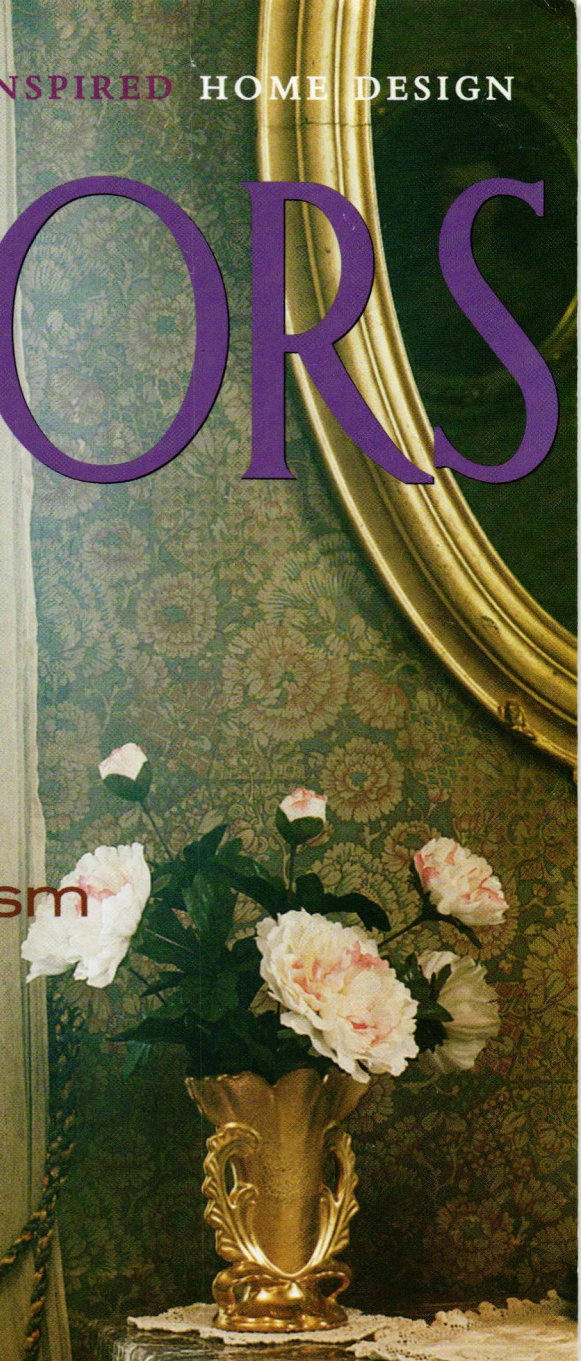
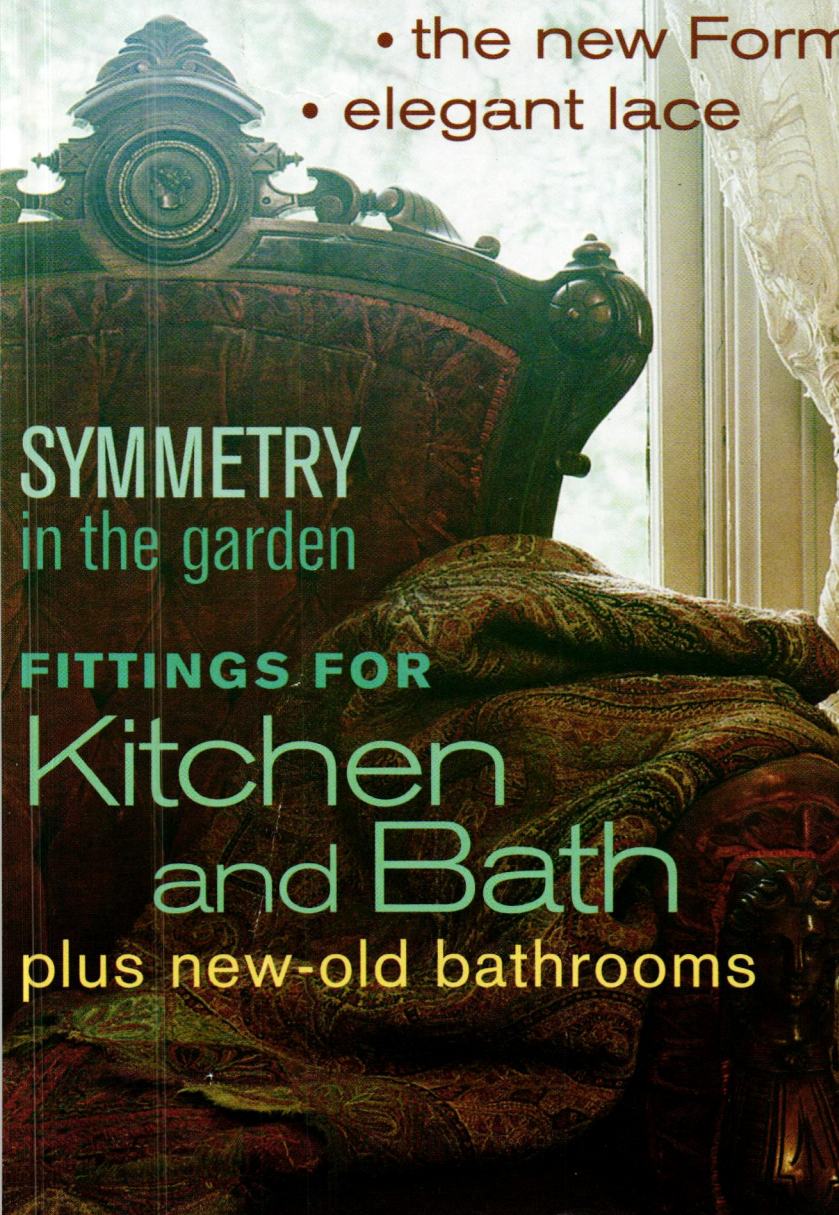


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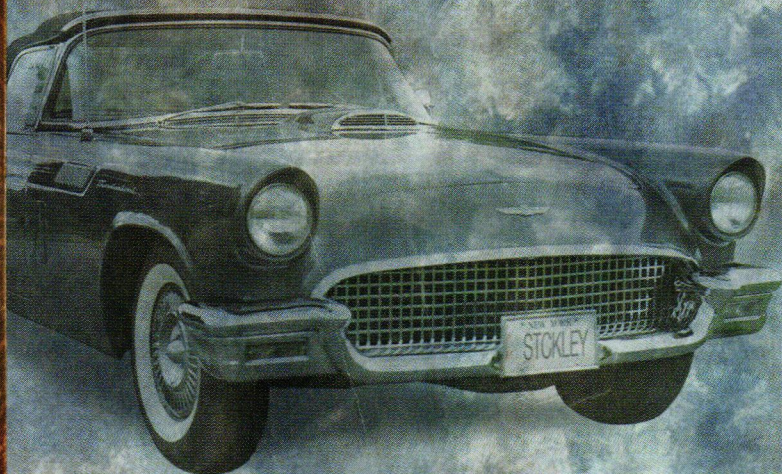
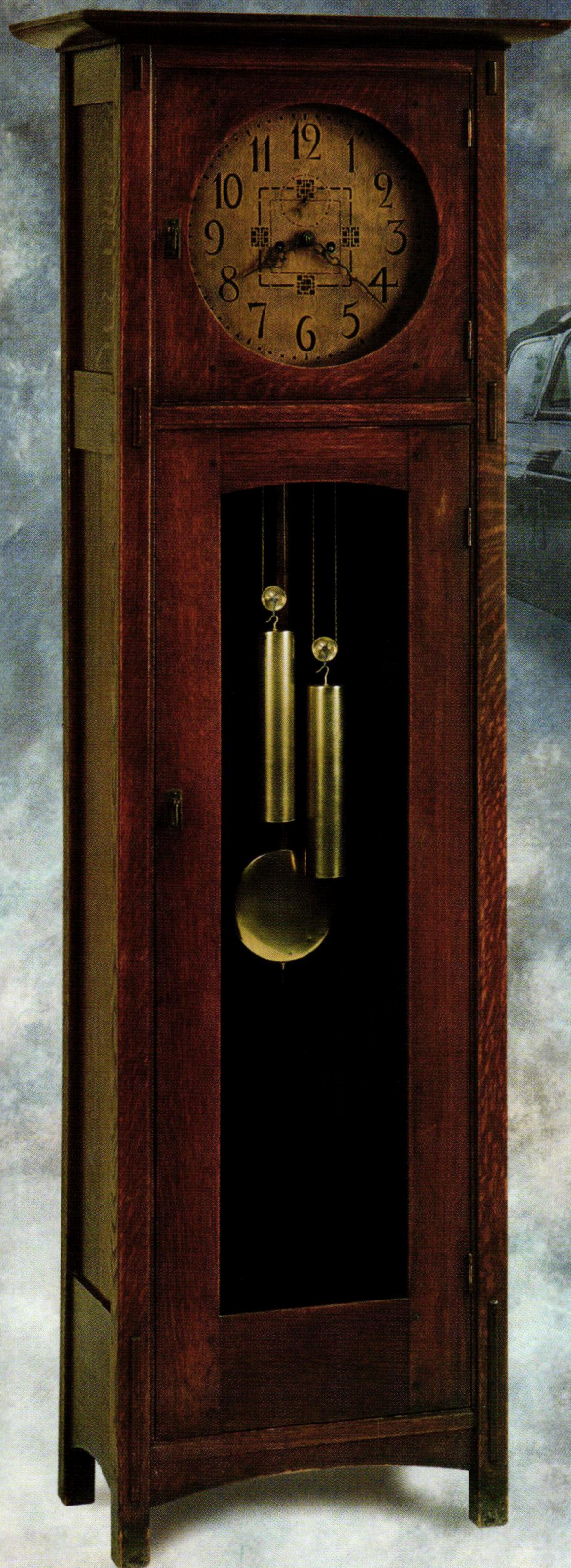
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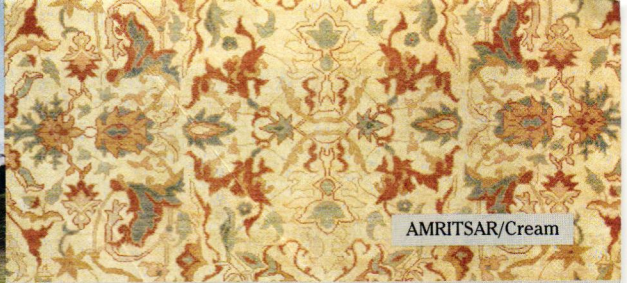
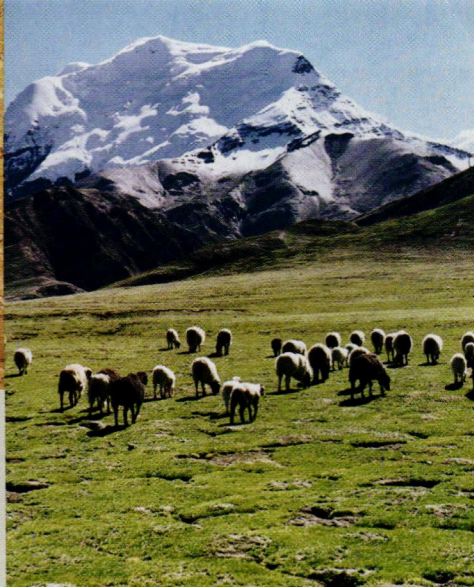
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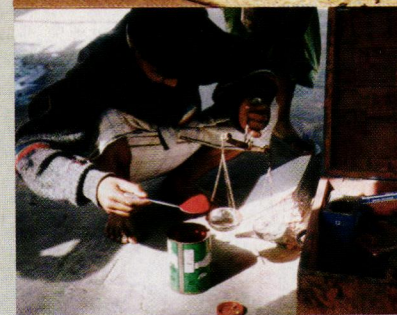
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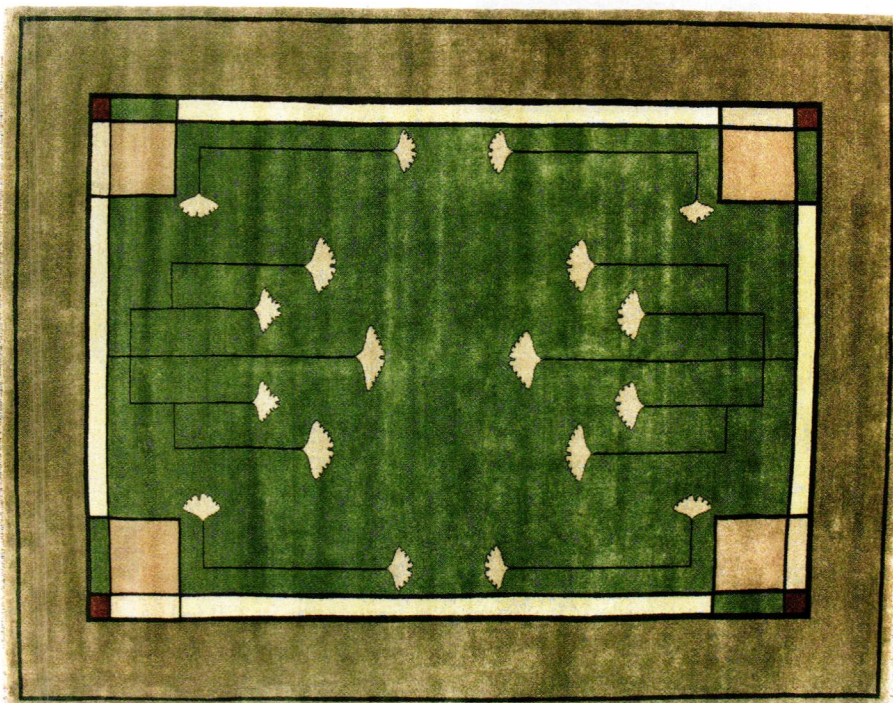
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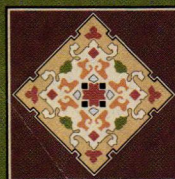
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**ON THE COVER:** *The use of lace curtains is a simple counterpoint to the Renaissance Revival furniture in the parlor of the 1878 Bush house in Salem, Ore. Cover photograph by Paul Rocheleau.*





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## All the boys, and me

**A**S I FINISH UP this issue, all the boys are preparing for The Ski Trip. We do it every year—drag the whole family, the polypropylene and the fleece, the goggles and magic hand warmers, to a condo on a mountain in Maine—and it is a trial for me. I am the only female. The rest of the family includes my husband and three boys, ages 23, 11, and 7. They are all expert skiers. I, on the other hand, skied for the first time at age 32, missed several years due to child-bearing and toddlers, then became middle-aged. I never will be really comfortable defying gravity on an icy slope. On our trip, the boys will go out early, push the limits, come in hungry, and lie around watching extreme-skiing videos in long underwear while ice-encrusted equipment wets the rented carpeting. On our trip, I will anxiously watch the clock all day, first to see how much longer 'til I can go in without losing face, then to wait for 4:30, when the last lift closes and I can count heads, especially little ones. Then I will cook dinner. I can tell I'm on vacation because I get blessedly few phone calls. ■ As I rush to finish up so that we can go skiing, I find myself getting too involved with Celia Thaxter, the subject of the book reviews. She had two brothers, three sons, a family business, and her own need to create. I am almost desperate to write her a letter, to go meet her, but she died 108 years ago. I want to tell her that I can feel her optimism pulsing through the exhausting days of her life. ■ When my son Will was five or six, for a brief period he wanted to tour old houses with me, which made me happy. In the big house at Batsto in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, I asked him what he liked about it. "They're dead," he said. "Who's dead?" I asked. "The people who lived here. The house is still here but they are *dead*." The tour at Batsto was one of those focussing more on family, less on décor; I considered what the docent's talk sounded like to kindergarten ears. It must have been hardly distinguishable from a ghost story. ■ Will outgrew that fascination without (yet) growing into an appreciation of architecture, so on family jaunts I once again house-tour alone, or skip it. I find the ghosts I need at work.



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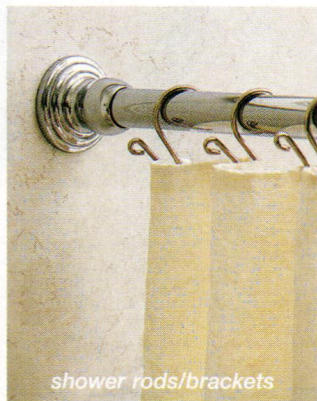
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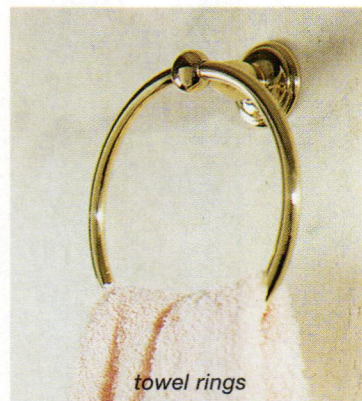
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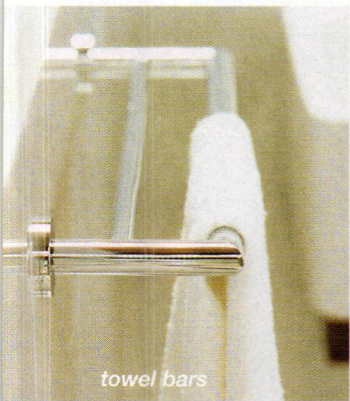
shower rods/brackets



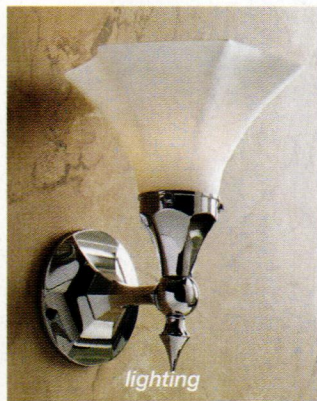
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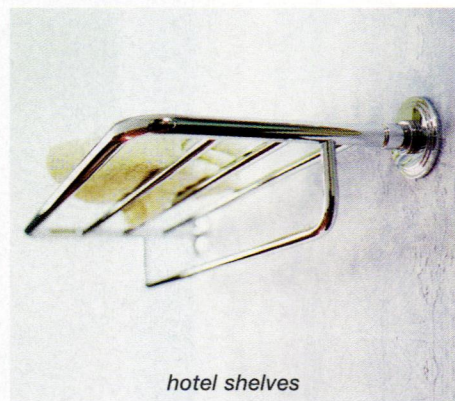
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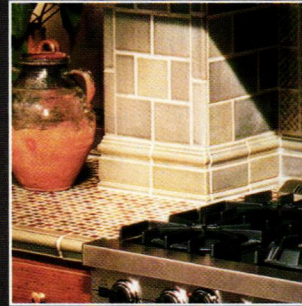
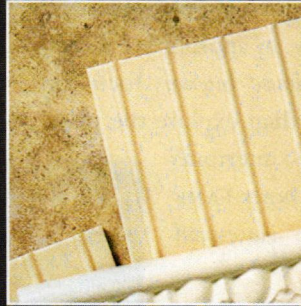
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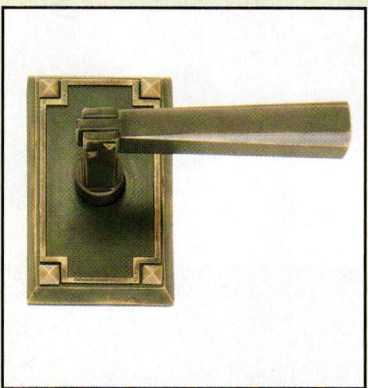
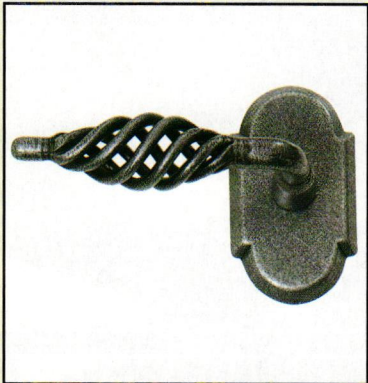
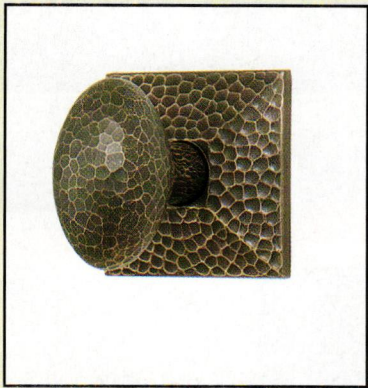
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# LETTERS *from readers*

## ARTSY CRAFTSY

I AM A new subscriber. Too much emphasis is placed on the currently popular Arts and Crafts style! My home is a Colonial Revival, built in 1915, and full of charm, so your excessive featuring of A&C is a disappointment to me. (Even worse, the last issue included an article on 1950s-era ranch homes, hardly an appropriate topic.) [Will] *Old-House Interiors* focus on trends rather than explore the many different classic interiors?

—DEBORAH LANE  
via e-mail

The March issue gives an A&C impression, I think, because of its cover and the wonderful advertisers up front, many of whom are artisans in the A&C tradition. But we ran lavish Victorian articles, too, and features on auctions and clocks, and (oh dear) the despised 1950s stuff. (It's historic and has a rabid following!)

This issue is for you, with several Colonial Revival interiors, not to mention the classics: symmetry, Formalism, Biedermeier, and lace. Please give us a bit more time to grow on you. And look for

our Design Center coming in the next few months: an interactive website and Sourcebook that will let you surf (or look up) only Colonial Revival-style and products, if that's what you prefer.

—PATRICIA POORE

## HEADY PRAISE

THANK YOU once again for letting me be part of OHI; it's a delight to be included in the pages of such a great publication. I have something funny

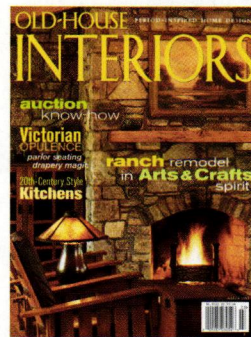
to tell you. My mother, who rarely reads my work in *Modernism* [magazine] because the field is just not her thing, was enormously impressed with the appearance of the Hitchcock article. ["North by Northwest," *Other Voices*, Nov. 2001] She

told me it was wonderful that I was appearing in a magazine she liked.

I'll have more ideas to share with you soon.

—SANDY MCLENDON  
Atlanta, Georgia

Check out Mr. McLendon's work at [jetsetmodern.com](http://jetsetmodern.com) —ED.



## PHILLY OPEN HOUSES

NOT JUST one house tour in Philadelphia—there are more than a dozen in just six weeks! Up first: tours in Overbrook Farms and Washington Square (APRIL 28); the tour in Overbrook, a turn-of-the-20th-century neighborhood, gets you into the Tudor Revival home featured in the Jan. 2002 issue ["Informal Grandeur," p. 50]. ■ Other tours take you into the houses of Society Hill and East Germantown (MAY 5), Cherry Hill (MAY 8), the Main Line (MAY 9), Victorian Germantown and Washington Square West (MAY 11), Fairmount (MAY 19) and Society Hill Gardens (JUNE 2). ■ Tour prices range from \$25 to \$85 and they often sell out. Brochure and reservations from PHILADELPHIA OPEN HOUSE TOURS: (215) 928-1188.



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# news & VIEWS

## Greene Revival

Aficionados of the Arts and Crafts movement are pinching themselves at the attention to detail that's been poured into the Lodge at Torrey Pines, a stunning new resort in La Jolla, California, inspired by the architecture of Greene &

Greene. The Lodge features a powerful post-and-beam structure with authentic clinker brick foundation, metal strap-and-wedge joinery, expanses of leaded glass, and broad roof overhangs with projecting raftertails. "The work of the Greene brothers has been a passion with me," says hotel developer Bill Evans. "That's why I made sure every detail was historically accurate as a tribute to their work and the Craftsman movement. People can't stay overnight at the Gamble House, but our Lodge comes very, very close."



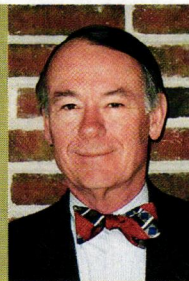
An early ladies' desk and chair from Winterthur, on display at the National Gallery of Art beginning May 5.

Furnishings include period originals and many latter-day Stickley reproductions. The Lodge's 9,500

square-foot spa takes its artistic direction from the style of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Of course, this being Southern California, a feng shui expert was called in, too. Contact (858) 453-4420, lodgetorreyppines.com.

—TOM SHESS

**BOW-TIE EMINENCE** What old-house buff hasn't dreamed of owning one of the mansions we're invited to tour on the PBS television series, "America's Castles"? The amiable host in the bow-tie is **Richard Guy Wilson**, one of the country's preeminent architectural historians. Chairman of the Department of Architectural History at the University of Virginia, Wilson stays busy: Since 1979 director of the Victorian Society's popular Summer School in Newport, R.I., Wilson also leads the annual Fall Preservation Conference there (215-627-4252, victoriansociety.org). Due this month from Oxford University Press is *Buildings of the U.S.: Virginia Tidewater and Piedmont*. Wilson is a co-author of the lavishly illustrated *Richmond's Monument Avenue* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Opening late this year is his exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago on David Adler, the last of the "great house" Beaux Arts architects of the 20th century (November 2002–April 2003). —BRIAN D. COLEMAN

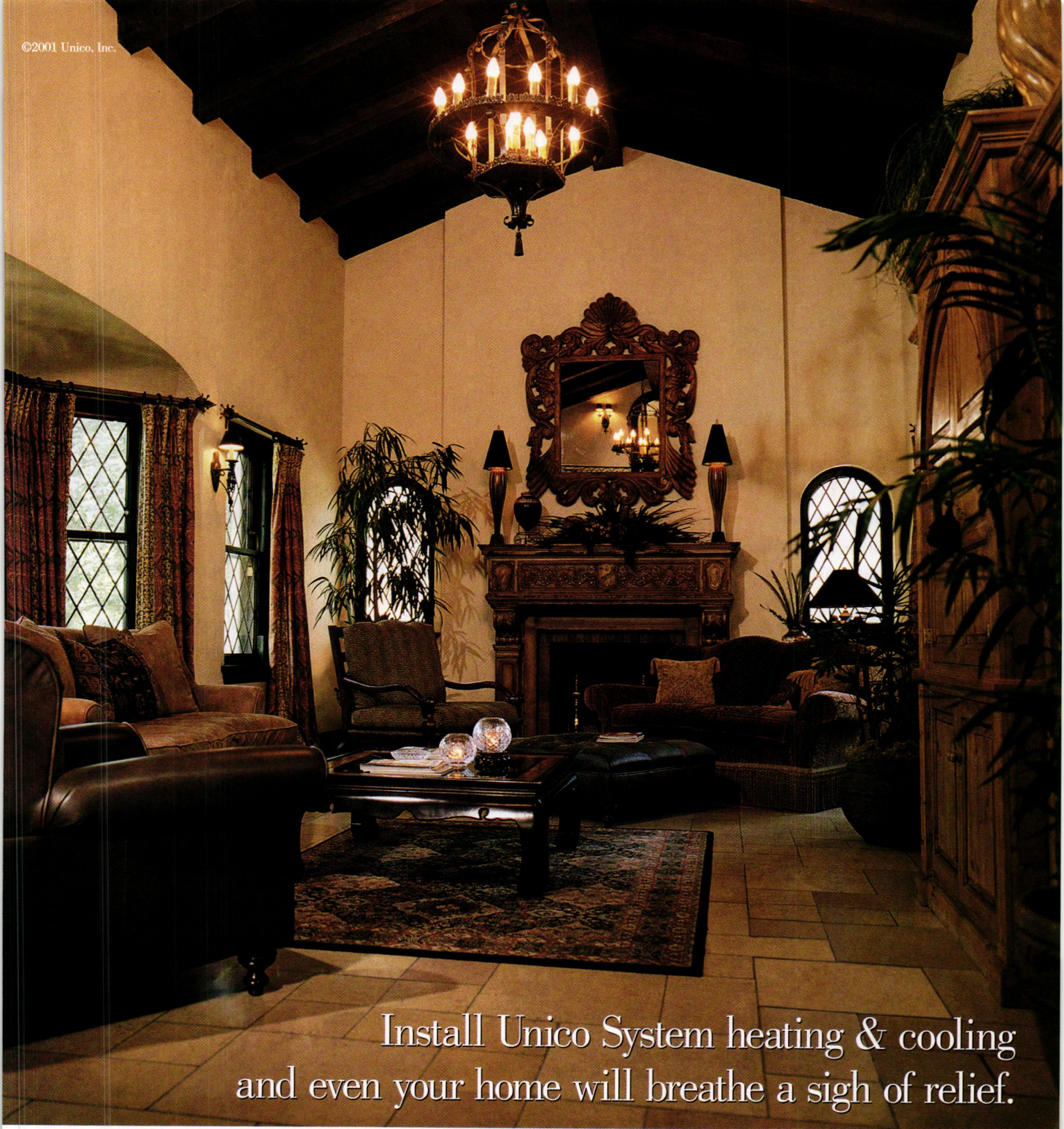


## Winterthur in D.C.

Winterthur has aged well. Although the country estate of Henry Francis DuPont has been a house museum for half a century, it's the antithesis of stuffy. The grounds and house are lovely, the staff friendly and [continued on page 18]

“Here I am, Madame, gazing whole hours at the Maison Quarree, like a lover at his mistress. . . . This is the second time I have been in love since I left Paris. The first was with a Diana at the Chateau de Laye Epinaye . . . This, you will say was in rule, to fall in love with a fine woman: but, with a house!” —Thomas Jefferson to Madame Tesse, 1787





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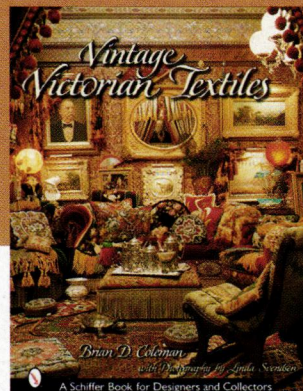
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## More Life of Brian

Another of our contributing editors has a new book, **VINTAGE VICTORIAN TEXTILES**, and it's a stunner. It showcases the window draperies, footstools, pillows, portières, and accent pieces—all made from vintage textiles—that create such a rich atmosphere in the home of author **BRIAN COLEMAN**. He offers warm encouragement and practical advice on collecting and using the Victorian needlepoint, beadwork, silks, velvets and brocades which, Brian says, make all the difference in a house's interior. Photographs by **LINDA SVENDSEN** are almost edible. The book is from Schiffer, through your bookstore.



knowledgeable—and stunning examples of DuPont's 85,000-piece collection of the American decorative arts fill room after room. (On a recent press visit, our guide—who had been giving tours at Winterthur since 1957—had difficulty keeping our party of five from diverting to rooms not on the agenda.) It must have been difficult to choose a mere 300 for "An American Vision: Henry Francis DuPont's Winterthur Museum," which opens at the National Gallery of Art May 5. The

chosen ones reflect the strengths and styles of Winterthur. Treasured objects on display include a 1680 court cupboard from Essex, Massachusetts, a 1769 Philadelphia high chest with gilded hardware, illuminated Fraktur manuscripts from the Pennsylvania Germans, and John Trumbull's painting, "Washington at Verplank's Point" (1790). The show, at the National Gallery of Art (202-842-6353, [nga.gov](http://nga.gov)), on the Mall in Washington, D.C., runs through Oct. 6.

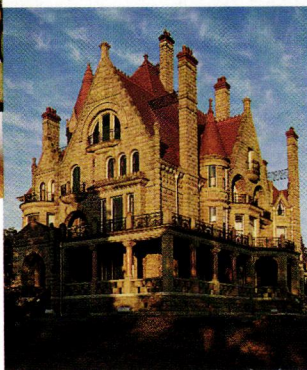
### Southern Furniture

Not to be outdone, Colonial Williamsburg is launching its own traveling road show.

"Furniture of the American South: 1680-1830," at the Atlanta History Center through Aug. 11, is the first major exhibit of early Southern furniture in half a century. More than 50 pieces from Colonial Williamsburg's collection showcase the work of joiners, turners, and cabinetmakers in Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. Items include an early-19th-century

Empire sofa attributed to Georgetown artisan William King Jr., who designed furniture for the White House; a tall-case clock in an idiosyncratic Neoclassical style from Pulaski County, Virginia; and a double chest of drawers with secretary from Charleston. Contact the Atlanta History Center, (404) 814-4000, [atlantahistorycenter.com](http://atlantahistorycenter.com).

—M.E. POLSON



**OPEN HOUSE** It's one of North America's "bonanza castles"—status symbols built by newly wealthy men—39 rooms big, and the history of the family who built it is full of intrigue, fame, feuds, and tragedy. All that makes **Craighdarroch Castle** a worthy tourist destination. But it has greater rewards for those of us who will joyfully spend hours studying its Art Nouveau leaded glass, its parquet and paneled walls and painted decoration. Woodwork is utterly magnificent; bedrooms offer approachable ideas for furnishing and window dressing. Best of all, the restoration is not finished! Guides are happy to tell you what's original, what's been covered up, and exactly how conservation work is progressing. ■ A Scots Jacobean–French Gothic residence begun in 1887 for the Dunsmuir family of **Victoria**, British Columbia, Craighdarroch is open year-round: (250) 592-5323; [craighdarrochcastle.com](http://craighdarrochcastle.com)

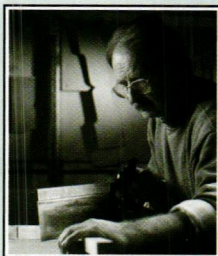


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# FURNISHINGS

by Mary Ellen Polson



## Scythian Silver

The Fleur tabletop candleholders reflect Scythian design themes more than 2,000 years old. The tallest of the three candlesticks is 20" high. A set of three in an antique silver finish retails for \$369. Contact Montage, (972) 488-0401, montage.com



## Catalina Days

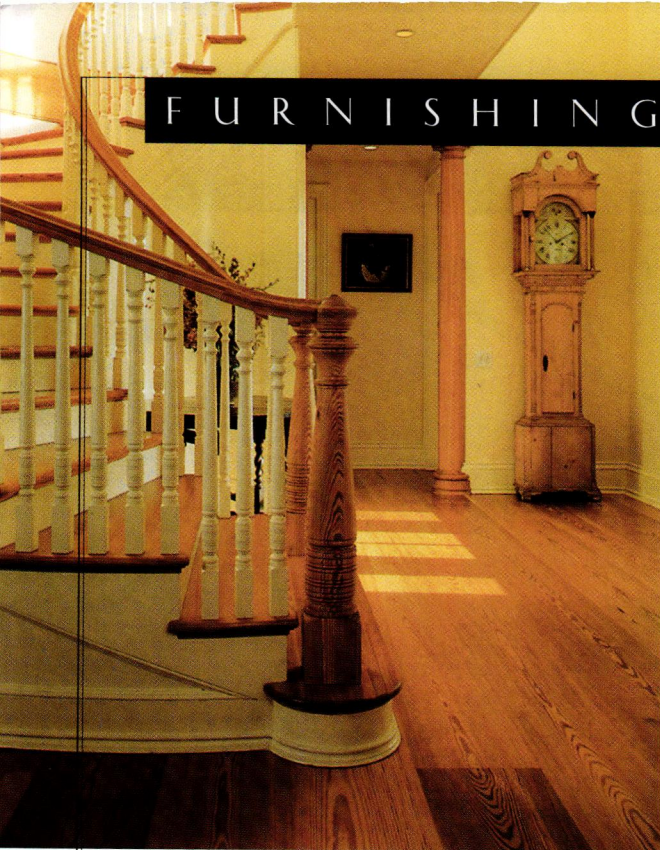
The Catalina Clay Products Company went out of business in 1937, but Catalina tile lives on in these vibrantly colored reproductions by Richard Miller. The 6" x 6" decos are \$25 in Catalina shops, but cost \$12.50 if you order directly from Miller Art Tile, (818) 972-9339, millerarttile.com

## Greek Meets West

The Lambda chair is based on the eponymous Greek letter. Made from sustainably harvested cherry, the chair is 33"H x 21"W x 24"D. It's \$1,350 from Berkeley Mills East-West Furniture Design, (510) 549-2854, berkeley-mills.com



# FURNISHINGS

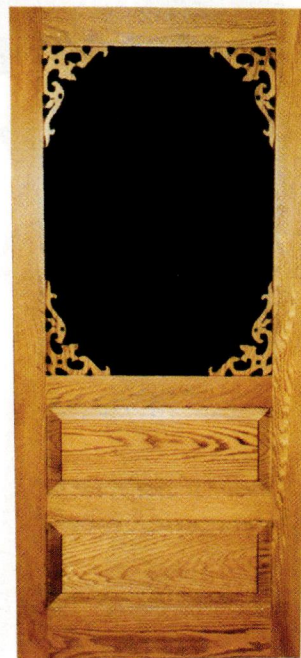


## Beaming Beauty

Reclaimed from old beams and timbers, character marks are part of heart pine's charm. The crown-grade width shown here retails for \$11.95 to \$19.35 per square foot. Contact Mountain Lumber, (800) 445-2671, [mountainlumber.com](http://mountainlumber.com)

## Screen Breezes

Add the perfect finishing touch to a Queen Anne or Folk Victorian entry with a screen door from Yesteryear. Eight styles, including the Heritage (\$359), are delivered nationwide. Contact (800) 787-2001, [vintagedoors.com](http://vintagedoors.com)



## Cut by Hand

German and Swiss immigrants brought the art of *Scherenschnitte*, or paper cutting, to America two centuries ago. Nancy G. Shelly cuts each of her original designs from a single sheet of acid-free paper. Pieces like the 8"x15 1/2" bee-themed cutting shown sell for about \$385. Call (610) 865-3561.



## American Bungalow

The sideboard in Thos. Moser's new American Bungalow Collection is a freestanding version of a Bungalow built-in. The case is suspended from a table-like frame, allowing light to pass through the sides. In cherry, the piece measures 32"H x 68"W x 23"D. It sells for \$5,950. Contact (877) 708-1973, [thosmoser.com](http://thosmoser.com)



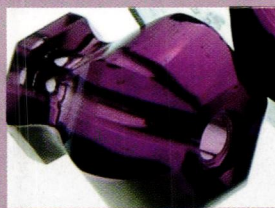
## Kitchen Jewelry

Customize a paneled refrigerator with these 14" Mackintosh-inspired handles. Available in antique, semi-bright, and bright finishes, they match a complementary line of cabinet hardware. The handles retail for \$125 (bright finish slightly higher) from Horton Brasses, (800) 754-9127, [hortonbrasses.com](http://hortonbrasses.com)



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## ◆ Toile and Old Lace

Pillows from My Grandmother's Lace often incorporate antique fabrics into the design. The antique lace neckroll retails for about \$300, while the toile pillows sell for \$65 to \$140. For a dealer, contact (304) 258-9378, [mygrandmotherslace.com](http://mygrandmotherslace.com)



## ◆ Address the Chair

Slipcover those old side chairs beautifully at an affordable price. Covers in all-cotton or cotton-blend fabrics in solids and patterns are \$25 each from Sure Fit, (800) 305-5857, [surefit.com](http://surefit.com)



## ◆ Toile on the Scene

Toile is making a big comeback. The coordinating fabric and wallpaper are reproductions of a 19th-century toile called French Fall Harvest. The fabric retails for \$42 per yard, while the wallpaper is \$25 per roll. Both from Eisenhart, (800) 555-2554, [eisenhartwallcoverings.com](http://eisenhartwallcoverings.com)

## ◆ After the Hunt

The Southern Huntboard with scalloped skirt is a one-of-a-kind piece from a fifth-generation Virginia furniture maker. Measuring 40"H x 56"W x 19"D, a similar piece in the Federal style would retail for \$3,800 to \$4,000. Call Mack S. Headley & Sons, (540) 955-2022.





## ◀ Crystal Glitters

Inspired by 17th-century chandeliers, Strass Winter Elegance is trimmed with Austrian crystal. The chandelier measures 36"W x 63"L. It's \$5,975 from King's Chandelier, (336) 623-6188, chandelier.com

## English Channel ▶

A little bit English and a little bit French, the Sheraton Settee sports a woven-cane back and hand-painted highlights. The settee is \$1,988 from Milling Road, (336) 751-9643, millingroad.com



## New York Revival ▶

The Thalia Torchiere is one of several Colonial Revival designs from Remains. The nickel-plated sconce is accented by an etched milk-glass shade. It retails for \$535. Call (212) 675-8051.



## Indoor Garden ▶

Renaissance Conservatories offers 15 period designs tailored to suit your house, such as this Gothic-inspired garden room. Prices begin at about \$45,000. Contact (800) 882-4657, renaissance-online.com



## ◡ Deep Relief ◡

These deep-sculptured mouldings are carved by hand. The egg-and-dart and dentil patterns shown here range from \$1.90 to \$3.80 per linear foot. The Corinthian capital, measuring 8"W by 7"H, is \$144. To the trade from Architectural Paneling, (212) 371-9632, apaneling.com

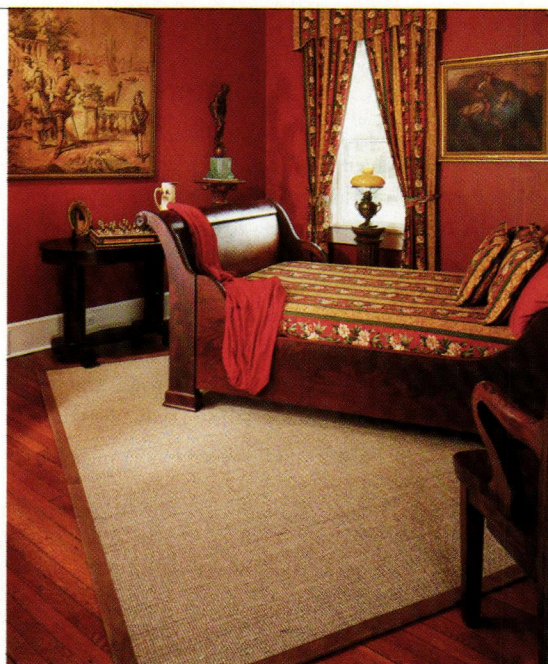


## ◀ Buzzing About Lace

Honeybee Lace is based on a Candace Wheeler design. The panels measure 60" wide and come in lengths from 54" to 90". A 72"-long panel retails for \$95. Contact J.R. Burrows, (800) 347-1795, burrows.com

## Sisal for Summer ▶

Lighten up for warm weather with natural fiber sisal rugs. In a choice of colors, the Apollo retails for \$80 to \$99 per square yard. Contact Glen Eden, (800) 843-1728, glen-eden.com



## ◀ Cabinets, or Furniture?

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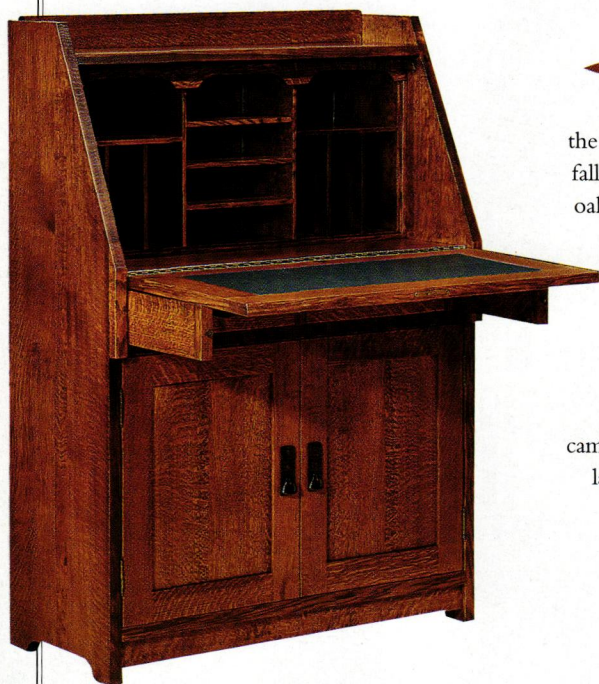
## ◀ Desk With a Mission

Hand-crafted and bench-built in the Arts and Crafts style, the Mission fall-front desk comes in quartersawn oak (\$2,739) or solid cherry (\$3,007) in a choice of finishes. Contact Harvest House, (877) 939-8606, harvesthouse.on.ca

## Gallé Style ▶

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## Too Much, Too Soon

[AN OPEN LETTER FROM DAN COOPER TO HIS FRIEND SARA]

**M**Y DEAREST SARA, congratulations on your purchase of The Pile! You're now the proud owner of what is possibly the last untouched, original-condition, Shingle-style beach house on the North Shore. You've paid an impressive sum for it, and no doubt you will have to plow in again as much to bring it up to your standards. I know you and your husband are delighted to be coming back to New England after your tour of duty out West, where you lived in a multi-million-dollar tract mansion that had all of the charm of a barracks, no matter how much time and money you threw at it.

Even though you have the wherewithal, please be careful. Don't make the mistake of the Newly Affluent and throw money blindly into this house. The McMansion philosophy, when applied to an old house, gets you a very expensive heap of compromises: a soulless house stripped of period charm that nevertheless misses the mark on 21st century functionality.

Fortunately, we have a mutual friend, Butchy, who has restored many houses built over the past two centuries. He's one of those annoyingly precise, meticulously compulsive types who primes his sash-weights just in case they might start to corrode in the seaside dampness. In his spare time, Butchy collects archaic plumbing and electrical fittings. I think he hordes string as well, or at

least Pre-War string, should he ever desire to hang a vintage pull-chain light fixture in one of his many sub-cellars. His is a frugality born of many restorations done with little or no budget. He has learned when to spend, and when to scrimp.

The reason why I hope that you'll entrust Butchy to oversee The Pile's restoration is that he will be the check and balance to every subcontractor who will want to rip out anything that isn't currently available in huge quantities at Home Despot [sic].

"Oh no!" you say. "I would never let my subcontractors gut and clean The Pile like a freshly caught rainbow trout!"

Sara, Sara. What follow are my cautionary tales about people in your shoes who either didn't hire a guy like Butchy, or who did and then ignored his wisdom and advice. On a project of this magnitude—seventeen rooms, five baths, and two outbuildings, none of it updated except with paint since the Great War—even the best general contractor will be inclined to proceed with a scorched-earth policy.

Here's something that could haunt you, something I actually saw happen. Vinny the general contractor (he of the big friendly laugh and pickup truck) wants to get down to studs fast. He doesn't even think of removing and saving the picture mouldings, [continued on page 30]

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which are quartersawn oak (never painted). He had his brother-in-law up there with a flat-bar, making kindling. You, still in the phase of great expectations (“let’s be nice to the GC, because he’s on our side, and we want him to like us and we’ll share many happy dinners together when this is over”), will mention, with reticence, how important those mouldings were. Vinny will say, “No problem, Sara”; he’ll run over to Lumber World, buy dinky pine picture mouldings that don’t take stain, and then he will bill you—not for the time it would have taken to save the old mouldings (which you assumed was included in the bid), but for the time, labor, and materials he invested installing inadequate new trim.

Here’s where a guy like Butchy earns his pay. Butchy anticipates the picture-moulding fiasco. (He once spent two weeks of summer evenings stripping yards of a similar profile. Years later, Butchy’s hands can still instantly conform to their shape, as if they were the arms of a lover who long ago fled.) He will protect your original trim from harm, and if it needs to be removed he will index pieces for reinstallation.

SPEAKING OF THE QUIRKS of an old house, here’s a monumental decision you should consider soon. The kitchen of The Pile is located on the (shall we say) garden level. (Granted, it has windows that look out over the Atlantic. But admit it, it’s in the basement.) What should you do? Will you sacrifice the library or the dining room on the first floor, both of which have gorgeous paneling designed by the original architect? As a preservationist, you know that’s wrong. Perhaps you could build a kitchen wing off the back? (Two storeys, of course; due to the grade, the cellar of the house is already above ground.) By the time you total the costs including design fee, construction, an all-new kitchen, and heck! a spa on the first level—whoops! There goes a quarter million, easy.

You could take Butchy’s suggestion and rebuild the old dumbwaiter. Then you’d refurbish the existing kitchen with a skillful blend of historicism and modern convenience. (Here you may have to disagree with Butchy. The man is the culinary equivalent of a Civil War reenactor. No one should have to bake by gaslight.) A first-floor kitchen is convenient. (Think of bringing in the



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The advertisement displays a variety of wood screen doors in different styles and finishes, including white, light wood, and dark wood. The doors feature various decorative elements such as arched tops, lattice work, and intricate carvings. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a backdrop.

Circle no. 901

groceries.) You always eat in the kitchen anyway. Think how impressed your friends will be when the dumb-waiter opens at formal dinners upstairs, resplendent with whatever you've defrosted.

Sara, I'm sure you can see how, in lesser hands, vast sums of money hastily spent would have either ruined this significant interior or grafted on a six-figure lean-to that would have encroached on your already eroding back yard.

What I'm saying, my friend, is that you probably need someone obsessed with history to oversee the other professionals. Contractors seldom have a clue. Their preservation education is often limited to watching you-know-what shows while they do the books after dinner. A lot of architects aren't much better; they'll claim to be historically sensitive because their professors once mentioned Charles Bulfinch in a lecture. Skilled and experienced preservation architects do practice, for a price. But what you need, regardless, is someone as comfortable with a masonry trowel as she or he is with CAD-CAM and fabric swatches.

DO YOU REMEMBER last year when Butchy was called upon during the redecoration of that charming Colonial Revival/Arts and Crafts/Shingle *mélange*? A modest house in comparison to The Pile, but it has lovely grounds and a matching storey-and-a-half garage located about twenty feet away. The new owner's architect had designed a large addition—not bad, pretty much in keeping with the original house (although the windows were a bit gimmicky, I thought). Well, Mr. Bulfinch there apparently didn't pay much attention to the site plan, because he situated the addition on the footprint of the lovely garage, and he signed off. Mr. and Mrs. Victim came home from work to find their outbuilding bulldozed. So they had to build a new garage. Except somebody didn't measure the width of Mrs. Victim's *huge* new SUV, and the custom-made garage doors were too narrow. To drive into her new garage, Mrs. Victim has to fold in her side-view mirrors. [Readers: I couldn't make this stuff up. —Dan] Which means she can't use them to back out. Which means her SUV now has aftermarket racing stripes (matching the trim color) on both sides. Forest green on burgundy metallic.

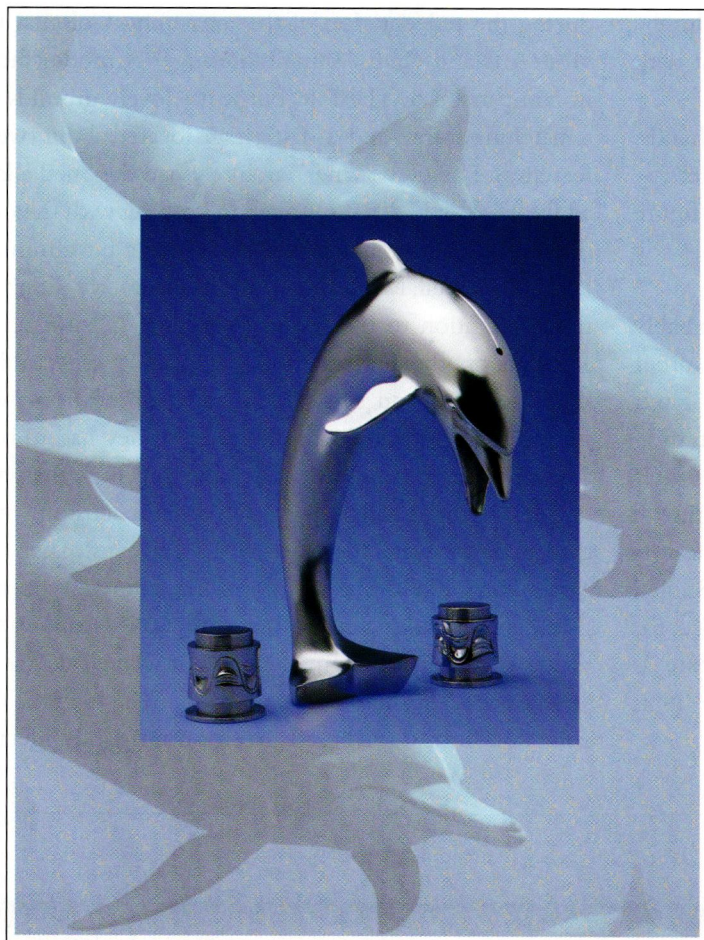
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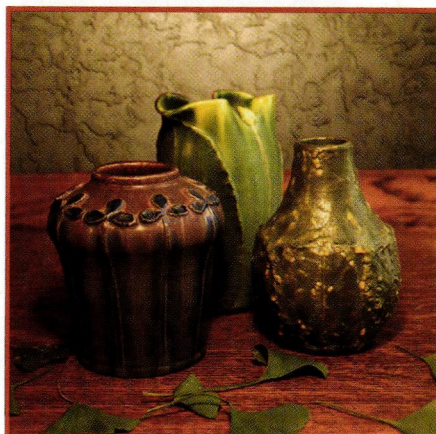
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Now Butchy would've caught all that. Before the ink was dry on the blueprints, he'd have seen an addition dropping on the garage like the Wicked Witch of the East. So some call him pessimistic and cynical. Look at it this way: you get to sleep at night because he doesn't. (The man bolts awake at 3AM wondering if they used coated nails on your porch fascia board.)

Maybe I shouldn't tell you the one about the dining-room ceiling. You actually know these people; they're going to be your new neighbors. As soon as they moved in, they hurried to replace the dining room ceiling—three times. Okay, the first time it was because fist-sized chunks of failing plaster were falling on dinner guests. Their twelve-year-old liked to watch the ceiling during meals and scream, "In-coming!" Then they decided to wire the house for cable and ethernet, so they hacked and patched once more. Then it came time to replace the plumbing in the master bathroom directly above the dining room. They just couldn't bring themselves to rip out the ceiling again, so instead they demolished the 1910 hexagonal tile floor set in mud. All in vain, I'm afraid—the tile contractor dropped a slab of marble between the joists, which took out the ceiling after all, and ruined the dining-room table. The moral is: Sit down and think about all possible system installations before you call the contractor.

I wish you well in your undertaking, Sara. (Hire Butchy.) ✦

THE INCIDENTS mentioned are true, but names and locations have been changed to protect the mortified. "Butchy" is a fictitious character created from several of my colleagues . . . he made me promise to say that. —DAN COOPER





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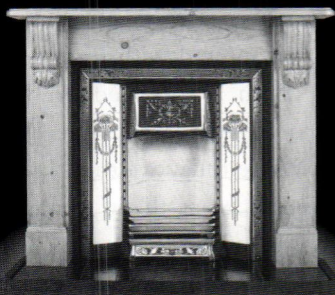
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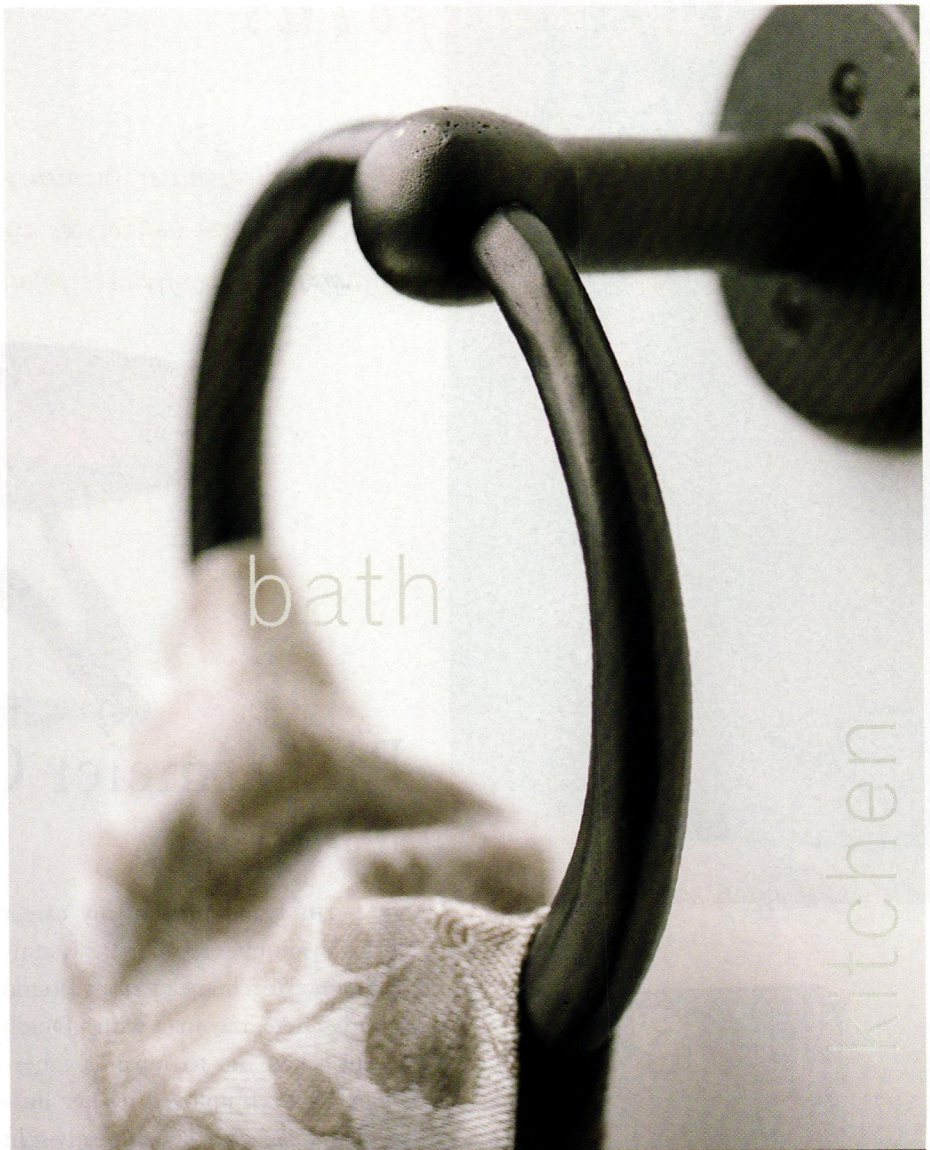
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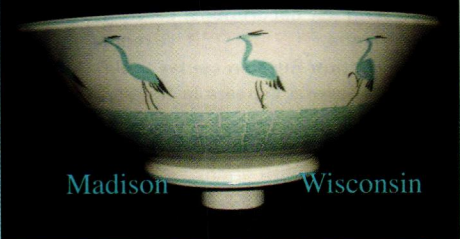
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*Not much Biedermeier furniture came to these shores in the first half of the 19th century. But antique and reproduction Biedermeier is extremely popular in interior design these days.*



## Biedermeier Classicism

BY DAN COOPER

**I**N THE EARLY DAYS of my career as an antiques restorer, I was summoned to a home in a tony Boston suburb. There, a woman with a Dutch accent asked me to repair a saber-legged chair. Employed by her husband as a step stool, it had neatly split at every mortise. As I gathered up the shards, I remarked that, while it looked like a typical Empire piece from the 1830s, the blonde tone of the wood and the bulbousness of the carving differed from the mahogany fragments I was usually called upon to mend.

“Eetz not Empire,” my customer stated with a mixture of pride and indignation. “Eetz Biedermeier.”

“Wasn’t he a jazz musician?”

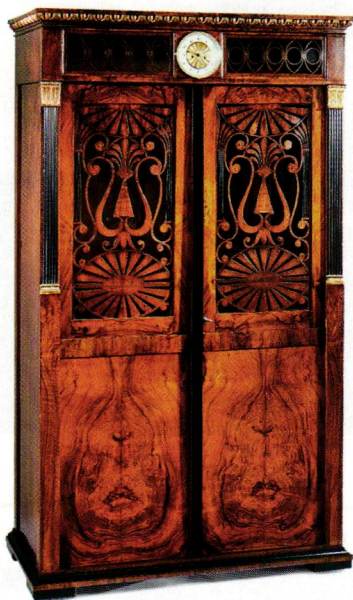
“No, zat vas Bix Beiderbecke.”

Confusion over names aside, Biedermeier is essentially the Germanic equivalent of the Empire/Neoclassical furnishings found in American homes between 1820 and 1850. While its origins may be obscure, even exotic, to many Ameri-

cans, Biedermeier is one of the best “bridge” styles for transitioning historical feel to modern sensibilities. Biedermeier can work smashing in 19th-century Greek Revival settings, but its clean lines, light woods, and emphasis on fine veneers also complement the Art Deco/Moderne styles of the 1920s through the 1940s.

It’s easy to see why Biedermeier is commonly confused with Empire furnishings. Both are derived from ancient Greco-Roman design elements and motifs. While today we think of Neoclassicism as an aesthetic trend, in the early part of the 19th century, it had political significance as well. This dramatic embracing of antiquities was a direct refutation of the excesses of the Rococo, which was associated with royalty and aristocracy, whose power was quickly waning in an era of revolutions.

A common misconception is that Biedermeier was the name of a designer or [continued on page 36]



**TOP LEFT:** Cherrywood settee with ink decorations, ca. 1830, Vienna. **TOP CENTER:** A reproduction Russian center table with exotic veneers in the style of Biedermeier. **ABOVE:** The walnut-on-pine Biedermeier vitrine with ebonized trim dates to 1825 Vienna.



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*The Biedermeier label makes many of us think of light-colored wood with black accents—a treatment used in many, but not all, pieces.*

cabinetmaker. The name actually comes from a German newspaper lampoon (“Bieder” translates as “simple” or “plain,” and “Meier” is a merely a very prevalent German family name). The Biedermeiers were a fictitious bourgeois family pilloried in a series of humorous poems ca. 1855. The authors were chiding the emerging middle class about its preoccupation with domestic comfort, as opposed to any interest in political awareness. The term later was employed retroactively to define a period of relative peace and prosperity enjoyed by the bourgeoisie in Northern Europe between 1815 and 1848. (With this logic, one wonders if mid-20th-century American antiques will one day be referred to as “Bumstead” furniture, after Dagwood and Blondie.)

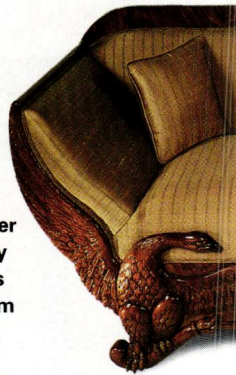
So what differentiates Biedermeier from Empire? “Biedermeier” makes many of us think of light-colored wood with black accents—a treatment used in many items. This is hardly the rule, however, and the outstanding characteristic in a majority of Biedermeier pieces is the use of fruitwoods and domestic and exotic veneers. These highly polished woods, including burls and other unusual figured cuts, were laminated to plain secondary woods to create beautiful, book-matched patterns that seem to dance in the light. Also, Biedermeier furniture is frequently inlaid with ebony and ivory, as well as alabaster.

Biedermeier hardware is also far more restrained than Empire. On French Empire furniture, you’ll often

find large, fancy drawer pulls and purely superficial mounts, such as gilt-bronze capitals, caryatids, and other architectural trim. Biedermeier pieces are devoid of these touches; they are adorned with very simple knobs and tiny escutcheons (keyholes).

Beyond that, there are other nuances that point to a piece’s country of origin. We in America are more familiar with the lines of Empire pieces, so Biedermeier tends to look a bit “different.” Some pieces

**RIGHT:** A walnut-veneered Biedermeier sofa, once owned by Napoleon’s family, is attributed to Wilhelm Kimbel of Mainz in South Germany.





**OPPOSITE:** The cherrywood dining table in this private home is Austrian, ca. 1835. The Viennese side chairs are attributed to Josef Ulrich Danhauser, ca. 1820. **ABOVE:** The exquisitely veneered Biedermeier *secretaire* dates to 1829.



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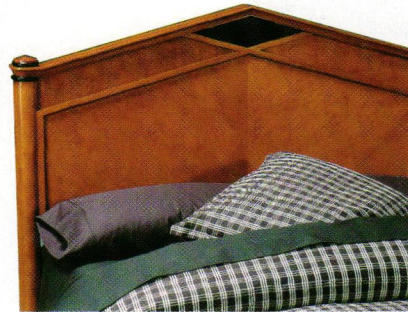
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will seem exceptionally heavy; others incorporate turnings and curves unlike what we commonly associate with Empire.

Just as Neoclassical design was revived in America at various points throughout the 19th and early-20th centuries, there have been at least three revivals of Biedermeier in Northern Europe. The first was a very brief revival in the 1860s, followed by a greater one around 1900. If you look closely at a lot of American Golden Oak furniture made between 1890 and 1910, you'll notice many tables and case pieces are actually Neoclassical in form.



period, as well as today, the "glamour" piece was a secretary or other grand cabinet or desk placed prominently in the best parlor. Tall-case clocks were also prized. Chairs and smaller tables, especially those with striking profiles, make lovely accent pieces.

When inspecting a prospective antique purchase, be ever watchful for loose veneer that indicates a failing glue bond, a potential harbinger of expensive conservation. While a few

chips are typical for veneered antiques, avoid pieces with obvious delamination.

The massive scale of some period Biedermeier makes its

*If we continue with this logic, one wonders if mid-20th-century American antiques will one day be referred to as "Bumstead" furniture, after Dagwood and Blondie.*

The third revival and most important resurgence of the Biedermeier style occurred during the Art Deco movement of the 1920s. Biedermeier's soft undulations and exotic woods dovetailed perfectly with Moderne design. In fact, some Biedermeier pieces from the first quarter of the 19th century can easily pass as Art Deco with their sleek lines and shiny black finishes.

Several forms of Biedermeier have proven more popular than others. Couches or settees seem to lead the pack, as these are often the focal point of a room. In a similar vein, the classically inspired bed (often referred to as a sleigh bed) is also on many wish lists. As with all antique beds, the never-ending quest for king-size eludes all but a lucky few. In the

deployment in the average American Bungalow or Dutch Colonial a bit forced. But several furniture manufacturers are creating reproductions compatible with today's living. Antique pieces that would otherwise be unobtainable or unable to withstand the rigors of contemporary use are now well within the grasp of the many homeowners smitten by German Neoclassicism.

This harmony of Biedermeier and the styles of the following 170 years explains its popularity. Biedermeier works beautifully in an early-19th-century context; those of us with eclectic taste appreciate its ability to adapt to almost *any* style. ✦

DAN COOPER *still has difficulty spelling Biedermeier.*

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I always begin with **WINDOW TREATMENTS**, an area where there are plenty of examples of proper design and materials, no matter what the age or style of your house. I study the scale and proportions of various ap-

# soft treatments BY JAMIE GIBBS

propriate designs, then consider how they might be adapted in a given setting. Sometimes a detail originally created for a room with 12' ceilings will not adapt well to a house with an 8' or 9' foot ceiling—even if both houses are the same style. For instance, although the drapes in a 17th-century English Tudor house might have puddled on the floor, I would avoid that in a smaller-scale Tudor Revival house, since puddled drapes visually lower the ceiling. To preserve

the sense of scale, I mount the rod as high on the wall as possible and use a small-scale tassel or moss fringe on the draperies.

In American homes, it has always been appropriate to have drapes, whether café style, rod pocket, tab top, or decorative header, hung from either metal or wooden poles with decorative finials and rings. With each decade, the rod sizes vary. As a basic rule, the higher the ceiling, the larger the rod. I use metal rods for anything

under 1" in diameter for simpler treatments, such as café curtains or sheers.

**DRAPERY TRIM** should also be period appropriate. It is not so much the color that determines the correct style, as the size and shape. In the early-19th century, tassel trims and small crystal beads were popular. Later in the Victorian era, bullions (heavy fringes of twisted gold or silver thread), netted tassels, and long bead trim came into vogue. By the early-20th century, small- [continued on page 42]

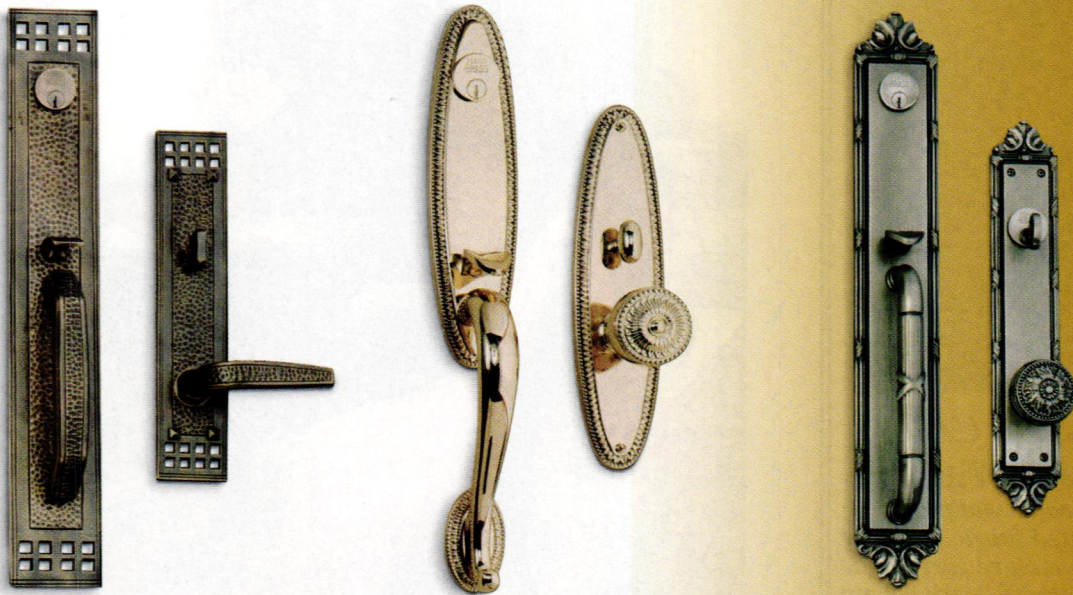
**A ball-fringed table skirt, tapestry wallhanging, complementary fringed pillows, and even needlepoint slippers work together to add a lavish sense of richness and comfort to this late-Victorian vignette with slipper chair.**





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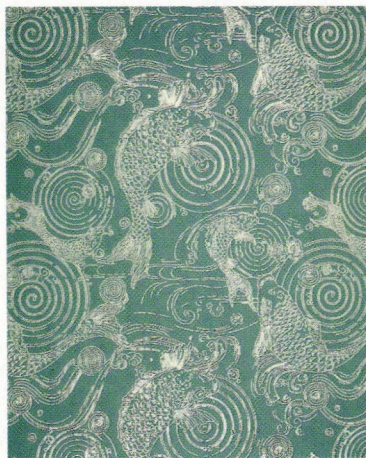
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oriental rug, and appropriately  
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to a formal Victorian parlor.

scale tassels, gimps (ribbon-like braided  
fabric), bands, and applied fabric bor-  
ders were more popular.

Today, a wide variety of repro-  
duction trims are available. Each is  
usually part of a collection, making it  
easy to decorate with matching trims  
of different styles. While the Victori-  
ans used almost every possible trim  
to embellish most surfaces, use it more  
delicately and with restraint for  
Georgian, Empire, Edwardian, and  
most early-20th-century styles. Trims  
are most cost-effectively used on pil-

lows, throws, or small upholstered  
items or table skirts.

**TABLE SKIRTS** appear throughout  
American history. Early paintings of  
colonial interiors show tables topped  
with everything from oriental rugs  
to elaborate silk panels with long  
piano fringe. Damasks and toiles are  
always appropriate for Colonial  
Revival homes, while heavier tapes-  
tries, jacquard weaves, and even light-  
weight carpets can be used on tables  
in a Victorian interior.

Table skirts require approxi-  
mately 6 yards of fabric for a 36" to  
48" round table. Trim for a skirt de-  
pends on the circumference of the  
fabric; I plan on 8 to 9 yards. Skirts

*Throw pillows, popular in every room in the house since the mid-1800s, are an easy way to relate all the elements in a room and create harmony.*

can be used over fine wood furniture, but they can also cover a makeshift table, or camouflage filing cabinets or safes. (I used a metal garbage can and a 36" round of plywood in my formal living room for years.)

**THROW PILLOWS**, popular in every room in the house since the mid-1800s, are an easy way to relate all the elements in a room and create harmony. Use them to emphasize an architectural style or a decorative theme. In Gothic Revival interiors, for instance, pillows with heraldic themes and other classical patterns are appropriate. For a late-Victorian interior, pillows made of heavy tapestries or sections of oriental rugs help create an Edwardian atmosphere.

Whether you cover your pillows in antique textiles or new fabric, or buy them ready-made, the investment is minimal compared to draperies or upholstered furniture. If you are a person who likes change, then owning alternative decorative accessories will allow you to create different moods without the expense of slipcovers or reupholstering the furniture. I vary my décor with pillows, throws, and table skirts in expensive, very delicate fabrics, such as silk taffeta, embroidered silk panels, cut velvets, silk damasks, and even antique textiles and trims. (My seasonal favorites are a tablecloth hand-embroidered in Poland in 1860, delicate embroidered silk panels from 19th-century China, and silk tassel tiebacks as accents draped over upholstered furniture.)

In the 18th and 19th centuries,

people used **SLIPCOVERS** to protect fine upholstery. Slips were placed on furniture when not in use, or during summer months to protect the fabrics from strong sun. Most appropriately used only in the summer over velvet or mohair "winter" upholstery, slipcovers are usually made of cotton

## ESSENTIALS by century

*Here are some trends common to city residences of previous centuries.*

### 18TH CENTURY

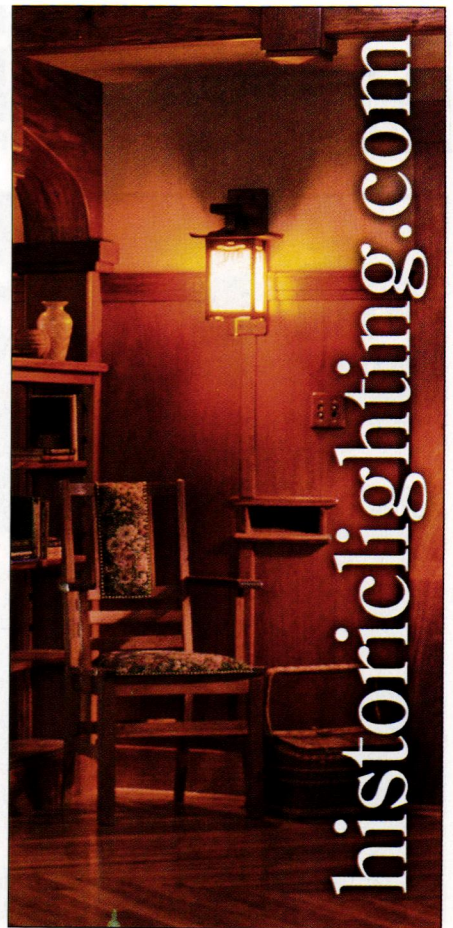
- Brilliant colors
- Silk brocades and damasks
- Simple window treatments with layers and elegant trim
- Wooden blinds with decorative tapes
- Wooden shutters (inside or on exterior)
- Upholstered cornice boards
- Skirted tables with no trim
- Carpets and floor clothes
- Tassel tiebacks and delicate hardware

### EARLY 19TH CENTURY

- Subtle, pastel colors
- Sheer fabrics including silk taffeta
- Crystal and metallic trim
- Egyptian, Roman, and Greek motifs
- French (Aubusson and Savonniere) and English carpets (Wilton, Axminster, and Brussels)

### LATE 19TH CENTURY

- Darker colors and moods
- Many layers and lots of diverse trim
- Floral and Japanese motifs
- Shutters under sheers or lace, with drapes and elaborate valances



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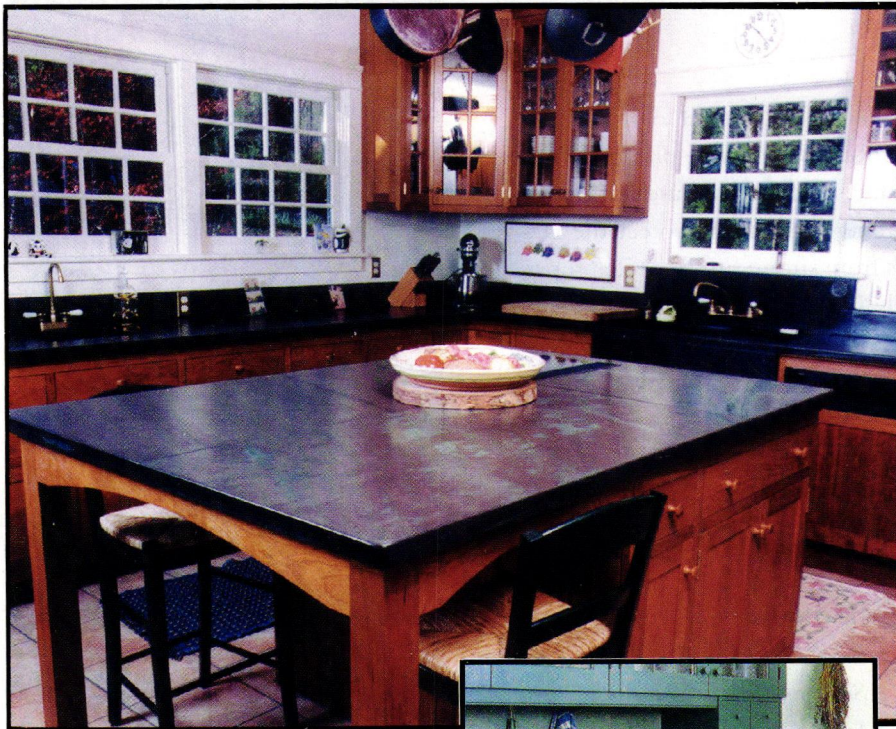
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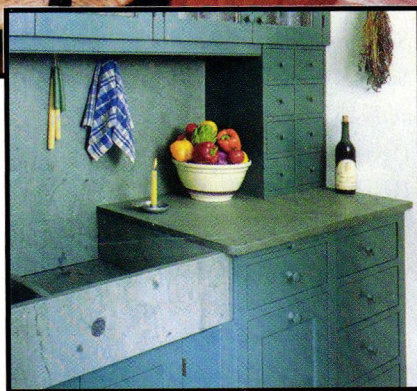
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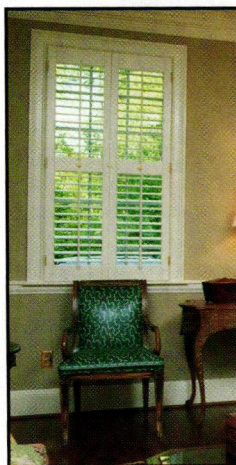


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**LAMP SHADES** were luxury items in the 18th century when parchment and paper shades were painted or papered on the outside. Silk and other fabric shades were introduced with the advent of electric lighting. Always a reflection of the country in which the lamps were made, style options for shades vary from shields of parchment, linen, or cotton panels to pleated silk. Trim applied to the edge of the shades adds a distinctive character and can help tie the colors of the room together.

Introducing soft accessories to your interiors can complete your decorating theme and offer you wide flexibility. In the end they will be the elements people remember, whether or not you have stunning furniture—or even a comfortable couch. ✦

JAMIE GIBBS is an interior designer who lives in New York City.

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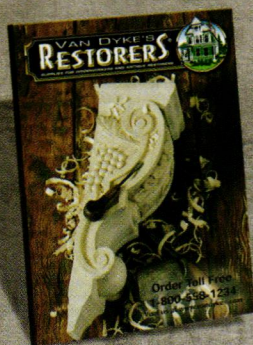
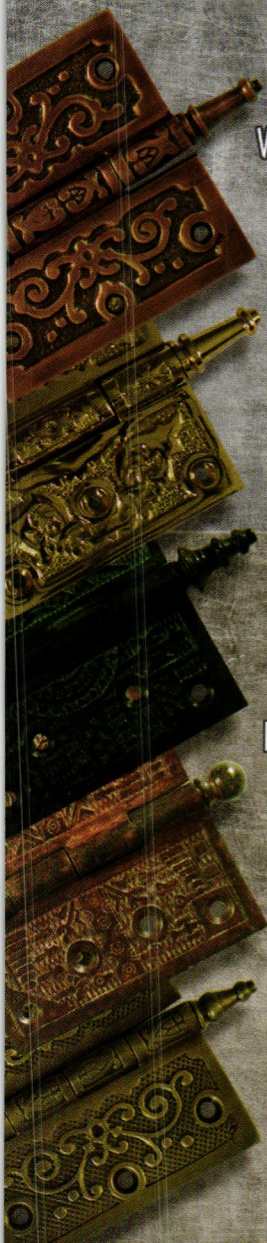
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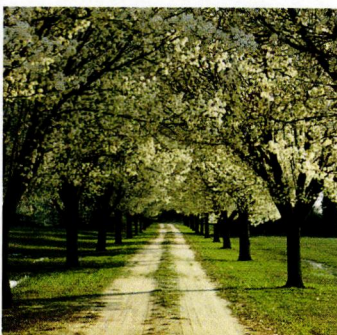
**A SPORTING HOUSE**

*Dressed-down elegance survives in a Tennessee house, part English country estate, part hunting lodge. (page 48) ▶*



**FEDERAL IN NEWPORT**

*Some people do want to live in a museum, especially if it's a period gem, restored by the Newport Preservation Foundation, that offers a sublime slice of the past. (page 54) ▶*



**NOSTALGIC BATHROOMS**

*Revival of the old-fashioned bathroom makes it possible to design one that says 1920, or even 1885. (page 65) ▶*



**CLASSIC AMERICANA**

*Interpretive, eccentric but masterful, the extended brick farmhouse in Vermont was a testing ground for Shelburne Museum founder Electra Webb, and an original of Colonial Revival taste. (page 59) ▶*

**AH, SYMMETRY**

*In the garden, it's a classical device that pleases the eye and is deeply comforting, a bridge across the wildness of nature. (page 72) ▶*





*A sporting good time*  
in **TENNESSEE**

BY DONNA DORIAN WALL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBT AMES COOK



*In the early years of the 20th century, a Boston industrialist and his wife brought their New England taste, their bird dogs, and a Newport antique or two to Tennessee.*

**T**RAVELING by private rail car and preceded by a bevy of servants, Hobart and Julia Ames arrived at Grand Junction every January. For the next four months they would entertain, hunt quail and 'coon, and oversee the plan-

tation where 200 sharecropping families harvested cotton off the land. Show cattle in their purebred Angus herd won blue ribbons across the country; their bird dogs won many trial competitions; their thoroughbreds boarded in stables that, like the Ames plan-

tation house, are meticulously maintained to this day.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, high society followed the lead of Teddy Roosevelt and took to the rugged life outdoors. Among them was Hobart C. Ames, a wealthy Boston industrialist who

Delicourt block prints of a chase line the walls in Mrs. Ames's sitting room, where Newport antiques share space with pieces of uncertain provenance that have long been in the house.





**Game rifles and photos taken in years of field trials furnish a sportsman's room. The Ostaus portrait in the middle is of Hobart Ames. The room is centered around a 15th-century English writing table (opposite bottom).**

fished for salmon in Alaska and hunted grouse in Scotland. In 1900, when the national bird-dog trials temporarily moved near Grand Junction, Ames and his wife Julia visited. Attracted to the abundant wildlife and natural setting, they purchased a property the following year: Cedar Grove, a Greek Revival house built in 1847.

Over time, Ames increased his holdings to include 25,000 acres. By 1915 he'd seen to it that the seat of the National Field Trial Championship Association moved permanently to the plantation. The Ken-

tucky Derby of the sport (which attracted the likes of the Milwaukee Pabsts and the Vanderbilts), the Championship is still hosted here every February. Inherited by the Trustees of the Hobart Ames Foundation, the house's interior remains very much as it was when the Ameses transformed the antebellum mansion into a hunting lodge.

"It was a 'dressed-down' kind of place," says James Stevens, the interior decorator and historic preservation specialist from nearby Bolivar, Tennessee, who helped with the



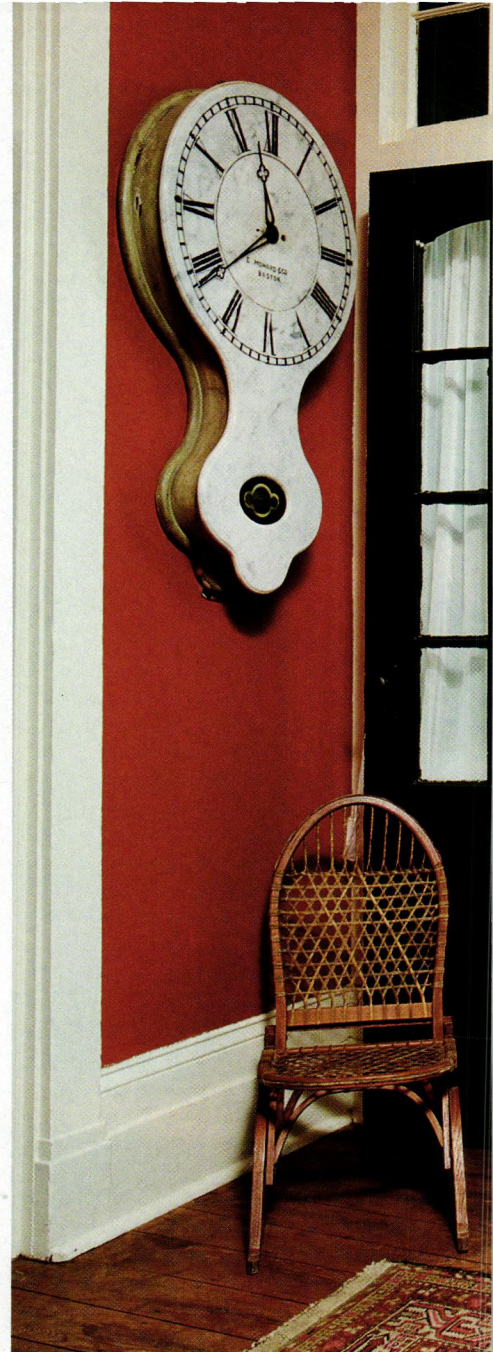


**LEFT:** One of a pair of Empire "petticoat" tables in the dining room; the mirrored bottom allowed ladies to check their skirts. **ABOVE:** Ames plantation started as a Greek Revival house called Cedar Grove, built in 1847.





**ABOVE:** Delicate shelves and oriental paper evoke 1920s taste in an upstairs bedroom.  
**BELOW:** A French-style sleigh bed anchors the downstairs bedroom of Cuthbert Buckle, first manager of the Ames plantation. Ames and his brother, a Broadway producer, owned stock in MGM Studios; the photo is of the aged MGM lion at the Memphis Zoo.



refurbishment during the 1970s. “The carpets give it away. At the turn of the century, the wealthy preferred Isfahans—but this house has Serapis, Kazaks, and Herizes, then considered rather informal. Today, of course, it’s these more ‘primitive’ rugs that are thought to be more desirable.”

The house is filled with furniture that few would think to use in a catch-all or vacation house today. Chairs in the dining room are probably period Newport, Rhode Island, Chippendale—which these days is just about as high style as it gets. But no-



body looked at American furniture that way a hundred years ago.

Yet there are Delicourt “Grand Chassé” block-printed wallpapers in Mrs. Ames’s sitting room. Even in the first decades of the 20th century—almost a century after DuFour hand-block prints were installed at Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage—Delicourt was considered formal attire, even more so today. The original “Chassé” blocks were ruined decades ago in a flood; only two other examples of the pattern are known to survive. (One is in the Louvre.)

With extraordinary antiques alongside day-to-day objects, the house has a comfortable, lived-in look, an authentic kind of shabby chic. But it has eccentric surprises, too: a closer look at the Delicourt panels reveals hunters in keen pursuit of terrified prey—brazen, bloody scenes in alarming contrast to the genteel Classical decor. A huge elk’s head hangs in the entrance hall, sent home by Hobart Ames after an expedition in Montana. The house at first impression has the feel of an old English country estate, but it is a hunter’s lodge.



**ABOVE:** Bedrooms decorated after 1915 are like guest suites, with striped papers, twin beds, private baths. **LEFT:** The marble-faced Boston bank clock was rescued and repaired by the butler, son of a clock-maker; it runs today. **BELOW:** Most lamps had shades with a sports motif.



The Ameses filled their lodge with photographs of their favorites: dogs, cattle, and horses. Edmund Henry Ostauss, one of the best known dog painters of the century, was a frequent guest of the couple. The house has numerous oils by the British artist Maud Earl, including that of Mrs. Ames’s thoroughbred Anita. Field trial photos surround a Ostauss portrait of a ’coon-hunting Hobart Ames crawling along a branch fallen across a creek. A silver flask quite clearly protrudes from his back pocket. He was a man known to like his liquor. ♦


# *A Newport Federal*

BY BRIAN D. COLEMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH

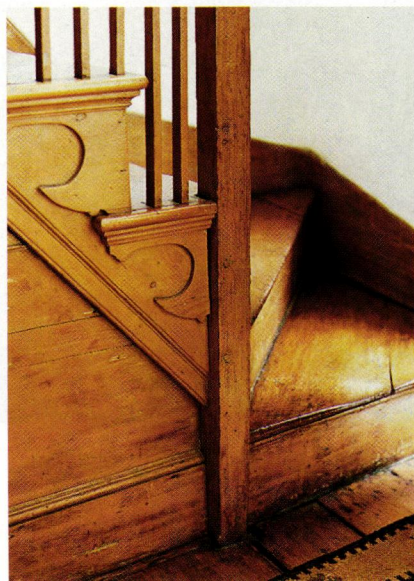
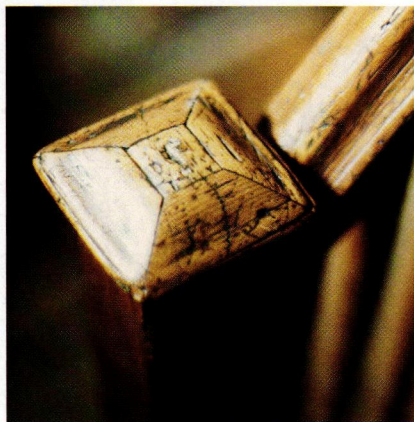
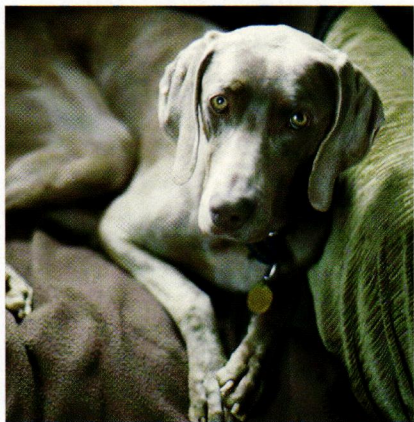
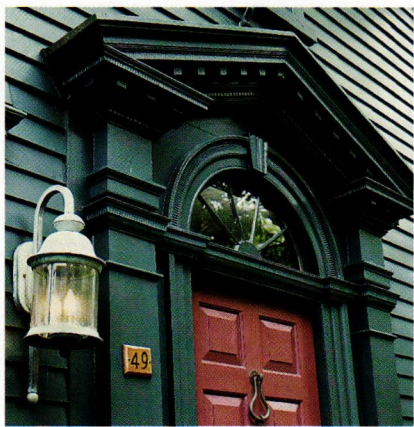
**N**EWPORT NEVER FULLY recovered after the Revolutionary War. Founded in 1639, the Rhode Island seaport ranked with Charleston, New York, and Boston before the British destroyed over one-third of the city. For the next century, Newport was quaint and quiet, with a growing summer clientele throughout the nineteenth century. By the 1870s, hundreds of palatial summer “cottages” had been erected by the financial and literary elite, and Newport was the nation’s social capital. But, as progress and redevelopment swept the country during the 1960s, even sleepy Newport was threatened. Many of its early, colonial-era houses were being demolished to make





The dining room's original  
woodwork and flooring  
are intact. Purchased by  
the Newport Restoration  
Foundation in 1969, the 1811  
house (opposite) has been  
meticulously restored and  
repainted in historical colors.

*Famous for Gilded Age mansions,  
Newport nevertheless boasts more  
surviving 18th-century homes  
than any other Atlantic seaport.*



**A simple kitchen best fits the 1811 house. Note the counter and backsplash running in front of the original window opening, which has not been changed. LEFT: (top to bottom) Fine dentils and mouldings. Foley's dog is a Weimaraner named Jackie. The newel post shows marks of nearly 200 years of use. The original pine staircase.**

way for shopping centers and condominiums. Enter the heroine heiress: Doris Duke, who since childhood had spent part of each year in Newport at Rough Point, the family's Gothic mansion built by Frederick W. Vanderbilt in 1889. Miss Duke in 1968 used some of her considerable fortune to establish the Newport Restoration Foundation. Over the next 15 years, her Foundation bought and restored more than 80 seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century buildings, employing a work crew of over 75 carpenters and painters, and

running a millworks. Restored homes were rented out, the Foundation overseeing their care and upkeep.

Robert Foley, who is Preservation Coordinator for the Foundation, has lived in one of the restored homes for the past sixteen years. The modest, two-storey, gambrel-roofed structure was built in 1811 by Alexander Jack Jr., a free black and cordwainer. Typical of Newport houses ca. 1740–1815, the house is built around a center chimney. Simple architecture is graced with reeded cornice mouldings and chair rails over flat





## Preservation in NEWPORT

Founded by Doris Duke in 1968, the **NEWPORT RESTORATION FOUNDATION** is now a nonprofit organization maintaining nearly 80 colonial-era homes leased to private individuals. Restored homes open to the public include the Samuel Whitehorse House, Prescott Farm, and, most recently, Rough Point. Contact the Foundation at (401) 849-7300, or e-mail them: [newportrestoration.com](http://newportrestoration.com) ■ The **PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF NEWPORT COUNTY** was founded in 1945 and currently maintains 11 properties including such grand Gilded Age mansions as the Vanderbilt family's The Breakers and Marble House, as well as several others (including the Gothic favorite from earlier in the 19th century, Kingscote). Call the Society at (401) 847-1000; e-mail them at [newportmansions.org](http://newportmansions.org) ■ Founded in 1854, the **NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY** maintains the Museum of Newport History and several historic houses. The Society sponsors a series of lectures, walking tours of Newport, and other public events throughout the year: (401) 846-0813; [newporthistorical.org](http://newporthistorical.org)

**BELOW:** The front parlor is centered around the original mantel. The house is furnished simply with a mixture of family pieces and period antiques.

board wainscots; the house is reminiscent of the elegant furniture produced by such local cabinetmakers as the Townsends and the Goddards in shops along the waterfront. A divided fanlight over the entry door and 12 over 12 windows add considerably to the house's charm.

Living in an colonial house restored by the Foundation has its drawbacks, Foley cheerfully explains. It is cold in the winter and heating bills can be high. He is not allowed to build bookcases into the walls. But when church bells peal from the white-washed spires of Trinity Church (1725) across the square, even a visitor knows preservation makes perfect sense. ✦



THREE editorial inquiries, three houses, three different states—they made a set, I knew intuitively, but I was at a loss to explain why. What do they have in common?—the hunting lodge in Tennessee; a 20th-century property of the Shelburne Museum; a restored antique in Newport. My first attempt to explain was tiresome: “Each describes an idiom contributing to the rise of a nostalgic Colonial Revival that, over time, evolved into an unexamined, traditional deco-

she was new here and her Yankee neighbors had yet to invite her in. She’d come from Los Angeles, a California girl who dressed on the cutting edge of tasteful, a girl who could afford any décor and who bought original paintings. I wondered, therefore, as she furnished her house north of Boston, where her consummate New England decorating taste had come from. The house (which started, oddly, as a Victorian-era duck blind) is best described as a shingled, center-hall

## Enduring TRADITIONS

rating taste.” Would *you* read that (except for credit)? ■ Here is a better story. As a set, these houses help explain Suzanne. “I hate New England!” she blurted during one particularly nasty winter, when

Colonial Revival built, for the most part, ca. 1915, with a foursquare plan radiating from a classical staircase. Leaving her condo in Playa del Rey, Suzanne had somehow acquired—instantly, as if by channeling—an unerring, if conservative, decorating taste. Her parlor features Queen Anne sofas in silk damask and a Hepplewhite console

table. ■ The answer *by Patricia Poore*

is not to be found in New England, but in working-class New Jersey, where her family is from. Like her parents before her, Suzanne was drawn to indisputable good taste—the American taste that decorated the three houses in this issue. Their interiors are not modish, not easily placed in time nor described with such self-conscious labels as Rococo or Aesthetic, Arts and Crafts or Moderne. No, they are best described as Traditional; Classical is also apt. Their rooms evoke a common history in a way as comforting to Easterners with old-family ties as it is to the children of immigrants. ✦



Antique wall paneling salvaged from a Southern house was installed in the blue bedroom at the vernacular Brick House in Vermont during a Colonial Revival redecoration in 1937. Classical mouldings and symmetry are emblems of traditional taste.



HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR

# Americana

## at the BRICK HOUSE

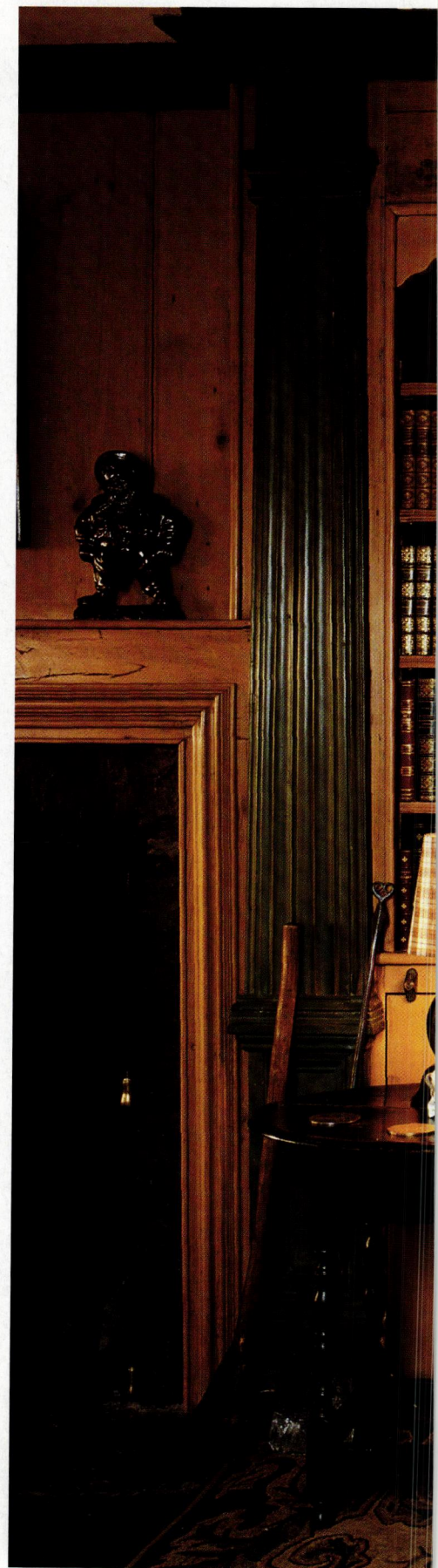
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLYN BATES

The north wing entry, part of an extensive 1919 remodeling, is a seminal Colonial Revival façade.

IT'S AN ORIGINAL, one of a handful of houses about which you can say: This is where American taste comes from. This is where we first interpreted the colonial past. This is what became traditional decorating. ■ The Brick House in northern Vermont is a complex and original example of Colonial Revival taste. A vernacular farmhouse that became the design [text continued on page 64]



**ABOVE:** View into the breakfast room or children's dining room (1919). **BELOW:** The formal dining room makes up a large portion of the original, 19th-century house. The refined, Neoclassical cornice and wall paneling here are from a Southern house (probably Virginia) and were installed in 1937. **RIGHT:** In the den, horizontal boards as wall cladding date to 1919; green-painted pilasters and cornice date to the 1940s.





*Mrs. Webb created revival rooms of artistic merit by exploiting colonial and Federal devices, installing antique paneling and carved cornices and mantels in a house full of her bold collections.*

*The farmhouse* was built before 1808; the young Webbs added to it in 1913 and, more extensively, in 1919; Colonial Revival furnishing continued beyond a major redecoration in 1937.

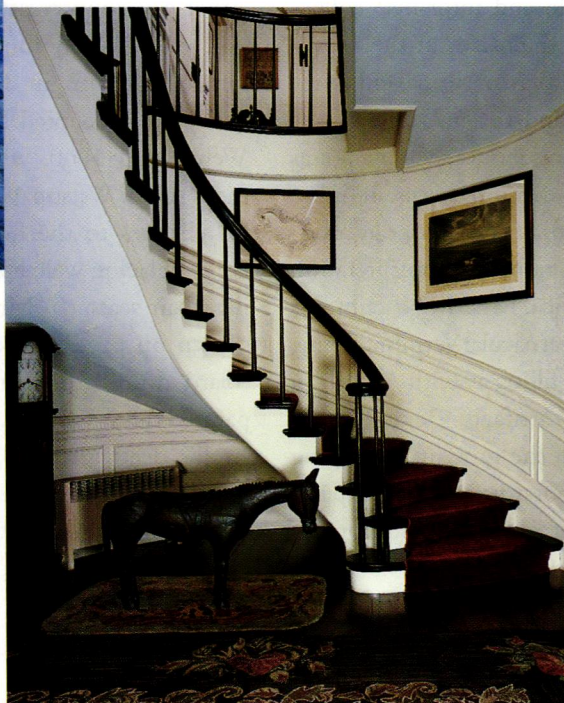


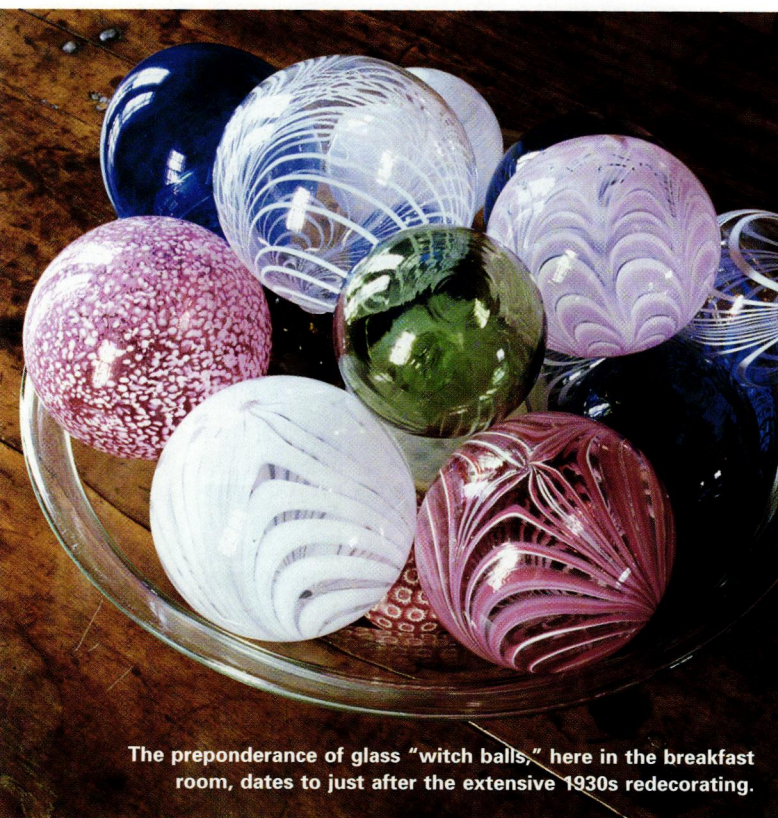


The Quilted Bedroom is "very Mrs. Webb" in its eclectic use of Americana: the American tin and cast-iron bed in French Rococo style is from 1850; fabric from old quilts was used on the walls.



**ABOVE:** In Mrs. Webb's time, her office had unpainted woodwork like the den across the hall. Toby jars remain on the top shelf. Her late-18th-century desk is tiger maple, one of her favorite woods.  
**LEFT:** A folk-art donkey lives at the bottom of the Colonial Revival staircase.  
**FAR LEFT:** In Mrs. Webb's bathroom, the walls are as they were in 1938, including the rare, early 19th-century trompe l'oeil fireboard installed above the mantel.





The preponderance of glass "witch balls," here in the breakfast room, dates to just after the extensive 1930s redecorating.

sign. The house was a sort of proto-museum, and remains, with documentation, largely as she left it.

ELECTRA HAVEMEYER married James Watson Webb Jr. in 1910; he was the son of Dr. William Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb, who created the agricultural landmark Shelburne Farms along Lake Champlain. The abandoned brick farmhouse on the property was given to the young married couple in 1913, along with 1,000 acres. The rambling house grew to 40 rooms after an extensive expansion in 1919.

The house is filled with the stuff of the Colonial Revival—all of which dates to the 18th century. Hooked rugs and quilts, country furniture, folk art, and salvaged Georgian paneling play prominent

*In her beguiling interiors, visited by important collectors and curators of the time, she boldly combined folk art, dolls, hooked rugs, colorful textiles, historical wallpapers, and American paintings to create unusual, dynamic ensembles.*

experiment of Shelburne Museum founder Electra Havemeyer Webb, it was expanded just before and just after the First World War, and decorated by Mrs. Webb throughout the 1920s and '30s. A capable and informed collector, she was a trailblazer in the movement to preserve Americana and to revive colonial and Federal taste.

Everything about the house points to early-20th-century ideals. It is no Beaux Arts mansion, no European country house, but rather an interpretation of early America. Mrs. Webb chose to rescue an old, vernacular Vermont house, and set about filling it with American furniture and artifacts. Beginning in 1913, she used the growing, changing house as a laboratory for her experiments in architecture and interior de-

roles in the decoration of the house. When Electra Webb placed a carved donkey at the foot of the sweeping Colonial Revival stair, she showed herself to be a pioneer in collecting American country arts.

Mrs. Webb founded the Shelburne Museum in 1947. The brick house was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Webb until 1960, when it passed to their son J. Watson Webb Jr. Most of his changes to the house were modest—replacing wallpapers, reupholstering chair seats. (In Mrs. Webb's office, shown on page 63, he removed cupboard doors from the shelving and painted the woodwork white in 1961.) At his death in 2000, the house became part of the Museum; it will open for tours in June of 2003. ✦



nostalgic

# Bathrooms

*all-new and  
practical, too!*

BY PATRICIA POORE

From the beginning of the twentieth century until its close, bathrooms did not change much. You could pretty well count on this: three plumbed fixtures, a tile floor, a medicine cabinet, and a washable wainscot of varnished wood or tile. A revival of old-fashioned fittings only added to the timeless similarities. By the 1980s, the colored bathrooms of mid century were outmoded and, anachronistically, you could once again purchase little hexagonal floor tiles, pedestal sinks, even pull-chain toilets.

**Revival bathrooms tend to be more high-style than the average period original, even when authenticity is sought in reproduction materials. Here, American wallpaper is matched with English tile.**





**LEFT:** Period design and salvaged fixtures lend stunning authenticity to this newly commissioned bathroom in an 1887 Illinois Queen Anne. **ABOVE:** Twin pedestal sinks flanking a marble-topped cabinet answer modern needs in period style.

THE REVIVAL BATHROOM got its start as the answer to owners restoring their period homes. Thirty years later, the phenomenon has spread to general taste; even new houses have old-fashioned baths. Scholarship and the wide availability of vintage-look materials have evolved to the point where restorers can outfit a bathroom that's nearly indistinguishable from one that might have survived since the 1880s or 1920s.

Look at the pictures. The rooms shown are all new (although they may incorporate existing woodwork or salvaged fixtures). Each one gives a terrific first impression and holds up under close scrutiny—the attention to detail is exquisite in all cases. They'll help you design a bathroom that looks like it's been there since

the early days of American indoor plumbing. (And why would you want to go back any further?)

THREE OF THE BATHROOMS here evoke late Victorian rooms ca. 1885–1895. The blue and white bathroom on the opener is in an 1887 Queen Anne in Oak Park, Illinois, restored by Kelli and Tom Kline. (The November 2001 issue featured their contest-winning kitchen.) The Victorian radiator, white subway-tile wainscot, bordered hex-tile floor, wall-hung marble sink, wood cabinet, and combination gas/electric sconces are period perfect. Wallpaper adapted from Candace Wheeler's "Carp" textile (ca. 1885–1905) lends a decorative lift.

Also in the Kline house is the handpainted washroom shown on





**OPPOSITE:** Rushes and fishes have long been popular bath motifs, and may have been stenciled or handpainted in a Victorian bathroom; today's well-ventilated bathrooms allow the use of wallpaper. **ABOVE:** In a washroom off a Victorian kitchen, old-fashioned bath fixtures and fittings are set off by the owner's handpainted bulrushes.

this page (above), a true period piece created last year. It has a pull-chain toilet, non-mixing taps, wide beaded wainscot instead of tile—you can't get much more authentic.

The jewel-like Victorian bathroom on p. 70 is a re-creation of the 1889 Aesthetic-movement bathroom that had been added to an 1878 Italianate house. Only the marble-topped corner lavatory is original to the 1889 room. The old medicine cabinet and

the high-tank toilet are salvage; the hex-tile floor is a reproduction; the beadboard wainscot was taken from old garage doors; the stained-glass window came from a church. Embossed Anaglypta wallcovering adds to the highly finished effect.

Bathrooms inspired by those of the early-20th century are a good choice for most old houses, and are period-appropriate for bungalows, Arts and Crafts houses, and Tudor,

Colonial, or Romantic Revivals. The one on p. 68 is from a 1909 house; it's transitional, blending the fine details and decoration of late Victorian sensibility with the sanitary whiteness of the 20th-century bathroom. The frieze is "Kingfisher" from Bradbury and Bradbury.

The use of Douglas fir lends a Western Arts and Crafts feel to the bathroom in the 1918 bungalow shown on p. 71. Likewise, a wood





**OPPOSITE:** The Victorian bathroom is more "furnished." **ABOVE:** In a 1918 bungalow: a bathroom brought back with Douglas fir and a reproduction pillbox toilet. **RIGHT:** A footed tub and brass fittings lend old-fashioned touches in the same Seattle bathroom.

wainscot warms the all-white fixtures in the generous bathroom on p. 67, where old-style fixtures and stylish woodwork lend a period feel, despite such modern elements as a huge mirror and double sinks. ✦

*Congratulations to author JANE POWELL and photographer LINDA SVENDSEN for their recent book *Bungalow Bathrooms* (Gibbs Smith, Publisher), from which several of the preceding photos were taken. It's full of great ideas from the classic to the zany.*





HISTORY GARDENS

# symmetry

IN THE GARDEN



*There is something deeply comforting, something that pleases the eye, in green lines that parallel and cross one another in an undulating landscape that falls between wilderness and civilization.*

*by Vicki Johnson | photographs by Ken Druse*

**W**E AMERICANS take pride in the wild beauty across our country, and at times will immerse ourselves in wilderness as a way of recreation and refreshment. Ultimately, however, we instinctively crave a sense of order and balance in our lives. Scientists and philosophers have theorized that what we see when we look in the mirror—the nearly perfect, symmetrical balance of features and appendages—

is responsible for our love of pattern, and that we are drawn to find and re-create that symmetry in the natural environment around us.

Strictly speaking, a symmetrical design is one in which all of the elements are balanced on either side of an imaginary central line, or axis. The use of the axis is a classical treatment in art, architecture, and horticulture, which the earliest settlers re-established when they ar-

**LEFT:** Bee skeps crown rectangular beds in the kitchen garden at Boscobel, an 1804 Federal mansion in the Hudson River highlands. **BELOW:** A pedimented Federal door flanked by tall trellises.



*A sense of balance and order is once again considered critical to a pleasing design; symmetry can be employed even in naturalistic settings to great effect.*

rived in America. The houses they built and the first gardens they planted were laid out in geometric patterns. The comforting rhythms of such designs fostered a feeling of control in a new and frequently hostile world. In an age where rational thought was valued above all else, “garden making was considered one of the highest forms of civilized behavior,” writes Michael Weishan in his book *The New Traditional Garden*. “Precisely planned and laid-out landscapes easily became a metaphor for a well-ordered, balanced world.”

Indeed, the architectural styles of our early history—Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival—dictate that gardens and grounds form an extension of the geometry of the house in order to preserve an overall visual integrity. “Simply because these landscapes were geometric doesn’t mean they were rigid applications of circle and square,” Weishan emphasizes. “There was a certain carefree genius to these American colonial gardens; they were flexible and less fussy than their British counterparts.”

Two hundred years later, the same design principles guide both architects and gardeners as we continue

to adapt our garden styles according to need and personal sensibility. The “foursquare” colonial herb garden and French *potager* are examples of just how charming and exuberant a structured design can be. Both gardens feature square or rectangular beds, usually measuring no more than 5’ across, and employ an artful mix of



vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees.

As food and garden writer Georgeanne Brennan explains, *potager*—the French word for soup—describes a garden that provides seasonal vegetables, fruits, berries, and flower cuttings for the household. “Lettuces stand side by side with pan-

sies,” she writes in *Potager: Fresh Garden Cooking in the French Style* (Chronicle). “Tomatoes climb alongside huge flowering poppies and potatoes are right at home with peonies.” Straight, right-angled pathways of brick or stone run in separate individual beds in both the colonial herb garden and *potager*, and short, manicured hedges or woven fences control the profusion of growth, making them both manageable and attractive.

Even as the concept of the “natural garden” has taken hold of our cultural consciousness in recent years, a sense of balance and order is still critical to a pleasing design. Symmetry can be employed even in naturalistic settings to great effect. A circular island of clipped lawn in a sea of lush flowers and trees, for instance, prevents the riot of colors, shapes, and textures from overwhelming the senses. A quiet pool reflecting a collection of dark ever-

greens and the sky above is the essence of natural symmetry. A passage through a long driveway with tall, protecting trees on either shoulder lends a comfortable, calming formality as one retreats from the chaotic world behind, even before the welcoming house comes into view. ✦

**ABOVE:** A double row of Bradford pear trees (*Pyrus calleryana*) arches over a drive vanishing into the distance.

**OPPOSITE:** The garden as an extension of the architecture at Hamilton House. The hipped-roof Georgian mansion, built ca. 1785 in South Berwick, Maine, is owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA).



# Lace elegance

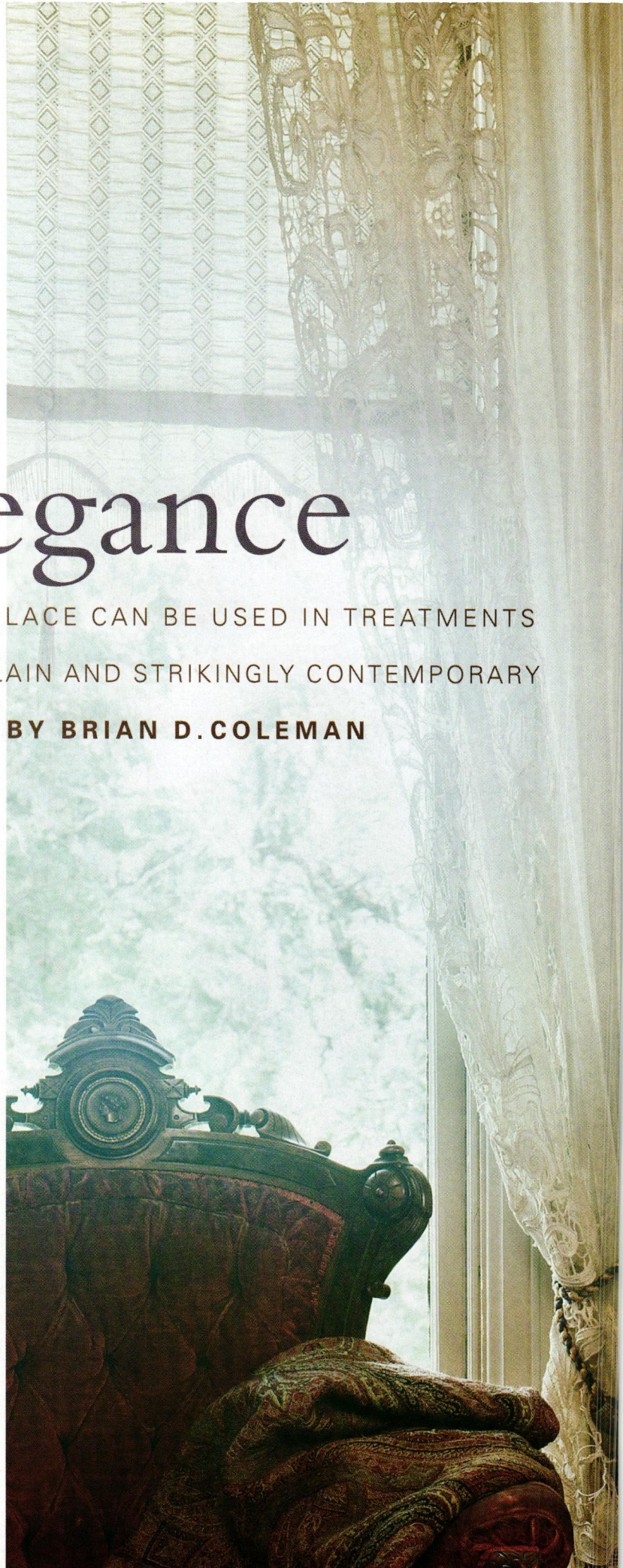
POPULAR IN ALL PERIODS, LACE CAN BE USED IN TREATMENTS RANGING FROM PLAIN AND STRIKINGLY CONTEMPORARY TO HIGH VICTORIAN. **BY BRIAN D. COLEMAN**

IN MY DORM ROOM, I had a macramé planter—as close as I'd come to lace, which reminded me of my grandmother, who wore dainty lace gloves when she took me to lunch. Lace had nothing to do with my idea of decorating. But then I began restoring period houses. I realized that the velvet curtains in the front parlor needed a little “softening” around the edges, something to diffuse the strong light from the windows. A pair of ivory lace panels was perfect for this. It was the beginning of an obsession.

Derived from the French *lacis*, which means to snare or entrap, lace is said to have originated from nets used in fishing and hunting. French aristocrats of the 16th century were

**A quiet use of lace in the parlor of the Italianate Bush House (1878) in Salem, Oregon; original furniture was purchased in Massachusetts.**

**FAR RIGHT:** Antique silk lace in a portière.





known to have bankrupted themselves overindulging in the delicate and, at the time, very costly fabric. Handmade lace became the major industry of 19th-century Belgium, where a quarter of the female population was employed in lace-making, often in primitive conditions. As machine-made lace grew in popularity, the cost came down until just about anyone could afford a pretty lace panel on the windowpane.

Today's choices of machine-made lace are endless. You can find it in polyester, silk, or cotton, in single panels or pairs, sold in various finished lengths, and in designs ranging from classical Greek to bouquets of spring flowers, even to Candace Wheeler's Japanese carp swimming upstream through folds of fabric.

EACH WINDOW is unique, but certain guidelines come in handy. Victorian lace curtains look best *full*—the flat width of the curtains should be at least two and even three times the width of the window. Arts and Crafts curtains may be hung almost flat, as little at 1-1/4 and up to two times the width of the window. Arts and

Crafts-style patterns tend to “read” better flatter, whereas repetitive Victorian patterns look good gathered.

Similarly, Victorian drapery should hang to the floor (unless there is a practical reason for making them shorter), but Arts and Crafts lengths look clean

and crisp when they fall to the sill or apron. Lace was generally available only in [text continued on page 82]



## Popular types of LACE

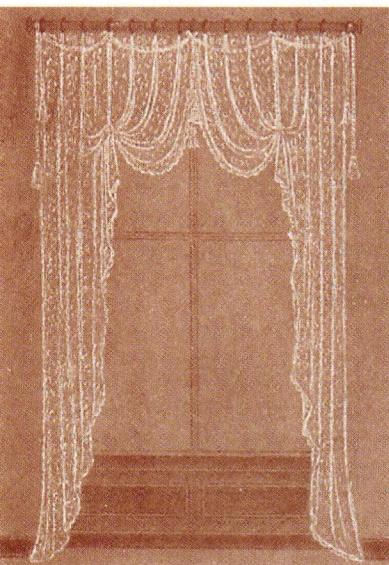
**MADRAS LACE** Named after the city in India where the Victorians first manufactured it, it is sheer as silk and has intricate overlays of patterns. It is the most costly lace, from \$60 per yard upward.

**NOTTINGHAM LACE** Named for the loom invented in Nottingham in the early 19th century, it is now made in Scotland, where the only remaining looms are still producing. The most delicate lace has the highest number of points (14) while coarser patterns may have only 6 or 8 points (threads per inch). Priced from \$40 per panel for a 6-point pattern, to \$150 for a 14-point design.

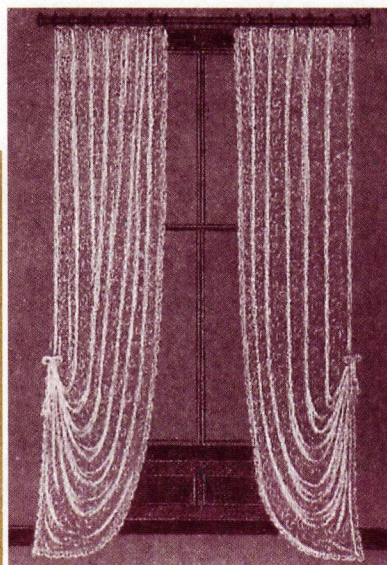
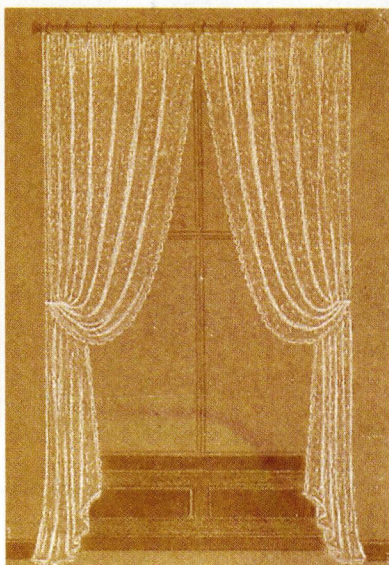
**BATTENBURG LACE** Also called Irish Lace and Belgian Lace, it has patterns of coarse linen braid or tape joined with linen thread. It is often found as a border on solid muslin or cotton panels. New curtains start at about \$60 for a set of two panels.

**CROCHET** The type of lace you're most likely to find in grandmother's trunk in the attic; in a simple process, a hook is used to loop a continuous thread into fabric. Most commonly seen as doilies or valances, antique crochet lace can be found for as little as \$10 for a functional, attractive table mat.

**Antique textiles on this Victorian window include colored lace over a hand-painted window shade.**

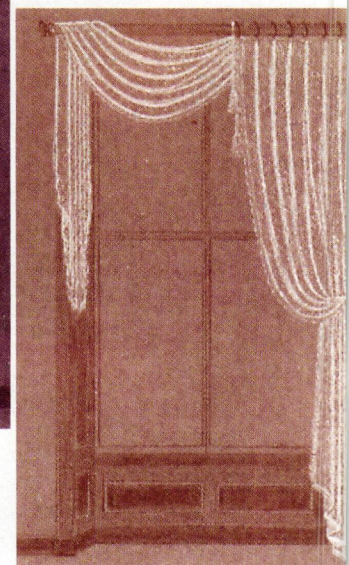


- ▶ Panels are symmetrically drawn up high by invisible cords.
- Twin panels hung from rings, held back just below mid-sash. ▼



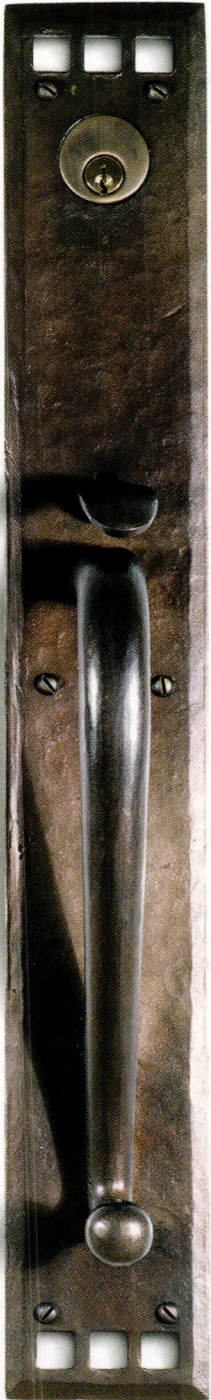
- ▲ Sewn-on rings allow panels to be drawn open and closed; these are drawn up near the hem to classical effect.

- ▶ Asymmetrical treatment: half the window width has a panel on rings, to which is sewn a jabot that swags over the rod. ▼



**METHODS** of hanging lace or muslin are from the 1902 edition of *The Upholstery and Drapery Guide*.

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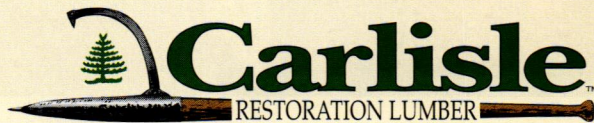
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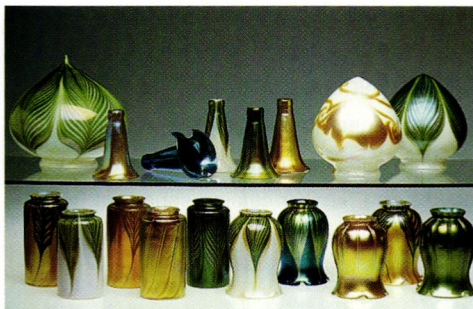
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## Lace PROFUSION

I like collecting lace so much, I've been using it more places than just on windows. The bathroom has a lace shower curtain (over a clear plastic liner). I shirred lace panels onto rods installed across a pair of French doors, to lend privacy. And on the dining-room table, lace is layered over an antique paisley shawl (below).

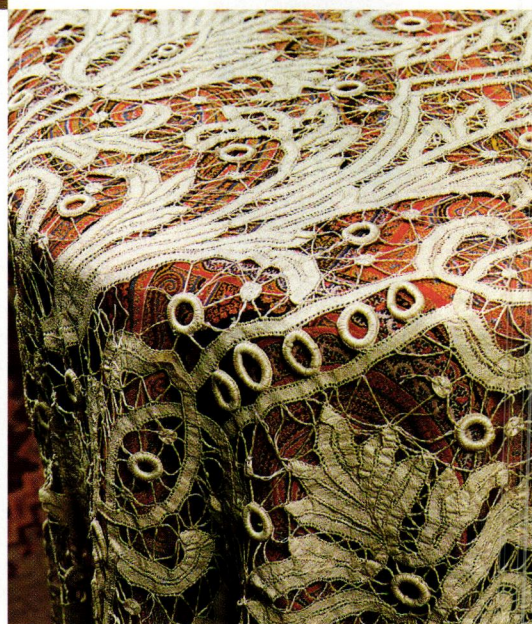
I recommend these books: *20th Century Linens and Lace* by Scofield and Zalamea, Schiffer Publishing, \$39.95; *Living with Lace* by Bo Niles, Workman Publishing, \$20; *A Dictionary of Lace* by Pat Earnshaw, Dover Books, \$9.95.

Historic but still practical instruction on hanging lace, weighting the hems, and washing can be found at [burrows.com/lacequotes](http://burrows.com/lacequotes).

—BRIAN D. COLEMAN

**BELOW:** Antique Battenburg lace is layered over a paisley shawl on the author's dining-room table.

**LEFT:** Generously full lace panels finished with tasseled cornices dress this revival dining room.



## Window SHOPPING

The Internet is a good place to start looking for lace. ■ **J.R. BURROWS & CO.** offers Nottingham lace, custom woven in patterns ranging from the classic Greek key to Candace Wheeler's all-American late Arts and Crafts designs: [burrows.com](http://burrows.com); (800) 347-1795. ■ **COUNTRY CURTAINS** offers a wide variety of lace, all ready-made and conveniently available: [countrycurtains.com](http://countrycurtains.com); (800) 876-6123. ■ **ENCHANTED LACE**—a wide selection of domestic and imported lace: [enchantedlace.net](http://enchantedlace.net); (800) 497-8615. ■ **HERITAGE LACE** is for light-hearted styles in easy-care polyester: [heritagelace.net](http://heritagelace.net); (641) 628-4949. ■ **LONDON LACE** has a wonderful selection of Nottingham and Madras lace: [londonlace.com](http://londonlace.com); (800) 926-LACE [5223]. ■ **RUE DE FRANCE**, the familiar catalog source of French lace café curtains, panels, flat panels, and hard-to-find French-door and sidelight panels: [ruede france.com](http://ruede france.com); (800) 777-0998.



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Circle no. 328



Brian Coleman uses lace panels as under-curtains even with his velvet portières.

long panels during the Victorian era, and lace curtains were often allowed to pool on the floor; hem them about 1/2 inch above the floor if pooling drapery accompanies the lace (or if you have cats and kids). Consider sewing lead weights into the hem to create a clean edge and to control the curtains when the sash is opened.

Most lace panels come with a tailored pocket for a rod threaded through the head (top)—a fine treatment, if the curtain is stationary. Use a standard tension rod across the window casing, a café rod held by brackets, or even cup hooks screwed into the window casing (a suggestion from Diane Jones of London Lace). If you intend to draw them open, curtains should be either sewn or clipped to movable rings on a rod. Projection out away from the window depends on your overall treatment. To allow a roller shade beneath the lace, allow a three-inch projection or more by mounting the lace on extended brackets or using modern “lace rods,” which are invisibly clear plastic header rods with a return. ✦

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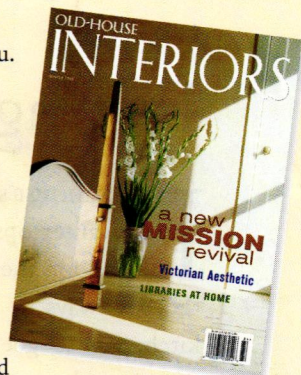
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*There's such an emphasis on aesthetics in baths and kitchens—where \$100,000 remodels are not uncommon today—that it's easy to overlook function in favor of form.*



## Fittings for Kitchen and Bath BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

FARMHOUSE SINKS and limestone countertops are all well and good in their place, but one of the best ways to improve a bath or kitchen is to get rid of that cheap faucet or showerhead and replace it with something that works.

Should the tub filler be a traditional American spout, or a wide-mouthed British style, resting in a cradle? Do you prefer satin nickel or antique brass for the lav set? Which is better, a wall-mounted kitchen faucet with hot-and-cold levers, or an integrated pillar? What exactly is it that makes a plumbing fitting durable and functional as well as beautiful?

"It's not name brand, and it isn't necessarily the price, because there are some inexpensive faucets that are

wonderful," says Tim Judge, owner of Antique Hardware & Home, which sells antique replicas of American bath and kitchen fittings.

Take, for example, an 8" sink mixer. "There are sets that are \$59, \$189, and \$400," Judge says. "The difference between the \$59 mixer and the one that's \$189 is substantial. But the difference between the \$189 faucet and the one that's \$400 is not."

That's probably because the mid-priced mixer is by a company you might not have heard of, while the more expensive faucet is a name brand. Most plumbing fittings are made overseas, then sold through wholesalers to dealers, Judge says. The price paid tends to double each time the fitting changes hands. So a fitting that ini-

tially cost \$10 will double to \$20 when it's sold to a wholesaler. When it's sold retail, it doubles again, to \$40. A similar faucet with a name brand might go through two layers of wholesaling—hence its \$80 price tag.

That said, the longevity of the maker is usually a good indicator of quality. Chicago Faucets, for instance, is still touting the integrated "Quaturn" cartridge it invented in 1913. Completely self-contained and easily replaced (at least by a plumber), washerless ceramic-valve cartridges that mix hot and cold water with just a quarter-turn of a handle are standard throughout the industry. (Just don't expect cartridges by different manufacturers to be interchangeable.) [text continued on page 88]

**A gooseneck faucet is not only traditional for a kitchen sink, it works well in terms of scale and balance with the fixture.**

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A more recent technologic advancement is the thermostatic shower. Most shower valves are pressure balanced, which means they adjust for water flow elsewhere in the house. While a good pressure-balancing system adjusts quickly, you may notice a slight drop or rise in temperature before the system readjusts the flow and temperature.

Thermostatic shower mixers go pressure balancing one better by keeping the temperature within a few degrees of a given setting. "The thermostatic holds your favorite setting in memory," says Warren Pearl, owner of LeFroy Brooks USA, a distributor of imported luxury bath fittings and fixtures. "If somebody flushes the toilet, it will remix the water to maintain a constant temperature."

## Flowing TERMS

A **FITTING** controls the flow of water to the fixtures in baths and kitchens. Fittings include kitchen and bar faucets, lavatory sets, tub fillers, shower valves, and bidet fittings.

A bath or kitchen **FIXTURE** is a component that's securely fastened to the wall or floor.

Sinks, tubs, lavatories, toilets, and bidets are all fixtures.

(chrome, nickel, brass, and gold, available in polished, matte, antiqued finishes, just to name a few), the best finishes are those old standbys, chrome and nickel. Chrome will spot if you don't clean it regularly, but it won't pit or tarnish. Gold is probably the

*Beyond considerations of construction and finish, a good plumbing fitting should look right in terms of balance, proportion, and scale with your chosen fixture.*

Although the inner workings of most American plumbing fittings are usually plastic, the best are made of brass. "You cannot get the feeling of the craft of the finish material unless you have the solid brass base that was traditional for fittings," says Barbara Sallick, senior vice president of design at Waterworks, a maker of luxury bathroom fittings and fixtures.

On the finished surface, all metal parts should be real metal, not amalgamated pot metal. "The one thing you probably want to avoid is any kind of plating over white metals or plastics," Judge says. That's the mark of an inferior faucet. Look for fittings with an electrostatic (or "powder coated") baked-on finish.

Despite the explosion of variety in finish metals and treatments

least durable finish, but unlacquered brass gives it a run for its money.

Beyond considerations of construction and finish, a good fitting should look right in terms of balance, proportion, and scale with your chosen fixture. If you're not sure whether a fitting works with a given fixture, ask for help in the showroom, and be willing to try different combinations of fittings and fixtures before you order.

More important, the fitting should feel as good as it looks. "It's the first thing you see in then morning and the last thing at night," Sallick says. "If it's uncomfortable in your hand, or it's hard to turn when it's soapy, then maybe it's not the right one. You want to choose something that you really like." ♦



# HOME REMEDY



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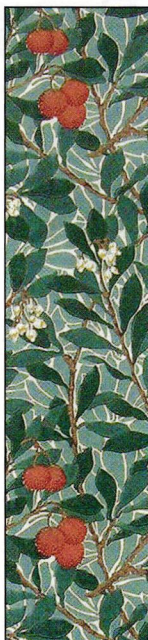
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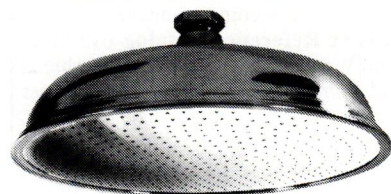
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*"I want to paint everything; every leaf, stem, seed vessel, grass blade, rush, and reed and flower has new charms. I know I can do it . . .!"*

—CELIA THAXTER, 1874

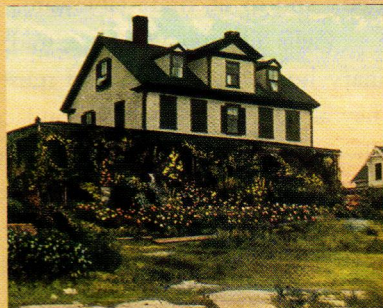


## One Woman's Life REVIEWED BY PATRICIA POORE

CELIA THAXTER's poetry and magazine articles were quite well read—she was even famous. (In an 1897 edition of the card game Authors, Celia Thaxter shares the deck with Dickens and Twain.) But for most of the 20th century, she was overlooked as both writer and artist; only now is her name again familiar outside of women's-studies scholarship. But what generosity!—what exquisite

beauty created during stolen moments in a woman's busy life!

Celia Laighton was born in



Portsmouth but raised from the age of four on White Island, a barren rock ten miles offshore, where her father was lighthouse keeper. The family purchased Hog Island in the Isles of Shoals when she was barely in her teens, renamed it Appledore, and on it built a tourist hotel. Celia would take care of her aging parents, and help run the 300-room complex for the rest of her life.

At sixteen she married Levi

The large photo is a contemporary view of Celia Thaxter's garden as it was re-created on Appledore Island. **ABOVE:** Penny-postcard view of Thaxter Cottage, Isles-of-Shoals, ca. 1890. **INSET:** Celia Laighton Thaxter in 1875.



From  
Celia Thaxter's  
European tour  
sketchbook,  
a Spanish pepper  
in watercolor, 1880.

**BELOW:** Earthenware  
plate painted by Thaxter  
with poppy motif, 1879.  
**RIGHT:** Poppies in water-  
color over set type,  
from her 1886 book  
of illustrated poems.



SCHUMANN'S SONATA IN A MINOR

(MIT LEIDENSCHAFTLICHEM AUSDRUCK)

THE quiet room, the flowers, the perfumed calm,  
The slender crystal vase, where all aflame  
The scarlet poppies stand erect and tall,  
Color that burns as if no frost could tame,  
The shaded lamp-light glowing over all,  
The summer night a dream of warmth and balm.

Outbreaks at once the golden melody,  
"With passionate expression!" Ah, from  
whence

Comes the enchantment of this potent spell,  
This charm that takes us captive, soul and  
sense?

The sacred power of music, who shall tell,  
Who find the secret of its mastery?

*Celia Lighton Thaxter "could expertly grow a flower,  
paint it onto china, turn it into a verse, or arrange  
it in a vase—all with equal skill."*

Lincoln Thaxter, her 27-year-old tutor and connection to the rest of the world, a Boston Brahmin who introduced his young wife, an aspiring poet, to the literary giants of the time. The marriage would prove disappointing, with the couple often living apart. The Thaxters had three boys, the eldest of whom had mild birth defects and retardation and lived with his mother until she died. Celia wrote poetry, essays, and children's books during the years of child-raising, for financial as well as creative reasons. She did more prose writing as time went on—her most famous book is her last, *An Island Garden*,

which explains, with luminous love, every nuance of raising a garden on a treeless, windswept island. She turned her passion for plants into another career, too: painting, to illustrate her poetry and to decorate tableware.

Celia Thaxter was an extraordinary hostess and the island muse. They all came: Longfellow, Candace Wheeler, James Fields (editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*) and his wife Annie, who after her husband's death became devoted to the writer Sarah Orne Jewett, another dear friend of Thaxter's. The poet John Greenleaf Whittier was a close friend, and the Impressionist Childe Hassam, who il-

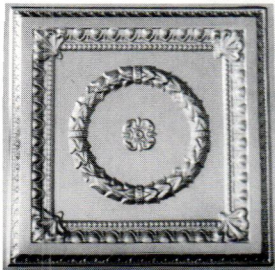
lustrated Thaxter's book.

Thaxter's competent Victorian poetry seems sentimental to critical modern readers; her artwork is unlikely to fall into collectors' hands and is not being reproduced. But she is a mentor; every summer now, a dedicated following comes to visit the islands off the New Hampshire/Maine coast. Her garden has been replicated on Appledore according to plans and descriptions in her book.

SOME YEARS AGO, a Thaxter descendant with an idea to exhibit Celia's visual art ap- [continued on page 100]

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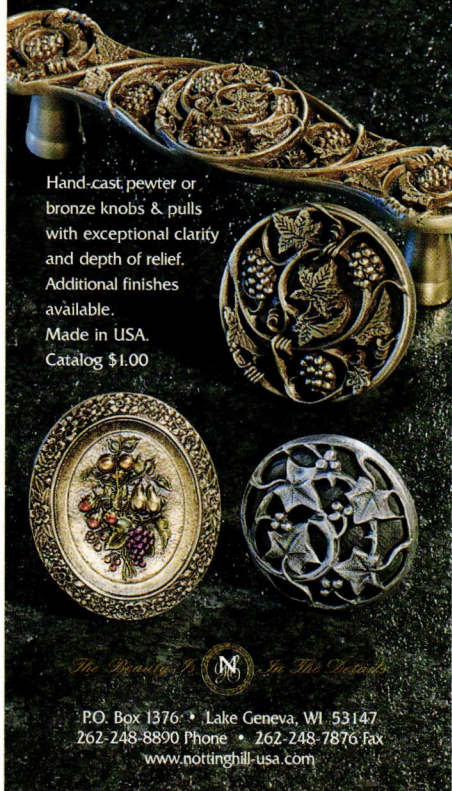
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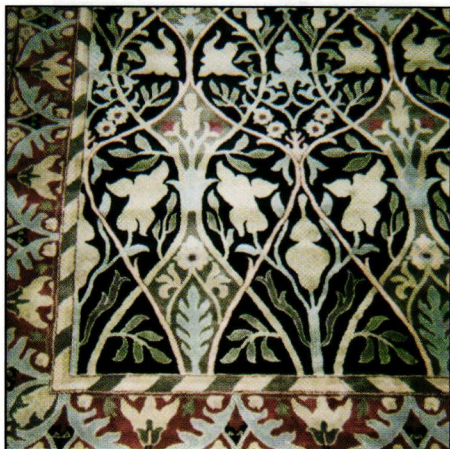
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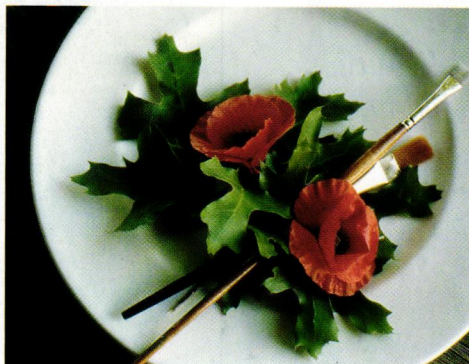
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Circle no. 174



*"Isn't she that Island poet?" people say, "the one with the garden?" So she still is, although her cottage burned to its foundation and her hotel has been gone almost a century.*

proached the Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association, who joined with the Portsmouth Athenaeum to make it happen. The resulting exhibition pulls together painted china, illustrated books, sketchbooks, and watercolor landscapes. The book—*One Woman's Work*, edited by Sharon Paiva Stephan—offers five essays by Thaxter scholars that explain her "kaleidoscopic appeal," from the imaginative child growing up on a remote lighthouse island; to distracted mother and beset caregiver; to cottage-salon hostess and businesswoman; to artist, journalist, naturalist and gardener; to literary celebrity.

Thaxter's own book is direct, achingly poignant and then again funny: "These are the most anxious times on account of the slugs. Now, every morning when I rise I go at once into the garden at four o'clock and make a business of slaughtering them till half past five, when I stop for breakfast." [The 1988 (etc.) re-issue includes the Hassam paintings.]

A garden does not often survive the lover who made it. The hotel and the Thaxter cottage burned to the ground in 1914. The island became a Navy target range and then

a seagull rookery. Poison ivy and scrub vegetation took over. Her garden was but a memory in the pages of her little book and in Hassam's paintings (at the Smithsonian), until it was re-created from her plans during the 1980s.

*The dear flowers! Summer after summer they return to me, always young and fresh and beautiful; but so many of the friends who have watched them and loved them with me are gone, and they return no more. . . .*

*Into silence! How deep, how unbroken is that silence! But because of tender memories of loving eyes that see them no more, my flowers are yet more beloved and tenderly cherished.*

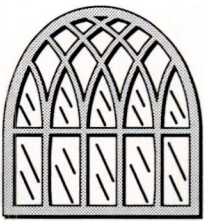
Celia died in the full of summer, just months after publication of her garden book, at age 59. ✦

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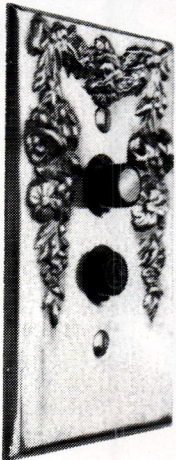


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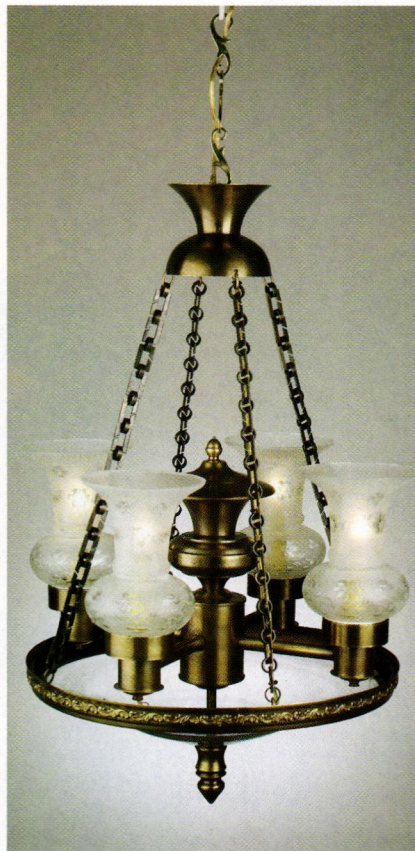
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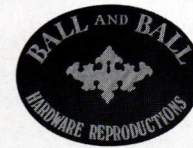


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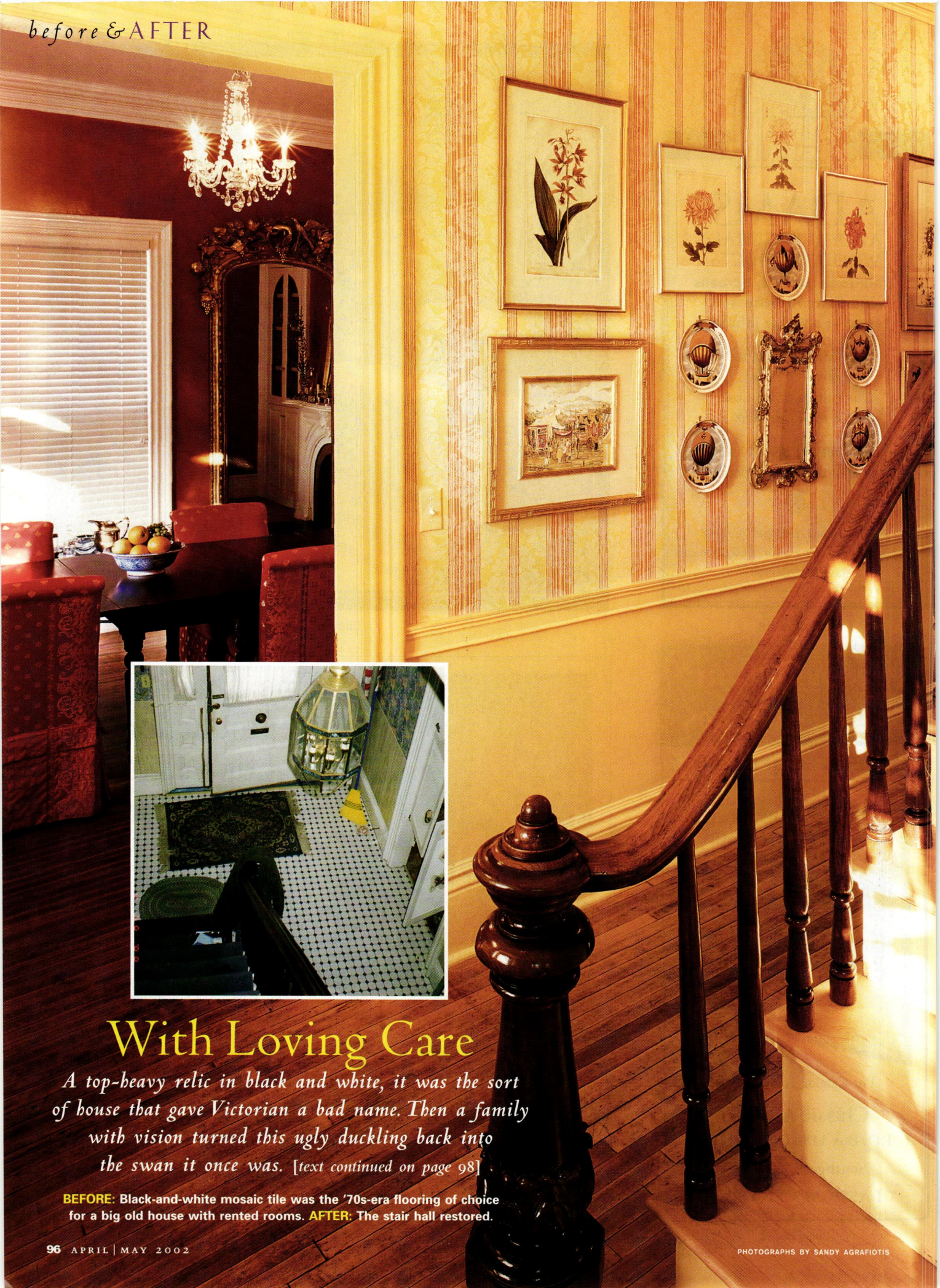
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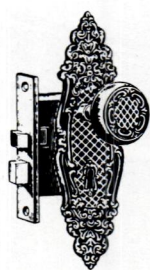
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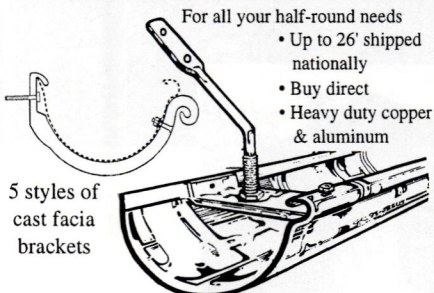
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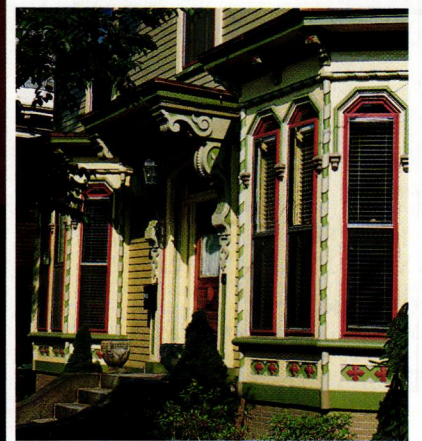
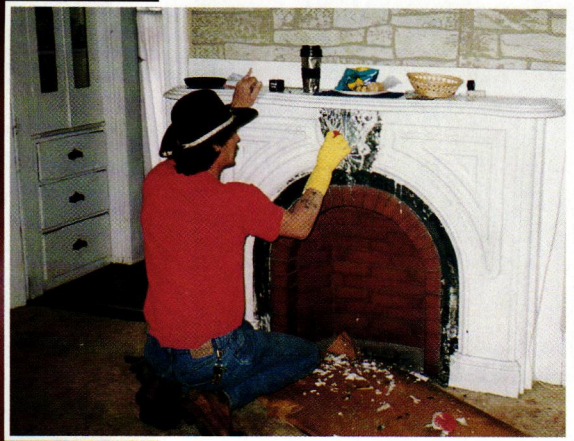
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**Under the paint, a marble mantel—no! it's soapstone, and so was repainted with the woodwork. AFTER:** The 1875 Second Empire house came back to life beautifully with a balanced, period-inspired, polychrome paint job. **BEFORE:** The mansard house in its days of black and white anonymity.

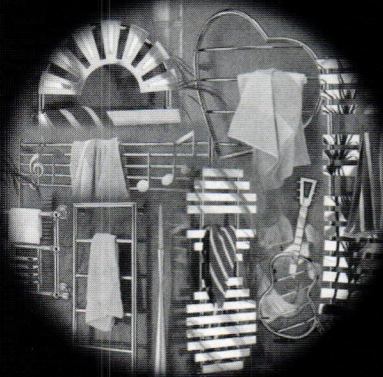
**M**ANSARD-ROOFED Second Empire houses are not uncommon in Portland, Maine. Bold and stylish, they conferred status upon the Victorian sea captains and merchants who built them. A hundred years later, though, many had become rundown. They were big and they were old, slapped with white paint as if in shame. Despite its unfortunate exterior colors—black shutters, black roof, black trim and stark white siding—this particular house had had benign owners who left bay windows and woodwork intact. When Peder and Jill Knoth bought it several years ago, it was ripe for restoration.

“Jill did all the colors—she was amazing,” boasts Peder, a general contractor and serial restorer. “She picked six or eight, just like that, and I went out to buy quarts. We put ‘em up; I think maybe she just switched two colors around, that was it. I couldn’t believe she had it down so fast.” Jill was fearless, choosing colors not from a pre-selected line but off the Pratt & Lambert chart. The reddish accent color was matched to pansies on a magazine cover.

Their restorations have been collabora-  
*[continued on page 100]*



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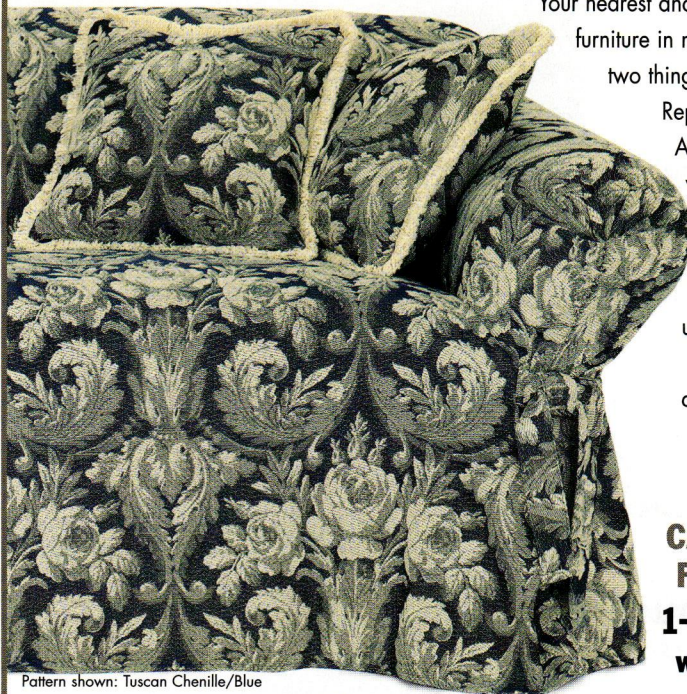


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tive. "I do the physical work, I'm the mechanical one," Peder explains. "She studied art history."

JILL AND PEDER, who are raising four children, got good results together inside, too. Wiring and plumbing are new. Worn and broken pine stair treads were replaced with maple to match flooring that had been laid throughout the house decades ago. The color sense is personal and comforting; the start of a good collection of antique lighting, mirrors, and furniture is evident. Perhaps the most memorable rooms in this house belong to the children. (Those rooms, all with paint decoration, appear in the next issue.)

The Knoths restored this house over a period of seven months—before they moved into it. "We lived in the [unrestored] house the first time," Peder explains, "and I didn't finish it until it came time to sell. Never again, Jill said." The family has recently purchased an 1894 brick Queen Anne house that Jill had coveted for years, where they intend to finally settle in. "The good thing about moving is that each house has been more customized for our needs," Peder says. "Old houses are wonderfully adaptable for families." ✦

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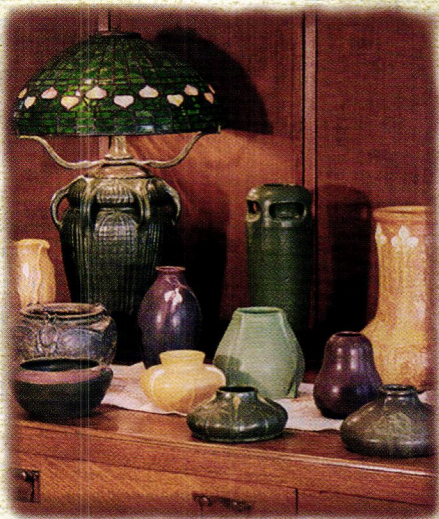
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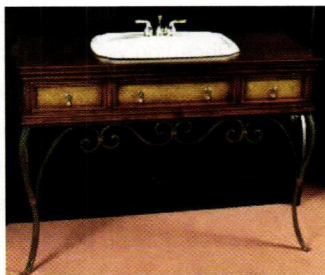
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# ask THE EDITORS

## Got Milk Paint?

I've stripped layers of wallpaper and paint from the dining room paneling in my ca. 1840 farmhouse. I'm down to the last few layers, and I can't seem to remove them. Could this be milk paint?

—EDNA MILLARD  
CONCORD, N.H.

Indeed it could, says Anne Thibeau, manager of Old Fashioned Milk Paint Co., Inc., in Groton, Massachusetts. "If you're removing many layers of paint, and finally get to one last stubborn layer of paint that won't budge, it's more than likely milk paint."

Milk paint is made primarily of casein (a protein in milk), lime, and natural earth pigments and clays. A common finish on colonial and Shaker furniture, milk paint hardens over time until it becomes almost impossible to remove. You can paint over it, Thibeau says, provided you've cleaned the surface with a cleaner that won't leave a residue, such as a dilute mixture of trisodium phosphate (TSP).

## Clean First

I recently inherited some good pieces of late-19th-century furniture from my mother. Should I have them refinished, or simply cleaned?

—CAITLIN CAROTHERS  
FAIRMONT, N.C.

You'd be surprised at what a little cleaning can do. David Berman, an artisanal designer and restorer who specializes in English Arts and Crafts revivals, once witnessed the transformation of a 200-year-old



**Some types of woodwork were always meant to be painted. Stripping the paint can result in loose joints and robs the finish of its history.**

case clock at a seminar taught by furniture restoration expert Robert Mussey. The clock was black with dirt, its finish hopelessly alligatored. Using Vulpex, a conservator's soap, Mussey cleaned the clock in just a few minutes. "It looked like he took 200 years off the piece, except what was left was the original finish," Berman says.

Vulpex (available from Wood Finish Supply, 800-245-5611, woodfinishsupply.com) is unique in that it is both water soluble and solvent soluble. But you can also clean furniture with any gentle soap that's solvent and fragrance free, such as Ivory Liquid. (Cleaners like Formula 409 and Fantastik contain solvents and will remove some of the finish along with the dirt.) Use a cloth dampened in a solution of

mild, soapy water, and get the moisture off the surface as quickly as you can—in less than five minutes.

Once you've cleaned the surface, protect your furniture with a thin coat of wax, such as Briwax or Minwax, applied with a soft cloth and buffed to remove any excess. "On an older piece, I like a good beeswax finish," says says James Curran of James Curran Antiques and Restoration in Lambertville, New Jersey. "It holds up well, but you have to use it sparingly—no more than once a year."

## Restore vs. Refinish

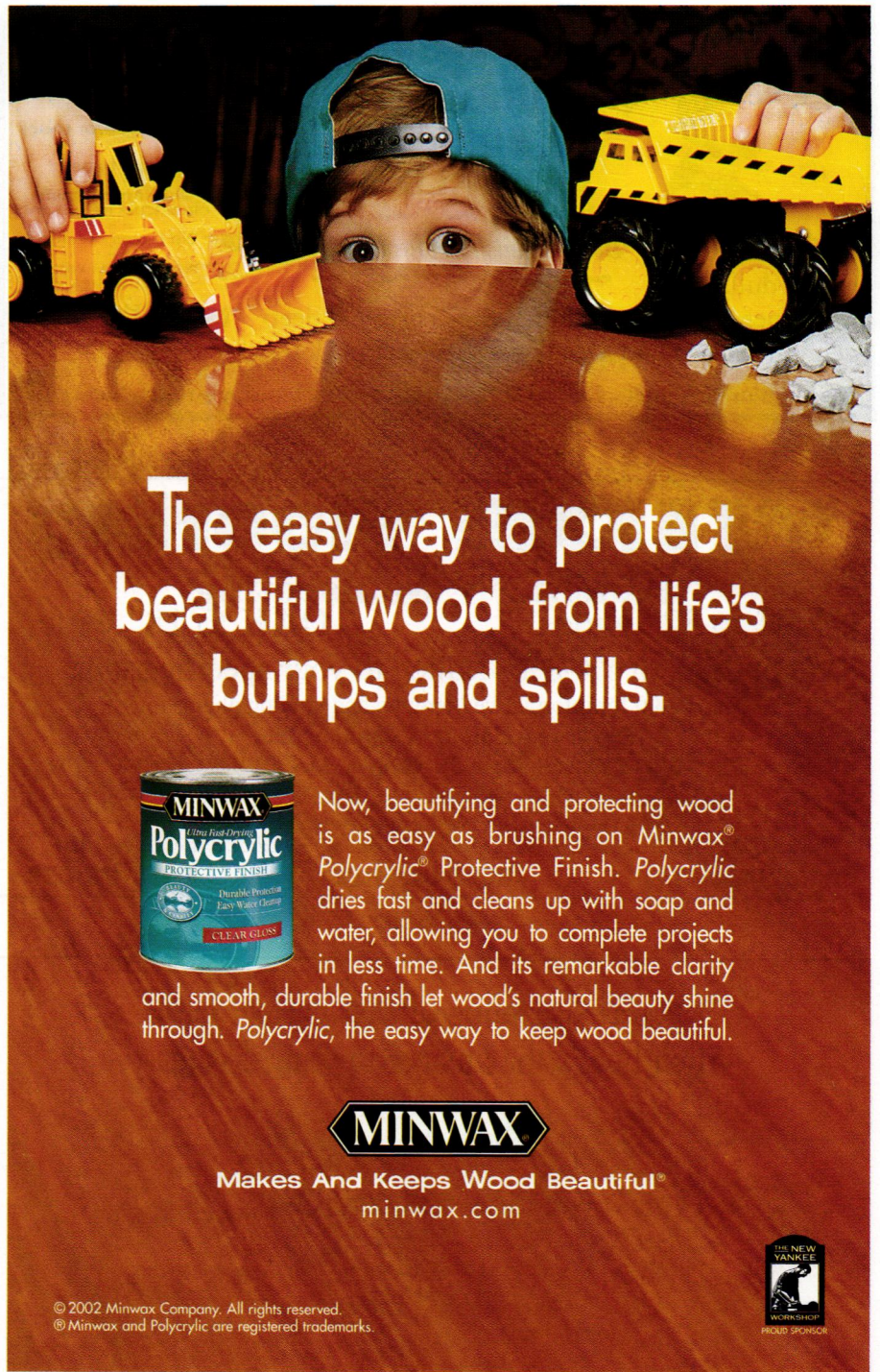
What's the difference between refinishing a piece of furniture and restoring it?

—BECKY TRAVERS  
LANSING, MICHIGAN


It's not just a matter of semantics. *Refinishing* implies removing the original finish and building up a new one in its place, while *restoring* means refreshing the existing finish.

While refinishing may be fine for flea-market finds with little value, it's not the best approach for valuable (or potentially valuable) antiques. At its best, refinishing part or all of an old family piece can give it added durability and new life: for example, refinishing only the top of an old farmhouse table to remove water stains, leaving the rest intact. At its worst, refinishing means "skinning"—as in going after the surface with a belt sander, says OHI contributing writer Dan Cooper. Not only does skinning devalue the piece, but it also robs it of the beauty that comes with age—the mellowing of the colors in the wood, the patina that may have developed, even evidence of wear.

Before you can restore a piece, you need to understand the nature of the original finish, or you risk damaging it. The most common furniture finishes are varnish, shellac, and lacquer. Varnish is an oil-based finish that cures when it comes in contact with air, says James Curran, a furniture restorer. Shellac is water-based and lacquer is solvent-based. Both harden when the liquid in them evaporates. Varnish finishes, especially old ones, can be notoriously difficult to refresh, Curran says. Shellac, familiar to many old-house owners from its use on interior woodwork, is a little more forgiving. The best approach is to find a qualified furniture restorer who can help you identify what type of finish you have, and determine the best approach for your piece of furniture. Admittedly, finding a good one can be difficult, but check with antiques dealers in your area.



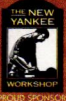
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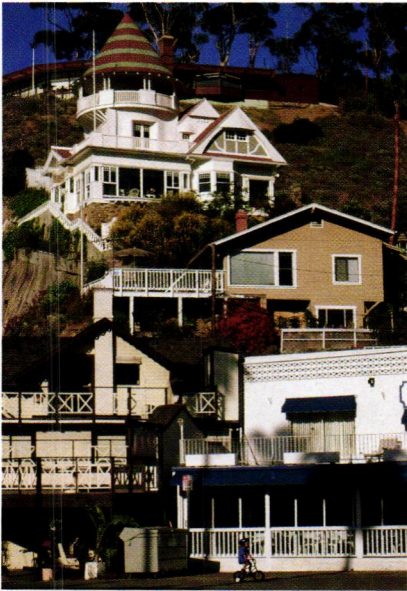
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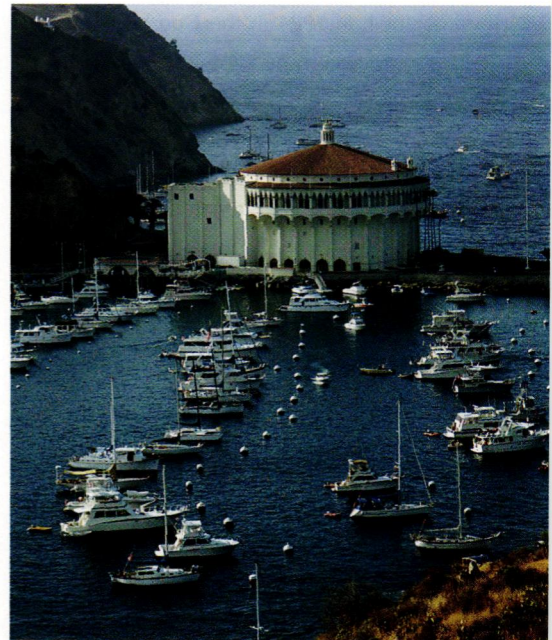




## Catalina Island BY THOMAS SHESS



**CLOCKWISE:** (from top left) Picturesque cottages climb the steep hills over Avalon Bay. An aerial view of Catalina from the north. The Catalina Casino, an Art Deco masterpiece of the 1920s. Catalina Tile adorns a fountain on Crescent Avenue.



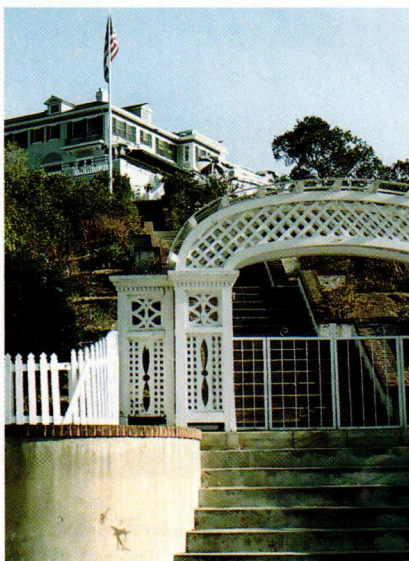
**F**ABLED Santa Catalina Island is a paradise no matter what your pleasure. For sheer location and beauty, you can't beat it: Twenty-two miles offshore of Los Angeles, Catalina is ringed with spectacular cliffs, coves, and inlets. If you sail, golf, hike, bike, ride horseback, dive, snorkel, kayak, or deep-sea fish, there's no better spot. Care for the solace of an immense nature preserve? Nearly 90 percent of the island is a protected wilderness.

Prefer the charm of quaint historic villages? Catalina has two: storybook **AVALON**, and serene **TWO HARBORS**.

Visitors to the lone populated isle of California's Channel Islands can get there only via boat, air, or a long, cold swim. Romance (in all its forms and permutations) keeps the local economy thriving. Avalon (pop. 3,500)—tucked between the sailboat-filled Avalon Bay and the ridge of hills that forms the spine of the

*Visitors to Santa Catalina Island off the Southern California coast can get there only via boat, air—or by swimming 22 miles across open ocean.*

**CLOCKWISE:** (from top right) American bison, indigenous since 1924, when fourteen were imported to make a scenic backdrop for a Hollywood film. William Wrigley Jr.'s Catalina home, now the Inn at Mt Ida. A tiled fountain at the Wrigley Memorial.



## STAY HERE

There are dozens of accommodations on Catalina. Must reading is the *Catalina Island Visitors Guide*, available from the helpful visitor's bureau (310) 510-1520, [Catalina.org](http://Catalina.org). Architecturally interesting inns include:

**INN ON MT. ADA** (310) 510-2030, Avalon. The former Wrigley mansion, built in 1921 in the Georgian Revival style, commands sweeping ocean views from its hilltop location.

**HOTEL ST. LAUREN** (800) 645-2478, ([stlauren.com](http://stlauren.com)), Avalon. A San Francisco-style Queen Anne with a waterview rooftop patio.

**GLENMORE PLAZA HOTEL** (800) 422-8254, ([catalina.com/glenmore.html](http://catalina.com/glenmore.html)), Avalon. Turreted Victorian on Island Plaza in the heart of town.

**ZANE GREY HOTEL** (800) 3-pueblo, Avalon. Once the home of Zane Grey, author of the Tarzan books, this Hopi Pueblo dwelling was built in 1926.

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island—teems with shops, restaurants, and, in August, tourists. **CRESCENT AVENUE** is the main harborside esplanade to stroll. **CHIMES TOWER**, a gift from Ada Wrigley, has been tolling the quarter hour between 8 AM and 8 PM since 1925. Most of the architecture of interest dates to the 1920s: New England-style cottages, Arts and Crafts bungalows, and scores of red-tiled Spanish Colonial Revival homes cling to the hillsides like bougainvillea. Guarding the entrance to Avalon Bay is the **CATALINA CASINO** (310-510-2414), a superb example of Southern California Art Deco design.

Not coincidentally, the Roaring Twenties was also the heyday of the prolific Catalina Clay Products

Company, which between 1927 and 1937 produced a breathtaking array of ceramic artware, tableware, and tile here. The idea to build a tile, pottery, and brick plant on the island using local clay deposits came from David Renton and chewing-gum scion William Wrigley Jr., who at the time owned all of Catalina (as well as the Chicago Cubs). The handmade tiles appear everywhere. Naturally, there's a tile festival, held at the Casino each September. The Catalina Pottery and Tile Extravaganza, sponsored by the **CATALINA ISLAND MUSEUM** (310-510-2414, [catalina.com/museum](http://catalina.com/museum)) features historic pieces from the museum's collection as well as many special and rare pieces from private collectors.

As he did in so many beautiful places, Wright built a residence—in this case, overlooking Avalon Bay on the outskirts [continued on page 108]

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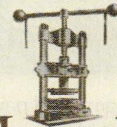
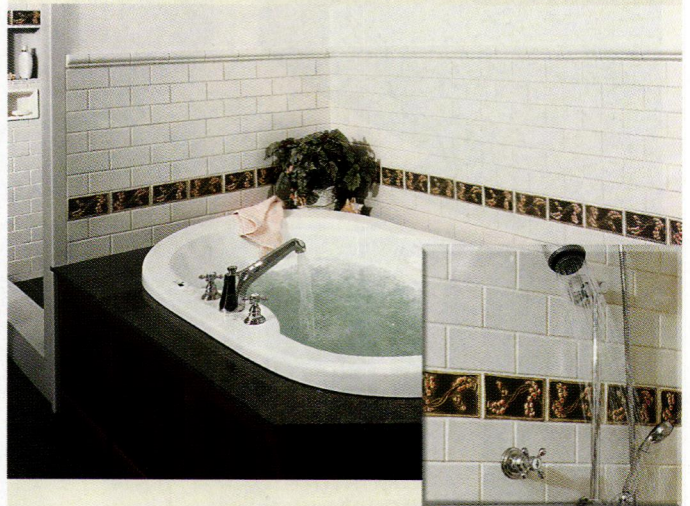


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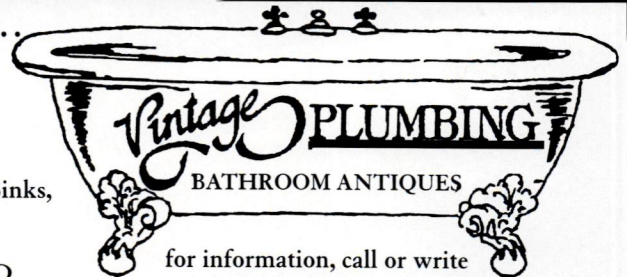
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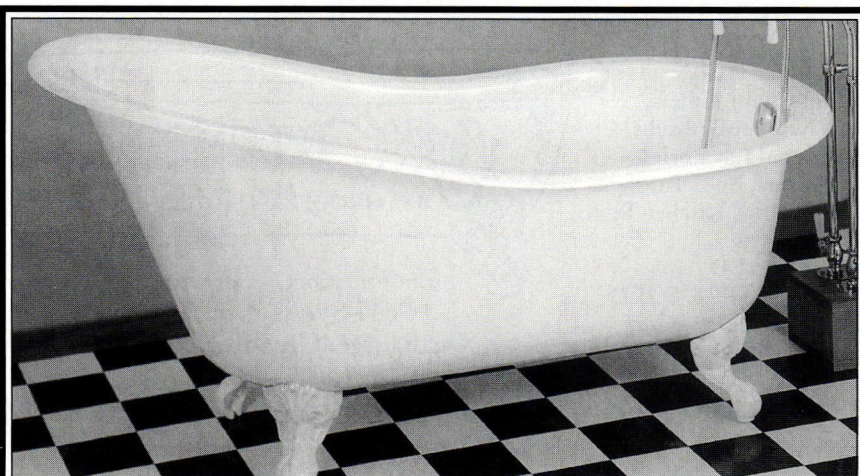
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of Avalon (now the Inn on Mt. Ida; see "Stay Here," p. 106). You may also want to visit the **WRIGLEY MEMORIAL AND BOTANICAL GARDEN** (310-510-2595), home to cacti, succulents, and rare plants native only to Catalina.

Speaking of nature, about 88 percent of the island is owned by the **SANTA CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY** (310-510-2595, [catalinaconservancy.org](http://catalinaconservancy.org)), a nonprofit dedicated to the preservation of the island and its 48 miles of coastline. A world-class destination for sailors, Catalina boasts dozens of protected coves, including the year-round safe harbor at **TWO HARBORS**. Nature lovers can hit the popular inland trails to bike, hike, or tour by horse or Humvee.

With all its charms, the only mainstream tourist activity not allowed on the 21 by 7-mile island is driving an SUV. No tourist vehicles or auto rental agencies are allowed. Not surprisingly, golf carts traverse Avalon's narrow streets like rickshaws in Shanghai.

Getting to Catalina is part of the challenge and part of the pleasure. Three boat companies serve the island with departures from Long Beach, San Pedro, Dana Point, and Newport Beach. Boat trips take from 75 to 90 minutes, depending on departure point. Airplane service to and from Catalina's Airport-in-the-Sky, located 10 miles inland, is open all year to private pilots, charters, and airlines.

If you're in no hurry, sail over on a good day. With no dallying (10 knots or so), it's fairly accurate to figure on a three-hour, one-way sail from Long Beach Harbor to Avalon. The windy passage is exhilarating for experienced sailors. ✦

THOMAS SHESS *writes from San Diego's historic North Park neighborhood.*

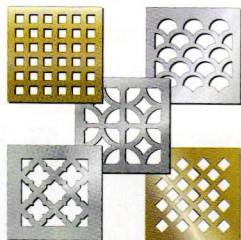
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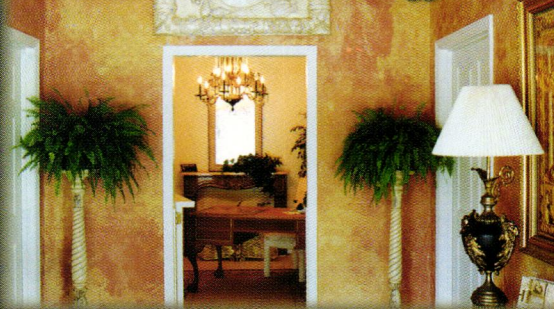
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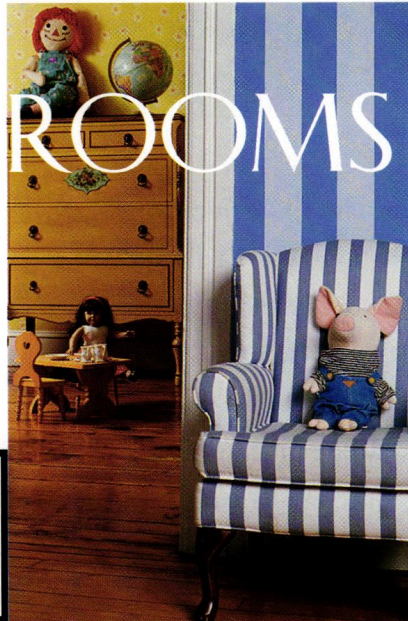
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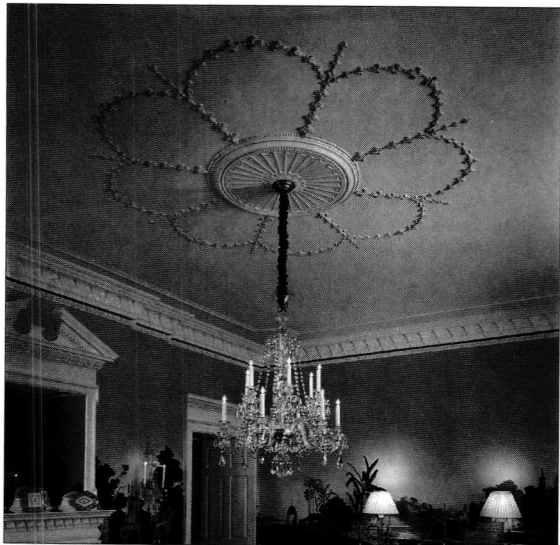
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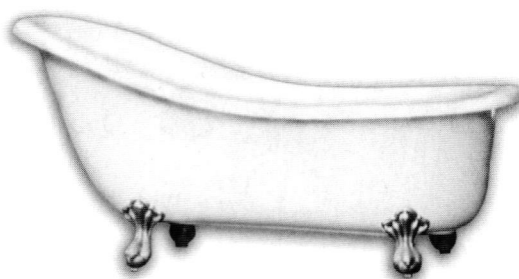


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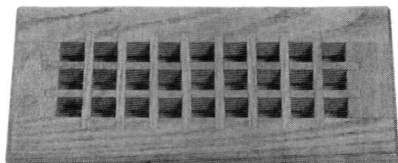
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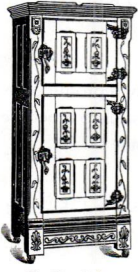
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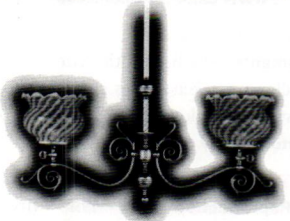
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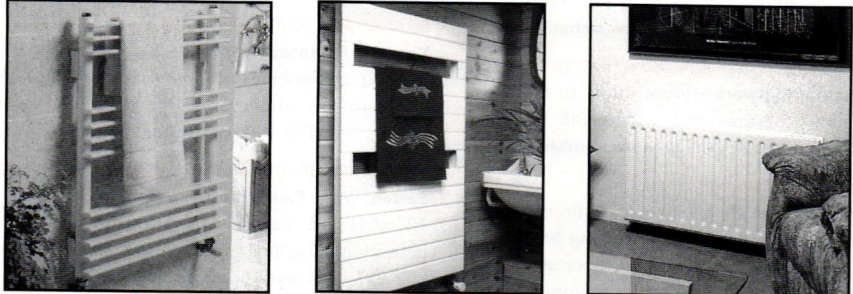


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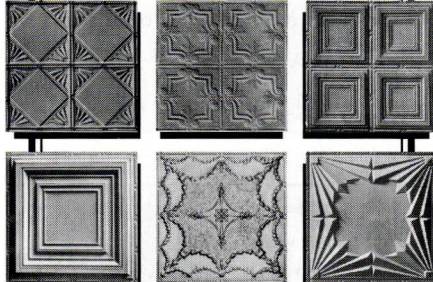
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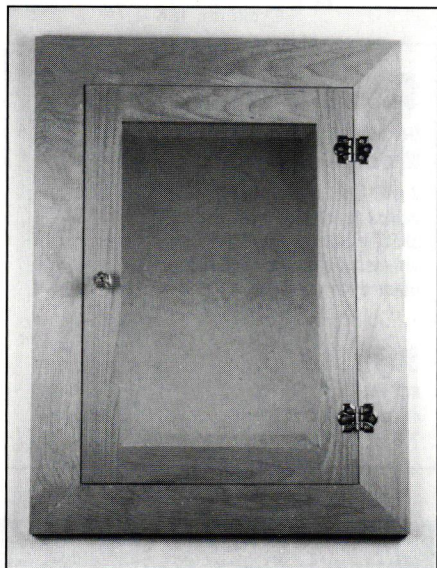


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### News & Views, pp.16-18

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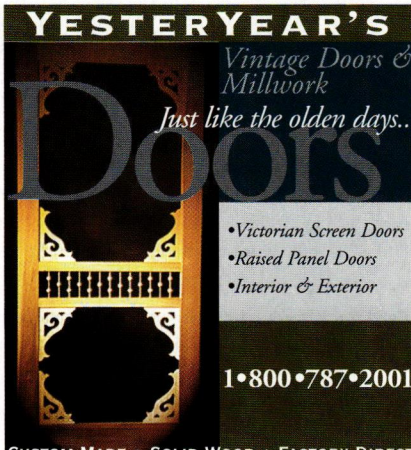
### Biedermeier Classicism pp. 34-38

An excellent reference from which several of our photos were reprinted: *The World of Biedermeier* by Linda Chase, et al., Thames & Hudson, 2001. Lavish and underpriced at \$95; from your bookstore or Internet seller.

### The Brick House pp. 59-64

The house will be the focus of a residential symposium, "Country Houses and Their Collections," May 20-24, 2002. Topics include exploration of the English tradition of the country house and development of the American country estate. Speakers will examine the complex relationship between architecture, collections, gardens, and recreation. Symposium is held at the Brick House and the Shelburne Museum; participants stay at the Inn at Shelburne Farms. • The Brick House will open for tours in June 2003; call (802) 985-3348. Check in at the Museum website, too: shelburnemuseum.org

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### Nostalgic Bathrooms pp. 65-71

p. 65 "Carp" wallpaper designed by Candace Wheeler, ca. 1885-1905; reproduction from J.R. Burrows, (800) 347-1795, burrows.com [Note that "Carp" was originally designed as a textile; it is available, as is the pattern in lace, from J.R. Burrows.] • Art Nouveau fish-motif tiles, originally designed by Wm. deMorgan, are not currently in production. Companies offering fish-motif, Art Nouveau, "subway," and custom tile include Designs in Tile (530) 926-2629, designsintile.com, and Urban Archaeology (212) 431-4646, urbanarchaeology.com. • New Victorian-style radiators are available from Burnham Corp., (717) 397-4701, burnham.com.

p. 68 "Kingfish" frieze and many other Victorian roomset papers from Bradbury and Bradbury, (707) 746-1900, bradbury.com. p. 70 Embossed Anaglypta (paper) and Lincrusta (linoleum-like) wallcoverings from Imperial Home Décor Group, (216) 464-3700, ihdg.com.

### Before & After pp. 96-98

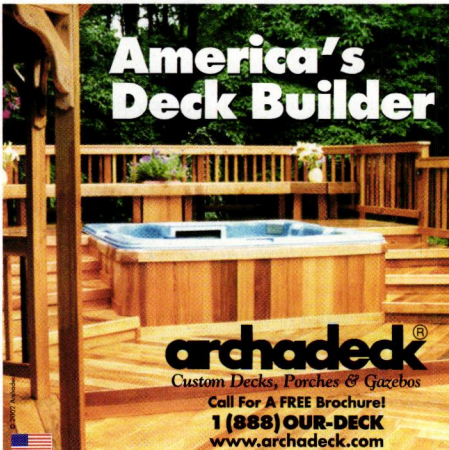
Peder Knoth Construction, Portland, Maine, (207) 450-3369.

### Ask the Editors, pp. 102

Old-Fashioned Milk Paint offers 16 colors of milk paint in powder form. (978) 448-6336, milkpaint.com. James Curran can be reached at James Curran Antiques & Restoration, (609) 397-1534.

### Motifs p. 122

"Tulip" fabric (and other Morris floral-motif papers and fabrics) to the trade from Sanderson, (212) 319-7220, sanderson-UK.com.



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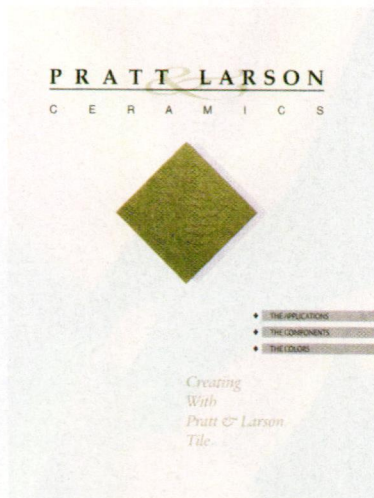
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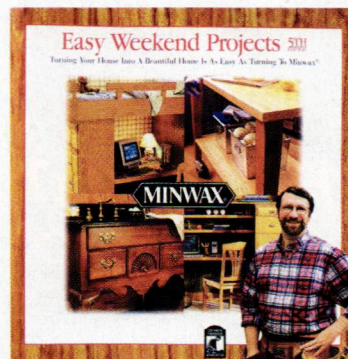


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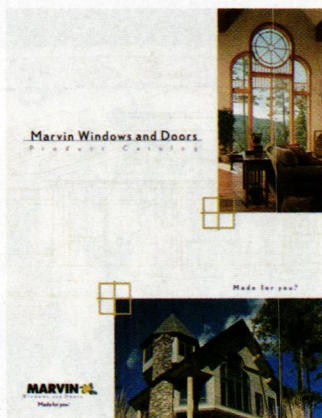
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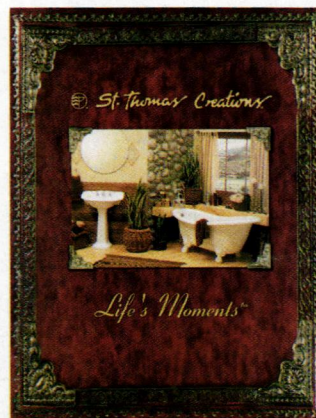
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Circle no. 96

# MOTIFS

## Tracing Tulips

**P**ERSIAN legend has it that tulips were created from the drops of a lover's blood. Forever since, the tulip has been a symbol of perfect love. Tulip motifs are found frequently in ancient Persian and also Turkish design—the tulip was the emblem of the Ottoman Empire. Exported to Holland in the seventeenth century, tulips soon seized the Dutch psyche; it's no surprise the esteemed flower ended up as their national emblem, too. ✦ The uncomplicated tulip was a popular motif throughout Colonial America. The motif was resurrected 150 years later by William Morris and the English Arts and Crafts movement, seen in materials from fabric to wallpaper, as in Morris's popular fabric "Tulip" of 1875. Curvilinear patterns of petals and stems were popularized in stained glass, textiles, and furniture in the sinuous Art Nouveau style. ✦ Tulips appear today on designer dresses, curtains, kitchen towels, pottery, and art tile—a perennial motif conveying a sense of spring, fresh simplicity, and renewal.

—BRIAN D. COLEMAN



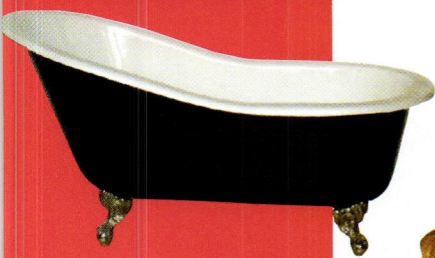
Three very different sources of tulip art: Dancing friends and tulips on an Austrian chest from 1785; a sixteenth-century Iznik tulip mug (Turkey); and, in the Morris & Co. tradition, a woven woolen fabric by Dearle ca. 1895–1900.



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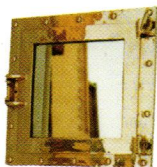
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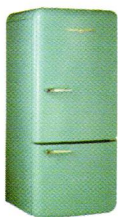
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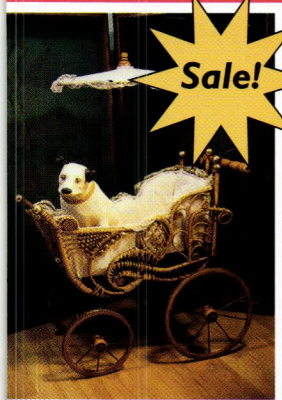


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