

Old House Journal

MARCH/APRIL 1989 \$3.95

RESTORATION TECHNIQUES

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Chimneys, &
Mantels

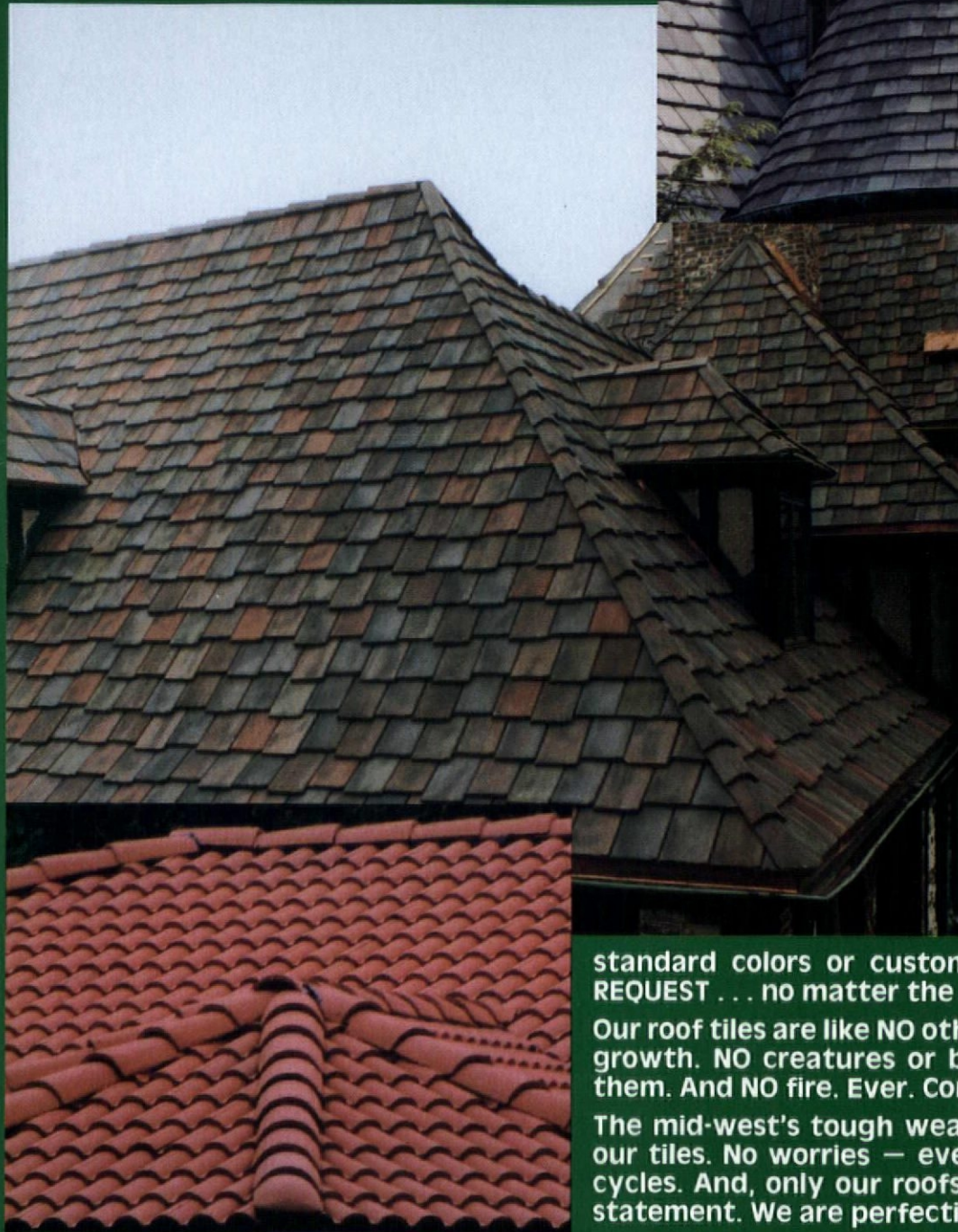
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*Cover: Cozy hearth to chimney pot in a Second Empire house. Original illustration
by Al Lorentz, New York City.*

EDITOR'S PAGE

B U S I N E S S N E W S

SUBSCRIBER SERVICE

We've just moved our subscription department to Boulder, Colorado (from Knoxville, Iowa). The subscription department I'm referring to is where The Computer lives, as well as the staff who sends out bills and expire notices, posts your renewals and changes of address, and troubleshoots subscription complaints.

The fastest way to ask a question about your subscription or to make a change in your record is to contact our Boulder address:

The Old-House Journal
PO Box 53752
Boulder, CO 80322-3749
(800) 234-3797

All business-reply envelopes that come with your OHJ bills and renewal forms will have the correct address on them.

Occasionally I get a letter from a reader who has corresponded with our subscription people, and then writes to me to express utter disappointment that we don't do everything from the editorial main office. Usually there's a comment about how OHJ is getting too big for our britches. Well, maybe it's true . . . but then it happened a while ago. We haven't handled our subscription list "in-house" since 1975.

Most subscriber transactions go smoothly, and you don't much consider whether your renewal instructions went to Brooklyn or the Rockies. But sometimes things go awry — and we do want to hear about it. It's here at the main office that policies are set (and messes are cleaned up).

If you have a complaint about the way your sub inquiry was handled, or if you can't get an answer, or if you don't like one of our policies — or if you're MAD at us — then by all means call OHJ and let us know! The main office number is (718) 636-4514.

We do have full-time customer-service people in the editorial office — and "the buck stops here" with Jeanne and Matt.

OHJ'S NEW OFFICE

For 10 years, OHJ's main office has been in a converted four-storey brownstone. The time has come to move — all of 12 blocks, still within Park Slope's historic district, to the third floor of an 1889 building.

We haven't lost our penchant for unusual and antique work space. OHJ's new office is a ballroom — or it was, once, when the building was used as a social club from 1890 through the 1930s. (After the Depression, garment workers used the space.) The best part is the 29-foot ceiling height, not to mention the cast-iron balcony that skirts three walls. Bekka may bring her guitar and serenade us, as musicians must have in 1910. . . . Gordon has other ideas; he wants to run HO trains around the balcony. I said sure — *if* he builds miniature neighborhoods for the tracks to run through. (Victorian neighborhoods closest in, then early tracts of Foursquares and Bungalows, with post-war ranches still further out. . . .)

For my part, I wanted to put all the furniture on casters so we could move it out of the way for waltzing, but OHJ's long-suffering architect insists that's not practical.

Move-in date is set for late spring. We'll make our new address obvious in an upcoming issue. Our Brooklyn and Gloucester phone numbers remain the same.

Like our popular spring issue last year, OHJ's next issue will focus on outside the old house.

MAY-JUNE

How to Use Epoxies for Exterior Repairs

Carving Exterior Ornament

Historical Clapboards: Types and Installation Tips

Topiary Gardens

OHJ GRANTS

Every year, OHJ awards six \$1,000 grants to preservation groups. Five winners are chosen by lottery from the pool of groups who have participated in our Subscription Revenue-Sharing program. The sixth winner is whichever group sold the greatest number of subscriptions.

For 1988, the winners are:

- **Athens, Georgia:** University of Georgia Student Historic Preservation Organization
- **Hartford, Connecticut:** Greater Hartford Architectural Conservancy
- **New Baltimore, Michigan:** New Baltimore Historical Society
- **Joplin, Missouri:** Joplin Heritage Trust
- **Vallejo, California:** Vallejo Architectural Heritage Foundation

The Compton Heights Concert Band of St. Louis, Missouri, earned the sixth grant, selling nearly 200 subscriptions. Congratulations to all!

The Subscription Revenue-Sharing and Grant Programs have been renewed again for 1989. Any group can sell subscriptions to OHJ for \$16 instead of the usual \$21, a 24% saving for your members. Then your group keeps half the money collected (\$8 each, or \$96 for each dozen subs and renewals sold). So your group makes money, guaranteed — and also becomes eligible to win a grant.

This is, of course, a customized subscription-promotion program for OHJ. But it's a win-win deal: Our money goes to help preservation groups instead of into additional direct-mail campaigns.

Your group can send subs to us all year long (12 names minimum at a time). The final deadline is December 15, 1989. For details and subscription forms, write or call GROUPS, Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11217. (718) 636-4514.

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House Plans & Fuddy-Duddies

To the Editor:

I have noted the outrage with which some of your subscribers greet *any* change in Old-House Journal, and wasn't particularly surprised at the negative letters regarding the "Historic House Plans" department [*Editor's Page, Nov/Dec 1988*].

After nine years of digging through Multiple Listing books and cobweb-filled houses, my husband and I have despaired of finding a "real" old house to expend our energies on, so yes — we are thinking of building a "fake" new one. But it makes me angry to think there are those who believe new construction cannot be sensitive, can easily be identified as not "genuine," and does not involve the *same* amount of blood, sweat, and tears as a restoration. If we build, our home will combine all that we love about old construction and take advantage of new building methods, and the end result will be as much a source of joy as any home we renovated or even took apart piece by piece and moved.

— Chris Commet
Michigan Center, Mich.

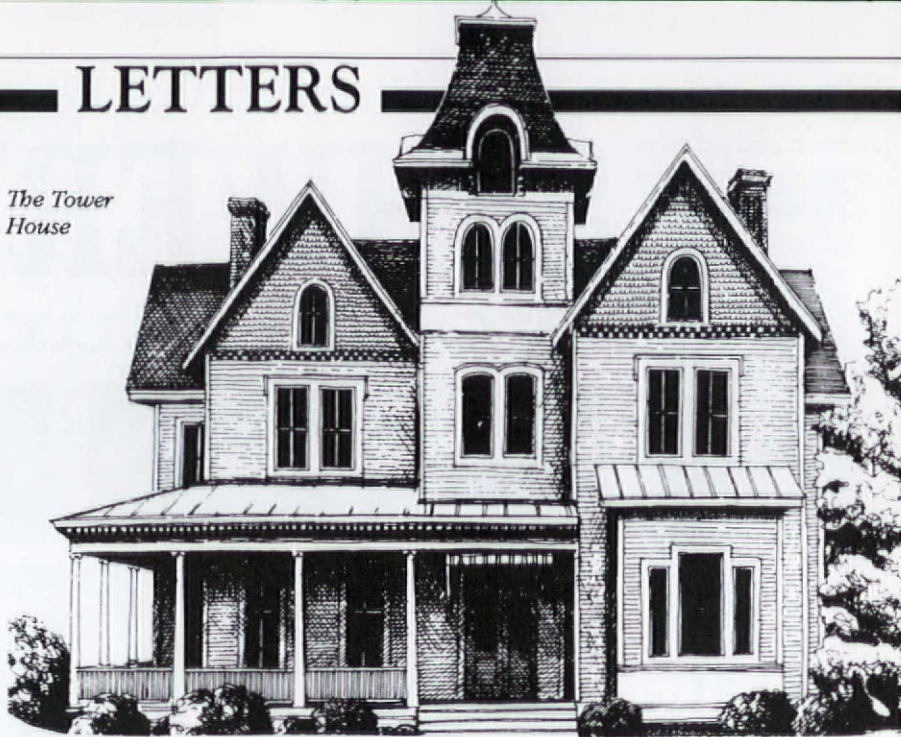
Dear Ms. Poore,

I was quite surprised to read that some of your readers don't like your regular feature of house plans. *Please* don't give in to them!

My husband and I consider ourselves "purists" when it comes to old houses. We have just begun the slow restoration of our 1919 modified Bungalow. When we are finished, we hope that our house will look much as it did around 1925 (with a few unavoidable exceptions, like the stereo and the microwave).

We realize, however, that within five to ten years, we will have outgrown this 1500-square-foot house. Rather than remuddle it, we will probably move to a bigger one. Nearly all the big old houses here in Louisville are on busy streets and

The Tower House



have no yards to speak of. Our dream is to have a big house with large rooms, high ceilings, a big porch, etc., as well as a yard where I can have my rose garden. The Tower House in your last issue is so perfect it could have been designed just for us. We have looked at that page so often it is becoming dog-eared. We are dreaming of buying an acre or two outside the city and building that house on it someday.

My point is this: The design was good 100 years ago, and it is still a good design. When the time comes that we can afford a bigger house, we will look for an existing Victorian. But if we can't find one that truly meets our needs, we will build the Tower House, or another of OHJ's plans.

— Joan R. Plamp
Louisville, Ky.

Dear OHJ:

A few of your readers have displayed a negative, knee-jerk reaction to "Historic House Plans." I share their enthusiasm for older homes and have been searching for one that I can call my own. But restorable old homes exist in a very finite number. Also, investors have purchased many of the remaining homes and boarded them up, waiting for the restoration efforts of others to drive up property values. Of course, these homes can

be bought, but at a prohibitive price. Then the homeowner is faced with the added cost of a total restoration or undoing someone else's remuddling.

A reasonable alternative is new construction. Anyone such as your reader who reports being able to recognize new construction "a mile away" should also be able to specify the construction details of a new home to his or her own satisfaction. What will result is a home with exactly the interior and exterior features desired — constructed under contemporary building codes, for a home that is better constructed, more energy efficient, and safer than those of 100 years ago. (I pause while I listen to a collective gasp.)

I still would greatly desire a late Victorian; history cannot be built into new construction. But I appreciate the opportunity OHJ provides by displaying well planned new construction.

— Larry Wagner
Jacksonville, Fla.

Dear Editor,

Please keep putting those "new old fake Victorians" plans in OHJ.

If more builders, developers, and new homeowners would use these instead of the pallid designs currently repeated endlessly in new de-

continued on page 6

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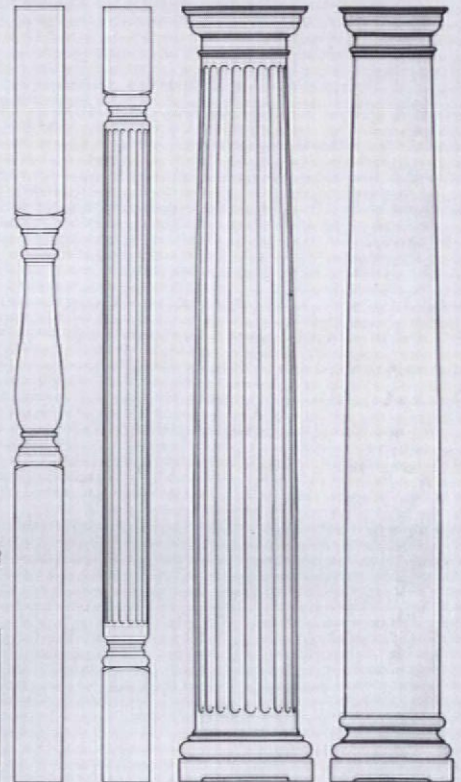
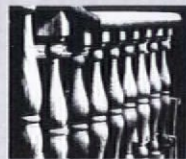
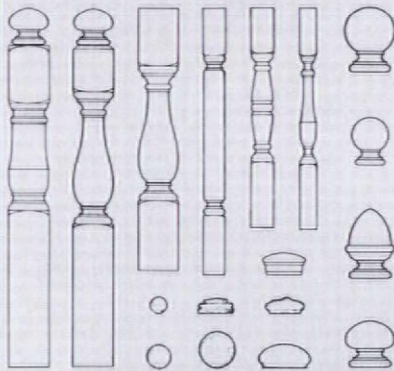
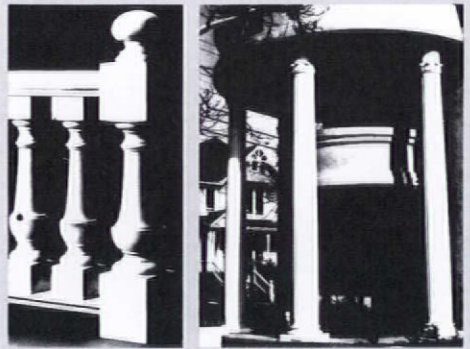
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LETTERS

continued from page 4

velopments, those developments would be much more interesting to buy into — and to sell. Spoken as a real-estate agent who is so very tired of dealing in lackluster architect-designed homes “for modern living.”

— Duncan Nash
Stowe, Vermont

Dear Ms. Poore:

I was incredulous that there could be any objections to OHJ publishing plans for reproductions of old houses. When I first subscribed to OHJ nearly 15 years ago, there were no standards for restoration. OHJ put restoration information into the hands of the “common man,” and the resulting industry offers a plethora of restoration products which had been virtually nonexistent.

It was a logical consequence that when the public reawakened to the attributes of Victorian and post-Victo-

rian homes, architects and builders would attempt to model this style once again. I agree with your “hate mail” subscribers that the vast majority of these “copies” look like badly remuddled Victorian homes. But just as OHJ set the standards for restoration when remuddling was all the rage, it is proper that OHJ should now set the standards for reproduction homes.

Let's see more plans! How about an octagon and some Gothics? Don't let the fuddy-duddies get you down!

— Bob Law
Amenia, N.Y.

Electrical Update

Dear Editor:

Two cautionary words and a request after reading your January/February 1989 issue.

Regarding circuit capacity for 15-amp fuse: 1725 W is incorrect. The multiplication is all right, but the

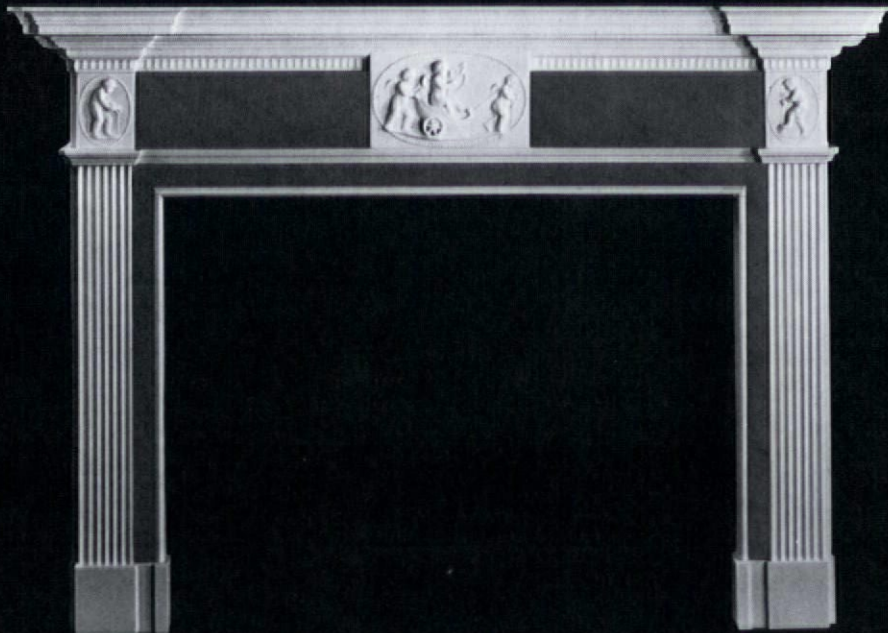
Code recommends never exceeding 80% of capacity or, in this case, 1380 W.

And Miller's tips (“Wiring Tips for the Do-It-Yourselfer”) are injudicious: “When I quoted the code book, he backed down.” [My] inspector told me I had too many items in a junction box (pigtails, wire nuts, etc.). I hauled out a book published by another inspector, which contradicted my inspector. “Well, then,” said the inspector, “get him to inspect your installation,” and he walked out.

While historically edifying, “Evaluating Electrical Wiring” left out what for me is the most important thing: an explanation of the codings used in the cloth coverings of old conductors. They differ in color and in bandings, and I've never learned what they mean. Do you know?

— William Talbot
New York, N.Y.

continued on page 8



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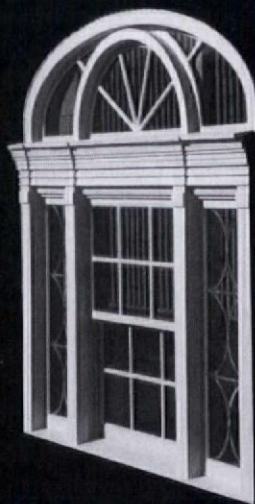
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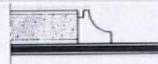
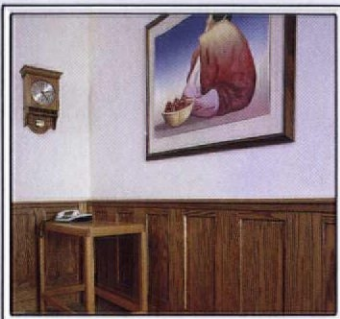


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LETTERS

continued from page 6

Article 210-22 (C) of the National Electrical Code says, "Continuous [emphasis ours] loads, such as store lighting and similar loads, shall not exceed 80 percent of the rating of the branch circuit." Continuous loads in a house are special cases (such as heating or cooling devices), and usually have their own dedicated circuits and fuses. While restricting a 15-amp circuit to a total of 1380 watts is a conservative practice that can't be faulted, most household lights and appliances are used on an intermittent basis, and represent less than an 80% load.

On your second point, Dan Miller also advised in the subsequent paragraph on inspectors, "Do not have a negative confrontation with him. Know what you're talking about, but keep him on your side." (I wonder, too, if it's the difference between suburban Illinois and New York City.)

Your question about coding on cloth wire coverings is an interesting one. Cloth was important in the manufacture of early wire: Outside, it provided mechanical protection when woven in a sheath around the rubber insulation; inside, it was used as a barrier between bare or tinned copper conductors and rubber insulation to prevent a chemical reaction. Cloth coverings could be made with colored tracers to identify individual leads in a multiconductor cable (just as vinyl insulation is colored today), but I've yet to run across evidence of a coding system — for wire gauge or other purposes. Still, electricity has seen other standards that never caught on (color coding of radio components was a big bit with resistors, a flop with capacitors). Perhaps the coding you saw was some early manufacturer's dead-end idea.

— Gordon Bock



Hometown House

Dear OHJ,

What a pleasant surprise to open the September/October 1988 issue of Old-House Journal and find that your article on Greek Revival included an example from my hometown! The Dennison Green House was built about 1841 in Plainfield, Illinois. Its builder, Mr. Green, came from Oneida, New York, and constructed this scaled-down version of a house that stood in Henrietta, New York. That house was 60 feet wide but was reduced to a 36-foot width at Plain-

continued on page 10

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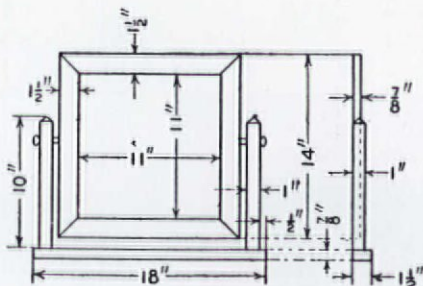
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field. A portico as at Henrietta was never constructed. The siding is of pine, the studs and joists of walnut, and the girders of ash.

As an architectural historian, I have always been intrigued by the Greek Revival style, especially in its vernacular interpretation. I write a local architecture column for the Plainfield newspaper, *The Enterprise*. In it, I have written quite a bit about the vernacular buildings in this town of 4,000 people. I am glad to hear whenever I have "converted" another to being an old-house admirer.

In closing, let me say that your magazine is not only enjoyable, but also a source of good information when I am stumped on a restoration question at the architectural firm where I work. Keep up the good work!

— Michael A. Lambert
Plainfield, Ill.



Mirror Frame and Standards Details

Furniture Making

Dear OHJ,

I thoroughly enjoyed the issue on the Craftsman style [Nov/Dec 1988 OHJ] and would like to suggest one more source for reproduction furnishings of the Craftsman era. *Mission Furniture: How To Make It*, from Dover Publications, reproduces authentic how-to instructions and patterns from *Popular Mechanics* of 1909-12.

In my work, I have run across a number of examples of home-built

furnishings in this style. The build-it-yourself idea was very strong at that time, and seems an appropriate tradition to continue.

— Susan Berg
Director, Silver City Museum
Silver City, N.M.

[The book is available for \$9.95 ppd. (UPS delivery) from Dover Publications, 31 East Second Street, Mineola, NY 11501; (516) 294-7000.]

Pro & Con

Dear OHJ,

Please forward this letter along with the enclosed check [for \$5] to Penny Waring. I was very touched by her story of the fate of Matthew Pines ["A Family Homestead Lost," Jan/Feb 1989 OHJ] and the fact that she was unable to afford to purchase the property. I am very much aware that my donation is frightfully small and

continued on page 12

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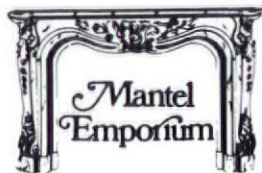
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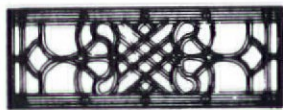
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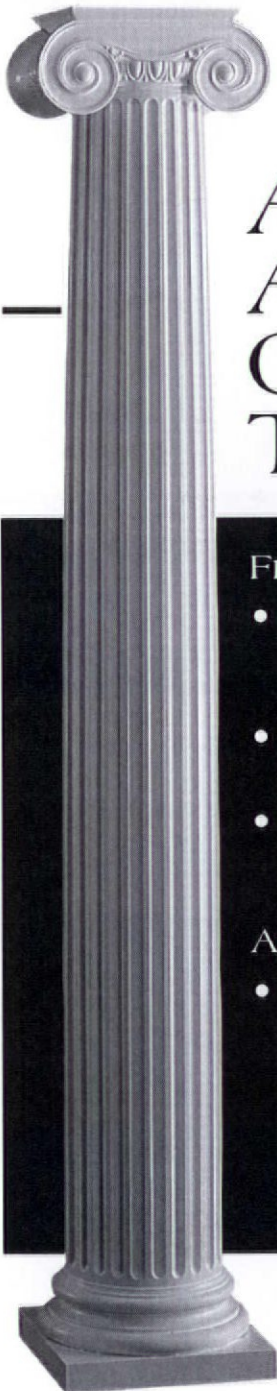
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LETTERS

continued from page 10

of no help at all, but it is my hope that other readers are equally touched and (maybe?) are also making contributions.

I am a single parent (mother of three college-aged daughters) and have recently purchased my own old house to restore. Among the four of us, we have no [restoration] skills, no time, and no money. What we do have is a willingness to learn and the ability to dream. I want Ms. Waring to have her dream also.

— Carol Scott
Michigan City, Ind.

Dear OHJ,

I find most of your articles timely, useful, and relevant to this reader's interest. I find your "Restorer's Notebook" especially useful.

I did not find anything timely, useful, or relevant in "A Family Homestead Lost." I struggled through it all in a sincere attempt to learn some-

thing and found it a waste of time. There may have been some subliminal message in it which I missed, but I prefer my reading to be less well disguised.

— John C. Newman
McLean, Virginia

Electric Sink

Dear Ms. Poore,

The Kohler Electric Sink [Nov/Dec 1988 OHJ, p. 21] is not just a museum piece. One is still in use — well, almost. When we bought this wonderful 1928 house in 1971, everything was just as built.

In the kitchen was a Kohler Electric Sink. The dishwashing apparatus had been removed some time previously. But the deep sink was still usable and the chromed lid was still in place. Two small levers under the faucets operated the two drains.

I installed the sink in my basement workshop, where it is in almost daily use. It's wonderfully convenient. And

it is wonderfully *heavy*, too.

— Donald L. McKinsey
Charlotte, N.C.

Correction

Dear OHJ,

Select Seeds was mistakenly listed as offering a free catalogue in "Where to Find Period Flowers" [Jan/Feb 1989 OHJ]. Unfortunately, I cannot send them out free; I ask \$1.50 to cover printing and postage costs. The confusion can be attributed to the fact that I do send out a number of complimentary catalogues to professionals such as the author of this article, and I don't have the price printed on each copy — something I plan to remedy soon. I would greatly appreciate that catalogue requests be accompanied by a check for \$1.50.

Thanks!

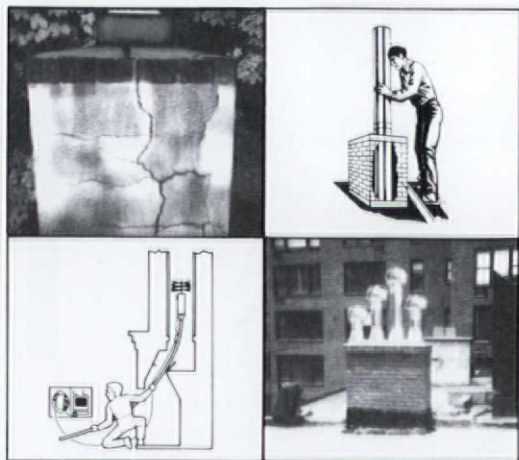
— Marilyn Barlow
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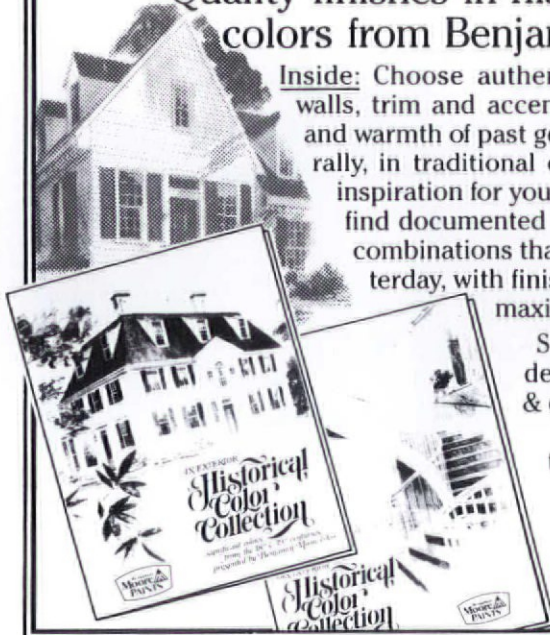
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Don't Lose Your Marble

Q We have a marble-based sink with separate hot- and cold-water faucets. We purchased new faucets for the sink, but while rehabbing the rest of the bathroom, we began to question the plumber's judgment when he said he'd use a holesaw to cut the third hole.

Our house was built in 1900, and the sink is probably as old. We wonder how marble can be cut without cracking or chipping. Any suggestions you have would be appreciated.

— Mark I. Cantor
Baltimore, Md.

A Marble is a rather soft stone, and it can be cut and sanded almost like hardwood. A holesaw would be our first choice for the job — just keep these comments in mind:

- 1) Use a quality *bimetal* saw, such as those by Lennox or Millers Falls. They have much harder teeth than the inexpensive variety.
- 2) Clean the dust and chips out of the kerf regularly. Holesaws do not "chip" well; if you don't clean out the cut, the teeth will just ride around on the dust like a bearing and won't make any progress.
- 3) Work at slow speeds and be patient. Holesaws, particularly those of larger diameters, can grab suddenly, break the pilot bit, twist the drill out of your hand, and skate across the surface, marring the work. Use two hands!
- 4) If possible, do a practice run on a scrap piece of marble.

Women's Work Gloves

Q My husband and I bought our dreamhouse, a 10-room, 1880s Victorian. Unfortunately, it came with 100 years' worth of paint build-up. For a house-warming gift, my husband gave me a beat gun. I thought he was kidding, but soon I was a better paint-stripper than he was (something he has a hard time accepting). Which brings me to my

question: Where does a female get good, sturdy, but not too expensive work gloves? I'm tired of the garden-glove scene — they just don't last, and they don't protect my lily-white hands from the 1000-degree heat blasting from my gun. Men's gloves slide off my hands when I put my arms down at my sides. It's not fair! My husband has several pairs of gloves to protect his rugged hands; I would settle for one pair. (Nothing in flowers, please.)

— Kathy Johnson
Altamont, N.Y.

A Our search for the solution to a common problem led us to Karen Smiley, president of Womanswork: "Our work gloves are of excellent quality and they are designed especially to fit women's smaller and narrower hand sizes. Made of suede pigskin and also a combination of suede pigskin and split cowhide, they are very supple, yet durable. Also, they offer maximum hand dexterity, as they are designed to follow hand contour, with the base of the little finger angling downward.

"They are available unlined and also Thinsulate-lined for warmth, and are made in three women's sizes: small (6½-7), medium (7½-8), and large (8½-9)."



Interested readers can contact Ms. Smiley through Womanswork, P.O. Box 2547, Dept. OHJ, Kennebunkport, ME 04046; (207) 967-8800.

Ceramic Style?

Q I think our house is a "pattern-book house" because there is a row of houses in town, built approximately 20 years later, which are very similar in appearance. Also, we found a ceramic Victorian house which is in this same pattern. My assumption is that these houses are similar by design.

— Bruce Andrews
Sumter, S.C.

A Both houses in your photos are Queen Annes of the hipped-roof-with-lower-cross-gables variety — the most popular subtype of this highly popular style. The central hipped roof in your case is actually a pyramid, a common interpretation; the tower at the corner of the building is also a classic Queen Anne whimsy. The Queen Anne style, ceramic and otherwise, was probably the single most widely-built house style of the 1880s. We don't know the history of your particular house or town — but many, many pattern-book Queen Annes were built.



No, this isn't a before-and-after remuddling; it's Bruce Andrews' house, left, and a porcelain interpretation.

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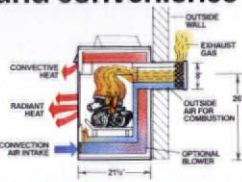
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Pigeon Defenses

I had some problems with pigeons roosting above the second-storey windows of my 1856 brick Italianate home. I took short lengths (12 to 18 inches) of fishing line, attached a small piece of lead split-shot sinker to one end, and attached the other end to the soffit with a staple gun. These weighted lines were placed around the window about 8 inches apart and 8 to 12 inches from the wall — but I have to look very carefully to see the lines, even when almost directly underneath them. In over a year, I have not had a pigeon roost over any of the windows. One bird did try, but lost some feathers when it became entangled in the line. (The feathers are still hanging.) This means of keeping birds away works well for areas where there is an overhang on which to attach the lines, but I believe the concept could be adapted easily to other situations.

— Richard G. Carpenter
Adrian, Mich.

Porch Maintenance

Several years ago, you printed an article on porch decay in which you stated that porches are a maintenance problem because their construction and detailing are basically the same as interior house elements, yet they are subjected to weather conditions along with the rest of the house's exterior.

After doing a rather expensive replacement of some rotting railings and columns, I watched as the snow piled up on my handiwork, and thought, "What a calamity I'd consider this if the snow was in my living room!" Ever since that realization, I've always included the porch in my snow-removal chores. I never use a metal shovel because I don't want to damage the wood; I use a broom whenever possible, or a child's plastic shovel. Now when the snow melts, there is little more moisture against the wood than there would be in a rain storm.

The real key to preventing paint from peeling is to keep moisture from entering the wood. All it takes is one poorly caulked joint — water can then enter a railing and the paint will start to go. I've found it very useful to do a twice-a-year (spring and fall) inspection of the railings and deck for opening joints — touching them up with caulk and paint is a lot easier than letting the problem get out of hand, and then having to scrape peeling paint.

— Kenneth R. Bohl
Lombard, Ill.

Old Ohio Gray

When I was growing up — a few years ago now — it seemed as though every house in the world was painted gray. And I just knew that when I owned a home, it would be *anything* but gray! Alas, 20 years ago we decided to paint our 70-year-old house gray with very dark green shutters and white trim.

Well, we searched high and low for a suitable exterior gray paint — be it latex or oil — but there was none on the market. Oh yes, you can still buy a dirty gray, but not the real gray color. So we made our own: ½- to 1-ounce tube of lampblack to 1

gallon of white paint. (Varying the degree of lampblack varies the depth of the gray.) This formula can be used with latex or oil paints. We call the color "Old Ohio Gray." Because folks have asked us where we buy our paint, we are passing this on to you.

— Marilyn S. Daniels
Mentor, Ohio

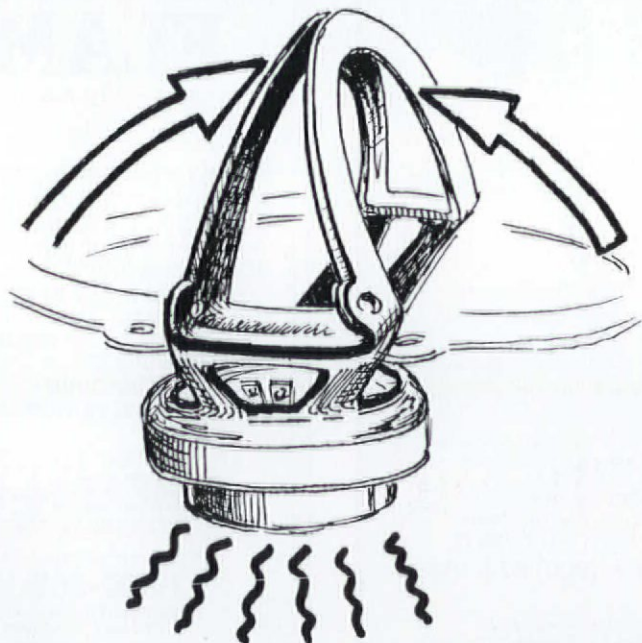
Magnetic Dusting

Using steel wool between coats of finish? Here's an easy trick to pick up the steel-wool powder that collects in hard-to-reach corners: Use a magnet.

Scrounge a broken loudspeaker — a 5-inch speaker is about the right size (and the bigger the magnet, the better). Tear out the paper cone and bend the metal frame up for a handle. Slip a plastic bag over the magnet and slide the wrapped contraption over the workpiece just before your next coat. Peel the bag off the magnet to trap the metal dust inside, and hang the tool by its handle until next time.

Attention gardeners: Magnets will remove nails from wood ashes, allowing you to recycle their valuable potash.

— Robin Arthur Parker
Norwood, Mass.





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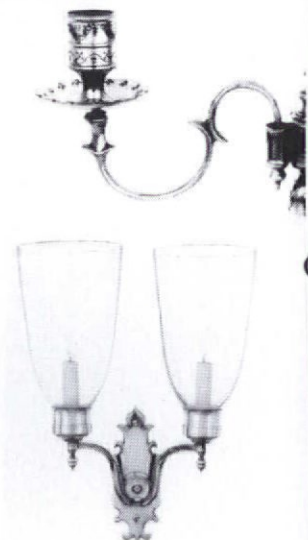
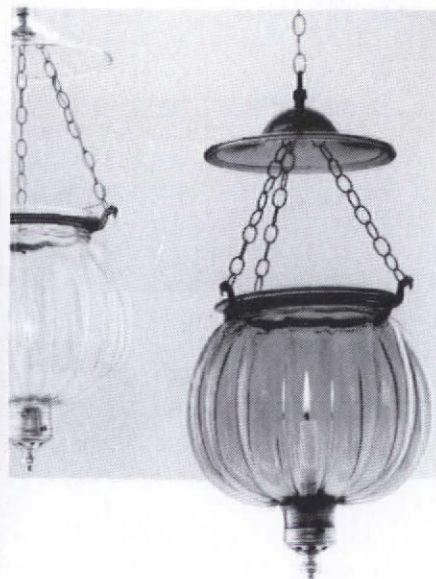
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One hundred years from now, preservationists restoring the walks of some venerable old 1980s house will no doubt be searching for the interlocking concrete pavers so trendy among landscapers today. But what if the house you love right now dates from the 1930s or 1850s or 1720s and needs a walk, driveway, or terrace?

Concrete pavers probably aren't suitable, but there are many appropriate possibilities.

DIRT & STRAW

The most common paving in America until well into the 20th century was probably dirt. Although few would choose it today, dirt still makes sense in some situations — and it certainly looks archaic. In kitchen gardens, dirt paths were sometimes blanketed with straw or marsh hay to make them cleaner and drier.

GRASS

Soft, green, and natural, grass makes a lush "paving" for low-traffic areas. Ornamental lawns came into vogue in the 19th century. Furnished with a cast-iron settee or a couple of kitchen chairs, the Victorians' "room for outdoor living" was often just a grassy area in the shade. Grass walks were widely recommended, and many old photographs show farmhouses with unkempt front lawns bisected by a neatly trimmed grass walk, often bordered by flowers.

WOOD

Wood was one of the most common paving materials in timber-rich 18th- and 19th-century America. "Corduroy roads" were paved with logs, and in



Period Paving

many areas wooden sidewalks were standard — just as they were in TV westerns.

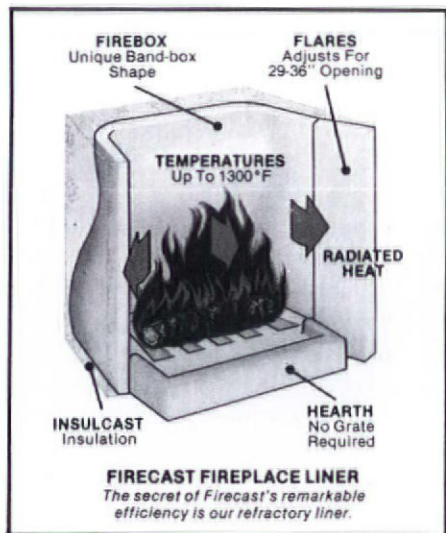
Local codes now prohibit wooden sidewalks in many areas, but wood certainly is an option for the path to your front door or for informal garden walks. (Wooden decks, however, are a late-20th-century phenomenon.) Wooden walks could be rough-cut boards (2 × 12s, for instance) laid end-to-end on the ground. For more substantial walks, boards were nailed crosswise on a couple of runners (small logs, say, or 2 × 4s) that would keep the walk off the damp ground and help protect it from decay. Even fashionably curving Victorian walks were often built this way.

Reproducing a wooden walk today is relatively easy. Use rot-resistant pressure-treated wood for longer life; a grey, transparent stain will mask its raw green color and instantly give it an antique look.

GRAVEL

Until early in this century, another of America's favorite paving materials was gravel. Although cheaper and more widely available than brick or stone, it was considered refined enough for the fanciest walks, drives, and terraces. Victorian tastemaker A.J. Downing and countless other writers praised it and advised gardeners on how to keep it neatly rolled, raked, and weeded — maintenance that still

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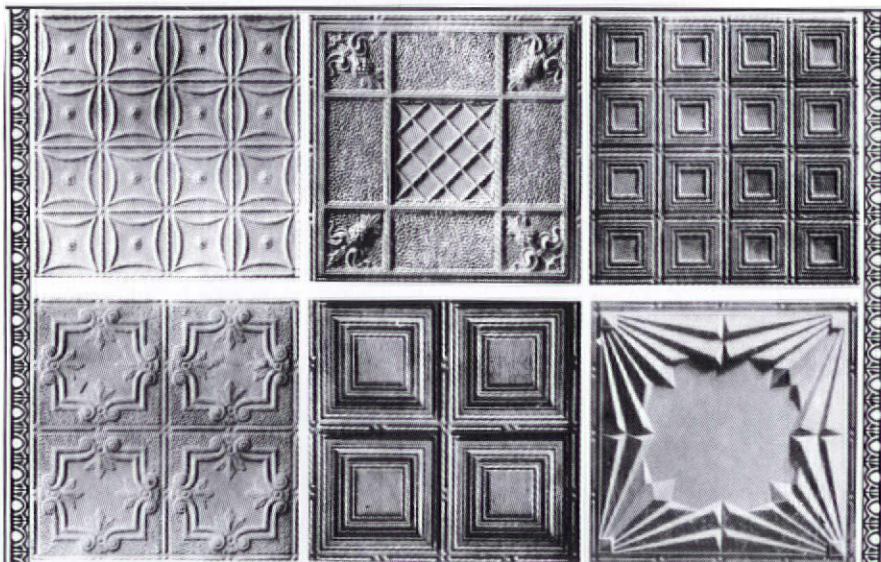
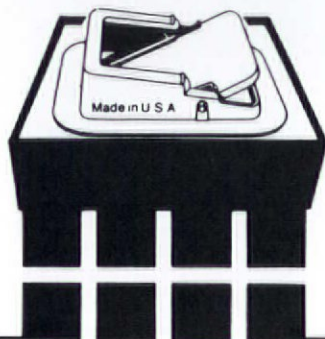
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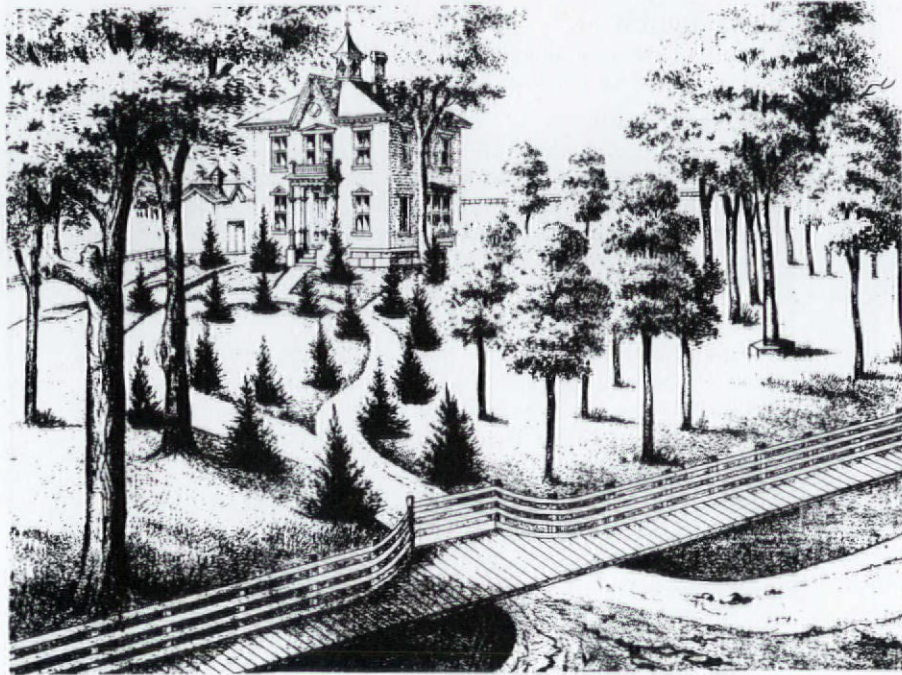


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will be necessary today.

Creating a firm, hard-packed gravel surface is a complex process. For guidance, see "How to Design and Construct Gravel Walks and Driveways," OHJ May 1983. Use natural pea gravel instead of modern crushed stone for the finish layer. Avoid clean gravel: It lacks the clay dust necessary to bind the gravel into a stable surface. Regional alternatives to gravel have included sand and crushed shells.

BRICK

Although handsome and nostalgic, brick is more a restoration cliché than an authentic choice for most sites. Brick was used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, but was primarily an East-Coast, big-city, upscale pavement.

If you must have it, try to find recycled, hard-fired "street brick." Where winters are frigid, soft building brick soon will spall and crumble. Modern hard-fired brick can better survive harsh climates, but much of it has a distinctly contemporary look. For directions on how to lay brick paving, see "Brick Walks," OHJ July 1980.

STONE

For centuries, elegant walks and terraces have been constructed of cut stone. The type of stone varied by region and era. However, two popular choices have been slate and sandstone, particularly bluestone.

Before 1900, large, rectangular flagstones were the norm. Remnants survive today in older neighborhoods and commercial districts. In the early-20th century, "crazy" paving came into vogue. Its irregular pattern of broken flagstones recalled the thrifty, picturesque paving of English cottage gardens. Arts and Crafts gardeners like Gertrude Jekyll often combined flagstone with brick, cobbles, millstones, and tiles to create elaborate pavements.

CONCRETE & ASPHALT

Today, concrete is frequently scorned, but it is the appropriate paving for many sites dating back as far as the 1890s. Modern concrete technology developed in the 19th century, and by the turn of this century Chicago and other large cities had adopted standards for concrete sidewalks. Early in the century, Gustav Stickley endorsed concrete as du-

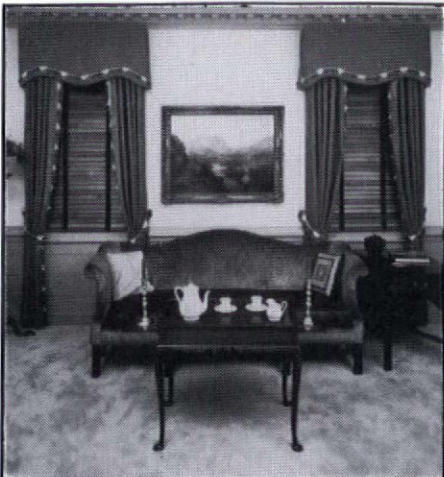
table, inexpensive, and in keeping with Craftsman aesthetics. By 1930, it was commonplace even in small towns. Ribbon-type concrete driveways, usually with a strip of grass in the middle, were popular in the early-20th century. And concrete patios were a hallmark of 1950s middle-class backyards. Because concrete mixing and finishing techniques have changed throughout the century, look for an older mason to lay your walk or ribbon drive.

Asphalt paving in the 19th century was called *macadam* and usually consisted of gravel rolled into a layer of tar. It was used primarily for roads and significant driveways. Its modern incarnation, blacktop, has become ubiquitous but is best avoided in most period landscapes.

The above list by no means exhausts the possibilities. Other paving materials included cobblestones, cinders, granite blocks, and crushed clay pipes (which can be seen in a Williamsburg garden). Your choice of paving will depend on the locale and period of your house, whether it's high-style or modest, how much traffic the pavement will have to bear, its maintenance needs, availability, cost, and — as in the 1930s, 1850s, or 1720s — your own personal taste.

— **Scott G. Kunst**
Old House Gardens
Ann Arbor, Mich.





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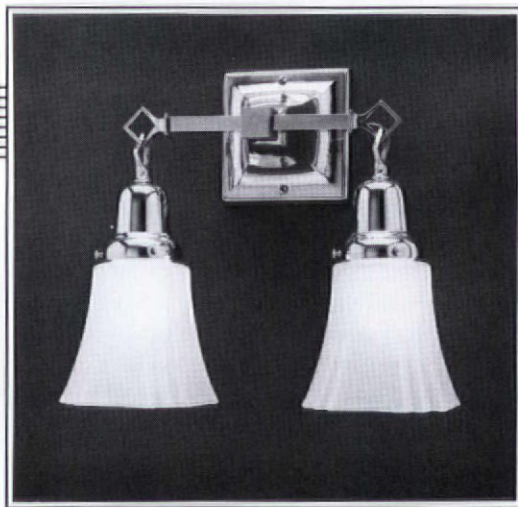
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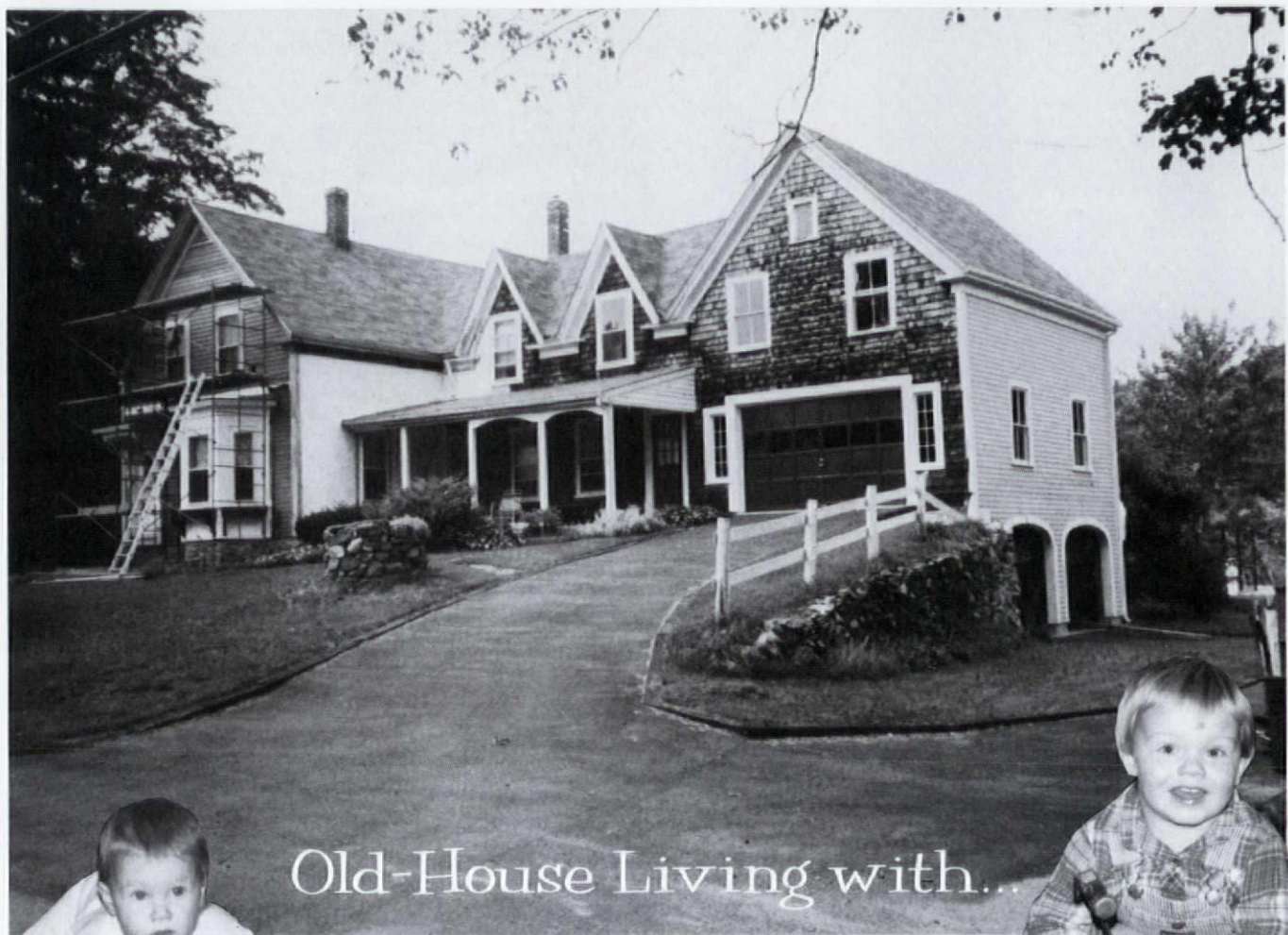
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photos: Courtesy of Michael & Chris Dimock, except where noted

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Old-House Living with...

CHILDREN

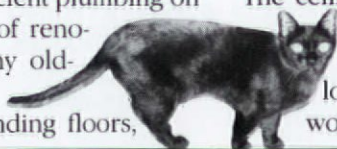
by Michael Dimock



My husband Chris and I have known for quite some time that we are old-house people. For the past four-and-a-half years we've been engrossed in the restoration of a c. 1830 farmhouse in Georgetown, Massachusetts. During that time we've added two major additions to our home: Stephen, now 2½ years old, and Heather, a year old.

Before the kids arrived, it was our Burmese cat BooBoo who caused the biggest interruption. While we were building out the wall around the brick hearth, which had been remuddled by previous owners, BooBoo decided to inspect the work and got trapped between chimney and studs. We ended up tearing down the entire hearth to get her out. Fortunately — for her sake as well as ours — the new hearth looks a lot better than the old one.

Aside from the BooBoo debacle and the partial collapse of the dining-room ceiling (thanks to ancient plumbing on the second floor), our first two years of renovation went without a hitch. Like many old-house enthusiasts, we spent every weekend and countless weeknights sanding floors,



resecuring plaster walls, stripping moulding, painting, wall-papering. Our efforts were inspired by the neighbors' tales of how this house had once been called the "showplace of Georgetown." We knew that with hard work and imagination, this house could once again be that showplace.

The only obstacle we hadn't considered was the amount of time that it would take to do this. Our unchallenged success in quickly and systematically renovating each room led us to develop a rather unrealistic theory that we could restore the entire house within a year or two. By the time I found out that I was pregnant in fall of 1985, we had finished the living room, dining room, and den, and were working on the kitchen.

Now the race was on. We had approximately eight months to finish the interior. The plan: first transform an ugly, 1950s-style panelled bedroom into a cheerful nursery. The ceiling and floor were in extremely poor condition and had to be replaced. Plaster washers did the trick in pulling back bulges in the wall, thus allowing us to salvage them. Time marched on, the work progressed (painfully) slowly, and I got bigger

and bigger. When we finally completed the nursery, we were three weeks away from my due date.

It was decision time, and we agreed to go for it! The upstairs bathroom was next on the agenda. At some point, the house's showcase bathroom, Georgetown's first, had been "renovated," leaving a hideous assortment of mismatched fixtures, stained pine mouldings, Fiberglas tub surround, and Sheetrocked walls too flimsy to support their own weight. The room had to be gutted. Once the room was demolished, cleaned, and the joists reinforced, we were ready to bring in the *piece de resistance* — a cast-iron tub. I can still see Chris, huffing and puffing, with a car tow rope slung over his shoulder, pulling the tub up 14 stairs, as our brother-in-law pushed, red-faced, from behind. The tub was successfully installed, just in time for my leisurely soak that night. As I gazed up at the rafters, I secretly hoped that I would *not* go into labor on my due date. We still had to install the ceiling, walls, tile, toilet, and sink.

My wish came true. Three weeks (and several pounds) past my due date, on June 17, 1986, a new bathroom was born, and so was Stephen Walter Dimock (8 pounds, 3 ounces).

While I was in the hospital recovering from the birth, Chris decided to catch up on some "homework." His first assignment was to get an old desk out of the "guest room" and downstairs to make room for my mother. The desk came crashing down the stairs on top of him. He wound up in the hospital, too, to have eleven stitches sewn in his badly gashed leg. As Chris pushed my wheelchair through the halls, limping all the way, the nurses whispered, "Crazy new father."

(When Chris called for help, two police cars, one search-and-rescue vehicle, one official fire department car, and an ambulance showed up at our door. Eight volunteers stopped the bleeding, locked up the house, and drove him to the hospital. With all the ruckus, the neighbors thought I was still at home having quintuplets. We want to say thanks to Georgetown's volunteer firemen.)

We gave ourselves a month before we tackled the dreaded raising of the barn/garage project. Originally, our two-storey garage with third-floor loft, attached to the right side of the house, had been a barn. The foundation was definitely not designed to carry the weight of one or more automobiles. As a result, the whole structure had pulled away from the main house and sunk approximately six inches.

I crossed my fingers as Chris carefully supported the building with railroad-tie cribbing, knocked out the old posts and makeshift cement walls and, using a twelve-ton hydraulic jack, raised the structure back into position. Finally, I realized that at no time was the garage in danger of collapsing. So I eagerly pitched in, helping to dig out and pour twelve cement footings, erect four 25' 10" × 12" salvage-yard timbers as joists under the second-storey floor, and lower the structure back down on its new foundation. All this was done with the help of the cribbing, a two-ton winch, a tow rope, and one rear-wheel-drive car.

You're probably wondering, "whatever happened to baby Stephen?" Most of the time, Stephen rode in either a frontpack or backpack, and my help was reduced to fetching tools or just providing Chris with companionship during those difficult, tiring hours.

I must admit that my change from active renovator to moral supporter was frustrating at times. However, I soon made a wonderful discovery: The Nap. With baby monitor clipped to my belt, I was able to be truly useful for one or two solid hours a day.

Just a note of caution about those giggles which transmit over the monitor: The tea party that you envision your toddler having with his crib companions may turn out to be a wallpaper removal party. One afternoon when I entered Stephen's bedroom, I found the same wallpaper I'd so lovingly hung only months earlier was lying in sheets on the floor. After counting to ten, I began making repairs. Maybe now I'll be better prepared for his first crayon masterpiece on the wall.

It's even possible, with a little luck and a lot of organizing, to work during your pre-toddler's waking hours. Armed with crackers, juice, diapers, and toys, I ventured to the local Registry of Deeds to research our house's history. From my backpack, Stephen could coo and gurgle with those around him while I waded through two Depression-era bank foreclosures and thirteen families. I still haven't gone back far enough to pinpoint the exact construction date of the house. But someday, when I muster the courage and stamina, I will return.

As winter 1986 approached, we contracted out our first job: replacing the roof and wood gutters. Meantime, Chris and I laid a new floor in the upper garage. Our pace quickened as I learned that the house was now identified as "the one with the sportscar parked on the porch." (The current front porch is cement.) But before we could move the car back into the garage we had to pour a cement lip between the floor and driveway. Chris was able to do this one balmy January day when the temperature soared to 50 degrees. He also caught pneumonia and was bedridden for the next two weeks.

Continuation of the barn/garage project was sparked by an *Old-House Journal* article which featured two handsome carriage-house doors — just the finishing touch for our two lower-garage bays. Chris designed and built the arches using the photographs accompanying the article as a guide, then got a local iron forge to make the curved and straight strap hinges.

While the forge was busy with the ironwork, we removed the old cedar shakes and rotted clapboard from the garage wall and installed new clapboard. As autumn 1987 arrived, neighbors waved to me high up on the scaffold as I painted the new siding and announced to the world that I was seven months pregnant.

Once again the rush was on to renovate another bedroom. The "ugly panelled room" was our choice. It featured a textured ceiling, bouncy, patched pine floors, and dark, wood-look panelling. Behind the walls was rockwool



A slight miscalculation during foundation repairs caused this gaping hole, but Chris still manages a smile.

Tips for Old-House Parents



- Prepare your newborn for the sounds of restoration by periodically running the vacuum cleaner during naptime. Gradually work up to drills and power saws. Soon your pre-toddler will be napping peacefully while you're hammering in the next room.
- A frontpack (for 0-to-4-month-olds) and backpack (for 4-to-18-month-olds) enables you to use your hands in light renovation work — until the baby learns how to poke your eyes, pinch your cheeks, tug your earlobes, and pull your hair.
- A baby swing, playpen, or walker can be useful, but not for long. Your little one will soon figure out how to stop the swing by grabbing one of its legs, climb out of the playpen, or make a beeline for the wet plaster.
- In summer, a sandbox or swingset proves a great investment for kids 6 months and older. They'll dig and play until they're so filthy that *you* can't stand it anymore. Keep in mind, though, that one parent will have to

supervise, while the other one restores.

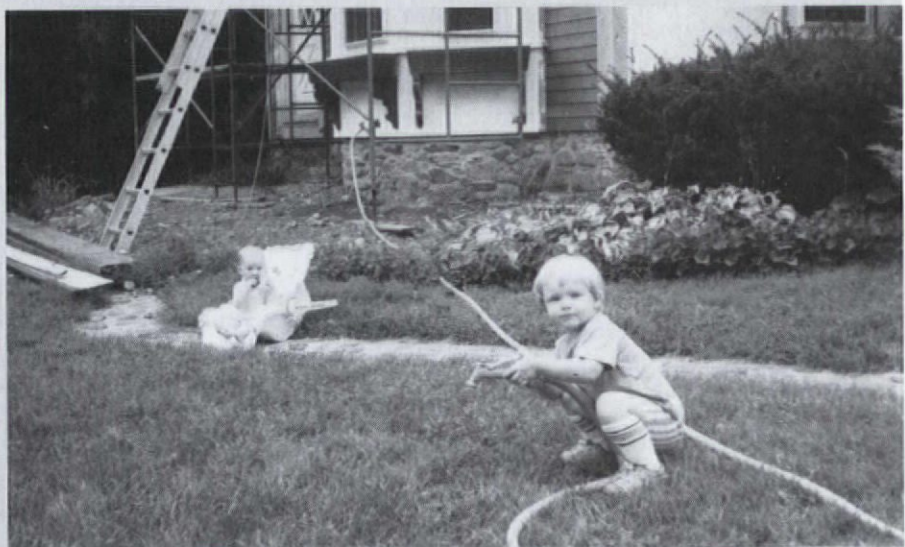
- Encourage your toddler to "help" by fetching tools and supplies. (The trouble begins when it's time to relinquish the item.)

- Never compare your progress B.C. (before children) with A.D. (after the darling arrives). With your first child, this is an easy trap to fall into, since those days of uninterrupted restoration are fresh in your mind. You'll find yourself trying all sorts of ways to get baby to amuse himself (toys, food, swings, walkers), while you try to resume work in pre-child fashion. By the

time the second child arrives, you realize that your restoration pace will never be the same. So relax!

- In two-child families, it's absolutely necessary for one parent to play with the kids while the other works. To determine who will play and who will work, it's a good idea for you and your spouse to develop restoration specialties. My husband tackled chores like demolition and plumbing. I handled plastering, painting, and the like. During naptime we both worked blissfully uninterrupted — sometimes.

— **Michaele Dimock**



Encourage your toddler to, ahem, "help" by fetching tools and supplies.



The restored fieldstone foundation and clapboard look as good as new, or should I say old?

insulation which had settled into a compressed mass through which the local field mice had tunneled a major thoroughfare. Our goal: restore the room to its original configuration (confirmed by the neighbors) as a smaller bedroom and hallway. The steep, narrow servants' stairway, which had been blocked up, would once more provide access from this hallway to the kitchen below.

It was during this period that I realized what a truly wonderful thing The Nap is. You know you're an old-house family when your child naps contentedly through the thunderous sounds of demolition. Like familiar music, it lulled Stephen right to sleep.

Stephen was now 18 months old, the age when most children are learning the words for "cup" or "chair." Stephen could easily identify — and use — "tape measure," "screwdriver," and "hammer." I don't need to tell you that at times I wished he didn't learn so quickly. Often, we'd retreat to the den while Daddy worked alone. However, when my expertise in plastering, painting, and wall-papering was called for, Daddy became Mr. Mom. I took these as opportunities for quiet contemplation.


Meanwhile, my due date approached. We'd come to accept that the bedroom would *not* be ready in time for the new baby's arrival, and proceeded vigorously on.

Heather Rowena Dimock (8 pounds, 4 ounces) was born on January 18, 1988. Her beautiful bedroom was finished four months later.

With warm June weather upon us, we tackled the difficult job of digging a ditch around the fieldstone foundation out front. Crumbling mortar, moisture, and mouse infiltration were our concerns. Our solution was to pour a cement retaining wall over the stones under the soil line, and to repoint the stonework above the soil. We hoped the result would be a more secure foundation without a remuddled look.

As Heather napped in her baby seat and Stephen played with the hose, we aimed a last spritz of water at the stonework to wash it off before pouring the retaining wall. The entire foundation under the bay window came tumbling down! The bay did not move; the interior walls did not crack; but I was left shaking as I stared at the gaping hole into the basement. In time, this episode became just another setback to be dealt with before real work could resume.

We're still stripping the old siding off the front of the house and installing new clapboard. We hope to restore the house's original 1830s appearance, including a wooden front porch. And we look forward to finishing the interior.

But somewhere along the way, that quest to quickly and systematically renovate the entire house has fallen by the wayside. We now take into consideration the Mushroom Factor of unforeseen complications *and* the Baby Factor of unforeseen interruptions. Experience has made us (slightly) more realistic in estimating how long it takes to finish a project. Our enthusiasm, however, has not diminished. Contrary to what our friends and neighbors say, it is possible to both raise young children and renovate an old house. Patience is the key — but old-house people know that anyway. 

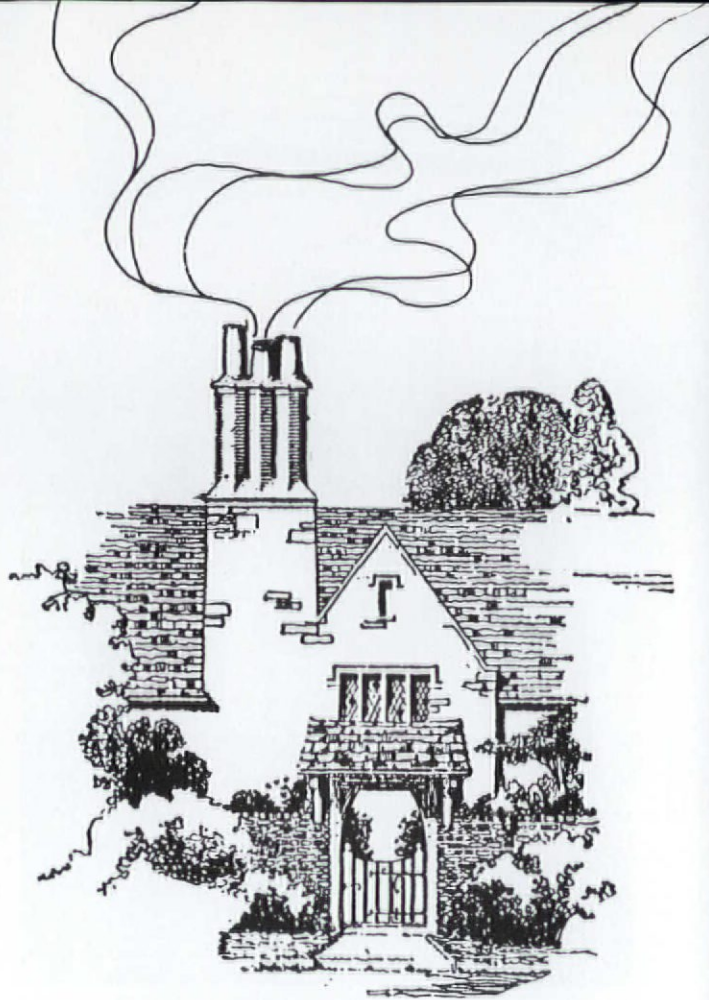


An old-house family: Me and Chris and Stephen and Heather — and scaffold.

T

HE FOLLOWING PAGES are devoted to the restoration of fireplaces, from lining the chimney to finding the right mantel. Although technologically obsolete, a woodburning fireplace is still among the most charming amenities of a home, and old-house owners are forever reactivating unused flues. *Proceed with caution.* This is hazardous stuff! After all, if you don't follow best procedure for refinishing a floor, you may wind up with peeling polyurethane. But if you don't follow best procedure for restoring a fireplace, you stand to lose it all.

An acquaintance awoke at 3 AM to a smoke-filled house and the unmistakable, terrifying sound of a house fire — but no flames, only an orange glow behind or under the staircase that ran along the brick party-wall of her brownstone row house. She got out, but the house sustained \$100,000 worth of damage and was uninhabitable for months. The cause: conversion of the gas fireplace *next door* into a woodburning fireplace. The contractor had not adequately inspected conditions. It seems a header beam from the woman's house was tied into party-wall masonry just behind the firebox of the house next door. Gas fires never would have burned hot enough to ignite the wood. But after the conversion, the heat of a wood fire did ignite the header — and the fire smoldered and spread to joists and stair carriage. The house with the converted firebox was unharmed.



SPECIAL FEATURES

Fireplace Conversions

— an architect's specific advice on how to avoid hidden hazards when reactivating an old fireplace

Inspecting Chimneys

— checklists for evaluating and maintaining old chimneys
specifications for masonry repairs

Mantels, 1700-1940

— a pictorial history to help you interpret your house, or to guide you in choosing a reproduction chimneypiece

In another case, friends activating a fireplace did reline the flue and firebox according to code — but, as it turned out, the hearth was laid directly on wood subflooring, and the joist header was directly against the firebox. One night things got hot enough that the floor framing ignited. The fire was caught, but the damage done by water pumped into the floor cavity destroyed decorative plaster in the ceiling below, and did thousands of dollars' worth of damage to finished oak woodwork and parquet flooring. Note that *no open flame ever touched the wood*; a buildup of heat ignited the subfloor and framing.

The technical advice in this section is not based on theoretical practice. It all comes from the real world. Even as he wrote the fireplace article, Jonathan Poore called to report that his favorite ice-cream parlor had burned down. An old woodstove connection into the chimney had been sealed up with cement instead of a proper brick patch. Even though the chimney was thus sealed, the patch was a "thin spot" that allowed the intense heat in the flue to ignite adjacent wood members. It was sobering — one day I read Gordon Bock's points on chimney inspection and maintenance, and the next day one of his "could happens" *did* happen.

We know that readers will be motivated to reactivate old fireplaces by archetypal longings. But please know what you're doing, go by the codebook, and pick a contractor with lots of pertinent experience.

— P. Poore

FIREPLACE CONVERSIONS

How to convert a gas fireplace to wood burning, and how to reactivate an old fireplace

by Jonathan Poore

The centerpiece of the parlor with its beautiful tiles and wood mantel, a Victorian fireplace seemingly begs for a crackling fire. The problem is that many such fireplaces were not designed for wood fires — and therefore present a dangerous fire hazard should you proceed in ignorance. Concealed wood members that are too close to the hearth, firebox, or flue can ignite and smolder undetected for hours, while fire gradually spreads through wall and floor cavities before visible flames erupt in what is already a conflagration. By the time fire is detected, you may have gone out — or gone to bed.

Never build an open wood fire in an uninspected firebox/chimney, and never burn wood in a fireplace designed for gas logs, or for gas or electric heaters. If you're not sure whether your fireplace is fit for wood fires, have it thoroughly inspected and tested before you use it.

It is possible to *convert* a gas fireplace into a wood-burning fireplace. What follows is a comprehensive description of all the steps involved in planning and specifying a proper conversion. The information here also applies to recommissioning an old woodburning fireplace. (Lining chimney flues is generally not a do-it-yourself job, nor is much of the masonry work described.)

SURVEY AND INSPECTION

Both the inspection and the fireplace conversion itself are

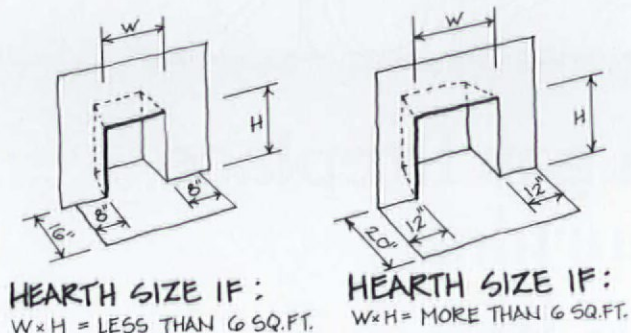
somewhat destructive as they require making access holes and, occasionally, minor demolition. Fire safety concerns are often in direct opposition to being gentle with the building. If the building burns down, however, you haven't preserved anything.

Fireplace and chimney design is not an exact science, so you may find that codes vary from place to place. In getting the inspector's approval for a conversion, there are two sticky issues: the minimum depth for the firebox, and the sizing of the flue in relation to the firebox. You're forced to work within the size constraints of your existing firebox and chimney flue. If your project can't comply with current code, the best approach is to tell your inspector what you plan to do to make the conversion, then ask for his recommendation on those two points. If everything else is to code and the job is being done by a qualified contractor, then the inspector may be flexible.

It is extremely important that you or the contractor do a thorough inspection and have a comprehensive understanding of existing conditions before converting or reactivating an old fireplace. *The overriding concern is safety.* Inspection must include more than just the fireplace. The whole assembly including the hearth, the firebox/smoke chamber, and the flue right to the roof must be surveyed and evaluated. The following is just an outline of important considerations; this inspection is best done by a qualified tradesman.

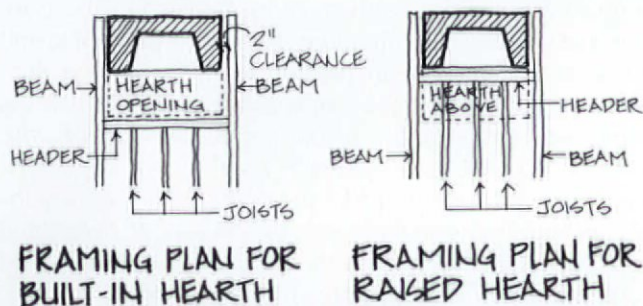
Hearth

You may think of the hearth as a decorative detail, but it provides a very essential heat shield for house framing and flooring in front of the firebox. Check the dimensions of the hearth and make sure they conform to the local code.

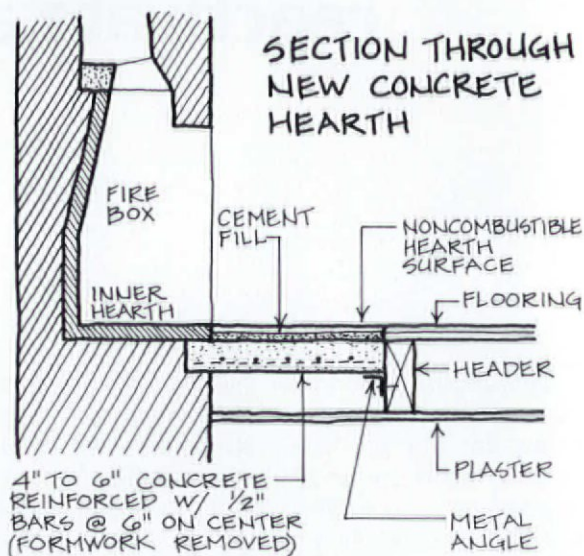
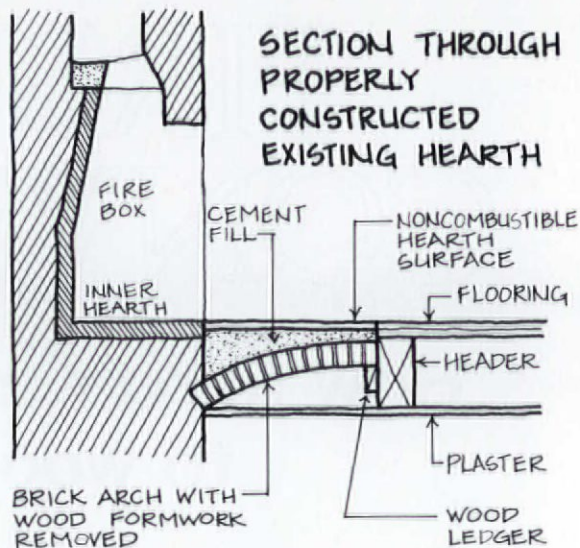


Often the hearth consists of tiles laid directly on wood subflooring or framing. This is not adequate for a wood-burning fireplace. (Wood fires burn hotter than gas.) The hearth should be constructed of a noncombustible surface material such as tile, stone, or brick, over a noncombustible, self-supporting substrate. No combustible formwork, framing, or lath should be touching the underside of the hearth.

To gain access to this space for inspection, check to see if there are any loose tiles which can be pulled out; otherwise remove a small section of ceiling plaster below the hearth. If you're lucky, you'll find a very flat brick arch spanning the hearth space. It's a good idea to open up the plaster below anyway to make sure no wooden formwork for the arch was left in place. Dried-out old formwork together with open mortar joints in hearth masonry presents a clear fire hazard. Remove any wood in contact with the masonry and repoint bricks as necessary.



If the hearth tiles are resting directly on the subfloor, it may be necessary to remove the existing hearth and rebuild it. The floor should be reframed so that there is an opening where the hearth goes (unless it is to be a raised hearth). A reinforced concrete slab can be cast in place. It should bear on steel angles attached to the beams. Be sure to remove the wood formwork after the concrete has cured. If it is possible to salvage the old hearth tiles, relay them over the concrete slab.



Firebox/Smoke Chamber

Examine both the hearth and firebox for evidence of gas pipes. Active gas pipes must be relocated far from the fireplace. Abandoned gas pipes should be removed, as they sometimes contain residual gas which could ignite; even if no gas is present, the pipes will conduct heat, possibly to adjacent combustible materials.

Someone with experience should evaluate the firebox and smoke chamber for safety and efficient operation. Check the overall dimensions of the firebox. Gas fireplaces often have smaller fireboxes than woodburning fireplaces. (You may have to burn shorter logs than standard, adding to firewood expense or labor.) Because gas fireplaces are smaller, the depth may not meet the 20-inch minimum depth requirement. It may be possible to deepen the fireplace if the firebox is just a bit undersize. That depends on the thickness of the existing masonry walls. The sides and back of the firebox must be at least 12"-thick brick or

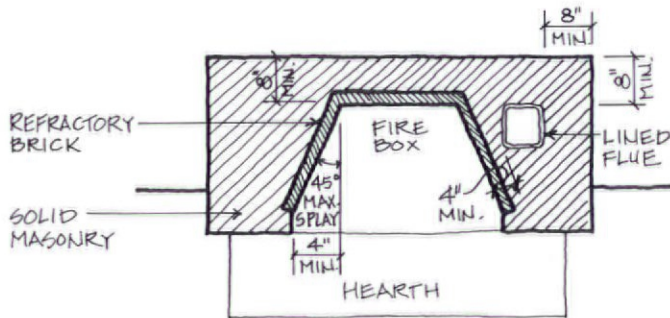
concrete. The thickness can be reduced to 8" total if the fireplace is lined with 2"-thick refractory brick. If, for example, you had 12"-thick walls, you could remove one wythe of 4" brick and replace it with 2" refractory brick. This would deepen the firebox by 2". (A small air space should be left between the refractory brick and the backing material to allow for expansion and contraction.) This practice will, of course, eliminate the existing material at the back of the firebox. If it was old brick with a lot of character, or tile, or a cast-iron fireback, you'll have to sacrifice it forever to get the pleasure of an occasional wood fire. And the tile often found in old gas fireplaces probably will not stand up to the intense heat of a wood fire. Glazing will fail, and the tiles may crack and discolor.

As you read this article, keep such alterations and sacrifices in mind as you decide whether the conversion is really worth it.

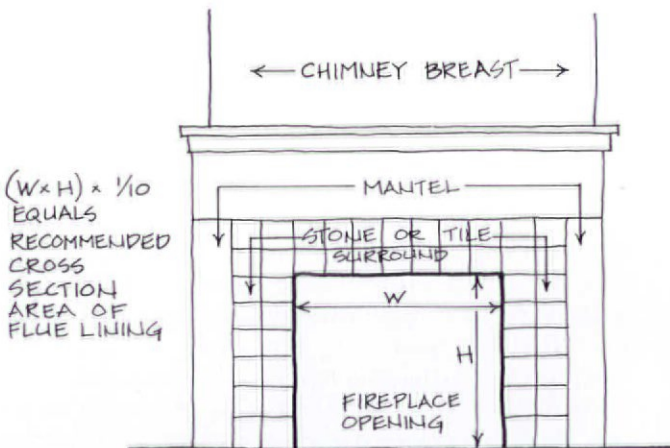
Rumford fireplaces — which are permitted to be shallower — are taller than many gas fireplace openings. Hence, converting an antique fireplace to Rumford di-

mensions may mean changing the size of the opening, and that means changing the surround and perhaps the mantel. The amount of splay can be changed if the firebox is being relined with refractory brick. The more splay in a firebox, the more heat is radiated into the room. This splay should not exceed 45° in any case.

When you inspect the firebox, make sure that no wood members are less than 2 inches from the masonry — a very common problem in old fireplaces. It is difficult to determine whether there is adequate clearance without opening up holes in walls and ceilings. A really hazardous condition is when beam ends are set into the masonry. This is most common in row-house construction. Often the beams of the attached building are set right into the back of the fireplace, separated from the firebox by only one wythe of brick. The floor of the adjacent building may be higher than your floor level, which puts those beam ends higher in the firebox where the temperature is higher, compounding the problem. This jeopardizes the building next door.

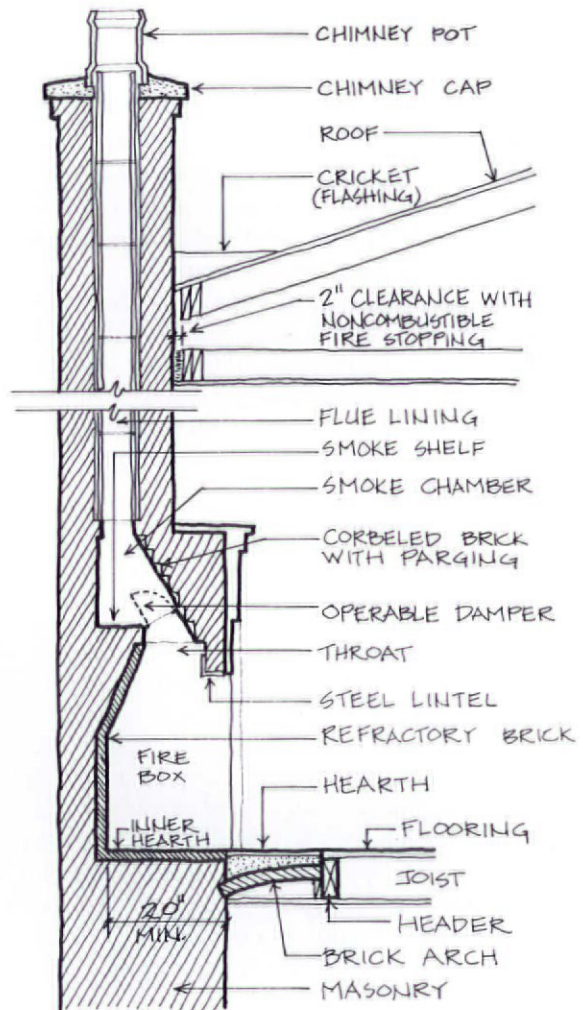


PLAN

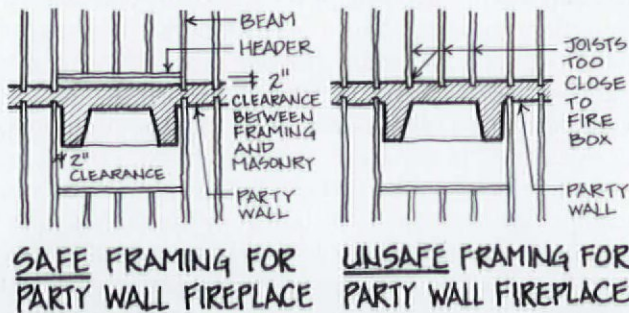


ELEVATION

ANATOMY OF A FIREPLACE & CHIMNEY



SECTION



Before converting a party-wall fireplace, check the relative floor heights: yours and your neighbor's. Check the thickness of the party wall to determine how many wythes of brick separate the back of the firebox from your neighbor. Also try to determine whether your neighbor's building is framed with a header at the back of your fireplace.

In a detached house, inspection is much easier. Also, the chimney of a detached frame house is not as frequently used to support wood framing. It should still be carefully inspected for adequate clearances, however.

When inspecting the firebox area, check the clearance between the wood mantel or trim and the fireplace opening. The distance should be 6 inches or greater. Ideally, there should also be an air space between the back of the wood mantel and the fireplace. Also, if there is a metal hood of any type over the fireplace opening, make sure it will withstand the higher temperatures of a wood fireplace. If the joints are merely soldered, the solder may melt; if the sheet metal is thin, it may deform.

Next inspect the throat and damper. Check the throat for any obstructions and see if there is a functioning damper. If there is no damper, one should be installed. Most likely it will have to be custom made to fit. The damper should be bedded in mortar in such a way as to allow for expansion and contraction of the metal. A compressible, noncombustible insulation can be packed around the damper to allow for movement.

While inspecting the throat, make sure there is a non-combustible lintel or masonry arch in good condition above the fireplace opening. Repoint or repair this area as necessary. When repointing, as with the damper, leave some room for expansion and contraction of any steel lintels.

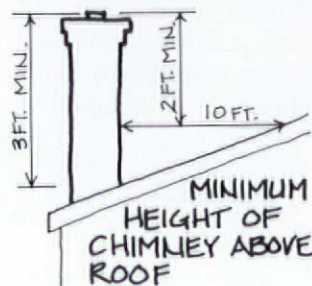
The smoke chamber plays an important role in ensuring that the fireplace draws properly. The smoke shelf deflects downdrafts. The smoke chamber in an old gas fireplace may be small to begin with, so be sure that the smoke shelf is not reduced in size or eliminated when relining the firebox and flue and installing the damper. The walls of the smoke chamber should be relatively smooth to reduce air flow friction. If the walls are rough corbeled brick, parge them with refractory cement.

Chimney

The chimney will most likely be unlined. There are good reasons why all building codes now require flues to be

lined. An unlined masonry flue is a very rough surface that does not promote smooth air flow, that allows a great deal of creosote buildup, and that is difficult to clean. Open mortar joints may allow exhaust gases to leak into other flues or into the building itself. Open mortar joints may also expose combustible materials to high temperatures and burning embers. A flue liner provides a smooth, relatively seamless surface as well as additional insulation when it is installed properly with an air space between the liner and existing masonry. The liner must extend from the top of the smoke chamber all the way to the top of the chimney cap.

Before relining the flue, inspect the entire chimney for structural integrity. If the portion of the chimney above the roof is leaning, it may have to be rebuilt. Check the height of the chimney above the roof. It should be at least 3 feet above the highest point where it passes through the roof, and at least 2 feet higher than any portion of the building within a 10-foot radius. These height requirements are both for fire safety and to ensure that the chimney draws well. If the top of the chimney is too low



or protected by roof projections, eddying air currents may cause downdrafts.

Check the condition of the mortar inside the chimney. If the chimney doesn't have a rain cap, the mortar may have gotten very crumbly over the years, and much of it may have eroded away. Freeze/thaw cycles, as well as combustion-byproduct corrosives that react with moisture, cause rapid deterioration of an unprotected chimney. Repoint and rebuild as necessary.

Chimney wall thickness should be 8-inch (minimum) solid masonry. Flues should be separated by 4 inches (one wythe of brick minimum) solid masonry. By code, all wood framing should be two inches (minimum) away from the fireplace and chimney masonry. Flooring and sub-flooring should be $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch away (minimum). Wood beams or girders may be supported by the chimney, provided the flue is lined and there is 8 inches of solid masonry separating wood from flue liner.

Any plaster on the chimney should be either directly on the masonry or over metal lath. It should not be on wood lath. These fire safety concerns are especially important if the mortar is old and crumbly.

Each fireplace or heating appliance should have its own flue. Most codes are fairly strict about this. This prevents downdrafts and leakage of exhaust gases back into the building.

LINING OPTIONS

Clay tile is the most common material for relining a flue. The advantage of clay tile is that it is readily available, most

contractors are accustomed to working with it, and it provides additional insulation. Insulation is important for two reasons. It protects surrounding combustible material from high temperatures and also keeps cold outside air from cooling the flue so much that downdrafts are created.

The disadvantage of clay tile is that fairly large access holes must be made at regular intervals the entire length of the chimney in order to install the liner. This is messy and somewhat destructive, especially if you have to cut through much woodwork or decorative plaster to get to the masonry. It is essential to plan access holes carefully to cause the least amount of damage.

Clay tile comes in two-foot lengths and a variety of sizes and thicknesses. The size or cross-section area is determined by the area of the fireplace opening. The flue area should be approximately $\frac{1}{10}$ the area of the fireplace opening. The tile thickness recommended for residential fireplaces is $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch.

Round tiles will make the flue draw the best but square- or rectangular-section tiles are more space-efficient in an existing rectangular flue. In other words, there is more cross-sectional area in an 8-inch square tile than in an 8-inch circular flue tile.

When clay tile is installed, it is important that each tile be carefully aligned with the next tile. A small air space should be left between the tile and the existing masonry, with only small amounts of mortar and bits of masonry used as spacers to hold the tiles in position. The first (bottommost) tile should be resting securely on corbeled bricks at the top of the smoke chamber; all other tiles bear on this foundation tile. Each joint should be carefully and completely mortared so that it is smooth and well sealed. Any offsets in the flue will have to be opened up for access and the tiles neatly mitered and mortared in place. All joints should be mortared with refractory cement. No offset should exceed 30° from vertical. (If it does, it is probably against current code, and you are taking a great risk that the finished fireplace won't draw well. In addition, an extreme offset collects creosote accumulations.)

Another type of liner is a poured-cement liner. (See the suppliers box on page 37.) In most such systems, a flexible, inflatable form is inserted into the existing flue and then a special refractory cement, which has been formulated for the purpose, is pumped into the space between the existing masonry and the form. Once the cement has cured, the form is deflated and removed. If the contractor has done his job well, the flue is now completely lined with a smooth, seamless layer of refractory cement. The cement is designed to withstand temperatures in excess of 2000° F., which means it could survive a chimney fire. A poured-cement flue is only as good as the installation, though, so it is important to hire an experienced contractor.

The advantage of a poured-cement liner is that the installation is less destructive than clay tile installation. Access holes still must be opened up at any offsets in the flue to position the form properly, but straight runs can be done without breaking through the masonry.

The disadvantage of this type of lining is that, in the rare

case that it's installed incorrectly, it is irreversible. It is also difficult to inspect the finished job for problems. Generally, if the contractor is experienced in this type of installation, however, you can count on successful results. Poured-cement liners are not generally recommended for chimneys with multiple flues, particularly in old chimneys where the mortar may be crumbly, because the wet cement could flow into the adjacent flue. Also, the additional weight of the cement lining could cause collapse of the brick partition.

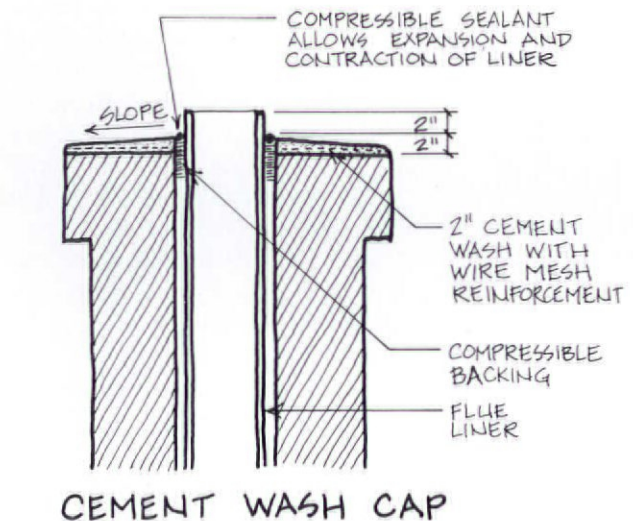
Metal liners are another choice for flue lining. If local code allows, stainless steel liners can be used in a masonry chimney serving a woodburning fireplace. Installing a metal liner in a straight-run chimney is fairly simple and inexpensive.

As with the poured-cement liner, though, any offsets must be opened up for access. Metal liners are available in 6" to 36" lengths, with diameters ranging from 5" to 10". Elbows are available for offset sections. Metal liners must be installed so that joints orient in the proper direction to keep creosote drips inside the pipe — not outside.

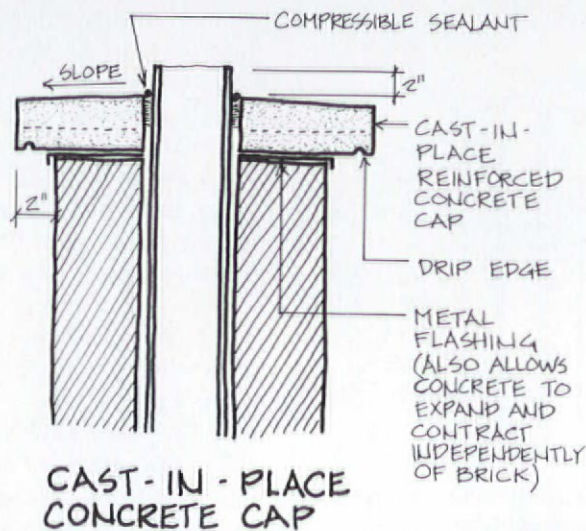
The advantage of metal liners is light weight and ease of installation. The disadvantage is they have negligible insulating value and a shorter lifespan than tile or cement.

Ordinary stove pipe should never be used as a liner in a masonry chimney, as it will not withstand high temperatures and will rust out rapidly. Another lining material not generally recommended for woodburning fireplaces is flexible stainless steel. The corrugated surface is difficult to clean, and woodburning fireplaces tend to build up creosote.

CHIMNEY CAPS AND RAIN CAPS

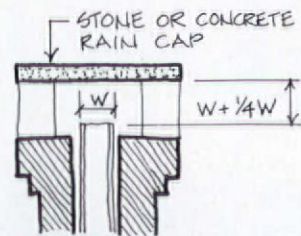


If the top of the chimney is being repaired or rebuilt, it may be worthwhile to build in some sort of feature to prevent moisture from penetrating the top of the masonry. The simplest way is to put a reinforced cement wash on top of the chimney: Lay wire mesh on top of the chimney and cover it with a thin cement wash that slopes away from the liner. The liner should extend at least 2 inches above the top of the chimney cap. Be careful not to feather the edges of the wash too thinly or it won't last. Leave a small space between the liner and the cement to allow for expansion and contraction of the liner. Fill this gap with a compressible sealant. (See previous page.)



If the design of the chimney permits, that is, if it will look okay, a reinforced concrete chimney cap can be cast in place. Its advantage is that it provides a drip edge that keeps water from running down the face of the chimney. You can even install flashing on top of the chimney before casting the cap.

A wide variety of rain caps and decorative chimney pots are available that help keep rain from entering the flue. Or you can fabricate a rain cap out of stone, concrete, or sheet metal tailored to the chimney. When you design the cap, make sure its height above the top of the flue is about 25% greater than the width of the flue. If two or more flues exit at the top of the same chimney, they should be unequal in height to prevent downdrafts.



DETERMINING HEIGHT OF RAIN CAP

When the fireplace conversion job is complete, have the contractor test the fireplace to be sure it draws properly. He should always perform a smoke test as well (see p. 35). The Brick Institute of America calls fireplace and chimney design "an empirical art to be applied with judgment" — so it's all the more important to hire a contractor who has a lot of experience with fireplaces, and who will stand behind his work.



GAS FIREPLACES

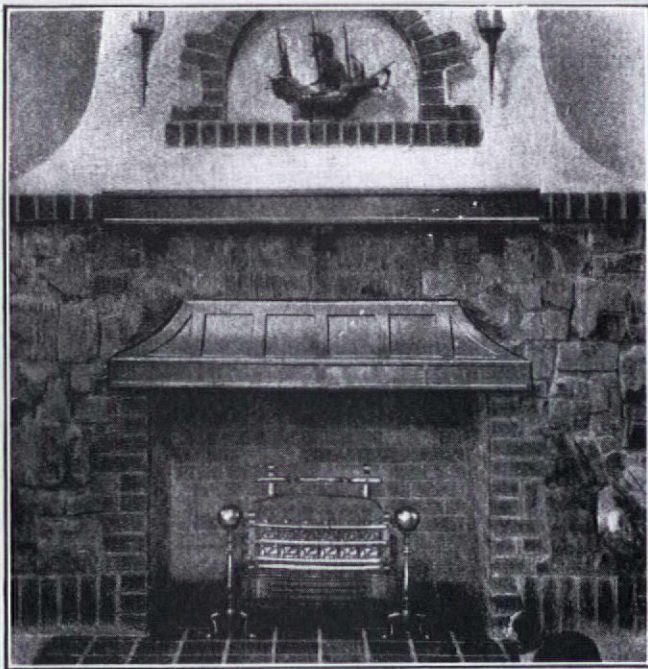
by Gordon Bock

Gas fireplaces seem to be orphans in the hearth-and-chimney world: If one were to judge from the amount in print on the subject, they never existed at all. Yet they've left traces of their presence in many houses, and in some buildings they're squatting still, waiting to be lit. Since so many readers have asked about these devices, we felt obliged to dig up all we could on them.

Their history is sketchy. Although gas service in houses was fairly common by 1850, evidence suggests that gas fireplaces didn't get popular before the 1880s and '90s. Until then, gas was considered an illuminant, either impractical or uneconomical for other uses. By the turn of the century, the picture had changed. A bitter coal strike in 1902 cut the supply of heating fuel to almost nothing, and sparked homeowners to look for other ways to stay warm. At the same time, gas companies were seeing electric light cut into their main market, and they pushed to make up the difference with new products: gas stoves, gas irons, gas refrigerators, gas clothes dryers, gas vacuum cleaners and gas space heaters.

Still available today, gas fireplaces had a heyday in the first three decades of this century. They were decorative heaters, used to augment the main furnace in very cold weather or just to take the chill out of a room without firing up the central heating. Designs varied through the decades and fell into two basic types. *Reflector heaters* burned gas in luminous flames and had a silvered backing to reflect the radiated heat. *Incandescent heaters* used elements that were heated by the gas flame until they became white-hot and luminous. This principle was used in gas-fired simulated coal and some gas logs to provide heat and atmosphere without the fuss of the real thing. Radiant heaters, however, were the most popular of the incandescent. They employed Bunsen-type burners and fireclay elements to "furnish a source of radiant energy (Sun Heat) that cannot be obtained from steam and warm air heating systems," according to advertising. Other products made use of fireproof fibers (sometimes asbestos) towards the same end. All units were promoted as being cleaner, safer, and more efficient than wood fires.

Recommissioning a gas fireplace is a potentially dangerous undertaking and not always possible. A large number of units originally ran in unvented hearths — that is,



A glowing ember gas burner in a 1926 Arts & Crafts hearth.

fireplaces without chimneys — and were the cause of many deaths in the past. Like any fire, gas burners consume oxygen, and they can literally eat up all the air in a flueless, closed room, asphyxiating the occupants. The situation is even more likely today because air exchange is reduced by efficient weatherstripping and storm windows. For this reason, operating gas fireplaces (and similar devices such as kerosene heaters) in an unvented installation is illegal.

The building inspection department for a given locale is the authority that passes judgement on the safety of individual gas fireplaces. Each community has its own regulations and more than a few would agree with the inspector who told us his city "doesn't relish the thought of having gas fireplaces in service." New York City, for instance, has very strict requirements which begin with this list of *must-haves*:

The installation must be in a good, working, vented fireplace.

The fireplace and chimney must be suitable for burning wood and have a minimum flue diameter of 8 inches (or a 51-square-inch area).

The gas burner must be MEA (Materials and Equipment Administration) approved by the City of New York, as well as AGA (American Gas Association) approved. *Antique units are not permitted.*

The City also very strongly suggests an additional opening to the outside of the building to permit oxygen flow (something more permanent than just cracking a window).

While these requirements may not be law in other cities, they are useful guidelines for reviving a gas fireplace anywhere. Safety pilots (that shut off the gas if there is no flame burning) are also a good idea, and are required for burners fired by bottled gas.



GAS FIREPLACE SUPPLIERS

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3 E. 47th St., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10017
(212) 753-9400

Distributors and installers of Peterson gas logs in several models and sizes.

Robert H. Peterson Co.

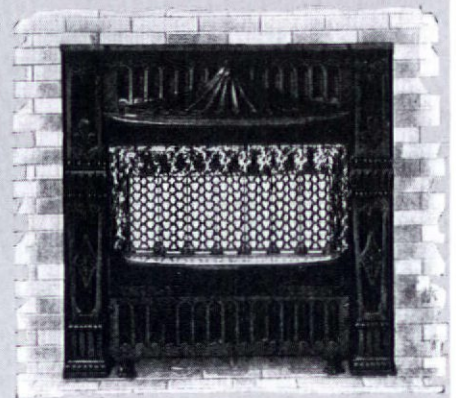
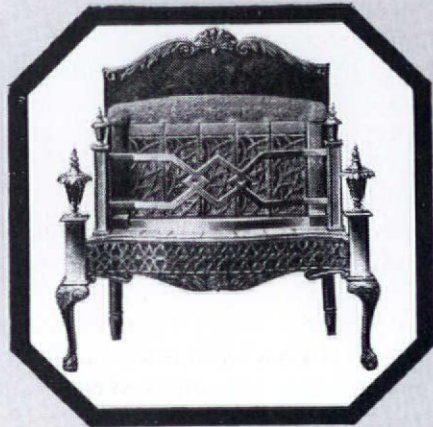
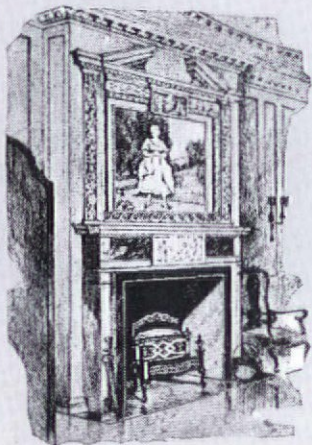
530 No. Baldwin Park Blvd., Dept. OHJ
City of Industry, CA 91744
(818) 369-5085

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Readybuilt Products, Co.

1701 McHenry St., Dept. OHJ
Baltimore, MD 21223
(301) 233-5833

Gas logs and accessories with safety pilots as standard equipment.



A Georgian mantel (left) featuring a Chippendale-style burner (center).
An inset model with heart-patterned radiants (right).

INSPECTING CHIMNEYS

by GORDON BOCK

The byproducts of burning various fuels all threaten chimneys. Coal burning produces sulfuric acid powder — a potent destructive compound. Gas appliances produce a clear, very corrosive condensate. Wood burning produces creosote, a corrosive, flammable substance that can ignite (if allowed to accumulate), producing a chimney fire of 2000° F., which can burn a house down.

OLD CHIMNEY CHECKLIST

Chimneys that have been out of service for extended periods develop their own special problems and should be thoroughly inspected before you start a fire. Use this checklist first, and then make a second inspection with the Working Chimney Checklist.

Give chimney an overall inspection for soundness. Check for cracks and settling at foundation; weathering of masonry; evidence that chimney is moving away from the house.

Check for excessive leaning above roofline. (Chimneys tend to lean in direction of prevailing wind, not because of wind pressure itself, but due to effects of sulfur dioxide produced by burning sulfur-containing fuels. Sulfur dioxide is also present in polluted atmospheres. When sulfur dioxide combines with lime (calcium carbonate) in mortar, it converts it to calcium sulfate — a compound that occupies a larger volume than lime alone. So mortar joints on side of prevailing wind — which brings wind-driven rain — gradually become thicker than joints on the lee side. Result is a lopsided expansion of the mortar and a chimney that leans.) Minor leaning poses more of an appearance problem than structural, but if chimney shows signs of cracking and imbalance, it may have to be dismantled to roofline and rebuilt.

Confirm that chimney is at least 3 ft. higher than roof surface where it comes through, and 2 ft. higher than any roof surface within 10 ft. Shorter chimneys frequently have draft problems; they may spew live sparks on roof.

Inspect rack (widening of chimney where it becomes the fireplace) for weathering. Racks can be protected with a course of paving brick or wide, flat stone (most durable method), or with mortar wash. Mortar wash should fill each step of brick (but not bridge over each course); you may have to remortar eroded parts.

Determine whether chimney is lined. While a flue liner is required by code (and for safety), most chimneys from last century were built before they were common practice. Unlined chimneys may have mortar deterioration inside flue (see Working Chimney Checklist) and need a liner.

Check for obstructions. If chimney is straight, sighting up or down flue tells whether it is clear. For chimneys with bends, a smoke test (see Working Chimney Checklist) will tell if flue is blocked. Obstructions can be located by tying a rope to a weight (window sash weight is ideal): Lower it down the flue until rope goes slack. Measure amount of rope let out to tell where plug is. Sometimes drawing weight up a few feet and dropping it on obstruction breaks it up. Persistent blockages (such as cluster of fallen bricks) may require breaking through chimney wall.

Check flue for electric wires, pipes, television cables, etc., which were run through chimney while out of service. Such surprises must be relocated before chimney can be used.

Check for poorly patched holes in chimney. Examples: breaches repaired with brick pieces and wadded aluminum foil; unused thimble sealed with metal "pie plate." Either may be wallpapered over, leaving telltale bulges as clues to location. Such seals can leak dangerous flue gases, or blow out during chimney fire, letting smoke and flames into room.

Check for cleanout door at base of chimney. An essential feature for cleaning and maintenance, some old chimneys don't have them. Doors are made of ferrous metal, cast cement, or other fireproof material; must create a tight seal when closed.

Check inside cleanout door. Soot, leaves, twigs, nesting material are normal in an unused chimney, but large deposits of old mortar and fallen bricks may point to deteriorating masonry.

Check for damper in throat. If not present, one should be installed for best fireplace and heating efficiency.

If chimney has damper, check to see it opens. Closed damper in unused chimney often collects debris on top — sometimes so much that damper won't open. Clog to be removed before damper and chimney can be used. Begin by digging around slots in damper with a long tool; rake out soot and dirt. Process is messy, but eventually a



Years of moisture damage and lack of maintenance have devastated this chimney.

hole through debris will develop and accompanying draft up flue will draw away dust.

WORKING CHIMNEY CHECKLIST

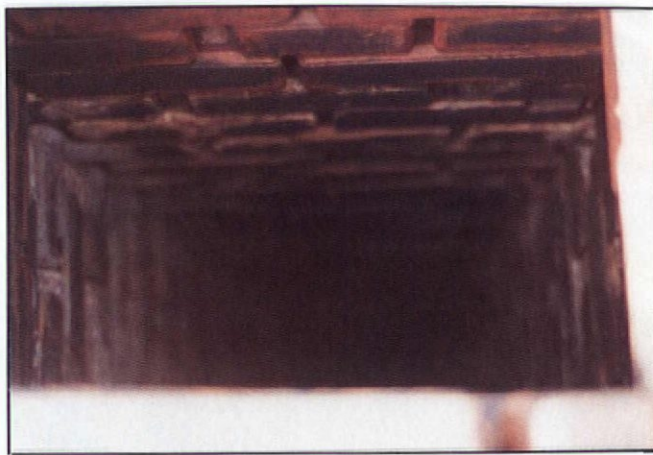
Inspect working chimneys once a year. Spring is recommended because the heating season is over and warm weather is ahead for making repairs, but the byproducts of burning are still fresh and have had little time to corrode metal and mortar.

Cracks in chimney indicate failing masonry and are dangerous as they leak gases and flames. Check for cracks by inspecting chimney on exterior surface; look down (or up) flue to evaluate interior surface. And/or perform a smoke test: First all known openings in chimney are closed, including top. Then smoke source is put in fireplace. Use a small, smoky fire or a smokebomb made for heating trade (available at supply house). Leaks are quickly identified by plumes of smoke coming through the mortar. Repair cracks with heat-resistant (refractory) mortar marketed for chimney repair.

Check for missing bricks or mortar and repair (see sidebar).

Check condition of interior mortar joints. Look up hearth with a mirror or through stovepipe thimble. Corrosive action of burning byproducts literally erodes a chimney from inside out, leaving half-empty mortar joints on flue side. Chimneys not attended to will eventually be destroyed. Remedy is to have the chimney relined, usually by a contractor employing one of several commercial processes (see suppliers list, page 37).

Check chimney top for deteriorated flashing or open caulking at roof line. Look in for leaks evidenced by stains on rafters or underside of roof. Check cricket — tentlike piece of flashing between chimney and roof on uphill side; this too can be source of leaks. Seal open joints with car-



This photo shows how the inside of a chimney deteriorates. Note the missing mortar.

tridge caulking or roofing cement. Caulks should not be oil-based, but instead a good grade polysulfide, butyl, or silicone rubber sealant.

Check chimney cap — flashing ornament that keeps

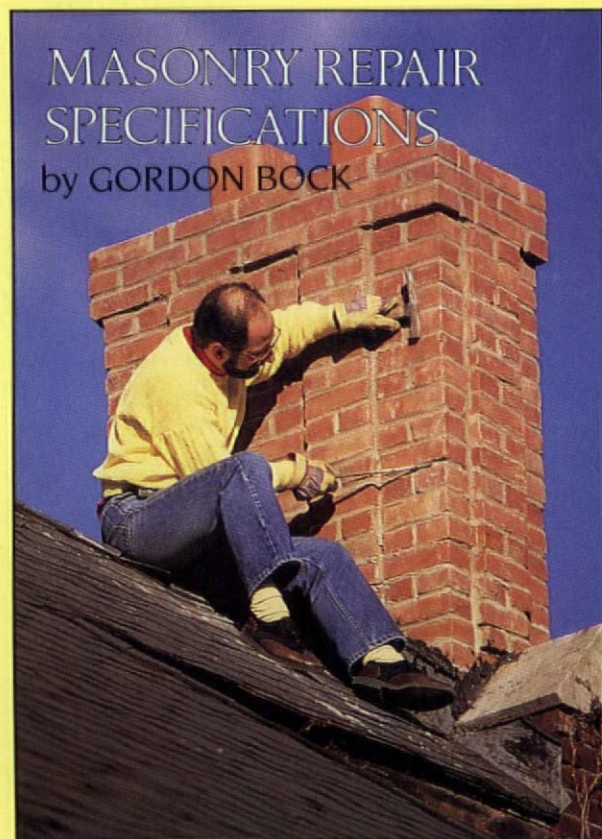


photo: Daniel Durka

Chimneys take quite a beating and need regular maintenance. Rain and ice erode mortar joints on the exterior, combustion byproducts corrode them on the inside; expansion/contraction cycles age brick and force joints open. Maintain chimney masonry to extend chimney life and to improve efficiency and safety.

water from penetrating masonry — for signs of weathering or wear.

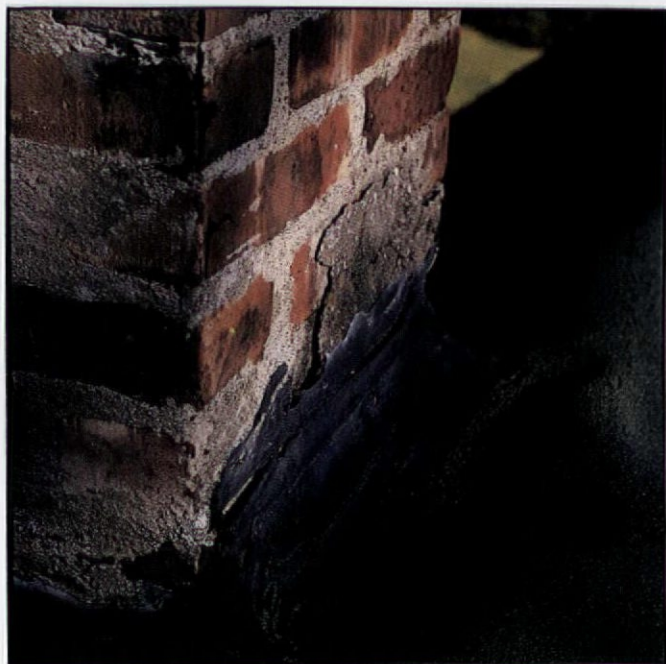
Check condition of flue liner. Clay-tile liners, widely used since 1910s, can crack and come apart, sometimes as result of a chimney fire. Byproducts of new, high-efficiency coal burners and gas appliances also affect them. Cement and metal liners are usually newer but should be checked.

Check for creosote or soot bleeding through mortar joints. Faulty liner or mortar joints are usually to blame, buildup *inside* chimney is likely.

Operate damper and make sure it functions smoothly. Check for worn or missing cotter pins that link moving parts and replace if necessary. Examine base plate and touch up anchoring mortar if cracked or missing with refractory cement.

If fireplace has an ash pit, empty ashes and doublecheck that passage to fireplace floor is clear.

Clean chimney. Usually a professional job, particularly



Open seams in roof flashing or caulking can cause water leaks.

Three- or four-inch-thick solid bricks are required for new chimney and fireplace construction in most communities, and are also the best choice for repairs. Refractory brick should be used for fireboxes.

Type N, portland-cement lime mortar is a good, all-around choice for repointing chimneys and fireplaces *not* built with soft mortar.

Use mortar substitutes when repointing masonry made with traditional soft mortar — the standard until portland cement became popular around 1870. Modern mortars have a high portland-cement content, and are much harder than soft mortar (which has a high lime content). They also don't "give" as soft mortar does and can crack and spall old brick and stone during expansion and contraction cycles. A good soft mortar-type formula:

1 part portland cement

3 parts hydrated lime

3 to 5 parts sand to 1 part of the cement-lime mixture

Fireclay mortar must be used for combustion chamber and hearth masonry, and should be in accordance with ASTM C 105. Fireclay mortar is available in cartridges like caulking compound, which are well-adapted to repointing, as well as dry mixes commonly used for new work and major repairs.

REPOINTING

Old mortar is best raked out with hand tools, usually a hammer and a small chisel. Remove mortar to a depth of

two to two-and-one-half times the width of the joint — about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to $\frac{3}{4}$ in. for most brick masonry. The joint should be raked clear to the brick (or stone) on top and bottom, and square along sides and back. After brushing all loose material and dust from the opening, wet the joint with a rag or coarse brush so that new mortar does not have its own moisture drawn off.

Joints are filled in layers to limit shrinkage, and should be well packed. Tooling the joint, usually with a jointer, is important; performed just after the mortar sets but while it is still soft, it tempers and shapes the exposed surface of the joint. Tooling should match the rest of the masonry. (Mortar profiles are designed to shed water.) Finally, pointing mortar will develop to maximum strength if allowed to cure slowly. A time-honored curing technique is covering the new work with burlap or old tarps that are kept damp for three consecutive days.

Combustion-chamber mortar joints are made as thin as possible (typically $\frac{1}{16}$ in. to $\frac{3}{16}$ in.; no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ in.) to minimize cracks and movement from thermal expansion. Repointing with cartridge mortars begins with the same raking, dusting, and wetting procedure as other masonry. Then mortar is laid in with a gun (make sure it penetrates the entire gap) and finished off flush with the brick with putty knife or trowel. Manufacturer's directions for curing should be followed before lighting a fire. More extensive repairs will probably mean using traditional fireclay mortar. Rule-of-thumb allows 30 days for curing after construction before starting a fire in a new or repaired hearth.



Creosote leaking through mortar joints is a sure sign of problems.

if chimney is very dirty or hasn't been cleaned in long time. Many chimney-cleaning brushes and devices are on the market, but basic (messy) process remains the same: brushing soot and other byproducts off flue walls from top down, then vacuuming residue from hearth and smoke shelf.

- ☑ Check smoke shelf for soot and debris, especially after cleaning chimney.
- ☑ Check cleanout doors and remove debris before and after cleaning. After cleaning, make sure door seals correctly.
- ☑ Stovepipe thimbles (and stovepipes too) should never protrude into flue space where they will impede draft. But they should extend fully through chimney wall and stop flush with inside surface.
- ☑ Where wood or coal stoves are installed in fireplaces, connector pipe should continue inside chimney at least to beginning of flue liner. Such installations should *not* be made in chimneys where cross sectional area of flue is more than 3 times area of stove pipe.



SUPPLIERS

CHIMNEY LINERS

Ahrens Chimney Technique, Inc.

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Two-part masonry lining system installed nationally through dealers nationwide.

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Refractory mortars and caulks, chimney patching products.

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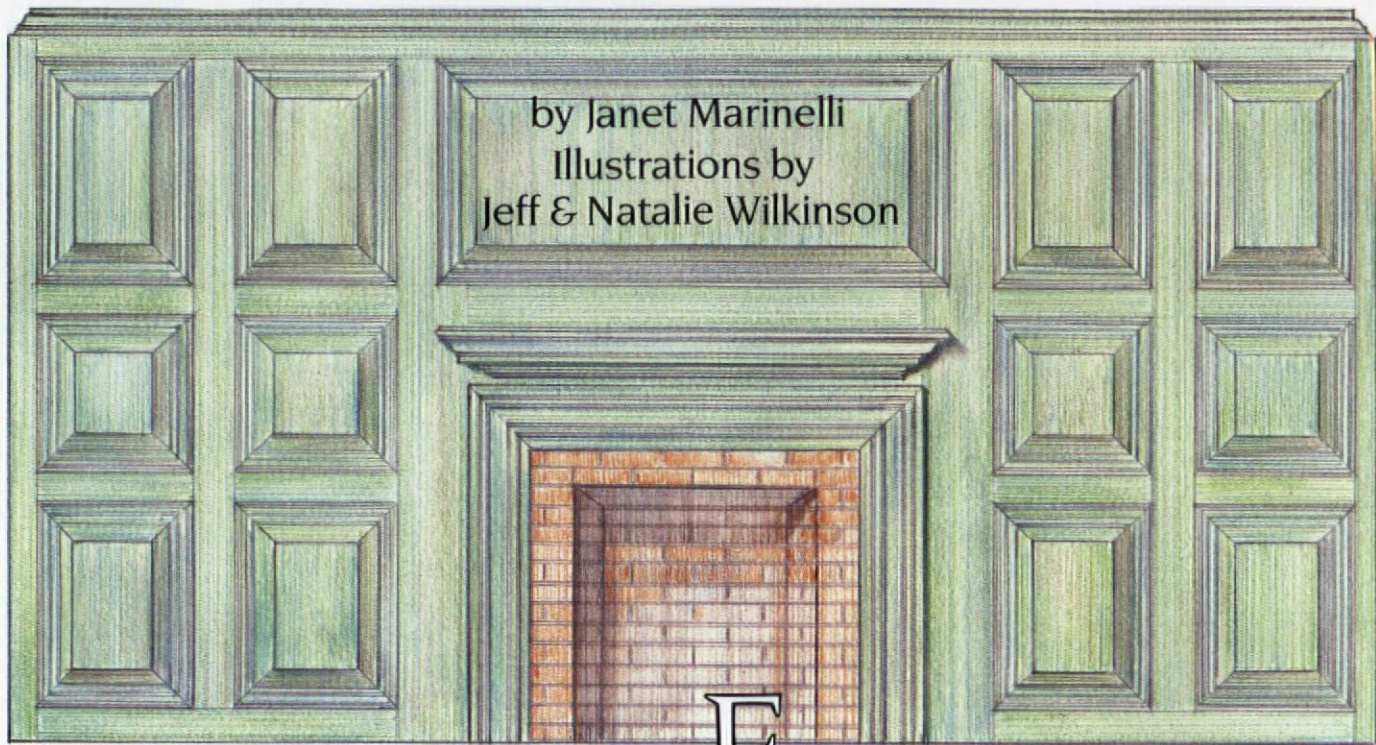
Woodmart

PO Box 45, Dept. OHJ
Janesville, WI 53547
(608) 752-2816

MANTELS 1700-1940

A Pictorial History

by Janet Marinelli
 Illustrations by
 Jeff & Natalie Wilkinson

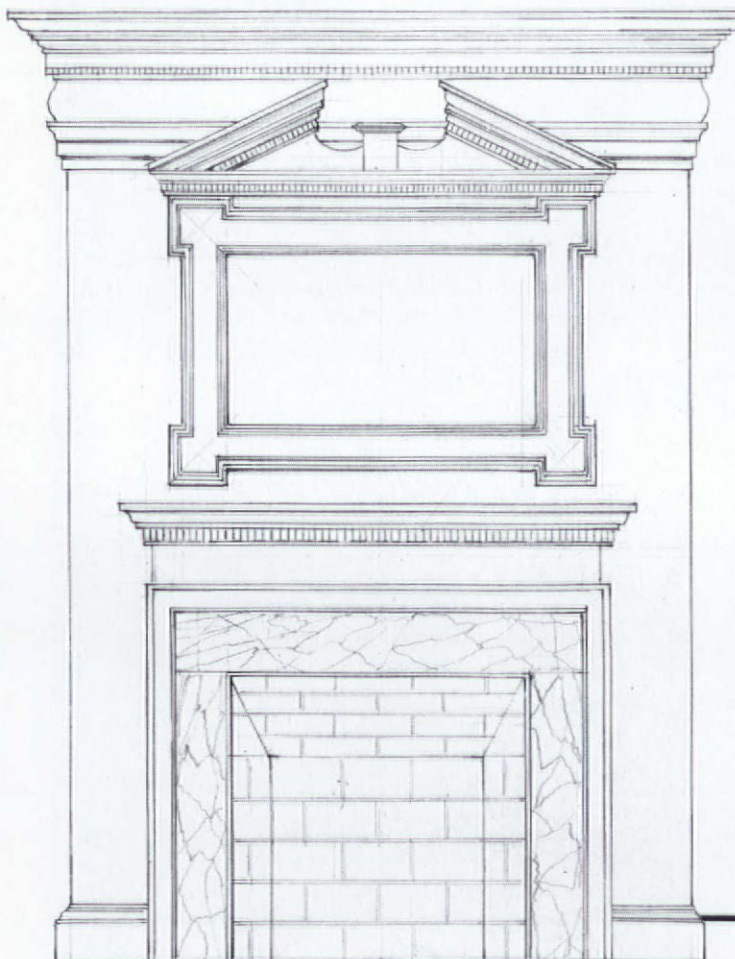


Colonial, c. 1720

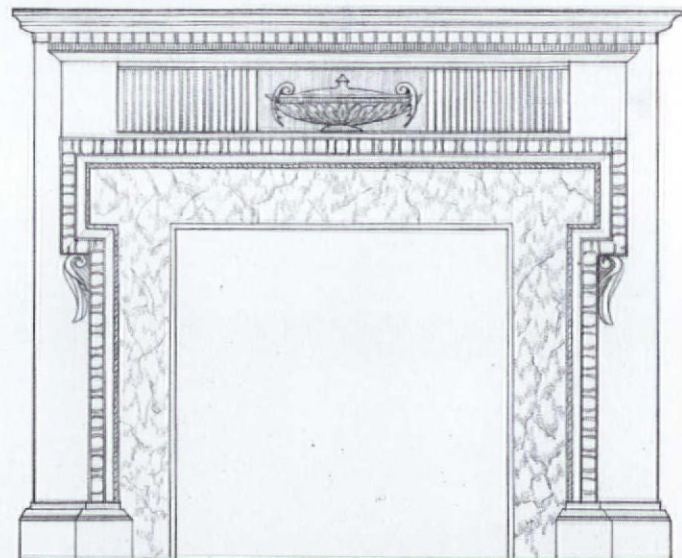
For nearly 300 years, chimneypieces in hardwood and painted pine, marble, slate, brick, and iron have been key architectural details in American houses. In fact, mantels and staircases are perhaps the two interior elements that provide the best clue to style.

Raised panelwork, *above*, is typical of fireplace walls in colonial houses of the early 1700s. Around that time, mantelshelves first appeared, and the grander fireplaces were surrounded with wide bolection mouldings.

By mid-century, the Georgian mantelpiece, *below left*,



Georgian, c. 1750



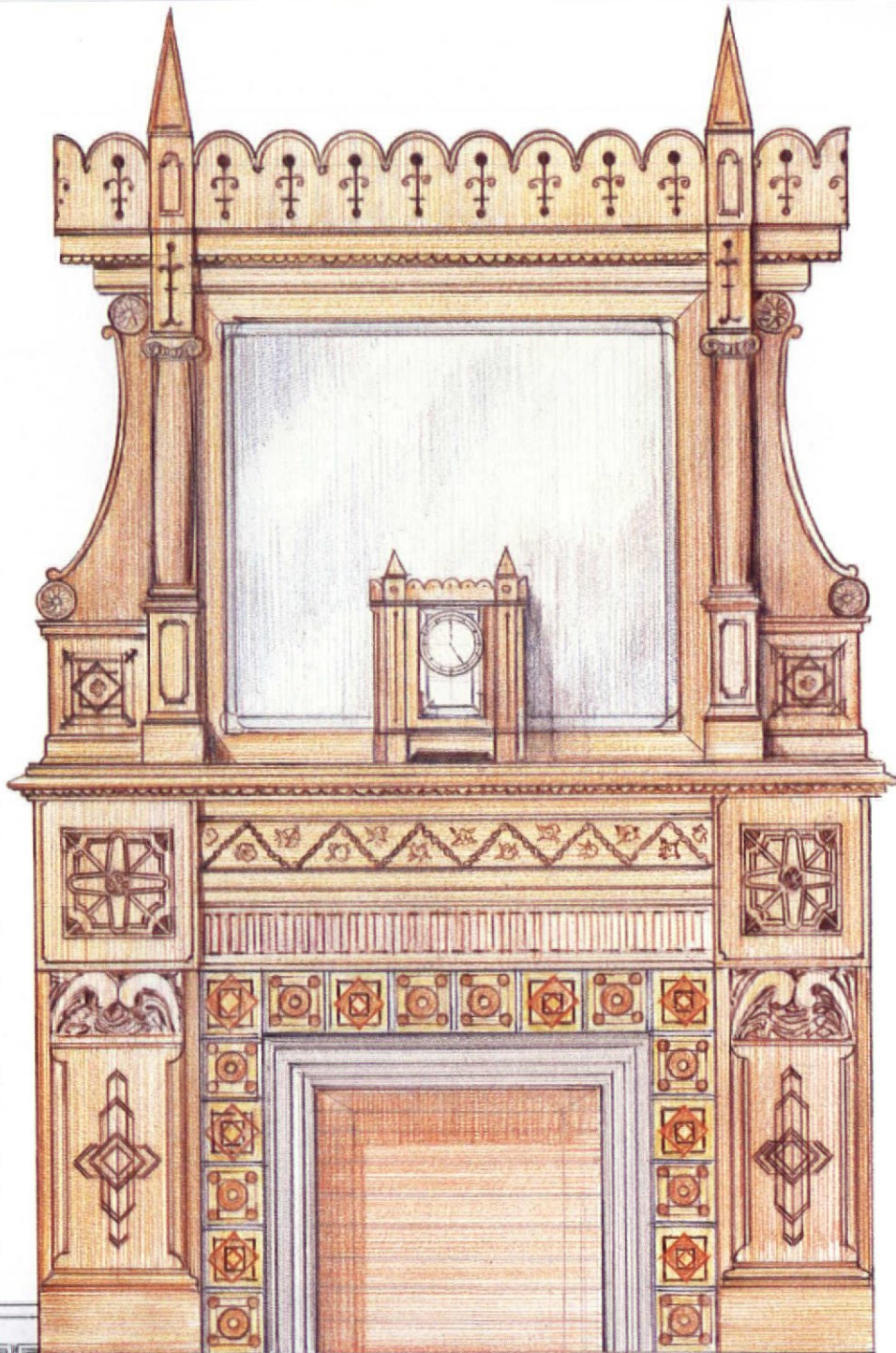
Adam, c. 1800

was very much in vogue. The surround, or flat band around the firebox, had square or crosssetted corners and was usually made of marble or wood (often marbleized). Mantelshelves, now commonplace, were supported by a bed moulding with dentils or other decorative details. But the Georgian fireplace's most distinctive feature was its overmantel, often topped by a broken pediment. Georgian mantels were usually white.

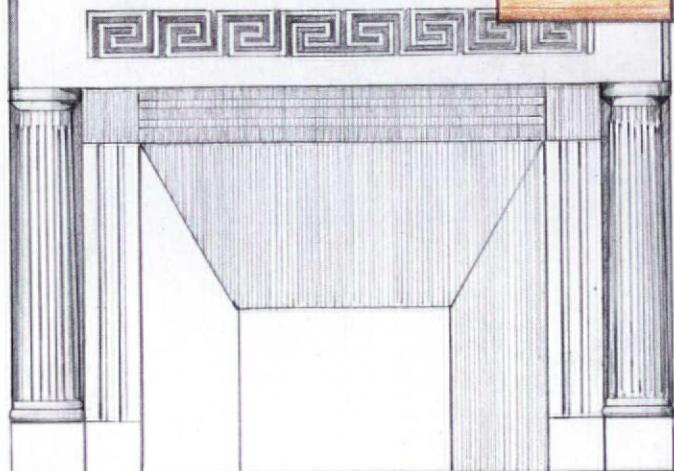
The Adam mantel, *opposite, below right*, popular around the turn of the 19th century, was more playful than the severely classical Georgian. Spidery, low-relief ornaments, including scrolls, urns, flowers, and mythological figures, sometimes eagles and other Federal details, danced across the mantel's frieze. The most dramatic development was the disappearance of the pedimented overmantel.

During the early decades of the 19th century, Americans began to prefer a pared-down Greek style to the patrician — and quite British — Adam. Builders found mantel designs based on the simple post-and-lintel construction of Greek temples in patternbooks like Asher Benjamin's 1830 *Practical House Carpenter*, *below left*. White marble was thought to be very Athenian. Ornament was kept to a minimum. Mirrors began to appear over the mantel.

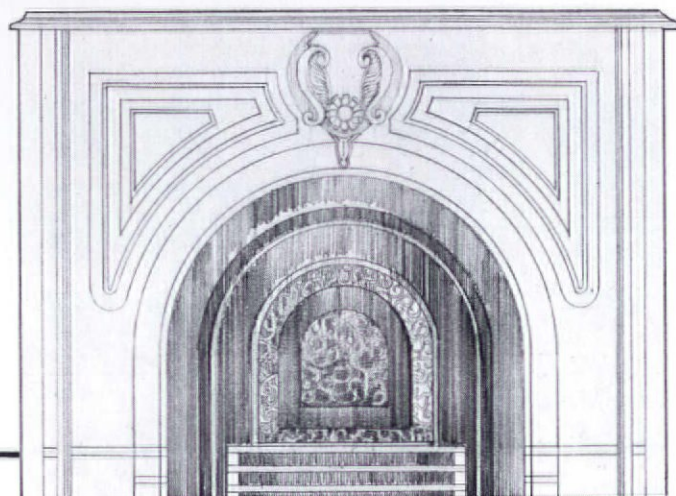
After mid-century, central heating was gradually making the fireplace obsolete, but A.J. Downing and other proponents of picturesque houses still loved them. Most of the Gothic cot-



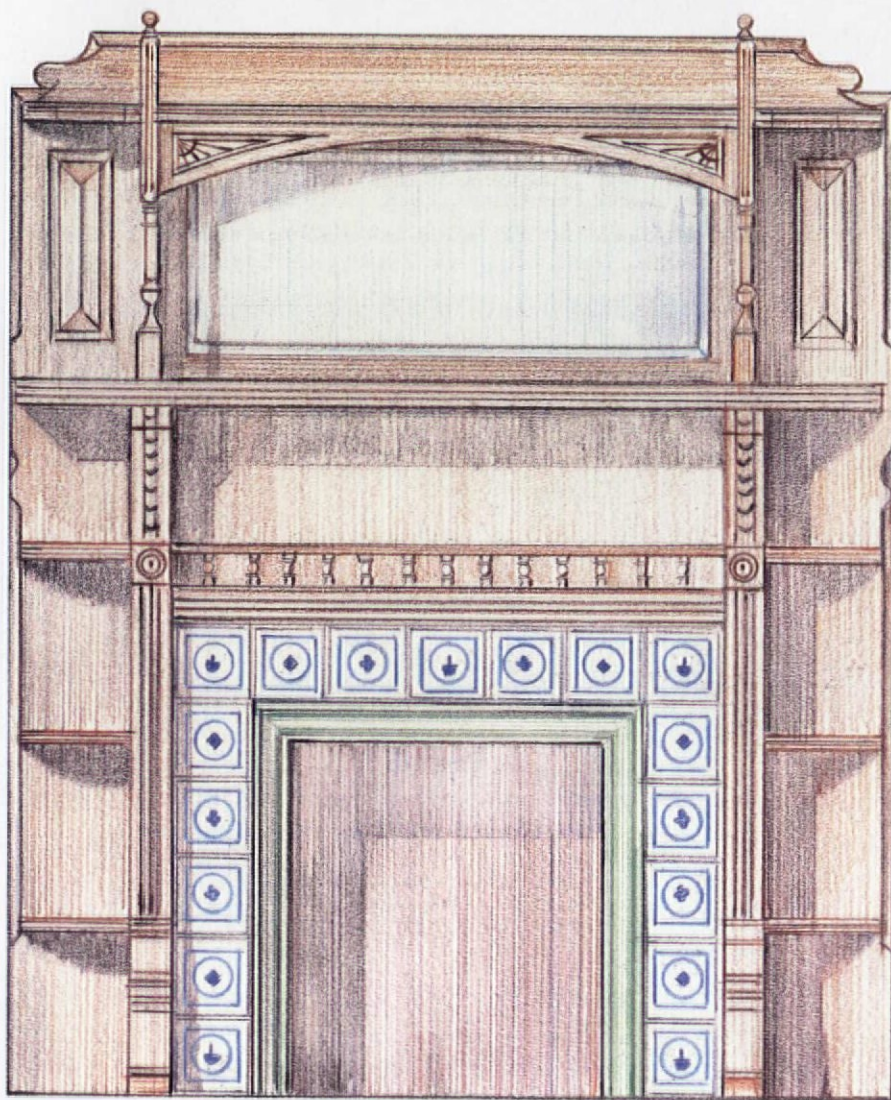
Victorian Gothic, 1878



Greek Revival, 1830



Italianate Marble, c. 1860

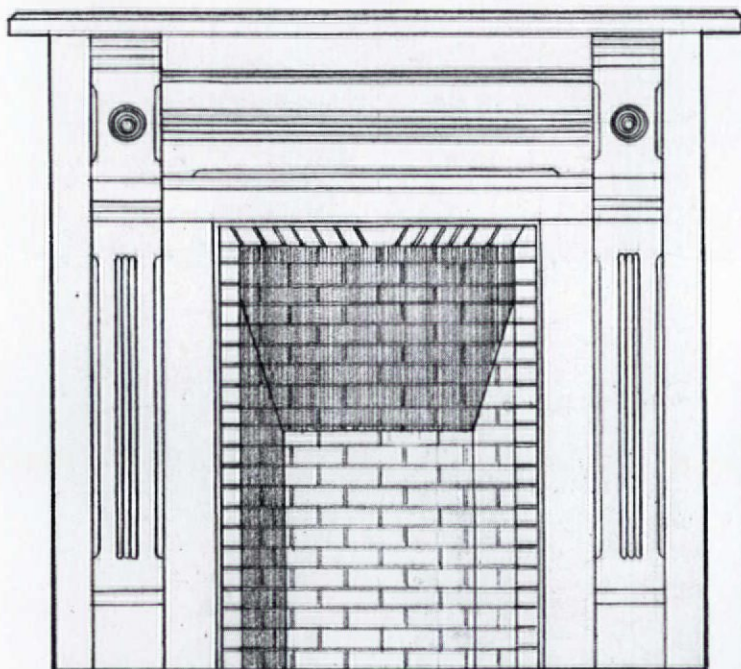


Late Victorian, c. 1880

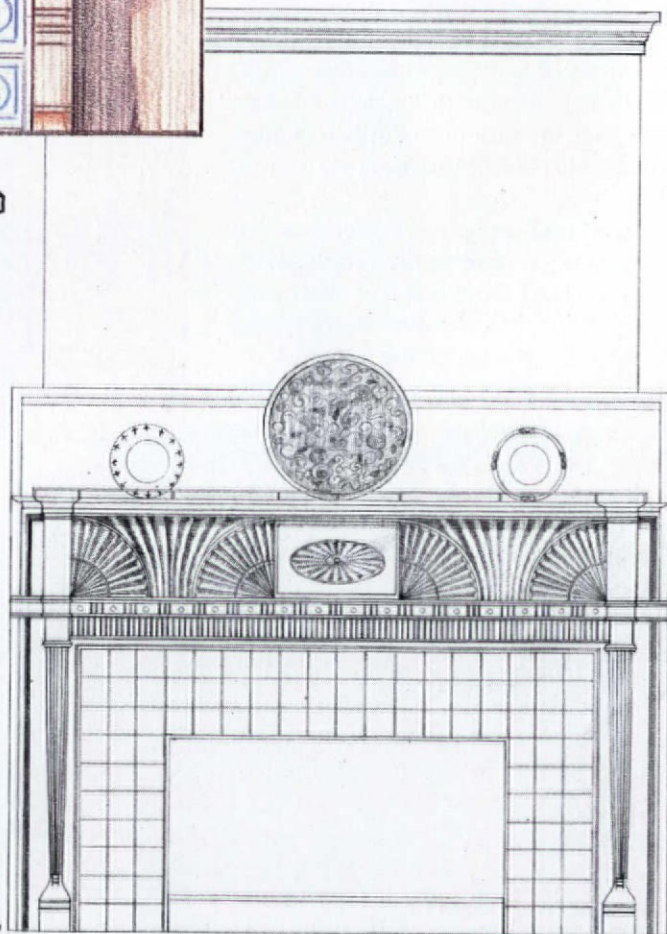
tages illustrated in Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) have fireplaces and elaborate mantelpieces with confectionary Gothic charm. The impulse toward medievalism resurfaced decades later in the work of Charles Eastlake and his American admirers, including Harriet Spofford, in whose book *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (1878) we found the mantel on *page 39, top*.

Vaguely classical marble mantels like the one on *page 39, bottom right*, were fashionable from the 1840s through the 1860s. The primary difference between these and previous designs was the new arched shape of the firebox opening. This arched shape created large spandrels, which during the heyday of rococo decoration often overflowed with carved fruits, flowers, and vines. Although the fanciest mantels were marble, marbleized slate and cast iron were popular second choices.

The late Victorian mantelpiece, like most things late Victorian, was elaborate and eclectic, to put it mildly. The mantel, *below*, designed by Louis



Farmhouse Mantel, c. 1870

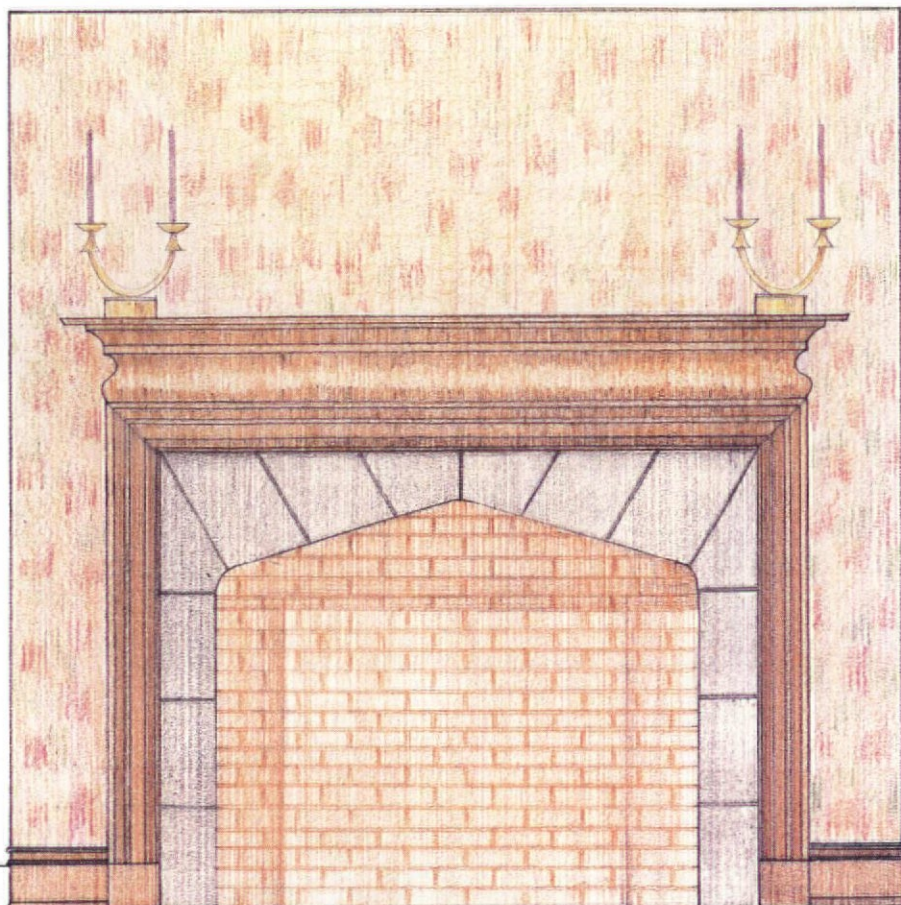


Art Movement (Tiffany), 1883

C. Tiffany in 1883, combines among other things Aesthetic Movement fans with elements of the Colonial Revival. The mantel on the *opposite page, top*, is typical of the period: tall, with shelves stacked one on top of the other, a profusion of pilasters, mouldings, and turned woodwork, bevelled mirrors, and colorful tilework in hearth and surround. Simple pine mantels, *opposite page, below left*, could still be found in Victorian farmhouses across the country.

As the turn of the century neared, mantels became increasingly less ornate. By the 1920s the overmantel had disappeared entirely.

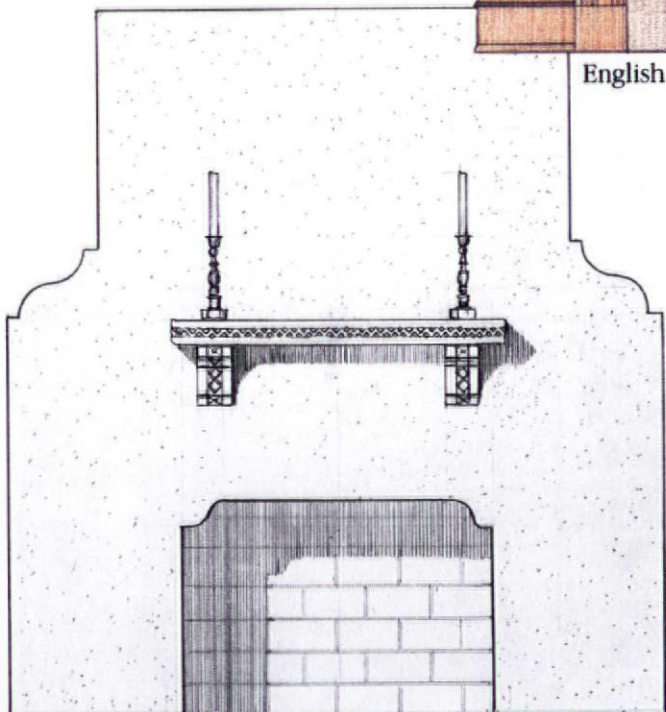
The mantel, *right*, is one of several English Revival mantels illustrated in the 1927 *Universal Design Book* for builders. Designed for the Tudor Revivals, English Cottages, and English Country houses so popular in the early-20th century, these and other English-style mantels featured a fire-



English Revival, 1927

were simplified versions of the Adamesque mantel, with a stylized swag or garland design on the frieze. Some Colonial Revival mantels lacked even this sparse ornamentation, instead featuring fluted pilasters or simple panels on either side of the firebox and a plain panelled frieze. They were invariably enamelled ivory or white.

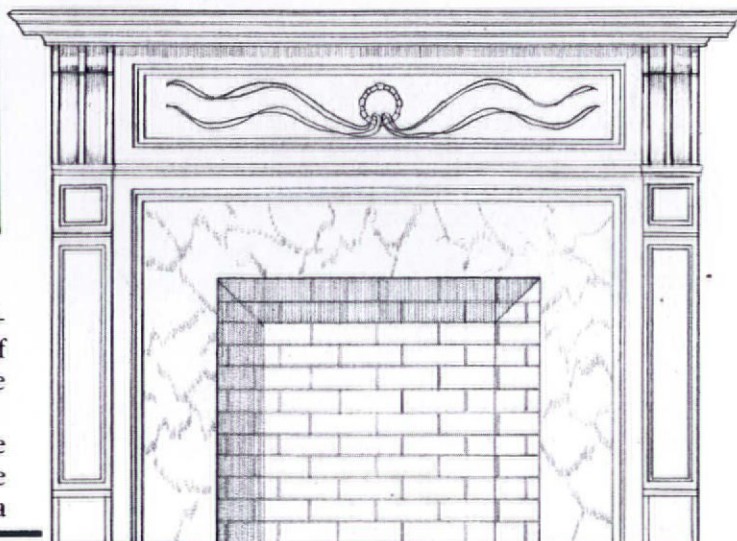
The mantel, *left*, could have appeared in any of the Spanish Colonial Revivals built between 1890 and 1930, mostly in California and Florida. The chimneypieces in these houses were sometimes hooded, sometimes faced with ceramic tiles, and almost always set into the white stuccoed walls of the Spanish Colonial Revival interior.



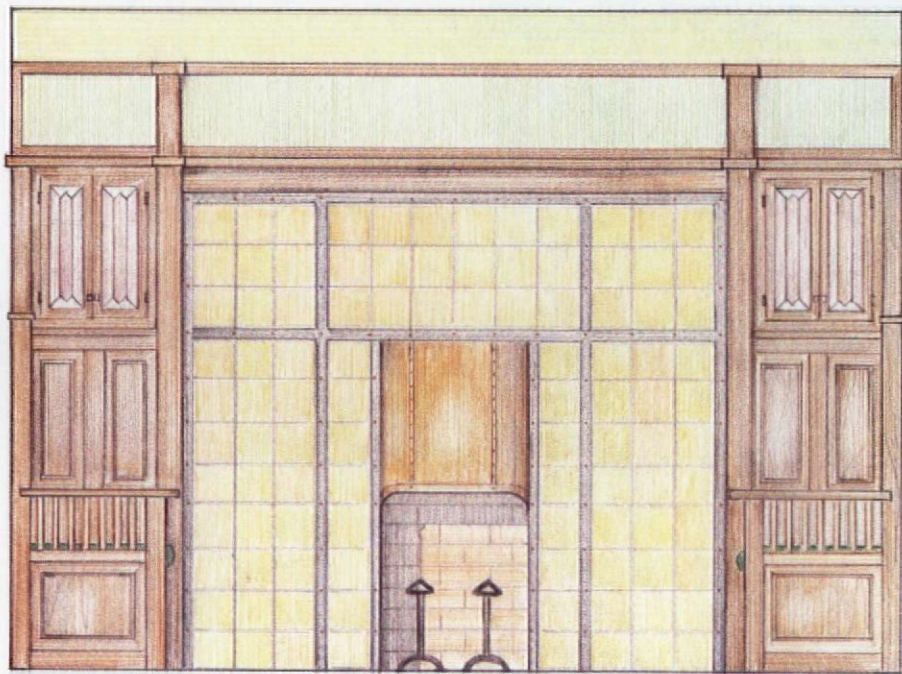
Spanish Colonial Revival, c. 1920

box opening in the shape of the Tudor arch. In pared-down post-Victorian style, the mantel usually consisted of a bolection moulding and mantel shelf; sometimes, the entire mantelpiece was a simple brick construction.

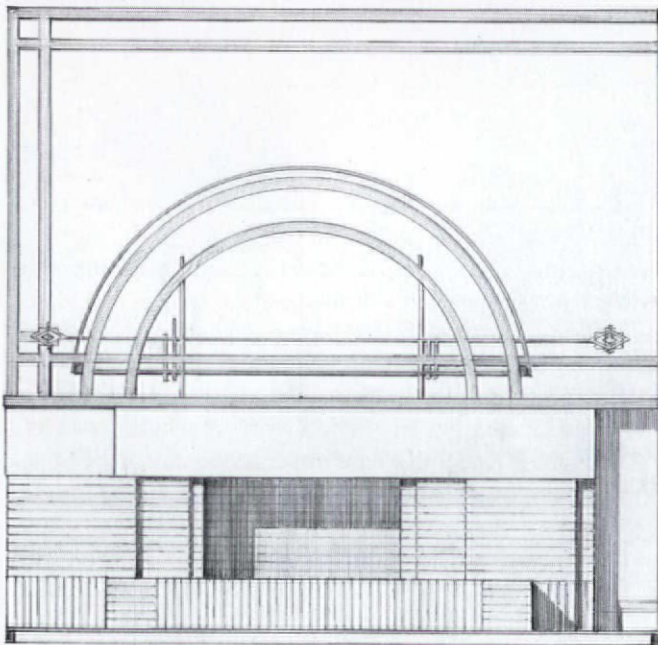
The mantel, *right*, would have been at home in any one of the various Colonial Revival-style houses built in the 1920s and '30s. Most Colonial Revival mantels of this era



Colonial Revival, c. 1927



Craftsman, 1907



Prairie, c. 1915

The fireplace wall, *top*, is based on an illustration in the April 1907 issue of Gustav Stickley's magazine, *The Craftsman*. Stickley considered the fireplace the focal point of the Craftsman living room, although fireplaces were relatively rare in other rooms.

The quintessential Craftsman mantel was made of fieldstone, cobblestone, brick, or other rustic-looking material. It was set into a panelled wall, preferably in a cozy inglenook with built-in seats. Craftsman fireplaces often had a copper hood.

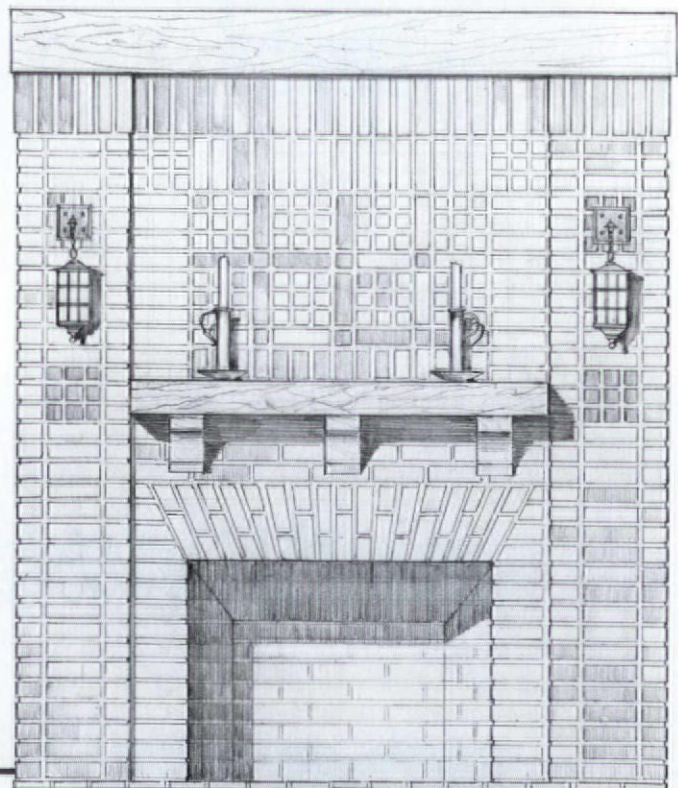
Glazed ceramic tiles were another favorite component of the Arts and Crafts fireplace. Tile was often used in the surround. Mantels entirely in tile were not unheard of; Rookwood Faience was one pottery that sold them.

The Prairie-style mantel, *middle*, is from Chicago architect William G. Purcell's own house in Minneapolis, Minnesota, built c. 1915. Fireplaces were considered the core of the Prairie house. In high-style dwellings they were usually masonry constructions in abstract designs that sprawled across the interior wall. Patterns of vertical and horizontal bricks were generally the only ornament. One vernacular Prairie-style mantel that was widely advertised in *The Craftsman* and other periodicals in the 'teens and '20s consisted simply of a large arched opening in brick.

Around the turn of the century, both tile and brick were popular for hearths and fireplace surrounds. But by 1930 brick had become the favorite material for the entire mantel. Brick mantels

were installed in all sorts of houses, from Bungalows to Tudor Revivals.

During the early-20th century, some chimneypieces were made of brick laid in intricate patterns. These became known generically by the trade name Tapestry Brick. The chimneypiece, *below*, is based on one in a Tapestry Brick ad in *The Craftsman*. According to Fisk & Company, manufacturers of Tapestry Brick, "its soft, restful colors harmonize with natural wood finishes" which were the height of fashion in Arts & Crafts houses. Most fireplaces of the period, however, were fitted with simple brick mantels, without the intricately patterned brick chimneybreast.



Tapestry Brick, c. 1915

Buying Reproduction Mantels

Danny Alessandro Ltd.

Edwin Jackson Inc.

307 E. 60th St., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10021
(212) 421-1928

Reproduction mantels in marble and wood, including several Adam styles and a Greek Revival. Some reproductions of documented originals, including a Samuel McIntire mantel from Salem, Mass.

Architectural Components

26 N. Leverett Rd., Dept. OHJ
Montague, MA 01351
(413) 367-9441

A panelled fireplace wall suitable for colonial parlors. Will also custom-make Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival mantels.

Brill and Walker Associates, Inc.

PO Box 731, Dept. OHJ
Sparta, NJ 07871
(201) 729-8876

U.S. distributor of British-made Halli-days mantelpieces, mostly Georgian and Adam styles. Also, custom work.

Crawford's Old House Store

550 Elizabeth St., Dept. OHJ
Waukesha, WI 53186
(800) 556-7878

Reproduction mantels in wood and marble, including an Italianate white marble mantel.

Dalton-Gorman

1508 Sherman Ave., Dept. OHJ
Evanston, IL 60201
(312) 869-5575

Reproduction marble mantels based on antique Victorian and early-19th-century originals.

Decorators Supply Corporation

3610-12 South Morgan St., Dept. OHJ
Chicago, IL 60609
(312) 847-6300

Reproduction wooden mantels suitable for Georgian, Federal, and Colonial Revival houses.

Dovetail Woodworking Company

PO Box 352, Dept. OHJ
East Greenwich, RI 02818
(401) 885-2403

Hand-carved wooden mantels in six early American designs.

Fourth Bay

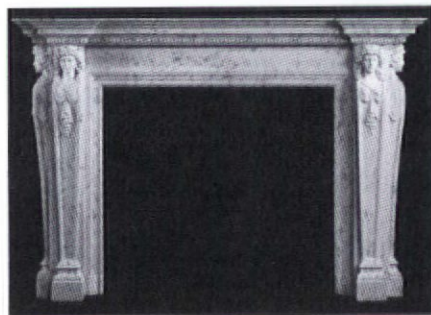
Call (800) 321-9614 for the location of the nearest dealer.

Three Victorian farmhouse-style pine mantels made in England, which can be fitted with three reproduction Victorian cast-iron fireplaces also available.

Henderson Black & Greene

Box 589, Dept. OHJ
Troy, AL 36081
(205) 566-5000

Wooden mantels in four early American styles, sold through distributors.



Heritage Mantels

PO Box 240, Dept. OHJ
Southport, CT 06490
(203) 335-0552

Marble reproductions of antique mantels, including an Adam mantel in black marble and a white Greek Revival mantel with carved figures on either side of the fireplace opening.

William H. Jackson

3 E. 47th St., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10017
(212) 753-9400

Reproduction wooden mantels in European and early American styles made to client's specifications.

Maizefield Mantels

PO Box 336, Dept. OHJ
Port Townsend, WA 98368
(206) 385-6789

Nine reproduction early American wooden mantels, including Georgian, Adam, and Greek Revival styles, made to client's specifications. Will also custom-build mantelpieces, from High Victorian to Greene & Greene.

O'Connor Millwork

RD 1, Box 203, Dept. OHJ
New Park, PA 17352
(717) 382-4139

Hand-crafted wooden mantels. Custom work only.

Old World Architectural Millwork & Paneling

13 Lucon Dr., Dept. OHJ
Deer Park, NY 11729
(516) 454-6518

A handful of reproduction wooden mantels suitable for early American and Colonial Revival houses. Also, custom work.

Ole Fashion Things

402 S.W. Evangeline Thruway, Dept. OHJ
Lafayette, LA 70501
(318) 234-7963

Reproduction of a Louisiana Victorian cottage mantel c. 1880 made of cypress wood to client's specifications.

Readybuilt Products Company

1701 McHenry St., Dept. OHJ
Baltimore, MD 21223
(301) 233-5833

A large selection of softwood mantels in classical designs, including several Adam mantels and a Georgian mantel with panelled overmantel.

Worthington Group, Ltd.

PO Box 53101, Dept. OHJ
Atlanta, GA 30355
(404) 872-1608

A collection of wooden mantels inspired by great houses of Europe, including a Georgian mantel and overmantel with a broken pediment.

GASLIGHT

BY GARY QUILLIAM

The Industrial Revolution ushered in a new type of illumination that eventually became synonymous with the Victorian era: gaslight.

It was the Britisher William Murdock (1754-1839) who brought gas lighting to public attention by economically lighting a factory with coal gas in 1789. In 1817, Baltimore received the first U.S. charter to produce gas. During the early years, gaslight was used primarily for street lighting in cast-iron lamps, where it was relatively easy to install. Many people mistrusted the new light and refused to permit it in their homes, so street lighting also allowed them to become familiar with it gradually. By the 1850s, gas lighting was considered a necessity. A decade later, 301 gas companies were operating across the country, and gaslight had become the dominant form of illumination for populated areas.

The gas was produced at works both large and small by distilling bituminous coal, and so was called *manufactured* or *coal* gas. Once produced, the gas was pressurized at the works and delivered to its destination through underground cast-iron mains.

Upon entering the house, the gas was connected to a gas meter. The earliest, invented in 1815, was called a wet meter. The main drawback to wet meters was that they froze in cold weather; alcohol or whiskey was often added as an anti-freeze. In 1820, the dry meter was invented. It utilized a system of leather bellows, gears and levers. Occasionally, the meter was highly decorated and prominently displayed in the parlor.

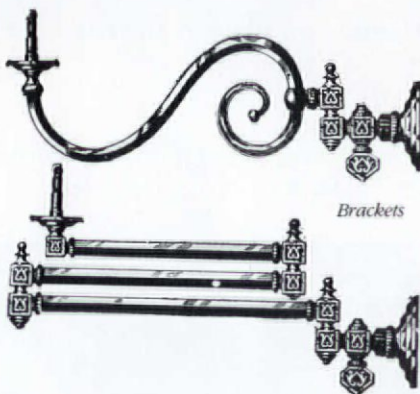
To the folks of the gaslight era, the meter was probably the greatest source of mistrust and misunderstanding. "To lie like a gas meter" was a popular expression, as many people felt that the machine was in

collusion with the gas company.

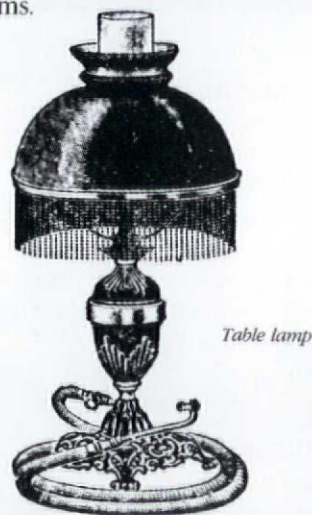
Upon leaving the meter, gas would course its way to the light fixtures via service pipes run through interior walls and ceilings. Plumbing was wrought or cast iron but never copper, which was too soft.

FIXTURES

Gaslight fixtures have their own specialized nomenclature:

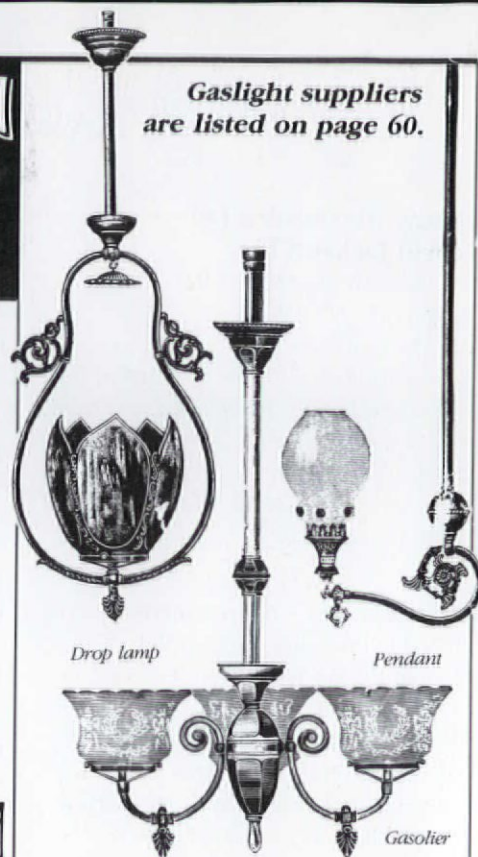


Bracket lamps are fixtures that are attached to a wall. They may be one-piece stationary units or models with up to three horizontal, movable arms.



Portable or table lamps were run by connecting a rubber hose from the gas key assembly of the lamp to an overhead fixture.

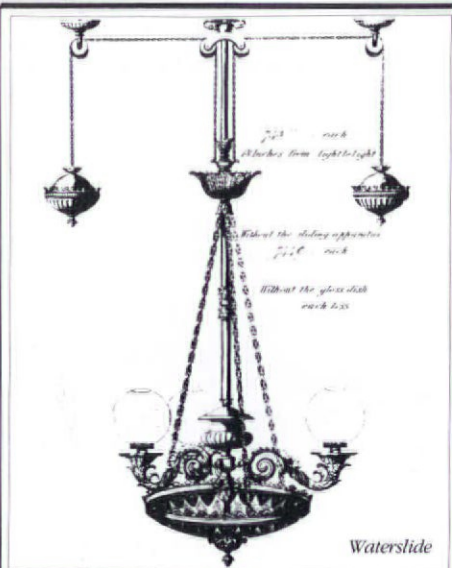
Gaslight suppliers are listed on page 60.



Ceiling fixtures can be further classified into three subtypes: drop lamps, which have a single center burner (and are sometimes called hall lanterns or lyres); pendants, which have one or two arms; chandeliers or gasoliers, which have three or more arms.

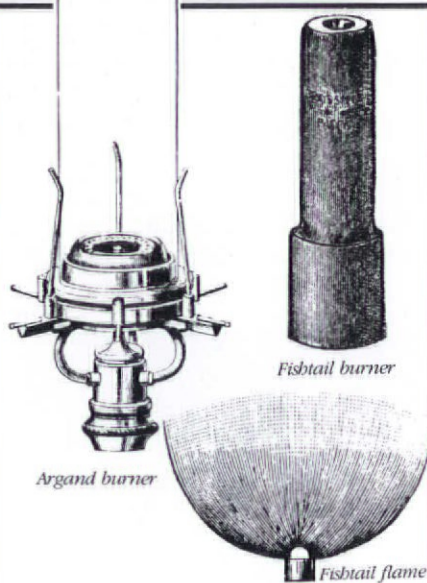
Unlike brackets, which were connected directly to the gas pipe, ceiling fixtures usually used a ball-and-socket assembly to connect the fixture to a gas line mounted in the ceiling. This consisted of two threaded iron pipes about one inch long with a rubber ball in between. This assembly greatly reduced the chance of a pipe breaking and leaking gas when a fixture was disturbed.

An interesting type of ceiling fixture was the waterslide, a gasolier that could be raised or lowered through a series of pulleys. The name stems from the ingenious gas seal — a cup positioned between two telescoping rods into which water was placed to keep the gas from escaping. A thin coat of oil prevented the water from evaporating. Such a unit, usually positioned over a table, could be lowered to provide light the same as a portable lamp.



Gas fixtures operated in much the same way as electric fixtures, except that today electric wire winds its way through the unit instead of gas. The main structural difference is that each arm of a gas fixture has its own cock-and-key assembly with which to regulate the flow of gas. To light a fixture, one would open the key gradually, letting out just enough gas to ignite it with a match, and then adjust the flame to the desired setting (like an electric dimmer switch). Or a torch-and-key lighter could be used, especially for hard-to-reach fixtures. This lighter had a flange to turn the gas key and a lighted wick to ignite the gas, similar to the taper lighters used to light church candles. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, various types of ignitors came into use incorporating flint, sparking wheels, springs and 12-volt batteries.

Igniting the gas was not enough to produce usable light. Burners were needed to form the flame into various shapes and sizes to increase the amount of light emitted. The first burners were the rat-tail, cockspur, and cockscomb (named for the animal counterparts they resembled), and had one, three, or more flaming jets. In 1809, the circular-flamed Argand burner was introduced, which allowed air to pass inside and outside of the flame with improved results. Batswing and fish-tail burners appeared in 1816 and 1820. The flame was now wide and



flat, providing greater illumination. These two designs remained in use throughout the gaslight era, and were only superseded by the Welsbach burner in 1886. Similar to the mantles on modern Coleman lanterns and Aladdin lamps, the Welsbach burner used a chemically-treated cotton-mesh bag that produced an incandescent white light when ignited. Welsbach lamps were even brighter than early electric light bulbs until the tungsten lamp came along in 1911.

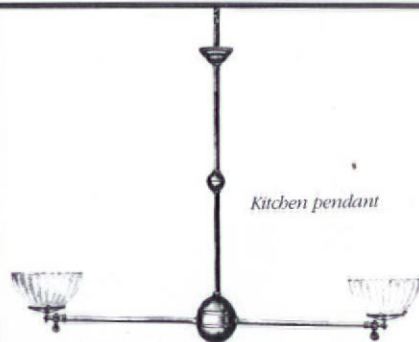
HOME GASLIGHTING

Until the gaslight era, interiors were designed for natural light that entered through windows and moved across the room. Gas fixtures were stationary, however. So layout of room furnishings became more fixed as it adapted to this new light source.

◊ In bedrooms, ceiling fixtures were not often used. Instead, several brackets would be placed strategically around the room. Likely locations would be at the washstand, on each side of the headboard, and by the bureau and mirror.

◊ In the bathroom, one bracket would be placed near the mirror and wash basin and another near the toilet and bathtub.

◊ In hallways and staircases, fixtures were carefully positioned to avoid accidental damage and to minimize



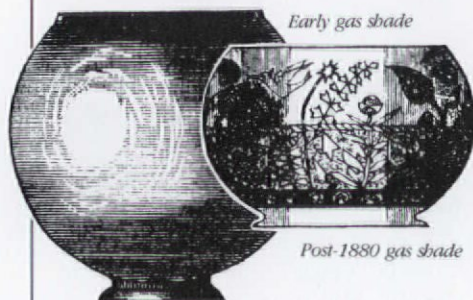
shadows that might cause someone to trip. Kitchens would have a pendant — preferably a “T” — over the work table, with brackets located by the sink and stove.

In these secondary spaces plain, stiff brackets were generally used. Movable brackets were located only where light was needed in more than one place. In the bedroom, for example, stiff brackets would be placed at the bed and movable ones at the dressing table.

◊ The parlor and dining rooms received more elaborate fixtures, and both gasoliers and brackets. Brackets would be fixed in places where they would match (or complement) the gasolier, such as on both sides of the fireplace. In the dining room it was essential that the table be well lit. Depending on the size of the room, a four- to eight-arm gasolier would be appropriate, again matching or accenting single- or dual-arm brackets. Contrary to today's fashion, crystal gasoliers were seldom seen in dining rooms. Instead, the brilliance from cut glass prisms often made them more appropriate for entertainment areas such as ballrooms and parlors.

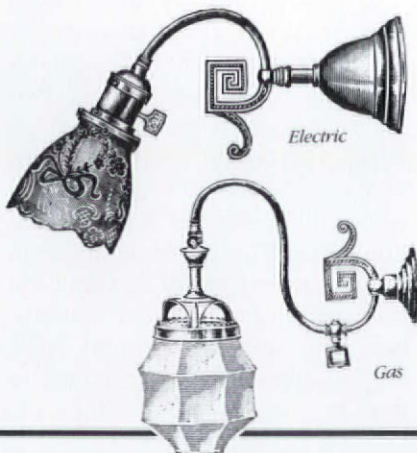
The light produced by a gas flame is harsh and glaring, so glass shades were used to soften the light. Gas shades prior to 1880 had a bottom opening of approximately two inches and a top opening not much larger. This design, however, cast an excessive amount of light on the ceiling and delivered little direct illumination. The small bottom opening also constricted air flow, causing excessive flickering, poor combustion, and smoking. Around 1880, bottom openings were enlarged to four or five inches, and tops ex-

panded to as wide as nine, permitting better air flow and reducing undesirable effects. The shade fitters (holders) also became less bulky and so cast fewer annoying shadows.



Etched, opal, and clear glass were most popular for gas shades, often with designs that ranged from simple geometric patterns to elaborate hunting scenes. Colored shades, although pretty, allowed little working light to pass and probably found more use as accent lighting. Opal and clear glass shades were usually reserved for work rooms such as kitchens; etched and frosted served mainly in the parlor and dining rooms.

In 1878 the electric light was perfected, and not long after came the demise of gaslighting. Had it not been for the invention of the Welsbach burner, gaslighting probably would not have survived to the end of the century but, in part due to the unreliability of early electric service, it held on until the First World War. At the turn of the century, new construction usually included both gas and electric lines for illumination, allowing people to continue their work by gaslight in the event electric power were interrupted.



The design of fixtures did not change much with the advent of electric lighting. The major change was the introduction of transition fixtures, models that alternated downward-pointing arms (for electric light), with upward-pointing arms (for gas). In some cases both lighting devices shared the same arm.



DECORATING WITH GASLIGHT FIXTURES

You'll find the following guidelines helpful if you want to use gaslight fixtures for historically accurate decorating.

Assuming that you know the age of your house, the first step is to establish what gaslight period is authentic for the building. This means researching when (or if) gas was available in your area by checking with the local gas company or historical society.

Once you're certain that gas service was available, find out whether gas was supplied to your home. Look for capped gas lines. (Do not uncap them, as the lines may still be live.) Look in the ceilings of first-floor rooms where there are fixtures currently, and in out-of-the-way places such as attic or cellar. In homes built after the introduction of electricity, it was not uncommon to wire the entire house for electric light, but plumb only the main floor for gas service. The intent was to have gas still available to carry on the primary household tasks should the electricity fail.

In the cellar, look for pipes rising vertically into the walls, but try to confirm that these lines were not for

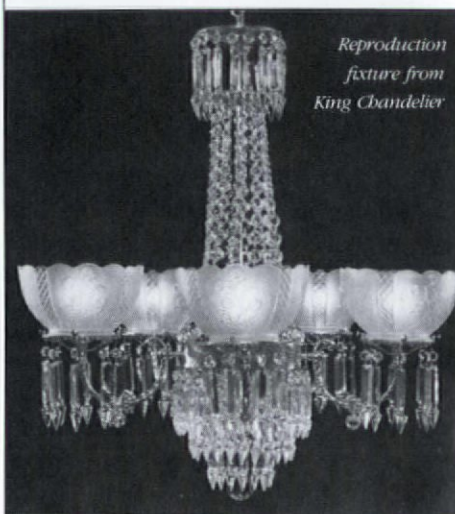
cooking or heating instead of lighting. A final resort would be to open walls and inspect inside — gas piping was rarely removed once installed. Such evidence as old photographs or checking in similar nearby homes usually yields the answer with less mess.

BUYING FIXTURES

Pre-1880 Fixtures

Scarcity complicates the purchase of proper gas fixtures for the main floor of a pre-1880 home. The cost of good original examples that have survived "redecorating" average between \$2500 and \$5000. Authentic, electrified reproductions can be a good alternative to original fixtures, but the selection is limited and high production costs still put the price of these units in the \$1500 to \$3500 range.

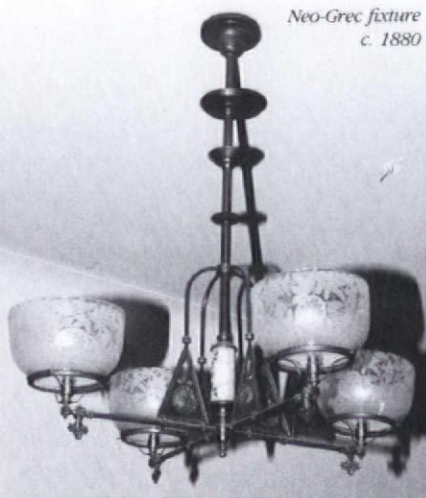
Virtually all fixtures throughout the gaslight era were made of brass, bronze, and sometimes crystal or cast iron. It was the way the materials were used, with their many castings and style flourishes, that divided fixtures into various periods.



Reproduction fixture from King Chandelier

Early-nineteenth-century pieces often came from England and reflected the styles there. Among those popular were Neoclassical, with its foliate motifs; Gothic, mimicking the details found in cathedrals; Greek Revival, similar to Neoclassical but less elaborate; Regency, incorporating figurines and other fancy accoutrements. Gas-

liers of the period were often decorated with slack chains running vertically from (or near) the arms up to the center body.



Neo-Grec fixture
c. 1880

The mid-nineteenth century saw a fondness for the Rococo style with its elaborate morning glory and grapevine motifs, but also witnessed the change to a more rigid and angular design. This latter movement, a reaction to Rococo, manifested itself in the Eastlake and Neo-Grec styles and was produced by such noted manufacturers as Archer and Pancoast and Cornelius and Baker.

Post-1880 Fixtures

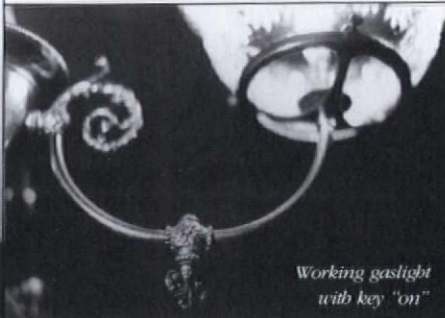
This period includes many gas/electric fixtures that were kept in service well into the twentieth century, providing us with numerous originals today. Post-1880 gaslights were less ornate than early fixtures, so they were less expensive to manufacture as originals and can be produced economically as reproductions. Electrified originals generally run from \$500 to \$2000, while reproductions (where the selection is quite good) fall into the \$200 to \$1200 range.

Although post-1880 fixtures echoed earlier design periods, they were often characterized by a much lighter look than earlier models. Bodies were often spun brass and had tube arms of the same material. Castings, no longer massive, became a subtler accent element. In utilitarian rooms such as the kitchen or pantry, plain fixtures sufficed. Sometimes only the black iron gas

pipe was used, without even a shade.

If you prefer an original, be aware of these guidelines to determine the value of individual pieces:

◊ Check the gas-cock assembly; it should be two separate pieces with the stop pin straight and in place.



Working gaslight
with key "on"

◊ In electrified fixtures, the key should be in line with the arm when wired, as though the gas were on.

◊ There should be no holes or exposed wiring around gas cocks or where arms join the body. Wiring an original gas fixture is tedious, and some amateurs drill holes to avoid tight spots, reducing the value of the fixture if done in visible areas. ◊ Original shades will add to the overall value of the fixture. (There is no tried-and-true method for confirming whether a shade is original or reproduction, so you must rely on the integrity of the seller.)

Once the fixture is brought home, hang it at the proper height. For ceiling fixtures, maintain a distance of 78 to 84 inches from the floor to the bottom of the fixture. Place brackets about 78 inches from the floor in main rooms; 84 inches is better for brackets in passageways. There should never be less than two feet between the burner tip (light-bulb socket) and the ceiling.

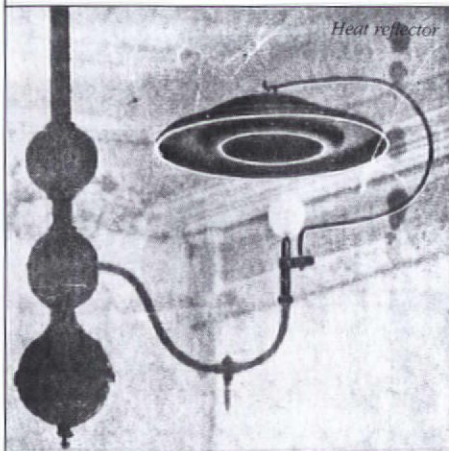
Accessories

Once you have positioned the fixtures, you may wish to add a few finishing touches.

◊ To simulate the low candlepower output of gas flames, use light bulbs of no more than 15 watts. Candelabra bulbs and sockets are closer to the small size of gas burner tips than standard bulbs and sockets. The socket should be encased in a

brass sleeve or painted dark gun-metal gray, again to simulate burner tips. Where small bulbs are impractical, install a dimmer switch that can be turned low to create a gaslit effect.

◊ Smoke bells may also be appropriate. (See *drop lamp* on page 44.) Shaped like bells and suspended by small, fine chains, they hung from the ceiling six to eight inches over each burner to keep soot from soiling the ceiling and table. (Coal gas was not clean like today's natural gas.) Smoke bells are readily available in glass, ceramic, and brass. Another type of smoke bell was suspended from the gas arms, but these are not available as reproductions and originals are difficult to locate.



Heat reflector

◊ Two other accessories — scarce as originals and not available as reproductions — are light and heat reflectors. Light reflectors are round, mirror-surfaced discs, six to eight inches in diameter, that reflected and focussed light within a room. The heat reflector was similar, except that it redirected heat rather than light, and was intended to give additional warmth to a room in winter. Both types mounted to the gas arm of the fixture, and were often used concurrently on the same arm.

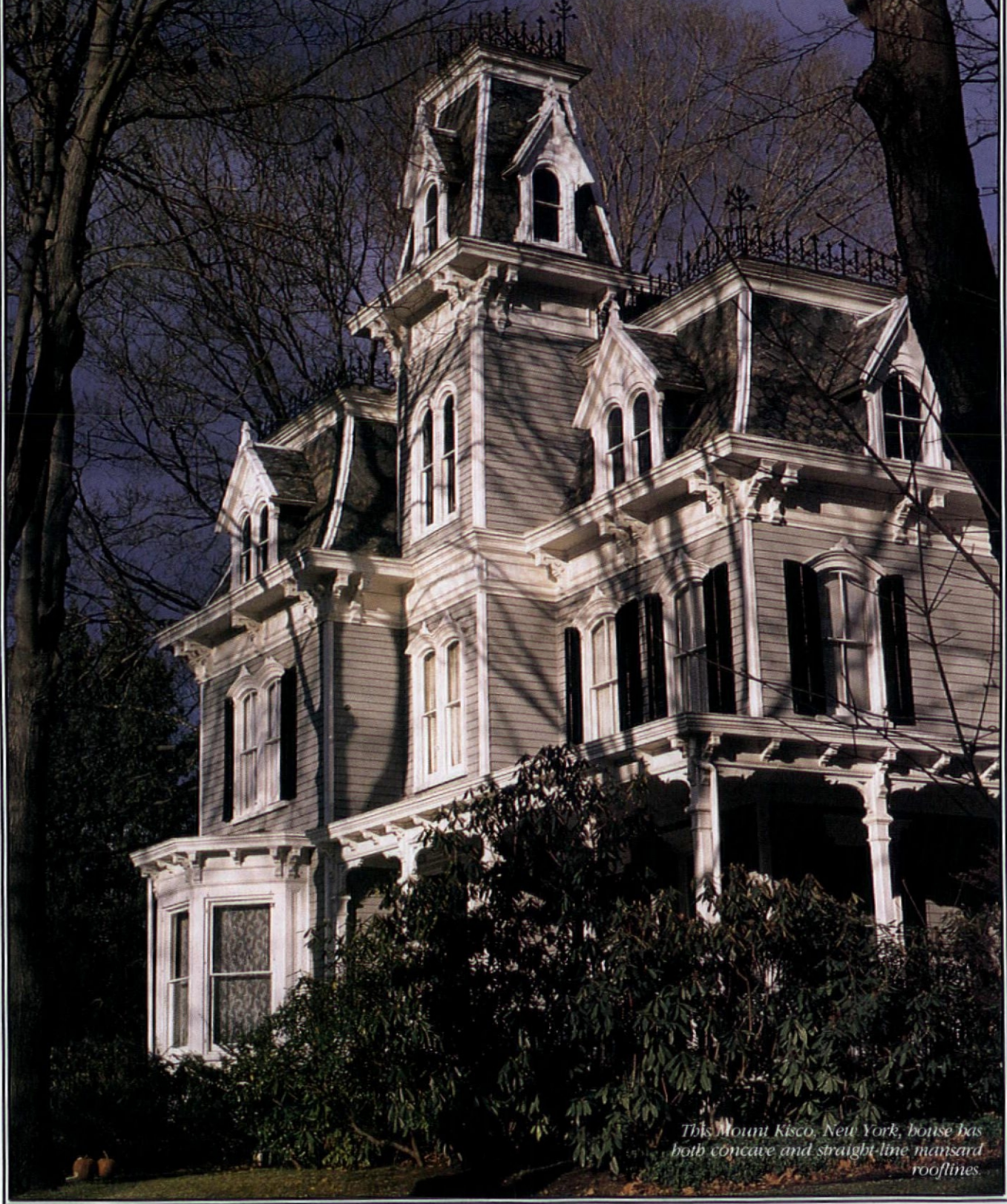
Gary Quilliam is a gaslight collector, restorer, and consultant based in Freeport, New York. He lives in a 1906 tri-gabled Homestead House furnished with period lighting fixtures.



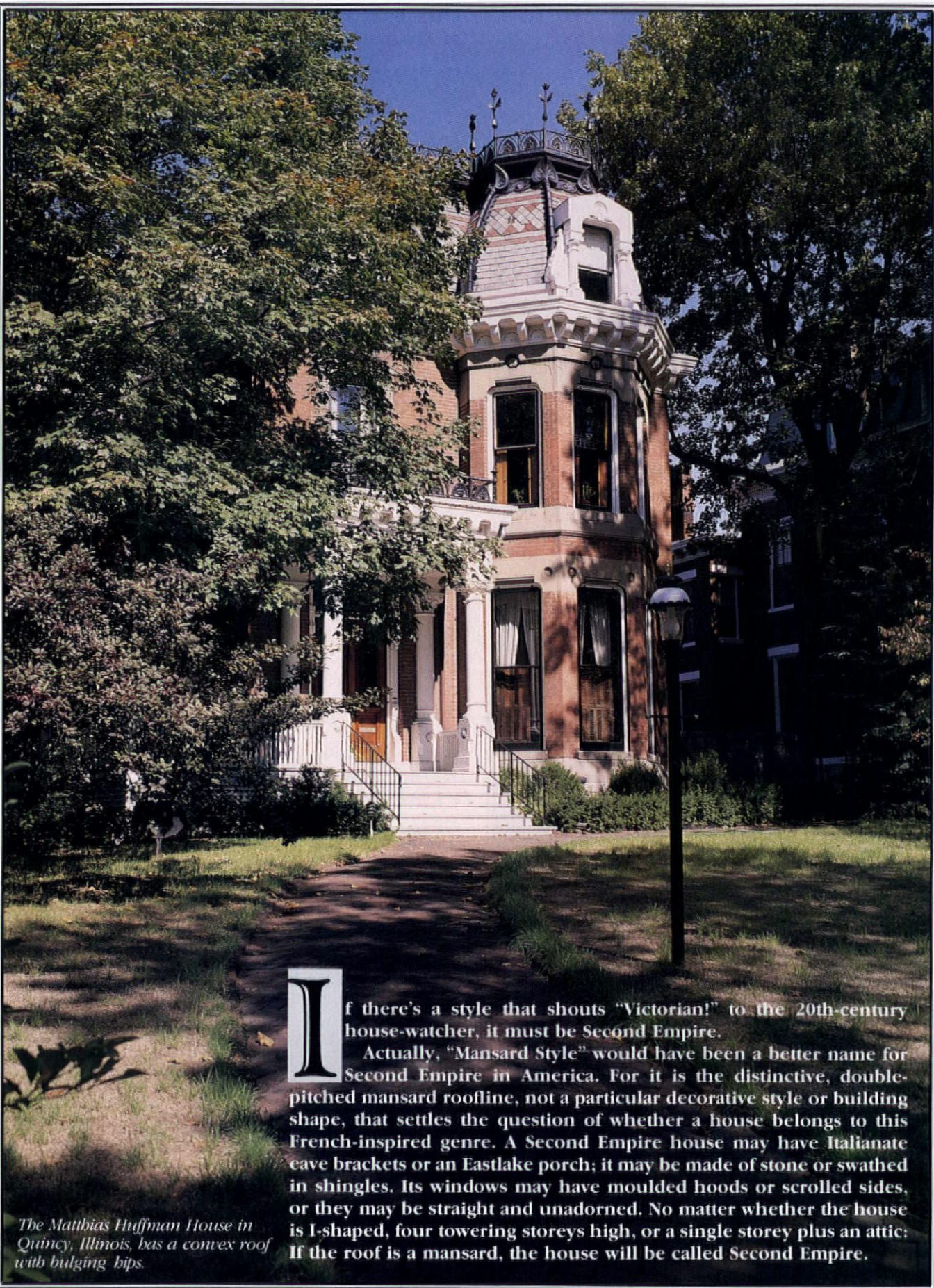
SECOND EMPIRE

by James C. Massey & Shirley Maxwell

Photo: Gordon Back



This Mount Kisco, New York, house has both concave and straight-line mansard rooflines.



If there's a style that shouts "Victorian!" to the 20th-century house-watcher, it must be Second Empire.

Actually, "Mansard Style" would have been a better name for Second Empire in America. For it is the distinctive, double-pitched mansard roofline, not a particular decorative style or building shape, that settles the question of whether a house belongs to this French-inspired genre. A Second Empire house may have Italianate eave brackets or an Eastlake porch; it may be made of stone or swathed in shingles. Its windows may have moulded hoods or scrolled sides, or they may be straight and unadorned. No matter whether the house is I-shaped, four towering storeys high, or a single storey plus an attic: If the roof is a mansard, the house will be called Second Empire.

The Matthias Huffman House in Quincy, Illinois, has a convex roof with bulging hips.



The James Whitcomb Riley House in Indianapolis. Like most American Second Empire houses, it features Italianate details and a mansard roof.



This house in Nantucket combines Italianate eave brackets, round arch windows, and a bell tower with a half-height mansard roof.

Between about 1855 and 1885, roughly the same time that Italianate design was popular, this related style leapt across the Atlantic. Americans were impressed by the panache with which Napoleon III (Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew) had revamped the Louvre and other buildings in Paris, then the cultural center of the world. This new French style, called Second Empire in honor of the era in which Napoleon and his empress Eugenie reigned (1852-1870), was enthusiastically adopted in this country. For a brief spell after the Civil War, in fact, it was used for so many public buildings that it has also been facetiously named "General Grant Style," after the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant.

Second Empire was embraced more widely in cities (where the mansard roof was a stylish way of adding an extra storey to a rowhouse) than in rural areas, and in the Northeast and Midwest (where the cities were) than in the South and West. The farther the style moved from grandiose public edifices, the simpler it became. At the domestic level, what we finally wound up with was the comfortable old American house, decked out in Italianate ornament and topped by a mansard roof. In *couturiers'* terms, the *chapeau* may have been French and the jewelry Italian, but the bodies were made in America.

Named for the 17th-century French architect Francois Mansart, the mansard roof consists of a very steep lower slope and a gently angled, almost flat top portion. The mansard was a practical way to inject a full storey of space into the attic level, since the steep slope doesn't create leftover bits of unusable floor area. It was a relatively cheap and easy means of enlarging and modernizing old buildings, especially in cities, where lot size was limited. It also helped make these buildings look a little less bulky, a little less ready to fall on their faces onto the street. Best of all, it was extremely *chic*.

A boxy, straight-line mansard roof was most common, but the trendiest thing in Second Empire rooflines was the curve — bulging outward (convex), scooping inward (concave), or looping about in a giant S (ogee-shaped). Although the original idea was to create as much space as possible above the cornice, there are also half-height mansards without windows. Large houses with towers and wings often combined several different roof shapes; only porches were exempt (usually) from the mansard craze.

The preferred building material for this type of roof was slate. Tin and wood shingles were also popular, but not just any shingle: Fashion dictated that the shingles had to be multi-colored, fancifully shaped, and laid in intricate patterns. Large dormer windows almost always pierced the roofs to light the new extra storey. Ornate cast-iron cresting marched along the roof ridge or around a central deck, and towers were likely to be topped by cast-iron pinnacles or finials. Tall, elaborate, brick chimneys completed the impressive Second Empire roofline.

The Second Empire style may have been based on French Renaissance architecture, but it was seen in this

country as a very modern style, not a historical throwback such as Gothic or Greek Revival. So builders, never pedantic about constructing "pure" examples of a particular house style, felt even freer to take liberties with Second Empire.

High-style Second Empire houses were usually large masonry piles, classically decorated with columns and pilasters, ornamental stone quoins at every corner, and projecting towers, bays, and pavilions. But such pure examples of the style are few and far between. Americans had too many choices in their architectural grab-bag just then — a lot of Italianate, some Gothic, a little leftover Greek Revival, a powerful bit of Romanesque, and strong hints of the Shingle, Queen Anne, and Eastlake styles to come. It was much more interesting to mix things up and see what developed.

What developed was often pretty heavy stuff. In fact, "heavy" is one of the most useful adjectives for Second Empire: heavy stone or brick wall surfaces (or wood imitating stone); heavy ornate trim — and lots of it — at windows and doorways. And holding it all down was The Roof. The look was solid and self-assertive, sometimes downright overbearing. Looking at the somber brown brick and grey granite of the James Whitcomb Riley House in Indianapolis (pictured on the opposite page), for example, you get the point: These are Serious Buildings.

The Hubbel House in Des Moines, Iowa (pictured on



The Hubbel House in Des Moines, Iowa, now the governor's mansion, is a flamboyant example of Second Empire in America.

this page), now the governor's mansion, is an especially flamboyant example of the style. It has *two* mansarded towers, the taller of them five storeys high. In fact, it has just about everything a mid-Victorian homeowner could

THE SECOND EMPIRE OR MANSARD STYLE

Note: The mansard roof determines this Second Empire style — Remove the roof, and there is a good Italian house with many classic details, including a Palladian window.

READING THE OLD HOUSE

Five-bay front with vestigial tower at left (the tower is generally a full storey)

Concave mansard roof with slates in striped pattern

Palladian dormer window

Segmental pediment

Bracketed cornice

Corner pilasters

Belt course

Fancy entrance porch with paired columns and balustraded deck above

One-over-one-light double-hung sash with pilasters and entablature

Deck with railing and cresting

Double arch-head dormer windows with segmental pediment

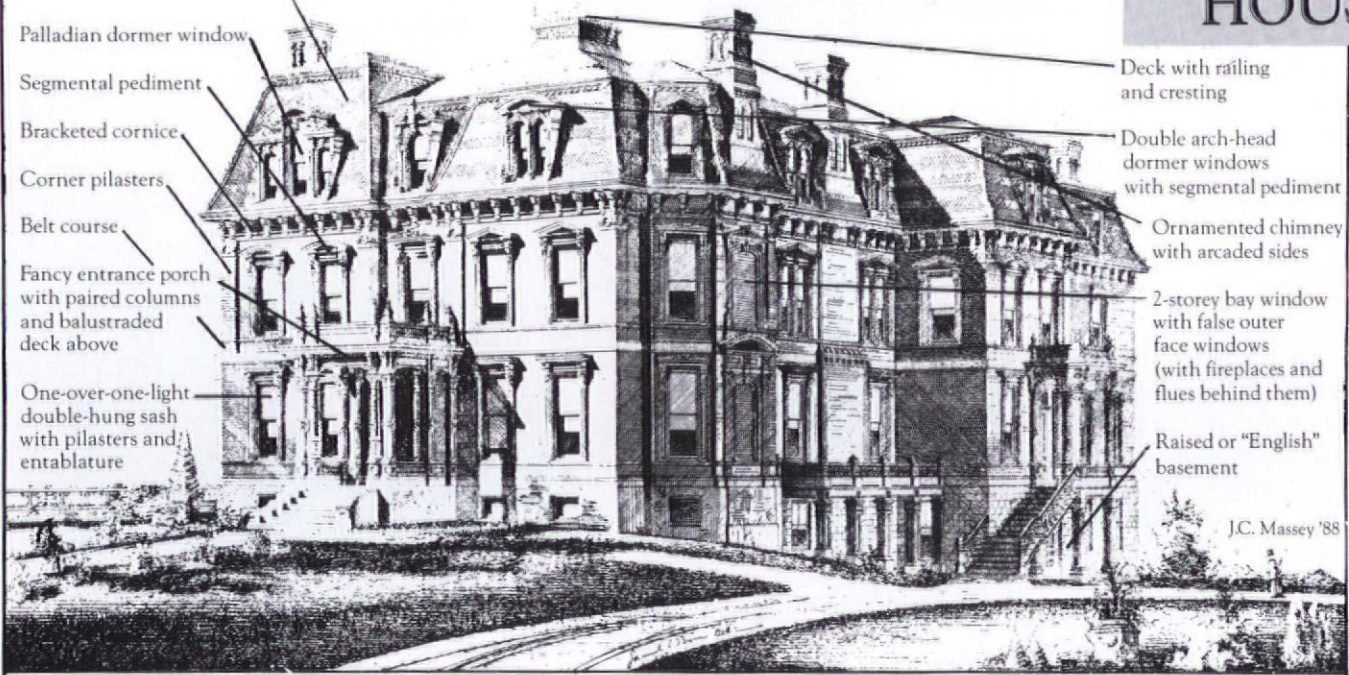
Ornamented chimney with arcaded sides

2-storey bay window with false outer face windows (with fireplaces and flues behind them)

Raised or "English" basement

J.C. Massey '88

Source: American Architect, June 24, 1876



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ask for, including at least five different window treatments.

But the vast majority of mansard houses were much simpler buildings, decorated in whatever the current styles and the owners' whims suggested, in whatever quantities their pocketbooks could handle. Since this was the era of machine-turned wooden and pressed or cast-metal trim, there was usually a good bit of it. Italianate ornament was by far the favorite choice. However, other decorative styles were also present in profusion. The Stick Style, for instance, is quite evident in the vernacular Second Empire pictured on this page, especially on top of the porch posts, where it looks rather as if an armload of kindling has made a chance landing.

A good way to demystify the complicated house shapes of this period is to play a little game of architectural strip poker. Off with the porches, towers, bays, and wings, and what do you have? Almost always — a box. Rectangular or square, big or small, but still a box. Like other houses of the period, Second Empires are basically boxes, but there are plenty of rear wings and ells to liven things up. By the 1860s, the liberal use of wings, towers, bays, and oriels led to the "picturesque" outlines Victorians admired so much. Often, an Italian-style center cupola and/or a projecting center entrance bay betrayed an owner caught between his architectural attractions. Shall it be French? Italian? Symmetrical? Picturesque? Well, why not have it all?

Second Empire houses are usually at least two or three storeys high, sometimes four, not counting the attic storey. Occasionally, somebody chose to build a mansard cottage, with only a single storey below the mansard. While masonry — stone but more often brick — was the preferred building material for mansions, most mansard-roofed houses were of light, balloon-frame construction with wooden siding. The desired weighty look was achieved through the judicious use of dark, stone-like paint colors. Occasionally, corners were finished with counterfeit stone quoins made of wood, but usually they were covered by simple vertical boards painted in even darker shades for contrast. These corner treatments served to make the house look sturdier, and to draw the eye upward to — what else? — The Roof.

Porches invariably played a prominent role in late-19th-century domestic architecture, and Second Empire was no exception. In fact, porches were often tacked onto these houses with what looks like reckless abandon. The most fashionable porches were small, one-storey, somewhat boxy affairs (this was not an era that favored round shapes). The porch posts were usually, but not always, square and panelled. On less pretentious houses, the porch was very often a full-width, honest-to-goodness "sitting" porch.

Windows, always important to the Victorians, were often grouped in pairs or threes. They were generally Italianate: round-topped, square-headed, or pedimented, capped by



Most mansarded houses in America were made of wood, not stone or brick as were their French prototypes.

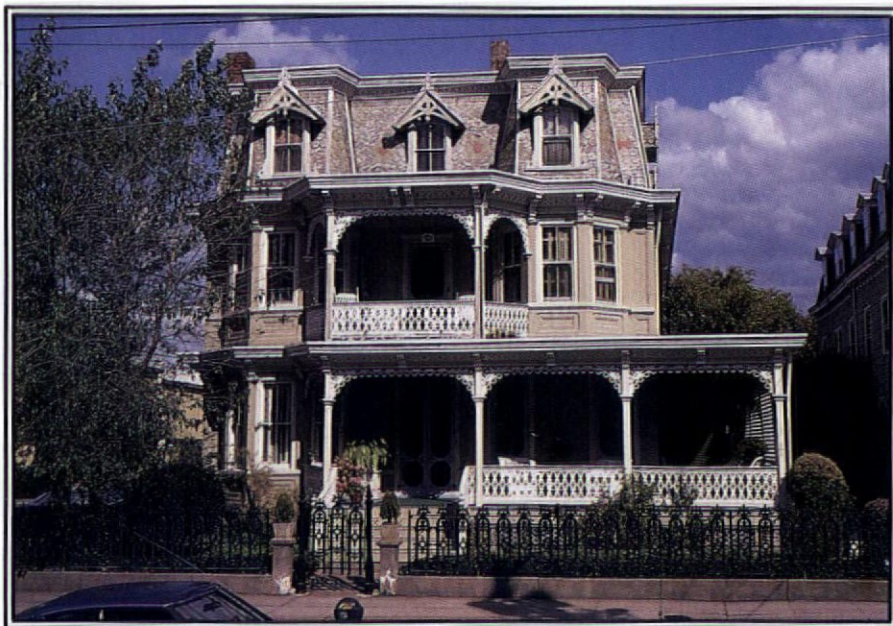


Vernacular Second Empire: Mansard cottages like this one in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, are a common sight along Boston's North Shore.

Photo: Janet Martineau



The height of fashion in a Second Empire house: a mansard roof in polychrome slate with cast-iron roof cresting.



The Gallagher House in Cape May, New Jersey: a large Queen Anne verandah, lots of lacy, pierced millwork, and a mansard roof.

hood moulds, surrounded by moulded or scrolled panels. Small round (oculus) windows were often tucked in wherever they would fit, and sometimes little rectangular "monitor" windows paraded across the frieze beneath the cornice, recalling the Greek Revival. Big windows set in bays, one storey or taller, and oriels (bays above the first storey) let in still more light. Trim, almost always made of wood, was often painted up with pigment mixed with sand to make it look like stone. On plainer buildings, windows were sometimes left untrimmed, but they were still large and prominent. Windowpanes got larger as the century progressed, appearing first as six-over-six-paned double-hung sash, later two-over-two, and finally one-over-one. Meanwhile, muntins, the wooden members dividing the panes, got thinner and thinner.

Where does the Italian style leave off and the Second Empire begin, and when did the style fall out of fashion? Since Americans of the mid- to late-Victorian era never really made such distinctions, it's sometimes hard to tell. The Second Empire came into vogue at an unusually eclectic period in American architecture, a time when new ideas lurked behind every pilaster and there was a rich mix of ornamental influences. It's safe to call any 19th-century building with a mansard roof "Second Empire." But to see what else is going on, a useful test is to remove (mentally, please) the roof and take a look at what's left. It could be Italian, Greek Revival (or even Federal), Romanesque, Queen Anne, or Shingle Style.

Consider the Cape May, New Jersey, house below left. The center entrance is flanked by matching angular, two-storey bays (three storeys if you count the mansard dormers), a two-level entrance porch projecting even farther, a large side verandah worthy of the best Queen Anne (and just right for enjoying sea breezes), and a lot of lacy, pierced millwork. What style *is* this house? Lucky for us, it has a mansard roof, so we'll call it Second Empire.

By 1870, Napoleon III was out of favor even in France, and the Grant administration was under fire for corruption here in the United States. The financial woes of the mid-'70s soon followed, and Second Empire fell out of favor almost as quickly as it had reached its peak. The style did linger in some areas, but it was rarely even mentioned by the architectural *avant-garde*. When it was mentioned, it was in articles telling homeowners how to update their musty old mansards into ultra-modern Queen Annes.

Yet, were mansards really, truly, forever dead? Not if you count their reincarnation as the "mansard" roofs that cropped up nearly a century later on countless fast-food restaurants, storefronts, townhouses, and lawyers' offices across the country.



If you like coffee-table books and you like colonial style, you're in luck: Several big, beautiful volumes on early American architecture and design were published this year. The following books are especially handsome.

Colonial: Design in the New World

by David Larkin, June Sprigg, and James Johnson. Photographs by Michael Freeman and Paul Rocheleau. 272 pages, 300 color photographs. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 740 Broadway, 11th floor, New York, NY 10003. \$47 ppd.

This book traces the development of American architecture and design in the original thirteen colonies. It's organized by regions: New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South. The emphasis is on photographs, both interior and exterior. The indoor shots are particularly interesting, since photographers Michael Freeman and Paul Rocheleau use natural daylight to capture the look and feel of the colonial interior. Chapter introductions and extended captions provide an overview of what early American life was like and describe architectural details and furniture.

The thesis of *Colonial: Design in the New World*: In the New England saltbox as well as the opulent Governor's Palace at Colonial Williamsburg, Old World traditions combined with New World materials and a utilitarian ethic led, over time, to a unique American design. Standard stuff, but the photos are worth the price of admission.

The New England Colonial

by Anne Elizabeth Powell. Photographs by Joe Viesti. 248 pages with more than 250 color photographs. Bantam Books, 414 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, IL 60016. Hardcover, \$36.95 ppd.

The premise of this book is that although a variety of housing traditions dominated the other American colo-

nies, it is the Colonial New England dwelling that has come to symbolize America's origins and democratic ideals. The book is divided into sections on early houses in the six New England states. Introductions to these sections discuss the early development of each state and how it contributed to a distinctive version of the New England Colonial.

However, the real focus is on 16 individual dwellings, from the Thomas Perkins house, a 1724 saltbox on the banks of the Kennebunk River in Maine, to the Vernon house, a 1758 high-style Georgian townhouse in Newport, Rhode Island. The discussions of all the houses are as much about the families who've lived there and left their mark as they are about the structure's architectural significance. Interior and exterior photographs, many full page, are striking. In addition, a useful list of suppliers — craftspeople, antiques, periodicals — is appended.

Shaker: Life, Work, and Art

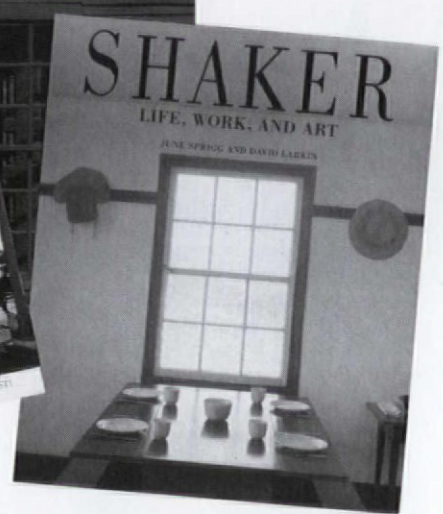
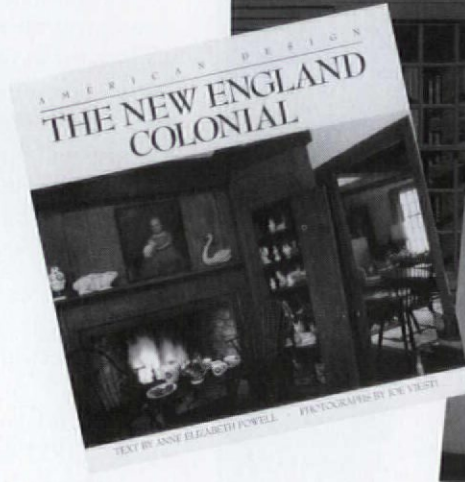
by June Sprigg and David Larkin. Photographs by Michael Freeman. 272 pages, more than 200 color photographs. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 740 Broadway, 11th floor, New York, NY 10003. \$42 ppd.

Shaker history in America began in 1774, when a 38-year-old working-

class Englishwoman named Ann Lee brought a handful of followers to New York. She became the spiritual leader of this small but growing group of dissidents from the Anglican Church who came to be called the Shaking Quakers — Shakers for short — because they trembled when seized with the Holy Spirit. The sect blossomed around 1840, when nearly 6,000 Brethren and Sisters lived and worked in 19 communities from Maine to Kentucky according to principles of equality, celibacy, and communalism.

In Shaker architecture and artifacts the bold, honest utilitarianism at the core of colonial design is taken to its logical conclusion. The rule of thumb of Shaker design: Don't make something if it's not useful; but if it is both necessary and useful, don't hesitate to make it beautiful, as long as the decoration is an inherent part of the design. This aesthetic is exemplified by the Shaker baskets, oval wooden boxes, and ladderback chairs so prized today.

In this handsome book, color photographs capture the austere elegance of Shaker objects, from round barns to brooms, while the text provides an overview of the history, beliefs, and lifestyle of the fascinating utopian society.



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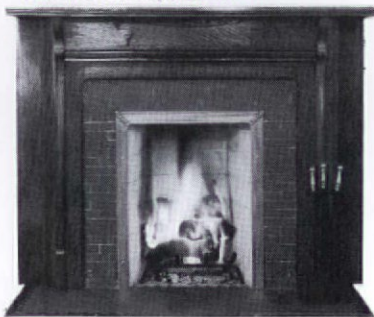
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Rising and Nelson Slate Co., West Pawlet, VT 05775; (802) 645-0150. All the Vermont slate colors, plus Buckingham grey slate from Virginia and Pennsylvania black slates.

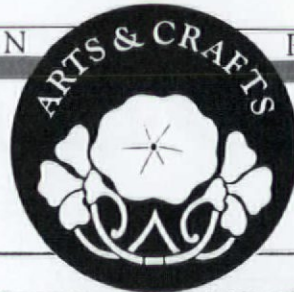
Evergreen Slate Co., 68 Potter Ave., Granville, NY 12832; (518) 642-2530. Vermont slates in 10 colors.

Hilltop Slate Co., Middle Granville, NY 12849; (518) 642-2270. All the Vermont colors, as well as imported Spanish black slate.

Structural Slate Co., Pen Argyl, PA 18072; (215) 863-4145. Deal exclusively in Pennsylvania black slates.

Buckingham Slate Co., 4110 Fitzhugh Ave., Richmond, VA 23230; (804) 355-4351. Virginia Buckingham grey slate only.

The price of standard 3/16"-thick slate ranges from approximately \$270 per square for Pennsylvania slates that weather, to \$1000 or more per square for unfading reds from the Vermont/New York border. (A square is 100 square feet of coverage at the standard lap.)



Craftsman Linens

From furniture to fabrics to lighting fixtures, reproductions of most Arts and Crafts furnishings are easier to track down today than they were as recently as five years ago. However, you were on your own to make A&C linens — hand-embroidered table scarves, pillows, and bed covers.

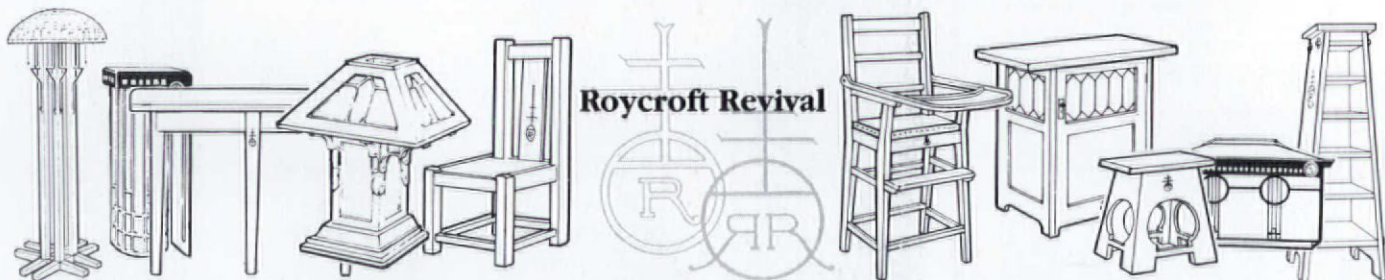
That is, until Ann Sweet founded Craftsman Linens to fill this void in the Arts and Crafts trade. Her Massachusetts-based company specializes in table runners, dresser and sideboard scarves, table squares, portieres, and pillows, and one bed



cover design is also available.

All designs have been taken from *The Craftsman* (1901-1916), Craftsman furniture catalogs, and other publications from the period. The hand-worked pieces are available in kit form or completed. They're made of unbleached linen. Linen floss is used for all embroidery, and large areas of color are hand-painted with special fabric paints. In the 12" x 12" size, the "pine cone" table square, left, costs \$70 finished; \$22.50 in kit form.

Craftsman Linens, One Cider Mill Lane, Dept. OHJ, Upton, MA 01568; (508) 529-3416. Catalog, \$2.



A group of craftspeople are bringing the original Roycroft Village in East Aurora, New York, back to life. Furniture and lighting reproductions are newly available, as well as copper-

work, Roycroft china, and an Arts and Crafts line of interior paint colors developed with Sherwin-Williams.

More on this story in an upcoming issue of OHJ; in the meantime, call

(716) 655-0571 for more information. Or you can write Roycroft Associates, 31 South Grove St., Dept. OHJ, East Aurora, NY 14052.



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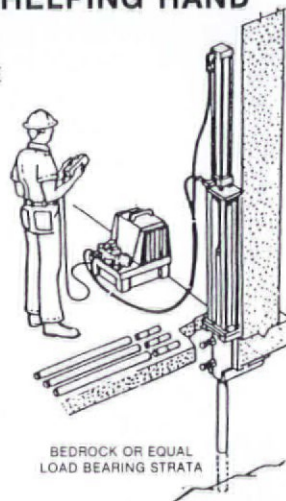
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brilliant blue were widely used to decorate mantel, floor, and firebox. A collection of hearth tiles, based on original Victorian designs and hand-made in England using up to 18 colors, is available from Fourth Bay.

Pictured at left is a combination of tiles grouped together to form a floral panel. Plain tiles are currently available in cream, light brown, dark brown, and blue, and cost \$5.50 apiece. Fourth Bay also sells 3" x 6" half tiles (\$4 per tile) and hard-to-find 1 1/2" x 6" quarter tiles (\$3.50 per tile)

in the same colors. Patterned tiles retail for \$18 each. All tiles are 3/8" thick.

Call Fourth Bay toll free at (800) 321-9614 for a brochure and the name of the dealer nearest you.

Firebacks

No colonial fireplace was complete without a fireback. These decorative slabs of cast-iron were placed against the vulnerable bricks, stones, and mortar of rear fireplace walls to shield them from intense heat.

The following foundries make reproduction firebacks:

The Country Iron Foundry, PO Box 600, Dept. OHJ, Paoli, PA 19301; (800) 233-9945. Reproduction firebacks based on colonial originals. The "Three Goddesses" design at right, for instance, was found in New

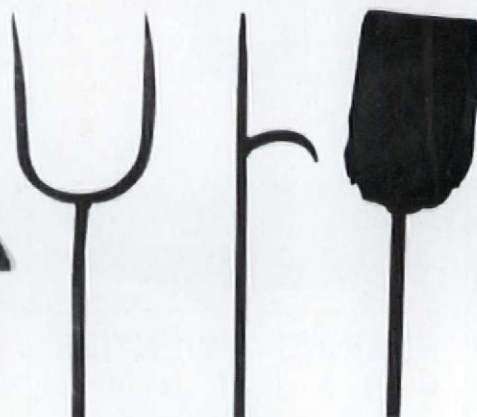


FIREPLACES

Club Fenders

Club fenders were all the rage in Edwardian libraries and billiard rooms, where they provided extra seating around the hearth and kept children safely away from the fire. Some of the plushiest fenders available today are made by Robin Gage in England. They're hand-built from brass and leather according to clients' specifications in three styles, and cost about \$4000 to \$5000. One style is shown above.

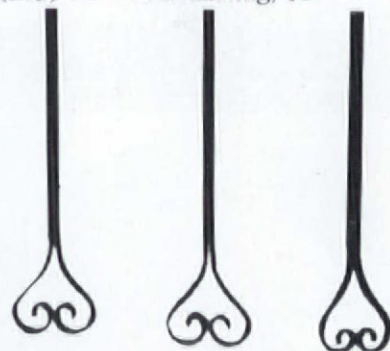
An architect or designer or your local furniture store can order the fenders for you from Smith & Watson, The Decorative Arts Center, 305 East 63rd St., Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10021; (212) 355-5615.



Fireplace Tools

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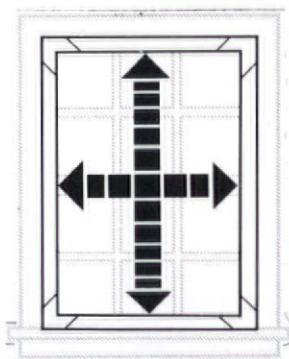
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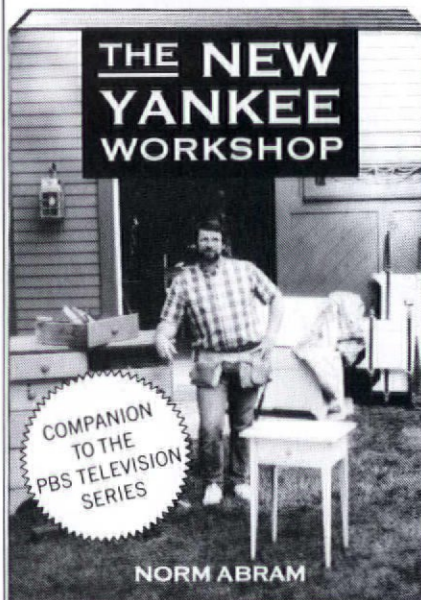
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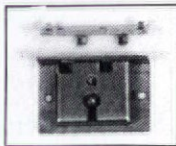
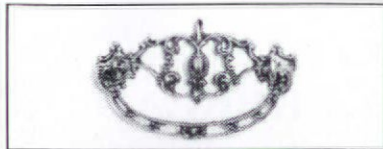
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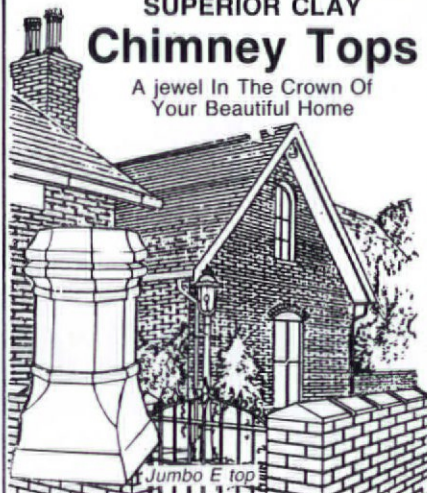
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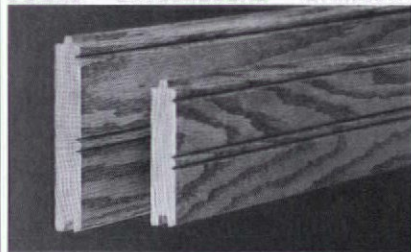
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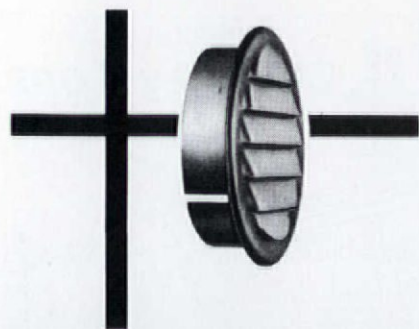


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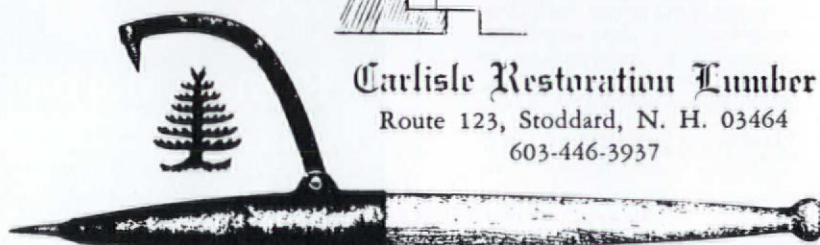
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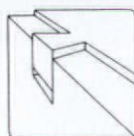
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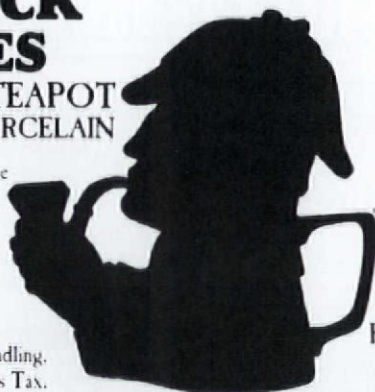
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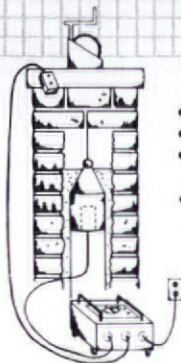
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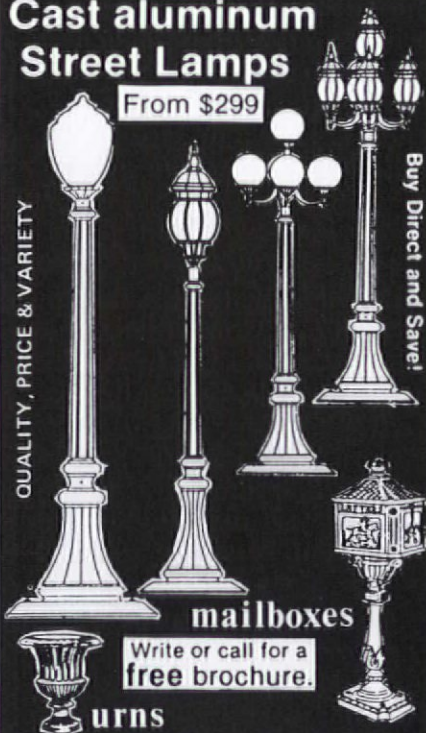
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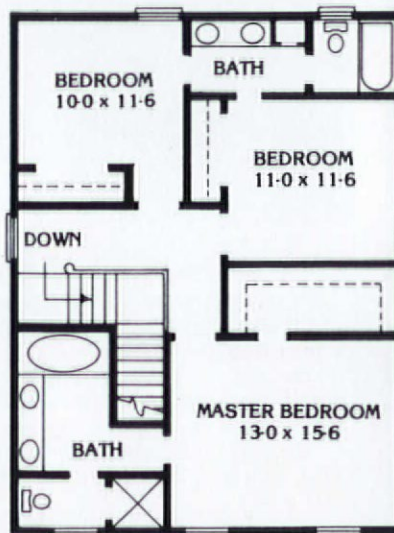
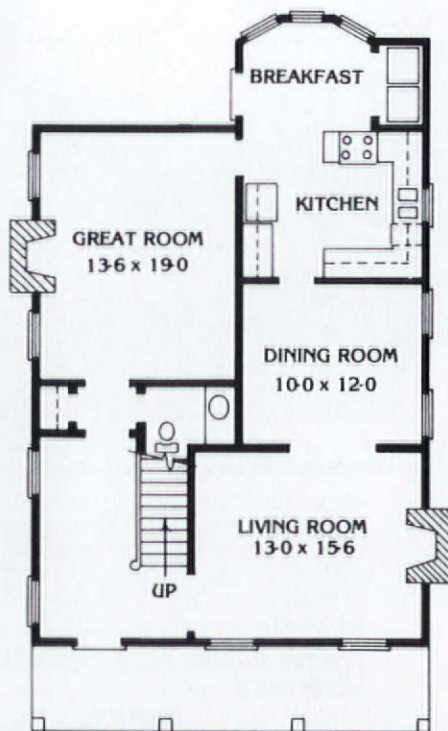
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An unassuming and well proportioned cottage, this design is adapted from a turn-of-the-century house in Natchez, Mississippi. There is nothing about it that is strictly Southern, however: Its massing, porch, beveled-glass entry door, and Colonial Revival allusions are familiar around the country. Houses such as this were built from about 1895 to 1915.

The plan lends itself to a narrow lot in town. Note the double exposed chimneys.

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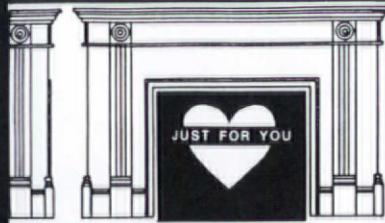
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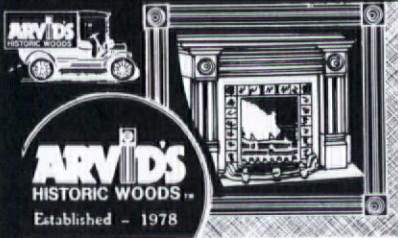
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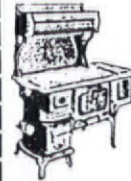
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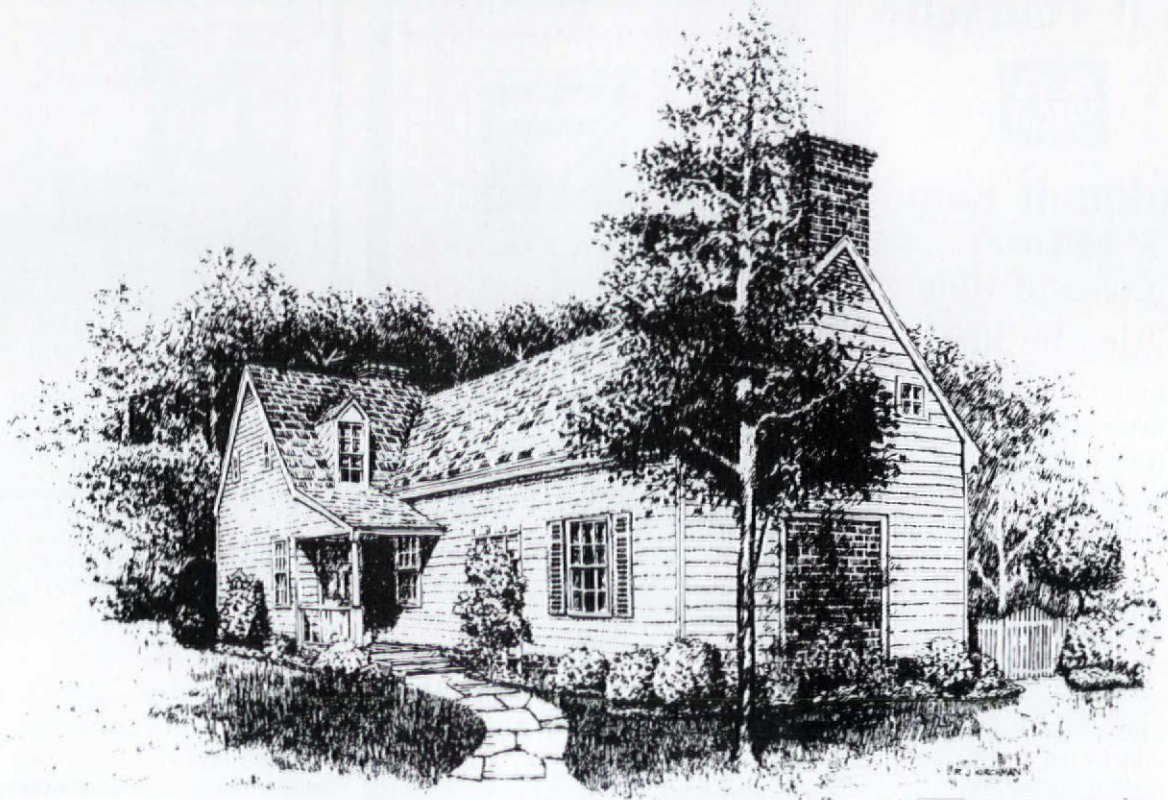
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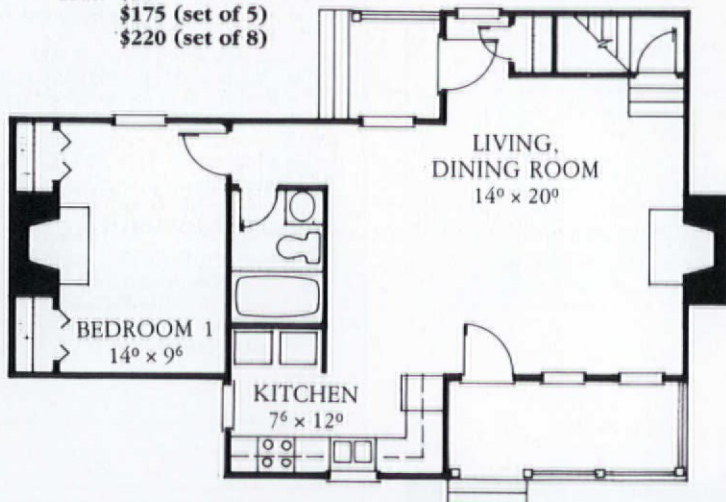
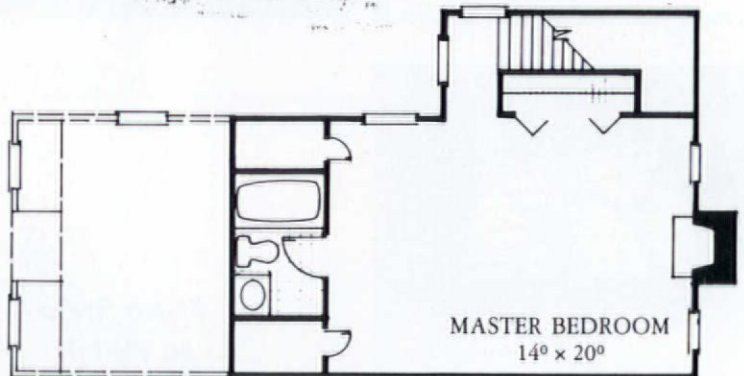
TIDEWATER LITTLE-HOUSE



SQUARE FOOTAGE	1165
FIRST FLOOR	704
SECOND FLOOR	360
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	9
SECOND FLOOR	8
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	38
DEPTH	26

Plan #E-01A-TA

Cost: \$95
 \$175 (set of 5)
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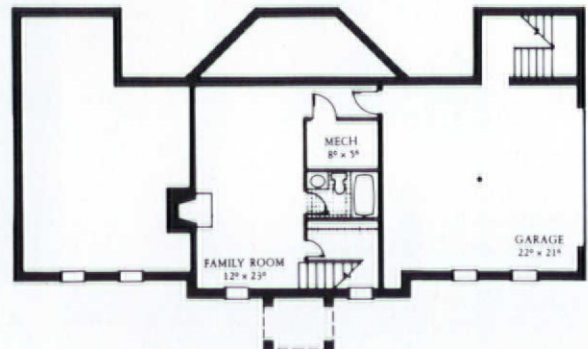
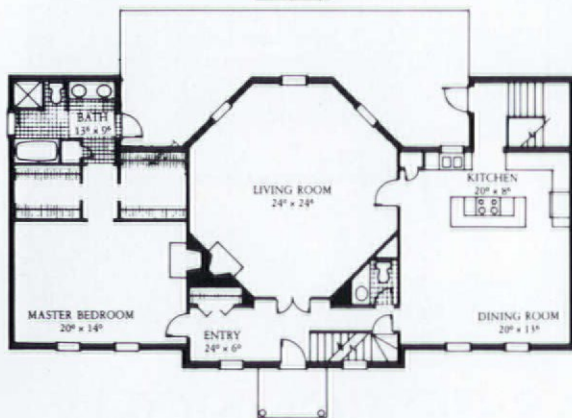
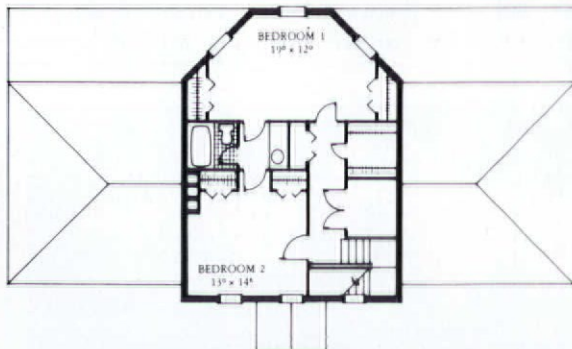
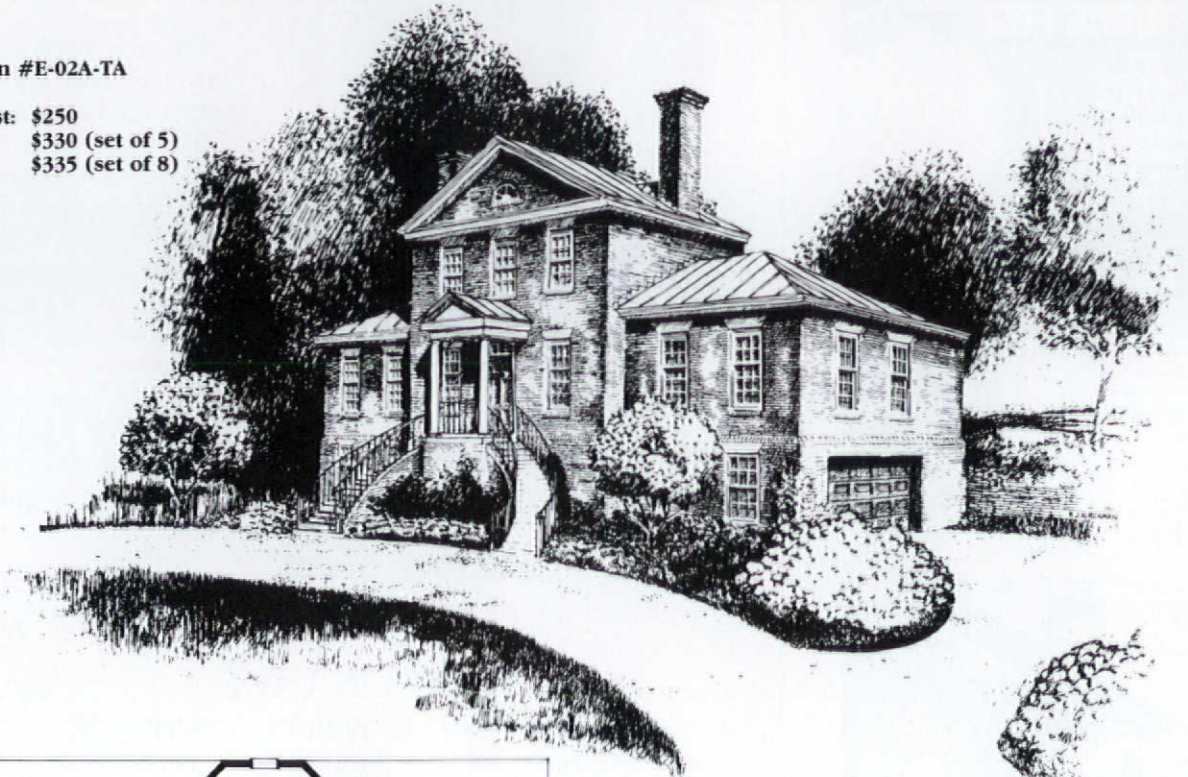
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VIRGINIA PALLADIAN

Plan #E-02A-TA

Cost: \$250
 \$330 (set of 5)
 \$335 (set of 8)



SQUARE FOOTAGE	3600 (excl. garage)
BASEMENT	1355
FIRST FLOOR	1925
SECOND FLOOR	785
CEILING HEIGHT	
BASEMENT	8
FIRST FLOOR	9
SECOND FLOOR	8
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	65-4
DEPTH	33-4

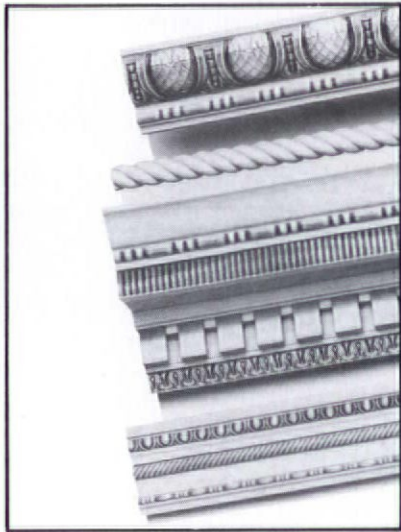
There is a legend that the original of this house was built by one of the carpenters who built Monticello. That original house stands in the mountains above Lynchburg, where the surrounding land can be viewed from the large windows in the octagonal living room.

This house is an extremely fine example of early-19th-

century domestic architecture. Note the masonry detailing, the graceful circular stairs, the tall chimneys (and the unobtrusive garage entry).

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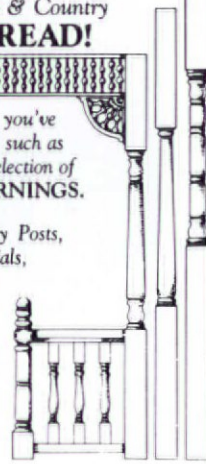
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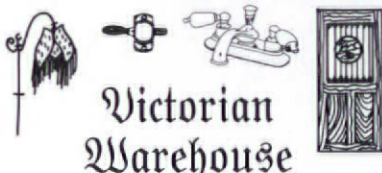


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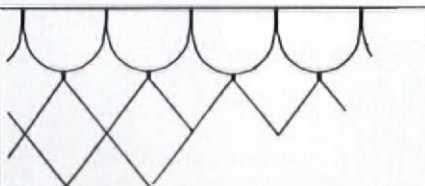


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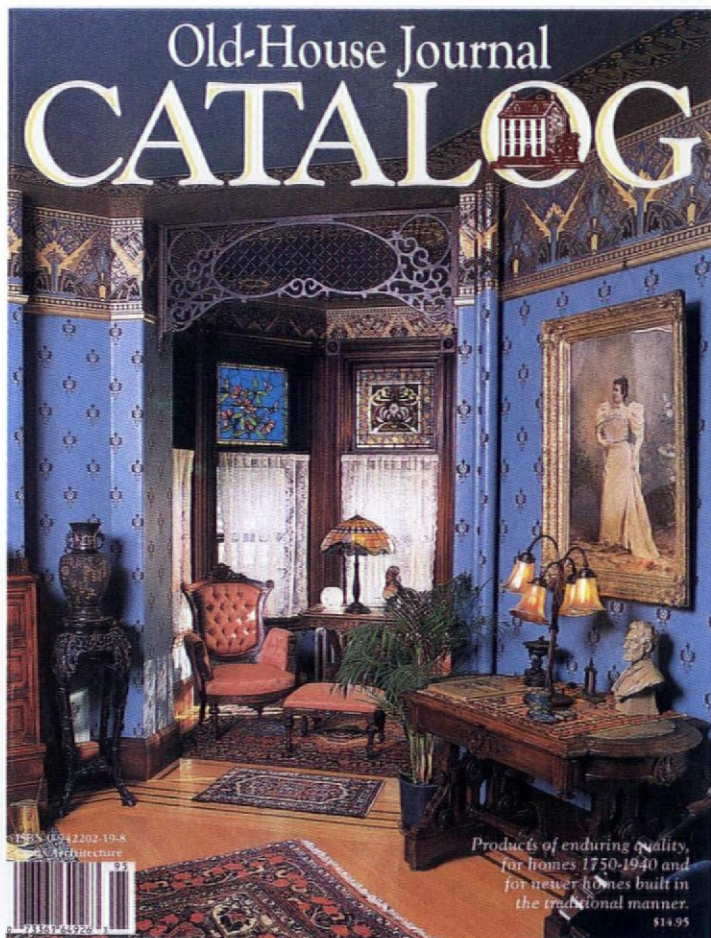
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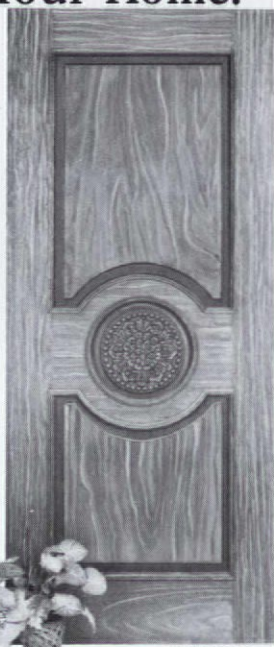
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MEETINGS & EVENTS

"THREE CENTURIES OF AMERICAN FURNITURE" to be held on Thursdays, March 16 through May 25, 7 to 9 PM at the Codman Carriage House, Codman Road, Lincoln, MA. This intensive 11-week course, featuring lectures by curators & scholars, will provide an in-depth look at developments in American furniture-making from the early-17th to the early-20th centuries. SPNEA members, \$175; non-members, \$200. Call (617) 227-3956 to register & for further information.

24TH EUFAULA PILGRIMAGE & ANTIQUE SHOW, March 31-April 2. Daily tours, 9 AM to 5 PM; candle-light tours, 7 to 9:30 PM; Sunday tours, 1 to 5 PM. For more information & advance ticket sales, contact Eufaula Heritage Association, PO Box 486, Eufaula, AL 36027. (205) 687-3793.

PHILADELPHIA OPEN HOUSE! 11th annual house & garden tours include more than 150 private houses & gardens & historic sites. April 28 through May 14. Special weekend & weekday packages. For further information, contact POH, PO Box 40166, Philadelphia, PA 19106. (215) 928-1188.

ARCHITECTURAL ARTISANRY: Preservation By Design. Symposium & exhibit, March 17-19, in New Bedford, MA. Speakers, panelists, moderators, & attendees will address the issues & needs facing the training of architectural artisans within a design-oriented curriculum. Philip C. Marshall, Director, Architectural Artisanry Program, Swain School of Design, 1213 Purchase St., New Bedford, MA 02740. (508) 994-0262 or 997-7831.

DESIGN & DECORATION WEEKEND, April 1 & 2, at Old Sturbridge Village. Participants will discuss design & structural topics with experts, and share ideas & information with each other. Small group

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATIONISTS — \$29,213 plus benefits. The NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission seeks qualified people to fill several positions in various departments. *Must* have either Masters degree in historic preservation, architecture, or architectural history & 1 year related work experience, or a B.A. plus 2 years related experience. Research Dept.: Research & write designation reports for potential landmarks & historic districts. Preservation Dept.: Review & evaluate proposals for work on designated structures. Survey Dept.: Carry out survey to identify buildings & areas eligible for designation (1 part-time position). Send resume & writing sample to NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, 225 Broadway, 23rd floor, New York, NY 10007. Att.: Fred DeLeon, Personnel Officer.

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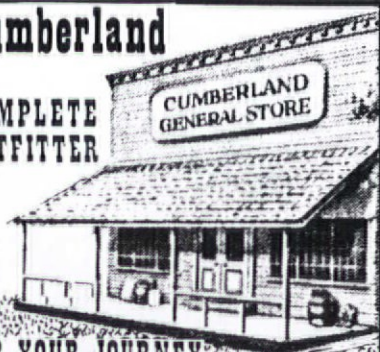
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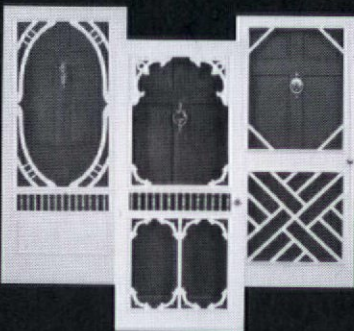
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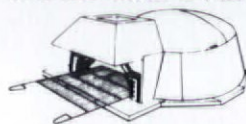
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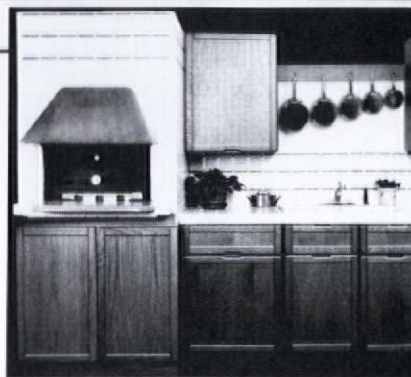


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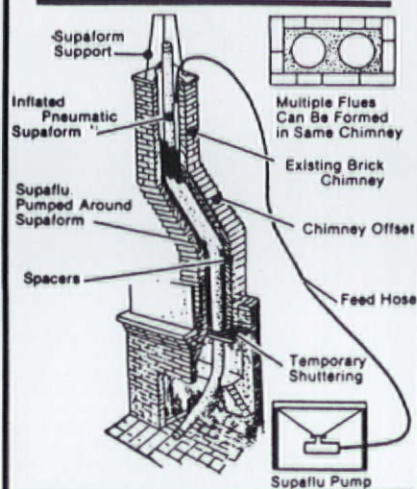
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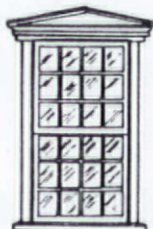
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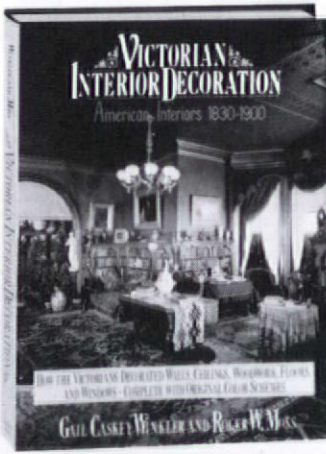
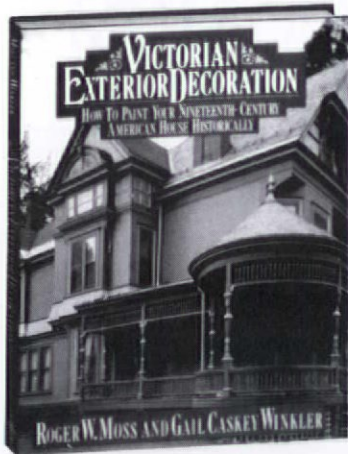
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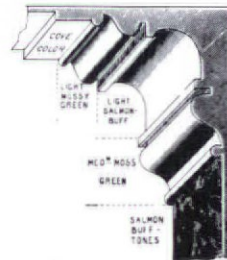
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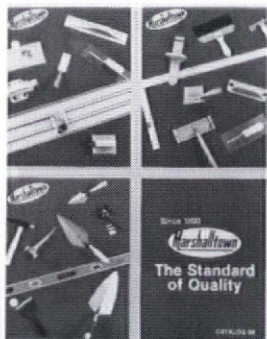
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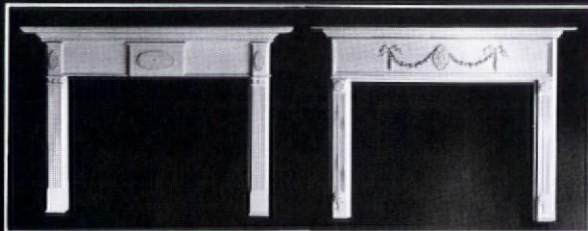


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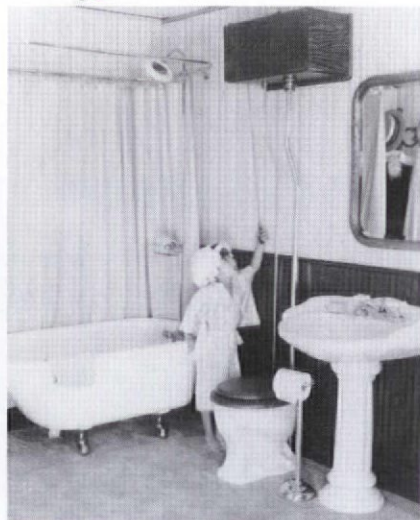
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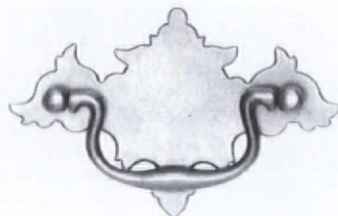
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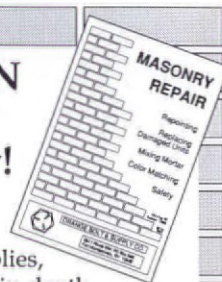
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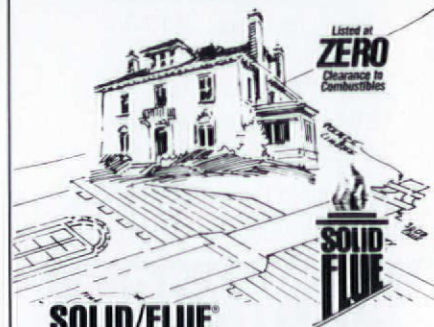


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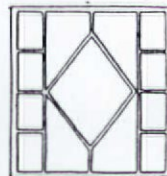
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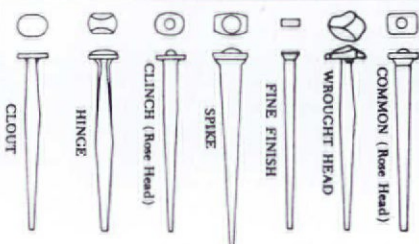
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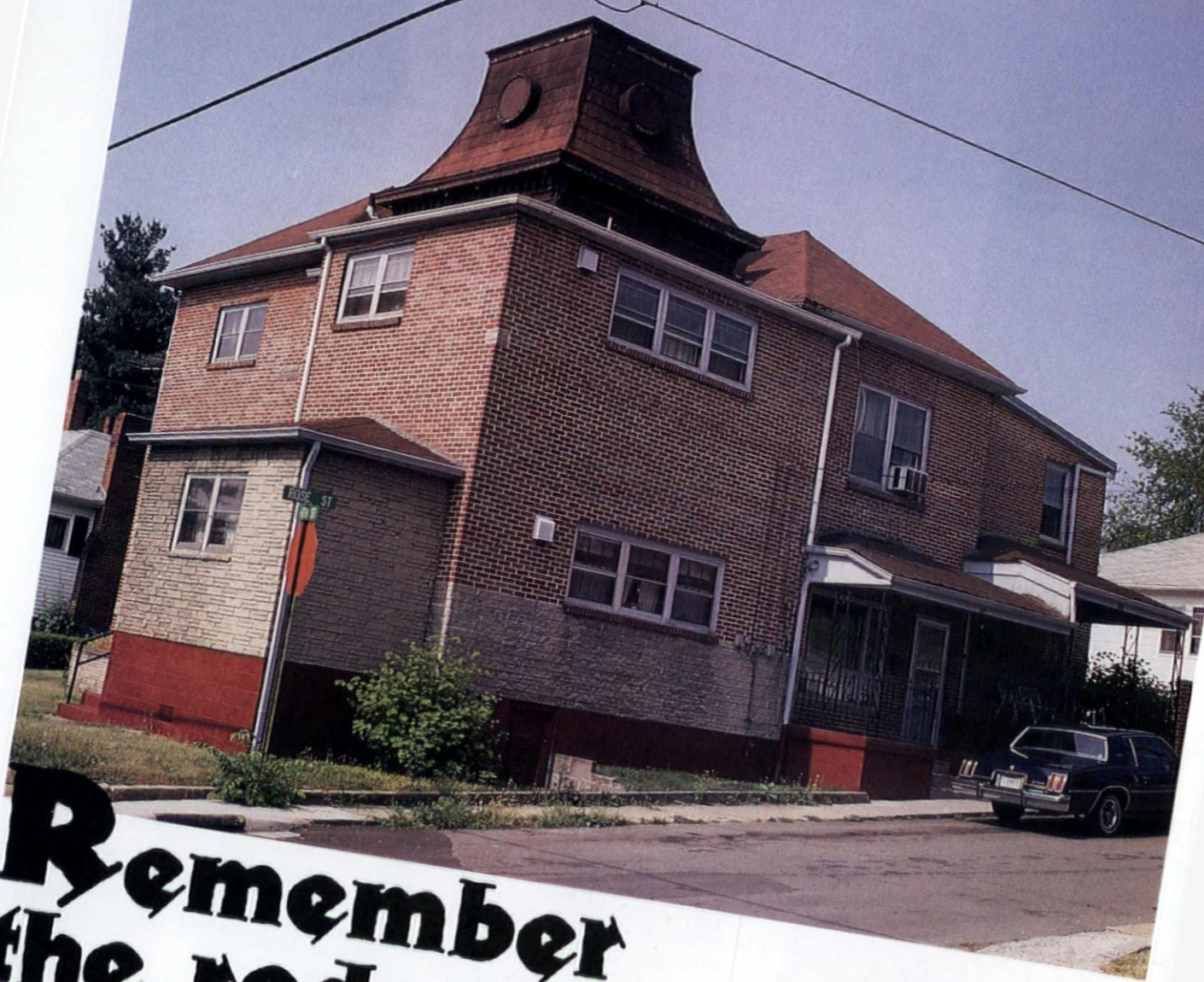
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opinion...

Remuddling



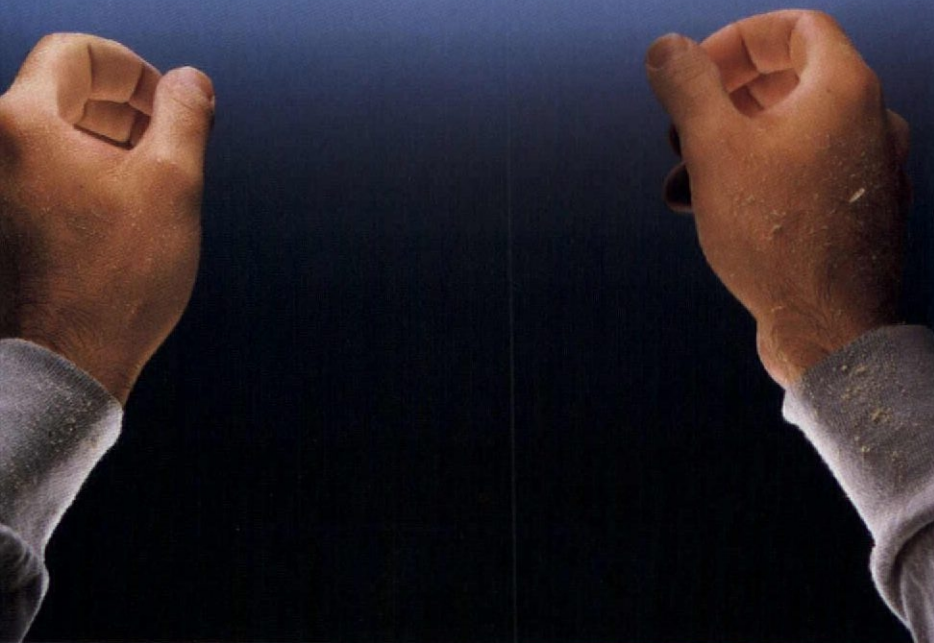
Remember the reducing cabinet?

It was a box with heat-generating light bulbs inside. You'd sit on a chair in the box, just your head poking out the top, to sweat the pounds off. Rife with mayhem possibilities, it was a favorite gag device in cartoons and two-reelers of the '30s and '40s. Someone would inevitably get trapped inside the box, it would be cranked to the limit, and the victim

would finally emerge thin as a rail or shrunken to dwarf-size. Frank Godbey of Lexington, Kentucky, sent us this photograph of "a sadly remuddled Second Empire house in Bristol, Tennessee." It's tempting to imagine pulling away *this* box and finding the Victorian house still inside. Because this has *gotta* be a gag — right?

WIN FAME AND \$50: If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color slides. We'll award \$50 if your photos are selected. The message is more dramatic if you send along a picture of a similar unremuddled building. Remuddling Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

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Vernacular Houses



This 18th-century hipped-roof cottage in New Orleans' Vieux Carré (left) survived two fires that eliminated most Creole Cottages in the original city. The construction of early examples was *briqueté-entre-poteaux*, heavy timbers with brick infill, usually stuccoed over. The house form arrived with French-Spanish Creoles from Haiti and the Caribbean — a place that shares southern Louisiana's climate of humidity, hurricanes, and floods.

THE CREOLE COTTAGE

New Orleans, 1790-1840

The gable roof is also common on Creole Cottages (right). Other typical details: low elevation to the sidewalk; vertical-board shutters over French doors; gabled dormers on front and back. Early-19th-century houses were more likely to be built of stuccoed brick.



Most cottage roofs incorporate a sidewalk overhang, sometimes with a double pitch above the eave. This photo shows the *abat-vent* variety, where a flat overhang is supported by iron brackets. Fire walls project above the roofline.



Weatherboard siding and shuttered, multi-light windows are common, too, and the lack of dormers is not unusual.

Submitted by Evan Wilson,
New Orleans, Louisiana