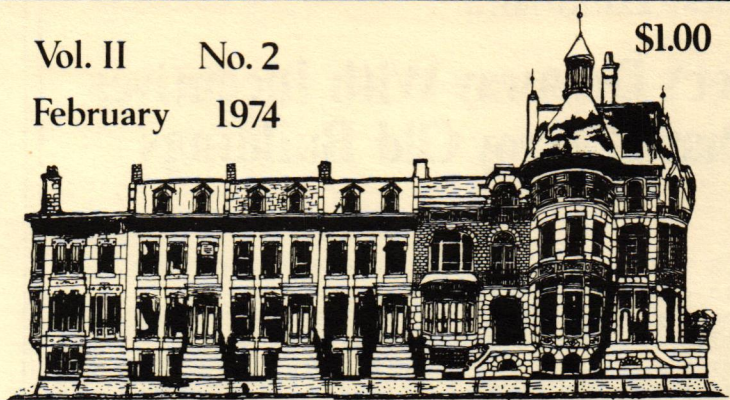


THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House

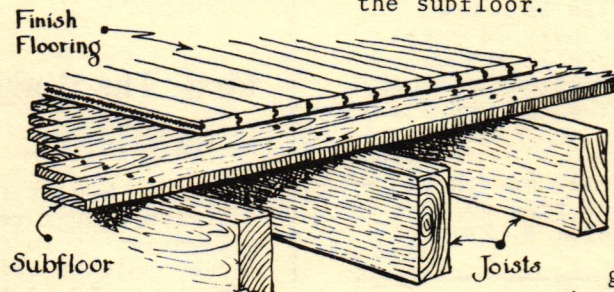
How To Stiffen Sagging Floors

IT'S HARD TO IGNORE a sagging floor. A cracked ceiling can be avoided by never looking up. You can hang pictures over holes in the wall. But a defective floor nags its way into your consciousness continually...the ominous bounce...spongy boards...having to adjust your posture to accommodate the tilt in the floor...these things have an annoying way of calling themselves to your attention.

SO BEFORE YOU START refinishing those lovely old wide plank floors, or restoring that magnificent parquet, make sure that the floor itself is structurally sound. Some of the tilt and wobble may just be part of the house's character; in other cases it may be the signal of real trouble ahead.

IN THIS ARTICLE, we'll review some of the major structural ailments that can afflict old-house floors and what can be done to correct them. In subsequent issues we'll deal with patching and refinishing wooden floors.

THE DIAGNOSTIC TECHNIQUES for identifying floor problems are simple enough; fixing them may be another matter. Rolling a marble or rubber ball across a floor will identify the direction and severity of any



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Coming Next Month

CASTING PLASTER MOLDINGS

sag. Jumping up and down on a floor will tell you if it is adequately supported (if the floor vibrates and the windows rattle, you've got a problem). Walking around a floor will locate any loose and springy boards.

MOST FLOORS HAVE THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS: Supporting joists; subflooring laid at right angles to the joists; and finish flooring at right angles to the subfloor.

A SAGGING FLOOR is the result of a problem with the supporting joists. Only careful inspection can tell you which problem you have. You're lucky if the sag is on the ground floor because it is easy to inspect the underside of the floor from the cellar or from the crawl space under the house.

THE PROBLEM COULD BE AS SIMPLE as the joists having shrunk or sagged a bit.

(Continued on p. 9)

Guest Editorial...

Let's Do Away With Incentives That Destroy Old Buildings

FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS, our news has been so dominated by the energy crisis that we haven't noticed another crisis creeping up: America is running out of building materials. Right now we are critically short of lumber, glass, copper, aluminum, vinyl and steel. We could well find these items being rationed by 1975.



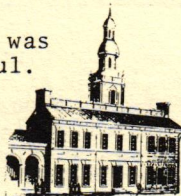
AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM are wasteful building practices that have been encouraged by government policies. Businesses continually move to new buildings in new communities lured by the promise of lower real estate



taxes. In addition, depreciation and accounting practices have artificially reduced the cost of these new buildings to the point where it is often profitable to demolish an old but sound building and erect a new one in its place.

IN MOST AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, fully three-fourths of the structures you'll see are less than 30 years old. Many of these stand on the rubble of older buildings that could have been renovated and modernized using only a fraction of the natural resources that went into construction of the new building.

ARTIFICIAL STIMULATION OF BUILDING was acceptable for America the Bountiful. But now we must reduce our usage of natural resources or find ourselves with rationing, recession or worse. Renovation of old buildings not only uses less material, but it creates ample employment opportunities within the building industry.



TAX LAWS GOT US INTO THIS MESS. Revised tax laws can help us get out. Tax laws now allow depreciating buildings in only 20 years. Lengthen this to 50 years and you'll see an immediate shift from new construction to renovation. Simultaneously, double the tax deduction for building repair.

THESE PROPOSALS aren't a cure-all, but they are a practical first step along the road we must travel, like it or not.-- Lawrence W. Prince

LAWRENCE W. PRINCE, Director of New Business Development for a major U.S. corporation, has restored the Victorian brownstone in which he lives with his family. As a businessman and renovator, he has become keenly aware of the economic forces that are destroying old houses.

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Editor R. A. Clem Labine
Editorial Assistant Carolyn Flaherty
Circulation Director Paul T. McLoughlin
Contributing Editors Martin M. Hechtman
James R. McGrath
Claire Wood

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Logo art: Stanley Skardinski

Notes From The Readers...

More On Secret Passages

To The Editor:

In your article on secret passages in your January issue, you refer to the space between chimneys and framing as unused space. This space is actually a dead-air space to assure that the hot chimney does not ignite the wood framing members and cause a fire. Even modern building codes generally require a minimum of 2 in. between wood framing members and chimneys. If wiring were run through the space next to a functioning chimney, it could be subjected to rather high temperatures. It would be a good idea to check local building codes before running wire or piping in these spaces.



Jay W. Hedden, Editor
Workbench Magazine

First, The Workshop

To The Editor:

Here's a thought for your readers who are just starting a renovation. Although the temptation is to concentrate on the cosmetic projects, I've found that you should give priority to establishing a workshop. This takes great self-discipline, but the time invested will more than pay for itself in the time you don't have to spend searching all over the house for lost tools.

Roger W. Christian
Katonah, N. Y.

Wallpaper In Old Houses

by Carolyn Flaherty

The old-house owner can do a lot to restore the original look and feel of a house with wallpaper. And there are many ways to approach it.

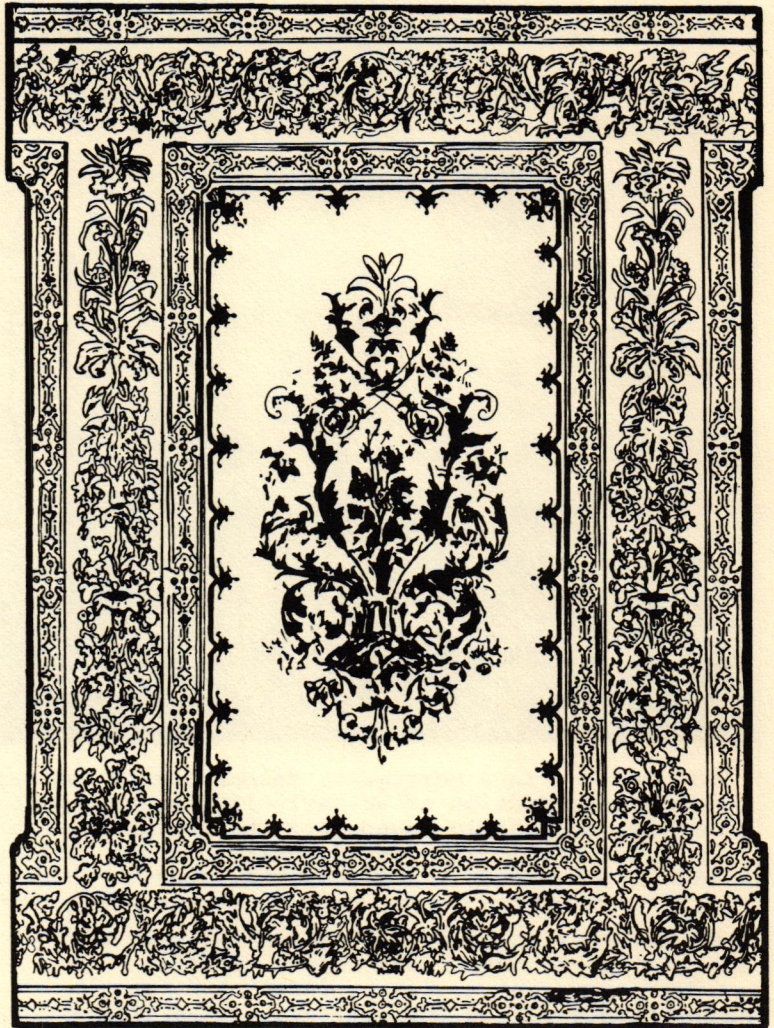
You may be fortunate enough to have an original paper on your walls. If so, experts advise that you do no more to it than dust with a clean paint brush, as chemicals and coatings can ruin an antique paper. Antique papers were often hand painted in tempera or water colors. There are companies that will reproduce an antique design if the piece of original paper is large enough to contain at least one repeat of the pattern.

If you find a piece of an original paper and do not wish to go to the expense of having it reproduced, or if you find only a fragment, there are many historical societies and museums around the country that would appreciate receiving these samples.

There are also firms that carry original antique papers. These designs are often the scenic murals or historical depictions that were so popular in the 19th century, or antique English imported reproductions of Oriental patterns and papers directly from China. Some firms also reproduce antique papers using the old method of hand-blocking, a very time consuming (and expensive) method. Several of these firms are included in the listing on page 5.

More likely, the old-house owner will just want to re-createsome of the original spatial effect and period of the room with a more moderately priced paper, manufactured in the modern way. These wallcoverings, however, because of the attention given to the authenticity of reproduction, will maintain the feeling and period of the house.

The available designs in reproduction papers seem to be preponderantly 18th century. The reasons for this, so far as I can determine, are many. By mid-19th century, when America began mass-producing its own, the enormous



PANEL, PILASTER, AND BORDER
This type of decoration, which divided walls vertically, reached the height of its popularity in the mid-19th century.

popularity of wallpaper led to some rather overdone styles and badly printed paper. As one decorator said, "You really wouldn't want to copy anything done after 1820." This, to me, seems an arbitrary judgement. The wild and wonderful whimsies of the Victorian period express the mood and character of that particular era so forcefully that even its excesses hold a charm and fascination to many of us. Also, it is an attitude that neglects much of the truly fine design done here and abroad in the 19th century.

Another, more practical difficulty with 19th century papers, is that, aside from murals, even the all-over patterns were much larger than the 18th century. Many 19th century houses, particularly the brownstone, had rather grandiose proportions in the formal areas of the house (parlor, dining room) which made these large-scale designs necessary.

And the fashionable mode of dividing walls for decorative effect into horizontal or vertical portions also led to some quite complicated co-