

Restoration and Maintenance Techniques

# Old-House Journal

May 1986 \$2.95

Special Report:

## Painting

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Masking a Room

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**On the cover:** Professional painting of an expertly prepared surface. Photo taken at Colonial Williamsburg by Larry Jones.



# Funnier Than Fiction

I GUESSED what "The Money Pit" must be about before I saw the promos. We own one (a money pit), so I knew.

A BUNCH OF US went to see the movie on the night it opened. Would a dog-eared copy of OHJ turn up next to the bed or sharing space with Reader's Digest on the back of a toilet? (It didn't.) Well, it wasn't a great movie. A missed opportunity came when the writers decided the old-house owners would hire contractors for everything. Contractors can be a hoot, but real craziness starts when you try to do it yourself. The other problem was that the film's pratfalls were exaggerated (a staircase collapses all at once; an oven ejects a turkey out the window). Exaggeration and slapstick are unnecessary and somehow they missed the point.

I WISH I knew how to make movies. Think of what you could do with material like this:

## Scene 1: Mother Cleans House

Nice young couple [guess who?] buy old house in city; house has received no maintenance in exactly 42 years. Looks okay, but filthy. Her mom says, "I'm going to come stay for a long weekend and help you fix it up." (Mom and Dad's last three houses were 14, four, and three years old at time of purchase.) Daughter (me) and son-in-law (Jonathan) are grateful for help. (Maybe Mom will scrape grease off kitchen range!) But we hope she won't be disappointed when we're still not ready to hang cafe curtains on Sunday night.

Mom arrives and is pleasantly surprised. Bless her heart, she looks beyond dirty aqua paint and peeling ceiling and sees spaciousness, old-house character. "Just like those '30s movies where Claudette Colbert comes down the staircase and through the French doors!" [Mom has been living in ranch houses too long.]

We set to work cleaning kitchen, scrubbing away with Top Job [cuts anything]; suddenly, panic in her voice. I turn radio down and ask what's wrong. "The walls are coming off!" she says with horror and embarrassment, as if she'd broken some fine china. Scrubbing has brought crumbly plaster right off masonry wall.

I show no surprise, but definite amusement. "Ma, that always happens -- you don't just clean an old house when you move in. It'll get a lot worse before it gets better." Mom says, "Maybe we shouldn't, uh, clean it anymore until Dad sees it." (Dad has some heavy bread invested in the downpayment, you see.)

## Scene 2: Design by Moonlight

[Background: Much of the plaster in dining room had already come down by itself -- it was a bad job from day one, right on exterior masonry without furring and lath, had water damage, was texture-finished in the '20s. Only way to get to a sound substrate is to demolish and replace with a three-coat plaster job on metal lath. The old-house couple are over their heads now and hire plasterers.]

One crisis after another: crew has to know where to install nailers for the wall battens



The formal dining room

before the plastering starts -- tomorrow. We haven't designed room yet. After long day at office and long night at house, crisis dawns on Jonathan.

I'm in bed, trying to fall asleep in house still full of activity (it's only 1 A.M.-- thought I'd turn in early). Jonathan comes in and puts on lights. "Come downstairs with me; we have to talk about

where the battens go." I whine, "Do we have to do this now? I can't think straight." "Well, the guys are coming at 7:30 in the morning..."

Find shoes (even slippers are out), tromp downstairs. Mere few hours ago room was in thick cloud of demolition dust. Scene is cataclysmic: plaster debris covers floor, walls are naked structure of bare brick, wood lath. Debris crunches underfoot; we stand ankle-deep in rubble, photo-floodlamps light two bare walls. We measure and discuss aesthetic impact of various panel widths. Use plasterers' coal shovels and broom handles as make-believe battens. "Move it a few inches to the left." Crunch, crunch. (They're removing our dining room walls with coal shovels! How much did we pay for this house?!)

## Scene 3: It's Raining

Ate supper out after 10 P.M. [my stomach thinks I changed time zones]. Home around 12:30. In the dark (no lights remain on most of first floor), Jonathan opens kitchen door and fumbles for switch. We're talking, he walks half-asleep into kitchen. "HEY!"

It's raining... we have a swimming pool in our kitchen. The plaster ceiling, already bad, bulges. We try to fix problem with carefully chosen four-letter words; it just keeps raining.

Only thing to do is take down ceiling. Plaster comes down without any dust -- like wet mud. 75-year-old construction debris comes down too: bricks, broken tile, chunks of cement. Problem is a burst elbow in cold-water supply pipe to rear bathroom upstairs.

So here's the count: no living room, no dining room, no kitchen ceiling, no rear bathroom. Bad enough, but there's more: Demolition is due to start on the only remaining bathroom tomorrow.

I didn't make any of this up. If Mr. Spielberg wants to make a sequel, he can ask me. (Or you, right?)

*Patricia Moore*





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## More "Painted Ladies" Sought

Dear Patricia,

Michael Larsen and I are planning a second book about exterior color schemes. We're looking for leads on beautifully painted houses that should be photographed for the book. Would you put the following query to your readers?

For a sequel to Painted Ladies: San Francisco's Resplendent Victorians, the authors seek photos or information about Victorian homes, businesses, and bed-and-breakfasts around the country, painted in three or more colors. The authors would like to hear from homeowners, preservationists, color designers, painters, architects, and architectural photographers. Send a color photo (and a stamped envelope if you want it back) to: Larsen/Pomada, 1029 Jones Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. (415) 673-0939.

Thanks.

-- Elizabeth Pomada  
San Francisco, Ca.

## Burning Sensation

Dear Editors:

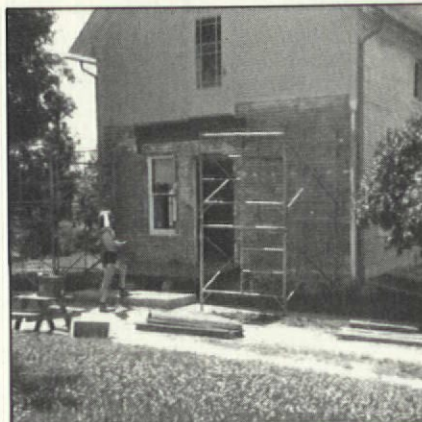
You asked for feedback on exterior stripping (Dec. 1985 OHJ). For 6 years I stared at my 1910 clapboard farmhouse, its peeling paint looking more like a "before" ad for an aluminum siding company. It was 1976 and our country was celebrating its 200th birthday and we were celebrating the birth of our son. So with an abundance of patriotic perseverance (& a lack of experience), I decided to single-handedly strip and repaint our two-storey, six-bedroom house.

From past projects on the farm, I had acquired scaffolding, sturdy wooden 40-ft. ladders, ladder jacks, and assorted planks, giving me a good start on the basics. To begin with, I chose a Sears electric heat plate. Its design with the handle mounted

perpendicular to the plate, made it less tiring to use than the horizontal handle. (It did, however, require periodic maintenance.) To power the unit I used two 50-foot, #12, 3-wire extension cords. Using an old painting dropcloth to catch the hot paint droppings proved to be a mistake. It caught on fire and was immediately replaced with a heavy welding curtain and a side order of five gallons of water.

Definitely -- complete one section right through to painting before starting on a new area. The only exception: If the weather didn't permit painting, I'd get a jump on burning off a new section.

Without some form of entertainment, I never could have completed the work. Dancing



Sheldon Shaver on the lookout for dancing girls.

girls first entered my mind, but my wife took a dim view of that. So I hooked up my old reel-to-reel tape recorder and played back classical and early jazz recordings and programming. Listening to radio talk shows is another option that eases the pain.

### TOP 10 TOOLS & PROCEDURES:

- 1) Heat Plate
- 2) #12, 3-wire Milwaukee Electric Tool extension cord
- 3) 3-in. scraper with off-set handle
- 4) #3010, 1-in. Red Devil Scraper (perfect for corners and underneath siding)
- 5) 50-grit 3M open-coat sandpaper
- 6) Wipe clean; vacuum around windows.
- 7) Sand nail heads -- prime with aluminum paint.
- 8) Primer: Oil-base Dutch Boy #010

9) Apply two finish coats Dutch Boy Super Latex.

10) Wear non-slip footwear.

Unlike some of the restoration projects that may exceed \$100,000, mine was completed on a shoestring budget. Consider these additional facts: A) I also restored seven out-buildings; B) My regular job required up to 700 hours (annual) overtime; C) If you live and breathe restoration ONLY, anyone can do it.

It took six years to complete (Wisconsin weather wasn't always accommodating), burning off and repainting the cedar siding (2-1/2 inches to the weather exposure). The results were excellent and it was well worth the time and effort. However, I wouldn't do it again ... but then, I won't have to.

-- Sheldon Shaver  
West Bend, Wisc.

## Pier Pressure

Dear OHJ:

Six months ago we completed rehabbing a late 19th-century two-storey vernacular farmhouse in northeast Georgia. In it, extra consideration and expense were given to preserving one of its most distinctive features -- the field-stone piers the house rests on. Today, our independent insurance agent informed us that no company he is aware of will underwrite our homeowner's policy because, "no underpinning presents a fire hazard."

Virtually all historic rural houses (grand and modest) in this area were constructed on brick or stone piers to keep them dry and well ventilated. Most foundations have been infilled by now, but we are determined to preserve this regional characteristic in our home. Where can I go for homeowner's insurance without being penalized?

-- Sara Glickman  
Athens, Ga.

[Holy cow! We haven't heard this one before. Are there other readers who've had this problem and solved it (with persuasion or a different insurance company)? -- ed.]



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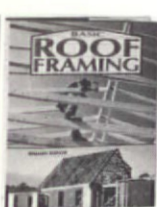
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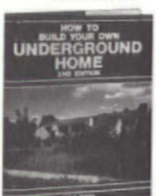
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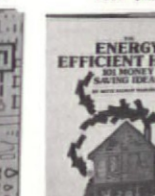
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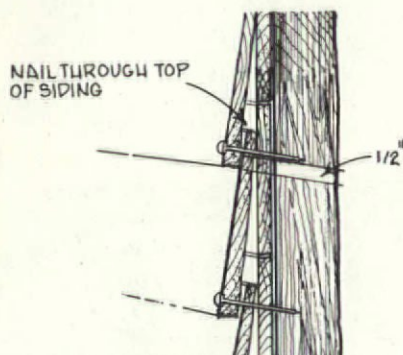


## Clapboard Controversy

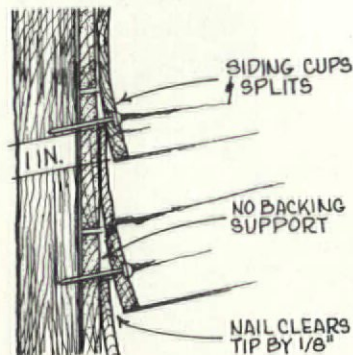
Dear OHJ,

I am not in the habit of writing letters; however, I must call you on this one.

"Ask OHJ" in March 1986, page 89, is wrong about how to nail siding. I am a side-waller and I do only wood siding, not vinyl or aluminum. The people who tell you to nail above the lap have never installed or repaired siding.



Right?



Wrong?

If you nail above the lap, you will force the clapboard into the small space between the two boards, resulting in a severe cup. In a year or less, all your siding will be cupped and probably split; ask any side-waller, or go and look at any old house with clapboards -- you'll see that the boards are nailed 1/2 inch up from the butt.

-- Stephen Winchester  
Gilmanton, N.H.

[There seems to be a traditional divergence of opinion on which nailing method is correct. Both methods have

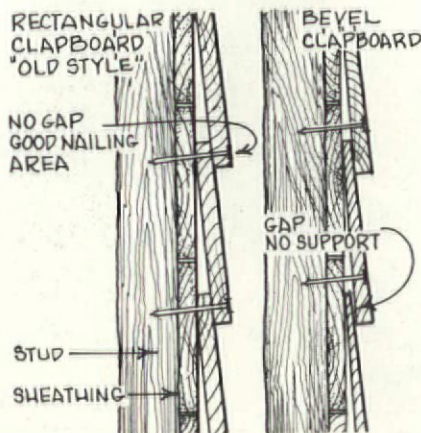
their advantages and drawbacks, and each has its adherents. Many of those who recommend nailing above the lap do have considerable experience applying clapboard siding. Most architectural specifications we've seen, as well as government publications and Forest Products Laboratories, say to do it the way we showed in the March "Ask OHJ." Either way, there could be a splitting problem. Our minds are still open on this -- yours was one of three counterpoint letters we received on this debate. -- ed.]

Dear Editors:

I believe you are wrong about nailing 6-in. bevel siding above the clapboard underneath -- and not because I haven't tried it that way, or because my Daddy didn't do it that way.

(1) With modern bevel clapboards (as opposed to the old rectangular clapboards), the overlapping clapboard touches the underlying clapboard only at the bottom of the overlapping clapboard. The further up you nail from that point, the more likely it is that the nail will cup the clapboard, causing it to crack. 1/2 inch up is fine, but nailing 1-5/8 inch above the bottom edge means nailing where the clapboard is weak and has no firm backing. I realize that one shouldn't drive the nail "home," but you do want it flush, and that final tap frequently cracks the clapboard.

(2) The theory that only one nail in the clapboard allows the clapboard to expand



and contract with changing temperature and humidity is a nice theory. The reality is that one nail is not enough to hold a modern flat-sawn clapboard stable. It's even worse if there is rigid insulation behind the clapboards. There is not enough expansion and contraction in a 5-1/2-in. clapboard nailed 4 inches apart (above and below) to cause a problem. If the clapboard should split from expansion and contraction, it will split underneath the clapboard above, a harmless development.

I was passing by a nicely done addition to a local fine restaurant the other day, admiring the work. Then I saw where they nailed the clapboards (above the clapboard below), and many of the clapboards had 4- or 5-in. cracks right through the nail at the end of the clapboard.

The one project I did nailing clapboards this way was a nightmare of cracked clapboards. I don't recommend it.

On another subject, your new format looks great. Advertising may be a compromise, but it's also a good source of information for us builders.

-- Thomas F. Murray  
Ashfield, Mass.

## A Shellacking Miracle

Dear Patricia Poore,

In my joyous hobby of developing my 1910 Bungalow (I feel driven by the project!), I've discovered a true miracle.

Pigmented shellac, which can be purchased at any paint store, will: 1) cover and seal mildew (given resolution of the cause, of course); 2) seal mineral stains in old plaster and keep them from 'drifting' into new coats of paint; 3) prepare 'questionable' walls before hanging wallpaper!

It has been serving me for over 10 years on 'bleeding' plaster stains -- and all is well!

Thanks again for the great service you provide -- I truly feel that I could not have mentally survived my undertaking without your information -- and humor!

-- Michelle Burrill  
Sacramento, Ca.





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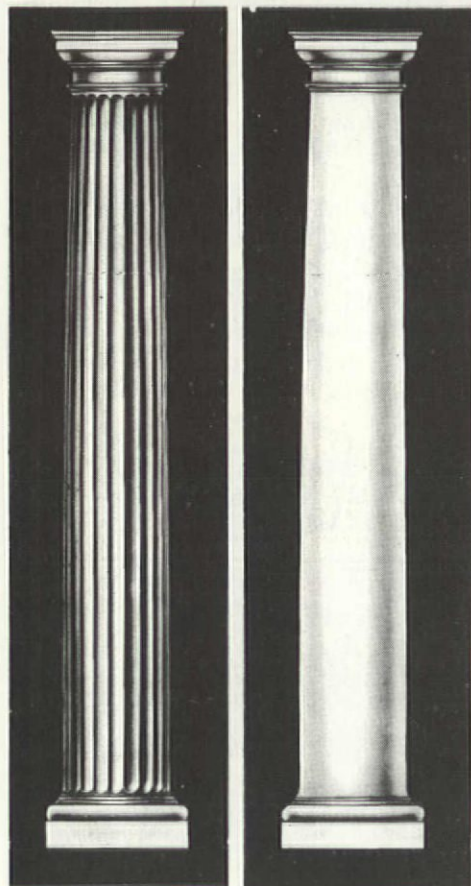
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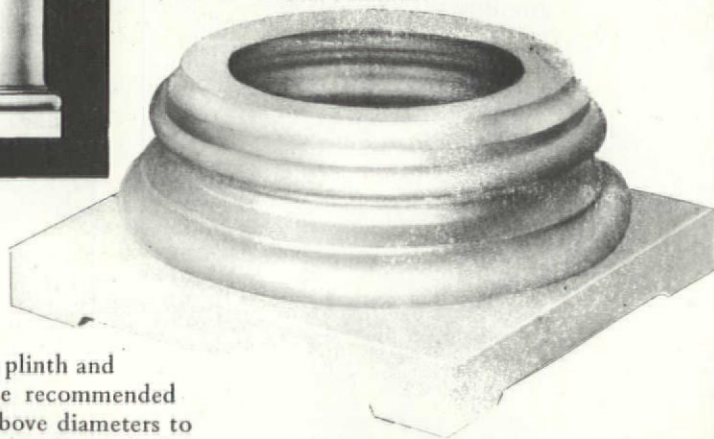
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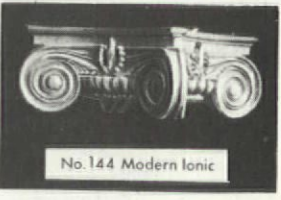
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WE'VE ALL SEEN the happy pictures: the wrecked house before, the renovated house after, with the proud owners/renovators standing before it. And we've read their stories of surprise, disaster, and ultimate triumph. We're told it was difficult, more time-consuming and expensive than they imagined, that they bit off more than they could chew, that they suffered, lived in unspeakable conditions with dirt, dust, inadequate plumbing, leaky roofs, cold winters, hot summers; battled animals, neighbors, governments small and large, and yet they stuck it out until they reached their goal.

MY STORY IS pretty similar, except for one thing: I failed. And measured in dollars, that failure cost \$18,356.23.

WHEN WE STARTED searching for our "dream house" in June, 1981, my wife and I had been married for one year and had \$10,000 saved. Although we'd always been fans of old houses, we weren't exactly looking for one to restore. We just wanted a safe, comfortable home, ideally a house with some "character."

WE PICKED A BAD TIME to go house-hunting (summer 1981). Mortgage interest rates were high, and homes in desirable areas were priced well out of our reach. After a few months of looking we realized we had two choices: buy something in an "adventurous" part of the city, or buy a place in the country. The city was out of the question. We didn't feel safe there and, well, this was supposed to be our dream home, and the urban neighborhoods we could afford just didn't fit the image.

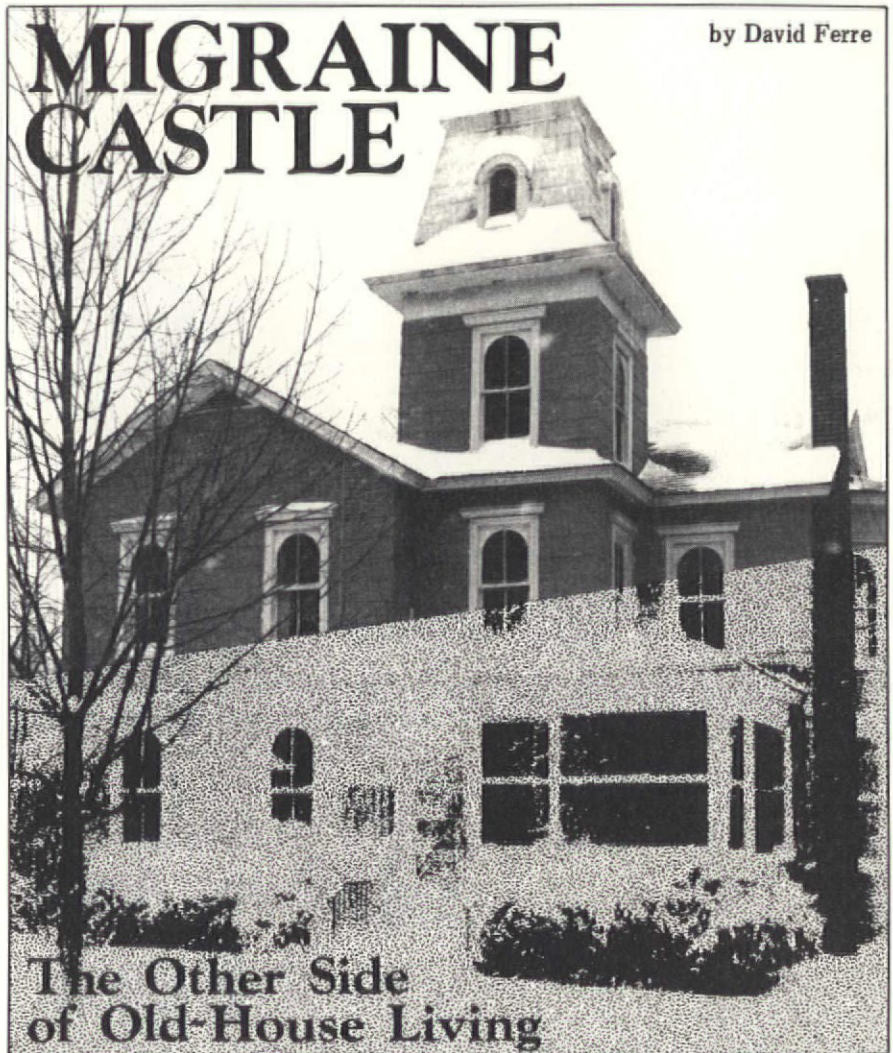
SO WE FOCUSED our efforts on the country. Since a suburban house would mean commuting to our jobs in the city, we wanted to live near an expressway. A new one, I-390, was scheduled to open in less than a year, so we decided to look at homes for sale in the villages along its route.

WE LIMITED OUR SEARCH to locations within an hour's commute. And we decided to "save" money by selecting a little village exactly one hour away -- where the houses were cheapest. It was going to be exit 3 on the new expressway, but for the time being it was 43 miles -- via country roads -- from work.

IN OCTOBER, 1981, we drove to our chosen spot to see if there were any houses for sale. There were. Dozens, in fact. And the prices! This one \$17,900, that one \$15,900, this one only \$14,900. And look at that one: an Italianate with a four-storey tower, arched windows, fireplace... and only \$24,900?? Okay, I

# MIGRAINE CASTLE

by David Ferre



The Other Side of Old-House Living

know it needs work, it's carnation pink, it has ugly siding all over it, the floors tilt, but I'll fix it up, I'll renovate it, I'll restore! The owners accepted our offer of \$22,000 and agreed to hold a \$16,000 mortgage with a \$6,000 down payment.

THE CLOSING WAS HELD in the morning of a cold day in February, 1982. It was snowing, and the trip to the village took almost two hours. I remember the sellers saying how much they appreciated us making the trip in such poor weather -- we were the only ones who realized the long trip would soon be a daily event for us. After the closing, we spent the rest of the day removing old carpeting and trash from the house. I had kind of an uneasy feeling that first day: The furnace never stopped running, and it wasn't only the floors that weren't level. The doorways, windows, in fact the whole place was not level. And did two people really need five bedrooms?

WE DECIDED we would move in after fixing up the bathroom, kitchen, parlor, and downstairs bedroom. The rest of the house -- four bedrooms, living room, and formal dining room -- could wait. We planned to do it all ourselves, but only on the weekends, since the trip was too long to be worthwhile on weeknights. We purchased tools and began.



ARRIVING ONE SATURDAY in March, 1982, we found that the furnace had gone off during the week and the heating system's water pipes were frozen. We had run out of fuel oil: 300 gallons in six weeks at a setting of 55 degrees! No water damage had occurred, because the pipes hadn't thawed out. We proceeded to remove the ancient hot-water furnace, the old radiators and their various pipes. We purchased a new furnace; it was delivered to the front porch.

WE SET OUT TO FIX the bathroom first. The floor tilted, we learned, because the beams underneath were rotted and the foundation severely damaged. In fact, the foundation fieldstones were nothing more than a loose stack. We purchased materials to fix the foundation and replace the rotted beams.

DURING A HEAVY RAIN in April, 1982, we noticed water dripping from the bathroom ceiling. A few tugs came crashing down. Clearly, the roof above the bathroom leaked. We purchased more materials, this time to fix the roof. There were no gutters, which explained the leaky bathroom roof -- runoff poured heavily on it each time it rained. We installed gutters.

AT THIS POINT my wife inquired, why was I putting in gutters when I promised to fix up the bathroom first?

**B**Y THE TIME the new gutters were in place, the bathroom roof fixed, structural beams replaced, floor jacks inserted all over, and a new sub-floor put into the bathroom, it was June, 1982, and we ran out of savings.

I WAS ABLE TO ARRANGE for a \$2,000 line of credit to enable us to continue. We stopped working on the bathroom and concentrated in-



Brenda Ferre used a paint roller dipped in hot water to loosen wallpaper from the ceiling. Messy, but looks like it works!

stead on the leakage problems throughout the house. The tower roof was replaced, the porch roof was fixed, siding repaired where water seeped into the house, and other general repairs were made wherever moisture was a problem. Then we found more foundation problems. We used up the line of credit in six weeks.

AT THE END OF JULY, 1982, we sat down to analyze our financial condition. We had zero savings, we had used up all available credit, plus we had payments to make for the line of credit, apartment rent, house mortgage, utility and telephone bills, Sears bills, as well as a car payment and commuting expenses. At this point our "dream house" didn't even have a working bathroom or central heat.

WE MADE THE PAINFUL realization that we'd made a big mistake in trying to restore this house, and the best thing to do was sell it. The house was listed with a local real-estate company in August, 1982. Asking price: \$29,900. An ad was also placed in *The Old-House Journal* for the slightly higher price of \$35,000.

WE HAD NO MONEY, so the only thing we could do to help sell the place was keep it as clean as possible. The real-estate agency was very generous. They listed the house as having a new furnace (even though the thing was sitting on the front porch and the radiators had been ripped out). During the three-month listing period only one person looked at it. No sale. One inquiry was received through *The Old-House Journal*. Again, no sale. The house was re-listed in October, 1982, for \$19,900.

### WHERE THE MONEY WENT

Total loss on sale (buy at \$22,000, sell at \$19,000) ...	\$3000.00
Commissions/fees/mortgage/taxes .....	\$5194.88
Bills (telephone, trash pickup, sewer, utilities) .....	\$1295.80
Commuting (80 trips, 86 miles each, \$.20) .....	\$1376.00
Misc. (new furnace, insulation, ant killer, paving) .....	\$1815.11
Tools (table saw, ladder, propane torch, etc.) .....	\$1238.20
Plumbing (pipes, fittings, fixtures) .....	\$964.96
Roofing, siding, and gutters. ....	\$591.84
Foundation jack posts and mortar mix .....	\$535.82
Doors & windows (including shades, glass, hardware) ...	\$534.51
Painting supplies (including caulking, primer, topcoat paint, varnish, brushes, rollers, masking tape, trays) .....	\$500.08
Electrical supplies (fixtures, bulbs, wire, switches) ....	\$479.67
Lumber (plywood, pressure-treated beams) .....	\$412.98
Walls (dry-wall sheets, repair tape) .....	\$130.04
General hardware .....	\$91.10
Publications ( <i>The OHJ Compendium</i> and <i>Catalog</i> , two-year subscription, <i>Century of Color</i> , architectural patterns) ...	\$89.34
Cleaning (mops, sponges, trash bags) .....	\$77.80
Film .....	\$28.10
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$18,356.23</b>





David Ferre dismantled a useless chimney and dropped it brick-by-brick down a stovepipe. Brenda sent it out the window via ramp.

BY DECEMBER, 1982, the unheated house was suffering. Walls were cracking everywhere. The first and only offer came in January, 1983. It was for \$16,500. We negotiated with the prospective buyers and settled on a price of \$19,000, with the stipulation that all the materials we had bought stayed with the house. The closing was completed in April, 1983. The dream-house nightmare was over.

### What I Know Now

**M**Y ERRORS FALL into eight general categories. I'll discuss each one below, in the form of advice.

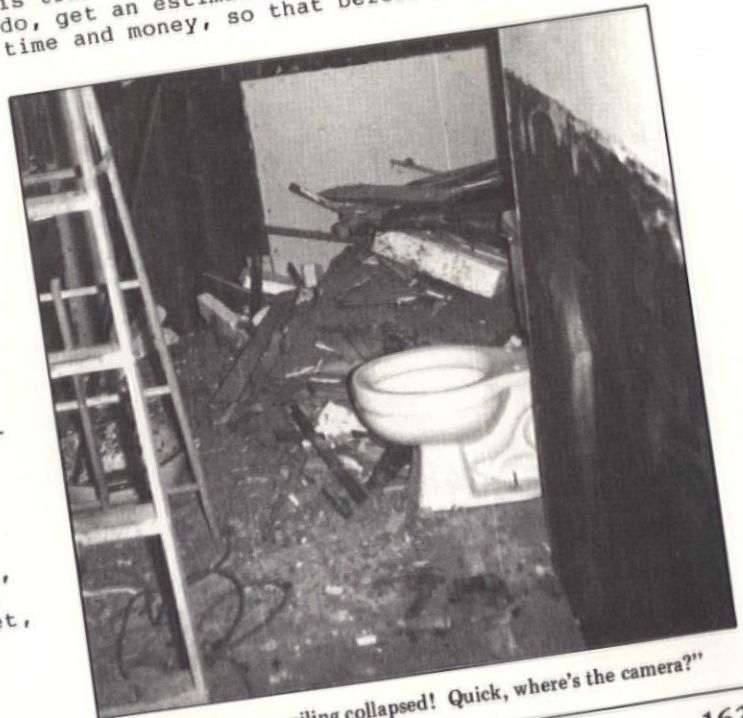
**1** REMEMBER, LOCATION, location, location. The three most important considerations in real estate apply to old houses too. I realize many good buys are located in "adventurous" and "progressive" neighborhoods, but if you have to answer "no" for any of the basic questions below, think again:

- Will you feel safe in the neighborhood?
- Is the house easily accessible from places of employment, shopping, good schools, diversions (movies, theatres, concert halls), parks/recreational areas, family, friends?
- Is the house situated in a reasonably quiet, residential neighborhood, preferably on a low-traffic street?
- Does the area have good street surfaces, sidewalks, and streetlights?
- Have property values been increasing in the area, i.e. is the house a sound investment?

**2** LEARN EVERYTHING possible about the structural condition of the house. For this you need an engineer to give you a detailed, written inspection report. Relying on your own limited experience is not enough; you're no expert, and 'they don't make 'em like they used to' doesn't mean that every old house is naturally constructed better. The report costs about \$200, and that could be the best money you've ever spent -- if at this point you're thinking, "I can't afford the \$200," then you shouldn't be considering buying an old house in the first place! You can often track down a good engineer by calling the leading real-estate companies in your area and finding out who they recommend. (Don't necessarily take the recommendation of the agent trying to sell you the house.) And while the engineer is at the house, if at all possible, follow him/her around and tape-record all comments -- these might be prove useful later on.

**3** CONSIDER THE SIZE of the house. Some old houses may be too small for your needs, but most often old houses are too big. Remember, everything multiplies with size -- like repair, maintenance, heat, and furnishing costs, not to mention taxes. Avoid the cavernous, drafty old barn of a house unless you plan to go into the bed-and-breakfast business.

**4** MAKE A DETAILED time and money budget. The engineer's report will identify most of the problems. The next step is to figure out what you can do yourself, and what you'll need to hire professionals for -- and if you think you can do it all yourself, watch out! The old saying "if you want a job done right, do it yourself," doesn't always hold water when it comes to old houses. I've found that often professionals can do the job in far, far less time than the amateur, and usually at a reasonable cost; the only problem you might have is tracking down qualified people. Once you do, get an estimate from them in terms of both time and money, so that before you tackle the



"The bathroom ceiling collapsed! Quick, where's the camera?"





With a rusted foundation post like this one (center, surrounded by new jack posts), it's no wonder the living room sank two inches.



So many layers of roofing — but none of them could save the bathroom ceiling.

house you have a good sense of what it will cost and how long it will take. When you think you have the bottom line, multiply the figures by two and you should have something reasonably accurate. Then ask yourself, do I have adequate financial resources? Can I stand living in an unrestored house that long? Will the house be worth the expense?

**5**WHEN BUYING, BE a good negotiator. I know, you love the house. It's loaded with potential, just the right size, and exactly what you've been looking for all these months. It just came on the market, it's in a great location, it's structurally sound, priced fairly, you can afford the repairs, and you have to have that house! Well, if that's the case, ignore my advice: Just pay the asking price. But if the place is anything less than perfect, you're probably in a position to haggle. Remember, everybody loves to look at old houses, but few are willing to take on the responsibility of actually fixing them -- so you usually won't have a lot of competition breathing down your neck. Watch out for pressure from the real-estate agent. Before you sign anything, talk to the neighbors and get the real story. Is this the sixth real-estate company to list the house, and has it been on the market for two years (meaning it's priced way too high)? Are there outstanding taxes or mortgage payments? And when negotiating the mortgage, 1) see if the owner will hold the mortgage and 2) make the least down payment possible, and get the largest and longest mortgage you can; try to make it assumable without approval -- this makes it easier to bail out on the project later.

**6**BUY NOTHING until you need it. This rule applies with very few exceptions. Even if you see items on sale, and you're sure you'll need them, don't succumb. One purchasing mistake can eat up more savings than you make on all your other bargains. Decorating plans change along the way -- so who's going to buy your "used" pink bathtub, just because you decided you want a white bathroom instead?

**7**TAKE ADVANTAGE of available discounts. At first it didn't occur to me I could walk into a plumbing wholesaler and buy at wholesale prices. I mean, it says on the door, "wholesale only," right? But you're not fool-

ing anybody: When you go into the business of repairing an old house, it really is just that, a business, so you're entitled to discounts. The first time I went to the plumbing wholesaler I found that just about everyone charges purchases to their account. When I tried to pay cash I was sent to the front office to explain who I was and what kind of discount I expected. I said I was in the business of renovating old houses, one at a time, and that I was new to the business. They gave me a full discount and an application for a contractor account, which opened a few days later. The amusing part came when an experienced plumber would walk up to the counter and order a "schedule 40 clip-lock clean-out, three-inch, 135-degree elbow," and I'd have to stand there muttering, "Gimme one of those bent things, about this big, with a cover on it, made out of the white stuff." Even the local hardware store gave me a flat 10% discount, simply because I asked for it.

**8**KEEP CAREFUL RECORDS of events and expenses. From day one, write down everything that happens with your old house. Take lots of photographs, especially before you do any work. Keep a log of trips to the house, calls to contractors, phone numbers of suppliers, and any events or milestones. Good financial record-keeping is also essential, because should you ever sell the place, for tax purposes you may have to show exactly what you spent. Save every receipt. I organized mine in a spiral notebook, with a running tab of expenses in the right-hand margin. I used separate notebooks for "supplies" and "tools." The Internal Revenue Service, by the way, considers any tool with a life expectancy of less than one year a supply, so I did too. And don't forget bills like utilities and taxes, or mortgage payments.

### Epilogue

IN OCTOBER, 1983, David and Brenda Ferre purchased a three-bedroom ranch house in "Maple-dale Estates." The house needed only a fresh coat of interior paint. In 1985, upkeep expenses consisted of \$20 worth of driveway sealer and a \$3 furnace filter. David and Brenda are both very happy in their cozy tract house, but David muses, "I wonder, had we not gone through this, would we be as happy?"



# The Old-House Journal cat is sitting on the answer to one of your old-house problems!

**O**ur office cat, Chester, tends to sit around most of the day. But when we need him to catch a mouse, he's right there, earning his keep. Just the other day, in fact, Chester proudly presented our Editor-in-Chief with a mouse. (Chester thinks he works for *The Old-Mouse Journal*.)

**J**ust like a cat, **The Old-House Journal Catalog** is a mighty handy thing to keep around an old house. The **Catalog** won't catch mice, but it's the cat's meow when you're searching for a particular old-house object needed to finish off part of your house. It's the only complete directory to suppliers of thousands of products and services made specifically for old houses, and it's newly revised and updated by the Editors of **The Old-House Journal**.

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listed in two handy directories — by product and by company. Three indexes printed on yellow paper make finding the right categories and companies a snap.

**O**rders your copy today at the OHJ Subscriber Price of just \$10.95 postpaid — 28% off the regular price. Just return the coupon ... Chester's keeping a copy warm for you!

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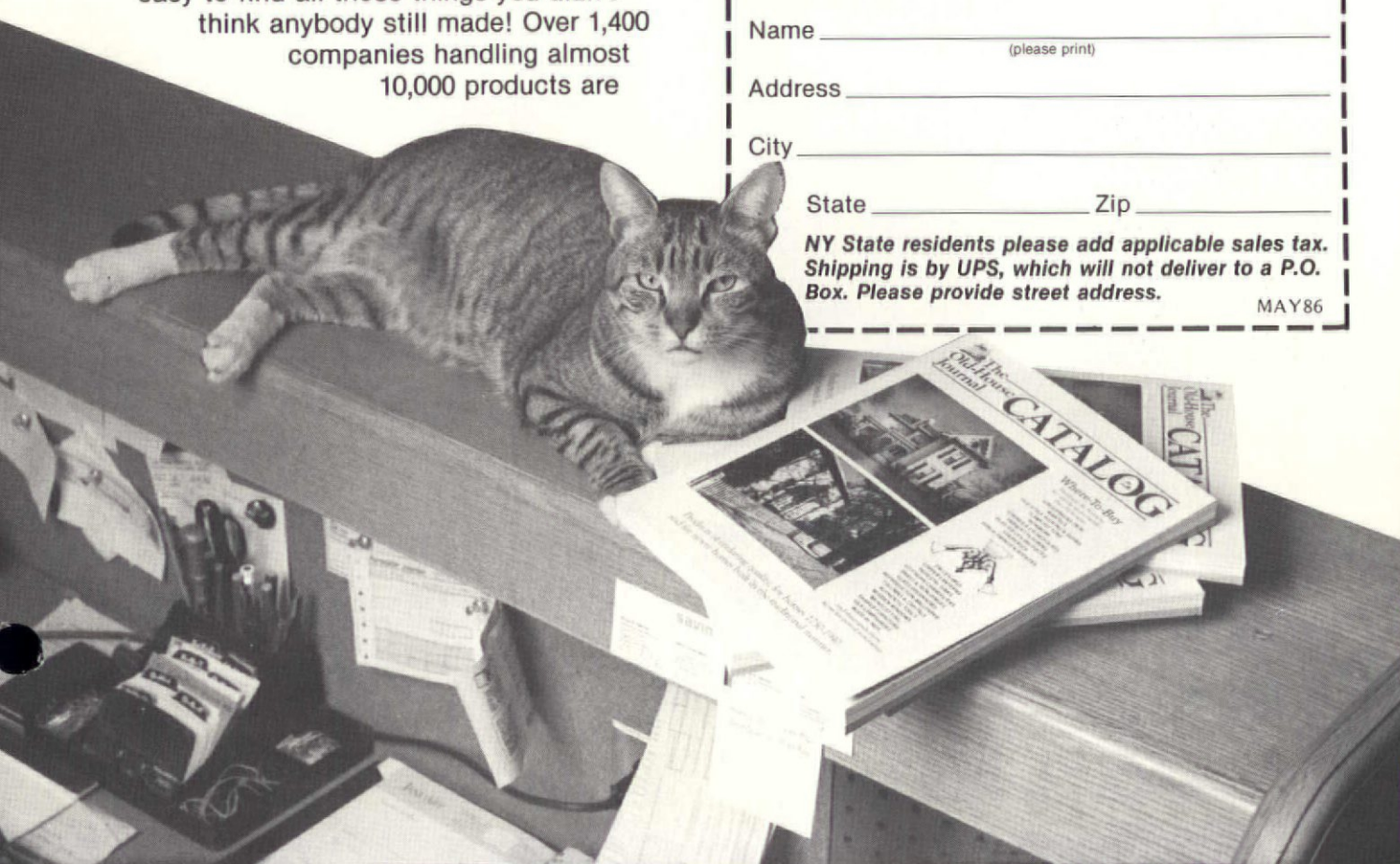
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MAY 86





# Thoughts on Exterior Painting

## Colorists Tell How To Get What You Want

*James Martin*  
JAMES MARTIN  
DENVER

### ... on what people really want

WE'RE IN THE THROES of a revisionist trend for older buildings. Whether you want to be a traditionalist or not is your choice. I will say that I've never had a client who, having come to me for a historic paint job, has upon seeing the authentic Victorian color palette and paint schemes, found that to be what he or she really wanted.

AN EXAMPLE IS ELLEN, who had a strong affection for things Victorian. She said she wanted the house to be absolutely authentic on the outside. I said, "Great, I've been eager to do an authentic one." So I brought over several books on period house colors, complete with color swatches, and showed her how the house should look if historically accurate.

ELLEN WAS DISAPPOINTED. "They look like the musty old house my grandmother lived in," she said. "I can't live with those kinds of colors." The way her house is painted today cer-

tainly tips its hat to authenticity, but we used shading and painted detailing unheard of 100 years ago. People come by and say, "That's the most authentic-looking Victorian I've ever seen!" But it's not.

WE LIVE SO FAST today we seem to need to have the fine detailing brought to our attention a little more than the Victorians did. A man told me in front of a newly painted building, "You know, I've walked by here for 25 years

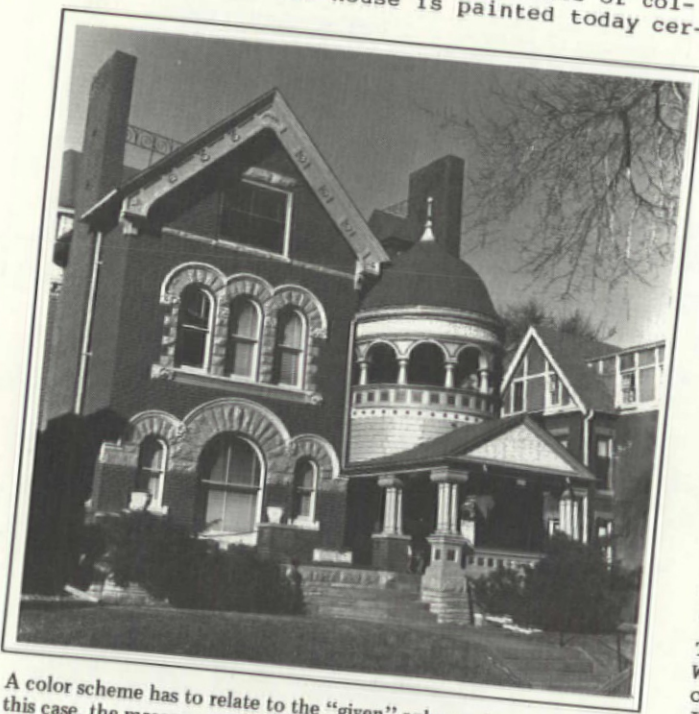


Authentic? Not entirely ... but colors and their placement have a historical basis.

and never noticed all the beautiful work on this building."

ONE THING I'M VERY opinionated about is the superiority of light-colored sash windows. Historically, windows were usually painted dark (the sash, almost always). I have found this makes a house look dark and closed up. A light sash gives a feeling of brightness and livability. Again, it's all your own choice, but spend some time comparing the windows of other buildings before you decide.

THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN color preferences. What's your interior like? Beside the general colors, think about the ambiance you've set. It's not essential that the same colors be used, but the exterior colors should complement the interior.



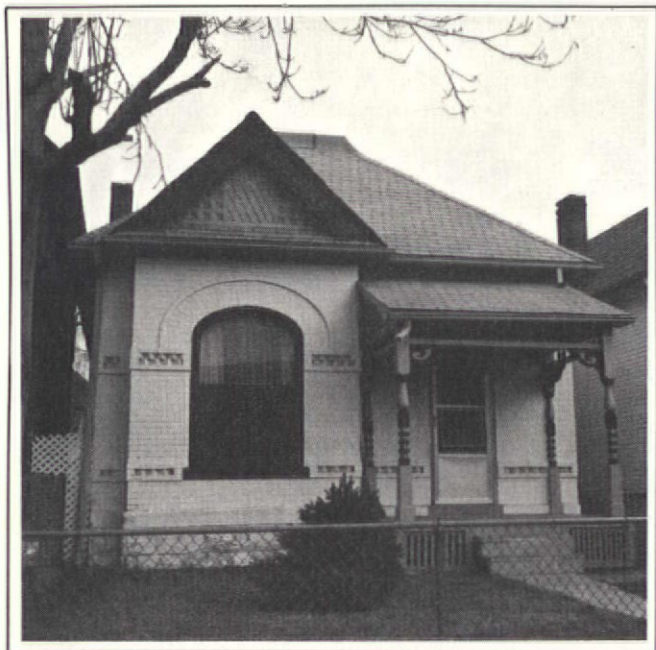
A color scheme has to relate to the "given" colors — in this case, the masonry provided a cue.



IF YOUR HOUSE SITS by itself, you have a free hand with the color. But if you live in a neighborhood, your house must fit in and not jump out. Even the most expertly decorated building may look like a street carnival if it is overtly unlike its neighbors.

A BUILDING MUST RETAIN its architectural integrity. It's very tempting to have a ball painting up details, but don't lose the feeling of wholeness: Too often, over-zealously "painted ladies" become more details than house, and the original proportions of the building are lost.

THE PORCHES, DORMERS, and bargeboards should not be allowed to "jump" off the main body of



Dark brown trim and sash give this house a more "closed up" feeling. Light-colored curtains sometimes alleviate that.

the building. This will happen if the colors are not closely related or if the contrast between the parts and the whole is too great. Hue is the specific color used (red, blue, blue-green, etc.); value is the light-to-dark scale of the colors (black, dark gray, medium gray, light gray, etc.). Choose your palette so there is a relationship of both hue and value running through all the colors.

### ... on getting started

TO START YOUR PLAN, make an elevation drawing of your house and get copies made. Since the front facade often shows all of the design elements in the house, you may need a drawing only of the front (or of the front and one side). Feel free to do all sides, if you want. If you're no artist, take B&W photos of each side and get 8x10 or larger prints made, then trace them. Making these drawings will give you a real familiarity with the building. You'll get a feel for the different areas, the size and distribution of trim, and how the detailing is layered and arranged.



Trim on this cottage is a medium value, but the sash itself is white. Light sash is preferred by many as more "inviting."

LOOKING AT YOUR DRAWING, separate out the main areas: body, trim, windows, gables, repeating details, etc. Notice what stands out or what are your favorite parts. I don't recommend coloring your drawings. The reason for this is that there are about 30 colors at the art store and 1,600 colors at the paint store -- and since combining just the right shades is what makes a paint scheme great or only fair, color drawings are very misleading. Your house will never look like your drawing. Instead, I recommend shading the drawings in B&W with a lead pencil. Laying out your building in terms of value (the light-to-dark scale of color) will give you a better feeling for the balance and how to handle the details.

LIGHT COLORS SHADOW a lot and therefore show up imperfections. Dark colors will not show shadows as much and therefore can be used to play down or even cover problem areas that you may have to live with. In painting broad areas, get the most visual return for your money. For instance, areas with relief should always be painted a light color so that the natural shadowing enhances the relief -- you won't need an extra color to do so.

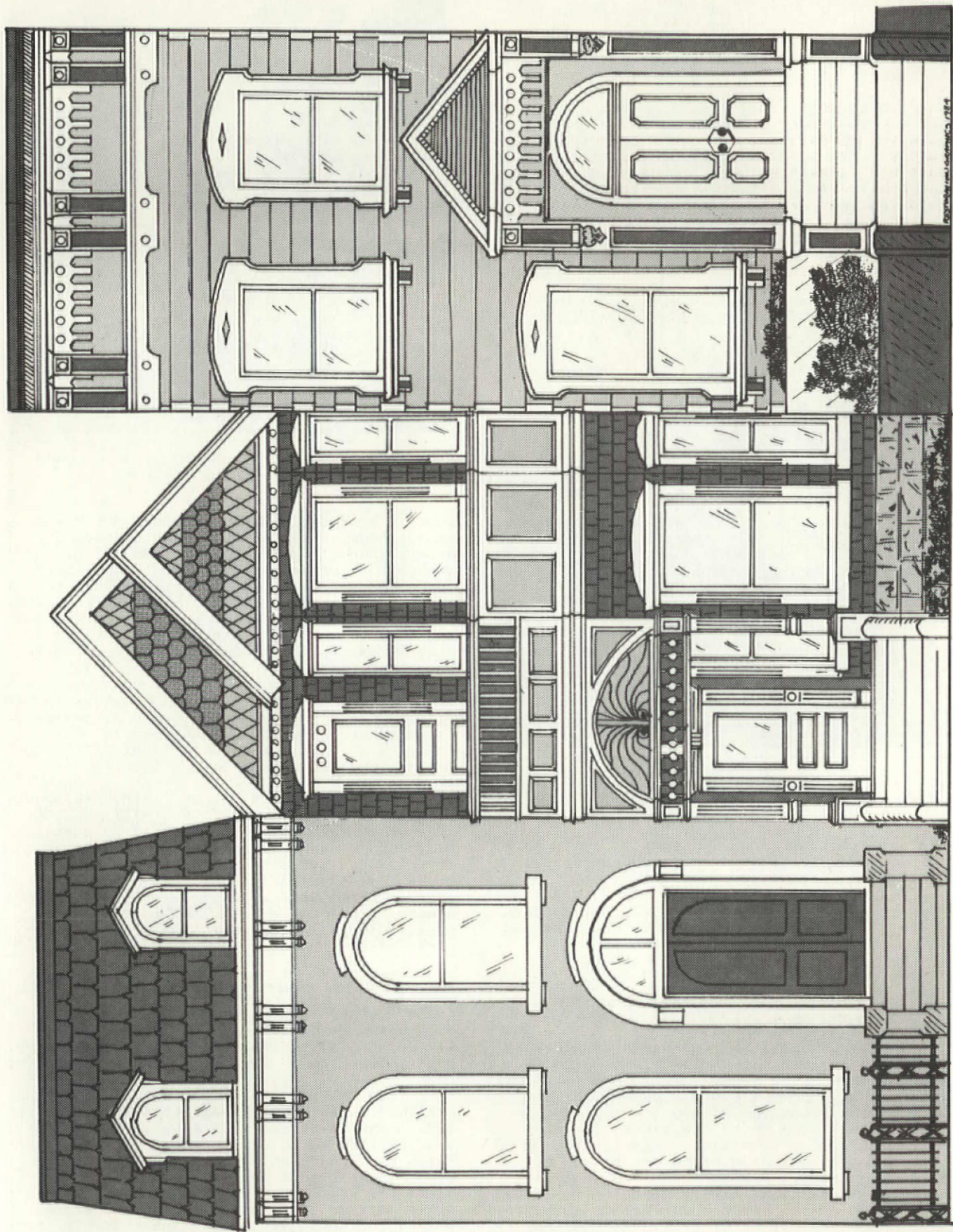
### ... on color choice

CHOOSE COLORS FROM paint sample chips of a good brand -- better paint will be truer to its chips. Cut a window in a sheet of white paper; use this to isolate colors on the chip.

PICK YOUR COLORS outside in open shade or under an overcast sky. The colors are truer in this light. The glare of sunlight inhibits your ability to see colors well and distinguish their subtleties (and you know what fluorescent lights do to color).

REFER BACK TO YOUR "given" colors -- stone, brick, roof shingles, etc. These are the colors your color scheme must be based on to give







Shade drawings of your building in black and white — to lay out the paint scheme in terms of *value* (not hue), and to develop a sense of the details.

the house a whole feeling. Most colors can be adjusted to fit. If you're set on blue, make sure you use hues and shades of blue that work best with your given colors. Now, make sure the combinations of colors you choose go with each other as well. To do so, isolate them together on both a light and a dark background. Make adjustments as needed. When you've found the body color(s) you like, try different trim colors until one works. Then do the same for your accent colors. Make sure these colors correspond in value (darkness or lightness) with the B&W plans you have made.

WHEN YOU'RE CONFIDENT of your color selection, get sample paint mixed at a professional paint store (a store where the help knows how to mix colors). Get quarts. Now find a small, significant section of the building where all of the colors come together and paint it completely. Live with the painted sample for a few days. Look at it in every kind of light. Squint a lot. If one color seems to be wrong, modify or change it and put the new one up.

### ... on contractors

THERE ARE BASICALLY two types of painting contractors: production companies (who do large developments, rental properties, etc.), and custom painters. Start with custom painters. Call a few; if yours is a fancy job be sure they've done Victorians; make sure they sound "positive" about them. Cross out the ones who don't sound enthusiastic -- you have to love these buildings to paint them well.

ASK FOR REFERENCES and examples that you can look at. Go look and check the references. Then narrow your candidates down to three. Do let personality play a part in your final decision. If you relate well to the painter, if you like the cut of his jib, if talking to him is easy -- it augurs well.

CHOOSE SOMEONE WHO HAS been in business a while -- who has a reputation to protect. These people will do the job right (generally), because they do not want to come back and fix it if the paint peels in three years.

BE CAREFUL OF A LOW BID. An exceptionally low bid usually means that, halfway through the job, the painter will realize he's going to end up in the hole, and will finish up as quick-and-dirty as he can. You may not realize this for a year or so. If you have lots of time and knowledge so that you can supervise the job, it is possible to do alright with a cheap bid. But it's not a good situation when the person working for you knows he's losing money.

James R. Martin of The Color People is a graphic designer and restoration contractor. He does color consultation and exterior design nationwide, and offers a mail-order service. 1672 Madison St., Denver, CO 80206. (303) 388-8686.

Jill Pilaroscia  
JILL PILAROSCIA  
SAN FRANCISCO

### ... on approach

SELECTING COLORS can be intimidating. You're required to work with color on a grand scale. Your color selection is public and has a visual impact on your whole neighborhood.

AS A COLORIST I have watched tastes and color styles change, just as designs change in architecture and fashion. In California and elsewhere there are presently two schools of thought regarding exterior coloration for old buildings: the authentic, historical approach, and the contemporary approach sometimes referred to as the "boutique school."

TAKING THE HISTORIC approach, you'd work from color palettes documented in various books and archives of 19th-century exterior decoration. To be perfectly authentic, you'd take paint shavings from your building, analyze them under a microscope to determine what colors had been applied, and duplicate the original (or a subsequent) color scheme. In Century of Color, Roger Moss has written an excellent re-



In this example of the historic approach, Jill Pilaroscia collaborated with Bob Buckter to create a refined scheme in peachy-tan, rust, and burgundy-brown.

source for this approach. Numerous paint manufacturers have compiled "Historic Color" charts which do give you a start.

TAKING A MORE contemporary approach, you'd glean the best techniques from the past and combine them with imaginative solutions, such as exterior stencilling, trompe l'oeil, and faux finishing. You'd select a palette that primarily reflected your own personal color preferences. I feel both approaches are valid. A homeowner can look at both and then choose the more appropriate route.



### ... on use of colors

IN MY EXPERIENCE, I've found that four to six colors are the easiest to arrange on a building. Victorian architecture provides many planes for color. A two-color scheme may lack dimension and fight the complexity of the building; a three-color scheme is hard to arrange consistently. A four- (or more) color scheme lets you orchestrate the surface. Four colors does not have to appear overdone or busy. Four carefully coordinated colors will create a rich visual surface.

NOW, HOW DO YOU personally envision your building? Do you want a unique color statement which stands out from its surroundings? Do you wish to blend with your surroundings? Do you want to re-create a historically accurate color scheme? Do you want a more personal statement? Do you want continuity from interior to exterior colors?

LIGHT COLORS REFLECT ultraviolet light and heat, making them durable. They advance visually and make areas appear larger. They can outline shape, accentuate detail, and allow light and shadow to play. Dark colors absorb ultraviolet light and heat, making them susceptible to fading. They usually recede, make areas appear smaller. They create drama, weight, and mass. Some guidelines:



An example of "the boutique school" — five colors, and the giant engaged columns are whimsically marbled.

**INTENSITY:** Color intensity increases as the volume and scale of the color increases. Select the grayed and muted hues. Exterior light greatly amplifies the intensity of color. What may look dull on a paint chip will become very lively on a large expanse.

**BALANCE:** Distribute color evenly over the building from its top or hat, to its middle or belt, and to its base or shoes. A building with a light-colored base and a dark-colored peak may feel top heavy and ungrounded. A well balanced color arrangement will have visual unity.

**RHYTHM:** Keep the same colors touching and interacting. Repetition of color juxtaposition will create a rhythm that pleases the eye.

**DURABILITY:** Select colors for major surfaces which are durable and neutral. Remember the sun will fade pure bright tones quickly.

**ACCENT COLORS:** Use strong colors only in small expanses so they will fade gracefully. Accents may be used on undersurfaces, such as soffits, to add an element of surprise and create surface texture. Don't overuse accent colors as they can cause visual chaos.

**SKELETAL STRUCTURE:** Use your trim to create a skeletal structure for the building. This technique will define and unify the architectural elements. Create a contrast in value between the body and the trim.


**INTERACTION:** White drains color from the color it is touching. Black accentuates the color it touches. Gray is a chameleon color. It makes whatever it touches resonate. If gray is touching red, it makes the red appear redder and it takes on a reddish cast itself.

### ... on picking a paint scheme

**PHOTOGRAPH YOUR BUILDING** with a 35 mm camera using color print film. Take some distance photos of the building in its setting, close-ups of window areas, entryway and front doors, ornamental details, and under-surfaces such as soffits. Shoot an entire roll. Have the film developed into 3"x5" glossy-finish prints.

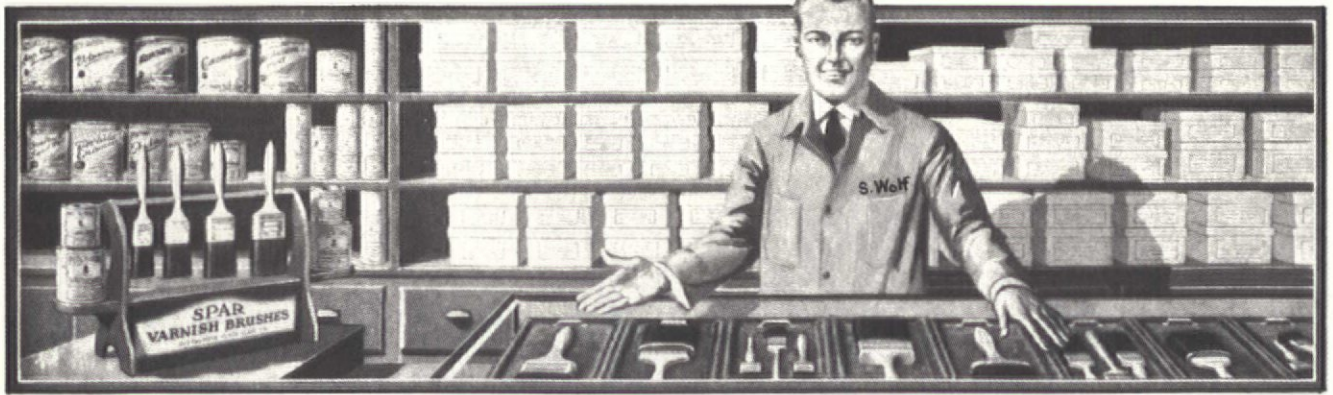
**COLLECT COLOR BOOKLETS** and color chips. Buy or borrow a paint fan-deck, which contains all the colors the company makes. Cover a table surface with white paper to create a clean, neutral field on which to view your color samples. When possible, work in natural light. Place your developed house photos in front of you and have a list of "givens" for your building: its interesting -- and awkward -- features; its surroundings; the colors of its roof, stone, tile, landing, or stained glass; and its exposure and orientation.

**LAY THE CHIPS** on the white paper and see which colors appeal to you. Arrange the chips into groups indicating preference: first choice, second, etc. Select color(s) for the body, the building's largest surface. Once that's established, select a color for trim. Remember to refer to your list of given considerations, restrictions, and preferences. Next develop accent color(s).

**AFTER YOU PAINT** an actual sample on the house, you may decide to alter a color in the scheme. The addition of white, called tinting, lightens your color. The addition of black, called shading, darkens it. If two adjacent colors don't harmonize, try mixing some of color one into color two. This blending creates an "essence of one another" feeling; the colors become complementary. If you want to experiment with color mixing, I recommend buying a book on color theory; for example, Elements of Color by J. Itten. Get a color compass or color wheel by Grumbacher, too. 

OJH readers can write with questions — and for information on her mail-order color service — to Jill Pilaroscia, San Francisco Color Service, 855 Alvarado St., San Francisco, CA 94114. (415) 285-4544.





# Paintbrushes

**W**E KNOW A PAINTER who gave a cheap brush to his helper to slap a coat of primer on a dirty, hastily-prepared closet. Left on his own, the helper went on to prime the trim in two large rooms with that same inferior brush. It took a long time, and the helper cursed the primer, which seemed to drag and covered poorly.

WHEN THE PAINTER returned to the job, he said, "Oh jeez, are you still using that garbage brush?! I didn't mean for you to use it in the rooms. Here, use a real brush." The helper shrugged and changed brushes. Now the primer flowed smoothly and covered well. The brush held a lot of paint, and he didn't have to dip it in the can very often. With the cheap brush, the job had been a frustrating struggle and the coverage poor. With the bigger, better brush, the job was almost a joy and the outcome neat.

THE HELPER still hasn't forgiven his boss for leaving him with that crappy brush.

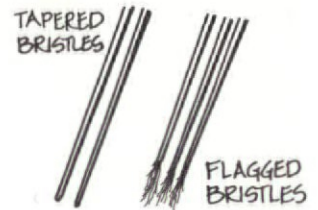
WE'VE ALL USED brushes that don't seem to hold any paint, yet drip paint all over your arm the first time you paint over your head. This article will show you how to tell the difference between a quality brush and one that's second-rate. We'll also give you some tips on the proper use and care of your brushes.

## What is a Good Brush?

**R**ECOGNIZING a good paintbrush isn't always easy. The best paintbrushes are still hand-crafted by skilled brush-makers much as they have been for centuries. Consumer and bargain-grade brushes frequently are machine-made and less expensive, but you get what you pay for. The best way to see the differences between brushes is to compare a professional's brush side by side with the same size consumer model. Ask to see the manufacturer's catalog; it contains complete specifications. The characteristics of a quality paintbrush are the same whether it's a natural or synthetic brush. A good brush will have:

- Long, flexible bristles of varying lengths. Longer bristles allow the brush to hold more paint, and flexibility (softness) makes for smoother flowing of the finish.

- Flagged bristles. Flagging (splitting) at the ends of the bristles makes for fewer brush marks and more even application of the paint. In synthetic brushes, look for both flagged and tapered filaments.



- Spread the bristles of a professional brush at the ferrule, and you will see a treated wood or aluminum spacer plug that holds the bristles in place and creates a void that allows the brush to hold more paint. Cheaper brushes will have cardboard spacer plugs.

- A wooden handle shaped to fit the hand. Cheap brushes often have a sharp-edged, un-contoured handle. Unfinished, smooth-sanded hardwood handles are the most comfortable. Varnished handles may cause blisters.

- A sturdy, corrosion-resistant ferrule (nickel-plated, stainless steel, copper or brass). Some cheap brushes will have an aluminum ferrule anodized to look like brass. The ferrule should be securely fastened to the handle -- if it wiggles now, it will eventually work loose.

- Bristles set securely in vulcanized rubber, epoxy, or chemically inert cements. Work the brush back and forth across your hand to see if it loses any bristles. A good brush will lose some bristles or filaments, but a cheaper brush will lose more, and they'll continue to fall out.

- The best brushes are built with a "cupped chisel" design (a filament-setting method). Check the manufacturer's catalog for this information.

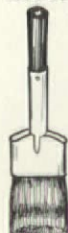
- Good brushes feel smooth and silky when rubbed against your hand, not coarse or stiff. Look for brushes with bristle or filament that has a resilient spring to it (when pressed against your hand, the bristle should spring back into shape).

- Balance is hard to define, but all good paintbrushes have it. A balanced brush is comfortable to use all day.

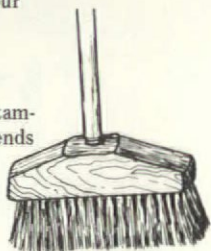


# SPECIALTY BRUSHES

**FLOWING BRUSH:** Use anytime the finish must be smooth and free of brushmarks (like on a broad, flat surface with a gloss finish, where brushmarks would be extremely noticeable). The most commonly used bristles are white hog, badger, and fitch (skunk). These bristles are combined in a multitude of different grades and blends. The thinner the finish, the softer the flowing brush should be. So, if you're applying alkyd or oil paint, use a slightly stiffer flowing brush. Any supplier who stocks these specialty items can surely give you sound guidance in your selection of a brush.



**WHITEWASH BRUSHES** are made of white tampo (cactus fiber) or horsehair and bristle blends (more resistant to the lime base than other bristles). The brush attaches to a wooden handle — it looks like a push-broom.

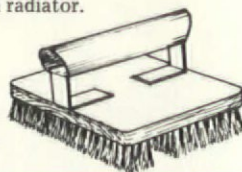


**CALCIMINE BRUSHES** (or block brushes) are available in natural and synthetic bristles and blends.

**MASONRY BRUSHES** carry a lot of paint and are suited to rough surfaces. They resemble calcimine brushes, but use horsehair or tampico filaments.

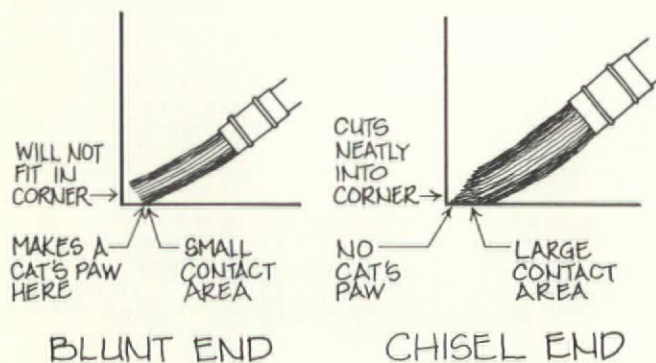


**RADIATOR BRUSHES** come in two types. One has a long handle to reach between the fins of a radiator, the other an offset handle ideally suited for those hard-to-reach places — like behind a radiator.



'ROUGH RIDER' is the brand name of a common shingle-siding painting tool. Great for painting the rough, uneven surfaces and edges of shingles.

● Good brushes have a slight taper from the heel to the edge. Good brushes may have a "square edge" (for holding more paint and painting large, flat surfaces) or a "chisel edge" (for broader filament contact, more even application, and precise cutting in). Use a chisel-edged brush for inside corners and edges.



BLUNT END

CHISEL END

BECAUSE a blunt-end brush will not fit into a corner, it leaves a mark or thin spot near the corner (where the brush stroke starts) called a cat's paw. This occurs because you have to first push the brush into the corner and then pull it out. A tapered edge also allows you to see the edge as you are cutting in, whereas the blunt brush blocks your view of the edge.

## Economy of Quality

**P**ROFESSIONAL TOOLS cost more than consumer grades and are often available only at larger paint suppliers rather than hardware stores. But good-quality brushes pay for themselves through superior performance. Here's why:

● Your painting skills will never improve with inferior tools. If you want to work faster, neater, with better coverage, buy a good tool.

● Flexible filaments with well-flagged ends spread paint more smoothly, minimizing brush marks and holidays or thin spots. (A holiday is where the brush takes a vacation; a bare area.)

● A good brush cuts down on frustration (fewer holidays, easier to cut in, etc.) and time.

● More numerous bristles hold more paint, so the brush doesn't have to be dipped as often. Because the paint goes on faster, there is less chance of lap marks.

● A quality brush won't leave as many stray bristles for you to pick out of the finish.

● A well-made brush lasts longer and is worth the effort of cleaning it out.

## Natural Bristle

**B**RISTLE, to most of us, has become synonymous with "filament" (natural or synthetic). Bristle actually refers only to the hair of hogs. Hog bristle makes a good brush filament because of its natural flagging. Hog bristles are slightly oval and grow naturally to a taper. This gives them spring and elasticity and helps them maintain their shape.

BEWARE OF bristle brushes labelled China or ox hair blends. These cheaper brushes may contain as little as 1% China or ox-hair bristles. Reputable manufacturers clearly label their brushes with the percentage of bristle used (100% China bristle, for example).

CHINA BRISTLE is the most common natural bristle, and is best suited for non-water-soluble finishes (alkyds, oil enamels, oil-based stains, varnish, polyurethane, shellac, lacquer, etc.). If untreated natural bristles are used in a water-based finish, the bristles will absorb water and become limp. A limp brush is hard to control. Other types of natural fibers are used in specialty brushes.



## Synthetic Filament

**T**HE TWO MOST commonly used synthetics are nylon and polyester. Nylon (such as Dupont Tynex) is used in low- to medium-priced synthetic brushes. It can be used for oils, alkyds, latex paints, oil stains, varnish, and polyurethane. Nylon cannot be used for creosote, methyl- or ethyl-alcohol-based shellacs, or finishes containing ketones (like two-part epoxy finishes). Don't buy imported nylon (some get limp in water).

**MEDIUM- TO HIGH-PRICED** synthetic brushes are generally made of polyester or a nylon/polyester blend. Dupont Orel is one brand name. The longest wearing synthetic brushes are 100% polyester. It has higher solvent and temperature resistance than nylon, and better bend recovery. Polyester is also more resilient than nylon and can be used with any finish. Look for brushes with an even mixture of flagged and tapered filaments.

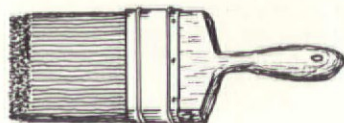
**AVOID BRUSHES** made of styrene unless they are for a single, crude job, and you plan to throw them away; they're not worth cleaning. (Polystyrene is a tough filament used mostly in wallpaper brushes.) Don't buy synthetic brushes with very coarse filaments. If the filaments stay bent when you pinch them with a fingernail, they're hollow -- not as durable, and likely to lose shape sooner.

## The Right Size and Shape

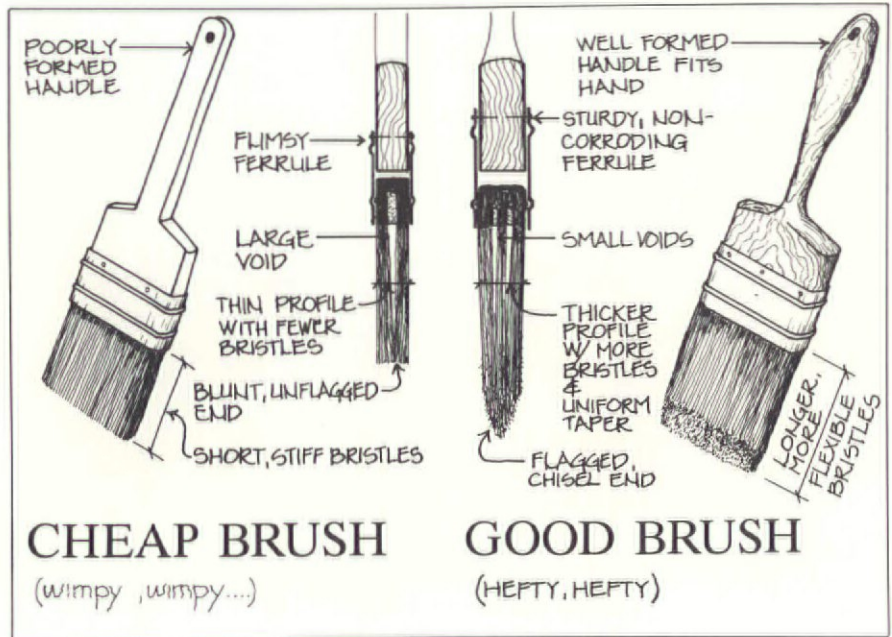
**I**N ADDITION TO CHOOSING a quality paintbrush with the right kind of filaments, you have to make sure the size and shape of the brush suits the job. The proper size and shape can make the difference between a neat, fast job, and a sloppy, slow one.

**BUY THE BRUSH** to fit the job. The most common error in choosing brush size is buying one that's too small for the job. If you're investing in a quality brush, you can buy bigger. The more expensive brush will hold more paint, and still make it easier to cut in than a smaller, inexpensive brush. You won't have to work the brush back and forth over the edge to cover it.

WALL BRUSHES  
3 to 5 inches



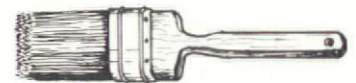
When you have no cutting in to worry about, the general rule of thumb is: the bigger, the better. Just keep in mind that if you're handling a full-bodied brush more than four-inches wide, your arm is going to start to ache after a couple of hours. If you're painting clapboards, match the width of the brush to the width of the clapboard.



**CHEAP BRUSH**  
(wimpy, wimpy...)

**GOOD BRUSH**  
(HEPTY, HEPTY)

FLAT SASH &  
TRIM BRUSHES  
1 to 4 inches



Chisel-edge trim brushes in this size range make easy work of window and door surrounds, baseboards, wall corners, etc. Brush width depends on the size of the trim you want to paint.

ANGLE SASH BRUSHES  
1 to 3 inches



The long end of an angle sash brush helps for reaching into inside corners on window sash. Don't allow the angle alone to convince you this is the right brush -- a fine tapered edge is the most critical element of a sash brush.

SEMI-OVAL VARNISH  
& ENAMEL BRUSHES  
1 to 4 inches



These tools have wider centers, longer filaments, and rounded edges. They carry a lot of paint, apply it smoothly, and make it easier to paint sharp edges. They usually have round handles.

ROUND OR OVAL  
SASH BRUSHES  
even numbers 2-20



These brushes aren't very common, but they're excellent for fine work. Their dense bristles and thick profiles allow them to hold a lot of paint. They're compact and have a well-chiseled edge, so they make cutting in easy. They are especially appropriate for spindle work because they won't "splay out" as easily as flat brushes.

The technical information in this article comes from Stephen L. Wolf, proprietor of Wolf Paints and Wallpapers (771 Ninth Ave., New York City 10019.) Steve's an old friend of OHJ.

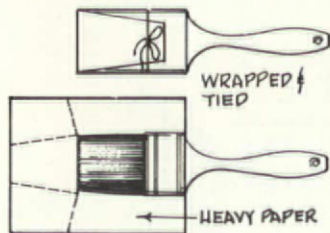


# Cleaning & Maintaining Brushes

by Bill O'Donnell

**A** GOOD BRUSH is expensive to replace; fortunately, proper cleaning and storage is easy. The secret to keeping a brush in good shape is to clean it immediately after each use. Cleanup is part of the job; consider it when making a work schedule.

YOUR QUALITY SASH BRUSH won't help you "cut in" neatly if it's spent the past few months at the bottom of a clutter-filled drawer in your workshop. Hang your brushes by their handles in a clean, dry place. Fold some kraft paper around them (or, if you can find them, use the protective envelopes they came in) to keep the bristles in shape. Never store a brush so that it rests on its bristles; they'll bend permanently.



Don't let this happen to your brushes — it's almost impossible to bring them back.



When you leave a neglected brush soaking in solvent, keep it suspended on a wire.

thinner) will be all that is required; some will require turpentine. (For lacquer, use lacquer thinner; for shellac, denatured alcohol.)


FIRST, WORK THE BRUSH dry on kraft paper, newspapers, or paper towels. Don't distort the brush in the effort; just brush as you normally would until no more paint comes out. Fill a coffee can about half full with solvent, and work the brush up and down in the solvent for a few minutes. Save the solvent to use as a first rinse for all your brushes.

AFTER THE FIRST RINSE, pour fresh solvent in another coffee can. Use only as much solvent as needed to rinse the brush. Add the spent solvent to your "first-rinse" can. Three to five rinsings in fresh solvent is typical, although you may have to do more. Flex the brush gently against the bottom of the can to help squeeze out thinned paint. Be careful not to bend the bristles too far, and flex evenly -- one side, then the other. Seal the used solvent tightly. In a couple of days, the pigments will settle to the bottom, and the solvent can be reused for another brush.

IF THE BRUSH will be used for oil-based paint in the future, simply squeeze out the excess solvent, and store as usual. If it'll be used for latex, rinse the solvent out of the brush thoroughly with warm, soapy water.

## Reviving a Dead Brush

**I**T IS POSSIBLE to restore natural bristle and some synthetic brushes that have hardened up. Sometimes it's relatively easy. For example, if the brush contains hardened shellac, an overnight bath in denatured alcohol may be all that's required. If paint has dried in the brush, soak it in paint stripper until soft, then comb the goop out of the bristles with a discarded wide-tooth comb. Follow with a rinse in the appropriate solvent.

SOME CHEAP BRUSHES will dissolve in paint stripper, others may lose their shape. Paint stripper is worth trying on an expensive, neglected brush -- as long as it dried in shape. If it dried with bent bristles, it will never be a good brush again. The trick is not to neglect a good brush in the first place -- clean it immediately after use. 

## Latex Cleanup

**W**ATER IS ALL YOU NEED to remove latex paint. Don't bend the bristles down hard against the sink. Run warm, not hot, water on the face of the bristles only, not between the bristles with the brush upside down. Pat the brush sharply against the palm of your hand to bring the watered-down paint to the surface, and keep rinsing. Rinse until there's no hint of pigment. Be sure to work all of the paint out of the heel of the brush.

YOU CAN USE a little mild soap (Ivory Liquid) while rinsing the brush. The soap helps remove the paint and serves as a good gauge to judge when the brush is thoroughly rinsed -- when the soapy water lathers up easily, the brush is clean. Rinse the soap completely from the brush.

TO EXPEL EXCESS WATER, twirl the brush rapidly back and forth between the palms of your hands. If it's a good sash brush used for cutting in, just shake the water out; that way, you'll be less likely to cause permanent spreading of the bristles. Hang the brush from its handle until completely dry.

## Oil/Alkyd Cleanup

**B**ECAUSE OIL-BASED FINISHES repel water, paint will have to be rinsed out with solvent. The solvent to use is the same as the solvent that you'd use to thin the paint (check the label). For most oil-based paints and varnishes, mineral spirits (paint



# MASKING BEFORE PAINTING

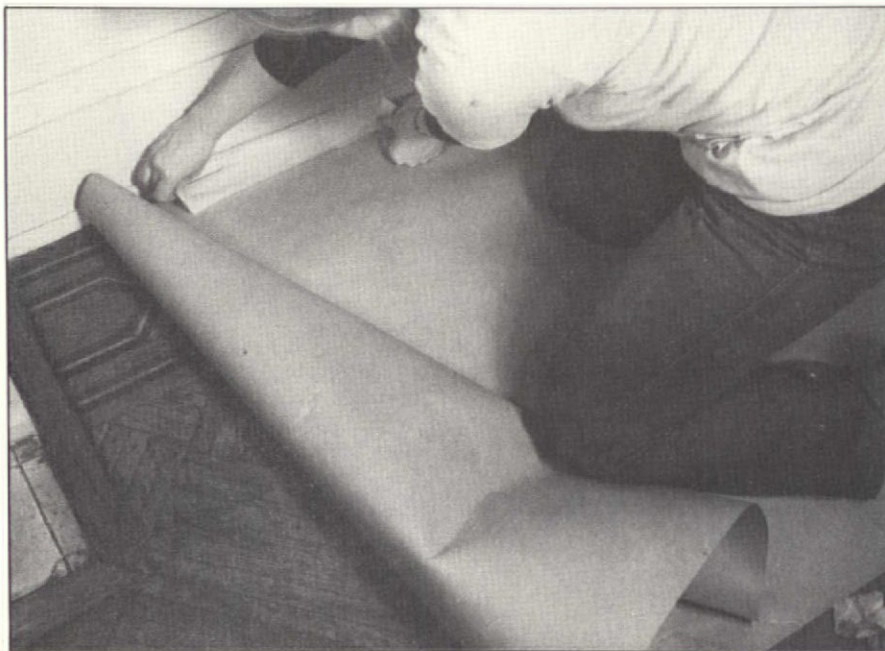
by Bill O'Donnell

**P** AINT HAS A WAY of getting all over everything -- including surfaces that are already finished. This article will help you keep paint where you want it: on the walls, not the woodwork. In an old house, you typically spend four to eight hours of preparation for every hour of painting. If a couple of additional hours are spent masking finished surfaces, you'll make the painting easier on yourself, you'll save time on clean-up, and your finished work will have a much neater appearance.

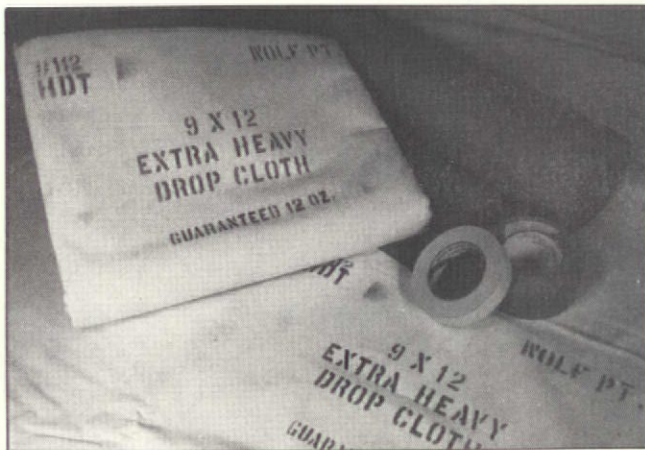
## Floors

**R**EGARDLESS OF WHAT PART of the room you're working on, the floor will have to be masked. Paint will splatter on the floor. If you've got much preparation to do before painting (plaster repair, etc.), the best and easiest masking method is to cover the entire floor with kraft paper.

MASKING TAPE won't adhere to a dirty surface. Vacuum the floor thoroughly, and wipe down any areas to receive masking tape with a rag.



Kraft paper protects the floor throughout the project.



Tape the kraft paper right up against the shoe moulding with two-inch-wide masking tape. Burnish the tape down hard so paint can't seep under it. Overlap the lengths of kraft paper to minimize the amount of tape on the floor. That is, only tape to the floor around the perimeter of the room. Masking tape leaves a gummy residue and, if it's left down long enough, may damage the finish when removed.

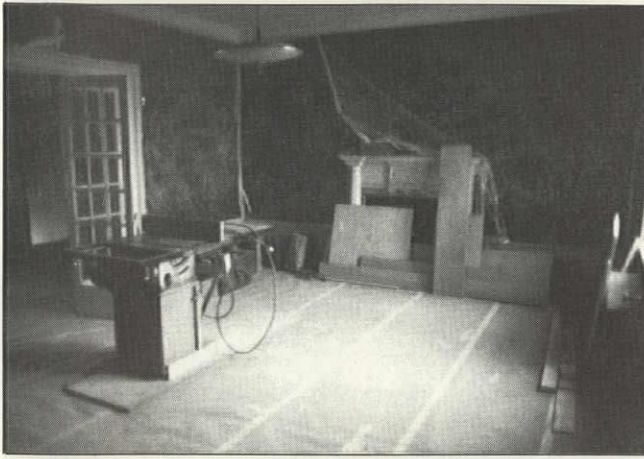
IF ALL THE PREPARATION is complete, and the floor has to be protected from paint only, it's easier and more economical to simply lay down dropcloths to catch the paint. There are several kinds of dropcloths, and each has its advantages and drawbacks:

**DISPOSABLE PLASTIC SHEETS** -- Cheapest in the short run, but they tear easily, and they have to be taped down because they weigh so little. They don't provide good footing because the plastic is slippery -- they're especially dangerous on stairs. If you're going to paint one room in your whole life, a good dropcloth is not a necessary investment, so use one of these.

**POLYPROPYLENE TARPS** -- Generally less expensive than canvas, far more durable than thin-mil plastic. These tarps come in a variety of sizes, they repel water, and they're lightweight. They tend to bunch-up more than canvas, and are difficult to fold. If you have use for a dropcloth once every couple of years (and need a cover to keep your cordwood dry) they're a good buy.

**CANVAS DROPCLOTHS** -- Your best bet. A quality canvas dropcloth lays flat, folds easily, and is virtually tear-proof. Although we've seen 9x12 dropcloths for as much as \$50, you should expect to pay between \$20 and \$30. It's a good long-term investment if you do most of your own painting. Bunch the cloth up at the edges so that it covers some of the baseboard. When it's time to paint the baseboard, pull the cloth back a few inches.





Sheets of plastic are taped to the cove moulding to protect the wallpaper in this dining room. Note the well-masked floor.

WHATEVER DROP CLOTH you use, be sure to keep it tight against the walls at all times. If it bunches up, take a break from painting, and lay it flat again. Fix tears immediately. Paint has a way of spilling on the only unprotected spot on the floor.

## Wood Trim

**M**AKE SURE THE WOOD is sealed before masking. If you just finished stripping the trim in the room, or if the old finish is deteriorated, be sure to refinish the woodwork before doing any painting on adjacent surfaces. If a little paint gets on finished wood, it can be removed relatively easily. If it gets on bare, open-pored wood, it will be very difficult to remove.

OF COURSE, you don't want paint to get on your woodwork at all, so even though it's sealed, you still have to mask it off. Tape kraft paper over the woodwork with masking tape. Press the tape to as little wood as possible. (The less tape you use, the less residue you'll leave on the finish.) Burnish the tape down hard along the edge.

IF YOU'VE GOT a large area to protect (an entire window and surround, for example), use

thin-mil plastic dropcloths in lieu of kraft paper. The plastic folds around corners easier, and its light weight requires less masking tape to hold it in place.

ALSO MASK ANY HARDWARE or light fixtures that aren't easily removed to protect them from roller splatters or spray. It's easier to mask a doorknob than remove it. After you've finished using the roller, remove the masking to make cutting in with a brush easier.

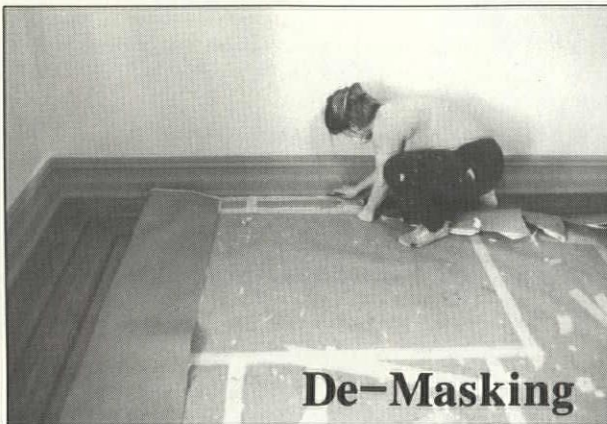
## Wallcoverings

**W**ALLPAPER, especially if it's old, can be difficult to mask without damage. Any tape applied directly to it will almost certainly tear the paper when it's removed. You'll have to be crafty to cover the paper by attaching to adjacent trim. Look for:

1. Picture mouldings and plate rails -- When these features exist, they are usually at the uppermost edge of the wallpaper. You can drape plastic dropcloths down from this edge by taping to the top. Because there is a very small surface to tape to, tape alone may not hold up the sheets. Press a thumbtack through the tape here and there wherever you need some additional support. Nobody will ever see the small pin holes on the top surface of the moulding or rail.

2. Gaps behind loose pieces of trim -- If some pieces of woodwork that adjoin the wallpaper have worked loose, you can wedge a piece of thin cardboard into the crack. Pressure from the trim will hold the cardboard in place, giving you a surface to tape to.

COVERING THE WALLPAPER is most important if you're going to be spraying, or working on the ceiling with a roller. For cutting in around wallpaper when you're painting trim, a good brush and confidence are probably all you need. But if you're uncertain of the steadiness of your hand, work on a small area at a time while holding a 10- or 12-inch taping knife against the wallpaper. If you slip, the paint will hit the knife, not the wallpaper. Wipe the knife clean with a rag each time you reposition it to avoid smearing paint on the wall.



- REMOVE all masking tape as soon as possible after you finish painting. The sooner you pull the tape up, the less likely it will be to damage finishes or leave a gummy residue.
- CUT the paint film with a utility knife wherever it overlaps onto the masking tape. If you just rip the tape off, you'll chip some of the new paint.
- USE acetone and fine steel wool to remove any gummy residue left behind by the tape.
- FOLD the kraft paper up as you lift it. Not only will this make a neater pile to dispose of, but it will prevent dried chips of paint from falling on the floor.



## What Masking Won't Do

A WELL-MASKED room is one in which any reasonably-likely mishap won't spell disaster for finished surfaces. It is possible to get carried away, though. If you're painting a baseboard, there's no need to mask the chandelier (unless you're especially clumsy).

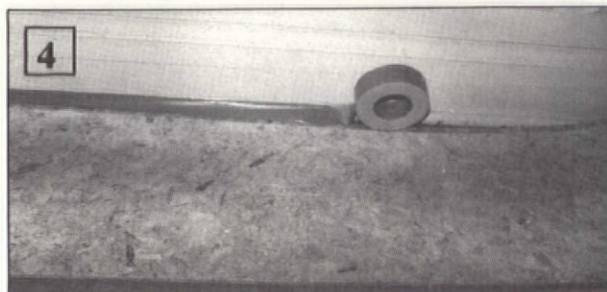
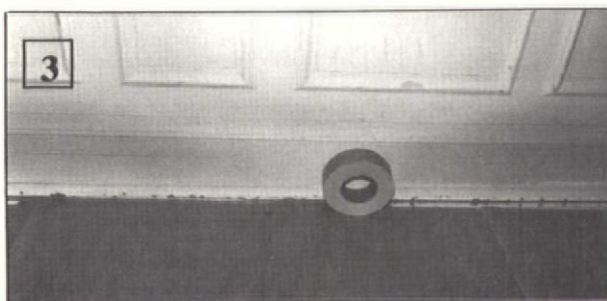
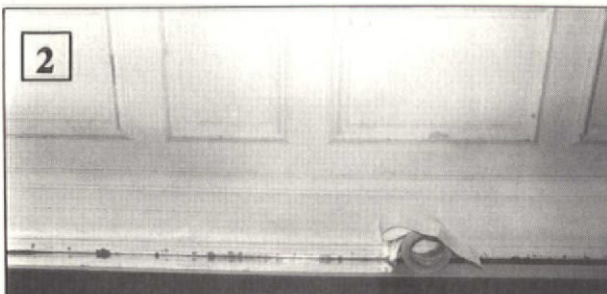
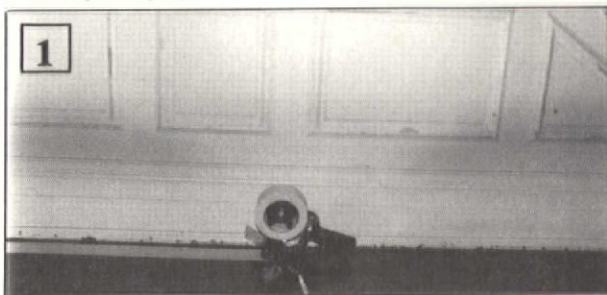
YOU SHOULDN'T MASK window glass either (unless you're spray painting the window); you want a

bead of paint to run from the sash slightly onto the glass to prevent condensation from soaking into the wood. If a little paint gets on the glass it can easily be scraped off with a razor blade once it's dry.

REMEMBER, MASKING should save you time, not preoccupy you from the task at hand (painting or stripping). Masking doesn't take the place of neat work habits, either. No matter how well you mask, finishes are bound to be damaged if you work sloppily.

## MASKING BEFORE STRIPPING

Photos courtesy of BIX Process Systems, Inc.



STRIPPING CHEMICALS and the dissolved paint they contain have complete disregard for kraft paper and masking tape. If you're going to strip, you'd better prepare the floor before the sludge starts running down the wall. Here's the procedure:

1. Lay down a strip of two-inch-wide masking tape about one-quarter inch away from the shoe moulding. Unless it's left down for a long time, masking tape usually won't damage the finish when it's removed.
2. Place aluminum tape (thinner, stickier, and more impervious than duct tape) over the masking tape. Butt the aluminum tape right up against the shoe moulding. Burnish the tape down forcefully. Aluminum tape will stick better than masking tape; solvents can't soak through it or seep under the edges. However, it will likely remove some of the floor's finish when you lift it — that's why you put masking tape down first, so that any damage will be limited to the quarter inch nearest the baseboard.
3. Put down standard polypropylene dropcloths. Tape the edge of the dropcloths up against the shoe moulding with duct tape.
4. Cut a width of particle board and lay it down at the edges of your dropcloths. Rip the particle board down to an 18-inch width; any wider and you may have difficulty reaching over the board without stepping on the slime you'll collect. Duct-tape the board directly to the shoe moulding. Burnish the tape down hard. If you plan to strip the shoe moulding, worry about it later — after the majority of the stripping is completed.

FINALLY, spread generous quantities of newspapers over the particle board. The newspapers are totally sacrificial — throw them away as they get wet.

THE IDEA is that your polypropylene dropcloths should never get dirty. All the effluent should be captured on the newspaper, or at least not seep beyond the particle board. If nothing spills onto your dropcloths, you can be sure that nothing is getting under them.



# GLOSSARY OF HISTORIC PAINTS

compiled by Cole Gagne

**T**HIS GLOSSARY concentrates on American paint from the 18th century through the mid-19th century, when the most common paints were either oil- or water-based. What they had in common in those years past was the use of coloring pigments (a subject surveyed below). The paints would be mixed on-site; the painters' recipes -- and results -- varied with the quality, availability, and price of materials in different regions of the country.

## OIL-BASED PAINTS

**P**OPULAR FOR EXTERIORS because they resisted weathering, oil-based paints had three primary ingredients: oil, white lead, and coloring pigments. Two of the principal types of oils were infrequently used: Animal-fat or fish oil took a long time to dry and tended to turn rancid with prolonged exposure to air; mineral oil was used mostly as a varnish thinner. It was the vegetable oils which were most common; poppy seeds and walnuts had their enthusiasts as oil sources, but linseed oil, plentiful and inexpensive, was by far the most frequently used. White lead was required for almost every job facing an 18th-century painter: puttying, priming, base coat, top coat. It retained its popularity throughout the 19th century (despite competition from zinc white).

**SAND PAINT** was a special variation on oil-based paints: While the applied paint was still wet, sand would be thrown into it or blown in with a bellows (or mixed in with the last coat of paint). The resulting texture created an effective illusion of stone. In 1850, tastemaker A.J. Downing wrote, "Nothing is more offensive to the eye than an avowed union of wood and stone in the same building." If you had a stone or brick house, this was the green light to use sand paint on its wooden architectural elements: decorative trim, door and window frames, the verandah or porch. (It was also commonly used on the cast-iron fences in front of city rowhouses.) Today's pre-mixed sand paints are hard to apply and don't really have the look of traditional sand paint. But you can still blow sand into wet paint -- try using a glitter gun, available from mason's suppliers.

## WATER-BASED PAINTS

**W**HITEWASH was an inexpensive and popular water-based paint used throughout the country. It's essentially a liquid plaster made from slaked lime and water, but other materials were often added, including



salt, sugar, glue, alum, and oyster shells. ("Treasury Department Whitewash," described in Dick's Encyclopedia Of Practical Receipts & Processes, included ground rice in the recipe.) Yellow ochre, charcoal dust, or brick dust could be thrown in for color. Virtually the only interior paint used in America prior to 1700, whitewash remained popular for both interior and exterior painting after the introduction of oil-based paint. By the 19th century, its use had become more specialized, centering on fences and the exteriors of cottages, barns, and outbuildings. If you try to buy it in a store today, they'll just sell you a package of lime, which is fine -- whitewash is still as easy to make and apply as it was 200 years ago (see the March 1985 OHJ, p. 49).

**DISTEMPER PAINTS** were made with a water-soluble adhesive or glue binder (and usually applied hot, as the glue thickened when cool). All the better animal glues were used, but isinglass, made from the air bladders of sturgeon, was especially popular. Other common binding agents were egg white, vegetable gums, and casein. The base was a whiting such as chalk or clay. Although distemper could be tinted by a compatible pigment, 18th-century painters used it primarily as a primer. By the 19th century, however, it was a popular interior finish, especially for plastered surfaces. The most frequently used distemper paints were calcimine and casein.

- **Calcimine** (or kalsomine) is the classic distemper paint: whiting, glue size, and water (maybe tinted with blue pigment). It was used on ceilings and walls throughout the 19th century, and was still being slapped on ceilings well into the 1930s (by the 20th century, a just-add-water-formula calcimine was commonly used). Nowadays homeowners seem more interested in removing it than applying it -- it creates peeling problems when latex paints are applied over it -- but the paint is still generally available. Besides its soft sheen, calcimine is advantageous because you wash it off before repainting; paint need never build up on plaster details.

- **Milk Paints** substituted skim milk for the water and binder. The milk was often curdled with rennet (an acid found in calves' stomachs) to form casein. Casein paints became popular for 19th-century walls and woodwork (furniture too) because they were inexpensive, dried quickly, and -- unlike oil-based paints -- didn't smell bad. For use as an exterior paint, linseed (or poppy or nut) oil was added to improve its weathering strength. Coloring pigments, berry juice, and/or animal blood were frequently mixed in to tint the paint, making it popular, especially in rural areas, as a stencilling paint. Milk paint is commercially available today, or you can make your own (see the Jan.-Feb. 1984 OHJ, p. 27).

THEIR ORGANIC MATERIALS -- blood, milk, berries -- tend to make the early paints very





hard to remove. Along with their permanent staining characteristics, they were thinner than modern versions, and so would soak into the substrate rather than simply form a film. Milk paint, for example, is a classic toughie to strip: Neither heat nor methylene chloride will phase it; ammonia gets out most of it, but a haze always remains unless you sand it away -- and the age along with it. That's the other factor which weighs against stripping these paints: They're often a primary characteristic of age, and add something unique to the patina of the woodwork or furniture on which they're found. Removing early paint from an antique can irreversibly change its appearance -- and lower its value.

## LIVING COLOR

**I**T SEEMS THAT ALMOST ANYTHING -- animal, vegetable, or mineral -- that could impart color was used as a paint pigment at one time or another. Liquid dyes, derived principally from the first two categories, would be converted into a solid "lake pigment" which was added to the paint. Because they tended to become transparent when added to oil, they were commonly used in water-based distempers. The roots and trunks of trees yielded attractive, bright dyes in red (Brazilwood, logwood) and yellow (fustic), although many of these colors were fugitive and wouldn't stay bright; the yellows from buckthorn berries (Rhamnus infectorius) also were short-lived. More durable yellows came from turmeric and saffron; hardy red pigments such as carmine and madder lake were extracted from the bodies of dried insects. Most of the non-dye pigments were from mineral sources. (Unless otherwise noted, the examples below were used in oil-base paints.)

**BLUE**, a not-very-plentiful pigment, was prepared in several ways. Zaffre was made by grinding, washing, and roasting cobalt ore, and then adding pulverized flint. Smalt was zaffre fused into glass, cooled, and then pounded, washed, and dried; a coarse pigment, it was frequently strewn or thrown onto a paint base of white lead and clear oil, and then brushed into a uniform thickness with a feather. The popular Prussian blue, used in both oil and distemper, was made from the precipitate that resulted from combining prussic acid, copperas (ferrous sulfate), and alum. The bright blue ultramarine was prepared from the semi-precious stone lapus lazuli, which was very hard to grind into the required fine powder; its high cost kept it from widespread use in house painting.

**BROWN** pigments were usually mined from the ground. Brown ochre was an iron oxide pigment that ranged in shades from brown to orange; Cologne earth, used in distemper and oil, was made from lignite, or brown coal. Bistre, however, was a pigment made from wood soot (and used only in distemper).

**GREEN** was ordinarily made by mixing yellows and blues. The green pigments commonly available were made from copper dissolved in nitric acid (green verditer) or corroded with acetic acid (verdigrise). Terra verte was a natural blue-green ochre mined in Europe; its coarse texture restricted it to more common types of painting.

**RED** was available in many hues, and was especially useful as a tinting or toning color. Ordinarily it was made with iron: iron ore or clay with a high iron content (bole); iron oxide (Indian red), sometimes mixed with clay and silica (Red ochre). Burnt sienna was just that, a pigment made by heating the iron-and-manganese substance sienna. The iron-less realgar was an orange-red pigment made from sulphur and arsenic.

**YELLOW** was made from a variety of materials. Sulphur was commonly used, compounded with arsenic (king's yellow) or mercury (queen's yellow). The cheap, durable yellow ochre was a pigment from clay and hydrated ferric oxide. Raw sienna was an ochre used in oil (chiefly as a glazing color or stain) and distemper. Chrome yellow, massicot, and patent yellow were all lead-derived pigments. But for those who were into it, ground gall stones or the paste of evaporated bile yielded a golden yellow pigment.

**WHITE** coloring in oil-based paints was ordinarily obtained from their white-lead base; some pigments were derived by heating shells into a powder (pearl white, oystershell white). Distemper paints similarly relied on their base whittings of clay or chalk (materials which tended to darken and lose their lustre if used in oil-based paints).

**BLACK** pigments were made from carbons derived from burning organic materials. (An exception is asphaltum, from natural asphalts, used principally as a glazing color.) Vine stalks, peach pits (blue black), and wine lees (Frankfort black) were all thrown on the fire. Lamp black used the soot from burning resins or oils. Ivory black, from the burnt shavings of ivory or bone, was rather expensive, and its use as a house paint wasn't widespread -- but at least it could double as "tooth powder, and to decolorize syrups and other liquids!"

Although there are several suppliers of 'milk' paints, one firm which actually makes paint "using milk products and mineral fillers and pigments" is The Old-Fashioned Milk Paint Co., Box 222H, Dept. OHJ, Groton, MA 01450. (617) 448-6336. Send \$1.60 (stamps OK) for a brochure and color card.

If you're hunting down traditional calcimine paint, your best bet is Muralo Co., 148 East 5th Street, Dept. OHJ, Bayonne, NJ 07002. (201) 437-0770. Write them for the name of a distributor, or order the calcimine through Johnson Paint Co., 355 Newbury St., Dept. OHJ, Boston, MA 02115. (617) 536-4838. (Their minimum order is 25 lbs. of powder, which makes 12 to 15 quarts.)





# Uncovering Decorative Painting

by Julia Lichtblau

with Darla M. Olson

ARCHITECTURAL-ART CONSERVATOR

**N**ATURE ABHORS A VACUUM and something in human nature abhors a bare expanse of wall. Along with eating, sleeping, and sex, the urge to paint decorations on walls must surely be one of mankind's most universal compulsions. From the earliest age, the sight of an unadorned wall -- be it in a cave, a cathedral, a subway train, or the living room -- makes us itch to fill it. Decorative wall paintings are found everywhere: in prehistoric caves in France, Spanish cathedrals, Tibetan monasteries, tiny roadside shrines in Italy, and on mud-walled mosques in dusty West African villages.

AMERICANS tend to assume that "the good stuff" exists only abroad, even though we have a long history of exuberantly painting buildings with folk talismans, portraits, geometric patterns, scenes, and illusory architectural details. Much of this work has been damaged or destroyed, but a substantial amount still survives -- sometimes visible, sometimes hidden by paint. If you own a pre-1920 house, especially one built between 1850 and 1900, you may have treasures waiting to be uncovered.

THIS ARTICLE will help you identify the paintings you have, and enable you to make an informed decision about what to do with them. It outlines techniques for uncovering and restoring decorative paintings, with an emphasis on paint removal and cleaning. The methods are those used by architectural-art conservator Darla M. Olson -- which puts some of them beyond the technical and artistic abilities of the amateur preservationist. But there's still a lot which you can do on your own, particularly preliminary research and discovery. And if you do decide to revive your paintings, an understanding of these techniques will help you work intelligently with a conservator.

## Options

**T**HESE RESTORATION PROCESSES are time-consuming, messy, and expensive. If there's damaged plaster, special techniques must be used to repair it without ruining the paintings. Also consider that decorated walls and ceilings can be overpowering -- they could

be a more-immutable part of your decor than you'd really care to have. But if you're game to proceed, there are several approaches to choose from:

- **CLEANING & CONSERVATION:** You need to clean exposed paintings and have the areas that have suffered paint loss "in-painted."
- **STRIPPING & RECONSTRUCTION:** Overpainting essentially destroys the paintings because they cannot be uncovered intact -- once you've stripped the later paint, you'll have to document the remnants and reconstruct the images.
- **DOCUMENTATION:** Through color analysis, drawings, and photos, you can create a historical record to guide future restoration. Isolated areas can be uncovered and left out for view beneath a shield of glass or plexiglass.
- **COVERING UP:** If restoration isn't feasible or desired, there are several ways you can protect and conceal paintings with drywall or panels. If the paintings are in good shape, they can be sealed with removable varnish and wallpaper. A drop ceiling could also be installed. (An architect can recommend an appropriate choice.)

BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISIONS, you may want to consult an architectural-painting conservator. (A college art history professor or museum conservator can also be helpful.) Your State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) may be able to refer you to someone. The conservator will examine the paintings (or the surfaces if they're covered), as well as any documentary evidence, and may remove a small area of overpainting. Then he or she will evaluate the condition of the paintings and estimate the documentation and restoration costs. Professional advice is essential for determining the value of the paintings.

IN AN ARCHITECT-DIRECTED RESTORATION, the conservator will probably locate the images and the areas of plaster damage on floor plans, interior elevations, and ceiling plans. If there's significant plaster damage, an architect or engineer should examine the structure; repairs must be done before anyone addresses the paintings.



## Types Of Decorative Painting

**STENCILLING** — A design created by applying the paint to the surface through a template. A different template is used for each color. The technique produces a hard-edged image and precise repetitions.

**POUNCING** — A method for transferring an image onto a surface for painting. First, a drawing is made on tracing paper and the lines are pricked with a pounce wheel, which resembles a tracing wheel. The drawing is positioned on the surface, dusted with chalk, and removed, leaving a dotted-line tracing of the original to be painted in.

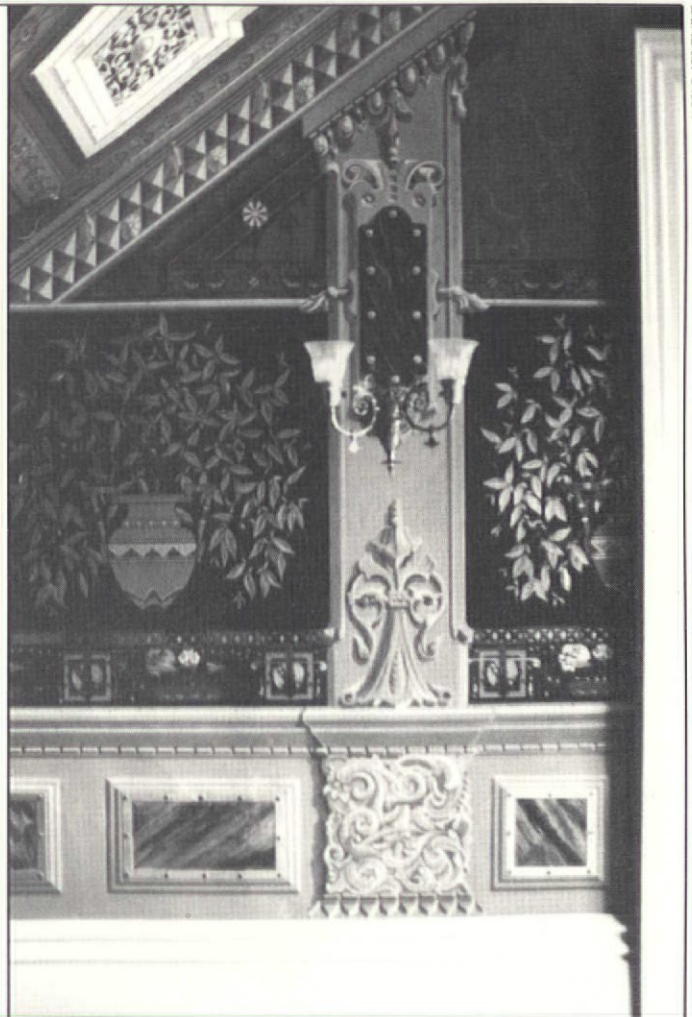
**FREEHAND PAINTING** — Work done without a pattern.

**FAKE WOOD GRAINING OR MARBLEIZING** — Also called "faux bois" or "faux marbre." Paint, glazes, and various methods of texturing are used to imitate wood or marble.

**TROMPE L'OEIL** — A painting technique that uses geometric perspective, light, and shadow to make painted images appear to be three-dimensional. Often used to simulate architectural details.

**FRESCO PAINTING** — Painting done on fresh, damp, lime plaster with water-based paints for which the lime acts as a binder. It is uncommon in the States, but the term is often used incorrectly to mean decorative wall painting.

*This wall in Honolulu House showcases an array of decorative-painting techniques: stencilling, marbleizing, trompe l'oeil (the column is an illusion), & freehand painting.*



Darla M. Olson

## Research

**T**HE FIRST STEP in restoring your paintings is historical research: if they're covered, to prove their existence and to locate them; if exposed, to learn when the paintings were done, by whom, and whether they're original or not. Documents describing local history and the history of the building (its function, original owner, etc.) may contain valuable data. Look for artists' or craftsmen's bills, letters, photographs, diaries, and newspaper articles in municipal or historical-society archives or in family records. For a big job (a mansion or public building), newspapers carried advertisements for "fresco artists."

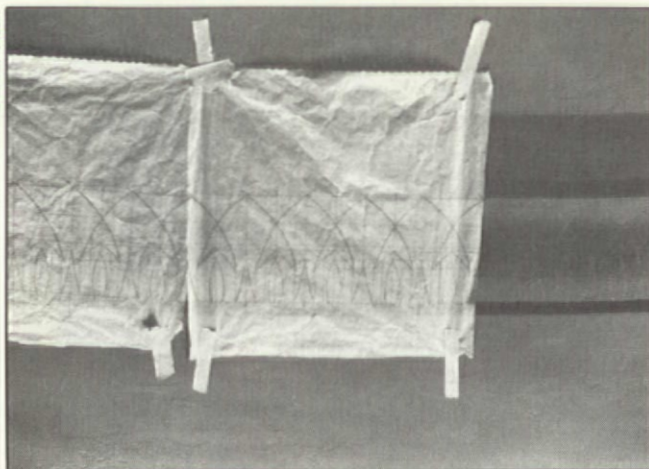
**ASK AROUND YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.** Elderly neighbors may remember your paintings before they were painted over or before the colors were "modernized." Clusters of decorative paintings sometimes exist in a given locale -- you may be able to identify the artist who did your paintings by comparing the style with others nearby. Localized economic booms encouraged such clusters: The newly wealthy often commissioned "dream houses" decorated in the height of fashion, and in the mid- to late 1800s, that meant decorative paintings.

## Locating Images

**A**FTER RESEARCHING documentary evidence, look in the building itself. If your research has not revealed the locations of the paintings, explore areas where they were usually applied: above wainscoting, along cornice lines, in the corners and centers of ceilings. Sometimes you can slide an X-acto blade underneath blistering paint and peel away small areas. You should also look under anachronistic features, such as drop ceilings or light fixtures -- they may be hiding paintings.

**OVERPAINTED IMAGES** sometimes leave visible clues. Temperature differences in the paint layers can cause dirt to cling to the surface along the underlying pattern, creating a dark "ghost image" of the paintings, which usually can be seen under normal light. The extra paint thickness where a pattern has been applied over a field color can create a tiny ridge beneath the overpainting. This can be seen under "raking light": Standing two or three feet from the surface, shine a reflector-type light with a 300-watt bulb along the surface at an angle; the variations in the thicknesses may show up as shadows that trace the patterns.





Above: The pounced pattern on the tracing is dusted with chalk, leaving an image (visible at right) to be painted in.  
Below: Bruce Lanehart in-paints the pounced design.



THESE VESTIGIAL IMAGES should be documented before any paint is removed. Using duct tape, cover each repeat of the ghost pattern with sheets of 5-mil acetate (available at art-supply stores). Tape the edges of the acetate so they don't tear, and trace the outlines carefully with acetate-marking pens.

DOCUMENT THE POSITION ON THE WALL of each part of the pattern as it's traced. Snap a 6-in. grid of chalk lines running the full height and width of the area to be documented, and identify them with numbers and letters like the locating grid on a map. Make corresponding marks on the acetate so it can be registered over the original spot for further documentation or re-creation. When large areas of paint are removed, leave the end points of the grid lines intact so they can be re-snapped, if necessary, to re-register the acetate.

## Uncovering Paintings

**O**VERPAINTED IMAGES can seldom be resurrected intact, especially if the paint layers are firmly bonded together. Therefore, as each layer is removed, the patterns must be documented and paint samples taken for eventual reproduction. This is one of the trickiest processes and should definitely be left to a trained person.

A PASTE-TYPE PAINT REMOVER is usually required to remove overpainting, but mechanical methods are worth trying if the paint is chipping, extremely thick, or flaking off. This usually occurs where layers are incompatible, such as oil paint over a glaze. In that case, you may be able to "pop" it by working a sharp chisel or Number 18 X-acto chisel blade under the cracks at a shallow angle -- being careful not to scratch the substrate.

YOU CAN ALSO CHIP OFF THE PAINT by holding the chisel to the surface and gently tapping it with a small tack hammer. If the paint is thin and loose, you may be able to remove it by firmly pressing strips of duct tape on the paint and peeling it off -- in rare instances, this may leave the underlying paintings in good enough condition to be cleaned and retouched. If the overpainting is distemper, brush it off gently with very fine steel wool or sandpaper, taking care not to abrade the layer you want to save, especially if it's also distemper.

WHERE PAINT REMOVER is required, the process is a delicate one of timing and control. The materials needed for Darla's methods are:

- clear, non-flammable, heavy, paste-type paint remover (follow the safety guidelines on the label)
- a razor-blade-type scraper
- leather gloves
- goggles or a face mask
- an old pot or coffee can fitted with a handle (an old trowel handle will do)
- a 2-1/2-by-2-in., natural-bristle brush (synthetic will melt)
- a container for scrapings

FIRST DETERMINE the number of paint layers and how long each takes to melt. Hold the can of remover up to the surface and slide a layer of paste smoothly onto the wall in one direction in a swooping motion, moving the can with the brush to catch drips. Make a 2-ft.-square test patch and time each layer. The first layer often bubbles right off; scrape it into a container and reapply remover.

STUDY THE REACTIONS of the layers and note the patterns that emerge, down to the plaster. If you have distemper paintings, they were probably absorbed into the later oil and may leave only "ghost images" on the plaster or the first layer of overpainting. Darla says that once she's figured out the pattern in an area, she starts stripping a new one, "going down layer by layer, documenting as I go."

AS THE PAINTINGS start to appear, each layer must be recorded before it's stripped away. Usually the highlight colors and gilding penetrate and become visible in that first, oldest layer of overpainting. Before documenting, make sure any traces of stripper are dry. Lay the acetate over the design and trace it, noting the areas of color on the pattern. Remove the acetate, reapply stripper to expose the body of the design, scrape, and document.

MUCH DECORATIVE PAINTING consists of repeated and reversed patterns, so you don't have to keep on redocumenting the repeats as long as you've recorded where they begin. When the patterns have been traced and the colors noted, they should be redrawn on vellum,



refined, and used to create stencils or pounce patterns for re-creating the paintings. Where sections have been destroyed, you may have to reinvent the design based on material appropriate to the building's period and style.

## Exposed Paintings

**J**UST BECAUSE a painting is visible, that doesn't mean there's no work to be done. You may have to clean it, fill in cracked plaster, and/or in-paint damaged areas of the design. Paintings can be soiled from graffiti, repeated touching, old varnish, household dust, coal dust, and air pollution. Paint types and finishes determine which procedures and materials to use. But even in one building, there's no stock procedure for a given surface because of differences in the type of soil, paint chemistry, temperature, and humidity. When cleaning decorative paintings, the rule of thumb is to start with the most innocuous method and work up to stronger ones.

**DISTEMPER PAINTINGS** cannot be cleaned with liquid, nor do they withstand abrasion well. Test for distemper by rubbing a small, inconspicuous spot with a moistened finger -- if color comes off, it's distemper. Following the principle of Most Innocuous First, begin by vacuuming the surface very lightly with a soft-bristle-brush attachment.

**NEXT**, in a 1-ft.-square test area, determine how embedded the soil is by gently rubbing the paintings with green Eberhard erasers or the dry-cleaning pads that architects use to clean drawings (little cloth bags filled with a slightly gritty powder that picks up dirt -- available from art or drafting supply stores). As you work, keep checking the paintings for signs of abrasion. Repeat this procedure over the entire surface.

**AS YOU CLEAN**, you may find previous attempts to restore the paintings. If that overpainting was done badly or used incompatible paint, you'll probably need to scrape or strip those sections and in-paint with distemper.

## Cleaning Matte-Oil Finishes

**M**ATTE-OIL FINISHES are also hard to clean because they're porous and absorb dirt easily. But they can be cleaned with liquids and are more resistant to abrasion than distemper. Proceed as with distemper, starting with a soft brush or a vacuum cleaner, followed by dry-cleaning pads and erasers. Areas with complicated glazes, delicate brushwork, and metallic leafing are easily abraded and so require a light touch. Do as much as possible using the dry method.

**IF THESE TACTICS DON'T WORK**, begin testing the following series of liquid cleansers in the order listed:

- vinegar and hot water (1 cup/1 gallon)
- Soilax and water (1 oz./1 gallon)
- Murphy's Oil Soap and water (as indicated on label)
- concentrated Soilax solution (1 tbsp. Soilax /1 cup water)



Malcolm Krosstine

A bad touch-up can be worse than no repair at all, as you can see from the peeling paint and unmatching colors in this photo.

- non-sudsy, clear ammonia or (in a pinch -- this is very dangerous to use) stronger ammonia and water (a few drops to a cup)

**TEST IN 1-FT.-SQUARE PATCHES** in different parts of the paintings. Patterned areas, field areas, and certain colors may all react differently -- cleaning methods that work in one area may not work in others. Do as much as you can with the mildest method before going to the next.

**THE PROCEDURE FOR EACH CLEANSER** is basically the same. Prepare three containers: a bucket of solution for refills (except when using the stronger ammonia -- a cupful is dangerous enough, to both the paintings and your lungs); a smaller container to work from; a third for rinse water. Always wear gloves and goggles (and for ceiling work, a face mask). Saturate a natural sponge or the finest grade steel wool in the solution, squeeze out the excess, and apply it gently (no scrubbing) to a 4- to 6-in.-square area. Clean the wall from the bottom up, and wipe off drips immediately with a damp, clean sponge. Usually, matte surfaces have to be cleaned twice.

**IF SOIL** is firmly bound into the paint, the last resort is a poultice of lime and plaster of paris (photo on the next page). The alkali in the plaster actually disintegrates a microscopic layer of paint that holds much of the soil. It's very effective but can also strip the paintings.

**TO MAKE THE POULTICE**, mix dry equal portions of regular plaster of paris and Ivoryclad Hydrated Finishing Lime. Sift into a bucket of water until the water can't absorb anymore; stir until smooth. Using a small (1-1/2-in.-by-4-in.) finishing trowel, apply 1/8- to 1/4-in.-thick test patches, in 1-1/2-in. squares, on different areas of the paintings. Time the plaster's reaction periods -- it usually takes around 45 to 60 minutes to lift the soil off the painting. But you must test each wall because plaster reacts differently on walls of different temperature and humidity (drying more slowly on an outside wall than an inside wall, for example). Don't leave it on beyond the tested time.





A plaster poultice is used to rescue the trompe l'oeil frieze border in one room of Connecticut's Lockwood-Matthews Mansion (Richard Bergmann, Restoration Architect). Louise Stoltz is applying the poultice. (Note the already-cleaned section of border to her right.)



Darla Olson removes the poultice — the surface seems as dirty as before, but . . .



. . . as Darla washes down the area with a hot-water-and-vinegar solution, the frieze returns to elegant life.

AFTER TESTING reaction times, apply plaster in small sections along a moulding or pattern area, leaving slits for inserting a trowel to break off the plaster. Plaster sets fast, so it's best to do this with two or three people: one to mix small batches of plaster and one or two to apply it. When you remove the plaster, be careful not to gouge the paintings with the trowel. In dryer areas, the plaster may fall off by itself. When it does, the paintings will still look dirty, but they'll come clean when washed with hot water and vinegar. This process blanches the surface, but after cleaning, plaster repair, and in-painting, the colors are varnished and become fully saturated again. This technique works best on busy pattern areas; the cracks between plaster patches leave unsightly lines of dirt on field areas.

## Cleaning Glazed Oil Paintings

**G**LAZED OIL PAINTINGS are coated with varnish that may have yellowed over the years and become impregnated with soil. When cleaning them, you want to loosen the dirty layer with a solvent -- totally stripping the varnish removes the patina with it.

TRY THESE SOLVENTS in the order listed:

- pure mineral spirits (paint thinner)
- acetone and paint thinner (3/2)
- denatured alcohol and water (1/1)
- denatured alcohol, turpentine, and acetone (5/3/1/)

MIX EACH SOLUTION in a gallon can or jar, but work from a tuna can. Apply solvents with non-sterile household cotton. Soak a small wad of cotton in the solvent and wring out the excess. Working in 4- to 6-in. squares, rub the varnish in a circular motion. Keep turning the cotton inside out to get a clean surface, and check it frequently for color -- a sign that the varnish has been stripped. The solvents will blanch the paintings, but this disappears once fresh varnish is applied.

CAUTION: These solvents are volatile, flammable, and toxic. Make sure the space is well ventilated. Darla recommends wearing goggles, a toxic-fumes respirator, and two pairs of rubber gloves. The discarded cotton is a real fire hazard (spontaneous combustion); throw it in a covered container and remove it immediately to the outdoors after each work session.

## Surface Preparation

**I**F YOU'RE VERY FORTUNATE, your newly cleaned paintings will need only light touch-ups and a coat of protective varnish. Even so, there will probably be small cracks in the plaster, 1/32 to 1/16 inch wide (wider ones are repaired before cleaning). These should be scraped out, filled, and in-painted to match. (Hair-line cracks don't need filling.) Widen them a little by inserting a #18 X-acto chisel blade into the crack and tapping it lightly with a tack hammer. Rake out the loose plaster underneath with the the blade or the point of a can opener, slightly undercutting the crack in an inverted "V."





USING A STANDARD MIX of slaked lime and plaster, fill in and smooth the crack following traditional plastering techniques. Take care not to let plaster sit on the adjacent paintings. Let it dry for several weeks. Test for dryness by striking a wooden match on the plaster -- if it's too damp, the match won't light. The plaster will shrink slightly, to about the depth of a paint layer. Level it with a thin layer of drywall compound applied with a palette knife; allow to dry overnight; and sand lightly without scratching the adjacent paintings.

## In-Painting

**B**EFORE IN-PAINTING, paint the plaster with a penetrating oil-based primer/sealer that accepts acrylic emulsion. (Acrylics are preferable to oils for in-painting oil paintings because the colors are stable.) First, test the primer for adhesion by sticking a layer of duct tape to it and peeling it off after one hour. If more than a few flakes come off with it, the primer hasn't penetrated and must be stripped; the plaster may be wet, dirty, or greasy.

ONCE THE PAINTINGS ARE CLEANED, the colors can be matched. Always match colors under natural light or 3400-K photographic floodlights. Match a swatch of dry varnished acrylic emulsion to an area of dry varnished original. Determining the original colors of oil paint can be difficult, because they darken considerably when covered for long periods. Before matching, try bringing them back to their original brightness by exposing them to ultraviolet light from the sun or a UV lamp.

**DISTEMPER COLORS** that have been overpainted are difficult to restore accurately, because they'll have been distorted by the overlying paint's moisture -- and usually will have absorbed some of its color, too. But it's often possible to find little pockets of fresh color which are locked into porous areas of plaster. Once examined under a microscope, they can be matched easily. If the distemper wasn't overpainted, you can scrape away a patch of its surface to reveal a fresher color.

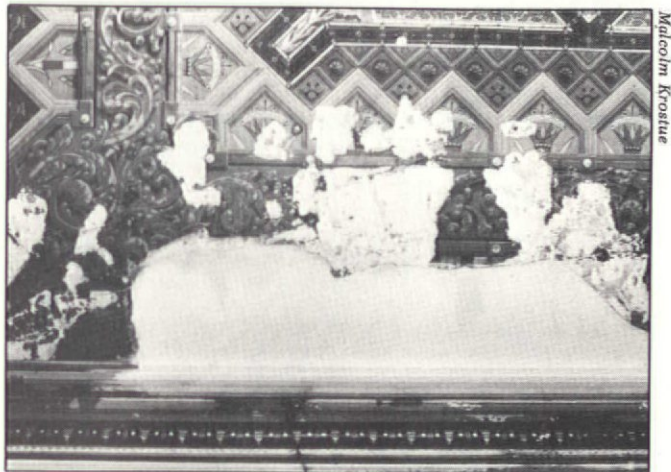
**SAMPLES OF FRESH COLOR** should be preserved as a permanent record of the original condition of the paintings; match them with Munsell System colors, and code them accordingly. The Munsell Color System is a universal system for documenting color; it's used by artists, architects, conservators, printers, and others who need a fixed, non-subjective color-reference system. Getting an exact match may be difficult, but a close Munsell match is still the best reference for recording purposes.

**SAYS DARLA**, "Color is difficult to determine because it is the nature of materials to constantly change. Realistically, the best you can do is create a very close interpretation. It is important not to rely exclusively on microscopic analysis to determine the original color scheme. You need to understand the artist's color concept to replicate what he did. Perhaps he used a cheaper color to cover a large area, saving the expensive color for the final coat. Or maybe he painted an undercoat of one color to give a certain character to



Malcolm Kroetue

Dirty glaze is removed from a decorative painting in Michigan's Honolulu House (Hasbrouck Hunderman, Restoration Arch.).



Malcolm Kroetue

The surface has been cleaned, the bad overpainting removed, and the plaster patched. Now the in-painting can begin.

the overpainting. It takes a combination of microscopic analysis, paint removal, and an artist's intuition."

**AFTER DETERMINING** the color scheme, the base or field coat is applied. The pattern is registered and transferred to the plaster; missing sections of the design are in-painted. With oil paintings, the final touch is to take a wide, soft brush and varnish with two coats of matte Soluvar (never polyurethane!), thinned with an equal part of mineral spirits. 🖌️

New York-based architectural-art conservator Darla M. Olson has restored painted interiors throughout the U.S. Her projects include Wheeler Opera House (Aspen, Colo.), Ebenezer Maxwell House (Philadelphia, Pa.), Lockwood-Matthews Mansion (Norwalk, Conn.), South Church (Nantucket, Mass.). Her work has been featured in the New York Times, Architectural Record, and other periodicals.





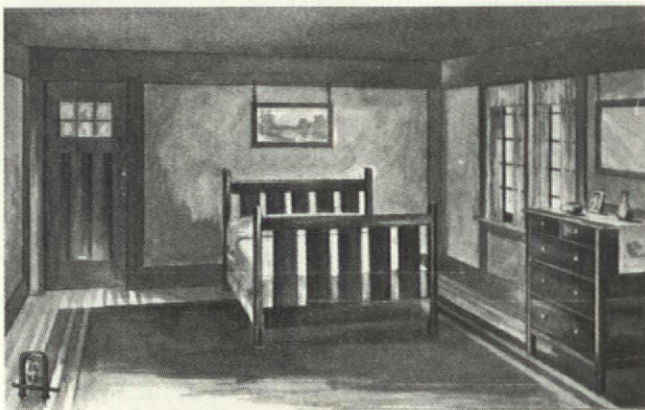
# PAINTING ADVICE

## from THE CRAFTSMAN



**BETWEEN** 1901 and 1916, a man named Gustav Stickley published a magazine entitled *The Craftsman*. In it he promoted a vision of how people should live: close to nature, untroubled by the frivolous trappings of commercial society, in houses made of natural materials and filled with handmade goods. Through house plans and articles on decorating, Stickley rigidly defined what should and shouldn't be in the ideal home. He was a tyrannical arbiter of taste; even so, his popularity was enormous. Craftsman philosophy and design affected almost every home built from the turn of the century through the 1920s. This article deals with some of Stickley's suggestions (more like commands) regarding painting.

STICKLEY MADE FEW compromises applying his philosophy, and using paint usually wasn't one of them. He considered paint an artifice that concealed the true nature of the material underneath. It seems he had trouble even uttering the word, using "tint" or "tone" instead.



This simple bedroom, designed for a bungalow, has intentionally mottled plaster framed by dark timbers.

NEVERTHELESS PAINT IS mentioned, albeit subtly, in many of his essays and descriptions. Its use was limited -- but could be dramatic, as in the murals that filled Craftsman friezes, or the earthy color schemes Stickley and friends advise.

### A WORD ON THE EXTERIOR

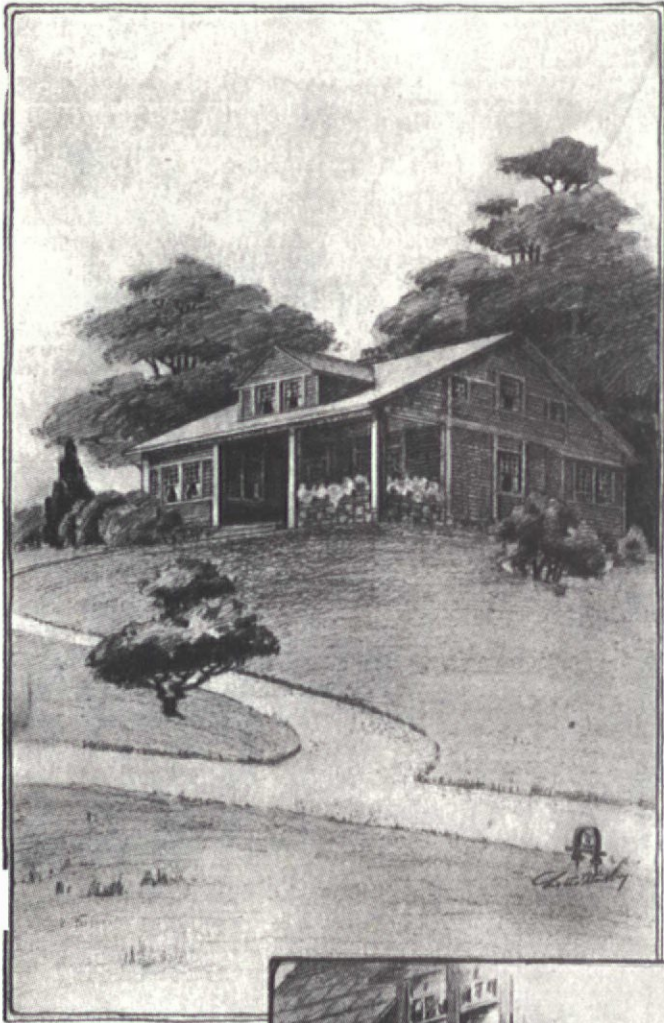
CRAFTSMAN HOUSES MADE of rough stone and weathered shingles left little room for paint. Stucco could sometimes be "tinted"; it's not clear whether Stickley means with stain or paint, "brushed on irregularly, giving a general tone of green that yet is not a smooth color." Shutters, too, could be painted, sometimes in a different color on each storey of the house. Beams that decorated the exterior of a shingled house (see illustration, facing page) could be highlighted with cream-colored paint; this was not dishonest, in Stickley's view, because it served to accent the underlying structure.

PAINT WAS ALSO THE BEST option for coloring roof shingles deep red; in this case, Stickley says, stains are insufficient. And white paint appears on the classical posts that frequently support Craftsman porches or pergolas. This was rationalized as a way to emphasize the dark, natural woodwork behind the posts.

### AND ON THE INTERIOR

STICKLEY LAID DOWN several strict decorating commandments. One: Never paint woodwork, lest its "friendliness" be destroyed by some "foreign color." Two: Bring art and nature into the home, especially in the form of stencils and murals. "Let us call in the artist, bid him leave his easel pictures, and paint on our walls and over the chimney corner landscapes and scenes ... which shall speak of nature ... shall become part of the room." And three: Don't succumb to the vagaries of fashion. "Let us have rooms which once deco-





Two permissible uses of paint on Craftsman house exteriors were decorative beams (above — a cream accent was recommended), and classically-inspired porch posts (right), painted pure white.



rated are always decorated...." The goal was to create a retreat, where the artwork was permanent and would never need "updating."

STICKLEY'S APPROACH to decorating was holistic, and began with the woodwork. To keep the decor harmonious, the plentiful woodwork had to determine the color scheme, simply because there was so much of it (wainscoting, built-in furniture, grilles, etcetera), and also because of its near-religious significance in Craftsman philosophy. For example, if the woodwork were oak (Stickley was fond of this material because it ages well, which suits a house that will be decorated only once), it should be finished in a "rich nut-brown," which gives a "mellow sunny effect to the whole decorative scheme." Above that the plaster frieze would be done in a "warm tawny yellow," and from there the rest of the house's decorating scheme would follow.

OTHER PLASTER COLOR options included muted shades such as "dull green," gray, or biscuit, on rough- or sand-finished surfaces. The suggested method for applying these tones was to either leave the plaster in its natural state of gray (recommended almost invariably for ceilings), or treat it "with a coat of shellac or wax that carries the color desired," or "color" the surface (still no mention of the word paint) while it is still wet, "with a large flat brush, a process which incorporates the color in the plaster and gives it an agreeable texture, by reason of the markings make (sic) by the brush; the result being a beautiful tint of the color employed, free from the painty look so often seen in colored walls, and making the observer question the material." (Of course most homeowners won't

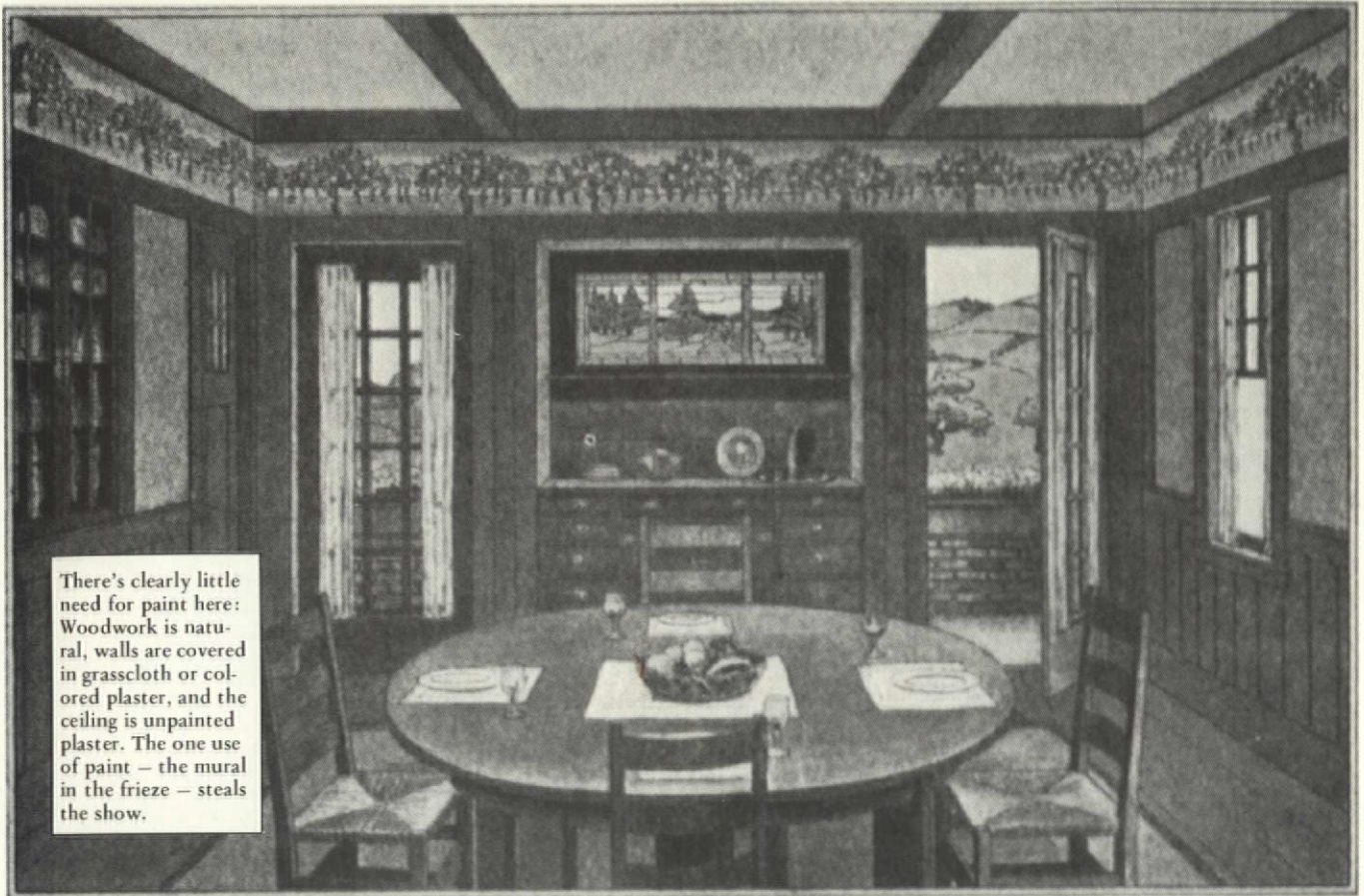
have an opportunity to paint the plaster while it's fresh, unless you're replastering. Take comfort in knowing that, then as now, color was undoubtedly more often applied to dry plaster.) A mottled effect was intentional. The Craftsman ideal when finishing either wood or plaster was to have them look exactly like what they were.

WHEN IT CAME TO PAINTING friezes, the Craftsmanite had freer reign. Stencils and murals ranged in scope from repeating bands of simple, geometric, stylized flowers, to elaborate forest panoramas. Natural forms invariably provided the subject matter.

ACCESSORIES PLAYED a central role in The Craftsman's unified decorative schemes. Everything had to be coordinated: Rugs and curtains, for instance, repeated the patterns of the stained glass or of the stencils; these were pieces designed for the individual house and meant to remain there. A whole room's tones could be based on one Japanese print (in harmony with the woodwork, of course).







There's clearly little need for paint here: Woodwork is natural, walls are covered in grasscloth or colored plaster, and the ceiling is unpainted plaster. The one use of paint — the mural in the frieze — steals the show.

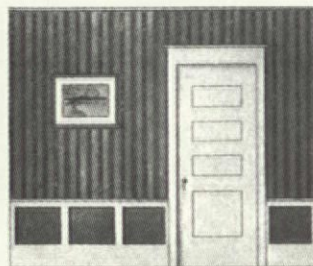
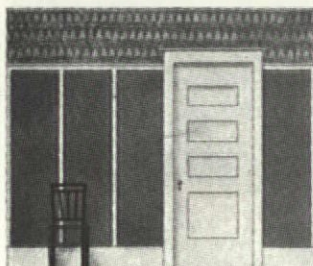
Or a single choice "object" could balance a color scheme: If it "presents, by way of foil, its own complementary color," it prevents a room from becoming "dead and uninteresting."



**T**HE WHOLE FIRST FLOOR was meant to be coordinated -- something else to keep in mind when choosing paint colors and placement. Often in Stickley's plans, halls and living and dining areas flow into one another. Ideally the three areas would have the same kind of woodwork, and in them the decorator would "treat the upper walls ... alike, as the object is to give a sense of space, dignity, and restfulness to the part of the house that is most lived in."

## THE LIVING ROOM AND HALLWAY

THE CRAFTSMAN DESCRIBED in detail one exemplary home. Its living room had a fireplace tiled in blue-green tiles of varying shade, a



Though he told readers never to paint woodwork, Stickley was not unwilling to compromise on the bedroom walls.

hearth of dark red brick, woodwork fumed to a rich brown, walls tinted a "pale, sappy green," and the leather of the built-in seats and bookcase dyed a pale golden yellow. The floors were yellow, and the ceiling, of course, the gray of plaster. An open mesh linen hanging enlivened the "somewhat quiet scheme of color," a piece designed especially for this room. A Donegal rug and bookcase curtains repeated the main colors of the room; they too were intended to be permanent. Pictures on the walls were avoided, considered "superfluous and discordant."

THE HALLWAY "calls for a cheerful treatment that shall give a presage of the hospitality to be found beyond." Golden tones, "from a full dark orange to a pale lemon yellow," prevailed, and would be "contrasted at the extreme end of the hall by some object of pottery, or a fabric of a dull violet." The only other decorations were Japanese prints framed in dull ebony, "of a good period and by approved masters, hung at irregular intervals and heights."

## THE DINING ROOM

"THE DINING ROOM, being used [only] at special periods, admits of a trifle stronger and more brilliant treatment. Here, the walls are a strong golden yellow, the ceiling the gray of the plaster, and the woodwork a rich olive green" [ed.'s note: this is probably stain and not paint]; "the visible wall in the alcove for the







The woodwork is stained light brown, the frieze is tawny yellow (ochre). The stencilled motif consists of white ribbons with deep green accents. Walls are mauve trimmed in sage green bands. The ceiling is pale gray, unpainted plaster, and the rugs and fireplace have subtle green backgrounds. The floor is dark, almost black.

sideboard is a dark, dull Indian red, and the floor a golden yellow, with a large moss-green rug in the center. Extending about the room is a small pseudo-frieze, which has for its color a bright Venetian red. The windows are hung with a fabric akin to India silk, whose color is, largely, a creamy white, old rose, and gold. The leaded window over the sideboard is framed with broad bands of blackened copper; while the martins in the designs are of a dark gray blue, with circles or halos about their heads of a bright yellow, and all against a background of cloudy, milk-colored opaque glass," with streaks of dull turquoise.

### THE KITCHEN AND BATH

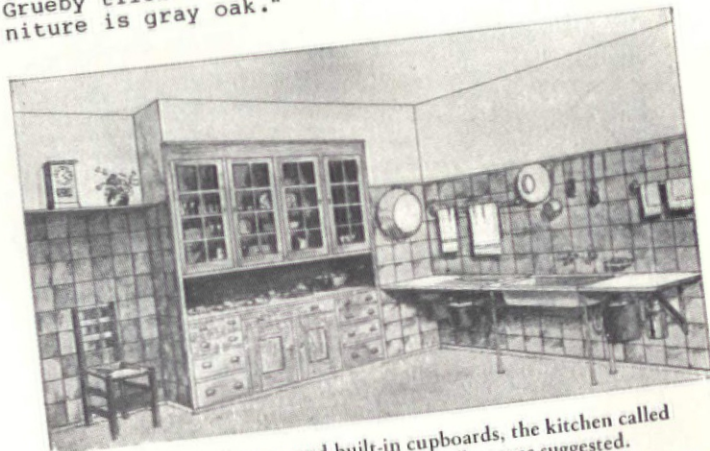
THE KITCHEN, "being one of the warmest rooms in the house," should have a color scheme "suggestive of coolness." The tiles lining the floor, of rubber or cement, should be in blues and greens and rise to form wainscoting. The wallpaper above should be greenish gray, with a pale lemon yellow ceiling; all this "will remove from the kitchen its usual ugly and neglected appearance."



THE CRAFTSMAN CHOICE of bathroom colors will probably surprise the modern reader: yellow and red. "It is especially desired that the frigid white and blue decorations of the ordinary bathroom be avoided. If there is any one place in the house that should look as well as be comfortable, it is the bathroom."

### THE BEDROOMS

THE DECORATION OF the bedrooms would depend upon how much sunlight they get. Northern rooms, presumably the cooler ones, "would seem to demand a coloration of yellows and orange, or reds and orange," and those on the south "schemes of green and blues." In a house Stickley designed and built at Craftsman Farms in 1911, there were two bedrooms, at opposite ends of the house: "One of them is furnished and decorated in yellow and seems aglow with sunshine; the other, a much larger room, is done in blue and gray with woodwork of dark gumwood. The walls are covered with gray Japanese grass-cloth, the hearth is of dull blue Grueby tiles with a brass hood, and the furniture is gray oak."



With its tile, wallpaper, and built-in cupboards, the kitchen called for paint only on its ceiling - a cheery yellow was suggested.



# Checklist for Painting

**A**LTHOUGH LEVELS OF SKILL vary, everyone has some sense of how to paint. A novice painter can apply a smooth, lasting finish on a well-prepared surface, but even the most experienced painter can't do a good job on an inadequately-prepared one. Surface preparation is 90% of the job.

THIS CHECKLIST IS a guide to good preparation. An experienced restorer may find much of this list to be second-nature, by now. But no matter how many times you've prepared surfaces for painting, it helps to have a list of all the considerations involved -- just to make sure you didn't overlook anything. If you're going to hire a contractor to do the job, this will enable you to discuss the job. What we're presenting here is essentially a set of job specifications, written in layman's language.

by Jonathan Poore & Bill O'Donnell

## I. Inspection

DON'T RUSH into a major project; look the job over carefully. A close inspection helps you decide whether to do the job yourself or hire it out, how long the job will take, and how much it will cost.

### A. DON'T COMPLETELY REPAINT WHEN:

1. The existing paint is intact, but dirty. A thorough cleaning will freshen its appearance without adding unnecessary paint layers.
2. Cleaning and minor touch-ups will revive the finish. If the paint hasn't faded significantly, it will be fairly

easy to match the color and just touch-up where needed.

3. It would be more appropriate to strip the surface of existing paint. For example, hardwood trim with insensitive layers of paint, masonry that has only a few flecks of paint remaining, etc.

### B. CONSIDER REPAINTING THE SURFACE (AFTER REPAIRS ARE MADE) WHEN YOU FIND:

1. Paint failure --
  - a. Flaking and peeling
  - b. Intercoat peeling
  - c. Cracking and alligating
  - d. Efflorescence
  - e. Chalking and streaking (check for interior calcimine)
  - f. Thick buildup that obscures detail

- g. Staining from knots, water, rust, etc.
- h. Faded color

2. Open joints -- unsightly on the interior, and destructive on your building's exterior (permit water to enter)

### C. LOOK FOR UNDERLYING PROBLEMS AND MISCELLANEOUS REPAIRS.

1. Moisture problems --
  - a. Rising damp
  - b. Leaking roof or gutters
  - c. Deteriorated flashing
  - d. Mold or mildew
  - e. Plumbing leaks
2. Carpentry repairs --
  - a. Doors and windows in proper working order
  - b. Miscellaneous carpentry (damaged or missing components, open joints, etc.)

## II. Planning

YOUR INSPECTION may have shown that painting should be postponed until repairs or reconstruction are completed. Now, devise a realistic plan, considering such things as:

### A. TIMELINE:

1. If repairs and preparation are extensive, plan to do the work in phases. Will you do all the preparation, then all the painting? Or will you work on one room (or one side of the exterior) from start to finish? Determine logical breaks.
2. Do not leave any exterior surfaces bare -- prime even if finish painting has to wait.
3. If work will be contracted out, determine order so that tradespeople don't conflict. (The electricians should finish before the plasterers begin, for example.)

### B. FINISH SYSTEM. WILL YOU USE:

1. Paint? -- No need to remove previous coatings if sound.
2. Stain? (semi-transparent or opaque) -- Previous paint layers must be totally removed.



Paint applied over obvious problems will fail again -- unless inspection reveals the cause to be corrected first.



3. Canvas or wallcoverings? -- Surface must be sound, but needn't be perfect. Consider time and skill necessary to install wallcovering.

#### C. ACCESS TO JOB. WILL YOU NEED:

1. Step ladder or extension ladders?
2. Ladder jacks?
3. Scaffolding?

#### D. DO-IT-YOURSELF VS. HIRING.

1. With what you know of scope of job, is it feasible to do it yourself?
2. If budget is low, you may have thought it would be cheaper to do the work yourself. But if work requires special tools/materials that you don't own, cost of these objects must be factored in.
3. Consider dividing job into d-i-y and contracted phases. Doing some phase of work yourself may save money or assure you of painstaking work where it counts.
4. Don't forget: "Time is money." Your time has value, too. If you're not as well equipped or experienced as a contractor, it will likely take you much longer to do the same amount of work. Mistakes are expensive on large projects.

### III. Setting Up

EITHER YOU or the contractor should first:

#### A. REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS:

1. Furnishings
2. Easily dismantled hardware or trim (light fixtures, wall plates, shutters, etc.)
3. Trim trees and shrubs so that they don't contact building. Tie back untrimmed vegetation for easy access and safety.
4. Remove vines and abandoned utility wires from the exterior. (Be sure the utility wires are in fact abandoned.)

#### B. PROTECT AND MASK:

1. Cover floors with kraft paper and/or dropcloths.
2. Cover pavement and ground with dropcloths.

3. Wrap remaining hardware and fixtures with kraft paper or plastic and tape securely.

4. Mask small pieces of hardware (like door hinges) with masking tape.

5. Protect adjacent surfaces not to be painted as needed. (See "Masking Before Painting," page 175.)

6. Cover nearby shrubs only as long as required.

7. Take additional care when masking area where paint will be mixed and poured.

3. Mold and Mildew -- Use 50/50 mixture of bleach and warm water to kill fungi. Scrub the areas with a scrub brush and water (a little TSP -- tri-sodium phosphate -- speeds the cleanup). Determine cause of excess moisture and remedy as required to prevent recurrence.

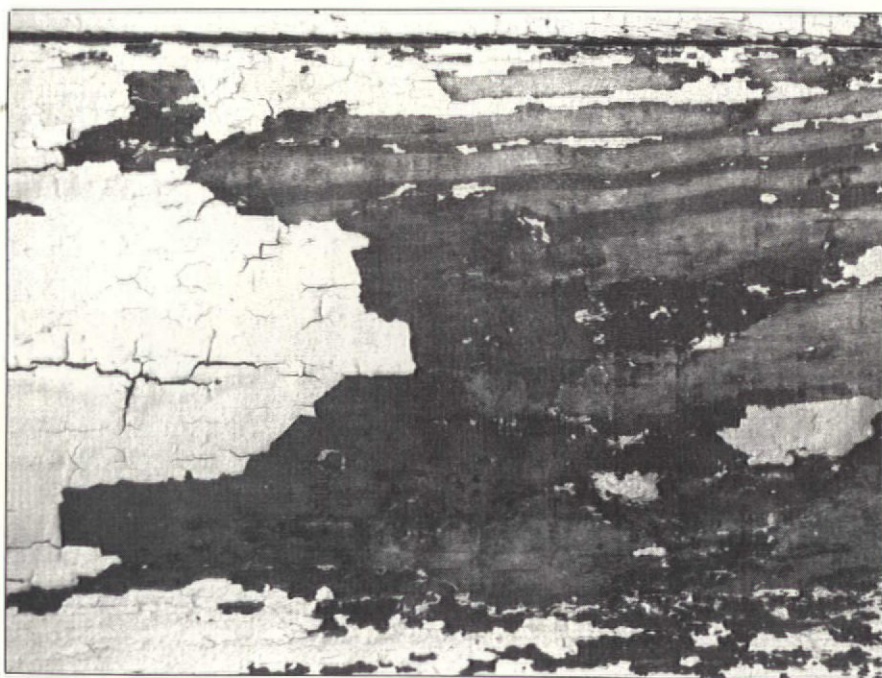
4. Grease -- Scrub with detergent and warm water. If stain is stubborn (like crayon), cover with pigmented shellac before painting.

5. Oily residues on new galvanized metal -- Scrub off with TSP and water.

6. Efflorescence -- Wire-brush masonry to remove salts and loose paint. Correct moisture problem before repainting.

#### D. SCRAPE AND/OR STRIP:

1. Flaking, peeling or blistering paint. Scrape down to sound substrate, determine cause of failure, and remedy moisture conditions. Prime bare wood before repainting. Solve exterior moisture problems (leaky gutters, etc.). Exterior peeling or blistering may be caused by water migrating from interior. Ventilate high-humidity areas (kitchens and baths), and install a vapor barrier. Severe exterior paint buildup aggravates problem -- strip excessive paint layers.



Here, alligatored paint has failed down to bare wood, exposing the clapboard to weathering.



2. Excessive paint buildup that obscures architectural detail or shows signs of alligating. Adding another coat of paint to an alligatored surface will only compound the problem. Strip the existing paint, prime, and repaint.

#### E. REMOVE UNNECESSARY LAYERS:

1. Wallpaper should be removed before painting (especially with latex; water-based paint will loosen bond to wall). Vinyl wallcoverings can usually be pulled off. Most paper wallcoverings will succumb to hot water. Stubborn ones may require steaming. Thoroughly rinse size and paste residue, and prime with an oil/alkyd sealer or pigmented shellac before painting with latex.

2. Tapes, stickers and miscellaneous adhesives. Most are water-soluble and come off much like wallpaper. For others, test with mineral spirits or acetone. Acetone works well on bubble-gum.

3. Roofing tar will bleed through new finish and cause wrinkling and crazing of new coating. Scrape off as much as possible. Dry ice will embrittle it, making it easier to knock off. Scrub residue with mineral spirits.



Weathering is worst on exposed horizontal surfaces. This rail must be scraped, treated with a water repellent, and primed before painting.

#### F. REPAIRS:

1. Repair windows and doors so they are fully functional. Allow enough clearance between moving parts for paint-film thickness. Selectively strip areas of excessive buildup. Prime exposed wood on sash before reglazing.

2. Consolidate, patch, or replace all rotted or missing wood. Back-prime all exposed wood before installing new parts.

3. Back-prime all new galvanized sheet metal patches before installing.

4. Allow a minimum of 30 days before painting newly repointed or refaced masonry. Neutralize with dilute muriatic acid before painting.

5. Allow a minimum of 30 days before painting new plasterwork. Non-alkaline patching materials (like joint compound) may be painted immediately.

#### G. SANDING, FILLING, AND CAULKING:

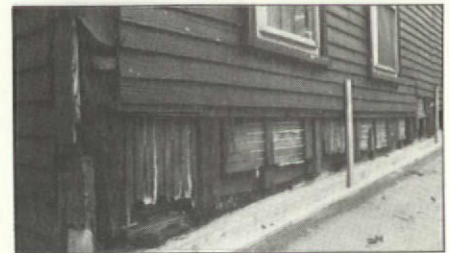
1. Sand all glossy surfaces before painting. Wet-sand where a fine finish is important or dust is objectionable.

2. Prepare severely weathered wood before painting.  
a. Sand weathered wood.

b. Formula for bare, weathered wood: Mixture of boiled linseed oil and paint thinner brushed on in two or three applications (allow 24 hours between coats). Let dry for three days and prime with oil/alkyd sealer.

c. A WR (water repellent) or WRP (water repellent preservative) can be applied to bare, weathered wood on horizontal surfaces. (Sand before application.) Allow to dry thoroughly, and use compatible primer.

d. Rotted wood should be replaced with standard carpentry repairs. Minor rot or weathering can be consolidated and/or filled with exterior epoxies.



Inspection just might reveal the need for repairs that take precedence over painting.

3. Sand (feather) pocked areas where failed paint has been removed.

4. Knock bumps and pimples off plaster or existing finish with sharp paint scraper.

5. Remove all sanding dust and residue before painting.

6. Fill all open knots and nail holes (rigid fillers may be used only in masonry and plaster).

7. Exterior caulking:

a. Caulk all cracks and joints where there is potential water penetration.

b. Pack all joints wider than 1/4 inch with backer rods before caulking.

c. Seal with paintable urethane caulk after priming.

d. Apply silicone caulks after application of finish coats -- choose appropriate tint.

e. Leave joints in protected areas open for ventilation of cavity wall (e.g., under clapboards).

8. Interior caulking:

a. Caulk with paintable urethane or acrylic latex caulk after priming.

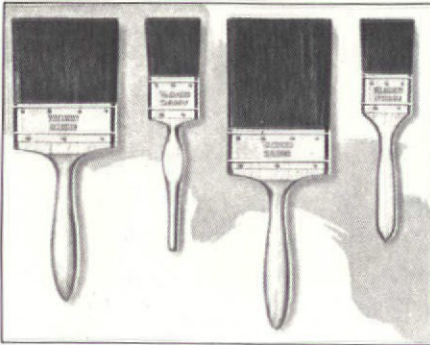
b. Caulk all open joints -- especially around windows, doors, and other through-wall fittings which allow air infiltration.



## IV. Application

### A. TOOLS:

1. Brushes -- The most versatile paint-application tools. Buy high-quality brushes suited to the job. (See "Paintbrushes," page 171.) Use a paintbrush for:
  - a. Trim, windows, and doors
  - b. Corners and edges
  - c. Clapboards
  - d. Cutting in to adjacent surfaces



2. Rollers -- Best for covering a broad, flat area. Rollers produce a consistent textured finish, but this is not objectionable to most. Use a roller for:
  - a. Ceilings and walls
  - b. Brick, stucco, and other masonry (use a long nap roller)
3. Sprayers -- Fastest and best method for areas where brushing is likely to cause dripping and pooling. Sprayers should not be used for applying primer (the primer won't penetrate or adhere as well as it would with brushing or rolling). Consider using a sprayer for:
  - a. Turnings or balusters
  - b. Elaborate trim
  - c. Radiators
  - d. Shutters
  - e. Single finish-coat application over a large area (there's only one cleanup)
4. Foam pads -- Nearly useless for all but the thinnest (most fluid) coatings. We have found them useful for applying penetrating-oil finishes (the oil runs out of a brush too fast).

### B. PRIMING AND SEALING:

1. Spot-prime all bare wood, metal, and masonry before caulking and applying top coat(s).
2. When paint system is

being changed (say, oil to latex), prime all surfaces. Use same brand of paint for primer and top coat(s).

3. Seal knots, water stains, and greasy or waxy stains with pigmented shellac (inside) or exterior-grade knot sealer before priming.

4. All surfaces previously covered with wall coverings, calcimine, or other water-soluble material must be primed with alkyd primer or pigmented shellac.

### C. FINISH COAT(S):

1. Apply only one finish coat if paint buildup is a problem.
2. Selectively apply two finish coats to exterior surfaces where severe weathering is a problem.
3. Apply one finish coat to well-prepared interior surfaces unless coverage is a problem (as when going from a dark to light color).
4. Interior painting sequence:
  - a. Ceiling
  - b. Walls
  - c. Windows (scrape old paint from glass before painting)
    - (1) Mating surfaces of meeting rail
    - (2) Muntins
    - (3) Sash
    - (4) Jamb
    - (5) Trim
  - d. Doors
    - (1) Panel mouldings
    - (2) Panels
    - (3) Rails and stiles
  - e. Baseboard and miscellaneous trim
5. Exterior painting sequence:
  - a. Body (starting at top)
  - b. Windows (same as above)

- c. Additional trim
- d. Doors (same as above)

### D. TOUCH-UPS:

1. Selective touch-ups may be used instead of complete recoating when coverage is thin in some areas.
2. Large, flat interior surfaces with a semi-gloss or gloss finish cannot be touched up without becoming conspicuous -- recoat.

## V. Cleanup

### A. CLEANUP:

1. Clean all painting tools immediately with appropriate solvent.
2. Unmask immediately after paint is dry to prevent damaging surfaces with tape.
3. Clean tape residue with mineral spirits or acetone.
4. Remove drips and splatters before they harden.
5. Seal and label leftover paint (especially custom colors) for future touch-ups.

### B. MAINTENANCE:

1. Inspect exterior annually. Look for moisture problems, clogged gutters, overgrown vegetation, etc.
2. Clean exterior annually, paying special attention to protected areas that collect dirt. Kill mold and mildew as soon as it appears.
3. Wash interior finishes as required. On flat-finish surfaces, vacuum rather than wash. (Washing may smear dirt into finish.)

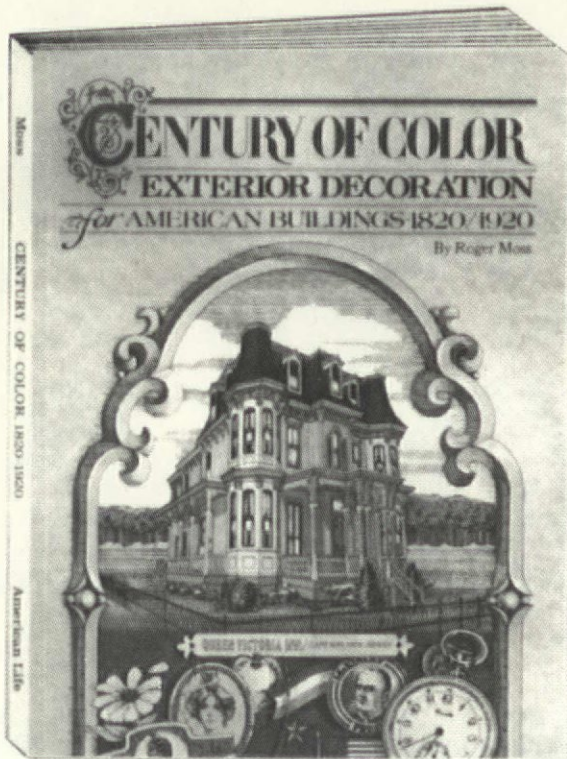


Scraping and painting in Salt Lake City.



# "What Color Should I Paint My House?"

## Century Of Color Has The Answer!

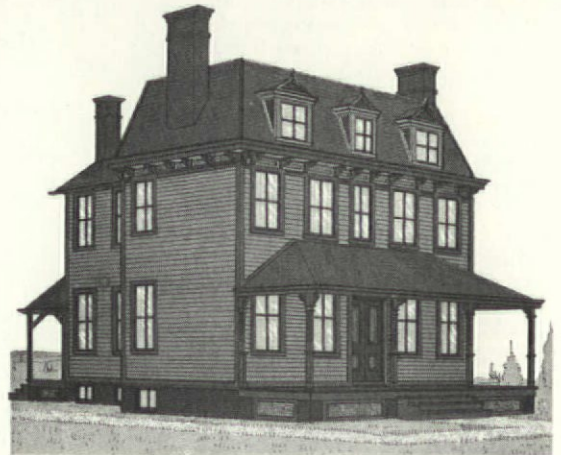


Our subscribers are always writing us for advice on which exterior-paint scheme would be most appropriate for their old house. If this question is on your mind, the first thing you should do is consult *Century Of Color* by Dr. Roger Moss — the most comprehensive and practical guide available to authentic, historically accurate, exterior paint colors. This book is a unique documentary history that covers a full century — from 1820 to 1920 — of American architectural styles and their exterior coloration.

Dr. Moss, noted architectural historian and executive director of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, balances his clear, readable text with 100 full-color, period illustrations of the houses. The plates show 'plain' Victorian and vernacular Classic houses, as well as the expected showcase homes. The color combinations emphasize the rich character & detailing of the house designs. Dr. Moss describes and analyzes each plate, sometimes even incorporating the language of the times. (The plates are rare, historic documents drawn from the archives of the Athenaeum.)

But *Century Of Color* includes other unique sources of information. The book has 'Affinity Charts' that detail 200 color combinations which are historically accurate — and diverse enough to appeal to everyone's taste. It also features a large color-chip card representing 40 colors that can be matched to modern custom paint colors, as well as a guide to the selection and placement of colors.

This invaluable guide also comes with an extensive essay on exterior decoration; a glossary of Victorian architectural parts; a microscopic analysis and Munsell color-coding reference guide



to 57 colors found on original, 19th-century paint-chip cards; and a bibliography of published sources.

*Century Of Color* is an 8½-x-11-inch softcover, 108 pages long; it's available for only \$15.50. To get your copy, just check the box on the Order Form, or send your check or money order to:

**The Old-House Bookshop**  
69A Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11217

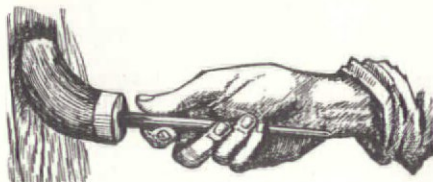


# Restoration Products

Reviewed by Larry Jones

## PAINTING TOOLS & SERVICES

### Oval & Round Brushes



We first discovered Epifanes' outstanding line of Omega brushes at a wooden-boat show. These traditionally designed Italian brushes are made from natural, 100% black China bristle (each hair is split to produce the greatest softness). The bristles are hand set in vulcanized hard rubber, a process most brush manufacturers abandoned long ago for quicker and cheaper methods. Vulcanizing assures the longest possible brush life with minimal loss of bristles.

All Epifanes brushes come with quality, nickel-plated ferrules securely fastened to beautifully made, traditional hardwood handles. The brushes come in round, oval, and full (elliptical) shaped heels. The round brushes hold the most paint because of their volume of bristles. They come in 11 sizes from the #10 (3/8 inch, \$8.45) to the #50 (2 inches, \$33.70). The oval brushes release coatings more slowly, making them ideal for applying varnishes. These come in five sizes, from the #30 (1 inch, \$10.30) to the #50 (2 inch, \$33.70). The elliptical brushes resemble flat brushes except they have rounded edges for better control. These also come in five sizes, from the #50 (1-1/2 inch, \$20.85) to the #75 (3 inch, \$38.50). All of the brushes can be used with oil-based paints and varnishes.

If you haven't used one of these shapes of brushes before, you're in for a pleasant surprise: Not only do these shapes allow the brushes to hold the most paint, but they also improve the flow and control along edges. For more information contact Coastal Trade, Inc., Dept. OHJ, 601 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301. (305) 467-8325.

### American Brush Co.

The American Brush Company of Claremont, New Hampshire, is one of the nation's largest makers of paintbrushes. They produce a variety of professional and consumer paintbrushes in five categories: Pro Edge, Worksaver, Timesaver, Odd Jobbers, and One Timers. Their Pro Edge brushes are hand-crafted with a choice of 100% Chinese double-boiled bristles, 100% tapered Tynex nylon filaments, or a blend of tapered Tynex nylon and tapered polyester filaments. The bristles are epoxy set with nickel ferrules, hand-formed chisel edges, sanded European hardwood handles, and uniform taper.



The Worksaver and Timesaver brush lines are machine-made tools designed for homeowner use. These high-quality tools, also with hardwood handles and epoxy-set bristles, offer the same bristle and filament options as the Pro Edge line and have similar painting characteristics. They come with a detailed sliding chart that explains how to clean them. Timesaver brushes are designed to be fully loaded with paint; they have a removable foam collar at the ferrule to keep paint from dripping or running down the handle.

For the name of a distributor near you, contact the American Brush Co., Dept. OHJ, Wellesley Office Park, 60 William St., Wellesley, MA 02181. (617) 235-5088.

### Historic-Paint Research

Interesting facts about the history of every old house are recorded in its paint layers -- rich and varied paint-color schemes, fine varnishing, marbleizing, wood graining, decorative stencils, and even murals could be buried under the coats of paint on your old house. One of the best people for helping you uncover some of these mysteries is historic-paint-specialist Matthew Mosca. Using microscopic techniques and chemical analysis, Matt can determine original colors and finishes of the interior or exterior of a building, despite the changes wrought by age and the exposure to soiling and weather.

Matt has worked on projects for the Smithsonian Institute and the National Trust for Historic Preservation; recently, he's completed a project at Mt. Vernon, George Washington's Virginia home. But he's eager to work with homeowners and architects on more modest projects. He'll even show you how to carefully take samples yourself, which can then be mailed to him for examination. He charges \$75 per sample (3-sample minimum) and will supply you with an accurate determination of the original finish and one later finish. Write describing your project and needs to Matthew J. Mosca, Dept. OHJ, 10 S. Gilmore St., Baltimore, MD 21223. (301) 566-9047.







Founded in 1851, the Wooster Brush Works is one of the nation's oldest and largest paintbrush manufacturers. They offer a wide line of professional and consumer grade brushes and other paint applicators. For all types of paints and varnishes, they sell Magikoter Professional Brushes, available in nylon, polyester, and nylon/polyester combination. The nylon/polyester Wooster-Pro are handmade, professional brushes with extra-fine filaments for very smooth finishes. Wooster invented the Exploded-Tip filament which gives their Super/Pro brushes good paint pick-up and release with fewer brushmarks.

Wooster's Black China and White China bristle brushes are a favorite for oil-based coatings and varnish. Some of the brushes in this line, such as the White Semi-Oval Varnish brush, haven't changed design for over 50 years. For laying on mirror-smooth, oil-based coatings and varnish, they make Brown Bristle/Ox brushes. For a free catalog and a list of dealers in your area, write the Wooster Brush Co., Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box B, Wooster, OH 44691. (216) 264-4440.

## Painting Buyer's Guide

In September 1985, American Painting Contractor Magazine published their First Annual Buyers' Guide which lists over 700 manufacturers and suppliers. It's become one of the handiest catalogs in our library. It lists not only paints and coatings of all kinds, plus all the tools and equipment for applying them, but also all the firms who make these products. Of course we would have liked a listing of firms who offer historic paint colors (perhaps next year!). Single copies of the guide are \$2.50.

Other publications include: Diagnosing Paint Problems and Correcting Them (\$4.75); Refinishing Wood Furniture for Profit (\$4.75); Hanging Modern Wallcoverings (\$4.75); No Molasses In The Wheat Paste, a guide for professional and amateur students of wallcovering installation (\$8.95). Add \$1.50 postage for all book orders. American Paint Journal, Book-Dept. OHJ, 2911 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63103. (314) 534-0301.



Kyanize Paints has a Historical Color Collection consisting of 72 colors, of which 36 are listed Early American and 36 Victorian. They have fun names, too, like Canal Boat Red, Toll House Green, Charleston Cream, and Alamo. The Historical Color Collection comes in both interior and exterior grades of acrylic latex, oil-based, and alkyd enamel. Grant Doherty of Kyanize spent over two years scouring archives to develop the paint line. He tells us that the final colors chosen for the collection (especially the Victorian ones) are slightly muted adaptations, designed to appeal to modern tastes. For a color card write Kyanize Paints, Inc., Dept. OHJ, Second & Boston Streets, Everett, MA 02149. (617) 387-5000.

## Clarification

Readers may have been confused by our April 1986 write-up of Silk Surplus Outlets in "Restoration Products" (page 138). Regarding Scalandre and ordering their fabrics by mail: Scalandre sells ONLY to the trade. Silk Surplus Outlets are retail stores with their own line of fabrics; they are also the exclusive outlets for Scalandre close-outs. For more information, call Silk Surplus at (212) 794-9373.

## Special Painted Effects

Trompoy produces highly unusual and varied scenic wall murals; faux-marble finishes on floors, cornices, and mantelpieces; skies on ceilings; trompe-l'oeil finishes on all sorts of surfaces; even wood-graining for metal doors. Owners Gary Finkel and Clyde Wachsberger developed their craft as professional scenic artists working in theater and television. Their painstaking work produces finishes and effects that can fool the eye even from a few inches away.

The owners of a 1790 Long Island house wanted a "naive landscape" of their village and surrounding farmland. A commission such as this is painted on canvas in the studio and then taken to the site



for installation. (Owners can have them installed as permanently or temporarily as they wish.) Other jobs are painted directly on-site, such as the application of wood-graining, or marbleizing existing mouldings, doors, and floors. (A recently completed faux-marble finish applied to a new wood floor took about ten days, including the final protective coatings.)

Trompoy's prices begin around \$10 per square foot. Costs depend on how detailed the project is; a 6-x-9-ft. canvas painted and installed could cost around \$700 (including installation). For a kit which includes photos of a variety of their projects, send \$5 to Trompoy Studio and Gallery, Dept. OHJ, 400 Lafayette St., 5th Floor, New York, NY 10003. (212) 420-1639.





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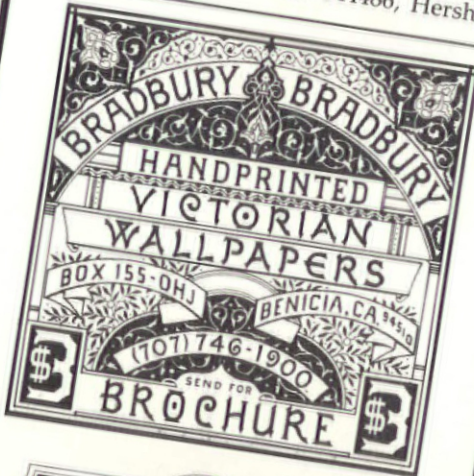


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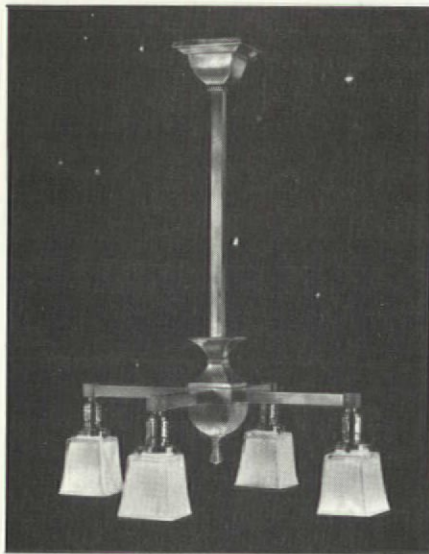
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78 Thames Street, Newport, Rhode Island 02840

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## Arts & Crafts Fixtures

At last someone has come out with a line of high-quality, Mission/Prairie-style light fixtures. Stephen Kaniewski, of Brass Light Gallery, found the demand for his restored original fixtures far outstripping the supply, so he's spent the past several years designing the Goldenrod Collection of reproduction Mission/Prairie-style lighting. The fixtures are solid brass with a polished finish (lacquer and antique finishes are available at additional cost).

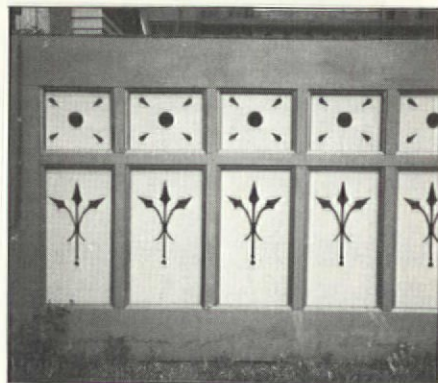


The collection offers ten fixture designs to suit every need. Pictured at left is the Oak Park chandelier (\$425) and above is the Sherman Park wall sconce (\$135). Mr. Kaniewski brought prototypes of the new line to OHJ to let us take a look at them. We're impressed by his attention to detail. The fixtures' canopies are precise reproductions of original examples. The glass shades can be purchased separately. Brass Light is offering OHJ readers a 30% discount; buy one light or a houseful, but your orders must be postmarked by July 31, 1986. (This discount doesn't apply to shipping charges or sales tax.)

For a catalog, send \$3 to Brass Light Gallery, Dept. OHJ, 719 South 5th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53204. (414) 383-0675.

## Decorative Wood Lattice

Through old photographs, Pete and Marjory Holly found that the porches of their home were once graced with decorative lattice work. After they re-created their lattice, the Hollys decided to make custom-cut wood lattice available to other old-house owners. Their lattice (or vented-panel skirting) is different and more decorative than the usual diagonal lattice-stripped screens.



The Hollys also produce porch and balcony railings and scroll-cut inserts to order, as well as turned spindlework. For their brochure, write Marjory and Peter Holly, Dept. OHJ, 3111 2nd Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55408. (612) 824-2333.

## Non-Rotting Lattice

Wood lattice looks great on a restored porch, but nothing is harder to keep painted or to protect from decay. We've found a product that may reduce this maintenance chore: PVC lattice manufactured by Cross Industries. Yes, we had the same first reaction: "Plastic lattice work? Oh, yuck!" But we're being open-minded about this one. The lattice is made of solid, foamed polyvinyl-chloride strips with a UV inhibitor. The strips are chemically welded into panels at the factory; the joints have no metal fasteners to get rusty. We

inspected a 9-1/2-in.-square section of the lattice and found it solid, surprisingly heavy, and pretty darn convincing.

The lattice comes in six types. Type 2 (1-1/2-in. x 5/16-in.) is the closest match to the most common old-style lattice, which ran at a 45-degree diagonal and had spaces between the strips equal to the width of the strips. A 4-ft.-x-8-ft. panel of this type lattice sells for about \$64 plus shipping. The lattice can be made and cut at the factory to suit your size requirements in either a diagonal or rectangular pattern.

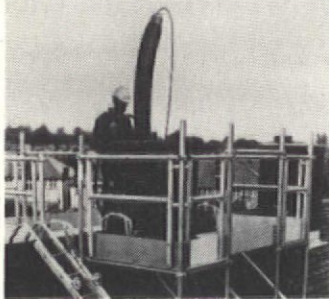
We suggest you install it just as you would regular wood

lattice, with the original kind of framing and trim work. It's easily cut with ordinary hand- and power-saws (with fine teeth); you can drive nails without predrilling. If any strips come loose, you can simply "weld" them with acetone. PVC expands and contracts more than wood, so you have to follow the directions on proper anchoring points. There's no fake woodgraining; it comes in eleven standard colors, including white. (It can also be painted with non-oil-based paint.) For a free color brochure, contact Cross Industries, Dept. OHJ, 5262 Peachtree Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341. (404) 451-4531.





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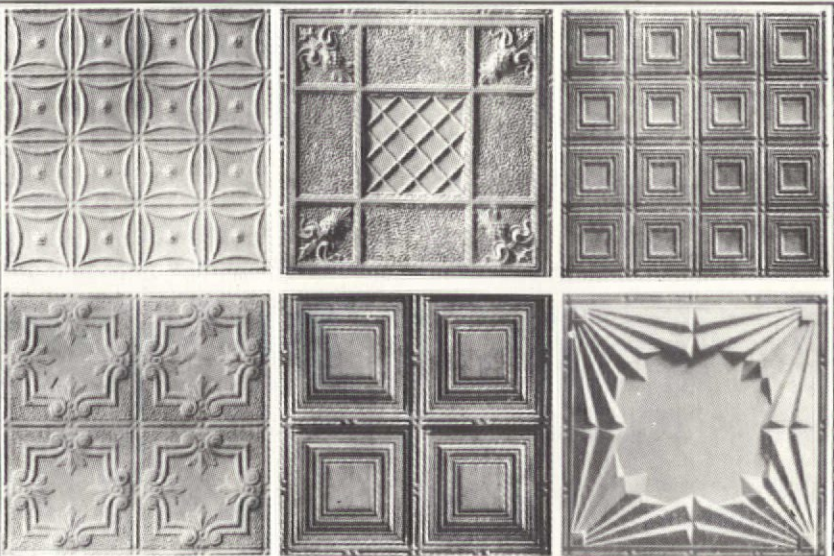


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## Covering Over Calcimine

**Q:** WE LIVE in a house built in 1843. The interior walls are plaster and were painted with calcimine in one room. The first coat of calcimine was sealed with a different type of paint, and then the wall was repainted with another layer of calcimine. Since the wall has only some minor plaster cracks, we'd prefer to canvas over the walls rather than apply paint. OHJ has warned us to remove calcimine before repainting, but you've never said anything about what to do with it before canvassing. There must be a way to canvas over calcimine, because we know of some houses where three layers of wallpaper are firmly affixed to old calcimine paint.

-- Mrs. W.G. Hudson, Selma, Ala.

**A:** MOST LINING-MATERIAL glues are water-based, which means there's a chance of the glue weakening the calcimine's bond to the wall. We're sure there are instances of people canvassing over calcimine without subsequent failure. But that would be small comfort if your ceiling should start peeling shortly after you've invested so much time in it. All you need to remove the calcimine is hot water -- a few tablespoonfuls of TSP will help speed the process. The task of removing the calcimine shouldn't take much more than an afternoon. Sure it's a messy, annoying job, but shortcuts during preparation almost always come back to haunt you.

## Painting Kitchen Cabinets

**Q:** WE'RE STUMPED. We have large, white metal cabinets in our kitchen. The kitchen was probably remodeled in the late '40s or early '50s. The cabinets are in desperate need of care. The insides are fine, but the doors and drawfronts are chipped and show some rust. Is it possible to paint them? If so, with what? What kind of preparation will be necessary?

Please don't tell us to put in new cabinets. We've heard that suggestion before, but we'd rather save the money for other necessary restoration projects. Even though the cabinets may not be appropriate for our house, we'd like to save them. We've been told that they're the "Cadillac" of metal cabinetry.

-- Berta Lalomia, Jackson, Mich.

**A:** AS LONG AS YOUR METAL cabinets aren't rusted through, it shouldn't be too late to save them. The first thing to do is remove any loose paint, rust, grease, etc. Scraping and sanding will do most of this step. The important thing is to have a smooth, dirt-free surface to paint. Just before applying the paint, wipe the surface with a lint-free cloth dipped in a little mineral spirits (paint thinner).

Once you have the cabinets prepared for painting, apply a coat of alkyd primer specifically made for metal. Rustoleum brand sells one such primer. Whatever brand you choose,

use a topcoat from the same manufacturer as the primer. Two topcoats should be applied after the primer has thoroughly dried.

## Colonial Revival Colors

**Q:** OUR COLONIAL REVIVAL HOME, built in 1903, is presently painted white. The shutters are dark green. The windows and storm windows are painted black (not the trim, mind you, just the windows). The house is huge,



approximately 9,500 square feet, and we're having a difficult time deciding what color to paint it. It needs paint desperately, as it is peeling badly. We are very much in love with our old house and want to keep it looking as it did in the old days. Can you give us some hints as to what colors would be appropriate for this type and size house?

-- Barbara A. Medina, Marinette, Wis.

**A:** COLONIAL REVIVAL HOUSES marked a return to pale colors: mostly white or cream, sometimes pale yellow, with white or cream trim -- a soft gray body, white trim and sash, and cream shutters would be very appropriate for your house. As you see, even within the boundaries of historical precedents, there are still a lot of color schemes available to you. Whatever you select, you're going to have to live with it, so we recommend that you do some research before making your decision. The Colonial Revival period has a large bibliography, so your local library is sure to have solid information on which to base your choice. We also recommend that you consult Century Of Color by Dr. Roger Moss. (See the Order Form in this issue.)

General interest questions from subscribers will be answered in print. The Editors can't promise to reply to all questions personally—but we try. Send your questions with sketches or photos to Questions Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.



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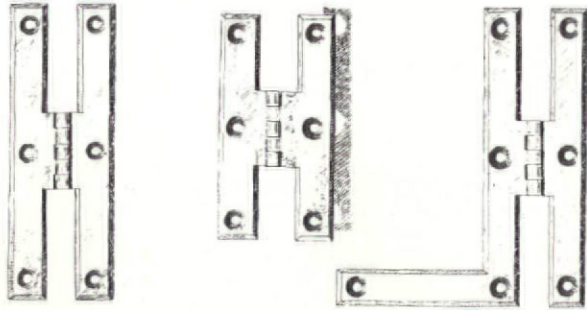
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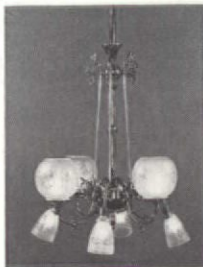


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# The Emporium

## FOR SALE

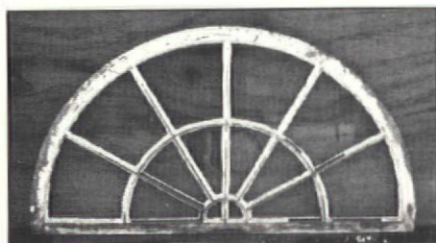


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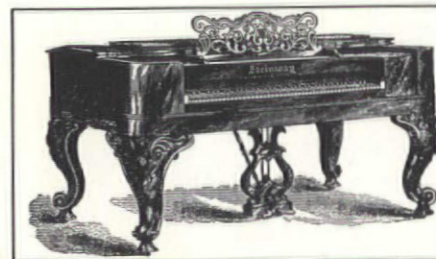
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**MANUAL BOWLING MACHINES**, 6, age unknown, last used in 1983. Contact City of Lead (South Dakota), (605) 584-1401.

**ELBERT HUBBARD'S SCRAPBOOK**, copyright 1923 by the Roycrofters of East Aurora, N. Y. Used but in good cond. Brown, leather-like covers, 228 pp. + indices, \$20 plus postage. Ruth Stahl, 4744 E. River Rd., Grand Island, NY 14072.

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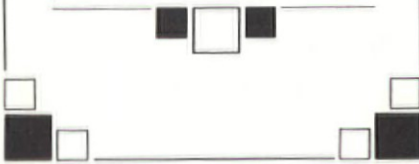
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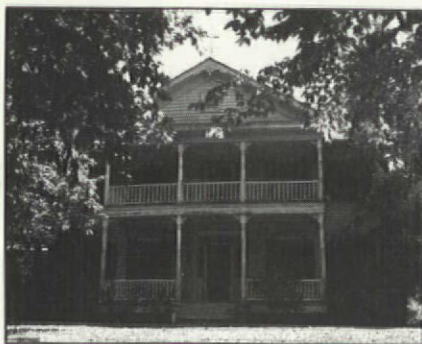
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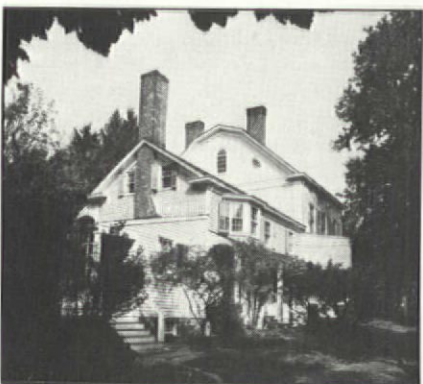


**CLARKTON, NC** — Clark House, c. 1890. 2-storey, frame, vernacular Vict. house. Features 5-bay facade & double portico w/ turned balusters & columns. Impressive woodwork in parlors. 3400 sq.ft. home w/ 1 1/2 acres in Bladen County in southeastern North Carolina. \$25,000. Larry D. Mc Bennett, Hist. Preservation Foundation of NC, Inc., PO Box 27644, Raleigh, NC 27611. (919) 832-3652.

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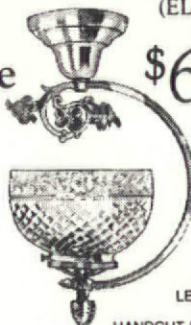
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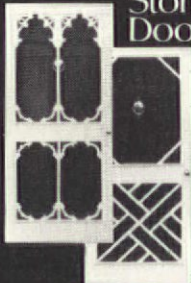
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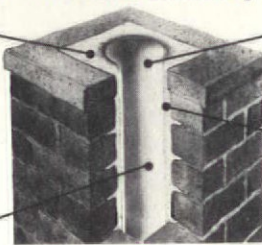
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MAY 86

# THE TWO BEST HEAT TOOLS FOR STRIPPING PAINT

That's a strong claim to make, but we stand by it. The OHJ editors have tested the heat tools available, and these two are still the best: the strongest, most efficient, longest-lasting heat tools you can buy. The Heat Gun and Heat Plate are designed to provide years of service on heavy-duty jobs. The other paint-stripping tools now available don't compare: They're not industrial quality, are made largely of plastic, have a lower heat output, and break down all too quickly.

Together, the Heat Gun and Heat Plate described below can solve your most difficult paint-stripping projects. Refinishing experts agree that, whenever practicable, hand stripping wood pieces is preferable to dipping them in a strong chemical bath. The Heat Gun and Heat Plate are the best overall tools for taking paint off wood surfaces. They make paint removal safe, quick, and economical.

Heat is a fast method because the paint bubbles & lifts as you go along. There is no waiting for chemicals to soak in, no multiple recoatings, and far less cleanup. Unlike stripping with chemicals, all layers of paint are removed in a single pass.

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## The Heat Gun

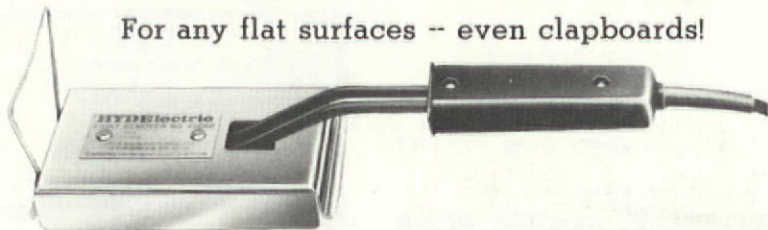
Ideal for moulded & turned woodwork!

Over 10,000 OHJ subscribers have purchased the Heavy-Duty Heat Gun, and discovered the best tool for stripping paint from interior woodwork. (A small amount of chemical cleaner is suggested for tight crevices and cleanup, but the Heat Gun does most of the work.) It will reduce the hazard of inhaling methylene chloride vapors present in paint removers. Another major safety feature is the Heat Gun's operating temperature, which is lower than that of a blowtorch or propane torch, thus minimizing the danger of vaporizing lead. The Master HG-501 Heat Gun operates at 500 to 750°F, draws 15 amps at 120 volts, and has a rugged, die-cast aluminum body — no plastics!



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**HELP WITH YOUR OLD HOUSE:** Our professional services can help you understand, restore, and enjoy it: architectural services for restoration and remodeling, consulting help w/ architectural & technical problems, historical research, & more. Allen Charles Hill, AIA, Historic Preservation & Architecture, 25 Englewood Rd., Winchester, MA 01890. (617) 729-0748.

### INNS AND HISTORIC HOUSES



**GOLD-COUNTRY INN** in the Sierras. Relax in a century-old home w/ historic designation & electric blankets, air conditioning, verandahs, gardens. Have breakfast by a crackling fire. Near Yosemite. Brochure & gift certificates. Dunbar House, 1880, Box 1375, Murphys, CA 95247. (209) 728-2897.

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**DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA** Bed and Breakfast. Arrowhead Inn, restored 1775 plantation w/ 6 guest rooms, private & shared baths. Full breakfast included in rates of \$50 to \$75 per room + state tax. 106 Mason Rd., Durham, NC 27712. (919) 477-8430.

**PROSPECT HILL, B&B, 1789.** Colonial mansion situated on 225 acres. In Nat'l Register of Hist. Places. Spacious rooms w/ fireplaces & a separate guest house. All elegantly furnished w/ antiques. 15 miles from Harpers Ferry. Brochure. Box 135, Gerrardstown, WV 25420. (304) 229-3346.

**INNquest** - computerized nat'l directory of inns, B&Bs, lodges, & other special places to stay. Enjoy modern convenience when seeking vintage or otherwise unique accommodations. Detailed, up-to-date information for all of your lodging needs available toll free. Call (800) 221-INNS; in MD, (301) 864-7233. M-F, 10 to 6 EST.

### MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**OLD MAUCH CHUNK Hist. House & Bldg. Tour,** Jim Thorpe, Penn., June 8, 1986, 1 to 5 p.m. \$5 advance, \$7 day of tour. Previously unseen homes throughout town. Mauch Chunk Hist. Soc., PO Box 273, Jim Thorpe, PA 18229. (717) 325-4439 AM, (717) 325-4041 PM.

**HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR,** Hyattsville, Maryland, Sunday, May 18, 1 to 5 p.m. Highlights Vict. architecture & preservation efforts in 100-year-old community, which is a Nat'l Register Hist. District. Hyattsville Preservation Association, PO Box 375, Hyattsville, MD 20781. (301) 277-5562.

**HOME INSPECTOR'S TRAINING COURSES:** 5-day comprehensive training courses in home inspection, May 26 to 30, for persons interested in qualifying in the new field of home inspection. Participants should have some basic knowledge of residential construction practices. Property Inspector's Training Institute, Inc., PO Box 10464, Rockville, MD 20850. (301) 983-9371.

**BACK TO THE CITY CONFERENCE,** Fort Wayne, Ind., June 13, 14, & 15. Lectures, tours, workshops. Pam Michel, Back to the City, 1310 W. Jefferson, Fort Wayne, IN 46804. (219) 483-6441.

**ROMNEY MARSH OLD-HOUSE TOUR & Antique Show,** May 17, 1986, in Cape May Court House, N. J., at First United Methodist Church, Route 9 & Church St. Sponsored by Cape May Court House Neighborhood Association, PO Box 502, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210.

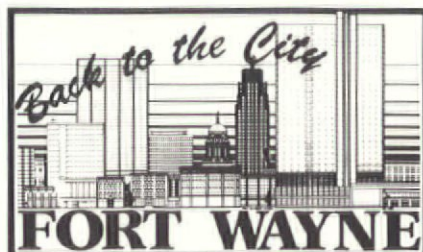
**RUGBY SPRING MUSIC & CRAFTS Festival,** May 17 & 18. Dozens of traditional craftsworkers demonstrating & selling throughout village. British Isles & Appalachian music & dancing; tours of historic buildings. Historic Rugby, PO Box 8, Rugby, TN 37733. (615) 628-2441.

**OLD WEST END HISTORIC HOME TOURS,** June 7 to 8, 1986, in Toledo, Ohio. Come to Toledo's Old West End & stroll through our historic neighborhood; it boasts one of the largest selections of Vict. & Edwardian homes in America including Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, & many more. Houses on tour are open from noon to 5 p.m. on both days. Old West End Festival, PO Box 4652, Old West End Stn., Toledo, OH 43610.

**OLD-HOUSE FAIR,** May 17 & 18 in Oklahoma City. 2-day trade show featuring latest information, products, & services for renovating, restoring, & repairing older homes. Exhibitors' booths will offer displays, working models, & demonstrations by local, regional, & national preservationists, craftsmen, commercial firms, & inner-city neighborhoods. To be held at State Fairgrounds. Old-House Fair, NDCC, 1236 NW 36th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73118. (405) 528-NDCC.

**THE CAMPBELL CENTER** for Hist. Preservation announces its 7th year of instruction w/ 21 summer workshops, 2 to 5 days long, June 16 to July 23. Care of museum collections, furniture conservation, architectural preservation, & interdisciplinary courses occupy major program areas. Of special interest to OHJ readers: understanding & using adhesives, hands-on furniture conservation, period finishes, Nat'l Register: How to list a place, interior & exterior decoration, repair of wooden structures, maintenance & preservation of concrete structures, masonry cleaning & repair. For further information & free copy of workshop news bulletin, contact: Campbell Center, PO Box 66, Mt. Carroll, IL 61053. (815) 244-1173.

**HANDS-ON WOODWORKING SEMINARS:** finishing, using table saws & routers. 2-day courses taught by team of experienced woodworkers to develop skills w/ tools & products. Lectures, slides, materials, hands-on experience. May 12 & 13, 14 & 15, and 16 & 17. Lodging available for \$24.38 single, \$29.38 double. \$200 registration. College of Continuing Education, Adams Hall 131, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115. (815) 753-1457.



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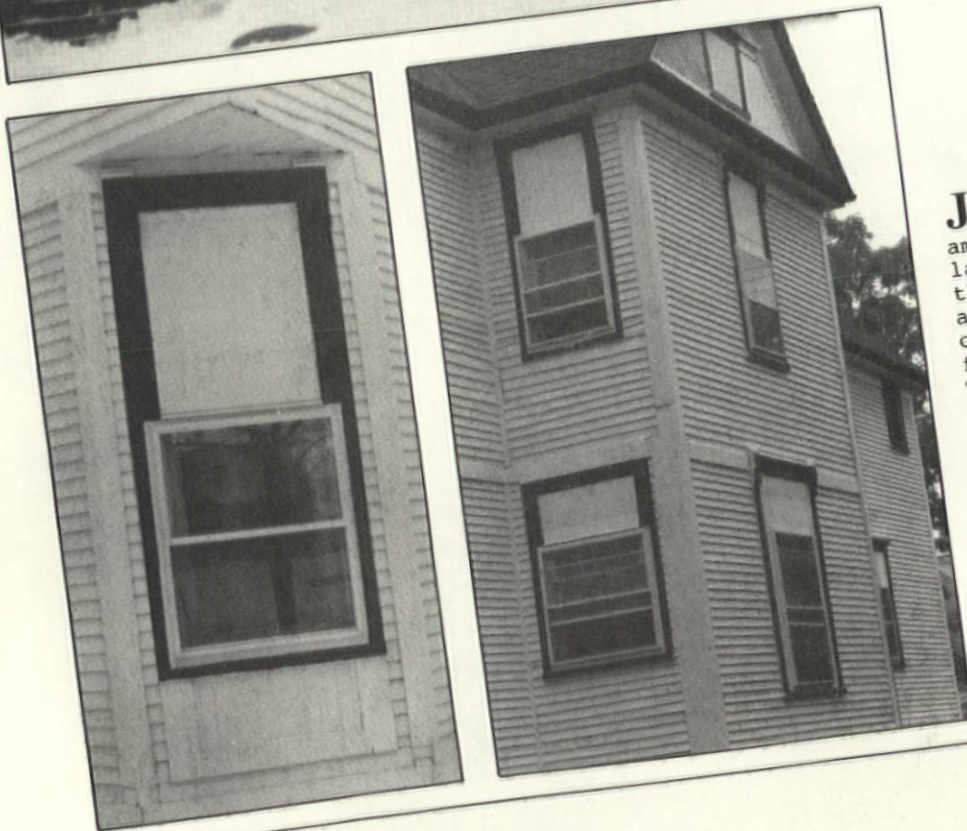
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# opinion... Remuddling



## Window Pains

**JENNY LINN** of Grand Rapids, Michigan, sent us these amazing photographs: "The landlord was trying to improve the value of his house by adding storm windows. He purchased odd-sized windows and fit them in wherever possible. The unused window space was filled with lumber. Then he painted the house white and the trim bright red, which really calls attention to the remuddled windows. One can only imagine how dark and grim the inside must be with the daylight cut off."

May 1986



Marvin Windows



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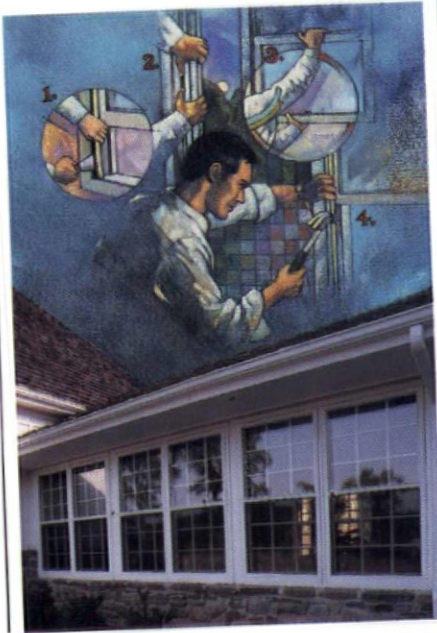
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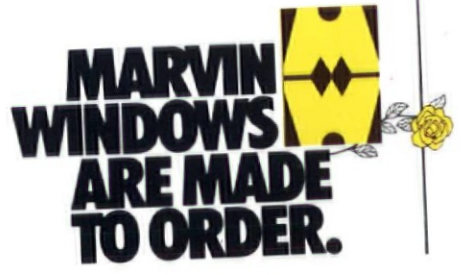
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## Vernacular Houses

R. B. St. George



## THE SALTBOX

Above: The Paine-Dodge house in Ipswich, Mass., dates from around 1702. The front door was improved in the 1840s with a Greek Revival frontispiece, but the house retains its traditional five-bay fenestration on the facade and the saltbox profile with an integral lean-to roofline.

Below: This 1725 house in Newington, N.H., has the characteristic five-bay facade, central entry and staircase in front of the chimney, and, of course, the classic saltbox profile.



R. M. Candee

Popularly known as the New England Saltbox, this vernacular house form was built throughout the region from late 17th century through (and occasionally after) the 19th century. The basic form is a two-storey house with one room on either side of a central chimney. The identifying feature is the roofline, which extends over a one-storey range (row) of three rooms — usually a kitchen, pantry and unheated bedroom.

Earlier one-room-deep, central-chimney houses often had an added lean-to, with the pitch of the rear roofline broken at the level of the rear plate to provide greater



height in the addition. By the 1680s, however, a few prosperous yeomen and ministers in Massachusetts adopted the lean-to plan from the start. The rear roofline of the integral lean-to house is an unbroken line.

A symbol of prosperity in the 18th century, the Saltbox continued as an alternative vernacular form into the post-Revolutionary building boom in New England.

— Richard M. Candee  
Boston University