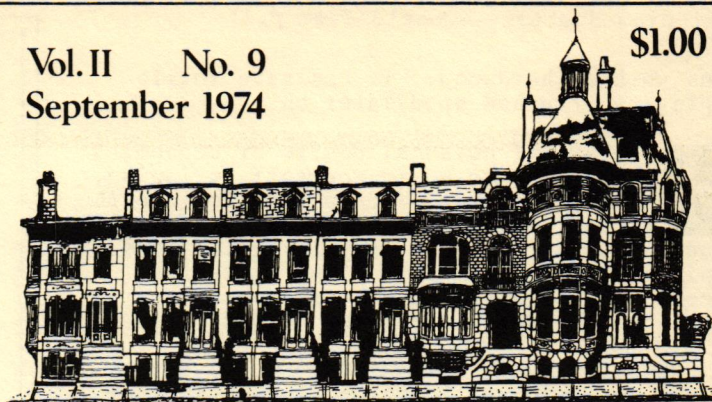


THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

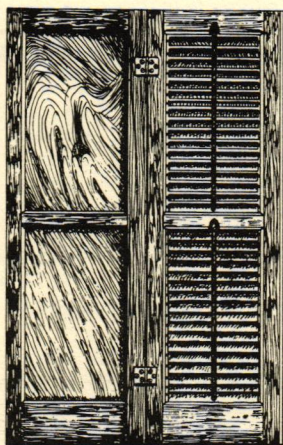
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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House

Tips On Stripping Shutters

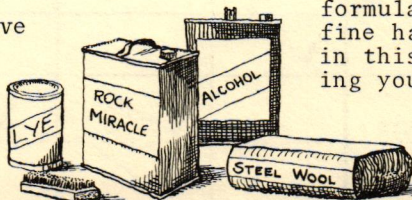


SHUTTERS COME IN TWO DEGREES of difficulty as far as stripping goes: Hard and Very Hard. Because of the many irregular surfaces, under the best of conditions stripping shutters is a time-consuming and frustrating process. We've collected the techniques and suggestions from a number of old-house people who have been through it so that if you're undertaking a similar project you can get through it with a minimum of ulcers and deleted expletives.

IN THIS ARTICLE we're using the term "shutter" to cover both both blinds and shutters. True shutters have solid panels and are usually used on the exterior—to literally shut up a house. Blinds have movable louvers that are used to regulate light. Stripping techniques are the same for both—although blinds are harder because they have more ins and outs.

BECAUSE SHUTTER STRIPPING is such a major project, it shouldn't be undertaken casually. There are three situations in which you should consider stripping:

- (1) You have hardwood shutters that have been painted and you wish to go back to a clear natural finish;
- (2) You have hardwood shutters with old darkened shellac or varnish on them that you wish to remove before refinishing;



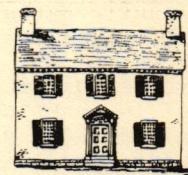
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Coming Next Month

DOWNING'S IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

- (3) You have softwood shutters that have been painted so often that they are thickly covered with old cracking paint. It may be desirable to strip off the old material before repainting. It usually is not worthwhile to strip paint from softwood shutters in order to apply a clear finish.



SOFTWOOD HAS AN OPEN PORE STRUCTURE and paint tends to cling tenaciously—making it very difficult to get the wood really clean. And once it is clean, softwood grain isn't particularly interesting. So you put in a lot of work for a result that isn't terribly exciting.

IF YOU HAVE A LOT OF SHUTTERS TO STRIP, you may want to farm the whole thing out to a commercial stripping service. Cost usually is in the range of \$5-10 per shutter—and the charge might well be worth all the time and mess saved.

CAUTION: Commercial services usually use a variation of the lye bath process—although each will claim he has his own magic formula. These dips can be rough on fine hardwood (see discussion later in this article). So before consigning your precious mahogany shutters to a caustic soaking, you're best off if you can see examples of the stripper's pre-

(Continued on p. 2)

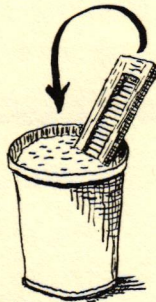
vious work on hardwood. It can save futile weeping over ruined wood later on.

HOWEVER, if personal desire or economics impels you to do-it-yourself stripping, here's what you need to know to make the process as painless as possible. First, because shutters have so many irregularities, dipping in a bath simplifies the stripping process because all surfaces are contacted simultaneously by the treating liquid.

WHEN REMOVING SHUTTERS FOR DIPPING, be sure to mark the original location of each shutter. Although they look identical, the odds are that the sizes will differ slightly—as will the mounting holes. Pencil marks on the ends usually aren't sufficient because the dipping process will likely obliterate them. If you're equipped with metal numeral dies, use them to stamp numbers into the end-grain in an inconspicuous place. Otherwise, cut numbers into the end with a pen knife.

THEN THE QUESTION ARISES: What to dip in? The best answer is a tub made from galvanized metal. In some restoration neighborhoods, several families have chipped in and split up the cost of having a suitably sized tub made up at a local tinsmith shop. A tub 60" x 24" x 10" is adequate for work with shutters. If the dip tub will also be used for larger pieces like doors, then obviously a larger tub should be ordered.

QUICKER MAKESHIFT EXPEDIENTS can be pressed into service for dipping tubs. An old bathtub...a 55-gal. drum...a big plastic garbage pail. As long as the container is at least half the depth of the shutter, you can use it for dipping by dunking one-half of the shutter at a time. You can also make a dipping box from clear pine boards (knots will cause leaks). The joints can be sealed with silicone bathtub caulk.



Dip One End At A Time



This type of wood box will serve pretty well for everything but lye (the lye would eat through the boards in fairly short order). For lye service, a wood dipping box could be lined with fiberglass and epoxy—the type used for marine repairs.

LYE IS THE QUICKEST and least expensive stripping agent to use. Cans of lye are available at many supermarkets and hardware stores (it's sold for cleaning drains). Strength of the lye solution you'll need depends on the amount of paint to be removed. In general, the stronger the better. Some use a solution of

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one pound of lye per gallon of solution. If there's only one coat of paint to cope with, you could get away with one pound for every five gallons. The idea is to use a strong solution that will attack the paint quickly—before the lye has a chance to soak into the glued joints. Shutters should never be left in a lye bath one minute longer than required to soften the paint.

LYE WORKS BEST WHEN IT'S HOT, so you're best off working on a warm sunny day. Bricks can be used to hold down the shutters to totally submerge them in the solution.

SECRET OF SUCCESSFUL LYE STRIPPING is to stay with it...don't leave the shutters soaking while you go off to varnish the parlor floor. You may come back to find your shutters dissolving on the bottom of your tub.

WHEN THE PAINT HAS SOFTENED SUFFICIENTLY, you will be able to remove it by scrubbing with a stiff-bristle scrub brush...the kind you'd use to scrub floors. This scrubbing can be done while the shutters are floating in the vat (and while you are wearing rubber gloves to keep the lye from dissolving your hands).

(Continued on p. 8)

Shutter Stripper Selector

Type Of Shutter Stripper	SOFTWOOD or OAK			HARDWOOD		
	Paint	Shellac	Varnish	Paint	Shellac	Varnish
Lye Bath	✓					
Chemical Strippers		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alcohol		✓			✓	

In Covington... A Riverboat Captain's Italianate Berth

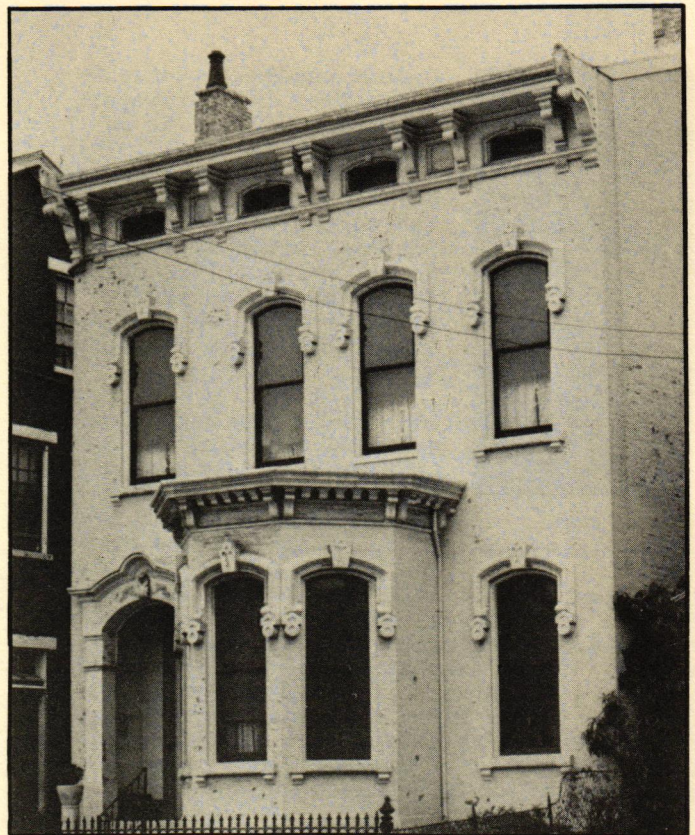
By Claire Wood

IN THE 1950's, as a boy on his father's houseboat, Don Sanders dreamed of being a steamboat captain on the Ohio River. To his family's distress, at 17 he translated dream to reality by running off to New Orleans and signing on the Avalon, a tramp excursion boat that plied the Mississippi and Ohio from St. Paul to Pittsburgh.

HE WORKED ON THE AVALON—later known as the Belle of Louisville—through college. Married, with Air Force duty behind him, Don headed back for the river and the historic steamboat, Delta Queen, which he piloted for several years following. During this period, Don and Joyce Sanders found their interest in old boats expanding to include old houses. And when they decided time had come to buy a house of their own, they gravitated to the city of Covington, Ky., traditional home of steamboat captains.

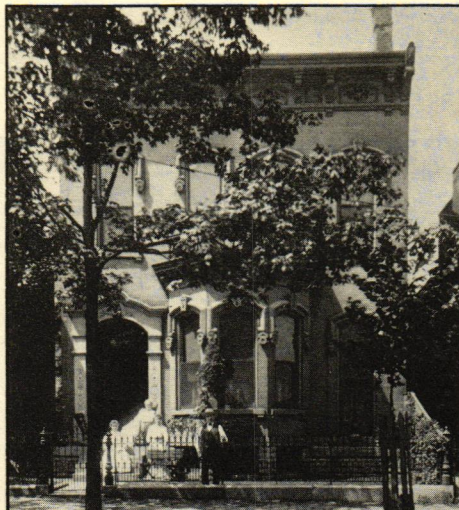
COVINGTON WAS A PRACTICAL as well as romantic choice. In the old Theological Square District, Don's brother was restoring an 1820 house that had been the president's mansion for the Western Baptist Theological Institute. An abolitionist college in a state that leaned toward slavery, the Institute was disbanded in 1858 and its grounds broken up into a subdivision.

THE MOST ELEGANT residential area in Covington at that time had been the Riverside District (now an historic area). However, Riverside had certain drawbacks....flooding, cholera and yellow fever among them. Some residents of Riverside saw a certain wisdom in building in the new subdivision of Theological Square, which happened to have the highest elevation in Covington. Most



of the houses now on the Square are products of that migration in search of higher ground.

WHEN THE SANDERS thought they'd found a mansion of their own, and were on the verge of buying it, Don was called away on a river job. Then Don's brother told Joyce that the smaller Harriet Albro house was for sale. She decided to look at it—to make sure they didn't want it. Once inside the front door, however, Joyce knew this was her house. Don was persuaded to "just look at it," and found himself in total agreement. So in February, 1971, the Sanders bought Harriet Albro house for \$9,000.



This 1918 photo shows the Klefken family, who owned the house at that time. The Sanders bought the house from estate of Theresa Klefken, the young girl on the lower step.

BUILT IN 1874 for the widow of Henry Albro, Cincinnati dealer in fine woods and veneers, Harriet Albro house is not surprisingly distinguished by some extraordinary woodwork. In parlor, dining room, downstairs hall and stairs, it is natural finish walnut, burlled walnut, and oak. Upstairs woodwork is softwood with painted graining.

THE FEATURE that so intrigued the Sanders as they entered the front door is a newel post of some justifiable local fame. It is a four-foot fluted walnut column, topped with a three-foot bronze figure of a gentleman who is something of a mystery. In this century he has been known to to owners of the house as Christopher Columbus—or more familiarly, Chris. Behind him extends a



"Chris"

walnut handrail atop oak balusters, on a staircase curving midflight at an angle of 90 degrees. This 90-degree angle is repeated on the horizontal level in the second floor hall. The Sanders assume that the house, which unlike most Victorian townhouses is nearly square, was built to accommodate this staircase design.

THE HOUSE HAS a happy history and therefore needed little major restoration. Mrs. Albro died in 1904, and her home was sold for \$4,200 to Louis Klefken who owned and operated a produce market

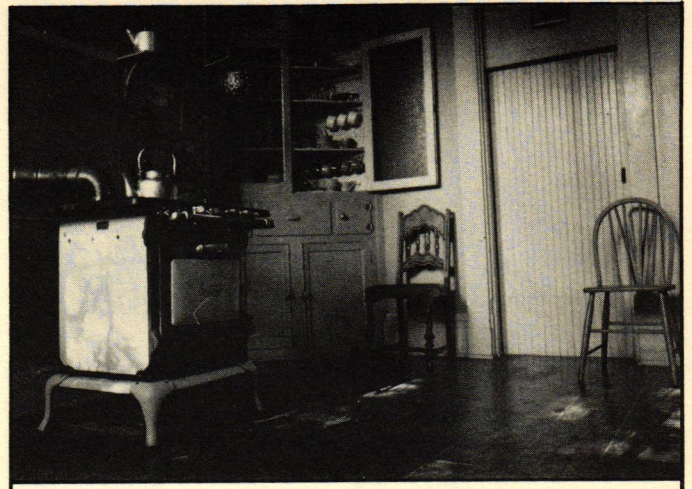
in Covington. In 1920 the Klefken daughters, Theresa and Frances, married—and both newly wed couples moved into the big house on Russell Avenue. There they prospered and brought up their own children. It was from the estate of Theresa Klefken Dietz that the Sanders bought the house. To this lady goes major credit for the preservation of Harriet Albro house; Theresa never wanted to change anything.

THE SANDERS HAVE REBUILT chimneys, put in 220-v. wiring, removed miles of strip carpeting and the thousands of tacks that nailed it down, and restored the floors. Their first instinct, quickly abandoned, was to decorate different rooms in different periods. But once the spirit of the house was fully upon them, the Sanders agreed that their long-range goal was a deliberate and patient restoration in which Harriet Albro herself would be perfectly comfortable.

TOWARD THIS END, one of their current projects is to bring back Harriet's Renaissance walnut bed to the master bedroom. Stored in the attic for almost 70 years, it was sold shortly before they took possession. They have located it, however, and are negotiating for its return. Don's grandmother and local auctions have been primary sources of other Victorian furniture.

THE ONLY NON-VICTORIAN room in the house is the kitchen in which the Sanders indulge their enthusiasm for Art Deco and Fiestaware. The stove was purchased by Theresa Klefken Dietz in the 1920s and is used by Joyce in preference to a new model that they have stored in the cellar. (The oven needs "a little jiggling now and then," but otherwise works perfectly.) Linoleum floor tiles in a Deco pattern date from the 20's, too, and though a trifle worn in heavy traffic areas, are preservable for a number of years to come.

EVERY RESTORATION has its horror story. The Sanders'

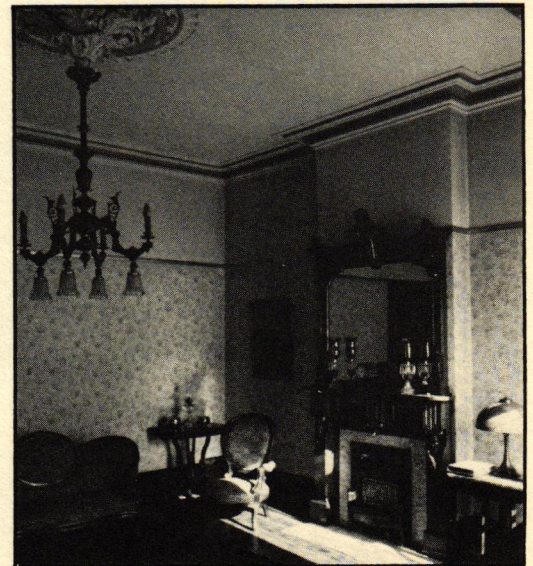
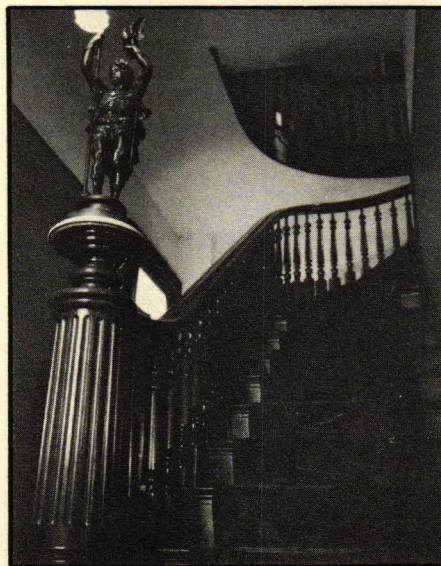


Joyce Sanders has become fiercely attached to the 1920's stove in the kitchen and refuses to install its modern replacement.

occurred on winter morning when Joyce walked into their parlor—and found herself practically ankle-deep in water. Noting a small rivulet streaming down the wall, they traced the flow to the upper reaches of the house. There they found the trouble: Workmen who had been repairing the gutters had drilled holes directly into the cornice for anchorages. Ice dams had formed in the gutters, which backed water up...and the water was flowing into the anchorage holes and bubbling merrily down the interior walls.

COVINGTON HAS BEEN FORTUNATE in the dedication of its head of urban development, Fred Donsback, who for 11 years has promoted the cause of historic preservation. One result: Theological Square has recently been designated a Kentucky State Historic Landmark.

BECAUSE THE SANDERS were willing to invest their energies in an old city neighborhood, they now have the satisfaction of being active preservers of American history—as well as the tangible reward of a prize house for nine thousand dollars.



Restoring A Frame House Exterior

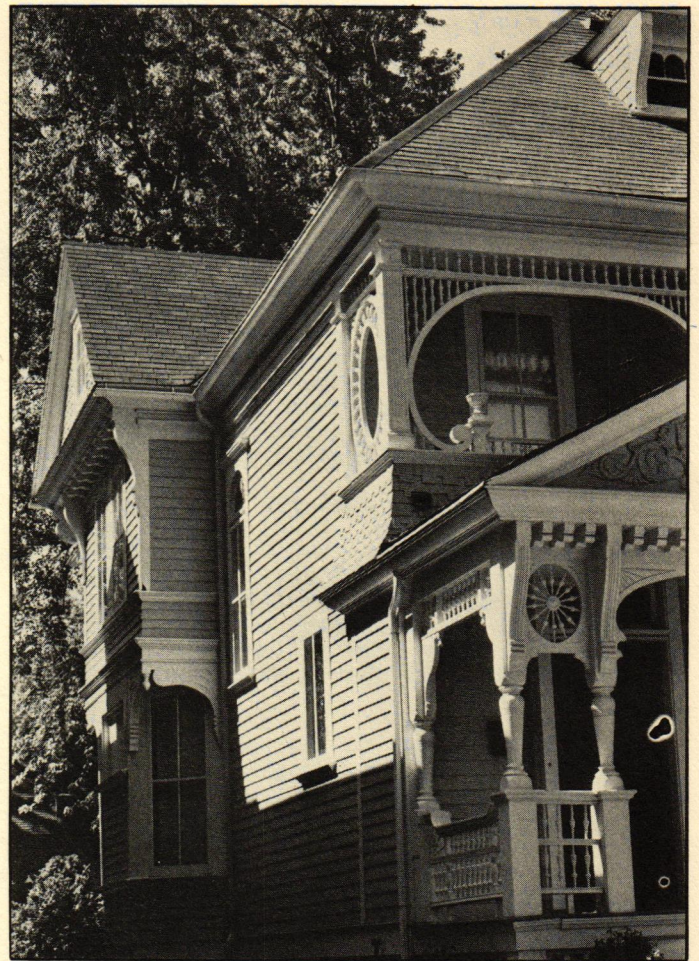
By Hugh Morgan

OUR 1890 QUEEN ANNE HOUSE in St. Paul was covered with asbestos shingles when we bought it. A squadron of shingle salesmen had apparently passed through town in the 1930's, promising that lovely new asbestos shingles applied over ugly old clapboards would forever relieve the owner of the need to paint. A previous owner of my house had bit for the shingle job...abandoned the paintbrush and had sealed up heaven knows what siding sins under the shingles for 30 years.

THE ONLY THING I have against asbestos shingles on an old house is that they look ABSOLUTELY AWFUL! So on a bright spring morning last year, I decided to see what I could accomplish on a do-it-yourself basis to restore the outside of my house to its original appearance. Despite many warnings about the folly of my efforts, I took a pry bar and very tentatively began ripping the asbestos shingles off. This exploratory operation revealed sins no greater than peeling paint—and a 5' x 5' section of wall that rotted after becoming home for a family of squirrels.

I DECIDED TO RIP OFF THE REST of the siding—and did so in about four working days. Working from top to bottom, I pulled off the shingle tiles and nails with a wrecking bar and let the stuff fall to the ground. (Next time, I'd use a pickup bed or dumpster and try to aim as much stuff as possible right into the container.) The nails came out neatly, as did the staples that held an aluminum foil backing to the original cedar siding. Later, these holes would be filled with putty.

AS THE HOUSE SHED ITS SHINGLES like a dance of the seven veils, carpentry details were revealed that began to make the house look elegant again—peeling paint and all. We also uncovered a remodeling job done around 1960. On the back of the house, sections of pine were tacked to the studs to bring the surface out to make a flush surface to mount shingles. I chose to take off the pine furring strips and splice in new redwood siding in the gaps left by the remodeling.



A CARPENTER-FRIEND pieced in the redwood and while he was at it he replaced some drip-cap molding that had been removed to accommodate the shingles. I followed his work immediately with oil-based primer.

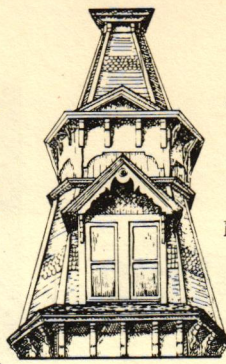
SEVERAL OTHER OPERATIONS had to be completed before I could get to the fun part...the painting. Eighty-three years of rain and snow had loosened and rotted much of the window trim. I will likely need to mill new wood within a few years, but for the moment I am making the old wood last. I stripped off the old cracked paint, nailed loose trim back tightly to the house, puttied holes and caulked the cracks. With that preparation—plus thorough priming—the window sills and trim are holding up well under their new coat of paint.

PEELING PAINT OFF WOODWORK can bring the same pleasure as peeling the wax off your finger after toying with a candle...it is a dull, dreamy sort of pleasure that is best indulged when you have something more pleasant to think about.

GIVEN THAT FRAME OF MIND, my wife Anne and I stripped the paint off every inch of the elaborate spindlework on our front porch. The old paint was peeling badly, and where the paint had not peeled it was so thick that it blurred the wood detail.

WE USED A SCRAPER shaped like a French curve and softened the paint with a propane torch.

The torch had a trigger on it that raised and lowered the flame and an attachment on the nozzle that spread the flame out. I would heat an area of 10-12 square inches until the paint bubbled, then scrape it off. It seemed to take forever and we used 12 cannisters of propane. Once the paint was gone, a wire brushing readied the wood for primer.



torch, strip, clean and paint the trim. I succeeded in messing up a lot of the nice work I had done earlier.

NEXT TIME, it's one section at a time ...top to bottom...with cleaning and scraping first...then priming... trim and house color next...followed by a lemonade in the shade while the work dries.

GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE, I would probably take the porch apart—disassembling the decorative work into pieces small enough to fit into the vat of a commercial stripper. Let the chemicals do the work. A stripping bath would undoubtedly loosen many of the glued joints. But commercial stripping would be faster, cleaner and potentially less damaging to the wood than torch and scraper.

I HAD ONE GOOD SCARE with the torch that I should tell you about. I was working on a dormer on the roof when the wood I was torching started to smolder. I flew in the window and dashed downstairs, yelling for water. Miraculously, Anne appeared with a watering can and the glowing embers were extinguished. But from that time on I kept a water bucket close at hand.

ALL THIS GETS CLOSER TO THE BASIC business of painting. The options in painting an old frame house range from completely stripping all the original paint to merely putting a fresh coat over all that has gone before. I selected a step in between: I scraped off all loose paint and primed the bare spots before repainting.

DURING MY EXTERIOR RESTORATION, I made plenty of mistakes. So the procedure for painting that I'll outline is more what I would do if I were starting out fresh than what I actually did the first time around.

FIRST, I discovered that the law of gravity applies to house painting as well as apples. So all scraping and slopping must be done from top to bottom.

THE NEXT TRICK is to get as many tasks as possible done with one placement of the ladder. In my case, I cleaned, scraped and primed before painting. I chose to wash the walls with TSP, a chemical cleaning compound that removes surface dirt and grime and provides better adhesion of the new paint. Where water was used heavily to flush off the TSP, the house had to dry a day or two so moisture wouldn't be trapped under new paint.

AFTER WASHING, I puttied the holes left by shingle nails and scraped all loose paint. Up on the ladder with me was a can of primer. That was applied to all spots that had been scraped bare. My pattern was to scrape and prime a section of the house in one session, and then come back the next day and paint that section with the latex paint we had selected.

HERE LET ME TELL YOU my single biggest mistake. I thought the trim painting should be a separate job since it was a different color. So I proceeded to paint the main body of the house, and came around later in the summer to

FROM THE SCRAPINGS we took from the house, it appeared that it had spent most of its life painted a basic white with green trim. But for its reincarnation, Anne and I chose a butterscotch color with ivory trim. That color scheme seemed to fit the mood of tintype pictures, proper parlors and high-wheeled bicycles.

AFTER THE SUMMER'S LABOR, it became clear that the key to a good paint job is extensive preparation of the surface. The preparation is hard and seemingly unrewarding work...but absolutely essential. It was especially hard because our place hadn't received any maintenance for years...but it will be easier next time.

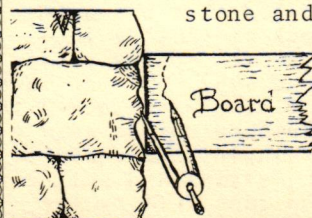
OIL-BASED AND LATEX PAINTS WILL BOTH yield good results if they are good quality paints. Over the oil-based primer we applied a semi-gloss latex from Sherwin-Williams. Eighteen months after, the paint job still looks good. There were some small areas where, during the winter, some of the original paint peeled. These areas have been scraped, primed and repainted. The latex is holding well on the oil-based primer, however.

IF YOU ARE FACING an exterior paint job, I believe you can set out with some confidence that I have already made most of the mistakes for you.

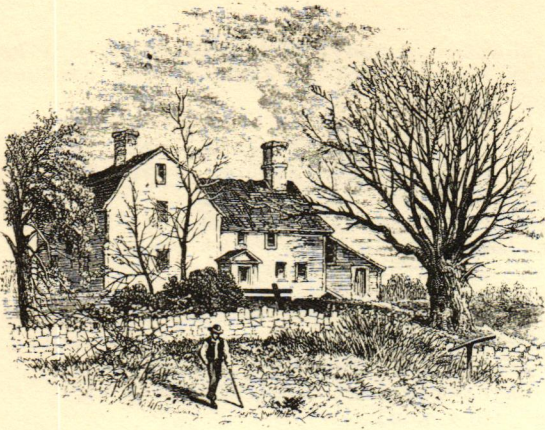
Hugh and Anne Morgan's Queen Anne house, pictured on the preceding page, was also featured in the "Old-House Living" section in the August 1974 issue. They are both active in restoration in St. Paul.

Fitting A Board To An Irregular Wall

Our 67-year-old carpenter showed us how to get a perfect fit where clapboards were butting against a granite chimney. Even the carpenters who built our house 85 years ago didn't do as good a job. He held the board square to the chimney, then traced the contour with a compass. The metal tip followed the curve of the stone and the pencil made a parallel line on the board. Cutting with a saber saw completes the operation.



Rebecca Witsell
Little Rock, Ark.

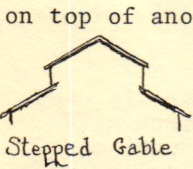
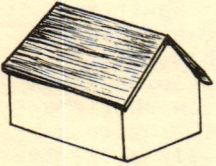


Early American Roof Types

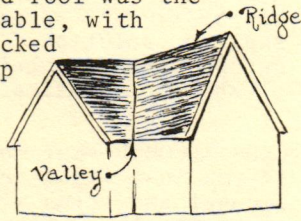
EARLY AMERICANS BUILT their houses with the same type of roofs that were familiar to them from the old country. Although dormers and trimmings changed the outlines of roofs as time went on, the basic shapes of roofs are still very much the same as those found on the earliest houses in America. The following illustrations show these basic types and a few of the early variations.

Gable Roof

The triangular shape formed by the outline of the sloping sides of a roof is known as a gable. A gabled roof has this triangular shape at the ends—on a dormer it is known as a gabled dormer. A very old form of the gabled roof was the stepped gable, with one gable stacked



on top of another. The top of a gabled roof, where the slopes meet, is called a ridge.



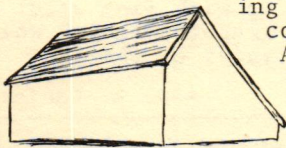
When a gable roof is truncated, or bevelled off, the roof is called a Jerkin-head. They are found in the Carolinas.

One of the simplest types of house is the one-storey with a gable roof known as the Cape Cod. To provide additional headroom, a variation was used, known as the "bowed" or rainbow roof.

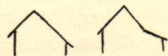


Leanto

A Leanto house has a gabled roof with one side of the roof sloping almost to the ground to cover a shed-like addition. A leanto in New England is known as a "saltbox." In the south they are most descriptively called a "catslide."

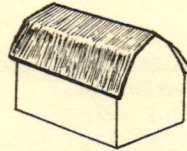


Leantos were sometimes built in this shape originally, but more often the shed addition was added at a later date. A broken line in the slope is usually an indication of this.

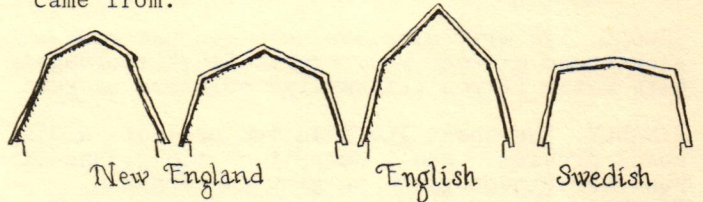


Gambrel Roof

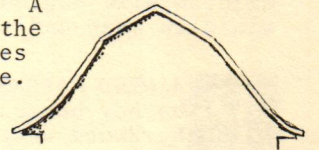
The gambrel roof afforded more headroom in the attic than the gable roof. On a gambrel, the slope is steep for a distance above the eaves and then changes abruptly to a flatter pitch. The junction of these two pitches is called a curb. Gambrel



roofs were originally built in distinctive shapes, reflecting the country the builder came from.

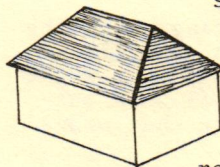


The eaves are the part of the roof that extend over the walls of a house. A distinctive roof shape is the Flemish style that has eaves flaring in a graceful curve. It is commonly known as a "Dutch kick."

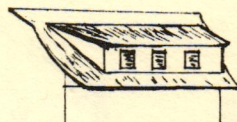
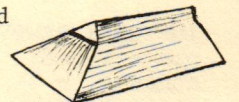


Hip Roof

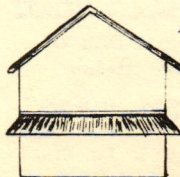
A pyramidal shape in which all four sides slope upward at the same pitch. Georgian and Federal style houses often had a hip-roof that was ornamented with a balustrade on the ridge of the roof.



An odd variation of the hip roof is found in Newport, and called a hip-gambrel. It is a combination of a hip roof topped with a small gable.



Dormers—projections from roofs that contain windows—change the appearance of a roof. The most dramatic change is the addition of the long shed-type dormer that adds another roofline to a house.



A pent roof is a narrow, continuous shed-type roof attached to a wall, usually at second story level. It helped to keep rain away from the lower part of the house. Pent roofs were introduced by the Pennsylvania Germans.

(Stripping Shutters—Cont'd from p.2)

AS SOON AS THE PAINT HAS BEEN SCRUBBED OFF, remove the shutters from the bath and flush them thoroughly with a garden hose to remove all traces of lye. Some people recommend neutralizing the lye by dousing the shutters with vinegar, but this really isn't necessary if you flush thoroughly. Besides, who wants shutters that smell like salad dressing?

FINAL TRACES OF PAINT in corners and crevices should be picked out while the shutter is still wet. Use an old screwdriver, nutpick or your favorite crevice tool. While lye is an inexpensive and effective stripping agent, it is not a universal cure-all, and there are several cautions to be observed.

FIRST, while lye will do an effective job on softwood and oak, it is not recommended for hardwood—such as mahogany and walnut—to which a clear finish will be applied. Lye will turn wood dark, and although it can be bleached back with Clorox, all this back and forth definitely does not enhance the grain.

SECOND, lye will dissolve skin—so use rubber gloves and protect your eyes. Flush thoroughly with water if you get any lye solution on you.

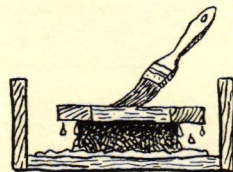
FINALLY, the spent lye solution presents a disposal problem. Don't dump it on the ground if you ever expect grass to grow there again. If you are connected to a central sewer system the solution can be flushed down a drain—diluted with copious amounts of cold water to minimize wear and tear on the pipes.

PAIINTED HARDWOOD SHUTTERS are the biggest bother because in order to preserve the hardwood underneath, the paint should be removed with chemical strippers rather than lye. There's no pleasant way to use a chemical remover. But there are a few tricks that will make it a little less gruesome.

THE FIRST TRICK IS: Don't be stingy with the material. Although stripper is expensive—it runs around \$8/gal. these days—you might as well get the maximum amount of work out of it by using it properly...and that means generously.

THE BEST REMOVERS are the water-rinseable paste types. Sold under a variety of trade names such as Strypeze, TM-4, Old Reliable, etc. Selection of remover is pretty much a matter of personal preference.

ONCE THE REMOVER IS APPLIED, resist the urge to start scraping away immediately. Wait until the remover has soaked through to the bottom layer of paint. You may have to lay on a second—or even third—coat of remover in order to soak through. Don't let the remover dry out... keep it wet with successive applications of remover. It's easiest to conduct this operation in a tub or dipping box...



Cross-Section of Shutter Being Stripped in Box.

with the shutter supported on blocks or bricks. This allows you to recycle some of the remover that drips off.

TEST WITH A PUTTY KNIFE to see if paint will come off in a continuous ribbon, leaving the wood clean. If not, wait longer. If it will, the remover has done its job and now it's your turn. Remove as much paint as possible by scraping with the putty knife. Then wipe up the remainder with fine steel wool.

AFTER MOPPING UP WITH STEEL WOOL, there will still be some paint remaining. Rinse with a liquid paint remover, followed by a wipe with more steel wool.

EVEN WITH GENEROUS USE OF REMOVER, it usually takes at least 4 hours to strip a painted shutter.

AN OLD DARKENED FINISH on shutters is probably shellac. If so, you're lucky—because shellac is the easiest finish to remove. It dissolves readily in denatured alcohol...and liquid paint remover will cut right through it.

THE MOST PLEASANT METHOD is to set up a 2-vat dipping system with denatured alcohol. Very effective...but also expensive. Shutter is dipped in first alcohol bath and allowed to soak for 15 min., then is scrubbed with very fine steel wool. The shellac dissolves into the dipping solution. After a few shutters are done, the alcohol bath absorbs quite a bit of finish—becoming essentially a dilute shellac solution. Rinsing shutters in a second clean alcohol bath removes the traces of shellac solution.

LESS ALCOHOL—but more elbow grease—is used if you just flood the shutter surface with alcohol and scrub with fine steel wool and paper towels. With this process, you're lifting the surface off mechanically rather than floating it off as you do with the alcohol bath.

IN SOME CASES, the shellac contains additives that cause it to ball up in alcohol rather than dissolve. In this event, add one part of lacquer thinner to three parts of the alcohol. If neither alcohol nor lacquer thinner will touch the finish, then you're dealing with real varnish and you'll have to use chemical strippers as described below.

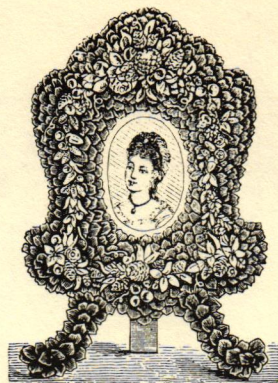
LIQUID PAINT REMOVERS can be used with shellac or varnish—although the action is a lot faster on shellac. Working in a horizontal tub, flood on the liquid remover. Remover that drips off can be picked up from the bottom of the vat with a paintbrush and recycled to the top of the shutter. When the remover has soaked through the finish, mop it up with fine steel wool. Add more remover to keep the finish wet and to rinse off the last traces of the old surface.

--R. A. Labine

Mr. Joseph Balzamo, who strips fine hardwood professionally, provided valuable tips for this article. Incidentally, Balzamo, who lives in Parlin, N.J., says that his very favorite paint remover is "Rock Miracle," manufactured by Pyrock Chemical Corp., Long Island City, N.Y.



Victorian



Fancywork



by Carolyn Flaherty

VICTORIAN DECORATION EARNED its often bad reputation in large part because of fancywork. This was the name given to the endless variety of ornament produced by the Victorian woman in an effort to "beautify" her home.

Household Art

OTHER THAN NEEDLEWORK—making clothing for herself and her family—which was a necessary skill for all females before the sewing machine, fancywork was the only outlet for the "genteel" middle or upper-middle class woman.



THE ROLE OF SUCH A WOMAN was to show the world how well her prosperous husband was doing. This necessitated servants and often a governess. With even "novel reading" considered somewhat of a vice, making fancywork objects was the only proper way to spend a long afternoon.

UNFORTUNATELY for the appearance of many a parlor, too many women did not find this pursuit rewarding, nor were they very good at the crafts at which they so earnestly and diligently worked.

POPULAR PUBLICATIONS URGED them on, however, with high-minded advice. "The wife is the presiding genius of the home. Let her learn to create those adornments that make her home pleasant and attractive." And so they did...often with such a vengeance that one wonders, looking at some of the worst examples, if there was not some subconscious retaliation directed at the Victorian male who kept her in her ribbon-bedecked, stuffed parlor.

BUT THEN, as today, there were some who truly enjoyed these creative efforts and, far more often than we should expect, some lovely things were made. Even most of the more naive efforts show an industry and charm that would be readily admired if they had been produced in colonial rather than Victorian times.

SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR TYPES OF FANCYWORK, most of which can be duplicated today, are described in this article. Left out, as being of only historic interest, are the many items associated with the bygone pastimes and customs of the era. Because needlework played such an important part in their lives, ladies spent a great deal of time ornamenting pincushions, needlecases (needles were an expensive item) and thimblecases. These were popular gift items and they usually rested in an elaborately decorated workbasket.

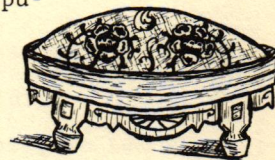


THE CUSTOM OF PRESENTING a calling card when paying a visit provided many more opportunities for decoration. The cards themselves were usually quite elaborate, and a table was placed in the hall for the sole purpose of holding a fancy card box in which to place them. Another table, covered with a fancywork cloth, was placed in the parlor to exhibit the current projects the young ladies of the house were engaged in, for the admiration of the visitor. These objects, no longer useful in contemporary life, may have caused much of the Victorian clutter, but they were very dear to the heart of a 19th century lady.

Berlin-work

KNOWN TODAY AS "petit-point" or "needlepoint," it was then called "wool-work," "canvas-work," but most commonly it was known as "Berlin-work." Originally, a pattern was printed, requiring many skilled colorists, on which each tiny square represented a stitch. These patterns originated in Berlin. The needleworker would look at this paper pattern and then duplicate the square with a stitch on a canvas. It was an extraordinarily painstaking but popular pastime. Woolwork was used for ottomans, chairs, and footstools and fireplace screens.

BY MID-19th CENTURY the method of printing the design right on the canvas (as it is still done today) had been perfected. This spurred Berlin-work on to even greater popularity. From the traditional birds and flowers, patterns went on to historical figures and scenes and copies of great paintings, much of them earning Berlin-work its bad name.



THE CRAFT LATER degenerated to cardboard cards with perforated holes, and to patterns sold with the difficult parts already filled in.

MANY PEOPLE STILL ENJOY doing needlepoint and it is recognized as an historically authentic textile to use with colonial or Victorian antiques.

Bead Work

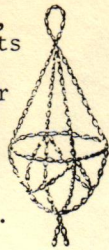
GLASS BEADS were produced in abundance in Venice in the early part of the 19th century and they were used in needlework to decorate purses, work boxes and pincushions.



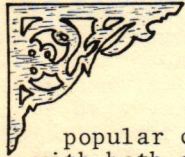
THE BEADS WERE ALSO worked on a loom



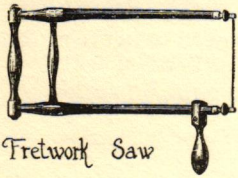
to make lamp or table mats, vase covers, hanging baskets and lambrequins. Or, in other words, a covering for just about anything it could be made to fit. Crystal and metal beadwork was also used lavishly for fringes and tassels on upholstery and drapes.



Fretwork



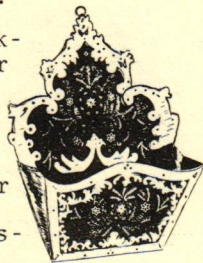
INTRODUCED in the 1860's, fretwork—also known as scrollwork, jigsaw work, and Sorrento carving—soon became one of the most popular crafts in the next few decades with both sexes. A delicate handsaw or "jigsaw" was used to cut out patterns on a small wooden article.



Fretwork Saw

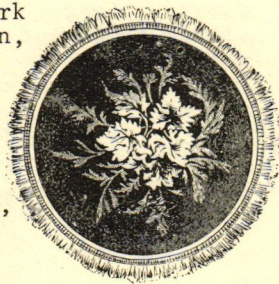
PUBLISHERS OF NEEDLEWORK and other fancywork patterns soon put out portfolios of designs for fretwork. These patterns were traced on wood—an expensive material at the time—and then carved out with the jigsaw.

BRACKETS FOR THE UBIQUITOUS knick-knack shelf were the most popular items. Fretwork also was widely used to make wallpockets or "catch-alls"—a favorite Victorian item. They were carved in wood with a pocket of beadwork or embroidered cloth. They often held no more than the weekly newspaper or (an obviously necessary item) a dustcloth! Fretwork was also used to make picture frames, towel racks and other numerous small items.



Spatterwork

TO PRODUCE A spatterwork or "spraywork" pattern, an arrangement of leaves, ferns and/or flowers was pinned to a light board or piece of fabric. A wire sieve was placed over this and india ink was "spattered" through, usually with an old toothbrush. A modern spraygun would quickly give the same effect.



A WELL-DEFINED, DELICATE SILHOUETTE remained after removing the foliage. "Graceful, waving grasses" and even seaweed were popular, and it was recommended that the "spattering" gradually thin out towards the edges to give a graduation of tints. The patterns were then used for lampshades,



curtains, lambrequins, and insets on book covers, boxes, and workbaskets. The most common use—a framed picture—still adds a nice, nostalgic touch to a Victorian parlor.

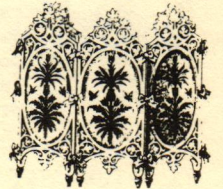
Lampshades

LAMPSHADES WERE MADE from ornamented cardboard for many years before the Victorian period. One of the most popular methods was known as "embossing on cardboard." To do this, a series of slanting incisions was made on paper or thin cardboard with a sharp knife held obliquely. The cuts raised the face of the paper slightly to make a shadowy decoration.

THE DESIGN ILLUSTRATED ON the left is an actual pattern for another version of embossing on cardboard known as "diaphne." Diaphne was a form of window decoration that vaguely imitated the effect of stained glass, but with colored paper. This method, used for lampshades, called for colored tissue paper behind the slits. According to Godey's Lady's book, this method would "give a soft shading to the old-fashioned biscuit lamp shade."



SOME OF THE MORE ELABORATE versions added fretwork or beadwork. Later, actual slits were made through the cardboard and the light of the electric bulb filtered through. Along with floral decorations, birds, swans and landscapes were popular motifs.



Shellwork

MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE OBJECT, the seashell filled the Victorian desire for intricacy of detail, delicacy, and variety of curved lines. Collecting shells was a popular pastime at English resorts. The tiny "rice" shell from the West Indies was also enormously popular. Great numbers and varieties of shells were glued together to form floral arrangements for mantel decorations, figures, vases, jewelry and hair ornaments.

SHELLWORK PICTURE FRAMES were well-suited to the Victorian theory of "appropriateness" in decor. If a landscape scene was framed in a rustic manner with twigs and acorns, what could be more appropriate than a seascape framed in seashells?



SOME CHARMING EXAMPLES of the complicated floral arrangements that were used for mantel decorations still retain their delicacy a century later due to the practice of placing them—like many other types of handwork—under a glass dome for protection.

UNFORTUNATELY, the over-abundance of fancywork produced in so many endless hours was often jumbled together along with many other fussy decorations and knick-knacks. Taken out of its muddle and placed in a more serene atmosphere, many of these fancywork objects can be as delightful to us as they were to the Victorians. And a few of them, whether antique or newly-made, can give a charming nostalgic touch to an old Victorian house.



Guide To Old-House Styles

To aid old-house spotters, The Old-House Journal has just published a 4-page "Field Guide to Old-House Styles." The Guide contains line drawings of 17 basic architectural styles—along with a capsule description of the basic characteristics of each. The Guide can be used not only in identifying the architectural heritage of a particular house, but also in helping determine what detail may have been added—or removed—in later remodelings. Priced at 50¢. Readers of The Journal may obtain a free copy by sending a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope to: Field Guide, Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, New York 11217.

Colonial Paint Colors

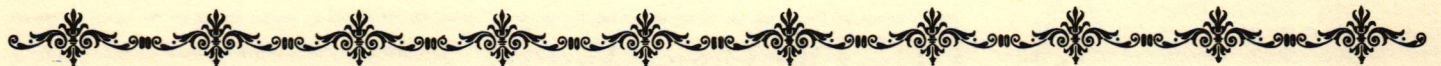
Although ready-mixed paints were unknown to the 18th-century artisan, The Turco Paint and Varnish company has been able to reproduce authentic colonial colors in high-quality modern paints. They are the exclusive licensee of Old Sturbridge Village for paint, and reproduce paint colors for inside and outdoors. Taken right from the Village houses, the colors such as Fenno House Red or Richardson House Gold, are unusually warm and rich. The Independence Park Collection, with elegant shades like Powell House Green or Congress Hall Red, are authenticated by the National Park Service. Turco will send sample paint chips, historical information, and literature on their stains and furniture waxes, free on your request. Write to: The Turco Paint and Varnish Co., 212-220 Race Street, Phila., Pa. 19106.

Early Pennsylvania Houses

Most books on architectural styles dwell on the great houses and public buildings. A happy exception is "Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania," which concentrates on vernacular architecture—the plain houses of ordinary folk. In hundreds of detailed photos and measured drawings, the author documents the 17th- and 18th-century houses and barns of eastern Pennsylvania...primarily English, Dutch and German in their origins. The book is a valuable research tool for anyone doing Early American restorations, especially in this area of Pennsylvania. A reprint of a book originally published in 1931, the 182-page volume is doubly valuable since many of the houses pictured have been destroyed. In soft-cover, "Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania" is \$6.95 plus 75¢ handling from Pyne Press, 291 Witherspoon St., Princeton, N.J.

Picture Frame Reproductions

The Victorians were quite fond of oval picture frames and looking glasses. They were often used in clusters of different sized frames. A young man in Cincinnati, who began by hand-crafting frames in a single design, soon built a large business featuring over 300 styles, and these frames found their way onto walls all over the country. These same frames are being authentically reproduced today by R A Enterprises just as they have been found on walls of many old homes. A free brochure of their reproductions is available by writing to: R A Enterprises, P. O. Box 18016, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118.



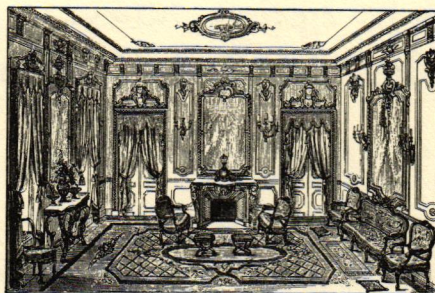
A Primer On

A general introduction to the Victorian era is presented in a lively, witty book, "Victoria Royal," written by Rita Wellman.

Beginning with the amazing Great Exhibition in 1851, bringing to London examples of the world's manufactured goods, Wellman tells us about this brain child of "dear Albert" that pleased the Queen so much. Dubbed the Crystal Palace by Punch, it featured a giant water lily, "Victoria Regia."

The book progresses through the Victorian decades, describing the manners, dress, and pastimes of the people, and their taste in home furnishings and ornament.

In discussing some of the important figures of the period like Eastlake, Morris, Downing and



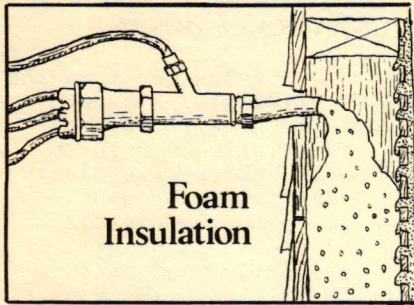
Victoriana

Oscar Wilde, some wonderfully gossipy sidelights on their manners and mores are offered.

For anyone who owns a Victorian home and would like to know more about the culture that influenced its architecture and decoration, "Victoria Royal"—a hardcover, 180-page book with line drawings—is a quick and entertaining way to learn more about the Victorian period.

By special arrangement with the American Life Foundation, The Old-House Journal is able to offer "Victoria Royal" directly to its readers. To order, send \$4.00 (includes postage and handling) to: The Old-House Journal Reprint Dept. 199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, New York 11217

Products For The Old House



Insulating the old house presents some unique problems. Contractors traditionally have used fiberglass or loose mineral wool blown into voids inside the walls. Drawback of these materials is that they tend to pack down with the passage of time, leaving uninsulated voids at the top of the partitions.

More recently, attention has been focused on foamed-in-place insulations—especially the polyurethane type. These materials will fill voids that blown insulations can't, and they won't settle over the years. However, urethane foams have provoked controversies about their safety. Some types will give off toxic gases when burned, which has led to their being banned by some local building codes.

Now, there's a new foam type, called Rapco-Foam. It's based on a urea-formaldehyde resin and will not burn up to 1,200 F. Above that temperature, the foam will decompose, but the gases are not toxic. The foam has been classed as non-combustible by the New York City Building Code.

Rapco-Foam, which has the consistency of shaving cream, is pumped through 1-in. holes at the top of a wall via a special gun. Foam fills all cavities, including spaces under pipes, wires, electrical boxes and braces. In 30-45 sec. the foam sets to sponge-cake consistency.

Higher in cost than other insulations, Rapco-Foam is claimed to recoup its cost through greater fuel economies. For more information, contact Rapperswill Corp., 305 E. 40th St., New York, N.Y. 10016 or at 518 S. 11th St., Richmond, Calif. 94804.

The Decorative Tradition

TO APPRECIATE VICTORIAN architecture, it is necessary to first understand the Victorians. After reading Julian Barnard's fascinating book, "The Decorative Tradition" the reader will not only understand much more about Victorian architecture and ornament, but most likely will also find that some of Barnard's great enthusiasm for their "humanly satisfying" buildings has rubbed off.

"In the eyes of most people a building without decoration was nothing, it was naked, an undressed and rude structure." The Victorians used machine-made ornament in abundance and revelled in the opportunities afforded for everyone to have variety, individuality, color, visual interest, or in other words, what was unquestionable in their minds—beauty.

A confident and prosperous people, the Victorians were quite unfamiliar with modern insecurities about what was in good taste. They were quite sure they knew what was beautiful—ornament—and the more of it the more beautiful it appeared to them. This practice is of course what caused so much criticism of Victorian excesses. Barnard says, "It was generally

agreed that ornament was not style, although there was a tendency to regard the accumulation of ornamental details as an expression of style."

The book contains 350 illustrations, each of them made relevant and interesting by Barnard's text, and taken together, provide a rich visual history of the English Victorian heritage. The currents of popular thinking and ideas of the influential figures that Barnard discusses affected American architecture in much the same manner.

Although his affections obviously lie in the decorative tradition rather than the functional, Barnard does not suggest we should or could go back to the same forms of a century ago. But he does have some very interesting ideas about how we can use some of the decorative tradition principles to make modern architecture more satisfying to the people who have to live with it.

To order "The Decorative Tradition," by Julian Barnard, send \$12.95, plus 50¢ postage and handling, to:

The Pyne Press
291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, N.J. 08540.
--C.F.



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199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217

Jeremy lived in a modern, convenient, clean, trouble-free apartment.

He secretly longed, however, to own an old house. Every morning as he slipped through the sterile lobby, Jeremy imagined himself instead striding through his own foyer to stand, imperially slim, atop his own stairs surveying the passing scene.

But fearing scorn from his practical-minded friends, Jeremy dared not give voice to his dream. And thus he despaired of ever taking the first step that would make his dream come true. Then he met Gwendolyn. To her, Jeremy poured out the secrets of his heart. Not only was Gwendolyn understanding—she also knew about The Old-House Journal.

Her gift subscription brought Jeremy knowledge and advice, comfort and support, know-how and confidence. And all, by special arrangement, in a plain brown wrapper.

Moral: Be a friend in need. Give The Old-House Journal. We'll send a certificate identifying you as the benefactor.