



Restoration and Maintenance Techniques
For The Pre-1939 House

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The Old-House Journal

*Annual Index
Inside*

Reconditioning Floors

by Bill O'Donnell

MY LATEST RESTORATION PROJECT involved reviving the finish of a parquet floor. At the time, I thought the fastest method would be to power sand and completely refinish the entire floor. I chose not to for practical rather than aesthetic reasons: I hadn't the time to sand the floor, and I didn't want to deal with the noise and dust generated by a drum sander. Also, I knew from past experience that I didn't possess the deft touch necessary for using a power sander without damaging the floor.

INSTEAD, I DECIDED to simply clean the floor and add a new finish right over what was left of the existing one. With the job now completed, it's clear that my practical solution was also correct aesthetically: Rather than appearing new and out-of-place, the floor is full of patina and warmth. It now graces an old house as only fine old woodwork can. Equally important (to me anyway), I spent less time cleaning the floor than I would have had I power sanded.

FOLLOWING are the procedures to use when you want to gently revive your floor's finish.

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In the next issue...
AN EXPANDED OHJ!

Imagine Walking Barefoot!

*Sharing Temporary Burnout
with a Sympathetic Audience*

I LONG FOR a normal family life. I want to live in the kind of house where you can get on with the day-to-day stuff of living, a house that's a backdrop for all the usual activities (you know, like cooking and watching television).

TAKE LAST WEEKEND. Jonathan and I went down to see Mom and Dad's new house. (It's nice: a shingled ranch with lots of windows looking out at the woods that practically come right up to the house.) Mom kept apologizing, "Sorry the place is so disorganized, kids; we just moved in on Wednesday." This was Saturday -- of the same week -- and would you believe you could get out of bed and sleepily pad around barefoot?! Wall-to-wall carpeting! A clean tile floor in the bathroom! I thought I'd die of cozies.

(I'VE BEEN LIVING in my aqua-marine cave for 15 months and you still can't go barefoot.)

THEIR HOUSE didn't demand to be the center of attention all weekend. The double-glazed Anderson windows kept us warm, the kitchen functioned, there was no dust. There were no holes in the walls, no slop-buckets of paint stripper.

MOM AND DAD had just moved all their belongings into this six-year-old house, and already it was a home.

BACK IN Brooklyn, it all came clear: what's been nagging me is not having a home. True, I own a house. But I live on a job site.

SINCE THAT REALIZATION, I've become obsessed with home-less thoughts. The other day I was on the phone, holding for someone, and I glanced at a mail-order catalog on my desk. Hey, LOOK AT THAT: The people on the cover are sitting on the floor, wearing silk pajamas, playing Trivial

Pursuit! Imagine sitting on the floor! (Imagine having nothing else to do at night!)

MAYBE YOU'RE WONDERING about the state of our floors. They're going to be great some day, even better than wall-to-wall, but for months the parquet has been covered with kraft paper, onto which have fallen plaster chunks and all sorts of toxic dust. The kitchen floor is a total gross-out: multiple layers of old linoleum and vinyl, cracked and peeling and dulled to a medium grey-olive. The layers are so porous that if we spill milk on the floor and go get a paper towel, when we turn back the milk is gone.

SOMETIMES I don't know whether to be proud of our fortitude or ashamed of our lifestyle. Last week, for instance, a photographer came to get some shots of Clem and me in a "before" setting -- my house, naturally. The photographer showed genuine interest in the evidence being uncovered by our scraping. The more fascinated he seemed, the more excited I got about showing him all the neat stuff. I opened up to a non-initiate, who just maybe didn't think this was a disgusting way to live.

THEN CAME his killer question: "So where are you living while all this is going on?"

THIS LIMBO LIFESTYLE -- stacked furniture, eating pizza because you can't face the kitchen -- isn't as much of a hoot as it was the first time around.

IF MY ONLY WISH were for a home, plain and simple (and clean), there certainly would be easier ways to go about it. But for me, it just had to be an old house -- and once the adventure has begun, you can't escape. During the adventure, the house isn't a backdrop for the other activities in your life, it is the activity in your life.

IN THE MEANTIME, we've decided to finish one room (the bedroom). Really finish it, right down to a three-color paint job and, yes, a carpet. It's like playing tag: The bedroom'll be a safe "home base," where the rest of the house can't get me.

Patricia Poore



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Old-House Living ...

CAVEAT EMPTOR

The Pitfalls of Restoration in the Big City

by Greg Jackson, Boston

SO, YOU'VE DECIDED to buy an old house and fix it up. You and your mate have been doing very well in your respective careers; you're hopscoching into higher tax brackets and need a good tax shelter. You both have IRAs and some safe stocks. But what you really want is something you can enjoy as it escalates in value, something into which you can channel your creative energies.

YOU TRY NEVER to miss This Old House. But what your own friends are doing with their old houses makes the work you see on television pale by comparison. Just last week, for example, you went to Sue and Alan's . . . what they've done in just a few years is unbelievable. They've created an elegance in living you thought no longer existed.

BUT WHAT REALLY impressed you is the fond way in which Sue and Alan spoke of their house. They acted as if it were a living, breathing member of the family rather than a heap of bricks and mortar. Their feelings were evident from the way they stroked the wainscoting in the dining room and explained the long process by which Alan had removed layers of paint from the walnut. And from the way Sue reverently showed you where the original owner had scratched her initials and the date -- 1/29/95 -- with her diamond on the windowpane in the master bedroom. And the way they displayed the scrapbook of before and after pictures of each room in the house.

TO RETURN TO the white walls and exposed bricks of your small apartment leaves you depressed and claustrophobic for days. You're green with envy every time you remember the 12-foot ceilings, the ornate mantels, and the rich wallcoverings. You read the real estate section of the Sunday paper even before you read "Parade." You begin to suggest to your partner that "fixing up our own place" would be just the thing to restore some of the magic that has gone out of your relationship. You make a few calls and find several realtors who have "just the thing for you."

IF, DURING A TIME of diminished mental capacity, your spouse agrees to buy an old house, make sure he thinks he made the decision for himself. The first rule of restoration is to convince your mate that it was his idea in the first place. The ability to scream, "It was your idea to buy this stupid house!" will see you through many difficult times.

THIS RULE IS particularly helpful when a neighbor calls to say that he has just seen the 100-pound hatch go sailing off the roof in

high wind. It also comes in handy when the plumber doesn't show up to reconnect the heating pipes by Labor Day, or by Columbus Day, or by Thanksgiving. And when the city threatens to shut off the hot water because the previous owner didn't pay the bill. You get the point. Being able to blame someone else when something dreadful happens is very therapeutic.



Greg Jackson's corner rowhouse in Boston, Massachusetts.



Top left: The work begins. Top right: Dental pick in hand, Greg removes paint from ornate plaster instead of cooking dinner. Bottom left: Atop makeshift scaffolding, Greg applies a new coat of paint.



AND DREADFUL THINGS do happen. If you think nothing could be more frightening than the shower scene in "Psycho," you haven't gotten a phone call from a tenant, informing you that firemen are removing your tenants from the house with a cherrypicker. And if you think nothing can be more frustrating than dealing with an amoral landlord, you've never stood in housing court and heard the judge dismiss your case against a tenant who refuses to move out of your house so you can move in, and who refuses to pay his rent in the meantime. This tenant has told the judge, through an interpreter, that he is virtually destitute and unable to speak or understand English. This same tenant operates a business, owns an apartment building, and drives an El Dorado. He also displays an amazing ability to speak English outside the courtroom, calling you every vile name in the language. To add insult to injury, his octogenarian mother spits at you when you meet in the hallway.

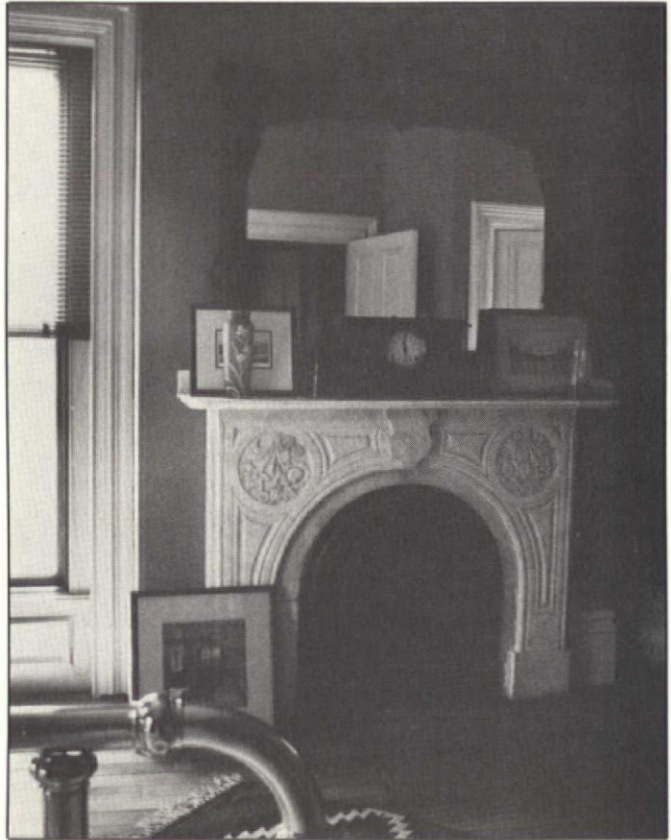
IT WOULD BE IMPRUDENT to tell the judge what you think of his idea of justice and you most certainly cannot trade spit for spit with an 85-year-old woman. However, being able to shout, "Why did you ever suggest we buy this house in the first place?" at your partner provides no small comfort.

THE SATISFACTION of pointing a finger is only one of the many things you must be aware of before you buy a "neglected Victorian queen" or that "diamond in the rough," euphemisms employed by realtors to describe inner-city wrecks. One very important rule to remember is never to believe anyone who says, "Restoring an old house is fun." Restoring an old house is not fun unless the only active role you're required to play is to write checks from a very fat bank account. If you are financially able to become the primary source of income for a dozen or so skilled craftsmen for the next two or three years, then, by all means, buy a house that has "great potential." If, however, your bank account barely enables you to be the primary source of income for yourself, buy a condo.

A MEAGER BANK ACCOUNT requires that you do the work of a dozen or so skilled craftsmen for the next nine or ten years. Learning plastering, roofing, and electrical work is not fun . . . particularly if you avoided shop class like the plague in high school. Learning to route waste pipes and lay electrical systems will be no more appealing to you as an adult than it was when you were a teenager.

IF, IN THE PAST, you enjoyed spending a weekend painting your apartment, good for you. But spending months removing other people's paint from fireplaces, oak staircases, and parquet floors will not provide you with the same sense of satisfaction. It's true that Michelangelo lay flat on his back for years, paintbrush in hand, working on a ceiling. But, in the end, he had the Sistine Chapel to show for his efforts. After you've lain on your back for months, using dental tools to remove lead paint from an ornately-plastered ceiling, you will have a damned nice ceiling under which to recuperate from lead poisoning. However, it is doubtful that busloads of tourists from all over the world will descend upon your house to see your ceiling.

LIVING IN A RESTORED house is fun. Therefore arrange to live in someone else's restored house while you're working on your own. It would be very difficult to overemphasize the despair generated by living in a house which has a fine layer of plaster dust over everything. Few people enjoy shaking fine powder from their pillows each night or blowing dust out of the bristles of their toothbrushes in the morning. Sitting down to dinner among saws, ladders, and paint brushes soaking in turpentine is unappetizing and demoralizing. To be able to leave the chaos of construction behind you at the end of the work day is invaluable to mental well-being.

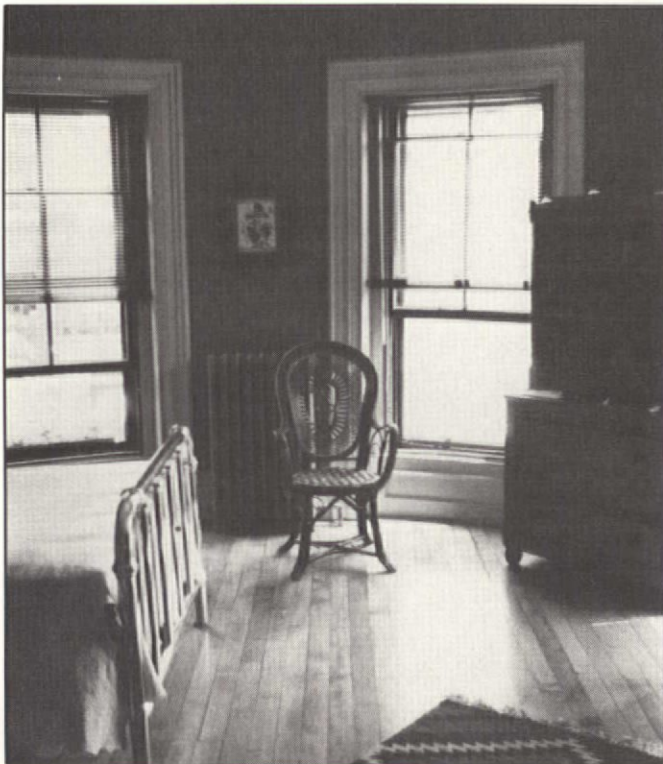


Although it took many hours of hard work to remove paint from this carved mantel, the result was worth the effort.

BEFORE YOU BUY that house with all the detail, you must understand the formula for determining how much time each task will take and how much it will cost. The arithmetic is quite simple. After you decide the absolute maximum amount of time a job should take, multiply this number by two and add three months. This new figure will be fairly accurate if all goes well. To determine how much a project will cost, multiply the absolute maximum you think it should cost by three. This amount will be close if you cut out all extras and allow for inflation.

YOU MUST DETERMINE exactly what standards of workmanship your partner demands in advance, because, after you buy, it will be too late. A good test is to gauge his or her reaction to The Old-House Journal. If he or she scoffs at the techniques of the OHJ editors and accuses them of being hacks and renovators, then, for the sake of your sanity, put your foot down and insist on buying that maintenance-free condo. Otherwise, you'll be a slave to a master of perfection. If your partner also harbors a secret desire to have your house profiled in Architectural Digest magazine someday, beware, beware.

IF NOTHING I'VE SAID thus far has deterred you from your dream of restoring an old house in the city, let's talk about the neighborhoods in which old houses are most often found. There's a very good reason why so many inner-city houses are in disrepair. Poor people have owned these houses ever since the affluent fled to the suburbs decades ago. They've struggled to keep the houses from collapsing, but few have been successful.



At long last — a bedroom free of plaster dust!



Though it's not the Sistine Chapel, Greg is very proud of his parlor and the ceiling he painted himself.

ANYONE WHO WOULD BUY a house in one of these neighborhoods by choice, not necessity, is not poor -- at least not in the beginning. You need not feel guilty about being middle-class among the poor. Once you've bought your house and take on the struggle to keep it from collapsing, you'll soon become a poor person yourself. Being a poor person among other poor people will probably be the only way you'll feel at home in your new neighborhood. It's not unlikely that you will be the only person of your race, ethnicity, educational background, and possibly sexual preference on your block. This can be culturally enriching if you enjoy new experiences.

IF YOU FEEL the slightest reluctance to insist politely but firmly that your stoop can no longer be used for drug trafficking, you should look elsewhere for a home. You must also be able to turn a deaf ear to the lady who tearfully explains that removing an old mattress from your backyard will deprive her of her livelihood. I won't suggest you should be heartless enough to kick the homeless from your foyer on nights when the temperature is sub-zero, but you must insist they leave long enough to answer nature's call.

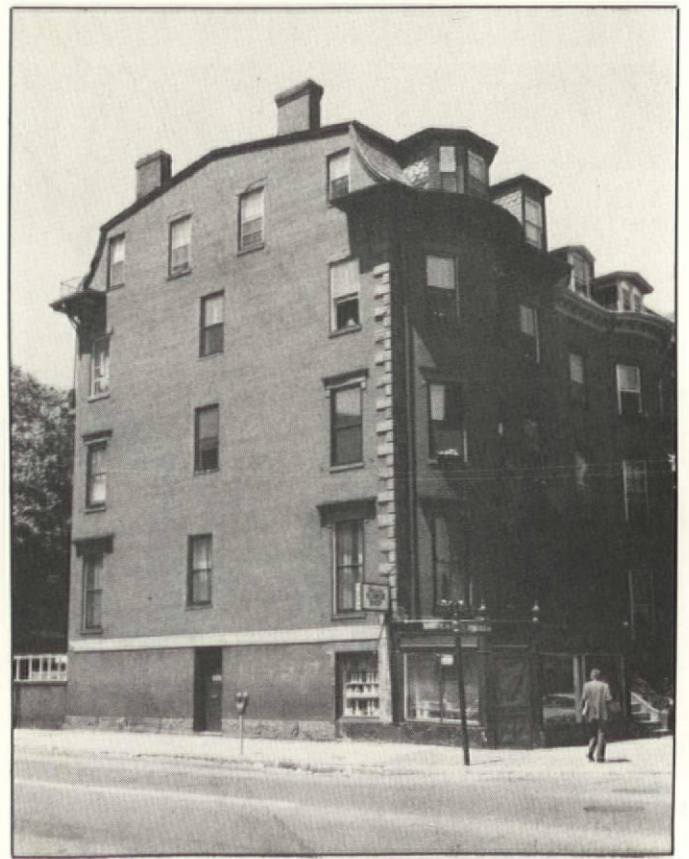
YOUR NEIGHBORS have been trying to get the hell out of the area for years, so don't be surprised that they think you're crazy to move in. This attitude will also be prevalent among your friends and family. However, they will show less tact in expressing their opinions. Be prepared to hear, over and over again, "You moved WHERE!?!". Don't be offended when no one comes to visit you. Your parents will never set foot in your neighborhood, much less your house. Your home will be inaccessible to friends who don't own cars. How can you let them walk alone from the subway?

THE FEW FRIENDS who do visit will leave firmly convinced you've gone off the deep end. They will never be able to understand why you have hours to devote to scraping paint from egg-and-dart moulding, but no time at all to tighten the windows to keep out the cold air. They'll be equally puzzled that you bought new chandeliers but you're not concerned at all that your stove has only one working burner. How can they understand that you're too busy stripping paint-encrusted plaster to cook?

COOKING WILL BE only one of many activities that you no longer have time for. Reading will be limited to the backs of paint cans. Your gym membership need not be renewed -- who needs aerobics after wrestling with scaffolding? There will be no winter trips to Jamaica; the cost of eight days in Negril will almost pay for a new roof.

WHY, IN THE LIGHT of such harsh realities, do people buy and restore houses in transitional neighborhoods? Several reasons come to mind. Some of us are masochists who enjoy the pain of it all. Many of us are martyrs: We present our friends only with the finished product, never relating the blood, sweat, and tears we've put into the restoration.

ALSO, RESTORING an old house tests your personal mettle as well as the mettle of your relationship. If your relationship can withstand the rigors of restoration, then it is truly made in heaven. And someday, at long last, the house will be completely restored, right down to the last walnut baluster and brass hinge. Then, if you don't hit your mate over the head with an andiron when he or she says, "Okay, now let's sell it and buy another one," you'll be nominated for canonization. 🏠

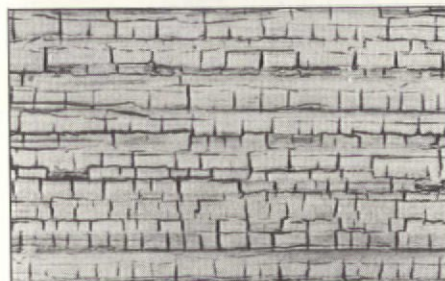


If you're working on an old wood house, you're eventually going to have to do some stripping outside. Maybe it's just a door or a few porch balusters that need the paint taken off. But if every clapboard is thick with alligatored paint, how would you proceed? Here we explain *when* to strip and *how* to do it.

by Patricia Poore



Crazed, alligatored, and blistering paint.



Stripping Paint from Exterior Wood

TAKING PAINT off exterior masonry is an all-or-nothing proposition -- you strip all the paint off to expose the masonry. Not so with exterior wood. Even when you intend to repaint, old paint may have to be stripped off in some areas. And the methods and materials for stripping wood are somewhat different from those used to strip masonry.

BEFORE YOU PICK a stripping method, take a good look at all the parts of the building. What's the problem, and what is the extent of paint failure? Inspect to determine:

- What is the underlying material? If you own a simple clapboarded farmhouse, it isn't hard to tell which parts are made of wood. But complex late Victorian or early 20th century buildings can fool you. Some elements may actually be made of stucco, metal, or terracotta. These would require different stripping methods.
- What kinds of paint failure exist in various areas? Many places won't require stripping. The siding may be fine (just dirty). Yet the eaves may be peeling and the balusters on the porch caked with alligatored paint. An essentially sound but worn painted surface needs only washing and a topcoat. Failure of the top layers calls for limited paint removal before repainting. Only substantial failure throughout paint layers or down to the wood calls for total paint removal.

Limited Removal

A COMMON KIND of paint failure is intercoat peeling, where layers on top are peeling away from paint underneath. This condition is usually caused by bad preparation in the past coming back to haunt you: Maybe paint was laid on a dirty surface and now the bond

is failing. It can also be caused by incompatibility of paint types. You don't necessarily have to strip to bare wood in these cases. Just scrape the surface to sound paint; wash it thoroughly to remove dirt and paint chalking; wipe it dry; and sand it lightly. Prime the area with an oil or alkyd exterior primer.

CRAZING OR CRACKING of the upper layers of paint should be taken care of now, as it will worsen to alligatoring: deep cracking down to bare wood. And that condition would call for complete removal. Sand the surface by hand or mechanically, just down to sound paint.

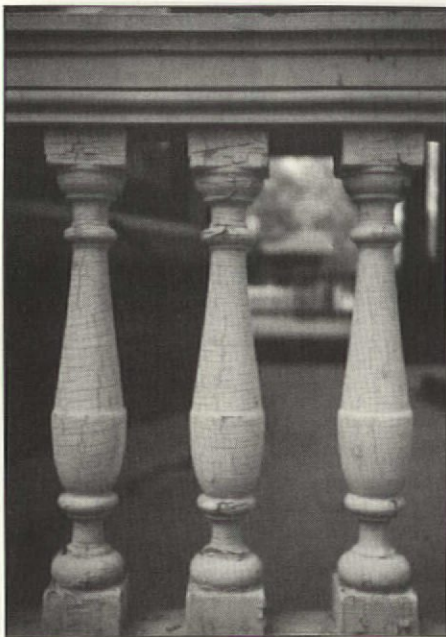
Down to Bare Wood

HOW DO YOU KNOW if you need to totally strip the paint? Don't count paint layers; look for obvious signs of failure and "ugliness." Is the paint peeling, splitting, alligatoring, flaking, chipping, blistering, and loose? Are all the edges and details blurred and fat?

WHERE PAINT IS PEELING down to bare wood, a moisture problem is probably to blame. Find the cause and correct it or the wall will peel again. Moisture may be coming from a humid interior if you've tightened the house but the walls have no vapor barrier. It may be coming from outside because of rain splashback, inadequate or clogged gutters, or a roof leak.

EVEN IF paint problems -- here and there or all over -- require stripping the paint down to bare wood, you may not have to strip the whole house. That's a job to avoid if you can.

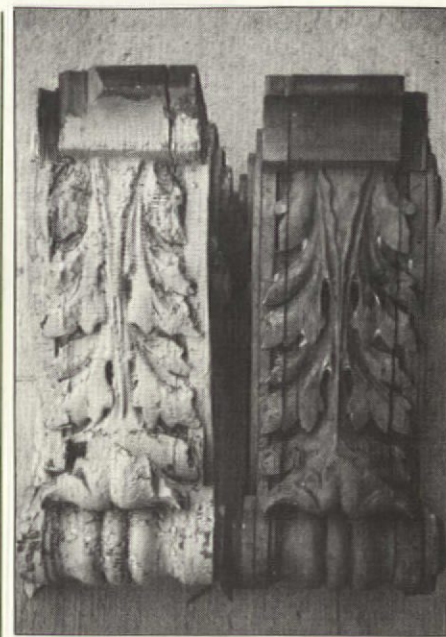
IF DOORS, shutters, or windows are inoperable because of a thick paint buildup, strip only those areas down to bare wood. If new wood is



Thick, alligatored paint build-up on these porch balusters must be removed before repainting.



Stripping with chemicals removed the paint without damage.



Stripping the bracket not only uncovered crisp detail, but lets you see better for repairs.

being pieced in and will be painted, the area surrounding the patch has to be stripped so that there will be a smooth transition between the old and the new.

HINT: Most exterior trim should be stripped in place. Shutters are usually an exception, because they're easy to remove and a pain to strip -- dip them. Doors and other trim pieces may be an exception, but think twice: Will you really save time? You have to disassemble or detach the pieces, transport them, pick them up, and re-install.

Biting the Bullet

IF THE PAINT BUILD-UP is extreme and the problems past simple scraping, don't deny the inevitable. Painting over problems is doomed to failure and will cost extra in the long run. At this point, you'll just have to realize that it's not a paint job you have on your hands. You have a major exterior restoration coming up. That happens every 75 or 100 years, and you pulled the short straw. It will be time-consuming and expensive, but once it's done, the house will look a lot better and the next paint job will be a breeze.

IF IT TURNS OUT that you do have to totally strip most of the exterior, there is an alternative to the mess and expense of doing it all at once. As paint fails, it will "self-strip" a little at a time. Why not scrape, prime, and paint only the bad areas each spring? Or, starting with the worst side, strip (then prime and paint) just one side of the house each year for the next four years. As long as you prime and paint bare spots, nothing bad will happen if you don't do the whole job at once.

IN THE MEANTIME, will the house look like hell? Only up close. Remember: It's an old house and maintenance is a process. Do the

worst side or the worst patches; next paint job, do others. Whenever you can get away with it, do only the problem areas. But wherever you do strip, do it right. Take it down to a sound substrate, then sand it, prime it, and paint it.

IF EXTREME PAINT FAILURE exists all over the exterior, you may prefer to strip it all at once. Stripping a large house in one season is going to require a crew; you'll probably hire a contractor. Various stripping methods are described in the following pages.

REMOVING ALL THE PAINT from an old house is not well regarded these days. Technologists are wary of techniques such as chemical stripping and sandblasting because of the irreversible damage they can cause. Preservationists, including many decision-makers in the SHPO and National Register offices, condemn the like-new appearance of a stripped house as well as the removal of historic coatings.

WHEN YOU STRIP an old house clean, you're making it impossible for anyone in the future to investigate original paint colors or anything else about the decorative history of the exterior. Always leave inconspicuous areas unstripped for future reference -- on the siding, on the porch ceiling, on the window trim. Mark each sample off or cover it with a metal plate. Don't add any more paint to it.

The D-I-Y Decision

A CAUTION for do-it-yourselfers: Exterior stripping can become unmanageable. It's a different animal from interior stripping. Factor in the greater expanses to cover, the heights, the changing weather and seasons. You can get hurt, too: The tools are heavy and sharp, the old paint contains lead, and much of the work is done two or three storeys above the ground.

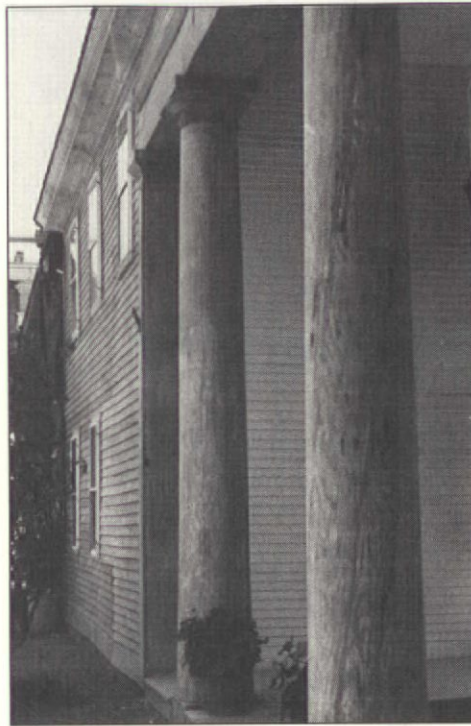
STRIPPING SAFETY

Always wear goggles. Experience has probably taught you that flying paint chips are very sharp. And it's hard to describe the panic you feel as you run to a sink, stripper in your eye.

Have fire extinguishers and plenty of water near each worker. The water can be used for chemical spills as well as to put out fires.

Wear rubber gloves with chemicals, heavy work gloves with heat.

Tidy up often. Know where things are. Don't track sludge around. Watch for slippery drips, especially on ladders and scaffolds.



Contrast the picture at left with the charring committed by a blow-torch, above.

Six exterior stripping formula was used to strip paint from wood columns on a 1794 Vermont house.

IF YOU'RE FUSSY, doing it yourself may be the only way to get it done right. But keep in mind that contractors already have experience, skill, materials, equipment, scaffolding -- and they can better estimate the time needed. The right contractors will even know about restrictions and waste disposal.

HINT: If you're doing the whole job without a big crew, do just one side of the house at a time. Strip, prime, and paint before going on to the next side. Two good reasons: (1) You don't have to move the scaffold back and forth; (2) You get the psychological reward of seeing something finished before proceeding with still more grunt work.

Tried-and-True Stripping Methods

THE MOST COMMON METHODS for exterior-paint removal aren't too different from those you use to strip interior woodwork. But the tools are bigger, heavier, and faster. The familiar methods described below are what most homeowners use. In fact, the simple, common techniques are used even by painting contractors.

ABRASIVE METHODS: These can be manual (scraping and sanding) or mechanical. Sometimes a very sharp, wide scraper can be used to remove paint to bare wood, but most often abrasive methods are used to remove only the loose paint. Use an orbital sander for finishing or smoothing. (It's good for feathering the edges between stripped wood and surrounding paint layers.) A belt sander works fast, so it can cause damage fast. It should be used by a skilled operator.

SAFETY HAZARDS associated with abrasive methods are eye damage and inhalation or ingestion of dust that contains lead and other toxins. You should always wear a dust mask and goggles when sanding.

HINT: When hand-sanding to remove paint, don't tear at it with lots of muscle. Instead, get three or four sandpaper grits, from open-coat 50 up to medium-fine 180 or so. Take a few swipes with the 50, then move through the grits to the finer papers. It'll go faster, you won't clog the medium and fine papers as often, and you don't need any muscle.

HEAT METHODS: Torches or any kind of open flame are out of the question. Even if you don't burn the house down (a distinct possibility with plenty of precedents), an open flame will char the wood. The heat gun works, but has several disadvantages outdoors. It's too heavy to hold at a vertical surface all day, especially if you're on a ladder. It heats up only a few square inches at a time, which gives you commendable control on interior woodwork but will drive you crazy when you've got a whole side of the house to cover. Also, it blows hot air, so there is a small possibility that it could heat combustibles (like a bird's nest) hidden in hollow spaces. Save the heat gun for solid wood on porches.

ALL IN ALL, the most practical heat tool to use outdoors is a heat plate. It doesn't blow hot air, it isn't heavy, it heats up the width of a clapboard all at once, and it works quite effectively on thick paint build-up. Use it with a scraper for total paint removal, followed by a quick sanding before priming.

CHEMICAL METHODS: When used outdoors, hardware-store chemical strippers are generally



Here's the wholesale approach in progress. A workman rinses effluent from clapboards that had been coated with chemical stripper.

less controllable than heat, and the sludge makes a mess for the do-it-yourselfer. But chemical stripping comes in handy for a final cleanup, for very ornamental surfaces that heat might scorch, and for window muntins (heat will break glass). Chemicals have to be used for removing varnish and urethane, as heat is ineffective. And you can use chemicals to create a cold dip-tank for removable items such as shutters and fluted posts.

USE methylene-chloride-based stripper for outdoor items, not lye; lye residues interfere with the adhesion of new paint. Allow the wood to dry thoroughly before priming.

DON'T USE water-rinsable chemical paint strippers outdoors. All that watery sludge is hard to contain. Also, those removers sometimes leave a gummy residue on the wood that you'll have to remove with a solvent. Water-rinsed removers raise the grain more than others, requiring more sanding.

AS YOU STRIP, scrape the sludge into an empty paint can. When the can is full, cap it and dispose of it according to local regulations. The toxic waste in there contains concentrated lead, among other things.

Wholesale Stripping

WITH STRIPPED MASONRY getting more common, readers ask if a similar process can be used to remove all the paint on wooden buildings. Yes; there are contractors willing to completely strip the exterior of a wood building -- using much the same methods that have been used on masonry. Sandblasting, waterblasting, and application of special chemical strippers have all been used to strip clapboards, shingles, and trim down to bare wood.

NOW TELL US HOW TO DO IT!

Researching this article was difficult — no one claims any expertise. We came upon a chemicals-manufacturer who's being sued for a job that went sour (he claims it was the applicator's error); an independent contractor who purposely "forgets" to neutralize caustic-stripped wood if the homeowner's payments are not current (thus dooming the next paint job); and companies that talk clients out of the job, or bid it so high that nobody can afford it. Wood just isn't as predictable as masonry.

We're looking for case histories — successful *and* unsuccessful. We'll pay for information we publish. Please include photos, specifications on materials and how they were used, and notes on the outcome of the job.

Bix Process Systems
PO Box 3091, Dept. OHJ
Bethel, CT 06801

Contact: John Schmuecker
(203) 743-3263

Mr. Schmuecker says that caustic (alkaline) strippers are trouble. Even reputable, experienced contractors can follow neutralization procedure only to see paint fail during a humid period years later. Bix recommends solvent-based stripper. Theirs is *Power-Off*, a methylene-chloride formula that needs no neutralizing; can be rinsed with a hose. Won't work in direct sunlight, in wind, or under 50 degrees. It is 25-35% more expensive than caustics.

American Building Restoration
9720 South 6th St., Dept. OHJ
Franklin, WI 53132

Contact: Jack Tadych
(414) 761-2440

800s line of caustics (2-80% solution); average price \$8.60/gal. (to contractor). 700s series are methylene-chloride-based, \$9-\$14/gal. ABR recommends "the old 700F" for wood. Recommend using caustics on thick build-up, then switching to 700 line for last layers of paint. No. 800 — 2% lye stripper recommended for d-i-y homeowners: Alcohol-based and with only 2% caustic, it's relatively safe. Dwell time longer than average.

Diedrich Chemicals
300 A East Oak St., Dept. OHJC
Oak Creek, WI 53154

Contact: Larry Kotke
(414) 764-0058

For wood buildings: 606 and thicker 606X products. Potassium-hydroxide-based, so proper rinsing, neutralization, drying must be carried out. (Stripper releases natural tannic acid content in cedar, redwood, and cypress — can be overcome with special neutralization and extra-long drying time.) Diedrich 505 Special Coating Stripper is methylene-chloride-based; because of expense, recommended only for enamels, epoxies, etc.

ProSoCo
PO Box 1578, Dept. OHJ
Kansas City, KS 66117

Homeowner inquiries
discouraged

For wood, their Heavy-Duty Paint Stripper (a caustic) works for thick build-up. Company recommends using the caustic only until wood starts to be visible, then switching to solvent-based 509. Neutralization still needed, but less chance that caustic will have soaked into wood. Caustic, \$22-25/gal.; no. 509, \$28-31/gal., and gives less coverage.



This South Carolina church looks pretty good after stripping . . .



. . . until you get close. Sandblasting left behind wood that has in effect undergone accelerated weathering. Experts believe that pitted, roughened wood like this will deteriorate much more rapidly than normal.

SANDBLASTING does not destroy wood in the same way it can destroy masonry. Still, it is not generally recommended. Old wooden houses are "loose" and the sand is often forced through walls and into the interior. Dry sandblasting creates dust that obscures the surface being blasted, which can leave pitted wood. (Wet-blasting wood has its own obvious drawbacks.) Wood is not a homogeneous material: It has harder and softer fibers in the grain. Blasting leaves an unevenly eroded surface reminiscent of the fake wood grain in vinyl siding. Blasting leaves some woods with a fuzzy surface. And, of course, it blurs edges and details. We have seen acceptable sandblasting jobs, usually the result of a hand-picked contractor who took his time. In one notable case, an acceptable outcome was produced when the homeowners hand-sanded every first-storey clapboard after blasting.

SOME CONTRACTORS now accomplish all-over stripping with chemicals specifically formulated for use outdoors. This is a developing technology, worth exploring though even the chemical manufacturers seem hesitant to recommend this method for wood. The problem is neutralization: Wood absorbs the chemicals and that can lead to subsequent paint failure. In particular, caustic formulations (lye, etc.) are very tricky to neutralize. If they are not completely neutralized and rinsed, the wood will continue to self-strip any new paint.

METHYLENE-CHLORIDE-BASED formulations are available, but they're expensive. The material itself is costly to use on such a large job as the exterior of a house. Also, these chemicals are quite volatile; the stuff evaporates quickly outdoors, so it has to be reapplied frequently.

RINSING OFF the chemical sludge creates problems of its own. If the water pressure is too high, the damage is similar to that of sandblasting. Also, it's always risky to throw

that much water at a wood building. It may get inside, causing water damage to plaster and interior finishes. If there's any side-wall insulation, it'll probably get wet. That much water in walls and wood creates swelling and, if it's trapped, could even lead to wood rot, mildew, and failure of the new paint.

ALL OF THESE scary scenarios should convince you that whole-house stripping is not an easy proposition. Avoid it if you can. If you must remove all the paint quickly, you need to pick an experienced contractor who will:

- inspect the building first, taking precautions to mask and caulk where necessary;
- use specially formulated, tested chemicals;
- neutralize and rinse properly without high water pressures/volumes, and;
- contain the effluent. Local authorities are becoming stricter about what goes into town sewers -- you may be slapped with a \$500 (or higher) fine if your contractor hasn't made arrangements to contain and haul the runoff.

IT'S A MORAL ISSUE, too. In my article on masonry stripping back in January, I stated that the effluent was a toxic waste and should be contained. Letters in response showed that my comments weren't popular with contractors, who claim that "nobody contains the runoff" and "it's too expensive to haul away" and "it's an insignificant amount of waste."

THE DECISION IS YOURS, but here are some facts to help you make it: (1) The effluent that comes off a stripped building contains lead, as well as various solvents from both the paint itself and the heavy-duty stripping chemicals. (2) The amount of sludge that comes off a big, thickly-painted two- or three-storey house is hardly insignificant. (3) The homeowner and/or the architect can be held responsible for fines, damage, and suits.



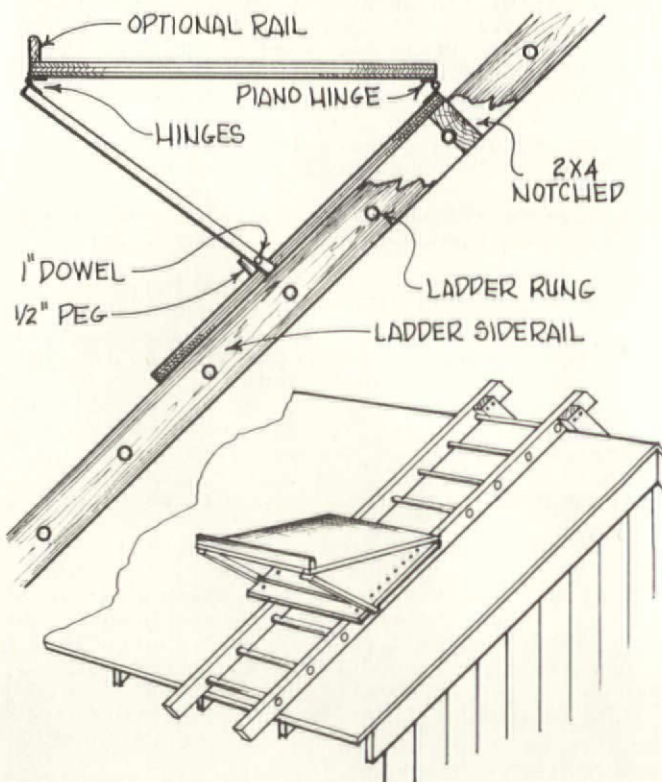


What Goes Up, Should Stay There!

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU been working on a roof and had a tool slide down and over the edge? It took me many trips up and down the ladder before I finally decided to solve this problem. After a bit of experimentation, I finally devised a platform that holds tools level regardless of roof pitch.

CUT TWO PIECES of 1/2-in. plywood, 3 feet long and 1 foot wider than the width of your extension ladder. Drill a series of 1/2-in. holes six inches in from each side along the length of one of the pieces. Attach a 2x4 cut to the length of a ladder rung to the back of the top edge of this piece. Notch the underside of the 2x4 so the ladder rung will fit into it.

NEXT, ATTACH THE TWO PIECES of plywood together at their top edges with a piano hinge. Then, hinge two pieces of 2x4 to the bottom of the undrilled piece of plywood, and attach a 1-in. dowel between them.



TO USE THE PLATFORM, hook the extension ladder over the peak of the roof and rest the notched 2x4 over a rung. Lift the top piece of plywood until it's level. Hold the piece in place by inserting a couple of 2-in.-long dowels into the predrilled holes in the bottom piece of plywood. The 1-in. dowel will rest against the small pegs, holding the platform in place.

W.A. Rolke
Columbus, Ind.

Pesti-Strip

IRECENTLY HAD TO REMOVE many layers of shellac from every piece of woodwork in my house. I scrubbed the gummy mess off with steel wool dipped in denatured alcohol. This was a terribly messy process; the steel wool dripped alcohol all over the floor, and the dry weather caused rapid evaporation of the solvent.

I SOLVED THESE PROBLEMS by putting the alcohol in a plastic spray bottle (the kind you might use to mist your house plants). Now I can apply just as much alcohol as I need without drips, spills, or excessive fumes. I still use the bottle to mist plants, too! I've found that a gentle mist of denatured alcohol kills the mealy bugs that feed on my porch plants.

Donna Presnell
New Haven, Conn.

Candle Controversy Continues

YOUR AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1985 issue included a reader tip concerning the vexing problem of cleaning wax-encrusted candlesticks. I've found that this annoyance can be largely avoided by storing your candles in a freezer. The candles seem to burn slower and drip less wax.

Lucille A. Cook
Gilmanton, N.H.

THE IDEA OF USING A HEAT GUN to remove wax from candlesticks (Aug./Sept. '85) is indeed ingenious. However, there is an equally simple way for those of us who do not possess a heat gun.

BOIL WATER IN A LARGE POT, immerse the candlesticks, and remove the pot from the stove. Allow to soak until the water has completely cooled and a film of solidified wax has formed on the surface. Skim off the wax, remove the candlesticks, and clean and polish as usual. This works especially well on really ornate candlesticks where wax works its way deep into crevices. Large candelabras can be done in sections.

Susan Parrott
Philadelphia, Penn.

Tips To Share? Do you have any hints or short cuts that might help other old-house owners? We'll pay \$15 for any short how-to items that are used in this "Restorer's Notebook" column. Write to Notebook Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

Some Typical Restoration Questions



Where To Find The Answers

Dear Questions Editor:

A WATER LEAK has caused the paint to peel away from several areas of my plaster ceiling. I would like to completely remove the remaining paint before priming. Is the heat gun suitable for removing paint from plaster?

J.E.
Flossmoor, Ill.

NINETY-FIVE PERCENT of the questions we receive from subscribers have already been answered in back issues! Authoritative advice to virtually all of your old-house questions can be at hand immediately when you add The Old-House Journal's Yearbooks to your restoration library.

IF YOU NEED information now, there's no need to write a letter and then wait for an over-worked editor to send you a reply. And when your question is answered by an article, you get more than words.

Dear Editor:

WE WOULD LIKE advice regarding painting the tin roof of our 1885 house. The problem is that someone once fixed leaks in the roof with asphalt roofing compound. We've been told that unless we paint the roof black, the asphalt will bleed through the new paint and spoil the appearance of the roof. How can we solve this menacing problem?

K.A.W.
Warrenton, Va.

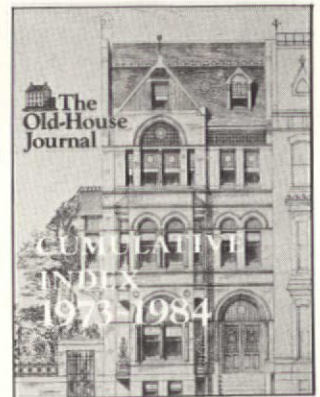


Just four of our many hundreds of titles.

Superb illustrations and clear, meaningful photos take you step by step through your restoration project; case histories of completed restorations keep your morale up; and product reviews and evaluations help you spend your money wisely.

FROM FOUNDATIONS TO FINIALS and everything in between, our "Restoration Encyclopedia" gives you expert advice with over 500 feature articles augmented by our regular departments like Restorer's Notebook, Ask OHJ, Restoration Products and Remuddling of the Month ... over 2,000 pages of restoration knowledge for less money than two hours with a preservation consultant.

EVERY EDITORIAL PAGE we've printed since 1976 can be put to work for you today if you buy the books as a package. If you order the complete set now, we'll include our newly-published Cumulative Index (a \$9.95 value) free! (See order form on page 219 I.) Compiled by OHJ editors, and meticulously cross-referenced, the Cumulative Index is your key to a veritable treasure-trove of restoration know-how. The Cumulative Index makes the Yearbooks a greater value than ever because it puts all our unique information at your fingertips.



Dear OHJ:

ALTHOUGH I SAW a company that sells whitewash listed in your Catalog, I'd prefer to purchase the materials locally for convenience and speed. Do you know of a good recipe from which I can make lime-based whitewash?

P.B.
Canandaigua, N.Y.

Dear OHJ:

MY VICTORIAN HOUSE has standard double-brick cellar walls. The brick walls and brick floor of the basement allow a great deal of water to seep through. I know I can't coat the inside of the walls to waterproof them because this will cause spalling. What can I do to improve the integrity of the old walls while making them waterproof? Has anyone developed a process to waterproof and strengthen old walls? What do you recommend? Do I have to live with a chronically wet basement?

J.B.
Springfield, Mass.

Hot Tips For Heat Stripping

THERE'S MORE to stripping paint with heat than picking up a heat tool and blasting away. You don't exactly need the hands of a surgeon...but a deft touch helps. And so does knowing some tricks of the trade. Here are a few:

PRACTICE using the heat tool on a scrap of painted wood or an inconspicuous spot before going on to your precious oak mantel. Each painted surface reacts differently to heat. You have to find the combination of exposure time and distance of the tool from the surface that will melt paint down to bare wood -- without scorching.

TO AVOID GOUGING wood when scraping off melted paint, round the corners of your putty knife or scraper with a file.

YOU'LL FIND VARNISH under most painted surfaces. Don't work the putty knife back into the hot varnish in an already stripped area. The molten paint mixes with the hot varnish, making a mess that will be harder to clean with the final chemical stripper wash.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS to keep your putty knife clean. If you are fastidious, cut a slit partway down the side of a coffee can with tinsnips. Insert the putty knife into the slit and pull outwards; the crud falls to the bottom of the can. If you prefer quick and dirty methods, merely wear some heavy old workpants and wipe the knife on your trousers as you go along.

PROCEED from large areas to smaller details. Hit the broad areas with the heat plate before you do the detailed areas with the heat gun. If you're using dental picks in the first hour of a major job, you're probably wasting time.

WEAR GLOVES and safety goggles or a face shield. It's almost impossible to avoid getting hit by hot paint scrapings. You should also wear a respirator rated for dusts and mists.

It Pays To Use Industrial-Quality Tools When You Have A Lot Of Stripping To Do

HEAT TOOLS soften paint so you can scrape it off with a putty knife. With a little practice, you can lift long strips of paint in one continuous motion. The stripped paint solidifies into crispy flakes, which can be easily swept or vacuumed up -- unlike the messy slime you get from chemical strippers.

Heat stripping works best for thick layers of paint on top of varnish; the varnish acts like a releasing agent. Heat is NOT recommended

for removing shellac or varnish -- use chemical strippers instead. Heat tools will remove about 98% of the paint; a one-coat clean-up with chemical stripper takes off paint residue plus any underlying shellac or varnish.

There's a big difference in heat tools. Most hardware stores only carry plastic "homeowner-grade" heat guns. The two heat tools below have proved best in tests conducted by the OHJ editors.

THE HG-501 HEAT GUN

Most rugged heat gun anywhere!

The red, all-metal Master HG-501 is the original paint stripping heat gun. Over 10,000 have been purchased by OHJ readers since 1976; it's a rugged industrial tool with a *proven track record!* The success of the HG-501 has led several manufacturers to come out with "homeowner-grade" versions in hardware stores. But based on independent tests by *The Old-House Journal* and *Family Handyman*, the HG-501 does the best job and lasts the longest. The all-metal HG-501 operates at 500-750 F. (higher temperatures can possibly volatilize the lead in old paints). It has a rugged, die-cast aluminum body, and draws 15 amps at 120 volts.

The HG-501 is the most flexible heat tool; it'll strip paint from any surface. It's especially valuable on mouldings and carved work, where you want to push heat down into recesses. The HG-501 pays for itself very quickly; its price (\$77.95) is about the same as 3½ gallons of good chemical paint remover. So if you have a lot of stripping to do, and you want the most rugged, long-lasting tool, choose the heat gun that has been stripping paint in old houses since 1976: The original, all-metal Master HG-501.

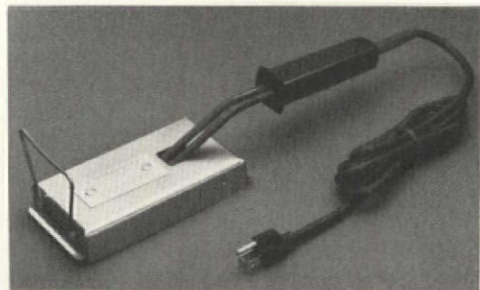


THE HEAT PLATE

Ideal for broad, flat surfaces

The Heat Plate is the best tool for stripping broad flat surfaces, such as clapboards, door panels, baseboards, etc. It has a wide-area electric heating coil that heats about 12 sq. in. at a time by radiation. (The heat gun, by contrast, has a blower that pushes hot air against the paint.) The Heat Plate is light (only 1½ lb.), making it easier to hold for long periods than the heat gun.

The Heat Plate has sturdy all-metal construction and no moving parts, so it's virtually maintenance-free. The Heat Plate is safer than a propane torch or heat gun to use around hollow partitions, such as cornices, walls, etc. (Hollow spaces often contain insulation, animal nests, and other combustible trash that could be ignited by a flame or hot-air stream.) The Heat Plate draws 7 amps at 120 volts, and heats paint to 550-800 F. It costs about half as much as the heat gun, so if you have a lot of flat surfaces to strip, the Heat Plate is the most economical tool. Of course, having *both* tools on hand makes most jobs go faster.



Both heat tools come with 4 pages of operating instructions and 2 pages of safety data compiled by the OHJ editors. *The Old-House Journal* is the only stripping tool supplier that

provides full details on how to avoid lead poisoning and other hazards of paint stripping. See Order Form at the back of this issue for details on ordering both tools.

MAKING PHOTOS LAST

... and bringing back the old ones

by Walter Jowers

WE OLD-HOUSE DWELLERS have a strong attraction to images of the past: Our houses are images of the past, carefully rescued and given life in the present. And much of the attraction is visual; when we speak of the scale, warmth, charm, and detail of an old house, we're talking about visual impressions. We fuss over colors, shop for antiques -- mostly to please our eyes. So it makes sense that a lot of us enjoy looking at or taking photographs. Old-house owners have been known to go to great lengths to find an original-condition picture of their house. And most of us have a photo album full of before-and-after pictures which we can't wait to show off.

BUT, PROUD AS WE ARE of the care we've taken with our old house, as much as we covet that original-condition picture, as much as we enjoy the before-and-after shots, most of us have little or no idea how to take care of the old -- or the new -- pictures.

WHERE DO YOU KEEP your special photographs? Are they stuffed into a box in the attic? Or in the basement? Are they in a desk drawer, or framed and displayed in a nice sunny room? If you have photographs stored in any of these places, the images are fading away faster than they have to.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS are remarkably stable; with a little care, they will last for generations. A properly processed and stored black-and-white negative or print could last for hundreds of years.

IF YOU WANT the images that are important to you to survive as long as your house -- if you want them to survive as long as you -- here are some things you should know....

What Not To Do

MOST PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS consist of a support material (film base* for negatives; paper for prints) and an emulsion layer of gelatin in which the photographic image is suspended. Film base, paper, and gelatin are all water-permeable;

*Some pre-1950 negatives can have a cellulose-nitrate film base. This film base deteriorates quickly; in advanced stages of decomposition, it can be extremely flammable. Many experts believe that nitrate-base negatives should be copied and then destroyed. (Deteriorating nitrate negatives can also damage other negatives that are stored with them.) A decomposed nitrate-base film is recognizable by its acrid odor -- any film labeled 'safety film' is not nitrate-base film.

this makes the photographic material susceptible to attack by moisture. High temperatures are also a problem: Detrimental chemical reactions, caused by residual processing chemicals in the photograph, are accelerated by heat. If a photo gets sufficiently hot and damp, fungus can grow in the gelatin emulsion, destroying the image.

THAT'S WHY hot attics are bad places to store photos -- and damp basements are even worse. But it isn't difficult to arrange proper storage conditions for your photos. The



Above: Lost under the layers of tarnish on this early daguerrotype is a view of Providence, Rhode Island.

Below: A careful cleaning has removed all the tarnish. (Unfortunately, you can't clean away the scratches.)





Above: This is the back of a cardboard mount which has been touching a sheet of plywood for years. Materials from the wood migrated to the cardboard, producing this stain pattern.

Right: There's no way to repair the havoc fungus has wrought on the negative of this print.



temperature should be 75 degrees Fahrenheit or less; the relative humidity, 20% to 60%. Keep your negatives and prints in the living area of your house -- if you're comfortable, they will be, too.

BOXES OF WOOD OR CARDBOARD are poor containers for photo materials. Wood and wood products, such as plywood and chipboard, contain volatile substances that stain and fade photos. Drawers with plywood bottoms are particularly bad places for storing photographs. Cardboard boxes put together with glue and tape also give off damaging chemical compounds. (Specially made cardboard boxes are available for photo storage, and these are okay.) The best storage boxes are enameled steel, stainless steel, or anodized aluminum.



Above: Even a print as badly faded as this one can be saved . . .
Below: . . . by copying it with a high-contrast, continuous-tone film and developing the negative.



ALUMINUM FRAMES ARE BETTER for your photographs than wood frames. But this presents a particular problem for many old-house owners: Aluminum picture frames in a room full of antiques? Solution: Don't put rare, one-of-a-kind photographs in a wood frame. Have a duplicate made of the rare photo, and put it in the wood frame. (There'll be more on duplicating later in the article.) You should also replace a plywood frame backing with a sheet of high-quality photo mounting board. And use a matte -- if the photo is pressed up against glass, the gelatin could stick to it under humid conditions.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS should not be stacked and then placed under pressure. Residual processing chemicals in one negative or print could migrate to adjacent photos and damage them. So even if you're using a box that can safely contain photos, don't stuff them all in as if you were packing an undersized suitcase.

FEW THINGS ARE WORSE for a photograph than to be sandwiched between glue and plastic, and yet this is precisely what many modern photo albums do. Old-style photo albums, with paper pages and corner tabs to hold the photos in place, aren't perfect, but they are decidedly better than the glue-and-plastic types. A nearly perfect photo album can be made up from acid-free, pre-punched binder pages available from Technical Library Association (TALAS).

IDEALLY, prints should be stored interleaved with acid-free paper, cellulose acetate, or polyethylene dividers. These materials are available from custom photo shops or shops that cater to professional photographers. Negatives should always be stored in sleeves or bags made of one of these materials.

PRINTS, especially color prints, should not be displayed in areas where they will suffer prolonged exposure to direct sunlight or fluorescent light. Black-and-white photographs will yellow under these conditions; color prints left in bright sun will fade to nothingness in a very short time. As a general rule of thumb, don't display your prints anywhere that you wouldn't display an antique floral sofa.

What About Color?

BLACK-AND-WHITE photographic images are made up of particles of pure metallic silver, and so black-and-white negatives and prints, properly processed and properly stored, can last indefinitely. Color negatives, prints, and slides contain unstable dyes, and fade noticeably in just a few years. It doesn't matter if it's your wedding picture and you paid \$300 for it -- if it's color, most of the detail will be gone within a few dozen years. If you want to make permanent photographic records of an important event, shoot the photos in black and white. If you want color prints to show your friends and relatives, shoot those too, but don't consider them a permanent record. (NOTE: Color materials can be kept indefinitely under certain tightly controlled conditions; consult Kodak's *Storage And Care Of Color Photographs*, Kodak publication #E-30.)

FINALLY, what can be done with old, deteriorated negatives or prints? More than you might think. Old, stained prints can be re-photographed through an optical filter, eliminating the stain from the new print. Faded prints can be reshot on very high contrast paper, and the new print can be remarkably



Above: This print was made from a stained negative. The damage is most clearly visible in the sky at the top center, and in the extreme right-hand side of the photo.
Below: After its stains were chemically removed, the negative yielded this quality print.



clear. Scratched photographs can be retouched to restore lost detail. And badly deteriorated negatives or prints can sometimes be restored by cleaning or retouching. Restoration work (especially of negatives) is sometimes risky, usually complicated, and almost always expensive; it should be done only by a competent professional. Check local custom photo labs (and their references) to find someone who can do this type of work. 🏠

Getting The Full Picture

Two books used as sources for this article deal specifically with the care of photographic materials. Kodak's *Preservation of Photographs* discusses the physical make-up of negatives and prints; what causes them to deteriorate; and what can be done to slow the deterioration. One chapter explains how to process new photos for maximum stability. A two-page section on how to identify old materials (daguerrotypes, tintypes, etc.) is helpful for answering the question: What is this thing in the funky old frame?

AASLH's *Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs* is divided into two parts. The first deals with the problems of collecting and cataloging historic photos — information useful to museum curators. The second half of the book discusses the care of photographic

materials. An appendix gives sources for hard-to-find items: acid-free mounting boards; storage sleeves.

The Kodak book is a paperback; the AASLH book, hardbound. Both are well illustrated. For their current prices (and a list of other publications), write:

Eastman Kodak Company
Rochester, NY 14650

American Association for State and Local History
1400 Eighth Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37203

TALAS (213 West 35 Street, New York, NY 10001) handles Hollinger 'Permalife' negative envelopes, acid-free mounting boards, and storage boxes. Pre-punched acid-free pages for 3-ring binders, which make a fine, safe photo album, are also available. Minimum order, \$3.



Well, winter is here again. Still don't have the old house tightened up to seal out the cold north wind? We've found a way to temporarily weather-seal loose windows, glass, and other cracks: UGL Removable Caulk. The clear caulk seals out moisture, drafts, and dust until you can make permanent repairs. Best of all, you can remove it without damaging the surface it's applied to, which means you can use it indoors (instead of sealing from a tall ladder outdoors). We don't advise applying the caulk to delicate old wallpapers, but we've applied and removed it from painted wood and found that it doesn't pull off the paint or leave stains.

The caulk comes in tubes and is applied with a caulking gun. It's easier to remove when left in a bead rather than smoothed out. One tube will do four average windows and sells for about \$3.95 at building-supply stores nationwide. For more information contact United Gilsonite Laboratories, Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 70, Scranton, PA 18501.

Seasons Greetings



Have a big list of hard-to-find old-house parts? You need the new 1986 Old-House Journal Catalog.

Iron Snowguards

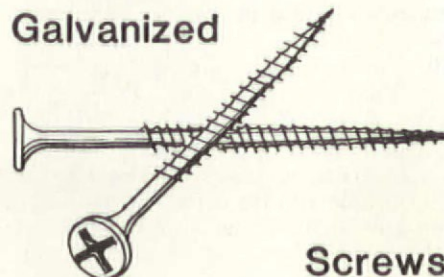
We are happy to announce a source for hard-to-find snowguards. Ray Zeleny of Windy Hill Forge hand casts these reproductions for use along roof edges and above entry ways. The cast-iron guards come in several shapes: fan, \$8; acorn, \$6; eagle, \$6; rose, \$2.80; and the pipe rail, \$5.50. The guards vary in height from 2 in. to about 4 in. The ornament is mounted onto a steel, L-shaped bracket designed to be nailed or better still, screwed, into the roof sheathing. The shingles are relaid over the top of the bracket to prevent leaks.



If you're installing snowguards, we suggest you consider putting down a waterproofing course such as the Ice & Water Shield by W.R. Grace as well (see RP Aug./Sept. 84). When reroofing, the waterproofing is laid along the roof edge, before the snowguards are installed. This reduces the chances of ice dams causing roof leaks. Often, the guards are attached in two or more rows in a staggered pattern. The pipe rail forms a continuous fence along the roof edge. Ray supplied the cast brackets—you supply two lengths of 1/2-in. pipe (copper pipe works well).

All of the guards come primed, but we suggest that you apply two more coats of gloss enamel before installation. For a free brochure that also shows decorative cast-iron tie rod ends and shutter hold-backs write to Windy Hill Forge, Dept. OHJ, 3824 Schroeder Ave., Perry Hall, MD 21118. (301) 256-5890.

Galvanized



Screws

Weather Challenger is a new type of machine-driven, hardened steel, all-purpose exterior screw made by the Philstone Nail Corp. The screws look like standard, screw-gun driven, drywall screws, but they're galvanized so they can be used outdoors without rusting. The screws were designed for use with pressure-treated lumber and deck building, where fasteners have to resist weathering and the corrosive effects of wood preservatives.

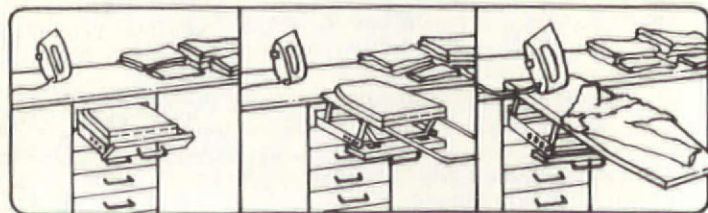
Formerly such galvanized screws were not available because no one could figure out how to coat the extra sharp screws without getting a zinc buildup that either made them hard to drive or that came off when driving. These screws have a mechanically galvanized finish that is very smooth. We tried them out and they drove very well with no predrilling or head stripping.

They have coarse threads for better holding and reduced popping. (Always wear safety goggles when driving them.) They come in 8 sizes (1 in.-4 in.) in bulk cartons or smaller packages. The 8-x-3-in. size we tried comes in 250 count boxes for \$16.40 ppd. For more information write DJ Inc., Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 825, Brattleboro, VT 05301. (802) 254-6023.

Kitchen Hardware

The Woodworkers' Store has a fine collection of hard-to-find kitchen remodeling supplies nestled into their new woodworking catalog. It's loaded with specialized drawer and cabinet hardware, such as swing-out shelves and racks found only in custom-built kitchens. We were particularly impressed with a fold-out ironing board in a drawer. Previously, this hardware was pretty much unavailable to home owners doing their own kitchen remodeling.

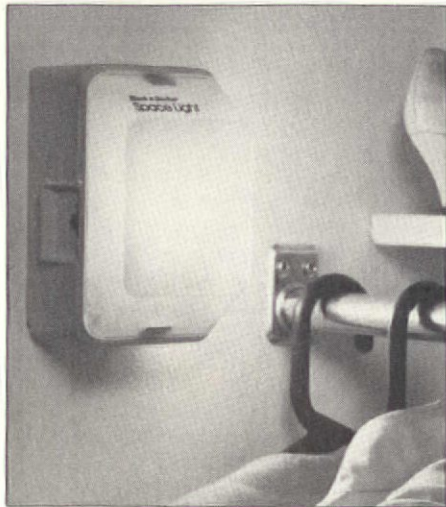
The Woodworkers' Store also offers a wide variety of unusual books, tools, veneers, pulls, laminates, and finishing supplies — in short everything for building a comfortable, functional kitchen (or anything made of wood). What's more, it's tested and guaranteed. The catalog sells for \$1 (\$2 for 1st-class mail) from The Woodworkers' Store, Dept. OHJ, 21801 Industrial Blvd., Rogers, MN 55374. (612) 428-4101.



Space Lighter

If you're tired of bumping your head in the dark or having to use a flashlight every time you go into a closet, Black and Decker's Space Light is for you. It's great for old houses because it's designed for use in places where wiring doesn't exist: closets, stairway enclosures, basements, under sinks, in sheds.

The cordless Space Light uses rechargeable storage batteries that hold a charge for up to six months and allow the light to burn for up to two hours.



The charger is self-contained in the light case. A bracket allows you to mount the light horizontally or vertically and remove it for portable use. The Space Light is an excellent old-house gift and sells for about \$21.99 at local hardware and home-improvement centers.

Cane Supplies

If you're considering any type of caning, rushing, or basketry project, you need Bill Fimpler's new Cane & Basket Supply Catalog. I've never come across such an extensive array of caning supplies, tools, and books for the professional or hobbyist. Best of all those of us who have unknowingly purchased inferior and short-lived cane in the past will appreciate the fact that all of the items sold by this firm have been tried and tested by them.

If you haven't done any recaning, rush seating, or basketry, you will find the catalog full of good tips and suggestions to make your project easier and more enjoyable. They have cane-webbing styles I didn't even know were still available and some I never knew existed.

Copies of the firm's 50th Anniversary Catalog are available for \$1 each from Cane & Basket Supply Co., Dept. OHJ, 1283 S. Cochran Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90019. (213) 939-9644.



At a show hosted by the Art Deco Society of New York we came across a firm that sells antique telephones. For over 20 years, the Chicago Old Telephone Co. has been collecting and restoring just about every type of old telephone imaginable. Each one has been carefully and completely restored to work on modern service. Unlike most reproduction phones available today, these instruments were built with great care and the best materials available. You probably can't break or wear one out, but each phone comes with a 1-year warranty. All the parts are authentic from the dial right down to the cord. They come with a 14-ft. modular service cord (fabric or rubber) that plugs into existing outlets.



We were impressed with the rich sculptural quality of these robust old phones. The oldest phone in the brochure is a 1919 Erickson Upright, \$279. The rarest is an Art Deco cradle phone, the 1922 Kellogg, \$239-\$269. The best value is the solid brass 1930 Elite, \$119-\$149. Our favorite was the Western Electric no. 202, \$189, which was the classic Bell Telephone of the Roaring '20s. There's a \$5 shipping and insurance charge for each phone.

Send an SASE for a free color brochure. There are lots of options. If you don't see the phone you want, contact them; they have many types not listed in the brochure. They also have publications on the history of telephones showing all the styles. Write to Chicago Old Telephone Co., Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 189, Lemon Springs, NC 28355. (919) 774-6625.



Wood Rack

Vermont Castings offers an attractive and rugged wood box that would look great by the fireplace or stove in any old house. The wood box has a black cast-iron frame with a stained wooden back and bottom. The front is open for easy access. The hand-sculpted frame features shell motifs, latticed fanlight, raised panels, and mouldings finished in glossy black. The box holds 3-1/4 cubic feet of wood and measures 26 in. wide x 16 in. deep x 19-1/2 in. tall. It sells for \$140 plus shipping.



If you're considering a wood-burning stove installation, send \$4 for the new Vermont Castings Design Portfolio. There's a decorating guide, a techbook for installation planning, a stove clearance template, plus a copy of their own newsletter. Vermont Castings stands behind their customers — they'll even answer installation questions over the phone. Be sure to send \$1 for their catalog of stoves and accessories and a listing of dealers near you. Vermont Castings, Inc., Dept. OHJ, Prince St., Randolph, VT 05060. (802) 728-9561.

Gas-Light Parts

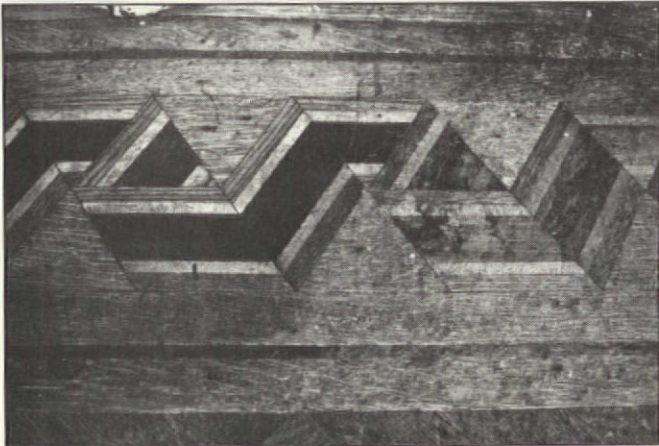
In restoring his 1886 brick duplex, OHJ reader Eric W. Jack needed to replace the missing ceramic candles and bobeches on several of the gas chandeliers. He discovered that matching replacement parts for antique gas-lighting fixtures are darn hard to find, so he decided to make his own. Eric developed a technique for producing white ceramic, heat-resistant pieces in several styles, and they look and function just like the originals. If you need similar parts for your gas lights, Eric would like to try making them for you. Write Eric W. Jack, Dept. OHJ, 2409 Madison Ave., Baltimore, MD 21217. (301) 669-3992.

Clean It First!

YOUR FLOORS may simply have "Dirty Wax Buildup." You can remove wax, and all the dirt in the wax, with mineral spirits. Apply it, scrub the floors with a bristle scrub brush or fine steel wool, and wipe with rags. A quick hands-and-knees scrubbing removes all surface grime and gooey deposits. Mineral spirits are quite flammable, so use caution.

YOU CAN ALSO CLEAN your floors with commercially available floor cleaners. The Bruce Company*, for example, makes a good one. Wood-floor cleaner is sold at well-stocked hardware stores. Don't use caustic cleaners; they're essentially weak lye solutions, and may change the color and texture of the wood.

PROPRIETARY CLEANERS like Mex or Spic'n'Span will also clean floors, but they do so by removing some of the floor's finish. If you've tried mineral spirits and a commercial floor cleaner without good results, try giving the floors a good scrubbing with one of these products -- providing they still have a good finish left on them. Never let water stand on your floor; wipe it dry immediately after using any aqueous cleaning solution, or else you'll permanently stain it.



The right side of this photo shows scratches and nicks where traffic passed through a doorway. Some sanding will be necessary here, but the rest of the floor can simply be cleaned.

ONCE THE FLOOR is fairly clean, go back to really troublesome spots with mineral spirits and coarse (#3) steel wool. Scrubbing will lift all but the most stubborn stains.

YOU MAY FIND darkened areas under the old finish. If the offensive spot is localized, try making it less conspicuous by blending the blemish into the surrounding wood with an oil stain. You can adjust the color of a stain by thinning it or varying the amount of time you let it sit on the wood.

* Bruce Hardwood Floors, 16803 Dallas Pkwy.
Dallas, TX 75248. (214) 931-3000.



A thorough scrubbing with steel wool and mineral spirits removes all traces of wax and grease. Return to stubborn stains with coarse steel wool and more mineral spirits.

A LARGE STAIN (around a once-leaking radiator, for example) will have to be bleached out. Brush full-strength bleach onto the darkened area and allow it to work for two minutes. Rinse with a damp terrycloth until you are sure all the bleach is removed. If the bleach changed the color too drastically, choose an appropriate shade of oil stain to blend the area into the surrounding woodwork. Bleaching may raise the grain of some woods, requiring sanding. As always, test this method in an inconspicuous location first.

IF YOUR FLOOR looks pretty good after a thorough cleaning, but still has a few scratches and maybe some dark water spots... so what? The water spots may never come out, and removing all scratches on floors is nearly impossible. Remember that this large expanse of floor will look a lot better with some finish or wax and some furniture on it. Besides, scratches and spots help you decide where to put your rugs.

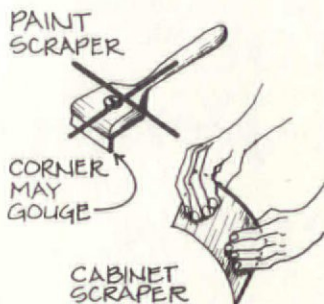
Selective Sanding

SOME SANDING IS INEVITABLE when restoring a badly worn old floor. Deep scratches, raised grain, and areas where the finish has worn all the way through (allowing staining) need more than cleaning for restoration.

SAND THESE AREAS by hand with a sanding block. Use a belt sander for large areas and especially deep gouges. Don't use rotary sanders on parquet flooring -- they'll leave swirl marks, and they'll dish-out softer woods.

START WITH a medium-grade paper and work your way down to finer papers. Feather out the edges of the area you're working on. That is, don't leave an abrupt line between the area that was sanded and the rest of the floor. Sand with the grain, especially with the coarser papers.

CABINET SCRAPERS ALSO come in handy for removing a small amount of material from your floor. Don't use a regular paint scraper, though; you'll end up gouging your floor.



DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY with sanding. Some nicks and stains penetrate deep into the wood and you'd have to remove a lot of material to get them out. Seek to restore the severely damaged or worn areas up to the level of the adjacent areas, and not beyond. That way you'll be creating an even patina without removing all evidence of age and use. When you think you've done a good enough job, wipe some mineral spirits over the area; that will show you how the wood will look when varnished.

Spruce Up The Finish

AT THIS POINT your floors may look worse than they did when you started. The sanded areas, as well as the spots where you scrubbed out stubborn stains, will appear faded and lusterless. All this can be remedied with one quick application of varnish.

PREPARATION IS THE KEY to varnishing. Be certain the floor is free of all traces of wax and grease. Then thoroughly vacuum the area. Even a tiny bit of dust and grit would mar the appearance of your floor. After you've vacuumed, go over the whole floor with a tack rag.

DON'T USE POLYURETHANE finishes here; they often don't bond well over an existing finish. Use an oil-based varnish. One coat will work wonders, especially if you follow it with a renewable coat of wax.

As you sand, wipe some mineral spirits on the floor now and then to see how it will look after you apply the finish.



Above: Careful work with a belt sander removes deep scratches. Below: New finish is applied over existing one with a sponge mop. The floor retains its patina while gaining luster.



SPOT-PRIME BARE WOOD before varnishing the whole floor, and wait the recommended between-coats time before varnishing the entire floor. You can apply the varnish with a natural-bristle brush. If you're tired of being on your hands and knees, though, a perfectly good alternative is to apply the varnish with a clean, new sponge mop. Remember, you're just trying to add a bit of luster to your antique floors, not finish a mirror-smooth surface. Work methodically to ensure uniform coverage. Pull the mop along gently and steadily to avoid creating bubbles in the varnish.

AFTER YOU CLEAN and varnish your floor, apply a coat of paste wax. Paste wax will protect the varnish from scuffs and spills -- it's a lot easier to renew a layer of wax than a coat of varnish. Trewax is a good brand.

USE A TACK RAG to be sure the surface is free of grit and dust. Put a few tablespoons of wax in a cloth towel, fold the towel over it, and rub the floor until wax comes through the towel. Let the wax dry for five minutes, then polish it with an electric floor polisher. The wax should fill in the minor imperfections in the finish, not sit as a slippery layer on top of the floor, collecting scuff marks.

Test Your Restoration-Products Awareness

We've just published our new Old-House Journal Buyer's Guide Catalog. If you find the how-to information in OHJ helpful, you're just the person who also needs the where-to information in the Catalog. The two complement each other and give you the whole story on restoring your old house. Preservation professionals -- architects, consultants, even real-estate agents -- can use the Catalog, too. It turns you into an instant expert. (We use it to answer reader questions every day!)

The OHJ Catalog took months of painstaking updating -- and was years in the making as the resource for the restoration market -- yet it's only \$10.95 to subscribers (\$13.95 to non-subscribers). To get a copy while it's still hot news, see the Order Form in this issue.

Are you still resisting buying a copy of the Catalog? Then please take this test ... it may convince you.

1. IF THERE ARE NO RESTORATION SUPPLIERS LOCATED NEAR YOU,

- (A) you'll never be able to restore your old house. Move to an apartment.
- (B) don't worry: In the OHJ Catalog, you can find hundreds of sources, most of whom sell by mail order or through distributors nationwide.
- (C) buy a truck, because you have some long-distance salvage-hauling to do.

2. HOW MANY COMPANIES ARE LISTED IN THE BRAND-NEW 1986 OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL CATALOG?

- (A) 205
- (B) 872
- (C) 1,416

3. THE OHJ CATALOG IS A BUYER'S GUIDE. OUR BUYER'S GUIDE IS

- (A) the floorwalker in Macy's wicker department.
- (B) a tremendously helpful compilation that will save you money on fruitless phone calls and hundreds of frustrating hours hunting for hard-to-find old-house items.
- (C) out of print.

4. A BUSY-BODY IS

- (A) An old-fashioned exterior mirror that lets you see who's at the front door.
- (B) A device for eavesdropping through old plaster walls.
- (C) A 1926 movie starring Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.

5. THE JUST-PUBLISHED 1986 CATALOG CONTAINS

- (A) 110 pages.
- (B) 232 pages.
- (C) scratch-and-sniff ads.

6. THE BRAND-NEW CATALOG IS

- (A) last year's edition with a new cover.
- (B) available to interior designers only.
- (C) not only bigger than ever, but also redesigned to make it even easier to use,

with complete indexes up front and three separate sections inside.

7. YOU CAN GET PUSH-BUTTON LIGHT SWITCHES

- (A) only by inheritance, because no one makes them any more.
- (B) through antiques dealers who'll scalp you on the price.
- (C) from a company that just started reproducing them (and is listed you-know-where!).

8. THE ELEVENTH EDITION OF OHJ'S FAMOUS CATALOG LISTS RESTORATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- (A) only the rich could afford.
- (B) for making every house look like a Victorian ice cream parlor.
- (C) from wide-plank flooring to turn-of-the-century lamps, epoxy to wallpaper -- stuff appropriate for houses built between 1750 and 1940.

9. THIS IS THE COVER OF

- (A) OHJ's new Catalog.
- (B) the swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated.
- (C) the redesigned IRS Standard Tax Forms booklet.

10. IF YOU WON'T SPEND YOUR LAST DIME TO REPLACE YOUR SLATE ROOF,

- (A) you're a remuddler at heart. Admit it!
- (B) don't despair: The OHJ Catalog tells you about a less expensive, good-looking substitute.
- (C) you can kiss that roof good-bye.



ANSWERS: 1. B 2. C 3. B 4. A
5. B 6. C 7. C 8. C 9. A 10. B



The Old-House Journal

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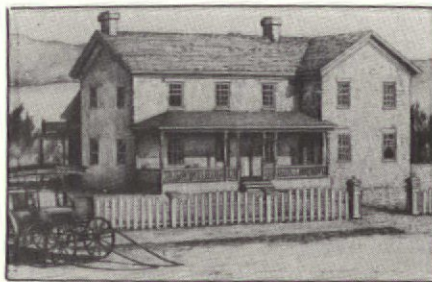
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LIGHT BULBS, old, unusual, commemorative, decorative, or Christmas. Joe Kimbell, 29A Rivoli, San Francisco, CA 94117.

5 PORCELAIN CASTORS for 5 pineapple leg table. (918) 336-5429, eves.

GAS BURNER (not logs) for use in small 1907 FP. Burner should not exceed 20 in. wide x 24 in. high. R. Silverman. (718) 434-2952.

FLASHED GLASS, ruby red, unetched, 10 in. x 50 in., or slightly smaller, to replace part of broken window. Dennis Gebers, 107 E. 7th Street, Grand Island, NE 68801. (308) 384-0409.

MUSIC RACK, ornate, Victorian, for grand piano. Also pedal lyre, legs, & other useful parts for 1864 concert grand. Also looking for organ reeds & parts. Geller, 1649 S. Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006.

"MODERN CARPENTRY, A Practical Manual" by Fred T. Hodgson, usable copy, any edition, or any other books by Hodgson. Send price. Paul Slaton, PO Box 771, Russellville, AR 72801.

REAL ESTATE

WAVERLY, NY — Historically significant Mary Muldoon High School. First floor offices rented, 3 large new apartments on remaining floors with potential for 24. Surrounded by lovely Victorian homes on park. \$250,000. Ward, 444 Park Ave., Waverly, NY 14892.

MOORE HAVEN, FL — 2-storey, 1921 commercial building w/ living quarters upstairs. Quiet, small town on Lake Okeechobee. Great hunting, fishing, climate. Needs restoring. \$6500 as is. (305) 635-2700.

MORRISTOWN, NJ — Charming 120-year-old restored Victorian with original wide plank yellow pine floors, screened porch, 3 BR, beautiful bow window in DR, 1-car attached garage with new roof, within easy commute to NYC. Brochure. \$134,500. J. Mahowald, 185 Western Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960. (201) 267-8157.

NE MAINE SHORE — Nat'l Register 18th/19th-century mansion, carefully winterized & maintained. 15 spacious rooms. Country kitchen, DR, entry hall, double stair, 9 BR, 3 1/2 baths. 12 acres, boat house on beach, log cabin, barn/garage, artist studio. \$225,000. Owner. (207) 454-3460.

TENN. — 78 acres. 4500-sq.ft. rustic home with basement. Wood-burning furnace. Hand-hewn log stairway & beams. 2 baths, everlasting spring water. Secluded, 5 miles to town. 60 miles east of Nashville. Lots of deer, wild turkey. \$175,000, \$75,000 down, owner financing 10%. Jimmy Hendrixson, (615) 597-6957; 444-4166.

NORWOOD, MA — Spacious 1869 Victorian. 9 rooms, 4 BR including king-size master. Many amenities: 1st-floor laundry, possible office space, partially renovated attic, newer kitchen appliances, huge LR with FP, super backyard. \$262,900. MLS exclusive. The Parkers. (617) 449-7744, days; 769-6053, eves.

LOS ANGELES, CA — Restored late Victorian 2-storey. Redwood construction, built 1901, 3800 sq.ft., plus attic & basement. C. 1920 6-car garage, on 65 x 203 R-4 lot. Currently split into 4 units. Annual income \$25,000. \$225,000. (213) 255-2955.



BAY MINETTE, AL — 90% restored 1906 B&B. 5 BR, 4 baths, 2 separate cottages in rear that rent monthly at present. Close to Alabama's only winery, 45 min. to Gulf of Mexico. Opened in July, doing good business. \$149,500 includes most furnishings. Louise Gerald, 501 E. 2nd St., Bay Minette, AL 36507. (205) 937-5322.



LITCHFIELD CO., CT — Finely detailed 1740s/1820s Federal. 11 rooms, 5 BR, 4100 sq.ft. Reproduction wallpapers & lighting fixtures. Wide pine floors, 4 FP, new mechanicals, insulation, low heating costs. Gourmet kitchen, 2 1/2 baths. Restored bi-level carriage house. 200-year-old maples, orchard, 5.6 acres. Brochure. DeBonte, Casey R.E., Kent, CT 06757. (203) 927-3591



CAPE MAY, NJ — B&B. Immaculate Victorian c. 1900. 2 parlors, 1 with gas FP. 2 DR, new kitchen. 6 guest rooms, 4 with private baths, large owners' quarters. Expansion possible. Walk to shops, tours, beaches. Must see. \$350,000. (609) 884-4717.

KINGFIELD, ME — Established B&B in 1840s farmhouse. 8 BR, 2 baths, DR seats 20, sleeps 19. Commercially licensed dining & lodging. Operating 10 years. Perfect husband-&-wife operation. Owner's husband being transferred. Western ME near ski area. 4-season business. \$125,000 partially furnished. (207) 265-2193.

BOSTON, MA — 20 minutes south, in lovely town of Milton. Horse farm. 15-room Colonial. Formal LR, DR. 5 FP, 4 baths, greenhouse, stable, barn, unusual trees, & many extras. Offered at \$850,000. Lisa Gebhardt, Century 21, Excelsior Properties. (617) 698-1770.

ROSLYN, NY — Elegant Greek Revival in Historic District. Double parlors with draperies by the Metropolitan Museum's upholsterer, period carpets by Scalandre. Graining, marbleizing, trompe l'oeil throughout 14 rooms. Porches overlooking ponds & cascades, 1/2-acre formal gardens. Low taxes. \$475,000. (516) 621-8560; 747-8781.



MARIETTA, OH — Historic 150-acre working farm, 12 miles west of town. C. 1890 8-room farmhouse. 4 FP, gas furnace, oak/cherry woodwork, remodelled kitchen, bath. Octagonal 1890s barn, silo, horse barn, arena, granary, summer kitchen, shop, outbuildings. Free gas, royalties, good oil/gas development potential. \$120s. (614) 678-8073.

VERMONT — Former 1792 stagecoach stop & tavern. 16 rooms, 6 BR, ideal B&B. Backyard borders nice trout stream, Green Mountain Nat'l Forest, Appalachian Trail. FP, wide board floors, slate roof, 12-over-8 windows, large attic. 8 acres. Town spring-fed water supply. \$140,000. Herb & Peg Barker, Rt. 17, S. Wallingford, VT 05773. (802) 446-2611.

FORT MADISON, IA — 1848 large brick 2-storey Federal Revival in picturesque small town on banks of the Mississippi. Original oak mantel, hardwood floors throughout. Updated plumbing, heating. 5 BR, 4 baths. Great family home. \$54,900. (701) 237-0220.

CHATHAM, NY — 1800 farmhouse perfect for B&B. 2 1/2 hours NYC, 1/2 hour to Albany & Tanglewood. 6 BR, 4 baths, large LR & DR, 3 porches. Garage, barn, stream, 20 acres. New mechanicals. Insulated. Asking \$275,000. John Staber, Old Chatham, NY 12136. (518) 794-9091; 392-2600.

LEESBURG, TN — Restored home featuring log (1790s) & frame (1840s & 1980s) construction. 2700 sq.ft. of quality materials & craftsmanship provide beauty, comfort, low maintenance. Greenhouse, passive solar sun-rooms, stained glass, hardwood floors, & much more. \$89,000. Colin Robertson, Rt. 6, Jonesborough, TN 37659. (615) 753-5473.

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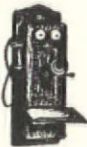
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ONCE A MID-CENTURY Italianate with Gothic details, this house has now entered a twilight zone that exists beyond remuddling. In fact, for once we can applaud the decision to apply substitute siding; it's the only unifying feature for this agglomeration of architectural shapes. What perplexes us is that big round addition -- a skating rink? ... storage for circus carousels? ... the world's biggest jacuzzi? (Thanks to Cathy Anderson of Shokan, New York, for the photos.) -- CG



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