you're into gardening don't forget Rock's advice that a golden raintree will only bloom when growing next to a house where love abounds.)

The Haunting (1963) is one of the scariest films I've ever seen and one of the reasons for its success is the incredible house used for the hauntings. Who can overlook a mansion where a visiting parapsychologist says: "Scandal, murder, insanity, suicide—the history of Hill House had everything I wanted. It was an evil house from the beginning—a house that was born bad." So welcome to a place where the ornately moulded doors actually bend from an other worldly presence, and chills are so bone-rattling that the largest furnace can't warm you up. This

19th-century house, Ettington Park, is real but situated in England rather than the movie's alleged New England setting.

And speaking of haunted houses, let's give an ectoplasmic salute to the new (1999) House on Haunted Hill. The first (and far better, from 1958) starred Vincent Price and featured skeletons rising from the wine cellar. But in the second, production designer David Klassen dispatched with the Victorian touches and created an insane-asylum-cum-house in the "monolithic style" of Albert Speer, the infamous (and normally uninspiring) architect of Hitler's Third Reich. "It was very exciting," said Klassen, "to design a psychiatric institute for the criminally insane in this very looming, large, and clean style [as] it really draws the audience into the setting."

Finally, there's The Sandpiper, the 1965 fictional joining of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, directed by Vincente Minnelli, which features "a shack on a deserted beach." Some shack: With a rippling Pacific one flew through the large windows and sunflowers of an orange so intense that they would make a poppy blush, this beach house stirs nestles enchantingly among the coastal grasses of Big Sur. Featured, among decor, are a great Firehood stove, a massive kitchen table, piled with fresh tomatoes, Italian prints, Mexican rugs, and an inviting leather campaign chair. A pottery jug of a Cézanne still-life overflows with earthy and dried grasses to make a conservative weep. Instead of a stag, we have a a wonderful sandpiper recovering from a broken wing.

A house-lover with a VCR or a DVD player can reside in these houses for a couple of hours of vicarious chills or over whelming envy—and sometimes that's all we can ask for.

Peter Kimber, who lives in Asheville, North Carolina, is a movie reviewer for NPR stations. He has written more than 30 books on gardening and natural history.
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Bringing the Outdoors In

While the stereotypical Victorian parlor includes a potted fern perched on a stand, their fronds were a tiny tip of the virtual jungle that filled some interiors of that period. They clustered in window gardens, decked walls, occupied summer fireplaces, formed screens around sofas, and flourished in glass enclosures.

In the 19th century, nature was believed to hold the key to emotional solace, religious instruction, and natural history education, and for some amateur naturalists, physical exercise in pursuit of unusual species. In the same way that Victorians saw prints of Old Master paintings and religious illustrations as beneficial to children, flowers and foliage were expected to inspire family members and visitors. Their "language of flowers" interpreted various plants as symbols of devotion, love, sorrow, remembrance, or hope. Typical views were expressed by a writer who spoke of the vegetable kingdom as analogous to human behavior with "some industrious and perpetually striving for the good of the whole... the leaves provident for the coming day, the flowers provident for the next generation, all working, not merely for themselves alone." Thus hyacinths, ivy, fuchsia, and numerous other plants meant far more to their owners than colorful decoration.

For the thrifty, plants offered an inexpensive means of filling space. Advice manuals frequently decreed that plants in a window were just as good as expensive curtains and "finer than anything you can buy." Parlor gardens held particular appeal during long winter months when they provided a cheering bit of green growth, although individual plants might be shifted outdoors during the summer. There was no lack of ideas on how to integrate plants into the parlor.

Window Gardens
Window gardens filled with pots, hanging baskets, and trailing vines created a transition between house and garden. A bay window was the epitome of such parlor greenhouses. Most window gardens adopted a symmetrically balanced arrangement featuring a stand or shelves in the center, hanging baskets dangling above, plants on brackets or sills to the sides, and often vines trained to grow over and around the ensemble. The vines could originate in hanging baskets, but more often grew from pots placed on the floor at each side of the window.

Plants on Walls
Training vines to crawl around interior elements was a favorite Victorian concept. Walls could be completely covered in ivy,
which could survive dim spaces, fumes from gaslights, and forgetful would-be horticulturalists who seldom remembered to water plants. Instructions called for placing the roots either in pots of soil or in small vials of water behind picture frames and then encouraging the plants to embrace the frame, outline a cornice, or drape the top edge of a window as a lambrequin (valance). In extreme cases, homeowners used all those techniques. One correspondent to a ladies' magazine claimed to have grown 60 to 80 yards of ivy, covering all four walls and fastened with loops of thread (in a color to match the wallpaper) and pins or tacks.

**Wardian Cases**

Any child who ever placed plants in a plastic bottle, sealed the bottle, and hoped for a tiny self-sustaining ecosystem has made a type of Wardian case. Wardian cases—named for their inventor, Nathaniel Ward—were small self-maintaining environments. The idea was that once the plants were sealed inside with a little water, natural processes would recirculate moisture and keep the plants growing without further human intervention. (This was revived as the terrarium fad in the 1970s.) Scientists greeted the 1830s invention with enthusiasm because it made possible shipment of exotic plants from far-flung corners of the globe. Homeowners saw these cases as a golden opportunity to make small indoor gardens that required little care. During the fern craze of the mid-19th century, many people rushed into the woods, dug up every fern they saw, and installed them in Wardian cases.

Instructions on how to build a basic case abounded, but it was also possible to purchase elaborate cases in styles from Rococo Revival to Gothic Revival. One could either simply place the case on a table, acquire a special stand, or buy an integrated case and stand.

**Containers and Stands**

Nineteenth-century advice manuals brimmed over with inspired ideas on how to pot plants. Homeowners could buy planters ranging from relatively plain to nearly any revival style they might desire, but they also pressed coconut shells and gourds into service as containers. Purveyors of
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do-it-yourself instructions recommended a vast variety of materials with which to personally decorate the cheaper pots, such as glueing seeds and pine cones in patterns.

Practically any material could be used for plant stands; metal and wicker saw extensive use. Elaborate stands constructed in tiers (and sometimes in triangular configurations for corners) could hold several plants. In the most complex designs, the ensemble included fish bowls, fountains, and bird cages.

**Summer Fireplaces**

Just like homeowners today, Victorians puzzled over what to do with a fireplace during the summer. When left alone it was a black hole in an otherwise elaborately decorated room. Minigardens offered an appealing seasonal alternative to a fireboard or fan. These small arrangements ranged from boxes of soil set into the cavity and filled with plants, to collections of pots arranged within the space, to elaborate compositions of tree stumps and branches adorned with plants (and occasionally decorated with stuffed squirrels or preserved butterflies).

**Trellises**

Most of us associate trellises with exterior gardens, but to the 19th-century plant fanatic they seemed like perfect interior screens. Usually, latticework rose from behind a rectangular box planted with vines trained to grow up and cover it. In more dramatic cases, trellises flanked and then roofed over a sofa. With additional potted plants as part of the ensemble, the viewer saw the seating (and any occupants) as being engulfed in foliage. One glance at some of these compositions and it is easy to understand garden designer Gertrude Jekyll's comment that "I have seen many a drawing room where it appeared to be less a room than a thicket.

*Marilyn Casto* is an associate professor of interior design at Virginia Tech.
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Six landmark houses set the course for modern concepts.

MODERN CENTURY

Where have the ideas that reinvented interiors over the last 100 years come from? What brought houses to the modern concepts of design just after 1900, and developed them into totally new environments by the mid-20th century, thereby changing the look of living spaces—and how we look at them—ever since? The influences are many, but they include three fundamental shifts in thinking. First, that interior spaces do not have to be defined by the building’s exterior—that is, limited to the level of small boxes cut out of one large box—but rather that their shape and organization can drive the plan and massing of the house. Second, the notion of rooms as cohesive space, with a natural flow of volumes and finishes from one major area to another—a notion often tucked under the highly elastic rubric “open plan.” Third, that the designer’s concept for a house need not be limited to the structure or interior architecture, but can extend down to colors, finishes, and the minutest details of furniture and furnishings to produce a totally integrated environment.

Certainly, Frank Lloyd Wright is the prolific exponent of such thinking, and the innovative houses from the early part of his career—along with those who shared the same philosophies—are landmark examples. However, there were also designers who pioneered the modern trail ahead of Wright, as well as many who followed in his path. In not a few ways, the directions of modern residential design were charted by the genius of Henry Hobson Richardson in the late 19th century. His experiments with the new prominence of the central hall, and the revival of practical, delightful features like the medieval inglenook, gave Americans new models for residential building in houses like the Watts-Sherman House in Newport, Rhode Island. In the following six houses, we’ll explore how some wide-ranging architects built on what Richardson had begun to help create a new kind of house for the modern century.
A succession of open terraces and porches creates outdoor living spaces at Frank Lloyd Wright's Willits House in Highland Park, Illinois.

Willits House (1902)
Frank Lloyd Wright

In his illustrious career—spanning more than 70 years—Frank Lloyd Wright built 769 structures—from synagogues to gas stations and everything in between. Wright is known to have called himself "the greatest architect in the world," and both Wright and historians agree that the Willits House in Hyde Park, Illinois, is the first great Prairie-style house and a turning point in Wright's career. Built for Ward Willits, president of the Adams and Westlake Company, a brass and bronze foundry, the house is a total departure from what had come before. Laid out in a cruciform (cross plan), the house's exterior is a steel reinforced wood-frame clad in stucco. Following his mantra of "form and function are one," the open, horizontal interior space—stair hall, living room, kitchen, and dining room—flows effortlessly around a massive Roman brick central chimney. Light floods the house through bands of art-glass casement windows. Wright's love of Japanese culture and architecture is apparent throughout—particularly in the use of vertical spindle screens found in the living space. (In fact, Wright made his first trip to Japan with Willits in 1905.) Wright designed almost all the house's original furnishings. Although most were sold off in the 1950s after Willits' death, the current owners worked with restoration architect John Eifler to find Wright pieces to replicate. The dining table and chairs are reproductions.
Powers House (1910)
Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie

In background as well as work, William Grey Purcell and George Grant Elmslie shared impeccable credentials as early modern architects. Both were among the most talented designers in the circle surrounding Frank Lloyd Wright, absorbing many of his ideas about organic architecture, and Elmslie had even richer experience via Wright’s mentor, Louis Sullivan, for whom he worked for 20 years. In realizing new visions of residential design, the hands and inspiration of both men are evident in the Powers House, their first major project as a team.

As sometimes happens, the discipline demanded by a difficult site gave rise to fresh directions. While the clients were generous, and the lot, on the Lake of Isles in downtown Minneapolis, was enticing, it was a mere 50’ wide. The innovative solution was to reorient the house, and put all primary living spaces in the back—a realm normally reserved for kitchens and other service spaces. This inversion not only gave the living room a sunlit southern exposure but also a delightful lakeview panorama made possible by the hexagonal bank of windows. The curves of this observatory carry right through the walls to the living room, where they enclose a semicircular window seat. Across the house these windows are balanced by a “tower” that creates the uncommon identity of the street-side façade. Interior walls share the same undecorated plaster surfaces as the exterior set off by dark trim, with deft use of architect-designed built-in cabinets and inglenook seating that allow the plan to remain open and flowing.

Though passerby may see the distinctive tower end of the Powers House as its main façade, the bulk of the house actually extends back along the side to the lake. Top: The living room with its lakescape window seat.
Samuel Tilton House (1880) McKim, Mead and White

If Henry Hobson Richardson was the 19th-century architect who advanced the Victorian house right to the thresholds of modern design, it was his young, artistic protégé, Stanford White, who later expanded on many of Richardson's concepts, creating prototypes of the totally integrated interiors to come in the 20th century. One such bellwether is the summer house that McKim, Mead and White designed for Samuel Tilton that established a new level for the young firm and set the tone of their many Newport commissions to come.

While the exterior—a cloak of shingles wrapping bays and blocks of window—is generally referred to as early Shingle style, the interior with its intense collection of design references can only be described as eclectic. American Colonial details like scallop-shell niches and a Dutch door (the particular passion of Charles Follen McKim) mix with Queen Anne features, such as the recently revived fireplace inglenook. Turned-spindle screens borrowed from Moroccan models meld with Art Nouveau metalwork and panel decorations. Walls defined by rectilinear panels and basket motifs are clearly of Far Eastern origin via the studies of Stanford White. Though striking—even unrelenting—in the imagination and profusion of their details, the interiors still work exquisitely because they are interwoven with meticulous care, while still being open and integrated with the skeleton of the house in the manner of a Japanese villa, or the future experiments of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Panels of bottle glass, as well as glass bits in the pebbledash stucco, hint at the fanciful detailing inside the Tilton House.
Roos House (1909)
Bernard Maybeck
Perhaps it's no surprise that one of the most original designers of the 20th century,—the inventive, unclassifiable Bernard Maybeck— took readily to creating houses inside and out down to the smallest details. Before studying architecture at the esteemed Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris, which stressed, among other ideas, the integration of interiors and exteriors, the young Maybeck apprenticed in the large New York furniture firm of Pottier & Stymus, where his father worked.

The new communities surrounding San Francisco Bay where Maybeck settled in 1890 gave him an open-minded and aesthetically oriented clientele. Among them was the Leon L. Roos family, and in 1909 Mrs. Roos, a frequent entertainer who loved the stage, hired Maybeck to design a "theatrical" house that would be a wedding present from her father. Maybeck's visionary combination of Gothic elements in a thoroughly modern handling of space produced rooms that are large yet intimate, evocative yet breathtaking in their novel juxtapositions of materials and details. The electric light clusters, hung at different heights so they "lower" the hall ceiling to human scale, are a prime example of Maybeck's uncanny mastery of technology and history towards the same goals. Leon Roos, a successful men's furnishing merchant, even commissioned Maybeck to design furniture to go with pieces they had picked up abroad and work with a family crest Roos had created.

The 9,000-square-foot house, one of Maybeck's largest and effectively a mansion, sits on a hillside lot, but is unimposing and practical nonetheless.

The upstairs living room has a far more intimate feel than the huge living hall, and it echoes with features like pitched and beamed ceilings.
The living hall, a two-storey space built for entertaining, was designed with the staircase landing as a stage where the Roos family could make its entrance.

This couch designed by Maybeck, with the Roos crest in the center, is formed around yet another startling use of the Gothic quatrefoil featured throughout the house.
Bradley House (1909)
Louis Sullivan
Louis Sullivan, the man who challenged future generations of architects to seek their own, innovative styles, holds a rare place in design history as both the "father of the skyscraper" and the "Leib Meister" to the most influential of residential architects, Frank Lloyd Wright. Sullivan himself, however, designed uncommonly few houses, and the Bradley House is the only one still standing.

Built in Madison, Wisconsin, a wedding present for the daughter of a close client, the Bradley House exterior looks less "Prairie" than one might expect from the pioneer of the Chicago School of Architecture—almost Victorian verticality, reinforced in a way by Sullivan's hallmark, interlacing ornament. Once inside however, it's clear that the exterior is an expression of the interior spaces that jut out from a central core, intersecting with the outdoors, true to Prairie ideals, through porches and balconies. A matrix of virile oak ceiling beams telegraphs the layout of the room spaces while encouraging flow through the open plan. Wall trim divides the surfaces into similar grids that enhance the volumes of the rooms while highlighting the changes in plane directions.
contracts, putting stress on the wall surface. This contraction is the reason why wall-prep for paper is different than for paint. Unfinished walls, whether wood, plaster, or drywall, are porous, but if a wall is too porous the paste may get lost in the wall, leaving few solids to anchor the paper. If a wall is too sealed, it may not have enough texture for the paste to hang onto, and the paper may curl up after drying. The semi-
One problem with plaster walls in the past were "hot spots"—concentrations of lime that could discolor wallpaper with its alkalinity. Blue Ribbon Wheat Paste sizing helped temper the wall.

A drawing in Diderot's and D'Alembert's Encyclopedia by Jean-Baptiste Michel Papillon (1698-1768) details the process of preparing walls for paper hanging.

More on Sizing

For old-time paperhangers, who were never without their glue pots, size was very close to a universal solution for plaster. Most size was granular, soaked in water, and then heated to form a liquid. Ready-mixed glue size came to retailer's shelves by the 1920s and such versions as Sisk's and Adhesium were heavily advertised. Glue size was great for plaster walls, somewhat less effective on oil-painted walls, and a disaster when used over weakly bound paints like calcimine and whitewash. Similarly, glue size by itself could not cope with the new challenge of drywall, or with the weakly bound latex paints that came into use after World War II.

Inexpensive and easy-clean-up latex paints were effective at covering vast amounts of drywall. But when these walls were papered, failures were common. Often, the top layers of drywall would adhere to the back of the paper. If the wallpaper did not pop off after the wallpaper dried, creating a daunting repair, it simply lay in wait. When it came time for removal, there was hell to pay.

Today's prep-coats are often called "sizes," an echo of the product they replaced. But they do not size—they seal. (And yet, they do not produce a monolithic film, but one perforated by micro-holes. This allows the high-moisture pastes still in use to evaporate into the wall.)

There are many varieties of prep-coats. Some are for priming vinyl wallcoverings. Some types are pigmented, so that a white, nearly opaque film results. Many of them can be tinted. What sets prep-coats apart from other primers is that they're specifically formulated for wallcovering.

While there are some all-purpose types, these are pigmented and they have a significant drawback for the historic homeowner. The pigmentation buries historic plaster under an opaque film. The translucent types offer just as much adhesion promotion, and yet leave the plaster visible for future generations.

Shredded drywall, a byproduct of stripping problems, became so widespread that a special type of primer, also based on acrylics, was developed to seal it. These products are called drywall repair clears (DRCs) and are similar to prep coats, but they offer more sealing properties and less adhesion promotion.
porous wall—one that is receptive to adhesive—is the best surface for wallpaper. What’s needed is a sound “wallpaper sandwich”—wall and wallpaper united by a thin layer of high-moisture adhesive. Porous walls can be sized to reduce porosity, while sealed walls can be coated with an acrylic to promote adhesion.

**Plaster Problems**

Because traditional lime-plaster walls dried hard, they made an ideal surface for papering in many ways, but they had their pitfalls. Concentrations of lime (known as hot spots) could burn wallpaper colors with excess alkali. Paperhangers could neutralize the lime with vinegar or a solution of zinc sulfate. However, the same color variations could also be caused by suction spots, which could occur anytime the porosity varied. The danger of hot spots faded as lime plaster gave way to gypsum plaster.

Hard as they were, plaster walls were also porous and needed to be tempered with glue size (a liquid that reduces the absorption of an adhesive). Once sized, the wall could easily accept the paste used on the wallpaper. The paste would evaporate into the wall, leaving a stable, easily removable decoration. Although paper could be removed, it often wasn’t. This resulted, after several generations, in something that more resembled a layer cake than a sandwich.

**Past Solutions** In the past the best trade practice for prepping walls called for a slow-drying coat of lead paint, but shortcuts abounded. Oil paint often covered this coat. When homeowners tried to paper over these oil-painted walls, the wall was hard and impervious to moisture. It could be prepared for papering by washing with sal (salt) soda and sanding to abrade the surface, providing a key for the wallpaper paste.

Calcimine and whitewashed plaster walls, by far the most prevalent, were even more difficult to prepare. These water-based materials made with simple chalk or lime “pigments” incorporated little binder. They couldn’t be papered over without the contraction of the paper lifting them from the wall and ruining the job. A rosin varnish coat often lay underneath. It was so slick that paper wouldn’t easily stick to it. These coats, too, were often washed and sanded, although the most rigorous advice was to remove the varnish with strong chemicals. Glue size was used for such slick walls, since it promoted adhesion, but it wasn’t quite enough in many cases. This is why sticky additives like molasses, sugar, and syrup were common. They helped wallpaper cling to varnished or painted surfaces, but may also be responsible for many a weary old-house owner’s complaint about stripping wallpaper.

**Today’s Fixes** As in the past, the best way for old-house restorers to prep plaster walls is to size them. The first modern wall-prep product came along in the early 1970s. It was an acrylic wall primer called “Wallpaper Prep-Coat” from Swing, Ltd., a Canadian company, and based on a commercial version of acrylic first produced by the Rohm & Haas Company in 1927. The flexible acrylic film was effective in sealing most surfaces and yet promoted adhesion. An important additive was diatomaceous earth, which is a fancy way of saying silica, or, even simpler, grit. (Silica is the inert transparent additive that turns gloss finishes to matte.)

In this modern “size,” the grit provided tooth for the wallpaper to hang onto. It was quickly joined by competing products. The original “Wallpaper Prep-Coat” is still in production, but the generic term “prep coat” has since come to mean any acrylic wall-prep product. After walls are stripped, you should apply the acrylic prep coat with a brush, paint pad, or roller. The standard coverage is 600 square feet per gallon, much more than the 400 square feet standard for paint. But prep coats are often overspread because they are so thin. Spread a full coat, paying particular attention to where the trim paint overlaps the wall—the most likely place for wallpaper adhesion problems. If the prep coat beads up on an oily or freshly painted surface, you may need to lightly sand before application.

**Drywall Drawbacks**

The first attempts at a “dry” alternative to wet plaster walls, around 1900, were semirigid composition materials of felt, fiber, and animal hair. By 1904 early drywall composed of gypsum base surrounded by cardboard was available, but this wall material created a new problem—uneven
In 1872 the American Agriculturist advised prepping lime-washed walls with vinegar or a combination of water and sulphuric acid.

For a related story online, see "6 Ways to Survive a Wallpaper Project." Just click to "The Magazine" section, and go to the alphabetical list of recent features.

The 1922 Painter and Decorating Contractors of America manual’s chapter on “wall-board” advised that “As a rule, cracks between sections...are covered with mouldings put on by the carpenter...if no mouldings are to be used, it is very difficult to fill the cracks with putty so they will not show.” But by 1949, the manual had much happier news: “Special joint cement and perforated joint tape have been perfected.”

Past Solutions This period of experimentation, especially around 1930, explains the odd-looking joints uncovered by old-house owners. The earliest fillers were based on materials from the painter’s shop: linseed oil or varnish, chalk, and lead already in use for plaster repairs. Plaster of Paris was widely used for the base repair, but it could powder, shrink, and fall out. “Swedish putty” or spachtel, a more tenacious substance that dried harder, became a standard final coat for repairs.

Another problem arose when wallpaper was hung on drywall. The wallpaper would often become laminated to the top layer of the cardboard face, nevermore to be separated from it. Anyone who has been part of a wallpaper stripping job of this type knows how tenaciously the two layers of paper will bond together.

Cheap varnishes were also used to seal drywall, as they had plaster. This explains why it is common to run across shiny, clear surfaces when stripping wallpaper from old drywall and plaster. A new reason for sealing drywall became obvious after the first few attempts were made to strip wallpaper from it.

Today's Fixes Premixed joint compound is the present day answer to most patching needs, but because it shrinks, it may need multiple applications. Joint
A Few tips:

Stripping: Most all wallpaper can be removed with enough soaking. If you come across genuine historic paper, or decorative painting, stop and seek professional help. Both can be damaged by excessive moisture.

Plaster: If it has never been painted, it can still be glue-sized. It can also be coated with a translucent prep-coat. Don’t coat with an opaque primer; this buries the history of the wall, which may include evidence of alterations such as former doors or windows.

Patching: For best results, use plaster for plaster repairs and seal joint compound, spackling compounds, and hot muds.

Prep-coats: Paint primers and wallpaper primers are not the same. Read the labels.

Lining paper: Lining paper is a worthy upgrade for costly papers. Like underlays for carpet, or linings for drapes, it makes the wallpaper look better and last longer.

Paint Problems

What if your walls have only a few coats of a reasonably good latex or acrylic paint? Do you really need additional wall prep?

Acrylic paints have been improving by leaps and bounds. Many acrylic paints can withstand the stress of a paperhanging project. Years ago the flat paints were suspect, but now a top-quality flat can be as good as an eggshell or semigloss at holding out moisture and protecting the wall. But there is still a large consumer market for inferior paint at discount prices. The painting public is inclined to skimp on paint specifications, especially when covering thousands of square feet.

Today’s Fixes Unless you’re sure of the history of the wall and the quality of the paint, the safest course is to apply an acrylic wall-covering primer to all existing paint prior to papering. Even oil-based paints, which are naturally more resistant to moisture, may benefit from prep coats, because of the enhanced adhesion. One can of wallpaper primer (about $15) is cheap insurance if it keeps the paper on the wall.

Multiple Paint Coats Wall prep for the outer layer may be beyond reproach, but what about the weak layer of paint, the one that is four or five layers down? The chain of paint layers is only as strong as its weakest link, and many wallpaper jobs have been ruined by the wallpaper pulling up this hidden problem.

Today’s Fixes Sometimes a professional may be able to test the surface, or suggest a lower moisture paste that pulls less on the paint film. Sometimes liner paper can serve as a sacrificial layer to test the surface. (If the liner ruptures in a few areas, repairs can be made. But even then, problems may persist.)

If it seems likely that a weak paint film may sabotage the project—based on how similar paint layers in similar rooms have reacted, for example—then paper may not be a viable choice. Or, a new surface may need to be created, for example, by installing a new plaster or drywall surface.

Robert M. Kelly is the principal at WRN Associates in Lee, Massachusetts (www.paperhangings.com).
Recognizing ageless structure beneath vines and crumbling mortar, Bob and Macon Hilton turned a 1790s estate on Virginia's western frontier into a family retreat.

Bob Hilton discovered Sitlington through his membership in a fishing camp that belonged to his wife's family. Reputed to be one of the oldest structures in remote Bath County, Virginia, the 18th-century stone house stands on a breezy knoll above a horseshoe bend in the Cowpasture River overlooking 150 acres of rolling hayfields and the forested slopes of the Allegheny Mountains. "I married into the fishing camp next door," says Hilton, rocking on Sitlington's restored front verandah. "When I first saw Sitlington, it belonged to a blind recluse."

Built in 1798 by Colonel Robert Sitlington, following his service in the American Revolution, the house was overgrown with vines and weeds, its mortar crumbling, its porches bereft of paint. But when the property went up for sale more than two decades ago, Hilton, who worked in healthcare services in Nashville, Tennessee, decided he wanted it. "I had seen a restored stone house in France," he says, "and I had a vision of what this one could be like."

Although the house had no electricity, no heat other than wood stoves, and no plumbing, Hilton and his wife Macon thought they could turn Sitlington into a retreat for family and friends. "We scrambled to buy it—it was another couple interested in it," he says. They'd never restored a house before they embarked on the two-year project, "but we had a good architect, and we trusted him." That was Thomas Craven of Charlottesville, who was immediately taken by Sitlington's hallmark feature—its magnificent stonework. While most of the mortar was gone and vines encrusted the stones, Craven noted how solidly the stonework still held.

"It was built," explains Hilton, "to prove to people in eastern Virginia that they could have culture in the western part of the state." The stone in the house's front section, original to its 1798 construction, was hauled 50 miles from Staunton, the transportation hub of western Virginia at the time. The stonework in back, part of a post-
With its stones remortared, Sitlington has regained its former dignity on what two centuries ago was Virginia's western frontier.

Far left: The Hiltons added a breakfast room and deck to the back of the house, which overlooks a fishing pond. Left: When they bought the house it was swathed in vines with most mortar missing and the porches paintless.
Civil War addition, is native to Bath County.

Sitlington's stone walls are about 2' thick at the bottom, tapering gradually to the third floor. The home's three unique chimneys are built even with the exterior walls and, thus, are not visible from outside.

Local contractor Phil Burks supervised the restoration and hired stonemason Jerry Rexrode to restore the mostly missing mortar. "We pulled the old mortar out where it still existed," says Burks, "and repointed all the stonework," which took about a month.

In the meantime, Hilton began chiseling away at the home's 11 fireplaces, nine of them original to the 1790s structure. All had been plastered over, some with wood stoves installed. "Underneath," he says, "most of the fireplaces were in really good condition."

Hilton's chisel slowly revealed the craftsmanship of two centuries ago, including the vast stone fireplace—6' wide and 3' deep, with a massive oak beam for a mantel—that once served the basement kitchen. "No one even knew it was there," says Burks, "and now it's a real focal point. Two chairs pulled up to the fireplace in what is today the Hilton's base-

Bob chisled plaster out of the house's fireplaces, some of which were serving wood stoves.

The ceiling of the basement family room are floorboards of the room above. Bob scrubbed the whitewash off of them and the beams with a Brillo pad.
ment family room, were purchased by Bob and Macon, now retired grandparents, after they first married. The family room ceiling is the unfinished underside of the original upstairs floors. Bob scrubbed the whitewashed beams with a Brillo pad to reveal the original wood. More of the home's original woodwork is visible in the attic, where hand-hewn beams with wooden pegs and roof slats remain exposed beneath a new tin roof.

Along with moulding dating to the 1920s and pocket doors, the interior features kitchen cabinets and bookcases of wood recovered from the estate's old barns. In the study, the Hiltons display a copy of the 1743 land grant from King George II, offering the property on which Sitlington now stands to William Doherty, who later sold the estate to the Sitlingtons, owners of the property for more than a century.

Today the Hiltons typically occupy Sitlington from Easter through the end of October as an escape from the heat and noise of Nashville. The furniture is simple Victorian-era farmhouse antiques collected over several years in Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky. Among the couple's favorite pieces is a round Boston "dancing" table in the dining room, with legs that fold up so it can be moved aside to provide dancing space. "None of the pieces here are very valuable," says Hilton. "We just wanted a comfortable country look."

With two grown and married children and three grandchildren, the Hiltons frequently host family gatherings in Bath County. "Last Fourth of July the whole family was here," he says. They also entertain friends from both Virginia and Nashville and use this as home base for fishing excursions and hikes into the nearby George Washington National Forest.

"If's tempting to consider moving here permanently," says Hilton, as he stands on the upper front verandah looking east toward the wooded slopes of Virginia's Alleghenies. "This place exudes history. When I'm here I think about the man that built this house and all his descendants who lived here and enjoyed it, just as we do."

Deborah Huso writes from Warm Springs, Virginia, about the state's rural history, culture, and environment.
Wood floors go hand-in-hand with old houses. They're traditional and functional—as well as having finishes highly valued for their rich historic character and warm beauty. Little wonder then why the phrase “hardwood floors” is such a magnet in the real estate market, especially given that the generation of wall-to-wall carpet houses from the 1960s and '70s were built without any finished flooring at all. Enduring as they are, wood floors bear tremendous amounts of use, abuse, and changes and, after many decades of service, they often need repairs or replacements. Since most folks don't wonder about the specifics of wood-floor construction and care until it's time to act, here's a rundown of the common issues that surface in the quest to keep up old floors or blend in new flooring seamlessly.

Answers to common plank and strip-flooring questions.

By the Old-House Journal Technical Staff

Flat-sawing (far left) produces a circular or random growth-ring pattern on the end of the board, and often the “flame” grain pattern evident on the face of many wide-board floors. Quartersawing (left) produces a vertical growth-ring pattern on the end of the board—that is, rings nearly perpendicular to the finished face.
What's the history of wood flooring?
The most common kinds of wood flooring in old houses can be divided into two general categories: wide-plank floors (boards typically 8" and wider) often seen in early buildings, rural areas, or secondary spaces like bedrooms and kitchens; and strip floors (narrow boards typically 2” to 4” wide), at first reserved for better rooms but nearly ubiquitous in most houses by the 20th century. Wide-board floors are the oldest and simplest type. In most areas they were originally constructed of softwoods like pine that were durable but easy to hand-saw, then face-nailed to supporting beams or joists.

True strip floors are a product of the Industrial Revolution, and started to become widely affordable and reliable in quality in the 1880s. Steam-powered machinery, which made the milling of dense hardwoods like oak and maple practical, also enabled edge-matching the sides of each board into a sophisticated system of tongue-and-groove joints. This system not only integrates hundreds of small boards into a wood “skin” that shares loads among many boards, but it also makes possible blind-nailing where nail heads are recessed below the surface for better appearance and durability.

The woods used for flooring have always depended upon what species were available and affordable locally, as well as what was attractive or fashionable. Though softwoods like pine (of which there are many kinds) have always been popular for wide-board floors, hard pine and fir are regularly used as strip flooring; and hardwoods like ash, elm, and chestnut have also been employed for wide-board floors.

What is quartersawn flooring?
When it comes to specifying new flooring for repairs or replacements, the cut of the wood is as important as the species. Like many other wood building materials, flooring is commonly either flat-sawn, or quartersawn. In flat sawing, the simplest method, all boards are sawn from the log in the same manner, like slicing bacon strips (see previous page). The more sophisticated cut particularly coveted for flooring is quarter-sawing. Though sawmills can choose among several methods of quartersawing depending upon their needs, the basic practice is to first saw the log into equal quarters, then to reposition each quarter and flat-saw across the quarter. This method produces boards that are more dimensionally stable with a more uniform appearance.
To create a "cheater board" for a tongue-and-groove floor patch, rip the bottom shoulder off the groove. The shoulder (or a duplicate) can be saved for the repair or omitted, depending upon conditions.

To cut back a board, first bore a 3/4" hole in the center of the board right next to the scribed line. Then, working with a saber saw or similar tool, cross-cut the board. Avoid cutting the subfloor.

Next, rip two kerfs down the length of the board to create a relief strip. Avoid cutting the subfloor by setting the blade depth to just shy of flooring thickness. Tape the saw plate to protect nearby finishes.

Then, pry out the relief strip. The new space in the middle will allow you to gently pry and split each remaining side of the board away from its tongue or groove (and some nails) without disturbing the floor.

After squaring up edges with a chisel, "cheat-in" the prepared patch board by nosing in the tongue (usually after rounding off the bottom of the board). Secure it with glue and finish nails on the groove side.

What are the cuts on the bottoms?
Called undercutting or relieving, grooves have been milled into the undersides of some flooring since at least 1900 to both allow the flooring to rest more solidly on a subfloor and/or to minimize the potential for warping. Other nuances of construction that are important to look for when buying replacement flooring are end-matching (tongues and grooves on board ends, particularly on random-length flooring), and the matching dimensions (better quality flooring of the past had more wood above the tongue than below it to allow for finish scraping). Note that modern prefinished flooring is often made with a "micro-bevel" along each side of the top surface that eliminates the need for finish sanding, but may not be compatible with traditional strip flooring.

Can I install flooring the day it arrives?
Whether you are repairing an existing floor or laying a new one, it is critical to have the flooring materials at the same moisture level as the room before they are installed. This means leaving the materials stacked with spacers in the room they will occupy for as long as possible—two weeks at a minimum. Without this time, there is a real chance the flooring will dry out and shrink after it is installed, resulting in unsightly gaps between boards, or pick up moisture and expand, creating the potential for buckling. Though manufactured flooring is shipped kiln-dried to an industry standard, this does not mean it cannot pick up additional moisture later. Storage in an unheated garage or installation in the same building with fresh plasterwork or poured concrete that is still drying can have a drastic effect.

How do you patch strip flooring?
While old-house strip floors occasionally suffer isolated damage from deep burns to animal gouges that require a small, surgical repair, the more common scenario is an in-fill patch—that is, adding new flooring to cover the space of a removed wall, say, or a large duct hole cut in the floor. Here the most unobtrusive repair involves not only matching the wood and cut of the old flooring as closely as possible, but also
blending the repair into the existing installation by “fingering in” new boards so they match the spacing of the rest of the floor as closely as possible. To do this, you must cut back selected boards at varying positions, then splice in new boards—all without disturbing the flooring you want to keep.

Start by thoughtfully planning your repair. Measure the offset of the joints in your existing floor, then plot out a similar pattern in the area you need to patch. Do your best to take advantage of the joints already in your favor so that you minimize the work and loss of good materials, while making most effective use of your repair stock (which may be limited if you are recycling flooring). Typically, you want to have boards no shorter than about 24” and a minimum cutback of 9” to 12” to maintain the structural integrity of the tongue-and-groove system.

Next, mark the boards you plan to remove and scribe cut lines at right angles across the boards where you will make a joint. Bore a 3/4” hole in each board on the waste side of the line, positioning it in the center of the board to avoid any flooring nails. Then, starting from the hole, crosscut the board with a saber saw, working tangent to the circle circumference. To avoid cutting the subfloor underneath, shorten the saber-saw blade by snapping it with pliers so that its maximum travel just reaches the bottom of the finished flooring.

Afterwards, working from the hole, saw two kerfs down the center of the board to cut out a relief strip—wood that once removed allows you to pry out the groove and tongue sides of the board without damaging the adjacent flooring. Make these blind cuts with a circular saw, setting the blade depth to just about the thickness of the flooring.

How do you get new boards into the tongues and grooves?

With an in-fill repair, you can often slide some of the new flooring into place between the existing tongues and grooves. Where this is not possible, though, you have to “cheat-in” the new board around the system. One method is to cut off the bottom groove shoulder of your patch board so you can nose the tongue into place (usually with a little planing of the bottom corner of the board), then pop the groove over the existing tongue. To secure the board, you either face-nail the board with finishing nails (which are set and filled) or you can glue the board to the cut-off portion of the shoulder that you have put in place beforehand.

What about strip floors that are basically sound but squeaky?

Squeaks and springy spots in old floors are, strictly speaking, not normal. Solutions vary with the construction of the floor and the cause—generally, insufficient contact with the subfloor. If you can get below the floor, first have someone walk around on top so you can identify the location and source of problems—often shrunken or poorly supported subfloor boards. Try adding support by nailing a cleat (a 1” or 2” stick) alongside a joist, or driving a wood screw up through the subfloor to secure a loose floorboard. Where you have no access from below, or the problem stems from a loose-fitting tongue and groove, try driving two ribbed finish nails at opposing angles—preferably into a joist—to secure the floorboards.

After taking the finish off an old floor, can you stain the wood?

Yes, but you should know what you’re getting into first. Many an old-house owner has stained a freshly sanded floor and returned to find that, contrary to their expectations of a mellow grain pattern, the floor has become a mess of blotchy patches. This is the result of uneven stain absorption. What’s the reason? Though most bare wood takes stain in varying degrees depending upon what part of the grain structure is exposed—the very effect desired with stain—a newly sanded old floor presents a different scenario. Here, some areas of wood are exposed much as they would be newly milled wood, while others still retain old finish that has deeply penetrated the surface, effectively sealing the wood pores from stain penetration. Extreme conditions like sunk-and-filled nails or spot repairs exacerbate the difference. What’s the solution? Test the effects of the stain first in a limited, out-of-the-way area, and if you anticipate any problems, prepare the surface first with a stain controller—a finishing product that evens the absorption of the wood.
Its birth was a happy coincidence. At the turn of the 20th century, the time when lighting was beginning to really go electric, America was also producing some of the greatest art glass the world has ever known.

The chance intersection of two independently developed technologies—the incandescent electric lamp and hand-blown, iridescent glass by magic names like Tiffany and Steuben—begat the little understood gem of household lighting: the art-glass shade.

Exploring how skills used to make art-glass vases were adapted to early electric fixtures helps explain why art-glass shades created artistic lighting in the home of a century ago and can still do so today.

**Origins of the Art-Glass Shade**

In 1879 Thomas Edison perfected the first electric light source practical for domestic use (and a system to power it), but the low output of his carbon filament lamps or “bulbs” did not instantly supplant gas lighting. The invention of the incandescent gas mantel in 1885 gave gas companies a boost by producing lots of useful, white light, and it was not until just before World War I that electric lighting became the better economic deal for the average American family.

During the two decades prior to electricity’s final triumph over gas around 1913, Louis Comfort Tiffany experimented with making hand-blown artistic vessels—vases, of course, but simultaneously globes for electric light fixtures, initially for use in his own homes. Tiffany arrived at using blown glass this way not for the sake of cleverly tweaking vases to serve as light shades, but because the idea had ancient precedents. One of the premier benefits of the discovery of blown glass in the first century A.D. was better artificial light. If you suspended a blown-glass bowl and filled it with water topped...
by oil, you could have light from a cork-float-ed wick. By the 10th century, Islamic glass workers had raised such "float lamps" to an art form, and it was these lamps rather than vases that were the inspiration for the American art-glass shade.

Tiffany went on to make art-glass shades commercially in virtually every type of blown glass used for vases, including Cypriote glass, his prized emulation of ancient Roman glass. In the early 1910s, Tiffany withdrew from creative control of his own glass company, Tiffany Studios (1893–1928, Corona, Queens, New York), in order to devote more time to Tiffany & Co., his father's famous silver and jewelry business. Despite Tiffany's dream of decorating every home in America with his wares, art-glass shades, like all things Tiffany, were always objets de luxe.

A total of six companies made art-glass shades until the Depression wiped

Above left: In Cypriote glass, Tiffany sandwiched oxblood swirls between layers of bubbly, amber-brown glass to create a pitted, crusty simulation of ancient glass. Bottom left: The "zipper" or "broken thread" pattern of this Fostoria shade cleverly turns a reheated thread of glass into an orderly design of dots and dashes. Above: A Tiffany shade with a difficult-to-execute partial casing of green over a white body.
out all art-glass manufacturing in America. Perhaps half the total output of all art glass in America consisted of shades. It's not hard to understand why. A tastefully appointed mansion might make space for two or three iridescent vases, but it could easily accommodate dozens of art-glass shades. In groups of three or more—sometimes many more—art-glass shades would form chandeliers in dining rooms, living rooms, and ballrooms. They could be used with wall sconces in hallways, on staircases, and as supplements to chandelier lighting. Unlike gas lights that were usually fixed to rigid gas pipes, electric lights were flexible, so art-glass shades could also be used in electric floor lamps and desk lamps which, in the case of Tiffany's famous lily lamps, incorporated from three to 18 shades. Taken altogether, these shades could provide a total lighting system, a rare instance where fixtures are integrated in-kind with furnishings.

Making Art-Glass Shades

Art-glass shades are underappreciated in part because their nature is not well understood. The process starts with a glob of molten glass at the end of a 5' blowpipe that an artisan blows into a bubble the size of a large pear. With the aid of wooden paddles and ladle-shaped tools, he coaxes the bubble into a rough version of the shade's final form, usually a bud or bell...

Right: The burgundy red of the Quezal shade comes from the element selenium. The element gold is the colorant for a red most people would describe as pink. Far right: A Steuben shade in a gold fishnet design.
shape. Next, he flattens the bottom of the bubble a bit to form a disk, at the center of which he attaches a solid metal rod with a button of molten glass at its tip. Then, he knocks the blowpipe away, leaving the solid rod to carry weight of the bubble. The artisan expands the hole left by the blowpipe using giant wooden tweezers to pull the glass outward from inside the vessel. Last, he works the shade into its final shape with more prodding from paddles and tweezers that can also be employed to add decorative notches and ruffles on the open end.

At this point, while formed but still attached to the solid rod, the shade is iridized. Most often this process is described as spraying tin and iron salts onto the shade, as if it were analogous to spray-painting a picket fence, but this is misleading. More like salt glazing a stoneware jug, iridizing the still red-hot glass is a fuming process. Here the artisan drops some hot glass into a crucible full of tin and iron salts, which vaporize. Then he twirls the shade in the vapor, which ionizes with the silica in the glass forming a chemical—not a mechanical—bond with the glass. The result is a permanent, but easily scratched, molecule-thin layer of iron and tin on the glass surface that refracts light in a prismatic rainbow of colors.

Finally, the artisan scores the edge of the flattened area, gives the solid rod a tap, and the shade breaks away into waiting asbestos gloves or tongs. From here the shade moves to an annealing oven where, over a day or so, it is gradually cooled to room temperature. This annealing relieves the stresses introduced into the glass while it is manipulated into a shade—stresses that would otherwise cause the glass to fracture.

**Designing Decorations**

Perhaps half of the art-glass shades ever made have no decoration beyond their iridescence and shape. Typically these are made of amber-colored glass that, when iridized, appears solid gold but with sheens and highlights running from platinum to red, depending on lighting conditions and the amount and proportions of the iridizing salts. However, it was possible to add a wide variety of decorations to a

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**Inside the Shade Industry**

Making art-glass shades required a highly skilled workforce. After the molten glass bubble (Step I) is transferred to a solid rod (Step II), the artisan not only widened the throat area to form the mouth of the shade, he also formed the fitter opening on the opposite end. Using tweezers, he would press a groove around the shade just short of the flattened area. This slot is where three brass screws hold the shade to a metal fitter, which in turn connects the shade to its light fixture. The industry standard for fitter openings is 2 1/4”.

As with art tiles, the art-glass shade industry went through many changes. In 1901, dissident workers from Tiffany set up the Quezal Art Glass Company (Brooklyn, New York). In turn, dissident workers at Quezal hived off the Lustre Art Glass Company (Maspeth, New York) in 1920. In 1925, Quezal died but was resurrected as Durand Glass, a division of the Vineland Flint Glass Works (1897–1931, Vineland, New Jersey). From 1910 to 1932, Fostoria Glass (1899–1917, Fostoria, Ohio) made iridescent art wares, most of it shades. Finally, Steuben Glass (1903–present, Corning, New York) made art-glass shades from 1904 to 1932.

The delicate feather pattern of this Quezal shade is an unusual pea-green over a white body. Gold threads are draped in bold waves around the shade.
basic shade by using just a few simple techniques. For example, the artisan might first apply fillets or threads of molten glass in a contrasting color to the still red-hot glass bubble. Then he could manipulate these appliqués with a hooked tool that is basically an ice pick with its tip bent 90 degrees.

The most common decoration is a repeating feather pattern that spreads toward the open end of the shade. In this effect, the artisan dribbles a trail of glass onto the bubble while it is still on the blowpipe. As he rotates the blowpipe, the threading forms a coil that spirals about halfway down the bubble from the fitter end. At the end of the coil, he wraps a single, thick band of glass around the bubble, typically in yet another contrasting color. Dragging the hooked tool up and down through the coil, around the whole shade, produces feathers with a nice outer border. Variations on the feather decoration include a swag or festoon pattern (where the threads are pulled only toward the fitter), a drape pattern (where the feathers are placed at the open end of the shade), and a fishnet pattern (where the feather pattern is done twice over the entire shade, alternating the direction of the pulls).

On decorated shades, gold is usually not used as a background color but as a lining for another color, typically white, which is then decorated. Why not just make a white decorated shade? Well, one of the strangest things about art-glass shades is that early consumers were most interested in how they appeared when they were not in use. In contrast to gaslight shades, which always face upward, electric light shades usually point down, as in a drop chandelier, and people did not want to see a lot of plain white inside fancy art glass that came at handsome sums. So all the shade manufacturers except Tiffany, who refused to pander to common taste, accommodated this desire and gave most of their decorated shades perky gold linings. While these gold-lined shades are technical tours-de-force (the artisan must blow one glass bubble inside another), when lit the gold tends to bleach out the decoration design.

Surprisingly, what makes an art-glass shade expensive is not chiefly the complexity of its design or the difficulty of its execution, but the color of its outermost layer of glass. Colors in ascending order of cost are white, gold, brown (the darker the

A Word on Wattage

The error those new to art-glass shades are likely to make is to fit them with today’s wattage lamps. Put a 100-watt bulb in a plain gold shade and you won’t be able to stay in the same room, much less see the patterns on a decorated shade. Rather, try every type of low wattage bulb you can get your hands on. A number of old-house supply companies sell reproductions of Edison’s original carbon-filament bulbs, and these are wonderful matches with period lighting. They burn warm, yellow-red through a clear glass envelope—the kind of low-level light source for which many fixtures and shades were designed.
better), green, blue, and red, with blue and red casings commanding heavy premiums. Red shades are rare because red is a hard color to produce. The coloring agent is either the element gold (for a pinkish red) or the nonmetallic element selenium (for a burgundy red) and these tend to “burn out” after a short time in the storage vats of glass-making ovens.

**Living with Art-Glass Shades**

Given the quality of their glass—the best there is—art-glass shades are an excellent value for the owner of an old house. Though a green Steuben shade with a gold heart-and-vine decoration might cost $1,000, the same piece of glass executed as a vase would be at least $15,000. Even so, there are lots of decorated shades out there in the $200 to $400 range well worth having.

The general artistic style of American art-glass shades, especially Tiffany's, comes closest to Art Nouveau, with swirls, sinuous lines, and blurring of boundaries. Many lesser companies, however, produced ruffled shapes and feathered patterns that are more Victorian in feel. Art-glass shades work well with virtually any house architecture except a very strict Federal, neo-Colonial, or Bauhaus-modern style. They are ideal for Victorian and Arts & Crafts houses.

Realistically, a homeowner today cannot do what captains of industry did in 1910 and deck out the whole manor in art-glass shades. Costs aside, art-glass shades simply do not provide enough light to read by comfortably. They work best as accent lights, mood lights, or as supplemental lighting. Art-glass shades make good chandelier lighting for a formal dining room, background lights for television viewing, side lights to a fireplace, or hallway sconces.

You are most likely to run into vintage art-glass shades at large, general-line antiques shows. About a third of art-glass shades are unsigned, but each company had quirks of manufacture that make it possible to identify almost 100 percent of decorated but unsigned shades. (The only book on American art-glass shades is Darrah L. Roberts’ Collecting Art Nouveau Shades; Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1972. Long out of print, it turns up at Alibris and other used-book outlets.) Along with the tremendous growth in historically accurate lighting in general, there are now quite a lot of companies selling reproduction art-glass shades along with fixtures or lamp bases, as well as authentic accessories like reproduction carbon-filament lamps and cloth-wrapped electrical cord.

Try to buy sets of shades and then line up an appropriate fixture. Don't make the mistake of buying a partial set of shades for a fixture that you already have, thinking a match for the missing shade will show up in the next few months. Though we live in an age of eclecticism, mix-and-match shades on the same chandelier generally do not look good. If variety is what you’re after, hang diverse shades from different-length chains against a wall or other neutral backdrop.

Art-glass shades are pleasing with either brass or bronze fixtures. You can still occasionally find a good chandelier, sconce, or lamp base at flea markets. Good hardware stores or lighting shops will sell adapters that enable a high-quality light socket to support an art-glass shade with the standard 2 1/4” fitter rim. One adapter is threaded for a C-mount so that it screws onto a socket like a lampshade. The other type uses a clamping mechanism to hold fitter to socket—a less elegant option, but with wider applications.

Consider a single, plain gold art-glass shade as your starter kit. Though simple, they look good in daylight and terrific when illuminated. They go with virtually any décor, and they are cheap. If you are intrigued, a more complex glass world awaits you, but, in any case, you will already be living like the Havemeyers and the Vanderbilts.

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O
f course there are entire build-
ing halls. Town halls, city halls, fire halls, concert halls, dance halls, guild halls, halls of fame and valor, large pretentious halls, such as Acorn Hall in Morristown, New Jersey, and Mineral Hall in Kansas City, Missouri—and so on.

The word "hall" is closely related to the German word halle, meaning a "roofed structure intended for community activities," including dancing and general carousing, as in "deck the halls." But that's not what we're talking about here. The halls we are interested in are halls within buildings—halls as rooms. Even here, the history of the hall is long and varied. The original hall-as-room was the largest space in a medieval castle, a place where strangers were welcomed, entertainments were held, banquets were served forth, and visitors' bedding was arrayed before a blazing hearth.

Smaller houses had their halls as well, on an appropriately smaller scale. In colonial America the hall-and-parlor English
house—with just two main rooms on the first floor—was tiny by baronial standards but a very respectable residence in a new country. It became the dominant 17th- and 18th-century housing unit in the English-speaking mid-Atlantic and southern colonies. In these houses, the hall was the general activity area. Here food was cooked and eaten, and family, and visitors of all sorts (and servants, if there were any) gathered daily while the routine business of the home went forward around them. The parlor was a smaller and more

On the second floor, the stair hall of the Colonial Revival Chipstone mansion in the Fox Point suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, opens to a generous hall divided into two sections by an arched divider. The mansion is now a decorative arts museum.

Below: The Colonial Revival C. E. Hart House in New Brunswick, New Jersey, extensively remodeled by architect Henry Ruters Marshall in 1889, has stair openings to a large living hall with columns and a fireplace.
private area, used for formal occasions and, sometimes, for the master bedroom.

Around the middle of the 18th century, however, the Georgian-style center- or side-passage house became the preeminent house form in America. The hall then became basically an entrance hall, sometimes with higher ceilings than were found in the other rooms of the house, but generally without a fireplace and often narrower than the other rooms. The main staircase was frequently located here. The hall was still the place where guests—and except in the grandest houses, tradesmen and other business visitors—came into the house and waited to pay their respects to the residents. Usually the hall, whether it was grand or simple, opened onto the other major rooms of the first floor—living room, parlor, dining room, office, and so forth. The great Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival houses often had soaring entrance halls, sometimes partitioned by classically designed columns, with elaborately decorated doorways and perhaps paneled pocket doors leading to the adjoining rooms. In 18th-century America a "saloon" was not a public bar but a large and lavish central passage devoted to entertaining. It frequently had elegant and imposing staircases as well.

By the middle of the 18th century, the hall and the passage had developed complex and intermingled identities. Not just a narrow space intended to separate and provide access to the rooms onto which it opened, the center passage (or center hall) ran straight through the middle of the house and pretty much replaced the functions of the old hall.

Many 18th- and early 19th-century houses had both a passage and a hall. The passage, at the front of the house, was the less formal area, where the public at large was likely to be welcomed. The hall (which was much like today's living room) was located toward the rear of the house but still in the center core. It became the main entertaining space, reserved for those the owner wished to please with his hospitality or impress with his worldly goods. In the South, where summer heat and humid-
ity made wearing wigs and furbelows intolerable, the passage offered lightly clad residents a shaded spot that captured whatever breeze might blow. (Or at least it did for the men—ladies might have to retire to a more private seat in the second-floor passage.)

The 19th-century revival styles—Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Romanesque—reembraced the concept of the medieval great hall as the centerpiece of the residence. Generously proportioned fireplaces and inglenooks welcomed one and all. Well, almost all. This was the era of the vestibule, the small ante-hall that intervened between public and private spaces. Now that the hall had once more become a useful living area, the vestibule became a sheltered area where tradesmen, messengers, and the uninvited cooled their muddy heels without disturbing the family and guests within the house. Throughout the late 19th and into the early 20th centuries, in big, formal city houses constructed on the English basement plan, there might be a vestibule, followed by a marble-floorered, two-level entrance hall, with one or more cloakrooms or waiting rooms off to the sides, and a grand staircase facing the entrance.

There were and are other forms of halls or passages. "Corridor," for instance, is a more specialized term most often used for circulation spaces in large buildings, such as city halls, hotels, and apartment buildings. Any of these buildings might have an entrance hall (usually called a lobby) as well as corridors leading to separate suites or apartments—and each of the latter could very well have its own entrance hall as well as interior passages. The term "foyer," incidentally, originally referred to the entrance hall or lobby of a theater. Nowadays, "hall" is almost universally used to refer to what in former times would have been called a passage—the constantly shrinking space between bedrooms. In the mid-20th century, the entry hall virtually disappeared as the open plan gained prominence. Actually, the bedroom hall might have disappeared as well, if the federal government had not intervened with a 1930s FHA ruling that required bedrooms to be separated from common living areas by a hall.

Specialized halls of many types were customary in the larger houses of earlier years—service or back halls, for instance, between the kitchen and a back door frequented by icemen and grocery delivery boys; rear stair halls for servants' and housewives' unobtrusive access to the upper floors from the kitchen; and large second-floor halls connecting the bedrooms to the main stairs, which often doubled as upstairs sitting rooms or were partitioned off to become bedrooms known as hallrooms.

Well into the 20th century, as long as there were big houses with sizable staffs, there were servants' halls, large rooms where the housekeeping crew could relax and take their meals together away from the heat and bustle of the kitchen. Today's new houses are generally sans servants, but their floorspace is growing larger even as their lot lines shrink. Thus, visitors frequently find themselves standing in the modern equivalent of the traditional monumental entrance hall—an imposing, albeit space-wasting, area that often as not leads to an expansive "great room"—which may itself be seen as the modern equivalent of the lordly "hall" of the Middle Ages.

Now who says history isn't cyclical!
Thinking about Arts & Crafts houses in the United States prompts some mental meandering down several diverse byways. One of these paths leads to Gustav Stickley’s homey Craftsman bungalows and American Foursquares, both generously distributed around the country. Or, there’s the western trail. This one ends at the elegantly crafted wooden houses of the Pacific Coast, stunningly represented by Charles and Henry Greene’s “ultimate bungalows.” Then, too, there’s the road to those square-edged gems of the American Midwest, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie School houses.

Finally, there is a lane that leads to some less-well-known Arts & Crafts houses. These, found mostly in the eastern states, sprang more directly from the English Arts & Crafts Movement that leapt across the Atlantic in the late 19th century, transfixing American architects, artists, social critics, and homebuyers alike.

The word “style” is not used here in referring to Arts & Crafts architecture, because there is no single Arts & Crafts style. There’s
During a wedding trip to England, Charles Greene was impressed by the work of the Arts & Crafts architect C.F.A. Voysey, perhaps for the inspiration for the stucco cladding and imitation thatched roof of Greene and Greene's 1891 Mortimer Flats Rocker House.
only a general approach to building—and, in fact, to living—that encompasses the ideas of an entire movement. It includes art, architecture, furniture, decorative design, landscape, book design, and more.

In the United States and in England, the premise behind the Arts & Crafts Movement—which in this country dates roughly from 1886 through 1920—was that the Machine Age had destroyed a vital bond between man and his work and denied a basic human need for beauty as well. Victorian industrialization produced oceans of ornament, much overblown architecture, and a massive backlash among social critics, artists, and many in the general public.

On both sides of the ocean, promoters of Arts & Crafts ideals insisted that human beings were happier—nobler, even—when surrounded by beauty in their homes and at work. Beauty, in these reformers’ eyes, sprang from simplicity and unity of design. Furthermore, every human being—given proper instruction and good examples—was capable of not only appreciating but creating, with his own hands, beautiful objects for the home.

Sensitive Dwellings for Enlightened Lifestyles

As for houses, the Arts & Crafts ideals were simplicity and comfort. Houses should suit contemporary ways of life, but they should suggest the continuity of history as well. They ought to be made of local building materials...
materials, in designs inspired by vernacular buildings of their region, and they should not weary the beholder's eye with needless gewgaws.

Those were the points on which Americans and Englishmen agreed. There were still some basic differences about how to arrive at these goals. English Arts & Crafts advocates, for example, saw the machine as intrinsically evil; only hand-crafted objects were worthy. Americans were more optimistic; they thought the machine could be useful in providing inexpensive, well-designed houses and decorative objects for the ordinary family. American architecture could accommodate the machine as well. While the British stuck pretty much to brick and stone as building materials, for example, Americans were taken by the logic of building in concrete, a cheap, malleable, easy-to-use, fireproof material. Then there was the bungalow, a huge success in America but for the British, a minor phenomenon suitable mostly for informal vacation houses.

Still, American enthusiasts were quick to acknowledge their debt to the British originators of the Arts & Crafts movement. British visitors such as May Morris, daughter of the great English Arts & Crafts leader William Morris, and the British architect C. R. Ashbee fascinated American audiences with their lectures on how to achieve Arts & Crafts ideals for a better society and a more beautiful and satisfying home life.

Houses evoking an English past were found more often (though not exclusively) in the eastern states, and these were frequently designed by academically trained architects. It must be remembered that architecture as a profession was just coming into its own during the Arts & Crafts period. What's more, there was an incredible amount of new wealth to be accommodated with impressive residences. The newly wealthy did not, on the whole, show a great interest in the Arts & Crafts notion of simplicity, unity, and regionally inspired architecture. They preferred the European Beaux Arts emphasis on classical forms and Renaissance ornament. There were a few among them, however, who sought out architects such as Will Price of Philadelphia and gave them permission to pursue a uniquely American vision of the Arts & Crafts.

What did an English-influenced Arts & Crafts house look like? There's no easy answer to that question, for the designs came from a variety of historical styles, with features creatively reassembled into a new presentation.
ENGLISH ARTS & CRAFTS HOUSES
Picturesque features combined in novel ways create houses that look both fresh and familiar.

The complex multicasement bay window with sculptured stucco panels of fleur-de-lis in Providence, Rhode Island, designed in 1885 by Carpenter and Willson, shows how English designs went beyond merely copying English houses.

Quiet simplicity marks the Beistle House in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, designed by architect W. E. Jackson and built before 1904.
On the exterior, most of the houses were informal rather than symmetrical, with irregular massing and a random mix of picturesque features of varying sizes and scale, as well as unusual combinations of materials and motifs. Projecting bays and wings added interest to the facades. Walls were often stuccoed and elaborately half-timbered. The houses might sport steep, multigabled rooflines and two-storey gables, as well as many dormers of varying shapes. Slate or tile roofs were punctuated by tall chimneys of corbelled brick or stone, sometimes rising on the front wall of the building. Along with the usual wood, brick, stone, and stucco, that new fireproof building material, poured concrete, made increasingly frequent appearances.

Entrance porches and doorways were emphasized, but there were no vast wraparound verandas, such as characterized Queen Anne houses. Porte cochères, elegant predecessors of the mundane carport, gave shelter to visitors and family alighting from their carriages at the more pretentious houses. Windows, often in pairs or groups, were of varying sizes, shapes, and sash components. Some were unusually large. Some contained leaded casements, others held stained glass. While sometimes the "vernacular" effect was enhanced by means of small, unevenly spaced windows artfully placed at varying heights, architects were careful to keep in mind the needs of modern living. There were usually enough windows to provide a satisfying amount of natural light wherever it was needed. The intent was generally to suggest early buildings of the colonial period, but the larger ones resembled medieval English manor houses, certainly grander, despite their informal air, than genuine colonial American buildings would have been.

Modern, Holistic Design with a Preindustrial Feel

Inside, the houses illustrated the "total design" concept vital to Arts & Crafts thinking. Wood-paneled walls, stone or tile fireplaces, and stained glass were important—but so were the simple but highly decorative hand-woven textiles that hung at the windows, covered the upholstered furniture and pillows, the silverware that formed the table settings and adorned sideboards, and the ceramic and glass vases and bowls that held the artfully arranged but very simple floral displays. Naturally, so was the furniture itself, which was often designed specifically for the house by talented architects or their favorite furniture designers. Plate rails and deep wallpaper friezes enlivened walls of textured plaster.
These were houses planned for comfort and ease of care. A spacious hall with a fireplace inglenook, a nearly universal feature of the Arts & Crafts home, was a multipurpose living space that also gave easy access to other parts of the house, as it contained the main stairs to the other floors. Bathrooms were commonplace by this time, as municipal water and sewer systems answered the demand for modern sanitary facilities in cities and towns. Sleeping porches, either open or, depending on the climate, with walls of windows were wildly popular.

Only a few examples of the work of British Arts & Crafts architects exist on American soil, but M.H. Baillie-Scott took time off during a proselytizing trip to America to design a house in Short Hills, New Jersey. American architects brought their own national sensibility to their designs. Joy Wheeler Dow, an American, designed nine English-style houses in Milburn, New Jersey. Other prominent names to watch for are Wilson Eyre, Will Price (and his brother Walter), Martin Hawley McLanahan, L. V. Boyd, Edmund Gilchrist, and Mellor, Meigs and Howe, all in Philadelphia. Also of note are Carpenter, and Willson in Providence; Grosvenor Atterbury and Cram and Goodhue in New York; Claude Bragdon in Rochester; and Frederick G. Scheibler in Pittsburgh.

Some of Frank Lloyd Wright's earliest residential work, including his own home and studio in Oak Park, Illinois, suggests an English Arts & Crafts outlook. His design for Nathan G. Moore's home in Oak Park (1895) was an Old English mansion with a distinctly Wrightian flair. William Purcell, another Prairie architect, also dabbled in English-style Arts & Crafts design.
Through the pages of the era's shelter magazines, led by the Ladies Home Journal under editor Edward Bok, the middle class also had access to the skills of talented architects at their disposal. LHJ published illustrations of plans by architects such as E. G. W. Dietrich of New York (and Frank Lloyd Wright as well!), and the magazine's series of beautiful Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau room designs by Will Bradley is legendary in Arts & Crafts circles. Bok also teamed up with Will Price and Price's partner Martin Hawley McLanahan to found a craftsmen's colony at Rose Valley, Pennsylvania. In East Aurora, New York, Harvey Ellis was the star designer for Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Community.

During the decades between the two world wars, the English approach to American Arts & Crafts house architecture gave way to more "archeologically correct" Colonial Revival designs that were near-replicas of the originals and to the Eclectic Revival version of Old English. Still, America's English-influenced Arts & Crafts buildings are a solid reminder of how the Arts & Crafts Movement made its way across the Atlantic.
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Listed below are a number of resources and suppliers for the old-house restorer. For an in-depth compilation of companies serving the old-house market, go to the “Restoration Directory” on oldhousejournal.com.

**Presssed in Time page 33**

AA-Abbingdon  
(718) 258-8333  
www.abbingdon.com  
Circle 14 on the resource card.

American Tinsmith  
(508) 347-7038  
Circle 15 on the resource card.

Architectural Antiquities  
(207) 326-4938  
www.archantiquities.com  
Circle 16 on the resource card.

Chelsea Decorative Metal Co.  
(713) 721-9200  
www.thetinman.com  
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Classic Ceilings  
(800) 992-8700  
www.classicceilings.com  
Circle 18 on the resource card.

M-Boss, Inc  
(866) 866-2677  
www.mbossinc.com/index.htm  
Circle 19 on the resource card.

The Old House Parts Co.  
(207) 985-1999  
www.oldhouseparts.com  
Circle 20 on the resource card.

Shanker Industries  
(516) 766-4477  
Circle 21 on the resource card.

W.F. Norman  
(800) 641-4038  
www.wfnorman.com  
Circle 22 on the resource card.

Wall-Prep Primer page 58  
Benjamin Moore  
(800) 344-0400  
www.benjaminmoore.com  
Circle 23 on the resource card.
DAP
(888) 327-8477
www.dap.com
Circle 24 on the resource card.

Red Devil
888-733-3845
www.reddevil.com
Circle 25 on the resource card.

Roman Adhesives
(800) 488-6117
www.romanadhesives.com
Circle 26 on the resource card.

Scotch Paint
(800) 404-2878
www.scotchpaint.com
Circle 27 on the resource card.

Swing Paints
(323) 816-3041
www.swingpaints.com
Circle 28 on the resource card.

Zinsser Co.
(732) 469-8100
www.zinsser.com
Circle 29 on the resource card.

Wood Flooring Q & A page 68
Aged Woods
(800) 233-9307
www.agedwoods.com
Circle 30 on the resource card.

Albany Woodworks
(225) 567-1155
www.albanywoodworks.com
Circle 31 on the resource card.

Antique Woodworks
(888) 350-4790
www.antiquewoodworks.com
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www.chestnutwoodworking.com
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J.L. Powell & Co.
(800) 227-2007
www.plankfloors.com
Circle 35 on the resource card.

Renaissance Old World
(559) 444-0558
www.carving.com
Circle 36 on the resource card.

Southern Wood Floors
(888) 488-7463
www.southernwoodfloors.com
Circle 37 on the resource card.

Sylvan Brandt
(717) 626-4520
www.oldhousestuff.com
Circle 38 on the resource card.

Glass Art page 72
Architectural Antiques Exchange
(215) 922-3669
www.architecturalantiques.com
Circle 39 on the resource card.

Lyn Hovey Studio Inc.
(617) 333-9445
www.lynhoveystudio.com
Circle 40 on the resource card.

Ohmega Salvage
(510) 204-0767
www.ohmegasalvage.com
Circle 41 on the resource card.

Rejuvenation
(888) 401-1900
www.rejuvenation.com
Circle 42 on the resource card.
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To order a copy of either the RESTORATION DIRECTORY or TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS ($9.95 each, plus $5.00 for shipping and sales tax, if applicable), call (202) 339-0744 ext. 101, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. Or simply make out a check for $14.95 to OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, and mail it to OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL'S RESTORATION DIRECTORY, 1000 Potomac St., NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007.

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<tr>
<th>Specifications Chemicals</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 106</td>
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<tr>
<td>System for repairing cracked plaster walls and ceilings. Free literature. 800-247-3932</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stairworld Inc.</th>
<th>Circle no.</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staircases, stair parts, interior &amp; exterior railing components and columns. Free literature. 800-387-7711</td>
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<tr>
<th>Steptoe &amp; Wife</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decorative cast iron spiral &amp; straight staircase kits. Free literature. 800-461-0060</td>
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<tr>
<th>Strictly Wood Furniture Co.</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clay chimney tops and Rumford Fireplace components. 800-848-6166</td>
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<tr>
<th>Tendura</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composite wood tongue-and-groove plank for porches. Free literature. 800-TENDURA</td>
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<tr>
<th>Texas Iron Fence &amp; Gate</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature $4. 940-627-2718</td>
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<th>Tile Source, Inc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free literature. 770-993-6602</td>
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<th>TK Waterproof Coatings</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interior wall &amp; ceiling crack repair. Free literature. 800-827-2056</td>
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<th>Touchstone Woodworks</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screen storm doors. Literature $3. 330-297-1313</td>
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<th>Under Glass Manufacturing Corp.</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenhouses and solariums. Literature $3. 845-687-4700</td>
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<th>Uponor Wirsbo Inc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>See our ad on page 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turns beautiful floors into warm and cozy radiators. Free literature. 800-321-4739</td>
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<tr>
<th>Vermont Soapstone</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architectural soapstone products. Free literature. 800-263-5404</td>
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<tr>
<th>Vintage Wood Works</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brackets, corbels, gable decorations, mouldings, porch parts, screen doors! Free Catalog. 903-356-2158</td>
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<th>White River Hardwood</th>
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<td>800-558-0119</td>
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<th>Wm. J. Rigby Co.</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unused original builders' hardware ca. 1860-1940. 607-547-1900</td>
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<tr>
<th>Woodstock Soapstone</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 105</td>
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<tr>
<th>Woodstone Company</th>
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<td>See our ad on page 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturer of high performance wooden architectural windows and doors. Free literature. 800-722-9217</td>
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<th>YesterYear's Doors &amp; Millwork</th>
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Ah, how nice to drive home from work and pull onto a concrete slab in front of a mammoth glass protuberance. Glass block was hot for windows in Art Deco, Moderne, and International-style structures of the 1930s and '40s, but it makes this issue's contributor shudder as used here to enclose a porch on a Baltimore, Maryland, bungalow. Riding by at night, she says, "you see big, dark pieces of furniture against the window. If they had to enclose the porch, at least the second house (top) has some dignity and balance left to it. Not that we are fans of porch enclosures."
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