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Old House JOURNAL

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February 2006

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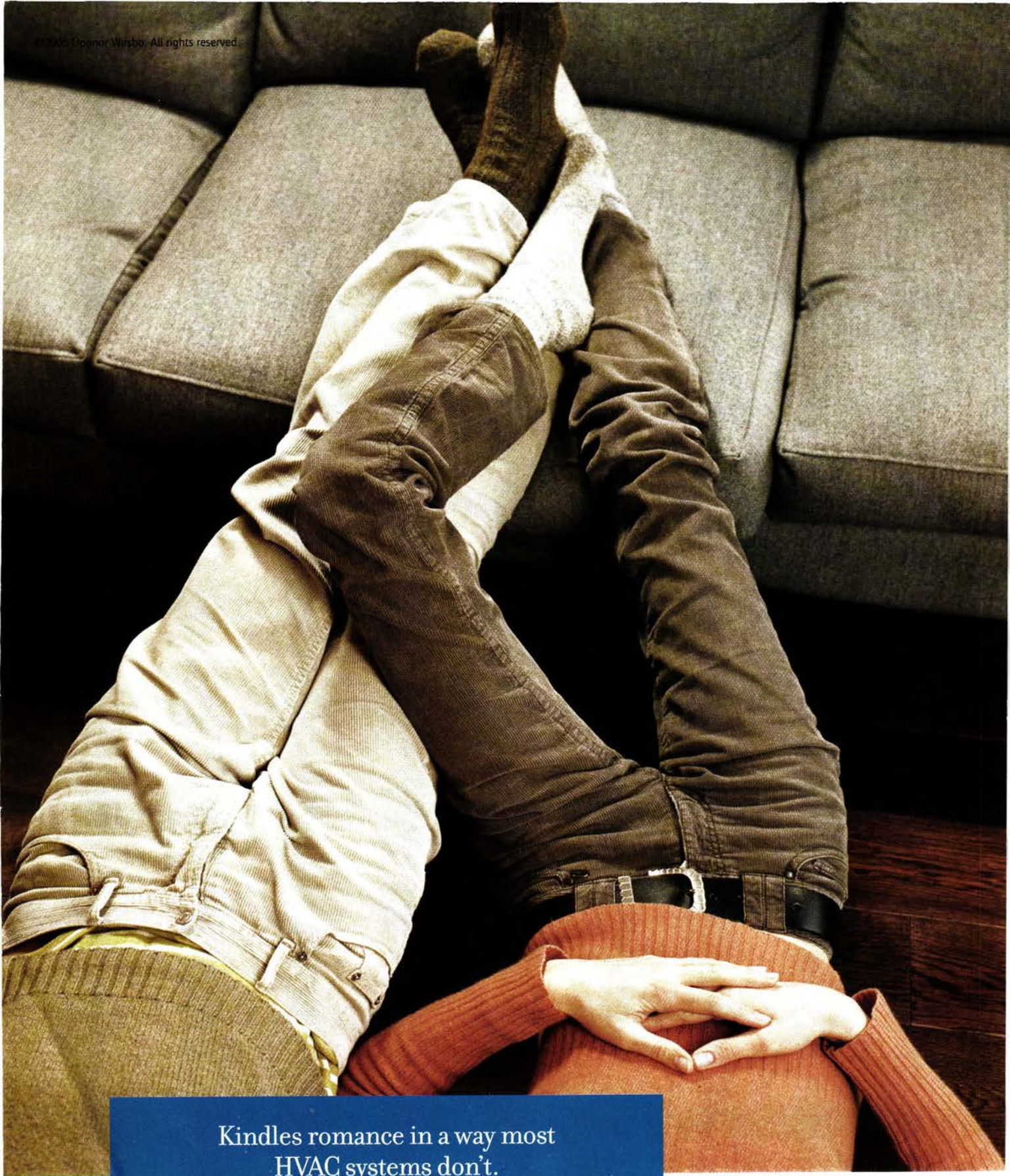
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Old·House
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January/ February 2006

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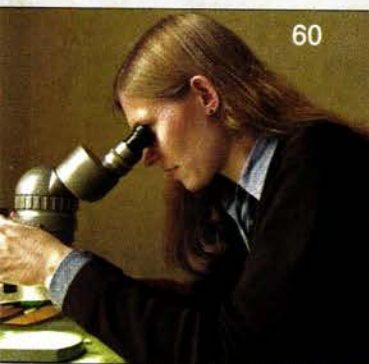
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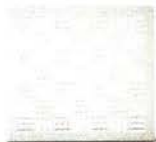
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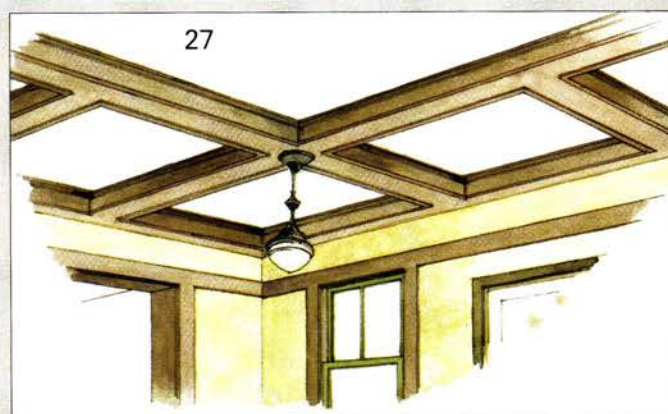
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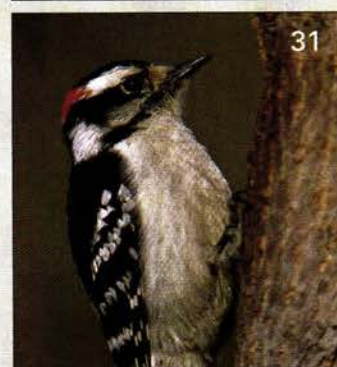
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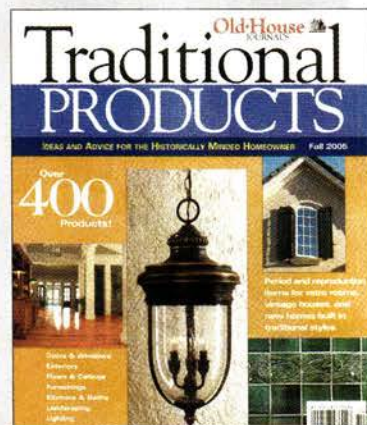
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New Old-House Journal's New Old House

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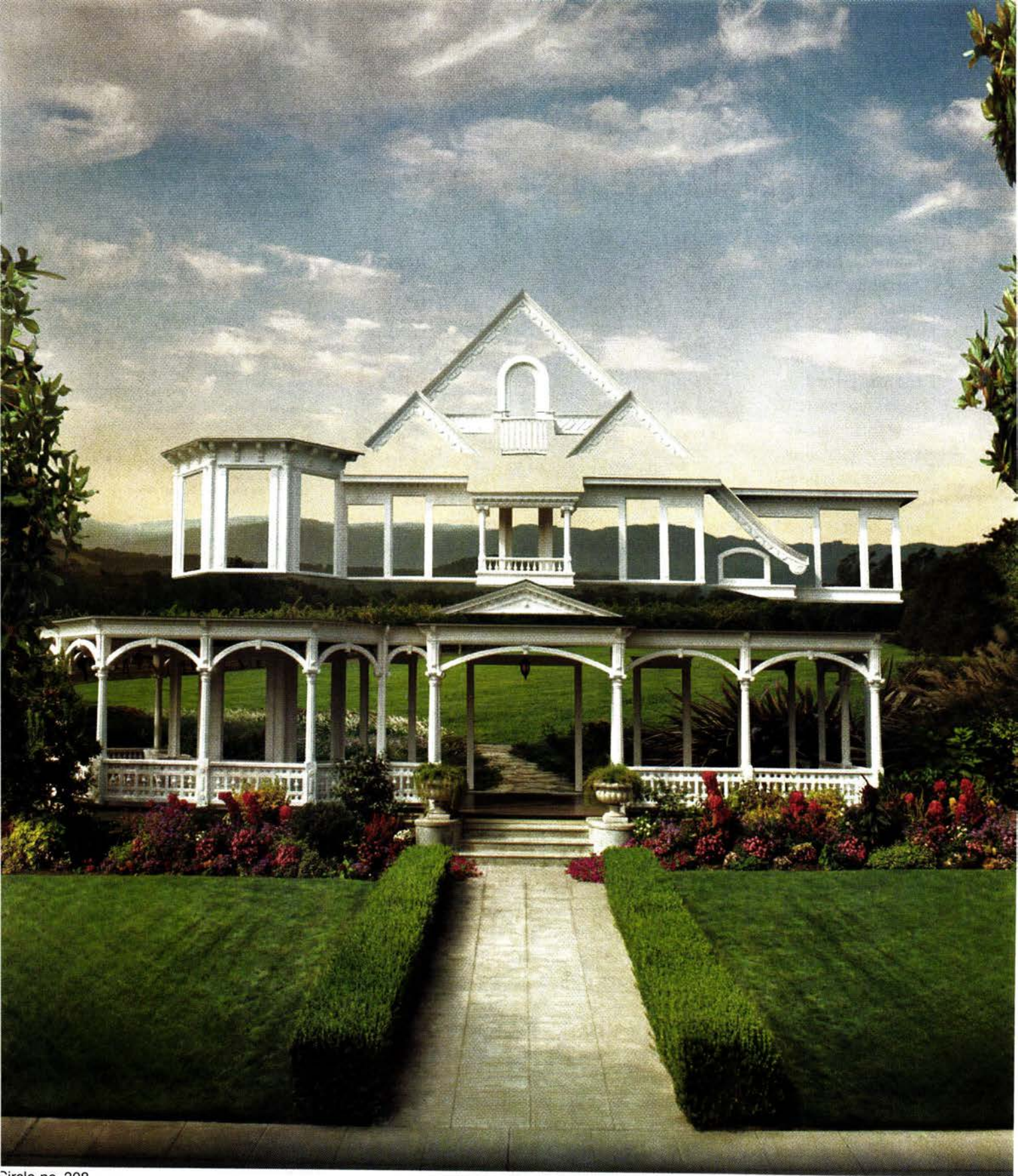
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Calling All OHL Experiences

Among the regular features in *Old-House Journal*, the "Old-House Living" articles ("OHLs" for short) are the longest running and most beloved.

There's little mystery why. Historic preservation is really about the interface of people and buildings, and

when it comes to working on and living in an old house at the same time, there can be some unique issues. We editors would like to explore more of this mercurial, emotional, very human terrain in future "OHL" articles.

Because most *OHJ* readers are not working on their old houses solo, the work often affects two or more people—be it a couple who are the owner-restorers, a family of parents and kids, or even the "marriage" of owner-client and contractor. Often, it's not the mechanics of the project or the money that are the trickiest parts to juggle; it's the interpersonal relationships. With this in mind, we're asking readers to join us by sending any input they may have on the subject of old-house living. A few of the areas we'd like to explore are as follows.

- How do you prioritize old-house projects? Faced with too long a list of what to work on, how do you decide what comes first—and who makes the decision? If you're a couple, how do you choose between agendas?
- How do you balance the need for here-and-now creature comforts with the longer-range goals of architecture or historic integrity? For example, should you turn an original closet into a powder room to gain the only bathroom on the first floor?
- How do you decide decorative questions? Fortunately, most couples have the same opinion about the future of plaster cracks, but picking paint colors, for example, can get far more personal. Does one taste prevail, or can you compromise?
- Is it okay to remove a perfectly working, but heinous, original feature? Moreover, do you and your spouse agree on this?
- How do you get through the rough waters of too little time or money when one person in the relationship has a consuming passion for the project, but the other is not quite so committed?

Of course, we're most interested in answers to questions like these. (A classic piece of advice has been don't take on every room in an old house at once and leave yourself an oasis from the work.) Good questions, however, are welcome too. Either way, send your ideas to the editorial office, either by USPS (OHL Editor, 1000 Potomac St., NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20007) or email (csiskos@restoremedia.com). We look forward to learning more about old-house living in the 21st century.



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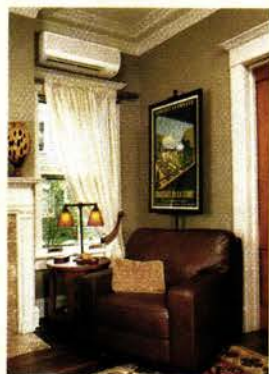
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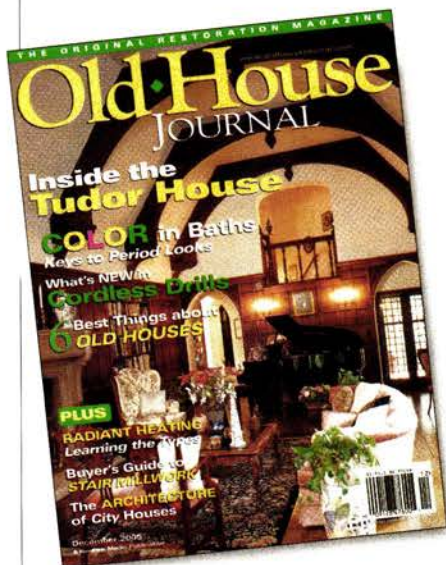
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Reminiscing about Radiant Heat

Your "Radiant Reflections" article in the November/December 2005 issue reminded me of the subfloor hydronic radiant heat I grew up with in buildings within five years of the age of Levittown. I'm sending copies of articles about it. One is a January 1950 story about the economic benefits radiant heat would provide the Winchester-Hood apartment building in Chicago, which at the time was being completed by the architectural firm Holsman, Holsman, Klekamp & Taylor. I haven't found any mention of the development on the Internet so far.

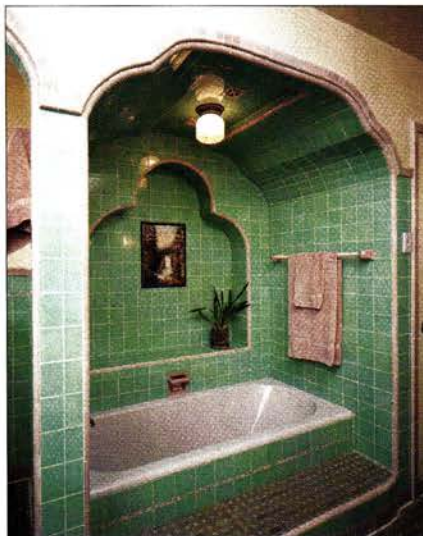
*Jean SmilingCoyote
Chicago, Illinois*



Bright Bathroom Ideas

As a new subscriber, when I got to the article, "In Living Color," in the November/December 2005 issue, I had to catch my

breath: There it was...the bathroom that I had been looking for! Like all searches regarding my Queen Anne Victorian, I knew immediately that it was perfect. I absolutely devoured the article gleaned sources, grabbing ideas to call mine, and admiring those brave souls who have used color to define their homes. My house, which was built without plumbing, and is currently without plumbing because I hadn't been able to find just the right look, will now be able to heave a big sigh of relief. The bold-colored bathrooms I'll install will bring a smile to visitors' faces and will complement the original stained-glass windows throughout the house. I am inspired!



Normally when I get a magazine I tear out a few pages to keep, but because of the well-written articles, I will save this issue and keep each new one I get. I applaud your efforts!

*Susan Lewis
Sandersville, Georgia*

Tudor by the Book

In the November/December 2005 issue, I was interested to see your assessment of the Tudor house in the "Ask OHJ" column. I featured a similar home in my book, *Houses from Books*. I believe both homes were modeled after a house called The Crestline from the 1927 *Home Builders Catalog*.

The built version I found in Cassadaga, New York, is also a frame version of the brick model—though it does have the distinctive

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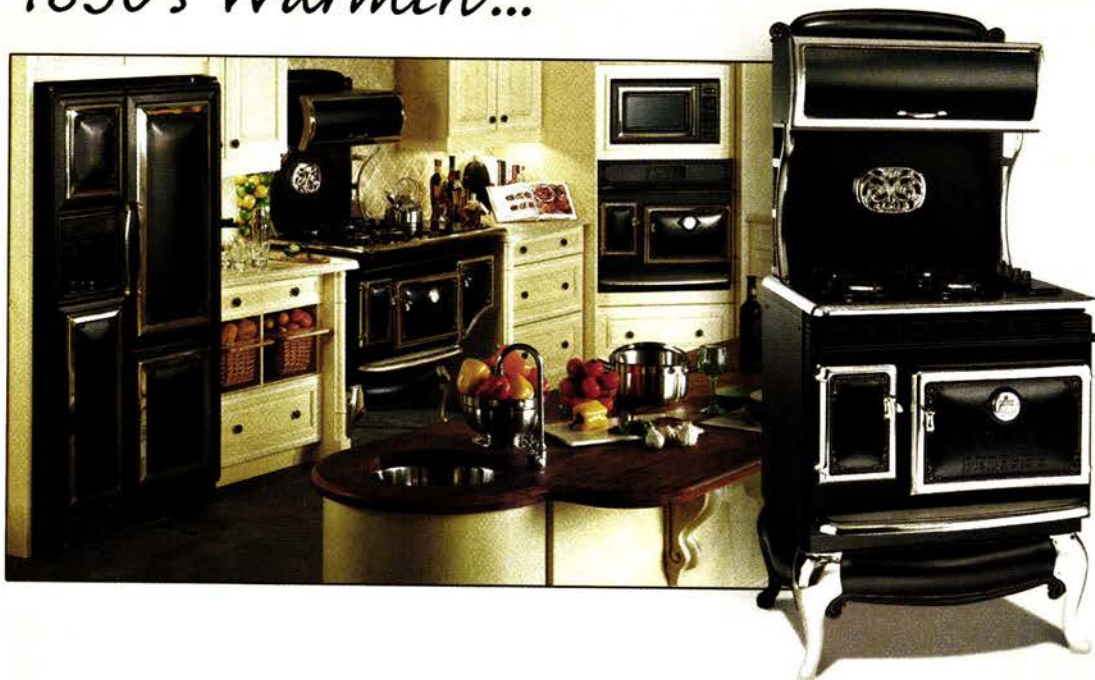
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Letters

steel sash windows, which help confirm the *Home Builders Catalog* design as the ultimate model. I suspect in the Madison, Wisconsin, example, as in Cassadaga, the builder either just copied the plan from the catalog and made adjustments, as was so commonly done, or possibly bought the plans and then made the proper translation to frame.

That it is the 1927 *Home Builders Catalog* model is "confirmed" by several points. One is that the photograph shows the house from the left side and sure enough, there is the side entrance as indicated on the plan. I see that the soil pipe is right where it is supposed to be in the front gable, too. That arched entrance, even the wider moulding at the top, seems a good translation of the model. All the other features match up as well—even the plantings around it.

Daniel D. Reiff
Kenmore, New York



OHJ author Dan Reiff wrote *Houses from Books*, which traces the history of published house plans and features homes

across the United States whose designs were based on pattern books or mail-order catalogs.—Eds.

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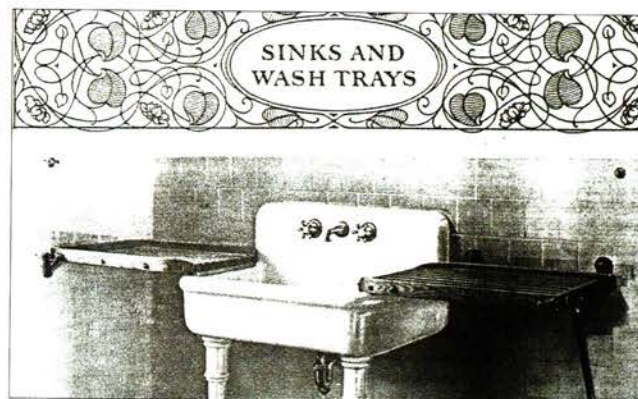
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More than 70 exhibits touch on everything an old house needs for restoration and décor, indoors and out. Also included are workshops, lectures, and seminars. Admission: \$35 Friday night (includes party), \$12 Saturday and Sunday. See www.historicshomeshow.com or call (717) 796-2380 for details.

Everything but the Kitchen Sinks

There was a time when a domestic service problem for Tudor Place meant not being able to find good hired help. Today, the problem at this stately house museum is about finding not domestic servants but the missing pieces to its domestic service wing. The house that Martha Washington's granddaughter built in Washington, D.C., almost 200 years ago is undergoing restoration, and much of the work is on the kitchen and servants' dining hall.

Added much later, the kitchen is being restored to the years 1914-1925 but lacks three sinks (two for the kitchen and one for a butler's pantry). To locate appropriate replacements, Ann Steuart, curator of collections at Tudor Place, is putting out a call for



Among the fixtures missing from Tudor Place is this Motts Pierpont kitchen sink, circa 1914.

help to *OHJ* readers. All three sinks should be Motts products, circa 1914, with the following specifications:

- The butler's pantry sink, made from white crown metal, measures 18" x 30" and has a recessed end. The sink should be complete with a grooved drain board that has a raised rim, apron, and back, all in white

crown metal.

- Kitchen sinks are both "Pierpont," 26" x 30", with roll rims, an integral back, and porcelain legs complete with drain boards.

Forward any information to Tudor Place Historic House and Garden, (202) 965-0400, ext. 114, or asteuart@tudorplace.org.

Coming Attractions at the Traditional Building Show

Thanks to an abundance of educational seminars and home repair demonstrations, an issue of *Old-House Journal* will come to life at the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference, April 5-8, at Chicago's Navy Pier.

Whether you plan to do the work yourself or hire contractors and tradespeople, the how-to sessions have something for everyone, including plaster repair; small duct, high velocity heating; masonry repointing with lime mortars; window repair; color selection; paint prepping; and slate roofs.

Maybe you just want to get the details right on your old house? You'll have access to professionals who will discuss Arts & Crafts interiors, exteriors, and wood finishes; late-19th and early 20th-century kitchens and baths; Colonial Revival homes; eclecticism and the American interior; porticos and patios (a primer on American residential architecture); as well as the influences of traditional architecture on new residential design.

Or if modernism is more your style, learn about Lustron homes and the five remaining houses from Chicago's 1933-34

World's Fair that promised America a "century of progress."

Lou Manfredini, syndicated columnist, author, and host of the Chicago radio station program, WGN's Ask Mr. Fix-it, will be on the show floor Saturday to share his insights on maintaining homes. For more information, visit www.traditionalbuildingshow.com, call (800) 982-6247, or email info@restoremedia.com.



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Arts & Crafts Weekend in North Carolina

Few places are associated as closely with Arts & Crafts as the Grove Park Inn Resort in Asheville, North Carolina. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the inn plays host to the annual Arts & Crafts Conference and Antique Show. Now in its 19th year, the show brings together collectors, antique dealers, expert craftspeople, and Arts & Crafts devotees for an event that feels more like a reunion each year. The 2006 conference, held the weekend of February 17-19, has extended hours for the antique show, which opens

Friday with a sneak preview.

For restoration-minded homeowners, there are hands-on workshops, including one for stenciling techniques (the Arts & Crafts' version of wallpaper), as well as the chance to master re-creating the stains, lacquers, and finishes for the wood trusses and trim that feature so prominently in Arts & Crafts houses. A full list of workshops and events can be found at www.artsconference.com. For more information or to register, contact Bruce Johnson at (828) 628-1915.

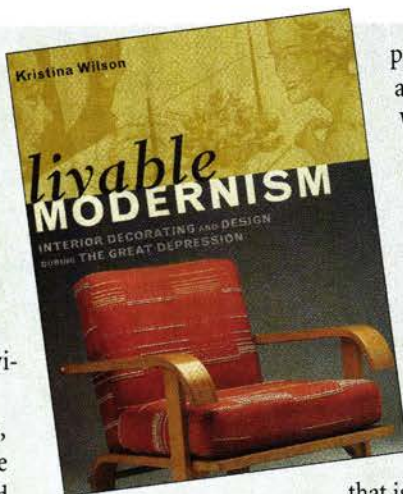


A valuable resource for Arts & Crafts collectors, the antique show held each year at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina, features art, pottery, and furnishings, including rare styles by Gustav Stickley.

Books in Brief

During the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, manufacturers began producing the first real wave of American modernist home furnishings. Unlike previous designer furniture and accessories, these sofas, tables, and chairs were intended to be streamlined, space-saving, and affordable to the middle class. According to Kristina Wilson, assistant professor of art history at Clark University, they were designed to appeal to "the minds, bodies, and pocket-books of consumers." Wilson coins the clever phrase *Livable Modernism* for the title of her book on the subject and to describe the design mantra she documents, one that is savvy and sophisticated, efficient and functional, while offering both physical and psychological comfort.

Wilson's informative and handsomely illustrated book examines the confluence of social ideals—the newly fashionable companionate marriage is one—and reduced living spaces in expanding cities that made these furnishings so appealing. The concepts of modularity, mobility, and functional efficiency were at the core of the designs and added a



practical component: Consumers could buy furniture able to expand to suit their changing needs. Or as Wilson sprightly puts it, the "sofa sections could multiply—perhaps like children in a healthy family—growing into an ample, L-shaped sofa ideal to frame a fireplace."

One of the most intriguing ideas Wilson asserts is that the talents creating these furnishings—Russel Wright, Gilbert Rohde, and Norman Bel Geddes among them—believed they were making the world a better place by improving its functionality and flexibility. In Wright's words, modern design is "a design solution to living, a solution that is absolutely necessary if you are going to live gracefully, comfortably, and naturally in the world at the time at which you happen to be born into it. Thus if our homes are planned for modern comfort by means of modern materials, it is possible to achieve a new kind of beauty... which is the only true refuge in these harsh and strident times."

Livable Modernism, published by Yale University Press, is an interesting read. Its colorful illustrations, many of them drawn from advertising of the day, make a strong case for Wilson's overall argument: It was these early artists who paved the way for popular post-World War II designers, such as Charles and Ray Eames, who garnered fame, fortune, and household-name status by creating similarly minded home furnishings. 🏠

—Demetra Aposporos



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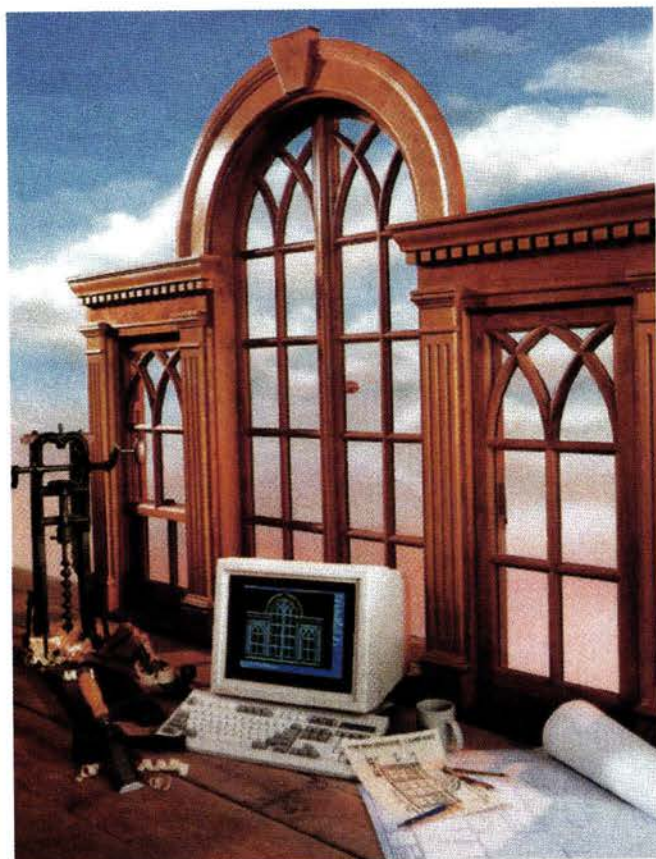
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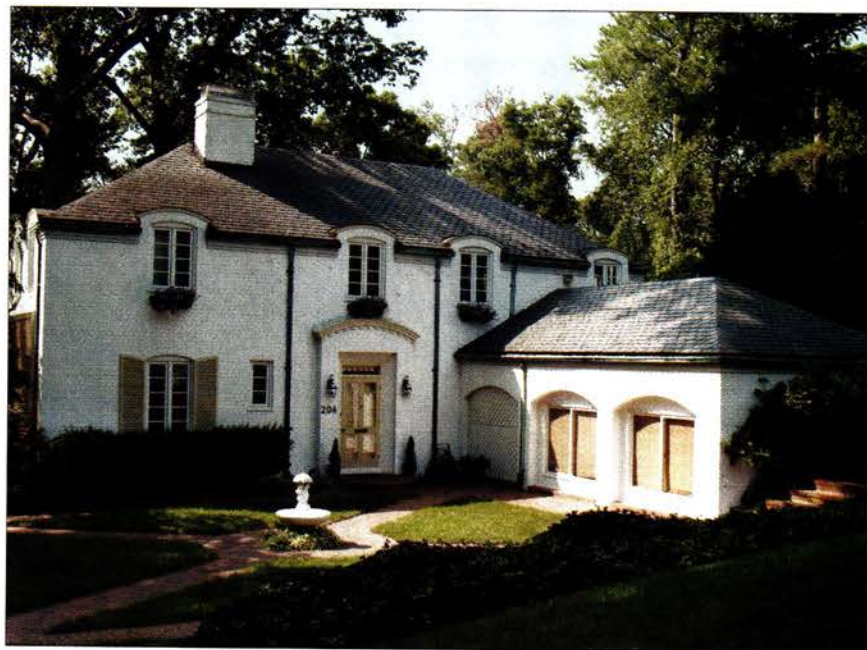
Electric Eclectic

Our home's original blueprints, which we discovered in the attic of our 1930s house, are labeled "The New American Home, After Design by Arthur R. Hutchason, Submitted in the G.E. Competition." We are new subscribers to *OHJ* and enjoy the features on different house styles; do you know anything about ours?

Jennifer Tarry
Richmond, Virginia

Based upon the date and a few salient features, your house appears to fall into a group of buildings categorized by some historians as French Eclectic houses. Popular between the World Wars, these houses were inspired by a wide range of relatively modest residential buildings in the north-western portions of France—not grand chateaux but not vernacular farmhouses either. As built in America, they became a kind of stylistic alternative to the interpretive Spanish, Italian, and English houses dotting the suburbs at the time.

The key point for calling the house French is the tall, steeply pitched hipped roof with a ridge running parallel to the facade, both common forms of these houses. The main block is basically symmetrically balanced, with the door in the center and windows in three bays. The arched-top casement windows are continental and typical, and the way they penetrate the cornice on the second floor is a frequent flourish in these houses. As for the provenance of the design, your blueprint is a fortunate find and worth researching further. Though the G.E. Competition does not come up on any quick surveys, there were many design competitions during the 1930s, and this one may have followed the popular General Electric House of the Future, displayed at the 1933 World's Fair. More tantalizing is architect Arthur R. Hutchason. Known to have worked on several buildings in southern California, he is listed in

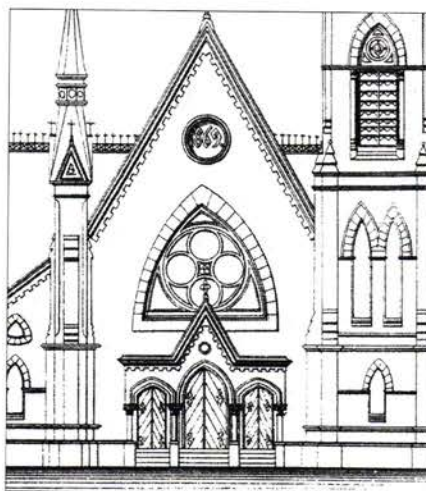


Wings frequently were appended to the manor houses that inspired French Eclectic houses, and in America they were often reinterpreted as garages, such as the one at right in the photo (now a living space).

the Architecture and Design Collection at the University Art Museum, University of

Southern California—a good place for further research.

Crying for a Chapel Door



This 1870s entrance detail is for a full-size church built in the Romanesque style, but it can offer useful ideas about doors for a smaller but architecturally related chapel.

We are most interested in restoring a small chapel built in 1901 but are at a loss identifying the correct period doors. The chapel exhibits features of the Romanesque Revival and Gothic Revival styles and has pointed-arch window openings.

Thomas B. Hanlon
Director, Department of Cemeteries
Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin

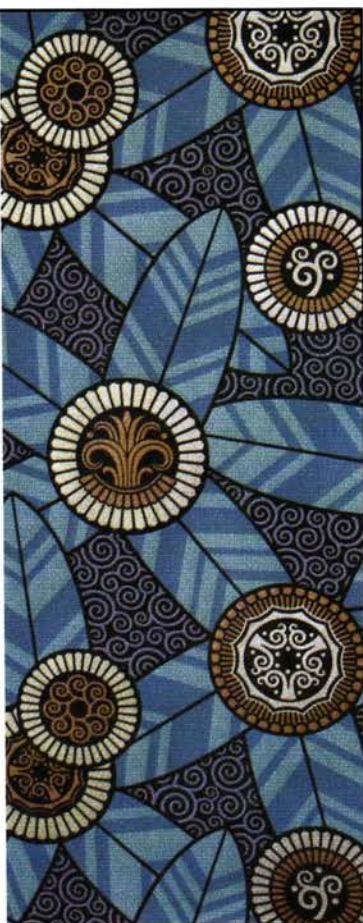
As you know, some direct indication of the original door's design—either through period photographs or physical evidence, such as hinge marks on the building—will be your best research tool. Barring this evidence, however, you should be able to come up with a historically appropriate replacement by 1) looking at

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original doors in buildings similar to yours in design or era, or in historic reference materials, and 2) keeping your design simple where you have no more concrete information. For example, the 1870s planbook, *Bicknell's Village Builder*, shows a church with pointed-arch windows and entrances using relatively simple batten doors, consistent with Gothic architecture, but with the boards angled to accentuate the rise of the arches. Also investigate the resources of organizations devoted to the preservation of ecclesiastical buildings, such as Partners for Sacred Places (www.sacredplaces.org).

That ol' Calcimine

I have lost two of my favorite issues of *OHJ* that contained articles describing how to deal with calcimine paint (April and June 2001). Is there any other place I can read up on this subject?

Alice Cunningham
Speonk, New York

There's little other significant reading in print or online about dealing with calcimine. However, the good news is there isn't that much to say. Calcimine (or kalsomine), which was popular for a flat, pastel look on ceilings and walls up to the 1930s, is the most indelible of paints, basically chalk and pigment in a glue binder that was mixed with water. Easily washed off, calcimine becomes the bane of old-house owners when it starts to lose its grip after years of being overcoated with layers of oil paint.

If you're painting a peeling ceiling or wall, your best bet for removing the first layer of calcimine is a simple matter of working with brushes, scrapers, and water mixed with TSP or a little vinegar (to soften the calcimine) and lots of elbow grease. 🛠️

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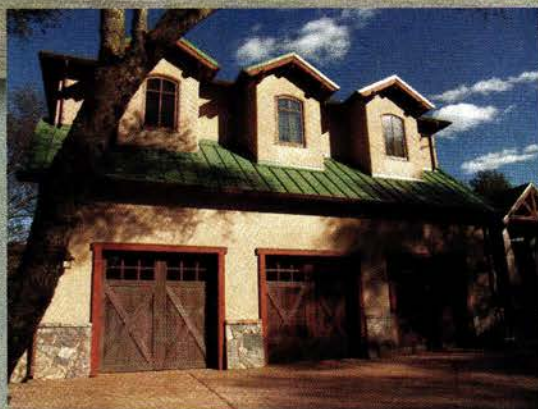
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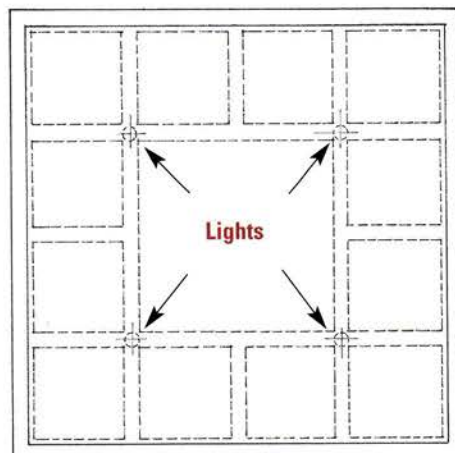
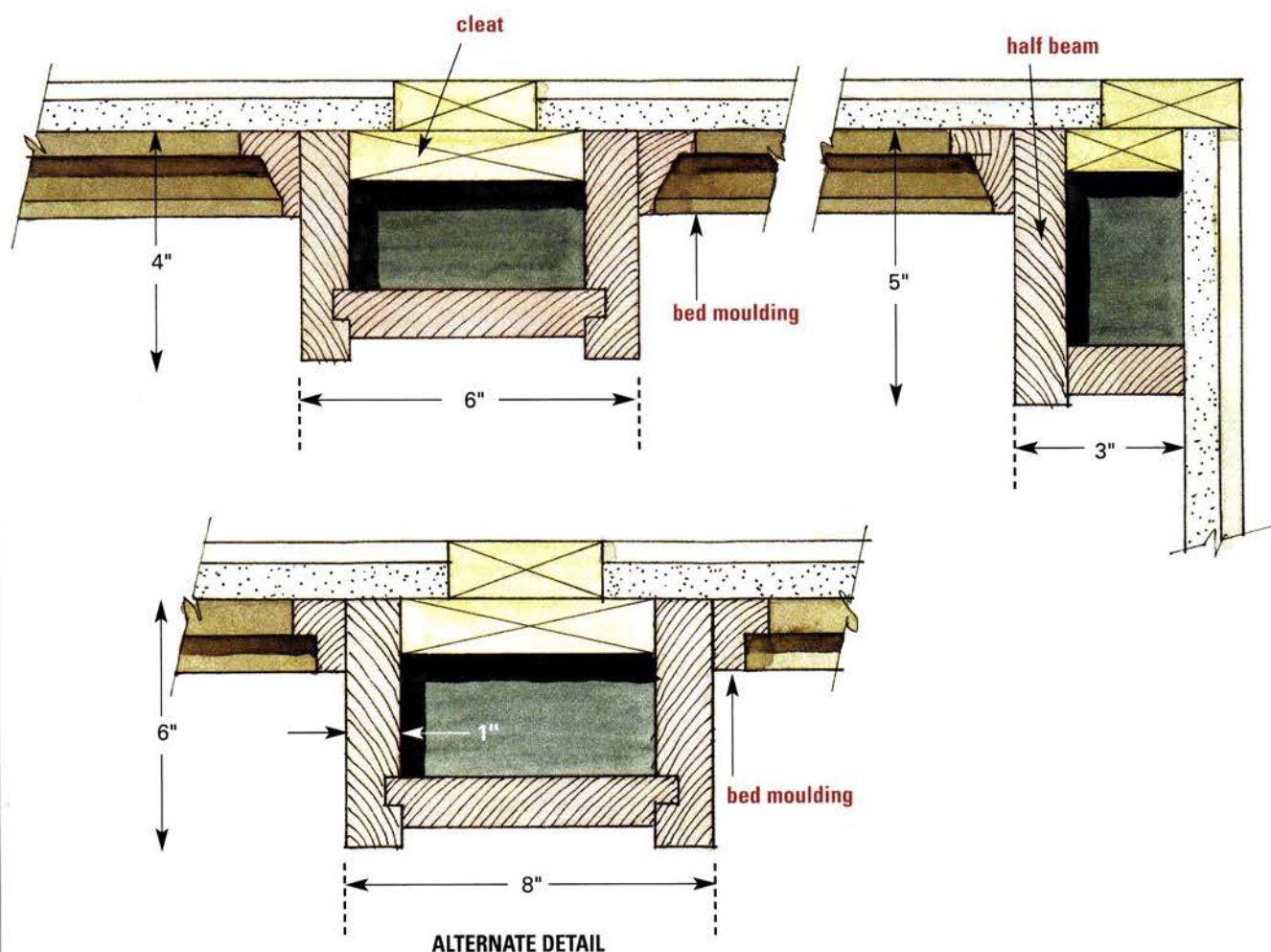


Arts & Crafts Box Beams

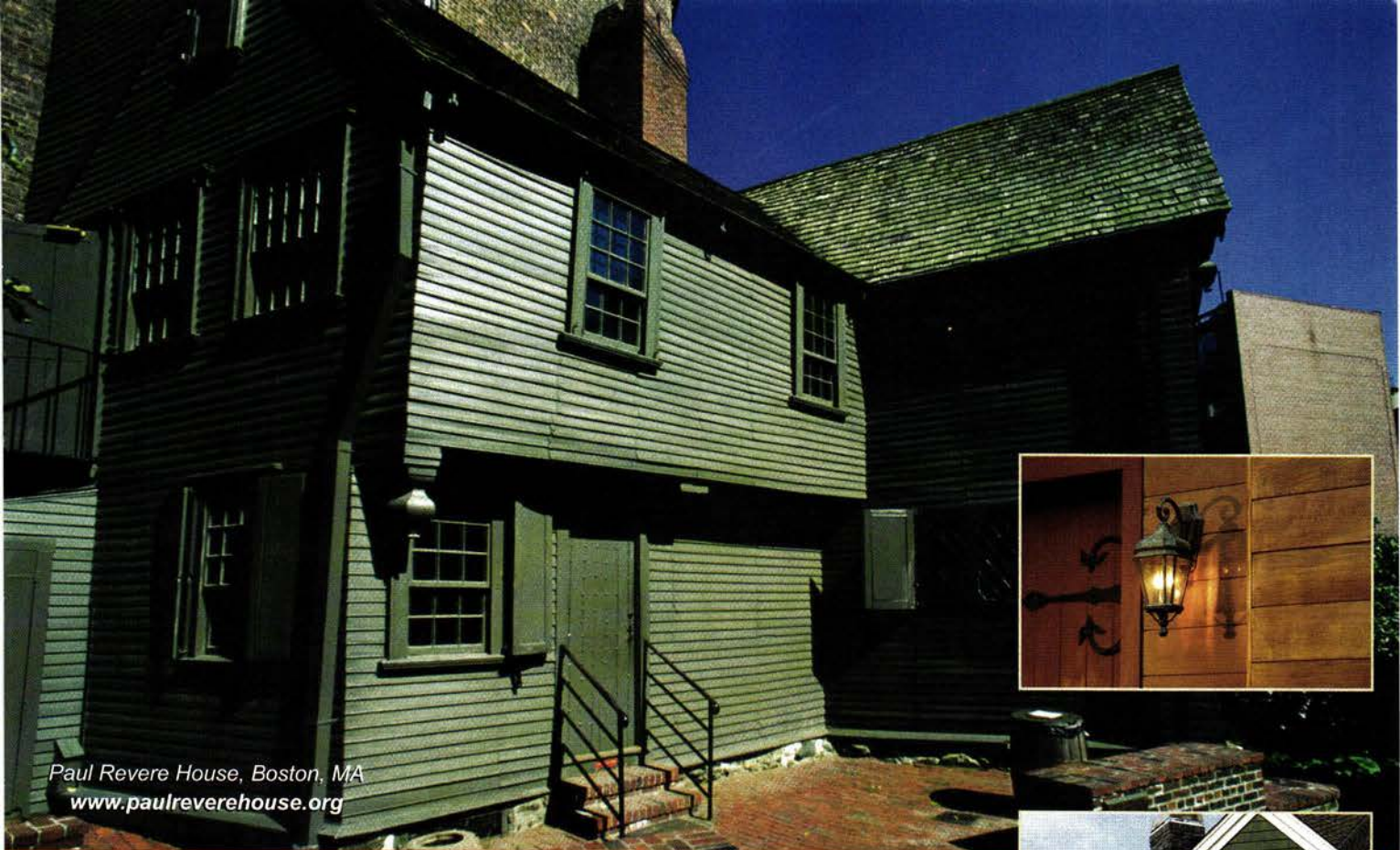
DRAWINGS BY ROBERT LEANNA



From simple planbook bungalows to architect-designed landmarks such as the Gamble House, the decorative feature that practically every Arts & Crafts house has in common is a beamed ceiling. Typically appearing in dining rooms or libraries, the purpose of these beams was not structural but environmental, helping to create an intimate setting by physically lowering parts of an already low ceiling, while delivering the impression of expanded height in the intervening spaces. The beams themselves were also something of an illusion—not solid timbers but thin boards rabbeted together to form a hollow shell. Often called box beams, these features came in many variations, but the details shown here are the kind once commonly ordered from catalogs in the 1910s or built on site in Arts & Crafts and Prairie School style houses alike.



The beam is actually two sides of 1x material rabbeted to accept a third side, which is inset to make the decorative face. Each beam straddles a cleat that is anchored to the studding in the ceiling; beams are attached to the cleat with screws or nails. A bed moulding in the Arts & Crafts style—that is with a rectilinear pattern rather than curves or beads—hides the fasteners and extends back to the half beams that typically ring the perimeter of the room. Dimensions are ultimately up to the builder and were often varied to suit the scale of the room, as in the larger, alternate version above. The layout of box beam ceilings can be quite complex in large rooms (see grid plan at left), which were often wired for small lights that created “jewel points” at major intersections. 🏠



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Dealing with Woodpeckers

Plugging the holes of avian intruders can arrest their incursions while saving wood structures.

BY GORDON BOCK

Among the animals that do damage to old houses, insects seem to get the most press. However, another class of winged creatures—woodpeckers—can be just as insidious as termites or bees and even harder to control. Left alone, one small woodpecker can perforate the outside of an old house with several holes in a week, ruining wood trim or siding and opening the door to water, decay, and other fauna in important architectural elements such as columns. Though there's no magic fix, here are some ideas about what to do if your neighborhood Woody comes tap, tap, tapping by your front door.

What Makes Peckers Wreckers

Woodpeckers are attracted to old houses for several reasons. Because most birds feed on wood-boring insects, they may find a source for lunch behind some soggy window trim or underneath shingle siding, and then start pecking to search for a second course. Or they may be drilling to excavate a nesting site. Wood columns, especially, might as well be hol-

low trees to a bird, and blowing a hole is an instinctive way to make a temporary home. Sometimes the pecking is merely a male drumming up a date with a prospective mate, but making a mess of your woodwork in the process.

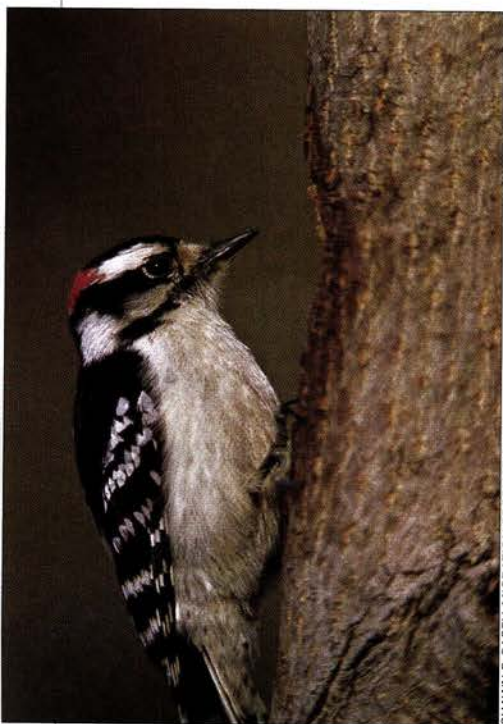
In any event, understanding the appeal of antique lumber is useful for taking preventive action. Though scare tactics such as visual repellents, loud noises, and hawk effigies sometimes work, experts generally concur that the best strategy is to exclude the birds from their work site immediately. This tactic prevents them from becoming established, as well as doing more damage. If they've already begun boring, your best bet is to repair the holes quickly.

A Dutchman Solution

While small holes are often best mended with weather-resistant wood fillers, such as epoxy-based products, large holes call for more comprehensive carpentry. Here, a round Dutchman patch or plug can be effective. Start by buying two hole saws: one just large enough to round out the holes made by your feathered friend—say, 2" in diameter—and another, $\frac{1}{8}$ " larger in diameter, to cut some snug-fitting plugs. Next, choose the plug stock, such as some clear, tight-grained 2x4 scraps, and cut some plugs. You don't need to cut all the way through the 2x4; just keep running the hole saw until it bottoms out. Clean out the saw kerf at regular intervals, and then pry the plug out of the block.

Now take the smaller hole saw and cut a nice neat hole where

When the glue has cured, plane down the plug excess for a finished repair. Bottom: After rounding out a bird hole in a column, align the plug with the same grain orientation.

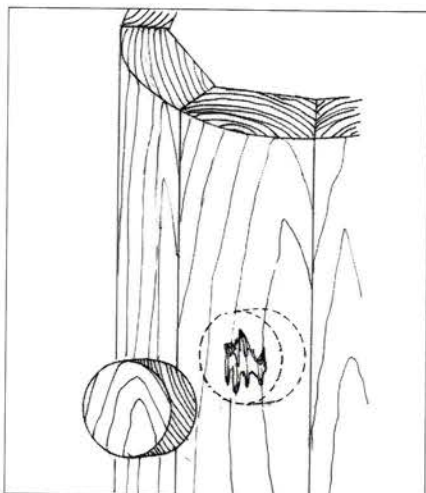


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The downy woodpecker is only one species that causes problems in houses; others include the northern flicker, red-headed woodpecker, and hairy woodpecker.



GORDON BOCK

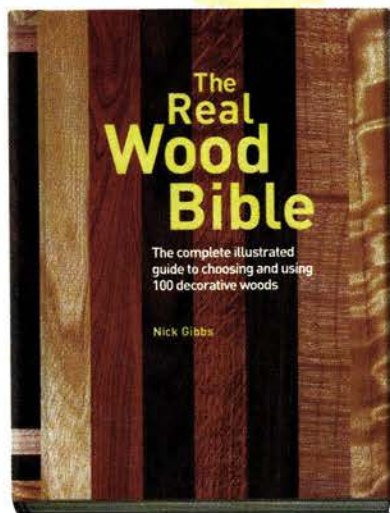


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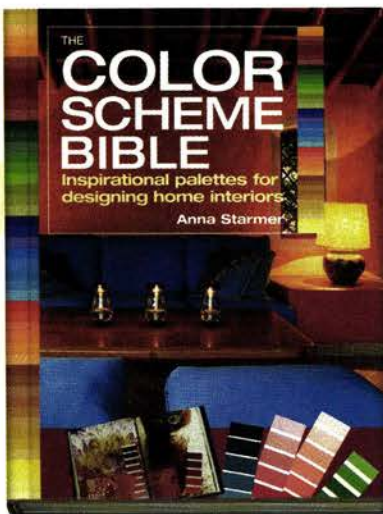
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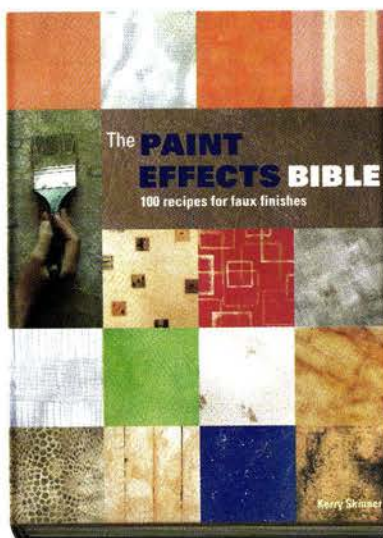


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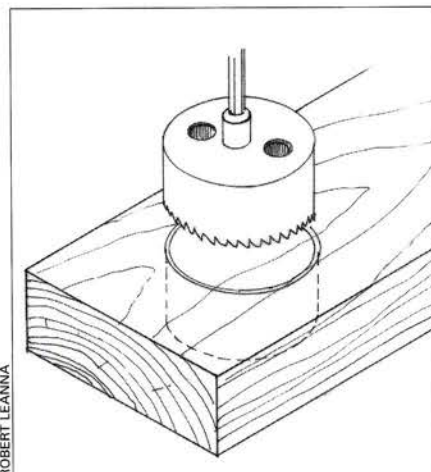
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Cutting with a hole saw creates a plug that can be pried out with a screwdriver.

the woodpecker had been working. You can do this by inserting a backer block behind the hole as a ground to start the pilot bit. Or you can lay the hole saw at an angle in the bottom of the bird opening and then carefully begin cutting until the saw starts itself. (If you use the latter method, take pains to prevent the saw from skipping out of the hole and damaging the nearby area.) Once you have a clean hole, test-fit a plug (aligning the grain of new and old wood) and file or sandpaper any rough edges. Drive a screw a few turns into the plug as a removable handle, then apply an exterior-grade, gap-filling adhesive, such as polyurethane glue, to both hole and plug. As you insert the plug, maneuver it so a bit of the wood stands proud above the building surface. After the glue has dried, plane the plug flush with the trim or column, and when finished you and your pesky pecker will never know he was ever there. 🐦

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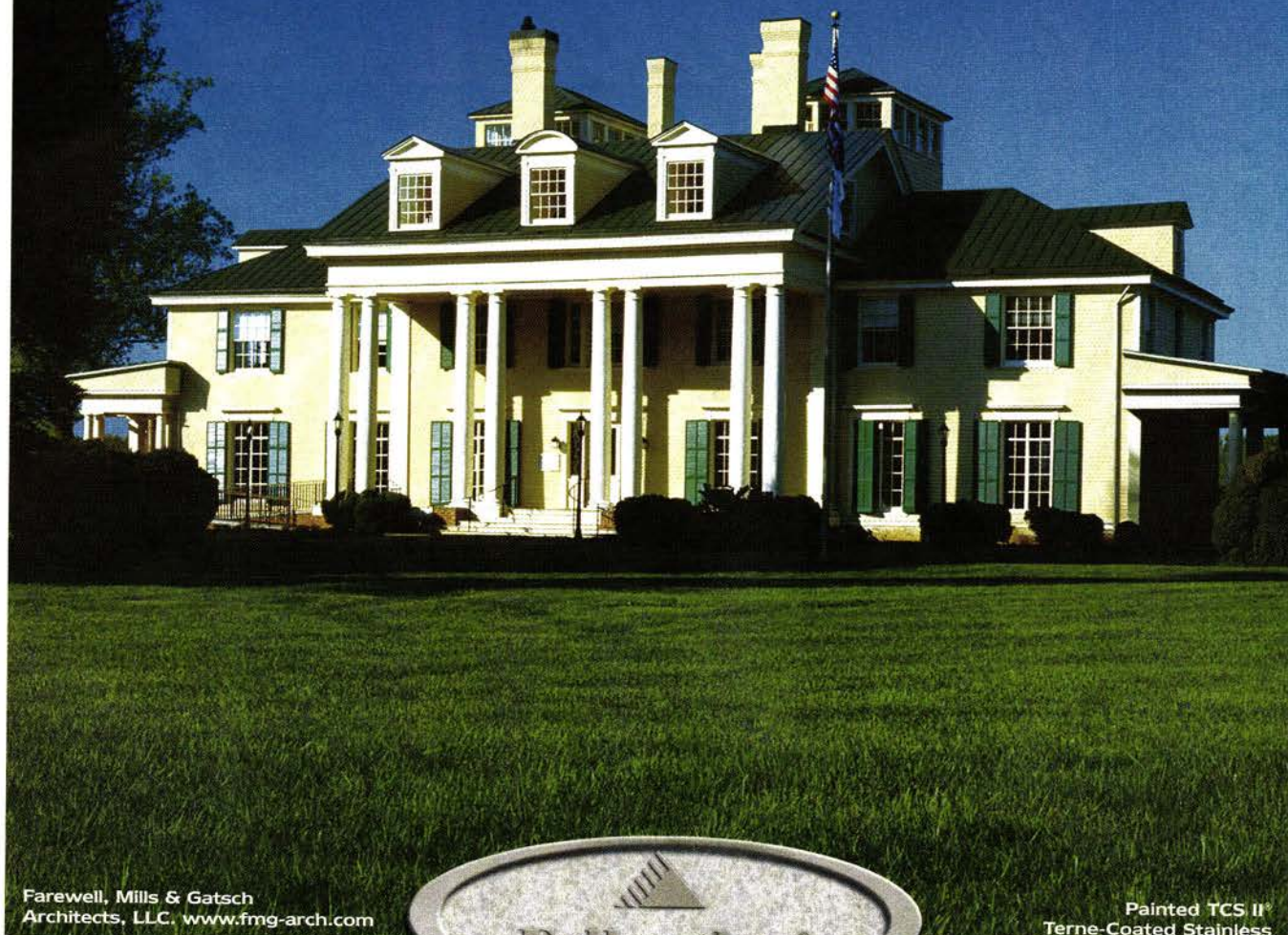
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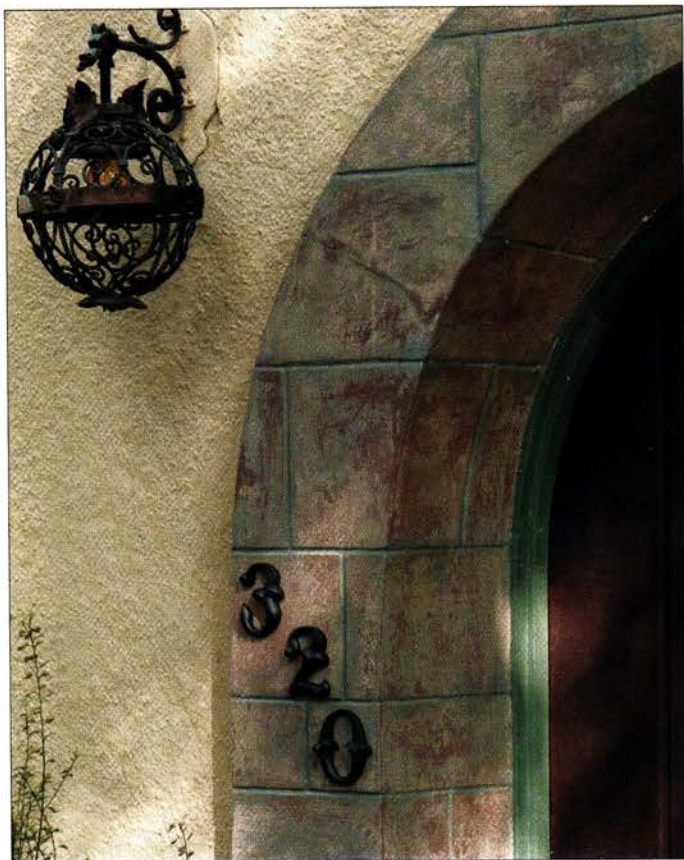
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The One-Dollar Log Home

BY MCCABE COOLIDGE

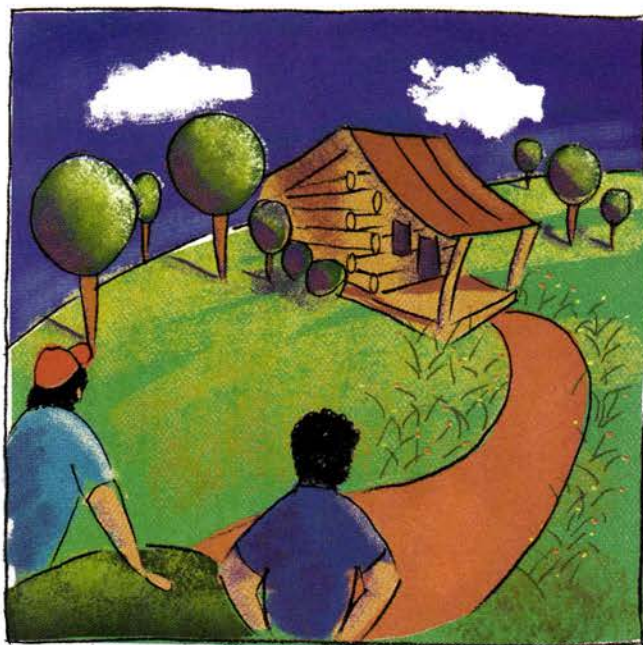
My life changed in 1970. After electing to dam up the New Hope Creek, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decided to create a 10,000-acre recreation area near Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They condemned all the farm buildings up and down the low-lying basin, auctioning off houses and barns to the highest bidder; structures that received no bids were let go for a dollar.

My friend, Dick, suggested I check out one of these one-dollar log cabins. On a fine Carolina spring day, we drove in his old GMC pickup truck to the western edge of the proposed lake and down a rutted farm lane amidst wildflowers, abundant weeds, and decrepit fencing. There, riddled with chinking and boasting a rusty red tin roof, wide logs, and a front-leaning porch, stood my future homestead.

Soon I passed a dollar bill to a clerk of the Army Corps of Engineers and signed my name on their contract, promising to move this "structure" within 30 days. What I didn't realize was how much I had just become indentured to the country.

On the following Saturday, Dick and I rounded up some friends. We met at the circa 1900 shack and quickly tore off the tin, then carefully marked each log with a number system (A-1, B-1, etc.) to help us remember how the logs were notched and assembled. We disassembled the cabin like Lincoln Logs and placed the weighty timbers on a flatbed truck.

We took the cabin to a five-acre plot of wild land, sitting high on a ridge above a small creek, that I had purchased a few months earlier. One by one, we lifted the logs off the wagon, spacing them with two-by-fours so they could dry out while we built the foundation piers. Then we put her up, one log at a time.



BARBARA QUINN

We raised the roof to a full second storey to create space for two bedrooms. The downstairs was a big room with a fireplace and a woodstove. We added on a small kitchen because the old one had fallen in. For this, Dick found some red cedar that had sat in an old-timer's shed for 50 years, waiting for the next project. He was mighty glad to see it used.

Nine months later and a few days after the spring solstice, my family of four, plus a dog, moved in to this restored log cabin complete with a log well house, a deck with screened-in porch, and a rock fireplace that we had cobbled together

from a variety of hearths salvaged out of collapsed or abandoned homesteads. The total cost of this enterprise, excluding the price of the land, was \$13,500.

For more than 15 years I lived in the country, miles from the nearest town, at least an hour away from any city. I had a dream—to give abandoned log structures another life—and I pursued it with a passion, finding old tobacco barns and turning them one by one into a pottery studio, a second home, a chicken coop. Then one day in 1993, my life and work took a jarring turn. I moved to Chicago. A few years later, I relocated to Asheville, North Carolina. San Francisco followed in 1999.

Now on my days off, I frequently find myself fleeing the city and driving into the countryside to explore old missions, homesteads, and ancient wooden barns used a century ago for winemaking. I touch their massive beams, and images of pine, oak, and chestnut logs fill my mind.

New housing abounds where I live now, but I'm looking backward, planning my return to some rural area of North Carolina. I think that day will come soon.

When I do return, maybe I'll buy an old Ford pickup truck and drive down a country lane, between rows of pine trees, to a farmhouse that has endured, unchanged, through generations of one family. I'll make some inquiries about a log barn or a piece of land that might be for sale. Then I'll start again, one log at a time. 🏠

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Circle no. 128

Where the Past Meets the Present

BY ALLEN
CHARLES HILL

No three things control a house restoration more than budget, structure, and time. Many an ambitious project has been curtailed by cost or by the design challenges of the existing building. That's why, right from the start, you should know as much as possible about your house's past and present condition to help determine the scope of the project's plans, your budget, and your own capacity for being involved in the work.

A Little Planning Help from History

Before treating a patient, a doctor takes a history and performs a physical exam to help determine what needs to be dealt with. A Historic Structures Report fills a similar function when an individual or other owner wants to work on an old building. Historic Structures Reports (also called preservation plans or HSRs for short) come in all sizes, from one-page outline summaries to many-volume documents. All of these reports, however, have the following items in common:

- A historical summary of the building as an object existing through time that sets the context for the remainder of the report. When was it built? What happened between then and now? What is significant about this building?
- A description of the building's form and fabric. How is it laid out? What does it look like now? What did it used to look like? What is its architectural style? Of what is it made?
- A description of its existing condition. What needs attention (repair, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation, continued monitoring, further research) and why?
- A description of the work needed in order to return the building to a stable, standard condition and to accomplish what the owner wants to do with the building.
- Priorities for doing work. Most buildings can absorb more work than their owners

can fund at once, so it is necessary to organize the work by priority. Critical work must be done as soon as possible because the building is at risk; necessary work also must be done but not as quickly; elective work includes any work that lacks the urgency of the first two categories.

When dollars are scarce, it's easy to say, "My project doesn't need a preservation plan." This is rarely true. A Historic Structures Report should pay for itself many times over in a more coherent project undertaken with fewer false starts, less backtracking, and less damage to the building and your wallet.

Balancing Additions and Extensions

Ultimately, in any construction project, your wallet holds sway. A project may vary from the small and simple to the enormous and elaborate. As for the budget, there are costs below which nothing useful can be built and above which you cannot afford to spend. Most of us are more flexible in our needs and desires than in the amount of money we can spend. The



JAMES C. MASSEY

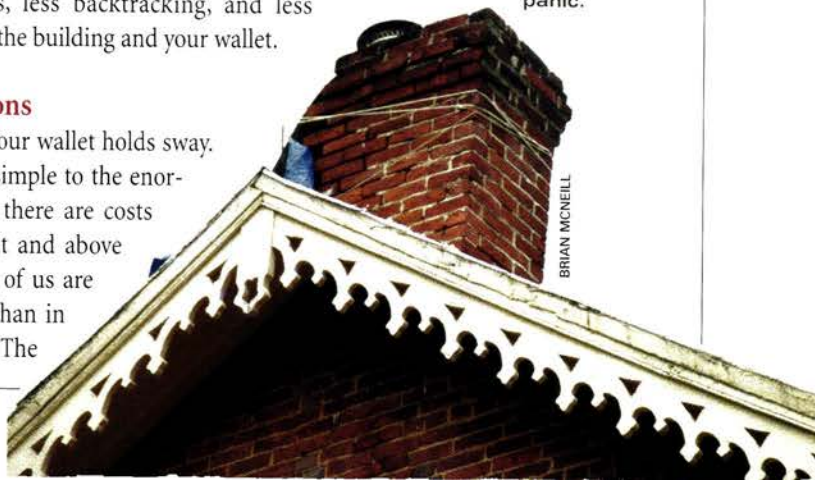
A Historic Structures Report should describe a building's architectural style. This documentation, along with detailed measurements, forms the basis of designing a sensitive extension.

A sound preservation plan helps a project proceed based on knowledge of the building and reason, rather than momentum, impulse, or uninformed panic.



BRIAN MCNEILL

Additions often exhibit a shift in materials or design, even when historic.



BRIAN MCNEILL



BRIAN MCNEILL

Large-scale projects, such as a structural repair, typically involve several trades with specialized skills and equipment, and are likely beyond the scope of an owner-restorer to manage.



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result is that few building projects go ahead as originally envisioned.

In working with old buildings, the existing structure complicates matters further by establishing an aesthetic or spatial standard for the new work. Consider the common situation in which an owner wants to increase the size of a building. When constructing an enclosure that is obviously an addition to a building rather than an extension of an existing design, the owner can probably accomplish the addition for a relatively small sum of money. It's also likely that an addition's exterior appearance will not be sensitive to what is already there. With little or no consideration of what the building looks like or what it's made of, the result is nothing more than a collision of two objects. To design such a simple box requires minimal time and no investigation of the existing building beyond taking a few basic dimensions.

On the other hand, a carefully designed extension that enhances the existing building in a manner compatible with its original design will cost more. Before the design process can begin, it will be necessary to measure, sketch, and photograph the

existing building, and to prepare drawings to scale. The design process itself will take more time to arrive at a solution that meets the owner's needs and respects the appearance of the existing building. And once the design is settled, the actual construction may well cost more, because there will be more to construct and its execution will require more care. Whichever way you go, determining if the results will justify the additional time and cost of extending a building, rather than merely adding to it, will be one of the most important decisions you'll make before you embark on a project.

On Being Your Own G.C.

Whether it's realistic for you to manage the project yourself is another matter. As a preservation architect, I often have clients who ask, "Couldn't I save money by acting as my own general contractor?" The answer is maybe, but it won't be a free ride. One of the most important functions of a contractor is coordinating the different workers and subcontractors so that they do their work exactly on cue in a wonderfully complex choreography. Miss a beat and delays can cascade down the line, with a one-day slip mushrooming into a weeks-late finished product.

Unless you have previous building experience, you may not be sure which trades will be needed when, and even if you are, getting workers to arrive at the job on time may be a challenge. You just won't have the clout of the general contractor working on the other side of town if both of you need, say, the plumber at the same time. After all, the general contractor is a source of repeat business, while you are almost certainly a one-shot proposition.

So, yes, you could save money, but your lack of experience also could end up costing money. You'll have to spend time on the project, and your time has value. In more cases than not, paying a contractor to manage the job will be money well spent. ■

Allen Charles Hill, AIA, writes from Woburn, Massachusetts (home.att.net/~allen.hill.historic.preservation/).

Being your own general contractor may be practical if you have construction experience, but it still means an expense in the time you must devote to orchestrating subcontractors.



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Common COLORS Used Uncommonly Well

A basic guide to the decoration of Arts & Crafts interiors.

BY JOHN CROSBY
FREEMAN

What is it about the interiors we associate with the Arts & Crafts period? How did some basic and timeless colors and materials have such a revolutionary impact on buildings and furnishings more than a century ago, and why do they speak to us as rich and relevant again

today? There is no one simple answer, but instead a remarkable confluence of new ideas that energized the hunger of early 20th-century homeowners and designers for a fresh approach to color and design.

The Victorian Thing

In order to best understand Arts & Crafts colors, we must first clarify the relationship of the Arts & Crafts movement to the late-Victorian era. America's signature Arts & Crafts architects promoted themselves as geniuses who revolutionized domesticity after 1900, but their efforts evolved from two previous generations of innovative designers inspired by the Aesthetic Movement in Britain. In the 1890s the Aesthetic Movement (a trend that sought to reform and simplify household decoration) was re-branded as the Arts & Crafts Movement and exported to the British Empire as an anti-Victorian international style, which was further extended to the entire English-speaking world by *The Studio* magazine and its American edition, *International Studio*.

If you were a card-carrying Arts & Crafts devotee, there was a lot to dislike about late-Victorian interiors: the glare of gas lighting glinting off glossy wood surfaces, faking up-market mahogany or

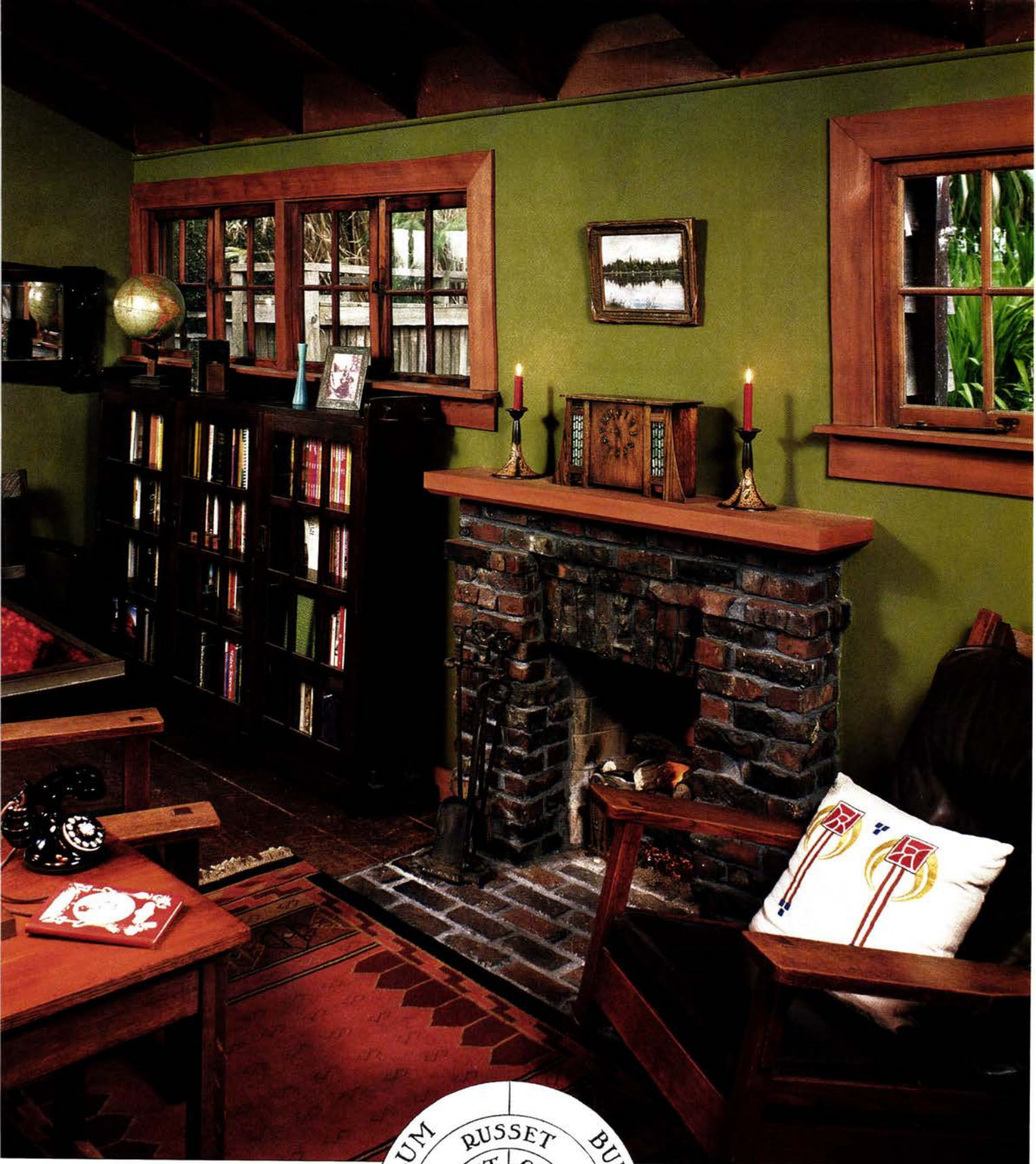


In this cultured 1910s Arts & Crafts living room, the sacred open hearth is wrapped into the high dado by setting the plate rail at the level of the mantel shelf; open shelves above showcase objects d'art.



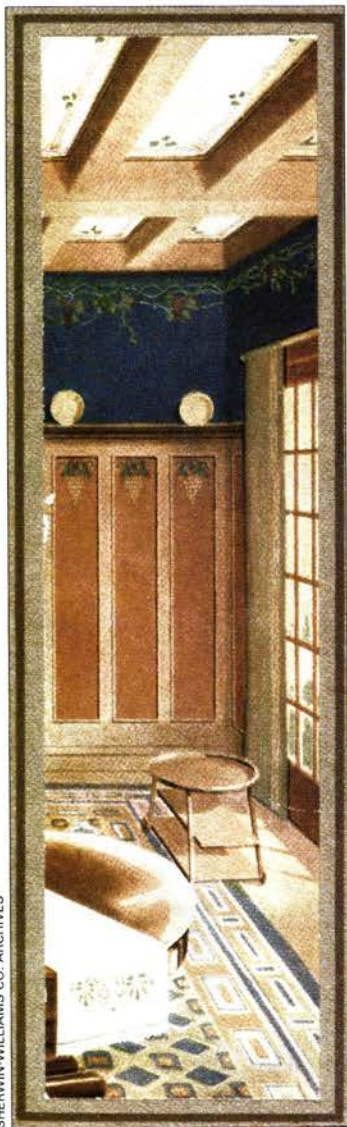
LINDA SVENDSEN

Soft olive green walls enhance the natural wood and masonry of the guest quarters for the 1905 Wadsworth House in Berkeley, California.



rosewood on down-market pine with wood stains and graining, upholstery masking shoddy furniture construction, dust-catching heavy drapery, and excessive ornamentation. Arts & Crafts adherents especially disliked three Victorian "V" words: *varnish* and polished surfaces,

This 1915 graphic turns the kindergarten color wheel inside out and makes it useful for selecting tertiary Arts & Crafts colors. Sage=dull, greyed green. Buff=greyed yellow-brown leather. Plum=dark, greyed purple. Citrine=light to moderate olive. Russet=moderate reddish-brown. Slate=greyed blue.



SHERWIN-WILLIAMS CO. ARCHIVES

The color of these high dado panels appears stationary in space in contrast to the dark plum blue of the upper walls, which seem to recede.



AMERICAN LIFE FOUNDATION

Except for the screen, everything in this Aesthetic Movement book illustration migrated into Arts & Crafts interiors.

veneer and wood-graining, and velvet and other fancy fabrics used for window treatments overwhelming walls and windows.

An important legacy of the Aesthetic Movement was its divisions of interior walls, especially the high dado, a paneled wainscot capped by a plate rail that might rise to the tops of windows and doors. Disposable income determined what appeared. Mansions and villas got fully paneled rich wood. Homesteads and cottages got open panels defined by framing in less expensive wood, simple mouldings, wallpaper borders, or stencils. This is how the high-style Aesthetic Movement high dado was made accessible to all owners of Arts & Crafts homes.

Dividing walls was a simple and elegant way to integrate the vertical interruptions of doors, windows, and recesses that often disintegrate the horizontal unity of a room with their uneven heights and widths. It still is, even for someone wanting to decorate their great room in the Arts & Crafts style. The open paneled high dado capped by a plate rail will 1) establish the proper scale for furnishings, 2) historically resonate with Arts & Crafts reverence for late-medieval great rooms, 3) provide opportunities for color and pattern impossible on today's soaring great room walls, and 4) supply a shelf for the display of Arts & Crafts *objets d'art*. The upper walls can be painted a richer color than what would be permissible without a high dado. It also opens opportunities to select a tint or contrasting tone for the upper wall that will harmonize with the lower wall colors.

When this divide-and-conquer approach was translated into woodwork, it resulted in walls defined by warm wood tones, especially oak, mahogany, redwood, chestnut, or cedar, often made richer in the Arts & Crafts era by fuming, stain, and dyes and amplified by furniture in the same or similar tones. Looking at illustrations of today's hit parade of Arts & Crafts interiors often reveals furniture getting lost against walls paneled in wood. That is what happens when the contrasting colors of soft goods are missing—for instance, the needlework accessories of pillows, sideboard scarves, table runners, and shawls.



LINDA SVENDSEN

What's So Keen about Olive Green?

The Arts & Crafts movement had a thing about olive green. It wasn't personal; it was practical because, like Will Rogers, olive green rarely meets another color it doesn't like. Because the wood tones of Arts & Crafts interiors were warm colors



This fine interior in Takoma, Washington, would be swamped by brown, if not for the cool contrasts of greyed blues in the tiles, pottery, and carpets.

in the yellow-red spectrum, olive green was an ideal contrasting, cool color that could do no wrong painted on adjacent surfaces.

Olive green—a large family of colors that includes today's popular sage greens—was more than the Miss Congeniality of Arts & Crafts colors. It was a common

color, much favored by ready-mixed paint manufacturers for its practicality and profit. Olive greens were cheap to make, because they didn't require white lead, an opaque pigment that was expensive and could add 40% shipping weight per gallon. Olive green was also high hiding, resistant to fading, and stable in oil-based paints and stains. An ancient common color, it has been documented in the interiors of some of New England's Pilgrim homes of the 17th century, which makes olive green a Colonial Revival color for the Arts & Crafts. It's still being made the old-fashioned way by mixing the ubiquitous iron oxide of yellow ochre with the common carbon of lampblack that greys and darkens the yellow and makes it green with its blue bias.

Affable as it is, olive green is not foolproof. When walls are undivided by panels or frames and the horizontal trim is weak, painting them with a complementary cool color of olive green will make the

Anonymous, mass-market bungalows and Arts & Crafts homesteads of post World War I drive the Arts & Crafts revival today—not the up-market villas and mansions of the era. Now, as then, their comfortable interiors were decorated to be refuges.

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ARTS & CRAFTS OR COLONIAL REVIVAL?

When looking at old black and white and color illustrations of early 20th-century interiors, it's often difficult to accurately identify the room as Colonial Revival or Arts & Crafts, because Bungalow cottages and Craftsman villas frequently were furnished with a mélange of Colonial, Victorian, and Mission furniture. White-painted woodwork, clearly visible even in photographs, is one simple litmus test for identifying one from the other. If the woodwork looks dark and appears to be stained instead of painted, you've got your Arts & Crafts interior. If it's painted white, Colonial Revival is the call.

The second litmus test, which involves period furniture styles, is more complicated. Looking at old pictures reveals that Americans a century ago didn't suffer from a shriveled sense of style and mindless devotion to the period room that butchers the history of home décor into recognizable cuts. They preferred stew to steaks. Their mixing of historic styles with Mission furniture exposes an essential difference between English-speaking Arts & Crafts, which reconsidered home décor for the many as a simplified set of familiar forms, and Continental Arts & Crafts, which radicalized interior decorating for the few with exercises in pure design.

Both here and abroad, "simplicity" was a buzz word of the Arts & Crafts Movement. Here, it meant making old look new by abstracting America's historic styles to remove dishonest overlays of late-Victorian ornamentation. Over there, it meant abstracting basic forms with little or no reference to the past. Here, Arts & Crafts cleansed Victorian history, with affection. Over there, it murdered Victorian history, with malice.

Even so, the politics of American Arts & Crafts, which was linked to Progressivism, stigmatized the fancy styles of a century earlier that were associated with the ultra rich. Late-Colonial Chippendale woodcarving and Adamesque-Federal Hepplewhite/Sheraton wood inlays were beautiful, but they were politically incorrect. The simplicity of furniture in the Pilgrim, Queen Anne, and Windsor Chair styles were P.C. Colonial; the grandeur of Chippendale and elegance of Sheraton/Hepplewhite were not. If you see them in an old picture, along with gloss white-painted woodwork, it's a double whammy Colonial.

Despite vaguely Arts & Crafts furniture and olive green upper walls with a pale tint on the ceiling, gloss white woodwork scores a technical knock-out in this Colonial Revival interior.



Although the red walls look too gaudy for an Arts & Crafts interior, it was a wallpaper option of the period. The natural tones of the woodwork are what make this room Arts & Crafts, plus the wonderfully cozy inglenook.

woodwork's deficiencies more obvious. Instead, select a lighter tint or tone of the woodwork color—for example, a tan, terra-cotta, buff, or gold.

However, if those walls feature built-ins with wood tones similar to the trim, a lighter tint or tone would be injurious, because it would blend the built-ins with the walls. Make your built-ins appear more outstanding by painting the walls with a warm color that has more contrast. If you want a rich, warm wall color and your walls have nothing going for them, install paint-grade chair rails and paint them, along with the walls below, that color. If your flooring has the handsome warm wood tones that are lacking on your walls, this is one occasion when it would be permissible to put a lighter tint or tone of the flooring on the lower wall. Otherwise, let the sleeping dogs of floor colors lie.

The best place for cool colors on horizontally divided walls is above the rails. Here they will pull the eye into depth without resorting to darkening, which is another way to make a color appear further away relative to a lighter color. The complementary push and pull of warm and cool colors layered horizontally, which also enlarges the perception of space, will energize any Arts & Crafts interior.

Beyond the Green Horizon

Decorative effects for Arts & Crafts walls are facilitated by chair rails or paneled high dados. If you want to wallpaper with Arts & Crafts or Art Nouveau flowers and vines, common sense suggests they belong "on the ground" below the rails, rather than in the "sky" above. Expensive wallpaper will go further with no waste when it's put in the open panels of a high dado. This tactic requires more work, but your efforts will be rewarded by the delightful effect of looking through an elegant fence at a field of flowers or verdant landscape.

When horticulture must appear above a rail, it works best with a small-scale, abstracted pattern designed for the purpose in the rectilinear Arts & Crafts or curvilinear Art Nouveau style, which is

In this bungalow living room, the wall surfaces have been painted a tint of the fireplace brick—pleasing, no doubt, but perhaps lacking the energy of a complementary Arts & Crafts color scheme.

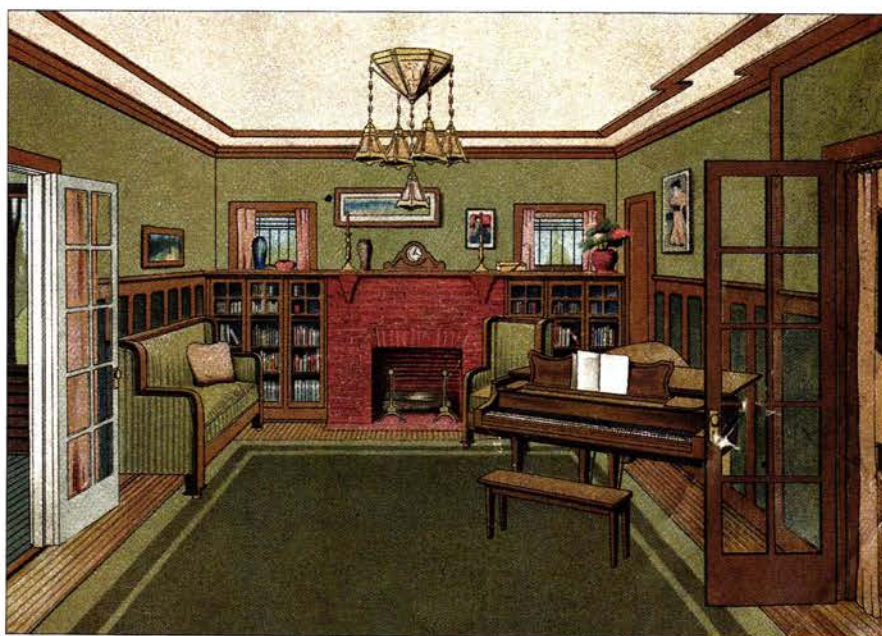


LINDA SVENDSEN

properly called a “fill” paper. Gardening with wallpaper above a rail, when the exposed walls below are plain-painted, without the decorative effect of faux finishing, texturing, or stenciling, makes visual nonsense, because the only way to make sense of it is to stand on one’s head.

Wheeling through the Colors

The color wheel and its color theory became a standard feature of elementary art education during the Arts & Crafts period. Its primary goal then is the same as it is now: organizing the minds of children to perceive basic color relationships of the visible spectrum as the human eye sees them. Because the arts in the early 20th century were suckers for scientific explanations of aesthetic matters, the color wheel and its theory achieved iconic status during the 1920s. Color wheels still appear



Fortunately, the illustrators of this 1910s Sears interior didn’t paint the built-in bookcases flanking the fireplace in white, which is a plus. Nonetheless, the overall effect is dull. Why? Although citrine is an excellent cool color background for warm woodwork, it needs a complementary color in the rug or upholstery.

with regularity in textbooks, home décor guides, magazine articles, and “idea cards” for paint schemes.

Kindergarten colors and their arrangement on the color wheel might be helpful if you are designing color schemes for college pennants, but they are useless for home décor. It's time for the color wheel to grow up, leave the classroom, and be driven through real rooms with really useful colors.

Complementary colors are determined by receptors in the human eye. If you stare at a dot of red on a white paper and shift your gaze, you'll see a dot of green, which is its complement. That's why complementary colors enhance the perception of each other. A typical complementary color scheme for an Arts & Crafts interior would contrast woodwork and furniture in warm tones of the yellow-red spectrum against painted walls in the cool tone of an olive green in the yellow-green spectrum.

This simplified approach to selecting useful complementary colors reduces the matter to balancing a cool color with a warm color that shares the same minor hue. For example, the yellow-green of an olive green would complement the red-

dish-yellow of an old gold or the yellowish-red of a terra-cotta. Yellow is the hue that links them. To put complementary color selection to real use in an Arts & Crafts interior, you could paint old gold or terra-cotta in the open panels of a high dado or below a chair rail and paint olive green on the upper walls. Or, to take another example, paint the bluish-red of burgundy on the lower walls and the reddish-blue of lavender on the upper walls.

In closing, consider the following advice that appeared in a little book published in 1915, *Good Taste in Home Furnishing*, by Maud and Henry Sell.

AN ASIDE ON SHADOWS

Essential to an understanding of Arts & Crafts interiors and their colors is the role of *shadows*. Another legacy of the Aesthetic Movement was its two-pronged campaign against the glare, expense, smell, and “vitiated air” of gas lighting, and the romancing of soft, familiar, and affordable candle lighting. American Arts & Crafts adopted the aesthetics of candle lighting for its romantic shadows and its linkage to the Colonial Revival, especially the rising reverence for 17th-century Pilgrim homes. Shadows prevailed in Arts & Crafts interiors, despite the invention of Edison's lamp. Arts & Crafts incandescent lighting fixtures were veiled with painted or stained glass shades to cast delicious jewel points of color upon a sea of shadows.

It's tempting to light your Arts & Crafts interiors in the no-shadows style of a sale room or art gallery when you have accessorized it with five-figure furnishings. But it does the historic integrity of your precious objects an injustice. Please put your klieg lights on dimmer switches. Those who know you will already appreciate what you've got in your shadows. If they don't, let them relax and enjoy the gentle and simple pleasures of life in the shadows of America's favorite comfortable house.



In the 1910s one paint company reversed the warm woodwork/cool walls color scheme by showing how mouldings finished in a Mission Green stain contrasted with the complementary red of the upper walls.



LINDA SVENDSEN



Architecturally, the trimwork surrounding the built-in sideboard in this dining room echoes the construction of the porch outside. In terms of color, the warm wood tones are echoed by the yellow sponge finish, a complement of the same hue.



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"When you have found the scheme that you think is right, stick to it, and carry your idea out to the end. Many a good original plan is spoiled because of changing ideas." 🏠

John Crosby Freeman, "The Color Doctor," can be reached through his free, mail-in Color Design Service, sponsored by Valspar (1601 Sheridan Lane, Norristown, Pennsylvania 19403-3336).

Behind the Scenes with Beadboard

The ubiquitous, all-purpose paneling of the Victorian era is still versatile today. BY JOHN LEEKE

A little more than a century ago, Peggy Worthy's great-grandfather built Savo Homestead out on the prairie grasslands of what is now northern South Dakota. In 1987, Peggy jumped at the chance to move back into the old place, but first she had to evict birds from the eaves, which were rotted through in spots. Leaks in the roof above had let rain pour onto the overhanging eaves resulting in rusty nails and fungal decay. The first four carpenters

she talked to wanted to slap up cheap aluminum soffit stock all around the house and call it good enough.

As a longtime *Old-House Journal* reader, Peggy knew there was a better way. She finally found a carpenter who recognized that the material he was looking at was beadboard. Even better, he was willing to repair what was good and replace the few boards that were completely shot, if only they could find some that were the same size and shape. They didn't have to look far; the lumberyard in the next town had an exact match. Because often it can cost less to make spot repairs like this than to cover a whole house with modern building products, here's the lowdown on what beadboard is and how it was traditionally used in finish carpentry all over old houses for decades.

What Is Beadboard?

Like many common building materials that went the way of the buffalo after World War II, beadboard is a garden-variety millwork product that for half a century came in a surprisingly wide range of styles and sizes and still goes by many names. In some parts of the country it's called wainscoting (after its common use as a lower wall paneling), and in many old carpentry texts it's referred to as ceiling, no



While beadboards most often appear inside old houses, they were widely used for porch ceilings and sometimes to finish roof eave soffits. Here it's easy to see the repairs on the Savo homestead, as well as the herringbone method of returning the boards.



ALL PHOTOS BY JOHN LEEKE EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

LINDA SVENDSEN



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SUPPLIERS,
see page 88.

Before ceramic tile was in vogue, varnished beadboard was deemed the ideal match for late-Victorian bathrooms because it made an attractive, easy-to-install wainscot that blended with other woodwork.

Even though Mara is an experienced old-house owner, she asked me to help with her beadboard installation. Mara wondered if she should use a level to ensure the beadboards were truly vertical. Perfectly plumb and aligned boards can look too stiff in an old house that has settled. If this installation covered an entire wall, I might use a level to mark a line every 36" or so across the wall as a guide. Even then, I would stand back to take a look as the boards went up, adjusting them until they looked "comfortable" on the wall, even if it was contrary to the guidelines.



Mara's first step was to clean and prep the salvaged beadboards. After carefully prying a few pieces of blocking off the backs of the boards, she realized they left shadow marks across the boards. She was in luck, though, when she noticed that the boards had beads cut on both sides, meaning she could simply install the boards with the best side out. To keep their aged color and patina, Mara cleaned the boards by wiping them off with a damp cloth.

Though regional sizes and bead styles may no longer be made, beadboard is still available in common forms, such as the $\frac{3}{4}$ " thickness (left), and even specialty wood, such as mahogany (middle) or modern wide versions.



doubt a reference to the overhead application in porches. By 1900 it was widely known as sheathing in New England and even matched sheathing around Boston.

Whatever the name, beadboard is defined by two characteristic features. First, beadboard is edge-matched—that is, milled with a tongue on one side and a groove on the other so that the boards fit together to make an integrated surface like strip flooring. Second, beadboard incorporates one or more half-round beads milled into the finished surface. At the very least there's one bead and quirk (a sharp recess) running along the tongue side of the board that serves the purpose of disguising the joint, especially when the boards move subtly with seasonal moisture changes. Beadboard also may be the center bead type, which is milled with one, two, or even three beads in the center of the board face to add to the paneling's decorative effect.

Beadboard also varies in size and thickness. The common widths recommended in the past for good workmanship were 3" and 4" (showing $2\frac{1}{4}$ " and $3\frac{1}{4}$ " on the face). Nominal thickness ranged from $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " and as thin as $\frac{3}{16}$ " depending upon the manufacturer. The beadboard that was sold by catalog in the 1910s was often western yellow pine, but regional markets regularly took advantage of local wood, such as cypress in the Gulf states, depending upon the customary use or finish (varnish or paint).

Beadboard in Practice

Historically, beadboard was a basic, slightly decorative service finish that was common by the 1880s and remained in use well into the 1930s in rural areas. Its popular

use in most buildings was as a full or partial wallcovering in kitchens, back halls, stores, and schoolrooms, but it also appeared widely on porch ceilings and eave soffits (also known as planciers) where it attained something of a featured presence. Beadboard was never designed to be a showcased material, but at its height of popularity at the turn of the century it captured center stage in summerhouses or shore cottages, where it sometimes doubled as both finish and wall material all over the building. Beadboard was also a regular component in site-made cabinetwork and joinery, where the beadboard was used to make panels in doors or cabinets.

Beadboard is put up one board at a time and blind-nailed like flooring so that no nail heads show in the finished installation. The need to joint butt ends of boards was seldom an issue because a century ago beadboard was easily obtained in 12' and 16' lengths that could run floor to ceiling or wall to wall without a break. On walls it generally runs right to the floor without a baseboard of any kind. However, at the top of the wall or wainscot, it is necessary to finish off the edge of the boards with a cap moulding or with a cornice moulding for a smooth transition to the next surface. Despite the simplicity of its installation, there is a catch to working with beadboard: The boards must be nailed to some sort of support running perpendicular to their length. In a vertical wall installation then, the carpenter must add horizontal blocking every 24" up the wall and also account for the thickness of the beadboard if it is to be flush against any plaster.

In many old houses you will see beadboard run vertically up a wall, as a wain-



Next Mara varnished the best side of the boards, using a clear oil-based alkyd resin varnish. Shellac would be a good finish to use as well. A couple of coats were enough to bring out the color and character of the grain and to seal the wood surface so it could be cleaned easily.



When the varnish was dry, Mara examined each board and arranged them so that the best color and grain would show most prominently in the final installation. Boards with defects, such as this major split along one edge, she planned to place in hidden areas of the closet. At the back of the china closet, the area was so small and hidden that I advised Mara to simply align the boards by eye and hand. That's the practical simplicity of beadboard—the beads make any irregularity in the joint look refined and even elegant.



To prepare the back wall of the closet for the vertical beadboards, Mara added horizontal blocking or "nailers" between the studs. After cutting the blocking from some 2x4 stock, she "toe-screwed" each block to the sides of the studs with 2" wallboard screws and a cordless screwgun. If Mara wanted to install the beadboards horizontally, across the vertical studs, she would not need the horizontal blocking.



Once Mara had all the blocking in place, she proceeded to install the beadboards. Lining up each new board tongue out against its predecessor, Mara tapped lightly on the tongue, up and down, to seat the tongue-and-groove joint. Then she nailed each board in place.



Mara had planned to simply face-nail the boards to the blocking, then set the nail heads and fill the holes. Instead, I showed her how to toe-nail the boards on an angle through the tongue and into the blocking using finishing nails. For the last fraction of an inch, she seats the nail snugly into the shoulder of the joint with a nail set, avoiding the need to fill any nail holes.

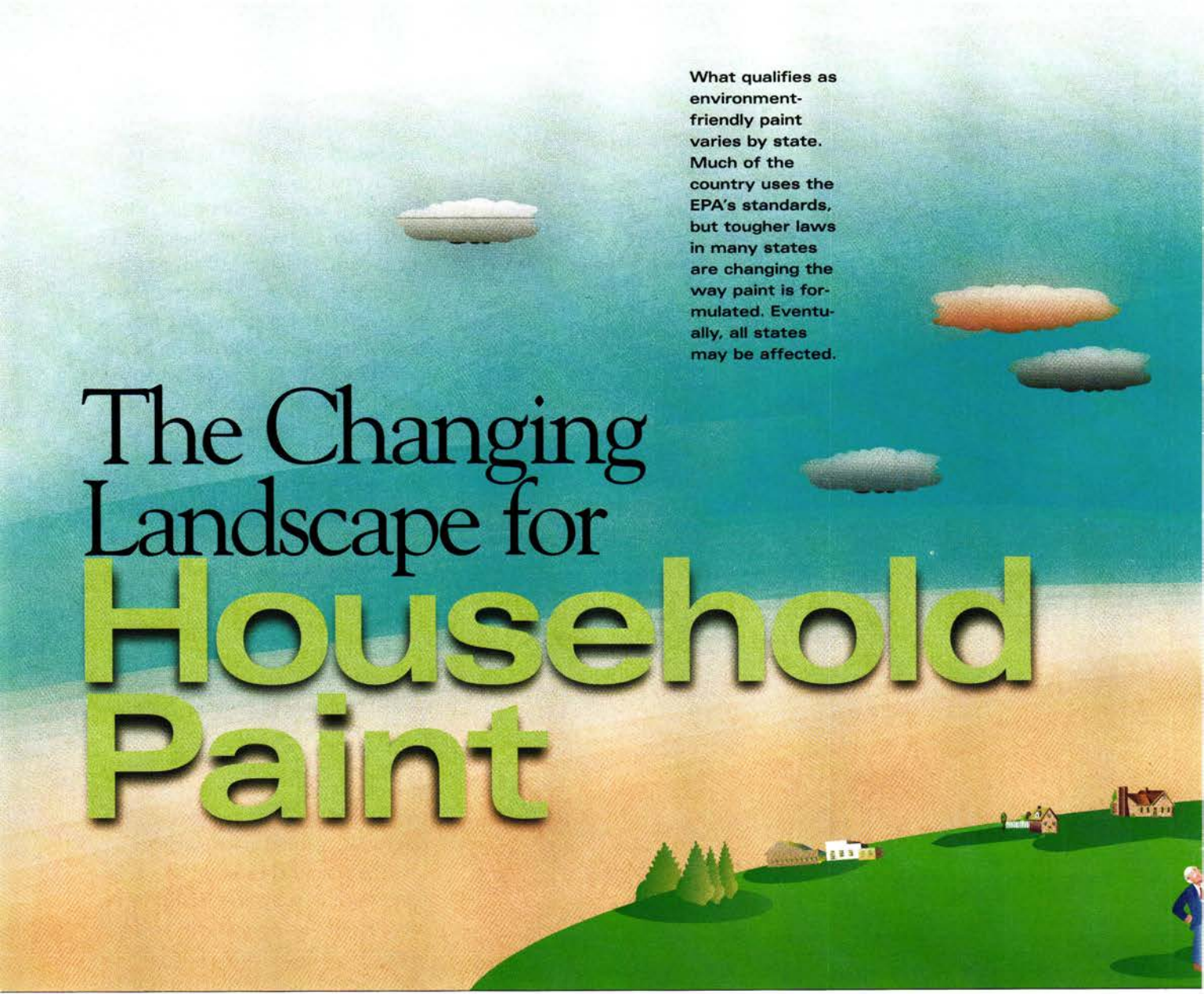
scot or floor-to-ceiling finish, and then carried across the ceiling in the same direction. However, in some areas of the country, such as the South, it is just as common to see beadboard running horizontally for wainscots or diagonally for effects such as "bookmatched" panels of beadboard in a door, or as framed panels. From here, the problem-solving installations of this prosaic material can be surprisingly creative. Changing direction with beadboard, as in the ceiling of a wrap-around porch, may be accomplished by simply mitering the boards, but carpenters of the past often made a practice of alternating boards in a herringbone pattern. In kitchens and halls, where a 40"-high wainscot had a good chance of being interrupted by a window or two, the cap over the beadboard could be integrated right into the window trim. The thinnest varieties of beadboard also have the capability to go around corners readily, a unique attribute for wood products. Narrow boards can be nailed up to follow a radius of 24" or so to make a rounded bathroom vanity or lecture podium, and long boards can easily cover a ceiling with a graceful camber.

The beauty of beadboard is its versatility, which is really only limited by the user's ideas. The story of my neighbor, Mara Love, is a good example of just how adaptable and reusable beadboard can be. A trailer full of trash, just down the block from her old house in Portland, Maine, caught Mara's eye when she noticed a few beadboards sticking out of the top. From her neighbor, she learned the load was headed for the dump that very minute. If she wanted the boards, she'd have to go along and help unload it. Afterward Mara said, "The salvage operation was worth it. I rescued just enough fine old beadboards to line the china closet in my parlor!" 🏠

John Leeke helps architects and homeowners understand and care for their historic buildings at www.historichomeworks.com.

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What qualifies as environment-friendly paint varies by state. Much of the country uses the EPA's standards, but tougher laws in many states are changing the way paint is formulated. Eventually, all states may be affected.

The Changing Landscape for Household Paint

New regulations will affect what you can buy.

BY STEVE JORDAN

For more than 25 years, old-house owners have heard far-off rumblings that paint would change drastically once less toxic waterborne paints improved and new government regulations were introduced. That day has finally arrived. After some 300 years of use, most oil-based paints are beginning to be phased out, destined to become the buggy whips and Easter bonnets of architectural coatings. Even die-hard traditionalists like me have accepted the changes, while painters and do-it-yourselfers say that, after decades of constant reformulations for oil and latex paints (also called waterborne paints because they're thinned with water), it's about time manufacturers left their product lines alone and gave

people a chance to adjust to the latest technology.

While that does appear to be happening, now more than ever, where you live determines what you can buy. Modeled on states such as California, where laws mandating environment-friendly paints have been in place for some time, regulations restricting the ingredients in architectural coatings took effect in eight states last year, and many more states are considering similar legislation (see map on facing page). Eventually, the new regulations probably will affect all 50 states because paint companies don't want to manufacture separate products to meet different standards in each state or even within states where some counties and cities have passed their own rules.

that it covered in fewer coats, leveled like glass, and was as tough and as durable as steel. The array of products enabled painters to be craftsmen.

Then came the success of user-friendly latex paint, first introduced after World War II, and the challenges from environmental regulations that followed. Instead of improving oils further, paint manufacturers directed their research at improving latexes, and existing oils were reformulated only to meet the letter of the law.

For more than a decade, sticklers for traditional coatings adjusted and re-adjusted to the various reformulations of oil-based paint, which became harder to apply, yellowed noticeably for light colors over a short period of time, and didn't level as smoothly as it had in the past. With mixed results, painters adjusted by adding thinners and additives on site or gave up and switched to latex paint. Sales of oil-based paints have been dropping steadily for 30 years and today account for only a small fraction of architectural paint sales.

In the 1990s the EPA, which regulates air pollutants, began focusing its attention

on VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which are found in everything from deodorant to shellac. In paint, VOCs are additives or solvents, such as mineral spirits, naphtha, lacquer thinner, dryers, oils, and alcohol. Ethylene and propylene glycol—additives that prevent freezing and promote wet-edge time—are VOCs commonly found in many latex paints, as are the coalescents that promote paint film formation.

VOCs are harmful to people and the environment. As paint dries, VOCs vaporize, and when they're released, they contribute to the depletion of the ozone in the earth's stratosphere and create smog or ground-level ozone. Under the Clean Air Act of 1990, the EPA was required to enact regulations for restricting VOCs. In 1999 those regulations took effect nationally, and more recently, states have started to adopt even tougher standards than the EPA to reduce air pollution further (see chart on facing page).

Paint by the Quart

The problem is that most pre-2005 alkyd paints (modern versions of oil-based paints) were formulated using various

solvents, oils, and dryers that didn't comply with the new rules established in many states. As a result, some paints have been discontinued; for example, you can't purchase an interior, flat, oil-based enamel anywhere.

Other paints, however, were exempted under the new state rules and continue to be sold but only in restricted quantities. For homeowners, this restriction means that eggshell to satin sheens; oils formerly used on walls and ceilings; and satin, semi-gloss, and gloss oils used on woodwork and trim will only be available in quarts. Exterior oil-based house paint, enamel, and porch paint (floor and deck enamels) are also included in this quarts only list. To add insult to injury, those quarts are sold at a new higher price, in addition to the premium quart price. Formerly, one gallon cost \$25, but under the new rules, you would need to buy four quarts at, say, \$13 each for a total of \$52.

Fortunately oil-based primers necessary for the switch from oil-painted surfaces to a latex system will comply with the new VOC rules and be available in gallons. These primers include specialty stain covering and adhesion primers, interior undercoaters, and exterior primers. The latter is especially important because exterior weathered wood should be coated with an oil-based primer for long-lasting results. Latex paints and primers don't adhere well to dirty, chalky surfaces unless they've been meticulously cleaned.

If you can find them, older products are grandfathered in, meaning that supplies manufactured before the new regulations took effect are legal to use. Many suppliers purchased warehouses full of paint for this purpose but have already sold out. What you can't do is bring products from non-regulated areas into regulated areas, or substitute industrial products—which, in the case of oil-based enamels, are still available in gallons—for residential use.

Leveling about Latex

For small finicky jobs oil-based enamels in quarts work fine, but it takes a lot of quarts to paint the exterior of a two-storey Queen Anne house. If you haven't already, it might

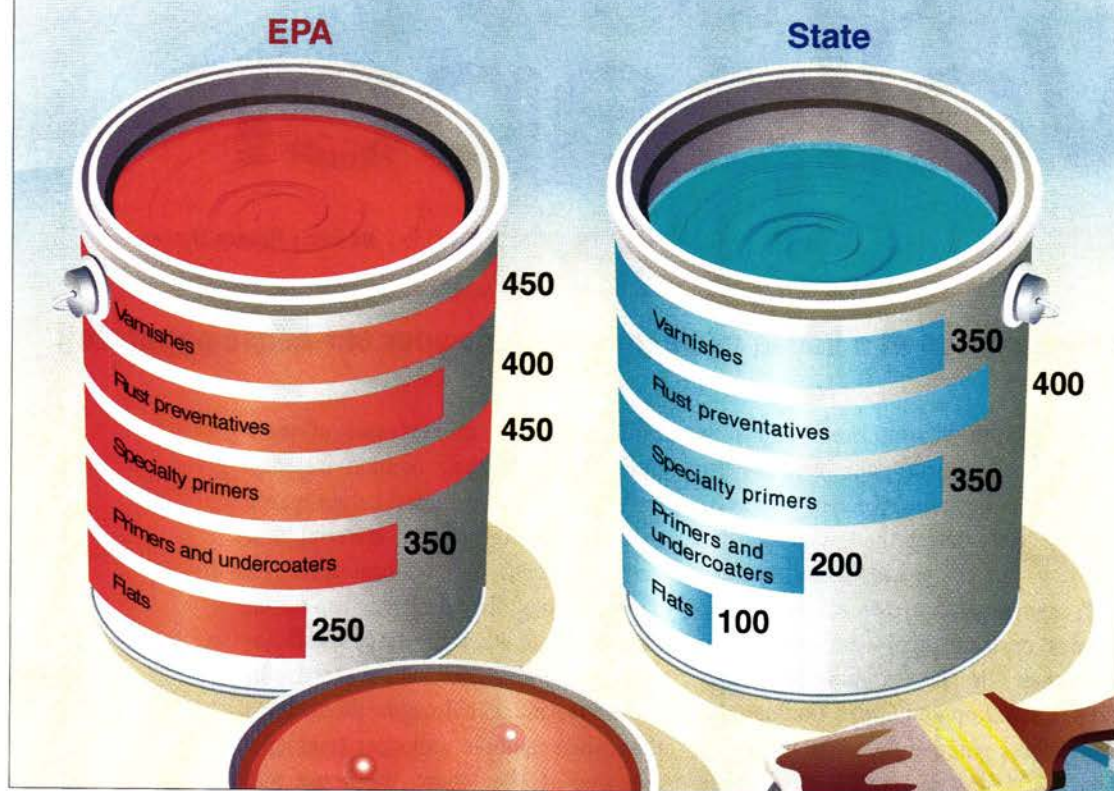
Most affected by the new regulations are exterior paints, including oil-based house paint and enamels for porches and decks. Paint manufactured before 2005 is legal to use in the restricted states and may even be sold in stores.



STEVE JORDAN

EPA regulations reduce VOCs but not enough for some states

VOC Limits by Paint Category (grams per liter)



The lower limits that some states have set for VOCs (volatile organic compounds) help reduce air pollution. VOCs are found in most paint ingredients. How low can VOC limits go? Parts of California plan to limit VOCs in some coatings to as little as 50 grams per liter by 2007.

DICK GAGE

be time to switch to latex.

How low-VOC latex paints measure up depends on your point of reference. If you're comparing them to oil-based paints, in many ways the low-VOC latexes just aren't the same. The truth is as oils disappear and are replaced by waterbornes, we are settling for enamels that don't level as easily, aren't as tough as the old oil-based paints, and don't cover nearly as well. Do-it-yourselfers and professional painters who abandoned oil-based paints a long time ago probably won't notice any difference in performance.

In some ways, the new generation of latex paints does boast some noteworthy improvements, and the new products are significantly better than older latex lines. Washable interior latex flats for walls and ceilings now offer tough properties similar to flat oils. The adhesion of acrylic primers and paints to various substrates now approaches or equals the adhesion properties of oil primers and paints. (Although

modern acrylic primers are excellent, the safest method of converting from an oil-painted surface to latex is to sand the surface and use an appropriate oil-based primer.) With skillful application, latex enamels can be applied to level like their oil-based cousins (see "Working with Water-Based Paints," September/October 2003). Film life and color retention of latexes have long surpassed those of even the best oils ever made.

In a nutshell, the future looks strong for low-VOC latexes. With time manufacturers may create latex paints that have all the attributes of oils, and it probably won't take another 300 years to do it. 🐼

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Puzzling Together the Wallpaper Pieces

By ERICA HUYLER DONNIS

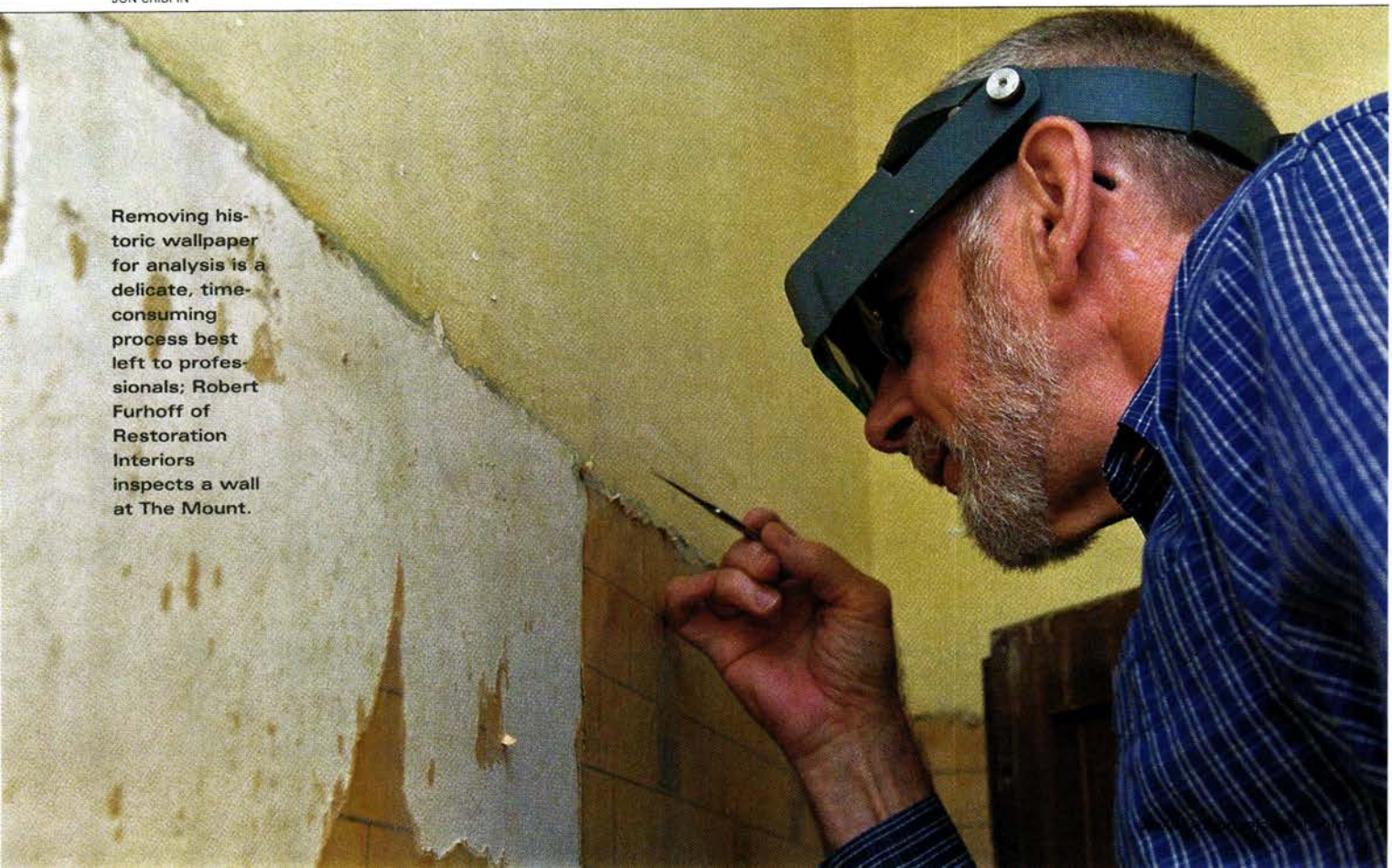
Sleuthing techniques used at a house museum can guide your old-house paper trail.

Edith Wharton is best known to the general public as a novelist who chronicled New York society during the Gilded Age. But in the world of architecture she's remembered as the co-author of a seminal design manual—and no friend of wallpaper. In *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., called for a renewed focus on symmetry and practicality in interior architecture

while criticizing the excesses of their time—which in their opinion included wallpaper. In fact, they derided wallpaper as a fugitive, unsanitary material that detracted from architectural lines. “A papered room,” they declared, “can never, decoratively or otherwise, be as satisfactory as one in which the walls are treated in some other manner.” Imagine the surprise then when multiple wallpaper fragments appeared at The Mount, the house that

JON CRISPIN

Removing historic wallpaper for analysis is a delicate, time-consuming process best left to professionals; Robert Furhoff of Restoration Interiors inspects a wall at The Mount.



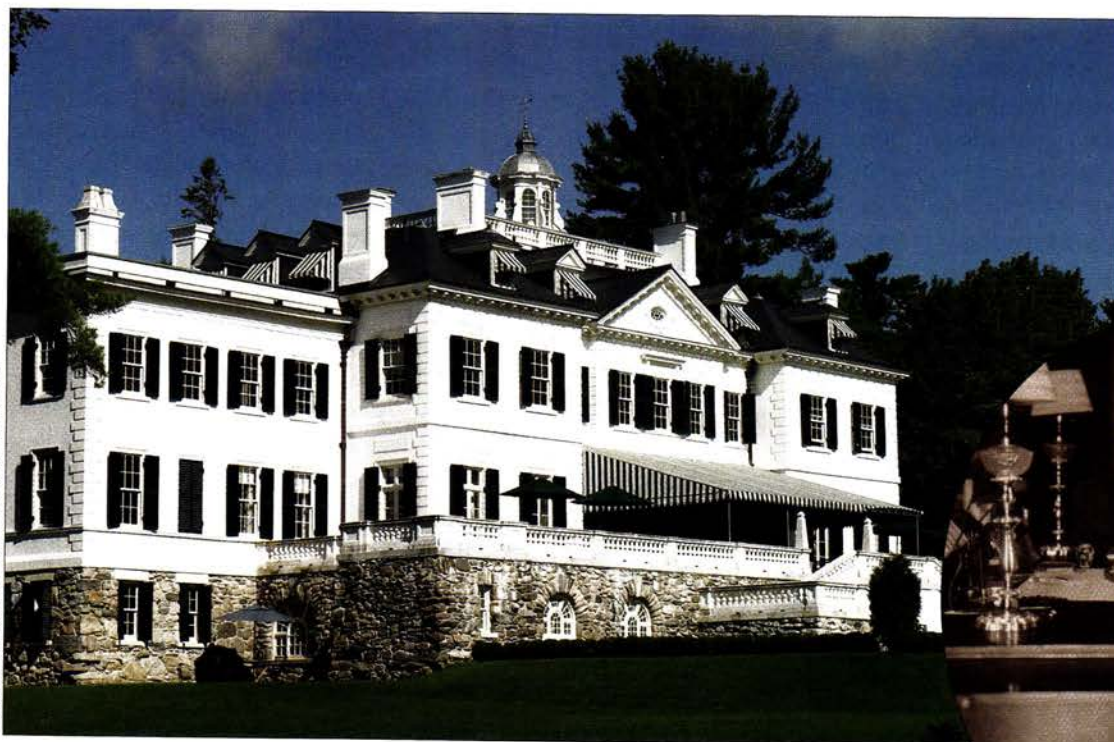


Researchers found a sample of sanitary wallpaper, which became widely available in the second half of the 19th century, behind a built-in cabinet in one of the guest bathrooms.

JON CRISPIN

Wharton designed and built for herself in Lenox, Massachusetts.

During the course of ongoing restoration work, my colleagues and I uncovered fragments of 11 different wallpaper patterns at The Mount. Many were concealed by cornice-level mouldings installed immediately after the paper was initially hung, a common practice then for high-end jobs that guaranteed a perfect trim line at the ceiling. Other pieces were hidden beneath fixtures such as mirrors, bathroom cabinets, and supports for shelves and towel bars that were added by later owners of the house, who also stripped paper from accessible wall surfaces. While some paper fragments stretch across the wall for several feet, others are thin strips only 1" or 2" high. Could these papers really have been selected by Edith Wharton, the wallpaper critic, or were they installed after she left The Mount? To solve this mystery, we conducted some research, called upon several experts in the field, and used some readily accessible methods and resources that can help many old-house owners shed light on their own historic wallpaper discoveries.



Edith Wharton (below) sits in her library at The Mount in 1905. Her home for nine years, the house best represents her architectural philosophy.



COURTESY OF THE MOUNT

Wharton built The Mount in 1902; it is a sprawling example of classical revival style in Lenox, Massachusetts. Designed to conform with Wharton's architectural principles, the house nonetheless revealed evidence of wallpaper, a treatment she publicly denounced.

Making Historical Connections

Our first tactic was to place The Mount's wallpapers within the context of technologies and trends of the late-19th and early 20th centuries. Because Wharton decorated The Mount between 1901 and 1902 and resided there periodically until 1911, we knew that any paper she would have installed must have been on the market at that time. First we had four experts in wallpaper history in the United States examine samples of many of the fragments we found. Their knowledge helped us date the papers based on the popularity of various paper styles, colors, and types, as well as installation methods used during the time period.

Next we consulted samples of historic papers as well as pattern books in the collections of two museum organizations and wrote letters of inquiry to several others. Historic New England possesses an extensive collection of wallpapers with New England associations dating from 1750 to 1950, so we scrolled through hundreds of examples on their searchable, online wallpaper catalog (www.historicnewengland.org/wallpaper/). Because the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum maintains the largest collection of wallcoverings in the United States, we viewed slide after slide of the papers and pattern books contained in their collection. Although we held out little hope of finding even one exact match for a pattern at The Mount, we hit the jackpot when we found a 1910 pattern book produced by the B.A. Cook Company of Fitchburg, Massachusetts. It contained a sample of the same Gothic-

Erica Huyler Donnis examines a fragment of ingrain wallpaper unearthed in a guest bedroom. Ingrains have a fuzzy texture similar to brown paper bags, and colors run throughout the stock (see inset), not just on the surface.



JON CRISPIN; INSET: ROBERT A. FURHOFF

window tile paper found in one of The Mount's guest bathrooms.

Our research led us to conclude that most of The Mount's fragments were representative of several different types of high-quality papers commonly available from the mid- to late-19th century to the first two decades of the 20th century. Although the only wallpaper I was able to identify specifically turned out to be American, it is possible that some of the other patterns found at The Mount were French or English in part because of the widths of the sheets (English papers tend-

ed to be around 22" wide) and the high quality of the designs. This possibility is reinforced by the fact that Wharton purchased many home furnishings in Europe.

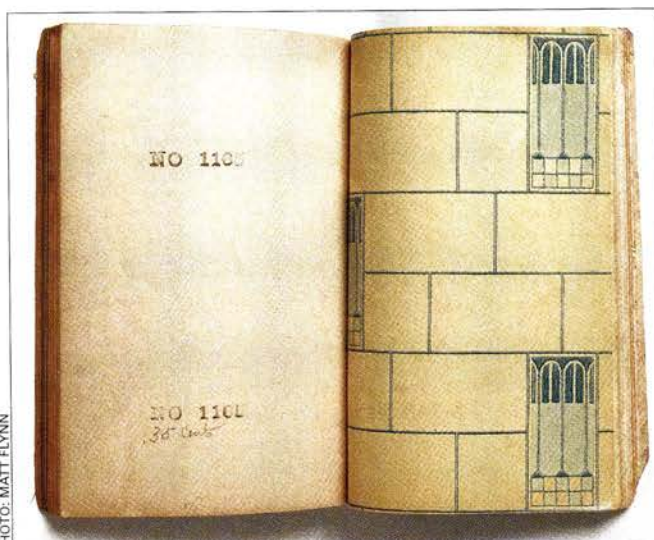
Sanitary Scrutiny

At The Mount, we uncovered fragments of several so-called "sanitary" papers, made with oil-based inks and usually coated with varnishes for a high-gloss finish that protected them from water stains, dirt, and dust. Because these papers were intended to be more washable, they were advertised as appropriate for high-traffic spaces such as kitchens and service hallways. Sanitary wallpapers were popular in patterns simulating the look of ceramic tiles, as they were a cheaper alternative to the real thing.

At The Mount, varnished sanitary papers depicting tiles surfaced in bathrooms adjoining the main bedrooms and included a blue and white faux Dutch Delft tile pattern and the B.A. Cook Company pattern of Gothic windows spaced by flat blue tiles in the Arts & Crafts style. A third sanitary paper depicts six repeating tiles, each containing a delicate sprig of carnations, tulips, and chrysanthemums, among

A match of the Gothic-window tile sanitary paper surfaced in a wallpaper sample book in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum's extensive collection, which is international in scope and dates to the 17th century.

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
PHOTO: MATT FLYNN



other flowers. This paper was installed artfully by a skilled hanger, who dropped each successive sheet to provide varied lines of flowers across each horizontal line.

Looking closely at the surfaces of our sanitary tile papers, we discovered the original high-gloss finishes were most intact in areas that had always been hidden behind cornice-level mouldings. Sanitary papers that had been exposed to light, dust, dirt, and contact with residents were more degraded.

In a guest bedroom, we also discovered a blue-green wallpaper fragment that had a fuzzy nap not unlike a paper grocery bag. This fragment was identified as a type of “ingrain” or “cartridge” paper, so called because it was dyed in pulp form (literally in the grain) before the papers were pressed into rolls, giving them a unique texture and soft color running through the paper stock, instead of just on the surface. Popular from the 1880s through the 1920s, ingrain papers gave rooms a soft, rich backdrop, adding atmosphere that enlivened walls without a distinct decorative pattern.

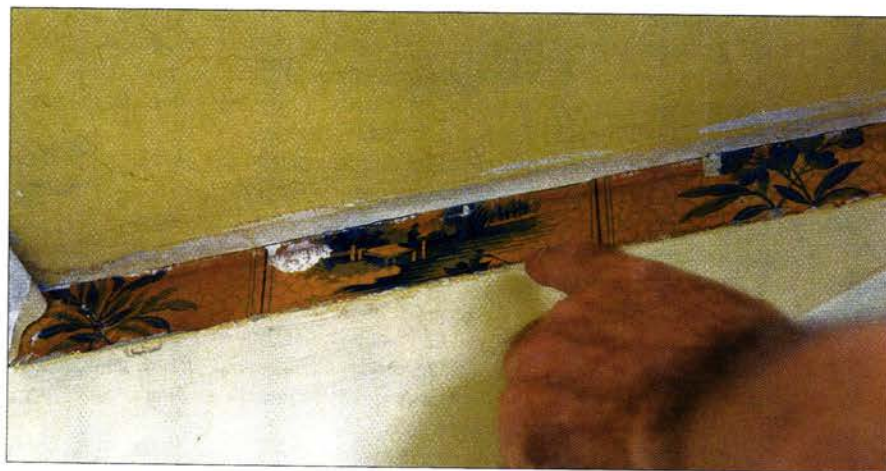
A Paper Mystery

We were puzzled at first by a swath of tissue-thin, light-brown paper found behind an original mirror in Edith Wharton's bedroom. Rather dull to our eyes aesthetically and so thin that the plaster behind it remained visible, it seemed an odd choice for wallpaper. The mystery of its appeal was solved when we discovered it was installed with a gap of about $\frac{1}{16}$ " between strips instead of the butt seam or slight overlap typically used for finish papers; this gap helped identify it as a type of lining paper. Lining papers provided extra support for high-quality finish papers such as French block-printed patterns, which were often quite delicate. Because very high-end papers were expensive, they sometimes moved with owners to a new house; lining papers also made such removal easier. Installing lining papers with a gap between strips ensured that seams would not show beneath the fine decorative paper applied over it.

With our fragment identified as a lining paper, we progressed to the next logical



JON CRISPIN



JON CRISPIN

question: What exactly did Edith Wharton pick for finish paper over this lining? We eagerly examined the room for evidence, gently pulling up sections of the chair rail, window frames, and even the parquet floor in the hope that a small fragment might have been trapped in place. Unfortunately, these hunts proved to be unsuccessful, and no evidence was found. We now know that Wharton had wallpaper in her bedroom, but we remain unsure of what that paper looked like.

We are currently in the midst of carrying out our second level of research:

Robert Furhoff measures the width of a sanitary wallpaper found in a bathroom (top) to help determine its provenance. Fragments can lurk beneath decorative trim. This piece of wallpaper (above) was discovered under a section of cornice moulding.

HANDLING HISTORIC WALLPAPER

By Carolyn Frisa

Original historic wallpaper from the 18th and 19th centuries is rarely found intact in old houses, primarily because repapering always has been an effective way to change a room's appearance completely. This was especially true as wallpaper became less expensive in the mid-19th century, thanks to machine-made paper. Old paper was often stripped off just as it is today, but it is often possible to find fragments left behind that can vary in size from minuscule to large enough that they show a full repeat of the pattern. Some areas of old houses have proved promising for finding fragments. Good places to watch for fragments of early wallpaper are as follows.

- Around or underneath decorative trim such as baseboards, chair rails, friezes, window frames, and mouldings. One technique for searching these areas is to shine a flashlight onto the wall at an angle, which may reveal the outlines of fragments or seams beneath the surface.
- Behind large pieces of furniture, built-in shelves, mirrors, and picture frames, and in closets, where leftover paper was often used as shelf liner.
- In attics, basements, and other storage areas; it's not unheard of to discover remnants of original rolls.
- The interiors of old trunks, drawers, and hat boxes, which may hold paper used as liner.

If you find historic wallpaper remember that it is often very brittle and may have been damaged by water, light, soot, and smoke, or by the past residents of the house. Some minor repairs and preservation steps may be undertaken by homeowners, but a conservator should always be consulted before attempting most *in situ* work or the removal of historic wallpapers. A good example is surface cleaning, which can reduce dust and soot, but also can cause damage if not done properly.

- Start by closely examining the wallpaper for loose pieces and any flaking or lifting paint. You will need a magnifier to assess the paper's condition fully. If any of these problems exist, surface cleaning will likely cause damage; consult a professional.
- If the paper appears stable, use a soft brush to gently clean it. Working in small areas, start at the top and work your way down to the floor. Wear a dust mask to prevent inhalation of particles.
- If further cleaning is necessary, you can use commercially available, non-chemical, dry-cleaning sponges. Apply small strokes in varying directions with minimal pressure. Be sure to stop periodically and monitor progress from a distance to prevent unevenly cleaned surfaces; watch for potential loss.

Re-adhering loose wallpaper is best done by a conservator to prevent damage or staining of the paper. If you want to try it anyway, follow these guidelines: *Never* use acrylic adhesives, pressure-sensitive tapes, or rubber cement. These adhesives are non-archival and can be difficult to remove without causing damage. Severe staining can also develop over a short period of time. If a water-based adhesive such as starch paste is used, water staining can occur if the adhesive is not applied properly. To protect your find:

- Limit exposure to direct sunlight as much as possible. Many historic colors are very sensitive to light and can fade dramatically.
- Monitor exterior walls and ceilings for any signs of water penetration.
- Keep furniture slightly away from walls to prevent scratching or gouging of the paper.
- Maintain moderate, stable environmental conditions. Avoid prolonged high temperatures and high levels of relative humidity. Air conditioners and dehumidifiers may be necessary to accomplish this.

Carolyn Frisa is a paper conservator at the Northeast Document Conservation Center.



Carolyn Frisa separates a fragment of historic wallpaper from a piece of plaster.

microscopic analysis. This step should pinpoint definitively whether these papers were installed by Edith Wharton or by a later owner of The Mount. Because Wharton was the first owner of the house, her selections would have to be the first layer of decorative treatment found on the walls. We carefully removed small samples of selected fragments along with their underlying plaster and examined them under a microscope to determine if other earlier layers of paint and paper lay beneath them. We concluded that the fragments examined to date are indeed the first decorative wall treatments, separated from the original plaster only by coatings of wallpaper glue and, in some cases, lining paper.

Contradicting Advice

Our insights confirmed that while Edith Wharton publicly decried the use of wallpaper, she ignored her own advice when it came to decorating The Mount. Substantial evidence points to her use of wallpaper throughout the house's secondary spaces, including bedrooms, bathrooms, and service areas. We may never know exactly why she changed her mind about the decorative value of wallpaper, but we can guess. In some cases, papers were less expensive than other wall treatments, which may explain the use of sanitary papers depicting tiles instead of ceramic tiles themselves.

Wharton was certainly wealthy by contemporary standards, but she was no Vanderbilt. She made several cost-cutting decisions as she built The Mount. In addition, she was known to be generous to her employees and may have given upper-level staff some latitude in selecting decorative treatments for the spaces they would use. Interestingly, Wharton's 1934 autobiography stated that friends often accused her of "not applying to the arrangement of my own rooms the rigorous rules laid down in *The Decoration of Houses*."

Future Patterns

Now that we know more about the style, composition, and probable dates of The Mount's wallpaper fragments, we're better prepared to make decisions about their



restoration. We intend to preserve representative samples of all of the wallpaper fragments uncovered in order to document the history of the house's wall finishes over time. We also hope to reproduce some of the patterns that were positively identified as Edith Wharton's original selections in order to restore The Mount's interiors to reflect the time of her residence accurately. Lastly, we want to ensure that we can protect the fragments that remain on the wall during periods of active restoration work. Fortunately, we were awarded a grant to bring in a conservator specializing in the care of wallpaper.

Our work with The Mount's wallpaper fragments continues as we move forward with interior restoration. At present, we are reproducing the floral tile sanitary paper and the blue-green cartridge paper to help restore and refurnish Edith Wharton's bedroom suite. The fragments found in other spaces await further research and conservation. Eventually, we hope that all of the rooms that were once decorated with wallpaper will come alive with reproductions of patterns approved by Edith Wharton—the critic with a secret soft spot for wallpaper. 🏠



There's no evidence of wallpaper in Wharton's boudoir (above), but covering decorative wall panels with fancy papers was popular at the time.

Uncovered fragments (left) must be handled with care. A sample is packaged in acid-free paper and box before going into storage.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 88.

JON CRISPIN

Erica Huyler Donnis is The Mount's consulting curator of collections.

Special thanks to Richard Nylander at Historic New England in Boston.

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A non-abrasive, bleach-free scouring powder seems contradictory, but that's why Bon Ami Cleaning Powder (www.bonami.com) works well on old-house fixtures. Since 1886, Bon Ami's active ingredient has been crushed feldspar, an expensive but much softer scouring agent than the silica commonly found in modern cleaning powders. It's gentle enough to clean glass and won't leave behind a chemical residue. NASA even used Bon Ami to clean the windows on Skylab, proof that old products are sometimes perfectly in step with modern technology. Circle 16 on the resource card.



When it comes to cleaning antique woodwork, the strength of today's household detergent cleaners is overkill and even damaging. Instead, look to a mild, non-sudsing soap such as Murphy Oil Soap (www.colgate.com). First sold 100 years ago, Murphy Oil is used only on finished wood, never on untreated surfaces or wood floors where the finish has worn away. Dilute the soap with water and wash the floor with a damp, well-wrung sponge. Use a clean cloth moistened with water to remove the soap film, and mop up any drops to avoid staining the woodwork. Circle 17 on the resource card.

Cleaners Lost & Found

Make an old house shine with time-tested, old-fashioned products.

Anyone who has spruced up an old house knows that using the wrong cleaning product is sometimes worse than living with the grime. Abrasive scouring agents scratch surfaces, and harsh floor cleaners remove all the dirt and the finish, too. So what are the gentlest, most effective products to make an old house sparkle? Often, they're the same ones the original owners used many decades ago—all natural, pH-neutral cleaners that forgive frequent use. Some were eco-friendly long before the concept was in vogue. The venerable old cleaners we profile here may not have been featured on store shelves in years, but tap into the online retail world and you'll find they're still around, often sold directly by manufacturers. 🐾

By CATHERINE
SISKOS

PHOTOS BY ANDY
OLENICK



Complementing each other in function and form are a trio of polishes. Called Bar Keepers Friend for good reason, this mild, non-abrasive powder was first used by bartenders in the 1880s to keep an array of metal trim—copper, brass, chrome, steel, even cast iron—gleaming. In addition to removing rust and stains from metal, Bar Keepers (www.barkeepersfriend.com) also cleans porcelain, grout, and ceramic tile. Circle 18 on the resource card.

A cotton wadding cloth soaked in a solution, Nev-Dull (www.eagleone.com) has a 70-year track record for cleaning tarnish and dirt from all metals, even gold jewelry. In old houses, it's the polish of choice for shining nickel brightwork on pre-1930s woodstoves, cooking ranges, or bathroom hardware. Circle 19 on the resource card.

Simichrome also restores luster to metals but goes one step further and leaves behind a protective finish that retards tarnishing. The polish also helps renew the shine for vintage chromed appliances such as a Toastmaster toaster or Kitchen Aid mixer. Simichrome is sold by specialized online retailers, including www.architecturals.net. Circle 20 on the resource card.



When multipurpose cleaners can't do the job, try primary chemicals. The great-granddaddy of household cleaners, Rainbow Pure Oxalic Acid (www.empireblended.com) is a crystalline, organic acid that serves dual purposes in old houses. Unadulterated and sprinkled on metal or porcelain, the acid eats away rust stains. Dissolved in water, it becomes a wood bleach and the classic solution for removing blue water stains in oak flooring or furniture. Like many acids, oxalic acid is potentially lethal and should be used with care. Circle 21 on the resource card.



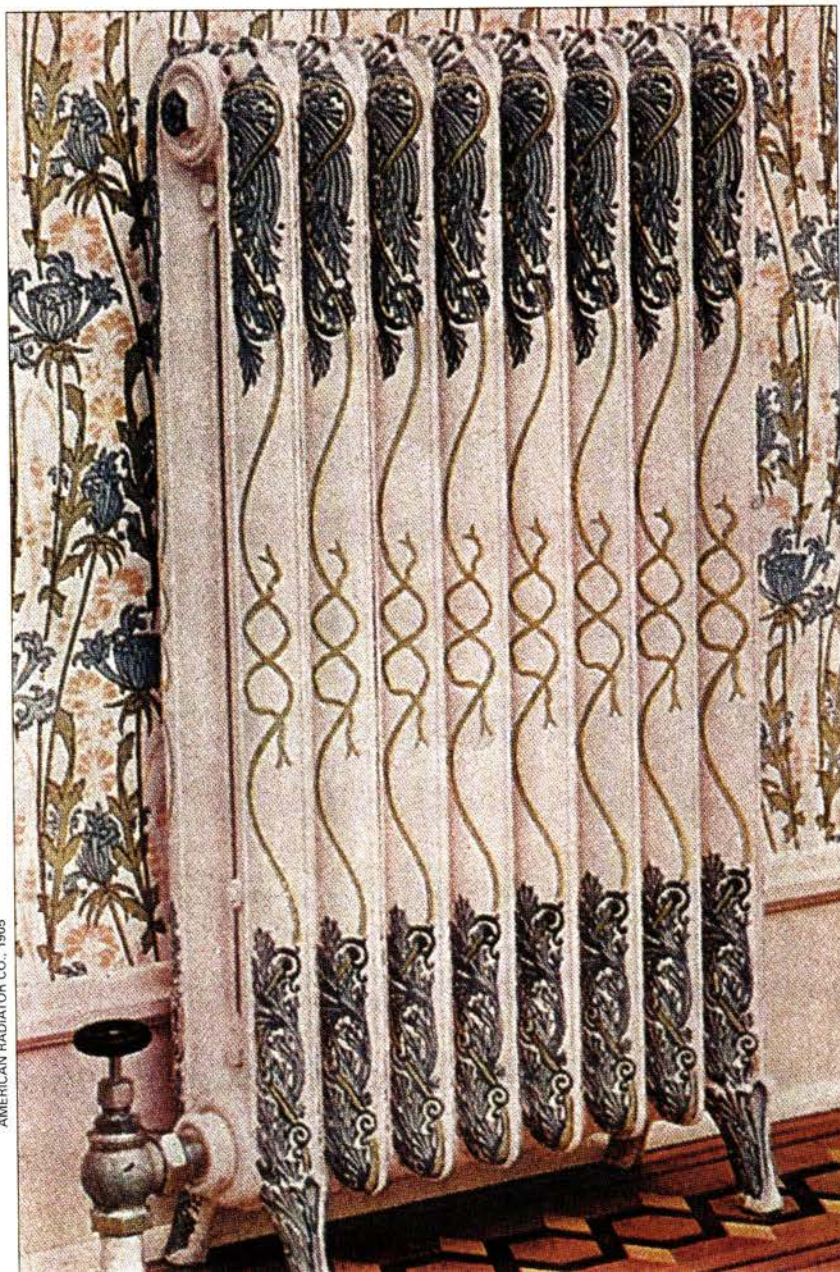
Short for trisodium phosphate, TSP is a generic compound that serves many household purposes: masonry cleaner, paint deglosser, and all-purpose dirt fighter. A strong cleaner when dissolved in water, TSP even works as a mild paint stripper, and its alkaline nature is ideally suited for emulsifying grease and lead paint cleanup. Some states (New York and Vermont for example) prohibit TSP because it causes algae growth, which harms the environment. TSP is sold by specialized online retailers such as www.doityourself.com. Circle 22 on the resource card.

An environment-friendly alternative to TSP, MEX (www.ugl.com) consists of a group of non-phosphate chemicals, chiefly sodium metasilicate, and like TSP mixes with water to form a cleaning solution. An ideal hearth cleaner, MEX removes soot and smoke stains from masonry, and is an effective grease fighter for concrete driveways and walls. Use TSP and MEX with care, and always test first. Circle 23 on the resource card.

Color Me *Beautiful*

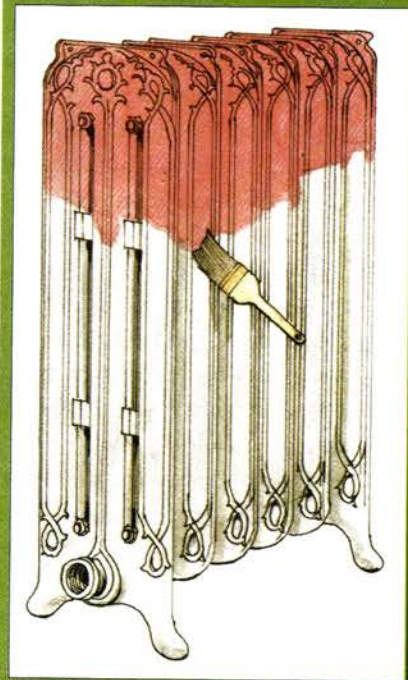
BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

Two techniques, borrowed from the past, transform radiators into artwork.

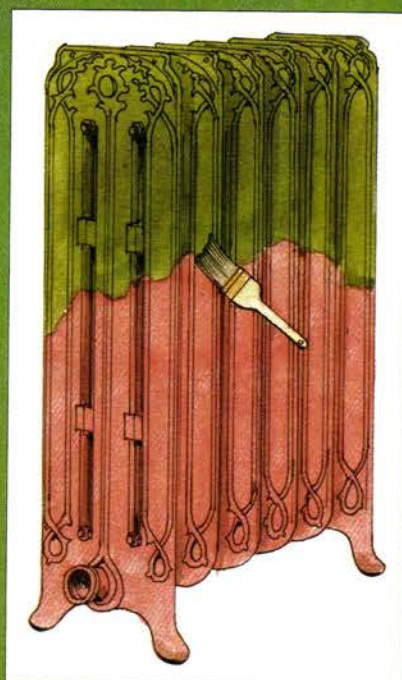


AMERICAN RADIATOR CO., 1905

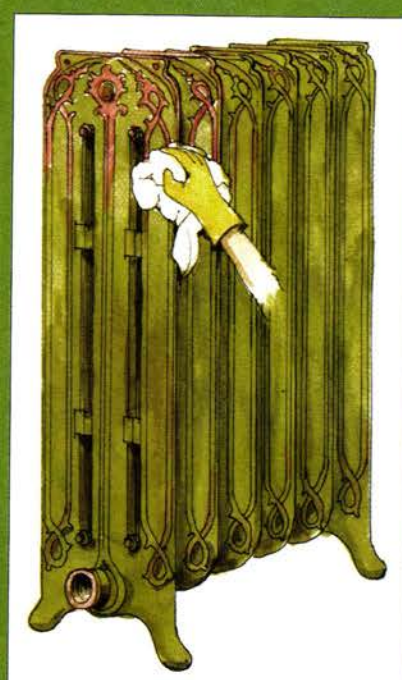
Radiators painted in elaborate color schemes became popular around 1900. This example, featuring colors to match the wallpaper and hand-detailed vines, was featured in an American Radiator Company souvenir book from 1905.



To polychrome, first use a brush to paint a solid coat of your highlight shade over the entire radiator; let it dry completely.



Next, use a brush to paint the background, or main, color you have selected. Be sure to apply a solid coat so that none of the highlight shade shows through.



Before the background shade has dried, use a cloth or a sponge to wipe down the high spots of the raised ornament and expose the highlight color underneath.

Radiators were a huge step forward in home heating when they became widely available towards the end of the 19th century. Their dependable, even warmth and ease of operation caused them to quickly grow in popularity, but their positive aspects were soon undercut by the aesthetic dilemma they presented fashion-minded homeowners: How do you decorate around an obtrusive, immobile hunk of metal?

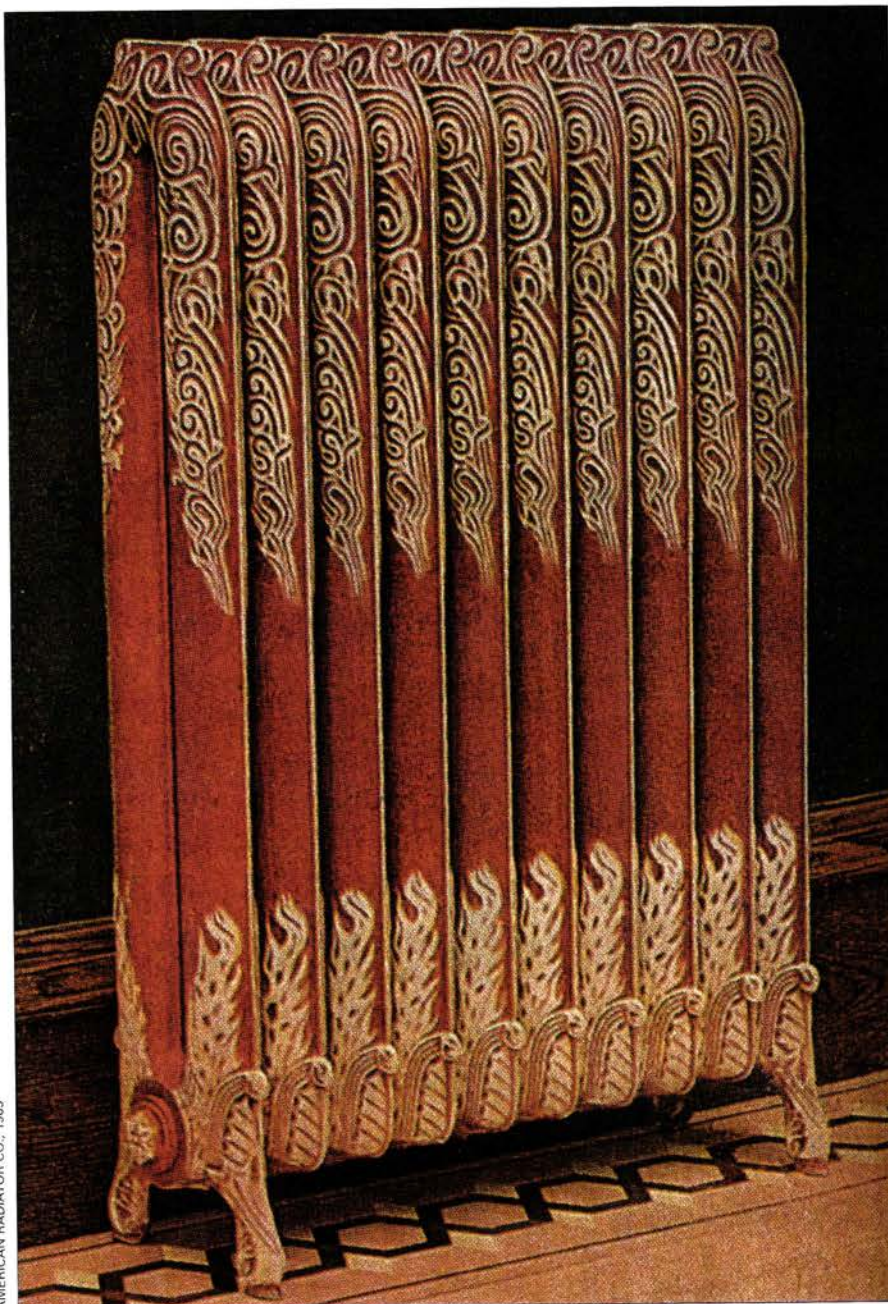
Many people tried, and failed, to make radiators less conspicuous. Painting them to match the walls so that the radiators would blend in, or arranging furniture to hide them, only seemed to make the hulking beasts stand out more. The earliest radiators were wrought iron tube radiators, huge and impossible to decorate around. Then came column radiators, slightly more streamlined but still quite difficult to overlook in a room. Manufacturers, hoping to increase the mar-

ketability of their product, began creating more and more ornate radiators—ones that boasted intricate decorative details—and billed them as beautiful in their own right. An ad for one such model read, “For beauty, richness and delicacy of ornamentation, elegance of proportion, finished smoothness of castings, appealing senses of lightness and gracefulness, the Verona is simply incomparable. It is a work of art in iron.” Consumers didn’t quite buy the radiator-as-art tactic; they still struggled to make them fit in with their furnishings. So for a brief moment in time, homeowners desperate to solve this décor dilemma latched onto a novel idea: Splash radiators in elaborate color schemes in the hope of turning an eyesore into an accent piece.

Polychroming Makes a Bold Impression

The earliest technique for beautifying radiators with paint was called polychroming, from the Greek words *many*

and *color*. It used two- and three-color paint combinations to highlight radiators’ unique architectural elements—the decorative scrollwork and ornamental floral reliefs that increasingly were molded into pieces to make them more appealing. Polychroming, which competed for a time with painting radiators gold in a technique known as bronzing, came into fashion after 1900. Shortly thereafter the American Radiator Company took the heating and ventilating grand prize at the Saint Louis World’s Fair in 1904 and published a souvenir book expounding on the beauty of radiators to celebrate the victory. The book featured colorful illustrations of radiators decked out in fashionable, bright hues—looking more like elaborately frosted cakes than clunky heating elements—and offered detailed instructions on how to achieve the same results at home. For a few years, polychroming became all the rage, until decorative radiator boxes became the preferred treatment.



Radiators in color schemes contrasting with the walls (above) were recommended for decorating areas such as hallways and billiard rooms. It's possible to do stippling over polychroming (right) for added interest and depth.

ROBERT LEANNA



While polychroming looks as though it involves a painstaking process, it is in fact a fairly straightforward technique to beautify radiators in three easy steps. First, using a brush, paint the entire radiator the color you want the finished ornamental detail (the raised filigree) to appear; let this coat dry completely. Second, paint the entire radiator the background, or main, color. Third, before this second coat of paint is fully dried and while it is still tacky, take a cloth or a sponge and wipe down the raised ornament to expose the color painted beneath (it takes a bit of practice to remove the background color from only the high spots). And *voilà*—you have an intricately detailed radiator without a lot of expended effort. If you're artistically inclined, you can also place some additional ornamental details freehand. An example from the American Radiator book shows green vines drawn with a flourish onto a white and blue painted radiator in order to accent the flowers and stems of the wallpaper behind it.

Polychroming had the effect of turning radiators into one of the grace notes of a room, bringing them out of hiding and into the limelight. The American Radiator book suggested a number of three-color schemes targeting the gamut of fashionable palettes popular at the turn of the century. A list of their selections (the first color was suggested for the background or main shade) included: red, brown, and grey; red, olive, and grey-blue; yellow, old rose, and white; terra cotta, white, and soft green; sage, russet, and blue-green; blue, light olive, and plum; and green, violet, and soft grey. Color choice was important and was dictated by the decorative effect a homeowner wanted to achieve. Some people polychromed in colors designed to complement and augment the wallpaper; others picked completely contrasting shades, with the intention of having the radiators stand apart from the rest of the furnishings.

Stippling, for a Sun-Dappled Effect

A like-minded but more subtle technique for beautifying radiators was called stippling or sponging, and was intended to

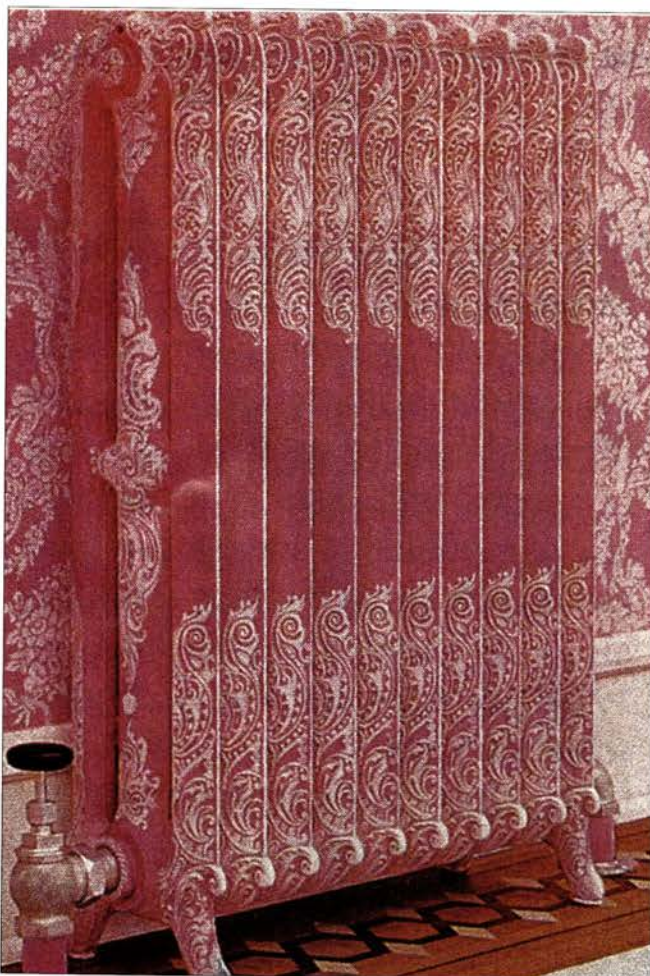
make radiators harmonize perfectly with their surrounding walls. Stippling was accomplished by blending two complementary paint colors for a two-toned, dappled effect—somewhat akin to sunlight warming a pitted stone surface—and was especially suited for rooms where the wall decoration was one of mottled and blended wallpapers.

The simplest method of stippling, also known as Tiffany glazing, is to first paint two solid covering coats of the background color. Once the background coats have dried, take a natural sea sponge that's been cut across the grain (this provides a good, textured painting surface), dip it into a well of colored paint, tap it out a few times to remove any excess, then pat the sponge straight across the radiator without twisting or turning it. Continue working this way until the entire surface has been covered. For added interest, a third color can be layered onto the radiator using the same sponging technique. The resulting mottled effect adds texture to the radiator, helping it harmonize with its surroundings. It's also possible to do stippling over a polychromed radiator for an even more intricate effect.

There are some important points to remember when undertaking either of these radiator beautifying techniques. First, make sure the radiators are in good shape for refinishing—they must be thoroughly clean and free of grease and dust. Be sure to scrape and sandpaper any scaling or rusty spots. On the off-chance the radiators have never been painted, or if the finish is in very bad shape, apply a prime coat of rust-inhibiting metal paint. Second, make sure you choose paints, including a prime coat, that can withstand the heat of the radiator. Also, it's important to avoid using any water-based paint directly on the cast iron as it can cause the metal to rust, which may then bleed through the paint. Paint only when radiators are off. Otherwise, their warmth will dry the paint too quickly. Keeping these simple guidelines in mind, you can use your imagination to make some creative color choices and turn your radiators into a modern-day fashion statement with an eye towards the past. 🏠



ANDY OLENICK



AMERICAN RADIATOR CO., 1905

Using a natural sea sponge (above) for stippling adds complexity to the finish. A radiator appears as a 3-D version of the wallpaper (left) and shows why polychroming became a popular technique for making radiators blend in.



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For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 88.

A Corner Monopoly

BY ANNE MCCARTHY STRAUSS

in Fort Wayne, Indiana

An old-house owner with vision re-invigorates an entire city block.

The corner house where Tom lives—a 1913 Arts & Crafts-inspired double house—was in terrible disrepair when he bought it. Now it's a show-stopper.

DAVID KIRK

Tom Cain is one of Fort Wayne's West Central neighborhood pioneers. Over a 20-year period, he's purchased and restored four properties, remapping the course of an entire block.



DAVID KIRK

In the game of Monopoly, the cheapest and most expensive properties are located on corners. This is the story of how one man turned the equivalent of Mediterranean and Baltic Avenues—the bargains on the Monopoly board—into Broadway and Park Place, the game's crown jewels.

Tom Cain bought his first property in the West Central neighborhood of Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1984. After transforming the three-bedroom Foursquare double house from a shambles into a showplace, he decided to purchase the corner property next door in 1992 and restore it as well. "I actually bought the corner building





because it was so run-down," explains Tom. "Once I settled into the first townhouse, I was nagged by the neglected condition of the neighboring properties and felt compelled to improve them, too."

During the early 1960s, the 1913 Arts & Crafts-inspired double house had been hacked indiscriminately by an unscrupulous landlord into four apartments, which had fallen into dreadful disrepair. Years of neglect and shoddy craftsmanship left the house with faulty wiring, a leaky roof, unreliable plumbing, and an antiquated heating system. Adding insult to injury, repairs after a 1970s fire "remuddled" the interior's original fine features. The apartments were habitable but dismal, "like a



DAVID KIRK

A built-in sideboard is Arts & Crafts, but leaded windows lean toward Colonial Revival. "The house is kind of a mutt," says Tom.

The West End Historic District

smile with missing teeth," says Tom.

Despite the deterioration, Tom's background—he's a senior urban designer for the city of Fort Wayne—helped him see the beauty and craftsmanship hidden behind the destruction. "The original architecture and potential were evident," he says. "I saw my task as putting back a lot of missing pieces."

Restoring the properties to their original splendor has been an ongoing labor of love for Tom, and not a square inch has been left untouched—from porches and interiors to plumbing, electrical work, and landscaping.

The Houses That Tom Rebuilt

Growing up in suburban Chicago during the 1970s, Tom learned about fixing up houses from a neighbor who built his house from scratch. Early on, Tom developed a keen interest in gardening, building, and restoration, and fed his growing enthusiasm by following home improvement shows and an assortment of magazines for years. "I read *Old-House Journal* before it was printed in full color," he boasts.

In addition to reading as much as he could about home improvement subjects,

Fort Wayne's West Central neighborhood was founded in 1830 and remained a favored middle- and upper-class neighborhood to businessmen and professionals well into the 20th century. The houses represent virtually all architectural styles popular between 1830 and 1950: Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, Richardsonian Romanesque, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Prairie, Tudor, Arts & Crafts, and American Foursquare.

The district is home to Fort Wayne's last remaining Gothic Revival residence, as well as the city's largest collection of homes designed by Wing and Mahurin. These architects were famous throughout Indiana for a number of outstanding buildings, most of which combine Queen Anne and Romanesque styling.

After World War II, changing tastes and a local housing shortage left homes dissected into small apartments, many of which fell into disrepair by the 1960s. The early 1980s brought gentrification through people interested in restoring the district to its original splendor; Tom was one of them. Thanks to their efforts, the area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as the West End Historic District.



TOM CAIN



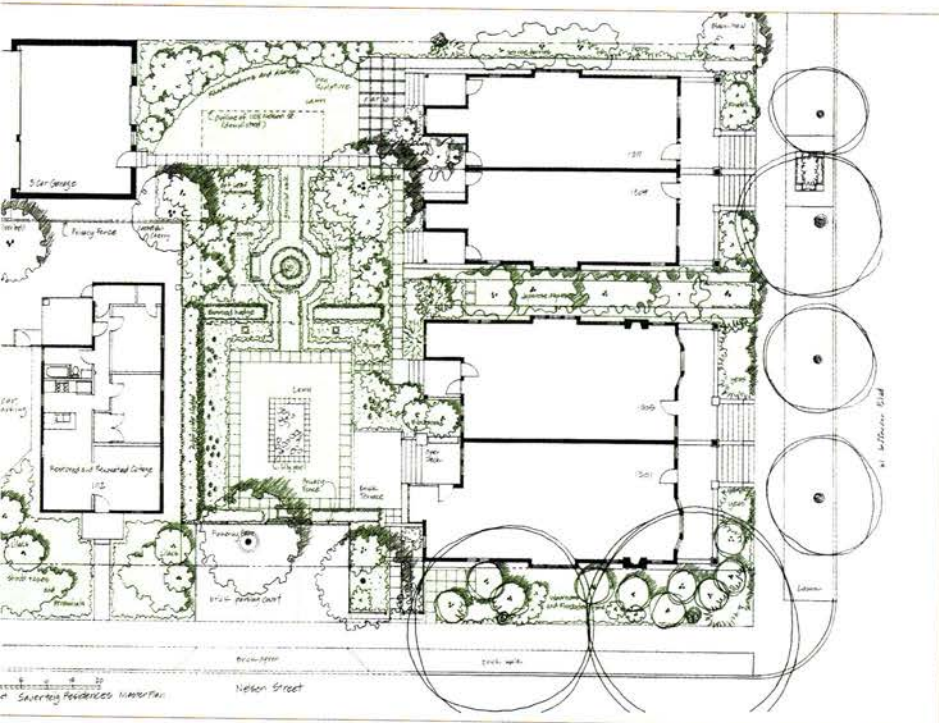
DAVID KIRK

Like many homes in the Arts & Crafts vein, natural woodwork is a highlight of the interior hall. The stairwell bears strong, simple lines and makes a nice centerpiece for the main living space.



DAVID KIRK

The carriage house (above) as it looked before and after Tom's handiwork. He was delighted to find original clapboard mostly intact beneath aluminum siding. A master drawing of his properties (right) details the elaborate gardens between them and shows the outline of a building too termite-damaged to save.



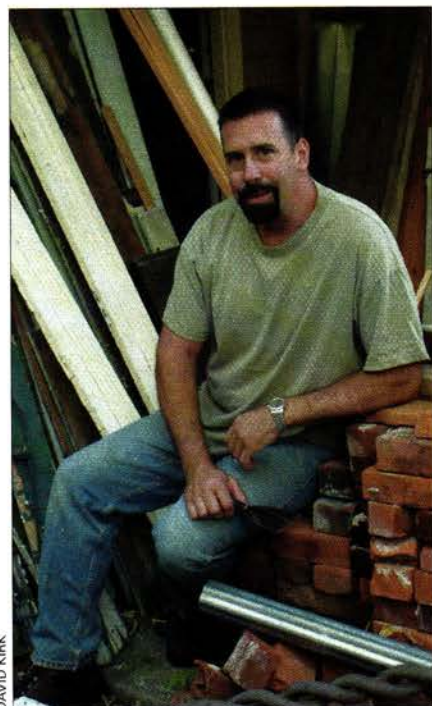
Tom initiated casual apprenticeships to learn his craft. "Here in the Midwest, people are usually friendly," he says. "They take pride in their work and in teaching others how they do what they do. I've often stopped by a home site and asked a worker about a project."

With the exception of some plumbing, electrical, and structural work, Tom did all the restoration himself. "If a project required a huge learning curve, or specialized skills and unique tools and equipment, I hired contractors. Friends helped with many jobs that weren't cut out for one man," he says.

Those friends helped make it easy to come by the perfect materials at little or no cost. Tom fashioned his patio out of bricks from a condemned city sidewalk that he and his buddies salvaged. After obtaining permission from project authorities, Tom

TOM CAIN

Tom works at removing peeling paint (right) from the back of the cottage. Sitting amidst a cache of materials that he has removed or salvaged (below), he says, "It's kind of like a staging area for things I'm not sure I won't need."



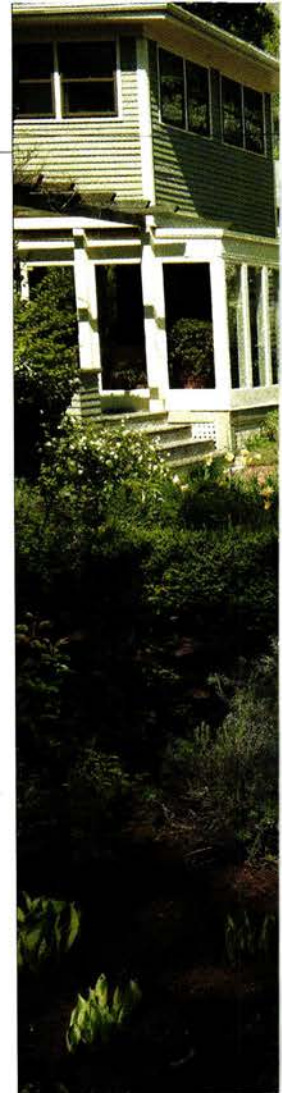
DAVID KIRK



DAVID KIRK



TOM CAIN



DAVID KIRK

and his friends spent the better part of a weekend procuring bricks. "We literally dug out and carried the bricks away from the sidewalk replacement construction site. We collected close to 4,000 bricks, saving them from the landfill while obtaining the finest original materials for the patio for free," he says. "You can't buy bricks with this character or patina."

Another way to keep costs down, Tom found, was by bartering his design skills for work he couldn't do himself. One example is his "purchase" of four beveled leaded glass windows from a local artisan in exchange for landscape design. The wood window casings were found inexpensively, too—at a local salvage shop that sells historic materials from area homes being remodeled or demolished.

A Flowering Investment

A landscape architect to the core, Tom never considered the properties complete until they had blooming gardens. Because

he views outdoor spaces as rooms from which people move, one to the next, he created three botanical areas based on the work of renowned English garden collaborators, Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edwin Lutyens, whose work was in vogue at the time the properties were built. Using flowers such as Siberian irises, Russian sage, hybrid daylilies, and Rocket Ligularia, which were adapted to Midwestern conditions, Tom surrounded the lawn with a classic English perennial border in white, yellow, and blue hues. A rose garden, complete with a koi-filled pond, includes white Iceberg and yellow rugosa shrub roses, framed by a border of Munstead lavender.

Tom's keen interest in revitalizing the West Central neighborhood has had the additional result of making him a landlord. Living in half of the corner Foursquare, he rents two apartments in the other half of that building, as well as three units in the first house he purchased.

You'd think these projects would have been enough, but Tom couldn't stop with just two restoration successes. Once he settled in at his newly refurbished corner house, he was troubled again by the run-down conditions of surrounding buildings. That led him to buy two more properties behind his home, a carriage house and a cottage, the latter a restoration project that still occupies him.

The cottage is a simple gable-fronted worker's house, a fairly basic, vernacular home of the mid-19th century. It does, however, show some Italianate influences. Tom undertook a new trade with this project, too, doing all of the electrical work himself for the first time. "I began by reading books and watching the work of a friend who's an electrical contractor. When I was ready to do the job, I took out a permit through my contractor friend, who oversaw my work for safety purposes and ensured it was to code."

Tom expects his final work on the cot-



TOM CAIN

Gardens flowing between the buildings are based on designs from English landscapers, Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edwin Lutyens. Historically accurate, the gardens boast a reproduction Lutyens sculpture (above) as well as antique urns (far left).

tage, the laying of a hardwood floor, to be completed in early 2006. As soon as it's done, the cottage will be rented, too.

"I'm no Donald Trump," Tom says. "But I am fortunate to live in an area where housing is affordable. By national standards, my purchases and restorations have been done on a shoestring."

Will Tom run out of projects soon? On the contrary, he recently purchased a one-and-a-half-storey Greek Revival cottage two blocks away that he says will get a major makeover. "Now that I've bought yet another house, I realize my compulsion to restore the neighborhood is more than just a hobby; it's a healthy addiction," one that's made his properties the jewels in the crown of the West Central neighborhood. 🏡

Anne McCarthy Strauss lives in Long Island, New York, and specializes in writing about home, food, and other lifestyle topics.



DAVID KIRK

The striking green fireplace tiles once hid beneath a pink and beige mosaic. Like nearly everything Tom has touched, he brought back their original beauty.

Some Assembly Required

BY GORDON BOCK

Inspired by colonial ingenuity, the prehistory of the prefabricated house shows why it just may be the longest-running construction tradition in North America.

We like to hear that old houses are built from the materials right at hand, framed with the very timbers felled to clear the site, or finished with plaster using sand from a nearby stream. We like this

connection because it reinforces a romantic image of an earlier, simpler world where building a house was like growing one's own food: direct and untouched by the tentacles of technology or large-scale commerce. We find it easy to believe that houses changed dramatically—perhaps

for the worse—when they started to become accretions of factory-made components, assembled like machines hundreds of miles from their point of origin. When we see such prefabricated houses today, we assume that the practice is a product of our lifetime, or at least that of our parents. And we are shocked when we learn that all of these assumptions can be very wrong.

In reality, the portable, prefabricated house is a concept that dates back more than 200 years in North America. Prefabricated houses not only have traveled to almost every corner of the continent, they also often represent the earliest dwellings to appear anywhere. Rather than being strictly about man-made materials or high technology, the prefab has evolved to serve a wide variety of methods, uses, and inhabitants, with one need in common: shelter that can be transported readily and then erected quickly and easily, often in a place short on construction skills and materials. Whatever the ultimate use, the point of a prefabricated house has always been the same: expedience both for



DANIEL REIFF

The 1875 Miller Cottage in Chautauqua, New York, was built while the portable house evolved from basic shelter to vacation home. It was the retreat of Lewis Miller, an industrialist who helped found the Chautauqua Institution.



the user and the supplier. Appreciating the surprisingly rich history of the early prefabs can add another dimension to understanding the not-so-new construction techniques behind many of the new houses springing up all around us.

Before 1830, the backbone of a house was not light studs but a timber frame, an ancient method of interconnecting heavy timbers into a structural skeleton that led directly to the nascent idea of building prefabrication. In timber framing, each mortise-and-tenon joint that holds the frame together is carefully crafted in advance by itinerant joiners. As each tim-

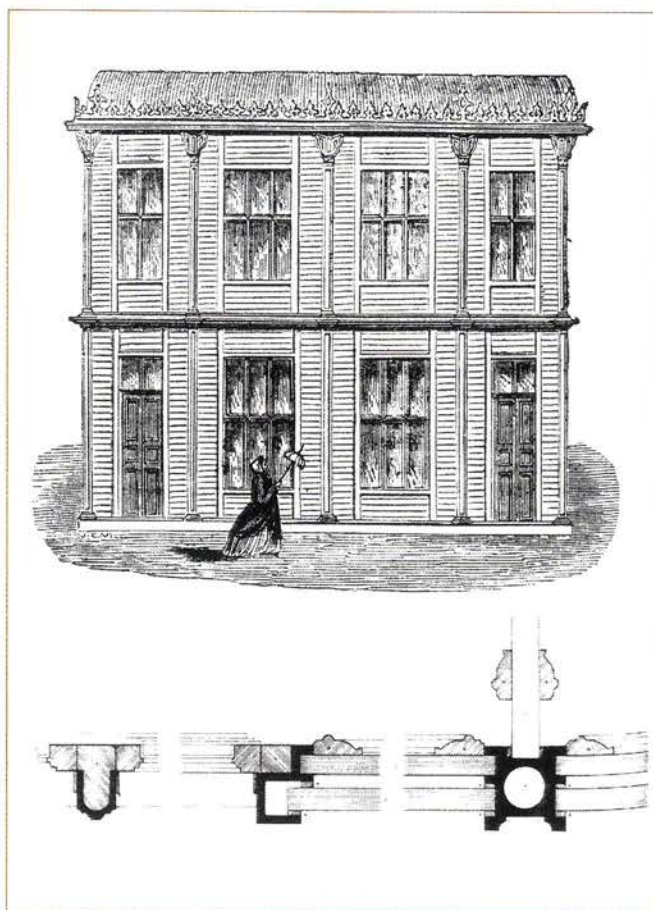
In colonial America, the ports of New England and Virginia were already exporting timber and other raw materials to the Caribbean and overseas; shipping knocked-down timber-frame houses was only the next logical step. Though early records are sketchy, one documented example is a timber-frame house built by Clarke and Hodgdon of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to be shipped to the island of Grenada. After the Revolutionary War, the

www.oldhousejournal.com

Below: The Frame House is a heavy timber-frame structure pre-cut in New England and shipped to Honolulu to house missionaries. Erected in 1821, it waited months more for sufficient lumber and finish materials to complete it.



PHOTO BY M. VITARELLI, MISSION HOUSES MUSEUM



A British design for an 1853 Australian iron house. The detail at bottom shows how cast iron columns and window frames are slotted for wood panels or corrugated iron.

Also known as the John Bartlin House, Bahamas House was imported to Key West in 1830. Note the extensive use of shade-giving galleries running across multiple sides.



JAMES C. MASSEY

In fact, colonization of far-flung, exotic regions became a critical catalyst in the development of the prefabricated house at this time. However, the first big technical sparks came not from the United States but the British Isles. After 1830, the flow of British migration shifted from North America to Australia, and the mounting numbers of immigrants brought with them a deepening shortage of construction materials and, more importantly, skilled labor. Enter John Manning, a London carpenter and builder, to fill the gap. Manning devised and manufactured a Portable Colonial Cottage that was widely used and promoted during the peak years of Australian migration. Though still a simple, one-storey dwelling made of wood, the genius of Manning's cottage was its design. Instead of a medieval timber frame, each cottage was a series of vertical, grooved posts joined and bolted into a foundation sill beam. Interchangeable

panels slid in between the posts to create walls, and preformed trusses topped these walls to support a roof. The cottage required no on-site work to complete, and the pieces could be transported easily and assembled by the settler with a minimum of tools—house building for dummies one might say today.

About the same time, other clever Brits were applying their nation's prowess with iron, the marvel material of the 19th century, toward easing the immigrant housing market in Australia. Unlike wood, iron products must always come from a distant, central location (the foundry), and bolting or riveting together iron structures such as bridges and lighthouses from cunningly mated pieces was a regular practice by the 1830s. What brought iron technology to the prefabricated house was not only the profits to be made in places such as Australia, but the development of corrugated, galvanized sheeting in the 1840s.

Though iron is strong it's also very heavy, and one way to limit the weight of an iron house was to make it a frame infilled with light corrugated iron panels for walls and covered with corrugated iron sheets for a roof. A century before the U.S. military broadcast the Quonset hut across the Pacific in World War II, there were iron houses in Australia, Hawaii, and beyond.

Panel Walls and Mid-Century Profits

Well aware of the key technical groundwork laid by British manufacturers, U.S. producers of portable houses made an evolutionary leap in the mid-19th century, spurred by new markets right within their own borders. The westward expansion of the United States created an indigenous demand for immigrant housing, and portable iron houses are known to have been shipped to Oregon in the 1840s. However, it was the California Gold Rush



and, to a lesser extent, the Civil War, that suddenly propelled the industry to new levels of production and design.

When James Marshall reported finding gold in the waterways of Sutter's Mill near Sacramento in 1848, the ensuing race to wealth in California ignited the need for hundreds of shelters for mining camps and to create instant cities out of mere trading posts such as San Francisco. Instead of relatively gradual building-by-building settlement, overnight the Gold Rush fueled a huge, though ultimately short-lived, commerce in housing. Settlements critically short on shelter but flush with gold became a seller's market. One-storey, portable houses, some wood with iron roofs and some all iron, that cost \$300 to \$500 at the factory could command seven or more times the price in California. Scholars estimate that in 1849 some 5,000 houses were shipped from New York alone, with more coming from



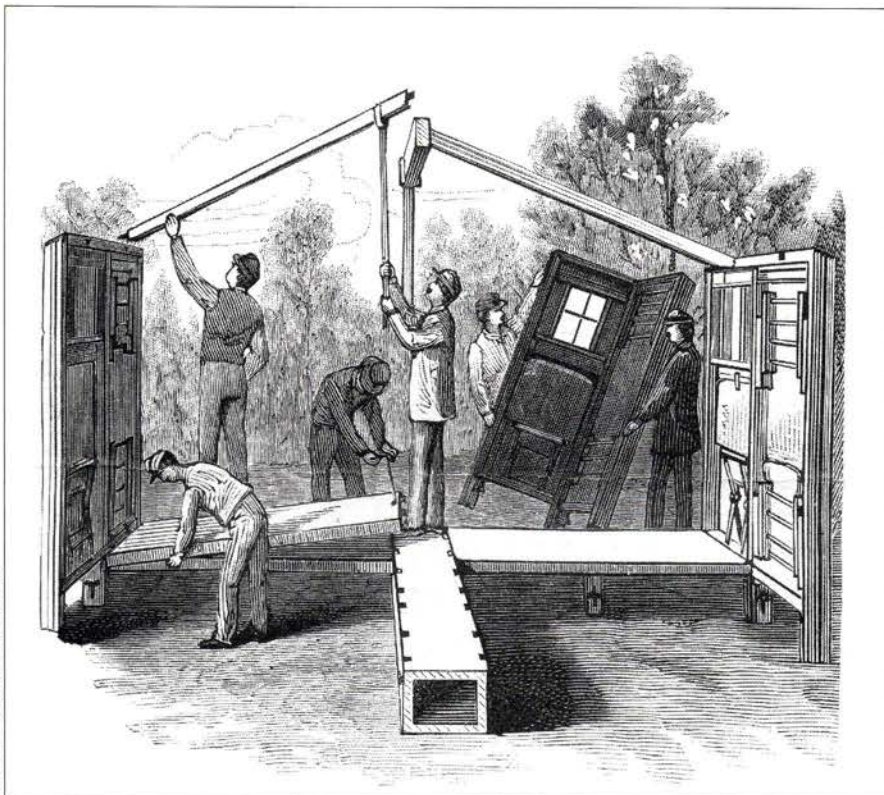
In San Diego, California, stands one of the first prefab houses to make the trip west from Portland, Maine. Large at two storeys (most Gold Rush buildings were single storey), it is otherwise a conventional, center-hall, gabled-roof house.

Right: The 1884 Drucker Portable Barrack was a portable military dwelling up to 34' long that assembled, beds and all, from panels moved by wagon. Smaller versions were promoted for family camp meetings.



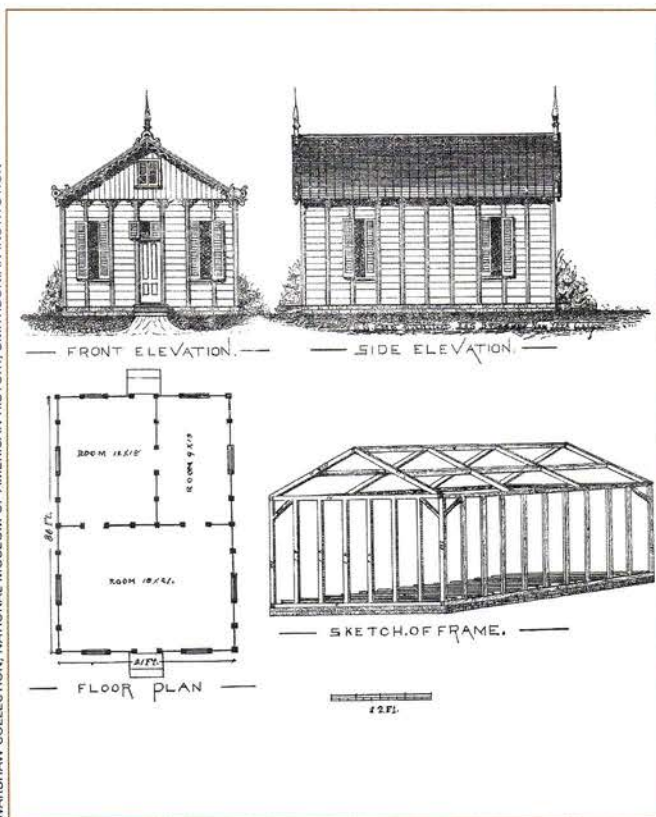
JAMES C. MASSEY

NATIONAL ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION



Above: Montgomery Meigs, the military Quartermaster General who designed the U.S. Pension Building, is also the talent behind this post-Civil War dwelling at Fort Myer in Arlington, Virginia. The building was designed as a prototype for a portable house that could be moved easily in the frontier West.

WARSHAW COLLECTION, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



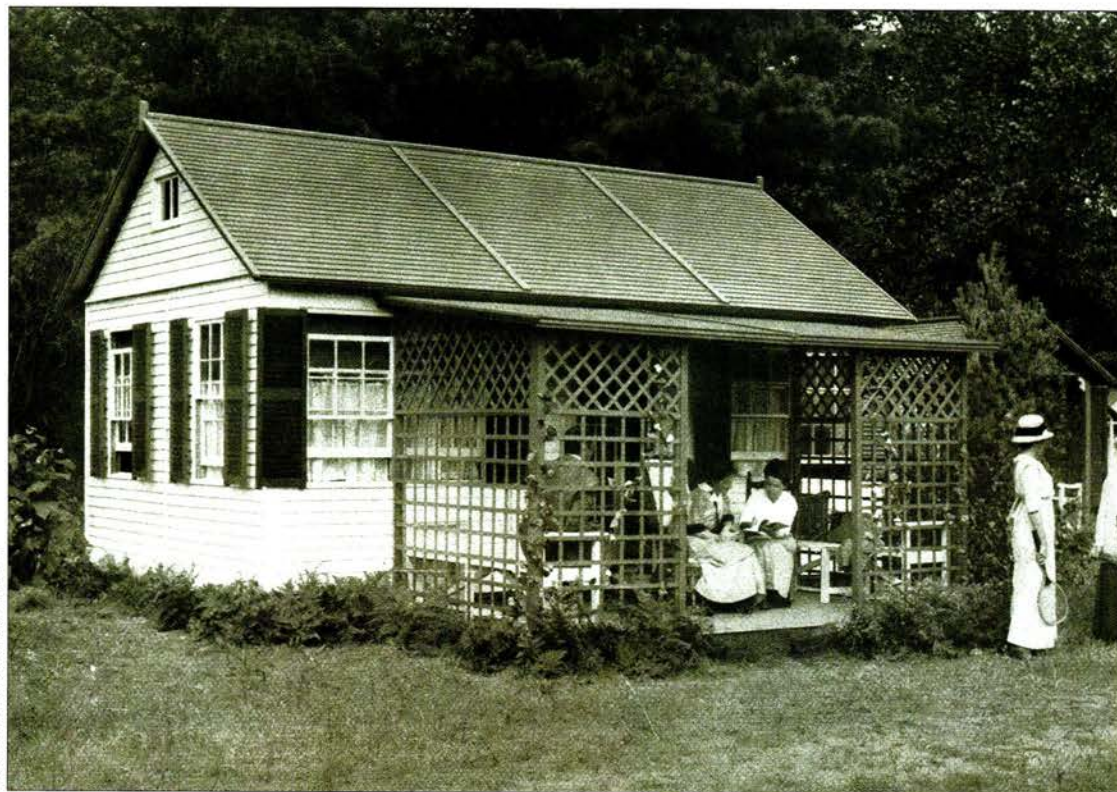
Typical of the portable houses sold earlier for immigrants, Peck's Improved Panel System of 1880 was a frame of pitch pine built to accept spruce panels and designed for export from New York to India, Mexico, or South America.

other eastern ports and as far away as China. The trick to cashing in on the boom was getting the houses to the West Coast as quickly and efficiently as possible.

While shipping over open water was the major mode of commercial bulk transportation to the California gold fields (a multi-week voyage around South America and the Horn), the distance could be cut by hauling goods overland across the Isthmus of Panama on pack mules. Whatever the route, the nature of portable houses adapted readily to the new market. Though still mostly small and utilitarian in design, there was an increasing use of "sectional" or "panel" houses of both wood and iron that capitalized on the innovations in Manning's colonial cottage and British iron houses. Convenient transport size now had become as important as ease of erection, and iron houses on the order of 20' x 15' were advertised as being ready to ship in two 12'-long boxes. Public structures such as hotels, hospitals, and warehouses that stood as large as 90' x 180' and 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 stories high also made the trek as easy-to-move pieces.

The portable house boom of the Gold Rush lasted little more than a year, and many houses already en route to California

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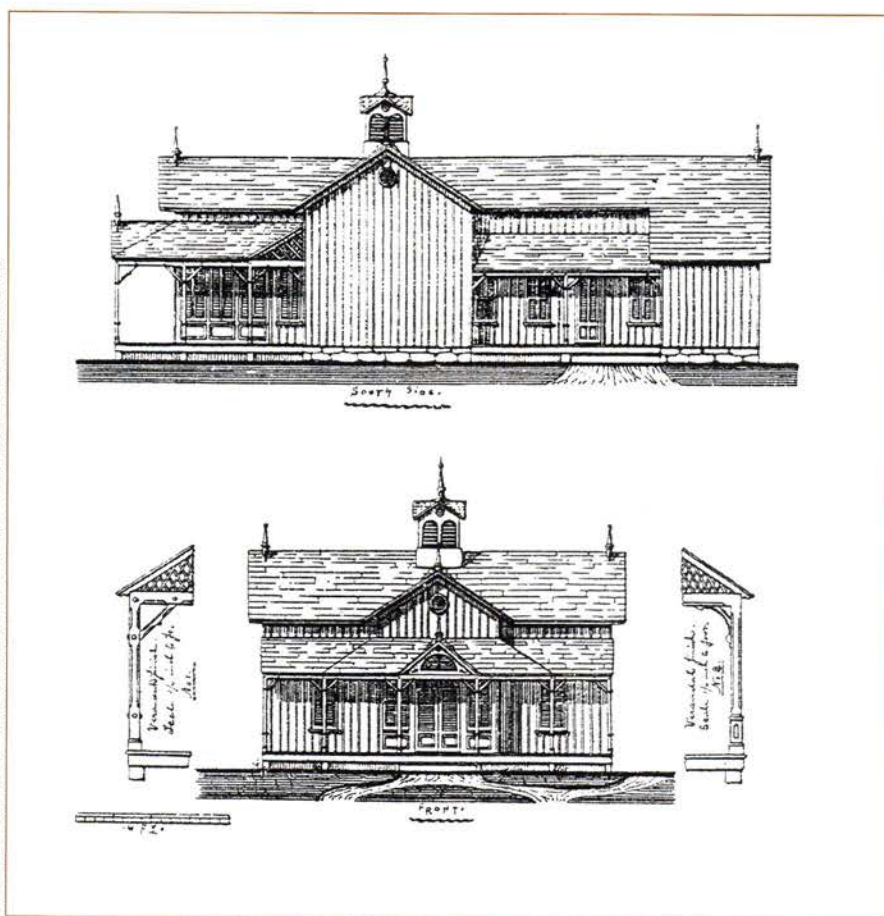
The E.F. Hodgson Co. of Boston is a good example of the maturing of the portable house industry. Quick to capitalize on the shift to vacation dwellings in the 1890s, Hodgson was using sophisticated marketing literature by 1921 to also sell buildings from out-houses to field hospitals.

wound up in Hawaii after the bottom dropped out of the market. Starting in 1860 the Civil War created another short-lived but pressing need for portable houses. Experiments with iron buildings for army barracks dated to at least the late 1840s, and the Union Army in particular mustered the prefab concept for field quarters and hospitals that could be pitched and struck to follow troops.

In the 1870s, the prairies presented a new opportunity for the prefab. Before the Civil War, the open land west of the Mississippi was considered a wasteland, treeless and difficult to traverse. Afterwards, though, the growing network of railroads opened up the prairies to another wave of settlers. With planning they could take advantage of portable houses such as Clemens' Ready-Made Sectional Houses. Made for mill and mining towns as well as immigrants, the Clemens product was a panelized house in the Manning mode with an iron roof and fabricated in sections 42" wide specifically to facilitate shipping by rail and wagon.

By this time the portable house industry was springing up wherever there was a practical source of raw materials and labor and a convenient port of export.

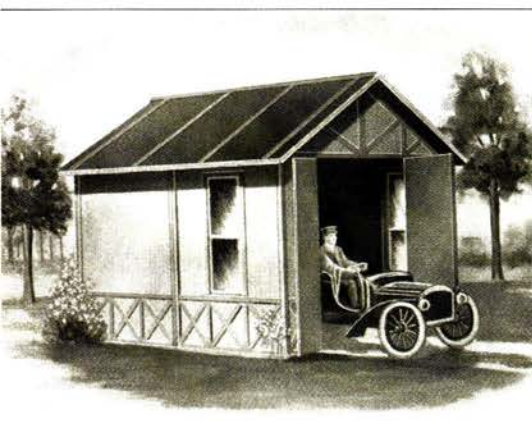
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Evidence of the growing ambitions of portable house manufacturers after 1870, this architect-designed prefab was intended for Havana or other tropical locations and included ample verandas within its 36'x64' footprint.

No longer subsistence shelter, in the early 20th century, the panelized or sectional house aspired to offer architecture as well as economy, with buildings such as this "combination English and French" model from Minter, replete with six rooms and bath.

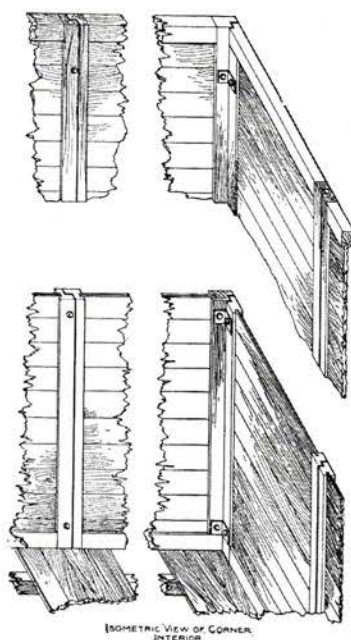
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NATIONAL ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION

The dawn of the auto age after 1900 created an immediate need for garages—small, light-duty buildings that the portable house producers were only too ready to supply.

NATIONAL ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION



Construction details of the Cornell Portable Garage (shown at left) explain how the wall panels built up from boards and frames are bolted together in ship-lapped joints.

Shipyards, which were equipped to make structures far larger and more complex than houses, seemed to have exploited the market regularly, perhaps as a sideline to keep their workers active between major commissions. Sawmills and millworks sometimes took the same approach, as did railroad car builders. The houses they advertised were growing larger and more architectural in appearance, if not form. Those that were intended for plantations in tropical countries, a growing market at the time, might incorporate features designed for the climate, such as verandas for shade and cupolas for ventilation.

Portables for Pleasure and Progress

After the turmoil of the 1860s and the growing pains of the 1870s, the relative quiescence and increasing affluence of the United States in the late-19th century created another, more bucolic need for the portable prefabricated house: second homes, vacation cottages, and club houses. Here, ironically, their purpose had swung a full 180 degrees from providing basic shelter in a foreign environment to a simple retreat in a rustic one.

By the 1890s, the portable panel house was reborn completely as a recreational building, with several national manufac-

Through the first half of the 20th century, the panelized and sectional house evolved with changing markets and technologies. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were more than 40 producers in the United States ready to serve the post-war housing crunch.



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National Home Builders' Institute and Structural Steel Erection Co. assembly plan enter the Good Housekeeping advertisement and Parents' Magazine of course

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turers leading the market, most notably the E.F. Hodgson Co. of Massachusetts. Oddly enough, it was not adults alone who fueled the market for prefabricated houses in this era but chickens for hen houses, children for play houses, and that most mechanical member of the early 20th-century family, the Tin Lizzy. Stabling the new member of the modern household became a pressing issue in a time when automobiles were still made with lots of wood and fabric and were too temperamental to share a barn with livestock. By 1907, Sears, already a goliath of mail-order building products, had moved into a new realm by selling Simplex sectional garages.

The portable house manufacturers of the 19th and early 20th century were not just pioneers of the modern prefabricated house but the precursors of the ready-cut and kit houses that made such an important impact on housing of the early and mid-20th century. What's more, while they may not have matched the size or number of houses built in this manner, they may well eclipse them in impact, because their story is still to unfold completely. 🏠

This article is excerpted from a forthcoming guide to historic building technology to be published in conjunction with the American Life Foundation.

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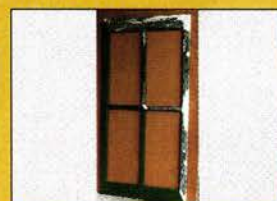
WoodCast: lightweight interior and exterior casting compound.

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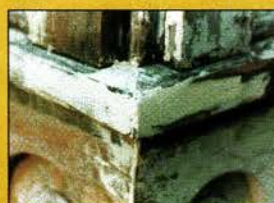
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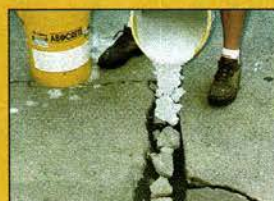
Rotted loadbearing column base sawed off and replaced with **WoodEpoX**.



Antique window sash consolidated with **LiquidWood** and rebuilt with **WoodEpoX**.



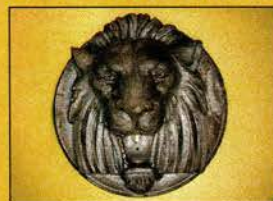
Consolidation and rebuilding of rotten windowsill with **LiquidWood** and **WoodEpoX**.



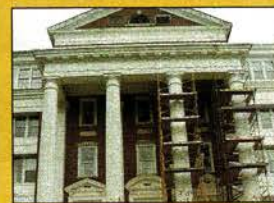
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Old-House Products

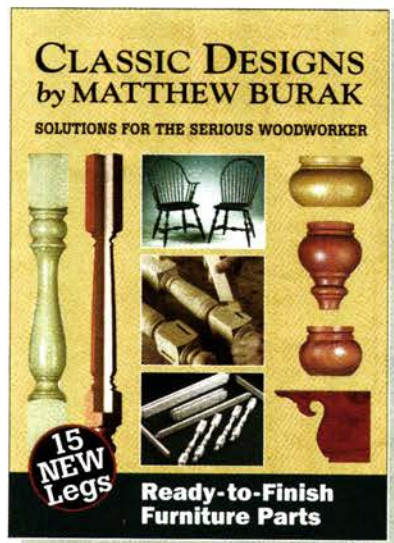
Powering Out Grout

Whether you're replacing a broken tile or restoring a stone fireplace, half the work is removing the old grout. The Grout Removal Kit is a new attachment for the RotoZip spiral saw, a power tool for cutting circles in materials from drywall to laminates. The kit fits grout lines $\frac{1}{16}$ " or wider and uses a detachable steel guide pin for work in hard-to-reach corners. Learn more at www.RotoZip.com. Circle 24 on the resource card.



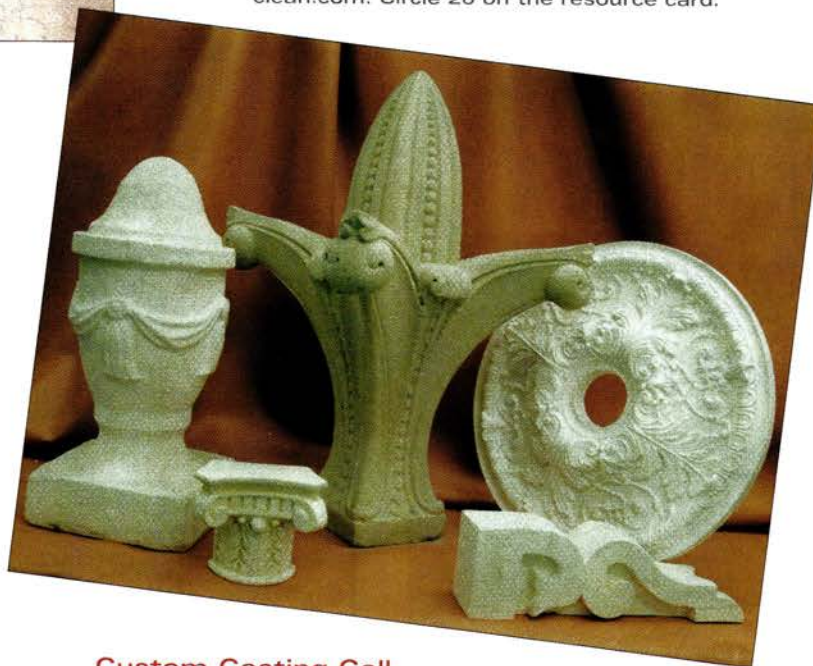
Plant-Safe Stain Remover

It's a dirty world out there, and stains on outdoor materials such as concrete can make the surfaces around houses look that much dingier. Trouble is, cleaning products meant for use indoors aren't always up to the job outdoors or can adversely affect grass or plants. Enter OxiClean Outdoor Professional Stain Remover, a powerful oxygenated product safe for use around plants and shrubs. When mixed with water, the hard-surface cleaner tackles stains from dirt, grass, grease, and grime. For more information visit www.oxiclean.com. Circle 26 on the resource card.



Getting a Leg Up

When repairing antique furniture, you can't buy a set of cherry spindle legs at the nearest home center. Instead, try consulting Classic Designs by Matthew Burak. This new catalog of furniture parts, table bases, and chair kits is full of ready-to-finish turnings, including bun and ogee bracket feet. For a free copy, call (800) 843-7405 or visit www.tablelegs.com. Circle 25 on the resource card.



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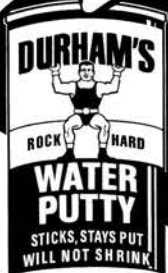
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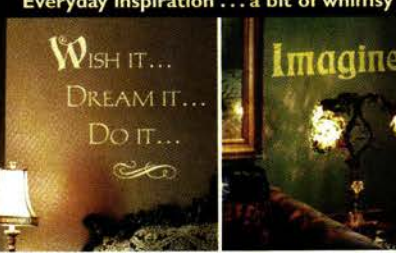
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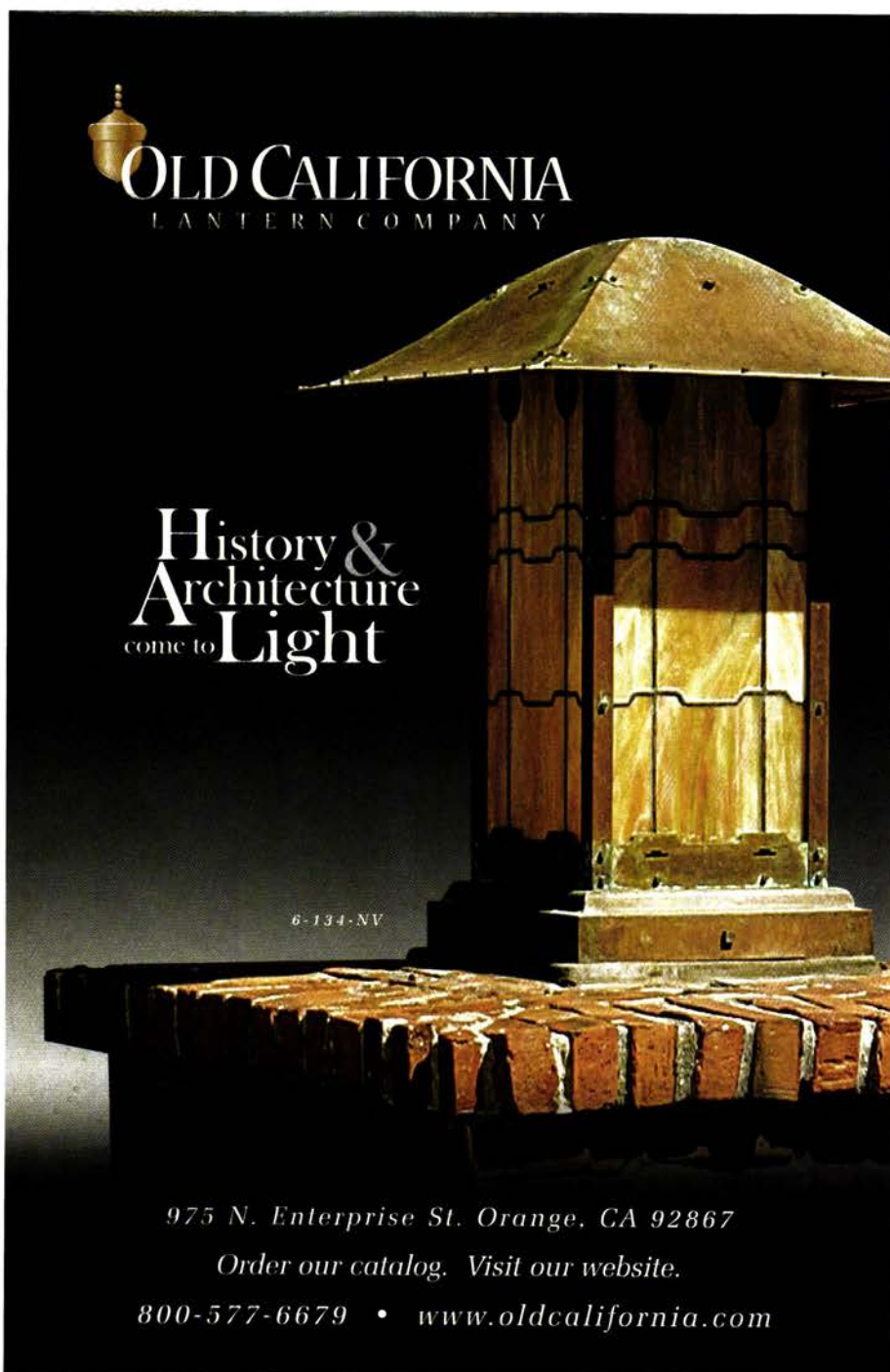
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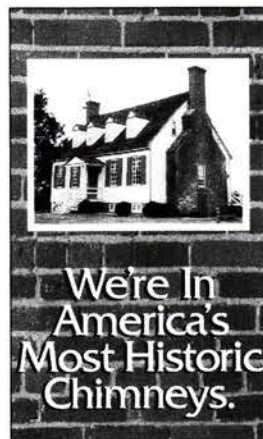
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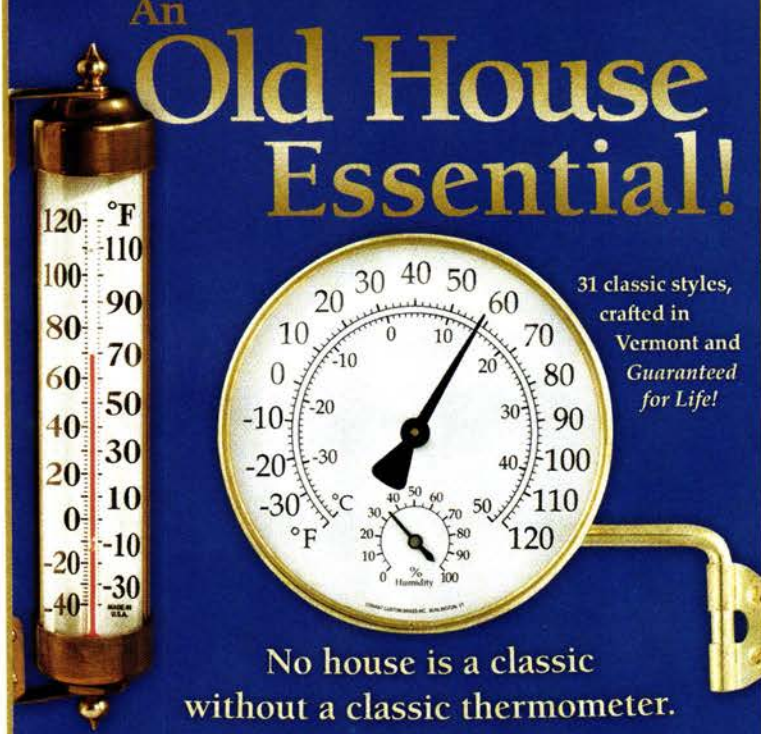
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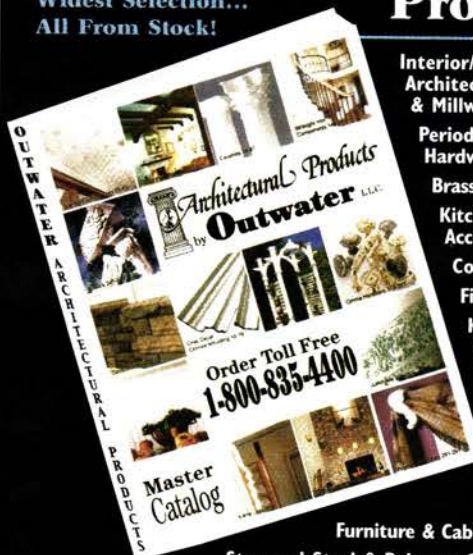
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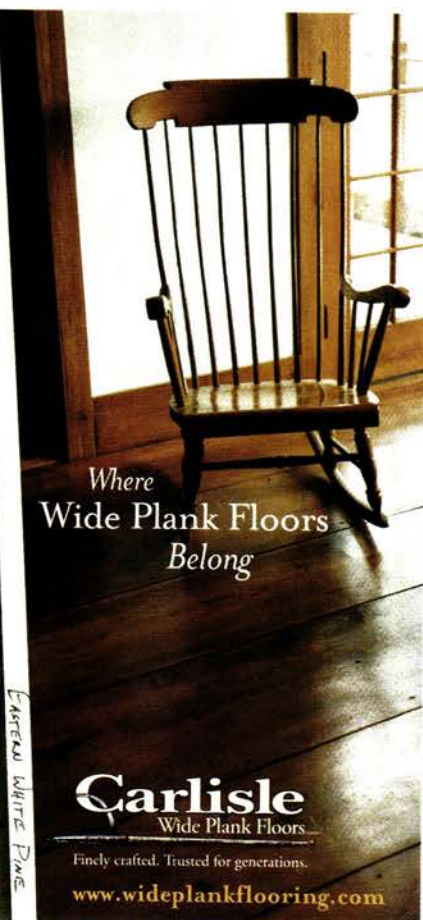
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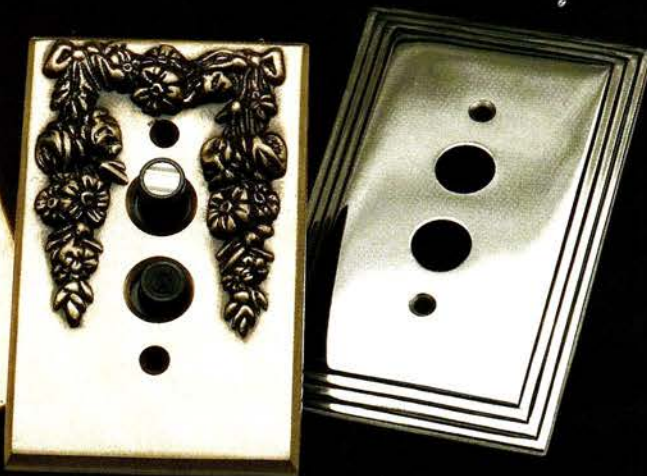
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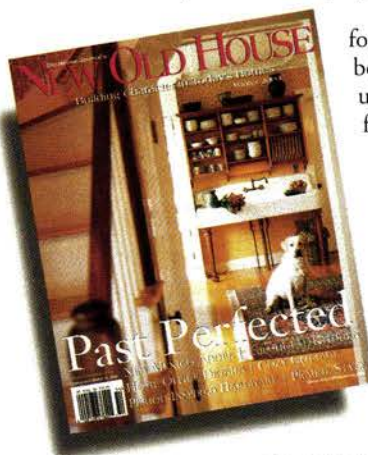
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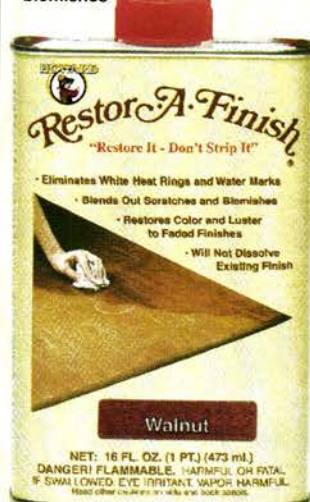
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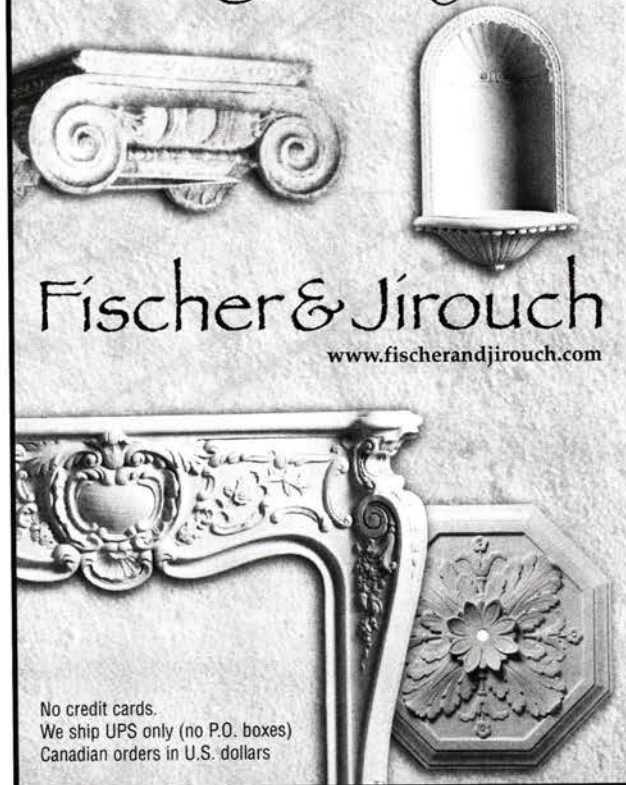
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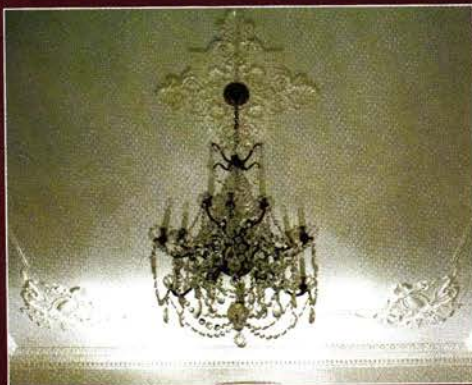
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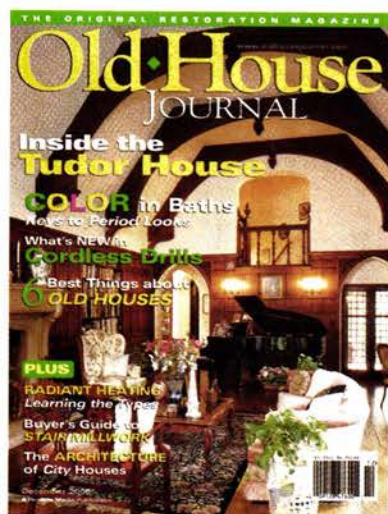
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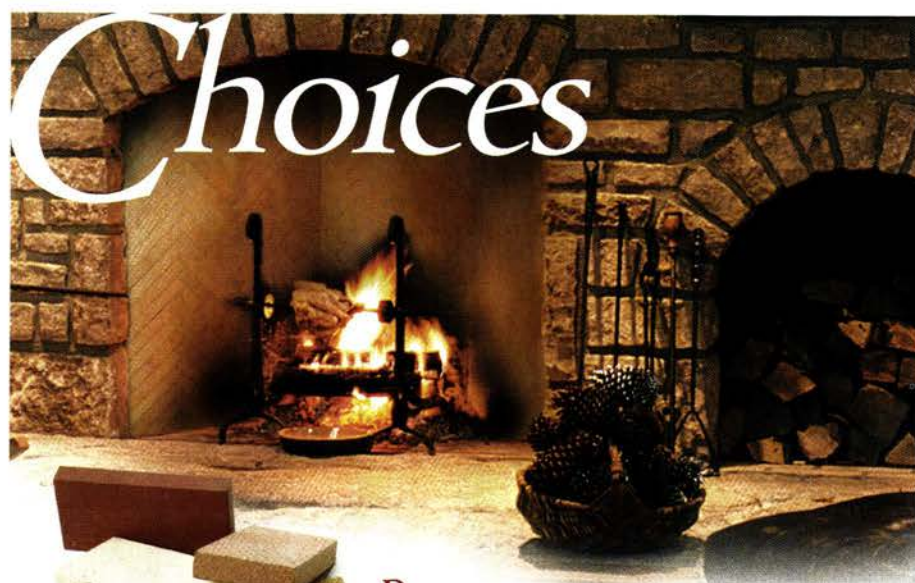
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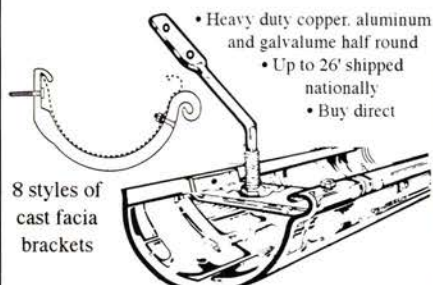
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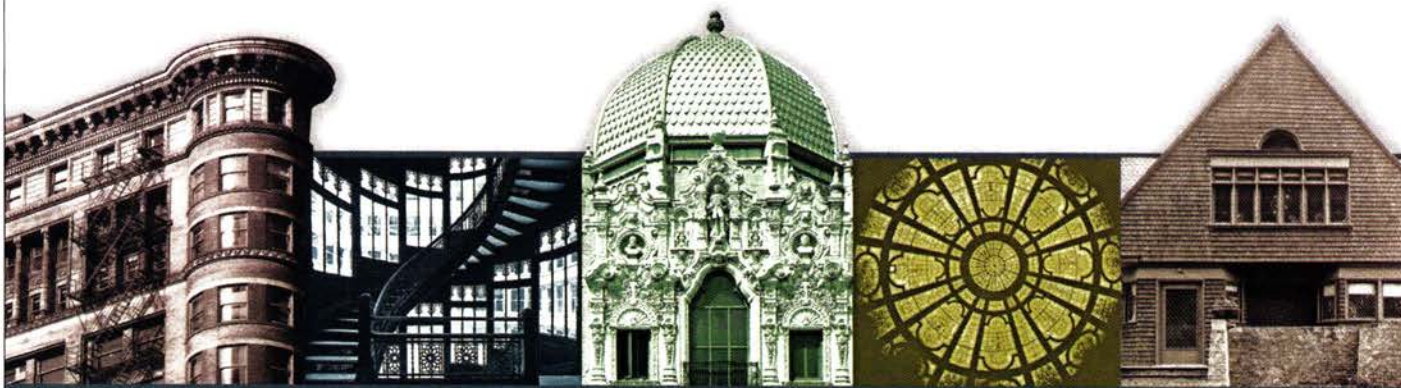
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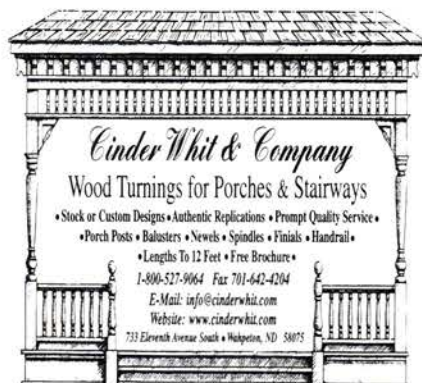
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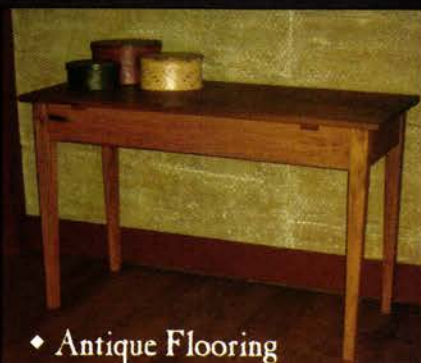
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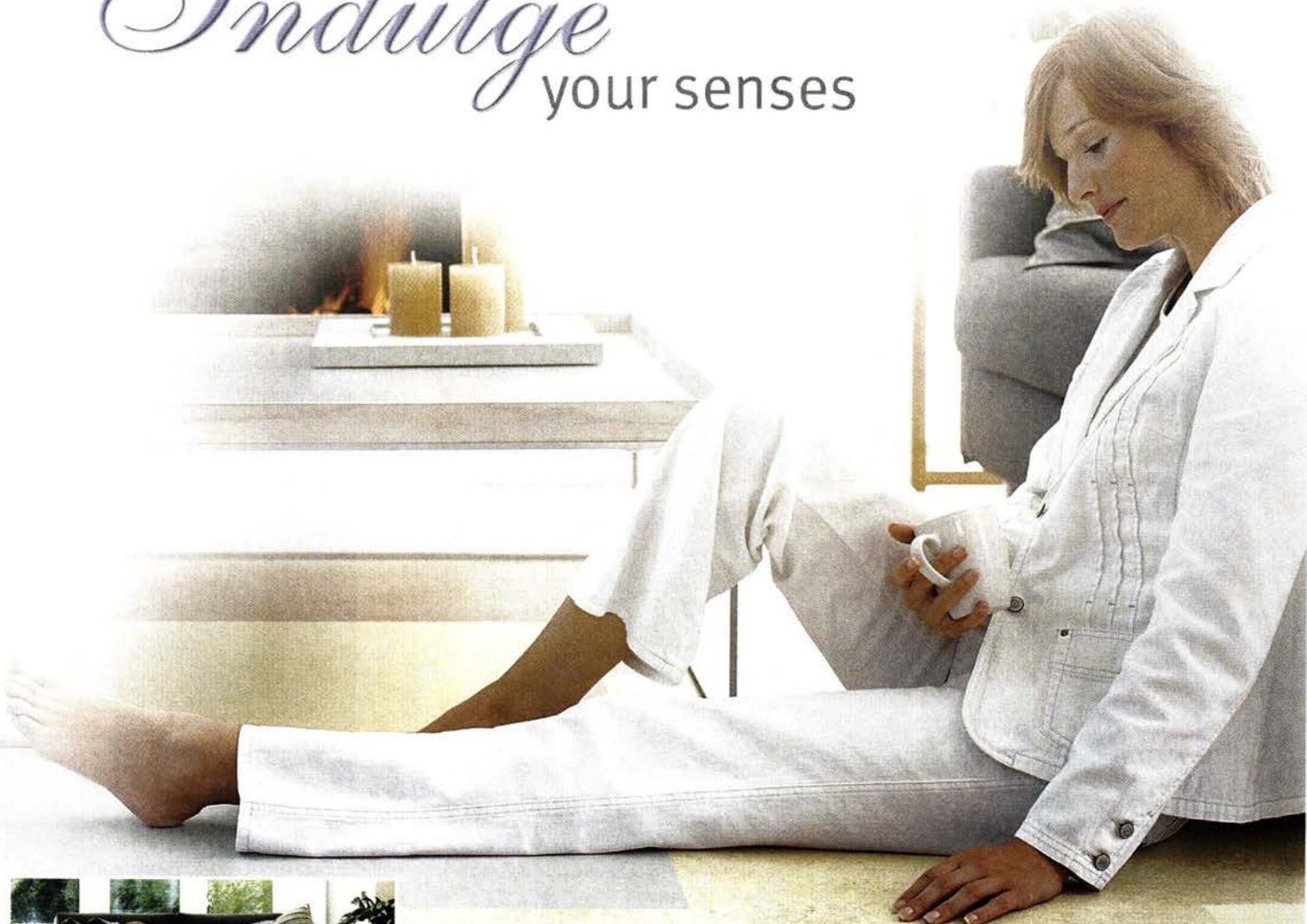


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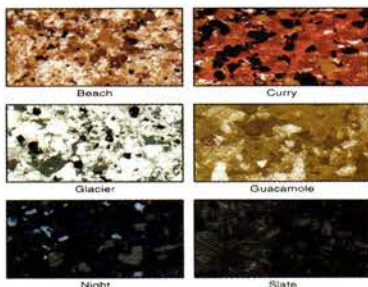


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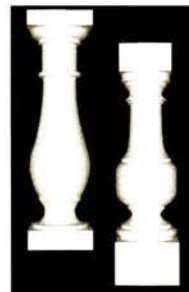


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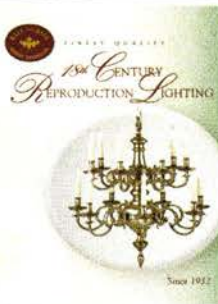
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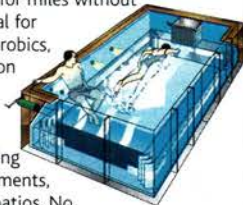
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PALO ALTO, CA — Two 1890's homes located in the heart and soul of Silicon Valley. Currently a B&B, these homes, a classic Craftsman and a shingled Queen Anne, are situated downtown at the gateway to Stanford University. Over 9,000 square feet of space, easily converted to single-family use. \$5,250,000. Steven R. Pierce, Broker. Zane MacGregor & Co. 650-323-5305. www.zanemacgregor.com



LANCASTER, KY — Restored Kentucky Colonial circa 1790, \$269,000. Over 4000 sq. ft., 4 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, formal dining, parlors, living room. Original hardwood floors and trim. 4.5 acres of pasture and elms. Log cabin encased in home and masterfully restored by Ted Green. Call Dawn Nelson at 859-319-3296 or Shirley Culton at 859-936-0005 to schedule a showing. More photos on affinityrealtyofky.com



SANFORD FL — Spectacular three-story mansion sitting on 2.26 acres was built by Clara Ginn, an international opera star, in 1908. Features a full daylight basement, detached guest cottage, salt-water pool and hot tub, sauna, wrap-around porch and upstairs balcony all overlooking the the fabulous grounds and sunken gardens. The property includes garages, workshop and storage outbuildings. \$1,500,000. Sandy Faber, Watson Realty, 407-325-0500, sandyfaber@watsonrealtycorp.com



BROOKEVILLE, MD (16 miles north of D.C.) — Longwood Manor, built in 1817 for Thomas Moore (refrigerator inventor), was frequented by Thomas Jefferson. Elegant B&B featuring the Retreat and Brookemore Suites w/large sitting rooms, spacious bedrooms & private baths. The Rose Room w/private bath and 19'x 32' Maryland Room overlooking pool. 5 bedrooms, 7 baths \$1,395,000. Janice Valois, Re/Max Realty Centre, 301-502-2103.

SPOTLIGHT HOUSE



MARINE CITY, MI — "The Heather House," beautifully restored Queen Anne Victorian, circa 1885. Six bedrooms w/private bathrooms & porches. Large living areas. Many unique features include: stained glass, original oak woodwork, curved staircase, elevator, remodeled kitchen w/double Viking stove & walk in refrigerator. Second floor laundry, all-home A/C, complete new roof in 2005. Great views of St. Clair River & Canada with freighter and pleasure boat traffic. Lovely perennial gardens with sprinkler system from river. 3rd floor suitable for expansion \$ 925,000. Owners: 810-765-3567



LOUISBURG, NC — True Plantation — Restored circa 1760 w/3 bedrooms, 4 fireplaces, original woodwork, floors & fixtures. 2-storey studio w/fireplace, woodworking shop and outbuildings. 30 acres w/vegetable and formal English garden and 4 streams. 35 miles from Raleigh/Durham. On National Historic Register. \$550,000. United Country — 1-800-999-1020, Ext. 108. [www.unitedcountry.com/old American Treasures](http://www.unitedcountry.com/old_American_Treasures) — Full Color magazine of older and historic properties for sale. Just \$3.95.



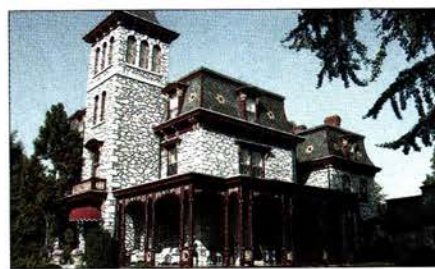
STATESVILLE, NC — Beautiful landmark home in Mitchell College Historic District! Circa 1900 w/5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, 4297 sq. ft. Recent addition w/great room, fireplace and many updates. Fantastic location near Lake Norman at 140 & 177. 2-car garage with rental apartment. Large landscaped lot. Neighborhood of architecturally significant houses. 40 miles to Charlotte. \$415,000. Sally Parker, Lake Norman Realty, 704-880-6757 or 881-0771. lakenormanrealty.com



CATONSVILLE, MD — Homewood Mansion. Potential for B&B, multi-family, condominiums or immense single family. 4 levels w/4,000+ sq.ft. Four rental apartments on upper floors and main level owner's suite w/3 bedrooms and 3 full baths! Detached three-car garage, parking for 9+, gorgeous grounds and 3 separate lots for privacy or future development. A perfect package! Kimberly Kepnes, CBRB at 443-250-4241 (cell)/410-461-7600 (office) or www.kimberlykhomes.com



SPARTA, NJ — Gorgeous East Jersey Cottage on ~5 acres adjoining Conservation Land. Beautifully restored with original features including: 4 functional fireplaces, bake oven in keeping room, wide board floors, period hardware, woodwork & doors, and "borning room." 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, heated in-ground pool, 3-car garage, large barn & much more. Rare gem. \$629,000. Virginia "Beth" Harpell, RE/MAX Properties Unlimited, 973-726-5700 x308. www.realtor.com/gardenstate/vharpell



MARIETTA, PA — Historic Riverview Tower, a spectacular 1871 former ironmaster's residence on 7.4 acres. Convenient to Harrisburg, York, or Lancaster. 6 bedrooms, 5 1/2 baths; sweeping three-story staircase; 9300+ sq. ft. finished including lower level; ballroom; 40x20 in-ground pool w/adjacent pool house/cabana; tennis court; 3-car garage, lavish gardens. All systems updated including central air conditioning. \$1,895,000. Bill Rothmel, RE/MAX Associates of Lancaster 1-800-572-2338 x3332



PITTSBURGH, PA — Beautiful European Renaissance church, in need of considerable restoration, offered for sale by the German United Evangelical Independent Congregation of Spring Hill in Northside. Circa 1902 architect-designed building w/sanctuary and social hall. Stained glass, murals, oak pews, bell, altar and more. Church use or convert to single family. In search of proper steward. \$50,000. Michael Mohr, 412-741-9183. More details on HistoricProperties.com



WEST CHESTER, PA — Built by PM Sharpless and located in the historic district of West Chester Borough, this circa 1865 Queen Anne Victorian contains many original appointments. Highlights include: Chestnut floors, coffered ceiling, leaded glass windows, four fireplaces, detailed millwork and moldings, widows walk and the basement's brick lined well. For further information contact: Julie Robbins, Weichert Realtors, 484-356-9452



AUSTIN, TX — Large estate on the cliff over Shoal Creek in Central Austin. 1913 Craftsman-style house remodeled in 2001 — roof, wiring, plumbing, central heat and air, floors, paint, kitchen, rebuilt garage. Grand style and spaces. Third-floor bonus room and full basement. \$1,500,000. Lin Team, Old Austin Realtor, 512-472-1930. www.TheKinneyCompany.com.



AUSTIN, TX — Rare diamond in the rough in Central Austin: +/- 3770 sq. ft. solid stone and concrete house built in 1890 as a hunting lodge overlooking Shoal Creek. Major potential but needs everything. Third floor could be finished with a wonderful greenbelt view. \$850,000. Lin Team, Old Austin Realtor, 512-472-1930. www.TheKinneyCompany.com.



HALIFAX, VA—Magnolia Hill, circa 1843 Greek Revival architect-designed home. 7 private acres w/original plantings. 5 bedrooms w/6000 sq. ft. Wide board pine floors, 2 front parlors, oversized windows, curved stairway w/walnut balusters, original mantels and doors, gorgeous woodwork including dentil moldings, high baseboards and more. Needs general restoration. Walking distance to village. \$449,000. The Davis Co. Realtors. Honey Davis, Broker. 877-575-1100. www.honeydavis.net

SPOTLIGHT HOUSE



ST. JOSEPH, MO — George Morris Residence. A Queen Anne located in one of America's most famous historic cities. Eleven rooms, 1½ baths (3,530 sq. ft.), five fireplaces, and two-story carriage house. Overlooks downtown from the Museum Hill Local Landmark/NR Historic District. Current zoning allows property use as residential or commercial. \$187,000. Robert Myers or Kathleen Witek, 816-279-8817. For more information visit Heritage Action Campaign at www.heritageaction.com. Ad sponsored by St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce (www.saintjoseph.com) and St. Joseph Convention & Visitor's Bureau (www.stjomo.com).



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CHARLOTTE COUNTY, VA — Circa 1945 home on 41-acre working farm with good outbuildings including a hip-roofed 2-story dairy barn. The house has over 1700 square feet of living space, with 2 bathrooms and 4 bedrooms. Quiet country road in rural Virginia. \$265,000. For color brochure, 888-333-3972 (24-hours). United Country Davenport Realty, Keysville, VA. Floor plans & photos for Home # 4330 at www.davenport-realty.com



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SPOTLIGHT HOUSE



ASHEVILLE, NC — The Thomas Wadley Raoul House, in Historic Biltmore Forest, Asheville, NC. Thomas Wadley Raoul, developed the Manor Grounds (Albermarle Park), and the Manor Hotel, Arts and Crafts masterpieces in Asheville, NC, as well as the area known as Biltmore Forest. Located on 3.5 acres of mature oaks and native understory, the grounds were laid out by Chauncey Beadle, protégé of Fredrick Law Olmsted, who was responsible for the gardens at the nearby Biltmore House. On the Preservation Society Tour February 17-19, 2006 during the 19th annual Arts & Crafts Conference in Asheville. Online at www.raoulhouse.com. Available, brokers protected.



RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA — The John W. Miller House, on the National Register of Historic Places, is a classic Victorian home. Main house has 3 bedrooms and 2 full baths. The 2-story guesthouse has a living room with fireplace, one bedroom and a full bath. The 17.4 acre property includes a 4 stall barn and outstanding views. \$795,000. Thorne Auchter, Frank Hardy, Inc., Realtors. 540-675-3999



SOUTH BOSTON, VA — The Robert Penick Home. Fully restored 4050 sq. ft. circa 1890 Victorian. Small town neighborhood of fine historic homes. 7 fireplaces with original mantels. Grand foyer, large parlor, formal dining room & music room. Heart of pine floors throughout. Downstairs & upstairs master bedrooms with private baths. Central HVAC. Much More! \$299,000. Max Sempowski, Realtor, Antique Properties. 434-391-4855. www.oldhouseproperties.com



WINCHESTER, VA — "Fawcett Run Farm." Stunning, beautifully restored stone home, circa 1841, sited on 6 acres. 4100 sq. ft., 10-ft. ceilings, original wood flooring. Includes a separate in-law suite. Fawcett Run, a year-round bubbling brook, borders the property. Located on southwest side of Frederick County in the Shenandoah Valley. \$799,000. Bill Nordman, Historic Properties, Inc. 888-830-2678 www.historicpropertiesva.com



KEWAUNEE, WI — This elegant home is a fantastic blend of Colonial Revival and Craftsman architectural styles. The three-story 4,500 sq.ft. home was constructed in 1909. It has been renovated in a historically sensitive manner, keeping the best of the original while adding new baths & large kitchen. \$329,000. Darin A. Jeanquart, Town Country Real Estate, Inc., 920-388-0163. www.doorkewauneeproperties.com

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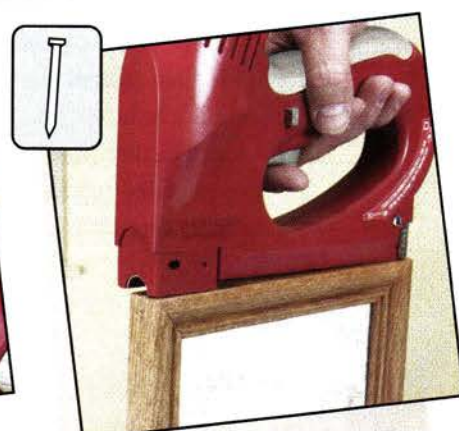
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Mid-Century Striptease

In burlesque, the phrase *taking it all off* is usually associated with smiling faces, but when it's used in reference to historic buildings, the reaction is often less enthusiastic. Such is the case with this Midwestern Italianate (left), which underwent a change of costume around 1950, when the modernist architectural mantra was less is more. The resulting first-storey addition, bearing horizontal, glass-block windows and a flat roof, seems positively naked posed beside the fancy window hoods, curvaceous brackets, and full-figured hipped roof accessorizing the second storey.

The house next door, built around the same time, still wears all of its audacious architectural finery, including a showy pedimented entry bracketed by well-dressed chamfered supports. Staring at the two houses side by side, our photographer notes, "The contrast is stark." 🏠

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