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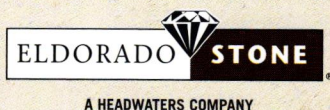
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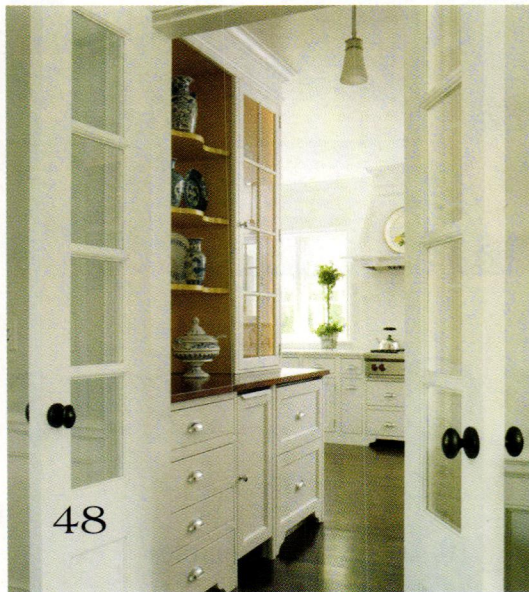
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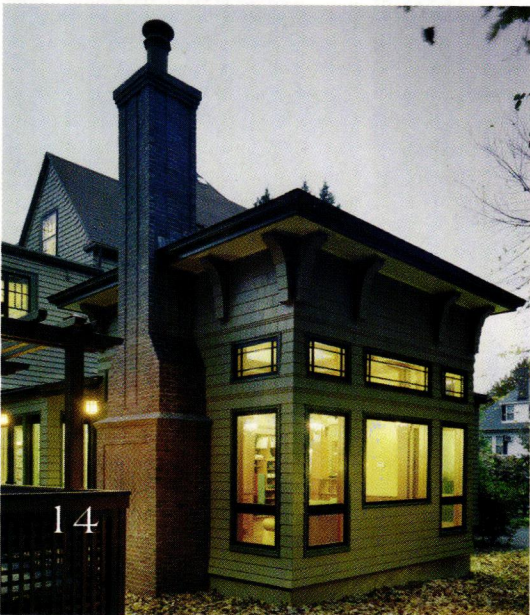
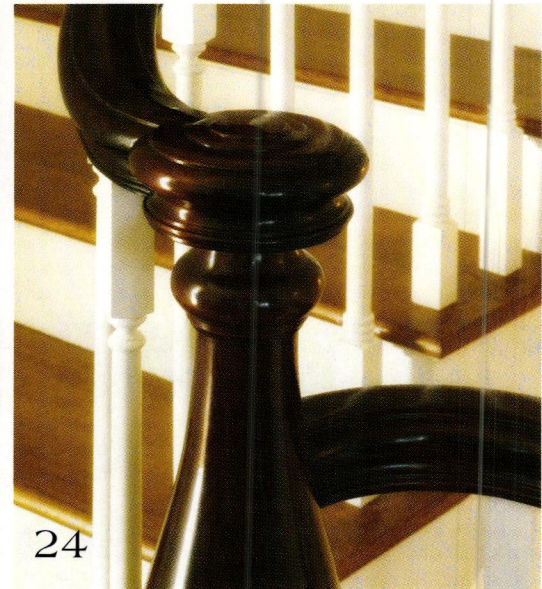
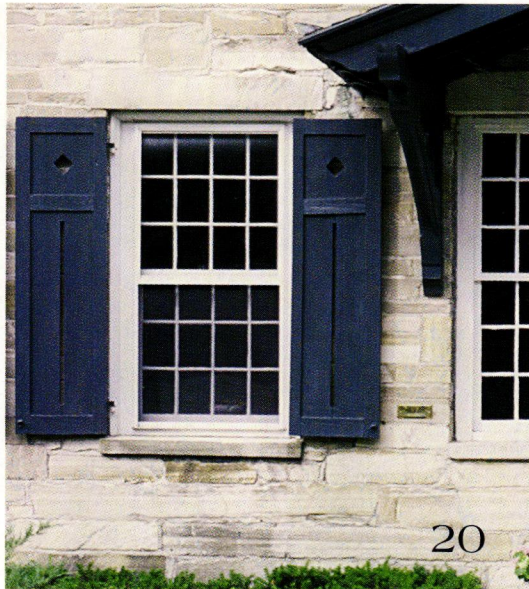
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Cover photo by Eric Roth
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Delightful Details

Early-twentieth-century architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe said, "God is in the details." And this divine quote couldn't be more pertinent when it comes to design. Mies van der Rohe—one of the founders of the Modernist movement—was the son of a stone carver, and he understood that it is the details that perfect the building. Getting the details "perfect" is what it's all about when designing a new old house. Whether it's the appropriate muntin profile for a casement window, the height of a door, or the curve of a banister, the details are what count. They won't jump out at you and say, "Look at me—here I am!" Traditional design details are often subtle and understated. You may not even recognize them, but a room based on traditional design principles will just feel right. We'll see architects hard at work creating these details in this issue of *New Old House*.

In Design Details (page 20) writer Jennifer Sperry interviews architect Peter Zimmerman and designer Christine Franck about choosing historically appropriate shutters for a new old house; when it comes down to these authentic details, the rule of thumb is to make sure they work. In Scaling Back (page 36) architect William Hefner designed a Spanish Colonial Revival home in Santa Monica to take the place of a 1920s version that was no longer structurally sound. Hefner researched original designs by George Washington Smith, a well-known Spanish Revival architect of that era. He also painstakingly researched bathroom wainscoting and tile color from the 1920s to make even the home's private spaces feel and look original.

Master gardener Michael Weishan shares his enthusiasm for boxwood in Heirloom Gardens (page 28). The hardy shrub is not only a beautiful addition to the garden but also a traditional detail to your outdoor surroundings.



In Traditional Trades (page 24) carpenter Carter Mitchell relies on salvaged newel-posts and balusters, old photographs, and antique carpentry manuals to create new staircases in historical forms from his workshop on Nantucket Island.

Architect James Collins gets the details right in his Cotswold cottage-inspired design in North Carolina. Along with builder Buck Nichols and interior designer Cynthia Schoonover, Collins creates a breathtaking yet livable home for an active couple. For more heavenly design details, visit www.newoldhousemag.com.

Enjoy!

Nancy E. Berry, editor

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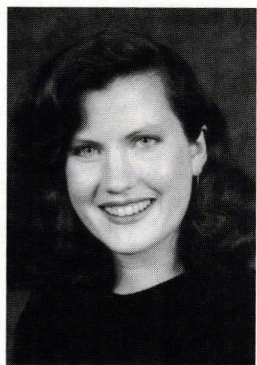
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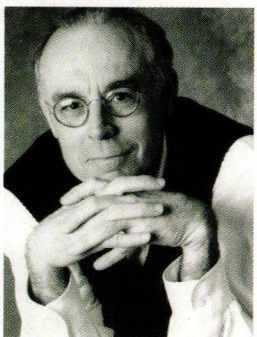
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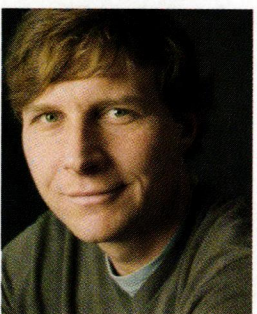
Christine G.H. Franck is a designer and educator with a practice in New York City. She is the former director of the academic programs of the Institute of Classical Architecture &

Classical America (ICA&CA). She sits on the board of directors of the ICA&CA and the management committee of INTBAU and holds a master of architecture from the University of Notre Dame. She was honored by the Prince of Wales with the first Public Service Award of the Prince's Foundation for her outstanding contribution to the study of architecture and design.



Editor-at-Large **Russell Versaci** is a residential architect who has spent two decades designing traditional houses. He attended the Harvard University

Graduate School of Design in 1973 and received his graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Fine Arts in 1979. He has designed traditional country houses, cottages, and farmhouses, as well as restorations and significant additions to period homes. Also an author, Versaci's debut book is titled *Creating a New Old House* (Taunton Press, 2003).



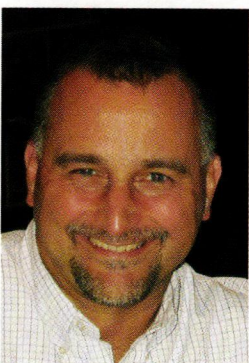
Logan Ward has written about architecture and historic preservation for the *New York Times*, *House Beautiful*, *Cottage Living*, and many other magazines. In 2000, he and

his family moved from Brooklyn to Swoope, Virginia, to re-create the life of 1900s dirt farmers, the subject of his recently released memoir, *See You in a Hundred Years: Four Seasons in Forgotten America*. Logan now lives with his wife and two children in Staunton, Virginia.



Garden writer **Michael Weishan** is host emeritus of PBS's "The Victory Garden" in 2001 and has shared his design tips, expert advice, and trademark sense of humor with gardeners of all

levels. In addition to heading his own design firm, Michael Weishan & Associates, which specializes in historically based landscapes, he has written for numerous national magazines and periodicals and authored three books: *The New Traditional Garden*, *From a Victorian Garden*, and the *Victory Garden Gardening Guide*. Weishan lives west of Boston in an 1852 farmhouse surrounded by 3 acres of gardens.



Michael Tardif developed a passion for new old houses over a 15-year career as a project architect designing homes in Boston and on Cape Cod.

Now editorial director of Design Byline in Bethesda, Maryland, he writes regularly about architecture, design firm management, sustainable design, and design and construction technology. His first book, *Financial Management for Design Professionals: The Path to Profitability*, co-authored with Steve L. Wintner, AIA, was published by Kaplan Publishing in December 2006.

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SKETCHES BY ANDREW LEWIS

Russell Versaci offers a cure for the common McMansion.

If the American dream is no longer a muscle mansion with an urban assault vehicle parked out front, what's next? A sea change is coming, and it's time for the home-building industry to rethink its game plan.

With the collapse of the mortgage market and the rising specter of oil depletion, the warning signs are clear. Americans are parting company with their McMansions, SUVs, and all the other goodies that cheap credit and cheap gas made possible. Good-bye to the era of easy money and fancy new homes with fancy price tags. Home builders, having bet it all on suburban sprawl, are reeling.

Leading the charge in the changing market are the 80 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. Now about to enter their golden years, the baby boomers are ready to move on, and their new priorities don't include big, showy houses in gated subdivisions. Smaller, leaner, and greener are the new bellwethers.

Aging boomers want to spend their money on quality, not quantity. They want smaller homes that are easier to care for and more environmentally friendly. They favor traditional styles that are built to last with high quality materials. And they want to live in places that offer natural beauty, recreation, and real culture. High on the list are smaller cities such as Santa Barbara, Austin, Charlottesville, and Charleston. Not surprisingly, each has a distinctive architectural character that draws newcomers.

Home builders toting bulging portfolios of generic bloated McMansions have little to offer new arrivals who want smaller, more authentic homes. The five-bedroom, five-bath, 5,000-square-foot behemoth is a relic of another era. If builders want to stay in business, they



will have to find new strategies to attract a market that is downsizing.

It's not just the home designs that need slimming. The home-building system itself needs to pare down. Construction costs are out of control because builders are still using a delivery system that hasn't changed much since the Middle Ages. We still gather up sticks and stones, bring them to the job site, trudge through mud and snow, go up and down ladders, cut and hammer in the blazing sun or driving rain, and generally build like medieval house wrights. Stick building houses is expensive and outmoded. With the home-building industry in shambles, there must be a better way.

Here are my suggestions: First, architects need to give home builders designs for smaller traditional homes that will attract maturing home buyers. The houses should be authentic, appropriate to place, and built for the ages.

Russell Versaci's design called the Barrister is from his Simple Farmhouse Portfolio.

Every region of America has a legacy of architectural traditions to serve as inspiration. Our best traditional architects should be drawing on them to design homes that are rich in character and that will be treasured for generations.

Second, home builders need to look for ways to meet new demands in a changing market. Builders know that rising material costs, lack of skilled labor, unpredictable schedules, shoddy workmanship, and dwindling profits are making their trade unworkable—and their products unaffordable. They should look at systems of home delivery that offer a better alternative to stick building.

I'm putting my money on factory prefabrication. One hundred years ago Sears, Roebuck & Company conceived the idea of a house in a box. From 1908 to 1940, Sears manufactured nearly

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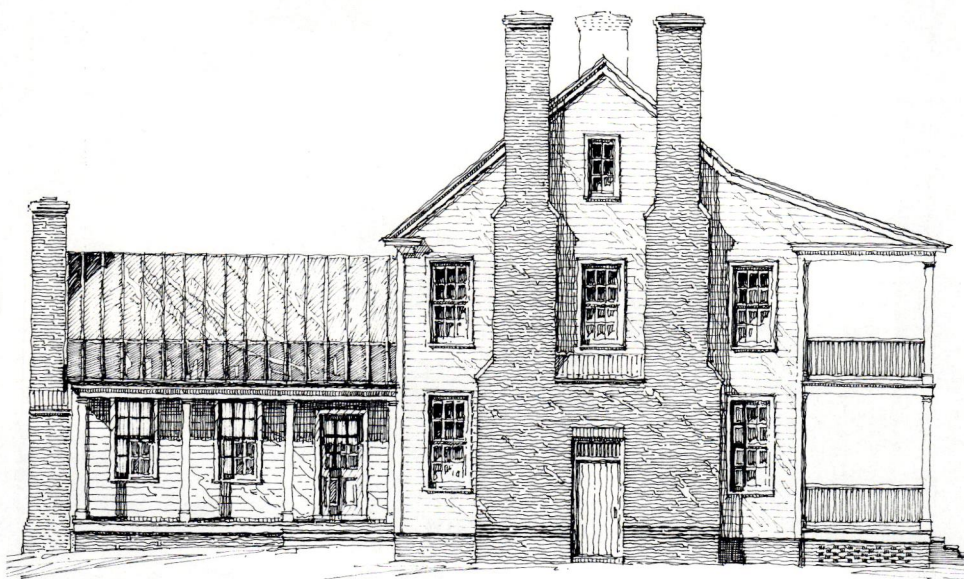


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The Chandler, a Southern planter's house in the vernacular of the Low Country, is another design by Versaci.

100,000 homes, built in distant factories as kits of parts that could be shipped anywhere. Sears kit houses were traditional, well designed, quick to build, and affordable, and Americans gobbled them up. Nowadays Sears kit homes are considered American classics. Today whole neighborhoods of them survive across the country, still prized by their owners and coveted by home buyers.

Following World War II, the kit home was killed off by the rise of mass-produced housing in planned communities like Levittown. At the same time architects gave up on the design of small houses in favor of heavier commissions for the well-heeled, leaving middle-class America with depressingly bad choices. Although today the kit home model has disappeared almost completely, it wouldn't be hard to revive it.

The fact is that America has a huge industry equipped for prefabrication. After touring half a dozen plants, I am convinced that their standards meet or exceed those of stick building. Factory building is efficient, consistently well crafted, and not affected by shortages of local skilled labor. The manufacturing process makes a tighter house that is bound to last longer and require less

upkeep. And that's not all.

There are cost and time advantages, too. According to industry sources, a prefabricated home costs 15 percent less than stick built, and it takes one-third less time to complete. Since all parts are made indoors, weather delays are eliminated. Materials are delivered to the job site from a single source on a reliable timetable, streamlining the delivery schedule. And construction waste going to the landfill is reduced by 25 percent, for a greener footprint.

With the clear benefits of prefabrication and with already-existing facilities, what's holding us back?

Unfortunately, the industry has an image problem. Hobbled by the old stigma of the trailer home, the prefabrication industry is using only 60 percent of its capacity. Part of this is a lack of vision at the top. Prefabricators can't see a way out of their stock-in-trade—building lowend housing—and are missing the future that's right before their eyes.

It would serve them well to get new glasses. Given the dismal climate of the housing industry today, opportunity is knocking. To meet it, prefabricators need to reconsider their strengths, revamp their designs, and reposition

their products.

Architects should do the same because times are changing for us as well. The high-end custom home commissions that were plentiful in the era of easy money are now thinning out. Sure, there will always be "patrons"—the 0.5 percent who can afford to build regardless of cost. But a shrinking pool of patrons will not keep all of us in business.

What about the next tier down, the 20 percent of American households who are customers rather than "patrons"? They are solid middle-class families planning their future homes, and they appreciate the benefits of an architect's design but cannot afford to custom design their home. This group works out to a couple hundred thousand customers who need our help each year, and we should offer them predrawn designs. I am convinced that they are the market of the future.

All of us in the home-building industry need to invent new ways of doing things or, better yet, reinvent good old ones. Having grown my architecture practice in the rarified era of custom-designed and custom-built homes, I have seen change coming for years and have been gearing up for the new market.

In my practice, we have been creating a collection of designs for houses based on America's regional styles—Hudson River Valley, Pennsylvania Dutch, Southern Piedmont, Chesapeake Tidewater, and Carolina Low Country—with more to come. The houses are part of our Simple Farmhouse Portfolio, and they are authentic, affordable, and green. I believe that houses like these are going to define the next chapter for the new old house. This new direction doesn't involve reinventing the wheel, just updating tradition for the new century. Rather than a revolution, it's a rebirth. In the end, I think that's what the new old house is all about. **NOH**

Russell Versaci is an architect and author of Creating a New Old House (Taunton Press, 2003). He can be reached via email at russell@russellversaci.com.

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Artful Addition

TEXT BY MARY GRAUERHOLZ PHOTOS BY PETER LEWITT

Architect David Torrey employs the tenets of the Arts and Crafts style to an 1890s Shingle-style home.



Preservationist and architect David Torrey employed the elements of the Arts and Crafts Movement in this home in Massachusetts.

On a business trip to the West Coast 20 years ago, Ted Kurland took a side trip and discovered his soul. After a meeting in Los Angeles, Kurland traveled to Pasadena to see the Gamble House, the classic Arts and Crafts home by Charles and Henry Greene. Every feature spoke to Kurland's aesthetic—the exquisite joinery, finely crafted wood, elegant stonework, the hint of Asian influence. But there was a deeper attraction pulling him to Arts and Crafts architecture: the philosophy of egalitarian collaboration

between homeowner and craftsman. Don't be an elitist with craftsmen, the philosophy intoned, and give them good, satisfying work.

"The movement was intended to be unpretentious," Kurland says. "It was for the masses."

What goes around comes around, as they say, and sometimes in grand fashion. More than a hundred years after the birth of the Arts & Crafts Movement, Kurland and his wife, Ann, experienced their own soul-lifting collaboration, when architect David Torrey, of Mendern, Torrey & Spencer Inc. in Boston, worked with the couple to add a

salon, sun space, and deck that are a pitch-perfect reflection of their 1887 Shingle-style home.

The Kurlands' three-story home stands on a gentle slope in a historic pocket of carefully preserved homes in Newton, just outside Boston. Serenity floats over the neighborhood like soft gauze: Velvety lawns drift into flower gardens and shady nooks that gently separate neighboring houses. Mature maple trees spread over sidewalks lit by street lamps in early-twentieth-century style. Almost every house has a historic plaque. The family, including the Kurlands' two sons, had loved their home in nearby Chestnut Hill, but this place was clearly special.

"The land and the neighborhood drew us here," Ted says. They loved the house, too, especially its fine craftsmanship, elegant use of wood, and a welcoming front porch. The structure of the house, in the Shingle style that emerged from Arts and Crafts architecture, captured Ted and Ann. But the house was showing its age. "It was tired," Ann says. "It wasn't kept up." And Ted, who is in the music industry, needed a comfortable room to listen to music. He and Ann, a freelance writer, and their sons all needed a more solid connection to the world outside.

Enter David Torrey, who has a deep affection for both Craftsman and Shingle-style architecture. Torrey's architecture and preservation firm, Mendern, Torrey & Spencer, is noted for the preservation of H. H. Richardson's Stonehurst, the Waltham, Massachusetts, estate and masterpiece of Shingle-style architecture. Torrey embraced the Kurland project and four



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years ago began the addition: a sunken living room that he and the Kurlands dubbed the “salon,” where the family could share in their enjoyment of music, and a sun space and deck that segue from the main part of the house to the backyard landscape.

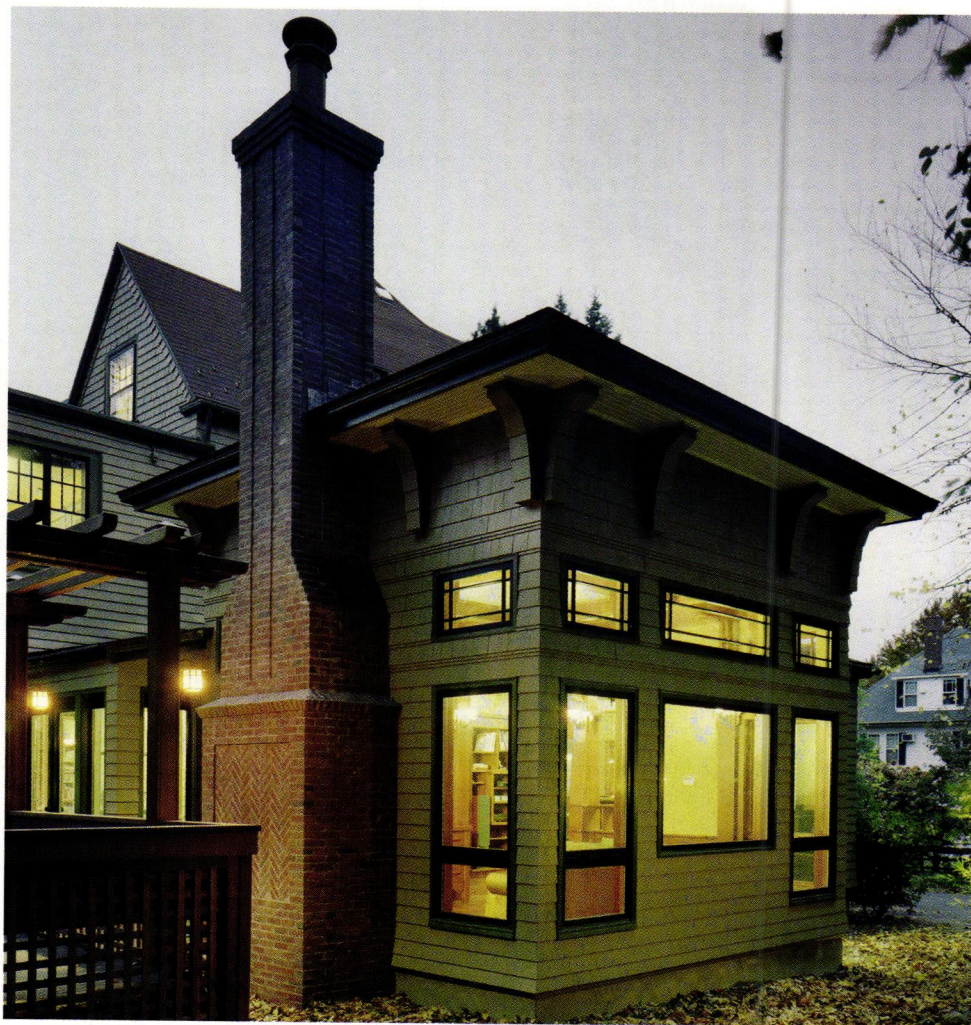
“This house typifies the time that Shingle style was in full flower,” Torrey says of the Kurlands’ home. Clearly, the bones of the house were strong, but it needed updating to suit the family. The addition gives the family more room and adds to the home’s expansive sense of scale without sacrificing its cozy mood.

“We wanted it to be intimate,” Ann says. Today, standing at her granite kitchen counter, Ann can look into the sun space and the backyard and glimpse the salon just to the left. For a woman who trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, writes about wine, and loves to cook, this is very good. Even when they spend time in separate rooms, the family doesn’t lose its sense of togetherness. “We like the scale,” Ted says.

The Kurlands also like the colors and fabric patterns inspired by Arts and Crafts Movement. Walls are soft reflections of earth tones, including soft organic greens and butterscotch. Although the furniture is eclectic and, as Ann says, collected from various sources, much of it sports deep tones and soft florals, another style signature of the early-twentieth-century movement. The overall effect is warm and gracious, with jolts of whimsy here and there and plentiful views of the luscious landscape.

The salon is every bit what Ted needed for the music in his life, both personal and professional. The two small sofas (whose subtle floral pattern echoes Arts and Crafts style) render very special views: one of an entertainment console, which Torrey designed to accommodate a music system with high-tech speakers and a flat-screen TV, and the other of a fireplace lined in soft green tiles, topped by a framed Art Deco poster.

“The hearth, that essential image of home, is the focus of the space,” says Torrey. The architect also incorporated



Torrey chose large picture windows with clerestory windows above to allow for plenty of sunlight. The chimney has a decorative herringbone pattern in its center.

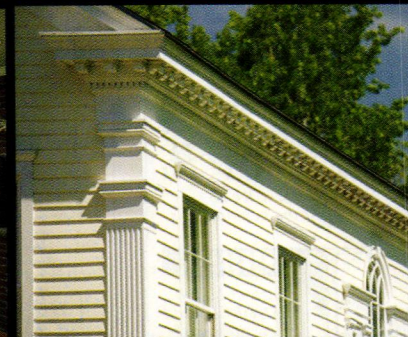
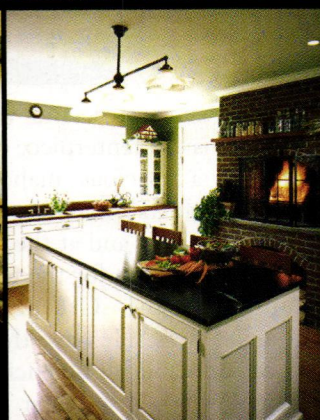
another Arts and Crafts element: a subtle sense of order in the integration of walls, ceiling, furniture, and lighting. Brass wall lights with a copper patina form a stately pattern. The bracket that appears in the coffered ceiling is repeated in the cabinetry and mantel. Warm green walls are echoed in the view to the kitchen ceiling, painted a soft tint of the same color. It’s easy to picture Ann and Ted with their boys, now in high school and college, lounging in the salon.

“We’ve never been comfortable in homes that are too formal,” Ted says. The family obviously enjoys the light-hearted side of life. The living room features velvet Egyptian Art Deco chairs, backed against a Stickley reproduction

oak-framed sofa, and one of the home’s four fireplaces. The dining room, elegant and beautifully lit with orange mica wall sconces, has walls of textured plaster tinted with deep orange sherbet tones. Over the table is a Rococo lighting fixture with a subtle leopard print.

The genesis of the sun space, located off the kitchen and next to the salon, was to get the family closer to the outdoors. “They wanted a better connection with the yard,” Torrey says. It is a quintessential “between” space that segues between the indoors and outdoors. The furniture is simple, including a tiled table and chairs from Mohr & McPherson in Cambridge. Muddy, the family’s little poodle, is especially at home here.

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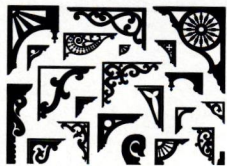
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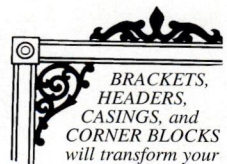
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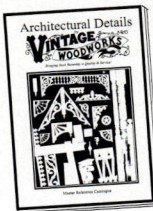
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Outside the sun space, and within view of the salon, is the centerpiece of the home's exterior: a spacious mahogany deck with a comfortable dining area shaded by a cherry tree, and at the other end, a hot tub big enough for the family. Torrey continued the Greene and Greene influence here. He gave the hot tub a sense of scale and subtle enclosure with an open Western Red Cedar frame in the Asian motif so common in shingle-style architecture. Shingles form brackets to hold framework around the deck, and the exterior face of the chimney that accommodates the hearth in the salon echoes the style with a herringbone pattern. The Arts and Crafts influence is everywhere, but never in rigid fashion. "Nothing's by the book," Torrey says. "This is my interpretation of the Greene and Greene craftsman idiom, as applied to a Shingle-style home."

The deck's design elements are little visual delights, dancing in and out of view with a turn of the head. Standing like sentries in the background are gorgeous stone columns, replicas of those in the front of the house, supporting the framework around the deck.

A traditional Arts and Crafts colonnade was incorporated as a divider between the family and dining rooms.

The stone columns have their own story. When the Kurlands and Torrey were planning the deck, they knew they wanted to reflect the home's original stonework in the columns. But how would they find the stones? Ah, said the family's Italian gardener, you must get them from the ground. That's what the craftsmen who built the original house had done—they plucked them from the ground. So the modern-day craftsmen did the same thing; they found the stones buried in the backyard. The stones are perfectly in sync with the 120-year-old stones in the columns on the front porch. Another century, but the same technique and same respectful collaboration, all in impeccable Arts and Crafts style. NOH

Mary Grauerholz is managing editor of Cape Cod Life Publications and a freelance writer.

For Resources, see page 70.

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Open-and-Shut Case

TEXT BY JENNIFER SPERRY

Don't fall victim to a common household crime—select, size, and mount your shutters properly.

One would be hard-pressed to name a more practical exterior element than the shutter, whose simple purpose is to filter or block wind, rain, sunlight, unwanted visitors, and intruding eyes. At the same time, shutters are vital decorative elements: Visually, they expand the size of a window, complement and accent the primary house color, and, when sized and mounted properly, lend authenticity to a historical or new old house.

Shutters should receive the same care enthusiastic homeowners willingly bestow on flooring, molding, and other key architectural elements. Furthermore, shutter style, size, hardware, and mounting are considerations to be addressed concurrently. Shirking one of these interrelated elements is akin to building a house without considering its owners' lifestyle—the end result just will not satisfy.

Functionality

In the seventeenth century, the first wood-framed structures on American soil were straightforward, as were their shutters. Since glass was an expensive commodity, shutters—usually of solid wood or board-and-batten—were used to seal off openings. They operated (and could be barred) from the inside, leaving no exterior hardware exposed. While glass eventually became more available, it was still expensive, and shutters were used as a vital line of defense against breakage.

As the need for strict security gradually decreased, shutter styles evolved. Instead of an entire piece hinged on one side, shutters flanked windows in pairs by the second half of the eighteenth century. Louvered shutters, either fixed or working, were often chosen for the second story, while solid raised panel versions continued to protect first-floor



openings. Louvers offered many advantages, including ventilation, visibility, light control, and privacy.

The style of shutter applied to a house typically had more to do with climate than aesthetics. “Both interior and exterior shutters were originally used as a means to modulate interior temperature,” says residential designer Christine Franck. “In the South, you will find louvered shutters more common as they shaded and cooled an interior while still allowing airflow.” Awning-style shutters, which hinge at the top and open vertically to provide maximum shade, are popular in subtropical areas.

No Detail Is Too Small

According to architect Peter Zimmerman, achieving “suspension of disbelief”—

This stone house has historically appropriate shutters that are operable as well.

making a house appear truly historical (whether it is or not)—relies on the success of small details, such as shutters. “Architects are always saying that ‘God is in the details.’ You can’t leave these things to chance,” he explains, referring to a past project, the renovation of a Pennsylvania stone house, as an example. “It was first constructed as a log house for shelter during the winter; then a stone addition was built when the settlers had more time. Overall, the house is a series of additions, so we used shutters with different thicknesses and hardware for different wings. In the end, the house really looks as though it was built over time.”

The majority of historical homes no

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longer possess their original shutters, observes Zimmerman. Therefore, determining the correct architectural shutter for a house oftentimes involves researching the neighborhood's roots, by either observing nearby houses of the same period or accessing reference documents. Tastes and styles from the past varied greatly within geographic regions. "Swedish, German, Irish, or English—these colonial settlers brought with them differing traditions, so house styles would differ incredibly from place to place," he says.

Accessibility to centers of commerce and materials also influenced shutter appearance. Stylistic design elements, particularly from Europe, would appear in cities first and then slowly make their way out to the country. In regard to hardware, early plate latches and locks were all handmade, but as settlers began to rely on shipped goods, they used what was available. Notes Zimmerman, "A grouping of German houses might have English hardware for this reason."

The Basics

A few guiding principles ensure that shutters enhance a home's historical feel. The first is obvious yet is seemingly the most overlooked—shutters should exactly fit a window frame when closed. When this simple standard is disregarded, a variety of shutter don'ts occur: They are ultimately too big or too small or are mounted improperly or backward. For example, an arched window's pair of shutters must match the arch when closed, so square tops are not an option.

Once properly sized, shutters should swing closed, even if homeowners choose to leave them open indefinitely. This involves placing the shutter on a hinge—a strap-and-pintle hinge, H-hinge, HL-hinge, or mortise hinge—at a slight incline. When open, the shutter is held by either a hook or a shutter dog. Hardware is available in wrought iron, cast iron, brass, and bronze, and its appearance ranges from the straightforward (Colonial homes used simple strap hinges and rings) to the highly ornamen-



CHARLES WHITE

tal (typical of the Federal and Victorian eras). Closed shutters must be flush with window frames; otherwise, they may be torn off their hinges by extreme wind.

Historically accurate shutters are never affixed to the face of a house but instead are mounted "in the traditional manner so there is depth and shadow," advises Zimmerman.

Another common shutter mistake involves louvers. Believe it or not, shutters are often installed upside down, with their louvers facing in the wrong direction. When shutters are closed, louvers should be angled down and away from the building to keep out rain and snow and to allow for visibility.

Color is also a factor in a successful shutter equation. "When you stand back, glass goes black, so dark shutters expand the size of a window visually. Light colors do not provide the same proportions," says Zimmerman. "Originally, very limited colors were available. On Pennsylvania Colonial houses, dark red paint, made with ox blood, was typically used. Dark reds and browns—earth tones—were created from available pigments. In fancier areas, homeowners could afford rarer pigments, such as white and light yellows."

Louvered shutters are an appropriate choice for this California Spanish Colonial.

Judgment Call

Replicating a historical home's original shutters down to the exact color and hardware requires some investigative work. Period photographs offer definitive proof, and professionals can unearth a shutter's first coat of paint. Without these clues, architects and designers are guided by the architecture of the house.

Selecting shutters for a new old house offers the most stylistic leniency. "My shutter decisions are not based on architectural periods, although I do take my lessons from the customs of any given architectural period," says Franck. "I am creating new works within a tradition, and I design what is most climatically appropriate, durable, and aesthetically pleasing."

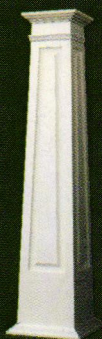
When in doubt regarding historically authentic shutters, simply consider their time-honored purpose. Allow them to shut and protect, and true suspension of disbelief can be achieved. **NOH**

Jennifer Sperry is co-owner of Sperry Communications Inc. in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

For Resources, see page 70.

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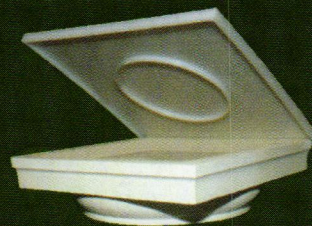


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Stair Master

Craftsman Carter Mitchell creates works of art in wood.

TEXT BY JILL EVARTS PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ALLEN



Above Carter Mitchell in his Nantucket shop. *Opposite* A close-up of a historically inspired newel-post in a new old house.

On the day of my meeting with master craftsman Carter Mitchell, I enter what seems an unusually quiet wood shop. There is no banging, no sawing, no whirring of machinery, although the sawdust and sections of staircases in various stages of completion are evidence of the shop's true nature.

The lone worker looks wide-eyed, eyebrows raised, when told Carter Mitchell has an appointment. "I'm sure he must have just stepped out," he says, as he fumbles for his cell phone.

I wander around the two-bay shop, examining work tables, saws, sections of wood. "He's sort of left-brained," the worker explains apologetically—cell phone tight to his ear—as I run my hand across a curved piece of wood secured with two clamps.

The shop is a no-nonsense sort of place, located down a winding road in





Nantucket's not-so-trendy mid-island section. It's a place where lumber and chairs and mismatched balusters are stacked in every spare inch of space, a place where the telephone consistently tells callers: "The machine is full." This is not the sort of a space where a tourist is encouraged to walk in off the street. This is a workshop in every sense of the word.

To the worker's relief, Mitchell is located, and we then while away a pleasant few minutes viewing pictures of past projects: staircases that appear to be undulating as they wind gracefully from baluster to baluster, handrailings turning in beautifully tight, seemingly impossible curves.

Carter Mitchell creates millwork of all types, including cabinetry, fireplace mantels, and doors; he also designs custom furniture on commission. But what

he is most known for are his elegant curving staircases, which have graced many fine homes on the island.

Mitchell and his two employees are gearing up for the installation of a six-story curved staircase, with six landings, for a private home on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Mitchell built a staircase for the homeowners here on the island and was then commissioned for their Manhattan home.

The 12 runs of stairs have been loaded onto a truck bound for New York, where they will be assembled on-site, a job which should take several months to complete and which is the reason for the wood shop's uncharacteristic inactivity today.

When Mitchell does finally amble into the shop, it's easy to forgive his oversight: Bespectacled, avuncular, immediately likable, he's a man clearly

passionate about what he does, and it's a pleasure to share in this enthusiasm.

"My craftsmanship is the type that lasts as long as it takes for the tree to grow back," he explains, as he displays a piece of reclaimed Ming Dynasty elm from the Yangtze River Valley in China. "This tree was probably 200 years old when it was cut down, and that was centuries ago," he says, as he pours water over the wood to accentuate the grain and the amber patina. The Ming Dynasty elm was used for the treads, the balusters, and the winding handrail in a home on Nantucket's south shore. In this same house, Mitchell also built 30 porch posts with elaborate lock-in miters, two fireplace mantels, the front door, and a vanity with drop-in sink. "So far," he adds, commenting on this work in progress.

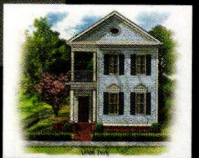
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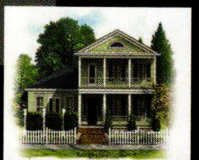
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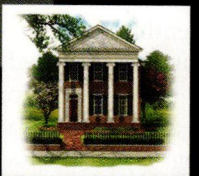
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four weeks to three months to construct, depending on the circumference of the curves and the elaborateness of the design. "One of the challenges is that you have to think three-dimensional all the way through the design," he explains.

Handrailings with tight turns must be hand-carved, although each project is unique and offers its own set of obstacles. The curved piece of wood I'd admired earlier is one such example. This section was constructed from 3/32-inch veneers in order to achieve the proper curvature.

Mitchell often draws his designs from past restoration projects, where he has brought historical staircases up to today's codes. Old balusters and newels, which were from 4 to 6 inches shorter, need to be either replicated or elongated with the addition of square posts at the base.

"I've gleaned a lot from doing the restoration on physical projects," he explains. "They've been the source of numerous newels, balusters, and handrail profiles."

Mitchell takes pictures in antique homes of details he would like to reproduce and also keeps a collection of historic balusters and newel-posts to aid in his designs, although these pieces often lose their original charm when altered to meet today's standards.

"When you proportion them up, with the relation between height and girth, you can end up with something totally different," Mitchell says. "Sometimes it just doesn't work at all."

For this reason salvaged balusters and newels often serve only as the inspiration for the design, with Mitchell redesigning a piece with the same historic feel.

Mitchell grew up outside Springfield, Massachusetts, and graduated from Gordon College with a psychology degree. He was unsure what he wanted to do, so he took a temporary job with a friend of a friend building houses. This was Mitchell's first real experience in working with his hands—aside from fort building as a child. He was hooked.

Then a home renovation brought him to Nantucket Island. Here he saw the potential to take on the challenging craftsmanship projects he desired and to

also work for himself. Mitchell opened a shop in a two-car garage and took any kind of woodworking assignment he could find.

"The island was like a Venus fly trap," he says. "Eighteen years and two children later, here I still am."

Mitchell was drawn to staircases as much by the statement they made in the home as by the challenge.

"I was humbled by the work involved," he explains. "But I do admit that I got myself in trouble a few times. I spent some late nights figuring out how to make the curves of a staircase work."

He took on his first elaborate circular staircase project 10 years ago. "I was basically walking in the dark," he says. "Everything was a test. But that's what caught me."

Although Mitchell sees building staircases as an evolution, with his skill level increasing with each project, he is also looking toward new challenges and hopes to open a showroom to expand on his custom furniture designs.

"One of the fun aspects is coming up with something unique," he explains. "It's hard to reinvent the chair."

For a recent commission, Mitchell designed a mahogany cabinet using elements from different furniture designs. This elegant cabinet is accentuated with cabriole legs hand-carved with a succession of indentures and a squashed ball-and-claw foot. A delicate lotus leaf molding runs along the crown of the piece.

He draws his designs from various books on furniture design, particularly of Early American artisans. Mitchell is ready for this new challenge.

"My idea of a vacation is going into my wood shop and building something I want to build," he says. "And woodworking is a gentle teacher. You can pretty much do anything—as long as you take the time to make it right." **NOH**

Jill Evarts is a freelance writer who lives on Nantucket.

For Resources, see page 70.

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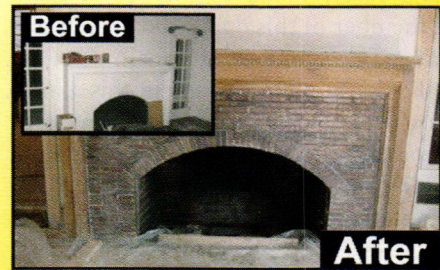


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Winter Interest

TEXT BY MICHAEL WEISHAN

Boxwood creates beauty in the garden all year long.

For the first 18 years of my gardening career, I lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. For you non-Midwesterners, that's Zone 5A territory, which in horticultural parlance translates into short, hot summers and long, cold winters—*very* long, *very* cold winters. It's so cold, in fact, that most broad-leaved evergreens, such as holly and rhododendrons, won't survive there. Thus, it wasn't until a vacation trip to Washington, D.C., with my mother at age 10 that I first experienced one of the most common of all broad-leaves: the boxwood. I remember the day quite clearly. It was a blistering afternoon at Mount Vernon. The gravel crunched wearily underfoot, and the entire landscape seemed to sag under the August sun. Having finished the non-air-conditioned house tour, we fled to the garden for relief. There, I got my first glimpse of those crisp lines of green that happily defied the heat, neatly edging the pathways with prim and proper dips and bows that somehow seemed the essence of what a traditional landscape should be. I was immediately entranced by this graceful plant and remain so to this day, having rarely failed to include at least one member of this delightful clan in the gardens I design, even if only in pots.

I'm certainly not alone in this admiration for boxwood. Common box (*Buxus sempervirens*) has been in Western gardens so long that there is considerable doubt as to the species' ancestral home. Surely the boxwood is native to central Europe, but precisely where remains a mystery, thanks largely to the Romans, who actively spread the species throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond, completely obscuring its source. Their interest in the shrub was wholly motivated by the boxwood's uncanny



ability to be sheared into elaborate topiaries, one of the standard features of classical landscapes. Thus, for over four hundred years, wherever a Roman garden was to be found, there too was found the boxwood. With the fall of the empire and the collapse of ornamental gardening, the cultivation of box slipped into desuetude. But the plucky little shrub wasn't at all fazed: It simply abandoned its formal surroundings for the pleasures of the countryside. By the Middle Ages, it was found growing wild all over

Boxwood has a long history in gardening. The Romans potted topiaries of this ancient shrub.

Europe in numerous forms, from 1-foot-high dwarf cultivars to towering giants over 25 feet tall.

The boxwood's resurgence in Western gardens is owed almost entirely to the smallest member of the family—the one I first met at Mount Vernon—*Buxus sempervirens suffruticosa*. Sometime in the sixteenth century, this little plant was found to be absolutely ideal for edg-

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ing, perfect for forming the elaborate knots and patterns that were then the height of gardening fashion. Topiary, too, returned to Western gardens about this time, and the larger box varieties were once again pressed into service with incredible zeal. William Cobbett, author of *The English Gardener*, echoed the popular sentiment: “If there be a more neat and beautiful thing in the world [than box], all I can say is that I never saw such a thing.” So popular was boxwood, in fact, that it became the dominant feature in many landscapes, with the ensuing backlash such horticultural monopolies inevitably inspire. Complaining that the gardens of the day were “stuffed too thick with box,” many landscape designers of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century ruthlessly ripped out centuries-old box gardens and replaced them with more “modern” shrubs and flowers. Once again the durable boxwood simply shrugged off these changes in garden fashion with the horticultural equivalent of “We’ll just see about that”—the wise old shrub knowing full

well that it was far too useful to be banished for very long. Sure enough, by the early twentieth century, boxwood had made a triumphant return to the European gardening scene, where it remains extremely popular to this day.

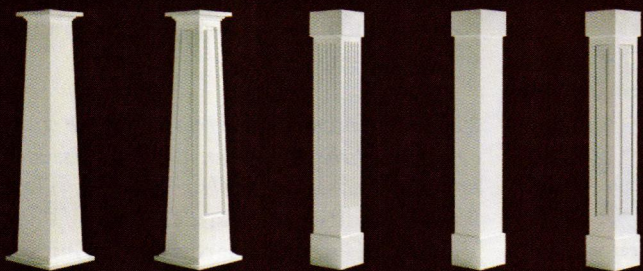
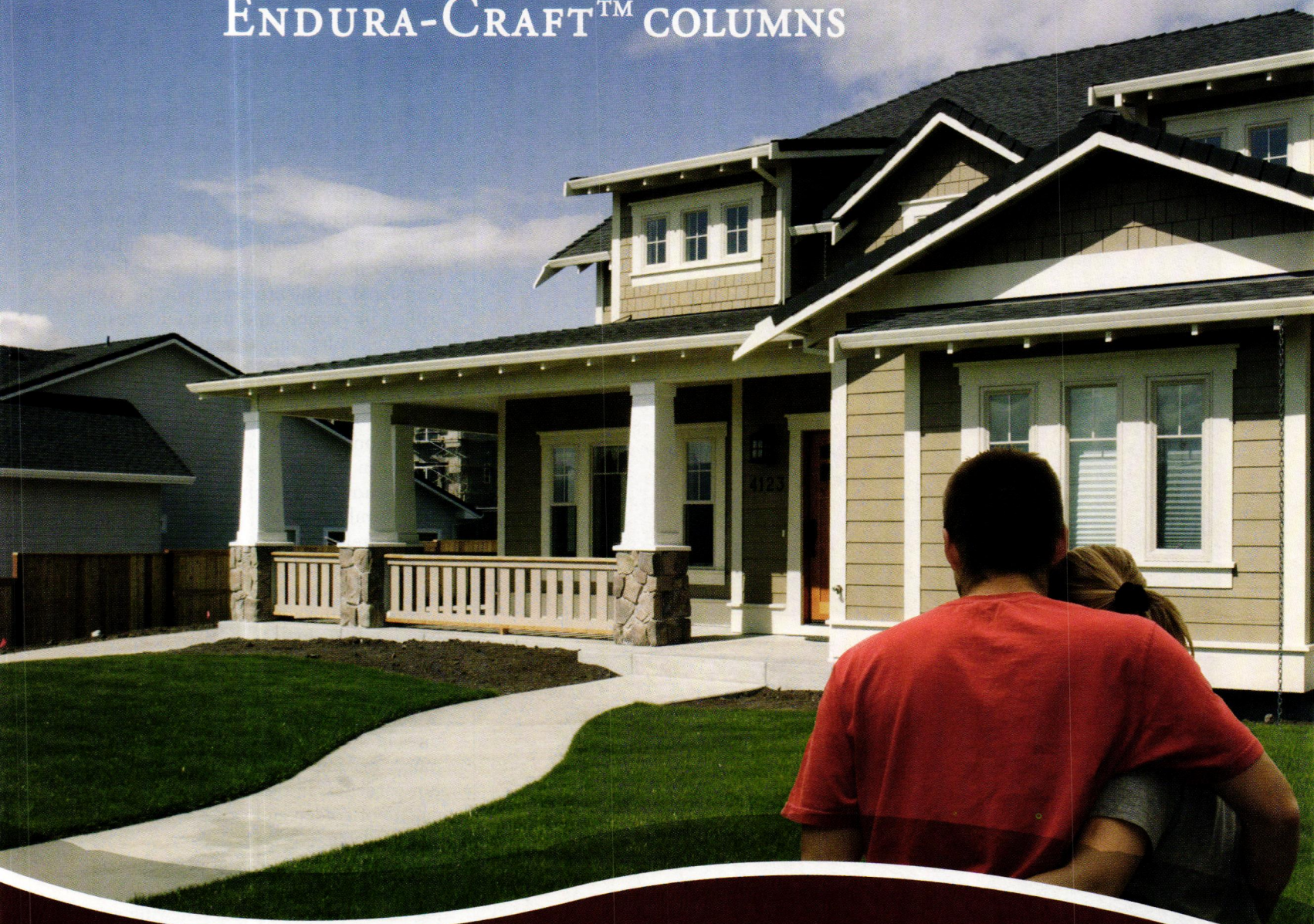
In contrast to overseas, here in America boxwood was never subject to such vagaries of fashion and has remained a beloved element in our gardens since its arrival early in the colonial period. Later, as the first Europeans moved west, the boxwood moved right along with them. One of the reasons behind boxwood’s remarkable ubiquity is its ability to root readily from cuttings: Snippets placed in damp sand and kept moist will firmly anchor themselves in a month or so. This meant that tiny little pots of box could be shipped by barge, boat, and even covered wagon across a largely roadless country and that boxwood gardens were often growing and established before the second wave of settlers reached their new home.

Thanks to its ability to be shaped, box is one of the very best shrubs for

Left to right *Buxus microphylla japonica* “Morris Dwarf”, *Buxus sempervirens* “Varder Valley” (American boxwood), and *Buxus microphylla* “Elegantissima” are three varieties of this evergreen favorite.

adding structure and geometry to the landscape. This quality is particularly valuable now, in winter, when most of the garden is an amorphous mass. In sharp contrast to this laxity, the verdant boxwood stands sentinel over the white winter landscape, maintaining form and order until finally relieved by the shrubs of spring. Nor does boxwood possess only winter appeal. On warm summer days when sunlight heats the oils in the leaves, the common box emits an extremely distinctive odor. Those who dislike the smell describe it as “musky”; for me, this wonderful fragrance seems to define “traditional,” as if air perfumed by boxwood is somehow older than the common stuff. Oliver Wendell Holmes shared my sentiments. “It is one of the odors that carries us out of time into the abysses of the unbeginning past: if ever

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we lived on another ball of stone than this, it must be that there was box growing on it."

In terms of culture, box is largely untroubled by pests, though leaf miners, mites, and a small greenish jumping insect called the boxwood psyllid are occasional problems; each can be controlled by organic and inorganic means. Box prefers full sun, though it will grow willingly in part shade, and is generally tolerant of most soils. As mentioned earlier, hardiness is an issue—it can be grown only up to Zone 5B—and boxwood can be very susceptible to damage from snow unless it is knocked off the shrub before breakage occurs. Fortunately, however, breeders have recently introduced a large number of box cultivars that are far more winter hardy than their parents, the mounding form of *Buxus* "Vardar Valley" being one of my very favorites. Several, like "Northern Find," "Ingliss," and "Northland," have withstood temperatures in the minus 20 to minus 30 degree range, making them viable into Zone 4. For gardeners in the South, an enhanced palette of golden and variegated forms is also available.

So this winter, as you peer out your windows pondering changes to the sleeping landscape, think about renewing your acquaintance with the ancient *Buxus* clan. I think you'll find no more delightful companion than boxwood for the traditional garden. **NOH**

Michael Weishan is a freelance writer and owner of Michael Weishan & Associates. He has authored many books including: The New Traditional Garden and The Victory Garden Gardening Guide. Weishan lives west of Boston surrounded by 3 acres of gardens.

For Resources see page 70.

For more information on boxwoods, visit www.newoldhousemag.com.



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Above: Mullion-window cabinets in Cornwall Beaded Inset door style and White Wash finish are townhome traditional. White Wash arched Kent door style wall cabinets atop Kent base cabinets in Century Blue Brushmark Crackle finish blend town and country manor style.

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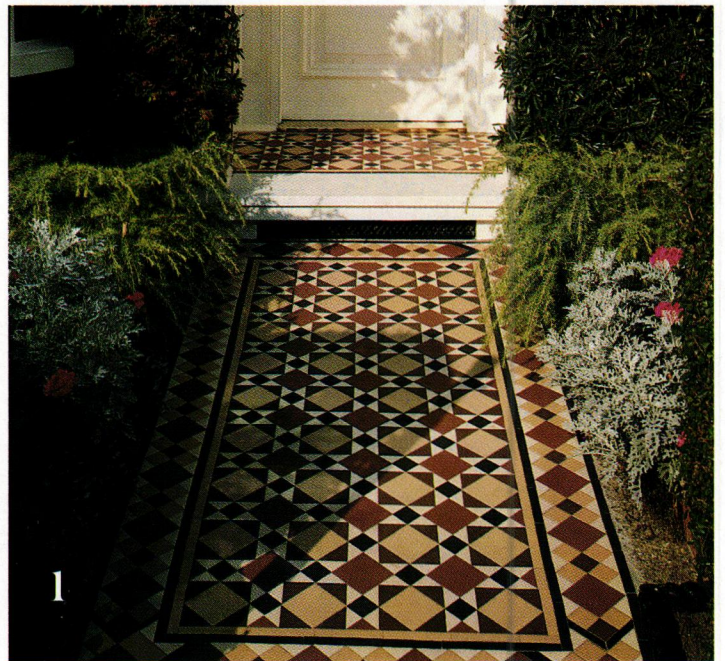
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William Hefner Architecture brought a 1920s Spanish Colonial back to life in Santa Monica, California. *Opposite* Wrought-iron detailing on both the front door and balcony was reintroduced to the home.



SCALING BACK

A family solves the scrape-off syndrome by rebuilding a Spanish Colonial in Santa Monica with help from William Hefner Architecture.

TEXT BY JUDI KETTELER PHOTOS BY CHARLES WHITE

When David and Stefanie Wilson moved to this Santa Monica neighborhood full of Spanish Colonial Revival homes from the 1920s and '30s, they spotted a troubling trend: More and more oversized homes—big on space but short on charm—were going up around them. “The type of houses we associate with this period—thick stucco with red terra-cotta roofs—were rapidly disappearing in Los Angeles,” David Wilson says.

The interiors are kept simple. Whitewashed plaster walls and antique beams dress the living room. *Opposite top* The furnishings are kept simple in a neutral palette. *Opposite bottom* French doors off the dining room lead to the lush backyard.



The Wilsons' Spanish-style home was a one-story, 1,700-square-foot structure built in the 1920s. They renovated it once, but as their kids (then 10 and 11) started getting bigger, the walls seemed to get narrower. "It became an issue of space," David Wilson says. "Still, I'm a preservationist." They began working on a second-floor addition to the home, but there were some issues—namely, a crumbling foundation. Plus, the Wilsons worried the new addition would stick out like a sore thumb and look far too intentional rather than as if it had always been there. "I hated to tear the home down, but the structural integrity just wasn't there," he says.

The Wilsons approached William Hefner of William Hefner Architecture to design a new home that would still have the look and scale of the older home, but with a second story. The Wilsons chose Hefner because he has what David calls "a knack for scale." "The original house had a really good sense of scale," David says. "We wanted to make it look like the house had always been there; we didn't want it to overpower the lot."

Hefner immediately grasped what the Wilsons wanted. "Today, things are built with a larger scale, but they wanted a three-quarters scale so that even though the house was getting bigger, it still had a more intimate feeling," Hefner states. He designed the new 3,600-square-foot home in the existing footprint—essentially using the same floor plan, just with a new foundation and a second story. The home needed to be graceful, not grand.

As the process started, Hefner and the Wilsons salvaged whatever they could from the old home, including the terracotta roof tile, the front door, and the living room fireplace. The new home was designed with the hallmarks of 1920s Spanish Revival architecture and interior design in mind, including a textured stucco exterior with shutters, iron railings, thick walls, exposed interior wood beams, narrow window fittings, simple cabinetry, period-style light fixtures, and tile in the bathroom and kitchen.

Hefner also looked closely at the designs of George Washington Smith, a well-known Spanish Revival architect who built several homes in the area in the 1920s and '30s. He looked through books that featured Smith's work, searching for clues about Spanish Revival architecture and the appropriate fixtures. That's how he came up with the design for the exterior railings. "We really researched railings from that time period, and then it was a matter of searching for parts that looked like that and were currently available," Hefner says.

The lot itself already had a lot of charm—another reason to keep the same footprint. The New Zealand Christmas tree in the front of the home was original; the Wilsons didn't want to lose it. We like to think outdoor living is a new concept, but in the 1920s and '30s, homes were actually built with indoor/outdoor living in mind, David Wilson says. The lots often had lots of fruit trees, and the houses had plentiful patios and porches. It was important to keep that outdoor living feeling and to preserve as many of the plantings as possible, including the orange, lemon, and pomegranate trees. "You wouldn't believe how good these pomegranates are," David Wilson remarks.

The Wilsons wanted the interior to also reflect the architectural style, but they wanted to go a little more modern.





The kitchen has simple white cabinets with chrome hardware, a breakfast nook, and a commercial-style six-burner range. The floors are stained in a dark finish, which is in keeping with the rest of the home's flooring.



The home's façade is classic Spanish Colonial, with its stucco walls and clay tile roof. The home offers plenty of outdoor spaces to sit and relax. *Opposite top* The yard is bordered in hedgerow. *Opposite bottom* Louvered shutters dress the windows.



“David and Stefanie really have an appreciation for the period style,” says Kazuko Hoshino, Hefner’s wife and the firm’s interior designer. However, it was also a new home, and the Wilsons wanted an interior that was livable for the kids—not necessarily a space full of precious antiques. Hoshino mixed several elements—classic, vintage, modern—to create an interior that would complement the period style of the home without feeling too dated. None of the furniture or accents are overly grand, which was deliberate. “These types of houses [from the 1920s] were usually very simple,” Hefner says.

The interior has charm and warmth, yet at first glance parts of the home feel downright sparse—an intentional decision. “We didn’t want it to feel overfurnished,” Hoshino says. “We really wanted to bring out the architectural details,” she explains, rather than having the furnishings compete for attention with architecture. In the dining room, for example, the main attraction is a Stickley table—a piece the Wilsons had purchased a few years back. There’s a simple sisal rug and a period light fixture, giving the eye a chance to appreciate the elegant beam ceiling, the beautiful archways on either side, and the clean lines of the patio door and windows.

In the living room, Hoshino had the thick exposed ceiling beams stained a dark walnut. The floors are stained even darker, almost an ebony. The furniture in the room—including a blue-gray mohair sofa and two linen chairs, custom-designed by Hoshino, and a Scandinavian rosewood coffee table from the 1940s—feels somewhat modern, but it’s simple and tailored. Even the window treatments are unadorned, clean panels. “It’s all simple lines,” Hoshino says.

Hefner and Hoshino did careful research when pulling the bathrooms together. “We noticed that these homes tended to have a higher wainscoting and a contrast in the tile,” Hefner says. To that end, in the master bath they took the denim blue tile up higher than normal and added a contrasting black strip. The black-and-white mosaic inset on the floor adds richness, durability, and more contrast. The beautiful claw-foot tub was an obvious choice (there’s also a stall shower), and the arched windows add more period charm.

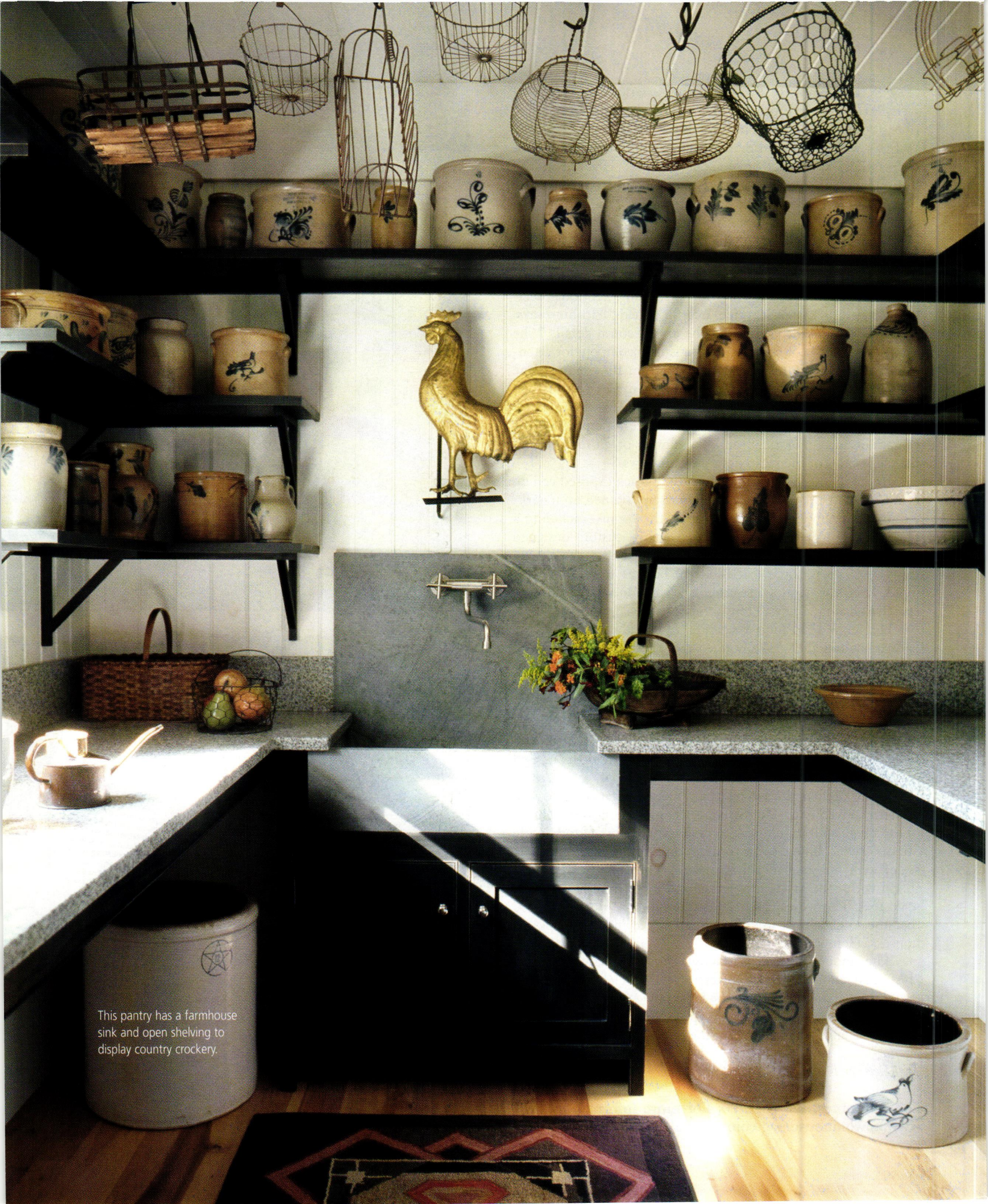
In the kitchen, it was a matter of blending period style with modern convenience. Hefner concealed the stainless steel hood of the range so it didn’t look too modern. He opted for simple Shaker-style cabinets (kept to that comfortable three-quarters scale) with polished nickel hardware. The subway tile backsplash with contrasting gray-green strip also has that smaller-scale feel. The white palette was intentional: “We discovered that the kitchen was usually painted white in these types of houses,” Hefner says.

The amount of space is exactly as it should be, David says. “It’s small enough that it fosters a sense of closeness.” But there’s also enough room for the kids (now 15 and 16) to invite friends over and have their own space. Everyone is happy, he says. “Our family has thrived in the house.” NOH

Judi Ketteler is a home and garden writer.

For Resources, see page 70. For more information, visit www.newoldhousemag.com





This pantry has a farmhouse sink and open shelving to display country crockery.

Personalized Pantries

These often multitasking, hardworking service areas come in a variety of forms and are a must-have in homes today.

TEXT BY APRIL PAFFRATH

Pantries hold nearly mystical qualities—of the culinary sort. They can be hidden spaces or showcases; they can hold food that will have you raiding the larder à la P. G. Wodehouse stories, or they can house the crystal and platters (not to mention the wine) that make your dinner parties sparkle. Rather than simply wish for a pantry that actually comes with a butler, we asked some of *New Old House's* favorite architects and designers how to make a perfect pantry for what you really need.

The first thing to consider is the type of pantry. There are pantries to hold dry goods (such as boxes and jars of food), everyday dishes, or special occasion entertaining ware. Some pantries you pop into several times for a single meal to fetch tools or foods, and some pantries tackle your kitchen overflow for major entertaining with extra dishwashers, sinks, and wine refrigerators. Many pantries are tucked into closet-shaped spaces off the kitchen, while butler's pantries occupy a corridor between the kitchen and dining room. These days, when building a pantry from scratch, it makes sense to consider all the types and see what combination of uses would work best for both how you cook and how your family lives.

Chef, Know Thyself

The most important facet of designing a pantry is a thorough understanding of yourself and how you cook. Given the many types of pantries, you need to determine how you will use the space. John Napsey of Crown Point Cabinetry begins any pantry discussion with questions. "I ask very early on how many members are in the family and if they have extended family gatherings or if they entertain a lot," he says. A pantry for two people who never entertain is a world away from the one a family of six needs, especially if the family hosts holiday dinners and large parties.

"There are many kinds of pantries historically," says Sandra Vitzthum of Montpelier, Vermont. "Houses used to be huge operations and had many storage rooms, each with its own specialty." Pantries today lend themselves well to multiple

tasks, combining storage and display, cleanup and coffee, and even wine and laundry. Heirlooms can be displayed above closed pantries that house the Tupperware or cereal, and no strict guidelines must be followed. Since it all depends on the owners' style of living and what convenience they want out of a pantry, it's important to think about who will use the space, what it will be used for, and how accessible or visible things need to be.

While one person's pantry may center on huge platters and crystal champagne flutes, another's might focus on coffee, boxes and jars of food, spices, and supplies. "My mother lives in the country where the electricity routinely goes out for three days at a time, so food storage is important there. Some people preserve their own food and need storage space," says Vitzthum. "Others have a lot of china and silver, some merely want display space, and others want a place to stash the dirty dishes."

To Butler or Not to Butler

The term "butler's pantry" has a familiar ring to it because it is a feature in many historic houses as well as in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and culture. Its name is much more familiar than scullery or larder, two other types of pantries, perhaps because it is more visible to a house's owners and visitors. While a pantry can be as small as a closet off the kitchen or can take up the end space of a hallway, a butler's pantry is a well-traveled corridor between the kitchen and dining room. You see the space every day, and visitors walk through it. It also makes the contents of the pantry much more visible, a bonus if you have items or heirlooms to display. If you want countertop appliances or dishwashers in your pantry, they will not be tucked out of view. A butler's pantry is more formal and isn't suited to the modern trend of entertaining in the kitchen and dining room simultaneously. On the plus side, it keeps the party in one place and hides the hubbub in the kitchen. It also functions as the perfect spot to serve from and to put dirty dishes—its original purposes.



ERIC ROTH

Windows and Doors

If the pantry is not in a corridor but rather in a dead-end room, you need to consider lighting. "Give it at least one small window so that you don't have to turn on the light every time you come in," says Vitzthum. "It also helps you see true colors better." Windows can add space in the sometimes tight confines, surrounded by jars, platters, and dishes. "Windows make the room seem bigger and more enjoyable," explains Crown Point Cabinetry's Napsey. If there are no exterior walls, you could install more than one door or leave the doors off completely. "If you put a door on, you can hide the mess," says Jonathan Hale of Watertown, Massachusetts. "On the other hand, you have to open the door every time you go in the pantry." Doors can get in the way, not just when you are entering but also when they're open and are blocking other cabinets or paths. "I have clients who left the door off and made the doorway extra wide. It's a question of what kind of cook you are," Hale states. If you want to forgo the door but still keep things looking tidy, opt for cabinet doors. Solid-door cabinets will block out the contents of the shelves, keeping some clutter hidden while the room stays

Above Pantries come in many shapes, sizes, and forms and can serve a multitude of uses. This pantry serves as a laundry room as well as dish storage. *Opposite top* A wine fridge is tucked next to these handsome floor-to-ceiling cabinets. *Opposite bottom* Many companies are designing cabinets to look like old hutches.

open. "I would say the trend is pocket doors," adds Napsey. "With pocket doors or no doors, then you're not blocking cabinets when space is so confined."

"Some pantries are constantly in use," says Hale. To make the pantry easy to use, mix up the cabinet styles. "You can have a mix of open shelves and cabinets." The open shelves allow you to get what you want quickly, and the solid-door cabinets allow you to manage the clutter a bit. "There are many historical examples of pantries that are just open shelves," states Vitzthum. "Some variation between open shelves and closed cupboards is really nice, too. And the upper cabinets don't need to be the same as the lower cabinets in color or style, period or detail." Adds Napsey, "Open shelving is great for easy access: Go in, grab it, go out."

Sinks and Appliances

Sinks and appliances transform a pantry into a station of activity where items can be set up, drinks prepared, and dinner clutter deposited. "If the owners entertain twice a year, then a sink's not that big a deal," says Napsey. But more and more often, people install sinks to help take care of the dishes and preparations, especially if entertaining is one of their main goals. For high-capacity clearing, some pantries house a second (or third) dishwasher, making Thanksgiving and large parties a breeze. Because of the demands and joys of entertaining, many homeowners create a beverage and wine center in their pantry. "One client in Marblehead has a great liquor cabinet pantry, with an adjacent closet for china storage," says Vitzthum. If choosing between appliances, the wine refrigerator seems to win out. "Most of my clients put in an under-counter wine and beverage refrigerator, outnumbering those who put in a second dishwasher," adds Napsey.

Other smaller appliances find a home in pantries, too. It's a great place to store the occasional tool, like a blender, that doesn't see daily use and that might clutter up the kitchen counter. Coffeemakers and toaster ovens or even refrigerators sometimes find themselves evicted from the kitchen proper. "A great trick is to put the fridge in the pantry so that it doesn't have to be in the kitchen. It's nearby, but that eliminates it from the kitchen. Sometimes for only three more steps, you can get this large appliance out of the room," explains Vitzthum.

Don't stop at kitchen appliances, though. In the modern pantry, which can fulfill so many needs, the washer and dryer aren't out of place, either, if you have room for them.

Cultured Counter

The counter in a pantry can match the counters in the rest of the kitchen, or you can mix it up a bit. At Crown Point Cabinetry, many clients choose the same counter as in the main kitchen, or something complementary. Vitzthum sees a difference in the surface needs. "It's not such a heavy-duty workspace," she says, "so I usually use wood. It's a little warmer and furniture-like. However, if you're going to be washing dishes, you want something waterproof."

Napsey agrees on the warmth of wood counters. "I have some architects I work with who put in wood countertops on the job site. It is a warmer look. Some people make it out of the same material as the flooring. If they have cherry flooring, they'll use "waste" flooring material for the counters—and it's not really waste then. I see that quite a bit, and it actually looks pretty nice. It contrasts with the kitchen and helps with the warmth of the pantry." NOH

April Paffrath is a freelance writer living in Cambridge.

For Resources, see page 70.

For more information, visit www.newoldhousemag.com.





This page French doors at the rear of the main hallway lead to a terrace overlooking the lake. Wrought-iron balusters reinforce the simple interplay between black and white in the hallway's décor.

Opposite The projecting bays on either end of the rear façade of this English-style cottage act like bookends. The sweeping eyebrow dormer in the shingled roof over the terrace, suggestive of a thatched roof, fits in the classic mold of Cotswold-style cottages.

North Carolina Cotswold Cottage



Architect James Collins brings an English sensibility to a new old house in Greensboro, North Carolina.

TEXT BY SALLY LAMOTTE CRANE PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH



This page In the combined living and dining room, the curtains cleverly slide into pockets set behind flat paneled walls with corner bookcases, providing the homeowners with greater light and a more expansive view. The herringbone pattern in the oak floor adds interest and texture. *Opposite* Whether the homeowners are playing bridge or the piano, dining or conversing in comfort, the living/dining room accommodates a variety of activities, much like a grand salon.

In a quiet enclave of Greensboro, North Carolina, nestled along the shoreline of Lake Hamilton, sits an American version of the classic rural English Cotswold cottage. Designed by Greensboro- and New York-based architect James Collins for a local couple, this new dwelling achieves a graceful unity with its surrounding landscape.

Sunlight and shadow play on the silhouette of the three steeply pitched gables, illuminating the rhythmic layering of the shingled roof, dappled in texture. The walls are rough brick with flush mortar joints whitened by limewashed paint, suggestive of old stone. The tall, slender chimneys twist on the diagonal. Reminiscent of thatch, the bell-cast shingled roof over the front entryway and the sweeping eyebrow dormer on the rear façade attest to the decorative vocabulary of an earlier English style.

It took over a decade of persistence for the homeowners to purchase this specific parcel of land. In that time, they built a relationship with builder E. S. "Buck" Nichols and thoughtfully considered design styles appropriate for this site. They had always been partial to certain traditional homes in their native St. Louis, as well as to the picturesque English cottages of famed British Arts and Crafts architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. The homeowners also appreciated the period English and French

Norman cottages that became widely popular country house designs across early-twentieth-century America.

It was perhaps fate that brought them together with architect James Collins, who specializes in the design of traditional buildings and interiors. He is also a scholar and admirer of the Philadelphia architectural firm Mellor, Meigs & Howe, one of the nation's most influential designers of English and French cottage-style homes in the first third of the twentieth century. Collins viewed this house and its lakeside wooded setting together in forming a single design, much as the owners had envisioned it. "My principal goal was to make the house be as integrated with the landscape as it possibly could be," says Collins.

Collins employs outdoor rooms, a pergola, fencing, and brick walls to integrate the interior and exterior spaces. In the flow of rooms throughout the dwelling, he uses few barriers, creating a progression that leads the eye through the house to nature and water beyond. "We had a specific idea of what we wanted, including lots of windows and views of the lake from each room," state the homeowners. The lake side of the house also enjoys a southern exposure.

Since the homeowners had a specific number of rooms and their possible linkages already in mind, the architect faced a





This page Dark-stained oak floors in the kitchen anchor the light, airy feeling induced by the all-white marble countertops, subway tile backsplash, and flat paneled cabinetry. *Opposite* Adjacent to the kitchen, the laundry room overlooks the front entry; its sink can be used for hand laundering or for repotting plants.

challenge with how best to fit their design ideas on a long and narrow site, which was 150 feet at its widest. Among their desires for the first floor were a large combination living room and dining room; a master bedroom, dressing rooms, a bath, and an adjacent study; a kitchen with a small pantry and adjacent family room; a separate home office for her; and a screen porch. To incorporate their goals, the architect designed an H-shaped plan with one-story attachments. "I had to make it into components—like it was an ensemble of one-room-deep rooms, much like a traditional Cotswold cottage," says Collins. Project architect Yvonne Bartos generated the construction documents for this nearly 5,000-square-foot plan.

For the upstairs, Collins's design includes a game room surrounded by four guest bedrooms and two baths, all on a separate heating/cooling system for when the owners' grown children and grandchildren visit. He also designed a detached garage with an artist's studio.

"What drove the whole design of the building was that the combination living/dining room was so big, it made for such a tall roof line," says Collins. "One of the challenges was to make the building appear smaller than it really is," he states, adding that traditional Cotswold cottages are low to the ground. In the gables that the architect uses to break up the steep roof line and

attain interior space, the eaves roughly align with the windowsills. "It lowers the roof mass and gives it an intimate feel," says Collins. "The other challenge was how to create a buffer to the street. We lowered the site behind the wall of the motor court, which serves as a screen."

Builder Buck Nichols, who prefers to construct one home at a time, states, "It seems like I'm the only builder around who begs people to build smaller. There's a fine line between the girth of a home and its cottage feeling." Nichols adds that a limited budget and a conscious effort by all of the participants helped keep this project a manageable size without sacrificing quality.

"On achieving a sense of scale, it's also the size of the fenestration that is important," says Collins, who, in determining appropriate window sizes, consulted an old architectural graphic standard for metal casement windows used on period English cottages. "The goal was to have someone look at it and say, 'Oh, this house has always been here.' One thing that can give it away is the fenestration sizes—they are always too small." For this lakeside home, the casement windows are wooden.

The use of organic materials is a hallmark of Cotswold cottages. The roof is made of pine shingles, as pine resin provides a seal best suited to the region. Inside, quartersawn oak plank





Opposite Flooded with sunlight, windows in the master bathroom and master bedroom offer views of the lawn and lake. French doors lead from the bedroom to a private terrace. *This page* A feminine vanity, with marble countertop and art deco touches below, bridges the space between his-and-her dressing rooms in the spacious master suite.





The fence and pergola, custom-designed by architect James Collins, provide a grand enclosure in which the homeowners' Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier can frolic.

floors are used throughout, laid in a textured herringbone pattern in the living/dining room. Richly toned mahogany panels and fireplace surround cast a warm glow in the study. Fitted with great precision, all the woodwork, including the kitchen cabinetry, bookcases, door and window casings, wainscoting and chair rails, crown moldings, and baseboards, is custom-made throughout the house.

Working with interior designer Cynthia Schoonover, the homeowners have achieved a feel of what they call “simple elegance.” As regular entertainers, the homeowners can host an intimate dinner or even a wedding reception comfortably with this floor plan. “It’s a beautiful house, but my kids, including my two-year-old grandchild, don’t hesitate to sit anywhere,” says one of the homeowners.

Schoonover states that “the homeowners both had a clear view of what they wanted—not something that was elaborate but that was like a home, in character with their own personalities. The house is very restrained. They are very warm people, and the house reflects that in a sophisticated way.” Window treatments are simple and elegant, allowing the view to take center stage. One clever feature—the matching bookcase walls in the living room area that are brought forward, allowing the

curtains to recess behind them—provides a more open lake view. While the homeowners used their existing family furniture and decorative objects throughout the house, they also relied on Schoonover for upholstery pieces, which she custom-designs and styles; her custom work is especially evident in the master bedroom and the study.

“Everything becomes art in a white kitchen,” says Schoonover. “The style in this kitchen—1930s and 1940s—is very much the style that I’ve done for years. It is the same with the baths; they all have that timelessness.” She adds, “Houses don’t need to have a trend. They should be a good reflection of the people living in them, not of the time period.”

For this Greensboro couple, the creative process of building a new traditional home was joyful. “We were very fortunate to have such a great team,” the homeowners state. “They knew what we wanted and accomplished it all. And we had a builder who really stayed within budget. It is our dream home!” **NOH**

Sally LaMotte Crane is a freelance writer and editor who resides along the coast of Maine.

For Resources, see page 70.

Many of the design elements on the front façade fit the decorative vocabulary of an English cottage—the steep pitch of the roofline, the dove-cote in one of the gables, the size of the wooden casement windows, the texture and color of the limewashed bricks, and the bell-cast shingled roof over the front entry.





Starry Night



Opposite The homeowners of Starry Night Farm searched for the perfect antique mantel for their living room. *This page* The surrounding cabinetry is custom-milled.

Farm

Archer & Buchanan Architecture brings historic sensibility to a new stone farmhouse in Pennsylvania.

TEXT BY CATHLEEN MCCARTHY PHOTOS BY ERIK JOHNSON



At first glance, Starry Night Farm looks like many of the eighteenth-century farmhouses scattered around the countryside of Chester County, Pennsylvania. There is the weathered fieldstone façade, the humble farmhouse expanded over the years, the outbuildings, the views of misty farmland stretching for miles in either direction. It's hard to believe the house didn't exist two years ago.

Chester County is the bucolic setting you find in many paintings by Andrew Wyeth, who grew up nearby. You'll find a couple of those paintings inside Starry Night Farm, along with works by the artist's father, N. C. Wyeth, and his son, Jamie. The farmland west of Philadelphia has been a retreat for the wealthy since the Wyeth clan settled there in the early twentieth century, along with many avid fox hunters. After the Brandywine Conservancy took control of the area in the 1980s, with easements limiting subdivisions to 33-acre parcels, the land became even more desirable.

By the time Mainline couple Scott and Roberta decided to build their weekend retreat there three years ago, good properties were hard to find in Chester County. They had taken up horseback riding along the Brandywine River a few years before and dreamed of finding the perfect old farmhouse.

Instead, they found a perfect 33-acre lot topped with a pink stucco eyesore built in the '80s. "It was universally hated," says Richard Buchanan, a principal at Archer & Buchanan Architecture, who was called in to replace the pink stucco with a classic farmhouse. The site of the original home, overlooking two valleys, allowed the kind of placement the easement laws usually forbid. "The idea is to tuck houses down and out of view," Buchanan states. "But they got a very visible space and a wonderful view—maybe the best in Chester County."

Buchanan lives not far away, in a farmhouse built in the 1750s and expanded over the centuries. He often uses his home as a model for the new old houses he designs. Scott and Roberta told him they wanted a weekend retreat that would accommodate friends and extended family for weekend visits, with plenty of privacy for themselves and designated areas to enjoy their individual interests. These included a jewelry studio for Roberta, a wine cellar, a garage and home theater for Scott,

Opposite Salvaged floors were incorporated throughout the house, including the kitchen. A large island anchors the space and offers the chef loads of prep room when feeding large crowds. The kitchen opens onto a back deck with views of the surrounding farmland. *Above* The mud room is outfitted with antique boot scrapers. *Right* Custom-milled doors lead into the garage from the back of the house.





and stables for their horses.

"I told Richard I wanted our house to feel like it had grown there," Roberta explains. Buchanan designed Starry Night Farm to look like a humble eighteenth-century three-bay farmhouse that was expanded, at some point, to a grander five bays. As another element of what he calls "the mythic history of the building," Buchanan masked the attached garage by creating the illusion of a thinner, taller building with a false brick chimney that might once have been a separate outbuilding, a summer kitchen. A copper roof connects this section, housing the mud room and Roberta's studio.

"I like that double reading you get when you look at an old house," Buchanan says. "When people build in the wilds of a frontier, they get by with what they need and let the next generation think about making it elegant. If you look closely at a house like that, you can see the asymmetries and quirks that betray what a simple farmhouse it was. I think this house has some of that double reading. It can support an interior with elegant furniture and paintings but still feel solid and permanent."

Creative use of salvaged materials furthered the illusion. "Part of what makes this house feel old is that most of the surfaces are, in fact, very old," states Buchanan. Its fieldstone came from an old barn that was being taken down nearby. "We have a very distinctive stone in this part of the world, and this was real fieldstone, weathered for millions of years in the fields so that it has a softness to it."

Seasoned builders at Griffiths Construction of Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, helped locate and, in some cases, hand-planed the surfaces of salvaged wide-plank floorboards, antique doors, jambs, and windowsills. Living and dining room mantels, both circa 1800, came from homes in South Carolina and Chester County. Buchanan designed vertical wallboard in the living room to resemble the cope-and-pattern paneling often found in Pennsylvania homes built in the 1700s.

Working with local antique dealers and decorator Kirsten McCoy of Meadowbank Designs in Wayne, Pennsylvania, Scott and Roberta filled the house with a mix of comfortable upholstered furniture and American antiques, mostly built in Pennsylvania between 1810 and 1830. "We weren't religious about it, but we were shooting for that era," Scott says. "Once you get into furniture from the eighteenth century, the cost goes way up and it's too formal. We were going for comfortable and relaxed."

Inspired by *New Old House* magazine, Roberta began searching for authentic materials for her new old house. She

Opposite above The stone façade was salvaged from an old barn close to the property. *Opposite below* The dining room is just off the kitchen and dressed in country antiques. *Above* The entryway to the house showcases a hand-milled staircase and salvaged transom window. *Right* The dining room hearth is created in an early Colonial style.







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discovered that a local firm, Heritage Metalworks, was reproducing the collection of antique American hardware at the nearby Winterthur Museum. Their handiwork can be found throughout the house in hardware, sconces, chandeliers, and whimsical fox-shaped thumb latches designed by Buchanan.

From the beginning, Roberta stressed that she wanted the house to feel “cozy,” and, remarkably, it does—despite the fact that it measures 6,000 square feet. By distributing the living space over four floors and “using every bloody inch,” Buchanan managed to fit private guest suites on the upper floors, a staff apartment over the garage, and a basement level where Scott has an office overlooking the valley as well as his antique map collection, a wine cellar, and an entertainment center that’s acoustically and visually separate from the rest of the house.

The kitchen of Starry Night Farm has the warm hands-on feel of a Tuscany farmhouse but with modern amenities and a layout that opens onto the dining room. Buchanan maintained the intimacy of an older home by using ceiling beams salvaged from an old barn to delineate zones within the rooms and a square layout that makes the rooms accessible but visually distinct. “Fifty years ago, you wouldn’t have dreamed of giving the kitchen the dominant view or of having guests arrive and wander right into it,” Buchanan explains. “But our interest is in making houses work for the way we live today.”

One of the best spots to enjoy the expansive views is the back porch—but only in good weather. “In the winter we get incredible winds,” Scott states. “The house is located in a place no real farmer would have put it. An eighteenth-century farmer would have moved the house down the hill so it would be protected. But we deliberately chose to leave it where the pink house was, as high up and as far out of the woods as the conservancy would let us be.”

Despite the gusts, the porch has become one of their favorite parts of the house. “It has a beefiness about it that seems like overkill at first,” Buchanan says. “But if you’re there on a winter day, you’re glad it’s as robust as it is.”^{NOH}

Catbleen McCarthy is a freelance writer who lives in Pennsylvania.

For Resources, see page 70.

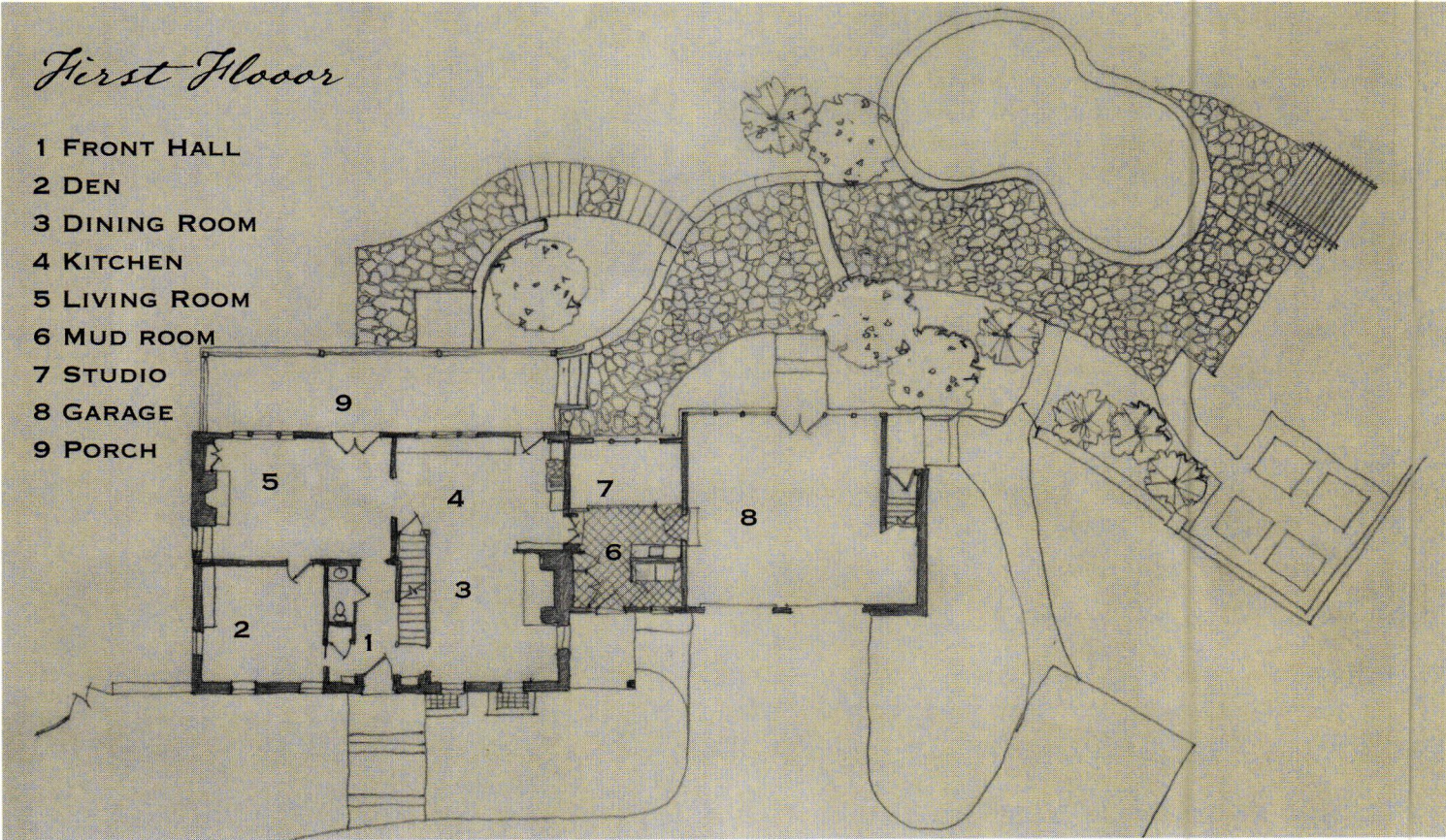
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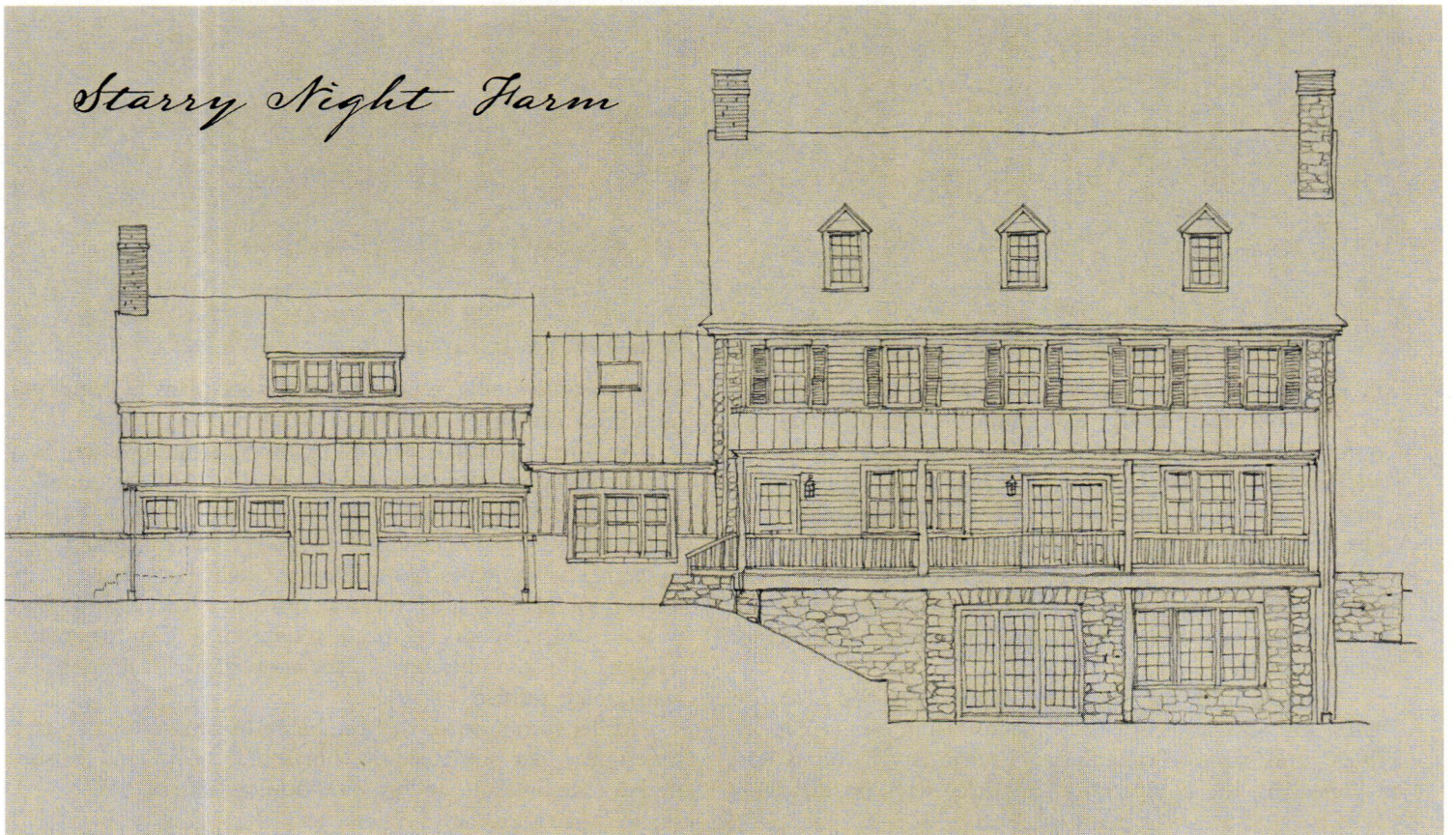
The master bedroom has an antique mantel and built-in cabinetry. *Top* The master bath is outfitted with a clawfoot tub and custom designed vanity. *Right* A detail of the mantel in the master bedroom.





Archer & Buchanan Architecture also designed a six-stall horse barn on the property. *Opposite* The back of the house offers decks and stone terraces to take in the views.





Craftsman Design

TEXT BY NANCY E. BERRY

Jonathan Miller Architects creates a harmonious Craftsman-Inspired house for Traditional Building's Design Challenge competition.



COURTESY OF JONATHAN MILLER ARCHITECTS

The first annual Traditional Building Design Challenge took place during the Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference in Chicago last year. The American Institute of Building Design, the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America, and *New Old House* magazine put eight architects to task to design a new old house that would fit into one of Chicago's nationally recognized historic districts—the Ridgeland/Oak Park, the Gunderson, or the Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie School of Architecture historic district.

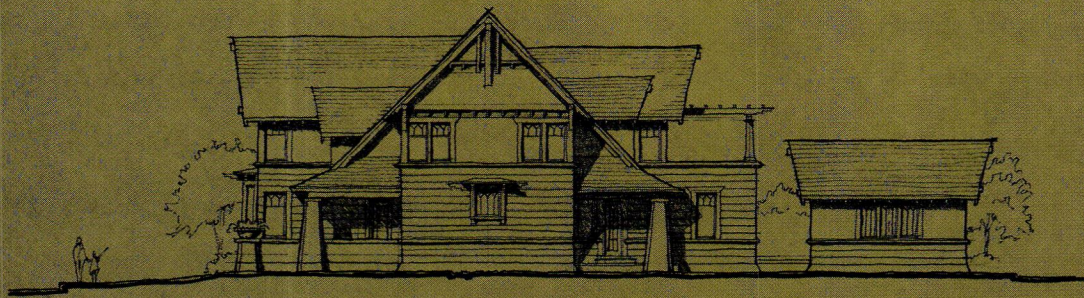
Working with set parameters, such as period (1880 to 1920), lot size (50 by 125), square footage (2,200 to 3,200), and style (Foursquare, Prairie style, bungalow, or Victorian), the competitors had three days on the show

floor to complete the renderings and floor plans by hand and then present them to the judges.

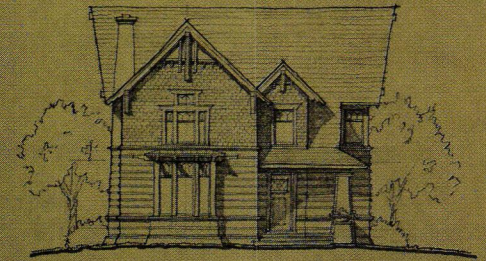
Architect Jonathan Miller Architects winning entry is a Craftsman house with Prairie style detailing. His design influences were homes located in the neighborhood of Oak Park as well as work by architects Frank Lloyd Wright and John S. Van Bergen. The highlights of this Design Challenge winner are its open floor plan, grand fireplace, spacious kitchen, wine bar, walk-in pantry, laundry room, and mudroom. Each bedroom has its own bathroom suite, and the master bedroom features a private outside terrace.

Miller recommends that the house be finished with a clay tile roof, cedar shake siding, horizontal board and batten, timber eave brackets, and exposed dovetail rafters. **NOH**

Craftsman House



Side Elevation



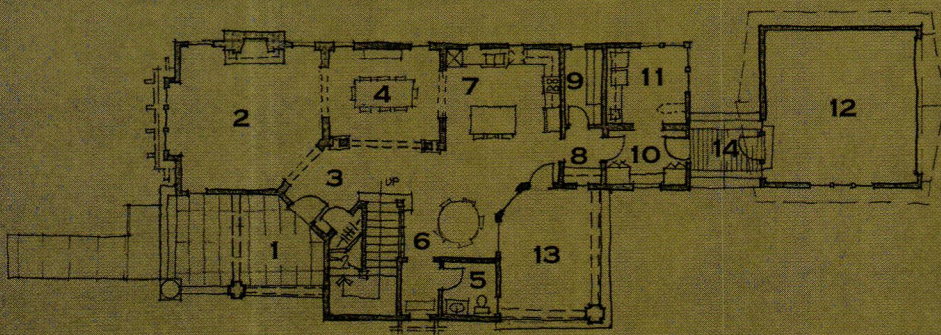
Front Elevation

Square Footage:

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TOTAL 3,265 SQUARE FEET

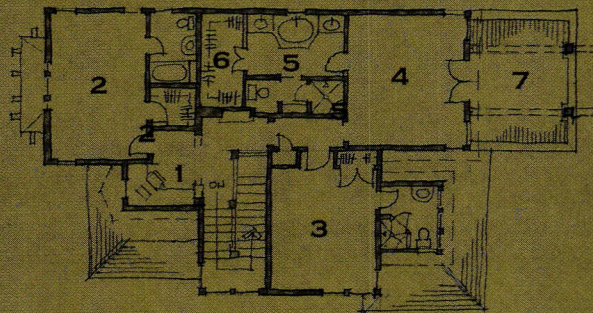
House Dimensions:

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- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
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| 3 ENTRY | 10 MUDROOM |
| 4 DINING AREA | 11 LAUNDRY |
| 5 POWDER ROOM | 12 GARAGE |
| 6 BREAKFAST NOOK | 13 COVERED PORCH |
| 7 KITCHEN | 14 TERRACE |



Second Floor

- | |
|--------------------|
| 1 COMPUTER STATION |
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Project architect: Yvonne Bartos

Builder: E. S. "Buck" Nichols,
Builder
336.644.1152

Interiors:
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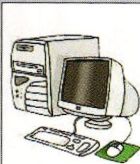
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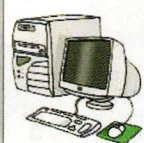
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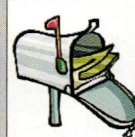
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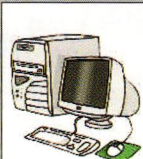
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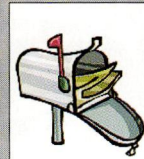
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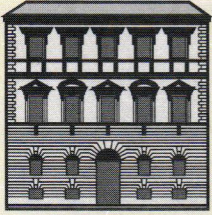


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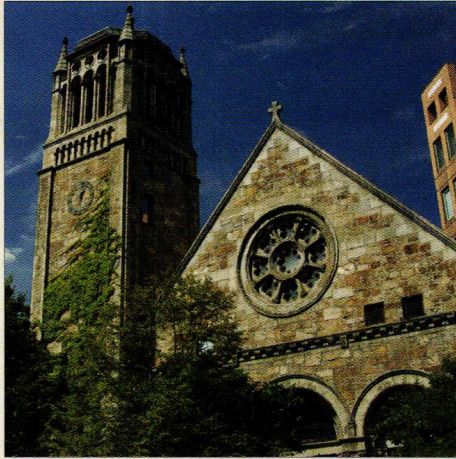
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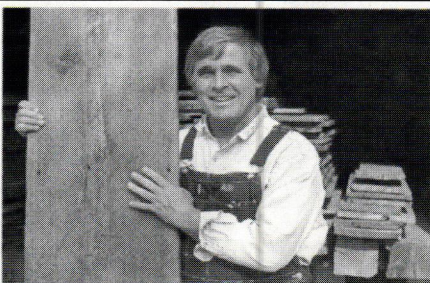
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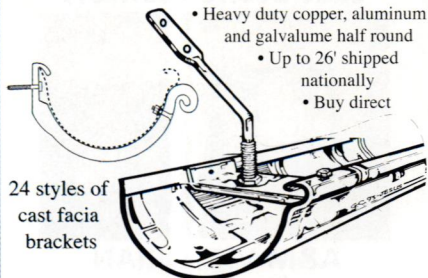


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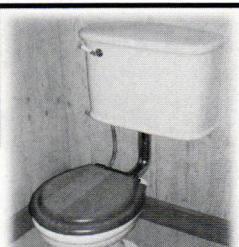
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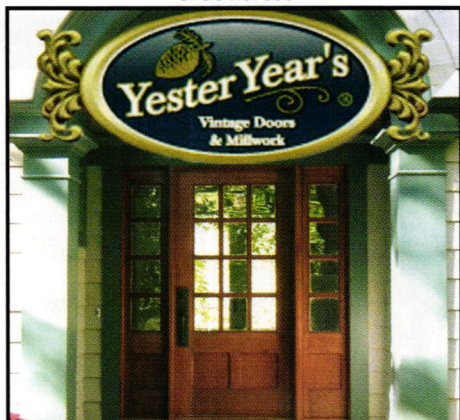
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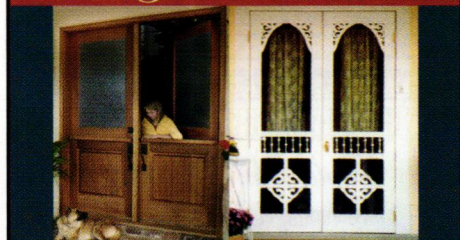


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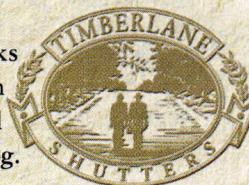
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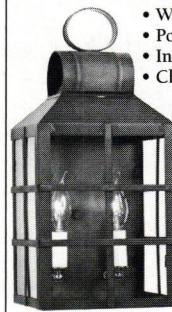
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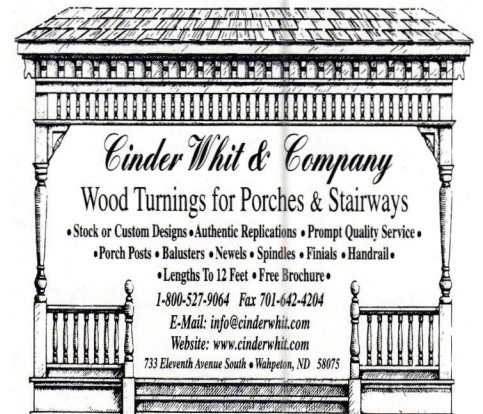
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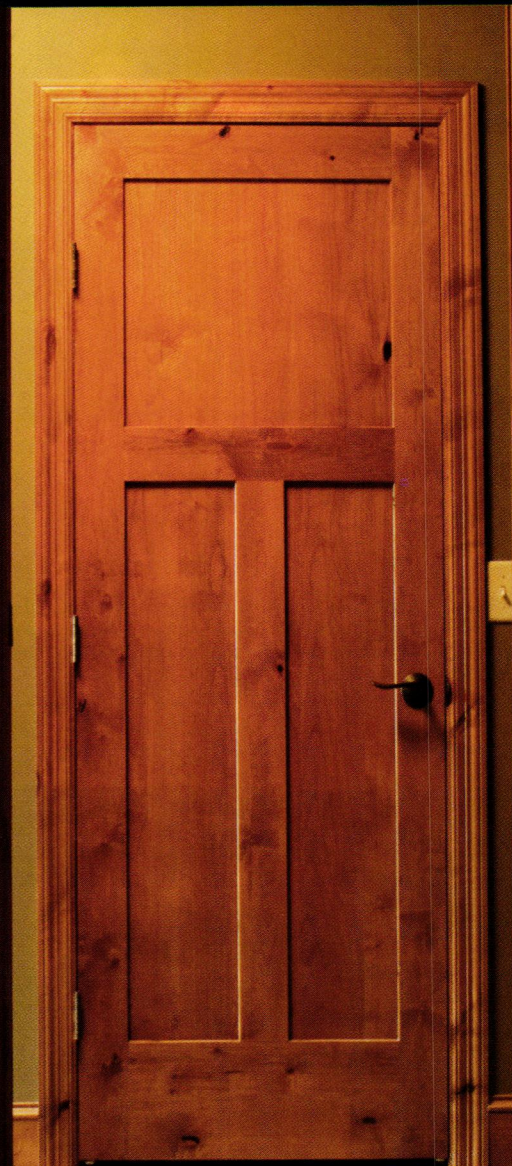


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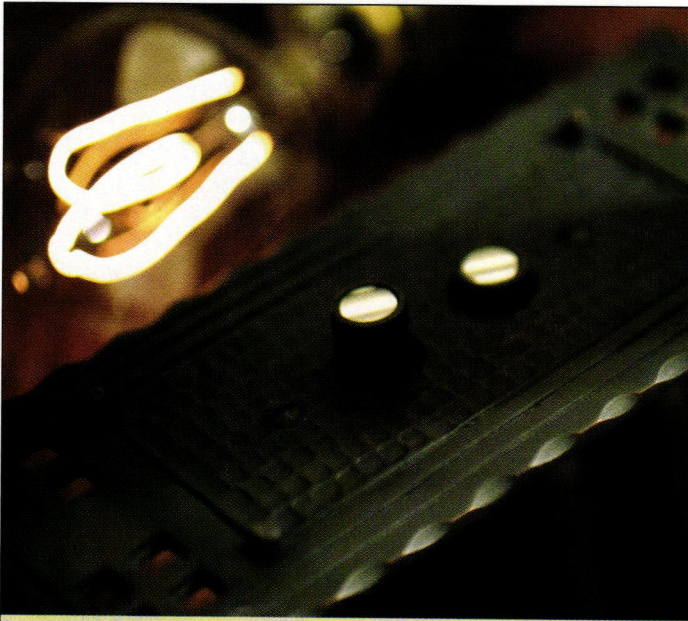


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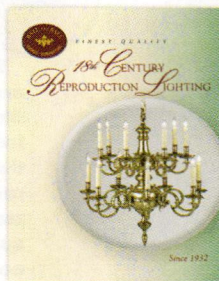
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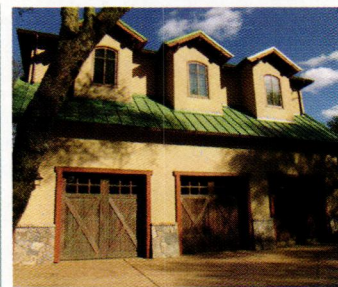
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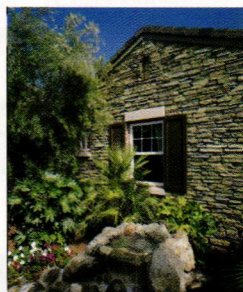
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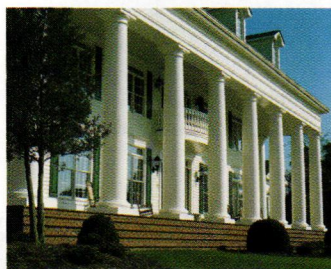
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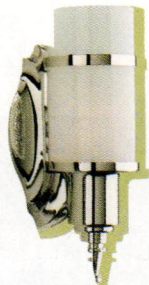
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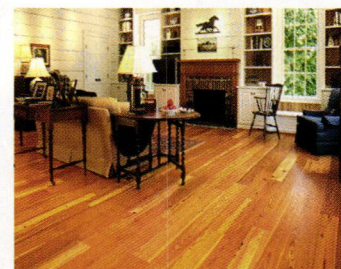
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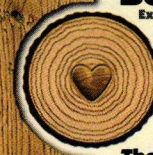


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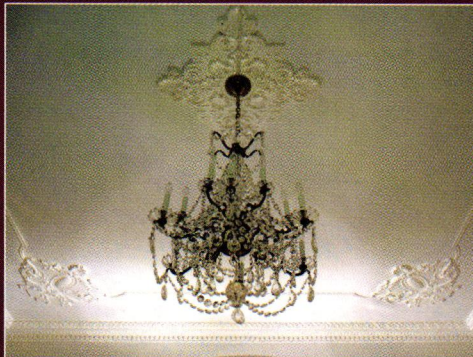
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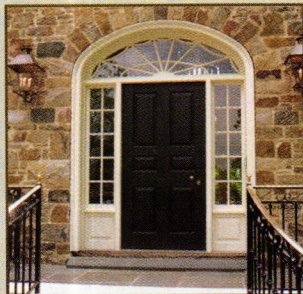
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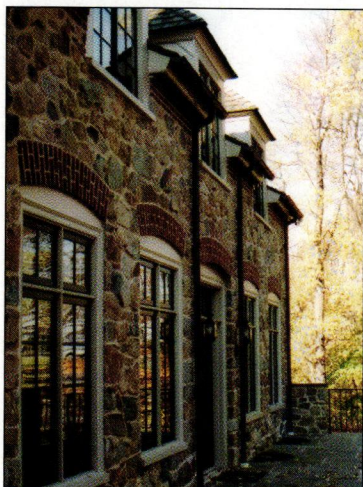
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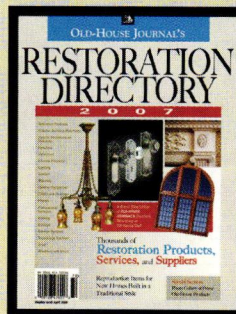
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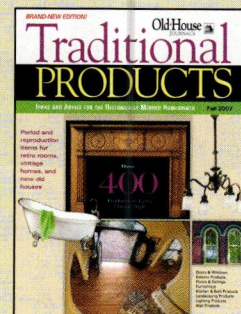


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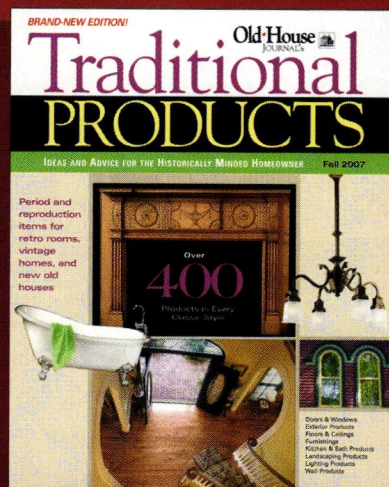
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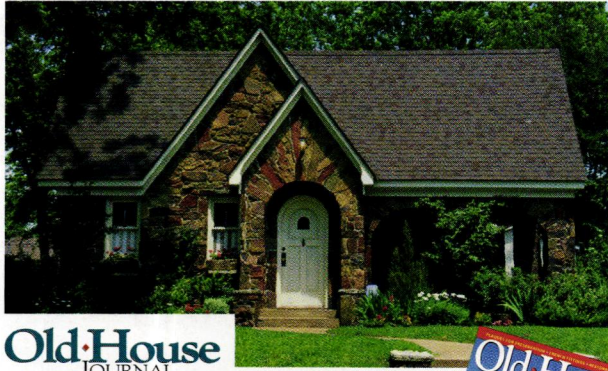
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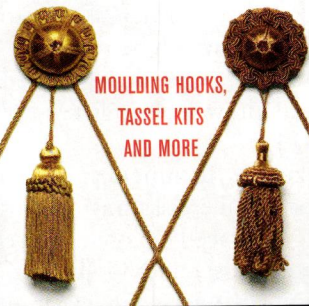
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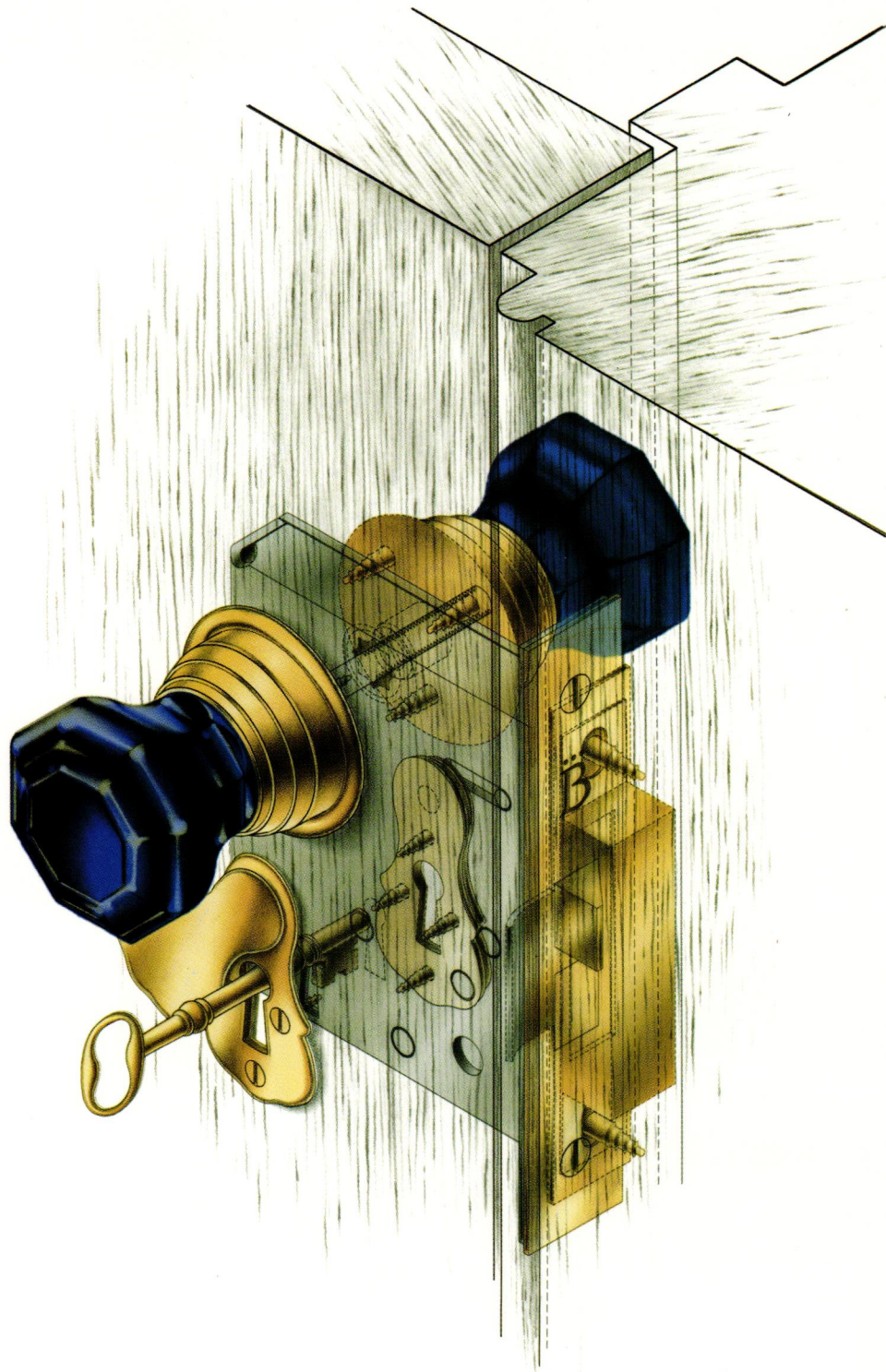
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