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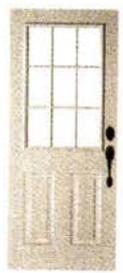


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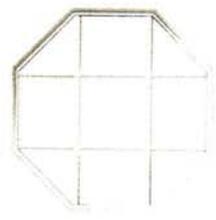
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Features

September/October 2006

Volume 34/ Number 5

Established 1973

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By Gordon Bock

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By Demetra Aposporos

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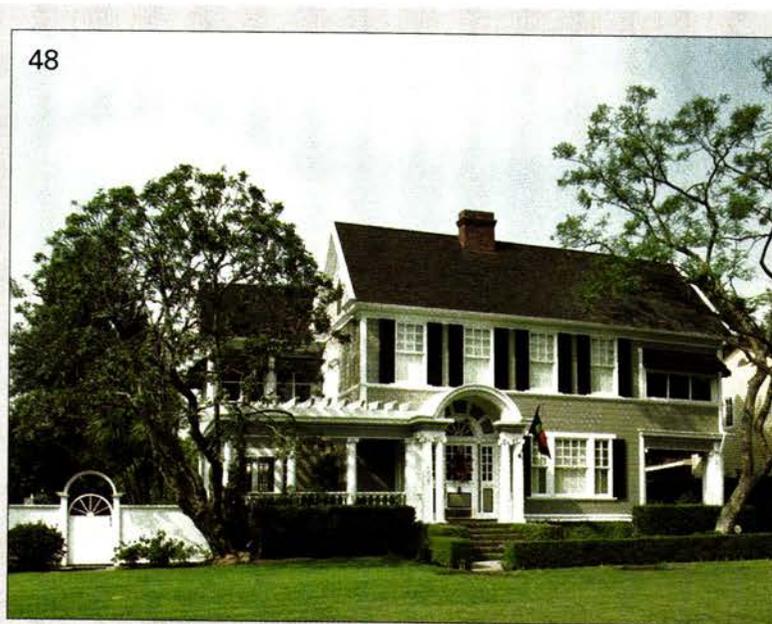
By Demetra Aposporos

Memories of the house they healed are a balm for a doctor and his wife when they find it's time to move out.

82 Style: What Goth Hath Wrought

By James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

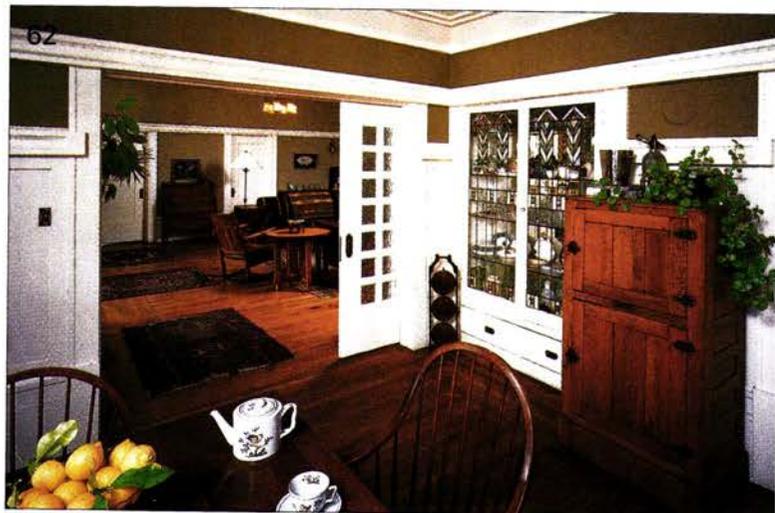
When Americans were close to overdosing on symmetrical, classical house styles, the mid-19th century arrival of Gothic Revival—a style derived from medieval cathedrals—was a breath of fresh air.



ON THE COVER:

A late-1880s wood-burning stove that's been wired for electricity is the highlight of the restored kitchen in this Italianate house dating to 1880.

Photo by Dave Randall, Werking Studio



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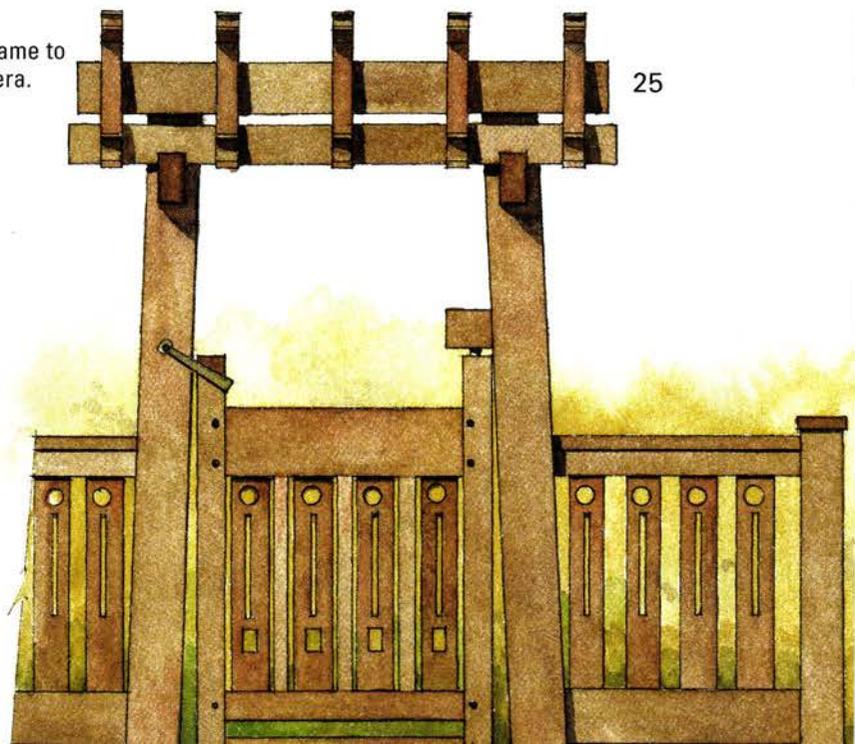
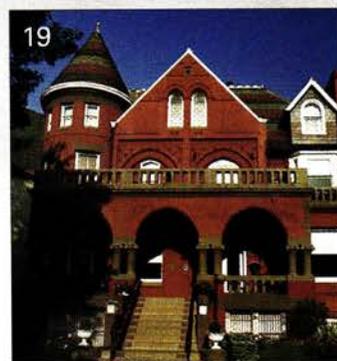
By Denise Wiles Adams
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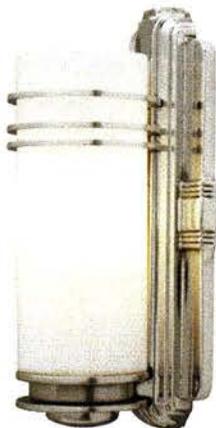
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New Old-House Journal's Traditional Products

Go to "Quick Links" on the home page, click on "Traditional Products," and enter a world filled with useful, stylish, and beautiful choices for your home.

Old-House Journal's Restoration Directory

Newly updated for 2006, OHJ's famous guide to old-house products and services is a down-to-earth resource for neophytes and sophisticates alike. Go to the home page.

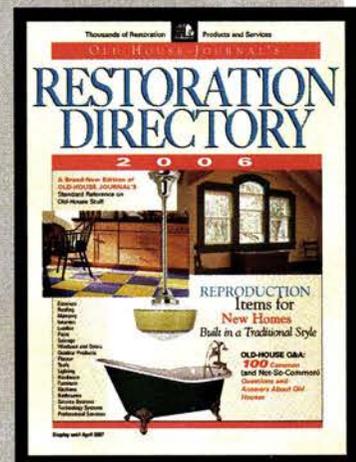
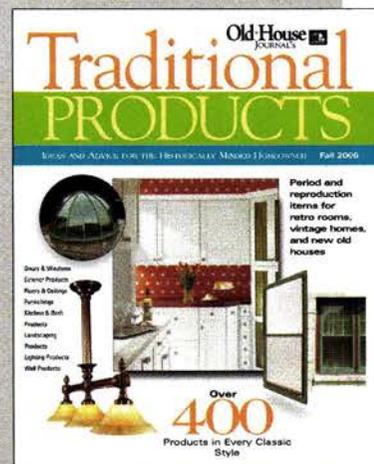
Get up to Speed on Steam

An expert on old houses experimented with different methods and found that steam provides a relatively safe and convenient way to remove heavy paint buildup from old houses. Go to the home page.

Period Homes

www.period-homes.com

Looking for a wide array of old-house products? From the publisher of *Old-House Journal*, this Web site, edited for architects, interior designers, and restoration contractors, is also a treasure trove of information for the ardent old-house owner in search of traditional styles and designs.





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Writing Jane Jacobs

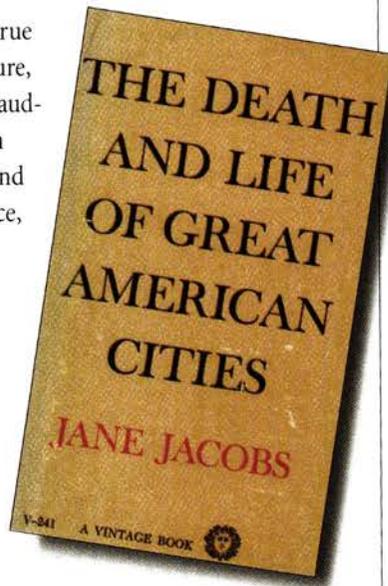
Acclaimed for nearly half a century as one of the true original thinkers of urban planning and architecture, Jane Jacobs, who passed away this April, is being lauded anew today for her prescient visions of modern America as we watch the concrete landscape expand all around us. While I never met Jacobs face-to-face, like many I got to know her through her provocative writing and, in my case, one special letter.

Like an urban Rachel Carson, Jacobs rang a wake-up call for America back in 1961 with her now legendary book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. From her vantage point in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, she presented an eloquent voice against what she once referred to as the "mad spree of deceptions and vandalism and waste that was called urban renewal." Though never interested in being a celebrity, she was quick to do public battle with Robert Moses, New York city's masterbuilder, over a proposed expressway through historic Washington Square. Her ideas and example have been guiding us ever since.

Back in 1995 I decided to contact Jane Jacobs in Toronto, Canada, where she had relocated with her architect-husband in 1969. My quest was to ask if she would like to write a short piece for *Old House Journal* on Lewis Mumford – a tempting idea, I hoped, to have one keen architectural pundit examine another. I waited for an answer, wondering if this esteemed thinker would even give me the time of day.

In a timely fashion, back came her response in the form of a full letter clearly composed on a manual typewriter that I covet to this day. "Thanks for sending me the copy of the *Journal*," she kindly replied. "I enjoyed the article on Frank Furness, and all the rest of it too. It's both so informative and beautiful." She went on to regret that she couldn't accept my invitation "because of press of other work," but suggested alternative authors, such as Brendan Gill of *The New Yorker* (that would have been nice!) as well as other subjects. I've been dreaming of living up to her recommendations ever since.

What I realized was that the "press of other work" was a project as visionary and monumental in its way as planning cities. Jane Jacobs was fulfilling a deathbed promise to edit and publish the journals of her aunt, Hannah Breece, who had gone to the Alaskan frontier in 1904 at the behest of the government to teach native peoples. To turn Hannah's memoirs into a book, Jacobs visited the remote sites where she taught for 14 years in an Alaska that was still almost as much Russian as American. The result, *A Schoolteacher in Old Alaska: The Story of Hannah Breece*, is the tale of a remarkable, dedicated, and independent woman trying to make life better in an other-worldly place. The same might be said of Jane Jacobs, as we enjoy the historic buildings and spaces that occupy the expressways she helped us to never build.



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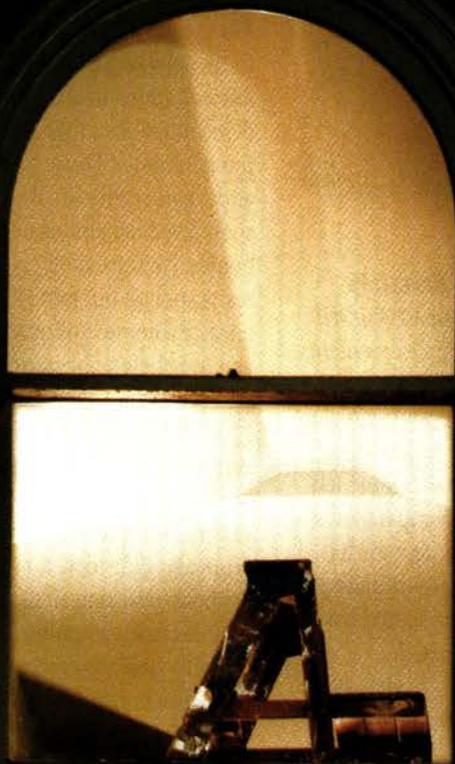


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Perfect Porch Touch

I just received the July/August 2006 *OHJ* and had to write with a couple comments. First, I really liked Joseph Metzler's article "Keeping Up With Codes" about restoring his second floor porch, especially one of his methods. As shown on the upper left photo on page 61, the box wrap newel is cut back at 45 degrees to accept the base and resist water. This is a beautiful detail, lost on most people, that he should have been proud to note in the article.

Also, for the "Ask OHJ" reader with a porch deck that may be yellow pine, as very plainly stated in the *Department of Agriculture's Wood Handbook*, this wood species does not hold paint well on exteriors. Furthermore, yellow pine has a poor



rating for rot and insect resistance. I used 5/4, vertical grain, tongue-and-groove yellow pine flooring on my last porch, and the areas exposed to gutter drips and weather rotted completely through in two years. This was after backpriming and painting with two coats of oil-based porch and deck enamel. Keep up the good work.
*Steve Jordan, Contributing Editor
Rochester, New York*

House Bloggers Unite

In the July/August 2006 issue of *Old-House Journal*, editor-in-chief Gordon Bock wondered aloud about the seemingly recent proliferation of house blogs on the Web and whether they are destined to be just a short-lived fad among folks restoring old homes. We started blogging about the restoration of our family's 18th-century ancestral home in Virginia seven years ago, long before the terminology was widely used.

Our online journal is simply a more sophisticated version of the spiral notebook journal my wife and I kept when we restored our first old home together 15 years ago. Blog tools now make it easy for anybody restoring an old home to share their experiences online, and for the web-savvy to view the process of restoring an old house in real-time. Often, the readers of our site provide us valuable advice that improves the outcome of our projects. And in 2005, the folks at houseblogs.net brought us all together as a formalized community. And that community aspect is the key that I think Mr. Bock overlooked in pondering this "phenomenon."

Restoring an old home can be a very solitary and isolating venture. The faithful followers of our online journal, as well as the community of other old-house bloggers, provide us with a much-needed support group. It's simply an old-fashioned barn raising, 21st-century style.

*Bill Chapman
Lancaster County, Virginia*

Brick Banter

I enjoyed your story "The Accidental Charm of Clinker Bricks" in the May/June

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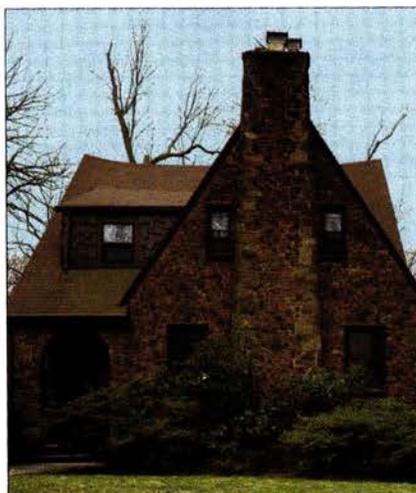
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Letters

2006 issue of *Old-House Journal*, especially the part about the lengths old-house renovators will go to seek out clinker bricks to use in renovations.

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Marc Barnes
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We Stand Corrected

In our July/August 2006, article "Down the Ornamental Garden Path," the relief showing Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in a garden, pictured on page 42, should have been dated 660 B.C. —Eds.

A Technological Breakthrough

We're pleased to announce a new medium for submitting letters to *Old-House Journal*. Beginning with this issue, you may send your contributions for the Letters page to:

OHJEditorial@restoremedia.com.

Please note that, owing to the sheer volume of mail we receive, we are unable to respond to every letter that is submitted to us. In addition, we also reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity. —Eds.

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September 28-29

NEWPORT, RI

Wine and Food Festival

Attend an evening gala at Rosecliff and then spend the next day sampling wine and food on the grounds of Marble House. Tickets for both events are \$225 or \$175 for the Rosecliff gala and \$65 for the grand tasting at Marble House. To learn more, call (401) 847-1000 or visit www.newportmansions.org.

September 29-October 1

PRINCETON, NJ

Antiques and Fine Arts Show

A preview gala held Friday evening kicks off the show featuring more than 40 antiques dealers, with proceeds benefiting the Historical Society of Princeton. Admission is \$8 for HSP members, \$10 for non-members. For more information, call (609) 921-6748 or visit www.princeton-history.org.

October 20-21

AMHERST, NY

Halloween Trick-or-Treat

Children ages three to 10 years will enjoy trick-or-treating at the historic houses

Learning the ABCs of B&Bs

If you've ever wondered whether running a bed and breakfast is right for you, autumn is a good time to find out. The spring and fall are popular seasons for innkeeping seminars. Here are a few of the seminars taking place this fall around the country.

New England B&B Consultants, September 8-10.

Attendees are encouraged to explore if the lifestyle and the business of running a bed and breakfast are a good fit. The cost is \$495 per couple or \$395 for an individual and includes a two-night stay at the Thatcher Brook Inn in Stowe/Waterbury, Vermont. For more information, call (802) 748-6321 or visit www.nebbc.com

Oates & Bredfeldt, September 24-26. This mid-week course is a comprehensive seminar that helps you develop a business plan and learn about operating and marketing an inn. The cost is \$750 for two people or \$550



Seminars can teach you how to run an award-winning bed and breakfast like the Swann House, rated best in Washington, D.C., by *Frommer's Guide*.

for one; accommodation at the Gateways Inn in Lenox, Massachusetts, where the seminar is held, is not included. For more information, call (866) 563-2772 or visit www.oatesbredfeldt.com.

Biltmore Village Inn, Sundays through Thursdays, September and November. You set the dates to attend this tailored, one-on-one seminar, run by innkeeper Ripley Hotch, the

co-author of *How to Start and Run Your Own Bed & Breakfast Inn*. The package includes a minimum of three hours of consultation and advice per day, a copy of the book, two tickets to the Biltmore Estate, and two nights at the Biltmore Village Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Cost is \$595.25 per person. For more information, call (866) 274-8779 or visit www.biltmorevillageinn.com.

A Capital Show for Historic Building Enthusiasts

Two Washington, D.C., homes with presidential pedigrees are featured tours at the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference: George Washington's Mount Vernon estate and Abraham Lincoln's cottage retreat. For a different perspective of old structures, tour historic watering holes on a traditional building pub crawl. Held October 4-7, the trade show is the largest in North America for exhibitors specializing in historic preservation and traditional building materials. The more than 70 scheduled seminars include topics such as Mid-Atlantic architecture, the function of windows and paint in historic buildings, and a guide to designing a kitchen workstation. On a more activist note, find out why a national tax credit for historic homeowners doesn't exist and what you can do to get one. For more information, visit www.traditional-buildingshow.com, call (800) 982-6247, or email info@restoremedia.com.



Historic Mount Vernon

Calendar

and buildings on Amherst Museum's 35-acre property. For ticket information, call (716) 689-1440 or visit www.amherstmuseum.org.

October 20-22
PASADENA, CA

Craftsman Weekend
Celebrate the 15th anniversary of this annual Arts & Crafts show with tours of significant Craftsman houses, lectures by prominent experts, and exclusive evening receptions at historic sites. For details, call (626) 441-6333 or visit www.pasadenaheritage.org.

October 21 and 28
GREENSBORO, NC

Ghost Stories at Blandwood
Listen to spine-chilling tales in the front parlor of this Italianate villa. Space is limited so book early by calling (336) 272-5003; tickets are \$1. Visit www.blandwood.org for more information.

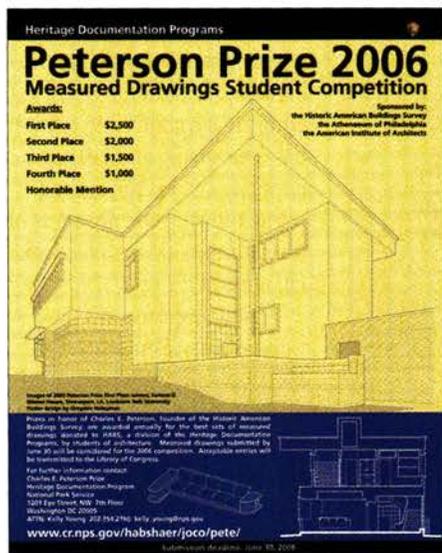
October 26-28
NEW ORLEANS, LA
10th Annual International Preservation Trades

Workshop
This gathering of historic-building tradespeople and preservationists has a mission: to help rebuild communities ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Attendees will staff a 32-foot RV and assist local property owners in Holy Cross, the Ninth Ward, and other historic neighborhoods in the city. For more information, call (866) 853-9335 or visit www.ptn.org.

Drawing to Promote Preservation

The wait is almost over for students competing for the Peterson Prize, the Historic American Buildings Survey's (HABS) annual contest of measured drawings. With the competition HABS, a part of the National Park Service, aims to document and preserve historic buildings across the United States through increased awareness, as well as add to their collection of measured drawings permanently housed at the Library of Congress. Students are judged on their drawing ability, use of field records, and the architectural significance of the structures they select. Because the HABS collection is rich in high-style buildings, bonus points were added this year for submissions on structures underrepresented in the collection, to encourage a focus on vernacular buildings.

The jury of three selected from the HABS, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia,



Last year's winning drawing of the Samuel G. Wiener house in Shreveport, Louisiana, appears on this year's publicity poster.

A list of winners will be posted on the HABS website as

and the AIA convened in August, and winners will be announced in September. The Prize, now in its 19th year, was named in honor of Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, founder of HABS who was also a founding member of the Association for Preservation Technology. Peterson, who passed away in 2004, is remembered as the godfather of historic preservation.

soon as they are available. In addition to the thrill of seeing their drawings added to HABS permanent collection at the Library of Congress, winners also receive a cash prize. Look for a list of winners and find additional information about the Peterson Prize on the HABS website at: www.cr.nps.gov/habshaer/joco/pete/.

Restore Media Launches Tradweb



Whether it's installing a slate roof or analyzing a paint sample, finding local businesses that specialize in the services needed to restore old buildings can be a challenge.

Tradweb, a new website from Restore Media, aims to make that task simpler. The site, which debuted in July, is a directory of services and professionals in the traditional building trades, including expert craftsmen, artisans, builders, and architects. Because the providers of these trades are often local or regional businesses, the directory of nearly 10,000 listings is searchable first by topic and then by state. The topics themselves include 28 general areas that can be broken down further into 967 service categories. Besides contact information, some listings also include images of typical projects.

Although the site was designed primarily for putting professionals in touch with each other to work on traditional building or restoration projects, many services also apply to old houses. Visit the site at www.tradwebdirectory.com.

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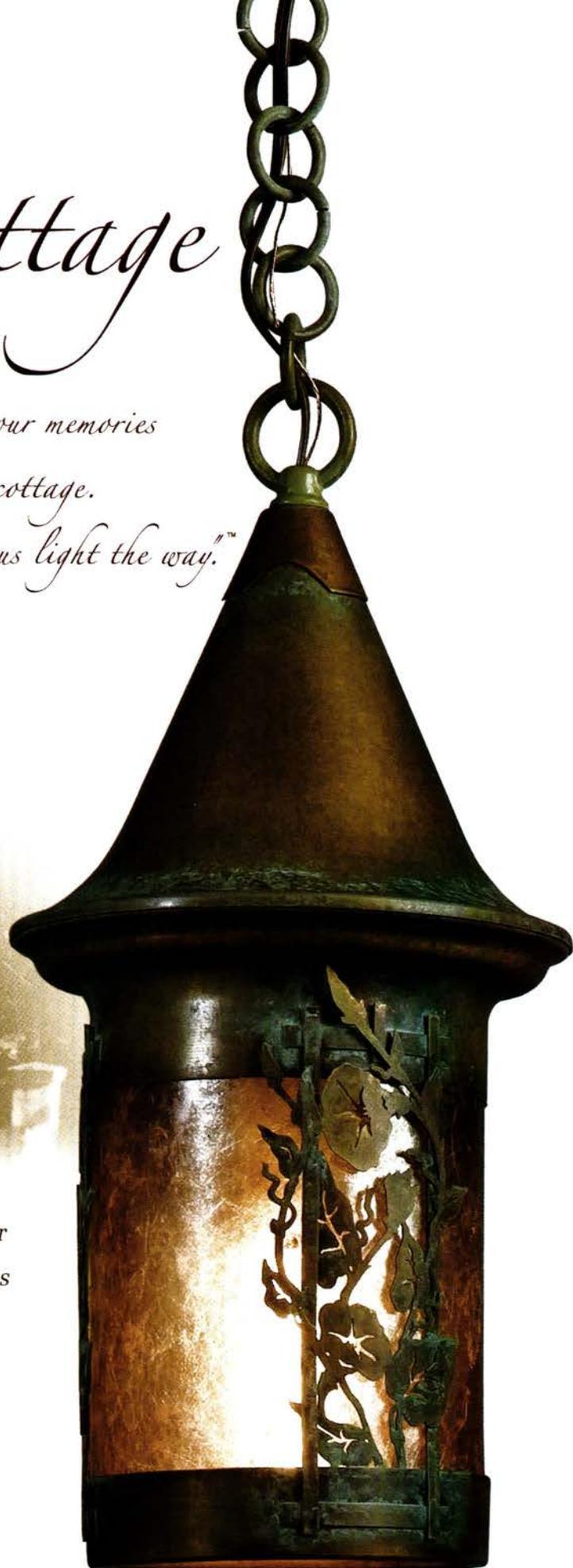
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Upscale Shower

I would like to restore this old shower, but I'm having a heck of a time finding parts or info for it. A value would be nice too.

Ken Warren

Halifax, Nova Scotia

That's what's often called a cage or needle shower, popular in the U.S. from roughly 1900 to the Depression as a high-end product, and still available in varied forms from custom manufacturers or suppliers in France and England. Whether installed on a tub or standing alone on a shallow pan or tiled floor, these devices are closer to bathing machines that, at their most complex, could incorporate a shampoo spray, a liver or kidney spray, needle spray, spinal spray, and bidet spray, with separate controls for each function. The uppermost outlet was typically a large "rain shower" head that emitted a gentle cascade of droplets rather than a pressurized spray, while the cage of nickel-plated hoops shot fine streams of water from scores of tiny perforations. In the best units, a mixing chamber blended hot and cold water and registered the temperature on a thermometer before it went to the sprays. Designed to be more for therapeutic use than actual cleansing, cage showers were typically only one of several fixtures in a large bathroom that also housed a tub and probably a foot bath.

As for value, you'd better sit down.

Cage showers were always luxury items favored by technophiles, and cost as much as \$170 in 1902 when a better-than-average package of tub and shower with all the fittings could be had for half the amount. Today new units (such as those sold by Bathroom Machineries at www.deabath.com) easily get into four figures, meaning that an antique unit like yours could be worth in the thousands to the right person, depending upon its condition.



This 1922 cage shower from Hoffman & Billings of Milwaukee is typical of the kind made by a half-dozen manufacturers in the 1910s. Note the large mixing manifold at the back surrounded by valves to control the various showers.

Stucco-ed in Time

My architect is having trouble matching the appearance of the 70-year-old stucco on our 1924 Tudor. Do you know a technique to "age" new stucco?

George Michael

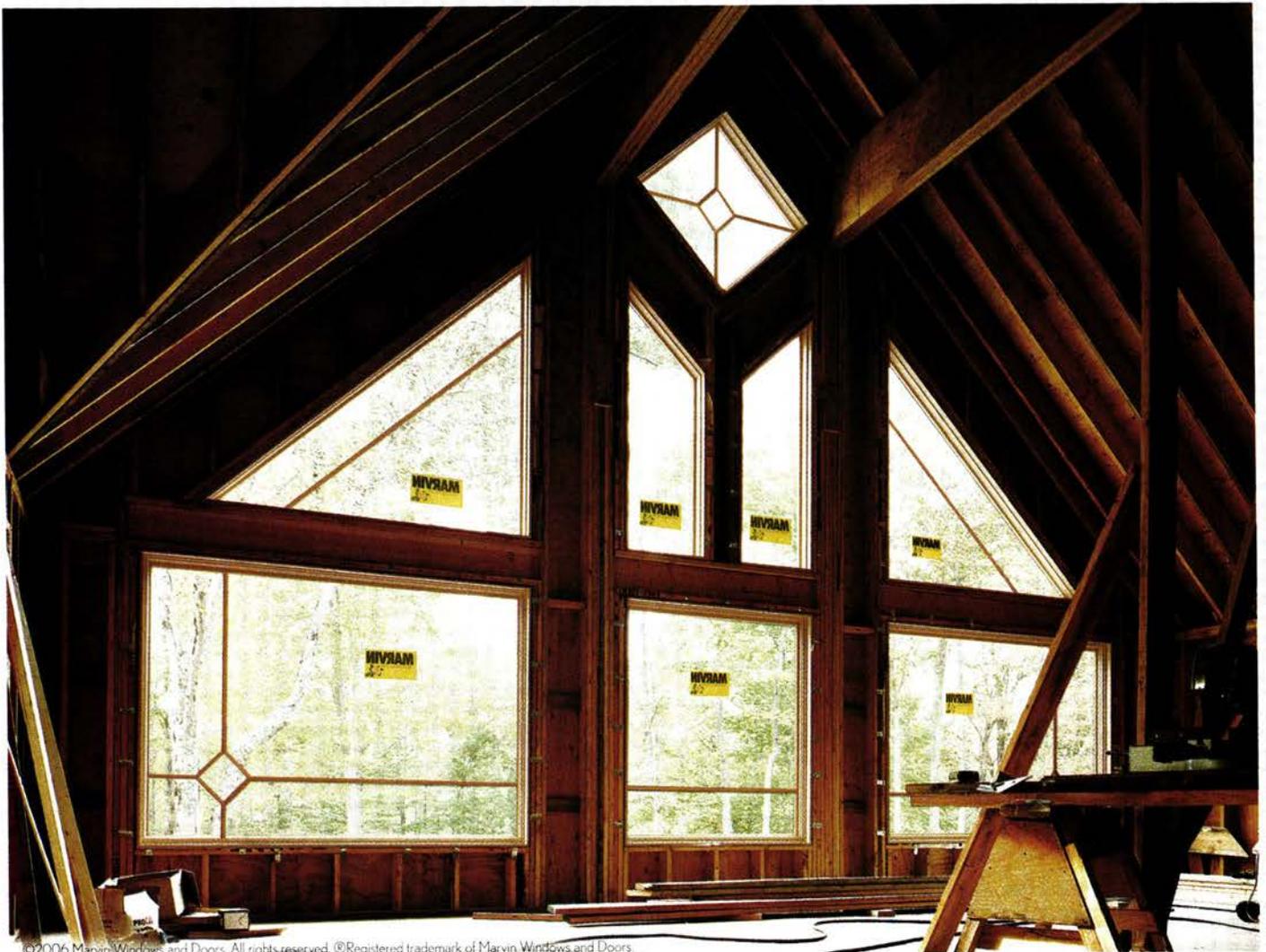
Kansas City, Kansas

One way to artificially age new stucco is to lightly mist the final coat with water before it sets up.

This way some of the cream (the surface lime between the sand and other aggregate particles) will wash away, giving the texture the weathered look you seek. For fully cured new stucco, try a muriatic acid bath. While this method won't harm the stucco if used correctly, some precautions are in order. Muriatic acid is a powerful chemical commonly used in

masonry cleanup and can damage woodwork and painted surfaces. First, make sure you thoroughly soak the stucco with water before applying the acid bath, otherwise the acid will be absorbed too quickly. Since the acid can burn skin, also make sure you wear protective gear, including rubber gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, and goggles. Then, using a mix of 1 part muriatic acid to 4 or 5 parts water, wash the stucco with a long-handled bristle brush, beginning at the top of the wall and broadcasting the solution around. The surface should begin to bubble, indicating that the acid is eating away the lime and exposing more of the aggregate. It pays to test the strength of the bath in an inconspicuous spot to judge results before proceeding with a whole wall.

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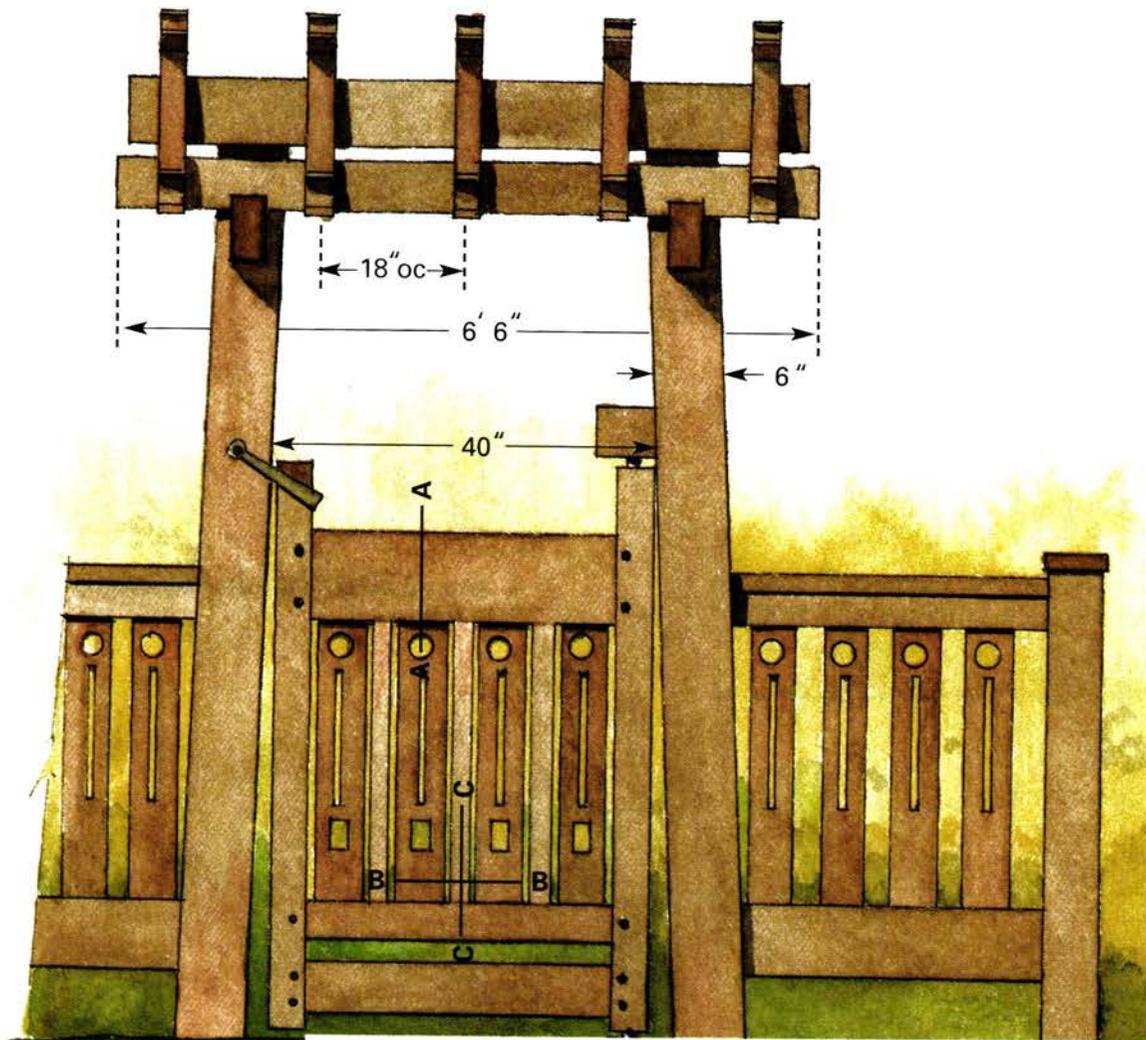


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Arts & Crafts Pergola Gate

DRAWINGS BY ROBERT LEANNA



Gate Section A-A



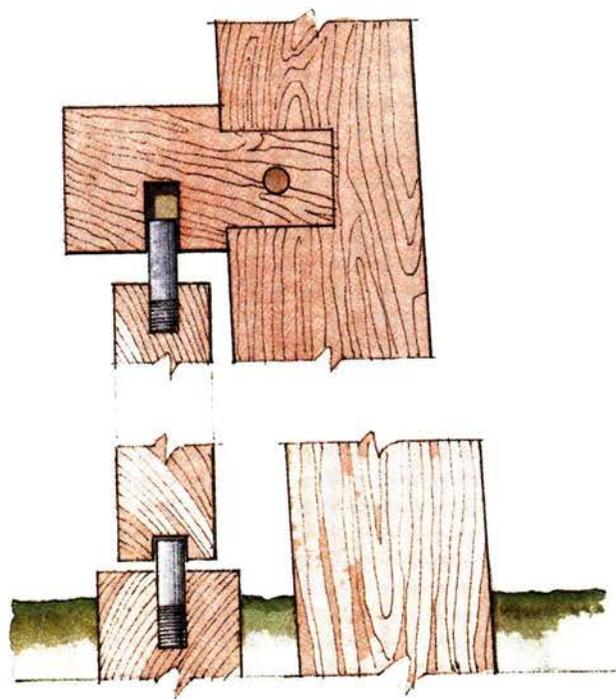
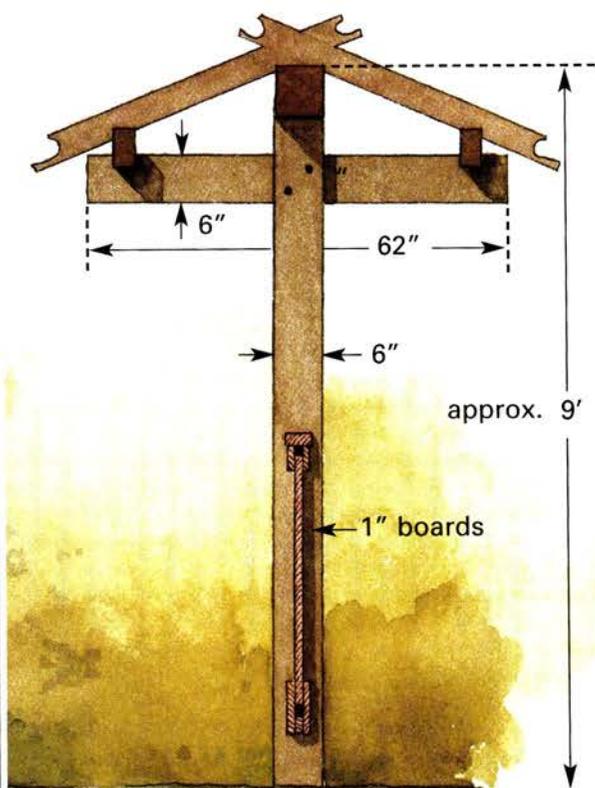
Gate Section C-C

At the turn of the 20th century, the ancient pergola popped up in new forms on the lots of American suburban houses and estates, and no version was more popular or varied than those built during the heyday of the Arts & Crafts movement.

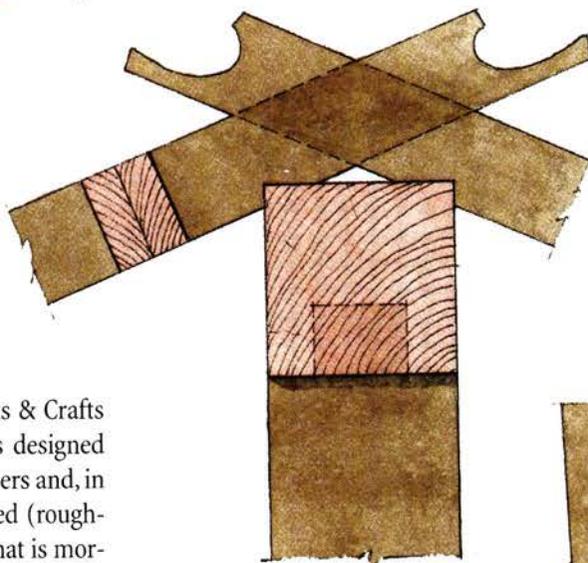
When stripped of its classical columns, the pergola represented to Arts & Crafts adherents a near-perfect intersection of indoors and outdoors, natural and man-made, unadorned structure and pure design, and they put it to many architectural uses including porches, screens, and even garages. These details show the pergola as a gate in an Arts & Crafts fence, an idea from the 1910s that draws heavily on the “Japanese style” for the angled posts and rafters—a treatment that is attractive and effective despite the cross-cultural connotations.



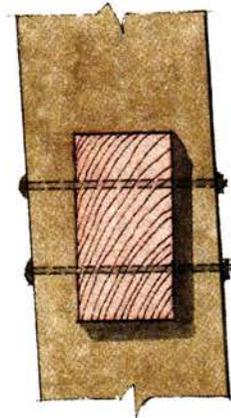
Gate Section B-B



Top and Bottom Gate Pin Sections



Pergola Header Section



Pergola Beam Section

Customary for most garden-variety Arts & Crafts woodwork of the era, the gate and fence is designed around plain, square-edged boards and timbers and, in fact, was intended to be built with undressed (rough-sawn) lumber. The gate is actually a frame that is mortised and tenoned together with pegs so that it holds the decorative slats. As designed, the gate swings not on hinges but two vertical pins in sockets, and the two main beams of the pergola are inserted through pockets in the posts and secured with bolts. All dimensions are approximate for relative sizes, and actual construction is up to the builder and the requirements of modern materials and building codes. Stain was recommended as the final finish. 🏡

BORANO

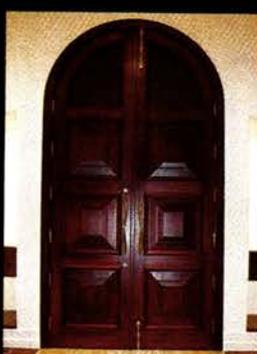
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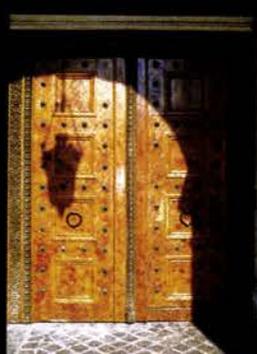
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Name That Color

By JOHN CROSBY FREEMAN

Q "I want to paint my library the same green as the room in the Jan/Feb OHJ. Can you please tell me the brand or name of the color?"

– Diane Cunningham,
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

To paraphrase Kermit the Frog, "It's not easy being [asked to name that] green," or any printed color, for that matter. As a historic color consultant, and personal shopper to Valspar's customers at Lowe's grand openings, I have spent much of the past 15 years in front of paint company color selectors fielding this often-asked question. When a customer asks me to "Name that color in this picture," it never fails to buckle my knees. Even if I could tell you the name, formula number, sheen level, and paint brand of the olive green on the walls in the picture, there is no guarantee it will look the same on your walls as the picture or the actual room. Here's why and what to do about it.

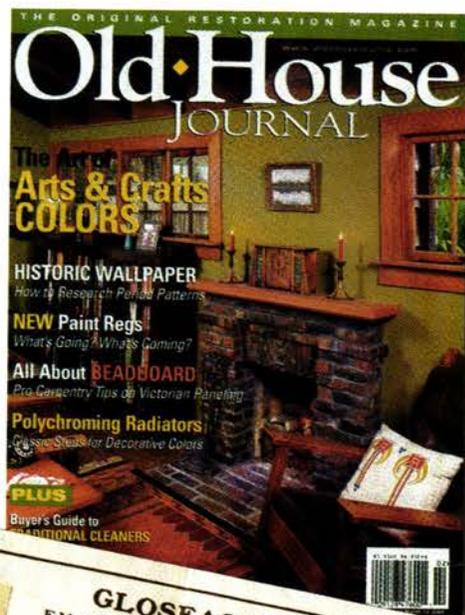
For the moment, let's breeze past the issue of specific names and discuss how a wall color changes when it is photo-

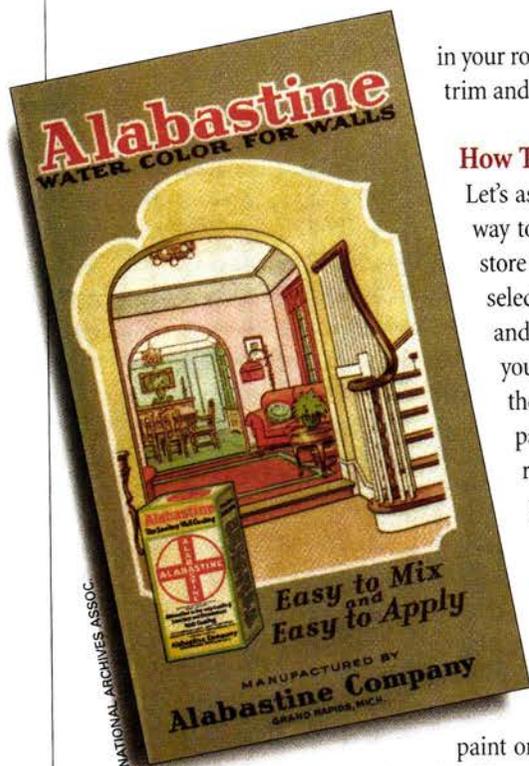
graphed. In this case, the photographer's bright artificial lighting in the center of that picture transformed one olive-green wall color into many colors. I believe the most reliable guide to the actual color is the area on the far left, farthest away from the photographer's lights. In the center, the lights have added yellow. As that color goes into shadow on the right, it is grayed. The point is, the photo presents not one color but a range of colors; which is the one you want?

Next, although this issue's print quality was excellent, it constitutes another layer of unreality. To make a magazine, the continuous tones of a photograph are separated into screen tints of four colors and printed as dots of ink (many of which are semi-transparent) on the paper's reflective surface—once again, many colors. Taking a magazine photo to your paint store and asking them to create a formula with their photo-spectrometer is doomed to failure because the tiny printed dots and translucent paper will give a false reading. A successful color match requires an opaque solid color sample. This is why paint color cards relied for decades on mounted chips of actual paint. The equally accurate color standards of today's color cards are applied by individual sprays of opaque lacquer.

If by some magic you were able to analyze a magazine photo, the paint color you select would not look the same on your wall as the photo because your perception of it would be affected by the quality and quantity of light

Faithfully printing paint colors, like the olive green in the Jan/Feb OHJ, is difficult and why color cards resorted to actual chips of paint for decades.





Up to the 1930s, water-based calcimine paints, such as Alabastine, were the way to achieve flat wall sheens in pastel tones. Today, acrylic latex paints serve the same purpose with better results.

in your room, as well as the contrast and reflection of existing colors in the trim and décor. That's why the next step is crucial: Put the picture away.

How To Test-Drive Paint Colors

Let's assume that you prefer the color on the far left of the photo. One way to get it in a can is to first, go to the color selector of your paint store and find that color on a card using only an "eyeball match." Also select a lighter tint (if it isn't already on the same card) to anticipate and compensate for any of your walls in shadow, which will darken your perception of the color. Next, make a true tint of a test quart of the color by mixing it at home with increasing quantities of white paint until you find your ideal color—the traditional and most reliable method. Then take a dried sample of that color to your paint store for a color match in gallons.

Some Other Tips:

- Never paint a test color directly on the wall. The test will only be valid for that spot, plus, in ambient light, that patch will be visible when it's painted over.

- Instead, brush-out or roll-out a large sample of test color

paint on a sheet of 20" x 30" poster-board. Hold the board out at arm's length so the color fills your field of vision, then let your tummy be your guide. If the color makes you queasy, the test is over.

- If the walls are already painted a strong color, consider applying a neutral gray primer over them to "kill" the color.
- Test-drive one color at a time. When you compare two color samples on a wall, your perception of one is affected by the other. What your eyes see will always over-rule what your mind thinks it is looking at.
- Test-drive the portable color sample on all the walls and study your perceptions at various times of day, especially under artificial light.
- Don't tape sample boards to the wall; the adhesive might leave a residue. Instead choose push pins used by artists and architects. Not only are they easy to grip and remove, the pin holes will fill up when you paint the walls.

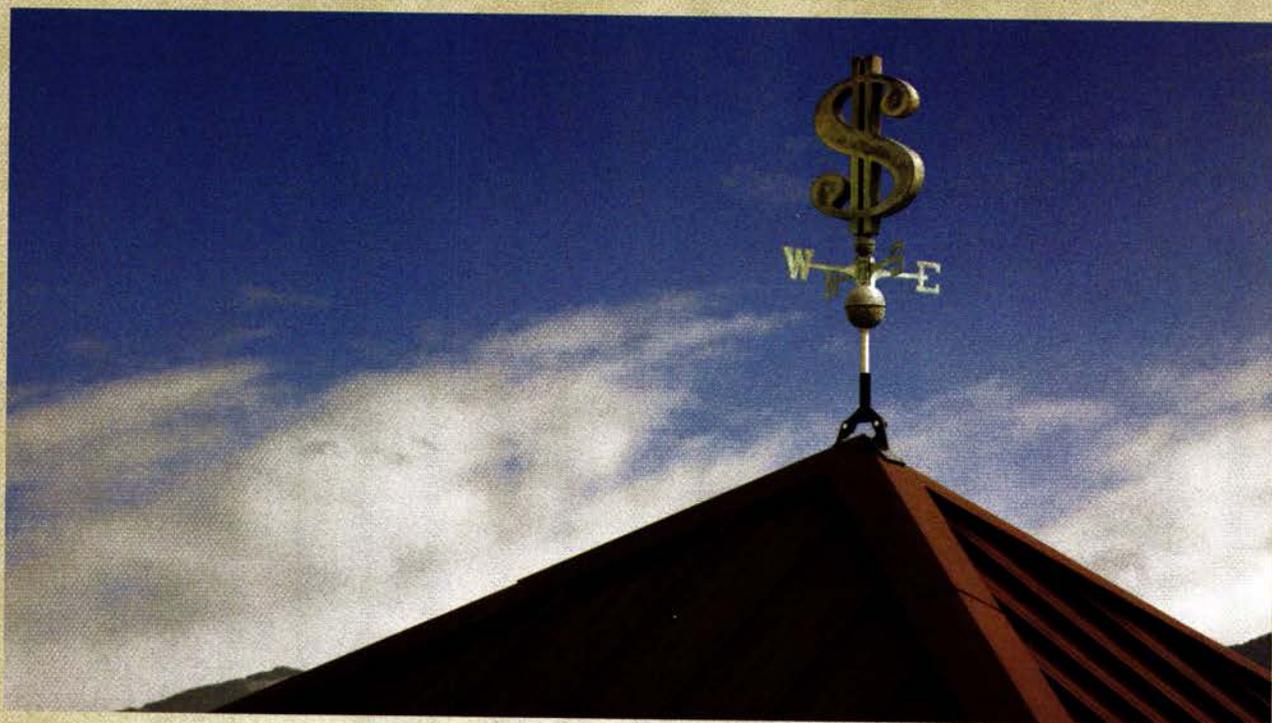
Purchase a test quart of the color in the sheen of your choice. If you want to imitate Arts & Crafts walls, remember that one of the three Victorian "V" words despised by the Arts & Crafts Movement was varnish, something that made surfaces shiny and paint glossy. The least expensive, most popular, do-it-yourself, water-based, interior wall paint of the period was the flat finish of chalk calcimine or gypsum Alabastine, which was often stippled for a fine suede surface that also removed brush-marks. The scrubbable flat of today's premium acrylic flat enamel emulates an Arts & Crafts finish without stippling and has more resistance to burnishing (making a mark when rubbed) than ordinary flat paint.

After you have made your initial color selection, the best way to confirm it is to search for similar colors in other selectors. Shopping a color in this way is akin to what an eye doctor does when he tests lenses and asks "Do you like this view, or do you like that better?" Odds are that you will stick with your initial choice, but your conviction will have been strengthened by the test. 🐾

John Crosby Freeman, "The Color Doctor," can be reached at 1601 Sheridan Lane, Norristown, PA 19403-3336.

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For related stories online, see "The Changing Landscape for Household Paint," "The Color of Money," and "The Vary Best Colors." Just click to "The Magazine" section, and go to the alphabetical list of recent features.



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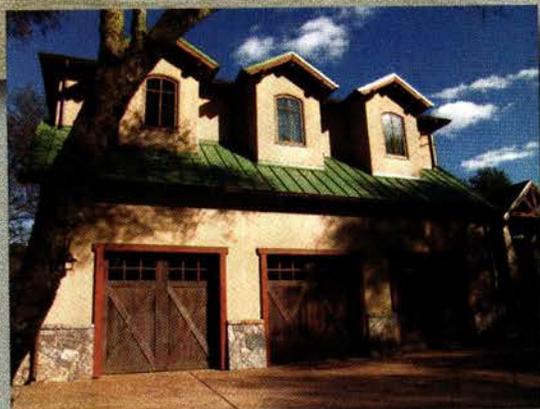
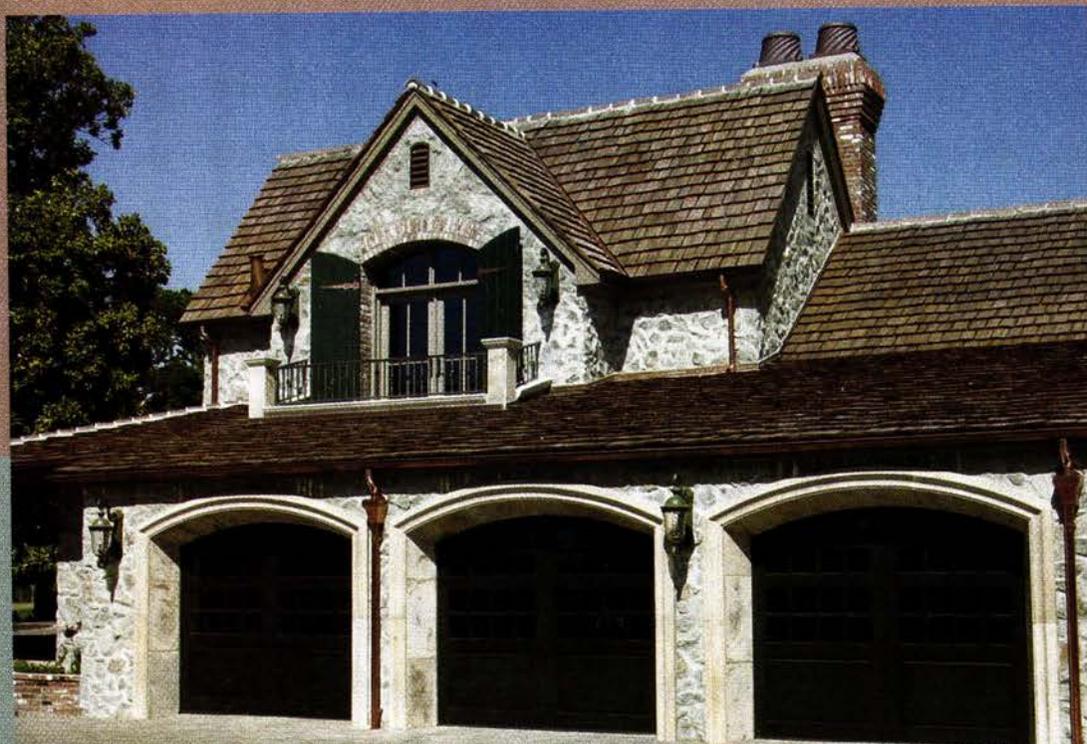
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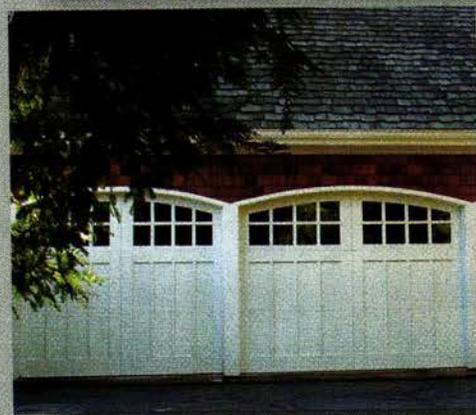


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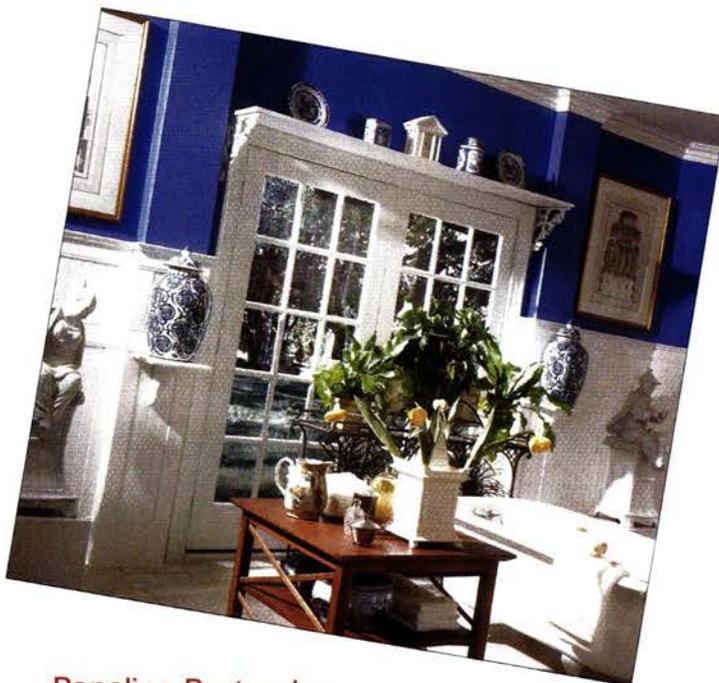


Fine Design



Dial C for Candlestick

From the cloth-covered receiver cord to the bell-shaped mouthpiece, the Candlestick phone from Crosley Radio Corp. is the mirror image of a model that was popular from the early 1900s until the 1920s—with a few modern twists. Push buttons form the decorative dial, and a redial button masquerades as a center medallion. Pictured in black, the phone retails for \$59.95, or choose from one of two metallic finishes, brushed chrome or brass, for \$69.95. For details, visit www.crosleyradio.com or call (866) 276-7539. Circle 10 on the resource card.



Paneling Pretender

As imitations go, New England Classic's beadboard looks like the paneling found in 19th-century houses except that it's made from modified density fiberboard. The easily installed panels come in standard sizes and finishes (oak, maple, or cherry) or a primed surface ready for painting. Prices range between \$7.20 and \$22 per square foot depending on the finish. For details, visit www.newenglandclassic.com or call (888) 460-6324. Circle 11 on the resource card.



Floorboards with a Past

By using antique chestnut, heart pine, or oak floorboards reclaimed from old mills, barns, and homes, Carlisle Wide Plank Floors is able to re-create the wide panels (up to 20") and long lengths (up to 16') of wood flooring found in historic houses. The company also makes custom wood floors from newly sawn, 100-year-old timber; the cost of both types of wood floors averages about \$10 per square foot. For details, see www.wideplankflooring.com or call (800) 595-9663. Circle 12 on the resource card.

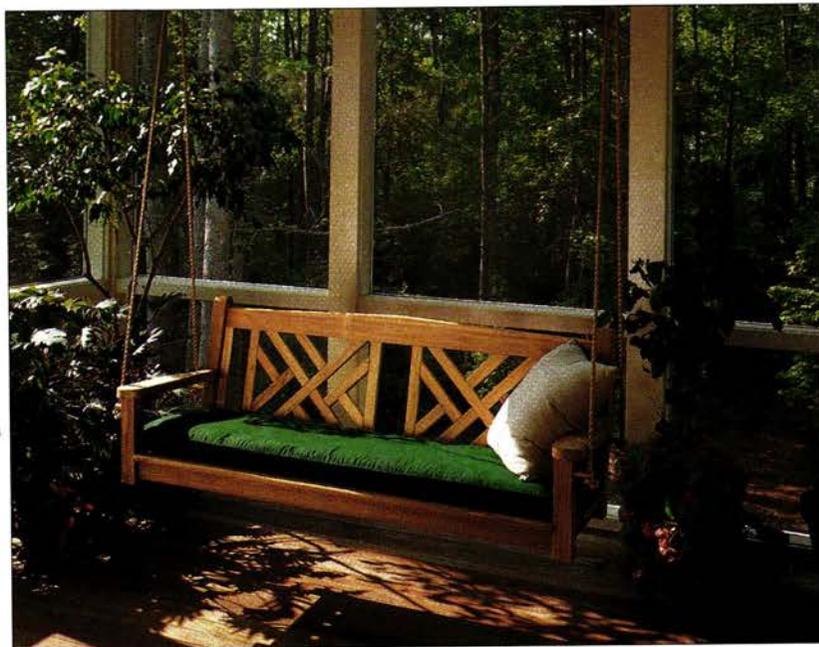


Hooked on Classic Styling

Although not a William Morris creation, the pattern of this rug replicates an Arts & Crafts-era textile displayed in London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Hand-hooked of 100% wool on a cotton backing, the rug has long been a bestseller for Jax Arts & Crafts Rugs. Sold in dimensions ranging from 2' x 4' to 8' x 10', the rug varies in price from \$120 to \$995 (shipping not included) depending on size. For more information, visit www.jaxrugs.com or call (859) 986-5410. Circle 13 on the resource card.

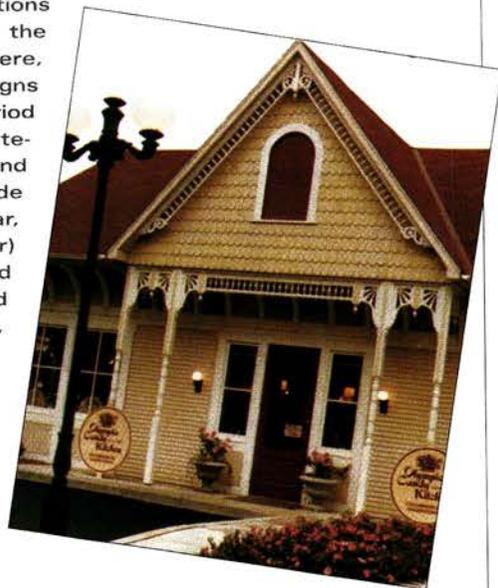
Swing Low, Sweet Chippendale

This variation of a classic fixture for an old-house porch has a latticed back that mimics the indoor furniture of master craftsman Thomas Chippendale himself. Aptly named, the solid teak Chippendale Swing uses mortise and tenon joinery throughout and suspends from weather-resistant rope suitable for an 8' ceiling. Available in 4', 5', or 6' widths, the swing ranges in price from \$580 to \$870 depending on the size selected and whether it is fully assembled, partially assembled, or in kit form. For details, visit www.southern-teak.com or call (800) 993-8325. Circle 14 on the resource card.



Complete with All the Trimmings

Sometimes it's the icing that makes the cake or in this case, the gingerbread house. Cumberland Woodcraft Co. Inc. produces a line of gable decorations and gingerbread trim, including the Wood Running Gable shown here, using authentic Victorian designs for Queen Anne houses. Period diehards can pass on the maintenance-free polymer material and choose decorative trim made from solid species wood (poplar, mahogany, or Spanish cedar) that costs between \$349 and \$510 depending on the wood type and roof pitch. For details, visit www.cumberlandwoodcraft.com or call (800) 367-1884. Circle 15 on the resource card.



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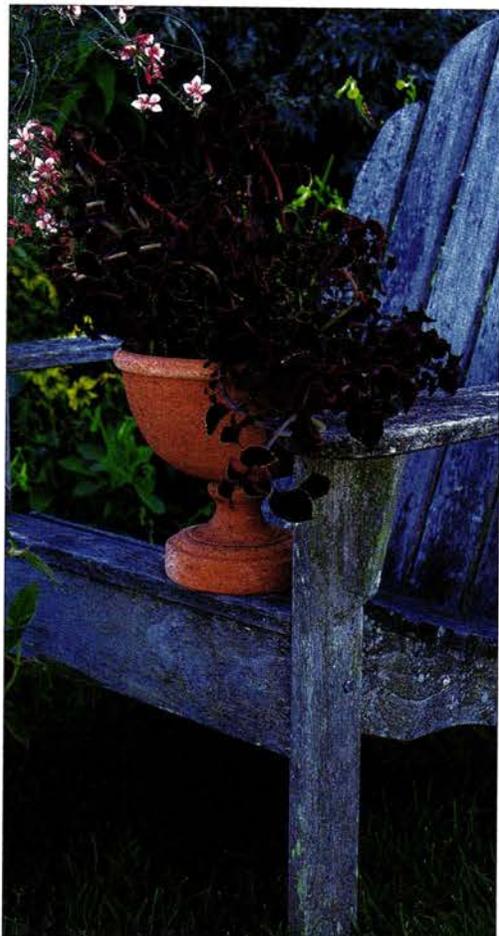


European Elegance

The belle époque design of the Axor Montreux tub filler brings upscale early 20th-century European elegance to the bathroom. From filigree cross handles with ceramic inserts that say "hot" and "cold," to a handheld shower that delivers a wide spray and is comfortable to grip, the Montreux bears luxury styling that will transport you to another time. Manufactured by Hansgrohe, the fixture sports top-of-the-line German technology and retails for about \$3,000 as shown in a brushed nickel finish; it is also available in polished nickel or chrome. For a store locator, visit www.hansgrohe-usa.com or call (800) 334-0455. Circle 17 on the resource card.

A Durable Classic

The pedestal urn is a timeless design that's been decorating classically styled houses for centuries. Seibert & Rice's hand-thrown Footed Bowl is made in Impruneta, Italy, a region near Florence renowned for its unique clay-producing soil, which when combined with a special week-long firing process creates terra-cotta pots that are frost proof to -20 degrees Fahrenheit. The two-piece design of the 10" x 9" bowl allows drainage through the pedestal stem. The urn retails for \$150. For more information, see www.seibert-rice.com or call (973) 467-8266. Circle 16 on the resource card.



Turning Back Time

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SCENE-ITIS

BY TONY AND CELINE SEIDEMAN

Darn that Gene Kelly! Why couldn't he just hoof it out of the way? Yes, the music and dancing are wonderful parts of *Singin' in the Rain*—what may well be the best musical film of all time. But my wife Celine and I wanted to see the Reliable brand stove. Kelly and his cohorts, Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor, were preventing us from glimpsing a six-burner, three-oven cabinet range with nickel-plated trim in mint condition—an item we'd lusted after for years.

Maybe you've had a moment like this, too. You're watching a movie, emotions are running high, and you're sucked into the dramatic flow. Then suddenly, you spot a light fixture in the background. It is the perfect chandelier, the one you've been trying to find forever. Or maybe it's that mantelpiece, chair, table, wallpaper, or some other decorative element you need to make your old house complete. The spell of movie magic dissipates, its rhythm broken. The desire is painful: Wouldn't that brass bed look great in our guest room? Celine and I suffer from this syndrome often; we call it scene-itis.

Some Hollywood directors are so meticulous about set designs that preser-

vationists are forced to take palliative measures before seeing the movies. My wife and I, for example, stroke and caress our authentic balustrades and wallpaper before seeing any movie by Martin Scorsese to remind ourselves that we have no business lusting after the set design. *Age of Innocence*? Sure, Michelle Pfeiffer suffered magnificently—but who cares. Look at those Victorian curtains! Those who love the baroque frenzy of late-1960s mid-century modern have needed sedation after glimpsing Ray Liotta's girlfriend's apartment with its groovy op art in *Goodfellas*. And who can survive a viewing of *The Aviator*, with its rampant overdose of 1930s Art Deco style, without medical intervention?

Then there are the older films. Every movie made before 1950 is a high scene-itis trigger risk because there is a good chance that what made a kitchen average then makes it wonderfully antique today. Check out the sets in *Maltese Falcon* and note the perfect pre-war kitchen. Catch the incredible attention to detail in virtually every



Pictured from left to right, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, and Gene Kelly block the view of a fabulous Roaring Twenties kitchen in this scene from *Singin' in the Rain*.

scene in *Citizen Kane*, or admire the verisimilitude of the sets of any of the Tracy-Hepburn comedies.

Occasionally, some classics can inflict a scene-itis outbreak without warning. Our house was built in 1903, the same year that *Meet Me in St. Louis* takes place. Some people say Judy Garland was the film's star; I disagree. It was the film's combination gas-electric light fixtures that stole the show. Hands down, the best scene in the history of cinema is when Judy Garland and Tom Drake walk slowly from room to room turning down all the gas fixtures and—ahhhh—flicking off the light switches. We shiver. We sigh. We wore out the DVD.

Yes, psychological manipulation is a powerful tool in modern moviemaking. Forgiveness may be possible for Cedric Gibbons, the art director of *Meet Me in St. Louis*, who couldn't anticipate the agonies he would inflict on future restorers. *Pleasantville*'s art director, Diane Wager, on the other hand must have known what she was doing when she shoved that 1955 Kelvinator Foodarama refrigerator (the

FILMS TO WATCH (OUT) FOR

- *A Christmas Story* (1983) The sink, the stove, the refrigerator, the radiators—we triple-dog dare you to watch this movie without suffering a scene-itis episode.
- *A River Runs Through It* (1992) Who cares about Brad Pitt? Yes, Brenda Blethyn gets emotional on learning her son is dead, but what is truly powerful in that scene is the wallpaper. Is it Bradbury and Bradbury? We must know.
- *RKO 281* (1999) This relatively little-known film provides a good Art Deco scene-itis rush as it tells the story of Orson Welles's battle to create *Citizen Kane*. It also shows Randolph Hearst's palace, San Simeon, in color. Be prepared to hyperventilate.
- Anything by David Lean, the Coen Brothers, and Merchant & Ivory should be viewed with extreme caution. Don't say we didn't warn you.

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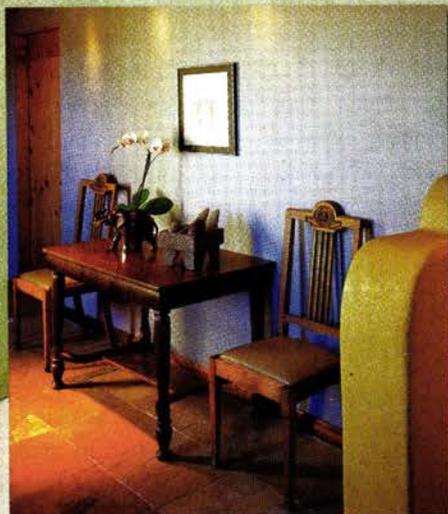
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Essay

first side-by-side unit ever) and a coordinating Western Holly range in our faces. Forget about Joan Allen choosing between William H. Macy and Jeff Daniels. We want that kitchen!

Then there are two of the most dreaded and desired films in the scene-itis oeuvre. We're talking about *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* and its remake, *The Money Pit*. Including *Mr. Blandings* is cheating a bit because the movie is about building a new house in 1948, not restoring an old one. Any preservationist who hasn't seen Myrna Loy describe her paint preferences to her contractors is simply an incomplete human being. After handing the paint contractor a clip of thread, a piece of robin's eggshell, and a small swatch of fabric to match for various rooms of the house, Loy gives him especially strict instructions regarding the kitchen. "It is to be white but not a cold, hard, antiseptic white. Rather, a warm, welcoming white."

As for *The Money Pit*, bring your smelling salts. This film is supposed to be a comedy, but for preservationists it is a tragedy that makes *Hamlet* look like *Mary Poppins*. From the overzealous permit guy to the predatory plumber, we've all felt the pain.

Even if you never watch films, television is always lying in wait. *The Honey-mooners* had very simple sets, but their wall-mounted, farm-style kitchen sink complete with rolled rim and integral back was a gem. Even the wood-burning stove in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* was the epitome of fabulous and may well have been made in our hometown of Peekskill, New York.

Does scene-itis have a cure? Well, we've tried watching football. Have you seen that collar the Budweiser Clydesdale was wearing at the Super Bowl half-time show? It would look fantastic in our carriage house. 🐾

Husband and wife team, *Tony and Celine Seideman*, write regularly about old houses, movies, and historic preservation from their home in Peekskill, New York.



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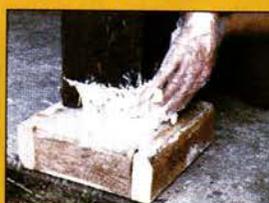
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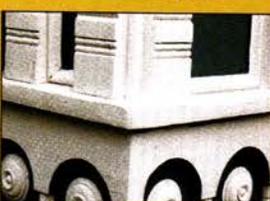
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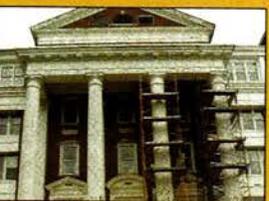
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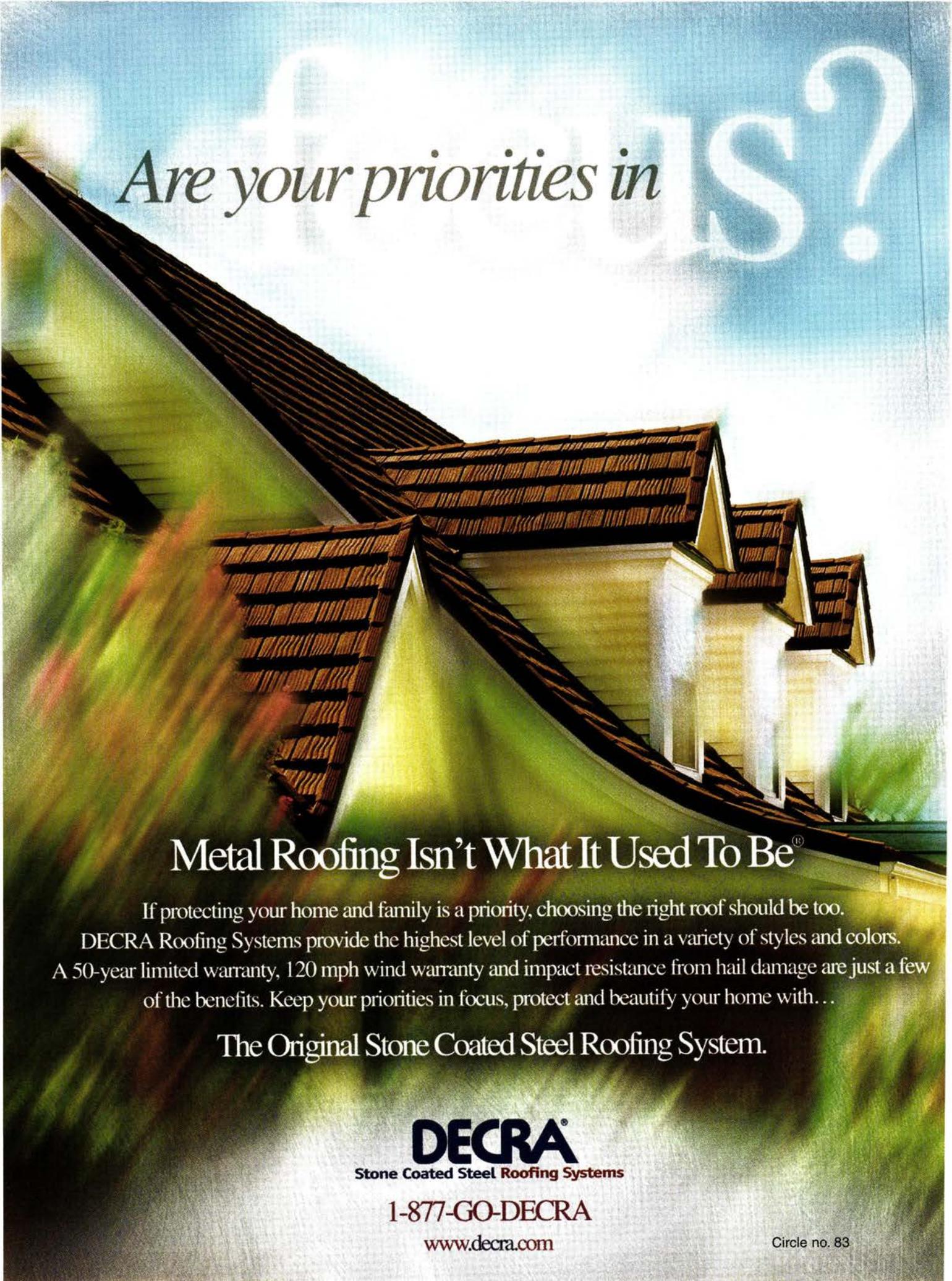
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A Call to Containers

From a simple debut, potted outdoor gardens grew into elaborate focal points by the Victorian era.

BY DENISE WILES ADAMS

Containers flanking entry steps on a house were one way to create maximum-impact curb appeal in the late 1800s.

Like so much about historic landscapes, it was Andrew Jackson Downing who set the stage for using urns and rustic baskets as ornamentation in Victorian home gardens. Writing in *The Horticulturist* in 1848, he expounded warmly about how Scottish terracotta urns and other classical urns could be used to “unite the architecture and grounds of a complete country residence.” It didn’t take long for the use of containers in gardens to become popular and include a variety of vessels, from tin-can porch plantings to hanging baskets.

Following the Civil War, garden writers routinely recommended placing plants in containers, and many articles were written about the art of cultivating houseplants, also known as parlor or window gardening. Growing plants in containers outdoors was also often recommended, along with suggestions for displaying the pots on lawns, along pathways to the house, as a focal point in the garden, or on the steps or floor of a porch or a terrace.

Placement Is Everything

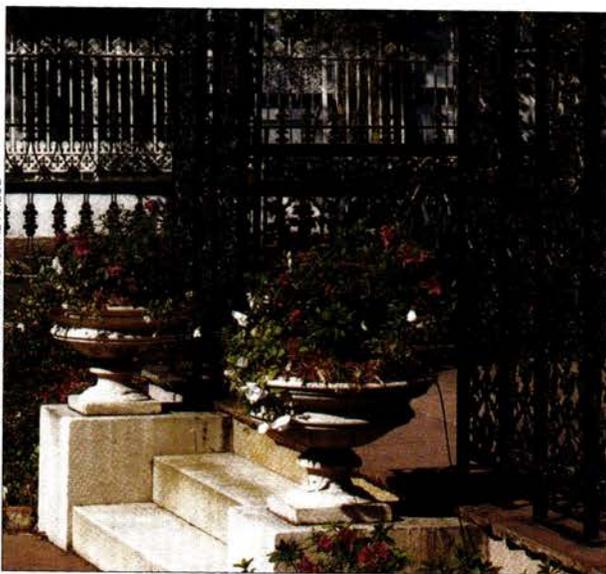
Proper placement of the pots, garden experts advised, should harmonize with existing garden features and take into account pathways and the views from the house. In *Suburban Home Grounds* (1870), landscape architect and Downing disciple Frank Scott cautioned against cluttering gardens with too many containers, noting that it risked producing “an affected or ostentatious character.” Scott’s own designs for embellishing the view from the house often included large vases of flowering plants flanking the main steps. Back in Downing’s day, urns could remain empty, serving only as architectural features, or they could be filled with tall, spiky plants such as yucca or agave.

Urn and vases made particularly stunning accompaniments to Queen Anne houses. In 1880, *Vick’s Monthly Magazine* proclaimed: “Among the many ornaments for the lawn, nothing can be more appropriate and elegant than a vase filled with plants. It takes long years to obtain trees on a lawn, but beds of flowers and vases can be arranged and put in place in a



DENISE WILES ADAMS

Plantings in urns were artfully arranged by height, with a tall plant in the center and a decorative vine trailing over the side.



SOUTHERN COMFORT / PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS

few days." To illustrate, the magazine showed a vase on the grounds of the publication's headquarters in Rochester, New York. The vase was filled with nasturtium, ivy, petunias, and geraniums on the left; Asarina and coleus on the right; and caladium and dracaena rising tall in the center. Owners of greenhouses and conservatories cultivated exotic plants such as palms, bananas, or oleanders in cedar boxes and displayed them on lawns in the summertime.

Bedding, or the art of planting gardens filled with colorful flowers and foliage, was all the rage in the late-19th century, and an urn or rustic basket carefully planted in the center of such a bed made a striking focal point. The effect was enhanced when the plants were arranged by height with a tall, striped Japanese maize in the center, coleus and geraniums alternating in a ring around the center, and the variegated leaves of vinca or trailing nasturtiums cascading over the urn's edge.



TOM CAIN

Downing considered classical urns (below) suitable for the grounds of Italianate houses, and rustic vases (right) appropriate to Gothic Revival buildings.

Bringing the Indoors Out

Porch plantings often consisted of houseplants that were brought outdoors for the summer. The containers ranged from artistic pottery to simple tin cans, and were filled with geraniums, begonias, or other flowering plants. Pots could be lined up side by side along the porch railing or fill a wire cart or wooden plant stand. More elaborate plantings in carefully constructed wooden boxes could also line the edges of a porch or balcony. Plans for such containers called for pine boards painted green and assembled into a box measuring 8" tall by 10" to 15" wide and as much as 48" long. Mounting these earth-laden boxes on casters made it easy to reconfigure the planters for privacy or aesthetic reasons. Roses, geraniums, bulbs, and even small evergreen shrubs were often grown in such containers.

Strategically placing urns in flower beds (above) was a good way to set off the border plantings, as is the case with these 1919 urns by Swedish designer Ivar Johansson.

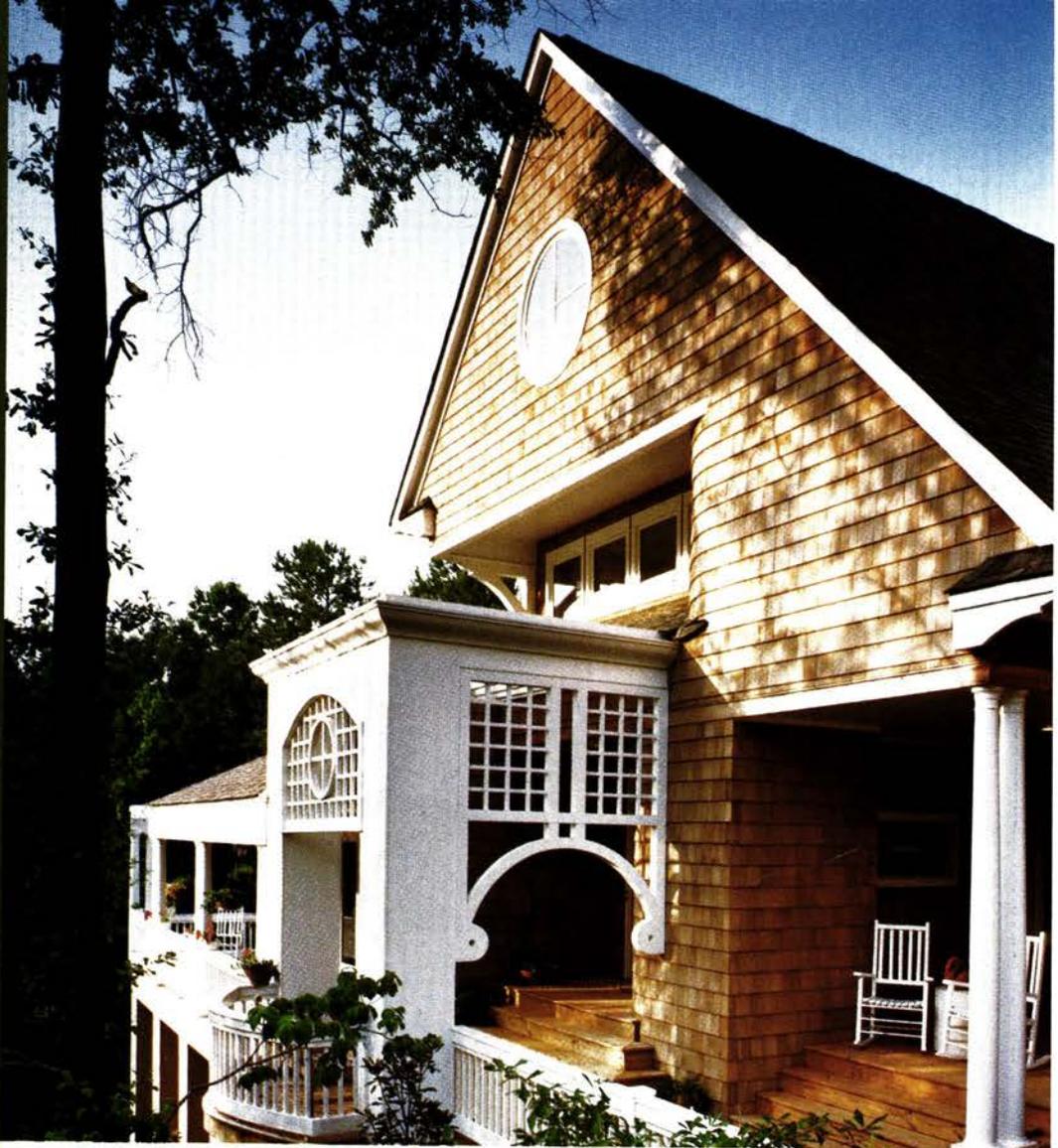


DENISE WILES ADAMS

The hanging basket was considered a modern invention in 1874. In *The Home Florist* (1888), Elias Long suggested that when there was no room on the grounds for a flower garden, hanging baskets could be used "under a piazza or tree, a trellis on the side of the house, or in front of a window." Homeowners could buy baskets or make them by shaping heavy wire into a circle and interweaving a lighter wire into a basket or dish shape. These frames were then lined with sphagnum moss to hold in the soil and moisture, and planted with either a single species, such



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ANDY OLENICK

Rustic-style containers made of wood still bearing bark—like this one full of flowerpots—met with Downing's exacting standards.

the edge and allowed to hang or drop at least halfway to the ground," *The Horticulturist* advised in 1874. Containers of pansies or ferns were appropriate for shaded areas.

Gardeners sometimes recycled impressive containers to hold their plantings. In 1890 *Vick's Monthly Magazine* showed a stove pot, freshly painted dark brown, that had been transplanted to a garden and filled with vibrantly colored nasturtiums. The 1897 *Mayflower* magazine described the creative efforts of one woman in Massachusetts who used an old wooden farm trough to hold her garden.

Maintaining vigorous container plantings, of course, was contingent on one practice: adequate watering. Gardeners in those days knew that plants in pots dry out very quickly and must be watered daily, sometimes even twice a day. "We have but one rule, and never fail to have gorgeous vases," proclaimed *The Horticulturist* in 1874. "Our rule is to give the earth a thorough soaking every evening."

Victorian ideas on container gardening—such as arranging plants by height in an urn—can still be seen today, showing the lasting impact of a gardening style that dates back to Downing's time. 🌿

as morning glory, or a combination of pleasing plants with luxuriant foliage trailing over the edge.

Designer Standards

For Victorian gardeners, the design rules for filling containers were fairly consistent. Plants in the center of the receptacle should, according to Scott, have, "large and showy or curiously marked leaves." Candidates included alternanthera, coleus, caladiums, geraniums, fuchsia, heliotrope, begonias, dusty miller, verbena, and, for the center of a large container, spiky plants such as striped Japanese maize and cannas, dracaenas, or an ornamental grass. Trailing plants for the edges of the containers were chosen carefully and included ivies, petunias, lobelia, morning glory, golden moneywort, tradescantia, variegated thyme, variegated vinca, and trailing nasturtiums. "A few drooping plants should be placed near

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A classical urn with showy foliage capped by a spiky architectural plant at center added interest to many Victorian garden landscapes.



DENISE WILES ADAMS

Dealing with Growing

Understanding some basics about residential design and historic preservation can provide useful guidelines for creating sensitive additions to old houses.

BY GORDON BOCK PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY

For lovers of old houses, additions pose a tail-chasing conundrum. We enjoy and value the architecture of earlier eras, often meticulously restoring it to original form and features. In fact, we regularly find that the best houses of the past offer better design and construction than many houses built or altered today—especially those that are products of the current building boom and its emphasis on volume for volume's sake. Yet the realities of a modern lifestyle sometimes requires more space than an old house can supply, say for a growing family or 21st-century needs like a garage or home office. On top of this there's the philosophical irony that our old house may derive the

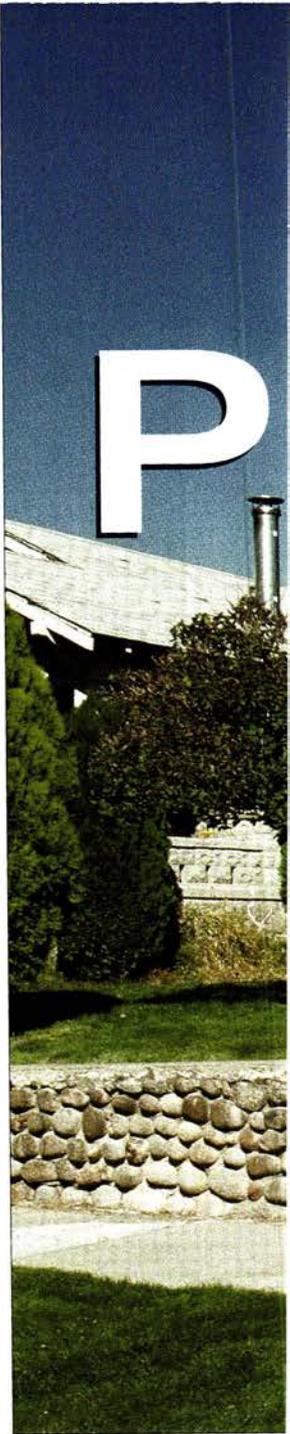
very character we love from wings or dormers added long ago. What to do?

While there is no universal answer to this puzzle, there is an approach: the sensitive addition—that is, a major alteration or expansion that respects the architecture and detailing of the historic structure. In this day and age, it's not hard to find examples of insensitive additions; they seem to be on every street corner. More difficult is finding your way among the forest of advice on and examples of additions that surround us. To help, following are some basic guideposts and parameters to consider and lead you on your way to sensitive additions that are successful and satisfying both for you and your old house.

Tastefully arranging secondary masses, such as wings, porches, and gables, and connecting them to the primary mass or main house is part of what residential design—and new additions to old houses—is all about.



DRAWINGS BY ROB LEANNA



Above: Small buildings are tricky to expand. While this rooftop addition does a good job of maintaining the original pitch, it changes the one-storey form characteristic of a bungalow.

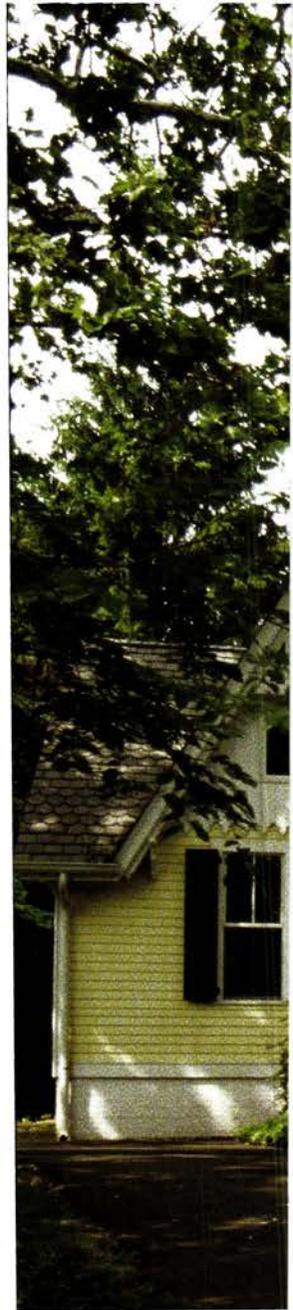
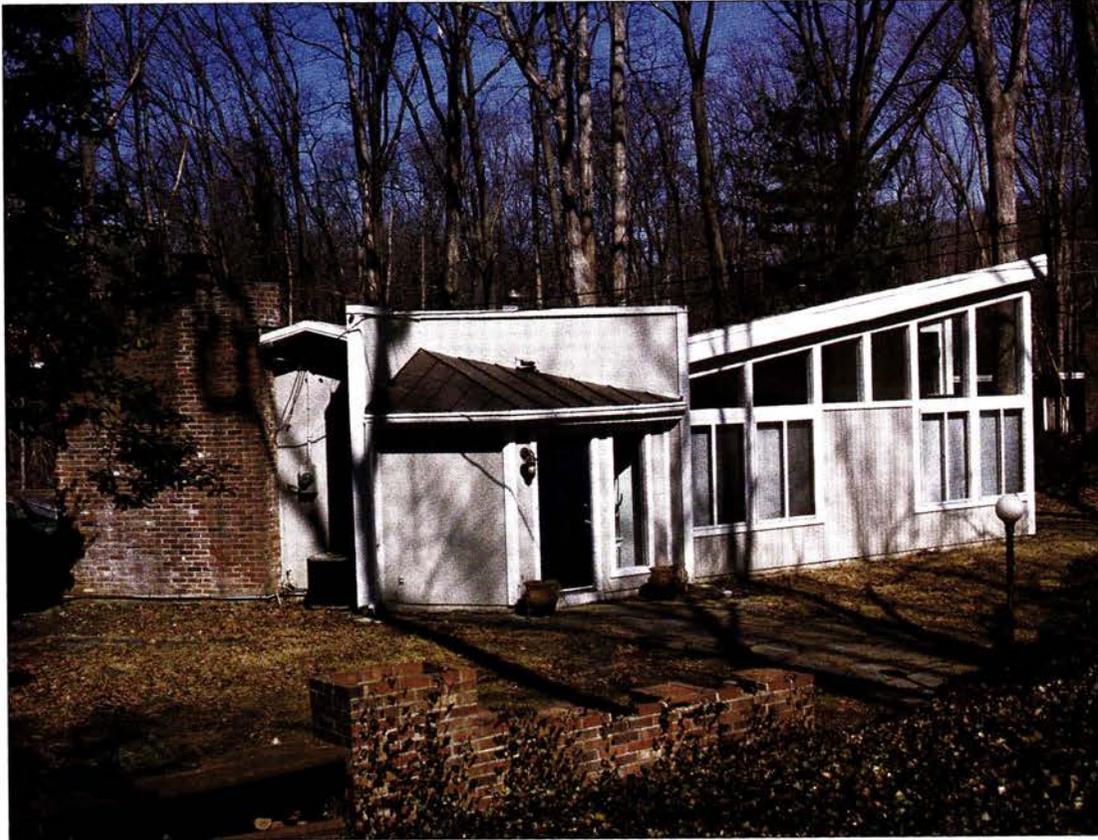
ains



Left: Additions are ancient notions, and traditional patterns make excellent models for old houses. Here, a 1696 brick house was expanded to the middle in the 18th century, and again in the 1970s, each time subordinating the roof line.

The ideal addition solution is a wing that is subordinate to the main house and positioned behind it. Emulating details on the original house like roof pitch and siding (but keeping them clearly later) helps integrate the new work.

Houses of the recent past often lack the main body mass of pre-1940s styles, so additions tend to operate outside of traditional patterns. The sloped roof seen here is on a later room in Hollin Hills, a 1950s modern neighborhood in Virginia.



What is a Sensitive Addition?

The trouble with additions is that they are not merely renovations, generally defined as upgrades of existing components or features. In contrast, additions are major alterations to a building driven by the need to embrace more space within the walls, and this can lead to radical changes and dramatic aesthetic effects from a preservation perspective. Since part of the National Park Service's mandate is to protect the integrity of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, their perspective is where the subject of sensitive additions starts. According to Kay Weeks of the Service's Preservation Assistance Division, "The concept of rehabilitation allows some change

for a contemporary use, but a new addition has the potential to damage or destroy the character-defining materials and features of a historic building." Preservation Brief #14 (available at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief14.htm) further outlines the scope of a sensitive addition from a preservation standing noting, in short, that an addition meets the standards of rehabilitation if it follows three key points:

- Preserves significant historic materials and features.
- Preserves the historic character.
- Protects the historical difference by making a visual distinction between old and new.

How these parameters are implemented, ultimately rests on the skills of a

good designer and builder. But observing some time-honored concepts and commonly employed guidelines can help.

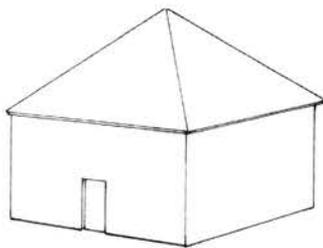
Understand and Respect the Massing

The success of an addition often turns on its relationship to the main body of a house. Therefore recognizing and understanding the massing (basic shape) of the main body is key to developing additions that are sensitive to the historic structure. If you look at old houses built in styles or types that pre-date the modernist ideas of the 1930s and '50s you can usually identify a main body, the dominant and most important form.

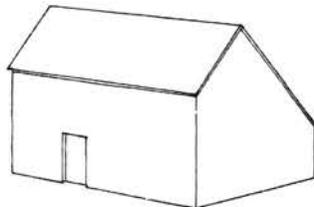
Once you've established the massing, how do you respect it? A good rule-of-



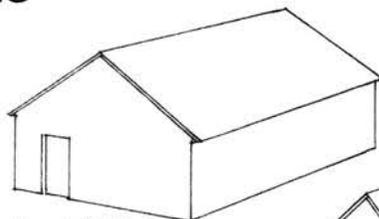
COMMON MASSINGS AND FORMS



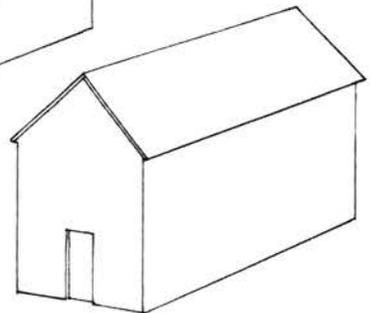
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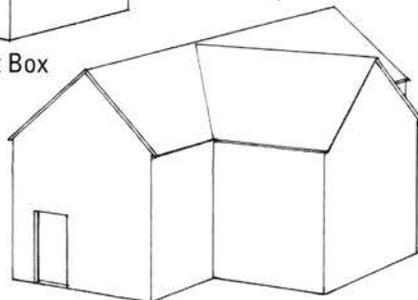
Side Gabled Salt Box



Front Gabled;
One Storey



Front Gabled; Two Storey



Gabled-El

Common, simple, old-house massings and forms are often elaborated into compositions that are classical or romantic in inspiration. Classical houses (Georgian, Greek Revival) are customarily rectangular in plan and symmetrical (centered door). Romantic houses (Queen Anne, English Revivals) are irregular in plan and asymmetrical.



thumb is by subordinating the addition through one or more ways. When viewed logically, building parts look most natural when their relative prominence is consistent with their relative importance. Put another way, less important parts—which is what additions to old houses usually are—make the most visual sense when they are subordinate to the most important part or parts of the house—the main, original body. This pattern is often very apparent in vernacular architecture where, traditionally, additions were secondary to the main body of the house in both their physical dimensions and often in their construction values. Sticking to this hierarchy maintains the major impact of the main body of the house and its design elements—an important criterion for historic area review boards—while encouraging an addition that looks right historically.

Given then that additions should be less-than-primary parts of an old house, how then do you subordinate an addition? Typically through the following.

Reduced Scale—Make sure the addition is significantly smaller. Height is especially important, and is best kept below the eave line of the original building. A common example is a one-storey addition to a two-storey house. In contrast, additions that cross over this threshold to become overly wide or even bigger than the original house upset the scale and proportion of the original house, making it look less of its era and more of the contemporary world of McMansions.

Secondary position—The less you tamper with the primary elevation of an old house, the less risk you run of compromising its historic character. The street side or front façade holds the most impor-

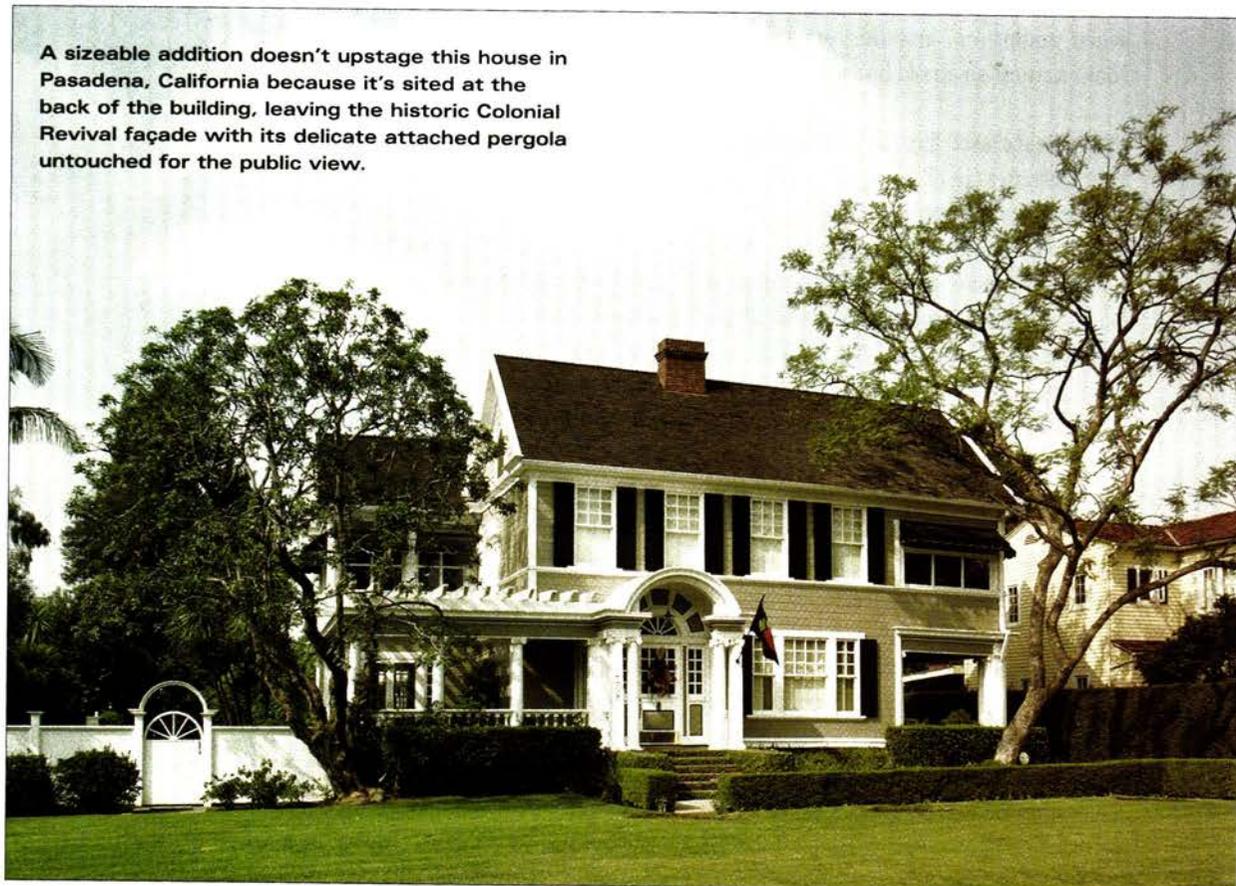
tant features, materials, and design elements, and carries a lot of weight. The secondary or rear elevations, where there are typically fewer details to impact and less visibility to be concerned with, are the non-primary facades and the first places to consider placing an addition.

Setbacks—Recessing an addition a significant distance from the front wall plane attenuates its visual impact, even when the overall volume approaches that of the original house. At the same time, a setback maintains the outer edges of the original house so that the historic form that defines it is still visible. In contrast, building a wing flush with the front of a house will, in effect, enlarge the façade, often making it too wide.

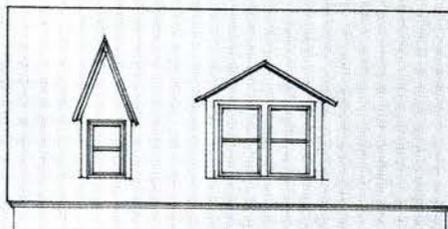
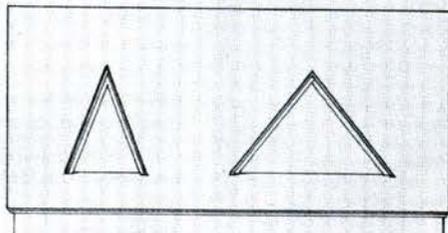
Subordinate materials—Though there is technically no hierarchy of building materials that applies to additions on

This house was enhanced with additions at either end sometime in the early 20th century. While the reduced height of the wings helps them read as subordinate, the lack of setbacks melds them with the main building into one massive façade highlighted by the horizon-like pent roof.

A sizeable addition doesn't upstage this house in Pasadena, California because it's sited at the back of the building, leaving the historic Colonial Revival façade with its delicate attached pergola untouched for the public view.



Dormer Dos and Don'ts



Top: Dissimilar roof pitches lead to dormers with different proportions, and incongruity in additions. **Above:** Different wall heights upset both proportions and visual emphasis.

Dormers have been employed for generations as a way to bring light into the partial storey and attic spaces often found in Victorian and Cape Cod style houses. They are one of the few traditional expansion options open to houses of a storey or storey-and-a-half if executed with proper forethought. Similarity and placement is the first concern. A common practice is following the bays of the house so that dormers are in-line with windows and doors on the storey below them. Dormers that use windows inconsistent the rest of the house ask for trouble. Also, if there are no dormers in the main house, chances are dormers will look odd in an addition.

Because dormers contain an even higher proportion of roof area than the house in general, roof pitch becomes an even more critical factor in successful dormer additions. Generally, maintaining the same roof pitch not only as the main roof, but also among dormers is a very good idea. When dormers of different pitches appear along side each other on the same roof, the result is incongruous and uncoordinated because the different pitches leads to different shapes and proportions. This circumstance pops up when the drive to buy more head room in an attic leads to raising the walls of a new dormer, but not the ridge. Inconsistent pitch has an influence on composition as well. As long as the roof pitch is more than 45 degrees, generally a dormer will appear to have a vertical emphasis. Once it falls below 45 degrees however, it starts to play up the horizontal lines in the dormer.

old houses, most designers and preservationists feel it is not easy to surpass the level of the main house in the new work. Traditionally most builders opted for the lesser expense and permanence of say wood over masonry, or brick over stone, when adding on, and this practice still looks natural on an old house today.

Be Guided by Similarity

Designers in all disciplines have long recognized that unity is a valuable, even essential, quality. In architecture, unity comes into play as the arrangement of parts otherwise unrelated so that the building comes off as a coherent composition, or as the critic John Beverley Robinson put it in 1908, "the mind loses sight of the separate objects and notes only the single whole, versus stuck-ons, gingerbread." Unity has even more relevance for additions, which are, by nature, alterations that are applied to an existing building, but are most successful when the final house looks of a piece. A primary way to encourage unity is to maintain similarity.

Similarity of purpose—What really helps a house to feel of a piece is to maintain a similarity of shape among the parts that share the same purpose. Windows, for example, are a prime concern in making sensitive additions and work best when they take their cues from the old fenestration. Sizes can vary if the general proportions of the originals are continued.

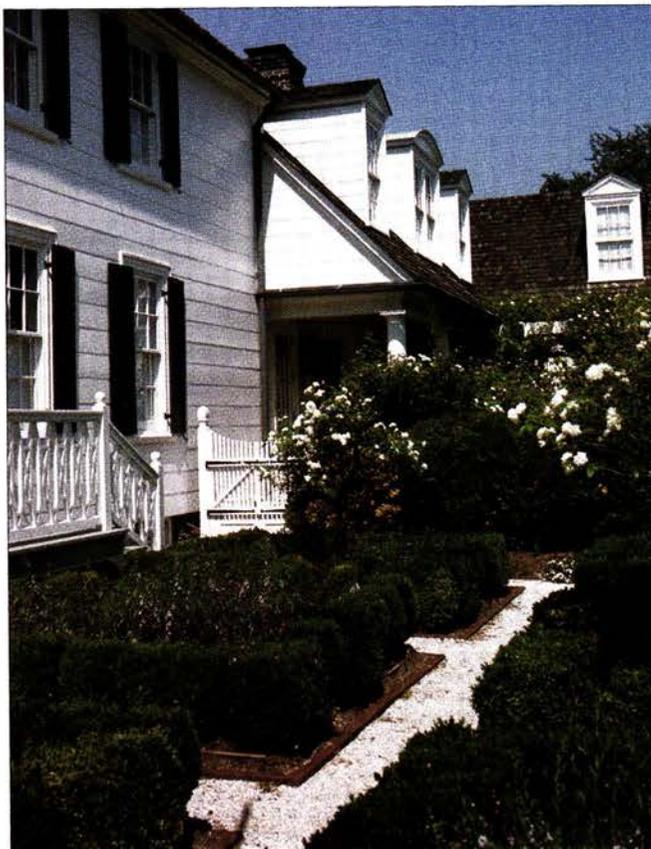
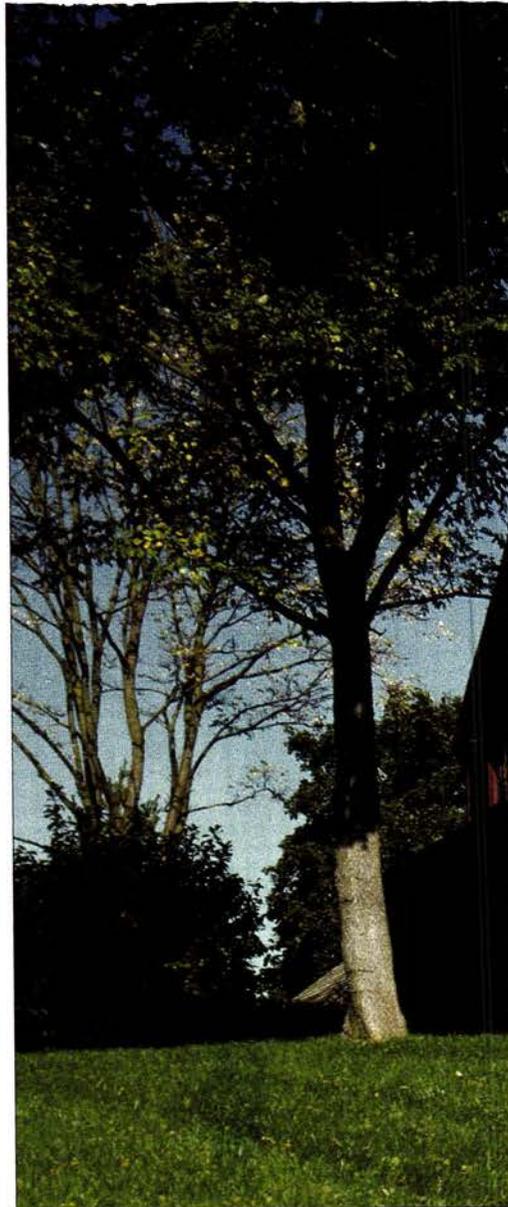
Similarity of roofs—Pitch is a specific example of the similarity principle. Though there are successful exceptions, a very helpful rule of thumb is to make sure that all roofs on a building stick to the same pitch.

Specific Issues

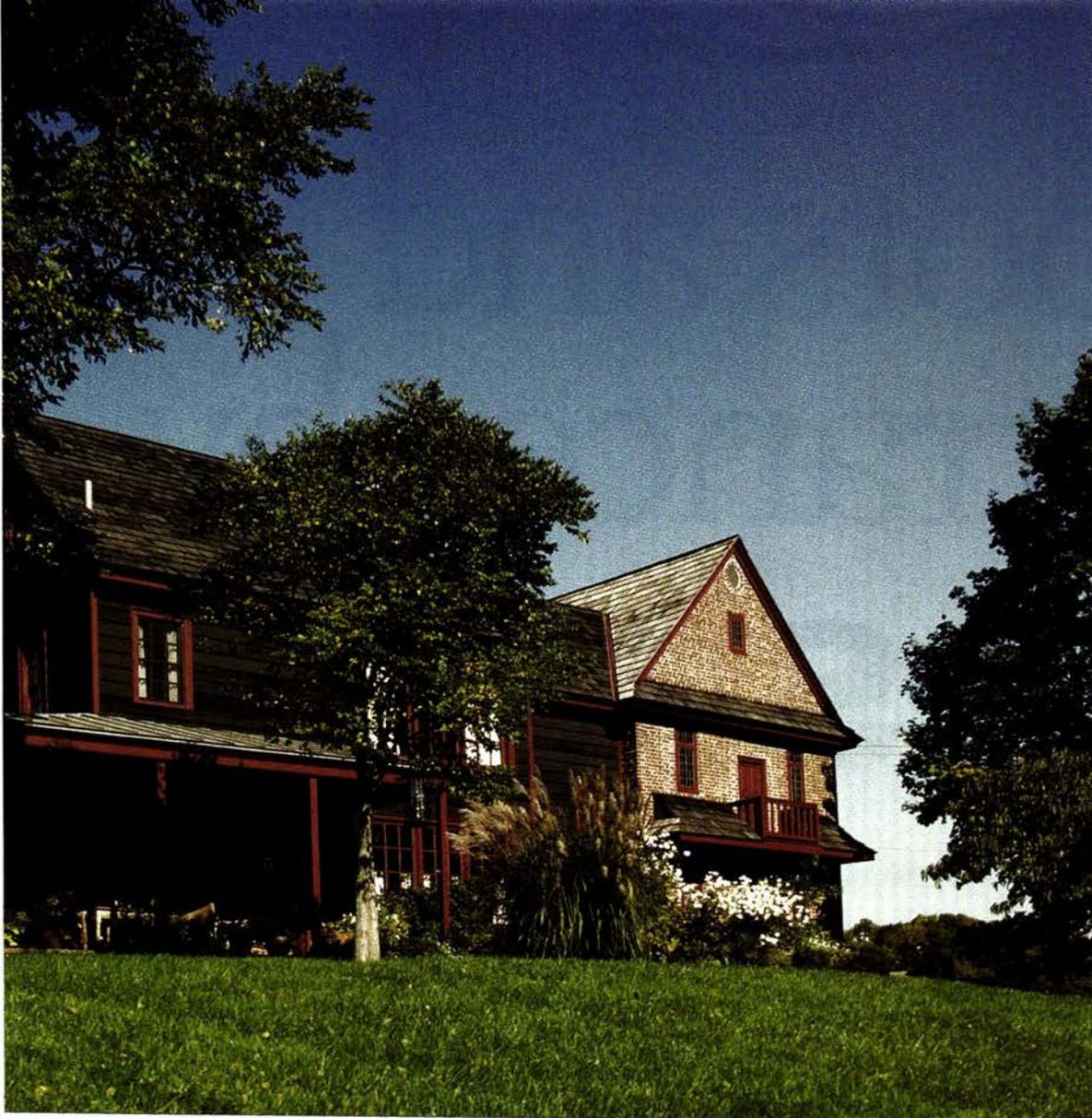
Every addition to an old house is different, and the sensitive solutions have to be worked out on a case-by-case basis. This being said, many additions to old houses fall into one of three general types—wings, garages, and dormers—and looking at how some of the aforementioned ideas are often applied can help with planning new additions

Wings—An ancient method for increasing living space, wings can have a dramatic impact on an old house, and their success as additions rests on their position as well as their shape and size. Though wing additions are sometimes recommended for the front of contemporary houses, this approach is extremely precarious for an old house because it immediately alters with the primary historic façade, and flies in the face of traditional expansion patterns. Side wings are far less fraught with problems, but they too must be compatible in massing, size, and setback. Some designers recommend that wings be set back from the front of the house a distance no less than half the width of the wing. Connecting the wing to the main house by means of a hyphen or passageway helps reduce its impact visually and structurally and, where practical, is a favored approach in preservation circles. Adding a wing or two also increases the complexity of the house. This presents the opportunity to enhance the interest of the house if done sensitively.

Garages—Again heeding the dictum that a feature's appearance should be related to its purpose, garages tend to look best when they are smaller than the main house. This may sound obvious, until one



Left: In Alexandria, Virginia, the original block of this 1781 house features gable dormers with Georgian style triangular and arched pediments, a detail picked up in the 1980s addition dormer.



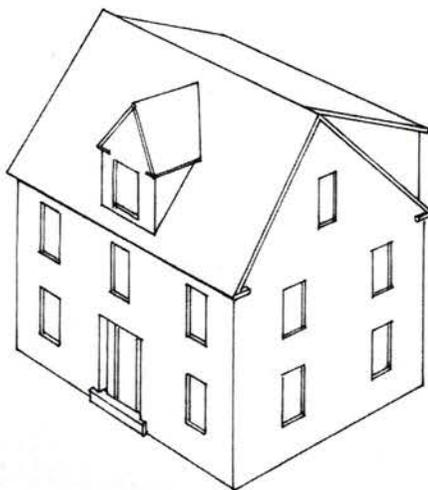
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Expanding this 18th century Pennsylvania stone house displays a sensitive use of a traditional addition material — wood — that respects the original structure.

notes how many recently built houses compete with a massive three-car garage with doors running across the front of the building. The objection here is not only the volume of the garage but the orientation. Though spec development builders will invariably favor creating the shortest driveway distance between street and garage, in contrast the best way to mitigate the impact of a garage is to have it open on the secondary side of the lot so the doors do not face the street. If the house is on a corner lot, the side street becomes the natural place to face the garage. Attached garages are effectively wings and should be treated with the same guidelines, including a setback equal to their width. One-car versions are best for old houses, not only because of their historic precedents but also because they reduce the opportunity for massing problems. 🏠

BUSTLE-BACK SYNDROME



Rear dormer expansions fueled by the quest for bigger baths are everywhere, but when they don't look quite right, it's probably because they lack similarity with the house's other roof types (gable vs. shed), pitches (steep vs. low), or dormer sizes (small vs. full-width running to ridge).

Doors and Entrances by Design

Here's help in finding stylistic matches for the portals fronting your old house. BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS



SIDE AND TOP LIGHTS DEFINE FEDERAL ENTRANCES.

HISTORIC DOORS



ROCHESTER COLONIAL

While windows were an architectural luxury on the earliest houses, doors have always been an absolute necessity. Not only do doors allow people to enter and exit a building as they please, they were also the main source of ventilation for living spaces in ancient times. However, once houses moved beyond being merely dwellings, doors and entrances grew to become important expressions of architectural style. If you're trying to replace an entry door on your old house you may be in luck, because now more than ever manufacturers offer a wealth of products that are good substitutes for originals.

Since a single piece of wood has never been large enough to cover the expanse of an average door, doors have evolved through three basic types of construction over the last 300 years, each with its own impact on door design. The earliest types were simple board-and-batten doors, made from a series of vertical planks attached by horizontal strips of wood known as battens. Paneled doors appeared next, and were more sophisticated in their construction. A framework of vertical stiles connected to horizontal rails, they supported thin internal panels fitted into grooves. Panel doors were more airtight than board-and-batten



ANDY OLENICK

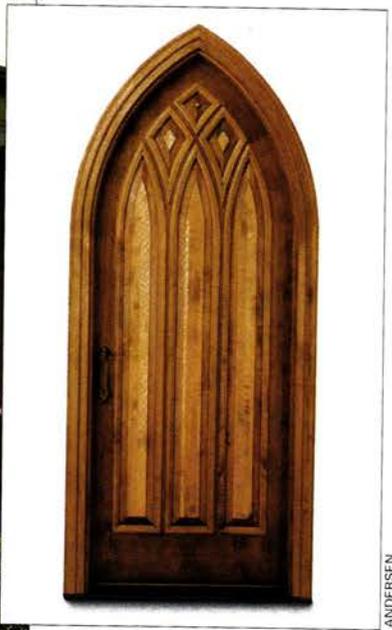


WOODSTONE

GEORGIAN AND OTHER CLASSICAL ENTRANCES TAKE TEMPLE FORMS.



JAMES C. MASSEY



ANDERSEN

GOTHIC PLAYS OFF THE POINTED ARCH.

doors because their construction addressed the seasonal expanding and contracting of wood. More airtight still were flush doors, which looked like a single piece of wood but were, in fact, long, thin panels glued together. Flush doors were used on more modern house designs beginning around the turn of the 20th century; their clean lines offering a streamlined appearance. All three door types can support an array of inset windows and other details designed to complement the architectural style of the houses they accompany.

Georgian

Paneled door construction came of age in the late 18th century, and reached its apogee in the Georgian style. Multiple raised panels were the rule, appearing in boldly moulded patterns that numbered from six to eight or more panels per door. Elaborate door surrounds were an important part of the entrance, making extensive use of classical elements, such as pediments (triangular, arched, and broken), entablatures, and pilasters or columns. Transom and fanlights sometimes appear above the doors and are often seen on

Colonial Revival houses of the 20th century because they added to the authentic feel in vogue at the time.

Federal and Adam

After 1790, classically styled doors and entrances based on Georgian models became both more elaborate and more restrained. While the actual doors stuck to basically the same paneled design, there was an increased attention to the surround, which made far more use of lights. Sidelights appeared at either side of the door, with muntins and glasswork often detailed into complex tracery patterns. Transoms and fanlights expanded to cap the sidelights and door with accompanying intricacy. At the same time, the surround woodwork might be expanded into an entrance portico with its own roof, or be all but eliminated to match the almost austere facades seen on Federal-style buildings after 1800.

Gothic Revival

The most distinctive feature of the doors on Gothic Revival houses of the mid-19th century is the pointed Gothic arch. The doors themselves were of two main types: board-and-batten and paneled, with the latter often inset with arched panels. Panel types tended to be elaborately carved with repetitions of Gothic motifs, such as foils or diamonds placed horizontally between the tops of pointed panels. Because entry doors sometimes appeared under an exterior hood or within a recessed porch, it was unusual to have any sort of overhead transom, although sidelights were occasionally featured.

Victorian

Steam-powered woodworking machinery brought new versatility to Victorian doors, and a wide range of designs to almost any consumer. Panel construction was the rule, with a basic four-panel door pat-

tern easily adapted to glazed doors with a single large decorative light over two or more small panels. Lights could be cut or etched glass, or a large clear pane ringed by multiple colored panes known as a Queen Anne door. While high-style houses were adorned with fancy entry doors, many modest houses made do with doors composed of a large beveled-glass light and one to three horizontal panels on the bottom half.

Double entry doors first appeared on Gothic Revival houses, but really became prevalent during the Second Empire and Italian styles—particularly for row houses—and their appearance varied greatly. They could be paneled or carved; bear glass inserts on top, or not; or have raised mouldings, louvers, and square or arched tops.

Arts & Crafts

The progressive ideas and medieval models that inspired the Arts & Crafts movement had a stylistic impact on the doors for bungalows and other Arts & Crafts influenced houses. Doors could emulate board-and-batten construction, but were just as often frame-and-panel, using the same flat panels and unmoulded edges that distinguish Arts & Crafts cabinetry. Rich woods, such as oak, cedar, and mahogany, naturally finished, were common. Many doors are proportionally wider than conventional doors of the era to help propel the horizontal feel of the building. Stained glass inserts also appeared on these doors, either in a singular rectangular panel or as matched windows; silight treatments were not unusual. The most iconic feature, however, was a small shelf running across the door about one-third down from the top and often just below a window.

Tudor Revival

The medieval feel evoked by the steep gables, half-timbering, and stone or stucco cladding made the look of heavy board-and-batten doors a good match for Tudor Revival houses of the 1910s and '20s. Though the doors themselves are relatively plain, they are characteristically topped



DAVE RANDALL/TWERKING STUDIO

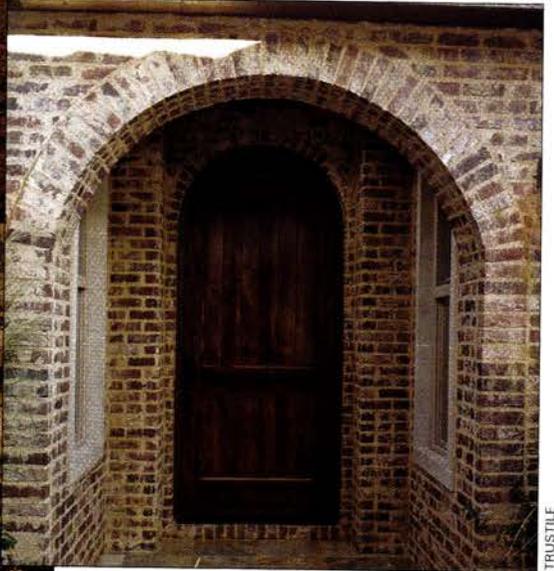


BORANO

DOUBLE DOORS MADE THEIR MARK IN VICTORIAN STYLES.



ANDY OLENICK



TRUSTILE

TUDOR ENTRANCES ARE CAPPED BY CURVES.

by a flattened Tudor arch or simply a semi-circle, a shape accentuated by the door head or stonework framing the entrance. Monolithic doors devoid of ornamentation are common, but small inset windows can also appear, their designs and placement largely influenced by how much light was needed in the interior entry hall. Standard window treatments are a single half-circle or half-oval with a top curve mimicking the one on the door itself; or the same window divided into six or eight lights; or a single narrow rectangle centered in the middle top of the door. It's also possible to find curved-top paneled doors on some houses, as these became popular in the late 1910s to mid 1920s. The panels on these doors almost always run vertically for a Jacobethan effect. 🏠



PAUL ROCHELEAU

ARTS & CRAFTS DOORS DISPLAY RICH WOODS.



MARVIN

Reproduction Door Connection

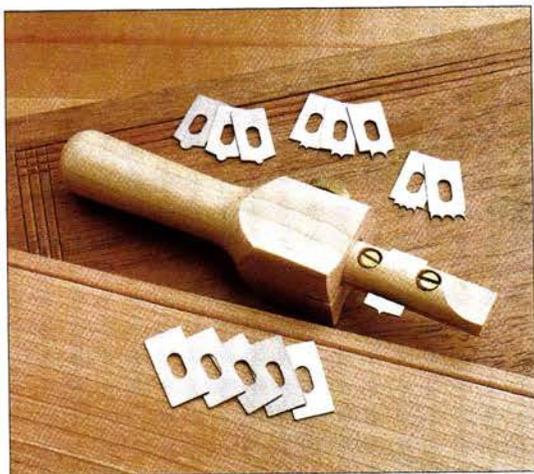
Andersen	www.andersenwindows.com	(800) 426-4261	circle # 23
Borano	www.borano.com	(877) 839-8029	circle # 24
Historic Doors	www.historicdoors.com	(610) 756-6187	circle # 25
Jeld-Wen	www.jeld-wen.com	(877) 535-3462	circle # 26
Marvin	www.marvin.com	(888) 537-7828	circle # 27
Pinecrest Inc.	www.pinecrestinc.com	(612) 871-7071	circle # 28
Rochester Colonial	www.rochestercolonial.com	(800) 321-8199	circle # 29
TruStile	www.trustile.com		circle # 30
Woodstone	www.woodstone.com	(802) 722-9217	circle # 31



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Much of the beauty of interior trim and cabinets of the past is the care lavished to embellish them with shadow lines and eye-catching treatments. Mouldings made by plane or machine have always been the top-of-the-line, but traditionally carpenters also added subtle finishing touches like beads or reeding with a simple beading tool. Lee Valley Tools (www.leevalley.com) offers a good example just like the kind once found in many a tradesman's toolbox. Circle 19 on resource card.



Whether you call it *faux bois* or simply graining, the technique of creating ersatz wood surfaces with paint has waxed and waned in popularity over the entire history of houses in North America. Though once the exclusive trade of itinerant grainers who produced cunning wood look-alikes with feathers, sponges, and brushes, by the mid-1800s inventors were coming up with patented tools, such as rollers and steel combs, to enhance the complexity or efficiency of the effect. Next time you're in the mood to whip up an imitation of burl walnut, graining tools from Old World Brush & Tool Co. (www.oldworldbrush.com) will be ready to help. Circle 20 on resource card.

Special Tools Lost & Found

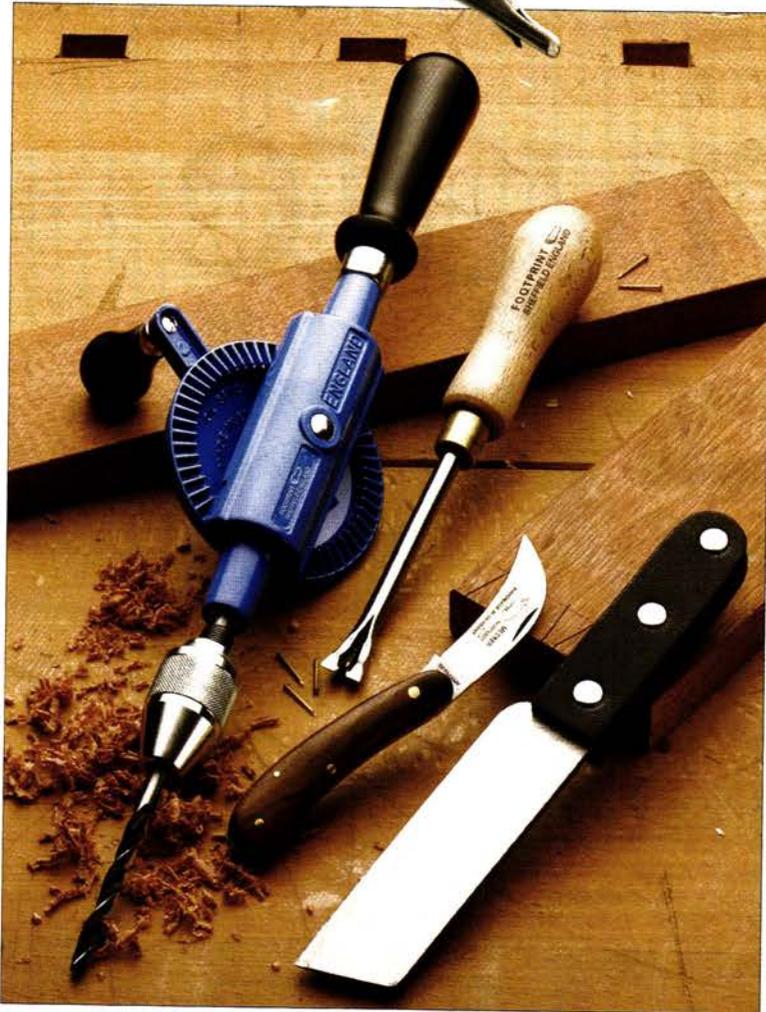
Whether you want to whack, pull, roll, or drag it, there's a unique, traditional tool made to manipulate many of the materials found in old houses.

BY GORDON BOCK

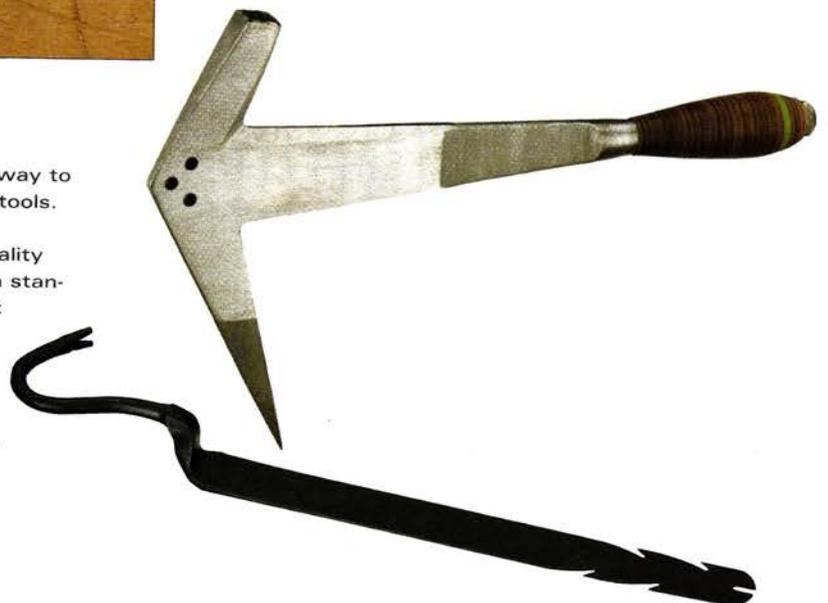
Humans are no longer considered the only tool-using animals (apes and birds do it too), but there's no question that the folks who created and cared for houses of the past are among the most imaginative tool creators. From the urge to install remarkable surfaces like slate roofs or decorative paint finishes, to the practical needs of making repairs or taking things apart again, the peculiar demands of old houses have inspired the invention of many project-specific tools by generations of craftspeople. Though you're unlikely to find any of these implements at your local mall, the ones we present here have never gone out of use and are still available today from a dedicated network of specialized suppliers. 🏠



Hammers are the tools that usually come to mind when we think of nails - that is, until it's time to take some carpentry apart. Sure, you can eventually extract a single nail with pliers or a prybar, but if you're faced with pulling up a deck full of them, you'll thank the stars someone in the 19th century invented the slide-hammer puller. Garret Wade (www.garrettwade.com) carries a faithful repro (below) that does what no power tool can do. For small jobs, check out their tack lifter or even the invisible nailing kit (at left), for hiding small nails you never need to pull. Circle 22 on resource card.



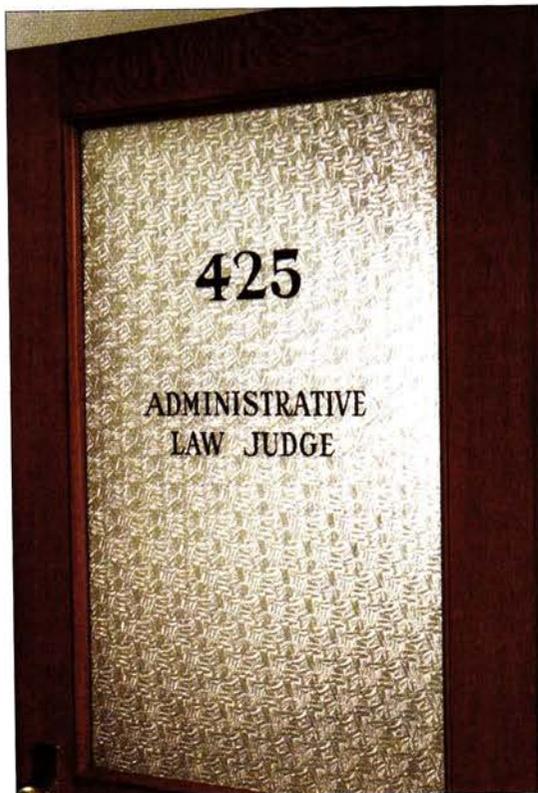
When you're laying a slate roof, still the best way to make holes or finesse the stone is with hand tools. North American Bocker (www.nabocker.com) knows this well, so they carry a full line of quality slating hammers and anvils made to European standards. But suppose you face the reverse task: removing just one damaged slate or shingle from a field for replacement? In this case there's only one way to go—with a ripper that slides under the shingle to grab it by the nails—and they have a nice clutch of them too. Circle 21 on resource card.



**Figured glass
added beauty,
light, and privacy
to houses by
fusing form and
function.**

A Private Eyeful

BY DEMETRA APOSOROS



ANDY OLENICK

Think of patterned glass and you probably conjure up images of colorful stained glass windows or sidelights glittering in a patchwork of beveled splendor. However, for more than 150 years there has been another type of glass in common use, although admittedly with less breathtaking effect. Known as figured glass, its main purpose was to provide a measure of privacy while letting sunlight pass through. While its forms may not be as memorable or splashy as those of its art glass cousins, figured glass filled a valuable role in many old houses beginning around 1850.

Figured glass—also called decorative or obscure glass—was produced by rolling a textured pattern onto one side of a sheet of molten glass as it cooled, leaving a permanent imprint behind. The result was a patterned surface that reduced transparency, yet



Delicately patterned glass fronts a kitchen cabinet and offers the contents a hint of cover, one of the many popular ways figured glass was first put to use in the mid-19th century. Bathrooms and entryways were other common places where this handy, utilitarian glass was used to retain privacy while letting in light.

didn't diminish the passage of light. Because figured glass was about the same thickness as regular glass, it could be substituted for the latter in areas where people wanted their light served with a measure of modesty. This need made figured glass popular for a variety of uses, such as bathroom and foyer windows, as well as more creative displays, such as transoms and interior doors.

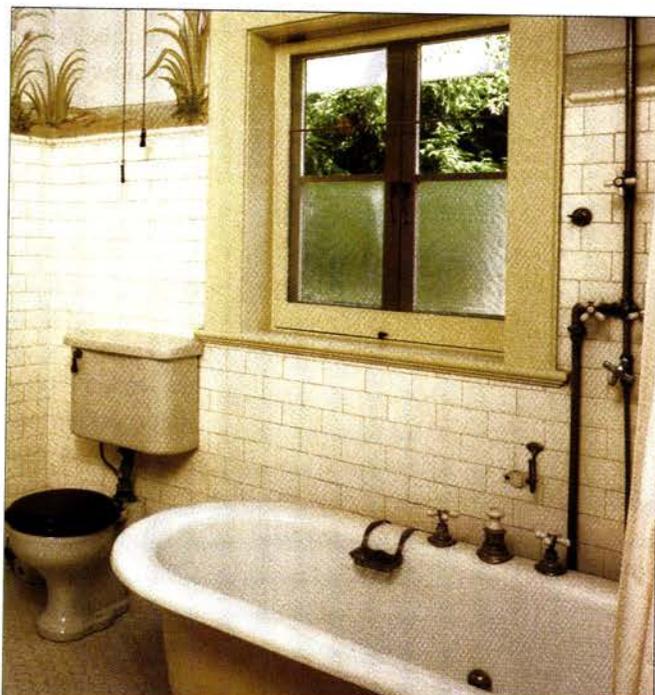
Many Practical Uses

You can find figured glass in the windows of many a bungalow bathroom where it kept bathers out of public view while letting them bask in natural light. Sometimes, windows had figured glass only on their bottom panes, allowing a clear view at the top of the window, which usually sat well above street level. You can also find figured glass in some kitchens and pantries where it was used to blur the contents of built-in cabinets.

Figured glass had an economic advantage, too. It usually cost just pennies more than standard issue glass and wasn't expensive like artisan-produced stained glass windows or wheel-cut glass. That doesn't mean it didn't see use in high-style buildings, though. For example, at the Biltmore House, the Vanderbilt mansion in North Carolina that was completed in 1895, a third-floor door that leads to the servants' quarters contains an insert of floral-patterned decorative glass, allowing light from main living spaces to help brighten those of the domestics.

Figured glass wasn't confined to home use, either. It had many commercial applications as decorative panels on office doors that could let light from exterior windows brighten dark inside hallways, or as partitions between lobby areas and the rest of an office suite. Some shops even used it to showcase their storefronts.

A bathroom window uses figured glass on the bottom to block a street-side glimpse of occupants. Clear upper panes allowed bathers a view of the outdoors. Left: A window on an office door admits light to brighten a dark hallway.



Appearance Is Everything

So what does figured glass look like? Patterns once came in a variety of shapes and sizes, from delicate lacelike floral and snowflake imprints to substantial vortexes entwined like dueling snakes to subtle hammered patterns resembling hand-worked copper. There were also patterns bearing a rippled or ribbed curve, some-

times with a hard edge that cast the light like a prism, and others consisting of a series of small, raised, industrial-looking squares. Levels of obscurity varied greatly with all of these styles. Some patterns barely distorted the view, affording just a hint of privacy, while others blocked all but the most basic shadows.

In addition to its primary use for privacy, figured glass could also be used for

security. When embedded with wire netting to make wire glass, it was popular in skylights, school windows, storefronts, and other areas where the dangers of broken glass was a concern. The wire mesh ensured that even if the glass was violently broken it would remain predominantly intact instead of raining down in potentially harmful shards. Wire glass had the added advantage of remaining “serviceable even if cracked in one or two places,” according to one advertisement. The glass was often found on commercial entrances.

It’s hard to say exactly when figured glass fell out of widespread use. It seemed to be everywhere in the early part of the last century, when a 1927 Universal Millwork Catalog touted its many practical uses and declared it “especially desirable for halls, transoms, bathrooms, side and rear entrance doors, court windows, office partitions, church windows, etc.” (The same catalog allowed any of its windows or doors to be special-ordered with figured glass.) One could argue that later versions of figured glass saw use well into the 1950s, as evidenced by mirror image rows of suburban subdivisions built with foyers notably obscured by front-door surrounds of rippled or hammered glass.

Modern Options

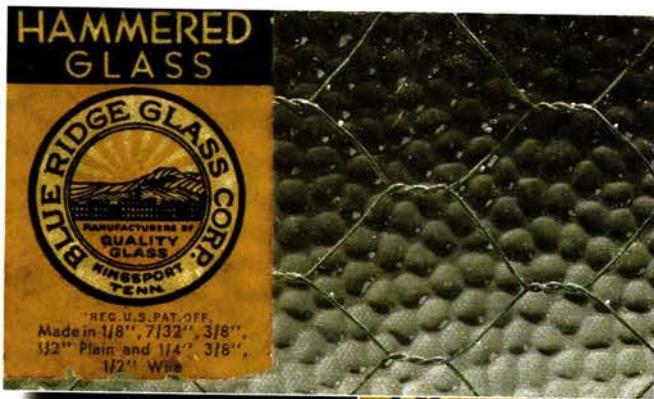
If you have figured glass in your old house, you probably wonder whether it’s possible to replace it in kind. Depending upon the pattern, the answer is a cautious yes. Many companies make modern versions of figured glass in a tremendous range of patterns, some bearing the same designs and names as those from the 1920s. It’s also possible to find creative modern patterns that closely match originals, so bear this in mind when seeking replacements.

During the early years of figured glass production, the choice of pattern dictated the level of modesty, but today it’s sometimes possible to order individual patterns in a range of figure-blurring options. To help consumers meet their needs, manufacturers often rate their glass on a scale numbered from 1 (minimally obscure,



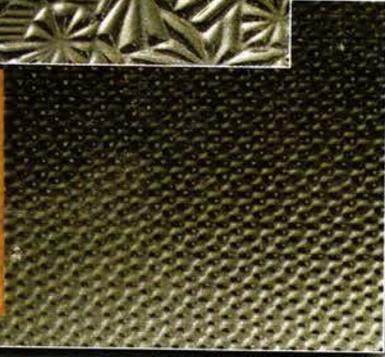
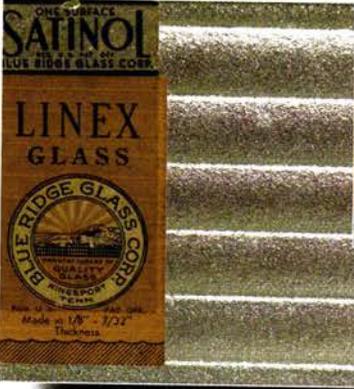
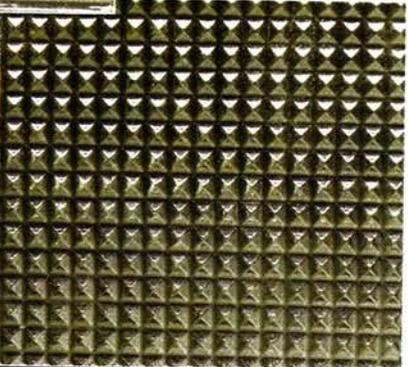
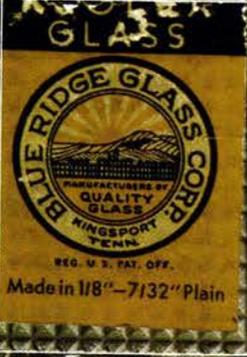
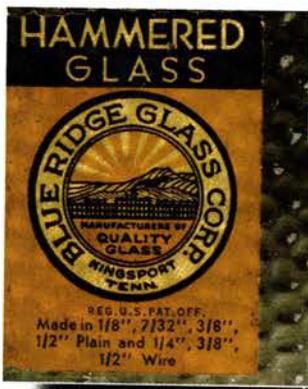
LINDA SVENDSEN / SIGNATURE ARCHITECTS

In a more unusual application, figured glass on a pocket door is used to partition a dining room, adding privacy to formal functions.



For a list of **SUPPLIERS**, see page 94.

Figured glass came in dozens of patterns, as these 1920s samples show. At top left: Hammered glass with safety netting; the dimpled version directly below it lacks the safety feature. Top right: the striations of Ribbed glass, the raised squares of Industrex, and the floral pattern for Florex. The names for the last two patterns are unknown.



ANDY OLENICK/ FROM STEVE JORDAN COLLECTION

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offering just a hint of visual distortion) to 4 (affording such a high level of distortion that no clear shape can be discerned).

In addition, many of today's figured glass patterns can be ordered in safety versions, either tempered glass or laminated glass, which most modern building codes require for use in areas such as sidelights and substantive interior panels. Tempered glass is specially heat-treated using a

process that both strengthens the glass and makes it break into small pieces with rounded edges if smashed. Laminated glass is a glass-plastic-glass sandwich that, like wire glass, holds broken pieces in place so they pose no danger. Today's decorative glass can even be found in a range of colors, too, if you want to get creative with your replacements. Speaking of wire glass, it is still sold today and avail-

able in a much more techno-savvy version with a fire-safety rating that guarantees the glass will contain smoke and flames for 20 to 90 minutes.

Clearly, decorative glass has come a long way since it was first manufactured in the middle of the 19th century, and it continues to be a great solution for areas where you want a little privacy without sacrificing the light of day. 🏠



Laying ingredients out in sections in the mortar box or mixing board helps you clearly see the proportions of materials. Here roughly 2 parts sugar sand is arranged with 1 part lime putty before mixing.

The Skinny on Skim Co

Whether you're reviving an 1840s ceiling or adding an alabaster finish to post-Victorian walls, the steps to plaster skim coating are handy for almost any old-house owner to master.

BY NOELLE LORD
PHOTOS BY JON CRISPIN

Whenever your flat plaster shows repeated repairs, decades of use, changes in detailing, or simply the need for a better surface, skim coating comes to mind. Skim coating is the name for a plastering technique that is exactly what it suggests: applying a thin (1/8" to 3/16") layer of plaster to upgrade a surface. Though the concept is simple, selecting the most appropriate plaster mix and learning how to manipulate it can be confusing and a bit daunting. When a seasoned plasterer trowels on a skim coat, it looks easy, then you give it a try and all the plaster falls off! Part of the trick is understanding how different plaster ingredients, products, and mixes interact to produce different set times, work best at different thicknesses, and respond differently to environmental factors. To help you get started, here's a primer on the process, with a case history explaining the

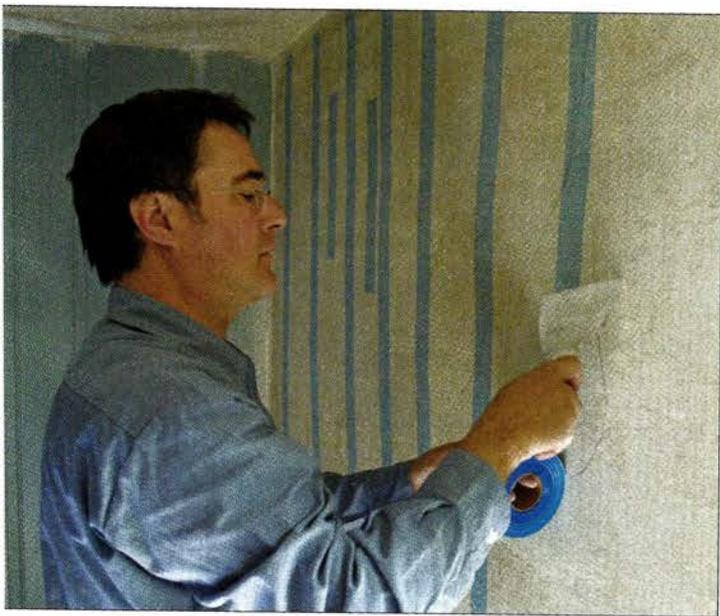
steps you'll need to practice so that you, too, can skim coat walls with the best to old-house perfection.

Picking a Mix and Goal

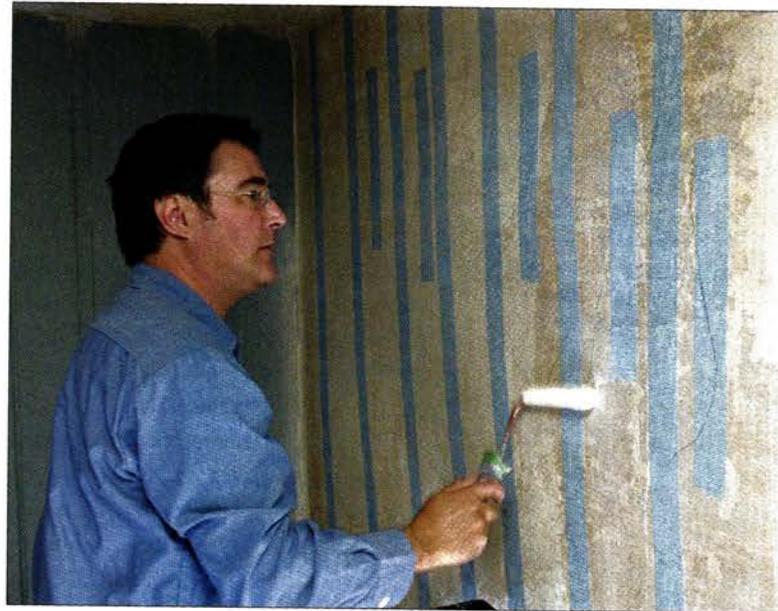
Like cooking, skim plastering is part science and part art, and you can vary mixes and methods widely to suit your situation. As with all plaster repairs, generally your skimming mix should be in-kind with the plaster you are coating. Regardless of the ingredients, skimming plasters are mixed slightly stiffer than usual so that they don't just slide off the surface. You want your mix to stay on the trowel when it's turned upside down, but remain spreadable (think peanut butter). The selection of a skimming mix, however, is not based solely on practical issues; there are the goals for your project to consider, too. Are you a restoration purist with a museum quality building that calls for strictly traditional practices? In this case, a lime putty and

This wall required a good sized patch and was fraught with hairline cracks, old water stains, and the marks of years of wear and picture hanging mishaps, making it a perfect candidate for a skim coat.

ating



Placing fiberglass tape at 8" to 10" intervals and on existing hairline cracks adds reinforcement and insurance against future hairline cracking. The tape is self-adhesive and easy to apply, so Peter needs only a joint knife.



Because plaster does not stick to other materials on its own, the absence of mechanical keying in skim-coating requires that acrylic bonding agent be rolled on to give the new coat suction and good adhesion to the older, dry plaster.



To accelerate the set-up of a sugar sand and lime putty recipe, Peter introduces approximately 10% gauging plaster to the mix. After the sand and lime are mixed together, he forms a small well in the middle, fills it with water, then adds gauging plaster until the water disappears. This section is blended together some, then introduced to the overall mix until all ingredients are thoroughly blended.

sugar sand skim coat over original lime, sand, and hair plaster might be in order. However, if you're looking for a more expedient option to spruce up your comfortable, old residence, adding modern gypsum plaster to this mix speeds set-up time, making the mix easier to work with, without changing the finished look. If you're a novice or do-it-yourselfer who just wants to get the job done as simply as possible, a premixed setting joint compound (such as products like Durabond) may be the best choice.

Regardless of your viewpoint, you will certainly want a finish that stands the test of time and fits visually with the rest of your plaster surfaces. For example, if you have a pre-1900 house your walls need to be skimmed with a mix that contains some aggregate (sand) to match the slightly rough surface of lime, sand, and hair plaster. On the other hand, smooth, Victorian-era plaster or houses finished with gypsum plaster call for using fine lime and gauging plaster for a skim coat that will look just right. The mixes described in the sidebar (at right) offer three options.

Getting Ready to Skim

Before you can add a new surface of skim coat, you need to prepare a good substrate by taking care of any old plaster patches,

Common Skim Coat Recipes

Lime Putty & Sugar Sand

Earlier plasters of lime, sand, and hair have a high sand component creating a rough surface texture. You will have to include some aggregate (sand) so the skimcoat doesn't look out of place with the rest of your plaster. As mentioned, this is the most traditional recipe.

- 1 Part Lime Putty
- 2 Parts Sugar Sand
- Lime Putty for final touch ups during polishing stage

This mix has an extremely slow set and will give you all the time you want to develop your technique. It is a very demanding recipe, however, because plaster and substrate must be kept very damp consistently throughout set-up time (which can take days). If the skimcoat dries out before setting up you will have dried mudflats on your surface. You need to plan for a lot of babysitting time and perhaps even cover the surface with light plastic to retain moisture.

Lime Putty, Sugar Sand & Gypsum

A very nice alternative for skimming lime, sand, and hair plasters is to add some modern gypsum plaster to a lime putty and sugar sand recipe.

- 1 Part Lime Putty
- 2 Parts Sugar Sand
- 20% Gypsum Plaster (gauging or small-aggregate basecoat plaster)
- Lime Putty for final touch ups during polishing stage

Mix lime putty and sugar sand together to even consistency in a mortar pan.

Make a ring in the middle (see photo this page) and fill this area with water.

Add gauging plaster until the water disappears, mix all ingredients thoroughly.

Introducing gypsum plaster gives the mix a chemical set for a much more practical option. Many plasters are available in slow- or quick-set to match your troweling-skill level to give you 15 minutes (quick set) to 50 minutes (slow set) before set up begins to occur.

Lime Putty & Gauging Plaster

This is the original topcoat plaster recipe for conventional plasters. It will provide a smooth finish so it is appropriate for later, smoother plaster finishes.

- 2 Parts Lime Putty
- 1 Part Gauging Plaster
- Lime Putty for final touch-ups during polishing stage

Make a ring of lime putty in your mixing pan.

Fill area with water and add gauging plaster until the water disappears.

Mix all ingredients thoroughly.

You will have about 20 to 30 minutes to get this mix troweled on before set up begins.



The goal of the first pass is simply to get the plaster on the surface with even coverage and thickness. Feeding from a supply of mix on the hawk, move the trowel in a variety of directions: up and down, side to side, and in arching patterns.

reattaching loose plaster, and repairing cracks. You cannot skim over wallpaper, calcimine coatings, or chipping and peeling paint. Scrape away any loose paint and sand glossy paint to give it "tooth" to which the skim coat can bond. Good preparation also includes washing the surface well to remove daily grime and residues, such as wallpaper glue. Hot water and Dirtex, Spic 'n Span, or other surface cleansers work well. If there is any sign of mold or mildew (indicated by black or dark green spots), kill them with a 3:1 solution of water to household bleach. Your plaster surface should be, literally, squeaky clean before skim coating.

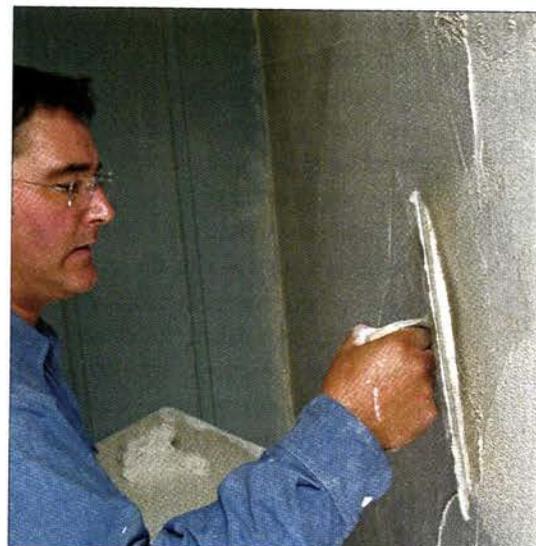
A modern trick of the trade is to apply fiberglass tape over hairline cracks. While this method will not resecure loose plaster (and would not be appropriate for purist projects), it does help guard against expansion cracks. Lay the fiberglass tape in bands every foot along the entire area to be skimmed. You can also lay strips diagonally across door and window frames at 45 degrees to prevent stress cracks at these weaker openings in the wall.

Because plaster adhesion relies on a mechanical bond (such as keying to some kind of lath), for skim coating your first step is to brush or roll on a bonding agent. These products are acrylic liquids available from plaster supply houses, larger hard-



Skim-coat mixes are slightly stiff so they stay in place on the wall during application. This mix clearly sits up on the trowel and will stay on the tool when it's tipped.

ware retailers, and many concrete product suppliers. Bonding agents create a chemical interface between new and old plaster, a cohesive surface for the plaster to bond with, and help provide suction for the new plaster. Though bonding agents enable skim coats to be much more effective, they make the application a little more challenging because in large areas they tend to make the surface slippery—more so than you would notice in a small patch. That is because they block the substrate from



Once the skim-coat is applied to the surface, some of the mix from the same batch is used to go back over the initial coat—called doubling-back—to fill in low spots.

immediately drawing moisture out of the wet plaster, which would otherwise enhance its grip. Also, when a bonding agent covers a large area, the exposed part of the plaster tends to dry before the hidden part so as it sets up, the plaster underneath remains squishy, leaving the working surface hard to control.

This additional slipperiness means you can't fool around with the initial skim coat for very long. To help with this challenge, mix your plaster so that it's a little

stiffer, and wait until the skim coat has taken an initial set and starts to feel firm (for lime and hair plaster) or rubbery like Silly Putty (for gypsum plasters) before working it further or you will delaminate it. Careful use of a felt or sponge to keep the surface damp helps, but be sure the plaster is set up enough. Don't push too hard or, again, you risk delaminating the coat.

Make sure you buy the right tools. The correct trowel is a plastering trowel—one that's perfectly flat (drywall trowels are curved) and that fits your hand. New plasterers are usually more comfortable with 11" or 12" trowels; more experienced plasterers go for 14" trowels. Other standard tools are one or two margin trowels (like pancake spatulas), a hawk (a sheet metal platform with a pole handle), a mortar pan or large tub (especially for large areas), a felt and bristle brush, a mortar hoe or shovel (for mixing), and an assortment of buckets, brushes, and cans. Of course, mixing vessel sizes depend upon the scale of your project, and how much plaster you can get on the surface before it sets up.

Before attempting a live repair, always familiarize yourself with the mixes and plaster set-up times (including reading the bag, folks), as well as hone your abilities. It's easy to build a practice board of wood lath over 2x4 studs, or even use a piece of blue-board or drywall over strapping to develop



When the plaster has taken an initial set and is firm enough to work some more, Peter uses a felt ahead of his trowel to add moisture that keeps the surface workable to remove trowel wakes and achieve desired smoothness.

your technique. It's well worth the extra effort because once plaster begins to set you are under the pressure of time, and fully set up plaster is like stone—very difficult to fix after the fact!

Skim-Coating Technique in Practice

In our 18th century colonial house, Peter and I had a room that had suffered numerous bad repairs and wallpaper removal gouges over the years (though not by us). That left the surface very irregular and a

perfect candidate for a skim coating. We generally lean towards the purist approach in restorations, but for the purpose of explaining a popular and practical process we mixed in some modern methods for this project. Our recipe was sugar sand and lime putty mixed with gypsum gauging plaster for set. This accelerated mix was a one-coat process so Peter had 20 minutes or so to trowel on the plaster at about 1/8" thickness. We turned to fiberglass tape, too, because the existing plaster, although very solid, was fraught with hairline cracks.

Step 1: The first goal is to get the plaster on the wall and achieve complete and consistent coverage. Load your hawk with plaster in your non-dominant hand, and feed your trowel from this supply. As you put on plaster, roll your wrist and move in whatever direction is comfortable for you. Save your back; this is an arm motion, not a full body turn. You are going for consistent thickness throughout the entire stroke. In this step you are hardly applying any pressure. You just want to get the plaster on the surface and get the thickness right.

Move your trowel in arching motions to get it on the surface, pushing with the sides and corners to work the plaster into wall corners. As you go back and forth with the trowel you will take out some air bubbles, making the plaster coat level. Don't worry about trowel wakes; you will work

Making Your Own Lime Putty

Traditional lime putty is made by adding water to quicklime, or the modern approach of mixing autoclave lime with water. Lime putty is easy to work with, and helps things stick. It softens gypsum plasters and helps the finish coats stay more workable, leaving a creamy consistency on the surface for filling in small craters.

Lime putty can be purchased through supply houses in pre-mixed containers, or you can make your own lime putty. The traditional method is to introduce water to quicklime out of doors in an unpainted metal container (wheelbarrow or mixing box) and enduring the violent, chemical reaction until the mix settles and can be moved to airtight containers. You can also purchase already slaked, active autoclave lime, which comes in a packaged, powder form.

Going the latter route is much easier for the average person and makes perfectly adequate putty, although it is not quite as strong as traditional lime putty. Mix active lime with water until it becomes a lump-free, yogurt consistency; it should be soft and spreadable. Let it set at least overnight (one week or more is preferable), and some water will rise to the top. Leave this layer of water to keep the putty from setting up. It can stay like this in an airtight container indefinitely; lime putty only gets better with age. It is best to use lime putty in plaster mixes, versus dry lime, so you can gauge more accurately your mix of ingredients as lime will affect set up times.

these out later in the tooling stage. When you have covered the project, you can use some of the mixed batch to go back over rough spots and low areas. Once you get your plane (correct thickness and even surface) where you need it, it is time to let the plaster set up some until it reaches a firm or rubbery stage—about 20 minutes for gypsum plasters to between four or five hours for a pure lime and sugar sand mix. Environmental factors like air flow and humidity also affect set up times. Always be careful not to let plaster dry out before it sets up.

Step 2: When the plaster has set up to a rubbery stage (where it can be thumb-dented), you need to begin to tool and work it to a smooth surface or whatever look you desire. Using a felt, sponge, or spray bottle, add moisture to the surface to keep it damp. Lubricate your trowel by misting the plaster surface down with water as you work, and use the “cream” that rises to fill in gaps, fissures, and other low spots. Hold the trowel at a slight angle, using light pressure. If you press too hard, you risk moving the whole layer around and making a mess. Let the plaster rest again.

You will spend the majority of your time and energy at this semi-set stage to achieve the look you want. It’s where your “feel” for the plaster comes into play for what is really a series of steps: first, going over the entire surface once to smooth and move the plaster around where you want it; letting it rest briefly; and then, addressing smaller areas. You can’t keep working the same area over and over; if you do, you will break the bond and delaminate the coat.

Step 3: By now the plaster is starting to become quite solid. You can move less of the surface, and you are working at the very top. Hold your trowel nearly perpendicular to the wall so that it is almost scraping the plaster. In this important step, you will be pushing fairly hard to compress the plaster as it hardens, thereby preventing shrinkage and cracking. With gypsum plasters, you will be running out of time, so you can’t add to the surface, just polish what you can. If there are more imperfections that you need to correct, you would have to mix a new batch of plaster or use lime putty.

There is no shortcut to becoming a skilled plasterer, so don’t be discouraged when you struggle at first and more plaster appears on you and the floor than what you are trying to plaster. Skim coating requires a combination of knowledge, physical skill, and experience. It’s best to begin with a basic project, then experiment as you grow increasingly adept. An important part of developing skill is paying attention to the feel of the plaster—the consistency of a mix, the thickness of the layers, and knowing when to keep tooling or to leave it alone. This all takes practice but the payoff can be a beautiful new skin for walls or ceilings without the expense of a total replastering, or the loss of historic materials. 🏠

Noelle and Peter Lord operate Old House C.P.R., Inc., specializing in restoring plaster and historic surfaces, from Limington, Maine; www.oldhousecpr.com.



Skim coating the open field of a wall is straightforward, but corners and around the margins can be tricky. Use the edges and front corner of the trowel to work the plaster up to edges and into the corners as you do not want skim on these areas.



Once the plaster has set up to a firm stage, using a flexible pool trowel helps accommodate tooling the plaster over the three-dimensional waves of the original lime, sand, and hair plaster wall. The lime “cream” that rises to the surface is used to fill in blemishes and low spots.



Once the plaster gets quite firm, Peter angles the trowel in nearly a scraping motion to complete the final polishing and compressing. This process compacts the plaster and removes excess moisture to help prevent shrinkage cracks.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 94.

Bold Frameworks of Design



MONTICELLO / THOMAS JEFFERSON FOUNDATION, INC.



FRESNO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Though often adorned with flowers or vines, trellises and related grids are fundamental motifs in wallpaper, lending texture and interest to the background.

BY ROBERT M. KELLY

The trellis is arguably the most important building block of wallpaper design. How basic is it? Consider that traffic patterns in downtown Boston follow what were once cow paths, while those in Chicago evolved from a grid. Trellis wallpaper unites both types of traffic patterns to feature plants and flowers wandering over a stationary, symmetrical base. The end result combines action and repose, the yin-yang of Western wallpaper decoration.

Wallpaper history is full of trellises and their related forms: diamonds, grids, diapers, and squares, all of which continue to frequent wallpaper designs, with several manufacturers offering reproductions of vintage patterns from the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Before choosing from the many reproduction prints available, however, it helps to know how wallpaper patterns evolved over time.

The lattices for trellis paper are diamonds or squares, such as this pattern in a room at the Kearney Mansion in Fresno, California.



Diamonds in the Rough

Until 1650, patterned paper was predominantly used to line boxes and trunks, and most designs were rather boxy as a result. Even elaborate designs were restricted by the sheet size, which was rarely larger than 22" x 22". In the years leading up to 1700 or so, however, fresh designs were encouraged by a new technique: joining the sheets end over end at the factory to create one long strip.

The joined sheet encouraged innovation. Because more space was available, designers could arrange motifs within the sheet in new ways, often creating diamond shapes in the process. These motifs were usually split at the paper's edge and joined side by side on successive sheets, resulting in the straight match. Another development was the drop match, in which alternating sheets were dropped half the dis-

MONTICELLO / THOMAS JEFFERSON FOUNDATION, INC.



Called "Fox Grape," the pattern of this trellis wallpaper (top) dates to at least 1790, when Thomas Jefferson purchased the paper for a guest room at Monticello (above).

There's no missing the grid on this French trellis wallpaper in a bedroom at the Wadsworth-Longfellow House in Portland, Maine—the boyhood home of the celebrated 19th century poet. The paper is a reproduction based on the room's 1826 decor.

tance of the design. This placement created a virtual diamond that resulted from the paperhanging technique, not from the motif itself. Any design, when viewed from a distance, would take on the diamond shape, which was more interesting than a square yet just as symmetrical.

The drop match was an important new tool, especially for large, formal patterns. Flocks (patterns that imitated woven fabrics) and arabesques (elegant, neo-classical designs) shared the same problem—they could look deadly dull when hung straight across. The drop match solved this problem by introducing variety.

American paperstainers regularly copied foreign wallpaper patterns using the same manufacturing technique of carving designs into wood blocks, dipping them in ink, and stamping the paper with the blocks. However, they soon found that depicting natural forms, especially the human face, required a higher degree of block-carving skill than was readily available. Instead, domestic producers concen-

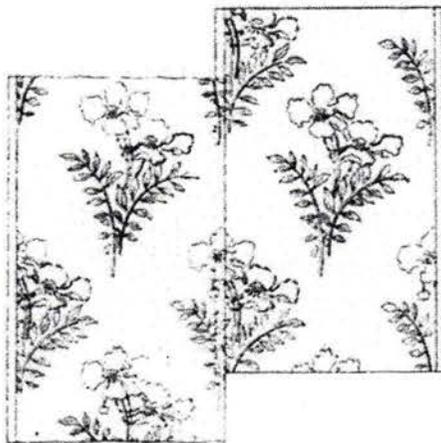
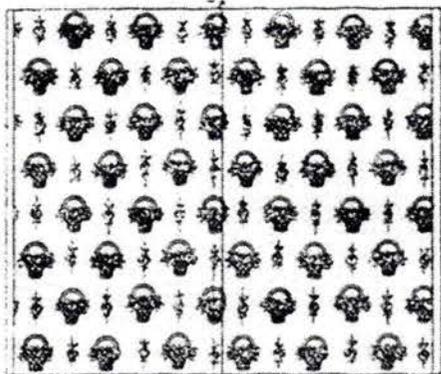


DAVID BOHL/ MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

trated on the backgrounds and brought out a variety of vibrant mosaic designs in all sizes between 1810 and 1840. These home-grown designs filled the demand for cheap, colorful backgrounds. Many of

them can still be seen appearing behind dour-faced sitters in the folk art paintings of Jacob Maentel and Henry Walton.

In the process, the simple diamond form became much more than a framework because it began to sprout leaves, curlicues, pinstripes, shading, and shadow lines. All this decoration had the effect of making the background more prominent.



A technical illustration from a French book compares the preferred alignments of regular paper (left) and drop match paper, in which alternating sheets were dropped half the distance of the design to increase the interest and creativity of patterns.

Grids of a Fashion

Diapers, which decorate materials from masonry to textiles, are a pattern of repeated motifs that were often used on dadoes and occasionally along borders, where they finished the edges nicely. The patterns were originally small—mere texture or embellishments on a grid. When diapers were used as the backdrop in wallpaper, dots or other small designs often peppered the intersections. Part of the success of the stately early 18th-century flock patterns was due to the rich embellishment provided by these diaper backgrounds.



The parlor at Wisconsin's Villa Louis bears Lincrusta, a paintable embossed wallcovering, in a design whose dots form a diaper pattern.

Later, larger diaper patterns of medieval, Elizabethan, or Gothic forms found their way into wallpaper. But whether large or small, diapers remained static, whereas a trellis pattern conveyed movement and growth. Like the iron grid used on prison doors and windows, the diaper forms could appear oppressive, and though they tended to lack the dynamism of the floral and leafy motifs seen in trellis paper, they have an abstract appeal. Many 19th-century tastemakers praised the simple decorative quality of diaper forms because when they were

used, the papered wall remained a flat, two-dimensional surface. An influential designer who showed how to carry out this idea was Christopher Dresser, who championed "art botany"—a stylized artificial art form with botany as its basis—in the 1860s and 1870s. He advocated supplementing floral motifs with sophisticated tints and diaper backgrounds for a more artistic approach.

Ode to a Trellis

For those who admired illusionistic, three-dimensional effects, there was the

trellis, a grid that looked like a lattice. Evoking images of arbors with their trailing vines and flowers, the classic trellis pattern aimed to bring the outdoors in, provided that certain rules applied. For instance, *House and House Furnishings*, a British decorating book published in 1841, advised against using "any pattern with lines crossed so as to form squares" for a low-ceiling room, but took a different view if the lines were sloping or diagonal: "A diamond trellis pattern, with a slender plant creeping over it, looks well in a small summer parlour." When a diagonal design

Dominant motifs that created repeating diamond shapes when viewed from a distance was another way in which wallpaper could present diaper patterns, as seen on this example from the late-18th-century Phelps-Hatheway house in Suffield, Connecticut.

had no plants or flowers, the trellis grid was often elaborated to resemble a lattice.

You didn't have to be a Romantic poet to notice that grids and flowers were a perfect combination, but several did. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a friend of Percy Shelley and his first biographer, described what happened when the pair went apartment hunting in London and in one of the flats discovered trellis wallpaper, something that was relatively uncommon at the time. "There were trellises, vine leaves, with their tendrils and huge clusters of grapes, green and purple," Hogg wrote, explaining that Shelley found it all delightful. "He went close up to the wall and touched it." Then, Shelley told Hogg, "We must stay here; stay for ever."

So strong was the attraction for paper roses among Romantic poets that James Leigh Hunt insisted on decorating with



ROBERT M. KELLEY

them, even though at the time he was serving a two-year prison sentence for calling the Prince Regent a fat Adonis. Nevertheless, Hunt was able to bribe or charm his

jailers into letting him occupy and decorate several rooms in the prison's infirmary. "I papered the walls with a trellis of roses," Hunt wrote. "I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows I screened with Venetian blinds. Charles Lamb declared that there was no other such room, except in a fairy tale."

Trellises may have been somewhat rare in England in the early 19th century, but by mid-century that had changed. In a 1988 article for *Country Life* magazine, British author Pauline Flick reported that many of the wallpaper registrations between 1842 and 1883 were of diamond designs, ranging "from the neat diaper patterns recommended by Owen Jones to ivy plants climbing up a crisscross framework of wooden poles." Naturally, mid-century designers came up with fresh variations for their favorite theme. The designers, Flick wrote, produced trellises "smothered with jasmine and honeysuckle, bunches of rosebuds tied with intersecting ribbons, formal quatrefoil motifs like the diamond panes of a stained-glass window, and countless others."

As usual in the wallpaper world, a good idea wasn't considered perfected

PAPERING ON A DIAMOND

Trellis and diaper patterns take us back to a time when most rooms had wallpaper; many rooms had their own dominant color; and all rooms had doors. Both patterns generally do best in an enclosed, traditional interior, but even there, some rules for placement apply. For guidance, old-house owners should look to 18th-century English gentry, who dropped large prints, especially flocks, half the distance of the pattern to create the drop match. Here are a few other tips:

- Keep the pattern contained within the sheet's width. If the pattern has a side-to-side match, it needs to be observed; if not, you're free to drop the match by hanging alternate sheets a half or a third of the distance between repeating vertical design elements.
- Be cautious about using strictly geometric forms in rooms that are out of square. Diamonds show badly in corners, even more so than squares. Professionals often use an extra repeat in a wayward corner to maintain the pattern match.
- Plan a ceiling line so that the paper looks straight where it meets the ceiling, even though the ceiling itself is probably crooked, either sloping upward or downward. Any wallpaper motif should be whole at the ceiling line, which means you will need to adjust the placement of the pattern on the wall so that it appears straight. Using a laser level, find the midpoint of the ceiling's slope. This point should be used as the starting place for hanging the first sheet of paper. Hang it so that this point splits the distance in half between the horizontal rows of pattern. That way, when the pattern starts to rise or fall with the slope of the ceiling, the differences in the ceiling line are minimized.

until it had been run into the ground. Manufacturers flooded the market with multi-colored floral patterns, most of them based on diamond modules. During the design wars that filled the latter half of the century, critics often scorned the homely, predictable, floral trellis and its related forms. In *Household Art*, an 1893 book edited by Candace Wheeler, one theorist complained about “the dreariness of an English bedroom” with its 40- or 50-year-old wallpaper on which “great, staring bunches of ill-shaped flowers are daubed of every conceivable hue.” The author was further dismayed that these same wallpapers could be purchased in any American town, appearing all too often in the bedrooms and sitting rooms of middle-class families. The United States, according to this author, may have achieved design parity with England, but it was only for bad design.

Trellises continued to decorate the walls in both countries as either bold frameworks or more subtle William Morris prints, most of which achieved the ideal of appearing trellis-like without actually showing the trellis. One exception

was the first wallpaper Morris designed, that of an unusual square trellis. Morris created “Trellis” in 1862, a pattern that was inspired by his garden at Red House, which was organized on a medieval plan with square flowerbeds enclosed by rose-covered wattle trellises. The pattern combined the simplicity of floral elements taken from medieval woodcuts, carefully rendered birds (drawn by his architect friend Phillip Webb), and a unique, undulating perspective. Flowers and vines were featured in both background and foreground, intertwining with the trellis.

The pattern remained a personal favorite for Morris, and he chose it for his bedroom at Kelmscott House, his London home for the last 18 years of his life. It must have satisfied his criteria for wallpaper design, which he believed should “mask the construction of pattern enough to prevent people from counting the repeats” while managing to lull their curiosity to trace it out. 🏠

Robert M. Kelly is the principal at WRN Associates in Lee, Massachusetts (www.WallpaperScholar.com).

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At the William Cullen Bryant Homestead in Massachusetts, a small diamond pattern with repeating motif appears in a bedroom. The paper, meticulously reproduced from a fragment found behind the servants' call bell, shows another form trellis wallpaper has taken on through the years.

COURTESY OF THE BRYANT HOMESTEAD, A PROPERTY OF THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS

A Prescription for the Future

BY DEMETRA AOSPOROS

Memories of healing an old house become a salve when it's time to move out.



Parks and Paula Adams on the porch of the house they lovingly restored.

Paula and Parks Adams had never owned a house. When they moved to North Manchester, Indiana, for Parks's medical practice, they just wanted a place their two young girls could call home. They fell in love with a dilapidated brick villa despite a startling (scary, even) ivy-covered appearance because it somehow felt like a home, and their hard work on it drew praise and unexpected help from the community. Now, some 20 years after finishing the restoration, the couple is preparing to retire out West. Instead of agonizing over leaving a place where they've invested so much labor and love, they are reveling in their memories of working on the house and of meeting the many people it brought them over the years.

The stories bubble out of the couple like champagne in a glass and carry a similar air of celebration. "We had looked at so many houses," says Paula, "but none of them seemed quite right"—least of all the new ones, which felt small and cramped. So they were focused on old houses when someone offered to show them an ailing and abandoned 1880 Italianate in the center of town.

Appearances Aren't Everything

When the Adamses first saw the house, they couldn't imagine anyone crazy enough to buy it. The walls were covered in poison ivy clear up to the roof, and the porch was crumbling. As they walked through it, however, they noticed all the ash and walnut woodwork, the chandeliers, and the original hardware and fine, fancy hinges. "We saw what it could be," says Paula. The Adamses bought the house—even though it had mushrooms growing in the basement, bees living in the walls, and bats and pigeons roosting in the attic—for \$25,000 in 1975, a full \$5,000 over its appraised value, because the house just felt right.

North Manchester is a small town where people generally keep to themselves and it can take years to get to know neighbors well. But a surprising thing happened soon after Paula and Parks began working on the house: People went out of their way to help them. One of Parks's patients, whose husband was a plumber, warned them about all the leaky pipes. A woman living a few doors down shared her treasured collection of postcards showing the house in its glory days, which proved to be

PHOTOS BY DAVE RANDALL, WORKING STUDIO, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



Restoring a Victorian kitchen (above) so that it was appropriate and functional was a challenge the Adamses met with beadboard wainscoting, built-in sugar and flour bins, and an authentic 1880s wood-burning stove, which was wired for electricity.



The Adamses' house (left) was built in 1880 with modern features such as running water and central heating, both rarities for houses at the time.



Clockwise from top left: Parks routs porch columns; the Adamses' daughter and a friend prime parts; Paula cuts balusters; a post goes up. At center: A photo of the original owner on his porch helped guide the restoration.

of critical help to the restoration. In the 1970s, restorers and the resources they needed were still a scarce commodity, but a farmer heard of the Adamses' efforts and drove into town to tell them where to find house parts. Likewise, an art professor appeared on their doorstep with a copy of *Old-House Journal*, declaring it an absolute necessity. "If we tried to think of a way to connect with this new town, we couldn't have come up with a better plan than to buy a crumbling town monument and start fixing it up," says Paula.

Monument is the word. Built in 1880 by the local hardware merchant, the 6,000-square-foot house has 12' ceilings and was full of cutting-edge technology for its day. "It was the first house with indoor plumbing in the town," says Parks. An outdoor cistern collected water from the roof and a hand pump in the basement directed it to a 200-gallon holding tank under the attic

floor. "Every morning, someone would go out and pump water up to the tank," says Parks. The house also had gravity-fed heat delivered through sheet metal ducts, and the whole place—from the basement to the attic—was piped for gas lighting.

Despite the grandiosity of its debut, the house had suffered through decades of use as a rooming house and then later at the hands of a faraway owner, falling into a state of terrible disrepair. Paula and Parks needed to redo the wiring, plumbing, and heating immediately. After the shock of their first heating bill, they focused on insulation and storm windows. To nurse the roof through one final winter, Parks formed discarded heating ducts into troughs and positioned them beneath the scores of drips in the attic, shooting the leaking water out through the windows—a system he calls "reverse irrigation." But their biggest project was repairing the

crumbling porch, and it became a family—make that a community—affair, as well as an example of the meticulous approach the Adamses used throughout the house's restoration.

Doctoring a Porch

"I wanted the porch done right," says Parks, who refused to put up stock iron-work and was determined to rebuild what had been there. They started by taking down the single best remaining porch post and using it as a pattern. In their basement workshop, Paula and Parks took turns cutting balusters and posts by hand, which took about a year because each post consisted of 120 separate pieces. Both of their parents, as well as their young daughters, helped every step of the way. Because North Manchester is a college town, they also had a stream of student labor at their service for dipping pieces of posts into

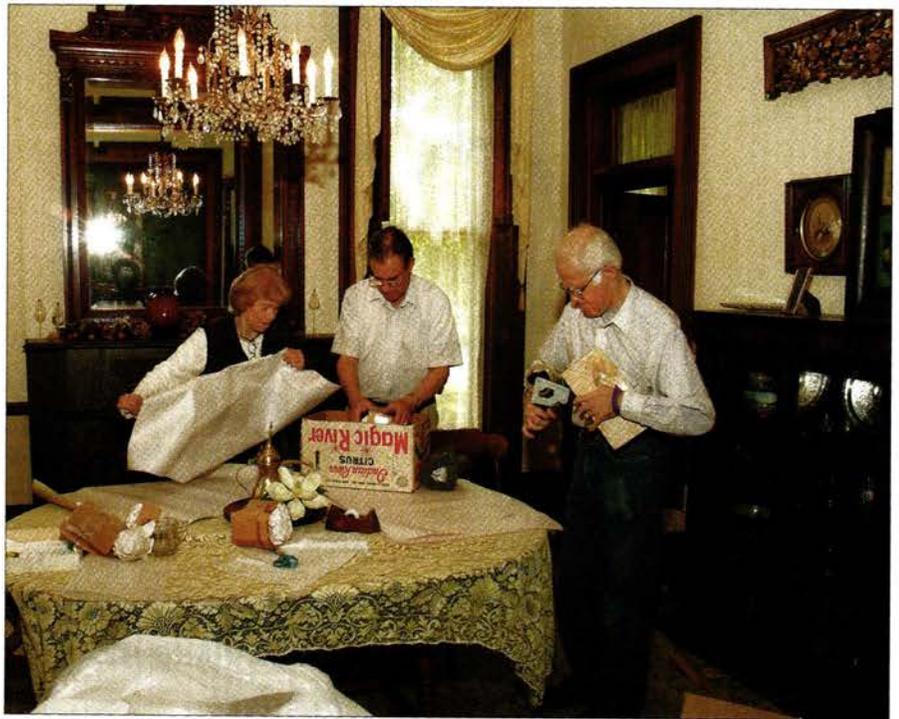
wood preservative and then priming and assembling them. When all 10 posts (and two half posts) were finally complete, a team of six neighbors helped finagle them out through the basement window.

Designing a color scheme for the porch was a separate project in itself, because there were 33 surfaces to consider. The couple pored over books on Victorian palettes and referred to the painted ladies they had seen in San Francisco; then they tested a series of dark, earthy colors out on a corner post to see if they could live with them. Some of the test combinations, teal and gold for instance, scared the neighbors. The Adamses only narrowed down their choices after their painter, college student Brian Lake, threatened to walk off the job if they didn't make up their minds within 24 hours. The final scheme consisted of brown, cream, and green with rust accents. Brian painted half of the porch before he had to return to classes in the fall. It was up to Paula and Parks to match his fine handiwork on the rest. Come October, they were struggling to finish as winter weather moved in, so Brian brought his whole soccer team over one weekend and completed the job.

After the porch, their next most challenging project was figuring out what to do with the kitchen. Paula wanted a period-authentic look but had a difficult time deciding on a stove, as everything seemed too modern. Inspiration struck Paula while she was eating in a restaurant one day, where a pot of beans heating on a wood-burning stove was part of the decor. They found a wood-burning stove, circa 1880, and had it wired to support electric burners by a college professor who had worked his way through graduate school as an electrician. "In a restoration project like this, part of the fun is in the learning," says Paula. "The house shows you what to do, if you listen carefully."

A Lasting Impact

It's a testament to the Adamses' hard work that their house appears on the opening page of North Manchester's town website. "It's one of the most picturesque homes in

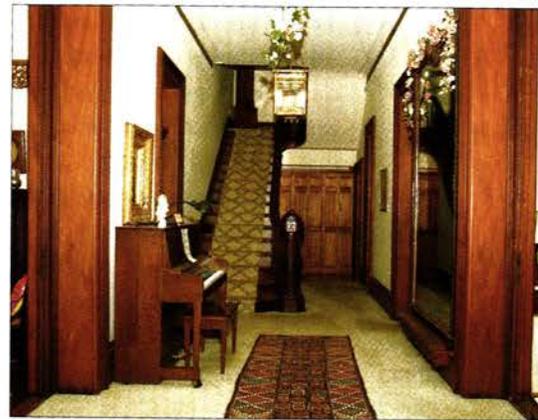


"The best parts of the house aren't left behind. They're all going with us," says Paula, referring to the memories, as she packs up dishes. The entryway (below) shows the woodwork that hooked the couple on the house.

the community, and Dr. Adams did much of the hard work himself," says Nancy Reed, the town clerk. It's clear that many people in the town appreciated their efforts. Cheryl Wilson, who has lived in the same neighborhood as the Adamses for some 20 years, says, "The house has been much admired, and Parks especially was very particular whenever he undertook a project, researching it meticulously and then finding a way to pull it off without it costing an arm and a leg."

The Adamses also got the house listed on the National Register but only after the constant urging of friends. "To put it forward, it seemed like snob appeal," says Paula. "So we're on the National Register," says Parks, "but we don't tell anybody." Theirs was the first house listed in Wabash County, but many have followed since.

When discussing their move out of the house, the Adamses don't falter in their upbeat tone. "The house brought us a lot of people we wouldn't have known otherwise," says Paula, explaining how all of their helpers through the years—from neighbors and college students to electricians and masons—stayed on and became



their friends. In addition, the house's size allowed them to support exchange students and foster children, as well as several family members who stayed for years. But it's not just the relationships they value; it's the bigger picture of what their stewardship brought. "Restoration is a little like taking a farm that's been rundown and bringing fertility back to the soil," says Paula. Those efforts benefit the property no matter who owns it. That idea comforts her along with a statement the new owner's home inspector made. He said the house will still be standing 100 years from now, thanks to their hard work. 🏠

What Gothic Hath Wrought

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

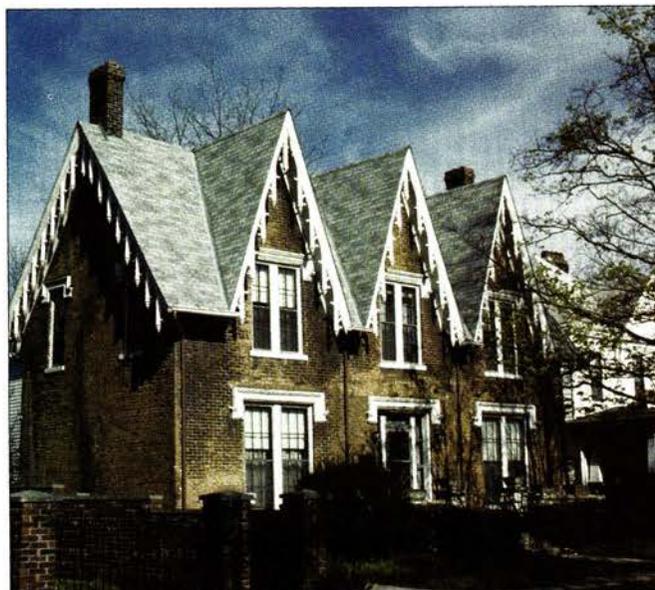
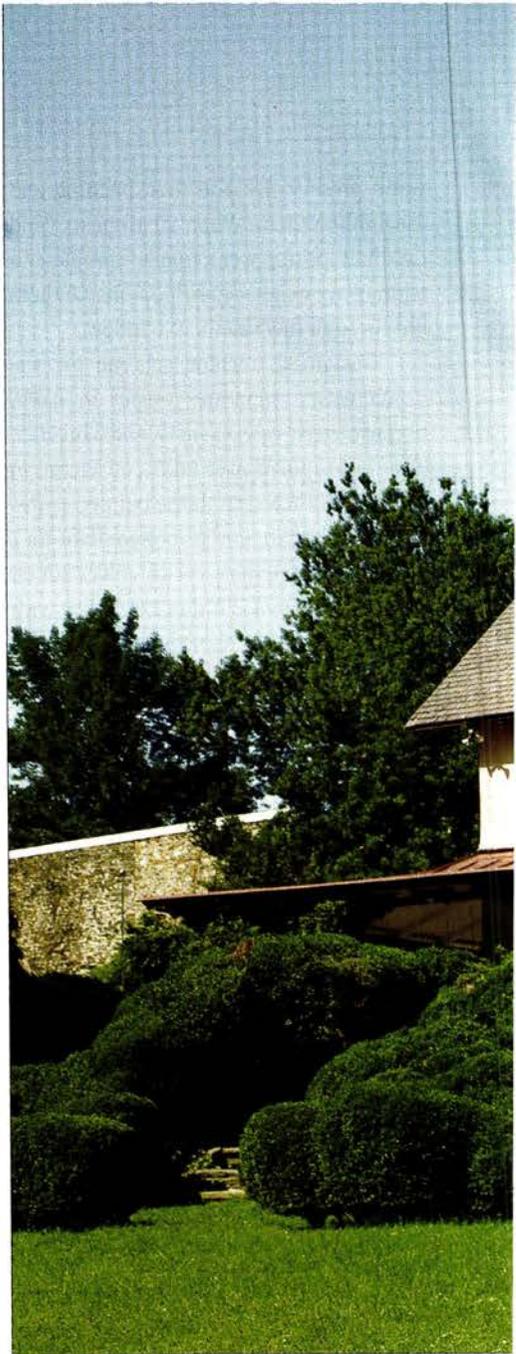
When classical styles ran their course in the mid-1800s, Gothic architecture moved in to make its picturesque mark on the American house.

Chances are it had to happen. After centuries of kowtowing to classical symmetry, the Western world got tired of architecture that was overly orderly. At the same time, people were fed up with the unaesthetic and inhumane messes created by nearly 100 years of the industrial revolution. How these two concepts came to be linked in the mid-19th-century mind is an intriguing historical puzzle, but the result was a re-interpretation of a medieval building mode—Gothic architecture—that put a whole new spin on American houses.

Tastemakers and social reformers in England and France thought they had the answer to both the problems of industrialization and the limitations of classicism when they hearkened back to the Middle Ages, a perceived golden era when craftsmen enjoyed a direct, creative relationship to their labor, especially in building great cathedrals and homely rural cottages. What a contrast, they felt, to the dehumanizing regimentation and ugly, useless products of modern factories. How interesting, picturesque, and romantic, not to

mention uplifting, were the buildings and furnishings created entirely by hand.

In a way, many Americans agreed. They liked technology, but they also were learning to like picturesque buildings. Since the late-18th century, in fact, a battle over architectural styles had been brewing in the United States, pitting two feisty contenders against each other. On one side was Greek Revival (classical but bolder



Left: Three tall and narrow gables, literally dripping with decorative pendants, mark the unusual Gothic Revival John Bibb House in Frankfort, Kentucky. Unexpectedly, the door and paired windows have moulded hoods but square heads.

PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



JACK E. BOUCHER, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

The Grange, a prominent museum house in Haverford, Pennsylvania, started life in the Georgian style but was thoroughly refinished in the Gothic mode in 1851 with decorated vergeboards, dormer windows, and a fine Victorian veranda.



ALISON MCKEEVER SHEEHY

The New York railroad suburb of Hastings-on-Hudson thrived in the mid-19th century. This fine but restrained example with decorative vergeboards and pointed-arch porch bays is one in a block of similar, small Gothic Revival houses.



JACK E. BOUCHER, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY



This Cambridge, Massachusetts, house is enhanced by a bracketed Gothic entry hood over the door and triple dormers enriched with typical ornamental vergeboards. It was built in 1848 at the height of the Gothic Revival movement.

than the Federal style and more essentially American than the old Georgian), and on the other, Gothic Revival (a British import based on medieval castles and cathedrals). Each side had its champions, and some noted architects planted their feet squarely on both sides of the style line.

The first American house designed in the Gothic style is considered to be Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Sedgeley, built in 1799 in Philadelphia. Actually, however, Sedgeley was not Gothic but *Gothick*, a term used when medieval ornament was applied to traditional buildings. It was a somewhat playful tactic reserved mostly for rich men's architectural follies, structures that were eye-catching but often non-functional, such as concocted ruins.

By the 1820s, a more picturesque Gothic Revival style was gaining popularity. Churches, Masonic halls, university buildings, and occasionally big houses



Varying a basic Downingsque theme, this Lexington, Virginia, house (appropriately called The Gables) has not one but two tall, pointed bays. The Gothic porch is a notable feature in this 1850 design. An 1880 octagonal room addition is at the left.

began to sport crenellated battlements, pointed-arch windows with stone tracery, irregular massing, and eccentric rooflines. Glenellen, built near Baltimore in 1832, is generally considered the first residential example of the fully developed Gothic Revival style in America. Its designer was A. J. Davis, who would play a major role in the Gothic Revival movement, especially after he teamed up with a young horticulturist named Andrew Jackson Downing.

The Dynamic Downing

It was Downing, a disciple of British art critic and social reformer John Ruskin, who took the revolt against classicism and excessive industrialization to the rapidly expanding American middle class. His books on landscape and architecture were immensely popular, particularly *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), which influenced thousands of would-be homebuilders through countless editions. Downing was the right man at the right time in more ways than one. Though Americans were ready for what he had to say, it was technological advances in machine printing and distribution that put his volumes in the hands of so many eager readers.

Downing, though a landscape designer by trade, was also an amateur architect and social reformer at heart. In his books, he touted rural life as a healthier, happier

and, in fact, more moral way of living. Families, he preached, could only develop properly if they had space to grow, away from the unhealthy influences of cities.

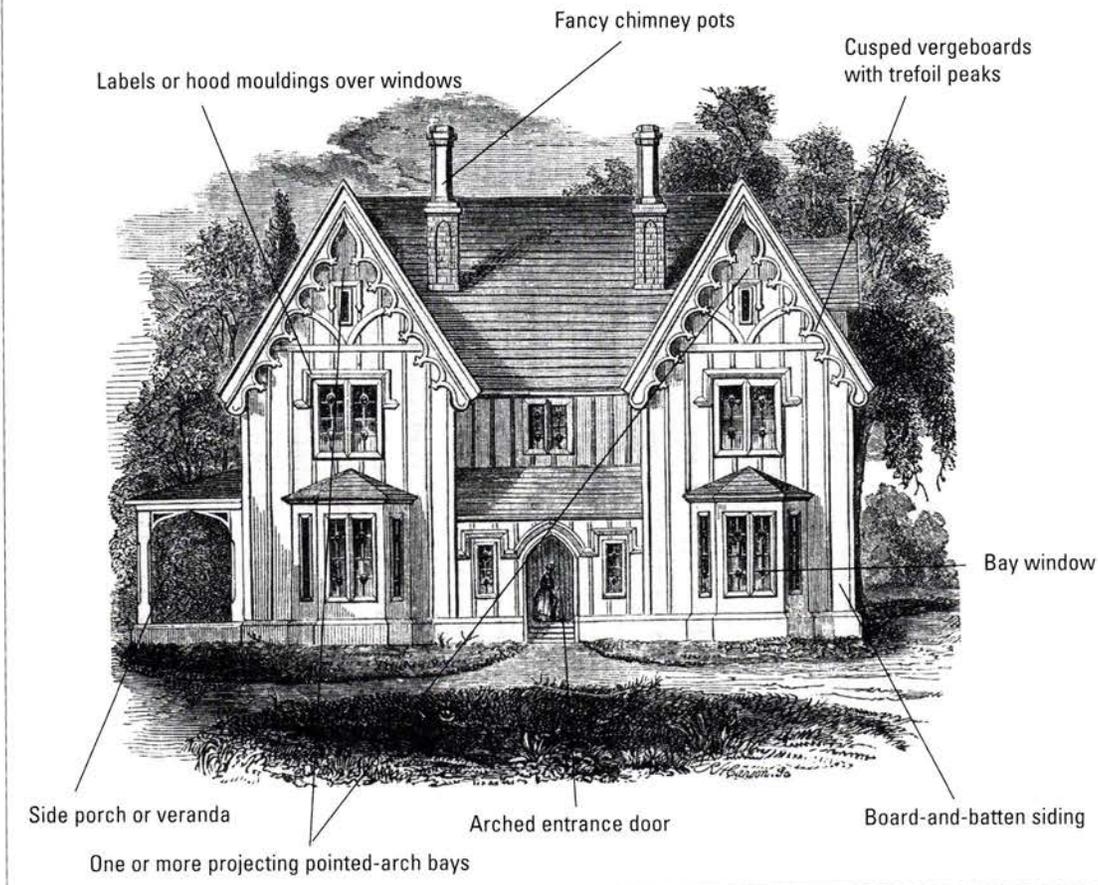
In Downing's time, the suburb was still a new and provocative idea. Until then, people had to choose between living in cities, where there was gainful employment, or in the countryside, where jobs were harder to find. Now, women and children could remain safely ensconced in almost-rural, village-like suburbs while their menfolk traveled to work in the nasty but economically rewarding city. Ironically, the retreat from grimy, disease-filled urban areas was enabled by yet another product of the industrial revolution: a rapidly evolving rail system that would transform post-Civil War America. Downing's view of the benefits of suburban life was later echoed by another immensely popular book, *The American Woman's Home* (1869), coauthored by two New England women, Catherine Beecher and her abolitionist sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe.

What kind of dwelling would house these new suburbanites? Downing had a few suggestions. On the one hand, there was the Tuscan villa, and on the other, the rural cottage. Both were picturesque and pleasingly irregular in form. Their irregularity not only engaged the eye but also was better adapted to serve the changing lifestyle of industrial-era families. Down-

Lindenwald National Historic Site in Kinderhook, New York, was the home of President Martin van Buren. It was remodeled in the 1850s with the help of architect Richard Upjohn, who added a fancy porch and arcaded tower to the original Georgian-style design. Note the prominent Palladian window.

The Gothic Revival Cottage

A "Plain Timber Cottage Villa" from *Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), designed by Gervase Wheeler.



ing recommended the villa (roughly based on Tuscan farmhouses) for larger homes, while his cottage (British in inspiration) was a small, informal, inexpensive house suitable for large families with limited income. As for crenellated mansions, Downing viewed these castle imitators with skepticism. They could backfire, he warned, dwarfing the builder who wasn't able to live up to such grandeur.

Dream Houses by Plan

Downing envisioned both cottages and villas with modern amenities, such as kitchens, central heating and ventilating systems, and cozy gathering places around a familial hearth. Naturally, he suggested that both types of houses be surrounded by large, woody grounds. Whereas Downing's suggestions for domestic work spaces were sketchy, the ones that Catherine Beecher, a drawing instructor,

prepared for *American Woman's Home* were thoroughly thought out. She pictured the ideal home as a multi-gabled Gothic cottage, replete with bay window conservatories, movable walls, and a large kitchen outfitted with efficient workstations, plenty of food and utensil storage, and continuous counters.

Many of the houses shown in Downing's books were designed by A. J. Davis, an established designer who became his friend, collaborator, and architectural mentor. Some were drawn by Davis to Downing's specifications (Downing was no draftsman). Still others were the work of Calvert Vaux, a young English architect and landscape designer who moved to the United States and became Downing's partner in the early 1850s. Downing also included in his books some house designs by Richard Upjohn, the architect of the 1846 Trinity Church in New York City.

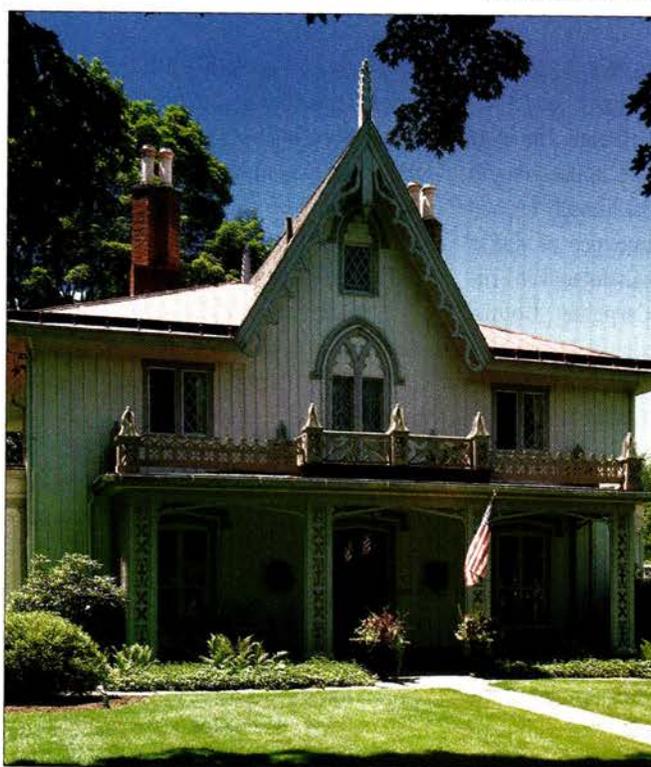
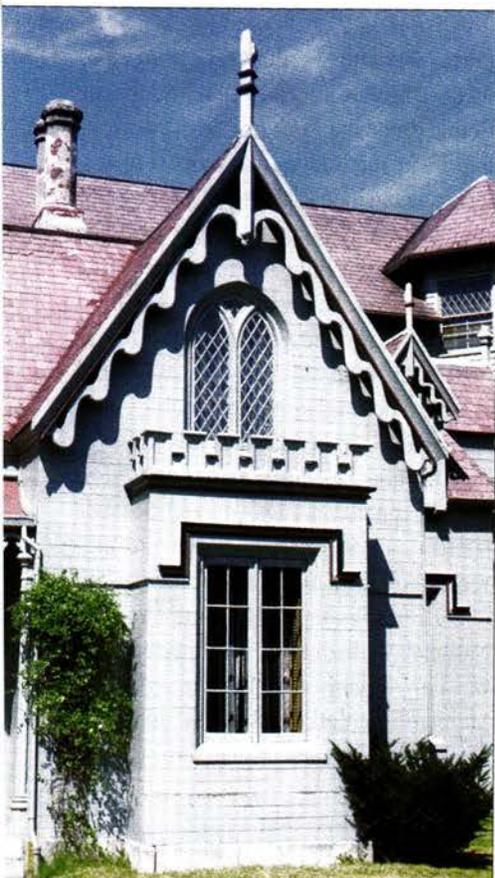
Other architects who published books with Gothic Revival house designs included Gervase Wheeler (*Rural Homes*, 1853), William Ranlett (*The Architect*, 1847), and Samuel Sloan (*The Model Architect*, 1852). The pictures in such "pattern books" were small, but supplemented by detailed written descriptions, they were enough to give local builders what they needed to erect credible replicas.

While both the villa and the cottage could be embellished with the owner's choice of bracketed (Italianate) or pointed (Gothic) ornament, Downing showed a strong preference for the Gothic. Stone was, of course, the original Gothic building material, but Downing, recognizing a land still full of virgin timber, saw nothing wrong with using wood for small houses and cottages. The important thing, he reminded his readers, was to maintain "honesty" in its use; wood should look like

One of the greatest Gothic Revival houses is the 1853-1861 Green-Meldrim House in Savannah, Georgia, by architect John Norris. The design has a castellated form enriched with an outstanding cast-iron entryway, balcony, and bay window.



JACK E. BOUCHER, HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

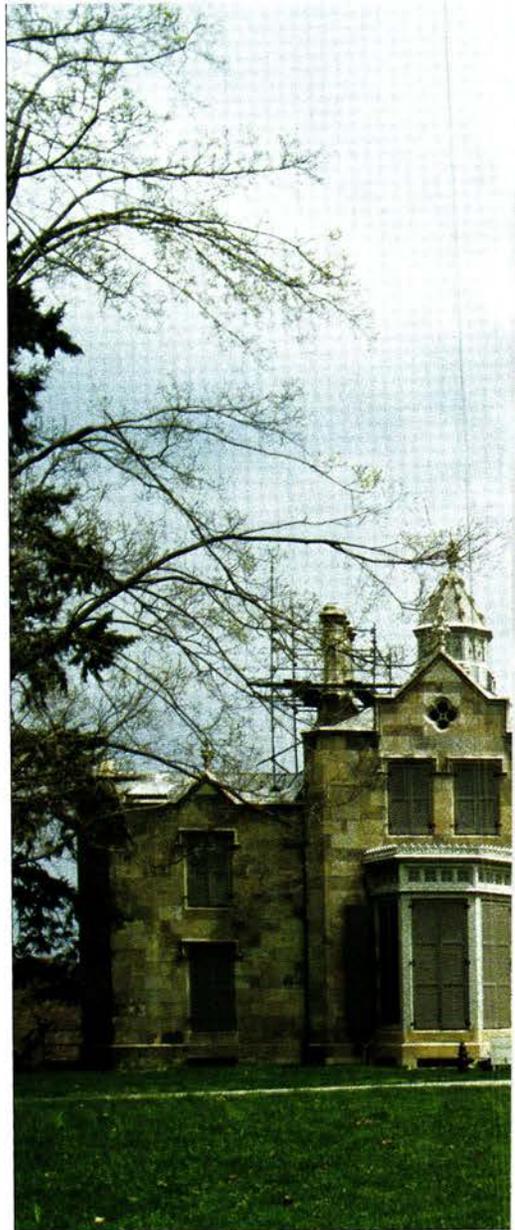


ANDY OLENICK

Bottom left: One of the earliest fully Gothic Revival houses was Richard Morris Hunt's Kingscote in Newport, Rhode Island, built in 1839 with later additions. Of special note is the window bay with labels over the paired casements and battlements.

Bottom right: The Delamater House is the work of A. J. Davis and a textbook Downing cottage, modeled on his 1842 designs for Rural Gothic cottages.

Apple Cottage in Lexington, Virginia, was built in 1868, late for such a simple board-and-batten cottage, but the picturesque Downing influence persisted, perhaps because of the large number of Gothic houses in Lexington at the Virginia Military Institute.



wood, and whenever possible be used in ways to express the building's structure. Furthermore, tempting though the new lathes and jigsaws might be, houses should not be laden with what he himself termed gingerbread, an overabundance of flimsy ornament. Downing was an outspoken critic of what he called Carpenter Gothic. (Nowadays there's a tendency to use that term for any little house with fancy trim.)

Downing liked board-and-batten walls (an undeniably honest use of material), and he was fond of wooden bargeboards (vergeboards) when they were tastefully decorated with Gothic-style details, such as small pendants, quatrefoils, and trefoils. He had no problem with pointed-arch windows, either, even in a small house. An occasional bay window was good too, as it was both attractive and useful. He was an outright fan of porches—on the

front, side, or back—not just because they added a pleasing irregularity to the outline of the house, but because they were so thoroughly useful. Cupolas were helpful, both to ventilate houses and to adorn them. Likewise, dormers brought light to dark spaces and added visual interest.

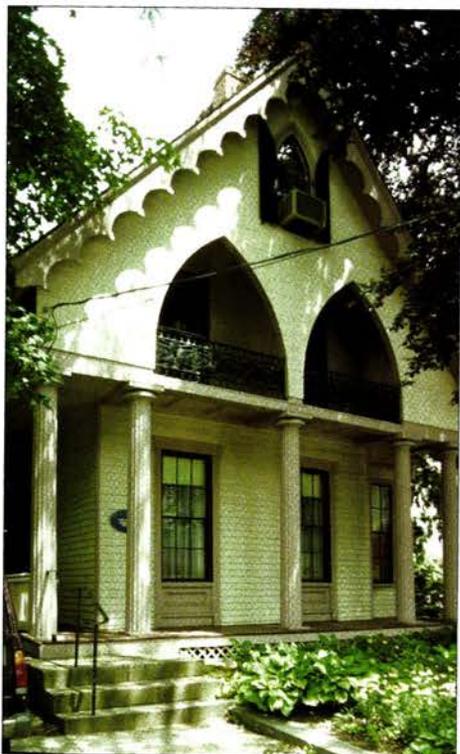
Gothic was often referred to, by Downing and others, as pointed architecture, because it featured high-pitched roofs, multiple high gables and dormers, pointed arches, spires, and pointy ornament. A more rectangular form of Gothic Revival was the so-called castellated Gothic, with battlements at the rooflines and square, watchtower-like, projecting corners. Behind the apparent flatness of the castellated roofline, incidentally, hides a pitched roof. Decorated eaves, moulded labels around windows, pointed-arch dormer windows, and fancy bargeboards demonstrate a happy meld of

practicality and stylishness. Cast iron also was used extensively for elaborate, upscale Gothic ornament, such as decorative cresting along roof ridges, balconies, railings, fences, and window labels.

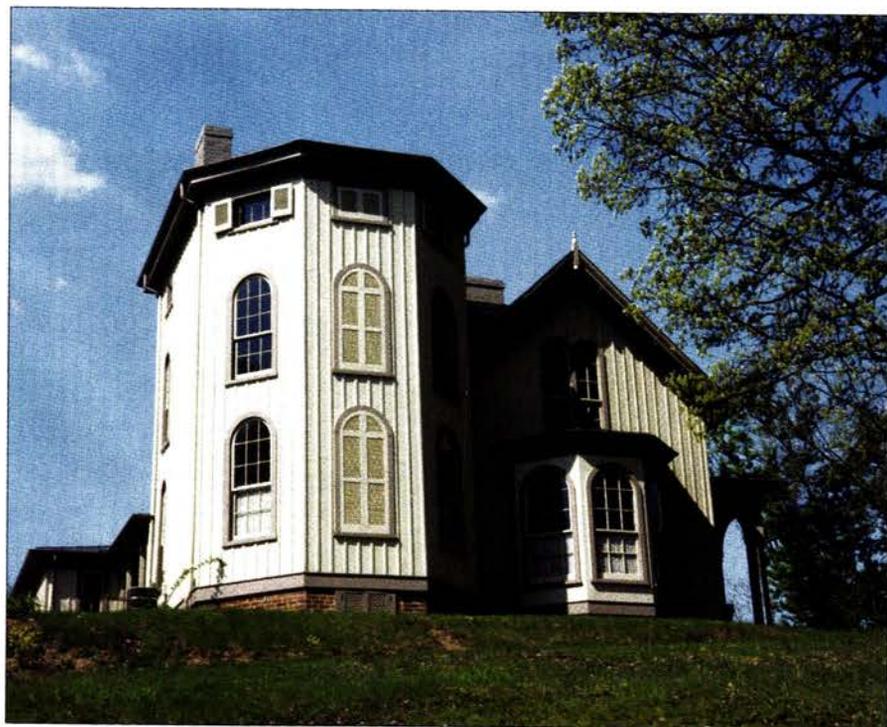
Sadly, A. J. Downing died in 1853, the victim of a steamboat explosion on the Hudson River. His books and ideas lived on, however. Gothic Revival houses continued to be built through the 1870s and 1880s. The high-pitched double- and triple-gabled fronts of the many mid-century farmhouses that still stand attest to Gothic's popularity. Of course, the style lasted even longer for churches and university buildings, right into the second half of the 20th century and beyond. The great National Cathedral in Washington, DC, was only recently completed in 1990, and Manhattan's Cathedral of St. John the Divine is still under construction. 🏠



The grandest of formal castellated Gothic Revival mansions is Lyndhurst in Tarrytown, New York by A.J. Davis for Jay Gould. The rich interiors have A.J. Davis-designed furniture.



The small 1840 house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, takes on a monumental aspect with a multistorey pointed-arch portico and single-storey Doric columns. Sawtooth ornamental gable vergeboards complete the composition.



This simple two-part board-and-batten Gothic Revival house sits on a hilltop in Staunton, Virginia. The original part on the right is gabled. On the left, an 1877 three-storey tower addition of an irregular octagon, adds a unique picturesque appeal.

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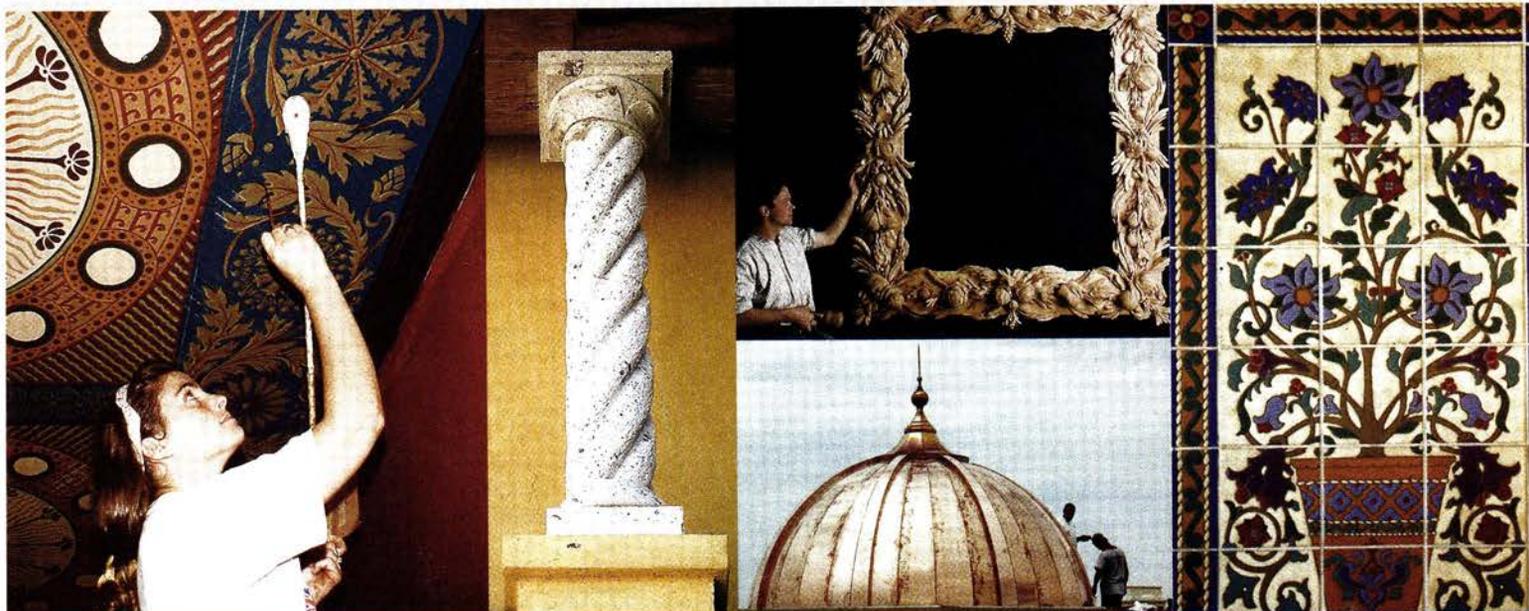


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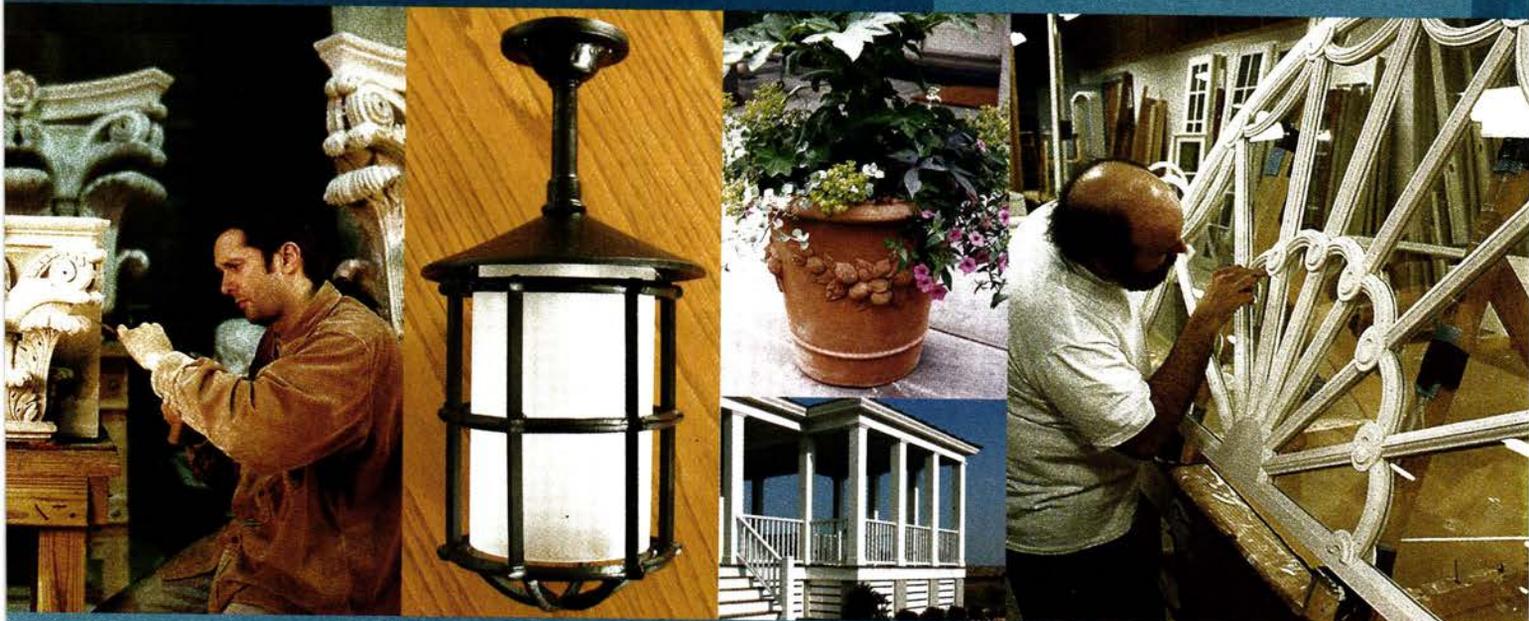
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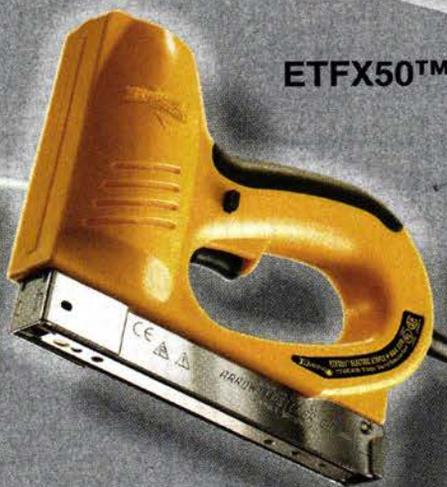
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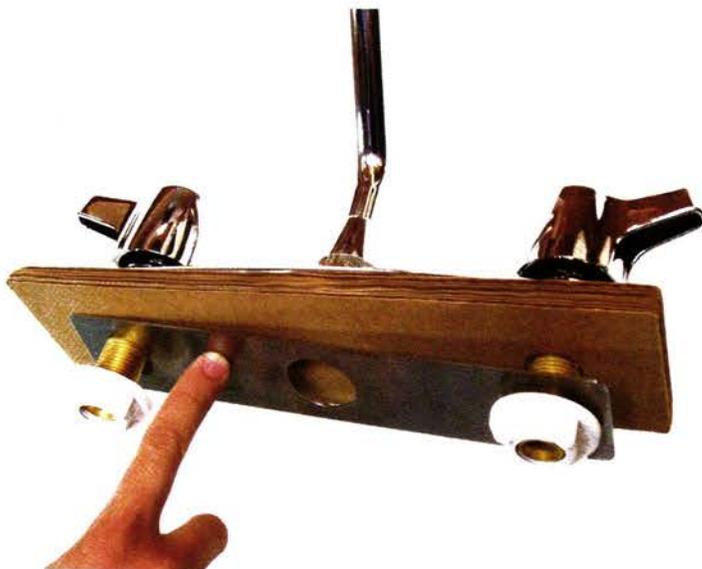
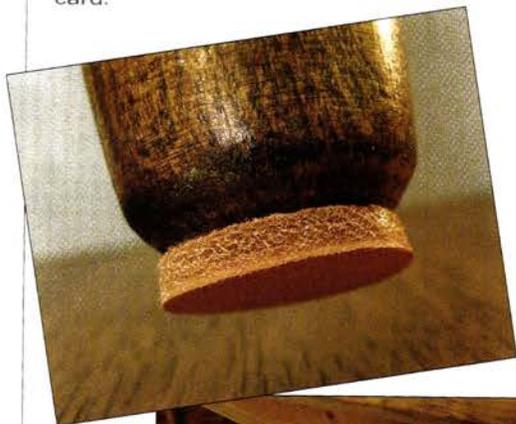
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Old-House Products

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Faucet Reinforcer

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Listed below are a number of resources and suppliers for the old-house restorer. For an in-depth compilation of companies serving the old-house market, go to the "Restoration Directory" on oldhousejournal.com.

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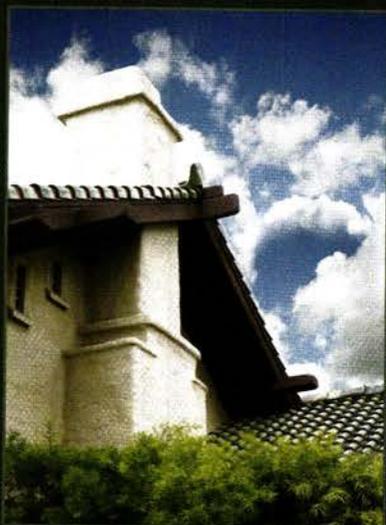
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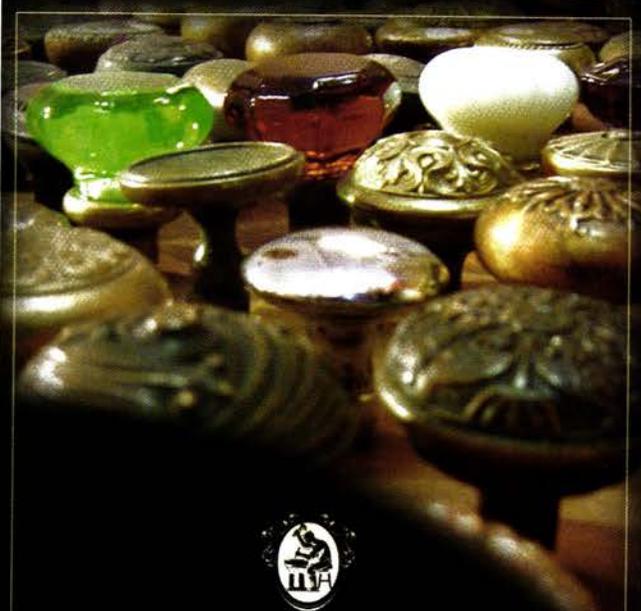
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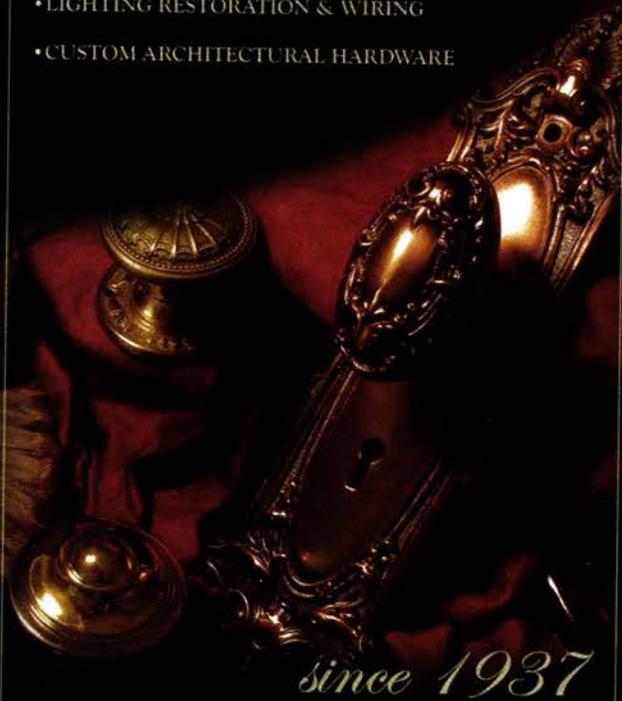


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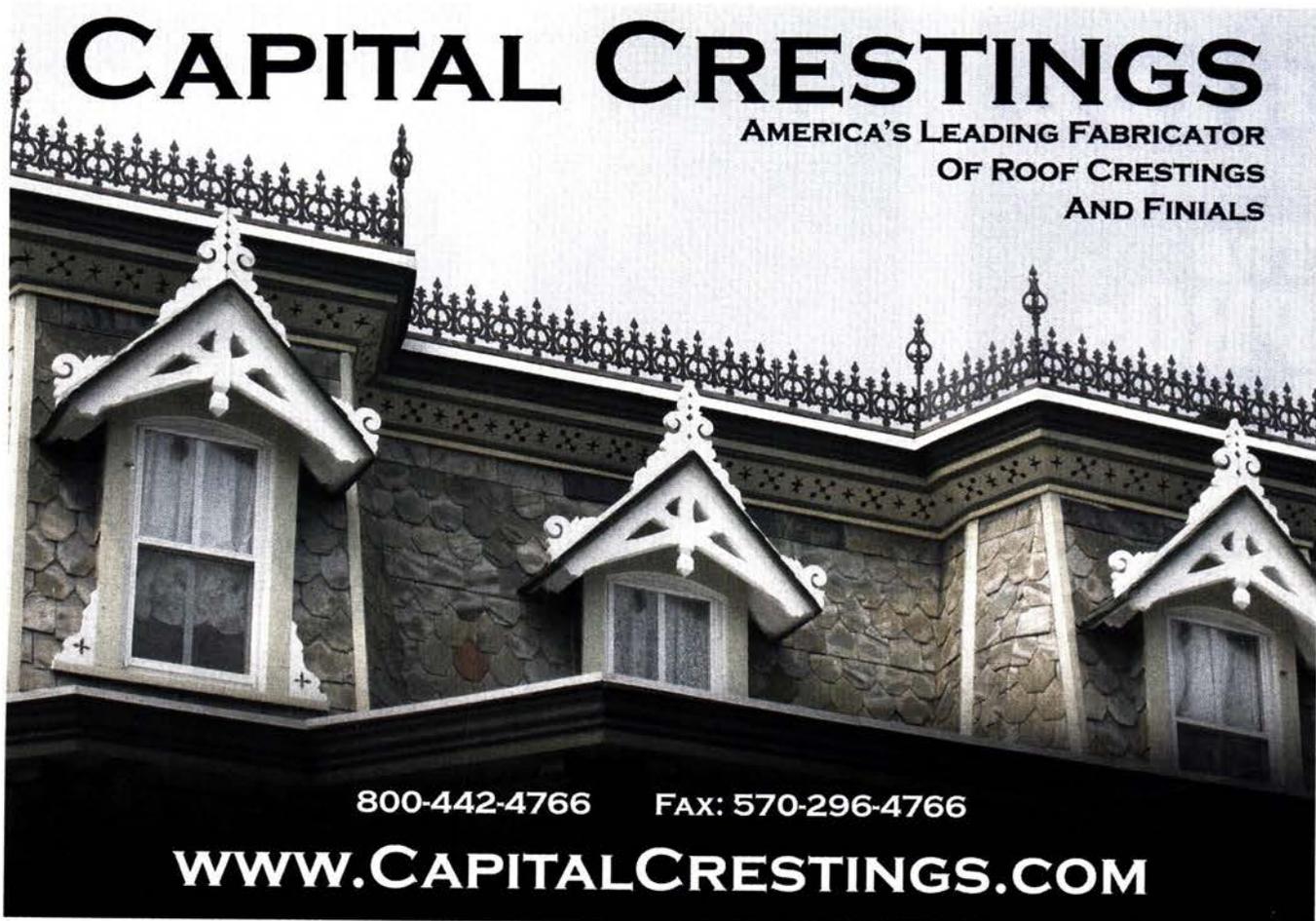
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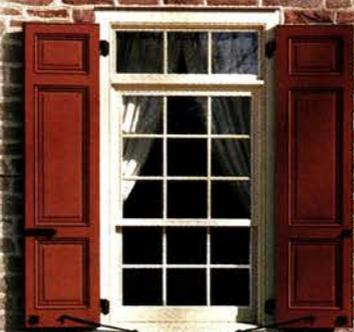
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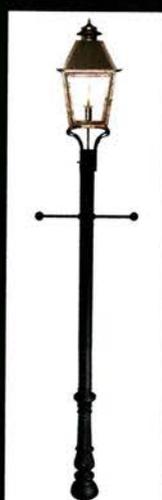
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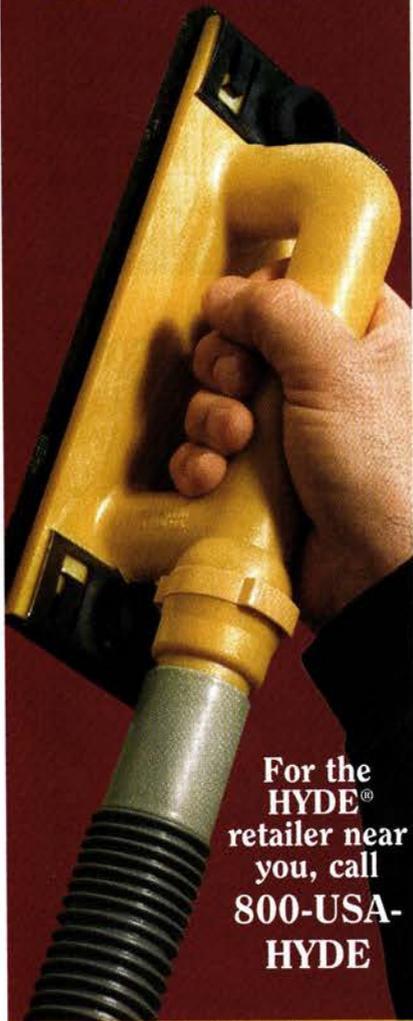
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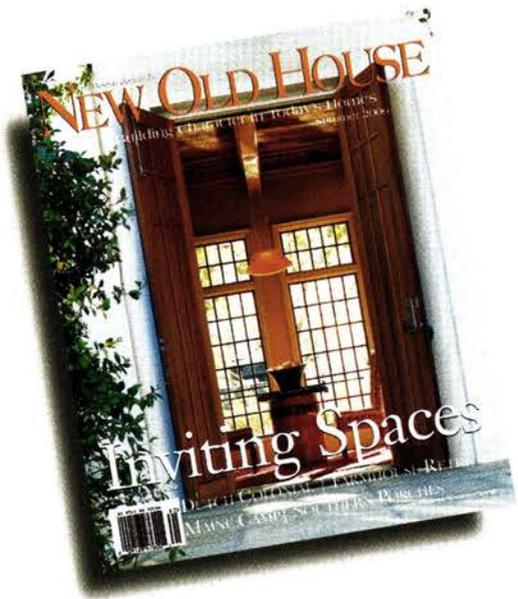


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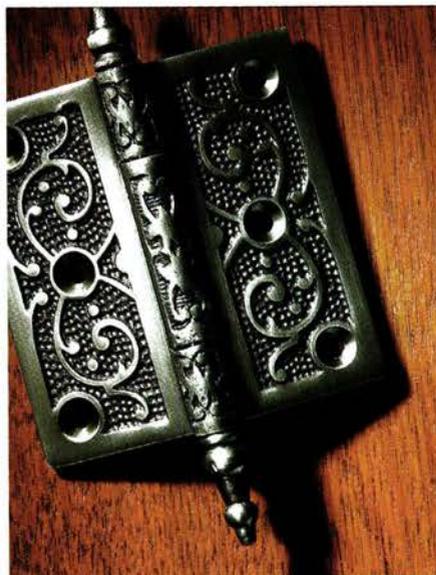
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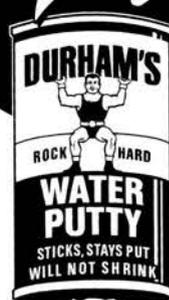
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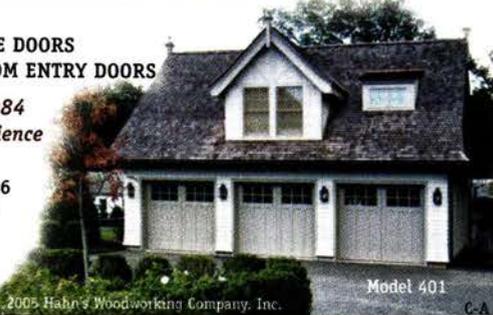
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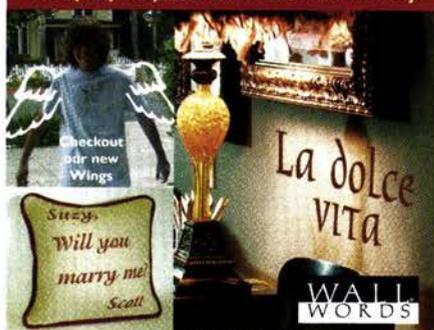
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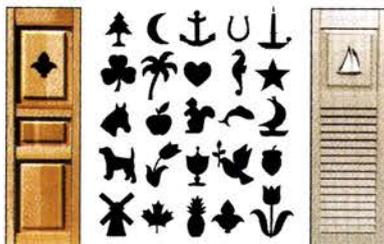


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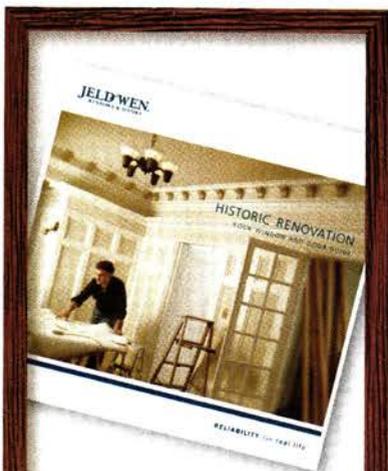
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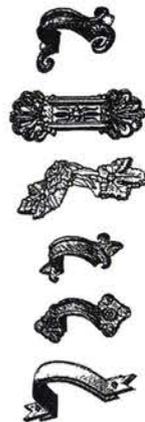


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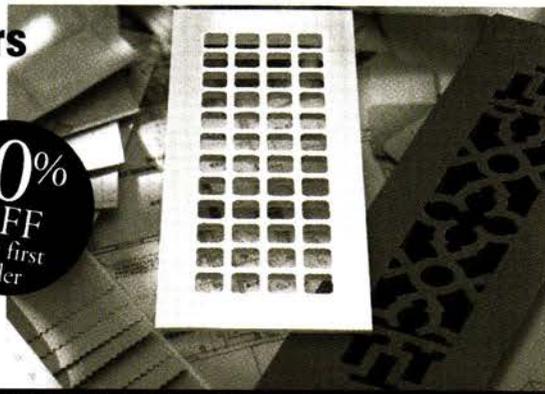
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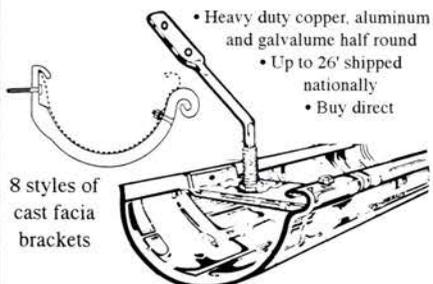
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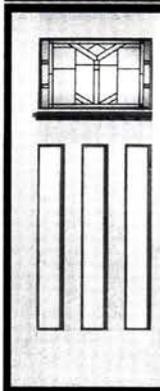
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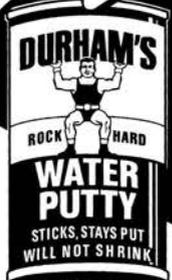
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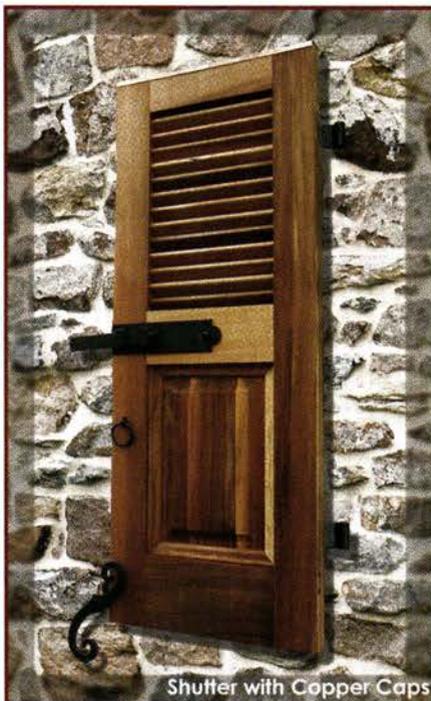
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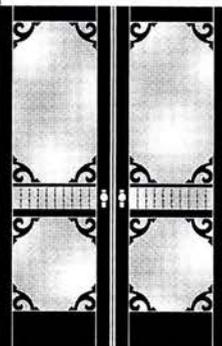


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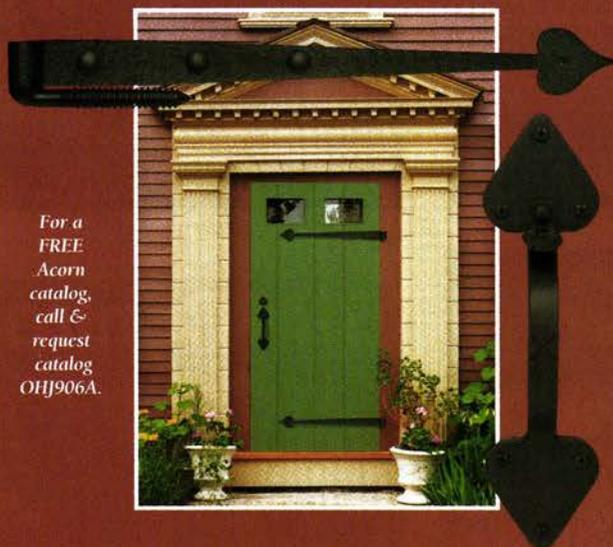
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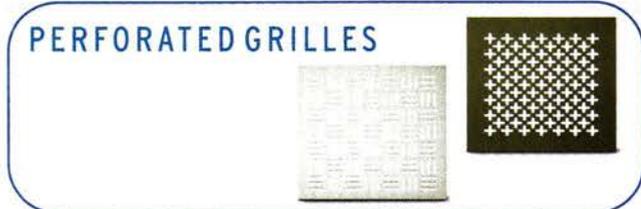
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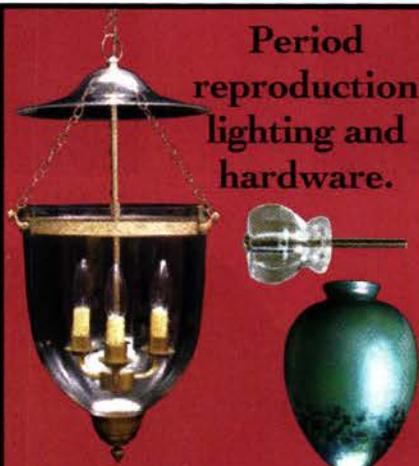
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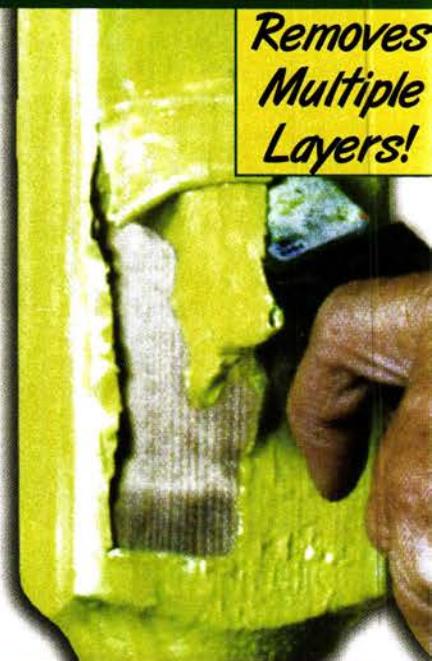
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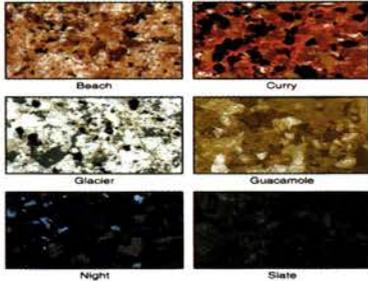


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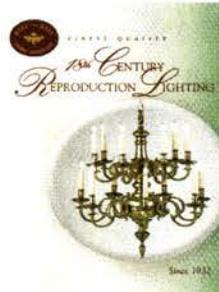
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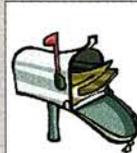
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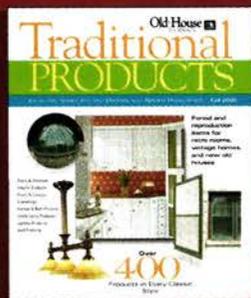
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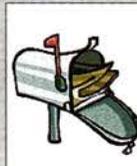
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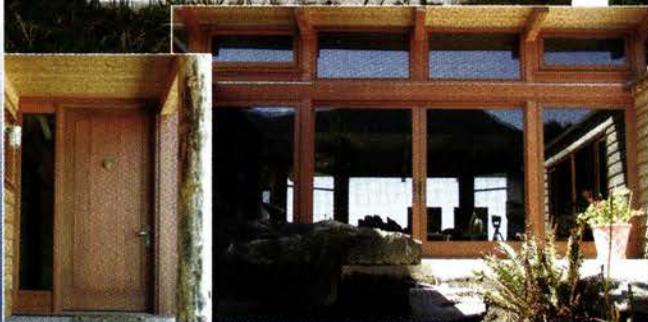
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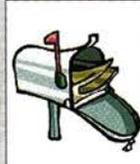
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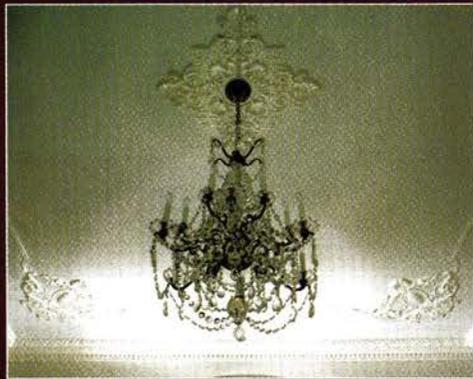
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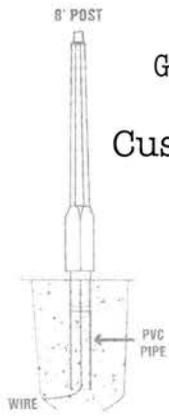
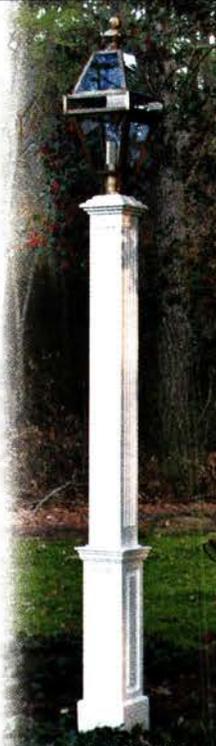


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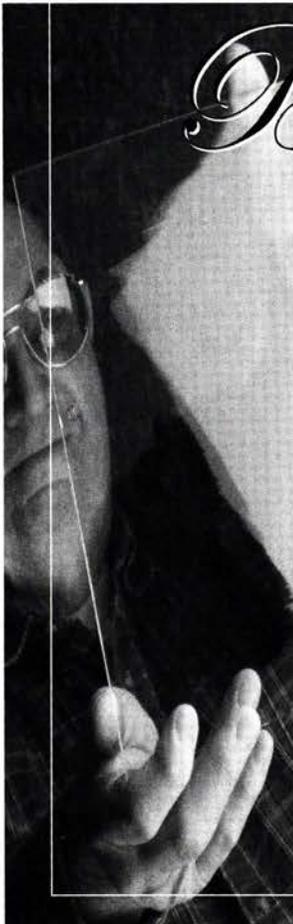
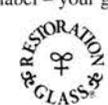
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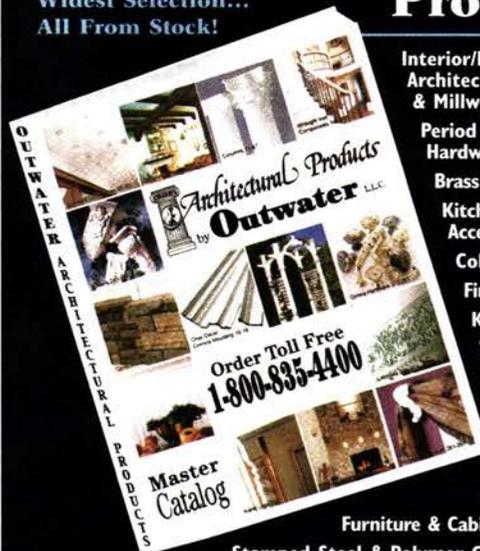
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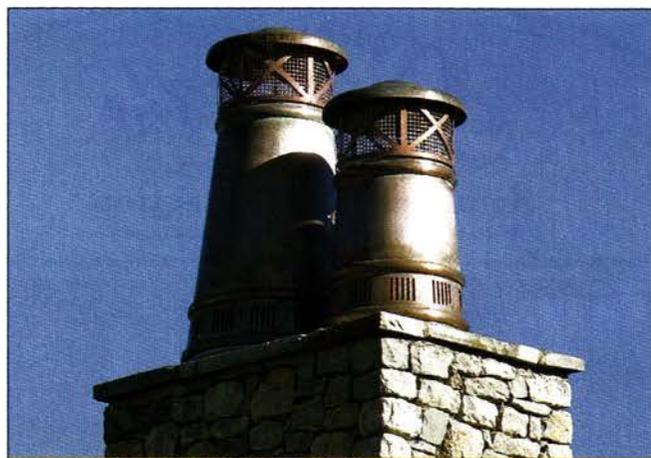
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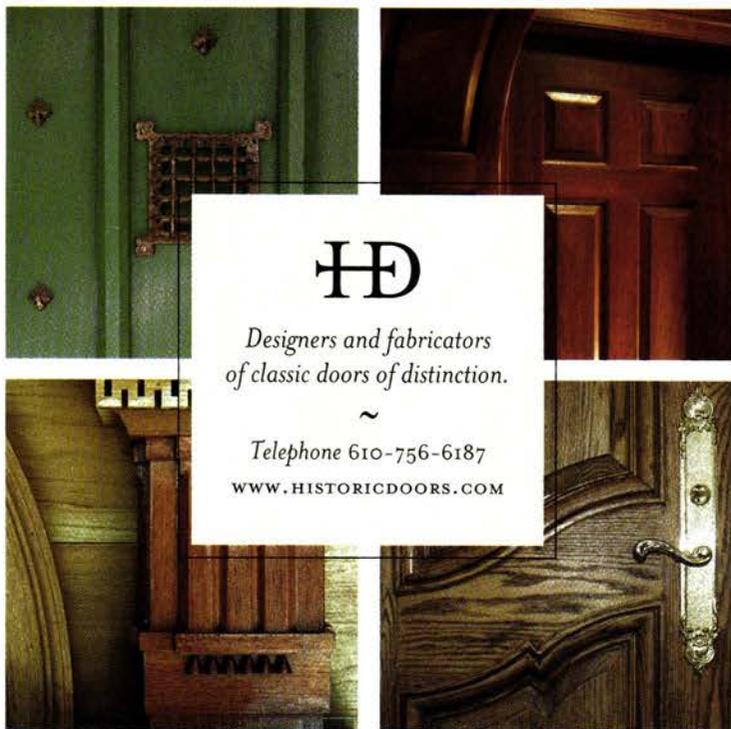
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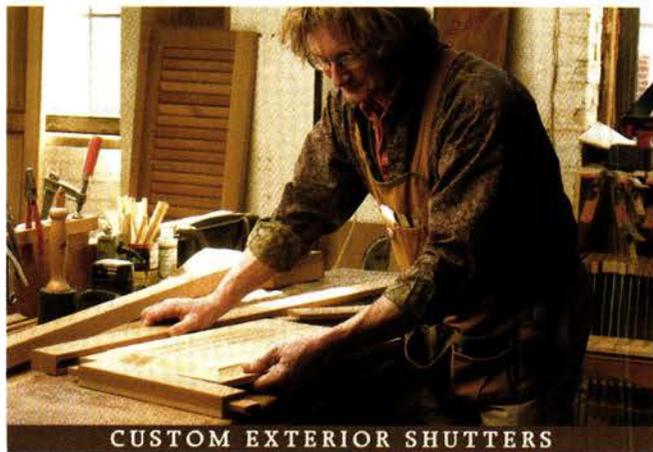
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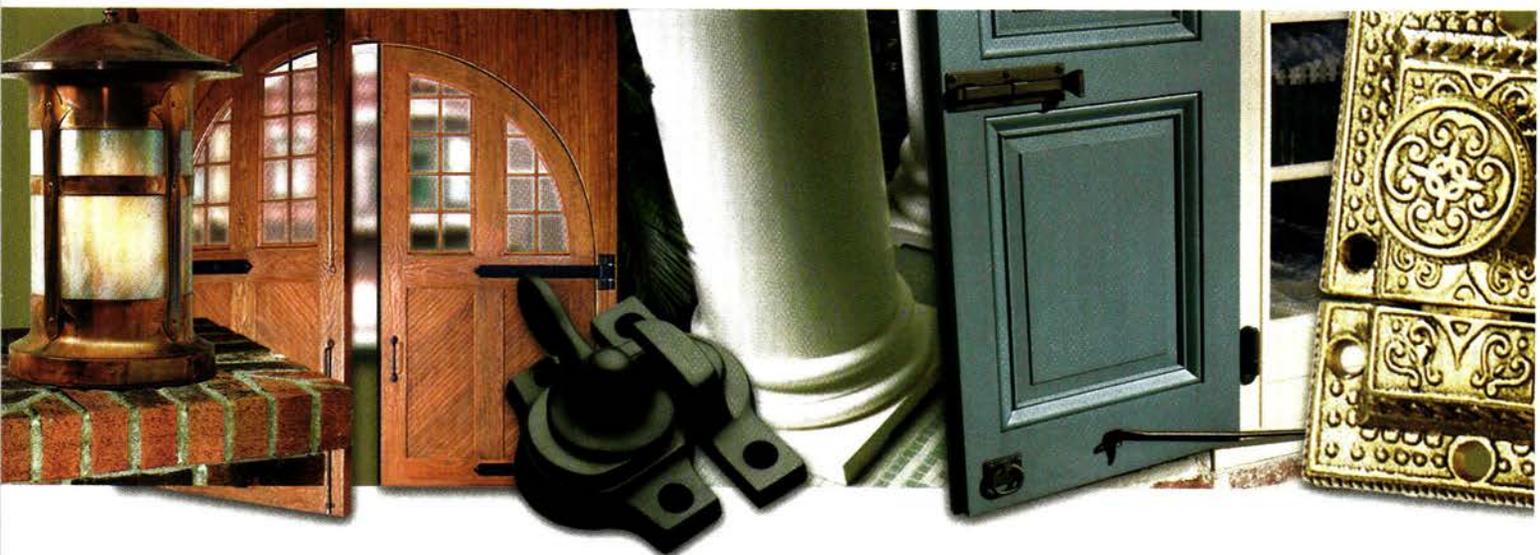
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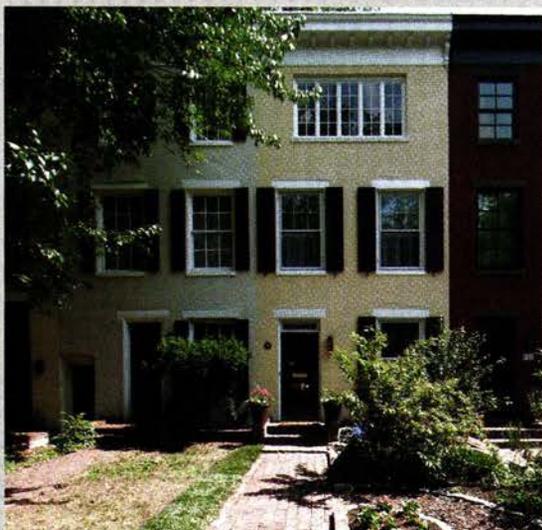
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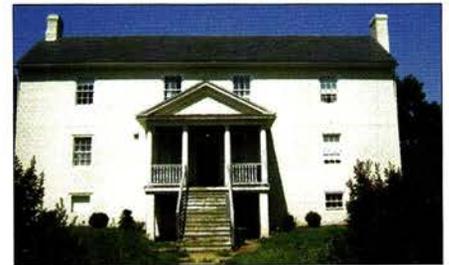
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Space Race

In the quest for more space, additions sometimes blast off into new dimensions. The textbook Foursquare at right is blocky and angular down to its traditional double-hung windows, and is on a different design trajectory than the futuristic addition, which is all streamlined curves and displays casements. Another time warp is the hexagonal bay window on the original house while the addition has a curved glass-block bay. A steel-beamed carport beside an old stone retaining wall appears to orbit the whole structure. Even the roofs seem to be from different planets. One is hipped; the other is flat and intersects accordion panels that repeat like a series of rocket stages.

Our contributor calls this architectural mix “post-Modern meets antique colonial.” We’d say it shows how portions of the same building can be light-years apart. 🚀

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