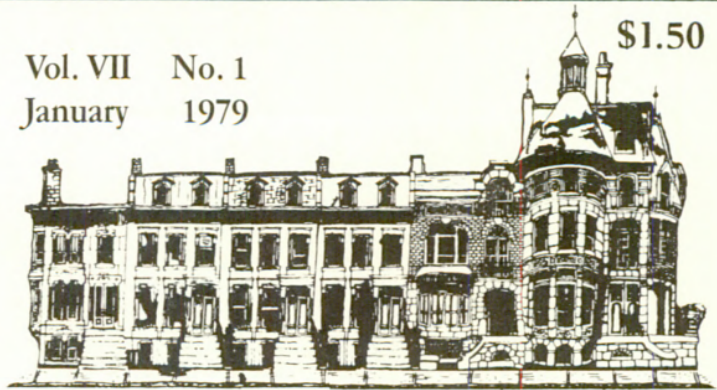


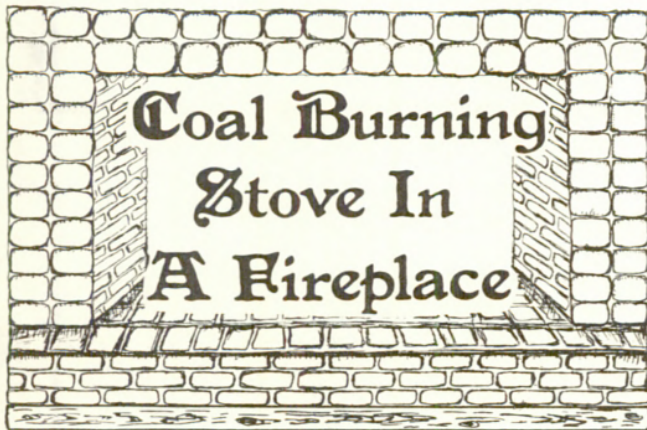
THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

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Restoration And Maintenance Techniques For The Antique House



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Coming Next Month

RESTORING DAMAGED PLASTER

By Rev. Thomas G. Souders, Philadelphia, Pa.

WHEN WE FIRST MOVED INTO THIS house in 1969, we realized it was not an ordinary place. One of the first clues came when we asked if an electrical outlet could be put on a certain wall. The answer was an emphatic "No! The last time we tried that we found a 22 in. stone wall to go through." It slowly dawned upon us that this place with its pegged rafters, rippled glass, deep windows, and hand dug wells is an old-timer.

WE WERE SO HAPPY to find the enormous fireplace in a central room. The first occasion to use it came when the Youth Fellowship was having a picnic and it was rained out. We brought everything indoors and set up a fire in the fireplace. Being a volunteer fireman for some years, I thought it wise to check the upstairs and the chimney since this was the first use of the fireplace.

EVERYTHING looked okay until I lifted the little lid which gives access to the tiny cockloft running the length of the house. Sure enough, it was filled with smoke! When I stuck my head up into the area and checked the chimney, I could see holes in the mortar and a check of these showed

that they extended completely through the chimney wall. Not wanting to damage the fireplace tiles and bricks with water, I put the fire out with a foam extinguisher.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS we tried to get someone to put a flue liner in the chimney or in some way make the fireplace functional. It appeared hopeless. The chimney is constructed of fieldstone (in this area mica schist) and only at the top five or six ft. does it narrow down to a rectangular, brick chimney. Upon looking up through the damper, I discovered what I had seen in old, untouched farmhouses: the interior of a walk-in, fieldstone fireplace complete with meat hooks and the soot of generations.

THIS MEANS THAT our enormous fireplace was built inside an even larger fireplace! Climbing up on top of the third storey section of the house and peering down confirmed the interior observations--the chimney widened and curved on the way down, with the fireplace set about three ft. in from the chimney. Also, in the cellar directly underneath the original section of the fireplace, is a massive stone arch



(Cont'd. on page 8)

Leaks From Old Gas Pipes

To The Editor:

THE ARTICLE ON reviving old lighting systems (OHJ, Nov. 1978) reminded me of something that occurred in our home. A few years ago, I thought I smelled gas in our bedroom. This made no sense to me, so I dismissed the thought as we went out for the evening. Returning later that evening, I still smelled it—stronger than before. My wife confirmed my observation.

STILL FEELING LIKE a fool, I called the gas company. They sent a workman over who confirmed that gas was indeed coming into the bedroom. It was coming from the gas pipes in the wall where the old wall sconces had been. The pipes had been capped—but they were still connected to the main gas supply used for the kitchen and the water heater. Some corrosion had taken place in the wall pipes...and now gas was leaking into the bedroom.

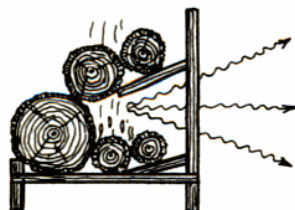
IN ORDER TO be able to sleep that night, we had to shut off the main gas valve to the house. Next day, we had our plumber disconnect all the old gas pipes.

I THINK this is a hazard not often recognized in old houses. Fortunately, it's one that is easy to remedy.

Adrien L. Coblentz, M.D.
Montclair, N.J.



CONVENTIONAL GRATE—Heat radiates in all directions



MODIFIED GRATE—Heat radiates into room

A High-Heat Fire

To The Editor:

IN THE ARTICLE "How To Build A High-Heat Fire," (OHJ, Jan. 1978) a procedure is described in which the fire is built on a bed of ashes. I use a variation of that technique, which I believe is more effective. The fire is based on the use of a grate called "The Texas Fireframe."

WITH THIS GRATE, a large rear reflecting log is used, as with the system described in the previous Journal article. However, the Texas Fireframe also adds an additional large log over the fire to reflect still more heat into the room.

A FRIEND AND I who use this system have allowed the ashes to build up under the grate, which keeps the fire from moving under the back log—preventing the fire from burning too

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vigorously. The amount of heat reflected into the room seems large; a small fire soon has our living room quite warm.

ANOTHER TRICK a friend uses to increase the amount of radiant heat is to build a light metal frame for the back of the fireplace and cover it with heavy aluminum foil. A covering of foil will generally last one heating season. The foil can also be extended to the sides of the firebox. The appearance is not very "old house," as you can visualize, but while the fire is burning the reflected light patterns into the room are fun to watch.

MORE INFORMATION on the grate can be obtained from Texas Fireframe Co., P.O. Box 3435, Austin, Texas 78764.

Paul B. Hinds
Rochester, N.Y.

Dangers Of Dipping

To The Editor:

MORE AND MORE owners of old houses are having shutters and other exterior woodwork striped of paint by having them dipped commercially. But in many cases, wood that has been treated in this fashion will not accept new paint—even though it has first been treated with wood preservative.

IT APPEARS THAT the chemicals keep leaching through to the surface. Any new paint that is applied peels off within six months.

DOES ANYONE KNOW of research that has been done on the use of dip stripping for exterior wood? And is there any remedy for wood that has been so treated that is shedding paint?

Sandra Bergmann
Richard Bergmann Architects
New Canaan, Conn.

A Small Farmhouse

In Illinois

By Barbara Schiller

WHILE PASSING THROUGH NORTHWESTERN Illinois on August 3, 1974, Norma Vander Meer saw a small advertisement in a realtor's brochure:

Stone house...over 100 years old and built with square nails. No water or electricity but solid and repairable.

Norma drove over to see the house. There was a frame addition built around 1900 and over half an acre of land with a creek running through it. "My heart did a double beat, and my head said you can't do it. My heart won out."

ON JUNE 29, 1976, Norma moved into a charming farmhouse with all the modern conveniences. The almost two years between seeing the advertisement and moving day were, Norma says, the best years of her life. She had never worked so hard or loved it so much.

EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT for 14 months she drove the 102 miles from the Chicago suburb of Elmhurst out to Rock City, Illinois. She worked on the house from sun up to sun down until Sunday night, then drove back to Elmhurst. Norma is able to enjoy the result of her labors from Thursday nights until Monday mornings since she now works a four-day week.



Norma's farmhouse before work began. The stone part was built in 1865 and the frame portion added about 1900.



HER SCHEDULE would have been grueling for anyone. For Norma it was particularly trying since most of the skills necessary for renovating the house had to be learned by doing. Her only previous experience had been watching her parents when they remodeled their own house, and helping them with some of the work.

PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL WORK, well digging and foundation work were too important to be done by amateurs. But Norma did most of the real gut work and all the finishing work with the help of her family and friends.

THE COZY (1200 sq. ft.) house consists of a stone part built in 1865 with walls 18 in. thick. The frame portion added on about 1900 has the decorative bevelled glass and wood trim typical of its period. Every bit of woodwork was refinished. First it was numbered, then removed, finished and re-installed.

NORMA MADE SOME STRUCTURAL CHANGES to bring the house up to modern standards. The upstairs bedroom in the old part lacked storage space, so she built a wall of closets. There were two upstairs bedrooms in the 1900 frame part. One of them became a bathroom, the other a walk-in closet.

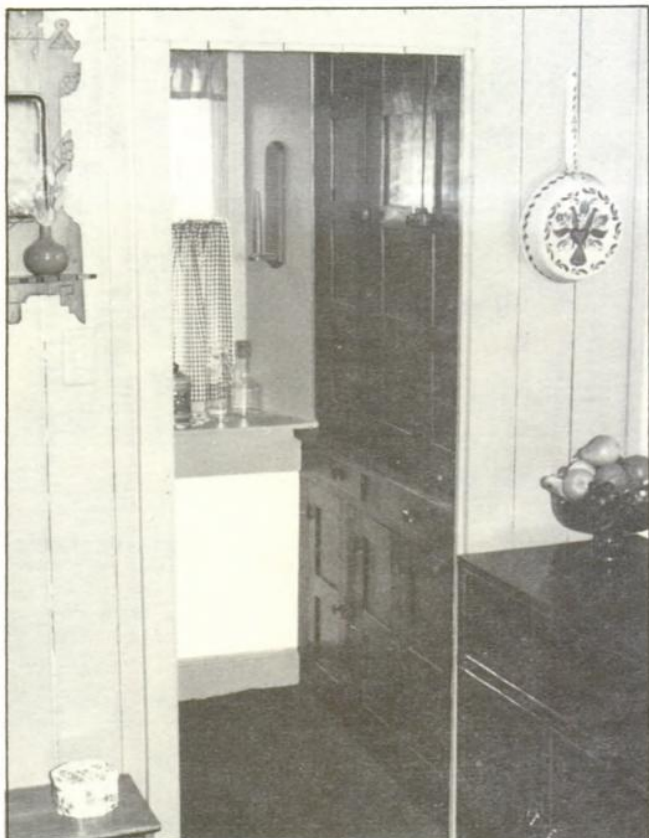
ALL THE LATH AND PLASTER was stripped. It was the old-fashioned kind...thick and strong. Norma insulated the house and installed a vapor barrier.

POWDER POST BEETLES had feasted on the floor joists and support beams for the first floor, so these had to be replaced.

NORMA'S BROTHER is in the heating and air conditioning business and he designed the forced air furnace heating system. On a 90 degree day they were up in the attic installing the ducts.

IT WAS JUST AS HOT when Norma did the work she really hated--the messy, boring job of installing, taping and finishing too many square feet of drywall.

NORMA RECALLS what a delightful contrast it was working on the wood trim outside in beautiful spring weather. All the wood was of a



The renovated pantry with the once water-stained and sagging pantry cabinets restored and refinished. Around the window note the thickness of the walls in the stone part of the house.

particularly hard pine that responded beautifully to a scrubbing with trisodium phosphate and a hosing down. She refinished it with Amity stain and varnish, products she could find only in antique stores.



Norma did much of the preliminary work before professionals came on the job. Here she is drilling holes for the power lines through 18-20 in. of the fieldstone. It was a three hour job.

BUT BEFORE THE FUN of woodfinishing, there were more basic jobs. Every window in the house had to be puttied. Instead of replacing the old ropes and weights, tracks were installed.

NORMA STAINED the exterior clapboards brown, the wood trim was painted white. The hardwood floors in the living room and dining room were sanded and refinished. Norma and her friends built the cabinet bases for kitchen and bath, but professional labor was used for the countertops.

NORMA ALSO SOUGHT PROFESSIONAL HELP for an unexpected and very expensive job. There were 32 feet of live honeycomb and two large swarms of bees on the walls...honey dripped for days!

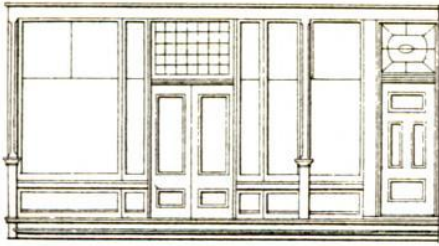
ASIDE FROM THE FRUSTRATING DELAYS caused by bad weather, there was one other problem that Norma had to take care of. The stairwell going to the second floor is only wide enough to allow someone carrying hand tools to use it. She had to cut a slot in the living room ceiling and the bedroom floor above it to pass up lumber, sheetrock, the four-piece Corning shower unit and mattresses.

THIS SLOT WAS THE CAUSE of Norma's one near major disaster. She was working alone one weekend taping wallboard ("All friends and family vanished when it was time for that task!") in the bedroom above the living room. An unused 4x8 sheet of drywall was in her way so she started to carry it across the room when much to her surprise she stepped into the slot going down to the living room and crashed through to the living room floor.

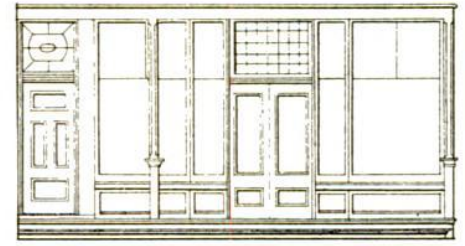
LUCKILY, she landed near the telephone and was able to pull it off of the table onto the floor and summon help from a neighbor. A glass of wine and a half-hour later, Norma was back at work! ■■



Ceiling in the living room is where the slot was to pass through the lumber, sheetrock, etc. Both the living room and dining room have lovely bevelled and cut glass transom windows.



The Art Of Graining



By Nat Weinstein

Part II

This is the second part of the article by Nat Weinstein on graining. The first part appeared in the December 1978 issue.

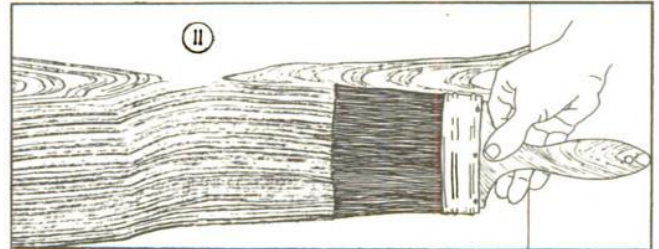
NOW WE ARE READY FOR TOPGRAINING. Dip your topgrainer into the glaze. Shake the topgrainer thoroughly to remove excess glaze. (Too much glaze will tend to run and smear, especially when working down on a horizontal surface like a table top.)

NOW TRACE OVER the previously executed heart-grain pattern with the topgrainer. It will superimpose the sharper grain lines usually found in the heart of walnut. (See illus. #10). Now, immediately following topgraining, sweep it lightly with the tips of dry brush, moving from the open end of the grain toward the closed end. (See illus. #12).

ANOTHER OPTIONAL FORM of this sweep blending is to modify the sweep by very lightly dragging the tips of the dry brush in one inch or so jerks in a similar manner to the sliding stipple operation described earlier.

WHEN EXECUTING the latter sweep-blending, a little sidewise wiggle every five or ten in. or so adds a little extra interest. A sharper topgrain will result if the glaze is allowed to set a few minutes before tracing over it with the topgrainer.

PRACTICE STIPPLING AND TOPGRAINING at longer and shorter intervals after application of the glaze. A variety of subtle patterns are possible through timing control. For sharper topgraining, a little of the glaze may be put in a separate container and darkened. Add a little raw or burnt umber or even lampblack.

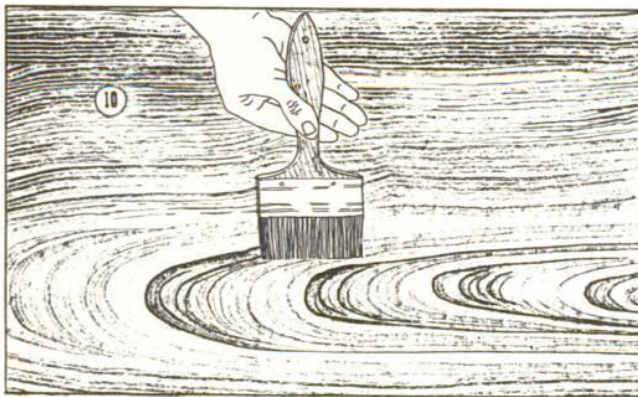


After heart growth has been executed, straight grain is produced by dragging dry brush through the still-wet glaze. Grain is curved to follow outline of the heart growth; grain lines get straighter as you work toward the edge of the board.

Adjusting The Glaze

AFTER FAMILIARIZING YOURSELF with the action of your glaze, you will most likely need to adjust it: You may want to make the shade deeper or lighter or alter the color.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE already tried to fine-tune your glaze color with little success. Even a competent color mixer of ordinary opaque paints may run into problems with a glaze. Mixing the glaze is more complex since the final effect depends on the interplay between the ground coat and the glaze. In attempting to match your walnut sample you may not have tinted your undercoat exactly right. Whatever the cause, when you reach the point where it seems that you keep passing over your target color--first getting it too dark, then too light or perhaps too rich or too dark--the problem may be solved by adding a small amount (a tablespoonful or so) of white undercoater.



This One



KK98-55U-N3Q4

Adding the white pigment makes your glaze greyer and more opaque. This can compensate for a too-intensely colored undercoat.

PERHAPS YOUR GLAZE is setting too quickly. Adding a small amount of oil will slow it down.

ON THE OTHER HAND, when the glaze sets too slowly, thus flowing together and causing the grain effects to blur or even vanish, the addition of a little varnish or thinner or both will counter this unwanted effect. Spreading the glaze further--extending the same amount over a larger surface--also helps to prevent the glaze from flowing back together.

WHEN YOU ARE SATISFIED that the glaze is working right and you have a feel for the techniques and timing, you should wipe off the table top you've been using for practice. Now you are ready to begin graining in earnest.

Graining Doors

DOORS SHOULD BE LEFT on hinges for easiest handling. Remove obstructions such as door knobs, keyhole plates, etc. When graining panelled doors, do not attempt to coat in the entire door at once. It will set up before you can grain it all. The panels should be coated with glaze and grained first. (If more than one panel, complete them one at a time.) The horizontal boards (rails) are done next and the vertical boards (stiles), last.

THE REASON for this order becomes clearer in the doing. You will see that it is based on the capability of each succeeding application of the glaze "erasing," so to say, the unwanted overglaze left from the immediately preceding operation. You will find it easy to

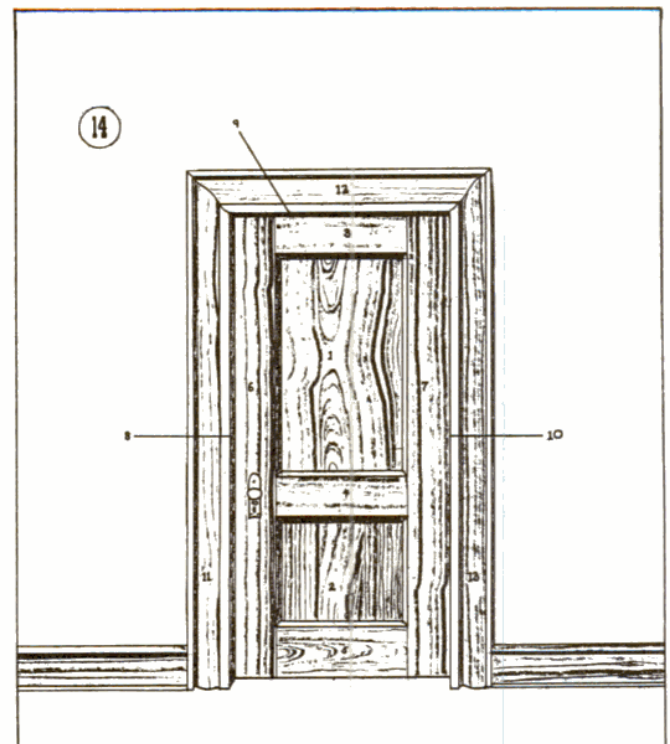
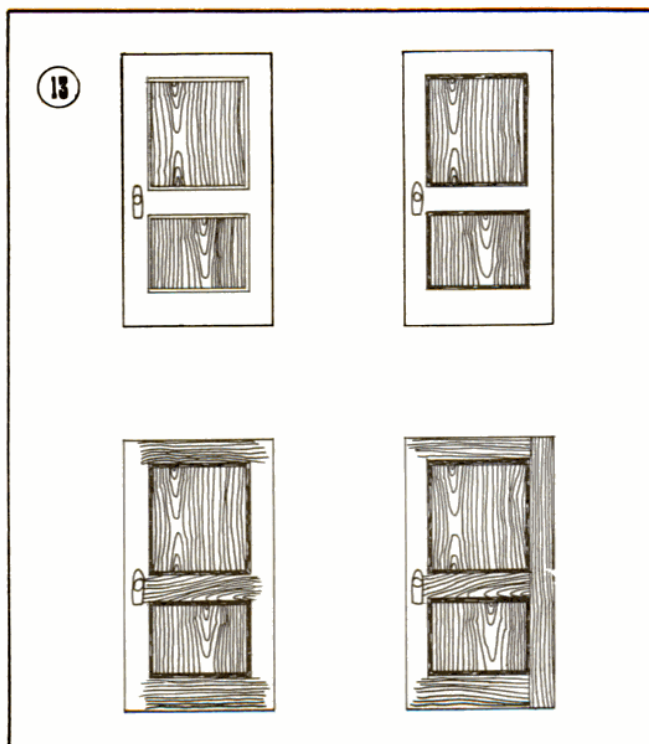
sharply separate the "boards" neatly from each other at the appropriate places--just as it would be if the door was real natural finish wood. (See illus. #13)

TECHNICALLY, graining the inside of the panels presents a slight difficulty. The glaze sometimes accumulates at the top and bottom where the dry brush must begin the stippling operation. The glaze may appear darker or more opaque at these points because the surrounding molding inhibits an even distribution of the glaze. This problem is usually solved by gently stabbing with the tips of the dry brush up toward the molding. This will pick off some of the piled-up glaze.

THE HEARTGRAINING and topgraining steps present no special problem in doing the panel. After the horizontal pieces--the rails--are grained, an overglaze will be left on the stiles. As previously indicated, this is readily dissolved when the glaze is brushed over the stiles. A sharp straight cut should be made at these junctions. The applicator brush should not contain too much glaze--squeeze the excess out of the brush--otherwise the glaze may bleed over into the finished area. If this should happen do this: Using the tips of the dry brush, gently sweep horizontally from a few inches inside the rail out toward and into the stiles on each end. Then drag and stipple the stile again with the dry brush.

THE DOOR CASING should be done last. Do the pocket (the inside of the casing) first and the facing last. (See illus. #14)

A FINAL NOTE ON GRAINING the panelled door. Watch out for a busy pattern resulting from too many heartgrains. Or a too-symmetrical wallpaper-like pattern. ■ ■



(Stove in Fireplace--Cont'd from pg. 1)

which supports the original fireplace floor, walls and chimney.

ONE DAY we visited a foundry where they were re-casting pot belly stoves from the original patterns. We bought a small one (30 in. high, 14 in. wide, with a 10 in. firebox.) These old stoves operative with a five in. dia. flue pipe that was usually elbowed into a nearby chimney. Sometimes the flue was simply extended through a window pane where it was directed up alongside the house.

Installing The Stove

WE HOPED that installing the stove would enable us to use the fireplace without changing the existing structure. Our answer, after three winters, has proven workable. We measured the distance between the fireplace floor and the underneath of the slab that rests atop the chimney. From this we figured out how many sections of five in. dia. galvanized flue pipe we would need for the job. At this point, there were several problems.

THERE WAS A CURVE IN THE CHIMNEY; would the installed flue bend enough? How to get it up? How to keep it up! How to get a five-in. pipe through a four-inch damper? I found that the flue pipe could easily be deformed into an elliptical cross-section shape and spring right back. This meant we could probably insert the pipe, section by section, from the fireplace, fastening each piece together as we progressed the pipe up the chimney.

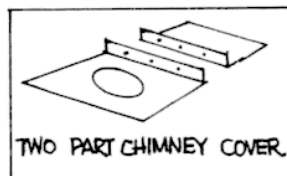
HOWEVER, it seemed quite probable that the longer the pipe got, the greater would be the chance that it would tilt back into the chimney wall and jam, especially because of the forward location of the fireplace and the rough, fieldstone walls. Just in case, I securely fastened a loop to the top (and first in) piece of pipe. Before inserting this piece, I passed a rope down the chimney and secured it to the loop on top of this initial flue-pipe section. I also prepared a clamp with which I planned to secure the flue at the top of the chimney.

WHILE THIS CLAMP is very simple, it is also very important. Using angle iron, I fabricated a shape a little like the tic-tac-toe diagram with little pieces of angle iron bolted on at the right places to keep the thing from moving back and forth and possibly tilting down into the chimney. Then I made a clamp which was simply two hefty pieces of flat strap iron bent to each form a half circle with "ears" bent out and drilled to accept a nut and bolt.

I MADE THESE HALF CIRCLES the same diameter as the flue, but not quite exactly half circles. The reason for this was to be able to obtain a clamping action by drawing the bolts up tight (but not too tight as this would distort the flue pipe). I also arranged for the clamp, while resting on top of the frame, to inter-

lock with this frame and thereby prevent any possibility of things twisting, or otherwise working loose.

OF COURSE, while up on the roof for the first inspections, I exactly measured every part and angle I could think of. This is very necessary due to the uneven methods of construction, and is helpful in any project as it is so nice to have the measurement you want on a piece of paper next to you when you want it. While I was fashioning the frame and clamp, and had the measurements, I also made a two-part cover for the chimney. One had a hole cut in it so I could pass the flue through it and have it located between the frame and the



chimney top. The other simply would take care of the other part of the opening of the chimney. It was easier to make this cover in two parts, and they bolt to each other.

THIS PREVENTS birds and squirrels from getting into the chimney and excess (not needed now) draft from removing air from the room in which the fireplace is located. Please note that in no way did I interfere with the opening of the flue-pipe itself!

IT WAS NOW TIME to put the pipe up the chimney. I went up top and put the rope down. This we fastened to the first piece and then started fastening them together. The flue pipes are arranged to slip together with an overlap of two in. and can be held by friction, however, I decided to secure each one to the other with a steel screw. All went well for about six sections, and then the thing tilted and jammed into the wall. Plan "B."

FROM THIS POINT ON, I would go up top and pull a section-worth up; my wife, who was shoving from below, would prop the whole thing with a pretzel can, and I would come back down to do the drilling and fastening. We repeated this procedure until all sections were up and securely clamped. It was a satisfying sight to see that pipe hang down into the fireplace! The last steps would be to insert a damper, attach the flue to the top of the stove and start a fire.

HOWEVER, as we had such a close clearance and wanted to have the stove as forward in the fireplace as possible, I decided to make a "collector box" for the gases which would have the damper incorporated into it. I brazed together a rectangular box (11 in. deep, 8 in. wide, 2½ in. high) with an elliptical entrance in the lower front and a round exit in the upper back. I made a butterfly valve in the middle. The metal for this box is 1/16 in. iron plate. I brazed it heavily, and tested it to the extent of having such a hot fire that the box got a dull red with no ill effects.

I HAD TROUBLE with the butterfly valve flopping shut when I didn't want it to. This was corrected by fitting a large round washer on one end of the valve's shaft over which hangs a brake. The brake is a length of pipe (for a little weight on a lever arm), which is hung over the washer by means of a narrow piece of

thin flat iron made into a shape just a little larger than the washer.

I CHOSE THIS METHOD over some kind of spring or clamp because it is not affected by heat, expansion, or age. It can't fail. After the first season's use, I began to worry about the possibility of one of the screws breaking off or something going wrong which might cause the flue to come down. To ease these fears, I put a pipe brace from the hearth to the bottom of the collector box. I feel sure the flue will hang in there with no problems, but I still feel better with a back-up brace in case.

Replacing The Stove Top

AS NOTED ABOVE, we bought a stove of such size as would fit into the fireplace and would not be too close to the mantel. As often happens, the foundry began re-casting more old patterns after we had bought one. One of the patterns redone was a flat top for the firebox instead of the pot belly top. The old-timers were thrifty and made as many parts interchangeable as possible--a far cry from planned obsolescence!

AFTER USING THE POT BELLY set-up for one winter, we found the flat laundry stove top was being made. We bought one and installed it in place of the first top. This set-up we have used for two more winters. It has been a splendid source of heat.

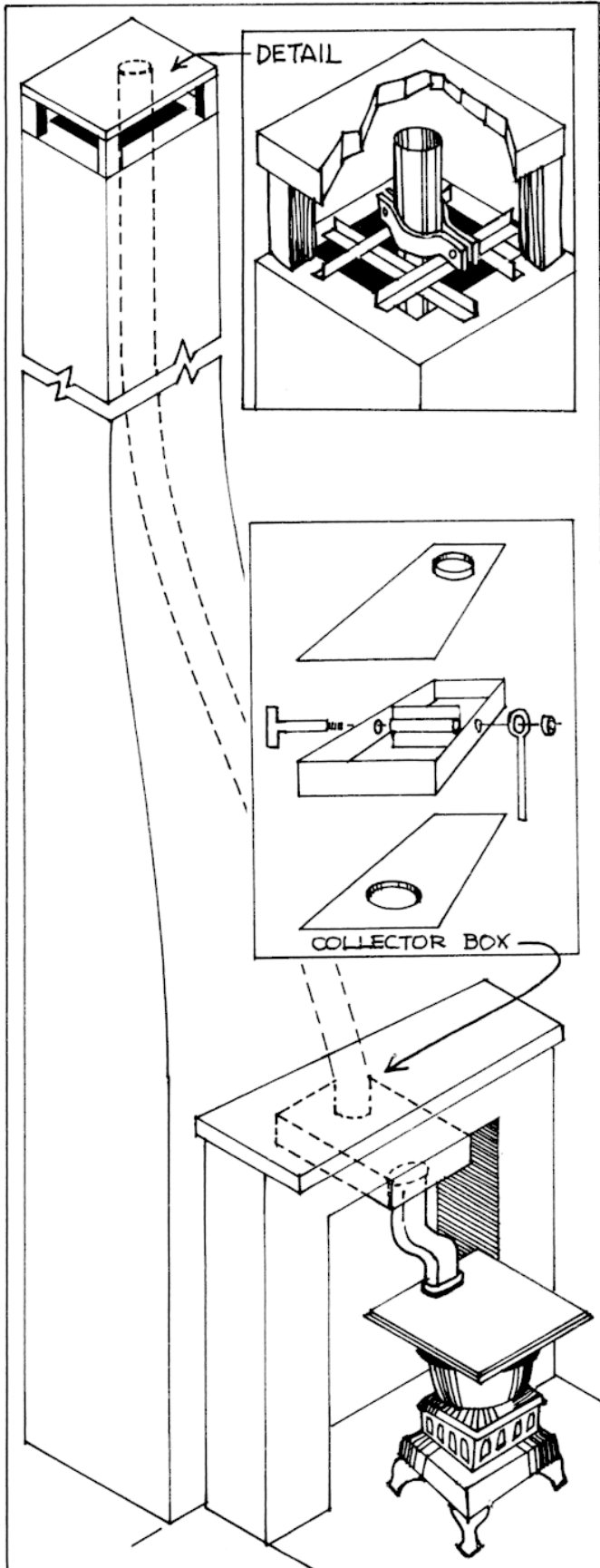
Fire: Friend Or Foe

IT IS IMPORTANT to realize that if you install this or a similar set-up, you are bringing fire inside your house. It can very quickly and disastrously switch from friend to foe. Any installation should be at least two feet from combustibles. Our installation was perfect in this regard, as it is bounded by the fireplace brick. Another danger is the hot coal which will eventually pop out of the stove when you are tending it. If you have a mitt or a coal shovel and poker handy, it is a short-lived problem.

IF YOU HAVE TO GO and get something, when you come back you may have at the least a nice hole in the floor, and at the most, a nice fire where you don't want one! You should have either a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher, or a preconnected garden hose near. Another problem with this auxiliary source of heat is that it is uneven. To be sure, this room in which I am cozily typing is comfortable. As this room has the thermostat, the rest of the house is chillier the farther from this central room.

HOWEVER, we do not really need a lot of heat in the bedrooms (our grandparents had none.) As for my study on the sunporch, it is possible to do long projects in this room when it gets very cold, just as I am doing now.

THE SAVINGS OF OIL for us have been very great. We also noticed that the other chim-





This is a side view of the Rev. Souders' house in Philadelphia, Pa. A sunporch, and various other additions have been made to the house over the years.



In this close-up photo of the fireplace and stove, you can see the piece of aluminum wedged in place behind the stove to direct warm air into the room.

ney in the house which has been pressed into service for the oil burner used to get so hot that the wall was too hot to touch. The wallpaper cracked one cold night when the oil burner was puffing away continuously. I am happy to report that last year, the coldest I remember, the oil burner did not work as hard as previous, much milder, years. That chimney has been only warm (which is expected) and a whole lot safer.

Safety Notes

WE DID HAVE ONE SCARY EXPERIENCE about which I would warn you. As my design did not provide for a clean-out at the bottom of the flue, the soot which collected on the inside of the pipe through the heating season all fell down during the summer. When I stuffed the stove with paper and wood to light it for the second season, I filled the room with smoke in about ninety seconds.

FORTUNATELY, the fire, having no vent and being contained in a cast iron stove, only produced volumes of smoke, which I was able to remove immediately as the window fan at the top of the stairs was still hooked up and ready to turn on. I did not want to put water on the stove and risk the danger of cracking the iron, but would have done this if the flames had come out into the room. I have since found that it is sufficient to clean out the collector box once a year at the beginning of the heating sea-

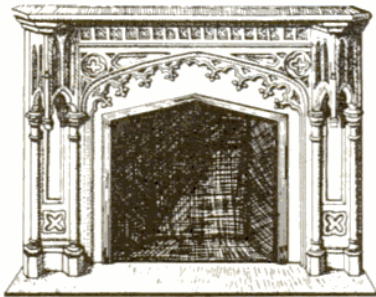
son, but for safety's sake, clean it out twice during a season's use.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT to make sure that the damper cannot be fully closed so that the heating equipment is properly vented, avoiding the danger of coal gas. Commercial types accomplish this by having a hole about the size of a half-dollar in the center of the butterfly. I accomplished this same result by making the butterfly not quite as wide as the box.

THE TOP OF OUR CHIMNEY has a two-in. thick slab covering it. It serves as a crude spark arrester, prevents downdrafts, and keeps things somewhat dry. I ran the flue pipe up to within 2½ in. of this slab.

IT MAY SEEM STRANGE to some to derive satisfaction out of reversing progress, and now having to tend to an old-time heater, when automatic equipment abounds. Our forbears looked to escape the continual drudgery of devices that had to be tended and cared for. But they also had benefits from them which they probably did not know. There is something personal about that little heater and the teapot which whistles atop it all day long, and something comforting about the measure of independence it promises if our modern devices or supplies should fail for a while. And there is something mystical about hearth and home, heat and fire, and the mastery of the same for beneficial purpose. ■ ■

Restorer's Notebook



Cleaning Marble Mantels

THE ONCE WHITE MARBLE MANTELS in the parlors of our late Victorian house showed the results of decades of neglect. One was dirty and yellowish. The other was dirty and greyish. Fortunately, they had not been covered with paint, although one of them was spattered with the results of a sloppy blue paint job.

I TRIED THE METHODS outlined in an article in *The Old-House Journal* in June 1974. The marble did get lighter—but not enough to satisfy our wish that the mantels look as white as they did when the house was built in 1874.

MY IN-LAWS had given us an old pamphlet on cleaning stone using the products of the Vermont Marble Co. in Proctor, Vt. Failing to find a retail source for their products, I called the company and was sent product literature and ordering information.

WHEN I RECEIVED the Vermont Marble Cleaner, Poultrice Powder and Vermarco Detergent, I set about making up batches of poultrice according to the directions. My goal was a poultrice with a plaster-like consistency, but I didn't think there was enough powder—so I went easy on this material and used more of the detergent.

I APPLIED MY MIXTURE to the mantels with a putty knife. (Getting the poultrice to stay in place on the slippery vertical surfaces of the mantels took some effort.) Having applied the poultrice to approximately a half-inch thickness, I covered everything in plastic wrap... to keep the poultrice from drying out. The plastic wrap stuck neatly to the surface of the poultrice—and then I covered the entire mantel with a large plastic sheet. During the 48-hour waiting time, it was necessary to re-wet the poultrice a few times with a plastic spray bottle, after carefully lifting up the plastic wrap.

I THEN CAREFULLY removed the poultrice with a putty knife (taking care not to scratch the marble), and washed the marble with water using soft brushes (a toothbrush and an old nail brush) to lift off the dirt. This takes some amount of scrubbing. A firm jet spray from

the plastic spray bottle was particularly successful in getting out the poultrice and dirt from the finely detailed carvings.

THE BEFORE AND AFTER appearance of our mantels is remarkable. But as can be imagined, this is very sloppy work. Do it before the surrounding floor is sanded and finished.

Nancy Kullman
Cambridge, Mass.

Ed. Note: Vermont Marble Co. is located at 61 Main St., Proctor, Vt. 05765. Tel. (802) 459-3311. They will send a free brochure describing their marble cleaners along with ordering information.

Removing Paint Residue

WHEN USING PAINT REMOVER, there's often a problem of paint residue left down in the pores of the wood. This stuff doesn't seem to come out, no matter how much chemical and steel wool is used. The residue is especially objectionable if the paint is white.

HERE'S A REMEDY that's worked every time I've tried it. Get the wood as clean as possible using paint remover and steel wool. Then coat the wood with orange shellac (just as it comes from the can). Let the shellac dry overnight. Then apply more paint remover to lift the shellac. As the shellac is scrubbed off with the steel wool, the paint residue should come out with it.

I DON'T KNOW why the shellac pulls the paint up out of the pores, but it seems to work—at least the three times I've tried it.

Eleanor James
St. Louis, Mo.

Repairing Bathtub Grout

HERE'S A SURE-FIRE METHOD for making a near-permanent repair to a messed-up edge of grout or caulk around the top edge of a bathtub:

- (1) Remove all loose grout, old caulk, etc.
- (2) Clean the surface with a cleanser like Comet and rinse. If a mildew problem exists, use Clorox (1 part to 4 parts water). Let the Clorox sit on the mildewed areas for 5-10 min., then rinse.
- (3) Fill the tub with water to maximum height.
- (4) Use a latex or siliconized tub cement or grout. (General Electric makes such a product; the premixed variety is very good.) Stuff the material into existing cracks and corners. Let it dry partially (about 30 min.), then wipe off excess with a damp sponge and buff the tiles dry with a soft cloth.
- (5) Leave the water in the tub for at least 24 hours. If possible, avoid using the tub for at least 4 days.

FILLING THE TUB with water is one of the secrets of this process. If you re-grout with the tub empty, when it is filled with water for the next bath, it will start to pull away from the new grout. A full tub weighs many hundreds of pounds and will substantially deflect the beams supporting it. By grouting with the tub full, you have opened the crack at the top of the tub to the maximum amount.

Douglas White
Brandamore, Pa.

Hard-Water Deposits

I HAVE RESTORED several old homes and this one problem always seems to crop up: Finding deposits of lime and other minerals in the bathtub from the hard water.

SOLUTION: Scrub the tub with vinegar. It works like a charm. You can use vinegar to remove hardwater deposits from other places, too, such as the inside of water kettles.

Frederick A. Mohler III
Lancaster, Pa.

Patching Plaster Holes

WE FOUND A STRONG, simple method for repairing missing patches of plaster. Use a piece of brown paper to make a pattern of the hole. Then you can cut a piece of sheetrock to the corresponding size.

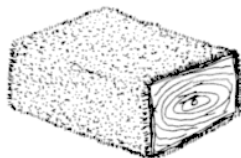
WHEN NAILING THE SHEETROCK in place, you may need thin strips of wood under it to bring it up to the level of the rest of the plaster. On brick, of course, it would be necessary to use masonry nails.

TAPE THE EDGES of the patch with dry wall compound and dry wall tape. When dry, another coat of compound over the area will provide the finish coat.

Gail Niedernhofer
Nokesville, Va.

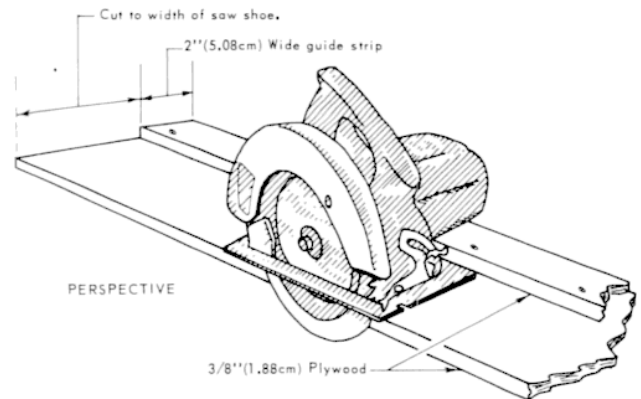
A Safe Nail Puller

WHEN DOING finish work, it is common knowledge that you should pull bent nails from wood by placing another block of wood in between the hammer and the wood being worked on.



HOWEVER, even this method can mar wood with a fine surface unless another precaution is taken. Use a piece of carpet and tack it to the pry block. Better yet, use contact cement to attach the carpet. I keep such a covered pry block in my tool box so it's always handy.

Karl Winneker
Placerville, Calif.



Saw Guide

HERE IS A SIMPLE, inexpensive device for cutting large pieces of plywood in a safe, accurate manner with a portable power saw. Cut two 8-ft. strips of 3/8-in. plywood as accurately as you can on a table saw.

CUT ONE STRIP 2 in. wide and attach it securely with glue and nails to the top of the wider piece—making sure both pieces are flush on one side. Place your portable saw on the wide piece, with the left edge of the shoe against the edge of the 2-in. guide strip, and cut the wider bottom piece of plywood to the proper width as shown in the sketch above.

YOU NOW HAVE a handy straight edge for making accurate cuts regardless of the angle. Use two "clothes pin" type wood clamps to hold it in place while cutting. It can also be tacked lightly in place for jobs like trimming the edge of a roof.

David R. Milner
National Park Service
Umpqua National Forest, Ore.

Paint Remover Trick

SOMETIMES, when removing multiple layers of paint with chemical removers, the volatile components evaporate before the paint layers have softened all the way through. If left on too long, the paint remover merely dries out, leaving a skin that is difficult to scrape off.

SOLUTION: Place wax paper over the surface after the remover has been applied. It will continue working for as long as necessary.

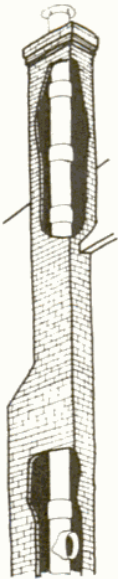
John P. Duffy
Kensington, Md.

Got Any Tips?

Do you have any hints or short cuts that might help other old-house owners? We'll pay \$15 for any short how-to items that are used in this "Restorer's Notebook" column. Send your hints to: Notebook Editor, The Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

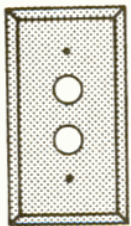
Products For The Old House

Chimney Liner



OLD HOUSES often have unlined chimneys. Creosote attaches itself to brick and mortar and can cause chimney fires. A chimney liner protects the house in the event of fire. An easy-to-install chimney liner is sold by the Bow & Arrow Stove Co. The Vitroliner is made of heavy gauge metal, coated on both sides with a vitreous enamel. It comes in sections (the largest is 3 ft. long) so it can be easily shipped. Most homeowners will be able to install it themselves or a chimney contractor can be called in. For a free brochure and price list, write to: Bow & Arrow Stove Co., Dept. OHJ, 14 Arrow St., Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel. (617) 492-1411.

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Brass Switch Plates

ARARE ITEM these days is the old-fashioned wall switch plate with round holes for push buttons. Solid brass single (2 holes) and double (4 holes) are available from the Renovator's Supply. They are \$3.70 and \$4.50, with quantity prices also available. Add 8% shipping and handling. For \$1.25 you can also get their 34-pg. catalog that is crammed with hard-to-find hardware and supplies for restorers. Write: The Renovator's Supply, 71 Northfield Rd., Millers Falls, Mass. 01349. Tel. (413) 659-3542.

Helpful Publications

Money For Preservation

IN A NUMBER of localities throughout the country, the revolving fund has proven to be an effective and indispensable tool in the preservation of historically and architecturally significant properties. The impact of the revolving fund is primarily psychological and catalytic. Rehabilitation and construction in deteriorating areas often encourages further investment and rehabilitation.

THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION and Recreation Service, a branch of the U.S. Government, has published an informative brochure that discusses the Historic Preservation Fund Grants as a potential source for local and statewide revolving funds.

FOR A COPY, write to: Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service, Pension Bldg., 440 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20243. Ask for Supplement 11593—Vol. 3 No. 3 (October 1978).

Slide & Tape Presentations

ARE YOU PLANNING a restoration workshop, conference, etc., and can't line up an expert speaker who is an authority in the field? The American Association for State and Local History may have a solution for your problem.

THEY HAVE PUT TOGETHER seven kits, each of which includes 78-80 slides—along with an illustrated script and cassette tape. Subjects that are particularly relevant to the homeowner audience are: Victorian House Colors--Exterior; Wallpaper And The Historic House; Reading A Building--Colonial, and Overall Planning For House Restoration. Other titles include: Curatorial Care--Environmental and Furniture.

THE KITS are \$22 each. To order, or for a free brochure, write to: Mary Howse, American Association for State and Local History, 1315 Eighth Ave., So., Nashville, TN 37203. Telephone: (615) 242-5583.

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