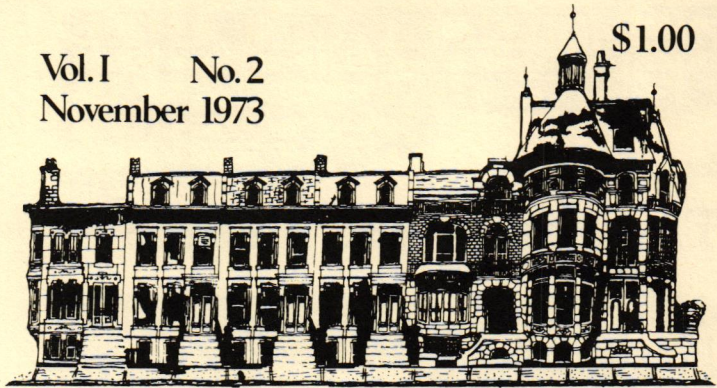


THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House

Refinishing Secrets Of The Boston Museum



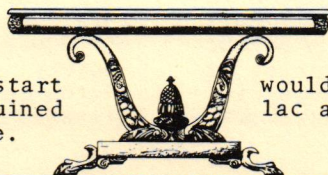
ALTHOUGH THE PRINCIPLES of furniture restoration are relatively simple, everyone—including the experts—makes mistakes from time to time. So it never hurts to go back to the beginning and review the basic rules that a professional restorer uses when he first approaches a fine piece of furniture. Keep in mind that these remarks apply only to pieces that are valuable and worth taking special pains with.

DON'T DO ANYTHING THAT CAN'T BE UNDONE. In the real world, everything changes, shifts and moves. That includes glued joints and surface finishes. So if you have a piece of furniture worth preserving, anything you do today will have to be re-done by you or someone else in 25, 50 or 100 years.

FOR EXAMPLE, synthetic resin glues (such as Elmer's Glue-All) are rarely used on Museum pieces. The aging characteristics of these glues are unknown—as compared with animal glues that have been used on furniture for centuries. And when you have to remove a synthetic glue in order to re-glue a joint—good luck!

THE ANIMAL HIDE AND HOOF glues used at the Museum are water-soluble and can always be dissolved when repairs are necessary. For the same reason, linseed oil finishes or other oil-based varnishes are not used on the Museum's furniture. More on that later.

NEVER IN HASTE. Whether it's a newly-acquired piece you're very excited about, or an old piece you're in a hurry to refinish—take your time. Many fine pieces have been ruined by a too-hurried approach to repair and refinishing. Wait until the excitement or impatience has passed before you start to work. More finishes have been ruined by excessive haste than by ignorance.



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Coming Next Month

HOW TO GET PLASTERED NICELY

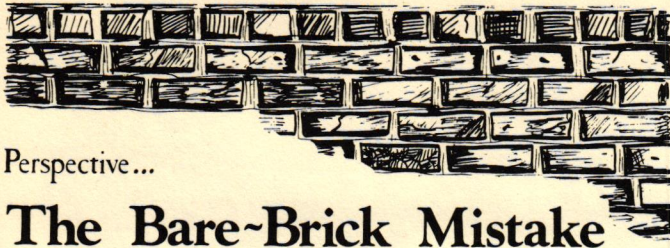


BE CLEAR ON YOUR PURPOSE. There are two extremes in restoring. One extreme is to keep the piece looking as old as possible—with the old dark finish, nicks, dents, burns, broken parts and all. At the other extreme is the desire to make the piece look exactly the way it did the day it was built.

The information in this article was presented at a Preservation Workshop sponsored by The Victorian Society at The Athenaeum in Philadelphia. Conducting the Workshop was Mr. Jonathan Fairbanks, Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He was assisted by Mr. Vincent Cerbone, Furniture Restorer at the Museum.

VICTORIAN FURNITURE provides a good illustration. Victorian furniture makers used the color of the wood as a design element—and many of the woods they used were quite colorful. The pieces were coated with shellac, however, and shellac darkens with age. So the somber shades we associate with Victorian furniture results from the aging of the shellac—not from the intent of the designer. Anyone with a "like new" restoration in mind, therefore, would want to strip off the old dark shellac and apply a new clear finish.

(Continued on p. 10)



Perspective...

The Bare-Brick Mistake

MANY INEXPERIENCED RENOVATORS are enchanted with "exposed brick" as a charming and rustic touch—whether or not the house was originally designed that way.

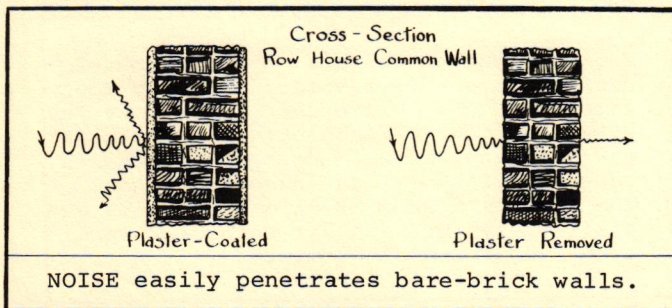
CHIPPING PLASTER OFF A WALL to get down to bare brick seems like a fast, easy and inexpensive way to add charm to a home. In some extreme cases we have seen, "renovating a house" simply means ripping all the plaster off all the walls that have bricks underneath.

BARE BRICKS CAN BE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

FIRST, PLASTER WAS INTEGRAL to the original design of the house. Rushing to make basic alterations that destroy the house's original character and flavor can be a mistake that you will have to live with for many years. Some remodelers think that to make a house look old, it should look crude and primitive. Nothing could be further from the truth. The old-time craftsmen went to great pains to give their work a finished look. Even the old hand-hewn beams that are shown off so proudly in "colonial" houses were originally encased in smooth boards.

SECOND, PLASTER IS A GOOD THERMAL INSULATOR. It definitely is a mistake to remove plaster from an exterior wall. A masonry wall is surprisingly porous—and with only three courses of brick between you and the winter winds, you'll be spending a chilly winter.

THIRD, PLASTER IS A GOOD SOUND INSULATOR. This is especially desirable in row houses. If you



and your next-door neighbor both opt for the bare-brick look on opposite sides of the same wall, you may well find yourself listening to him practice the bassoon every midnight.

SO PAUSE before you take that hammer and cold chisel in your hands. If you are tempted to rip off the plaster because it's too difficult to repair it...WAIT! The December issue of the Journal will be devoted to the techniques of plastering, in which all of your questions will be answered and your self-doubts dispelled. ❀❀

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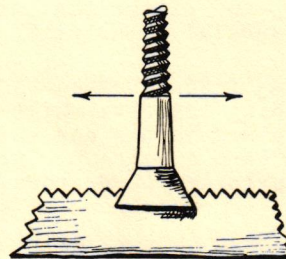
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Logo art: Stanley Skardinski

Recycling Old Brass Screws

DURING RECONDITIONING PROJECTS, the old-house owner frequently ends up with a pile of antique brass screws that he'd like to use again. But the slots in the heads are filled with paint and it's hard to get a grip with a screwdriver.

SOLUTION: Clean the slots out by running them over a hacksaw blade. To avoid skinned knuckles, be sure to run the screw over the blade as shown in the diagram; don't attempt to hold screw in your hand and cut down on it with the saw. You can use emery paper to take paint off the rest of the head.



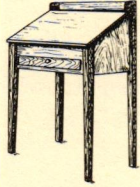
A Home For Your 'Leftovers'

AS YOU RENOVATE YOUR HOUSE, you may find artifacts of an earlier age that have no place in your current scheme of things. Before you throw out these "leftovers," consider...

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA maintains an archive that is collecting samples of old wall-paper, carpets, drapery hardware and just about anything else that would be of interest as part of a "material history" of the 19th century. Any samples should have name, address and date removed affixed to them. Address all queries to: The Victorian Society, The Athenaeum, E. Washington Sq., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.



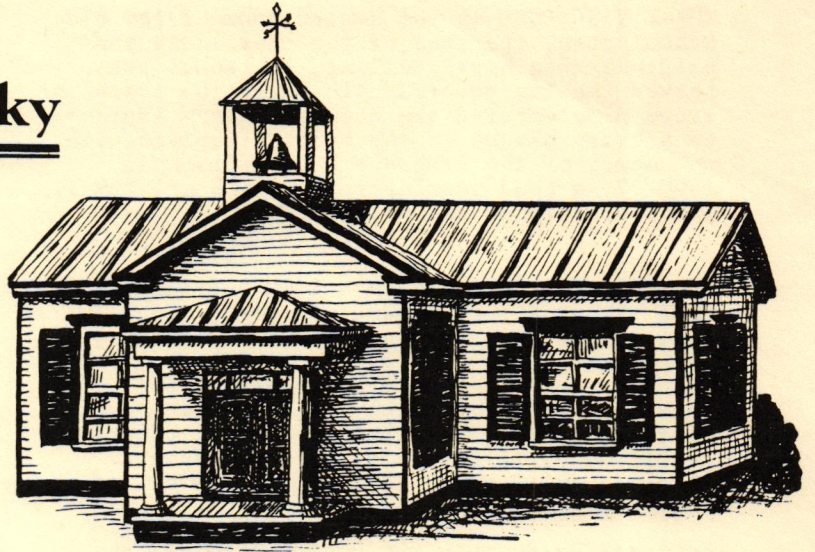
A Schoolhouse In Kentucky



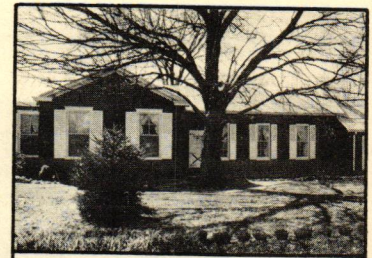
FOR NINETY-ODD YEARS, the high-windowed frame building on Wood Road has been, in one form or another, an integral part of the community of Lyndon, Kentucky, near Louisville.

IT WAS BUILT IN 1882 as Progress School #8, a one-room schoolhouse accommodating all eight grades. Within a year or two, a long second room was added to make a cross-shaped building; a large sliding blackboard served as a divider between the upper and lower schools. The building functioned as Lyndon's schoolhouse until 1936, when a new school was built. The old schoolhouse, with its giant maple tree and 7/8 acre of land was sold at public auction for \$1200.

THE NEW OWNERS installed a number of interior walls and rudimentary plumbing. When Mr. and Mrs. F. E. "Sandy" Wood bought the house in 1944 for \$6,200, it was perfect for them and their three children. The original one room—top bar of the cross—had become two bedrooms, with a family room in the middle, and



then another bedroom and bath. The old school vestibule—the top of the cross—became part of the family room (for many years an area utilized by son Perry's model train layout). The school cloakrooms, (boys to the right; girls to the left) became dressing rooms and closets. The original coat hooks are still on the wall.



Current view of side of ex-schoolhouse.

THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE HAS CHANGED SLOWLY and organically in response to changing family needs. As the children went off to school, the first major structural addition was a long sun-room and office along the back of the house. The addition made it possible for the old schoolhouse to be the place where the Woods lived both their private and professional lives (advertising, law, writing and publishing).

BECAUSE THE SCHOOL BUILDING HAD NO CELLAR, the heating plant had to stay above ground, in a utility room off the back porch. Structural problems prevented running hot air ducts through the floors, so they were installed under the roof instead, with vents in the ceilings. The only other major problem in the history of the house occurred during the years before city water service reached Lyndon and the Woods' water supply was dependent on a cistern and pump. During winter months, the pump had a distressing habit of freezing solid. Mrs. Wood, 5' 3", 100 lbs., was the only person in the family competent to handle a blowtorch and at the same time small enough to squeeze into the accessible work space in the utility room. She has wonderful memories of unthawing the pump at 5:00 a.m. on winter mornings.

(Continued on next page)



Living room mixes Wood's favorite antiques with the school's original board ceiling.