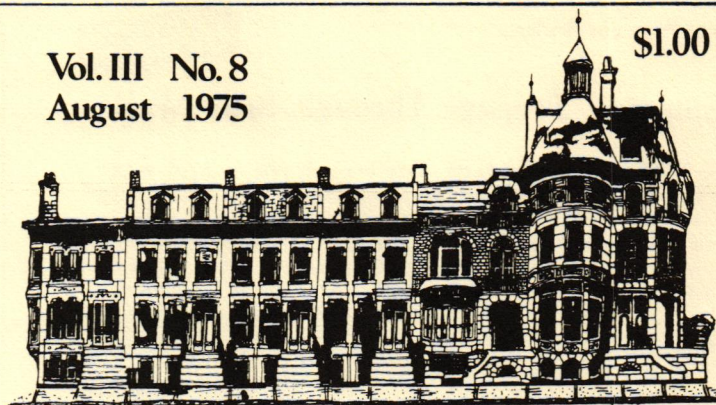


THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House



Paint and Color Restoration



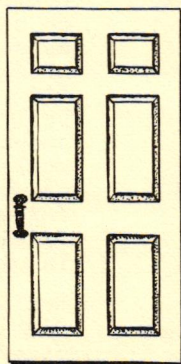
By Frank S. Welsh

WHEN RESTORING AN OLD HOUSE, whether of historical significance or not, the question most often asked by the owner is: "What colors should be used for repainting?" The answer requires some knowledge of the types and colors of paint used in 18th and 19th century architecture.

SIMPLY DEFINED, paint is a liquid consisting of vehicle and pigment, which when applied to a surface dries to become a protective and/or decorative film. White lead, an artificially prepared pigment, has been in use for over 2,000 years.

EARLY PAINTS WERE USED PRIMARILY as a protective coating to retard warp and rot on exterior wooden surfaces. During the Colonial period in North America, the use of good-quality, colorful house paints was limited to the homes of the wealthy. In the late 18th century and into the 19th century, paint raw materials became less expensive. The result was increased architectural usage of paint, with growing interest in its decorative aspects.

PAINTS OF THE 18th and 19th century were either lead-in-oil or water base. The three essential components of 18th century lead-in-oil base paints were: Linseed oil, white lead and coloring pig-



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RESTORING VICTORIAN LIGHTING

ments. Linseed oil is a drying oil obtained from flax seeds. After the seeds are washed, they are ground and heated to extract the oil, which is then refined. Walnut or fish oil could also have been used, but linseed was the most popular and successful of the available oils.

PIGMENTS of the 18th and 19th centuries were mainly imported from Europe. The most popular were the umbers and siennas (both burnt and raw), bone black, french ochre, red iron oxide, prussian blue, verdigris and vermilion. The ingredients were mixed by hand. Using plenty of "elbow grease," the painter first ground his dry pigment with oil, using a mortar and pestle. After he had enough white lead paste prepared, he added more oil to thin it; then the coloring pigments were mixed in. Turpentine, a balsam tree distillate, was not used extensively as a paint thinner until the late 18th century. It wasn't until the end of the 19th century that machinery was developed to produce the first "ready-mixed" paints.

MANY TYPES OF WATER BASE paints were known, the cheapest and most extensively used being whitewash. Whitewash is basically a liquid plaster composed of slaked lime and water. Other additives used were salt, glue, sugar, or rice flour, plus anything to give color such as brick dust, charcoal dust,

(Continued on page 8)



Stopping Seepage Through Brick Walls

ED. NOTE: A number of readers have asked what to do about interior plaster applied directly to brick walls when water seepage from outside is damaging the plaster. Two readers have sent in their own solutions. The first, since it involves less interior upset, seems like the one to try first. If that doesn't work, then the second—more drastic—solution would seem to be in order.

To The Editor:

When we bought our old house, there was considerable water damage in the plaster facing the outside walls. The trouble, we soon found, was that the plaster had been applied directly to the bricks of the exterior walls.

We had a few soft spots in the exterior masonry repointed, but that didn't help—especially when there was wind-driven rain beating against the side of the house. After much research in the neighborhood, we finally found a person with a similar vintage house who had finally (after much trial and error) come up with an answer.

The solution: Silicone sealer applied three times more thickly than the directions specify. Our neighbor told us that he had tried silicone sealer applied according to the label and it hadn't done any good. We have had this "three times thicker" coating on the walls for two years now and it seems to have corrected the problem—although we expect to have to re-apply more sealer in another year or two.

Anthony Hanson
Rochester, N.Y.

To The Editor:

Water seepage through one of our exterior brick walls was defying our best efforts to locate and cure the problem. One by one we ruled out water pipes, the roof, downspouts and cracks in the brickwork as sources of the moisture. We finally concluded the water was coming through the bricks themselves. Silicone sealer on the outside gave very little improvement.

Since the problem seemed especially bad on the ground floor, it raised the probability that at least part of the problem was "rising damp"—ground moisture being drawn up through the brickwork by capillary action. We had started to consider nailing furring strips to the wall and building a whole new interior surface, with an air space between the new plaster and the old brick wall. But that seemed like a lot of work—and we hated to lose that additional 6" of space in an already small room.

A workable solution was finally offered by a local mason. It was messy—but it worked. His procedure involved chipping off all the old plaster in the affected area, taking it right down to the brick. He then applied a coating of cement stucco (he used the pre-mixed mortar that comes in bags) about 3/8 in. thick. After letting the coating set for

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about 30 min., he scratched the surface with an old piece of wire lath to leave the surface rough. The next day, he wet down the first coating and applied a second layer of mortar stucco, bringing it to within 1/8 in. of the level of where the finish plaster coat would be. (He told us that if the moisture problem had been especially bad, he would have used three thinner coats instead of two.)

He roughened the second coat with the wire lath again, and about 24 hours later he applied a finish coat of plaster to the stucco. Although we had to put up with all the plaster dust and mess that this procedure generated, it did eliminate the problem of moisture seepage through the interior plaster.

Patricia Santulli
Philadelphia, Pa.

National Conference on Urban Restoration

THE ST. PAUL HILTON on Sept. 26-29 will be the site of the second national "Back To The City" Conference. This year's conference will focus on conserving the physical character as well as socio-economic diversity of old neighborhoods. Also to be discussed: Effects of public policy on restoration efforts, and the experiences—successful and unsuccessful—of a number of communities throughout the country. Workshops will be offered on the repair and maintenance of historic structures, techniques for making neighborhood associations more effective, and reviving business districts in old areas.

Registration is \$75. Contact Joanna Baymiller, Old Town Restorations, 158 Farrington St., St. Paul, MN 55102. Tel. (612) 224-8134.

RECYCLING RENAISSANCE IN BOISE

By Alan Minskoff

THE LOGAN/TWILEGAR HOUSE is but one example of a recycling renaissance occurring in Boise, Idaho. Ron and Betsy Twilegar live in the large, lovely Queen Anne house painted a soft gray with charcoal gray trim and a black shingle roof.

THIS ASYMMETRICAL AND MYSTERIOUS looking house, that has had fewer than a half-dozen owners, has always been something of a curiosity. At the time it was built, the location, away from the more fashionable Warm Springs Avenue mansions in east Boise, was considered out in the country. In the first decades of the 20th century one could see herds of cattle and sheep pass by the 11th Street residence on their way to graze in the hills to the north.

THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE has three gables that are right angles and one shallow, irregular dormer projects from the roof. A red brick

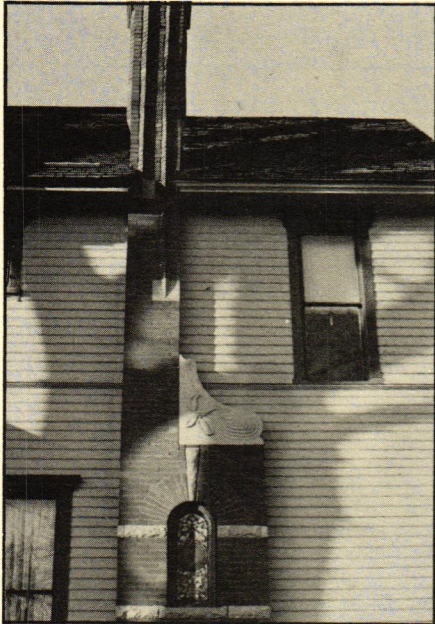


chimney with a leaded glass window inset doglegs up the south side of the house, while a beautiful, long, semi-circular and narrow glass window protrudes off the north side.

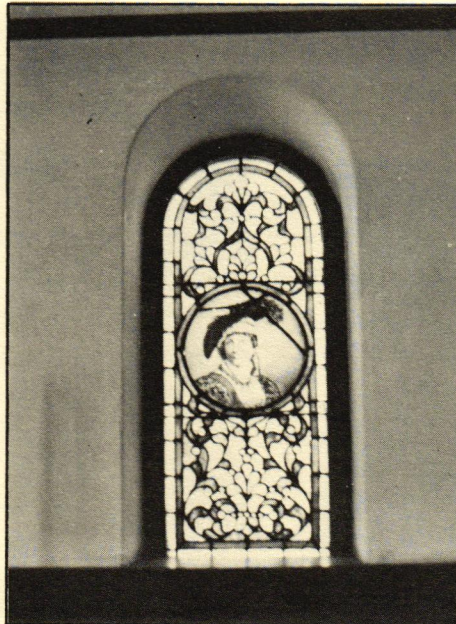
A CLASSICAL PEDIMENT is supported by the white Tuscan columns of the front porch. White fluted pilasters trim the windows and there is a topless turret (actually a round bow) on the south side of the house.

LOGAN, mayor of Boise three times, had the house built in 1892. Eighty three years later the general features of the exterior remain intact. The years have brought some changes to the interior, but thanks to an intelligent and sympathetic restoration, the house reflects its era but has no museum mustiness about it.

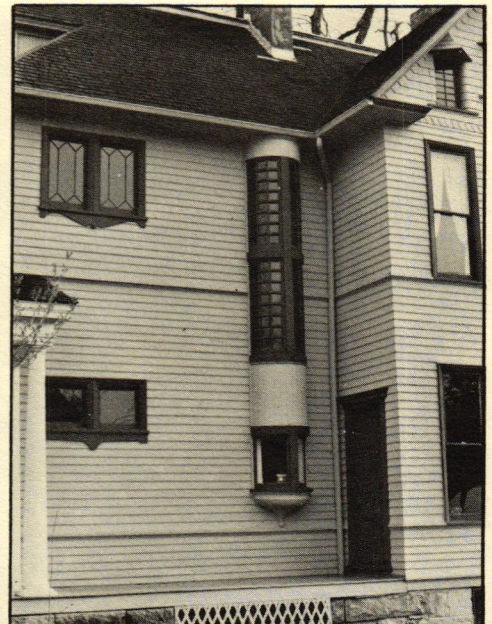
THE TWILEGARS MOVED IN in October 1972, the restoration process has been straightforward.



The unusual red brick dogleg chimney has a stained glass inset and a uniquely decorated bracket.



The leaded glass window with stained glass portrait inset as seen from the interior of the house.



The long, semi-circular bow window is original to the house despite its almost modern appearance.