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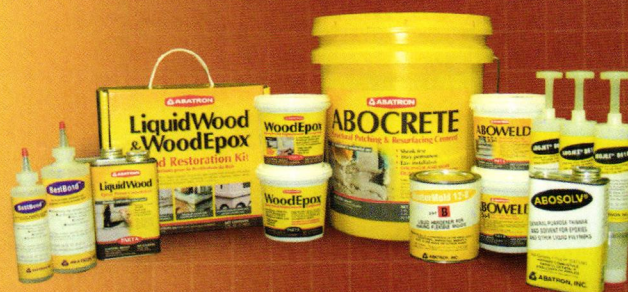


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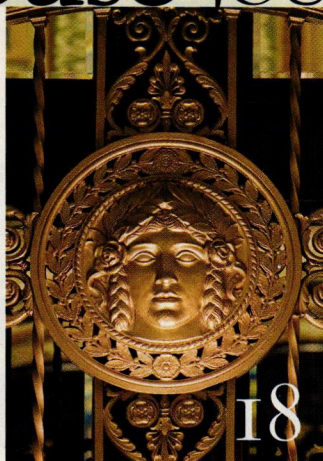
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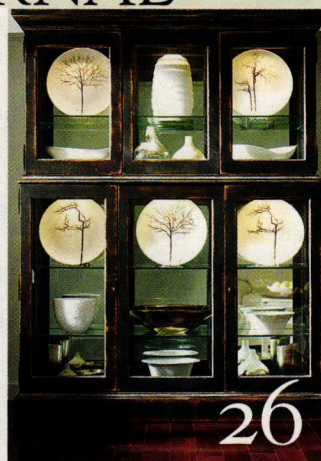


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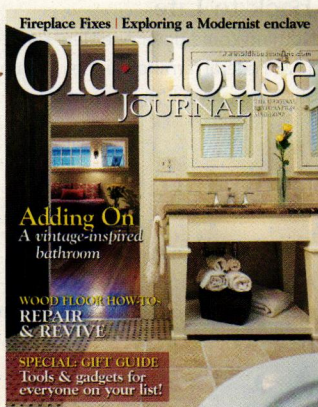
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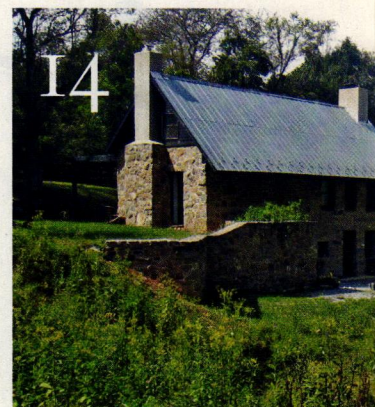
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SPECIAL GIFT GUIDE
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Cover: Photo by George Heinrich. A bathroom addition on a 1931 Minneapolis Tudor is inspired by the home's original details. Story page 50. Visit oldhouseonline.com.



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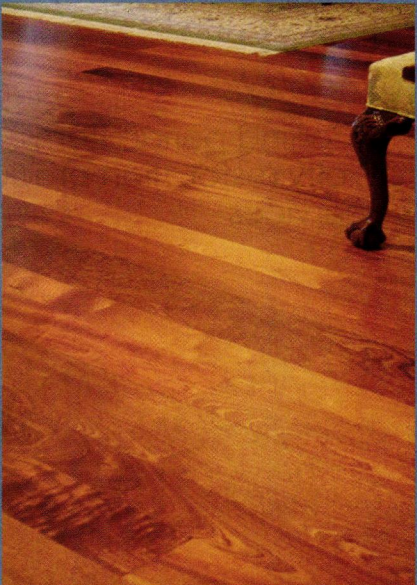


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Additions 101

Considering adding on to your old house? Or maybe you're trying to undo damage from a well-intentioned but poorly executed addition courtesy of your home's previous owners. Before you start reconfiguring your floor plan, brush up on addition do's and don'ts in our special compendium, which features loads of advice, tours of additions done right (like the Tudor pictured above and on page 50), and a gallery of our favorite sore-thumb enlargements from the Remuddling page.

How To Choose a Floor Finish

If our simple step-by-step floor recoating procedure (page 44) has you primed to breathe new life into your hardwood, you've got an important choice to make: oil or water? Oil- and water-based finishes each have their own pros and cons; before you purchase, consult our online guide to determine which one best suits your project.

Contest: Home for the Holidays

We spend so much time working on our houses that we often forget about one of the greatest joys of old-house ownership: gussying them up! As we head into the holiday juggernaut, we'd like to celebrate the joy of decorating for the season with a little friendly competition. Think your Thanksgiving centerpiece, Victorian ornament collection, or New Year's baby has what it takes to outshine the rest and win you a free year of OHJ? Find out how to enter (and vote!) at MyOldHouseOnline.com.



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Rob Howard *for* Town and Country

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Perhaps that explains why magazine readership has actually increased versus five years ago. The top 25 magazines continue to reach a wider audience than the top 25 prime-time TV shows. And despite the escalating war for consumers' eyeballs, readers spend an average of 43 minutes per issue.

What accounts for this ongoing attraction? Why do nine out of ten American adults choose to spend so much time with an unabashedly analog medium?

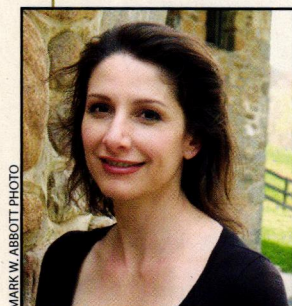
One enduring truth: people of every age love the experience of reading a magazine, even when the same content is available online. So curl up, get comfortable and enjoy the rest of this magazine.

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editor's note

Thoughts of Home



MARK W. ABBOTT PHOTO

I'LL START WITH A CONFESSION: That "friend" in last issue's note—the one looking at house after house with disappointing updates—was me. I'd been viewing properties in southeastern Michigan because I'll soon be relocating there from the Washington, D.C. suburbs with my family. (I'll continue editing my favorite magazine, thanks to modern technology and my accommodating bosses.) In the end, our house decision—like most people's—was an emotional one; there was one home we just couldn't get out of our minds. It's a

real beauty, a 1929 Colonial Revival designed by a noted Detroit-area architect—and it's almost completely original. As we wait for the loan approval and make plans to move forward with the purchase, I feel like I've hit the jackpot on the home front. But I imagine there will be several unexpected repairs that will pop up over the course of our first year in this home, especially since it hasn't been lived in full-time for several years. So rest assured, I'll be keeping in touch with the real issues we're facing with our old house.

On the subject of troubleshooting, in this issue we address two common problem areas in old houses: floors and fireplaces. Wood floors are one of the most defining features inside old houses, but after a century of use, they can start to show their age. Two how-to articles address ways to nurse them back to good health. Contributing editor Ray Tschoepe shows us how to replace damaged floorboards and install spot repairs called Dutchman patches (see "Fixing the Floor," page 56). The other story, by expert wood refinisher Bruce Johnson, explains that you don't always need to strip floors to make them pretty again—sometimes all it takes is a quick refinishing coat (see "A Brand New Coat," page 44). Old fireplaces also can be plagued by problems, but one of the most common is a lack of functionality—repurposed through the years to vent a major appliance like a furnace, they're no longer able to burn wood. While the fix here is an involved one, newer technologies—like cast-in-place liners—can help provide innovative solutions (see "Fireplace Fixes," page 36).

Quick fixes just weren't in the cards for the couple in this month's Old-House Living story. Their emotional house purchase brought them to a building that was almost falling down. But with time, patience, and determination, they brought it back. It's a stunning project, and one I'm sure you'll enjoy reading about (see "Back to Life," page 28).

As we head into a new year, I'm hoping we'll hear from more of you about the types of challenges and projects you're facing in your own houses. Your letters and questions help us put together a better magazine, so don't be a stranger—keep that communication coming. Wishing you a great 2011.

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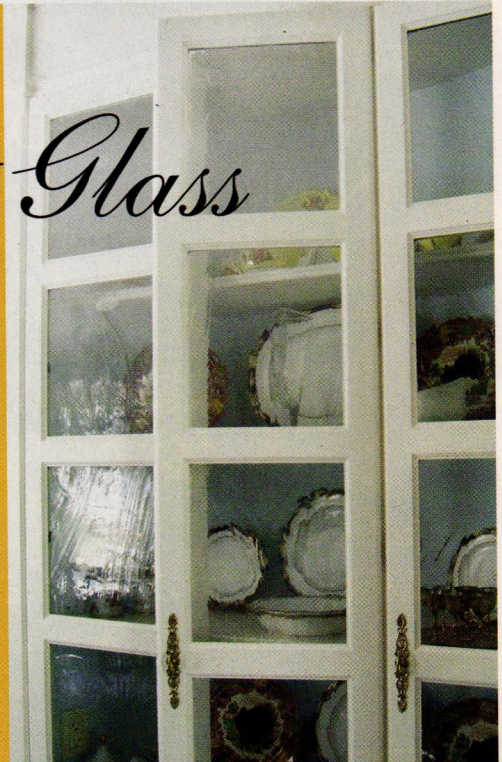
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letters

Inspection Corrections

As a state-licensed home inspector, I take umbrage with "Scrutiny on the Bounty" [October/November]. Most home inspectors I know won't go up on a roof except in rare instances. Roofs in excellent condition are inherently dangerous; a roof on an old house, especially one in need of repairs, can be deadly.

Ms. Powell says most states don't license home inspectors. In fact, nearly 30 states either license or certify home inspectors, and most do so based on a national standard. She also failed to mention the need for pest or radon inspections—many home inspectors are also licensed radon inspectors. Unless he or she is state-licensed as a lead or asbestos inspector, home inspectors can only state they suspect the presence of those substances.

Finally, Ms. Powell didn't state the most compelling reason for hiring a home inspector—they have no vested interest in whether you purchase the home. Most of the other participants in the transaction (agents, brokers, lenders, etc.) receive a commission only if the sale goes through; a home inspector receives a flat fee no matter what happens.

John E. Baker
via e-mail

Color Cues

I just received the October/November 2010 issue of *Old-House Journal*, with Beth Goulart's interesting article on the Dallas Foursquare. My wife and I are renovating a 1908 house in St. Paul, Minnesota, and we are working on an exterior paint



scheme that is quite similar to this one. Do you happen to know the paint colors that were used?

David Kirkpatrick
via e-mail

Reader Tip of the Month

To fix the squeaky, bouncy hardwood floors in our bedroom, my husband drilled holes into the ¾"-thick planks and countersunk screws into the joists. He then put dowels into the holes and cut/sanded them until they were even with the floors. Because he drilled the holes at regular intervals, it looks natural to the floors. Almost all of the noise is gone, but there's still a little left to give the place some character.

LoriMae Reynolds
Via MyOldHouseOnline.com

Got a great tip to share with other old-house lovers? Let us know at OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com.

Homeowner Clark Mitchell reports that they used Sherwin-Williams paint in Kale Green (for the body of the house), Alabaster (trim), and Ceremonial Gold (accents). —Eds.

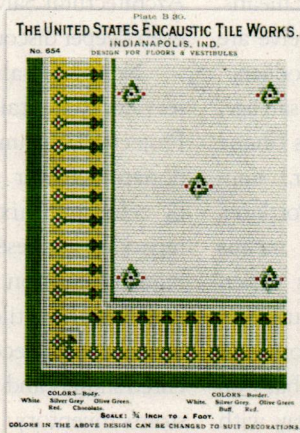
The articles in OHJ that I enjoy the most are those that detail the most authentic ways to restore an old house. Yet in “True Colors” [August/September], the author states that “today’s debilitated color sensibility isn’t up for living with” the bold colors of the 1920s, so only the “weaker” shades recommended for Sears houses are listed. Why didn’t the article list both versions, giving readers a choice of how authentic to be?

Doug Klotz
Portland, Oregon

Unfortunately, we didn’t have room to include swatches of the original Seroco colors, but you’ll notice that we kept their names in the text. To match these up with their modern Sherwin-Williams counterparts, download our color chart at oldhouseonline.com/paint-colors-for-sears-houses. —Eds.

Tile Inspiration

Every issue of *Old-House Journal* offers new insights into old house renovations and repair, but the October/November issue really hit home. Reading “Patterns in Time,” I finally found what I would like to use in the renovation of our bathrooms—the green and white floor tile on page 28 [right]. Do you have a close-up of this pattern?



Jim McPherson
via Old-House Online

We checked with contributor and catalog aficionado Bo Sullivan, who sent us the illustration, and he suggested getting in touch with the folks at Vintage Catalogs (vintagecatalogs.com) for a more detailed image. About the pattern, he added, “The border shows the influence of European Art Nouveau, with its elongated and conventionalized plant forms used in a repeating vertical orientation. The body fill motif is hard to make out, but it is interlocking triangles, each with two nipped corners—a very unusual pattern.” —Eds.

Send your letters to OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com, or *Old-House Journal*, 4125 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151. We reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity.



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ON THE RADAR

Salvation Through Salvage

For years, architectural salvage has been a lifeline for old-house restorers, with retail stores offering carefully edited collections of period artifacts. But there's another option on the scene, too—the non-profit salvage store.

Think of them as a Goodwill for DIYers—in addition to selling reclaimed building materials, many outposts weave community outreach and environmental stewardship into their mission.

"Our goal is to keep things from going into the landfill and get them back into service," says Phyllis Jordan, executive director of The Green Project, a 16-year-old nonprofit salvage center in New Orleans' Martigny-Bywater neighborhood. The Green Project's focus on the environment means that nearly all of the donations they receive are sold, resulting in a varied assortment of products.

"Instead of just taking high-end salvage, we accept anything that's reusable," says Shane Endicott, director of the ReBuilding Center, a similar venture in Portland, Oregon. This means some sifting is generally required to uncover treasures at nonprofit salvage stores, but you could come away with a good bargain—most resell items for 50 to 90 percent below the market rates for similar new items. (Some, like the



Old doorknobs (above) and windows (below) are standard salvage fare at New Orleans' Green Project warehouse.

Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit, offer even deeper discounts for low-income residents.)

Nonprofit salvage stores also may offer extra services that retail outposts don't. At The Green Project, for example, community members can donate leftover paint, which volunteers sort by color and mix together in big batches, then repackage and resell. The ReBuilding Center offers regular hands-on workshops covering everything from installing tile to re-hanging a door, and sells furniture and decorative accessories made by talented staffers and volunteers from materials in the store's inventory.

"We're taking something society considers a waste and turning it into an asset," says Endicott.

To locate a nonprofit salvage store near you, visit oldhouseonline.com/where-to-shop-for-architectural-salvage.



OLD-HOUSE RESOURCE

How Green Is Your House?

We've all heard the phrase "the greenest building is the one already built"—but just how much greener is it, exactly? If you're the type who likes to back up claims with cold hard numbers, check out the energy calculators on thegreenestbuilding.org. Plugging in your home's square footage and type of construction tell you how much energy it would take to tear it down and build a new struc-

ture in its place. For comparison's sake, you can convert this number into gallons of gas to show that, for example, tearing down a 1,500-square-foot wood-frame house would waste nearly 10,000 gallons of gas. Whip out that sobering figure the next time someone asks why you're determined to revive an old house instead of knocking it down and starting from scratch.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

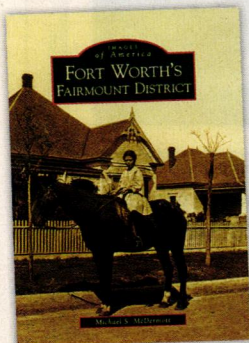
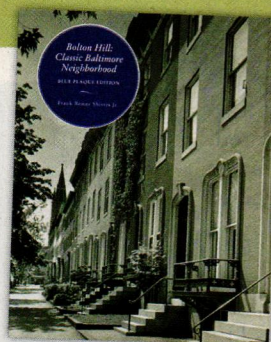
There's no doubt that old buildings provide a tangible link to the past lives of our towns and cities—but it can be difficult to separate them from their modern-day context and imagine them as they once existed. For residents of Baltimore and Fort Worth, two books help to illuminate the origins of their cities' historic neighborhoods.

In *Fort Worth's Fairmount District*, resident

Michael S. McDermott examines the genesis of one of the city's most venerable historic districts. Archival photos of streetscapes, family portraits, and community gatherings—many provided by current and former

Fairmount residents—trace the neighborhood's rise from desolate prairie to thriving streetcar suburb through its near-abandonment in the 1960s and its modern return to prosperity.

Similarly, *Bolton Hill: Classic Baltimore Neighborhood* follows the evolution of the upper-class enclave north of downtown that was originally advertised as offering "fine residences for better citizens." Weaving in memoirs from original residents, historic guidebook entries, and photos and line drawings of the neighborhood's traditional houses, author and longtime resident Frank Remer Shivers, Jr. paints a rich portrait of one of Baltimore's first suburbs.



IT'S TIME TO...

Order Heirloom Seeds

Spring planting might be the last thing on your mind right now, but that will change once heirloom seed catalogs start to appear around January. Although many seed providers now do business year-round online, winter is a great time to order seeds, because supplies are plentiful. Keep seeds cool and dry until it's time to plant by sticking them in the fridge; many seeds can be started indoors 6 to 12 weeks before the last frost. For a directory of nurseries that sell heirloom seeds, see oldhouseonline.com/heirloom-nursery-directory.

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ask ohj

Q: Last year I had my old stone house stripped of plaster and repointed. Should it be sealed? The contractor says it's not necessary; others say it is. What do you think?

A: **Jacob Arndt:** Using a sealer on masonry seems like a logical choice: Seal the surface like a raincoat to keep the water out, and the problems associated with damp masonry will go away. Many have tried following this logic before, coming up with different chemical compounds to do the job—I've even read that some medieval builders soaked foundation stone in linseed oil—but so far no one has come up with a product that's better than just leaving the masonry alone.

Around the world, many old masonry buildings have lasted hundreds of years without ever having had sealers applied to them. Even primitive clay and straw plaster mixtures will last for generations without sealers. What's more, some sealers may actually cause damage by trapping



AMY KOLCZAK PHOTO

When it comes to masonry buildings, sealers can sometimes do more harm than good, trapping water into the wall. A better bet is to divert moisture away from the building.

moisture in the wall.

The most effective way to avoid water damage is to keep excess moisture away from your façade by maintaining roof and gutter systems and by keeping the grade sloped away from the foundation. Monitor the steady drip of condensation on air conditioners, diverting water with sheet-metal flashing or a plastic tube. Good airflow and insulation also will help control condensation by reducing thermal differences between exterior and interior surfaces.

A periodic maintenance schedule, similar to the preventive maintenance your car receives, will have the greatest benefit. Once or twice a year, inspect gutter systems and use a flexible tent pole or stout wire to clear any built-up debris from common backup points in downspouts, then flush with water. Inspect the attic rafters, fascia, and soffits for any sign of moisture; if you discover water damage, it's likely a sign that you need to install ice-dam protection (such as roof vents, baffles, or membranes) to prevent ice from

pushing under the shingles. Observe water discharge around the structure, keeping the grade sloped well away from the foundation, and make sure downspouts are diverting water clear of the foundation. Also inspect mechanicals for any source of leaking water. Finally, old chimneys can be full of ash at the base and harbor moisture that will eventually deteriorate the base and cause problems above. Most chimneys have a small trapdoor at the base for the removal of built-up ash.

As for those chemical sealers, forget them: They are only temporary applications, probably addressing the wrong source, and their cure may be worse than the disease. As with most things in life, a little prevention goes a long way on masonry buildings. 🏠



Built-up debris in gutters can lead to water spilling onto stone façades. Give gutters a thorough cleaning once or twice a year.



Jacob Arndt, principal of Northwestern Masonry & Stone Co., is a preservation consultant and architectural stone carver.

Have questions about your old house? We'd love to answer them in future issues. Please send your questions to **Ask OHJ, 4125 Lafayette Center Dr., Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151** or by e-mail to OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com.

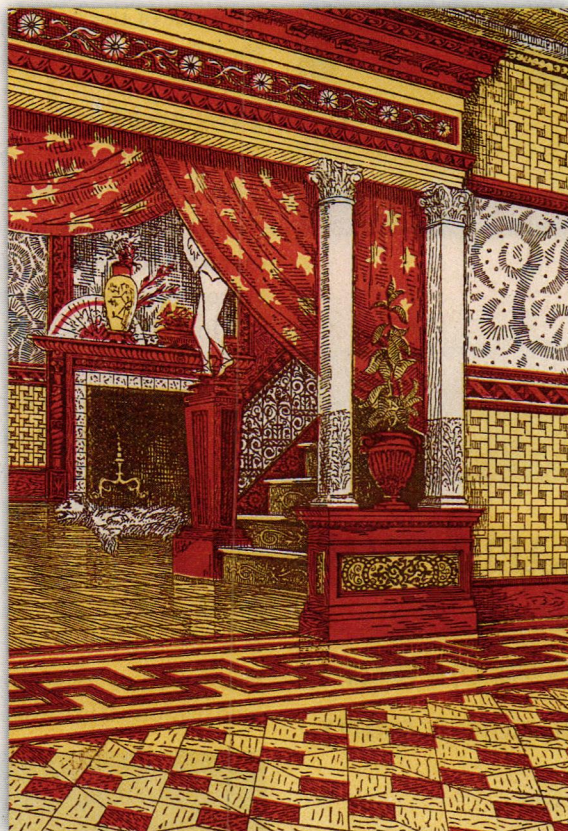


Plate No. 322, Interior Decorations & Artistic Wood Floors, J.W. Boughton, Philadelphia, 1893

Mosaic Mystery

A PRIM AND PROPER VICTORIAN PARLOR at first glance, closer investigation of the setting above reveals an ominous undercurrent. The strange half-observed warrior on the newel post, dead polar bear in front of the fireplace, too-tall potted plant, and vaguely threatening wiggles in the wallpaper leave a mysterious sense that something sinister lurks just behind the blood-red draperies...

J.W. Boughton was no mystery. Established in New York in 1868 and moving to Philadelphia in 1871, the company was the country's leading manufacturer of Gilded Age decorative inlaid and patterned wood floors. This interior is from Boughton's 1893 catalog, which included more than 40 pages of parquet designs, as well as mosaic wood wainscoting and an extensive collection of elaborate Moorish and Egyptian fretwork grilles—award winners at that year's World's Fair in Chicago.

"We cover Walls and Ceilings, as well as Floors and Stairs, and can produce the most pleasing and harmonious effects from our large variety of designs," states the caption. Of course, one person's "pleasing and harmonious effects" are another's crimes against taste and restraint. Perhaps the real mystery is why anyone would want such a preponderance of parquet in the first place. 🐻

Bo Sullivan is the historian for Rejuvenation and the owner of Arcalus Period Design in Portland, Oregon. He is an avid collector and researcher of original trade catalogs.

old-house toolbox



Japanese Handsaw

When it comes to quality and ease of use, these Eastern imports often win out over their American counterparts.

BY RAY TSCHOEPE

Walk down the tool aisle of your local home improvement center, and you'll see dozens of specialized power saws. Yet with all these choices at our fingertips, sometimes the task at hand requires nothing more than a simple handsaw. If you've purchased a handsaw in the past 20 years, it's likely to be a Japanese-style saw or some Western reinterpretation.

A Bit of History

After World War II, many carpenters turned to portable motorized saws for speed and efficiency. As a result, the demand for handsaws fell. Quality decreased with each passing year as interest waned. The only readily available saws were cheaply made, with little attention to the detail and quality that carpenters had come to expect.

As a result, importers began to market a Japanese saw that cut on the pull stroke, rather than the push stroke like their American counterparts. At first a curiosity, Japanese saws grew in popularity when craftsmen and homeowners found that the

saws were usually affordable, comfortable to use, and sharp right out of the box—features that more than made up for the necessary adjustments in cutting style.

Pros and Cons

Japanese-style saws have a number of advantages over American saws. Because they don't have to be pushed through wood, they can accommodate thinner blades without buckling, and without the need for reinforcement in the form of a thick piece of steel bent over the upper edge of the saw.

In order for blades to cut without binding, the teeth of the blade are "set," or bent slightly to each side in an alternating pattern. A Western-style saw requires a significant set, while Japanese versions require very little. As a result, the kerf (sawcut width) of the Japanese saw is very narrow, and only a minimal amount of wood is removed; hence, the saw requires less effort to use.

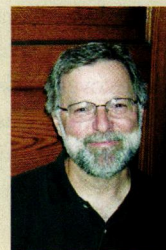
There are only a few disadvantages to Japanese saws. Sawdust is always deposited on the cut line and must be blown away repeatedly. Also, the thinner blade is more likely to wander, particularly in hardwoods with irregular grain patterns. The thin, very sharp teeth are prone to breakage when encountering knots or open-grain hardwoods like white oak, so extra care must be taken when sawing tough woods.



Blades that haven't been induction-hardened (evidenced by a blackening of the metal along the teeth) can be sharpened, but since the teeth are ground in a complex cutting pattern, it's a difficult task that requires specialized files and lots of patience. Finally, the short length of the

blades available from local suppliers (7" to 10") can limit the size of the material cut. (Some specialized suppliers stock longer blades, although standard blades are generally sufficient for most everyday work.)

Even with their drawbacks, Japanese pull saws are an excellent value when you need a quality handsaw, and newer Western-style saws just aren't cutting it. 🪚

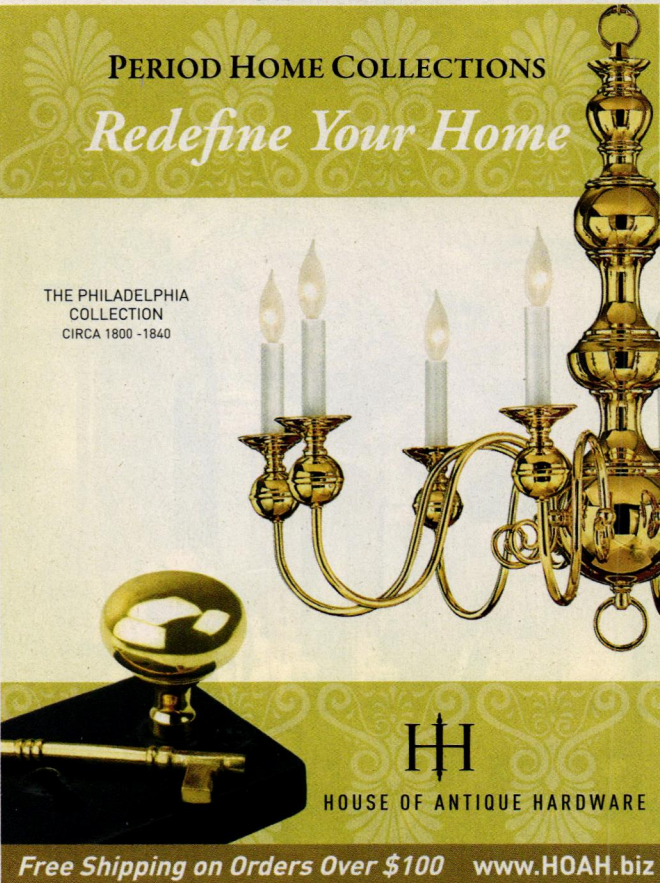


Ray Tschoepe, one of OHJ's contributing editors, is the director of conservation at the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust in Philadelphia.

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historic retreats



The Palmer House

Chicago's landmark is a sumptuous, must-see window into another time.

By DEMETRA APOSPOROS

To understand why the Palmer House is so special, you need only enter the lobby. Its ceiling, resplendent with 21 panels of Greek mythological scenes that spring to life in rich paints and raised plaster, could rival that of the Sistine Chapel.



The Palmer House's grand lobby boasts a remarkable ceiling. The two winged statues in the foreground were created by Louis Comfort Tiffany. INSET: The hotel circa 1900.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PALMER HOUSE



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUMENELLE, INC.

Chandeliers in the Grand and State Ballrooms are 9' tall, and had to be hung from specially designed dollies during work to restore them—a project that included, among other things, removing and cleaning the fixtures' 80,000 crystals.

In fact, when the ceiling was restored a decade ago, it was at the hands of Liddo Lippe, the same master craftsman who repaired Michelangelo's Vatican City masterpiece. Lippe worked flat on his back, raised on scaffolding, throughout the night so as not to disturb the guests. "We kind of made a show of him," says Ken Price, the Palmer House's director of public relations. "We'd roll out the scaffolding every evening around 9 and play Mozart while he worked on the ceiling."

The ceiling is but one of many grand flourishes throughout the hotel, which was built by developer Potter Palmer in the French Empire style as a wedding present for his 21-year-old bride, Bertha Honoré. It opened on September 26, 1871, just 12 days before the Great Chicago Fire, which it did not escape.

Determined to rebuild, Potter immediately commissioned a new hotel, requesting that it be fireproof. The visionary building, made essentially of cement, was completed in 18 months' time, and funded by a \$1.7 million personal loan. Palmer worried about lighting the new hotel with candles, so he started looking for a bet-

ter way. Legend has it that after hearing of a young inventor in Menlo Park, New Jersey, Potter became the first to install Edison's creation—the light bulb—in a public building.

The new incarnation of the Palmer House quickly became known as the most elegant hotel in post-fire Chicago, and was so popular that in 1923 it was significantly enlarged. A new 25-story building, the third Palmer House, was designed by noted architectural firm Holabird & Roche (which later became Holabird & Root), and erected on the same site—the previous hotel was disassembled in two stages as the new one was erected, so the hotel never lost a day of business.

Modern and Historic

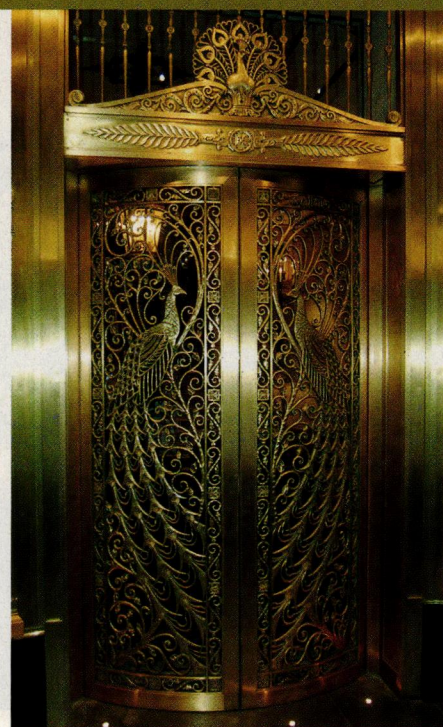
Today, that 25-story building has recently undergone a \$178 million restoration that returned its original luster while integrating modern gathering places—restaurants, a spa, and a fitness club—into its historic fabric.

Projects that sound straightforward—cleaning the chandeliers in the Grand and State Ballrooms—quickly turned into a

logistical challenge, given that the chandeliers in question are 9' tall and weigh more than a ton. "Because of their sheer size, they couldn't be taken off of the property," explains Price. The solution, devised by lighting restoration company Lumenelle, Inc., was to set up workstations on the premises, where each giant fixture was disassembled, cleaned, repaired, and rewired. Mapping and cataloging the chandeliers' 80,000 crystals so they could be returned to the exact same spot was a logistical tour de force. "People think it was just a cleaning, but these chandeliers were completely restored," says Peter Janko, president of Lumenelle. "They were brought down and taken apart, with each piece—crystal and metal—individually cleaned. Then they got all new sockets and wires up to UL standards."

Smaller chandeliers grace the Red Lacquer Room, a space whose sumptuous gilding and hand-carved friezes were painstakingly repaired. The Palmers themselves bought these Austrian chandeliers on a trip to Europe; they are festooned in crude garnets per an aristocratic custom of the time, decking out the lighting in

historic retreats



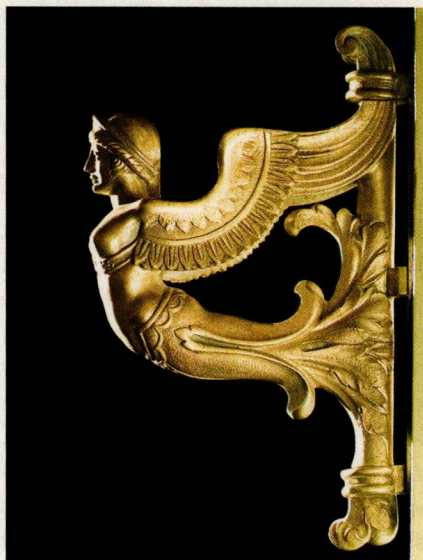
LEFT: DEMETRA APOPOROS PHOTO; FAR LEFT AND BELOW: PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PALMER HOUSE

semi-precious stones.

Touring the Palmer House, it seems that such visual and historical riches wait around every corner. Off of the Monroe Street entrance, visitors are greeted by a pair of enormous hand-forged bronze doors, each adorned with filigreed peacocks, their delicate heads nearly touching the door frame, and their elaborate tail feathers trailing down to the floor. The doors were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany to front the C.D. Peacock jewelry store, a landmark Chicago business—the first incorporated in the city—that was located in the Palmer House for decades. Each door weighs more than half a ton. “I can’t even begin to tell you what they’re worth,” says Price, whose personal hotel stationery bears a stylized embossed gold peacock. “They’re priceless real estate art.”

Time Travels

Then there’s the Empire Room, reached via a prominent staircase in the lobby and through a set of black French doors. Open them, and you’re transported to another era, one where performers like Judy Garland, Ella Fitzgerald, and Liberace



entertained diners on a stage so close you could touch it. Frank Sinatra’s career kicked off here when he appeared onstage with Tommy Dorsey, so unknown at the time that he wasn’t even on the bill. This room, with its dramatic gold-tinged Ionic columns and gilded friezes, also has been meticulously restored. “The room was completely regilded,” says Price. “Teams of artisans and craftsmen—a virtual army of people—worked on it for nearly half a year

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tiffany touches throughout the hotel include an ethereal medallion on the lobby rail, peacock doors that once fronted an in-house jewelry store, and artful, angelic hardware in the Empire Room that serves as a tieback for securing the latches of open casement windows.

to bring back its original grandeur, guided by original drawings and vintage photos.”

Today the Palmer House is the oldest U.S. hotel in continual operation—it celebrated its 140th anniversary in September—having remained open throughout all of its rebuilding and restoration projects. Yet despite its well-documented and storied history, the hotel managed to keep some secrets for decades. The two bronze winged statues gracing the lobby, for example, were thought for decades to have been done by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, the Italian sculptor commissioned to build the Statue of Liberty, largely because of the masculine nature of their faces. In fact, the hotel discovered in the late 1940s that they were created by Louis Comfort Tiffany after then-owner Conrad Hilton commissioned a study of all of the artwork; they’re now known to be Tiffany’s largest statues, weighing more than a ton apiece. “The

reason Tiffany became so famous in the Midwest is because of the Palmer family," Price explains. "They gave him tremendous exposure."

Thanks to Potter Palmer's vision and determination, today we can all be exposed to the hotel's many treasures. 🏨

The Palmer House

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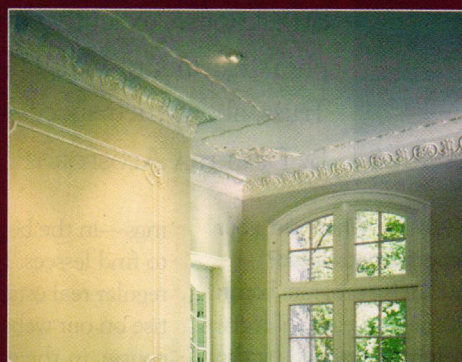
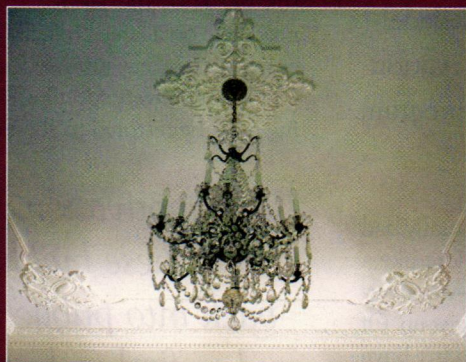
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PALMER HOUSE



Double rooms are outfitted in textiles that draw from the colors and architectural details of the hotel.

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preservation perspectives



Work by a recent lessee, the Trolley Car Café (left), restored the missing hipped roof (below) on a building that was once a public bathhouse.



COURTESY FAIRMOUNT PARK TRUST (ALL)

Projects in the Park



Historic leasing programs can be an innovative way to both save buildings and bring new services to public spaces. We spoke with Lucy Strackhouse, executive director of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust, about their successful leasing program.

By DEMETRA APOSPOROS

DEMETRA APOSPOROS: When did your historic leasing program get started?

LUCY STRACKHOUSE: Our program began in the early 1990s with a piece of legislation in Philadelphia approved by the City Council. It provided the Trust with the ability to lease publicly owned historic properties in Fairmount Park.

DA: How does it work?

LS: Very early on the Trust was given a list of 43 properties owned by the city, and charged with finding uses compatible with both the building itself, and with Fairmount Park. We put out requests for proposals to different organizations to see if there was interest in leasing build-

ings—in the beginning we actually had to find lessees. Now we act more like a regular real estate company—we advertise on our website and put signs up. Of course, in the early '90s we didn't have a website; with the Internet, it is much easier to get word out about a building.

DA: How do you determine what's an appropriate use of the building?

LS: Everything in Fairmount Park is zoned recreational, so one thing we try to ensure is that the proposed usage is compatible with where the building is located—some buildings are near residential neighborhoods, and some are in very isolated areas. We carefully consider

all proposals with our due process, which includes input from the local community, the Trust Board, Parks and Recreation staff, and the District Council member.

DA: How do you work with lessees to rehabilitate the buildings? Do you provide guidelines, oversee work, or actually do the work for them?

LS: It's a combination, depending on the needs of the lessee. Some may need help on a large project. On small projects, they may just need guidance. Our leases are very specific: The building must be restored to the Secretary

Our motivation is to bring these buildings back into public use and to find responsible tenants that will maintain and preserve our buildings.

of the Interior's standard of preservation; the lessee can't decide to paint a building with non-historic colors. We have a lengthy approval process and monitor every project pretty closely.



Another lessee, the Cedars Café, has brought public restrooms and a place to gather and grab a healthy bite to a remote, rugged area of Fairmount Park.

DA: Do lessees pay rent, or does their care and feeding of these buildings serve as payment?

LS: The rent varies, but most leases do require rents. We look at the market value of the lease if the building were up to par, then look at what capital improvements are needed

from the lessee for rehabilitation, and then we determine the rent—keeping in mind, of course, that the Trust is a nonprofit, so we aren't looking to make a substantial profit as a landlord would.

DA: Must lessees also be nonprofits?

LS: No—we have quite a few that are nonprofits, but we also have commercial operators that run cafés. We're happy to consider any proposed use, as long as the proposal is appropriate for the building and the park.

About Fairmount

Fairmount Park is Philadelphia's park network, encompassing 9,200 acres of citywide park systems and 63 neighborhood parks, which includes a significant number of historic buildings. The Fairmount Park Preservation Trust, a nonprofit organization, was founded to help preserve, rehabilitate, and manage those buildings.



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DA: Who are your newest lessees?

LS: We have two. The Trolley Car Café was a challenging project. It was a public bathhouse, but what made it interesting and gave it unique character was the roof, a hip roof similar to a little hat sitting on a brick box. It was quite costly to restore it, but the lessee was able to do so, and we're thankful that they did. The finished building brought a new amenity where none existed before: a café, bike rentals, public restrooms, and a welcome/information kiosk to East Falls. The other lessee, Cedars Café, was a very charming late 19th-century building in a beautiful rugged area with very few public services; it now provides public restrooms and a place to sit and visit and enjoy healthy dining.

DA: What's the Trust's main motivation for leasing buildings?

LS: Our motivation is to bring these buildings back into public use and to find responsible tenants who will maintain and preserve our buildings. We conduct annual inspections and document issues that could develop in the next two years to help tenants plan maintenance and repairs. These are fabulous buildings that Philadelphia cannot afford to maintain, so we're trying to make them all self-sufficient and available for public access.

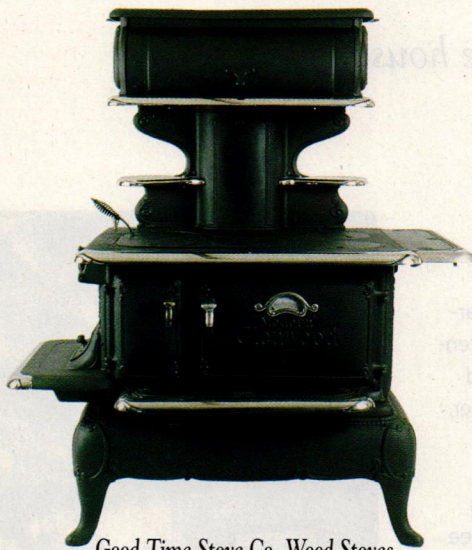
DA: Do you have other properties up for lease now?

LS: Yes, several. One we just started marketing, which may be a little difficult to find a tenant for, is called the Strawberry Mansion Music Pavilion. It was designed by Horace Trumbauer and was originally used for concerts—we have some great historic photos of people sitting on the grounds, listening to music. That building is going to require a substantial amount of rehabilitation, but it could be a fantastic music venue again, or even a farmer's market. 🏡

For more information, visit fairmountparktrust.org.

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BY CLARE MARTIN

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What a Gas

Vintage industrial lights are all the rage these days, but most examples on the market draw inspiration from the early 20th century. Rejuvenation's new gaslight-inspired fixtures take the concept back even further, to a time when Industrial Revolution-era factories were lit by simply constructed

fixtures burning acetylene gas. The Gas Industrial collection—featuring three pendants (including the Rockwell, left) and one wall-mounted fixture—faithfully imitates the spare beauty of their unadorned piping and caged globes. Rockwell pendant, \$520. Call (888) 401-1900, or visit rejuvenation.com.



Pattern Play

Conceived in 12th-century Syria, intricate damask wallpapers were once the height of elegance, reserved for the most formal rooms of a house. But today, vibrant, updated damasks have taken on a casual air while still retaining their time-honored sophistication. Thibaut is the latest company to offer a new spin on the pattern, infusing it with fresh colors and surprising textures. Their Damask Resource 3 wallpaper collection features 12 different designs, from the monochromatic Drexel to the subtly shimmery Taddington (left). From \$41 per roll. Call (800) 223-0704, or visit thibaut.com.

Coffer It Up

Popular since ancient Greece and Rome (the Pantheon is perhaps the most famous example), coffered ceilings have long been a simple way to add architectural interest to a room. What hasn't been so simple is creating those coffers—until now. Armstrong's Easy Elegance coffers fit easily into dropped ceilings, taking a room from institutional to traditional in just a week-end's time. (The lightweight, paintable panels also can be used on plaster or dry-wall ceilings after installing a metal grid.) \$2.48 per square foot. Call (800) 233-3823, or visit armstrongceilings.com.



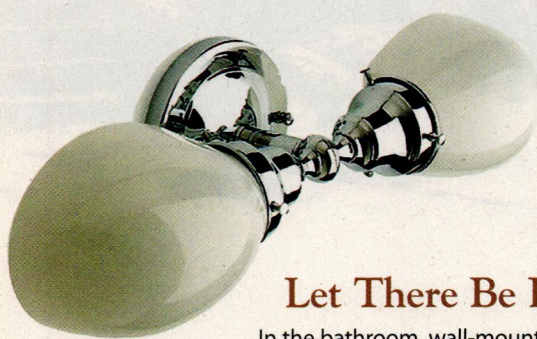
Culinary Classic

Home Depot has rarely been synonymous with period style, but that's about to change, thanks to the influence of Martha Stewart. In conjunction with MasterBrand Cabinets, the arbiter of refined taste has launched a new kitchen collection at the home-improvement chain. Details like board-and-batten construction, glass-front doors, and period-inspired hardware make regular appearances (as in the Seal Harbor line, above, inspired by a New England coach house), providing owners of vintage houses with a raft of appropriate kitchen options. Prices for cabinetry start at \$96 per linear foot; hardware ranges from \$3 to \$7 per piece. Call (800) 466-3337, or visit homedepot.com.



Iron Works

Sturdy cast iron sinks are an old-house staple, but they don't always accommodate the modern luxuries and configurations that homeowners seek when revamping kitchens. American Standard's new line of undermount cast iron sinks, however, marries traditional style with updated conveniences like offset drains and deep bowls for cleaning pots and pans. The 16" x 20" bar sink (above) is perfect for adding historical character to a central island. Bar sink, from \$260. Call (800) 442-1902, or visit americanstandard-us.com.



Let There Be Light

In the bathroom, wall-mounted fixtures aren't just practical—they're also a callback to the early 20th century, when the concept of task lighting in the bath was just taking hold. Waterworks' new lighting collection features a variety of traditionally styled wall-mounts perfect for replicating period style, from the Colonial Revival-esque Ashley to the Cameron (above), which calls to mind Deco-era turtle-shell lights. Cameron double-arm sconce, \$560. Call (800) 899-6757, or visit waterworks.com.



Real Simple

Often, furniture from—or inspired by—centuries past can feel as if it belongs in a museum, not a house. For homeowners searching for classic style without the stuffiness, Habersham has created the American Treasures collection, which takes timeless forms and simplifies them with distressed finishes and straightforward

details. The pieces (including the Bennington curio cabinet, above) draw on a wide range of early American influences, from Caribbean colonial to frontier rustic. Bennington cabinet, from \$11,239. Call (706) 886-1476, or visit habershamhome.com.

OLD-HOUSE LIVING



The restored home is picture-perfect today, but it took a lot of work to get it there, including (opposite, clockwise from top left) transforming an ancient summer kitchen into a family room, creating a bump-out addition for a new dining room, stripping off an attached woodshed, and reviving the front façade with a fresh coat of paint.



Back to Life

An 1825 Federal farmhouse in upstate New York was the picture of decay and disrepair—but to one determined couple, it was also a blueprint for their dream house.

STORY BY CHARITY VOGEL ♦ PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK

When people say a house makes time stand still, it's usually meant as a compliment, a way of saying that the home resembles nothing so much as a beautiful, carefully preserved history book.

But there's another kind of time stoppage that can happen in old houses, and it's not pretty at all. That's what Mike and Irena Guinness encountered the first time they walked into an 1825 Federal-style farmhouse in Scottsville, New York.

Their first clue should have been the "lock" on the vacant structure's front door: a 2x4 beam, wedged from the doorknob downward to a doorstep that had been nailed into the home's original maple floor.

The main house, which had previously been owned by members of only two families, made them draw a deep breath—and not in a good way. The home's primitive "locking system," as the couple jokingly calls it now, was the least of their problems. Raccoons and mice skittered throughout the attic, creosote had leaked down





LEFT: An antique hutch in the breakfast area provides a fitting backdrop for Irena's majolica collection. **ABOVE:** In the kitchen, custom cabinetry helps new appliances blend easily into the 185-year-old farmhouse. **INSET:** A scrapbook details Mike and Irena's restoration journey.



interior walls, and decades of occupants' smoking had tinged much of the interior a gritty tobacco yellow. Moreover, the elderly previous owner—a bachelor who had lived there since World War II—had evidently been a trapper who used a second-floor bedroom to dry skins.

"There was no indoor plumbing," recalls Irena, "and only seven outlets in the whole house. The kitchen had a hand pump for water."

Looking at these aspects of the house, Mike and Irena knew what lay in store for them: countless coats of primer and paint to cover the dingy walls; traps and push brooms to rid the house of animals and their waste; and scrub brushes, strippers, and peels to remove paint from woodwork and clean plaster and brick.

Most couples would have backed

away, mumbling excuses and grabbing for their car keys. Not the Guinnesses. They saw the old house as a blank canvas on which to inscribe their personalities while still respecting and restoring its original character.

"We envisioned what it could become," says Irena, "and we both liked it."

Master Plan

Instead of fretting about the inevitable crises that popped up—"When you're restoring a house, things come up that you don't expect," Irena notes—they sat down and brainstormed their ideal version of the house. Irena took their notes and drafted a lengthy "mission statement" for the property. When the couple found an architect they wanted to work with—Rochester-based Mark Muller—Irena gave him this

document asked him to use it as a Bible.

"We basically outlined every room in the house and how we wanted to use it," Irena says. "It was about how we like to live, how we entertain. That we needed a lot of light. That any additions should be in keeping with the house—and look like they had always been there."

But first, they had to tackle structural repairs—specifically, 16' worth of cobblestone cellar wall that tumbled down when digging began on the foundation for a new addition. Luckily, the rest of the home was so sturdily built that it never shifted; the crisis was solved by replacing not just the stone in the wall, but also part of the basement's cobblestone floor with a gravel floor that allowed them to incorporate French





Sunny yellow walls in the formal living and dining rooms (part of a new addition to the house) counteract the chilling effect of upstate New York winters, while an eclectic collection of antique furniture reflects the house's age.

drains. "It was actually somewhat of a blessing," Mike says.

The couple dismantled much of the first floor, but kept the floor plan largely the same. In the family room, they numbered each of the structural floor beams as they were lifted out, and put them all back in the same positions. All interior doors were also taken down, labeled, stripped, repainted, and then re-hung in either the original locations or other spaces in the expanded home that needed doors. "We reused every door we could," Irena says.

The new kitchen, the most labor-intensive part of the restoration process, tapped the talents of regional craftsmen to create a design that echoes, rather than mirrors, an antique kitchen. Appliances and furniture are all new; the walls of built-in wooden cabinetry were created by cabinetmaker David Lapp, designed to store Irena's collections of vintage linen and majolica and Staffordshire pottery.

Despite these updates, Mike and Irena wanted to keep the old, scarred chestnut floors in the kitchen, which proved to be a challenge to match with modern flooring when a bump-out addition along the back of the home was planned. Rejecting the contractors' offer of a pine substitute, the couple hunted down closely matching antique chestnut in a New Hampshire barn. "They brought it in on a tractor-trailer!" says Mike.

The addition added 10' along the back side of the house in the kitchen and dining room, allowing for extra eating and storage space and giving the Guinnesses room on the second floor to create a lofty master suite with cathedral ceilings, blue-and-white toile wallpaper, a white-tiled master bath, and a bank of windows overlooking their acres of back yard.



Irena, who adores gardening, was the driving force behind the yard's landscaping. She had workers dig up the foundation stones of an old barn that had burned in the 1920s, and turned them into a rock wall, fencing in a naturalistic, curving garden behind the house. Water features and a paved terrace complete the space and give the couple a cozy outdoor spot



ABOVE: With green walls, cream-colored furniture, and red accents, the family room is a cozy hideaway where the couple (along with dog Lulu) spends the majority of their time.

to entertain and enjoy meals.

The street-facing front of the house was the only part of the structure that owners in the 20th century seemed to have kept up with any degree of regularity. (Even on the back of the house, Mike and Irena noticed

with amusement, the newer coats of paint only went up as high as a man could reach.) It required just a few cosmetic tweaks and a color change to be photo-album-worthy. "We just gave it a good power wash and a coat of paint," says Mike.

Living History

Walking through the Guinnessees' fully restored Federal farmhouse today, it's hard to imagine that the home was ever anything but beautifully preserved.

The most lived-in downstairs room these days, the green-, red-, and cream-colored family room, now offers views of the front yard from original six-over-six windows, covered in winter with custom-cut storms. New French doors open onto Irena's sculpted gardens.

An adjacent powder room, a study in raspberry, highlights the strengths that Irena's artistic eye brought to the entire project: The walls are covered in a damask-like stenciled pattern she conceived and cut herself, then painted to achieve a vintage wallpaper effect.

Upstairs, other secondary bedrooms became walk-in closets, a home office, spaces for grandchildren and guests to sleep. (A secondary servants' staircase in the house was sacrificed to free up square footage for these purposes as well.) An all-new addition on one side created formal



Irena, an avid gardener, designed the home's landscape, incorporating a shady terrace for al fresco meals (above), and preserving the home's original three-hole outhouse (below right), which she says is a surefire conversation-starter at parties.




living and dining rooms, done in yellow and red, with Liberty of London fabric on the dining chairs and Schumacher paper on the walls. Other sympathetic additions to the property include a large garage and an 1,100-square-foot guest suite, connected to the main house via a long hallway, that Irena's mother lived in for a few years.

Looking back on their work, the cou-



ple sees these flexible uses of the vintage home's spaces as a way to bring the 1825 structure into the 21st century, keeping it relevant and livable while still respecting

its history. "If it's going to be a museum house, that's fine," says Irena. "But if a home is going to be lived in, it has to work for today." 🏡



The restored fireplace, with a new insert and two cast-in-place flue liners in the chimney, now safely vents two appliances—hot water heater and boiler—in addition to holding a crackling fire.

FIREPLACE FIXES

Old-house fireplaces that have been decommissioned—thanks to flues co-opted to vent central heating systems—can be brought back to good working order with some thoughtful repairs.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHARLIE ALLEN

When central heating was installed in pre-Victorian houses, it was often at the expense of an original wood-burning fireplace. The new heating system, powered by coal and later oil, needed a flue to vent the byproducts of combustion. The easiest solution was to punch a hole in the brick hearth (fireplace

floor) nearest the furnace or boiler, route a metal duct through the flue, and brick up the mouth of the affected fireplace. *Voila*, the homeowners had central heat and an end to the drudgery of heating with fireplaces. I'm sure our forebears felt that sacrificing a fireplace for the modern convenience of central heat was no sacrifice at all, but today's old-house enthusiasts may not agree. Getting a central-heat-retrofitted fireplace back to good wood-burning order is a job best tackled through a series of methodical steps.



The unlined brick chimney on the Friedman-Sorenson's 1860 Greek Revival worker's cottage was degrading—eaten away by years of acidic exhaust from the boiler that was being vented through it. Consequently, before the project, the fireplace could only safely hold lighted candles, and its brick mantel didn't match the home's architecture.

Bringing it Back

When the Friedman-Sorenson family, owners of an 1860 Greek Revival worker's cottage, contacted me, their boiler maintenance company had just informed them that their boiler's venting system had become dangerous. Acidic effluents from decades of boiler use had eaten away significant portions of the brick mortar above the roofline and in the third floor area of the house. Their unlined brick chimney—which had been reconfigured to vent the boiler—was becoming structurally unsound. In addition, holes that had worn through the mortar on the third floor could allow potentially deadly carbon monoxide to enter the living area. The Friedman-Sorensens wanted the chimney repaired, and they also hoped to get the fireplace in good working order since the flue's reconfiguration caused the fireplace to smoke up the room whenever it was used.

The masonry flue needed to be lined, and we decided to use a cast-in-place liner. (For more about lining chimneys, see

oldhouseonline.com/making-sense-of-chimney-liners.) The original chimney was large enough to accommodate a 6" round flue to vent the boiler and hot water heater, which would protect the masonry chimney, provide a superior draft for the appliances, and close all potential holes through which carbon monoxide might escape. But getting the fireplace working again was a different story. While we could fit another 6" round liner in the existing space, at 30" wide, the fireplace needed at least a 9" round flue to work properly.

To solve the problem, I suggested installing a Victorian cast iron wood-burning insert capable of drafting through a 6" round flue. As an added bonus, the stove's backplate would cover up the plain and inappropriate brick fireplace surround that detracted from the home's original charm.

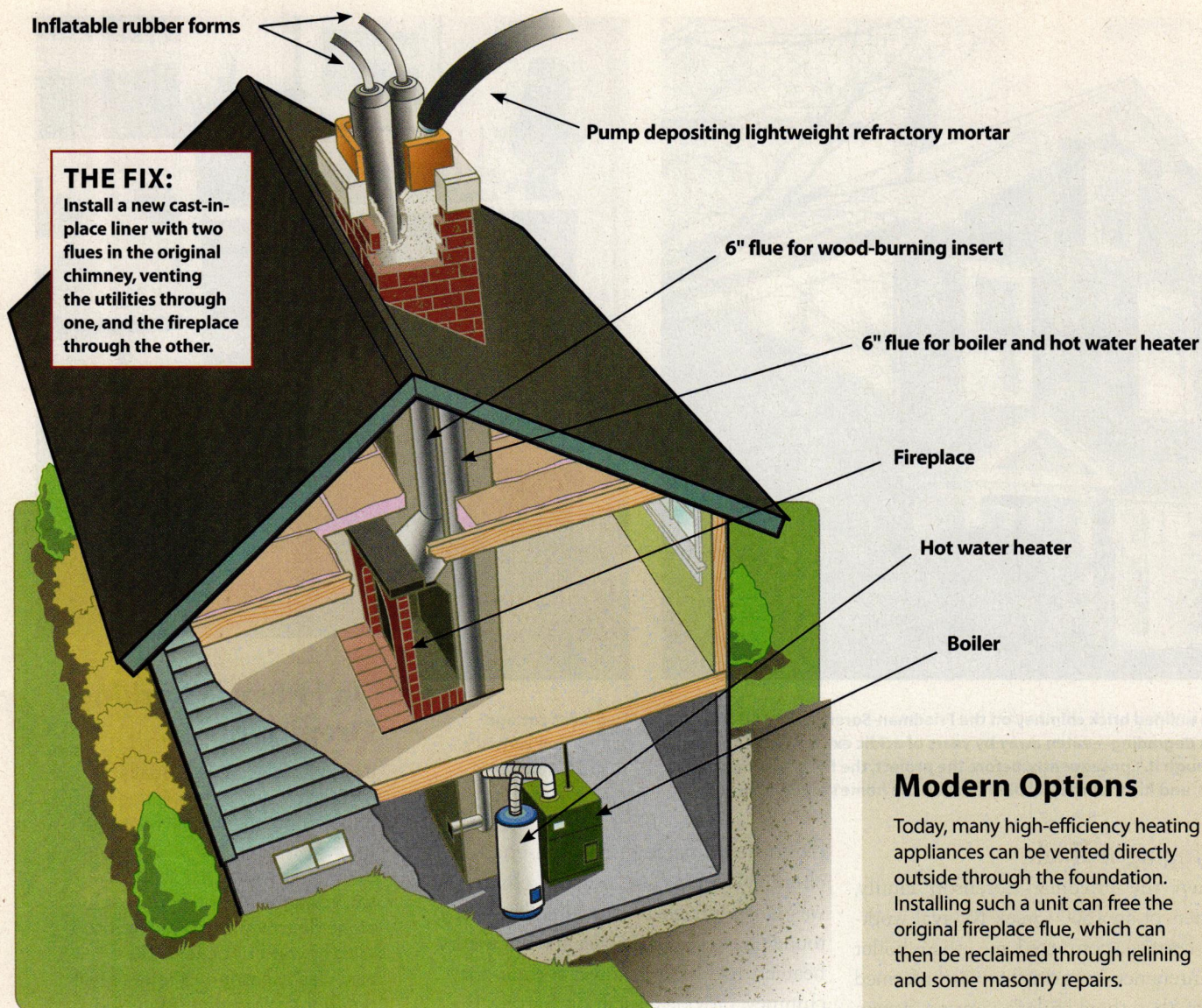
The Work

To restore the chimney's structural integrity, my team repointed it above the roofline and closed holes in the mortar joints on



Do I Have a Working Fireplace?

If your fireplace is essentially unaltered and the flue is free of obstruction, then it will continue to draft as it did 100, 200, or even 300 years ago. In that sense, it will continue to work, but that alone doesn't make it safe to use. With or without boiler-induced acid wash, masonry chimneys will deteriorate over time. Many old-house owners rightfully become concerned when they see white powdery sand appear in the bottom of the fireplace (a sign of deteriorating mortar) or when a chimney cleaner points out damaged areas of mortar and brick. Because old houses have wood framing and lathing in contact with the firebox and chimney flues, deteriorated mortar joints risk transferring heat to these wood members. And because they have been near the source of fireplace heat for decades, the flashpoint of these wood components is lower than when originally installed, presenting a fire hazard. For safety's sake, brick fireplace flues in old houses should always be lined.

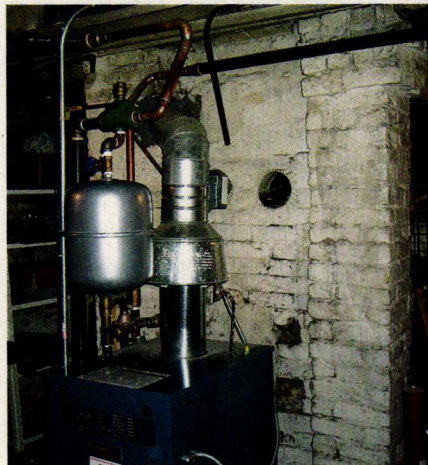


THE FIX:

Install a new cast-in-place liner with two flues in the original chimney, venting the utilities through one, and the fireplace through the other.

Modern Options

Today, many high-efficiency heating appliances can be vented directly outside through the foundation. Installing such a unit can free the original fireplace flue, which can then be reclaimed through relining and some masonry repairs.



Through the years, both the hot water heater (left) and the boiler (above) had come to be vented through the basement wall into a flue that originally serviced only the living room fireplace.

the third floor. In order to access the third-floor spots, we had to break through—and then repair—an interior wall, but fortunately we were able to do this through a closet. We also raised the mechanical flue's connection to the chimney in the fireplace throat so that it didn't turn so abruptly into the flue. Then we dropped two 6" inflatable rubber forms—like big balloons—down the existing chimney. Each had 1" springs crimped around it at 24" intervals along the tube to keep the forms off the chimney's brick walls and separated from each other.

The first form was lowered down the chimney and over to the basement boiler's flue thimble. The second form was dropped down the fireplace itself.



The new Victorian-style fireplace insert fit the space well, but its backplate didn't completely conceal the old brick. To create a seamless appearance, Charlie found a reclaimed wooden Greek Revival mantel and re-worked it, resizing its plinths and adjusting its height and depth to match the original molding and the built-in bookcase sitting beside it.



We removed the anachronistic 1980s-era brick mantel, and set the Victorian insert into the fireplace so we could pull the chimney form through the damper hole on the insert's back side. We then secured and braced the insert.

Our crew set up the pump and mixer and slowly poured SolidFlue lightweight chimney refractory mortar around the two forms. (Poured chimney liners are all done with Portland-based, lightweight refractory mortars.) We vibrated the forms constantly using machines strapped to the formers to eliminate the potential for voids, and monitored the basement, fireplace, and third-floor closet areas for leaks. We poured for three days before reaching the top of the chimney—spreading out pouring time puts less pressure on the old chimney. A day after we finished pouring, after 12 hours of cure time, we deflated and removed the forms, leaving behind two smooth, continuous masonry flues. In addition to being rated for zero clearance to combustibles, the new flues created a lightweight reinforcing column inside the old masonry chimney.

The Finishing Touches

Next, we connected the boiler and hot

Variations On a Theme

Historically, punching a metal duct through the hearth wasn't the only way to vent a new heating system. Heating specialists also could build a new chimney from the basement floor behind the wall past the firebox, connecting it to the original fireplace at the flue's throat somewhere above the mantel. This "saved" the fireplace from being bricked up and potentially made it available for wood-burning fires, but introduced a second appliance using a different fuel in the original flue. As the gases from the heating system rose in the chimney flue, they condensed, and their acidic effluents effectively produced an acid wash that ate away at the clay bricks and lime-based mortar joints. Building and plumbing codes have forbidden this practice for years.

Sometimes finding room for the new flue from the basement required that the original firebox be reconfigured and made smaller. No matter how the fireplace and chimney flue were reconfigured to accommodate central heating, sacrificing a wood-burning fireplace was typically the result.

water heater's 6" thimble to the new poured liner in the basement, and test-fired the Victorian insert to ensure that it was safe to burn wood, using a chimney camera to check that there were no voids or cracks. We verified that everything was safe and in good working order, but our job wasn't quite finished yet—we still had to replace the 1980s-era brick mantel.

We found a reclaimed wooden Greek Revival mantel and set it over the backplate of the Victorian insert. We then resized the mantel plinths to properly receive the original baseboard and base molding, set a wood corner plaster ground, and repaired the front and return walls. We had to adjust the mantel's height and depth to match the dimensions of an existing built-in bookcase that sat to the right of it.

Now, the relined chimney flues both exhaust the house's mechanical systems and preserve the ambience of the open-hearth wood-burning fireplace. Not a bad fix for a favorite old-house part. 🏠

Charlie Allen, founder and president of Charlie Allen Restorations in Cambridge, Massachusetts (charlie-allen.com), has been restoring older homes for more than 40 years.

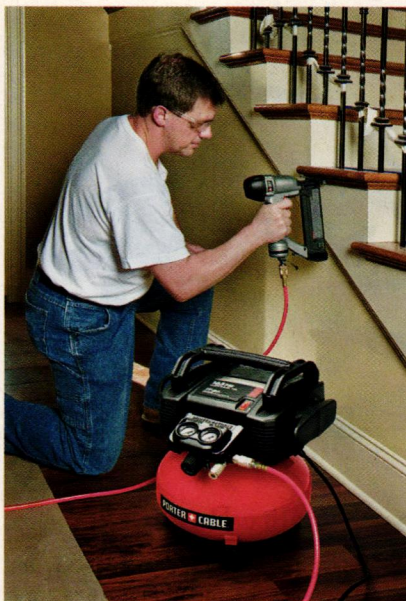
The Old-House *Gift Guide*



**Need the perfect gift for the determined DIYer on your list?
We've got you covered, from the newest gadgets to the classic
must-haves.** BY NOELLE LORD CASTLE AND THE OHJ EDITORIAL STAFF

As gift-giving season rolls around, most folks begin dreaming of expensive electronics, new clothes, pampering bath products. But not old-house restorers—for them, a high-tech hammer is much more useful than the latest iPhone incarnation, and a sturdy wrench will win out

over bubble bath any day. That's because, even during the holidays, the restorer never forgets his or her true love: that old house. Gifts that make working on it easier, faster, and better—from basic toolbox staples to new-and-improved gadgets—are always a welcome addition under the tree.



Pancake Compressor

Compressors are a must-have item for serious DIYers—they make nailing trim and other decorative elements as easy as pulling a lever. Porter-Cable's new 165-psi, 4-gallon pancake compressor packs more usable air and a faster recovery time into a compact package that's also lighter and about 30 percent quieter than previous models. About \$170; (888) 848-5175, deltaportercable.com.



AirGrip Laser Level

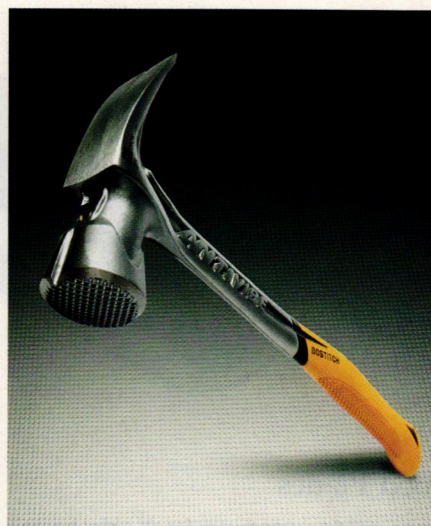
In an old house, where there's rarely a straight line, a level is a must, and one that keeps your hands free is even better. Ryobi's tiny laser level vacuum-grips the wall, even on uneven surfaces, to stay in place while you align shelves and picture frames. Unlike other hands-free levels that use sticky paper or pins, this one won't mar your walls. \$20; 800-525-2579, ryobitools.com.



Stay-Put Tape Measure

Tapes that stay where you want them—without rolling over or pulling away from the surface you're measuring until you're done—are key to making efficient measurements. The hook on Bostitch's new Bi-Material Tape with BladeArmor has a surface area 150 percent larger than traditional tape measures, and its 13' standout makes it easy to measure materials from a variety of angles. 25' tape measure, \$25; (800) 566-6696, bostitch.com.

THE LATEST & GREATEST



Anti-Vibe Hammer

All hammers are not created equal—some can make jobs move faster. Take the new Anti-Vibe hammers from Bostitch: A strike face that's 75 percent larger than the industry standard makes it easier to hit your target, while improved tuning-fork technology works to minimize vibration, and torsion control stabilizers help ease arm fatigue. Available in several sizes. 28-oz. hammer, \$28; (800) 566-6696, bostitch.com.



Reciprocating Saw (aka Sawzall)

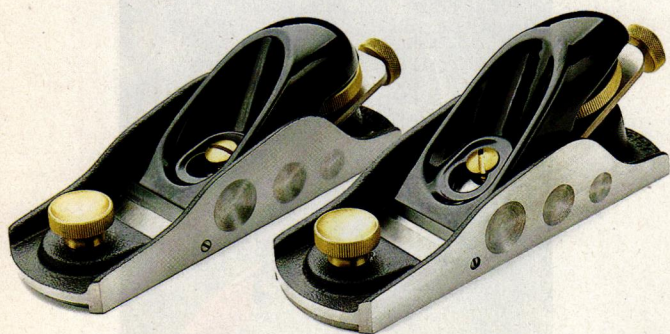
For major projects like removing clapboards or getting rid of rotten porch planks, the Sawzall's ability to cut through both wood and metal makes it invaluable. Word to the wise: This demolition tool can spell disaster in the hands of uninformed homeowners, so make sure your recipient knows what should and shouldn't be removed. (Might we suggest an OHJ subscription as a companion gift?) Around \$80, (800) 729-3878, milwaukeetool.com.



Good-Quality Respirator

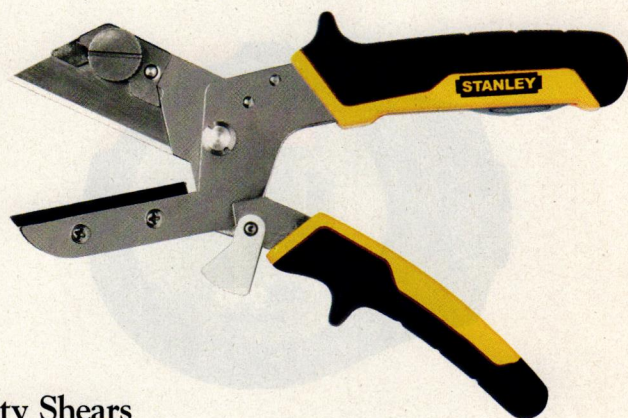
It may not be as flattering to wear as, say, a cashmere sweater, but no old-house restorer should be without a decent respirator. A rubber half-mask with a changeable cartridge is a good bet for basic home repair needs—we like the 3M 6000 Series because it comes in several sizes, and filter changes are a snap. Include HEPA (for airborne dust particles like lead) and charcoal (for organic vapors like oil paints and strippers) filters to protect against the most common repair-related toxins. From around \$11; (888) 364-3577, 3m.com.

THE CLASSICS



Wood Planes

Anyone creating woodworking for an older home—where new pieces can stick out because they lack the hand-planing marks of older craftsmanship—can appreciate a set of good wood planes. For general use, 6" to 10" block planes are a toolbox staple. Scrub planes are also good to have on hand; the subtle U shape of their blade creates hand-planing definition. Standard block plane, \$145; (800) 871-8158, leeco.com.



Utility Shears

Capable of handling a wide variety of projects both inside the house and out, utility shears can't be beat. They can prune trees, cut tubing and dowels to size, trim weatherstripping, and more. Stanley's latest version features a 1"-wide opening that cuts with standard utility blades, attached via a nut for easy changeovers. There's also storage for up to five standard utility blades in the handle, so you always have a fresh one at the ready. \$10; (800) 782-6539, stanleytools.com.





Windo-Zipper

This inexpensive little tool is an absolute must-have for any wooden window owner. Its triangle-shaped head allows you to get in between sashes or any other adjoining wood-work pieces that are stuck together by paint buildup. The serrated edges "unzip" the paint bead to regain sash movement. \$8; (800) 423-3845, reddevil.com.



Circuit and Polarity Testers

Before plugging an electrical device—especially high-tech gear like a new computer—into an old socket, you'll first want to make sure the outlets in your house are safe, meaning their polarity is properly wired and grounded. That's where these testers come in. Ideal's version diagnoses wiring via easy-to-read colored light combinations. Around \$8; (800) 445-6937, lowes.com.

STOCKING STUFFERS



Adjustable-jaw Wrench

Whether you're working with old bolts or new plumbing, this wrench—often called a Channel Lock wrench after a common brand—is invaluable. A slide offers multiple positions to hold and turn, and better-quality ones have spring systems to lock the grip in place. Parallel-jaw adjustable wrenches, from \$65; (800) 221-2942, garrettwade.com.

The Gadget

Landscape buffs will appreciate this handy, compact multi-tool from Arnold that combines 11 commonly used tools in one easy-to-carry accessory. Armed with four standard-sized sockets; standard, Phillips, and T27 TORX screwdrivers; and even a chainsaw file holder, The Gadget can be a pinch hitter on a number of old-house projects. It even comes with a handy bottle opener, and hangs from a belt loop via an attached carabiner clip. \$15; (800) 466-3337, homedepot.com.



Now that the shopping's done, enter your home in our holiday decorating contest! Get details at MyOldHouseOnline.com.

OLDHOUSEonline 



A Brand New Coat

**When your hardwood floors get dirty, dull,
and scuffed, make them gleam again with
this easy step-by-step tutorial.**

STORY BY BRUCE JOHNSON | PHOTOS BY ALEXANDRA FISHER

Nothing defines an old house like hardwood floors—they're one of the primary features that draws so many of us to antique homes. Regardless of their age or species, wooden floors give a house warmth, character, beauty, and value.

But as every old-house owner has learned, hardwood floors are subject to a great deal of use and abuse. Floors that once gleamed under a flawless coat of clear finish will inevitably become dirty, scratched, stained, and worn. In times past, homeowners would wait until either the finish had nearly worn away or they could no longer stand the sight of the stains and scratches, then would call in the professionals to erase every trace of the old finish with menacing floor sanders.

After the dust had settled, many of these homeowners would soon notice the disparity between their historic house—with its dinged doors, chipped tiles, bruised woodwork and cracked plaster—and their new, seemingly modern wood floors.

In most cases, complete floor refinishing isn't warranted, yet something needs to be done—and not just for the sake of appearance. A finish does more than just make wood look beautiful. It also seals and protects the wood's open pores, which, if left exposed, will absorb water, dirt, and spills and will be more likely to be scratched and dented.

Another solution is recoating: adding a new layer of protec-



This room's scuffed-up hardwood flooring (above) looks good as new (opposite) after a simple recoating.

tion that will adhere to the previous finish. Recoating is easier, safer, and faster than refinishing, but it does have its limitations (see "Is Recoating Right for You?," page 46). Since the fresh coat of finish will be applied on top of rather than in place of the existing finish, it can improve the appearance of the old finish, but it cannot solve any problems within the wood itself.

Testing, Testing

Wood is unpredictable. For that reason, after you assemble all of your tools and materials, conduct a test to ensure that everything is compatible with your floor.

- ◆ Select a 6" square section of the floor in an inconspicuous place, such as a corner. Using a commercial hardwood floor cleaner, thoroughly clean your test section following the manufacturer's directions. Wipe the test section clean with a soft cloth and let it dry.
- ◆ Using either a piece of 180-grit sandpaper or a medium-grit synthetic sanding pad, lightly scuff the existing finish, working back and forth in the direction of the grain. A clean, dry finish should produce a fine white powder when scuffed or lightly sanded. If your abrasive fills with a gummy substance, the floor may have been waxed. (For tips on removing wax coatings, see "Watch Out for Wax," page 48.)

- ◆ Brush a coat of the floor finish you plan to use onto your test area, following the manufacturer's instructions and safety precautions. Allow to thoroughly dry.
- ◆ Using your thumbnail or a coin, scratch the dried finish. If it has properly adhered to the existing surface, the new finish should not peel or flake off under moderate pressure. Suspicious signs of incompatibility are a rough, textured finish or small circles called "bird's eyes" that result when the new finish reacts to a contaminant on the floor.

If your new finish passes the scratch test, then you're ready to proceed with recoating. If it fails, your existing floor finish should be completely sanded off before you apply a fresh finish.

7 Steps to Recoating Wood Floors

Step One Empty the room.

Don't attempt to convince yourself you can complete this project by moving furniture around the work area. The room needs to be completely empty—and don't wait until you bring the floor buffer home. You'll be paying for it by the hour, so empty the room first.

Step Two Make any necessary repairs.

This is the time to countersink and fill any exposed nail heads, to plug holes left from old television or phone lines, or to touch up any deep scratches with a wood stain or stain marker.

Step Three Clean the floor.

In order for a new finish to adhere to an existing finish, any contaminants on the existing finish must first be removed—including, but not limited to, ordinary dirt, grime, grease, dust, soap film, cleaning residue, dusting oils or aerosols, furniture or floor polish, and wax.

Don't clean with hot, soapy water or any homemade recipes. Harsh chemicals can damage the finish on your floor and baseboards, soap will leave a residue, and excessive water will cause the wood to swell. Instead, use a commercial hardwood floor cleaner designed to dissolve contaminants without dissolving the existing finish. Afterward, scrape the finish with your fingernail to determine if the surface is completely clean. (If you're dealing with wax, see "Watch Out for Wax," page 48, for tips on removing it.)

Is Recoating Right for You?

Recoating CAN:

- ◆ Bring a dull floor back to life
- ◆ Fill worn, high-traffic areas
- ◆ Make shallow scratches disappear
- ◆ Remove white water marks

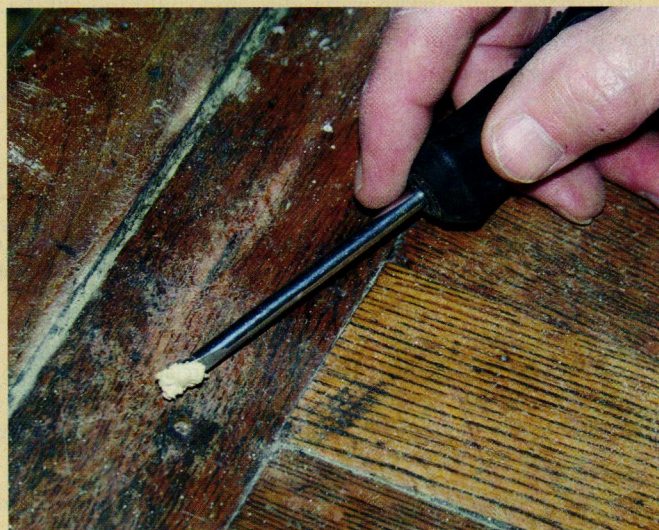


Recoating CAN'T:


- ◆ Remove black rings and stains in the wood
- ◆ Replace lost color in the wood
- ◆ Fill deep scratches
- ◆ Smooth out rough boards

TIP Secret to Success

The secret to a successful recoating really isn't much of a secret: It's all in the preparation. Without proper preparation, even the best floor finish may not be able to adhere. When that happens, your only recourse is a complete refinishing of the floor.



To cover up floorboard nails, use a hammer and a fine point (such as a pencil) to drive the nail $\frac{1}{8}$ " below the surface of the board. Fill the resulting hole with wood putty, allow it to dry (a few hours is usually sufficient), and then sand lightly in the direction of the surrounding grain until it is flush with the wood.

A man wearing a red baseball cap, a dark jacket, and a white protective mask is operating a floor polisher on a wooden floor. The polisher has a red top and a silver base. The room has wood-paneled walls and a window in the background.

A floor polisher fitted with a synthetic pad will make quick work of scuffing old coatings. The open weave of synthetic pads keeps them clog-free, allowing for more even scuffing. (Always wear a protective mask to guard against dust particles.)

Oil-based or water-based? Check out our guide to determine which type of finish is right for your floor.

OldHouseOnline  .com

Employing a clean, unused sponge mop to apply the new finish will result in a more even coating.



Step Four Allow the floor to dry.

After cleaning, wipe the floor with a soft, dry cloth, and give any remaining hardwood floor cleaner time to evaporate before proceeding. If you are in a hurry, set up a fan to blow air across the floor.

Step Five Gently scuff the old finish.

Since neither water-based nor oil-based finishes can form a chemical bond with a previous layer of finish, we have to create a mechanical bond between the two finishes by adding thousands of tiny scratches to the existing finish.

Using either a floor polisher and a large synthetic pad, a

Caring For Your Floor

Keeping your freshly finished floor looking new isn't impossible, but does require a few precautions.

- ◆ Take off your shoes. Grit embedded in the soles of shoes can turn them into sandpaper.
- ◆ Place doormats outside each door and throw rugs inside each door.
- ◆ Position rugs or carpet runners in high-traffic areas.
- ◆ Make sure each piece of furniture has safe, non-metallic glides attached.
- ◆ Use a commercial hardwood floor cleaner regularly to remove dirt and spills before they cause permanent scars.

Watch Out For Wax

For several decades, wax was considered the easy and acceptable way to bring an old floor back to life, even if just for a few months. However, the deposit of wax on top of the old finish eventually created problems for the next owner.

One of those owners happened to be a friend of mine who, in a rush to get his house on the market, brushed a coat of polyurethane varnish over an oak floor the previous owner had waxed. The polyurethane dried overnight, but when he started moving his furniture back in, he discovered the truth to the old adage: "Wax sticks to anything, but nothing sticks to wax." Each time he slid a chair or footstool across the floor, the fresh coat of polyurethane, unable to cling to the layer of old wax, peeled up behind it. Fortunately, use of wax on floors has declined in popularity.

If you have reason to suspect your hardwood floors may have been waxed, conduct this easy test. In a corner of the room where foot traffic would not have worn the wax away, sprinkle a few drops of water onto the floor. If wax is present, the finish under the droplets will turn white in less than 30 minutes. To remove the wax, dip a synthetic abrasive pad in mineral spirits and begin scrubbing. As the mineral spirits dissolve the wax, wipe it up with a dry cloth. Rinse with a second cloth dipped in clean mineral spirits, and then wipe each section dry. During the entire process, set up fans to provide a steady stream of fresh air into and out of the room.

hand polisher with a synthetic pad, or a palm or orbital sander with 180-grit sandpaper, lightly scuff the surface of the existing finish.

Step Six Vacuum the dust.

Use the soft bristle attachment on a vacuum to remove the dust created by scuffing. Do not sweep the floor, as a broom or dust mop only pushes the grit into the cracks between the boards.

Step Seven Apply your chosen finish according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Choosing the appropriate finish is critical (for tips on this, visit oldhouseonline.com), but regardless of the type of finish you apply, remember that there is a difference between "dry time" and "cure time." A finish may dry in a matter of minutes, but it will not achieve its maximum hardness until it has had time to cure—typically in about a week.

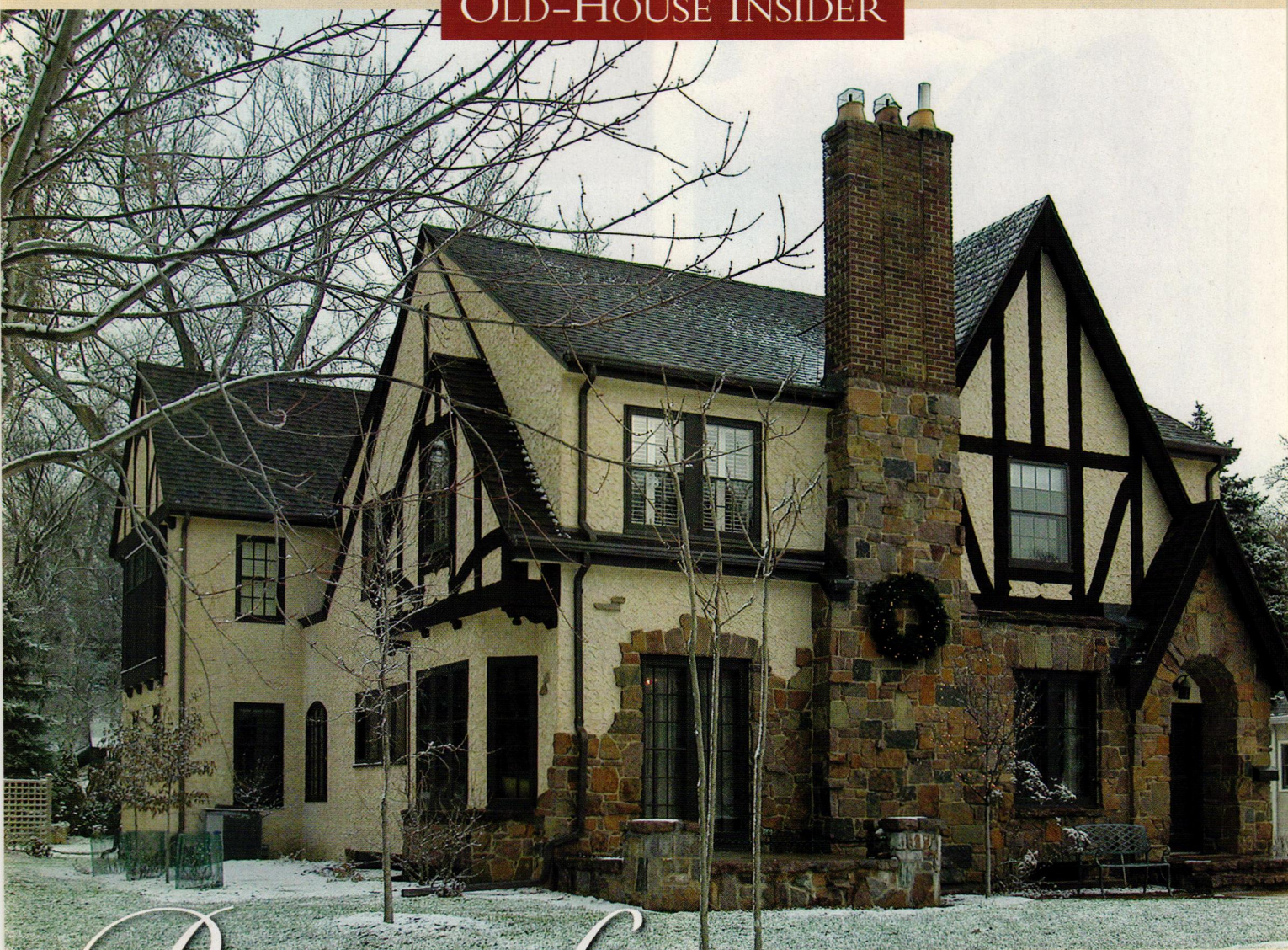
Once dry, you can walk on the floor in stocking feet, but keep shoes and pets off it for an additional day. If possible, wait three days before bringing in rugs and furniture. And regardless of how long the finish has cured, never slide furniture across a hardwood floor. A worn furniture glide or even a piece of dirt wedged under a chair leg can leave an unsightly scratch in even the strongest finish. 🛠️

Arts & Crafts expert **Bruce Johnson** has been working with wood finishes for more than 40 years.



ABOVE: If you don't have access to a floor polisher to scuff the old coating, an orbital sander with 180-grit sandpaper will do the job just as well, albeit more slowly. Once the old coating has been scuffed, a fine layer of dust will remain. **BELOW:** Before applying the new finish coat, use the soft bristle attachment on a vacuum to remove the dust. Using a sponge mop, apply the new finish evenly over the floor, working from the rear corner of the room toward the doorway.





Best of Both Worlds

A well-planned addition to a 1930s Tudor combines historical character with modern creature comforts.

STORY BY CLARE MARTIN ♦ PHOTOS BY GEORGE HEINRICH



Adding on to an old house is always risky business. In the wrong hands, an addition can completely mar a historic home's time-worn character. But when it's done right, an addition can gently usher an outdated house into the 21st century.

When Kris and John Mandler bought their 1931 Tudor in South Minneapolis, they knew an addition was in the cards. "It was a beautiful house, with a big backyard and views of a creek, but it had this tiny little kitchen and a really bad three-season porch," says Kris.

With two kids and a third on the way, the Mandlers wanted a large, open kitchen and living space that would encourage family time. But they wanted to blend this modern concept with the historic style of the house. "While we were house-hunting, we saw some additions that were so out of place," says Kris. "We really wanted to stay in keeping with the rest of the house."

So the Mandlers brought in Eric Odor of SALA Architects to help them execute their vision. With 15 years of experience in updating old houses under his belt, Eric immediately saw the potential offered by the house's pedigree. "The great



ABOVE: Woodwork in the new family room (top) was stained to match existing beams, molding, and window casings in the formal living room (above). **OPPOSITE:** The new addition on the back of the house blends seamlessly into the old, thanks to matching stucco and half-timbers.

ERIC ODOR PHOTO



thing about Tudors is that you can add and subtract in all sorts of ways," he says. "It's such a flexible style."

Instead of making the two-story addi-

tion an appendage on the back of the house, Eric and his team, which included fellow architect Chris Bubser and contractor Rick Reuter, stepped it back a bit

and connected it with a cross gable. "It's almost like a little village," Eric says of the two parallel sections of the house.

Matching the exterior of the addition to the original structure took some creativity. "All of the timbers on the outside of the house had been colored with creosote," says Eric—an unusual improvisation the team had never encountered before. "It took us a little while to find a stain that matched." He also brought in gran-

PRODUCTS: Kitchen/Family Room: Custom cabinetry and woodwork, Reuter Walton Construction; Dickinson undermount apron-front sink, Kohler; Ladylux Plus faucet, Grohe; Coppersmith pendant (over breakfast nook), Mica Lamp Company; Columbia pendants with Sherwood shades (over island), Rejuvenation; Range, Viking; Cabinet hardware, Rejuvenation. Master Bathroom: Caxton undermount sink, Kohler; Fabian faucet and tub filler, American Standard; Iron Works tub, Kohler; Jewell sconces and Lombard flush-mount, Rejuvenation. Exterior: Granite accents, Cold Spring Granite; Berkeley sconces, Arroyo Craftsman Lighting.



ABOVE: Eric, who creates furniture under the mantle Feenix Design, designed the kitchen's island and built-in banquette. Period touches like Arts & Crafts-style pendants and an apron-front farmhouse sink provide a counterpoint to modern amenities like recessed lighting and a stainless steel range. **RIGHT:** The small sun porch was removed to make room for the new addition, complete with a granite-accented rear entrance.



ERIC ODOR PHOTOS



Thinking about adding on? Find out everything you need to know in our special addition anthology.

OLDHOUSEonline 

Recessed medicine cabinets, basket-weave tile, and 1920s-style light fixtures ground the luxurious master bathroom in the appropriate time period.



ite to match the original stone detailing on the front façade; Eric surmises that their supplier, 110-year-old Cold Spring Granite, located near St. Cloud, may have provided the original stone as well. The handful of vintage granite that was removed when the three-season porch was cleared out to make room for the addition was repurposed as a small hearth in the family room.

Inside the house, Eric took cues from the 1930s design, incorporating dark-stained woodwork, but using it sparingly. "For a Tudor, this is actually a very light house," he says. Kris, who was particularly concerned about keeping the home's airy feel, agrees. "There's lots of dark woodwork, but it works because there are lots of windows, too." Throughout the addition, Eric maintained that balance, setting off the stained maple window casings, molding, cabinetry, and breakfast nook with wide French doors, a corner bank of windows, and transoms above the cabinets.

Eric also echoed the original floor plan by putting the kitchen and family room at a slightly lower elevation than the dining room, an effect that mirrors the transition from the dining room to the living room at the front of the house. "We really liked that podium presentation," he explains, "so in the addition, we stepped back down to the level of the living room."

Although the master suite on the second floor of the addition was a bit of an afterthought ("The kitchen and family room were the priority," says Kris), with only one full bathroom in the house, the Mandlers soon acknowledged that it was necessary to accommodate their growing family. Its white-painted woodwork and neutral stone tile give the suite a more contemporary feeling than the downstairs space, but it channels the rest of the house thanks to period details like a sink vanity reminiscent of a sturdy farmhouse table.

With the 1,000-square-foot addition, the Mandlers now have the open space

they wanted in the house—and neighborhood—that they love. No longer confined to a miniscule galley kitchen tucked away from the rest of the house (it was turned into a mudroom), Kris says she relishes the family's newfound togetherness. "I can make dinner while everyone is hanging out," she says. "I love that my kids are right there." 🏡

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arroyo-craftsman.com

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Fixing the Floor

Two traditional fixes for damaged and worn wood floors can add years to their lifespan.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RAY TSCHOEPE

In a world of laminates, composites, and wood choices like “Brazilian cherry,” modern flooring appears to be a disposable feature. But owners of historic homes know better. While our floors sometimes get chipped, splintered, and worn, they were made to last. And given that

they’ve survived a century or more, we feel a special responsibility to preserve them for as long as possible. When original floors show problems from years of wear, knowing how to replace damaged floorboards or splice in a Dutchman patch is crucial to lengthening their lifespan.

A 1918 bungalow in Mount Ranier, Maryland, displays beautiful, original tongue-in-groove pine floors that had been covered for decades by vinyl tiles—then subsequent layers of plywood, vinyl tiles, and carpeting—until they were refinished and restored in 2003.

COURTESY OF CITY LIGHTS REALTY

Most damage to traditional wooden floors is a direct result of wear and tear (including pets, stains, heavy furniture, termites, or fungal decay), but some comes from misguided maintenance. New owners of an older home often think the best way to spiff up their worn and stained floors is to sand and refinish them, but often, in order to achieve the desired like-new results, they remove too much flooring material. This can leave the upper edge of the groove in tongue-and-groove floors dangerously thin—so thin that breakage is common. When this happens, the original board needs to be replaced or repaired.

if it easily penetrates, the wood needs to be replaced.

The simplest way to make these repairs is to cut the floorboard directly over the floor joist or just to the side of the joist (which will provide ample room for nailing the new board), so the next step is to locate the floor joist. If your floor is exposed from below, this is as simple as going into the basement or under the porch and measuring the spacing. You also can drill a small hole beside the joist and up through the flooring, where it will be visible from the finished side. If neither of these techniques is possible, look across the floor and note the seams between the ends of other boards; measuring one seam to the next will give you a good idea of the spacing between joists, which will be uniform except in very old houses (dating to the 17th and early 18th centuries). Measure the distance between joists, and transfer that measurement to the boards that need replacing. If the flooring has separated so that there are gaps between the floorboards, you also can slide a thin piece of metal through the gap until it hits a joist. Draw a line across the board at the floor joists at a right angle to the groove.

Next, cut across the individual board along the line. You can use a very sharp chisel to cut across the grain, or use a drill to make a series of holes across the board and then finish the cut with chisels, a circular saw, or specialized hand saw. I like to use oscillating-blade saws (Fein, Bosch, Dremel, etc.) because they are a safe and effective way to sever flooring, particularly when removing just one board.

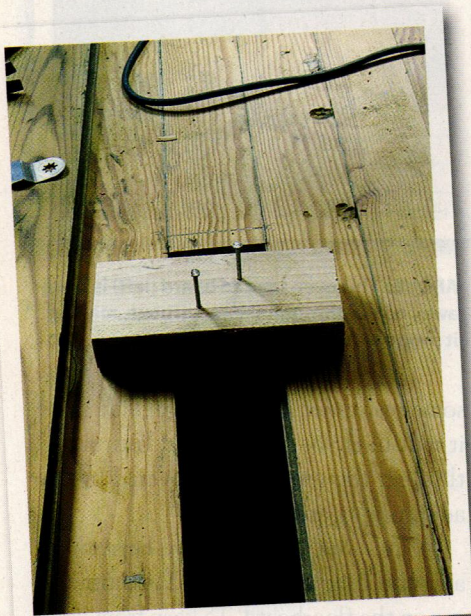
When cutting directly over the center of the floor joist, expect to encounter nails from the original installation. To avoid damaging your tools, cut the floorboard at the edge of the joist. (Oscillating



ABOVE: To replace a damaged floorboard, start by marking off the damaged material, then cutting it directly over the floor joist using an oscillating saw. You can then remove the damaged board.

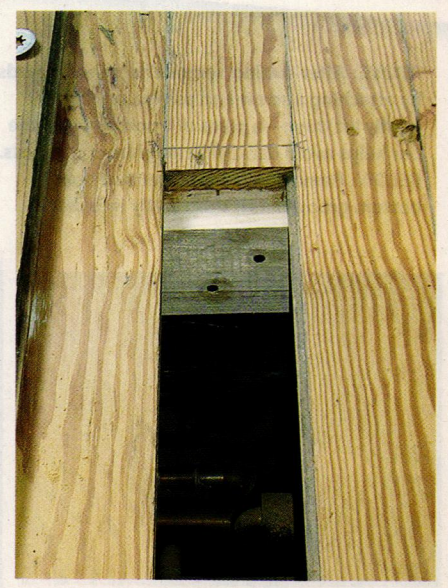
LEFT: With the board removed, prepare a small block (2x3 or 2x4), which you'll fish through the opening and secure to the end of the joist with glue and nails.

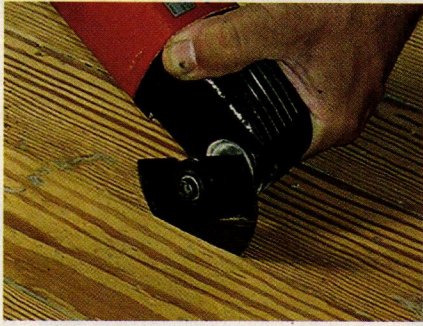
BELOW: Once secured, the block provides a solid nailing surface for the new floorboard.



Replace a Floorboard

Replacing a floorboard is a fairly straightforward job, and the process is the same whether working on interior floors or outdoor porches. Start by delineating the damaged material and marking it with a piece of chalk. Make sure you allow enough space beyond the damage to reach sound wood, particularly if the damage stems from termites or fungus. Test the wood by poking it with an awl;

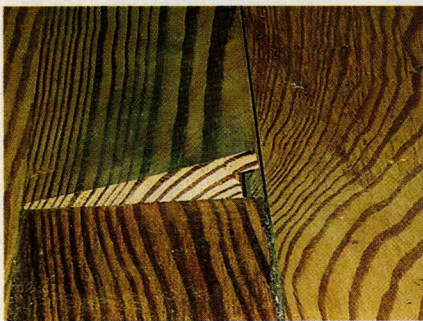




ABOVE: An oscillating saw cuts through the tongue of an in-place board.

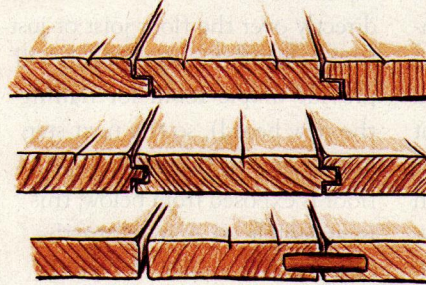


ABOVE: After cutting, remove damaged boards by attaching a screw and using a pry bar to gently lift them—a piece of wood beneath the bar helps avoid damaging neighboring boards. **BELOW:** Removing the replacement board's bottom groove lets it drop easily into place.



Early Floors

The earliest flooring in traditional American homes was usually milled from local softwoods and hardwoods, which were installed side by side with a range of joints—butt, shiplap, and doweled, in addition to the common tongue-and-groove joint. These



early floors were usually unfinished. Homeowners cleaned them regularly with water, harsh chemicals like lye, or a rubbing of sand.

LEFT: Early floor could be joined together by shiplap joints (top), tongue and groove (middle), butt joints (bottom left) or wooden dowels (bottom right).

saws are the exception—they can be outfitted with a blade that cuts both wood and metal, making cutting directly over the joist possible.) After you remove the board, nail and glue a small piece of wood (2x3 or 2x4) to the side of the joist to create a new nailing surface for the board you're about to install.

Removing a floorboard joined by tongue-and-groove or shiplap joints requires special attention. If you are able to insert a thin blade—such as that from a reciprocating saw (Sawzall), an oscillating saw, or a thin kerf blade in a circular saw—between the floorboards, cut the board along the tongue side, which removes the tongue. If you set your circular saw to a depth just $\frac{1}{16}$ " deeper than the flooring, you can make this cut without seriously damaging the joist.

If the gap between your floorboards is too narrow to insert a blade without damaging surrounding boards, use your circular saw to plunge cut two parallel cuts through the center of the board. Then, use a drill or a sharp chisel to connect these parallel cuts so you can remove the center of the board. With the board's center removed, you'll be able to easily pry both remaining edges away from the surrounding material. If your damaged piece extends over several joists, expect



ABOVE: This over-sanded board (left) is worn away nearly through the top groove, making it prone to breakage.

some resistance on the tongue side since it will likely be blind-nailed (i.e. nailed through the tongue and covered by the adjoining board).

Once the end cuts have been made and the tongue is removed, it's time to pry up the floorboard. To keep from damaging the end of your good flooring, try turning a screw into the board you plan to remove, and pry up on the head with a pry bar (place a block of wood between the bar and the floor to protect it).

Next, it's time to cut the new replacement piece to length. To install a single piece of flooring into a tongue-and-groove floor, you'll need to remove the lower portion of one of the grooves. This is most easily removed with a table saw or a router, but it also can be removed with a chisel and a plane. This allows your new



board to be installed tongue-side first, and close like a hatch into the groove side.

Tap the new board into place; if it seems too tight, it can be judiciously planed to fit along the groove side. Fastening a single board usually requires face-nailing, but you can countersink the nail head and fill the hole with wood putty to match the finished floor. When replacing multiple boards, blind-nail them through the tongue wherever possible.

Create a Dutchman Patch

In rooms with well-worn floors, gaps often appear between individual boards, mainly caused by repeated weather-related expansion and contraction cycles. When joints separate on tongue-and-groove boards, the upper edge of the groove is vulnerable to splitting, which can expose the tongue of the adjacent board.

The easiest way to repair this kind of fracture is by replacing the upper half of the broken groove with a Dutchman patch. Mark the ends of the fractured area, then

measure 1/4" further and mark this measurement across the width of the board.

Next, use a router and/or a sharp chisel to carefully pare away wood within the scribed lines to the depth of the original groove. Work slowly, checking the depth every few passes.

You'll need a piece of closely matched wood to finish the repair. Carefully choose wood of the same species and grain pattern as the piece that was removed. You can sometimes take a piece of matching wood from original flooring in an out-of-sight area like an attic, crawl space, or closet. Cut the new board to fit, leaving it a little higher than the neighboring surface.

Once you have a good fit, carefully tape the top to the edges of the new wood and the surrounding material (to protect from glue squeeze out), and apply epoxy to the mating (flat) surfaces. Drop the board into position, and rest something heavy on it to keep it from shifting. Any glue squeeze-out will be removed with the tape.

After the glue has fully cured (follow manufacturer's recommendations for

ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Three steps to a Dutchman patch: mark the area to be removed, carefully plane away, and install a new piece that's cut to match. **BELOW:** A damaged board with the top groove split away, exposing the adjoining tongue.



curing), remove the tape and carefully plane the new piece to match the neighboring surfaces. Finish up with sandpaper to soften any rough edges, then paint or stain and apply a clear finish to match the original floor. 🛠️

Ray Tschoepe, one of OHJ's contributing editors, is the director of conservation at the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust in Philadelphia.



STYLE

A Modern Model

In Hollin Hills, a neighborhood close to Washington, D.C., modern houses commune with nature, offering a leafy retreat from city living.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL



Looking for a woody escape from the urban hustle? A secluded spot where birds sing and squirrels frolic and Mother Nature never seems to shake an angry finger in your face? Not some lonesome cabin on a way-out mountainside, but a year-round kind of place, close to jobs and schools and civilization yet really, really special?



LEFT: These Rebecca Drive houses enjoy dramatic views through the trees while preserving the privacy cherished by Hollin Hills residents. **ABOVE:** Houses with inverted "butterfly" roofs were among Charles Goodman's most distinctive designs, offering expansive interior space with a wide view from the frame upper floor that oversails a brick ground floor.

We know the perfect spot. It's Hollin Hills, a close-knit neighborhood of some 400 glass-enclosed minor masterpieces by one of the leaders of America's postwar Modern movement.

This backyard wilderness is located about 10 miles from the nation's capital and within biking distance of George Washington's Mount Vernon. Despite its historic surroundings, Hollin Hills has been attracting residents with an architecturally progressive bent for 60 years.

Creative Vision

Hollin Hills was the brainchild of Robert C. Davenport, a Department of Agriculture employee who came to Washington from Nebraska in 1938, at the peak of FDR's New Deal. After World War II, he became a successful merchant-builder in the Virginia suburbs as a sideline to his government day job.

Davenport had a vision for Hollin Hills, and he also had the ability to assemble the raw materials, funding, and creative cast of characters needed to bring his vision to life.

REGISTER RECOGNITION

Thanks to a hardworking crew of volunteer preservationists lucky enough to live there, Hollin Hills will soon become a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places—one of few architecturally Modern neighborhoods to be so honored.

The land he chose in 1946 was hilly, with meandering creeks, steep slopes, difficult building sites, no utilities, and no roads. For most developers, that combination would have spelled disaster. For Davenport, it looked like destiny on his doorstep.

He picked a well-known architect, Charles M. Goodman, whose experience in government and military building had taught him to use prefabrication and modular construction with wit and economy; a landscape architect, Lou Bernard Voigt, who had an aversion to fences and walls; and a skilled and exceptionally patient construction foreman named Mac McCalley. And, in that house-hungry postwar



The strong appeal of this design comes from the intimacy with the outdoors created by glass window walls looking out to a verdant landscape. Like this one, many Hollin Hills houses are artfully set on steep grades, becoming a full two stories at the lower end.

decade, Davenport knew he could count on a host of eager buyers.

Construction began in 1949 and continued until 1970. Goodman's last design was in 1961; in the later period, Davenport contributed some of his own house designs, which were similar in tone to Goodman's.

After Voigt's death in 1953, landscape planning fell to Dan Kiley, a noted classical modernist, and, later still, to Eric Paepcke. Both continued to emphasize a seamless flow between indoors and outdoors and from property to property. For an extra



This later design with a flat roof and a deep overhang retains the characteristic window wall looking out over its steep lot.

\$100, homeowners were offered planting schemes created specifically for their lots.

Planning the Community

Davenport was determined to interfere as little as possible with the irregular terrain and natural vegetation of the land. Accordingly, Goodman laid out the new community with curving roads that yielded to the existing topography and set aside ample space for parklands and walking trails.

Goodman devised several affordable but distinctive house plans that could be adapted to suit the needs of individual homeowners—mostly married couples with children—while capitalizing on Hollin Hills' quirky $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre building lots. Goodman's models were endlessly varied in size, plan, elevation, and roof type, thus

Window Secrets

So-called "Hollin Hills windows" were not large and costly special orders, but rather small, readily available models in standard sizes that were arranged in distinctive horizontal and vertical patterns, often stretching from floor to ceiling and running lengthwise across most of an exterior wall. With fixed panes above and operating sash below, they were designed to maximize both views and decorative impact.

Corner windows, a common 1950s design feature throughout the country, were popular in Hollin Hills as well.

artfully skirting any suggestion of a cookie-cutter community.

Focusing on privacy, views, and solar orientation, Goodman ignored convention when placing houses on their lots. There were no uniform setbacks and no head-on confrontations with the street. In fact, most Hollin Hills homes seem to look backward or sideways—in any direction except into their neighbors' windows and yards.

Though Goodman's designs aren't

derivative, they show some influence from both Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra. Based on fixed modules that changed over the years, they were crisp without being sharp, simple but not austere—they might best be described as Soft Modern.

Interestingly, for a remote suburb of the automobile-dependent postwar era, Hollin Hills paid scant attention to the demands of the car. There are some carports, but garages are notably absent.

Further reading:

Hollin Hills, Community of Vision: A Semicentennial History by Scott Wilson (Civic Association of Hollin Hills, 1999)

Top Models

The first house plan Goodman offered in Hollin Hills was a split-level, a newly popular house type proven particularly suitable for sloping sites. Although the split-level had been introduced in the 1930s in the Chicago area, the Depression and war years had delayed its national spread until after wartime shortages eased. In the early 1950s it found fans throughout the Northeast, and Goodman deftly exploited its qualities for Hollin Hills. With entry, living, and sleeping areas each on a different floor, the split-level required fairly constant movement between levels, but it perfectly suited the open interior spaces and large window areas that characterize Hollins Hills houses.

Another of Goodman's initial designs was a small, undecorated, flat-roofed slab-on-grade rectangle with three bedrooms and one bath. Like many early '50s houses, its living, dining, and kitchen spaces were minimally differentiated, and it maximized the perception of spaciousness by giving visual access to the outside. Yet it was a far cry from the ubiquitous shoebox spec houses of the era.

In Goodman's version, frame walls with vertical wood siding were lifted out of the ordinary by massive brick chimneys and fireplace walls and long stretches of what are now known as "Hollin Hills windows" (see "Window Secrets," page 63) across the width of the house.

The third major plan was for a larger, two-story house with an oversailing second floor projecting over otherwise unusable sloping land, thus creating interior space out of thin air. These projections have a sheltering effect for the first-floor windows beneath and create the opportunity for great views.



Roof Lines

Modern architects were exceedingly fond of flat roofs; government regulatory agencies such as the FHA, not so much. Consequently, most Hollin Hills roofs have at least a moderate slope, but some later models did use flat roofs. A few of the more avant-garde houses have aptly named "butterfly roofs," with a gently sloping V shape. There are many front gables, some with clerestory windows. Attic fans (evidenced today by cubical "cupolas") encouraged airflow through the house.

Materials were simple. Salvaged brick enlivened many of the exterior (and interior) walls, chimneys, and fireplaces; it was later replaced by painted CMU (cement block). Vertically grooved wood panels and horizontal windows created the celebrated 1950s cross axis of a strong vertical architectural element intersecting a horizontal one.

All of the plans had several variations, and were designed to be easily

enlarged, generally by lengthening. Using prefabricated roof trusses with spans identical to the original house for these extensions was a labor-saving practice that was economical as well.

Hollin Hills Today

Even large Hollin Hills houses are fairly small by today's standards. Goodman's designs recognized the inclination to grow, however, and through the years, resi-

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Hollin Hills Standouts

In addition to the homes Goodman and Davenport designed specifically for the new subdivision, two other buildings in Hollin Hills illustrate the duo's willingness to experiment.

◆ The Alcoa '57 House ("Care-Free Home")

In 1957, Goodman came up with a striking design for the Aluminum Corporation of America—a house with an all-aluminum exterior—to promote new uses of aluminum in housing. One of several such houses erected around the country, it is said to be the only example on which a builder actually made money. Featuring purple anodized aluminum wall panels with decorative aluminum grillework, it even sports a bright blue aluminum roof. The interior layout was a classic example of Goodman's signature inventive practicality.

◆ National Homes Corporation "Sonoma Ranger" (1954)

Always intrigued by prefabrication and innovative materials, Goodman designed a number of houses for National Homes, the nation's largest prefab homes manufacturer. Hollin Hills' single example is on Rebecca Drive. Intended as a standard developer's offering, it lacks the architectural distinction of other Hollin Hills houses.



TOP: The prominent brick chimney mass is a common feature in most Hollin Hills models. It contrasts effectively with the large expanse of glass. **ABOVE:** In 1957, Charles Goodman designed the Alcoa Aluminum House. This example in Hollin Hills is one; others were built around the country to promote the use of aluminum in houses.

dents have been uncommonly respectful of their homes' original architecture and their neighbors' privacy. Consequently, although the community now has few completely unaltered houses, additions tend to be well-designed—thoughtful, attractive, and complementary to the original building fabric.

Of the 463 houses in the proposed Hollin Hills National Register district, surveyors identified only a handful that could be called (in Register parlance) "noncontributing resources" because of

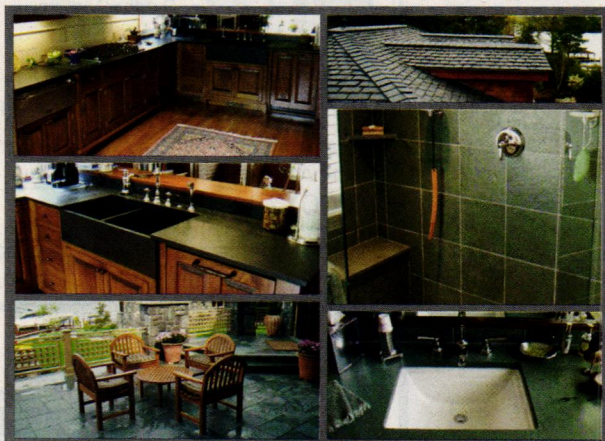
alterations. Most were disqualified on the basis of size rather than design.

From the beginning, Hollin Hills has been distinguished as much by its sense of community as its forward-looking architecture and remarkable landscape. As professional preservationist and longtime resident Jere Gibber notes, "First and foremost, Hollin Hills is an amazing community."

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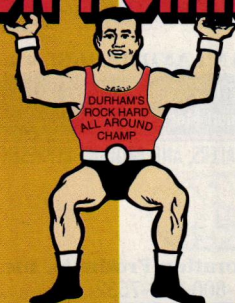
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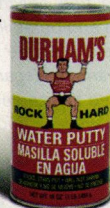
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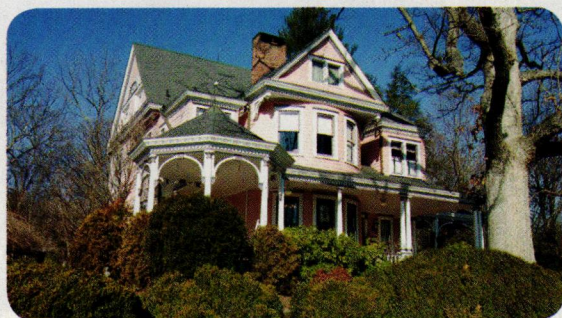
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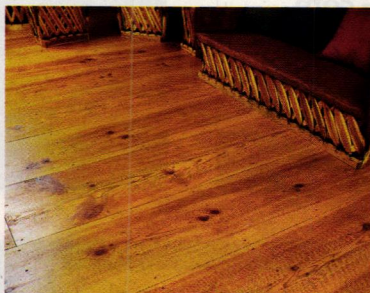
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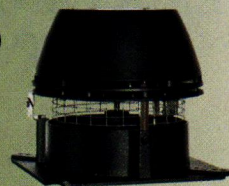


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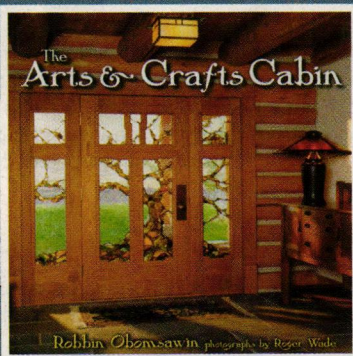


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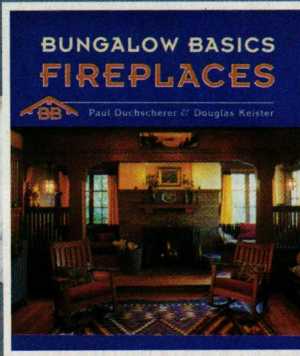
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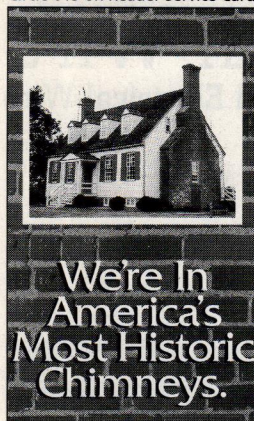
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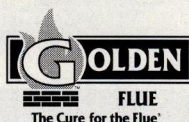
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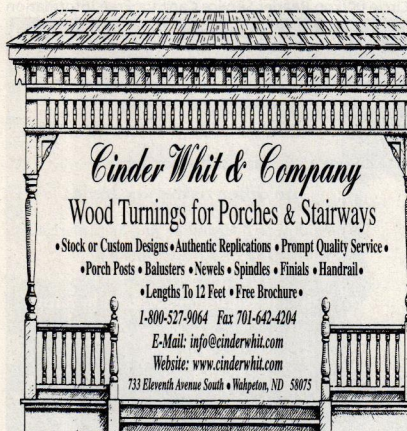
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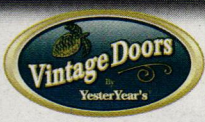
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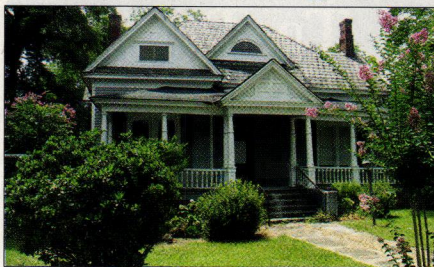
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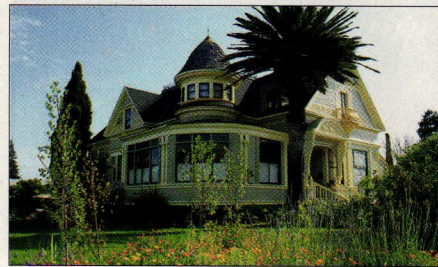


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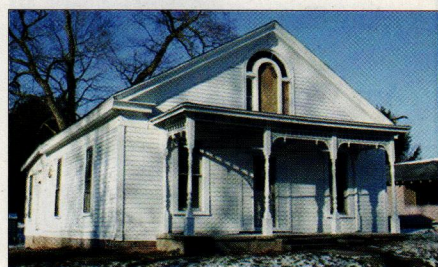


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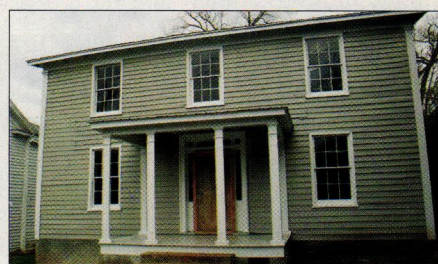
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SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA—This downtown Queen Anne Victorian has been artfully restored offering modern conveniences while retaining the rich historical detail. Currently features 9 distinctive apartments, each with their own bath and kitchen, ideal for extended families or communal living. The home can also be converted back to a stately single family residence! \$2,949,000. Linda Wilson, Wilson & Co. Sotheby's Int'l Realty, 805-543-7727. www.6871slayStreet.com



WAVELAND, IN—Circa 1850 cottage, home to American Impressionist T.C. Steele, saved from demolition. Simple Greek Revival details with two Eastlake style porches and an arched window added later. Indiana Landmarks has partially restored the exterior with new roof, siding, porch and foundation repairs. Interior requires complete rehabilitation. Eligible for tax credits. Sold with preservation easement. \$12,500. Thomas Balduf, Indiana Landmarks, 812-232-4534.



WARRENTON, NC—Burrows-Harper House, circa 1840. The stairwell and interior trim are similar to that of Jacob Holt. It has been stabilized for renovation and will require new electrical, plumbing and HVAC. Being sold by Preservation Warrenton with restrictive covenants. In the historic district and eligible for state and federal tax credits. County seat of Warren County and near Kerr and Gaston Lakes on the NC/VA state line. \$22,000. Preservation Warrenton, 252-257-1500.

Historic Properties



WILSON, NC—Circa 1910 stucco bungalow. Designed by architect Berewell Riddick, the house has 2 ½ baths, 4-5 bedrooms, and a working elevator. Eat-in kitchen, separate bar area, large living and dining areas. 3,100 sq. ft. plus 290 sq. ft. basement. One-car garage. Fenced yard. It is quite livable, but it needs deferred maintenance and restoration work. Qualifies for the historic tax credits and is a Landmark property. \$89,500. Kathryn Bethune, Preservation of Wilson, 252-234-7694.



WESTFIELD, NJ—Stunning 1915 Dutch Colonial on more than 1/2 acre manicured and fenced. 6 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths. Large rooms with 10-ft ceilings. Gracious foyer leads to living room w/fireplace. French doors open to formal dining room and family room. Master bedroom with bath. Covered front porch, large rear deck, private patio, 2-car garage. All new windows, roof and systems. Close to town and schools. Stephanie Smith, Coldwell Banker, 908-230-8585. www.StephanieAnnSmith.com



WESTFIELD, NJ—"The Harrison House," built in 1862, in the Italianate architectural style. Mansard roof, 50 decorative corbels, stunning molding, arched doors and breathtaking gardens. Wraparound porch, 12-foot ceilings, hardwood floors, bay windows, 6 bedrooms with master suite, 2 1/2 baths, office, studio, and 4 floors of living space. Looking for an antique home in New Jersey? Call an expert: Stephanie Smith, Coldwell Banker, 908-230-8585. www.StephanieAnnSmith.com



DEL RIO, TN—East TN historic 1830's dream log home, Rose Hill. 3 bedrooms, 2 baths on 3.5 acres. AC/heat; modern amenities; 2 fireplaces. Spa bathhouse; covered carport; easy private access; storage barn. www.historicproperties.com. Near French Broad River, Smokies, Asheville, Gatlinburg, and Knoxville. Family lodge, retreat, comes with own history book/guest docent. FSBO/writer. \$240,000 or best offer. 727-712-8401; rosemary_potter@msn.com



PALESTINE, TX—The Bentley House, circa 1908 on 3 acres. A designated Palestine landmark and zoned C-3 commercial. Full above-grade basement with garage, 4 bedrooms, 2-1/2 baths, 2 clawfoot tubs, beautiful staircase, and kitchen w/original double drain board sink and raised panel cabinets. 2-car garage and the original carriage house. Can be a beautiful bed and breakfast, restaurant, or office. Will be sold as-is with deed covenants. \$119,000. Historic Palestine, Inc., 903-724-3052.



CLARKSVILLE, VA—Woodland Tavern. Historic home circa 1765 on 2.75 plush acres with orchard. Beautifully landscaped. Maintains its historic integrity and is referred to as the "Old Tavern." Ten rooms, 5 bedrooms, 3 baths, 10 fireplaces and English basement. Updated eat-in kitchen with fireplace. Original heart pine floors. Great family home or Bed & Breakfast. \$298,500. Max Sempowski, Antique Properties, 434-391-4855. www.oldhouseproperties.com



DRAKES BRANCH, VA—Opportunity to fix-up a classic Victorian in small town of Charlotte County. Home is livable, but offered "as is." Almost all the trim—both indoors and outdoors—is in excellent condition. Needs improvements to the electrical and plumbing systems as well as some exterior and interior work. Features 1st floor master with a total of 4 bedrooms and 2 full baths. \$175,000. United Country Davenport Realty. 888-333-3972 or www.davenport-realty.com

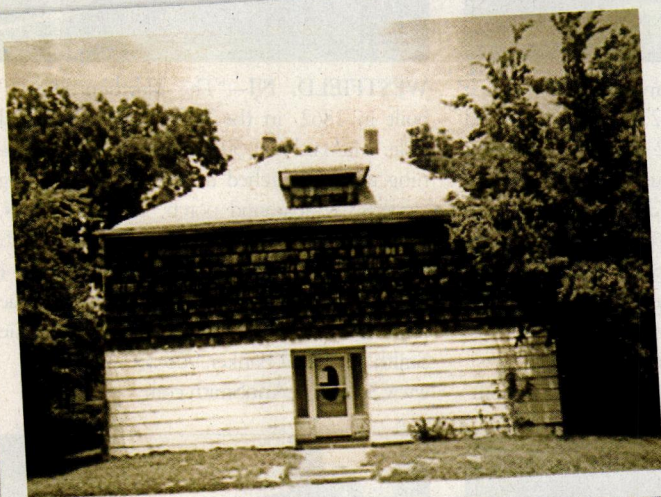


SAXE, VA—Elegant 1802 manor house with breathtaking views. 12-room gem restored to its original grandeur. Country kitchen in English basement plus 1st floor kitchen w/ granite countertops. 10 fireplaces; antique period lighting. Porches front and back. 4 full baths. Central HVAC. New plumbing & electrical. 4th floor tower. 5-bay carriage house. House and outbuildings sit high up on 9.4 acres. Max Sempowski, Antique Properties. 434-391-4855 or www.oldhouseproperties.com



LEWISBURG, WV—Circa 1815 home or possible B&B on 3.6 acres with easy access to Washington DC. 5+ bedrooms, 4 baths, hardwood floors, large kitchen with canning room & much more. Annex has in-ground pool, fireplace and spa. Mature orchard, hen house, 2-car garage, and garden. Prime location for inn. \$399,000. United Country, 800-999-1020, Ext. 108. www.unitedcountry.com/oldAmericanTreasures—a full color magazine of older and historic properties for sale. Just \$5.95.

unremuddling



Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

IT'S NOT OFTEN we see a home's original features so masked that they completely disappear. Yet it's apparently possible to turn a house into the hirsute Cousin It with the right combination of remuddles sprouting through the years like unkempt hair. Case in point: these two Texas Foursquares. One (at right) is fronted by original two-story porches supported by prominent columns and matching balustrades, while the other (at left) is buried under cascading shingles, its only remaining identifiable features found in a hipped roof, matching dormer, and twin chimneys. Stunningly, the houses are one and the same—the result of a tireless restoration after decades spent as a multiplex rental.

"After the owner stripped away the encasing façade of shingles, we were all surprised to find that the upstairs gallery, columns, and parts of the railing were still under there," says our contributor, a member of the local preservation committee. "When the committee noticed this miracle, they strongly recommended that the double galley be restored."

We agree—overextended locks might work on creepy fictional characters, but we think houses are better off shorn of excessive tresses. 🏠

WIN \$100: If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color prints or digital images. We'll give you \$100 if your photos are published. The message is more dramatic if you include a picture of a similar unremuddled building. (Original photography only, please; no clippings. Also, we reserve the right to republish the photos online and in other publications we own.) Remuddling Editor, Old-House Journal, 4125 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151; or via e-mail: OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com.

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