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# OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

JULY/AUGUST 1996

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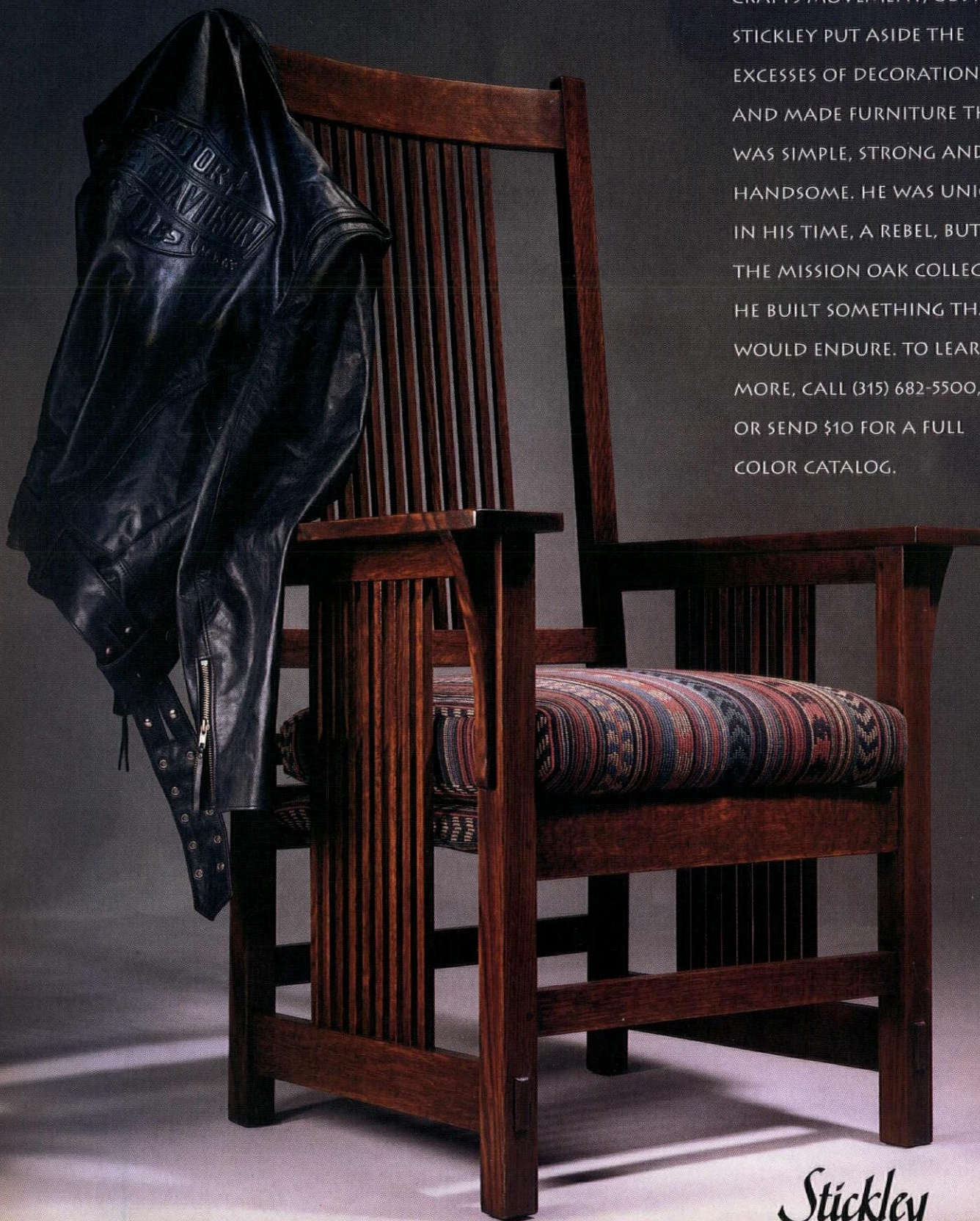


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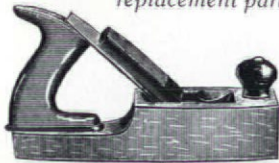
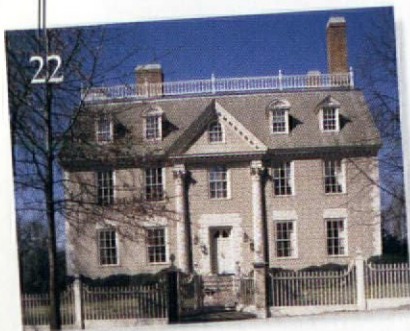
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VOL. XXIV, NO. 4

JULY/AUGUST 1996

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26 STYLE**In Search of  
Craftsman Homes***Gustav Stickley is more famous for his Arts & Crafts furniture than his houses, but many of the plans featured in The Craftsman were built throughout the country. Find out if you own the ultimate Stickley piece—a Craftsman Home.*

BY RAY STUBBLEBINE

**ON THE COVER:** Warm-weather months lure many people to the beaches—and old-house owners to outdoor projects. Bill Horgan, a painting contractor, starts work on a late-19th-century Victorian in Cape May, New Jersey.COVER PHOTOGRAPH  
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34 STEWARDSHIP**Security Measures***If an old house is worth restoring, it is also worth protecting. Among high-tech security systems are a few that can be added unobtrusively to period houses. Learn which ones are right for your home.*

BY JOSH GASKOF

ESTABLISHED 1973



## 50 HOW-TO Colorful Issues in Choosing Exterior Paint

*Choosing exterior paint colors is the bane of many old-house owners. What was the historical color of your house? What if you don't like it? Here's advice on the difference between historically accurate paint colors and historically appropriate ones—and expert ideas on how to pick colors that suit you and your house.*

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*When a skunk launches an attack from under the floorboards, life in a summer cottage seems like a campy horror flick for an old-house family.*

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## 40 HISTORY A Century of Awnings

*Awnings are a classic and ever-so-appropriate way of keeping interiors cool during the warm weather. Here's a review of the history and styles of period awnings, including a source list.*

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## 46 KNOW-HOW Gentle Blasting

*Cleaning and paint stripping by abrasive blasting has long been a no-no because of the long-term damage it inflicts. But new techniques using lower pressures and softer abrasives make it an option in some cases.*

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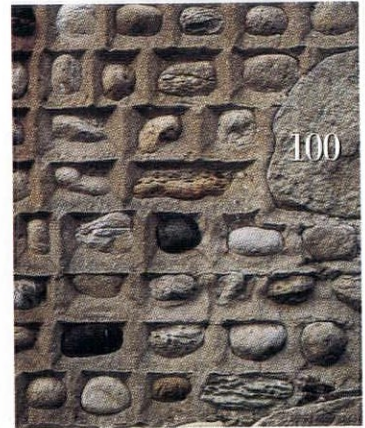
*Sources for shutter dogs, Victorian metal roof shingles, towel warmers, a pneumatic finishing nailer. An Arts & Crafts computer desk.*

BY JOSH GARSKOF

## 62 HISTORIC HOUSE PLANS

*A Northwest Bungalow with wide eaves and exposed rafters. A charming English Revival cottage.*

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*Anachro-balconies.*

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*The second largest group of  
Cobblestone Houses stands  
in Wisconsin.*

## Work Like an Egyptian

**A** SHORT-HANDLED SHOVEL, I'VE HEARD IT SAID, was invented by a fool. Why? Because in a long-handled shovel the handle adds leverage and balance, plus you bend over less to use the tool. Simple advantages like this mean a lot when you're working on an old house.

I call such advantages ways to "work like an Egyptian." The ancient Egyptians, you'll remember, built huge pyramids without a single power tool. Since they had little else, they used basic implements, human muscle, and ingenious methods that maximized their resources. Similar methods will also get the most out of many restoration situations—especially when working outside the old house—and help avoid mistakes (which cost a lot of effort to correct). Here's just a few of the time-honored ones that serve me well.

**Never run empty**—When you're working on an outbuilding, unloading a vehicle, or otherwise commuting back and forth between two locations, never waste a trip by going empty handed. As you carry some material out to the site, think about what you could be carrying back when you return at lunch or quitting time. It doesn't matter if your destination is as distant as a mountaintop or as near as the backyard.

**Excavate into a void**—Sounds obvious here on paper, but when digging a hole in the ground or chiseling out a pocket in wood or concrete, it pays to shovel or chisel towards the area you've just opened up—like taking bites out of an apple. It takes extra effort to cut into fresh material, which is held in place by all the wood or ground behind it. Try it!

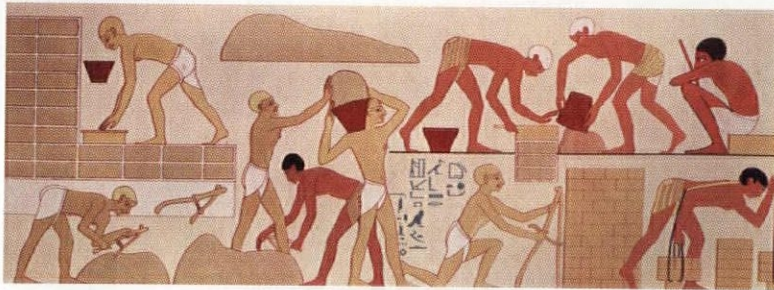
**Work clean**—Keep your hands, tools, work, and work area as clean as is practical. This is especially true for painting, gluing, sealing, and similar chores. Clean up immediately after spills. Once you get sloppy, the

mess quickly grows—almost exponentially—onto your clothes, your hair, and the work. This holds true for dirt underfoot that can be ground into finishes.

**Reduce friction**—When you're rolling or sliding any object, keep the supporting surface clean. Just a little grit on a floor or ramp adds a lot of friction. Another way to limit friction is to lift the object as you slide. Two people relocating, say, a heavy desk don't actually have to have it airborne for benefit, they just need to offset the force of gravity a little as they slide.

**Don't move twice**—When you're moving objects

of any significant size, think about putting them down in a location where they can stay for a while—not some temporary spot. It's inefficient to unload several gallons of paint in one area only to come back and restack them



You don't need power tools to make some old-house jobs easier. The handiest restoration technique can be simple, no-tech, labor-saving advice.

in their real home a day or a month later.

**Work with the seasons**—In the past, much logging waited for winter. Besides low sap levels and lack of leaves, freezing weather brought hard ground for moving heavy logs. To stay away from ruts, getting stuck, and the added drag of a soft surface, avoid moving objects and vehicles across yards and lawns in the wet seasons. Wait until frost—or at least the dry season.

**Don't put tools in your back pocket**—This last item is a personal insight from our own millennium. Screwdrivers and putty knives find a handy home off your hip, but are easy to forget. They come back to haunt you, though, when you're working in close quarters and scratch wallpaper or woodwork as you brush by. Or worse, when you sit down they puncture the upholstery in chairs or the seat in your chariot.

*Edouard Bell*



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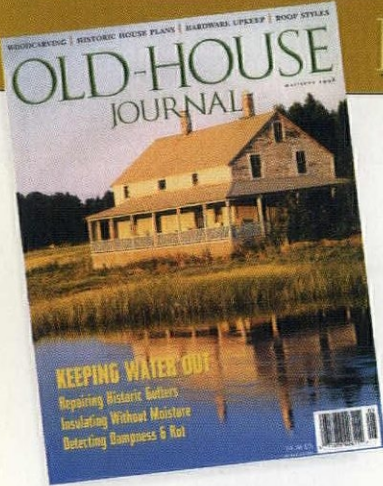
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# M A I L B O X

## ATTACHED TO MULTIPLES

YOUR ARTICLE ON SEMI-DETACHED houses ("Multiple Choices" May/June 1996) took me back to my youth in a suburban Philadelphia quadruplex. The only drawbacks to ours were the unavoidable sound of the neighbors climbing the stairs on the opposite side of the common wall and their occasional loud voices.

All four families got along well enough, but we finally moved because my father refused to accept his counterpart's habit of sitting in his underwear on the adjacent front porch. Fifty years later, I returned, but was disappointed at seeing it barely recognizable after extensive modifications. Thomas Wolfe said it all in *You Can't Go Home Again*.

—ROBERT K. MOXON, M.D.  
Columbia, S.C.

## INSULATION WOES

I PICKED UP THE MAY/JUNE 1996 issue the other day and found an article about the very thing I was researching ("The Dew's and Don'ts of Insulating"). We own a 1902 Foursquare in Portland (rain, rain), Oregon. We have had insulation blown into the walls and painted the exterior last summer. A month after the region's big rain started we saw blistering. I have talked with many paint people and none can

offer a more specific opinion than "moisture problems." Thanks to your article, I have a frame of reference, and some educated guesses, as to the sources of our troubles.

—AL PAPESH  
Portland, Oreg.

## WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

THANKS FOR THE MAY/JUNE 1996 issue. The subject of water couldn't have come at a better time—it was a sump-pump-in-the-cellar,

roofers-on-the-eaves sort of spring. Your articles were very useful.

—DANIELLE SIGMUN  
Storrs, Conn.

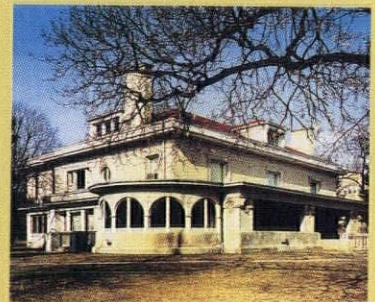
## LINOLEUM 'RUGS'

I PURCHASED THE JAN./FEB. 1996 issue at the corner newsstand and read with interest your piece about painting "Faux Linoleum," especially the brief sidebar entitled "Yes, Linoleum is Historic." The 1917  
[continued on page 12]

## HURRAH FOR MAHER

I AM MOST PLEASED TO SEE A MAGAZINE like *Old-House Journal* publicizing George Maher's architecture ("Prairie Panels" March/April 1996). Maher was a significant American architect and contributor to the Prairie School and Arts & Crafts movements. He designed more than 100 buildings in Chicago alone. Often overshadowed by Frank Lloyd Wright and several of Wright's students, Maher deserves more credit.

The article is particularly pleasing to me because I am executive director of the Pleasant Home Foundation, which governs Maher's 1897, 16,000-square-



George Maher's 1897 Pleasant Home. The architect sought to present "comfort in every form."

foot masterpiece in Oak Park, Illinois. It's a house museum that's open to the public (708-383-2654).

—JACQUELINE K. SCHOMER  
Pleasant Home Foundation  
Oak Park, Ill.

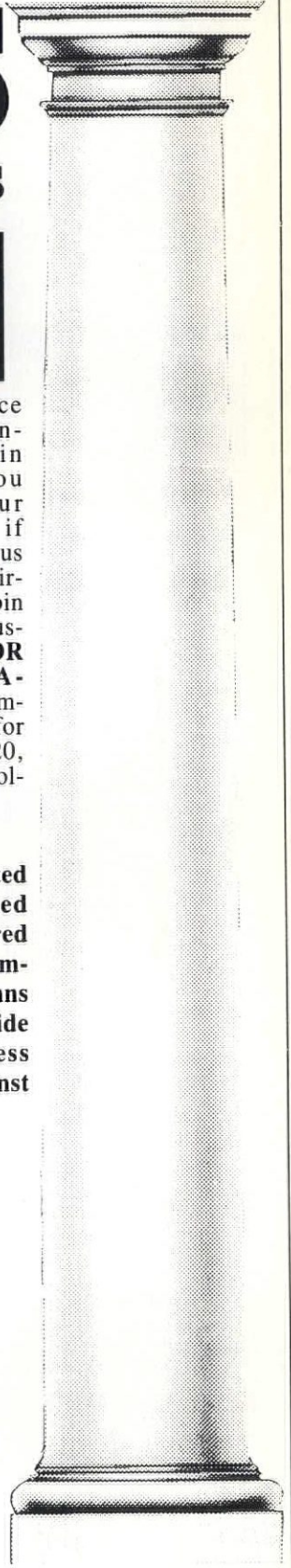
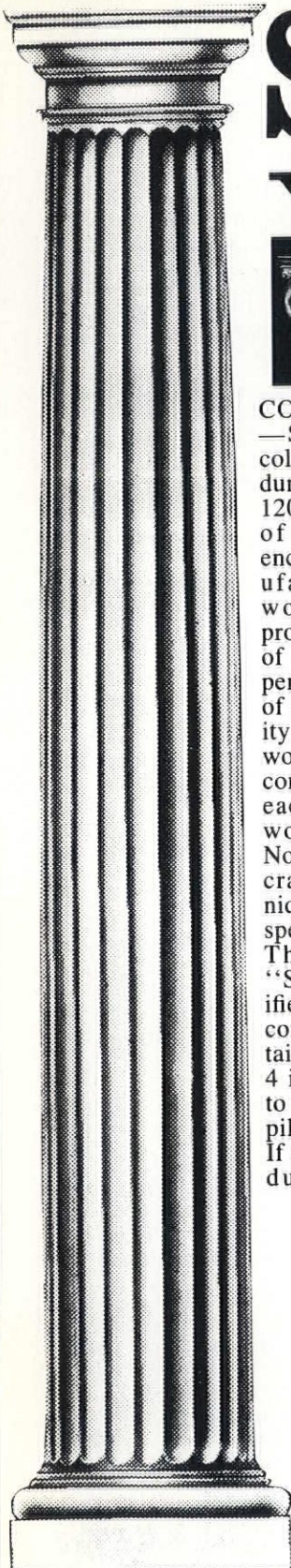




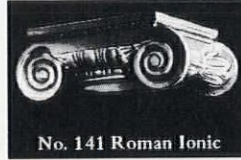
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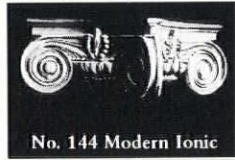
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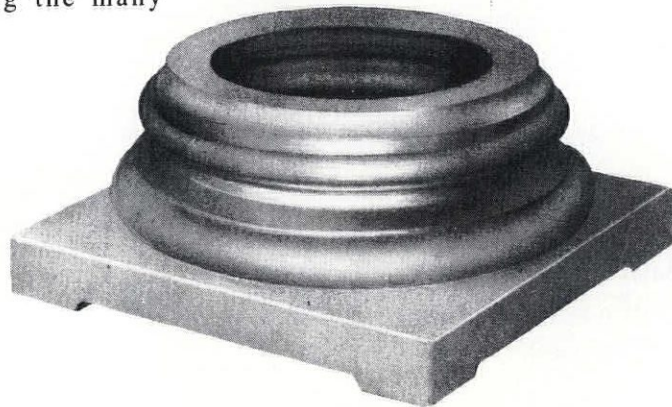
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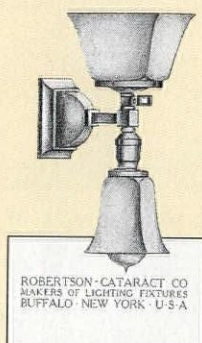
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[continued from page 10]  
apartment I live in has original  
"linoleum rugs" (below). They  
are in remarkably good shape  
considering the traffic they must  
have seen.

—ANGELA MAY  
Porter, Tex.



Linoleum  
imitates rugs  
in a 1917  
Texas  
building.

For more about the history of  
linoleum, see "Before Vinyl, There  
Was Linoleum" (Sept./Oct. 1992).

—THE EDITORS

#### SHOWING US HOW

JUST A NOTE TO SAY THAT I ALWAYS look forward to receiving your publication. Your articles are more than informative. They actually show you how to do a professional job, not like other mags that show you professionals doing their jobs.

—DEAN E. McCAHAN  
Danville, Penn.

**CLARIFICATION:** If you want to order Cottage Water Systems ("Water Books" May/June 1996), you can mail or fax your order, but cannot call on the telephone. We failed to note in our book review that the number printed (519-442-6897) is the fax number. —THE EDITORS



## What will it cost to rebuild their home?

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# Ask OHJ

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## Rust Sometimes Seeps

*Our concrete porch foundation has rust stains from uncoated nails used above to do some mending. I've tried scrubbing with a bleach solution, but I cannot remove the markings. Any advice?*

—Jake Pope  
Portland, Oreg.

REMOVING RUST STAINS FROM CONCRETE requires some toxic chemicals. Search them out at a local chemical supplier, and follow all precautions listed on product labels.

Some stains can be removed by washing with a mixture of one pound oxalic acid in one gallon of water. For a stronger cleaner, you can add ½ pound ammonium hydrogen fluoride, but be careful because it can etch brick and glass. Apply the solution and allow it to sit for three hours. Then scrub with a stiff brush while rinsing with fresh water.

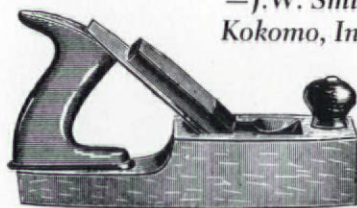
If the stains are deeply imbedded, you'll need to make a poultice. Combine 11 ounces (by weight) of sodium citrate, 2 quarts and 12 ounces glycerol, and 2 quarts luke-

warm water. Mix in enough diatomaceous earth or talc to make it stiff. Apply and allow it to sit for two or three days before washing it away.

## Plane Talk

*I am trying to restore some antique woodworking planes stamped "Scioto Works." Can you tell me anything about the planes or where to get replacement parts?*

—J.W. Smith  
Kokomo, Ind.



WOOD HAND PLANES REMAINED primary carpentry tools well into the 20th century. Even after metal-body planes became common in the 1880s, there were many types of wood planes for smoothing flat surfaces, creating joinery parts, and making decorative mouldings.

We consulted *A Guide to the Makers of American Wooden Planes*, by Emil & Martyl Pollak. They track Scioto Works to the Ohio Tool Company, and date planes with that imprint from 1893–1907. An excellent resource, the book is available from The Astragal Press, P.O. Box 239, Dept. OHJ, Mendham, NJ 07945, (201) 543-3045.

For replacement parts, you could contact Vintage Planes & Parts, P.O. Box 887, Dept. OHJ, Larkspur, CA 94977, (415) 924-8403 after 6 p.m. Pacific time. There are also a number of tool collectors' clubs, such as Early American Industries Association; P.O. Box 143, Delmar, NY 12054.

[continued on page 16]

## Gutter Quest

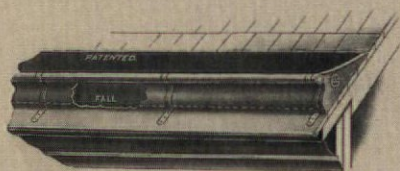
*I'm starting to restore my late-19th century home. I have never seen gutters like the ones on my roof. What are these, and how can I duplicate them?*

—Arthur L. Crowe  
Atlanta, Ga.

YOU HAVE METAL YANKEE GUTTERS (see "Gutter Choices" May/June 1996). Installed on the roof above the eaves, these gutters did not block cornice decoration, and were hardly even seen from below.

We found a very similar product advertised in the 1906 *Sweet's Indexed Catalog of Building Construction* (below).

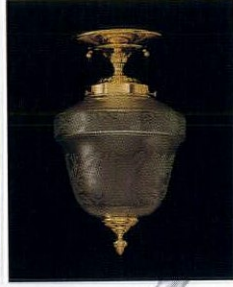
The catalog offered the "Densmore Patent Roof Gutter" in galvanized iron or copper. It explained that in addition to offering drainage, the gutter had a lower flange that served as a snow guard, protecting the roof from ice dams. We don't know of any company that still manufactures metal Yankee gutters. However, a metal fabricator could custom form something quite similar.



The metal Yankee gutters on this Georgia home (top) look quite similar to the model advertised by the Globe Manufacturing Company in Ohio, in the 1906 *Sweet's* catalog (above).

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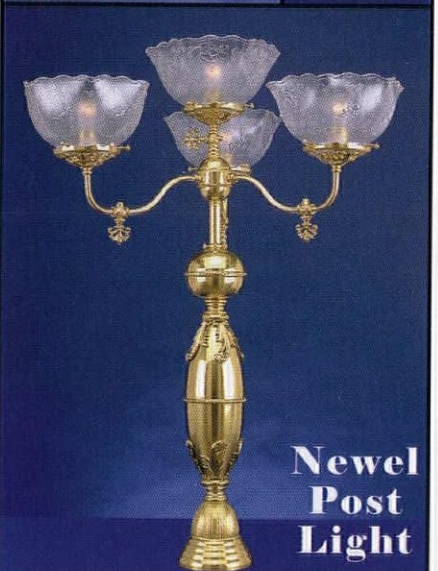
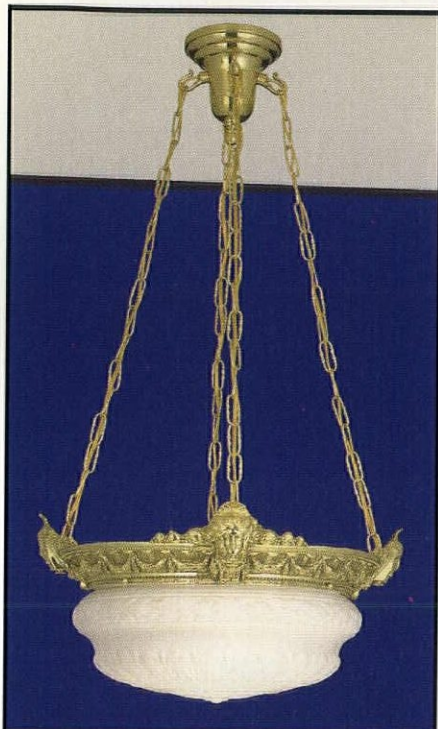
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## Ask OHJ



### Through a Glass, Structurally

*When our 1880s home was remodeled in the 1940s, "Carrara Glass" tile was used on the walls in the kitchen and bathroom. The 12" squares are muted green in the kitchen and black in the bathroom. Our intention is to restore the house to its original period. Would the Carrara Glass be useful for other restorers? How can we remove it without damaging the tiles?*

—Janina Romano  
Kingston, Penn.

CARRARA GLASS WAS PITTSBURGH Plate Glass Company's trade name for pigmented structural glass, a finish material for interiors and exteriors. First sold around 1900, its heyday was from the 1920s to World War II. The glass tiles are opaque with color in the glass—not on the surface. They can be curved, sculptured, textured, and illuminated, creating sleek and modern-looking effects. The tiles were favorites for Art Deco and Moderne storefronts, movie theaters, restaurants, and the vestibules of large buildings. Throughout the 1930s and '40s, it was used to "modernize" residential kitchens and bathrooms with a uniform, antiseptic, easy-

### A 1937 promotional drawing for Vitrolite, by Libbey-Owens-Ford.

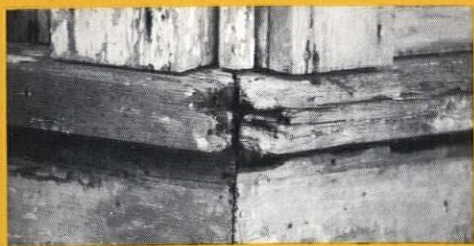
to-clean surface—very up-to-date.

Pigmented structural glass is durable but is easily smashed. Damage can also occur if the adhesive mastic fails. Since the glass tiles are no longer manufactured, yours may be in demand.

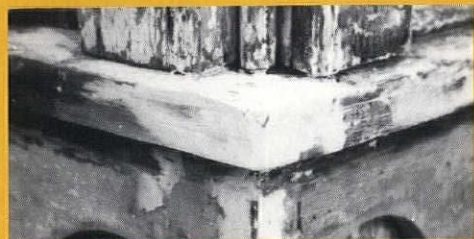
Removal can be difficult, especially if the asphaltic mastic has hardened into the ribbed back of the tiles. Use a commercial solvent, such as acetone, marketed for asphaltic mastic, and squirt it behind the panels with a laboratory squeeze bottle. If the mastic softens easily, carefully pry the tiles with a flat bar. (Use cardboard or thin plywood to protect the glass.) If not, give the solvent time to soak in, and then slide a piano wire behind the panel. With one person on each end of the wire, saw through the mastic. If these methods fail, try steaming the tiles. The heat may soften the mastic enough for removal.

For more information, see Preservation Briefs 12, available from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Dept. OHJ, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, (202) 512-1800 (\$13, in package set).

# Wood Restoration System



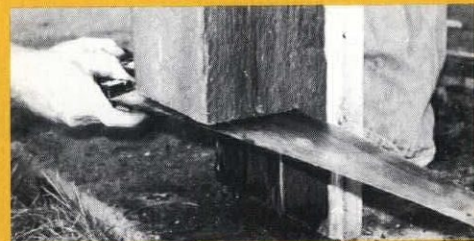
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*10" rotted bottoms of these load-bearing columns...*



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



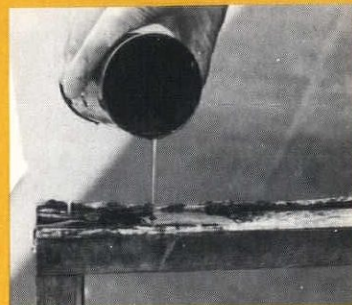
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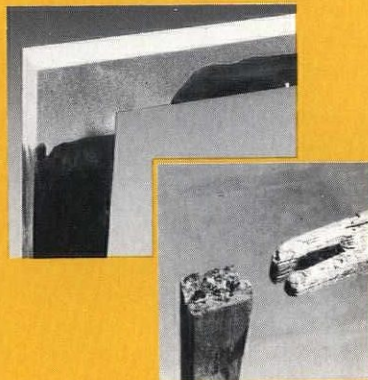
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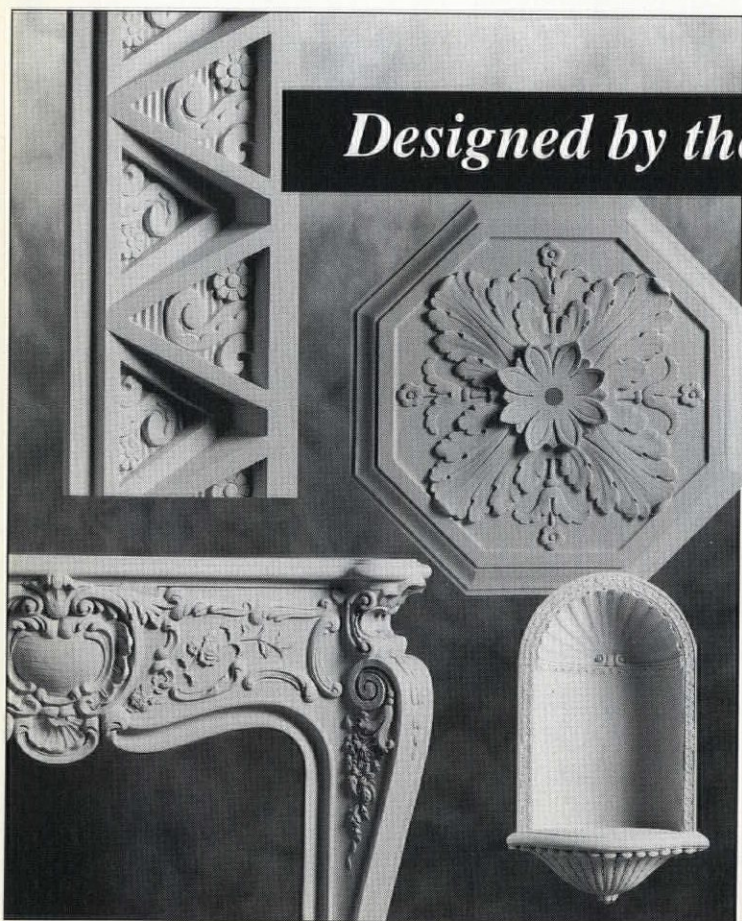


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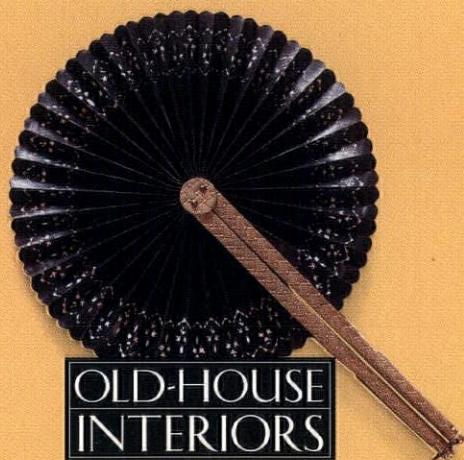
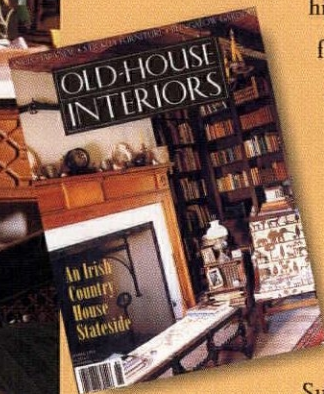
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# RESTORER'S NOTEBOOK

## PAINT-FREE HARDWARE

**I**F YOU CANNOT REMOVE HARDWARE from a door, cabinet, window, or other area that you're painting, here's a way to protect the metal from spatters. Smear a thin layer of petroleum jelly on the hardware, making sure to completely cover it. Then, when the project is complete, simply wipe off the jelly. Unwanted paint will come away with it.

—SAMANTHA O'BRIEN  
*Eureka, Calif.*

**The pipe dressing works best if the flutes are the full depth of the thread at the end of the plug, and taper to a shallower depth.**



## PIPE DRESSING

**W**HEN YOU'RE REATTACHING OLD threaded plumbing pipes after a repair, the threads are often so encrusted with dirt and rust, you can't get them back together. Instead of buying a tap, you can make an inexpensive dressing tool for cleaning out the internal threads. Take an old plumbing plug and cut flutes across the threads with a high-speed hand grinder. The flutes should extend the length of the threads to create a series of cutting edges. Use a wrench to work the plug back and forth all the way like a tap, and use plenty of oil.

—CARROLL HUDDERS III  
*Larchmont, N.Y.*

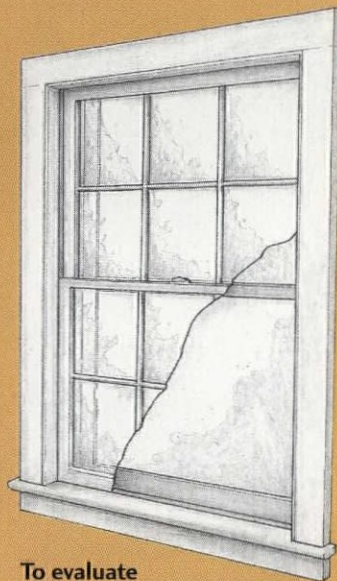
## LAYING LAMINATE

**T**HE TRICKEST PART OF LAYING laminate is getting the material placed properly before the contact cement on the two surfaces meets. As soon as the cement touches, the laminate is stuck in place. Here's a good trick. Lay strips of construction paper, say 2" wide,

## WINDOW DRAFTS

**T**IPS ABOUT HOW TO SPOT AIR INFILTRATION around windows are common: use a lit cigarette, a candle, or a piece of cloth to locate drafts. I offer a different approach. Watch for condensation on the windows in the wintertime. If moisture builds up on the exterior storm window, that means moist air is leaking around the main window and reaching the storm. If condensation appears on the living space side of the sash pane, too much cold air is leaking in around the storm and cooling the inner glass enough to cause condensation. (One caveat: the weep holes at the bottom of the storm are essential to allow moisture to escape.)

—EVAN BALDWIN  
*Lansing, Mich.*



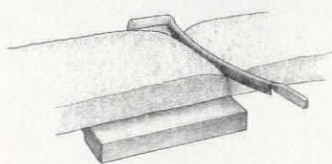
**To evaluate the window's weather seal, determine if condensation is appearing on the sash glass or on the storm.**

across the surface. Place them 6" to 10" on center and make sure the ends hang off the countertop. Once you've positioned the laminate, carefully slide out the paper strips.

—K. CHEIPPO  
*Loveland, Colo.*

## CUTTING BATT INSULATION

**I**CUT FIBERGLASS BATT INSULATION with a lever-arm paper cutter. It's easier and quicker than using a utility knife, plus you get accurate lengths and square cuts every time. At first I thought the insulation would quickly dull the blade, but it hasn't. An unanticipated benefit is that the



**Lay out a measuring tape and roll the batt insulation over the paper cutter to the length desired.**

shearing action releases a minimum of glass fibers into the air.

—DENNIS ERDELAC  
*Chesterton, Ind.*

## IS IT LATEX OR OIL-BASED?

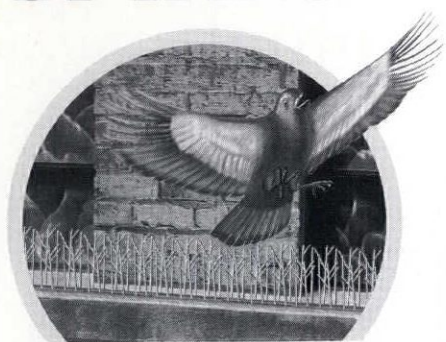
**I**F YOU'RE PAINTING OVER AN OLD painted surface, it's best to use the same type of paint: latex over latex and oil-based over oil-based. If the paint is peeling, see if it's flexible and stretchable, which indicates latex paint. If not, wet a rag with denatured alcohol or rubbing alcohol and vigorously wipe it over a small area. If the paint gets tacky, or if a bit of color comes off on the cloth, it's latex paint. If not, it's oil-based paint.

—DAN FITZGERALD  
*Portland, Maine*

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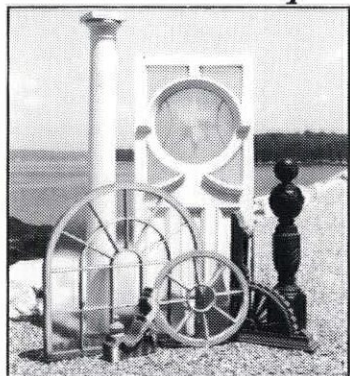
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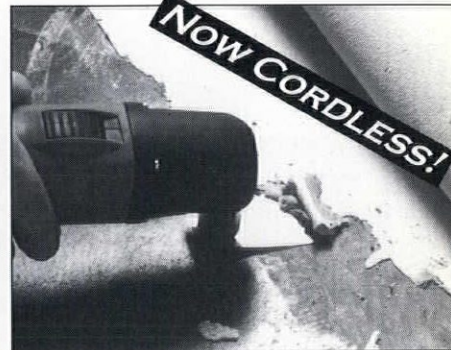
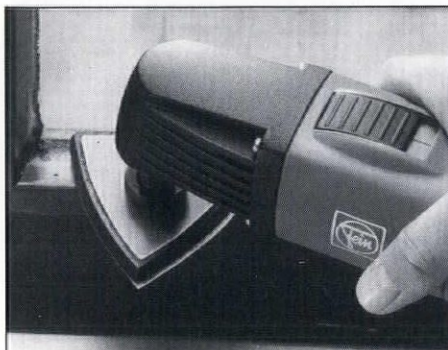


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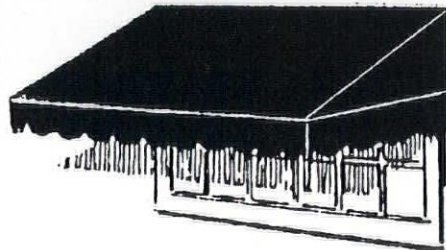
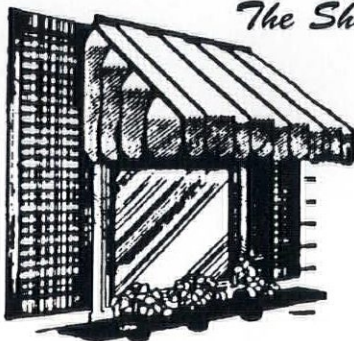
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# Please Don't Call It Colonial (Unless It Is)

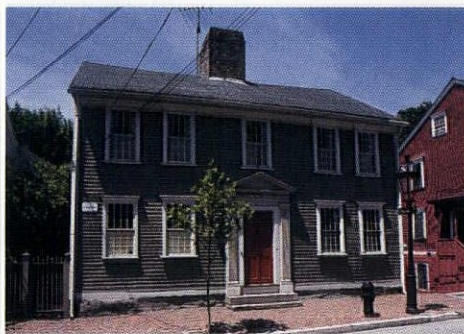
BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL



**W**E'VE NOTICED PEOPLE AREN'T CONFIDENT when talking about pre-Victorian architecture. "That's a really nice—um—Colonial," they mutter, staring fixedly at a columnless Greek Revival house. They know that's not the right identification—but what the heck is it?

There's reason for the confusion. American houses of the late-18th and early-19th centuries do share similarities of shape, size, and/or ornamentation because they came out of a common, basically English building tradition. Also, houses in different areas were inspired by drawings from the same pattern books. But a few simple

tricks can make closer style identifications possible. Here's a quick-and-dirty guide that uses elements as clues to the age and style of early American houses.



**Above:** A late Colonial house of 1792 in Rhode Island is enriched by a fine pedimented entrance. **Top:** Built in 1754, this stylish Georgian house was moved to Washington, D.C., from Massachusetts.

Following it won't make you a professional architectural historian overnight, but you will at least be armed with the same kinds of data pros rely on to evaluate historic houses. One very general tip: the older the house, the steeper the roof pitch and the smaller the windowpanes.

Taking the styles chronologically, and allowing for some inevitable overlap, let's look at how things changed through the years. In all cases, the building construction may be either frame or masonry.

The 1844 Thomas Burgess House in Rhode Island is typical of the Greek Revival style, but without the popular portico. Instead, it has a pedimented end gable, deep cornice and fascia, and corner pilasters.

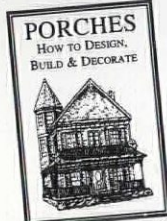


## Many Years Ago

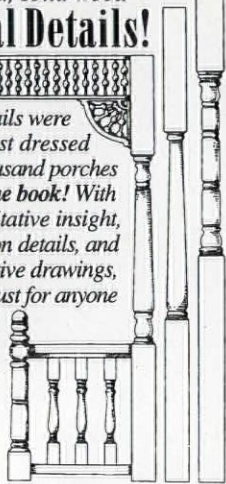
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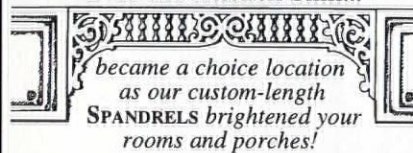
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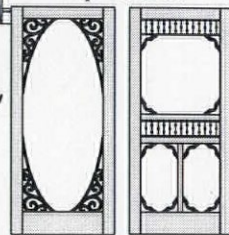
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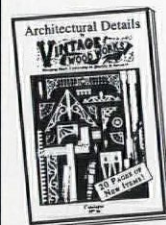
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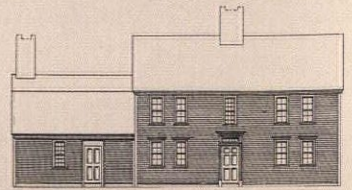
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## Clues to Early American Houses

These characteristics are commonly found in early American houses. However, they are not necessarily unique to a particular period. The hints provide a solid framework for looking—and talking—about what you see.

## Colonial

CA. 1700-1800



Logically, a Colonial-style house would have been built before 1776. But styles tend to linger, so, actual age notwithstanding, look for these Colonial signs.

### SIZE & SHAPE

- Small and rectangular
- 1 to 2½ storeys high

### ROOF LINE

- Gable, sometimes hip or gambrel
- Steep pitch
- Box or simple moulded cornices
- Plain dormers

### CHIMNEY

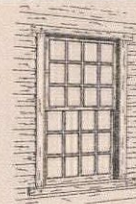
- Prominent, interior (sometimes centrally located) or exterior



### DOORWAYS & DOORS

- Small and simple
- Unornamented entrances
- Paneled doors; some have vertical or diagonal boards
- Rectangular transoms, but no sidelights

### WINDOWS



- Only a few (not large) with small panes
- Double-hung with thick muntins and heavy frames
- Simple lintels; sometimes arched

### PORCHES

- Possible, but not likely
- If one is found, it is probably a later addition

### FAÇADE

- Usually a somewhat asymmetrical placement of doors and windows

### ORNAMENTATION

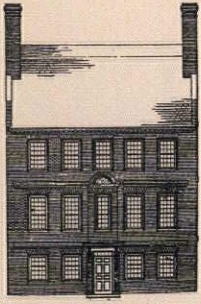
- Sparse to non-existent

### WATCHWORDS

- Small, simple

# Georgian

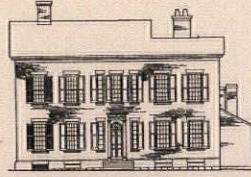
CA. 1740-1790



As the first formal style in American architecture, Georgian combines big, blocky outlines with bold, classically inspired ornament and rigid symmetry.

# Federal

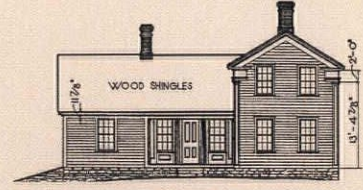
CA. 1790-1830



The Federal style (roughly corresponding to England's Regency style) is easy to confuse with Georgian, but it is more refined with restrained ornament and flat-surfaced walls.

# Greek Revival

CA. 1820-1860



The problem is identifying vernacular forms of Greek Revival, which lack the signature columns and porticoes associated with Tara and other fantasies of the Old South.

- Rectangular or nearly square
- 2 to 3 storeys high

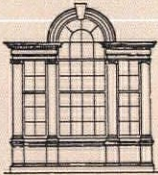
- Gable, hip (or deck-on-hip), sometimes gambrel
- Lower roof slope than Colonial ones
- Prominent, gable or hip dormers
- Possibly balustrades

- Prominent



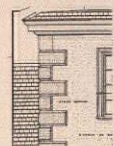
- Often heavily ornamented frontispieces or "ensembles" of classical columns, pilasters, and broken pediments with semi-circular fanlights

- Double-hung with muntins
- Palladian windows appear
- Classical ornament and heavy tracery
- *Voussoirs* (lintels with angled, wing-like stone ends) common



- Square entrance porch
- Occasionally, a portico

- Very symmetrical placement of doors and windows



- Formal, classical ornament
- Large cornices with modillions; corner pilasters or quoins

- Bold, formal, decorative

- Rectangular or nearly square
- 2 to 3 storeys high

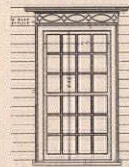
- Hip (or deck-on-hip) and gable
- Lower roof slope than Georgian ones
- Parapets on finer houses
- Dormers with low-arch window heads

- Less noticeable; plain, not ornamented
- Symmetrically placed



- Delicately scaled, classical ornament similar to Georgian
- Semi-circular or elliptical fanlights with tracery
- Double paneled doors; rectangular sidelights

- Double-hung with larger panes; thin muntins and frames
- Sometimes floorlength
- Palladian windows
- Flat lintels, not arched; often flush with the wall



- Entrance porches may be semi-circular
- Porticoes are common

- Symmetrical placement of doors, windows, and other building elements
- Lateral building wings are common

- Formal ornament in the Adamesque mode
- Dentils and modillions at the cornice
- Garlands, swags, and cartouches



- Formal, symmetrical, delicate

- Generally rectangular
- Usually 2 storeys high

- Nearly flat with parapet, but also gabled, especially on vernacular houses
- Roof slope is lower than before
- Large, plain cornices and fascias

- Not prominent

- Much classical Greek ornament: anthemions, dentil moulding, swags, fans, key frets
- Rectangular, 3- to 7-light transoms
- Paneled doors, rectangular sidelights

- Double-hung, even triple-hung
- Large, often floorlength
- Never Palladian
- Often a row of small, attic-level frieze windows just below the cornice



- Small, square, Greek-columned entrance porches
- Large, formal porticoes common

- Ultra-symmetrical placement of doors and windows, although front door often set at one side of the façade

- Columns and ornament of the Greek classical orders
- Heavy, flat cornices with triglyphs; Greek pilasters at corners

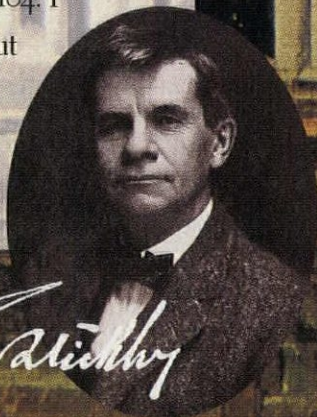


- Formal, symmetrical, classical

# In Search of Craftsman

by Ray Stubblebine

I BEGAN AN INTERESTING QUEST IN the late 1970s. My wife Ula and I were furnishing a 1920s home in New Jersey with inexpensive, golden oak furniture from the last century. One neat-looking rocker I brought back from an auction was painted black. I still remember the thrill of watching stripper lift paint off the back stretcher, revealing Gustav Stickley's burned-in compass trademark. ■ We became collectors of more Mission-style furniture and felt it would only look right in an Arts & Crafts house. After a two-year search we found one nearby. Again, stripping paint from the interior woodwork gave indications that we had another Stickley. ■ Ula bought a reprint of *More Craftsman Homes* and there was our house, Plan No. 104. I wanted to know more about Stickley's house plans, so I started researching. Here's what I've learned so far.



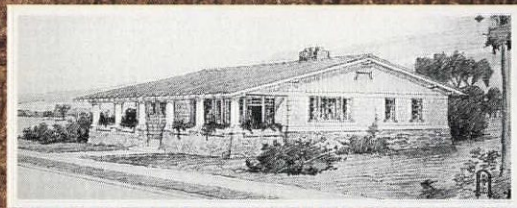
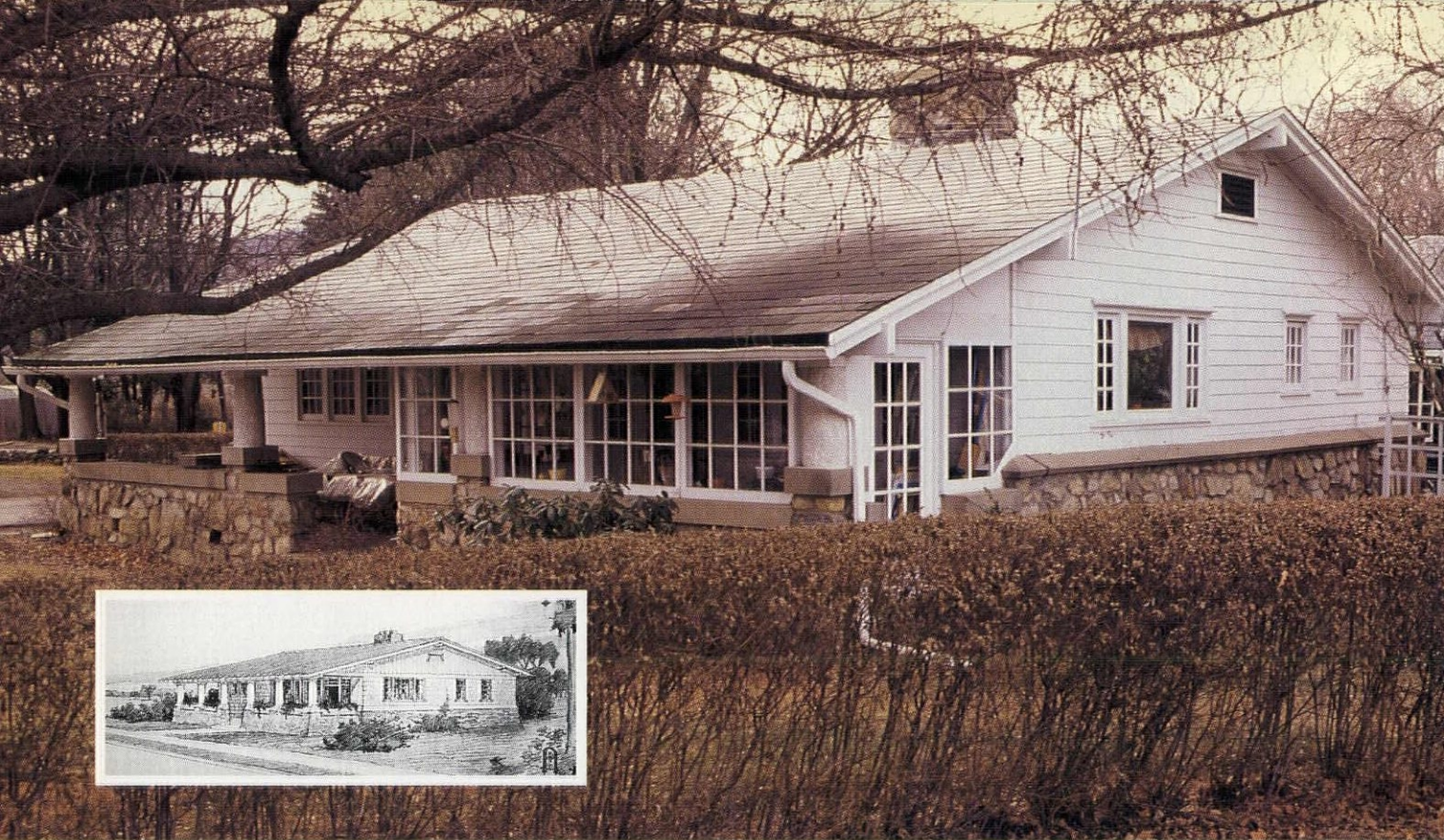


# Homes

How to Recognize Houses from Stickley's Magazines



Among the scores of houses featured in 15 years of *The Craftsman*, only this plan (No. 10 from October 1904) was printed in color. A modified version is known to have been built in Washington, D.C., by attorney S. Hazen Bond, yet others may be waiting to be found. Inset: Gustav Stickley about 1911.



This striking bungalow house in northern New Jersey is No. 75 (1909). As built by photographer Roger Millen in 1911, the porch uses four pillars instead of six. Though Stickley is often described as a purveyor of bungalows, fewer than half his plans came even this close in design.

As many OHJ readers know, Gustav Stickley (1858-1942) was not just a furniture manufacturer, but the publisher of a seminal periodical of the Arts & Crafts movement, *The Craftsman*. From the first issue in 1901, it ran articles containing pictures and descriptions of homes. Stickley, a savvy promoter, used the magazine to spread the appeal of his product line as well as his own ideas about house design and domestic issues. Yet by the time it ceased publication in 1916, *The Craftsman* had become the medium for a much broader vision: a house that blends with its furniture to form a new living environment and a new lifestyle.

According to the magazine, Craftsman Homes were designed “to substitute the luxury of taste for the luxury of costliness.” Stickley’s philosophy and decorative details may have been simple, but his plans were expensive to execute. Consequently, houses supposedly marketed for the masses appear to have been built by those in the middle and upper classes.



Stickley distributed many pamphlets and catalogs to advertise his house plans—and the products he sold to furnish them.

### Plans for the Future

WITHIN THREE YEARS STICKLEY had taken *The Craftsman* to another level by offering plans for Craftsman-style houses that his readers could order and build themselves. This enterprise was a favorite with subscribers and Stickley alike, running (with two short lapses) for the life of the magazine—some 240 plans. Stickley marketed the service aggressively and republished many plans—probably the most popular ones—in two books: *Craftsman Homes* (1909) and *More Craftsman Homes* (1912).

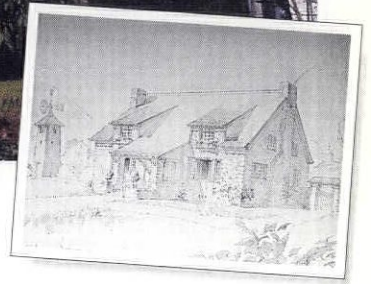
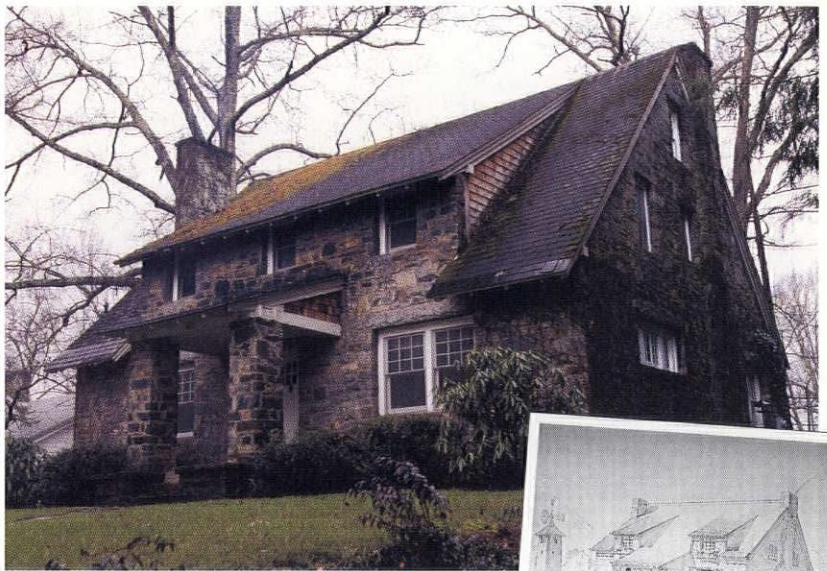


John and Mary Cone built No. 2 from the 1905 series near Hartford, Connecticut, shortly after it was published.

The appeal of the Craftsman House was that the owner had an expressive alternative to the kit homes produced by Aladdin or Sears without having to hire an architect. Using Stickley's detailed working blueprints, these home builders could consult with their contractor and modify the plans to suit their needs and tastes. In fact, Stickley encouraged this kind of customizing, and many readers adapted his plans.

I've been searching for built versions of Craftsman Homes now for over ten years and with some success. The magazine featured some houses in various parts of the country, but we can only guess how many were actually built. I look for houses wherever I travel, as a photojournalist or on vacation. They appear especially in areas served by the turn-of-the-century streetcars and commuter railroads, and in towns with universities and art communities.

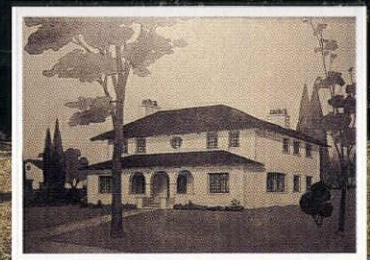
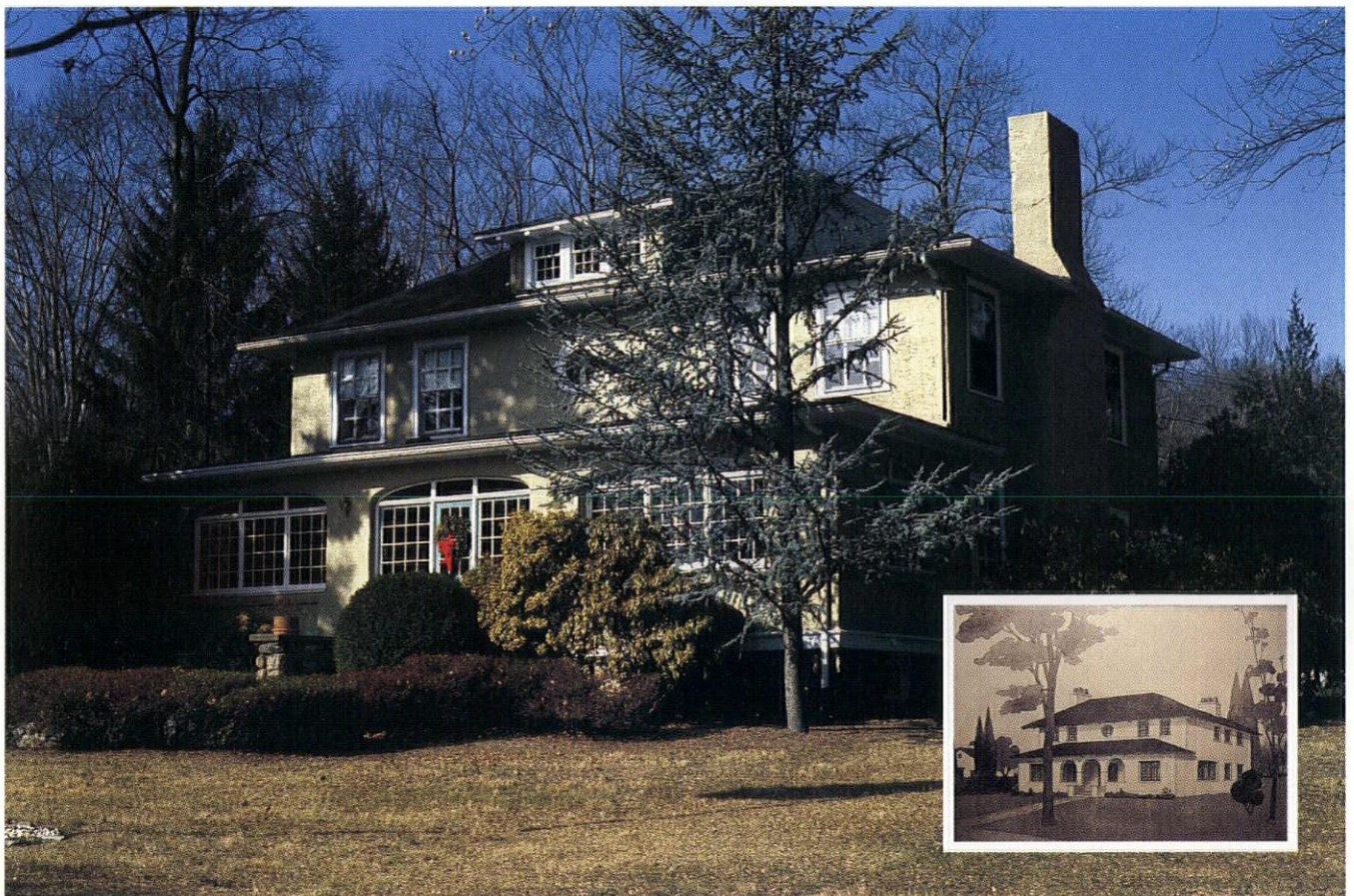
*The Craftsman Home Builders' Club began with this plan. A 1910 example in Mountain Lakes, New Jersey—not far from Stickley's home—shows the plans could be varied (note the hip roof) and easily modified (here, with dormer).*



### A History of the Plan Service

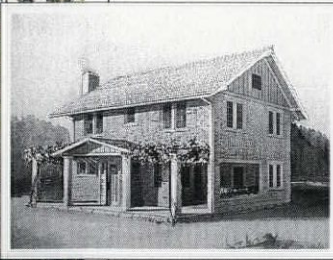
KNOWING THE RISE AND FALL OF STICKLEY'S house plan enterprise helps with the search. The "Craftsman House" label is used for the first time in 1903 with several homes designed by architect Ernest G.W. Dietrich. The interior drawings naturally highlight Stickley's Craftsman furniture, but they also

Royal and Louise Morrow built No. 69 in the North Carolina mountains. Except for uniting the dormers, the 1915 exterior is quite faithful to the plans.





My own Craftsman Home is No. 104 from December, 1910. The original plan called for brick construction, a slate roof, and cedar boards in the gables. In 1911 patent attorney Edward W. Vaill not only reversed the plans, he chose structural hollow tiles for walls and Spanish tiles for the roof.



suggest a coordination between furnishings and house. The same year sees the legendary tenure of architect Harvey Ellis. While Ellis's houses were appearing in the magazine, Stickley was gearing up the plan service, called the "Craftsman Home Builder's Club." It's probable that Ellis recognized that *The Craftsman* would be the ideal platform for such a venture.

## Adventures in House-Hunting

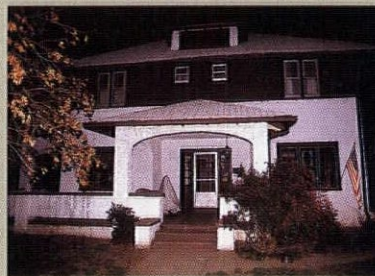
**A**mong the Craftsman Houses I've found, many have suffered over 90-plus years. I've learned to "see" beneath aluminum siding, and enclosed porches. Some are now located in "undesirable" areas. Yet if I spy a low roof with wide eaves I'll still jam on the brakes.

Almost without exception, the owners already sense their house is special—even though they rarely know its history. I am struck, too, by how much they like their house. My search has produced some funny stories—and sad ones, too.

Once I was driving in northern Virginia about dusk with my fellow house-hunter, Joe Farmarco. I had a picture of a house that I thought was a Craftsman, so we drove into town to find two patrol cars with officers having coffee. After examining the very unclear photocopy, one officer directed us to a hilly section to the north. "It'll be in that area," he said.

We came upon a man in his bathrobe walking a dog. When Joe leaned out the window to ask

about the house, naturally the man didn't have his glasses, so we were invited home to be joined by his wife with her hair in curlers. Their son offered to help. One look at the picture and he drove off with the sound of squealing tires and



Midnight photography never shows a house at its best, but on a hunt like this sometimes you shoot first and ask questions later.

smell of burned rubber. In no time he was back with good news.

At slightly after midnight we arrived at our destination. The house sat shimmering white in the full moonlight with a large FOR SALE sign on the lawn. I grabbed my flashlight, stole up to the front window, and peered inside. "Well,

you've come all this way," said Joe, "but remember: they shoot prowlers down here!" I began to walk around taking flash pictures.

Suddenly the upstairs lights went on. Soon a man was standing on the front porch, bathrobed and barefoot in the cold February air asking, "What the @#\$% is going on here!" Seizing the opportunity, I grabbed the picture and a *Homes* book, then ran up the stairs to show him what he owned.

After a minute of shivering on the steps he said, "I guess you'll be wanting to come inside." He allowed me to take photos of the downstairs, apologizing that his wife was asleep upstairs. At 1:30 AM, with handshakes and good-byes, we resumed our journey. One week later, the mail delivered color slides of the exterior of the house shot with bright blue sky. Now that's southern hospitality!

Ray Stubblebine is a Trustee of the Craftsman Farms Foundation. He is working on "A Field Guide To Craftsman Homes," and welcomes photos and information (863 Midland Rd., Oradell, NJ 07649).

Craftsman Home Number 1 debuts on the cover of the January 1904 issue. Stickley announced that the magazine would feature at least one house a month, and subscribers could request a set of blueprints for one house from the series per year—free of charge. He also set up an architectural department to produce these free home designs, as well as rework plans or design a special home for a fee.

The articles that accompany each plan include an exterior sketch, floor plans, renderings of room schemes, and elevation drawings, but the advice doesn't stop here. The copy goes on to describe appropriate rugs, fabrics, furniture, and colors.

There's a hiatus in the plans from June 1907 to December 1908, and not surprisingly. Stickley was caught up in a new passion: his Craftsman Farms school for

**Apparently this commissioned home, built to high standards in the New York suburbs, pleased Stickley so much that the owner let him offer the plan to readers as No. 54.**

## Divining the Designers

Did Stickley design these homes, or did he hire architects? In the last years the plan illustrations are signed "Gustav Stickley, Architect." Yet different styles in the renderings suggest different draftsmen. Though no architects are listed in the existing payroll records, during this period

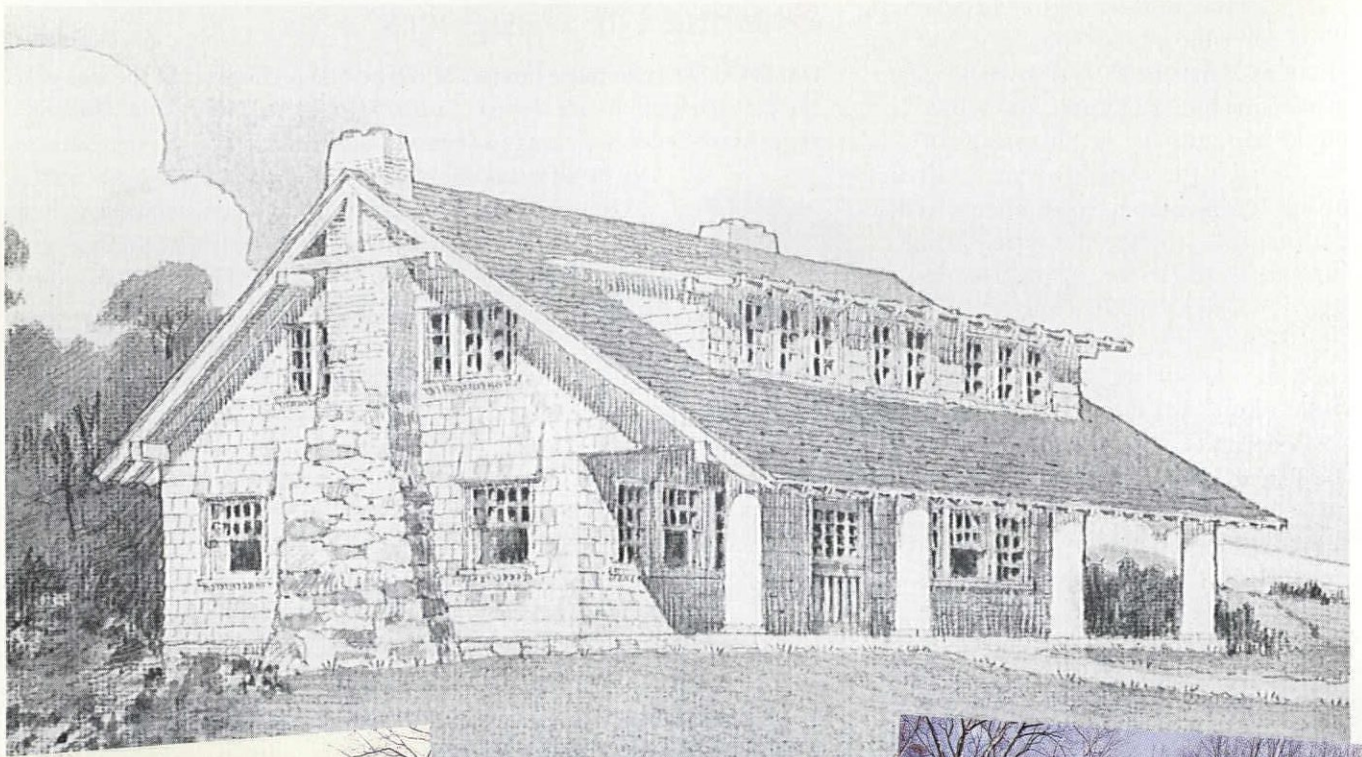
it was common for architects to be unlicensed and to find work as draftsmen. What is known is that Stickley had at least three architects—Samuel Howe, E.G.W. Dietrich, and Harvey Ellis—in his employ at various times.

Multitalented Harvey Ellis is, perhaps, the best-remembered. An alcoholic, Ellis died in January 1904 after only nine months on the job, yet he influenced Stickley for the rest of his career. Ellis's furniture designs emphasized lines and curves and were closer to European-style Arts & Crafts. He also contributed many drawings and articles to *The Craftsman*.

Ernest G.W. Dietrich (1857-1924) left a partnership in 1889 to open his own office in New York City—headquarters for Stickley after 1913. He concentrated on residential design before moving on to commercial and public buildings. He was elected to the A.I.A. in 1921.

Although untrained as an architect, Stickley appears to have been a quick learner. His travels exposed him to the Prairie School architects in the Midwest and the work of Charles and Henry Greene in California. He surely learned from all of them.





If proof were needed about the popularity—and adaptability—of Stickley's plans, there's No. 78 from 1909. So far, five versions have surfaced, from coastal Maine to the California goldfields. Left: Outside New York City is a close match to the plan. Right: Over in New Jersey, developer Charles Hapgood cut the design to  $\frac{3}{4}$  size around 1914.

boys. (The school never developed, and the buildings eventually became his home.) Stickley did, however, find time to launch a new home-building company.

The exact nature of this company

is unclear. While the construction may have been supervised by Stickley, the houses do not appear to be built by the same contractor. Also, most do not feature Craftsman hardware—and it's hard to believe that Stickley would have built houses without it.

The house articles materialize again in January 1909, this time in a consistent format in the magazine. There are two houses to an issue, each with an exterior drawing, floor plans, plus one interior illustration. These house designs are more uniform, too.

As World War One rages in Europe and Stickley's business begins to suffer, the house plan articles lose their interior illustrations and the copy gets shorter. In June 1915, the plans are dropped altogether for one year. They reappear in June 1916, as Stickley's ill-fated line of "Chromewald" furniture is introduced. (One month earlier, *Craftsman* editor Mary Fanton Roberts had run her very personal description of Stickley's bankruptcy.)

Stickley writes he has explored all areas of house plans as an idea, but he is reviving the service at the behest of his readers. Even with financial reverses, he still did not charge subscribers for the plans. It's a good bet that these last houses were designed by George Fowler, one of Stickley's employees. When *The Craftsman* finally ceased publication in December 1916, Fowler (along with Roberts) founded *The Touchstone*. The new magazine went on to offer plans designed by Fowler.

Perhaps the story of Craftsman Homes is just a period on a page of American architectural history, but I believe otherwise. While the ideas of simplicity and utility Stickley preached were not his alone, he rose above his contemporaries in popularizing them. That influence lives with us today and will continue into the next century. 🏠

## Keys to Recognizing Craftsman Homes

### QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION—

Like a piece of Stickley furniture, Craftsman Homes were meant to be refined in execution as well as design. However, many of the houses I have seen are evidence that home builders were not always swept up in Stickley's passion. Sometimes expensive interior details such as copper fireplace hoods, built-in furniture, and extensive woodwork were not carried out according to the plans.

### SITE RELATED—

Craftsman Homes often take advantage of the site and may not conform to other houses in the neighborhood. My home is a good example. The plans were reversed (built in mirror image) so that the house would look southeast down a small hill. The front of my house does not face the street.

### NATIVE MATERIALS—

A home in New England might be built with clapboard or fieldstone, but the same design in Arizona could use adobe or cement construction. A house in the woods was best made of logs or shingles, while stone or brick masonry was the choice where sand or clay was plentiful. I have found a home intended for fieldstone actually built with clinker brick in Forth Worth, Texas. These houses not only blend with their surroundings but were economical to build.

### EXPOSED STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS—

As with Stickley's furniture, the generally massive form of the house is lightened by "functional" details. The broad, overhanging roof—usually with soffits a yard or more deep—is supported by large, open rafters that extend beyond the eaves. Bungalow-style eave brackets, however, are rare.

### MIX OF MATERIALS—

A variety of natural wall materials provide textures for the play of light. Walls may change material at the second-storey line. Chimneys, especially, often combine brick and stone. Entrances, terraces, pergolas, balconies, recessed porches, and second-floor sleeping porches create voids and visual interest.

### OPEN, CREATIVE INTERIORS—

Inside, Craftsman Houses emphasize form and function. An open floor plan is likely, with one room blending into another. Design elements employ wood in exposed staircases, beamed ceilings, paneled walls, and built-ins such as fireplace inglenooks, benches, and cabinets. Grouped windows allow light and air into the interior. Stickley sold light fixtures and hardware that relate as design elements.



## Some Call It Craftsman

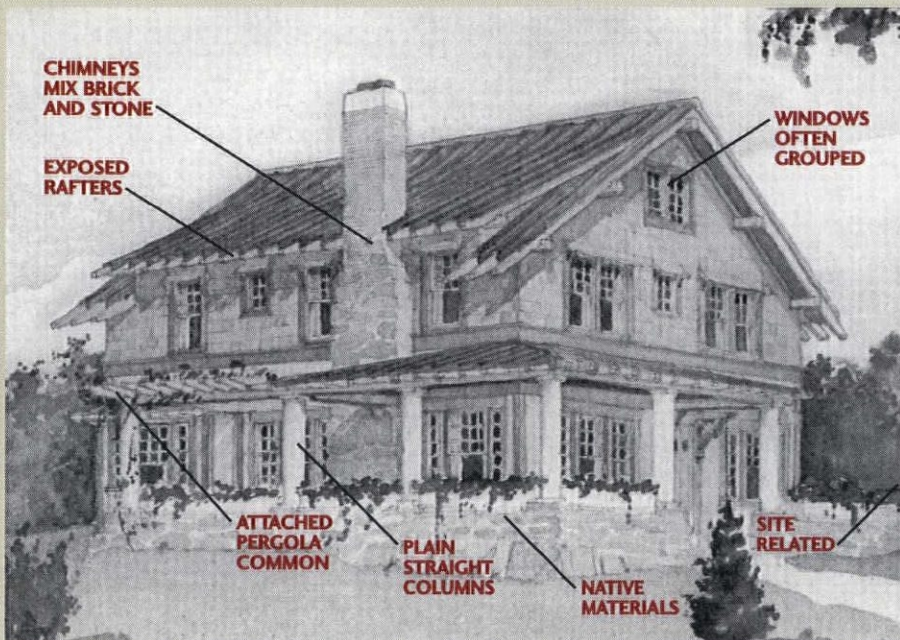
Like "bungalow," the label "Craftsman" has gained several meanings. Though Gustav Stickley chose it as the trademark for his furniture (shown above) and magazine, in the early decades of this century *Craftsman* was used by his competitors, too. Today, both houses and furnishings in this style are known generically as Craftsman. I believe, however, that only a house designed by Stickley can be a true Craftsman Home. The others are Arts & Crafts-style homes.

### FURTHER READING

DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC.  
31 East 2nd St., Dept. OHJ  
Mineola, NY 11501  
(516) 294-7000  
*Craftsman Homes* and  
*More Craftsman Homes* in  
softbound editions; *Gustav  
Stickley, The Craftsman* by  
Mary Ann Smith.

GRAMERCY BOOKS  
Random House, Inc.  
400 Hahn Rd., Dept. OHJ  
Westminster, MD 21151  
(800) 726-0600  
*Gustav Stickley: Craftsman  
Homes* in hardbound edition.

INTERACTIVE BUREAU, LLC  
251 Park Ave. So., 10th Fl.  
Dept. OHJ  
New York, NY 10010  
(212) 292-1900  
*The Craftsman* magazine  
available on CD-ROM  
late 1996.





Some old-house owners go to extremes to safeguard their homes. You can prevent break-ins with physical barriers or electronic ones.



# Security Measures

**O**LD HOUSES OFTEN PRESENT EASY, DESIRABLE TARGETS for burglars. Panel doors, weak jambs, and sash windows make breaking-and-entering a snap, and mature landscaping provides the perfect cover. If the building is uninhabited during a construction project, or summer vacation, the job requires little stealth. Plus, professional thieves know that a nicely restored house probably contains plenty of valuables. ■ You can retain the house's vulnerable-but-historic elements and still protect the building by installing an alarm—a proven deterrent. While thoroughly modern, alarms are relatively unobtrusive, affecting the aesthetics of a period interior very little. Here's a buyer's guide to the latest security-system technology and what works best for old houses. **BY JOSH GARSKOF**

**There's another kind of preservation many old-house owners are thinking about: protection from burglars and vandals. We offer a buyer's guide to alarm systems.**

**Below: Six million homes, or six percent of the U.S. housing stock, were burglarized in 1993. For recommendations about securing the old house with window grilles, see p. 37.**





### Getting Wired

THE NUTS-AND-BOLTS OF ALARM SYSTEMS are electronic devices designed to trip in case of a housebreak. These are linked to a control panel by low-voltage circuits snaked through the walls. When triggered, the system sends a signal via telephone lines to an around-the-clock monitoring station, which notifies the proper authorities. Because old neighborhoods generally have overhead electrical and phone lines, a professional burglar (or Mother Nature) could sabotage them. So, the first things to specify for an old-house alarm are a battery backup and a radio transmitter.



### Lights on for Safety

To deter prowlers from your yard, consider motion-detector lighting, which activates when someone approaches. A detector can be added to an existing fixture, and many lighting companies are now offering motion-detector lights in traditional styles, such as this one by Intelectron (510-732-6790).

**In about one-third of burglaries, forced entry is gained through a door. So when designing a security system, start with wiring the doors.**

In the house, burglar detection devices fall into two primary categories. *Perimeter contacts* sense when doors, windows, and other entrances are opened. They can be pricey because wiring every door and window requires a lot of parts and labor. *Motion detectors* work differently. They sense when someone moves inside the house, and could catch a thief who defeated the perimeter security. One motion detector can protect a large room or even multiple rooms with open floorplans. However, motion detectors must be disarmed when the family is in the protected space.

Perimeter contacts and motion detectors can be used independently or in tandem to design a security system that fits your house, budget, and lifestyle.

## Perimeter Defense

PERIMETER CONTACTS ARE SIMPLE DEVICES. Choosing among them is primarily a matter of how discreet they are. Alarm experts use three different contacts: surface mounted, embedded, and plunge switches.

*Surface contacts* consist of two small bars: an electromagnetic switch on the frame and a magnet on the sash or door. With the window or door closed, the two parts line up; if the magnet moves away, the alarm sounds. These are installed in plain sight, a drawback for discerning old-house owners, but they're still used because they can remain armed when the window is open slightly for ventilation. A second magnet is set 6" to 8" lower on the sash, and makes

## Bars and Grilles

Window grilles have plenty of historic precedent and offer good protection from intruders. If you're installing wrought-iron bars, be sure that you don't turn your house into a prison, either physically or aesthetically.



Create window grilles that suggest the overall style and complexity of the old house's detailing. Simple is OK.

If there is a fire, window guards can lock family members in the house. Generally, there are safe ways to install grilles so that residents can escape. The iron guards can be hung on hinges and fastened by special latches that operate from the interior only. Many states regulate window-guard installation, so check with your building and fire departments.

To get more than vertical, prison-like bars, decorate them with cast ornament, scrollwork, or picket tops. Take design cues from iron fencing, railings, or balconies on your property or from period ironwork elsewhere in the neighborhood.

the contact when it's at the proper height.

*Embedded contacts* are nearly invisible—a real plus for period interiors. The electromagnetic switch is countersunk in the window sill or the lock-side door jamb. A magnet is mortised into the sash or the door directly adjacent to the contact. Embedded units cannot be armed while the window is open for ventilation.

*Plunge switches*, used only for doors, are installed on the hinge side of the jamb, where they're well concealed. These are not electromagnets; the edge of the door simply depresses a button when it's closed and releases it when opened.

## An Interior Trap

MANY OLD HOUSES ARE WHAT THE INDUSTRY calls "hostile environments"—stimuli from the buildings cause false alarms from motion detectors. To combat problems, there are four technologies to choose from: ultrasonic, passive infrared, microwave, and active infrared.

*Ultrasonic detectors* send out inaudible, high-frequency sound waves and sense disruptions when they bounce back. The problem is that they are highly subject to false alarms, from such noises as the whistling of a steam-heat radiator and the old-fashioned ring of a rotary telephone. Also, these detectors cannot be used where cats and dogs roam free.

*Passive infrared detectors* don't respond to motion; they sense a sudden change in temperature, which happens when a hu-



PLUNGE SWITCH



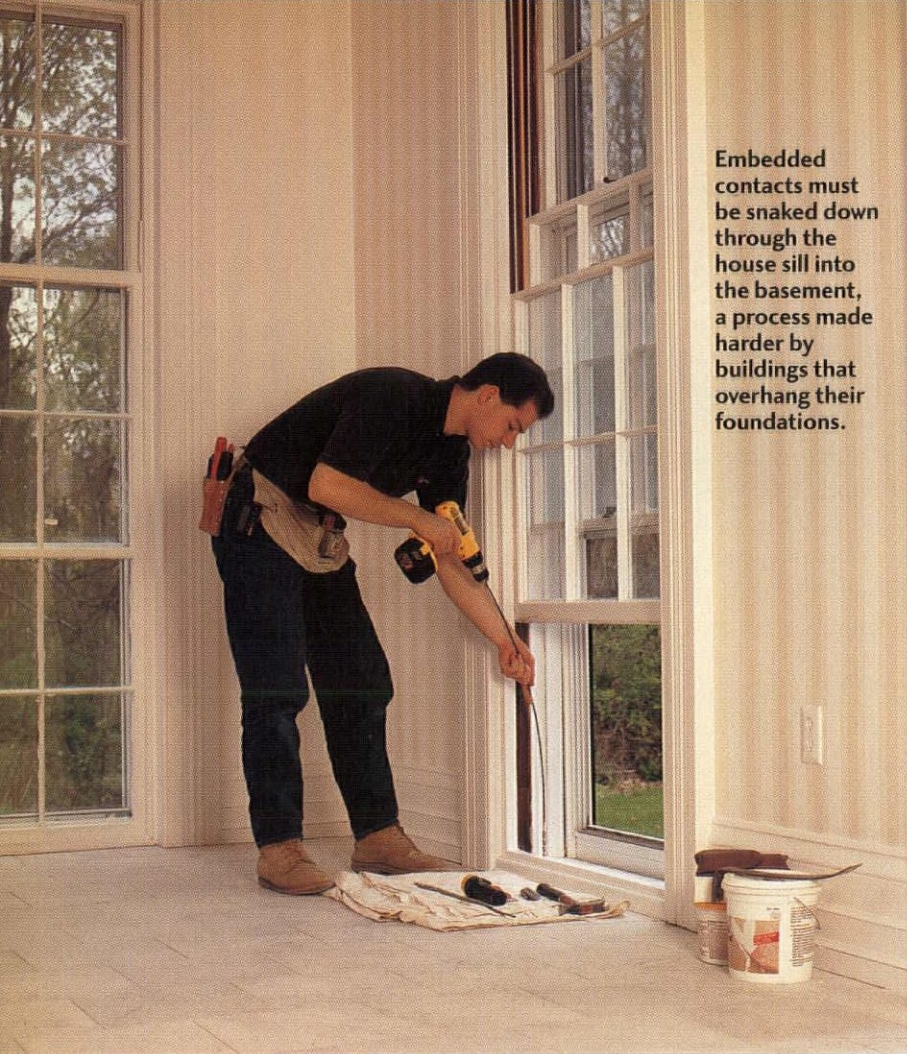
SURFACE CONTACT



EMBEDDED CONTACT

**Below: Plunge switches should be installed where they're protected by a stop on the exterior. Otherwise, a thief could depress the switch with a putty knife.**

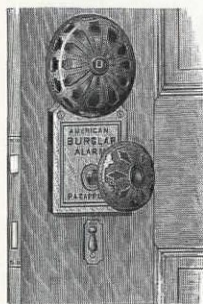




**Embedded contacts must be snaked down through the house sill into the basement, a process made harder by buildings that overhang their foundations.**

## Modern Problems?

“The demand for simple, cheap, and sure protection against unlawful visitors has long been felt by householders,” stated



*Carpentry and Building* magazine in an 1882 description of this doorknob alarm. Apparently security is not an entirely new concern for old houses.

man body enters a room. Special lenses even allow for “pet alleys,” detection-free zones in the lowest region of the room. False alarms may occur from cast-iron radiators, portable heaters, hot-air heating ducts, and windows that are quickly warmed by the sun. To reduce problems, the best units split the infrared beams into two or four elements. Each of the elements from a single beam must be tripped to trigger the device, resulting in fewer false alarms.

*Microwave detectors* operate much like ultrasonic detectors, sensing changes in wave patterns. Since microwaves travel great distances, and through walls, the detectors are particularly useful in industrial applications. For old houses, they must be adjusted so they don’t read motion beyond the area being protected.

*Active infrared detectors* sense breaks in invisible beams of light. This technology is used for “electric eyes” in store doorways.

For old houses, they are used only occasionally, for protecting very long hallways.

The best motion detectors for the most hostile environments combine two sensor methods. With these *dual technology detectors* (often passive infrared and microwave), both mechanisms must be triggered in order to trip the alarm. Start with quality passive infrared detectors and test and upgrade the device if necessary.

## Broken Glass, Cut Screens

WHAT IF AN INTRUDER ENTERS BY BREAKING a window or lifting a screen and crawling through? Perimeter contacts would not respond. For high-end alarm systems, there are three devices to counter these break-ins. Best is installing *wired screens* in the window. The screen is removed and restrung with a low-voltage wire that’s woven into the mesh. The unit plugs into contacts in the window sill. Opening or cutting the screen severs the electrical connection and triggers the alarm. Other alternatives are *vibration detectors* (installed in the window frame to sense the commotion of a person crawling through) and *audio discriminators* (that recognize the distinctive high-frequency sound of breaking glass). Without any of these, judicious use of motion detectors will suffice.

## Going Wireless

OLD WALLS HOLD MANY POTENTIAL BARRIERS to the alarm installer’s snake. Add fine interior finishes, and the job becomes quite difficult. In some situations, the installer may

recommend a wireless alarm. These systems operate with the same sensing technologies but, instead of using circuitry, they communicate to the control panel via radio waves. The benefits of wireless alarms are to the installer; they have disadvantages for the user.

Wireless devices are larger and must be surface mounted to adequately transmit their signal, and because they must be accessible for battery changes every two or three years. What’s gained in installation ease is lost in aesthetics. Also, while it’s not difficult, changing batteries is a chore and an expense that



**The motion detector’s plastic case can be painted, but do not cover the lens.**



All devices should be hermetically sealed and wire connections should be soldered.

falls on the homeowner. Nonetheless, wireless systems are the only option in some masonry buildings.


### The Bells and Whistles

WHATEVER COMBINATION OF DEVICES YOU choose, you'll control the network with a keypad. Quality models offer display screens that indicate the status of the system, remote control via a telephone (great for cellular phone users), and two-way communication with the monitoring station in emergencies.

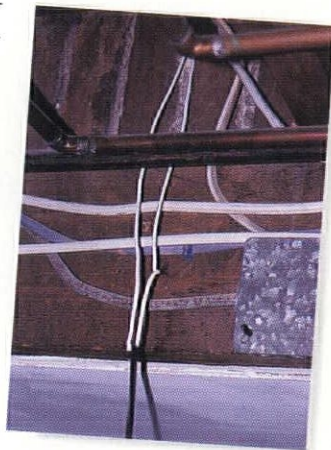
Beyond user-friendly technology, top-of-the-line alarm systems have individual circuits for each device. This means that the

alarm will specify which device has been triggered, even for non-burglary emergencies. (Options include devices that sense smoke, flooding basements, and freezing or overheating temperatures.) Most importantly, with zoned systems, pushing a few buttons on the keypad will selectively activate the zones: motion detectors on the first storey can operate at night while the family is upstairs, or a back door can be left open during a cookout while the rest of the perimeter is armed.

Keypads are installed near entrances, and often in the master bedroom and at second-storey landings. If the high-tech device would be out of place in your historic vestibule, place the unit in a coat closet.

With an electronic alarm, your old house still has its original doors and windows, but they're no longer easy prey. Let the world know it by using the stickers and signs provided by the company. 

*Special thanks for technical assistance to Ralph Graham, American Alarm & Communications, Arlington, Mass. Appreciation also to Lou Gilbert, ADT, Boston Regional Office and James Baker, Sentry Protective Systems, Malden, Mass.*



Firestops, thick timbers, and hurricane bracing make snaking wires difficult.

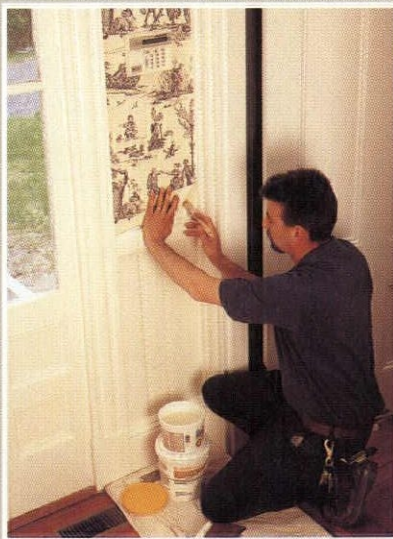
## Good Companies

Installing and monitoring alarms is a \$10-billion-per-year industry in the United States. In most areas—and certainly where security is a concern—the phone book offers pages full of alarm companies.

Pick wisely.

Good alarm installers do custom work, and the price should be custom, too. Installation will cost anywhere from \$500–\$1,000. This is largely dependent on the size of your home, but also on the choices you make. Monthly monitoring fees range from \$20–\$30, regardless of the alarm's complexity.

Look for a company that offers a lifetime warranty on parts and labor. Some will even pay for false-alarm charges imposed by the municipality



Pick a company that recognizes the differences between balloon and platform framing and between standard wallpaper and a hand-blocked reproduction.

(typically \$100–\$200 per false alarm after the first two or three of the year because of the demand on the local police department). One way to be sure that you can always get in touch with the company, not just its voice-mail, in the event of a malfunction is to select a company that operates its own 24-hour monitoring station.

Read your contract (as always). You don't want any clauses that say wiring may be surface-mounted or that limit the company's liability for damage to the house during the installation. You might even demand a signed guarantee stating that the company will repair or replace, to your specifications, any damage inflicted during installation.

"Awnings add a pretty touch of color to houses in the summer-time. They add quite a festive appearance and are, besides, useful in making rooms cooler during hot days."  
— Charles E. White Jr.,  
*Successful Houses and How to Build Them* (1912)





# A CENTURY OF AWNINGS

BY KERRY S. NORMAND

**J**UST OVER A CENTURY AGO, THE humble awning enjoyed its first flush of mass appeal. Though awnings had been in use since ancient times, the industrial age—with its cheap and plentiful steel—sparked developments that led to their modern form. With steel pipe forming the frames, awnings were suddenly practical for all kinds of buildings, and an industry was born.

The awning's traditional shapes and materials have not changed very much over the past 100 years. The



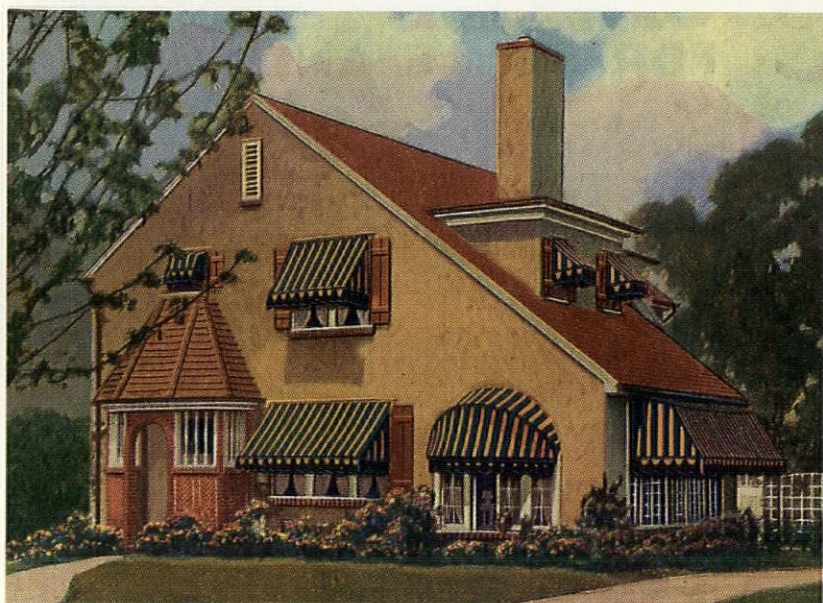
**Solid-color awnings suit this simple 1930s cottage (above) as well as Thomas Edison's mansion in West Orange, New Jersey (top).**

canvas of the 19th century now competes with modern synthetic fabrics, yet galvanized steel pipe is still the most popular metal for frames. Today, you can put together awnings for your old house that will look exactly

like the ones that might have been there in 1900 without searching for antique materials or obsolete parts.

## Anatomy of an Awning

AWNINGS CAN BE ATTACHED TO WINDOWS, doors, porches, or storefronts. Their main purpose is to shield interiors from the sun, but they can also be very colorful and enhance the appeal of a building. Traditional awnings consist of heavy fabric upholstered onto a metal frame. There is usually a *hanging valance* at the perimeter



Standard, circular, and casement awnings are all represented on this 1920s house.

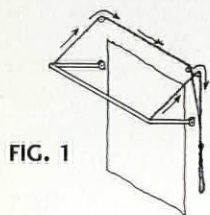


FIG. 1

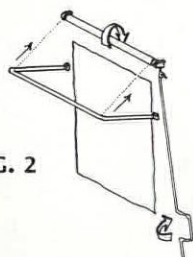


FIG. 2

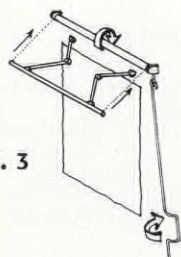


FIG. 3

of the awning that is either scallop-cut in one of many variations, or straight-cut. If the hanging valance is scallop-cut, the edge is trimmed with a *braid* or *binding trim*. If it is straight-cut, the valance is hemmed. Many awnings also have side panels called *fabric ends* to prevent sunlight from entering at an angle. Even in the simplest awnings there is usually a mechanism to collapse frame and fabric against the building. Ropes

and pulleys are the basic set-up, but many special-purpose mechanisms—generally called *operators*—were devised in the awning's golden age.

### The Modern Awning, 1880-1940

BEFORE THE ADVENT OF STEEL, ALL AWNINGS were made by nailing canvas onto a wooden frame. Steel water pipe made a stronger and longer-lasting frame than wood, plus it was possible to bend the metal into a variety of shapes. Lacing the canvas to the frame meant the fabric could be removed easily. Because unprotected steel rusts when left exposed to the weather, the metal parts were galvanized.

Special hardware soon was required to attach the steel frames to buildings. William J. O. Astrup, founder of The Astrup Company, was awarded a patent for such a mount in 1889. Retracting hardware, first patented in 1911, allowed awnings to be drawn up when not in use. Some awning mechanisms were designed to conceal the fabric when the awning was retracted. The Built-in Gear Roller Mechanism, advertised in Sweet's Catalog in 1926, eliminated the "unsightly exposed mechanical features of the old-fashioned type of awning" on buildings where appearances were important.

Textile mills began producing canvas especially for the awning industry. The

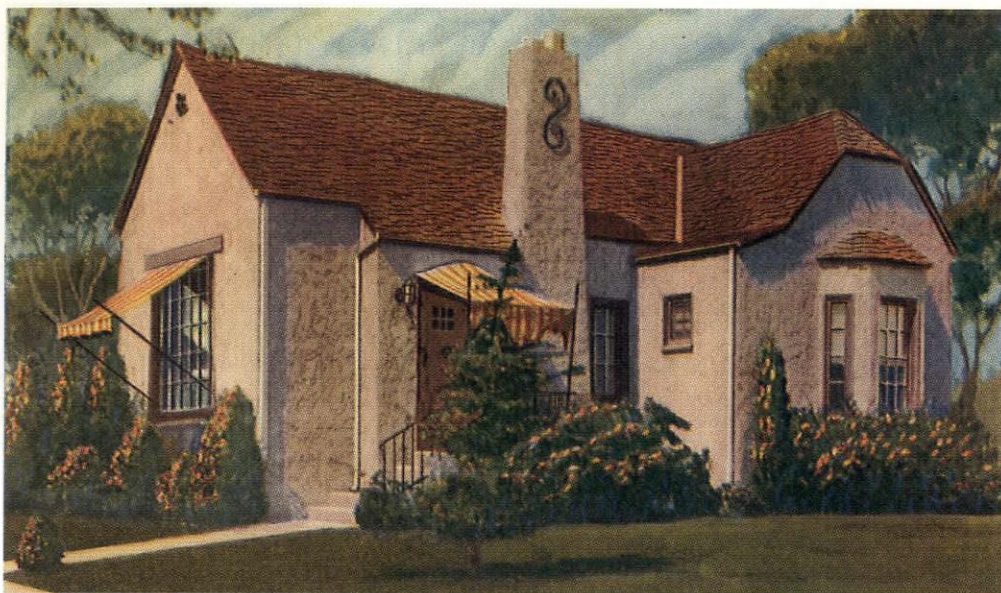
## Retractable Awnings

FIG. 1: Ropes tied to the transverse bar raise the awning. It is held in place by the rope tied off in a cleat. FIG. 2: Two ropes connect to the front transverse bar; the awning retracts when the crank, or operator turns. FIG. 3: Hinged arms bend like elbows when the operator is turned and the awning is retracted.



Striped awnings brighten the façade of this pattern-book house, ca. 1930.





Striped Venetian-style awnings were a favorite for the Spanish and Mediterranean-inspired houses so in vogue in the newly built suburbs of the 1920s and 1930s.

classic bold stripes we associate with awnings were being painted on well before the turn of the century. In 1902, the Sears and Roebuck Company advertised only blue-and-white pinstriped canvas ticking, sold by the yard, for awnings. By 1906, awning offerings had jumped to three colors: white, blue-and-white, and brown-and-white striped canvas.

Brighter colors and multi-width stripes followed close behind. In 1929, Montgomery Ward was selling awnings in a half-dozen multi-color striped patterns painted with "sunfast, rain-proof" paint. An elegant name accompanied each pattern. The "Coronada," for example, came in five colors: green, tan, red, black, and yellow. Brightly colored stripes added novelty and personality for both homeowners and merchants.

While awnings have remained ever popular among shopkeepers, they are seen far less on houses now than a few generations ago. After 1940, air conditioning and aluminum awnings replaced many canvas awnings. In the last few years, though, awnings have been undergoing a renaissance because they're attractive and still

the most efficient way to keep rooms cool.

### The Advantages of Awnings

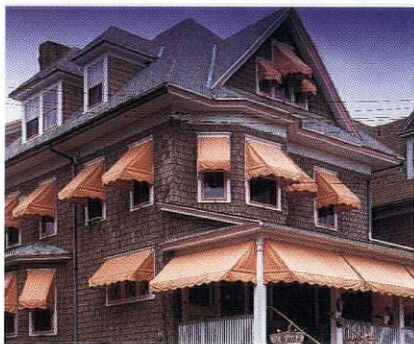
AD COPY FROM SEARS AND ROEBUCK PROMISED that "awnings will help make your home pleasant, keep the sun from fading your carpets and furniture, and will greatly add to the appearance of the house." Here are some other reasons why awnings are practical, especially for older houses.

**COOLER ROOMS:** Depending upon its exposure, fabric color, and size, an awning will reduce the amount of heat absorbed by a win-

dow by between 55% and 75%. (Light-colored awnings reflect sunlight best.) Awnings are most useful on west- and south-facing windows where sun is strongest.

**ENERGY SAVINGS:** Air conditioners run more efficiently if they are coupled with awnings.

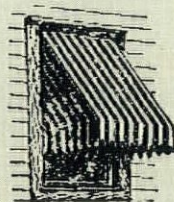
**UV RAY PROTECTION:** Awnings prevent the direct rays of the sun from fading carpets, upholstery, and wallpaper. Homeowners of a century ago were particularly concerned with the damaging effects of sunlight and appreciated the protection afforded by window awnings.



Even the attic dormers are fitted with awnings on this Victorian house in Cape May, New Jersey.

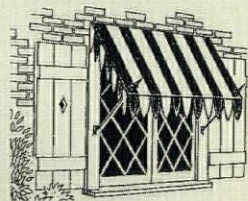
## In All Shapes and Sizes

*Metal frames permit awnings to be of any shape or size. They are made to fit the dimensions of the door, window, or porch they will shade.*



### STANDARD

With side panels and a hanging valance, this is the simplest and most common type of window awning. They sold for about \$1.50 from 1906 to 1929.



### VENETIAN

Spearhead arms and a hanging valance are the hallmarks of this type. The most historically evocative style, they find a home on many romantic houses.



### OUTSIDE BLIND

A cross between an awning and a window blind, the popularity of this type was short-lived. Although one builder's manual claimed it was "very extremely used around Boston" in 1913, modern examples are rare.

## RESOURCES

**AGELESS AWNINGS**  
4225 North 127th St.  
Dept. OHJ  
Brookfield, WI 53005  
(800) 999-8307.  
Awning repair service.

**ASTRUP COMPANY**  
2937 West 255th St.,  
Dept. OHJ  
Cleveland, OH 44113  
(800) 786-7601  
Awnings, spearhead arms.

**EIDE INDUSTRIES, INC.**  
16215 Piuma Ave., Dept. OHJ  
Cerritos, CA 90703  
(800) 422-6827  
Awning manufacturer.

**INDUSTRIAL FABRICS  
ASSOC. INT'L (IFAI)**  
345 Cedar St., Suite 800,  
Dept. OHJ  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1088  
(800) 225-4324  
Consumer information.

**RAIN PROTECTION:** As long as the wind is not too strong, awnings permit you to leave windows open and let in cool air without worrying about rain entry.

## Color

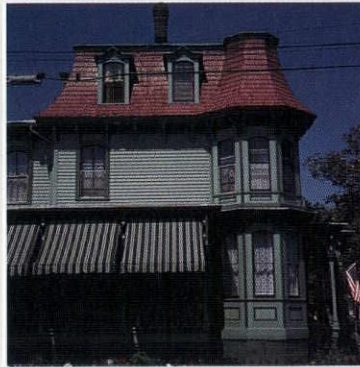
COLOR IS FAR FROM CRITICAL, but past fashions are a good guide. Traditionally, canvas was dyed pearl grey before any color was added to the fabric. The dye contained chemicals to help preserve the canvas. Once the fabric was treated, colors could be painted on the surface. (The underside remained grey.) The fabric could be painted a solid color—white was common early on—or colorful stripes.

The earliest striped patterns were fairly simple—usually white stripes alternating with brown, green, or blue stripes of the same

width. As the painting process was refined, more colors were added and the patterns became more complex: a white pinstripe separating green-and-tan candy stripes, for instance. Most had two or three colors and both wide and narrow stripes.

Solid-color awnings are often preferred when striped awnings would detract from the building itself. Houses with a lot of architectural detail and a more formal appearance tend to be better off with solid awnings. By contrast, plainer houses can benefit from bright, colorful striped awnings.

Awning fabrics still come in countless colors and patterns, both striped and solid. Because traditional awning styles have not changed at all, today's colors are just like those of an earlier era. You can choose a color and



Awnings can be lined up to extend their effect. This long porch is shaded by several.



This stately home, featured in an 1893 supplement to *Scientific American*, displays blue and white striped awnings with a scalloped edge.



Women stitching awnings for the Astrup Company in Cleveland, Ohio, ca. 1892. Painted stripes were a strong selling point for the awning industry 100 years ago, and remain popular today.

pattern according to your taste and the style of your house.

### Fabrics

THERE ARE SCORES OF AWNING FABRICS available, but the three described here are best for traditional-looking awnings. All come in a wide selection of colors, including striped patterns.

**COTTON CANVAS:** The most traditional of the three, cotton canvas is dyed pearl grey and the surface is acrylic-painted or vinyl-coated. It is the least mildew-resistant.

**POLYESTER:** Stronger than cotton, polyester lasts longer and is more resistant to mildew. Like cotton, it has an acrylic or vinyl coating.

**SOLUTION-DYED ACRYLIC:** Developed in the 1960s, this fabric has a natural appearance, resembling cotton canvas. It is the most popular fabric for awnings today. Because the fibers are woven without any coating, solution-dyed acrylic "breathes" better than coated canvas. It also lasts the longest of the three, being more resistant to fading than the others.

### Care


MOISTURE IS THE AWNING'S ARCHENEMY. Mildew will ruin all fabrics in time. During heavy rain storms, it is a good idea to retract awnings, but they need to be extended again so that they can dry as soon

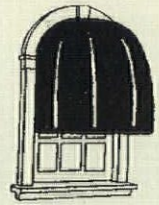
as the weather clears.

Keeping awnings dry is even more important today, with environmental laws that forbid the use of mercury as a preservative. Manufacturers are experimenting with alternatives to mercury, but so far nothing as effective has been found.

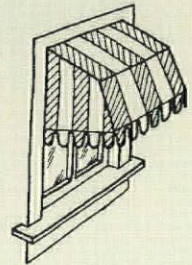
Stiff winds and freezing temperatures will destroy awnings. They should always be taken down and put away in the fall. Awnings need to be thoroughly cleaned and left to dry before being stored away. A mild, natural soap, warm (not hot) water, and a gentle scrub brush clean awnings best without damaging the fabric. Detergents, hot water, and electric dryers are forbidden. Awnings must be stored in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place—not on concrete basement floors!

It is also a good idea to buy an extra yard or two of fabric at the outset so that you can repair small tears without having to search for matching fabric. The binding, or edge, of the valance can easily be replaced. Some awning manufacturers will clean and repair awnings by mail.

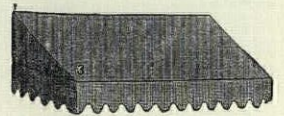
Awnings were very popular on buildings of all types from about 1880 to 1950. Your house may have had them originally. Since awning styles have changed little over the last century, there are few "rules" that apply for restoring canvas awnings to a building. 



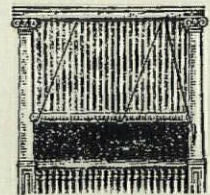
**CIRCULAR AWNING**  
Round-headed windows require an awning with a special frame. This awning can be retracted just like other awnings.



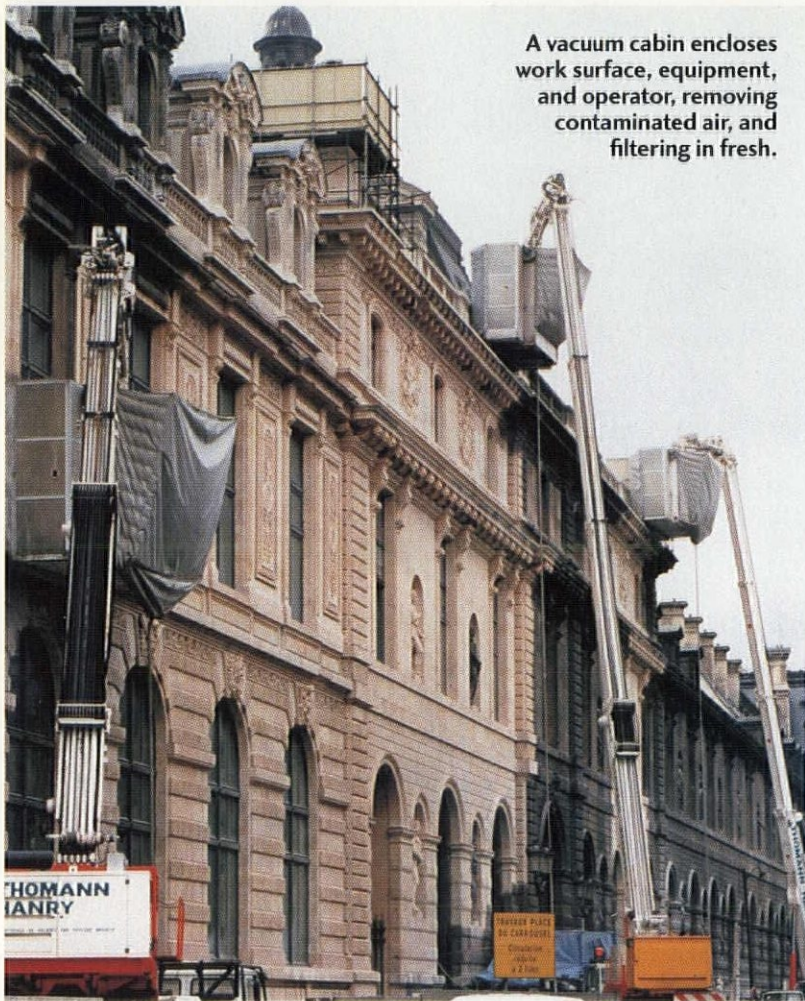
**CASEMENT AWNING**  
Also known as a "box" or "hipped" awning, its shape permits casement windows to open when the awning is extended.



**PORCH OR STOREFRONT AWNING**  
Extra arms allow these awnings to span wide porches and storefronts. When letters are painted on the canvas, the awning doubles as a sign.



**PORCH CURTAINS**  
Not exactly an awning, porch curtains (also called roll-up blinds) "protect the porch or piazza from the heat of the sun and keep out the dust and rain." They are made out of canvas and operate with a roller and pulley.



A vacuum cabin encloses work surface, equipment, and operator, removing contaminated air, and filtering in fresh.

**S**HOOTING GRIT AT A STRUCTURE'S EXTERIOR is an effective method for removing paint, dirt, and other surface coatings. Unfortunately, this abrasive blasting may harm historic buildings. It can erode brick and remove mortar from joints or obliterate detail in carvings and mouldings. Standard abrasives, such as industrial sand, can permanently pock-mark metal and glass.

For these reasons, conventional preservation wisdom rejects abrasive blasting for stripping and cleaning old-house exteriors. Yet, alternative blasting techniques are used in other fields: museum conservators use tiny nozzles to blast delicate artifacts with talcum powder, for example. Since the 1980s, new abrasives and novel delivery systems have begun to soften the hard line on abrasive blasting for historic buildings.

### Blasting Without Scratching the Surface

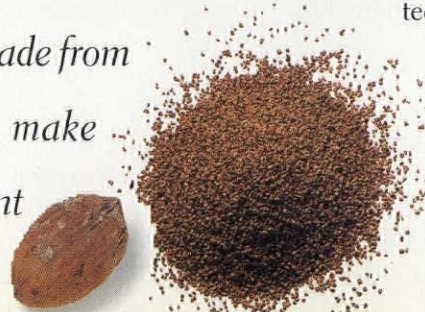
NOT ALL SURFACES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED for abrasive blasting. In general, the harder the material, the better it will stand up to the process. Likewise, smoother surfaces are easier to blast clean than rough ones, and blasting won't remove embedded stains.

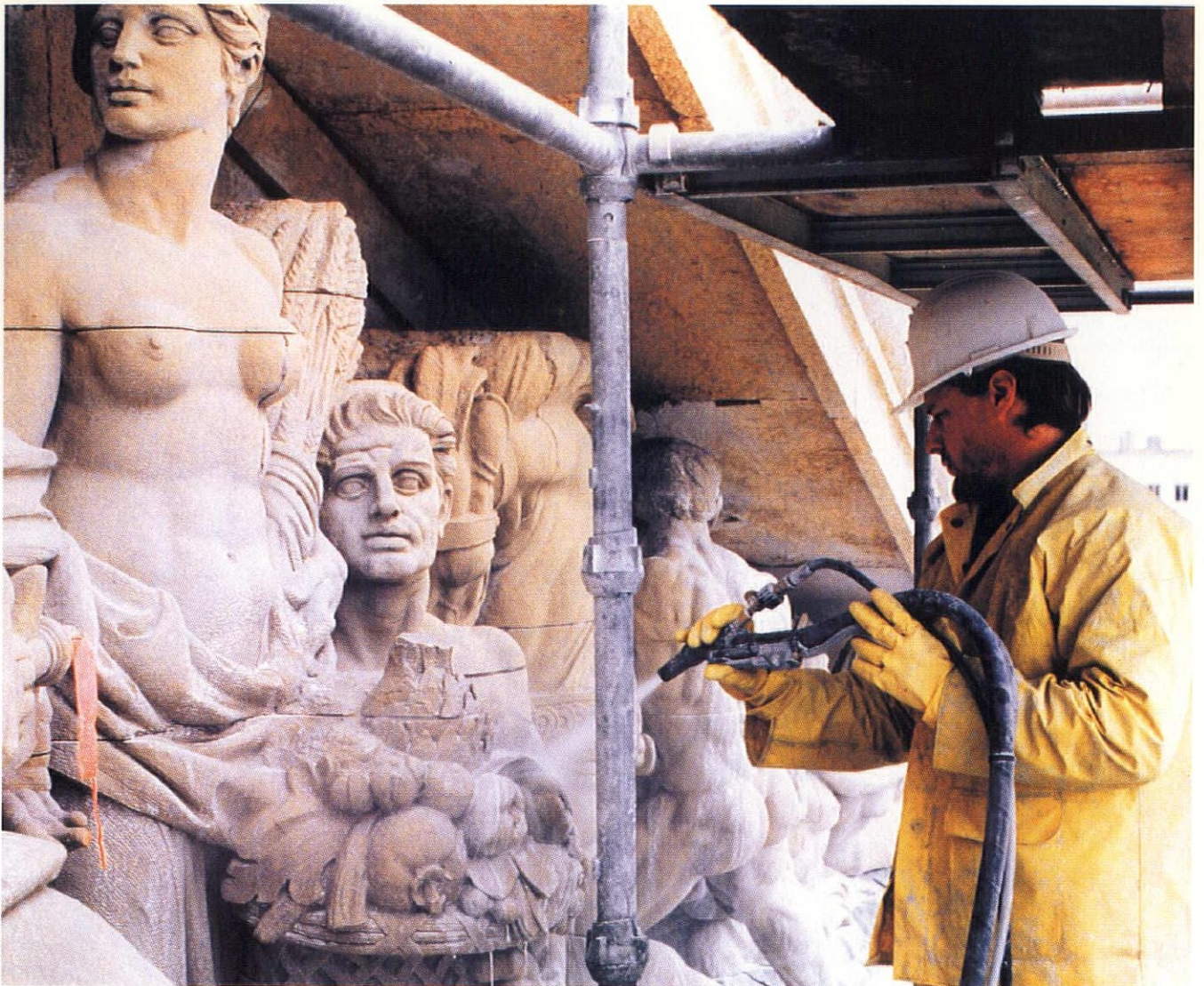
Because most *metals* are dense, they resist the erosive effects of blasting. Ferrous metals (containing iron), such as cast iron, wrought iron, and steel, rust in the presence of water and oxygen. Rust and paint are generally softer than the metal itself, so blasting can be an effective cleaner and stripper. Ferrous metals should be repainted soon after blasting to prevent the exposure that leads to rust. Non-ferrous metals such as copper, brass, and aluminum also react with water and air, forming an oxide layer (patina). The layer can be removed by blasting, but this may not be wise. Unlike rust, patina is dense and actually prevents further deterioration. Removing this protective layer will expose the metal

to the elements until a new patina develops. Only the latest, gentlest blasting procedures may be able to remove grime without taking the patina too. For sheet metal, only the softest, gentlest blasting system should

# GENTLE BLASTING

*Once rejected because of the damage it can inflict to historic exteriors, abrasive blasting is getting a second look. New techniques that work with lower pressure and softer abrasives, made from products such as ground nut shells, make it a safer option for cleaning and paint removal.* **BY VALERIE SIVINSKI**





be selected because the material is thin and can easily be misshapen. Most importantly, plated metal should not be blasted. The process could remove the thin veneer of finish metal.

When it comes to *masonry*, consider the density throughout the material. Some masonry units, such as brick and terra cotta, are like loaves of bread: the firing process gave them hard surfaces and soft interiors. The surface "crust" protects the interior from weathering, erosion, pollution, and dampness. Blasting can remove this crust, resulting in rapid weathering and moisture infiltration. It can also remove decorative glazes, erode mortar joints,

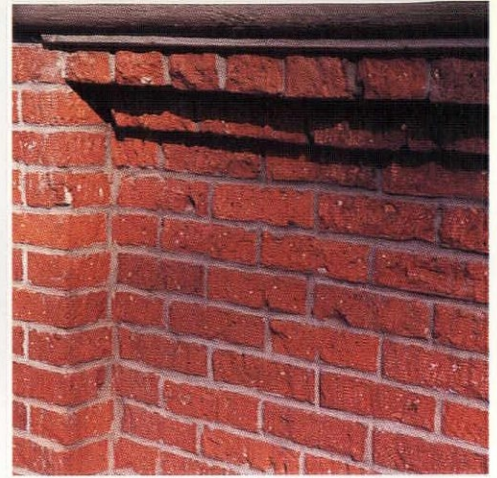
and spall corners and edges. Remember, too, that soft brick may need paint's protective film. Stone may be blastable, depending on the particular material's durability. Hard, volcanic stone, such as granite, is best suited to blasting. Soft, sedimentary stone, such as brownstone, is vulnerable. As a rule, if the stone was carved into ornaments, it is relatively soft and susceptible to damage.

The difficulty with blasting *wood* is the grain. If the blasting is gentle enough to protect the soft layers, it may not remove paint from the hard ones. Or, if the blasting is adjusted to remove paint from the hard layer, it may also cut away soft wood. Carved or shaped woodworking is a special problem because blasting won't clean indentations, and it can erode detail. Hardwoods are generally more suited to blasting than are softwoods.

**Above:** Blasting limestone statuary on the Manitoba (Canada) Legislative Building. **Below:** Abrasive blasting needn't be done with sand, and it needn't be destructive. Shown here, left to right: pecan shells, urea, and corn cob.



Blasting can raise the grain on wood (left) and erode and break brick (right).



## SUPPLIERS

**COMPOSITION MATERIALS**  
1375 Kings Highway East  
Dept. OHJ  
Fairfield, CT 06430  
(800) 262-7763  
Nut shells, fruit pits,  
corn cob, rice hull, plastic and  
glass beads.

**MAXI-BLAST**  
630 East Bronson Street  
Dept. OHJ  
South Bend, IN 46601  
(800) 535-3874  
Plastic beads.

**STRIPPING TECHNOLOGIES**  
2949 East Elvira Road  
Dept. OHJ  
Tucson, AZ 85706  
(520) 741-0501  
Plastic beads.

**JOS SHERMAN-HOLDINGS**  
(800) 567-0053  
Facsimile: (800) 567-2841  
Dolomite and recycled glass  
media; JOS Vortex Process  
blasting heads.

**CAE ELECTRONICS**  
8585 Cote de Liesse  
Dept. OHJ  
St. Laurent, Quebec H4L 4X4  
(514) 734-5640  
Wheat starch.

**CHURCH & DWIGHT**  
469 North Harrison Street  
Dept. OHJ  
Princeton, NJ 08543  
(800) 221-0453  
Sodium bicarbonate blasting.

## Under Pressure

SANDBLASTING WAS INVENTED IN 1871 BY Benjamin Tilghman and the mechanics have changed little. Abrasive is released from a hopper into a chamber where it is mixed with air or water and forced out of a nozzle at high speed. Innovations in blasting machinery—many proprietary—generally involve new nozzles that produce effective results at lower pressures. The only way to analyze which process might be appropriate for your own purposes is to investigate their results on similar projects. Here are some common approaches:

- Lower pressure means less potential for damage. Standard sandblasting equipment operates at 100–125 pounds per square inch (psi)—the same pressure that's used to carve tombstones. A garden hose spray nozzle operates around 30–60 psi. Start in that range and gradually increase the pressure until it's effective. Tests show that roughly 80 psi is the optimum pressure to remove paint from cast iron—about the hardest surface you'll encounter. Stay below the 80 psi level for metal surfaces, and lower for other materials. (A pressure gauge mounted on the nozzle is far more accurate than

one mounted on the compressor.)

- Increasing the aperture of the blasting nozzle beyond the standard  $\frac{3}{8}$ " opening makes the process more efficient. A larger nozzle propels a greater volume of air, utilizing more abrasive and doing the work faster. Best of all, a larger nozzle throws the abrasive out in a wider pattern, reducing the risk of carving the surface.

- Another spin on low pressure blasting is exactly that, a spin: the abrasive is rotated at high speed as it projects from the nozzle. At least one process injects air, water, and fine abrasive into the nozzle at angles that cause the mix to swirl while it's still in the blaster head. The spiraling spray expands rapidly after leaving the nozzle. It's this whirlpool-like rotation—not strictly impact—that scours the dirt off. The process uses extremely low pressure, ranging from 7 to 35 psi. Although invented to clean stone and brick, such nozzles are said to be gentle enough to safely remove paint from wood and plaster and even to clean tile or terra cotta without damaging the finish.



**Because of its hardness, cast iron is one of the most appropriate surfaces for blasting.**

## Blasting Safety and Disposal

Proceed with due caution. Most pre-1950 paints contain lead. Blasting painted items liberates lead into the environment. If absorbed into the body through eating or breathing, lead can cause serious health problems, particularly for children. Inhaling paints and the blasting media itself can cause respiratory damage. The equipment must be used with stringent safety precautions. Operators must cover themselves suitably and wear appropriate respirators. The dust from any blasting operation needs to be strictly controlled, contained, and removed from the site. Dust and debris should be deposited in an approved toxic waste site.

### Alternative Abrasives

THE ABRASIVES THEMSELVES HAVE THE BIGGEST impact on the results of blasting. If the abrasive is softer or more elastic (pliable) than

the material being blasted, much of the force is absorbed by the abrasive. That results in less damage to the surface. In addition, the finer the particle size, the more effective the abrasive and the less damage it will cause. Test different particle sizes and hardnesses at varying pressures to determine the correct choices for your house.

**Glass beads** have been used for years to remove graffiti, dirt, pollution, and rust from bronze statuary. They are uniform glass spheres, about 100 microns (a micron is one millionth of a meter) in diameter. Because they have no sharp edges, they do not tear the surface. Glass beads are harder than most building materials, however, and can cause microscopic denting. That can roughen the surface visibly and create little pockets to hold water and dirt.

The aeronautics industry developed soft **plastic beads** to clean turbines and engine parts. Plastic beads are manufactured in a wide variety of hardnesses for use on different substrates, mainly metals and fiberglass.

Soft enough to control damage to most building materials and effective enough to remove dirt and paint, **ground organic materials** are good all-purpose abrasives. So-called agriblasting utilizes such food by-products as corncobs, walnut shells, wheat starch, rice hulls, peach or apricot pits, and cherry stones, which are finely ground and graded by particle size. They are inexpensive and biodegradable. Corncobs are a good choice because they produce less dust than other media. Wheat starch is successful in stripping hardwoods, but it has to be used dry. Ground-up shells and pits can leave a thin coating of oil on the surface; degrease with a petroleum dis-

tillate paint thinner or methanol, and scrub with soap and water.

The Statue of Liberty was blasted with **sodium bicarbonate** (baking soda). The powder is soft, biodegradable, and water soluble, which makes cleanup easy. It's also inexpensive. Soda can clean glass and metals safely, but it will raise the grain on softwoods, and it doesn't effectively remove paints from masonry. Baking soda is slightly alkaline, which could damage surrounding plants or react with acidic materials. This abrasive is most suitable for big projects; the equipment required is quite large.

**Ice** has one major advantage: you only have to discard the debris, not the blasting medium. Standard ice (powdered to the size needed) and dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide pellets) can clean and strip metal, concrete, or brick without damage, but they work slowly. Like most blasting media, ice will raise the grain of wood, and it doesn't remove deep stains. In the case of dry ice, good ventilation is a must.

Museums are experimenting with **lasers** to incinerate dirt and paint off the surface of small artifacts. In theory, lasers can be tuned to burn certain colors, which means that they could remove one layer of paint, but not the next. This could be the future of abrasive blasting, but for now technical limitations and cost make lasers unsuitable for buildings.

Even with new methods and media, blasting has potential to be destructive. Careful testing and monitoring of the process is essential. 🏠



**Other novel blasting media include, from top to bottom: plastic, walnut shells, baking soda, and rice hulls.**



## Historic Houses

Check with the state historic preservation office before blasting a nationally registered house, a building in a historic district, or a project that is eligible for tax credits. Sandblasting will immediately disqualify the project from receiving tax credits unless it can be shown prior to the work that no damage is being done to the building. Work with local officials to put their fears to rest.



**The Armex Cleaning & Coating Removal System utilizes baking soda and water.**

## CONTRACTORS

**THOMANN-HANRY**  
575 Madison Avenue  
25th floor, Dept. OHJ  
New York, NY 10022  
(212) 755-5550  
[www.gommage.com](http://www.gommage.com)  
Proprietary method called Façade Gommage.

**COLD JET**  
455 Wards Corner Road  
Dept. OHJ  
Loveland, OH 45140  
(513) 831-3211  
Dry ice blasting.

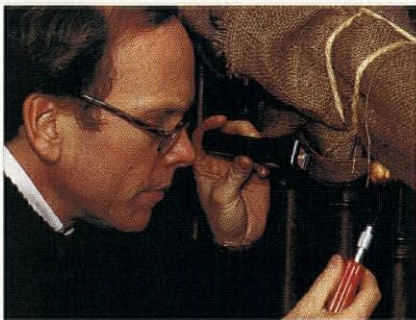
**MINERVA**  
22599 S. Western Avenue  
Dept. OHJ  
Torrance, CA 90501  
(310) 212-3434  
Proprietary method called ERASOFT.

*Valerie Sivinski is a registered architect and serves as historic preservation officer for the City of Tacoma, Washington.*

# COLORFUL ISSUES IN CHOOSING EXTERIOR PAINT

by Gordon Bock

**S**INCE THE 1970S, FEW images have summed up restoration more dramatically than an old house surrounded in scaffolds and “under the brush” with a fresh, colorful paint scheme. Even folks not bitten by the old-house bug now accept that some antique architecture is better bright than white—a complete reversal from the notions of 50 (more or less) years ago. Yet, if color is appropriate for old houses, the question quickly becomes: Which colors?



Paint research techniques range from “cratering” to reveal paint layers to electron microscope analysis. Here, historic paint consultant Frank S. Welsh takes samples at the George Wythe House in Colonial Williamsburg.

There’s no canned answer, no formula or litmus test for what color scheme is right for your particular old house. Some background reading in magazine articles and books can expand your knowledge and options, as will an on-site visit from a color con-

sultant. For most old-house restorers, there lies a spectrum of issues between the decision to paint and the actual work. We’ll try to separate out a few of the different shades here.

## What are Historic Colors?

UNDERSTANDING A LITTLE ABOUT historic color research is the logical place to start. Museum houses, landmark buildings, and similar properties that have a mandate to educate the public are often interested in presenting their exteriors as close as possible to how they looked at some point in the past. To do this, they examine the surface (as well photos and other documents) to try to determine the colors and placement that have actually appeared on the building—often referred to as the “chemical” or “scientific” approach. Since the 1950s, modern historic paint color research has developed an arsenal of tools and methods to aid in this process.

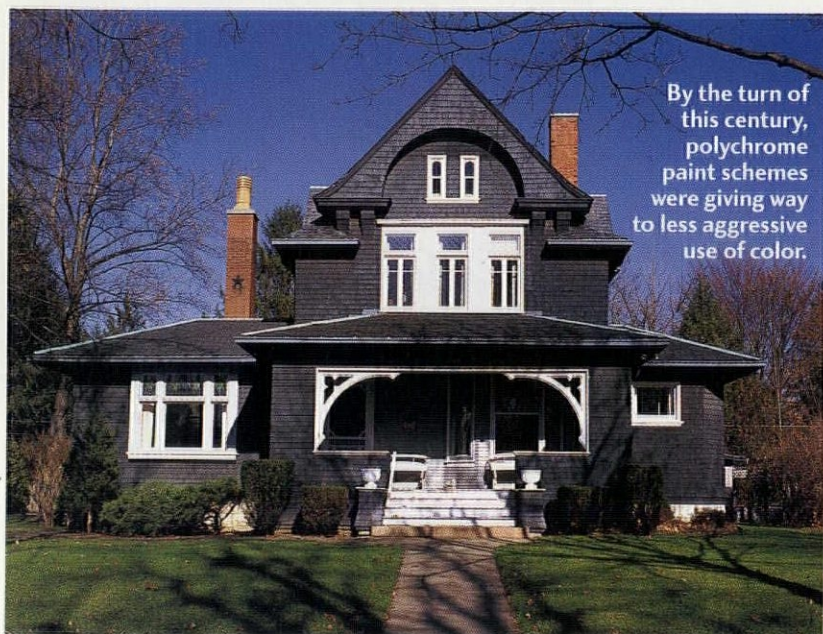
Andrea M. Gilmore, principal with Building Conservation Associates in Dedham, Massachusetts, uses this scientific approach in her work interpreting historic paint samples. She starts with color evidence from on-site paint archeology. Not surprisingly, she finds that “there are common colors and levels of repetitions for each period of time.” She compares the evidence with published material—that is, historic color charts, diagrams,

Your old house is a product of its era—that’s part of its charm. Choosing exterior colors that make reference to history helps ensure that the scheme will fit the building.





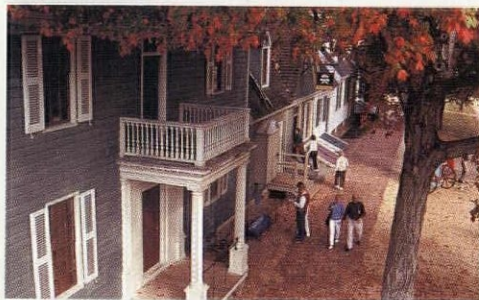




By the turn of this century, polychrome paint schemes were giving way to less aggressive use of color.

## Update on Documents

In this century, two very different kinds of color documents have had a dramatic influence on the way people regard historic colors and painting historic buildings. The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s, which received much media attention, was among other things the pioneering effort at matching historic paint colors. This research became the source of the Colonial Williamsburg palette of colors that have been licensed to major paint manufacturers since 1937. Although the original work was less sophisticated than today's methods, it gave the general public its first appreciation for the breadth of the 18th-century color palette.



The Colonial Williamsburg interior colors in 1957.

Revolutionary in its own way was *Exterior Decoration*, an 1885 paint manufacturer's display book by F.W. Devoe and Company. Republished in 1976 by the Athenaeum of Philadelphia and The Victorian Society in America, this book of architectural plates helped lay the groundwork for reproduction of accurate 19th-century exterior colors.

New information on 18th-century colors revised the scheme for the James Geddy House at Colonial Williamsburg (at left), from dark green to off-white.

pattern books, and literature—to see how it fits the broader picture of an era. In short, there are three steps to the process: 1) determine the original color; 2) determine how it is placed on the building; 3) relate it to the historic documentation. Colors can then be matched to off-the-shelf or custom-mixed paint.

## Impact of Paint Documents

PUBLISHED RECORDS OF EXTERIOR PAINT colors are hard to find for years prior to 1840, but there is a wealth of material for the mid-to late-19th century. In many ways, the most useful documents begin with Andrew Jackson Downing, popularizer of the romantic and picturesque. According to Downing, one should pick exterior house colors from nature. He was quick to capitalize on the power of publishing in his campaign for natural, stone and earth hues. When Downing published *Cottage Residences* in 1842, he featured one of the earliest actual architectural color cards. "Downing was the first color polemicist," notes John Crosby Freeman, color consultant and long-time *OHJ* contributor. "He used color to change the viewer's perception of architecture. Downing hated white wooden buildings; he thought they were dishonest."

By 1880, Downing's ideas had been expanded by late Victorian tastemakers and the fashion for aggressive, multicolored paint schemes. But they continued to build on his methods. Color standards gained a new purpose with the perfection of ready-mixed paint and color printing. The color card was the ideal promotion for a paint industry that, after the Civil War, was able to offer standardized colors, rather than the somewhat unpredictable tones of a handmade paint (see "Colors in Oil," Jan/Feb 1996).

Standardized colors went hand-in-hand with the complex, machine-made woodwork designed for "picking out" in the polychromy of the late Victorian era. It also empowered the buyer to use them. Not only could homeowners purchase and apply their own paint, but they could also select from a palette of sophisticated colors.

As the 19th century waned, the trends in exterior colors moved away from aggressive, multicolor schemes. House bodies in fewer colors were more the vogue—mossy

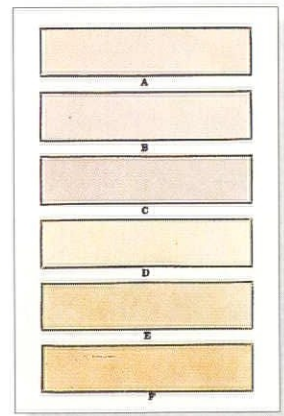
greens and browns for the Shingle houses, for example, or ubiquitous white again for the rising Colonial Revival style. In fact, companies that had once pushed many colors to highlight Victorian architecture were advocating its use to “modernize” the same buildings, now grown passé. With paint it was possible to effectively “paint away” ornamental details with one color.

### Choosing Historical Colors

DOCUMENTS, THEN, GIVE US VALUABLE BACKGROUND on the history of paint. But does every historic house demand historic paint colors? Most old-house owners—and not a few museum buildings—are free to choose colors beyond what is literally accurate for the building. For one thing, *Old-House Journal* readers live in their old houses, and

most want to paint in colors they can live with. For another, the historic paint evidence on the house may be (gasp!) unrevealing, uninteresting, or otherwise unacceptable. After all, tastes in paint colors change over time.

“It is possible to paint your historic house in appropriate colors and still express your personal taste,” notes Roger Moss, co-author of *Victorian Exterior Decoration*. One way is simply to do what any past owner of your house would have done: choose from the selection of available colors according to his or her taste. A historic house owner today has the same opportunity: choose from among the period color cards used in the house’s era. This straightforward approach requires a little homework on historic paint documents (see Fur-



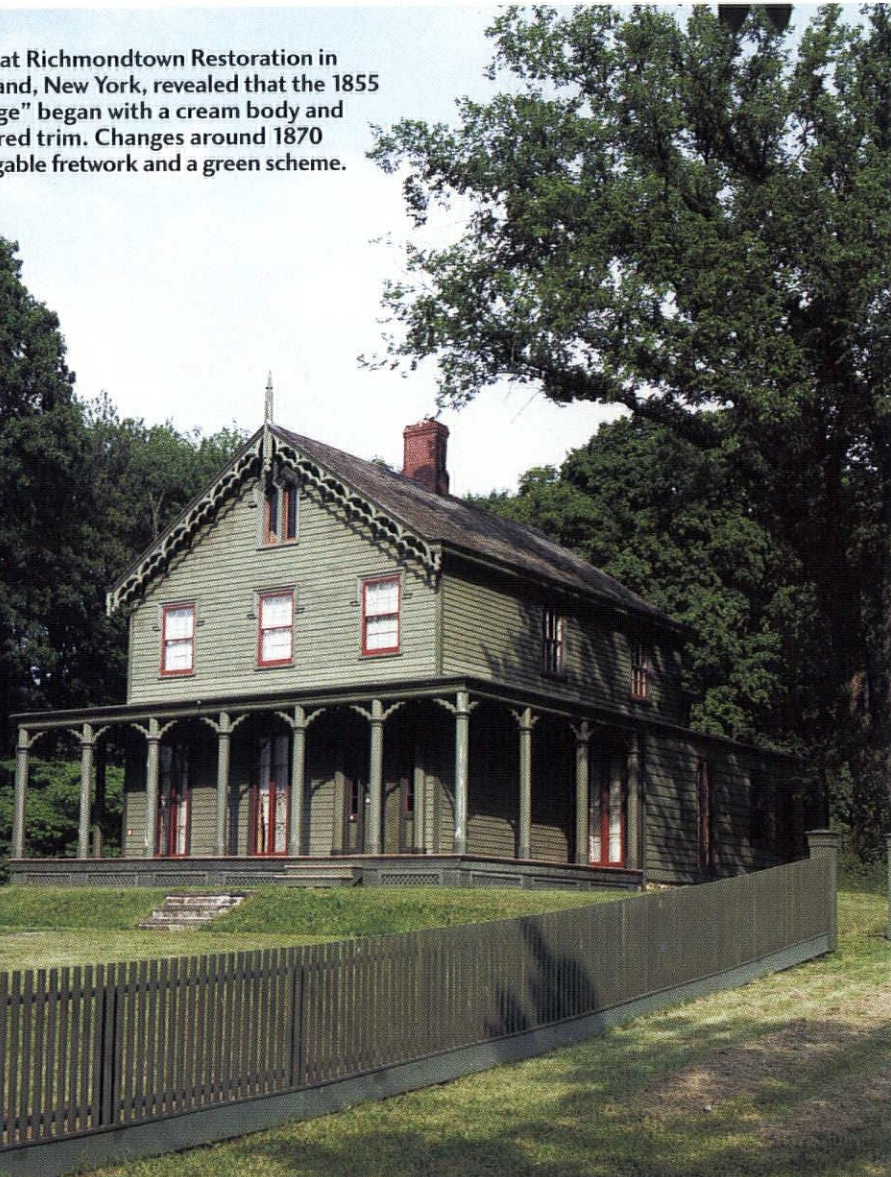
### Promoting Paint

This 1842 edition of *Cottage Residences* (above) shows the stone and earth colors—now much aged—that A.J. Downing advocated for house exteriors. The plate was hand-colored, not unlike the handmade paint still in use at the time.

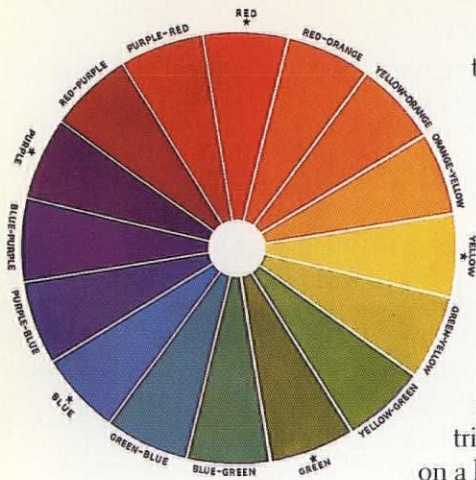


Ready-mixed, standardized paint colors, such as those on this 1871 paint card, dramatically increased the available palette. Even so, there were only around 100 colors in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

Research at Richmondtown Restoration in Staten Island, New York, revealed that the 1855 “Parsonage” began with a cream body and Venetian red trim. Changes around 1870 included gable fretwork and a green scheme.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GORDON BOCK; COLOR CARDS: GORDON BOCK (TOP), FRANK S. WELSH, BRYN MAWR, PA (BOTTOM)



## Don't Get Stuck on the Color Wheel

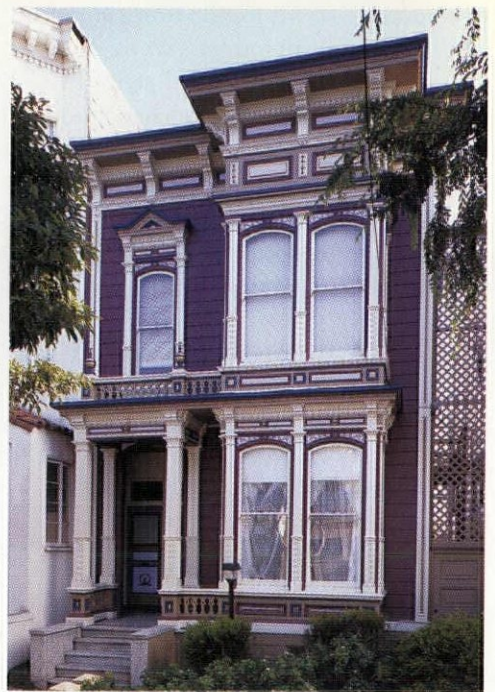
Colorists in the 19th century were greatly influenced by discoveries in the fields of optics and harmonious colors. However, old-house owners should not take theory on opposites and complements too literally. Use the color wheel as a guide, not a rule.

ther Information page 55), but it can produce a *historically appropriate* color scheme.

To be historically appropriate, exterior paint colors need not be picked from an archival document, either. They should, however, have some connection to the past that evokes an association in the viewer. It is this lack of connection that makes 1960s electric purple, for example, look awkward on a house obviously built before the industrial revolution, no matter how tastefully it is applied. John Freeman suggests two touchstones.

First, historical colors should emulate other traditional building colors. In other words, consider colors that have some relationship to a local or likely building material. This is not as abstract a concept as it sounds. Brown looks at home on many early old houses because it is the color of weathered wood and stone. Reds are associated with brick in areas where it is the material of choice. In the sunny South, where Spanish tile is common, orange doesn't look at all out of place. In fact, paint colors of the past were often marketed with descriptive names like "sandstone" or "brick."

Second, the colors should have some relationship to colors used in the past. Most early historic paints—and many used up to 1900—are based on naturally occurring earth pigments. For example, ochres (for orange-yellows) and iron oxides (for reddish browns) are highly stable and combined readily with other pigments to produce shades of surprising versatility. Lampblack and white lead have been manufactured for centuries, used alone or blended with other



When it first appeared, San Francisco's "painted lady" trend often used colors that were closer to the 1970s than the 1870s. Today's examples are more subdued (psychedelic colors were hard to keep up) and historical.

pigments. Colors such as maroon and mauve, however, were not possible until the late industrial revolution.

### Beyond History

THE ISSUES BEHIND EXTERIOR COLORS ARE not all historical, of course. A paint job has to be practical as well. "Resist the temptation to 'tart-up' your color scheme," cautions Roger Moss. "Like people, houses don't look good in party dress all the time." If you want to add a touch of personal color preference, choose an accent area, such as the sashes of windows or the panels of shutters. Not only will this be plenty of surface

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for a bit of whimsy, but it can also be repainted much more easily than a large area if the color should lose its appeal.

Today, as in the past, exterior paint color has economic implications. If your old house is not a mansion, chances are it was never painted like a mansion, and a baronial color scheme would look out of place. Lighter colors are still the most durable because they reflect ultraviolet light and heat. Blues and greens—among the most unstable colors 200 years ago—are still subject to fading and shifts of hue. “One of the most popular color combinations of the 19th century was grey and white,” notes Roger Moss. “It was easy to mix, easy to touch up, and it stood up well.” Always consider what the paint going to do to the house from a maintenance perspective.

### Consider Your Community

IF YOU LIVE IN A LOCALLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICT, be aware that you will eventually encounter a body with overall responsibility for its exterior paint colors. Typically, it's a Historic Architecture Review Board—a “HARB” in preservation lingo—but

it may have a different title or additional duties. Check with this group before you paint—or even buy paint!

The impact and authority of these review boards varies widely. In a high-profile district, as in Savannah, Georgia, or Charleston, South Carolina, an old-house owner may have to pick from an official, researched selection of colors, or submit a proposed paint scheme for approval. In fact, most bodies are advisory only and pass their recommendations on to a government staff or commission. Their concern is the context of the neighborhood or district—sometimes with tax breaks and National Register listing in mind. Rather than dictate colors or placement, they require only that they be appropriate for the style and era of the house. Many have resources or suggestions for choosing colors. After all, exterior paint colors have a public impact. You're not the only one who has to live with them. 🏠

*Special thanks to John Crosby Freeman, “The Color Doctor” (610-539-3010), and Roger W. Moss, Executive Director of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, for help with this article.*



Paint changes as it ages. Most common is yellowing of linseed-oil binders when hidden from light.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

#### *Victorian Exterior Decoration*

The classic guide to 19th-century color schemes. Order from: Old-House Bookshop (800) 931-2931

#### *Paint in America*

Paint color research from the professional perspective. Order from: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. (800) 225-5945

#### *“Painting the Town Victorian”*

Exhibition on selecting colors for historic buildings from June 3 to Jan. 31, 1997, at The Athenaeum of Philadelphia 219 S. Sixth St. Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 925-2688

#### Look for *Joy of Color*

by John Crosby Freeman and Patricia Eldredge in late 1996.

In this classic Queen Anne, color is used to pick out the exterior details and develop architectural effects.



# It Came from Under the Cottage!

BY PAUL LEWIS

**W**HEN MY WIFE AND I BOUGHT A ramshackle summer cottage just outside the village of Blue Hill, Maine, we were drawn to the natural beauty of the area: its ocean coves and mountain views, farm fields and blueberry barrens, open sky and dark woodland. But mostly we were drawn to the diverse and teeming animal life.

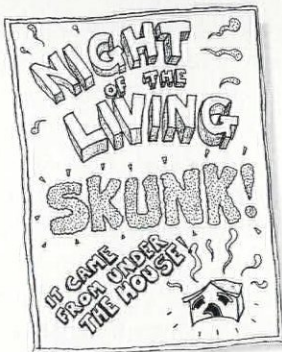
As we began the work of fixing up the old place, we were delighted to see foxes and grouse pass through our yard. During picnics along the coast, seagulls and ospreys glided overhead while harbor seals dotted tiny islands in the bay. As summer folk who spend most of the year in Boston—where the closest thing to natural history is the pooper-scooper law—we were often excited by the possibility of a wildlife encounter, the dash of wings or the clump of hooves.

In retrospect, it's clear that these attitudes made us perfect characters for an unfolding horror film scenario based on our run-in with a creature too repulsive to embrace, too noxious to admire. It was as if the channel of our lives was switched from a showing of *Bambi* to a Down East horror film called *It Came from Under the Cottage*.

At 4:30 in the morning one day last July, my wife and I were abruptly awakened not by a sound but an odor, as our bedroom filled with the stench associated with only one known creature, a skunk. With expressions of absolute disgust, we ran from the room. There was, however, no refuge as every step caused the beast—who had decided to move in under the cottage—to release a new blast. By 5 a.m. when our daughter Clara staggered in to join us, the whole place stank. Forty-five minutes before dawn we were awake, alert, terrified.

When the village hardware store opened at 8 a.m., I was the first customer. Wiping the last traces of sleep from my eyes, I said, "A skunk declared war on us last night. Do you have a product to drive it off?"

"No product," the man said, smiling, "but a suggestion. Give Art Lesker, the small game trapper,



**Like a scene in a horror film (above), a skunk launched an attack from under the floorboards (right), putting my family through a close encounter of the worst kind.**

a call and he'll take care of it."

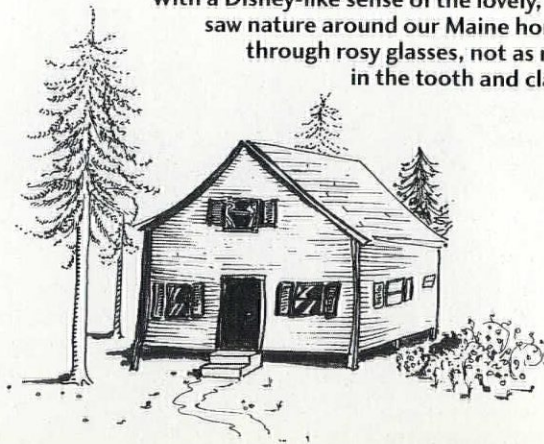
Driving home, I wondered how it had come to this. We had seen skunks in the woods behind the cottage. We had smelt their pungent but not altogether disagreeable aroma driving on backroads. None of these events alarmed us, perhaps because we failed to take note of the obvious parallels to the first reel of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

Still this was before the beast invaded. There's all the difference in the world between a skunk in the distance and a skunk close up. One can be tolerable; the other sickens—bringing nausea to the stomach, tears to the eyes, and anger to the spirit. Settling in under the cottage, the creature proceeded to squirt its loathsome smell at will. One by one the rooms became unlivable, as we began to tiptoe around in terror.

WE HAD IMAGINED ART LESKER AS THE CLINT EASTWOOD of *Unforgiven*: gaunt, snarling, the kind of man who boils wild animals for breakfast. But when he arrived, looking rather like Woody Allen—short, balding, and probably a vegetarian—we were discouraged. His Havahart trap seemed much too kind.

"Skunks are cute little fellahs," he said, "if you don't bother 'em, they'll leave you alone." Though he

**With a Disney-like sense of the lovely, we saw nature around our Maine home through rosy glasses, not as red in the tooth and claw.**





RIK. OLSON

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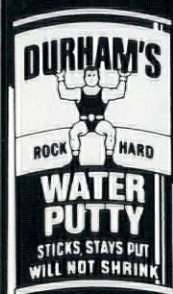
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was as close as we were going to get to an expert advisor, he seemed too confident. "I've caught hundreds of 'em," he said. "Attracted by the smell of this cat food, he'll head into the trap as the door snaps shut behind." Just like that.

Still exhausted, we got to bed early, only to be awakened by the sound of metal on metal. We were disappointed to find an empty trap and smell another blast from the (no doubt) insulted beast.

"Well," said Lesker the next morning, "sometimes it takes a few nights. Let's stick with it."

So every evening we reset the trap and every morning it was empty. On the fourth night we used smoked salmon instead of cat food—on the theory that our enemy might be finicky. But the gourmet treat had been carefully removed from the unsprung trap, and we thought we heard a voice like Freddy Krueger's saying, "How about some bagels and cream cheese along with this."

Although skunks are generally nocturnal—sleeping through the daylight hours and rising like vampires at night—our moment of greatest shock came on the afternoon of the third day. Friends who have a toddler were over and, about an hour into the visit, we saw their child walking across the lawn toward our enemy, babbling, "Here kitty, kitty, kitty." Transfixed, we swore that we could hear the music from *Jaws* and see the flash of sharp, if tiny, teeth as the unsuspecting victim drew closer and closer. But, as we gesticulated, her mother gently called the child, and the monster shuffled off, defiantly waving its tail from side to side.

MERE FANS AND AIR FRESHENERS, we soon discovered, are not made to handle skunk spray. Deprived of sleep, of appetite, and of peace, we became desperate. In fantasies and dreams, we imagined modes of skunk death, the more painful the better. Like Dirty Harry, we wanted to say to our black-and-white enemy, "Go ahead, make our day," and blow him away.

"It's like that movie *THEM* about giant ants in the sewers of Los Angeles," my wife said.

"No," I replied, "it's like a George Romero film called *Night of the Living Skunk*."

A friend who picked up an unpleasant aroma in our clothing suggested that—since we seemed to be turning into skunks—we might be living through a version of

the old zombie-pod classic *Invasion of the Body Stinkers*. We sensed we were in the second reel of a horror movie and hoped it was an old-fashioned one in which the human race triumphs over the invading force, and not a contemporary one in which the human race is defeated.

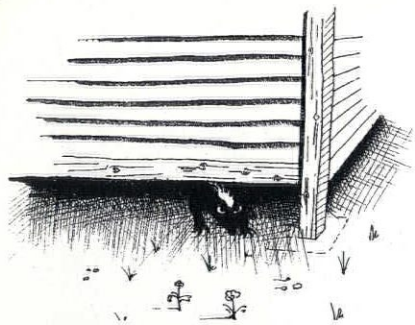
ART LESKER WAS READY TO GIVE UP. Apparently not the Dr. Van Helsing of skunk-fighting, he knocked on the door, trap in hand, and said, "That's how it is with a few of 'em. They're trap-shy." Much to our disappointment, he had no Plan B, and our hearts sank as his truck pulled away.

Troubled by the possibility that the beast would settle in for a winter of being fruitful and multiplying, I started to see our situation as an old-house problem, not as a confrontation. We didn't need some fearless vampire killer to drive a stake through its heart,



As the child walked toward the skunk babbling, "Here kitty," we swore we could hear the music from *Jaws*.





In the morning, we found an empty, unsprung trap. Our creature from the smelly pit had adapted well to a world filled with dangers.

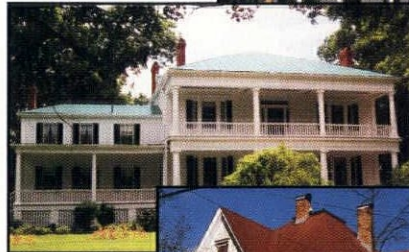
but a carpenter to ask the right questions. How was the creature getting under the house? How could it be kept out?

Soon, the solution to our troubles became clear. Half of the cottage had a poured cement slab; the other half consisted of pine planks over an easily accessed crawlspace. Assuming that our skunk could bore several inches underground, we decided to dig a 6" trench around the crawlspace. We ran heavy gauge galvanized wire (hardware cloth) with a 1/2" mesh from the bottom of the trench (where it was held in place by soil and stones) to the lowest clapboards (to which it was stapled), thus sealing the structure off. We left a small crack in the fence just for one night to allow the animal to depart, woke up at 3 a.m., and sealed the opening for good.

As the days passed with no further blasts, we began to relax. We trod a bit less lightly on our flooring and breathed deeply again. We even found ourselves singing, "Ding, dong, the skunk is gone."

No doubt we were still shaken. The sight of a black-and-white T-shirt on the ground was enough to send shivers up our spines. We had, after all, learned a lesson familiar to many owners of old houses in rural settings: sometimes nature is more like a horror film than a National Geographic special. Sometimes it just plain stinks.

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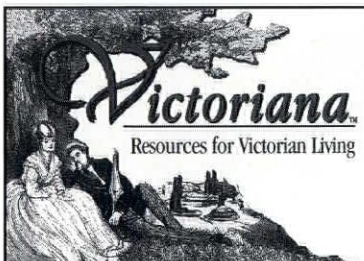
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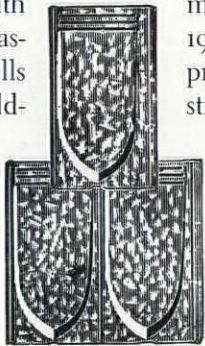
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W.F. Norman's metal roof shingles date back to the turn of the century.

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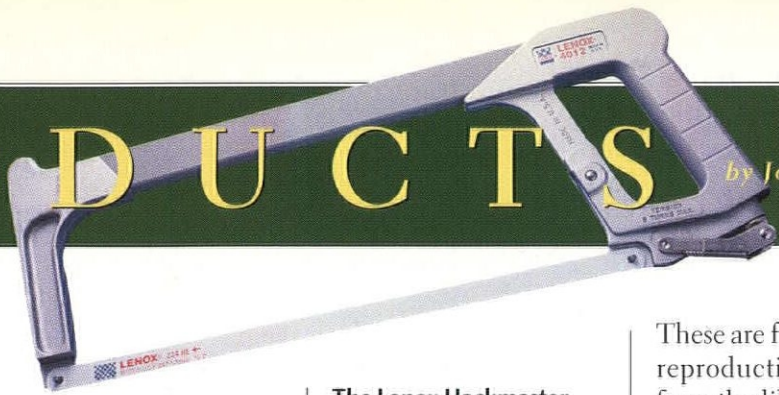
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by Josh Garskof



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You can order actual blueprints for all the houses featured. These plans are designed to conform to national building-code standards. However, the requirements of your site and local building codes mean you'll probably need the assistance of a professional designer (your builder may qualify) or an architect.

For the houses shown in this issue, blueprints include:

- Detailed floor plans showing dimensions for framing. Some may also have detailed layouts and show the location of electrical and plumbing components.
- Interior elevations are included in some plans, showing interior views of kitchen, bath, fireplace, built-ins, and cabinet designs.
- Building cross sections: cornice, fireplace, and cabinet sections when needed to help your builder understand major interior details.
- Framing diagrams that

show layouts of framing pieces and their locations for roof, first, and second floors.

- Energy-saving specs, where noteworthy, are included, such as vapor barriers, insulated sheathing, caulking and foam-sealant areas, batt insulation, and attic exhaust ventilators.
- May include foundation plan for basement or crawl space. (Crawl space plans can easily be adapted for full basements by your builder.)

Why order multiple sets? If you're serious about building, you'll need a set each for the general contractor, mort-

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**Other notes: (1) Plans are copyrighted, and they are printed for you when you order. Therefore, they are not refundable.**

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(2) Mirror-reverse plans are useful when the house would fit the site better "fopped." For this you need one set of mirror-reverse plans for the contractor; but because the reverse plans have backwards lettering and dimensions, all other sets should be ordered right-reading.

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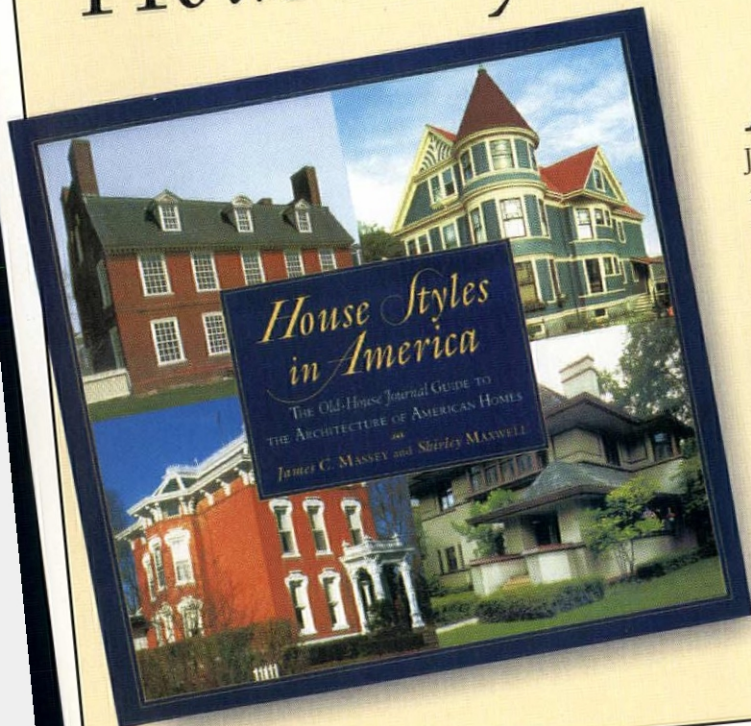
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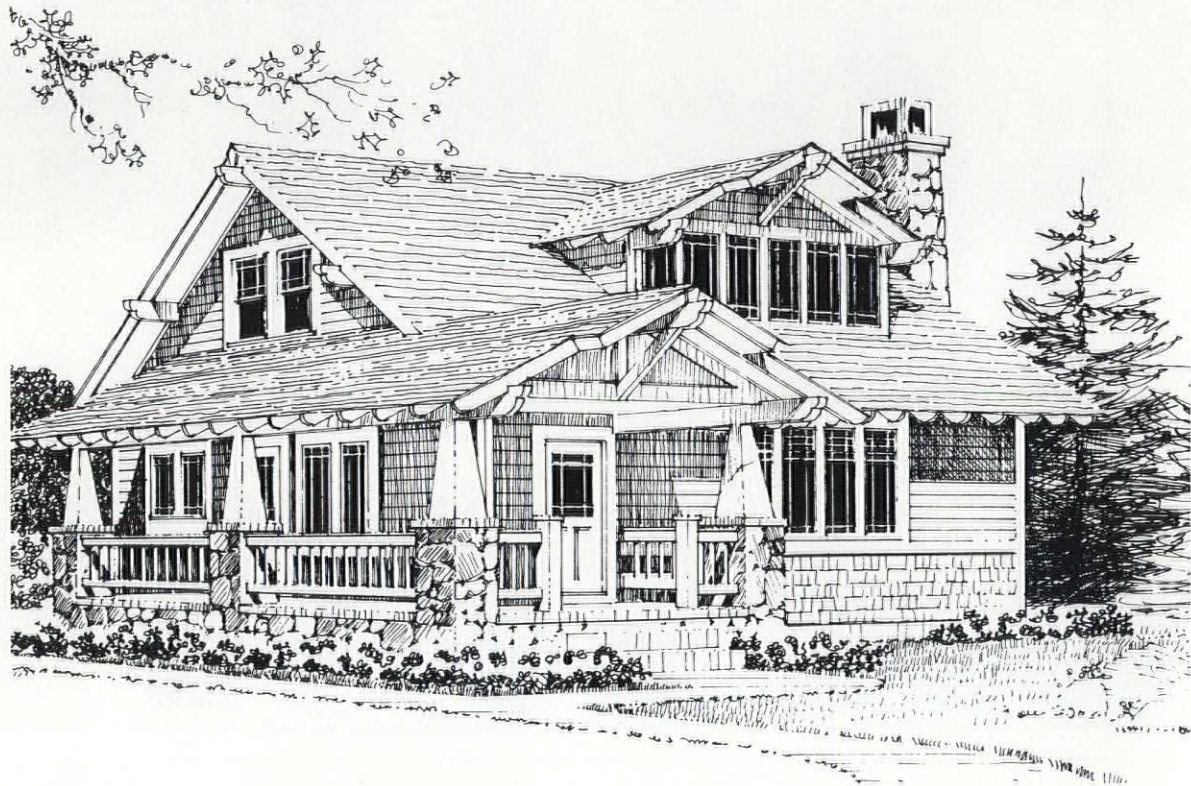
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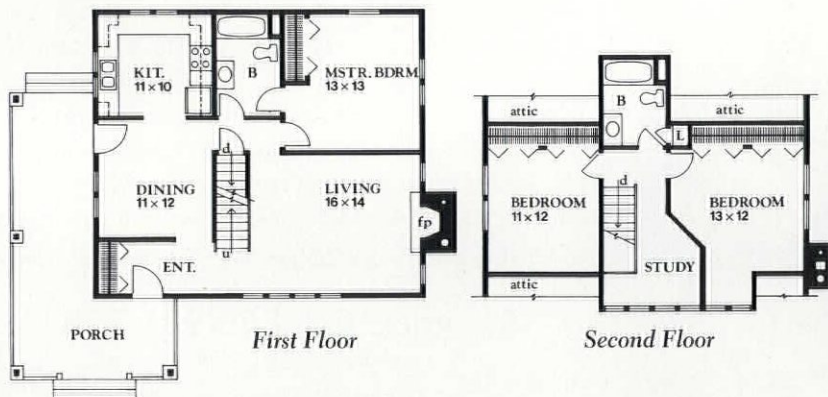
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# NORTHWEST BUNGALOW



**C**RAFTSMAN-STYLE EXTERIOR DETAILS ADD authentic character to this wood bungalow. Most notable are the sloped porch piers, wide eaves, and exposed roof brackets. Naturalistic stonework in the porch and the chimney is a hallmark of the Arts & Crafts movement. Plenty of large windows throughout assure bright interior spaces.

In the capacious living room, a large fireplace takes off the chill in cooler weather. The side porch, perfect for cookouts, connects to the dining room. As in most bungalows, the master bedroom is on the first floor, while two more occupy the second. The large, well-lit dormer—reminiscent of a sleeping porch—makes a pleasant spot for a study.

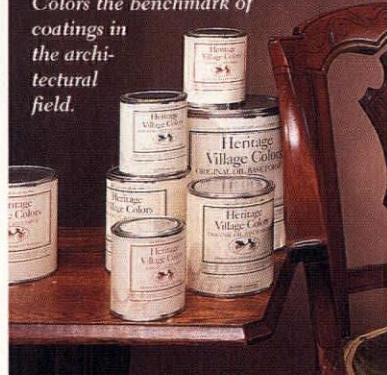


### Plan PP-06-PV

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Cost               | .....\$170 |
| Set of 5           | .....\$230 |
| Set of 8           | .....\$270 |
| Bedrooms           | .....3     |
| Bathrooms          | .....2     |
| Square Footage     | .....1465' |
| First Floor        | .....895'  |
| Second Floor       | .....570'  |
| Ceiling Height     |            |
| First Floor        | .....8'    |
| Second Floor       | .....8'    |
| Overall Dimensions |            |
| Width              | .....43'   |
| Depth              | .....36'   |

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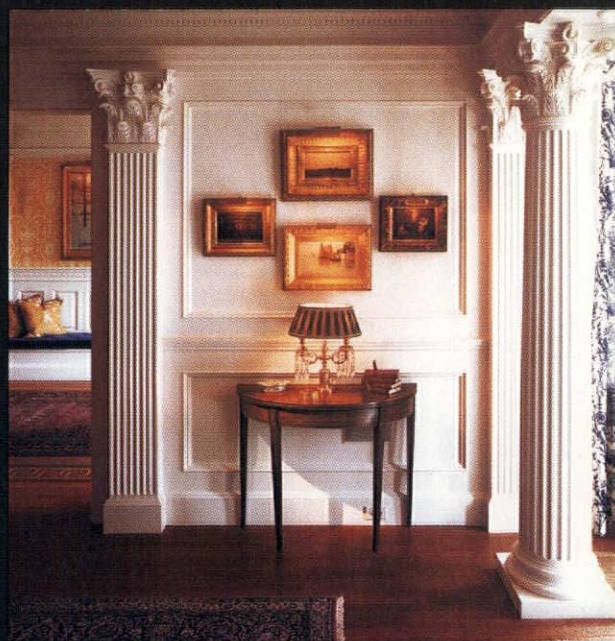


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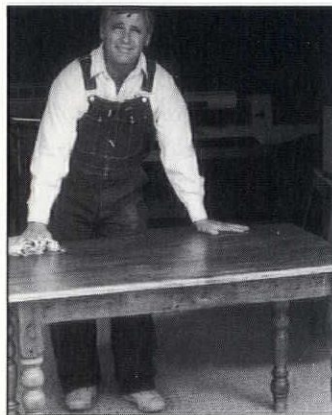
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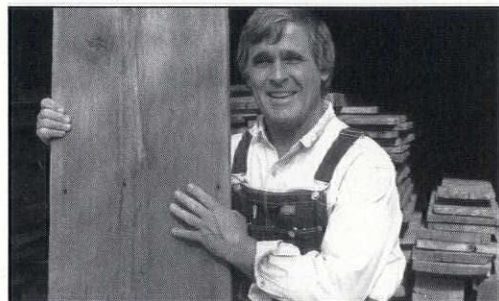
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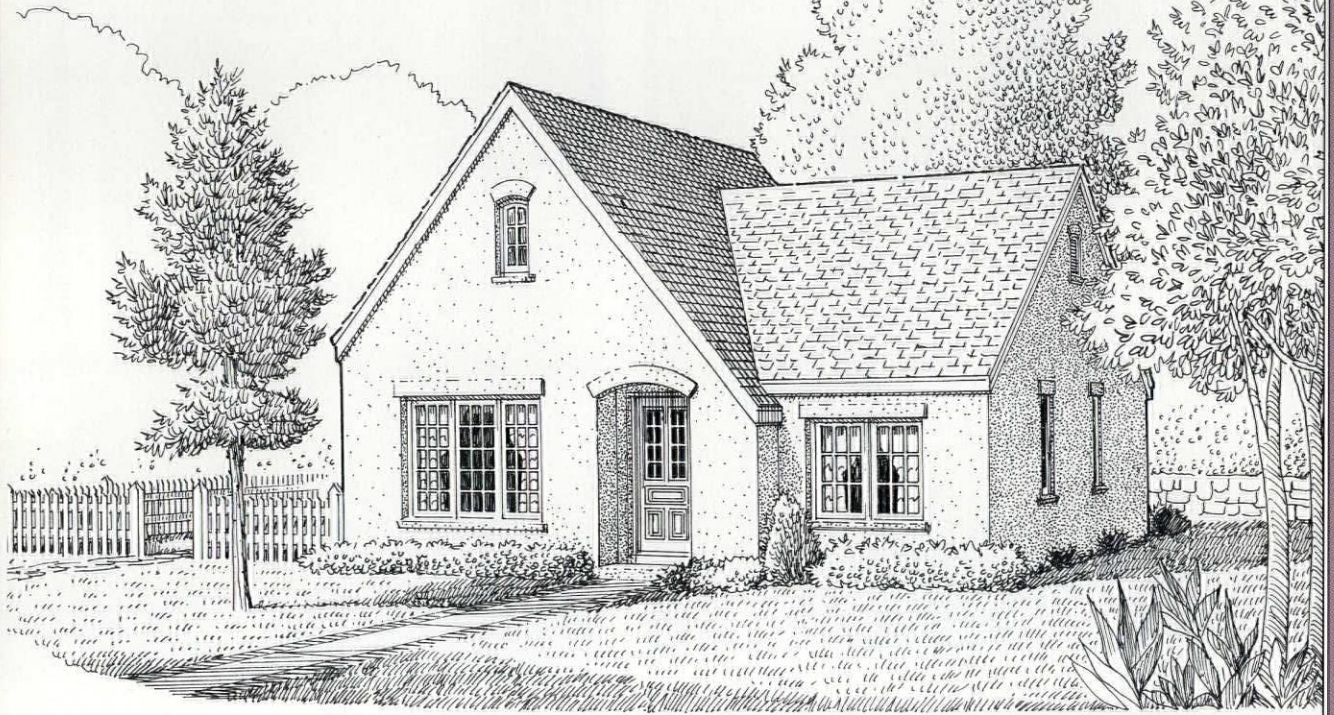
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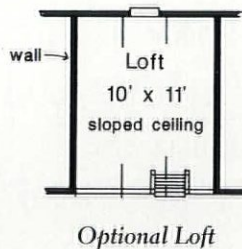
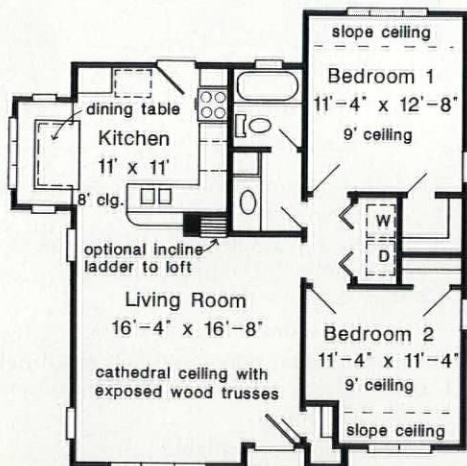
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| Bedrooms           | .....2     |
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| Square Footage     | .....902'  |
| Optional Loft      | .....127'  |
| Ceiling Height     | .....8-9'  |
| Overall Dimensions |            |
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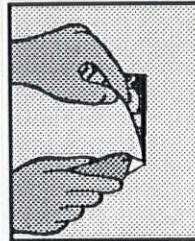
3. Apply fiberglass mat to wet surface.



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6. Trim mat at outlets, switches, etc.



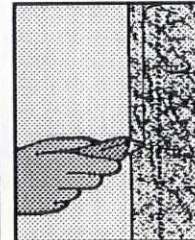
7. Apply second coat of saturant to wet mat.



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



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



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11. Remove mat strips on both sides of cut.



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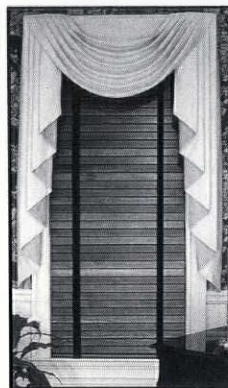
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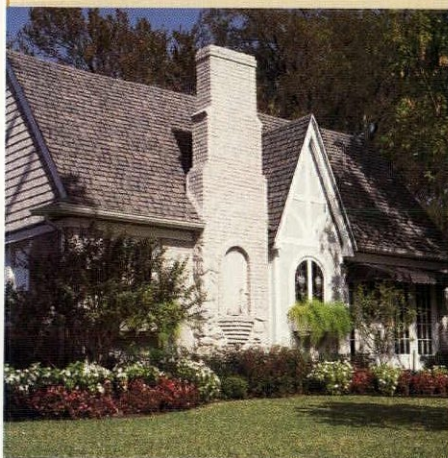
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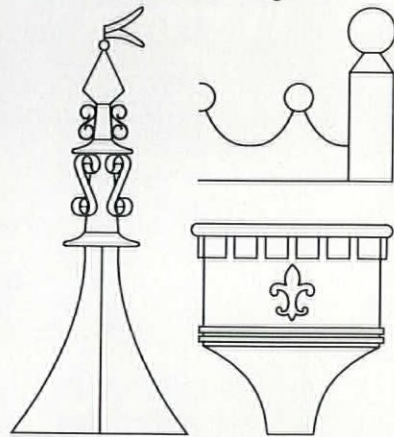
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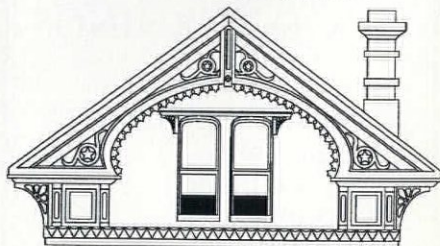
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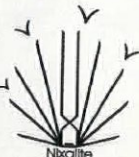
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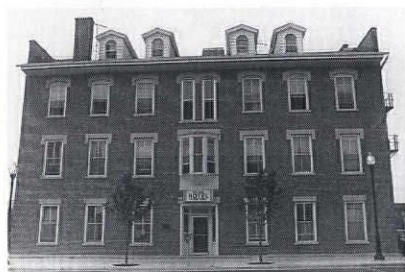
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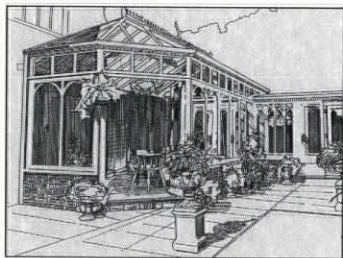


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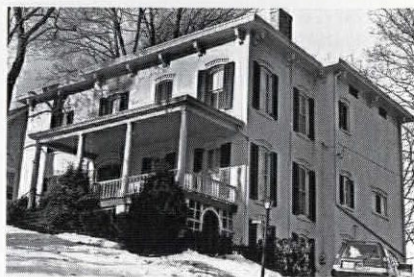
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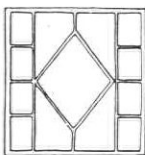
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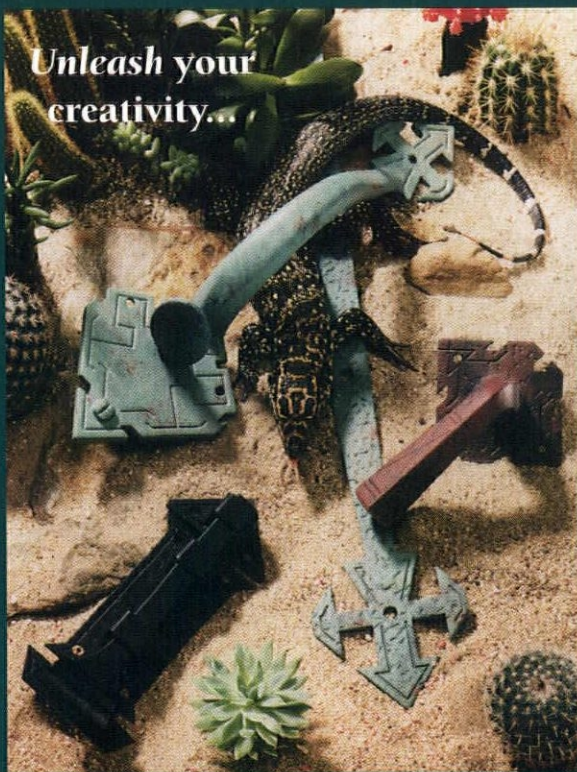
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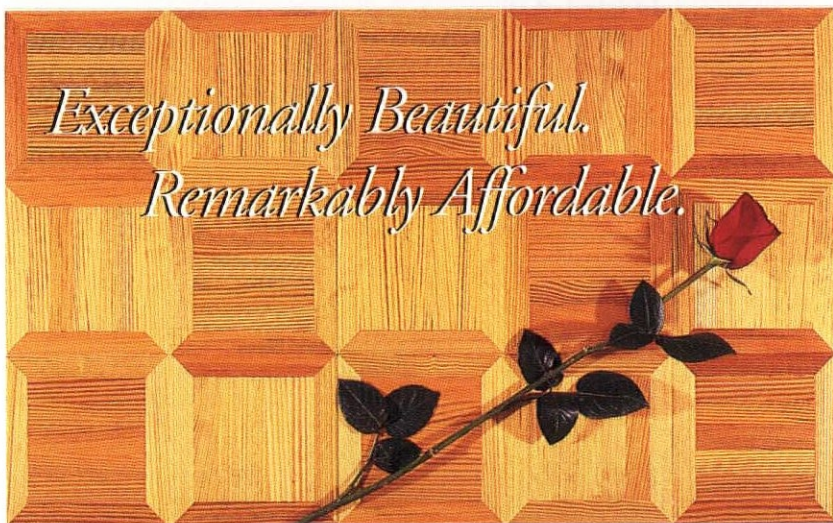


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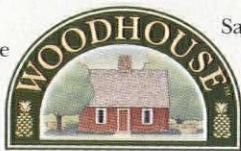


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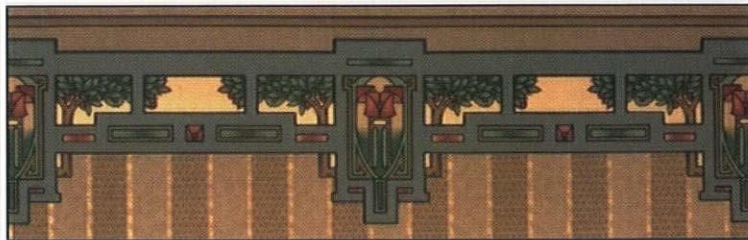
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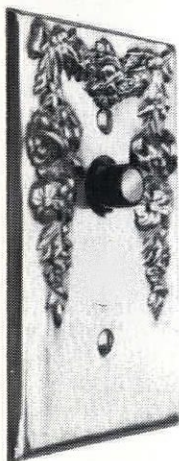
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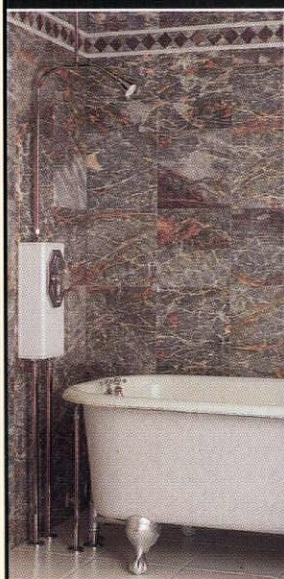
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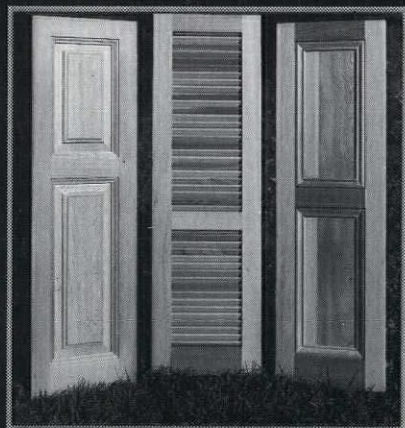
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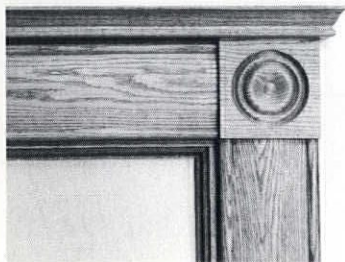
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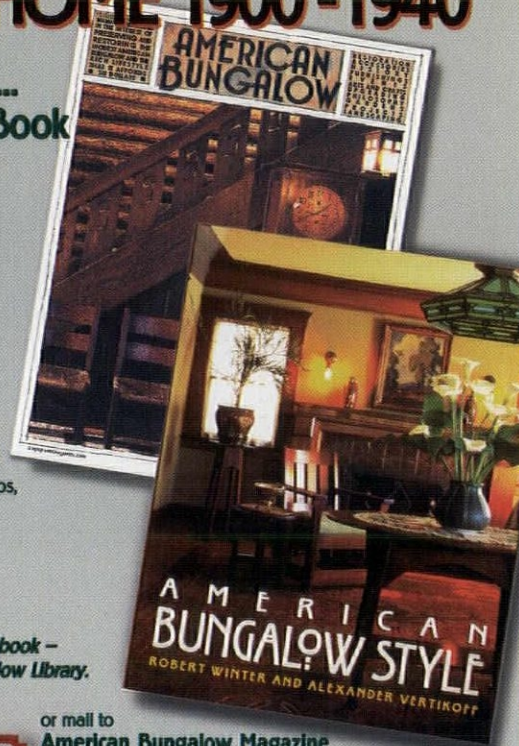
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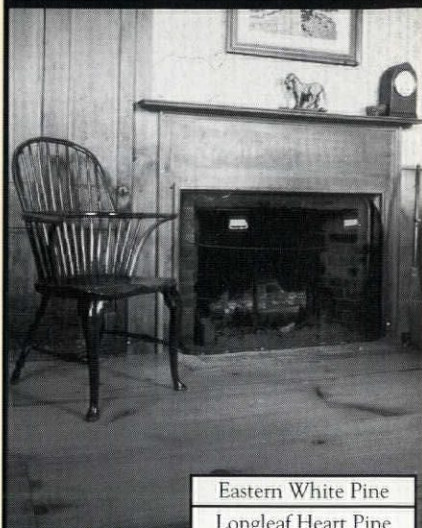
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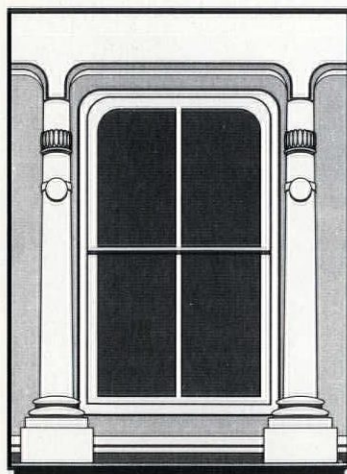
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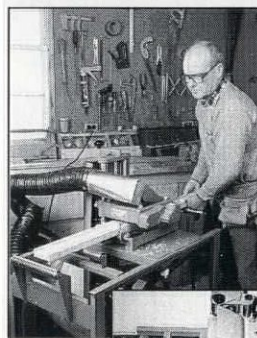
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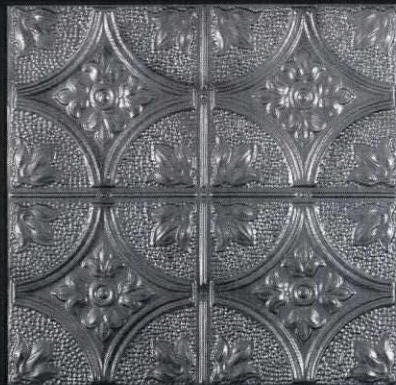
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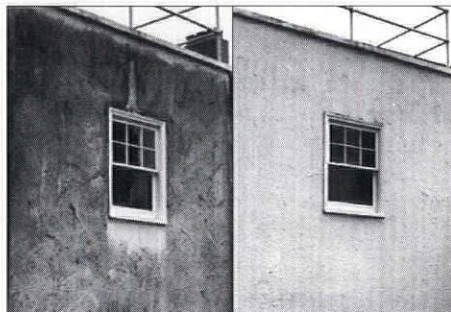
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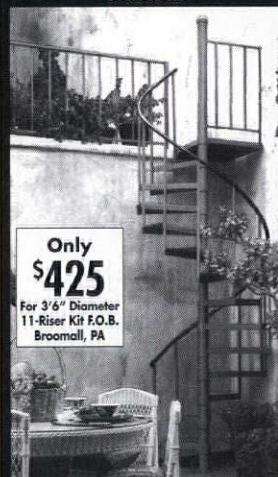
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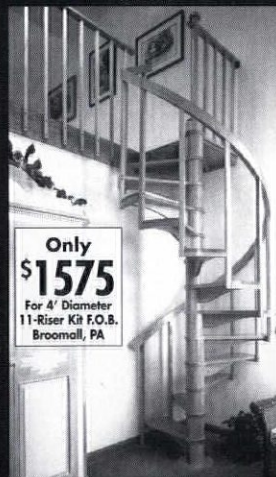
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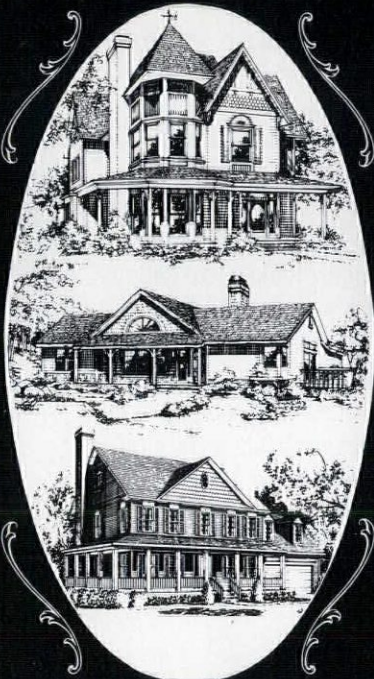
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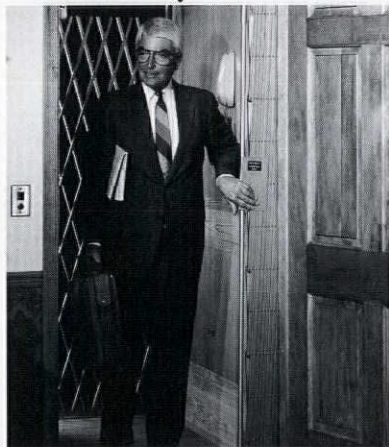
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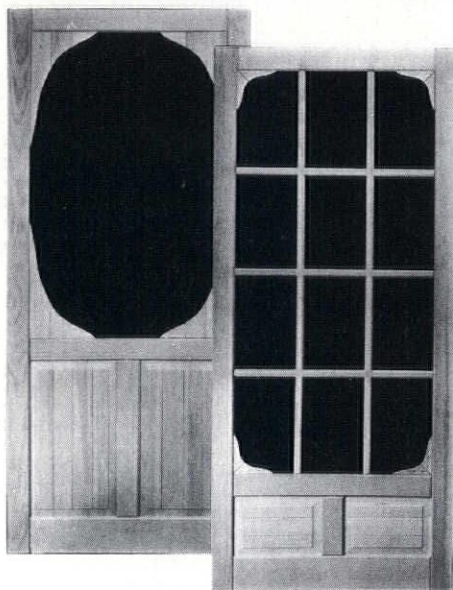
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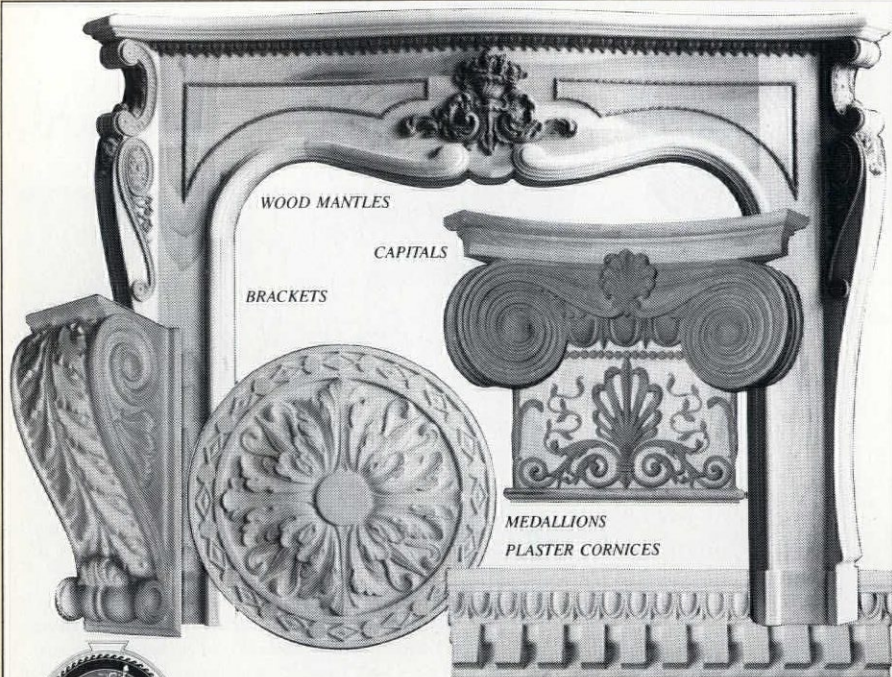
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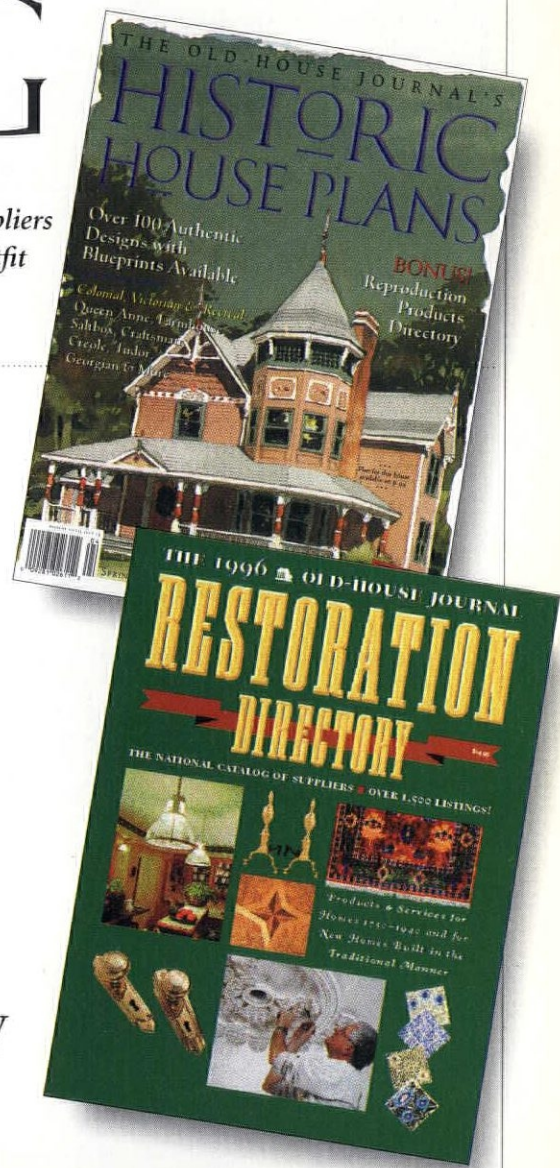
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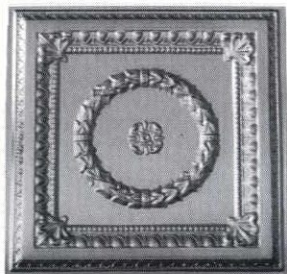
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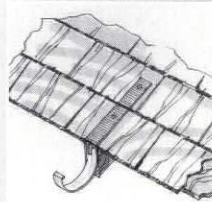


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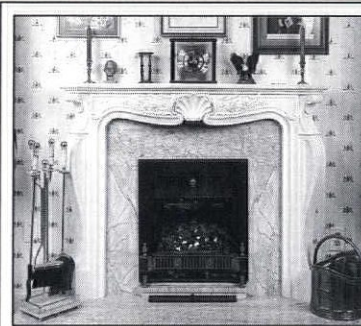
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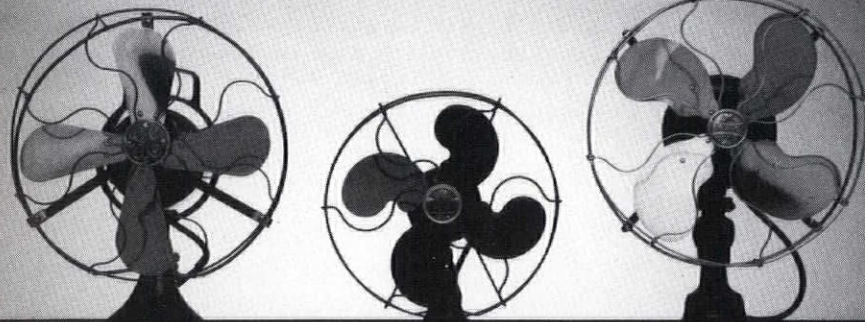
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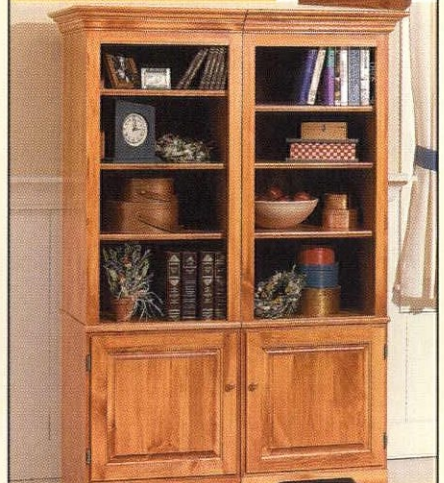
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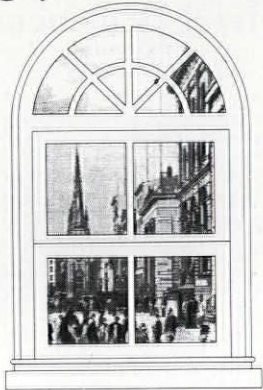
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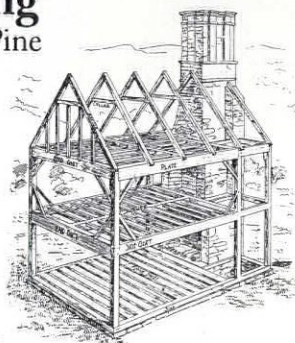
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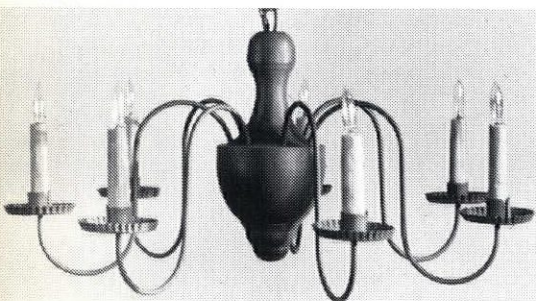
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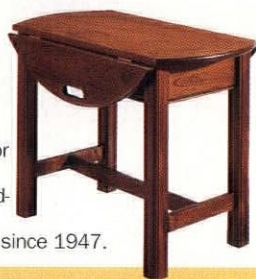
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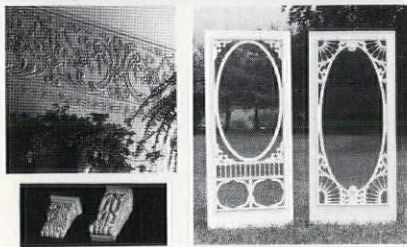


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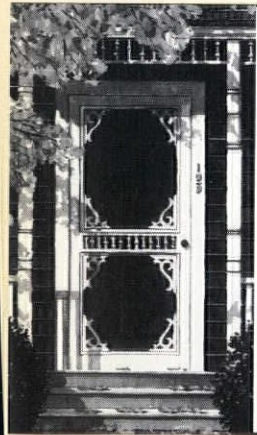
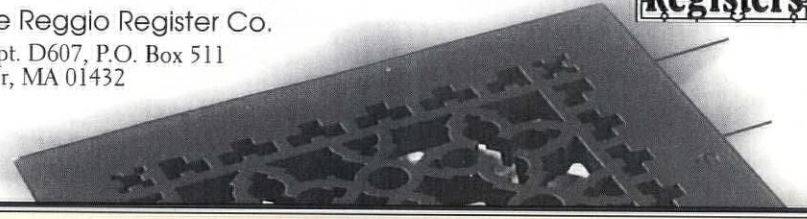
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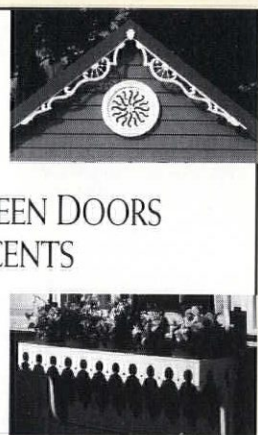
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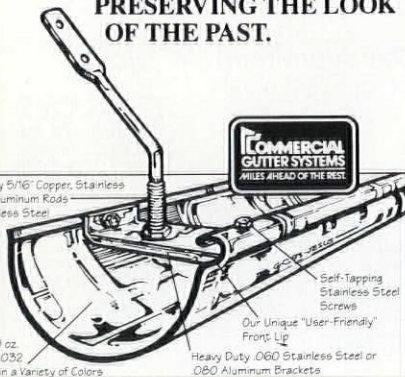
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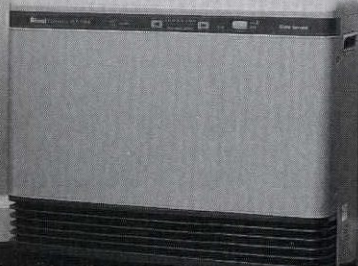
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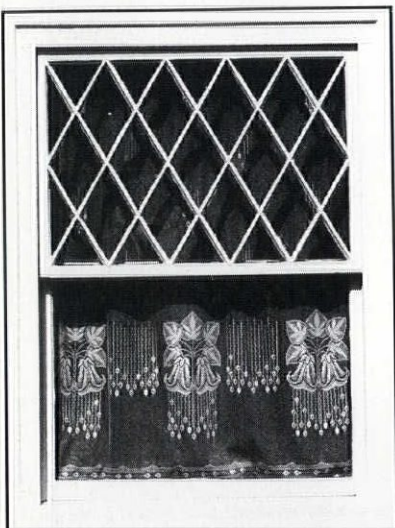


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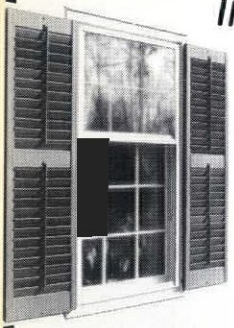
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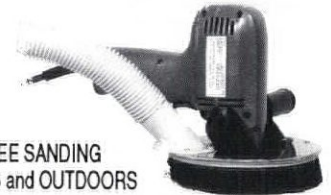
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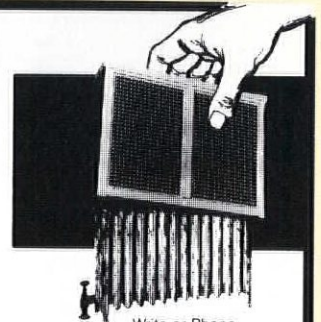
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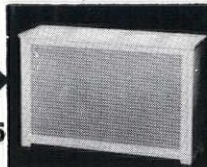
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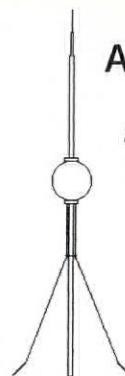
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OPINION



## Anachro·balconies

**I**NSIDE AN OPERA HOUSE A BALCONY CAN HOLD HIGH-PRICED SEATS, BUT STRUCTURALLY IT IS NOTHING MORE than a platform that projects from the wall of a building. Outside each of these old houses we find a balcony that's physically in the right spot, yet chronologically out of place.

Writes Kathy McLaughlin from upstate New York, "This house in Saugerties (top) has been divided into numerous apartments." Though it's hard to peg its age from the photo, the five-bay, brick building with stepped, pedimented gables and a string of frieze-band windows under the eaves easily fits the Greek Revival era of the early 19th century—about 150 years too early for the redwood-stained deck that now rings the second storey.

Perhaps multiple residency is the root of such time-warp walkways. Along a street of 19th-century row houses in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (right), one now wears a veil of contemporary cast concrete. "The doilylike masonry appears to cover fire escape stairs," notes Caroline Sutton, who sent in the photo. "The houses on left and right were originally identical." Not any more. There's no mistaking

the cement-colored block for any century but our own. In this case it seems time has taken a different kind of toll.



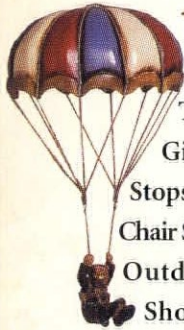
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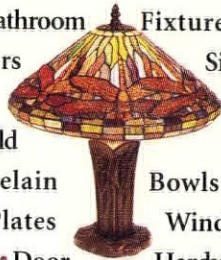
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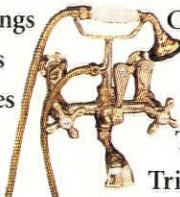
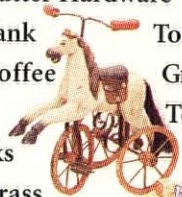
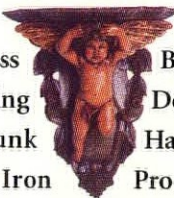
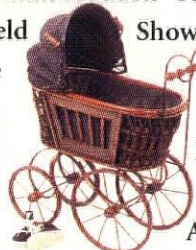
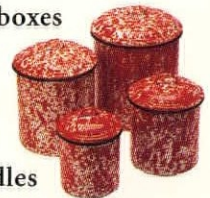
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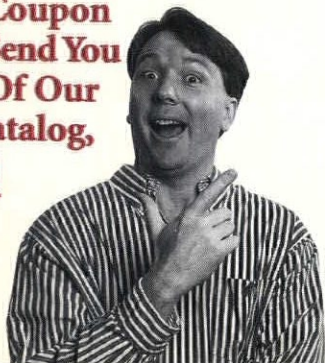
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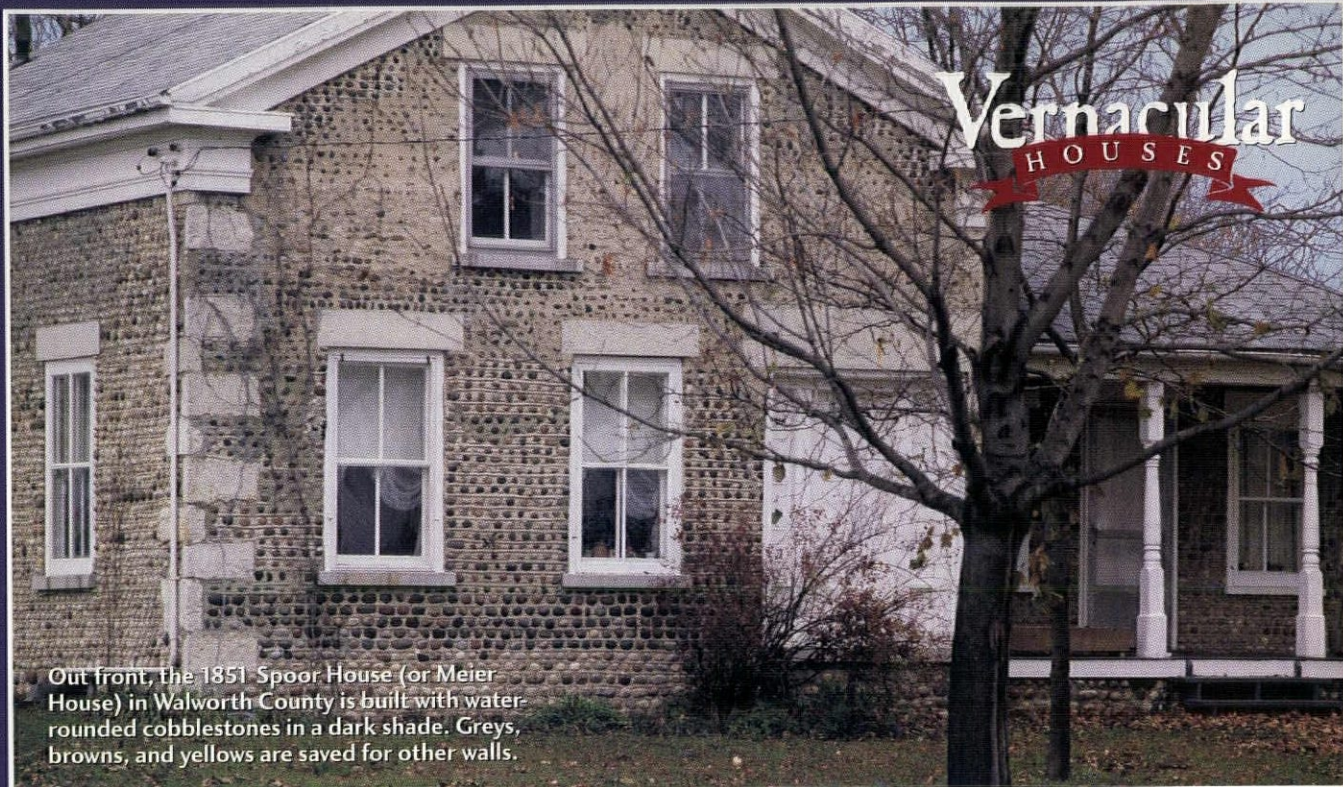
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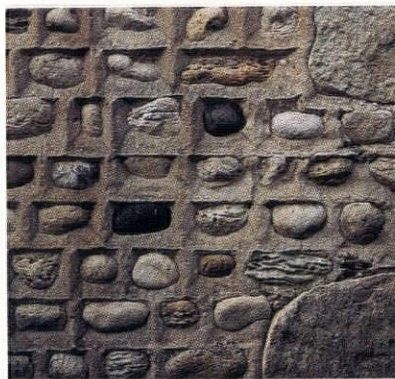


Out front, the 1851 Spoor House (or Meier House) in Walworth County is built with water-rounded cobblestones in a dark shade. Greys, browns, and yellows are saved for other walls.

## COBBLESTONE HOUSES OF WISCONSIN

**T**HE SECOND LARGEST GROUP OF cobblestone houses in America was built in the 1840s and 1850s near Wisconsin's border with Illinois. Cobblestone masonry—a style featuring matched stones, each small enough to hold in one hand—originated in New York State soon after the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. As New Yorkers moved west to new farmlands, they carried the cobblestone method with them to southern Michigan, southern Ontario and, ultimately, Wisconsin.

Masons in Wisconsin used two kinds of cobblestones: field cobbles (roughly rounded stones left in fields by glaciers) and water-rounded cobbles (smooth-surface stones found in lakes and rivers). Walls consisted of a facing of selected cobbles with bonding stones reaching into the rubble core. The



A detail of the 1852 Hazelo house shows cobbles of uniform size but mixed colors. Tooling both horizontal and vertical mortar joints is an uncommon flourish that creates a gemlike setting.

outward tips matched closely in shape and size. At first, the stones were laid in walls without regard to color, but in a short time it became

fashionable to select stones of the same color or hue.

The shores of Lake Michigan, the Fox River, and Booth Lake were ample sources of smooth, round and oval-shaped cobblestones. Ten cents a day hired a boy to walk alongside a horse-drawn cart and toss on the stones. Farmers planning to build a cobblestone house might hold cobblestone “bees.” Here young and old, inspired by a hearty supper, music, and dancing, helped sort the cobbles by size and color.

The cobblestone era ended as the generation of masons who had worked on the Erie Canal passed on, and when Civil War inflation made it prohibitively expensive. Today, about 25 cobblestone houses can still be found in southeastern Wisconsin.

—AUDREY PARKINSON  
*Mineral Point, Wisc.*