

Old-House Journal

RESTORATION TECHNIQUES

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1989

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TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

Power Tools

Hand Tools

Tool Kits

STENCILLING BASICS

SAFER PAINTS

Victorian
Pattern-Book Houses

1989 ONJ
• INDEX •



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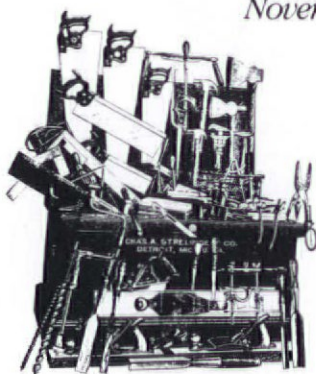
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Vol. XVII No. 6

November/December 1989



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Cover: Good tools, antique and new, go hand-in-hand with old houses.
Photo by Gordon Bock.

HOW-TO & WHY

Professionals in preservation have plenty in common with old-house owners. Fun, for one thing.

Gordon and I got seats together on the airplane back from Chicago. Normally I hate sitting in the middle five of a wide-body (29F and G — rats!). But I was in a good mood. We'd been at the annual APT meeting, a week of technical seminars and beer-drinking with 600 dedicated professional members of the Association for Preservation Technology. It was a happy, energy-charged reunion (my tenth year as a member).

We went to see what's new. We went for the technical seminars — where else do people talk about masonry deterioration, epoxy consolidation of rotted wood, or the special problems of preserving covered bridges? But we went for another reason, too: for the charge we get from being around these people.

We all know old-house owners are a little bit out of the mainstream. At a block party, we're more likely to talk about ghosts in the attic than about real-estate values. We're likely to chisel hardwoods to repair a parquet floor; it wouldn't even occur to us to just cover the thing with wall-to-wall.

But what about people who work in preservation for a living? Surely they're a more sober and pragmatic bunch. I asked Gordon what he thought of the APT gang. "What's interesting about this crowd is that they'll admit some projects involve fundamental questions — philosophical ones regarding 'saving' buildings: How far do you go? For example, at one seminar, they had a debate going on the restoration of an all-aluminum 'house of the future' from the 1930s. Okay, it's beat up now and needs work. What do you do? Just clean up the shell, leaving dents and corrosion? or do you put on new sheathing so it's shiny and looks more like the original did? In other words, *what* are you preserving —

the 'original fabric' or the intent?"

Can you imagine a technical convention where people talk not only about methods, projects, and failures, but also regularly ask *why* they do the things they do? The answers don't matter so much to me. What matters to me is that I'm involved in a field where people *think* about things like that.

The field attracts interesting characters. Much of the work done in the field of preservation technology is novel, even experimental. People appreciate that not all the answers are known. A certain, uh, humility is a basic tenet. They share their mistakes. There's also in this crowd a sense of time that's unusual in America, and unusual among technologists. It's a close-to-the-surface acceptance of the transience of our generation: An intimate acquaintance with the past and a concern for the future is always apparent.

Then there's the hands-on aspect. APT members get out into the field, one way or another. Preservation technology is no ivory-tower business, and it's not an executive-suite business. These people generally know the rigor of science and technique, yet they're openly philosophical. Strange combination — a wonderful, exhilarating combination.

So who are they? The group of people at that Chicago meeting could be described as inter-disciplinary. They'd probably like it better if I said "motley." Chemists, civil engineers, master artisans, manufacturers, educators, materials specialists, planners, architects, conservators (and a few editors). With a range like that, there's little competition. People accept — even learn from — each others' differences.

Gordon had told an old friend of his in Chicago that he'd be visiting

for a convention. "Oh, then you probably won't get downtown," the friend said. "Conventions are usually held at the airport hotels."

"Nope, that's not what this crowd's about," Gordon laughed. "I can't remember exactly where it is, but it's sure as hell not at an airport. These people are into real places — cities and streets. . . . They walk around with a telephoto lens to take close-ups of cornices. They're, you know, passionate about ambiance."

Thank goodness. This group makes me feel hopeful, that not everybody in America loves fast food and drive-up convenience. These people who are attracted to old buildings are in love with everything, I think. They love to eat — lots of food in the Greek quarter, say, *with* Retsina. They have a sixth sense about where locals go after hours — and then they dance till five AM. They love to talk — lots of friendly arguments, and talk of travel discoveries, of far-flung interests.

And they love their work.

So I guess the real reason I go to APT meetings is to talk and laugh and think and dance with bright, happy people who know what they're doing — and why they're doing it. Sometimes I think about all the many fields of endeavour I could have happened into. I think of all the jobs even in publishing.

I feel like I really lucked into this old-house stuff.

Stacia Fone

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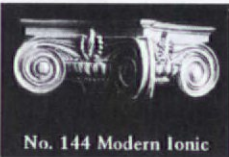
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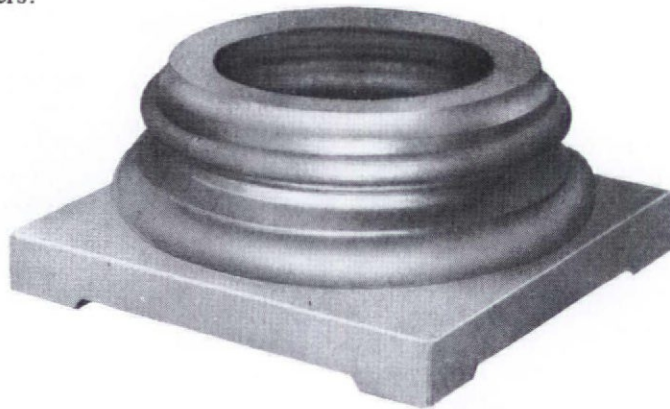
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Sleeping on Stilts

Dear Old-House Friends:

Several years ago, you did an article about sleepin' porches [*"Sleeping Porches," June 1986*], which I enjoyed. I just got to thinking that you might enjoy these sleeping porches on stilts, which are here in Richmond — architectural oddities of the past...

— Thomas Cox
Richmond, Virg.

Thrills & SKIL

(See "Letters," pages 6, 8, 10 in the September/October issue. The advertisement appeared on pages 8-9 in the May/June 1989 OHJ.)

Patty,

All this whining because a guy in an ad holds his drill in a "menacing" posture — pretty much the same posture Art Garfunkel uses when he sings! If you ask me, getting dirty and scowling and holding your tools where you please is what makes America great.

Would some of your readers have every ad and article tarted up to portray a world where everybody who picks up a drill is happy and comfortable and has a low testosterone level? I hope not. Some of us don't just priss around with the collar of our polo shirt turned up, hanging lovely wallpaper, and delicately polishing our brass.

Sistering the beams in my basement and busting through to my attic were blood sport. I got dirty, I swore, I scowled, I held my drill in

front of the bifurcation of my legs. So what? I pitched a plugged-in TV set from the ridge of my roof into a dumpster — while the *Donabue* show was on. It was big fun. I went to a paint store in the mall wearing hospital scrubs splattered with red paint. People let me go to the front of the line. No harm done.

Finally, in your defense, let me remind your readers that the OHJ staff lives and fixes old houses in Brooklyn, a place where people realize that it's not prop-wielding male models who get you.

— Walter Jowers
Nashville, Tenn.

Walter Jowers is a former member of OHJ's editorial staff (believe it or not).

Dear Editor:

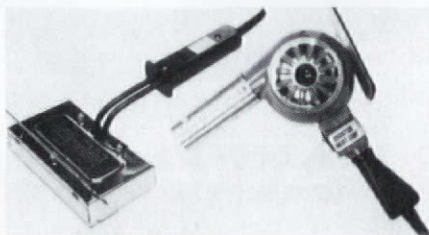
Your advertising director could have easily defused the situation by merely saying, "Sorry, readers, we goofed." Instead, all we got was a long evasive answer which created the impression that your advertising director would rather wash his hands of the whole matter than deal with his readers'/subscribers' complaints. Since he seems to have missed the point, let me rephrase it in one simple sentence: OHJ READERS WANT OHJ TO CEASE AND DESIST SEXIST ADVERTISING!

Is that clear enough?

— Kathleen L. Nichols
Pittsburg, Kansas

Dear Ms. Poore,

I am writing to express my concern about the rather salacious advertisement that appeared in your September/October issue of 1989. The ad I refer to is on page 19 and



depicts a "heat gun" and "heat plate" in rather suggestive poses. I am particularly upset by the subtle phallic reference in the picture of the heat gun. It says "master" on the handle, but I think since it is directly affixed to the gun, it probably refers to master and slave. Either way, it is very inappropriate in a magazine that enters the homes of vegetarians and druids — people I know for a fact would not be happy stigmatizing a former plant with such lurid tools.

Couldn't you advertise a "forced hot-air paint remover" instead of a heat "gun"? I am certain that you are probably affiliated with the NRA or some other quasi-military organization. The position of the "gun" in relation to the heat plate is also disturbing. It is quite obviously menacing that poor defenseless plate with a senseless show of bravado and testosterone-driven insolence. Quite frankly, I am appalled by this crass, commercialistic overture by Old-House Journal.

Ridiculous comments, wouldn't you agree? No more ridiculous than the barrage of nonsense concerning a recent ad for a well known power tool company in OHJ. Come on people, lighten up, this is a magazine ad, not the final draft of a constitutional amendment. There are many more important social issues to devote our energies to, rather than wasting time with neo-Freudian psychoanalysis of a power-tool ad. If you still insist on getting all worked up and drawing corollaries to phallic symbols and guns and Jason and the Wicked Witch, you can take one simple step: Don't buy the product. That's a lot cheaper than carrying on a verbose tirade on what was obviously a very effective advertisement. After all, how many people now have the SKIL name embossed in their memory thanks to all this nonsense?

With tongue in cheek,

— Tom Basinski
Buffalo, N.Y.

continued on page 6

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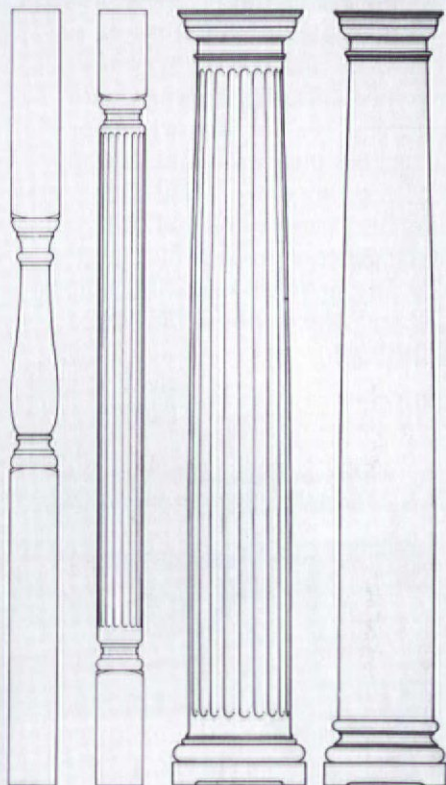
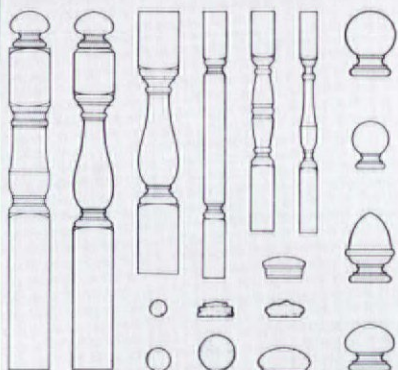
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PAG 3



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LETTERS

continued from page 4

Bill,

Sorry, but your answer to the protests about the SKIL ad missed the point. . . . Did you really read the letters???? Your readers were telling you the message is not *subliminal*, it is right out there, and you published some very well written letters explaining that to you.

You are also wrong as the ad is slanderous and violent. Tool ads have been insulting to women for years and, yes, we have written to the companies but they figure that only real men buy tools. These letters you didn't read are telling you that your heterogeneous readers find these ads offensive in YOUR magazine and suggest you take responsibility and do something.

— Lyle A. Jencsok
Denver, Colo.

OHJ readers are engaged in such pastimes as furnishing parlors as if the year

were 1889. So I'm a little surprised at the intolerance of fantasy — which, to my mind, is a rich form of human communication.

— Patricia Poore
Editor & Publisher
♀

Due to a space crunch, two excellent and widely available varieties were eliminated from Scott G. Kunst's September/October article on post-Victorian daffodils: 'Scarlet Gem' (an orange and yellow poetaz, 1910) and 'February Gold' (a short, early yellow trumpet, 1923).

How to Kill a Furnace

In the May/June 1989 OHJ, we printed a letter from Robert A. Pasbek ("Strippers Beware"), in which he described how the fumes from his chemical paint stripper had corroded and ruined his gas furnace. We asked our readers if they had more information on this phenomenon, and received a great many responses. A selection appears below; to all who wrote, our sincere thanks.

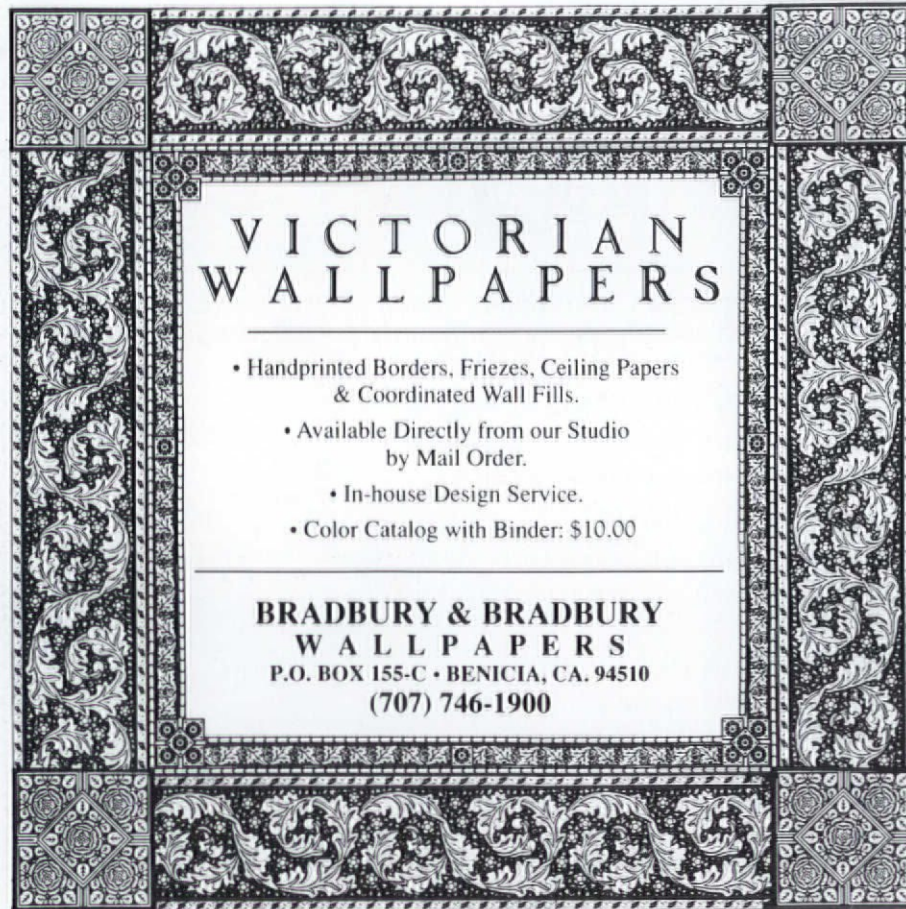
Dear Ms. Poore:
When natural gas, propane, or oil

are burned with air, a flue gas is produced, containing heat, water vapor, and carbon dioxide. In a warm-air furnace, flue gas is produced in a burner compartment. It then circulates through the inside of a metal air-to-air heat exchanger and is discharged from the furnace through a horizontal flue pipe or vent connector. The vent connector carries the flue gas to a chimney, vertical metal vent stack, or outside wall, where it is released into the atmosphere.

Circulating air comes from the occupied spaces in the building, usually through a cold-air return duct. Air from the return duct passes through the circulating-air blower in the furnace, accepts heat from the heat exchanger, and is delivered back to the heated rooms through the warm-air duct system.

The circulating air and the combustion air used in a central warm-air furnace aren't the same. In most

continued on page 8



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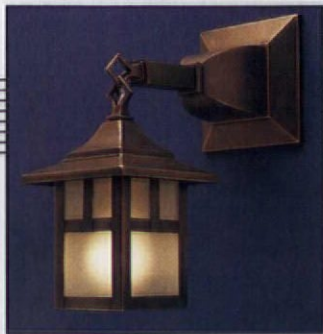
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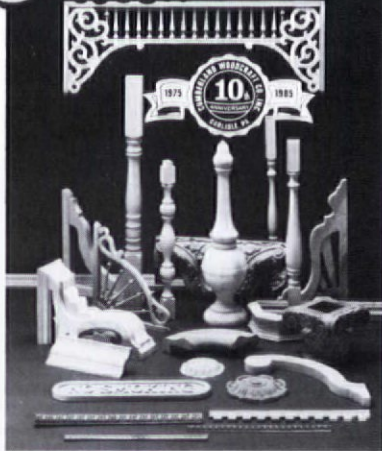
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THE LIBRARY PANEL



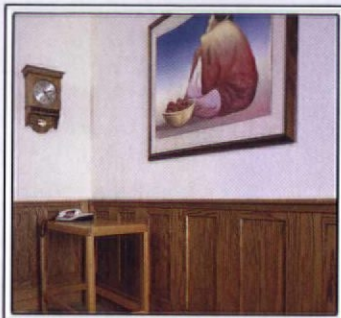
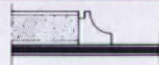
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LETTERS

continued from page 6

furnace installations, air used for combustion is drawn not from the cold-air return duct, but from the heated or unheated space surrounding the furnace — or from outside the building through a separate, dedicated air-supply pipe.

Building codes and furnace-installation instructions have long required that furnaces installed in beauty parlors or dry-cleaning plants be supplied with outside air for combustion. These requirements originally stemmed from the expected release of hair-spray propellants or dry-cleaning chemicals into the interior heated space during business hours. Chlorine and fluorine (halogen) compounds in the propellants and dry-cleaning fluids were the dangers to avoid. Unfortunately, the same or related halogen compounds are now widely used by homeowners in paint removers, refrigerants, laundry bleaches, adhesives, varnishes, plastics, and a host of other compounds.

The paint remover applied by Mr. Pashek probably contained a chloride compound. Vapor from his paint-stripping work entered the household air and found its way to his furnace room or basement. There, the chloride compound in vapor form probably accompanied the combustion air into the furnace-burner compartment. During the high-temperature combustion process, the chloride compound probably changed form, releasing chlorine ions into the furnace flue gas. These chlorine ions combined with water vapor in the flue gas to produce an acid in vapor state. The acid, condensing in minute amounts on the walls of the furnace heat exchanger or vent piping, probably caused the accelerated corrosion and irreparable damage to Mr. Pashek's furnace installation.

Halogen-bearing chemicals should not be used in areas close to or communicating with an operating gas, propane, or oil furnace. If you have to use them, do so only in well venti-

lated areas, and during periods when the furnace isn't providing heat. Don't store bleaches, paints, water-softener salts, and similar halogen-bearing compounds near furnaces; keep their covers on securely to minimize migration of the chlorides into the furnace-combustion air.

When purchasing a new, energy-efficient furnace, read the warranties carefully: Most furnace manuals now carry warnings about exposing the furnace and its venting system to contaminated combustion air. If you anticipate using a new furnace while conducting chemical experiments, stripping paint, or operating a beauty parlor in your basement, look for a "direct vent" furnace that draws its combustion-air supply from the outside through a dedicated pipe.

— Michael Baly III
Executive Vice-President,
American Gas Association
Arlington, Virg.

continued on page 10

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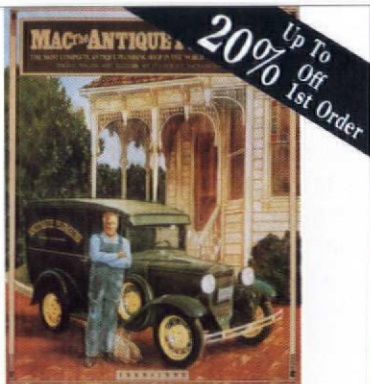
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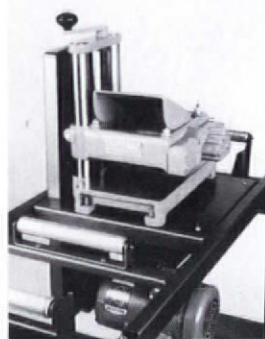
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LETTERS

continued from page 8

Dear OHJ:

I have been a heating contractor/dealer of a leading brand for many years and on several occasions have seen the problem Mr. Pashek experienced.

If you own a high-efficiency furnace that uses indoor air for combustion, the chances of damaging your furnace are greatly increased by the use of chlorine solutions during the heating season. You also risk voiding the manufacturer's warranty on the heat exchanger, resulting in costly repair or replacement charge. Using chemicals once is all that is necessary to start the corrosive damage to a heat exchanger. It is also true that once this process has started, it cannot be stopped.

Generally, furnaces with an efficiency rating below 82% are much less likely to be affected because the acid is still in a gaseous state as it leaves the furnace and chimney,

thereby not damaging the furnace heat exchanger.

— Randon R. Parks
Parks Heating & Sheet Metal
Hastings, Neb.

Dear Ms. Poore,

High-efficiency furnaces are known to be damaged by fumes from paint strippers. In our home, we had a similar problem when we installed hardwood floors using the non-flammable adhesive supplied by the floor company. The containers have long warnings about health hazards, symptoms, and treatments. The warnings state that fume health hazards are increased by a flame, but there is no warning that corrosive products are formed which can damage furnaces or other metal objects.

Three bedroom floors were laid in late spring, during a three-day period when heat was not required. Windows were left open and fans were used to keep the fume level low. The

furnace (a conventional gas furnace) was not turned on until three days after the floor laying was completed. About three days after the furnace was again in use, we noticed corrosion of the galvanized-steel stack connection between the furnace and chimney. An examination of the furnace showed that it had accumulated a lot of rust. A heating contractor had inspected and cleaned the furnace six months earlier; he knew that it was ten years old, but had described it as very clean and in excellent condition. Fortunately, only the stack connection now required immediate replacement, but the furnace needed another cleaning. Undoubtedly, its life has been shortened.

We also discovered that a spoon collection in the dining room was badly corroded. Metal pot and decoration hangers in the kitchen and brass coat hangers in the guest closet were also corroded. This was proba-

continued on page 12

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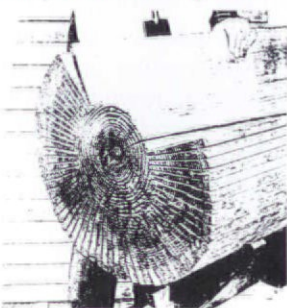
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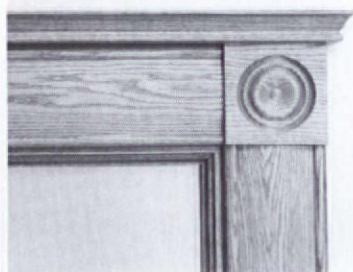
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LETTERS

continued from page 10

bly because we had used the gas stove in the kitchen during the floor-laying period.

— Eugene L. Perrine
Bloomington, Ill.

Dear OHJ:

The unfortunate experience of your reader destroying a gas furnace with paint-remover fumes is probably not all that unusual. And the problem isn't just paint remover. The biggest villain is chlorine, common in compounds used in paint removers, but also present in laundry chemicals (chlorine bleach) and refrigerants (chlorofluorocarbons — now less of a problem with their near-elimination from use as aerosol propellants).

Better condensing furnaces reduce the chances of this problem by drawing their combustion air from the outside. But precautions should be taken with these furnaces, too: An air intake near a laundry drier vent or a

swimming pool or a dry-cleaning establishment can murder a furnace.

— S. Leigh Harrison
Baldwinsville, N.Y.

For Art's Sake

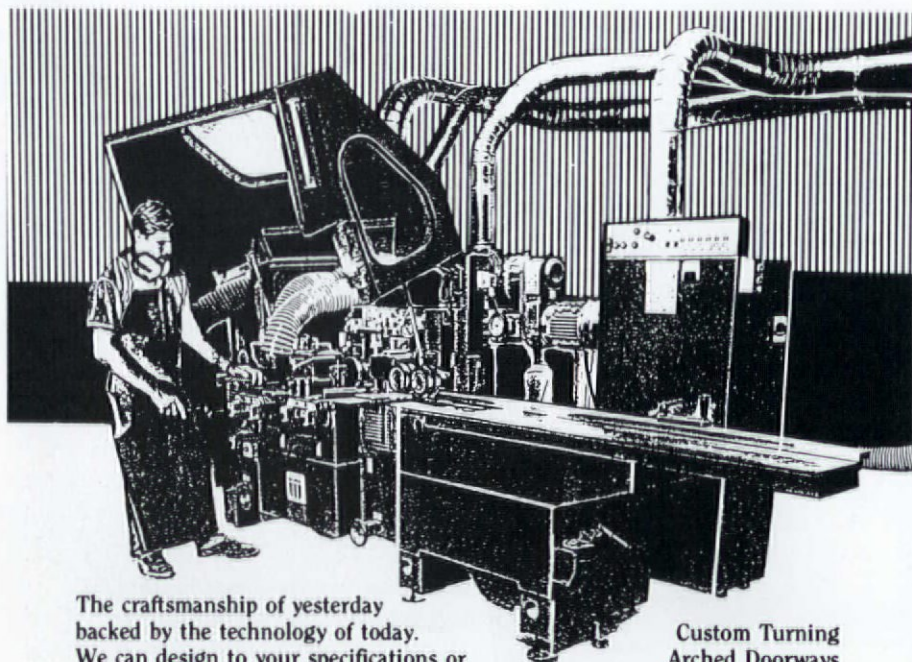
Dear OHJ,

I find your magazine to be an endless source of useful information. However, as a professional art conservator at a museum in Baltimore, I often cringe at do-it-yourselfers or painting contractors who write to OHJ to describe the application of house-restoration techniques to works of art which have been incorporated into architecture. The letter in the September/October 1989 issue from Lynne D'Angelo, a "painting contractor," prompted me to write. Ms. D'Angelo apparently "reconstructed and patinaed a Della Robbia" and then used "Oops" latex-paint remover to uncover a wall painting.

Art conservators endure a prolonged training period which often includes graduate school, apprenticeship, and the study of chemistry and art history. We are bound by a code of ethics which a house restorer would find incapacitating, but which has been established in this century as a reaction to overzealous art restorers of the past. To us, the wholesale use of "Oops" by an untrained person on a wall painting is akin to vinyl-siding a house.

If you believe you have a work of art incorporated into the house you are restoring, please consult an art conservator! There are many in private practice. Ethical conservators do not advertise; you can get a list of names from the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), Suite 340, 1400 16th Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036; (202) 232-6636.

— Ann Boulton
Baltimore, Md.



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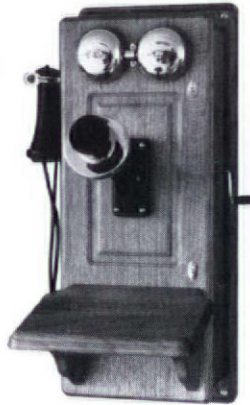
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ASK OHJ

I-House

Q *Our old house is in sad shape, as you can see. (As is, maybe the house is a candidate for "Remuddling.") We're hoping to bring it back to its former appearance. It's not clear in the deeds when the house was built — we guess in the 1890s. We were told it once had cherry-red clapboards. Could you tell us what style it is? What the front entrance may have been like?*

— Jenny Lisak
Punxsutawney, Penn.

A Essentially, your home is a two-storey I-House, a straightforward house form two rooms wide and one room deep. (See Vernacular Houses, March 1986 OHJ.) The style dates back to the early 1800s, although I-Houses didn't really become widespread until after the railroads came into their own. It's considered a folk Victorian house style, insofar as Victorian detailing — in your case, the Italianate brackets at the eaves — has been incorporated into a folk idiom. (Extensions off the rear were also common.)

It's likely that the house originally had clapboard siding. A peek under

the man-made siding will give the answer. It's also possible that the house once had a full-width porch. If you can't track down an early photo of the house, search for evidence of the porch, such as paint "ghosts" or nail holes in the original siding.

Weighty Question

Q *Eleven years ago, I had a re-roofing job done with asphalt shingles on my 1877 house. I happened to mention to a friend that the house now has three layers of roofing on it, and she said that this is dangerous because of the weight. The dwelling is solid and I haven't noticed any structural damage. Have you ever heard of a house being damaged because of too many layers of roofing?*

— Richard Hughes
Racine, Wisc.

A The weight of three layers of roofing shouldn't be a problem, provided your rafters and framing are sound. We've seen many houses with three layers: usually two of asphalt shingles over an original slate or wood-shingle roof.

Most communities restrict roof-



I-House form

overs to three, and this is a practical limit for a decent job. If you foresee putting on another roof in the future, plan on removing *all* the existing roofing first. This way, you can inspect the deck and make whatever repairs are necessary after more than a hundred years of service.

Light Question

Q *Two years ago, my wife and I bought a house built in 1906 for a newspaper editor. In the 1890s, he'd become interested in electricity, installed a "dynamo," and lighted his printing shop. Soon he expanded and formed a company that supplied electricity to residences and for street lighting. When he had this house built, he of course had the latest electrical apparatus installed. Some of the original light fixtures are still here, including a femme-fleur lamp at the bottom of the stairs. The lamp has two lightbulbs; rings in the glass of the bulbs indicate hand-blown construction. Inside each bulb is a heavy metallic filament. It has the appearance of tarnished silver when the lamp is out; it glows in pink and green brilliance when they're energized. There are figures of a bird,*

flowers, and leaves in each one.

Could you tell us where these bulbs might have come from? What era? Are they of particular value to anyone besides us?

— Paul & Susie Hershey
Christiana, Penn.

A The lightbulbs look like neon flower bulbs to us; and while not nearly as old or collectible as the lamp, they are appropriate to it (in an offbeat way). They were manufactured for many years by a company called Durolite, located in New Jersey, and came in various designs and colors such as tulips, violets, birds, and other figures. These novelty bulbs have only recently gone out of production, but limited styles and quantities are still available from Just Bulbs, Ltd., 938 Broadway, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10010; (212) 228-7820.

General interest questions will be answered in print. The Editors can't promise to respond to all questions personally, but we try. Send your questions with photos or sketches to Questions Editor, The Old-House Journal, 435 Ninth Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215.

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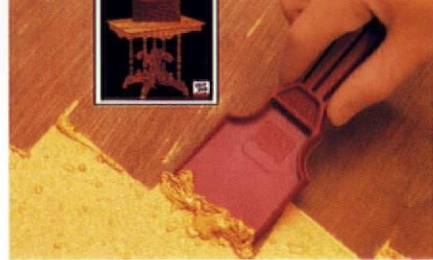
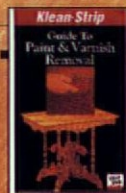
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Women's Work Gloves

OHJ readers will want to know about good work gloves for women. For several years I have worn a pair of Wells Lamont "Grips," with pre-curved fingers, in split leather. They are wonderful: strong, comfortable, and they fit. They are sized in ladies' small, medium, and large. Widely available in DIY stores, they can also be ordered direct from Wells Lamont Corp., Dept. OHJ, 6640 W. Touhy Avenue, Chicago, IL 60648; (312) 763-1100. (They have them for men as well — warmly lined gloves, too.)

— Alisa Bearov Landrum
Norfolk, Virg.

Under the Heater

Many older homes have a gas water heater in the kitchen or utility room. What do you do when you have to lay new linoleum or tiles in that room? You can use a scissors jack to lift the water heater one side at a time and lay the flooring under it. A scissors jack has a low clearance and a continuous screw action to avoid damaging pipes or causing leaks. Note: If the bottom of your water heater is rusted, do not use this method — you may as well replace the water heater along with the flooring.

For safety, turn off the pilot light and the gas supply line. Slide the jack under one side of the water heater; only one or two legs need to be elevated. Slowly lift that side about one quarter inch — any higher and you might start leaks or break pipes.

Use a putty knife to scrape away old floor covering from beneath suspended legs. Vacuum up trash. Apply the linoleum glue to the back of the flooring and slide it into place. (Don't get the glue on the legs — you won't be able to replace the heater without ruining the flooring. For even better protection, cut small coasters from a spare piece of the flooring and insert them under the

legs before lowering the heater.)

After the flooring is in place, press it down, wipe up excess glue, and slowly lower the heater. Repeat the whole process on the other side.

— George Barnwell
San Antonio, Texas

Radiator Stripping

Enclosed is a slide of how I successfully stripped an old radiator. Using my powerwash machine, I was able to remove almost 90% of the paint.

— Robert D'Angelo
East Norwich, N.Y.



Stretch Your Thinner

Here's an ecologically sound alternative to dumping paint thinner. After cleaning a brush, pour the used paint thinner into an empty thinner container labeled "settling waste." Continue this procedure with every use of thinner until the container is at least half full; then let it sit, unmoved, for a day or two. The pigment that was dissolved in the thinner will settle to the bottom and the solvent will remain on top. Carefully pour this solvent into a second container labeled "clear waste." Stop pouring at the first sign of the solvent becoming cloudy.

Now, whenever it's time to clean a brush, first clean with the clear

waste. I usually do three cleanings: two with clear waste and the third with just a little fresh thinner. Each time, the dirty thinner goes into the settling container. Eventually, that container will fill with pigment and must then be disposed of safely. But in five years, I have yet to reach this point.

— Chuck Mitchell
Madison, Wisc.

Residual Wax

I'm not aware of any methylene chloride-based removers that don't contain wax. The wax is there to form a skin at the stripper surface, impeding the solvents' evaporation and giving them time to penetrate the paint film. But if stripper is left on a cleaned wood surface too long, the solvents evaporate out of the wood pores and leave a tough plastic film of dry wax and thickener, which lines the inside walls of the pores. Normally, it must be sanded off: If you varnish wood that has residual wax and thickener, it looks blotchy. (The residue film has a different index of refraction from the varnish.) Also, as the varnish solvent evaporates, the wax diffuses out of the pores and up into the varnish, where it prevents the finish layer from hardening properly or adhering adequately.

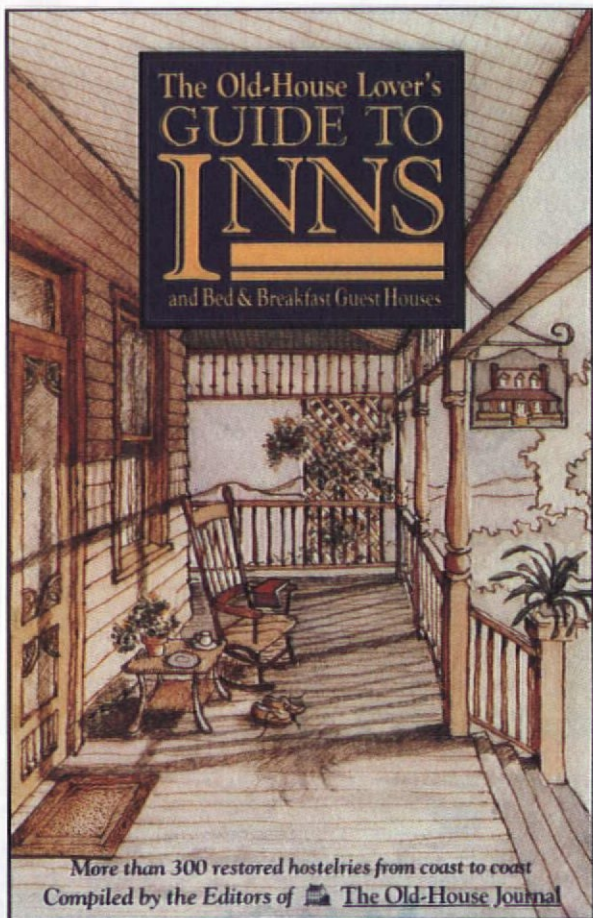
Now for my secret: I let the first coat of varnish sit for about half an hour — long enough for the wax to move up into the varnish. Then I wipe off most of it with a cloth dampened with mineral spirits. That's your sealer coat.

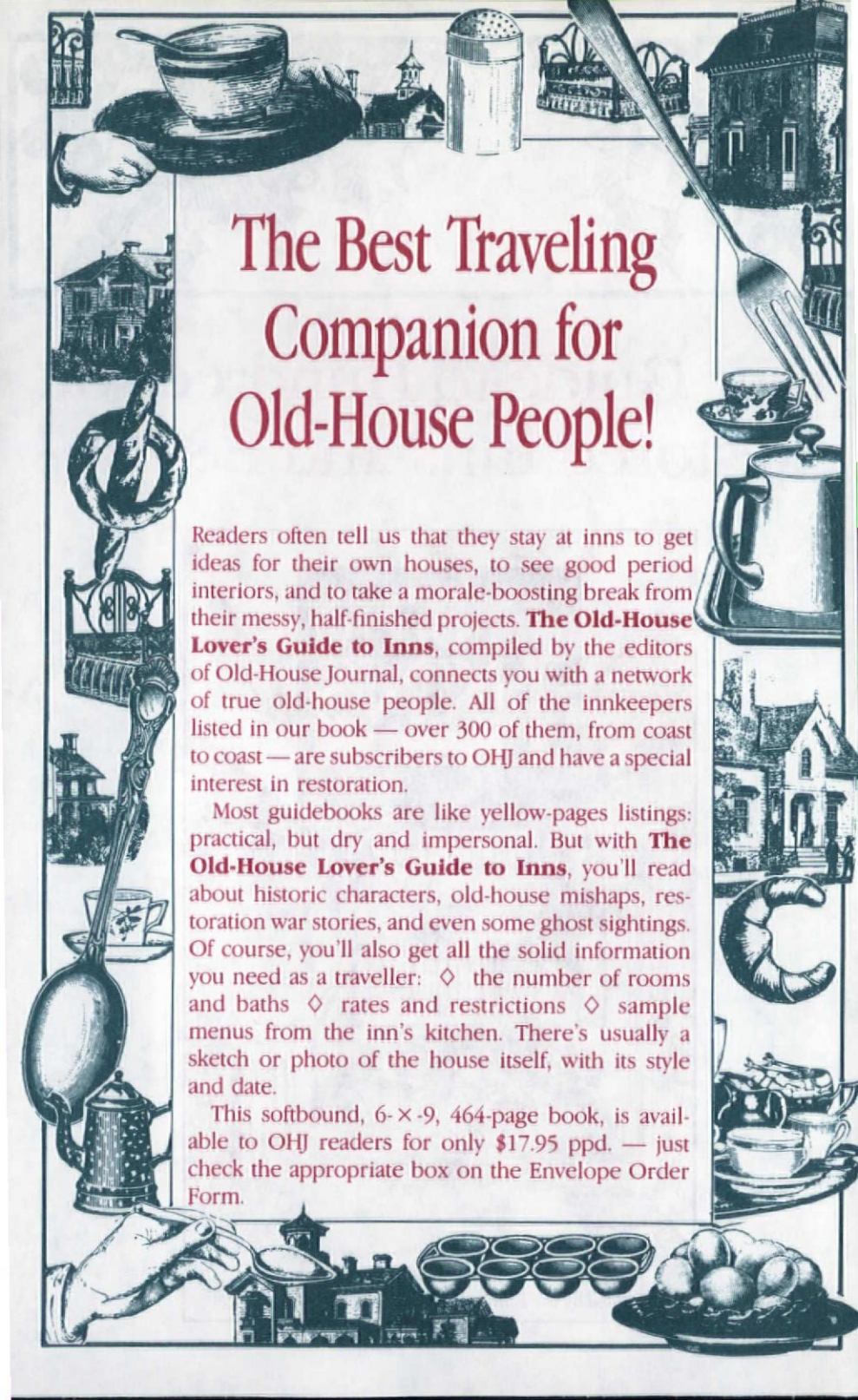
— Jeffrey May
Cambridge, Mass.

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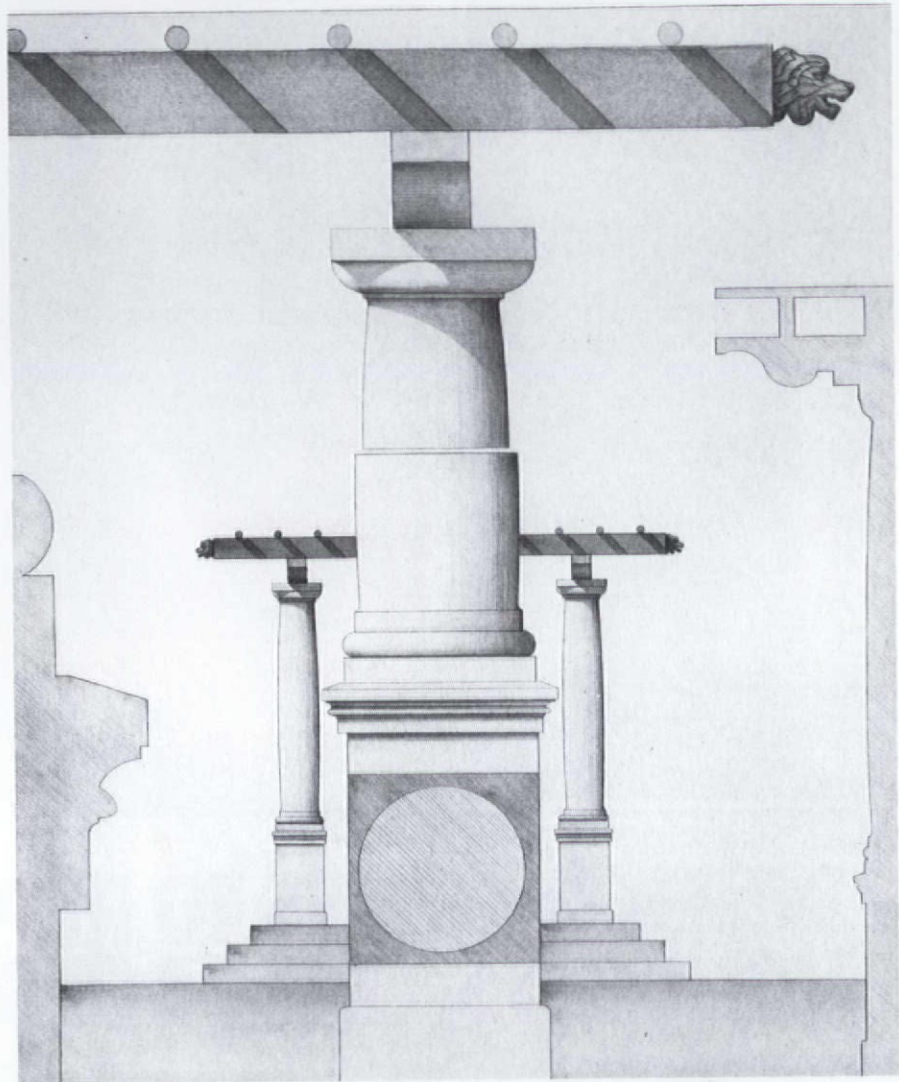
*Quite over-canopied with lush
woodbine,
With sweet musk roses, and with
eglantine.*

— Shakespeare

The definition of a pergola is “a covered walk in a garden, usually formed by a double row of posts or pillars with joists above and covered with climbing plants” (*A Dictionary of Architecture*). The first-century author Pliny the Younger writes of dining under a canopy of vines supported by columns, though the earliest representation dates from the 12th century B.C. in Egypt. Confusion arises when researching the history of the pergola, as it is very similar in purpose and design to such related garden structures as arbors, trellises, and galleries. In many 19th-century gardening books, the terms are used interchangeably. What normally distinguishes the pergola is a flat, open roof.

The word “pergola” comes from the Latin *pergula*, which means projection, referring to the wood structure in Roman gardens which projected from the courtyard wall and was supported on the open side by a single row of columns. Pergolas have appeared throughout history in many styles, including classical, oriental, and gothic. Within the classical language, the pergola developed as architects of the Italian Renaissance sought to reproduce the villas of Imperial Rome. Sometimes pergolas were built as ruins with only the columns freestanding.

The pergola has many functions, both subtle and obvious. It creates an enchanting atmosphere where one is



Jeff Wilkinson

The Pergola

by Jeff Wilkinson

sheltered by nature. Seating-benches are often provided, affording the unique experience of sitting in an outdoor room, surrounded by vines and columns. Its main purpose is supporting the climbing vines and plants which are trained along the columns to grow on the wooden grid above. Traditional plants include flowering vines, climbing roses, honeysuckle, wisteria, clematis, and grapes. By providing shade, it serves not only as a covered walkway from the hot sun, but also as a place to

keep shade-loving plants.

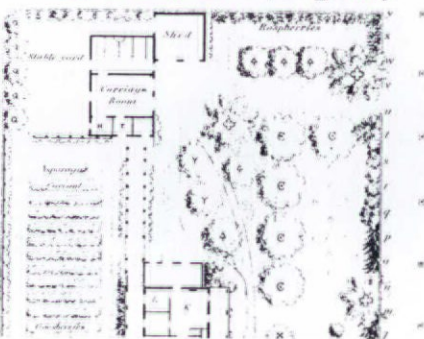
When placing the pergola in the landscape, many options are presented. The pergola is best suited for use as a transitional or connecting device. It can provide a poetic theme by leading one from dark to light or vice versa. Semi-circular-shaped structures are suitable as a terminus. When given a small site, it is probably best to place the pergola off to the side. In larger landscapes, the pergola can act as a focal point and is sometimes used as an entryway

into the garden. Many arrangements use pergolas in conjunction with a path surrounding a large lawn. Height is also an issue, and pergolas help to establish scale in this way. Level changes can also take place, either by stepping up or stepping down.

The rendering at left is of the pergola at the John Brown house in Providence, Rhode Island, built in 1786. The gardens and pergola were added in the early part of this century by the Olmsted brothers. The pergola, on a raised stylobate, is placed along the edge of a terrace which overlooks the city below. There are twelve columns in the Tuscan order with twelve rafters that have the signs of the zodiac carved at the ends.



Note the benches and column bases in this Renaissance pergola from *The Strife of Love* (1499) by Francesco Colonna. This structure can also be referred to as an arbor, or gallery.

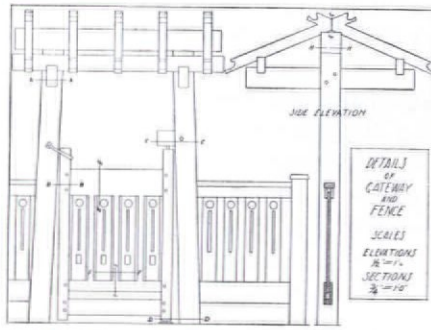


In the ground plan above, taken from Frank Scott's *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* (1870), the pergola is used as a de-

vice to provide a covered walkway that connects the main house with the carriage house. It also serves to divide the kitchen, or vegetable, garden from the picturesque orchard.



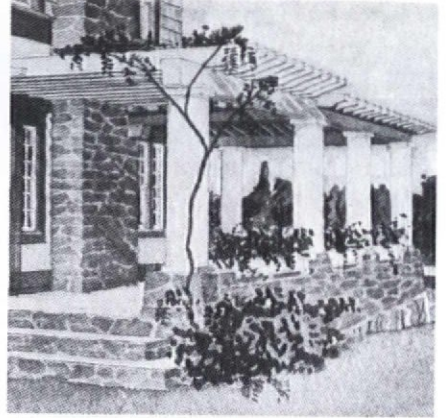
The beauty of architecture and nature intertwined is well represented by the pergolas in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, which feature wood members of cedar resting on stone columns (above). The plants are Japanese wisteria.



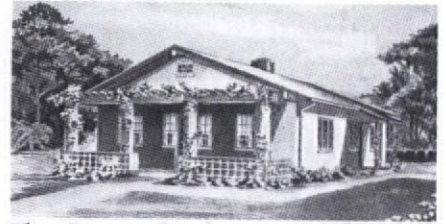
Architects and designers of the Arts & Crafts styles, particularly the American Craftsman style, were influenced by the woodworking details of Japanese temples and teahouses. The drawing above from *Radford's Details* (1912) shows the oriental influence that was part of the bungalow movement. It illustrates how pergolas changed from independent structures to composite structures that could incorporate porches, pavilions, and trellises. A real Japanese pergola would look more like the bamboo trellis shown here. Japanese garden design often uses simple bamboo grids raised on poles to support ancient cherry trees.



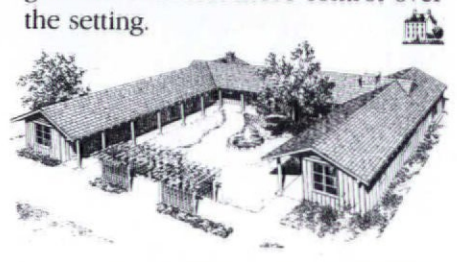
The structures were also used to support wisteria vines, often extended out over water so that the blossoms could be enjoyed in reflection as well as firsthand.



Architects McKim, Mead & White used the pergola as a focal point and entryway to the gardens of the Edwin D. Morgan Estate (1901) on Long Island, New York, shown above.



The Greene Brothers in California and Gustav Stickley in New York expanded the pergola's traditional uses by making it an extension of the house. Thus was born the porch-pergola as seen above. Another contribution by these architects was the use of the pergola as a strategic screen in suburban planning. This proved quite useful in smaller suburban lots. An example by Greene and Greene is shown below. With the pergola incorporated into the house design and extended into the landscape, it established a theme and gave the architect more control over the setting.



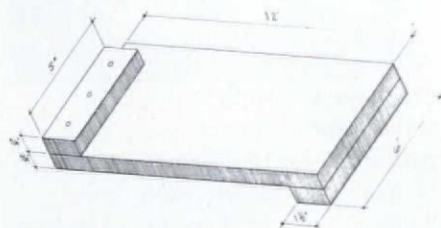
RESTORATION

FINISH TOOLS

by Jeff Wilkinson

When asked to prepare my "favorite tools list," I immediately began to list various planes and scrapers, spokeshaves and saws. Then I remembered Paul Bennett of Clarkston, Michigan, one of my first wood-working teachers. His reply to "Which is your most important tool?" was, "The library." That answer serves me just fine as a beginning for my own tool list. Nevertheless, the demands of this discussion call for brass and iron. As I am trained as a furnituremaker, I'd like to discuss some of the tools and techniques learned in the shop, which I've found useful in restoration work.

Bench Hook



One of my favorites is the bench hook used in conjunction with smaller planes such as the block plane or palm

plane, and smaller saws like the back saw and dovetail saw. Often a small piece is needed to be fit, and the bench hook makes a fine portable workbench on which to hold the piece concerned. I sometimes use my tool box as an edge on which to rest the work (see "Tool Chest" below). A nice thing about the bench hook is that it's an easy tool to make (see drawing above).

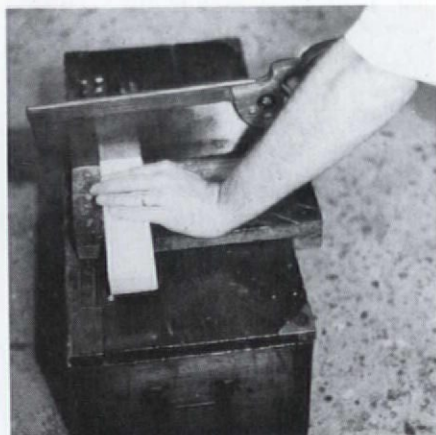
Chisels

Chisels are one of my favorite topics. Shown here are four types I use often. The first pair are butt chisels, which I refer to as my "whacker" chisels, so named because they are plastic handled and can be hit with a steel hammer. Jobs frequently encountered in old-house repair, where you are bound to hit old nails, plaster, or masonry, require keeping a few of these handy. The second pair are mortise chisels, sometimes referred to as framing chisels. They are a specialty tool featuring a long blade used for cutting the deep mortises required in locksets and post-&-beam framing. Their square edges and socket ends make them capable of withstanding heavy

blows from a wooden mallet. The third pair represents the workhorse section known as firmer chisels. They are the chisels I use most often for carpentry work such as cutting hinges and stair-making. They have double ferrules, square-edged blades, and ash handles. The fourth group are paring chisels, which are kept razor sharp and used only for furniture work. Their thin, bevelled-edged blades and boxwood handles make them fairly delicate, perfect for making dovetails. These are for hand pressure only.

Measuring

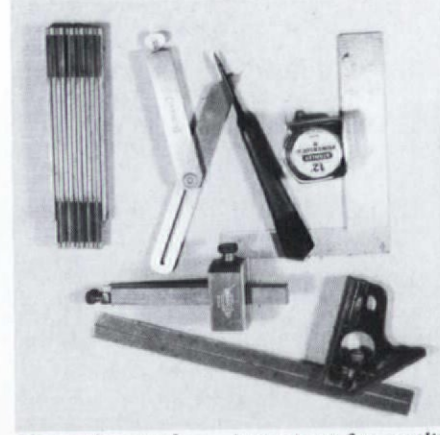
Believe it or not, one of the best measuring devices is not an expensive rule or gauge, but a stick. The stick method of measuring is useful when fitting new cabinet-work into an existing room. The basic concept is quite simple. Instead of taking measurements of wall lengths, ceiling heights, and window openings, and then writing them down in a notebook, cut or mark the actual lengths on a thin stick. You can then write notes and sketch important details such as moulding profiles, which correspond to the area in question. One stick can accommodate many lengths. A similar concept of measuring is the practice of marking the piece to be cut against the actual condition. For instance, when cutting trim moulding, it's much more accurate to hold



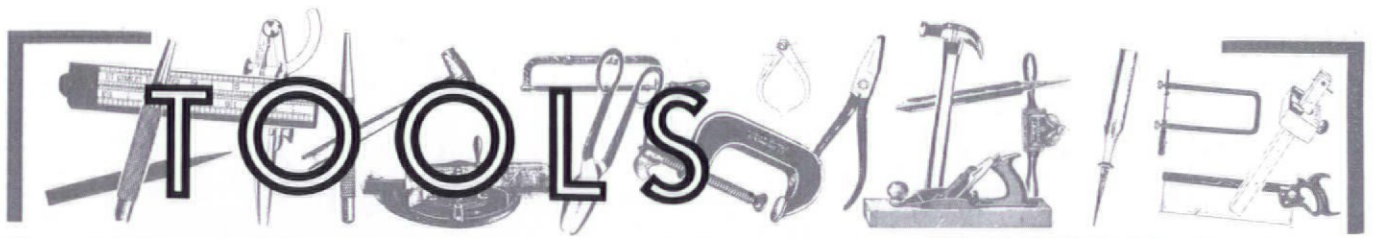
A tool chest will also support a bench hook when there's no workbench nearby.



Four families of chisels, four different types of work.



Measuring tools — important for quality finish work.




the moulding up against the area where it is to be placed, and then make a mark as to where it should be cut, as opposed to measuring the length and transferring the measurement to the piece to be cut.

Although using sticks and making actual measurements is very accurate, it is often too cumbersome. Some of the measuring devices I use are above: a try square, adjustable marking gauge, 6' folding rule, bevel gauge, striker, tape rule, and 10" square. Not pictured but fundamentally as important are a carpenter's square, level, plumb bob, and chalk line.

Scrapers

One of the most useful sets of tools are scrapers. Many people try them but get frustrated. The trick is knowing how to correctly sharpen one. (For more in-

formation, consult Tage Frid's wood-working books.) The three most common and useful are the hand scraper, the goose-neck scraper, and the cabinet scraper. The rectangular-shaped hand scraper is the most versatile of all. After wood has been stripped, a scraper can be used to clean up the surface. And it doesn't leave scratches. This is the tool that finished furniture before the days of sandpaper. The goose neck can be used to tackle cove and crown mouldings or similar profiles. If there is a shape you need but cannot find, it is an easy thing to make by cutting the shape from an old saw blade. For scraping large, flat surfaces such as table tops or doors, the cabinet scraper is irreplaceable. Once mastered, it can quickly remove the old finish from wood. 

Basic Tool Inventory

Carpentry/Wood

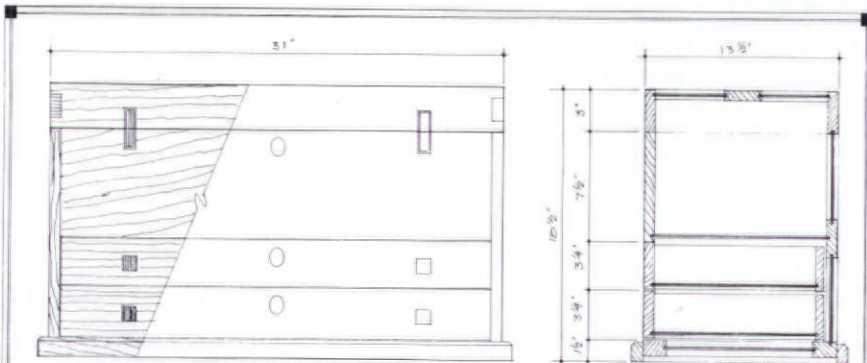
- hammers (16-oz. framing; 12-oz. regular claw)
- combination square
- framing square
- nail puller (ram-pinch type)
- crosscut saw (20 in. × 10 pt.)
- rip saw
- dovetail saw
- coping saw
- keyhole saw
- sharpening stone and oil
- wood chisels (½ in., ¼ in.)
- gouge (¾ in.)
- paring chisel (1 in.)
- awl or ice pick
- thin prybar
- level (2 ft.)
- angle copier
- compass or dividers
- wood rasp (flat & round, 12 in.)
- rattail file
- nail sets (2 or 3 sizes)
- utility knife
- linoleum knife
- 6-ft. folding wood rule
- 25-ft. steel tape.

Mechanical/Metal

- ball peen hammer (16 oz.)
- hacksaw
- small hacksaw (blade-in-handle type)
- slotted screwdrivers (3 sizes)
- Phillips screwdrivers (2 sizes)
- adjustable (Crescent) wrench
- vice-grip wrenches (big & small)
- wire brush
- large channellock wrench
- pliers (regular & needle-nose)
- medium-sized bastard metal file
- plumber's cold chisel
- diagonal cutters
- tinsnips
- putty knife (2 in.)
- paint scrapers

Power Tools

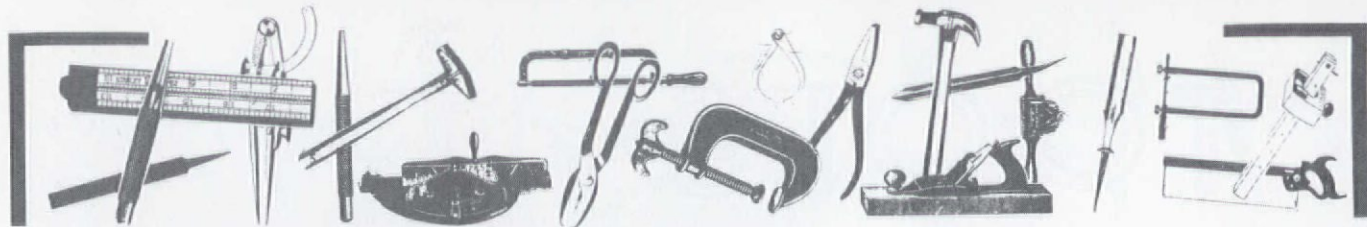
- ¾-in. reversible variable speed electric drill
- 7¼ in. builders saw (Skilsaw)
- electric sander (opt.)
- electric scroll (sabre) saw



Tool Chest

TOOL CHESTS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. THIS CHEST IS DESIGNED TO HOUSE CABINET-MAKING TOOLS NEEDED ON SITE. A BENCH COULD BE MADE TO HOLD THE CHEST WHILE IN SHOP CONSTRUCTION. THE BOX USING HARDWOOD SUCH AS OAK OR MAPLE THE TOP LID IS LARGE ENOUGH TO HOLD SEVERAL SAWS THE MIDDLE SECTION IS FOR PLANES & MALLETS CHISELS & SCREWDRIVERS CAN FIT IN THE DRAWERS





PORTABLE POWER TOOLS FOR RENOVATION WORK

by Jonathan Poore

Portable power tools can be the greatest timesaver for homeowners doing their own renovation work. Unfortunately, power tools are not cheap, so it's important to decide which tools are indispensable and which can be postponed or omitted. This article is for the homeowner who can't afford to go out and buy one of each type of tool. It's necessary to set priorities about which tools are the most versatile and will pay for themselves the quickest. I will discuss primarily carpentry tools, although some tools such as drills and sanders may certainly be used for more than just woodworking. With a few basic power tools, a homeowner can even do some simple cabinet and millwork; more sophisticated cabinet and millwork, such as frame and panel doors, etc., may require more elaborate equipment.

The most important consideration in selecting which types of power tools to buy, of course, is what kind of work is being done. For example, if you're planning to do a lot of trim work, you'll want a tool which will make quick, accurate crosscuts. Basically, any woodworking task which can be done with a power tool can also be done with hand tools. Often it takes a little more skill to do something by hand, but the major difference is in the amount of time it takes. So figure out what kind of projects you'll be spending the most time on, and focus on the tools you need to expedite the work. (Anyone who has a lot of time to spare and gets great aesthetic satisfaction from doing everything by hand can skip this article.)

Basic Portable Tools

All power tools come in various grades, no matter what the brand. Usu-

ally the range runs from home-handyman grade to professional-contractor grade, often with various models somewhere in between. To decide what grade is most suitable for your needs, you must determine how frequently you'll be using the tool and



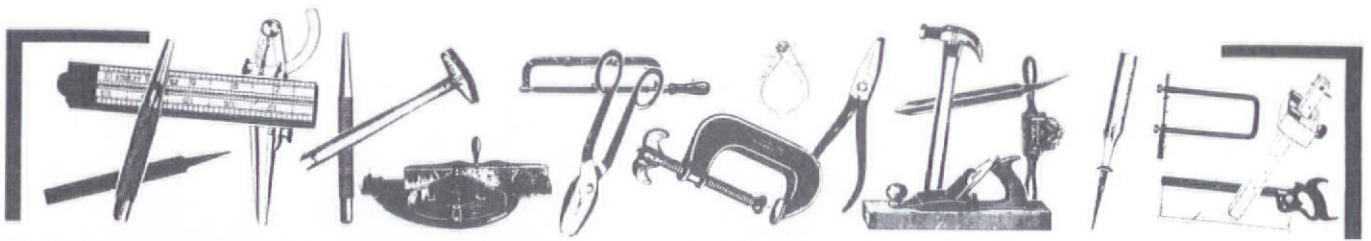
A 1/2-inch drill is a heavy-duty tool that requires using two bands at all times. (Most large bits need its power and 1/2-inch-capacity chuck.)

how heavy duty the work is. I recommend buying the best grade of tool available (within reason and budget), because unless you're prone to losing tools, you'll have that tool for a very long time — unlike computers, tools don't become obsolete. If you're fairly sure that you'll use a certain tool very occasionally and for fairly light-duty work, then purchase the homeowner grade. Otherwise stick with the higher-grade tools; not only are they designed to take more abuse, but they also often have more powerful motors, making the task go faster with less effort. A

higher-grade tool also may have better bearings for longer life, more accurate and easily adjustable guides and controls, and a better feel and balance in your hand. When comparing the power rating of different models and different brands, look at the amperage rating of the motor, not the horsepower rating. The amperage rating is the most accurate indication of the motor's power. The higher the amperage, the more powerful the motor is. It's important for the motor to have adequate power for the job; an undersized motor will not only slow the work down, but will also, under continuous use, tend to overheat and burn out prematurely.

Circular Saws

A circular saw is one power tool that is in just about every tool collection. Generally the most popular size is 7 1/4", which refers to saw-blade diameter. With the right blade, it will crosscut or rip any piece of wood up to about 2 1/2" thick and thicker if the cuts are made from opposite sides. Smaller and larger saws are available as well, but these are designed for fairly specific work. There are 10" framers saws which are ideal for cutting large pieces of framing lumber and heavy timbers. These are powerful, heavy-duty saws but they can be somewhat heavy and unwieldy for regular use. There are also little trim saws for fine cabinet work. These trim saws come in sizes from about 3" to 6", and some are even cordless. Trim saws are excellent for fine work but are limited in power and depth of cut when working with larger pieces of lumber. A circular saw is used for so many different types of projects that it's worthwhile investing in a good one for long, reliable service. A circular saw is only as good as the blade that's in it, so don't scrimp on the blade. A good quality carbide-tipped blade will work much better than the one that's supplied with the saw. Be sure to suit the blade design and number of teeth to the task at hand.



Drills

An electric drill is another tool that is at the top of the list of Must Haves. If you're doing more than hanging a few shelves or towel racks, get a $\frac{3}{8}$ " drill. A $\frac{1}{4}$ " drill is limited to $\frac{1}{4}$ " or smaller drill bit shanks (the part that gets clamped in the chuck). A $\frac{1}{4}$ " drill is also limited in power. If you think you'll be doing a lot of heavy-duty drilling, such as drilling holes for plumbing and electrical work, consider a contractor-grade $\frac{1}{2}$ " drill. The type with the extra side-mounted handle gives you two hands' worth of leverage. Most drills are variable speed: an essential feature because it allows you to go slowly to get a hole started, and because each different type of material which you drill through requires a different speed to maximize the speed of cutting and minimize the build-up of heat in the drill tip. (It also pays to buy a reversible model that enables you to back out screws and mired bits.) Variable speed is also useful when you go to use the drill for other purposes. A wide range of attachments are available for electric drills — everything from screwdriver tips to sanding disks.

Screw Gun

Screw guns were designed to drive drywall screws for hanging sheetrock, but they have many more uses than this, especially in renovation work. If you have ever tried nailing around crumbly old plaster, you know how quickly the plaster lands on the floor. A screw gun can be used to fasten things through the plaster, as well as refastening the plaster itself. Plaster which has come away from the lath, and plaster and lath that has come away from the studs, can be refastened by using plaster washers in conjunction with drywall screws. The screw gun does not jar the plaster the way a hammer and nails do, and so it offers a far less destructive process. It's also useful for attaching sheetrock patches in areas of missing plaster.

A screw gun is indispensable for

building and installing cabinets. Even though you can put a screwdriver bit into an electric drill and drive screws, a screw gun is far more effective. The screw gun has a magnetic tip which holds the screw in place while starting it. More important, it has an adjustable clutch mechanism which automatically stops driving the screw when it reaches the right depth. This has two major advantages: It allows you to drive the screw very rapidly to the right depth and also allows the motor to spin free as the clutch disengages, instead of



$\frac{1}{4}$ -inch and $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch drills are band-sized tools and essential for general old-house woodworking and repairs.

forcing the motor to grind to a halt the way a drill has to. This ensures longer motor life as well as allowing you to drive screws at a very rapid rate. Screw guns were designed as a contractors' tool, so most of them are fairly heavy duty. As with other tools, compare motor amperage. Also check to see how easy the clutch is to adjust.

Driver Drill

A driver drill is a hybrid between a screw gun and a drill. It can be used as either a drill or a screw driver. It has a regular drill chuck with an adjustable internal clutch that releases

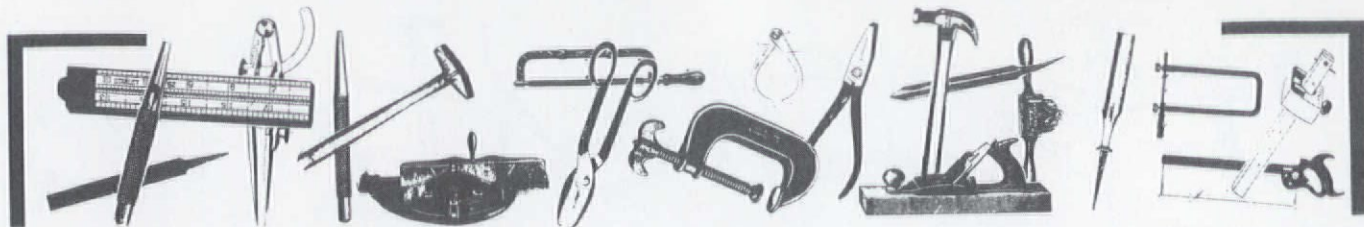
when it reaches a certain preset torque (twisting force). This differs from a screw gun in that a screw gun stops when the head of the screw reaches a certain depth regardless of the torque required. Driver drills are also usually cordless with a rechargeable battery pack. If you intend to really use a driver drill for construction work, be sure it has a powerful battery pack. The battery packs vary from 6 to 12 volts. For heavy service, 12-volt is preferable. The more torque settings the tool has, the more you'll be able to control the depth to which the screws are set.

Reciprocating Saw

When you work on an old house, it will invariably require some demolition, even if just for installing plumbing and heating. A reciprocating saw (sometimes called a sawzall, which is really a brand name) is the fundamental power tool for demolition. When used carefully, it can allow you to sneak pipes through tight places, move entire partitions intact, neatly cut out rotted framing members, etc. When used carelessly, it can destroy the structural integrity of a house in a few short hours. It's an undeniably useful and powerful tool. Because a reciprocating saw is a contractors' tool, most are fairly heavy duty. They are also rather expensive, but if you're doing a lot of major demolition and construction, the time savings may justify the cost.

Shop Vacuum

A vacuum is not really a construction tool as such, but if you're going to do any interior work while the house is occupied, it is essential. If you attempt to use a household vacuum to clean up construction dust, especially plaster dust, it will last only a few months. Shop vacuums come in a variety of sizes with a wide range of attachments. It's best to stick to major brands rather than buy a department-store type. If you're going to vacuum plaster dust, be sure to buy the type with replaceable bags and filters, and replace them often.



THE WHOLE KIT AND KABOODLE

by John Leeke

Have you noticed how demolition debris, new materials, tools, and equipment spread out into an increasing jumble the longer you concentrate on the work at hand? Getting organized will do as much as anything to make a remodeling or preservation project successful.

Keeping the clutter under control has two important benefits. The first is saving time and money. When you need a different size screwdriver, you can jump over the sawhorse and pick your way through a tangle of extension cords and electric hand tools, or walk directly across the room and select it from a row of sizes in your tool box. Guess which one saves time and money? Second, you and your old house will be safer the more you keep things in order. Accidents happen where there is disorder. I know I've had fewer accidents in my workshop than on job sites because everything has its place and it's usually there.

I use a system of "tool kits" to bring that same order to my job sites. I keep all the tools and supplies I need for a particular task, such as painting, in a "kit" or box. If I grab the paint kit, I'll probably have everything I need to complete a painting task.

I keep my kits in an odd variety of boxes and crates. You don't have to take the time to make fancy boxes. Fruit lugs are what your grocer gets his cherries and plums delivered in. They are light-weight, about the right size and shape, and usually free. You can fill them with heavy tools and cans of supplies and still pick it all up.

My masonry tools are in an 8" x 10" x 36" wooden box that just happened to be handy when I did my first masonry job many years ago. Every time I pick it up, I think I ought to nail

a leather strap on at the ends so I can sling it over my shoulder. Some construction crews use special crates. They are all the same size, stack when they are full, and nest when they are empty.

Is it worth it to take this kit approach when working on an old house? After all, you'll probably end up with more than one of the same tool. As a self-



An empty joint-compound bucket is light, low cost, and a popular container for heavy items such as masonry tools.

employed professional who believes time is money, I know I have at least five 1 3/8" putty knives. Good putty knives cost about \$4.50, so that's \$22.50 worth of putty knives. \$22.50 is worth just a little more than an hour of my time. If I had just one putty knife, would I lose more than an hour getting it, looking for it, or doing without it right when I need it? Yes, probably within a month, definitely within a year. With five putty knives, that first month or year I'm saving time; after that, I'm saving time and money. The

kit approach definitely makes sense in a commercial setting.

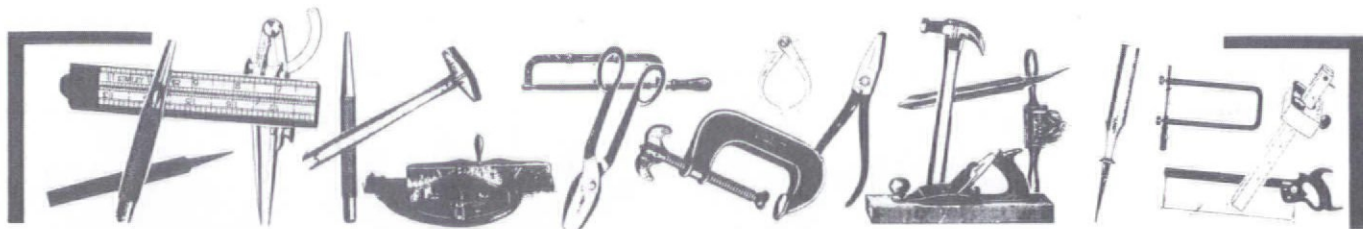
How about a do-it-yourself homeowner? The kit approach will make sense if you are doing your whole house, even if the work is spread out over several years. You might need only two putty knives — an appropriate investment for the return you would get. On the other hand, separate kits for upstairs and downstairs in a large house might save miles of running between floors.

As a professional doing renovation and preservation work, I know it pays to be this organized. But as a homeowner I sometimes slip. For instance, I do most of the electrical wiring in my own home. About once a year, there's some wiring to do, and I chase around the shop and cellar collecting up tools and parts. Every time I ask myself why I don't put together an electrical kit like my others. The answer has to do with the fact that the work is for my own home.

If your hobby is working on the house, and actually getting things done is a side benefit, please forget about this tool-kit idea and enjoy yourself. But if you would rather just finish the work on the house and get on with your life, put together a few kits that will help you do it.

To put together a kit, just start doing the work. Then, take whatever tools you have gathered up by the end of the job and put them in a box. Of course, there may be a few tools that are too expensive to own more than one of, such as a sabre- or skill-saw. Just make a note of these tools on the side of the box, and store the tool in the shop. The next time you pull out the kit, you'll see quickly what you need to make the kit complete.

Kits make it easy and quick to get into a project or shift from one project to another. In an emergency the benefit is obvious. But a quick start-up also makes it easy to use little bits of time here and there, which can add up to



substantial progress.

There are three important items not included in any of the kits I talk about here. The first is a pair of welder's goggles with clear shatter-proof lenses to protect my eyes. The second is a pair of earplugs to protect my ears from noisy machinery. The third is a respirator, good against dust and fumes, to protect my lungs. When I'm working, I consider these a part of my personal equipment similar to my pocket knife, car keys, and wallet. I always keep them with me, so you won't find them in any particular kit.

Although I'm talking mostly about tools here, the kits also include supplies that go along with the work, such as paint thinner in the paint kit. And you could have job boxes that hold special tools, materials, or parts such as hardware for each job you have going.

My Kits

I practice a wide variety of trades as I do my work — carpentry, brick masonry and plastering, painting, and metal-smithing — so I have quite a few different kits. You might only do painting and light carpentry work, so you would have two kits. Here are a few of my tool kits and what I keep in them.

I keep a paint kit handy because I do a lot of back-priming of exterior wood parts before I nail them in place. I have another big box of many kinds of paint brushes, from which I select for specific paint jobs.

Contents of paint kit:

brush, 2" natural bristle

sash brush, 2"

round brush, 3/4"

small artist's brush

paint thinner, 1/2 gallon

brush cleaner, 1 quart (second-hand thinner, reused)

brush comb

brush spinner (cleans brushes with centrifugal force)

3-lb. and 1-lb. coffee cans for cleaning brushes

several 1-lb. coffee cans for paint pots
clean rags

pack of newspapers

masking tape

paint shield (6" x 12" aluminum flashing, to keep paint off adjacent surfaces)
hornet- and wasp-killer spray can

One of my most useful paint-removal tricks is to grind and shape special scrapers to match moulding and turning profiles. So this kit includes tools for making special scrapers.



The traditional finish-carpentry "kit": a tote box with all the hand tools needed for interior trim work.

Contents of paint-removal kit:

hot-air gun

electric heat plate

3 kinds of chemical remover (one with a spray-on applicator)

several ordinary hook-type scrapers with packs of fresh blades

a few special scrapers I made for myself

2 sets of hook-type scrapers with replaceable shaped blades

files — flat, curved, round (for sharpening scrapers)

small power grinder (for shaping scrapers to match mouldings)

3-lb. coffee can with cover (for paint chips)

1-lb. coffee can (used as pot to hold chemical remover)

I do a lot of epoxy consolidation of decayed wood. All my epoxy supplies and tools fit in one box that measures 15" x 16" x 24". This includes a "ready kit" to carry around the job site, as well as back-up materials and supplies. (See my article "Wood Repairs with Epoxies" in the May-June 1988 OHJ.)

I do brick masonry, including tuck pointing, and chimney repairs. Tools for hand plastering and plaster repairs are included too. My plastering hawk is too big for the kit, so I keep it in the mixing trough.

Contents of masonry kit:

pointed trowels (10", 4 1/2")

straight trowel, steel (4 1/2" x 11")

concave trowel, steel, for taping wall-board (4 1/2" x 14")

convex trowel, steel (4 1/2" x 11")

pointing trowel (1/2" x 6")

browning brush (natural bristle, for splashing water on plaster)

brick hammers (14 oz., 20 oz., for cutting brick)

scrub brushes (natural bristle, for cleaning brick)

string and cord

abrasive block (for smoothing cut bricks)

joint rake (for cleaning soft mortar out of brick joints)

level (14")

set of wood blocks (for spacing quarry tiles)

toothed trowel (for spreading mastic adhesive)

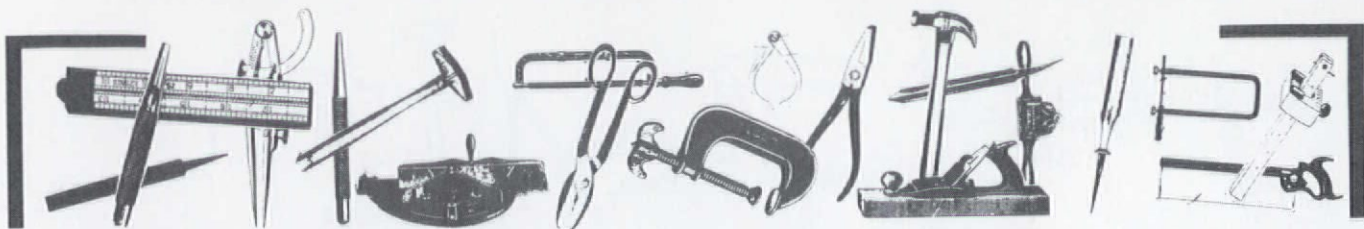
hand lotion

alum (for controlling the set of plaster)

cans (a variety of sizes for measuring proportions)



John Leeke, a consultant and contractor who lives in Sanford, Maine, helps homeowners, contractors, and architects maintain and understand their early buildings (RR 1, Box 2947, Sanford, ME 04073; (207) 324-9597).



TOOLS FOR ROUGH STUFF

by Gordon Bock

Before getting down to the picky finish jobs, there's always rough carpentry and basic production work to do. When I want to move fast and efficiently, I'm forever using these tools:



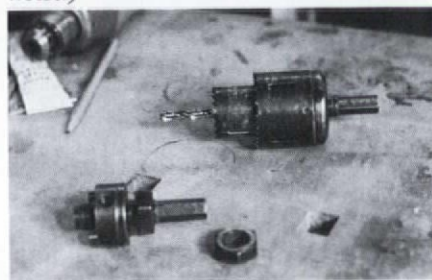
The "business ends" of a carpenter's hatchet and a staple hammer.

☞ **Staple Hammer:** When you have a lot of non-precision stapling to do, staple *bammers* are a lot faster and easier to use than a staple gun. They are *the* tool for putting down felt or rosin paper — I never do a roofing job without one. They're also excellent for installing foil- or paper-backed insulation. Try to buy the manufacturer's staples too — "also fits" brands tend to jam.

☞ **Holesaws:** I am a big fan of holesaws. They are extremely versatile if you buy the top-quality *bi-metal* type. These holesaws are welded together from several pieces of steel rather than stamped from a single plug, and have much harder teeth. I also prefer the types that thread on to individual arbors (I'll explain why later).

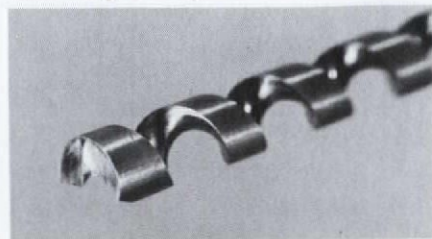
Good holesaws can cut through all kinds of wood, metal and plastic; with a little care, they usually work on slate, marble, and ceramic tile, too. Up to about 2 inches in diameter, you can drive them safely with a 3/8-inch electric drill, but go any larger than that and you'll need the power and chuck of a

1/2-inch machine. There are two big points to remember when working with these tools: (1) Holesaws do not "chip" well; you have to clean the kerf out regularly or the saw will just spin without cutting; (2) For large holesaws, work slowly and carefully with two hands on the drill — these tools grab easily and develop tremendous torque that can spin the drill out of your hands and damage the work (or break a wrist!)



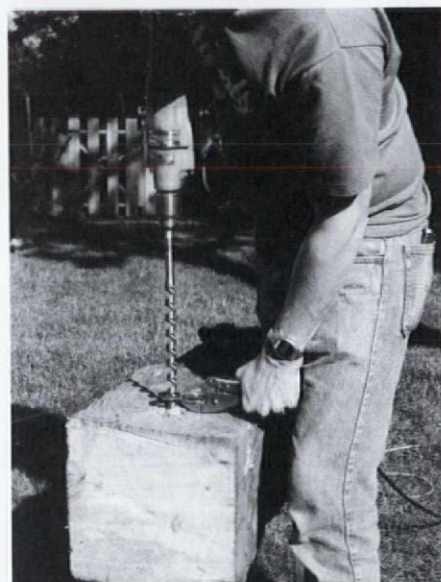
Two holesaws on a single arbor produce a hybrid tool.

A favorite trick of mine is to gang two holesaws on a single arbor so I can accurately enlarge an existing hole (for instance, when changing locksets in a door). Start with an individual-type arbor and mount a holesaw the diameter of the existing hole in the normal manner. This will be the "pilot bit." Then remove the locking ring and nut from the back of the arbor and mount a holesaw the size of the new hole here. Thread on the locking nut and tighten it behind the second holesaw: You have a hybrid tool that will cut perfectly concentric holes.



The spurless, screwless tip of a ship auger.

☞ **Ship Augers:** When you have to bore *deep* holes in lumber thicker than 6 inches, you need a ship auger. These tools look like rejects — they have no feed screws or side cutters, and only a single twist — but they burrow through wood long after other bits dull or break. No feed screw means you can pull the auger out of the hole to clear chips without stopping or reversing

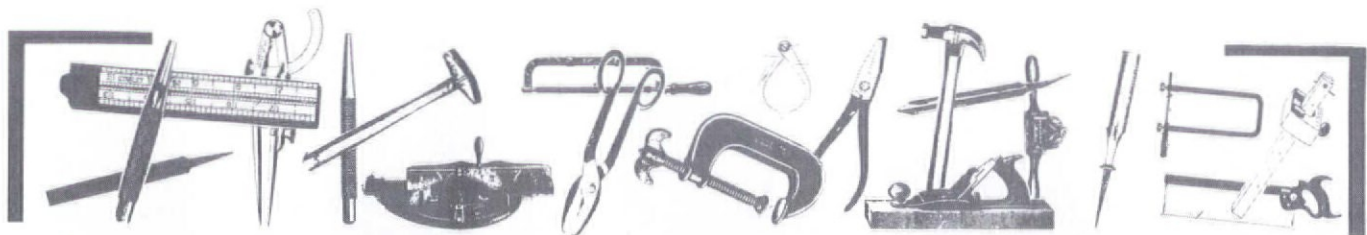


One way to start a ship auger on the mark is to guide it with a washer.

the drill. To start a ship auger accurately, you have to bore a pilot hole with another bit or use a guide (like a washer or some pre-bored scrap).

☞ **Cobalt Twist Bits:** If you're trying to bore through tough metal such as stainless steel, and regular high-speed steel bits don't suffice, get ahold of some cobalt bits.

☞ **Combination Carbide Circular Saw Blade:** I'm partial to simple, stamped-steel saw blades for some work (they can be ground razor sharp), but for rough carpentry I've got to have a carbide-tipped combination blade. Carbide blades dull with usage as any blade will, but they keep a moderately sharp edge many times longer than plain steel. They can also take tons of abuse — like slicing through roof decking and a little flashing or hitting



a nail or two. A *combination* blade means one that works adequately for a variety of cuts and materials.

I also like a blade with a set that cuts a wide kerf. It's good for notching without a chisel: Set the saw blade to the depth of the notch desired, then make successive cuts through the lumber the full width of the notch. After kerfing the away about 35 percent of the notch like



A hammer quickly turns a line of circular saw cuts in framing lumber into a notch.

this, it looks like a comb, and you can usually clean the rest out with a few swipes of a hammer.

☞ **Hatchet:** A carpenter's hatchet — not a Boy Scout's hand axe — makes quick work of trimming or splitting lumber for framing (new work and demolition), scaffolding, shoring, masonry forms, and stakes of all kinds.

☞ **Sledge Hammer:** You don't have to be John Henry to find a use for a sledge hammer. In fact, the best way to handle one is like a putting iron. A 10-lb. head is a good all-purpose size useful for heavy carpentry tasks like tapping wedges into place or "adjusting" the position of timbers or whole carpentry assemblies. A sledgehammer is also handy for demolition of cast-iron soil pipes or radiators. Believe it or not, this metal cracks like an eggshell if you


strike it repeatedly in the same spot or where it has been scored.

☞ **Vice-Grip Pliers:** Vice-grips have many uses, but I use mine constantly for trimming the tails on bolts and nails. When bolts are ¼ inch or under, just clamp the pliers on tightly a thread or two after the nut and work them back and forth. The bolt will break almost as cleanly as if it was hacksawed off. I do the same with nails when the ends are in the way (when altering framing, for instance) but I can't pull or hammer out the entire nail.

☞ **Wrecking Bar:** The list of uses for a "gooseneck" wrecking bar in a hefty size (2 ft. long or better) is endless:

- * Prying up flooring or sheathing.
- * Pulling lath and plaster off a wall.
- * Pulling nails.
- * "Plowing" up shingles or roofing.
- * "Pinching" (levering) heavy items.
- * "Whackin'" stuff.

I could go on and on. . .

☞ **"Shorty" Saw:** I would strangle anyone who made off with my little 12-inch crosscut saw. It's light and small so it's never a chore to carry from job to job, and it fits in tight places (like wall cavities) where I can't work with a regular saw. I always keep it sharp (which is easy since there aren't many teeth), especially the toe, which I use a lot for starting blind cuts in floor repairs and the like. I can't tell you where to get a "shorty" saw (mine followed me home from a garage sale one day), but it's the niftiest tool I own. 



A small crosscut saw is tailor-made for trimming woodwork in tight or bidden places.

Mail-Order Tool Companies

Conover Woodcraft Specialties

18125 Madison Rd., Dept. OHJ
Parkman, Ohio 44080
(216) 548-3481

Constantine's

2050 Eastchester Rd., Dept. OHJ
Bronx, NY 10461
(212) 792-1600

The Eastwood Company

580 Lancaster Ave., Dept. OHJ
P.O. Box 296
Malvern, PA 19355
(215) 640-1450

Frog Tool Company, Ltd.

700 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept. HJ1
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 648-1270

Garrett Wade

161 Ave. of the Americas, Dept. 521
New York, NY 10013
(212) 807-1757

Hyde Tools

54 Eastford Rd., Dept. OHJ
Southbridge, MA 01550
(508) 764-4344

Lee Valley Tools, Ltd.

1080 Morrison Dr., Dept. OHJ
Ottawa, Ontario K2H 8K7
(613) 596-0350

Masonry Specialty Company

4430 Gibsonia Rd. (Rt. 910), Dept. OHJ
Gibsonia, PA 15044
(412) 443-7080

The Mechanic's Workbench

P.O. Box 668, Dept. OH89
Marion, MA 02738
(508) 748-1680

Trend-Lines

375 Beacham St., Dept. OHJ
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 884-8882

Van Dyke Supply Company

Box 278, Dept. OHJ
Woonsocket, SD 57385
(605) 796-4425

Woodcraft

41 Atlantic Ave., Dept. OHJ
P.O. Box 4000
Woburn, MA 01888
(617) 935-5860

The Woodworker's Store

21801 Industrial Blvd., Dept. OHJ
Rogers, MN 55374
(612) 428-4101

Woodworker's Supply of New Mexico

5604 Alameda Pl., Dept. OHJ
Albuquerque, NM 87113
(505) 821-0500



RESTORATION MATERIALS IN THE 1990s: CALIFORNIA LEANIN' IS BECOMING A REALITY

by Katherine Knight

The 1990s are soon to arrive and with them will come big changes in the materials everybody uses in restoring a house: paints, stains, and varnishes. Deteriorating air quality has forced many areas of the country to limit the VOCs (volatile organic compounds) in architectural coatings. Translated into lay terms, that's the solvents in all kinds of finishes. To meet the new laws, the paints and coatings industry has undergone a tremendous upheaval, resulting in the invention of entirely new types of coatings and the phasing-out of many "old friends."

Solvents not only can be health risks for the end-user, but the hydrocarbons and other compounds they release into the air are also *photochemically reactive* — that is, they react with the ultraviolet portion of sunlight to produce ozone. At ground level this ozone (not to be confused with the ozone layer) becomes a major component of smog. For this reason, the EPA limits the amount of ozone allowed in the air to 0.12 parts per million. Air-pollution control districts that exceed the limits must institute programs to reduce the hydrocarbon concentration or face the loss of federal funds. A major target for these programs has been architectural coatings.

The spark for these changes has been the so-called "California laws" regarding solvents and air pollution. They go back as early as 1967, when the Los Angeles County Air Pollution Control District adopted Rule 66. This benchmark regulation identified three groups of photochemically reactive solvents and set specific limits on their use in coatings. Since that time, California has led the way in restricting emissions through legislation, and measures to improve California's air quality have become models for other governing bodies.

The VOC regulations have turned the paint industry upside down. "The restrictions they're putting on us have had a major impact on the way we do business," notes Dwight Cohagen of Sherwin Williams. "We have had to come up with a whole new paint technology."

"New" Paints

In basic terms, paint has three main ingredients: *pigment*, the solid grains or particles that give paint color; *resin*, the

material that holds the pigment in the coating; and *solvent*, the volatile (evaporating) liquid included to improve application. The major thrust of the American paint industry's low-VOC effort has taken two directions:

1. Where possible, *water* is being substituted for solvents by creating either water-based substrates (latex emulsions) or water-borne reduceable coatings (acrylics and vinyl acrylics). Water-based paints were first developed several decades ago for the building industry, when it needed paints that could be used on lumber with high moisture content. Not all coatings, unfortunately, can be made water-borne.
2. Another new approach to low-VOC coatings makes use of *high-solids* technology. Here, the normal ratio between solids (pigments and resins) and solvent is shifted so that the solvent content is in line with VOC requirements. This task is not as simple as it sounds. Solvents are present in the first place so that coatings won't be as thick as molasses; just cutting back on them (sometimes by 15 or 20 percent) defeats this purpose. High-solids paint formulation also means finding new resins, new additives, and new methods of manufacture.

Coatings and finishes designed specifically to meet the solvent restrictions, however, are not the only low-VOC choices on the market today. For nearly 20 years, West Germany has been making non-toxic paints, finishes, and other materials from recycled and plant-based materials. In addition, some U.S. manufacturers are taking a completely different tack and coming up with non-toxic coatings for the chemically sensitive, which eliminate all or most of the additives (many of them hydrocarbons). Many of these "alternative" building products have the added advantage of little or no VOCs, and are available to those willing to hunt them down.

New Low-VOC Coatings

These new paints, stains, and finishes don't behave like their high-VOC counterparts. When using them, bear in mind the following points.

Water-Borne

Compared to slower-drying oil-based finishes, latex paints



tend to lay on top of a surface rather than penetrating it. For this reason, proper surface preparation and painting technique is crucial to promote the best possible latex paint adhesion:

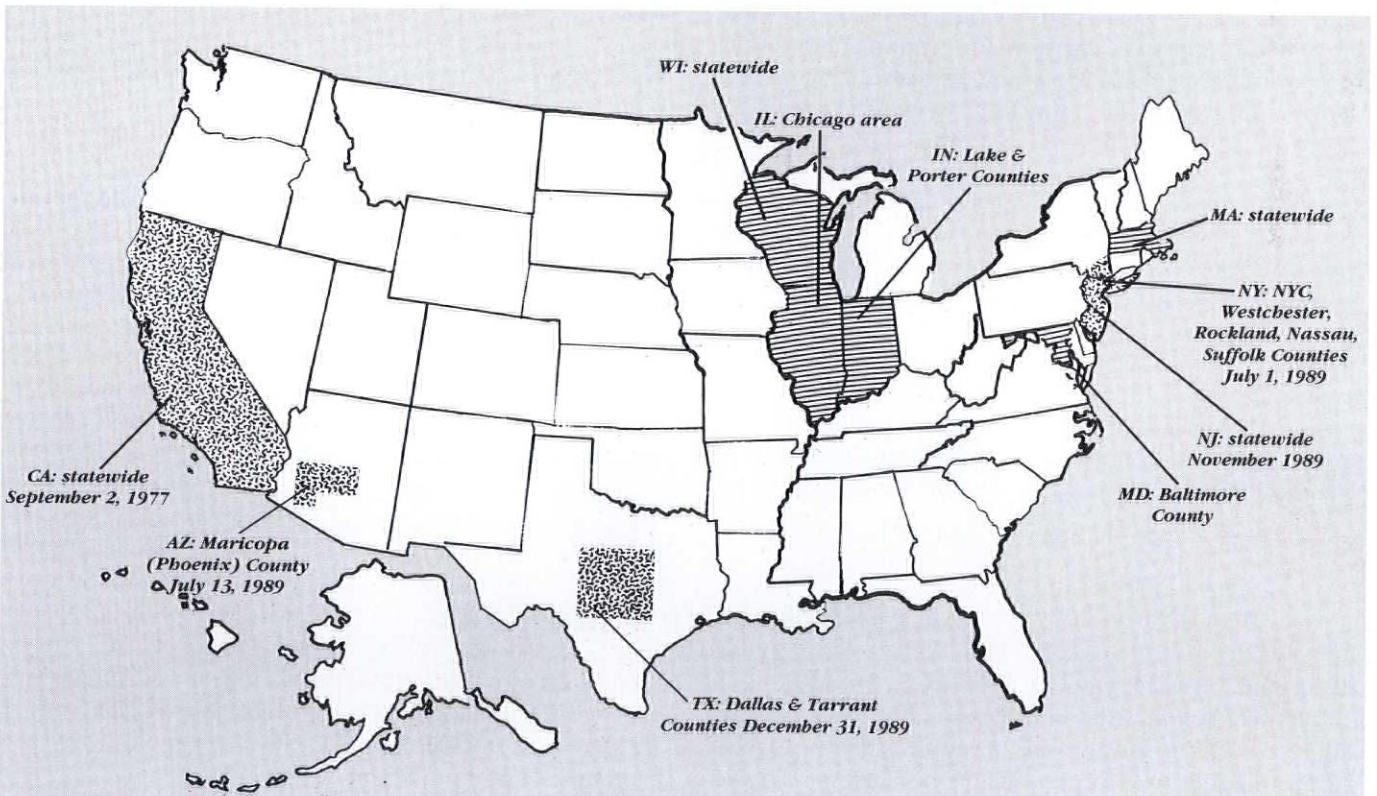
- Surfaces showing cracking, checking, or alligating should be sanded or stripped clean.
- Sanding the entire surface gives it "tooth" on which the new coat can adhere — especially important when painting over shiny or glossy finishes.
- Wash the surface with hot water and TSP (trisodium phosphate) to remove dirt and grease.
- Prime the surface. As of this writing, most primers recommended for latex topcoats are alkyd (oil) based, including new high-solids varieties. The paint industry is also developing latex primers with good adhesion properties.
- Latex paint does not dry well when the weather is cold or the humidity is high. For best result, follow the man-

ufacturers' temperature recommendations.

High-Solids

While latex paints have been time-tested, the same cannot be said for the high-solids low-VOC coatings. "The products are still being tested and perfected," states Kath Holcomb of the Flecto Company (manufacturers of Varathane Brand finishes), "and we expect many refinements to be made." Holcomb offers the following advice:

- Proper temperature is crucial. The ambient air, the coating, and the surface to which it will be applied should be at least 70 degrees Fahrenheit. (The coating can be warmed by placing the container in warm water.)
- Coating thickness is also *very* important. Stick closely to the manufacturer's recommended spread rate (coverage) to avoid applying too thick a coat. If applied too thick, solvents can become trapped beneath the surface and the coating will take an abnormally long time to dry.



Many states — as well as the paints and coatings industry — are waiting to see what initiatives the federal government will take regarding VOC's. Some feel that revising the Clean Air Act is the place to start. Until then, VOC control remains a patchwork of local regulations (many modeled on the "South California laws"), and varies from state to state.

- States with regulations that have/will take effect
- States with legislation pending

Map research: Lynn Elliot



● Spraying high-solids coatings is actually easier than spraying their old high-VOC counterparts. The new coatings are less likely to sag on vertical surfaces and fewer coats are needed.

● Do not recoat until the surface is completely dry. High-solids coatings build a surface film fast and dry on the top well before they're dry on the inside. The only true test of dryness is to dig a fingernail into an inconspicuous spot. If you leave an indentation, the paint is not completely dry.

● Never apply more coats than the manufacturer recommends.

● There are myriad variations among the high-solids coatings. Always read the manufacturer's instructions for each product or call the company for answers to specific questions.

Alternative Coatings

Paints and coatings based on plant or no-additive chemistry are a breed apart from mainstream products and tend to be very individual in their use and performance. Read the labels carefully and take the time to get the "feel" for

working with a different kind of paint or finish. Also bear in mind:

● These are not "budget" products. Costs are usually comparable to top-of-the-line conventional coatings, and may run higher.

● Pre-mixed color range is very limited for most products. Some paint manufacturers offer only a white base that has to be tinted by the user or custom colored by the factory.

● Coatings that employ plant-based systems give off a very strong herbal vapor when wet. The citrus thinners used in some products are potent solvents and should be used with proper care.

● Coverage varies significantly from product to product, with some requiring more than the standard two- or three-coat paint job.

● The products usually do not "dry" in a conventional coating manner or time. Technically, many of these coatings cure rather than dry. This is not always an even process and the appearance of wet-looking "holidays" may not be a cause for alarm.

Katherine Knight writes regularly on old houses from her home in Cambria, California.

Wood preservatives are in the VOC hotseat, too. Most are used for impregnating wood through a controlled process and are usually not considered coatings. The situation changes, though, when these products are painted on — as is the case in most restoration work. To get effective penetration with brushing, wood preservatives have to be applied in a very thin (dilute) solution, and this means including solvents. Some VOC regulations categorize wood preservatives into specific types, setting individual solvent

limits for some and exempting others (such as below-ground preservatives).

Many products are already under close scrutiny due to the toxic nature of such ingredients as pentachlorophenol, heavy metals, and coal-tar derivatives. Solvent restrictions have added to the pressure. Responding to these health issues and still manufacturing an effective preservative requires a change in chemistry, too, and new products (see suppliers list, facing page). — Gordon Bock

ALTERNATIVE STRIPPERS

Perhaps the biggest imminent challenge facing many chemical manufacturers is to find a substitute for methylene chloride, a chlorinated solvent found in some household products and most solvent-based paint strippers. The Federal Hazardous Substances Act has spelled trouble for this solvent. In 1986, the Consumer Product Safety Commission passed an enforcement policy requiring that all methylene chloride manufactured after September 1987 bear a cancer warning label — the first such label to be required under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. The label warns that methylene chloride is a carcinogen and should only be

used outside or with active ventilation. If this label is not effective in curtailing methylene-chloride exposure among consumers, Ken Giles of the CPSC notes, the agency may ban the chemical next year.

Alternatives to methylene-chloride paint strippers are slow in appearing because there are no safe substitutes for this solvent. In recent months, though, two new non-toxic strippers have debuted:

● "Safest Stripper" by 3M is the product of an eight-year search that tested over 150 different solvents, according to company spokesman John Mailand. The active ingredients,



dibasic acid esters, are combined with other materials and about 70 percent water to form a product that has no exposure limits for any of its ingredients and is non-caustic. The trade-off is time. "Where conventional (methylene chloride) strippers act within 15 minutes or so, ours takes an hour or more," says Mailand. "We suggest that you apply the stripper, then leave for a while — even the day. The surface will glaze over like icing on a cake, but underneath the stripper stays moist."

● "MF" and "Stripper 66" by AFM Enterprises, Inc., are also water-based products: the first designed for general paint stripping and the second for clear finishes only. Both contain no methylene chloride or trichloroethane and are formulated to minimize chemical exposure to the user. "The active chemicals are slower acting than methylene chloride, so be patient," advises Nestor Noe, president of AFM. "They do not blister the paint. Instead, they soften the surface. The paint can then be removed by applying

pressure with a pad or soft brush. The residue, which is 20 to 25 percent water soluble, is cleaned up with a household cleaner."

Citrus-based technology is also being used increasingly for tasks once performed by straight solvents and strippers. Industrial citrus products — extracts from pulp and other byproducts of the juice-processing industry — first made their mark as deodorizers and heavy-duty cleaners. In time, many were found to be excellent emulsifiers for greases, oils, and fats, and so found ready application as petroleum-solvent-free degreasers. The latest discovery has been that they can also loosen floor-tile mastic. The asbestos-abatement industry, for one, has found this ability of tremendous value because: (1) The citrus products are safer and often more efficient to use than are other mastic-dissolving materials, and (2) being essentially biodegradable, they simplify disposal of waste products. So the future looks bright for these natural solvents.



SUPPLIERS

Low-VOC Coatings

Benjamin Moore Co.
51 Chestnut Ridge Road, Dept. OHJ
Montvale, NJ 07645
(201) 573-9600
paints, finishes

The Flecto Company, Inc.
1000 45th St., Dept. OHJ
Oakland, CA 94608
(415) 655-2470
paints, finishes

Fuller O'Brien Paints
P.O. Box 864, Dept. OHJ
Brunswick, GA 31521
(912) 265-7650
paints, finishes

Glidden Coatings and Resins
925 Euclid Ave., Dept. OHJ
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 344-8216
paints

Kyanize Paints, Inc.
342 Second St., Dept. OHJ
Everett, MA 02149
(617) 387-5000
paints, finishes

Martin-Senour Co.
13 Midland, Dept. OHJ
Cleveland, OH 44115
(800) 542-TINT
paints

Muralo Company
148 E. 5th St., Dept. OHJ
Bayonne, NJ 07002
(201) 437-0770
paints

Pratt & Lambert
75 Tonawanda Street, Dept. OHJ
Buffalo, NY 14207
(716) 873-6000
paints, finishes

The Sherwin-Williams Company
101 Prospect Avenue, N.W., Dept. OHJ
Cleveland, OH 44115-1075
(800) 321-8194
paints

Alternative Wood Preservatives

Auro Natural Paints
Sinan Company
P.O. Box 181, Dept. OHJ
Suisun City, CA 94585
preservatives, other natural building products

Livos Plantchemistry
2461 Cerillos Rd., Dept. OHJ
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 988-9111
preservatives, other natural building products

Preserva-Products, Inc.
P.O. Box 744, Dept. OHJ
2955 Lake Forest Rd.
Tahoe City, CA 95730-0744
wood, concrete preservatives and sealers

Alternative Paint Strippers

AFM Enterprises, Inc.
non-toxic strippers
see alternative coatings

3M D-I-Y Division
Wood Refinishing Products

P.O. Box 33053, Dept. OHJ
St. Paul, MN 55133
(800) 548-6527
non-toxic stripper

Enviro Control and Containment Products, Inc.
1400 Brook Road, Dept. OHJ
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 649-0007
citrus mastic removers

Alternative/Low-VOC Coatings

AFM Enterprises, Inc.
1140 Stacy Ct., Dept. OHJ
Riverside, CA 92507
(714) 781-6860
paints, clear finishes, sealers, other house materials
for the chemically sensitive

Murco Wall Products, Inc.
300 North East 21st St., Dept. OHJ
Fort Worth, TX 76106
(817) 626-1987
paints, wall products for the chemically sensitive

Pace Chem Industries, Inc.
779 So. La Grange Ave., Dept. OHJ
Newbury Park, CA 91320
(805) 499-2911
paints, clear finishes for the chemically sensitive

The Masters Corporation
P.O. Box 514, Dept. OHJ
12 Burtis Ave.
New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 966-3541
non-toxic building products consulting



A STENCILLER'S TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

by James L. Jansen



Whole books have been written about stencilling technique. Sure, you can get into ten-color patterns and Japan driers and brushes made from animals nearing extinction. But it doesn't have to be so difficult: A sash brush and latex paint work just fine. Here are the basics.

A stencil is formed using sheets of plastic as templates, or plates. You place them on the wall, apply color over them, and the areas that are cut out of the plate allow the color to pass and adhere to the wall. I could expound at length upon the aesthetic charm and beauty of this age-old, simple, and attractive way to decorate. But I'll get to the heart of the matter: It's cheap. Several years ago, I came upon a great historical border paper with a not-so-great price of \$10 per yard — and I needed 25 yards. So instead of hauling

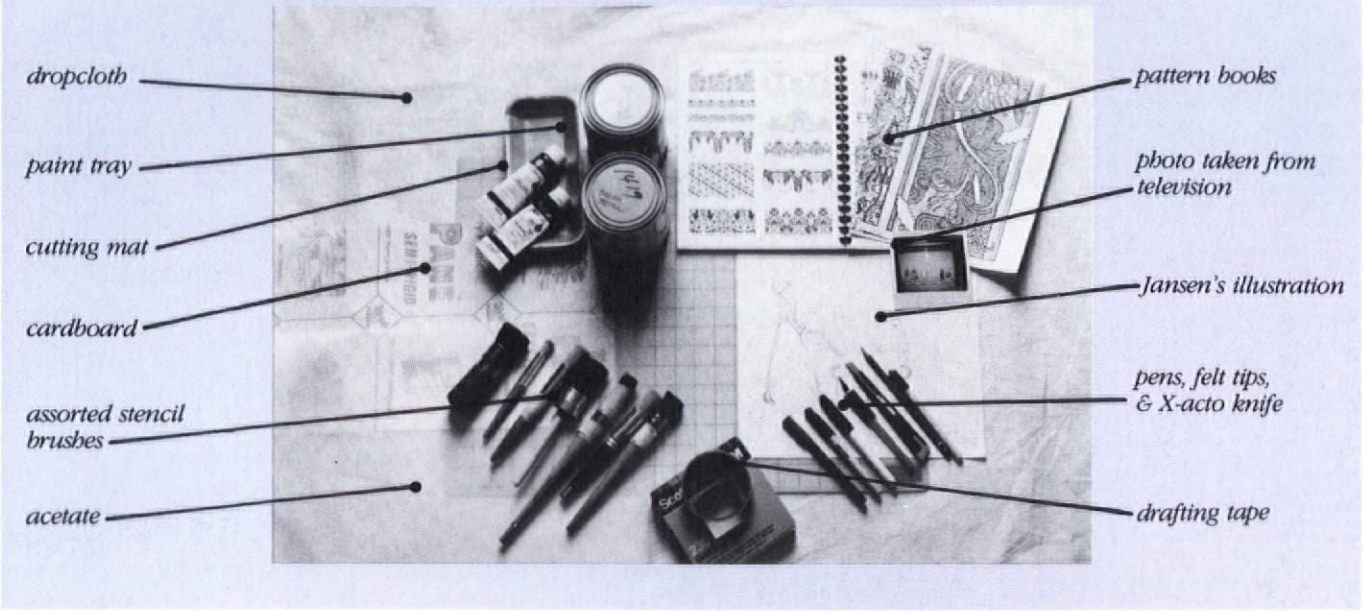
out my wallet, I hauled the wallpaper book to a Xerox machine, made a photocopy, traced the pattern onto a sheet of clear plastic, cut out the traced motif, got up on a ladder, and stencilled an exact copy of the border around the room. Rather than spending \$250, I'd spent \$25.

There are of course many ways to stencil, but what follows is what I believe to be the easiest, most foolproof method, which the beginner can master in the time it takes to read this article. On page 37 is a list of the necessary supplies. You probably have most of them around the house already; the rest you can acquire from your local art-supply, paint, hardware, and stationery stores.

Pattern books are available in libraries and most bookstores. But you can also take your cue from the graphics you encounter everyday, in wrapping paper, textiles, newspapers, magazines, china, book covers. . . . The motif you select will probably be the wrong size for your room, so take the pattern to a photocopier and enlarge or reduce it to what should be the appropriate scale. Make several versions and then tape them onto the room's most prominent and eye-catching wall. Stand back and look at the scale of



JANSEN'S STENCILLING TOOL KIT:

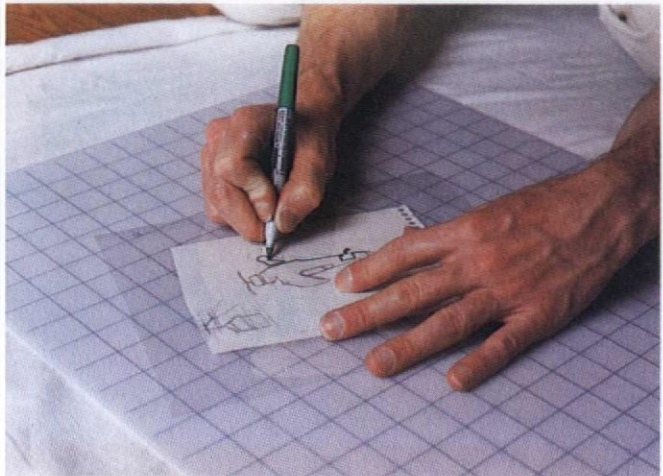


your design in relation to the room: A tiny pattern may be lost in a high-ceilinged room; a large design can overwhelm a small room. Select the one which best suits the room. (If none seem satisfactory, go back to the copier and try again.)

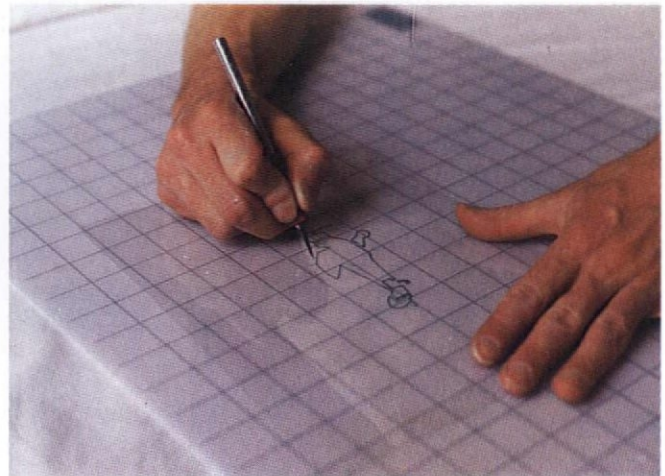
Once you've decided on motif and scale, lay the sheet of vinyl plastic over your photocopy. It should be a good two inches larger than your pattern, to leave you a sufficient edge. Secure it with tape. If your photocopy shows several repeats all in one continuous pattern, note the individual repeat and trace only it with a permanent marker. Then, with a different-color marker, trace one repeat to the right of the design, and one repeat to its left. The first color

signifies the area of the stencil to be cut out; the other color defines register marks, so you can correctly line up and lay out the repeating pattern. If you're working with a single motif rather than a continuous pattern, trace the motif and then remove the tape and slide the plastic to the left until it's lined up properly with the photocopy. Re-secure the tape and trace the motif again, using the register-color marker. The register tracing that aligns exactly at the other side of your motif must wait until you do a trial: After stencilling two repeats, lay the plate over the repeat to the right and trace the pattern stencilled on the left as your other register.

Place your plate on a cutting mat and use an X-acto knife



Jim traces the design onto acetate using a felt-tip pen.



With an X-acto knife, he cuts the acetate.



to cut out the design. Work in long, steady strokes, without jags or hesitations. Pull the blade toward yourself, slicing outwards from the center of the piece. If you hit a curve, turn and rotate the plate and mat rather than the knife blade. Cut all the areas before extracting the pieces — this keeps the plate rigid. Remove the pieces smallest to largest. If you have a design with large cut-out areas, the plate will develop weak spots; strengthen it by designing stay-bars into your motif. (They need not be monotonous rectangular bridges; vary their sizes and shapes to complement the design.) Should the plate tear, repair it by placing tape on both sides of the break and then cutting away the excess tape that extends into the plate openings.

Small dots are difficult to cut — use a leather hole punch or similar device. Or make a round hole with a knitting needle, and then smooth its edges with fine sandpaper. Larger circles can be made by cutting around coins. (Remember, a circle within a circle needs bridges or it will

drop out.)

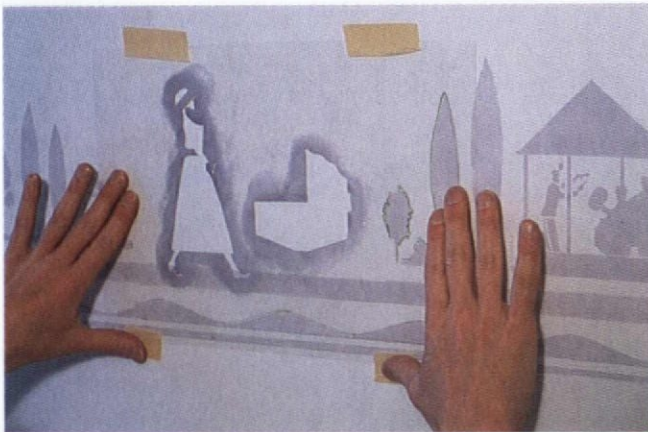
Usually, a separate plate is cut for each color you'll use in your design. (I especially recommend this approach for beginners.) But if the plate's openings for two different colors are an inch or more apart, one plate can be used for both colors — just be neat and careful. On templates where openings for two different colors are less than an inch apart, you can still cut and use a single plate: With masking tape, cover over the openings for color A; stencil color B around the room; then remove the tape, tape over the openings for color B, and make a second trip around the room, applying color A.

Paint

The walls on which you'll be stencilling will probably be painted with latex, which is fine. If you plan to repaint before you stencil, make sure you know how long the paint needs to set before you can wash the walls (usually about one week). Try not to stencil until after this time — this way, if you make a mistake and want to wipe out a repeat, you won't risk marring the newly painted surface.

I recommend stencilling with latex wall paint: It's easy to clean up and has a smooth consistency. You can have a paint dealer mix most any color for you. (Any sheen is fine.) A quart will be more than enough; you'll use only about 5% of it.

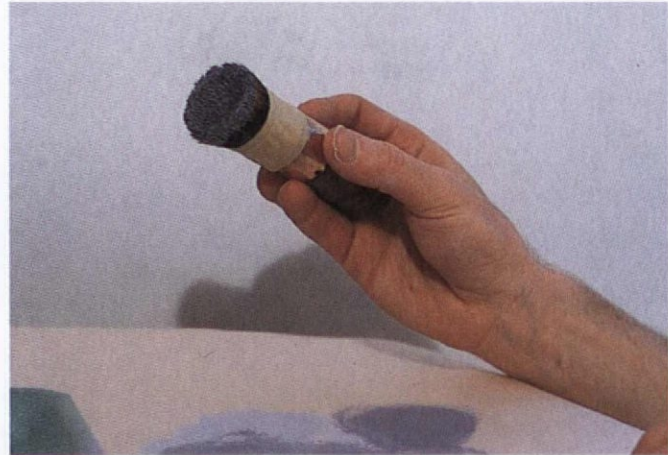
One note of caution with color selection. Paint applied as a stencil is beautifully transparent — it's very light, very delicate. Therefore, the color of the stencil should be quite distinct in relation to the wall, or it won't show up (not very well, anyway). A white stencil on yellow walls, for example, will be practically invisible.



The stencil must be aligned and secured to the wall with drafting tape.



Jim prepares a small amount of paint on a polystyrene tray.



Jim's favorite stencil brush is a badger-bair brush made in Scotland in the late 1800s.



Trial

To get a feel for how much pressure to use when applying the paint to a vertical surface, stencil the back wall of a closet. This will also let you get mistakes out of your system. Speaking of which: Keep a pail of clean water and a HandiWipe nearby. Should an edge come out somewhat "wooly," wet the HandiWipe, wring out the excess water, wrap it around your index finger, and ever-so-lightly wipe away any globs. If paint gets on the back of the stencil, clean it the same way. You can even wipe out an entire repeat if it's a disaster. Just be quick about it.

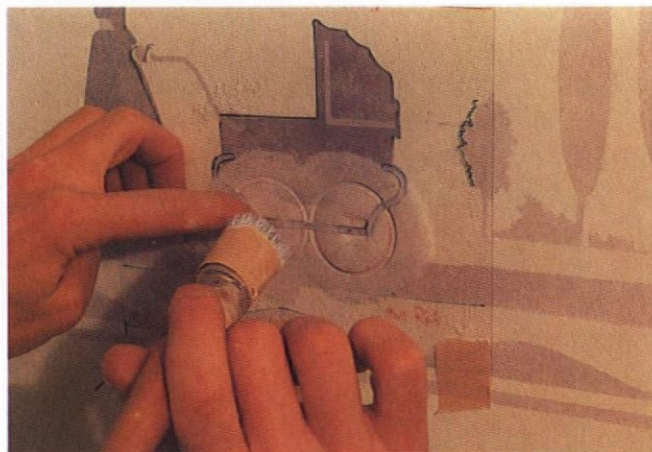
Secure the template to the wall with drafting tape. (If your plate is large and heavy, you may have to use masking tape, but be careful: Masking tape can pull paint off walls.) No matter what type of brush you've acquired, wrap $\frac{3}{4}$ of the bristle length in masking tape. This prevents the bristles from splaying out and getting under the plate.

Place a dollop of paint, about the size of a silver dollar, on a clean polystyrene meat tray. At a 90-degree angle, dab the brush into the paint. Then pounce the brush in an up-and-down motion on a section of newspaper, to distribute paint evenly on the bristles. When an even "haze" of paint is evident on the newsprint, the brush is almost ready. Continue until you believe you've no more paint left on the brush. Your goal is to use a "dry" brush: The brush, when lifted to the stencil plate, should appear dry. Always start with what seems like too little paint — too much paint will spell disaster, because an overloaded brush creates wooly edges and can cause paint to seep under the plate.

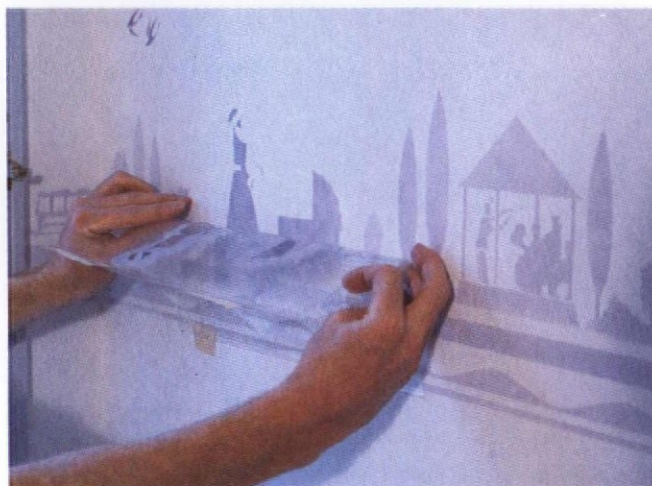
Hold the brush perpendicular to the plate and pounce the cut-out spaces. This will produce the stippled, transparent look that only stencils possess. The brush should have so little paint that it must be literally pounded onto

the walls. Be prepared to make a racket. (You know you're pouncing correctly when family members begin rushing into the room to see what's the matter.) Smack the edges of the cut-out firmly against the wall as you pounce, thus preventing bristles and paint from getting behind the plate. Sharp, crisp lines are the secret to stencilling; the secret to sharp, crisp lines is pounding the heck out of a dry brush. I suggest you protect your fingers with Band-Aids as you do it — you'll find out soon enough where to apply them.

When all the areas are filled, peel back the tape and remove the plate from the wall. (Don't detach by pulling at the plate; you can rip it.) Do a couple of repeats on either side, to make sure your registration system lines up properly. Because so little paint has been used, it dries almost upon application. Nevertheless, if you're stencilling from left to right, pounce across the plate right to left, so the paint will be dry when the plate is laid over the previous



Wheels are added to the carriage using a soft-white paint.



The stencil can be removed as soon as the paint has been applied.



In a matter of seconds, the paint is applied using dry-brushing technique.

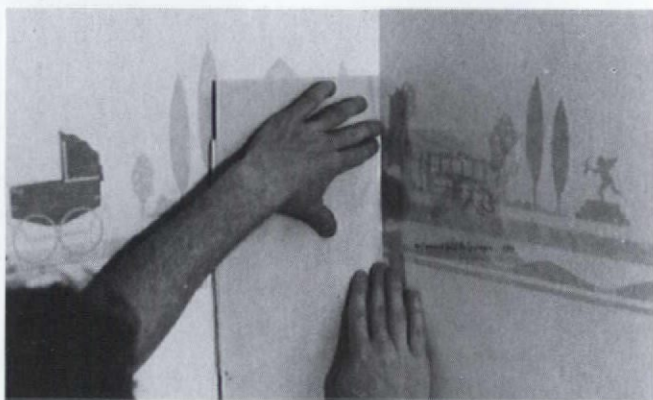
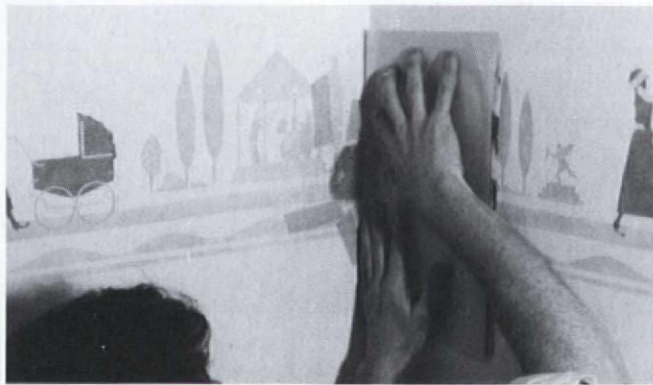


stencil for registration.


If paint builds up on the plate, you can immerse it in warm soapy water, let it soak for a few minutes, gently scrub with a green 3M Scotch Brite pad, and pat dry. But such cleaning can do more harm than good to a delicate, intricate plate. There's nothing wrong with never cleaning a plate, so long as paint doesn't obscure your registers. Built-up paint can cause the plate to curl somewhat, but just by holding the plate gently against the wall with one hand while pouncing with the other, you can remedy this. Call me a slob, but I rarely clean my templates.

Stencilling

I suggest starting with something easy, such as a frieze. This most common stencil is a decorative band at the top of the wall. It's particularly easy because you can use the ceiling as your guide, rather than drawing or chalking a level line. When you cut the template, leave a margin at the top which equals the distance you want your frieze to sit from the ceiling. Even though ceilings are never level, follow their angle rather than true level.



Jim bends the stencil to accommodate corners; then he continues the stencil onto the adjoining wall.

I treat stencilling much the same as wallpapering: I begin in the middle of the prominent wall and work outward; or I start in the least conspicuous corner and proceed continuously around the room, leaving a mismatched corner when I get back to the beginning. I stencil corners as in wallpapering as well: None of this lengthening and condensing repeats or cutting apart your plates! The plastic is pliable, so I just wrap the plate around the corners. Because walls are never plumb, after you round a corner, adjustments need to be made. If proceeding left to right, register the left side of the plate and tape it in place. Using a piece of cardboard, press the plastic firmly into the corner and stencil the left-hand section. The cardboard covers and protects the right-hand side. Then use the cardboard to push the plate into the corner and apply paint. (Removing the tape from the brush will help get paint into the corners.) There will be a slight mismatch, and you won't be able to get paint in the very corner, but don't worry about it; when the job's done, no one will ever notice it. 

Author James Jansen of Old Greenwich, Connecticut, was inspired by an animation from a television series to create his "Nanny in the Park" nursery frieze. A total of 12 stencils were used to produce each repeat.



Another satisfied customer!



SUPPLIES

Template

1. clear acetate 7.5 mil to 10 mil weight (A, S)
2. clear vinyl plastic heavy 10 or 12 gauge (H)
3. frosted or clear Mylar .005 or .0075 gauge (A)

How much you will need depends on the size of your motif plus at least 2" top and bottom plus enough room on either side for register marks. You'll need separate sheets for each additional color in your design.

Brush

1. stencilling brush (A, P)
2. sash paint brush with natural bristles (H, P)
3. cabinet-maker's gluing brush (H, P)
4. rubbing brush (H, P)
5. cut-up sponges or foam-rubber

padding (can be used in a pinch, but are more difficult to use). (Y)

Cutting Knife

1. X-acto no. 1 handle with nos. 10 and 11 blades (A, H, S, Y)
2. snap-off blade knife (H, P)
3. leather hole-punch for circles (Y)

Cutting Board

1. self-healing cutting mat (A)
2. scrap piece of vinyl flooring (Y)
3. plate glass with taped edges (Y)
4. heavy cardboard (Y)

Permanent Markers

1. Sanford Sharpie extra-fine point (A, H, S)
2. Sanford Rub-a-Dub laundry-marking pen (A, H, S)
3. Staedtler Lumocolor (A, H, S)

Paint

1. 1 quart latex wall paint (any sheen, any color) (P)

Other Materials

1. masking tape (A, H, S)
2. drafting paper (A, H, S)
3. newspaper (Y)
4. polystyrene meat trays (Y)
5. pail of clean water (Y)
6. HandiWipes (Y)
7. Band-aids (Y)
8. plastic scouring pad (Y)

KEY

A = art-supply store
H = hardware store
P = paint supplier
S = stationery store
Y = you probably have it already

SUPPLIERS

(518) 843-1380
Stencil brushes; Japan colors

Wolf Paints & Wallpapers
771 Ninth Ave., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10019
(212) 245-7777
Stencil brushes, all sizes; oiled stencil boards; Japan colors; graining materials; scenic paints.

Stencils

Dover Publications, Inc.
31 East 2nd St., Dept. OHJ
Mineola, NY 11501
Complete Catalog, 68 pages, free.

Hand-Stencilled Interiors
590 King Street, Dept. OHJ
Hanover, MA 02339
(617) 878-7596
Send \$1 for information.

Medusa
236 Prospect St., Dept. OHJ
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 876-6329
Free brochures.

Prater-Northey
17159 Beaver Springs, Dept. OHJ
Houston, TX 77090
(713) 893-4112
Call to discuss your needs.

Rasa Arbas Design
306 22nd Street, Dept. OHJ
Santa Monica, CA 90402
Write for information.

Stencil World
Box 175, Dept. OHJ
1456 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10021
(212) 517-7164
Catalog, \$3.50.

Paints & Brushes

H. Behlen & Bros.
Rt. 30 North, Dept. OHJ
Amsterdam, NY 12010
(518) 843-1380
Japan colors in quarts & half-pints.

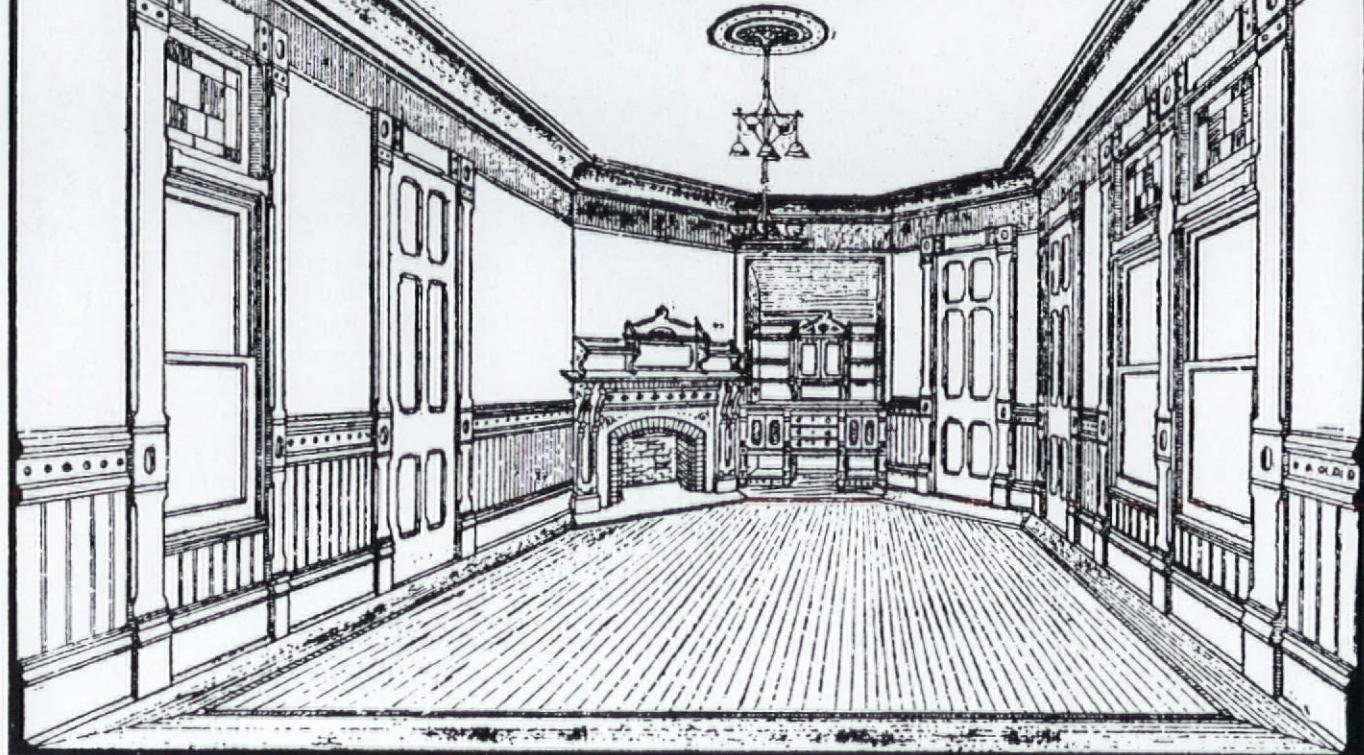
Arthur Brown & Bros.
2 West 46 St., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10036
(212) 575-5555
Stencil brushes.

Chromatic Paint Corp.
P.O. Box 690, Dept. OHJ
Stony Point, NY 10980
(914) 947-3210
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Mohawk Finishing Products
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Mail-Order Interiors

by Gordon Bock



What can one say about interiors in plan-book houses? Three letters, really: F.O.B. This was "freight-on-board" architecture, mail-order design. It's a good bet every item in the rooms pictured here was once a number in a catalog.

It should come as no surprise. Mail-order became a way of life, a uniquely American way of life, as railroads expanded while the 1800s drew to a close. It enabled households hundreds of miles from manufacturing centers to buy as many of the material benefits of the late Industrial Revolution as they could afford.

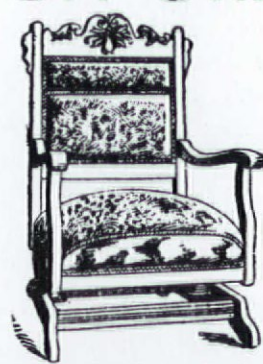
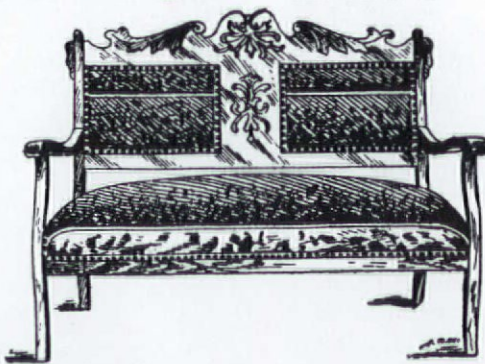
House interiors were a strong focus of catalog commerce

right from the beginning. Knocked-down interior woodwork (such as door and window casings and stair parts) was eminently shippable, and was a well established order-by-number business before the Civil War. Manufacturers of decorative parquet flooring followed this lead. In time, mass-produced furniture was also being shipped great distances, especially by 1895 when the mail-order titans Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck were up and running.

It's not hard to imagine the mail-order architects taking advantage of this cornucopia of catalog products. The Pallisers obviously regarded interiors as fair game for their cookbook brand of design, as they published several editions of *Palliser's Useful Details* describing doors, casings,

A \$16.00 PARLOR SUIT FOR \$11.35.

GRADE A
UPHOLSTERING \$11.35



GRADE D
UPHOLSTERING \$14.50

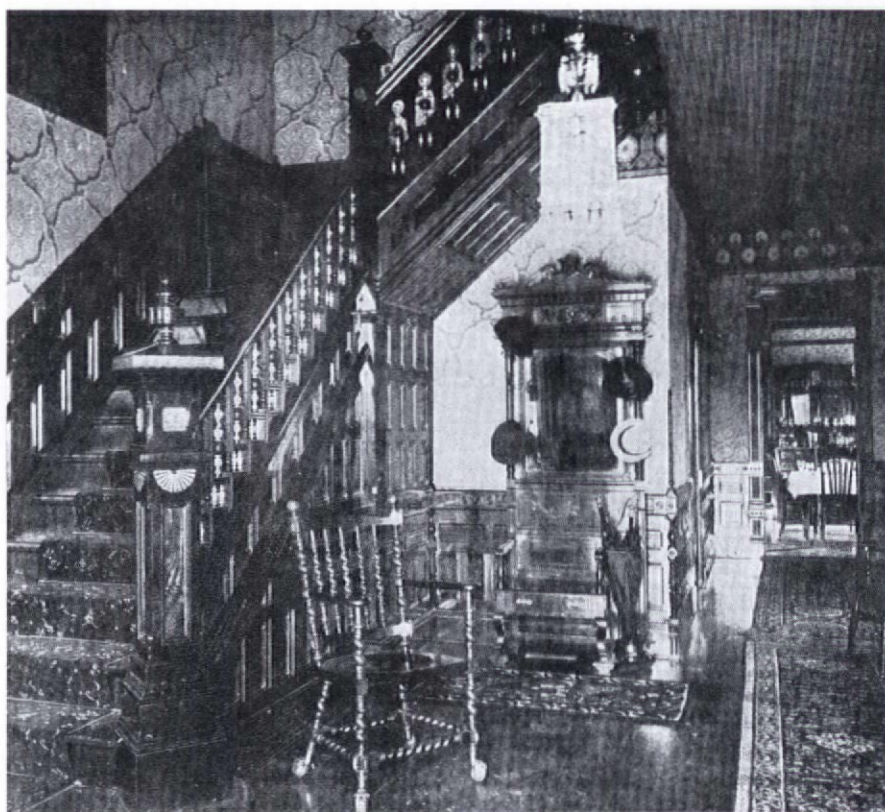
By 1897, whole rooms of furniture could be purchased in coordinated "suits" in vaguely historical styles (Sears, Roebuck and Co.)

Left:

When asked, the Pallisers would design interiors, too. They biglighted the F. Egge bouse in Model Homes, noting that "the owner did not dictate to us how we should place the rooms, or how the exterior or interior should be, but left it entirely to us — and therefore, he has something to his and everyone's liking."

Right:

The interior of the Barber-designed William Weiss bouse in Beaumont, Texas. Weiss was president of the Reliance Lumber Company.



mantels, bookcases, and other elements. George Palliser, himself once a partner in a millwork factory, made liberal use of stock wood trim in designing the F. Egge living room (opposite page), perhaps ordered from one of his advertisers. George Barber knew his way around architectural supply houses, too, and it shows in the module-like woodwork of the Weiss house hall.


Robert Shoppell also turned his attention to interiors along with house plans in *How To Build, Furnish & Decorate*. In an 1897 edition he notes, "In the present age machine work, moldings and carvings are practically turned out by wholesale without regard to their particular use or location . . .," an apt description of stock, universal millwork. Shoppell also recommended that "when the exterior of a building has any distinctive style, the interior should be in keeping." Simple enough, but this was the height of Victorian industrialism, and a potpourri of styles was in. (This quote shares a page with examples of both Colonial and Romanesque staircases!) Catalog merchandise provided products in a variety of design idioms.

One way to view these mail-order interiors is as middle-class versions of design fashions set by a Gilded Age wealthy class. If your name was Vanderbilt, Villard, or Carnegie, you could commission a top-shelf architect — Richard Morris Hunt or Stanford White, say — to design an

interior in a trendy exotic style such as Turkish, Rococo, or Italianate. He might also have a hand in some key pieces of furniture and scour Europe for the rest.

If your house started as a plate in a planbook, though, your chances for a custom, high-style interior were slim. You could stay in step with a new look, however, by ordering it from a catalog.

That's not to say these interiors are short on quality of materials, workmanship, or imagination; far from it. Mahogany and oak were as desirable then as now and very popular, but many of the "humbler" hardwoods used as common stock 100 years ago — cherry, chestnut, ash, and even walnut! — are held in very high esteem today. Even when machine made, woodwork and furniture were all hand-fitted, -tooled, and -finished, and represent a level of skill that is all but lost in our present era. Variety, too, was in ample supply. These were the days before universal millwork patterns or the standardization of building materials: A large choice of designs was not a liability to a manufacturer, but rather his stock in trade.

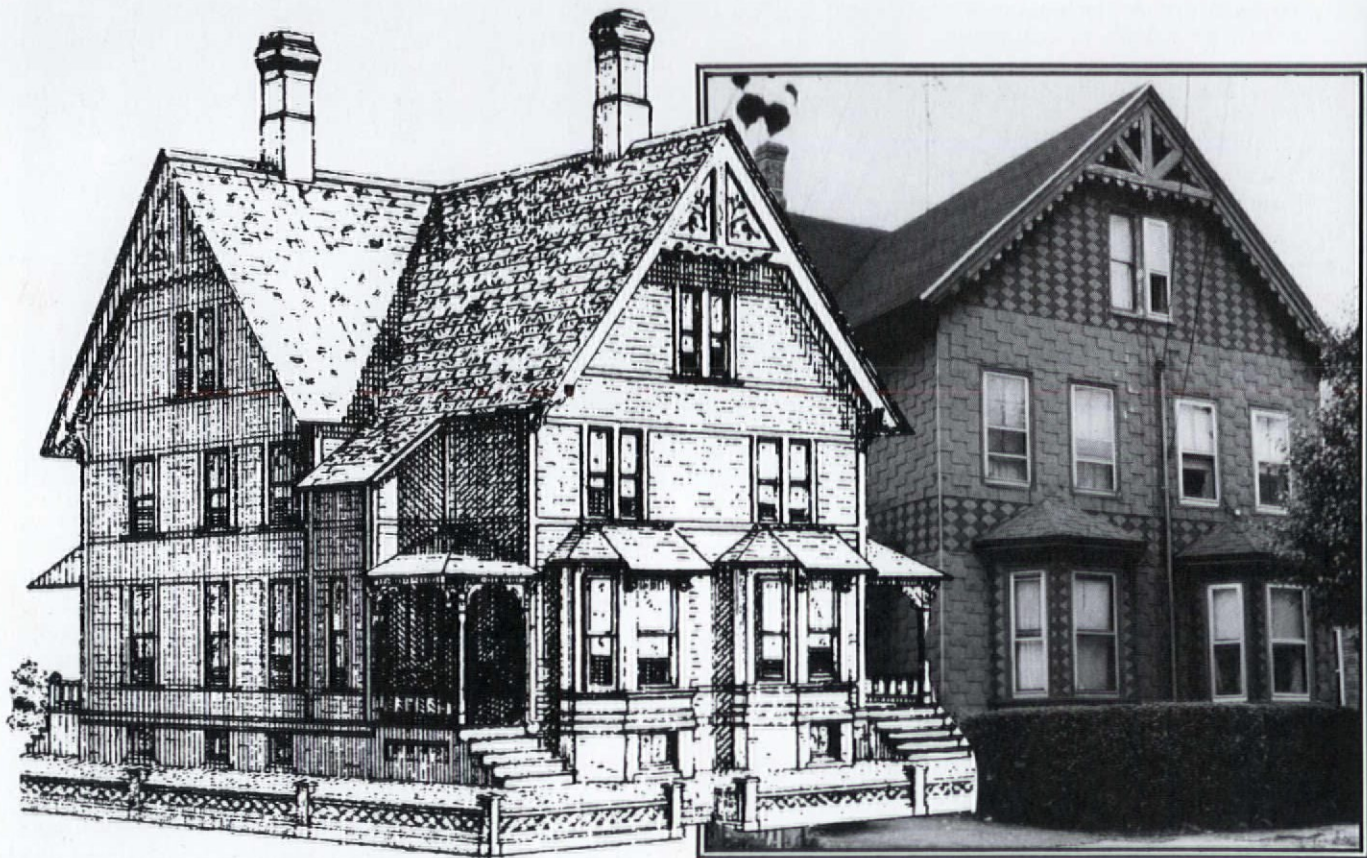
There was a distinct advantage to mail-order interiors. Woodcuts and steel engravings depicted items that already existed in warehouses, not unrealized in a designer's imagination. And you didn't need to fire the architect if you weren't thrilled by a style — you just turned the page. 



Assorted styles of staircase newel posts from an 1885 catalog — all ready for blast-off.

PLANBOOK HOUSES: ARCHITECTURE BY MAIL

by James C. Massey & Shirley Maxwell



Under the asphalt shingles, this Palliser-built house in Bridgeport, Connecticut, is a dead ringer for design no. 30 in Palliser's American Architecture.

Let's face it: Until the 1880s, one middle-class house was pretty much like another. Greek or Gothic or Italianate or whatever, it was still the same old box with a little lace here, a ribbon or two there. This may seem perfectly normal (even desirable) to many of us thrashing about here in the deep end of the stressed-out 20th century, but to the late-Victorian mind, it was . . . well, boring. And not very practical either, because it had lately become apparent that every family was — and ought to be — different from every other family and therefore needed a different sort of house.

Yet the average person hoping for a new home was still at the mercy of his local carpenter/builder, his own training and imagination, and a few tiny woodblock prints in architectural pattern books. Without an architect to direct design and construction, most middle-class houses reflected traditional skills and local building habits more than the owner's personal taste. All that changed, though, with the mass selling of architect's plans by mail.

Toward the end of the 19th century, this new merchandising technique transformed the house-construction business and, with it, small cities and towns all across the nation. Spurred by improved technology in printing, photo reproduction, and transportation, scores of books and periodicals streamed off the presses and into the mailboxes of America's vast army of "intending builders."

They were churned out in architectural-plan factories by enterprising architects who recognized the value of presenting their work to the broadest possible audience. After all, selling one design many times promised to be easier than creating a different house for each and every hard-won client. For the first time in history, the common man had a shot at Architecture with a capital A!

The publications included both periodicals and inexpensive paper or clothbound books or portfolios of designs. The books were often "classified," or arranged according to price, so that potential buyers could zero in on their particular budget requirements. The periodicals


usually covered a full range of prices and structure types, from dwelling houses to barns, schoolhouses, churches, fences, and gates. Sometimes the architects acted as their own publishers; sometimes they joined forces with established architectural publishers.

Architectural pattern books had been around for a long time, of course, but they were essentially style books, long on text and short on illustrations. A few championed a particular architectural-cum-social philosophy (such as A.J. Downing's picturesque rural Gothic cottages) or innovative construction (like Orson Squire Fowler's octagon buildings). By the 1850s, some periodicals — among them, Samuel Sloan's short-lived *Architectural Review* — appeared with full-page perspective drawings and plans for buildings. Home-oriented magazines like *Godey's Lady's Book* also featured drawings of model houses.

Two English-born brothers, George and Charles Palliser, led the way in developing plans by mail. George Palliser was an enormously successful carpenter who had moved up to architecture. (He designed speculative housing for P.T. Barnum, then the mayor of Bridgeport, as well as for other developers.) In 1876, he issued his first small booklet of plans available by post, *Model Homes for the People, A Complete Guide to the Proper and Economical Erection of Buildings*, which sold out at 25¢. By 1878, he and Charles were partners in Palliser, Palliser & Company, Architects, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and publishers of *Palliser's American Cottage Homes*, a larger, more expensive, and

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FRANK P. ALLEN, Architect

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- 32 Houses, \$1500-\$2000, 25c
- 32 Houses, \$1800 (new), 25c
- 32 Artistic Churches, 25c

HERBERT C. CHIVERS
Architect, Walnutright Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

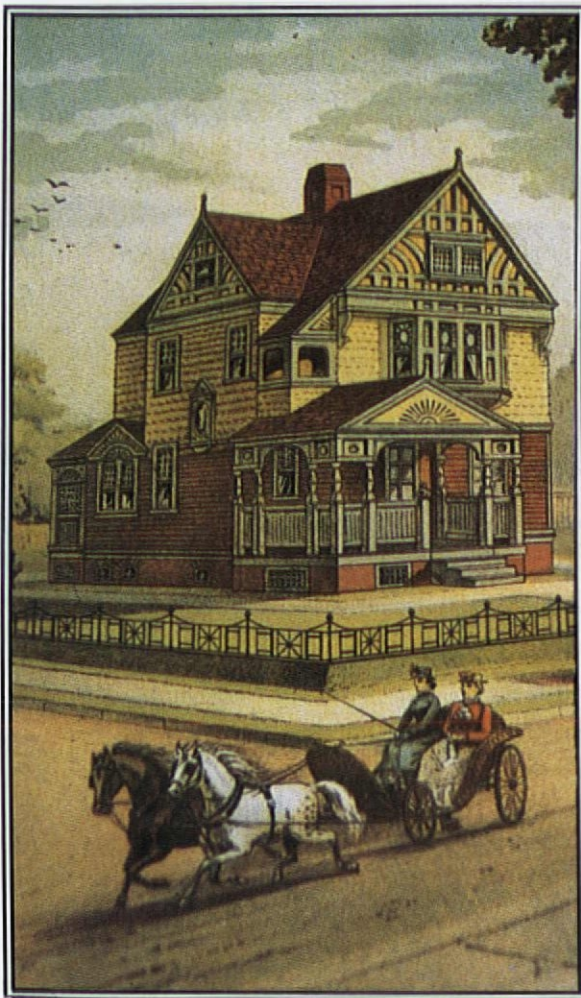
Member Exch., Minneapolis, Minn.

The mail-order house-plan movement was at its height when these three architects advertised in the January 1899 *Ladies' Home Journal*.



Martha T. Olson, The Renaissance Group

One of Barber's residences in Knoxville, Tennessee — sans original roof cresting, corner turret, and fancy chimneys.



Susan G. Pearl



Quality color plates were a big improvement on the spartan illustrations of early-19th-century style books, and helped sell thousands of plans (Shoppell's Modern Houses, 1887).

The suburb of Berwyn Heights in Hyattsville, Maryland, contains a number of Shoppell houses. Here is design no. 449 (1889), with a square corner and panelled gable halfway between Stick Style and half-timbering.



Susan G. Pearl



Susan G. Pearl

This fine house (left) with the three-storey octagonal tower on the main facade is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It was built to Shoppell's design no. 216 in *Artistic Houses of Low Cost* (right) and also stands in Berwyn Heights.



Michael A. Tomlan

A Barber house in Elwood, Indiana. Barber was very comfortable with the Queen Anne style, as this smart-towered example shows.

(until it was combined with another plan book and reissued in a cheaper version) less popular catalogue. The Pallisers took their cue from A.J. Bicknell & Company, publishers of *Bicknell's Village Builder* (1878), which included elevation drawings, floor plans, cost estimates, specifications, and a sample contract form. By 1908, the Pallisers had issued over 20 separate publications. Along the way, their firm developed most of the marketing techniques that would be used in the mail-order field.

What made the plans-by-mail idea unique and irresistible

was the superior quality of the plates in the books, the availability of affordable, full-sized working drawings prepared by professional architects and accompanied by specifications for materials and techniques, and — best of all — the chance to work with the architect to customize the design. "Keep writing till you get just what you want," urged George F. Barber (Knoxville, Tenn.), one of the most popular of the mail-order architects. "Don't be afraid of writing too often. We are not easily offended."

Irresistible indeed. An expert on the mail-order-house phenomenon, Michael A. Tomlan, estimates that Barber's firm alone produced 20,000 sets of plans.

The potential customer wasn't expected to buy a pig in a poke, either. The catalogues described the buildings in minute detail, right down to materials and color choices. A drawing by the architects Rossiter and Wright for publisher William T. Comstock's *American Cottages*, for example, noted that the finished house should have terracotta cresting and finials on a slate roof; gables (five of them) in grey cement; russet-colored, stained pine shingles on the second storey; clapboards painted a dark, dull red on the first storey; and trimmings in dark olive green. R.W. Shoppell's Co-Operative Building Plan Association even offered to help the buyer negotiate a mortgage. Occasionally, site visits could be arranged.

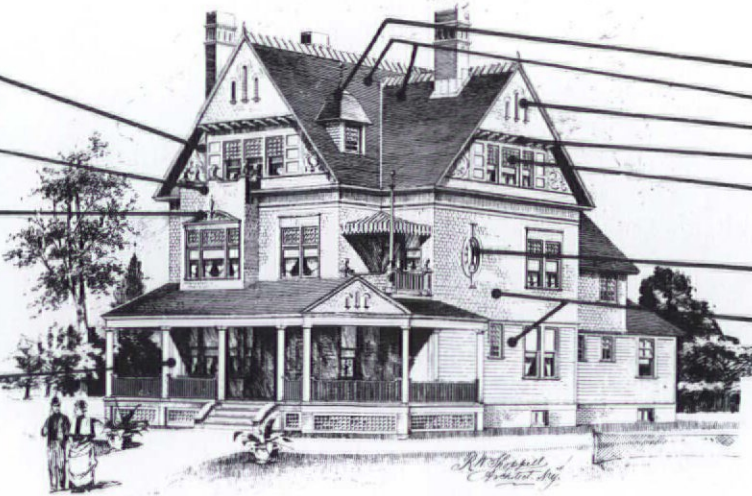
Obviously, there were plenty of details to worry about. In *Houses and Cottages*, David S. Hopkins urged his clients to "be very particular about informing regarding the plumbing (if wanted included), also sewerage, gas, water supply, cesspool, door hardware, and any similar matter not usual about such building." Whew! Publishers soon found it helpful to put together questionnaires to speed the planning process.

MAIL-ORDER PLANS

Note variety of window types — single, double, triple windows, single- and double-hung sash, lights 1/1, 4/1, 16/1 in double hung, & 8- and 16-light single sash

READING THE OLD HOUSE

- Foliate Scroll decoration
- Rectangular bay with porch on top
- Colonial Revival broken scroll pediment with urn
- Large verandah on 2 sides — plain Tuscan columns — plain railing ramped at columns — typ. Col. Rev.



- Dormer with hipped ogee roof
- cross-gable roof
- An arch arcade in miniature
- Corbels
- Triple windows with panels at each side — note small panes over single pane — typical Q. Anne
- Tall oval window — typical early Colonial Revival — note keystones
- first-floor clapboards, shingles upstairs — a "shirtwaist"

Source: Shoppell's Modern Houses, An Illustrated Architectural Quarterly, Oct. 1889

With an eclectic mix of styles and details from Queen Anne to Colonial this 1889 Shoppell design is a typical mail-order plan

J.C. MASSEY '89

The plan books didn't set any architectural trends. Some of the publishers, like the Pallisers, did hope to educate middle- and upper-middle-class home builders — and, of course, to convince them that architects were absolutely essential to making a proper house. But these publications were intended to echo, not to lead, public opinion in respect to design. After all, the main purpose was to sell plans. "Do not insist on having a very odd or peculiar house," Shoppell admonished his readers. "The best house is one whose exterior and interior are generally approved by people of good taste."

As for the designs themselves, they ran the whole dizzying gamut of late-19th-century style choices. Barber's were perhaps the most flamboyant, making them among the easiest to spot in today's neighborhoods. Although most of his designs were intended to be built in wood, Barber especially liked the Richardsonian Romanesque style, which most architects built only in brick and stone. His frame houses bustle with rounded wooden bays, turretlike oriels, three-storey towers, many gables, and much carved- and turned-wood decoration. Not that he ignored other popular styles: Queen Anne and Colonial Revival details were tossed into the mix with a kind of grand giddiness that today is breathtaking.



This house has the Barber touch — polygonal corner tower, jerkin-bead dormers, a mix of materials and Colonial Revival details like the swag decorations at the entrance and on the tower porch.

R.W. Shoppell (New York City) and his associates in the Co-Operative Building Plan Association generally favored a quieter approach with less ornate decoration. Still, they went in for massive Queen Anne or Shingle-style buildings with complex, asymmetrical facades and rooflines and plenty of Colonial Revival details. The table of contents for

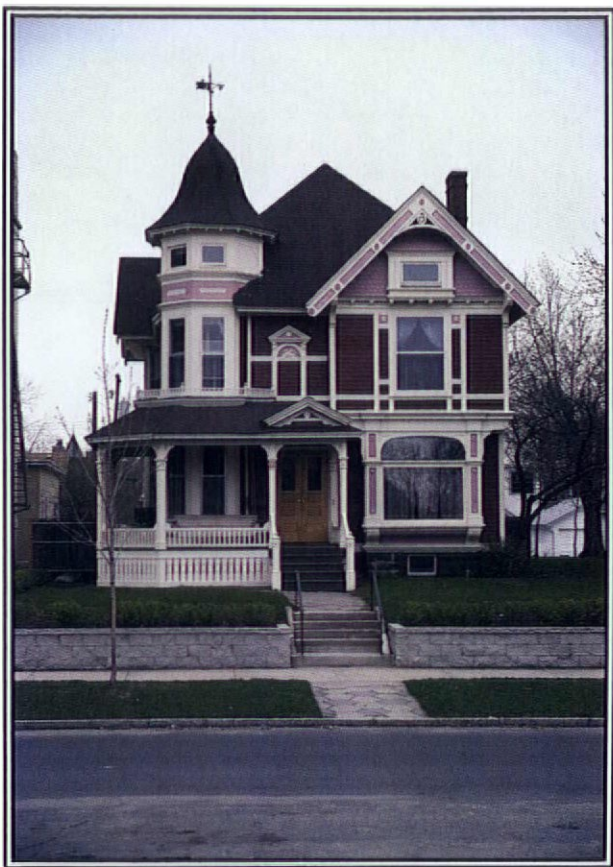


Gordon Rock



Gordon Rock

The Palliser Brothers-P.T. Barnum partnership built at least one Bridgeport development, and in it, many duplex houses. Often, they recycled the same basic plan by changing details. In American Homes, the building to the left has square bay windows. On the right, typical Palliser carved ornament.



Michael A. Tomlan

A Barber Queen Anne house in St. Paul, Minnesota, bandsomely painted in Victorian colors. Note large arched "picture window."

Shoppell's 1883 book *How to Build, Furnish, and Decorate* lists houses in the Gothic, Queen Anne, Mansard, Shingle, Italianate, and Swiss styles, in addition to Renaissance and Gothic mansions, a stone villa, "Pretty Country Boxes," "Picturesque" houses, and "An Old House Improved." It would be a mighty picky customer who couldn't find something to like in that list!

And the customers really must have liked what they found. Shoppell printed endorsements from happy clients in Fernandina, Florida; Portland, New Brunswick, Canada; Titusville, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; Bluffton, Ohio; Arcadia, Louisiana; and a myriad of towns across the United States and Canada. Barber had equally enthusiastic letters from an equally far-flung clientele. In fact, mail-order plans traveled to Europe, South Africa, and even China and Japan.

Prices for the books ranged from 25¢ to \$5; annual subscriptions to quarterly catalogues cost about \$3. The catalogues relied heavily on advertising to pay for their costs. The Pallisers were able to sell their first little volume for 25¢ because half of its 44 pages were devoted to ads for building-related products. Shoppell's illustrated quarterly, *Modern Houses*, had 24 pages of drawings and text and 15 pages of ads in its October 1889 issue. The ads touted everything from paint to weathervanes, gas furnaces, porch balusters, and metal shingles — not to mention bathtubs, earth closets, and window-sash cord!

And who were the planmakers? Barber appears to have been his own chief designer, supervising a staff of about

30 draftsmen (not necessarily experienced) and 20 secretaries. The Pallisers appear also to have produced their own plans, although their designs sometimes closely resemble the published work of other architects. Shoppell boasted a large and varied pool of professional designers in many locations. Comstock (a publisher, not an architect) and Fred T. Hodgson, compiler of *Hodgson's Low Cost American Homes* and other books for Frederick J. Drake & Company, also used the work of many different architects. (Comstock and Hodgson offered only stock plans, not customized service.)

Thousands of these long-distance dream houses still exist. Can they be identified? Sometimes. On occasion, a house matches a published plan perfectly. More likely, the plan was altered in the building phase, or added to, simplified, modernized, mutilated, or repaired beyond recognition sometime in its hundred-year career. Take Barber's own home in Knoxville, Tennessee, for instance (see page 41): Design No. 60 in *Cottage Souvenir No. 2*. It once had cresting at the roofline and a big corner turret — now lost, presumably to decay. With some thought, it's still recognizable as a Barber design, but it's not as suggestive of Barber's zanily eclectic style as it once was.

Owners who want to verify the plan-book origins of their 19th-century residence should first gain a good understanding of the range of design sources. (A number of recent reprints makes that easier; see the list on page 58.) The most telling evidence, however, comes from documents, either for the house or for one like it nearby. Given the possibilities for correspondence back and forth, the paper trail was often lengthy and still exists for some houses. Architectural historian Michael A. Tomlan, for instance, began a decades-long study of plan books and their architects when he found a stash of Barber papers in the attic of his own Victorian home.

Plans-by-mail continued into the 20th century (and up to this very day, in fact, as a glance at pages in OHJ and other shelter publications will confirm). The idea acquired even greater substance when such mail-order giants as Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and Aladdin entered into the logical development of pre-fabricated houses — which, incidentally, Barber had pioneered, and in which the Pallisers and other mail-order plan architects had participated to varying degrees. But that is a tale best left for another day.



Michael A. Tomlan kindly provided information and photographs of Barber houses he has identified. Susan G. Pearl shared her photographs and a pre-publication glimpse of her book Victorian Pattern-Book Houses in Prince George's County, Maryland (see page 58).

We also received photos of two documented Barber designs from the owners or their representatives in Texas and Tennessee, and now our appetite has been really aroused! We would appreciate hearing from owners of other houses by mail-order architects. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 263, Strasburg, VA 22657. — J.M. & S.M.

Old-House Living . . .

Up Against the Wall Stencilling



by
**John and Susan
Omohundro**



We didn't know anything about wall stencils when we moved into our 150-year-old sandstone house in upstate New York. We certainly didn't know there were any *in* the house. But as we removed some 20th-century wallpaper in our bedroom, we discovered geometric and floral patterns in red, green, and blue on the original plaster walls! At first we were puzzled by our find — then intimidated by its implications. Should we repaper the walls, hire an expert to repair the stencilled designs, or tackle a restoration ourselves? We couldn't decide. Ultimately, owning this house makes us stewards of history, and the responsibility was ours to protect and restore these odd pictures. So . . . what began as a quick little papering job turned into two years of research, and practice in the 19th-century craft of wall stencilling.

We had a lot to learn and our first step was to read everything we could find on the subject. Although the body of literature on historic stencilling is small, we found one extremely useful book that depicted patterns from Vermont and central New York, which were similar to ours. In *Early American Stencils* (William Scott, 1937; reprinted by Dover, 1968), author Janet Waring approaches the subject as a folklorist — we loved that, being anthropologists.

The museums of rural New York and New England were another excellent resource. We examined the stencilled walls at the Shelburne¹, the Genesee Country Museum², The Farmers' Museum³, and the Society for Protection of New England Antiques⁴, and searched their archives for clues to the provenance of our patterns and the identity of the stenciller. Conservators at these museums graciously responded to our requests. They suggested installing sun screens in the windows to reduce fading, applying transparent fixer to preserve the original stencils, and hiring a professional to restore those that were in poor condition. We were grateful for expert advice, but now felt we'd *really* gotten in over our heads — we had neither the money nor the experience to tackle this project properly.

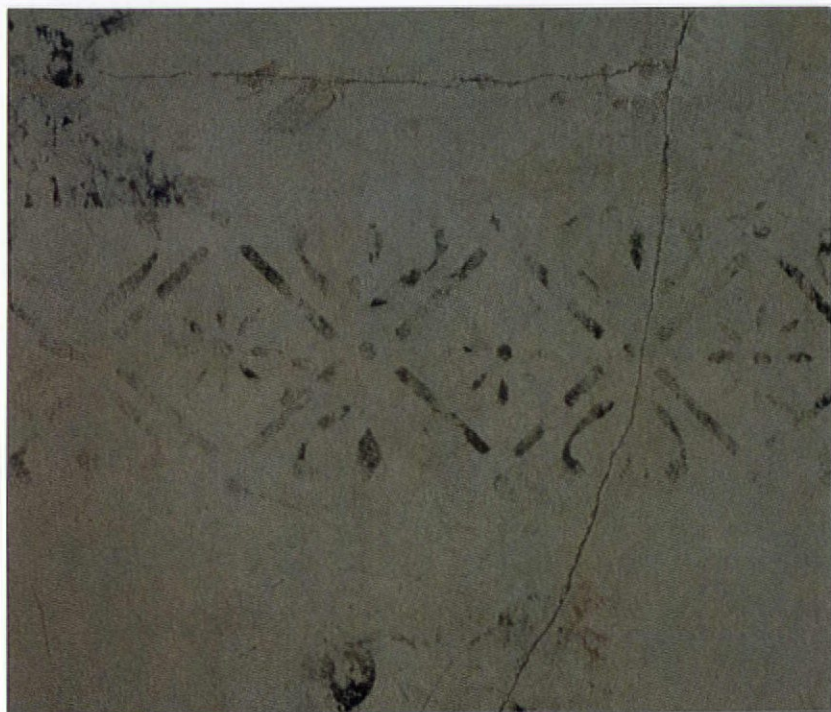
Fortunately, three artisans came to our rescue. Through "old-house" friends — how could anyone survive without such a network — we were introduced to the county's stencilling specialists, Sigrid and Cheryl, who instructed us in the basics of cutting patterns and applying paint. Practicing with these artisans gave us the confidence to tackle re-stencilling entire walls. The Shelburne Museum put us in contact with Philip Parr of Rochester, New York. Mr. Parr, whose avocation was cataloguing the historic sten-

cilled houses in New York State, came by to help us with initial tracings. He also helped us place our stencils in regional and historical perspective.

What we learned from Philip Parr was sketchy but fascinating. Our 1838 house was built near the end of the period when stencilling was a popular substitute for wallpaper. The man who founded our hamlet and built our house was from Vermont. We have not discovered any other stencilled houses in our county, so we imagine that this prosperous mill owner and his wife adhered to an older decorative style when they built their house. They may have brought a stenciller from Vermont, because our walls have patterns which copy those of Moses Eaton, Sr.

(1753-1833), the famous New Hampshire-based stenciller whose work is featured in Janet Waring's book. We gave up expecting to find the identity of the original stenciller. We don't even know of any other examples of his work, although he clearly provided his clients, our predecessors in this house, with carefully executed, elaborate designs of poppies, thistles, rose vines and grapevines, swags and meanders, urns and anthemions, interspersed with a myriad of balls, diamonds, and stars.

After a year or so of research into the history and application of such designs, we felt we were ready to attempt restoration. We relied on what the artisans had taught us, more or less inventing other procedures as we worked.



Above: The original (c. 1838) stencils John and Susan discovered on the plaster walls in their bedroom.

Left: Repairing the wall was necessary before stencilling could be tackled.

The first hurdle was determining how to make "invisible" repairs to the bare plaster walls. Most of the 150-year-old lime plaster was sound, but there were numerous unsightly white speckle streaks and sections of grey plaster applied in the 1940s. John concocted camouflaging formulas using various pigments in assorted forms, daubing these on with brushes or sponges to achieve a mottled, sandy-grey surface resembling the aged plaster wall. Sometimes many experiments were necessary to make a once-ugly patch blend into the rest of the plaster.

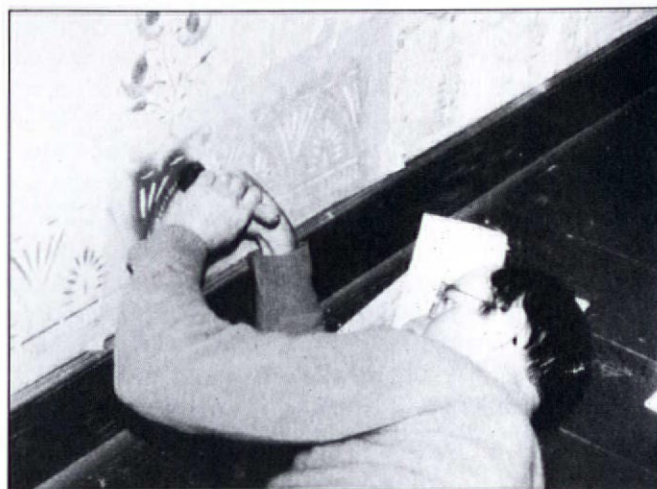
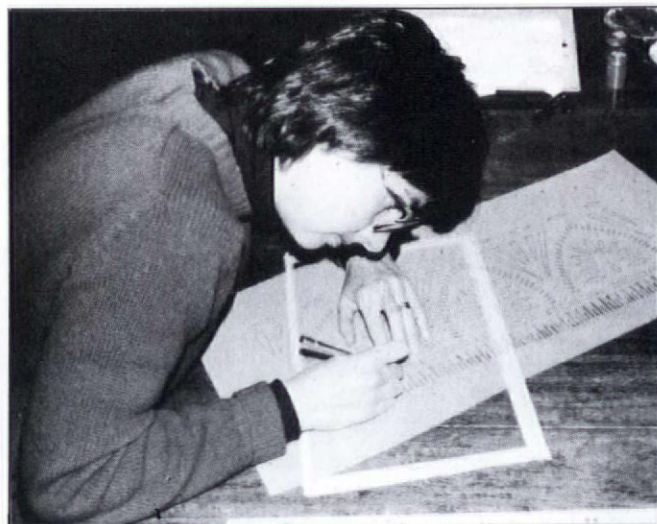


In the meantime, Susan traced all the designs onto clear acetate using a fine-point engineer's pen. The stencil paint had faded and worn, so she needed to examine many specimens across a wall to assemble an accurate outline of a leaf or blossom. Then she'd make a smoothed, permanent copy on heavy paper. Using a photographer's light table simplified this step. Next she traced the design onto heavy (4 mil) Mylar sheets, using a pencil. She cut this out with a razor knife, supporting the Mylar on a pane of glass. Another hurdle was finding the right paint in the ad-





Susan meticulously traced stencil designs onto clear acetate (upper right) before she and John applied stencils to the wall (above and bottom right).



appropriate colors. After phone calls to Philip, and several experiments, we decided upon a milk paint resembling the one used for the originals. It doesn't dry on the brush as quickly as Japan enamel or acrylic, and brushes can be easily cleaned with water. Our milk-based paint formula was simply four tablespoons powdered skim milk, $\frac{7}{8}$ cup of water, and a tablespoon of hydrated lime, which hardens the milk casein into a durable paint. Dry pigment is then added to this mixture to produce color — we purchased some in two-pound bags from Fezandie and Sperrie, a New Jersey paint manufacturer.

The colors used in the original designs were Prussian blue, Venetian red, and a dark olive green made from yellow ochre, Prussian blue, and whiting. The new blue and red were exact matches of the originals, but the green was more difficult to re-create largely because the original shade had been applied in varying hues. Furthermore, our powdered pigments didn't blend into a stable compound, so we were constantly testing and adjusting the green paint.

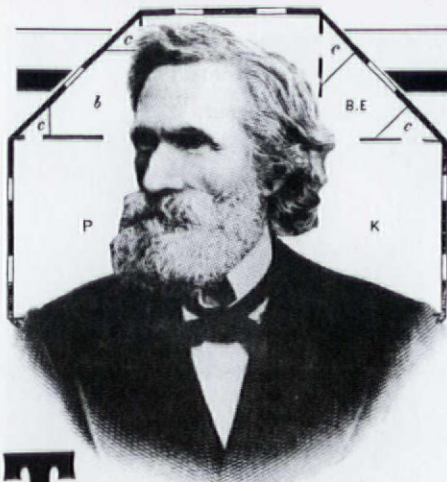
Two years after pulling down the bedroom wallpaper, we were at last ready to re-apply the stencils to our walls. This stage was relatively easy, fun, and rewarding — the big payoff for the hundreds of hours of preparation. It took only about five minutes to tape a Mylar template in place and pat on the color with a round stencil brush. We re-

tained the vivid coloring of the originals and made soft, faded repairs around the designs that had survived intact. We left the best surviving examples of each design untouched.

The winter after we finished the bedroom stencils, we began restoring the complementary patterns we found under the wallpaper in the upstairs and downstairs hall. We were happy to discover that this project was much easier than the first. There's plenty more work to be done, though; John discovered that his study walls are covered with more stencil patterns, and the back bedroom wallpaper is probably hiding some sort of design, too. *Most* of the rooms were, in fact, stencilled. We plan to restore all that we've found, but some plaster walls have been long-ago painted rather than wallpapered, and the stencils hidden there are beyond saving.

What other historical treasures lurk in this house, we don't know. But if something pops up, sending us into archives and compelling us to take up an arcane hobby, we'll be prepared. Our adventures in stencilling have tempered our steel — we're ready for the next surprise! 🏠

1. Route 7, Shelburne, Vermont.
2. Flint Road, Mumford, New York
3. Lake Road, Cooperstown, New York
4. Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts



ORSON SQUIRE FOWLER

by Jeff Wilkinson

The popularizer of the octagon house was not a professional or even amateur architect. He was a phrenologist. Orson Squire Fowler was born in 1809 in Cohocton, New York. He worked on his father's farm before attending Amherst College. His plans to study for the ministry were transformed by a lecture given by Johann Spurzheim, a Viennese doctor who was busy bringing the doctrine of phrenology to America. The new science of phrenology, which in brief holds that a person's character can be interpreted by studying characteristics of the cranium (i.e., reading the bumps on his head), had such an impact on Fowler that upon graduation he began a practice with his brother Lorenzo. They were soon regarded as two of the nation's top experts. Along with lecturing and private readings, the Fowlers began publishing *The American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*, which survived into the 20th century. Walt Whitman served briefly as editor in the 1850s.

Today, the subject of phrenology usually attracts labels such as quackery, fad, and folly, but in Fowler's day it was seen as a serious attempt to study the brain and its diseases. In fact, it is linked with the beginnings of modern psychiatry. As a physician and publisher, Fowler associated himself with many reforms, including bloomers (anti-lacing), vegetarianism, water cure, and teetotalism. It was only natural that, when it came time for him to build his own country house with the money he'd made, he would assume the role of a reformer in house design. It is thus with a

health criteria that Fowler began writing his book *A Home for All*. Never did he think that he would be remembered a century later as a designer rather than as a doctor.

Being a phrenologist and a great believer in basing design on nature, Fowler held that the circle and sphere were the ideal forms for the house. What would look more like the head! He also cared a great deal for low-cost housing, and knew that mathematically a circle encloses the greatest amount of area with the least perimeter, which he assumed would reduce costs. Though a symbol of perfection, circles are difficult to build, so Fowler compromised on the octagon. The first edition of his book was published in 1850. The following year, while lecturing in Wisconsin, he came upon a house addition built by Joseph Goodrich, which had walls made entirely of lime, coarse gravel, and sand, applied in the manner of poured concrete. So impressed was Fowler with this new material and its method of construction that he published a revised edition of his book in 1853, completely dedicated to what he termed "the gravel wall."

Fowler built his own house overlooking the Hudson River in Fishkill, New York, using this new, or rather rediscovered material. His house was three storeys high, and crowned with a glass-domed cupola with a fully planned and well lit basement level. The over sixty rooms showcased many of the design reforms he proposed, including such radical ideas as an indoor water closet underneath the central staircase, which contents were to be drained into an underground collection basin and then drained into the vegetable garden by the kitchen water runoff. Other im-

portant innovations included heat provided by a furnace, gas lines for interior lighting, ventilation and light in every room, and individual rooms for specific work and leisure-related activities such as an exercising room. At the time of its construction, it was probably the most modern house in America.

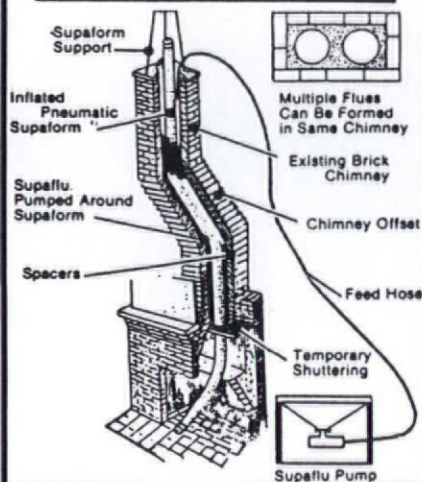
Fowler reaped the benefits from his popularity for a brief time. Octagon houses were being built all over the United States and Canada. Even P.T. Barnum, then the mayor of Bridgeport, Connecticut, erected one as a tourist attraction. The Panic of 1857 put a damper on the octagon, dooming it and its lifestyle as a fad. Fowler was forced to sell the building in 1859, when it was converted to a boardinghouse. Unfortunately, seepage from the cesspool threatened the occupants with typhoid and the famed house in Fishkill was eventually abandoned. In 1890, youths from nearby Wappinger's Falls held a bizarre "witches' dance" and the building was condemned as a public hazard; "Fowler's Folly" was finally razed in 1897. As Fowler had died three years prior, he was saved the humiliation of seeing it destroyed. According to the demolition team, an extraordinary amount of dynamite was used to dispose of the house, giving testimony to its solidity.



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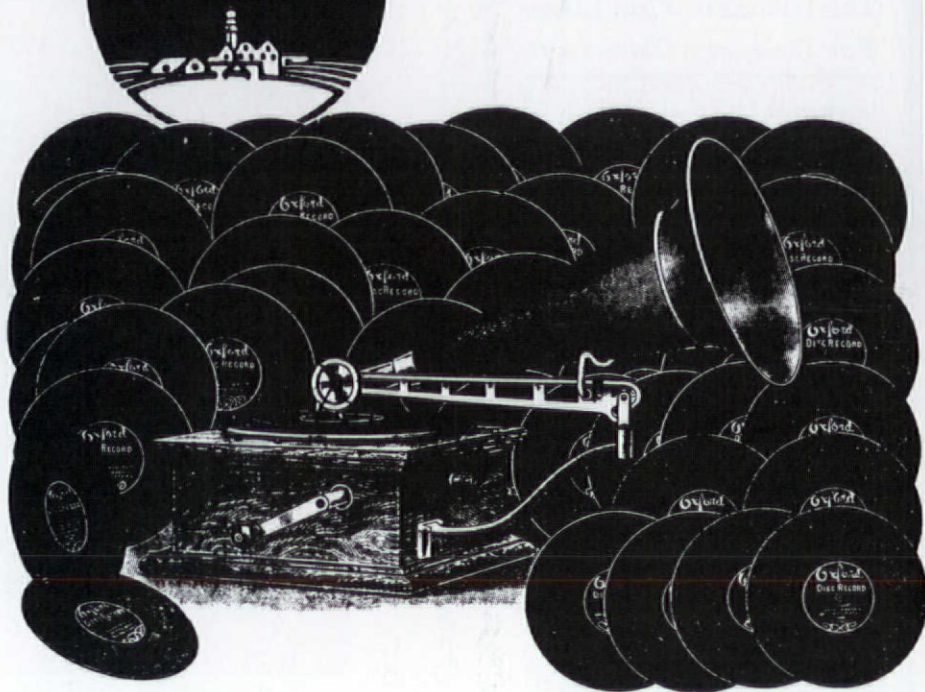
The earliest phonographs played cylinder records, fragile tube-shaped records made of wax material. In the 1890s, a new development appeared on the market. Designed to play discs, it featured sound projected through a large amplifying horn. Later this was incorporated into a speaker cabinet by the Victor Talking Machine Company of Camden, New Jersey, and this new phonograph or "Victrola" became a well known item in the household.

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REVIEWED BY
JEFF WILKINSON



Electric Icebox

It looks like an ordinary icebox, but open the doors and you'll find a modern refrigerator. For many years Charles Cushway has been collecting wood iceboxes. Simultaneously, he has been teaching refrigeration at Ferris State University, and it is no wonder that he has combined two of his interests.

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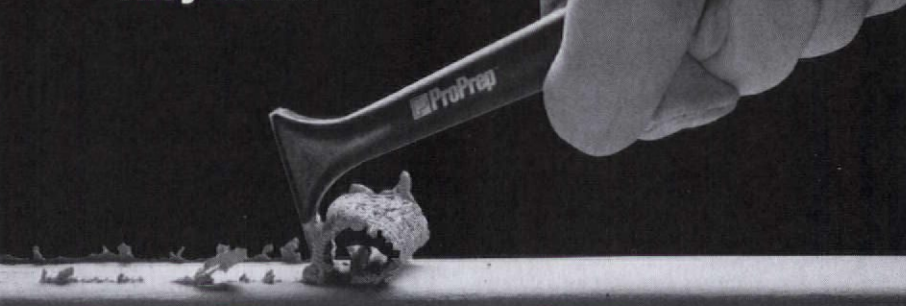
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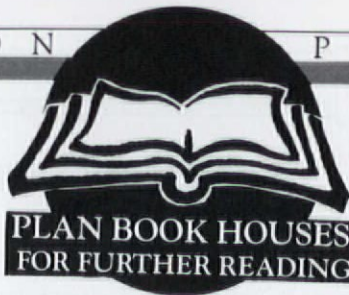
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Reprints still available in bookstores:

Bicknell's Victorian Buildings: Floor Plans and Elevations for 45 Houses and Other Structures. Reprint of Bicknell's Village Builder and Supplement (1878). (Dover Publications, Inc., 31 East 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501; 1979, \$6.95.)

Country Houses and Seaside Cottages of the Victorian Era. Reprint of William T. Comstock's American Cottages (1883). (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1989; \$4.95.)

Shoppell's Modern Houses, 1887 & How to Build, Furnish and Decorate, 1897. (Antiquity Reprints, Box 370, Rockville Center, NY 11571; \$7.95 ppd.)

Turn-of-the-Century Houses, Cottages,

and Villas: Floor Plans and Line Illustrations of 118 Homes from Shoppell's Catalogs. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1983; \$5.95.)

Victorian Pattern Book Houses in Prince George's County, Maryland by Susan G. Pearl. A new book on Shoppell and the Cooperative Building Plan Association's houses in Prince George's County. (Prince George's County Preservation Commission and the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, County Administration Building, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772)

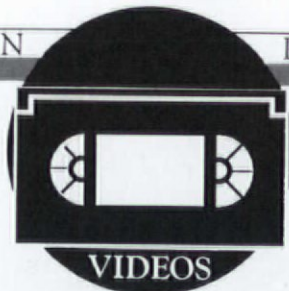
Check your library for these out-of-print editions:

George F. Barber's *The Cottage Souvenir No. 2.* (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: The American Life Foundation, 1982).

The Palliser's Late Victorian Architecture. Facsimile of George and Charles Palliser's Model Homes (1878) and American Cottage Homes (1878), as republished in 1888 under the title, American Architecture; and New Cottage Homes and Details (1887). (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: The American Life Foundation, 1978).

Palliser's Model Homes 1878. Reprint. (Fenton, California: Glenwood Publishers, 1972).

Palliser's New Cottage Homes and Details. Reprint of 1887 ed. (New York: DaCapo, 1989).



Furniture Repair and Refinishing with Bob Flexner

As most Old-House Journal readers also own old or antique furniture, these two videos will be of great use, not only for furniture, but also for restoring interior cabinetwork. The award-winning "Repairing Furniture" video (70 minutes) discusses and demon-



strates how to clamp problem pieces like round tabletops and curved table legs, disassemble pieces safely, mend broken parts, match missing mouldings, reglue or replace damaged veneer, and how to use various glues, including hide glue.

"Refinishing Furniture" (60 minutes) covers the how-to aspects of removing and applying varnish, shellac, oils, and waxes. Some very good tips on stripping old finishes and removing water stains are included. The tapes sell for \$29.95 each and both include a companion booklet. The Taunton Press, 63 South Main

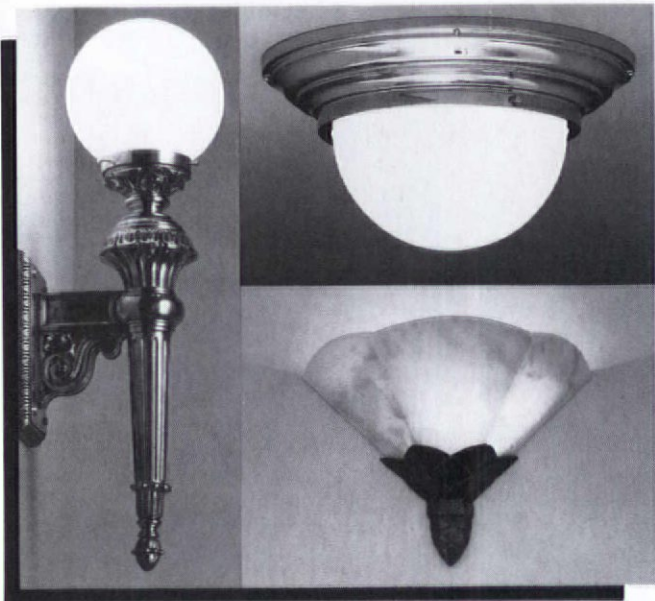
St., Box 355, Dept. OHJ, Newtown, CT 06470; (203) 426-8171.

Installing Trim with Craig Savage

Although the focus is new construction, this 60-minute video demonstrates how to solve many problems OHJ readers may encounter when refitting moulding or when replacing missing moulding with newly made pieces. Savage covers many tricks of the trade for cutting and fitting moulding. Companion booklet included. Price is \$29.95. The Taunton Press, 63 South Main St., Box 355, Dept. OHJ, Newtown, CT 06470; (203) 426-8171.



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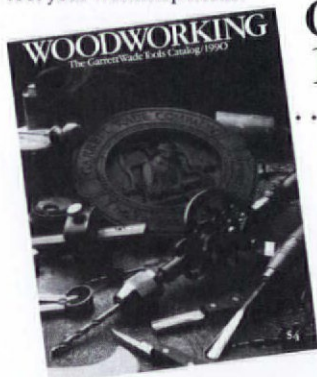
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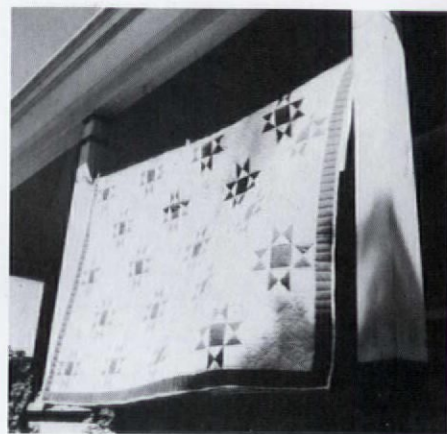
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an additional cost. Pictured right is the "Ohio Star." The cost for a queen-size quilt is \$625 ppd. Catalog available. Dutch Country Designs, 2404 Bellevue Rd., Dept. OHJ, Harrisburg, PA 17104; (717) 238-9043.



Chintz Prints

Gore Place Glazed Chintz is among the line of historic fabrics offered by Brunschwig & Fils. The pattern is composed of flowers surrounding a pillar, and was taken from an 1805 English block print used at Gore Place, the home of Christopher Gore, seventh governor of Massachusetts. Offered in four colorings, (the original blue and gold, as well as red and beige), the all-cotton fabric is available to the trade only. Brunschwig & Fils, 75 Virginia Rd., Dept. OHJ, North White Plains, NY 10603-0905; (914) 684-5800.



Historic Charleston Fabric

Founded in 1929 by the late Franco and Flora Scalamandr , the textile firm of Scalamandr  has been involved in many of the most prestigious restoration projects in the country, including the restoration of both Monticello and Mt. Vernon. Recently the firm was involved in producing a collection of fabrics based on many of the fine fabrics found in Charleston's exquisite 18th- and 19th-century homes. Pictured below from left to right are Carolina Damask, Plantation Palampore, and two colorings of Harborside Garden. Available to the trade only. Scalamandr , 37-24 24th St., Dept. OHJ, Long Island City, NY 11101; (718) 361-8500.

Afghans

The Goodwin family has been weaving since 1812, when John Goodwin set up a small silk-weaving business in Macclesfield, England. The family eventually immigrated to Maryland, and by the end of the 19th century had operated mills in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. The business is now located in North Carolina, where their mills continue to produce fine woven products. This Lover's Knot afghan, left, which measures 50" x 70" and is all cotton, is available in rose, delft, navy, cranberry red, and hunter green. Price is \$42.95 ppd. Goodwin Weavers, P.O. Box 16, Dept. OHJ, Blowing Rock, NC 28605; (704) 295-3577.



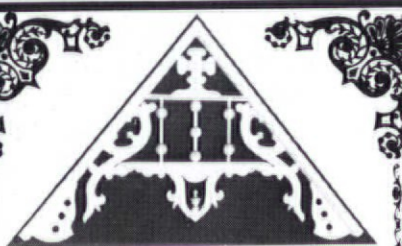


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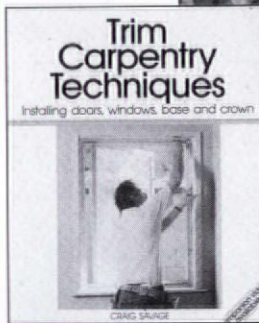
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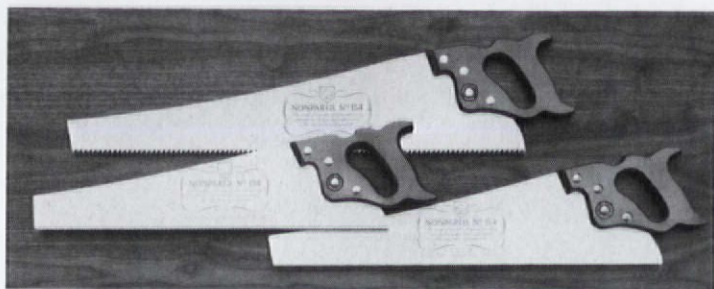
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Hand Saws

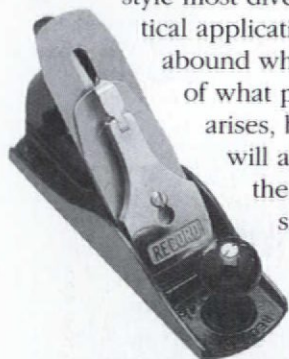
Owning good cross-cut and rip saws seems like an essential item on the home-restorer's tool list. However, they are often overlooked as the restorer acquires electric-powered table, circular, and jig saws. Hand saws are thus often purchased after the tool collector realizes the multiple practical applications a well tuned hand tool affords. The cross-cut and rip saws displayed here are made by Nonpareil in England from



Sheffield steel, and should last a lifetime or two. A taper ground blade minimizes friction while cutting and the hollow-back design reduces weight and improves balance. Price for the 26" crosscut with 10 TPI (teeth per inch) or the 26" rip saw with 4-1/2 TPI is \$45 each, ppd. Woodcraft Supply Corp., 41 Atlantic Ave., P.O. Box 4000, Dept. OHJ, Woburn, MA 01888; (617) 935-8560.

Smoothing Plane

There are at least a dozen styles of planes, but bench planes are the style most diverse in their practical applications. Arguments abound when the question of what plane to buy first arises, but most experts will agree that owning the 9-3/4", #4 smoothing plane by Record of England is a worthwhile investment. If you need to edge join boards and square doors, you can then jump to the 18" fore plane,



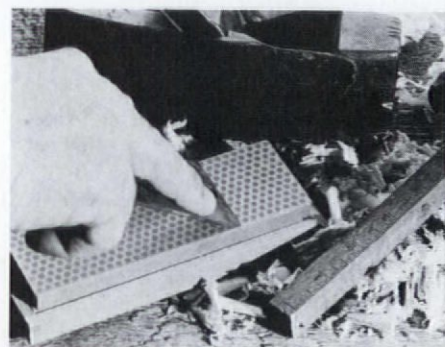
or 22" jointer plane.

Cutters are made of tungsten vanadium and feature an adjustable frog. Plane body is made of cast iron and knobs are hardwood. Price is \$49.95 plus shipping. Garrett Wade, 161 Ave. of the Americas, Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10013; 1-800-221-2942 (in N.Y. state, 212-807-1757).

speed steel. Pictured below is the 8" coarse stone which comes in a redwood case. Also available are fine and extra coarse. Price is \$70 ppd. Diamond Machining Technology, Inc., 85 Hayes Memorial Drive, Dept. OHJ, Marlborough, MA 01752-1892; (508) 481-5944.

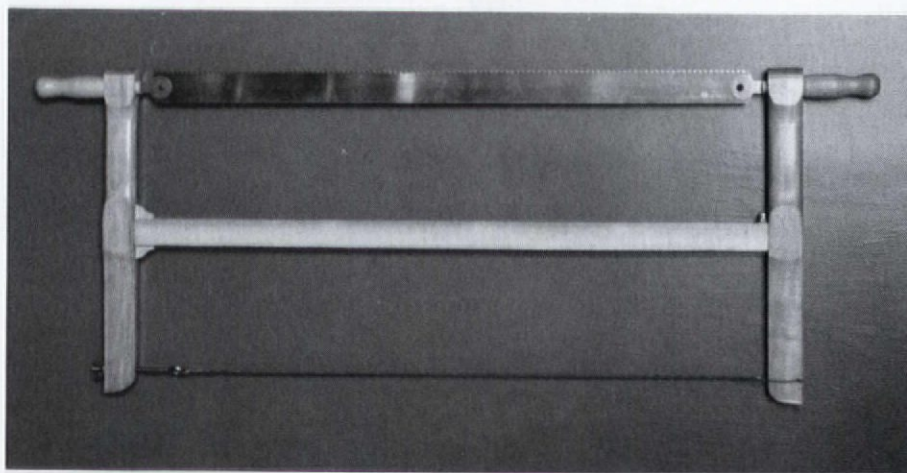
Diamond Hones

Keeping tools sharp is as important as the tools. A new development in sharpening technology is an abrasive surface made from diamonds embedded in a metal surface. Normal steel tools are sharpened more quickly, as well as tungsten carbide and high-



Bow Saw

A saw often used in Europe but overlooked in this country is the bow saw. It functions like a bandsaw, minus the motor. Depending on which blade style is used, the bow saw can rip or crosscut through thick stock, plus it can be used to cut the fine scrollwork needed for decorative brackets. Made from red beechwood and Swedish steel, the price for the 28" model is \$23.60 ppd. Frog Tool Co. Ltd., P.O. Box 8325, Dept. OHJ, Chicago, IL 60680; (312) 648-1270.



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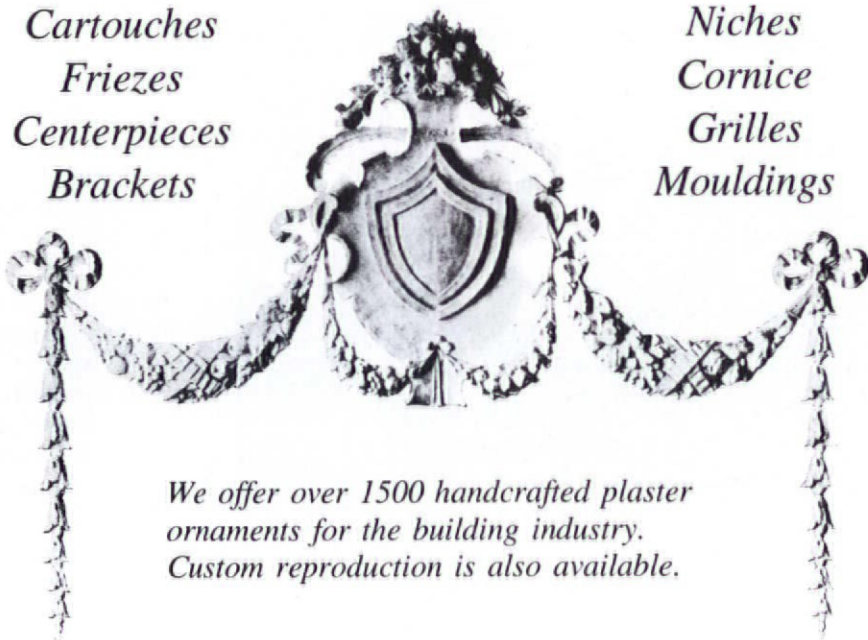
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HISTORIC HOUSE PLANS



Mail-order plans have a long history in shaping the residential architecture of the country. Of the thousands of house plans available today, few exhibit good design and a grasp of historical proportion and detail. So, in response to requests from OHJ readers, the editors have "done the homework": We've hand-picked plans. In each issue, we offer the most attractive, authentic, and buildable of the historical designs, from all periods of American architectural history. Let us know what plans you're looking for.

You can order actual blueprints for all the houses featured. Plans conform to national building-code standards — however, *modifications are usually necessary for your site and local requirements, so you'll probably need the assistance of a professional designer (your builder may qualify) or an architect.*

For the houses shown in this issue, blueprints include:

- **Foundation plan** for basement or crawlspace. (Crawlspace plans can easily be adapted for full basements by your builder.)
- **Detailed floor plans** showing all dimensions for framing, plus detailed layout and location of electrical and plumbing components.
- **Interior elevations** are included in some plans, showing interior views of kitchen, bath, fireplace, built-ins, and cabinet designs.
- **A window and door schedule.**
- **Building cross sections:** cornice, fireplace, and cabinet sections when needed to help your builder understand major interior details.

- **Framing diagrams** that show layouts of framing pieces and their locations for roof, first and second floors.
- **Energy-saving specs**, including vapor barriers, insulated sheathing, caulking and foam-sealant areas, batt insulation, and attic exhaust ventilators.

Why order multiple sets? If you're serious about building, you'll need a set each for the general contractor, mortgage lender, electrician, plumber, heating/ventilating contractor, building permit department, other township use or interior designer, and one for yourself. Ordering the 8-set plan saves money and additional shipping charges.

Other notes: (1) Plans are copyrighted, and they are printed for you when you order. Therefore, they are *not refundable*. If you order additional sets of the same plan within 30 days of your original order, you can purchase them for \$15 each. (2) Mirror-reverse plans are useful when the house would fit the site better "flopped." For this you need one set of mirror-reverse plans for the contractor; but because the reverse plans have backwards lettering and dimensions, all other sets should be ordered right-reading. (3) Heating and air-conditioning layouts are not included. You need a local mechanical contractor to size and locate the proper unit for your specific conditions of climate and site.

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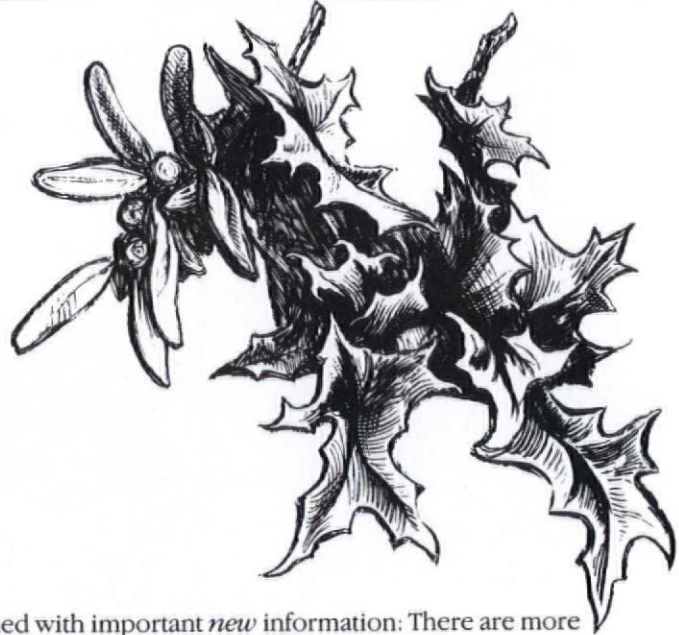
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The Old-House Journal Catalog is organized for easy use. Each company entry includes complete address and phone number, and lets you know what kind of literature

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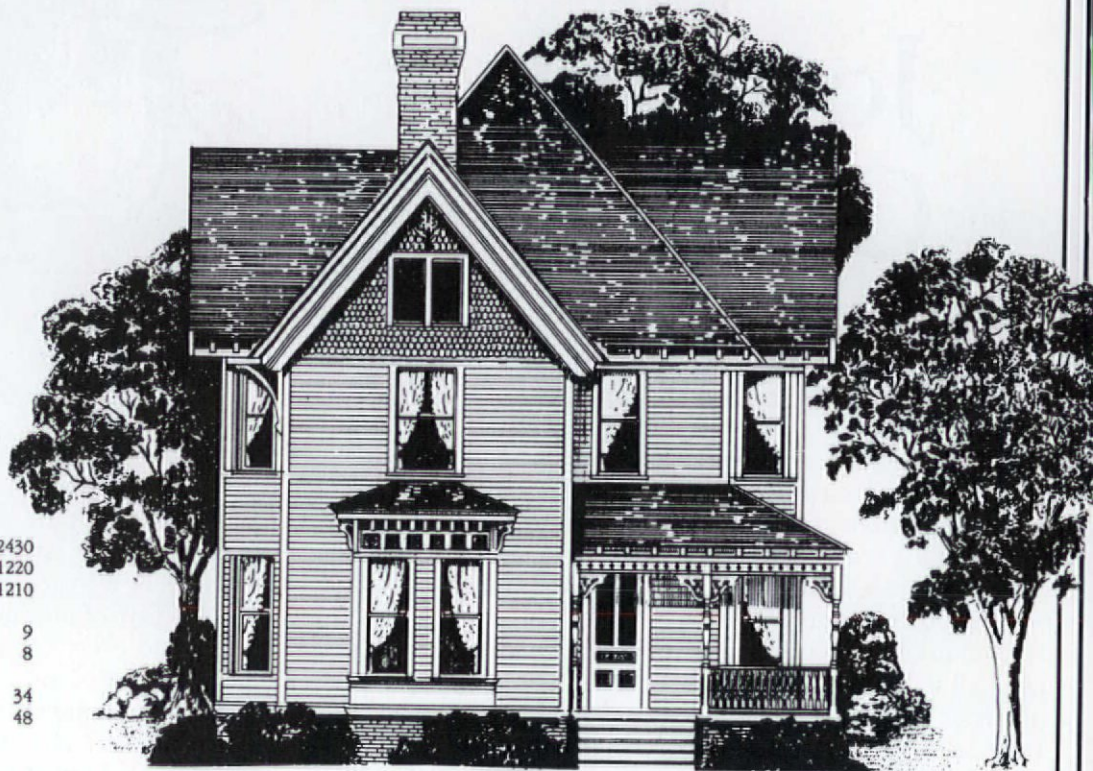


A BARBER DESIGN

Plan V-02A-HR

Cost: \$250
 \$300 (set of 5)
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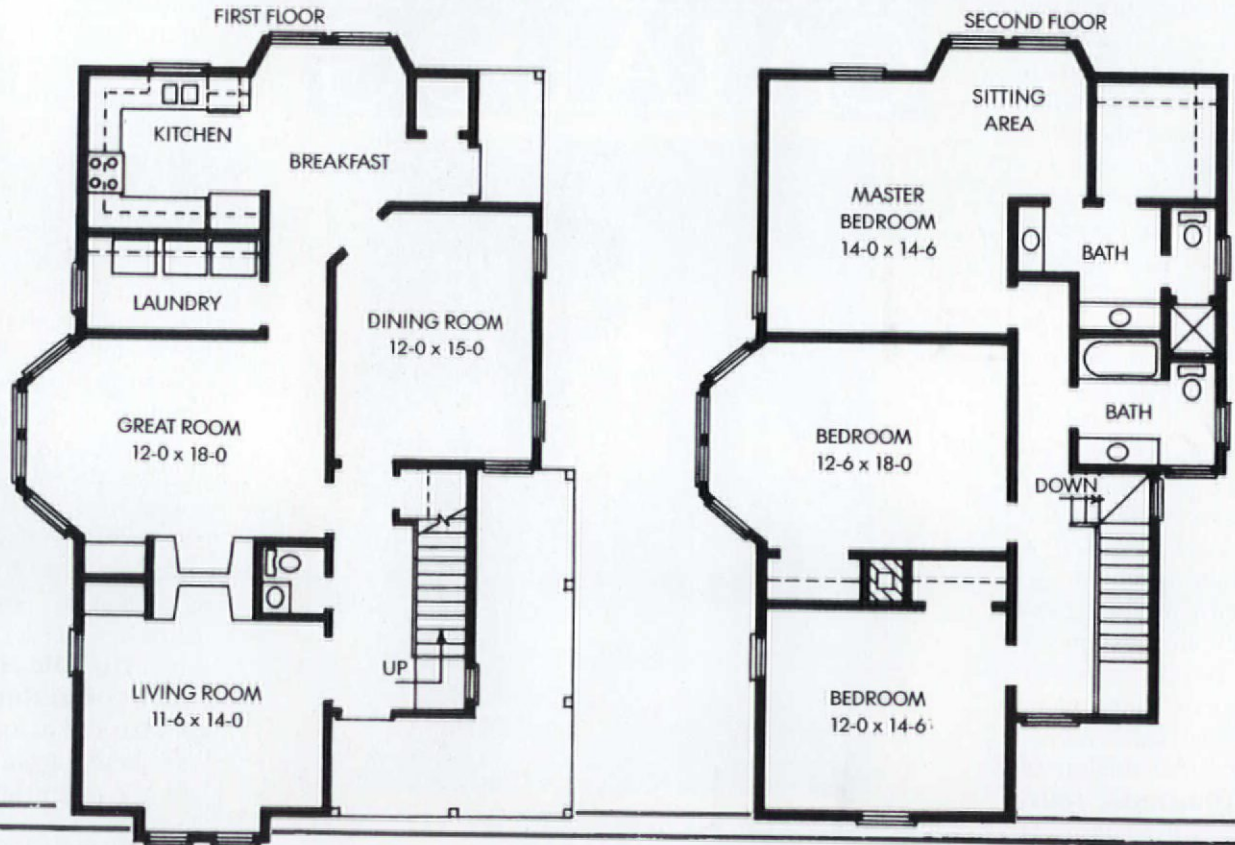
SQUARE FOOTAGE	2430
FIRST FLOOR	1220
SECOND FLOOR	1210
CEILING HEIGHT	
FIRST FLOOR	9
SECOND FLOOR	8
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	34
DEPTH	48

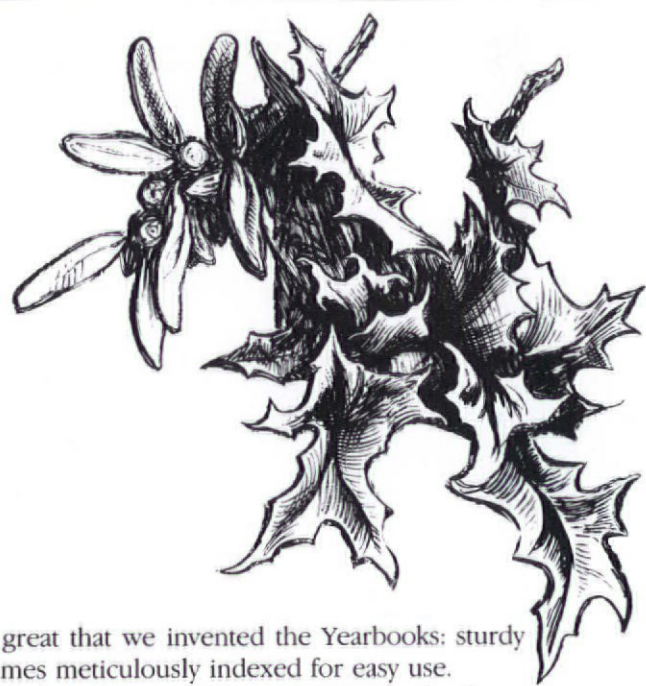
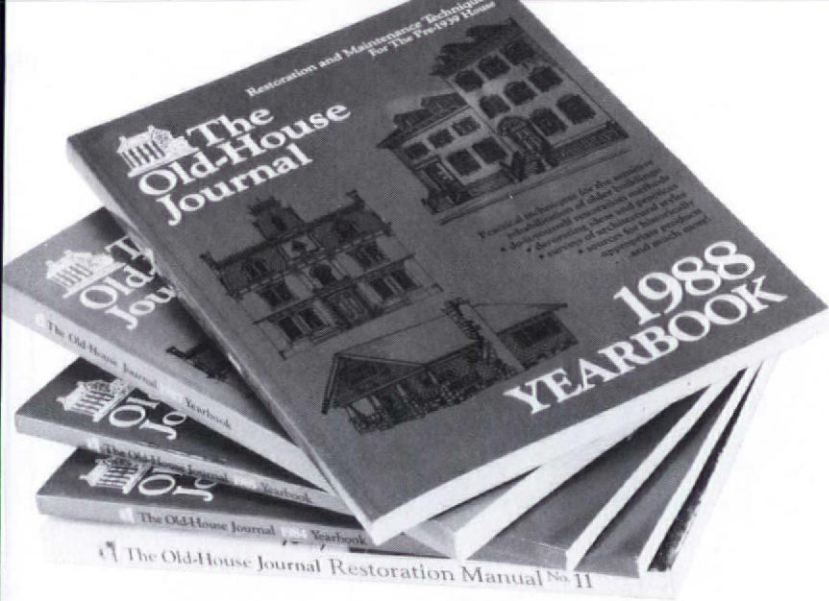


Speaking of planbook houses — and George Barber of Knoxville in particular: This is a slightly adapted design from Barber's *Cottage Souvenir*, published in 1890.

An excellent choice for a narrow lot, it has an updated

interior plan featuring a master suite with sitting area, and twin sinks in the bathroom. But like original Barber designs, the house has lively exterior details with the Queen Anne style's propensity for mixed textures and asymmetry.





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Over the years, as new readers signed up, they worried about what they'd missed. They knew that the how-to information already published in OHJ wasn't out of date — and that topics covered recently probably wouldn't appear again for years. The demand for single-copy back issues

became so great that we invented the Yearbooks: sturdy bound volumes meticulously indexed for easy use.

This year we're offering a full set of 1980s Yearbooks — nine volumes that include every article, every source, every tip published in OHJ from 1980 through 1988 — for \$99. That's \$63 off the cost of the Yearbooks purchased separately, and it includes a free copy of our Cumulative Index. We're also offering a five-volume set of the most recent OHJ editorial, 1984-1988, for \$59 — \$31 off the cost of the volumes purchased one by one. And our Cumulative Index is available too — for \$9.95.

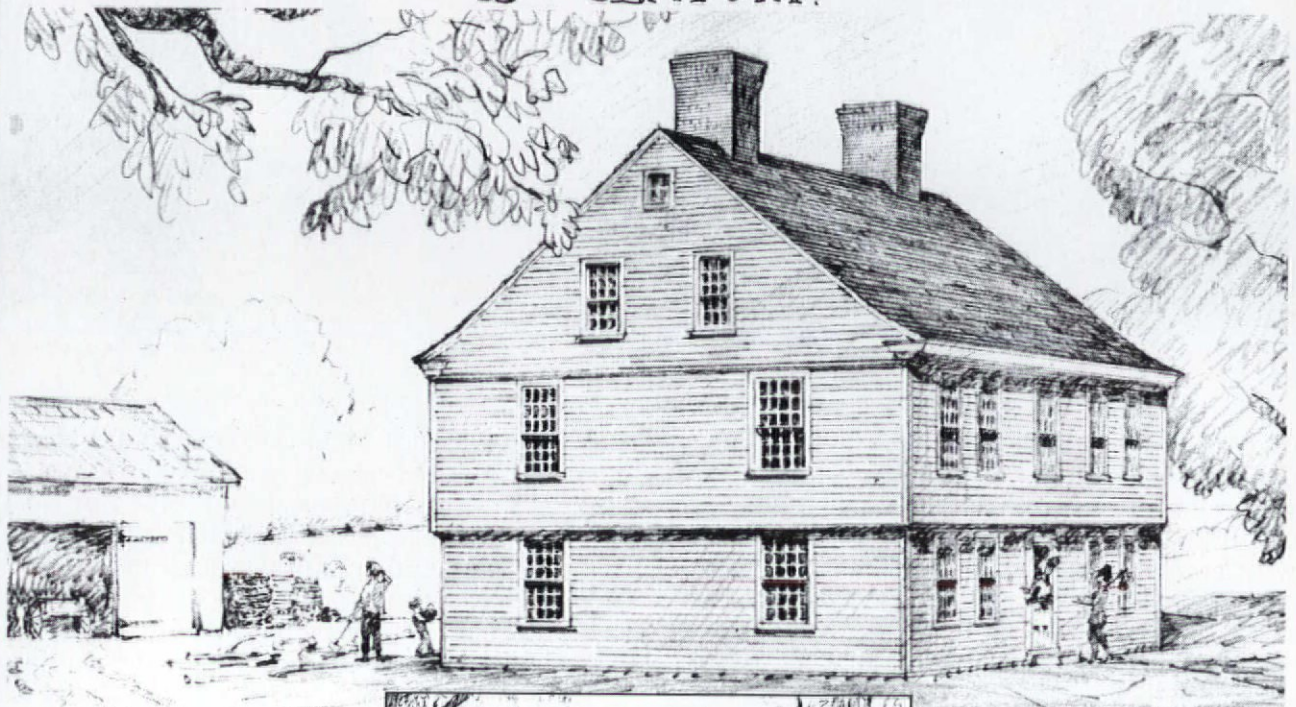
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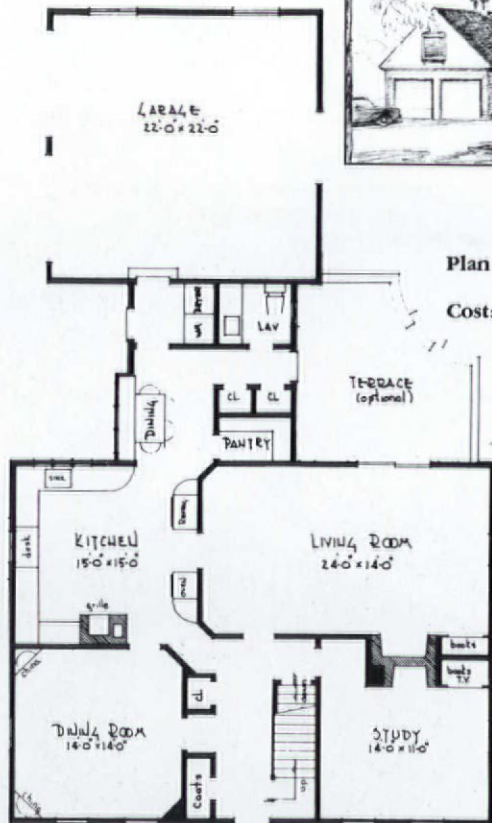


NEW ENGLAND FARMHOUSE, 18TH CENTURY.



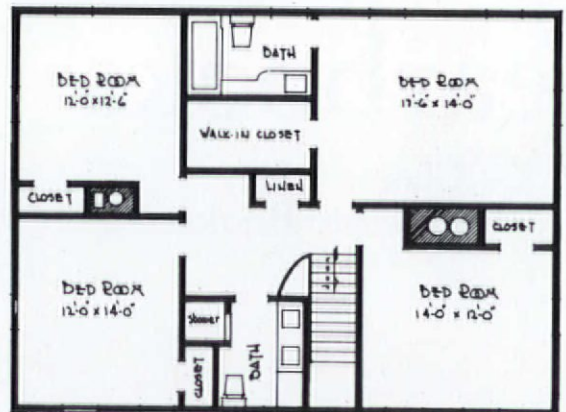
The large drawing portrays the original farmhouse. Plans are included for a garage at the rear, as shown in the inset.

SQUARE FOOTAGE	
FIRST FLOOR	1466
SECOND FLOOR	1270
CEILING HEIGHT	7-6
OVERALL DIMENSIONS	
WIDTH	40
DEPTH (HOUSE)	30
DEPTH (w/GARAGE)	68



Plan E-05A-EP

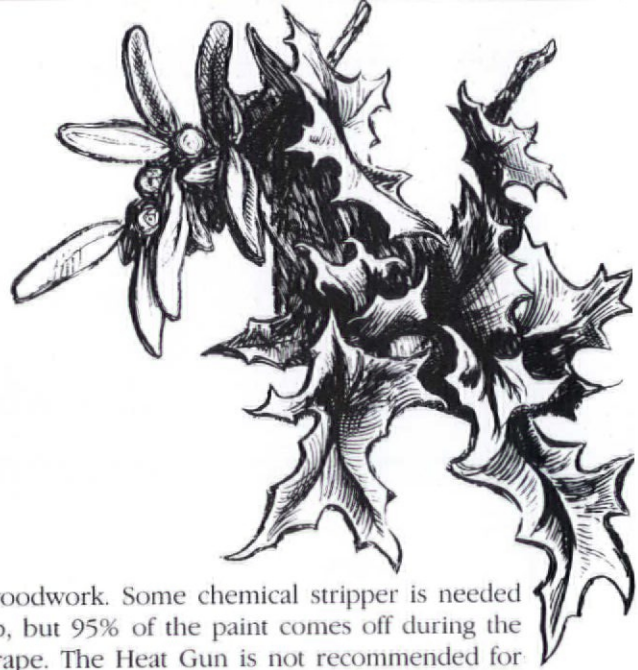
Cost: \$102
\$156 (set of 5)
\$186 (set of 8)



Planbook architecture may have had a heyday in the late Victorian period, but colonial-era house plans have been the most popular ever since. This is a unique early farmhouse, economical to build owing to its rectangular volume, yet distinctive in its second- and third-storey overhangs. Plans include a stair to the third floor.

Paint-Stripping Heat Tools

These are the tools OHJ editors reach for when we strip paint from our own houses.



We can't count the number of times we've been asked which method is *really* best for removing paint. Well, we've seen "miracle" paint removers come and go. We've watched chemical paint strippers almost triple in price in the past 15 years. We've tried just about every heat tool on the market. In our opinion, if you've got more than a door or two to do, heat is the way to go. And the heat tools we reach for when stripping paint from our own wainscot and newel posts are the Heavy-Duty HG-501 Heat Gun and the Warner Heat Plate.

Heat is a fast method because all the paint bubbles and lifts as you go along. There's no waiting for chemicals to soak in, no multiple recoatings, and far less clean-up. Unlike stripping with chemicals, you can remove all layers of paint in a single pass. And because these tools are long-lasting, industrial products, their initial expense is more than made up in savings on the \$18- to \$22-per gallon stripper you're no longer buying in quantity.

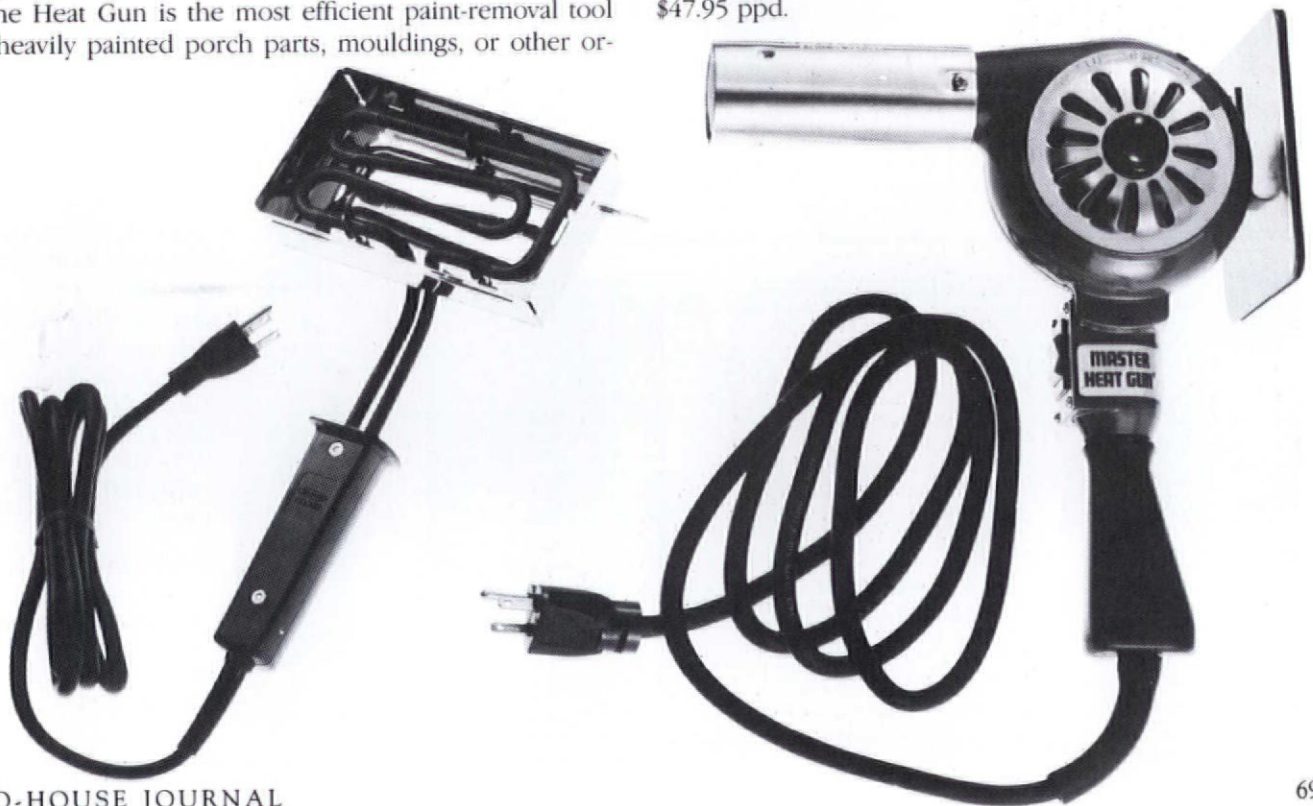
The Heat Gun is the most efficient paint-removal tool for heavily painted porch parts, mouldings, or other or-

namental woodwork. Some chemical stripper is needed for clean-up, but 95% of the paint comes off during the heat-and-scrape. The Heat Gun is not recommended for use on hollow partitions or for stripping entire exteriors.

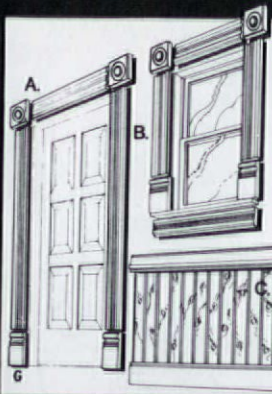
That's where the Heat Plate comes in handy. It's the most cost-effective and easy-to-use tool for stripping paint from broad, flat surfaces: doors, panelling, baseboards, and exterior wooden clapboards. And it's safer for use on hollow partitions and exterior cornices because there's no blown hot air that could ignite hidden dust. Neither the Heat Plate nor the Heat Gun are recommended for removing varnish.

Both the Heat Gun and the Heat Plate come with complete operating and safety instructions, and are backed by the Old-House Journal Guarantee: If your unit should malfunction for any reason within two months of purchase, simply return it to us and we'll replace it.

To purchase either or both heat tools, use the envelope order-form. The Heat Gun costs \$77.95 ppd; the Heat Plate, \$47.95 ppd.



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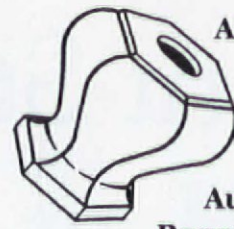
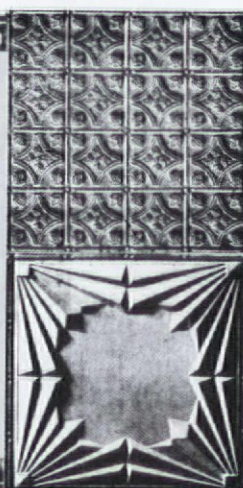
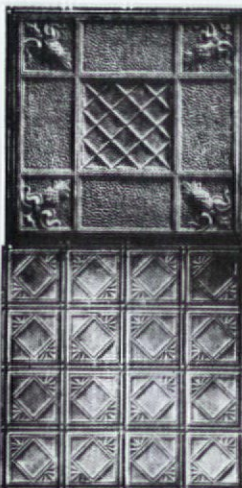
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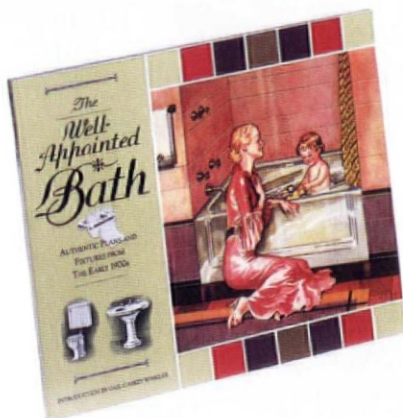
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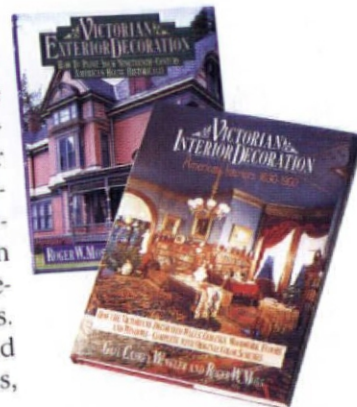
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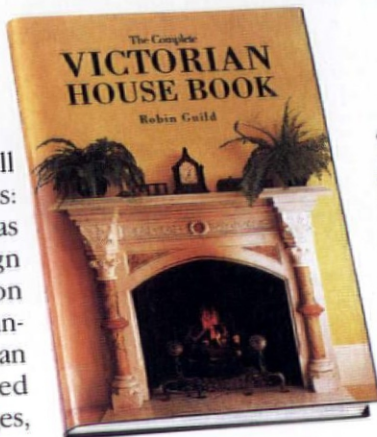
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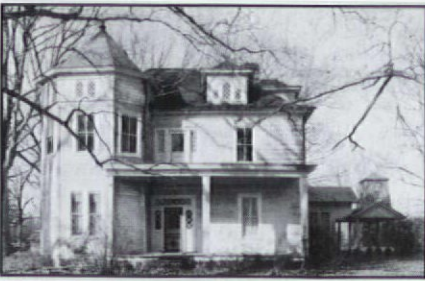
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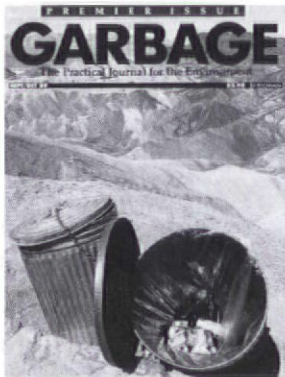
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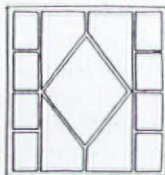
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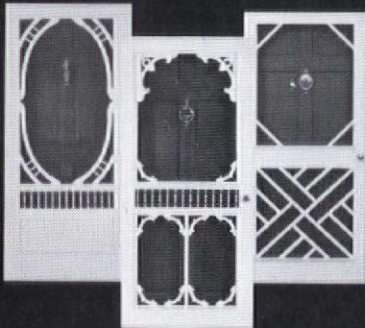
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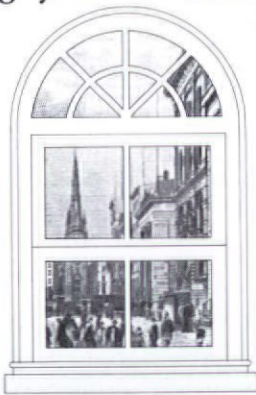
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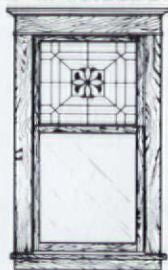
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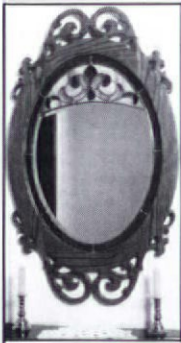
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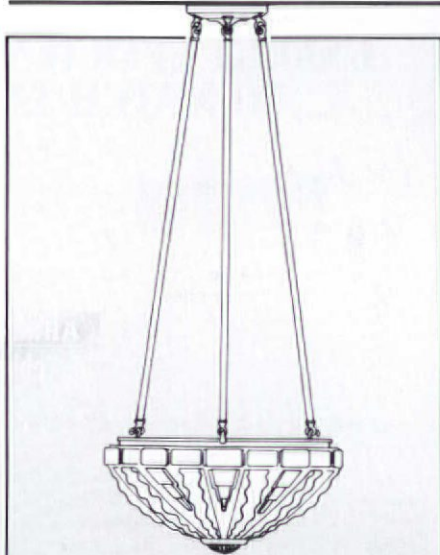
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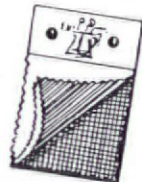
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MEETING AND EVENTS

CARRIAGE DISTRICT CHRISTMAS PARLOR TOUR, held December 2 and 3, from 1-5pm. This annual tour features a variety of turn-of-the-century structures, from the beautifully simple to the unique, including a Russian mosque-topped building! The tour is held in Corsicana, Texas, and will feature a "floating" choir, a tree-lighting ceremony, gifts, crafts and foods for sale. Ticket prices are \$4 in advance and \$6 at the door. For information, call Nancy Ann Snyder at (214) 872-0400.

THANKSGIVING AT OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE: Come to 1830's New England and explore the traditions of an early American Thanksgiving, November 18-26. Take part in an early 19th-century turkey shoot (with paper turkeys!), and join in the traditional meal on November 23. For info or reservations for dinner, contact: OSV, Visitor Services, 1 Old Sturbridge Village Road, Sturbridge, MA 01566, (508) 347-3362.

PARK HOUSE CHRISTMAS TOURS, visiting seven historic houses of Fairmount Park, will take place from December 1 through December 10, 10 am to 4 pm. This year's theme is "A Quilter's Christmas": each house will have quilts on beds and quilt racks. Crazy quilts, log cabin quilts,

double wedding ring, etc. will be featured, and a quilting demonstration will be given by Laurel Hill. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children. For information or group rates, call (215) 787-5449.

NINTH ANNUAL GHOST WALK: On Friday, October 27th, the ghosts of Olde Towne will come alive! The walk is based on the Jack-the-Ripper Walks in London, and takes spectators on a guided tour past the haunted houses and creaking mansions of Olde Towne, a 20-square block, 500-building area on the National Register. Tours leave from 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm, every ten minutes. Hot cider will be served. Tickets are \$3.00 for the 10-stop tour. For information, call Cathi Bunn at (804) 393-2011, or Doris Leitner at (804) 399-5487.

INTERPRETING COMMUNITY HISTORY Through Historic Sites: Behind the Scenes: On November 3-4, this conference, held at the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts, will focus on the ways Salem interprets its history through historic sites. Curators guide tours through the House of Seven Gables (1688) and others dated 1665 to 1768. Topics include choosing appropriate fabrics, wall and floor coverings, researching your own historic building. For further information, contact Conference Coordinator, Essex Institute, 132 Essex St., Salem, MA 01970, (508) 744-3390.

19TH ANNUAL HISTORIC OAKWOOD CANDLELIGHT TOUR, a self-directed holiday walking tour of several outstanding homes in Raleigh's original Victorian neighborhood, will be held Saturday & Sunday, December 16 & 17, from 1pm to 7pm daily. The Society for the Preservation of Historic Oakwood is a non-profit group dedicated to maintaining the historical value of Raleigh's downtown Victorian neighborhood. Tickets are \$5 in advance, \$6 the days of the tour, and \$2 for

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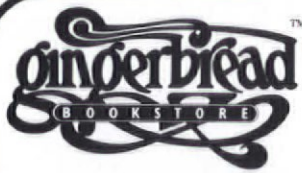
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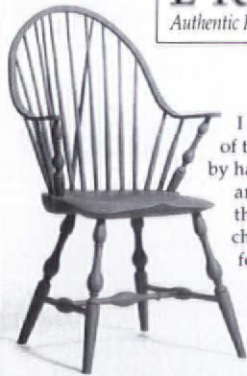


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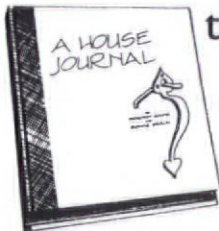
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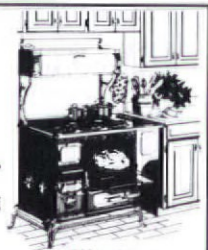
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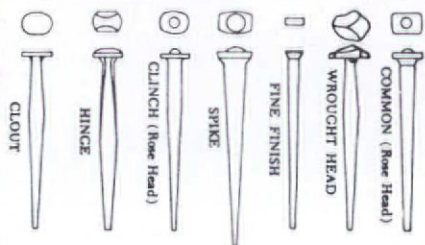


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21ST ANNUAL ANTIQUES SHOW AND SALE conducted by the Naperville Heritage Society, a not-for-profit organization, on November 3, 4 & 5, 1989 at Merner Fieldhouse, North Central College in Naperville, IL. Show opens at 11am each day. Admission is \$4 (good for all three days). Doll identification service, quilt raffle, door prizes, pre-emption house eatery, country store, free parking. For more information, call (312) 420-6010.

HISTORIC HOLIDAY HOMES — Visit five of Indianapolis' finest historic homes decorated for the holidays. One \$5 ticket is good for one visit to each of the houses during the month of December 1989. Tickets may be purchased by mailing a check or money order to: Historic Holiday Homes, President Benjamin Harrison Home, 1230 N. Delaware, Indianapolis IN 46202. For more information, call (317) 631-1898.

NEW BERN AT NIGHT — Tour this historic community's handsomest 18th to early 20th-century homes. Held on Saturday, November 11 from 5-9pm. Tour includes musical entertainment, wines and hors d'oeuvres. Sponsored by the New Bern Historical Society to fund its various programs. Advance tickets are \$17.50 each. For group rates, contact: New Bern At Night, PO Box 119, New Bern NC 28560 or call (919) 638-8558.

OLD HOME TOUR IN POMONA, CA: On December 3, six private residences in Pomona California's historic Lincoln Park and Ganesha Hills will be open to visitors. Various architectural styles will be featured. Crafts, collectibles, and refreshments will also be sold in the Park, and antique cars will be displayed in the Park and at

tour homes. Tour hours are from 11:00 to 5:00. Transportation will be available. Tickets are \$8 on tour day. Advance tickets can be purchased for \$6 by writing to Pomona Heritage, PO Box 2813, Pomona, CA 91769. Or call (714) 622-2756.

RESTORATION WORKSHOPS & BANQUET — November 10 & 11, 1989, Des Moines, IA. Sponsored by Iowa Chapter, Victorian Society in America, and Iowa State University Continuing Education in Architecture Office. Variety of "how to" workshops for both architects and the general public. Banquet speaker is Roy Graham, A.I.A., former architect of the Capitol at Austin, Texas. Registration required. Write: Iowa Chapter, VSA, 2940 Cottage Grove, Des Moines, IA 50311.

THE ANNUAL PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER HOLIDAY HOME TOUR will be held on Sunday, December 10, 1989, 2-5pm in the historic Garden District. Homes will be decorated in the holiday spirit, and local school music groups will serenade in each home. Local craftsmen will display their wares. Refreshments. Call (504) 581-7032.

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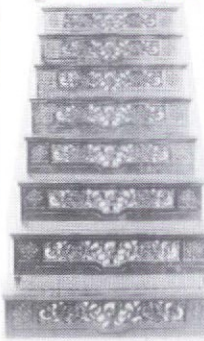
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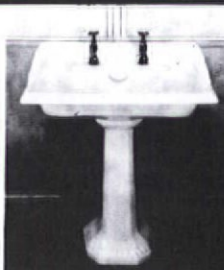
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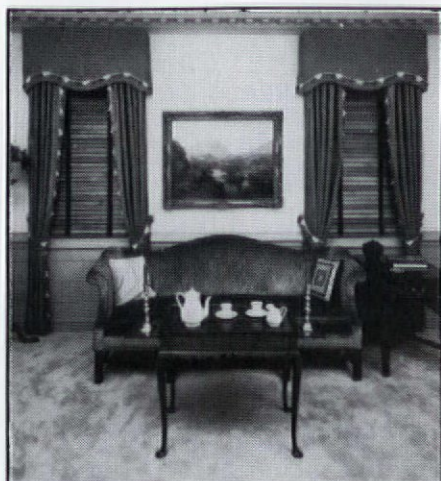
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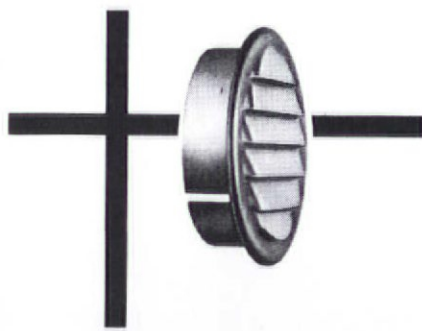
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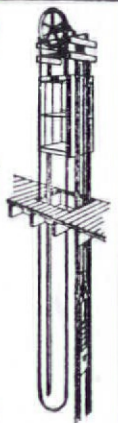
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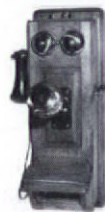


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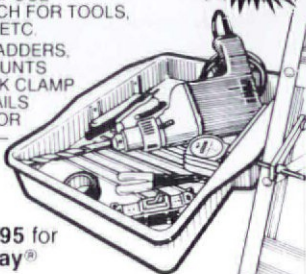
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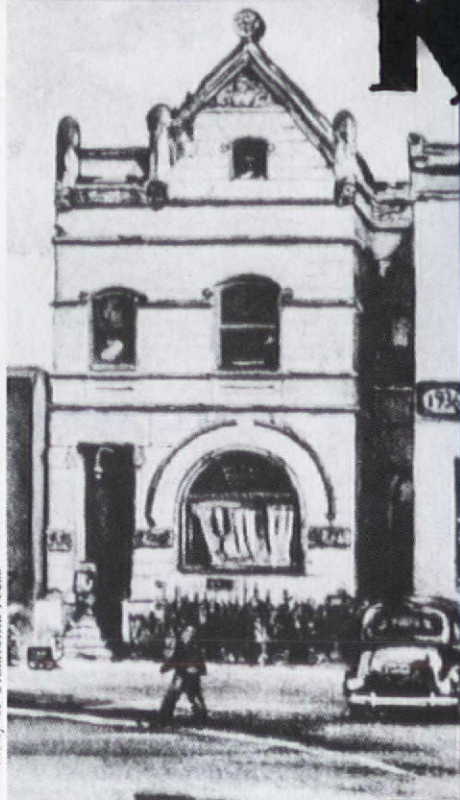
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opinion... Remuddling

University of Oklahoma Press



"Most famous sex palace in all the Rocky Mountain gold-rich country was Jennie Rogers' House of Mirrors, later Mattie Silks' establishment, and here, in this painting by Herndon Davis in the 1930s, a Buddhist Church." — Sandra Dallas, *Cherry Creek Gothic* (1971). Today, it's the anonymous, characterless warehouse shown right.



Bowdlerized Bawdy House

Once Denver's most exclusive vendor of wine, women, and song, Mattie Silks' House of Mirrors has been completely divested of its bawdy detailing. The original three-storey facade was of cut stone decorated with faces and phallic symbols. The house reportedly was financed through blackmailing a local politician — his young wife died suddenly, leaving him free to marry the

wealthy ex-wife of his former employer and to pursue his political career. Four faces, supposedly those of the two couples, along with the bust of the house's former owner, were carved into the facade. These intriguing features have been lopped off and smeared with a bland layer of stucco. The cement is a cover-up for a disreputable past — although the building seems to me far more of a blight on the landscape in its present

state."

— submitted by Mary von Tobel of Denver, Colorado

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Toronto Bay-n-Gable 1875-90

The facility with which local builders achieved a graceful marriage of Italianate and Gothic Revival modes is abundantly visible in Toronto's Bay-n-Gables, a distinctive form of double and row house which appeared all across the city in the fourth quarter of the 19th century. Characterized by polygonal end bays and pointy gables edged in decorative bargeboards, these pleasing, rhythmic compositions are virtually Toronto's architectural trademark. The oldest known example standing is the Struthers/Ross house in Yorkville, which was built in 1875. It may have been the inspiration for the army of speculatively built Bay-n-Gables which followed.

The row pictured left sits in an interesting area called Cabbagetown. Here, construction of homes didn't conform to 19th-century class divisions, and wealthy merchant homes stand next to rows of workers' cottages.

— Daniel Dutka
Toronto, Ontario

The author wishes to acknowledge Patricia McHugh's book, Toronto Architecture: A City Guide (Mercury Books, 1985).

