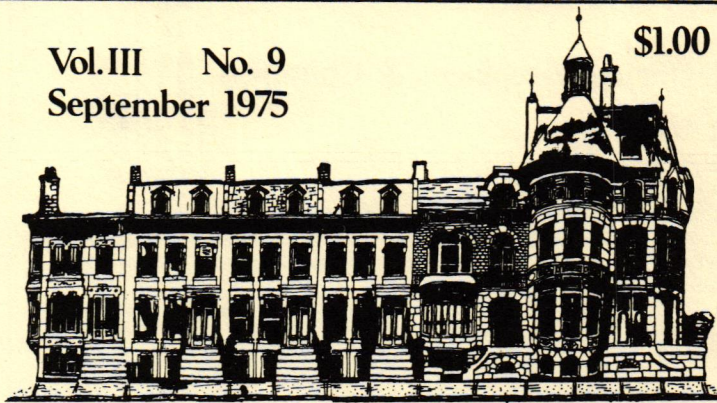


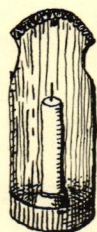
THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Vol. III No. 9
September 1975

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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House



Re-Creating The Effect Of Colonial Plaster Walls

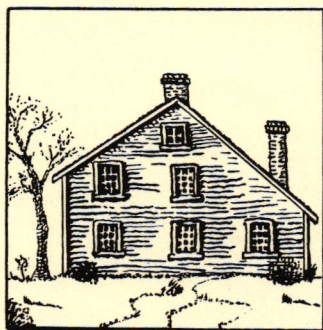
By Jack R. Cunningham, The Saltbox
Rohrerstown, Pennsylvania

WHEN WE FIRST MOVED INTO OUR 1830 Saltbox, we did some things in our youthful enthusiasm that we wished later we hadn't. So we have been slowly going about setting aright some of our early mistakes.

THE HOUSE HAD BEEN COMPLETELY "REMUDDLED" into a semi-Victorian semi-contemporary house. Since there was so little of the original detailing left, we have been reconstructing a "what might have been" house, based on our study of homes of a similar period. The style, if we should give it a name, might be "rural American country dwelling."

THE PARTICULAR MISTAKE that was giving me a headache recently was in the kitchen. About 7 years ago, I had panelled the kitchen with an inexpensive grooved hardboard. (Well, at that time I didn't know!) My motives then were quite pure. We had an insulation problem with the kitchen, and I had figured that the 3/4 in. air space behind the furred-out panelling would help. It did—but it sure didn't look very authentic.

I HAD PREVIOUSLY HAD good luck in simulating the look of old rough plaster on some new sheet-rock partitions, and it occurred to me that the same procedure might work equally well on those hideous hardboard panels. It worked out so well



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Coming Next Month

RE-CREATING GINGERBREAD

that I wanted to share my technique with other readers of The Journal who might be facing a similar problem.

FIRST, I painted the panels with a flat white oil-base paint to cover the blue that had previously been applied. Then I trowled on a thin skim-coat of "simulated plaster," which was in fact a thick mixture of joint compound—the kind you use on the seams in plaster-board partitions. I always use the dry powder and mix it myself to the desired consistency. (It costs about \$4.00 per 25-lb. bag.) You can also get it premixed, but it is more expensive this way—and you have to work with it as it comes from the can; you can't adjust consistency the way you can when you mix your own.

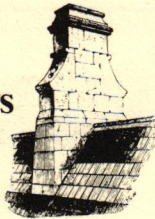
ONE GREAT THING about joint compound is that it stays moist and workable for a long time.

If you make up a large batch, you can even keep it overnight by just covering it with a damp cloth.

THE JOINT COMPOUND should be the consistency of thick mud so that it doesn't ooze off your trowel. Compound can be applied to the wall with a wide-bladed (6 in. or wider) joint knife or a cement trowel that has some flexibility in the blade. Work about a 2 ft. square area at a time. A wide

(Continued on page 8)

Restoring Fireplaces & Chimneys



To The Editor:

Here are some additional comments on the article about restoring fireplaces (July 1975). Anyone doing such a restoration should carefully examine the walls and floor around the suspected opening for measurements and moulding profiles of the original mantel. This may yield some valuable information that will help you locate a replacement that is appropriate for the house.

In rebuilding the firebox, it's not worth using portland cement mortar if the fireplace will get much use. The heat will erode ordinary mortar within a year. It's much better to use fireclay.

Flues, as you noted, should be thoroughly checked for soundness. Smoke bombs—such as those used by heating and air-conditioning personnel—can be a big help. Close all known openings in the chimney—including the top. A smoke bomb then placed in the stopped-up chimney will quickly show all its leaks. Such smoke bombs should be available at local heating & air conditioning supply houses.

Defective flues—if they are straight—can often be relined with stainless steel liners slipped in from the top. This is considerably easier than inserting chimney tiles. Stainless liners can be made up by most sheet-metal shops. Strength can then be added to the chimney by packing the area between the liner and the brickwork with air-entrained cement. This locks the whole assembly together without adding undue weight.

Chimneys that have not been used for many years should also be checked for electric wires, pipes, etc., that might have been run through them. Failure to check out this possibility could lead to some very unpleasant surprises.

Richard O. Byrne
Restoration Consultant
Mineral Point, Wis.

More On Matching Paint

To The Editor:

In the editing of my article on paint restoration (August 1975) a couple of alterations were made that could lead to misunderstandings.

The areas (1 to 2 sq. in.) that are suggested to be exposed on the painted surfaces are for general color perception—not "to determine the color of the first finish coats with some degree of precision."

There is a degree of uncertainty in determining the original color due to relative discolorations of mediums and pigments, etc. There is absolutely no uncertainty in matching any color to a Munsell chip.

The concept of finding the paint samples with the least amount of surface discoloration was

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Contributing Editors	Claire Wood Labine James R. McGrath R. A. Labine, Sr.
Advertising Representative	Curtis Dewees

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omitted. These are found in all the cracks and corners where the wet paint, when first applied, could have dripped behind and/or accumulated to form small globules.

Frank S. Welsh
Ardmore, Pa.

Cracks Between Floorboards—Cont'd.

To The Editor:

Cracks between floorboards allowing cold air to seep up from cellar or crawl space are a common problem in New England. A 12 to 18 in. wide board may move as much as half an inch between summer and winter. Some of my floorboards still move winter and summer, although they are close to 200 years old.

I suggest two approaches. First, thoroughly windproof the crawl space and heat it. For those with hot-water heat, it is relatively simple to re-route one of the hot-water pipes through the crawl space and to put a heating fin in the line. Careful sealing of the foundation is also called for. Second, for fillers one might consider using silicone caulking agents on the underside of the floor. These silicone agents are not cheap, but are waterproof, bond well and retain flexibility. They are ordinarily used in difficult glass glazing applications.

Silicone caulks are made by Dow, G.E and Rhoda-seal. At six dollars a tube, the cost will mount up. But there's no easy way to get a New England farmhouse tight.

S. P. Browning III, M.D.
Norwich, Conn.

Victorian Lighting Fixtures

The Journal's Old-House Living feature is usually about a house that people live in. In this issue, our subject is a museum house that is presently undergoing restoration. Part of this process has been the re-creating and restoration of Victorian lighting fixtures. The general information on the lighting of the period and the specific examples of restored fixtures in the Glenn House will greatly aid the old-house owner who is also trying to restore Victorian lighting.

By Tom H. Gerhardt

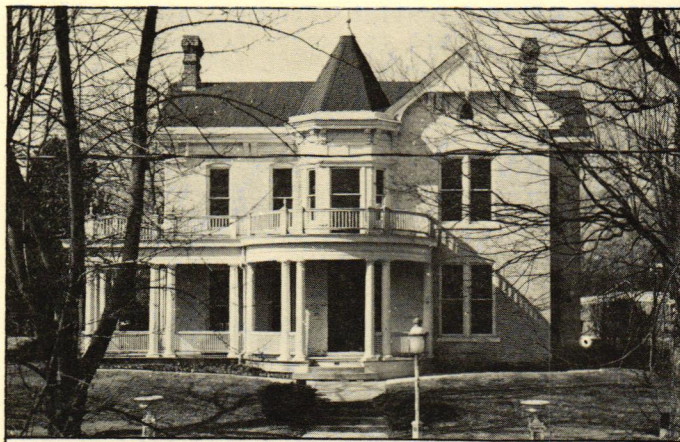
THE GLENN HOUSE, when it was built about 1800, had kerosene lighting, as the plaster ceiling rosettes had hooks in them and there was no evidence of gas piping. In the 1890's, the large front porch and tower were added. Also, the house was wired for electricity at this time; throughout the upstairs rooms, floorboards were found replaced with woodscrews, indicating that the house had been wired after it was built.

THIS ALSO GREATLY aided the electrician in rewiring the house, as he knew which floorboards to lift. Because of the alterations made to the house in the 1890's, this is the restoration period. Therefore, the fixtures could be either early electric or kerosene and electric combined for the restoration.

Period Of Lighting

IN ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES FOR lighting the old house, I think that the first thing the old-house owner should do is to assess the period of lighting in the house. If the original fixtures still remain, he is lucky and should proceed to the restoration of them, if restoration is necessary.

IF THE HOUSE IS COLONIAL, then the lighting should be restored as such. Unfortunately, lighting is often one of the most neglected areas in house restoration and often (with ridiculous results) we find Colonial fixtures (because they are readily available) in Victorian houses. In the United States, most Victorians used gas, kerosene, and/or elec-



The Glenn House, built about 1880, is the headquarters of the Historical Association of Greater Cape Girardeau.

tricity in their lighting fixtures—no candles!

THE RESTORATION that requires Colonial lighting fixtures is an easier route than the Victorian restoration, as many fine reproductions are made of the Colonial candle fixtures. This may be traced back to the early twenties when electric candle fixtures again became widely used.

NOW, THE VICTORIAN old-house owner really has problems if his original lighting fixtures are missing or if he needs glassware for them. Some gas and electric shades are satisfactorily reproduced; but a satisfactory reproduction of the actual fixtures themselves has not been produced, as Victorian fixtures are very detailed and ornate. Also, the demand for the fixtures has not been great enough to warrant satisfactory reproductions. So, the best thing for the Victorian old-house owner to do is to scout antique shops, junk stores, etc., looking for fixtures, glassware, pieces, and parts to replace missing fixtures and glassware.

Level Of Lighting

OF COURSE, many old-house owners want good lighting instead of the mediocre lighting of yesterday. It must be decided whether decorative lighting or utilitarian lighting is necessary in a room.

COLONIAL ELECTRIC-CANDLE lighting fixtures often pose major problems for use in utilitarian lighting, as flame-type bulbs in high wattages (they are not really made over sixty watts) often cause a great glare. Of course, a compromise can be made with these lighting fixtures by the addition of a small metal or silk shade over the bulb—allowing the candle to show—to cut down on the glare of the light bulb. However, these shades are not authentic, as they were really forced into popularity around World War I, before the decorative bulbs were extensively manufactured. Supplementary lighting, such as table and floor lamps, and ceiling beam lights will often allow the homeowner to use decorative lighting in rooms that also require utilitarian lighting.

MOST VICTORIAN LIGHTING FIXTURES required the use of glass shades (because of the more intensive light sources), which is an asset in using greater wattage lamps. These shades cut down on glare, with the fixtures still remaining authentic. Therefore, the Victorian fixtures can be decorative and can also be somewhat utilitarian without making a sacrifice in authenticity. Again, decorative lighting can be assisted by the aforementioned supplementary lighting sources.

Victorian Lighting Fixtures

BEING THAT VICTORIAN LIGHTING fixtures were much more diverse in fuel and design, much more complicated in design, and were used in more complicated arrangements, I think that the Victorian homeowner really needs greater help than the Colonial homeowner in lighting.

DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA, lighting fixtures using gas, kerosene, and/or electricity, or a combination of these were generally available as follows: Post lamps for street and yard lighting, chandeliers, wall brackets, single drop lights for alcoves and hallways, portables (table lamps), newel post lights (usually a statue on the bottom of the stair rail), and beam lights (usually restricted to electricity as they were placed on the ceiling in the corners of the rooms as supplemental lighting).

IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON for a room to have a center chandelier, wall brackets, alcove lights (such as in a bay window), and beam lights (if electricity was used). It seems that lights were much more evenly distributed through the room than today's modern single fixture in the ceiling. In the electric age in larger Victorian homes, it was not uncommon for a room to have over twenty light bulbs at the previously mentioned sources. And, by distributing smaller wattage light bulbs around in these types of fixtures, the Victorian homeowner can often bring the level of lighting up to utilitarian levels without glare.

FIXTURE FINISHES were often made in iron, white metal, brass, bronze, ormolu (a rough brass resembling gold), and oxidized copper. It is often easy to tell American fixtures from European fixtures because of the mechanics and design. European fixtures were extremely fancy and usually always made in larger cast sections (which means that they are very difficult to disassemble). American fixtures were always made in many small detachable parts.

EUROPEAN FIXTURES also made extensive use of ormolu coatings for finishes, whereas American fixtures would usually only highlight certain parts with ormolu. Fixtures with prisms were also made to a certain extent; however, most of them had bronze or brass frames. The prism fixtures in the late Victorian Era were more of the exception than the rule. Most Victorian fixtures were suspended on pipes rather than chains as the Colonials did. This was really a product of the necessity of gaslight fixtures having a supply pipe.

AN OFTEN PUZZLING SITUATION to those not acquainted with Victorian lighting is the use of fixtures featuring combinations of the various lighting fuels. This was particularly typical when a Victorian house was wired for electricity, which was available from 1870's on. The generators only ran in the evening hours (in some areas this situation existed up to the twenties), and there were many breakdowns. Therefore, electricity was often installed in existing houses and combined on fixtures with gas or kerosene lamps, allowing the latter to remain for emergency purposes. New Victorian houses wired from the beginning often featured the use of combination gas and electric fixtures that were stock made and very widely accepted.

Determining Appropriate Fixtures

BECAUSE THE VICTORIAN ERA had so many diverse fixtures and fuels available, this is a guide to aid the Victorian homeowner in determining what kind of lighting fixtures are appropriate.

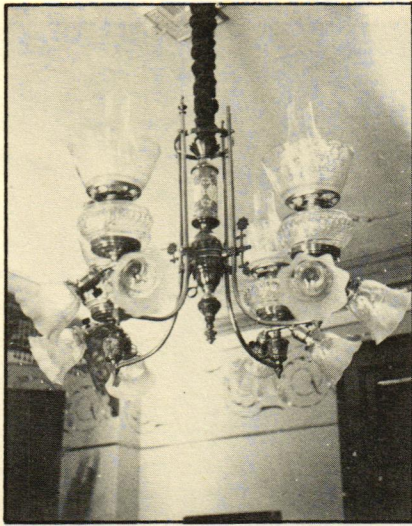
For Victorian houses built prior to 1880—

► **Detective work:** The homeowner should look under existing fixtures for gas pipes (if fixtures have been replaced, they are often attached to existing gas pipes). Cellars and attics are also good places to look for gas pipes. And, just because a Victorian residence was not located near a public gas plant does not mean that it could have not had a home gas plant. If no gas pipes are found, then the house was probably lighted by kerosene (this will especially show itself in hooks, if they still remain where the new light fixtures are.)

► **Fixtures used:** Prior to 1880, fixtures, either kerosene or gas, were widely produced in iron and white metal, and were cast in most instances. The use of brass and bronze, however, was emerging more and more. Fixtures were also much more massive during this period and often employed the use of ceramic ornaments. The shades were mostly etched glass in beautiful designs. Even kerosene fixtures used gas shades around the chimneys to cut down the glare of the light.

For Victorian houses built from 1880 to 1900—

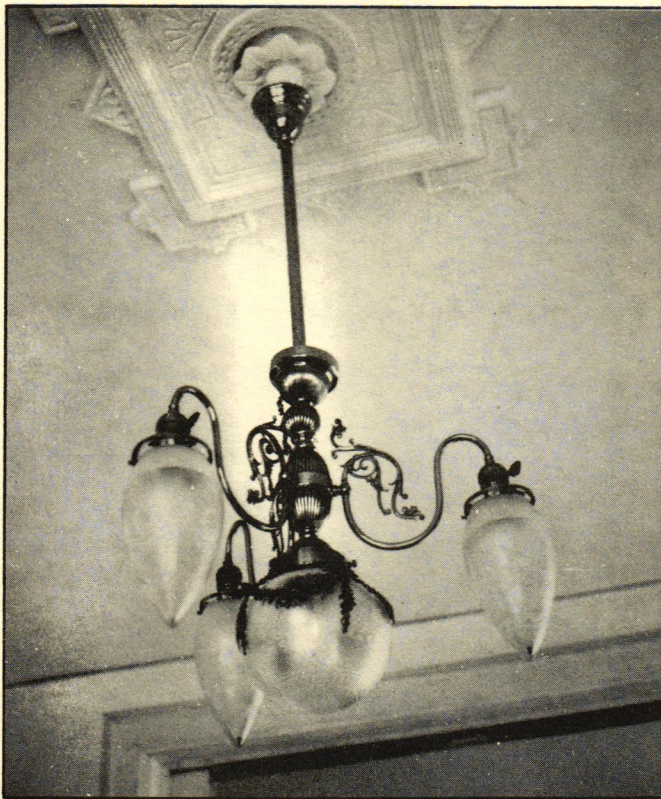
► **Detective work:** This Victorian homeowner has to be a first-class Sherlock Holmes, as the original lighting source could have been gas, electricity, kerosene, or any combination of these. Again, the first thing to do is to look under existing fixtures to determine if there are gas pipes. If yes, then it is known that gas was used for lighting. Then, determine the date electricity arrived in the locality and compare this date with when the house was erected. Usually the house will have had combination gas and electric fixtures if it was possible for electricity to be installed when it was built. If there are no gas pipes and electricity was not available when the house was erected, then the house was probably lighted by kerosene. Sometimes when electricity was added later, it was



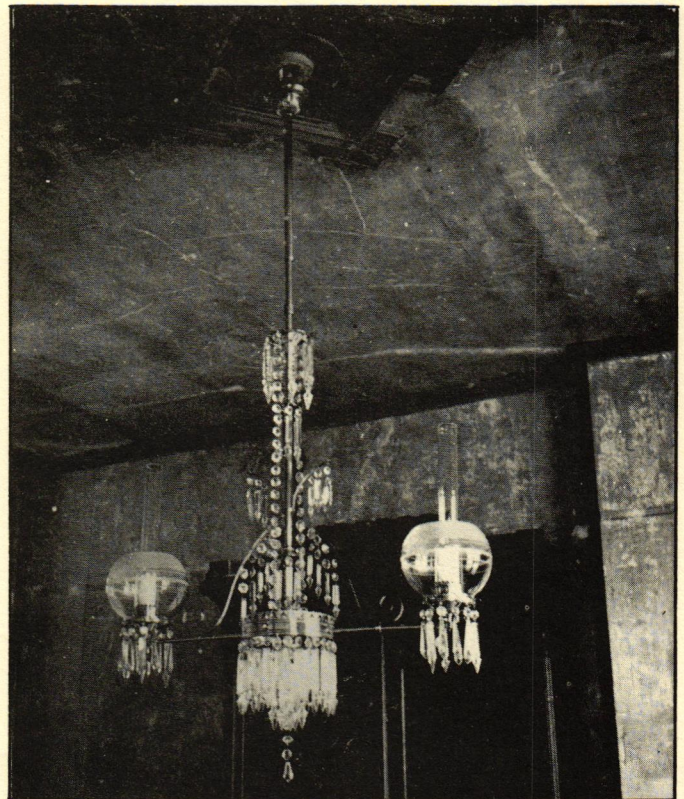
(1) Many fixtures were completely missing in the house. For the library, a kerosene fixture such as the house was first lighted by was obtained from a junkpile just before it was allowed to ruin. It has blue ceramic ornaments on it. After disassembling the parts, straightening them, and cleaning them (it is brass)—it was reassembled. Glass founts for the kerosene part had to be obtained as well as all of the shades (gas and electric.) Electricity was added as it would



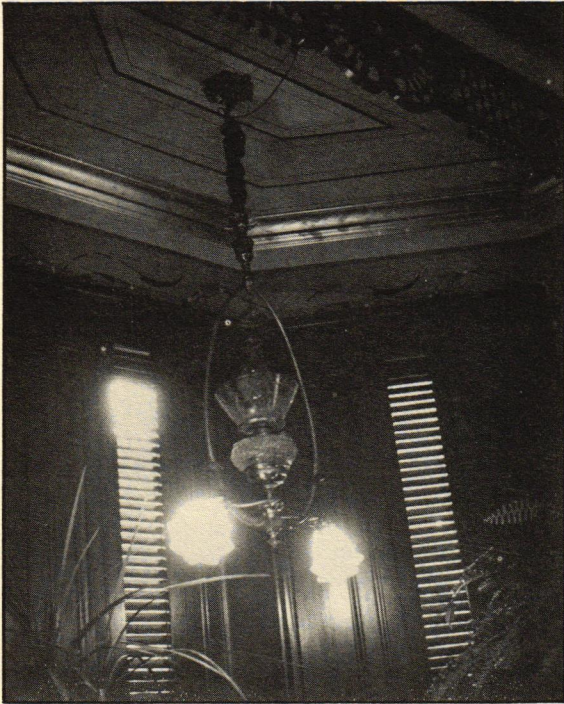
have been in the 1890's for a combination effect. Kerosene can still be burned. (2) This shows the library fixture from a distance. The pipe is covered with a stocking of velvet, which was typical of the period. With the addition of electric lights to the library fixture, we tried to have enough bulbs, because for restoration purposes we have to use reproductions of early carbon bulbs and yet have enough light. Ten lights on the fixtures is ample for displaying the room.



(1) One of the original early fixtures that was placed in the house during the 1890's. The brass, coated with many coats of paint, has been polished. It is very similar to a gaslight fixture in that it is suspended on a pipe. The globes are wreath and torch, and the outer pointed ones are replacements for the originals that were missing (the center



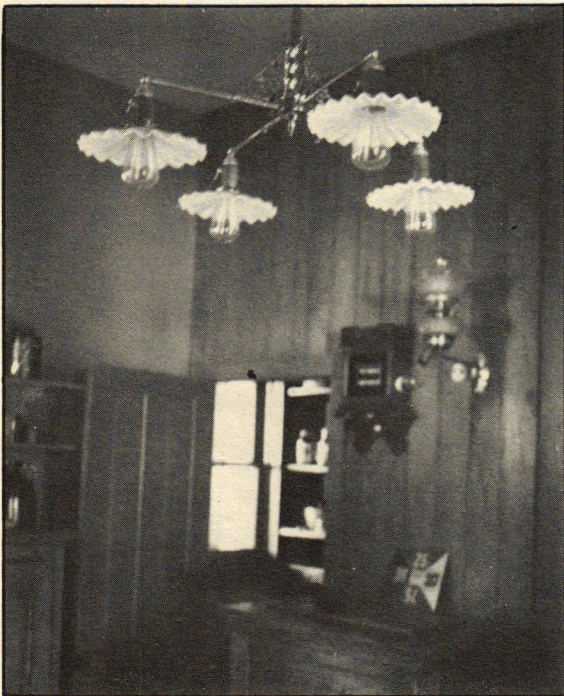
one survived.) (2) The missing dining room fixture was replaced with an 1870's crystal gaslight converted to electricity. It represents typical styling of prism fixtures before the turn of the century. They sure do not look like much without the prisms. These same frames were also often used in the construction of prism kerosene fixtures.



(1) Again, there was a problem of matching fixture construction to other missing fixtures in the same room. In the library, this bay window fixture was constructed to match the center chandelier by using old parts, matching shades, and a blue ceramic ornament.



(2) The fixture in an upstairs bedroom was also missing. This unusual iron kerosene fixture, with electricity added, was found and restored. The center lamp on the fixture pulls up and down. Matching wall fixtures, with shades and founts were found.



(1) The center fixture in the kitchen was located in an old building in the city. Fixtures from well-known places in the area are often interesting as replacements for missing lights. The center fixture in the kitchen was at one time acetylene gas; it has been restructured into an early electric fixture with the use of flat milk glass petticoat shades. Wall brackets provided emergency



lighting with kerosene. Note the use of the reproductions of early electric bulbs—a must for proper restoration of a house museum but not a restoration for living. (2) This is an example of the oxidized early electric copper fixture. It came from an old house in Cape Girardeau. It is now in the pantry, added at the turn of the century, in the Glenn House. Notice the stripes.

added to the kerosene lights in a combination manner; but the manufacture of combination kerosene-electric lights was never undertaken on a wide scale.

SOMETIMES, IN RARE CASES, a house was totally wired for electricity from the beginning in this era, with no provision being made for emergency lighting fixtures. Usually, this can be determined by finding no evidence of kerosene or gas lighting and no evidence that floorboards have been sawed and raised to install wiring, as would have been done in a house wired after it was built (these floorboards, interestingly, were always supposed to be put back with wood screws).

► Fixtures used: Electric, gas, kerosene, and combination fixtures were all being made during this period. And, much to the amazement of some, it is very possible that a particular early electric fixture could have been produced twenty years before a particular kerosene fixture. Fixtures were becoming beautifully light and airy, as the use of iron and white metal was being discarded in favor of brass and bronze. Also, less parts were being cast; more parts were being shaped out of sheet brass or bronze. Some shades were being made of swirled opalescent glass and vaseline glass. Combination fixtures had gas shades and electric shades (smaller than gas shades) that matched.

For Victorian houses built from 1900 to 1910—

► Detective work: Again, depending on the locality, fixtures could have been gas, kerosene, electric, or combination. The same methods of examining the house should be used as given in the previous explanation.

► Fixtures used: Some very beautiful fixtures were still being made; however, they were also returning to the massiveness of prior years with the use of fixtures made from square brass stock (these often even followed through with square glass shades). A new finish entered the picture around this time—oxidized copper. Much art glass was also used in shades and fixtures (the Tiffany-type domelights really became popular.) Many gas jets started to be disguised with milk glass candles, as they became more and more decorative, and really for emergencies only. Some fixtures even relinquished the glass shade for the electric bulb, which was occasionally becoming available in more ornamental styles.

Restoring Fixtures

IF THE OLD-HOUSE OWNER desires to refinish existing lighting fixtures, he must first take note of the finish. The iron fixtures will usually have to be repainted black; if fixtures are white metal, they usually can be polished to a dull pewter-like finish. Occasionally, fixtures were silver plated; if the plating is not heavy, these usually have to be replated. Removing the lacquer and testing a spot with silver polish will tell the story as to the condition of the finish.

IF THE FIXTURE is brass or bronze, it can be

polished brightly, depending on the condition of the finish. I prefer to soak the fixture (after disassembling it and removing all wiring and socket interiors) in Mr. Clean first, testing each day to see if the parts are ready to polish. Then, I polish them with Semichrome polish. Caution must be taken, however, to use Mr. Clean in a non-metal container (not plastic either) and to make sure that no iron parts are in with the brass. There is some type of reaction when other metals are present with the brass in Mr. Clean. The Mr. Clean usually strips off the old lacquer and the hard tarnish, which the brass polish is not at all designed to do.

OF COURSE, the first thing to do after polishing the brass or bronze is to lacquer the pieces once more to prevent tarnishing. Illinois Bronze makes several good spray lacquers for this process.

OXIDIZED COPPER was a very popular finish around the turn of the century. It looked like a leopard's spots and was highly utilitarian because the finish was striped black and copper, and additional tarnish did not show. Most of these fixtures are brass. They have been further copper plated, polished, and then sprayed with an oxidizer in spots. To restore this type of finish is tricky; however, usually one can use paint remover to remove the old lacquer and relacquer the finish. This does an awful lot toward restoring the finish. However, never use steel wool, Mr. Clean, or brass polish on this finish or the spots will be ruined.

The Glenn House

THERE ARE MANY FASCINATING RESTORATION projects underway at the Glenn House. White paint is being laboriously chipped off woodwork and doors to uncover one hundred year old gaining. Stencilling has been uncovered and restored, and shutters have been reproduced. The Glenn House is a restoration project of The Historical Association of Greater Cape Girardeau, Inc., 912 Karau Lane, Cape Girardeau, Missouri 63701.



Because the restoration at Glenn House is so interesting, we have asked Mr. Gerhardt to do another Old-House Living feature for The Journal. It will appear in an upcoming issue. --Ed.

Tom H. Gerhardt is First Vice President of the Historical Association of Greater Cape Girardeau. His hobby, since 1958, is collecting and restoring Victorian lighting fixtures—particularly gas and gas and electric combinations. He is also working on his doctorate in Business Education at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.



Restored kitchen at the Saltbox contains—in addition to its newly antiqued walls—a mixture of old pieces (the corner cupboard, dry sink and wall cabinet) plus reproductions created for the Saltbox collection.

(Colonial Walls—Cont'd. from p. 1)

range of textures and effects can be obtained, from smooth to Spanish stucco (if that's what you like). To create a realistic old plaster wall effect, you try for a generally smooth appearance, with scratches, bumps and gentle waves here and there. Ideally, you should have a look at a real old plaster wall before trying to sculpt your own.

FREQUENT "CAT-TAILS" will be created by the edge of your trowel. Some of these should be left, as they can be very effective in giving the over-all antique effect. Build-up should be 1/8 in. to 3/16 in. at the very most. In many cases I've gone from almost nothing to a 1/8-in high spot in the same general area. I create this variable-thickness effect by sticking a glob of joint compound about the size of a fist onto the wall and then work it out: Left to right, up and down... with most of the finishing being done with the vertical strokes. Once you start, you'll find the strokes pretty quickly that will give the effect you want.

ANY ROUGH SPOTS that you don't like once the material is dry can be sanded, or else smoothed over with a damp sponge.

WHEN DRY, the surface should be painted with a flat oil-base paint. I like to use a stiff 4-in. brush, spreading the paint on rather generously, because I only use one coat. It's not necessary to have complete paint coverage in all the little dents and valleys... in fact it's better to have a few little skips here and there when you're using an off-white paint as I was. The joint compound has a rather pleasant beige color when dry. So the skips here and there create subtle highlights in the surface and enhance the old appearance.

THE PAINT I USED was a warm off-white called "Candle Lite." I had it mixed expressly for The Saltbox by a large paint manufacturer after testing and rejecting literally dozens of shades of white. I find that "Candle Lite" gives a warm glow to the room and helps bring

out the colors in furniture and other decorations.*

THIS SAME BASIC PROCEDURE has been used with good results on plasterboard. Although I can't make any guarantees about longevity, I have nailed and screwed into a wall finished in this fashion with no problems. And since the joint compound seems to stick well for many years to plasterboard seams, there seems good reason to believe that my antiqued walls will similarly last for many, many years.

*Candle Lite paint is available only through The Saltbox. It sells for \$14.95 per gal. plus postage. Jack says he'll send Journal readers a sample on plasterboard for a 50¢ postage and handling charge. Contact him at: The Saltbox, 2229 Marietta Pike, Rohrerstown, Pennsylvania 17603.

Jack Cunningham is dedicated to the preservation of the old-time crafts. His personal specialty is the re-creation of Early American lighting fixtures. Both his lighting fixtures and his house will be featured in upcoming issues.

Gentle Restoration Of Furniture Finishes

MANY OLD PIECES OF FURNITURE with natural finishes that seem to be candidates for the stripping tank may in fact only need to have the finish restored. On fine pieces especially, it's far more desirable to revive the original finish than to strip and refinish. If the finish is smooth and not badly alligatored, chances are it can be rescued. Such defects as dirty dark color, scratches, dullness and cloudiness can often be remedied by the proper cleaning and/or restoring.

VARNISH OR OIL FINISHES should first be cleaned with mineral spirits or turpentine to remove any wax. Finish is then rubbed down with 3/0 steel wool...always following the grain of the wood. Finally, you can build up the surface with a thin linseed oil finish. Use a mixture that is 1 part mineral spirits and 3 parts boiled linseed oil. Apply to surface, then wipe off all excess, so that the thinnest possible film is laid down. Repeat two or three times. Each coat should dry thoroughly.

SHELLAC OR LACQUER FINISHES CAN BE re-amalgamated by careful application of the right solvent (alcohol for shellac; lacquer thinner for lacquer). First clean the surface with mineral spirits to remove any accumulated wax and dirt. Experiment with solvent in an inconspicuous test area. Brush on just enough of the solvent so that it will dissolve the surface of the finish, leaving a significantly improved surface when the solvent evaporates. You may want to apply another thin coat of shellac or lacquer for the best result.

Select The Adhesive That's Right For Your Wallcoverings

By Arthur S. Green

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE INTRICACIES of wallpaper adhesives came the hard way—naturally. The year was 1954 and we were living in a 40-year-old brick house in Chicago. The walls in one room were covered with a wallpaper that I had never liked. So I stripped off the old wallpaper and applied a new vinyl wallcovering with wheat paste.

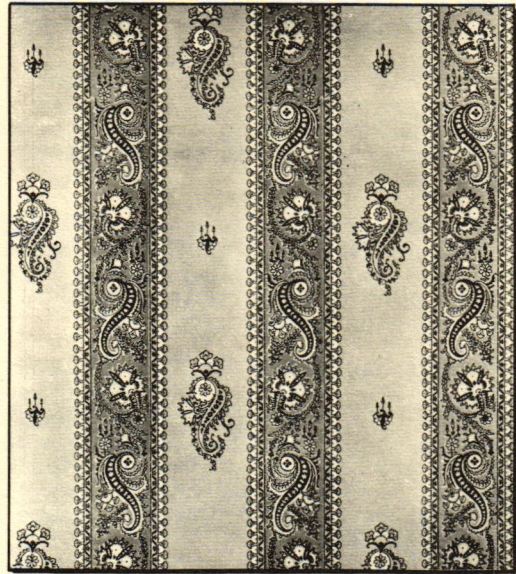
THEN IT HAPPENED. After the wheat paste dried, I noticed that the vinyl wallcovering did not adhere in many places. As a result, I had to strip the vinyl wallcovering off the wall and re-do the whole job—using more wallcovering plus an adhesive that was right for the job.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WALLPAPER ADHESIVE is often a puzzle...not only for the do-it-yourselfer but also for many decorating contractors. The confusion has become so great, for example, that one very large decorating contractor told me recently that they let the men doing the hanging select their own adhesives. And there is quite a divergence of opinion among his men on the right adhesive to use for certain applications.

MUCH OF THE CONFUSION is caused by wallcovering manufacturers who have introduced a large number of new products—without properly researching and giving out information about the right adhesive to use with them. Some wallcoverings dealers seem no better informed than the rest of us.

WHEAT PASTE was the universal adhesive for many years. Around 1935, the wheat paste formula was improved with the addition of bactericides. Things were fine until the 1950's, when the era of vinyl coatings, laminates and foils in wallcoverings began. The high water content, weak adhesive properties and vulnerability to bacteria makes wheat paste unsuitable for these newer materials. Wheat paste, however, remains quite satisfactory for the traditional, breathable wallpapers.

TODAY, some 75% of all wallcoverings fall in the category of semi- or non-breathable materials. These include the vinyls, vinyl-coated and foils. When used with the proper adhesives, they can be hung on a wide variety of surfaces.



Reproduction of an 1870 wallpaper—
"Barry" by Scalandre.

ESPECIALLY POPULAR for these non-breathable wallcoverings are the new liquid vinyl adhesives. Most are far superior to the dry adhesives that are mixed with water to make a paste. Although they cost more than the dry adhesives, they are economical to use, especially when the cost of labor is a factor. Not all the liquid vinyl adhesives have the same spread rate, but on the average you get 140 to 200 square feet of coverage from a gallon. One typical product of this type is called Control #64, manufactured by Control Products Div. of Creative Industries.

Selection Guidelines

THERE ARE THREE CHARACTERISTICS of a wallcovering that you should check out when you are selecting the proper adhesive: (1) Will it stain; (2) Will it bleed? (3) Is it semi- or non-breathable? A dealer's salesperson should be able to tell you these three things. If you have any reason to doubt the dealer's representation, experiment with a small piece of the wallcovering and the adhesive you've picked. It's much better to discover staining on a small test panel—rather than in the entire room that you've just papered.

AMONG THE TYPES of wallcoverings that tend to stain are: Light and medium-weight wallpapers, paper-backed flocks and handprints, porous burlaps, and backed or unbacked fabrics. Vinyl and several other types of wallcoverings are non-breathable—but don't bleed or stain.

IF THE WALLCOVERING is of a delicate, staining type, look for a paste that has "stainless" in its name. If the wallcovering is non-breathable (such as vinyls and foils) a low-water content liquid vinyl adhesive should be used. If the wallcovering is obviously breathable and doesn't bleed or stain, a conventional wheat paste would be fine. If the wallcovering is one of the new strippable papers, a strip-

pable paste or a thinned-down liquid vinyl adhesive should be used.

FOR HANGING HEAVY FABRICS where an ordinary wheat paste might not have enough holding power, one paste that has been used successfully is "Glutoline 77" distributed by The Henneux Company, New York.

THERE IS NO WAY for air to get through vinyl wallcoverings. Therefore, if a wheat paste or a paste that is ordinarily used for paper is used for a vinyl, there is apt to be mildew because of the slow drying process.

MANY STRIPPABLE WALLCOVERINGS look and feel like wallpaper—but they are not. Most require soaking. The tensile strength and absorbency of the back sometimes differs from the patterned surface, resulting in a tendency to stretch and shrink at different rates. This can cause wrinkles, bubbling or open seams if you're not careful.

MANY PAPER-BACKED VINYLs have a tendency to curl at the seams. If you encounter this problem, use one of the heavy-duty semi-paste vinyl adhesives.

Prepare The Walls Properly

AFTER IMPROPER ADHESIVE SELECTION, the next most common mistake made in applying wallcoverings is inadequate surface preparation. Just because the wall is going to be totally recovered, some people think that all blemishes can be ignored because they will be safely interred beneath the new covering. Not so! In fact, as much care has to go into preparing a wall for papering as is necessary prior to repainting. Here are a few pointers:

● **Papered Walls**—It is possible to apply new wall covering over old wallpaper. But this should be done only if: (1) The old paper is still tight to the wall; (2) There is only one layer of paper already on. It often is desirable to apply size to the old wallcovering before putting the new wallcovering on.

IF THE OLD WALLCOVERING was applied with lapped joints—that create bulges—they should be stripped with a razor. Gaps can be filled with joint compound, then sanded. Of course, once you get into this, you may find it just as simple to take all the old wallcovering off. The basic idea is to wet down the old paste (which is water soluble) so that the paper will be released. You can do this by using a rented steamer, which sends little jets of steam right through the paper. Or you can just wet the wallcovering thoroughly with warm water, slopping the water on with a big brush. Let the water soak in long enough to loosen the old glue; if it starts to dry out before the paper loosens, re-wet the wall.

WALLPAPER THAT HAS BEEN PAINTED prevents the water from getting through to the glue. The only way to get this stuff off is to cut through the paint film by sanding with a coarse sandpaper. Two handfuls of washing soda added to a bucket of warm water will aid in penetrating and softening the paper. (Warning: Don't use this washing soda solution unless

you are also planning to re-paint your wood-work; it really eats paint!)

SPECIAL LONG-HANDLED WALLPAPER SCRAPERS are available. Be sure you get one; a putty knife just won't cut it!

AFTER REMOVING the old wallcovering, wash off any remaining scraps of paper or glue with steel wool and a commercial wallpaper remover solution. Then use a wall washing powder or washing soda to remove any traces of old adhesive that remain on the surface. Finally, rinse walls with sponge and clean water.

VINYL-COATED WALLCOVERINGS do not provide a good adhering surface and you should never attempt to hang a new wallcovering over them.

● **Plaster Walls**—Newly plastered walls should be primed with a coat of flat primer-sealer. Follow with an application of size. Then you can proceed to hang wallpaper.

IN OLD PLASTER WALLS, cracks and holes should be filled with spackle or patching plaster. Any bumps should be sanded off. The patches should be coated with a primer-sealer before sizing.

● **Sheetrock Walls**—All joints and seams between panels should be filled with tape and joint compound in the normal fashion. Dry-walls should then be coated with a primer-sealer before sizing. This will help protect the surface of the sheetrock if you ever have to strip the wallcovering off the wall.

● **Painted Walls**—These should be thoroughly washed with a wall washing compound or washing soda to remove dirt and grime. Walls that have been painted with a glossy paint should be deglossed. One way: Wash with a strong solution of washing soda; rinse thoroughly. (Keep in mind that the washing soda solution will also mar adjacent woodwork and floor finishes!) An alternative: Sand with medium sandpaper, followed by washing with a weak washing soda solution. Rinse.

ALLOW WALL TO DRY, then apply a liberal coating of wall size. Size (which is basically glue) serves two functions: It provides better adhesion of the wallpaper—especially along the seams; the size also makes it easier to strip the wallpaper off in the future. Although you're best off using a commercial size and following manufacturer's directions, in a pinch you can use thinned-out wallpaper paste as your size.

FOR SPECIAL PROBLEMS, you may want to consider blankstock. It is a blank material applied to the wall before the wallcovering is applied. It helps correct imperfections in the wall and improves adhesion. Blankstock is often recommended when applying expensive wallcoverings because it does improve results. There is also a liquid version called liquid lining.

Arthur S. Green's current preoccupation is an elderly stucco house in Los Angeles. Having completely redecorated 10 years ago, it's now time to start over!

Helpful Publications You Can Send For

American Interiors, 1860-1917

A FASCINATING NEW BOOK has just been published that presents a visual history of the way people decorated their rooms in the period from the beginning of the Civil War to the end of the First World War. The author, William Seale, has collected several hundred photographs published here for the first time. They range from a luxurious parlor in Manhattan to a miner's shanty in Colorado and from a genteel library in Michigan to the salon of a Princess in Honolulu.

EACH OF THE PHOTOS is accompanied by a wonderfully informative text. The rooms are dated by their original period with changes noted over the decades as the influences of fashion altered the room. In one instance, there is a group of rooms in Santa Fe photographed in 1891 by their owner, and the same group photographed again in 1900 after they had been re-decorated at the turn of the century.

MR. SEALE'S INTRODUCTION is both entertaining and extremely informative. It explores the various styles and revivals that came and went in the Victorian era—French Antique, Gothic, Renaissance, Queen Anne, and even the Colonial Revival beginning in the last decades of the 19th century. There is a deep understanding in his essay of the personality of the American public of those years, and the economic and political forces that shaped it.

THE ENORMOUS INCREASE in manufactured goods was eagerly welcomed by the public and brought about the "personalized" room. Mr. Seale comments: "These pictures include many personalized rooms, with their mixtures of furniture, their gay festoons of printed materials and crisp, embroidered mull curtains, their sea shells, pillows, curios, shawls, potted plants, and other ornaments that could be obtained by one's own effort and were kept lively and vital by daily primping."

MANY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS are of excellent quality with a depth and richness equal to the variety of detail present in the rooms. But the real impact of the book is in the vast number of rooms of such different personalities. It is an experience similar to seeing a good motion picture in that you feel the quality and texture of living in another age.

"THE TASTEFUL INTERLUDE" is a handsomely designed book and a valuable contribution to the understanding of the period. It is of great value to anyone restoring an old house and a wonderful book for anyone with an appreciation of our past and a curiosity to know more.

To order "The Tasteful Interlude: American

Interiors Through The Camera's Eye, 1860-1917," send \$20.00, plus 50¢ postage and handling, to: Praeger Publishers, Order Dept., 111 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10003.

Roofing Installation Manual

HOW NICE IT IS to find a book that recognizes that there are other roofing materials besides asphalt shingles! Not only is the installation of asphalt shingles covered completely, but also wood shingles, slate, metal and roll roofing. This 98-page softcover handbook doesn't deal with tracking down and repairing minor leaks. But if you are considering re-roofing your entire house (whether you do it or somebody else does) this is a most worthwhile volume. To order "Roofing Simplified," send \$2.00 to: Directions Simplified, P.O. Box 215, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. 10510.

Custom-Produced House & Tour Guides

ONE OF THE JOURNAL'S READERS has a most interesting business: Producing and printing any type of personal historical guide to your house—whether owned privately or by a group. Can include before and after photos plus descriptive narration. Four pages and up on various types of paper stock. Specialists in limited edition pamphlet work. He'll send free samples. Write to: Stan Oliner, The Vic Press, P.O. Box 883, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001.

Guide To Urban Preservation

THIS 78-PAGE MANUAL is an indispensable reference for any individual or group that is even remotely interested in the revival of urban neighborhoods. The book, titled "Back To The City—A Guide To Urban Preservation", is based upon the proceedings of the first national "Back To The City" conference held in New York last fall. But the book is much better edited and more handsomely produced than most symposium proceedings. The book contains five major sections: (1) Publicity—Selling Urban Revival; (2) Planning—Toward the Liveable City; (3) Preservation—Its Economic And Social Benefits; (4) Money, Money, Money; (5) Public Policies—The Present And The Future. In all, 21 papers in the five areas are presented. They range from some very perceptive comments by D. Kenneth Patton on national urban trends, to specific guidelines from Peggy Houlton on how to start a flowerbox program on your block.

THIS VALUABLE SOFTCOVER MANUAL represents the best in practical thinking from people all across the country who are involved with the urban revival. You can get a copy of "Back To The City" by sending \$5.00 to: The Brownstone Revival Committee, Rm. 1825, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Products For The Old House

Hand-Carved Doors

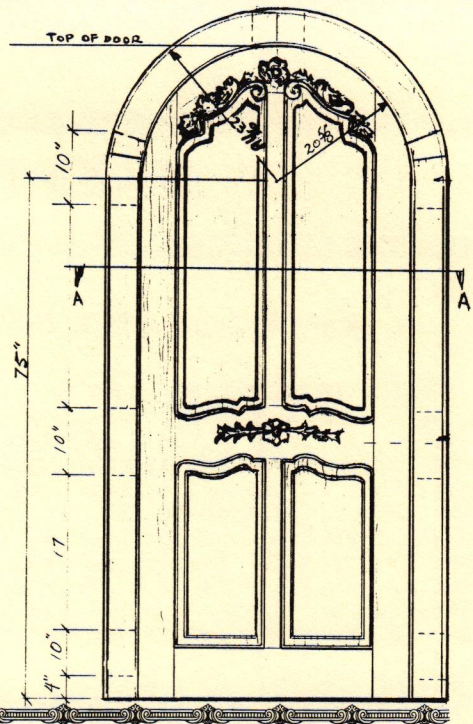
SEARCHING FOR REPLACEMENT doors for an old house can be a most frustrating experience. Finding salvage doors is a catch-as-catch-can process. Lumber yards seem to only stock flush doors these days. And not many places seem anxious to custom-make doors.

AN EXCEPTION is International Wood Products. Not only do they stock a handsome line of hand-carved doors, but they are also happy to custom-carve a door to your specifications. The company's 4-page brochure

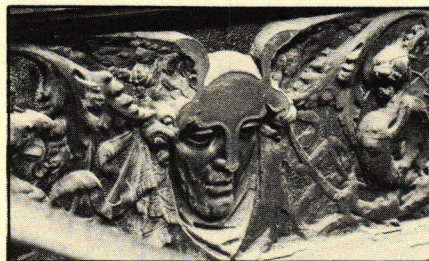
shows 20 standard designs—the panel designs of which are entirely carved by hand. Wood used is kiln-dried mahogany.

SOME OF THE STANDARD PATTERNS are suitable for Victorian and more formal Greek Revival and Georgian Early American houses. Particularly unusual is the Gothic pattern that they carry. But it is the company's interest in custom fabrication that makes them of special interest to the old-house owner.

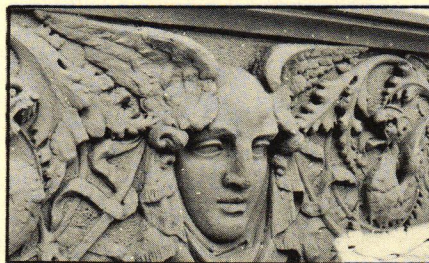
FOR A COPY of the 4-page brochure showing the 20 standard door patterns—or for information about custom fabrication, contact: Dick Gorostiza, International Wood Products, 9630 Aero Drive, San Diego, CA 92123. Tel. (714) 565-1122.



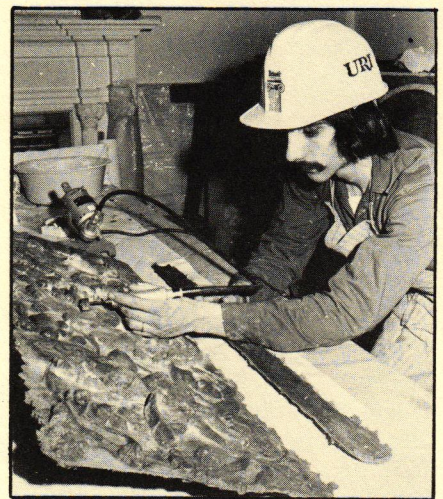
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Before: Badly spalled carving.



After restoration.



Restorer Of Stone Ornament

BRUCE OREN is a trained sculptor who is applying his talents to restoration. In his work at the Ballantine House in Newark, N.J., (top left photos) he used an epoxy molding compound with stone ground into it to repair stonework so that it is indistinguishable from the original.

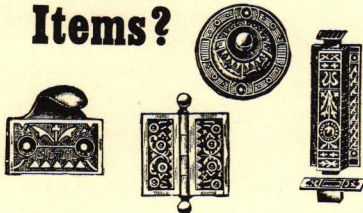
HE ALSO makes castings to recreate elaborate plaster moldings, and makes replacement pieces in fiberglass to repair stamped metal cornices and other architectural detail.

ALTHOUGH he prefers to work on site, he has made castings from molds mailed to him. Bruce Oren can be contacted at: 505 Raymond St., Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11570. Telephone (evenings) (516) 678-4846.

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To Trade

COLOR SLIDES—Would like to trade color slides of Victorian Cape May for slides of picturesque Victorian homes in your area. The slides will be used in a lecture series on Victorian America. Contact Tom Carroll, Mainstay Guest House, 24 Jackson St., Cape May, N.J. 08204.

Wanted

HIGH-TANK TOILETS—Looking for several Victorian pull-chain type high-tank toilets. New reproduction preferred. Box 11, The Old-House Journal.

Restoration Services

WALL AND FLOOR STENCILLING in original designs or adaptations of Early American or Victorian authentic designs. Will travel—call or write: Handcrafted Walls, P. O. Box 262, New Milford, Conn. 06776, (203) 355-1517.

PAINT STRIPPING—Specialist in stripping woodwork in place in your home. No need to take woodwork down for dipping. New York metropolitan area only. Joseph Balzamo. Telephone: (201) 721-2651.

STRIPPING SERVICE. We strip paint or remove finishes from furniture, woodwork, doors, metals, marble, etc. We also have a supply of old locks and hinges to help our customers restore authentically. Call or write Bob & Peggy Berger at Big Dipper, P. O. Box 22, Woodside, Delaware 19980, phone: (302) 697-3550.

Historic Houses

THE GLENVIEW MANSION is part of the Hudson River Museum. Built in 1876, it is beautifully furnished in the East-lake style. Recently, magnificent stencilling has been uncovered and restored by The Rambusch Decorating Co. Located at 511 Warburton Ave., it is open Tues. through Sat. 10-5, Sun. 1-5, and Wed. eve. 7-10. The Museum may be reached by Penn Central RR—a short walk from the Glenwood Terrace station.

THE EUGENE FIELD TOY MUSEUM is a preservation of early St. Louis Victoriana. Home of the poet and newspaper columnist, it was built in 1845 and now houses a large collection of toys, dolls, and furniture of the period. It is available during non-museum hours for private parties and for children's birthday parties. Open Tues. through Sat. 10:00 to 4:00 p.m., and Sun. 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. Located at 634 So. Broadway (3 blocks south of Busch Stadium), St. Louis, Missouri 63102.

Meetings & Events

BACK TO THE CITY—National conference on urban preservation will focus on techniques for preserving old city neighborhoods. St. Paul (Minn.) Hilton, Sept. 26-29. Registration \$75. Contact: Joanna Baymiller, Old Town Restorations, 158 Farrington St., St. Paul, MN 55102. Telephone (612) 224-8134.

HOME RESTORATION & REMODELING SHOW

November 7-9

San Francisco Showplace

EXHIBITS will feature everything from nostalgic old cornices to no-nonsense power tools; from classic carved fireplaces to paint and wallcoverings; from leaded glass to floor tile; from fine paneling to kitchen sinks. Also, a major market for contractors, craftsmen and related services.

FOR INFORMATION about exhibiting, contact: Peter C. Castas, Show Director, 33 Bartlett, San Francisco, CA 94114. Tel. (415) 282-2047

BROWNSTONE FAIR III—Everything you need for restoring and renovating brownstones and other townhouses. Craftsmen; reproductions; contractors and much more. Oct. 4-5 at Brooklyn Union Gas Co. Building, 195 Montague Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 10 AM-4 PM on Sat.; 12 Noon-4 PM Sun.

"A VICTORIAN SAMPLER," the Dupont Circle Annual Home Tour, will be held on Sunday, October 5th. Victorian houses that have been restored and "works-in-progress" will be visited beginning at 1:00 p.m. 1722 "S" St. NW, Wash. D.C. Tickets may be ordered in advance from Ann Bringsjord, 1612 "S" St. NW, Wash. D.C., 20009, for \$5.00.

Books & Publications

NEW LIGHT ON OLD LAMPS is a valuable, illustrated, hard-cover book giving practical information on 18th and 19th century lighting devices. To order, send \$9.75 to The Old-House Journal, Reprint Dept., 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, New York 11217.

Free From The Old-House Journal

The Old-House Journal has just published a 4-page folder called "Decorating The Victorian House."

While written for those who are new to their Victorian house, it may be of interest to some of our readers. Priced at 50¢, it is free to subscribers of The Journal. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (legal size) to: Decorating the Victorian House, Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217.

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HURLEY PATENTEE MANOR hand-crafts faithful reproductions of 18th century lighting devices in tin, pewter, iron and brass. For catalog, send \$1 to Hurley Patentee Manor, R.D. 7, Box 98A, Kingston, New York 12401.

VICTORIAN REPRODUCTIONS—The elegance of the Victorian era now reproduced in hand-carved mahogany. Chairs, sofas, tables...plus desks, cabinets, lighting fixtures, mirrors and brass beds. Send \$1.00 for catalog and fabric samples. Magnolia Hall, 726 Andover, Atlanta, GA 30327.

HISTORIC TEXTILES REPRODUCED FOR TODAY is a brochure with color and black and white photos of the many restorations by Brunschwig & Fils, specialist in documentary fabrics and wallpapers. To order, Send \$1 to Brunschwig & Fils, Inc., Box OHJ, 979 Third Avenue, New York, New York, 10022.

PLASTER ORNAMENTS in hundreds of patterns for medallions, rosettes, cornices, mouldings and pediment ornaments are available as well as ornaments for entire ceilings in Old English, Colonial and Louis XIV styles. For a 55-page catalog, send \$1.00 to: The Decorators Supply Co., 3610 S. Morgan St., Chicago, Ill. 60609, and ask for Catalog 130, "Plaster Ornaments."

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