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# OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1995

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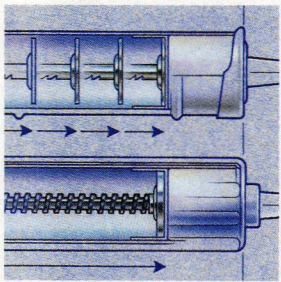
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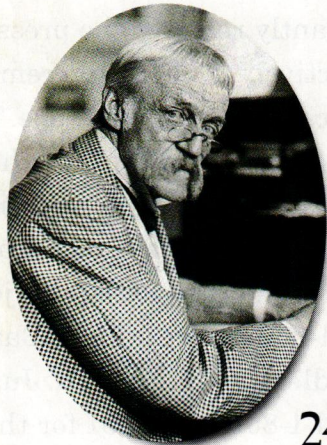
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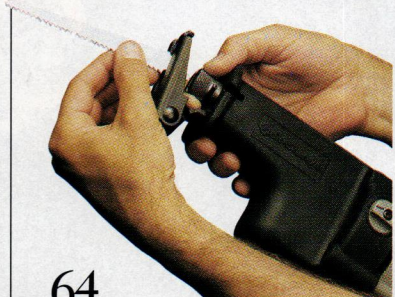


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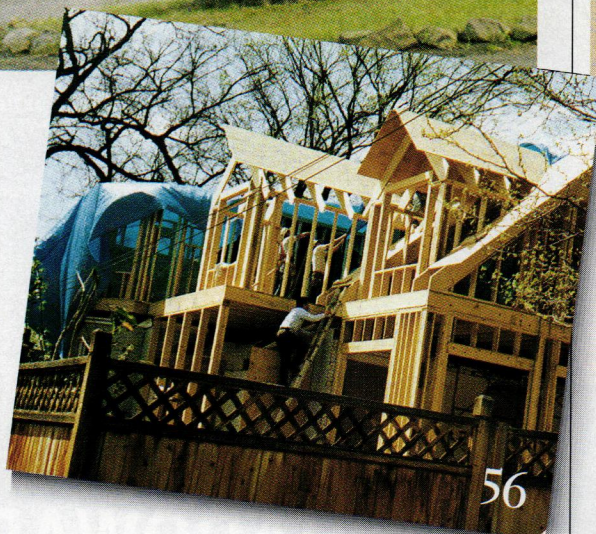
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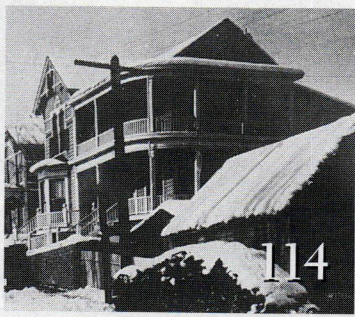
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BY GORDON BOCK



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# A Spec-tacular Issue

**I**T'S AN UNFORGIVABLE PUN, PERHAPS, BUT A GOOD description of the articles between these covers. For this bumper-size OHJ, we decided to focus on some bigger-than-average projects and explore the techniques, specifications, and interplay of craftspeople, designers, and overseers that come together in complex restorations. Here's what I mean:

More than just methods for decorative plasterwork, "Award-Winning Medallions" is about custom, large-scale ornament, artisanry, and a project that goes beyond off-the-shelf. It's also about the conditions and decisions you'll face if you want to create such a centerpiece in your old house. David Flaharty's skills first graced the pages of OHJ in our black-and-white newsletter days, and it's great to have him back — this time in living color.

Exactly one year ago, OHJ's cover came from one of the most romantic houses built in the early years of the this century — Gustav Stickley's log cabin home, Craftsman Farms. This September/October we get a look at the structural work that was actually underway when the photo was taken. Adding steel to a historic building is an extraordinary measure — in some respects like remedial surgery. It takes engineering to make the metal mesh with the existing building, not to forget planning. (You can't dash down to the lumberyard on a Saturday morning and drive away with a wide-flange steel beam — at least not in my neighborhood!) "Craftsman of Steel" takes us through the ins and outs — quite literally — of this remarkable case history.

In "Picturesque Slate," Randy Cotton returns for another informative look at architectural effects of the post-Victorian era. Those haphazard-looking slates atop so many English and French-revival houses of the 1920s are actually two different styles, both very pre-

meditated. Far from as simple as they appear, Randy explains the schemes behind each, and how to keep them looking . . . well, unkempt.

The "Construction Management" article started with a question: Who is this new creature we hear of on old-house job sites, the construction manager? A seeming chameleon — sometimes a contractor, sometimes a supervisor; the owner's liaison, yet an independent — this individual turns out to be not so new, but well worth considering. We all need help at one time or another,

and when there's a call for specialized expertise or equipment — or simply more bodies to complete the job — Josh investigates how the construction manager role can be a creative approach for dealing with typically old-house situations.

Yet this issue is not all large-scale reading. We take time out to have a little fun, too. As OHJ readers well know, stock house designs and materials have been used in North American housebuilding for 150 years. If you think your old house falls into one of the author's four groups, "Identifying

Mail-Order and Catalog Houses" will show you simple ways to confirm (almost) it's pre-fab provenance.

In "Who They Were," Jim Massey introduces us to his favorite Philadelphian. It's taken most of this century to change the notion that Frank Furness's buildings are extroverted and ugly, but perhaps that's because he was among the most innovative and individualistic designers of the Victorian era. Last, putting together "Cut Nails" gave me an opportunity to learn how a historical building material is made and how it is used, as well as indulge my a personal weakness for antique machinery. It all looks pretty spectacular to me.



**Not every old-house project is best done by one or two owner-restorers working in their spare hours. Big jobs, in particular, take added skills and extra hands.**

*Edna Kroll*





# OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

EDITOR  
Gordon H. Bock

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Lynn Elliott  
*History and Design*

Josh Garskof  
*Techniques*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

John Leeke  
*Portland, Maine*

James C. Massey  
and Shirley Maxwell  
*Strasburg, Virginia*

Marylee MacDonald  
*Evanston, Illinois*

J. Randall Cotton  
*Philadelphia*

ART DIRECTOR  
Inga Soderberg

DESIGN ASSOCIATE  
Claire MacMaster

ART INTERN  
Pami Tuomola

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
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Ellen Higgins

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CUSTOMER SERVICE  
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Shannon Tarr

OFFICE MANAGER  
Joanne Christopher

CIRCULATION CONSULTANT  
Rosalie Bruno

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Patricia Poore

PUBLISHER  
William J. O'Donnell

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Subscription service (800) 234-3797; back issues (available at \$4.95 per copy) (508) 281-8803. ADVERTISING: (508) 283-4721. EDITORIAL: We are happy to accept editorial contributions to Old-House Journal. Query letters that include an outline of the proposed article are preferred. All manuscripts will be reviewed, and returned if unacceptable. However, we cannot be responsible for non-receipt or loss — please keep copies of all materials sent. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Old-House Journal, P.O. Box 58017, Boulder, CO 80322-8017.

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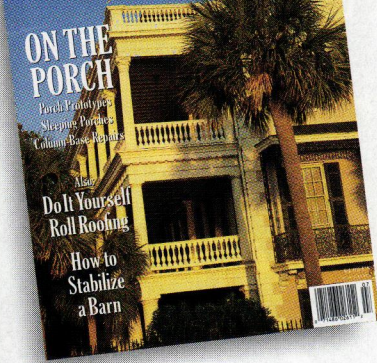
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**REPLACING PORCHES**

Dear OHJ,

I WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE THE PHOTO of our house pictured in your fascinating article ("Porch Missing? Altered? Answers to Reader Questions," July/Aug. 1995). At the time the issue appeared at our door, we were still in a quandary over what to do about our porches.

I had spread the word to everyone in town that I was looking for an old picture that might show how the porches once looked. I had all but given up on ever seeing a photo, when a friend of a friend produced this picture, taken of her great-grandfather on the porch in the late 1890s (about 10 years after it was built). I

have gone from having a simple-looking doll house to a wedding cake. I sure hope we can do justice to this little project of ours.

— SANDRA S. OSBORN  
*Chautauqua, New York*

YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT MISSING porches was extremely interesting to us in light of our own experience. In the 1940s, the owner of our 1888 Queen Anne removed most of the original porch. Fortunately, we got lucky. Our neighbor had a photo that showed how the original looked and we were able to reproduce it authentically. Thank you for your fine article.

— RICHARD & SHARON SCHMIDT  
*Merrill, Wis.*

**SLEEPING PORCHES**

I SO ENJOYED "SLEEPING PORCHES" (July/Aug. 1995). My 1905 Four-square has two. Judging by the interior mouldings, both are additions. But they are early ones: the horizontal beaded lap siding continues under the window frames. After

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**ANOTHER VIEW OF "THE OLD WAY OF SEEING"**

IF ONE IS TO JUSTIFY REGULATING lines in old houses ("The Old Way of Seeing... Additions," May/June 1995), they must be drawn through points and elements which are objectively apparent, and there must be a statistical standard of accuracy. Otherwise, one can find regulating lines everywhere.

If you look at the Jonathan Stone House, page 39 in the May/June issue, the only diagonal approximately in the golden mean relationship is the one between identical corners of the two groups of windows on either side of the door.

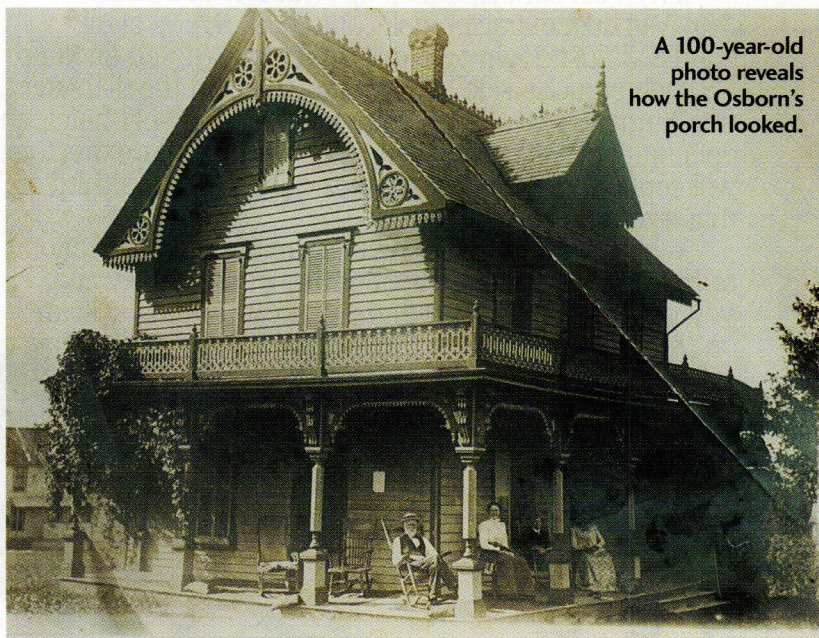
This is a legitimate and striking relationship among identical elements which clearly contrast on the façade. There is no guesswork in drawing the lines. The designer might well have used this proportion consciously in this case. Absent documentation, we can't be sure.

Most of the other lines drawn on the picture are misleading or inaccurate. For example, the line connecting the upper left corners of two windows emphatically does not land at the center of the door-sill, as anyone can demonstrate with a ruler, and the lines passing over the doorway arch are not parallel with anything else.

One can objectively tell that the Stone House diagonals are not parallel to the larger diagonals just described, although they are close to a golden section. In the house on page 41, it is impossible to choose which of several diagonals — such as those outside the frame, outside the ears of the sills, the edges of the glazing, the edges of the sash — naturally "belong" to the window.

Unlike the overall window grouping, in which we can measure

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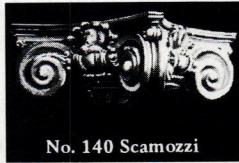
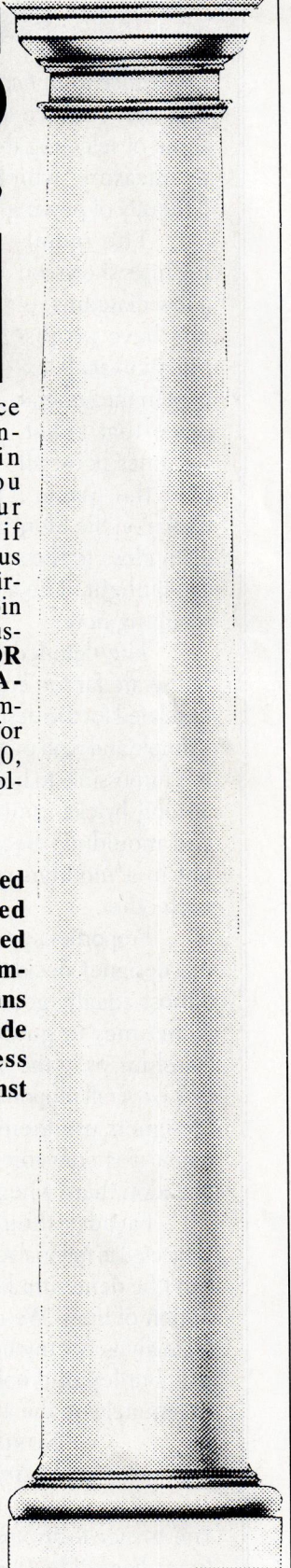
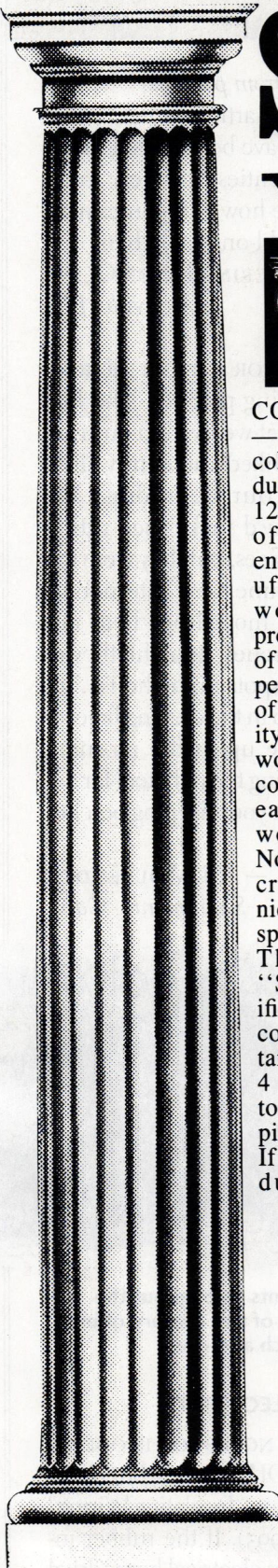


A 100-year-old photo reveals how the Osborn's porch looked.

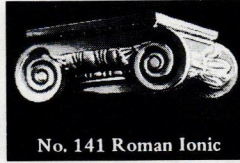
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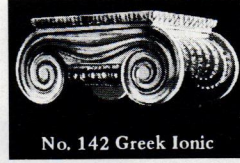
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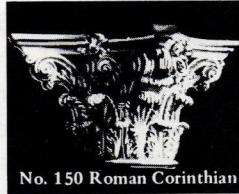


No. 142 Greek Ionic

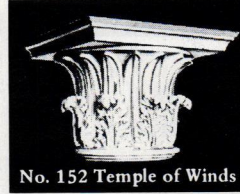
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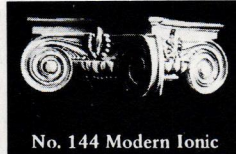
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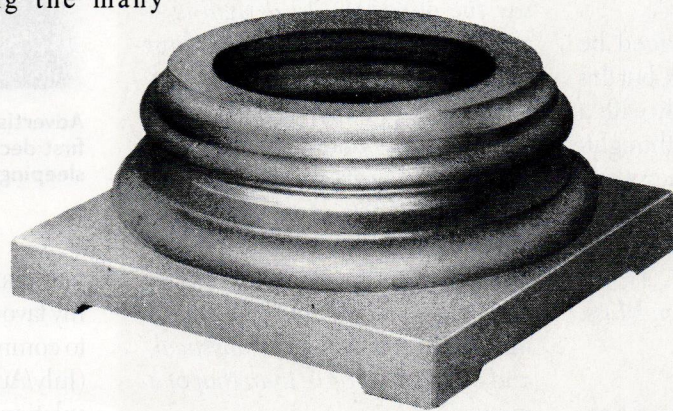
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# MAILBOX

[continued from page 10]

like elements, we are now in the game of selecting the relationship we measure, which adds to the difficulty of proving intentionality.

The radiating lines shown on a few diagrams really have no justification at all, except in the general sense that radiating lines point all over the place. The diagonals drawn on the Stone House are not even close to the actual radials of the fanlight. The author is really reaching here.

The detailed elements of a house are far too complex and interrelated for the designer to rely on a simple and rigid proportion system. It is impossible to hold proportions among bricks, muntins, casings, and mouldings because they are not in a modular relationship to each other.

Proportions are useful to help the designer decide between two almost equally good layouts, and sometimes to guide larger relationships, as in the plan of a room or the overall proportion of a façade. Designers use them on occasion when it is convenient, and freely abandon them when it isn't.

Façades should indeed be subjected to rational analysis, but this can't be done simplistically with a bunch of lines. We need thoughtful analysis, not mystical guesswork. The burden of proof is heavy and is definitely on the analyst.

— GORDON F. TULLY  
Arlington, Mass.

THE AUTHOR RESPONDS:

*In my book, The Old Way of Seeing, I show a picture of a maple leaf, and on it I draw lines con-*

*necting its outer points to make a pentagram, a five-pointed star. The pattern is not exact, but this does not mean the diagram is arbitrary. Like the leaf, and like most old houses,*

*the Jonathan Stone House is imperfect. But this does not mean it has no pattern; all but two of the regulating lines that form a lattice on the façade are*

*within 98 percent of one another's average slope.*

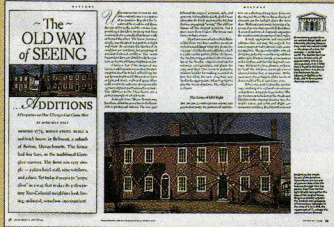
*The radiating lines do not "point all over the place"; they point to the center of the fanlight over the main door, as I say on page 39. The spokes of the fanlight do not match the pattern. A 1973 photo shows the fanlight boarded up; the house has since been renovated and added to, so the present fanlight may not be original. A pattern does not evaporate because a badly designed detail, old or new, fails to follow it.*

*I do not say that the Jonathan Stone House is designed according to the golden section. I say that its proportions are based on the square root of 2 (within 95.5 percent, on average).*

*I do not say a designer should rely on a rigid proportion system, I say the opposite: "In designing a new building or addition I don't form a rigid grid and manipulate every element of the new design into it."*

*In 1775 builders learned routinely the geometry of form, and they also had the use of pattern books that were based on classical principles. The underlying pattern of a house designed and built in the old way is no more mythical, or mystical, and no less beautiful, than that of a maple leaf.*

— JONATHAN HALE  
Watertown, Mass.



[continued from page 10]

reading your article, I figure that they must have been added in the teens or twenties. It is very interesting to see how companies marketed the add-ons back then.

— CATHERINE FRYER CLINE  
Jacksonville, Fla.

THANK YOU FOR A GREAT ARTICLE about sleeping porches. The first few years that we lived in our 1910 home, we liked the sunny little rooms off our bedrooms. We thought they'd make nice sitting rooms or offices, but they were too hot for summertime afternoons. Finally, we moved our beds out onto the porches. At night, they're the coolest spots in the house. It's great to sleep in the evening breezes and to wake up in the morning sun. Like using the right tool for the right job, use your sleeping porches for sleeping.

— JOE WOLFENDEN  
Sacramento, Calif.

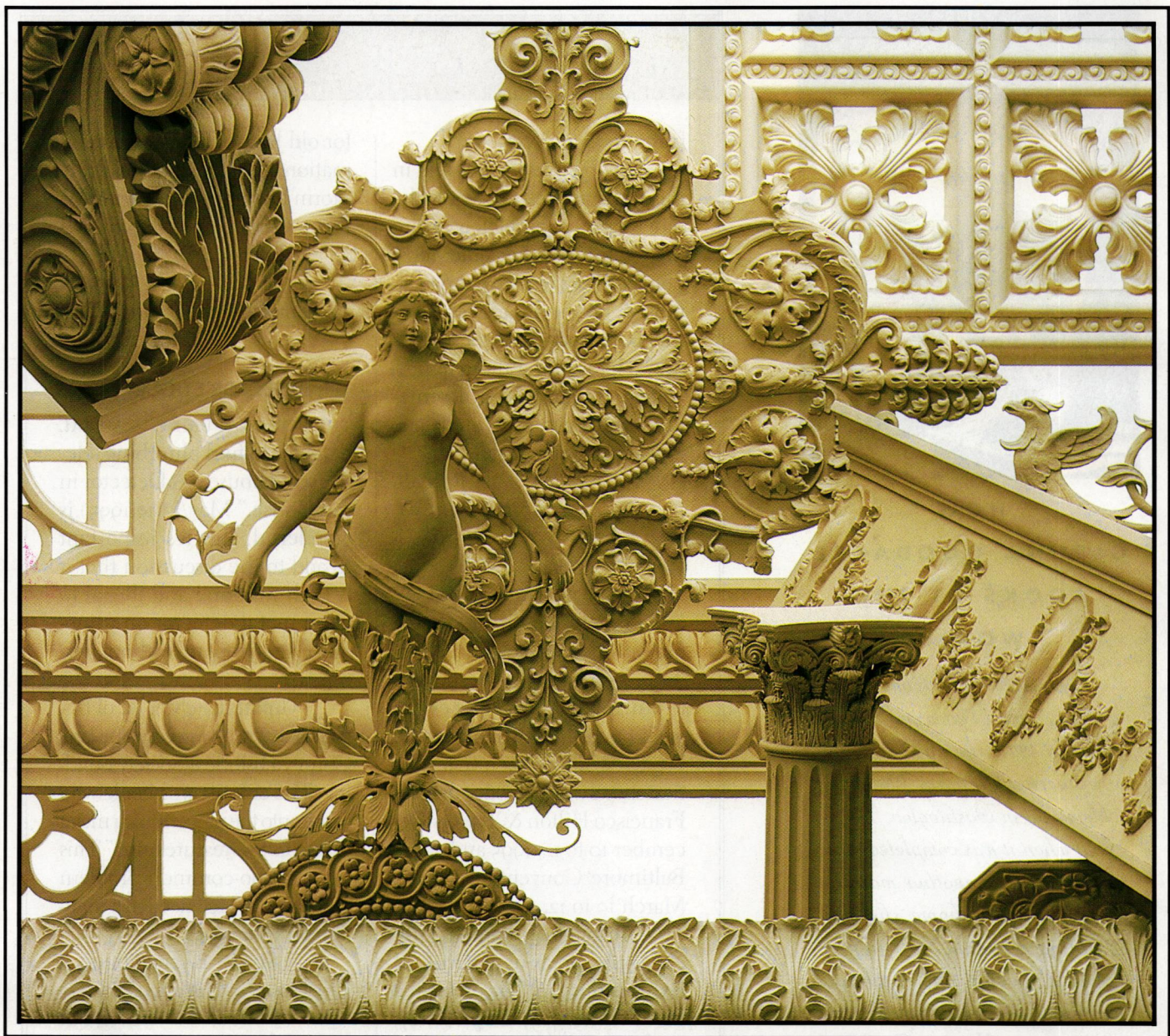


Advertisements throughout the first decades of this century offered sleeping porch add-ons.

## ELECTRIC TIP

RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK IS ONE OF my favorite OHJ features, but I have to comment on "Insulating Wiring" (July/Aug. 1995). If the rubber insulation in an electrical box is dried out or missing, it is probably also

[continued on page 14]



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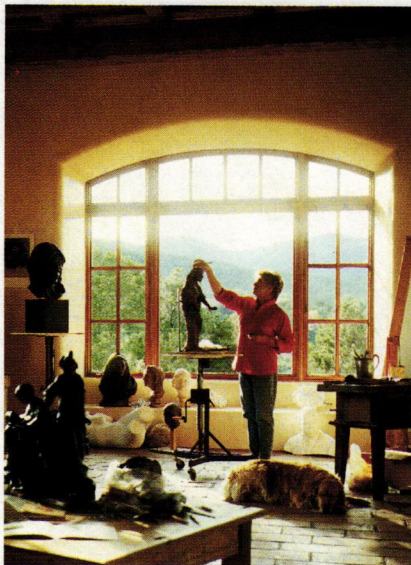
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**M A I L B O X**

[continued from page 12]  
dried out behind the box and in the walls as well. It would be much safer to completely rewire the circuit. Another note: most municipalities require permits, although not necessarily an electrician, to perform work such as this. Thanks for a thought-provoking column; I learn something from every issue, and I look forward to future tips.

— TOM RUSSEL  
Portsmouth, Va.

**RESTORATION RETURNS**

RESTORATION, THE EXHIBITION and conference on preserving our cultural and industrial heritage, is moving west. In addition to our annual East Coast event, we'll be holding a show in the West or Midwest each year. The next shows will be held at the San Francisco Hilton & Towers December 10 to 12, 1995 and at the Baltimore Convention Center March 10 to 12, 1996.

To get on our mailing list, call, write, or fax us at RAI/EGI Exhibitions, 10 Tower Office Park, Suite 419, Dept. OHJ, Woburn, MA; (617) 933-6663 (visitors), (617) 933-9699 (exhibitors), or (617) 933-8744 (fax).

— STEVEN SCHUYLER  
RAI/EGI Exhibitions  
Woburn, Mass.

**COLORED STORMS**

REGARDING YOUR ITEM ABOUT colored storm windows for old houses (Ask OHJ, July/Aug. 1995), I want to bring another company to your attention. National Pride offers good storm windows (and doors) at reasonable prices, and they come in nine colors, including some shades that are especially suited

for old houses. For more information, contact National Pride Storm Doors, 2964 Clydon SW, Dept. OHJ, Grand Rapids, MI 49509; (800) 968-6245.

— PAUL HAYDEN  
South Bend Heritage Fdn.  
South Bend, Ind.

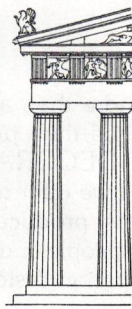
**DETECTOR ETIQUETTE**

THE IDEA OF USING A METAL detector to find plumbing, etc. in an old house ("A Detector in the House," May/June 1995) is wonderful. But it's important to add to the discussion that it is both immoral and illegal to use a metal detector on someone else's property without permission.

Unfortunately, a lot of history has been lost forever at the Erie County Historical Society building. The culprits are people who came onto the property with metal detectors to "treasure hunt." This is an all-too-common problem and one that I felt needed a mention on your pages.

— SUSAN BATES HANSEN  
Erie County Historical Society  
Erie, Pa.

**CORRECTION:** As a few readers noted, in "Greek Temples for a Young Republic" (May/June 1995), we showed a Greek Doric column with a base. Although the Doric Order is generally accepted to have no base (right), the examples we showed are directly from Asher Benjamin's "The American Builder's Companion," 1827. Apparently, Benjamin preferred the base, or simply erred.



— THE EDITORS

8'0" x 12'9"



Hall  
6'6" x 22'0"

## What will it cost to rebuild their home?

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# Ask OHJ

Send your questions to:

Ask OHJ

Old-House Journal

2 Main Street

Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930



## In the Gutter

*On our 1891 house, the original redwood gutters are still working fine, but the turret gutters were replaced some time ago with vinyl. I would like to return them to wood. How are round wood gutters made and who makes them?*

— Mike Korchinsky  
San Francisco, Calif.

MAKING ROUND WOOD GUTTERS IS an expensive, custom job, costing about 10 times as much per linear foot as straight wood gutters. Generally, they are fabricated in segments that are cut from thick sections of lumber. To get stock big enough to handle the arc, 2" dimensional lumber is glue-laminated together. Next, the piece is cut to the proper radius on a band saw. The segments are then finger-jointed together and passed through a shaper three times, once for the face profile (designed to match the existing gutters), once for the trough, and finally for the back.

**The turret on this classic San Francisco home is missing its original redwood gutters.**

A number of woodworking shops handle round gutters, especially in cities with large populations of Victorian houses. One is Haas Woodworking Company, 64 Clementia St., San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 421-8273.

## Metal Roof Repair

*Our 1900 Queen Anne has terne metal roofing in low-pitched areas. In general, it remains in good shape, except where the down-*

*spouts pierce the eaves. There, the paint is lifting and there is some rust. Our local sheet-metal company has refused to attempt repair, saying the only solution is costly replacement of all the terne. Are there other options?*

— Jim Bodine  
New Ulm, Minn.

TERNEPLATE IS STEEL THAT IS coated with an alloy of lead and tin. Any breaks in the coating will lead to not only rusting of the steel, but galvanic corrosion of the top  
[continued on page 18]

## Pressed Brick

*Many of the 19th-century houses in Brooklyn Heights are built with brick that plainly differs from modern masonry. It's narrower and longer, the mortar is thinner, and there is highly ornamental detail in some bricks. I have heard it called "hydraulic" or "pressed" brick. Is this available today?*

— Basil Pollitt  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH century, new steam-driven machines pressed brick from relatively dry clay mixes. This created, for the first time, uniform brick. It also allowed for intricate decorations because the dry mix held detail made with iron and brass molds.

The standardized brick made the mason's job easier, and it also tended to make buildings look very modern to contemporary eyes. Adding to the appear-

ance, masons tinted the mortar to match the brick and kept joints very thin — the "butter" joints so difficult to repoint today.

By the turn of the century, the machine-age look was out. Brickmakers developed ways to make their products look more rustic, scratching their faces and creating random discolorations.

Although some companies offer handmade "soft mud" brick today, we are unaware of a source for pressed brick. Try contacting architectural salvage yards.

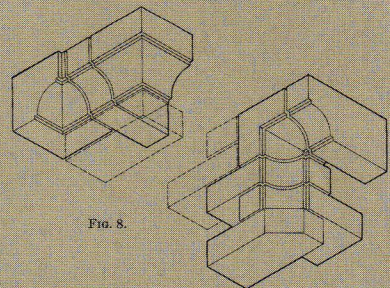


FIG. 8.

**The manufactured brick of the late 1800s included standardized common units and designs for trim.**



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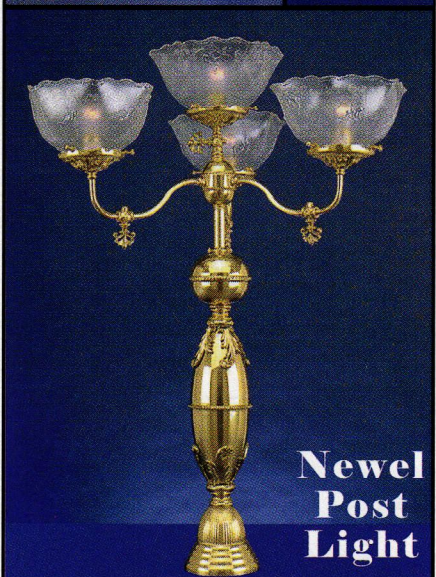
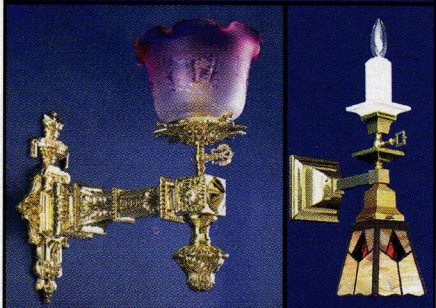
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## Ask OHJ



[continued from page 16]

layer as the two metals interact in the presence of rainwater. That means the problem quickly snowballs. For relatively minor damage, however, you may be able to repair the roof. Larger problems may require at least partial replacement.

To repair small damaged areas, remove paint with a chemical stripper, scrape away any excess tar and wash with mineral spirits or gasoline. Then scour the rust and patina away with steel wool.

To refasten seams, or to patch a break, use solder that's half tin and half lead after applying rosin flux. Do not use asphalt compounds; their acidity can cause corrosion. Paint with a linseed-oil iron-oxide primer, and finish coat to match the roof.

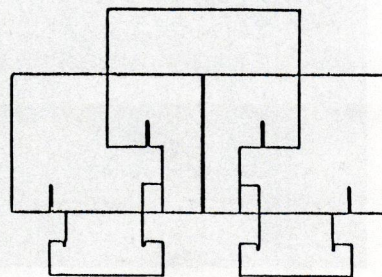
### Interlocking Shingles

*We will be replacing our roof soon, and I'd like to use a material like that on the house shown in an old OHJ. I'm assuming it's a composition roofing, but I have never seen anything quite like it. What is it? And where can I find it today?*

— Laura Ardis  
Sulphur Springs, Tex.

THESE INTERLOCKING ASPHALT SHINGLES became popular in the 1920s

**ABOVE:** Clearly not original to a Victorian house, the interesting pattern is created by the T-shape of the shingles. **BELOW:** The slots of one course ride on the ears of the course above, creating a wind-resistant roof.



and 1930s. The woven pattern is created by their interlocking design. Sold for their increased wind resistance, they are T-shaped with ears to lock the shingle to the course below. You can buy various interlocking shingles today, but they are a premium-priced product.

Here are some manufacturers. Contact them for distributors near you. CertainTeed Corp., P.O. Box 860, Dept. OHJ, Valley Forge, PA 19482, (610) 341-7000; Georgia-Pacific, P.O. Box 1763, Dept. OHJ, Norcross, GA 30091, (800) 284-5347; IKO, 120 Hay Road, Dept. OHJ, Wilmington, DE 19809, (800) 323-7171; Owens-Corning Fiberglas World Headquarters, Document Center - 3, Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 10014, Toledo, OH 43682, (800) 766-3464.

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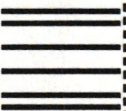


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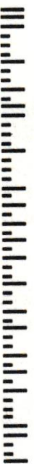


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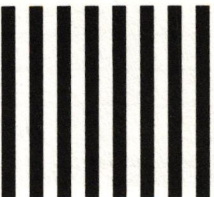
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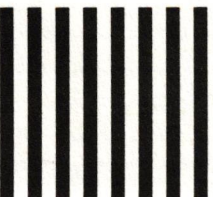
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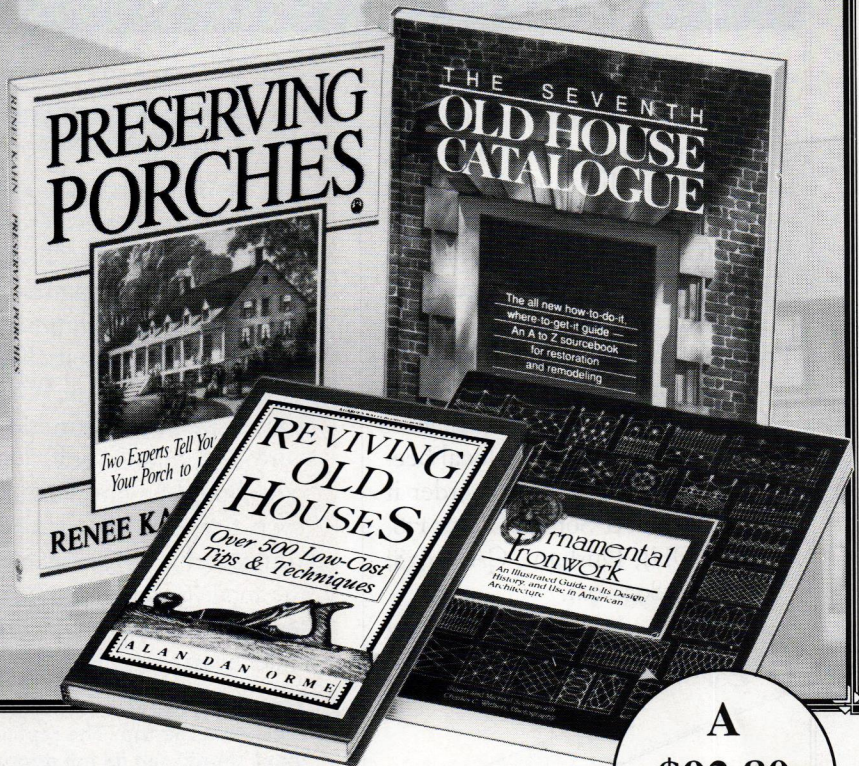
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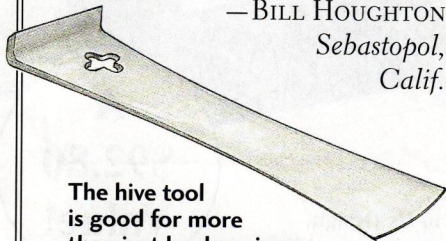
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# RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK

## HONEY OF A TOOL

**B**EEKEEPERS USE A HIVE TOOL TO remove sections of honeycomb. The tool is thin and flat, with a bent end — sort of a cross between a prybar and a putty knife. The flat end tapers to a sharp edge that's great for getting under moulding without damaging the woodwork, and the bent end is shaped for effective prying in limited spaces. You can find the tool at local beekeeping supply stores, or order it from Dadant & Sons, P.O. Box 178, Dept. OHJ, Durham, CA 95938; (916) 893-0921.

— BILL HOUGHTON  
*Sebastopol,  
Calif.*



The hive tool is good for more than just beekeeping. It works like a small, sharp prybar on wood mouldings and windows.

## WALLBOARD SKATE

**I**CART 4' X 8' SHEETS OF PLYWOOD and wallboard on a roller skate. I altered the old gear (not an "in-line" skate, but an old one with four metal wheels) by cutting V-shaped notches in the front and back and bolting a heavy-duty 90-degree metal flange to them. Now I simply rest a sheet in the holder and wheel it across the floor.

— JOEY BURKE  
*Washington, D.C.*

## PULLING LINOLEUM

**H**ERE'S YET ANOTHER LINOLEUM stripping method that I found easy and relatively clean. In addition to linoleum, I had carpet padding and asphalt tile to contend with. I bought an 8" cube of dry ice and had it cut in two. Then I laid

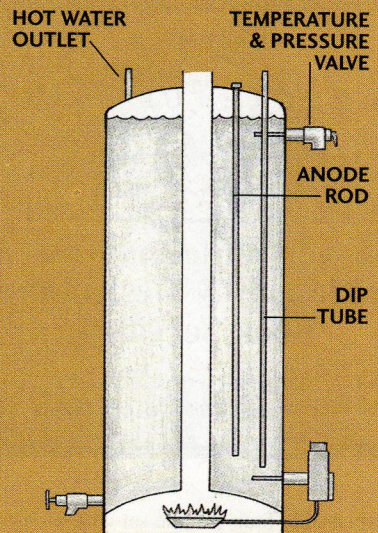
## MORE WATER HEATER MAINTENANCE

**A**N EASY WAY TO PROLONG THE life of a water heater is to replace the anode rod. This length of metal (usually magnesium) is meant to react with minerals in the water, sacrificing itself to protect the rest of the tank. When the rod is spent, the minerals will corrode the tank itself. The anode should be checked at least every five years (twice as often if you've got a water softener). If the anode is corroded, split, or pitted, replace it. Try contacting the water heater manufacturer; many

The anode rod screws into the tank from the top. The replacement should run its full depth so it will protect the whole tank.

plumbing supply stores do not carry compatible new parts.

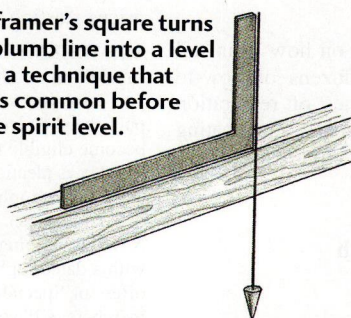
— SAM WEINSTOCK  
*Chicago, Ill.*



the two pieces on the floor. After about a minute, I hopped one piece over the other and went to work on the area frozen brittle by the ice. Everything popped up and shattered like glass when I pried at it with a putty knife. All that was left were a few shreds of tar paper.

— DANA C. JENNINGS  
*Upton, Wyo.*

A framer's square turns a plumb line into a level — a technique that was common before the spirit level.



## OLD-FASHIONED LEVEL

**I**F YOU'RE STRANDED WITHOUT your spirit level, you can determine level using this old tech-

nique. (I read about it in an old woodworking book.) Simply hang a plumb line and hold one leg of a framer's square against the line. The other leg will be level.

— J. BURNES  
*Little Rock, Ark.*

## SHIM DISPENSER

**I**USED AN ENTIRE BUNDLE OF SHIMS to tighten up the underside of my creaky Queen Anne floor. So, I made a shim dispenser. I poured glue into a glass jar and placed my wedges in it, thin end in down. When I needed a shim, I simply pulled one out — using another shim to spread the glue around a little — and put it in place.

— JENNIFER CAUFIELD  
*San Antonio, Tex.*

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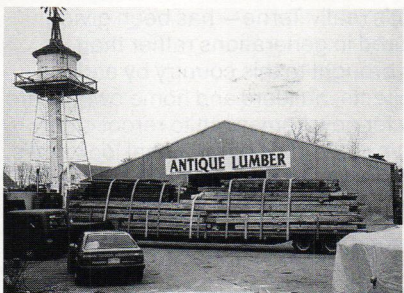
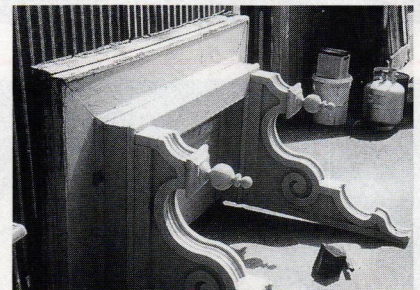
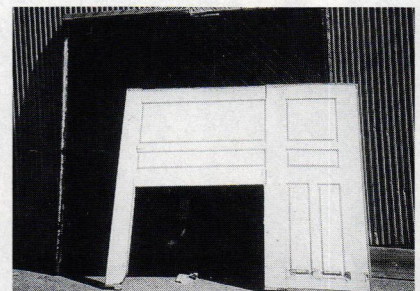
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the old "tin" roof

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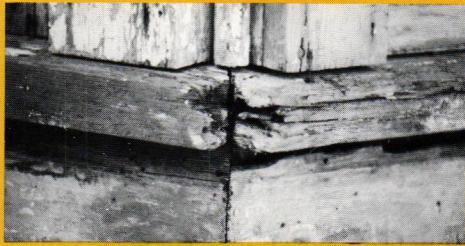
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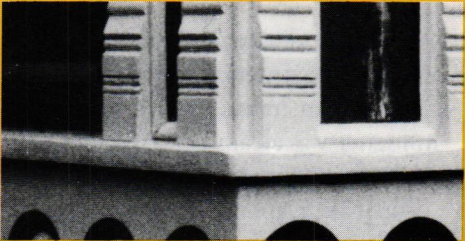
# Wood Restoration System



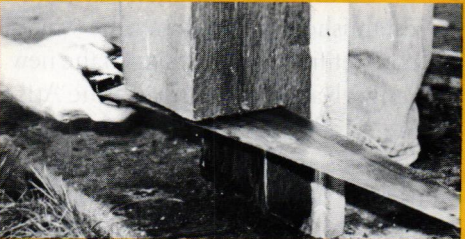
*This rotted – and irreplaceable – woodwork...*



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



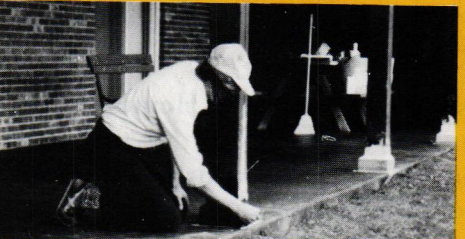
*...sanded, nailed, stained or painted.*



*10" rotted bottoms of these load-bearing columns...*



*...were completely sawed off and replaced with...*



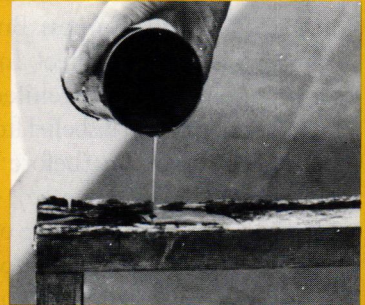
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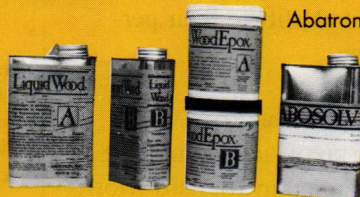
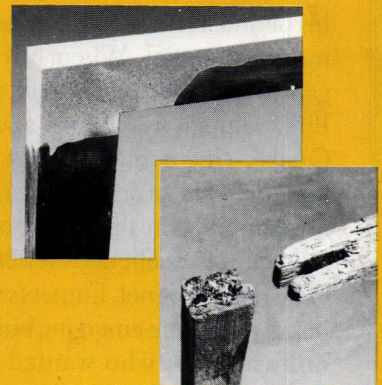
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# Frank Furness, Victorian Pioneer

BY JAMES C. MASSEY

**D**ARING, OUTRAGEOUS, EVEN WILD — ADJECTIVES not ordinarily applied to a Victorian architect — describe Philadelphia native Frank Furness. But then Furness was no ordinary Victorian architect. In the 1870s, he developed a uniquely personal architectural style that elicited gasps of horror and disbelief from public and press alike. Even in this century (before Victorian styles returned to fashionable acceptance), many regarded his work as the ugliest from an “Age of Ugliness.”

Fortunately, Furness’s place in history is secure. Today he is admired for the power and strength of his expressive designs and hailed as one of the most inventive architects of his period. He was certainly among the most influential. When Furness began his architectural career in 1859, Philadelphia was a staid and sober Quaker city, comfortable in its old traditions. Half a century later, he left a metropolis on the forefront of architectural excellence. Whether the critics liked it or not, Furness’s work was popular with the emerging business and railroad elite, who wanted energetic, avant-garde architecture to provide a public identity for their growing enterprises, as well as striking new houses to testify to their personal wealth and importance.

## A Talented Trailblazer

BORN IN 1839, FURNESS STARTED DESIGNING BUILDINGS at the age of 20 as an apprentice in Richard Morris Hunt’s new atelier. Hunt was the first American graduate of the French *École des Beaux Arts*. His studio was established to train other American architects in the methods of the *École*.

The Civil War interrupted Furness’s work in the Hunt atelier. Now just 22, Furness received a commission in Rush’s Lancers, the Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry — so-named because its members actually carried lances (hopefully only for ceremonial purposes). After a dash-ing career and promotion to the rank of captain, Furness won the Congressional Medal of Honor for ex-

ceptional valor under enemy fire in Virginia.

After the war, Furness returned to Hunt’s office for a few years before establishing his own firm with John Fraser and George Hewitt. When Hunt died, Furness paid homage to his early employer:

*“He stood in the relation of father to me and all that came of my professional life, and I do not think I shall ever take a pencil in my hand without thinking of him in some way.”*

Not content to copy the mode of the *École*, Furness looked to his own creative genius. He quickly established an individualistic architectural style, richly ornamented with patterns abstracted from nature. Later, Furness’s influence was clear in the Art Nouveau-style decoration of skyscraper pioneer Louis Sullivan, who had apprenticed at Furness’s office.

Furness’s reputation was firmly established in 1872 when he won a competition for the design of the new Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The handsomely restored Academy still stands and is, to use a period term, “muscular” in its bold design. It features a cornucopia of Furness trademarks: an arch supported in its center, overscaled features, ornament derived from nature, polychroming,

and the extensive use of colored tiles. The main interior walls are covered with a stylized flower-and-butterfly pattern. Furness’s sketchbooks show natural features being translated into abstract design in a manner reminiscent of Christopher Dresser, a 19th-century English designer.

**Frank Furness, son of a Unitarian minister and brother of a Shakespearean scholar, trained as an architect in Richard Morris Hunt’s atelier.**



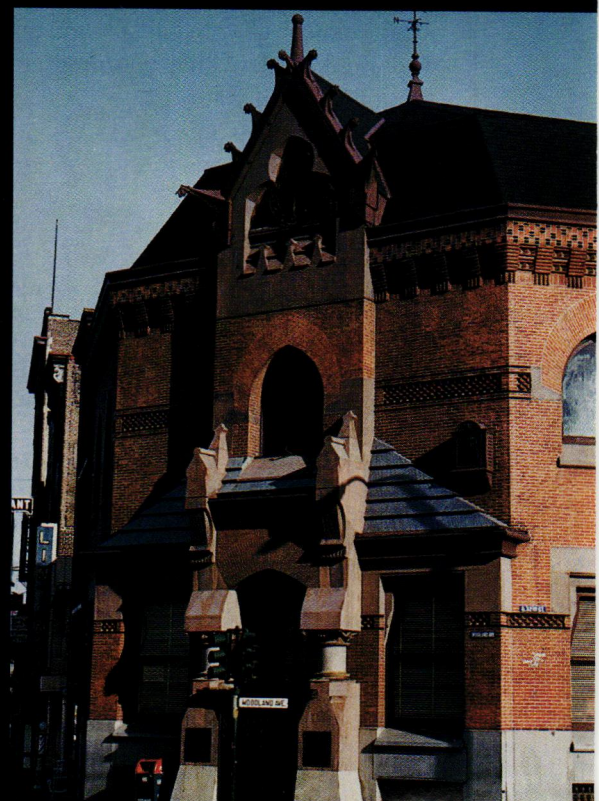
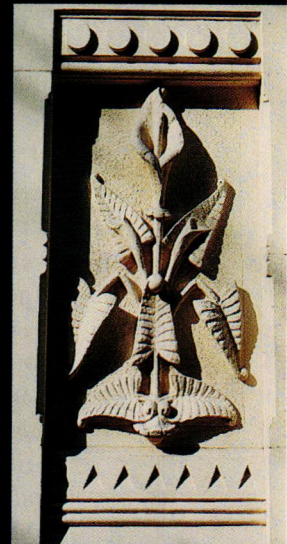
niscent of Christopher Dresser, a 19th-century English designer.

## Rustic Rooms & Novel Homes

TO HIS CONTEMPORARIES, FURNESS CUT THE IMAGE of a tough and confident self-made man — more than a bit eccentric. A noted sportsman, he let loose his penchant for hunting by designing a bizarre “camp room” addition to his Philadelphia town house. It was a sort



**CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT:** The rounded first-floor end of the University of Pennsylvania's Library (now the Graduate School of Fine Arts) is a distinctive counterpoint to the fortress-like tower. A sculpted terra-cotta lily is an ornamental accent on the façade of a Rittenhouse Square town house. The exaggerated arches, contrasting materials, and dramatic angled entrance of the 1876 Centennial National Bank are typical Furness embellishments. Complex dormers and noteworthy porch details are the highlights of the 1879 Hare House. The picturesque Rhawn House is an outstanding example of Furness's suburban architecture.





of western hunting shack brimming with trophies and rustic furniture. His manner was also brusque and unconventional. Louis Sullivan recalled Furness in his memoir *Autobiography of an Idea*:

*“He affected the English in fashion. He wore loud plaids, and a scowl, and from his face depended fan-like a marvelous red beard, beautiful in tone, with each separate hair delicately crinkled from beginning to end. Moreover, his face was snarled and homely as an English bulldog.”*

Furness was a bit much for old Philadelphia, but he got along well with bankers and railroad executives, representatives of that booming and self-confident capitalistic age. Naturally, the houses designed for such men were tamer than the ones intended as business showcases, but Furness’s originality shone through. (Many houses — several score, in fact — were de-

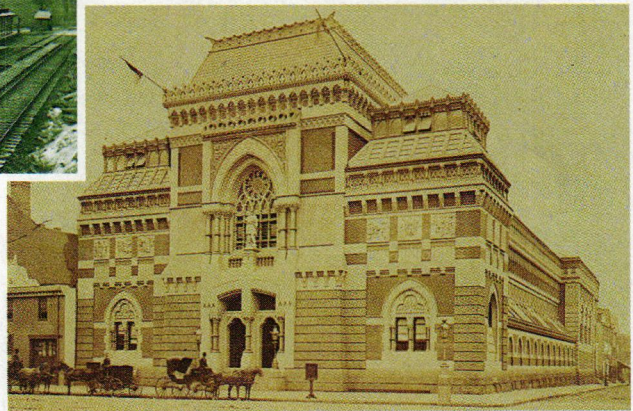


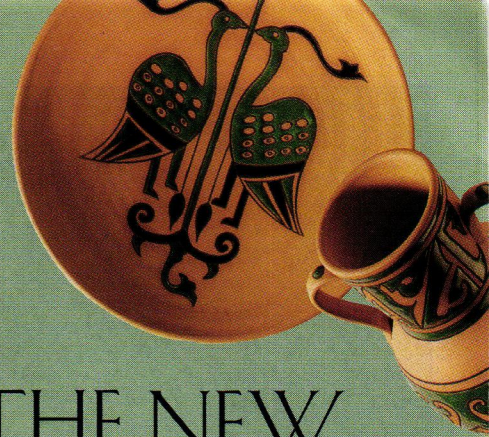
**CENTER:** Furness received over a hundred commissions to design railroad stations. His first stations were small depots for the Reading Company, many of which still stand on the lines out of Philadelphia. **RIGHT:** The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Furness’s masterpiece, was the first to show his bold personal style. At the time, the polychromed façade was called “Venetian Gothic.”

**Furness was noted for featuring stylized floral ornament on his buildings, such as this arch on the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.**

signed by his partners as well, particularly Allan Evans.) Furness’s town houses of the 1870s and 1880s were mostly constructed around fashionable Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. Generally, they were built of brick and were highly ornamented with complex wall and roof shapes. Perhaps the best survivor is the 1875 Hockley House, featuring a splendid recessed corner entrance porch replete with a superb, second-floor rectangular window. The interiors of some town houses are extraordinary, even for that highly decorated age. The rooms are totally designed — walls, ceilings, fixtures, and furniture all from the master’s hand.

Furness also built houses in the suburbs, mostly on the prestigious Main Line of  
[continued on page 28]





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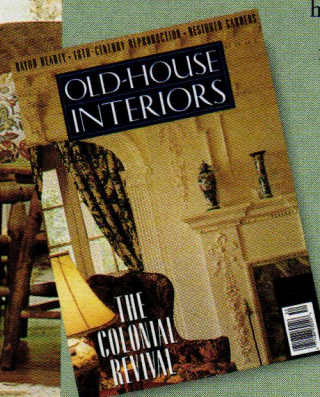
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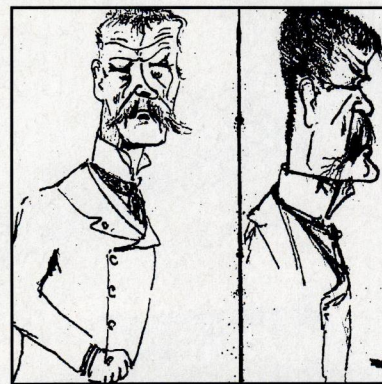


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[continued from page 26]

the Pennsylvania Railroad and in other railroad suburbs. These houses were larger and bulkier, with complex roofs, simpler ornament and less of it. Projecting hooded dormers and multiple porch columns were other common Furness flourishes on these suburban houses — usually frame or stone rather than brick.



Frank Furness was a whiz at caricatures of friends and family. As his self-portrait depicts, the drawings were none too flattering.

Furness worked mostly in Philadelphia; his buildings are rare farther north than New York and New Jersey or farther south than Washington, D.C. Perhaps the most famous example is the Physick House in Cape May, New Jersey, now a museum. Furness designed several houses in Cape May and spent his summers on the Jersey shore, sketching local plants and scenery in quick, concise strokes that were later translated into stone and terra-cotta.

As Furness aged, his growing firm gathered larger and more important commissions, but showed less of his creative presence. In his later years, in fact, he was remembered more as a Civil War hero than as a pioneering architect. However, Furness's younger partners, including George Howe, who later gained architectural fame, carried the firm and its tradition of excellence well past his death in 1912.

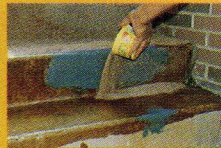
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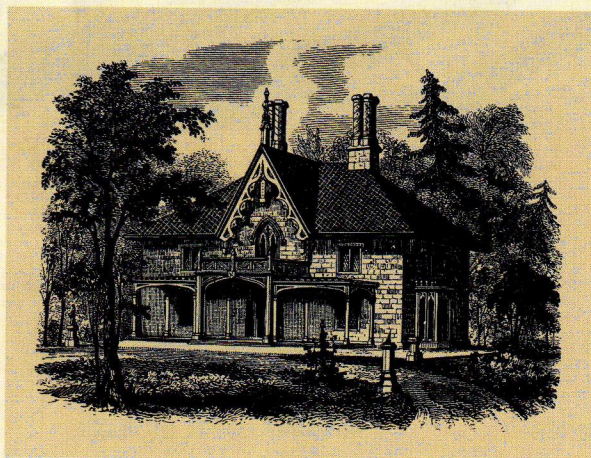
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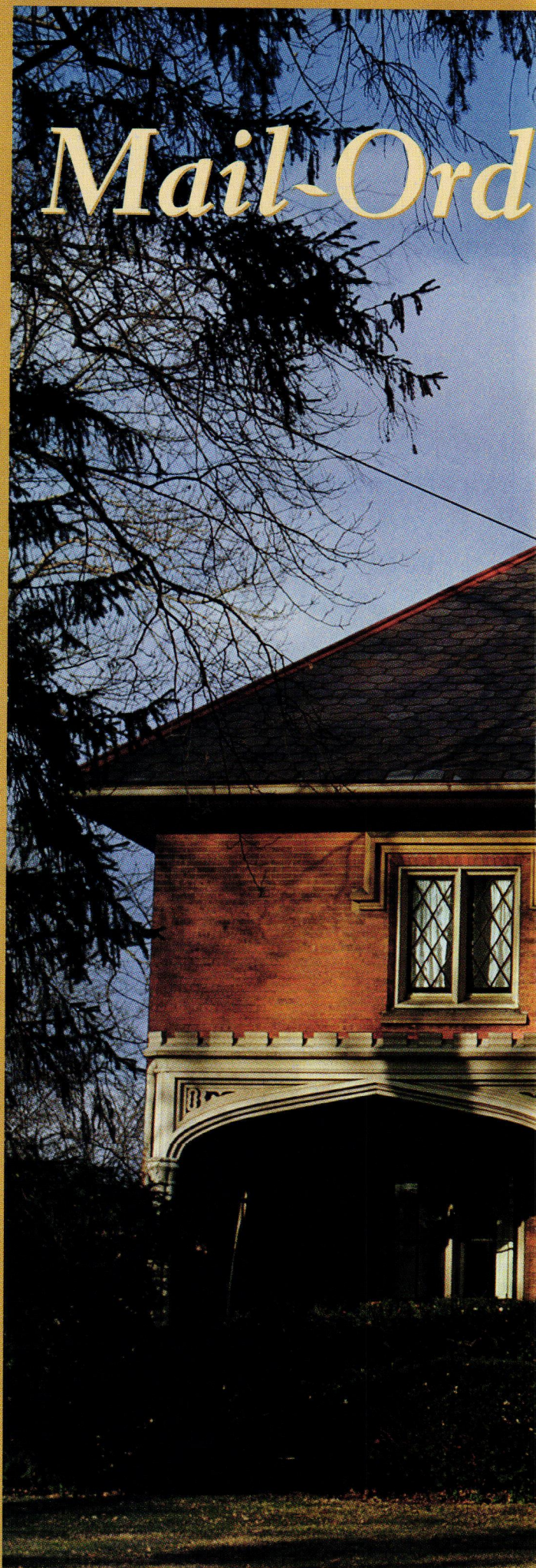
# Identifying Mail-Order

**T**RYING TO DETERMINE whether your house was built from mail-order blueprints or from materials (and plans) ordered by mail is more than just an interesting challenge. From the standpoint



of design and material quality, such catalog houses are in a class by themselves. In the 1840s, when entire plans for houses (not just details) became common, and continuing until World War II, published house designs were usually prepared by experienced architects. For their time, these dwell-

**ABOVE:** Downing illustrated his 1842 pattern book, *Cottage Residences*, with charming scenes of Gothic Revival dwellings. **RIGHT:** When constructing the Upham-Wright house in Newark, Ohio, local builders copied the elevation and floor plan of "Design II" in Downing's book.

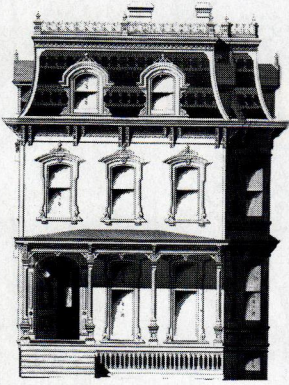




A photograph of a Gothic Revival house. The house features a prominent gable with intricate white woodwork and a porch with a decorative railing. The roof is dark, and there are two chimneys. The house is surrounded by trees and a blue sky. The title "er & Catalog Houses" is overlaid in a yellow, serif font at the top.

# er & Catalog Houses

by Daniel D. Reiff



**ABOVE:** The house styles in pattern books were more current and fashionable than what was locally available. This Second Empire house is a duplicate of the example in Bicknell's *Village Builder*. **BELOW:** The plan for this Italianate-style house first appeared in E.C. Hussey's 1875 *Home Building*.



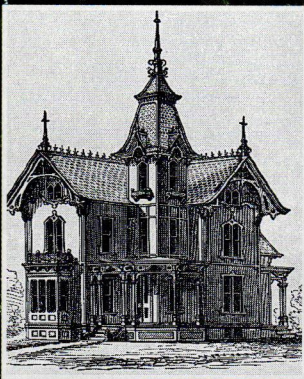
ings were more high style or up-to-date than a local builder's creation. The floor plans of these professionally designed houses were also better thought out, often containing special labor-saving features. The practice of purchasing pre-cut materials for houses became common in the early 20th century. The products were usually of the highest quality, so mail-order houses often were the most well-constructed dwellings in a neighborhood.

Four major categories of catalog and mail-order houses were available between the 1840s and the 1940s; each type is illustrated by constructed examples.

**PATTERN BOOK DESIGNS COPIED BY LOCAL BUILDERS:** Model plans and elevations for use by local builders go as far back as the books by Sebastiano Serlio, a 16th-century Italian architect. In America, their heyday begins with Andrew Jackson Downing. His *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) provided appealing perspective views, floor plans, and occasionally, details for local emulation; it was not uncommon to find builders making copies or variations of these designs. Other popular books included Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages* (1857) and E. C. Hussey's



**Published in 1887, Palliser's New Cottage Homes shows house elevations and details for architectural elements.**





*Home Building* (1875). Even when the models were enlarged or improved, the pattern book design is usually readily traceable.

**PATTERN BOOKS WITH MAIL-ORDER PLANS:** The first pattern book “for the convenience of such as may wish to build after any of the designs in this work” that offered “lithographed working drawings and printed specifications” was probably *Village and Farm Cottages* (1856) by architects Henry W. Cleaveland, William Backus, and Samuel D. Backus. Naturally, since scaled working drawings were in elevation view, constructing the buildings was made more accurate. Soon supplying mail-order plans became quite common. Other architects and designers began publishing pattern books, including Palliser, Palliser & Company (1887), George F. Barber (from 1891), and William Radford (1898 onward). Firms, such as the Home Builders Catalog Company and the Standard Homes Company, were active in the 1920s and 1930s.

**HOUSE DESIGNS BUILT WITH CATALOG-BOUGHT MATERIALS (NOT PRECUT):** Some companies, noted later for precut houses, first offered materials “enough to build the dwelling” from the sill plate up, not cut or fitted. The advantage, of course, was that the owner received the correct amount of materials in one order. A local carpenter would cut the lumber according to the ac-

companying plans. Two companies selling houses this way were the Chicago House Wrecking Company (1909), and Sears, Roebuck and Company (1912 and 1915 catalogs).

**HOUSE PLANS OFFERED WITH PRECUT MATERIALS:** First made popular by Aladdin Company in 1906-7, this method was soon picked up by other firms, notably Sears, as well as Bennett Homes and Sterling Homes. The materials received by the owner were precut and systematically labeled, simplifying the assembly process. In recent years, these “package” dwellings have become well known.

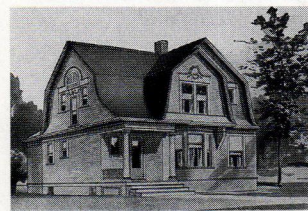
### Uncovering the Clues

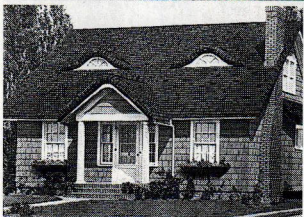
HOW CAN YOU KNOW IF A HOUSE IS A PATTERN BOOK OR MAIL-ORDER DWELLING? There are several ways to find out.



At the turn of the century, the Radford Company sold house plans with scaled drawings and elevation views. “Design 86” from a 1904 edition of *Radford Ideal Homes* was built in Sharpesville, Pennsylvania.

Homeowners and builders often altered house plans to suit their tastes and needs. Here, a porch was added to “Design 500” from the 1903 *Radford American Homes*.





**TOP:** Except for the addition of shutters, this Fredonia, New York, home has changed little since its construction in 1930. **INSET:** By the early 20th century, the turreted Victorian plans were replaced by house designs in simple styles, such as the English Revival cottage from the *Home Builders Catalog*. **RIGHT:** As this Sears catalog boasts, the "Honor Bilt" system evenly spaced roof rafters and wall studs, making mail-order houses extremely sturdy.

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First, check for numbers written or stamped consistently on joists, rafters, or other members in cellars or attics. Two methods for labeling the materials were used.

Aladdin marked its lumber with dimensions. For instance, when the plan called for a 2x8 that was 12'6" long, lumber in that size was simply selected from the pile of 2x8s. In a 1920 Aladdin house that I surveyed, the first-floor joists were marked "11-10" on the side near the end — naturally, all joists were interchangeable. An illustration from a 1952 Aladdin catalog shows this system still in use.

Other companies, particularly Sears, used an alternate system by labeling the lumber with a code number, not a length. An illustration from a 1918 Sears catalog shows the labeling method clearly; a 1929 construction diagram depicts this approach as well — a letter and a number for each type of unit (all identically numbered pieces being the same). When laid out at the building site with the lumber arranged in organized piles, finding the pieces was very easy.

If the lumber is only marked on the end (as shown in a 1929 Sears catalog), you might have a whole house of marked lumber and never know it — short of dissecting a wall! Most precut houses had coded marking of one sort or another.

The house's hardware can be an important clue. Sears and other companies offered lighting fixtures, complete kitchens and bathrooms, and plumbing and heating. From the catalog, the owners picked the styles they liked in the quality they could afford. By locating trade names and comparing them to the ones in the period catalogs, it is possible to zero-in on the house's origin. (Of course, anyone could purchase sinks or furnaces from Sears, but mail-order houses often had everything from one source.)

Therefore, if you have a "Hercules" hot-air furnace made by the American Hercules Company of Chicago, it was a brand offered in Sears's catalogs from 1915 through 1929; their 1910 hardware catalog lists it as well. If your 1920s plasterboard is stamped "Goodwall" sheet plaster, it was sold by Sears. Even window hardware is sometimes marked by a brand name or a patent date. Lucky sleuths can turn up unexpected clues. In one Ohio house I studied, the owners produced an old ring of keys to all doors and cabinets that

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All framing material including joists, studs and rafters is spaced on 16-inch centers. The rafters are practically even in length and height. Double studing is used around all trade and window openings, three studs at corners and double plates over all opening double joints under all bearing supporting partitions.

Clear in mind that in buying a home, the price is not the only consideration. The quality of material must be considered. You must receive excellent material for every cent you spend on your home construction according to plan. Your home must be completed with a view to durability and convenience. It must be well lighted and provisions must be made for a safe and satisfactory heating, plumbing and lighting installation.

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**Double Studing:** All trade and window openings, three studs at corners and double plates over all opening double joints under all bearing supporting partitions.

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Sears, Roebuck and Co. 144 Page 7

**MODERN HOMES**  
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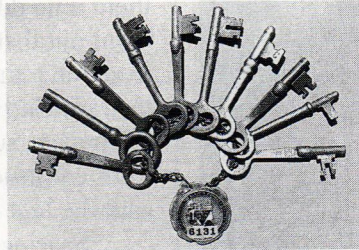
Another way to determine a mail-order or pattern book house is to check the blueprints, if they can be found. All precut houses had a full set of blueprints as a key to assembling the lumber; mail-order blueprints were also quite complete. These plans are sometimes still in the house. Carefully search the attic, built-in cabinets, and the cellar. Contact former owners because, for sentimental reasons, they often take the plans. Blueprints usually specify the company's name, the model number, and sometimes the draftsman's or architect's name or initials, but not always. One set of blueprints I uncovered left off any mention of the company or model name.

Do research in local newspapers during the year of the house's construction. In the early 20th century, houses are often mentioned under "Building News" and in special building or home-improvement sec-

tions. Some citations are quite specific: a newspaper item for Nov. 1, 1916, stated that "Ray Gibbs is putting up an Aladdin House on what was part of the Paschke farm, West Main Street." Exact locations are determined from real estate maps, cross-referenced with directories.

Finding a nearby Sears house can even be helpful. A builder would often erect a row of precut houses "on speculation," knowing that the Sears or Aladdin reputation, the quality materials, and the up-to-date design would be selling points.

A related method is to search for "local tradition." Long-time residents of a neighborhood might recall that the material for your house was "all brought on a big truck" or "sent one day from the railroad station." Discovering this information is not always easy, however. The simplest way is to write a letter or place an ad with a photo of the house in the local paper asking for information. If you are doing restoration work,



**Good-luck piece:** This Aladdin key ring revealed the serial number of a mail-order house.

**BOTTOM:** Popular house plans were often published in new editions of the pattern books, so check copies 10 years before and after the date of your house's construction. Built in 1910, the Henry J. Green house in New York was matched with "Design No. 134" from the 1913 Chicago House Wrecking Co.'s catalog.





**“We will furnish all the material to build this eight-room house, consisting of lumber, . . . hardware and painting material,” says a 1918 Sears catalog about the “Arlington.” However, the lumber for this Westfield, New York, house was not precut.**

there is no difference.” Sears was proud to point out that its “Honor Bilt” system was in all ways sturdier and more weather-tight than standard built houses. In fact, most pre-cut houses, such as Aladdin and Bennett, were constructed in a thorough manner with the best lumber.

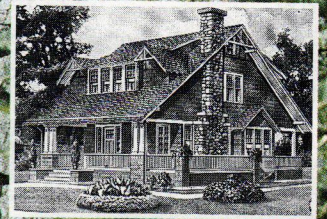
Spacing of roof rafters, floor joists, and even wall studs can be examined in your attic or cellar. Of course, just because your home is soundly built does not mean it is pre-cut. Many first-class frame houses were constructed in the same way. Except for summer cottage models, lightly built houses were usually not offered by the pre-cut home companies — though Sears did include a few inexpensive dwellings of “Special Bilt” construction with rafters widely spaced.

Unless you’re lucky enough to find blueprints, the clues may only reveal that the house is pre-cut and possibly the company that designed it. To definitively find out the company, the model name or number, and a date means embarking on the last step.

some local papers are interested in “before and after” articles. Either way, someone may recognize your house and give you a gold mine of information.

Studying your house’s construction is another way to determine if it is pre-cut. The companies carefully pointed out that their houses were sturdy and well designed. As Aladdin observed in 1918, “if you attempt to tear apart . . . an Aladdin house, the most expert contractor could not tell it from any other first class frame dwelling because

**All of the lumber for “The Detroit” from the Aladdin Company was shipped pre-cut and labeled for easy assembly at the site.**





The mail-order house companies offered choices for building materials. In this case, the Sears plan was shown with clapboard siding but was actually built with brick.

Make a careful search of the illustrations in any pattern book or catalog you can lay your hands on. (Choose editions from the time of your house's construction.)

Fortunately, a fair number of popular plan books have been reprinted (see Resources on page 34).

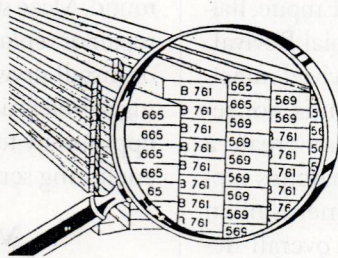
As you study the catalog plates, keep two photographs of your house (front views of the left and the right sides) handy. Select catalogs 10 or 15 years before and after the date of your house. Occasionally, people waited many years before building.

Match your house to a design with great care. Published designs were often altered in execution. Even pre-cut houses were changed during construction by modifying a number of elements, such as the size or placement of windows, the type of exterior wall cladding, the form of a dormer, and the addition or removal of the chimney. Some companies, like Bennett Homes, customized their package plans.

Compare floor plans, too. Popular designs were often pirated by rival firms. To avoid copyright infringement, minor changes in size and exterior detailing were made. Occasionally, entirely different floor plans were used.

Of course, there was nothing to pre-

vent a local carpenter from building a version of a Sears or Aladdin house based on illustrations or duplicating (with "improvements") a catalog house. These copies confirm the stylistic authority and popularity of the mail-order house — reminding us of its enduring appeal then and today.



One of the two labeling systems used to sort the lumber for mail-order houses.

Dr. Reiff teaches art and architectural history at the State University of New York, College at Fredonia. He recently

completed a book-length study on pattern book and catalog houses in America.

The sound construction and affordability of mail-order houses made them a favorite for starter homes, particularly compact designs like Sears' 1928 "Crescent."



# AWARD-WINNING

## *Steps for Making Decorated Ceiling Ornaments*

BY DAVID FLAHARTY

**I**N THE DAYS OF HIGH CEILINGS, FANCY cornices, and hanging chandeliers, an elaborate center medallion was the finishing touch to any ceiling. Most high-style homes — especially row houses — built between the early 18th century and the Great Depression had these plaster ornaments. Their design schemes followed the house's overall styling, perhaps Greek Revival, Second Empire, Italianate, or Colonial Revival.

Few have survived intact. If the medallion is not repairable, you can create a new one that matches representative elements of an original or the overall detailing of the house — say, lines from the cornice and ornament in the mantel. A job for a skilled plasterer, it involves turning a round base and then adding cast enrichments. Here's how I produce plaster medallions. If you're experienced, use the directions to tackle the project yourself, otherwise use them as specifications for a professional.

### Getting Started

IF YOU'VE GOT A LARGE MEDALLION, CHANCES are you've also got a high ceiling. Plastering 11' up, 14' up, or more, is not step-ladder work; you need solid footing and a good deal of workspace. I recommend 8' x 8' staging. Attach flood lights so you can see and a mortarboard to hold ornaments.

Before getting started with the plaster, run rough electrical service to the center of the room. Install a 4" junction box there, mounted flush with the ceiling. Snap a chalk line from the center of a chimney breast or main wall and through the middle of the electrical box. This line will serve as a reference point for the segmented enrichments. Also mark the locations of joists and other good nailers for fastening the surround. Make sure the ceiling is sound. If not, repair or replace damaged lath and plaster, or install drywall. If you open up the ceiling for electrical work or repairs, take the opportunity to add additional blocking for anchoring screws.

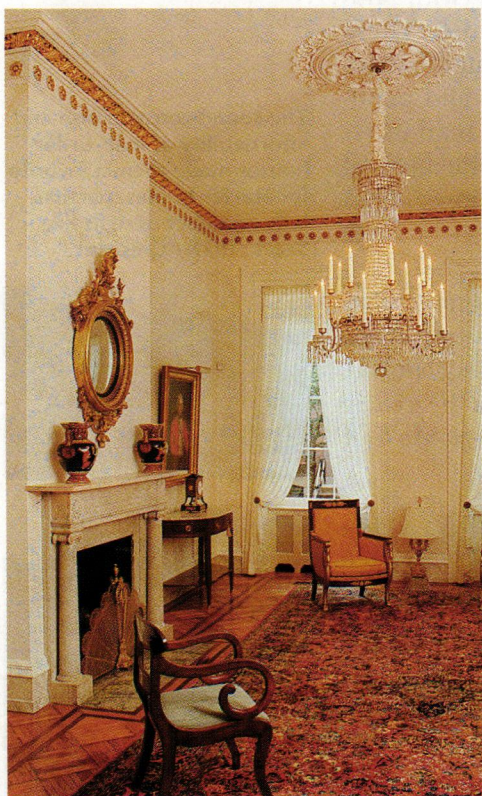
### Making a Mold

THERE ARE TWO PARTS TO MOST MEDALLIONS: a run surround and cast enrichments. We'll get to turning a run surround, but first, you'll need to make a casting mold. Prepare a model (a piece from an original medallion or new sculpture in clay or wood), then glue it to a flat marble surface and fence it with wood or sheet metal. Seal around the fence with clay or plaster to prevent leakage.

Lather the model with an alcohol-free neutral liquid soap; the soap film acts as a separator so that the rubber molding compound does not stick to the prototype. Allow the soap to dry and then burnish it (wipe away any soap powder) with a dry brush.

Originally, medallions were cast in melted hide-glue molds, but now there are many modern mold-making rubbers available. Silicone is good, but it's needlessly ex-

**For this project, a Greek Revival town house in Philadelphia, I turned a run surround and then applied cast enrichments.**



**For final finish, specify a three-coat application of oil-based paint, beginning with an alkali-resistant, low-pigment primer, or use a latex emulsion system with an acrylic plaster primer plus two finish coats.**



# MEDALLIONS



## Casting Enrichments

Specify casting plaster for the ornaments. It contains starch, which creates a hard, damage-resistant surface. Moisten the urethane mold with water from a plant sprayer before pouring in the plaster. No separator is required. Pour the plaster into the mold slowly and evenly. To ensure that it settles into the nooks and crannies, push it in place with a brush (fig. 1) and gently jiggle and slap the mold.

Just before the plaster sets, scratch the back surface to make a better bond between ornament, adhesive, and the ceiling. I key the casts with a notched trowel, but any tool that creates grooves for the adhesive to grab will work (fig. 2).

Plaster sets in about 15 minutes, but follow the manufacturer's directions. Carefully peel the mold away and set the enrichment aside (fig. 3). You can repeat this process for as many pieces as you need. You might even cast a couple extra, just in case. Also, cull any defective pieces.

pensive. Polysulfides are OK, but they have no *memory* (they lose their shape unless you keep a plaster cast in them at all times). Latex rubber is good because it resists tearing, but it must be painted on in as many as 20 coats and it shrinks when it hardens. That can mean your enrichments don't line up well. The best option is a two-part mixture of liquid urethane rubber in 30-durometer

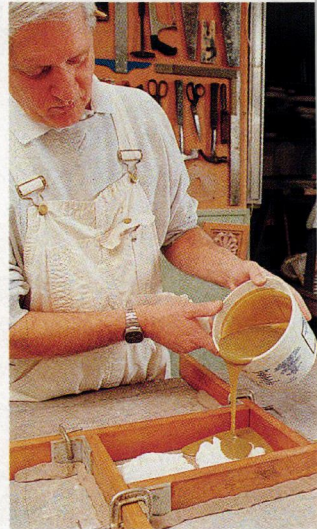
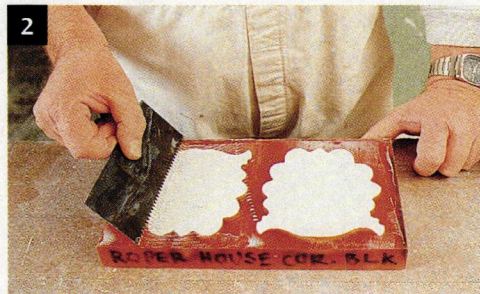
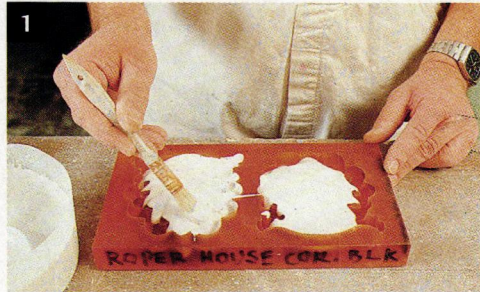
hardness. It is inexpensive, has a long life, and holds its form.

For standard ornaments, cover the entire model with rubber by  $\frac{1}{8}$ " to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". More than that, and the mold will be stiff and it will be hard to demold the plaster pieces later. However, for large enrichments, or those with very deep relief, extra rubber may be needed so it will keep its shape.

### Building a Base

YOU'LL HAVE TO determine whether the medallion will have a run surround moulding (a turned plaster base). Many medallions have one of these, with cast enrichments applied to it. However, after 1850, especially in the South, medallions might not have had a run surround.

Traditionally, run surround mouldings were turned directly on the ceilings. However, for medallions that are less than 36" in diameter, I recommend running them on a bench and then applying them to the ceiling. The process is essentially the same; it's just harder overhead and upside-down. For benchwork, use a mortarboard that has a plastic laminate top. It's non-ab-



**Pour the rubber in a small, steady stream so it flows smoothly over the model without trapping air in the crevices.**

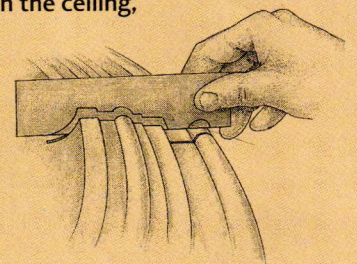
## DESIGN DETAILS

If possible, use the house's existing medallion, or representative remnants, as a model. If not, try examples in neighboring houses. Also, ornamental plastering shops have large collections of medallion parts taken from other old houses. Pick and choose the surround profile and enrichments so they match the overall patterns of the house's cornices, mantels, and mouldings. To reproduce ornament that's only documented in pictures or just a memory, you can sculpt the elements in clay. Refer to stylebooks and trade catalogs of the house's period for more clues.

To record the profile of a surround moulding, you can

scribe it, use a profile gauge, or, best, make a cross section. To do this, cut a thin saw kerf through the moulding. Then slip a piece of 22-gauge galvanized metal into the kerf and trace the moulding. Now you have a perfect replica of the design. To copy existing cast pieces, use the objects themselves as models for the molds. If they are part of an existing medallion that's on the ceiling, use a paste rubber and mold them in place.

To copy an existing run surround, slide a piece of sheet metal into a thin crosscut kerf.



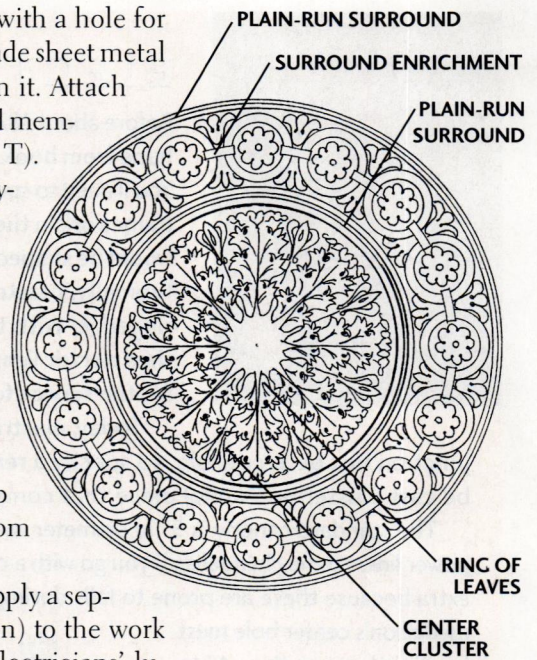
sorbent, making removal and cleanup easier. Mark the circumference of the medallion by placing a pencil against the arm and spinning it.

Whether turning in place or on the bench, you'll need to build a jig consisting of a template and a spindle to turn it. To create the template, transfer the surround profile to 22-gauge galvanized sheet metal stock and cut it to rough shape with tin snips. Then carefully file it to the exact profile. I use half-round, rat-tail, and flat files, as well as a carbide rotary file chucked into a drill press. For benchwork, the template should be designed so the base has a 4" diameter circle in the middle — this is where the electrical box will go.

The blade will ride on a wood arm (or stock). Anchor the arm to a nail in the tabletop, or to a screw turned in a wood block that's force-fit in the ceiling's elec-

trical box. Set up the arm with a hole for the spindle. I use a shop-made sheet metal bracket with a notch cut in it. Attach a slipper (an additional wood member that forms the top of a T). A brace (a wide plank or plywood support that lays over the T to prevent flexing or vibrating of the arm as it spins) is especially recommended for running the disk on the ceiling because it catches excess plaster. Nibs (protective sheet metal strips) will keep the edge of the slipper from wearing down too quickly.

For bench turning, apply a separator (a barrier to adhesion) to the work surface. Petroleum jelly, electricians' lubricants, soap, and oil will work, but if the



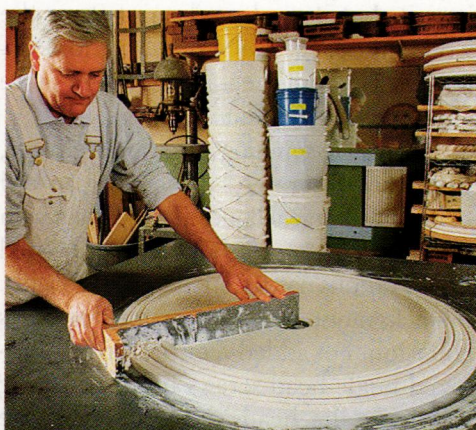
When ready, mix up plain gypsum plaster (plaster of paris) and apply it onto the board in a ring the size of the medallion.



To strengthen the disk, add sheet fiberglass or erosion control burlap cut to shape, and then pour on more plaster.



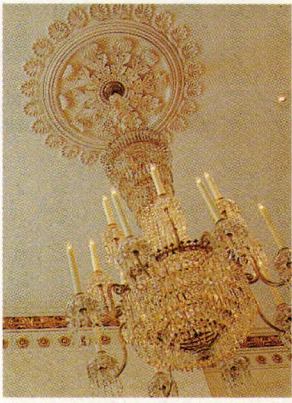
Attach the pivoting arm and spin it through the plaster. Where needed, feed additional plaster ahead of the revolving blade.



It will take 20 to 30 passes to create a sharp form. After every few passes, remove the template and clean hardening plaster from it.

## Medallion Makeup

Ceiling medallions look complicated, but on closer inspection, you'll notice that they are actually many small, repeating designs. From the center outward, medallions typically consist of a canopy (not shown above) made of metal or cast gypsum, a ring of small leaves, a center cluster of ornaments, a plain-run or enriched surround (either round or elliptical), and a perimeter enrichment of leaves or anthemia (not shown).

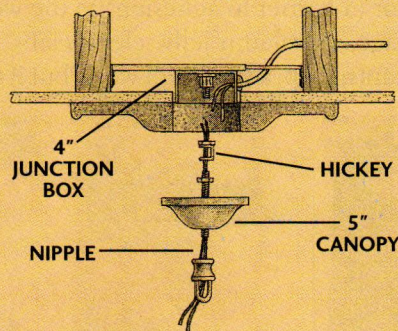


## ELECTRIC SPECS

Before about 1820, light fixtures were simply hung from hooks attached to ceiling joists. You'll need to specify some sort of anchoring framework in the ceiling. Originally, plaster would be shaped around the hook — most typically, plaster balls resembling seeds ringed it. With the advent of gaslight and then electric light, medallions were designed for the service feed.

Today, electrical codes require that the junction box be accessible, so specify a removable canopy. This can be cast plaster or a metal piece that comes with the light fixture.

The standard canopy is 5" in diameter with a 1" shouldered hole for power lines to the chandelier. If you go with a cast plaster canopy, make an extra because these are prone to falls during electrical installation. The medallion's center hole must be slightly more than 4" to cover the box; if it comes out too small, it can be opened with a rasp.



The hickey attaches the nipple, which supports the canopy and the chandelier, to the electrical box.



This medallion has 16 enrichments, so my shop-made protractor has 16 lines.

surface is too slippery, the plaster may move. And if that happens, you'll have to scrap the run moulding and start over. I use a separator that I make myself. It's a combination of kerosene and stearene (available from hobby shops that sell candle-making supplies). Boil the kerosene in a double boiler and melt the granulated stearene into it. Let it cool, and paint it on the worktable. (See "Gelatin Molds for Plaster Casting," Jan./Feb. 1995 OHJ for more about making separators.)

If you're spinning a surround in place, first scarify (scratch) the ceiling so it'll have a mechanical bond. Then paint it with polyvinyl acetate (a bonding agent sold under various names, such as Plasterweld). It blocks moisture absorption and improves adhesion. For added security, drive galvanized bugle-head screws into the ceiling and leave the heads exposed where the plaster will go. Trowel equal parts lime putty and plaster and add a powdered retarder to slow the setting process. This pro-

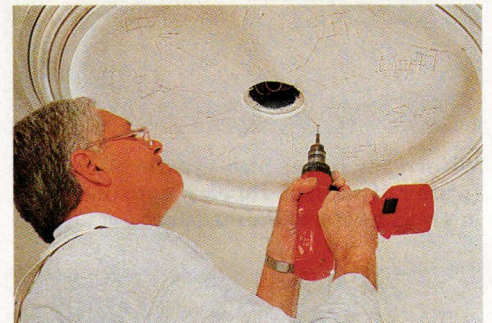
duces thick enough plaster to stay put, while allowing you time to work before it sets. (Wear rubber gloves when working with lime.)

## Gluing Up Medallions

THE CEILING WILL DETERMINE WHAT KIND of adhesive to use. If it's lath and plaster, a simple gypsum plaster is the best glue. (Make sure three-coat plaster is strong and lath is firm or the added weight of a medallion could be disastrous.) In the case of drywall ceilings, the paper surface inhibits plaster adhesion. So use white glue mixed with just enough plaster to thicken it so it fills voids. The mixture should be the consistency of sour cream; I have never measured, but it's probably 10 to 20 percent plaster, the rest glue.



Make sure to get a good, thick coat of adhesive on the back of the run surround.



Ideally, screws should be located where enrichments will be applied to cover them.



Apply plaster to seams with a paint brush as you might caulk around wood mouldings.

Construction adhesive is another good option for drywall ceilings, but it takes longer to set. It therefore requires fastening the medallion with screws — not a bad precaution with any adhesive, especially on drywall ceilings.

Pre-drill holes in the disk and countersink them to receive galvanized, bugle-head deck screws. Unlike predrilling for screws in wood members, these holes should be sized larger than the screw shanks so the threads will pass without grabbing. Otherwise, the screw may crack the plaster. Drill pilot holes at slight angles (say, 5 to 10 degrees) so the mold will not loosen if the screw releases slightly. Where there is no solid nailing behind the drywall, toggle bolts are an option.

For an existing ceiling, remove paint so that plaster meets plaster or clean drywall. Scarify plaster ceilings. Paint adhesive on the back of the disk, and press the ornament in place, aligning it with the chalk marks and over the electrical box. Then remove it. Inspect the adhesive for complete coverage and let it set briefly so the piece sticks quickly when reapplied. Finally, put the medallion in place and drive screws into the predrilled locations. A variable speed drill is a necessity. Fill uncovered screw heads with a thinned plaster mix before finishing.

### Fastening Enrichments

HISTORICALLY, ENRICHMENTS WERE SOAKED in water before mounting to prevent the plaster from drawing the water out of the adhesive. However, modern bonding agents block moisture migration so the enrichments need not be saturated. Paint polyvinyl acetate on and allow to dry. It strengthens the bond, decreases the weight of the enrichment by one-third, and allows the painter to begin work sooner.

The trick to installing enrichments is placing them correctly. To ensure that they are spaced equally around the 360-degree surround, I make a protractor from a piece of Masonite or cardboard. Cut a circle of the needed size and paint it white. Place a hole in the exact center and, using plane geometry, draw radiating lines for the center of each enrichment. When it's time to

apply the enrichments, transfer the marks to the surround. Make sure the first line rides the chalk line from the chimney breast or wall. To space enrichments equally from the midpoint, cut another layout disk (this one must be an accurate circle) to the radius the enrichments are to be distanced from the midpoint. Either trace it or fasten it temporarily and place the enrichments against it.

Plaster is the best glue for attaching enrichments to the run surround. For enrichments outside the perimeter, use whatever is appropriate for the ceiling surface. Score both the ornament and the surface location. I slather a piece, stick it up and remove it and set it aside. Then I move to the next piece, and so on.



Once four or five pieces are glued and have thickened slightly, I return and attach them in order.

The medallion can be polychromed, gilded, or painted. With a reproduction medallion in place, your parlor, dining room, or living room will once again have its original glory.

*David Flaharty is a sculptor and ornamental plasterer based near Philadelphia. His credits include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the U.S. State Department, and the White House. He can be reached at 1064 Magazine Road, Green Lane, PA 18054; (215) 234-8242.*

## Suppliers

**STANLEY TOOLS/  
GOLDBLATT**  
600 Myrtle St.  
Dept. OHJ  
New Britain, CT 06053  
(203) 225-5111  
Plasterer's tools.

**UNITED STATES GYPSUM**  
P.O. Box 6721  
Dept. OHJ  
Chicago, IL 60680  
(312) 606-4000  
Plaster, bonding agents,  
molding supplies.

**SMOOTH-ON INC.**  
1000 Valley Road  
Dept. OHJ  
Gillette, NJ 07933  
(908) 647-5800  
Rubber molding supplies.

**ABOVE:** The last enrichments I apply are the leaves which ring the canopy.  
**INSET:** Push the plaster-and-glue adhesive into the scarified enrichment.



ADDING A STRUCTURAL SKELETON TO AN ARTS & CRAFTS LANDMARK

# CRAFTSMAN *of* STEEL

*by Nancy  
Strathearn*

Of the 200 house plans published in *The Craftsman*, the 1911 log cabin at Craftsman Farms was Gustav Stickley's pet project and ultimately his home.

**A**T FIRST, THE RESTORATION PLANS for Craftsman Farms were not overly complicated. Phase One called for reconditioning the terra-cotta "shingle" roof, which was leaking badly, and structural repair of the sagging kitchen roof. Yet anyone who has worked on old houses knows no project is as simple as it appears. Gustav Stickley's ultimate log cabin and former home soon pre-

sented its own version of the "mushroom factor." As the architectural firm Holt Morgan Russell investigated the building for a set of drawings, they discovered a major structural problem.

The roofs of the two shed dormers on the main building were supported in a precarious way. Instead of resting on load-bearing walls, their weight bore on the log beams carrying the second floor, and at



nearly the midpoints of the 13' span over the porch and dining room (see drawing below). Moreover, many of these joists had been mortised out by the electrician who installed the original ceiling fixtures — right at the log bottoms where the greatest stresses occur. After 80 years of shouldering a very heavy tile roof and many winters of snow, one log beam had developed a dangerous stress fracture. The fear was that the remaining logs would soon follow suit.

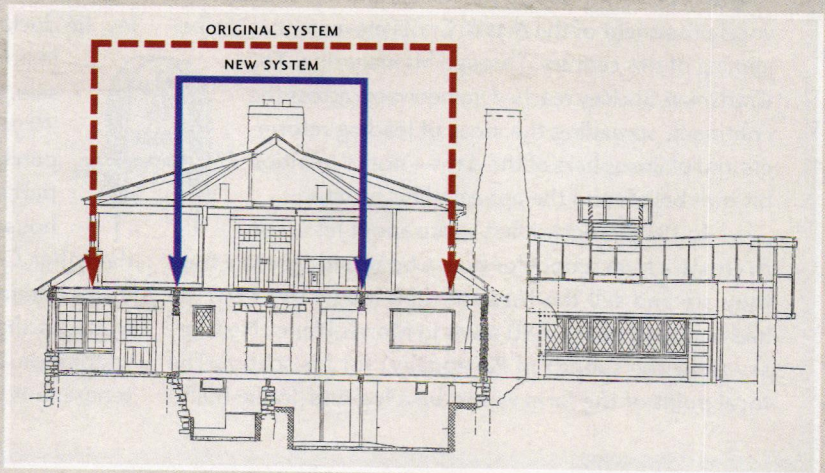
Faced with this new information, the roof restoration project soon grew in scope to correct the two structural problems — the sagging kitchen roof and the ill-supported dormers. The Township trustees of Craftsman Farms considered temporary supports, new visible columns in the wonderfully open downstairs rooms, and several structural materials. After debating the merits of each with state officials, the trustees elected a solution that was complicated to construct and time-consuming to execute, but would be a hidden and permanent solution.

Here's how we added a steel skeleton in the concealed parts of the building.

### I. In the Kitchen

ELECTRICAL WORKERS WERE ALSO PARTLY to blame for the deep bellies in each side of the kitchen roof. Over the years they had inserted junction boxes at numerous spots, weakening the rafters so they sank uniformly

**A survey showed the dormers suspended by log beams (red); new steel placed the load over existing walls (blue).**





**ABOVE:** The kitchen rafters had spread worst at the middle of the roof — so much so that they affected how the roof tiles drained. Sistering with 3 x 8 lumber reinforced each rafter with identical material, but was not intended to correct the sag. **INSET:** The sisters stopped short of the original rafter tails, which were restored with epoxy fillers.

in two large depressions. The failing rafters only exacerbated the sagging roof ridge. Here the cross ties had been placed too high in the 1911 construction (to provide for a lovely lofty ceiling in the large kitchen, perhaps), and they could not stop the rafters from spreading at the eaves.

To stabilize the depressions, the contractors chose to sister each of the damaged rafters with two new 3x8s. In sistering, identical members are attached to either side of

a weak rafter or floor joist to increase its strength. Since the original shingle tiles had been carefully removed as part of the reroofing, it was easy and logical to take up the decking in order to get at the rafters. (This also preserved the ceiling finish in the kitchen). Fitting the sisters was simple too because the original rafters did not extend beyond the wall plate, due to the exposed Arts & Crafts-style eaves. The sisters were nailed to the rafters in a staggered pattern using 6" spikes.

The ridge sag, however, required shifting to another material. By cutting a 4' square opening in the wood-frame gable end of the kitchen, the contractors gained access to the small "attic" crawlspace above the ceiling. Attaching a chain hoist to the ridge beam, they were able to lift the custom-made, steel beam off a truck and into the gable opening. Though this single piece of steel weighed in at about 1,100 lbs. for the 30' span, materials such as glue-laminated beams and engineered lumber would have been too massive to work with.

The beam had to support not only the roof ridge, but its own weight, so solid an-



## The Craftsman Saga

**G**USTAV STICKLEY IS BEST KNOWN AS A MANUFACTURER of plain, durable furniture that is often called "mission style" today. Yet, he was also a prominent and vocal proponent of the Arts & Crafts movement at the beginning of this century. Through his magazine, *The Craftsman*, Stickley reached homeowners across the continent, spreading the ideas of leading reformers and philosophers of the day — not to mention his own beliefs and the appeal of his furniture.

In 1908, Stickley first wrote about his vision to create a farm school for boys who would raise the food they ate and sell the fruits of their labors. By 1910, he had acquired nearly 650 acres in Morris Plains, New Jersey (now the suburb of Parsippany) for his school. The focal point of the farm was to be a log-and-frame build-

ing, described in *The Craftsman* as a clubhouse and communal meal hall. However, by 1911, the cabin's floor plan had been altered to become Stickley's family home.

The plans for the school were never realized. Changing tastes and extended business ventures overtook Stickley; he declared bankruptcy in 1915. Two years later he lost Craftsman Farms as well. After a bankruptcy sale, the property remained in the same family for 70 years until the Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills purchased what remained of the farm — a 26-acre parcel including seven buildings and the main house — to stop a planned development. Shortly thereafter, Craftsman Farms was designated a National Historic Landmark. Today the Craftsman Farms Foundation manages the main house as a museum and oversees its restoration. Stickley left Craftsman Farms after a too-brief tenure, but visitors still feel his hand in its creation.







chors were critical. On gable side, the kitchen ended in a stone wall — a substantial and welcome point on which to pour a two-foot-high concrete footing. Opposite this, the kitchen met the main building in a rubble-stone chimney. “Normally you can’t bear on a chimney,” notes architect Robert Russell, “but at 6’ by 10’ this was no ordinary chimney.” The contractors cut a T-shaped slot in the masonry to receive a hanging plate. The plate was bedded to

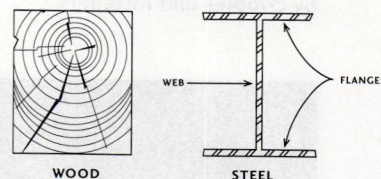
**TOP PHOTO:** Pipes made quick work of rolling the 30’ steel beam into the kitchen attic. A wood beam would have been impractical in this confined space. **INSET:** Behind the custom-fabricated plate is a horizontal shelf cut and grouted into the massive chimney so that it can support the steel.

## Why Steel?

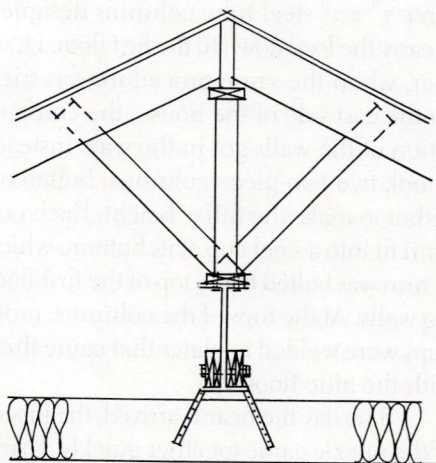
Structural steel is the material of choice for spanning large areas. The metal alone is roughly 15 times stronger than wood and 20 times more resistant to deflection (bending). A steel beam is also a more efficient shape than a wood beam. In a steel

the irregular surface with high-strength, non-shrink grout, so that it bore fully on the enormous chimney. After hoisting and bolting the steel into place, a small cripple stud wall between the top of the steel and the bottom of the existing ridge board accommodated the sag.

Once installed, the new steel beam effectively took over support of the roof and relieved the sagging ridge of its weight. When the deck was closed up and the roof retiled, the sag had not disappeared, but it was only an eccentricity — not an ongoing problem. This portion of the job took five steel men and about a day of work — just an opening act for what was to come.



I-beam, H-beam, or wide-flange beam, it’s the top and bottom flanges that are put in tension and compression when under load; the center web merely holds them together. In a wood beam, the top and bottom surfaces work the same as flanges, but nearly 50% of material does nothing except add weight and volume.



On top of the beam, braces at each rafter provide support up to the old ridge. Structural metal connectors below the beam attach to the collar ties and add more support by “hanging” the rafters.

## II. The Unmoored Dormers

CORRECTING THE DORMER PROBLEM ON the main house was a lot more complex. The challenge was to transfer their support to some load-bearing portion of the first floor. The log walls on either side of the living room were perfect candidates since



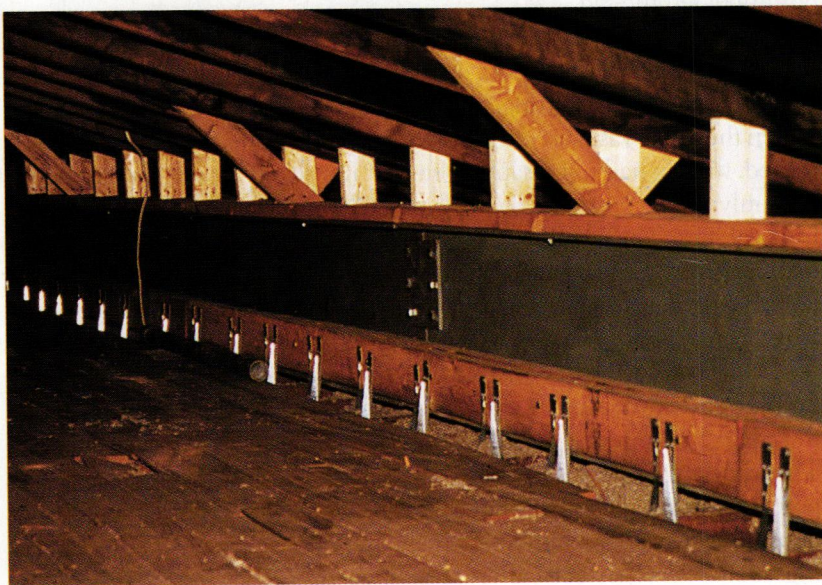
**ABOVE:** An attic vent window (above worker in photo) provides a way into the main building for the dormer steel. **INSET:** More pipes position the steel once inside. **BELOW:** Now in place, one two-piece dormer beam is connected to the existing framing by cripples and fasteners.

both rested on stone walls in the basement. The contractors started in the second floor of the main building. On the west side, they broke through two different frame walls, carefully removing and saving each layer of historic finish for reinstallation. This doesn't sound like a big deal until you grasp the turn-of-the-century products Stickley chose for his home. The walls were 1x6 tongue-and-groove planks laid di-

agonally on both sides of the studding. Over these were 3/4" x 44" blocks of cardboardlike material — possibly Upson Board. The final covering was grass cloth in some bedrooms, canvas cloth in others, and ceramic tiles in one of the bathrooms.

The carpenters opened these walls to create chases, voids no wider than the 14" between studs and long enough to receive three 3" x 3" steel tube columns designed to carry the load down to the first floor. However, when the same procedure was tried on the east side of the house, the configuration of the walls got in the way. Instead, it took two two-piece columns, bolted together to make the full 9' height. Each column fit into a steel cup at its bottom, which in turn was bolted to the top of the first-floor log walls. At the tops of the columns, more cups were welded to plates that came flush with the attic floor.

The day the beams arrived, the pieces of the puzzle came together quickly. Using a small vent window as access through the stone gable wall, the contractors slid four sections of steel beam into the attic, rolling them into position over the column tops at either side of the space. When the sections



were bolted together, they formed two 35' beams that ran the length of the attic.

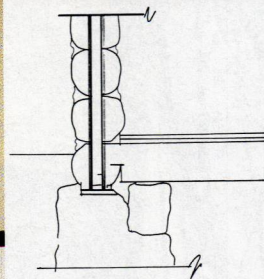
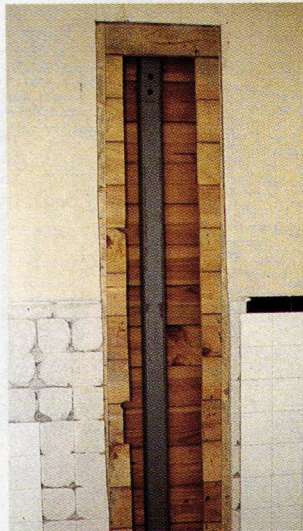
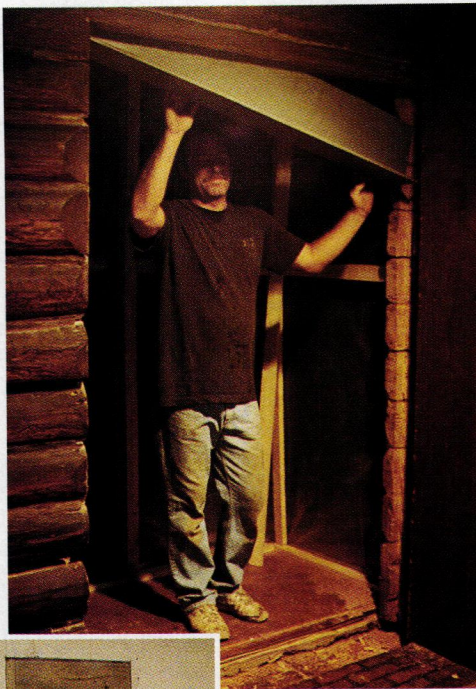
The idea, of course, was to shift the weight of the dormer roofs onto the steel beams. The beams, in turn, were bolted to the steel tube columns, which stood on top of log walls, which rested on thick stone foundation walls. Cantilever loads were a welcome by-product of the column locations. Since the beams are supported a couple of feet in from each end, the "outboard" loads offset some of the "inboard" loads, and help keep the beam sizes at a minimum.

### III. Portals of Problems

ONE HITCH REMAINED. THE EAST LOG WALL between the porch and the living room is punctured by two large doorways — as luck would have it, directly beneath the new tube columns. Since these openings left only two "header" logs to support the columns, rather than the complete wall of 17 logs, the support system had to be further engineered around the doorways. The solution turned out to be more tube columns.

After removing the doorway frames and casings, the contractors proceeded to dig out chases in the log butts on both sides of each opening and the header logs above. As frightening to see as it sounds, they worked deftly with chain saws and circular saws to groove the logs, finishing up with chisels. When vertical tubes on either side were bolted to flanged lintel plates inserted in the headers, they formed steel portals set inside the logs. After the door frames were set back in the openings, none of the reinforcement could be seen.


The last structural step took place back in the attic. After the steel was in place, the carpenters installed blocking and cripple studs between the top of the steel and the dormer rafters, thereby relieving much of the load from the porch and dining room log joists. The second-floor walls were closed up using the original materials, so that it is almost impossible to detect where the chases are. The final numbers on this work are hard to separate from the other phases of the restoration, but the total steel project was estimated to



cost \$34,886. As for manpower, there were five steel men who installed the beams; two carpenters

connected the steel to the roof and worked on the chases.

So, using steel reinforcement that can't be seen, we have practically eliminated the chances for structural failure in a house with "honest" but shortsighted construction. The new roof wasn't put to much of a test during this past mild winter, but we feel more secure now that rain won't bring leaks, and we can allow normal visitor traffic again.

Knowing that Stickley designed this house at Craftsman Farms, architect Phil Holt remarks, "As an architect, Stickley was a fine furniture maker." The house is remarkable nonetheless, and restoration of the aesthetic finishes and mechanical systems lays ahead. With some trepidation, we wait to see what new problems will come to light at that time. 

"Secret steel" preserved the historic appearance of the living spaces. Careful channeling of the solid log doorways hid the steel lintels (left) and columns (below right). Tube columns (below left), 3" square and assembled from two pieces, fit within the second-floor stud walls.

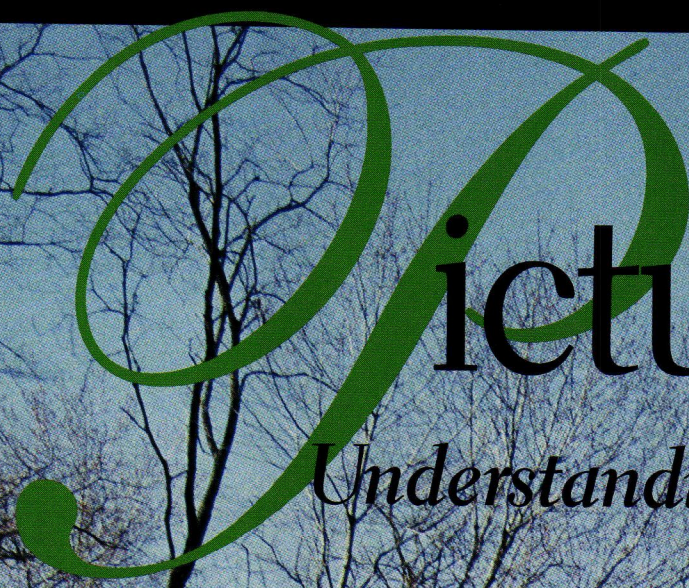
## Adding Steel to Wood

Steel may be strong, but it is not a structural panacea for older wood buildings. Issues such as these must be weighed before reinforcing with steel:

**ACTION OF DISSIMILAR MATERIALS** — Steel and wood respond differently to changes in temperature, moisture, and load. For example, wood bends more than steel, so under changing loads the materials may pull apart where they are joined.

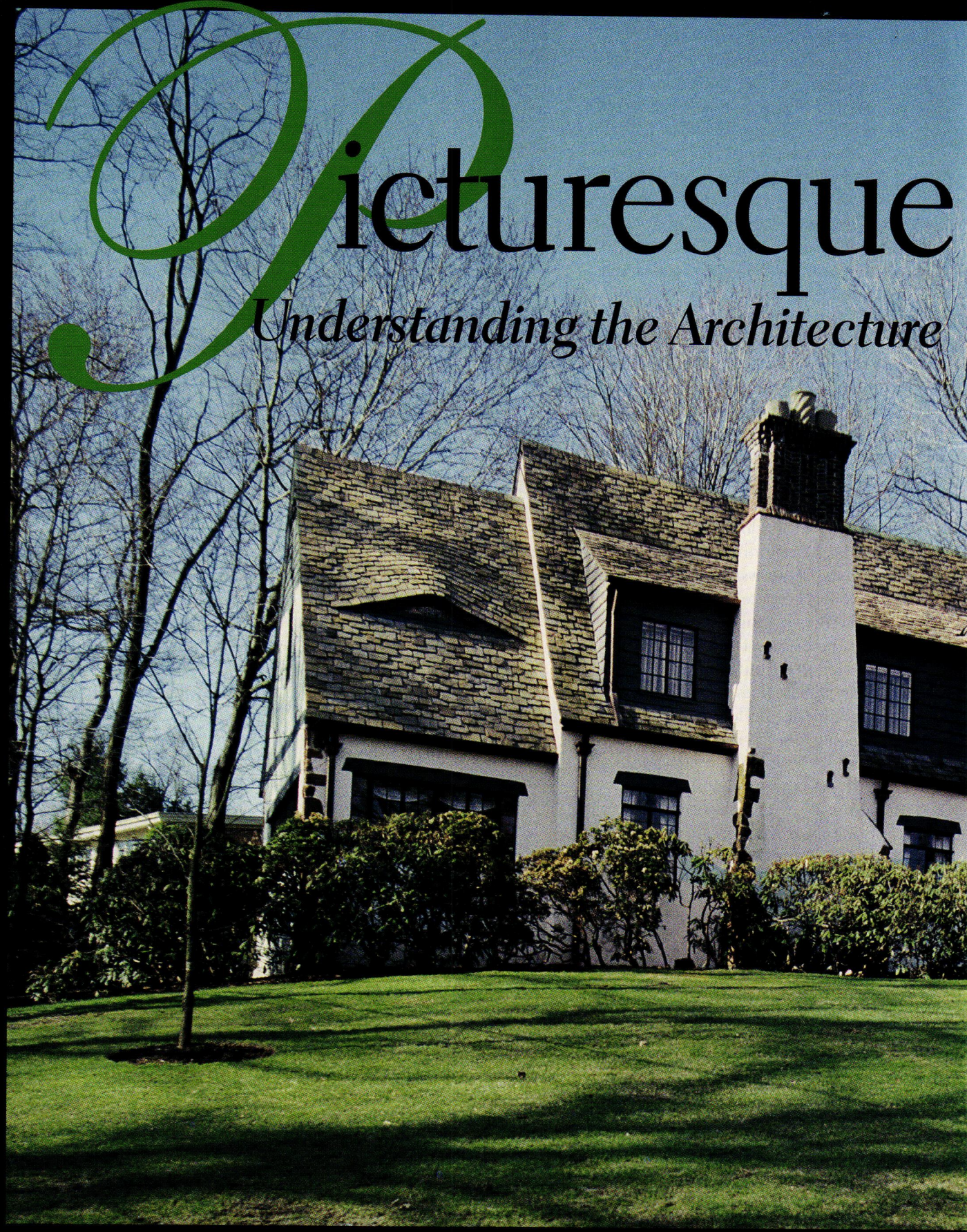
**CONDENSATION** — Indoor climate conditions can cause moisture to condense on steel, especially where there are HVAC systems. Collecting water may damage wood, often at fasteners.

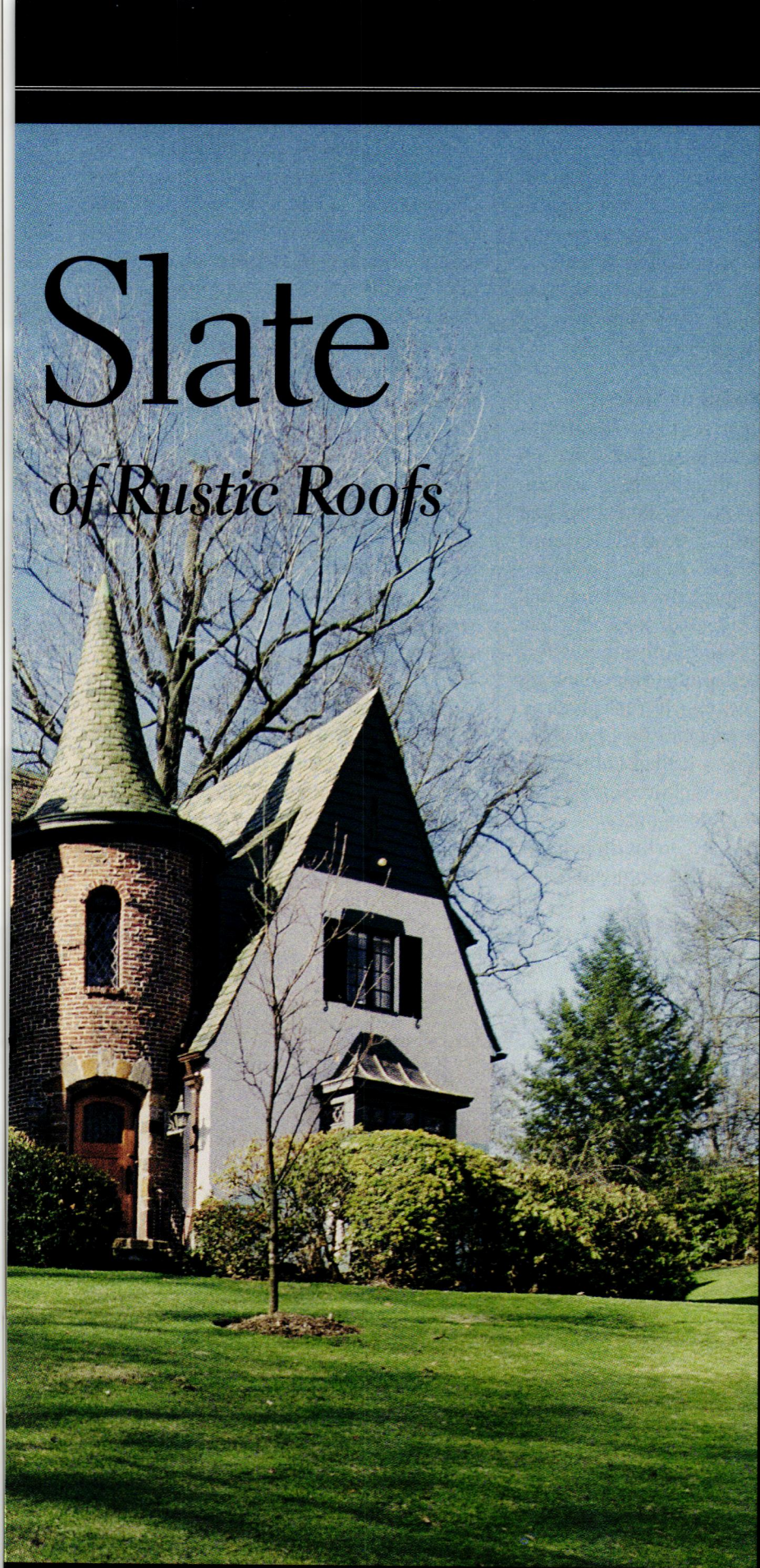
**LOSS OF EVIDENCE** — Particularly in historically significant houses, wood structural systems are examples of early building engineering. Swapping original beams and supports for modern materials can obliterate this record. "Try to use steel as a redundant system rather than as a replacement system," suggests Thomas Visser of the University of Vermont Historic Preservation Program.



# Picturesque

*Understanding the Architecture*





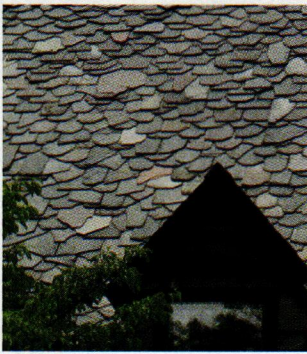
# Slate *of Rustic Roofs*

**T**our any early-20th-century neighborhood and you'll soon notice that

Tudoresque, French Revival, and so-called cottage-style homes are quick to feign an antique, timeworn appearance. Battered walls, sagging ridge lines, pseudo half-timbering, and quaint masonry are only a few of the architects' devices employed for the feel of instant age. You're also bound to note some rugged-looking slate roofs — random colors, thicknesses, and sizes, all in an awkward mix. Were these rustic roofs the work of amateur slaters? No indeed, quite the opposite. ▲ Contrary to what meets the eye, architectural slate roofs, as the industry calls them, were carefully planned by architects, slate companies, and skilled roofers to create a surface that was anything but uniform. Though architectural roofs are still produced by traditional roofers and slate companies today,

**BY J. RANDALL COTTON**

Inspired by Normandy farmhouses, English Cotswold cottages, and perhaps the Hansel & Gretel fairy tale, romantic revival houses of the 1920s and 1930s are skillful combinations of mediaeval features — chief among them deliberately haphazard slate roofs.



**Specifying staggered butts, staggered exposure, and clipped corners can take the textural roof to an extreme level, producing a crazy quilt of slates.**

**Textural roofs scramble slate thicknesses, lengths, widths, and colors in combinations that can be specified for any one of many rustic looks. The effect is most often seen on average slopes; steep roofs and towers tend to look “cut up.”**

many homeowners and craftspeople are unaware of the inventive and cunning specifications that underlie them. If your old house is topped by a rustic slate roof, chances are it's original and in service close to 70 years. For its best upkeep and restoration, here's what you'll need to know about how these deceptively primitive, but delightfully eccentric roofs, were put together.

### The Styles of Slate

THE ARCHITECTURAL SLATE OF THE EARLY-20th century represented quite a shift in effect from roofing in the preceding Victorian era. Not that the Victorians didn't turn their flat, smooth, regular, and neatly trimmed slate to decorative uses. In fact, the golden age of the polychrome, patterned slate roof blossomed in the latter half of the 19th century. Combining contrasting colors with a variety of neat, overlapping, fancy-cut butts created striking geometric roof patterns. These diamond, hexagonal, wavy, fish-scale, or staggered designs — called imbrication — were favorites on Gothic Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne houses.

Architectural slate, on the other hand, based its look on being random-width and

heavily textured. One quarry promised slates “so intermingled and weathered that a newly laid roof has all the aged appearance that is characteristic of the roofs on the ancient castles and homes in England.” Another described architectural slates as having “random lengths and widths, and promiscuous thicknesses.” Evocative trade names such as Old English Cleft, Thatchslate, Olde Stonesfield, Rough Cleft, Tudor Stone, Antique, and Rustic Mohawk hammered home the intent for a buying public.

If a Victorian-era patterned slate roof can be compared to the complex and crisp delineation of a computer-generated drawing, then the architectural slate roofs of post-Victorian homes resemble a freehand sketch: rough at the edges, coarse, and seemingly unrefined, but also enchanting and romantic.

### Textural Slate Roofs

ESSENTIAL TO THE LOOK OF ANY SLATE ROOF is the material itself. Standard slates are uniform in size, color, and thickness (commonly  $\frac{3}{16}$ "); they also have a smooth surface. Architectural slates vary in some or all of these characteristics within a single roof. For re-





LEFT: Graduated roofs reduce the slate thickness as the courses approach the ridge. BELOW: Slates over 1" at the butt often begin the graduated roof.



vival-style roofs there are two types: textural slate and graduated slate.

According to *Slate Roofs*, the 1926 publication still considered the slater's "bible," textural slates are "usually of rougher texture than the Standard, with uneven tails or butts and with variations of thickness or size." Textural slates were — and still are — quarried in thicknesses from  $\frac{3}{16}$ " to  $\frac{3}{8}$ ", and lengths from 12" to 20". Variations in width, length, and thickness dimensions are scattered evenly throughout the roof, from eave to ridge, often matching one of the following schemes:

- ▶ Slate length is constant, thickness and width vary
- ▶ Slate thickness is constant, length and exposure vary
- ▶ Slate width is constant, length and thickness vary

A textural slate roof will have a range of colors scattered evenly across the surface, although a single color predominates. For example, one common mix is a background blue-black slate, with lesser numbers of greys, black-greys, and occasional purples. Period advertising described the overall effect as "a beautiful tapestry." Mixing in a sampling of buff, bronze, or opal freak slates (see page 55) resulted in a roof re-

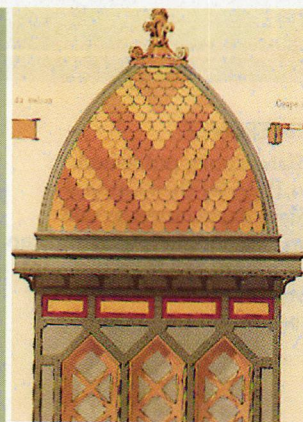
sembling "autumn foliage."

Many slate companies offered textural slate in several standard combinations. However, slate could also be ordered by specifying each of the various parameters for a comparatively unique roof. Before you begin to restore or replicate a textural slate roof, carefully study and record its features so the slate supplier can tell if it is one of the stan-

## Stats on Slate

Slate is a metamorphic rock that has been transformed from shale by enormous underground forces of heat and pressure. One of slate's chief characteristics is its ability to split into thin sheets along natural cleft lines. It's durable and resistant to acids as well, so it's the basis for a long tradition as a roofing material. However, slate is also very attractive, with a color range of blacks, dark greys, reds, purples, and greens.

The first slate quarry in North America is thought to have been at Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania, which produced roofing as early as the mid-1700s. The heyday of slate production was from the mid-1800s to the 1930s when quarries in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Georgia produced millions of slates for countless roofs.



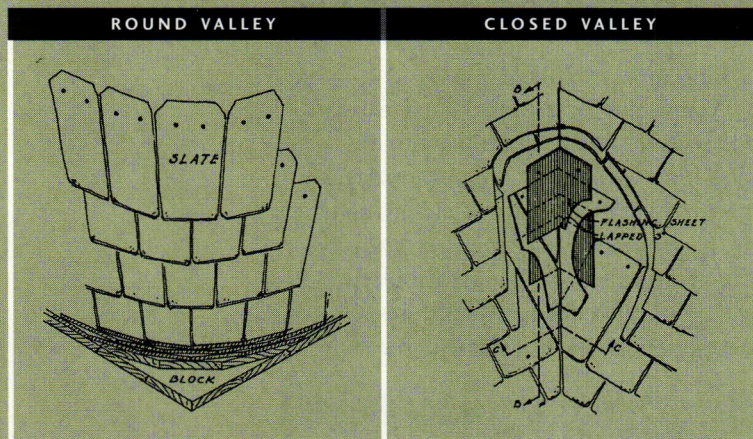
Victorians coveted slate's capability for crisp patterns and brought it to new prominence.

## Slate in the Valley

A valley is the depressed angle formed where two roof slopes meet. Most garden variety slate and shingle roofs are laid with open valleys — that is, the sheet metal flashing is exposed and the shingles or slates lap over on either side. Architectural slate roofs, however, use more picturesque closed or round valleys to enhance their fluid irregularity. In a closed valley, the slate is worked tightly across the angle, interweaving pieces of metal as flashing.

The round valley is perhaps the most appropriate for textural and graduated slate roofs. It creates a pleasing, nearly seamless, curved transition between the two intersecting roof slopes. The drawback to a round valley is its complexity. In order to construct a round valley, the roof has to be framed and decked so that it creates the general dished contour.

One method often used is a series of 3" nailing blocks, cut to fit the valley curvature and spaced 20" to 30" apart. Tapered strips,  $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 3", are then laid lengthwise in the valley and nailed to the blocks — no work for amateur or inexperienced roofers. The slate used in round valleys is tapered at the edges to fit the radius of the valley, and must be 4" longer than the slates used in the corresponding courses on the roof.



### REFERENCE

*Slate Roofs*, published in 1926 by the National Slate Association, is still an excellent resource and can be purchased from Vermont Structural Slate Company (see Suppliers, page 55).

dards (photos always help). Specifications will also spell out the following:

**THICKNESS** — Typically  $\frac{3}{16}$ " to  $\frac{3}{8}$ ", but you may also state the percentages of thickness. For example, 10% of 1" thickness, 15% of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 20% of  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", and so on.

**COLOR** — Predominating color, color mixture, permanent or weathering.

**GRADE** — Today slate is graded as S1 (a serviceable life of 75 to 100 years), S2 (40 to 75 years), or S3 (20 to 40 years).

### Graduated Slate Roofs

AS IF A TEXTURAL SLATE ROOF, WITH ALL ITS mixes of thickness, width, length, and color, weren't creative enough, the graduated slate roof adds another twist to the same mate-

rials. In these roofs, the longest and thickest slates are placed at the eaves and they "gradually diminish in size and thickness until the ridges are reached," according to *Slate Roofs*. Graduated roofs emulate medieval European slate roofs, which used slates that were quarried without standardizing size or thickness.

As with textural slate, the slate company would provide graduated slate in the necessary mix of thicknesses, widths, lengths, and colors. Typical thicknesses ranged from a modest  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to a beefy  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " — even behemoths 2" were sometimes used. Lengths ran from 12" to 24". Widths and colors were random but, again, a predominant "field" color was usually specified.

The chief characteristic of a graduated roof, however, was the way the slates diminished in size up the roof. Exposure might be  $10\frac{1}{2}$ " at the eave, and shrink to only  $5\frac{1}{2}$ " at the ridge. Occasional slates of varying thicknesses in the same course added more spice to an already irregular roof. Slate thicknesses might even be graduated side to side. Important specifications for a graduated roof are as follows:

**THICKNESS** — The variation in inches from eave to ridge has to be set. Typically, thicknesses are also intermingled in the various courses, with the heavier and thicker slates concentrated in the lower courses and the thinner slates at the ridge.

**LAYOUT** — Traditionally, quarries supplied a detailed roof layout for the job, to be approved by the architect, before the slate order was put together.

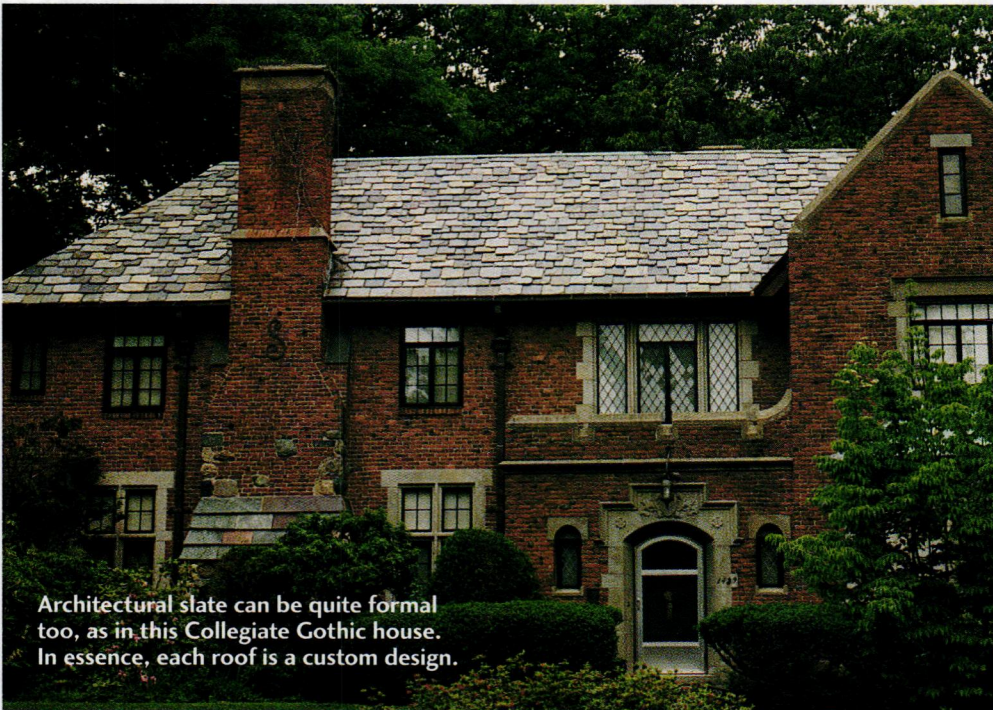
**LENGTH** — The graduation of the exposure from eave to ridge must be determined, including a standard 3" head lap.

### Restoring and Replacing Architectural Slate Roofs

WHEN A TEXTURAL OR GRADUATED ROOF needs to be repaired or replaced, their complexity almost demands the services of an experienced slater, and probably an architect familiar with these roofs. Still, there's a lot of educated restorers can do toward maintaining the health of their slate roofs.

**WATCH THE SLATE** — Although slate is very long-lasting, it will eventually deteriorate. Signs of failing slate are cracks, exfoliation, or scaling along the cleavage planes.





Architectural slate can be quite formal too, as in this Collegiate Gothic house. In essence, each roof is a custom design.

Lightly tap suspect slate with a mallet: if it gives a dull thud, the slate's probably shot. **WATCH THE UNDERLAYMENT** — It's common to replace roofing felt in slate roof restoration. Felt underlayment not only provides a temporary weather shield before the slate is laid, it cushions the slate

## Slate Colors

Slate is quarried in a range of colors from black to reds and greens. Though slate is naturally grey, the presence of minerals increases the palette — for example, iron oxide for red, or chlorite for green. Two types of slate are available: “unfading,” which will remain colorfast, and “weathering,” which fades with time. Because it adds to an aged look, weathering slate is common in architectural slate roofs. The basic slate colors are: black; blue-black; dark, light, and silver greys; blue-grey; light and dark purple; mottled purple and green; green and grey-green; red; and variegated purple.

Also available are freaks, which were often interspersed in architectural slate roofs. Freaks, sometimes called rustics, are usually splotched with brown tones, such as buff, bronze, or opal.

and adds protection against driving rain and snow. Use at least 30 lb. asphalt-saturated rag felt for slate up to 1" thick; 50 lb. felt for slate over 1" thick.

**WATCH THE FASTENERS** — Original iron nails are the Achilles' heels of older slate roofs. When they rust away, slates that are sound in other respects can fall out and start leaks. Nowadays, copper or stainless steel nails are preferred, especially those with ringed shanks that resist pull-out (zinc-coated steel and brass nails are also used). Slate nail length should be two times the thickness of the slate plus one inch.

**RECYCLE SLATE** — A general rule of thumb says that when 20% of the slates in a roof are failing, it's probably more economical to replace the entire roof. However, bear in mind that many old slates may be salvageable for future use. This is especially true for architectural slate. Their random dimensions and colors make them difficult to duplicate with stock replacements. In any event, document the old roof with photos and a written description to aid slate companies in matching replacement slates.

Like so many early-20th-century roofs, architectural slate is a character-defining feature that is expensive to duplicate today. Understanding how their mock-medieval effects work will keep them on old houses well into the 21st century.

## Suppliers

**DURABLE SLATE CO.**  
1050 N. Fourth St.  
Dept. OHJ  
Columbus, OH 43201  
(800) 666-7445

**EVERGREEN SLATE CO., INC.**  
68 Potter Ave.  
P.O. Box 248, Dept. OHJ  
Granville, NY 12832-0248  
(518) 642-2530

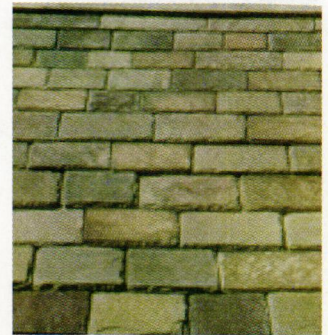
**NEW ENGLAND SLATE CO.**  
Burr Pond Road  
Dept. OHJ  
Sudbury, VT 05733  
(802) 247-8809

**NEWFOUNDLAND SLATE, INC.**  
8800 Sheppard Ave. E  
Dept. OHJ  
Scarborough, ON M1B5R4  
(416) 281-8181

**RISING AND NELSON  
SLATE CO.**  
Main St.  
P.O. Box 98, Dept. OHJ  
West Pawlet, VT 05775  
(802) 645-0150

**STRUCTURAL SLATE CO.**  
222 E. Main St.  
P.O. Box 187, Dept. OHJ  
Pen Argyl, PA 18072  
(215) 863-4141

**VERMONT STRUCTURAL  
SLATE CO., INC.**  
3 Prospect St.  
P.O. Box 98, Dept. OHJ  
Fair Haven, VT 05743  
(802) 265-4933



“Old English No. 12,” was just one standard slate combination used in the 1920s.

# CONSTRUCTION

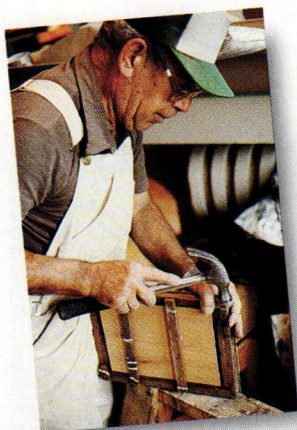
— AN OHJ REPORT —

A creative alternative to the general contractor keeps costs down and lets old-house owners stay more involved in their large construction projects. If disputes arise, though, the homeowner could be stuck with big headaches.

By Josh Garskof

# MANAGEMENT

**ABOVE:** Construction managers oversee the tradespeople but do not hire them. **BELOW:** Even for small-scale work, old houses often require multiple specialists.



**W**HEN SUZANNE O'CONNELL AND TOM Christopher decided to remodel the kitchen in their old Connecticut Cape, they hoped to keep their role minimal. They'd find a good general contractor and write the check. But then they started planning counter layouts and cabinet designs and realized they needed to be involved and to make decisions as the work progressed.

Problem was, the contractors who came to see the job wanted to define the scope of the work and set a price up front, leaving less flexibility than the couple envisioned. The one person who was willing to work on their terms is not a contractor. He is a construction manager — a consultant who oversees the job while the homeowners hire the tradespeople themselves.

## Professional Managers

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT HAS BECOME an alternative to general contracting for big

old-house projects. It's cheaper and it allows owners to be their own general contractors, while keeping a set of professional eyes on the job. But the arrangement also has potential pitfalls that can get homeowners in over their heads.

Traditionally, when old-house owners need professional help, they hire a *general contractor* for a total package price. The general contractor pays a crew of carpenters and laborers, hires independent *subcontractors* for specialized work (such as mechanical services), and buys materials.

*Construction managers*, however, do not hire subcontractors or buy materials. They are consultants to the homeowners who become the general contractor, signing *prime contracts* with each company that works on the job. The construction manager typically analyzes cost, recommends tradespeople, schedules the workflow, and oversees the project. Some managers also perform general carpentry; others specialize in

**“Construction management is like ordering a la carte. You pick your entrée, side dishes, appetizer, and dessert. General contracting is like ordering the special.”**

— MARK BRADY, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

searching out restoration materials or researching old houses. (Sometimes, as we'll discuss later, homeowners hire both a construction manager and a general contractor.)

“Construction management is like ordering a la carte,” says Mark Brady, the Middletown, Connecticut, construction manager Tom and Suzanne hired. “You pick your entrée, side dishes, appetizer, and dessert. General contracting is like ordering the special.”

The system began in the late 1970s in the commercial construction sector, according to Jerry Householder, Chairman of the Department of Construction Management (the business of contracting) at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Construction management peaked with the soaring interest rates of the early 1980s. Project owners wanted fast-track construction. The model allowed enough flexibility so work could begin before all the blueprints were finished, Householder says.

While the construction management boom has leveled off in the commercial sector, it appears to be growing in residential restoration and remodeling.

### Finances and Flexibility

SMALL RESTORATION AND REMODELING COMPANIES see real economic benefits to construction management. As general contractors, they must shuffle resources to pay subcontractors and their own crews before they bill for the work. It may not be until the final payments on a job that the general contractor earns any money. If the deal comes unglued, these checks may never come.

“Little contractors are not banks,” says Brady. “So why should they be in the business of extending credit?”

As construction managers, they don't have to finance materials or subcontractors' expenses. The homeowner pays each company directly, so the most the manager can lose is payment for their own time. Plus, if the homeowner reneges on payments for a tradesperson's work, the short-changed party will sue the homeowner, not the construction manager. If, however, subcontractors don't get paid, they sue the general con-

tractors, who may be liable even when the owner fails to pay them.

Why would a homeowner agree to the construction management framework? First and foremost, you can expect to pay less for the project with a construction manager than with a general contractor.

The company is not marking up subcontractors' work or materials. Because it is not taking on the risk of prepaying for, or guaranteeing, others' work, it typically does not require a large sum up front. The manager simply gets paid for the management service — an hourly rate, a flat fee, or a percentage of the project cost.

“Construction management is a particularly good model for restoration work,” says Householder. “In an old house we don't know what we're going to run into until we open up the walls. The model is flexible enough to handle the unforeseen.”

Beyond that, construction management sets the stage for more control and involvement by homeowners. They may handle portions of the work themselves — most



**New construction on old houses requires many trades and someone to orchestrate the job.**

### J O B G L O S S A R Y

- ▶ **BASIC SERVICES:** The five standard elements of an architect's contract: schematic design, design development, construction documents, bidding or negotiation, and contract administration.
- ▶ **CALL BACKS:** A tradesperson's return visits to a job after completion to fix failing work or materials.
- ▶ **CHANGE ORDERS:** Amendments to a contract for a change in the work.
- ▶ **CONSTRUCTION MANAGER (CM):** A consultant who assists the homeowner with issues that may include cost analysis, scheduling, contract negotiations, purchasing of materials, and overall project coordination.
- ▶ **GENERAL CONTRACTOR (GC):** A company responsible for carrying out the

construction project — labor, subcontractors, and materials — as defined by the agreement.

- ▶ **LUMP-SUM:** A price that specifies a total, or an estimated total, for specific work.

- ▶ **PRIME CONTRACTOR:** A company that contracts directly with the homeowner.

- ▶ **PUNCH LIST:** A list of unfinished or unsatisfactory work that must be completed before final payment.

- ▶ **SUBCONTRACTOR:** A company that contracts with the general contractor for a portion of the work.

- ▶ **TIME-AND-MATERIALS:** A flexible billing arrangement based on hours spent and items purchased, instead of a flat fee.

**“Is the homeowner, who’s got a busy life doing something else, going to save that much money by taking the time from their work to learn the construction trade?”**

— PAUL WINANS, OAKLAND, CALIF.



**ABOVE:** Many construction managers handle the carpentry work themselves. **BELOW:** The general contractor hires tradespeople and purchases materials (fig.1). The construction manager oversees the job, which is contracted by the homeowner (fig.2).

commonly demolition and painting. Meanwhile, they can watch what’s going on and make decisions along the way. The construction manager is liaison between owners and tradespeople.

“Because of Mark’s diplomacy as a construction manager, we got what we wanted,” says Christopher. “For example, we decided we wanted a peninsula in the kitchen, but the cabinetmaker thought it would be too crowded. So Mark cut a mock peninsula from plywood and we left it there while the work progressed, adjusting it until it was right.” Once they proved that it worked, the cabinetmaker built it.

### The Risk Factor

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT, HOWEVER, is not for everyone. We spoke to homeowners who wouldn’t touch it with a 10’ 2x6 because the construction manager is not totally accountable for the work. What if there is trouble — shoddy work, disappearing tradespeople, or *change-order* disputes? The homeowners may be on their own. A general contractor, though, guarantees the project, nailing down *punch list* items and handling *call backs* for subcontractors’ work. If not, the legal recourse includes two possible lawsuits: against the tradesperson and against the contractor.

“General contractors are on the hot seat. We’re responsible for, and stand behind, the entire project,” says Christopher Walberg, of Chicago’s Downstate Restorations.

Whether legally accountable or not, construction managers have to maintain their reputations, counters Mitchell. That means managers are careful to recommend reliable tradespeople. They use their clout — influence with the check-writing owner and recommendations on future jobs — to keep them in line.

“My business is based on happy

clients,” says construction manager Jennifer Smith Mitchell, principal of Heritage Restoration, in Bozeman, Montana. “It’s all about word of mouth. I may not be liable, but if the job falls apart, I look bad. You bet I’ll follow through to make sure everything works.”

Homeowner Christopher acknowledges that construction management left him a bit exposed. “But we weren’t looking for the lowest bidders. We wanted quality, reputable, local craftsmen, and that’s who we hired.” These individuals are licensed and insured professionals themselves, he notes.

The best way homeowners can protect themselves when they hire a construction manager is with a well-written contract. It should spell out exactly what the manager’s role and responsibilities will be. Householder recommends showing it to an attorney.

“The construction manager’s contract should make sure the owner doesn’t get left in the lurch,” he says. “It should state that the construction manager is responsible for observing all the work and for overseeing the project as a representative of the owner’s interest.”

### Contractors Wary

LOTS OF GENERAL CONTRACTORS WON’T get involved in construction management at all. This may be in part because the arrangement cuts into their potential earnings (they can charge more as contractors), but it’s also because they feel the structure can be dangerously open-ended.

“Many times, a contractor will suggest construction management if the budget is uncertain or if the homeowners can’t make up their minds,” explains Bruce Curtis, president of Washtenaw Woodwrights, general contractors of Ann Arbor, Michigan. “I feel a lot more secure if the scope of the work is set before it begins.”

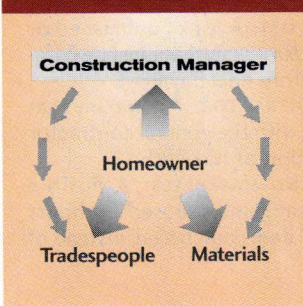
Another potential problem with construction managers, according to Denver architect Doug Walter, is that because they do not hold the checkbook, they have less control of tradespeople than a contractor would.

“Unless the subs are looking to him for their money, it can be difficult for him to ef-

FIG. 1



FIG. 2



fectively manage the project," Walter says. The answer to this, according to Brady, is that the construction manager must sign off on work before the homeowner pays for it.

But some general contractors aren't convinced. Few homeowners have the job-site experience to take on the responsibilities of a general contractor, says Walter.

"Is the homeowner, who's got a busy life doing something else, going to save that much money by taking the time from their work to learn the construction trade?" asks Paul Winans, a general contractor in Oakland, California. "Why not pay someone who's already been through the mill?" Winans Construction makes sure subs are properly insured and handles all tax forms.

So, what if a homeowner wants a general contractor but also wants involvement and flexibility? A good general contractor cooperates too. There are plenty who will let the homeowner bang a few nails or hold the end of a 2x10. Many will even tolerate design changes with a polite smile. And all of this comes — for a price — with the confidence that the entire project is in someone else's hands.

### Hiring Both

SOME HOMEOWNERS — PERHAPS ON THEIR first old-house project or perhaps not a single owner, but a museum building board — need more job oversight than either a general contractor or a construction manager can provide. They can hire both.

The manager, who is top dog in this project hierarchy, acts as the owner's advocate, making sure the specs are met and handling surprises and problems.

"A third party can look at each situation in an unbiased way," says Dave Mathew, a construction manager and architect currently with the Troyer Group in Mishawaka, Indiana. "He's not paid by the contractor and he's not going to be living in the house."

"It's important," adds construction manager John Leeke, "especially on big projects, to have a distinction between the consultant, who is taking an integrated, whole-house approach to problems, and the hands-on workers."

Adding a construction manager's services to a project that will also have a general contractor can tack on 15 to 20 percent to the

## Creative Pricing

Construction managers, and some general contractors, often recommend basing contracts on *time-and-materials*, also called *cost-plus*. In other words, instead of a *lump-sum* bid, the company bills the owner for the hours worked and the materials purchased (including a markup).

For jobs that are not fully outlined when the work starts, the arrangement allows the scope of the work to change without reworking contracts; it makes change orders unnecessary. Meanwhile, the carpenter or electrician doesn't have to guesstimate the cost of the project.

The downside for homeowners is that an unscrupulous contractor can use *time-and-materials* as a license to overcharge. Without a definitive project total, the work can be dragged out and the bill jacked up. The key to an effective *time-and-materials* arrangement is mutual trust.

overall budget. Critics call this a top-heavy team and a waste of money. But Leeke, whose second calling is as an OHJ contributing editor, notes that unforeseen problems are the rule

— not the exception — in old-house work. He says that his investigation, planning, and oversight can save more than they cost.

### Architect as Manager

FOR JOBS WITH BOTH a general contractor and an architect, the architect's *basic services* typically include limited construction management services — about six hours per \$100,000 of work, according to Walter. An additional contract can put the architect, or the architect's staff, in a full-fledged construction management role. This makes sense given that the architect drew up the plans and wrote the specs.

Another option is to offset somewhat the cost of a construction manager by reducing the architect's responsibilities. (One hour of a manager's time comes cheaper than that of an architect's.)

There are lots of ways to set up a construction management job; the unorthodox system remains undefined until outlined by a specific contract.

It's too soon to say whether construction management is a bona fide trend in old-house restoration. It's clear, though, that the flexibility and involvement are just what some homeowners are looking for.



General contractors are legally responsible for all work on the project; construction managers are not.

# CUT NAILS

## THE STRIKING FACTS ABOUT

by Gordon Bock

**I** CHANCES ARE YOU'VE SEEN THEM IF YOU'VE EVER PULLED apart pieces of an old house. They're spiky and toothlike, with sharp edges but squared-off tips. Though they belong to an earlier generation of carpenters, they're still called "common." They're nails — cut nails, to be specific.

RUNNING FROM THE 1790S to the 1880s, the cut nail era is a bridge between the age of the handmade wrought nail and today's mass-produced wire nail reign. Cut nails were machine-made, uniform, and cheap, and they quickly became linchpins in the move away from labor-intensive construction, such as timber-framing and split-lath plaster. Far from footnotes, cut nails continue to be made in modern and traditional shapes that are practical for old-house restoration work. Moreover, historic cut nails can be surprising clues for shedding light on the past of old houses once you understand their finer points.

One way to see how important cut nails are is to look at nails in general over 300 years of North American housebuilding.

**HANDWROUGHT NAILS** — Nail making was part of the blacksmith's art until the end of the 18th century, and a well-organized trade in preindustrial England. Handwrought

nails were sold at so many pence per hundred — the origin of the "penny system" of grading. Until the Revolution, colonial Americans were big importers.

Despite their cost and scarcity, carpenters and cabinetmakers continued to use wrought nails well after they were obsolete because they could be clinched. Since the iron fibers ran parallel to the length of the bar, the nails bent without breaking and were ideal for, say, locking together the parts of a board-and-batten door.

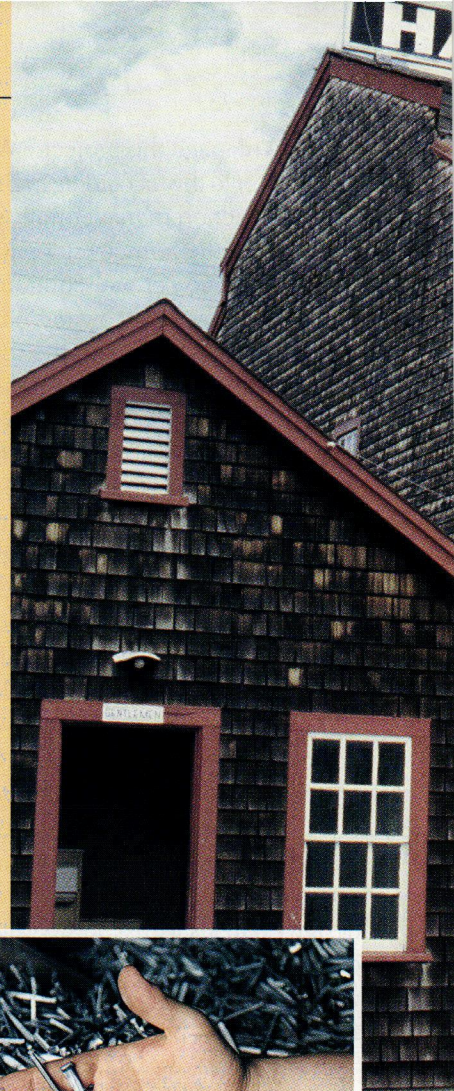
**WIRE NAILS** — The modern, mass-produced wire nail became common on this continent in the 1880s. The first machines in the 1850s and 1860s were capable of only small, light nails for installing decorative hardware or making cigar boxes. Once the Bessemer process made steel plentiful, wire nail pro-



Cut nails have some fasten-ating advantages over other nails:

- ▶ Blunt points punch through the wood fibers; wire nails pry — more likely to cause splitting.
- ▶ Sharp corners continue cutting as the nail moves.
- ▶ Tapered edges wedge the nail in the wood, compressing the fibers so they don't shrink and release the nail.
- ▶ Flat sides provide a large gripping surface.

Cut nails carry on for special purposes, such as nailing furring to masonry, installing flooring, timber construction, and restoration work.



RDENED STEEL NAILS



duction advanced quickly into all areas of construction. In 1893, the wire nail drove past the cut nail in output and has not been surpassed.

**CUT NAILS** —Cut nails stand apart from wrought or wire nails because they are sheared (cut) from iron or steel plate (see drawing, page 63). This process gives them square edges like a wrought nail, but only two tapered sides and a blunt point. Cut nail use did not die out instantly at the end of the last century, or without a fight. In the carpentry trade, the tug-of-war with wire nails raged for a good 20 years. “The relative value of these two kinds of nails,” editorialized

*Carpenter & Builder* magazine in 1894, “is a matter on which builders are far from being satisfied.”

Researchers sometimes use cut nails (and other early nails) as archaeological evidence of age or alterations in an old house. As the technology for manufacturing cut nails improved, the nails themselves changed in subtle ways that correspond to general dates (see timeline, page 62). Dr. Henry C. Mercer was the first to recognize the value of historic nails for dating house changes in his 1923 monograph “The Dating of Old Houses.”

Nail dating is a soft science, but quite revealing if the interpretation is kept within limits.

**Among the cranberry bogs that lead to the Cape Cod peninsula stands the Tremont Nail Company factory, the oldest manufacturer of nails in North America.**

Much like patent dates on hardware, you can't rely on nail evidence as precise benchmarks. It's viable only for “post-dating,” in other words, assuming the structure is no older than the nails. Local history (such as when railroads were available to bring new products) should be considered too. Compare nail samples from several parts of the building before drawing any conclusions. In fact, just finding similarities or differences in the nails can tell a story.

# NAILS UP TO NOW

Nails have seen many changes in their evolution from wrought to wire, but the basic shapes and eras below are good for general dating.



## 1880 — Present

Wire nails are made from steel wire by gripping the end to form a head (the source of the tooth marks in the upper shank), and then clipping off the nail to form a point.



## 1830 — Present

Nail taper is produced exclusively by flipping the strip; heads are machine-made without deforming the shank.


Metal is now rolled so iron fibers run parallel to the length of the nail, making them stronger.




## 1815 — 1830

Early machine-made heads appear on both the above types of cut nails. The machine leaves distinctive “hips” in the nail where it grabs the shank to form the head.

## 1810 — 1820

The taper is produced by flipping the strip for each nail, a method that leaves shear burrs on same-side edges.  Heads are still hand-hammered.

## 1790 — 1820

The earliest cut nails were made on machines akin to simple cutters, slicing nails from the same side of an iron strip. The operator shifted the strip side-to-side in order to give the nail taper and save iron. This process  leaves distinctive shear burrs on diagonal edges. Heads were added later by hand-hammering. Iron fibers ran across the length of the nail.



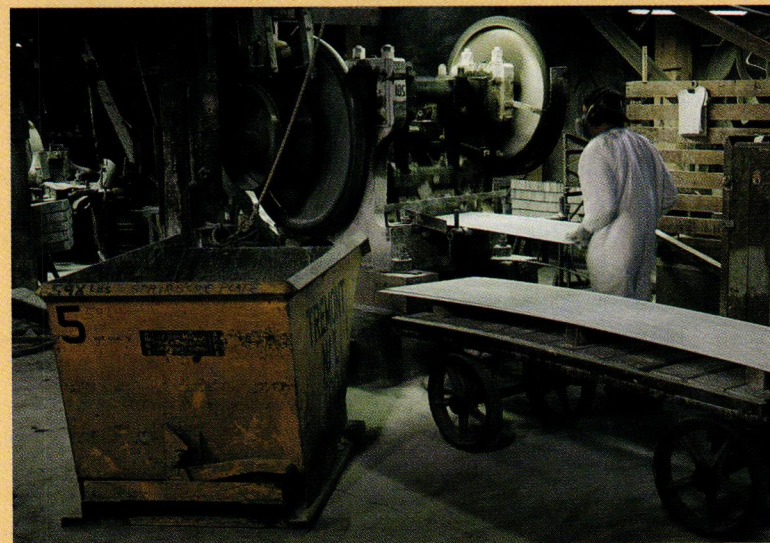
## Antiquity — 1810

Handwrought nails started with a bar of wrought iron obtained from an iron works. The smith hammered out the bar to a thin point with four tapered sides. After breaking off the rough nail point at the desired length, he placed it in a special anvil and hammered on a head.

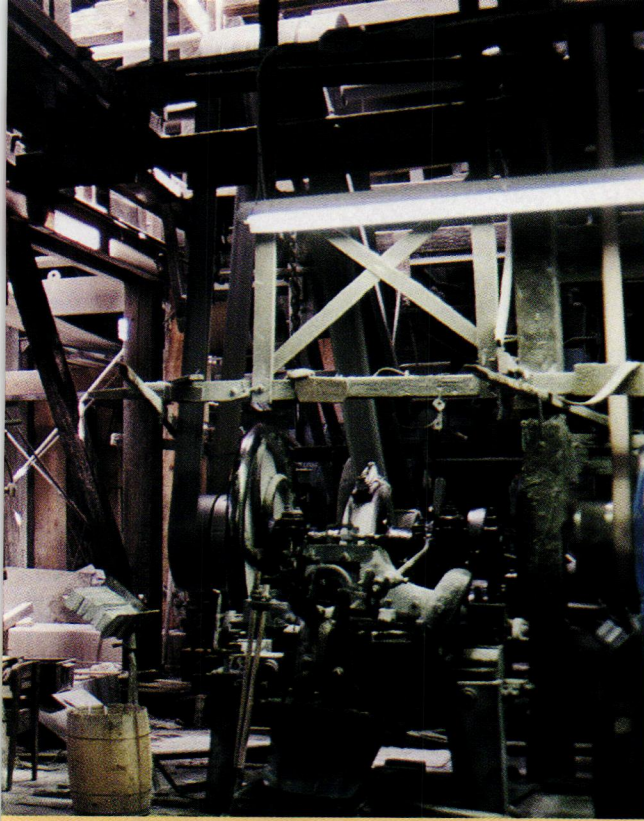


WE PAID A VISIT TO THE TREMONT NAIL COMPANY in Wareham, Massachusetts, manufacturers of nails since 1819. Their plant is a step back in time, and a marvelous education in what puts the cut in cut nails.

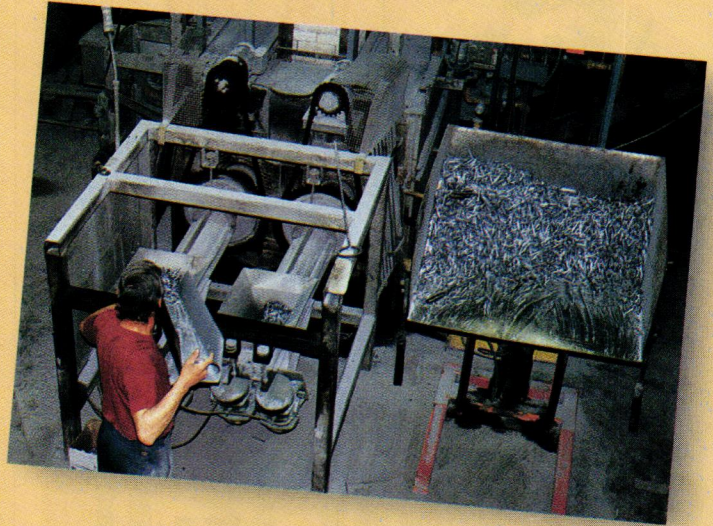
▼ **STEP 1:** At Tremont, cut nails start out as 2' x 9' sheets of hot-rolled, high-carbon steel, cleaned and dusted with lye to lubricate them. Thickness varies according to the nail, from 0.080" for finishing nails to a very hefty 0.250" for spikes — essentially plate steel. The first step is to feed each sheet into a gigantic cutter that shears them into strips as wide as the nails will be long. Massive flywheels deliver the power from whirring overhead belts and smooth out the chopping cycle.



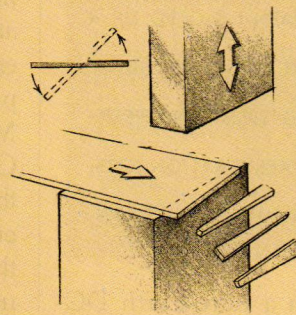




▼ **STEP 4:** Making hardened-steel nails, such as masonry nails and flooring nails, requires extra steps. First the nails are heat-treated to 2,000 degrees F in modern continuous ovens for increased strength, then quenched rapidly in a water bath. Afterwards they are tempered at 500 degrees to remove brittleness. The result is a nail hard enough to drive through steel.

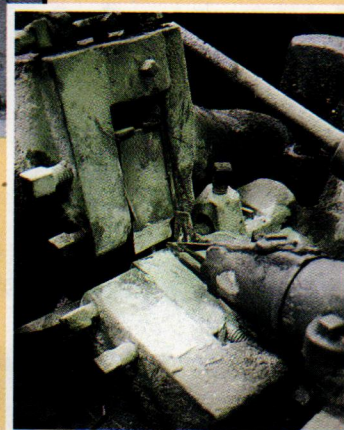


◀▼ **STEP 3:** The heart of the machine is the moving head knife (photo below). This carbon-steel tool, sharpened like a wide chisel, cuts a nail each time it travels



down to the bed knife (see drawing). The steel strip (not shown) is held in position by the fingers, which cycle back and forth. At the same time a nail is cut, "nippers" grip the nail shank so that dies can press on a head. Afterwards, the finished nail drops into a pan at the feet of the machine.

▲ **STEP 2:** One after another, the steel strips are next attached to long wooden sticks that feed them to the nail-making machines. Each 1870s-vintage machine is geared so it flops the strip back and forth, biting off a nail each time, three to five nails a second.



#### SUPPLIERS

**TREMONT NAIL COMPANY**  
P.O. Box 111, Dept. OHJ  
Wareham, MA 02571  
(508) 295-0038

*Cut steel nails in 20 patterns for restoration, flooring, and masonry work.*

**LABELLE NAIL PLANT**  
Wheeling Corrugating Company  
31st and Wood St., Dept. OHJ  
Wheeling, WV 26006  
*Cut steel nails in several types including stainless steel; contact for distributor details.*

# RESTORATION



Milwaukee breaks new ground with their cordless drill. It offers self-contained power for hammer drilling.

## TOOLS THAT MAKE SENSE

GOOD POWER TOOLS ADD SPEED AND PRECISION TO OLD-HOUSE WORK, YET WHO HASN'T PICKED UP A SAW OR DRILL THAT'S A CHORE TO OPERATE? IT TAKES THOUGHTFUL DESIGN AND TIGHT ENGINEERING TO BUILD TOOLS THAT SUIT RESTORATION JOBS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST RECENT INNOVATIONS.

### HANDY HAMMER DRILL

IF YOU STILL THINK BATTERY drills are toys, you haven't hit on the new cordless hammer drill from Milwaukee. Percussive drilling in materials like masonry takes power, and up until recently, you could only work as far as an electrical cord would allow. Milwaukee's Super-Tough Cordless Hammer Drill changes all that

with a Rare-Earth DC motor that the manufacturers say makes this drill the



most powerful on the market. The Super-Tough is available in three models (depending upon the battery pack and carrying case options desired) and a wide range of accessories. The suggested retail price for drill, battery, and charger is \$320. Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation, 13135 West Lisbon Rd., Dept. OHJ, Brookfield, WI 53005; (414) 783-8311.

### COMPOUND CUTTING

THE NEW SLANT ON POWER-miter "chop saws" these days is compound cutting, and with good reason. Mouldings and framing lumber are often cut at angles in two planes, especially in the rich carpentry of old houses. Makita's 12" Slide Dual Compound Saw makes the job easier and more accurate with a cutting head that tilts both left and right up to 45 degrees and miter cutting to 60 degrees in either direction, so

the mouldings or members don't have to be turned around to change cuts. The LS1211 comes with an electric brake, a 96-tooth carbide-

tipped blade, a vertical material vise, and a standard dust bag. Suggested retail price is \$1,620. Makita U.S.A. Inc., 14930 Northam St., Dept. OHJ, La Mirada, CA 90638; (714) 522-8088.



This compact, inexpensive angle grinder is perfect for removing mortar joints.

### A NEW GRINDER

FOR LARGE MASONRY re-pointing projects, many restorers turn to power tools. DeWalt's new Heavy Duty Angle Grinder is just right for such a job. The model DW400 is smaller and less expensive than most angle grinders, which are built for the rigors of a machine shop. Use a standard masonry blade, or try their diamond-tipped, tuck-pointing blade. It's pricey, but it makes quick work of tough mortar. The suggested retail price for the angle grinder is \$118; for the speciality blade, it's \$195. DeWalt Industrial Tool Company, 626 Hanover Pike,

Makita's new saw offers compound miter cuts with chop-and-slide motion.

# PRODUCTS

Josh Garskof  
& Gordon Bock

Dept. OHJ, Hempstead, MD 21074; (800) 433-9258.

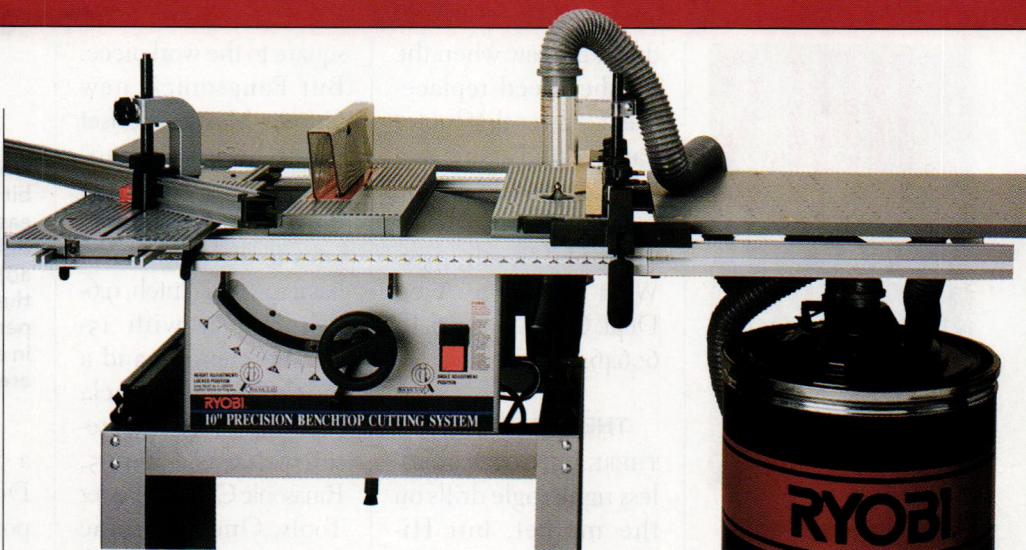
## QUIETER CLEANUP

THE WET/DRY VACUUM IS a must for restorers, both professionals and homeowners. Shop-Vac, whose name has become synonymous with the tool, has a new line that significantly reduces the decibel level of the vacuum. They call it Quiet Super Power, or QSP. An air-baffle system and foam insulation reduce the noise from the motors, available from 1.5 to 5 horsepower. The ca-



Shop-Vac's latest line turns down the volume on restoration cleanup.

capacity ranges from 5 gallons to 25 gallons depending on the model. Hose attachments are conveniently stowed on board. The model shown



A high-powered "contractor's" saw with a port for mounting a router or jig saw.

has a 5-horsepower motor and a 16-gallon tank. The suggested retail price is \$191.95. Shop-Vac Corporation, 2323 Reach Rd., Dept. OHJ, Williamsport, PA 17701; (717) 326-0502.

## TABLE SAW WITH ROUTER OR JIG

THE RYOBI BENCH TOP SAW is practically a portable shop. The 3-horsepower motor and 10" blade will easily cut a 4x4. Plus, the saw's table has a port for a router or jigsaw. An optional attachment kit fastens either one underneath the saw table. Your router becomes a mini shaper and your jigsaw takes on the qualities of a shop tool. With a 36-tooth carbide-tip blade, the saw costs less than \$600; router/jig attachment costs \$85; dust bag is \$30;

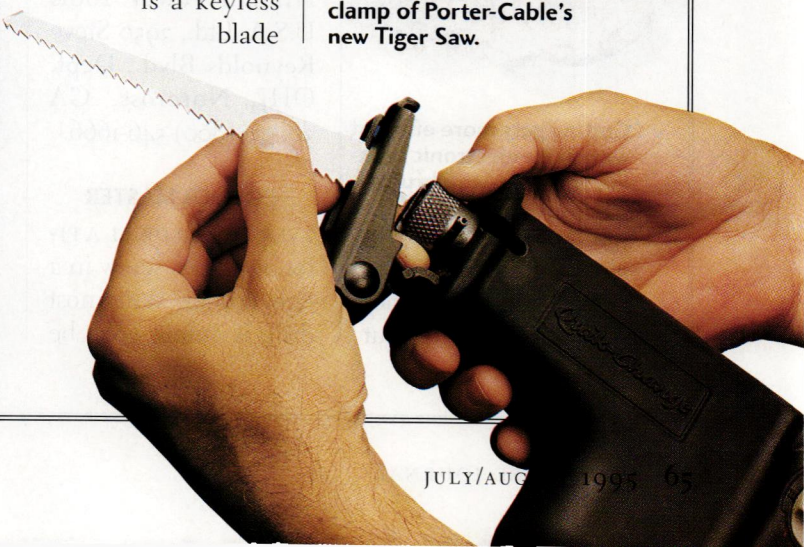
or vacuum, which doubles as a shop cleanup tool, costs \$130. Ryobi America Corp., 5201 Pearman Dairy Rd., Ste. 1, Dept. OHJ, Anderson, SC 29625; (800) 525-2579.

## NO KEYS, PLEASE!

BROKEN BLADES ARE A fact of life with reciprocating saws, especially when there's rough carpentry or demolition underway. Why then should you have to fumble over and over with little wrenches to get cutting again? The folks at Porter-Cable asked the same question, and their answer is a keyless blade

clamp for their Quick-Change Tiger Saw, the first of its kind. The stainless-steel clamp has two blade positions and is hitched to a muscular 9.6-amp motor. The model 9737 Tiger Saw also features orbital action for quicker cutting, and comes complete with a steel carrying case for a suggested price of \$290. Porter-Cable Corporation, 4825 Highway 45 N., P.O. Box 2468, Dept. OHJ, Jackson, TN 38302; (800) 487-8665.

Blades change in four seconds without keys in the unique spring-loaded clamp of Porter-Cable's new Tiger Saw.



# RESTORATION PRODUCTS

## TOOLS THAT MAKE SENSE

### BRAKE-SAWING

THE SING OF A SPINNING steel blade may be a romantic part of circular saws, but when work has to wait up to half a minute for that blade to stop, it's just a waste of time. Skil's newest heavy-duty circular saw calls a halt to free-wheeling with an electronic brake that engages when you release the trigger, bringing the blade to rest in



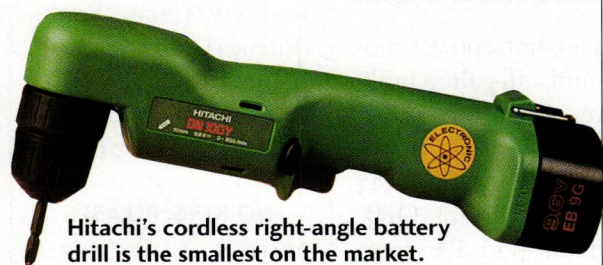
Cutting gets more efficient with Skil's electronic braking and auto-stop brushes.

just two seconds. The tool also features brand-new, auto-stop motor brushes that automatically shut

down the saw when the brushes need replacement, preventing motor damage and acting as a "service minder." The saw retails for around \$149. Skil-Bosch, 4300 West Peterson Ave., Dept. OHJ, Chicago, IL 60646; (312) 286-7330.

### THE RIGHT ANGLE

THERE ARE OTHER CORDLESS right-angle drills on the market, but Hitachi's is the most compact, which makes getting into tight spaces —



Hitachi's cordless right-angle battery drill is the smallest on the market.

say, to run new services in an old stud wall — a lot easier. It's 12" long, 4" wide, and 1 1/8" thick. It's reversible and offers an electric brake as well as a keyless chuck. With a case, charger, and one 9.6-volt battery, the suggested retail price is \$370. Hitachi Power Tools U.S.A. Ltd., 3950 Steve Reynolds Blvd., Dept. OHJ, Norcross, GA 30093; (800) 546-1666.

### CORNER MASTER

EVER TRY TO DRILL A PILOT or drive a screw in a tight corner? With most drills it simply won't be

square to the workpiece. But Panasonic's new Corner Master is offset so the bit is only 5/16" from the edge of the drill. Plus, the mechanism rotates to eight positions, has a 22-stage clutch, 9.6-volt battery with 15-minute charger, and a quick connect chuck. The drill's suggested retail price is \$369.95. Panasonic Cordless Power Tools, One Panasonic Way, 4A-3, Dept. OHJ, Secaucus, NJ 07094; (201) 392-6655.



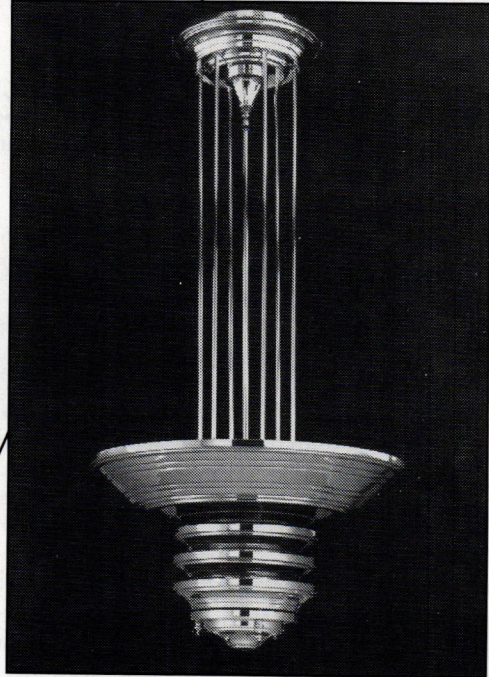
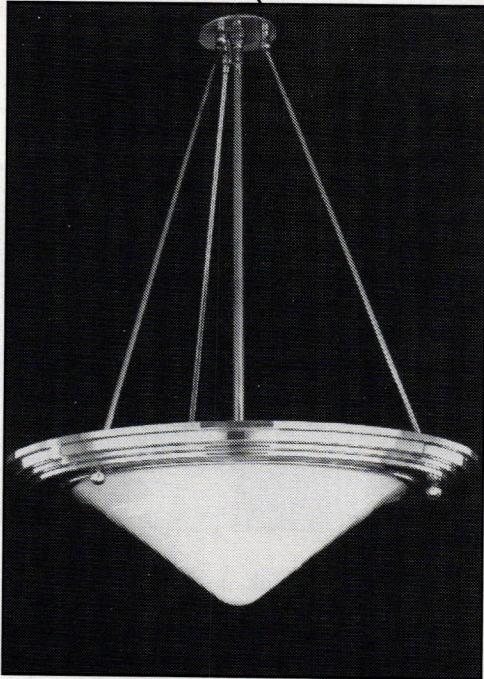
Not only is the bit off-center for easier access to tight work, it's also adjustable, giving this drill better performance in a cramped area.

a pickup. Delta's 12" portable planer is a good match for serious old-house restorers. With a 12" width and 6" thickness capacity, the planer can handle the needs of most regular cabinetwork, yet it's compact and light enough to be moved using the carrying handles. Power requirements (120-volt, 15-amp, single-phase motor) are lean too. Retail price for the planer is \$524. Delta International Machinery Corp., 246 Alpha Dr., Dept. OHJ, Pittsburgh, PA 15238; (800) 438-2486.



Delta's 12" portable planer can turn a tabletop into a woodshop.

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# RESTORATION PRODUCTS

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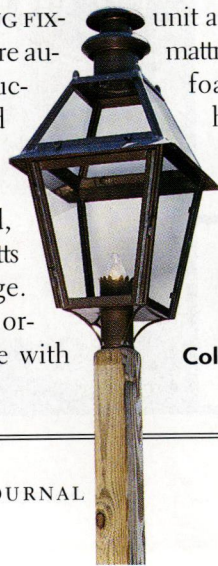


**Iron fences and railings made with traditional designs and craftsmanship.**

art Iron Works Company, Inc., 20 West 18th St., P.O. Box 2612, Dept. OHJ, Covington, KY 41012; (606) 431-1985.

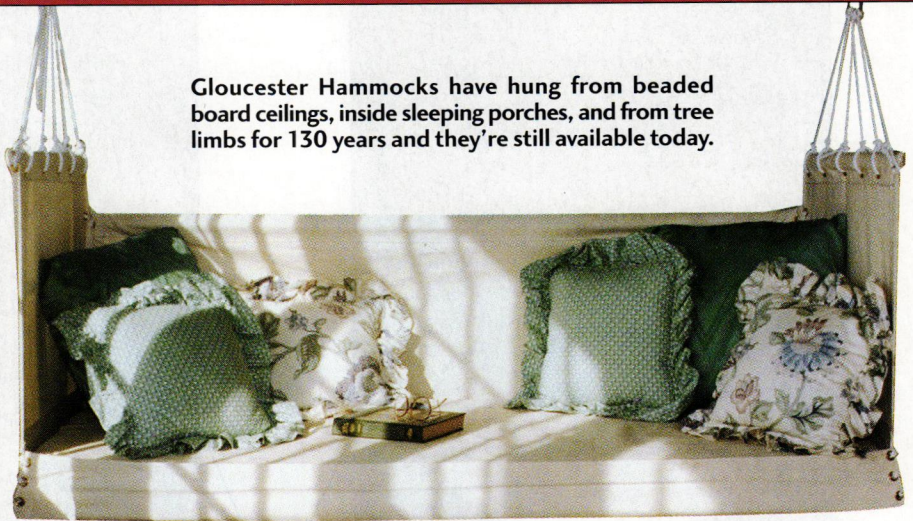
## COLONIAL LANTERNS

PERIOD LIGHTING FIXTURES' lanterns are authentic reproductions of 18th- and 19th-century examples at Historic Deerfield, the Massachusetts museum village. Handmade to order, they come with



**Reproductions of Historic Deerfield lanterns will light up a Colonial or Colonial Revival yard.**

**Gloucester Hammocks have hung from beaded board ceilings, inside sleeping porches, and from tree limbs for 130 years and they're still available today.**



patina, bright copper, or lamp black finish. They are wired for electric lighting and are U.L. listed. Period Lighting also offers chandeliers, sconces, onion lanterns, student lamps, and indoor lanterns. The example shown costs \$725. Period Lighting Fixtures Inc., River Rd., Dept. OHJ, Clarksburg, MA 01247; (413) 664-7141.

## PORCH SWING

D.F. HARRIS HAS BEEN making the Gloucester Hammock, a heavy canvas swing, since 1865. And it hasn't changed much. The wood frame is now a metal spring unit and the horsehair mattress is now 4"-thick foam. But it still hangs from ropes laced through brass grommets

in the treated cotton duck canvas. It is 6' long, 30" deep, with a 25" high back. The Gloucester Hammock costs \$445. D.F. Harris & Sons, 5 Youngs Rd., Dept. OHJ, Gloucester, MA 01930; (508) 283-2082.

curate 18th- and 19th-century reproductions (color matching is available). And because there are no modern synthetics or flattening agents, the finish texture looks authentic. Traditional painter's sun-



## LINSEED OIL PAINTS

WHY NOT TOP OFF YOUR restoration with a reproduction handmade paint? Like paints made before about 1860, these consist of pure linseed oil, powdered pigment, spirits of turpentine, and natural resin varnishes. The colors, too, are ac-

**Linseed oil paints and brushes from Historic Paints.**

dries are also available. The high-coverage paints cost \$12.50 per pint and \$21 per quart, with bulk discounts. Historic Paints Limited, Burr Tavern, Route 1, Box 474, Dept. OHJ, East Meredith, NY 13757; (800) 664-6293.



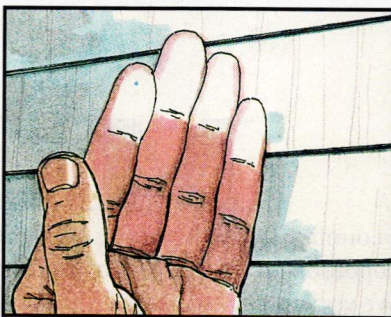
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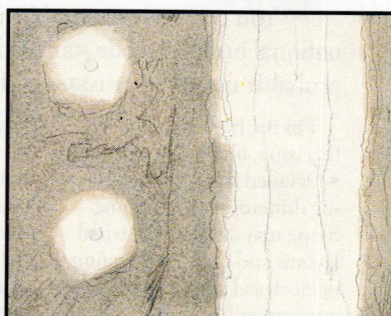
Ordinary paint peels because it won't adhere to chalky surfaces...



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in your area.

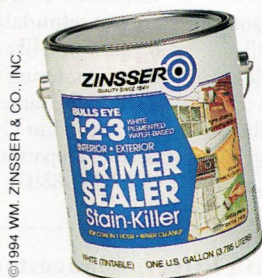
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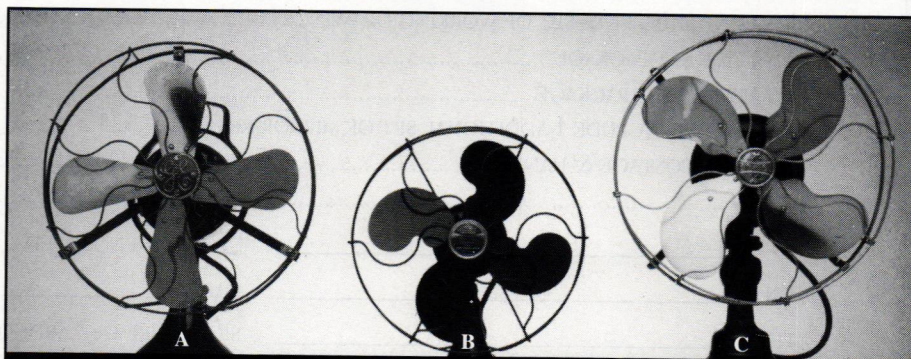
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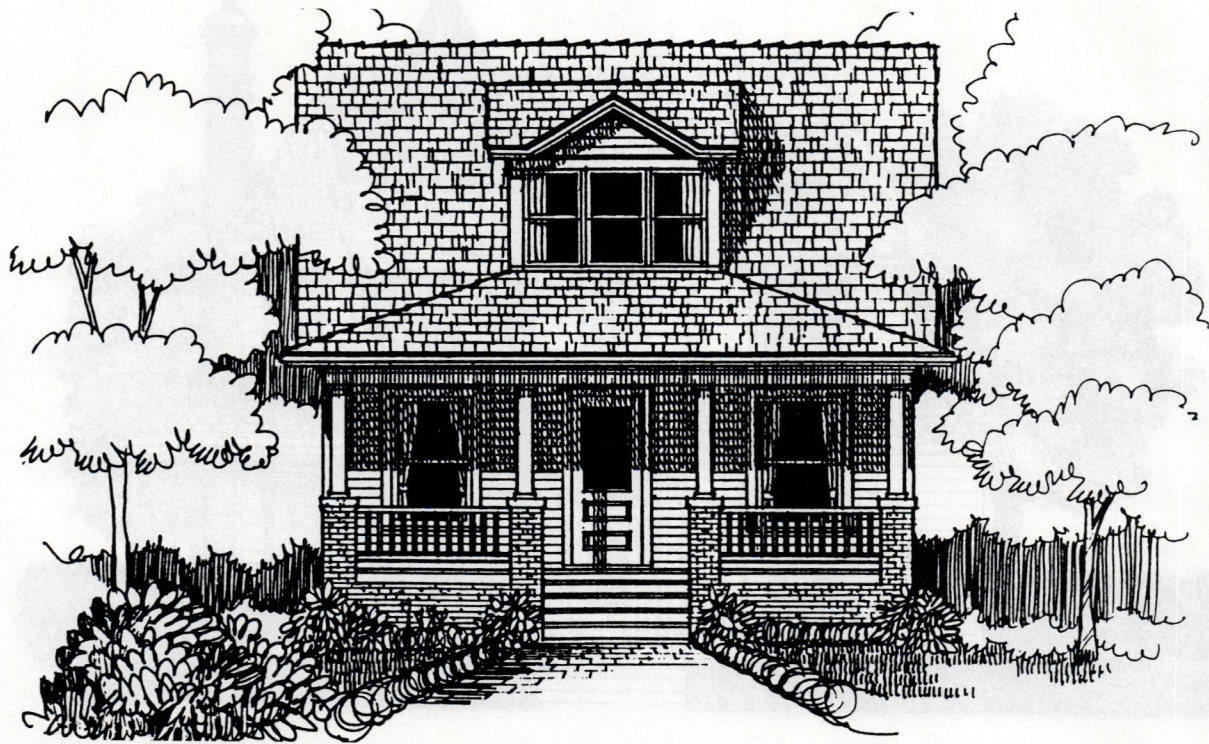
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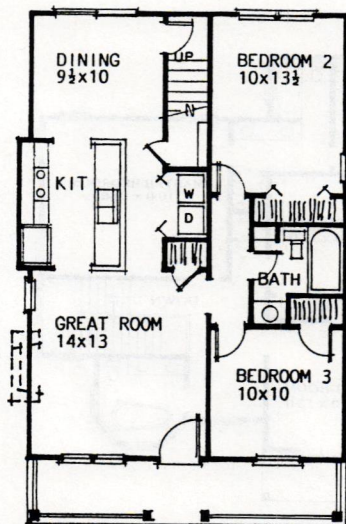


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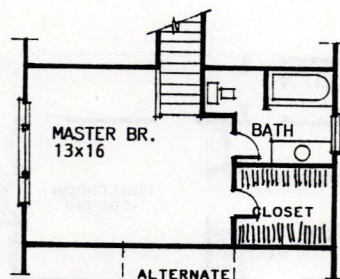


**T**HIS EARLY-20TH-CENTURY COTTAGE WOULD make a great starter home for a couple on a budget. Designed for a small lot, the compact floor plan provides a lot of living space. On the first floor, two bedrooms with roomy closets share a full bath.

The kitchen can be arranged in a U-shaped or galley-style layout, depending on the homeowner's preference. Upstairs, the attic can be left unfinished or turned into a master suite with a window-seat nook and walk-in closet.



First Floor



Second Floor

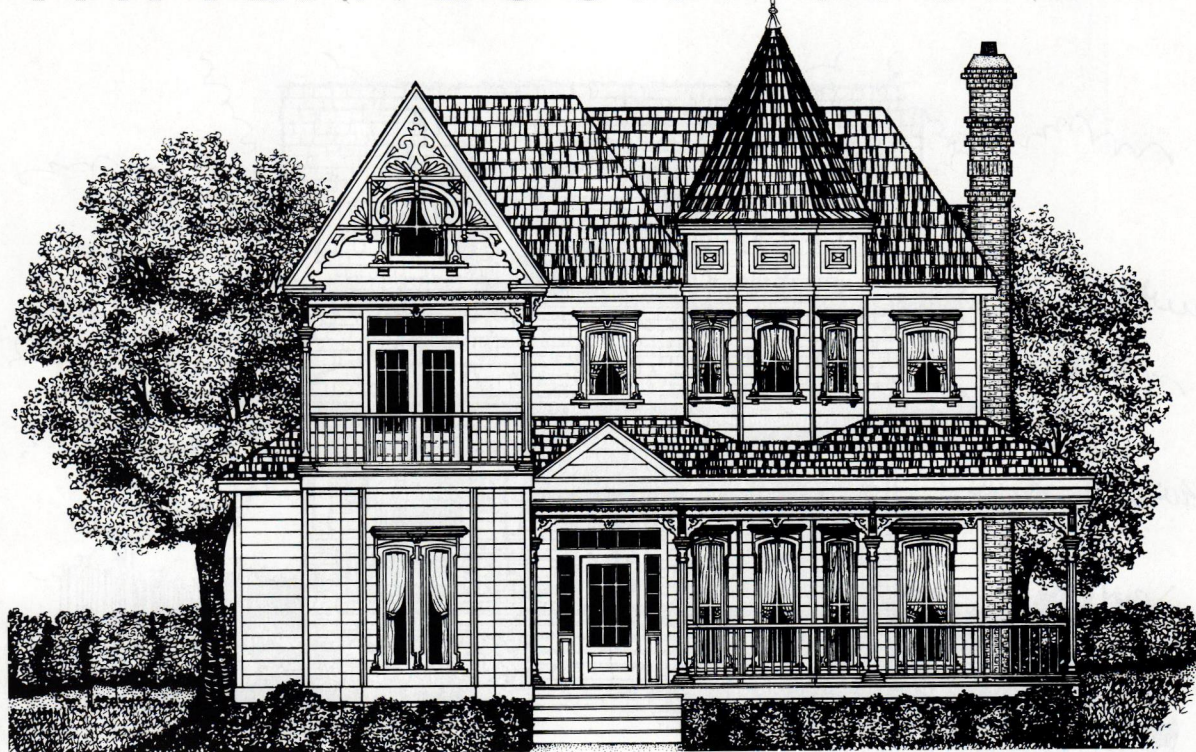


Alternate Kitchen

## Plan RT-06-PV

Cost.....	\$170
Set of 5.....	\$230
Set of 8.....	\$270
Bedrooms.....	3
Bathrooms.....	2
Square Footage.....	1,161'
First Floor.....	825'
Second Floor.....	336'
Ceiling Height	
First Floor.....	8'1"
Second Floor (to the ridge) ...	11'6"
Overall Dimensions	
Width.....	24'
Depth.....	34'

# PATTERN BOOK VICTORIAN

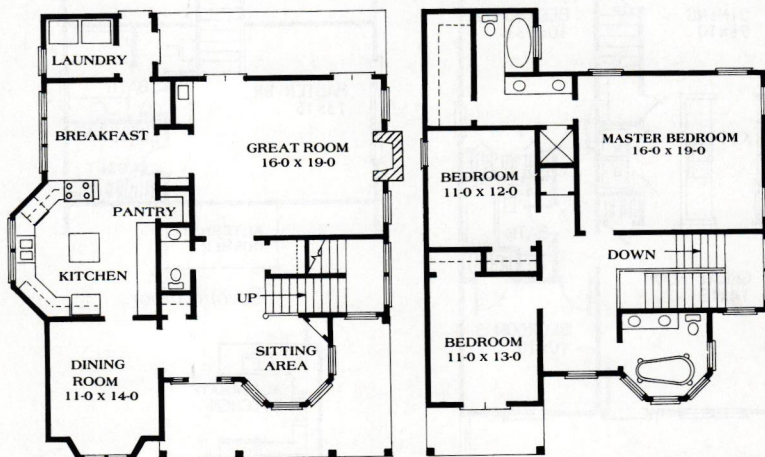


**B**ICKNELL'S *VICTORIAN BUILDINGS*, PUBLISHED in 1878, inspired the intricate window casings and porch details of this grand Victorian residence. The tower gives instant impact to the gracious foyer; a stained or bevelled glass window on the stair landing will be visible from both floors. The U-

shaped kitchen is adjacent to the dining room and the breakfast room. Note the hutch in the breakfast room with glass doors for cookbooks or ceramics. A cozy, sun-filled sitting area is tucked between the foyer and the staircase. The second floor of the tower is occupied by a charming bath with a claw-footed tub.

## Plan HR-51-VI

Cost.....	\$230
Set of 5.....	\$290
Set of 8.....	\$330
Bedrooms.....	3
Bathrooms.....	2 1/2
Square Footage.....	2,440'
First Floor.....	1,259'
Second Floor.....	1,181'
Ceiling Height	
First Floor.....	10'
Second Floor.....	9'
Overall Dimensions	
Width.....	46'
Depth.....	36'



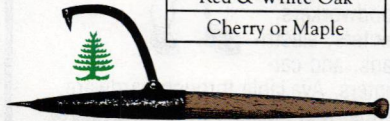
First Floor

Second Floor

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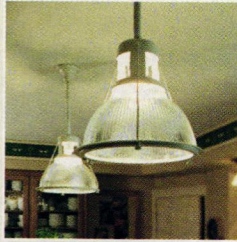
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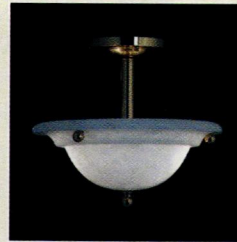
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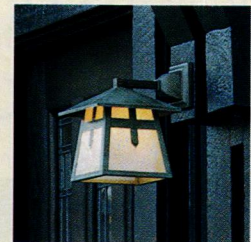
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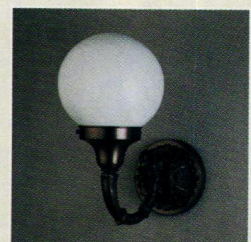
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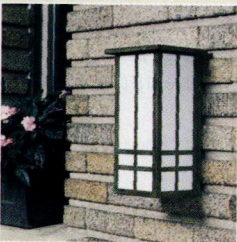
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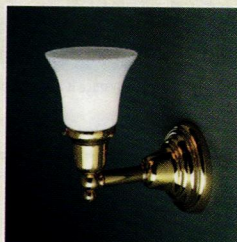
LeFleur Wall Sconce



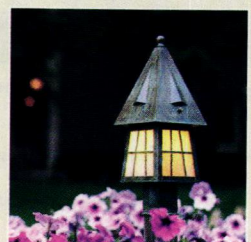
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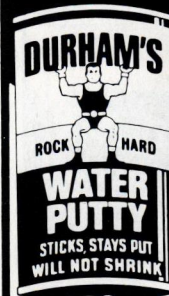
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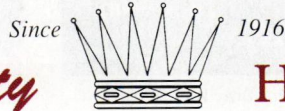
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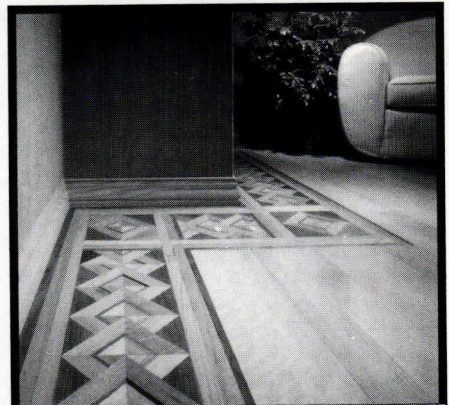
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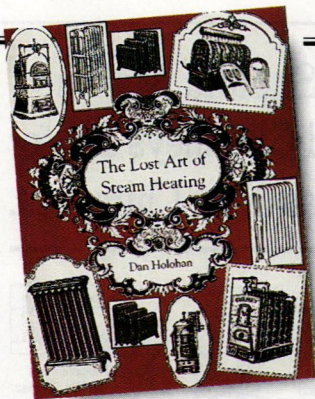
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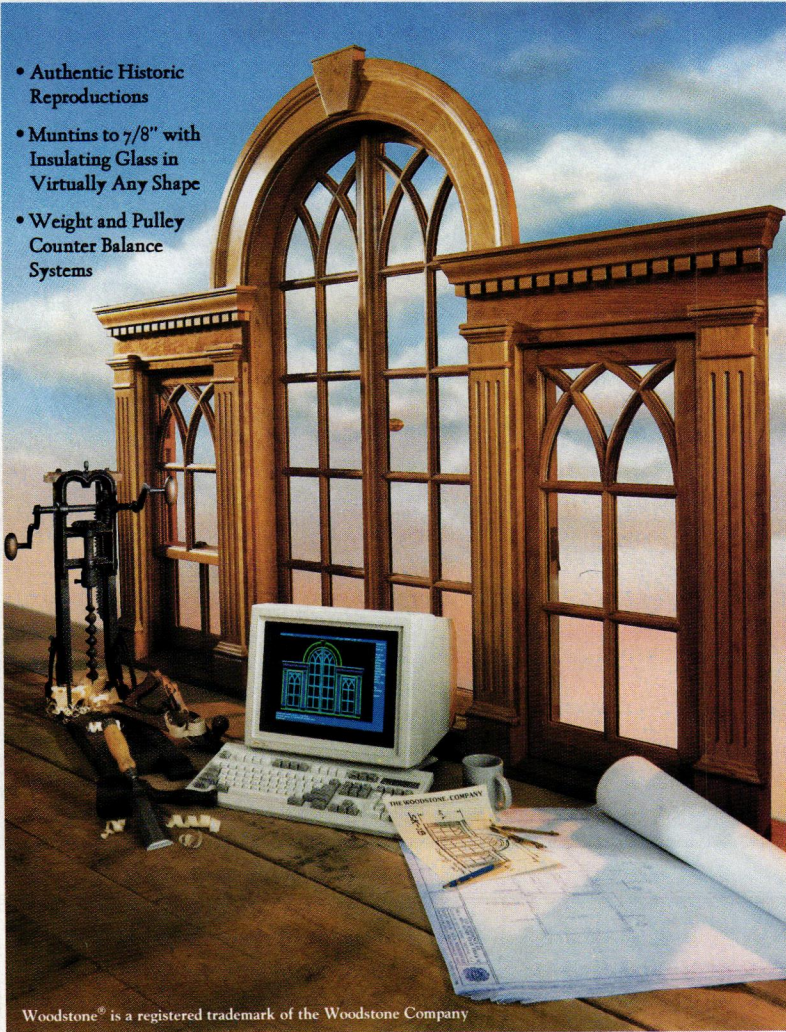
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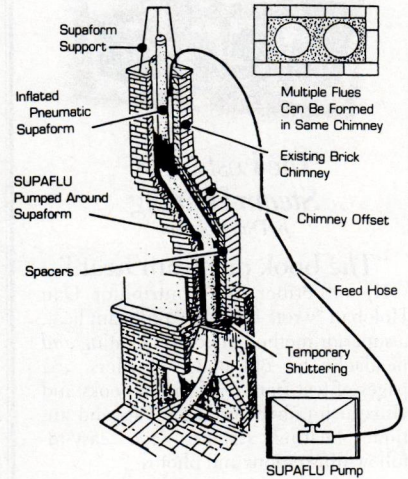


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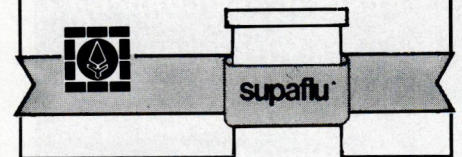
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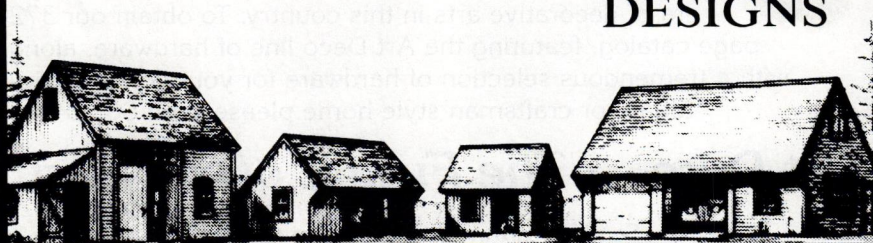
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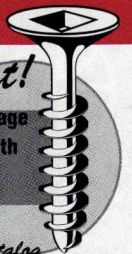
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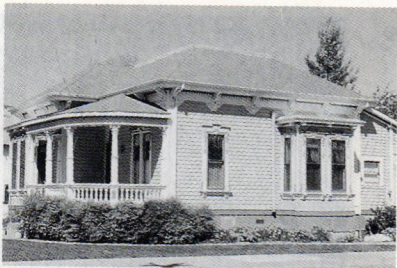


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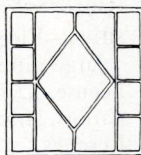
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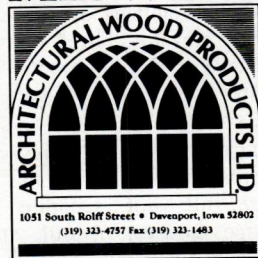
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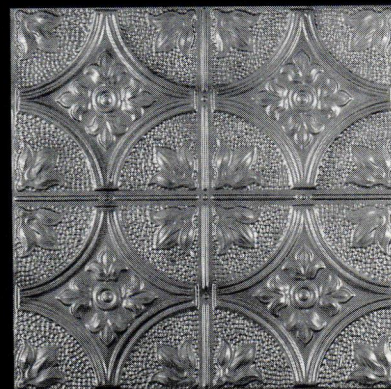
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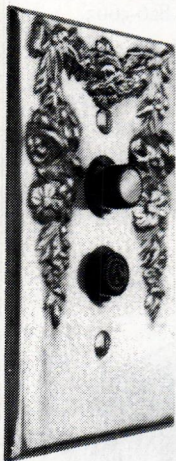
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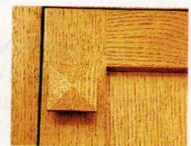
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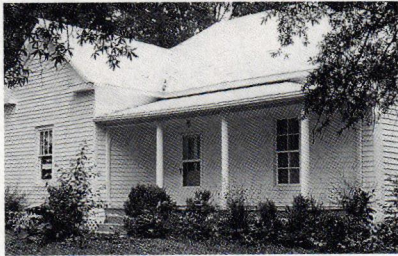
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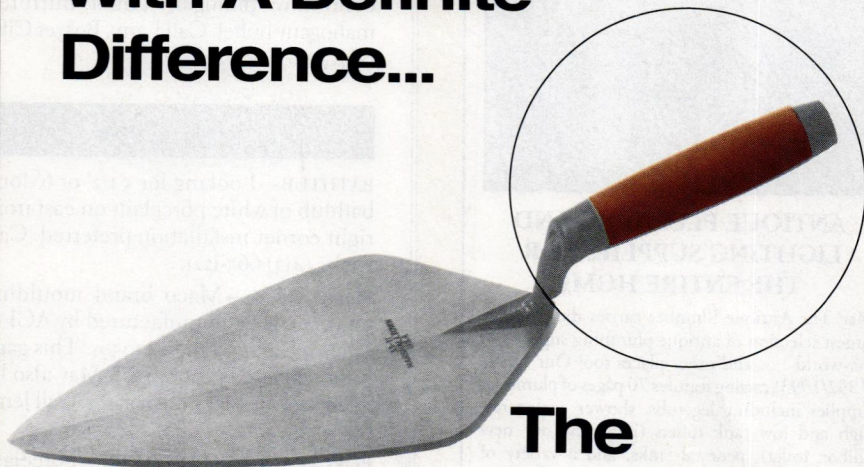
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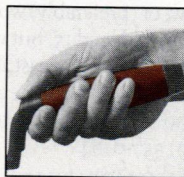
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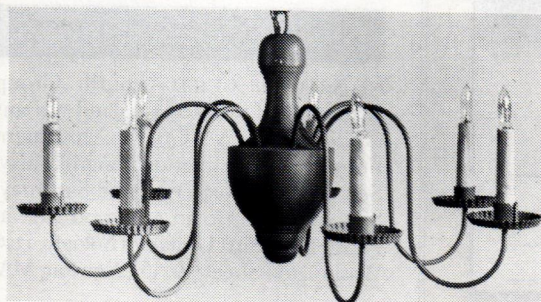


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### Events

**NE ARTISANS GUILD**—Fourth Group Exhibition of the New England Artisans Guild, Arts & Crafts Movement Furnishings and Interior Design, Friday, September 15, 6:30 P.M. and Saturday, September 16, 10:30 A.M.-5:00 P.M. at Parish Hall, First Unitarian Society, 1326 Washington Street (Rt. 16), Newton, MA.

Friday's lecture is on California Bungalows. For information, call John Burrows, (617) 982-1812.

**SEMINAR ON CLASSICAL ORNAMENT**—Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture 3rd annual seminar and workshop October 14-15 in New York City. Entitled *The Ornament of Classical Architecture*, the seminar will examine how architects, preservationists, designers, craftspeople, and interested property owners can use decoration in building and design projects today. One-day admission is \$95; 2 days, \$175. Contact the Institute at 111 Franklin Street, New York, NY 10013. (212) 570-7374; fax (212) 627-5740.

**VICTORIAN DECORATIVE ARTS SHOW**—Country's premier gathering of finest dealers of authentic Victorian decorative arts and furniture. Metropolitan Art & Antiques, 110 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011. Gala opening Friday, October 13, 6-9 P.M.; collector's seminars Saturday and Sunday, October 14 & 15, 9-12 noon; show hours Saturday 12-7 P.M., Sunday 12-5 P.M. (212) 473-0200; fax (212) 473-7099.

**THEATER TOUR**—Preservation Wayne presents Detroit's Historic Theater District Tour, Saturday, October 7. Guided walking tours from State Theater lobby between 10 A.M. and noon. Six movie palaces including nation's largest theater restoration project. (313) 222-0321.

**OLD-HOUSE FAIR IN STOCKBRIDGE, MA**—The Center for Historic Houses of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Massachusetts Historical Commission are sponsoring the second annual Old-House Fair at Chesterwood, summer estate of sculptor Daniel Chester French, September 9-10. Call 413-298-3579 for information on exhibiting or directions.

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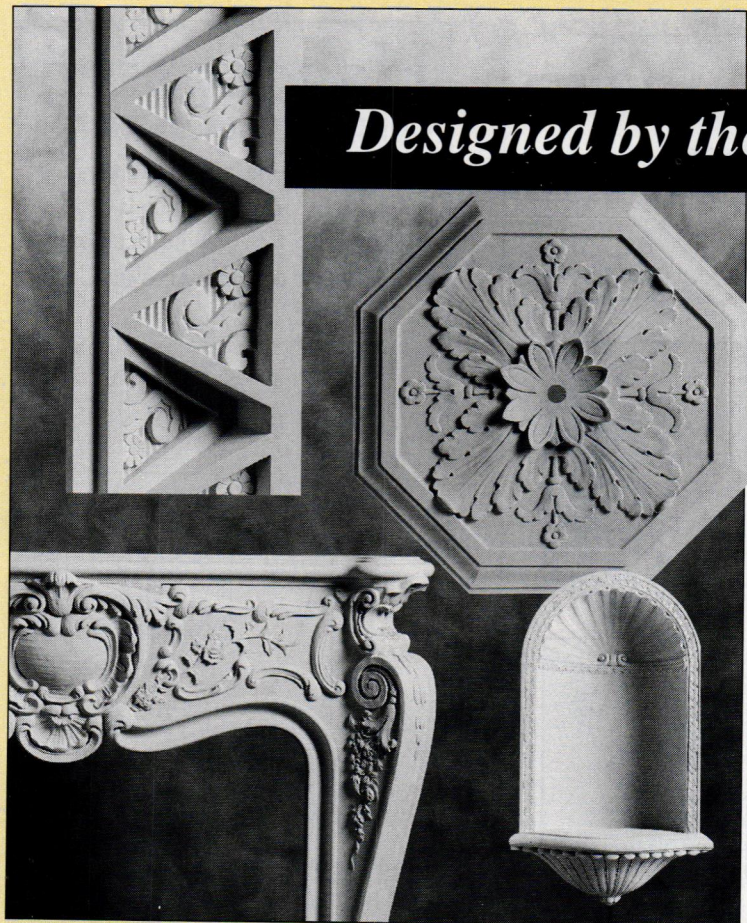
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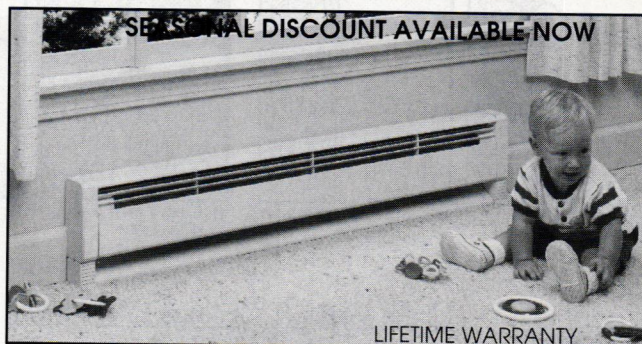
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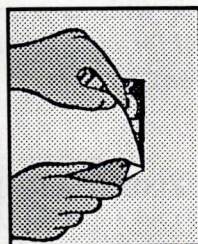
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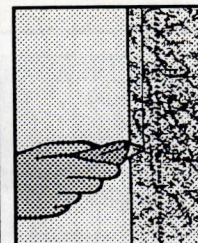
7. Apply second coat of saturant to wet mat.



8. Apply 1st coat of saturant to adjacent area.



9. Apply mat to 2nd area, overlapping by 1".



10. Cut down center of overlap (both layers).



11. Remove mat strips on both sides of cut.



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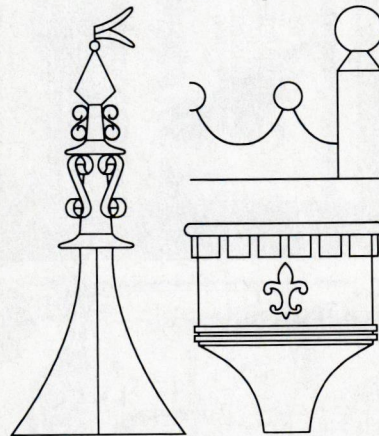
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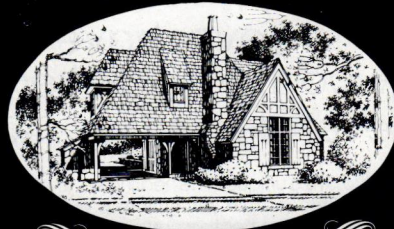


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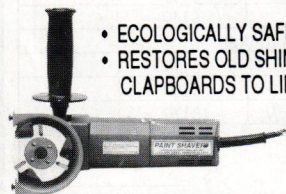


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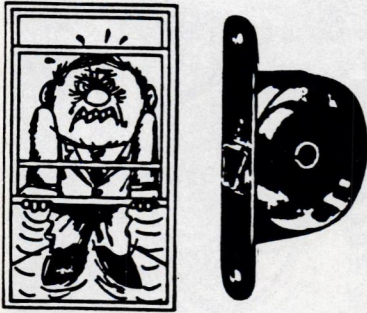
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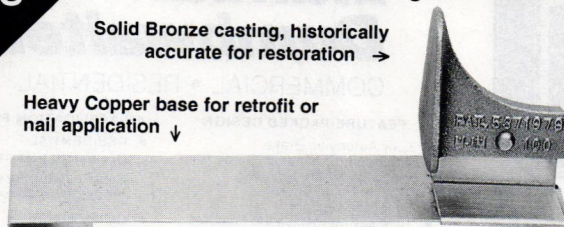
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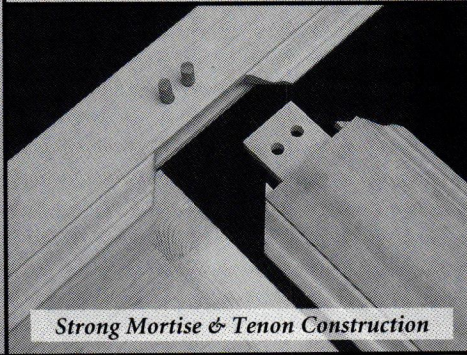
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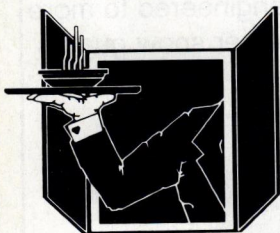


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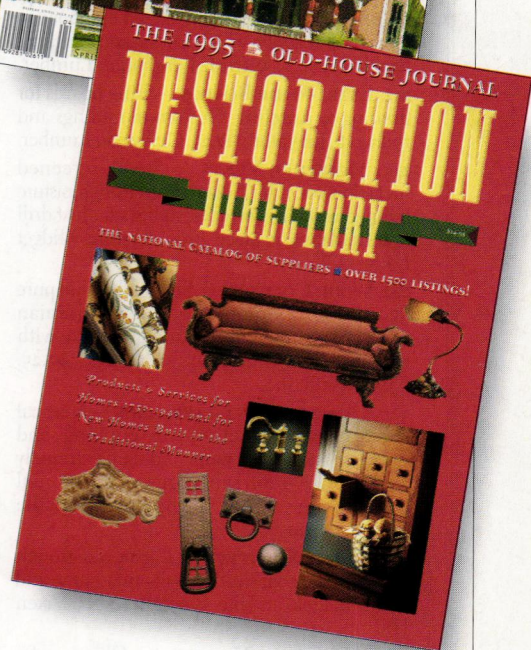
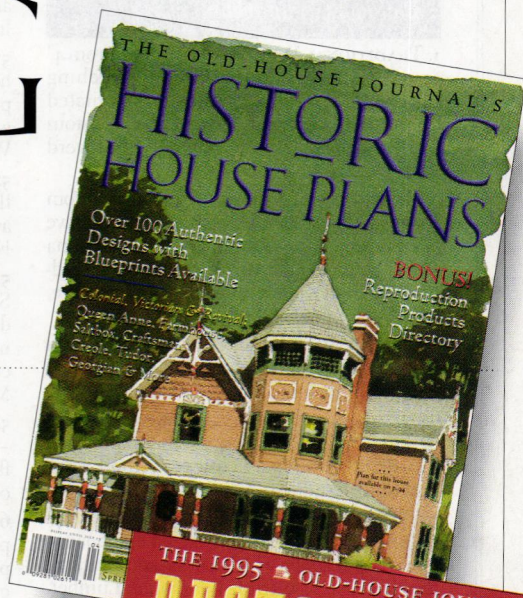
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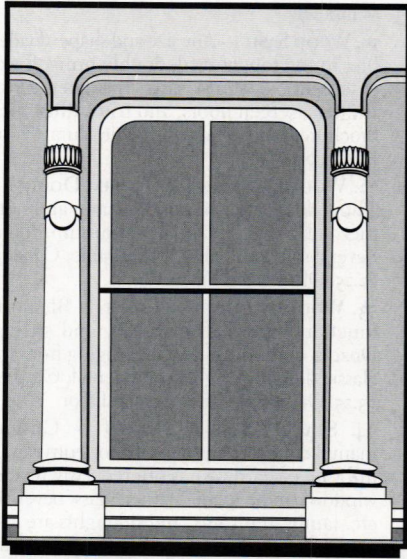
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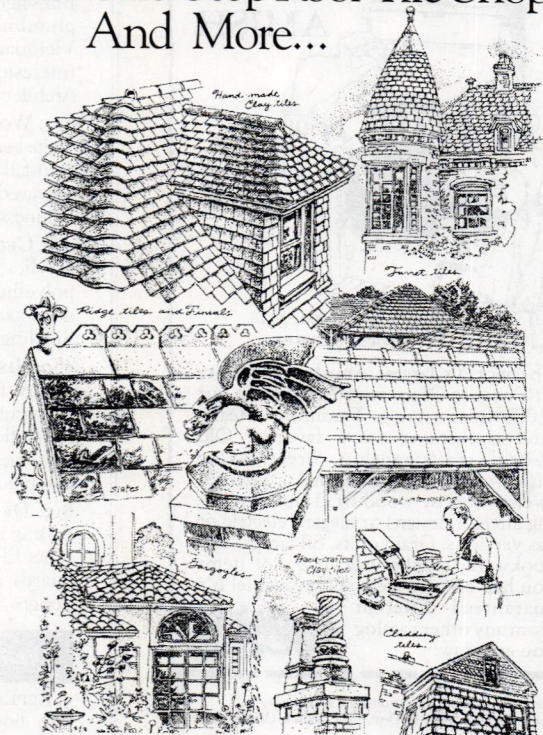


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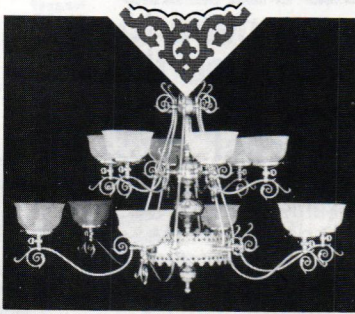
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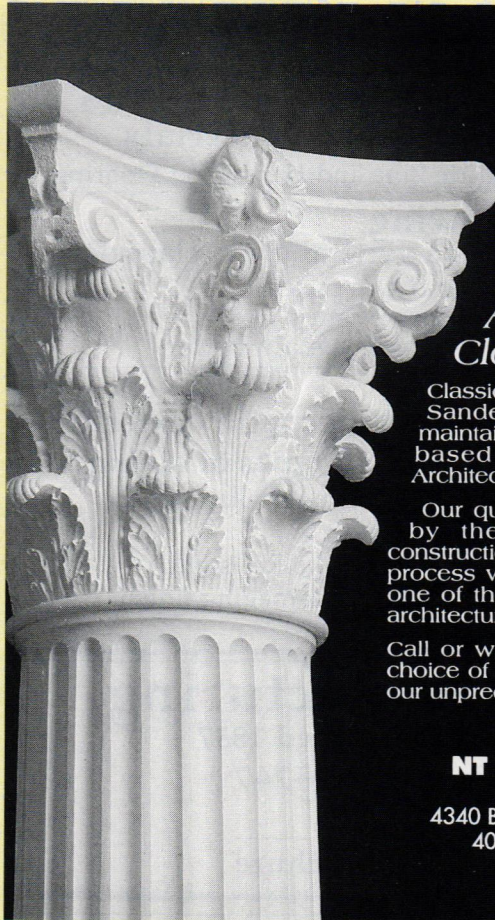
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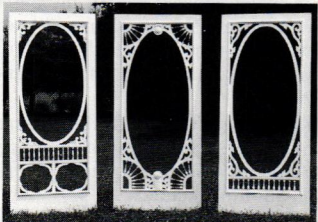
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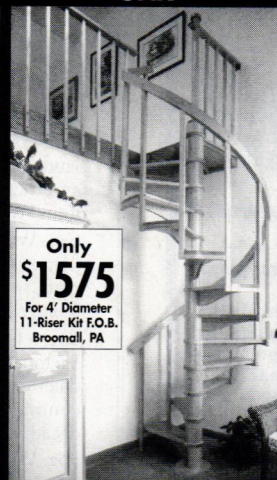
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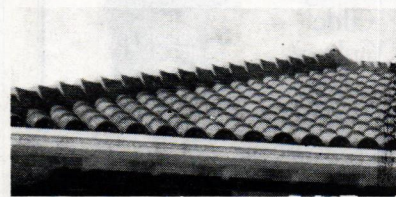
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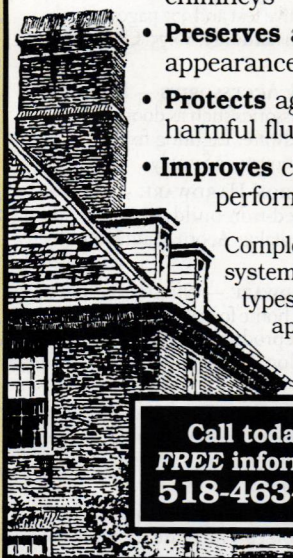


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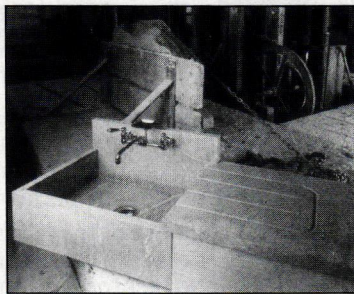
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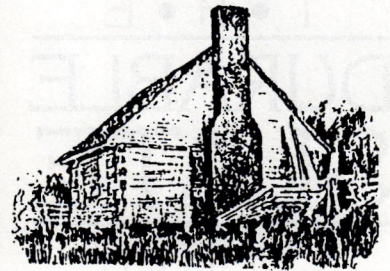
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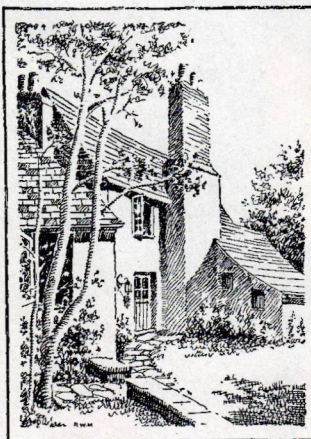
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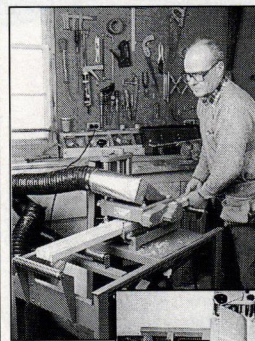


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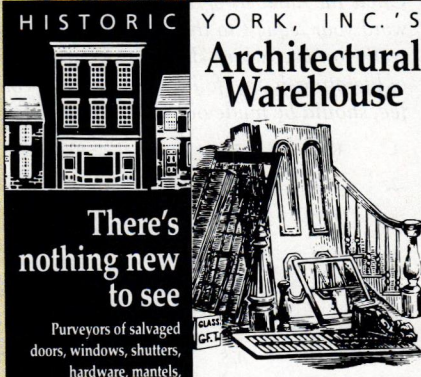



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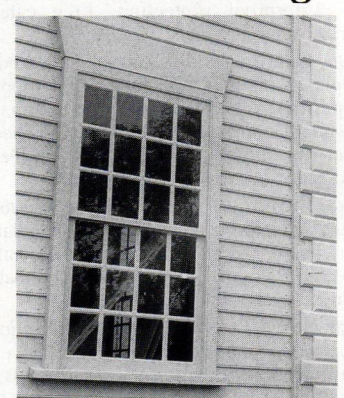
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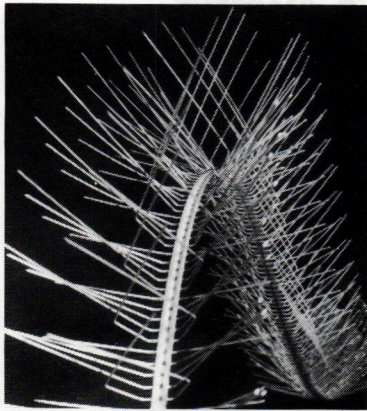


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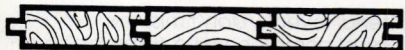


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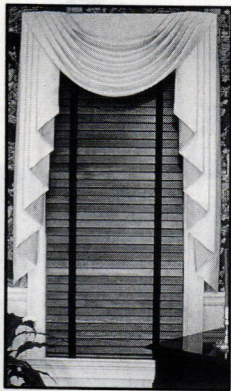
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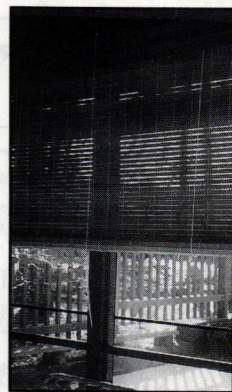
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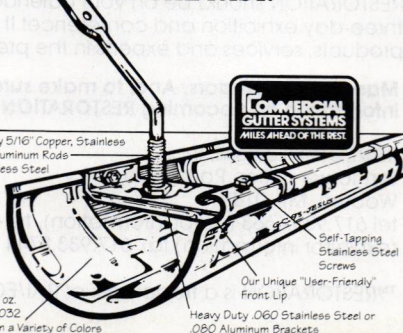


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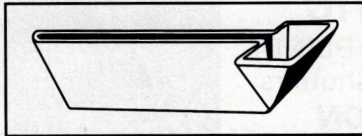
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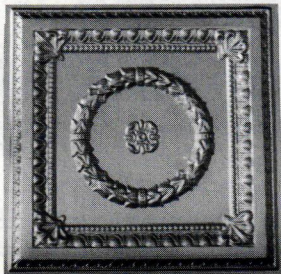
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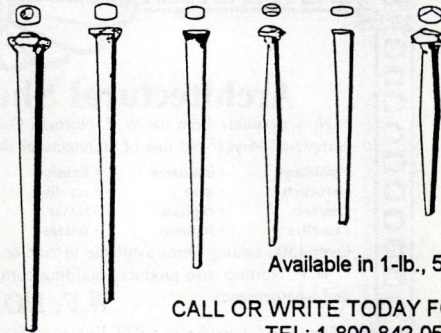
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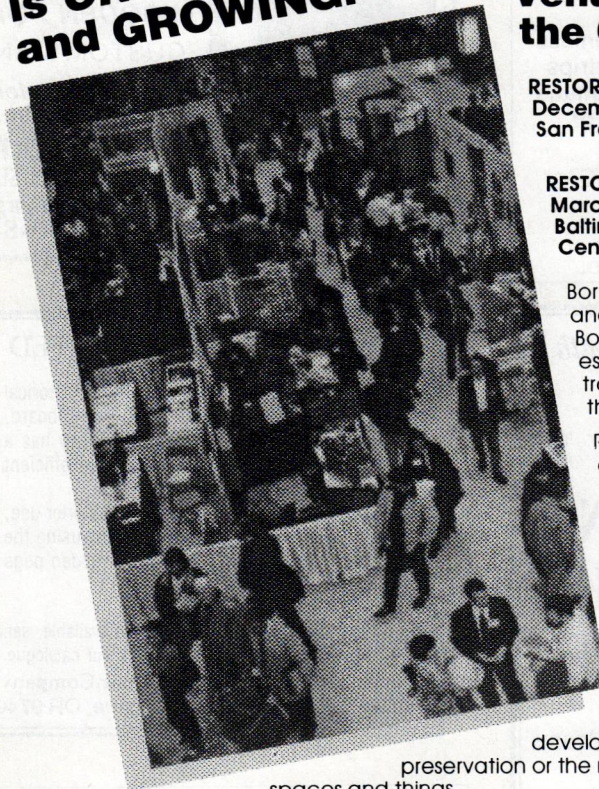
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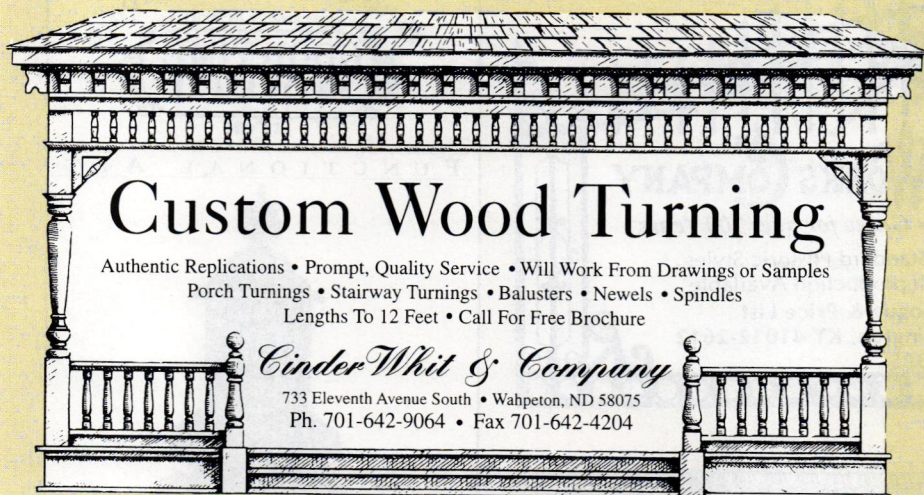
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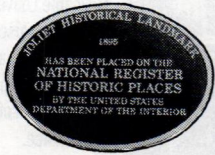
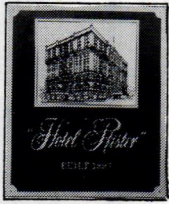
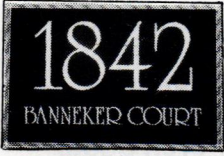
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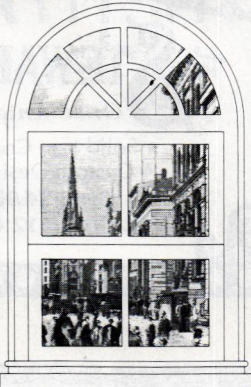
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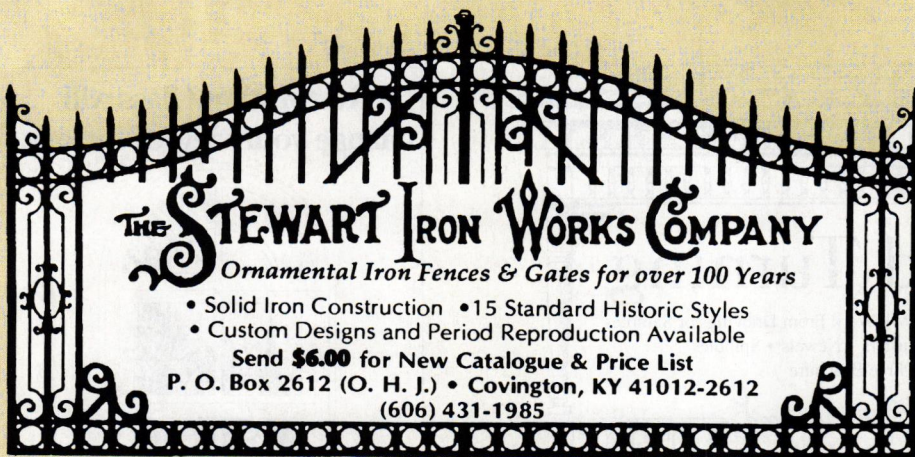
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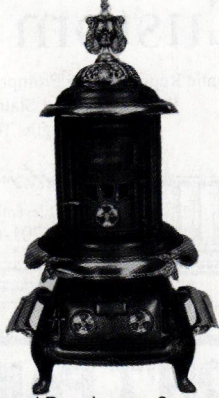
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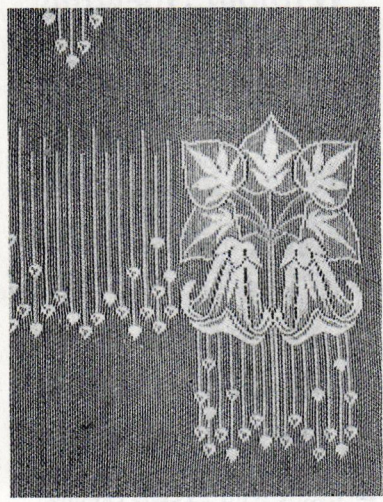
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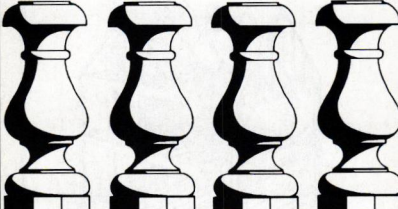
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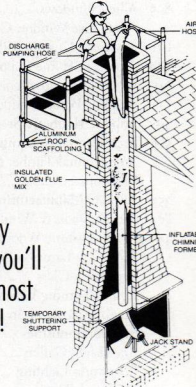


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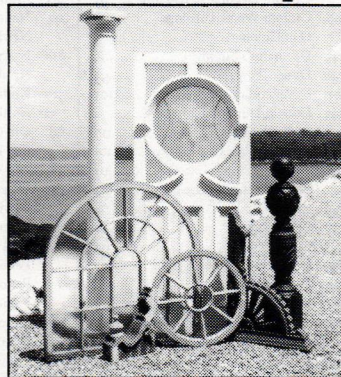
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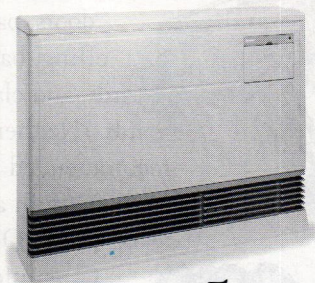
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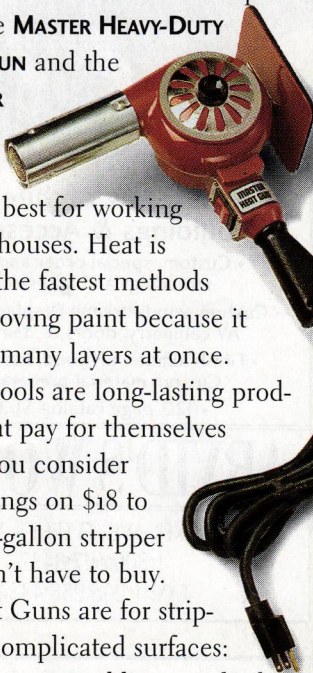
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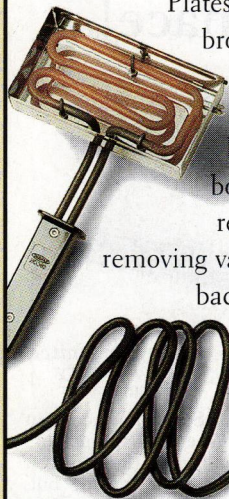
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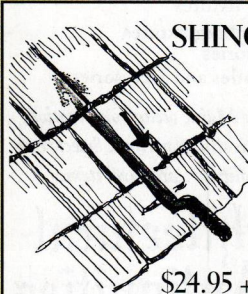
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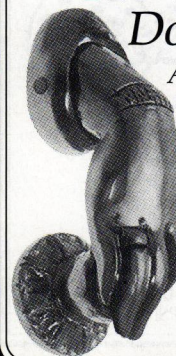
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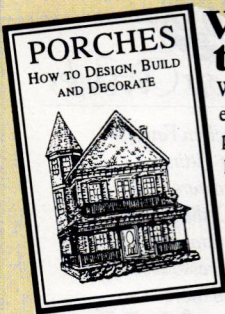
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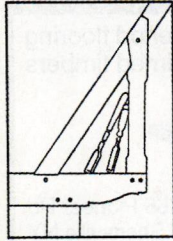
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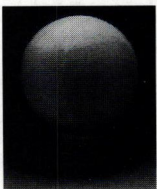
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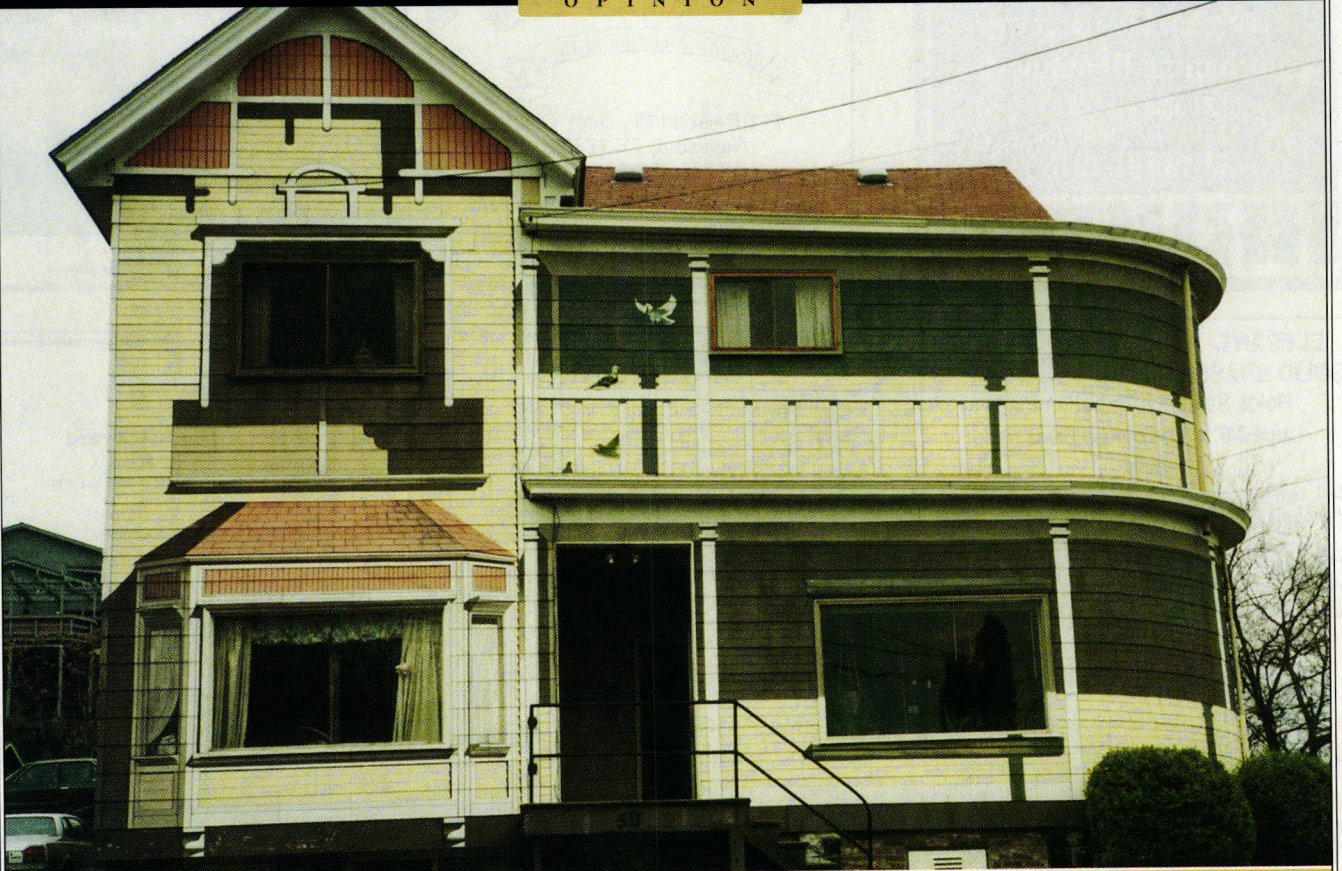
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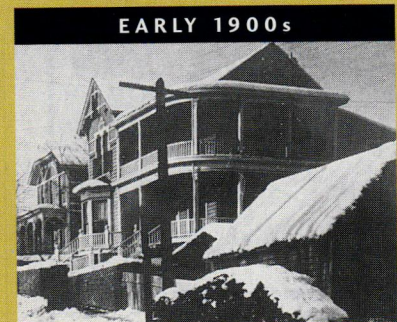
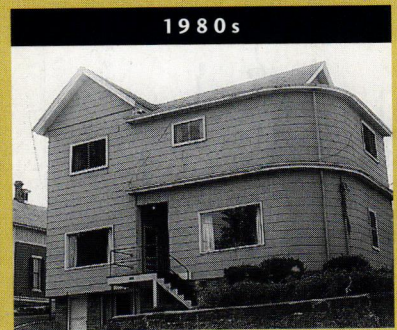
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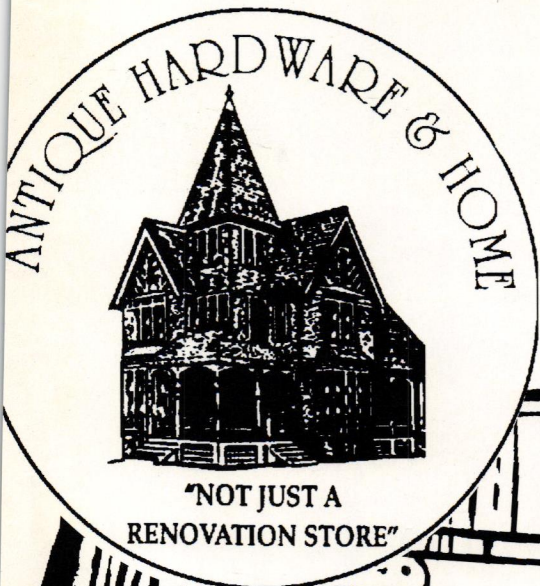
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Special effects of an older kind — specifically, *trompe l'oeil* painting — are at work in The Dalles, Oregon. Look closely at the photo above and you'll see what we mean. Are those shingles over the first-storey bay window, or maybe the bay's over the shingles? Is there really a bird on the porch railing? For that matter, is there really a porch?

If you think you're seeing double, in a way you're right. Back in June, 1984, this two-family Victorian house made the Remuddling page when we noted that the original twin porches (at right) had been walled and windowed out of sight (at right, above). Now the porches and ornaments are back — sort of. This two-dimensional “restoration” may be an honest, but deluded, attempt to rematerialize the earlier features. In the real world, though, even the shadows are only as deep as a layer of paint.

*Thanks to Jacqueline Cheung for capturing the latest incarnation in color.*



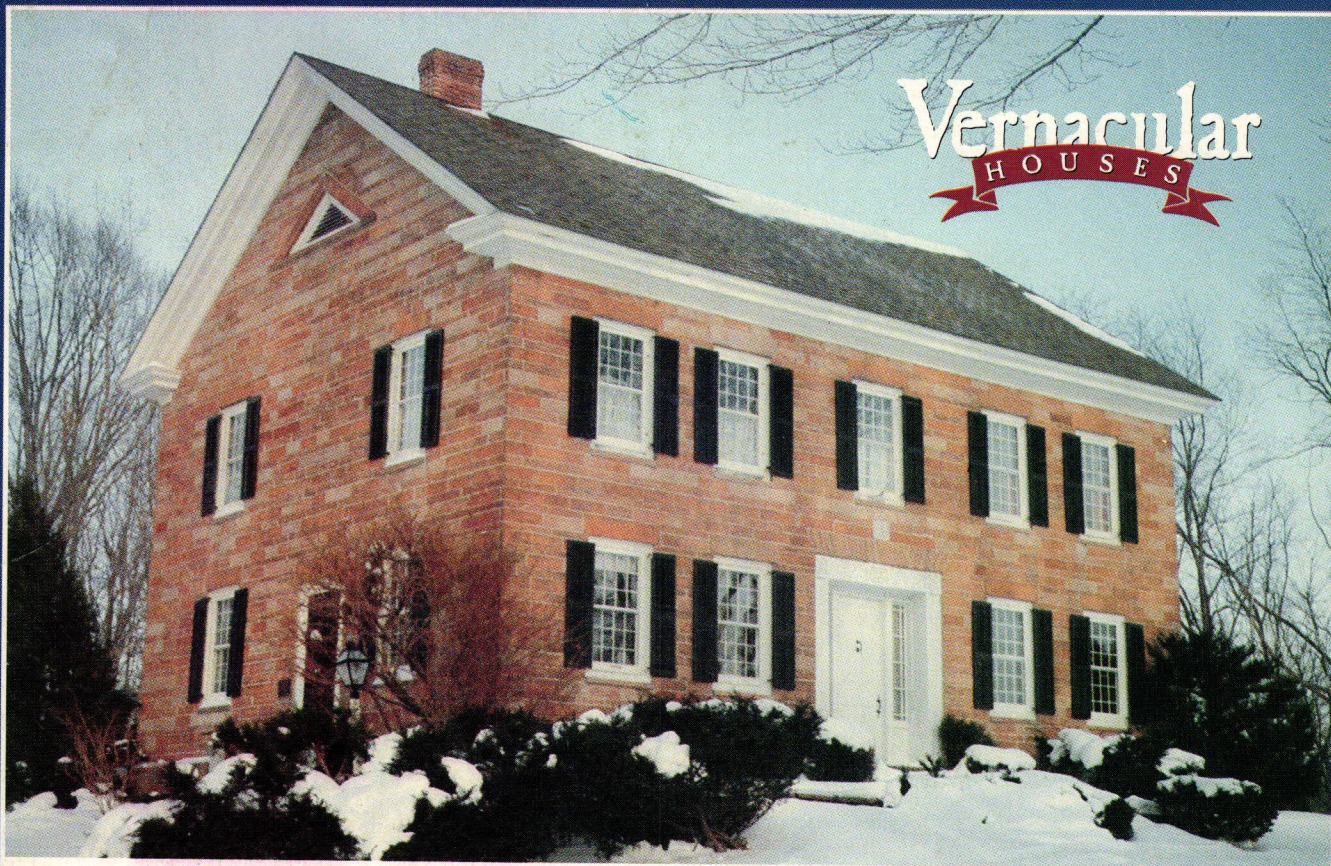


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In the earliest houses, the stone is laid in random rubble walls or narrow courses. By the late 1820s, the *slab-and-binder* technique appeared — a masonry style that is probably unique to the Potsdam area. The stone is laid so the grain direction alternates with each course. The slabs are long facepieces with the grain running



**TOP:** Although less commonly built, some sandstone houses, such as this 19th-century example, were two storeys high with Greek Revival embellishments. **ABOVE:** Slab-and-binder masonry alternated face-cut and bed-cut sandstone.

vertically. The binders are narrow horizontal pieces that tie the 2' thick walls together.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Potsdam sandstone acquired a wide commercial reputation. Railroads carried it as far as Ottawa and New York City. Later structures, mostly public buildings, were constructed with the rough-surfaced, random blocks of the ashlar style. (Only two Potsdam residences date from this era.) The heyday was short lived, however. In the early 20th century, the industry collapsed because, compared to other materials, sandstone was too expensive to prepare. Also, during World War I, there were restrictions on transporting commodities not essential to the war effort. Today, only 25 sandstone houses remain in Potsdam and outlying hamlets.

— SUSAN OMOHUNDRO  
Hannawa Falls, New York