

# THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Vol. V No. 7  
July 1977

\$1.00



Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House



## Late 19th Century Decoration

By Carolyn Flaherty

AS MORE AND MORE old-house owners become involved in restoring Victorian houses to their original architectural charm, the question of how to decorate them becomes more urgent. Many people never had any intention of getting into period decoration, but after a few years of very hard work they have on their hands a house with lovely plasterwork, beautiful parquet floors, and period lighting fixtures.

THEY HAVE GOTTEN THIS FAR, and they want to continue the Victorian look and feel of the house they have so lovingly restored. But they also may not be overly fond of the stereo-typed image of antimaccasars, beribboned lamps, and frou-frou all atop a carpet of bright red cabbage roses.

THE VICTORIAN ERA produced many theories of decoration usually voiced by cranky gentlemen who decried the poor taste of the day. One such man was Charles Eastlake (The Journal, August 1975) whose influence was felt throughout the late Victorian era. Another was Henry Hudson



Holly. Holly is mainly remembered for his very popular books concerning architecture. His volume, "Holly's Country Seats," published in 1863, presented designs and plans for rural and suburban houses which were widely copied around the country to build for a growing nation.

BUT HOLLY did not confine himself to the design of the house itself. A large section of his later book, "Modern Dwellings," published in 1878, is addressed to the decoration and furnishing of the house. Written in high Victorian dudgeon, he attacks the craftsmanship, taste, manufactured goods, and attitudes of the day. But Holly is more than a negative voice of his time.

WITH A DEFINITE SET of guidelines for painting and decorating, use of color, fabric and furniture, he presents a sophisticated and elegant mode of decoration for the late 19th century house. He formed his theory of interior decoration by drawing on the more original work of A. J. Downing, Eastlake, and the creative genius of Dr. Christopher Dresser in England. But by putting it all to-

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### Coming Next Month

EARLY AMERICAN ROOFS



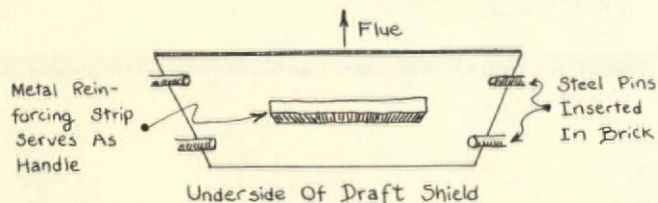


## A Simple Damper

To The Editor:

I THOUGHT YOUR READERS might be interested in another solution to the problem of old fireplaces that don't have dampers.

WE HAVE A COLONIAL house with six fireplaces in two chimneys. Since one chimney needed considerable rebuilding, we installed conventional dampers. But for the other fireplaces we had a local craftsman fashion draft shields out of sheet metal to fit the throat of the flue at the top of each fireplace.



THE SHIELD RESTS on 4 steel pins inserted in small holes in the brick made with a star drill. There is a reinforcing strip of metal along the center which stiffens the shield and serves as a handle in sliding it in and out. Small wood wedges are used with the pins to keep the shields tight and to prevent chatter in high winds.

THIS ARRANGEMENT is quite inexpensive (about \$50 for the four fireplaces when done five years ago) and has no effect on the chimney draft when fireplaces are in use.

Francis Manwell  
Conway, Mass.

## The Virtue Of Shellac

To The Editor:

WITH ALL OF THE INTEREST in "miracle" finishes, I'd like to say a few words in praise of old-fashioned shellac. In areas where water resistance is not a critical factor, shellac has an important characteristic: It is readily removed by washing with alcohol.

SHELLAC WILL DARKEN with age. But after 25 or 50 years if the darkness is a problem the old

# THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL®

Published Monthly For People Who Love Old Houses

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Published by The Old-House Journal Corporation, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217. Tel. (212) 636-4514. Subscriptions \$12/yr. in U.S. and Canada; \$20/yr. elsewhere. Printed at Royal Offset Co., 34 W. 15th St., NYC 10011. Contents of the Old-House Journal® are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without specific permission in writing from The Editor.

finish can be easily stripped off without damaging the wood.

SHELLAC WAS A STANDARD FINISH for woodwork in the late 19th and early 20th century. Where it has darkened with age, old-house owners are able to strip it off easily. But how many people, when refinishing the stripped woodwork, ever consider how the finish they are applying will age? All materials change with age... including the modern "non yellowing" finishes. But when some of these penetrating oil-based finishes darken, there's no way to remove the darkened material that has penetrated into the pores of the wood.

IN ANY HISTORIC HOUSE where you want to consider what the wood will look like 100 years from now, a shellac finish has the property prized by all preservationists: It is totally reversible.

Joan Davis  
San Francisco, Calif.

## Help Needed: Paint On Fireplace

To The Editor:

WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING—unsuccessfully so far—for a good way to take paint off of the brick facing on the fireplace in our main parlor. Chemical strippers seem to leave too much paint in the pores of the brick.

HAVE ANY OF YOUR READERS coped successfully with this problem?

Jean Watson  
Chicago, Ill.

A number of readers have posed this question. Anybody have a good answer?—CL



# Fountains For The Conservatory



This is the second part of an article by Tom H. Gerhardt on Victorian Cast Iron Fountains and Urns. The first part appeared in the June 1977 issue.

**I**N THE GREAT HOUSES OF SAN FRANCISCO, Thomas Aidala describes the use of plants in the Victorian house. "If money allowed, you could almost always find a conservatory, a wonderful glass room, just off the drawing room on the first floor, filled with plants growing around an artificial pond fed by trickling water, which often contained goldfish and occasionally frogs." The conservatory fountain is really one of the more delightfully whimsical, exciting, and unusual decorative pieces that is allowable in the Victorian scheme.

THERE ARE THE SMALLER VERSIONS of the larger outdoor fountains, usually consisting of a figure on an iron basin around 2½ ft. in diameter that is set up on iron legs. Also, usually on pedestals following the same motifs as the ones under spills on exterior fountains, are often found iron octagon-shaped aquariums piped with a spray in the middle and having a drain and overflow. The plumbing is very similar to an exterior fountain. One could then watch the fish through the glass sides while enjoying the sound of the splashing spray.

HIGHLY ORNAMENTAL rectangular aquariums were also produced, a very early model being on a cast iron stand that looks like rustic pieces of tree limbs nailed together. The corners of the conservatory fountain-aquarium often have iron brackets for flowerpots and/or iron eagles gazing down into the pool of water.

GOLDFISH, along with standard aquarium plants are excellent for ornamenting these aquariums. There are even miniature water lilies available that will do well in the proper light. A long

algae scraper equipped with a razor blade takes care of the "green stuff" that forms on the glass and is not consumed by those helpful scavengers, pond snails. Coarse gravel and rocks make the bottom very interesting. The addition of fresh water by the use of the spray and avoiding the introduction of too many fish or overfeeding will eliminate the need for frequent cleanings.

DRY SPELLS FOR THESE AQUARIUMS should be avoided as the lack of water causes the seal to give out, necessitating the use of aquarium cement to form a watertight bond once more.

## Restoring Cast Iron

**C**XCELLENT SUGGESTIONS for restoring cast iron are given in the December 1974 issue of The Journal. To these suggestions might be added an emphasis that cast iron should not be sandblasted as this removes the smooth, rust-resisting (to some extent) finish that was placed on the item at the foundry. Stripping through the use of chemicals and then wirebrushing the pieces are much safer (to the cast iron) methods of removing the paint and rust.

MISSING PIECES, especially urn handles, can often be recast by a local foundry if they are willing to make a mold. Although it is tricky, broken pieces may be welded through the use of nickel rod on an evenly heated surface (often, the cast iron will break elsewhere while the welded place is cooling if the whole surface has not been heated.)

AN INTERESTING VICTORIAN COLOR SCHEME for iron urns and fountains consists of dual (compatible) colors that bring out the features in sort of a "Wedgwood" design. White with pale blue, pale green, pale gray, or cream were often used on these garden ornaments during Victorian times. Less "Wedgwood" look-



ing but also used, were black with silver or dark red, and green with dark red.

**I**T MUST BE REMEMBERED in painting fountains that regardless of the colors used the water will always stain the paint according to the chemicals that are in it. Fountains supplied by artesian wells often will have an iron coating all over the wet surfaces within days. This staining might to some extent dictate the color scheme; otherwise its evidence must be regarded as an artistic patina and a necessary evil.

**THE BLUE SWIMMING POOL LOOK** for a fountain basin must be avoided. If a coat of paint must be applied to the cement basin, it should be black waterproofing tar. Most people think at first that this might be gloomy-looking. However, the black surface gives an illusion of depth, causes the surface of the water to reflect beautifully, and hides the dirt between cleaning.

**FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO acquire iron urns and fountains for use in restoring Victorian houses, the search for the old is not easy. There are only a few antique and restoration shops that specialize in these iron ornaments. Sometimes nurserymen, florists, and caretaking services that do cemetery work have several of the relic urns that are surplus. Pieces and parts should not be overlooked and left behind, as they will most likely interchange with others that may be found.**

## Sources For Garden Ornament

Robinson Iron, Inc., Robinson Road, Alexander City, Alabama 35010. Cast iron fountains and urns--stock, custom-made and restoration work. Brochure, "A Selection From Robinson," free.

Tennessee Fabricating Co., 2366 Prospect, Memphis, Tenn. 38106. Victorian style cast iron garden furniture. Ask for free ornamental furniture brochure.

Kenneth Lynch & Sons, Inc., Wilton, Conn. 06897. This firm works with professional landscape architects, decorators, etc., but will sell directly to the consumer. The ultimate catalog is their "Garden Ornament, An Encyclopedia" which begins with an illustrated section on The Fountains of Rome and offers everything from urns and fountains to statuary, topiary frames and gazebos. A large hardcover book, 768 pps., illustrated with photos and drawings, it is \$25.00, plus \$2.50 postage.

Their "Garden Ornament Catalog" contains the items most homeowners would want and is \$2.50, plus \$1.50 postage.

(Holly--Continued from page 73)

gether in an easy-to-read, popular book, it was easily digested by the public and had a wide influence on the American reader.

SOME OF MR. HOLLY'S suggestions, culled from his writings in his own words, are presented here as a practical set of guidelines for decorating in an authentic late 19th century manner:

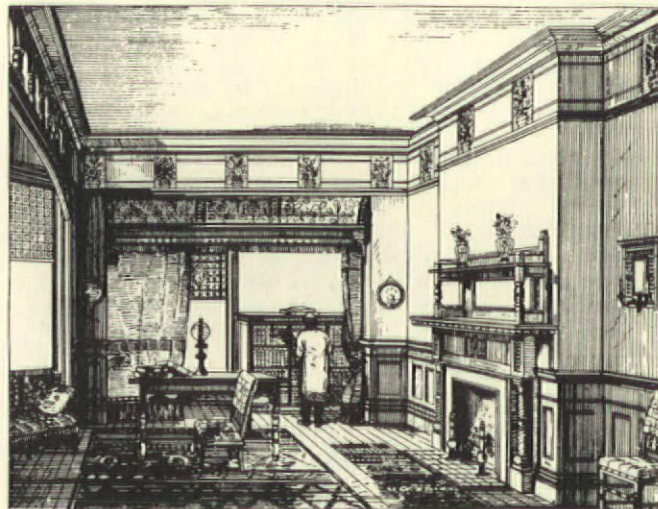
### Color And Wall Treatments

**C**OLOR CAN GIVE prominence or subordination. Blue produces the effect of distance, and if placed upon the ceiling, causes it to appear higher, or, if in a recess, will deepen it. Yellow, on the contrary, appears to advance toward the eye; and, if used upon the ceiling, will seem to lower it, or if upon a projecting moulding, will exaggerate its prominence. Red is the only color that remains stationary.

IT IS GENERALLY ADMITTED that furniture and costume show to a better advantage when the walls of an apartment are dark, while pictures look well upon a light background. In order to accommodate these requirements, the dado, or lower three feet of the walls, may be dark in color; the surface, where the pictures are to be hung, of a neutral tint; while in the cornice and ceiling any number of brilliant hues may appear. By this means a harmonious

gradation of colors is achieved. Indeed, it would be well if this arrangement of colors were to be made the rule in decorating apartments. The heaviest and richest colors should be upon the floor or near it, and the lightest and most brilliant either upon or in the neighborhood of the ceiling.

A DARK COLOR, also, when applied to a skirting or dado, gives the effect of strength, which is always desirable to suggest in parts bear-





ing a super-incumbent weight. Brown, rich maroon, dull bronze-green, or even black, may be used here to advantage.

**T**HE ASSOCIATION OF COLOR with strength claims a larger part in decoration than is generally supposed. Thus, the trimmings of the exterior of a dwelling, if painted a color darker than the body, seem to produce a constructive effect, and convey the idea of ribs and stanchions supporting the house. So, too, the frame of a panel, if painted darker, gives the idea of strength, while the panel itself, being light, appears to be supported.

A SKIRTING OR MARGIN ALSO, having in any way the effect of a frame, should be emphasized by a stronger color. This includes cornices and trimmings of doors and windows. These trimmings, or architraves, as they are called, should be of a color more pronounced than the wall, but not so dark as the surbase, unless black be introduced, in which case one or two narrow lines of bright color or gold may be added. When black is used, it would be well to have a portion of it polished, thus producing a contrast between a bright and dead surface.

DOORS SHOULD BE DARKER than the walls--something in tone between them and the trimmings. Thus if a wall be citrine, the door may be low-toned Antwerp blue or dark bronze-green; but in either case a line of red, being complementary to both, should be run around the trimmings.

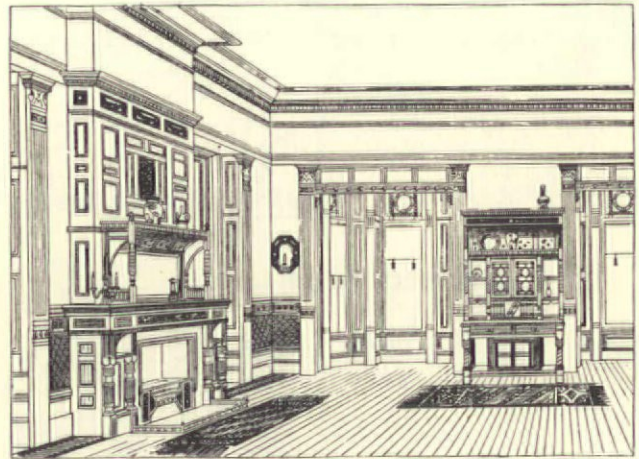
## Ceilings And Mouldings

HOLLY ALSO has some definite opinions about the treatment of ceilings and mouldings:

**C**EILINGS ARE ESPECIALLY susceptible to ornamentation, for the reason that their entire surface may be seen at once. If we wish to limit the decoration of our rooms, let us expend our efforts here, as the walls and floors can be relieved by pictures and furniture.

I WOULD RECOMMEND the avoidance of structural members, and especially of that chef d'oeuvre of plaster art, the centre-piece, with its impossible flowers and feeble ornaments. It would be better to use some flat design in color, making it the principal feature of the ceiling, reaching, if you choose, to within a few inches of the border. I say border, as the cornice, unless broad, is much improved by being extended with a margin of color. Now, these borders on the ceiling are like the dado on the wall, and have the effect of breaking up its broad surface. The same rule applies to floors. By surrounding them with a margin of darker color, a similar advantage is attained.

IT MAY NOT BE INAPPROPRIATE to introduce around the ceiling a margin of some tasteful design in wallpaper--one, for instance, in which brilliant colors appear on a gold ground. In a large room, the effect would be good if this margin were the entire width of the roll. It might also be appropriately edged with a wooden moulding.



**L**ARGE MOULDING on top of the dado may frequently be employed with advantage. It not only improves the appearance, but, if placed at the proper height above the floor, it will also serve to protect the wall from the chafing of chairs and other furniture.

LOWER MEMBERS ought never to be light and so gilt mouldings should not be placed below the level of the eye. Therefore, black walnut or ebony are more appropriate here.

AS A GENERAL RULE, if light, transparent tints are used, the moulding should be black. If a dark or maroon inlay is employed, gilt mouldings would make a pleasing contrast. The remainder of the ceiling, if low, should be of some tint calculated to give an appearance of elevation, such as, for instance, one of the many delicate shades of blue or violet.

**H**OWEVER, if there be sufficient height to warrant it, a rose tint, or a buff, appears well, provided the general tone of the room will permit. Violet has the advantage not only of increasing the height, but it will also harmonize with paper of a green or olive tint, these being among the best colors for a wall.







## Decoration In General

**H**OLLY WENT TO ENGLAND in 1856 and was very impressed with the new "Queen Anne" movement. Many architects, designers and craftsmen in England were rejecting the Gothic style as too church-like for domestic living. The "free classic" or Queen Anne style was emerging. Holly was the first to bring these ideas back to America. Here are some of his miscellaneous remarks about decoration in general:

### Wallpaper

**L**IKE OTHER INDUSTRIES that have come under the influence of the general advance in decorative art, the manufacture of wallpaper has greatly improved. (Holly, did, however complain that there was not enough interest in good wallpaper to warrant the import of the famous William Morris papers.--Ed.)

THE BREAKING UP OF WALL SURFACES with frieze and dado is one of the peculiar characteristics of the English designs, and in this way some of the best combinations of color and pattern are produced. The dados are sometimes of a checkered chocolate pattern, relieved with gold and black, while the intermediate space above contains a neutral design, as introducing moss or delicate ivy.



THE FRIEZE is of an utterly different treatment, sometimes Japanese in character, positive in color, and either conventional or natural in design. In some, storks, or other fowl, in various attitudes seem gliding through the air. In others, vines and trellis-work, laden with vivid green and golden fruit, relieve the frieze as if the intermediate space represented a wall or screen, over which the various scenes of the vegetable and animal kingdom are made to show in bold outline.

FOR A ROOM in which convivial conversation, wines, and viands are to be enjoyed, the color should never be light, but of neutral or complementary tint. In reception rooms or parlors, the eye should be gratified, the senses of the palate not being brought into competition; and hence floral de-

signs and gay colors--something of an enlivening nature--would be appropriate.

**T**HE FLATNESS OF A WALL should be left undisturbed, and the decoration as little obtrusive as possible. For instance, use a diaper pattern (a diagonal pattern made up of regular repeats of small geometric or floral motifs, often surrounded by connecting lines) that imitates a flat stencil design. No attempt should be made to show figures in relief with shades and shadows which are in bad taste and produce a disagreeable effect. Such vulgarisms are, however, happily passing away; yet the public taste is far from being cultivated in these matters; and paper, instead of forming a background to pictures, is apt to assert itself far beyond its due importance.

### General

**DINING ROOMS**--Dining rooms, as a general thing, should be treated in dark colors, so that their walls may form an agreeable background for the tablecloth and fixtures. A white tablecloth is generally too glaring in its effect and out of keeping with the surroundings. For general purposes, one of a cream tint is preferable.

**PLANTS**--An inexpensive method of decoration is the introduction of flowers, according to a system quite common in England, but only recently introduced here. It consists of an arrangement of plants in the fireplaces in summer. Of course, in a position like this, where the sun cannot reach them, there are only certain plants which could thrive, as for instance, the English ivy, or some varieties of fern. If cut flowers, which can be changed as they fade, are added, the effect will be as bright and cheerful as that of a wood or sea-coal fire in winter. ■■

### Reprint Of Two Famous House Books

HOLLY'S "COUNTRY SEATS" is a paperbound volume containing Henry Hudson Holly's two famous books--"Country Seats" and "Modern Dwellings."

"COUNTRY SEATS" was originally published in 1863; it has 34 original Holly house designs complete with floor plans as well as a rationale for the various functional and decorative features. House styles include: Tudor, Italian and Gothic.

"MODERN DWELLINGS," originally published in 1878, contains many designs in the Queen Anne style. A section on decoration--color, wallpaper, furniture, etc., incorporates the ideas of Eastlake and many others and is a valuable aid in the decoration of the Victorian house.

TO ORDER "COUNTRY SEATS," send \$7.95, plus 50¢ postage, to: The Old-House Journal Reprint Library, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, New York 11217.





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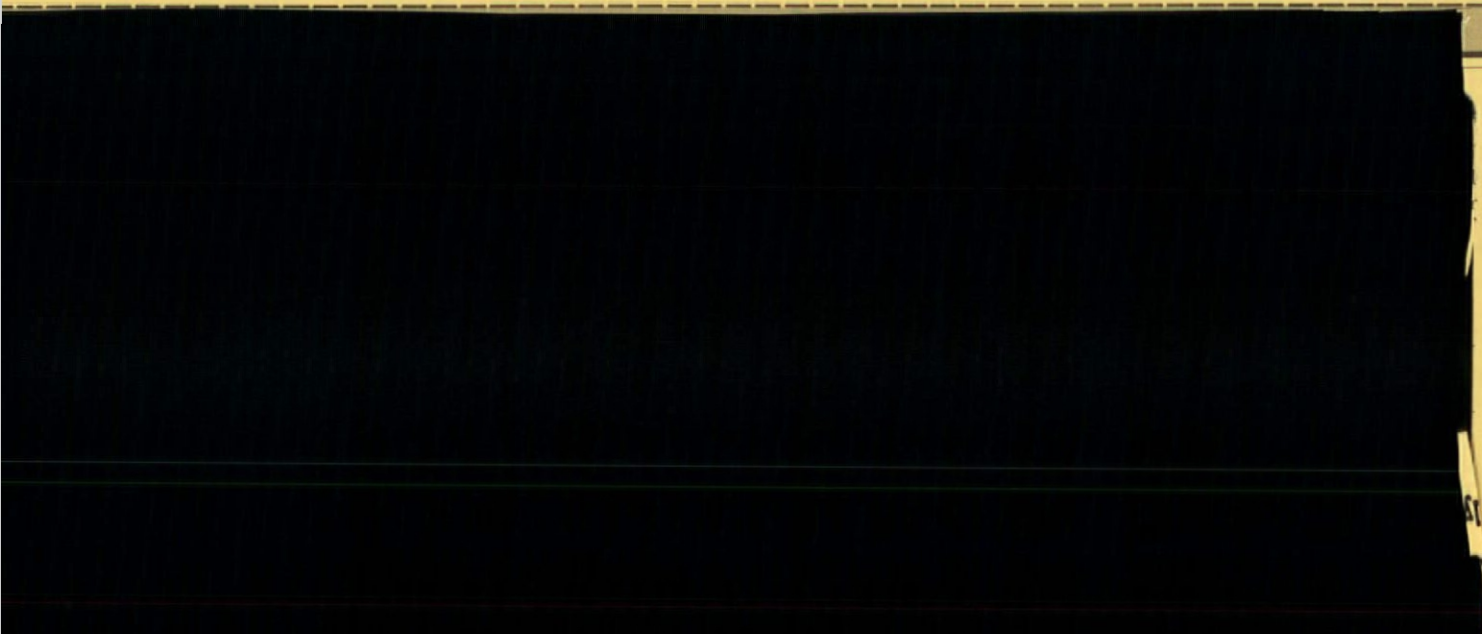
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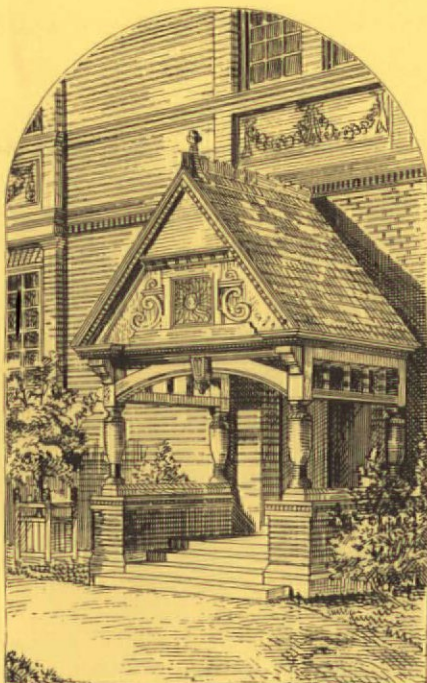
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## Country Seats

And

## Modern Dwellings



## Holly's House Books

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"COUNTRY SEATS" contains the designs by Henry Hudson Holly, famous architect of the late 19th century, for houses, cottages, villas, mansions and their outbuildings. The styles are Gothic, Tudor, Italian.

THERE ARE ALSO DESIGNS for churches, railway stations, city terraces, and even remodelling an old mill.

"MODERN DWELLINGS" also contains over 100 Holly house designs. There are chapters on the Queen Anne Style, comments on buildings materials, architects, plumbers, etc.

THE SECTION ON DECORATING the Victorian house is especially helpful. There are guidelines for painting both exterior and interior, advice on ceiling decoration, mouldings, wall-paper, etc.

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THE ELECTRIC HEAT GUN first came to the attention of The Journal's readers in the April 1976 issue. Patricia and Wilkie Talbert described their experiments with various paint removal methods...and pronounced the electric heat gun best. We have since received similar reports from dozens of other readers.

**B**UT THERE IS ONE PROBLEM. The electric heat gun isn't marketed specifically for paint removing. It is an industrial tool used mainly in the electronics industry. Many readers have had difficulty in finding a local source for heat guns.

SO THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL has made special arrangements with the manufacturer to offer the electric heat gun directly to its readers. Made by Master Appliance Corp., the gun is a heavy-duty tool designed for years of service. It is the best one on the market in the opinion of the editors. It operates at 500-750 F., and draws 14 amps at 120 volts.

**O**F SPECIAL INTEREST are the safety factors. The heat gun avoids the hazards of methylene chloride vapors that are present in most paint removers. And because it operates at a lower temperature than a propane torch, there is no danger of the lead poisoning that can occur when torching old lead paints. Too, fire danger is much lower than it is with a propane torch or blowtorch.

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# Removing Black Spots From Wood

By Frank Broadnax

**W**E TALKED LAST MONTH about white spots on wood and how to remove them. When moisture penetrates into a wood finish, it usually turns the finish yellow or dark gray. The discolored finish then has to be removed. But when the moisture penetrates all the way through to the wood, the wood itself turns dark—sometimes black. Once the wood has turned dark, even though the finish is removed the dark spots remain.

TO REMOVE DARK SPOTS from wood, you have two choices: Sanding or bleaching. Bleaching is often the only practical solution because the spot may go fairly deep into the wood and you don't want to remove that much material. And you certainly wouldn't dare sand a spot on veneer. The dark spot certainly goes all the way through the veneer.

THERE ARE TWO METHODS for bleaching wood. The first method involves commercial wood bleaches, which are high-powered acidic bleaches. These come in several brand names, which can be purchased at most paint and hardware stores. Please follow directions on the labels.

SECOND BLEACHING METHOD, which I prefer, uses household chlorine bleach. It takes longer to bleach the wood, but it is a lot safer to use and does less damage to the wood. I use full-strength household bleach. I have tried all brands and they all work equally well.

YOU CANNOT SUCCESSFULLY spot bleach. For example, if you have a table with a black spot in the middle, you can't just bleach out the spot. You'll have to bleach the entire top.

**T**HE PIECE TO BE BLEACHED should be placed outside in the shade. Don't put the wood in direct sunlight: The combination of moisture and heat from the sun can cause warpage. In addition, the wood to be bleached should be free of all old finish, wax, dirt, etc.

APPLY THE HOUSEHOLD BLEACH full strength. I prefer to use a piece of #0000 steel wool to apply the bleach. It has to be rubbed on because bleach has a high surface tension and if it is just poured on it will bead up and leave white spots. We want the wood to be bleached evenly, so rub the bleach in. Work with the grain of the wood. After applying a good heavy dose, let it set until the surface is dry. Then put on another application. Repeat this until all spots are bleached out.

AFTER ALL SPOTS have vanished, apply a coat of white vinegar over the entire surface and let

dry. The vinegar will stop the action of the bleach. After the wood is dry, buff thoroughly with dry steel wool. Apply a light coating of lemon oil (such as our Broadnax Wood Preservative). This does two things: It puts natural moisture back into the wood and brings out the true color. Should any of the dark spot remain after applying the lemon oil, you may wish to bleach again. Follow the same procedure as you did the first time.

**A**FTER YOU have bleached out all the spots, buffed with steel wool and applied lemon oil, you are now ready to stain. The color of stain to use will be governed by the effect you are seeking. If you are bleaching a top to a piece of furniture, naturally you'll want to stain the top to match the rest of the piece. Sometimes, unless you are an expert at wood identification, you may not know what the wood in your piece is—and so are not sure what color stain to use.

IF THE PREDOMINANT wood tone is brown, select a walnut stain. This comes in several different shades. All serve the purpose of darkening the wood. (I won't cover stains in detail here, as that will be covered in a future column.) You should allow the stain to dry at least 24 hr. in clear weather before applying a final finish.

IF YOUR WOOD is part of the house and cannot be taken outside, follow all the above instructions—working as best you can with the wood in place.

ONE WORD OF CAUTION about using household bleach: Under certain conditions, bleach can be deadly. Never mix bleach with other products, such as ammonia, cleansers, etc. The combination can produce toxic gases. Also, tobacco smoke mixing with fumes from household bleach can form a poisonous substance. Always have plenty of ventilation when working with bleach. ■■

Frank Broadnax is President of Broadnax Refinishing Products, which markets some excellent refinishing compounds. You can get free product literature by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Frank at: P.O. Box 196, Ila, Georgia 30647.



# Patching Cracks in Plaster

By Clem Labine

Last month we looked at the best way to get plaster surfaces ready to paint. In this installment, we'll examine the best way to deal with structural cracks in plaster.

**B**AD STRUCTURAL CRACKS—the kind that tend to re-open year after year—require a different treatment than the surface repair described in the June issue. Structural cracks are the result of movement. Few people realize that a house is constantly in motion due to changes in temperature, humidity, winds, foundation movement, etc. Expansion and contraction of structural elements at differing rates sets up stresses in plaster walls and ceilings. Although the amount of movement is normally quite small, it can be great enough to cause cracks to develop along lines of greatest stress. Cracks are the building's way of relieving tension.

THE FACT OF CONSTANT MOVEMENT dictates the best approach to mending structural cracks. If you use a rigid material like plaster of paris or powdered spackle to patch a stress crack, it's likely that the structural movements that created the crack in the first place will cause it to re-open in a year or so—sometimes almost immediately.

THE SECRET lies in using a mending system that has some "give" to it. An excellent mending system can be created by using the materials used for covering sheetrock joints: Pre-mixed joint compound (such as U.S. Gypsum's "Durabond Wallboard Compound") plus a cloth or paper reinforcing tape.

**P**REMIKED JOINT COMPOUND is more expensive than the powdered mix-it-yourself variety, but it more than makes up for the added cost in better workability. If you have a lot of patching to do, you can save quite a bit of money by buying the joint compound in 62-lb. pails.

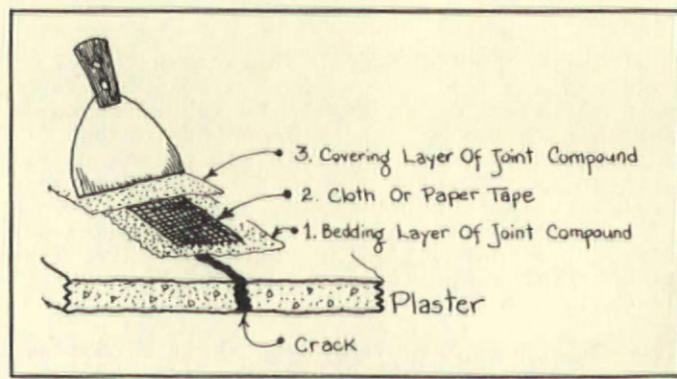
THE CLOTH REINFORCING TAPE is better for flat surfaces than the paper tape. The open weave of the cloth tape allows the joint compound to ooze through easily and thus beds the tape securely to the compound. This characteristic is especially important when you have to overlap tape when following jagged cracks (see diagram on p. 81).

THE CLOTH TAPE is difficult to find in certain parts of the U.S., however, and so you may have to make do with the paper tape. This shouldn't cause any great problem except when overlapping tape on jagged cracks: You'll have to make sure there is an adequate bed of compound between the two layers of paper. In any event, the paper tape works best on corner cracks, as explained later.

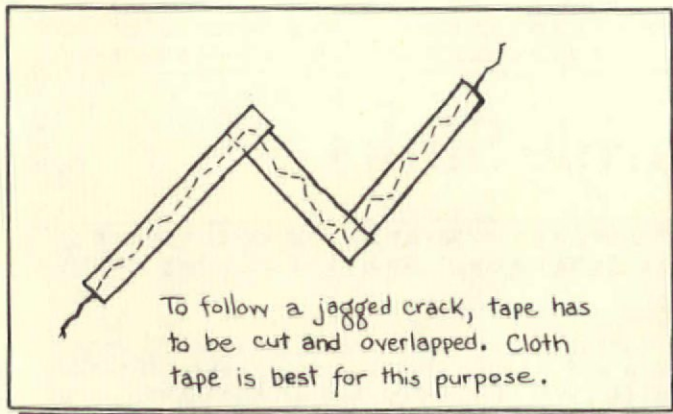
## Applying The Tape

**N**O PATCH CRACKS, apply joint compound with a wide (5-6 in.) joint knife. Butter the compound into the crack, spreading it about 3 in. on either side of the crack. Center the reinforcing tape over the crack, and force the tape down into the bed of joint compound with the knife. It should be pushed hard enough so that some of the compound oozes up through the fibers of the cloth tape—but not so hard as to disturb the fibers of the tape. If you are using paper tape, push hard enough to bed every portion firmly against the bed of compound—but not so hard as to squeeze all the compound out from under the tape. There should be a thin layer of compound left under every square inch of tape to form a bond between the tape and the plaster surface. Remove any excess compound by wiping with the joint knife.

AS SOON AS the tape is bedded, cover with a thin layer of compound and smooth as much as possible by working with the joint knife. When first coat has dried (at least 24 hr.), smooth out any ridges by "wet sanding" with a damp sponge or a heavy-nap cloth folded flat or wrapped around a suitable block. (You can also sand with sandpaper, but it creates a lot of dust.) Apply a second thin coat of joint compound and feather the edge at least







1 in. beyond the first coat. After second coat has dried, wet-sand lightly and apply a thin finishing coat. The finishing coat can be worked quite smooth with the joint knife. A professional can work it so that no further sanding will be required. But most of us will find that our work will need a final light wet-sanding.

WHEN WORKING WITH joint compound, be sure to keep any crusted material that forms on the taping knife out of the fresh material. The old stuff will just cause lumps that make it impossible to feather out the joint compound smoothly. Throw away any material that shows signs of losing its workability. Better to waste a little than risk fouling all the material remaining in the can.

TO KEEP JOINT COMPOUND in the can from getting fouled—and for ease of working—a second tool is used to hold a working amount of compound. (Plasterers would call this tool a "hawk.")



A large joint knife or finishing trowel will serve for this purpose. Just be sure the holding tool is bigger than your working knife; you need a long edge to wipe the edge of your working knife against.

### Inside Corners

PAPER TAPE works best on cracks in inside corners because it can be folded easily to conform to the shape of the corner. Apply compound to both sides of the corner, then fold tape along center crease and press into position. Firmly press both sides of tape into compound with the joint knife. As noted before, it's very important that every square inch of tape have an adequate bed of cement underneath it. Otherwise, it will pull away from the plaster surface sooner or later.

WIPE EXCESS off both sides of the angle. Immediately apply a coat of compound over one side of the angle only and allow to dry (at least 24 hr.). After compound has dried, apply coat to other side of angle and allow to dry. (It is possible to cover both sides of the angle with a single application, but the two-step process ensures that you don't disturb your work on one side while you are smoothing out the other side.)

APPLY A FINISH COAT, and feather it out beyond the edge of previous coats of compound. Wet-sand as needed.

### Cracks In Coves

A SLIGHT VARIATION in technique works best when dealing with cracks in curved surfaces, such as a cove between ceiling and wall. The bedding layer of joint compound can be brushed on with a 2½-in. nylon paint brush. The cloth tape is then pressed into position by hand, and then a covering layer of joint compound is brushed on. Brush back and forth until it looks smooth. If the compound is too stiff to brush smoothly, you can loosen it by adding a small amount of water.

AFTER DRYING, the first coat can be wet-sanded with a damp sponge, and then a finish coat is brushed on. The brush adapts itself to these curved areas much better than a joint knife.

### Problem Cracks

IF YOU HAVE a structural crack that you know from experience is subject to an unusual amount of stress and strain, it may break through the sheetrock tape and compound. For these special problem areas, the best thing to use is a commercial patching system called Krack-Kote. It uses a pliable adhesive and a glass fiber reinforcing tape, and thus has more flexibility and strength than ordinary joint compound.

KRACK-KOTE, manufactured by Tuff-Kote Co., Woodstock, Ill., should be available through large paint supply stores. The main drawbacks of this system: It is more expensive than the joint compound, and also takes much longer to apply.

GAPS BETWEEN PLASTER surfaces and surrounding woodwork are also subject to a lot of movement because of the shrinking and expanding of the wood with changing temperature and humidity. Thus you need a filler that has some flex to it. Acrylic latex caulk, applied with a caulking gun, works very nicely for this purpose. Any excess can be cleaned off with water and a sponge before it sets up.

A FINAL WORD on the taping system: Don't go "tape crazy." Minor cracks can be handled with the surface spackling techniques described in the June issue. Only experience, unfortunately, can sometimes distinguish between major and minor cracks. Also: If a wall has so many cracks that it would take an undue amount of time to tape them all, consider either totally replastering or else canvassing the surface. We'll discuss canvas in detail in a future issue.

SPECIAL THANKS for technical advice to Howard Zucker and Helmut Buecherl—both professional decorators and members of the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators.



# Restoring Marble Sinks

By David S. Gillespie, Executive Director  
Historic Pullman Foundation, Chicago

**A**T ONE TIME or another most of us have come across those fine marble sinks so common to Victorian buildings of the 1870's and 80's. They usually stand against the walls of junk shops gaping forlornly. The marble is stained, the bowls cracked or missing, and the faucets are corroded beyond recognition. We scratch our heads and think, "If only I could use that," and then go out and buy an imitation marble thing.

WHEN MY WIFE AND I set out to restore an 1883 home in Michigan we discovered one such sink in the original bathroom. Local garage sales yielded three others in various states of disrepair so that we now had sufficient sink tops for the house.

THESE TOPS can usually be had in this area for between five and fifteen dollars and are thus a good cheap sink as well as being authentic. Moreover, they are not difficult to use and any old house owner can do it with easily available tools and small expense.

THE FIRST STEP IS CLEANING the top. One of ours had been painted black (modern?) but paint, we found, comes off quite easily with common paint remover. Stains, particularly rust and water stains, are very difficult to remove since marble is a porous, soft stone. Cleanser will clean off most grime and surface stains but for deeper stains a weak solution of muriatic acid worked fairly well.

SCRATCHES AND SMALL PITS are more difficult but they can usually be worked out with a very fine grade of wet/dry sandpaper. In some areas there are shops which will polish the marble to give it a harder surface which will resist stains in the future. For the very deep stains there is just no solution and you should either avoid buying tops that are badly stained or be prepared to live with the stains.

**R**EPLACEMENT BOWLS are really no problem. (See box below.) Since marble is very soft it is easy to work with common shop tools. Re-aligning the mounting screws (necessary when using some replacement bowls) is not hard but must be done with care. Place the sink top upside down on a work table and place the bowl where you want it, marking the location of the four mounting points. Then set the bowl aside and shim up the top between the work table and the top. This step is

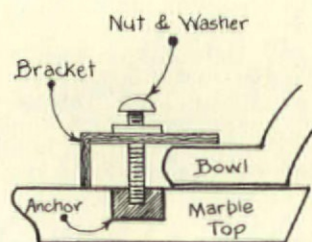
crucial because the sink top is made with a lip which contacts your work table but the flat part of the top itself does not. Attempting to work on the sink top without properly supporting the face can result in a cracked or broken top.

NEXT, DRILL NEW MOUNTING HOLES using a half inch masonry bit. Be careful not to drill through the top and lubricate the bit with water as you are working. Drilling through stone generates a good deal of heat and the water will cool both the bit and the stone to minimize the possibility of cracking. The holes will need to be about three quarters of an inch deep and once this is accomplished set the new mounting screws. The old way of doing this was to drip hot lead into the hole around the screw head.

IF YOUR TOP HAS MOUNTING SCREWS which need to be removed simply heat the lead with a small propane torch and the screws will come out easily. An easier method for the amateur is to buy four star anchors at the hardware store.

**T**Hese are simply a machine screw nut surrounded by a lead sleeve. Place one in each of the half inch holes, and, using the tool provided with the anchors, tap them until the lead expands and the anchors feel solid. Be sure that the face of the marble beneath each hole is firmly resting on a block of wood or other shim. Otherwise you will break right through the face. If the original mounting brackets are on the sink top new ones can be fabricated quite easily out of flat steel or bars.

USING A PIECE of eighth-inch metal about ½ in. wide and two in. long, bend one end at right angles so that you have an "L" with the short side about ½ in. long and the long side one and a half inches.



DRILL A HOLE large enough to take your machine screw in the long side and you are ready to go. The short end of the "L" braces against the marble and the long end goes over the bowl edge to hole it firmly in place.

FAUCETS ARE ALSO no problem. If you have the original faucets you may want to use them. They will need to be thoroughly cleaned (I recommend having them boiled out at a local radiator shop) and possibly will need to be





replaced. Replacement of the rubber washers will then yield a perfectly functional and original faucet.

**I**F, LIKE US, you have gone soft and prefer mixers, almost any wide-spread faucet set will do. Most sink tops had two holes for the faucets and a small hole in the middle to which the chain on the rubber stopper was connected. The faucet holes are usually too far apart for modern wide-spread faucet sets so you will have to go to the plumbing supply house to get a short length of 3/8 in. copper tubing to replace the pieces which come with the set (18 in. should be more than enough).

**YOU WILL ALSO FIND** that the faucet holes in the sink top are just a bit too small. A 1 in. grinding wheel in an electric drill will enlarge the hole sufficiently to use modern faucets. These are available at most hardware stores or through the Sears catalogue. The central hole will have to be made much larger and for this I recommend a large masonry drill bit if one can be had. If not, it can also be made with a series of grinding wheels though it is a tedious job.

**SOME SINKS WERE MADE** with only one hole for a faucet and a large hole in the center for the drain plunger. I discovered that Delta makes a faucet which requires only one hole for mounting. The center hole in the sink top which had once held the drain plunger was much

too large, however. To solve this problem I had two stainless steel washers made and, by placing one above and one below the surface of the marble, was able to reduce the size of the hole to fit the new faucet set. The hole for the old faucet was used up by the new drain plunger.

**W**ITH THE NEW FAUCET SET and the bowl firmly installed on the sink top, the next step is to hang the sink on the wall. On my sinks they mounted from 22 in. to 26 in. apart which isn't very handy for hitting pre-existing studding. If your wall is torn up for plumbing anyway, don't forget to install new studs or braces in the proper location before sealing up the wall. If you are hanging the brackets on a finished wall, try to hit a stud on at least one side and then use toggle bolts on the other.

**IN MANY CASES THE BRACKETS** will have been lost. If there are no brackets with your sink you have several alternatives. Any metal shop (including the local high school) can fabricate new brackets cheaply. Another alternative is the chrome posts used to support more modern wall-hung sinks though I don't think they look very well in an old house.

**A CHEAP ALTERNATIVE** I used is to support the sink with old stair balusters salvaged from a demolition site. Brackets are probably preferable as they are easier to clean around.

**INSTALLATION** is the last and easiest step requiring only that the sink be level from side to side and that you allow a very slight drop from back to front to prevent water running back toward the wall. Another thing to consider is height. Both my wife and I are tall and so we installed the sinks 36 in. above the floor. Normal height of 32 in. will be too low for most people over five feet tall.

**NOW HOOK UP** the water supply and turn on the faucet. You will have an authentic addition to your bathroom. It is both inexpensive and easy to maintain. No Victorian home should be without one.

### Sources For Replacement Bowls

Sherle-Wagner, 60 East 57 St., New York, N. Y. 10022. Bowls in a variety of sizes including round and oval in 15 and 17 in.

W. T. Weaver & Sons, 1208 Wisconsin Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20007. Also has a variety of sizes including 15 and 17 in.

Kohler Co., Kohler, Wisconsin. Makes a plain white bowl called "the Claxton" which will fit 17 in. tops if you re-align the mounting screws.

Mayfair China Corporation, 142 22nd Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11232. 12, 14 and 19 in. round bowls, and a variety of oval sizes. Bowls are plain or decorated.



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stored to its original state, then wired and prepared for hanging.

MOST PIECES are solid brass, which is polished and lacquered to preserve its luster. Pictured is a typical gas chandelier, with handblown and etched gas shades.

BECAUSE THE SUPPLY is dwindling, original fixtures have the appreciation potential of any fine antique. London Venturers will ship anywhere, and an illustrated catalog is available for \$1. Write to: The London Venturers Company, P. O. Box 434, Rockport, MA 01966.

## Victorian

### Design

### Tile



CERAMIC TILE can be used effectively in the Victorian house providing, of course, that the tile is similar to the kinds used in the 19th century.

AN UNGLAZED QUARRY TILE with a Victorian design is available from H & R Johnson, Inc. The decoration on these tiles is applied by silk screen while the tile is still in

clay form, so that the pattern is absorbed into the tile and does not wear off as the tile wears down.

THERE ARE THREE PATTERNS of this decorated quarry tile--V32 Lambeth Harvest, V40 Blenheim Red, and V51 Holyrood Sienna--that would fit well in the Gothic or Eastlake type Victorian house.

TILES WERE OFTEN USED on vestibule floors in late 19th century houses, and were generally encaustic or unglazed. The unglazed quarry tiles are similar to the old tiles in pattern and color. They can also be used to give a dramatic Victorian character when used for a kitchen floor.

THE H & R JOHNSON CO. has recently been involved in making encaustic tile (tile with in-laid color similar to marquetry in wood) for restoration in the Smithsonian Institution. In order to make these tiles, the company had to relearn and revive the lost art of making encaustic tile.

WITH THIS KNOW-HOW, they can now produce encaustic tiles in other sizes, shapes and colors on a custom-made basis. This can only be done, however, for a fairly large-scale restoration.

FOR THE NAME of a distributor of the unglazed quarry tile in your area, write: H & R Johnson, Inc., Marketing Dept. OHJ, State Highway 35, Keyport, New Jersey 07735.

**FOCAL POINT Inc.**  
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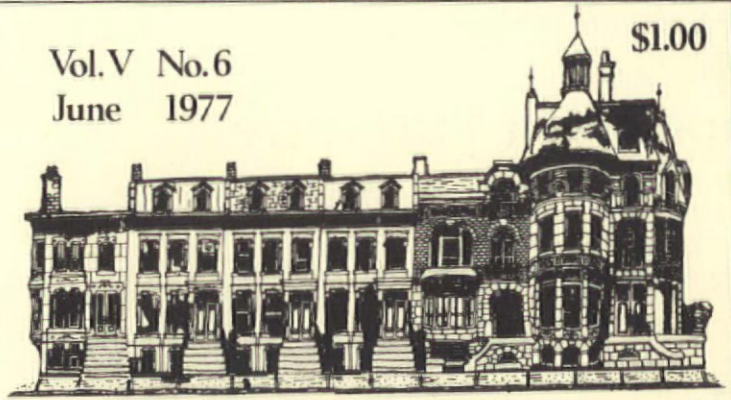
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Vol. V No. 6  
June 1977

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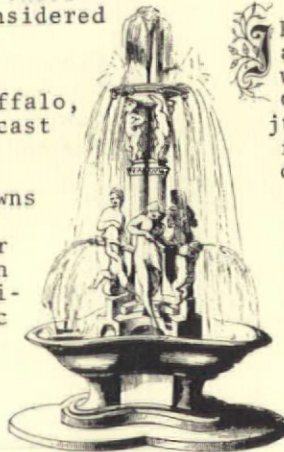
## Fountains And Urns



By Tom H. Gerhardt

FROM MID-19th century until World War I, mass-produced cast iron supplied decorative beauty to the home and lawn. Used for fences, cresting, railings, columns, urns, statues, fountains, and lawn furniture, it was almost as common as the "molded-stone" garden ornaments that are available today... although far more durable and detailed. There was never as many fountains and urns as other works of art in cast iron and they seem to have had a higher mortality rate as they could be, and often were, easily removed and donated to scrap drives or sold to the dump. Therefore, the remaining ones should be considered prized possessions.

FOUNDRIES SUCH AS Mott, Walbridge (Buffalo, New York), and Fisk (Danbury, Conn.) cast these Victorian beauties and shipped them by train and boat throughout the country (Colorado's wealthy mining towns even had their share.) Major centers of production seemed to be located for the most part in the Northeast. Often sparking the interest of owners of private residences in such finery, public parks and streets boasted large examples of this iron art--decorative horsetroughs; man, dog and horse drinking fountains; and huge decorative fountains complete with life-



size figures and smaller drinking fountains around the edges.

FOR TODAY'S VICTORIAN HOMEOWNER, iron urns and fountains are important elements of decoration that are often missing from the lawn or the conservatory, or are still present but in poor condition. On the other hand, they are often added to provide greater interest and authenticity for the Victorian house where the owner can find no evidence of this decorative art ever being present.

### Iron Urns

IRON URNS WERE USED in greater proliferation than the fountains as the latter works of art took plumbing and water to operate. Being available in basically just a few styles, these urns were manufactured with square bases or with more decorative figured bases and were made in sections so that they could be taken apart and moved around very easily. For the most part, the pieces are interchangeable and usually starting with a base (of which the larger ones are made of separate iron panels held together by tie rods) the pedestal, water reservoir, and bowl with or without bolted-on handles (handles were optional and

(Continued on page 66)



# Spots On Furniture And Woodwork

By Frank Broadnax, President  
Broadnax Refinishing Products

**H** EAT OR MOISTURE can cause spots on furniture or woodwork. The cure for spotting conditions is the question I am asked most frequently on my lecture tours of the Southeast. In this column I'll review some of the specific problems I have run into.

FIRST OF ALL, about 98% of all furniture polishes contain wax...often beeswax. This is a soft substance—and subject to change by moisture. When condensation from cold glasses (or steam from hot cups of coffee) gets under the wax, it turns white. After the surface dries off, the white rings remain.

OTHER COMMON SOURCES of water that cause white spotting: Spilling water on a table while watering plants; water splashes from a sink that run down the front of a cabinet; mopping floors that gets water on the bottom of furniture or cabinets. I've even had a case where a person accidentally sprayed Lysol on a piece of furniture, causing the entire front to turn white.

REMEMBER: Water is wood's worst enemy! If water penetrates beyond the wax, the problem gets much worse—water turns wood black.

**T** O REMOVE WHITE SPOTS from waxed finishes, the easiest method I have found starts with a small piece of soft cotton cloth (old sheet, pillow case, undershirt or baby diaper). Moisten it by running water over the cloth—then squeeze out ALL excess water. Put a small amount of toothpaste on the damp cloth and rub the spot. Use one of the old brands such as Colgate, Ipana, Pepsodent, etc., that contain a fine pumice abrasive. (Modern brands like Gleem don't contain abrasives—and thus are useless for this job.)

USE THE INDEX FINGER to provide pressure as you rub the spot. The whitened wax will come off—leaving the rest of the finish untouched. Another mild abrasive that you might use is cigar or cigarette ashes. Mix with some mayonnaise to form a paste. Rub this on the white spot with the damp cloth.

**I** F YOU USE WAX POLISH on furniture or floors, I suggest removing the old wax at least once every 4-5 years with mineral spirits. Then if you must use wax, apply a fresh thin coat. Otherwise, you may generate a problem like the one I ran into recently in a Baptist Church here in Georgia. The church was threatened with a lawsuit because people were ruining their clothing when they sat in the pews.

THE CHURCH-GOERS were bogging down in 50 years of wax polish—and upon rising they were taking some of the wax with them. A local refinisher had given them an estimate of \$3,000 to re-finish the pews. I showed them how stripping off the old wax with mineral spirits could achieve the same results. One gallon of mineral spirits, along with some #0000 steel wool and 8 working hours for the janitor solved the problem!

**W** HITE SPOTS can also occur on clear finishes that don't have any wax on them. Often these can be taken care of by applying a thin coat of lemon oil (or our Broadnax Wood Preservative) with a soft cotton cloth. If the finish is gummy, you might want to apply the oil with #0000 steel wool—rubbing very lightly so as not to damage the finish.

I HAVE BEEN CALLED IN to give estimates on refinishing kitchen cabinets and panelling—when all that was needed to restore this woodwork was lemon oil or our wood preservative. A dried, bleached, whitish appearance can usually be fixed with a \$2.00 bottle of lemon oil preservative—quite a saving over a \$1,500 restoration fee.

RATHER THAN WAXING, I recommend applying lemon oil or our Broadnax Wood Preservative once a year. It keeps the wood from drying out, keeps the wood looking good—and helps keep the moisture OUT.

Editor's Note: Free information about the Broadnax wood preservative can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Frank Broadnax, P.O. Box 196, 11a, GA 30647.

NEXT MONTH: What To Do About Black Spots.

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Published by The Old-House Journal Corporation, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217. Tel. (212) 636-4514. Subscriptions \$12/yr. in U.S. and Canada; \$20/yr. elsewhere. Printed at Royal Offset Co., 34 W. 15th St., NYC 10011. Contents of the Old-House Journal® are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without specific permission in writing from The Editor.



# A Greek Revival Phoenix

By Meg Houser

**F**IRE IS A TERRIBLE WORD if you own and love an old house. Our house was built of the wood from its own land, between 1809 and 1822, and was a fine example of the transition from Federal to Greek Revival architecture. So it wasn't just the place of our happiest memories; it was our proudest possession. When we had to move to Iowa in 1972, we put caretaker tenants in it. Alas, in December 1975 it burned, a few months after our second set of tenants moved in.

WE WERE TOLD THAT the house was a total loss. We drove back East immediately, and found the house roofless and gutted--in ruins. We stayed several days, saying goodbye to it.

ON THE FINAL DAY I was sitting in the car, looking my last at the house's beautiful front, with its stately Federal pilasters and elegantly detailed doorway. I suddenly realized what I should have seen the first day--that many of the things we loved best about the house were still there.

THE PEDIMENT WAS DAMAGED, its oval window with the delicate lead tracery gone, the applied Greek Key motif in the frieze gone; but the facade below it was almost intact. And, inside, you could walk around in the parlor and front hall; their floors, and the joists under them, were untouched. The inside shutters and panelling and some of the old glass in the parlor windows were still there, though the paint was blistered.



After the fire, not much more than the facade was left. All of the windows with the shutters remaining were saved.



**T**HE MANTELPIECE WAS SMOKY but undamaged. There was good wood under the blackened paint of the hall stairs. The beautiful cherry banister was charred and twisted but the applied scroll-sawn decorations that ascended with the stair were there, though the elliptical ceiling with its concentric mouldings was gone, as was the curving wall. In the big bedroom over the parlor the floorboards were all right, and so were the mantelpiece, the door and frame, and some of the window enframements--though these things, like the stair hall, stood under the open sky. Some of the exterior walls still stood, and the chimneys, and a few interior partitions.

I BEGAN TO FEEL a wild hope, that the house could be rebuilt.

**W**HEN WE GOT BACK to Iowa I telephoned a builder who had previously worked on the house, and asked him to go over and look at it. He called back to say it couldn't be saved. Even the rooms that appeared relatively undamaged had been fatally charred within the walls, he said; the stairs could never be made safe; the first wind would take down the facade. He urged us to forget our crazy idea.

A RESPECTED RESTORATION BUILDER told us the same thing, and worse, a few weeks later. Other builders refused to bid. Still other builders promised to bid, or even said they had bid, and then the bids never came. Every builder or architect who went to look at the house thought we were kidding. It was an impossible situation, trying to rebuild a ruin from a thousand miles away.

THEN MY BROTHER in Washington told me to call the New York State Parks Department, because they know about preserving old houses. The Parks Department told me to call The Landmark Society of Western New York, in Rochester.



THE FIRST PERSON I TALKED TO at The Landmark Society was Mrs. Elizabeth Stewart. She gave me immediate comfort, encouragement and advice. And then she told Mrs. Patrick Harrington, the Society's Executive Director, about our house and what had happened to it. It was Mrs. Harrington and The Landmark Society, in the purest altruism I have ever witnessed in a long life, who made it possible to rebuild our house; out of their generosity of spirit and their skill and experience, they made it happen.

MRS. STEWART SUGGESTED that I telephone the famous preservation architect, Carl F. Schmidt. Mr. Schmidt was immediately kind, saying he would go and look at the house even though it was 60 miles away. After he saw it, he said that much of it could be salvaged, but the cost would be prohibitive -- \$100,000 to \$150,000. We had \$28,000 from the insurance; \$25,000 after the rest of the existing mortgage was paid.

**A**S FAR AS I KNOW it is not possible to insure an old house for anything like its value or replacement cost, at least not in that part of New York, where there are still dozens of fine Greek Revival and Federal houses standing, not particularly appreciated. Insurance companies look skeptically at any attempt to insure a house like ours against the loss of its architectural and historical value.

IT WAS PAINFUL to have our loved house turned into a replica of itself. But it was much more painful to lose it all. So we began to ask banks to give us a mortgage. We thought we could rebuild the main block for about \$60,000 if we did all the detailed restoration ourselves. We then began the search for a builder.

WHEN IT HAD BECOME CLEAR that only a small part of the house could be saved, Mrs. Har-

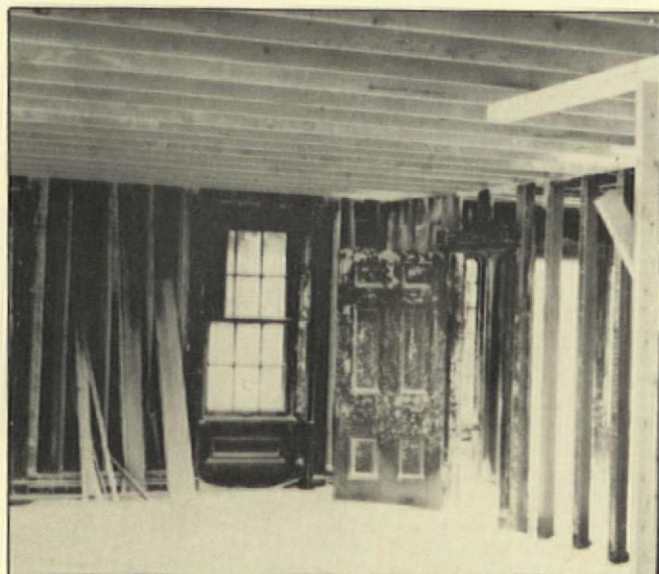
rington asked two young men finishing their doctoral work in History of Architecture at Cornell to look at the house and make a report to the Society. The two men, Carl Stearns and Kevin Harrington, agreed that the house had had architectural merit, and Kevin Harrington said that the facade alone was worth every effort to save it.

**W**E WAVERED NO LONGER. We had been entrusted with a beautiful thing. It had been destroyed while under our care, and we had an obligation to save what we could of it. Elaine Harrington kept urging us to look at a badly-burned Federal house being restored in Ithaca by a young builder she and Kevin knew about. We resisted; we had tried so many builders. One day we did walk by the house and as a result, the builder promised to come look at our house.

HE CAME THE NEXT SATURDAY, July 3, 1976, the day before we had to leave for Iowa. Alexander Ardwin (Sandy) said he could save most of the front two rooms, and some of the bedroom over them, and of course the facade and probably the front door and pediment. And he could begin work at once. We were filled with joy, and we still are.

WHEN WE GOT BACK to Iowa, the last bank turned us down, but what did we care? Sandy Ardwin was going to save a third of the main block of our house. We asked Sandy what he would do for \$28,000 to \$30,000. He said he would demolish the ruined part of the house, carefully removing or leaving in place what could be used. He would build a new house, an almost exact replica--except for the sad fact that it would no longer be a timber-framed house but a modern balloon-frame.

THE NEW HOUSE would enclose and preserve most of the two main rooms and some of the bedroom above, and would preserve the facade.



Parlor, in the midst of re-creation, with inside shutters and panelling left in place and new joists for upstairs bedroom floor. Parlor floor is under snow.



The house now shows the rebuilt portion, with the pediment removed for copying and salvage. The heavy bracing and studding is original.



**H**E WOULD REPLACE THE PEDIMENT, though we would have to manage the window and window grille and the original and copied mouldings. He would build a new main chimney. He would re-create the oval ceiling and the curving stairwall of the front hall. He would build a one-storey, somewhat shorter kitchen wing, which Kevin had told us was its original form. (The second storey of the wing, dating only from about 1900, was not in scale with the rest of the house, in any case.) He would put in a new bathroom downstairs, and side and roof the whole house, providing subfloors and the studding for bearing partitions.

THIS WAS ALL WE HAD HOPED FOR. Now, work on our house is going on.

**T**HE DEMOLITION was done with great care and skill. Before and during it Kevin Harrington and Martha Gates carefully photographed the structure for documentation, and the mouldings for copying. Also, Mrs. Gates copied all the mouldings with a moulding comb. The pediment was removed and the bricks stored, to be used as material for paths in a projected formal garden, like the one in the February 1977 issue of *The Old-House Journal*.

THE ORIGINAL STUDDING in two partitions was saved, and the old wide boards in all three rooms. The joists under the big bedroom had to be replaced, not because of the fire but because they sagged dangerously, even before the fire. The mantelpieces were removed and carefully stored, and the frames of windows and doors remain in place, in the front of the parlor and in the hall. Other window frames were removed and will be put back into the new walls. The walls are up to the top of the second floor, though the snows came before the roof could go on.

THIS SUMMER we will, ourselves, paint the exterior and repair the damaged pilaster and shutters. We will have a new oval window put in the pediment; the window grille will be copied from our photograph and re-created, in pewter-finish iron, by a firm we found in *The Old-House Journal* Buyers' Guide: Steve Kayne Hand Forged Hardware in Smithtown, N. Y.

**S**TEVE KAYNE will also be able to duplicate our 5 in. brass front door key, once we remove our lock and send it to him. E. N. Pfaff and Sons, near us in Horseheads, New York, will duplicate the Greek Key moulding that frames the pediment, from a piece we still have. Using these new parts, we hope my husband will be able to restore the pediment and the facade in detail, under the supervision of Martha Gates.

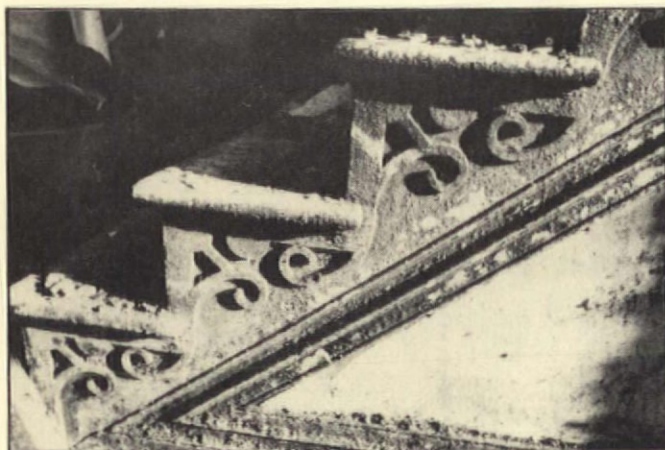
ON THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE, we will scrape off all the charred paint, using the instructions in "Restoration and Preservation," Carl Schmidt's new book. (\$24.50, plus tax and postage, from Mr. Schmidt in Scottsville, N.Y.) We will plane the surfaces smooth; Mr. Schmidt feels that sandpaper raises the grain and thus dulls the wood. We'll repair with putty the damaged medallions at the corners of door and window frames. We hope to remove the modern front steps and put suitable wooden ones there.

**W**E WILL DECORATE in the 1810-1820 style, using Mr. Schmidt's fascinating book, which describes in detail just how those houses were painted and papered, and in what colors--even how to make the paint! We'll be advised by Kevin and Elaine Harrington, and we'll use the household inventories for that house, found by Kevin as he documented its history. When we put the described rag rug in the kitchen, or aspire to the Brussels carpet once used in the hall, we will feel the resonance of the house's past.

WE WILL NEVER PRETEND that the replica part is original, but we will try to make the combination of replica and real into a beautiful, harmonious and satisfying new entity.

BY THE END OF THE SUMMER the five main rooms will be done, and then we're going to have a wedding! Our second daughter and her fiance are waiting for the house, to be married in. And so a joyous celebration will begin a new life for our phoenix house.

(Photos by Martha Gates and Kevin Harrington)



The Housers are hoping that some of these charred decorations can be duplicated.



The original house as it looked in December 1959, the day the Housers moved in.





An iron octagon-shaped aquarium with plant brackets, the familiar Seahorse base, and a less-familiar small umbrella boy spraying water made the long Michigan winters more pleasant in the tiled conservatory of the Edward Buckley residence, Manistee. The conservatory remains with only a cement patch in the tile floor where this beautiful aquarium-fountain once stood. (Photograph courtesy of the Manistee County Historical Museum.)

water reservoir is kept filled with water. If the urn is left out during the winter it is a good idea to place a drain in this reservoir to prevent it from filling with water and breaking. If a drain is not already present, a hole drilled at the lowest point and tapped eighth-inch pipe threads can be equipped with a pet cock to be opened in the winter.

**W**ITH PLANTS AND FLOWERS selected according to geographical location, these urns are beautiful when filled with appropriate and compatible plants that seem to spray upward and overflow downward like a fountain. Plants such as the spike (*Dracaena Indivisa*), that grows quite large if taken in during the winter year after year, as well as fern, caladium, geranium and coleus provide height. Variegated Vinca and wandering Jew trail downward.

DUSTY MILLER (a plant that has now escaped to the roadsides) provides a complete variation in color with its grayish-white lacelike leaves. There are really all sorts of possibilities in planting urns that provide a very artistic and Victorian effect.

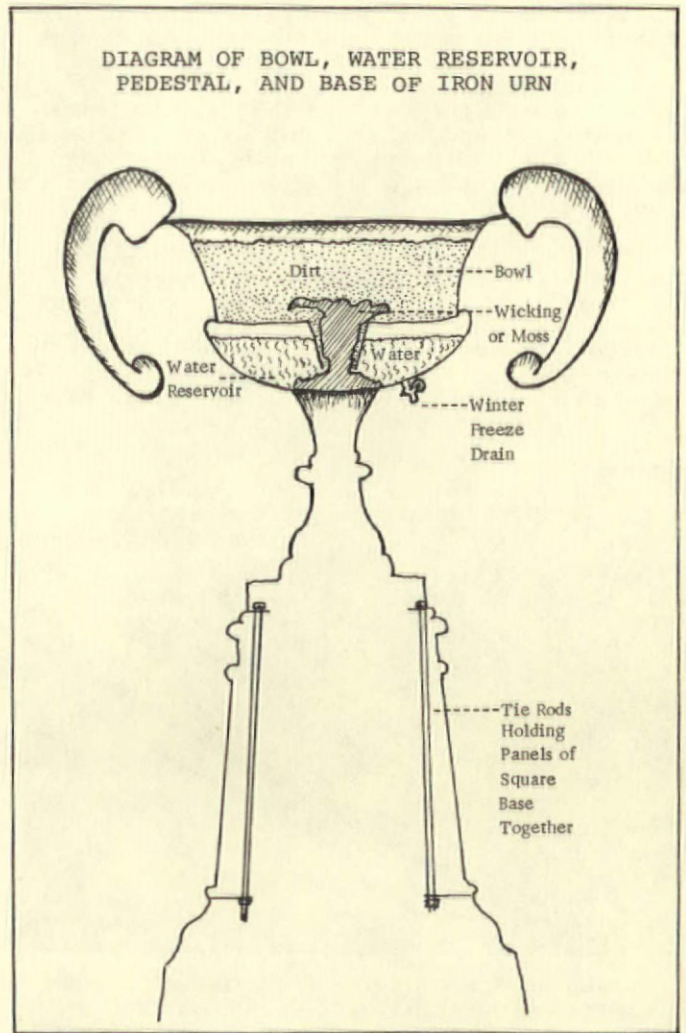
(FOUNTAINS AND URNS--Cont'd from page 61)

if present at one time are often missing) are all stacked together without being bolted. The dead weight prevents them from being turned over by the wind; however, they are still vulnerable to the thrust of vandals.

**T**HE IRON URNS are often used on balustrades near the house, along driveways, or just out in the center of the yard. In the house, the smaller versions can be used in the conservatory or plant room. When iron urns are placed on the lawn, a concrete pad should be provided so that the hollow base does not start sinking to one side; and when they are placed indoors, a heavy wooden pad with casters makes it easy to roll them around.

THE WATER RESERVOIR is often the least understood part of these urns. It is the pan that receives the bowl where the flowers are planted. And in the bottom of the bowl, there is usually a funnel-shaped opening that extends downward into the water reservoir. This is where wicking or moss is placed so that the bowl is to some extent self-watering when the

DIAGRAM OF BOWL, WATER RESERVOIR, PEDESTAL, AND BASE OF IRON URN





## Iron Fountains

**A**LTHOUGH THE IRON DECORATIVE FOUNTAIN is a more complicated embellishment to the Victorian setting, nothing can duplicate a certain restful, peaceful, and yet mysterious feeling found in the sound of a fountain's falling water or can imitate the glistening spray that sparkles in the sunlight.

THE CAST IRON FOUNTAIN was the first type to be mass produced. Available with its own iron pool, it eliminated the use of dirt ponds or lead tanks and was often installed by homeowners as a most pretentious symbol of elegance in celebration of the completion of a town's waterworks.

IN ADDITION TO its presence on the lawn, it was often used inside the house (often in the form of a large aquarium) in a bay window or a conservatory to hasten away the gloom of fall and winter by providing the sounds and delights of spring and summer through those bleak seasons of the year.

HOWEVER, because of the rising costs of water (in the beginning it was sold at cheap, flat rates based on the number of fountains, hydrants, cocks, and water closets) and the difficulty of maintenance caused by a lack of knowledge along these lines, many iron fountains were allowed to go dry, fell in poor repair, and were removed. Therefore, the few remaining ones or pieces and parts are highly prized today as ornamentation for the Victorian home. The availability of small electric pumps that consume little energy has provided a method of making them workable one more without such a great expense in water.

### Fountains for the Lawn

**B**ASICALLY, the iron fountains include: (1) A central section with one, two or three spills (bowls where the water runs over the edges) that are stacked together like the urns and are often surmounted by a small iron or lead statue, (2) A large iron or lead statue on a low base. The central section is often surrounded by a round iron basin or concrete basin with a sculptured edge. The weight of course is terrific--a



This fine example of a residential fountain is located in Anna, Illinois, and through repairs could run once more. It shows the typical cement basin that some of the iron fountains were constructed with.

three-spill fountain, 8 ft., 2 in. high with a 7 ft., 6 in. iron basin costing \$215 (painted) and \$235 (bronzed) in 1909 from N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company weighed 1,400 lbs. When having the iron basin on the Onekama, Michigan, Village Park fountain moved for repairs after being damaged by an automobile, the author found it necessary to find seven men to lift it onto a truck.

**T**HE ELABORATE AND WHIMSICAL DECORATIVE motifs of the different foundries for these fountains follow the same patterns with most parts being interchangeable. The iron basins have an edge with frogs or turtles nestled in rocks among waterlily and/or ivy leaves (a rare version is the one that was at the D. W. Filer home, Manistee, Michigan--it had light bulbs popping up around the edge for nighttime viewing.) The pedestal under the first spill is the most ornate, commonly equipped with seahorses or cranes intertwined among cattails and arrowhead plants, or equipped with a fluted column decorated with lionheads and curling acanthus leaves.

THE PEDESTALS UNDER the other spills are usually smaller and less ornate but compatible in design, and the spills themselves often have carved edges to vary the size and location of the drip with acanthus leaves spreading outward underneath from the central column. The statue (large if alone in the pool, small if on top of one or more spills) is of iron or lead depicting the Victorian imagination at its best in very interesting and detailed forms of time-honored favorites such as the boy and swan, the boy riding a dolphin, the umbrella boy, the boy with a serpent, the lady at the well, and the huge bird--all of which are usually perched on a base of extremely intriguing iron or lead rocks.

IF THE IRON FOUNTAIN does have a statue, the spray usually emerges from the mouth of the featured beast, the top of the umbrella, or the jug; a ring of sprays might also be used at the statue's feet. For those fountains lacking a statue, a ring of sprays or a single spray sometimes placed in the middle of two or three iron leaves and flowers in the top spill provides bubbling action.

BASICALLY, THE SPRAY IS supplied by a central pipe that in reality also holds the stacked-up parts together. Then, usually under the base of these central parts out in the basin, is the overflow pipe that carries the water off so that it does not spill out over the edge of the basin. It is typical that this overflow pipe may be unscrewed from its socket in the basin floor to drain all of the water out of the basin. A valve on the supply line is often located in the yard or under the central base to turn the water on and off.

THE ACCOMPANYING DIAGRAMS show piping for using the fountain with fresh running water and for the addition of a small electric pump to recirculate the water through the fountain. Especially in the smaller basin that contains a fountain using a pump, it is important to install a float valve on the water supply to maintain the water level as the water splashes out and evaporates.







**I**F NEW PIPING IS REQUIRED in restoring a fountain, copper or red brass piping are the most desirable. Adequate provision must be made for draining the supply piping so that winter frost damage will not occur. Regardless of the piping used, a copper or red brass fitting is a must for the socket in which the overflow pipe is screwed as these threads will quickly rust out when the overflow pipe is left out to keep the pool drained in the wintertime. And the larger the drain line, the better. It is much easier to wash out a pool where the drain is large enough to carry out small bits of debris without clogging.

**I**N RE-SETTING AN IRON BASIN, a level concrete pad should be built as a foundation; then, the iron basin is placed (above ground level) on this pad using a seal of wet cement beneath the basin floor to seal around pipe openings and to adhere the basin to the pad. A level should be used in checking the basin and spills at all times to avoid the one-sided or unlevel-dish effect of a leaning fountain.

**D**UE TO THE UNAVAILABILITY of cement and the difficulties in forming and working it, cement basins for iron fountains were not usually used unless the desired pool size and/or depth exceeded dimensions offered in iron. Larger fountains in parks often



Color scheme of dark green with white accents this unusual ramhead fountain on the lawn of the Hamill House in Georgetown, Colorado. Iron leaves and flowers ornament the spray on the top spill while small iron flowerpots adorn the edge of the basin.

have the hexagon or octagon shaped cement basin combined with an iron coping that was supplied by the manufacturer; however, the smaller residential fountains usually have a round cement basin that has a cement curb as well, when cement was substituted for the iron basin. The edges of the curb are usually simple and still can be formed by adding wooden mouldings in circular forms built with well-supported flexible sheets of wood. The author has never seen brick used originally as a coping around these basins, although several instances of sculptured sandstone coping have been evident.

**I**N THIS UNDERTAKING OF CEMENT WORK, it is important to follow the information given in the diagrams in order to avoid frost damage. The mixture for the cement should be no leaner than four parts sand, two parts cement, and one part gravel. After the forms are removed, the surfaces can be troweled and broomed. The finish should not be real slick as algae forming on the wet surfaces makes them as slick as smooth ice and very dangerous when cleaning the basin.

**T**HE IRON BASINS are usually not more than 8 in. deep and are very safe for children. However, they may be used for a few goldfish in the summer and such water plants as water hyacinth (which produces beautiful purple bloom spikes) and parrot's feather. If one desires to grow waterlilies, water irises, or arrowheads in a fountain, the basin must be a large concrete one with a depth of not under 24 in. Generally, the water garden is kept to a minimum in a basin with an active fountain, as most of these plants do not like to be kept wet on top and do not like currents of rushing water around them. Also, a water garden must receive at least partial sunlight.

**T**HE PLANTINGS AROUND THE FOUNTAIN should be compatible with water as the area is usually kept wet by the wind blowing the spray. Ivy is excellent around the basin.

**M**AINTENANCE OF THE IRON FOUNTAIN will require cleaning of the basin more often if re-circulated water is used. Algae (green water), which forms from the bottom of the basin will always be a problem unless fresh water is added continuously. The author has found that the only real solution to this algae is to place in the basin the oxygenating plant water-milfoil or Myriophyllum that shades the basin floor and prevents the formation of algae. The problem of mosquitos should not be evident in the fountain basin that has fresh water and fish.

**W**INTER AND FREEZING TEMPERATURES must bring the draining of all fountain parts and the basin (unless it is a deep one in which logs should be placed to prevent the breaking of the cement by the freezing of the water) and the covering with canvas of the spills and statue.

The second part of Tom H. Gerhardt's article on Victorian Cast Iron Fountains and Urns will appear in the July 1977 issue of The Old-House Journal. It will discuss fountains for the conservatory and give sources for garden ornament.



# Preparing To Paint

By Clem Labine

**F**EW PEOPLE REALIZE that, in painting, the actual application of paint is the easiest—and in many ways the least important—part of a paint job. Proper surface preparation is EVERYTHING. In old houses, you can easily spend 4-8 hours or more in preparation for every hour that will be spent actually painting.

BEFORE PLUNGING into preparation for painting, however, ask yourself the basic question: Is repainting really needed? Or will just a thorough cleaning (and maybe some touch-up) suffice? Too often, people lay on a new coat of paint rather than cleaning. But repainting year after year has two serious drawbacks: (1) Thick paint layers blur detail in woodwork and ornamental plaster; (2) Heavy paint layers create lumpy surfaces and increase the likelihood of alligatoring and other paint problems.

A CLEANING SOLUTION of Soilax (or similar non-rinse soap powder) can provide an amazing rejuvenation of old paint. And since old painted work should be washed free of dirt and grime before repainting anyway, you can delay a final decision until the cleaning step is completed.

IF THERE IS WALLPAPER on the wall—painted or unpainted—you're best advised to strip it off. Wallpaper that is tightly bonded to the wall can be painted—but it doesn't look as good as paint on flat plaster. Also, the paper can always come loose at a later date—ruining the whole paint job. (See The Journal, Sept. 1975, p. 10, for tips on removing wallpaper.)

## The Calcimine Factor

**B**EFORE 1940, calcimine paint was widely used on ceilings (and sometimes walls) to avoid problems of paint build-up. Calcimine—essentially a tinted chalk in a weak glue—was meant to be washed off before a new coating was applied. That way, you always had only a single layer of paint on top of your plasterwork, and all outlines were crisp and sharp.

WHEN OIL-BASED PAINTS began to replace calcimine, often these new paints were applied right on top of the old calcimine. This was a mistake. Over the years, the glue that holds the calcimine to the plaster weakens... and as it peels it takes all the other paint layers with it.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS to deal with chronic peeling caused by old calcimine:

- (1) Allow the surface to continue peeling and touch it up periodically;
- (2) Remove the calcimine and covering paint layers. Calcimine dissolves in water—but you'll have to use heat or chemicals to remove the water-impervious paint on top of the calcimine. Or use the steam process described in The Journal, May 1976, page 2.

IF YOU HAVE A SURFACE that is still covered with its original calcimine (you can tell by its solubility in hot water), be sure to wash it ALL off before painting. (The May 1976 article has tips on washing calcimine.)

## Beware Of Alligators

**T**HE MOST FRUSTRATING of paint problems is alligatoring—an over-all series of cracks in the old paint film. The cracks originate not in the plaster or woodwork below, but rather somewhere in the layers of paint on top. One common cause is applying a flat paint over varnish or glossy enamel.

ONCE ALLIGATORING is occurring, you can do only one of two things:

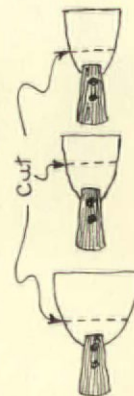
1. Treat the problem symptomatically by filling the cracks with spackle or joint compound. Recognize, however, that the alligatoring will probably show up again within a year;
2. Remove all the paint layers with a heat gun or chemicals and start all over again.

IF YOU ARE EVER painting over varnish or a glossy enamel, prevent future alligatoring by sanding thoroughly, or use a liquid deglosser.

## Elbow Grease Needed

**A**FTER WASHING (and having determined to repaint), the next step is to thoroughly scrape all loose and flaking paint. This is a boring—but essential—part of the job. Proper scraping not only removes blemishes and loose material; it also calls your attention to cracks and loose plaster that will need more work.

IT'S AMAZING what a difference the proper scraper makes. Although there are many types on the market, most professional painters find that the best scraper is a homemade "short scraper." They take a good quality flexible scraper (such as a Russell or Warner) and have it cut down as per the sketches at the right. Best way to cut them is at a metal shop that has a sheet metal cutter. In a pinch, you could cut one with a hacksaw and straighten the edge with a grinding wheel or file. A file





is used during scraping to sharpen the scraper should it become dull. Professional painters usually have a number of short scrapers—cut to different lengths from different width blades. For the homeowner, a good all-purpose scraper can be made from a 4" flexible scraper cut so that about 2" of blade remains.



PROPER LIGHT is a great asset in the scraping and subsequent patching operations. Best way to get this is with an extension light fitted with a reflector. Hold the lamp in one hand and the scraper in the other. You'll be astounded at the imperfections that show up in the glare of your hand-held lamp that aren't noticeable in ordinary lighting conditions.

## Loose Plaster



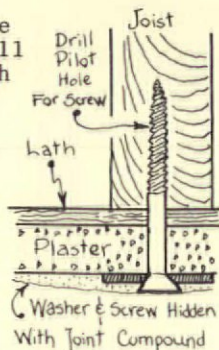
FTEN THE SCRAPING will turn up areas of loose plaster in walls or ceilings. In severe cases, the only solution is to remove all the old loose material and replaster or replace with sheetrock. But if the problem is localized, there are a couple of short-cut repairs.

PLASTER OF PARIS can be used to make a "key" to anchor the old plaster. Cut away the heart of the loose material, exposing the lath. Make sure that the lath is firmly attached to the studs. After thoroughly wetting the lath and surrounding plaster, trowel in a stiff mixture of plaster of paris—making sure that some of it oozes behind the lath strips. Trowel the plaster of paris firmly against the old plaster to obtain a good bond.

RUN A BOARD across the patch to make sure that none of the new wet plaster is higher than the surrounding surface. Much better too low than too high. Low spots can be filled in later with spackle or joint compound. If any plaster of paris gets on adjoining painted surfaces, sponge it off while wet—or else remove it after it is dry with your short scraper and coarse steel wool. Plaster does not adhere well to painted surfaces, so if you don't remove this slopover before painting, you run the risk of chipping at a later date.

BEWARE ESPECIALLY of ceilings that seem spongy to the touch. Lath nails can work loose from old dried joists. Or the plaster keys may have broken loose from the lath. In either case, loose plaster in a ceiling is just an accident (possibly fatal) waiting to happen.

IF INSPECTION SHOWS the lath are still secure to the joists, small loose areas can be repaired with plaster of paris keys as described above. If the lath is loose—or the area involved is several square feet—you can drill through the plaster with carbide bits, and secure the plaster with 2" washers held by 3" wood screws driven into the joists. The washers can be camouflaged by feathering out with several applica-



tions of joint compound. These anchors should be placed at about 18" intervals throughout the loose area.

## Joint Compound: The Magic Material



DO BRING OLD PLASTER SURFACES up to snuff for painting, many professionals rely heavily on joint compound (also called "wallboard compound," "taping cement," etc.) They use this in preference to commercial spackle. The advantages of joint compound: It has good adhesive properties (it will stick to paint); works smoothly and can be easily sanded when dry. The premixed joint compound, although more expensive than the powdered form, has better working properties and is worth the added cost.

JOINT COMPOUND is excellent for leveling imperfections in walls or ceilings...such as places where old paint has chipped out, cracks caused by alligating, etc. Used in conjunction with joint tape, it's also useful in covering structural cracks. When professional painters are preparing an old room that's in bad shape, very often every square inch will be gone over with a thin layer (or layers) of joint compound to even out all irregularities.

ONE DISADVANTAGE of joint compound is that it shrinks on drying. Thus if any build-up more than 1/32" is required, you should put the material on in several applications. Each coat should dry thoroughly before the next one is applied. Try to get the bulk of the material put on in the first application—and smooth it out as much as possible without fussing excessively. The subsequent coats...applied thin...will complete the smoothing of the patch.

THE WIDER THE AREA being worked, the wider the taping knife you should use. Some professionals have taping knives as wide as 12". For the homeowner, however, a 3", 5" and 6" knife should handle 99% of the situations you'll encounter.



AFTER THE JOINT COMPOUND dries, it can be smoothed by sandpaper or "wet sanding" with a damp sponge. If you've worked carefully with the taping knife, however, the need for sanding should be minimal.

JOINT COMPOUND is highly absorptive of paint. Therefore, before the finish coat of paint is applied, all patches—both raw plaster and joint compound areas—should receive a coat of primer. The primer should be tinted the same color—or slightly darker—than the finish paint that will be used.

NEXT MONTH: The Best Way To Handle Cracks

SPECIAL THANKS for technical advice to Howard Zucker—a member for 31 years of the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators.



# Products For The Old House

## Authentic Victorian Wallpapers

BECAUSE both editors and readers of The Journal have often bemoaned the lack of truly Victorian wallpapers today, we are especially pleased to discover this source for authentic and beautiful Victorian fabric and wallpaper.

WATTS WALLPAPERS are very popular in England for restorations and several of the Pugin designs have been hung in the Houses of Parliament. (The paper shown at right is Pugin's Pineapple.) Still made from the original carved pear wood blocks, they are printed by hand in any combination of colors.

THE WATTS PRINTERS can copy a color from paint chips, a piece of fabric or carpet, etc. There is a minimum order of 10 rolls. Each roll is 21 in. wide and 11 yards long. The papers start at approx. \$30 per roll; price increases according to the number of colors used and the size of

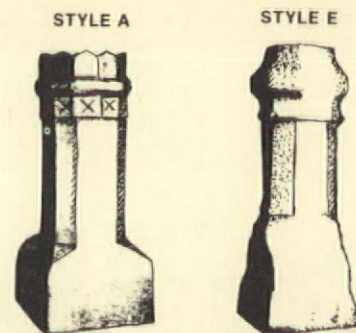


the patterns printed. There is a three month delivery. A separate estimate is given for each order.

THE PATTERNS are by the famous Victorian Church and domestic interior designer, George Bodley, and some by the architect, Pugin. The designs reflect their interest in late Gothic art as well as Venetian and Florentine textiles. The patterns range from small-scale up to monumental size for public buildings.

WATTS & CO., one of Britain's leading Church furnishers, also offers a selection of genuine Victorian fabric which is excellent for upholstery.

A FASCINATING BROCHURE with photos of both fabric and wallpaper is available for \$1.00. Address inquiries to: Mrs. Lindy M. Drury, Watts & Co., Ltd., 7, Tufton Street, Westminster, London, England, SW1P 3QB.



## Chimney Pots

CHIMNEY POTS—made from fired terra cotta—are used at the top of chimney flues to increase draft, keep out the weather, and to add architectural interest. Popular in Europe for many centuries, chimney pots were widely used in the U.S. in the 19th century. They are useful as a replacement for rotten chimneys where it is required to keep the top at least 2 ft. above the highest roof point.

THESE CHIMNEY POTS are hand crafted by an American firm that uses the same molds it has been using for 100 years. They weigh approximately 100 lb., measure 2½-3 ft. high and 12-13 in. at the base. Prices range from \$50 to \$110. Shipping would add about \$10-20.

FOR DETAILS on styles, prices and installation, send \$2 to: William L. Lavicka, Historic Boulevard Services, 1520 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill. 60607.

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