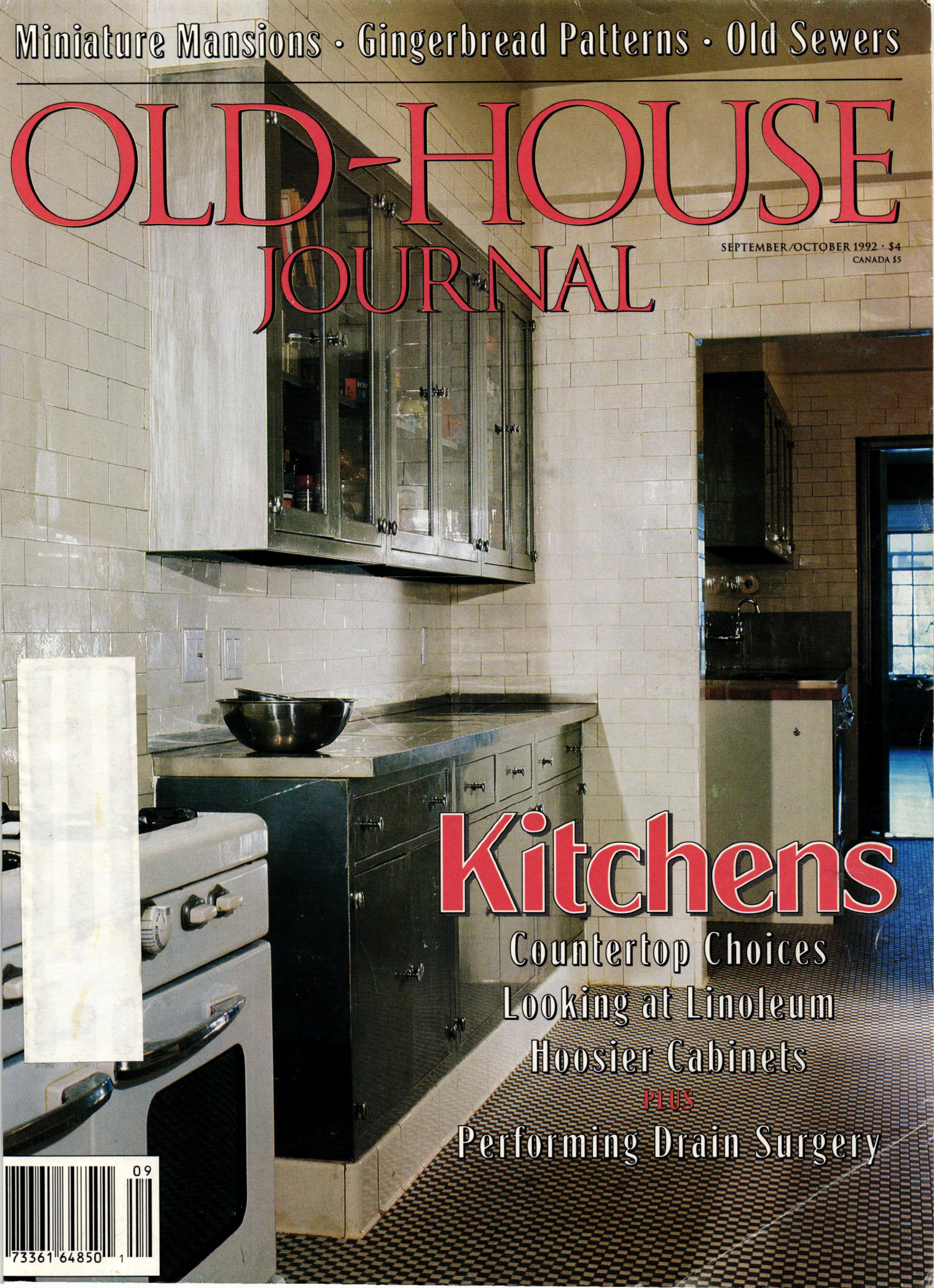


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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1992 · \$4
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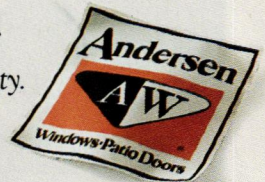
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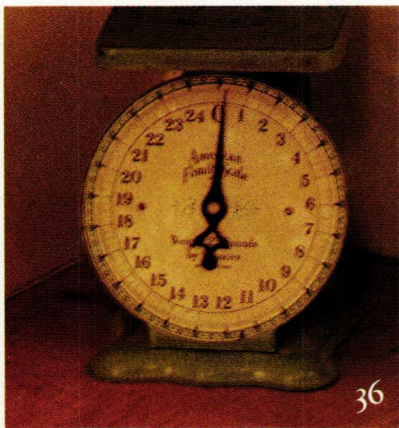
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OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Volume XX, Number 5



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Traditional Countertops

To solve the plastic laminate quandary, here's a survey of practical countertop options in vintage materials.

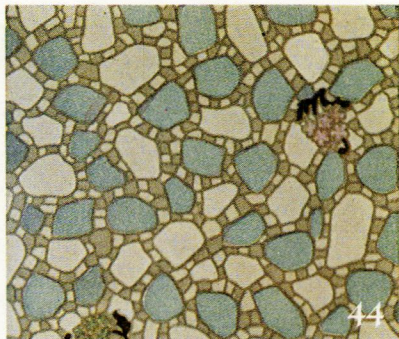
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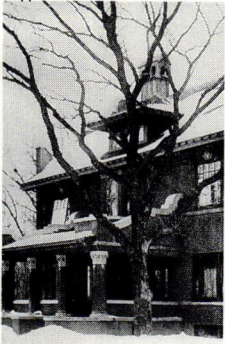
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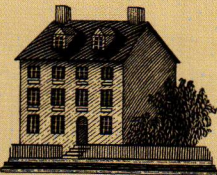
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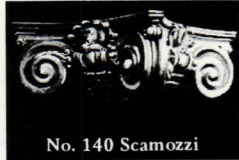
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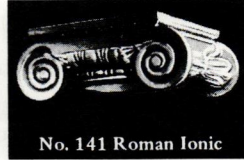
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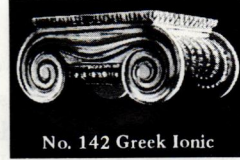
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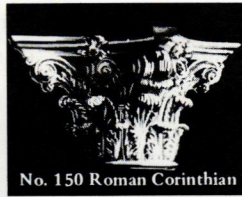


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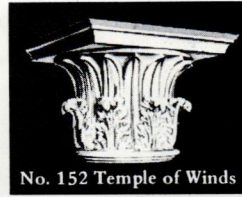


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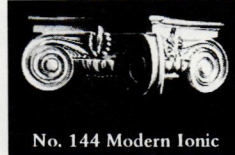
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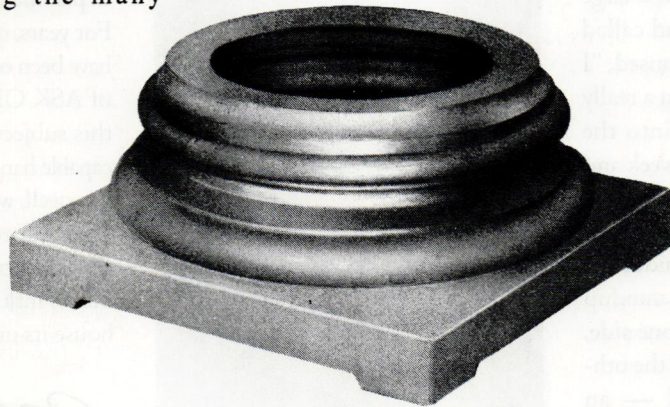
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EDITOR'S PAGE

Old Houses, Big and Small



FOR SOME TIME NOW, LYNN AND I have been noticing that among the many historic buildings we look at in books, antique plans, correspondence, and towns everywhere there are a surprising number of very small old houses. It seemed natural that OHJ should devote some pages to these pocket palaces, so last year we sent out the call for reader's stories about restoring and inhabiting tiny old houses. The response was enthusiastic, and we put together some of the most interesting examples for this issue's Old-House Living article.

It just so happened, too, that when OHJ moved to our new office here in Gloucester, I found myself looking for a roof over my head. There were many kinds of short-term, off-season shelter available that October (Gloucester has a large summer rental market), but one of the most intriguing was a pint-sized property tucked behind a large house on a scenic spit of land called Rocky Neck. "Mmmm," I mused, "I wonder what it's like to stay in a really little old house?" I moved into the 10'x20' Bell cottage later that week and soon found out.

The place was really only one room that was cinched at its middle by a closetlike bathroom with a standup shower. The kitchen was on one side, the "everything else" room on the other. Furniture was minimal — an antique bureau and a convertible sofa — which was fine for one person.

However, entertaining required making and stowing the bed first — in other words, you had to be a sort of domestic Houdini.

While the building itself dated to at least the '20s, the kitchen was all

new and, though not particularly old-house, had some nice touches to make optimum use of the close quarters. My favorite was the "U-drawer", a mighty Yankee solution to the age-old waste of storage around a sink — just the spot a drawer should be, but never is.

Living in a one-room dwelling does have its cozy side. Not only can't you get away from yourself, you have to share space with some inanimate stablemates. Ever realize how noisy a modern refrigerator is? You do when you're sleeping only spitting distance from one. Like the smell of fried fish that lingers after the stove is off? You get used to it when there's no other

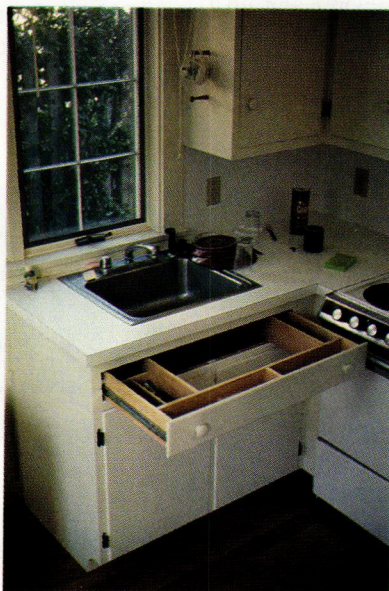
room to escape to. In a tiny old house everything is so scaled down and within reach, it feels like you're living in a giant nest or a space capsule, only one made out of wood and nails.

In this issue we also debut a new department: Reading the Old House. For years, questions about house styles have been one of the most popular parts of ASK OHJ so it was logical to give this subject a home of its own. In the capable hands of Jim Massey and Shirley Maxwell, we'll continue to field queries from our readers and try to tease out the architectural influences — and often mix of influences — that give every old house its unique personality.

Carolyn Bell

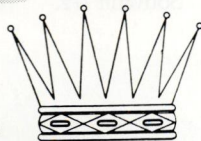
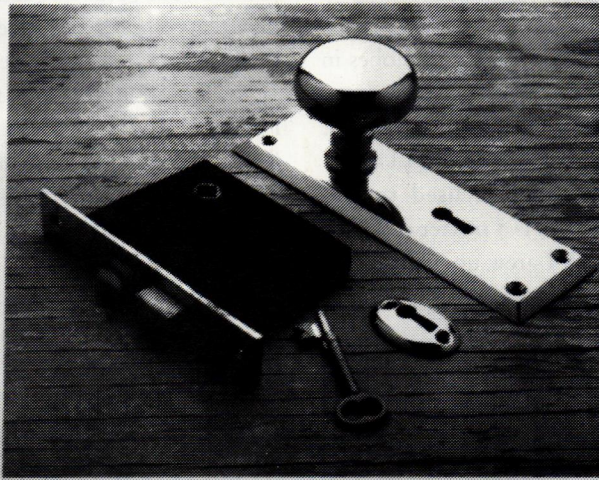
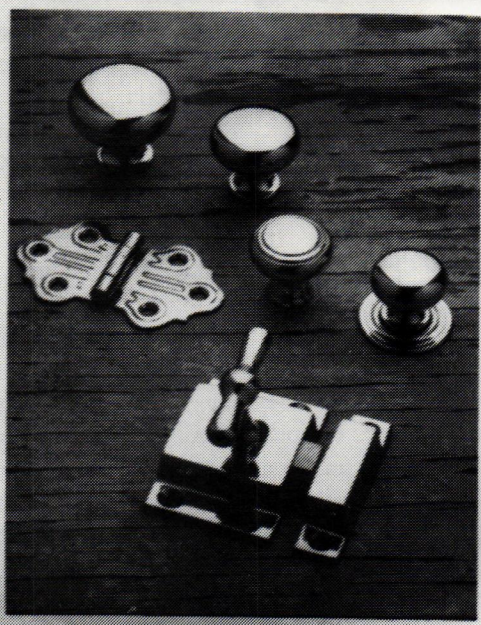
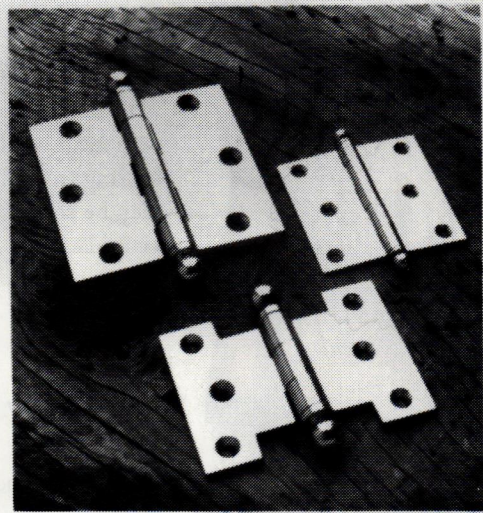
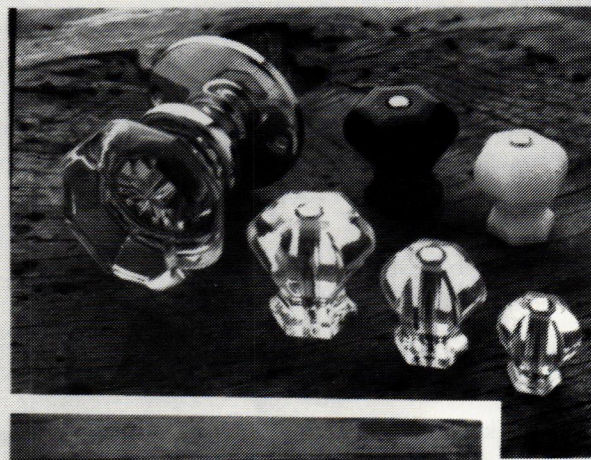


**Old-house living
in 200 square feet (above)
and the U-drawer (below).**



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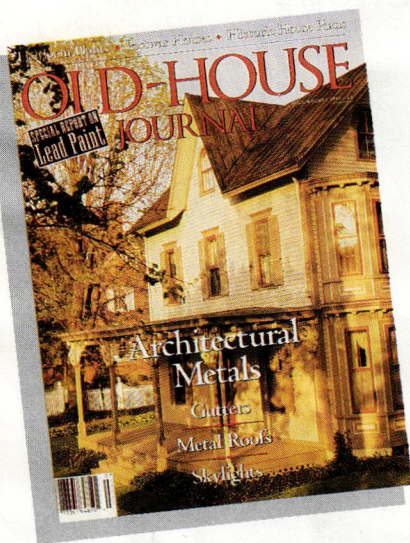
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LETTERS



GLOBAL HISTORY

Dear OHJ,

I read your article "Gazing Globes in the Garden" in the May/June 1992 issue with great interest. Having spent the majority of my life in Ohio, I am no stranger to what we used to call "chrome balls." As a matter of fact, I feel as though I grew up with gazing globes. As a youth someone told me that these "silvered orbs" were once placed in rose gardens to scare aphids away; aphids, of course, being frightened by their own reflections. Whatever their history might be, I have become increasingly enchanted by these round reflective garden ornaments.

This past year I began doing research on gazing globes. Along these lines, I am currently in the process of collecting personal stories that relate to gazing globes. My hope is that these accounts will reflect what is interesting, charming, and unique about these spheres and the people who have encountered them. I am also interested in other uses for the globes outside of the traditional garden setting. I have heard of a restaurant owner who placed one next to his cash register as a method of surveillance. And at some point in the 1970s the U.S. Air Force bought thousands of them for secret experiments. In

essence, I want to know why the gazing globe has continued in popularity for so many decades.

If any of your readers have such stories that they would like to share with me, I would be very interested in hearing from them. Correspondence may be sent to 420 East Broadway, Granville, Ohio 43023.

— DAVID BUSSAN
Assistant Professor
Denison University

A NEW OLD HOUSE

Dear OHJ,

My husband and I would like to thank you for your great magazine and the ideas that come inside. We began to read the *Old-House Journal* after we bought an old house with the hopes of restoring it. However, after numerous attempts to find a contractor to help us, reality set in. Between city codes, expense, and the condition of the house itself, we had to demolish it and start again.

After looking through past issues, we found a set of plans that really caught our eye. It fit with the dimensions of the old house perfectly, enabling us to keep all the trees and bushes that had been

The house plan for this new old house was adapted from George Barber's A Cottage Souvenir #2.



planted almost 100 years ago.

We are really proud of the way it turned out and we wanted to share it with you. Once again, thank you for helping us get started on our way to building our dreams.

— DENIS AND MIKE BUDGE
Reno, Nevada

LOVE (HATE) REMUDDLING

Dear OHJ,

The "Pink Snout" from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania [Remuddling, July/August 1992] is a gem! We live 50 miles from Pittsburgh and wish that you had printed an address. I'd love to see this monstrosity in person.

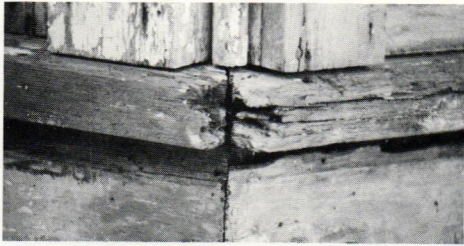
— JUDITH TOMAZIN
Valley Grove, West Virginia

INTERESTED IN ILLUSTRATION

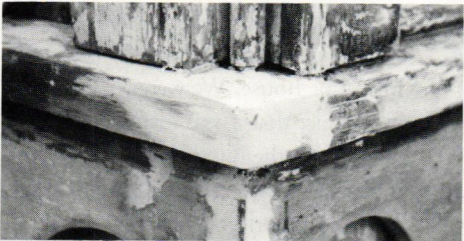
Dear OHJ,

I am writing this letter with somewhat of an unusual request. On page 51 of your May/June 1992 issue, you show an obviously old illustration of a circular radiator. This radiator, if I am correct, was manufactured by the A.A. Griffing Company of New York. The reason that this is significant to me is the fact that similar radiators exist here at Craigdarroch Castle, and the illustration in

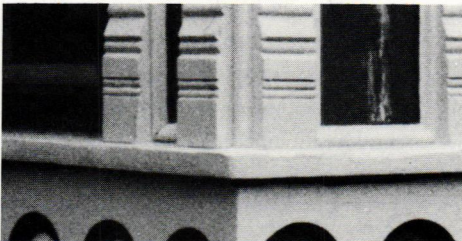
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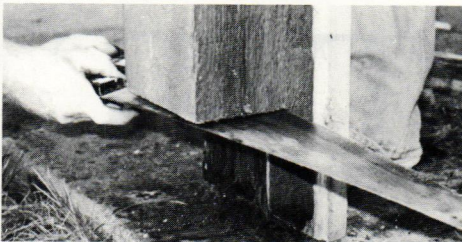
This rotted – and irreplaceable – woodwork...



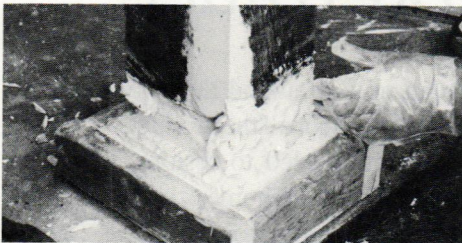
...can be easily and permanently restored...



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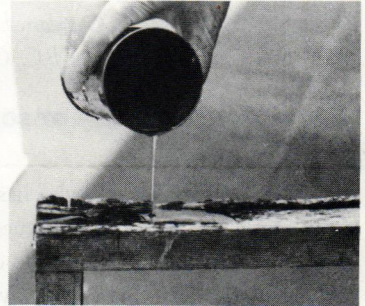
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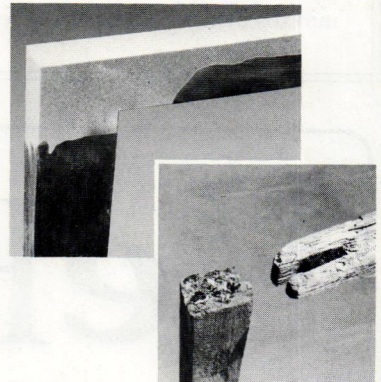
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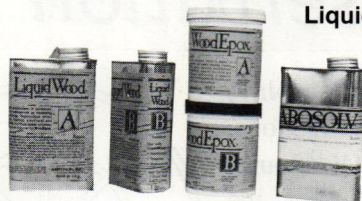
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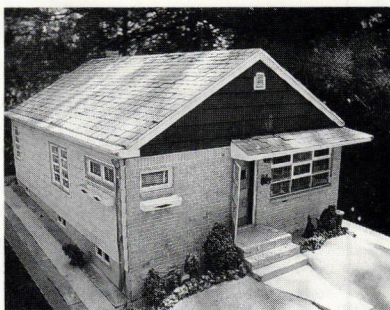
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LETTERS

your magazine is the first and only reference I have seen with respect to the Griffing Company.

I am very interested in the source of the illustration and also learning about any other associated information or illustrations.

— FRANK TOSZACK
Craigdarroch Castle
Victoria, B.C., Canada



Not your typical dollhouse: This model was inspired by postwar houses in Queens, New York.

A POSTWAR HOUSE — OF SORTS

Dear OHJ,

Now that the postwar “style” has been canonized — or at least catalogued into the annals of American architectural types — it seems that my family heirloom, a postwar dollhouse, is now a pertinent artifact (of sorts). Built during the mid 50s by my grandfather, a retired

commercial artist, for his two granddaughters, the 1/2-size scale model legendarily took six years to perfect the details, right down to the family portraits on the living room walls. The roof/attic section removed to reveal the three dimensional floor plan of the house. The authenticity of detail extends to the

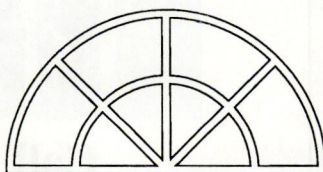
formica and chrome kitchen counter, venetian blinds, and Philco television.

As kids at play, we probably couldn't fully appreciate the integrity of workmanship vested in the model, but it did offer a twist to the traditional dollhouse fantasy. Instead of the story-book gingerbread house or the High Victorian, we had sort of a “this is your life” type house. We weren't bothered by the fact that it was identical (except in scale) to the hundreds of surrounding homes in the eastern Queens, New York, neighborhood where we grew up. The fact that someone would devote as much time and craftsmanship to such a project seemed to have as much to do with a returning GI's family pride in first time home ownership (the American Dream circa 1950) as it did with a

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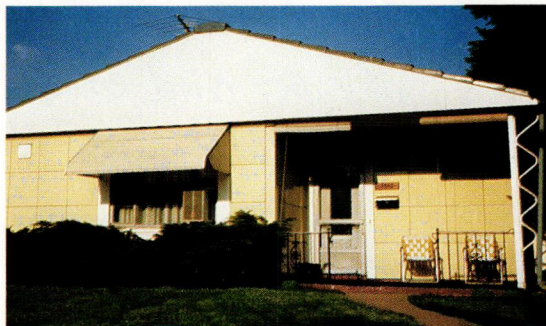
— JON DEMBER
Spencer, New York

ON THE LOOK OUT FOR LUSTRONS

Dear OHJ,

The recent story that concerned the Lustron houses [*"Postwar Houses," July/August 1992 OHJ*] is a pet project of mine. I have been working on the complete Lustron story for the past five years and have completed a book manuscript that should get into print next year.

One of the important phases of



Heralded as the wave of the future, prefabricated Lustron houses were made of porcelainized steel.

the project was to discover and record as many of the remaining houses as possible. I have found and documented as many as 700 of the Lustrons, with the

vast majority being the common 02 model Westchester. The 03 three bedroom Westchester is found in many locations, but is not as common as the 02 model. And, there are a very few of the 023 and 033 Newport economy models out there, but I have only found two, both in Eastern Iowa.

I welcome your readers participation in the search for unrecorded Lustron houses. Most of the houses on the East Coast have not been documented, although a very few in Clarks Summit, Allentown, and Philadelphia have been found. Here is what is needed: the address of the

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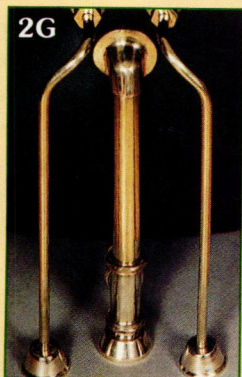
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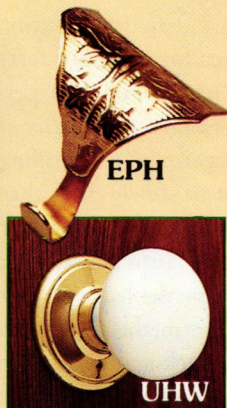
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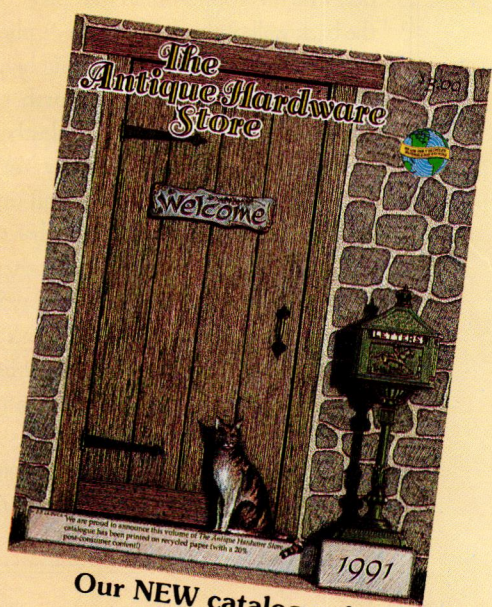


2G

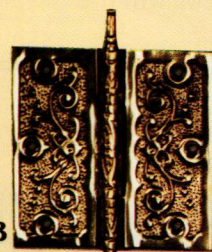


EPH

UHW



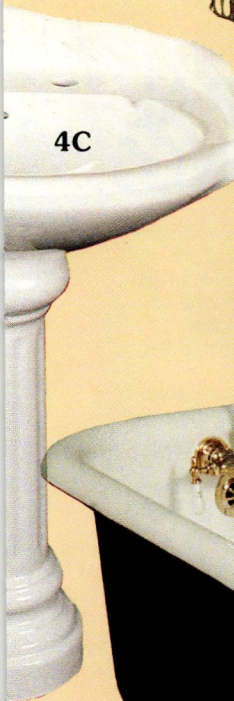
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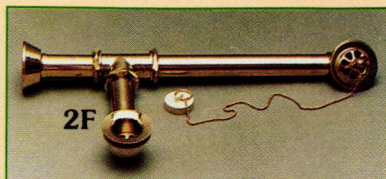
2UDS



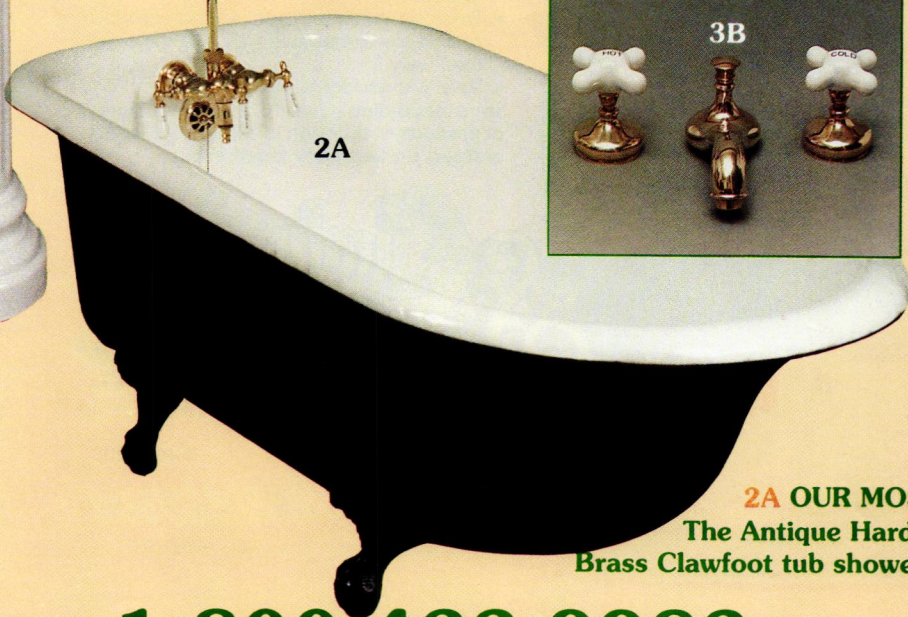
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LETTERS

house, the model type, the basic tile color, the roof color, any architectural modifications, and, if possible, the serial number, which is found on an oval plate on the back wall of the utility room. A photograph of record would be a big help.

Lustrons were built in northern New Jersey, on Long Island, in suburban Connecticut, and in upstate New York near Buffalo. These are mostly all unknown and waiting for the researcher to find them. Volunteers can report their finds to me at Lustron Research, 545 S. Elizabeth Dr., Lombard, IL 60148.

Hopefully, we can enlarge the list of known houses before publication to 50% of the 2,495 that were built.

— TOM FETTERS
Lombard, Ill.

FASTEN-ATING RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear OHJ,

I wish to add two recommendations to Gordon Bock's article on fasteners that appeared in the May/June 1992 issue of *OHJ*. Before buying anchoring devices for masonry fastening projects, readers should experiment with sheet metal screws. After selecting the correct size bit and drilling a hole, attempt to slowly drive the screw into the masonry. The ability of the screws to "bite" into the material is determined by the hardness of the masonry. (This method has worked on concrete block and a variety of different bricks.) When the material is too hard for this technique, the screws will

break off. When the masonry can be successfully "threaded" with the screws, a superior and inexpensive method of light-to-medium duty fastening will result.

One note on expansion devices for historic masonry: Do not use them. Significant amounts of pressure are concentrated within the masonry unit. When expansion bolts are employed, cracking and spalling are the possible consequences. Bolts that utilize epoxy glue (for example, Hilti "restoration" products) rather than expansion, are the preferred method of attachment for important or historic masonry. Thank you for an informative publication.

— KEN MARKUNAS

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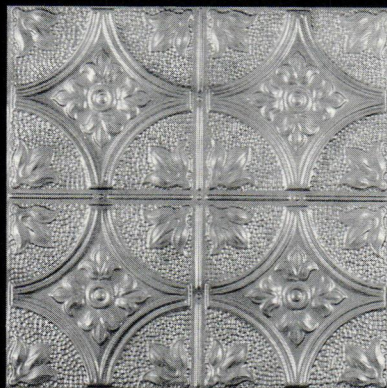
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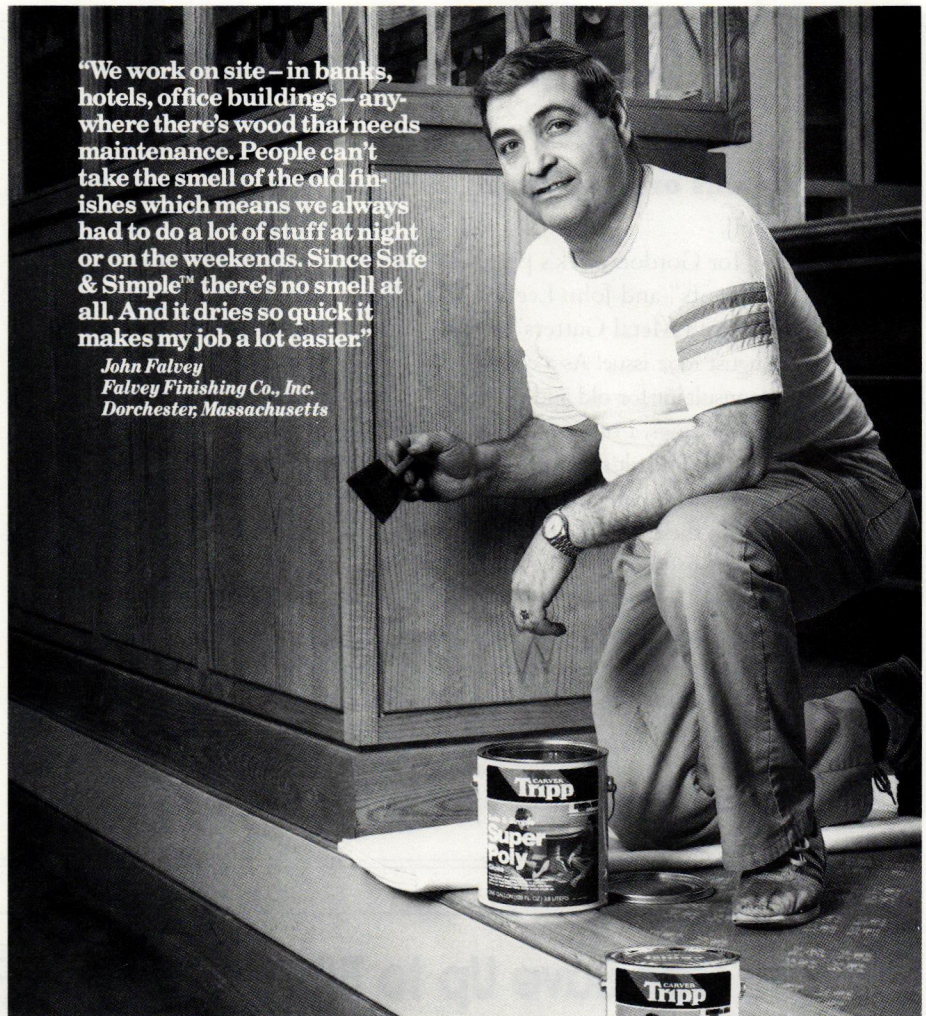
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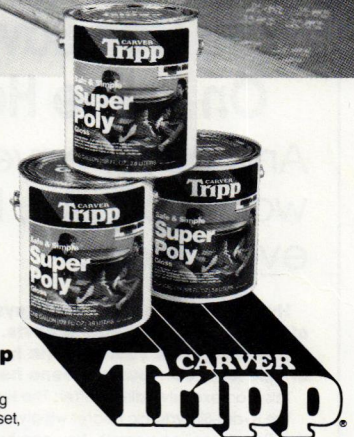
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LETTERS

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Dear OHJ,
Hooray for Gordon Bock's piece on "Metal Roofs" and John Leeke's on "Half-Round Metal Gutters" in the July/August 1992 issue! As a color and design consultant for old and new traditional buildings, I often fight losing battles against asphalt shingle roofs and K-style gutters in vinyl or aluminum. Armed with these arrows in my quiver, I'll win more battles.

To me, the chief attractions of metal roofs and gutters are unlimited life, if they are properly maintained, and unlimited colors, if they are properly primed and painted. One of my color design "tricks" is painting half-round metal gutters a very dark accent color,

such as the deep maroon of Sherwin-Williams Rookwood Dark Red or greenish black of Rookwood Shutter Green. Accenting them transforms them into decorative crown mouldings. Heighten the illusion with the same color on the downspouts because it looks silly to "paint them out" with body trim colors they traverse.

— JOHN CROSBY FREEMAN
Norristown, Penn.

HURRAH FOR HEATING SYSTEMS

Dear OHJ,
Thank you for the recent articles on steam and hot water heating systems [September/October 1991 and May/June 1992]. They contained good informa-

tion on what is becoming a dying art. The content was good, and Mr. Holo-han's presentation clear and concise.

Mechanical systems can be difficult to understand, yet seem to always require work during renovation. Please continue to present articles such as these.

— THOMAS LAUPA
Fort Collins, CO

YOU SPELL POTATO, WE SPELL POTATOE

Dear OHJ,
Certainly the subject of heritage plants ["Tough Plants for Tough Times," July/August 1992] is a worthy one to cover, but your article is fraught with errors in spelling and horticultural misinformation. In the box listing plants, the pur-

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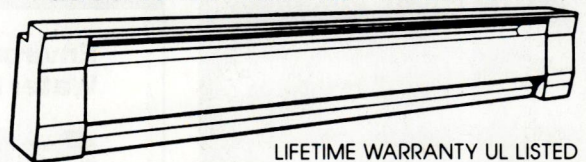
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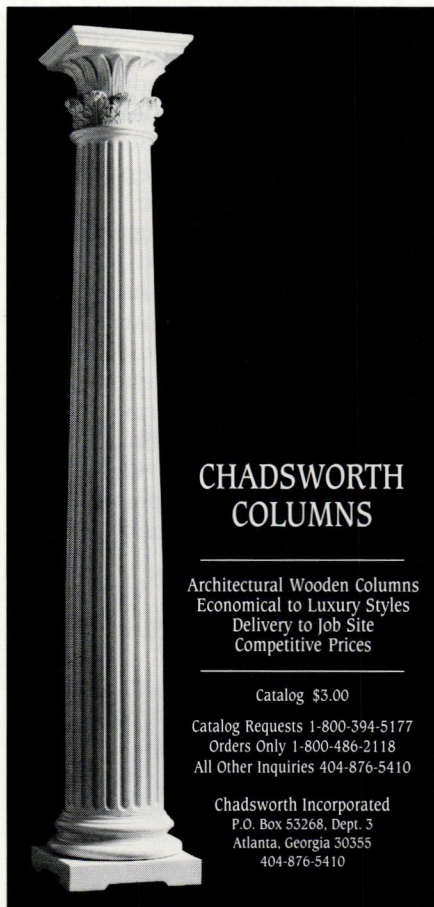


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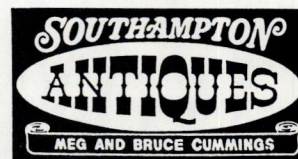
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LETTERS

ple cone flower is *Echinacea purpurea*. There are many flowers in the *Echinacea* family. You should specify which one you mean, so that anyone seeking it can find it in catalogs or at the nursery. Soapwort is misspelled a zillion times. It is soapwort, not wart. This is true of many plants that end in "wort," including Spiderwort. The Daylily is *Hemerocallis*, not *Memerocallis*. And you might add *Lillium* after lilies, since daylilies are not true lilies, but another family altogether. This will help the novice garden-er/shopper.

Now, bachelor buttons are not of the *Gomphrena* family! Bachelor buttons, the pretty blue things, are *Centaurea cyanus*. If you ask for *Gomphrena*, you will end up with white, pink, and ma-

roon clover-like flowers, much used in dried arrangements. Imagine a garden-er's surprise when he/she hopes to see blue and instead sees pinks and whites!!

Anyway, this subject is widely written about in horticultural maga-zines, and anyone interested in a period garden would do better to do research there. (There are several good books on the subject, as well.)

— ALYCE CRESAP
Germantown, New York

Yes, the "worts" got misspelled here at OHJ, and we neglected to catch them before they went to the printer. We passed your botanical comments on to the authors for their reaction.

— THE EDITORS.

Although the plants we mentioned are widely grown, part of what makes them special are their common names in each part of the coun-try, which provide a "sense of place." We are hard pressed to find more than one species of Echi-naceae listed in mail order catalogs. *Gomphrena* is bachelor buttons everywhere in the South; whereas *Centaurea* is "cornflower" or "ragged robin." We have come up with three refer-ences to *Gomphrena* being called bachelor but-tons, which are in *The Complete Florist* by Lea and Blanchard (1847), *Perennial Gar-den Color* by Bill Welch and *Gardening for Love* by Elizabeth Lawrence.

The purpose of our article wasn't to be scientific, but rather to encourage. Where this is more appropriate, we write accordingly.

— FELDER RUSHING AND
SUSAN HALTOM

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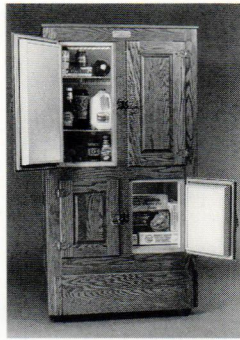
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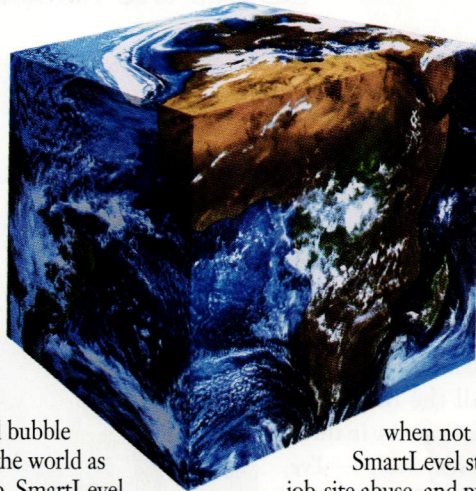
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READING THE OLD HOUSE

"Does the house 'feel' Victorian?"

BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

Dear OHJ:

I'm sending you new and old pictures of my house (built in 1907) because I would like to know what style or mix of styles it is. Is there a California Mission influence? Prairie School? All the first-floor windows in front are in three pieces and very wide — I've never seen any like them anywhere. Does the house "feel" Victorian to you at all? The original owner was a doctor who actually practiced medicine in what is now our dining room.

— Julie Mellum
Minneapolis, Minn.

WHEN IT COMES TO HOUSE STYLES, sometimes it's as plain as the nose on your face— or, we might say, as the brackets on eaves. Other times, a house may hide a glamorous stylistic past behind a remodeled facade. Old photos can magically reveal an unsuspected feature — an elaborate Queen Anne porch, say, or a Craftsman-style porte-cochere — that was consigned to history by the dictates of modern taste.

Here, for example, is a house that has fallen victim to the common American tendency over the past fifty years to simplify house designs to conform to the taut boxes of the modern era. This still-attractive home started life as a high-style Mission Revival design and its presence in the far north is a testament to the strong appeal of the Spanish styles, even in unlikely climates. Today the house retains only a few Mission features, such as its octagonally



Evidence of the original Mission-style details (top) remain in this 1907 house today (above).

columned porch, bracketed eaves, and stucco walls.

In the early photograph, though, we see the characteristic fancifully shaped gables that have an extra upward curve at the corners and are echoed by smaller gables at the sides of the front porch. In a Mission-style context, the overhanging eaves that remain on the dormer and the main house begin to make sense. The tall chimney in the old photo, with its gabled and arched peak, reminds us of a Spanish bell tower in miniature, right down to its typ-

ical covering of barrel tiles. The barrel tile on the ridges might indicate that the entire roof was covered in flat tiles.

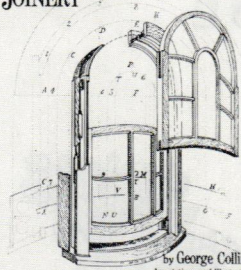
Of special interest are the porch's splendid column capitals — now lost — which seem to spring from the Prairie School (a strong influence in the area at this time) rather than from a Spanish background. The double side doors with their overhanging pergola also give a feeling of Prairie

School or Craftsman. They are a helpful reminder that few houses are stylistically pure. Since the side door is featured, did it lead to the doctor's office?

The round-arch windows are typical of Mission Revival, although they are also seen in other styles. The now-unusual sash pattern of eight panes over one was popular when the house was built, and the three-part window arrangement goes back to the 18th century and beyond. As nearly as we can tell, the house has preserved its original wooden sash. The original photograph suggests that the stucco was finished in a darkish color (probably an earth tone) rather than the light color used on the house in the later photograph.

All in all, the house represents a clear break from Victorian architectural traditions. Because of the care and taste with which the remodeling was handled, it is still a handsome, well-composed house. But without the aid of the old photograph, you would have to look very hard indeed to guess its origins beyond a vague turn-of-the-century air.

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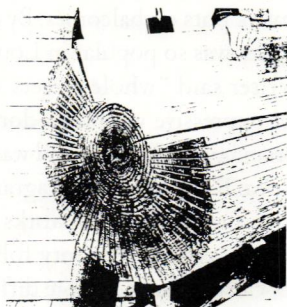
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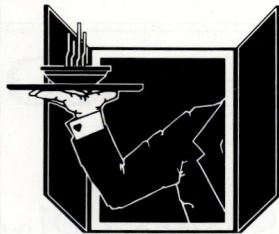
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OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

Night-Scented Plants

by Carol Barnett

A MOONLIT PORCH MAKES THE perfect setting for spring- and summer-blooming plants that are most fragrant between dusk and dawn. The majority are easily cultivated as pot plants or foundation plantings, and though some are plain — even muddy — in their coloring, their bouquet more than makes up for their lack of good looks. As cut flowers they can fill the house with their heady aroma.

Night-scented stock (*Matthiola longipetala*) is one of the many “gilliflowers” (with a g like gem), a name derived from the French for July when they

are in bloom. During the day stocks smell of cabbage but this is overridden in the evening by the spicy perfume of clove. The flowers are tall, slender, and inconspicuous with a dusty purple or muddy lilac color and go well with more attractive bloomers. As evening approaches the flowers unfold and their perfume becomes noticeable. Because of their scent, night scented stock is favored for cutting, but the fleshy stems have a tendency to ooze if the water isn't changed every other day.

Hesperis matronalis is an old cottage garden plant whose colors range from white to tints of pink, lilac, and purple. Hesperis is also called sweet rocket, dame's violet, or vespers flowers because its scent, a mix of clover and violet, is sweeter toward evening. Singles have been grown in England since the mid-16th century, and A.J. Downing recommended the double white rocket for American gardens in the 1873 edition of *Cottage Residences*. Very fragrant and excellent for cutting, it was much prized as a pot plant in the 18th and 19th centuries and is an excellent choice for the summer porch. They make very pretty cut flowers and singles do well in a wild garden, being easily naturalized.

Reseda odorata or common mignonette is a native of Egypt and delightfully fragrant at night. Ancient Egyptians placed the flower in tombs, but it was not introduced as a garden flower until the mid-18th century, traveling from Paris to London (as did many flowers). Napoleon's Empress Josephine was infatuated with reseda and started a trend by growing them in



Nicotiana flowers can be bright red, pink, or mauve.

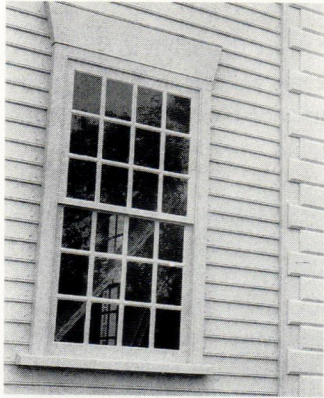


Evening primrose, a longtime garden bed favorite.

decorative pots on balconies. By 1829 the flower was so popular in London one writer said “whole streets were almost oppressive with the odor.” In Victorian houses its only rival was the sweet pea. Reseda is most fragrant at night, and as a cut flower works well with plants that have scanty foliage, such as carnations. It is more difficult to grow in pots than in beds.

Nicotiana glauca, a handsome night-scented flower originally from tropical America, is well-adapted to pot or tub culture. Often called the jasmine tobacco, some consider the scent to be closer to honey or lily. Shades run from pink, lilac and lavender to a flaming tobacco red. *Nicotiana* makes a very good cut flower,

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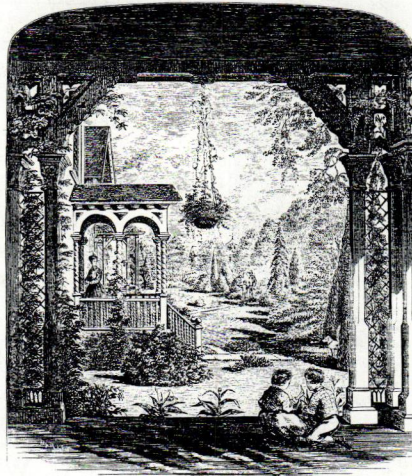
OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

but has a tendency to draw back if placed in bright light.

White petunia, both single and double, is an annual whose fragrance is reminiscent of nicotiana. Introduced to England from Brazil in 1823, it is a frequently-mentioned inhabitant of historic gardens. White petunia is simple to grow and works well in hanging baskets.

Evening primrose (*O. odorata*) is an easily cultivated summer flower. In *The English Flower Garden* (1883), William Robinson found this North American plant one of the most interesting plants calling it "moon flower" not only because it bloomed toward bedtime but due to its resemblance to the moon. Evening primrose gives off a perfume of lemon and jasmine.

Grow night-scented plants in



Night-scented plants make ideal porch plantings and hangings to be enjoyed as evening falls.

pots on the porch or plant them near a window so the perfume will drift in on a warm evening. You may not

be able to see them, but in the future their scents will stir and enhance the memories of late spring and summer nights.

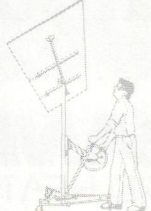
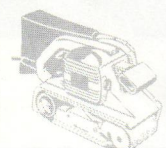
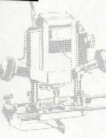
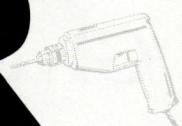
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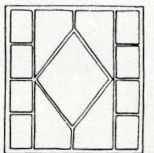


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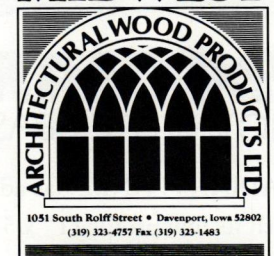
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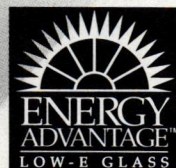


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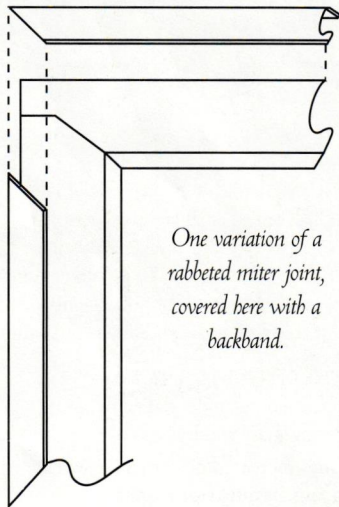
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STAYING TRIM

Q I'M A CARPENTER WORKING ON a house in Newark, New Jersey, that was built around 1889. During the project I discovered that the trim around the doors and windows were mitered in an unusual way. Around the perimeters, a smaller run of trim was mitered and nailed in the conventional manner to cover the unmitered portions of the 1 x 5 casing. Can you explain why, when, and where this practice was used?

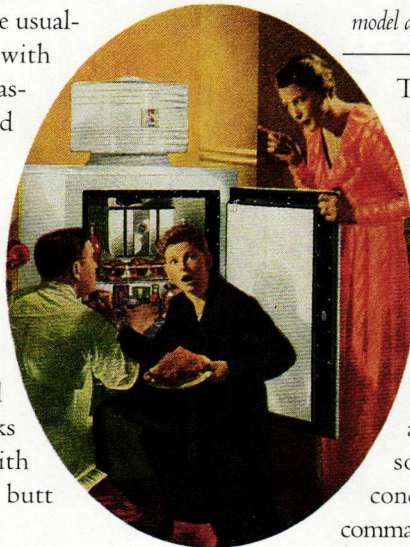
—JOHN ARMENTI
Iselin, N.J.



One variation of a rabbeted miter joint, covered here with a backband.

A IN ITS MOST SIMPLE FORM, INTERIOR trim around doors, window, and other openings is usually installed with either a miter joint (where the trim pieces meet at 45 degrees) or a butt joint (where they meet at 90 degrees). In good quality work, miter joints made with a single strip of wood are splined (using a thin piece of hardwood inserted in a groove cut perpendicular to the miter) to prevent the joint from opening up as it shrinks and settles. However, this is not practical for trim built up from two or more strips of wood, so the customary procedure is to install the

flat portion of the trim with a butt joint (which is less likely to show movement) and the moulded portions (which are usually much smaller) with miter joints. The casing-and-backband trim you are working on is such a job, but here the original carpenter used a hybrid of both methods — a not-uncommon technique intended to combine the looks of a true miter with the stability of a butt joint.



Manufacturers of top-compressor refrigerators included Westinghouse and General Electric, whose Monitor Top model appeared in this 1934 ad.

The folks at Johnny's Appliances & Classic Ranges (P.O. Box 1407, Dept. OHJ, Sonoma, Calif; 707/996-9730) tell us that \$500 to \$600 is an average price, but these refrigerators are very popular in some areas and mint condition examples may command much more. Keep

an eye on the newspaper classifieds and check all your local used appliance dealers.

REFRIGERATOR RESOURCE

Q DO YOU HAVE A SOURCE FOR vintage refrigerators, the type with the motor on top?

—THOMAS CAPERTON
Santa Fe, New Mexico

A THE CLASSIC COMPRESSOR-ON-TOP refrigerators you are interested in were produced from the late 1920s through much of the '30s by several manufacturers and are getting hard to find today. Sometimes called "monitor top" refrigerators, they were designed so that the entire cooling system was a unit and could be lifted off the insulated cabinet for shipping — which is still the best way to move one. When shopping for these appliances, only consider a "sealed system" machine that you see running. While some small parts such as door gaskets are still available, the early compressors use a different, more toxic gas (usually sulphur dioxide or ammonia) than modern refrigerators, which makes recharging basically out of the question. Working refrigerators, however, are reliable and surprisingly efficient.

BEE-VICTION

Q I'VE RECENTLY PURCHASED THE Federal-style plantation home of my Great-Great-Great-Grandfather, built circa 1820 and located in Halifax County, Virginia. The house has been unoccupied for some years. Historic architects have advised me that the house is replete with original woodwork and they urge me to rehabilitate it, which I hope to do over the next decade. An immediate problem are the swarms of bees who have made hives behind damaged clapboards and other parts of the exterior. What is the best way to evict them without damaging the house?

—LESTER C. WELCH
Gaithersburg, Maryland

A IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU WILL NEED a local licensed pest control expert to rid your house of your insect guests. Professional removal of wasps, yellowjackets, and hornets is relatively simple and can be accom-

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plished without damage to the house. However, honeybees — which are a nationally protected species — will have to be removed and relocated alive, typically using a device similar to a vacuum cleaner. Furthermore, the house will have to be opened up at strategic spots in order to ensure complete removal of the hive. If the comb and honey are left behind, they can draw more pests such as carpenter ants or cause wood decay as these materials melt and deteriorate. Even a small hive can weigh pounds and one that has been established for seasons may be as large as a bathtub. Evicting the bees promptly is extremely important because the comb will continue to grow through October, with the queen bee capable of laying between 1,000 and 2,000 eggs per day.



Doorstop or drape knob?

WANDERING KNOB

Q WE LIVE IN A VICTORIAN HOME built sometime in the 1890s. Nobody can identify this piece that screws into the wall above the floor board (it doesn't connect to anything). Some say it is a doorstop; others say it is a damper. Do you know what it is?

—SUE & GORDON CONRAD
Ionia, Mich.

A JUDGING BY THE SIZE AND THE decorative face, your mystery hardware might be a drapery knob, probably one of a pair that were once at either side of a window. Drapery knobs are discs of metal or glass that are screwed into the wood trim somewhere below the midpoint of the window. They serve as anchors for drapes and curtains (or their holdback cords) so that the window dressing can be gathered back in an attractive swag. Drapery knobs were also handy for partieres, but it is unlikely yours was used as intended on a baseboard.

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 to: Questions Editor, Old-House Journal, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.



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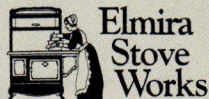
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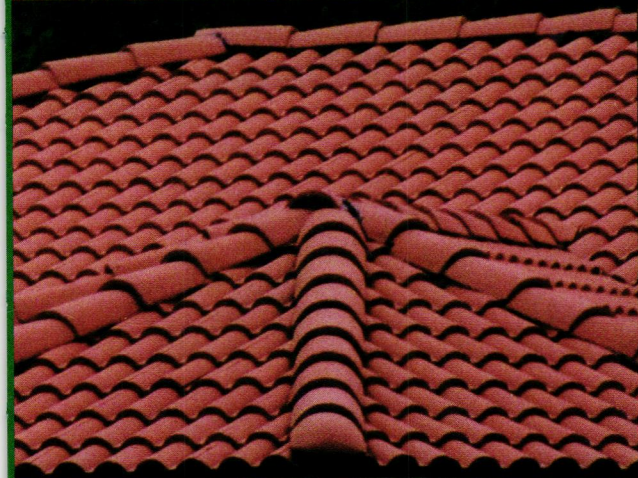
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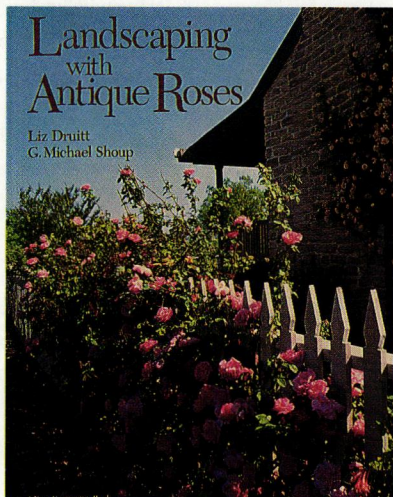
GOOD BOOKS

LANDSCAPING WITH ANTIQUE ROSES

by Liz Druitt and G. Michael Shoup

Pub.: The Taunton Press, 63 S. Main St.,
Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470; (800)
888-8286; 1992, 227 pages (in color).
\$38.95 ppd, hardcover.

LIKE SOME OLD HOUSES, OLD GARDEN ROSES have had to weather tough times while the interest of gardeners centered on those young upstarts from the late-19th century, the Hybrid Teas. All but forgotten in a corner of grandma's garden, these antique varieties, which existed prior to 1867, have been recently rediscovered, collected, and identified by antique rose enthusiasts. If you are considering including old roses in your garden, *Landscaping With Antique Roses* is a comprehensive how-to guide that will make your choice in plantings a success.



Particularly well-organized for beginners, the book covers the care and propagation of old roses, but the most valuable information is in the rose-use reference chart for 80 different species. The chart is a compilation of the ideal climate zones for growing each Old Garden Rose, and lists their genetic characteristics, such as size range, width range, fragrance,

color, frequency of bloom, and time of bloom. Useful for selecting the appropriate variety for your garden, this advice is sure to be an asset for the novice gardener.

Authors Liz Druitt and Michael Shoup, who started the Antique Rose Emporium, have put together a handy guide for those who want to cultivate an entire old-rose garden or just include one plant as a focal point. This well-illustrated book with its practical advice is sure to bring Old Garden Roses out of the shade and into the sunlight where they belong.

— Lynn Elliott

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

by Gersil Newmark Kay

Pub: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company,
11 West 19th St., New York, NY 10011;
(800) 2-McGraw; 289 pages with black-
and-white photos and drawings. \$49.50 plus
\$4.50 shipping, hardcover.

ONE OF THE TOUCHIEST BALANCING acts in restoration is retrofitting a historic building with the heating, plumbing, air-conditioning, lighting, and electrical systems that are standard for contemporary living. The trick is to add pipes, wires, and fixtures without upsetting the existing structure (how to run new lines in old walls is a classic issue) or upstaging decorative features. Not surprisingly, system upgrades can flop dramatically if not installed with architectural sensitivity.

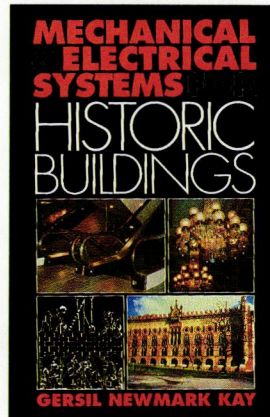
Little help has been the lack of practical literature available on the do's and don'ts of planning and executing

such projects, and this is the gap *Mechanical & Electrical Systems for Historic Buildings* goes a long way in filling. Gersil Kay first explains what one should know before working on a pre-1940 building — not only fine points in architecture and construction, but what to watch for in contract documents — and then moves on to look at each technology, chapter-by-chapter. Mrs. Kay's approach is to identify by sections all the top concerns for a specific service (Scaffolding, for instance, or

Codes), and then offer successful and less-than-successful solutions through quick, anecdotal case histories and photographs. The information is presented in a textbooklike outline form, yet the writing is informal and often refreshingly frank.

While most of the installations and examples highlighted here are from large commercial and public buildings, houses are included. It is also worth noting that this book is written with construction planners and supervisors in mind; useful hands-on techniques and tips for doing the work are a part of most chapters, but the emphasis is on contracts and managing the job. A wealth of illustrations accompany the text (though some photos look hurried and there are over 100 uninterrupted pages of period HVAC drawings) and helpful checklists appear as appendices. Organizing and presenting new ideas about appropriate service installations in older building is a challenging — but overdue — subject, and this book is an admirable and valuable performance in an otherwise empty arena.

— Gordon Bock



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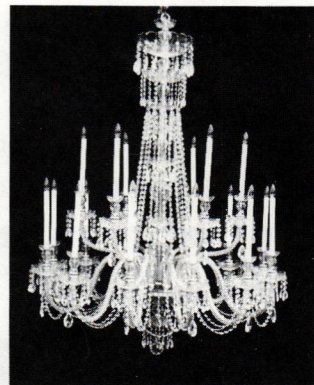
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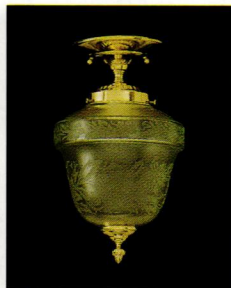
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TRADITIONAL COUNTERTOPS

“Old-fashioned” materials that still work

BY J. RANDALL COTTON

KITCHENS ARE AT THE CENTER OF AN OLD-HOUSE quandary. Modern cabinetry and appliances are undeniably efficient and low-maintenance, but to restoration purists, a sleek, modern kitchen can stick out like high-tech sneakers under an old-fashioned gown. With kitchen countertops, the dilemma becomes even more acute. Today's plastic laminates and solid acrylics are very durable and come in a wide range of colors and patterns. Yet they lack the look and feel of such traditional countertop materials as wood, soapstone, or enameled steel.

But let's face it. Traditional countertop materials — and there was an incredible variety of them — have been superseded by their modern counterparts for good reasons. They can be maintenance headaches when they stain, chip, or scratch, and vintage materials can be more expensive to fabricate and install than modern materials. Then why consider traditional materials for today's countertops? Well, some — granite or stainless steel, for example — are as durable and practical as today's synthetics; many others are perfectly serviceable if given a little care and simple, routine maintenance. As for cost, yes, traditional materials can be expensive, but the price range is still comparable to top-quality modern options such as Corian®.

In the final analysis, it comes down to this: old-house lovers are romantics, wooed by aesthetics and nostalgia as much as practicality. So if you fit this description, con-

sider the alternatives for counters before renovating with a slab of off-the-shelf plastic laminate from your local home-improvement center.

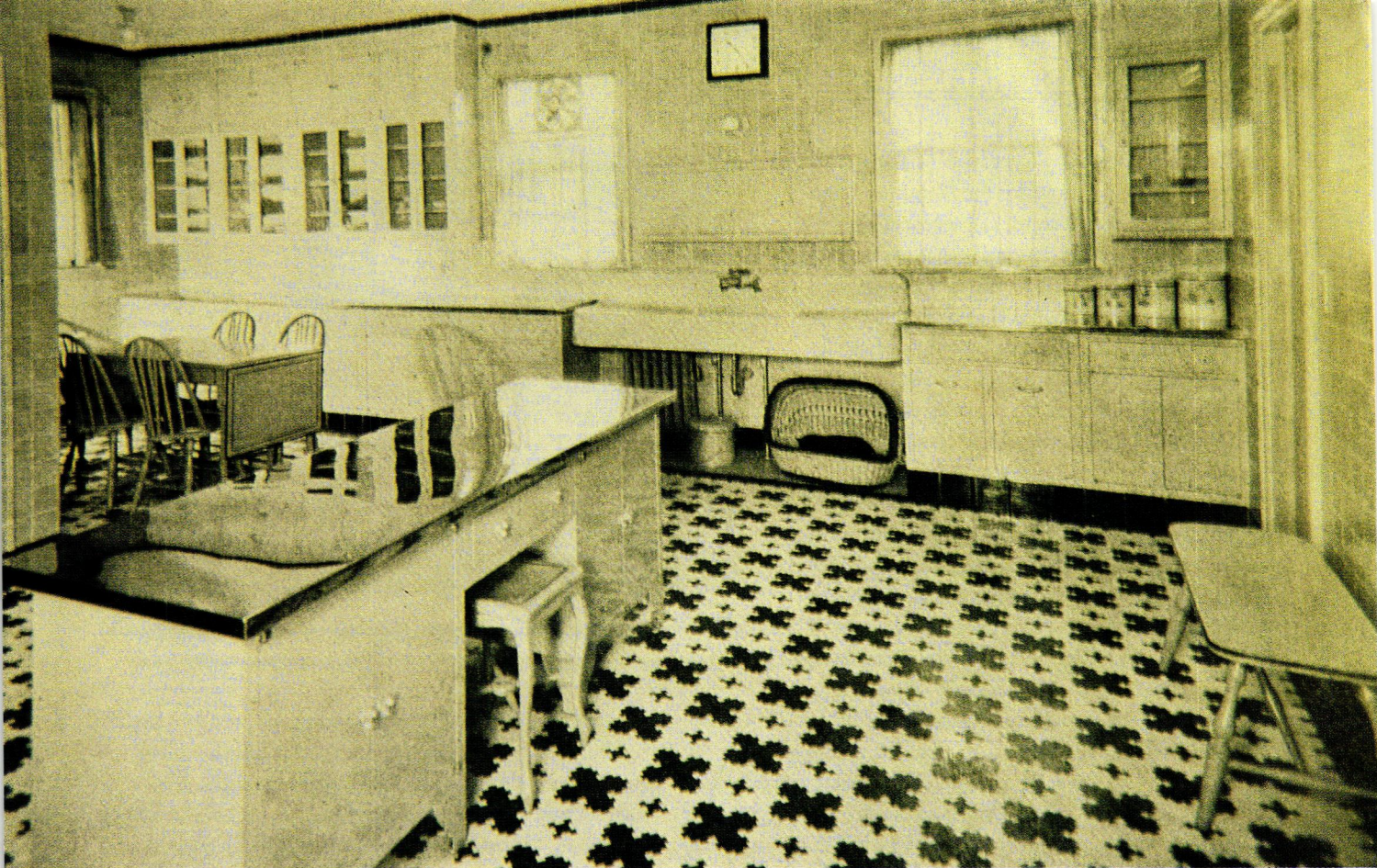
COUNTER CULTURE

FROM THE LATE 19TH CENTURY TO THE 1950S (WHEN SYNTHETICS started to become nearly ubiquitous) the “modern” kitchen was constantly evolving and manufacturers and designers experimented with a wide array of countertop types. In 1917 *Country Life* magazine advised its readers that “the material used on [countertops] may be hard maple or vitralite, porcelain or Monel, or a combination of wood for general use, and porcelain for pastry.” Obviously there was no consensus. Some materials were briefly popular, but ultimately fell into disfavor. Linoleum, for example, was inexpensive, easily installed, and colorful, yet proved to be too vulnerable to moisture and normal daily use. Other materials stood the test of time (stainless steel, granite, maple butcher block among them) and remain viable options today.

Even if you're not willing to invest in authentic “old-fashioned” countertops as part of a kitchen renovation, most manufacturers of modern plastic laminates and solid acrylics offer designs that imitate the look of natural materials like marble, granite, slate, and wood, or are back in production with “retro” patterns from the

Wide hardwood boards make viable counters for limited, dry areas.



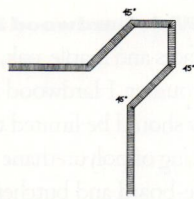


recent past. Be aware, though, that the best imitations of older counter materials will still look anachronistic in an older kitchen if the detailing is wrong. To help, we've cooked up the following run-down of materials traditionally used for early countertops, how they were detailed, what can be bought today, and what care they need.

METAL

METAL KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS CAN BE TRACED TO THE USE OF sheet metal in dry sinks. Initially free-standing wooden cases for preparing food and washing utensils, dry sinks evolved into fixed-in-place base units with recessed tops lined with copper, zinc, or galvanized iron sheets for waterproofing. Another kitchen counter ancestor, the cupboard, grew over time into built-in pantries or their cousins, Hoosier cabinets, both of which often featured integral enameled-metal work surfaces. From here, it was a short evolutionary step to the now-common combination of base-unit and wall-hung cabinets — which in early versions retained the enameled-metal countertops.

By and large, early metal counters employed the same sheets of zinc, tin, nickel, or galvanized iron used for architectural flashing and metal cornices, but by the 20th century, these materials were replaced by a new generation of alloys. Monel, an



A "marine edge" in cross section.

Enameled metal countertops, once common on pantries and free-standing cabinets, were also used for primary work surfaces as in this large 1931 kitchen.

alloy of $\frac{1}{3}$ copper and $\frac{2}{3}$ nickel, was heavily promoted during the '30s. Magazine ads advised homemakers to "Monel-ize" their kitchens, promising that "the play of light over these shining surfaces makes hours in the kitchen pass cheerfully — and quickly," and that "Monel is good for your nerves." Perhaps, such overblown claims were predestined to disappoint. Offering less hyperbole, but a more practical product, manufacturers of stainless steel pretty much captured the market for metal countertops beginning in the late '30s. These stainless steel counters were regularly combined with enameled-metal base cabinets. Also popular were counter units that mated double sinks flanked by ribbed drainboards, backsplashes, aprons, and faucets, all made of stainless steel.

➤ **Stainless-steel** counters are still a good option today. They are nearly indestructible, impervious to water and food stains, and easily maintained — features that make them the surface of choice for restaurant and institutional kitchens. They are primarily sought by homeowners seeking a "high-tech" or "seriously professional" kitchen, but restorers, too, should consider them for a '30s or '40s kitchen look. Although stainless steel counters will be expensive, they usually cost less than stone or state-of-the-art synthetics.

The best places to order stainless steel counters are commercial kitchen supply houses. Many have the designers on staff

that will be necessary to provide working drawings and specifications for the fabricator. Commercial kitchens usually use 14-gauge stainless steel, but for residential use, 18- or 20-gauge metal will do (as the metal thickness increases, the gauge number decreases). Also, remember that steel, like wood, has a directional grain that should run from left to right — not front to back — when installed. This detail will minimize marring from routine cleaning (typically, a natural side-to-side scrubbing motion using household cleaning powder).

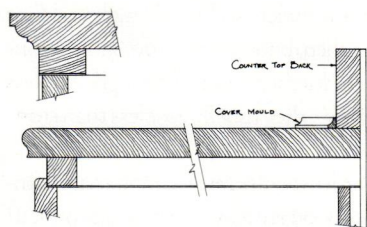
Counters of stainless steel can be installed directly on base cabinets, but plywood underlayment is recommended as a sound deadener. The edges of stainless steel counters were (and are) simply squared-off (90° edges) or formed into a so-called “marine edge” of 45° angles that prevent water run-off. Backsplashes can be formed as an integral part of stainless-steel counters, and the top of the back-splash can be angled up 45° to meet the wall to help prevent dirt from being trapped. Stainless steel counters are very durable, but you should not cut on them. Some scratches can be removed from the metal surface with a polishing wheel and compound.

➤ **Copper** is the only other metal to consider for counter-tops (enameled metal is covered in the Ceramics section). It looks very classy, but copper is soft as metals go and dents and scratches easily. It is vulnerable to food stains, particularly the acids found in fruits. It's also expensive, and needs regular polishing to keep it from tarnishing. Protective lacquer finishes are generally not recommended for copper countertops as water will inevitably find its way under the smallest wound in the coating.

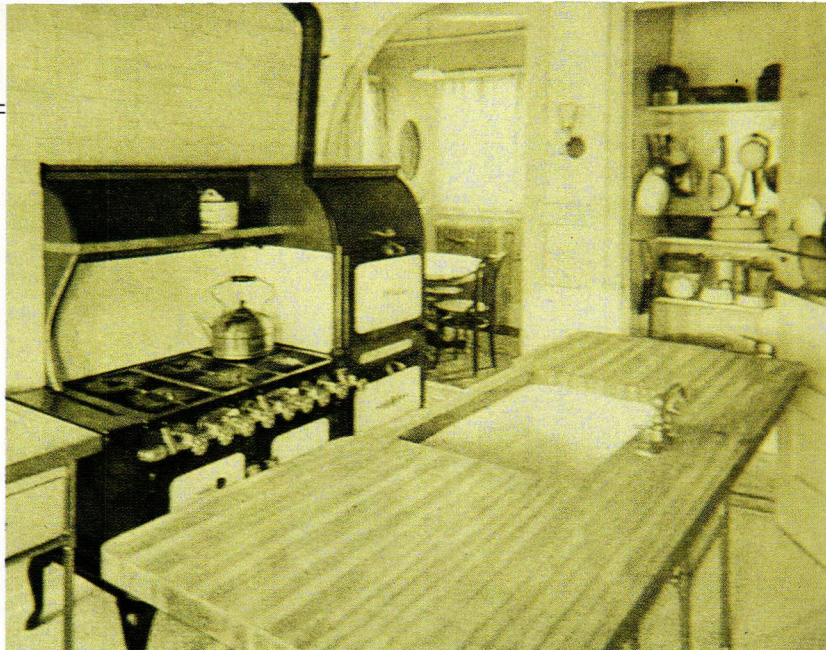
WOOD

WOOD HAS ENJOYED A LONG TRADITION AS A KITCHEN WORK surface, from the sturdy wooden trestle table to the refined side-board. However, because it is porous, wood stains easily and can harbor bacteria from grease and oil that penetrate the surface. This is why, until the advent of butcher block, wooden counters were generally capped with sheets of metal. As the name implies, butcher block was first used for commercial meat cutting, but by the early 20th century expanses of this material were also being used as kitchen counters.

➤ **Butcher block** is made by laminating strips of hardwood (usually maple) into a dense wooden slab that is warp-resistant and self-supporting. The butcher block used for counters is



Period wide-board edge profiles from 1899 (inset) and 1930 also work for synthetics.



Butcher block counters are key to the contemporary kitchen look, but were popular even before the 1917 example shown here.

edge-grained, as opposed to the end-grained versions used in real butcher shops. Earlier in this century, butcher block was even used around sinks. Now it is usually not recommended for such counters because of the persistent presence of water, but it can be used almost anywhere else. Use butcher block for limited areas, such as on center islands or as inset cutting boards.

When buying butcher block make sure it is approved by the National Sanitation Foundation for kitchen use. In addition, the undersides of counters should be sealed before installation to prevent moisture from penetrating from below. Some manufacturers routinely apply an acrylic coating to both sides of their product, but an oiled top surface is better for kitchen counters and should be so specified when ordering. Maintain butcher block by regular oiling with tung, linseed, or other non-toxic oil. Don't use vegetable oil because it will go rancid. Clean routinely with warm, soapy water followed by thorough drying. Minor cuts can be removed with light sanding, and many stains can be removed or lightened with lemon juice or diluted bleach.

➤ **Wide hardwood boards** were occasionally used as work surfaces and maple, oak, or cherry are good species for this kind of counter. Hardwood board counters can warp, however, so they should be limited to areas that don't get wet (a protective coating of polyurethane or acrylic can help). The edges of both wide-board and butcher-block counters can be detailed traditionally, using rounded corners and slightly blunted edges.

STONE

➤ **MARBLE** WAS POPULAR FOR TOPPING WASHSTANDS, SIDEBOARDS and tables, throughout the 19th century, so it was natural that this stone became a choice for kitchen counters as well. Although it is a good surface for pastry preparation, marble has some drawbacks. It is relatively porous and therefore susceptible to staining, particularly from the natural acids in some foods. Instead

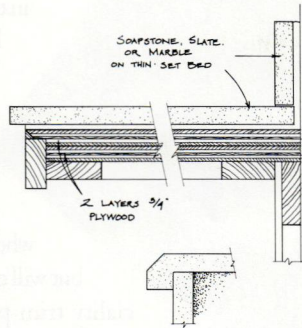
of entire counters made of marble — more common in the past than now — it's better to limit its use to insets or "show-off" areas like center islands.

➤ **Granite** was also used historically for countertops, although not nearly as often as marble or even slate or soapstone. It is more expensive than marble (about \$150/foot as opposed to \$130/foot), but more durable and practical. Granite is vulnerable to alcohol, but otherwise resists stains and makes a great serving surface (as do all stone counters) because of its ability to absorb heat.

Granite and marble are usually available at local stone yards or through kitchen supply houses. Try to look at the actual slabs before ordering. The coloration and mottling varies so much — even within a single piece — that a small sample chip will not represent what you actually get. Choosing a color that is neither too light or too dark will help camouflage the inevitable stains and mars, as will a stone with attractive vein and mottling patterns. Both a highly polished and honed (satiny look) finish is available for both marble and granite. Marble is also available in 12" tiles.

Stone counter installations generally require plans from a kitchen designer or architect. Traditionally, outer edges of counters have a 45° chamfer that reduces the dangers of a sharp corner. Backsplashes can be made of the same stone and are usually epoxied to the wall as a separate piece. Stone counters must be set on a very true base-cabinet surface; any high spots increase the risk of cracking the stone during daily use. The surface can be pitched slightly forward, however, so that water rolls off.

➤ **Slate** and **soapstone** were more common for sink than



Stone counters require sufficient support; chamfered edges (inset) reduce chipping.

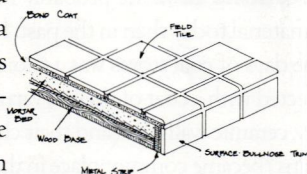
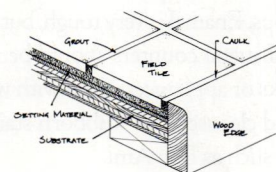
countertop materials, but do have a history and remain options today. Slate is available either as a slab or as 12" tiles. It comes in the familiar "slate" gray and in variations of red and green. Natural clefs present a rough surface that is not recommended for counters so slate is usually polished. Soapstone is a gray, non-porous stone noted for its ability to resist heat, making it well-suited for stoves and laboratory counters. It is still available for counters, sinks, drainboards and backsplashes in either standard or custom sizes. Soapstone is soft enough to be shaped with most heavy-duty woodworking tools and can be suitable for do-it-yourself installations. Slate and soapstone are less durable and less expensive than granite

CERAMICS

FIRED CLAY AND GLASS MATERIALS ENJOYED VARYING DEGREES OF popularity as countertops in the past. Among them were Vitralite and Carrara Glass, pigmented glass products widely used for streamline storefront facades in the 1930s and '40s. When used as countertops, these materials were easy to maintain and impervious to stains but could shatter and had a cold, hard look and feel. Both Vitralite and Carrara Glass tiles were probably more popular in kitchens as a wall surface, particularly behind sinks and counters. Neither product has been manufactured for some time.

➤ **Enameled metal** counters, however, were quite popular not only on built-in pantries and Hoosier cabinets but, for a while, on base cabinets as well. Enameled metal consists of a protective, opaque glassy coating fused to an iron or steel substrate.

White was the most popular color for enameled counters because it



Thin-set tile with wood edge (top); mortar bed job with surface-bullnose edge (above).

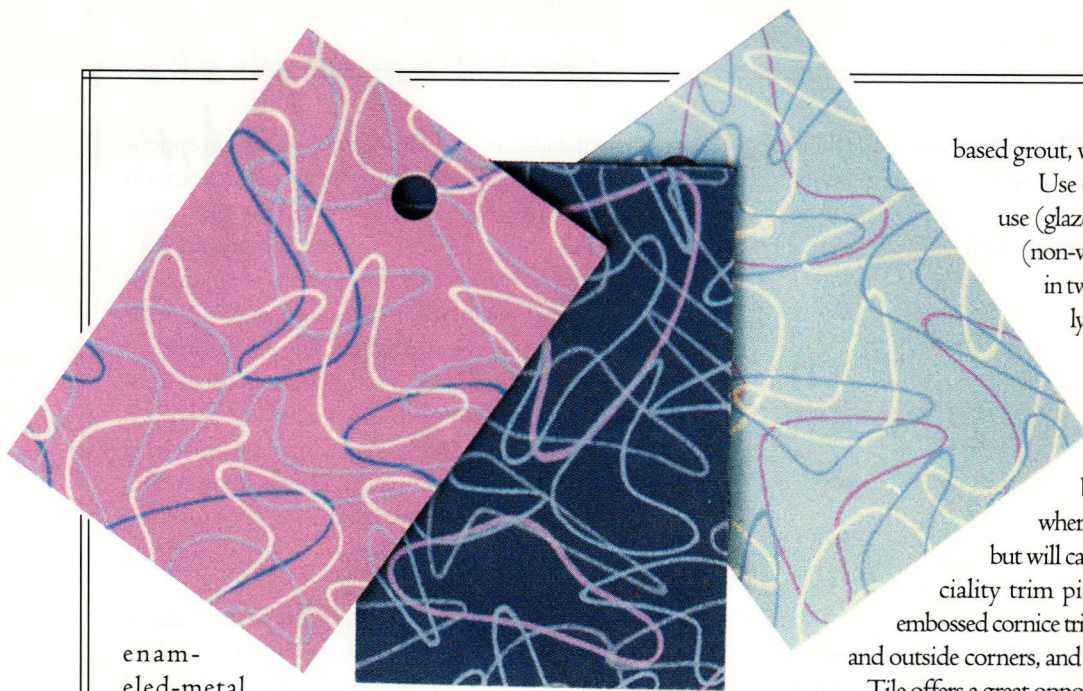
was equated

with good hygiene and sanitation, but colored enameled metal became popular in the '30s as part of a reaction to the all-white kitchen. One critic complained that the white kitchen "took on the look of a hospital operating room: its china-white walls and ice boxes shouting aloud that it was clean! And pure! And sterile! So that when one cuts up a fowl in these kitchens, one felt quite like a surgeon performing a major operation."

Although not much in demand today,

Soapstone counters are not common, but the stone is durable and still available.





enam-
eled-metal
counters for resi-
dential kitchens
are still available
through commer-
cial-kitchen or
laboratory supply houses or specialized local metal-fabrication shops. Enamel is very tough, but can still chip or scratch. Enam-
eled-metal counters should be maintained just like enameled
sinks or appliances: clean with warm water and a liquid house-
hold cleanser. For stubborn stains use a gentle cleansing pow-
der such as Bon Ami.

Early laminate patterns - such as the "amoeba/boomerang" - are historically appropriate and sometimes back in production.

➤ **Ceramic tiles** are probably more popular as a counter-
top material today than in the past. Keeping kitchen walls clean
in the days of coal stoves was a chore and sometimes they were
protected with a coat of shellac, varnish, or enamel paint. Even-
tually, ceramic wall tiles (and their cheaper plastic and linoleum
cousins) became commonplace in the kitchens of mansions and
bungalows alike.

Wall and counter tiles of the 1920s and '30s purveyed the
cheery and colorful "Good Housekeeping" style: white glazed
tiles enlivened with colorful vignettes of celery and onions,
bananas and cherries; or "coats-of-arms" emblazoned with
crossed kitchen utensils and teapots; or Delft-like blue-on-white
tiles featuring tulips or peacocks. Kitschy? Perhaps to some, but
the continuing popularity and availability of these designs —
and hundreds more — bespeak of their common-man appeal.

Although tiling counters and walls is usually a job for a
tiler, it can be a do-it-yourself project. Two methods are
popular. In the "mortar-bed" method, tiles are set in a relative-
ly thick layer of portland cement over a plywood substrate. With
the "thin-set" method, tiles are set in a thin layer of mortar or
mastic over plywood or cementitious backer board (see "How
to Tile a Countertop", OHJ, July/August, 1989). In both cas-
es, the spaces between the tiles are filled with cement grout,
which can be colored or sealed to prevent staining, or epoxy-

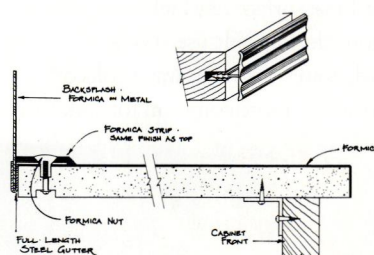
based grout, which resists stains and cracks.

Use only tiles specified for counter
use (glazed are best), and avoid porous
(non-vitreous) tiles. Kitchen tile comes
in two forms: individual tile (usual-
ly 4"x 4" or 6"x 6") or sheets of
small tiles held together by
plastic webbing (such as the
popular small, hexagonal
tiles). Solid-color tiles will
be more expensive than those
where the color is just on the surface,
but will camouflage scratches better. Spe-
ciality trim pieces include bullnose edges,
embossed cornice trim to top off splashbacks, inside
and outside corners, and narrow decorative borders.

Tile offers a great opportunity to be creative and many
manufacturers continue to carry traditional and period designs.
Expensive hand-painted tiles can be used intermittently with-
in fields of less-expensive white or solid-color tiles — a cost-
saving trick used historically as well as nowadays. Tile can be
cleaned with all-purpose liquid cleaners like Mr. Clean, or a
heavy-duty liquid cleanser like Bon Ami if necessary. A solu-
tion of one part bleach and three parts hot water is good for
removing grout stains.

SYNTHETICS

MANMADE COUNTERTOPS FORMED FROM PLASTIC LAMINATES (LIKE
the well-known Formica), or solid acrylics (like Corian), have
largely taken over for traditional materials both in modern
kitchens and remodeled older kitchens. Plastic laminates, in
particular, are widely available, comparatively inexpensive, and
— restoration purists take note! — have been used as counter-



Original laminate details include metal mouldings at corners and often edges (inset).

➤ **Plastic laminates** are generally comprised of a decora-
tive paper (often resin-impregnated kraft paper) that gives the
countertop its color and pattern, sandwiched between a pro-
tective outer layer of melamine and a particle board substrate.

Laminates come in hundreds of colors and patterns. Some
of these are effective imitations of traditional countertop materi-
als, such as "slate" with a natural cleft texture. Formica has, by


tops since the
1920s. Plus, lami-
nates are really the
only countertop
materials discussed
here that can be cut,
shaped, and in-
stalled with com-
mon power and
hand tools and the
average restorer's
construction skills.

popular demand, resurrected its 1950s "boomerang" design in several authentic '50s color palettes. The point is, old-house restorers need not feel guilty about using "modern" laminates for counters, but in order to make them seem less anachronistic in an old house, choose patterns that are either revivals, convincing stone or wood imitations, or that have a certain timelessness.

Proper installation details are as important as an appropriate laminate. The very popular postformed laminate countertop — in which the backsplash and rolled outer lip edge are formed as a continuous part of the counter — is definitely a modern (and, admittedly, practical) feature. But for an earlier kitchen look, laminated backsplashes should be fabricated the old way using a standard 4"x 3/4" piece that is bonded separately to the wall. The inside corner joint between the backsplash and counter can be finished with a traditional thin, metal (usually aluminum) cove moulding.

The "old-fashioned" way to detail the outer edge was also with an extruded aluminum band or nosing, often detailed with grooves. These edge bands are still available (see suppliers list),

and are secured into a channel cut into the laminate substrate. Also common, then and now, is a self-edge in which a strip of the same laminate used for the countertop is glued onto the exposed edge. Hardwood edge strips are a newly popular idea.

➤ **Solid plastic** countertops (usually made from acrylics) are considered by many to be the ideal kitchen work surface. Here, color and pattern are homogeneous throughout the thickness of the counter. Solid plastics resist stains, heat, water, and general abuse. Although not recommended as cutting surfaces, cuts and scratches can be sanded out. Like laminates, solid plastics come in various patterns and colors that imitate natural materials such as stone, and like real marble and granite, this material is expensive. Solids can be cut and detailed in any number of shapes using professional woodworking tools. Because it is not flexible, a solid plastic counter should be installed over even and level base cabinets to avoid the possibility of fracturing the slab later on. 

Thanks to Lawrence and Co., and National Products Co., (both Philadelphia-based kitchen suppliers) for contributing information to this article.

S U P P L I E R S

Slate:

Vermont Structural Slate Co.
PO Box 98, Dept. OHJ
Fair Haven, VT 05743
(802) 265-4933

The Structural Slate Company
222 E Main St., Dept. OHJ
Pen Argyl, PA 18072
(800) 67-SLATE

Bergen Bluestone Company
see Granite and Marble.

Granite and Marble:
check local stone yards or kitchen suppliers, or:

Gawet Marble and Granite, Inc.
Route 4, Dept. OHJ
Center Rutland, VT 05736
(800) 323-6398

Conn. Stone Supplies
311 Post Road, Dept. OHJ
Orange, CT 06477
(203) 795-9767

Bergen Bluestone Company
PO Box 67, Dept. OHJ
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 261-1903

Blackstone Company
PO Box G, Dept. OHJ
North Amherst, MA 01059
(413) 548-9195.

Marble Technics
A & D Building, Dept. OHJ
150 E 58th St.
New York, NY 10155
(212) 750-9189; *also marble and granite tiles.*

Shaw Marble Works
5012 South 38th St., Dept. OHJ
St. Louis, MO 63116
(314) 481-5860

Niro Granite
9165 Rumsey Rd., Dept. OHJ
Columbia, MD 21045
(301) 997-8700
Durable granite look-alike porcelain tile; call for local distributors.

Butcher Block:

The Bally Block Company
30 S. 7th St., Dept. OHJ
Bally, PA 19503
(215) 845-7511
Butcher block counters, including versions with integral backsplashes. Call for local distributors.

The Building Block
550 W. 30th St., Dept. OHJ
New York, NY 10001
(212) 684-1836
Butcher block available in 18" to 25' lengths.

Metal Trim:

American Metal Molding
PO Box 2977-0977, Dept. OHJ
1801 North American Street
Philadelphia, PA 19125
(215) 634-3100
Aluminum edge, corner bands, nosing.

Synthetic (Plastic)

Laminates and Solids:
Widely available through almost all home-improvement centers and kitchen-and-bath stores.

Soapstone counters, sinks, drainboards, backsplashes available from:

Vermont Soapstone Company
PO Box 168, Dept. OHJ
Stoughton Pond Road
Perkinsville, VT 05151
(802) 263-5404
Soapstone; care and maintenance information.

Tile is widely available at kitchen-and-bath shops, or try:

Designs in Tile
Box 4983, Dept. OHJ
Foster City, CA 94404
(415) 571-712
Several series appropriate for period kitchens.

United States Ceramic Tile Company
10233 Sandyville SE, Dept. OHJ
E. Sparta, OH 44626
(216) 866-5531
Broad product line; call for local distributors.

Shep Brown Associates, Inc.
307 W First St., Dept. OHJ
South Boston, MA 02127
(617) 268-2900
Carries the "Art Tile Company" line of authentic Victorian designs.

American Olean Tile Co.
PO Box 271, Dept. OHJ
1000 Cannon Ave.
Lansdale, PA 19446
(215) 855-1111.
Extensive line with many traditional designs

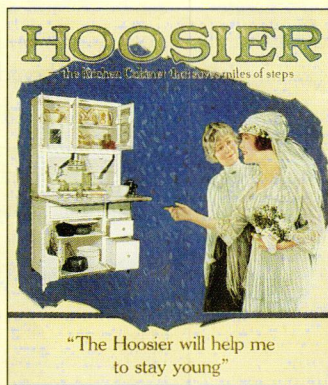
Hoosier Kitchen Cabinets

Buying and Reviving All-Purpose "Help-Mates" • by Ellen M. Plante

IF YOU WERE TO DREAM OF creating for your kitchen a magical fixture which would give you a work-shop as convenient as any ever designed — a work-table that would eliminate the hardest muscular strains of the kitchen — the HOOSIER would be the realization of that dream."

This 1923 string of superlatives was part of a massive, national advertising campaign designed by the Hoosier Manufacturing Company of New Castle, Indiana to put one of their products in every kitchen in America. However, these popular, kitchen "help-mates," which had their origins in turn-of-the-century baker's cabinets, were also manufactured by several other Indiana-based companies including G.I. Sellers & Sons of Elwood, Mutschler Brothers Company of Nappanee, The Campbell, Smith, Ritchie Company of Labanon (makers of Boone cabinets), Showers Brothers Company of Bloomington, and McDougall Company of Frankfort. Similar units could also be ordered through mail-

order houses such as Montgomery Ward & Co. and Sears Roebuck, which carried the "Wilson" kitchen cabinet. As a result, today all such free-standing kitchen cabinets are generically referred to as "hoosiers." In old-house kitchens these vintage, all-purpose units can add a lot of early 20th century authenticity while still being functional as a mini-pantry, kitchen desk area, home to a microwave — or used for baking as originally intended.

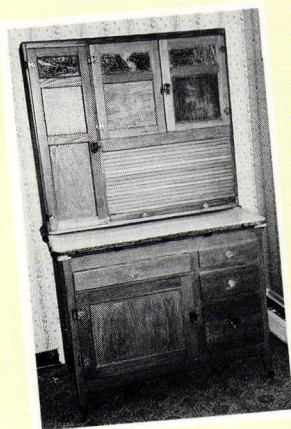


Hoosier, in business from 1899 to 1940, was only the most prolific producer.

Styles and Finishes

GARDEN VARIETY HOOSIERS WERE MADE IN a wide assortment of models, sizes, and styles so anyone shopping for one should be willing to search for just the right cabinet. For example, if you have a 1900-1919 era kitchen, turn your attention to early types. Baker's cabinets in either pine or maple have multiple small drawers on top for spices, a wooden work surface, and possum-belly bin drawers underneath for flour and sugar or cornmeal. Early hoosiers, with a natural oak finish and a zinc or aluminum work surface, are quite large. They have drawers for storage, cupboards with blind-front or glass doors (used for dishware or foodstuffs), and either a deep bottom drawer (serving as a flour bin) or a new metal flour bin/sifter located in a top cupboard.

By 1920, styles began to change and hoosiers in an oak finish or painted white enamel were available. Around 1928, advertisements for Seller & Sons were urging homeowners to "Try color in your kitchen. Jade Green! Colonial Ivory! Sellers Grey! Spanish Gold!" Many cabinets manufactured during the '20s not only had metal flour bin/sifters in the top-left cupboard, but a sugar bin on the opposite side, a spice rack or revolving shelf in the middle, and glass canisters for coffee, tea, and salt. Porcelain enamel work-surfaces, and tambour (roll-top) sliding doors were introduced along with higher legs. Most cabinets turned out during the peak years of production (1920-29) were



A restored Sellers cabinet, bought "as is" for \$100.

SUPPLIES

• **Muff's Antiques**
135 South Glassell St., Dept. OHJ
Orange, CA 92666
(714) 997-0243
Extensive Hoosier and Sellers hardware, accessories, labels; contact for catalog.

• **Phyllis Kennedy Restoration Hardware for Antique Furniture**, 9256 Holyoke Ct., Dept. OHJ, Indianapolis, IN 46268
(317) 872-6366
Hoosier and Sellers roll doors, accessories; Hoosier Cabinets by Phillip D. Kennedy

• **Van Dyke Supply Company**, Box 278, Dept. OHJ, Woonsocket, SD 57385
(605) 796-4425
Hoosier hardware, supplies.

72" tall and 40" to 42" wide, but there were extra-large models, such as the Hoosier High Boy, and small versions, like the 36" wide Hoosier Junior No. 3037.

During the 1930s, the movement to modernize and streamline kitchens could be seen in the new hoosiers produced with plain hardware, smaller flour bins, and Art Deco stencilling in contrasting colors on painted cupboard doors. Semi-transparent finishes in yellow and green were especially popular. By the late '30s the demand for hoosier-type cabinets dropped off sharply as built-in cabinets with continuous countertops became commonplace and the "modern" kitchen was born.

Finding and Restoring Hoosiers

LOOK FOR HOOSIER CABINETS AT ANTIQUE SHOPS, FLEA MARKETS, house sales, and auctions. Cabinets in good original condition or refinished can cost between \$400 and \$1200 depending upon the type of finish and wood (oak is priced higher), decorative features (etched and slag glass were popular in top-of-the-line cabinets up to the early 1920s), and the flour bin (adding approximately \$100 if present). A hoosier that retains its sugar bin, spice rack, and canister accessories in close-to-original condition might be in the \$800 to \$1200 range. Hoosiers in need of tender loving care can usually be bought for \$50 to \$300.

Before beginning any actual work, make a list of the missing parts and begin shopping for them. Cabinet backs are often subject to mildew and decay and may require replacement (flooring underlayment sometimes works as a substitute). Bear in mind that not all hoosiers were meant to have a clear finish and stripping down to bare wood may not be appropriate. Models that came painted from the factory were often made from an assortment of woods and are best left painted. Determine the original finish by test-stripping in an inconspicuous spot.

If you do decide to refinish, disassemble the hoosier first by taking the two sections apart, removing the cupboard doors, and unfastening all hardware. Note that the flour bins in cabinets made by the Hoosier Manufacturing Company were never meant to be removed. You can either work around these bins or take them out by first removing the backing on the cabinet top and then removing the wooden frame behind the flour bin. The nails inside the flour bin must also be removed in order to lift it out of the cabinet.

If the hoosier you're working on has a roll door, you have an additional project at hand. The fabric backing on these little doors is often dry and brittle — not to

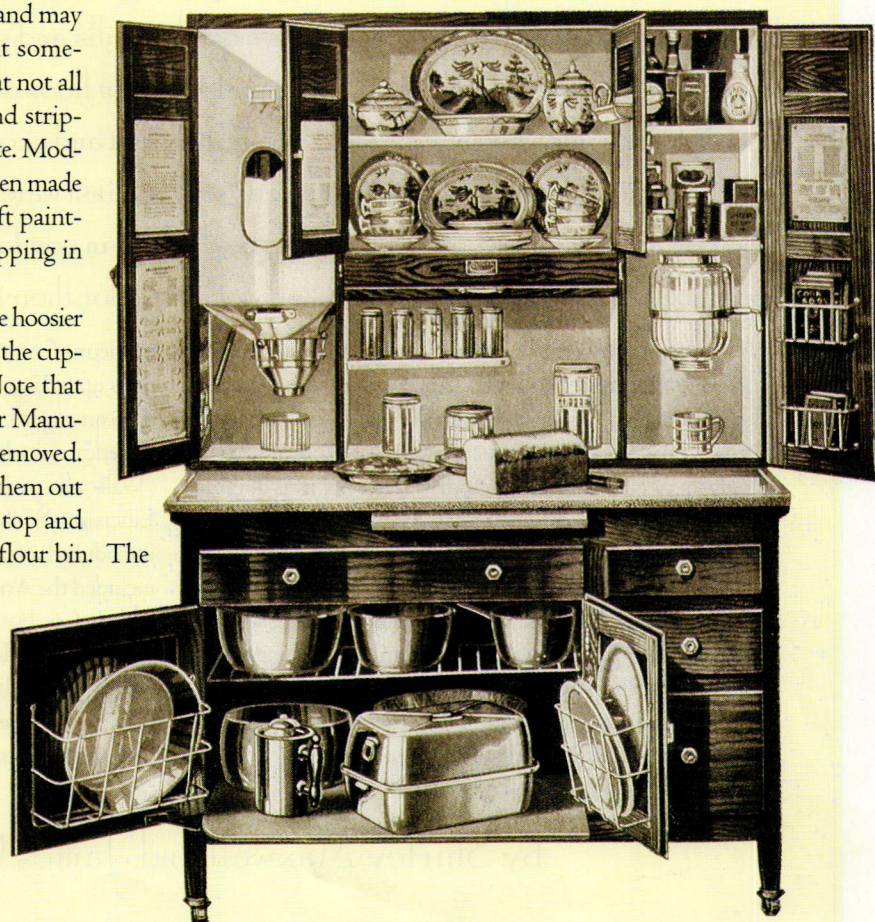
mention the difficulty of stripping the wooden slats. Replacement kits are available, however, it's not impossible to rebuild a roll door yourself. In *Hoosier Cabinets*, author Phillip D. Kennedy suggests numbering each slat before you remove the old backing. Then use a single piece of drill (a canvaslike material available at fabric stores) for the new backing. Cut the material to fit, trimming off the 2" to 3" needed to accommodate the track inside the cabinet. Slats are reattached using white wood glue thinned with water.

Oak cabinets may be refinished in golden oak or slightly darker tones covered by two to three coats of polyurethane or lacquer. A wide variety of colors are popular on hoosiers today, but the original colors were basically white, grey, apple green, ivory, gold, and lime oak.

Ellen Plante is the author of Kitchen Collectibles: An Illustrated Price Guide (Wallace-Homestead Book Co., Radnor, PA; 800-695-1214).

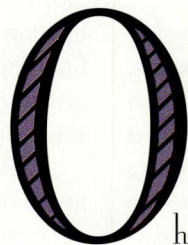


This c.1900 baker's cabinet was \$700 at an antiques market.



The Sellers "Mastercraft" from 1919, complete with Porcelain work table and Ant-proof casters.

Before Vinyl, There Was Linoleum



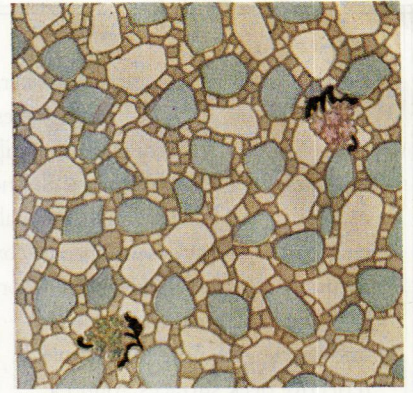
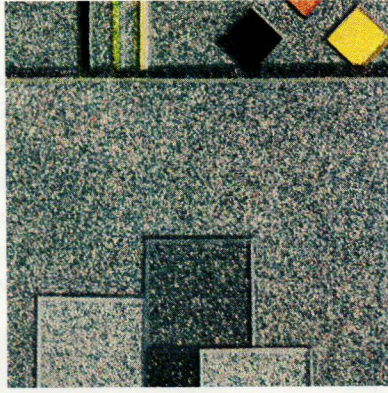
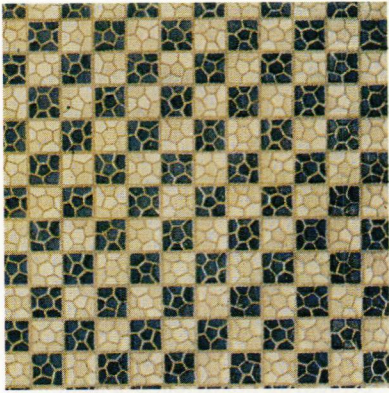
Oh, for the perfect, indestructible, easy-care, attractive kitchen floor! What householder hasn't longed for it? The quest for a waterproof, sanitary, decorative, comfortable, and inexpensive floor covering has gone on for centuries, certainly long before the mid-19th-century invention of linoleum. ♦ In the 18th and 19th centuries, painted floor cloths and their commercial cousins, oil cloths, were commonly used to save floors and carpets from the spills and stains of everyday living. As the industrial revolution advanced, the manufacture of floor cloths gradually changed from a tedious and expensive handcraft to a relatively fast and economical machine process. Floor cloths and oil cloths held their own pretty well against water and stains, but since they were too thin to be resilient, they left a lot to be desired in comfort. And although they were surprisingly durable when well made and well cared for, their lifespan was definitely limited.

Something better was needed, and 19th-century inventors were determined to find it. Among the many flooring experiments undertaken in that inventive pre-linoleum period, the most commercially successful was Kamptulicon, an amalgam of cork and molten India rubber that was durable and resilient, but so expensive that only wealthy homeowners and the publicly endowed could afford it. In 1863, things began to improve in terms of the popular market when Frederick Walton, an English floor cloth manufacturer, came up with his offering of a flexible, nearly seamless, machine-made material that incorporated linseed oil, ground cork, wood flours, kauri gum, rosins, and other fillers and driers on a strong burlap backing. Walton named his new product

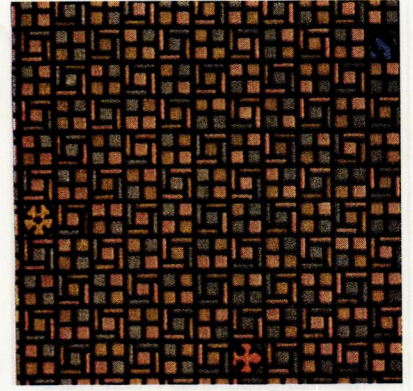
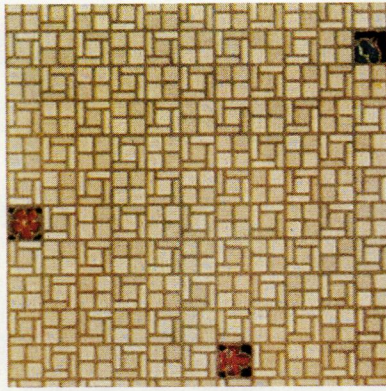
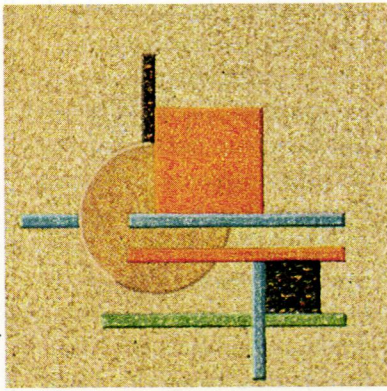
linoleum from "Linum" (flax) and "oleum" (oil), which adds up to linseed oil — the magic ingredient. He brought it to an eager United States market in 1869, opening the American Linoleum Manufacturing Company in New York. (Walton is perhaps better known today as the inventor of Lincrusta-Walton, an embossed linoleumlike wallcovering introduced a few years later.) Other early linoleum makers included the Armstrong Cork Company and the George W. Blabon Co., both located in Pennsylvania.

Unlike floor cloths, linoleum could be either a floor covering, as in the case of a linoleum area rug, or the finished flooring itself, as in wall-to-wall linoleum sheets or tiles laid over a concrete or wooden foundation. It required less upkeep

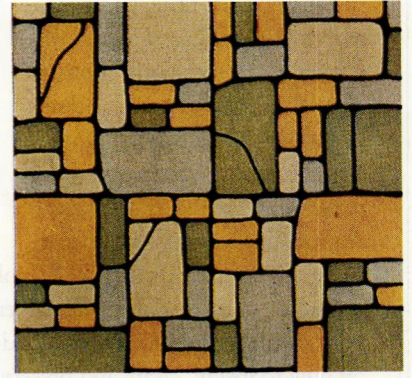
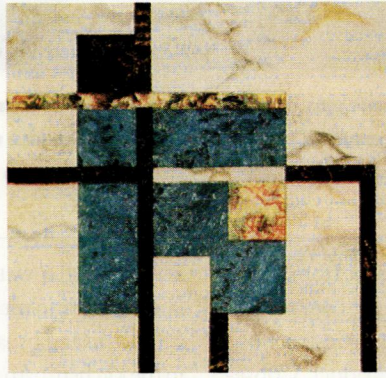
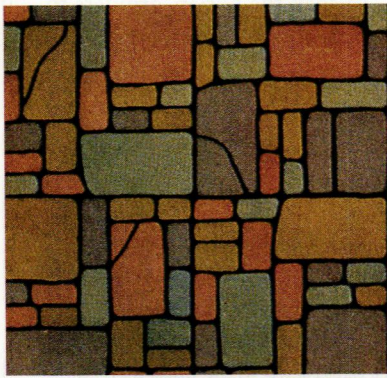
by Shirley Maxwell and James C. Massey



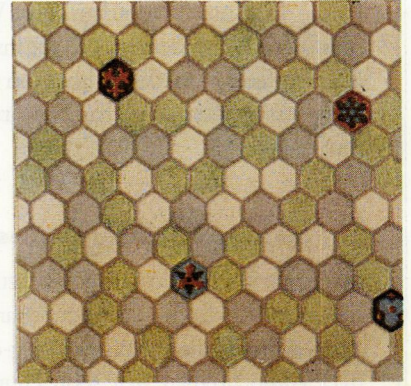
A wide choice of colors and an array of linoleum patterns — including ceramic tile motifs, hooked



rug effects for traditional interiors, broken flagstone designs with irregular repeats, brightly col-



ored solids and inlaid geometrics in modern themes — created seemingly-limitless decorating pos-



sibilities for the pre-1940s homes, as these varied examples of Armstrong linoleum demonstrate.

than wood, and it was cheaper, quieter, and more resilient than ceramic tile or marble. The best grades were extremely durable and yet cost less than cork or rubber-tile floors (two other popular alternatives). Linoleum was also non-flammable, owing to its density, and had natural germicidal qualities as a result of a bacteria-destroying gas produced by oxidized linseed oil. Consequently, it was a highly favored flooring choice for hospitals. Even the U.S. Navy, on the lookout for rugged, non-skid, non-reflective deck surfaces, found a place for it on its ships during — and long after — the Spanish-American War. Official reports noted that injuries caused by splintering wood during combat engagements decreased with the use of “battleship” linoleum, so the sturdy, plain-colored material became the standard against which other resilient floor coverings were measured. It was used for other purposes as well, such as on desks, work tables, and counter tops. A marketing blitz after World War I taught America’s housewives to value linoleum’s decorative qualities as well as its utilitarian ones, and the material soon found its way into every room in the house.

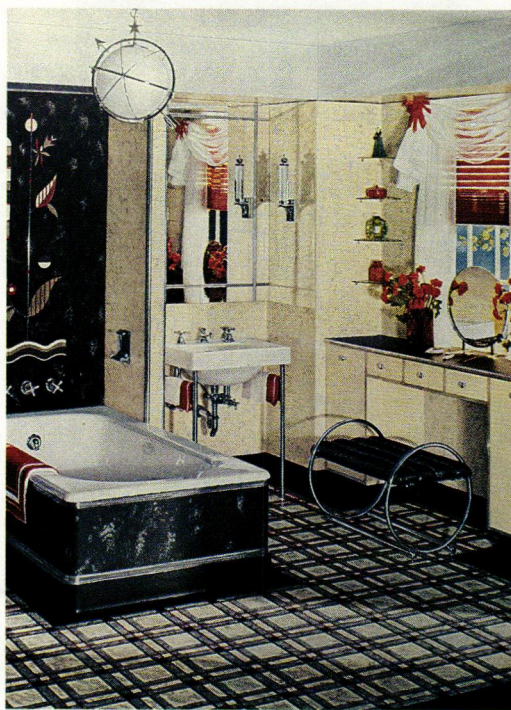
It is not for nothing that linoleum was called the “forty-year floor” because with the right care it can last almost indefinitely. Although it cost less than other materials of similar quality, good linoleum was far from cheap. To protect their customers’ investment and their own reputations, linoleum manufacturers issued scrupulous instructions on how to install, clean, and preserve their product. Consequently, there are well-laid linoleum floors that are still serviceable after sixty or more years of wear, attesting to the value of following directions. The kitchen of the Woodrow Wilson House museum in Washington, D.C., for instance, boasts an almost-like-new floor of battleship linoleum tiles laid in 1915 that’s still going strong after more than 75 years of family and museum foot traffic.

The Linoleum-Making Process

FREDERICK WALTON’S COMPLEX LINOLEUM-MAKING PROCESS MARRIED jute fibers from India to Siberian flaxseed, Spanish cork, and fossilized kauri gum from long-dead New Zealand pine trees. Although there were soon a number of linoleum manu-

facturers, they all used pretty much the same process. Linseed oil was boiled, dripped onto huge sheets of scrim that were suspended from the ceilings of oxidation sheds, and allowed to oxidize through contact with the air until it became as thick and golden as caramel. Then, it was ground up and transformed into a “cement” by heating it with kauri gum and other resins, after which the mixture was cooled and ground with cork flour. The

resulting “clay” was next pressed into burlap backing material between the heated rollers of mammoth calendaring machines. Voila, linoleum! But it wasn’t quite finished yet. Before being printed and sent out to the waiting marketplace, it had to hang in drying rooms to be seasoned for three or four days. Later, vast oven rooms sped the drying process somewhat. Because of the size and weight of the material being produced, massive machinery and huge spaces were needed to turn out linoleum. A roll might measure as much as 12 feet x 90 feet and weigh tons. There had to be enormous rollers to hold the scrim to oxidize linseed oil, vats to soak the burlap, grinders to make the cork flour, more grinders to pulp the oxidized linseed oil, and calendars to press cork and linseed oil onto the burlap.

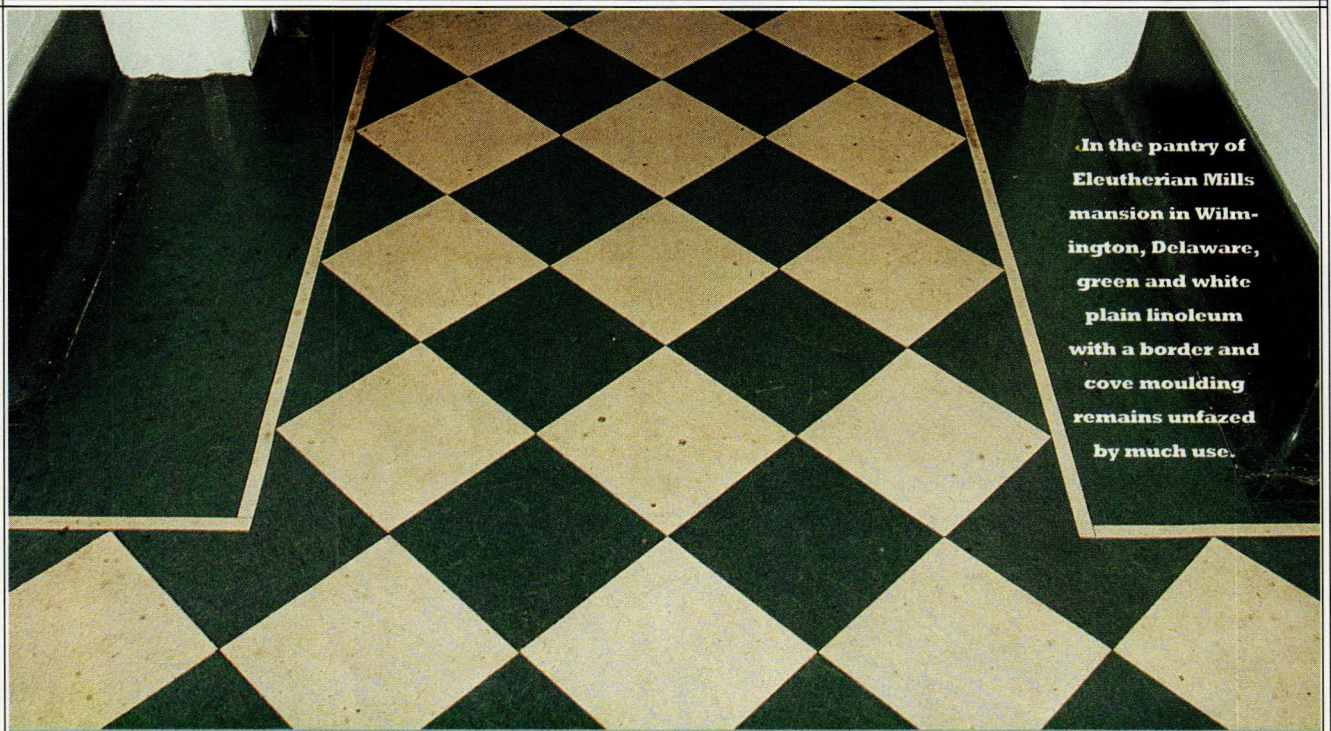


Linoleum wasn't just for floors! Here linowall in black and ivory dresses up the walls, tub, and panel, which also has an inlaid design.

Patterns and Colors

BEFORE WORLD WAR I, THE FAVORITE LINOLEUM PATTERNS SIMULATED encaustic tile and mosaic patterns, which were strongly geometric and usually small in scale. These patterns were used in the kitchen, bath, and entry hall. By the 1920s, linoleum design came into its own. As the decade wore on, the choice of colors and patterns expanded enormously. Art Deco, Moderne, and Colonial Revival patterns prevailed, along with new solid and jasper colors. In 1925, Armstrong patented an embossed inlaid linoleum that featured indentations along the straight lines of the pattern, adding new dimensions to the linoleum trade.

While Art Deco and Moderne patterns continued to be popular in the 1930s and 1940s, many linoleum designs were meant to complement the Colonial Revival craze in architecture and home furnishings. Simulated flagstone or brick paving was common in sunrooms and entry halls, and tasteful “carpets” were featured in living and dining rooms. Inset patterns for custom effects in solid or marbled linoleum often introduced strikingly modern themes — or amplified traditional ones. In



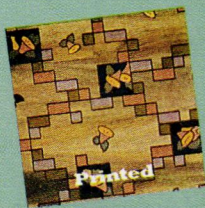
In the pantry of Eleutherian Mills mansion in Wilmington, Delaware, green and white plain linoleum with a border and cove moulding remains unfazed by much use.

Types of Linoleum

Battleship: The three heaviest grades of plain linoleum, ranging from $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " in thickness, came originally in only three solid colors (brown, green, and dark gray) and the burlap backing was always left unpainted. Other colors, including blue and black, were added later.

Plain: Patterns were sometimes cut from plain linoleum, by machine or by hand, and inserted into sheets of background linoleum. Intricate inlaid patterns could also be achieved by pressing "granulated" colored rosin in metal stencils onto the burlap.

Jaspé: A variation on inlaid linoleum, jaspé displayed a striated or, in the manufacturers' descriptive term, moiré pattern. The color went through to the backing, and the rather subdued pattern was considered especially suitable for living, dining, and bedrooms.



Printed: Plain, solid-color linoleum was often decorated with designs printed in oil paints on the surface. If the design wore off, the plain linoleum was still a useful flooring material. However, with an occasional wax job (preferably paste wax), the design could last indefinitely.

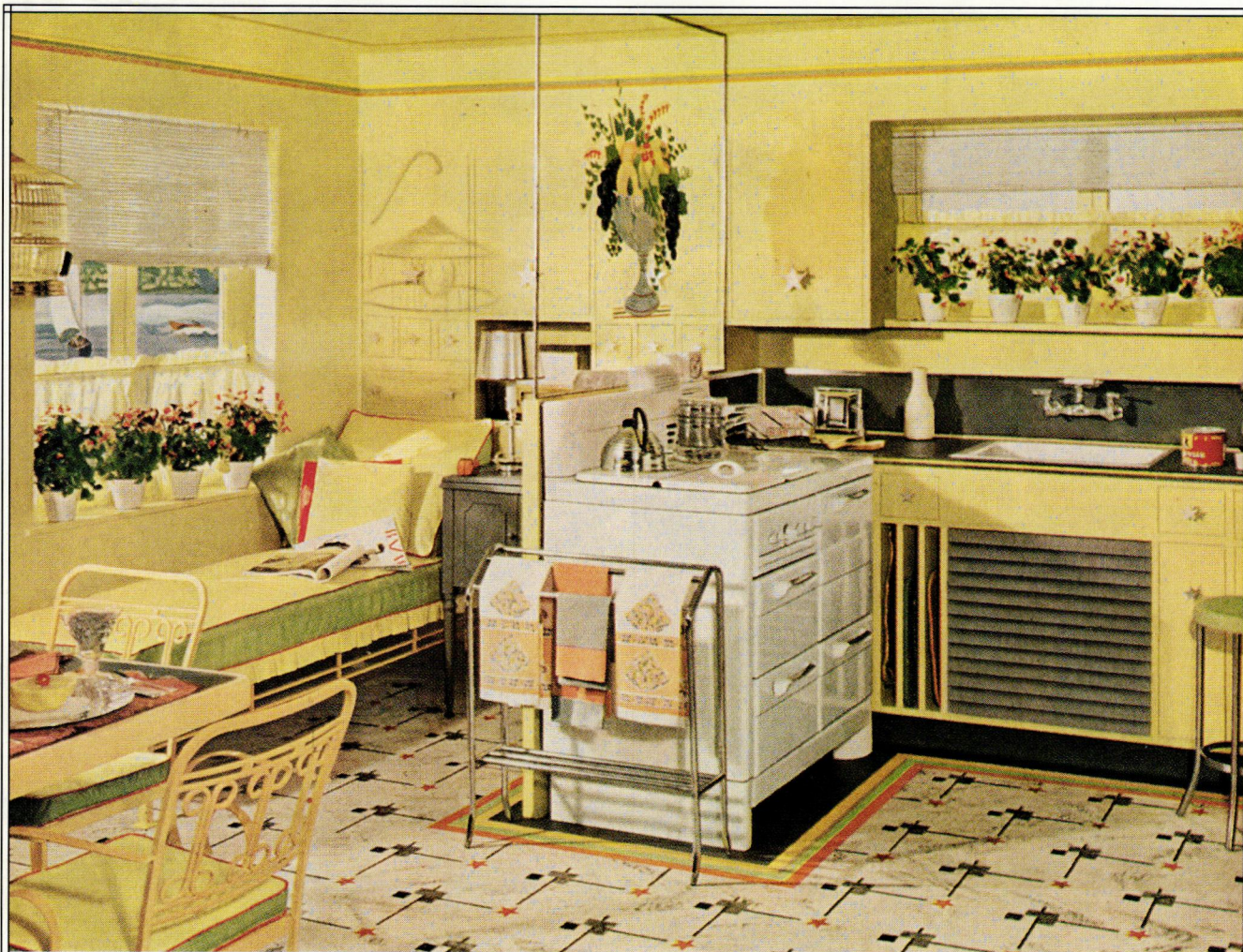
Borders: Factory-made, narrow, two- to three-foot widths of linoleum were often used around the edges of fiber carpets or to finish room-sized inlaid linoleum floors. These strips could be cut on the job from full-width rolls as well. They often simulated various types of wood grain, but they also came in solid colors or decorative motifs, such as Greek key or laurel leaf designs.

Cove Mouldings: Linoleum's flexibility allowed the use of curved cove moulding — a major advantage in cleanliness because it avoided dirt-gathering cracks between the wall and floor. It was most commonly used in kitchens and baths.

There were also a number of linoleum look-alikes on the market in the early-twentieth century. Here's two types:

Cork Carpet: Cork flooring used much the same process and materials as linoleum, but it was not as firmly compacted, giving it a sound-deadening quality that made it especially useful for public buildings.

Felt-backed rugs: These resembled floor cloths more than linoleum, being merely painted patterns on a backing of felt or felt paper. They contained no cork, linseed oil, or burlap. Their skin-deep patterns wore through quickly and the backings tore more easily than burlap, but they came in a dizzyingly varied array of patterns and were generally cheap.



the 1950s, linoleum was still going strong, but it would be supplanted by asphaltic tiles and vinyl within the decade.

Installation

FAR FROM ENCOURAGING THE DO-IT-YOURSELFER, LINOLEUM MANUFACTURERS universally recommended professional installation because there were some real problems. Not only was accurate cutting tricky for amateurs, the material itself was heavy and difficult to handle, requiring specialized equipment, such as 150-pound iron rollers. Since linoleum was usually laid over wood floors, they had to be level, sanded, and clean. If the flooring was to go over a concrete slab, the slab also had to be meticulously prepared, with a recessed area exactly the right depth reserved for the linoleum. The unsaturated building felt was also formidably heavy. Since some common ingredients could damage the linoleum, the paste had to be carefully selected and painstakingly applied to produce a reliable bond. Finally, since linoleum expands at a different rate than wood, there was always the risk of buckling and cracking after it was laid. In the early days of the industry, manufacturers recommended leaving the linoleum on the site for days before laying it and then refitting it at least once over a period of weeks after the initial laying. Now doesn't

By 1938, a preference for streamlined, easy-to-clean kitchens made linoleum with cove moulding a favorite floor covering.

that sound simple? No? Well then, you can see why this was usually done by trained workmen.

Conservation & Repair

SOONER OR LATER, VIRTUALLY ALL OLD-HOUSE RESTORERS MEET UP with linoleum — or, at least, with the stubborn, solvent-defying remains of its black felt underlayment. Linoleum is most often found in a kitchen or bathroom, but it could be almost any place in the house. In 18th- or early 19th-century houses, it is a reminder of some late 19th- or early 20th-century remodeling. However, in houses built after 1890, it may well be original. No matter what its credentials, until recently the typical response to even the best preserved linoleum was “Yuck!” Out came the electric sander and into the dumpster went an important document in house history in the mistaken belief that exposed wood floors were somehow more authentic. Fortunately, today's more sophisticated restorationists are likely to recognize and honor linoleum for its historical — if not necessarily its decorative —

character. Whenever possible, it's a real kindness to your house to keep the old flooring in place, even if modern esthetics or housekeeping considerations require it to be concealed under a new subfloor. Yet, there are times when the linoleum really has to go. In such a case, salve your conscience with a little salvage archeology. Keep a large enough piece of the linoleum to show the pattern and put it away with an identifying tag in a safe place.

What if you have roomful of old linoleum in good shape and you want to reuse some or all of it in a different location? We surveyed a few manufacturers, distributors, and restoration architects for advice about this idea. The consensus was that the linoleum probably wouldn't survive the move, at least not in a single piece. The problem is that the linseed oil continues to oxidize with age, so the linoleum becomes more and more brittle. If you are determined to try to move your linoleum to another room, your best bet is probably to wait for a string of warm days or to turn up the thermostat, then slice the linoleum into neat rectangles of the largest manageable size and remove it as carefully as possible, using a broad scraper. Don't try to roll it up!

A more hopeful project is laying unused old linoleum still in the original rolls. However, this also requires scrupulous attention to temperature (warm) and handling (gentle). Following the standard manufacturer's instructions for installation should make it possible, if not easy.

There is even some hope for making minor repairs to linoleum or felt-backed rugs. A little judicious cannibalizing is probably the easiest and most successful way to accomplish this task. Cut out the damaged area and glue in a sound, exactly-matching piece taken from an inconspicuous spot, such as under a radiator, in a pantry or closet floor, or, if you're really lucky, a kitchen shelf. Otherwise, pick a piece from the least obvious corner of the room. Then use the damaged piece to fill in the blank in the less readily visible area. In the case of gouges and stains, you may be able to make a paste of ground sawdust, oil-based varnish, and pigment. Then, repaint the damaged area with an oil-based paint to restore any pattern and apply an oil-based varnish (not polyurethane). Although it sounds plausible enough at first blush, grinding up cork or old linoleum to make a paste is a hopeless chore, given the density and toughness of these materials.

In the case of printed linoleum or felt-backed rugs (or later rugs with asphaltic backing), the manufacturers

"Who wouldn't sing in this bathroom?" asks a 1930s Armstrong ad - particularly when Marbelle linoleum with a Greek Key pattern covers the floor.



Removing Linoleum Adhesive

SCRAPING UP IS HARD TO DO

EVENTUALLY, EVERY OLD-HOUSE RESTORER GETS stuck with removing the mastic adhesive left behind by linoleum. The problem is, many different kinds of mastics have been used over the course of a century, making it difficult to predict their exact ingredients and the methods that might soften them. Even more of a concern is the fact that some of these mastics — and the lining felts that accompany them — used asbestos as a component (some floor tiles also contain this mineral). This rules out machine sanding (which clogs the paper anyway) and other operations that will make these materials friable, releasing asbestos fibers into the air and creating a potential health threat. Gummed down by these limitations, the two main tools become a cautious trial-and-error approach and plenty of elbow grease. Some guidelines worth adhering to:


- Note that waterproof glue was usually applied at the edges and seams of linoleum; a weaker (and often water-soluble) paste anchored centers to the felt layer.
- Start with hot water. Soak the mastic for 20 to 60 minutes or until it is soft enough to be mopped or scraped up (keeping the surface continually wet also limits friability). Adding vinegar or high-strength citrus degreasing solvents (Limo Sol is one brand) to the water may improve effectiveness. On floors, long-handled garden edgers are a break from scraping with putty knives.
- Try heat or cold where water doesn't work. Modern mastics and those containing linseed oil may soften with heat from a lamp or hot-air gun. Some readers report freezing the mastic with dry ice breaks the bond with the substrate.
- Resort to chemical solvents last. Start with the most innocuous solvent and test in an inconspicuous area first before proceeding or increasing in strength. Isopropyl alcohol, paint thinner, xylol, lacquer thinner, or paint stripper may yield results. Work with plenty of ventilation and proper safety precautions.

Random insets inserted into linoleum, such as the abstract figure in this embossed type, added diversity.

recommended a coat of oil-based varnish once or twice a year to increase durability, so you may find several uneven layers of varnish on top of the linoleum. Anything that removes the varnish is likely to have similar consequences for the oil-painted pattern, so it is best to proceed cautiously with cleaning efforts, trying out the cleaner in small, inconspicuous areas before you tackle the whole job and hand-drying as you go. Obviously, you will want to keep water or other liquids away from the felt backing. After cleaning, you can spruce up your old linoleum one more time by applying yet another coat of varnish or you can try a thin coat of boiled linseed oil (warmed slightly to make it penetrate more easily) and apply it with a rag. Expect a tacky surface for at least a few hours and stay off the floor until it is thoroughly dry.

Replacing old linoleum with new is hard, unless you are able to make use of available solid or marbled colors and the patterns that can be made by inseting cut designs. Next to finding unused rolls of the original stuff (not impossible, but not easy), your best hope is to try to find something similar to the old patterns in vinyl flooring or tile. Compare the tile patterns from old catalogs with modern flooring choices, and bear in mind that today's pebble-textured flooring is very different from the low-sheen, smooth-surfaced effect of earlier years. If you can find a *Home Owner's Catalogue* or a *Sweet's Architectural Catalogue* for a year near the one you're interested in, you've hit pay dirt because they contain the original manufacturers' catalogs.

Linoleum Care

TO KEEP LINOLEUM IN TOP CONDITION, MANUFACTURERS HAVE always recommended frequent vacuuming or dusting with a dry mop. Working on only a small section of the floor at a time, regularly and carefully damp mop (that's damp, not wet!) using a mild soap, such as Ivory Snow, to help keep the linoleum in good shape. Stay away from cleaning agents that contain ammonia, baking soda, and borax. Also remember that scrubbing and abrasive cleansers can pit the linoleum surface, allowing dirt to settle in the tiny holes. In order to keep excess water from migrating to the jute backing through seams, edges, and worn spots, dry the floor sections immediately after damp mopping. To preserve the pattern, follow with a thin coat of liquid or paste wax and possibly a coat of varnish once or twice a year. 



Suppliers List

WE'VE FOUND NO ONE STILL MAKING PATTERNED linoleums, borders, or rugs, and the market for solid-color, marbled, and battleship linoleum is supplied by a shrinking number of manufacturers around the world.

• Forbo Industries, Inc.

P.O. Box 667, Dept. OHJ

Hazleton, PA 18201

(717) 459-0771

Makers of solid color, marbled, and battleship linoleum.

• Bangor Cork Company

William and D Streets, Dept. OHJ

Pen Argyl, PA 18072

(215) 863-9041

Distributes Forbo battleship linoleum in two thickness (1/8" and 0.8") and six colors: black, gray, light green, and three shades of brown.

• Gerbert, Ltd.

Box 4944, Dept. OHJ

Lancaster, PA 17604

(717) 299-5035

Distributors for DLW (Deutsche Linoleum Werke, a German company founded in 1926), which makes jasper in a broad range of colors.

UNDERSTANDING OLD-HOUSE WASTE SYSTEMS

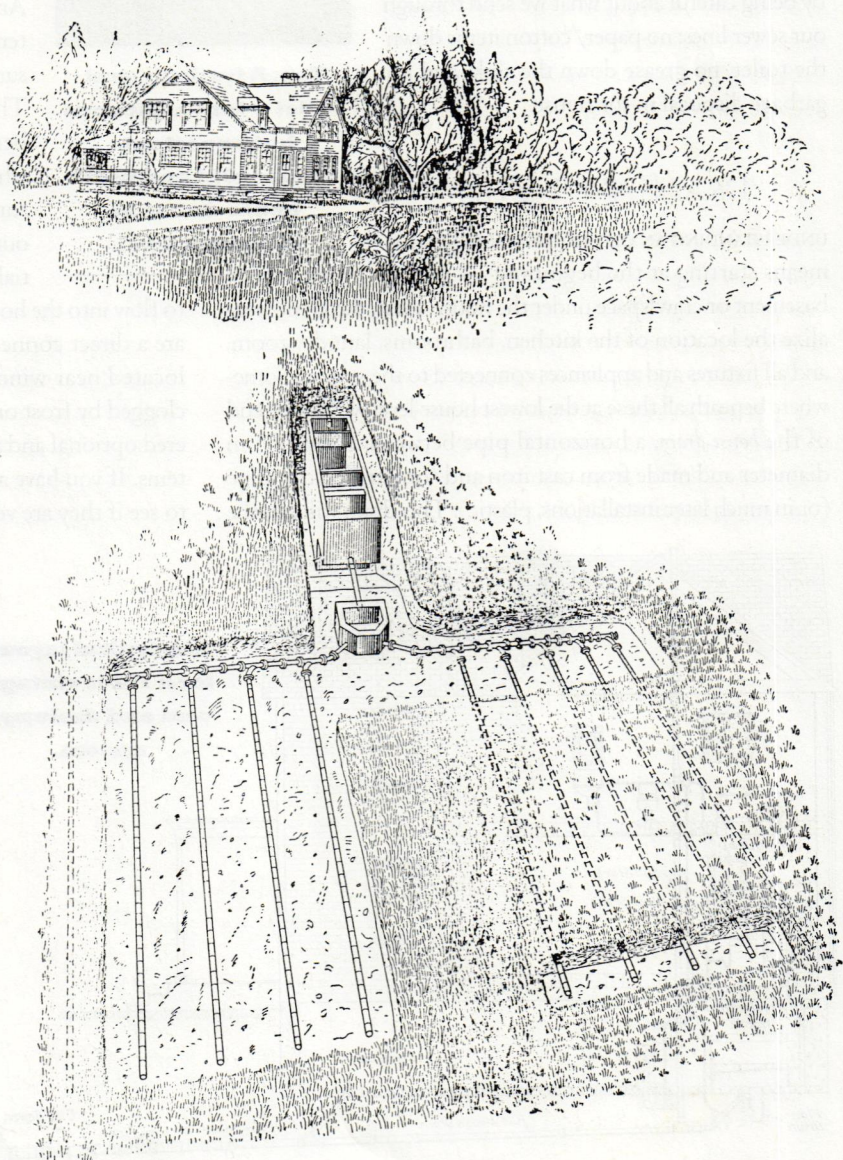
"Pure Air, Pure Water and a Pure Soil"
— an Old Greek Sanitarian

THESE WORDS FROM GERHARD'S *Hints on the Drainage and Sewerage of Dwellings* (1884) have been the basic guidelines for a healthy house since

ancient times. However, even with the advent of modern plumbing in the mid-19th century, the practice of sanitation has not always been perfect or logical. As a result of advances in construction and changes in the community, the owner of an older home is often using systems that depart from current standards. Potential problem areas include inoperative traps, lack of proper air vents, faulty piping, and the presence of old privy pits, septic tanks, or drain fields in the yard. While most old-house owners have systems that function adequately, the best way to anticipate problems is to understand how your waste system works and how it might have been altered since your home was built — especially if it originally had no plumbing.

My 1910 home in Cambridge,

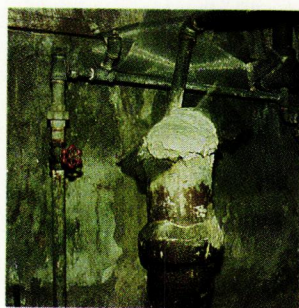
A subsurface view of an early 20th century septic system and drain field designed for sewage disposal and irrigation.



Maryland was built with indoor facilities that were upgraded in the late 1950s. The city engineer does not know when the town's municipal sewer system was installed, but 1914 drawings show the system in place and connected to each house and business in the community. While this means that I don't have the remains of a septic system in my yard, I do have a sewer line buried only ten inches below ground that snakes around the property before connecting to the main in the street. This pipe is laid with relatively little pitch and therefore can clog easily. The street system, being only thirteen feet above sea level, is also flat and shallow and prone to sluggish movement. The city deals with this situation by flushing the street system whenever we ask. We cooperate by being careful about what we send through our sewer lines: no paper/cotton items down the toilet, no grease down the sink, and no garbage disposal in the house.

DRAINS AND VENTS

UNDERSTANDING AN OLD-HOUSE WASTE SYSTEM means starting at the beginning — in the basement or crawlspace under the house. First, sketch or visualize the location of the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, and all fixtures and appliances connected to the system. Somewhere beneath all these at the lowest house level will be the end of the *house drain*, a horizontal pipe between 3" and 5" in diameter and made from cast iron and/or vitrified clay pipe (or in much later installations, plastic). This drain will exit the

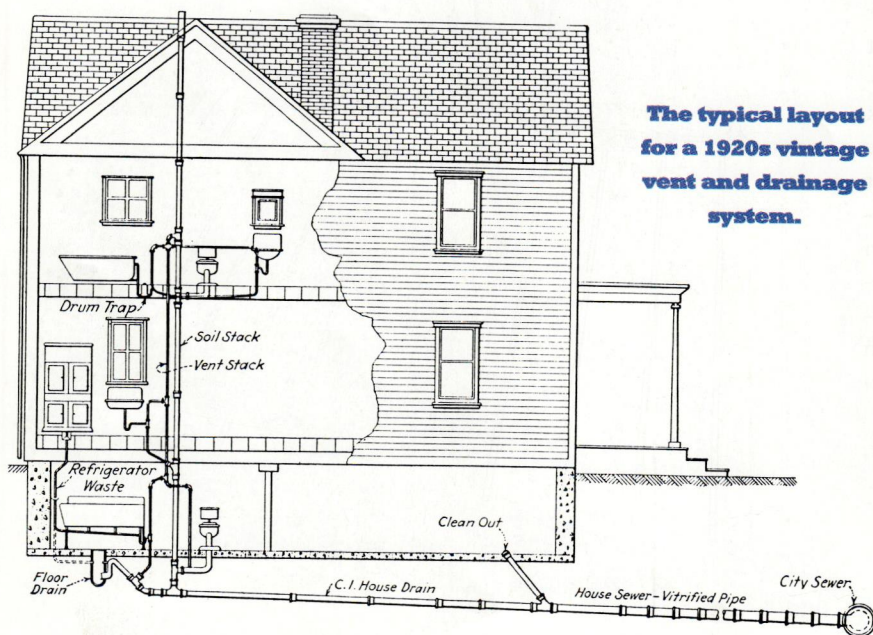


Top: A fresh air vent outlet — inconspicuous but important.
Above: Old and new house drains at basement level.

house through the foundation and run underground either to the city sewer or a private disposal system in the yard. House drains have to be installed with a minimum pitch (typically 1/4" per foot or better) to keep waste moving away from the building. However, in some old houses settlement has reduced this pitch to the point where it causes problems and the line has to be relaid.

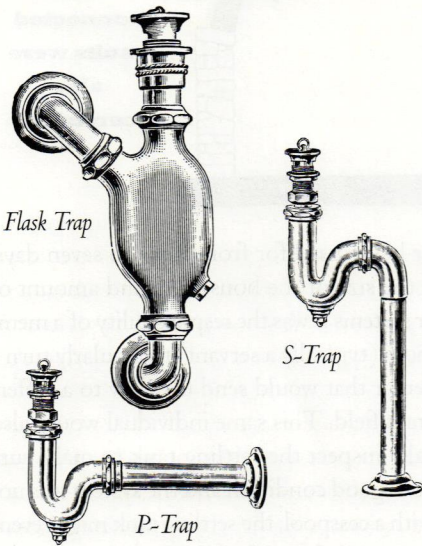
Connected to the house drain and rising vertically out of the basement will be the *soil* or *waste stack*. This pipe connects with all of the fixtures in the house and eventually extends through the roof as a 2" or so diameter air vent. Running parallel to the waste stack will be the *vent stack*, a pipe 1 1/4" or larger that is tied to both the waste stack and the fixtures. An important safety feature of the waste system, these vents maintain atmospheric pressure in the system in order to keep it in balance. They also prevent the traps in the system from being emptied through a siphoning effect when other fixtures discharge or negative pressure when wind blows across the waste stack outlet. Failure of the traps creates the potential for sewer gasses — including methane — to flow into the house and sicken the occupants. Because they are a direct connection to the sewer, air vents must not be located near windows or chimneys, or where they can be clogged by frost or foreign objects. Vents were once considered optional and are occasionally missing in old-house systems. If you have a traps that don't function properly, check to see if they are vented correctly.

While most homeowners are vaguely aware of rooftop air vents, a second type called the *fresh air vent* or *drain vent*, was a required part of waste systems through the first half of this century. These are narrow pipes that rise out of the ground, terminating in either a bell-shaped cover or "U" end with an opening on the ground side. They are normally located near clean-out ports for the house drain. While these ground-level vents are not a common feature on modern waste systems, they may still help the systems in older homes function properly, and the decision to remove or cap them should be made by a licensed plumber.

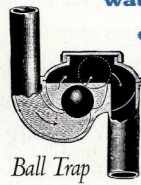


The typical layout for a 1920s vintage vent and drainage system.

A LESSON IN TRAPS

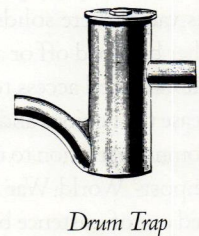


The basic, long-standing sink trap is the P-TRAP, which looks like the letter turned on its side. When these traps are properly installed, the pipe leaves the water seal horizontally to meet a vent in the wall, and so meets modern code requirements in most communities. Another common variety used in this century is the S-TRAP, made up of two sets of deep curves that end



in a vertical pipe. These curves were intended to prevent water loss through evaporation or a drop in atmospheric pressure, but the trap is often unvented and is not allowed in most new work (existing installations are usually "grandfathered"). A second, once-popular type of anti-siphon trap was the DRUM TRAP. Around 10" deep and usually set in the floor under a metal plate, these were frequently

installed to service both the sink and the bathtub, but are no longer standard because they are not self-cleaning. FLASK TRAPS are similar obsolete features. MECHANICAL TRAPS that use balls, flaps, or other moving parts are very early and have long been illegal.

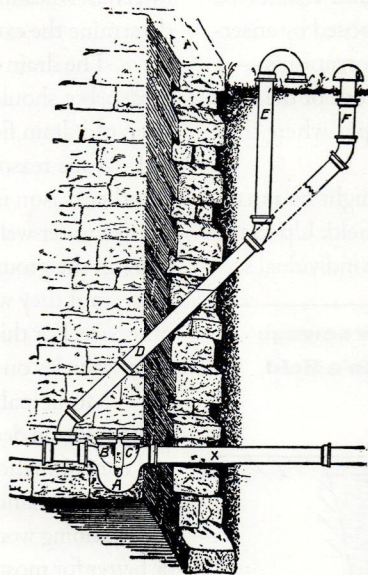


TRAPS

ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT PARTS OF THE WASTE SYSTEM TO locate and examine in any house are the traps found at each fixture (see box). Traps are specialized reservoirs in the drain pipes designed to hold water — not lost rings and the like — and create a seal in the system. This seal prevents sewer gasses from entering the house through the open drain of a sink, tub, or appliance. Modern plumbing codes require that all fixtures be trapped. Small, simple traps under sinks are easy to see, but traps hidden under the floor or in a wall behind tubs and toilets are more difficult to spot.

The first trap design was simply a U-shaped section in a pipe. These tended to be shallow and prone to failure either through evaporation or siphoning. This early design also had the potential to not be self-cleaning, trapping solids at the bottom that would decay. Mechanical traps were primitive devices also tried early on. A simple version was a piece of leather set on a hinge within the pipe. The leather however, never provided a tight seal, trapped materials behind it, and was

prone to corrosion. There was a wide variety of bell traps which used a water seal. Others used floating balls or self-seating valves as a mechanical trap. One series of ingenious traps used a mercury seal in case the water seal was lost. Another early form was the cesspool trap — simply a small masonry chamber that tended to clog easily.



The fresh air vent connects to the house drain just before the main running trap.

DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

HOUSES BUILT IN RURAL AREAS OR BEFORE community sewage systems were in place will contain ample evidence of historic waste disposal systems in the surrounding property. Without a doubt, the first to appear was the simple privy pit built with an outdoor necessary over it. The majority of such outhouses tended to be portable so that they could be moved to a new location when the pit was full. Some, though, had cleanouts that reduced the need to dig a new pit every few years.

The push for a better waste disposal system than a privy pit or kitchen slop area began in the middle of the 19th century and came from two sources. First, there was a greater understanding and acceptance of the relationship between

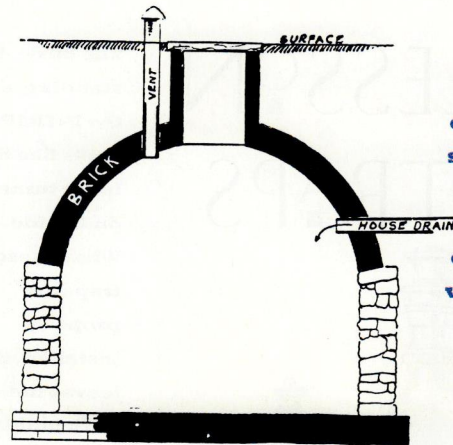
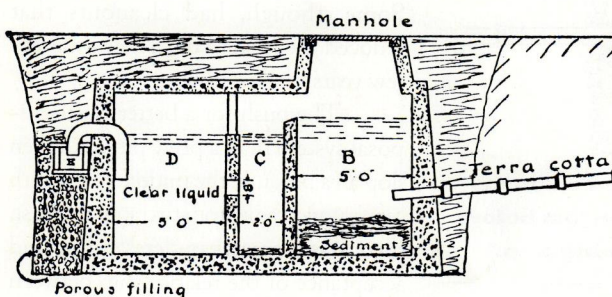
disease and decaying matter. Primary examples were the connection between cholera (which reached epidemic proportions in London in 1849 and 1854) and a contaminated water supply and the discovery of the typhoid fever bacillus in 1880. Second, households and communities were using more water for daily activities and the customary methods of waste disposal simply could not keep up with the amount of sewage being generated by each household. While larger cities began to build municipal sewerage systems, individual house owners usually had to take responsibility for their own waste.

The simplest on-site system was the *cesspool*. This is a large vault — typically ten or more feet in diameter — lined with brick, stone, or concrete that is actually just one step better than a privy pit. The house sewage would flow into this vault where solids would settle out and liquids would either be piped off or allowed to leach away. A covered manhole provided access to the vault and a vent was essential to release the noxious and combustible gasses. The cesspool was a common solution to the problem of sewage disposal through the post- World War II housing boom, but has been regulated out of existence by most communities. Besides its dubious sanitary value, the cesspool filled up quickly and needed to be cleaned periodically. Most existing cesspools have been disconnected from the house, but the empty vault itself may still be present.

A second option was the individual *septic tank and drain field*, one that is still in use in most rural areas today. The operation of a home drain field is simplicity in action. Fixtures and appliances in the house are connected to the waste system, which feeds by gravity into a single- or multi-chambered tank. There, solids settle out and are decomposed by anaerobic bacteria, yeasts, and other microscopic organisms — a septic process. From here, the effluent flows out of the tank and into a series of buried vitrified clay pipes where they would ooze out and be absorbed by the soil.

In a historic drain field system there might be a manual divertor between the tank and the drain field. Up to the 1930s, plumbing design manuals called for the individual sec-

Design for a 1912 septic tank. Raw sewage breaks down in "B," then moves to a field through "C" and "D".



This 1893 cesspool is single unit, but two or more connected vaults were also common.

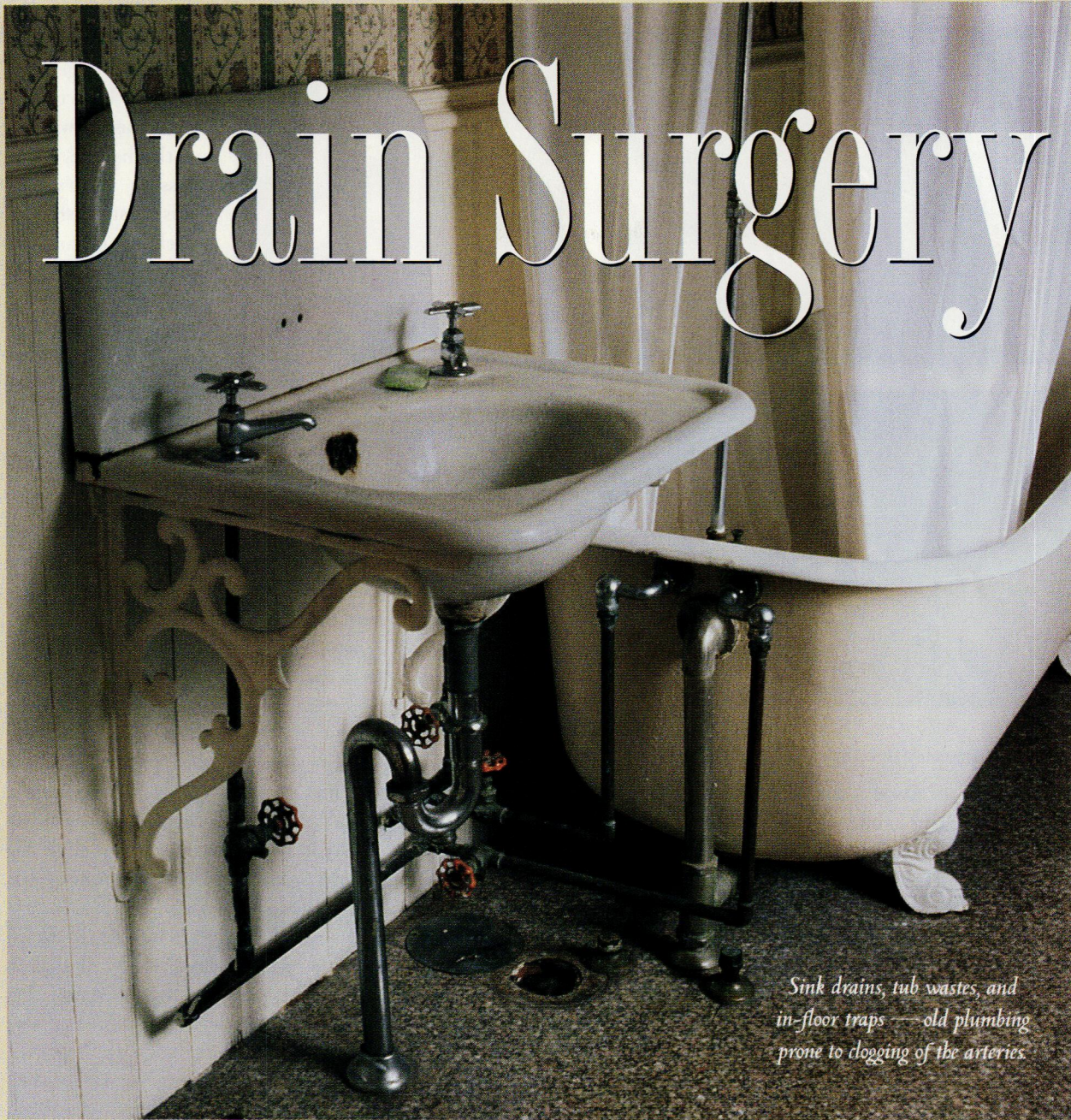
tions to rest after being used for from three to seven days, depending upon the size of the household and amount of use. In these older systems it was the responsibility of a member of the household (typically a servant) to regularly turn a wheel on the divertor that would send the flow to a different part of the drain field. This same individual would also have to periodically inspect the settling tank to make sure that the seals were in good condition and the system was not clogging up. As with a cesspool, the settling tank might eventually have to be pumped clean of solid material.

These settling tanks and drain fields are easy to locate. The top of the tank may be visible on the surface and the field is often marked by a large area where grass and other plants tend to grow better than elsewhere on the property. The locations of pipes, tanks, or other underground apparatus can also be located by using a plumber's rod or any similar pointed metal stake and probing the ground at regular intervals. Marking the "hits" with flags or golf tees can help determine the extent and the direction of any piping.

The drain field site might seem like an ideal area for a garden, but should be considered only for ornamental plants. Even old drain fields have the potential to contain polluted soil — one reason why it is helpful to know their location. Another reason is these constructions can collapse suddenly. Like water wells, privy pits, cesspools and drain fields are holes in the ground that can cave in if the soil is wet or very loose, or if they were not backfilled properly when taken out of service. For this reason it is not a good idea to park cars or other vehicles on top of these features.

Municipal sewerage systems were, of course, the ideal waste solution despite early worries about poor construction and contamination from the discharge of neighbors. In 1878 the prolific manual author James C. Biles commented "As the plumbing work of our house is commonly done, it would be better for most of us if we had to . . . carry our waste to the culvert at the nearest street corner." Fortunately, improved sewerage technology in this century answered such concerns, and with designs and materials that in many cases have been operating reliably for close to a hundred years.

Drain Surgery



Sink drains, tub wastes, and in-floor traps — old plumbing prone to clogging of the arteries.

THE HEAD OF THE TEAM frowns as he pensively massages his jaw and studies the troubled patient. His eyes meet those of his eager assistant. "Your diagnosis?" he asks.

"It looks like a complete blockage sir," comes the assistant's reply.

"Have you determined the cause?" he questions.

"Initial testing shows a fatty buildup which has stopped normal flow," the

bright young student responds.

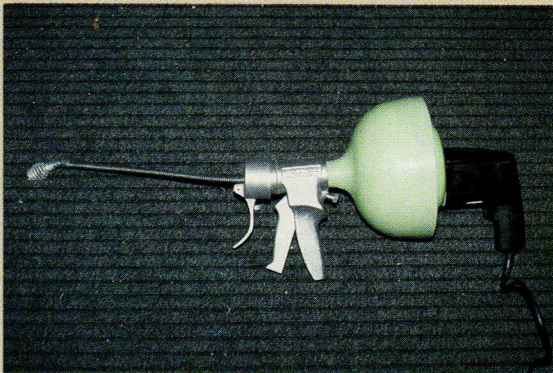
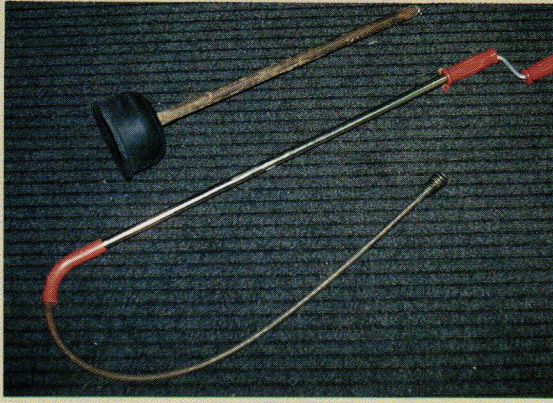
The head of the team nods in agreement while squeezing the bridge of his nose between thumb and forefinger. "This is very serious," he says after a pause, "we'll have to open up immediately. If you're ready, let's begin. Clamp . . . force cup . . . monkey wrench . . . snake . . ."

As a plumbing contractor, I am

biased when I say that the best solution to any plumbing problem — such as a blocked drain — is to contact your licensed professional. For most old-house owners this is the most cost-effective solution. However, I am also a realist and understand that many people enjoy a good challenge or may be forced to make repairs themselves. For those people,

here are some systematic guidelines for treating your own drains.

BY STAN PATEY



Top left: The force cup is a basic tool for tubs, sinks and toilets; closet augers are manual snakes for toilet traps. Bottom left: An electric snake, available at rental houses. Above: Closet augers are fully extended when the crank meets the shaft.

DRAIN DIAGNOSIS

STEP ONE IN DRAIN SURGERY IS determining the location of the clog. The simplest form of drain stoppage is were a single fixture that does not drain is unaffected by the use of any other fixture. Test for this type of stoppage by running water into other fixtures in the home and watching to see what affect their use has on the backed-up fixture. If the other fixtures drain properly and the water level in the affected fixture does not rise, breathe a sigh of relief. This test indicates that the problem is within the drainage piping for that fixture only and is not located further down the line in any common piping.

A common response to a blocked drain is to run down to the grocery store, buy a quart or two of "Liquid Drain Blaster," dump it down the drain, and wait for the stoppage to dissolve and disappear in an impressive whirlpool like the *Pequod* at the finish of *Moby Dick*. If it were that easy your Yellow Pages would not have

pages of plumbers and drain cleaning companies. Do not be drawn in by consumer advertising claims. Drain acid is a powerful and dangerous chemical that can burn skin and eyes, and damage the finish of your fixtures, but in my experience seldom clears drain stoppages. Drain acid in a fixture will make it very difficult for cleaning the drain with any other method without first pumping out the acid — a messy and dangerous process.

OPERATING INSTRUMENTS

THE ORIGINAL TOOL OF DRAIN CLEANING is the age-old symbol of plumbing, the plunger or force cup, often nicknamed the "plumber's helper." Force cups come in a variety of designs (from simple hemispheres to ball or flanged models that improve the seal when clearing toilets), but all operate the same way. To use one, begin by carefully positioning the plunger over the drain opening. (On a lavatory or tub drain be sure to plug the overflow opening first with a rag or face

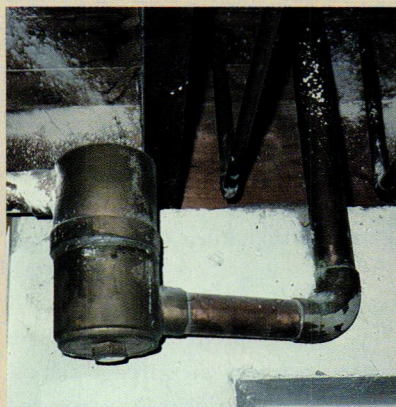
cloth so that the pipe between plunger and stoppage is airtight.) Gently push downward on the handle, compressing the rubber. This first push will expel the air from the plunger, so go slowly to avoid splashing. If the plunger has a tight seal against the fixture, a vacuum will form when you begin to pull up on the handle. It is this vacuum that will dislodge many stoppages. Steadily pump the plunger up and down as if you were working a butter churn, increasing the pace as you proceed. After ten or twelve plunges, free the plunger and hopefully

the water will swirl down the drain. If not, repeat the process several times. A plunger will clear stoppages in less than five minutes or not at all. If the plunger fails to do the job, the time has come for the snake.

There are a variety of drain cleaning tools referred to as snakes, but most are based on a flexible spiral cable, usually $\frac{5}{16}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter and 15' to 25' in length. Typically, some sort of cleaning head is attached to the end for small diameter drain cleaning. Hardware stores generally stock low-priced, hand-operated snakes that will work well on minor stoppages. Most common, perhaps, is the closet auger (a 3' to 6' long snake that telescopes inside a rigid tubular guide) used for snaking the clogged toilet traps. For more stubborn clogs, rent an electric-powered snake from your local tool rental outlet. New professional drain cleaning equipment for contractor use can even get fairly high-tech. High-pressure snakes that operate around 1000 psi use water jets at

the end of a hose to “blast” their way through blockages. These are particularly effective on frozen lines. Shock devices that function much like force cups send a pressurized charge through the line to break up obstructions. Safety is an important consideration with drain cleaning. Always wear eye protection and rubber gloves. Be certain that electric drain cleaning equipment is properly maintained and plugged into grounded receptacles.

Both electric and hand-operated tools rotate the snake as the operator feeds the length of the snake down the fixture’s drain. When using a close-



Drum traps will snare a snake because there is no clear path from inlet to outlet.

et auger, first pull the snake up into guide tube, then maneuver the tube into the bowl trap. Once the tube is in place, crank the handle and the snake will feed itself into the fixture — don’t push it! Never force a snake or it may kink up in a knot that no human will ever extract. If the snake binds, pull it back until it rotates freely, and then slowly feed it back down the drain. The electrically powered tools will provide more power and will do a better job of cleaning the drain than the slower, hand-operated units.

CLEANING CAUTIONS

MANY LEAD DRAINS STILL EXIST IN older homes across the continent and should be treated with the utmost respect and care. They are relics

of the past and by now are extremely fragile. Electric snakes can — and often do — pop right out through the thinned walls of lead drains. If you still have lead piping in your home, you should consider having it replaced with updated materials.

Drum traps and pot traps are shaped like (you guessed it!) drums or pots. They can literally put a kinky twist into the job of drain cleaning. Unlike a P-trap, a drum trap will not direct the snake in and out. Instead, a snake fed down a fixture drain and into a drum or pot trap will twist itself into a tangle of knots that will become a permanent part of your plumbing. If you have to work with a drum trap, you must first open its clean-out and then snake from that point. Be careful when you remove the cover; if the water has backed up into the tub or lavatory you will have a nasty flood. Instead, bail out as much of the backed-up water as possible, and be prepared with a bucket and plenty of rags to catch the overflow when you remove the clean-out cover.

TECHNIQUES AND TIPS

WHILE THE FIRST CHOICE OF entrance to clear a stoppage is through the fixture’s drain, this is not always possible or may not allow satisfactory access to the stoppage. On occasion an obstruction within the piping will stop the snake. If an obstruction is encountered in the drain that the snake is unable to move past, locate a clean-out opening in the pipe that is closer to the obstruction and attempt to clear the stoppage from that location. Have a clean-out installed when one cannot be located. A sharp turn in the pipe that can’t be negotiated may require coaxing the snake in and out until it bounces around the corner. The further out the snake is extended, the less effective this (and the snake itself) becomes.

Tubs with trip-lever type wastes require that the stopper (if there is one)

and linkage be removed before the drain can be snaked. Simply pull the stopper out of the drain, then remove the screws from the trip lever face plate. Place a facecloth over the open drain so you won’t drop the screws down the drain. Gently pull the face plate and the linkage out of the overflow opening. You now have access to run the snake directly down the tub’s overflow. Always snake a tub down its overflow



Traps often hide in awkward locations, such as this under-floor crawlspace.

(also known, for this reason, as the “cleanout”). In the waste line of almost every tub — both old and new — the drain proper ends in a tee, which means that a snake would have to negotiate a turn and could just as easily head towards the overflow as the blockage. By snaking down the overflow the route is set and simplified. Clean any hair and debris that has accumulated on the linkage before replacing it in the overflow. Always install the linkage first with the trip lever in the closed position, and then drop the stopper into place. When the stopper is installed first, the linkage will not fit properly and will not operate the stopper.

The spinning action of the snake as it runs down the drain cuts through the stoppage and cleans the walls of the pipe. Once the obstruction is partially cleared and begins to drain, start a flow of cold water to help wash the debris freed by the snake down the drain. Run the snake in and out several times to assure a thorough job.

MAJOR SURGERY

THERE ARE SOME DRAIN PROBLEMS that are not as easy to deal with as the stoppage in an individual fixture's drain line. Water backup in one fixture at the lowest level of the building whenever any other fixture is used indicates a problem in the building drain (the main line leading out of the building) or in the septic system. This problem could be either a stoppage in the main building drain or, if the building discharges into a private septic system, a flooded system. Inspect the septic tank or cesspool to see if it is filled above the level of the inlet pipe from the building. If this is the case, then the tank should be pumped out. If the inlet pipe is above the water level in the septic tank or cesspool, then you have a building drain stoppage. Correcting these problems will usually require equipment not readily available to the general public.

Other kinds of drain stoppage



Electric snakes are cord-powered tools that should only be used if grounded and in good operating condition. Battery-powered models are also coming on the market.



Left: When snaking a lavatory drain, begin at the outlet after first removing the stopper (which may block the snake). Right: If the snake binds at the trap, disassemble it or enter at a cleanout closer to the blockage.



problems you will not be able to clear with tools made for the average homeowner. Frozen drains, crushed underground piping, stoppages in large diameter drains (such as the main building drain) and solid obstructions will require commercial drain cleaning and/or excavation equipment that is best operated by professionals.

Good waste system hygiene is always the easiest way to keep drains healthy and avoid problems:

- **Watch what goes down the drain.** Hold those diapers tightly when rinsing in the toilet and be careful about allowing toys in the tub with children. (One weeble jammed in a tub drain can ruin an entire Saturday.)

- **Keep the toilet seat cover down.** This helps to keep out lipstick, brushes, deodorant, combs, and bars of soap that seem to be magnetically attracted to the toilet when they slip free of your hands.

- **Use kitchen basket strainers.** Don't remove them simply because it's hard to push kernels of corn through them — they're there for just this reason.

- **Run plenty of cold water when operating the garbage disposer.** This flow flushes the line and reduces the chance that wastes will collect at a trap or obstruction.

- **Never pour grease, paint, oil, or any hazardous waste down any drain.** These materials can clog or damage piping, disposal systems, and the environment.

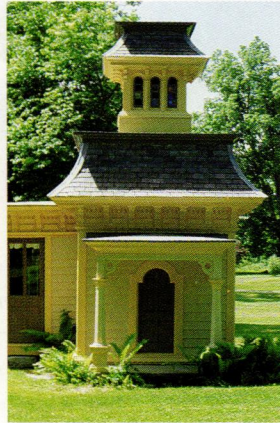
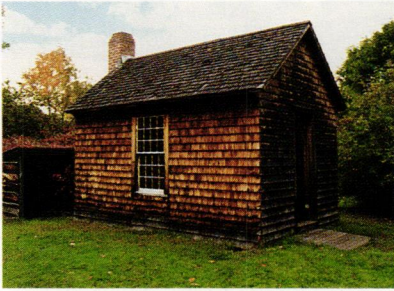
Drain surgery is not fun or even satisfying work for most stable adults. There is little reward in clearing a stoppage; you simply end up back where you should have been before the flood, except now you must clean black slime off the shower walls and your back aches. A small amount of attention to preventative action will allow you to spend your time at more enjoyable home improvement projects. 🏠

Stan Patey is a master plumber and president of Patey & Company, Inc. of Gloucester, Massachusetts, a residential plumbing and heating contracting firm.

TINY OLD-HOUSE LIVING IN ...



Cabins, Cottages, and Miniature Mansions

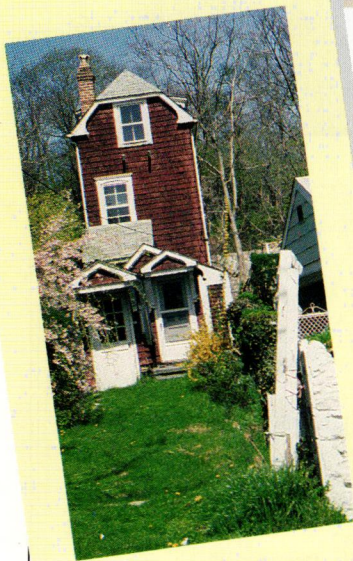


Queen Annes,

Italianates, and other large, amply chambered old houses get plenty of attention in books and magazines, but what about the old houses no bigger than a single room? Tiny houses, which can be defined as dwellings under 500 square feet, dot the landscape from coast to coast.

To find out more about these diminutive domiciles, back in 1991 we asked readers to send in their photos of tiny old houses and stories about what old-house living is like surrounded by only four walls.

(From left to right) Three historic tiny old houses: A replica of Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond, the Children's Playhouse on the grounds of the Park-McCullough House, and Jefferson's Honeymoon Cottage at Monticello.



Cooped Up

This almost two-dimensional house, a landmark in Mamaroneck, New York, since the 1920s, was once a chicken coop. It sits on a sliver of property, sandwiched between two full-sized houses.

—Loren Phelps
Richmond, Virginia

The history of tiny houses can be traced back to North America's earliest settlers, when one-room, post-and-beam buildings were quickly constructed for shelter. As pioneers moved West, small-but-serviceable houses, such as shotguns and log cabins, paved the way for larger communities. Often, tiny houses provided basic living necessities as a main house was being constructed; after the main house was completed, tiny houses might become outbuildings. While the stately Monticello was being built, Thomas Jefferson took up residence in a 210 sq. ft. brick building, known as the

Throughout three seasons, we devoted two days of every week to the restoration until our cabin, sporting a new roof, was finished.

Honeymoon Cottage, which later became a kitchen/schoolroom. Other tiny dwellings were built out of a desire for simplicity, such as Henry David Thoreau's famous small house on Walden Pond or the Campground Gothic cottages used for religious retreats. Many of these tiny old houses still exist and have been given a second life as offices, playhouses, and seasonal — or even year-round — homes. The appeal of tiny old houses lies in their compact size, which requires some ingenuity to make comfortable, as the following two tales describe. Our thanks to all who wrote.

Log Cabin Life

MY HUSBAND, RAY, AND I HAVE A HISTORY OF DOING the unusual. We have restored several homes and built our first camp from an old house and barn that we dismantled. In February of 1991, Ray and I snowmobiled to a close friend's log cabin in the woods. Since it was my first visit, I was given a tour of the place and the surrounding property. Next to our friend's house sat an old, one-room log cabin, falling into disrepair. The cabin was 16' x 14' with a ten-foot porch incorporated under one roof. Inside, a stairway led to a small loft. I immediately fell in love with it! My husband and I were searching for a new project, so our friend kindly gave us the log cabin to restore.

When the ice and snow had receded, we began dis-

mantling the cabin. The original windows and stairway were salvaged, but we couldn't save the original cedar shingles or the broken front door. Another minor disappointment was discovering that the original floor was rotten. Once the frost had left, we moved the dismantled cabin to a parcel of land that we owned in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains.

After extensive research, we placed the cabin's construction around 1930. Our cabin was built for Bessie Conklin Bryden, the descendant of an original settler in the area. Originally, the log cabin was going to be a small museum or a playhouse for our granddaughter. Then the idea of living there began to appeal to me. After all, we had worked so hard to restore it! Unable to resist the opportunity, we spent one night in our cozy cabin and immediately decided to make it our "home away from home."

When we first moved in, my husband and I were bumping into each other and knocking books, dishes, and clothes on the floor whenever we turned around. It also seemed that if I picked up an item, I had to rearrange the cabin to find a place to put it down! Yet, our enthusiasm for living there did not diminish, even when we were faced with the task of bringing the mattress and bedsprings up the stairs to the loft. At one point, we thought the stairs would have to be taken out, but thanks to my husband's ingenuity, we hoisted them straight up and in.

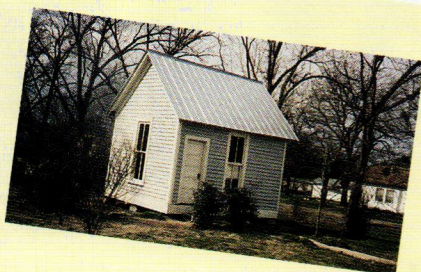
Our heat is provided by a large propane furnace installed where a window was (we didn't want to cut a hole in the wall) and we also have electricity. The first meal I "cooked" in the cabin was macaroni and cheese in the microwave oven. It tasted

delicious because it was spiced with the flavor of our success! Yes, I have a microwave oven (and a one-burner hot plate) because there is no room for a stove. It is amazing how quickly we discarded non-essentials for the basic of everyday living. Since we don't have running water, I have to allow room for water containers. We installed a sink with a drain

to the basement, and I use a movable Formica-covered board over the sink as counterspace. To prevent them from freezing, I leave all of our canned goods in the refrigerator. In the living areas, I have eliminated end tables, and instead use an old wooden box and a replica cobbler's bench, which double as storage space. In the loft, our bedroom only has headroom in the center, so there isn't any wall space for closets.

Because of our demanding business, we stay part of the week in our apartment, so for three days a week the cabin serves as a year-round getaway for us. I really don't miss a stove, closet space, or a full bathroom because we have chosen this scaled-down lifestyle. Right now, we don't have a phone or a television set and I would like it to stay that way, but my husband enjoys more comforts. Eventually, we might give up the couch for two chairs and a small TV. Slowly, we are developing a system for co-existing in our log home and can look around with pride in our accomplishment. It is definitely an adventure.

— ALICE F. GROWER
Poland, New York



Shift Shack

This tiny old house was a "swing-shift" shack for railroad workers in the 1920s. Recently, it was moved to Tehuacana, Texas and restored. The 12' x 16' building sports a new grey and cream paint job to match the main house. Used as a music studio, it now houses a baby grand piano instead of people.

— Bill Ferris
Tehuacana, Texas



It's a tight squeeze in our one-room log cabin, but furniture that does double-duty, like the replica cobbler's bench which serves as an end table and storage space, helps.



The Dollhouse

IN 1980, MY MOTHER PURCHASED A TINY COTTAGE ON Cape Cod, nicknamed “the Dollhouse,” for use as a family summer home. It is located within the Yarmouth Camp Ground, a community which began as a campground for methodist religious meetings in 1863. The camp-meeting idea combined worshipping and socializing in the late 19th century.

Originally, the cottages were family tents, which were canvas-covered wooden frames mounted on wooden platforms. As families began to stay for longer amounts of time, the canvas sides were replaced with wood. The Yarmouth Camp Ground reached a maximum of 150 to 160 cottages. Over time, some were removed or destroyed by storms, so that by 1932 there were approximately 75 cottages left, the number that remains today. Several different sizes and styles of cottages emerged over the years. Our cottage is in the most common style, “Campground Gothic,” that has a gable roof of cedar shingles, gingerbread decoration, and tongue-and-groove, random-width board siding. Its floor plan was one of the most basic: a 10' x 12' living room with steep, ladder-like staircase in one corner leading to a sleeping room above. The bedroom only had headroom at the ridge, which made it difficult to walk around with out bumping your

head. In the kitchen, open shelves and a make-shift, L-shaped counter served as cupboards, but the only true storage space was a small closet under the stairs. Reaching the toilet enclosure, which didn't include a shower or a tub, required going out the kitchen door.

The vacationing demands of my three sisters, their families, my mother, and myself, plus the desire for indoor plumbing, all prompted ambitious plans for the expansion of the cottage. We doubled the original 350 sq. ft. to a palatial 675 sq. ft. (not including 120 sq. ft. of screened porch), but still preserved the entire original Gothic “room.” Discreetly added were a kitchen/breakfast area opening onto a screened porch and an attic-storey sleeping area with the prized indoor bathroom.

True to the original, the cottage remains uninsulated with the framing exposed inside and slated for the leisurely addition of white paint. Each sister-in-residence always pursues some small improvement, lending campground charm to the whole project. Just inside the door hangs a small painting which was found in the

cottage. It shows the cottage as seen from the porch of one across Simpson Avenue, imparting the colors and flavors of summertime at this now secular, yet still spiritually uplifting retreat.

— JANE TREACY
Washington, D.C.

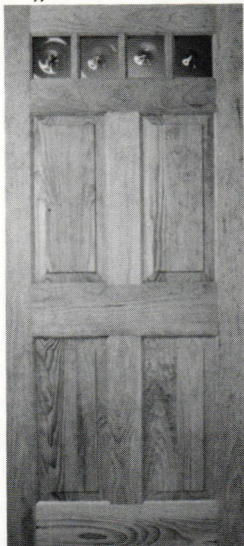


(top left) As part of the renovation, the Yarmouth Camp Ground preferred that our cottage was moved one spot over.

(top right) The roofline of the new addition echoes the Dollhouse's original one. (above) A peek inside the one-room cottage shows its exposed framing.

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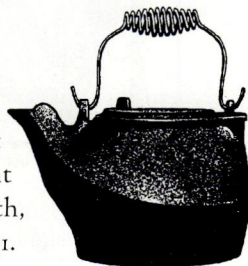
the-century kitchens. For more information, contact The Kennebec Company, One Front Street, Dept. OHJ, Bath, ME 04530; (207) 443-2131.

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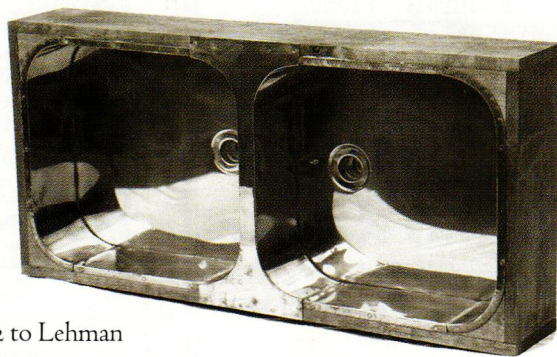
Lehman Hardware supplies the Amish with items that are now difficult to get in our high tech society, so the catalog's pages are filled with many old-time, non-electrical kitchen appliances and cookware. Hand-cranked ice cream machines, blue "granny-ware" bowls, Dutch oven replacement doors, old-fashioned crockery with blue trim, cast-iron skilletes and kettles (including 100-gallon English pots!), and corn-straw

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This divided double basin was reproduced from an early-1900s original.

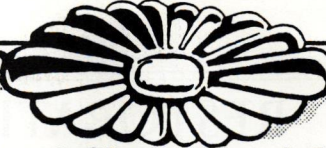
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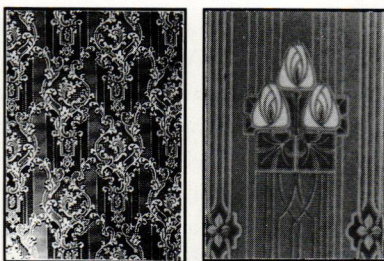
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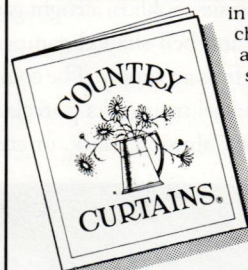
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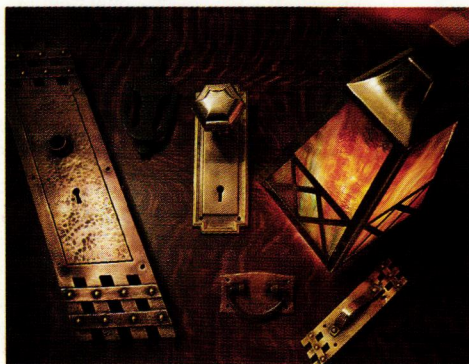
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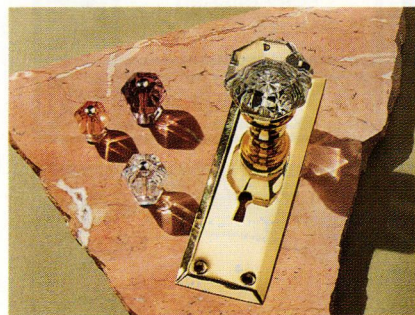
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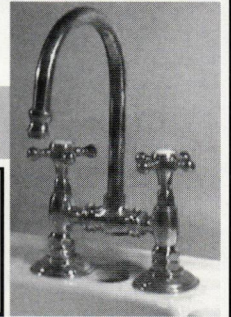
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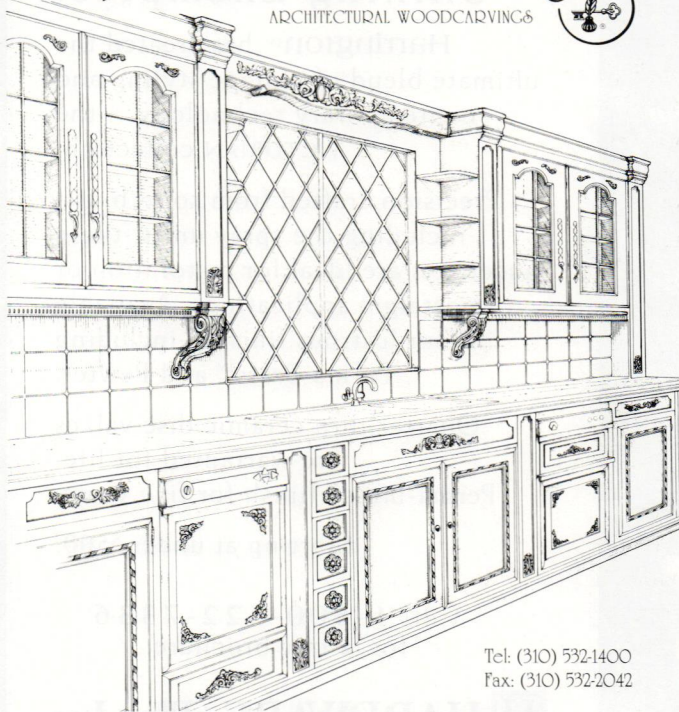
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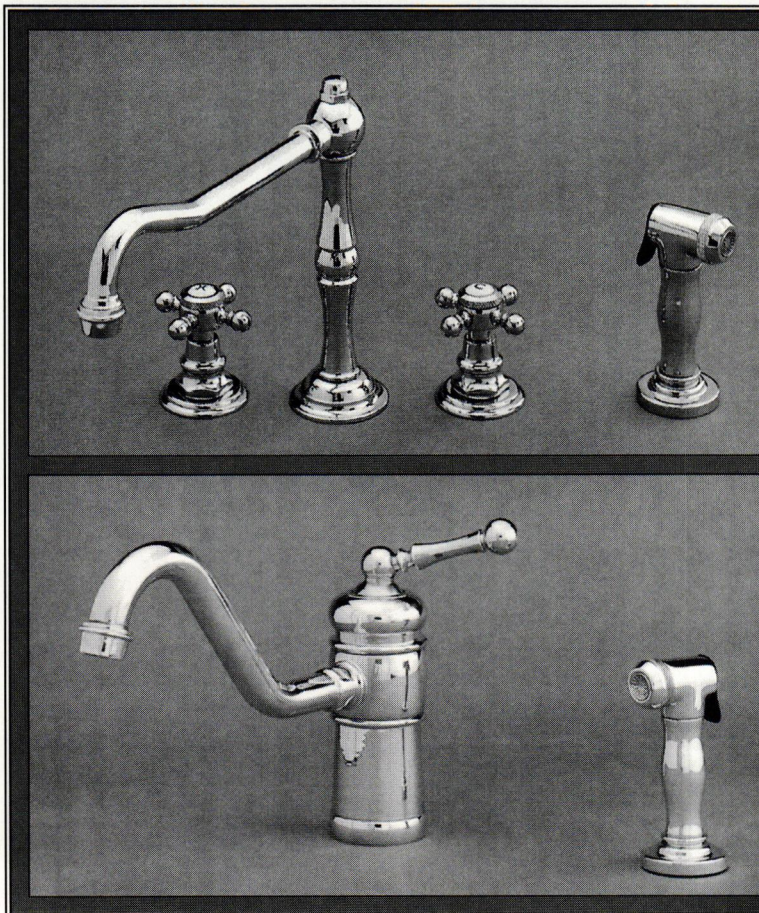
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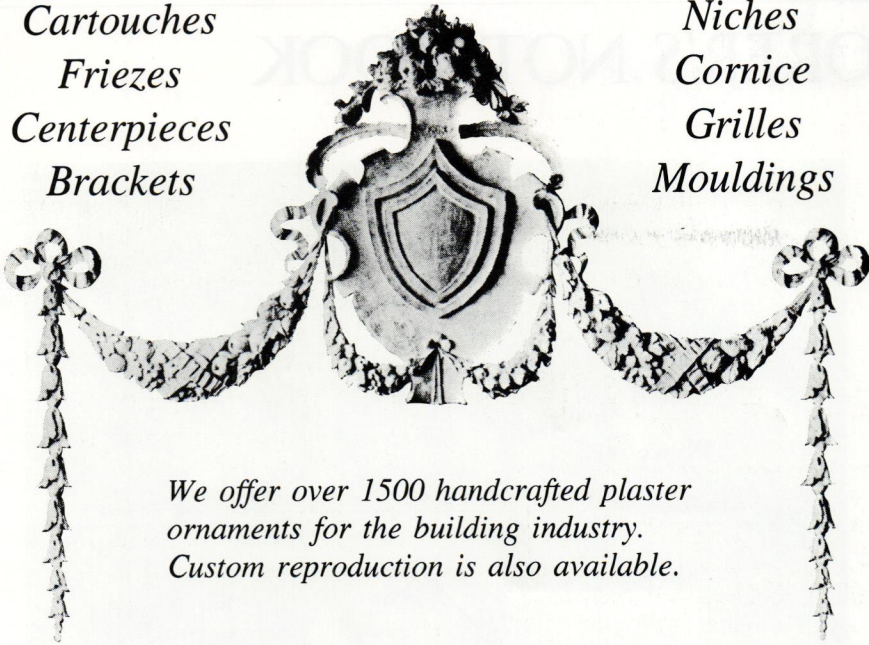
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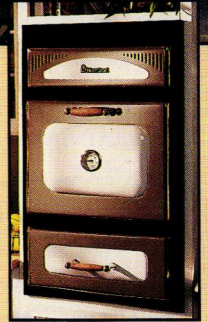


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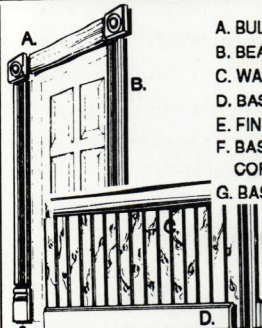
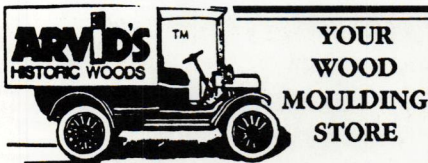
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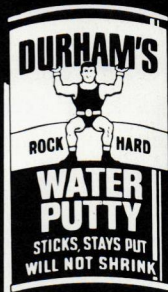
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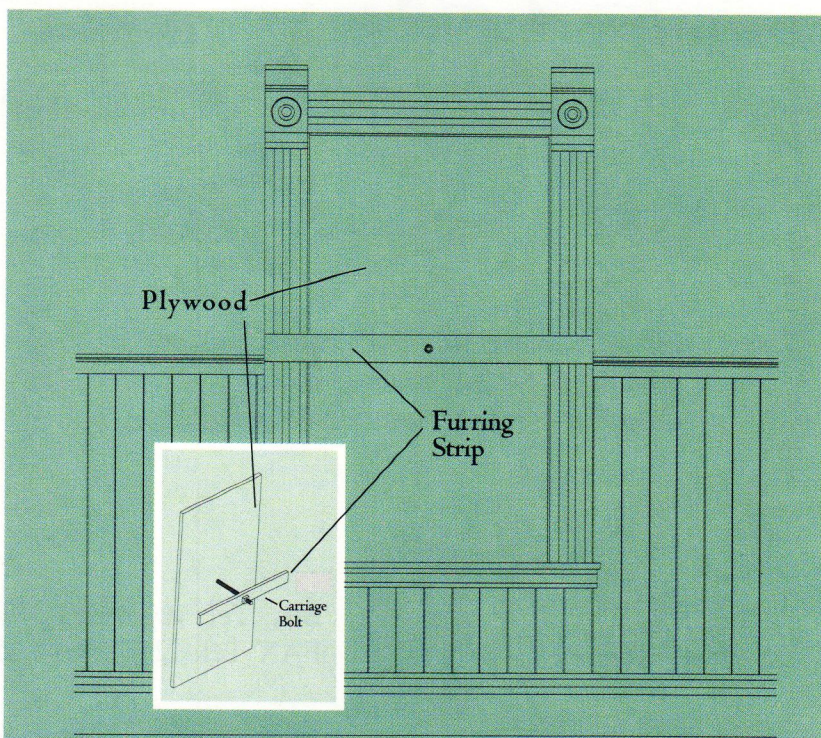
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Tulsa, Oklahoma

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OF TENTIMES WHEN YOU OPEN A partially full can of paint you find a few lumps of pigment, hard particles, or whatever in the paint. Sometimes, this paint is a special hard-to-match color or valuable extra you have set aside for future touch-ups.

When you have to get these mysterious lumps out of either latex or oil-base paint, pour it through a piece of polyester "cut to fit" air conditioner filter. Place a piece of filter over the top of a container and fasten it down with a rubber band. Then, make a depression in the center with your fingers so that the paint will create a pool and pour slowly. You can buy new cans at most paint dealers if you need a cleaner and tighter-fitting container.

— JOHN KETCHAM
Lewiston, Ill.
[continued on page 66]



WALLING WINDOWS

AFTER REMOVING SASH FOR RESTORATION, WINDOW OPENINGS MUST be sealed for protection against the elements and uninvited guests. I have devised a quick way to seal these openings, even on a third-storey window:

- 1) Cut a section of plywood 2" to 3" larger than the opening.
- 2) Measure the distance between the outside edges of the interior trim and cut a piece of furring (or 1" lumber) to this length.
- 3) Drill a hole in the center of the plywood and furring strip to accept a carriage bolt 2" longer than the combined thicknesses of the exterior trim, wall, and interior trim.
- 4) Insert the carriage bolt in the plywood and furring strip, then secure with a washer and nut.

This assembly can be slipped through the window lengthwise and turned to rest on the sill so it covers the opening. Then the furring strip is rotated to overlap the interior trim and the nut tightened to "sandwich" the window. The setup can be used from window to window and does not require a ladder since the process takes place from inside. More importantly, it doesn't leave nail or screw holes that have to be patched and installation requires about 30 seconds, freeing up valuable time to restore those windows.

A reusable panel covers empty windows from the outside, while a bolt and board secure it from the inside.

— GLEN MAGGARD
Adrian, Mich.

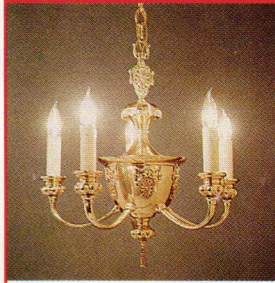
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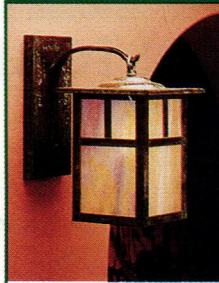
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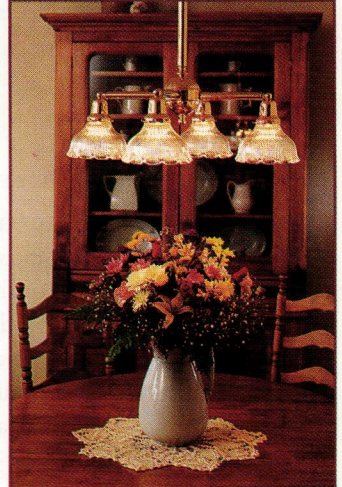
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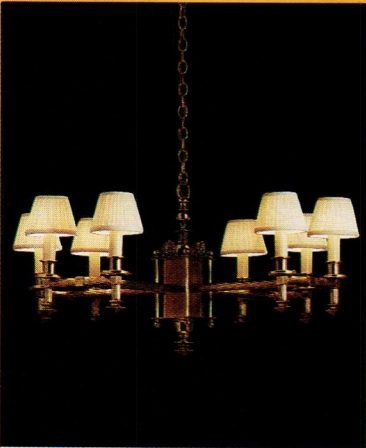
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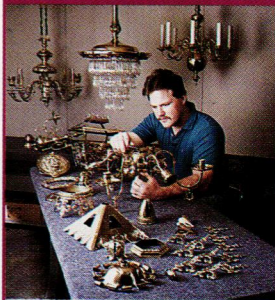
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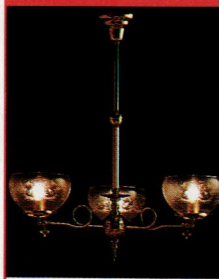
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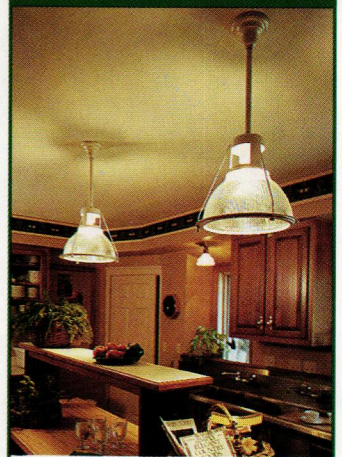
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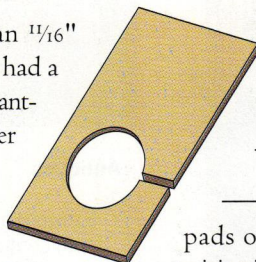
A SHORT STACK

LIKE MOST WOODWORKERS, I PREFER TO use stack-type dado cutters because of their accuracy, squareness, and the flat bottoms they produce. However, recently I had a dilemma when I decided to replace some built-in shelving using ready-made 3/4" panels. Although these panels were great-looking, none were a true 3/4" in thickness after sanding at the factory had reduced them by 1/32" or so.

The problem I ran into was that stack-type dado cutters are adjustable in only 1/16" increments, meaning that a 3/4" stack cut a dado that was too sloppy, and an 11/16" stack cut one too tight to assemble. I overcame the problem by using shims of heavy paper between the inner chipper blades of

my cutter. Starting with an 11/16" stack, I added shims until I had a "set" that cut the size dado I wanted. The over-cut of the chipper blades compensated for any potential gaps in the finished work. The dado produced was perfect in every way — not too tight and just loose enough for ample glue and easy assembly.

— ARTHUR A. CORBETT
W. Concord, Mass.



Pipe clamp pads made from leather cushion the metal jaws and prevent them from leaving marks in soft woods such as pine or poplar.

pads over the pipe for suitable positioning. The leather will protect the wood being glued from mar-
ring by the pipe jaws.

— R.M. WOODBURY
Belfast, Maine

JAWS OF LEATHER

MAKE PADS FOR PIPE CLAMP JAWS FROM an old boot or piece of scrap leather. Cut the pads in the shape of the jaws, leaving enough material at one end of each to cut a hole and a slit. This will enable you to slide the

TIPS TO SHARE: Do you have any hints or short cuts that might help other old-house owners? We'll pay \$25 for any how-to items used in this "Restorer's Notebook" column. Write to Notebook Editor, Old-House Journal, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.



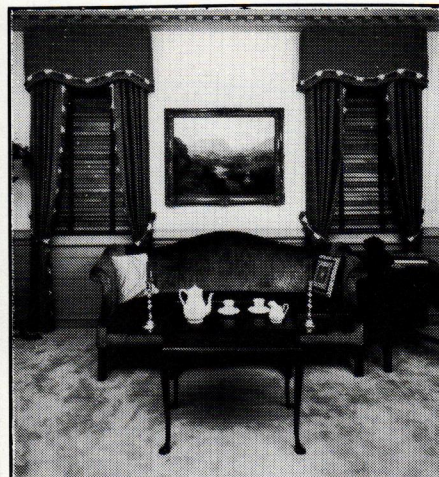
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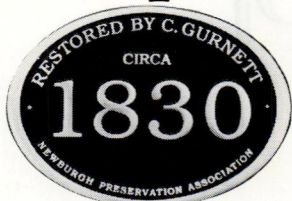
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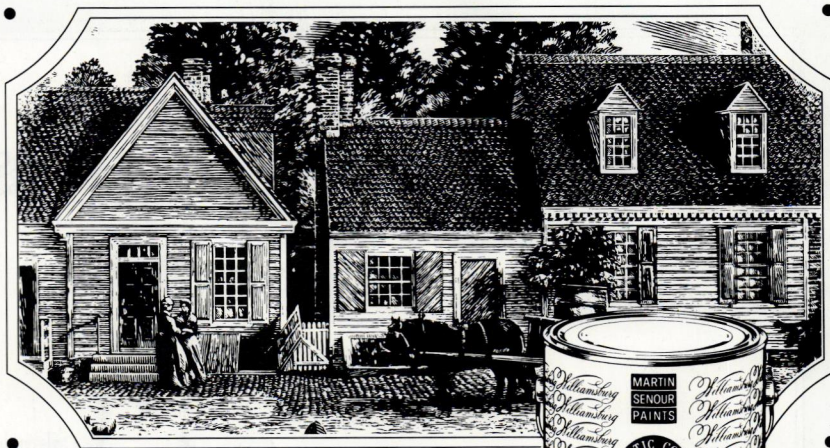


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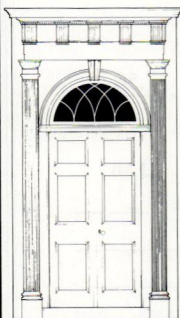
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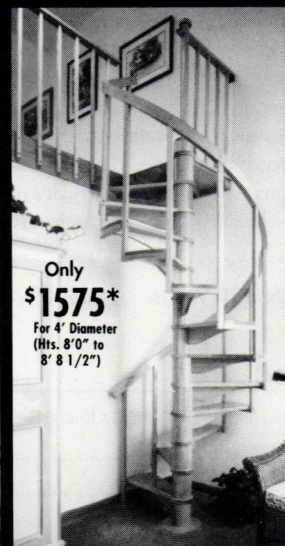
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You can order actual blueprints for all the houses featured. Plans conform to national building-code standards — however, modifications are usually necessary for your site and local requirements, so you'll probably need the assistance of a professional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

For the houses shown in this issue, blueprints include:

- Foundation plan for basement or crawl space. (Crawl space 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.
- 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.

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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 origi-

nal 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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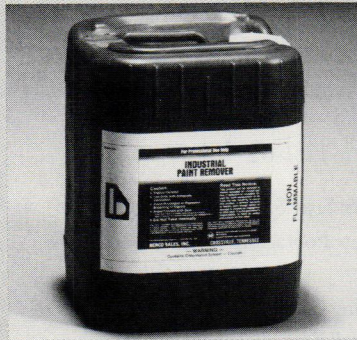
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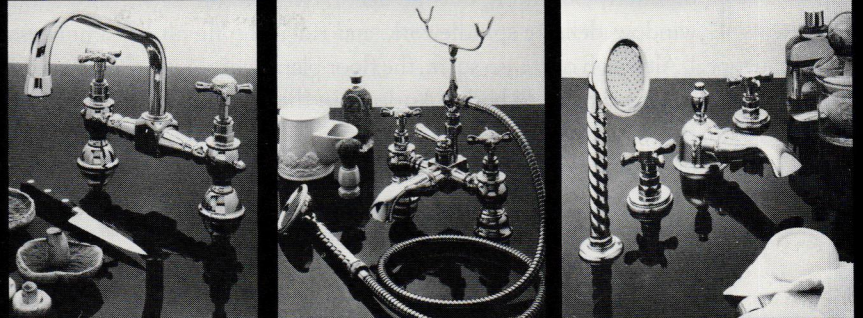


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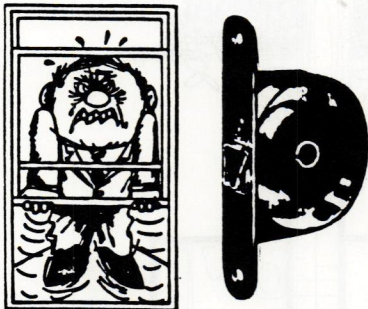
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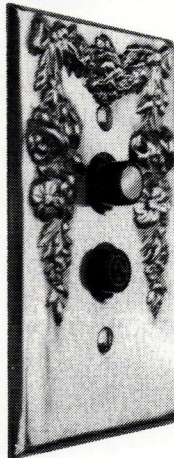
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Southern Queen Anne

THE MASSING OF THIS ONE AND ONE-HALF STOREY QUEEN ANNE IS distinctly Southern, but the decorative exterior with cutaway bay window, delicate spindlework, and ridge-top finials has a universal appeal. Although only 1,350 sq. ft., the floor plan incorporates three spacious bedrooms and two full baths. Aside from the walk-in closet and private bath, the master bedroom has a dormer window, which with the addition of a seat is a perfect spot to curl up with a classic book. Downstairs, the U-shaped kitchen with washer and dryer is easily accessible from the dining and living rooms, which is an asset when entertaining guests.

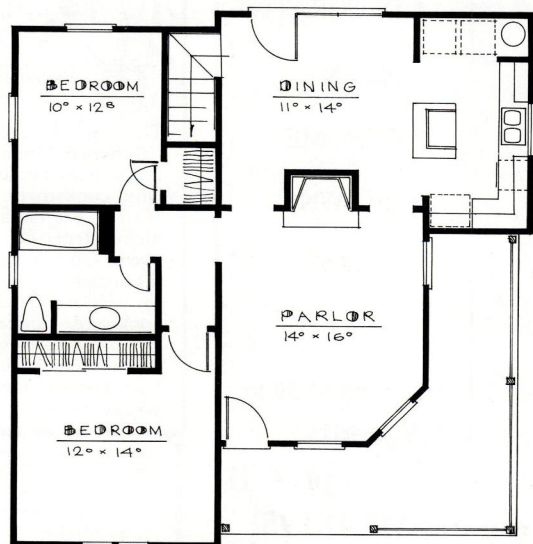
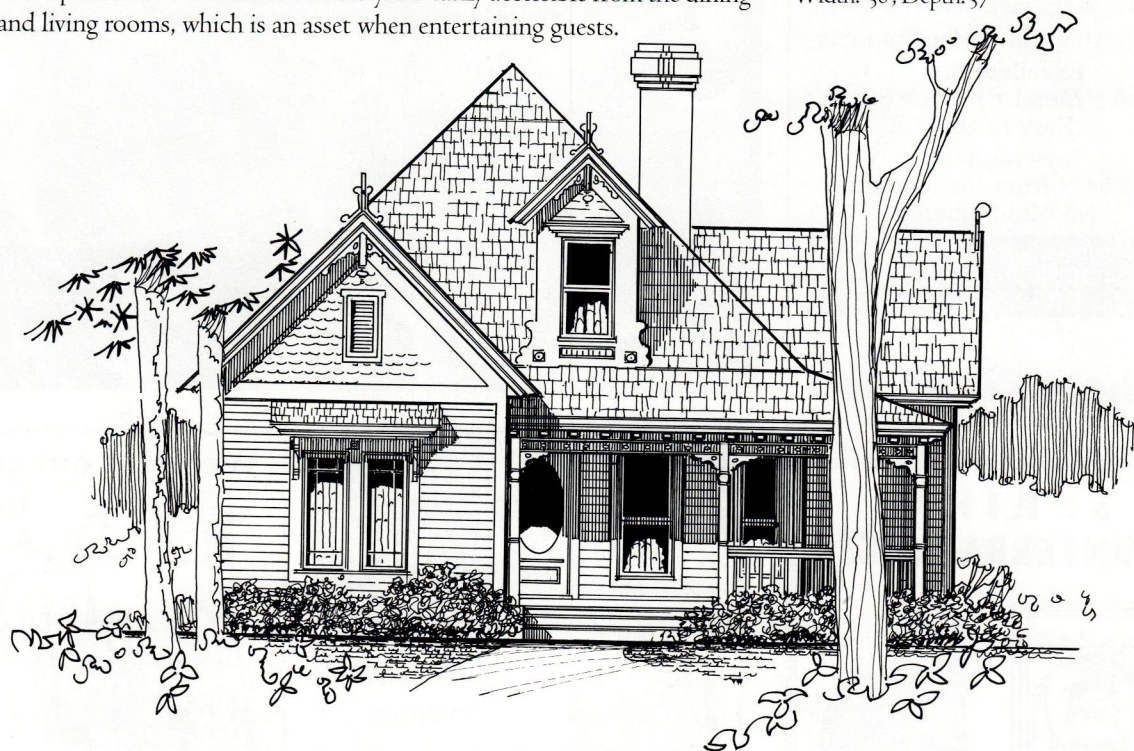
Plan: HH-02-VI

Costs: \$150; \$250 (set of 5); \$350 (set of 8)
 Square Footage: 1,350 (total), 964 (first floor),
 386 (second floor)

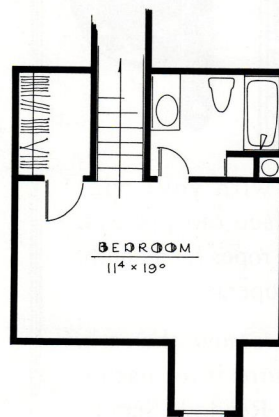
Ceiling Height: 9' (first floor), 8' (second floor)

Overall Dimensions:

Width: 36', Depth: 37'



first floor



second floor

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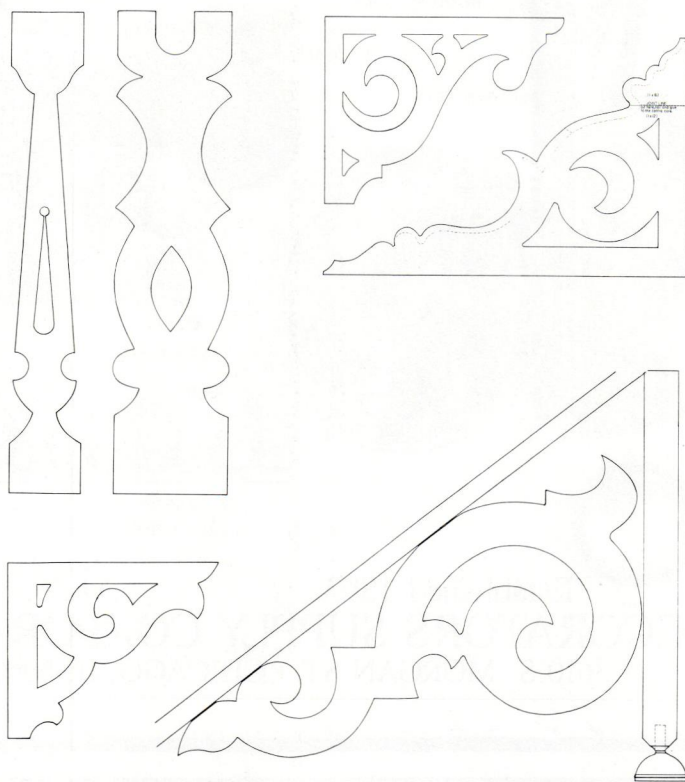
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An 1860s Carriage Barn

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Plan: CD-08-GA

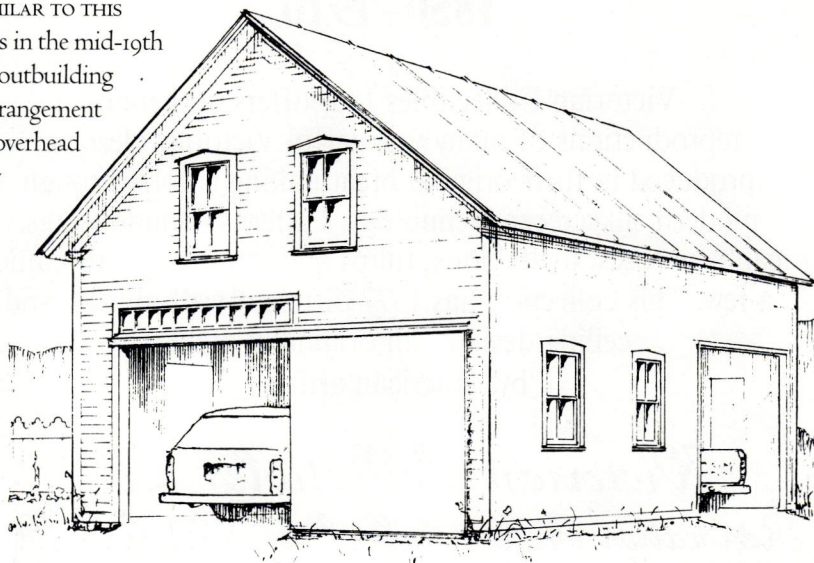
Cost: \$50

Square Footage: 600'

Height: 24' 4" to the ridge.

Overall Dimensions:

Width: 22', Depth: 30'



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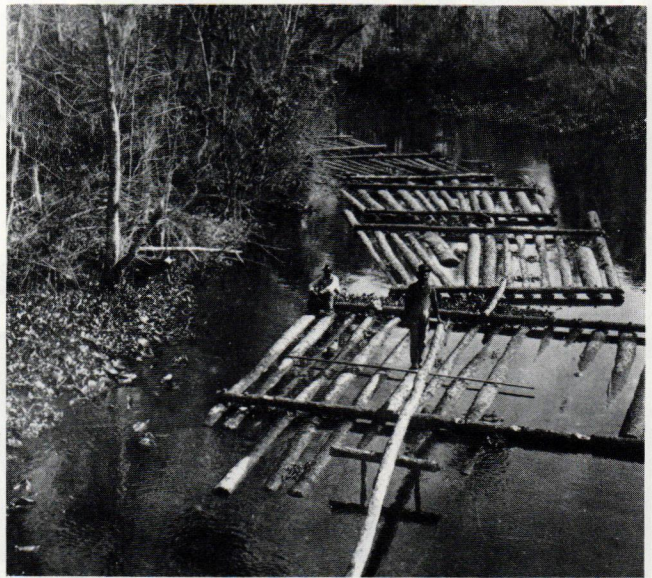
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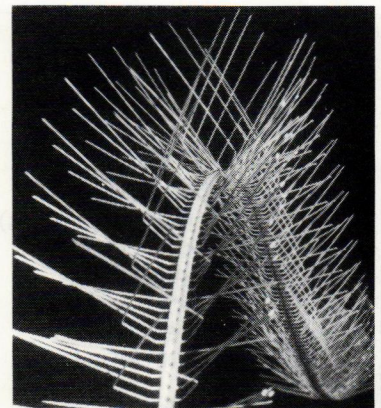
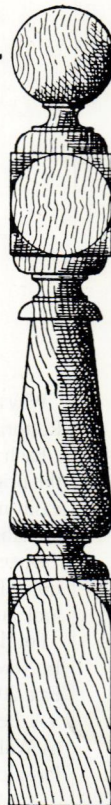
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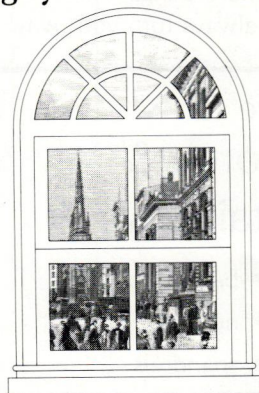
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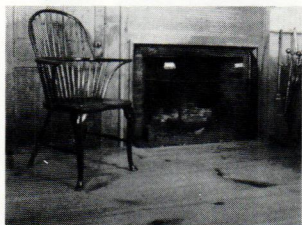
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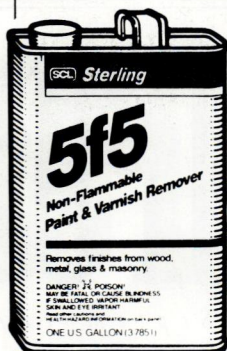
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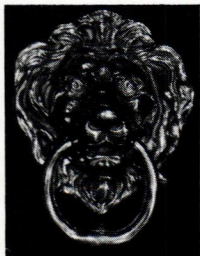
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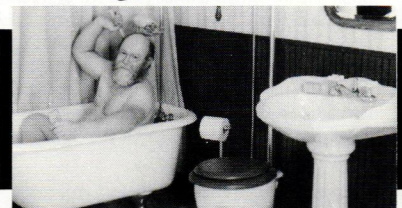


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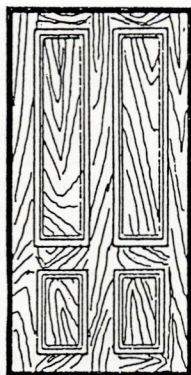
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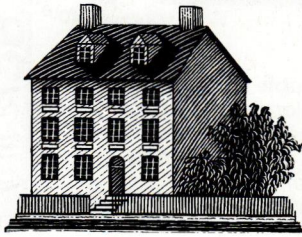
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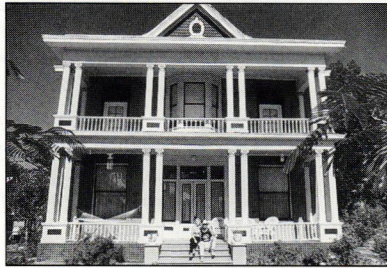
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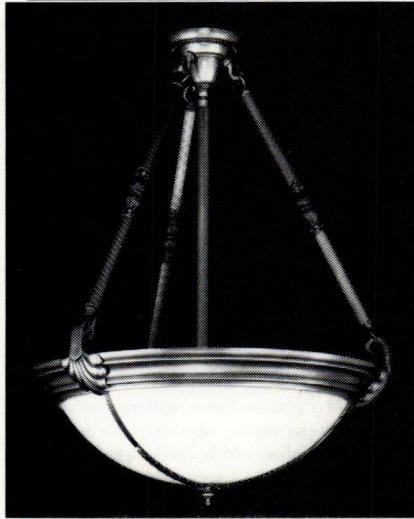
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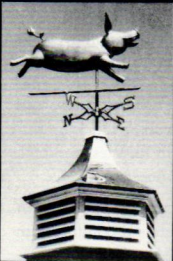


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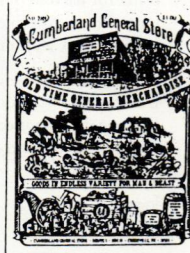


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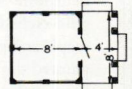


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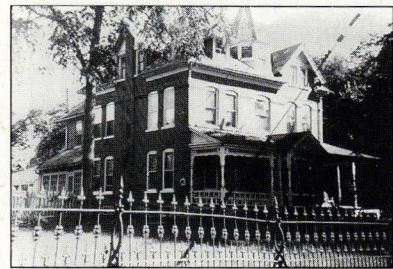
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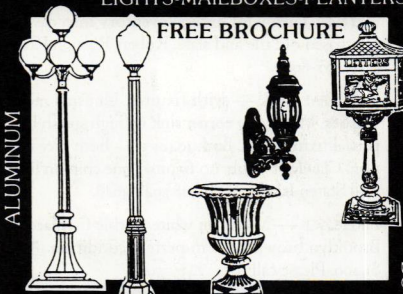
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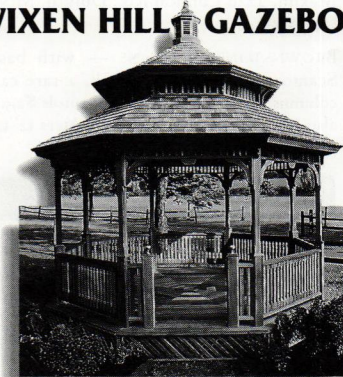
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Events

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STROLL THROUGH HISTORY — September 12 in Woodland, California. Docents will lead free walk-

ing tours past historic homes and through historic downtown Woodland. There will be horse-drawn carriages, antique cars, and entertainment along the route. Contact Woodland Downtowners, PO Box 1035, Woodland, California 95695; (916) 666-5269.

ARTISANS' FAIR — September 13 in Lincoln, MA. Artisans will sell their handmade wares on the grounds of historic Codman House. Call (617) 227-3956.

ELGIN HOUSE TOUR — September 13 in Elgin, Illinois. Homes on the tour range in style from Italianate to Queen Anne, from full restorations to works-in-progress, from ornate mansions to simple worker's cottages. Call the Gifford Park Association (708) 742-7763.

ARBORETUM & FAIRSTED TOUR — September 17 in Falmouth, Maine. Chartered bus to the Arnold Arboretum and Fairsted (home of Frederick L. Olmsted), with a reception. Maine Olmstead Alliance, PO Box 6176, Falmouth, Maine 04105.

TRENTON HOUSE TOUR — September 19 in Trenton, NJ. Nine grand homes of Tudor, Georgian, and Colonial Revival styles from 1910-30. Neighborhood and park designed by Frederick Law Olmstead. Call (609) 394-5864.

OLD IRVING PARK HOUSEWALK — September 19 in Chicago, IL. The housewalk will include historic houses in architectural styles from Victorian to Prairie School. Call (312) 282-9553.

DOORS TO THE PAST — September 19-20 & 26-27 in Des Moines, Iowa. This tour features homes in the Sherman Hill Historic District, built between 1885 and 1905. Eight to ten homes in various stages of restoration. Contact Sherman Hill Association, 756 16th, Des Moines, Iowa 50314; (515) 284-5717.

MALDEN HOUSE TOUR — September 20 in Malden, NJ. The Victorian Society of Malden, NJ, will sponsor its 4th public house tour, which features 5 houses in a variety of Victorian architectural styles. Call (617) 322-8062.

MEXICAN WAR STREETS HOUSE TOUR — September 20 in Pittsburgh, PA. National Historic area of Pittsburgh, PA. 15-20 Victorian-era homes open for tour. Contact MWSS, PO Box 6588, Pittsburgh, PA 15212; (412) 323-9030.

WAUSAU HOUSE TOUR — September 26 in Wausau, WI. Five houses from the late 19th and early 20th centuries will be open, including Queen Annes and Prairie style houses. Contact Mary Jane Hettinga (715) 848-6143.

COLONIAL CRAFTS FESTIVAL — September 27 in Ledyard, CT. Crafts include baskets, quilts, pottery, cider pressing, fireplace cooking and much more. Contact the Ledyard Historical Society (203) 464-9441.

TIMBER FRAMING WORKSHOP — September 30 to October 4 in Hancock Shaker Village, Hancock, MA. Traditional timber framing with Jack Sobon & Dave Carlon. Contact Dave Carlon, PO Box 223, Windsor, MA 01270; (413) 684-3612.

RAMAPO HOUSE TOUR — October 3 in Rockland County, New York. A tour of private residences, garden estates, and a chapel set off by the spectacular scenery of the Ramapo Mountains. Contact the Historical Society of Rockland County for more

information at (914) 634-9629.

VICTORIAN WEEK CELEBRATION — October 9-18 in Cape May, NJ. Among the popular activities are self-guided tours of Victorian homes, walking and trolley tours of the Historic District, Victorian fashion shows, and a Grand Victorian Ball. Write to MAC, PO Box 340, Cape May, NJ 08204.

FALL HOUSE TOUR — October 13 in Saratoga Springs, NY. Features the interiors and exteriors of 12-15 historic structures near the renown historic race track. Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation, Broadway at Lake Ave., Box 442, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866; (518) 587-5030.

7TH ANNUAL BRITISH CONNECTION — October 14 in New York, NY. A transatlantic exchange of ideas on building conservation, with three distinguished British speakers. Contact Building Conservation International, 1924 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19103; (215) 567-0547.

POMONA OLD HOME TOUR — October 18 in Pomona, CA. Tours and exhibits of arts and crafts in the Historic Lincoln Park. Call (714) 622-8022.

HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR — October 18 in Brooklyn, NY. The Bay Ridge House and Garden Tour presents homes built during the post-Victorian era, including Brownstone, Limestone, and Federal style houses. Call (718) 836-2087.

ANNUAL GHOST WALK — October 24 in New Bern, NC. Besides touring historic homes, guides will lead the way through Cedar Grove Cemetery, where resident ghosts will tell their tales. New Bern Historical Society, PO Box 119, New Bern, NC 28563; (919) 638-8558.

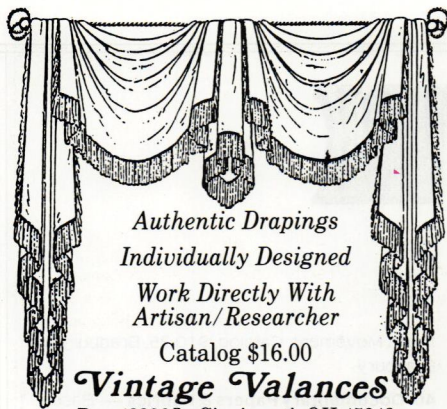
HISTORIC EUTAW PILGRIMAGE — October 24 & 25 in Eutaw, Alabama. Events will include: a living history encampment, re-enactor's ball, box lunches & tea, guided "Olde Strolls," and an antique sale. Contact the Greene County Historical Society (205) 372-2871.

PLANTATION TOUR — November 14 in McClellanville, SC (35 miles north of Charleston). A low-country plantation tour of the coastal area, sponsored by the St. James Parish Historical Society. (803) 546-4550.

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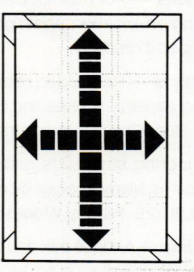
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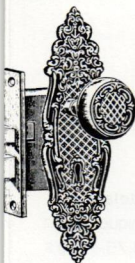
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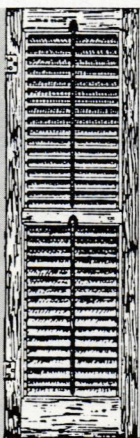
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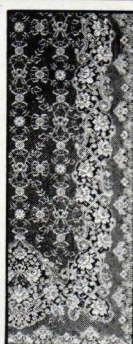
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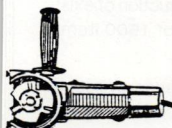
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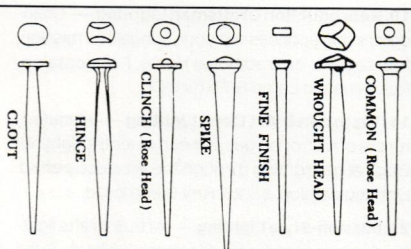


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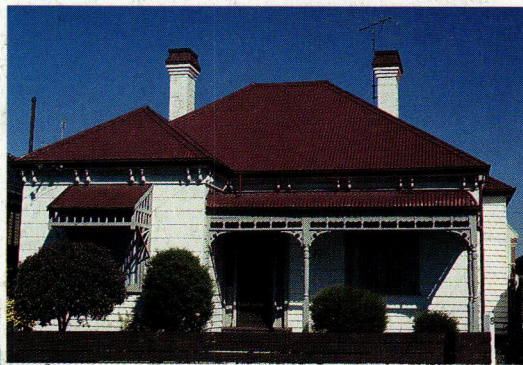
REMUDDLING

[opinion]

THE AQUA WONDER FROM DOWN UNDER

IF THIS ATTENTION-GRABBING AQUA VICTORIAN FROM Launceston, Tasmania, isn't a fair dinkum Remuddling, we don't know what is. Few of the house's surviving details, like the delicate scrollwork on the porch, can compete against the tidalwave of ultramarine. The spray-foamlike stucco, which almost engulfs the exterior, appears to be oozing over the fence and heading for the rest of the neighborhood. As Angus McIntyre of Vancouver, Canada, who contributed this month's Remuddling,

comments, "This is a city rich in Victorian and Edwardian ("Federation" in Australia) architecture, but as you can see there are blemishes. The turquoise color was perhaps the reason the neighbor next door erected the white wall with the odd shape — as an attempt to block off the shocking stucco." Right-o, mate!



Unlike the sympathetic restoration of the turn-of-the-century house in Melbourne (inset), the charms of this Victorian (bottom) are obscured by the overexuberant use of aqua-colored stucco.

