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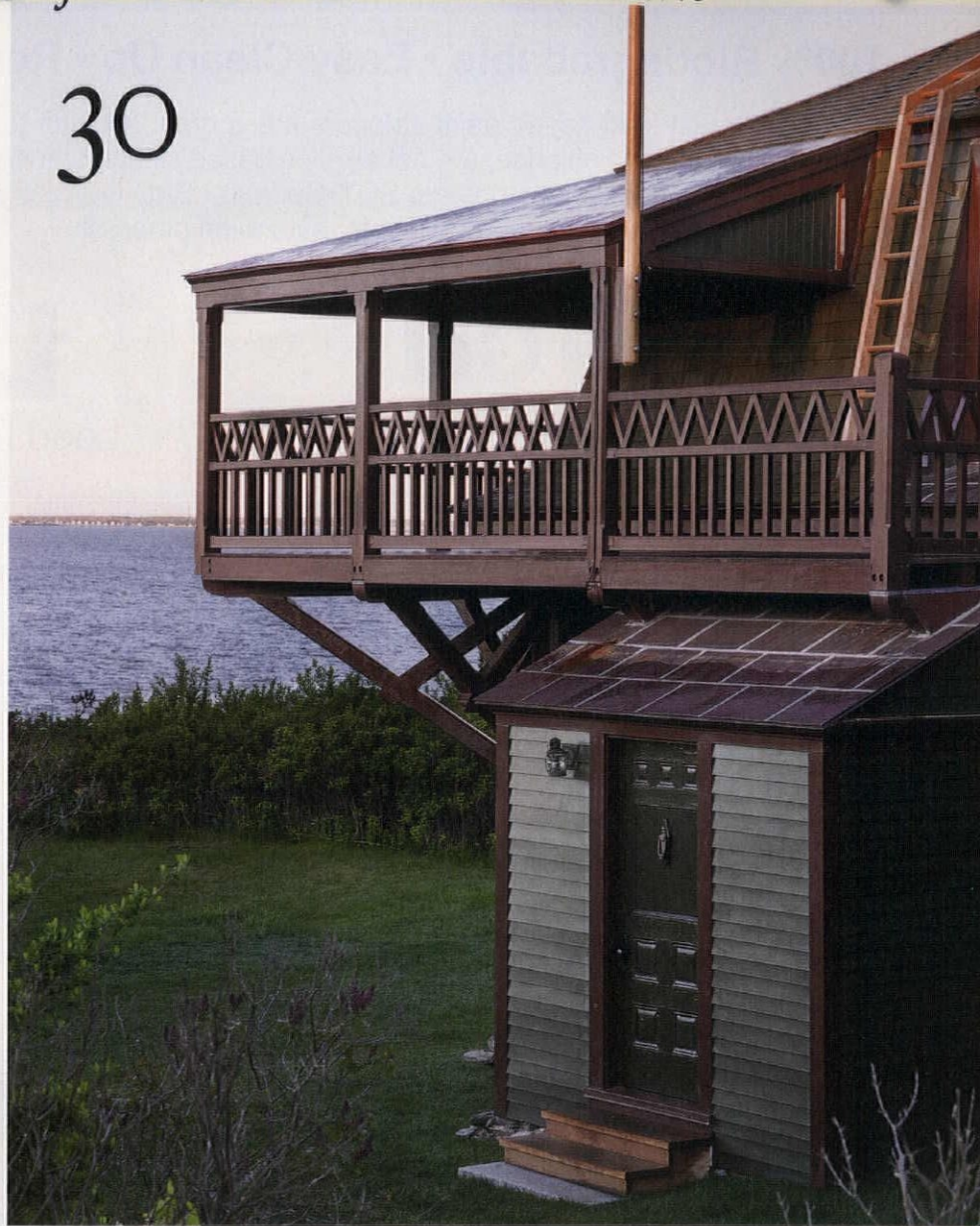


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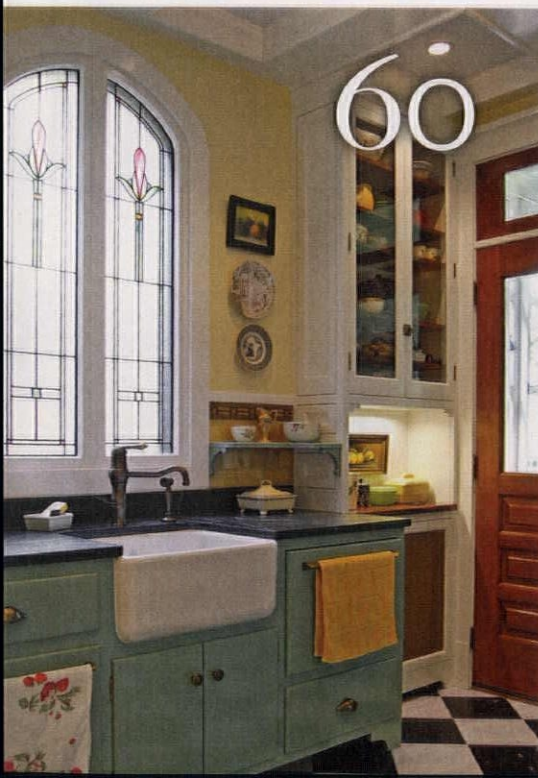
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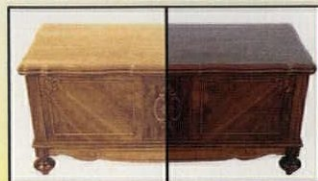
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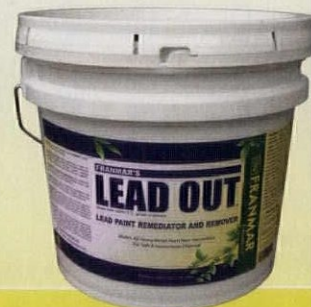
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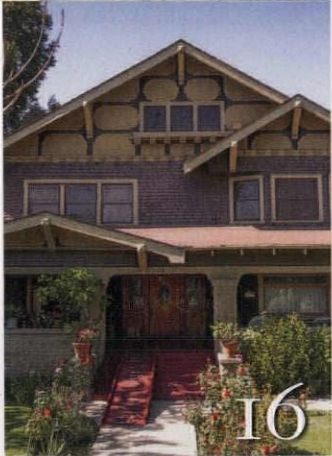
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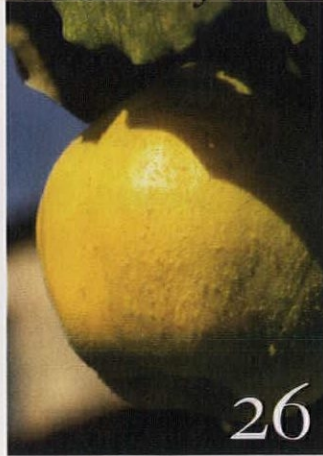
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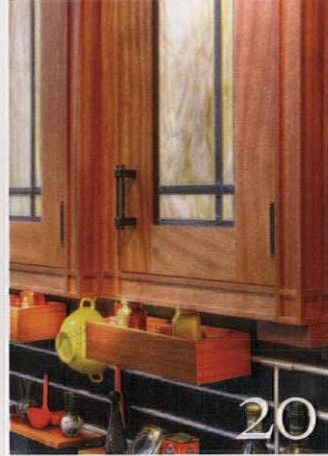
# Old House JOURNAL



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*Green Letter Wins*

**Beautiful Exteriors**  
DIY door upgrades • Easy porch repairs • Perfect moldings

**Photo by Tom Grimes. The 1892 Charter House in Princeton, New Jersey, was restored by Lasley Brahaney Architecture + Construction.**

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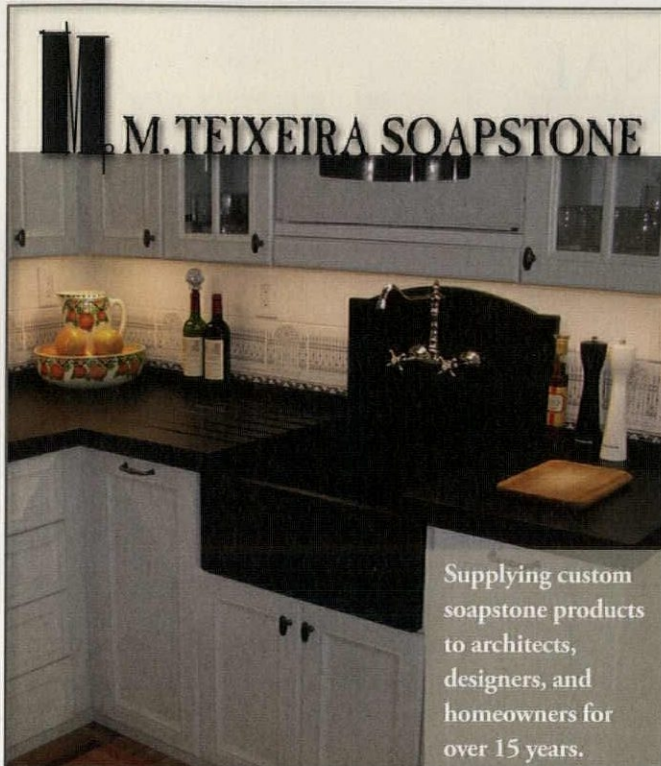
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## Digging Deeper

When homeowner Kerry Baldrige uncovered conflicting histories and long-lost artifacts (like the vintage newspapers above, found beneath linoleum flooring) while restoring her Federal-style house in New Hampshire, she started a blog to chronicle her findings. Her Old-House Living story on page 42 came from that blog; to learn more about her discoveries and theories about the house (and follow her latest updates), head online to get a link to her site.

## Dealing with Doors

After you've read A.R. Bowes' tips for repairing panel doors (page 48), you'll know how to deal with loose joints, wood damage, and a host of other problems. But what do you do when an entire panel has been knocked out and has splintered off? The author's online step-by-step will show you how to craft a good-as-new replacement.



A.R. BOWES PHOTO; TOP: KERRY BALDRIDGE PHOTO

## Just Jane

If you're restoring a bungalow, chances are you're already well-acquainted with author Jane Powell's trademark humor and incomparable expertise. (If you're not, the story of her own kitchen restoration on page 38 is a good place to start.) We've gathered more than a decade's worth of Jane's wit and wisdom from the pages of OHJ for a special online tribute. Log on to read her advice on everything from linoleum floors to surviving a home inspection.



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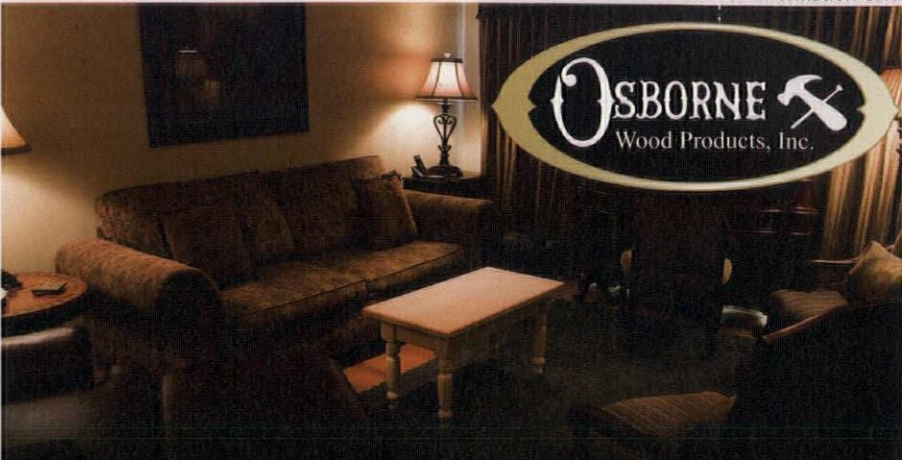


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## Old-House Obsessions



WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALIZE you were indentured to your old house? For me, it was when I was living in Pittsburgh, serving a Sears-catalog Foursquare and struggling to remove glossy white paint from the window seat in the living room bay. I knew that hiding beneath was a rich, dark mahogany finish. I knew it was there because for days on end, I'd been patiently hovering a heat gun over the surface and scraping away the gloss a few inches at a time, ignoring any other distractions—friends, pets, books, sometimes even meals—that crossed my path. And yet I had only cleared a small amount. A very small

amount—about the size of a serving platter. That's when it hit me: My life wasn't my own anymore. Every spare moment I had was consumed with this project—and the dozen or so others I had started but was having a hard time finishing.

Old houses have a way of getting under our skin and bringing out an obsessive-compulsive, make-it-better mindset. I see it often in the letters and story ideas you send my way. In this issue, we've got several examples of houses that turned their owners into old-house detectives and single-minded restoration machines. Our Old-House Living homeowner, for instance, got hooked on nailing down the history of her house (see page 42). It's a fascinating read, and one that might send you running to the archives in your own town. Reader A.R. Bowes' thorough restoration of panel doors on his Federal house inspired a cornucopia of different approaches and repair tips (see "Rescuing Panel Doors," page 48). And expert contributor Jane Powell details her kitchen restoration project, which stretched to seven years as she struggled mightily over every decision. (See, even restoration experts sometimes stumble over what to do! Her story starts on page 38.)

If you've had similar experiences—and I know that many of you have—we'd like to hear about them: all of your toils, troubles, and success stories alike. As we move closer to OHJ's 40th anniversary, one of our goals is to get more reader voices into the magazine. Will you help? Drop us a line at [ohjeditorial@homebuyerpubs.com](mailto:ohjeditorial@homebuyerpubs.com), or leave us a comment at [facebook.com/oldhousejournal](https://www.facebook.com/oldhousejournal). And don't forget to send a few pictures our way, too!

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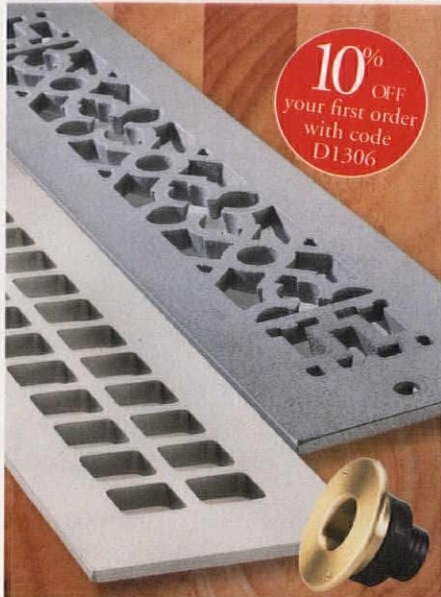
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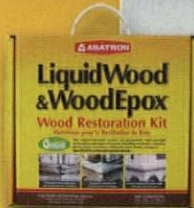
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# Letters

## An Anniversary Story

In honor of your 40th anniversary, I wanted to share a story of a relationship with OHJ that began in the early 1970s. We couldn't have done it without you!

Our young family had just returned from three years in Germany, compliments of the U.S. Army. We needed shelter in Helena, Montana, where my husband was to begin his first job as a civilian attorney. The 1890 Queen Anne Victorian we purchased [below, before our restoration and in a historical photo] looked OK from the exterior. Record-setting cold weather quickly demonstrated that the furnace was inadequate. The wiring was a mix of knob and tube and industrial conduit. The 1940s attached

garage was home to numerous feral cats, to which half of us were allergic. We were not short of projects.

I am not sure how *Old-House Journal* came to our attention, but I think we must have been among the early subscribers. Over 12 years, we did everything from digging out the basement floor to stabilizing the attic plaster, often with guidance from *Old-House Journal*. We did



MARGARET S. DAVIS PHOTOS, OPPOSITE; COURTESY OF MIDTOWN DENNOIT, INC.

a lot of things right, and committed some boo-boos, too. For those things we didn't do ourselves, we waited until we could find the craftsmen who could meet the standards you set for us.

The legacy from that initial foray into rehabilitation has been serial involvement with "house projects." They include a 1919 bungalow, mid-century ranchers, condos, and my current residence, a 1,200-square-foot log house that was built as a summer lodge in 1924. My children, despite the early parental coercion, are also enthusiastic about building and rehabbing properties. Each, in their own way, has taken the risk of making their environments more appealing and substantial.

Margaret S. Davis  
 Via email

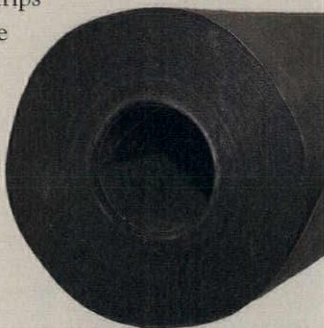


## Reader Tip of the Month

Most rot on porch floors starts when water sits between the joists and the flooring, so before I nail down a new porch floor, I cut tar paper into 6" strips and staple them on top of the framing. The paper allows the water to run away and keeps the framing dry. This step is quick and doesn't cost much for all it can save.

Lair Tienter

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) or tell us on Facebook.

## Motor City Magic

I just read the article in *Old-House Journal* about The Inn on Ferry Street [Historic Retreats, April/May]. It made me

smile on several levels. First, it's great to see a national magazine cover a positive aspect of Detroit. Second, the writer, Jeff Samoray, is an old friend of mine. (I emailed him immediately after reading his byline.) Third, the article is well-written, and the photos are great.

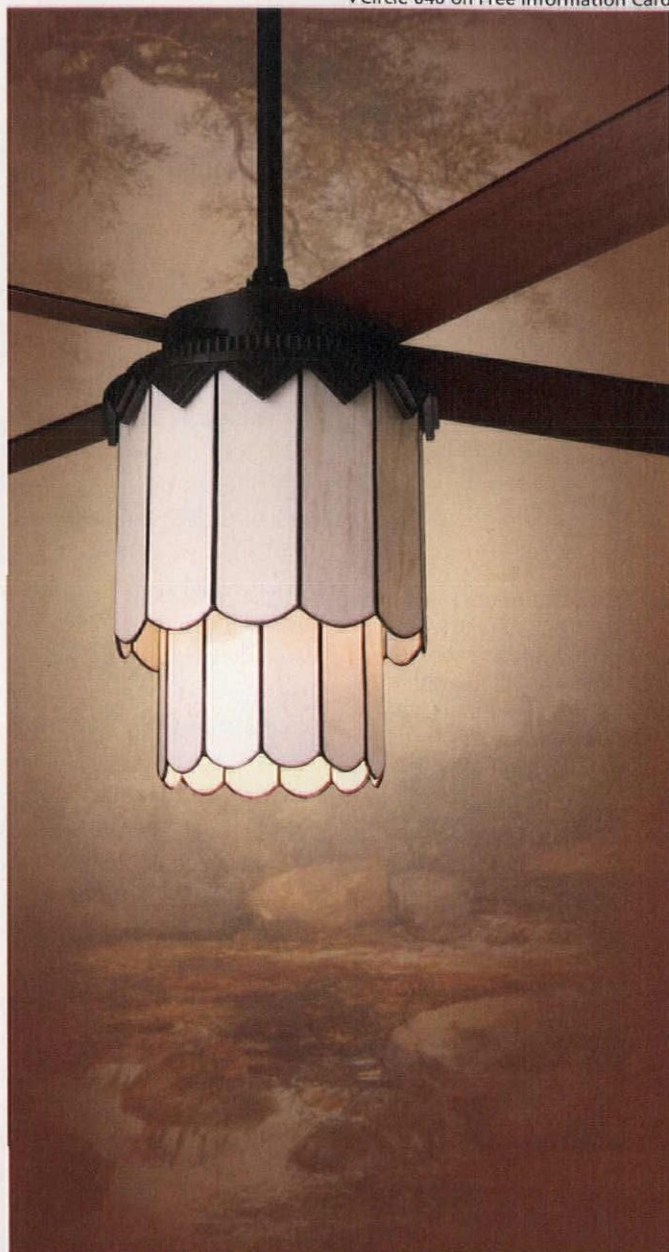
Ken Marten  
Detroit, Michigan

I'm caught with the riches to rags back to

riches story of The Inn on Ferry Street. A success story for Detroit needs recognition—as does a group that can raise \$8.5 million from two dozen foundations!

Nancy Iverson  
Salinas, California

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# about the house

By CLARE M. ALEXANDER

## CALENDAR

JUNE 8  
SEATTLE, WA

### Shared Walls Tour

Author Diana James will lead this walking tour around Seattle's Capitol Hill, focusing on the design and importance of apartment buildings constructed between 1900 and 1939. (206) 622-6952; [historicseattle.org](http://historicseattle.org)

JUNE 15  
SAN DIEGO, CA

### The Old-House Fair

San Diego's South Park neighborhood celebrates all things old house with a festival of exhibitors, historic home tours, live music, and more. Shopping at Vintage Row is new to the fair this year. (619) 233-6679; [theoldhousefair.com](http://theoldhousefair.com)

JUNE 17  
BOSTON, MA

### Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture

Get a crash course on 400 years of furniture design (particularly 17th-century ornate furniture) courtesy of Winterthur professor Brock Jobe. (617) 994-6629; [historicnewengland.org](http://historicnewengland.org)

JUNE 30  
COLUMBUS, OH

### Haus und Garten Tour

A dozen houses and gardens in Columbus' historic 19th-century German Village will be open for tours. A preview the night before grants early access, along with a dinner and cocktail reception. (614) 221-8888; [germanvillagetour.com](http://germanvillagetour.com)

JULY 27  
PORTLAND, OR

### Heritage Home Tour

Wander through five beautifully restored homes spanning from the 1870s to the mid-century modern period. (503) 231-7264; [visitahc.org](http://visitahc.org)

## ON THE RADAR

# New Kids on the Preservation Block

When Rich Lawson and his wife, Amy, bought a 19th-century house in southern Maryland, one of their first thoughts was, "Which historic preservation group should we join?" However, after doing some research, they were disappointed to find that there wasn't a national-level organization that catered exclusively to the needs of old-house owners. So they did the only logical thing—they started one.

The Society for Historic American Homes, which got off the ground just a few months ago, aims to, as Amy puts it, "inspire a younger generation to own historic homes and be good stewards of them." Open to anyone with a home built before 1945, the group will offer member perks such as free webinars, discounts at member B&Bs, and behind-the-scenes tours of historic sites.

The Society's mission goes beyond just restoration resources, though. Rich and Amy have employed a chief advocacy officer, who will lobby in Congress on issues like energy efficiency and tax credits, and they're hoping to expand retail



The Lawsons' 1825 Greek Revival in Southern Maryland inspired the couple to start the Society for Historic American Homes.

offerings to offer members easy access to products most appropriate to their style of home. The group is also shopping around a TV series that would focus on the history of old houses. "If that takes off, it would be hugely influential," says Rich. "We want to reach people outside of our organization to fulfill our mission of getting people interested in historic homes."

For more information about the Society's activities, events, and membership options, visit [historicamericanhomes.org](http://historicamericanhomes.org).

## OLD-HOUSE RESOURCE

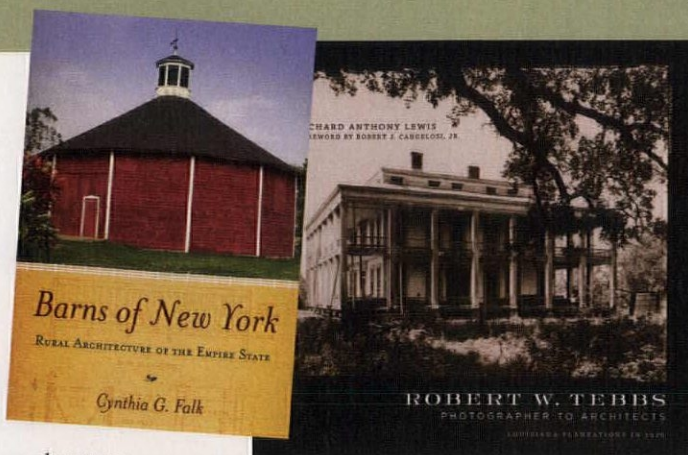
### Seeing Green

With greening historic buildings becoming more popular by the day—particularly now that LEED certification can be applied to rehabs of older structures—it's sometimes hard to sift through what's happening where. The U.S. Green Building Council's new Green Building Information Gateway keeps tabs on all the LEED-certified projects (both new and historic) happening around the country. You can do a simple search, or browse by building, activity, or location. Perhaps the most interesting data can be found in the Collections tab, which is organized by concept. In the Building Reuse collection, for example, you can see how the number of projects has grown from year to year, or get average stats on building performance. To start exploring, visit [gbig.org](http://gbig.org).

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

When it comes to old buildings, some things are universal, no matter the structure's regional provenance or intended purpose. Two new books—one about barns in rural New York, the other about grand plantation homes in Louisiana—offer fresh perspectives on the evolution of historic structures.

In *Barns of New York: Rural Architecture of the Empire State*, author Cynthia G. Falk tours the state's varied agricultural buildings, from high-end horse stables that boast house-like details to rough-and-tumble tobacco barns emblazoned with advertisements. The text focuses largely on the construction of these different types of buildings, offering a unique view of the kinds of age-old



design tricks that are often missing from modern construction (building vineyard greenhouses with operable upper windows to encourage ventilation, for instance). Aspiring homesteaders might also find ideas worth cribbing in sections about root cellars and beekeeping.

*Robert W. Tebbs: Photographer to Architects* focuses on the efforts of one

architectural photographer, Robert Tebbs, who in 1926 created the first photographic survey of Louisiana's plantation homes, many of which were already falling into decay. Minimal text out-

lines a bare-bones history of each home shown, allowing the photos themselves to tell the underlying story of the fading grandeur of the antebellum South. Paging through the lush silver gelatin prints of crumbling porches and towering columns reclaimed by vines, it's hard not to feel that familiar pull to nurse a building back to life.

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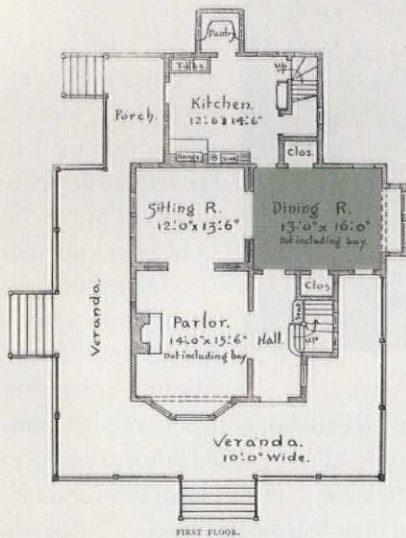
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# ask ohj



**ABOVE:** The homeowner's door opens from the dining room onto a side porch (left). **FAR LEFT:** Planbook architect Robert W. Shoppell used this treatment in some of his mail-order designs, as highlighted in the floor plan of an 1890 Queen Anne.

**Q:** Our large 1875 Italianate has an outside door that opens into the dining room. Why would they do that? This door causes problems in modern life, as it's difficult to place furniture in the dining room. What should we do?

**A:** **James C. Massey & Shirley Maxwell:** Good question. The role of house doors sounds straightforward enough, but nothing is simple in the historic house. Single or double door, two separate front doors (more common than you might think), rear door, side door, basement door: There can be a lot of outside doors in old houses, some placed for the sake of convenience, some for necessity.

Regarding the purpose of the outside door from the dining room to the porch on your house, the architect might say that such a secondary door was a circulation convenience, while the hostess might point to its social practicality—dinner in the dining room, coffee afterward on the porch, for instance. Unlike the front and rear doors, which are basic and necessary house components, your door (along with others like it) was a useful but optional addition.

An examination of more than a hun-

dred Victorian house plans shows that a dining-room-to-porch door isn't a frequent feature, but it does appear from time to time, especially in designs by Shoppell. It's an enrichment rather than a necessity. Such dual doors fit in with the sweeping wrap-around veranda era of Italianates, Second Empires, Queen Annes, and Shingles, and sometimes can be found on these styles. They are decidedly convenient. In a Sears Queen Anne that we documented in Strasburg, Virginia, the dining room door to the porch was more convenient for accessing the house's walkway than the living room door, and it was also closer to the kitchen. Second doors also could be useful in the event of a fire.

But what to do with a door that's superfluous for today's lifestyle—as in your house, where it's just plain in the way? There's nothing wrong with closing in a door—or a window—if it's interfering with modern living. However, to respect history—and a future owner's potential needs or taste—the best practice is to make the alteration both reversible and easy to detect. Fill in a useless door or window with

a material that matches its surrounding on the home's exterior, i.e. a similar brick or stone bond, or siding profile. It should be slightly recessed, perhaps ½" to 1", to set off the change and indicate its reversibility. Inside it's not as critical to recess the change, with interior plaster covering over the opening. Casing trim around the door or window can be left in place to recall the older pattern and maintain a sense of the room's proportions and geometry. Indeed, if this can be accomplished inside and out with enough depth, do leave the original door or window in place and bury it *in situ*. If you must remove the trim, store it in the attic for a future owner. You also can try this old-house trick, which may be the most historically respectful solution of all: Leave the door alone, and block it with a large piece of furniture. 🏠



**Longtime contributors James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell write OHJ's Style articles.**



# MYOLDHOUSEonline

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## MORE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

**Q:** I need to repoint old bricks before I put my kitchen back together. From what I've read, I'll need some sand, Portland cement, and hydrated lime. Am I forgetting anything else? The original mortar has a lot of beach sand in it, and I have been able to find some sea-shells in there. I'm not too worried about the color of the mortar since the exterior will be repainted in the future. Any help would be great! —*Martin*

**A:** Take samples of your mortar and get it analyzed to get the correct mortar mix—in my area, this costs around \$250, and is worth the investment, considering the potential damage without the test. Contact your local historical society for recommended labs to test your sample. One important fact: If you have old sanded brick and use too much Portland cement in your formula, you will damage the brick—as your house expands and contracts, the harder mortar will sand it away. Right now I'm rebuilding a stone foundation, and my mix is 1 part white Portland, 1 part lime, and 6 parts sand. —*Randall*

**A:** Do not use Portland cement on historic masonry! It will destroy the weaker materials around it over time. Try a supplier like Pennsylvania Lime Works or Virginia Lime Works. Their lime is not hydrated, but rather a lime putty made from calcined limestone. It varies from butter joint formulas for fine joints on face brick to coarse sanded natural hydraulic lime for foundation stonework. If you're going to use Portland cement, I would recommend a formula of 1 part Portland cement, 2.5 parts lime, and 9 parts medium bank mason sand. That is weak enough to give way without spalling the masonry, but still hard enough to be a good repair. However, if you're not a professional, it's better just to buy one of the pre-mixed mortars. —*Craig*

Have questions about your old house? We'd love to answer them in future issues. Please send us questions by snail mail at Ask OHJ, 2520 55th Street, Suite 210, Boulder, CO 80301, by email at OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com, or via Facebook at facebook.com/oldhousejournal.

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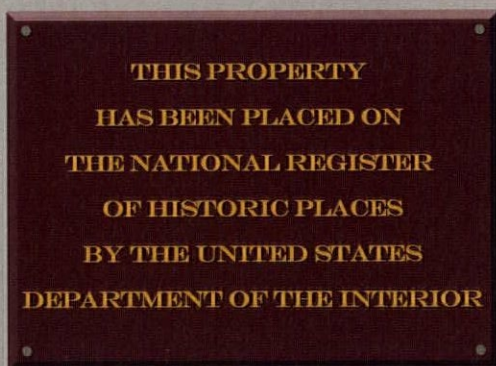
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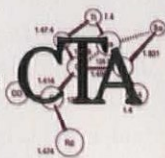
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# preservation perspectives



## Creative Storytelling



Innovative technology is helping to spotlight some fine old houses in Los Angeles. We talked to photographer and former BBC television director Jett Loe to learn how. BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

**DEMETRA APOSPOROS:** You're finishing up an electronic book about L.A.'s West Adams district. What inspired the project?

**JETT LOE:** Last year I was new to L.A. and looking for a place to live. I got off a bus in West Adams, walked a couple of blocks, and was stunned—there was block after block of beautiful old homes.

**DA:** What happened next?

**JL:** I decided I wanted a book about West Adams so I could learn more. I looked and looked, but couldn't find a color coffee-table book like I wanted to see. So

I decided to make one, and began canvassing the neighborhood to see if folks would be interested.

**DA:** And you funded it on Kickstarter?

**JL:** I have friends in the film business who have used Kickstarter to fund their small films. I had seen it in action and thought, why not give it a go? We launched the campaign in April of 2012 with a goal of \$7,000, and raised \$9,000 in one month. The neighborhood historic organizations were really instrumental in getting the word out, especially the West Adams Heritage Association.

**DA:** How did you settle on the book's format?

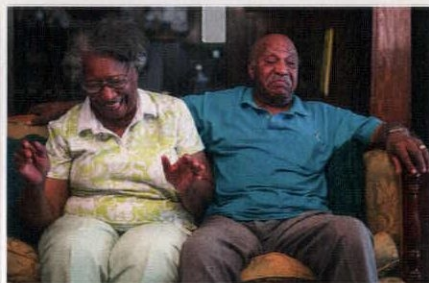
**JL:** A digital book is less expensive to produce, and lets us get creative with our approach. Also, the iPad is such a great platform for showing photography. We also can sell an iPad book for around \$10 or so, making it accessible to a larger group of people.

**DA:** What kinds of features did you incorporate?

**JL:** I based them on the question "What else can the iPad do?" With its ability to use video and audio, I added some of each. I have something like 50 audio clips in the book—many are oral histories—because they play to the technology. Each chapter also has a neighborhood video tour.

**DA:** What do the book—and the oral histories—address?

**JL:** I wanted it to be a snapshot of what the place is today—not just historical anecdotes, but offering the flavor of what it's



**ABOVE:** Many West Adams houses exhibit a heavy Arts & Crafts influence, and are rich in original architectural details both inside and out. Bob and Irene Grant (bottom right) have called the neighborhood home for 40 years. **BELOW:** A glimpse of the iPad book.

like to live here now. So for the oral histories we talked to a variety of people, from couples who've lived here 40 years to some who moved in only recently. There are also some clips discussing touchstones like the Angelus Rosedale Cemetery.

**DA:** What were you aiming to convey?

**JL:** That we're spoiled for choice here; we have just a vast housing stock. I wanted to show a selection and a range of homes—some of which are very well-maintained, some not so well-maintained. I also wanted to look at some of the history. West Adams has such an interesting history, and things are constantly changing. It started as a very wealthy white neighborhood. In the 1940s, it became a place for black royalty, celebrities, stars—Hattie McDaniel lived here, despite there being a covenant in deeds at that time saying that homes could not

be sold to black people. That battle went all the way to the Supreme Court, and in 1948 was deemed to be unconstitutional. Through the years there have also been large Japanese and Hispanic populations, and today it's one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the entire United States, according to the most recent census.

**DA:** Did you find a sense of community there?

**JL:** I think people are really proud and excited about the homes. When I've been out photographing homes in different West Adams neighborhoods, people always talk to me and ask what I'm doing. Whenever I explained the project, everybody got so excited. People here—just ordinary people I met on the street—are very proud of their homes, and eager to share them with the world. There's an absolute sense of pride

and joy that people take in their homes. And because the area started out wealthy, then fell on hard times before upswinging again, many people didn't have the money to tear down and redo the interiors. That's why we have so much original stained glass, lighting, and more.

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# tools & materials

Our editors pick the best products to make your old-house projects easier.



## A Safer Ladder

Falling off a ladder is one of the top causes of injury among DIYers, so it's important to make sure yours is secure, particularly if you're working on your gutters or roof. The Ladder Tite system easily (and securely) fastens an extension ladder to a gutter or fascia board. The lightweight, durable aluminum clips attach the ladder's frame to the house, tightening via an adjustable slide arm to lock the ladder in place so it can't shift from front to back or side to side. \$29.95. Call (541) 476-6810, or visit [roguevalleyinnovations.com](http://roguevalleyinnovations.com).

## Sea Worthy

If you're looking for a super-long-lasting finish, it makes sense to choose one that can stand up to the worst conditions imaginable—the open ocean, for instance. Epifanes' high-gloss varnish has been used to finish surfaces on yachts for more than a century, and can provide a durable protective coat for outdoor furniture or exposed elements like doors and trim. The tung-oil-based finish has maximum UV absorbers and superior water-resistance, making it a good choice for environments with intense weather. Around \$27 per gallon. Call (800) 269-0961, or visit [epifanes.com](http://epifanes.com).



## Going in Circles

Trying to cut a perfect circle freehand can be an exercise in frustration—but getting it right with Rockler's new Trim Router Circle Jig is a no-brainer. The compact jig fits several popular router models, and can be adapted easily to fit others. Its center pivot pin (tightened via a T-bolt and four-star tightening knob) adjusts to cut diameters from 6" to 36". \$36.99. Call (877) 762-5537, or visit [rockler.com](http://rockler.com).

# old-house toolbox



A contour gauge makes it easier to copy curved lines.

## Contour Gauge

*When you need to replicate curved surfaces, this tool makes the right impression.*

BY RAY TSCHOEPE

**T**ransferring molding profiles to paper or cutting flat material—such as flooring or siding—around curved surfaces can be a challenge if you don't have the proper tools to accurately transfer the curves to the material you're cutting.

Cardboard templates can provide a pretty decent approximation, but if you find yourself making them often, you might consider purchasing a tool designed to transfer curves and irregular shapes: the contour gauge. Reminiscent of a hair comb, the tool—also known as a profile comb—features a row of long, thin, moveable teeth and a perpendicular housing that holds them in place as they take an impression of the surface.

### How to Use It

To use the gauge, start by first pressing the teeth against a flat surface until all of the ends are in line. Next, press the comb against a molded surface—each

tooth will contact a small area and move relative to the next tooth, which adjusts to the adjacent point. The tip of each tooth then defines a point, creating a static wave of pins around the curves, in the form of a traceable line. The tracing will be a bit choppy (because your pencil contacts the tip of each wire), but it's easy to smooth out.

Profile combs do have limitations, particularly where absolute accuracy is needed—for instance, if you're making a wood or plaster molding that has to match the original exactly. The comb will provide you with a great starting point, but a certain amount of refinement will almost always be necessary.

However, if you're just looking to replicate the general look of a molding, they're perfect.

### What to Look For

Contour gauges and profile combs come in two types: metal and plastic. The metal comb employs a row of what are essentially stiff metal wires. Because they're generally smaller in diameter than the teeth of plastic combs, there are more points per inch pressing on the material for a potentially more accurate tracing. The downside is that metal wires are more susceptible to bending, which can make the gauge much less useful. And because the metal wires are simply "pinched" in a metal housing, if one is accidentally dislodged (say, by bouncing around in a drawer or tool pouch), it's usually followed by the loss of more and more wires in rapid succession.

The needles of plastic profile combs, on the other hand, are locked in by their shape, so they can't escape. Plastic combs tend to be quite durable, and are available in a variety of lengths. Although they're not capable of producing as fine a tracing as metal combs, they're quite adequate for the vast majority of profile tracings.

### The Bottom Line

If your restoration projects will have you cutting around a lot of corners and curves, this tool will make your life much easier. If your budget allows, pick up a couple of lengths to make sure you can handle any size molding or contour. 🛠



Ray Tschoepe, one of OHJ's contributing editors, is the director of conservation at the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust in Philadelphia.

# period products

By CLARE M. ALEXANDER

*Jazz up your period kitchen with new products that blend vintage aesthetics with modern technology.*



## French Cuisine

The features of modern fridges are hard to beat: ample space, side-by-side French doors, integrated ice and water dispensers, bottom-drawer freezers. If you'd rather not sacrifice vintage style for convenience, you're in luck—the latest offering from Elmira Stove Works combines the company's characteristic retro styling with all the modern bells and whistles. Available in both a full-depth and cabinet-depth model, the Northstar French-Door refrigerator has a capacity of 24.8 cubic feet and comes in the company's nine standard colors, or a custom color. From \$5,495. Call (800) 295-8498, or visit [elmirastoveworks.com](http://elmirastoveworks.com).



## The Wright Stuff

Although Prairie School founder Frank Lloyd Wright tended to prefer plain cypress cabinets for his cooking spaces, the kitchen's evolution to hub-of-the-home status demands more artistry. For its Prairie line, Crown Point Cabinetry expanded on its Craftsman design with signature details borrowed from the master architect: strong horizontal and vertical lines (via the company's patented channel face frames), leaded glass, and cantilevered details. Endlessly customizable, Prairie kitchens start at around \$30,000. Call (800) 999-4994, or visit [crown-point.com](http://crown-point.com).



## Seeing Red

If you're re-creating an early kitchen, honed finishes—such as slate or soapstone—are a more period-friendly countertop choice than shiny granites. But if you're still craving something showstopping, try the red slate available from Sheldon Slate. With gray veins and markings running throughout, this rare form of slate is high on the "wow" factor—but because of its cost and limited availability, it's best used to highlight a small area, such as an island or baking counter. Prices range from \$100 to \$160 per square foot. Call (518) 642-1280, or visit [sheldonslate.com](http://sheldonslate.com).



## Perfect Tin

Always a popular choice for embellishing kitchen ceilings in vintage houses, embossed tin panels have started making their way onto other kitchen surfaces, from backsplashes to islands. The faux tin thermoformed panels from Surfacing Solution make it easy to experiment with whatever application strikes your fancy—the glue-based installation process requires no nails, and you can cut the panels to fit with a pair of scissors. (Purists, take heart: They also offer traditional metal panels.) Available in six designs, in five metallic colors or paintable matte white, from \$12.95. Call (800) 964-8961, or visit [surfacing-solution.com](http://surfacing-solution.com).



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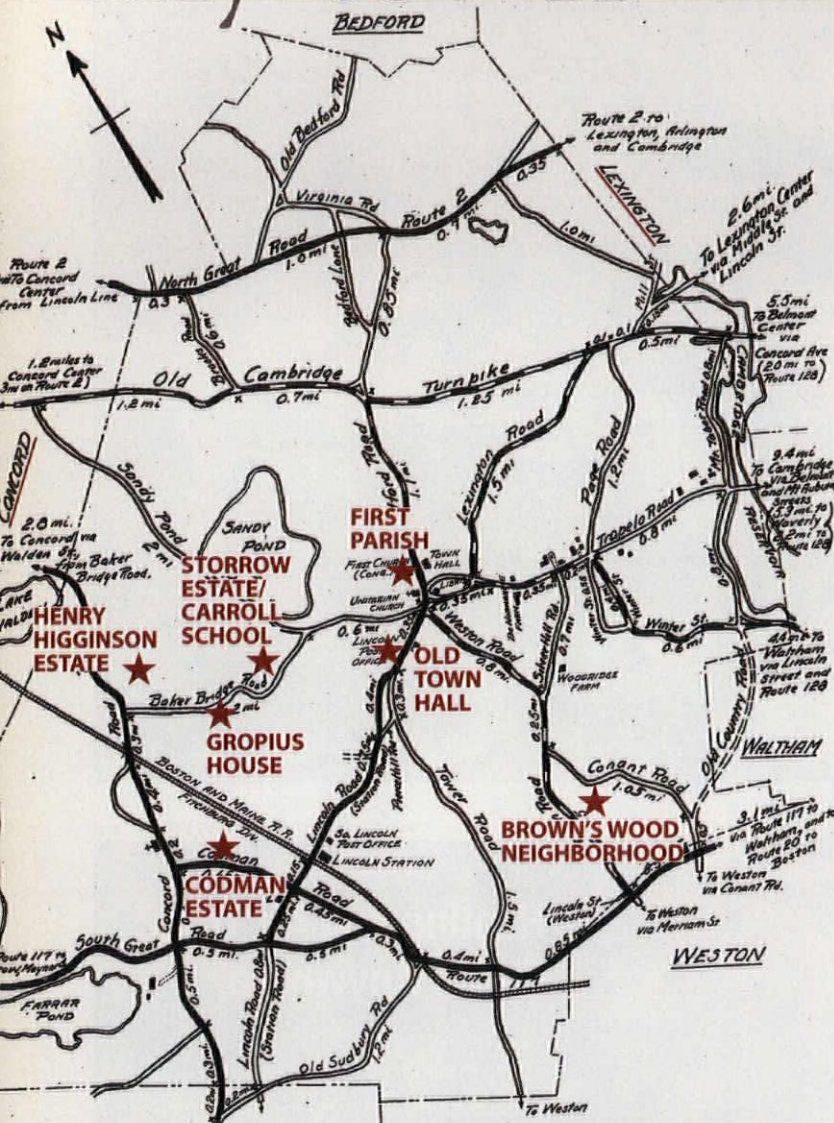
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# my town



## Lincoln, Massachusetts

A local walks us through three centuries' worth of important buildings in this New England town.

By BARBARA RHINES

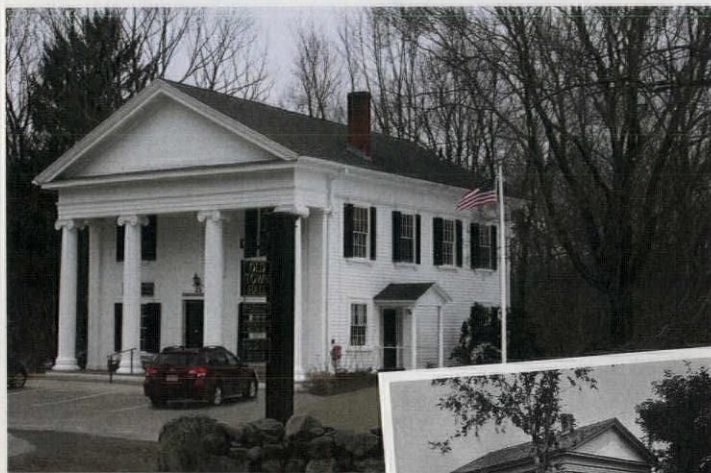
**M**y daughter recently asked me, "Who'd want to tour our town?" To a 14-year-old, Lincoln, Massachusetts—12 miles northwest of downtown Boston—might seem rather sleepy. There are only three restaurants, and the nearest hotel accommodations are in neighboring Concord and Lexington (towns that draw plenty of tourists).

But Lincoln is a perfect destination for an architectural history buff, revealing its entire development history through buildings that are visible, preserved, and in many cases open to the public. Don't make the mistake of thinking that Lincoln is just a leafy bedroom community—there is much history to discover in this small town of 15 square miles.

### Revolutionary Roots

Most people know Lexington and Concord as the sites of the first battles of the American Revolution. But few realize that Lincoln, which lies between those two iconic towns, was the epicenter of bloody fighting along what is now Route 2A, dubbed the Battle Road. In fact, on the night of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere did not finish his historic ride to Concord—he was arrested by the British in Lincoln!

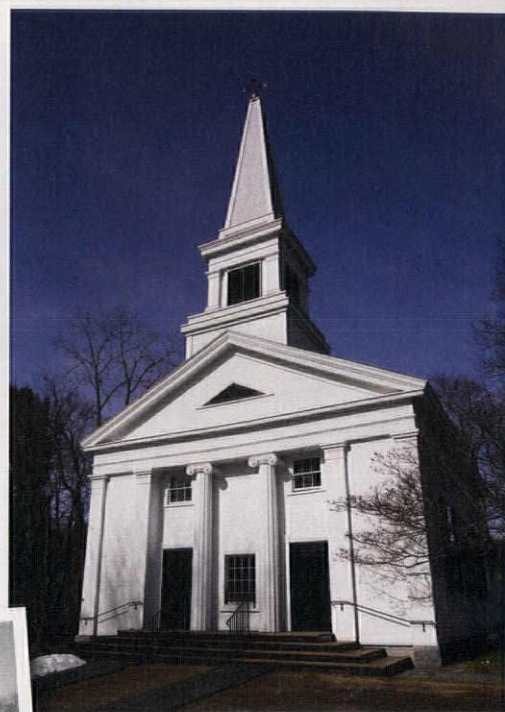
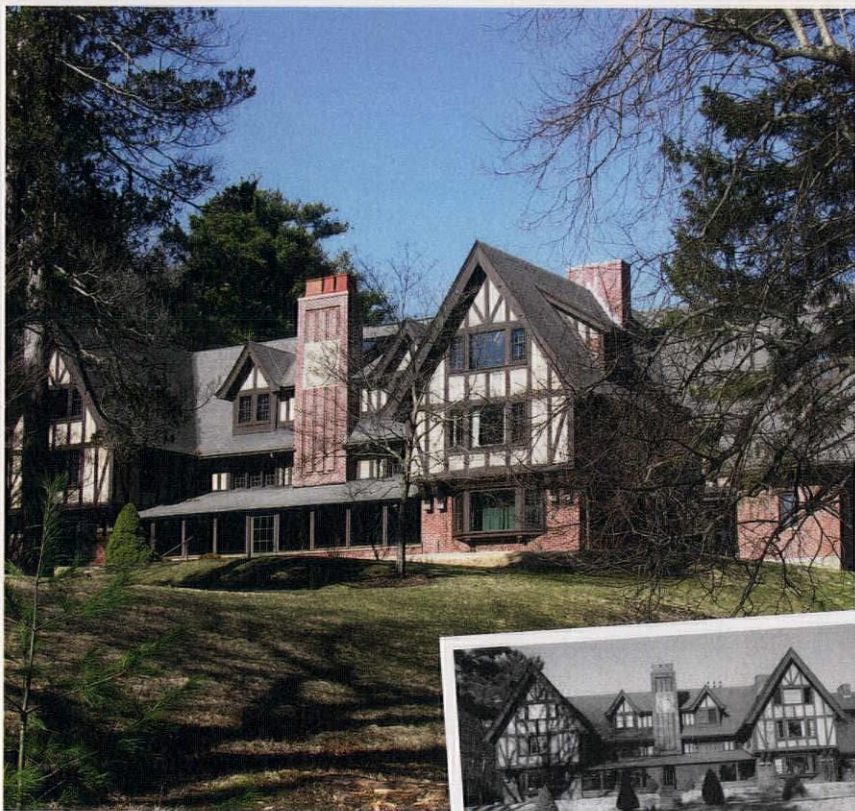
Minuteman National Historic Park, which preserves and commemorates the beginning of the American Revolution, has its main visitor's center in Lincoln. You can stroll along the Battle Road, tour original houses that remain from the time of the battles, visit the Revere capture site, and enjoy the historic landscape of fields and stone walls, which the National Park has worked hard to restore. Privately



The Old Town Hall is such a classic Greek Revival that Henry Ford wanted to move it to Greenfield Village.







**LEFT & INSET:** The impressive 1906 Tudor Higginson Estate now houses the Thoreau Society. **ABOVE:** First Parish church dates to the 1840s.

owned homes nearby date from the late 1600s through the 1700s.

Crossing Route 2 leads you into the heart of Lincoln, an idyllically preserved New England town center. The cemetery on Bedford Road holds the remains of British soldiers killed along the Battle Road. The town center also has excellent examples of Federal- and Greek Revival-era buildings, including the 1840s white-steepled First Parish in Lincoln and the Old Town Hall, built in 1848. The latter building almost disappeared in 1928, when Henry Ford came to town, intending to purchase historic buildings to move to Greenfield Village, his new outdoor museum in Dearborn, Michigan. He approached the Old Town Hall's owner, Charles Sumner Smith, who declined to sell, famously responding, "If it's good enough for

Michigan, it's good enough for Lincoln."

### The Estate Era

By the turn of the 20th century, wealthy Boston Brahmin families discovered Lincoln's convenient location and beauty, and began building country estates in the town. Many large manor houses from the estate era are preserved and used today as museums, schools, and nonprofit headquarters. All are worth visiting; they are arranged here by time period.

Helen Osborne Storrow was one of Boston's most generous philanthropists, and in 1904-05, she built her large brick Arts & Crafts style estate in Lincoln. Storrow helped start Girl Scouts in America and the Saturday Evening Girls Pottery, which made some of the finest ceramics of the Arts & Crafts

movement. You can still see the large terrace that she built to stage Morris dances, part of the Arts & Crafts movement's celebration of folk arts. The Storrow Estate is now the Carroll School, located on Baker Bridge Road, and not generally open to the public—but you can see its impressive carriage house as you pass.

Alexander Henry Higginson was the son of Boston Symphony Orchestra founder Henry Higginson, who bought Alexander land in Lincoln to fulfill his interest in fox hunting and steeplechase. The younger Higginson built an imposing Tudor-style estate on Baker Farm Road in 1906. Today the Higginson Estate houses the Thoreau Society. You can stroll the grounds to enjoy this English-style manor, or enter to research Henry David Thoreau and his connec-

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## my town



COURTESY OF HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

**TOP:** The refined Codman Estate. **BOTTOM:** Built in 1937, Gropius House soon became an international icon.

tions to Lincoln. (The philosopher first sought to build the cabin he chronicles in *Walden* on Flint's Pond; rebuffed by the owner, he retreated to Walden Pond, a couple miles away.)

Anyone interested in period furnishings and design should tour Historic New England's Codman Estate on Codman Road. Originally built in 1740 by the Codman family, the estate is exquisitely preserved in its Victorian-era incarnation. The interior is the work of Ogden Codman, Jr., co-author of the 1898 book *The Decoration of Houses* with Edith Wharton.

Julian DeCordova's turn-of-the-20th-century home on Sandy Pond Road, which he modeled after a European castle, was left to the town of Lincoln upon his death in 1945 to be preserved as a house museum on par with Isabella Stewart Gardner's residence in Boston.

Unfortunately, DeCordova's collection was deemed less than museum-worthy. The objects were sold, and the home became the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, with a focus on contemporary art.

### Mecca for Modernism

Not all is old-timey in Lincoln. In 1937, Helen Osborne Storrow donated some land from her estate to help a newly arrived German immigrant build a house. He was Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, who had escaped Nazi Germany and moved to Lincoln to head the Harvard University Graduate School of Architecture. In 1938, he built a severe white cube of a house on the land, which immediately became the talk of Lincoln and beyond. Fellow Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer soon arrived, and built a flat-roofed modern home across the street.

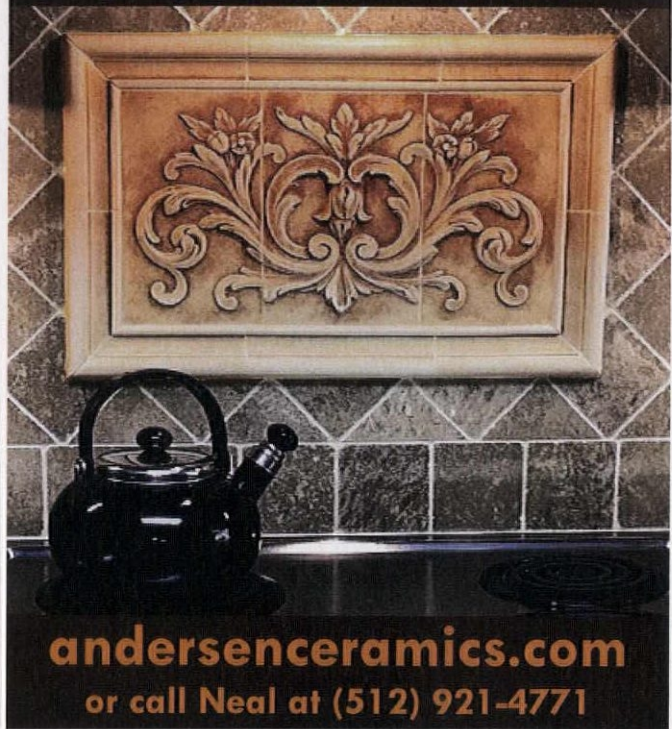
Today, Gropius' house on Baker Bridge Road is operated as a museum by Historic New England and contains the family's personal furniture and belongings. Walk through the abutting Woods End neighborhood to see a fine collection of early modern homes by architects like Breuer, Gropius, and Walter Bogner, which are privately owned and wonderfully preserved. A driving tour on Tabor Hill Road also will reveal several examples of fine mid-century modern architecture by Henry Hoover, a Lincoln-based architect who actually built the first modernist home in Lincoln one year ahead of Gropius.

Lincoln's embrace of modernism continues in the Brown's Wood neighborhood (Laurel Drive and Mocas Hill). In the early 1960s, a group of MIT professors and their families decided to build their own modernist neighborhood. This tight-knit collective continues to thrive, and periodic tours of it are given by Historic New England and Lincoln's own Friends of Modern Architecture (FoMA).

To answer my daughter's question, I do think touring Lincoln is worthwhile—particularly for someone who enjoys history and fine residential architecture. Lincoln's houses and buildings document a New England town's journey through the centuries of American history, and demonstrate that careful planning can preserve what's best from each era. 🏠

**Barbara Rhines** has been a Lincoln resident for 20 years, and is currently living in and restoring an early modernist home from the 1940s.

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BERNANMOGLU PHOTO/FOTOLIA.COM

# Forgotten Fruits

*Fruits of the past combine mouth-watering flavor with easy maintenance. With their historical roots, these 6 are ideal for old-house gardens.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

**W**ander through markets or backyards of a hundred, 300, or even a thousand years ago, and you'd find some unfamiliar fruits. A number of fruits that were known and enjoyed centuries ago—among them, quince, medlar, cornelian cherry, clove currant, and mulberry—have fallen by the wayside. Flavor isn't the reason—rather, lower yields, the dif-

ficulty of being shipped halfway around the world, and poor appearance all spell death to market fruits in our modern global economy.

The plants of many of these “forgotten fruits” are still available—and while they might not make good commercial fruits, they're great for the backyard. Given their history, these plants and their fruits are especially appropriate in old-house settings. Here are six varieties to try.

## Medlar



### WHAT IT IS:

Closely related to quince, medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) is more tree-like in form yet smaller in stature, making it perfect for a small yard. Its spring blossoms are followed by golfball-size fruits that resemble russet apples with the bottom ends flared open.

### HISTORY:

Charlemagne commanded that medlar be planted in

every town he conquered. Admittedly an ugly fruit, medlar was described by D.H. Lawrence as "wineskins of brown morbidity."

### CARE & USE:

Naturally softened after picking, medlar's brown flesh tastes like rich applesauce with a hint of wine.

### HARDINESS:

Zones 5-8

## Cornelian Cherry



### WHAT IT IS:

In taste and appearance, cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*) is a dead ringer for tart cherry, except it's much easier to grow. In addition, buds on this dogwood relative unfold very early in spring to yellow blossoms that stay in bloom for weeks.

### HISTORY:

Cornelian cherry was popular in ancient Greece and Rome, and in England up into the 19th century, where it was known as cornel plum.

### CARE & USE:

Use cornelian cherry as you would tart cherry, but the fruit will mellow and taste good fresh if allowed to hang longer on the tree or even sit in a bowl for a couple of days. Like quince and medlar, cornelian cherry demands little more than sunlight and reasonably good soil. Little or nothing is required by way of pest control or even pruning.

### HARDINESS:

Zones 4-8

## Clove Currant



### WHAT IT IS:

The perky yellow flowers of clove currant (*Ribes odoratum*) bloom in early spring, followed in July and August by aromatic, sweet-tart black currants.

### HISTORY:

Clove currant was a common dooryard shrub in early America, planted so its sweet clove fragrance could waft onto front porches and into open windows.

### CARE & USE:

A native of the Midwest, clove currant tolerates any amount of cold, heat, drought, deer, insects, and diseases. The plant has a somewhat scraggly growth habit, and it sends up shoots from creeping underground stems, so unless pruned, is not for the formal garden. It's perfect for covering a bank, though. The fruit is good fresh, but also cooks up to make a very tasty jam.

### HARDINESS:

Zones 4-8

## Quince



### WHAT IT IS:

The true quince of antiquity (*Cydonia oblonga*) is a small tree or large shrub sporting pretty white flowers in spring. The fruits, which ripen in autumn, resemble downy, muscular Golden Delicious apples.

### HISTORY:

Some allege it to have been Eve's "apple." In any case, the fruit was very popular up to Victorian times, and you occasionally find an old tree still gracing the grounds of an old home. (Nowadays, the quince most frequently seen around houses is flowering quince [*Chaenomeles japonica*], a related ornamental shrub whose fruit would need plenty of cooking and sweetening to be rendered edible.)

### CARE & USE:

Cooked, the fruit turns pink and spicy, perfect in jelly, to add pizzazz to applesauce or pie, or, with a bit of honey, stewed by itself.

### HARDINESS:

Zones 5-9

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# outside the old house



## Strawberry

### WHAT IT IS:

Strawberries have been popular since olden times, but not in the form you're familiar with. The strawberries of antiquity are alpine strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*) and musk strawberries (*F. moschata*, shown above). Don't expect to fill your freezer with these fruits, because they are small, with consequently low yields. But flavor! Alpines have an intense strawberry flavor with a hint of pineapple and bear all season long. Musk strawberries taste like a delectable commingling of strawberries and raspberries.

### HISTORY:

Alpine strawberries grow throughout northern regions of the world; musk strawberries are native to Europe. Both were popular through-

out medieval times, but their general popularity was eclipsed in the 19th century with the development of the larger-fruited, modern garden strawberry.

### CARE & USE:

Both species thrive best in well-drained soil and full sun to partial shade. Musk strawberries, like modern strawberries, make runners (above-ground stems that root along their lengths to make new plants), so they need periodic thinning out of excess plants to prevent overcrowding. Alpines don't make runners, so they're perfect for garden edging or pots. Both species are very soft and very flavorful when ripe.

### HARDINESS:

Zones 3-10 (alpine), 4-10 (musk)

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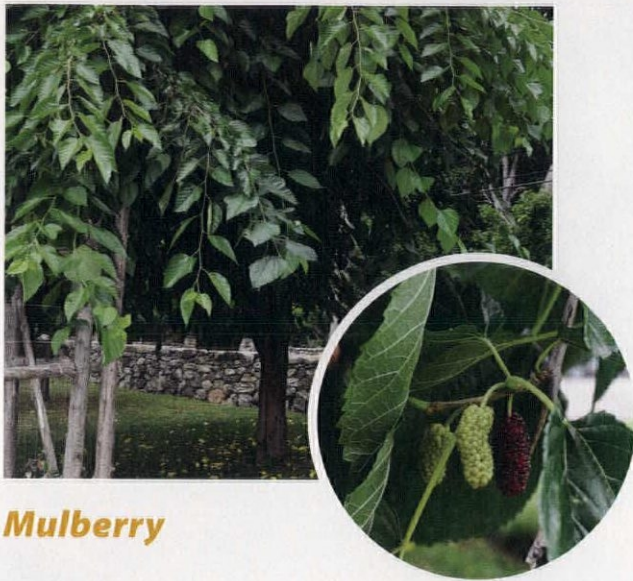
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## Mulberry

### WHAT IT IS:

Various species of mulberry (*Morus spp.*) grow wild and are cultivated throughout the U.S. These fast-growing trees bear a profusion of fruits that look like elongated blackberries. Their flavor ranges from sweet to sweet-tart.

### HISTORY:

Asian white mulberry was imported 200 years ago as silkworm food for what was hoped would be an American cottage industry; the industry failed, but white mulberries thrived and spread, mingling with our native red mulberry to form myriad natural hybrids. From among the many wild mulberry plants, a number of superior varieties were selected and propagated, the first being Downing's Everbearing in 1846. Henry Ward Beecher wrote that he would "rather have one tree of

Downing's Everbearing mulberries than a bed of strawberries." Other varieties followed, including New American, Johnson, and Travis.

### CARE & USE:


One of the best-tasting mulberry varieties still available is the Illinois Everbearing, which traces its origin to 1958 on a farm in Illinois. Like other forgotten fruits, Illinois Everbearing is easy to grow, requiring little or no care once established, and its glossy leaves recall bygone days. The easiest way to harvest mulberries is to spread a clean sheet on the ground to catch the fruit that falls as you shake the branches. The fruit is very good fresh; cooked, it's best combined with other fruits that are more tart.

### HARDINESS:


Zones 5-8 (red and white mulberries), 7-10 (black mulberries)

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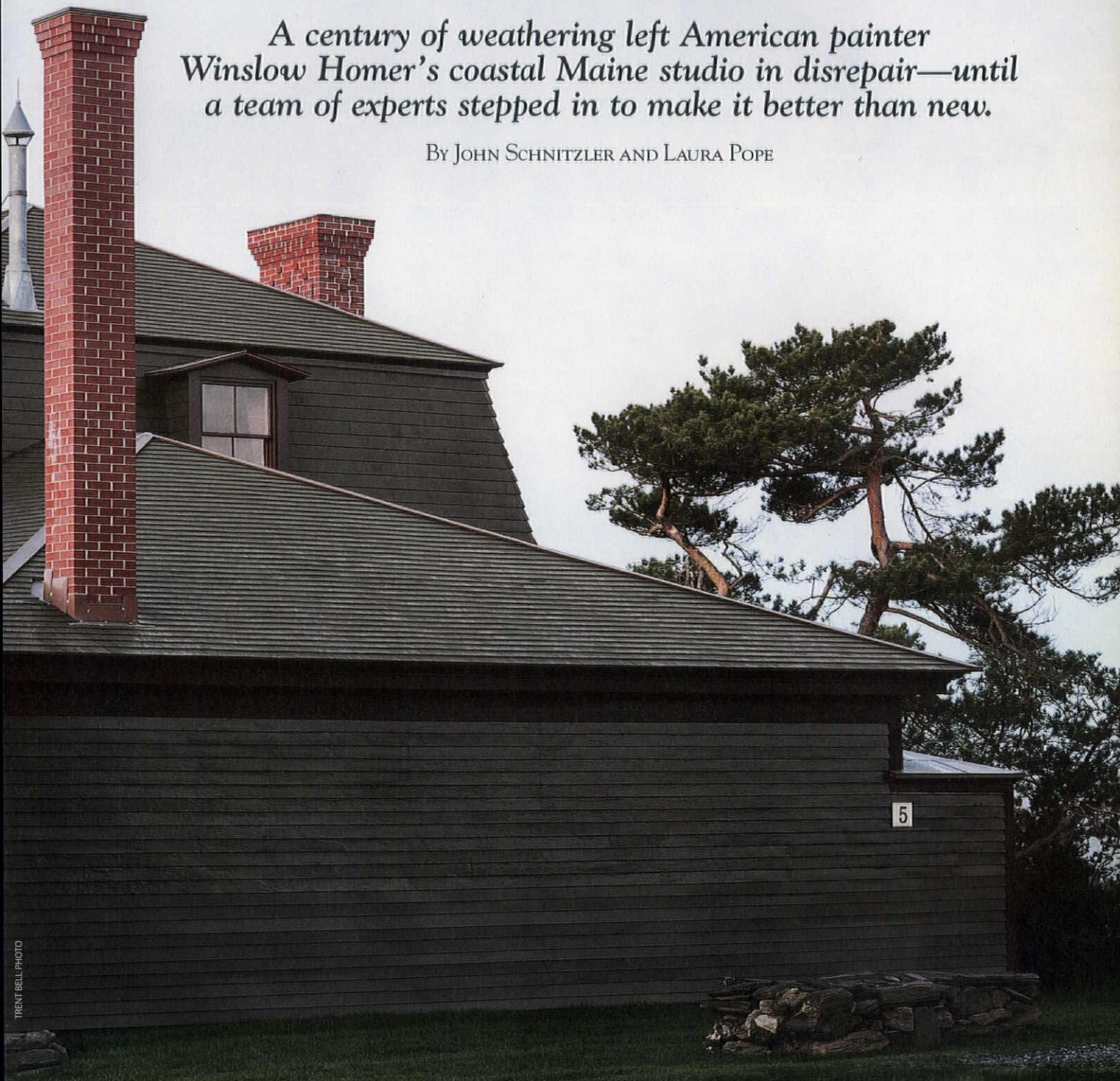
A small army of restoration specialists revived the seaside studio over the course of several years.



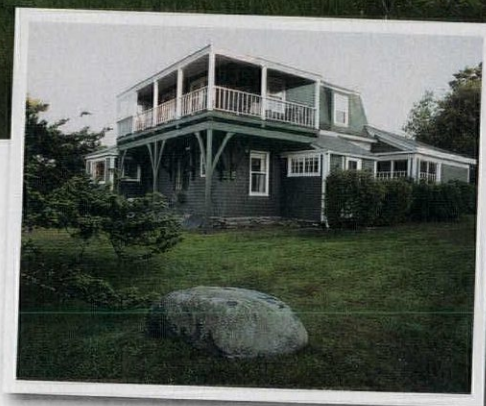
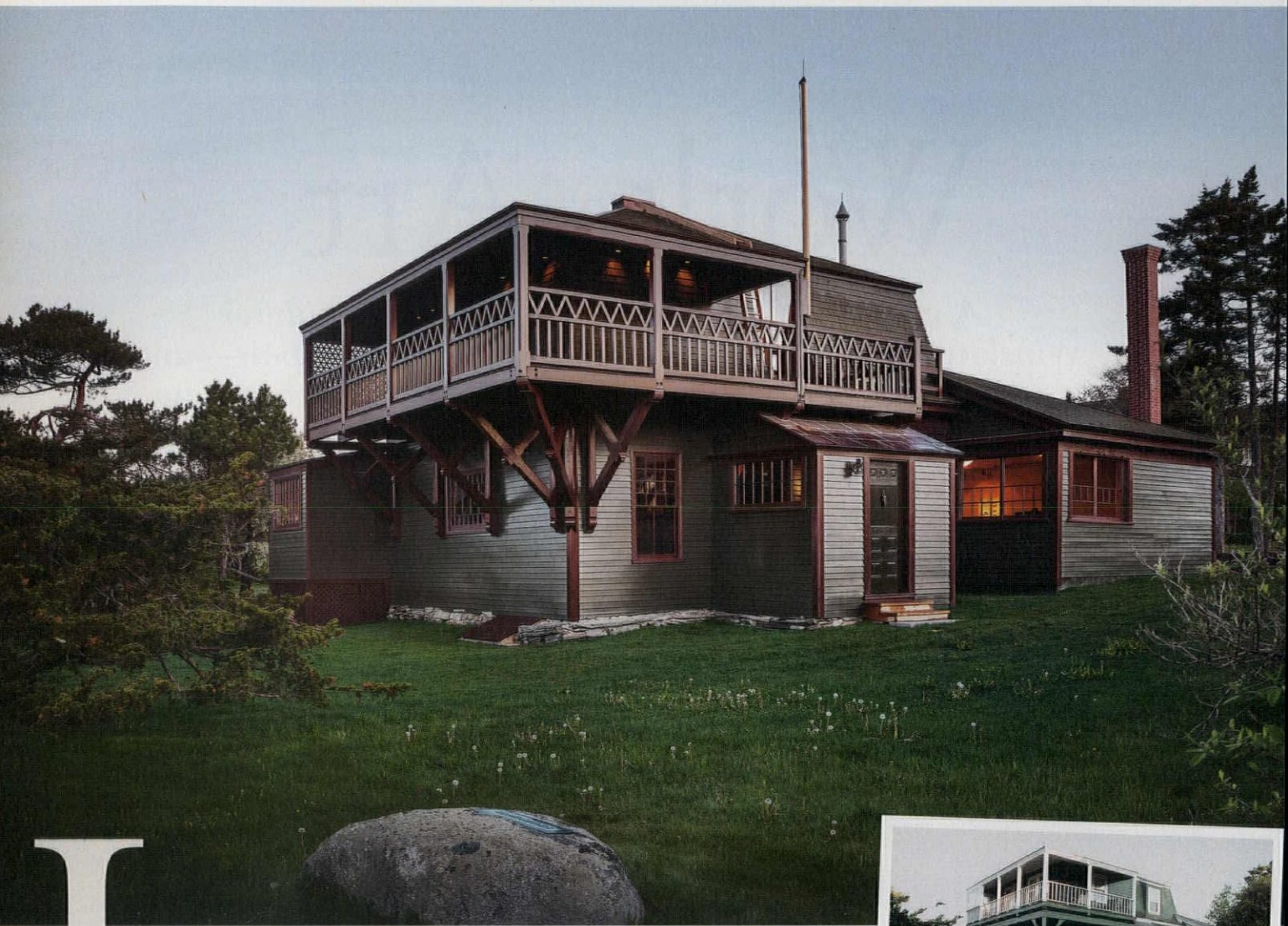
# Work of Art

*A century of weathering left American painter Winslow Homer's coastal Maine studio in disrepair—until a team of experts stepped in to make it better than new.*

By JOHN SCHNITZLER AND LAURA POPE



TRENT BELL PHOTO



It was described as “maintained over the years,” but on closer inspection, the Winslow Homer Studio was more like the name of one of the artist’s iconic masterpieces: weatherbeaten.

The two-story carriage house with a mansard roof first belonged to Homer’s father as part of a massive Shingle Style house by the sea, purchased in 1883. Within a year, the small structure was moved a hundred feet further down the shoreline and redesigned by Homer’s architect friend John Calvin Stevens as a studio and residence to suit the artist’s needs.

The Portland Museum of Art bought the building in January 2006, intending “to preserve and interpret the inspirational setting” on Prout’s Neck, Maine. After

completing a meticulous, multi-million-dollar restoration designed to bring the studio back to 1910 (the year Homer died), the building opened for public tours for the first time ever last September.

### Structural Support

It took six years to complete the painstaking project; work took place in three “summer season” phases, driven by guidelines set by the American Association of Museums and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic

Preservation. The ravages of time and the often merciless seaside weather had understandably compromised the fabric of the studio, but design flaws in the building’s original construction also had taken a toll.

For instance, the shallow, poorly laid foundation had allowed water and moisture to breach the crawlspace and infiltrate downstairs rooms, especially the Painting Room. After supporting the building and painstakingly digging



**ABOVE:** Workers prepare the structural members of the house (top) to receive new and restored piazza brackets (bottom).

**OPPOSITE:** The restored studio is a dramatic contrast to its 2006 appearance (inset).

out the original foundation, “the stone foundations of the entire building were underpinned with concealed concrete footings in order to stabilize the building,” says Craig Whitaker of Mills Whitaker Architects, whom the museum hired to research the history of the building and determine the scope of restoration.

The oversized Queen Anne-style chimney built on a shallow rubble foun-

ation was another area of concern. Described by architectural historian James F. O’Gorman as “relieved by four projecting belt courses, a flared top, and a decorative pattern of single projecting bricks,” the chimney had started to pitch into the building.

“The chimney was leaning several inches inward toward the house, and the whole building was triangulating as a result,” explains mason, carpen-

## An American Original

The middle of three sons, Winslow Homer (1836–1910) was born with all the makings of a great artist. Influenced by his talented watercolorist mother and apprenticed to a lithographer, he would become a master of many media: engraving, etching, watercolor, and oil painting.

From this snug perch in Prout’s Neck, Maine, just steps away from the quicksilver pull of the ocean, America’s foremost marine and landscape artist lived and worked the last 27 years of his life, painting numerous marine masterpieces, including *Weatherbeaten* (1894), *Eight Bells* (1886), and *Coast of Maine* (1893), following a two-year immersion painting fishing villages in northeast England.

Ultimately, the small building on a spit of land jutting into the sea provided Homer a rare balance—proximity to his art source, privacy

to focus and paint, and access to the unflagging moral and financial support of his closest neighbors: his elder brother, Charles, and sister-in-law, Mattie.

“He is so tightly connected to place—the landscape and seascape outside his door,” remarks Dana Baldwin, director of education at the Portland Museum of Art. “Certainly, Homer had viewed similar scenes in England, but Prout’s Neck offered everything—indelible landscapes, community, and family.”

Often described as a recluse, Homer took a shine to the picturesque enclave, a spot he first visited when his brother honeymooned there, and where his family bought up lots and developed real estate holdings, attracting a lively seasonal population. “He lived in a bustling summertime place with eight hotels—not exactly the place for a hermit,” counters Baldwin. “Prout’s Neck was a safe harbor for him, between his forays to the tropics and the Adirondacks.”

In a letter to his brother Charles in 1895, Homer conveys his feelings about his days at the studio: “The life that I have chosen gives me my full hours of enjoyment for the balance of my life. The sun will not rise, or set, without my notice, and thanks.”



**Artist Winslow Homer created several marine masterpieces at his studio in Prout’s Neck, Maine, including *Weatherbeaten* (1894, above).**



**ABOVE:** Thanks to the leaking chimney, the original pine mantel was suffering from rot.

**TOP:** After being patched and repaired, the mantel was reinstalled in the studio's main room.

## Repairing the Mantel

The studio's chimney had leaked for years, and the large pine mantel hugging the oversized fireplace in the studio's main room had suffered the consequences—damage

and rot, and eventual separation from the wall.

"The mantel had to be removed; it was so rotted that you could see brick behind it," recalls Robert Cariddi. He used thin pry bars and chisels to remove the mantel, and a regular putty knife (sharpened to a chisel point) and hammer to cut through nails.

The mantel was then transported to his Buxton, Maine, workshop and repaired in stages. First, Cariddi carefully removed rot from the back of the mantel, treating it with an epoxy consolidator and patching it with mahogany, "to give the mantel

something to hold onto and as blocking to remount it to the wall."

Holes on the front of the mantel were patched with pine and touched up with matching finishes. Additionally, Cariddi reproduced a couple of small moldings for the flat frieze board at the front of the mantel.

Getting the restored mantel back into place was a bit of a struggle, thanks to issues caused by the chimney's undersized footing and constant exposure to moisture. "It had to be bent around the chimney, which had a bulge in it; the front face of the brick had an inch rolled out in the middle," Cariddi says. "We pressed the mantel into place and attached it with star point trim screws, placing them in strategic areas to hide them from view, but also to hold the mantel securely in place."

ter, and millwright Robert Cariddi, who lent his expertise to several aspects of the project. "It drifted in because they built this massive chimney on top of a loose rubble base," he adds. "The chimney also leaked like a sieve. So basically, we had two problems—we had to fix the base and straighten out the stack."

Repairs began with the remarkable engineering feat of lifting the monumental 8-ton chimney stack with steel supports to install a new footing, then pulling it straight and back into place, followed by repointing the mortar and reinstalling the firebox and hearth. (For more on the chimney repairs, see "Shoring Up the Chimney," page 36.)

Another obvious problem area involved the decorative Eastlake-style brackets designed by John Calvin Stevens to support the second-story piazza, which gave the artist sweeping views of the Atlantic from his upstairs painting loft. The brackets had been inadequately fastened to east- and south-facing exterior walls, where "snow and wind from this large cantilevered porch exerted very

large loads on the building," explains Whitaker. As a result, he says, "about 260 square feet [of the piazza], or nearly one half the size of the upstairs loft, began to sag."

"When we first saw the eight piazza brackets, one was totally gone and a few were in jeopardy," recalls Cariddi, who transported them to his home workshop. All bracket surfaces were allowed to dry out before being treated with polymers—except for three, which were either partially or completely reproduced.

Installing the brackets back onto the piazza demanded steel reinforcement to bolster the structure. "By the time we arrived," explains Whitaker, "vertical posts and beams had been added at the perimeter of the piazza to help support it. We substantially reinforced it with concealed steel angles in the walls. Stainless steel reinforcements also were installed to tie the original brackets back to the building."

"They were welded to bottom plates, bolted into the sill and top plate," says Cariddi. "We used stainless steel lags, and

we also put lead-coated copper pans on top of the brackets before the new decking. At the top of each bracket, a strap was fixed and installed into the second-floor joist system; we put 100 screws into each one to ensure added support."

A substantial amount of new steel also was added to the main building in the form of a new roof. "A concealed galvanized steel structure was installed on top of the original roof sheathing at the second-floor loft," Cariddi explains. "That allowed us to restore the loft to a single large open space, as it had been in Homer's time, and to install concealed utilities such as electrical, security, and fire suppression systems."

Cariddi and his son, Sebastian, also repaired existing windows and reproduced others to match originals—including an Eastlake picture window, visible in historic photos of the building, that had been replaced with a steel casement. "We made our own knives to the correct profile of the mullions and used historic salvaged glass to make the window," says Cariddi.



**ABOVE:** The team poured new concrete footings to stabilize the poorly constructed original stone foundation.

**LEFT:** The final finish is applied to the restored mantel.

## Shoring Up the Chimney

Craftsman Robert Cariddi describes the process of righting the house's massive chimney as "the scariest thing I've ever done." Following specs from the project's structural engineer, Cariddi and his team "slid one large I-beam horizontally through the firebox, which was supported by four smaller I-beams, and those sat on 50-ton jacks. A mason knocked out bricks for the holes for the steel; in a weakened structure, it was a bit scary. We had 10 men to slide the I-beams through onto the jacks."

Using the steel as a cradle and pivot point, with cabling attached to 3 tons of dunnage and a strong arm supporting it the other way, the team slowly pulled the chimney back into position over the course of a few days.

"We got to a point where we could safely excavate the stone rubble base and pour a monolithic amount of concrete, fortified with steel, into the base," Cariddi says. "On top of this footer, we built up one layer of concrete blocks, mortared between brick and blocks, and then put the hearth back in. We numbered every one of the 140 hearth bricks with blue tape to make sure they went back correctly."

Although masons cut out the old mortar on the exterior stack and repointed it, no bricks needed to be replaced. "We did put those holes through by knocking out bricks," says Cariddi, "but we put them all back."

Bricks were numbered before being removed from the chimney.

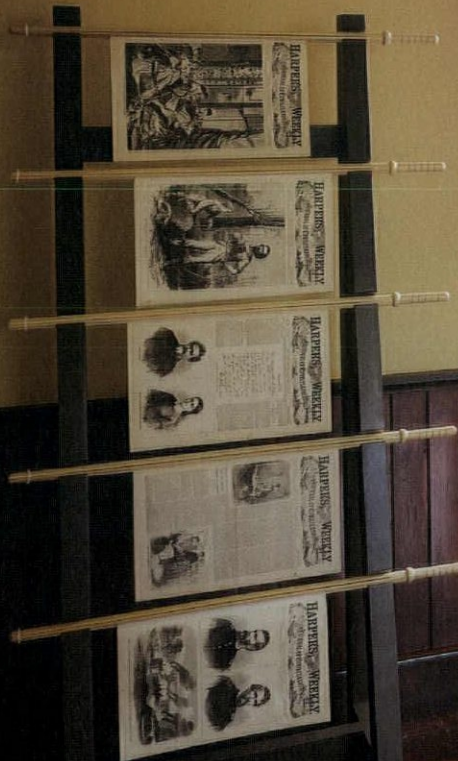
## Bringing It Back

Inside the studio, the team removed, restored, or repaired several elements, from beadboard-wainscoting to window sash, including a pane of glass the artist had etched with his name using a diamond ring. They also conserved and reinforced plaster, which was deteriorating from moisture and age; repaired, reinforced, or replaced flooring; and restored interior finishes.

Modifications made in the 1930s on the second floor—the addition of dormers and bedrooms to turn the space into an

apartment—were removed and replaced with period-specific materials to restore the floor to its original use as a painting loft. Other details added after Homer's death, such as the steel casement window on the south façade and the colonnaded entry, were likewise removed.

Beadboard, the predominant wall treatment in the studio, was in bad shape due to a combination of factors, including dry rot, corroded fasteners, and general shifting of material in the building due to age and weather. Throughout the studio, beadboard was removed, cleaned, repaired where necessary, and reinstalled. "Altogether, it took 800 hours," recalls site superintendent Geoffrey Goba. "Not only was it time-



consuming to remove and repair the beadboard, but in some instances we had to reproduce sections of it. We used a Fein oscillating tool to cut the nails; each piece was numbered and recorded as it was removed from the wall. Much of it was simply dusted off to preserve the patina and fabric, and put back. It was such a meticulous process that a shadow line made from a picture hanging over the fireplace is still there after removal, repair, and reinstallation.”

The downstairs Painting Room demanded extra special care due to wood rot and decay; Goba estimates that they reproduced 10 percent of the beadboard. “The beadboard was a hodgepodge of sizes,” he says. “In the end, we used five

different sizes to reproduce it. It was as if the original beadboard had been put together with scrap pieces or mill run boards of wood.”

After the arduous six-year process, the Winslow Homer Studio has rekindled the artist’s perfect perch—a place where America’s foremost marine and landscape painter found shelter and gathered inspiration. 🏠

*Restoration carpenter John Schnitzler learned his trade at the Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he has worked for 34 years. Journalist Laura Pope has written for several magazines, including New Hampshire Home and National Geographic Traveler.*



**ABOVE:** Before removing interior materials like beadboard and flooring (above), the team numbered individual pieces to make reinstallation easier. A pane of glass that the artist etched with his name (bottom) was carefully preserved.

**LEFT:** The Painting Room sports refurbished beadboard wainscoting; this section of the room highlights Winslow Homer’s career as an illustrator.



LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT: TRENT BELL PHOTOS; INSET: BERNARD C. MEYERS; PHOTO, OPPOSITE & TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART



# THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Vol. IV No. 4  
April 1976

## Kitchens in the Victorian Home



THE KITCHEN is the one room in the house that the old-house owner may not want to re-create as it was. The kitchen in the well-to-do Victorian home was given about as much consideration as the topic of sex at a

Victorian dinner party.

It is unusual to find a picture of the kitchen in the many books that feature period rooms. That is because most of the kitchens of the period were for the use of the servants.



# BALANCING ACT

*When an Arts & Crafts expert tries to restore her bungalow's kitchen historically and with modern conveniences, she finds it's harder than she imagined.*

STORY BY JANE POWELL ♦ PHOTOS BY EMILY HAGOPIAN

In August 2007 I ripped out my kitchen. That hadn't really been my intent, but longtime OHJ readers are aware of the dreaded Mushroom Factor—the unintended consequences that crop up on old-house projects. I only meant to get rid of the failing countertop tile, whose V-cap edging broke off every time someone leaned on it, and replace it with some cheap white tile as a temporary fix. Yeah, right. Removing the tile revealed serious rot in the plywood underlayment around the sink. Then I looked at the sink and thought, "I hate that this sink is on an angle," so I took it out, too. Then I removed the peninsula and the rest of the lower cabinets, leaving only the original kitchen dresser. Thus began my unplanned kitchen remodel.

I thought it would be easy—after all, I literally wrote the book on the subject: *Bungalow Kitchens*, which tackled the dilemma of trying to fit modern technology into a historic kitchen, making distinctions



**ABOVE:** The 1905 Jesse Matteson House.  
**OPPOSITE:** The new layout placed the vintage stove and original kitchen dresser side-by-side.

between obsessive restoration and compromise solutions. I tend to come down on the obsessive side of things, especially here at my bunga-mansion (the Jesse Matteson House in Oakland, California), since it's such an important and nearly intact historic house. On the other hand, I really didn't want the separate hot and cold faucets the sink would have had in 1905. Nor was I giving up my dishwasher or my frost-free refrigerator. When I restored

the other bungalows I'd owned, I generally compromised in the kitchens—didn't hide the dishwasher or the modern refrigerator, just made sure that the cabinets, hardware, flooring, and other details were right. But now, since I was staying in this house, I finally had a chance to do an Obsessive Restoration. That meant real conflict between historic authenticity and modern convenience—and between what I wanted and what the house required.

## Planning Conundrum

The layout was the first problem: Five doors and two sets of windows left little wall space, the chimney stuck out two feet into the room, and the original kitchen dresser was in the corner along the sink wall, making it impossible to put anything on the adjacent wall. I believe the original owners kept the icebox in the basement, because there is nowhere in the kitchen one would fit, nor do I have a service porch. That left the refrigerator

Generally painted all over in an institutional green or cream-colored enamel, they contained none of the decorative elements found in the rest of the house.

Simpler homes without servants had utilitarian kitchens that were equipped for the hard work it was to prepare food one hundred

years ago, but usually without thought to decoration.

Today's old-house owner wants a more attractive and convenient kitchen than the one that was originally there. Because of the different way food is packaged, we will also want to hide many of the cereal and cookie boxes that fill the grocery

shelves. So we need to add eye-appeal with decoration.

Probably the most important element in decorating the old kitchen is a negative—what to avoid. Under this heading comes any of the splashy vinyls. They will say "modern" and ruin the nostalgic effect.

—Carolyn Flaherty



**ABOVE:** The wall-mounted bridge faucet was procured after an exhaustive search. **RIGHT:** The modern fridge awaits a wooden front panel to make it resemble an icebox.



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positioned next to the stove, which was not optimal. I moved the fridge around, tried different layouts with tape on the floor, and asked everyone who came over for ideas. Years passed.

In the meantime, I had managed to rip out the hideous fake-brick vinyl floor tile—the kind with dirt photographically printed on the “bricks” and “mortar” so it never looked clean. Under the subfloor, I found the remains of linoleum felt—clearly linoleum had been the original covering. I picked out a Marmoleum pattern called Rembrandt Palette. (Nine colors, all earth tones, will not show dirt. That’s what I like in a floor!)

I was hoping that when I ripped out the 1970s cabinets, there would be ghosts on the beadboard showing the outline of the original sink, but there were no real clues. I finally settled on a 20" x 30" under-mount sink with a side drain. Next to that I put something I'd wanted for a long time—a 12" deep, 16" x 20" sink whose sole purpose is to hold the dish drainer below the level of the counter.

Then I went shopping for a faucet. I just wanted a nickel-plated wall-mount faucet with porcelain lever handles—

## Oops! Backsplash Tile

A friend who is a tilesetter agreed to install my backsplash at no charge. I was hoping to use subway tiles I had left from another house to save a bit of money. But once we figured out the layout and how many we needed, we discovered we were short *one* tile. Unfortunately, the tile company had gone out of business several years ago. Disappointed, I went off to the tile store to find something else.

I took one of the tiles with me because I liked the color. I related my tale of woe to the salesperson, who looked at the tile and asked, “Is that color #112?” I affirmed that it was. “Hold on,” he said, “let me go look in the back.” He returned five minutes later with six surface bullnose subway tiles in color #112!

how hard could it be? Harder than you'd think. An Internet search turned up lots of faucets, but then I discovered how picky I really am. The handles were too bulbous, too skinny, or they had some silly metal finial on the end, or I didn't like the typeface used for “hot” and “cold.” I finally picked out a Chicago faucet with an articulated spout and a soapdish. Then I lay awake trying to decide between polished nickel and satin nickel...

I had a sink, a faucet, and a linoleum pattern, but still no layout—then a fortuitous thing happened. I had written a couple of articles about sausage maker Bruce Aidells' new Greene & Greenestyle house. The architects, John Malick and Associates, were so pleased about the publicity that they made me an offer I couldn't refuse: They would design my

kitchen in exchange for a couple of articles on some other projects. When Greg Klein, who designed Aidells' house, came over to discuss the kitchen, I didn't tell him my ideas, only my parameters: All the doors and windows had to remain unaltered; I was willing to remove the chimney if necessary; the original cabinet had to stay, though it could be moved.

A few weeks later, he brought over the first set of plans, with an idea that hadn't occurred to me or anyone else: He proposed removing the chimney, shifting the stove to the left, and moving the original kitchen dresser to that side of the room, where it would just fit between the stove and the doorway to the service stairs. That allowed the fridge to fit in the corner where the original cabinet had been, in a logical place at the end of a run of

cabinets. Removing the chimney also left enough room for a table or island in the center. Layout problem solved.

## Free Range

Even before I became a kitchen expert, antique stoves kept appearing in my life, so I'd already snagged a lovely yellow and green Spark stove from the '30s. (A stove from 1905 is a bit too primitive, even for me. Plus, Spark stoves were manufactured locally.) The stove was going to need a hood, so I bought a Vent-a-Hood insert, which is the only insert that's not stainless steel—I settled for off-white. Using an insert allowed me to design a curved plaster hood above the stove.

All the wood in my kitchen was originally painted—cabinets, beadboard, and trim—as it often was in bungalow kitchens. All 10 of the other bungalows I owned had sported painted kitchen cabinets, but I always harbored a fantasy that someday when I had a keeper house, I would have beautiful fir cabinets, finished with orange shellac so they looked like they'd been dipped in molasses.

I argued with myself about this for a long time—probably the entire eight years since I bought the house. Restoration isn't supposed to be about your fantasies—it's supposed to be about what the house wants. And frankly, painting everything would have been not just the Obsessive Restoration thing to do, but also cheaper and easier. But in the end, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I ended up needing a combination of heat gunning, paint stripping,

dental tools, and sanding to get the paint off the trim and kitchen dresser.

## Light Work

For lighting, I bought four nickel-plated pendant lights—one for over the sink, two above the island, and one next to the basement door. They have ruffled Holophane shades—too twitty for my taste, but they match most of the house's original fixtures. (Apparently the ruffling actually serves some purpose in scattering the light.)

On to hardware. Luckily, a couple of pieces of the original hardware remained, so I know I need butterfly hinges, cupboard turns, and bin pulls in an antique copper finish. One can get these nearly anywhere, unless you're someone like me who insists on having matching slotted (not Phillips) screws.

Thus it is that I find myself five years into the project and still not finished. I know it will be done eventually. I know it won't be as 1905 as I might have liked. I made compromises that I might not have made if I were rolling in money. But it will be a whole lot better than what was there, and I hope that in 50 years, no one will say, "What was she thinking?" 🏠

*Old-house expert and advocate Jane Powell authored Bungalow Kitchens, and was a regular contributor to OHJ. She passed away last November, and her voice, expertise, and humor will be sorely missed. Her bunga-mansion has been purchased by owners intent on following her extensive restoration plans.*

## Oops! Cabinet Doors

The new cabinets are made of vertical-grain Douglas fir, just like the original dresser. I opted for plain face-framed cabinets with inset Shaker doors. To save money, the doors and drawer fronts were ordered from a company that builds doors—but that's where things went wrong. Normally on a frame-and-panel door, the vertical stiles run from top to bottom, and the horizontal rails fit in between. My interpretation of "rails run through stiles" was that the tenon of the rails would fit into a mortise in the stiles. The door company's interpretation (probably the correct one) was that the rails went from edge to edge, with the stiles in between. So now I have a bunch of doors that don't look right, that I can't afford to replace. I'm going to use them, even though they will annoy me on a daily basis. (The lesson here is to pay attention and make sure you understand what you're ordering. You can also take heart from knowing that even a famous kitchen book author can screw up this badly.)

## COMPROMISES

### COUNTERTOPS

I had originally planned to use 1" hex tile on the counter. But then my friend Russ called and offered me the leftover soapstone from his kitchen. They were large pieces, enough for the countertop on the sink side. But they wouldn't have used stone in 1905. It Would Be Wrong. But it was also, you know, free. I argued with myself for a month, but in the end thrift overcame compulsiveness, and I took the soapstone.

### ISLAND

I pondered what to do about the island or table that I was going to put in the middle of the kitchen. A table would be more authentic, but an island would have storage space. Then I had a random thought—it would be awesome to have something that looked like it came out of an old grocery store. Shortly thereafter, I found an oak candy counter at an antique show. It was fate.

### REFRIGERATOR

In order for the island to work, I needed a shallow fridge (24" deep), which put me in the land of expensive refrigerators. I had already rejected the idea of a reproduction icebox—I finally admitted that I actually like glass shelves, door storage, icemakers, and all the other stuff that comes inside modern refrigerators. I still wanted it to look like an icebox, though, so I designed a false wooden front.



# BURIED TREASURE

*By peeling back the layers of her Federal house, one reader began to unlock the mystery of its origin.*

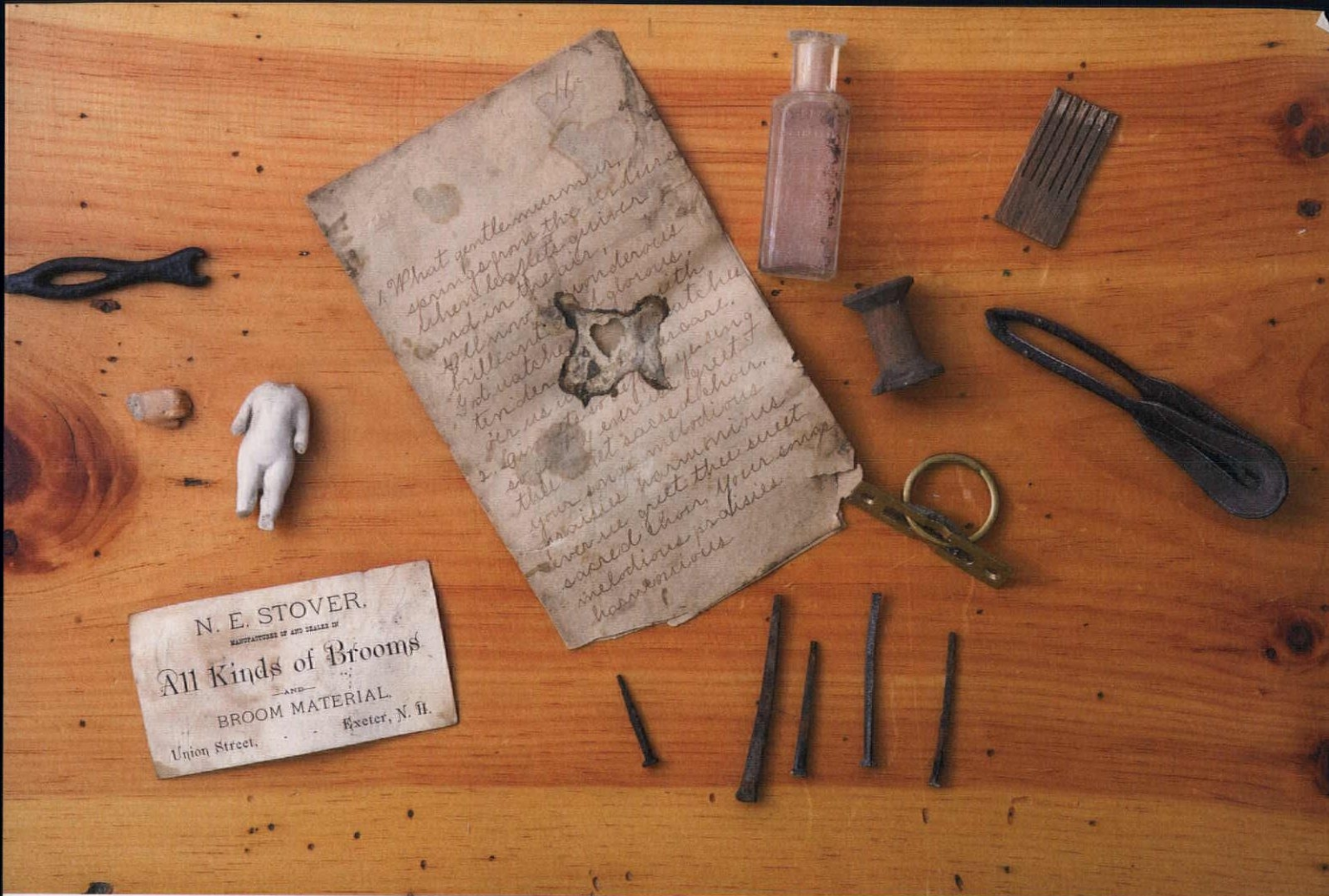
STORY BY KERRY BALDRIDGE ♦ PHOTOS BY JON CRISPIN

**I**n my early 20s, I lived in Washington, D.C., and frequented the Natural History Museum, my favorite of the Smithsonian's collection of museums along the National Mall. As luck would have it, I found myself working there in 1991 as part of a decorative painting team. Because the museum was open to the public during the day, a lot of our work was done after the museum closed. We had the run of the place, and would take coffee breaks while wandering through the darkened rooms, looking at the collections. Strangely enough, we were trusted around the priceless artifacts that were being readied for the exhibit. This may have been when I found out what anthropology was, and that I loved it.



**ABOVE:** The Federal house in Exeter, New Hampshire, was augmented with a Victorian-style porch, likely in the 1860s.

KERRY BALDRIDGE PHOTO



**ABOVE:** Artifacts uncovered in the house include owner Nathan Stover's business card, handwritten lyrics to an 1860s song called "The Birds Awakening," a variety of cut nails, and a Federal-era ring pull. **OPPOSITE:** Kerry also found this soapstone bed warmer on a beam in the basement.

After a decade, my love of anthropology and solving mysteries resurfaced, thanks to our disaster of a house, which was so structurally compromised that it sat on the market for a year before anyone was willing to take a chance on it. But when the selling agent casually inferred to me that the house may have been older than its ballpark date of 1800, I was hooked.

No one had ever researched the house's history or worried too much about its structure, as far as I could tell. Because it has been changed so much over the years with no apparent attempt to preserve its original character, I've learned much more about its history than I would have through a previous owner.

### On the Record

In tax records, our house is recorded as having been built in 1800. After living

in it for a few months, it became evident that the house is old, but there didn't seem to be any way that it was built in 1800—but it definitely seemed to have been built before 1850. While most of the house had been updated with a combination of linoleum, wall-to-wall carpet, and paneling that kept its history well-hidden, the interior of one bedroom closet had been left so completely untouched that opening its door was like looking into a time capsule. Huge hand-hewn wooden timbers revealed a house that was built before 1850, when stick-built houses were made possible by the availability of standardized dimensional lumber. In addition, the closet's walls are covered by split-board lath, which was widely used throughout the Federal period up until about 1850.

There's also the fact that the house is located on a street that didn't exist

before the late 1850s. According to an 1802 map I obtained from the Exeter Historical Society, our house would have been in the middle of Jabez Dodge's cow pasture if it were in its current location in 1802. Through the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds, I was able to easily follow the ownership back to 1858, but there it dead-ended.

On the deed dated April 16, 1858, I discovered that William C. Clark sold a piece of land to John and Maria Morse on "a new street." Aside from the fact that this deed's date didn't line up with the tax records or the physical evidence, there also wasn't a house on the lot that Morse bought. If there were, the deed would have said "a piece of land with the buildings thereon," but instead it says "a piece of land situate in said Exeter."

The conclusion might be that either



**LEFT:** Exposed beams in the dining room offer clues to the house's original configuration. **ABOVE:** Scabs are visible on some beams, which were cut to modernize the house.

Clark or Morse then built a house on the lot, but the physical evidence suggested that the house is older than 1858. I mulled over other ideas like, "It must have not been on the 1802 map because it was a barn at the time, and barns weren't always included on maps," or "It was a farmhouse on a cow path that wasn't considered important enough to be included on the map."

The house is a modest but classic hall-and-parlor Federal, with a front door flanked by sidelights and a Victorian-style porch probably added around the 1860s. I didn't imagine someone would go to the trouble of including those details on a farmhouse that wasn't worthy of being included on a map. Also, the other houses on our street are much more in line with Victorian architecture. As I learned more, I began to realize that the house might have been on the map, just in a different place. Once I realized that it could have been moved, our house started to make more sense, so I dove into the earlier deeds. What I found was a series of transactions that, when pieced together, ultimately told the story of a house that was moved in 1858.

OPPOSITE PAGE: KERRY BALDRIDGE PHOTO

## THE HOUSE'S HISTORY



Tax records state that the house was built in 1800—or was it?



The house is most likely built by Josiah Blake during this period (perhaps as a joiner's shop).



Sherburne Blake buys the property on Spring and Front streets from Josiah Blake, and likely makes renovations to the house.



In March of 1858, William C. Clark bought a parcel of land on “a new street” for \$57. On April 15, he bought a house on Spring Street (next door to his own house), and one day later, he sold the same lot he had purchased the month before.

I assume he bought the lot knowing that he would be able to buy the house and move it for the purchasers. It was easy to find the original location of our house because the deed gave an exact measurement from Clark’s house, which, thankfully, is still in its original location. He had bought our house from the estate of Sherburne Blake (who owned the property between 1823 and 1858) and moved it to the “new street” for a young couple named the Morses.

Exactly when our house was built is still a mystery, though. In 1823, Sherburne Blake bought the property at the corner of Spring and Front streets “with the buildings thereon” from Josiah Blake. But “buildings” doesn’t necessarily mean “dwellings,” so I’m still split on whether I think the house was built by Sherburne Blake in the period between 1823 and about 1830, or during Josiah Blake’s time between 1806 and 1823. Every once in a while, I stumble on a new piece of evidence that tips the scales in favor of one particular theory.

In one of the bedrooms, I took down some buckling plaster, which inadvertently revealed that an original post had been removed and plastered over using accordion lath. This places the update before the

1850s, when dimensional lath became widely available. While the time capsule closet has accordion lath as well, the posts there are intact, which suggest that the house was both built and remodeled between about 1800 and 1850. Josiah likely wouldn’t have built the house and then updated it in the short time he lived there. It seems much more likely that Sherburne did the updates between 1823 and 1847, when he died.

## Chimney Conundrum

Just as much of a mystery as *when* our house was built is *why* it was built. While the three-bay hall-and-parlor plan was a common design, it lacks one element that would have made it habitable as a dwelling: a central chimney.



**LEFT & ABOVE:** In the foyer ceiling in front of the staircase, Kerry discovered this Victorian-era wallpaper—evidence that the stairs and ceiling were likely later additions. (Further evidence on the dining room ceiling hints at the previous location of the staircase.)



William C. Clark buys the house and moves it to Union Street for John and Maria Morse.



John remarries and sells the house to Nathan and Everlin Stover. Most of the artifacts found in the house are from this era.



Nathan Stover sells the house in 1916; it remains in the same family for four generations.



In 2009, Kerry and Scott Baldridge buy the house and begin restoring it.

1916-2009

2009-Present *The Baldridges* PRESENT



**ABOVE:** Inside this closet, Kerry discovered layer upon layer of wallpaper, including a pomegranate pattern underneath the trim (left) and a cream-and-white acanthus leaf pattern hidden beneath several layers of plaster (right).

I measured and drew the underside of the house's frame to better understand what its basic construction had to tell me. In doing this, I noticed that the middle section (or bent) of the house is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  wider than the outer two bents, which could indicate that it was built to accommodate a center chimney. But the roof structure, which is often an easy way to see evidence of a chimney, doesn't have any of the hallmark chimney framing, nor does the lath on the attic floor. However, a smaller central chimney could have been snaked through the roof framing without requiring additional chimney supports, and the attic lath appears to have been added during a later renovation.

While looking for information on central chimney sizes, I came across this passage

in James Garvin's book *A Building History of Northern New England*: "One will occasionally encounter a house whose frame consists of a series of evenly spaced bents, with no sign of accommodation at the center for a chimney or entry. This type of frame often proves to have started its existence as a warehouse or shop... Many such utilitarian structures were eventually converted to dwellings in the old coastal cities of New England, and deeper investigation of such an atypical house will often reveal that it began as a commercial structure."

This bit of information led me to theorize that the house had started out as a joiner's shop for the original owner, Josiah Blake (a joiner), and was converted to a dwelling by Sherburne Blake.

## Layers of History

As we update the house, new evidence of its layered history is constantly revealing itself—we've found several types of early nails, boarded-up windows and doors, and old thresholds under newer walls. We've also found at least a dozen different wallpapers predating the 1960s.

When we opened up a part of the wall adjacent to the foyer and were able to see inside the ceiling, we discovered that it had been papered with what looks like Victorian-era wallpaper. This discovery, along with other elements like dimensional lath and circular saw marks, revealed that the stairs and foyer ceiling were probably added later. It's easy to imagine that older wood was reused here, which could explain the presence of wallpaper, but I don't understand why the paper was wrapped down over the old timber. Could it mean that the inside of the ceiling here was once exposed and wallpapered?

My favorite wallpaper—a pomegranate pattern—was hidden behind a piece of trim inside a closet in the old kitchen ell. The trim was clearly added after the wall was papered, and the wall above it had been papered and painted over several times. When I pulled down some crumbling plaster inside the closet, I found two additional walls underneath. Each was papered with one or two layers of wallpaper, allowing me to see a regression of wallpaper styles and technology going back to the early to mid-19th century. The innermost wall is composed of tongue-and-groove boards decorated with a cream-and-white acanthus leaf paper.

When we started renovating the bathroom adjacent to the wallpapered closet, we removed the drywall and found that the tongue-and-groove wall I had uncovered in the closet continued into this room, which was likely a pantry off of the kitchen. In this room, there were a total of six layers of paper. I haven't researched the wallpaper yet, but I'm hoping it will reveal something about the age of the ell.

We also uncovered a time capsule of flooring when we removed the carpet





**LEFT & ABOVE:** In the attic above the kitchen ell are two previous roofs. The first (top) is fully intact and appears to date to the 1850s, while the shallower framing inside it (bottom) is likely pre-1820s.



in the kitchen ell. Under the carpet was linoleum painted red around the edges. While the linoleum seems fairly new (maybe 1960s), painting floors around the edges seems like an earlier trend. Maybe painting around the edges and then throwing a rug down was a cheaper way to give the room a makeover than laying new linoleum? The next layer was a 1928 *Boston Globe* (which included an ad touting lead paint as “the secret for saving your house”), probably to even out the floor or add padding. Next was an older linoleum pattern printed with birds, followed by a 1906 *Boston Globe*.

The last layer was a gold fabric with maroon filigree. It wasn't bound or finished on the edges, and it covered the entire floor—I'm guessing it may have provided a nice touch to a modest Victorian-era parlor. The pine floors underneath had been painted gray with lead paint; we had them professionally restored.

By far the most bizarre discovery in the house was a fully intact, circa-1860 roof underneath the kitchen ell. When we were preparing to have the house insulated, I went into the attic for the first

time. Entering from the second-floor addition, which was added above the kitchen ell in the first half of the 20th century, I could see the back of the main house's roof, which was left frozen in time. The wooden shingles are still on it, and the two chimneys, one on each side, remain there inside the addition.


It gets better. This is the turducken of roofs. When you go into a hole in the old roof, you see an even older roof. It wasn't until recently that we came to realize what we were looking at—because the pitch is so low, it seemed much more like some sort of structural support for the common rafter roof above it. What I've come to learn is that this is the original hand-hewn and -scribed roof frame of the main house. The 1850s common rafter roof above it—built with dimensional, mill-sawn lumber—has been hiding and protecting this older one for 150 years and counting. The more I learn about timber frame construction, the more it reveals to me.

Before dimensional lumber became available, carpenters only had irregular logs to work with for framing, which required custom-fitting each mortise-

and-tenon joint. Their hand-scribing is evident by the Roman numeral-like marks carved onto both members of a custom-scribed pair. When each scribed pair was assembled, the members with correlating marks were pegged together. When it was discovered that mortise-and-tenon joints could be cut with patterns to create uniform standards at the joints, the need for scribing each joint was eliminated. This changeover to the “square rule” of framing occurred during the 1820s and '30s, which indicates that our house was likely built before that time.

Trying to piece together the origins of an old house requires turning the clues and facts this way and that until a picture emerges. My handful of working theories comes in and out of focus with each new piece of information. I've learned a lot, but I know that my house has much more to tell, as long as I listen closely. 🏠

Want to know more about Kerry's discoveries? Head online to get a link to her blog about her house research.

OLDHOUSEonline 

A photograph of a two-story white house with a red brick path leading to the front door. The house has white horizontal siding, black shutters, and a white arched doorway with a pediment. The path is flanked by yellow and purple flowers.

# Rescuing PANEL DOORS

*The anatomy of panel doors makes repairs and restoration easy—a reader shows us how.*

By A.R. BOWES



**OPPOSITE:** Six-panel doors are common on Federal, Georgian, and Colonial Revival houses, such as this 1938 Colonial Revival on Cape Cod. **LEFT:** Repairs often require disassembling and reassembling the door.

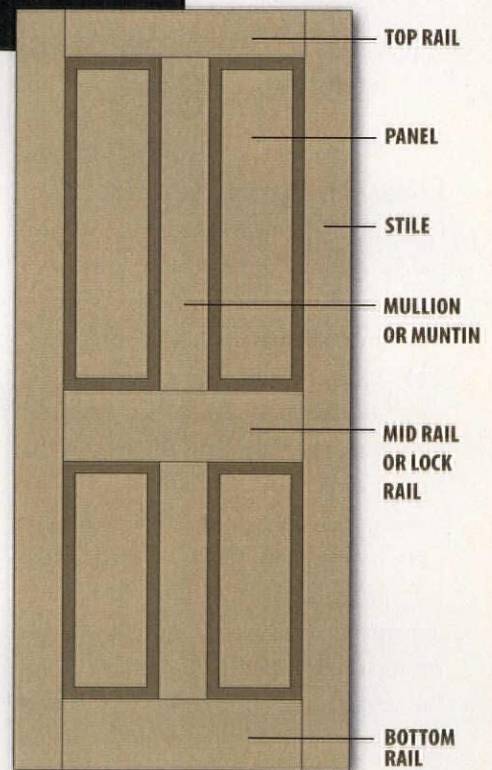
After some 200 years of “hard knocks” and spotty maintenance in the harsh climate of coastal Maine, our Federal-period home’s frame-and-panel doors exhibited a range of problems—from gaps and loose joints to outright rot. Repairing them without compromising their integrity required patience and an understanding of their mortise-and-tenon joinery.

Frame-and-panel (or rail-and-stile) doors became popular in the early 1700s due, at least in part, to the design’s clever solution for dealing with dimensional wood changes caused by fluctuating temperature and humidity. Because wood expands more across the grain than with it, the frame design minimizes the effect of expansion and contraction upon the door’s overall dimensions. The grain runs lengthwise in each frame member, which means that the frame contributes little to the door’s overall expansion, while the panels float freely in grooves, allowing them to expand and contract as necessary without distorting the door or altering its dimensions.

The design’s success also hinged on

the fine, durable joinery used—most commonly mortise-and-tenon joints with wedges to tighten the tenons in their mortises. Wood pegs often were incorporated, too, driven through slightly offset holes to draw the joint tightly together and secure it in what’s called a drawbored joint.

Despite their deceptively simple appearance, frame-and-panel doors are fairly complex. Each of our doors has 56 separate parts, counting the various pegs and wedges that secure joints, and all of them must function in concert with one another. Being handmade, these parts are rarely interchangeable, even within the same door. Always number parts when taking apart a door to avoid problems later.



### Frame-and-Panel Door Parts

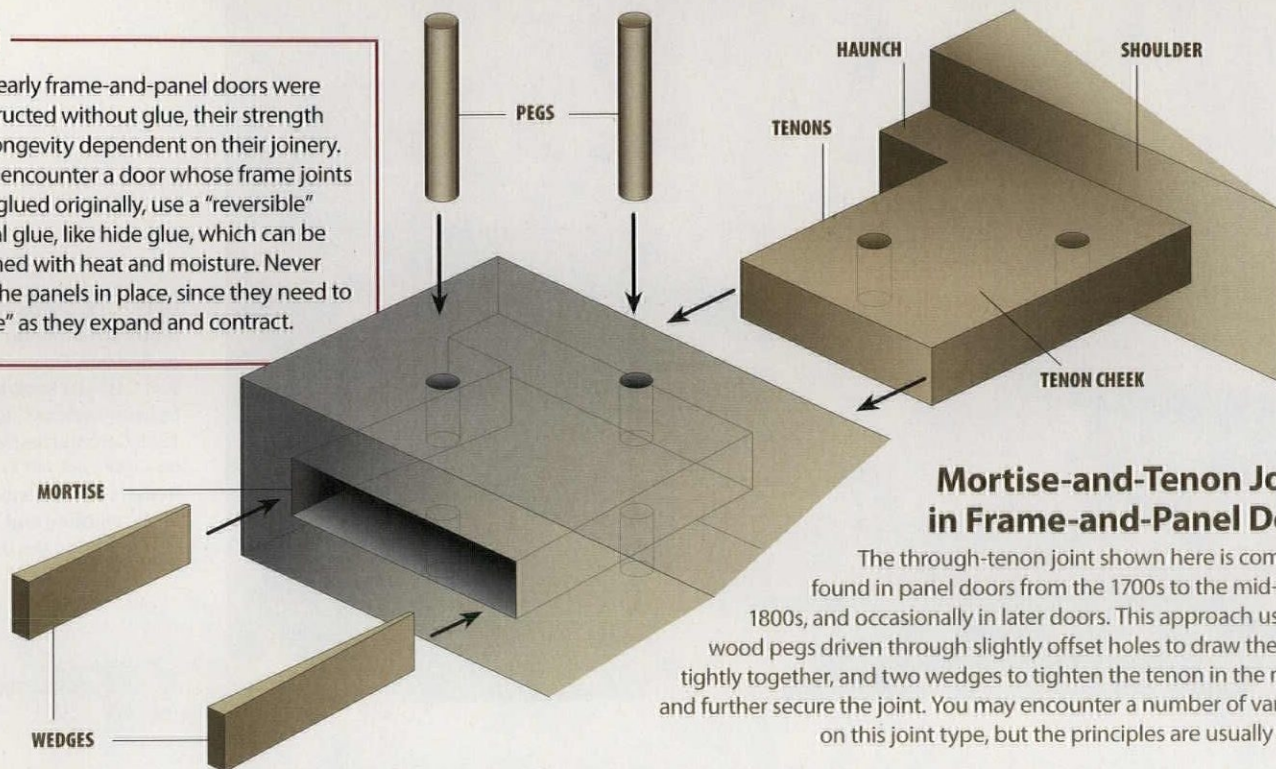
Early frame-and-panel doors usually were constructed without glue. Panels were never glued and were designed to “float” in a frame formed by the rails, stiles, and mullions, which allowed them to expand and contract without distorting the door or cracking.

Most old doors were finished with lead paint. Even after being stripped, a door could harbor remnants of lead paint, so it’s essential to always follow lead-safe work practices. For more information, see [epa.gov/lead](http://epa.gov/lead).



## tip

Most early frame-and-panel doors were constructed without glue, their strength and longevity dependent on their joinery. If you encounter a door whose frame joints were glued originally, use a "reversible" animal glue, like hide glue, which can be softened with heat and moisture. Never glue the panels in place, since they need to "move" as they expand and contract.



## Mortise-and-Tenon Joints in Frame-and-Panel Doors

The through-tenon joint shown here is commonly found in panel doors from the 1700s to the mid- to late 1800s, and occasionally in later doors. This approach uses two wood pegs driven through slightly offset holes to draw the pieces tightly together, and two wedges to tighten the tenon in the mortise and further secure the joint. You may encounter a number of variations on this joint type, but the principles are usually similar.

## Disassembly & Repair

Loose joints, cracks, rotted areas, and rodent damage often require partial or complete disassembly in order to access the damaged areas and fix the problems. This typically involves removing the pegs and tenon wedges, then carefully separating the stiles and the rest of the components.

Pegs usually can be driven out with a pin punch. If the peg is tapered, strike it from the small end to avoid damaging surrounding wood, and always use a punch that's smaller in diameter than the peg. If a peg is very stubborn, it may have been glued. Heat and moisture can

soften animal glue, while modern glue might require drilling.

Number the old wedges before removing them in case they are reusable, since each one is nearly always unique. If you can't get a wedge out with small needle-nose pliers or a thin blade, try this technique: Drill a small hole in the wedge, put a dab of glue on a small machine screw (using a wood screw may expand the wedge, making it harder to remove), and slide it into the hole. After the glue sets, pry the wedge out with a claw hammer or nail puller.

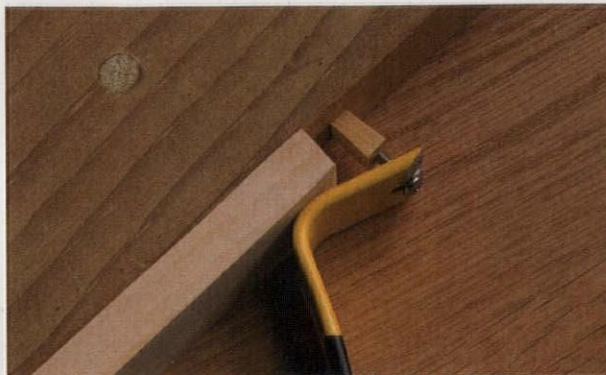
After removing any pegs and wedges, place a softwood block (shaped to avoid

damaging the finished edge of the stile) against the inside of the stile, and gently tap it to push the stile off the tenons. If the stile seems stubborn, check for anything you might have missed, like glue or brads that may have been used in an attempt to tighten up the door.

After you remove the stiles, the panels, rails, and mullions should separate without much effort, as long as they weren't glued in place. If pieces are stuck together with paint, you can use a blade

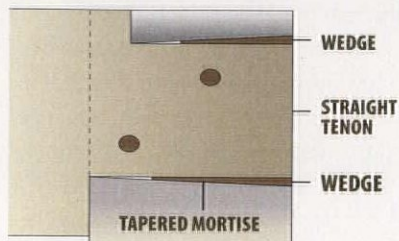
**RIGHT:** Inserting a screw into a wedge offers leverage for extracting stubborn non-glued tenon wedges with a nail puller. This method also can be used to remove blind dowels or pegs that can't be driven out.

**FAR RIGHT:** Use a pin punch with a slightly smaller diameter to drive out pegs.

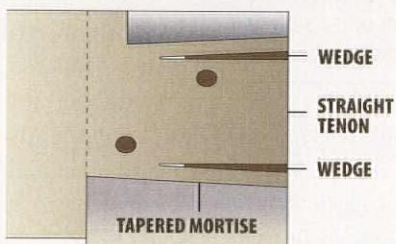


## Types of Joints

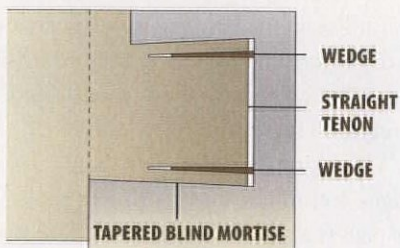
Through-tenon joints were commonly used to join the frame components of early frame-and-panel doors, and are still used today in the manufacture of traditional or reproduction doors. Here are a few variations of the standard through-tenon joint that you're likely to encounter.



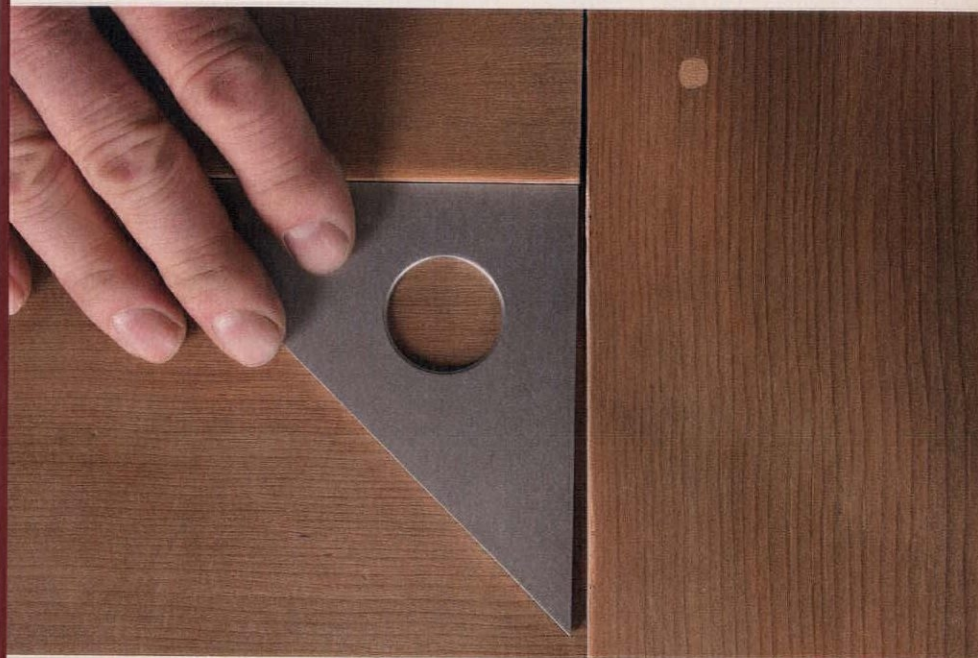
This wedged through-tenon drawbored joint has a straight tenon and a tapered mortise. Wedges are used to tighten the tenon in the mortise.



This wedged through-tenon drawbored joint has the wedges driven into kerfs in the tenon, spreading the tenon into a dovetail shape to fill the tapered mortise. This is a solid joint that almost always requires removing the wedges before disassembly, even if the joint is loose.



A "blind fox-wedged" or "stopped fox-wedged" tenon joint typically has a tapered mortise and a straight tenon with two kerfs cut into it for wedges. As the tenon is driven into the mortise, the wedges are pushed into the kerfs, spreading the tenon into a dovetail to fill the mortise and lock it in place. These joints may help protect a tenon's end-grain from moisture, but can be very difficult to disassemble.



## common PROBLEMS

### Problem: Gaps & Loose Joints

Over time, shrinkage in door components typically causes small gaps to appear in the joints. Some shrinkage is part of a door's natural aging process as it "settles in," and a narrow visible joint gap on the face of the door doesn't always mean that a joint is significantly loose. If a door isn't sagging or wobbly, the joints may still be reasonably tight or just slightly loose, in which case a simple task like tightening the tenon wedges often can keep the joints secure for years to come.



**ABOVE:** Tenon wedges often can be tapped in further or replaced with larger wedges to tighten joints. **TOP:** This door is out of square due to loose joints.

### Solution: Tightening Joints with Wedges

For doors that are still reasonably tight, or just beginning to loosen, try the following: Square up the door if necessary, and clamp the stiles against the rails with bar clamps under light pressure, then gently tap in the tenon wedges to tighten the tenons in their mortises, being careful not to crush the fibers in the tenons. (Note: Sometimes a joint might not close up completely, depending on its design and wood shrinkage factors.)

It's often possible to tighten a blind fox-wedged joint by installing

a screw through the outside edge of the stile and into the tenon. When the screw is tightened, it should push the tenon back into the mortise and close or reduce the visible joint gap. (This approach, while not perfect, may be adequate.) The pilot hole, shank hole, and countersink drill sizes must be correct—screw manufacturers publish tables that can help determine the correct drill sizes based on the size and type of screw and the wood type (hardwood or softwood).

# common PROBLEMS

## Problem: Wood Damage

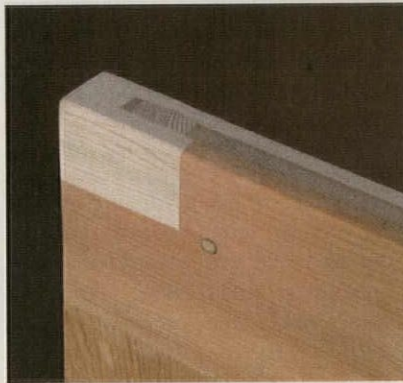
Rot is often caused by water collecting at the bottom of panels in rail and mullion grooves. Other rot-prone areas are the exposed ends of door components, since end-grain cuts absorb water more quickly than surfaces parallel to the grain. Priming end-grain areas before reassembly is a good idea, especially for exterior doors.

## Solution: Repair or Replacement

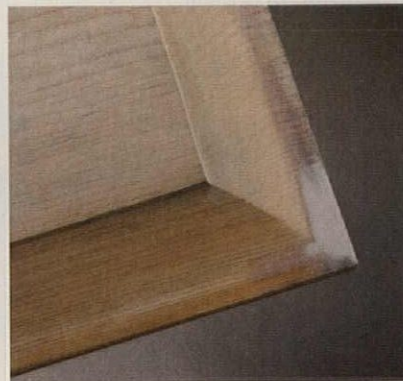
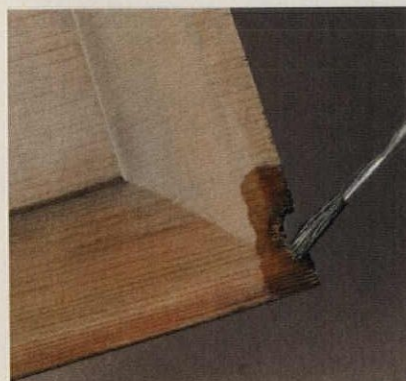
Wood replacement is my first choice when the damage involves a joint or threatens a door's structural integrity. (Depending on the location and extent of wood damage, you may or may not have to disassemble the door to carry out a repair.) I may replace an entire component, such as a rail or stile, or

splice in a new section of a component using a strong splice joint (such as a scarf or half lap), which also can be doweled if desired.

For damage that's less likely to affect the door's structural strength, I may simply replace the damaged area with a Dutchman patch (see [oldhouseonline.com/how-to-make-a-dutchman-patch](http://oldhouseonline.com/how-to-make-a-dutchman-patch)). If the door will be painted, there are more options: If decay is confined to a small, non-structural area, you can treat it with a wood consolidant, such as a two-part penetrating epoxy, then use a bit of epoxy or polyester filler to bring the surface back flush. If the door is going to receive a translucent finish rather than paint, fillers (even a stainable filler that matches the color of the surrounding wood) will almost always show to varying degrees.



Damage to the lower corner and joint of this door (left) was repaired with patched-in new wood (right). This door will be painted, so the color of the replacement wood is not critical.



In this case, a small rotted spot (left) was consolidated with multiple applications of slow-setting liquid epoxy, and filler was added to replace the missing wood (right).

to clean some of the paint out of the joint, being careful not to damage the edges of the wood. Always number the panels before removing them.

Once you've made the necessary repairs depending on your issue (see the "Common Problems" sidebars), reassembling a panel door basically involves reversing the disassembly steps, but there are a few other things to consider. Before driving in any pegs or wedges, do a preliminary assembly of all of the major

## tip

If a door is going to be finished with an opaque stain or paint, pre-painting the panels will help prevent lines from showing at the edges of the panels if the panels shrink.

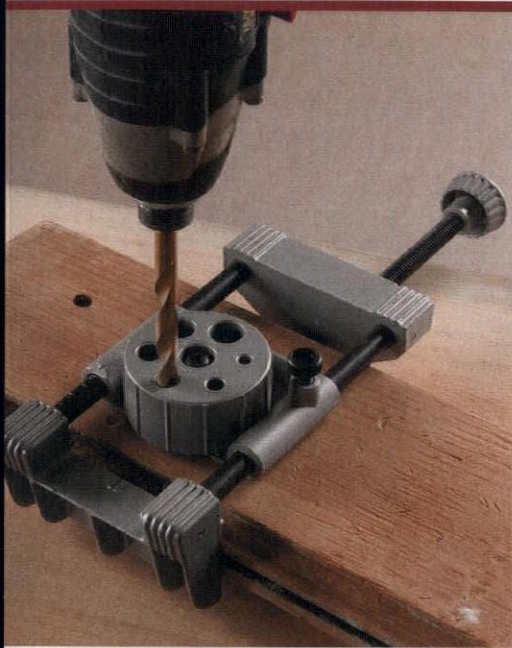
parts, holding them together with clamps or large rubber bands (the kind that movers use) or by gently inserting tapered

drawbore pins in the peg holes. (These long, slightly tapered steel pins are used to align and temporarily lock together door parts to allow their fit to be checked.)

Look for places where the fit is too tight or too loose, and whether any joints are out of square, and fix any issues before the final assembly. Remember that with any handmade door, there's a good chance that when some joints are square, others might not be. I always aim for the best compromise in overall squareness, while bearing in mind that the door bottom and/or top might have been trimmed at an angle that will need correction later.

Then prepare any new pegs and wedges you might need. I like to make new pegs from dowel stock. Some restorers start with a large-diameter dowel rod or square stock, then whittle it down to be just slightly larger in diameter than the peg hole, leaving some distinct facets on the peg to provide a better grip. You also can use a dowel plate to make the pegs.

Cut the pegs about an inch longer than the thickness of the door, and taper



## common PROBLEMS

### **Problem:** Loose Drawbored Joint

Shrinkage, poor maintenance, or abuse can distort the holes and pegs that draw the parts of a drawbored mortise-and-tenon joint tightly together, resulting in a very loose joint. Repairing loose joints requires care, but it's not difficult.

### **Solution:** Fill and Re-Drill Peg Holes

Remove the stile, and drill the existing peg holes to a slightly larger size—just enough to clean them up—using a drill press or doweling jig to keep the holes perpendicular.

Next, fill the existing peg holes in the tenon by gluing in wood dowels and trimming them or using an epoxy wood filler. Then, temporarily reinstall the stile on the rails without pegs, clamping it in place with the joints tight and square, and mark the position of the stile's mortise peg holes on the tenon with a sharp pencil. (Alternately, you can use a brad-point bit the same size as the

peg hole to mark the centers.)

Finally, remove the stile and drill the rail's tenon holes with a slight offset of about  $\frac{3}{64}$ " to  $\frac{1}{16}$ " closer to the shoulder of the tenon from the marked stile hole locations. If working with all-hardwood joints, you should reduce this offset slightly (harder woods generally aren't as compressible as softwoods).

**ABOVE, FROM LEFT:** To fix a loose drawbored joint, drill peg holes to a slightly larger size using a doweling jig. Then temporarily reinstall the stile to mark the position of peg holes on the tenon. When drilling holes in the tenon, offset them a bit closer to the shoulder to draw the joint together tightly.

them smoothly for at least  $\frac{1}{4}$ " at one end to make them easier to drive in and to reduce the chance of splintering. (You can further reduce splintering by placing a piece of scrap wood with a hole drilled in it directly under the mortise hole; the hole in the scrap wood helps reduce tear-out as the dowel is driven in.)


New tenon wedges should match the angles of the originals, but cut them about

an inch longer and trim about a half inch from the sharp end so they won't bottom out when driven in.

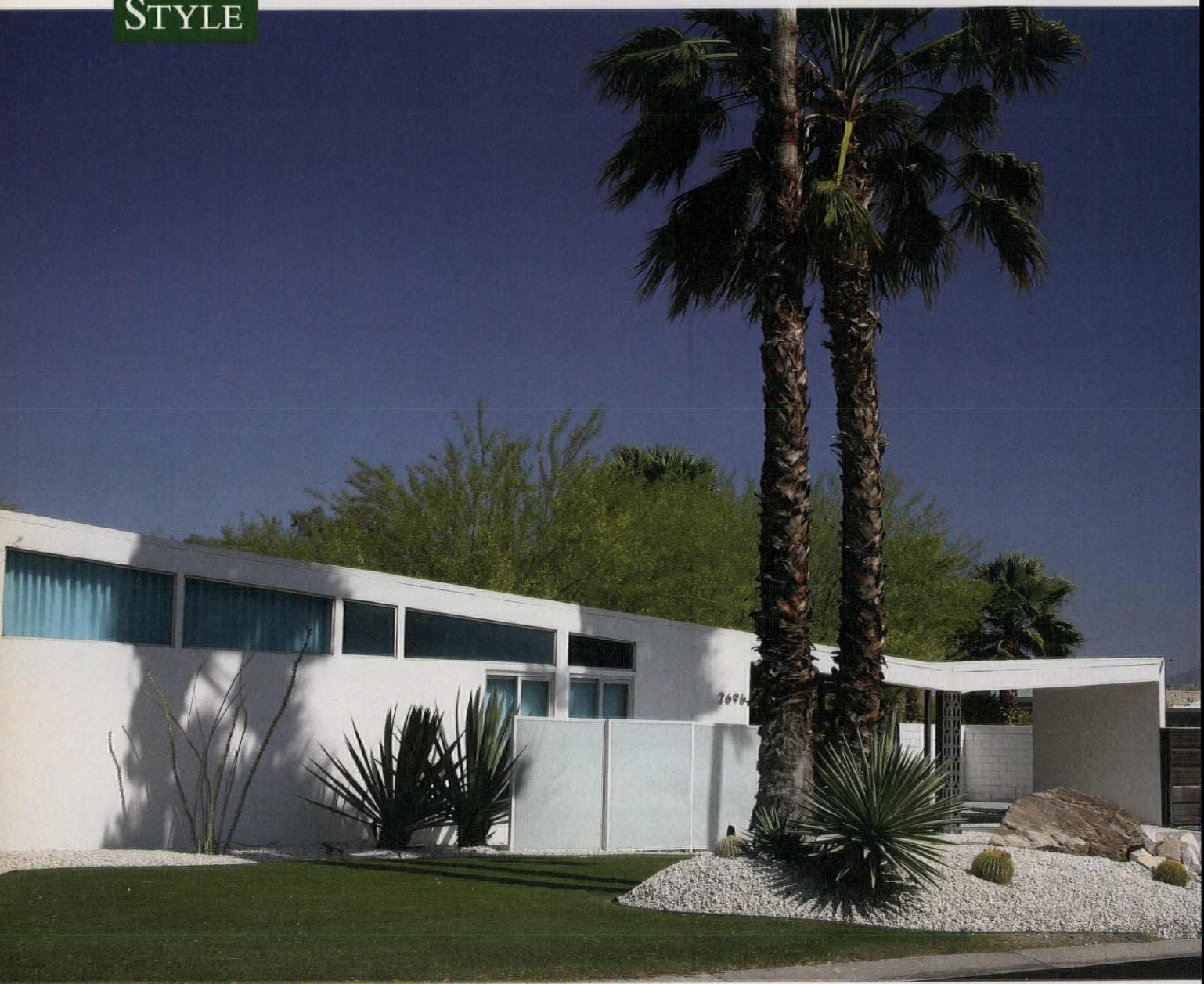
Don't drive the tenon wedges in too tightly, as this can cause damage. They should be just tight enough to hold the joint firmly without crushing the tenon. After all of the pegs and wedges are installed, trim them flush with the surface using a flush-cutting trim saw. 🛠️

*Longtime OHJ reader A.R. Bowes is putting his interest in architectural history and woodworking to use restoring a Federal-period Cape in Maine with help from his wife, Rebecca.*

Log on to get a step-by-step process for repairing a panel that's been knocked out.

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STYLE



# MODERN

*The mid-century houses of Palm Springs, California, live large.*



**OPPOSITE:** Bold, sweeping butterfly roofs were used in the 1959 Racquet Club Road Estates, designed by William Krisel.

**BELOW:** Simple modernist forms define this Palm Springs house by Donald Wexler in El Rancho Vista Estates.



# GIANTS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

The projecting hooded roof helps to shield the windows from harsh sun, and the sparse sand-and-gravel yard fits the surroundings of this El Rancho Vista Estates house by Donald Wexler.

**OPPOSITE:** Several dramatic A-frame homes, called "Swiss Miss" houses, are in Las Palmas Estates.



Two hours east of Los Angeles, the Coachella Valley town of Palm Springs has a star-studded past. Ever since Hollywood discovered it in the 1920s, it's been a weekend retreat for some of filmdom's brightest lights. While the luster of this desert hotspot dimmed a bit after its heyday in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s—when a galaxy of big-name movie stars like Loretta Young, Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball, and Desi Arnaz retreated there—Palm Springs never entirely lost its sizzle. Nowadays it's as renowned for its fabulous mid-20th-century architecture as it is for its famous residents. Look beyond the big estates, and you'll find a huge and stellar collection of modernist houses, big and not so big, tucked into its many 1950s and '60s subdivisions.

After World War II, modernism quickly displaced the elaborate Mediterranean and Spanish Revival mansions Palm Springs celebrities had previously favored. Built of glass, steel, decorative cement block, and native stone, and

provided with air-conditioning and abundant water from the large local springs, these homes—which are often described as Desert Modern—were designed to welcome the white-hot days and chilly nights of their arid surroundings.

In 1946, Richard Neutra, a powerful player in the International Style movement who came to the U.S. in the 1920s, produced a starkly beautiful desert retreat for Pittsburgh's Edgar J. Kaufman family (for whom Frank Lloyd Wright had earlier designed Fallingwater—a very different modern masterpiece in western Pennsylvania). Flat-roofed and glass-walled, the Kaufmans' house glowed like a shooting star in the dark desert nights—though its luminosity was seen for the most part only by the owners and their guests at the large, private estate.

Other affluent weekenders and snowbirds also were attracted to the desert oasis, building custom-designed homes with the aid of less famous architects. Frank Sinatra, for instance, asked Palm



## When to Go

Modernism Week, an annual February celebration of Palm Springs' enduring love affair with the modern house, is a great time to visit the town. Guided tours are available, though there's no guarantee you'll meet a movie star or a billionaire. If you're browsing on your own any time of year, you'll still find a heap of mid-century magic here. Pick up a brochure at the Palm Springs Visitors Center, located in the spectacular former Tramway Gas Station at the entrance to town. Designed by Albert Frey, the forward-thrusting, spear-like cantilevered roof of this 1963 roadside commercial icon is hard to miss.

Springs architect E. Stewart Williams for a glamorous getaway home where he could cut loose with his celebrity buddies (including fellow Rat Pack members Sammy Davis, Jr. and Peter Lawford). He figured a Hollywood-style Colonial Revival mansion would be just the ticket. A few deft strokes of the architect's pencil, however, instead focused Sinatra's sights on a Desert Modern dream of glass-walled splendor.

### Everyday Icons

Not all Desert Modern houses were custom-built for wealthy patrons. In fact, the overwhelming majority were subdivision houses, erected in great numbers for middle-class families as either weekend or

year-round homes. Yet they were definitely distinctive. Spearheaded by developers such as the Alexander brothers (George and Bob), Palm Springs' postwar building boom produced subdivisions containing thousands of homes for year-round residents. Though somewhat less numerous—and usually a good bit glitzier—they had an appeal akin to the myriad Soft Modern homes designed by architects such as Anschen and Allen and erected by the consummate merchant-builder Joseph Eichler in Southern California and the Bay Area.

A bevy of architects trained in the modern idiom flocked to Palm Springs to design homes for a growing population of well-educated middle-income buyers, as

well as for movie folks. Leaving behind the popular ranch house, stuffy Colonial Revival, and severe International Style alike, Palm Springs developments soon became testing grounds for the viability of a special brand of California modernism. They were often showy, even flamboyant in design, with open floor plans and dynamic forms. Yet they

The 1946 Kaufman House by architect Richard Neutra was commissioned by the Pittsburgh family best known for another house: Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.

**BELOW, FROM LEFT:** Architect Donald Wexler is noted for a group of 1961 steel houses built by the Alexander Company. House façades are frequently shielded from the sun by distinctive open-work cement-block screen walls.



always managed to keep in mind the needs of their target market—the child-centered, baby-boom-producing, middle-class postwar family. Despite their modest size—1,600 square feet was common—and their similar interior layouts, they were far from being cookie-cutter tract homes. Varied rooflines and other exterior design features combined with thoughtful siting, well-placed courtyards, atriums, swimming pools, walled gardens, and, of course, garages and carports to expand both perceived and actual living space.

Such visual sleight-of-hand also managed to make every house seem unique without adding to the cost. Natural light flooded into open living areas through sun-blocking and privacy-preserving screen walls of decorative pierced-concrete block. Extremely

deep roof overhangs on flat, butterfly, and low front-gable roofs also shielded the glass walls from the scorching sun. These features and the extensive use of cement block, both pierced and solid, define the Palm Springs look.

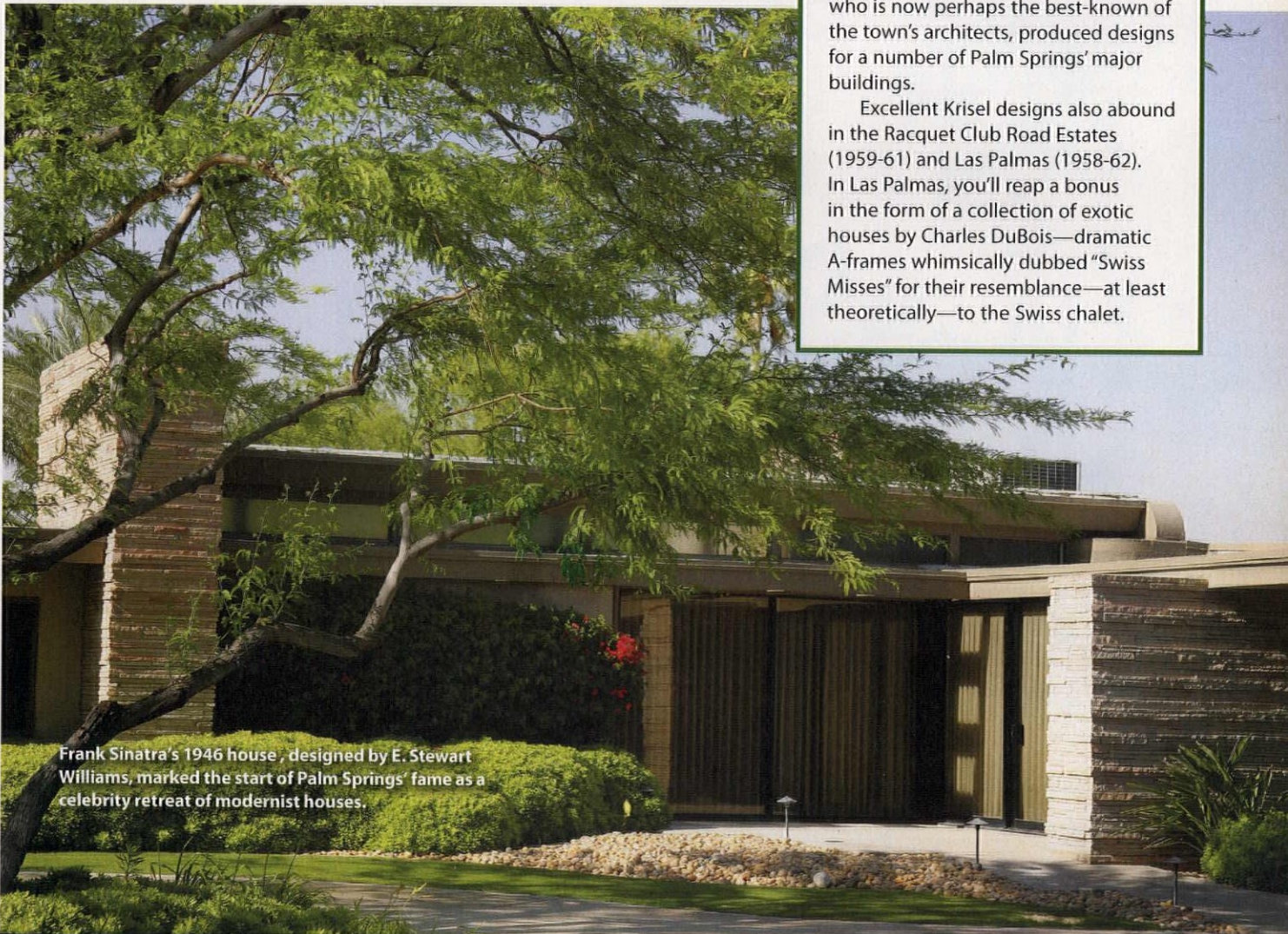
You may wonder why—with a few notable exceptions—these talented architects and builders never became household names outside their Southern California home turf. Maybe it's because once they found their niche, they never saw a compelling reason to leave—in fact, some of the best houses were intended as the architects' own homes. Whatever anonymity Palm Springs builders once enjoyed, it is rapidly disappearing now, as modernism enthusiasts restore, rehabilitate, and celebrate their town's remarkable mid-20th-century architectural heritage. 🏡

## Architects to the Stars

Important Palm Springs architects included Albert Frey (1903-1998), a Swiss-born modernist who studied with Le Corbusier; William Krisel, the Alexander brothers' designer of choice; and Donald Wexler. Houses by Krisel and Wexler today command cult-like reverence from modernism fans.

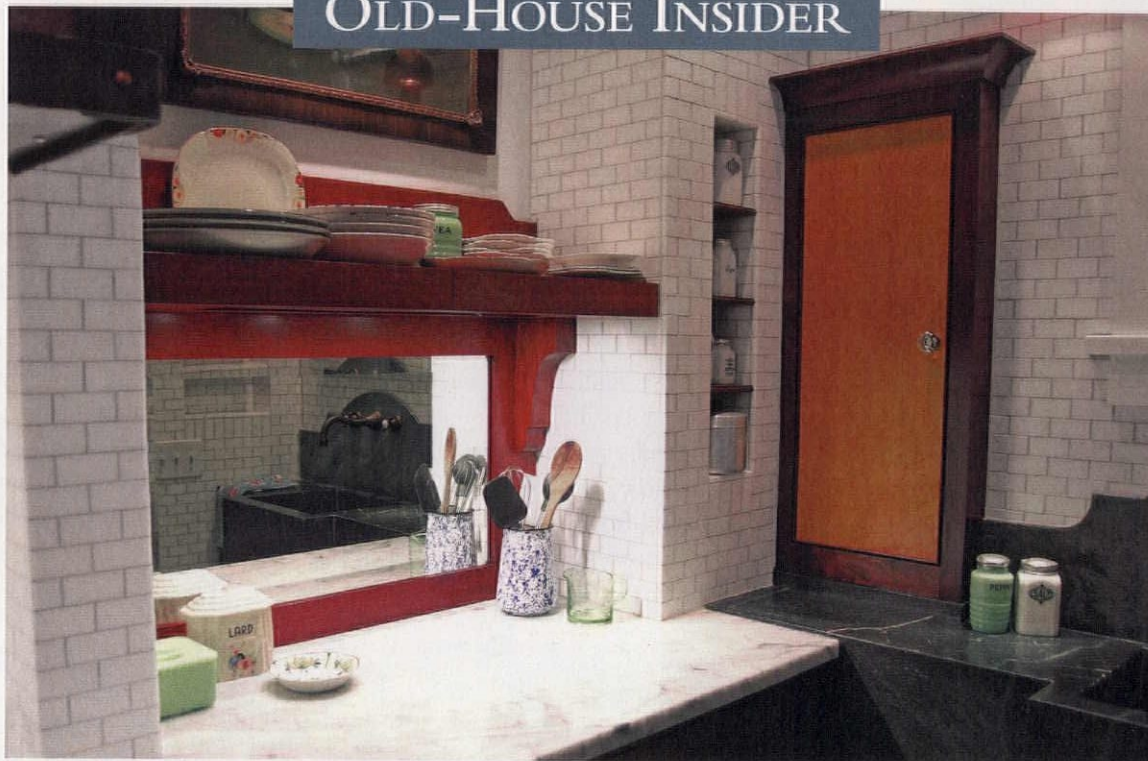
Among the major examples of Wexler's houses for Alexander are Rancho Vista (1960) and Royal Hawaiian Estates (1961), which was listed as the city's first residential historic district. He was commissioned by U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel to design 38 all-steel, prefabricated houses (of which only seven were actually built). Like the better-known Lustron houses, they were part of the postwar push toward industrialized building methods. The houses featured cantilevered overhangs for shade and open floor plans for easy circulation of air and occupants. In addition to his residential work, Wexler, who is now perhaps the best-known of the town's architects, produced designs for a number of Palm Springs' major buildings.

Excellent Krisel designs also abound in the Racquet Club Road Estates (1959-61) and Las Palmas (1958-62). In Las Palmas, you'll reap a bonus in the form of a collection of exotic houses by Charles DuBois—dramatic A-frames whimsically dubbed "Swiss Misses" for their resemblance—at least theoretically—to the Swiss chalet.



Frank Sinatra's 1946 house, designed by E. Stewart Williams, marked the start of Palm Springs' fame as a celebrity retreat of modernist houses.





# MIX & MATCH

*Inspired by family memories, a Chicago homeowner combined several period treatments for a kitchen that appears to have evolved over time.*

STORY BY CLARE M. ALEXANDER ♦ PHOTOS BY THOM GREENE

The kitchen was supposed to have been the first item on Doug Taylor's to-do list after he moved into his 1919 Foursquare in Chicago's Edgewater Glen neighborhood. He still remembers rounding the corner from the dining room and coming face-to-face with the 1950s-era remodel on his first tour of the largely untouched house. "I was like, 'Oh my God, this is the worst thing ever,'" he laughs. Not only had part of the space been siphoned off to create a powder room, making the remaining area cramped, but it was

crowded with out-of-date appliances and nondescript white cabinets.

But as other projects took priority (namely, upgrading the HVAC system and overhauling a second-floor bathroom), the kitchen redo was put on the back burner. For more than a decade, Doug puzzled over what to do with the space—he knew it needed to be expanded, but he was unwilling to give up the convenience of a first-floor powder room. He also didn't want to touch the service porch and pantry on

**OPPOSITE & ABOVE:** Inside the cooking nook, the custom-made sideboard was based on an old flea-market find that Doug had passed on to his sister. "Everything that was wrong with it we fixed in the new version," he says.

the back of the kitchen, which were still in original condition. "Most people probably would have gutted all that," he says, "but I didn't want to get rid of it."

Finally, he hit upon the solution: Realizing that he had no real use for the vestibule leading from the front porch to the foyer, he decided to relocate the powder room there, freeing up the conscripted powder-room space to be returned to the kitchen. He took the idea to neighbor Rick Proppe, principal interior designer at Greene & Proppe Design, who pronounced it doable. Together, they embarked upon the year-long task of returning the kitchen to its early 20th-century glory.

## Eclectic Company

Because he'd had so long to ruminate on his vision for the kitchen, Doug came into the project with, as he puts it, "a long list of peculiar likes and dislikes." Chief among them was his desire for the space to look like it had evolved over time. "I didn't want it to be a cutesy reproduction, or something where you walked in and could say, 'I know what year this kitchen was done,'" he explains. Instead, he sought to blend together a hodgepodge of ideas all rooted in the early 20th century, inspired by everything from his Grandma Iva's 1930s kitchen to Jessica Tandy's stove in *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Initially, Rick and fellow Greene & Proppe designer Paula Flanagan were flummoxed by Doug's eclectic mix of ideas. "At first we thought, how are we going to put all this together in this small space?" Rick recalls. "We kept saying, 'Oh my gosh, Doug, this is so much,'" adds Paula, "but he just stayed true to his vision."

Case in point: Doug knew from the outset that he didn't want large banks of matching cabinets, so the final design includes no fewer than six cabinet styles. Next to the main sink, a white glass-fronted cabinet with a wood counter was inspired by originals in the pantry; a hutch-style cabinet beside the



"IT'S NOT THAT I WASN'T WILLING TO DECIDE; I JUST WASN'T WILLING TO DO WITHOUT SOMETHING THAT I LIKED."

-DOUG TAYLOR







**LEFT:** The stainless steel fridge is Doug's one ultra-modern indulgence—but the evolved-over-time aesthetic of the kitchen helps explain it. **OPPOSITE:** Antique stained glass windows take center stage over the main sink, referencing stained glass found elsewhere in the house.

**PRODUCTS:** Main Kitchen:

Marble 12x12 floor tiles in Negra Marquina and Italian White, Tile Gallery; Honed Carrara marble countertops, Marble & Granite Supply of Illinois; Shaws fireclay farmhouse sink and Country Kitchen faucet, Rohl; Backsplash 3x6 field tiles in Polished Onyx and 3x12 border tiles in Chocolate Travertine, Tile Gallery; Custom cabinetry, Blueberry Woodworking; Harrisburg Green paint (on sink cabinets), Benjamin Moore; Manning pendant, Rejuvenation; Pro 48" refrigerator with glass door, Sub-Zero; Dishwasher drawers, Kitchen-Aid. **Cooking Area:** Travertine 6x6 floor tiles with Noce stain and etched relief, Tile Gallery; Polished Thassos 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>x2<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> tile (walls) and Polished Onyx 3x6 tile (stove backsplash), Tile Gallery; Soapstone countertops and custom sink, Marble & Granite Supply of Illinois; Perrin & Rowe wall-mounted faucet, Rohl; 36" six-burner gas range, Viking; Custom range hood, Archive Designs.

stove resembles a piece of furniture Doug bought years ago at a flea market. The cabinets beneath the main farmhouse sink (which conceal two dishwasher drawers) were painted teal to match the color that graced his Grandma Iva's kitchen. "There were so many types of woodwork and cabinetry," says Rick. "The challenge was how to let some things shine—you can't have a bunch of stars."

In the cooking nook (which occupies the space where the powder room

once stood), the star is unquestionably the six-burner Viking gas range, which is topped with a custom copper hood designed by artisan Joseph Mross of Archive Designs. In this more utilitarian space, the walls are covered with white subway tile: "Doug wanted the room to be able to withstand any cooking challenge," Paula explains.

The supporting player to the range is a massive soapstone sink with an integrated backsplash, also inspired by

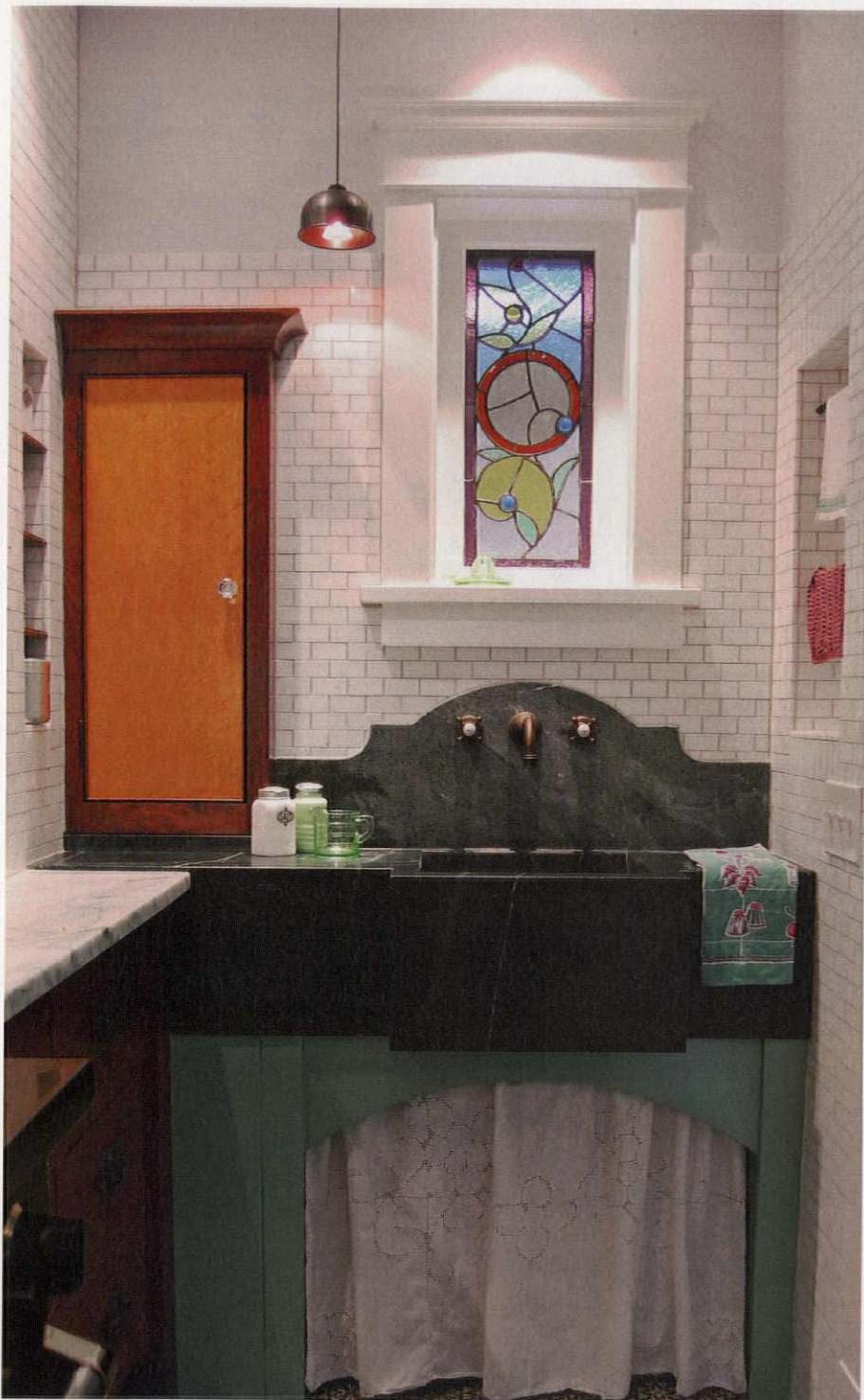
Doug's grandmother's kitchen. Getting the wall-mounted faucet installed at the proper height required some simulation from the designers. "Doug referred to it as 'the chicken sink' because he wanted it to be big enough to wash a chicken in," says Rick. "When we were installing the faucet, we actually had a chicken there to make sure it could squeeze under the faucet."

The main porcelain farmhouse sink represents the only compromise to

COURTESY OF DOUG TAYLOR



**ABOVE, LEFT:** Seen in an old family photo, the porcelain mystery object now commands a place of honor in the cooking area. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Next to the stove, birch cabinets have the look of built-ins. **OPPOSITE:** Nooks on either side of the soapstone sink hold vintage canisters and dish towels.



Doug's original vision. He initially had his heart set on finding a freestanding double-drainboard sink, but conceded that it would take up too much valuable real estate in the 10' x 14' kitchen. So instead, he settled on a farmhouse sink and outfitted an accent table by the back door with porcelain legs. "I figured if I couldn't have the sink, I could at least have those legs," he says.

Throughout the space, special niches and display shelves hold Doug's many pieces of vintage dishware. "Any place there was an opening in the wall, he had the perfect gizmo to display," says Rick. Perhaps the most noteworthy item—or at least the one that gets the biggest reaction—is the mysterious white porcelain piece that sits in its own lighted niche inside the cooking nook. Given by his grandparents to his parents, no one in the family has ever been able to figure out its original purpose; his mother used it as a plant holder for a while before it ended up in storage and eventually in Doug's possession. He planned to give the unloved heirloom a place of honor in the kitchen, teasing his family with clues about which prized possession would appear in the design. "My parents laughed like hell when they walked into the finished kitchen and saw that thing screwed into the tile, all lit up," Doug remembers.

The enigmatic porcelain item still may not have a real purpose ("It's kind of his little nightlight," Paula jokes), but in many ways, it typifies the heart of Doug's design: eclectic and highly personal, but with a lot of history. "It's not that I wasn't willing to decide," Doug says of the *mélange* of fixtures and finishes. "I just wasn't willing to do without something that I liked."

Fortunately, he had a talented design team to help him pull it off. "It really was like a puzzle," Rick says. "We did lots of 3D drawings to see how the different pieces needed to fit together." But in the end, says Paula, "it was super-rewarding. It really flows with the rest of the house." 🏠

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Archive Designs: [archivedesigns.com](http://archivedesigns.com)

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

Blueberry Woodworking:  
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Kitchen-Aid: [kitchenaid.com](http://kitchenaid.com)

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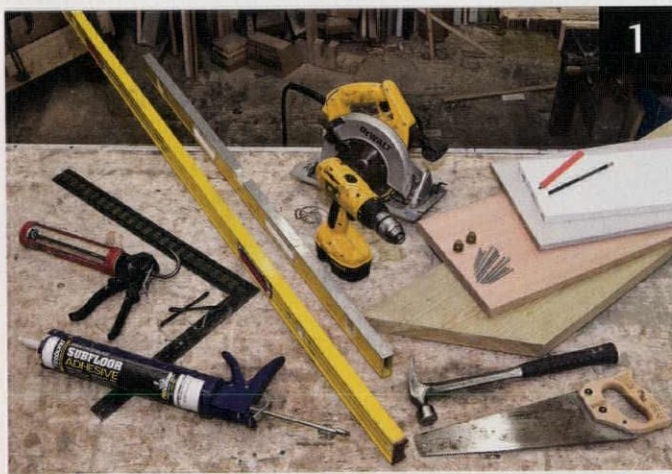
Tile Gallery: [tilegallerychicago.com](http://tilegallerychicago.com)

Viking: [vikingrange.com](http://vikingrange.com)

# Rebuild Porch Stairs

BY STEVE JORDAN ♦ PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK

Stairs are the most vulnerable component of a porch. Exposed to the elements (intense sunlight, rain, snow, frost heave), and often limited by poor choice of materials, bad craftsmanship, and lack of maintenance, it's no wonder they usually fail long before the rest of the porch. But new stairs—whether simply utilitarian or attractively dressed with trim—can be constructed to last many decades. The key is to use quality materials and a design that accounts for weathering.



## Step 1

First, purchase and assemble your materials. For longevity and reliability, construct the 2x12 stringers and 2x4 frame with double kiln-dried, pressure-treated lumber rated for 40 PCF ground contact. (Visit a top-notch lumber supplier, not a home store, to find these materials.) For the treads, go with 5/4 vertical-grain Douglas fir, and clear cedar or a cellular PVC product like AZEK for the trim, including the risers and cove mold. You'll also need hot-dipped galvanized nails and a tube of construction adhesive. For tools, you'll need a circular saw, handsaw, framing square, tape measure, and miter saw. A waist-level worktable will make the project easier on your back.



## Step 2

Measure the rise, run, and width of the existing stairs. Appropriate stringer layout must take into account the thickness of tread stock and porch decking. The run for porch steps is usually 11", which is the width of fir tread stock available at most lumberyards; a 9" run is code minimum. A 1" lip overhanging the riser is typical, but if you're using a cove molding and need more overhang, you can go as far as 1 1/4" (the limit mandated by building codes). Treads can overhang the end stringers as much as you prefer, but matching the lip overhang provides nice balance. Double-check your measurements—it's very important that the rise-and-run is correct, both to prevent a tripping hazard and to meet code requirements.



### Step 3

Now it's time to cut stringers and construct the frame. The number of stringers needed depends on the stair width and thickness of the treads—for 48"-wide 5/4 Douglas fir treads, you'll need 24" centers, or three stringers. (Note: If using 3/4 treads—not recommended for durable stairs—you'll need four stringers on 16" centers for the same span.) Lay out the stringer rise and run cuts using the guide on your framing square, allowing for a 1/8" to 1/4" pitch to the front for water drainage. If cutting with a circular saw, finish the cut with a handsaw so you don't over-cut your guide lines. Cut the 2x4 frame parts precisely with a miter saw.



### Step 4

Assemble the frame with hot-dipped galvanized nails and construction adhesive, making sure the unit remains square with each operation. Construct a triangle under each stringer to provide support, and use 2x4s to hold the stringers together. Add diagonal 2x4s between the stringers to keep the frame rigid from side to side. The final frame assembly should include any "feet" or shims necessary to create level placement on an often unlevel pad or surface. To provide ventilation between the stringers and trim, apply 1/4" pressure-treated shims to the stringer adjacent to each riser.



### Step 5

With the frame ready, fasten the treads, risers, and side trim. If you're using wood trim, back-prime all surfaces, including cut joints, before you attach it. (You can skip this step if using AZEK or pre-primed finger-jointed cedar trim.) For the most weather-resistant finish, paint the new stairs with two coats of floor and deck enamel, using a thinned coat of the paint for primer. (Clear finishes and stains are difficult to maintain.) For safety in areas prone to icing, add non-skid aggregate to the last coat of paint applied to the treads.

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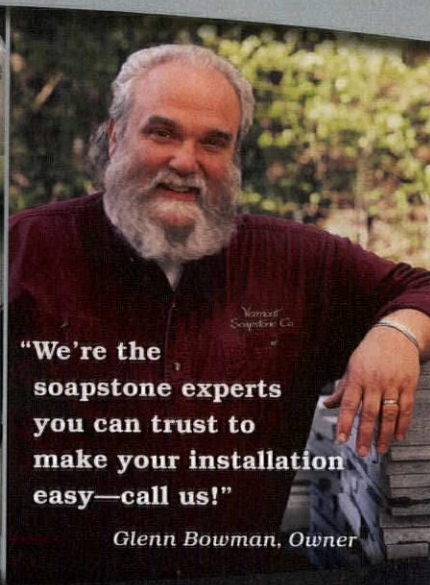


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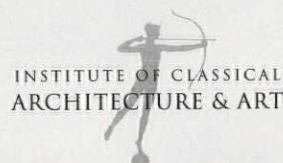
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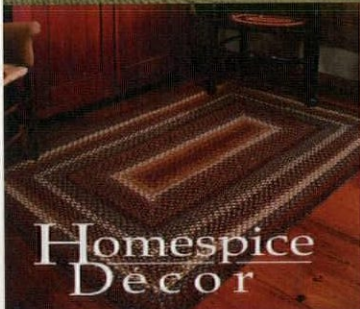
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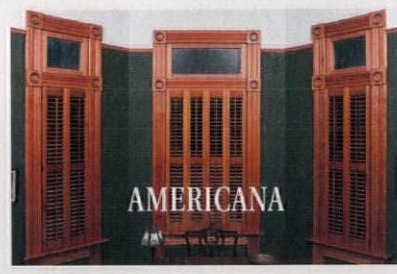


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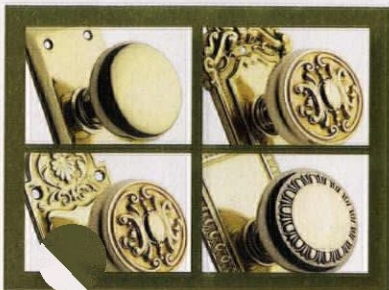
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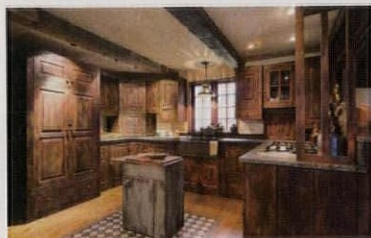


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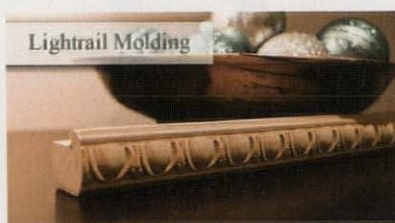


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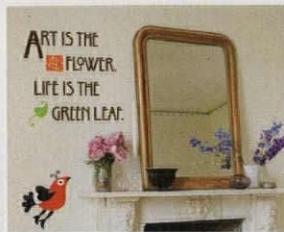


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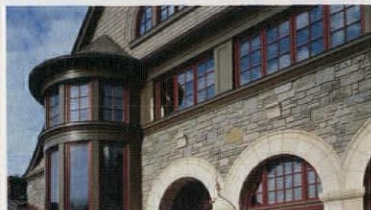
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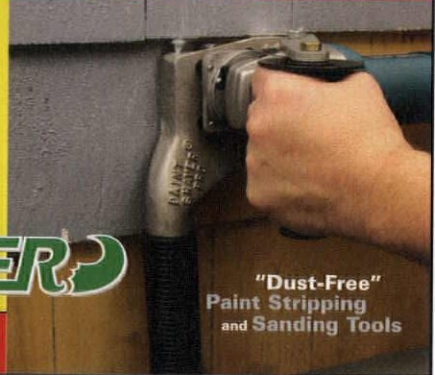


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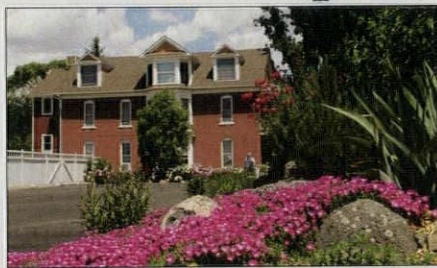


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# Historic Properties



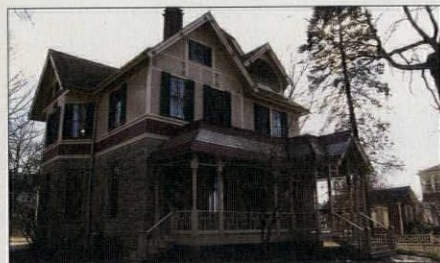
**WATSONVILLE, CA**—Victorian with a view! The Annie Nugent House, circa 1898 Queen Anne Victorian, designed by renowned architect William Weeks. Lovingly restored by current owners to its classic glory with all modern conveniences. Moved to its present location in 1994. Period replicated wallpaper and much more. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths set on 3.45 acres of pastoral beauty. \$999,000. Sotheby's International Realty, Lisa Barkalow, 831-594-2155 or Jacquie Adams, 831-277-0971. [www.180RanchoBrazil.com](http://www.180RanchoBrazil.com)



**PAONIA, CO**—Totally renovated, the Bross Hotel B&B retains its turn-of-the-century charm with 10 guestrooms, each w/private bath. Gracious lobby & dining room, conference room/lounge, commercial kitchen, and owners' quarters. Cool shaded porches, decks, perennial gardens, huge old cottonwoods. Located on West Elk Byway in the heart of wine country, near national forests and parks. Reduced to \$775,000. Bernadette Stech, Paonia Realty, 970-261-5928 or [www.paoniarealty.com](http://www.paoniarealty.com)



**SPARTA, GA**—The Moore-Lewis House. Built circa 1850, this antebellum house with Italianate features is located in Sparta Georgia's historic district. The approximately 3,000 sq.ft. house has a central hall with four large rooms per floor. House is in move-in condition, sold "as is" through Endangered Properties Program. 5 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, 8 fireplaces, 0.6 acre, garage and outbuilding. \$60,000. Kate Ryan, The Georgia Trust, 404-885-7817 or [kryan@georgiatrust.org](mailto:kryan@georgiatrust.org).



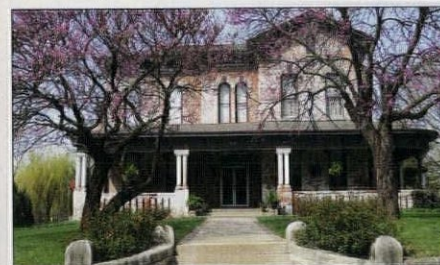
**BURLINGTON, IA**—This is the childhood home to world-renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold. This magnificently restored Victorian is situated on 1/2 acre of beautiful gardens, a naturalist's delight. This 3,000 sq. ft. Victorian has 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, 3 gas fireplaces and lovely stained glass windows on 3 floors. Refinished oak floors throughout. Mississippi River views. National Registry. \$330,000. Mary Shier, 810-441-7932 or [spwheel357@gmail.com](mailto:spwheel357@gmail.com). [www.leopoldhome.com](http://www.leopoldhome.com)



**SHARPSBURG, MD**—Beautifully restored circa 1825 home located minutes from the Antietam National Battlefield, C&O Canal and Shepherdstown. 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths. Sunny interior and lots of original fabric. Utilities, kitchen and baths restored to today's standards. Lots of outdoor spaces. Pottery studio and former shop offer opportunities for development or potential for home based business. \$325,000. Roger Fairbourn Real Estate 301-733-4183 or [rogerfairbourn@mris.com](mailto:rogerfairbourn@mris.com)



**BELLAIRE, MI**—Acclaimed Queen Anne Victorian circa 1895 B&B is one of the most photographed buildings in the nation. 6,600 sq.ft. on 1/2 acre corner lot. Handcrafted birdseye woodwork, three fireplaces, original lights, hand painted ceilings! 4 bedrooms with private baths plus 3rd floor innkeepers' quarters. 2005 carriage house with 2 suites and 2-bay garage. Popular tourist area. \$649,900 turnkey; \$495,000 real estate. Call 231-533-6111 or see [www.grandvictorian.com/forsale.htm](http://www.grandvictorian.com/forsale.htm)



**ST. JOSEPH, MO**—Outstanding 2 story Italianate with hardwood floors, pocket doors, natural woodwork, 3 fireplaces, cut glass windows, large rooms, built-in bookshelves, and wraparound porch. Modern features such as zoned HVAC, central vac, kitchen with every detail, surround sound, newer roof, and all newer wiring & plumbing. \$285,000. Lisa Rock, Realtor and Historic Property Specialist, RE/MAX Professionals of St. Joseph, 816-262-8462 or [Lgkid@stjolive.com](mailto:Lgkid@stjolive.com).



**EDENTON, NC**—The Paine House, an 1845 coastal cottage, in a charming waterfront community. Original house is a 2-over-4 featuring a center hall with Tudor Revival arch, 2 parlors, bedroom, study/library & 2 full baths. Dining room and kitchen were added later. 2 additional bedrooms and 1 bath on 2nd floor. Private screened porch overlooks garden. 1-car garage. In historic district. Short walk to downtown & waterfront. \$425,000. Katherine Kopp, 919-741-9444 or [kkopp3@gmail.com](mailto:kkopp3@gmail.com).



**ROSELLE PARK, NJ**—Elegant foursquare with front porch, back deck, high ceilings, period moldings, window seat, eat-in kitchen, living & formal dining rooms and foyer. Third floor master with walk-in closet and beautiful bath. 3 large bedrooms on 2nd. Basement offers office, laundry, family room and storage. Fenced yard. Close to NYC Transportation, schools, restaurants & shopping. \$385,000. Stephanie Smith, Coldwell Banker, Westfield, 908-230-8585. [www.HistoricHomesNJ.com](http://www.HistoricHomesNJ.com)

# Historic Properties



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**KINGSTON, NY**—The Van Keuren House is a designated city landmark in the Stockade historic district. Recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey and featured in numerous publications. The 9-room interior features with wide center hall, handsome staircase, fireplaces, massive beams, wide board floors and Dutch doors. A covered terrace overlooks private, landscaped gardens. \$430,000. Sandra Hutton, Lawrence O'Toole Realty, 845-706-9241 or [sandrahutton39@yahoo.com](mailto:sandrahutton39@yahoo.com).



**BIRDSBORO, PA**—Architectural masterpiece by renowned architect Frank Furness. Circa 1888, 13,700 sq.ft., 42 rooms, 16 bedrooms, 9 baths & 10 hand carved European fireplaces. 3 acres, zoning variance: bed & breakfast, restaurant, office, private residence. Listed as one of the 21 most noted homes in the world. The ultimate antique, Brooke Mansion is 95% original. Circular rosewood library, pocket doors. 1 hour west of Philadelphia. \$1,900,000. 800-358-2290 or 717-399-7995. [www.brookemansion.com](http://www.brookemansion.com)



**COOPERSBURG, PA**—Adorable 3 bedroom, 2 bath bungalow on 0.69 ac lot with 40x30 garage/pole barn perfect for at-home business. Living room w/French doors to sunroom, formal dining room, large eat-in kitchen, full basement & walk-up attic. Hardwood floors on 1st floor, 9' ceilings, stained glass, and built-ins. New HVAC and roof. Garage/barn has partially finished office space; 2-bay garage; and walk-up 2nd floor. \$260,000. June Croisette, Re/Max 440, 215-538-4400 or 215-872-4966. [www.JuneCroisette.com](http://www.JuneCroisette.com)



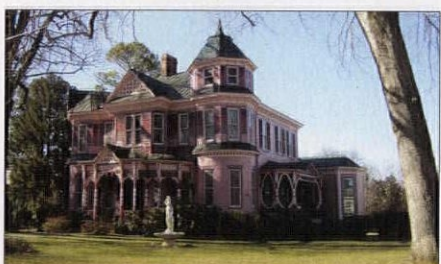
**PITTSBURGH, PA**—The King Estate, painstakingly restored to its original grandeur, is sited on 18 acres accessed by a private lane and cobblestone drive. The magnificence of an earlier era is captured in the beautiful woodwork, hand painted walls and authentic stenciling within this 2 1/2 story Victorian masterpiece. Updated kitchen, baths & mechanics successfully usher this estate property into the 21st century. \$2,100,000. Kelly Meade, Howard Hanna, 412-361-4000 or [kmeade@howardhanna.com](mailto:kmeade@howardhanna.com).



**RUSSELL, PA**—The Locusts. Built by lumberman Guy C. Irvine in 1835. In superb condition and on the National Register. Georgian red brick, 2-story exterior with unusual large bridged chimneys. Wide-planked chestnut floors lying as flat and true as they were in 1835, with the interior crown moldings, baseboards and wide windows in a Greek Revival style. Separate carriage house. 14 acres. 10 miles from Lake Chautauqua. Warren County's premier property. \$400,000. 412-261-8902.



**SOUTH BOSTON, VA**—Updated and well maintained circa 1892 home. 5,620 sq. ft., 11-foot ceilings, 9 fireplaces, intricate woodwork, wainscoting, beautiful floors, bay windows & porches. Formal parlors, dining room, kitchen with breakfast room, sunroom & family room. 1st floor bedroom & 2 baths. 3 bedrooms & 2 baths upstairs. Majestic magnolia trees. Short stroll to town. \$399,000. Rebecca "Honey" Davis, The Davis Company Realtors, 877-575-1100. [www.honeydavis.net](http://www.honeydavis.net)



**SOUTH BOSTON, VA**—High Victorian Queen Anne circa 1892 on 1.7 acres. Original inside and out. Breathtaking interior in every detail. Geometric tile in 55-ft. foyer, parquet floors, elegant woodwork, period draperies and wallpaper. 9 fireplaces with elaborate carved and painted mantels. Cooks house. On the National Register. Priced well below appraisal value. \$459,000. Max Sempowski, Old House Properties with Keller Williams Realty, 434-391-4855. [oldhouseproperties.com](http://oldhouseproperties.com)

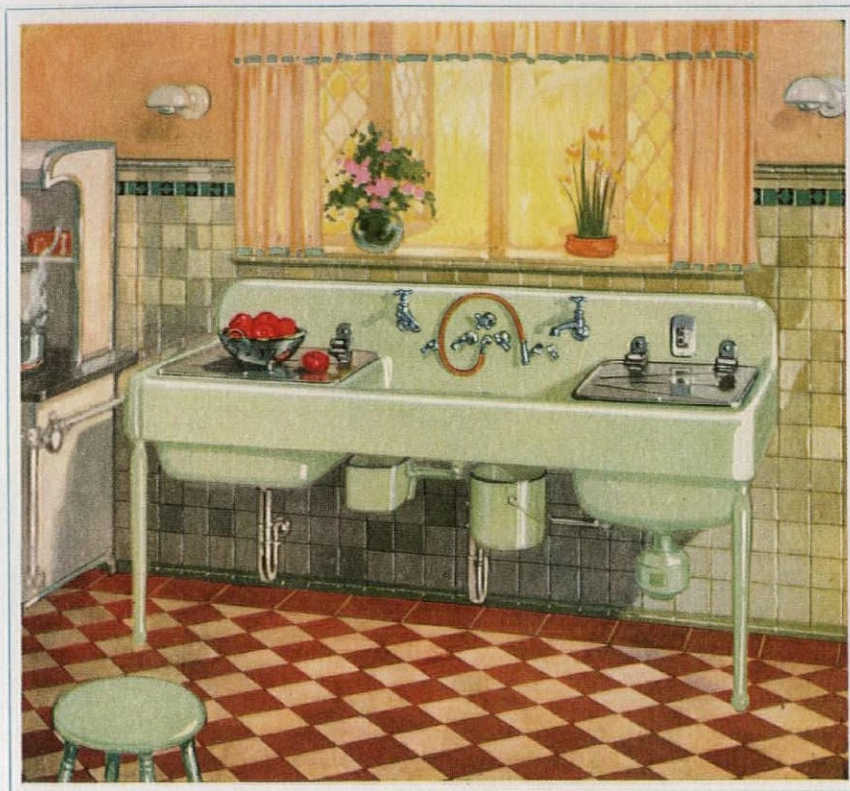
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Kohler's Plumbing Fixtures in Color, Kohler, Wisconsin, 1928

## Green With Sink Envy

**T**urning the old saying inside out, Kohler's designers didn't include everything but the kitchen sink in their feature-packed Model K-1050-R—this marvel of up-to-the-moment technology was the kitchen sink.

The 1920s saw a new focus on kitchen planning based on innovative scientific efficiency studies that emphasized step-saving solutions. To this end, the K-1050-R was a paragon of concentrated productivity, with multiple water taps; "secret" drain levers; swing-away containers for grease, scraps, or garbage; and gleaming hinged metal drainboards that converted the deep side sinks to spotless work surfaces. The *pièce de résistance*, however, is in the basin on the right: the Kohler Electric Sink, one of the world's first motorized dishwashers, introduced just two

years earlier in 1926.

Despite the amazing array of cutting-edge ideas packed into this kitchen-sink showstopper, what roused the most excitement among buyers was the color. Following Kohler's introduction of six color options (including Spring Green, shown above) in December 1927, colored porcelain fixtures became such a hot trend that a Jet Black Kohler bathroom suite was featured in an exhibit on American manufacturing advances at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929. While not considered museum-worthy today, tinted toilets and saturated sinks would be the pride of many a home for another half-century. 🏠

**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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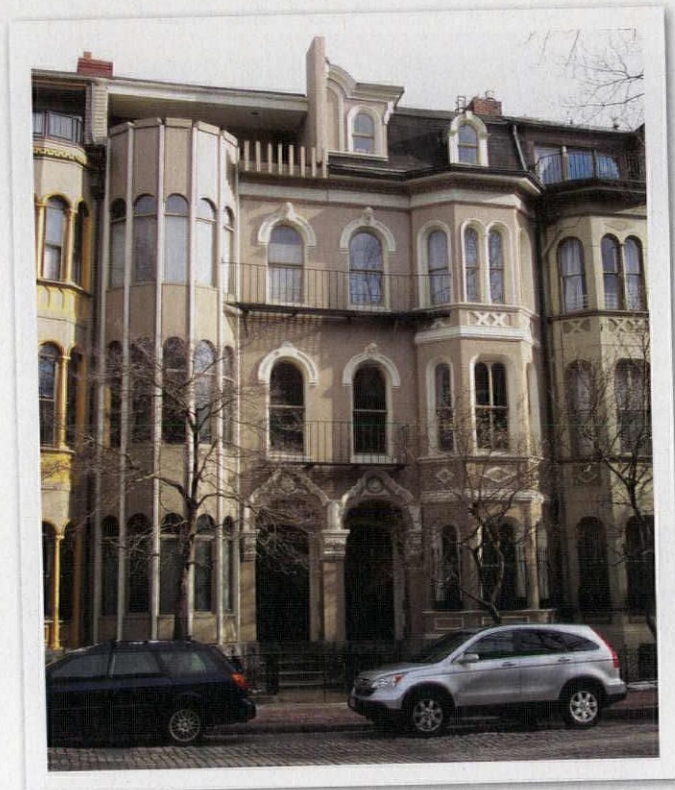
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# remuddling



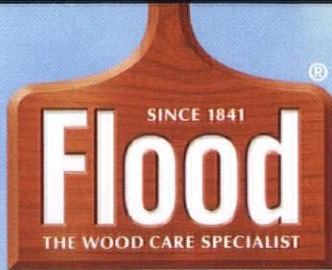
## Losing Face

Every once in awhile, old-house owners seeking to modernize their homes carry the makeover to the extreme. Take these two row houses standing side by side. The one at right maintains all of its original, expressive features: courses of decorative carved panels, deeply inset window casings, a substantive mansard roof, and a fourth-floor dormer that's arched in the middle like a questioning eyebrow. Meanwhile, its neighbor (at left) has lost all of these characteristics—including the dormer, now sliced down the middle as if by a surgeon's scalpel—in favor of an expressionless façade as smooth as Joan Rivers' face.

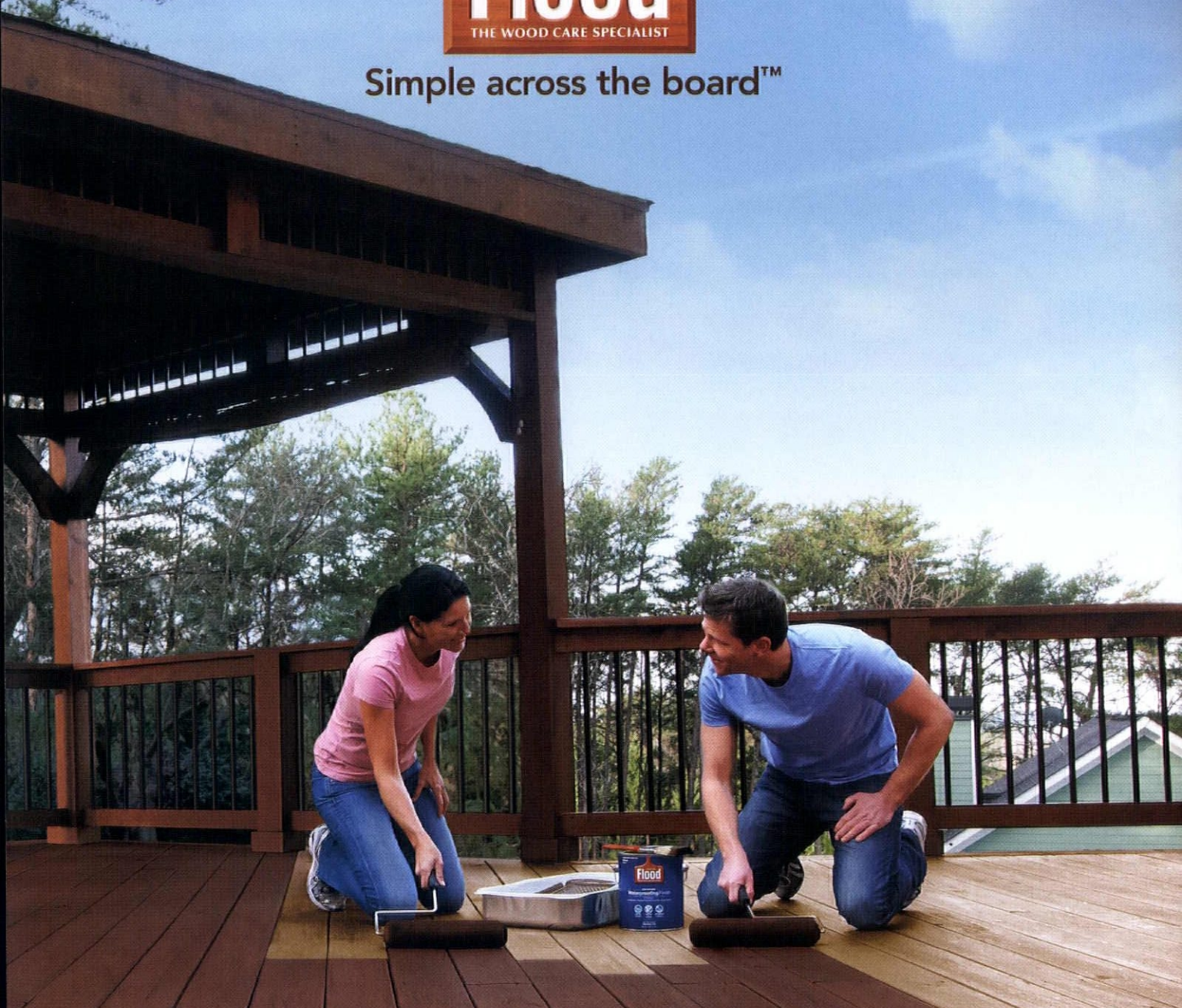
"The house on the left was exactly chopped at the property line in a 'modern' update," laments our contributor. We think it's a shame when aesthetic tweaks have such cutting consequences. 🗑️

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