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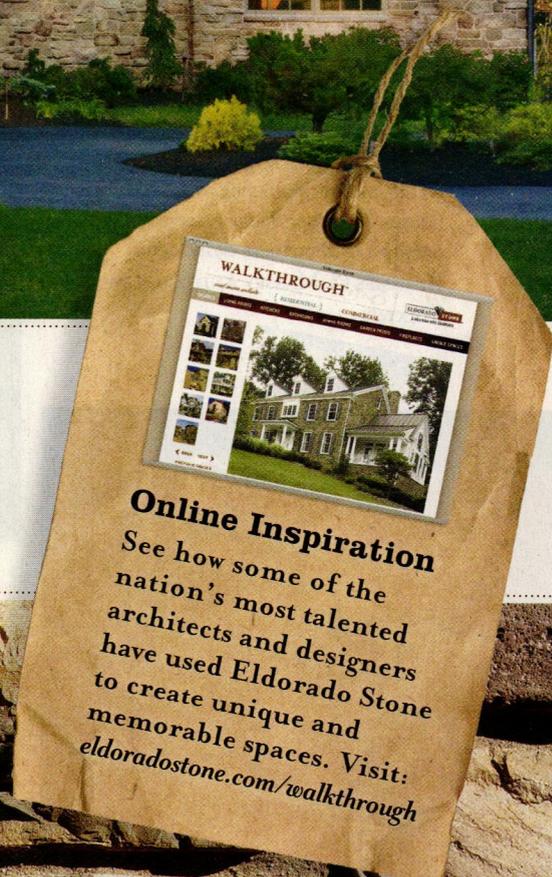
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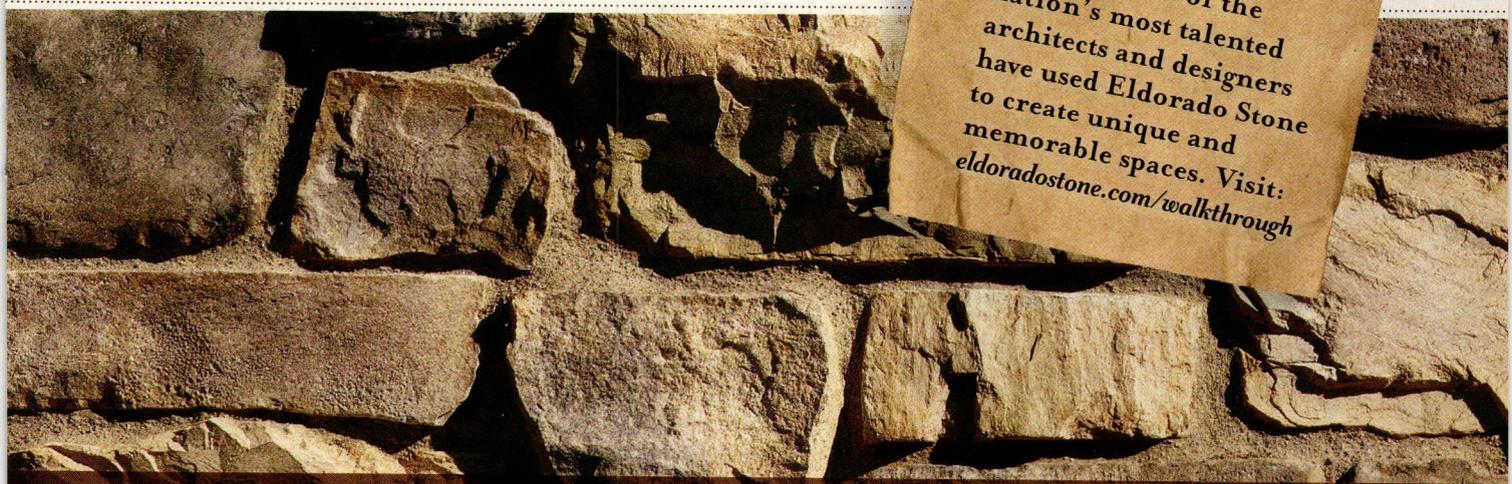
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Don't be intimidated by the rules and regulations that go along with living in a historic district. Our 10 handy tips can help you negotiate the pros and cons.

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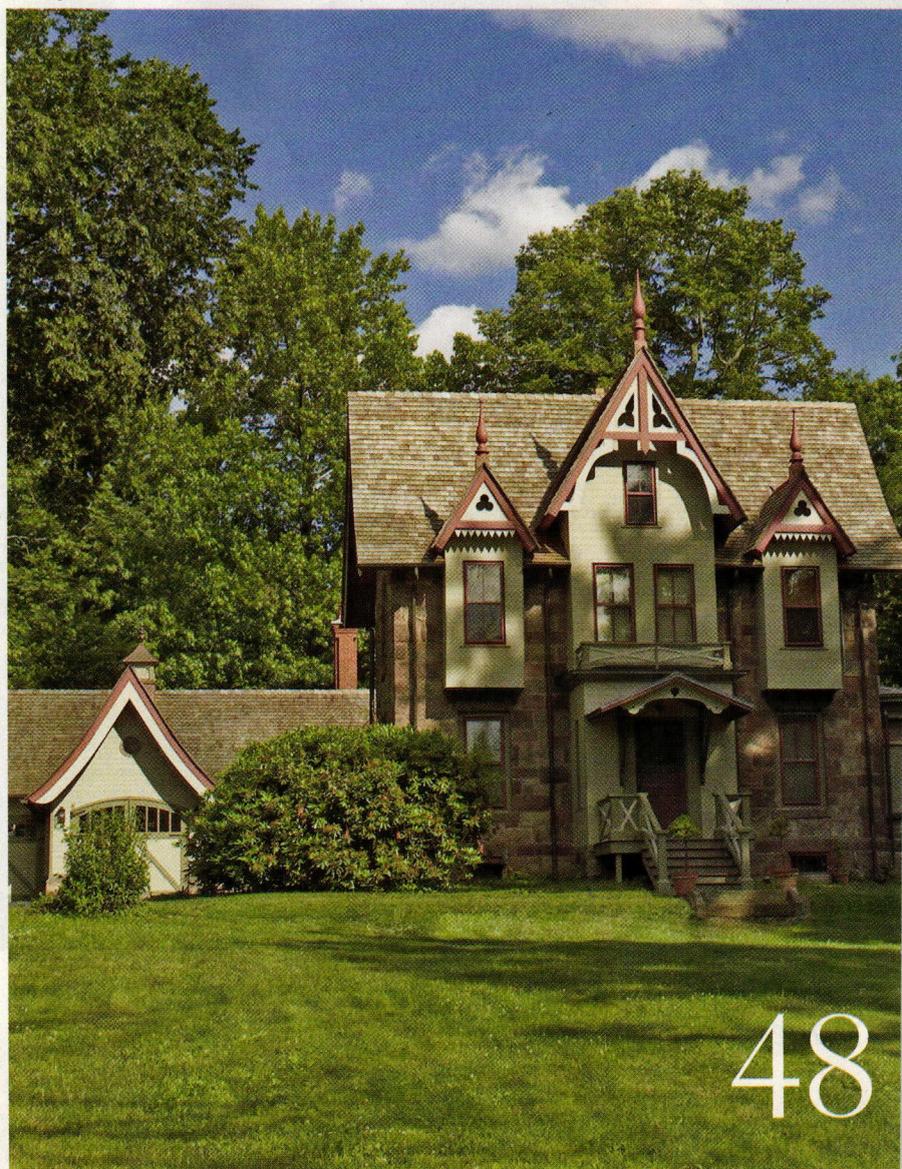
Making garages match the style of your house has never been easier, thanks to the wealth of period-appropriate offerings available today.

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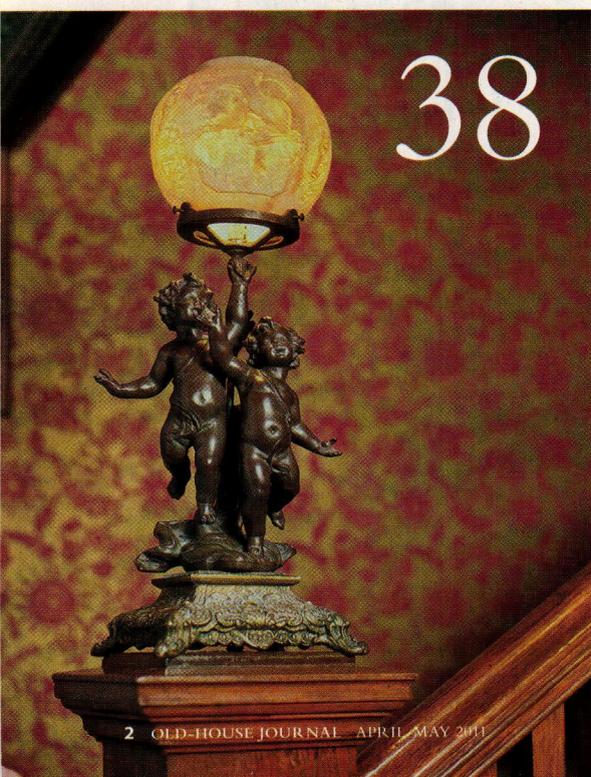
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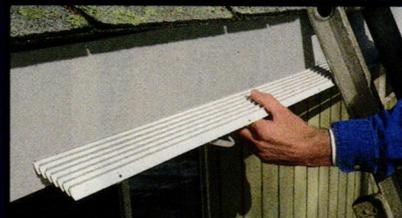
A Gothic Revival cottage with an impressive pedigree—it was built by Victorian planbook architect Daniel T. Atwood as his own home—gets a thoughtful and sympathetic addition.

By DEMETRA APOSPOROS



# 38

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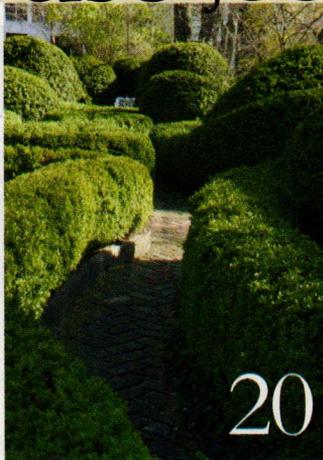
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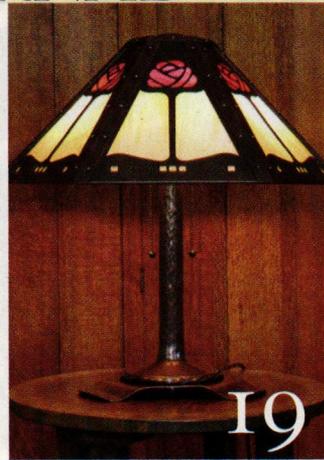
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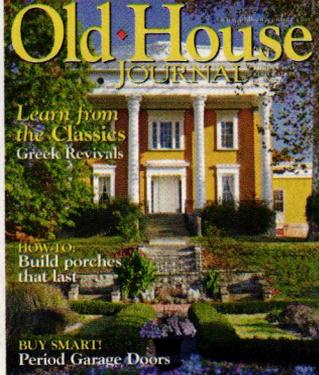
Learn from the Classics  
Greek Revivals

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How to: Build porches that last

p. 56 →

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Cover: Photo by James C. Massey. A massive Greek Corinthian portico defines the Lanier House in Madison, Indiana. Story page 60. Visit [oldhouseonline.com](http://oldhouseonline.com).

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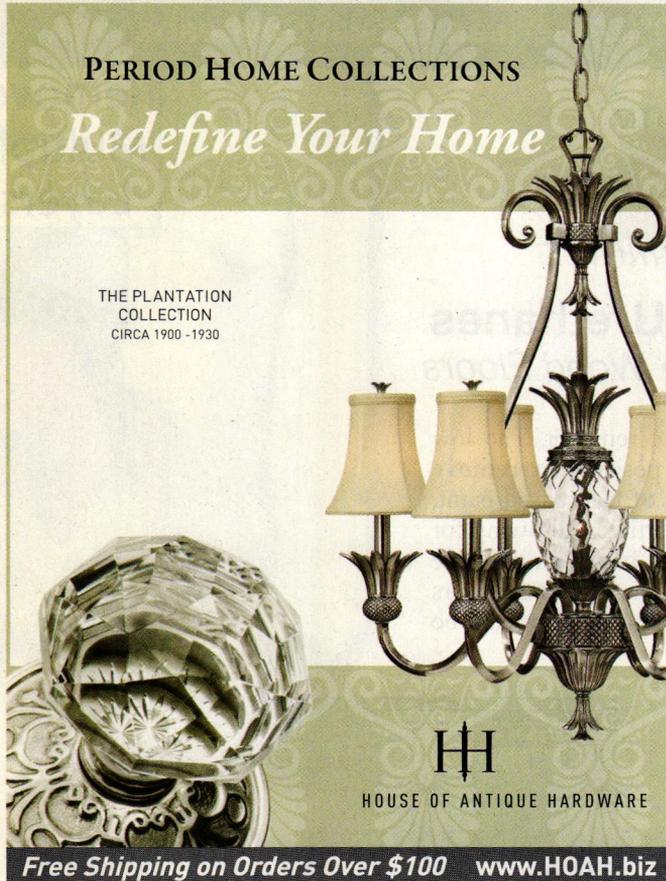
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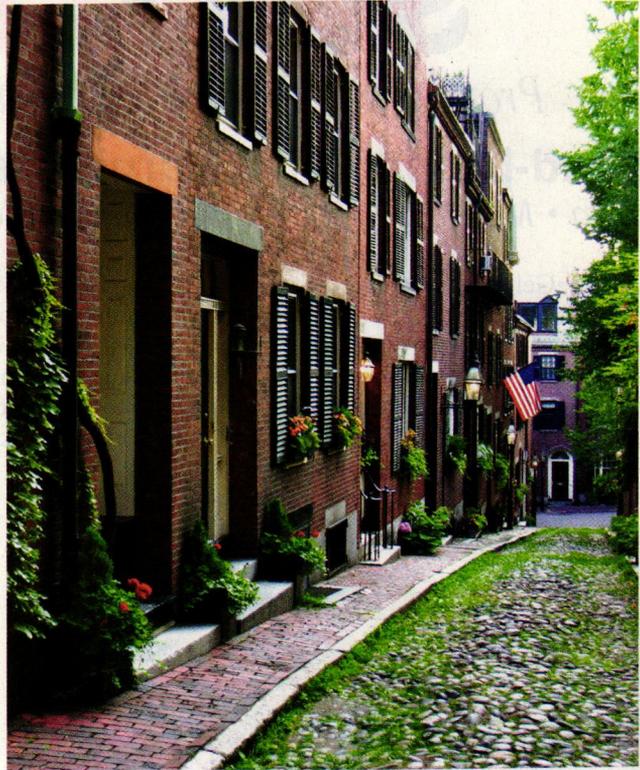
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## Our Favorite Historic Districts

There are thousands of historic districts in this country (see page 42 for tips on navigating life in one), each with its own undeniable charm. However, we can't help but harbor a fondness for certain locales, whether it's because of their remarkable resources, their unwavering dedication to preserving the past, or simply their breathtaking visual appeal. Come along on a tour of our 10 favorite historic districts.

## Best Garage Design Tools

It used to be that matching garage doors to a historic home was a daunting proposition, but those days are long gone. Not only are there more traditionally styled choices than ever on the market (see them starting on page 56), but several manufacturers also offer online design tools to help you try out doors before you buy. We tested all the options; check out our recommendations for the most user-friendly tools.

## Greek Revival House Museums

Got a Greek Revival gem like those tucked away in Madison, Indiana (page 60)? Decorating this 19th-century house style can be challenging, as Greek Revival décor doesn't tend to garner as much attention as other styles, like Victorian and Arts & Crafts. House museums can provide solid clues; our guide to Greek Revival museums will tell you where to find them.

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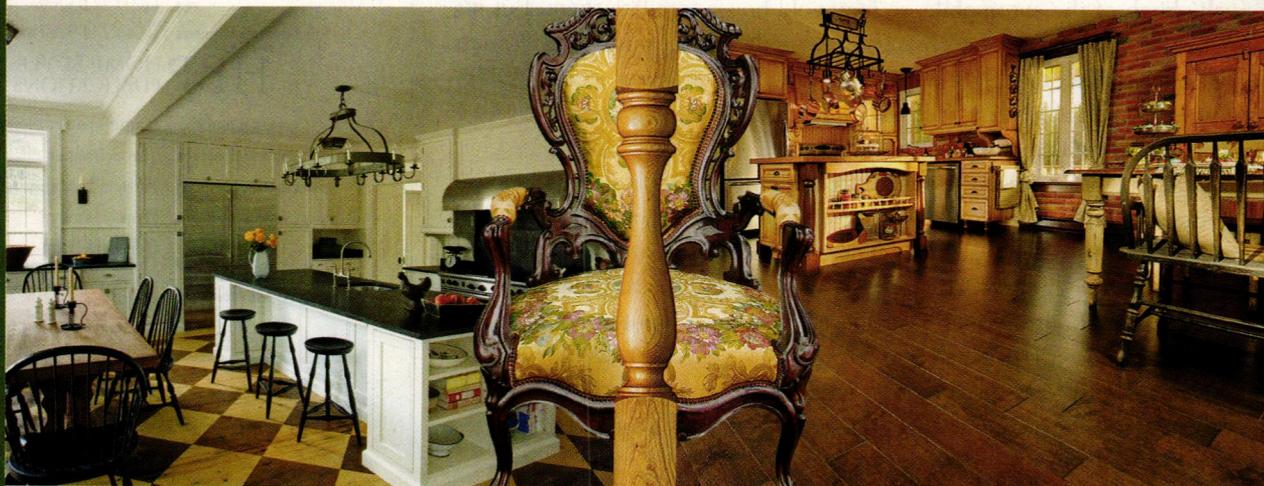
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# editor's note

## By the Book



WHEN MY HUSBAND and I moved into our new-to-us 1929 house, I was thrilled to discover that it came with most of the original architect's specs—10 typewritten ledgers outlining his exacting vision on everything from how to dig the foundation to properly applying the finish coats of trim paint. ("All woodwork shall be painted four coats—the final coat of enamel to be dull or eggshell finish. Sandpaper all undercoats to a smooth finish before applying the next coat.") The ledgers will be an invaluable reference for future restoration projects, and I feel very fortunate to have them.

I can only imagine how lucky I'd feel if my home's architect had published entire books on creating the perfect house, of which mine was an example—it would provide excellent insight on his design approach that could fill in any additional questions. That's the case for our Insider homeowners in this issue. Daniel T. Atwood, the architect of their house, was well-known in New Jersey, and his planbooks helped guide the modern-day addition homeowners Mario and Maria Turchi recently undertook with the help of architect Donald Cantillo. The project added significantly to the home's size with guest quarters, a great room, and a garage (see "Channeling Changes," page 48).

Garages, of course, are a bit of an old-house conundrum. They didn't exist before the birth of the automobile, so many old houses predate them. But it's possible to add a garage for today's living—or to update anachronistic, utilitarian garage doors—thanks to a fleet of period-appropriate modern options. OHJ's managing editor, Clare Martin, walks us through some strategic approaches (see "The Garage Door Dilemma," page 56).

A tactical plan for preservation work is something this issue's Old-House Living homeowner, Henry Wood, knows well. For decades now, he's employed a team of volunteers to help perform general maintenance and repairs on his unique Shingle Style house—which needs a lot of regular attention, since it's buffeted by some serious weather in its location on a rocky outcropping in the middle of Narragansett Bay (see "Community Rock," page 24). While his is an innovative approach to keeping the old house humming, it just goes to show that whether through the hands of volunteers and friends or through the pages of this magazine, there is strength in numbers.

daposporos@homebuyerpubs.com

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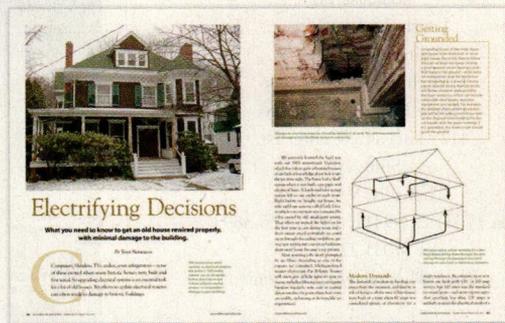
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# letters



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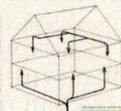
What you need to know to get an old house rewired properly, with minimal damage to the building.

By Ben Rotman



**Getting Circled**

When you're rewiring an old house, you need to know where the old wiring is. A Romex in contact with a water pipe is not up to code (here in Ohio, at least!), and because most old-house basements have low ceiling areas, the space between joists is a better place for electrical junction boxes.



## Totally Wired

Thanks for tackling a key restoration topic with old houses—old, unsafe wiring [“Electrifying Decisions,” February/March]. Having gone through the rewiring of two century-old homes, I’d like to point out a few things. First, the photo on the bottom of page 42 has a couple of issues: The Romex in contact with the water pipe is not up to code (here in Ohio, at least!), and because most old-house basements have low ceiling areas, the space between joists is a better place for electrical junction boxes.

Other things to keep in mind when rewiring: When tying old knob-and-tube wiring to new circuits, watch out for bad old wiring practices, like pulling the neutral (return) wire of a circuit down one side of a house, and the hot up the other! You also might find odd ties for branch circuits in the walls at unexpected points. Finally, if you’re going to tie knob-and-tube circuits to new breakers, be very careful to keep the breaker sized correctly—typically no more than 15 amp for the old 14-gauge wire.

Bruce Bennett  
Chardon, Ohio

Last year I bought a 1924 Foursquare. The electrical system was a nightmare combination of knob-and-tube and Romex wiring. I hired an electrician to bring a brand new 200-amp service in and decommission the old system in the entire house. From there, my dad began rewiring it. In the end, I have a house with 100-percent updated electrical wiring that should last my lifetime without being outmoded.

My opinion? Replace everything you can while you can. There will never be a better time, and you don’t want your house to burn to the ground because you updated all the aesthetic stuff and forgot the mechanicals. It is tedious work, and it takes what seems like forever, but if you want forever in your old house, do it.

Karan Andrea  
Via OldHouseOnline.com

## Reader Tip of the Month

When disassembling an old doorknob for repair, take a picture or two of the insides with a digital camera—then there are no mysteries when it's time to put it back together.

*Phil*

*Via MyOldHouseOnline.com*

**Got a great tip to share with other old-house lovers? Let us know at [OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com](mailto:OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com).**

## Illuminating Observation

Because I specialize in restored vintage lighting, I tend to first notice the fixtures in OHJ. (I do the same thing when watching movies.) In the story "A Bungalow Education" [February/March], there's a lovely image of a rather impressive dining room restoration, with a knock-out five-bulb chandelier. Originally, this fixture would have had a more vivid polychrome finish (below), and the shades and socket cups are later additions. As all OHJ readers know, old houses change over time—and so do old lights!



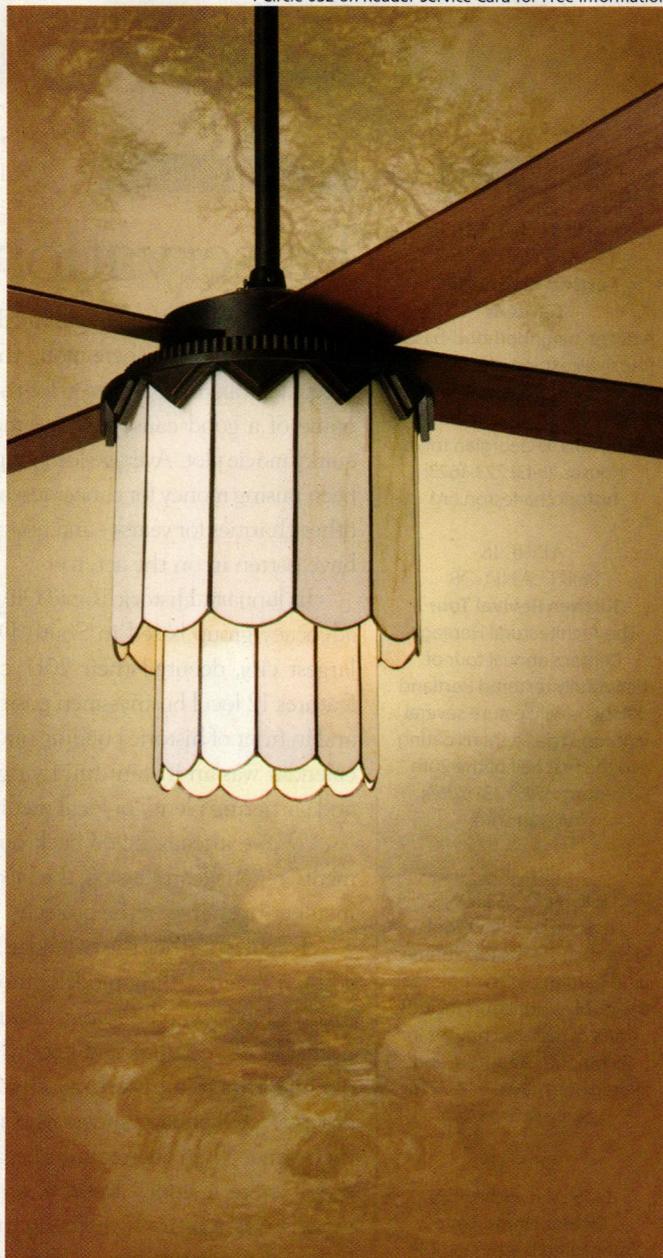
*Ross MacTaggart  
Owner, The Old Above*

*Good eye! The home's designer, C.J. Hurley, says he tracked down the fixture via a local lighting restorer, who had added the cups and shades as substitutes for missing original parts. As to your point about noticing the light fixtures in movies—we do, too! In our September/October '06 issue, we featured an essay in which author Tony Seideman*



*addresses his obsession with the architecture, hardware, and fixtures visible in the backdrops of old movie sets; you can find it on his website at [tonyseideman.com/ohj.htm](http://tonyseideman.com/ohj.htm). —Eds.*

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APRIL 16  
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APRIL 16-23  
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MAY 15  
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MAY 21  
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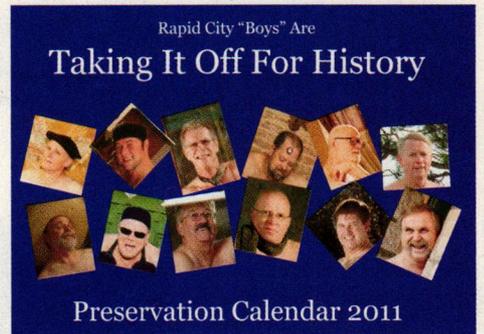
# Preservationists' Naked Ambition

The 2003 movie *Calendar Girls* might have inspired the trend, but somewhere along the line, the idea of regular folks dropping trou for the camera in the name of a good cause became more than just a quirky movie plot. Average-Joe pinup calendars have been raising money for cancer research and various other charities for years—and now preservationists have gotten in on the act, too.

In January, Historic Rapid City, a preservation advocacy group based in South Dakota's second-largest city, debuted their 2011 calendar, which features 12 local businessmen posing in the buff in and in front of historic buildings around town. The calendar was an instant hit, flying off the shelves and garnering plenty of local media attention.

"We've already made back our initial investment," reports Jean Kessloff, the Historic Rapid City member in charge of the project.

To pull together the calendar, Kessloff rounded up a dozen willing models (most of whom are involved in local preservation efforts in some way, from a LEED-certified architect who specializes in old buildings to a historic-window restorer) and a group of local photographers who agreed to donate their time. Then the real fun began: "The photo shoots were a hoot," Kessloff says. "One of our models was a retired gastroenterologist who collects antique potties. He posed on one of the potties like 'The Thinker,' and asked us to call his photo



Historic Rapid City's 2011 calendar features the town's historic buildings—and local businessmen in the buff.

'The Stinker.' Another guy posed in a dinghy in his front yard, right there on the main road that runs through the historic district—people were driving by, honking and waving."

Beyond the novelty of its unorthodox pinups, the calendar is packed with information about Rapid City's historic buildings and historic preservation efforts in general. "When people are done smiling at the pictures, hopefully they'll get something else out of it, too," says Kessloff.

Proceeds from the calendar will help Historic Rapid City buy the McGillycuddy House, the endangered 1888 sandstone home of a prominent South Dakota pioneer, plus help fund activities like window-restoration workshops. To buy a calendar (\$15), e-mail [jnksslff75@gmail.com](mailto:jnksslff75@gmail.com).

## OLD-HOUSE RESOURCE

### Find the Right Light

We've all heard time and again that the easiest way to reduce energy consumption in our homes is to switch to compact fluorescent bulbs. But when you're actually standing in the store, it can be difficult to take the plunge—how do you know whether the bulb you choose will put out enough light, or even fit in your fixture? A new free app called Light Bulb Finder takes the guesswork out of switch-

ing to CFLs—you input information about your fixtures and the types of incandescent bulbs you're using, and it provides recommendations for comparable CFLs, which you can save on a shopping list. It'll even calculate your payback period and energy savings so you can get the most bang for your buck. For more information, see [lightbulbfinder.net](http://lightbulbfinder.net).



## IT'S TIME TO...

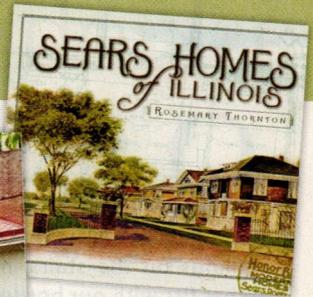
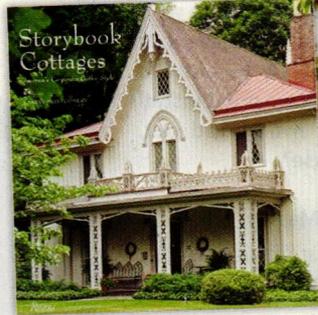
### Check for Rotting Wood

The double-whammy of winter snow and spring rain can do a number on your home's wood elements—so once it warms up outside, take time to inspect the exterior of your home for wood that's in not-so-great shape. The usual suspects include window sash and door frames, porch elements, eaves, cornices, and soffits. You'll know the wood needs to be repaired if it yields to pressure from a penknife or awl. (Tap the surface of the wood with the handle, too—a dull thud could indicate rotten wood just underneath.)

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

When it comes to old houses, there's something to be said for winning the popularity contest. It's no surprise that the same architectural trends that captured the public's heart a century ago are still among the most beloved old houses today. A pair of new books explores two house types turned iconic by their popular appeal.

In *Storybook Cottages: America's Carpenter Gothic Style*, Gladys Montgomery traces the origins of Gothic-style cottages from medieval English churches to the 19th-century practice of applying Gothic elements to country houses, as promoted by period architects and tastemakers like Alexander Jackson Davis and A.J. Downing. Along the way, she tours several beautifully restored Carpenter Gothic cottages, providing a wealth of ideas for those



who are lucky enough to own one—and plenty of eye candy for those who aren't.

Author Rosemary Thornton turns her attention to one of the following century's biggest housing trends in *Sears Homes of Illinois*. In her introduction, Thornton explains how Sears' enticingly marketed mail-order kit homes captivated the nation, and offers tips on identifying Sears houses today. She then takes readers on a photographic road trip through Illinois (Sears' home base), matching up archival catalog images with still-standing homes, offering a fascinating look at dreams turned reality.

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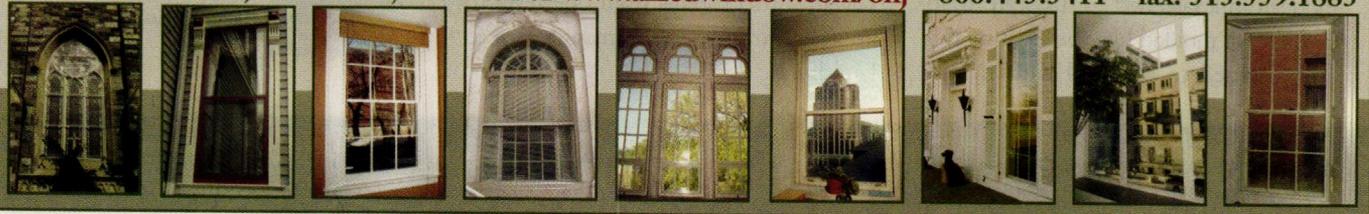
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# ask ohj

**Q:** We're an older couple who cannot bear to leave our 1925 home. A recent fall has made us realize that we must install railings on the stairs, inside and out. What fits with our house?

**A:** **James C. Massey:** The main interior stairs in vintage houses always have a stair rail—often one that's an important design element. Exterior steps, such as those going to the garden, often have none—on the theory, I guess, that there isn't far to fall.

Today, however, safety concerns—heightened by regulations for persons with disabilities (ADA), or just plain old age—bring a new focus to this previously neglected subject.

Outside, where short runs of steps—going down to the garden, or rising a few feet to the street—present an obvious hazard, adding handrails is always a good idea. Your masonry garden steps would take naturally to a simple wrought iron (or even dark aluminum) design with simple metal posts and railings, which will fit well within your small-scale shrubbed garden. Wood is out of character for masonry steps (and it's impermanent as well), vinyl is not appropriate on a historic house, and only a formal house would look right with carved stone railings or a brick wall.

Your main interior stairs have a fine rail with rectangular balusters and a large square newel, very typical of the early 20th century—but you might be better served by two rails, one for each hand. The second rail should ideally be in wood to reflect the qualities of the existing stair design. It could be a simple modern rail, fastened to the wall in an L-shape, or molded like the existing rail and fastened to the wall with incon-



The 1925 bungalow provides cues for new railings. Its interior stairs (below) would work well with a basic wooden rail mounted on the wall, while the exterior stairs (left) call out for a simple wrought iron or aluminum design.

spicuous iron bents. A matching rail with balusters along the wall is also an option, though perhaps a bit pretentious and impractical for a modest house with standard-width stairs.

An excellent full-safety solution for the disabled would be an electric stair lift that follows the line of the stairs along the wall. These have been successfully used for many years in houses both old and new.

Finally, there is the carefully located small house elevator. Though not all houses (or budgets) can accommodate this unquestionably expensive solution, it is valuable for moving not just people but all sorts of items from one level to another—everything from suitcases to laundry. 🏠



Contributing editor and preservation consultant James C. Massey has led HABS and the National Trust's Historic Properties.

Have questions about your old house? We'd love to answer them in future issues. Please send your questions to **Ask OHJ, 4125 Lafayette Center Dr., Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151** or by e-mail to **OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com**.

# old-house toolbox



TERESA COLEMAN PHOTO

## Narrow Crown Stapler

*When it comes to assembling trim, this overlooked tool often bests a hammer and nails.*

BY MARK CLEMENT

**W**hen I first read about narrow crown staplers, I thought they were designed for fastening crown molding only.

It wasn't my finest moment as a tool expert, and I soon learned that the word "crown," in this case, refers not to molding, but rather to the staple's width.

I now rely heavily on this stapler (sometimes called a "finish stapler") to create assemblies for trim projects, where staples offer a distinct advantage over nails. Since a staple's crown has more surface area than a nail head, they sink solidly but resist shoot-through. Their two legs provide excellent holding power. And, because I can use shorter fasteners (usually 1/4"), there's way less risk of blowout from the fastener changing direction inside the work.

There are a few trade-offs: A staple's initial impact is harder than a nail, so you have to make sure the work is stable. The

hole they make requires more attention with wood filler, and sometimes before filling, you have to remove a bit of the residual glue that held the staples together in a rack. But in my mind, these small inconveniences hardly outweigh the stapler's advantages.

### Where to Use It

When building knee walls with access doors in my attic (a project featured in OHJ N/D '08), I used my stapler to fasten rails to the back of the tongue-and-groove panel doors. I regularly employ it when trimming doors and windows, assembling my casing on a table so I can keep the miters tight during installation—I've found that two staples hold tighter than nails.

I also used it to trim out several square columns with molding. Instead of installing each piece individually, I joined three pieces, slid the U-shaped assembly around the column, then attached the fourth piece in place. To prevent blowout and to make an excellent connection, I used staples.

And it turns out my initial miscon-

ception was at least partially true—narrow crown staplers are useful for assembling crown molding. When splicing two pieces of crown, I staple a cleat to the back of the first piece and use that as a nailing surface for the second piece.

### What to Look For

**Size.** I like a stapler that's small, easy to handle, and has good sight lines to the nose of the tool (which helps me verify that I'm shooting in a straight line). I look for tools that can drive 1/2" to 1 1/2" 18-gauge staples.

**Exhaust.** Some staplers have a feature I wish all my pneumatic tools had: The exhaust air is diverted through the bottom of the handle, so it never blows up dust, and I never get a puff in the face.

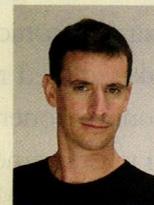
**Depth of Drive.** Because oak has a different density than PVC, an adjustable depth of drive is nice.

**Belt Hook.** Since I staple both at the bench and on top of a ladder, I need a tool that's easy to access from a tool belt, so a belt hook is ideal. My stapler even has a clever addition—a schoolboy-type pencil sharpener built into the hook.

**Other Features.** Oil-free designs are nice because you'll never have to worry about oil possibly blowing through the tool and onto your work. While not all tools come with them, a swivel adapter is particularly handy—it minimizes twists in the connecting hose and allows you to get the tool to the work much easier.

### The Bottom Line

In the realm of fastening tools, staplers often get overlooked, but in a lot of cases, they're the best fit for the task at hand. Both in the shop and on the job site, they've become a...ahem...staple for me. 🛠️



**Carpenter Mark Clement is working on his century-old American Foursquare in Ambler, Pennsylvania, and is the author of *The Carpenter's Notebook*.**

# historic retreats



## Hotel Galvez

*Galveston's matriarch has found her fountain of youth.*

BY DEBORAH BURST

**L**ike a larger-than-life sand castle, the Hotel Galvez rises above the glistening beaches of Galveston, Texas. Its iconic cream-colored lime plaster finish and stark red-tiled roof hold a diary of memories: courting honeymooners, vacationers, businessmen, and political masterminds.

Built in 1911, the striking Spanish Mission Revival building still holds the same splendor it did a century ago when it was



**ABOVE:** The hotel's loggia offers magnificent sea views through meticulously reconstructed windows. Until the recent restoration, the windows' arched transoms were hidden under layers of drywall and plaster.

dubbed the "Queen of the Gulf." Fashioned like an oasis, the hotel boasts a majestic eight-story center structure flanked by four hexagonal towers. On either side are two semicircular glass-walled wings that offer panoramic ocean views.



**ABOVE:** Built in a U shape with two protruding wings, an eight-story central tower is the defining feature of the 1911 hotel, the only historic beachfront hotel in Texas.

honor of the hotel's centennial, is a \$9-million restoration that exposed and re-created the original windows throughout the ground floor and in the gulfside guest rooms.

Prior to Mitchell's ownership, previous renovations had covered the arched transoms on the ground-level windows, encasing them in drywall and plaster. In the 1960s, aluminum plate glass windows replaced the lower sash. During the removal of the aluminum windows, the restoration team uncovered original wood jambs, complete with water damage that hinted at the motivation behind their replacement.

Architects, contractors, and the state's historical commission used original drawings and photos to re-create the size, proportion, and overall feel of the original windows. Although no completely intact originals remained, they were able to save the transoms, and consulted the historic documents to fashion custom-made mahogany windows with true divided-light panes for the lower sash. The new windows mingle with original mahogany beam ceilings supported by massive columns topped with bronze capitals.

guered by some misguided additions. The 1970s brought a renewed spirit to save the area's historic neighborhoods; prominent leaders in this effort were Galveston native George Mitchell and his wife, Cynthia.

Initially, the Mitchells purchased 15 buildings in the downtown historic district to save them from the wrecking ball. Today, Mitchell Historic Properties has rehabilitated three hotels and approximately 20 buildings in Galveston's historic Strand District. The Mitchells purchased the Hotel Galvez in 1993 and began a constant stream of restorations that gradually brought back the cool simplicity of the hotel's spacious ground-floor lobby and loggia. Mitchell's latest project, in

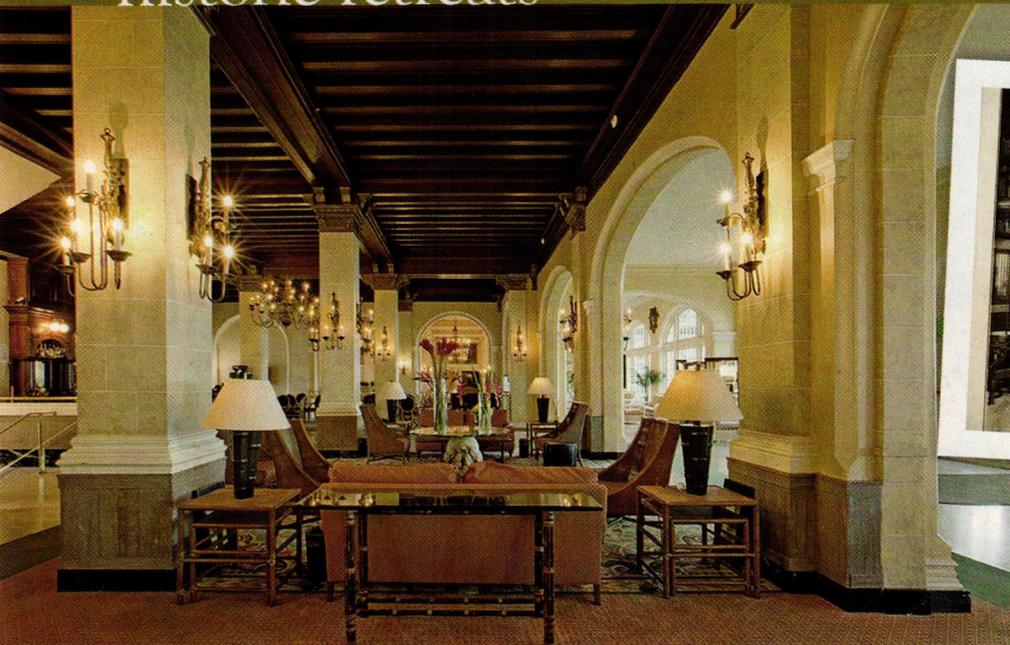
The hotel was built by a group of Galveston businessmen to reinvent a hurricane-devastated community—and it succeeded, drawing crowds back to what became a premier vacation destination. Nearly a century later in 2008, the city's historic district suffered a tremendous tidal surge from Galveston Bay in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike.

"Although the Hotel Galvez suffered some damage from Ike, I was relieved that it was relatively minor compared to the massive destruction wrought in other areas of Galveston Island," says the hotel's current owner, George Mitchell. "The main structure, which had withstood almost a century of hurricanes, fared quite well." Today, the Hotel Galvez has been called upon again to help restore the city's luster.

### Bringing It Back

By the 1920s, the hotel had become a Jazz Age hot spot, and went on to entertain legends such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Howard Hughes, and Frank Sinatra. But with the advent of the Port of Houston, Galveston suffered decades of decline, and the Hotel Galvez was belea-

# historic retreats



**LEFT:** The mahogany beamed ceiling in the lobby is original; the bronze capitals atop the columns were renewed during a previous restoration effort by owner George Mitchell.

Inspired by the results, the team turned their attention to the grand music room on the southwest corner of the building, where the windows were in the same sorry shape. “This ballroom is pushed south to the beach and has great views of the Gulf of Mexico,” explains Joseph Rozier, senior project manager with Mitchell Historic Properties. In total, 46 wood windows were installed in the lobby, music room, and Veranda Restaurant. “Opening these windows again gave way for great natural light to fill the rooms,” Rozier observes.

Seeking to keep the exterior as close to the original design as possible, the team next began the tedious replacement of 214 gulf-facing guest room windows. “The upper-level windows were replaced with Pella wood windows that are impact-resistant to protect the building from flying debris in a hurricane,” says Rozier.

The double-hung windows have applied nine-over-nine muntins to “match what the windows looked like when the Galvez was built in 1911,” Rozier says. For safety reasons, the lower sash is fixed, but the top sash opens to admit cool sea breezes.

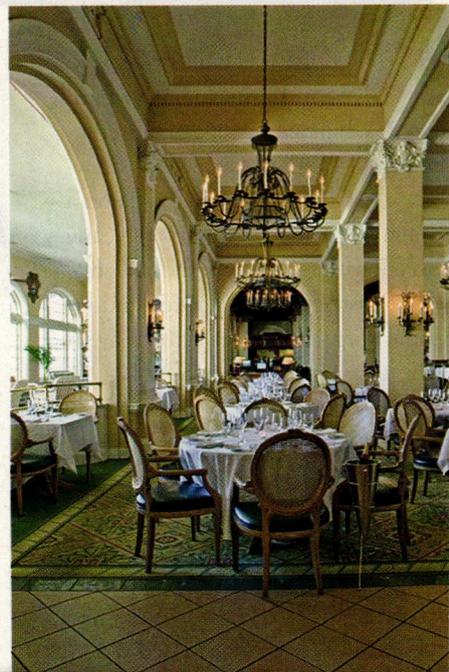
Early 20th-century photos of the

**Hotel Galvez**  
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Weekend rates start at \$159 per night, depending on season. The hotel is offering a special Centennial Weekend Package June 10-12 that includes a two-night stay, a copy of the book *Hotel Galvez: Queen of the Gulf*, and an invitation to a private party hosted by the owners. Prices start at \$479.

**RIGHT:** Located just off the lobby, Bernardo's Restaurant (known as the Marine Restaurant when the hotel first opened) is renowned for its traditional Sunday champagne brunch.

hotel show guests reclined in wicker furniture, and today the scene is much the same. As the recent restorations accent the hotel's original mystique, a new pool, patio, and spa celebrate an equally posh appeal that entertains 21st-century luxuries. As the centerpiece of George Mitchell's \$175-million efforts to help bolster a hurricane-battered city, the Hotel Galvez continues to find peace with the past while playing a pivotal role in Galveston's future. 🏠



# period products

By CLARE MARTIN

*Victorian, Arts & Crafts, and mid-century finds for indoors and out.*

## Wonderful Wicker

When it comes to outdoor seating for old houses, it's hard to argue with the versatility and timeless appeal of wicker—popularized during the Victorian era, it's never really fallen out of fashion, though it's changed form plenty of times along the way. The Blue Ridge collection from Whitecraft, inspired by outdoor seating at the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, plays up the casual side of wicker with simple lines and bright Sunbrella fabrics, but its graceful curves hint at its Gilded Age origins. Blue Ridge rocker, \$1,509. Call (954) 921-0775, or visit [whitecraft.net](http://whitecraft.net).



## Coming Up Roses

Artisan Michael Ashford's new Prairie Rose table lamp takes a classic Arts & Crafts motif—the stylized rose—and softens its shape, creating a fluid design that complements the lamp's undulating copper border. The panels can be customized with amber mica or art glass in a range of color combinations. The lamp also features an integrated dimmer switch, so it can pull double duty as both task and ambient lighting. \$2,390. Call (360) 352-0694, or visit [evergreenstudios.com](http://evergreenstudios.com).



## Got Your Number

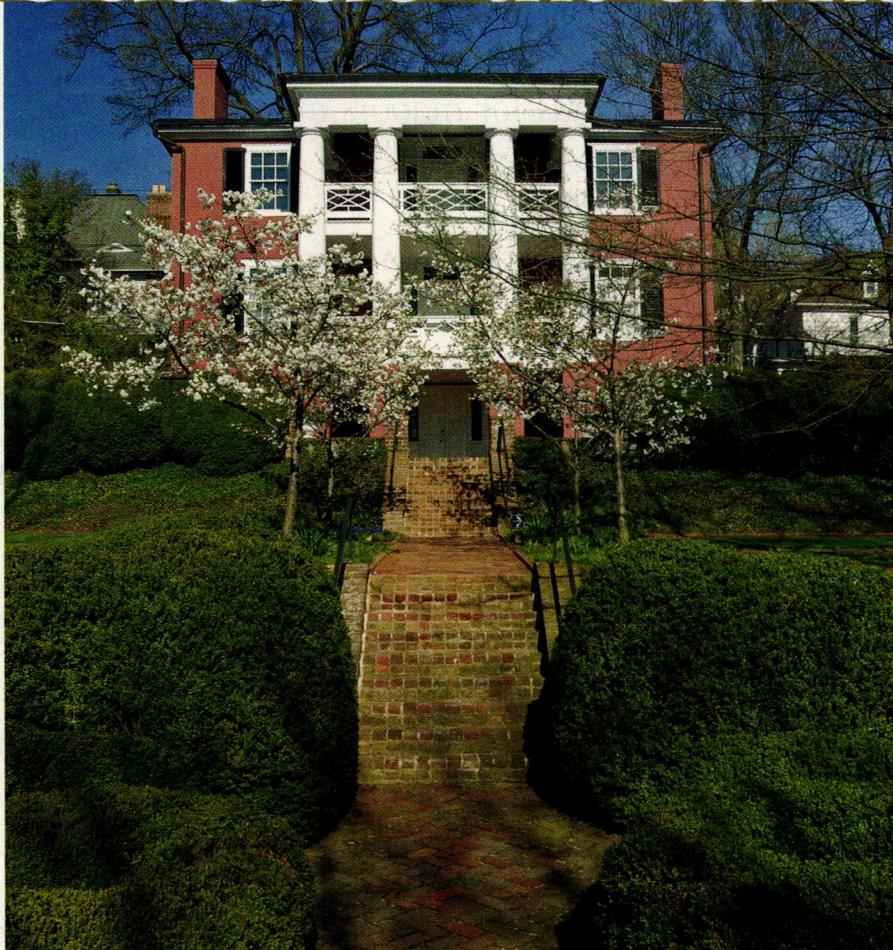
There's nothing worse than driving to a dinner party and having to crawl down the street at a snail's pace, squinting at house numbers in the dark until you find the one you're looking for. If you're a frequent entertainer, give your guests a break and take advantage of Old California Lantern Company's ingenious new take on house numbers. Their Arts & Crafts-style metal cutout overlays an LED-lighted box, creating a display that shines through the night. Choose from seven finishes and six art-glass colors; prices start at \$298. Call (800) 577-6679, or visit [oldcalifornia.com](http://oldcalifornia.com).



## Mid-Century Muted

Most of us are used to mid-century modern furniture that's hard and sleek, but Chelsea Textiles' new Mid-Century collection proves that modern can have a softer side. Many of the collection's pieces are faithful interpretations of iconic furniture forms—Mies Van der Rohe's Barcelona chair, Saarinen's tulip table, a Heywood-Wakefield chest of drawers—that have been filtered through the lens of muted colors and touchable fabrics. The three-drawer bedside table shown retails for \$1,250. Call (908) 233-5645, or visit [chelseatextiles.com](http://chelseatextiles.com).

# outside the old house



**President Woodrow Wilson's 1846 Greek Revival birthplace sits on a hill overlooking the town of Staunton, Virginia. A brick terrace, added in the 1960s by landscape architect Ralph Griswold, leads from the house down to the gardens.**

## Presidential Inspiration

*The classical gardens around the Greek Revival home where President Woodrow Wilson was born provide a trove of ideas for historically minded garden design.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CATRIONA TUDOR ERLER

**S**ituated on the highest point of the historic Gospel Hill District in downtown Staunton, Virginia, the Greek Revival-style Presbyterian parsonage where President Woodrow Wilson was born was considered

one of the finest houses in town when it was built in 1846.

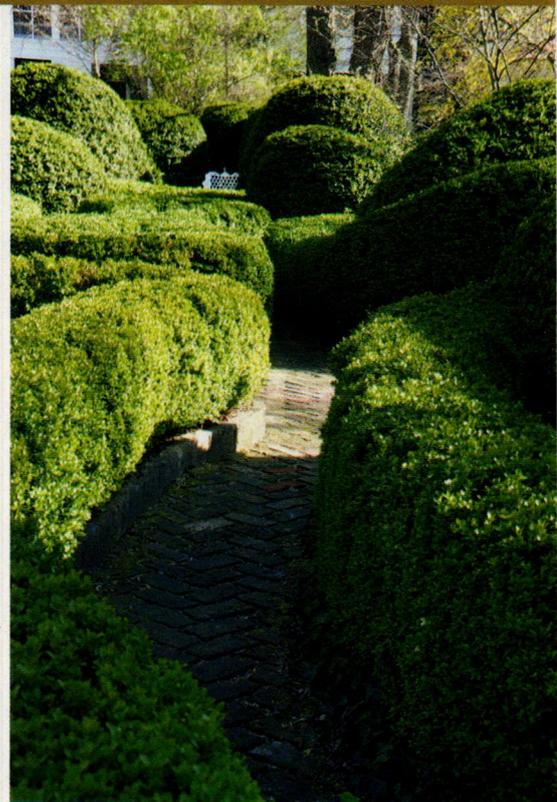
Wilson was still an infant when his family moved to Augusta, Georgia, in 1858, but the Staunton house remained important to him. He returned in 1912, as the U.S. president-elect, to celebrate his 56th birthday, and upon Wilson's

death in 1924, his wife, Edith, worked actively with the trustees of Mary Baldwin College in Staunton to purchase the house and grounds for preservation.

Shortly after acquiring the house, the trustees focused on creating a garden for the property—one that would harmonize with the home's era, and reflect the importance of its provenance. In 1932, the Garden Club of Virginia accepted the job of overseeing the garden's creation, and hired Charles F. Gillette, a celebrated Richmond, Virginia-based landscape architect, to conceive the design.

Re-creating historic gardens can be tricky, as designers must balance capturing the essence of the old while meeting modern needs. It's trickier still when few original documents exist. Journal entries from the home's first resident indicated that there was a garden, but trustees could find no record of how it had looked. A strict following of historical conventions dictated a yard composed of outbuildings necessary for running the house, surrounded by a few functional plantings such as a vegetable garden. But the trustees of Mary Baldwin College didn't want such a utilitarian garden for a home they intended to restore as a museum. Clearly, a compromise was required.

Working closely with Edith Wilson, Gillette created a Victorian-inspired garden suitable to the 1846 construction date of the house. Today, 77 years after Gillette first laid out the garden, visitors can still see the core of his original design, which has been gently updated through the years. The formal garden is terraced into two primary spaces to



## Who Was Charles Gillette?

Born in Wisconsin, Charles Freeman Gillette came to Virginia in 1913 to help architect Warren Manning with the landscape plan for the University of Richmond. Gillette quickly established a reputation in his own right, and set up a thriving business. His designs are characterized by an eclectic blend of formal 17th-century European traditions with the “gardenesque” aesthetic of the 18th-century English landscape gardening school. This “Virginia Garden” style is evident at the Woodrow Wilson House. His other notable commissions include the Virginia Executive Mansion and Agecroft, the reconstructed 15th-century Tudor manor on the banks of the James River.

**LEFT: An aerial view of the grounds shows both the upper and lower terraces, and reveals the pattern of the boxwood bow-knot garden designed by Gillette in the 1930s. ABOVE: Herringbone brick paths wind through the bow-knot garden.**

accommodate the sloping terrain; the upper terrace near the house features a brick path that runs parallel to the house through a manicured lawn. Two summerhouses flank the house on this level, adding architectural interest.

The lower terrace features boxwood-lined parterres planted in a fanciful bow-knot pattern. A brick path cuts a straight line toward the house, providing the sight-line axis from the house to the bottom of the garden, and bisecting the parterre garden on the lower terrace and the lawn on the upper level. On the upper terrace, this path is lined with white-flowering crabapple trees, which provide a froth of flowers in April and frame the view of the house throughout the year. Tucked beyond the parterre garden is a less formal

space filled with white flowering shrubs, perennials, and bulbs.

In 1968, landscape architect Ralph E. Griswold was called in to add a brick terrace along the rear of the house. Paved in a herringbone pattern and edged with a low wall that opens to a central flight of brick stairs leading down to the upper garden level, this space provides a commanding vantage overlooking the landscape.

## Practical Applications

Although classical gardens like the one at the Woodrow Wilson House are bigger than many homeowners have space for today, it's possible to scale down key elements to fit smaller suburban lots. The secret is to know which features are typical of the period and to implement them

in a way that is fitting to your own house.

For example, the large, elaborate boxwood bow-knot garden at the Wilson home could be scaled down into a parterre garden using small plants that lend themselves to close clipping, such as germander, rosemary, and lavender. If you fancy an allée, plant one, but use trees that fit comfortably on your lot.

There are even simpler steps you can take to introduce Victorian-era elements to your garden. Instead of acres of grass, a small lawn fits well with 19th-century sensibilities. By the late 1800s, the lawn mower had made lawn maintenance affordable, and having a grassy plot became the new status symbol. But these lawns were planted with intent, not as the default ground cover. They were an

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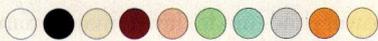


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## outside the old house



Mingling tulips and daffodils line an allée in a quiet corner of the garden. From spring through fall, the garden blooms with annuals maintained by the Garden Club of Virginia.

### 8 Lessons from Charles Gillette

Studying master landscape designer Charles Gillette's work on the Woodrow Wilson garden reveals some essential principles that can be applied to any historical garden:

1. Combine the best of traditional design with modern innovations.
2. Use pleasing patterns as part of a formal design.
3. Pay attention to proportion and scale.
4. Link garden spaces with elements such as hedges and paths.
5. Choose materials that are in harmony with the setting and the house.
6. Blend traditional forms to create an eclectic new design.
7. Give the garden a "sense of place," keeping it in harmony with the greater landscape.
8. Use native plants, as well as plants that were available during the period the garden is representing.

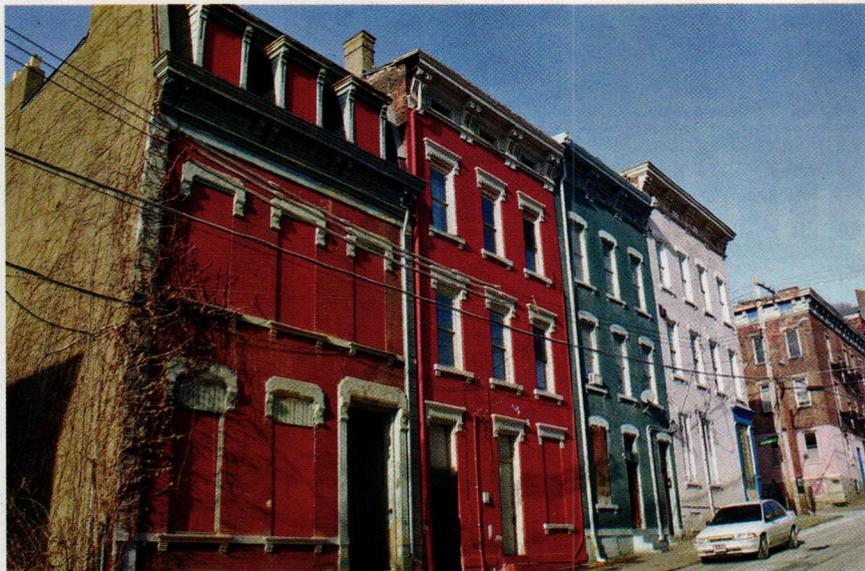
integral part of the overall design—a verdant canvas upon which to show off the principal decorations of the garden.

The Victorian age was the heyday of plant exploration as well. Exotic new plants were constantly being brought to the market, and people used these introductions prominently in their gardens. Often these plants would function as a piece of art: An outstanding specimen would be placed as a focal point, or an eye-catching exotic plant—such as a tall cordyline with a spray of spiky foliage atop a bare stalk—would become the centerpiece of an otherwise horizontal garden. Interesting foliage color or leaf shape, unusual growth habit, an arresting appearance, or pure novelty were all features cherished by Victorian gardeners. Considering the wealth of plants available to gardeners today, it shouldn't be hard to locate that special jewel to put in a place of honor in your garden or on your patio.

The Woodrow Wilson garden has been called a 1930s Colonial Revival garden with Victorian accents. Whether strictly accurate to the period or a suc-

cessful blend of elements from different eras, a well-designed garden with a sense of history is always a fitting complement to an old house. 🏡

Virginia-based writer and photographer **Catriona Tudor Erler** is the author of several landscaping and gardening books.



BRITTANY SKELETON PHOTOS

*Our mission is to save and revitalize Over-the-Rhine one building at a time.*

**The Lang House—at left in this row—was the first building adopted. Once home to a German brewer, its new owners have stabilized it and hope to move in this year.**

The tragedy of this wonderful historic district is that it has some of the lowest property values, so you get people who might pay a couple thousand dollars for a property and have no resources to sustain it.

## Adopting Change



A new nonprofit aims to rescue derelict buildings in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine Historic District one by one. Director Danny Klingler explains how.

By DEMETRA APOSPOROS

**DEMETRA APOSPOROS:** What's the mission of OTR (Over-the-Rhine) Adopt?

**DANNY KLINGLER:** Our mission at OTR Adopt—which stands for Advancing Derelict and Obsolete Properties through Transfer—is to save and revitalize Over-the-Rhine one building at a time.

**DA:** What's the concept?

**DK:** We track down endangered buildings that are abandoned and often condemned by the city, and work to get the existing property owners to donate them to us. Then we find a more responsible owner whom we give the property to on the condition that they fix up the building, maintain its historic character, and complete the rehab within a certain amount of time.

**DA:** How do you identify the buildings?

**DK:** The city maintains lists of buildings

they have ordered to be vacant or that they've condemned. We use those lists.

**DA:** Is it hard to track down the existing owners?

**DK:** The first one I did is a good example. I used an online search program that gave me all sorts of previous addresses—the city didn't have a current contact—then I went to each one until I found him.

**DA:** What's the incentive for owners to donate their buildings?

**DK:** They can get a tax deduction. More important, because they can be facing jail time for not fixing their buildings, they have an incentive to get rid of the building. And if the city does demolish a building, it sends the owner a bill in the range of \$15,000 to \$30,000. It's usually pretty easy to talk them into donating.

**DA:** In terms of new owners, what's your criteria?

**DK:** We look at three primary criteria. First, and most important, is the willingness and commitment to enter into a contract. Second, that they're in a financial position and have available resources to handle this type of investment. Third, that they have some experience in rehabbing a house—historic or not—or construction background, so they know what they're getting into.

**DA:** How do you ensure the new owners won't flip the building?

**DK:** Our contract states that if they do, a 10-percent penalty of their sale price would go back to OTR Adopt.

**DA:** Do you offer assistance or guidelines on rehabilitative decisions?

**DK:** We offer assistance—we'll broker meetings with local lenders, connect them with contractors whom we know to be good and affordable. Most of our properties are so dilapidated, the insides in particular, that our main concern is preserving the public face. We do have stipulations on exteriors; you must preserve the exterior façade to protect the integrity of the historic neighborhood.

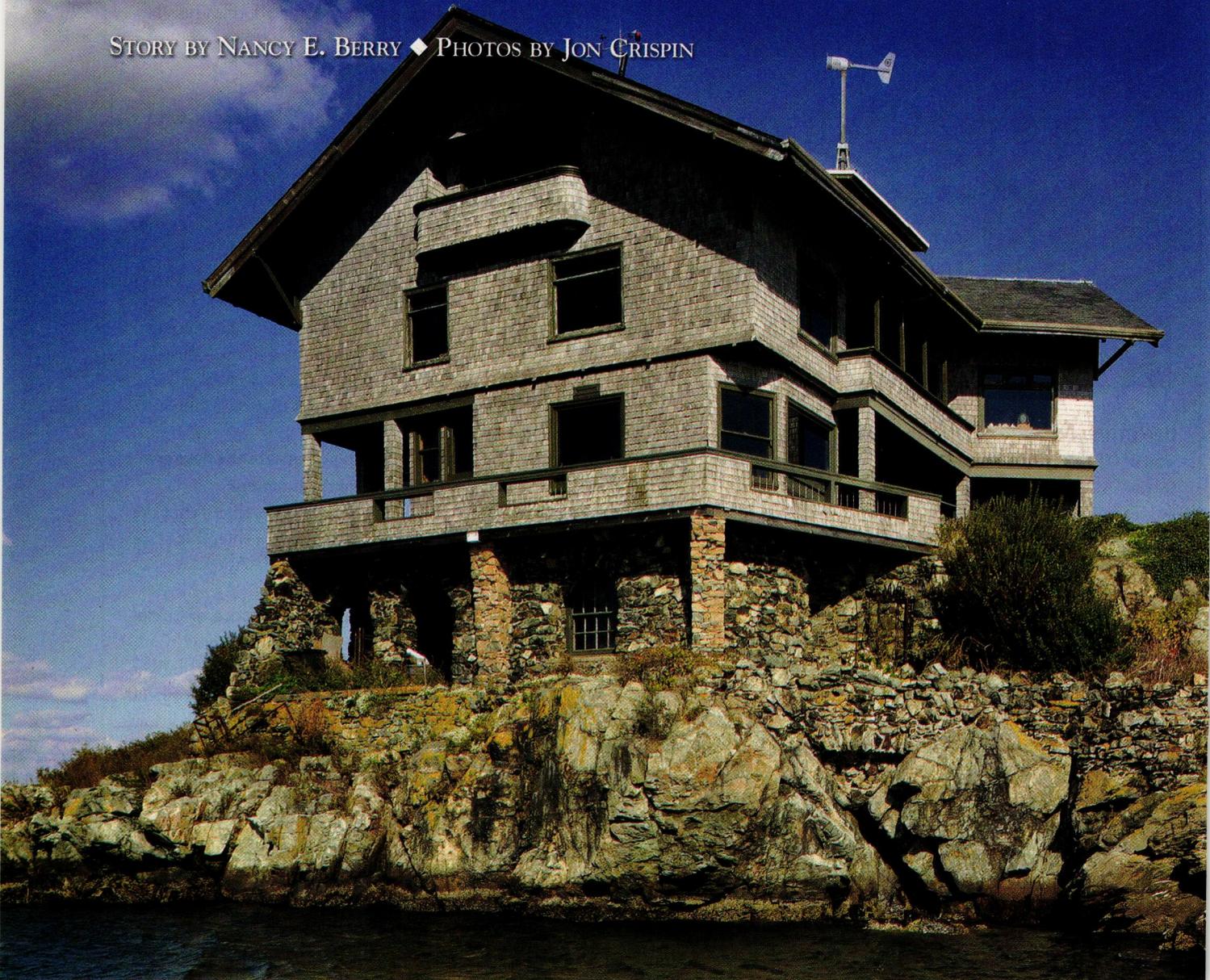
For more information, visit [otradopt.com](http://otradopt.com).

OLD-HOUSE LIVING

# Community Rock

*For more than 40 years, a communal effort has helped sustain Clingstone, a 1905 Shingle Style house perched on an island in Narragansett Bay.*

STORY BY NANCY E. BERRY ♦ PHOTOS BY JON CRISPIN





**ABOVE:** Volunteers pose for a group portrait during last year's Clingstone work weekend.

**OPPOSITE:** Clingstone is in fine form today, but when Henry Wood purchased the property in 1961, all of its windows were broken, and the roof had gaping holes that let in rain and snow.

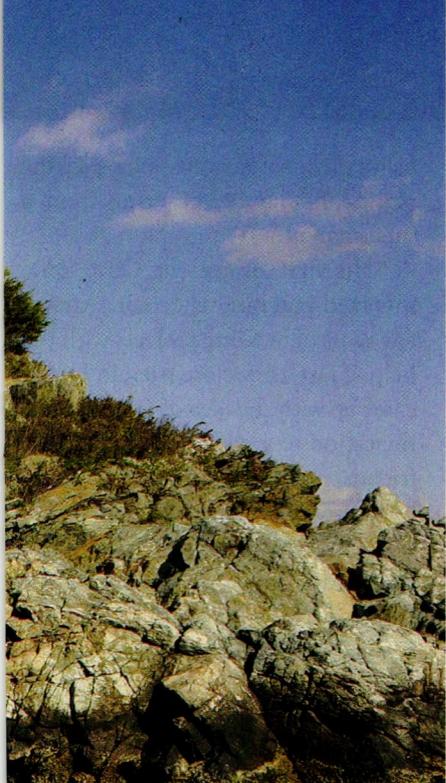
"I come to party," explains a volunteer at Clingstone's annual work weekend. The sentiment perfectly captures the vibe of those who have gathered here to help maintain this 106-year-old, 23-room summer manse sitting on a rocky outcrop in Narragansett Bay.

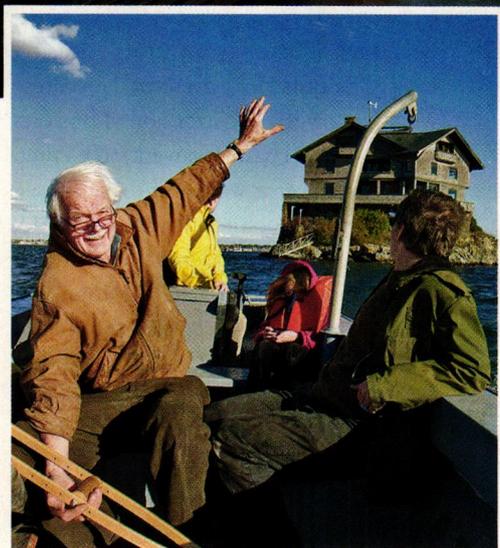
Although the annual early-summer event is dubbed a "work weekend," stories fly of bikini-clad painting crews in years past, and of owner Henry Wood's fondness for mooning passing tour boats. After four decades of work weekends, a sense of playfulness permeates the bohemian-style restoration scene.

"My childhood summers were spent sailing in Narragansett Bay, and as my father and I would sail by Clingstone,

he'd say, 'There's your crazy cousin's house,'" recalls Henry, a retired architect who oversaw the construction of Boston's City Hall and Hynes Convention Center. Years later, on a weekend drive to see Vermont's fall colors with his first wife, Joan (herself a residential architect), Henry discovered that Clingstone was on the market. The couple purchased the house in 1961 for \$3,600, a total that amounted to the back taxes owed on the property.

The original owner, J. S. Lovering Wharton—a distant relative of Henry's—had abandoned it after the Great Hurricane of 1938. It had since become a haven for vandals, a far cry from the well-heeled summer guests it once entertained. When the Woods bought the house, it had no running water or electricity, and was missing all 65 plate





**ABOVE:** Owner and master of ceremonies Henry Wood approaches the old manse in a skiff; the only way to reach the house is by boat.

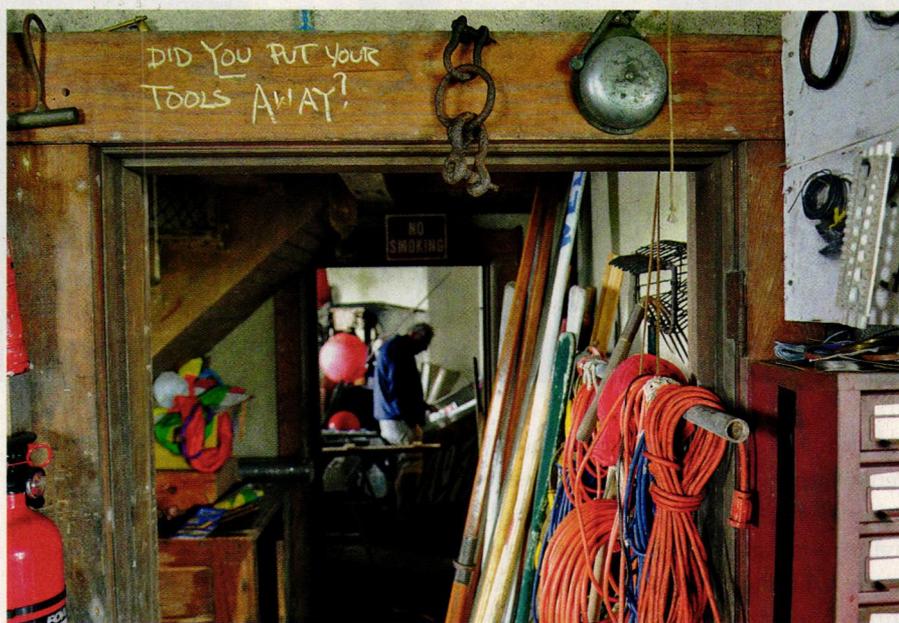
glass windows, as well as much of the exterior decking and part of its slate roof. “You could stand in the basement and look up through the house to the sky,” recalls Henry. Graffiti filled the home’s walls, and most architectural elements that could be easily hauled to a boat had been pilfered.

### Getting to Work

Henry was determined to resurrect the old wreck. “During the 1960s there were a lot of urban renewal projects going on around Boston,” he says, “and I would salvage architectural items from buildings being torn down in the South End—glass from old storefronts, doorknobs from brownstones,

factory lights from a city meat-packing plant, and lumber flooring from a supermarket.”

His first project at Clingstone involved patching the roof. After a few years of tackling projects with the help of just a few close friends, Henry came up with the idea of extending an invitation to a wider circle of family, friends, and the just plain curious to help preserve the monstrous mansion. “We held our first official work weekend around 1970,” Henry says. Guests partook in a plethora of home fix-it projects within the 48-hour span, ranging anywhere from painting window sash to replacing rotting decking to fixing plumbing.



**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** A true New England summer cottage, the house is clad in cedar shingles inside and out. The winding staircase's banister was lost to vandals long ago. A volunteer replaces rotten shingles around a bay window. Whimsical notes are etched onto doorways and walls around the house as reminders to the work crews.

The tradition continues today, with each work weekend's projects covering the needs of the moment. The draw to such a laborious event is the house itself. Built on a small granite outcropping just off Jamestown, the 10,000-square-foot house, which nearly covers the surface of the craggy rock, offers intoxicating 360-degree ocean views; some workers camp out there overnight. "The house's sight lines seem to reveal perfect seascape paintings, each framed through 4' x 10' plate glass windows," says Josh Wood, Henry's son.

### Historical Mystery

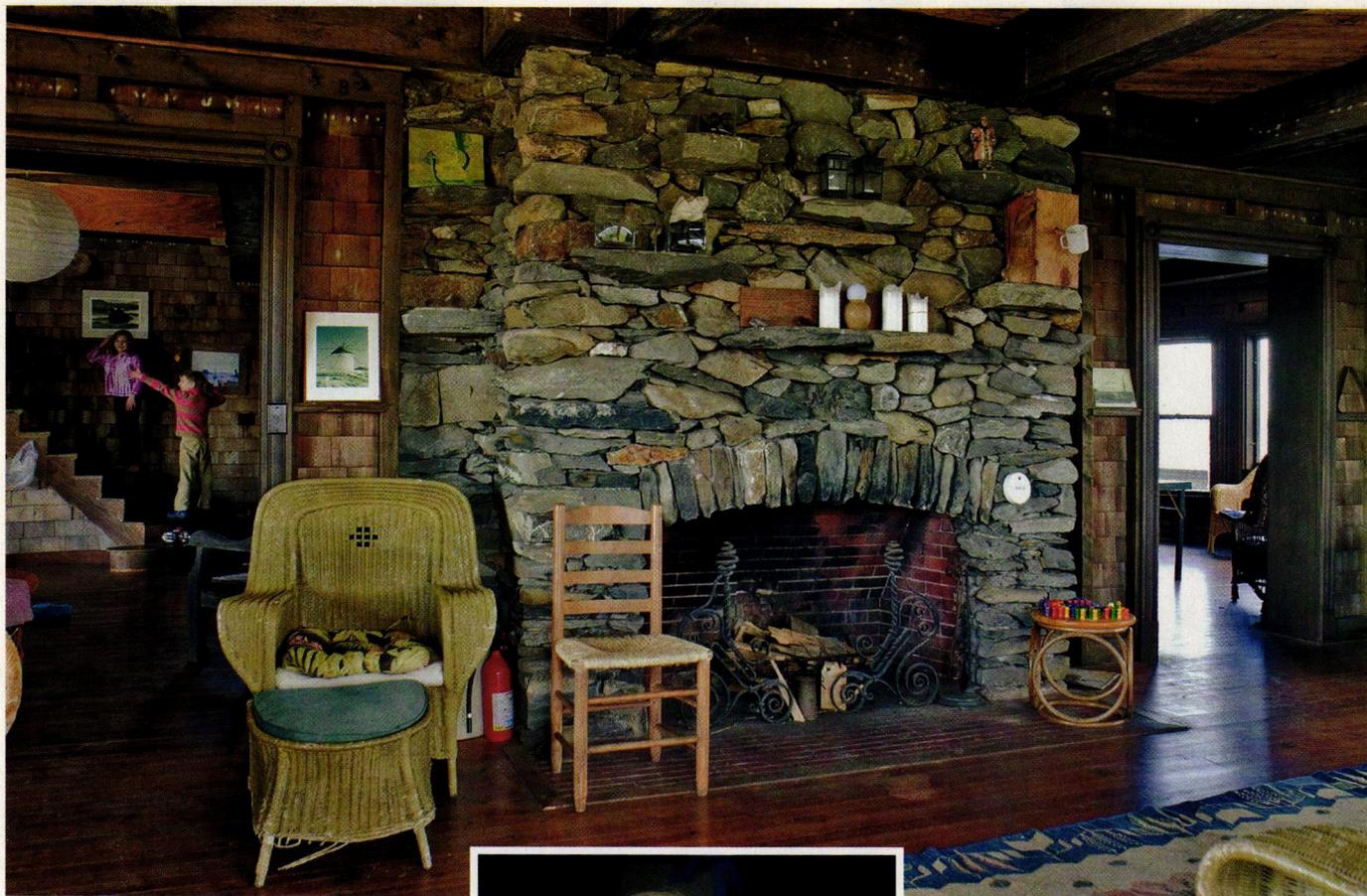
Jamestown Historical Society records offer conflicting stories on how the man-

sion came into being. One tale describes the house as being originally planned for marine artist William Trost Richards; he abandoned the project and sold the plans to J.S. Lovering Wharton, who modified the design, making the house smaller and adding a breakwater. The other story claims Wharton designed the original plans, and Richards offered the financial backing to build the structure.

Josh reveals the story he and his family have come to know: Wharton, a close friend and neighbor of Richards', collaborated with him on the design and put his house project in Richards' name to get around local gossip—Wharton was from the staunch Philadelphia Quaker society, and building a summer house

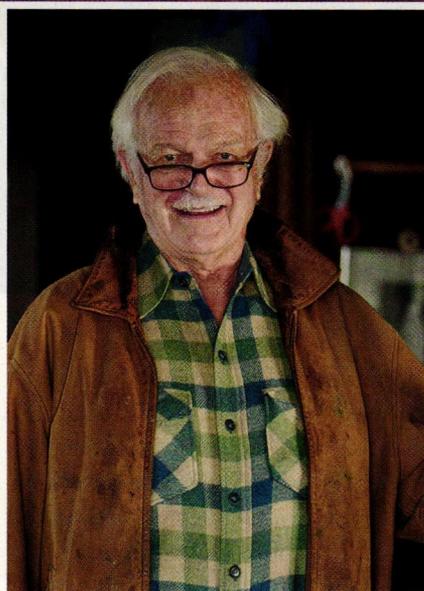
on a rock was considered more than a little unusual. "Newport architect J. D. Johnston, a friend of Wharton's, helped with window placement and such," adds Henry.

"Clingstone is a remarkable example of the Shingle Style," Henry says. Josh likens the three-and-a-half-story house, which was overbuilt to withstand New England's harsh coastal winds, to a ship. Its structural system consists of heavy



oak timber framing, and it is clad in cedar shingles inside and out. Massive stone fireplaces dominate the main hall, living room, and ping-pong room (originally a billiard room). Air circulates through a series of ventilating hatches built above and below the inoperable plate glass windows. The curved central staircase, which has no rails, leads up to 11 bedrooms. Decks—some with railings, some without—surround the house.

Today, Clingstone gets its water and electricity through sustainable methods—12 solar panels and a windmill generate power, a 3,000-gallon cistern collects rainwater, and five composting toilets service the water closets. “The house’s stone foundation came right from the island, and the dining table was made from planks from the original cistern,” says Henry. “You can’t get more green than that.” The interior is more reminiscent of a bachelor’s shack than a grand summer cottage; Henry



**TOP:** The parlor is anchored by a massive beach-stone fireplace. **BOTTOM:** Henry Wood in his unusual house.

has furnished the house with a hodgepodge of pieces collected over the years. The place is littered with nautical charts and historical photos; the library holds legions of seafaring, cooking, and architectural books.

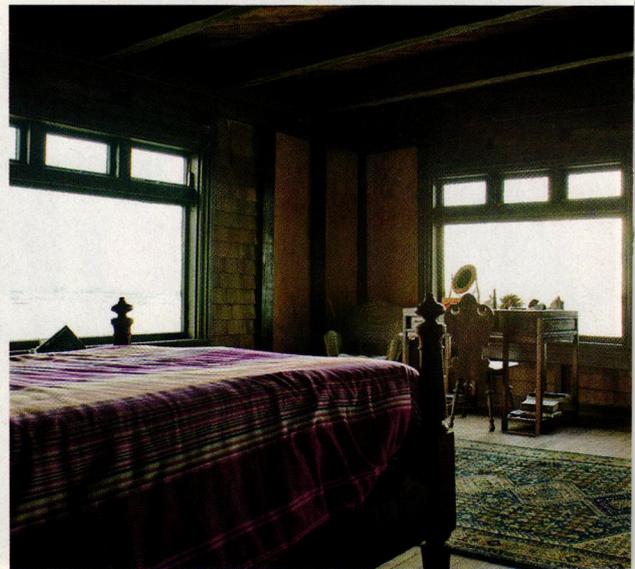
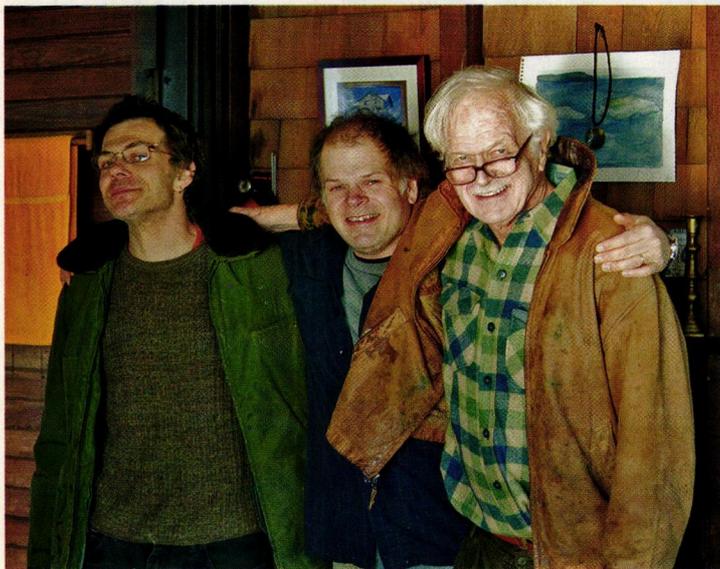
## Weekend Warriors

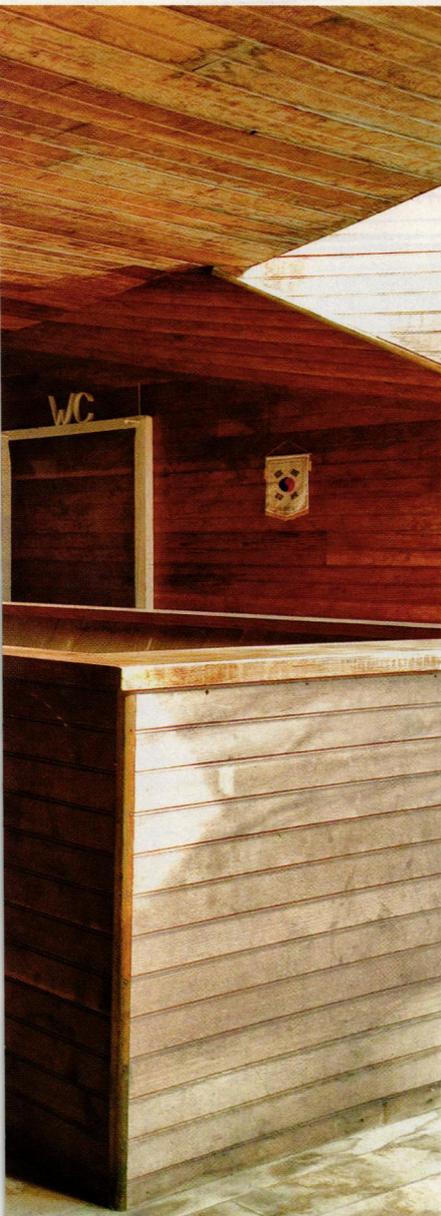
Henry, now in his 80s, likens the work weekend to an old-fashioned barn raising. It’s definitely family-centric, with his three grown sons, Paul, Josh, and Daniel, managing various projects. At last year’s event, among sailboats gliding under the Newport Bridge and cormorants soaring through the air, Dan, an artist and printer, shuttled volunteers over from Jamestown’s Dumplings Pier on a motored 10-man skiff, skirting rocks and buoys on the five-minute trip. Volunteers arrived to find Henry’s eight-page chore sign-up sheet among the papers scattered on the dining table, with tasks for the weekend broken into columns detailing the level of priority, description, location, and number of crew needed for each task. Projects included re-shingling window bays, installing a rope handrail, cleaning windows, and planting containers.

The scene was hectic as volunteers—many close friends of the Woods—chose



**ABOVE:** The dining room becomes command central during the work weekend—the spot where Henry organizes the day and gives orders, surrounded by the room's nautical charts and historical images. **LEFT:** Polly Nelson, a first-time volunteer, offered up her furniture refinishing skills.





**ABOVE, LEFT:** The third floor hall leads to additional bedrooms. The ladder at left goes to the roof, where 12 solar panels heat the water tank and a windmill generates electricity for the off-the-grid house. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Bathrooms boast original clawfoot tubs and the latest composting toilets.

**FAR LEFT:** Henry with sons Dan and Josh; the work weekend has become a family tradition. **LEFT:** A corner bedroom offers million-dollar views of the bay through the home's oversized windows.



their chores and got to work. Blaine Paxton of New Hampshire, who has been coming for five or six years, signed up to repair and paint exterior windows. Kathy Kahn, Josh's mother-in-law, volunteered for the first time. Polly Nelson, a mystery writer from New Jersey, saw the weekend posted on the Internet and thought, "What a great old house—who wouldn't want to see this?" She offered up her specialty—refinishing furniture—and stayed overnight in the house, hoping to get ideas for her next story. Alec Ferguson, a longtime friend with carpentry skills, replaced a carrying beam in the main hall that had been eaten away by insects.

Although all of the volunteers stayed busy, the mood remained relaxed and jovial. Josh reflects on the weekend: "It's like our own little socialist world—I love the community aspect to the weekend. My family has great friends—I would not trade this experience for anything." Henry agrees. With more than 24,000 volunteer man-hours recorded, he is thankful for the friends who have helped him preserve the old summer manse in the Bay. 🏠

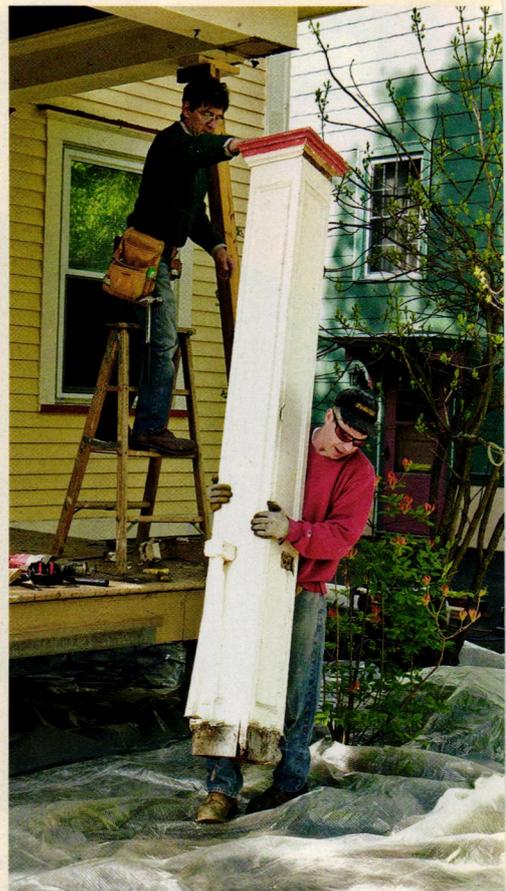
*Clingstone's 2011 work weekend is scheduled for the first weekend in June. For more information, e-mail [clingstone@me.com](mailto:clingstone@me.com).*



# Fixing the Porch

**Attention to small construction details adds longevity to a porch restoration.**

STORY BY STEVE JORDAN ♦ PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK



**ABOVE:** The old porch was crumbling away. In order to reconstruct it, Ted Robertson (left) and Mike Marini (right) began by spreading 6-mil plastic sheeting on the ground, bracing the porch's roof, then removing the columns. **OPPOSITE:** The new porch is not only picture-perfect, it's built to last, thanks to thoughtful structural details.

Drenched by the rain, covered in snow, and beaten by the sun, porches are vulnerable to every whim of the weather, and consequently require more maintenance than the rest of the house. Piecemeal repairs often make do for decades, but eventually porches must be replaced. When this happens, homeowners are often shocked to learn that the original building elements they've taken for granted for years are expensive and quite difficult to replicate.

Air-conditioning, television, and rear decks have rendered porches irrelevant

### Deck Paint Tip

Never use oil-based floor and deck enamel over an off-the-shelf oil-based house primer: The paint will dry more quickly and become harder than the primer, and the paint will "skid" off of the primed surface. While latex porch paint is self-priming, thinning the first coat is still recommended.

on many streets, but that's not the case in Rochester, New York's Linden-South Historic District, where neighbors linger on their porches to visit with passersby, argue politics, compare the fruits of their gardens, and even show off their prize egg-laying chickens.

When district resident John Smith realized he needed a new porch on his circa-1905 Foursquare, he called Ted Robertson of Kirkwall Construction. Ted arrived to find a porch with rotten tongue-and-groove decking, disintegrating steps, falling-off balusters, columns compressed into the floor, and a distinct lean to the whole structure, including the roof. Ted's experience told him that these visible clues foreshadowed structural problems below.

### Getting Started

Ted and his associate, Mike Marini, began the job by spreading 6-mil plastic sheeting all around the porch—a requirement of the recent Lead Safe Work Practices legislation. (Because paint wasn't being



**LEFT:** Ted builds a new structural support from treated 2x8s. He starts by attaching a ledger to the wall with structural lag screws and pocketing the rim joists directly into original slots in the stone foundation. **RIGHT:** One of Ted's tricks for making porches that last is ensuring that parts have good ventilation; here, he accomplishes this by installing vertical shims between the exterior joist and the finish apron (the shims are visible in the gap between these two elements).

sanded or scraped, the men didn't need to wear masks for this particular job.) Next, they supported the roof structure to clear the way for complete demolition of the porch. During the demolition, Ted and Mike set aside the columns, newels, and balusters, which they would replicate, and they cut and removed the flooring in small, uniform pieces that could easily be wrapped in plastic, sealed, and be carried away for disposal in a commercial dumpster per local regulations.

As expected, once the framing beneath the porch was exposed, the men discovered that it was completely shot. However, they found some good news, too: Faux-stone concrete piers were still plumb and in good condition, there was a concrete support at the termination of the stairs, and the porch roof and ceiling were sound, thanks to shingles that had been maintained through the years.

To build a new structural support, Ted and Mike attached a ledger to the wall with structural lag screws and pocketed the perpendicular rim joists into the stone foundation. With the exception of joist hangers at the rims, the 2x8 treated lumber was assembled identically to the old framing, and was gently sloped to shed water. As a final touch, Ted provided ventilation between the rim joists and finish apron by installing thin shims vertically on the exterior side of the joists. With the high cost of lumber and labor, such details ensure durability.

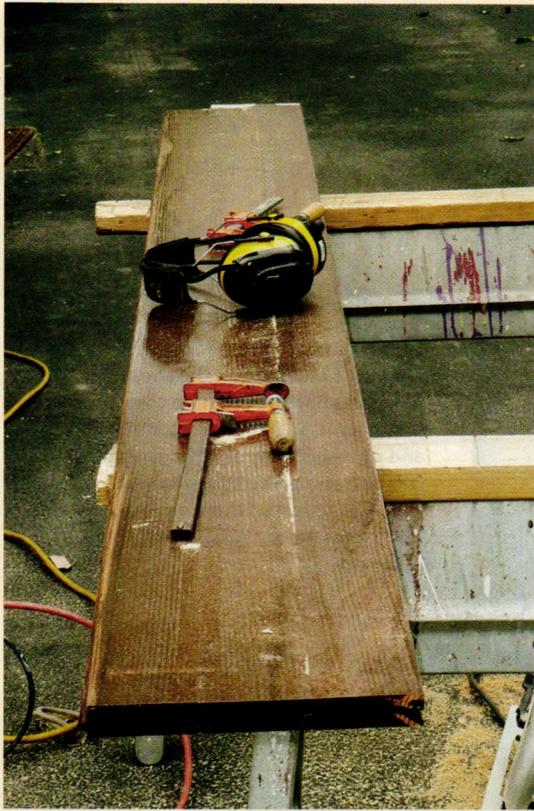
### Deck Decisions

Ted and Mike wanted the porch deck to have a similar look and feel to the original, so they chose 5/4 (1" thick) vertical-grain Douglas fir. Before they began assembly, they primed each board on all sides with a thinned coat of deck enamel—this primer

can either be an oil-based floor paint or an oil-based enamel thinned 10 to 20 percent with mineral spirits, or a water-based enamel thinned to the same proportions with water. Because the porch was slightly less than 8' long, Ted and Mike used full-length boards for durability and a better appearance.

When Ted assembles a porch deck, he begins and ends with a special technique that helps prevent the overlapping end boards from pulling loose where they overhang the edge: He glues the first and last three boards tightly together with marine epoxy. Then he cuts the tongue or groove on the termination side flush, and attaches the three-board panel to the framing with galvanized finish nails.

Ted never cuts decking boards to fit individually; he trims them to length after they are all installed. Like most carpenters, he determines a proper overhang



**LEFT:** Another of Ted's tricks for lasting porches: gluing the first and last three decking boards together with marine epoxy, a technique that helps keep the end boards from pulling apart. These three tongue-and-groove boards on sawhorses have just finished clamp time, and are ready to be installed. **RIGHT:** Ted and Mike blind-nail the rest of the decking boards into place.

**RIGHT:** With the deck installed, the men pop a chalk line, then cut the end boards to a uniform length. Afterward, they use a router to finish off the edges.



MIKE MARINI PHOTOS



**LEFT & BELOW:** The men assembled the balustrade in the shop, then installed it as a single completed unit. To help the columns and posts last—by enabling air circulation and preventing trapped water—Ted rested them on thin lead shims before completing assembly.



BOTTOM: MIKE MARINI PHOTOS

depth above the apron, pops a chalk line, and makes a straight cut across the width of the porch; Ted and Mike then added a finishing touch by cleaning their cut up with a router.

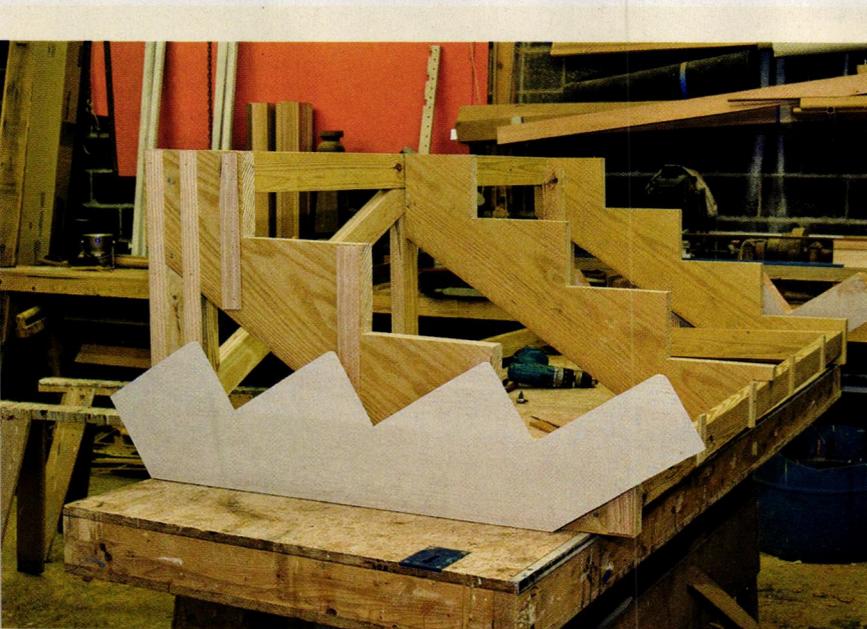
### Creating Components

For the new column and baluster components, Ted chose Western red cedar. While cedar is expensive, it's still avail-

able in clear, vertical-grain, old-growth stock, and is renowned for its resistance to rot and insect infestation. It also holds paint well. To further ensure longevity, Ted and Mike designed all joinery to shed water, taking extra care to slope the column bases. In addition to the columns, the men also replicated the balustrades, newels, and stair rails in the shop to match the originals. Each balus-

ter end cut was primed before assembly, and then, to avoid face- or toe-nailing into the top rail, Ted and Mike attached the balusters' upper ends to a separate piece of lumber with hot-dipped galvanized nails before attaching the entire unit to the top rail. (They attached the balusters' lower ends from the underside of the bottom rail.)

When a porch develops a significant



**TOP:** Ted and Mike built the stair frame in the shop, again securing thin shims vertically to the exterior sides to create an air space before installing the finish board (which rests across the frame bottom in the photo). **BOTTOM:** The assembled stairs sport a final finishing touch—cove molding beneath each tread.

lean over the years, it is usually impossible to jack it completely back into position without removing the subsequent layers of accumulated roofing materials. This roof had remained pretty true—there was no perceptible lean in the roof ridge—so the men decided to leave it alone. As they reinstalled the columns, they rested them on thin lead shims to allow the undersides to ventilate and to prevent moisture

entrapment between the column bases and the wood floor.

### Stair Strategies

As with the other features, Ted and Mike constructed the stairs for strength and durability. Unlike most porch stairs, these are trimmed with finish lumber—also red cedar—that hides the frame beneath.

Ted and Mike began with a treated

lumber frame, attaching thin shims to its sides to create an air space between the framing and the finish trim. All risers, treads, and side pieces were primed and fastened in a manner similar to the porch floor and fascia details.

“We used full 1 1/4” fir treads and risers, sloping the treads 1/4” toward the front,” Ted says. “We don’t drill holes, cut slots, or add any other drainage.” When stairs are constructed properly, as they once were, supplemental drainage via slots and holes isn’t necessary. The bottom riser and the side trim are held up above the ground on a 2” piece of 5/4 pressure-treated deck-

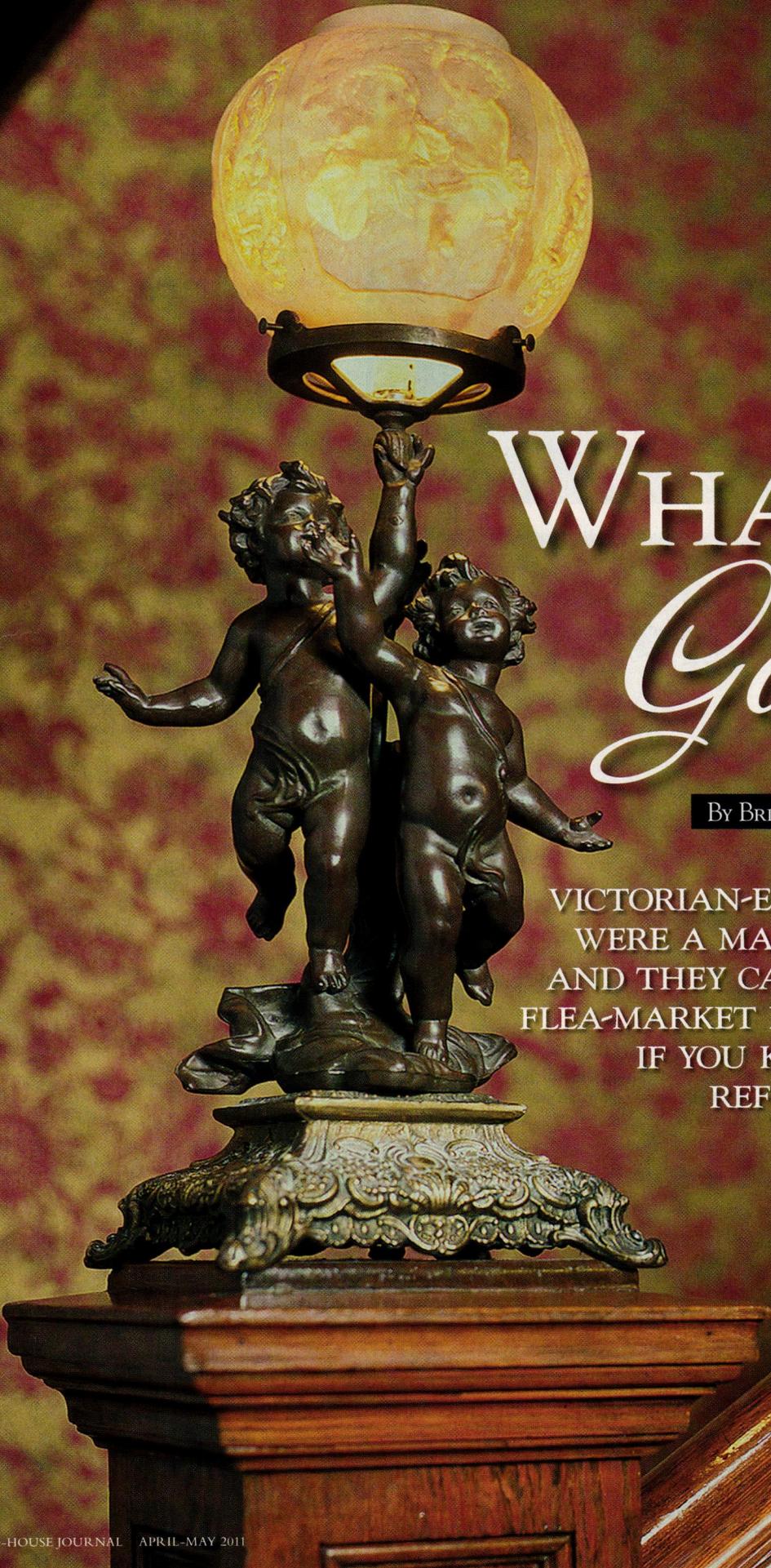
### In the News

New legislation from the Environmental Protection Agency, which went into effect in April 2010, requires that all contractors take precautions when disturbing an area or material that might contain lead. The first step is a test to determine the presence or absence of lead, and classes are available nationwide to complete the mandatory eight-hour lead-safe removal certification process. Various methods are required to prevent the spread and contamination of dust and particles into the environment, and large fines are possible when the law is flagrantly ignored. For more information, visit [epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm](http://epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm).

ing. “It’s close to the ground, it gets wet, and has dirt and leaves collect against it,” explains Ted. “Even if the pressure-treated lumber doesn’t hold paint well, it’s usually too dirty to tell.”

Most porch stairs don’t get this degree of finish, but these are no ordinary stairs—they’re built to last. Ted terminated the porch steps with a little extra overhang to accommodate the finishing touch—a bed of cove molding beneath each stair. Icing on the cake, it’s the perfect decorative touch for a meticulously reconstructed porch in a great historic neighborhood. 🏠

A bronze gas fixture of cavorting cherubs, circa 1890, has been electrified to light a stairway. Wiring was concealed by threading it through the hollow newel post underneath.



# WHAT A *Gas!*

By BRIAN COLEMAN

VICTORIAN-ERA GASLIGHTS WERE A MAJOR INDUSTRY, AND THEY CAN BE A PRIME FLEA-MARKET FIND TODAY—IF YOU KNOW HOW TO REFURBISH THEM.

WILLIAM WRIGHT PHOTO



**LEFT:** An ornate, gilded bronze gas chandelier has been restored to its original glory, complete with flickering flames. **BELOW:** A circa-1880 jeweled brass shade reflects the late 19th-century fascination with the exotic Far East.



ERIK KVALSVIK PHOTO

Gas lighting was one of the major industries of the 19th century. First used for street lamps, by the mid-1800s, gas had replaced kerosene as the preferred source of lighting, as it

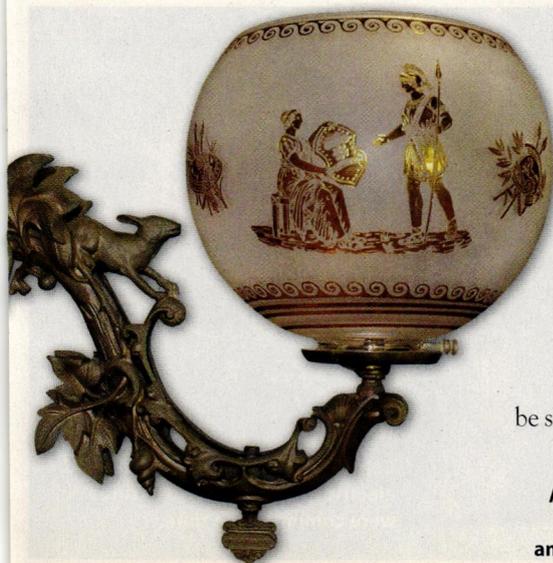
was more economical and provided a more reliable, even source of light.

Gas lighting became the third largest industry in the country, behind railroads and mining. Produced in municipal “gashouses” as a by-product of bituminous coal heated in airtight chambers, gas was driven off the coal, collected and purified, and then piped into homes and commercial buildings in nearly every city in the country.

Gas was used to illuminate chandeliers, wall sconces (called “brackets”) and “portables,” which were table lamps that drew their gas from a flexible tube attached to an overhead light.

But the era of gas lighting was to be short-lived, lasting just half a century.

**An 1858 Cornelius and Baker chandelier sports a rare acid-etched and flashed amber glass shade attributed to Baccarat.**



## Style Sampler

Substantial Rococo brass gasoliers—adorned with scrolls, flowers and classic cornucopias—were considered proper for Empire parlors of the 1830s and ‘40s. By the 1860s, polychromed, Neo-Grec, and Renaissance Revival chandeliers, often highlighted with “inspirational” statuary—such as Greek warriors or perhaps a poet (medieval Italian scribe Dante was a favorite)—were *de rigueur*.

After Commodore Matthew Perry visited Japan in 1854 and opened its wonders to the Western world, all things Japanese took hold, giving rise to the Aesthetic movement. By the 1880s, fashionably asymmetric designs of mons, fans, and even geisha girls appeared on gas chandeliers, sconces, and shades. The fixtures were sometimes even inset with faceted “jewels” of colored glass for even more sparkle and exotic appeal.

LEFT: COURTESY OF PAUL VAZES/QUALITYLIGHTING.NET  
ABOVE: WILLIAM WRIGHT PHOTO

# CLEAN IT UP

If you're thinking of installing a vintage gas fixture in your home, the first step is to make sure it's in good working order. Start by cleaning it thoroughly—a straightforward process, but one that takes a bit of patience and the right materials.

**1 Go easy on intact finishes.** If you're lucky enough to find a fixture that has never been electrified and still has its original patina intact, gas lighting guru Paul Ivazes of Quality Lighting in Grass Valley, California, recommends using an all-purpose cleaner such as Simple Green, which removes dirt and grime but won't disturb the original finish of the aged brass. Before starting, it's important to completely disassemble the chandelier, which helps avoid leaving any excess soapy residue on the metal.

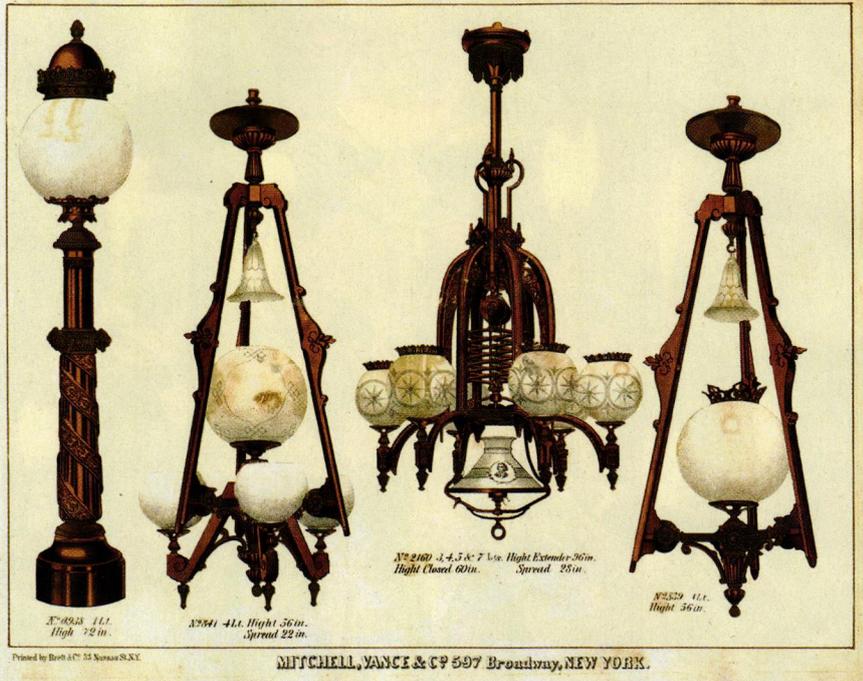
**2 Touch up spotty dirt.** If the finish is in good shape but just needs a touch-up in a few spots, Paul suggests wetting a cotton swab with denatured alcohol and gently rubbing the soiled areas.

**3 Remove stubborn paint splatters.** Old splatters from sloppy ceiling paint jobs are a common problem. Paul uses Green's Liquid Paint Remover to remove any paint, lacquer, or varnish without disturbing the original color of the metal underneath. Often, a chandelier that's been completely painted over is the easiest to restore, as paint can protect the original finish; once it's removed, the metal can shine like new.

If the fixture is spelter—an alloy of zinc made as a cheaper substitute for more substantial brass—and has a decorative painted finish, complete stripping and refinishing is often the only solution, as the underlying patina and color usually can't be salvaged. To tell if the piece is spelter, lightly scratch the surface in an unobtrusive spot—spelter will look silver or white underneath.

GAS FIXTURES

Plate 183

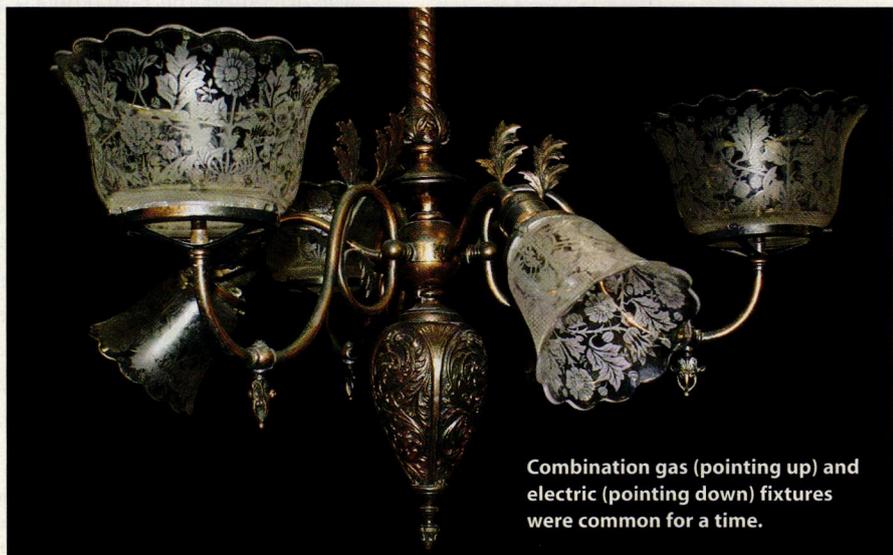


An illustration from an 1870 Mitchell Vance catalog shows some of the ornate gas lighting fixtures available toward the end of the 19th century.

The invention of the light bulb in 1879 signaled the beginning of the end. As gas was initially cheaper and more reliable than electricity, transitional gas-and-electric combination fixtures were made at first (typically, the electric lights pointed down and the gas jets up). The introduction in 1908 of the durable, inexpensive tungsten filament light bulb, which is still in use today, was the final blow that recategorized gas lighting as old-fashioned

and out of date, and relegated the energy source to secondary roles like the basement furnace and kitchen stove.

Now with the rise of period home restoration, those old gas chandeliers and sconces are being rediscovered and restored. They can be found anywhere from vintage lighting dealers to local salvage companies, where simple gas fixtures can still be purchased at a reasonable price, usually under a few hundred dollars.



Combination gas (pointing up) and electric (pointing down) fixtures were common for a time.

# REWIRING TIPS

After cleaning, you'll need to wire the fixture for electricity. (If you're bent on authentic gas, be sure to check your local building codes, as today many cities don't permit open-flame gas interior lighting).

Wiring a gas fixture can be tricky, as gas chandeliers were designed for thin streams of gas, not thick, cumbersome electrical wire. Threading an electrical cord through a narrow gas arm can be difficult; you'll need a steady hand and a good dose of perseverance.



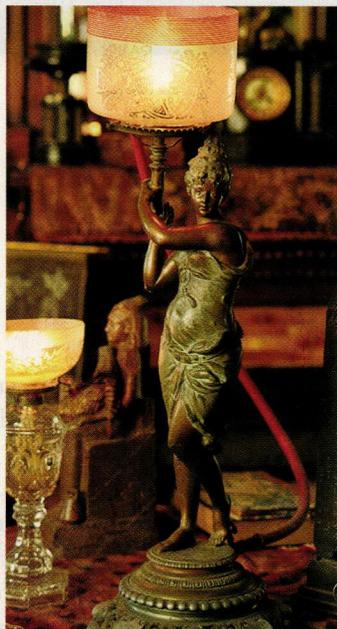
A small, beaded chain attached to the wire can be used to help pull it through the arm.



Lubricating the electrical wire with soap can help its passage down a narrow arm.

- 1 **Blast a shot** of compressed air through the entire gas line to make sure the path is clean and free of debris and burrs.
- 2 **Freeze the gas valves** shut so they don't turn and cut the wire; a drop of Loctite 680 on the gas valve stem effectively stops the valve cock from turning.
- 3 **Use the correct wire**—18-gauge stranded wire works best. Paul rubs it with a dry bar of Ivory soap to help lubricate its passage, then attaches the end to a small beaded chain to help pull it down the narrow channel of the chandelier arm. If the passageway is too small, sometimes the only solution is to run the wire unobtrusively along the outside of the arm.

## Gas Lighting Glossary



A lovely Grecian maiden "portable" table lamp has a rubber hose that funnels the gas from a chandelier overhead.

**BLOWING:** When the gas burner was turned up too high, the light level was reduced, and a soft roar (blowing) accompanied the wasted gas.

**BURNERS:** Gas wasn't burned directly from pipes, but from replaceable burners that were changed like light bulbs.

**CIGAR LIGHTER:** A gas portable lamp designed to light cigars.

**PETCOCK:** Each burner had a valve called a "cock" or "petcock" that adjusted the gas flow.

**PORTABLES:** Table lamps supplied with gas from a hose that extended to a chandelier or wall bracket; they were "portable" in the sense that the hose could be easily disconnected and moved to another source of gas.

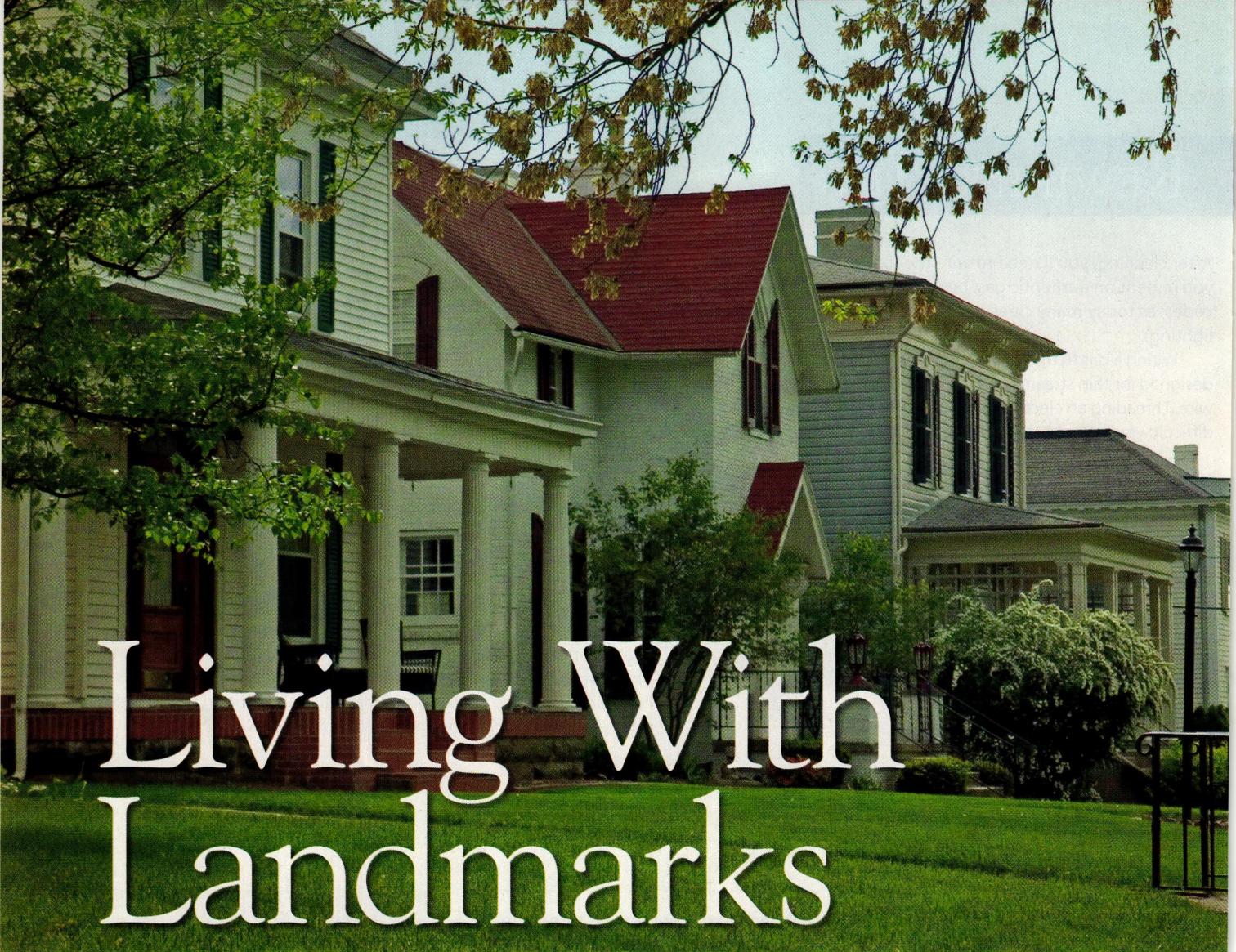
**TOILET CHANDELIER:** A gas chandelier suspended from a bracket hanging from the wall. The word "toilet" refers to a dressing table, which these lights typically illuminated.

**WALL BRACKET:** A light mounted on the wall—what we now call a sconce.

### Proper Toppers

Shades and light bulbs are easily overlooked, but they're an important detail in achieving a vintage look. The most appropriate bulbs for period authenticity are low-wattage (40 watts or less) and short (tips should remain below the outer edge of the glass shade)—appliance bulbs often fit the bill.

The first gas shades had narrow ( $2\frac{3}{8}$ "") openings at the bottom, but by the 1870s, most had become wider (4" or 5"), which eliminated flickering caused by turbulent airflow. Frosted, etched, opalescent, and colored glass shades were common, but finding a matching set of period shades today can be difficult and quite expensive. If your heart is set on vintage glass, try mixing and matching complementary shades (not an uncommon practice, as documented in period photographs).



# Living With Landmarks

*Scoring a house in a well-preserved historic district can be a thrilling coup—or a tangled web of rules and regulations. Take advantage of the benefits and avoid the stress with these essential tips.*

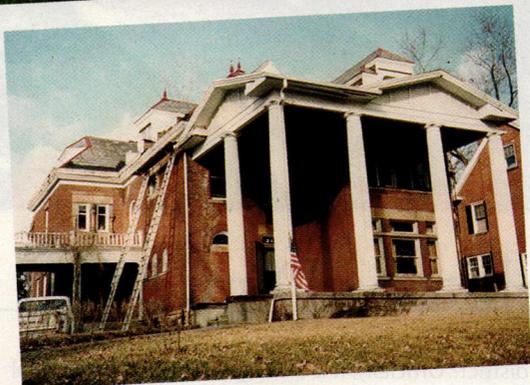
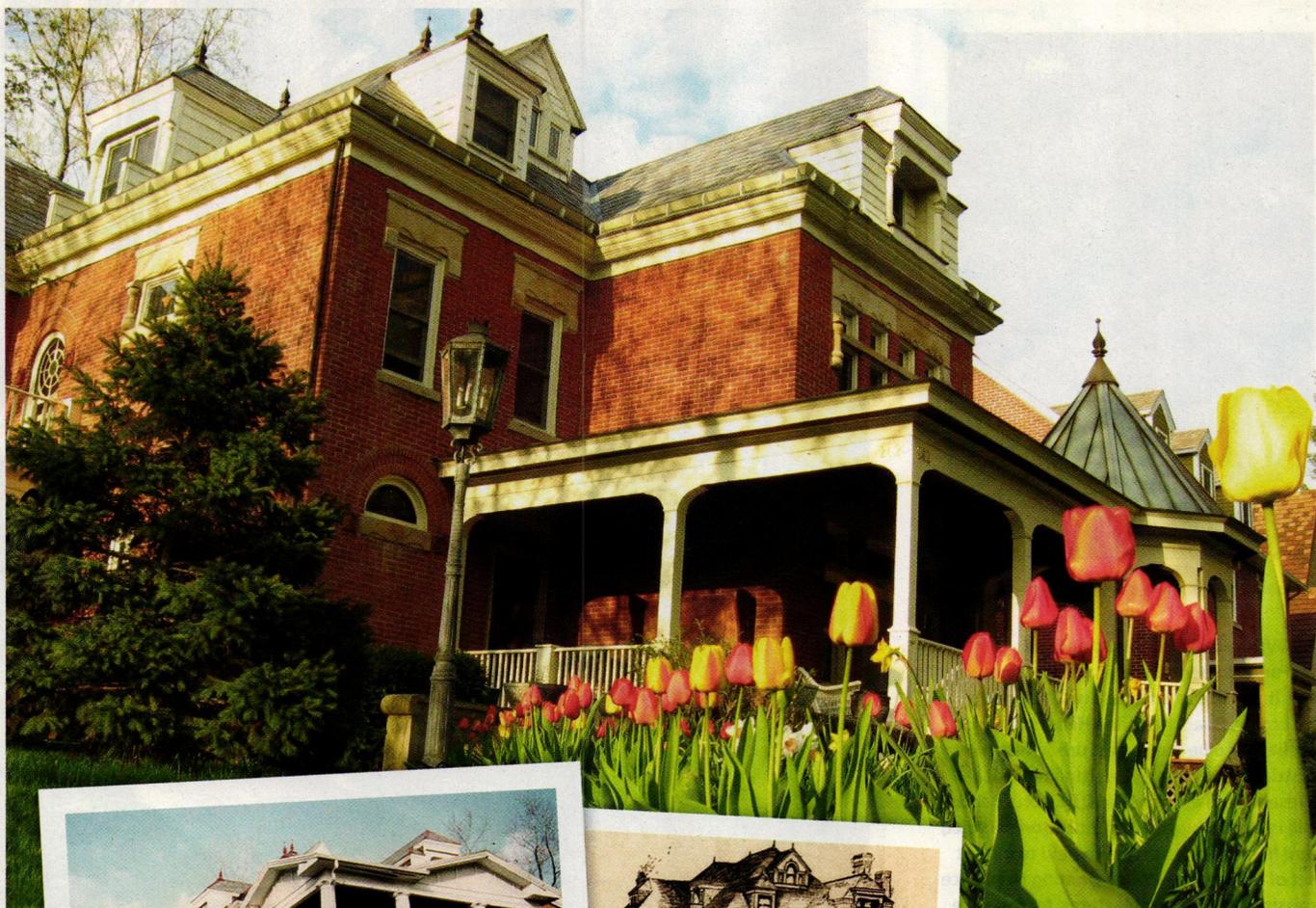
By JODI LISS

When the cement steps outside Kim Hamilton's 19th-century town house in the Hamilton Heights-Sugar Hill section of Harlem began to crumble, she decided to upgrade. The gallery owner and third-generation Harlem resident invested in period-appropriate bluestone and yellow brick to match the façade of her home.

But Kim soon found herself in hot water. Because her neighborhood is recognized as the center of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance—home to legendary artists like Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen—it was designated a New York City Historic District in 1974. "I wrote the [New York City] Landmarks Commission telling them what I was going to do," she recalls. "When I didn't hear anything, I went ahead and did the work. After four months, an inspector

came out and gave me a violation, and told me to paint the yellow bricks red. I was annoyed."

With around 14,000 historic districts in America today (including parks and archeological sites), it's likely that your old house might sit in one. And if it does, that will limit, to some degree, your control over restoration work. But being prepared can help you avoid headaches like the one Kim encountered—here's what you should know.



**ABOVE:** Columbus, Ohio homeowner Gary Means' work on his 1891 Queen Anne house predated his neighborhood's historic-district status. In the 1980s, he replaced the 1930s-era porch with a wraparound veranda modeled on an old drawing; the East North Broadway Historic District was added to the National Register last year.

## 1. Living in a historic district isn't just a frame of mind.

It is, in several significant ways, different than just living around a bunch of old houses. Although the designation only limits changes to the home's exterior, it will alter your options. "The most misunderstood thing is the amount of change that can or can't be put into the house," says Larry Harris, an urban conservator with the Historic Conservation Office in Cincinnati, Ohio. "People like the area but don't realize it could impact them."

Virtually all external renovations (other than routine maintenance) are guided by

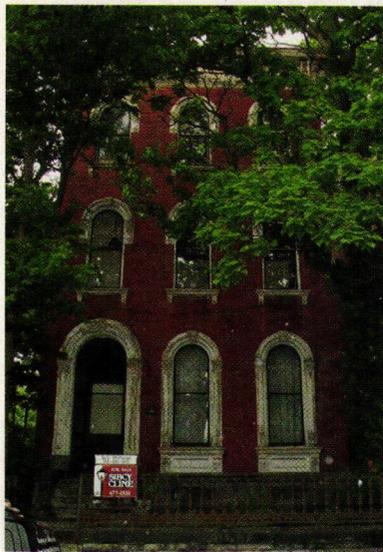
rules and require permits, although local officials often can approve minor projects in a day or so. For larger projects, check the community's municipal website for guidelines, then call with specific questions. Most local governments have officials whose main job is to monitor preservation.

## 2. Regulations vary by state and town.

While the federal National Register of Historic Places puts some restrictions on what homeowners can and can't do with their property, most states and local communities have more regulations—and each

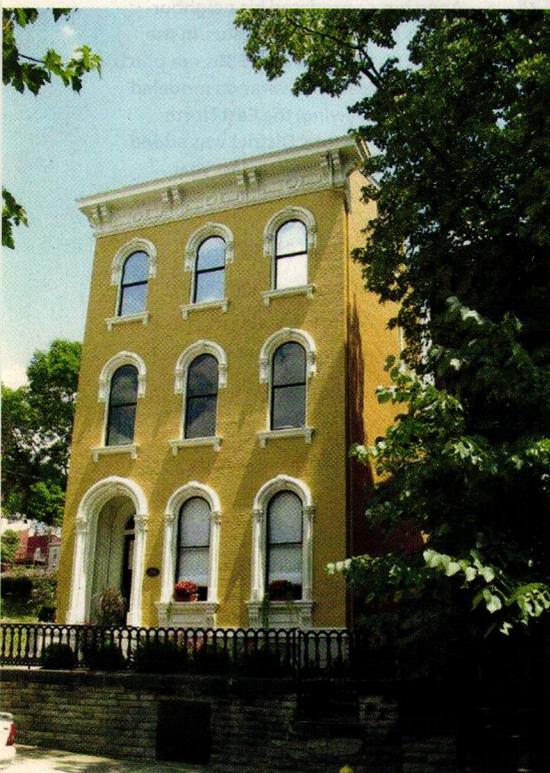
is different. According to Carol Shull, chief of Heritage Education Services with the National Register, "Many local governments have stronger protections than federal law. They know the area better."

Some cities are fairly restrictive: The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission regulates down to exterior paint colors. Other, more rural places like Honesdale, Pennsylvania, are still working to develop ordinances for their historic district. "We're looking into different towns to see how they're doing it," says homeowner Eleanor Young. "Here, you'd like to be stricter, but people just wouldn't tolerate it."



**ABOVE & BELOW:** Contractor Todd McFarland spent three years restoring this Italianate town house in Cincinnati's resurgent Over-the-Rhine Historic District (believed to be the largest urban historic district in the country), netting him a local preservation award. **RIGHT:** Boston's Beacon Hill is Massachusetts' oldest historic district, and homeowners there are held to a strict set of guidelines—those wanting to replace missing architectural features, for instance, must provide evidence of the originals.

CHEE-ONN LEONG PHOTO/FOTOLIA.COM



TODD MCFARLAND PHOTOS

## What Is a Historic District?

What constitutes a historic district? Officially, it is a designation by the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places, which, according to their website, "is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources." (Note: State- and town-recognized historic districts do exist as well, but these are more informal and often aren't subject to the same regulations—or benefits.) More to the point, says Sarah Carroll of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission, a historic district is "a collection of buildings that have a sense of place and have contributed to the development of the city."

Most communities strive for a balance. In Cincinnati, Harris says, "It's conservation—preservation with an eye toward changes that improve and modernize, versus absolute preservation at all possible costs. We need to respond to the city of the future as well as preserve the past." In Washington, D.C.'s Historic Preservation Office (which oversees 25,000 buildings in its numerous

historic districts), deputy preservation officer Stephen Callcott adds, "We want people to have some control over their neighborhoods. There's not a lot of micromanagement; we want the economy to be able to grow."

Most enforcement is fairly tolerant, with multiple appeals processes and allowances. In a case like Kim Hamilton's, an appeal to keep period-appropriate changes in place would



SUZANNE FISHER PHOTOS



Also located in Columbus's East North Broadway Historic District, this former carriage house retains a remarkably original appearance, despite being converted from a barn to a family home and receiving a two-story addition.

likely succeed. (Part of Kim's problem was the fact that in New York, routine maintenance is expected to reflect the district as it looked when the designation was made—in this case, 1974.) But in communities with zoning ordinances in place, even homeowners with the best of intentions can have fines levied on them for unintended violations, and the town can require work to be undone.

The best rule of thumb? Talk to your local preservation office during the planning stages of any exterior project or any interior work that will affect the exterior, even in a small way. You may feel you're being overly cautious, but it's better than being slapped with a violation because of where you put a new dryer vent—which can happen.

**3. You can't always rely on your own perfect taste.**

As everyone who has an old house

knows, restoring it is a balance between the freedom to do what you want and the restrictions of the building's period. "We had this one neighborhood where people had been promised money for preserving their homes without being told everything by the developers, and we saw people putting decks on their roofs that they had to take down. It caused a lot of bad feelings," recalls Cincinnati's Larry Harris. That's why it's necessary to get approval—your ideas about what's right for the house might not be in line with the preservation commission's.

**4. Being in a historic district offers tremendous resources to help you make the most of your home.**

All states and most communities with historic districts offer resources and guidance. Much of it is online—Cincinnati, for

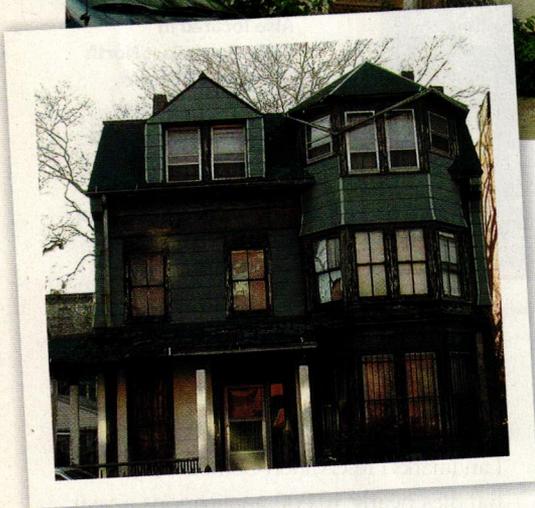
example, has an extensive website valuable even to non-residents. At the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, which handles nearly 10,000 applications a year, each staff member holds a master's degree in preservation. "The benefit you get by having the staff look at your project is that it is based on their experience," offers Sarah Carroll, the Commission's director of preservation. "They can tell you if the materials or technique the contractor is using may be more expensive in the end."

**5. You have more freedom than you might think—but so do your neighbors.**

Most communities can regulate the historical accuracy of a property's exterior—limiting decks and patios, additions, architectural ornamentation, and changes to or destruction of all or part of the structure.



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION PHOTOS



**With the blessing of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the owners of this Victorian-era house in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill Historic District replaced modern composite shingle siding (left) with more appropriate white-painted cedar shingles. In areas where the slate roof had been replaced with asphalt shingles, the Commission allowed for in-kind replacement, but required the remaining slate roof to be maintained.**

properties are up to 20 percent more valuable than similar non-designated properties—so your home is worth more, too.

## 7. There may be some financial incentives, depending on your location.

Developers willing to preserve and restore income-producing historic properties are eligible to apply for a federal tax break, originally designed to reverse the 1960s-era urban renewal incentives to tear down older buildings. Individual state and local offices also may offer their own tax breaks, matching funds, or grants for some historic district projects to homeowners.

For example, Washington, D.C.'s Department of Housing and Community Development offers a few grants of up to \$25,000 for restoration in some low-income historic neighborhoods, as well as some low-interest or deferred loans. But these are increasingly rare.

## 8. It changes the dynamic of the community, usually for the better.

When a neighborhood becomes a historic district, longtime residents occasionally shrug off the change or see the restrictions as a loss of freedom. But most embrace a renewed pride in their neighborhood. "It reinforces a sense of community," Calcott observes. "People live in a special place, and it increases participation." Shull agrees: "People care about these districts, and they want recognition. It changes the way people look at the neighborhood. They can get local officials to allocate support."

Historic districts usually start small, with a handful of homeowners determined to protect what is wonderful about the past. In Honesdale, there had long been a widespread, but diffuse, concern that many of the town's beautiful old houses were at risk of slipping into decay. To raise community appreciation and awareness, the local library organized a house tour, which in turn galvanized the community to act. "It's important for homeowners to work together," Lewis says. "Our house tours were great because they brought us together." (For more on

But they usually can't control the condition of the yard, changes to the interior—no matter how beautiful or historically meaningful that interior is—or (outside of zoning laws) what happens to a vacant lot.

This means you are still subject to Homeowner's Despair—just being in a historic district doesn't mean you can stop your neighbor from cutting down 100-year-old trees, having peeling paint, or amassing a collection of bizarre yard ornaments.

## 6. It is more expensive.

This is a constant refrain. "The only disadvantage of living in a historic district is that it takes a lot of maintenance," says Honesdale homeowner Barbara Lewis.

Many of the headaches today's homeowners face revolve around the application of green technologies like solar panels. Energy-efficient windows especially are a hot-button issue—the few appropriate wood windows on the market can be cost-prohibitive for the average middle-income homeowner. Common solutions include refurbishing the original system or adding storms and weatherstripping. Many historic communities are now offering low-cost or free energy audits complete with insulation ideas.

However, it's undeniable that maintaining a historic home can require a serious financial investment. On the other hand, studies have shown that historic district



## How to Start a Historic District

The seeds of a historic district are often planted when a small group of neighborhood homeowners and enthusiasts organizes and begins the process of nominating their area for designation. Nominations formally originate with a State Historic Preservation Office, and can be made by individuals, historical societies, preservation groups, or government agencies. Designation is based on three considerations: a district's age (usually a minimum of 50 years old, but this varies by locale), whether it still looks as it did in the past (although the different layers of that past are considered), and if it has historical significance. The area can be important for any reason, as long as a solid case can be made as to why it matters. For more information, visit [nps.gov/nr/national\\_register\\_fundamentals.htm](http://nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm).

attaining historic-district status for your neighborhood, see above.)

### 9. It might not be right for you.

Before you take the plunge, do your homework about what the rules are in the historic district you're considering. The district's beauty and historic consistency might be appealing, but those are also the very things you'll have to reach consensus on. While most districts require few serious compromises, be honest with

yourself about what your tastes and priorities are. If your wish list includes additions or new siding, you should probably skip it. As Young says, "It takes a special kind of person to live in a historic district. It's not for everyone, but it gives you so much pride in what you own."

### 10. It's a work in progress.

Finally, remember that living in an historic district does not equal living in a time capsule. History constantly moves forward,

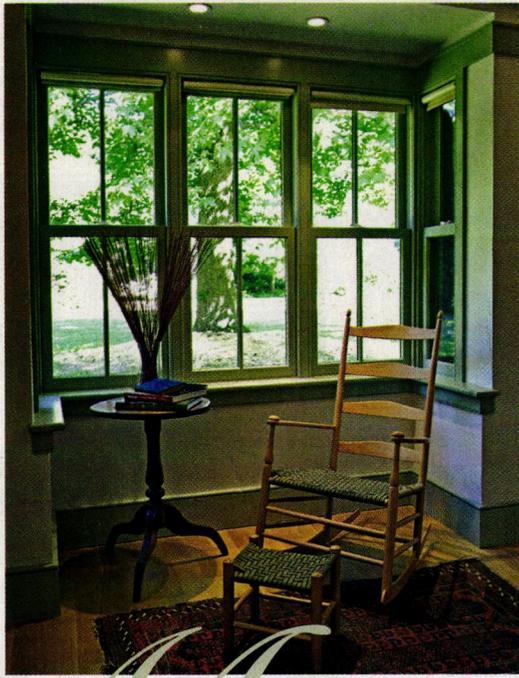
**In San Francisco's Alamo Square Historic District, the colorful, near-identical Queen Annes of Postcard Row—built by developer Matthew Kavanaugh between 1892 and 1896—have become one of the city's most recognizable landmarks.**

and historic homes do, too. Ultimately, the choice of a historic district home is less about what you'll have to give up and more about fostering an appreciation of the past, and a willingness to compromise and accommodate in order to preserve what is irreplaceable and wonderful about history. If you love living in old houses for their own sake, a historic district offers a unique, large-scale link to the past. 🏠

**Jodi Liss** writes about rural Pennsylvania life from her 1820s Greek Revival house in Wayne County.

Our editors spotlight their favorite historic districts around the country.

**OLDHOUSE**online 

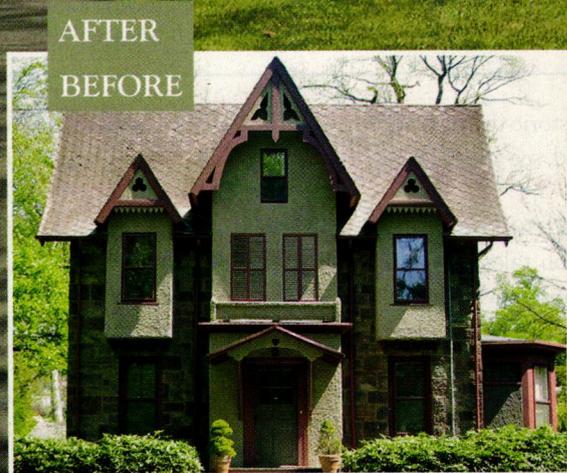
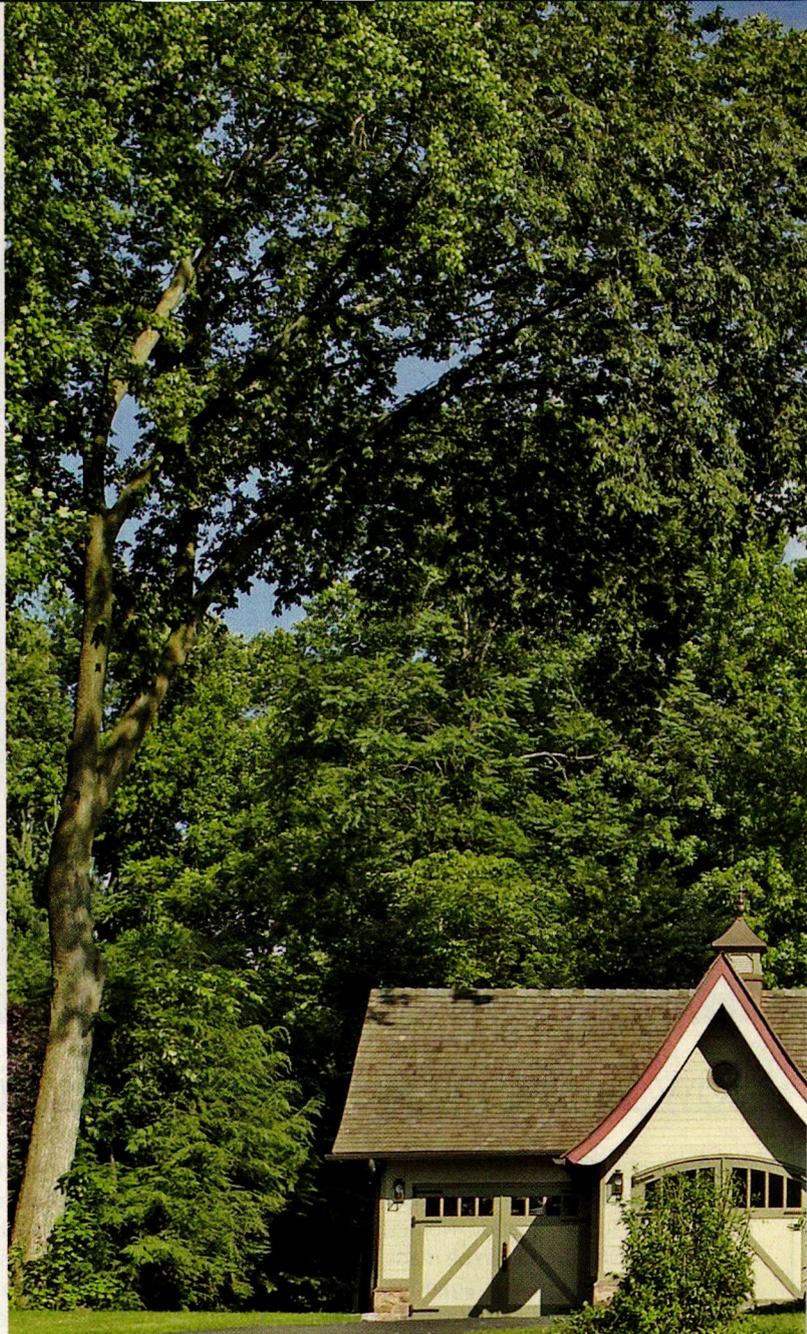


Mario Turchi has always loved Gothic Revival architecture and stone houses, so when a late-1860s home came on the market near him that combined both, he deemed it “kind of like a dream come true.”

He fell in love with the house—despite the fact that it harbored wall-to-wall carpeting over the original wide-plank flooring, a clumsily applied coat of stucco over original exterior woodwork, and an inappropriate addition. “The addition wasn’t at all thoughtful; it was a remuddling for sure,” explains Maria Turchi, Mario’s wife. “It had been stuck on there to create a second-floor bathroom with a coat closet beneath, and it destroyed the roofline of the house.”

The previous owner told the Turchis that the home’s designer had also built the stunning National-Register-listed train station in Tenafly, New Jersey (see “Original Vision,” page 51)—information that led Mario to uncover that the architect, Daniel Topping Atwood, had authored planbooks of house designs. It turned out that the Turchis’ home was not only a textbook example of Design One, the “Picturesque Stone Cottage” in

**RIGHT, INSET:** Before the project, board siding around the oriel windows was encased in stucco, and the home’s finials had been missing for years. **ABOVE:** An inviting reading nook inside the new guest room.



MARIO TURCHI PHOTO

The handsome house was built by Victorian-era architect Daniel T. Atwood as his own residence. In adding on to it, owners Mario and Maria Turchi felt a great responsibility to match the original details as closely as possible.



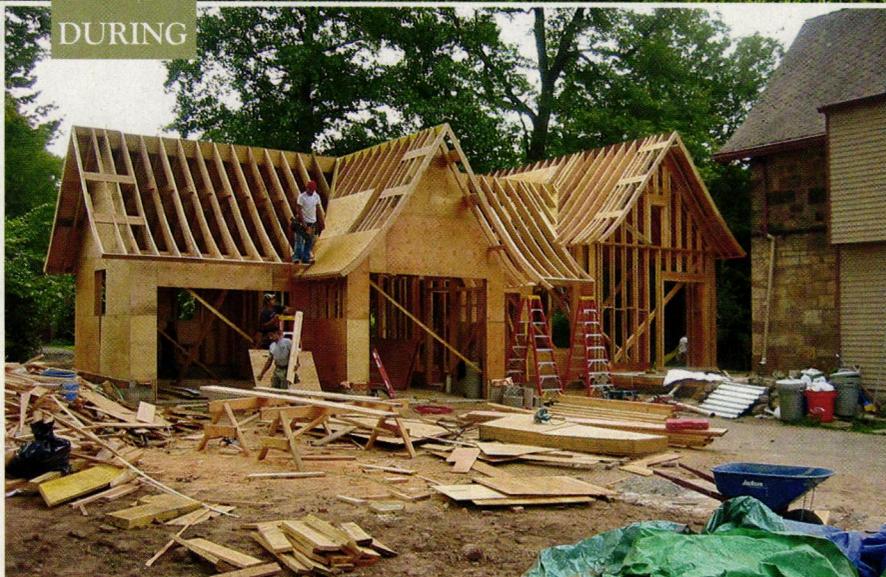
# Channeling Changes

The owners of a Gothic Revival cottage in New Jersey take cues from the home's architect to create a perfectly matched addition.

STORY BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS ♦ PHOTOS BY ROBERT MANDOLENE



AFTER  
DURING

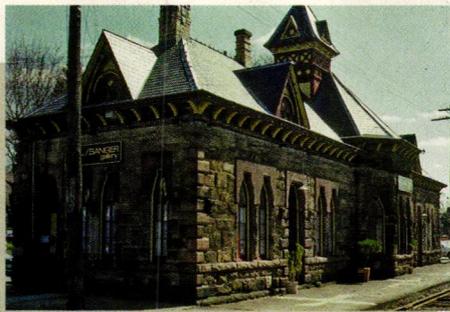


MARIO TURCHI PHOTO

Architect Donald Cantillo designed the addition to join the main house via a side porch—an original feature removed when a mismatched second-story bathroom addition had been placed on the house. To help the addition fit in and to underplay its scale, Donald stepped the building back, broke the garage into portions, and matched the bell-cast roofline on the original house. Omitting cutouts on the bargeboards was another way he helped signal that the new wing is a secondary structure.

## Original Vision

Daniel Topping Atwood was a New York-based architect who expanded his business to publish pattern-book designs for country houses, in the vein of A.J. Downing. He also dabbled in real estate development in Tenafly, New Jersey, after moving there in the late 1860s. Many of Atwood's high Victorian houses remain in Tenafly's Highwood Park District, but his most famous design is probably the Tenafly Railroad Station, a work that was misattributed to another architect for decades. The building, a stunning example of high Victorian Gothic Revival, is on the National Register. Atwood's publications include *Atwood's Country and Suburban Houses* (1871), *Atwood's Modern American Homesteads* (1876), and *Atwood's Revised Rules of Proportions* (1879).



he wanted to do it right, he would hold off.”

Two years later, Mario called back, and the men began plotting an extensive project that would add a great room, laundry room, garage workspace, and guest suite to the originally 2,000-square-foot house, in addition to removing the awkward second-floor bump-out, restoring the side porch, and re-creating the board siding around the oriel windows, which had been damaged beneath a layer of stucco.

In mapping out the changes, both men aimed to do justice to Atwood's initial vision. “Mario and I both studied Atwood's book, not so much as a guideline, but to get an idea of the spirit of the man who made the original house,” Donald says. “We wanted to add a substantial amount, but we didn't want it to overpower the house in any way,” Mario says, perhaps channeling this quote from Atwood's book: “Beauty of outline and proportion is as important in the design and construction of a house as the interior arrangement of the dwelling.”

To help downplay the addition's heft, Donald stepped the garage and great room back from the original house. He created

Atwood's 1871 book *Country and Suburban Houses*, but it had been built as the architect's own residence.

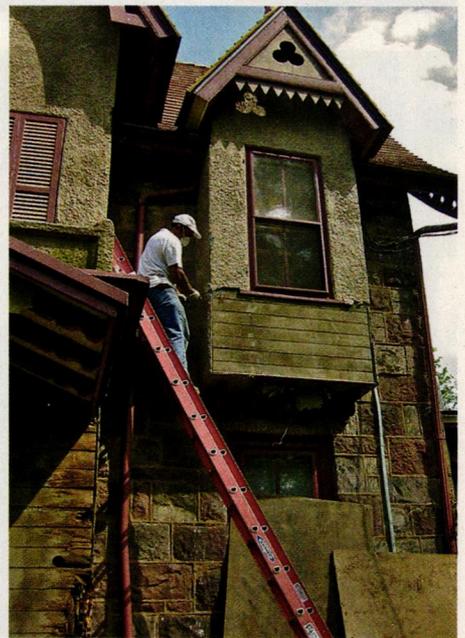
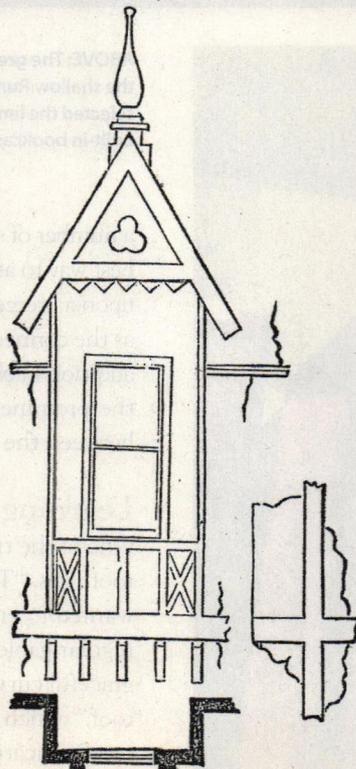
The discovery deepened the sense of responsibility Mario and Maria felt as stewards of the building. “From the beginning, my idea was to bring the house back to its former glory,” Mario says, and Maria was of like mind. “I come from New England, where we love preserving old houses,” she explains.

When the couple realized they needed more space for their family, finding the right person to map out the job weighed

heavily on them. “It was important for us to find a really good architect,” Mario says, “one with sensitivity for the building.” The search led them to New York-based architect Donald Cantillo (who worked with New Jersey-licensed architect Kevin C. Gore, the architect of record).

## Timing Is Everything

“I was impressed with Mario from our first telephone conversation,” Donald recalls. “He asked me for a rough estimate of the work, and when I gave it to him he said that wasn't quite in his budget, and since



LEFT TO RIGHT: Mario Turchi poses with the new finials, which were copied from a window detail published in *Country and Suburban Houses*. Removing stucco that had been applied around the windows and entry revealed original board siding.



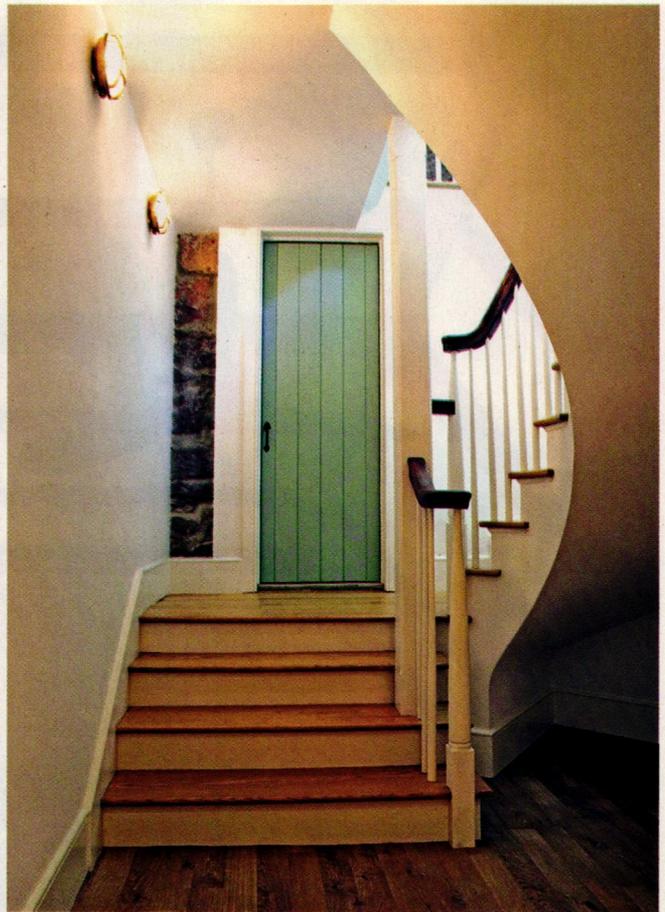
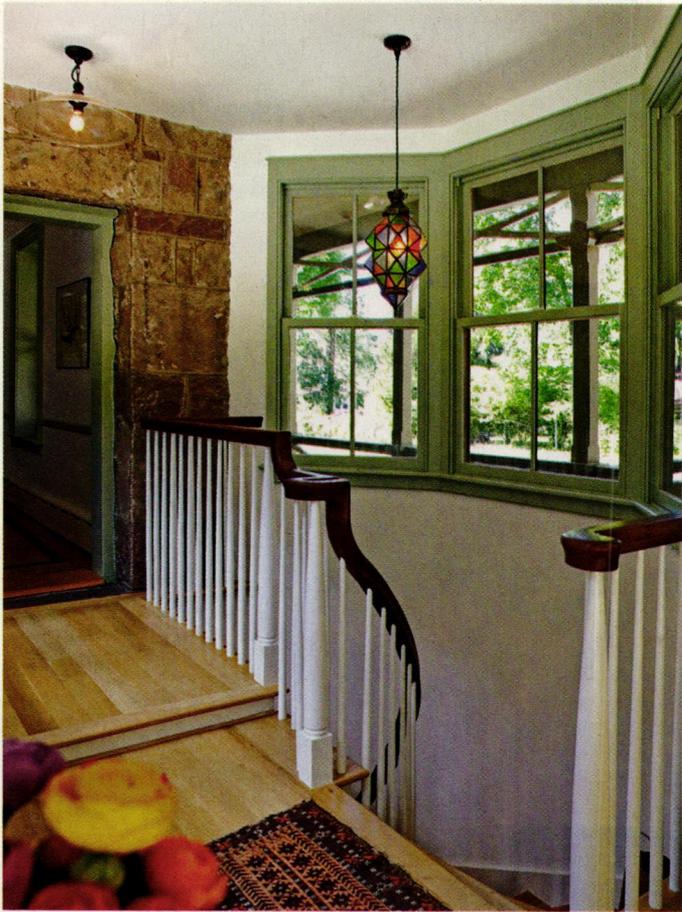
**ABOVE:** The great room gets plenty of sunlight from oversized windows; the shallow Rumford-style fireplace radiates heat back into the room. Mario selected the limestone mantel for its Gothic lines. **LEFT:** Chamfers on the built-in bookcases showcase the project's attention to fine-tuned details.

a number of sketches and massing models in order to test the best way to attach the new building to the old, finally settling upon a breezeway—an extension of the original side porch—as the connecting feature. The clever design not only sets the addition back from the street, keeping the original house as the prominent view, but it also makes a clear delineation between the original building and the new one.

### Learning Curves

One of the trickiest aspects of the design was matching the rooflines. “The roof’s shape was extremely iconic, and we wanted to emulate the original,” Donald says. Instead of a regular gable, the ends sport a little flourish that creates a graceful curve, a design element Atwood called a “bell-cast roof,” which was popular with builders of the day.

Replicating the curve proved to be a challenge, one that



Inside the house, the old and new buildings are connected via a hallway and meandering staircase. It was important to Maria that the narrow strip of stone next to the green door—part of the home's original foundation—remain exposed.

called Mario's expertise (he's an industrial designer) into play. "I laid out the bell curve on a piece of plywood and copied it to size to give the workers a template," Mario explains.

With rooflines in perfect concert, Donald wanted a device to help show that the buildings were from different timeframes. "While we made the bargeboard the exact same shape and size, we left off the cutouts to signal that this was a secondary portion of the building," Donald says.

The choice of building materials serves the same purpose. Creating the addition out of stone would have appeared too similar to the original house (and would have been too pricey as well). Instead, Mario and Donald opted for board siding, which matches the original detailing they unearthed around the oriel windows.

Two other decisions on the roof help to meld the addition and return the home's period authenticity. The first is the cladding—cedar shingles, as specified in Atwood's book. It was a big financial commitment to cover both roofs in  $\frac{5}{8}$ " quarter-sawn cedar, but Mario never wavered: "I knew there was one chance to do it right and make it unified."

The second is the reinstallation of three finials, which had been missing for decades, above the windows. Mario pulled

the finial design directly from Atwood's book and sent it to woodworker Steve Hanson, who precisely replicated the originals. "To me, it was a real moment of pride to see the finials back in place," says Mario.

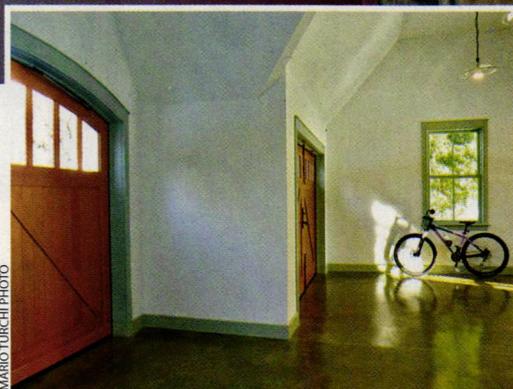
### In the Details

It's that sort of attention to detail that made the project so special. "Sometimes people—even our builder—thought we were going overboard in nailing so many

**PRODUCTS:** Great Room: Ultimate double-hung windows, Marvin; Ultimate swinging French doors, Marvin; Limestone mantel, Atelier Jouvence Custom Stoneworks; Zonix ceiling fan, Fanimation; Ceramic sconces, Fabby Lighting. Hallway: Newel posts, Hanson Woodturning; Interior doors, TruStile; Glass lanterns, Pottery Barn. Exterior: Clarksville Gray paint (garage doors), Sussex Green paint (garage trim; porch posts and rails), Sweet Rosy Brown paint (doors and finials), Tree Moss paint (wide bargeboards), Benjamin Moore. Z-brace garage doors with British pintle strap hinges, Real Carriage Door Company; Exterior doors with beveled glass lites, TruStile; Finials, Hanson Woodturning; Nantucket clear glass pocket lantern (outside garage), Artistic Lighting Design; Porch lights, Pottery Barn; Cupola, TA Millwork; Large Halifax chimney pots, Superior Clay.

A beamed ceiling soars above the great room, which also features a wall of French doors topped by transom lights.





of the details down. Those were the things that cost extra, but they also give the project integrity," says Maria, whose experience as an accountant Mario credits for keeping the project's financing on track.

The house had long been considered a

neighborhood treasure owing to its provenance—it even appears on a bookmark handed out at the Tenafly library—and working on such a beloved house is often a tricky proposition. As soon as word got out that the Turchis wanted to add on, the local preservation commission vetted the plans very carefully. Mario presented the whole project, complete with drawings, to the commission at a public meeting. They were so impressed with the details that several months later, Mario was invited to serve as a member.

"I don't know if it's because I'm a designer, but before this project, every time I went up the driveway I felt things were missing," says Mario. "I just wanted to see the house the way it had been." Maria agrees that the undertaking was worth the effort. "I think it's always worth it to work with a house and bring it back to what it wants to look like."

**ABOVE:** The breezeway that helps connect old to new, an extension of the home's original side porch, boasts chamfered posts and distinctive cross-braced balusters. **INSET:** The finished garage serves as storage and studio space, as well as a play area for the kids.

The couple is thrilled with the finished project, and the neighbors seem to be as well. Passersby often ask Mario and Maria for details about the work they did, and will sometimes even venture to ask if they can come inside. "While we're private people, we realize that it's not just our house," Maria says. "It belongs to the community." 🏡

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Atelier Jouvence Custom Stoneworks:**  
[ajstoneworks.com](http://ajstoneworks.com)

**Artistic Lighting Designs:**  
[artisticlighting.com](http://artisticlighting.com)

**Benjamin Moore:**  
[benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com)

**Fabby Lighting:** [fabby.com](http://fabby.com)

**Fanimation:** [fanimation.com](http://fanimation.com)

**Hanson Woodturning:**  
[hansonwoodturning.com](http://hansonwoodturning.com)

**Marvin Windows & Doors:** [marvin.com](http://marvin.com)

**Pottery Barn:** [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com)

**Real Carriage Door Company:**  
[realcarriagedoors.com](http://realcarriagedoors.com)

**Superior Clay:** [superiorclay.com](http://superiorclay.com)

**TA Millwork:** [tamillwork.com](http://tamillwork.com)

**TruStile:** [trustile.com](http://trustile.com)

# The Garage Door

*Finding a garage door that blends in with your house and enhances your curb appeal is all about playing the matching game.*

## *Dilemma*

BY CLARE MARTIN

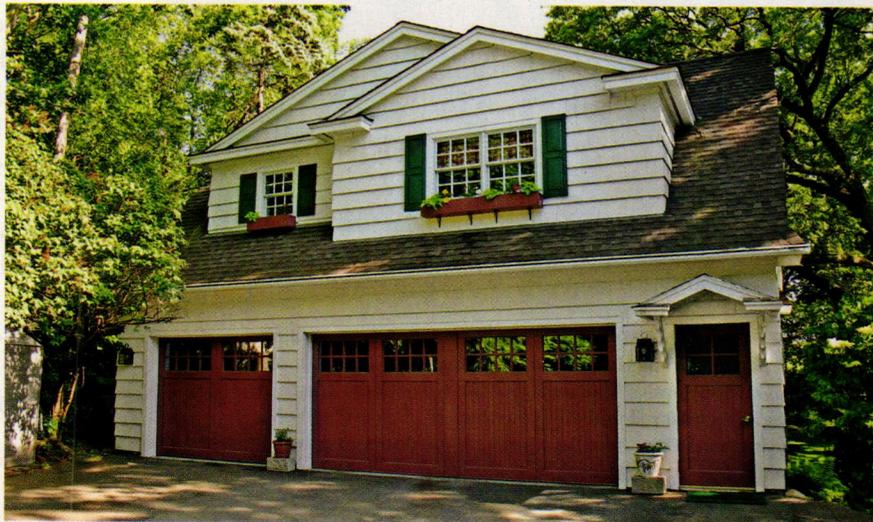
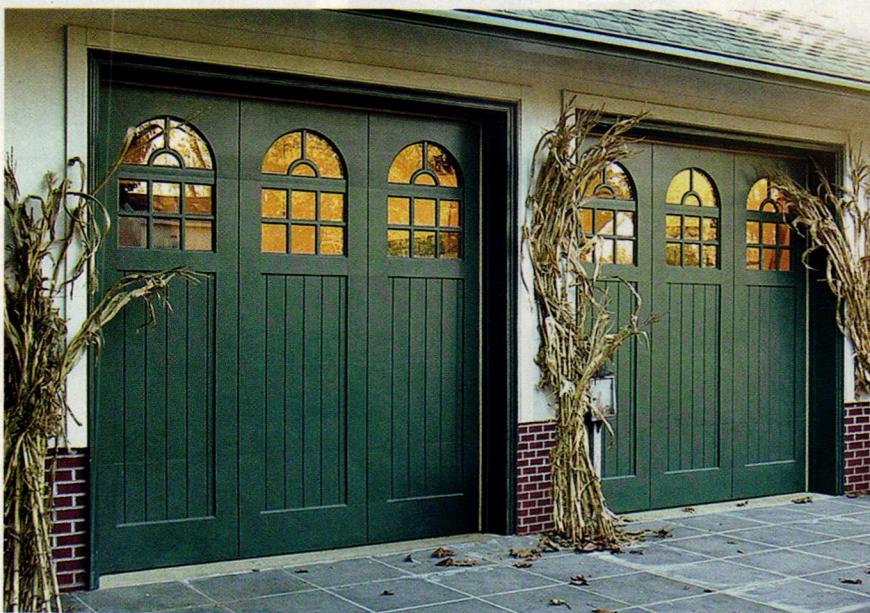
The garage presents one of those frustrating “only in an old house” conundrums: The automobile—and a place to put it—has become a necessity of modern life, but that wasn’t the case when most historic homes were built. Creating a garage that offers the amenities you want without disrupting the period character of your home can be a tall order. The good news? Today, there are more options than ever to ease the burden.

Since doors are the “face” of your garage, choosing them is one of the most important design decisions you’ll have to make. If your garage is prominently placed in relation to your house, the style of the doors can have a major impact on your curb appeal. Pulling architectural elements from your house and replicating them on garage doors will go a long way toward striking a harmonious balance between garage and house.

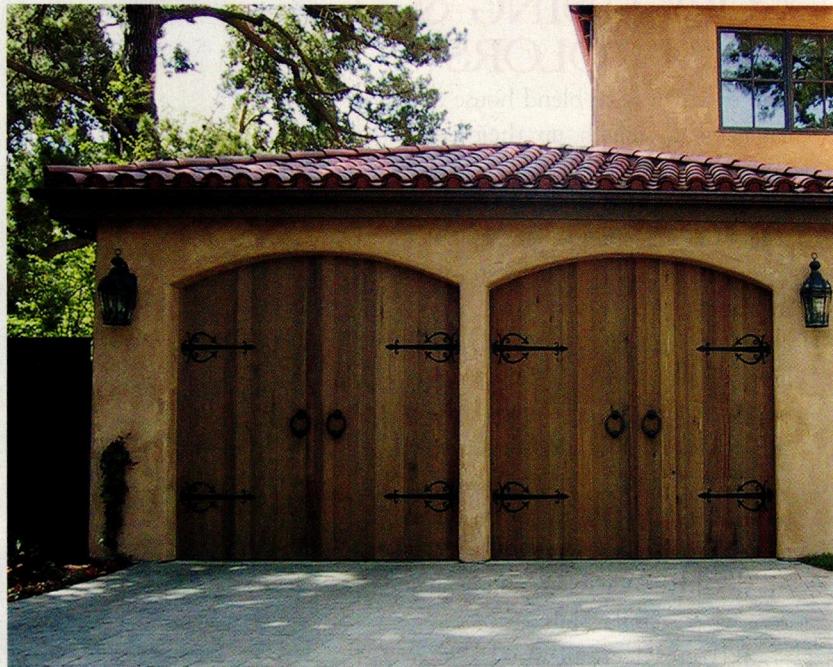
## COPY SIDING & TRIM COLORS

The easiest way to blend house and garage is to match up their color schemes. If the design of your garage door isn't a great fit for the age of your home, a complementary color scheme can at least help it blend in. Conversely, if you have a gorgeous traditional-style door to highlight, creative coloring (for example, painting the bracing elements on a carriage-house door the same color as your home's trim) can give it a huge boost. Paint isn't the only option—if your house has a handsome solid-wood entry door, choose a garage door with a similar stain.

If you select all-wood garage doors, you'll be able to completely customize paint and stain colors to match your house, but cost and maintenance are the trade-offs: Wood doors can be twice as expensive as steel ones, and they need to be repainted or recoated every few years. Steel doors typically come pre-painted, but today's manufacturers tend to have a good basic range of color choices. If you don't like any of the options, it is possible to custom-paint steel garage doors yourself using acrylic latex exterior paint.



**THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:** Doors painted the same color as the house help an attached garage blend seamlessly with an understated ranch. If your goal is to show off your garage door rather than camouflage it, paint it an accent color—here, teal garage doors match other elements on the house, including the entry door and garden gate. Amidst white siding and green shutters, red garage doors are a bold accent. **OPPOSITE:** Large banks of divided top lights with unique shapes, such as the arched profile shown here, reflect historic architectural details.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A simple carriage-style door reproduces the muntin patterns on this house's windows for a coordinated look. Arched tops and decorative hardware give this set of doors a Spanish Colonial flair. With their rail-and-stile construction, divided top lights, and convincing hardware, these swing-out garage doors give the impression of a second entryway.**

## MATCH WINDOW & DOOR DETAILS

For full integration between the garage and the house, you'll need to go beyond just color. The next step? Look to your home's windows and doors. Many traditional-style garage doors on the market today feature a row of top lights, and coordinating those windows to the ones already on your house will create a strong connection. If your windows are classic six-over-six double-hungs, for example, choose a door with multi-paned top lights. Also consider the shape of the windows—if your windows have arched upper sash, replicate that shape in the top lights.

When it comes to copying doors, construction and hardware are the key details. Board-and-batten, raised-panel, and rail-and-stile door profiles are all available in garage-friendly forms; the right stain can make the garage door a carbon copy of the entry door. And don't forget the hardware—while purely decorative, details like hefty ring pulls or forged strap hinges can confer instant period style.

## TAKE A CUE FROM HISTORY

If all else fails, replicate the kind of door that would have appeared on outbuildings during the period when your house was built. For most historic homes (especially those dating to the 19th century), the go-to template for garage doors is the carriage house. Carriage houses typically featured swing-out wooden doors, often with a diagonal brace on the bottom half. For older or more primitive houses, you might take another step back to stable doors, distinguished by cross-bucks on the bottom.

It's still possible to get carriage house and stable-style doors that swing out, and today these open by remote for the sake of convenience. Overhead folding doors that replicate the appearance of carriage house and stable doors are also out there, for homeowners who want all the modern conveniences wrapped in a period package.

Ready to create your perfect garage door? Check out our recommendations for online design tools.

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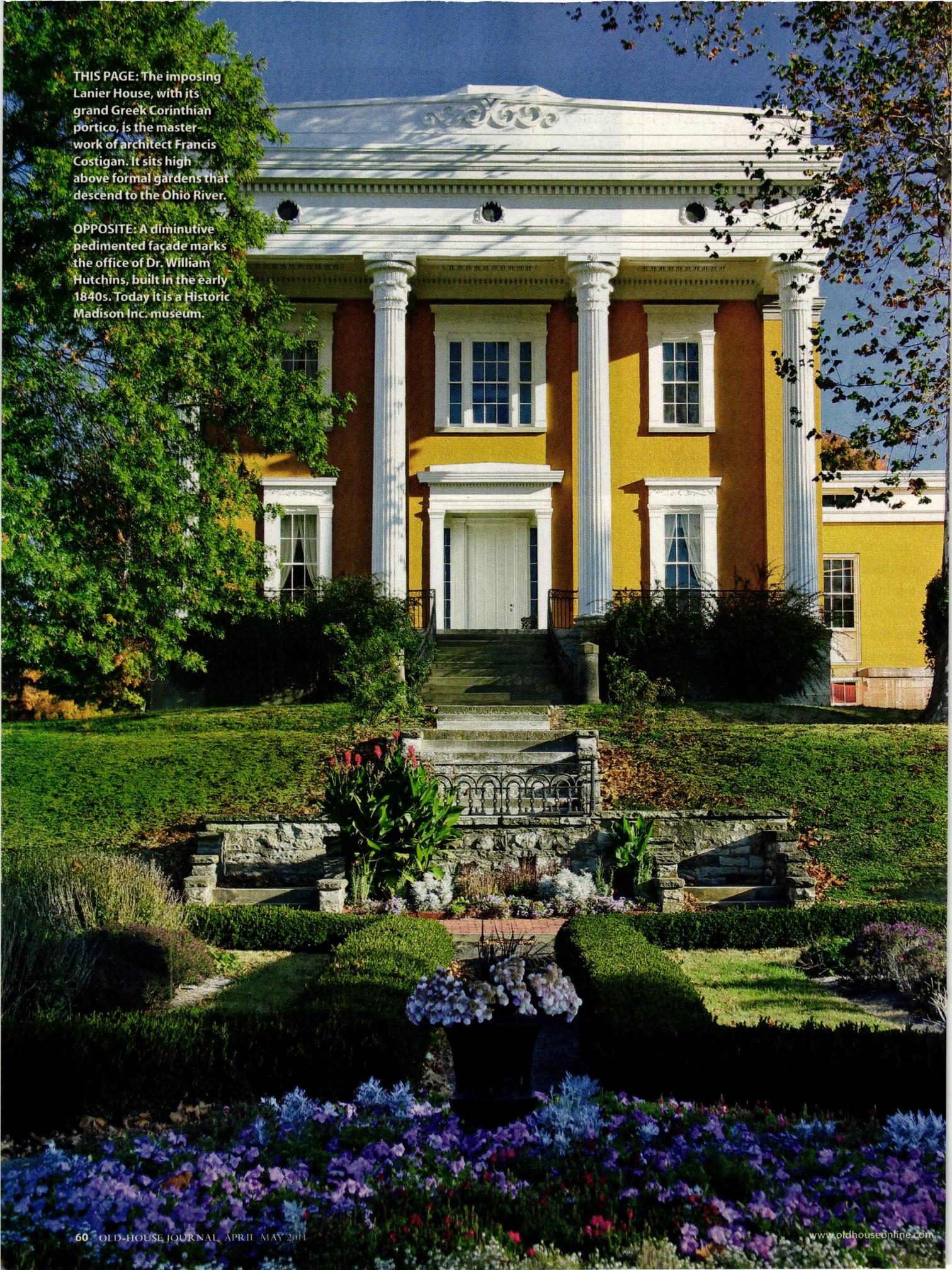


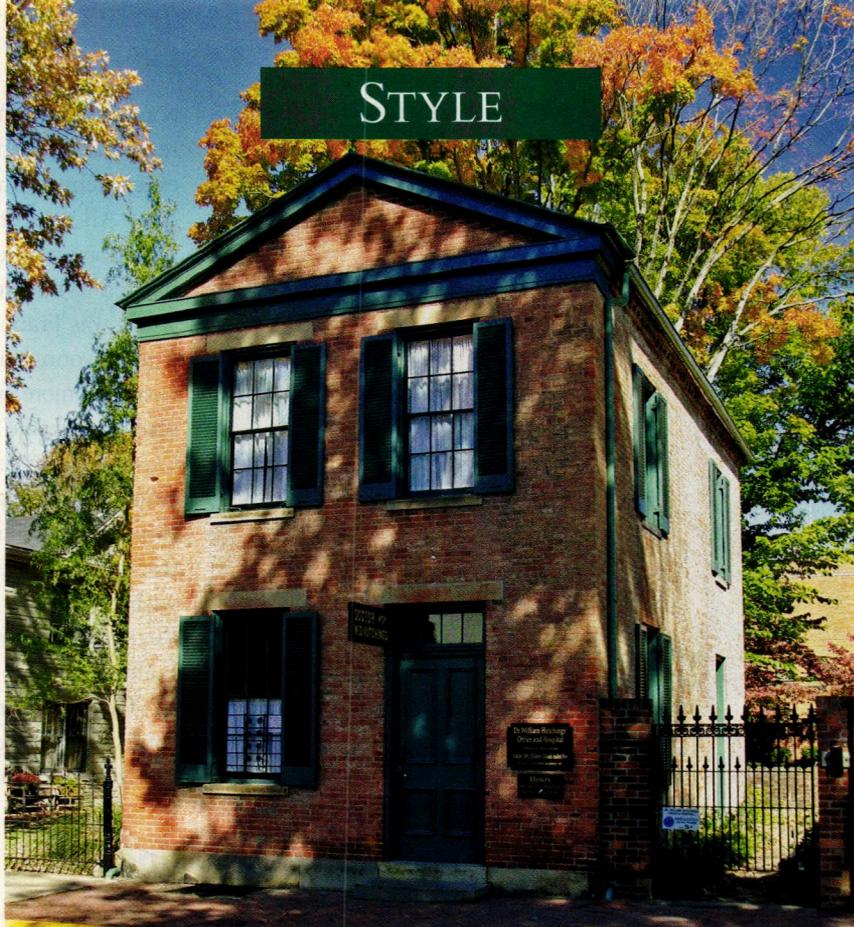
**FROM TOP:** Forged hardware like strap hinges and door handles lends authenticity to carriage-house-style garage doors. Diagonal-brace and cross-buck designs hearken back to the days of stables, and offer an eye-catching appearance when painted to match the house.



**THIS PAGE:** The imposing Lanier House, with its grand Greek Corinthian portico, is the masterwork of architect Francis Costigan. It sits high above formal gardens that descend to the Ohio River.

**OPPOSITE:** A diminutive pedimented façade marks the office of Dr. William Hutchins, built in the early 1840s. Today it is a Historic Madison Inc. museum.





# Speaking Greek

*The idyllic town of Madison, Indiana, harbors a rich bounty of Greek Revival gems.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

**M**adison, Indiana, is sitting on a secret: Its treasure trove of Greek Revival houses is celebrated among architectural historians, but many old-house aficionados have been kept in the dark—until now.

Madison is a quiet little city on the banks of the Ohio River halfway between Cincinnati and Louisville, and a couple of hours south of Indianapolis. For a few

heady decades after its circa-1809 founding, Madison's waterfront experienced a steamboat-era boom—its population swelled, and its citizens prospered. The town seemed set to become a mighty metropolis in the Old Northwest Territory.

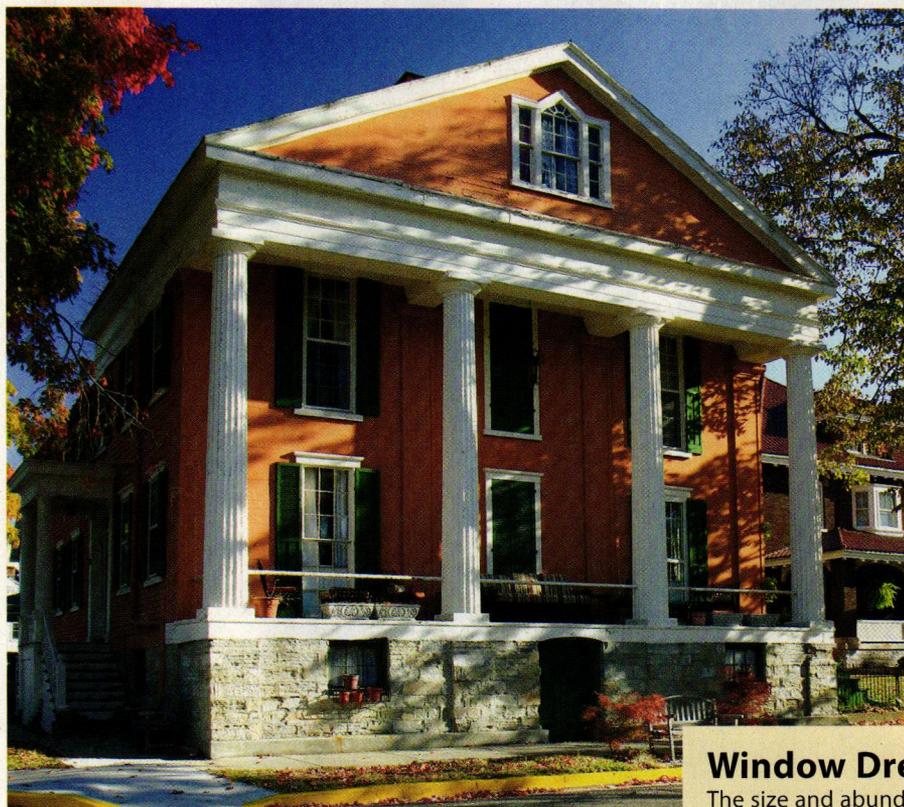
Then, beginning in the 1840s, a rash of railroads chugged into, and beyond, Indiana. The torrent of land-hungry migrants from the East swept westward along routes that bypassed Madison. Trade and industry found other paths as well, and all

too soon Madison's prospects for big-city stardom took a downward tilt.

Turns out, that's great news for folks who love beautiful old buildings in story-book settings.

## Rich History

Long years of benign neglect left Madison with its natural river-valley beauty intact—and also with one of the nation's finest collections of Greek Revival buildings. Its historic district (Indiana's largest)



**ABOVE:** A pedimented Doric portico with a faux front door distinguishes the 1838 Colby-Dunn House. The entrance is actually on the side, marked by a small, columned entry porch.

**BELOW:** Combining a Classical façade and entry with a later Italianate console cornice, this 1850s house is typical of many that blend the design elements of both periods.



## Window Dressing

The size and abundance of windows is an important Greek Revival detail. Glass was much cheaper in the 19th century than it had been earlier, so more of it was used. Greek Revival windows tend to be tall, often stretching from near ceiling-height to the floor, their larger glass panes made possible by improved manufacturing methods.

contains more than a thousand buildings representing virtually every decade—and every architectural style—of the 19th century. All told, it's a lovely architectural symphony whose most delicious accents happen to be Greek.

It was Francis Costigan (1810-1865), a gifted young carpenter-builder-architect from Baltimore, who set the tone for Madison's remarkable antebellum architecture. Costigan moved to Madison near the height of the great depression of 1837, at a time when Indiana was still the "West," a frontier yet to be built upon. He brought with him a solid grounding in the Greek Revival style, America's first truly national building style.

Costigan's first great commission was the home of Madison banker James F. D. Lanier, built from 1844-46 at 511 West

First Street. Lanier's stuccoed-masonry mansion is, in the words of local historians John T. Windle and Robert M. Taylor, "classic, cubic, and massive." Its main entrance, a colossal, four-columned (tetrastyle) Corinthian portico, faces the river, and terraced gardens roll down to the waterfront.

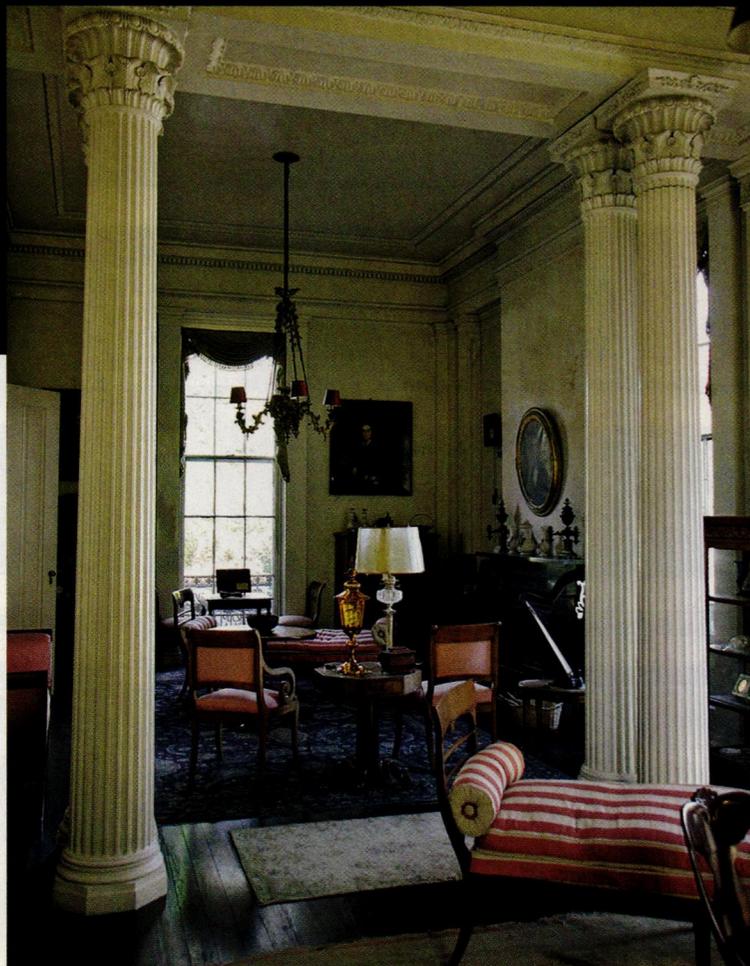
Eyebrow windows punctuate the heavy frieze surrounding the top of the building.

On the land façade, a carriage entrance features a small, columned porch; its stylishly tall door with two vertical panels is flanked by sidelights. The low-sloped roof is topped by an octagonal lantern (or cupola). Elaborate Greek-style ornament on and around the house is made of wrought iron, instead of Madison's more common cast iron. Lanier, who provided loans that supplied Indiana's army during the Civil War, lived in his \$50,000 mansion for only a few years before moving to New York.

Lanier House is now a state-owned house museum, so visitors can go inside to admire the fabulous cantilevered spiral staircase in the huge center hall that separates the double drawing rooms from



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** The chaste garden façade of the 1846-48 Shrewsbury-Windle House is notable for its entrance portico in the Greek Corinthian order—a treatment infrequently used during the period. The finely decorated interior is famed for its freestanding spiral staircase rising from the entrance hall to the third floor. Paired Greek Corinthian columns divide the double parlor of this house, which will be restored as museum by Historic Madison Inc.



## Tour It

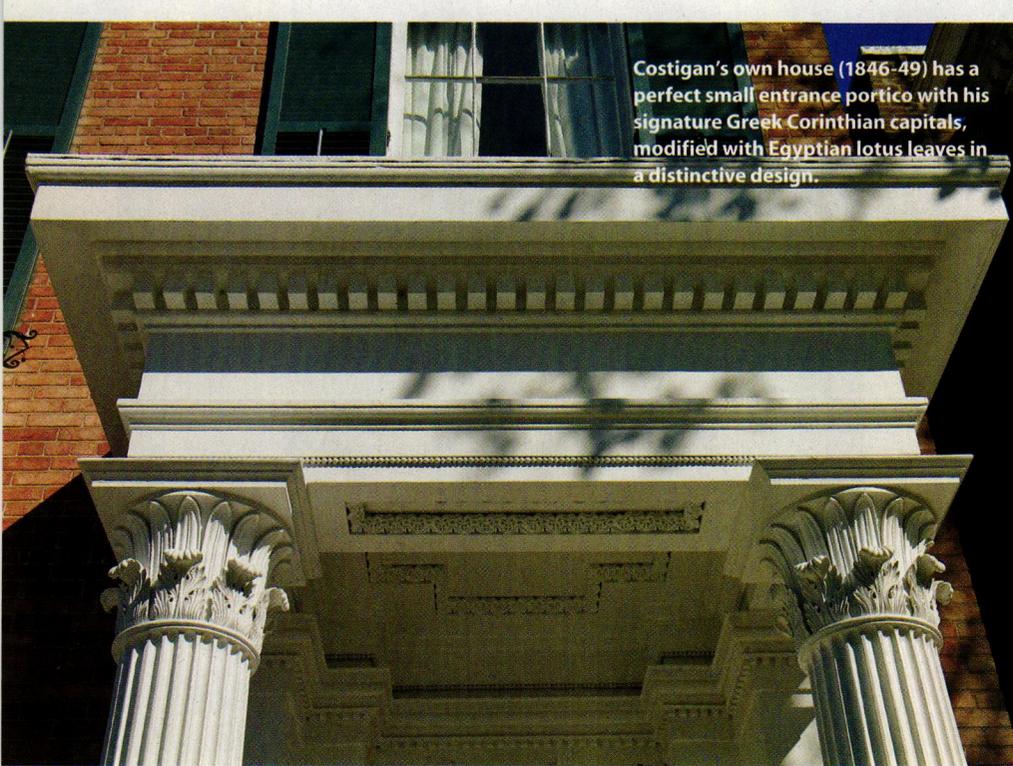
In addition to the notable homes mentioned here, many other smaller, less spectacular, yet eminently satisfying Greek Revival homes built during the 1840s and '50s line Madison's streets. Both Historic Madison Inc. and the Madison Area Convention and Visitors Bureau offer walking tour brochures of the historic district. Something to remember as you wander: In Greek Revival houses, as in earlier and later house styles, purity is rare. Styles often met and mingled—Federal slid into Greek Revival, and Greek Revival sidled up to Italianate.



The two-column pedimented portico on this house is unusual, and possibly an alteration to the core Greek Revival design.

### Elements of Style:

- ◆ Simple, blocky house forms and symmetrical façades
- ◆ Low-sloped, nearly flat, or gabled (either front or side) roofs with full pediments and triangular tympanums
- ◆ Porticoes and entrance porches
- ◆ Emphatic entrances with rectangular transoms and sidelights and impressively tall doors, often with two vertical panels
- ◆ Generally simple Doric or Ionic columns (rather than Costigan's preferred Corinthian ones)
- ◆ Attached pilasters (flat columns with capitals)
- ◆ "Lanterns"—rooftop cupolas, not domes
- ◆ Rectangular transoms, not Federal semi-ellipses or Georgian arches
- ◆ Inexpensive foundry-cast ironwork—not hand-worked wrought iron



Costigan's own house (1846-49) has a perfect small entrance portico with his signature Greek Corinthian capitals, modified with Egyptian lotus leaves in a distinctive design.

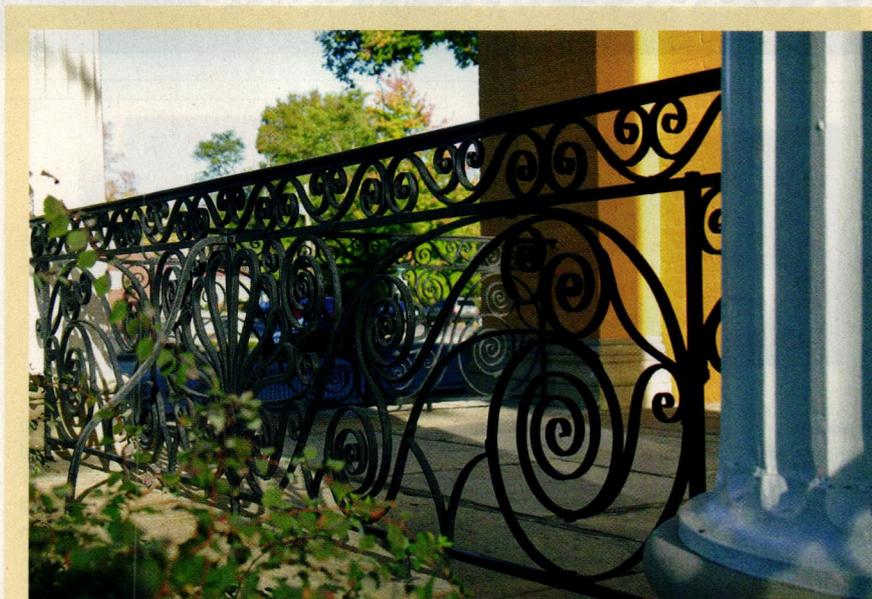
the dining room. Like the outside trim, the interior decoration is bold and beautiful.

Almost as grand, if not quite as showy, is Costigan's other major commission, the brick Shrewsbury-Windle House (1846-48) at 301 West First Street. Captain Charles Lewis Shrewsbury was a man of many interests—a prosperous merchant, mill owner, and sometime-mayor of Madison—and his home reflected both his wealth and Costigan's taste and skill. Here, the architect once again employed an "unsupported" spiral staircase rising to the third floor (probably inspired by Minard Lafever's instructive book of the period, *The Modern Practice of Staircase and Handrail Construction*, 1838). The river façade is enriched by a fine entrance porch in Costigan's beloved Corinthian order. Perhaps in a nod to the virtues of the modern foundry, the ironwork at Shrewsbury House is of cast iron. The house was recently bequeathed to Historic Madison Inc. by its last private owners, John and Ann Windle, and will be restored as a historic house museum.

## Home Again

Costigan's own home, built from 1846-49 at 408 West Third Street, is a compact but elegant tour-de-force on a dauntingly narrow lot. Its curved entry hall and bow-end parlor pack an architectural wallop that belies its small size. The quiet brick exterior sports a perfectly scaled dentilated cornice; a sophisticated little entrance porch with two proper Greek columns (i.e., with ornate capitals but no bases); tall, large-paned windows; an imposing door; and simple but bold stone window lintels and sills. Historic Madison Inc. operates the Costigan House as a fully furnished museum.

More modest still, but nonetheless a good guide to the best Greek Revival characteristics, is the Costigan Double House (circa 1840) at 415-417 Vine Street. In this side-gabled brick house, side-by-side recessed entries ensure the privacy of two families. Heavy, molded cornices at the roofline and across the double entry are typical of the style. Before he built his house on Third Street, Costigan lived on one side and rented out the other.



## Iron Ties

It would be impossible to walk around Madison's historic district without noticing the incredibly beautiful—and incredibly abundant—decorative ironwork. The Greek Revival period was all about new technology, from steamboats and railroads to wonderful new manufacturing processes for goods like glass and iron. By the 1840s, foundry-cast decorative ironwork was replacing wrought iron. It was cheaper, lighter (being half hollow), easier to transport, and available in huge quantities and an immense variety of ornamental patterns. In the Greek Revival era and later, Madison builders used it with what can only be called joyful abandon for fences, railings, roof cresting, balconies, and even entire porches. Some was even produced locally.

If you find yourself marveling at so much splendor in such a remote area—well, remember all those steamboats and railroads. Even in a newly settled frontier state, it was possible to acquire the essentials and furbelows of a home-builder's dreams. 🏠

## Further Reading

*The Early Architecture of Madison, Indiana* by John T. Windle and Robert M. Taylor (Historic Madison Inc. and the Indiana Historical Society, 1986)

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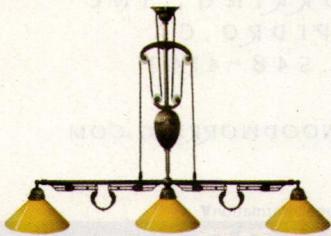
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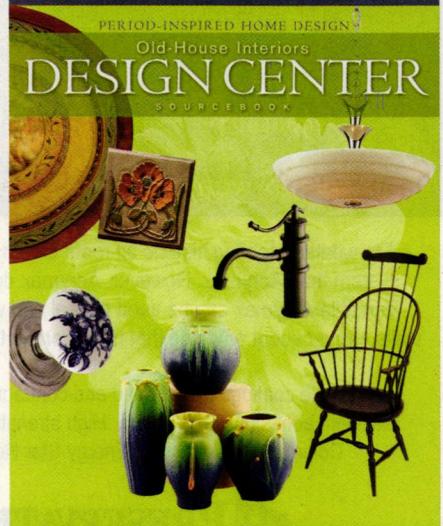
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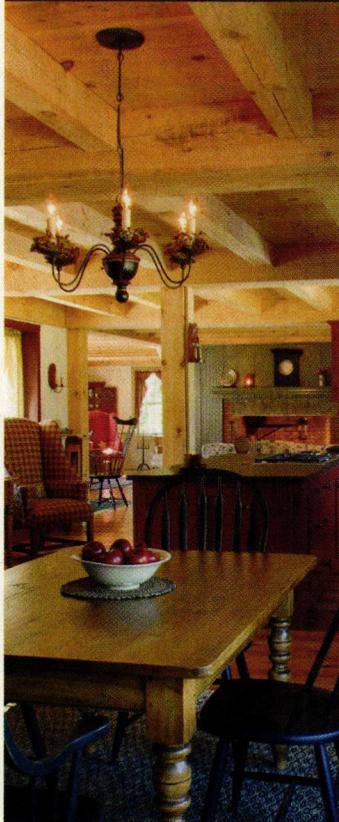
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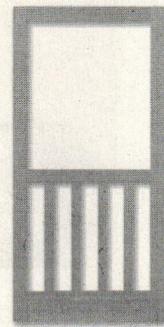
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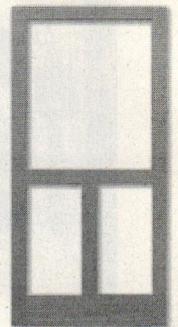
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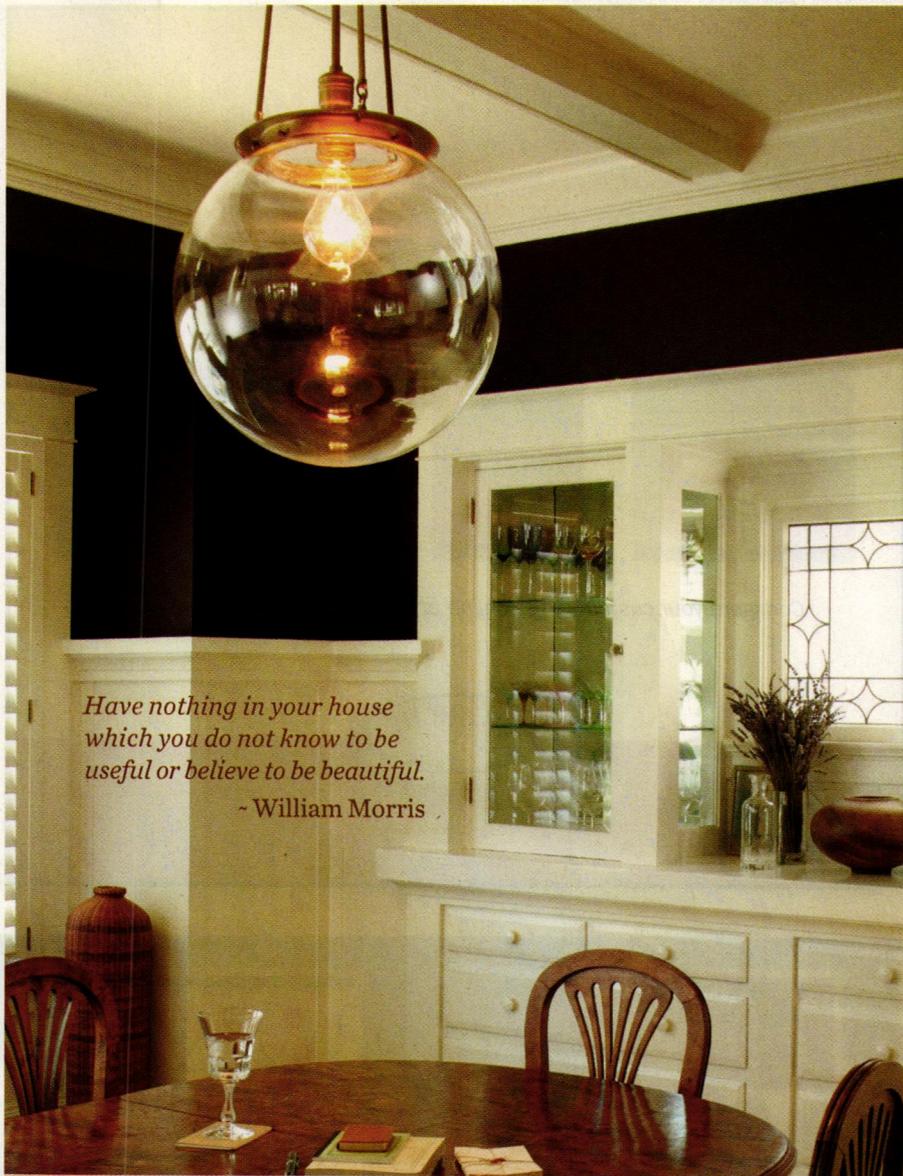
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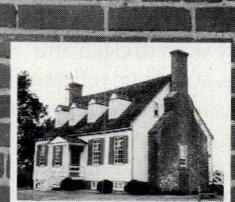
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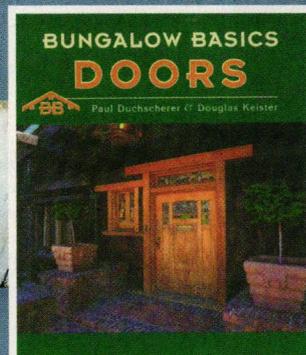
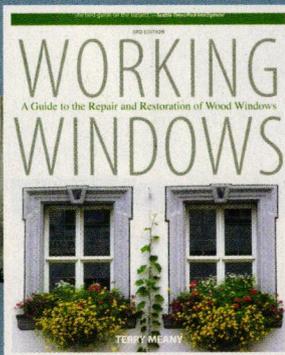
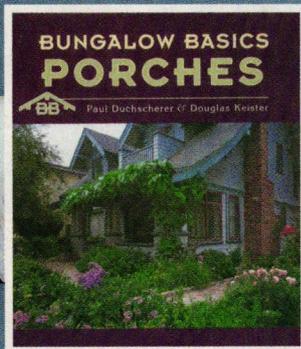


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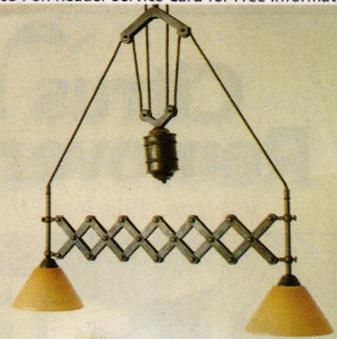


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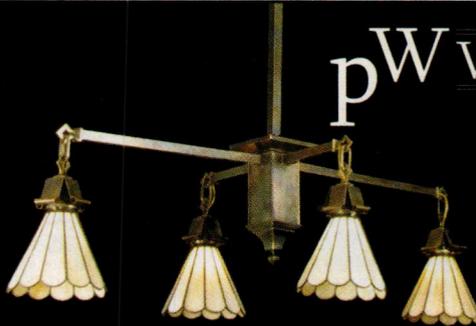
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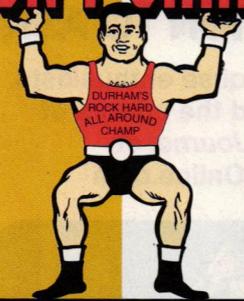


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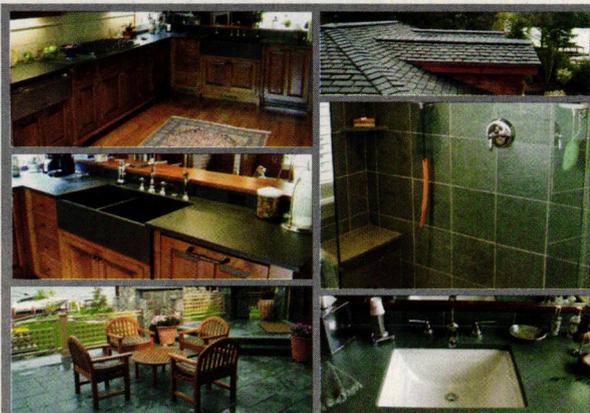


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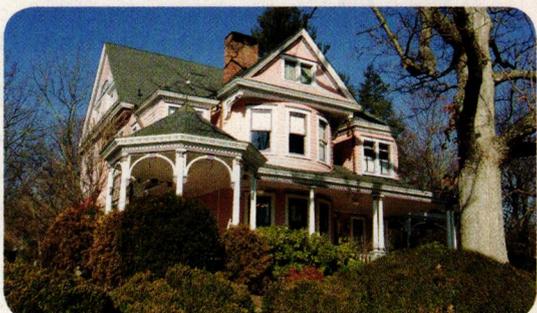
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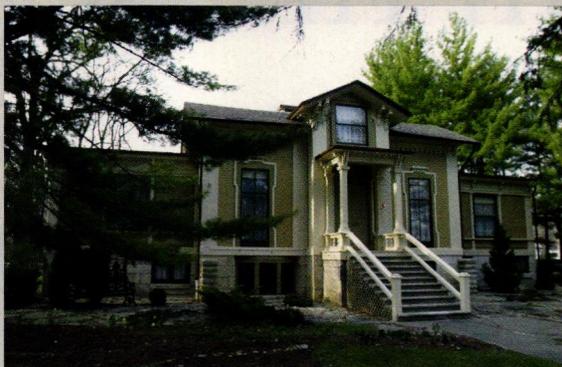


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Wire Screens, E.T. Burrowes & Co., Portland, Maine, 1892

## Court of Public Opinion

In the late Victorian era, large suburban homes weren't just exercises in domestic comfort—they were also a chance to show off taste, sophistication, and wealth. Many were set back on generous lawns, allowing the public to pass closely enough to see—but not intrude upon—one's station in life. Apparently this also left room for pleasant outdoor diversions...tennis, anyone?

Edward Thomas Burrowes knew a thing or two about catching the public's eye. He started making wire screens in 1873 to help pay for his college education; by the time this colorful vignette was published on the back cover of his company's catalog in 1892, E.T. Burrowes & Co. claimed the largest wire screen factory in the world. Burrowes also seems to have understood

that selling his utilitarian product line would require an enticing hook. While we may chuckle at the incongruity of a sporting party selling window screens, this is lifestyle marketing at its Gilded Age best.

And there's a secret hidden within this bucolic scene: Though unstated, it turns out that the yellow Shingle Style house in the background is Burrowes' own home (designed by John Calvin Stevens in 1885). We may never know whether Burrowes was aiming for curb appeal or snob appeal, but judging by the lollygagging strollers in the distance, a tennis court in the front yard can serve up a fair game of both. 🏠

**Bo Sullivan is the historian for Rejuvenation and the owner of Arcalus Period Design in Portland, Oregon. He is an avid collector and researcher of original trade catalogs.**



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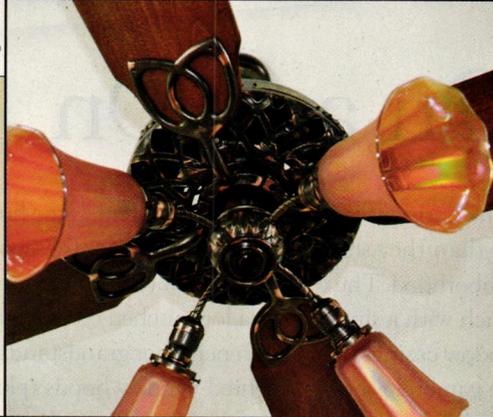
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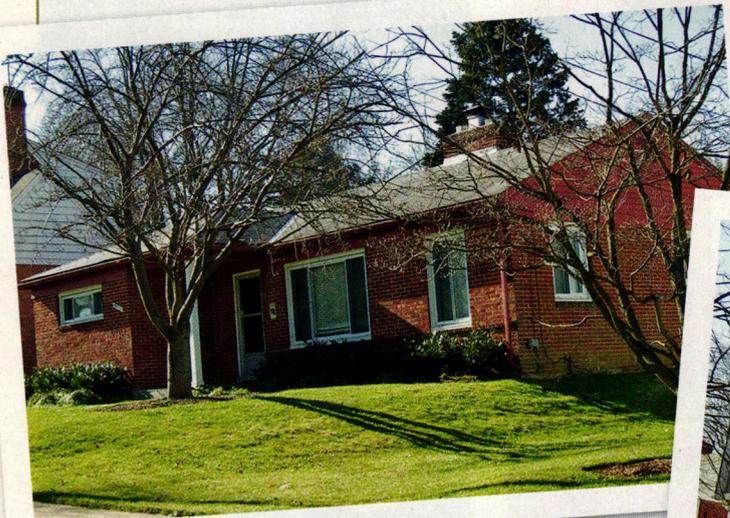
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# remuddling



## On and On

LIKE SONGS with choruses that just don't seem to end, some houses ramble on for longer than they should. Take, for example, these two homes in the same neighborhood. The original version (at left) is a modest mid-century brick ranch with a single story, a low-pitched cross-gabled roofline, and basic window casings. Its diva-ish neighbor grandstands with two stories, a massive gambrel roof, pedimented window hoods (plus a single second-story Palladian), and even an attached garage.

"The house prattles on in a way that doesn't make a lot of sense," our contributor says. We think that when it comes to home improvements, sometimes less is more. 🏠

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OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL (ISSN #0094-0178) is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November by Home Buyer Publications and Active Interest Media Inc. The known office of publication is located at 475 Sansome Street, Suite 850, San Francisco, CA 94111. The editorial office is located at 4125 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151; 703-222-9411; 800-826-3893; fax: 703-222-3209. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA, and additional offices. Vol. 39, No. 2. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Old-House Journal, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, call 800-234-3797 (US only), 386-447-2398 (outside the US). Subscription rates are: US: \$27 per year, Canada: \$35 per year, Other countries: \$41 per year. COPYRIGHT: 2011 by Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc. This publication may not be reproduced, either in whole or part, in any form without written permission from the publisher. PRINTING: RR Donnelly, Strasburg, VA. Printed in the USA.