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June 2007

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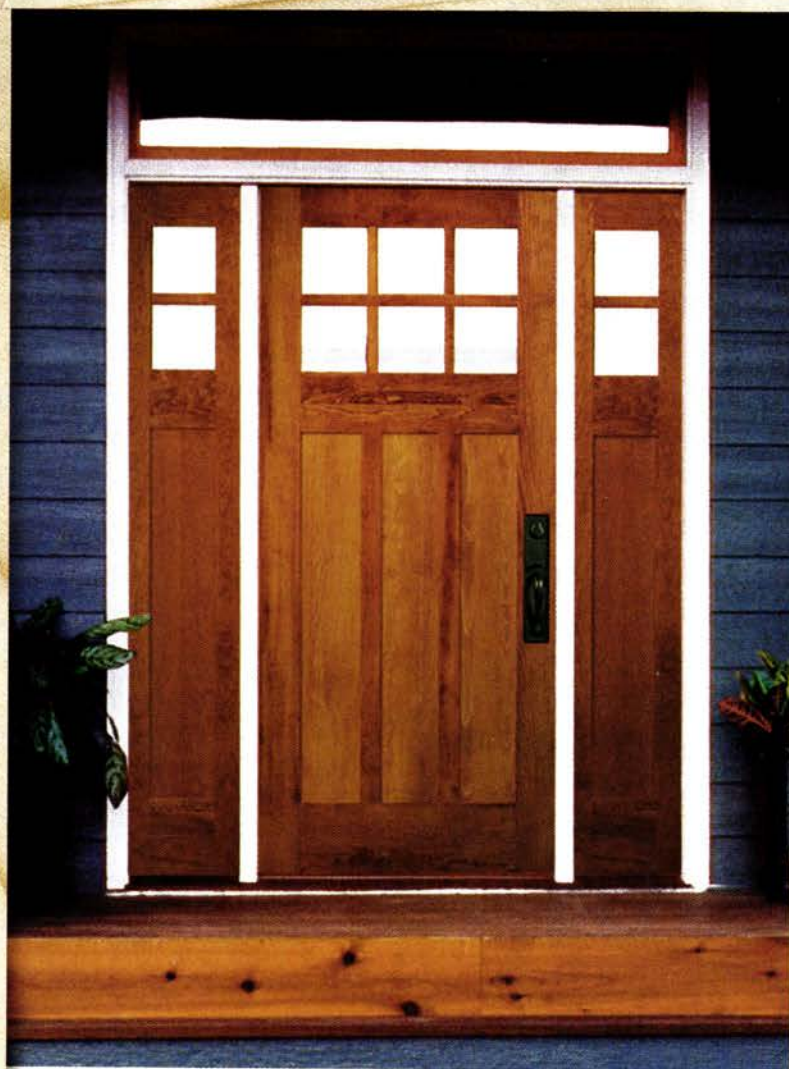
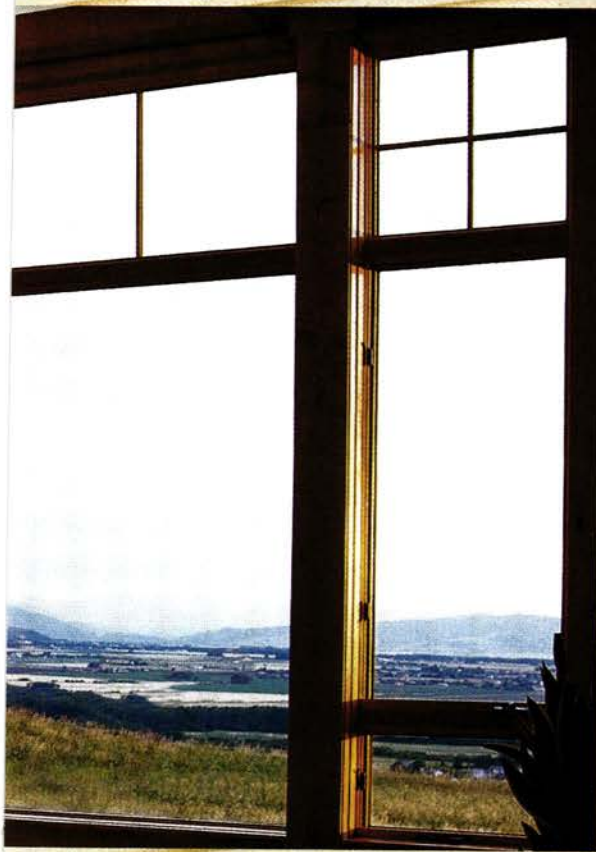
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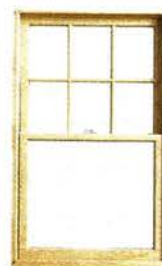
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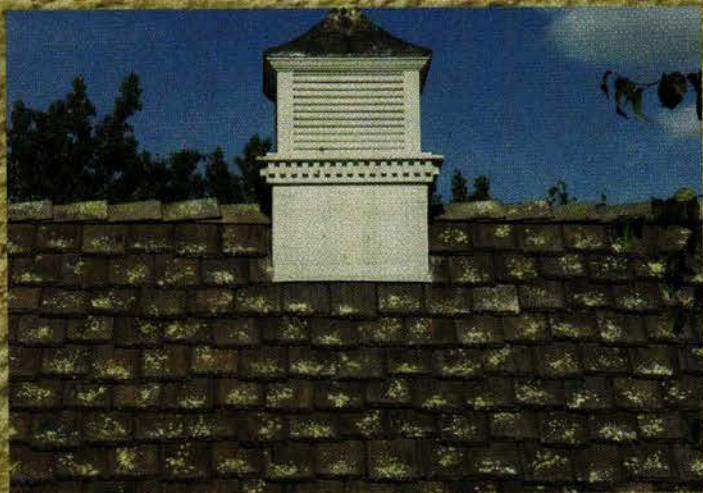
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Features

May/June 2007

Volume 35/ Number 3

Established 1973

40 House Parts with a Pedigree

By Catherine Siskos

The business of selling antique house parts is going mainstream, and with it come stiff competition and new opportunities for acquiring architectural salvage.

46 Visions in Glass

By Demetra Aposporos

Whether casement or sash, windows changed in appearance at the turn of the 20th century to reflect the cutting-edge designs for bungalows, Foursquares, and Prairie-style houses.

50 Flashing Points

By Gordon Bock and J. Randall Cotton

Whatever a roof is made of, flashing is critical for diverting rainwater around chimneys, windows, and dormers. This primer looks at the best materials and methods for the task as well as some expert advice for common roof flashing details.

54 Cornice Master Class

By Gordon Bock

A project on an 18th-century house becomes a textbook lesson in classic carpentry and state-of-the-art techniques for preservation students.

60 In Step with Trim Painting

By the OHJ Technical Staff

Following this classic sequence of steps can mean the difference between an average paint job that survives a few years and a truly attractive one that's longer lasting.

62 The Dirt on Wet-Dry Vacs

By Noelle Lord

Before you hit the stores to buy a utility vac, our old-house expert explains how to evaluate different models to find the machine that's best for the projects you do.

66 Old-House Living: Precipitating Preservation

By Demetra Aposporos

One couple's zeal for restoration ties in nicely with their town's goal of joining the National Trust's Main Street program.

70 Style: A Tale of Three Levittowns

By James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

Levitt and Sons reinvented the house construction business and single-handedly changed residential architecture and urban planning in ways that still resonate today.



ON THE COVER:

Salvaged materials await reuse at the Historic Eastfield Village in East Nassau, New York. Photo by Paul Rocheleau.

54





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Departments

12 Editor's Page

14 Letters

19 Annunciator

House museums find new uses for their sites; high-end insurance policies offer special features for protecting historic homes.

23 Ask OHJ

27 Plots & Plans

Shed-roofed entrance.

31 Fine Design

35 Outside the Old House

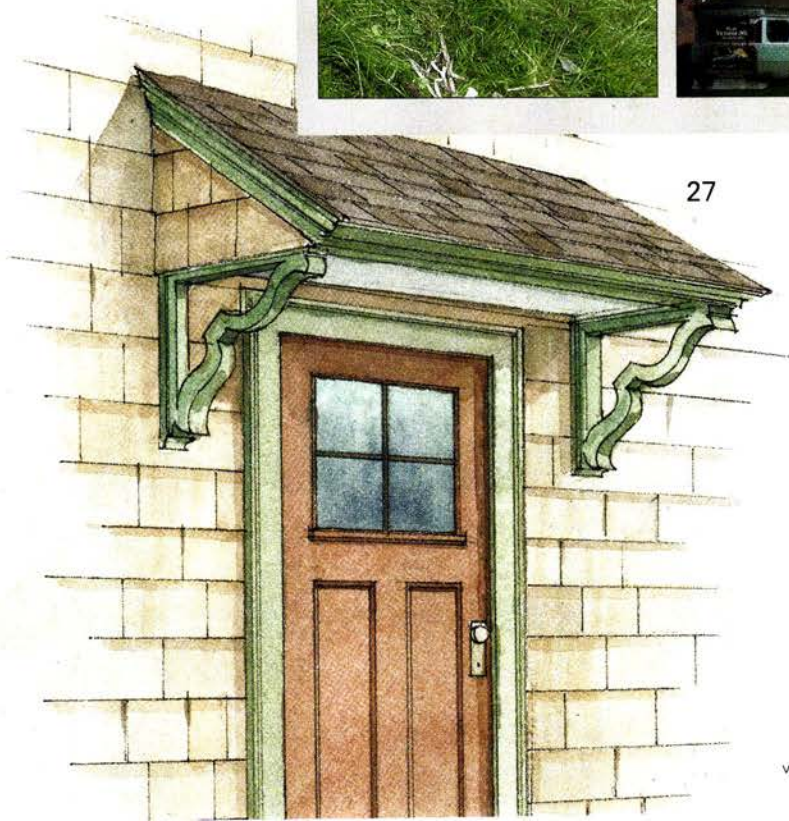
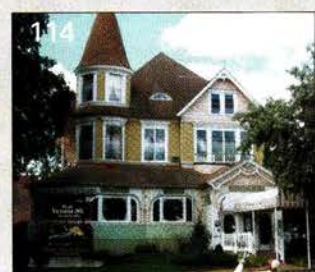
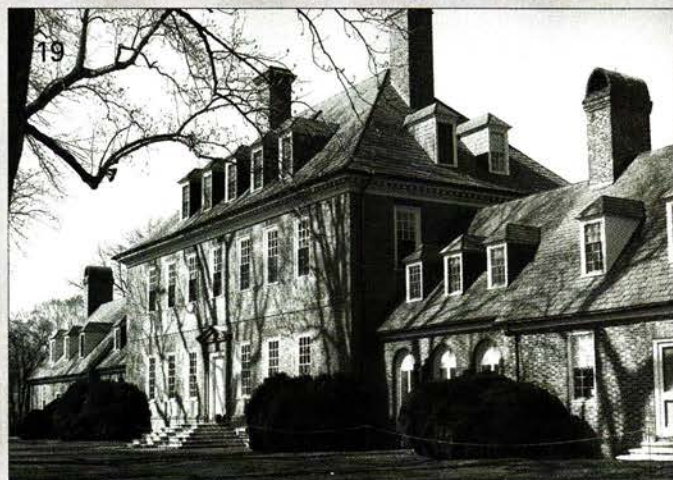
By Lee Reich

When and how to mulch, along with which mulches to use, depend a great deal on the types of plants you grow.

78 Suppliers

111 Swaps & Sales

114 Remuddling





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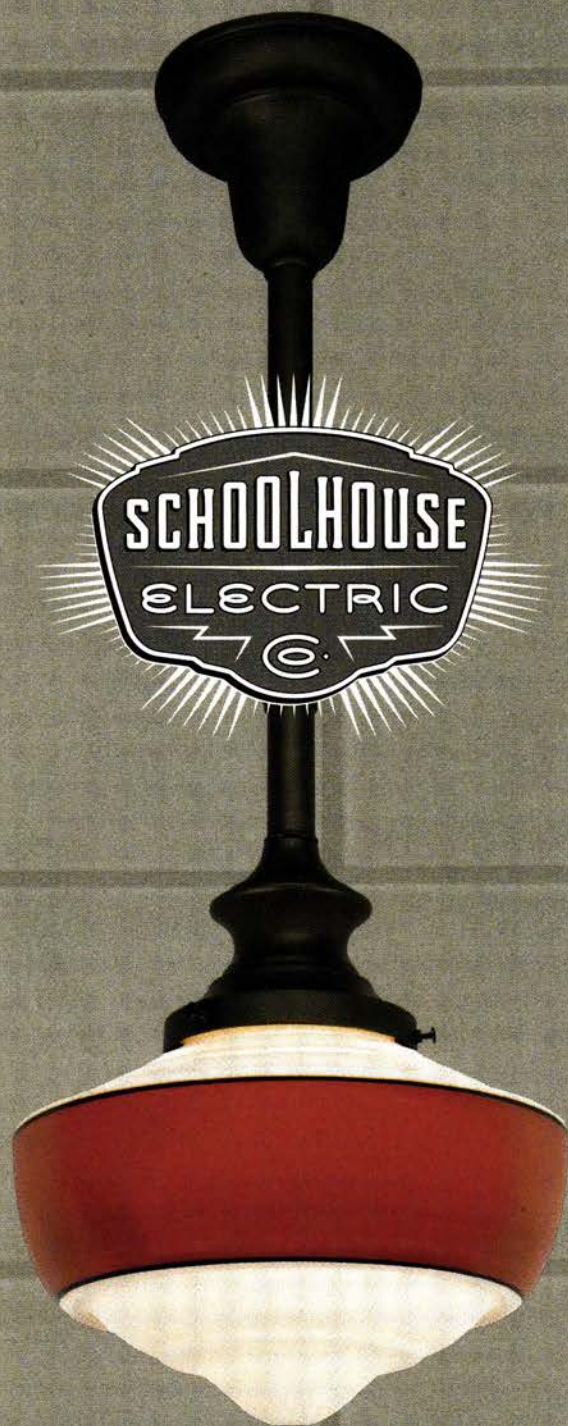
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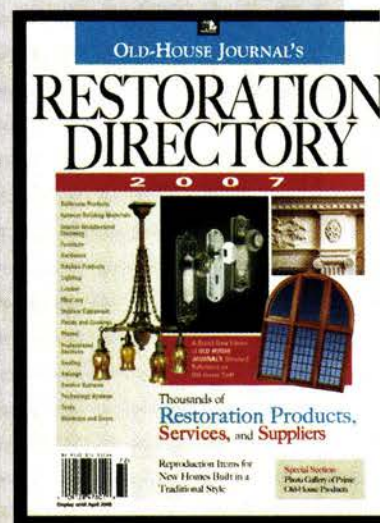
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Talk

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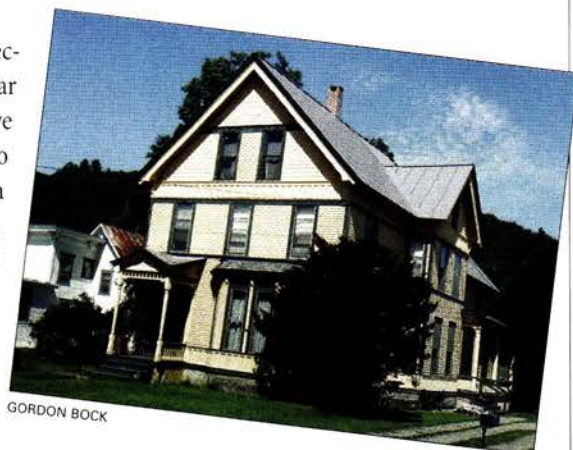
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Housing's Greatest Hits

Among certain circles of architectural historians, there's a popular line that goes, "God must have loved bungalows, for he made so many of them." Besides being a clear twist on a famous saying, the quip carries a bit of irony because bungalows are so obviously a product of their time: America's growth spurt around 1910 during the Tin Lizzy age.



GORDON BOCK

Glance at many a newspaper or website today, and you're bound to read reports and updates on the housing boom of the last decade or so. Before you get lost in the numbers, be they up or down, it's useful to note that while the latest building spree may well be one for the records, it is far from the first and not even that exceptional when compared to the housing booms of the last century and beyond.

Take the post-World War II boom of the late 1940s and early 1950s, for example—the one that spawned thousands of Capes and Ranch houses across the country and is exemplified by the developments of the Levitt brothers, who are the subject of the architectural style article in this issue. Though the recent boom is estimated to have created some 2 million houses a year at its peak, half a century ago in 1950, builders like the Levitts were churning out 1.95 million dwellings, and that was without the aid of computers, lasers, or the Internet.

Roll back the clock another few decades and you can see where all those Tudor, Mediterranean, and Colonial Revivals came from. The 1920s weren't called Roaring for nothing. They were prosperous times, with a seemingly boundless stock market, and the euphoria in business extended to the building and real estate industry. It rose to meet the needs not only of a growing population but also of one that sought individual homes in new automobile suburbs as an essential component of modern life. Housing starts set a new high-water mark for the century back in 1922 at 840,000 units, before bubbling up again to eclipse it three years later at 937,000 units, very nearly the million-house mark.

Lest you think the last century—the one we all were born in, mind you—holds a monopoly on the records, look around at all those Queen Annes. The 1880s and '90s were when the Industrial Revolution shifted into top gear and America's economy first approached world class proportions. Though there were some road bumps along the way in the form of a few roller-coaster recessions, all told, the times were good for house building, producing an estimated peak of 890,000 housing starts in 1890, and another topper of 840,000 starts in 1892. Both were levels not reached again until a generation later in the 1920s.

I'm often asked if the house construction boom we're beginning to see at a distance will have any impact on the world of old houses. After looking at the record, I'd say it's clear that every house built today has the chance to add to the ranks of the historic houses of tomorrow.

Gordon Bock

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Gordon H. Bock
ART DIRECTOR Karen Pollard
SENIOR EDITOR Demetra Aposporos
MANAGING EDITOR Catherine Siskos
PHOTO RESEARCHER Katie Beckwith
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS James C. Massey
Shirley Maxwell
Noelle Lord
Steve Jordan
Rob Leanna
PUBLISHER Michael J. Tucker
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Marilyn Light
CIRCULATION MANAGER Betty Russell
RETAIL SALES DIRECTOR Mark Harris,
National Publisher Services
PRODUCTION MANAGER Jessica K. Baim
PRODUCTION DESIGNER Alexandra Tzoumas
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Allison S. O'Connor

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES Restore Media, LLC
1000 Potomac St., NW
Suite 102
Washington, DC 20007
TEL (202) 339-0744
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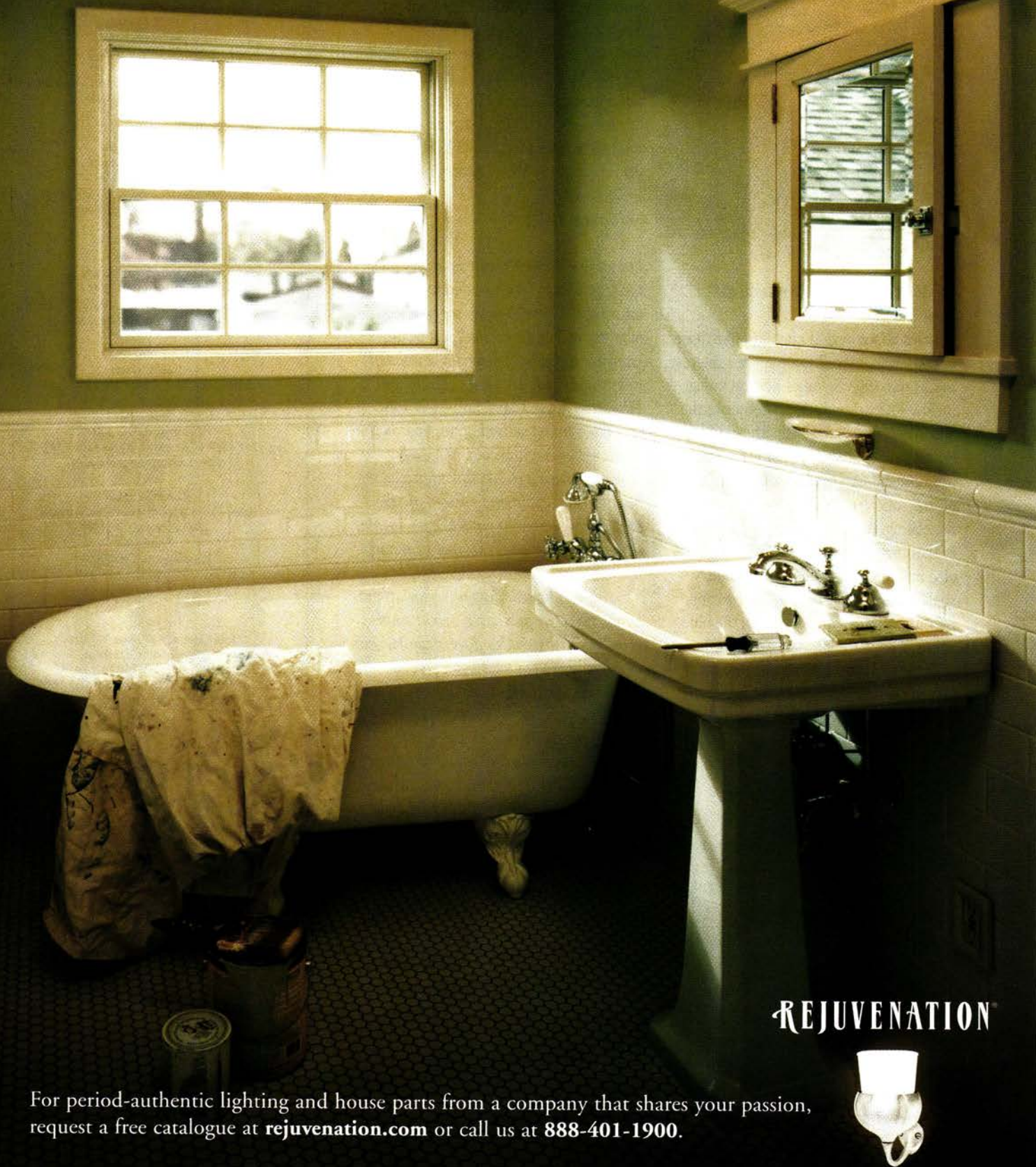
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A Kitchen Ahead of Its Time

Articles about period kitchens, like those in your March/April issue, always interest me, as our 1903 Colonial Revival house includes a kitchen little altered from the original. It must have been ahead of its time, because we have a counter with drawers and cabinets underneath. Above, glazed solid-front cabinets extend right to the ceiling. On another wall, a long counter that includes a large slab of marble also has cabinets beneath and shallow shelves mounted above. All of the cabinets are original and shown on the blueprints. An adjacent food pantry was originally fitted with a built-in icebox, courtesy of the man who built our house; he owned a company that made ice-cutting tools.

John Worden
Arlington, Massachusetts

Foodarama Fight

Concerning your article "Cold Comparisons" in the March/April issue, call me a purist, but a 1950s Foodarama would be totally out of place in a Victorian kitchen. What's next, fluorescent lights?

As someone who has extensively

researched iceboxes and early electric refrigerators (I am the author of *Identification Guide to Ice Boxes and Early Electric Refrigerators*), the obvious choice would be a wood icebox converted to electricity. Steel iceboxes didn't appear until the mid-1920s. A late-1920s Monitor Top would also be somewhat out of place but nothing like the 1950s refrigerators or the retro-style units. If I owned a Victorian-era house (and I wish I did), I would want it to look Victorian.

Craig Bryan
Northridge, California

I'm sorry we haven't read your book; it's the kind of tome my husband considers a must read—but I'm really sorry you didn't read our article. If you had, you would know we suggested converting a wooden icebox and using a separate freezer unit. This setup doesn't work for people with space and financial limitations, and in the world of home restoration, that's a big bunch of preservers. We also addressed the Monitor Top option and pointed out the problem of poisonous gas leakage—again, a pesky issue for any renovator or restorer interested in breathing.

We mentioned that our Victorian-era house, when we purchased it, had a hideous, McCarthy-era (and we mean Joe, not Gene) collection of fake wood and Formica, all lit by the fluorescent lighting you so rightfully abhor. So we started with a blank slate. Of course, we wanted our kitchen to have the charm of a largely fictitious bygone era. (Victorian kitchens were frequently dark, grim spaces populated by



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underpaid menials.) But we also live in the 21st century and wanted our kitchen to reflect some modern, decidedly non-Victorian conveniences, such as a dishwasher and smoke detectors.

If this means I'm impure, then I embrace impurity. American kitchens have evolved with our country. A good home celebrates that change.

—Celine and Tony Seideman

Literary Wallpaper

I was fascinated by Robert Kelly's article "Bold Frameworks of Design" in the September/October 2006 issue. As an English teacher, I appreciated the many references to literary giants such as Percy Shelley and Charles Lamb. What struck me most, though, was the vital part wallpaper played in influencing the mood in many literary works. One, in particular, comes to mind: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The

Yellow Wallpaper," published in 1892.

Gilman describes the wallpaper as "one of those sprawling, flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin." Besides providing the story's gothic mechanism, the wallpaper is also a powerful image. The narrator states that the house is a Colonial mansion, and I can guess that the wallpaper's style may date back as early as the beginning of the 19th century. There's been much speculation about who designed the wallpaper in Gilman's work, and I have discovered only one source who claims that it was William Morris, which I find hard to believe. Whatever you make of it, wallpaper

seems to have inspired more art than one might imagine.

Edward N. Tabor
Kutztown, Pennsylvania

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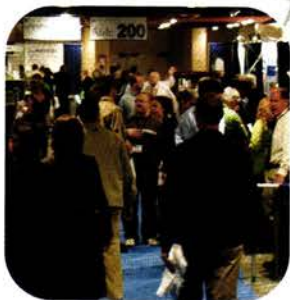
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May 19-20
ROCK ISLAND, IL
Broadway House Tour
Five "painted ladies" show off their interiors. Admission: \$10 per person; children under 13, free. For details, see www.broadwaydistrict.org.

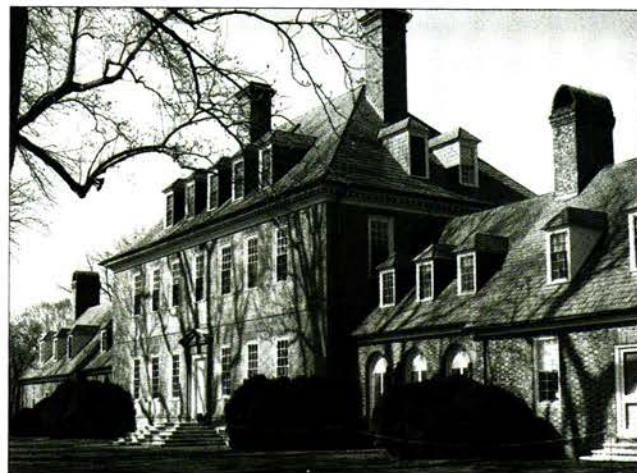
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Home Sweet House Museum

Over the next decade, some of the nation's finest historic houses, now open to the public as museums, may be sold. The latest example is Carter's Grove, the 18th-century Virginia plantation and one-time house museum, which Colonial Williamsburg plans to put up for sale later this year to a private buyer with restrictions to protect the property. "It's a foreshadowing of what's to come," says Marcia Young, site manager for the David Davis Mansion, a house museum in Bloomington, Illinois. "Some buildings will have to be sold back into private hands."

There are more than 8,000 house museums in the United States, and new ones continue to be created. Meanwhile, scarce dollars, fewer visitors, aging board members, and a wave of retiring staff are making it increasingly difficult for all of the museums to survive. Besides operating in the red, many house museums have no endowment to fall back on. "There's no underpinning for the organization and its future," says Donna Ann Harris, a preservation



Carter's Grove is expected to feature a for sale sign out front later this year.

consultant and author of *New Uses for Historic Houses*.

Demographics are also taking a toll. House museums, which often celebrate the achievements of long-gone white males, must find ways to become relevant to a more ethnically diverse population, a reason often cited for declining visitor rates. Retiring baby boomers who currently serve as curators and administrators are yet another issue, but even more critical, many volunteers and board members are older still, often the age of the boomers' parents. Busy schedules and younger

retirees who are more non-committal with their free time are making it hard for museums to find replacements, and that is leaving the buildings vulnerable at what may be their most challenging hour.

While some house museums introduce snazzy ipod tours and dig deep into the site's past for historical tidbits that will attract minorities, many more are reconsidering the use of their properties as community centers, schools, and even offices. The Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust in Philadelphia leases ten of its historic houses to businesses, ranging from architectural firms to health care providers, and uses the money from the rents to maintain the buildings.

But the most likely scenario is for house museums that are no longer sustainable to revert to their original purpose of private homes. That's what Historic New England did with some of its properties in the 1970s.

Harris concedes that it



COURTESY OF FAIRMOUNT PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRUST
This historic house in Philadelphia has been leased to a health care facility.

takes a special person to buy such a house, which may have easements for the exterior, interior, and even the grounds, but none of the properties sold so far, she

says, had difficulty attracting a buyer.

As a result, Harris believes that instead of creating new house museums, preservationists should adopt

a policy often used in the South of revolving funds, whereby a historic property is purchased, sold for residential use with protective easements in place, and the proceeds

used to buy and sell other historic houses. After all, she says, "These properties were originally built as homes. Why not just use them as such?"

—Catherine Siskos

Old-House Insurance Policies with the Right Stuff

Consider this recipe for sticker shock. Start with a historic house, which poses special challenges to rebuild in the event of a catastrophe. Throw in post-Hurricane Katrina construction costs that are up 25% and skittish insurers capping coverage amounts in coastal states, and the result is too many old-house owners who are underinsured for the next disaster, whether a fire, storm, or leaking upstairs toilet.

With its high-quality materials, craftsmanship, and period details, even a modest historic home can cost about \$880 per square foot to rebuild exactly as it was, or \$1.3 million for a 1,500-square-foot house, says Jim Fiske, vice president of marketing for Chubb Personal Insurance. A standard homeowner's policy will only rebuild an old house using modern ma-



MATTHEW JONAS/ THE NEWS JOURNAL

Special insurance policies will cover historic houses so that they can be fully restored should disaster strike.

terials. "Most insurers want to give you Pergo and drywall instead of hardwood and plaster," says Brian Phoebus, program director of National Trust Insurance Services, an independent insurance agency specializing in historic properties. In his view, only three national companies—AIG, Chubb, and Fireman's

Fund—sell policies that meet the special needs of old-house owners.

These high-end policies, which are sold only through insurance brokers and also apply to nonhistoric homes, have several advantages over standard homeowner's insurance. They guarantee to rebuild the house using original materials (or the best possible reproductions if originals can't be found) even if that cost exceeds the policy's limit. Chubb, for instance, recently paid \$3.5 million to rebuild a historic home in New York even though the amount was three times more than what the house was insured for. Because many jurisdictions require that the entire house be brought up to code, even when only a portion of it needs rebuilding, there is also built-in protection to cover

the cost of those upgrades as well. For losses exceeding \$50,000, the policies waive the deductible. Best of all, if your old house can't be reproduced or you're simply unwilling to rebuild, the insurer will give you the cash value of the policy so that you can build or buy elsewhere. As with any homeowner's policy, it doesn't include flood insurance, which you can only purchase through the federal government's National Flood Insurance Program.

Of course, this superior coverage doesn't come cheap; the premiums generally run 20% to 40% higher than a standard policy, but there are ways to keep costs down, for instance, by choosing the highest deductible you can afford—\$5,000 or even \$7,500. And you do get brownie points for any improvements that make the house safer, such as adding an alarm system or rewiring the home. Chubb, for instance, awards credits of up to 15% that apply toward the premium. As those systems age, the value of the credit drops so that eventually, you'll pay the premium's full cost. Sticker shock though that may be, at least you'll rest easier knowing no more financial surprises lie in wait should disaster strike. 🏠

—Catherine Siskos



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Circle no. 337

Going Dutch

Can you tell me any more about this Sears house? It's the Puritan model and still contains the original kitchen cabinets and brick fireplace surrounded by bevel-glass doors.

Karen Larrison

Long Branch, New Jersey

You're right. This is a Sears house and in a design the mail-order giant promoted as "the most modern type of Dutch colonial." More properly called Dutch Colonial Revival, such houses were inspired by 17th- and 18th-century farmhouses of the Hudson River Valley, and became a popular alternative to the Georgian-based Colonials that popped up during the 1920s and '30s. Though the Dutch originals were usually built in stone and often with gable roofs in urban areas, they are remembered for the many rural examples with distinctive gambrel roofs, a clever device that added to usable space in the attic.

The Dutch Colonial Revival came on the scene just after 1900 for large, archi-



The Puritan was among the most popular and architecturally faithful of the Dutch Colonial houses sold by Sears and was frequently built with an enclosed porch or pergola at one side.

tect-designed residences as part of the vogue for upscale country houses, but after World War I, it bounced back in the form of affordable frame houses for the Everyman. Sears took a particular shine to them, offering at least 10 versions over the decades. Charming as well as practical, the gambrel roof was by then an essential part of the style, especially with a large shed dormer that further increased second-floor

living space. Though a glance at the outside corners reveals how many Dutch Colonials are merely gable-roofed houses cunningly fitted with a pent roof to make them look Dutch, your house appears to be built with a true gambrel roof. Another authentic neo-Dutch touch is the cambered roof over the front entrance, which would typically shelter a pair of wood benches facing each other.

It's a Gas (Machine)

There's a contraption in the basement of our 1900 Queen Anne home that's labeled "Springfield Gas Machine, Gilbert & Barker Mfg. Pat. 1889." Can you tell me anything about it?

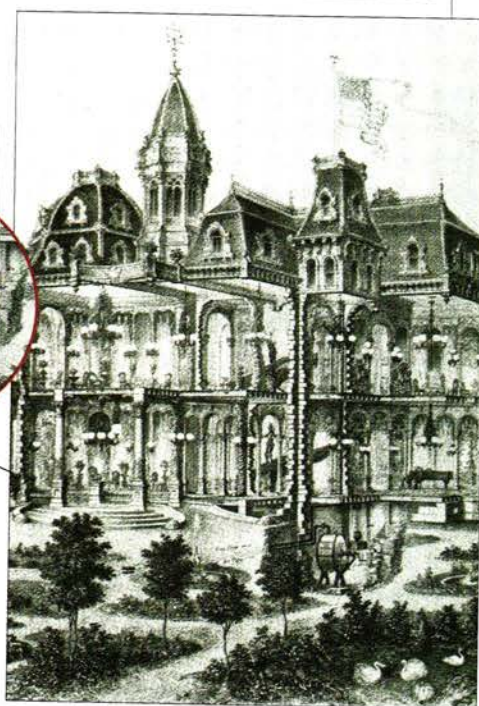
Kevin Caramore

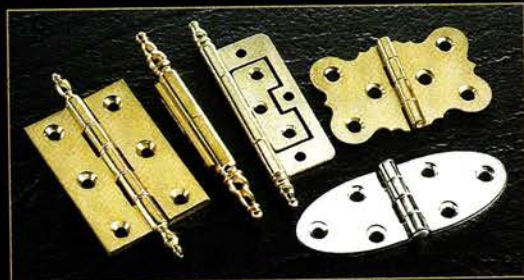
Hancock, New York

Gas generators varied in design but generally can be recognized by hand cranks connected to large drums (for vaporizing machines) or hoppers (for acetylene machines).



so accepted as the modern illuminant that large houses and hotels beyond the reach of city gas mains began to be equipped with their own gas generators. Rather than burning manufactured coal gas, these systems typically either ran on vaporized fuels, such as gasoline or benzene, or acetylene gas, which they produced within the generator by





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As a safety measure, the gas generator—an assemblage of tanks and regulators, often powered by a weight- or spring-driven pump—was stationed in the basement, an underground room, or off in an outbuilding some distance from the main house. With the exception of burners and jets designed specifically for the different kinds of gas, light fixtures were essentially the same for city gas.

Though records are sketchy, the Springfield Gas Machine stands out as one of the more noteworthy products of its type. It produced gas from gasoline, and there are advertisements for the apparatus as early as 1868, not long after the drilling of the first oil well in 1859. One ad illustration shows a hypothetical installation in the basement of a large mansion, with the evaporating tank contained in an underground vault some distance from the house—a sobering acknowledgment of the explosive potential of so much vaporized fuel.


Homespun Paint Stripper

I've heard that it's possible to make paint-stripping solutions from household ingredients. Do you have any formulas?

Liz McCarthy

Bat Cave, North Carolina

Well before today's sea of chemical- and solvent-based paint removers flooded the market, folks set on stripping mixed up their own. This caustic-based stripper is concocted from common ingredients that cost next to nothing. In a nonmetallic container, such as a joint-compound bucket, gradually dissolve household lye (caustic soda) in two gallons of warm water. Start with a medium-strength solution—say, two ounces of lye per gallon of water. Test for effectiveness, and then increase concentration if desired. Make the stripper paste by mixing corn starch and water in another bucket. When the water is milky, slowly blend it into the lye solution.

Apply the stripper with a tampico-bristle (whitewash) brush. The solution is particularly practical for removing paint on masonry; however, like all caustic strippers, this mix is highly basic and will darken some hardwoods. Test first in an inconspicuous area, and rinse the surface thoroughly before repainting. Most important, work carefully while mixing and applying the stripper. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves, and be sure to rinse skin immediately if it comes in contact with the stripper; caustics can cause burns. 

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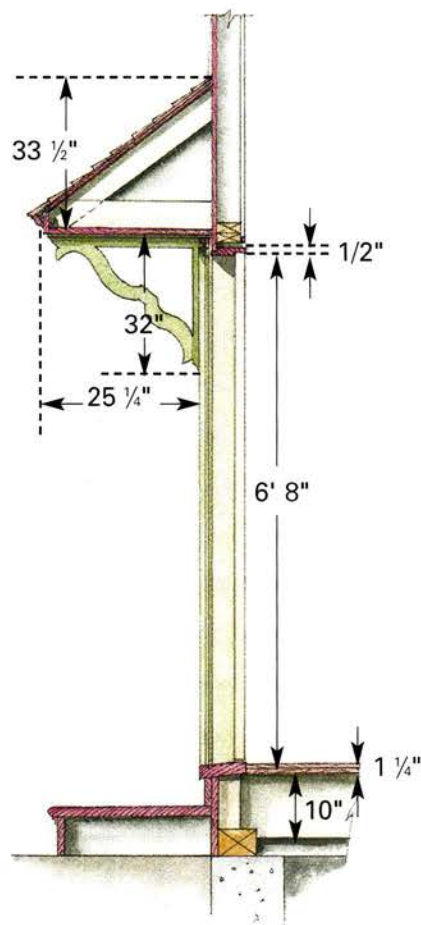
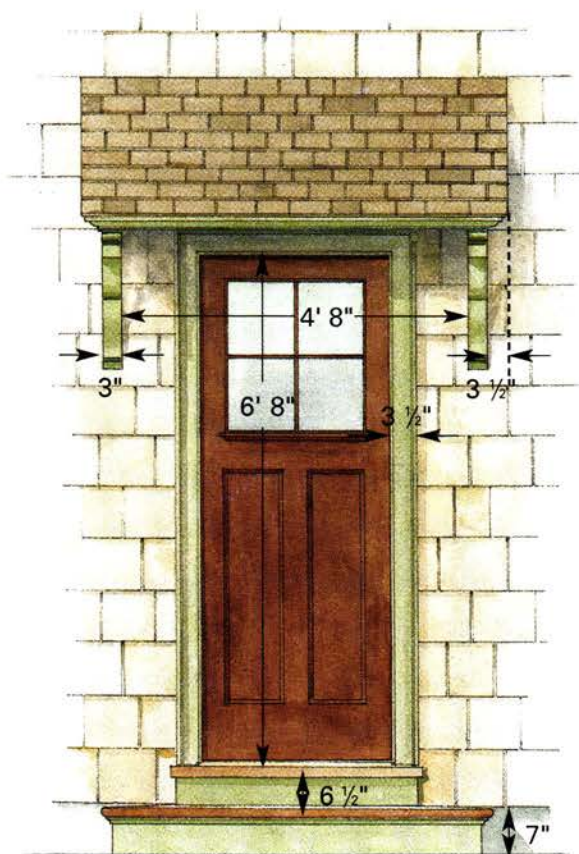
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Shed-Roofed Entrance

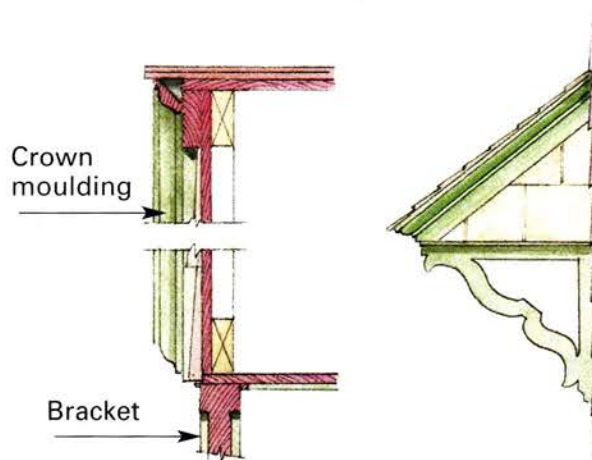
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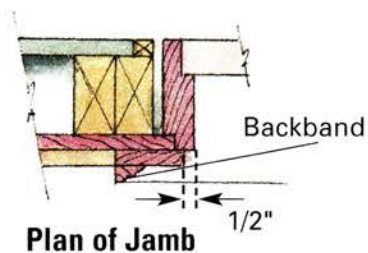
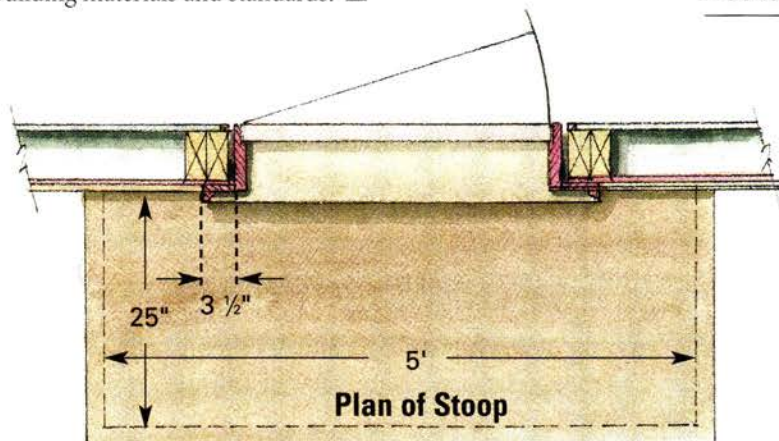
Often, the most difficult historic-construction information to find is not the details for stylistic highlights, such as porches or cornices, but the prosaic parts of everyday houses of the past. There was a time when any successful carpenter knew from experience the customary ways to build steps or service structures with a little tasteful flair, and like making an omelette, these simple designs were such common knowledge they rarely made it into the instruction handbooks of the time. A happy exception is the shed-roofed entrance presented here. Based on a drawing-manual design from the 1920s, it is a good example of a functional shelter for a side or back door with a little period personality that would fit with many house styles from the early 20th century.



Though the entrance appears no-frills at first glance, the drawing reveals a surprising amount of period detail. The shed roof is framed with conventional stud lumber, yet along the rake and eave, it is nicely finished with a simple crown moulding. The door casing, while basically flat, also sports a backband moulding to add interest, and the raised stoop below is trimmed with a bull-nosed edge on three sides and dressed with a bed moulding underneath. The support brackets, of course, are the primary decorative flourish and though garden variety in design, could be adapted to match other elements on the house—in an Arts & Crafts vein, for example. All dimensions are nominal and subject to the requirements of modern building materials and standards. 🏠



Section through Roof



our lawn and
our newspaper."

- member report #12737

get some
very envious
neighbors."

- member report #1456

Both times."

- member report #5678

was a miracle
worker..."

- member report #10100

is in good
hands."

- member report #47872

when they
show up."

- member report #12342

"Their
reputation is
as spotless as
their work."

- member report #5178

"He's a
cat hater."

- member report #11222

"Don't
expect him to
negotiate."

- member report #3462

"No pressure.
Just honest and
professional."

- member report #4160

"...the price was
excellent given
the detail
involved..."

- member report #11454

"It's a shame
we only see him
when something
breaks."

- member report #8165

"A fence
even a neighbor
could love..."

- member report #10101

"We kicked
them out before
something else
happened."

- member report #3425

"I wish every
home project
would go this
smoothly."

- member report #2319

"My wife
wanted him to
stay for dinner."

- member report #17852

"He respected
my time, opinion
and privacy."

- member report #1313

"Absolutely
outstanding."

- member report #2011

"They
worked like
bees and did an
excellent job."

- member report # 7371

"What a mess!"

- member report #1737

"...clean shaven
and most
professional
looking..."

- member report #2737

"Made me feel
like I was their
only client."

- member report #9832

"There
was a very
hard language
barrier..."

- member report #4567

"Went to small
claims court –
we won."

- member report #1099

"...It was also
tough to get
the deposit
back."

- member report #2636

"...they were
Johnny on
the spot..."

- member report #7477

"I can't believe
how great it
looks and how
inexpensive
it was."

- member report #9273

"They did it
in just a couple
of days."

- member report #13772

"They will help
you lift things
out of your car
and so on."

- member report #12222

"...not the
electrician to
call if you
have pets."

- member report #1313

"Grandpa did
the estimate...
Pa and son did
the work."

- member report #5789

"I had to hire
someone else
to redo half
the job."

- member report #10232

"They were
here two hours
and charged
me \$840."

- member report #9323

"...make sure
you ask for the
discount..."

- member report #11357

"We waited
almost two
weeks for our
appointment."

- member report #6783

"He treated
my house like it
was his own!"

- member report #4592

"...he couldn't
have been more
disinterested
in the job..."

- member report #31257

"These
employees love
what they do
and it shows."

- member report #6942

"I offered to pay
him something
additional, but
he refused."

- member report #6543

"They never
showed up and
never called..."

- member report #8765

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"Got the
response
'I don't know'
a lot."

- member report #15672

"...quote was
reasonable and
the actual price
was lower."

- member report #6479

"The workers
were an hour
late, but did
great work."

- member report #8900

"They
were friendly,
and even let
my daughter
pretend to
help."

- member report #31455

"...destroyed
part of my lawn
by leaving
equipment
on it..."

- member report #8721

"He understood
because he has
kids of his own."

- member report #6521

"A first
class job by first

"...the whole
place turned
out just the way

"The end result
was first rate—
cosmetically

"...great quality
and attention

"She did
not charge
because she

"...he even
helped me
with a 'word

"At le
providi



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Icon of Streamline Design

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Planting Mid-Century Ideals

The Case Study House Project—that illustrious experiment in mid-century modern dwellings—spawned a cottage industry of household items. This outdoor planter from Modernica is copied from a 1950s design typical of the spare furnishings that decorated the project's original houses. Made of teak to withstand the great outdoors, the Case Study planter has a high-fired ceramic pot that comes in charcoal (shown), white, or sage, and in 10" or 12" sizes, retailing for \$149 or \$189. The planter can be ordered through Modernica's showrooms, which are listed at www.modernica.net. Circle 10 on the resource card.



Scandinavian Seating

Throughout the 1950s, Scandinavian furnishings were popular in ranches and every manner of modern house. The Scandia indoor or outdoor bench from Pier 1 is designed with the same compact, clean lines that made the original furniture so appealing to 1950s consumers. Made of hand-woven rattan and banana leaf over a wooden frame, the sofa retails for \$399, and a matching chair is available as well. For more information, call (800) 245-4595, or visit www.pier1.com, where there is also a store locator. Circle 12 on the resource card.

Fringe Benefits

For more than 14 years, Vintage Shades has created sumptuous Victorian-styled lampshades layered in rich, muted colors. The Tea Garden shade pictured features metallic mesh and velvet fabrics lined in pure silk, and bears a custom-dyed fringe studded with acrylic and glass beads. Because all work is custom-made, prices vary (the Tea Garden retails for \$575; the antique finial at its top is \$25). To order call (712) 523-2804, or visit www.vintageshades.com, where you can also view their many designs. Circle 13 on the resource card.



Tread on Me

The heyday of cast iron was the late-19th century, when decorative fountains, benches, and welcome mats made of the metal were omnipresent outdoor accessories. The Ornate Cast Iron Rectangular Door Mat from British manufacturer Willow & Stone is true to that time, with scrollwork and an antique finish designed to withstand the elements. The 23.5" x 13.5" mat sits on rubber feet so that it won't scratch floors and retails for £29 (about \$57), plus shipping. Order online at www.willowandstone.co.uk. Circle 14 on the resource card.

Tap into Fin de Siecle Styling

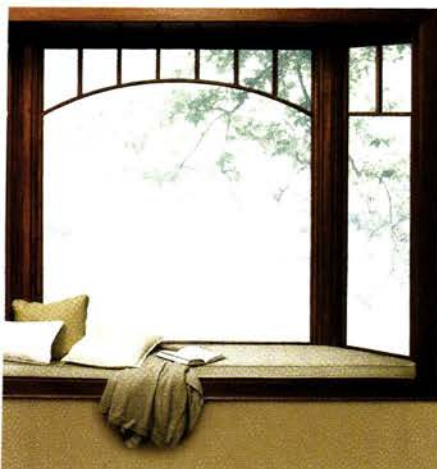
Faucets with late-19th-century styling are hard to find, but the Victorian Collection from Delta boasts antique lines appropriate for the era. The Roman tub and hand shower faucet combination shown is a four-hole 8-16" installation available in eight finishes (pictured in Venetian Bronze). Retailing for around \$770, the faucet is sold at Lowe's and Home Depot stores nationwide. For more information, call (800) 345-3358, or visit www.deltafaucet.com, which provides a store locator. Circle 15 on the resource card.





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Circle no. 183

Digging into Mulches

Proper mulching is critical for healthy gardens, with some mulches more suitable for old houses.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS
BY LEE REICH

Cover bare soil with anything from straw to rocks to wood chips, and that material is considered mulch. While mulch isn't particularly old-fashioned, it can be a beneficial addition to any garden, old or new. Mulching discourages weeds, adds nutrients to the soil, and protects it from both wind and rain. Here, then, are what you should know about choosing mulch and what you need to consider before adding it to your garden.

Among historic gardening books, there's no mention of mulch before the middle of the 20th century, except for dust mulch—the surface layer of loose dirt left after the soil has been worked over with a hoe. Dust mulch was believed to conserve water by slowing evaporation from deep down in the soil, but there's no proof that it works.

Modern mulching got its biggest boost from Ruth Stout, a popular author and early proponent of organic gardening who is now considered the grande dame of mulch. On the back cover of her 1955 bestseller, *How to Have a Green Thumb Without an Aching Back*, Stout visually demonstrated one advantage of mulching in her author's photo: She's pictured reclining on a thick pile of straw mulch, with no weeds in sight.

While smothering weeds is one dramatic dividend of mulching, there are others. Dust mulch aside, blanketing the ground with a layer of straw, pine needles, or other mulching material slows water evaporation from the soil surface. The fluffy covering also keeps the soil loose and ready to absorb rainfall so that plants will need less watering from you.

Mulches offer less obvious advantages, too. Organic mulches, for instance, are made from materials that were once living and that decompose over time, releasing plant nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Those decomposing materials also create humus, a witches' brew of complex organic chemical compounds that helps plants absorb nutrients, fight disease, and keep soil loose and moist to promote good root growth. In addition, mulches are insulators that moderate temperature. They keep the soil from becoming too hot in summer or too cold in winter, and retain the



Mulches enable gardens to thrive by providing nutrients and protection, but they can add visual interest, too—such as the compost and wood chips seen in this lush landscape.

Spreading mulches in a uniform thickness around plants, no matter what you grow, delivers maximum benefits.





Grass clippings from your own yard are free and make excellent, nutrient-rich mulch.

ground's warmth in the autumn, giving roots more time to grow.

Mulching Mechanics

Although Stout kept the ground permanently blanketed with hay, you'll

get better results by fine-tuning the placement of mulch to the types of plants you grow. Because annual flowers and vegetables need to put down roots quickly in their one-season growing time, organic mulches should be spread around them in spring once the weather has turned reliably warm. Otherwise, the insulating properties of mulch will delay soil warming and root growth. Leave a little breathing space between the mulch and young plant stems, or they are likely to rot. During the winter, the mulch can remain where it is, provided that you remove or pull it back by early spring to let the sun warm the soil where you intend to plant.

Perennial flowers, on the other hand, have roots that endure year after year, so you can leave mulch tucked around them all year long. In areas where plants need additional protection from winter weather, you can also toss organic mulch right on top of perennials after the soil has frozen about an inch deep. Covering plants before then or leaving them covered after the spring growth begins to peek through the mulch can cause leaves, stems, and roots to rot.

Trees and shrubs also benefit from mulching. After all, in the wild, each year's leaf drop is, in effect, a mulch. Observe two points when mulching trees: First, don't pile mulch right up against trunks or woody stems, because rot could result. Second, take precautions against mice, as mulch provides a nice home from which they can

ORGANIC MULCHES

Mulches are weed-free except where noted. One-third of a cubic yard covers 100 square feet.

Bark chips Long lasting; moderate water conservation and weed smothering; low nutrients. Coarse appearance is unsuitable for small plants.

Compost Excellent water conservation and weed smothering; nutrient-rich. Fine texture is suitable for formal and informal settings.

Grass clippings Excellent water conservation and weed smothering; nutrient-rich. Green color turns to light brown; fine texture.

Hay Contains weed seeds (except for salt or marsh varieties); excellent water conservation and weed smothering; moderate nutrients. Coarse texture and light-brown color; best in informal settings.

Hulls and shells (peanut, rice, buckwheat, etc.) Moderate water conservation and weed smothering; low nutrients. Fine texture is ideal for formal settings.

Leaves and leaf mold (decomposed leaves) Excellent water conservation and weed smothering; moderately rich in nutrients. Leaf mold resembles soil and is suitable for all gardens. Leaves are coarse; best for informal settings.

Pine needles Moderate water conservation and weed smothering; low in nutrients. Distinctive appearance can be an asset in any garden.

Sawdust and wood shavings Excellent water conservation and weed smothering; low in nutrients. Fine texture but light-colored, so consider visual effect.

Straw Excellent water conservation and weed smothering; moderately rich in nutrients. Coarse texture and light-brown color; best in informal settings.

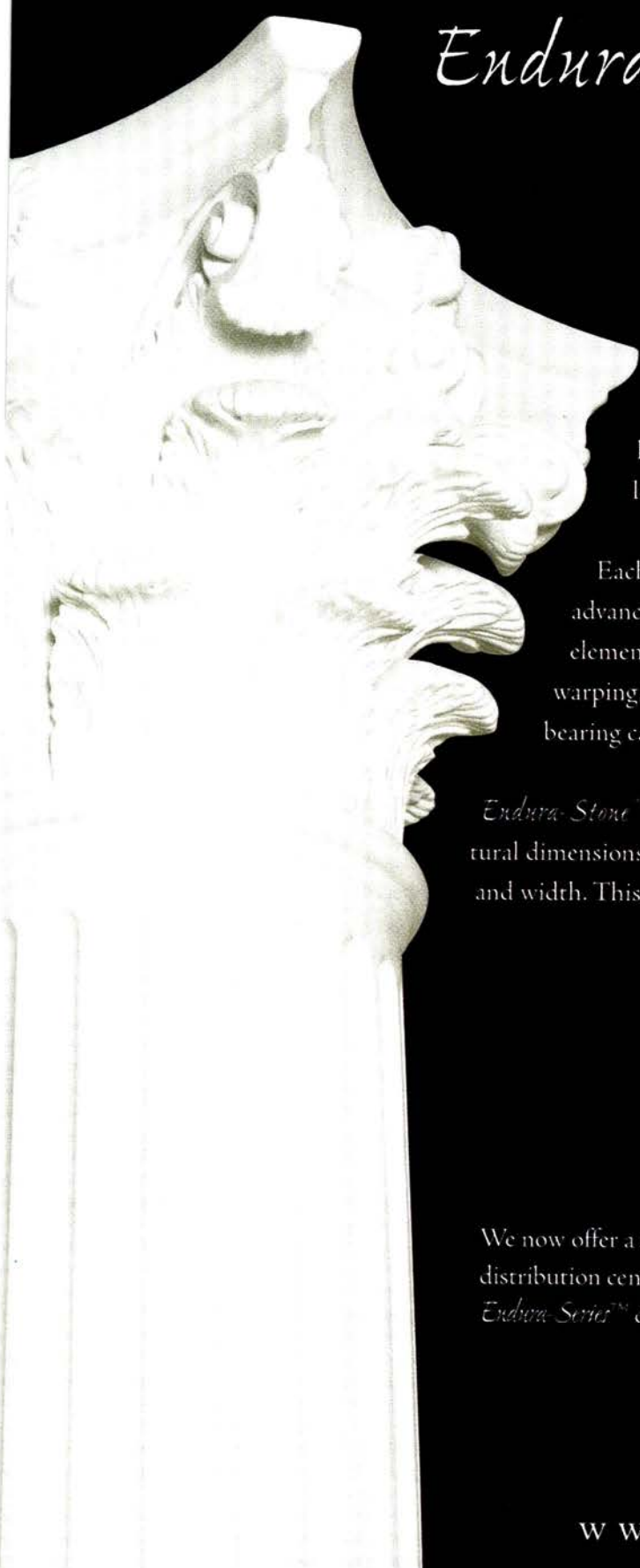
Wood chips Moderately good water conservation and weed smothering; low in nutrients. Fine texture and medium-brown color are suitable in all settings.



Mulches can cover perennials such as hellebores year-round, but once plants begin sprouting in the spring, be sure to pull mulches away from any new growth.

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gnaw on a tree's bark. Always keep mulch a few inches back from trunks, and on younger plants, you should also use cylinders of hardware cloth or tree protectors to act as an additional buffer in winter. As with perennials, mulch can remain in place year-round.

Mulches are especially useful in helping new trees, shrubs, and perennial flowers through their first winter, when the freezing and thawing of soil can heave plants right up and out of the ground before they are firmly rooted. The insulating properties of mulch help prevent the wide swings in soil temperature that lead to heaving.



Manic for Organics

Except for pea gravel, which looks just right in rock gardens, I only use mulches based on organic materials because of the plant nutrients they provide. Not all plants have the same nutritional needs, something you should consider when selecting a mulch. Compost, for example is rich in nutrients, so I use it in my vegetable garden beds and around flowers such as delphiniums, monkshoods, and roses that are hungry feeders in need of lots of nutrients.

Flowers that thrive in less fertile soils, such as coneflowers, liatris, and yarrow, get mulched with wood chips or autumn leaves, which are relatively poor in nutrients.

Another bonus of organic mulches is you can obtain many of them free. I have a standing request with local arborists for wood chips, which they dump at no charge in a corner of my garden. Which mulch looks best depends upon your taste and style of garden, but I don't think artificially colored mulches, landscape fabrics, or plastic films look good anywhere. The latter especially don't offer any nutritional benefits and can even deprive soil of oxygen.

Finely divided organic mulches, such as shredded leaves or various kinds of hulls and shells, are best suited to formal gardens. Rougher materials, including straw and wood chips, are better for informal gardens. In old-fashioned gardens, the best mulches have

a fine texture and include compost, buckwheat hulls, leaf mold, and shredded leaves. They provide nutrients and protection but remain unobtrusive, keeping the spotlight shining on your old-house garden, where it belongs. 🏡

Lee Reich writes about mulching in his book *Weedless Gardening* (Workman Publishing, 2001).

Trees look best when accompanied by rough-looking mulches, such as leaves, straw, pine needles, or the wood chips pictured.

ON NITROGEN

Many people think that mulches high in carbon, such as sawdust or wood chips, rob plants of nitrogen. Don't worry about using these mulches. While the microorganisms that break down organic materials will extract more nitrogen from the soil to decompose sawdust or any other mulch high in carbon, those same microorganisms also re-release similar amounts of nitrogen as they die.

The right mulch can complement the landscaping. Here, the unusual, fine-textured buckwheat hulls dress up this formal knot garden.



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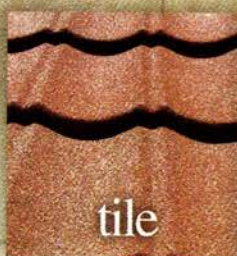
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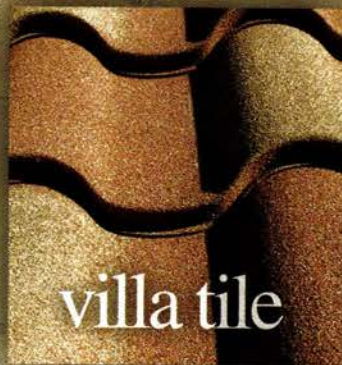
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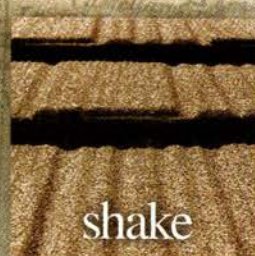
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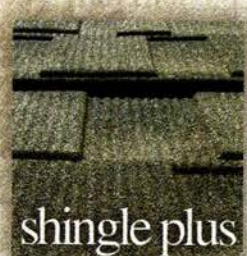
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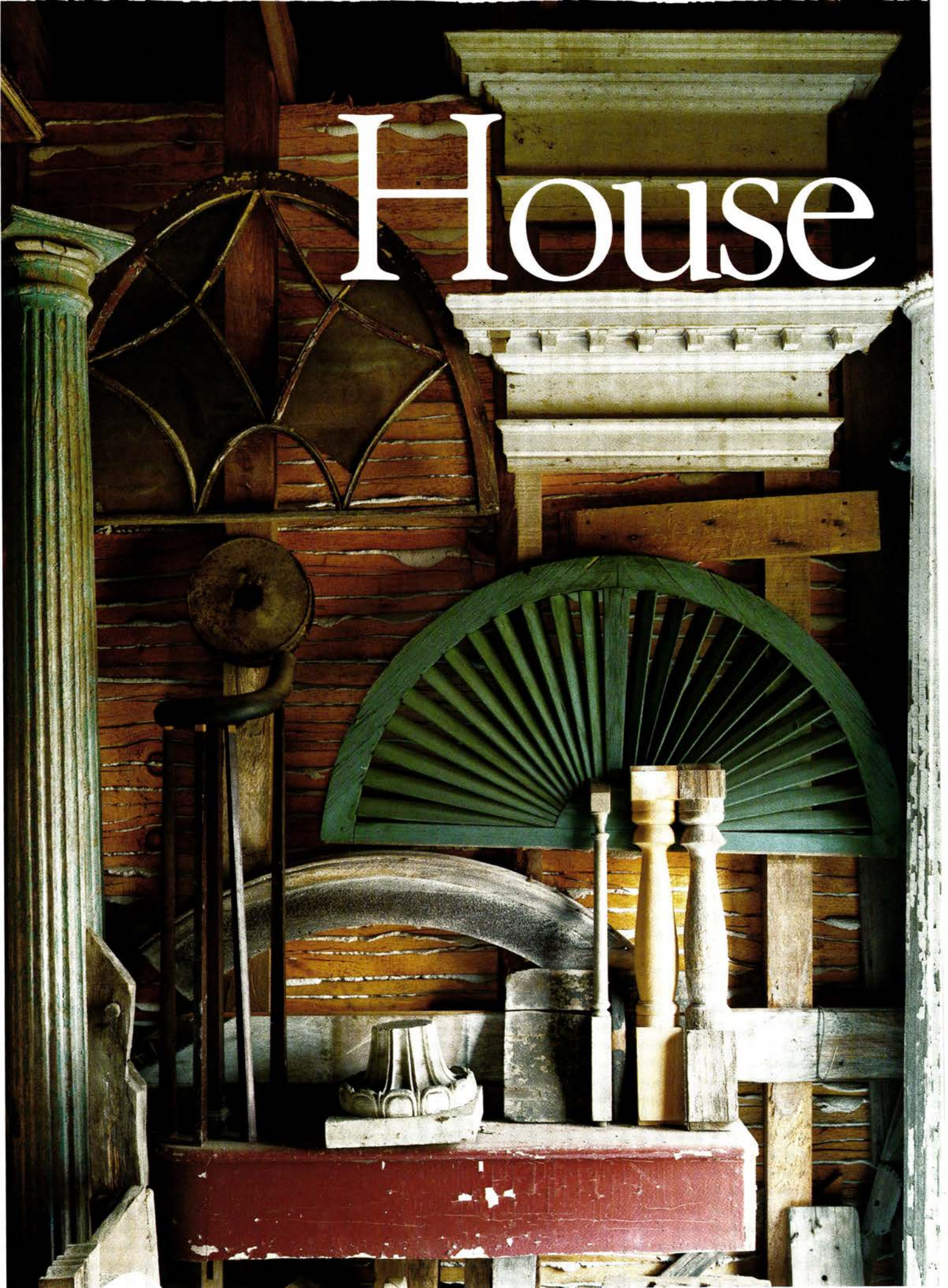
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House



Parts with a Pedigree

The opportunities for acquiring architectural salvage have never been better, but old-house owners can expect stiff competition for those materials.

By Catherine Siskos

For nearly three decades, the customers at Steve Drobinsky's architectural salvage store consisted primarily of dyed-in-the-wool preservationists intent on restoring a period home down to its authentic 19th-century shutter dogs. Then, in recent years, along came an entirely new breed of customer: suburbanites looking to replace hollow-core doors, aluminum windows, and bland cookie-cutter light fixtures in their *new* houses with something more solid, something with pizzazz. "There was just this huge shift in appeal," says Drobinsky, owner of Ohmega Salvage in Berkeley, California.

The architectural salvage marketplace, once the sole province of old-house owners and a curiosity to nearly everyone else, is going mainstream in a big way. Today's salvage and antique lumber dealers (more than 300 strong in the United States and Canada) are just as likely to sell to architects and owners of new houses as they are to those with period homes. For old-house owners, that has implications for everything from inventory to pricing as the industry responds to the demands of its newest patrons. Whether you find bargains or heavy markups when shopping for salvage depends a great deal on the era and style of your old house. In some ways, the eccentric nature of old houses, with their nonstandard sizes for doors, fixtures,



COURTESY OF ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE OF GREENSBORO

and hardware, works in your favor as you'll have less competition for some merchandise and more bargaining power over the price. Best of all, though, fixing up old houses has given you the skills to capitalize on another growing trend, that of do-it-yourself salvage, by harvesting architectural elements directly from the source, often houses that are the latest victims of the teardown or remodeling craze. Bob Falk, co-author of *Unbuilding: Salvaging the Architectural Treasures of Unwanted Houses*, calls this trend "preservation in pieces," the next best alternative when the building itself can't be saved.

From columns and cornices (opposite page) to glass doorknobs (above), architectural salvage is diverse. While high-end dealers are making salvage shopping more convenient, nonprofit stores, whose proceeds typically benefit local preservation efforts, often have the best prices.

The Seamy Side of Salvage

Architectural salvage is often haunted by the spectre of architectural theft. While most salvage dealers come by their inventory legitimately, typically by obtaining it directly from buildings slated for demolition, no national laws regulate the industry. Unlike pawnbrokers, salvage dealers are not required by federal law to keep records, such as driver's license numbers and addresses, about the people from whom they obtain merchandise.

That infuriates old-house owners such as Laurie Klinger, whose Indianapolis neighborhood of Craftsman and Foursquare houses has been targeted by thieves who stole porch lights, doorknobs, and wood trim from several historic homes. "I believe these architectural elements are sold to stores all the time," says Klinger, "but the police can't track it." Fed up with the crime spree, Klinger lobbied for a state bill introduced in January that, if passed, would require Indiana salvage dealers to keep detailed records, including thumbprints, of anyone who sells them architectural materials, and to hold on to suspected stolen goods for up to 20 days, while the case is investigated. Critics contend that local laws only drive criminals to sell stolen goods out of state and that to be effective, laws regulating architectural salvage must be national in scope.

While a national law has yet to be proposed, consumers who are concerned about stolen goods should buy only from reputable dealers that local historic preservation groups recommend. In addition, ask the dealer about an item's origins. While the lack of a response doesn't mean the item is hot merchandise, salvage dealers who work closely with demolition crews to replenish inventory should be able to tell you the location and the type of building the materials came from.



COURTESY OF BRAD GUY, UNBUILDING: TAUNTON PRESS

Two trends in salvage are becoming more common. Do-it-yourself salvage (above), such as removing tin ceilings for reuse, eliminates the dealer as middleman, and entire rooms (right) sold with blueprints for reassembly are simplifying old-house additions. This 1920s room (roughly 17' x 18' x 10') includes four built-in bookcases, oak paneling, a window seat, carved moulding, and a fireplace for \$37,500.

Shop Smart

Although preservationists bemoan the loss of the distinctive buildings that supply the inventory for salvage yards, the greatest appeal of architectural salvage for consumers is the chance to acquire house parts with a pedigree. "People like to point to an antique mantelpiece or flooring and say that it came from an old shoe factory," says Rich Ellis, the founder and publisher of *Architectural Salvage News*. "They like the stories behind the piece."

While you'll have to take the salvage dealer's word for where the piece came from (see sidebar on this page), you can be more discerning about other matters, particularly the item's suitability and condition. Falk likens shopping for salvage to buying a used car. "You want to walk around and kick the tires a little," he says. Given that most salvaged house parts are made of wood, consider if the species, patina, and finish are a good match for your own home. Any painted wood probably contains at least some lead-based paint and all the health hazards that accompany



COURTESY OF ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES

it. In fact, many salvage dealers won't carry painted wood for that reason. As for condition, if you're buying, say, exterior doors and windows, check how weathered they are and that all parts move easily. "With doors and flooring, see how many nail holes have been pounded into the wood," says Falk. "Have the floorboards been resanded, and if so, how many times?" One more sanding may leave you with nothing but the tongue and groove underneath. Look for any breaks, splits, or signs of rotting wood, and consider if the sizes, especially the thicknesses of older floorboards,

fit your space. Most importantly, check for missing pieces. For instance, “you can always find parts for the interior workings of an antique light fixture, but the ornamental bits are hard to match,” says Falk.

Once you find what you want, try negotiating a better price. “Some people will say bargaining isn’t done, but our goal is to sell the item,” says Scott Anderson, owner of Architectural Antiques in Minneapolis, which has semiannual sales to move merchandise. Salvage dealers loathe items that hang around too long, occupying valuable space in warehouses and on storeroom floors. Consequently, you’ll have the most sway over stock in architectural styles that are out of favor or in unusual sizes that won’t fit a new home. These days, Art Deco is a good buy, as is “anything from the 1940s, which you can’t even give away,” says Drobinsky. And as tough as it is to track down a door 42 by 75 inches that fits, say, an 18th-century house, consider how much harder it is for the salvage dealer to find a customer who wants it. “The likelihood that you’ll find doors in nonstandard sizes is great,” says Jona Harvey, a personal salvage shopper and the owner of Salvage Search and Management. “The salvage guys are just sitting on that inventory because new-house owners, whose houses have to meet modern building codes, can’t really use those doors.” On the other hand, expect to pay top dollar for anything Arts & Crafts, Queen Anne, or Tudor, all hot architectural styles right now. Antique brick and lumber, the fastest growing areas of the salvage industry, are also in great demand and fetch steep prices.

The Home Depot Effect

One consequence of architectural salvage’s broader consumer appeal, particularly at high-end stores, has been to make shopping easier and more convenient for everyone, regardless of a house’s age or style. Some upscale salvage dealers now sell merchandise in complete sets, instead of everything à la carte, saving you the trouble of hunting down each piece individually. Anderson, for instance, only sells salvaged doors with the jambs. “Home Depot has spoiled a lot of people because you’ll get a



COURTESY OF ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES



COURTESY OF ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES

The inner workings of vintage lighting are often easily repaired, but any missing decorative elements on the exterior may be impossible to match.

Antique house parts sometimes make great conversation pieces. These Art Nouveau lampshades are made from signed art glass from Frederic Carder’s Steuben Glassworks, a rival of Louis Comfort Tiffany.

This exquisitely carved door was salvaged from a building in Turkey, and gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, Turkish bath.



PAUL ROCHELEAU

Anyone who repairs old houses also has the skills to dismantle them. In addition, fewer tools are needed for the job as you're mostly pulling and prying apart pieces, such as the oak baseboards here.



COURTESY OF TED REIFF, UNBUILDING, TAUNTON PRESS

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 78.

door in the jamb," he says. The same practice applies to antique doorknobs, which Anderson sells with the matching hinges and mortise locks.

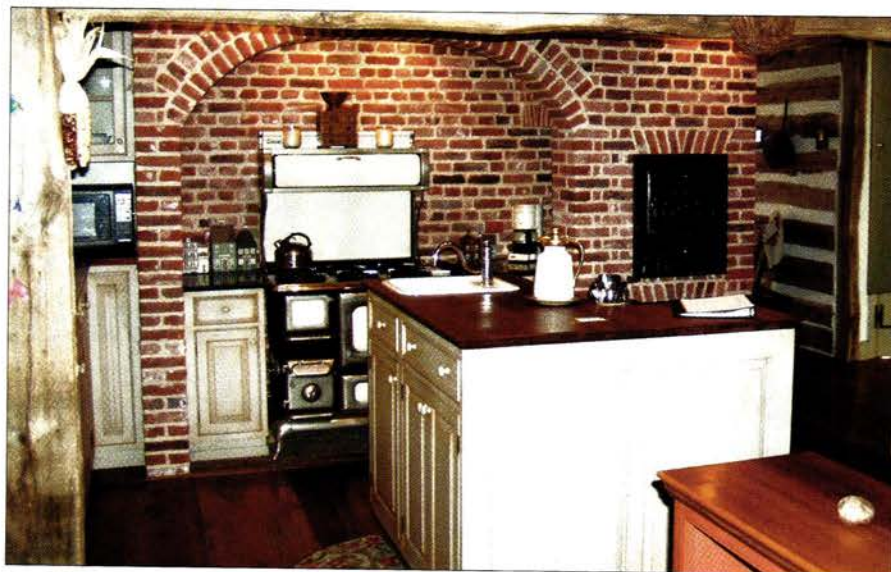
Perhaps the biggest change in salvage is the sale of entire rooms—from the wood paneling to the French doors to the marble fireplaces—that have been dismantled from old houses and come with detailed blueprints for reassembly. Anderson sold a walnut-paneled Georgian room from the Morton Salt estate for \$75,000. Although architects often buy the rooms and incorporate them into the design for a new house, they also have potential as one-stop shopping for anyone enlarging an old house with a period-sensitive addition.

No More Middleman

At the other extreme from high-end stores lies a different kind of one-stop shopping—laying claim to architectural elements in houses slated for demolition or remodeling. Salvage dealers do it all the time, but on a much larger scale, by buying the salvage rights to a building, a practice that is prohibitively expensive for the average person who wants to acquire only one or two pieces. An individual, however, can approach a homeowner, contractor, or a demolition company and come to some arrangement about removing only the items desired for hundreds of dollars, even for free, says Falk. For a quality mantelpiece, which can retail at a salvage store for \$1,500 or more, the savings can be significant because you eliminate the middleman. Instead, you dismantle the item and haul it away yourself, often on short notice.

To spot opportunities for “deconstruction,” as it’s known in the industry, keep an eye on redevelopment in your community, where the houses are likely to be of a similar age and style as your own and a good match for salvaged material. Find out from neighbors about upcoming or ongoing remodeling projects, or make friends with the staff in your local building department. “When permits for demolition come up, contact the contractors, who can save money if you do some of the work for them,” says Falk. Then get everything in writing. Specify on paper what you will and won’t do and by when, and make sure all parties sign it.

In a handful of cities, some companies secure the rights to salvaging properties, some of which are old homes, and then hold public auctions on site for buyers to bid on the architectural features. The winning bidder removes and takes away the piece that day, and “the buyer can get some real deals, too,” says Falk. Chicago-based Murco Recycling helped pioneer the concept more than a decade ago and is considering expanding the business nationally. Whichever approach you choose, extracting the items yourself assures you of pieces whose provenance you know, as well as the stories of what it took to save them for reuse in your own home. 🏠



The kitchen in this log cabin uses salvaged antique brick—an especially desirable commodity—arranged in an original 1714 pattern found in historic buildings.



Salvage stores supplied the clawfoot tub and its distinctive hunter-green backdrop of antique wainscoting. To the right of the tub, the panels conceal a laundry chute door.



Don't overlook salvage yards as a resource for finding the architectural accents that were once common in an old-house garden, such as statuary, stone pedestals, and cast-iron fences and gates.

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Visions in Glass

BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

At the turn of the 20th century, window designs took off in new directions to fit the cutting-edge houses of the day.





COURTESY OF ANDERSEN WINDOWS, INC.

For centuries, writers have compared the windows on a house to the eyes of a person, and rightfully so. Windows are much more than functional ports for admitting light and air into a building; they are important architectural elements that in many instances showcase the new ideas and creative thinking popular at the time.

Take the turn of the 20th century as an example, an era when new directions in housing—as exemplified by bungalows, Foursquares, and Prairie-style homes—were coming into vogue. A close look at the ways in which these new breeds of windows differed from those in the previous century can aid owners of post-Victorian houses who plan to restore or add on to an existing building. As luck would have it, now more than ever, a host of modern window manufacturers are creating historically accurate products or, at the very least,

The Prairie-lined sash windows on this Chicago bungalow (left) are new. In recent years, modern manufacturers have begun offering windows with classic, turn-of-the-20th-century muntin patterns, including these similarly styled sashes (top left).

new interpretations of originals that are a good fit for these houses.

Creative Casements

The dramatic popularity of casements is one example of how windows changed at the turn of the 20th century. Because casement windows were hinged on one side like a door, they opened more fully to offer better ventilation and an unhindered view of the outdoors. Perhaps that helped fuel their popularity within the Arts & Crafts movement, which touted bringing the outdoors in as a major theme.

Casements were also viewed as a fresh step away from sash windows. Stephen Calloway writes in *Elements of Style*, “In the early years of the Arts and Crafts movement sash windows were associated with iniquitous, modern plate glass.” Of course, in addition to being a modern, less formal window treatment, casements afforded some nice decorative options, too. Because they presented a continuous stretch of glass unbroken by sash, they could display muntin patterns designed to produce a bigger impact.

In fact, muntins appeared in a variety of shapes on early 20th-century casements

Queen Anne windows were popular from the 1880s into the 1900s and are now made by several window manufacturers.

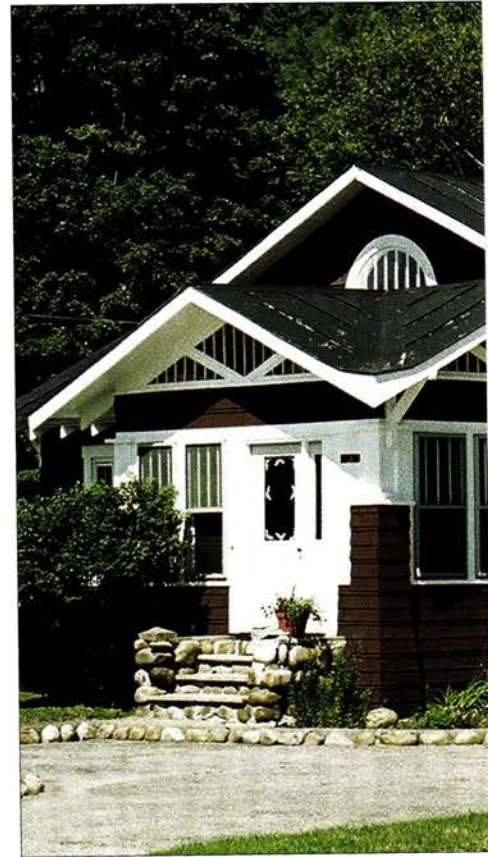
and were used with great creativity to add to a building’s overall warmth and charm. In a 1902 issue of *The Craftsman*, Irene Sargent writes, “The English home-feeling can be inspired by muntined windows with quaint shutters.” That may be why so many bungalows feature vernacular, decorated wooden casements. Typical lights could include diamond shapes, which tweaked designs that originated on medieval buildings, and lozenge shapes—elongated rectangles ending in a point—which were new and unique at the time.

Designers of the day offered a rationale for the new trend in window design, with none more influential than Gustav Stickley. In his 1909 book, *Craftsman Homes*, he writes, “Another feature of typical Craftsman construction is well illustrated in the windows used in this house. It will be noted that they are double-hung in places where they are exposed to the weather and that casements are used when it is possible to hood them or place them where they will be sheltered by the roof of

Frank Lloyd Wright's designs (below) appear on new sash, casements, and fixed-frame windows. An early 20th-century bungalow (right) boasts original windows with 3/1 and 6/1 sashes.



COURTESY OF ANDERSEN WINDOWS, INC.



the porch." The accompanying illustration shows a house with a combination of 9/1 sash windows and casements divided into 15 lights. Even Stickley's own house in Parsippany, New Jersey, was built with diamond-patterned casements.

Much has been written about the Prairie school's preference for horizontal lines, a design idea that clearly extended to windows. While individual windows were usually tall casements, they tended to be grouped together in long banks, or ribbons, that dramatized the building's horizontal nature. If you think of the Prairie style, the venerable Frank Lloyd Wright probably comes to mind. Wright helped pioneer new uses and placements for casement windows. Karen Sweeney, the restoration architect for the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust, says, "Ribbon window placement was an important part of Prairie-style architecture that tried to create buildings with horizontal lines. There's no doubt that Wright's use of ribbon windows inspired other people to use them, too." These window banks also allowed for a wide-ranging outdoor view from an inside vantage point, especially when they

continued around the corner of a building. "Wright used ribbon windows to break open the box and open up rooms so they seem bigger," says Sweeney. "Wrapping windows around a corner helped."

Of course, ribbons of casements afforded plenty of decorative opportunities, and new muntin patterns appeared here as well. One of the best known is a pattern of simple lines that places squares in each corner of the window. While no one can say for sure where this pattern came from, perhaps the inspiration lies in the ubiquitous Queen Anne sash that predated it—which boasted a large, clear pane ringed by a border of squares. If you clean Queen Anne sashes up a bit by removing the middle squares, they form a pattern that closely resembles this nine-light Prairie window.

Despite their horizontal groupings, most Prairie-style casements were defined by vertical details, either a series of narrow lights or, in more high-style examples, the incorporation of intricate leaded designs. Wright took these designs to their zenith. As stained-glass expert and author Julie Sloan explains, "He called his windows 'light screens,' a term that evoked Japanese

shoji screens, which were arranged in bands as his windows were. In Wright's buildings, inside and outside were joined by these large expanses of glass. The intricately patterned lines of lead maintained the boundary of the building's structure and sometimes echoed its silhouette, but the sparkling glass made the openings permeable, almost diaphanous."



COURTESY OF FELLA WINDOWS & DOORS

As recently as a decade ago, it was impossible to buy Prairie- and cottage-style casement windows (above and right) off the rack.



GORDON BOCK

A New Style of Sashes

By the 1890s, just when technology made large, single-light sash windows affordable for everyone, designers and homeowners alike became increasingly enamored with decorative patterns, particularly for the top of the window. "Plain windows with small lights above and a single, large light below are always practical," pronounced architect Charles B. White in 1914. "The upper sash can be divided into six or eight equal lights, with small lights at the side and larger

lights in the center." A similar trend is noted in Calloway's *Elements of Style*: A popular arrangement was "to pair an upper sash bearing small rectangular lights with a single paned lower sash."

Such windows differed substantially from those based on Georgian models for popular Colonial Revival houses. Instead, these new picturesque windows were ahistorical (as well as horizontally asymmetrical) patterns created for a new effect. Along with stock design, art glass windows, they were the stuff of mass-market, post-Victorian bungalows, Foursquares, and Prairie-style houses.

Manufacturers' catalogs grouped the scores of inventive patterns under some basic headings. Double-hung windows with equal-sized sash were variously called "divided top," "fancy top," or "cut top" windows. When the meeting rail was propor-

tioned above center in a double-hung window or the same appearance was built into a single sash, the result was a "cottage front" window or sash.

Roberts Illustrated Millwork Catalogue, a compendium of products from Chicago's E.L. Roberts & Co. at the turn of the century, shows a variety of sash windows with decorated upper panes. There are windows patterned with large harlequins and those bearing 36 small, square lights, as well as windows with a large diamond shape flanked by trapezoids, and others with a circle in the middle surrounded by various squares and rectangles. Homeowners of the day had a lot of leeway for choosing windows, and these selections were just the standard offerings; special orders could be had for a premium, too, which just goes to show, that at the turn of the 20th century, options were everything. 🏠



COURTESY OF ANDERSEN WINDOWS, INC.

With top-heavy windows, muntins didn't have to be elaborate, as the simple 4/1 pattern of these modern windows shows.

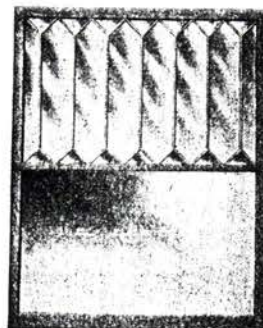
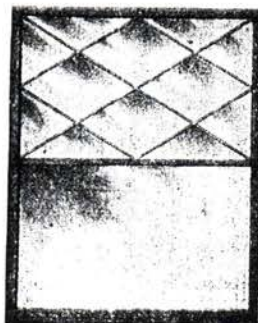
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COURTESY OF JELD-WEN WINDOWS & DOORS



Millwork catalogs from 1910 feature sash windows with diamond or harlequin shapes (left), the lozenge patterns often seen on bungalows (center), and three-light top-heavy sashes—all popular designs at the time.

Flashing Points

BY GORDON BOCK AND
J. RANDALL COTTON

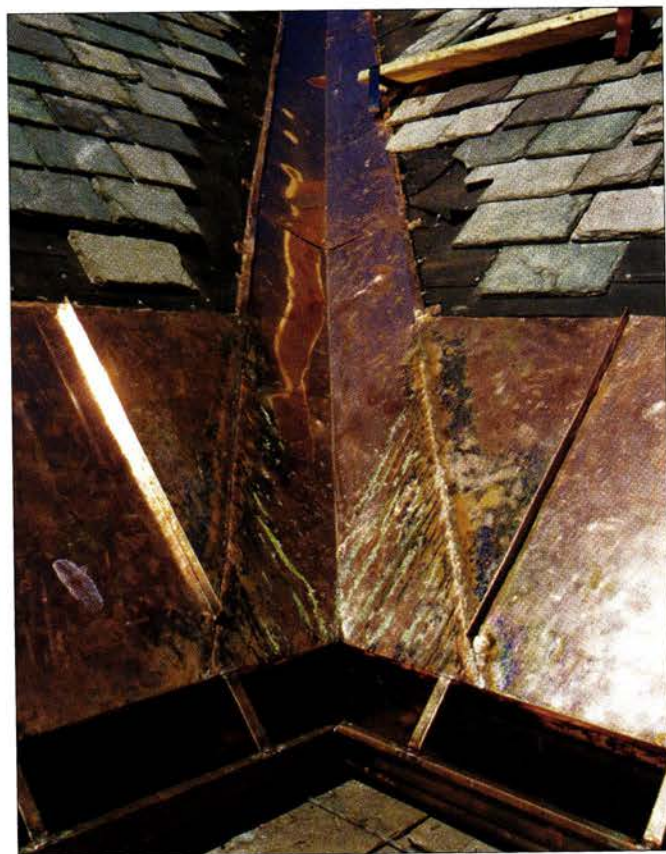
Paying attention to good installation methods in the sheet metal junctures of roofs and walls helps avoid some common problems.



PHOTOS BY STEVE JORDAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Roof-to-wall junctions are common flashing situations where reglets come into play. These grooves in masonry must be the right depth and crafted to hold the metal securely.

Roofs and walls are most vulnerable to water intrusion at their joints. Though the task of diverting rainwater is most critical in complex areas around chimneys (which penetrate the roof) and valleys (which are the intersections of roofs), that job falls on a relatively simple material: sheet metal flashing. Flashing's engineering is straightforward, yet one of the most overlooked features in an old house. Many times when roof and water problems arise, undermaintained or poorly installed flashing are the weak link in an otherwise sound roof drainage system. Here, then, are some common problem areas seen by experts and the proper ways to deal with them for healthy flashing.



Metals and Fasteners

● Choose appropriate metals. During the 19th century, lead, copper, terne (steel coated with a lead and tin mixture), and galvanized steel were used for roof flashing, and may still be present on some old houses.

Adding width to valley flashings toward the eaves allows them to handle the increase in water volume.



Most old-house chimneys (left) are made of porous brick or stone. In quality work, they are built with through-wall flashings to block moisture, and any new flashing (below) should be added so as to work with this system.



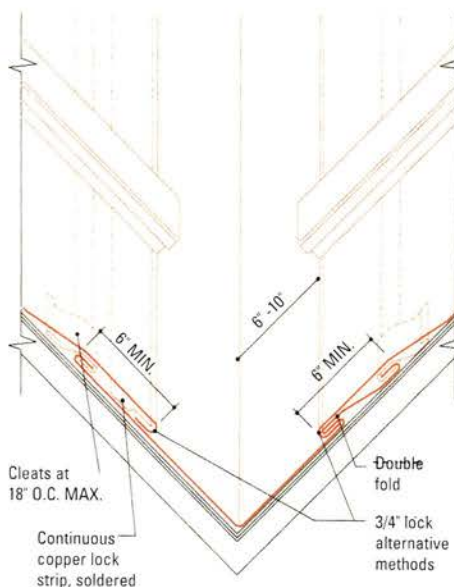
Today, the selection has expanded to include aluminum (once a precious metal), lead-coated copper (a visual stand-in for lead), and terne-coated stainless steel (a proprietary product known as TCS II), with copper remaining among the most versatile flashing metals for historic buildings in terms of balancing durability, workability, and traditional appearance.

- Use ring-shank or barbed-shank nails to fasten flashing components that don't move, such as cleats and some base flashings, to wood. Unlike smooth-shank nails, which can work their way out of wood through seasonal changes, the protrusions on ring-shank and barbed-shank nails hold the nail in the wood so the flashing stays secure.

- Make sure the metals in the fasteners and the flashing are compatible. With copper flashing, this means using copper, brass, bronze, or stainless-steel nails. Each metal has a position on the electromotive series, a scale that ranks it from noble (least corrosive) to base (reactive). The farther apart two metals are in this series, the more potential there is for galvanic corrosion, an electric current that occurs between two metals in the presence of an electrolyte, such as rainwater. In such cases the more base metal will corrode—aluminum gutters, say, in contact with copper flashing.

- Don't nail valley flashings to the roof deck. Nails won't permit the metal to expand and contract, which it can do significantly over long runs, and that movement can slot holes in the metal, creating avenues for water to penetrate. Instead, use clips, which allow the valley flashing to move, reducing the chance that the metal will buckle. Cleats are typically 2" wide, nailed to the deck, and formed to lock into the flashing while still allowing movement.

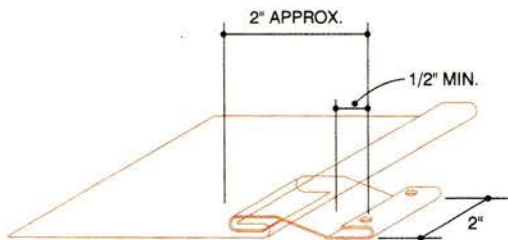
- Use the appropriate thickness of metal. Sheet copper thickness is measured by its



Standing-seam roofs should not be attached directly to valley flashings but instead connected using either a continuous lock strip (left) or double fold. The valley is cleated to the roof deck and overlapped by the roof by a minimum of 6".

ALL DRAWINGS COURTESY OF COPPER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Anchoring valleys with cleats formed from metal strips (below) allows large flashings to move and doesn't puncture the metal. Standing-seam roofs (left) must be integrated with flashings to allow for expansion and contraction.



weight in ounces per square foot. Valley flashings, in particular, are subject to the scouring action of water, and for valleys flashed in copper, experts recommend a minimum of 20-ounce copper and up to 24-ounce copper. For through-wall flashings, where the metal extends into the masonry (such as in chimneys or brick-veneered walls), use at least 16-ounce copper. Especially in brick walls, detail the masonry with weep holes above the flashing to allow moisture to escape.

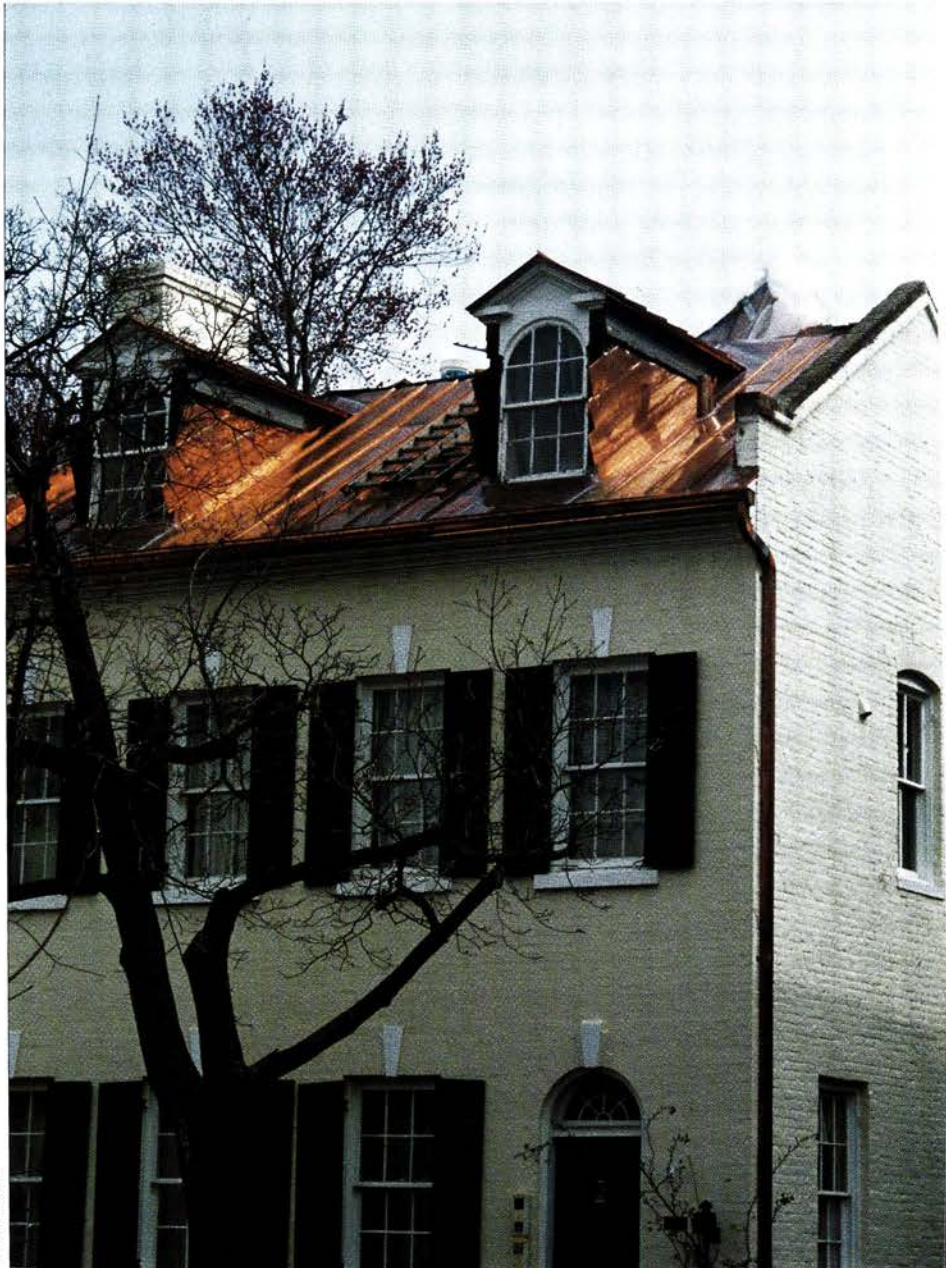
- Ensure there is galvanic separation between copper header flashings and galvanized-steel lintels over windows and other openings. Aluminum and zinc are the metals with the most potential for problems when in direct contact with copper, and steel is galvanized with zinc. Use a coating that is compatible with both metals, such as bituminous paint.

- If you use sealants with copper, make sure they're compatible compounds, such as elastomerics, butyl, or polyurethane. Avoid acrylics, neoprene, and nitrile-based sealants, which can corrode copper.

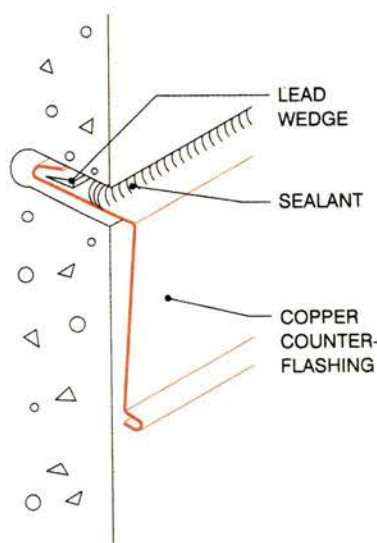
Common Conditions

- Ensure that appropriate flashings are used for appropriate roof slopes. Flashings designed for steep roofs where neither solder nor sealants are required will not perform reliably on low-slope roofs.

- Make valley flashings wide enough. The exposure—the portion of the valley not covered with roofing—should be at least 4" wide (2" on either side of the roof joint)



GORDON BOCK



Reglets are grooves (also called rag-gles) that hold flashing in masonry and should be a minimum of 2" deep. Note the V-fold behind the lead wedge.

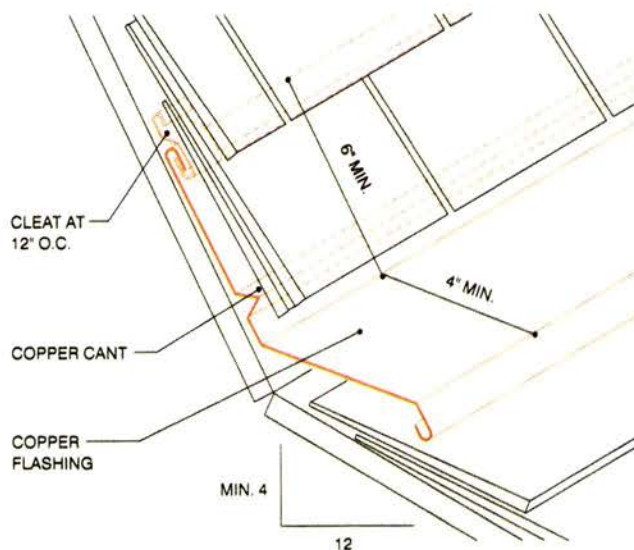
and extend under the roofing by at least 6" on either side. For long or steep slopes, increase the exposure by $\frac{1}{8}$ " per lineal foot of flashing to accommodate the larger volumes of water that gather in the lower portions of the roof.

- Make sure that reglets—grooves made in masonry to accept flashing—are detailed properly. The flashing should be at least 2" deep and should be folded to form a V to anchor it into the reglet. The flashing is then secured in front with folded lead or copper strips and sealant.

- In some parts of the country, flashings should be designed to minimize the potential for line corrosion. For valley flashings, especially, incorporate a cant strip (a feature having a sloping surface) into either

side of the valley so that it lifts overlapping slate or wood shingles off the metal. The prevalence of acid rain east of the Mississippi means that this acidic runoff has a tendency to migrate between shingles and valley flashings through capillary action, and can prematurely deteriorate copper over time. Adding cants raises the roofing material enough to remove the conditions for capillary action. Line corrosion is less of a concern at the eaves, because of the steep roof slope and rapid water runoff.

● Where valley flashings form the junction of roofs with unequal slopes, incorporate a baffle or splash rib in the form of an invert-



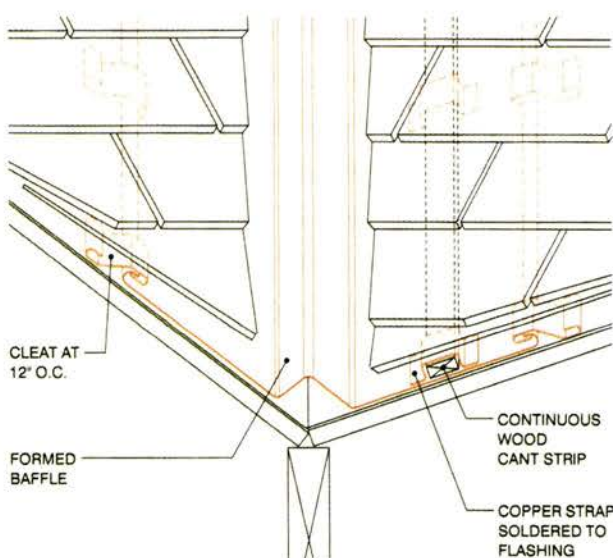
This detail for flashing a change in roof slope illustrates how to make a cant that raises the roofing off the metal. Here, the cant is an inverted V, formed directly into the flashing.

For a list of SUPPLIERS, see page 78.



ed V about 1 1/2" high into the center of the valley. This baffle reduces the potential for fast-moving water to wash over from one roof to the other and underneath shingles on the opposite slope. Also, crimp over the flashing edges about 1/2", not only to accommodate cleats but also to block water from creeping over the edge.

● On standing-seam metal roofs, do not lock the pans of the roofing to the valley flashing. Instead, attach the roof metal to the valley flashing using either a continuous locking strip soldered to the valley, or a double fold in the flashing that receives the ends of the roofing.



Incorporating a baffle in the middle of valley flashings between unequal roofs (above) helps stop rain-water from washing under roofing on the opposite slope.

The baffle for a valley flashing can be formed into the metal, as shown here, or fabricated from a folded strip and then soldered on. Note the construction of the wood cant strip, an alternative method.

● Do not cut off old through-wall chimney flashing and then install new flashing at a higher level using reglets. Because most traditional masonry is porous, this condition creates the potential for moisture migrating down the chimney masonry where it is blocked by the old through-wall flashing. The moisture then finds its way to the outside of the chimney, behind the new flashing, and enters the building. Instead, try to lock new flashing onto the old through-wall flashing using a folded seam. Or, if possible, install reglets just under the level of the through-wall flashing, and then use the existing metal as a counter-flashing. 🏠

Special thanks to Wayne Seale and the folks at the Copper Development Association, Inc., for technical help with this article.

Cornice Master Class

A wedge-shaped Dutchman patch shows clearly as class members fit a repaired fascia board back into the cornice. Carefully removing and repairing original materials such as this not only helps preserve historic building fabric, it also aids in re-assembling the pieces.

BY GORDON BOCK
PHOTOS BY JON CRISPIN

Repairs to an 18th-century roof become a learning laboratory for restoring early exterior carpentry with modern materials and preservation techniques.



Building the scaffolding that covers the front of the 1796 Thomas Whitney House was just the first phase of the project for the North Bennet Street School carpentry class. From here the crew restored the 48'-long classical cornice while also reinstalling and improving the slate roof.



Considering that a major proportion of historic building preservation is based upon the trade methods and knowledge of the past, where then do the traditional carpenters of the future come from? One answer is the preservation carpentry department at the North Bennet Street School in Boston, which, under the direction of creator and department head Robert Adam, has been turning out the next generation of preservation practitioners for two decades now. On the occasion of the program's 20th anniversary, *Old-House Journal* jumped at the opportunity to catch up with Adam and his class on a typical project that became a textbook lesson in a variety of carpentry skills, as well as a demonstration of state-of-the-art approaches to some common vintage building problems and conditions.

The Cost of Changes

The Thomas Whitney house northwest of Boston is the centerpiece of the historic district in Shirley Center, Massachusetts. It was built in 1796 by the town's first minister's son and architecturally represents a



Modern tools have their place in preservation, too. A pneumatic nailer attaches the bed moulding under the (removed) modillions with less shock to the building than a hammer. Stainless-steel nails are both durable and datable, so future historians will recognize the early 21st-century repairs.

transition from Georgian to Federal style. The house's construction is a bridge, too, showing the shift from the heavy timber framing of the 18th century to light timber framing that became common in the 19th century. When Robert and his students first worked on the house about 10 years ago, it was in rough shape, and since then they have been periodically rebuilding the roof and cornice, one face at a time.

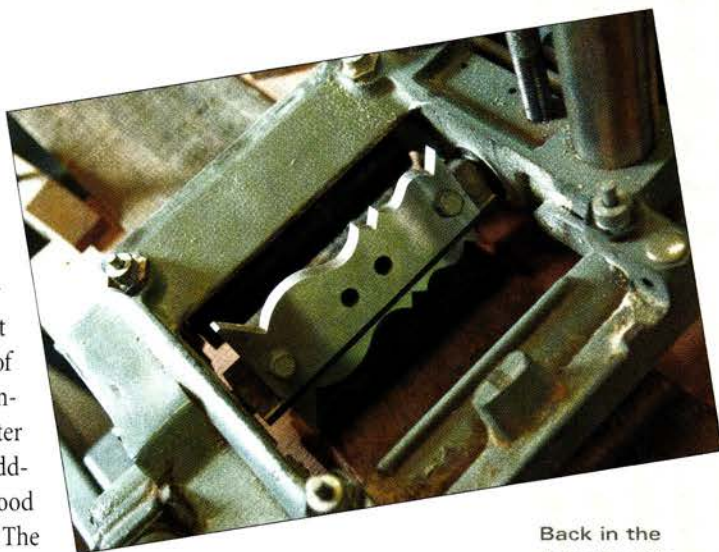
Though the house was originally protected by wood shingles, around 1900 it was reroofed in Black Monson slate from Maine, a material of legendary durability, but also far heavier. The extra weight had taken its toll over the ensuing decades, causing pronounced sagging in the roofline. More insidious, however, were the effects of hit-or-miss maintenance over the past 25 years. Neglected trees overhanging the building resulted in storm damage from dropped limbs and debris, which led to stopgap repairs, such as the liberal use of asphalt roof mastic. These repairs in turn led to leaks in the roof and deterioration along the full classical cornice—a combination of crown moulding, fascia board,

and modillions attached to a deep soffit running just under the eaves.

Understanding the construction of the hipped roof was integral to analyzing the cornice's repair. When the house was reroofed in slate more than a century ago, the owners beefed up the roof framing by adding conventional 2x6 rafters in the bays between the original timber common rafters. Roof framing members called tie girts also extend over the plate at the top of the wall to become the supports for the rich cornice composed of a 6"-wide crown moulding sitting on a 1"-thick fascia board that is rabbeted into a soffit board of 1" pine. The modillions that appear every 10" sit on a very large bed moulding. On top of this, the carpentry used to construct the cornice is a late-18th-century technique known as single-sided work—that is, composed of 1"-thick pine boards that have only one finished face. The backs of all boards are left rough sawn, and then rabbeted on this hidden side to bring

the finished face into the same plane with other boards.

Adam and his student crew began the project by removing all of the existing Monson slate for later reuse and then adding a new plywood deck to the roof. The plywood sheets helped take a 3"-to-4" droop out of the eave line while stabilizing the structure and creating a much better nailing surface for reattaching the slate. All the sheets were screwed in place so that they could be removed at a later date if desired, and then covered with an ice-and-water shield product to ensure another layer of protection under the slate. Once the roof deck was closed in, the crew turned to the cornice.



When these two knives are bolted in the moulder-planer (above), they rotate to cut the profile of the crown moulding.

Back in the department wood shop, Robert Adam (left in photo) shows the class how to set up the Williams & Hussey moulder-planer to shape new 16' lengths of crown moulding.



Making a Dutchman patch in a section of fascia board (left) starts with lining up the damaged area over stock of the same thickness and grain orientation, and then picking a patch shape.

Next, the class cuts both boards (right) at the same time with a hand or saber saw, typically in a wedge or arc that allows old and new wood to mate in a snug fit when glued.





Sensitive Deconstruction

Because many elements of the cornice needed to be repaired, carefully removing the historic materials intact became an important early phase of the work. Says Adam, "It's much easier to keep track of and work on whole boards than a lot of little pieces, and it's much better for the building." In places where the trim is attached with cut or hand-wrought nails, Adam and his crew prefer to pry boards off, not with metal tools and prybars, but with long tapered wedges. These wedges are 1" to 2" thick at the butt end, tapering down to nothing, and cut from a soft, strong wood such as spruce. The spruce is softer than the original pine and can take a beating, protecting the historic material from jaw and pinch marks. Though the students will sometimes use a hacksaw blade to cut nails from behind, they never use, say, cat's paws or a puller that can damage the wood. With wedges, Adam says, "You need to exploit a point of least resistance," placing wedges, say, every 24" or so, and applying constant pressure. Once the board and nails move beyond the area of



As it comes out of the moulder-planer, the freshly cut crown moulding (left) still has square edges. The last step is to rip the moulding on a table saw to make two 45-degree bevels.

corrosion and maximum girth on the nails, the boards tend to simply pop off. Then it's a simple matter to pull nails through the board from the back using nippers and protecting the wood with shingles. With cut nails, in fact, it's usually possible to just snap them off because, unlike wire nails, the grain of the metal runs perpendicular to a cut nail's length.

Patching comes into play when working on historic finish trim, such as this cornice, and rebuilding the localized rotted areas in the fascia board are a good exam-

ple of the efficient methods and conservative approach the program teaches. After examining the area to be repaired, Adam and the team select a piece of repair material of the same thickness, species, and grain orientation and lay it over the damaged area. Next, they make a cut in a patch shape—typically, a wedge or curve—that will yield a tight-fitting, mechanically locking patch, which is then cut through both boards at the same time. When the cut is complete, it has both excised the damaged area and created a patch identical to the

With the new crown moulding in place, the crew begins to install a fillet strip over the edge of the new roof deck—an addition to the historic cornice that finishes the plywood and helps visually straighten the eave line. Note the slate starter strip just above it on the ice and water membrane.



negative space. What's more, because they chose a wedge or open curve, the patch will fill the slight space and the loss of material resulting from the saw kerf, making for a tight-fitting patch. Adam and the team simply glue most patches in place. For this project, they used water-resistant or waterproof aliphatic carpenter's glue because it requires only reasonable clamping and will be relatively protected from the weather. In some cases, however, they will also add small brads in strategic places to help key the patch in place while the glue sets up. They also use epoxy adhesives, which require minimal clamping but have a significant setup time. (Durable, weather-resistant polyurethane glues are tricky to use for such a project because as they cure, their foaming tends to push pieces apart.)

Crowning Touches

Though the bulk of the cornice components could be repaired and reused, the 48' run of crown moulding was all severely rotted across its top and had to be replaced. To make new moulding, the team returned to the class shop where they ran 16' lengths of heart wood eastern white pine through a moulder planer fitted with knives specially

Examining the end of the new crown moulding reveals how the edges are beveled so that the board springs from the vertical fascia to the angled eave. Adding a nailer ripped from 2x4s just under the roof deck is a modern approach the crew used to increase support for the moulding.



ground to match the historic moulding profile. Because the crown moulding has to attach to the fascia board at an angle, the last step was to rip each piece at a 45-degree bevel on a table saw.

To cut compound, outside miters for a cornice crown moulding, the crew always makes a miter box specifically for the job, with sides high enough to allow the moulding to rest in its installed position, except upside down. This practice reduces orientation mistakes, which are easy to make with compound cuts, and helps ensure accurate angles. The box is cut with slots for left and right miters as well as square cuts.

When working with miters, Adam teaches the team to always cut the moulding a little long (say, $\frac{3}{16}$ "). Once the mouldings are tacked in place, they can go back and hand-saw the miter by running the blade between the two boards. This trick cuts each of the boards slightly, bringing the finished faces of the boards into a tight joint.

In cases where Adam and the class have to join mouldings in a long run, they usually butt-joint them. While traditional practice and historic examples advocated splicing mouldings in a lapped miter or scarf joint, in Adam's experience this method, which is supposed to make a joint less prone to opening up, in fact allows the boards to slide, making the joint more apparent. Sometimes, however, the team does back up their moulding butt joints with a block, screwing one board to one side and then attaching the mating board to the other.

Sprung mouldings, such as this cornice moulding, are typically only nailed at the bottom along the fillet, and allowed to

float free at the top. As part of this project, however, there is a 1"-thick wood starter strip along the edge of the eave to support the first course of slate shingles (to simulate a previous course of slates).

In installations such as this, the crew also nails a strip, rabbeted at the back, to the edge of the roof sheathing or decking that both creates the starter strip and hides the edge of the decking. Sometimes, if there is no sheathing edge to hide, Adam and the crew make a full-length backer block, ripped at the angle of the crown moulding and attached at the eaves. This strip, while not a historic construction detail, becomes a secure nailing surface for the upper edge of the crown moulding and "keeps everything straight," according to Adam.

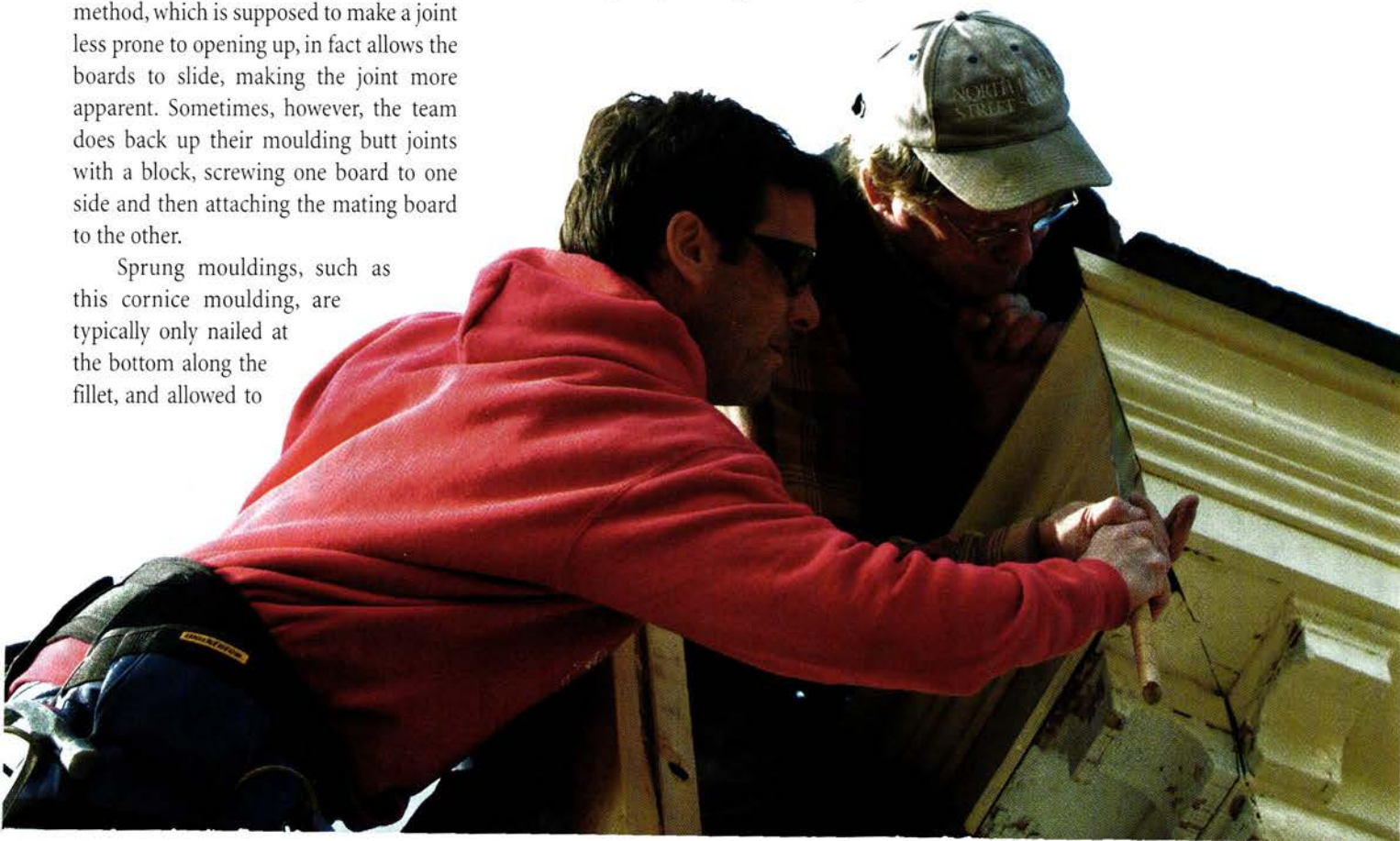
It's yet another example of a historically sensitive approach that updates time-honored carpentry techniques for today's

conditions with the goal of allowing historic buildings to function as designed for many decades to come. 📸

Special thanks to Robert Adam and the North Bennet Street School. For more information about the preservation carpentry program, visit www.nbss.org.



The cornice miter box (above) is custom-made to fit the height and projection of the crown moulding. Finessing the joint with a Japanese saw (below) brings the mouldings into a tight miter.

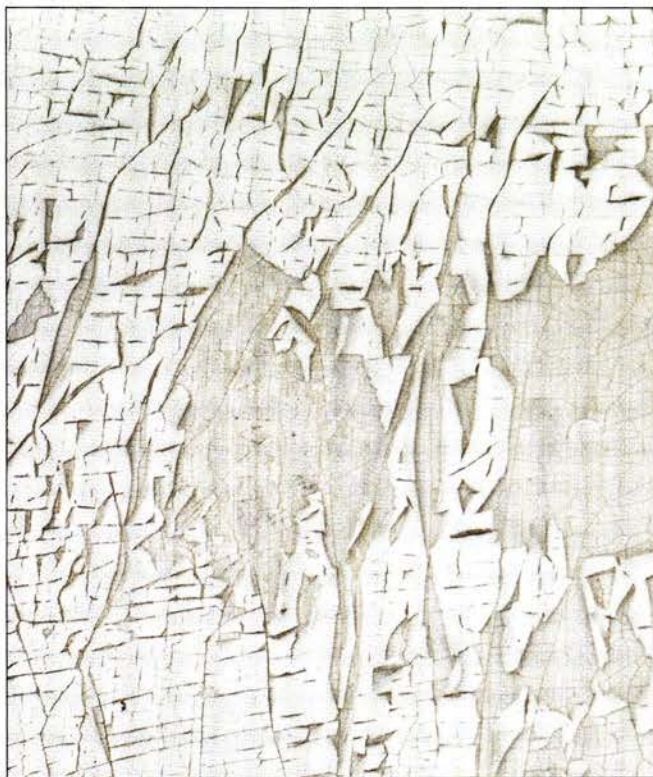


IN STEP WITH Trim Painting

BY THE OHJ TECHNICAL STAFF
PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK

Spring brings the outdoor painting season, and one of the keys to an attractive job is sharp trim colors.

Given that exterior trim comprises the visual frames for doors and windows on a facade, investing the time to make trim paint look smooth and like new leaves the rest of an old house appearing that much better. The trouble is trimwork takes an exceptional beating, leading to peeling paint, checks in wood, and other surface defects that undermine a shiny, smooth job. The solution is good prep work and painting, for which there's no secret formula, just careful attention to details in materials and methods, plus a few time-honored old-house tricks of the trade. Here, then, are the classic steps. 🏠



1 Assess conditions

Carefully inspect the existing paint to determine which areas are failing; problems will only re-occur if you simply paint over them. For example, for paint peeling between coats (a sign of poor earlier prep) or alligatoring (excessive paint), you will have to remove failing paint. To prep the area, wash the surface with a sponge dipped in a solution of TSP, Spic 'n Span, or a nonphosphate alternative.

MORE FROM OLDHOUSE- JOURNAL.COM

For related stories online, see "Choosing Exterior Paint," "Get up to Speed on Steam," "Going with the Flow," "Looking Out for Lead Paint," "Making Sense of Paint Strippers," and "The Changing Landscape for Household Paint." Just click to "The Magazine" section, and go to "Painting & Paint Colors" in the list of recent features.

For a list of
SUPPLIERS,
see page 78.



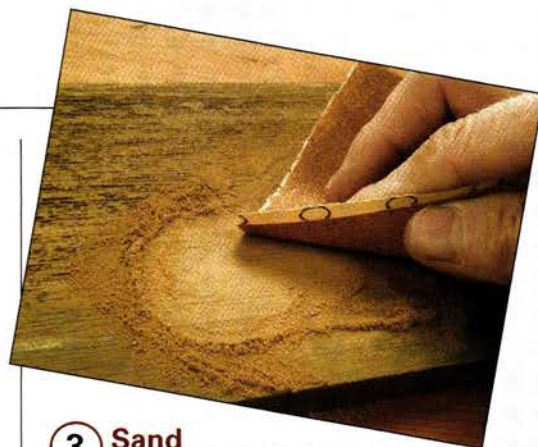
7 Apply paint

First prime wood with an oil-based primer. Tinting the primer to match the top coat improves appearance. Then choose a quality brush with tapered, flagged bristles (technically, split ends), and apply the top coat, brushing it out in long strokes and working from the wet edge.



② Perform bandage test

To see if seemingly sound paint is truly adhered well, attach one flap of an adhesive bandage, burnishing it down with your thumbnail, and then rip it off. If the paint stays put, you have a good surface for repainting; if it lifts, the paint will soon fail.



③ Sand to bright wood

Exposed wood that has weathered to grey is actually a mat of loose cellulose fibers that won't hold paint for long. Sanding to the bright sound wood underneath lets paint bond directly to a stable surface.



④ **Featheredge craters** Sanding into paint edges creates a transition between existing, sound paint and bare wood, so that they will appear as a smooth surface under the new coat. Use at least two grades of sandpaper.



⑤ **Fill defects** Putty nail heads, wood checks, and other imperfections with an epoxy filler, especially in weather-prone areas such as sills and headers. Then sand smooth until flush with the rest of the wood.



⑥ **Apply pre-prep** Where bare wood is exposed and weathered, brush on a pre-prep mixture of traditional oil varnish thinned as needed with turpentine or other thinner. Repeat until wood stops absorbing, and let dry 24 hours.

The Dirt on Wet-Dry Vacs

You need more than your trusty Electrolux to tackle shop duty. Fortunately, today's utility vacuums are equipped with more features than ever before. BY NOELLE LORD

The wet-dry vacuum is our barrel-shaped friend—a personal, practical R2-D2 from Star Wars, rolling along behind us as we clean up after repairs. Whether it's picking up paint chips and sawdust or absorbing a springtime basement flood, old-house owners can't imagine living without it.

Industrial- or commercial-grade vacuums come in various sizes with many features, but with prices ranging between \$79 and \$1,000, how do you pick from the many models and brands available to find the right one for you? Which features will facilitate the jobs you're doing, and which components will make your project site safer? You don't have to be a professional to consider investing in a quality vacuum that will last as long as your old house has projects for you to work on.

Wet, Dry, or Both?

First, consider what you'll be vacuuming. I count on my utility vacuum to come to the rescue when my clothes washer overflows as much as I do for cleaning up after plaster repairs. That's not the case for everyone. Many utility vacs are made only for dry use and come in compact sizes and light weights—a great option for homeowners who never need to work with water.

If, however, you want your vacuum to double as a basement sump pump every spring, you need something with a large capacity. A five-gallon tank, for instance, fills up in seconds, whereas a 20-gallon

tank sucks up more water. That unit, of course, is also bulkier, heavier to lug up stairs, and trickier to store. Vacuums on wheels are easier to move around when heavy with water and should have a drain convenient for easy emptying. Be sure it has a check valve or electronic shut-off to protect the motor from water splash and overflow.

Airflow and Water Lift

Vacuum strength is rated in two ways: Airflow and water lift. A vacuum's airflow—the speed at which it pulls in air through an unobstructed hose—is measured as CFM

(cubic feet per minute). Water lift refers to the machine's suction capacity as determined by a manometer, a device that calculates both pressure and suction strength.

Vacuuming takes a combination of airflow and water lift: Part of the hose opening is unrestricted, allowing air to flow and pull into the vacuum, and part of the opening is under pressure, sucking and lifting debris. Strong airflow allows the vacuum to pull fine dust from many inches away, and high water lift enables the machine to grab particles out of cracks and inhale large pieces easily. Look for vacuums with an airflow CFM rating of over 112 and a water lift of at least 80.

Filtration

There's a lot more to filtration than meets the eye, and it should be high on your list of preferred vacuum features because of the potential hazards of some old-house repairs. The dust we can't see is the most

Many of today's utility vacuums are designed with portability in mind.



COURTESY OF BOSCH POWER TOOLS



Modern utility vacuums come in many shapes and sizes, and with increasingly sophisticated abilities. HEPA models, like this one from Delta (left), are capable of lifting extremely fine particles and are well suited for lead abatement jobs.

COURTESY OF ALLEN CHEUVRON



COURTESY OF MASTERCRAFT



BOSCH POWER TOOLS

Well-placed handles and wheels are ergonomic innovations that make transporting vacuums up stairs and around obstacles less onerous. Many companies now offer models with these features, including Bosch (left), Ridgid (right), and Mastercraft (above, right).



COURTESY OF RIDGID TOOL CO.



Long hoses make it easier to vacuum hard-to-reach places, such as ceilings.

COURTESY OF BOSCH POWER TOOLS



With wet vacs, some filtration often must be removed for the machine to suck up water.

COURTESY OF RIDGID TOOL CO.



Power tools can be connected to many vacuums so that they can collect dust before it hits the floor.

COURTESY OF FEIN POWER TOOLS

dangerous, and if you own a house built before 1978, you should assume it contains lead paint. When working around lead paint debris, HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters—with many thick, dense layers to trap tiny particles—are essential, as is a well-sealed unit. Vacuums for lead abatement must be rated for fine filtration with a 99.97% efficiency for particles of 0.3 micron.

For non-HEPA vacuums, filter shape, size, style, and configuration all contribute to a vacuum's effectiveness. The best vacuums have multiple stages of filtration, stopping large particles with their outermost layer while passing minute particles

through several filters before capturing them in a finer, more expensive cartridge or filter.

Once filters get clogged, CFM drops dramatically. Cone- or V-shaped filters tend to clog fast and are hard to clean because they trap debris in the narrowest points. The best vacuums are designed so that large debris enters the machine and drops away from the filters to maintain unrestricted airflow.

Power

Unfortunately, there's a lot of leeway in how manufacturers measure motor performance. Motors may be rated by amperes (amps), horsepower, wattage, or some combination of the three. Amperage is the amount of electric current flowing through the motor, and when multiplied by the line voltage (120 volts in North America), it yields the wattage—a measure of the amount of work (by the standards of physics) that the motor can perform. Wattage has a direct relationship to horsepower. Upon starting, electric motors briefly exhibit surge horsepower, called peak horsepower. This number is often used to promote a vacuum's power, but it may not equate to overall running performance because the power being touted isn't neces-

sarily used to generate airflow and suction; less efficient (and cheaper) models may consume the same power as high-quality vacuums but be less effective. That's why it's important to factor in CFM and water lift. Ratings of 1,000 watts to 1,350 watts are fairly standard in quality machines.

Another feature to consider is how many amps the vacuum requires as you don't want to risk blowing a fuse. Because older buildings commonly have 15-amp circuits, it's best to stay between 8 and 12 amps. Many vacuums now allow attaching power tools, such as sanders, to contain dust before it hits the floor, making amp considerations even more essential.

Motor design is another concern. Vacuums create suction using fans and are classed by stages or the number of fans used. Most machines have one or two stages, but three-stage models are becoming more common. Additionally, motors can be either "through-flow," using the same air that runs the vacuum to keep the motor cool, or "bypass," using only fresh air to cool the motor and separate fans in order to generate airflow and suction. Through-flow motors should have a thermal cutoff control to keep the motor from burning out when a hose is clogged. Because bypass motors have air traveling

along several paths, study the CFM ratings, which can drop on lower quality machines. Vacuums that suck water always have bypass motors.

Body Design

A lot of thought goes into designing a good vacuum. Small, lightweight models maneuver better in tight spaces, and unlike older, top-heavy models, vacuums with more balanced bodies are pulled around easily. Handles help a lot, too.

When shopping, test the vacuum by pulling the hose to see how the machine handles. The wheels should be well spaced to prevent tipping, as well as large and soft enough to keep them from damaging historic floors.

Noise

There's a reason why your dog heads under the bed when you turn on a utility vac. Inexpensive vacuums are notorious for emitting noise above acceptable decibel levels, and even 15 minutes of use a day can damage your ears. Look for a vacuum with a decibel rating of 70 or less (though it's still advisable to wear ear plugs).

Accessories

The largest hose you can use is determined by the machine's input hole, but adapters allow you to attach smaller hoses, which reduce hand fatigue at the expense of airflow. A big hose increases the airflow but sacrifices water lift. If you're picking up lots of large debris, look for a machine that can take a large-diameter hose (standard diam-

eters are 1 1/2 and 2 1/2 inches). While a long hose allows you to climb stairs or a ladder and leave the vacuum below, it will cut airflow slightly. Because old houses are famous for having few outlets, a longer cord is a helpful feature, too—ours lets us plug in the vacuum wherever it's convenient so that we don't have to mess with extension cords.

The Bottom Line

When it comes to tools and equipment, you get what you pay for. A quality machine usually incorporates a thoughtful design with fewer features to drive you crazy, such as unmanageable cords, latches that won't stay shut, accessories that fall off, and a body that tips over whenever the wheels hit a good bump. We didn't skimp on our utility vac, and so far it's clocked nearly 100,000 hours in 13 years of almost daily use.

Consider your needs carefully, and then pick the most powerful machine you can find (we prefer the highest water lift) that is relatively quiet and has a bypass motor capable of suctioning fine dust particles without burning out. HEPA filtration is highly recommended. Do your homework and scout out local retailers for advice and the peace of mind that comes from knowing a resource is nearby to service your vacuum, should you need it.

Noelle Lord and her husband Peter operate Old House C.P.R., Inc., a business that specializes in the care of old buildings. She writes from her own old house in Limington, Maine, and can be reached at www.oldhousecpr.com.

Utility Vacuum Connection

Manufacturer	Contact	Resource Card
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Fein Power Tools	www.feinusa.com (800) 441-9878	Circle 18
Festool	www.festoolusa.com (888) 337-8600	Circle 19
Makita	www.makita.com (714) 522-8088	Circle 20
Mastercraft	www.mastercraftusa.com (800) 835-7812	Circle 21
Minuteman	www.minutemanintl.com (630) 627-6900	Circle 22
Oneida	www.oneida-air.com (800) 732-4063	Circle 23
Ridgid	www.ridgid.com (800) 474-3443	Circle 24
Shop-Vac Corp.	www.shopvac.com (570) 326-0502	Circle 25



Some newer models, such as Bosch's Power Broker, let you adjust amps to prevent circuit overloads.



HEPA filtration systems use several layers of filters and bags to remove debris in stages.

Precipitating Preservation

Meticulously refinished Victorian details such as bracketed cornices and window crowns, as well as the use of era-appropriate paint colors, set off the Armusiks' Italianate house.



PHOTO, INCLUDING INSET: COURTESY OF ERIC ARMUSIK

Before rebuilding the front steps, Eric tested historic designs using 3-D computer graphics to identify the best fit.

With a stack of skills and a passion for history, one young couple helps stoke a preservation fire in their town.

BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

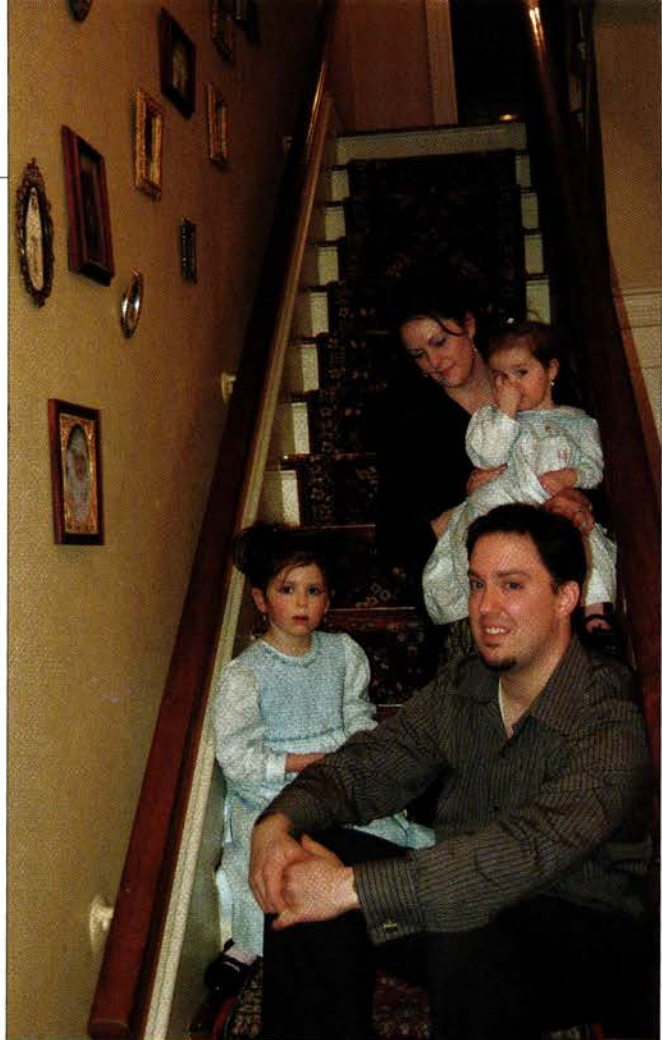
When Eric and Rebekah Armusik bought a fixer-upper house in 2000, they had big plans. Like many old-house aficionados falling for broken buildings, the Armusiks dreamed of putting all the pieces back together. But for this couple, the vision involved more than their own 1860s Italianate townhouse—they fantasized about breathing life back into their entire adopted home of Hamburg, Pennsylvania. “We heard that the town was going to apply to the Main Street program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and it became the reason we decided to move here,” says Eric. “We really wanted to be involved with getting the program off the ground.” The program uses historic preservation to help revitalize business districts in communities all over the country.

Both Armusiks caught old-house fever early. Eric’s dad was a carpenter who put his son to work restoring houses during summer vacations and on school breaks beginning when Eric was 11. Eric’s experiences left him in awe of the amount of labor that went into creating a fine old house. “It’s hard for us to comprehend how much effort and craft went into building a house 150 years ago,” he says. “Compared to modern construction, it is just so much work.”

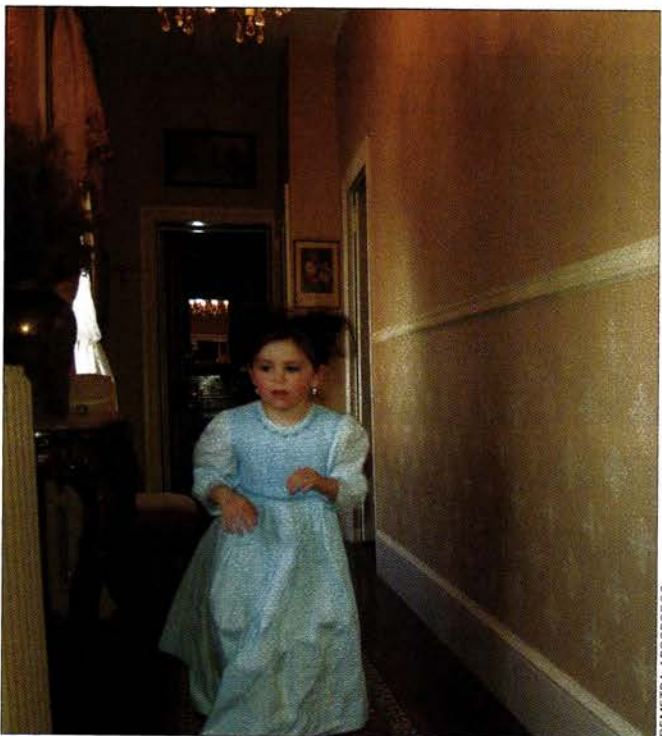
Yet, because he is so enamored with the end results, Eric doesn’t mind taking the time to re-create original elements for his house. “I guess I appreciate both the aesthetics and the amount of labor involved because of my profession,” he says, comparing his work on his house to his work as a fine artist who paints traditional portraits, a process that takes months.

Rebekah’s love of old houses began with her grandfather, an upholsterer by trade who left a big impression on her. “I remember sitting and watching in amazement as he carefully sewed everything by hand,” she says. “I could stay there all day long. I knew from an early age that I wanted to live in an old house filled with antiques.”

When the Armusiks found the house that would become theirs, it had been sublet for years to a passel of college kids and was in sorry shape, with every ornamental detail stripped away. There had originally been seven fireplaces; all were boarded up and missing mantels. Rebekah traces this loss to the advent of oil heat in Hamburg around the 1930s, a time when people stopped using their fireplaces to avoid being labeled too poor to buy oil. Refashioning the mantels has been a favorite part of their old-house

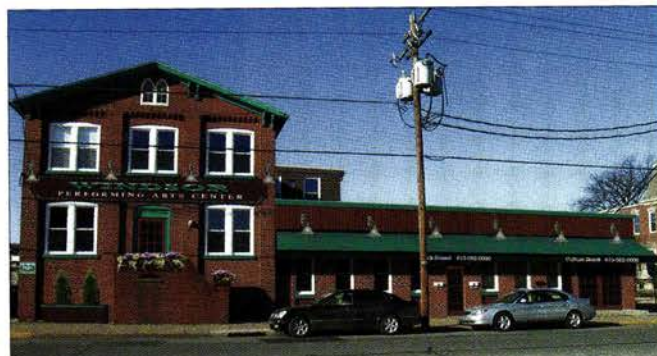


Eric and Rebekah pose with daughters Nadija (left) and Milla on their stairwell. The banister’s design was one of the main clues used to date the house.



An upstairs hallway was decorated with a traditional diaper pattern, an effect Rebekah painted by hand.

Much of the Armusiks' hard work is on display in the living room woodwork, where the couple refinished floors, added crown mouldings, and created an elaborate, fireplace mantel with overmantel.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ERIC ARMUSIK

Eric's volunteer efforts for the town of Hamburg include creating 3-D graphics of potential restoration work. His mock-ups help business owners compare before (left, top) and after images (left, bottom) to better visualize a project's impact.

project. Eric has re-created three elaborate, double-level Victorian-styled mantels by hand. For the one in the living room, Eric learned how to use a lathe to turn the impressive support columns; they are interspersed with store-bought mouldings and ornate, hand-carved elements. The completed piece leaves visitors convinced the mantel is original. For the fireplace in the master bedroom, Eric found a discarded harpsichord in a junk shop and sawed it in two, using the pieces as the main mantel supports. The couple has added other striking era-appropriate woodwork, including crown moulding and ceiling beams, and refinished more than 2,500 square feet of wooden floors. They brought back many pieces of antique furniture the same way—stripping, refinishing, and reupholstering them by hand.

When the two talk about the hamlet that is Hamburg, you can hear the content-



DEMETRA APOSFOROS

ment in their voices. "I love living here," says Rebekah. "This area is so family-oriented. We have a town full of adopted grandmothers and grandfathers nearby."

"You can walk to the supermarket, walk to the post office or a movie, or get on a nature trail and go to the river," says Eric. "Better yet, people trust you. They'll say, 'You need to get drywall? Take my truck!'"

Eric explains that many of the town's amenities stem from its past as a canal and rail center for goods. It was also a stopover point for several cities in close proximity: Reading is 15 miles to the south; Allentown is 20 miles east; and Philadelphia is just an hour away.

The Armusiks' appreciation for all the town has to offer sparked their involvement in the Our Town Foundation (OTF), Hamburg's Main Street revitalization effort. "The town needed a little TLC, and people started brainstorming about how



DEMETRA APOSFOROS

Nadija's room boasts a late-19th-century Eastlake-style bedroom set; much of the house's antique furniture was refinished and reupholstered by the Armusiks.

we could renew the luster and appeal it had in its prime," says Eric. "We decided bringing the historic integrity back might stimulate the town's economy." And so the idea of using Hamburg's history to hype its downtown shopping district was born.

Putting his art background to work, Eric created a logo, Historic Hamburg, to reference the town's architectural treasures and rich past. "The logo really identified us right away," says Eric.

"The logo features a window from one of the historic properties downtown," says OTF program manager Deena Kershner. "It represents a window of opportunity, and a window of growth." The design beams from highway billboards as well as brochures and pole banners that promote the town.

Eric also manages a website of the same name highlighting the town's history and encouraging tourists to visit, but those haven't been his only contributions to his crusade to bring back the town's spark. People often have a hard time envisioning the benefits historic restoration can bring, so for many projects under consideration Eric puts his graphics design background to work creating before-and-after images in 3-D that clearly show the end results. "It's a really nice service," Kershner says, "because if a business owner wants to improve their property and can't visualize how it will look, Eric can give them a mockup." Several of the images have helped secure Main Street funding and approval.

Rebekah's done her part too, lobbying for and organizing a holiday tour of some of the town's historic buildings. The first

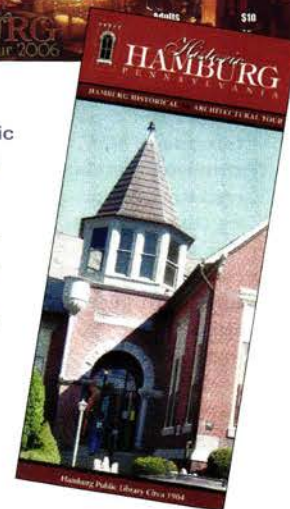
tour took place last December, and was accompanied by a brochure detailing the histories of the various houses featured. She's also working on a summer event that will fuse building and garden tours with music to promote local artists.

As a fire warms the living room, the Armusiks' young daughters Nadija and Milla run gleefully around the house, bounding onto Eastlake furniture and spilling drinks on velvet-upholstered 1890s settees and antique rugs. "People think we're crazy to live like this with children," says Rebekah, "but we wouldn't have it any other way."

"I feel so fortunate to live in a house like this," says Eric. "Every night I go to sleep thinking how lucky we are." 🏠



The Historic Hamburg logo Eric created appears on all material promoting the town—from welcoming highway billboards and streetlight signs, to brochures detailing architectural and holiday house tours.



When Levitt and Sons turned Long Island potato fields into the first of three mammoth developments, they reinvented the business of building construction while setting the look and scale of the postwar residential landscape.

A Tale of Three Levittown

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL



The year was 1947, 24 months after the official end of World War II, and 12 million American veterans had made their way home from Europe and the Pacific. The problem was most veterans had no real home of their own. A decade of economic depression followed by four years of war had created a shortage of jobs and

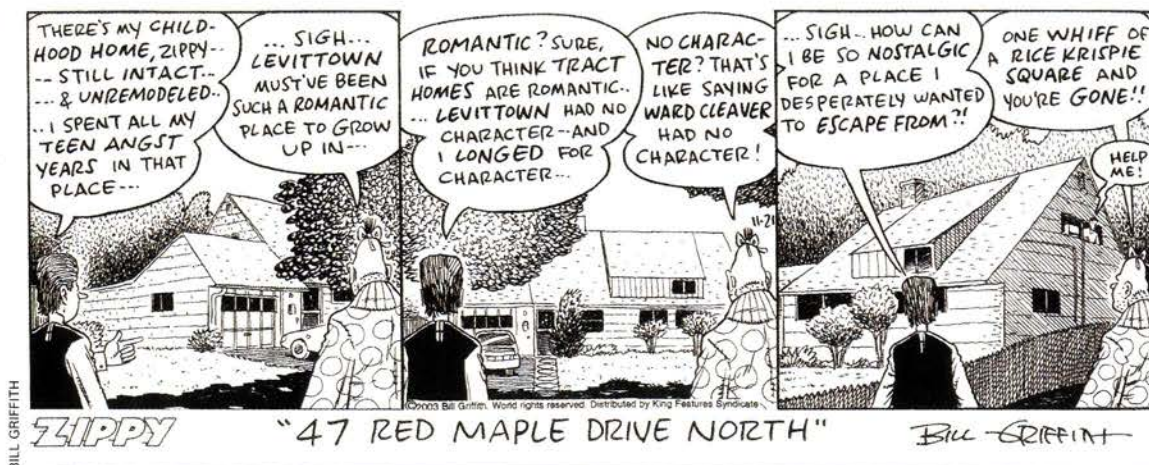
housing so severe that it threatened not only to renew the Great Depression but also to crush the great American dream of homeownership for the common man.

Ex-GIs tucked themselves and their families in wherever they could find a few unoccupied square feet—in tiny rented apartments, spare rooms, unfinished basements, barns, and occasionally, even chick-

en coops—and kept on dreaming. As America's returning heroes were soon to discover, however, some dreams really do come true.

The building boom that ignited the late-1940s economy introduced a new breed of mass-merchant builders with houses that sprang up by the thousands, creating whole communities in remote

Levittown, Long Island, the most famous of the communities, is also known for its illustrious native sons: musician Billy Joel and cartoonist Bill Griffith. The cartoon's irreverent Zippy the Pinhead character visited the town around its 50th anniversary.



Built in 1943 as rental homes for Navy personnel, Oakdale Farms in Norfolk, Virginia, is a little-known predecessor of the famous Levittowns. Today, it remains an attractive, well-maintained neighborhood.

ns

PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

rural places. While there were many of these new builder developers around the country, particularly on the West Coast, perhaps the best-known today is the legendary New York-based family firm of Levitt and Sons, the creators of the fabled Levittowns in Hempstead, New York, and Tullytown, Pennsylvania.

On-Site Assembly Lines

Prewar developers had been lucky to turn out 100 new homes a year, but fortunately, banks and builders started preparing for action long before the war ended, lining up lawmakers' votes for new roads that would support not just the automobile industry, the economic engine of the postwar economy, but also new far-flung suburbs. Changes in building and lending regulations were rushed through legislatures, making it easier to erect and sell houses cheaply and quickly.

The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, the so-called GI Bill of Rights,



Some of the Oakdale Farms houses have a masonry screen in front and an adjoining carport, a valuable amenity in the heat of Tidewater Virginia. The small window in the slab door moves beyond the traditional six-panel format.



For the postwar Long Island Levittown, this simple Cape Cod was the original basic design. With only 750 square feet, it recalls wartime austerity.

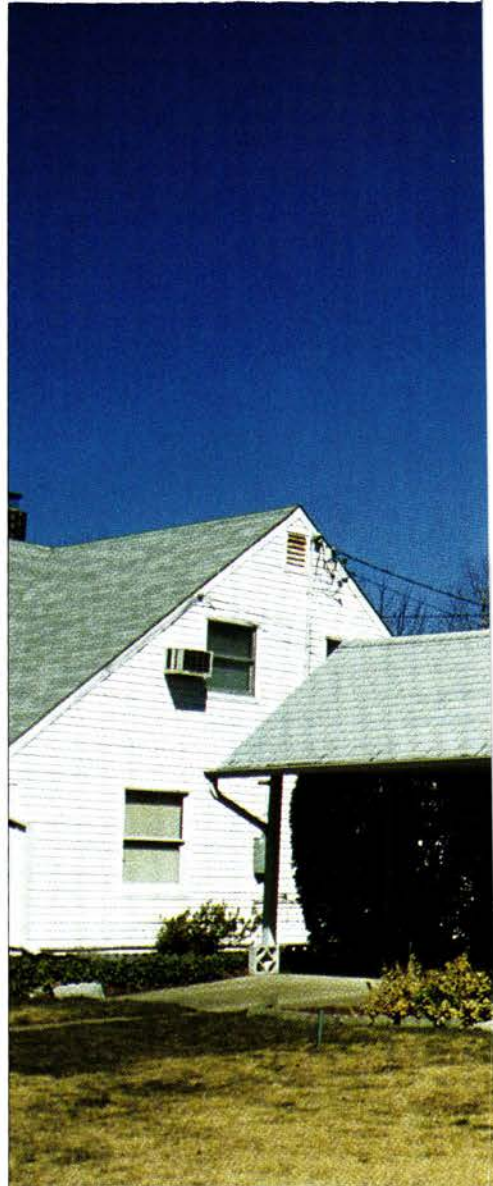
assured veterans of access to job training and higher education, as well as long-term, low-interest, no-down-payment, fully amortized mortgage loans guaranteed through the federal government's Veterans' Administration (VA). All that was missing were houses.

Founded in 1929 by Abraham Levitt, a real estate lawyer, Levitt and Sons was pushed to the front of the pack by his sons William, the firm's power mover, and Alfred, its designer. The Levitt firm started before the war with custom-built houses, a practice they found slow and not very profitable. In 1942 the company won a contract to construct Oakdale Farms: 750 small, frame, rental houses for U.S. Navy personnel in Norfolk, Virginia. Interest within the construction world at the time was focused heavily on adapting industrial assembly line methods to homebuilding. The Norfolk project employed many such cost- and time-saving techniques, as well as community development principles garnered from Federal Housing Authority (FHA) Technical Bulletins and construction and architectural journals. The advice must have been sound, as the Norfolk houses still stand today, largely unchanged, on FHA-approved, family-friendly, curving streets.

During the war, William Levitt served with the Navy's Seabees as a builder, taking advantage of his wartime experience to

refine his use of factory methods in homebuilding. When the war ended, the Levitts were ready to take on the pent-up housing demands of peacetime buyers. They had already acquired several parcels of land—former rural potato fields ravaged by beetle infestations—on Long Island near the town of Hempstead, New York. Here, they would adapt the assembly line procedures of automotive manufacturing to building houses, more than 17,000 of them, at the astounding rate of one every 16 minutes. To do this, the Levitts divided the work on each house into discrete operations—26 separate tasks, with 26 workers, each doing just one task. In this case, however, the product (the house) was stationary, while the workers (carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and roofers) moved quickly from site to site, using precut, preassembled, uniformly sized building parts that were waiting for them on the site. William Levitt unabashedly pronounced Levitt and Sons the “GM of the Building Industry.”

The Levitts' initial Hempstead houses in 1947 were rental units, which would later be sold. In June 1949, however, they began building houses for immediate sale. The first homes contained only 750 to 1,000 square feet, but they were well laid out and well equipped. Because wartime austerity measures combined with wartime employment had left a bit of cash in



people's pockets, many buyers made improvements and additions later.

The Levitts offered five different styles that were variations on two themes: a Cape Cod-like cottage (1947) and a “modern” (1949), similar to a ranch house. The differences mostly involved changes in the rooflines and the direction the gables faced, to the front or side. All had two bedrooms and one bath, and were constructed slab-on-grade (no basement) to cut costs, with unfinished “expandable” attics. The purchase price, beginning at \$7,500 for the Cape Cod, the cheapest model, included a 60' x 100' lot.

The new town had curving streets, a modicum of landscaping on each lot, and nine community swimming pools, but no schools, sidewalks, or sewers. (Septic tanks were provided.) The customer response was instant and overwhelming. Families camped out at the sales office, waiting for



In contrast to the Cape Cod, this larger house has unexpectedly modern lines. It included space on the second floor for additional bedrooms, and there were modern sliding windows and a carport.



Most Levittown houses expanded as families grew. Here, additions include a carport and a dormer-like half of a second storey that extends across one side of the gable. Compare this to the then-new model shown in 1949 with its lucky family posed in front.



GETTY IMAGES



For the 1952 Pennsylvania Levittown in Bucks County, Levitt added a ranch house design, the Levittowner, complete with carport, picture window, and high, small bedroom windows. Improved site design included sidewalks and paved driveways.



The Bucks County design for the Jubilee is reminiscent of the earlier modern model in Long Island, with an expandable second-floor carport and a picture window at the rear.



the doors to open. First-day sales for the 1949 model totaled 1,400 houses.

Emerging Communities

From Long Island, the Levitts moved west where they built another 17,000 homes in Bucks County, between Philadelphia and Trenton; Levittown, Pennsylvania, opened in 1952. Again, there were five different styles: the Pennsylvanian, the Country Clubber, the Levittowner, the Jubilee, and the Colonial. The Pennsylvanian carried a \$14,500 price tag that included a 70' x 100' landscaped lot (other lots were 100' x 120'), and it featured four bedrooms, an all-electric kitchen, and a garage (rather than the carport found in earlier Levittown houses), and of course, a picture window and double-paned Thermopane insulating-glass sliding patio door.

On the first weekend the houses were open, 50,000 people toured the models in the then-remote Pennsylvania farmland.

At nearby Bristol Pike, there would arise a large, open shopping center and a new station for commuters on the Pennsylvania Railroad (the other Levittowns had access only by automobile). Today, like the Long Island Levittown, the community remains well maintained and popular, although many of the houses have been enlarged.

When the next big Levitt community was begun, in New Jersey, residents decided to eschew the Levittown name and call their new hometown Willingboro. Also located between Philadelphia and Trenton, Willingboro was started in 1958. It featured several updated models from previous Levittowns and offered the first full-sized, two-storey, traditional Colonials. Willingboro was divided into neighborhoods with alphabetically arranged street names. Each neighborhood opened onto a broad, landscaped parkway that led to a major shopping center on the main highway, as well as to small

neighborhood shopping centers, churches, and schools. Today, it is the least altered of the Levittowns.

In the 1960s the Levitts built a number of other developments but none so well-known as their Levittowns. The brothers were not the only or even the nation's first big postwar builders. Some California builders, such as Joseph Eichler, were more distinctive, and others, like David Bohannon, had larger businesses.

The Levitts had their share of criticism, some of it justified. The houses were admittedly small. They also shared, at least when they were new, a striking likeness to one another. Not surprisingly, architects hated them. Social critics such as Lewis Mumford warned that the Levittowns nurtured a dangerous conformity in the "inescapable" isolation of "an incipient slum." On the other hand, one prominent sociologist, Herbert Gans, wrote a bestselling book about his own life as a New Jersey

There were new models for the 1958 New Jersey Levittown of Willingboro, including this typical L-shaped ranch design where a garage replaced the earlier carport.



Levittowner, concluding that the people who lived there thought it was just swell!

By 1955 there were 4.3 million homes with VA mortgages, and the Levittowns accounted for a relatively small number of them. Yet, the very name, Levittown, has come to symbolize an era when dreams actually did come true. 🏠



The largest Willingboro house was the popular two-storey Colonial, now with a two-car garage and large paired windows. As the Thermopane ad shows, Levitt used this quality insulated glass in his updated "picture windows" of sliding glass doors.



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Flashing Points, page 50

Copper Development Assoc. Inc.
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New York, NY 10016
(212) 251-7200
www.copper.org
Circle 26 on the resource card.

Follansbee Steel
State St.
Follansbee, WV 2603
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www.follansbeeroofing.com
Circle 27 on the resource card.

Revere Copper Products, Inc.
One Revere Park
Rome, NY 13440-5561
(800) 448-1776
www.reverecopper.com
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House Parts with a Pedigree, page 40

Adkins Architectural Antiques
3515 Fannin St.
Houston, TX 77004
(800) 522-6547
www.adkinsantiques.com

American Salvage
7001 N.W. 27 Ave.
Miami, FL 33147
(305) 691-7001
www.americansalvage.com
Circle 30 on the resource card.

Architectural Accents
2711 Piedmont Rd.
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www.architecturalaccents.com
Circle 31 on the resource card.

Architectural Antiques
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www.archantiques.com
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Architectural Antiques Exchange
715 N. Second St.
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www.architecturalantiques.com
Circle 33 on the resource card.

Architectural Antiquities
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www.archantiquities.com
Circle 34 on the resource card.

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Architectural Salvage of Greensboro
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Greensboro, NC 27415
(336) 389-9118
www.blandwood.org/archsalvage.html
Circle 37 on the resource card.

Architectural Salvage Warehouse
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(802) 658-5011
www.greatsalvage.com
Circle 38 on the resource card.

Brass Knob Architectural Antiques
2311 18th St. NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 332-3370
www.thebrassknob.com
Circle 39 on the resource card.

Building Materials Resource Center
100 Terrace St.
Boston, MA 02120
(617) 442-8917
www.bostonbmr.org
Circle 40 on the resource card.

Caravati's Architectural Salvage
104 E. 2nd St.
Richmond, VA 23224
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www.recentruins.com
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Country Road Associates
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www.countryroadassociates.com
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Historic Houseparts
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Rochester, NY 14620
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www.historichouseparts.com
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(continued on page 82)



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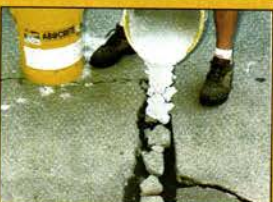
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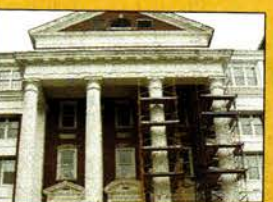
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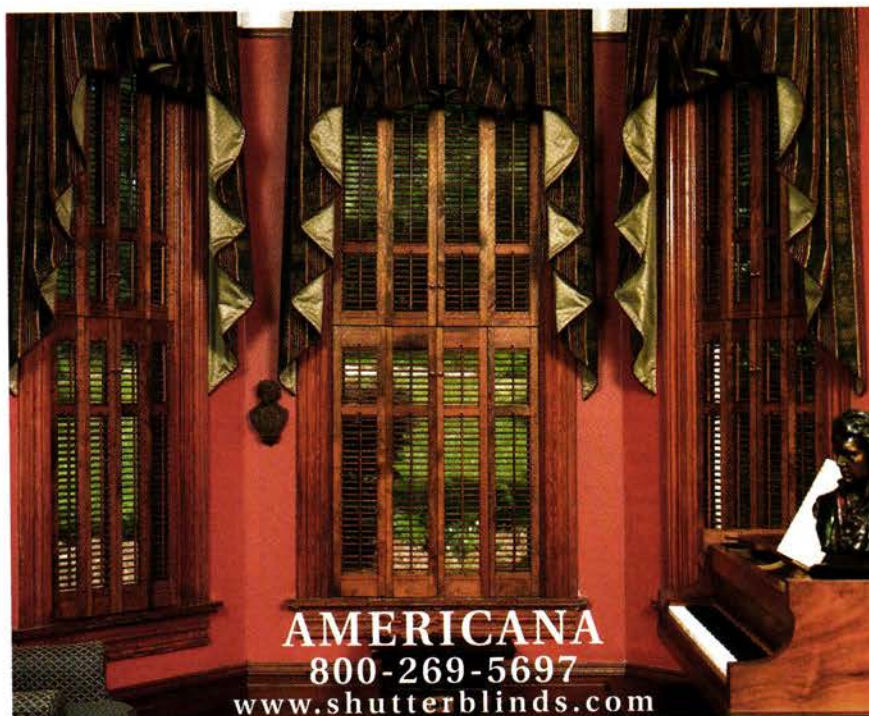
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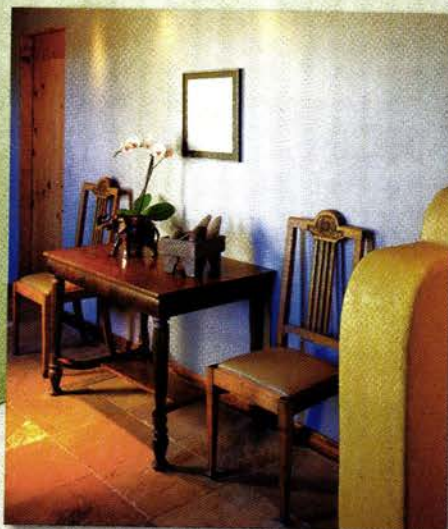
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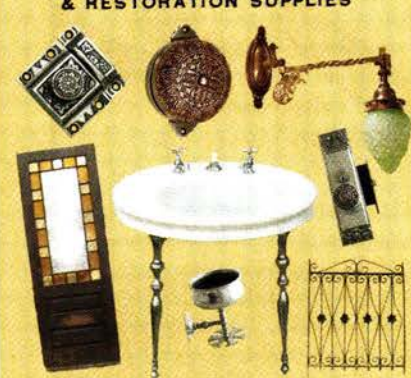
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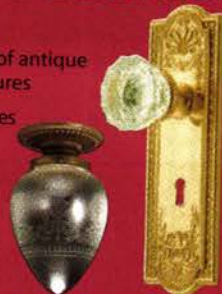
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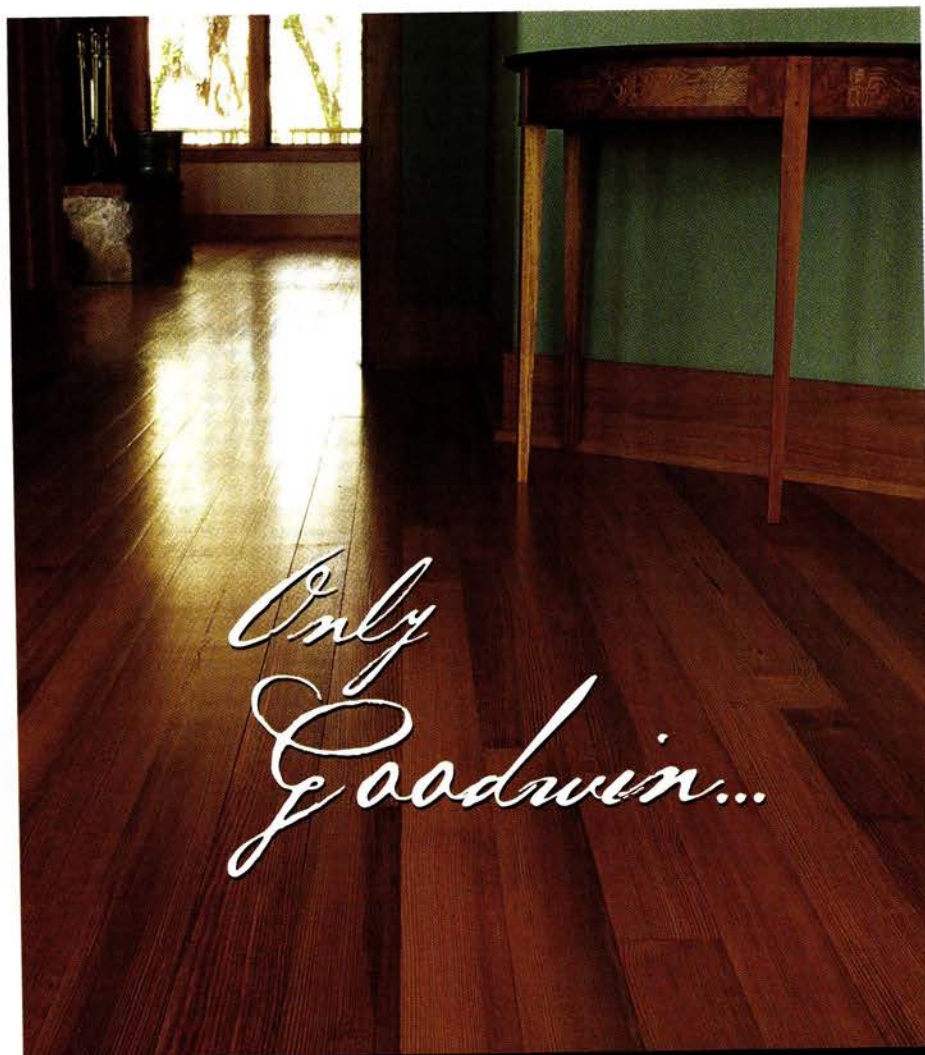
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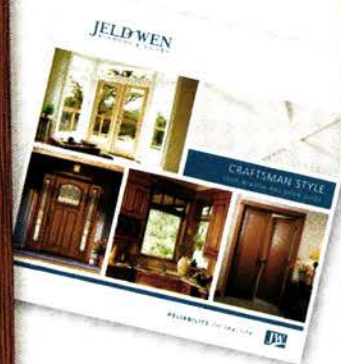
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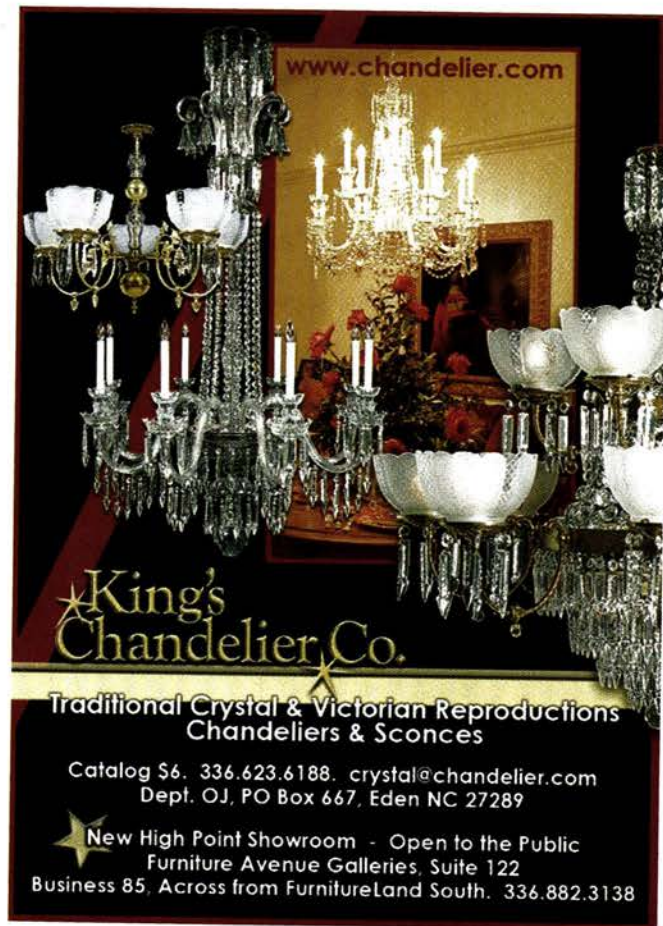
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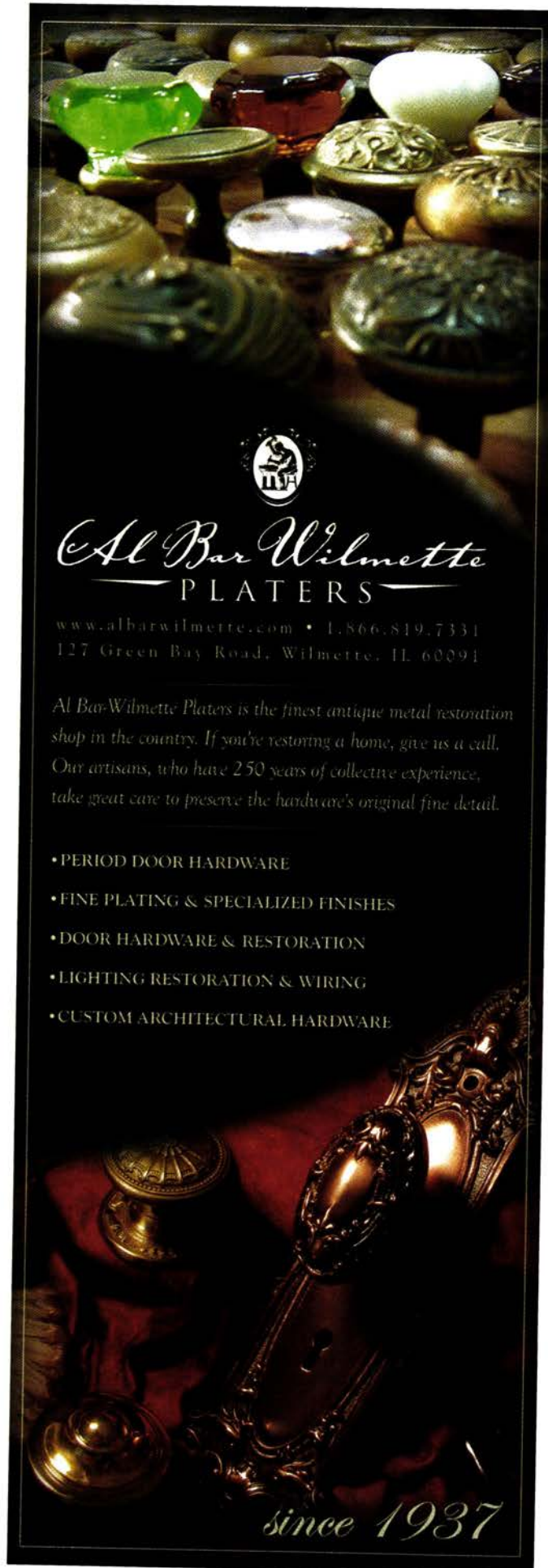
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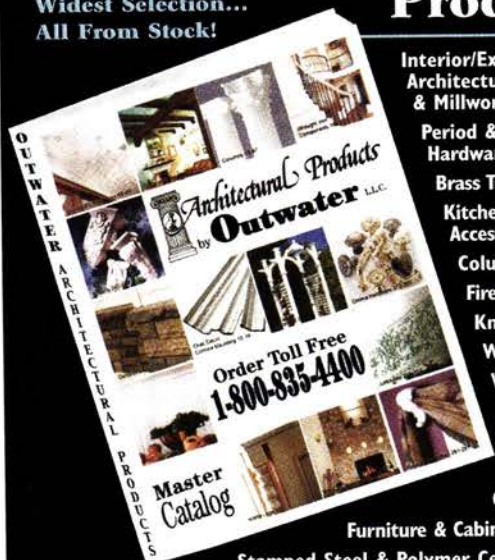
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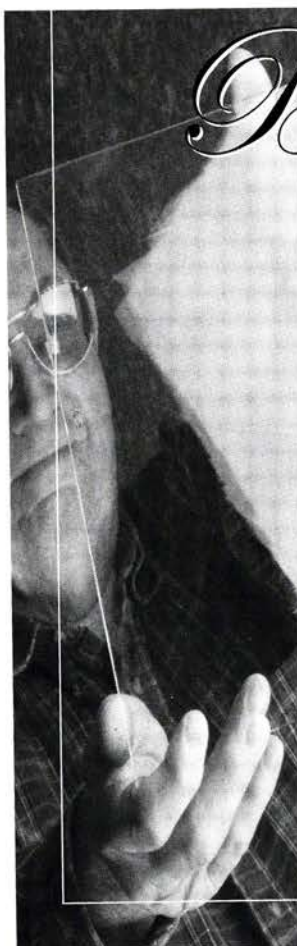
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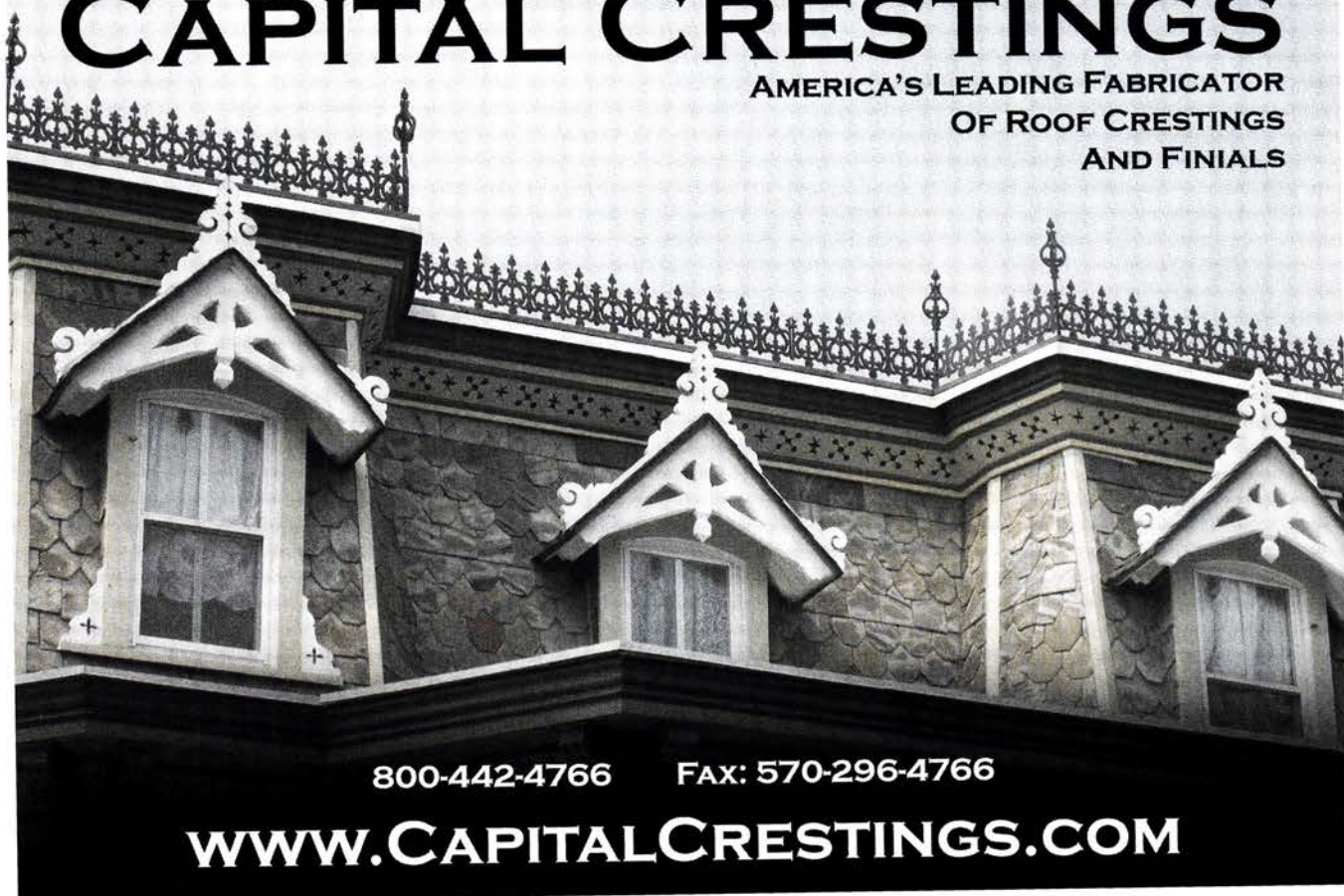
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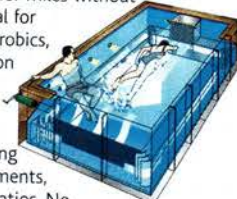
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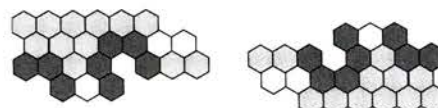
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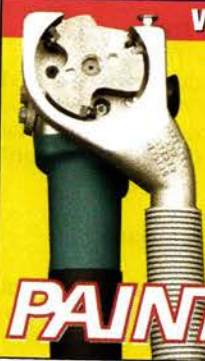
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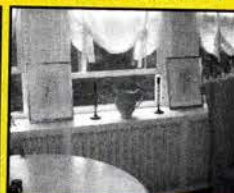
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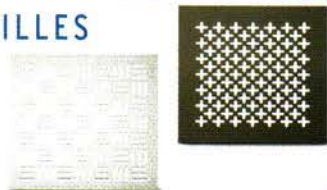
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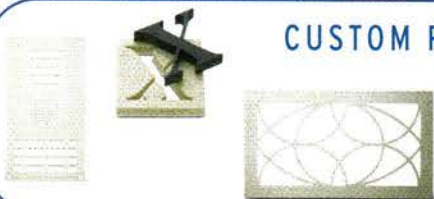
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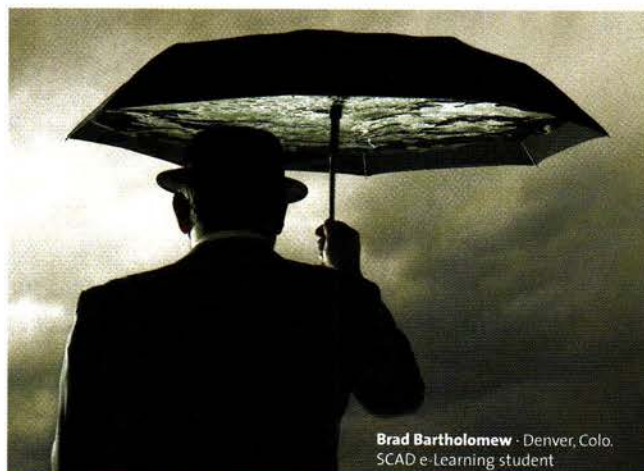
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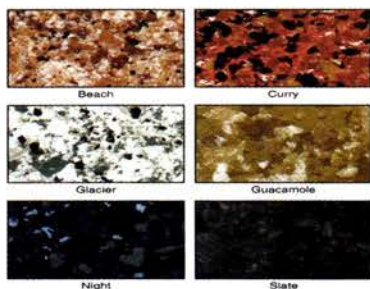
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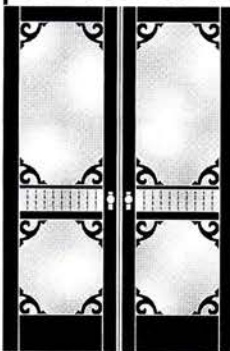
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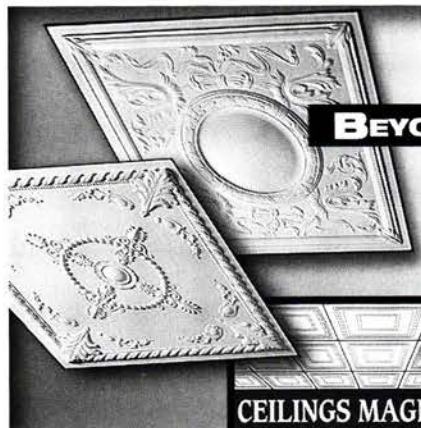
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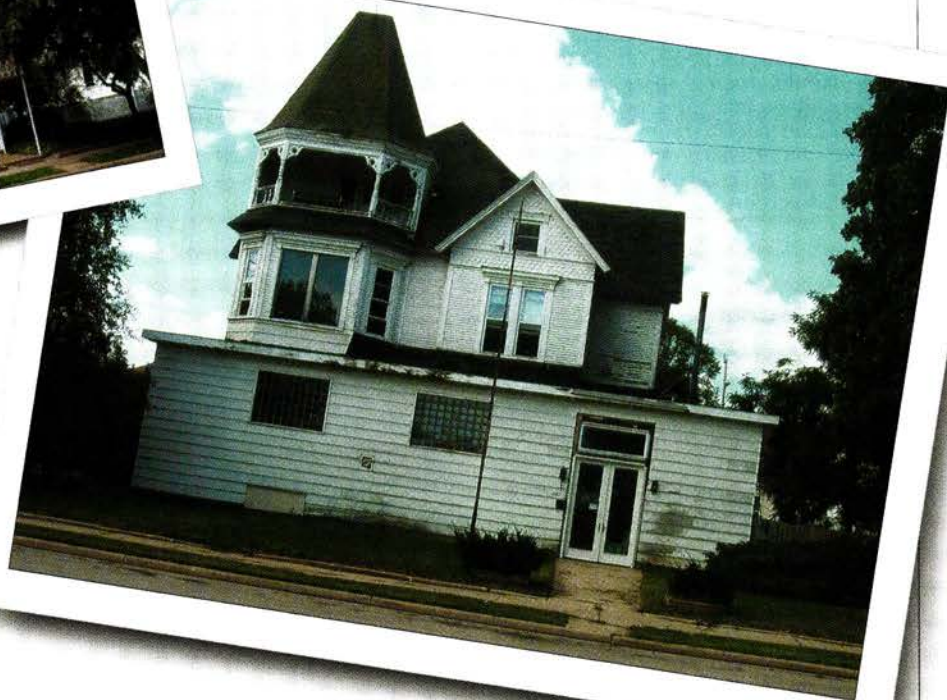
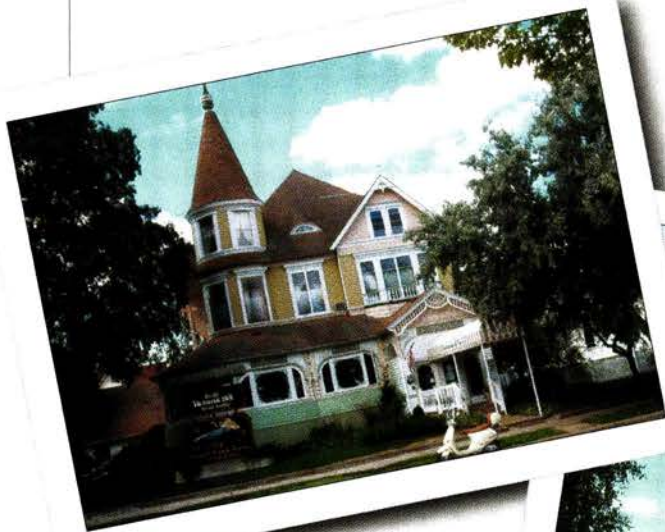
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STRASBURG, VA — Shenandoah Valley. Circa 1870 brick Italianate on 2/3-acre in historic district. Tranquility, mountain views, in-town conveniences. 3,000+ sq. ft.; four bedrooms; two newly updated full baths; two parlors; four fireplaces; walnut staircase; expansive halls; country kitchen with new appliances; walk-in attic, walk-out basement; new metal roof. Work at home or commute to DC area. \$439,500. masmax@shentel.net or 540-465-4566.



Off with Her Throne

At their crowns, these Queen Anne houses retain the regal, upright bearing befitting royalty, with their steeply pitched, irregular roofs that tower over commoners. Their thrones are a different matter. While Her Majesty on the left sits on an ornate, asymmetric pedestal, Her Majesty on the right appears perched on a stark corrugated box. We know that Queen Annes are a bit eccentric, often draped in bold multicolored siding made from different textures and materials. But the wide clapboards, double glass doors, and waffle-patterned grilles over square windows seem to stray a bit into the realm of madness. Perhaps they account for this sovereign's pallor and stiff upper lip. 🏠

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