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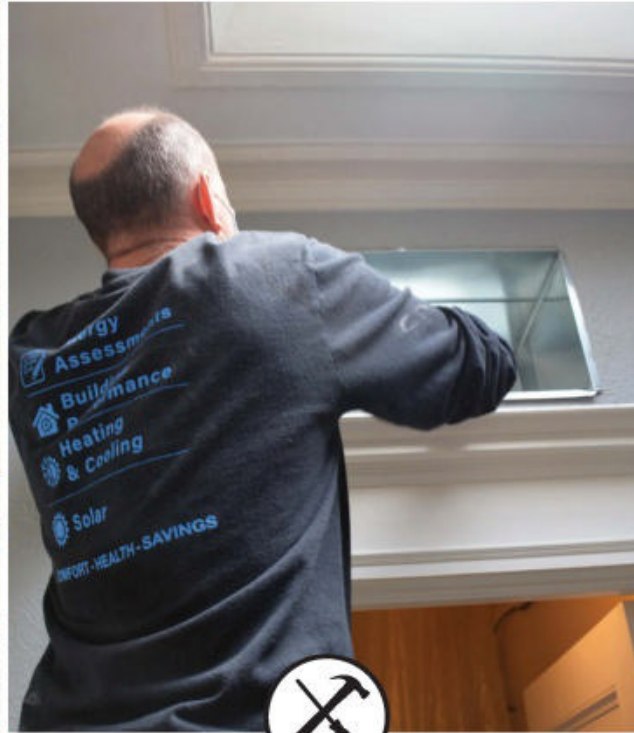
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87 RESOURCES

ON THE COVER A kitchen and family room addition to an 1850s house has the island serving as a table and room divider.
PHOTO BY EDWARD ADDEO. SEE PAGE 20.



Just so pretty!
A hand-decorated
Aurora lemonade
set with silverplate
(p. 44) pitcher
and tumblers,
ca. 1880.

End-of-year Favorites

In this last issue of the year, we present restoration award winners, reader-favorite kitchens and baths—and, I will say, a few over-the-top designs. This special issue is put together interactively with readers, whose Facebook “Likes” and comments over the year weigh into what we decide to feature.

The **RESTORE** section (p. 35) addresses technical issues that come up during the rehabilitation of old houses, regarding energy. Senior writer Mary Ellen Polson describes how older houses are moving toward efficient, even fossil-free, heating and cooling.

The **DESIGN** section (p. 19) asks a simple question: How big? We’ve noticed that people tend to buy rugs that are too small, and they build kitchen islands that are too big. We offer a few tips on how to determine the right size and scale for major elements. Next, we juried kitchens and bathrooms that have been published (in print or on social media) over the years in our group of magazines. Our respondents chose a simple throwback kitchen (p. 30), its design perfect for cottage or bungalow, as well as a spacious and high-ceilinged Victorian bathroom (p. 32) that mixes antique fixtures with a modern serenity.

Finally, find two inspirational house tours (p. 57). One shows the work of a determined do-it-yourself homeowner, the other a professional restoration designer’s own home. As it happens, they are located on opposite coasts, and have little in common except for the preservation ethic of their owners. The first is a builder’s Dutch Colonial Revival house, kept as near to original as possible. The other is a tale of adaptive reuse: the capacious building was a firehouse.

Upfront, find a selection of beautiful, timeless gifts for old-house friends, or for your own home. Also, a photo-rich feature celebrates simple holiday mantel decorating. Enjoy!



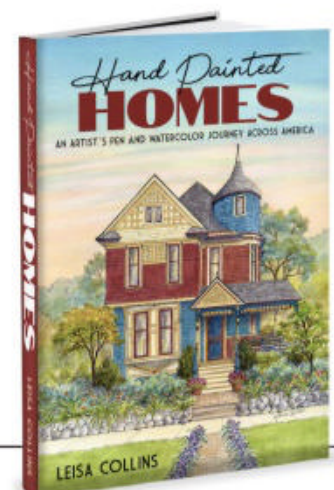
Patricia Poore

SIDE NOTES

HER WATERCOLOR JOURNEY

A vibrant labor of love, this big book presents artist Leisa Collins’ ink-and-watercolor paintings of old houses across the country. She is passionate about architecture, and preservation, and travel. That combination of interests took her to all 50 states to paint houses, including some in jeopardy due to neglect or development. You’ll find little stone cottages, row houses, Victorian mansions, and organic contemporary homes. Collins painted a few historic houses before and after being saved, along with churches and town halls. She included some informal sketches, adding to the moment-in-time sensibility.

The watercolors—650 of them—spurred text covering style, history, and the vernacular. Collins weaves in stories about geography, politics, and the economy as they affected domestic architecture. **Hand Painted Homes** (Leisa Collins Art, 2021, \$49.99) Order at leisacollins.artstorefronts.com



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Holiday Home

Any of these would be a welcome gift for an old-house friend or for an artful home . . . including your own.

By Mary Ellen Polson

1. RIBBONS AND RAINBOWS

The 6" x 8" Saguaro tile is based on a 1927 illustration by Frank Lloyd Wright, which was never published. The tile is 5/8" thick and has a notch at the back for hanging. Tile alone: \$160. Easels: \$19 to \$22. In a quarter-sawn oak frame: \$268. Motawi, (734) 213-0017, motawi.com

2. PENNY BRIGHT

The perennially popular Celtic, Snowdrop, and Step vases are shown in this historic pottery's new iridescent Copper glaze, which often exhibits unusual blue-grey flashing. Smallest: 6" high (Snowdrop). Tallest: 9" (Step). \$170 to \$270. Pewabic, (313) 626-2000, pewabic.org

3. LUSTER VASE

Shown in Luster Pottery Green, these vases are hand-thrown and hand-painted with a custom metallic glaze, undergoing multiple firings to achieve the jewel-like surface effect. Most luster vases are available in three sizes. A 9" vase similar to the one shown costs \$180. Hog Hill Pottery (704) 462-2744, hoghillpottery.com

4. SILKY CRESCENT

The Morning Grace Crescent Victorian lampshade is expertly fashioned from new and vintage silk and fringe by the owner-artisan, who offers period-style, one-of-a-kind shades. Ships free: \$768. Diana K. Miller Interiors, (510) 709-7043, dianakmillerinteriors.com

5. MAKING ROSES

An excellent gift for a beginner, the Rose embroidered pillow kit is worked solely in satin stitch, but includes a technique for raised embroidery. The kit comes with pearl cotton or silk thread, plus foundation,





6



7



8



9



10

instructions, and needle. \$50 (cotton) or \$65 (silk). Paint By Threads, (951) 545-7451, paint-by-threads.com

6. TUDOR . . . OR SPANISH

The hammered Spanish Cross finial adds quite a flourish to any 1"-diameter drapery rod. The wrought-iron finial measures about 4 1/4" wide x 4" high; \$85 each. Complete the look with the studio's hammered-iron drapery rod, sold by the foot. Bushere & Son Iron Studio, (909) 469-0770, bushereandson.com

7. CLASSIC LIGHTING

The Princeton table lamp is crafted from solid brass, using antique machinery and hand-turning techniques. It's made to order in a choice of hand-applied special and custom finishes. Shown in burnished brass, the lamp measures 18" high x 13" wide: \$550. Authentic Designs, (800) 844-9416, authenticdesigns.com

8. LAZY ROCKER

The classic Lumbar Rocker is constructed with interlocking, glue-free joinery and features curving back slats for support. This model is fitted with a woven seagrass seat, although slatted versions are available, too. The chair measures 26 3/4" wide x 31" deep x 46 1/2" high: \$429. Troutman Chair Co., (704) 872-7625, troutmanchairs.com

9. PICTOGRAPHIC

Mimbrenño is a historic dinnerware pattern inspired by the pottery art of the ancient Mimbres Valley tribes of New Mexico. Originally commissioned by the Santa Fe Railroad, it's been recently reintroduced by H.F. Coors. In red or black, a three-piece place setting is \$133. Fair Oak Workshops, fairoak.com

10. GORGEOUS INLAY

The Harvey Ellis Console Desk in solid quarter-sawn white oak has elongated Harvey Ellis-designed botanical inlays on both side panels. Available through year's end, the collector-edition piece measures 48" wide x 20" deep and comes in several finishes: \$1,259. Stickley, (315) 682-5500, stickley.com

Diamonds!

An eternal motif for objects around the house.

1. DIAMONDS IN THE SUN

Rendered in greens and blues, Sunburst is a pattern from the American Folk Art Museum, adapted as a vinyl floorcloth. Washable and durable, the rugs come in more than a dozen sizes, including runners and squares. A 5'10" x 8½' rectangular floorcloth is \$530. Spicher & Co., (877) 466-1148, spicherandco.com

2. DAZZLING EFFECT

The bold geometrics of the Philadelphia Harlequin wallpaper present repeating diamond shapes that create the illusion of depth. Dating to about 1807, the French-inspired paper has a 12" repeat and straight match. Sold by the 33' single roll: \$540. Adelphi Paper Hangings, (518) 284-9066, adelphipaperhangings.com

3. ON THE DIAGONAL

The solid-brass Diamond ring pull will suit furniture or cabinets in styles from Victorian Eastlake to Craftsman and Tudor. Shown in the antique-by-hand-finish, the pull measures 2⅞" wide if installed diagonally; \$14.39 each. House of Antique Hardware, (888) 223-2545, houseofantiquehardware.com

4. LEADED CAMES

Custom-built to museum specifications, this leaded-glass window features hand-made restoration glass in a hand-shaped and -pegged sash. It's typical of the period-specific work of this company known for its 18th-century restorations. Call for a quote on your project. The Cooper Group, (860) 599-2481, thecoopergroupct.com

5. RETRO ROSE

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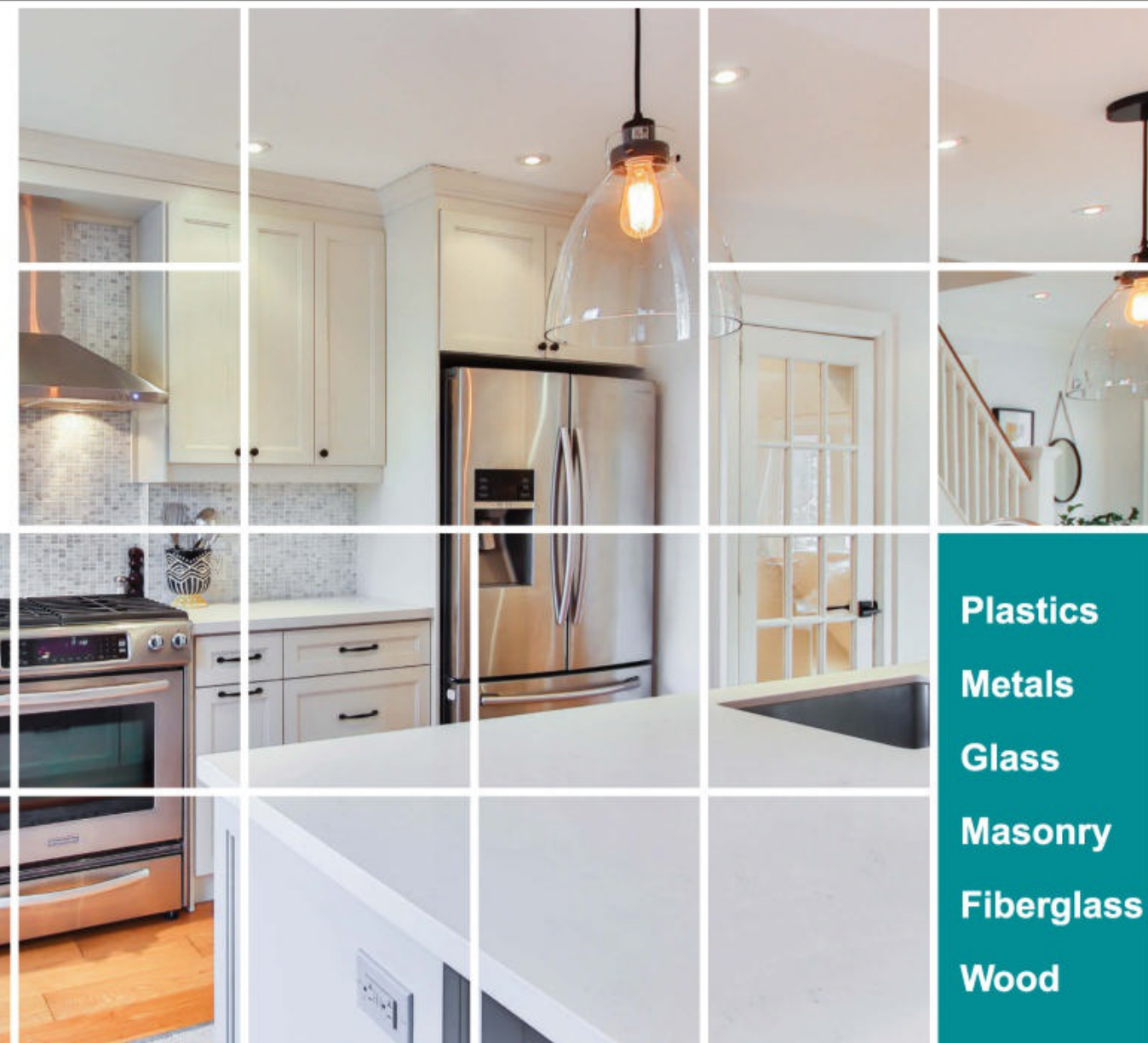
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Chary Griffin, Berkshire Hathaway CNY, bhhsncyrealty.com

CAZENOVIA, NY / \$39,900

Deteriorating for years, the 1873 Italianate Jabez Abell house retains remarkable period details: the original cupola, quoins at corners, bracketed eaves. Inside are period doors and a curved-rail main staircase.



Dave Royce, owner, historicproperties.com

NEPONSET, IL / \$45,000

Built in the Folk Victorian style in 1894, the William E. Whaples house includes built-ins and woodwork by the first owner's father. Although it suffers from deferred maintenance, the house retains Queen Anne, beveled, and rondel glass, as well as other Victorian details.



Dennis Lovello, Georgia Trust, georgiastrust.org

SPARTA, GA / \$15,000

The Sparta Female Dormitory dates to 1815 and was rebuilt about 1831, as one of two dormitories for an early school for girls and women. Later converted to a residence, the structure is built from heavy timber with wide plank floors and a standing-seam roof.



Craig Luthy, Nicholson Realty, nicholsonrealty.net

MARION, IN / \$89,000

This 1912 brick Tudor-Craftsman with a carriage house is attributed to Samuel Plato, one of the first Black architects in the U.S. Inside: leaded glass, pocket doors, oak staircase, and original millwork and doors. The roof was stabilized in 2019.



Cathleen Turner, Preservation North Carolina, presnc.org

WENTWORTH, NC / \$69,000

The King House is an early log farmhouse, built about 1802 with beam construction and stacked-stone chimneys. Details include beaded ceiling joists and tongue-and-groove plank walls, heart-pine floors, and board-and-batten doors with original HL hinges.

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WINTER BY THE SEA This is another of the five fireplaces in Clineff's home. Floral designer Sandra Sigman noted remnants of blue paint on the original paneling and built a coastal vignette on a bright-blue mantel recently added. She layered seashells, bleached fern, seeded eucalyptus, chamaecyparis, and smilax. She placed a globe-thistle wreath above: "There's so much here, we didn't need a bow."

EUCALYPTUS WREATH AND BAUBLES

In photographer Kindra Clineff's own ancient house, an upstairs fireplace has a narrow mantel shelf "more like a trim board." Sandra Sigman added sparkle with small vintage ornaments and sterling-silver candlesticks. Ornamental pots holding wire art frame a bountiful eucalyptus wreath. Blue tapers do a brilliant job of accenting the blue of the leaves.



MANTELS in a Holiday Mood

Pretty things from nature are always in style.

By Tovah Martin / photographs by Kindra Clineff

In vintage houses, especially, the mantel begs to be adorned with something festive and creative. Professional holiday decorators find inspiration in the room. No need to start from scratch; it is valid to incorporate elements that sit upon the mantelshelf all year—in fact, they give continuity to the festivities and keep it personal. Then, play off hues and motifs in the wallpaper or rugs. If the room is already “busy” with pattern, focus on greenery only, or on a single minimalist theme. On the other hand, if the room is subdued in quiet colors, take the opportunity to add a pop of red, blue, gold, or silver. For bling, vintage ornaments shine, as do objects in silver and brass.

You're not restricted to decorating only the shelf. Roping, garlands, beadwork, and strung cranberries may be swagged. If balance requires adding height, include a wreath, a platter, tall topiaries, or candlesticks with tapers. Other than incorporating nature, few rules apply. Even in a sparsely decorated home, this time of year calls for a moment of exuberance.

Sandra Sigman, floral designers and owner of Les Fleurs in Andover, Mass., says she uses pushpins, tacks, and hooks to ensure that decorations are stable. Brace any breakables. If yours is an open hearth, keep flammable materials well away from the flames.





PLATTER AND TOPIARY The 1683 Stanley-Lake House is the home of photographer Kindra Clineff. This shallow Rumford fireplace, in a 1750 addition serving as the dining room, was decorated by Sandra Sigman. An ironstone platter is the centerpiece, with herbal myrtle topiaries adding staggered height. Weighted reindeer lend formality. Greenery is spruce with draping smilax (which stays green and crisp even without water). Pinecones are a wintry touch.



PEWTER'S SHEEN

In a Colonial Revival house, metal vases add sparkle and cradle protea and echeveria. Berry-laden juniper sprigs are tucked into the tiny balconies of a vase in the guise of a strawberry planter.



PINECONE VIGNETTE A 17th-century mantel inspired a festoon of fresh citrus and cinnamon sticks tucked into a textural palette of holly and conifer greens. Golden chamaecyparis echoes lemon rinds; pinecones join dried wheels of blood orange. Everything is secured with pushpins to the narrow shelf. Cellophane is laid beneath, to avoid moisture or sap damage. The unadorned grapevine wreath adds height.



MINIMALIST BIRDS

For the holidays, Caroline Boniello asked her friend the designer and author Terry John Woods to decorate the mantel in the family room of her 1997 Georgian Revival house. The two share a love for muted beauty. The mantel composition echoes the colors in a Warren Kimble painting, and softens the mood with roping of white pine and a strand of tiny twinkling lights. A pair of handmade carved wooden crows adds balance.

CRANBERRY GARLAND

In Portsmouth, N.H., Strawberry Banke's Curator of Historic Landscapes Erik Wochholz interprets the Victorian era in the Goodwin Mansion, where the parlor has an 1840s black-marble mantel and a gilded mirror. Dried blossoms such as peonies, Montauk daisies, and roses from the summer garden are staged on the mantelshelf for holiday events. Silvery dusty miller and wormwood complement the darker colors.



KITCHEN SINK

When artist and interior designer Terry John Woods was renovating his own ca. 1820 parsonage, he put a "mantelshelf" over the kitchen sink. Ironstone dishes and pitchers create a chorus line in his signature white-on-white style. Apple-tree prunings in each pitcher add texture and a silhouette of branches against the pearly wall. Lemons are spots of color.



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NOT TOO SMALL!
HOW BIG?
PRACTICAL AND AESTHETIC
CONSIDERATIONS on sizing
major elements of
a room. **page 20**

High-ceilinged rooms demand careful attention to size and scale to bring pleasing proportion. In an Aesthetic scheme by architect David Scott Parker, features including the gaslight fixture and rug are perfectly sized.

20

JUST HOW BIG SHOULD IT BE? RUG, CHANDELIER, MANTEL, ISLAND

Right-sizing matters for everything from roof dormers to the tub. We address four common interior elements.

+

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**NOTHING TOO
SMALL, OR TOO BIG**

In a room by Amy Mitchell of Home Glow Design, chairs sit comfortably on the 9' x 12' silk rug purchased at auction. The tiered glass chandelier is a statement piece, in scale and hung at the right height.

RIGHT This classic, painted wood mantel was designed based on trim in the rest of the ca. 1835 house.

OPPOSITE The wallpaper is 'Chenonceau' from Schumacher, chosen to complement the vintage rug. The chandelier was a find on Etsy. The corner cabinet was made by D.R. Dimes and found on Craigslist.



How BIG should it be?

RUG, CHANDELIER, MANTEL, ISLAND

Absolute size is important: Will it fit and be functional? Equally important are scale and proportion. Oddy enough, people often purchase rugs and chandeliers too small for the space ... while mantels and kitchen islands may be designed too big. Manufacturers and designers can offer guidelines, but each situation is unique: a large room with a low ceiling has a smaller volume than standard; one chandelier takes up more visual space than another, affecting ideal diameter and hanging height. Best bet: painter's tape and cardboard! Mark out a proposed rug on the floor. Mock up an island with boxes and work around it for a few days. **BY PATRICIA POORE**



WHAT ABOUT THE SOFA?

Length is often the most critical dimension, and you can gauge that with a tape measure. It shouldn't take up a whole wall. But too small and the room may look choppy. Consider depth and height in overall volume.

LEFT Original wall-covering remains in the drawing room of a neoclassical mansion built in 1914. An archival photo of the room shows a similar use of multiple oriental rugs. **BOTTOM** In a 1951 Modern Movement house, a colorful Khotan (Iranian Buddhist) rug anchors a room furnished with Asian and 1960s Modern pieces.

fitting the rug to the space

Rules of thumb are still useful: Keep edges of a room-size rug about 12" away from perimeter walls, up to 18" in a larger room. A living-room rug should be big enough that at least the front legs of chairs sit on it. • Then ask: What is the rug's function? Will it tie together a seating area, or underpin the dining table? In those cases, bigger is usually better. You don't want a large gap between the sofa and the rug, or for chairs to get caught on the edge of the rug when diners push back from the table. Other rugs are themselves "display art," or being used in an alcove or just to fill the space between twin beds. These may be smaller. • Two rugs in a room can separate areas, or they can function as one larger rug when placed edge to edge. A custom rug may be needed in an odd-shaped room.



I was forever buying rugs too small for the space. To avoid the asymmetry created by a corner fireplace, for example, I bought a rectangular rug that sat in the center of the room, with furniture around but not on it. The room looked unanchored and small. Finally I realized I needed a custom carpet: large enough, but with a corner cut back for the hearth. I did better on another occasion. An office library needed a very long, especially wide runner, but there seemed to be no such thing. We bought several identical, machine-made, 4' x 6' oriental-style carpets and had them stitched together. Voila! Beware, though: a too-big rug can actually make a sparsely furnished room look smaller.

For a bedroom, the carpet should extend beyond the bed at least 12 to 18 inches on each side, and end in front of the nightstands. An alternative is a smaller rug placed at the foot of the bed and slightly wider than it. Round rugs do wonders in odd (curved, octagonal, bay window) spaces, or to define a vignette by anchoring a piece of furniture or two.



LEFT Sizable but simple, an Artemide Logico chandelier suits a room in a 1937 Tudor. Furniture is re-issued Stickley. **ABOVE** A wiry chandelier, such as this authentic reproduction by Period Lighting Fixtures, can have a wide diameter without appearing too big. **BELOW** With four lamps, the chunky Arts & Crafts-era chandelier doesn't overwhelm.



how to size the chandelier

“Don’t be afraid of the fixture being too large for the room, particularly if the chandelier has an open design,” says Chris Burda, owner of Period Lighting Fixtures. **“More often than not, people choose a fixture that’s too small.”** Fixture size should relate to the scale (square footage and height) of the room. In the average dining room of about 12 feet square, use a chandelier about 20–24 inches in diameter. In rooms larger than 14 feet, use a fixture at least 25–30 inches in diameter. Burda adds, **“The diameter can approach the width of the table** without interfering with traffic and seating; a bit smaller is ideal.” Consider how it looks both as you walk into the room and from a seated position. Hang a chandelier so its bottom is no less than 30 inches from the tabletop. In a stairwell or hallway, hang the chandelier so that it is no less than seven feet from the floor. **Mock it up before ordering.**



ABOVE A vintage pendant with a large, sculptural glass shade is perfect over the good-size kitchen island, which quietly adopts the same height, paint finish, and countertop as the perimeter cabinets.



SIZING A SINK

If it doesn't need to fit in an existing hole: Measure counter depth minus backsplash thickness. A bigger sink means less countertop. Do you need one big, deep sink, or a standard size plus a small food-washing basin?

the kitchen island

If you max out the size of the island using minimum clearance and egress codes, it will be too big.

For comfort, **you want 40" and up to 48" between the island and a run of cabinets**, considering the impediment of an open door on the oven, dishwasher, or refrigerator. It's best if someone can still pass even when an appliance is open. If one side of the island is just a passageway, with no drawers or appliances, 36" of clearance is fine. • **Be sure the island doesn't impede the work triangle or make you take extra steps.** Guidelines suggest that if the room is less than 13 feet wide, you don't have room for an island. Consider instead a peninsula or movable cart.

ABOVE LEFT In an 1830 Federal farmhouse, an island used only for prep and serving was designed with such period elements as raised panels and table legs. Without impeding traffic flow, it screens the work area. **ABOVE RIGHT** A long, narrow island serves a U-shaped kitchen; the fridge is on the righthand leg. The island is an old cash counter salvaged from a Vermont country store.

A SUITABLE MANTEL

Fireplaces are different in every era and with every design style, so it's hard to make rules about overall size, which relates to height and width of firebox and surround, as well as room features. Puny looks terrible; on the other hand, going "baronial" can result in an overscale, awkwardly proportioned focal point.

Scale relates to both the actual and relative size of a piece in the room. Proportion

deals with the relationships among various elements. You can have a well-proportioned mantel that is simply too big for the room. More likely, you'll encounter reasonably scaled mantels with distorted proportions, such as a too-narrow lintel (header) or overly wide legs. The hearth (extended fireplace floor) should always be wider than the mantelpiece, so that the legs sit on the hearth.

When we asked Alex Radmard of Homefires for guidance, he addressed safety. "When sizing a combustible wood mantel, you *must* meet local code requirements."

LEFT An authentic reproduction mantel shows the importance of proportion among elements, beyond actual overall dimensions.

RIGHT The curved overmantel lends delicacy to a bold mantelpiece in a 1912 English Arts & Crafts house in Victoria, B.C.



Sizing a kitchen island involves not only the island itself, but also the clearance space you must allow all around it. In today's designer parlance, an island is two counter-depths wide (2 x 24"), multi-purpose, with storage, and has accessible function from all four sides. Rarely does that translate to an old house. Certainly, an island can have a single use—a butcher block for food prep, or a sink and dishwasher only. It can be long and narrow, and it may have rounded edges. Allow a minimum of 36" on all sides, and quite a bit more if the oven opens opposite the dishwasher. There is such a thing as too much clearance, however. More than 60" of space between the island and a countertop or appliances can make it feel lost, and it will mean extra steps taken daily.

Seating is optional. For elbow room, assume 24 inches per person, and don't forget to allow for stools being moved out into the circulation area. The kitchen-bar overhang should be 12" to 15". Consider an L-shaped overhang, on two sides of the island, to accommodate more people at a shorter island.

The working surface of an island follows counter height, or 36". A breakfast counter can go to barstool height, at about 42". That height may afford a welcome screen for kitchen mess—or, conversely, it may make the island feel too big visually.

These general guidelines may have you wondering if you should consult with a designer. That often saves money!



ABOVE In an addition to an 1850s house, the low island functions as the kitchen's sink wall and a room divider. Its design was adapted from a worktable in an 18th-century kitchen in Cornwall, England.



THEY STILL MAKE...



FAUX BAMBOO

The Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s–80s embraced Japonesque and other Far East-inspired design. Butterflies, cranes, and plum blossoms were favored motifs—as was bamboo. Faux bamboo turnings showed up on chairs and bedroom suites, and even on fireplace mantelpieces. • Leonard's New England was founded by Lester and Hazel Leonard in 1933. Restored/resized antique beds were the genesis and remain the core of the business. But the company philosophy is that elegant antiques should be layered with new fine furnishings and modern accents. Thus, Leonard's reproduces especially fine and popular pieces, by custom order. • Seen here is the authentic-reproduction New Orleans Faux Bamboo Bed, with a French-style peaked headboard and bamboo-molded rails. In Spanish cedar, it's \$6,400 for the full/double size. • Leonard's New England, (508) 336-8585, leonardsnewengland.com



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Transitional Built-ins & Trim

From the 1917 “Woodwork” catalog of Curtis Lumber & Millwork



Painted white, the Prairie-influenced sideboard leans toward Colonial Revival in this room. Note the differences in hardware chosen.



The Manning is a Historical Revival-style, two-arm wall bracket with faux candles and cloth shades, a style popular in the 1910s and '20s. Choose from seven finish options: \$175–245. revivallighting.com



The enduring design of the two-slat Tappan side chair dates to the mid 1800s. With broomstick-top legs, it's small but sturdy. In a range of woods (shown in maple and ash with black paint), many options for seat weave and color: \$595. tappanchairs.com

The same sideboard, C-1006, was shown in both plain-sawn red oak and painted in white enamel on birch or pine. Don't assume all original cabinetwork was clear-finished.

Fitted with crossing muntins, the Newport door style is just one choice among Arts & Crafts and Prairie designs from custom maker Crown Point Cabinetry. Many options; custom quote. crown-point.com



On the opposite end of the style spectrum is the two-light Oak Park sconce, a Mission Style fixture that echoes the square motif seen in the sideboard. With choices in glass shades and 13 finish options; \$345. brasslightgallery.com





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Simple Craftsman Roots Revived

A “clean but sterile” 1914 kitchen is treated to bungalow-era design. **By Donna Pizzi**

This Craftsman Bungalow near Portland, Oregon, retained unpainted Douglas fir woodwork in the main rooms; original leaded-glass windows with beveled diamond panes still cast artful shadows. A frieze for wallpaper topped the high dining-room wainscoting. The kitchen, however, needed help. Its electric range, dated laminate countertops, worn vinyl flooring, and tip-out lower cabinets stood in stark contrast to the beautiful craftsmanship in the rest of the house. The homeowner restores vintage cars and also teaches woodworking. He decided to undertake restoration himself.

To hide a stovepipe hole in the wall, he built an upper cabinet, copying original pantry cupboards. He added a trio of half-round shelves for display of Arts & Crafts pottery and an old toaster. The vintage stove is a mid-1930s Wedgewood gas range with oven, broiler, and storage drawers. There's also a 1935 G.E. refrigerator refinished with automotive enamel. “Ice cream doesn't stay hard in it,” the owner says, “so I have a freezer on the back porch; mostly, the Monitor Top works fine.”



1. VINTAGE APPLIANCES

Joining a 1935 G.E. Monitor Top refrigerator is this 1930s Wedgewood gas stove featuring salt and pepper niches and a lamp.

2. STENCIL DECORATION

The owner painted the rose border using two Arts & Crafts-era, 18" Mylar stencils; colors come from the Sherwin-Williams Preservation Palette.

3. CABINETS & COUNTERTOPS

The owner built conventional base cabinets and curtained the under-sink area. A used, stainless-steel industrial sink married well with maple butcher-block countertops.

4. CHECKERBOARD FLOORING

The fir floor unearthed beneath 1950s vinyl flooring was too far gone, so the owner decided on black and white, 12-in. Armstrong VCT tiles, to mimic period linoleum.

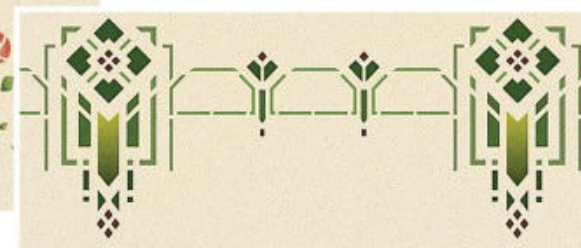
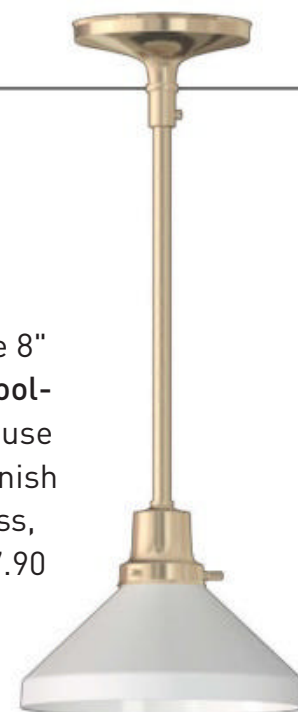




2

BE INSPIRED...

The Eastmoreland pendant with the 8" opal shade is a clean take on a **school-house fixture**, perfect for an old-house kitchen. Custom rod length, in 11 finish choices (shown in unlacquered brass, which will develop patina). It's \$317.90 as shown. rejuvenation.com



Arts & Crafts stencils by Helen Foster are an exclusive from Fair Oak Workshops. Designs include **rose patterns**, ginkgo leaves, woodland motifs (including a landscape frieze), geometrics, and **pendants**. Prices for the laser-cut polyester-film stencils range from \$26 to \$68. fairoak.com

3

The **retro Northstar line** of appliances by Elmira Stove Works lends a postwar look with state-of-the-art function. Ranges in 30" and 36" widths have gas/electric/dual options. Available in multiple retro colors; the Bisque (shown) is similar to the off-white enamel of the period. Chrome trim package offered. Model 1947P, 36", as shown: \$7,895. elmirastoveworks.com



4

Cafe curtains admit light and are easy to launder. The bowl on the island is vintage Fulper. A stenciled border adds a colorful period motif.





A Surprisingly Authentic Bath

The replicated, late-Victorian master bathroom is in an 1892 brick manse in St. Louis, Missouri. **Photos by William Wright**

When Gerry and Shirley Fisher moved to St. Louis, they knew what they wanted: an old house that needed restoration but that had period details largely intact. When they found this 1892 house—its transitional architecture a blend of Victorian chateau and early Colonial Revival—it fit the bill.

While the previous owner had begun restoration work, plenty remained to be done. Rooms were lit by inexpensive, hardware-store overhead fixtures. Baths had been replumbed and fitted with cheap, modern fixtures. The front-porch ceiling had been lowered to hide the P-trap from an antique rib-cage shower upstairs.

The owners set about restoring and furnishing rooms to look as if a comfortably situated, 19th-century family still lived here.

That original rib-cage shower had been relocated to the master bath by previous owners. Now, complementary antique fixtures include a pillbox toilet and a marble and nickel-plated console sink.



1. BATHROOM CURIOSITY

Once all the rage in homes of the well-to-do, rib-cage showers sent needles of water from a circle of bars to strike ribs, kidneys, and spine, stimulating circulation.

2. A CLAWFOOT BATHTUB

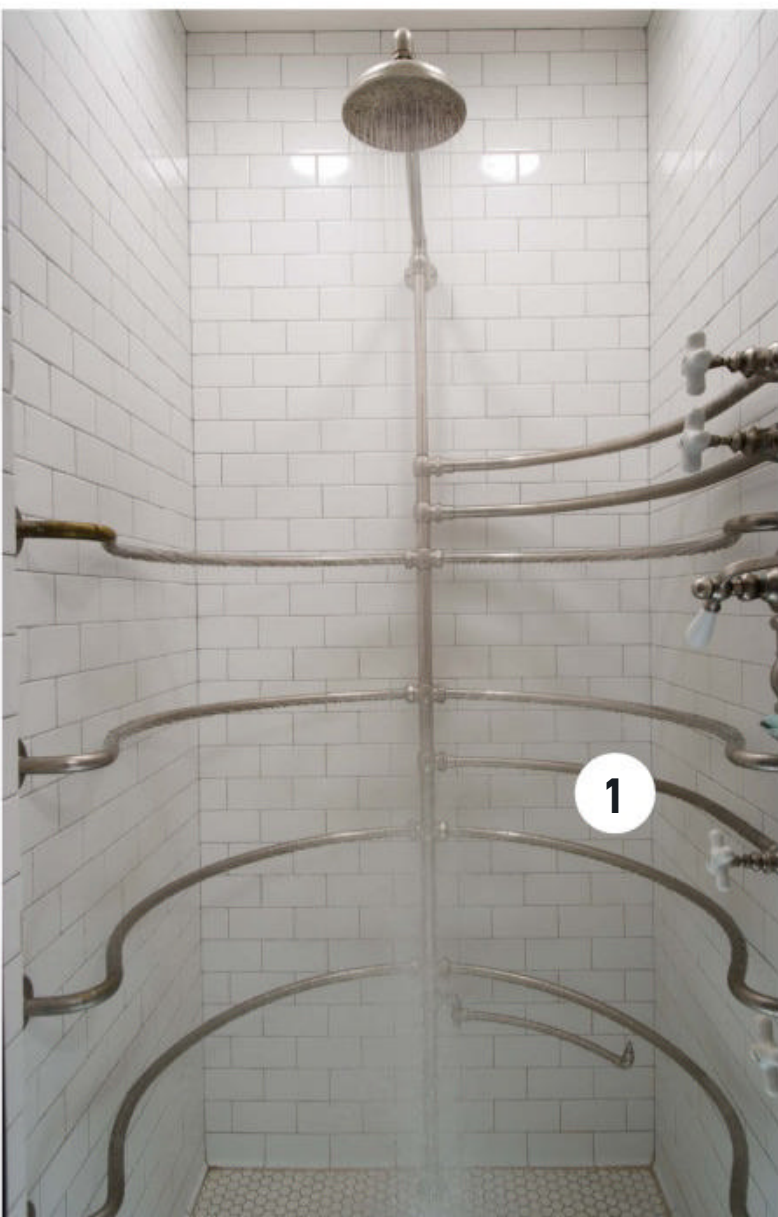
A tub normally would have been the third fixture in a bathroom ca. 1890–1930, but having a separate shower and tub was not unheard of—joined perhaps by a sitz bath and a dental sink.

3. WALL PROPORTIONS

A picture rail creates a frieze at the top of the wall, in period fashion. Wallpaper in the bath would have been unusual in the 1890s.

4. GASLIGHT ERA TRANSITION

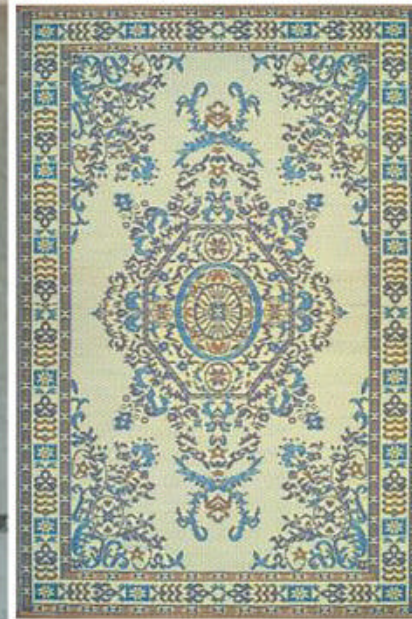
Electricity would have come to a city like St. Louis by the time this house was built; many fixtures, however, were made for both gas (shades up) and electricity (shades down), to cover unreliable service.





BE INSPIRED...

Vintage Hardware & Lighting offers this fully electrified, late-Victorian **gas/electric sconce**—practical in the bath, as it provides both ambient and direct lighting. Shown in unlacquered brass, it comes in other finishes, including nickel. Shades sold separately; \$245–295. vintagehardware.com

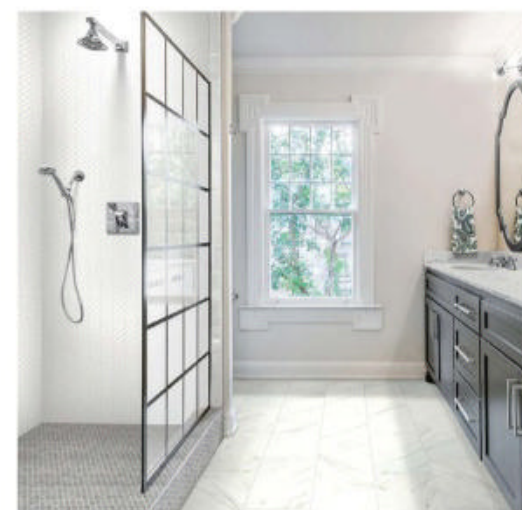


A wet bathroom is a good place for an outdoor rug. **Polypropylene rugs** are stain-resistant and easy to clean (no mold or mildew), won't fade from sunlight, and can handle high moisture and heavy foot traffic. This Persian design is handmade from recycled plastic. The 4' x 6' size is \$55. madmats.com

The Templeton Carrara Marble **Console Vanity** with a brass pedestal in polished nickel is from Kingston Brass. Wall-mounted with front legs, it comes with an under-mount sink installed, and predrilled holes for an 8" widespread faucet set. It's 36" by 22" and 38" high. The set has an MSRP of \$1,574.90. kingstonbrass.com



Marble slabs or mosaics are classic for bathroom floors. Get a similar look at much less cost (and less maintenance) with durable, **modern porcelain tile**. Daltile's marble-look RevoTile is a click-together flooring requiring no mortar or spacers. In 12 x 24-in. rectangles, available in a slip-resistant matte finish in five color families (shown: Carrara White RV50), it's \$4.99 per sq.ft. daltile.com



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LOOK AT THE INNOVATIONS IN HEATING AND COOLING—EVEN IF YOU ARE RENOVATING AN EXISTING HOUSE. **+ TWO PROJECTS**

page 36



Bringing up-to-the-minute heating and cooling systems to historic homes is on the upswing, as are energy savings.



36

MOVING TOWARD FOSSIL FREE: SAVINGS, LOWER EMISSIONS

Learn more about a new generation of heat pumps, condensing boilers, retrofitting ductwork, and more.

+

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54 ASK OHJ

A self-described early adopter, Kendall Christiansen previously had helped lead a movement to permit solar panels on the roofs in his historic Brooklyn row-house neighborhood. As his 35-year-old hot-water boiler neared the end of its life, it was a natural decision to convert to a more efficient heating and cooling system—one that was as close to fossil-free as possible.

Christiansen and his wife, Carol Shuchman, chose to replace the old hot-water boiler with a whole-house, air-source heat pump system. Commonly referred to as mini-splits and more accurately as inverter systems, air-source (or air-to-air) heat pumps run solely on electricity. Typically operating at lower temperatures than traditional forced-air or hot-water systems, they can be three to four times as efficient. Some work in temperatures as low as -20°F, too.

“They call them cold-climate heat pumps,” says Matt Crowley, the crew chief for Green Team Long Island, the installer for Christiansen’s 1910 limestone row house. He has seen a flood of residential and commercial customers moving to the all-electric heat pumps. “Basically, we try to get people off fossil fuels.”



INSET ABOVE Unused space near the ceiling of a short hallway turned out to be an ideal location for running a flexible duct running from the distribution unit to an outlet vent in the adjacent room.

MOVING toward



FOKUSIERT/ADOBE STOCK; JIM POLSON (INSET)



Changing energy markets and evolving technology make it possible to heat, cool, and ventilate homes of any age with (mostly) clean, all-electric power—and less of it. Heating home water, formerly an energy hog, is turning into an energy sipper, too.

BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

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No vents? No problem. New air-to-air and air-to-water inverter systems can be adapted to such homes as this 1910 limestone row house. **INSET** Air-to-air heat pumps mounted outside of historic buildings, such as these units from Fujitsu, are a sign of the times.

THE PRO TIP

A 2018 study in California found that air-source heat pumps could reduce household greenhouse-gas emissions from heating by as much as 54 percent. So besides homeowner savings on fuel costs, the environment also benefits.

→ **Once, we heated our homes with coal. Then came fuel oil, followed by natural gas. Now Americans are finding ways to heat and cool our homes without directly burning fossil fuels, sometimes without ties to any fossil fuels at all. We're saving money as well.**

A key feature of these HVAC systems is inverter technology that takes advantage of ambient air temperatures to heat and cool a house. They operate at cooler temperatures than a traditional forced-air furnace or hot-water boiler, so they use less energy. In addition, they are quieter and provide heating and cooling at a consistent level, without the stop-and-

start cycles of older HVAC systems.

One-off mini splits caught on initially because they could be used in locations that were completely ductless (think air handlers in restaurants in 100-year-old buildings). Later innovations allowed these heat pump-driven units to serve ducted buildings, particularly in new construction and renovation. Retrofitting a whole-house system into an existing dwelling such as the Christiansen row house, which has party walls and intact period millwork, and is completely ductless, was particularly challenging.

Inverter systems are powered by a compressor containing a condensing unit (the heat pump), typically installed outside the house. The Christiansen project required two such units. The heat pumps connect to distribution units strategically placed inside the house—usually just a few feet from the room(s) to be served.

Finding space for units roughly the size of a large, old-fashioned suitcase was essential to making the system work. Luckily, the ceilings were 11½' high, and there were plenty of closets as well as small, high-ceilinged passageways between larger rooms.

The installers created platforms in the top 2' or so of these closets and passageways, essentially creating small attics for the distribution units. (Because of the high placement, there was no sacrifice of usable space: a good thing, since one of the distribution units went in the pantry closet.) As the distribution nodes went in, other team members made strategic cuts and pushed flexible ductwork through walls that connected to outlet and return vents. Vents were cut into place without disturbing period wall trim.

The installation took nearly two weeks, but for Christiansen [text cont. on page 43]

ALL PHOTOS BY JIM POLSON (EXCEPT AS NOTED); KENDALL CHRISTIANSEN (OPP. BTM. RIGHT)

New Ducts

IN AN OLD HOUSE

→ When Kendall Christiansen and Carol Shuchman decided to add **a whole-house air-to-air HVAC system**, they had to **find space to accommodate distribution units, flexible ductwork, and inlet and outlet vents** without permanently disturbing the interior appearance of their 1910 limestone row house. The crew who installed the Fujitsu Halcyon system was able to work around most of the original period millwork and mouldings. Once installation was over, the couple had a long-time handyman repair and conceal any visible evidence of the work. “He knows how to make it look like it’s never been touched,” Christiansen says.



TOP The crew from Green Team Long Island opened up small spaces over doorways, in closets, and in halls to hang distribution units, which deliver conditioned air to adjacent rooms.

LEFT Owner Kendall Christiansen is seen in a short hallway between two bedrooms, where a distribution unit has been hung in place.

ABOVE An air-supply vent was placed in a ceiling cove, so as not to disturb original trimwork.

Find a Pro In some areas of the country, it's getting harder to find insulation contractors willing to blow cellulose insulation into exterior walls. Owens Corning has a handy "find a contractor" link to help you locate a full-service insulation pro (owenscorning.com/en-us/insulation/find-a-professional).

insulate first!

Converting an existing forced-air system to an inverter heat-pump system isn't necessarily straightforward, in an existing house. **First, consider that most inverter-based systems are going into well-insulated new construction**, where the entire system (furnace, piping, vents, and wall and ceiling units) can be designed for utmost efficiency. ■ **Then consider that the insulation in most older houses is spotty or nonexistent**, and existing ductwork may not be insulated. Since the heat produced by the furnace in an inverter system is significantly lower than a typical forced air system—110 degrees versus 135 degrees, for example—you're likely to get inadequate heat, or cold spots at the far reaches of the duct runs. Add to that, an inverter system must work harder to convert energy from the outside air when it's cold outside. **Have a contractor insulate areas where it's best able to keep cold or hot air out of the house.** In a cold climate, for example, insulate inside the perimeter of the foundation. In a hot climate, add insulation in the attic. **Be sure to insulate functioning ductwork, too.**



ABOVE Knauf's ECOSE glasswool insulation is made from recycled glass bottles.

Air-to-Water HEAT

Your house not a good fit for an air-to-air heat-pump system? Consider an air-to-water heat pump to supplement the heat, supply hot water in summer, and bring air conditioning to your home.

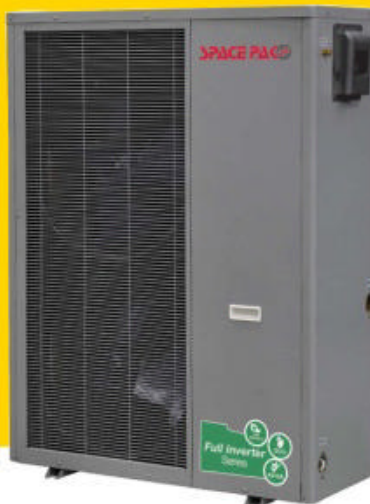
Air-to-water heat pumps work similarly to air-to-air heat pumps, except that the low-temperature heat extracted from the outdoor air is used to heat water inside a hydronic condenser before delivering it indoors. These are an ideal retrofit for any hydronic HVAC system designed for low water temperatures, such as newer hydronic baseboard or in-floor radiant systems. But they are not a seamless retrofit for older high-temperature boilers, says Jim Bashford, national sales and training manager for SpacePak, which has offered Solstice air-to-water systems since 2011.

That said, air-to-water heat pumps can make a significant difference in both comfort and cost as a supplement to existing heating systems, while

adding all-important air conditioning in the summer months. (They can also supply hot water during the warm season.) In shoulder seasons, a heat pump allows you to turn an older forced-air or hot-water boiler down, from, say, 140 to 120 degrees. That way, the boiler doesn't kick on when the temp drops below 60°—the heat pump does. The difference can be significant in areas where fuel oil or propane heating bills run \$500 to \$1,000 per month. "If I only have to run my expensive heating source six weeks out of the year, instead of four months," Bashford says, "that's a considerable savings." He recently installed an air-to-water system to supplement a

propane heater in his home in New York's Hudson Valley. His propane use dropped by four-fifths, saving him several hundred dollars per month. His electric bill increased by only about \$20 per month.

LEFT SpacePak's SIM-060 Solstice inverter heat pump is 30 percent more efficient than conventional heat pumps and can interface with any hydronic heating system.



THE PRO TIP

Condensing boilers save energy by heating water to the lowest temperature necessary. Outdoor sensors direct the boiler to increase or decrease water temperature depending on weather changes.

For The Next Hundred Years

When Bill Ticineto and Jill Chase moved into a rambling 1894 shingled cottage in northwest Connecticut a few years ago, there was little to no insulation and the house was heated with convector steam radiators. The house had all the charm they could desire, but that first winter was miserable. The convection units got hot quickly, but lacking thermal mass, they cooled off as soon as the heat source stopped. Installing interior compression windows from Indow in especially drafty locations helped, but the couple knew they were looking at a major heating-system overhaul.

They began by insulating the entire house, and ended with the installation of a state-of-the-art Viessmann condensing boiler that can also supply domestic hot water. “We were

able to use the existing hot/cold pipes from the previous steam system,” Ticineto says, “which saved a lot of money.”

The new condensing boiler is a two-pipe system with four zones. The boiler uses an exterior thermostat to monitor and predict future heat demand, keeping the heat in the house both consistent and comfortable. Ticineto and Chase very much wanted to install period-look radiators—the house appears never to have had any—and found a source from Castrads, which makes cast-iron radiators in England and sells them in the U.S.

The upfront expense ran into tens of thousands of dollars, but Ticineto says it was worth it. “The house maintained an even temperature all winter, no hot spots, no noise, and the fuel bills were very reasonable.”



Besides that, fuel costs for heat, hot water, cooking, and even the clothes dryer dropped to less than 25 percent of the first winter’s heating bill. That means the couple are on track to recoup their outlay in 10 years or sooner. “I don’t think I could be happier with the radiators and new heating system. It has performed better than I expected,” Ticineto reports.

ABOVE A portion of the new Viessmann system in the Ticineto/Chase basement includes an Amtrol Extrol expansion tank to handle thermal water expansion. Red knobs control heat flow to individual radiators.

TOP Bill Ticineto and Jill Chase had foundry-cast radiators, made in England, installed in their 1894 home. This is the Grace design.

TOOLS + MATERIALS

energy savers *Modern upgrades to keep the house comfortable year-round.*

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Museum-grade interior acrylic compression windows block drafts and noise, and also filter out 98 percent of damaging UV rays. These nearly invisible windows offer the same clarity as standard-grade interior storms and are easy to install. \$39 per sq. ft. and up. Free estimates. Indow, (503) 284-2260, indowwindows.com

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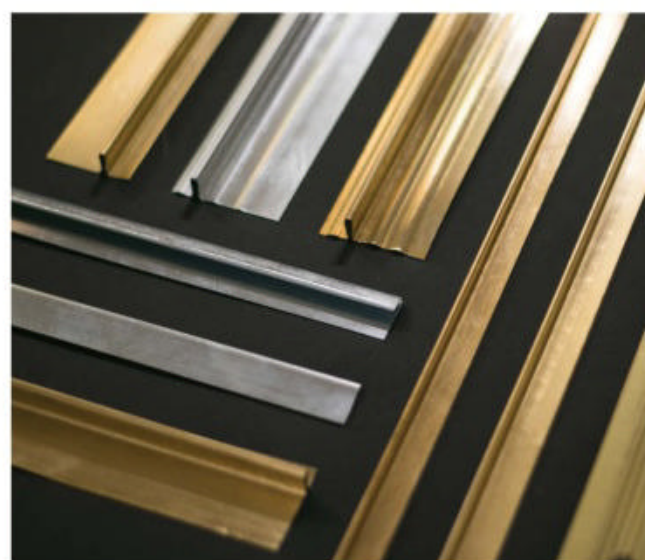
Power outages are increasingly common nationwide. One of the quietest backup generators, the Guardian 18kW keeps lights and appliances powered during an outage, or whole-house coverage when paired with a load-shedding switch. Wi-Fi-enabled; runs on propane. \$4,239 and up. Generac, (888) 436-3722, generac.com

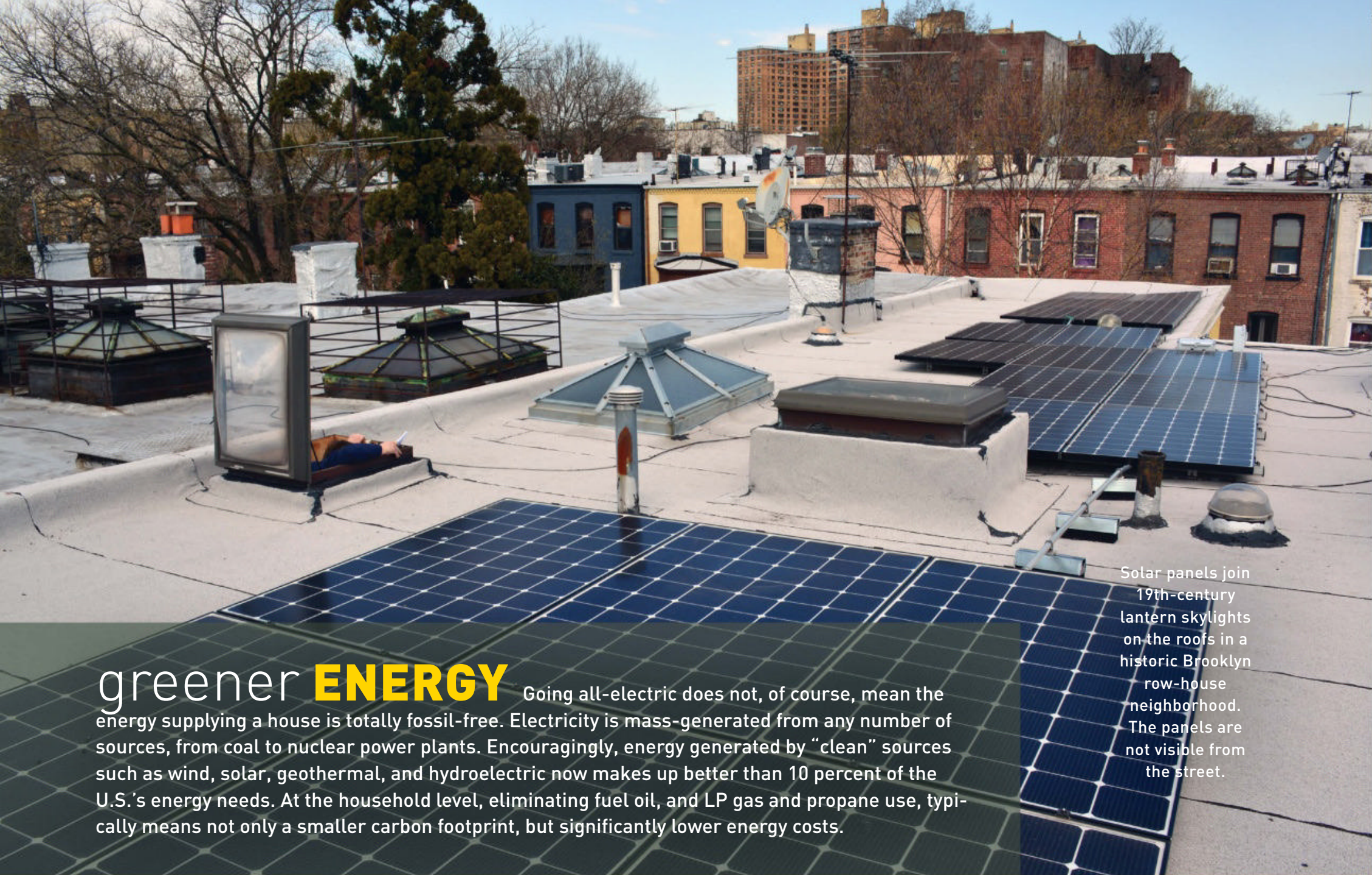
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greener **ENERGY**

Going all-electric does not, of course, mean the energy supplying a house is totally fossil-free. Electricity is mass-generated from any number of sources, from coal to nuclear power plants. Encouragingly, energy generated by “clean” sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, and hydroelectric now makes up better than 10 percent of the U.S.’s energy needs. At the household level, eliminating fuel oil, and LP gas and propane use, typically means not only a smaller carbon footprint, but significantly lower energy costs.

Solar panels join 19th-century lantern skylights on the roofs in a historic Brooklyn row-house neighborhood. The panels are not visible from the street.

Since inverter heat pumps transfer heat from one place to another rather than generate it through combustion of fossil fuels, they’re **up to four times more efficient than a natural-gas furnace**. They usually come with higher upfront equipment and installation costs, up to three or four times the cost of simply replacing a furnace or boiler. Still, the U.S. Dept. of Energy estimates a low-temp heat pump can save a homeowner hundreds of dollars a year.

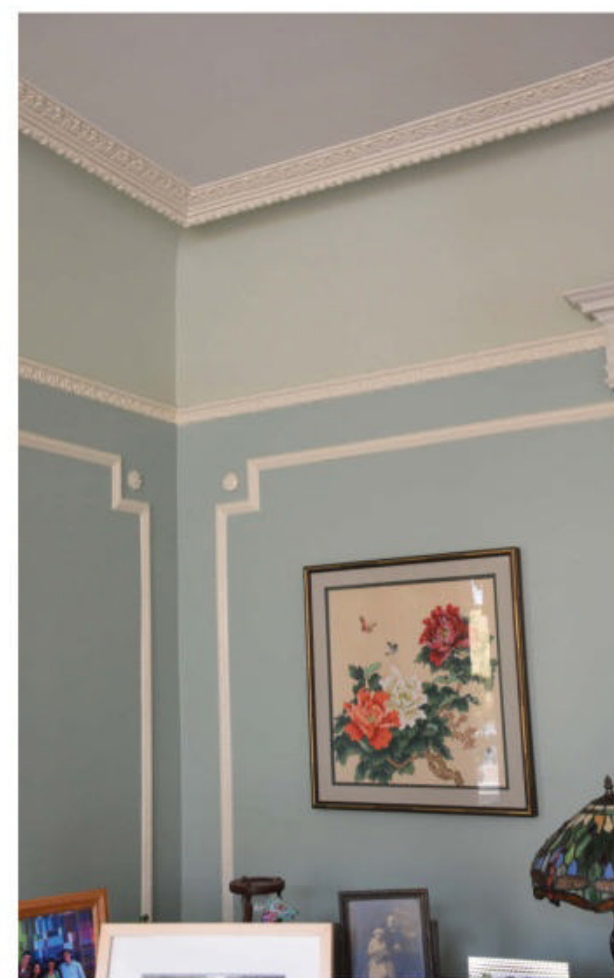
and Shuchman, the benefits were many. Not only did they get a substantial tax rebate from the state of New York (rebates can range from a few hundred to thousands of dollars, depending on location), but also the new setup supplies air conditioning as well as heating. For years, Christiansen had laboriously installed and removed five window air conditioners each season, plus two floor units. “We both work from home so this should be a great improvement over those,” he says.

As part of the system upgrade, he swapped out an existing 60-gallon water

heater for a 65-gallon combination boiler that can supplement the air-source heat pump. He’d previously installed solar panels on the roof, which had already significantly cut into power bills.

Although Christiansen and Shuchman have spent less than a year with the new system, they can tell that it’s saving them money. And “summer comfort has been outstanding,” Christiansen reports.

As for the existing, historic radiators in the house, the couple decided to keep them as a decorative nod to the past. The five window air conditioners are nowhere in sight.



ABOVE A priority for the Brooklyn couple was that the installers leave period millwork intact.



Caring for Silverplate

Whether the design is Rococo, Aesthetic, or Art Deco, silverplate is collectible—and needs care. **By Brian D. Coleman**



Decorative silverplate was a staple in Victorian households of the 19th century, and popular into the 20th century. It describes flatware and hollowware with an electroplated outer layer of silver on a base metal, usually nickel or copper. Quite functional and good-looking, silverplate was produced in a wide range of styles and designs, and might be found in every room.

Nicole Mullen and Daniel Calderon, curators at the San Francisco Airport Museum, recently mounted a fascinating exhibition of Victorian silverplate, giving us a tantalizing glimpse into

the beauty of its design. We asked the Museum's talented conservator Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz how to clean and polish silverplate properly. Her guidelines follow.

1. Examine Carefully

The first step, Alisa explains, is to take a good look at the piece and decide if it truly needs polishing—or not. Every time a piece is polished, a little bit of the surface silver is removed. This wears down engraving or surface details, and may eventually wear down the plating layer.

2. Make a Plan

Next, assess the piece to identify any problem areas: plate lifting, structural issues such as dents or loose components, pitting, old coatings, hollows, or detachable areas. Look for moisture-sensitive components—wood, ivory, or perhaps textiles, such as those lining jewelry caskets—to plan how to avoid contact between these materials and the metal-polishing compound. See if the area can be unscrewed or removed; otherwise, try to slip a thin plastic sheet between the metal and adjacent material. Don't use tape, as this may damage surfaces.

sterling vs. silverplate

Sterling silver is 92.5% pure silver; the percentage is stamped on the back, along with the maker's hallmark. (In some countries, "sterling" may contain just 80% silver.) Sterling silver has been used most often in jewelry, tableware, and coins. **Silverplate is the term used for base metal that has been electroplated with a very thin layer of silver.** The process dates to about 1850 and is done the same way today. **Look for stamps on the bottom: "silver plate"; "EP" (electroplate); "EPNS" (electroplated nickel silver).** No stamp at all probably means silverplate. Silverplate has no melting value in the precious-metals market, but antique silverplate is collectible, and decorative pieces are highly sought.

STORING YOUR SILVER

Good storage conditions and handling practices are the best way to keep silver or silverplate shiny after polishing. If the piece will be stored and not on display, wrap it in tarnish-inhibiting cloth made for silver, then place it into a sealed plastic (Mylar or polyethylene) bag. Avoid storage in a damp location such as basements or bathrooms. When handling, use gloves to prevent fingerprints and subsequent tarnish.

airport museum

The SFO Museum was founded in 1980 by the Airport Commission to “humanize the airport environment” through exhibitions of material culture in the public spaces of San Francisco Airport. It has grown to include 25 galleries in all four SFO terminals, gaining an international reputation for its broad-ranging and often unexpected subjects—from Zuber panoramic wallpaper to women’s hair styles. It is complemented by the Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum & Library, which opened in 2000 in the new International Terminal, in a facility modeled on the original 1937 passenger waiting room.



OPPOSITE Museum conservator Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz at work cleaning and polishing a silverplate water pitcher.

ABOVE Elaborate Victorian silverplate in the exhibition included the author’s own Aurora lemonade set with hand-decorated pitcher and tumblers (late 19th century).

BOTTOM LEFT The author’s ice-water urn set (1880–91) and decorated lemonade set, on display. **BELOW** The silver-plated stork, an antique newel-post light, was part of the exhibition at the SFO Museum.





Dye roll imprinting of decoration was perfected during the 19th century, allowing designs to cover surfaces from edge to edge. Complicated patterns could be had at reasonable cost. Tiffany's "Japanese" was an early Anglo-Japanese design. **Place settings became outrageously complex.**



ABOVE Precipitated calcium carbonate in water and ethanol, plus cotton swabs, are used for cleaning and polishing.

BELOW (left to right) Before polishing, the pitcher is dull and heavily tarnished. • Conservator Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz uses a cotton swab with a gentle polishing compound to clean the pitcher. • The water pitcher shines after careful polishing.

Alisa also looks for such features as inlays or recessed decoration where a polishing compound could become lodged. She approaches the tarnished area carefully and slowly, using a limited amount of polish and working with a swab sized appropriately for the area.

3. Clean Thoroughly

Following a thorough assessment, the polishing process begins. Any residues of previous polishing compounds are removed first as they may be abrasive and scratch the silver. Alisa likes to use a simple solution of equal parts distilled water and ethanol, applying it with a cotton swab to keep any residue confined to as small an area as possible.

4. Polish with a Close Eye

If the tarnish is mild, or she is concerned about old polishing compound lodged in hard-to-reach areas, Alisa will sometimes just use a silver polishing cloth. These are much less abrasive than polishing compounds, yet can be very effective on lightly tarnished pieces.

Alisa likes to make her own polish-

ing compound. She makes a slurry using precipitated calcium carbonate and equal parts of distilled water and ethanol. She applies it with cotton swabs, or sometimes with soft cloths or a soft disposable wipe, which also works well as an applicator. She keeps a close eye on the surface of the piece as she works, watching out for scratching. She feels the applicator to ensure there is no grit on it. Any problems and the polishing stops.

Alisa replaces the polishing compound if it begins to dry out or forms clumps, both of which can cause scratching. She also replaces the applicator regularly. When she has finished polishing, Alisa removes any residue with a 1:1 water and ethanol solution, using a cotton swab or soft cloth.

5. Finish Up

She finishes with a very light water light rinse to remove any final polish. Alisa is careful not to submerge the piece, or even rinse too heavily, especially if there are wood, ivory, or textile components, or hollows where water could pool. A gentle drying with a soft cloth is usually all that's needed for the silverplate to shine.





ABOVE A burled-walnut sideboard in the author's Victorian dining room sparkles with 19th-century silverplate and jewel-tone glass and ceramics.

COLLECTING TIPS

Prices range from under \$50 to thousands for pieces by Gorham and Tiffany.

- **Knowledge is power.** Good reference books include *The Victorian Dining Room* by Brian D. Coleman (Schiffer, 2003); and *American Silverplate* by Dorothy T. Rainwater (Schiffer, 2000).
- **Have fun:** Collect whatever beautiful or unusual pieces you enjoy, as you can find everything from figural **soup tureens** to **mustache curlers!**
- **Find your own conservator** or ask a question at the American Institute for Conservation website: culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator • The Institute also has a set of downloadable guides for people who want to care for their objects: culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/caring-for-your-treasures Find conservation tips, as well as storage and environmental-conditions guidelines.

FOR MORE RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 87.

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SALVAGE IT



A Furnished Bath

This elegant bathroom has fixture panels fabricated from parts of a Victorian armoire. **By Brian D. Coleman**



When Rick and Mary Lou Ponder bought their 1886 house in St. Louis, a priority was the poorly remodeled master bath, which had purple paint and a green tile floor. They kept the clawfoot tub and, inspired by an 1888 plumbing catalog, decided to surround it with paneling. Then they found an antique toilet and marble sink. At Shellenberger Architectural Antiques in York, Penn., they bought a huge (9'7" tall x 10'2" wide), burlled-walnut armoire. Disassembled, it would provide all the parts needed.

The Cost

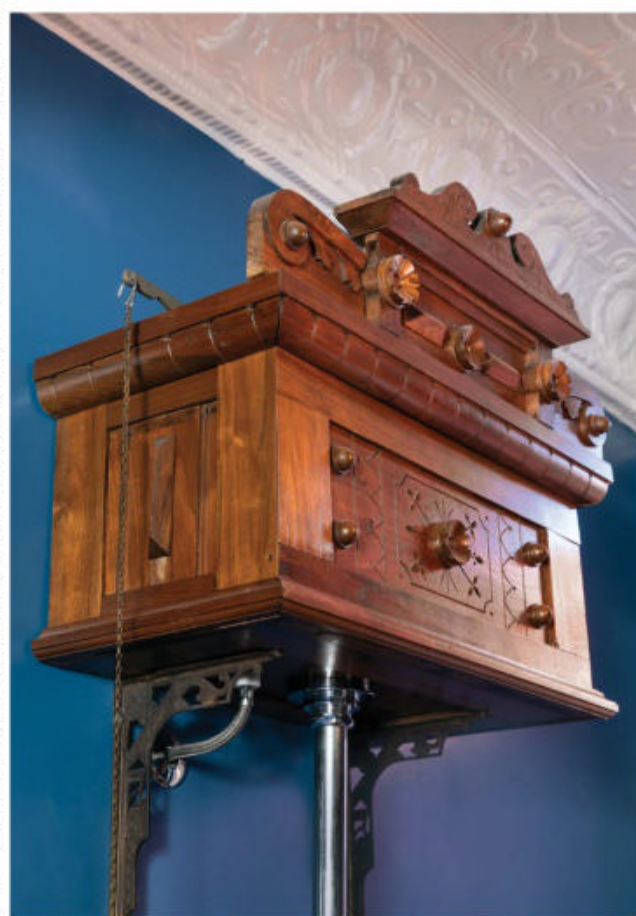
ARMOIRE	\$1,800
STRIPPER	\$30
WIRE BRUSH	\$10
DEFT LACQUER	\$20
GORILLA GLUE	\$10
SCREWS	\$5
MISC. SUPPLIES	\$25

TOTAL \$1,900

disassembly & refinishing

Working on his patio to avoid toxic fumes, Rick Ponder first loosened the armoire's joints, using white vinegar that had been heated in a microwave oven. He gently separated the doors and side panels. After disassembly, parts were stripped using a semi-paste stripper from Sherwin-Williams (using a wire brush, scrapers, and steel wool). The wood was sanded with fine-grit paper, dusted with a soft brush, and wiped with a dry tack cloth.

The stripped paneling was finished with four coats of Deft Spray Lacquer (the wood lightly sanded and wiped with a tack cloth between coats).



WILLIAM WRIGHT

reconstruction

Rick measured the dimensions for the tub, then cut panels with a radial arm saw, to construct a 29" tall x 70" wide (room-width) panel for the front, and 15" tall x 20" long panels for the back and sides. He glued it up with Gorilla Wood Glue and secured the panels with 2" wood screws. As the tub was several inches shorter than the panels, Rick had set it on wood blocks secured to the floor with 5" wood screws, which raised it to the lip of the surround.

A three-sided enclosure was made for the high toilet tank (26" wide x 13" tall x 12" deep). Decorative, carved crests had been above the armoire's doors, but they were 6" too wide for the tank enclosure, so Rick remade them. He removed the carvings with hot vinegar, shortened the back piece, then refastened the carved flowers and balls to it by gluing and clamping. The intact armoire mirror was recycled to become the mirror over the vanity. He secured it through to the wall studs using wood screws, and similarly shortened the other crest to be used here.

Finished now with a tin wainscot and ceiling, a hobnail-glass library light fixture, salvaged encaustic floor tiles, and an antique ruby-glass window, the room is an elegant nod to the 1880s.

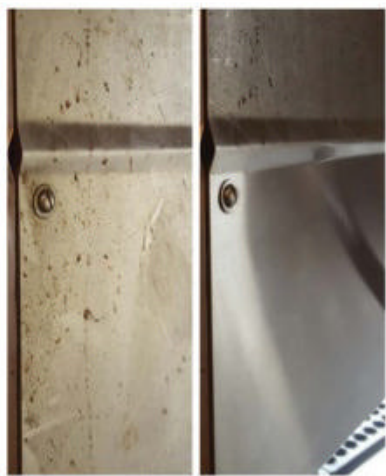


ABOVE Perhaps waiting for a new life: a late-19th-century piece, from Olde Good Things.



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Leather Care and Cleaning

Expert advice on how to keep leather furniture looking its best. **By Lynn Elliott**

CLEANING LEATHER

Dust the piece with a microfiber cloth, then vacuum using the soft brush attachment and the crevice tool. With distilled

water, lightly dampen a clean microfiber cloth and wipe the upholstery. Don't

soak the leather—make sure the cloth is well-wrung. Aged or neglected leather may require more intensive

cleaning. You might try adding a small amount of a neutral-pH liquid soap (e.g., Neutrogena) or a cleanser specifically made for leather upholstery. Don't oversaturate leather. Wipe with a new cloth dampened with distilled water, and dry with a clean cloth.

CONDITIONING LEATHER

Using a leather cream keeps leather pliable to prevent cracking and chipping. "If cracks have started, you can't make them go away, but you can prevent them from getting worse," says Jobson. "Moisturizing the leather softens the cracked edges and makes them less likely to tear further."

How often should leather be conditioned? "It's about the use of the object," says Dennis Blaine of Restoration Preservation Conservation Products, which offers museum-grade

"All leather ages, and darkens with oils from people's skin," notes Jason Jobson, co-owner of Christophe Pourny Studio, which makes leather-care products. "We refer to that as patina, and it can add character and value." Still, leather furniture can become dry, stained, or scratched, as well as dirty. • First, know what type of leather it is. These tips generally apply to protected (treated) leather, which is most often used for upholstery. It has a uniform appearance with some sheen. Unprotected leather requires professional cleaning. Avoid such homespun treatments as mayonnaise. Also avoid waxes and silicone, unless the furniture manufacturer calls for leather wax.

Renaissance Wax and more.

"A piece that gets daily use requires more attention." Conditioning leather once a year with a leather cream keeps it supple, but leather furniture used daily will need to be treated every six months." Leather in very dry environments may also need more frequent conditioning.

To condition a piece, apply a thin coating of leather cream with a clean microfiber cloth. If you are working with wax, "allow the fibers to move the wax over the object," Blaine recommends. "The key is to apply it sparingly. Don't fill in the cracks—let the cloth glide over them. Don't let the wax dry." Work in sections and buff immediately with another clean cloth. Keep leather furniture out of direct sunlight and away from heat vents.

REMOVING STAINS

Wipe up any liquid spill immediately with a clean absorbent cloth to prevent staining. For a light stain such as a water ring, dab on warm soapy water and then blot with a damp, clean cloth. For darker stains like wine, apply a small amount of rubbing alcohol to a clean white cotton



cloth and lightly rub in a circular motion.

Then condition with a leather cream or wax to even out the look. Ink stains from newsprint may be treated the same way.

Indelible ink from markers usually can't be removed. For oily stains, Jobson recommends applying talcum powder to the stain and letting it sit overnight; it acts as a poultice to draw the oil out of the leather. Wipe or vacuum the powder off.

Greasy stains and discoloration from body oil may be blotted with a dry cloth (no water). The "stain" will eventually dissipate into the leather.

DEALING WITH SCRATCHES

Very light scratches can often be buffed out with your fingers. For minor scratches, try buffing gently with chamois cloth. Apply leather cream or wax over the piece, if needed, and buff with a clean cloth.



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Resurfacing Spalled Brick

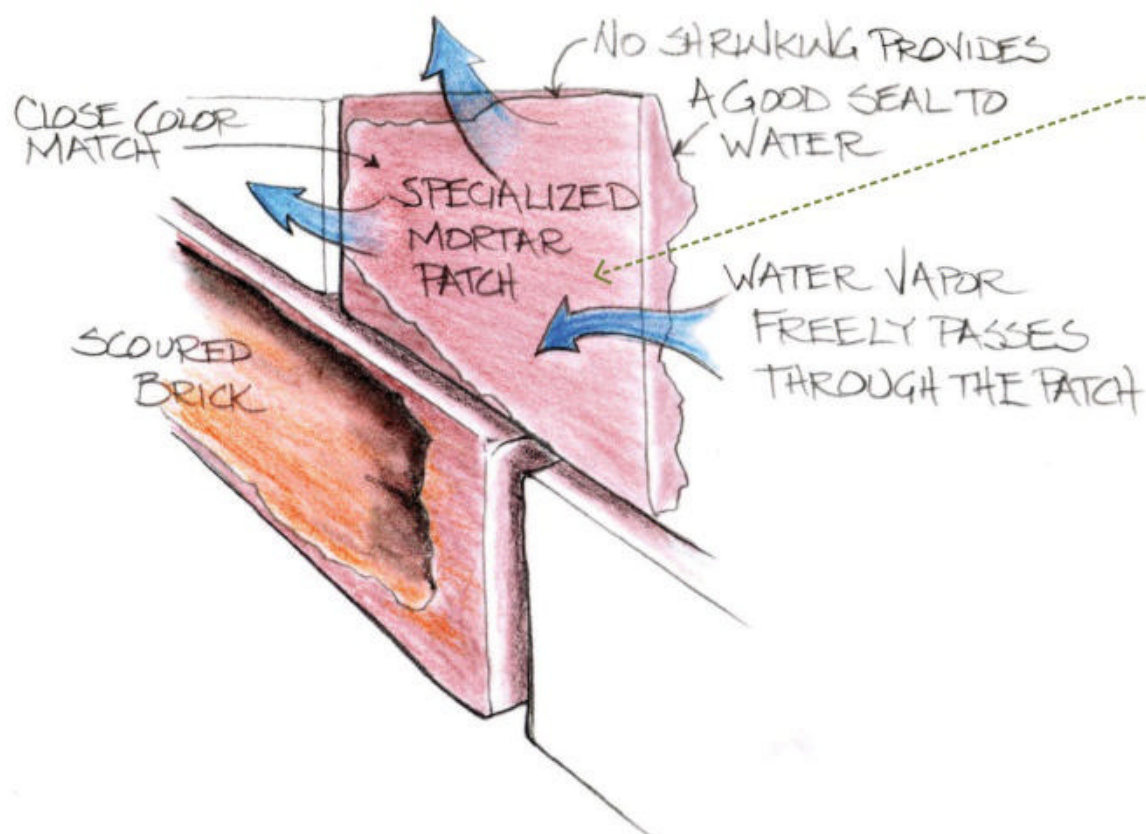
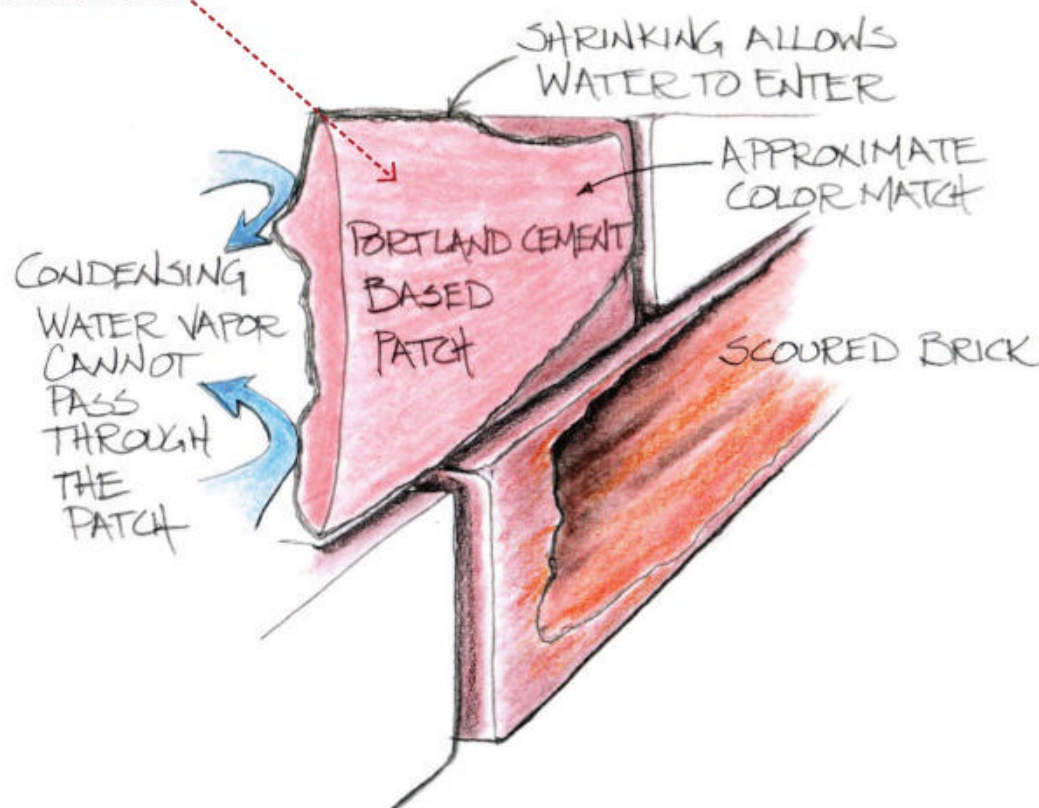
Older (softer) bricks may be damaged if repointed with Portland cement-based mortar. Water vapor can't pass through modern mortar, so moisture passes through the brick. Spalling (fragments of brick falling off) happens when the vapor condenses to liquid water and then freezes. Or, as it evaporates, it may leave behind crystallizing salts that can crack the brick surface. Spalling also occurs when brickwork is painted with oil-based or heavy "masonry" paints that aren't permeable. Finally, older bricks scoured by wind and rain may develop surface cavities once the outer "fireskin" has worn away.

A contractor sandblasting brick to remove paint accelerates the process. **By Ray Tschoepe**

WRONG WAY

HARD MORTAR FOR PATCHING

If you aren't aware of water vapor-permeable mortars, it seems simple enough to grab a bag of modern Portland cement-based mortar at the home center. Investing several hours in mixing the mortar with coloring agents may even yield an approximate match to your bricks. In the end, though, the longevity of the patch is limited by the use of the wrong material from the start.



RIGHT WAY

USE PERMEABLE MORTAR

Most of the time, three repair options present themselves. The spalled bricks can be removed and new ones installed in their place. Sometimes, bricks can be removed and rotated so that the previously interior (intact) face is now to the weather. More commonly, a mortar will be applied to fill in the cavities. Be sure to use a "breathable" mortar—that is, one that will allow passage of water vapor. Several companies, including LimeWorks, Jahn, Masonre, and Keim, supply appropriate mortars in colors for older brickwork.

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53



LEFT & BELOW The reader's heirloom is a drop-front, slant-top desk-on-frame.

BOTTOM The slant-top desk can be removed from the base.



Q: Family lore says that this desk dates to the 18th century. It is a slant-top desk-on-frame, and looks remarkably like one in your online article “History of the Desk,” by Brian Coleman. The two desks are different from any others I’ve seen. We know ours has been in the family for three-plus generations, passed down from a branch that came to Virginia in the 1600s. What may be the original key is attached to the underside of the bottom drawer. We’d appreciate anything you can tell us. —*Tammar Paynter*

A: Brian Coleman consulted early-American furniture collector and expert Tony Inson, who provided the following insights: These small writing desks on stands were made to be portable; the desk and its frame are separate pieces, so the top could be lifted off. Some have leather handles or bails on the side. A larger version of a lap desk, they were sometimes used on ships or in military campaigns.

Your example dates from the first quarter of the 19th century, likely 1810–20. The rope or spiral motif was most often found on New England pieces, occasionally on the legs of furniture from New York or Virginia. Analyze the wood (see an online app) to determine its origins: Southern yellow pine would indicate it is from Virginia, while white pine or tulip poplar would suggest it’s from the Northeast. The glass knobs look to be original, as this was a common type of hardware on furniture of the period. The value of the desk is determined by its condition; similar desks run from \$500 to \$1,500 at auction.



Our Cape Cod-style home was built in 1945. We see our wood mantel on greeting cards and behind governors speaking from their home offices on TV. We have no clue who mass-produced these mantels; do you know?

—*John Thomas, Waukesha, Wisc.*

I found it! Or one just like it, because several companies undoubtedly offered similar. The one below is from the 1940 Curtis catalog; Curtis was a large network of millworks that sold retail and through builders. The photo shows a Curtis Colonial Mantel, C-6057, in pine. That might be their paint-grade; your unpainted mantel may be stained pine or poplar or some other wood. It’s not oak; I doubt it’s a hardwood. The moulding on each side near the top that turns an angle is called a shoulder or an ear, a popular treatment in Georgian and Federal millwork.

Coincidentally, illustrations from the Curtis 1917 woodwork catalog are shown in this issue, on p. 28. —*Patricia Poore*





Have a Question?

Ask us at ppooore@aimmedia.com.

I recently bought this house, built in 1896, which has been referred to as “Victorian Gothic.” Can you tell me more?

—Sandy Jardine, Fillmore, Utah



Nationwide, Gothic Revival (less common than the Italianate and Queen Anne styles) spanned about 1840 to 1865, with a revival of interest in the 1870s and a spillover built later outside of major centers. Looking into Victorian houses in Utah, I found plenty of Gothic examples in brick with shingles in the gable, most dating to the 1870s.

I see where *your* Gothic label comes from: a very steep roof and spindle brackets under the main gable. But other Victorian Gothic Revival hallmarks are missing, such as a steep, centered (or double) dormer, bargeboard trim (along the eave rakes in the gable), lancet or hood-moulded windows. I see lingering Queen Anne influence. McAlester’s *Field Guide* would call this a gable-and-wing Folk Victorian. The gable-and-wing form is “folk” or vernacular and common 1870–1910. Most ornament is on the porch—spandrels that might be used on any number of Victorian styles. If the Gothic label holds charm, call it late Reformed Gothic or Eastlake.

You say you want to keep the house authentic. Make friends with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office: history.utah.gov/shpo/. Look for a town historian—someone from a local museum, or who gives walking tours. Have fun! —Patricia Poore

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a kitchen. **page 68**

A 19th-century, British tall-case clock stands beside a period plein-air painting in what was the firefighters' bunkroom. This vintage vase and two floor lamps feature herons.

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58

A SMALL HOME FULL OF CHARACTER

Built in 1925, the house was drab at first view—but this DIY owner saw the potential. **+ DUTCH COLONIAL STYLE**

68

THE RESCUE OF PORTLAND'S FIREHOUSE 17

Adaptive reuse of a firehouse led to a design vision bold, unique, and personal. **+ VINTAGE LIGHTING AS ART**

OLD HOUSE JOURNAL

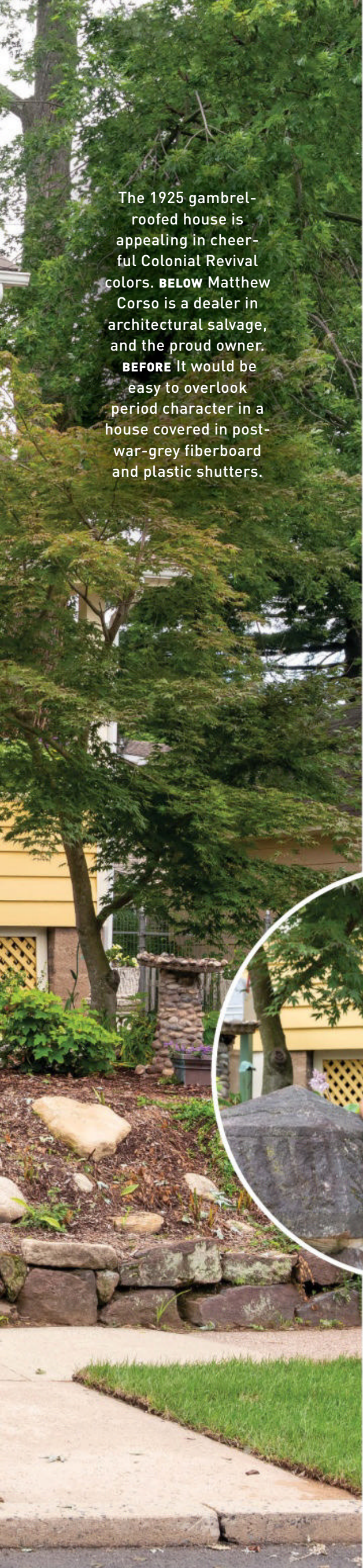


READER FAVORITE

BEST DIY RESTORATION

2021





The 1925 gambrel-roofed house is appealing in cheerful Colonial Revival colors. **BELOW** Matthew Corso is a dealer in architectural salvage, and the proud owner. **BEFORE** It would be easy to overlook period character in a house covered in post-war-grey fiberboard and plastic shutters.

“**W**HEN IS A HOUSE MAGAZINE-READY?” Matthew Corso asked, with hesitation. He’d shared some photos while inquiring about a salvaged mantel.

His kitchen was just about done, and we couldn’t help but notice the integrity of the design. Corso has spent the past four years rehabilitating and restoring a 1925 Dutch Colonial Revival house in Westwood, New Jersey. • “It’s coming along as I’d dreamed, and it will be worth it in the end,” he said. “I’ve been working like a dog on the kitchen. The Hoosier cabinet needed painting and adjusting, new linoleum shelf liners needed to be cut from the massive roll I got on FB Marketplace, and I painted the 1946 refrigerator.” • A few months later, he was working on getting the house furnished. Through much of the project, Corso lived with his parents in a town not far away. Motivated by a power outage there, he moved in during the pandemic shutdown. We got a call from him: “Three years, four months, 24 days—and I finally slept here!” He promised the house would be shelf paper-ready by the time of our scheduled photo shoot.

Smaller homes like this 1920s Dutch Colonial so often get overlooked as worthy of restoration. Owners don’t think they’re special ... or they add on or remodel until the original is unrecognizable. This owner saw the potential.

A HOME FULL OF CHARACTER

BY PATRICIA POORE / PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRIDLEY + GRAVES



ABOVE Two “Sears catalog-type” 1920s chairs, now reupholstered, were bestowed by the previous owners. The art lamp is gilded spelter or white metal with fiery orange slag-glass panels. The settle is antique Limbert. Antique portieres drape the wide, cased opening to the dining room. **BELOW** The small office is fitted out in antiques and vintage wall art.



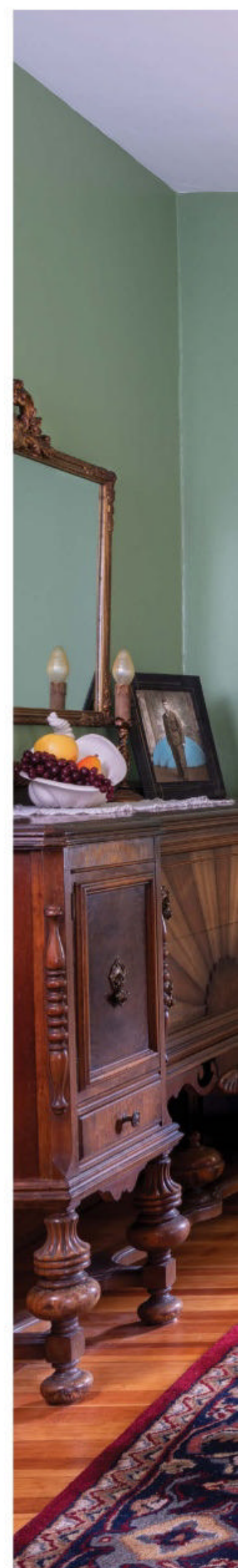
“I FOUND IT CHARMING,” Matthew Corso remembers, “except for the garage and landscaping.” Built during a housing boom in the Twenties, the Dutch Colonial is in an eclectic neighborhood of working-class, Depression-era houses: Colonial Revivals, a few bungalows, and Tudors. Infills tend to be postwar traditional.

“When I went looking for a house,” Corso shares, “I had two things in mind: that it be close to family, and that it be a manageable project involving a house with character intact. I knew a man, years ago, who made a very decent living but always said that owning a small, manageable house let him enjoy it; he never lost his shirt on the cost of maintenance.

“I decided to heed his advice and so far, so good. I’m single, so much more house would be silly. And I was able to do most of the work myself, including restoration of 25 windows.” A high-school guidance counselor, Corso makes a bit of extra money for the house by buying and reselling antique lighting and salvage.

Corso delved into its history. He met and spent time with an octogenarian woman named Barbara (Jussen) Olson, whose family owned the house ca. 1938–1959. Corso had already become friendly with the previous owners, the Leavy family, who’d lived here from 1959 until 2017. “Tom Leavy even helped me with some small projects, and he’s become a great friend,” Matt says. They gave him a few furnishings that had been in the house for decades, including two upholstered chairs.

“I took one chair to the curb after they declined to take it,”



EVOKING AN ERA

A mix of Colonial Revival and Arts & Crafts pieces suits the house's time period. Roller shades, appropriate for the era, dress windows: "I find window treatments to be so hard!" says the owner.

You can almost hear FDR on the radio, in the dining room outfitted with a Depression-era set from an estate sale. The case pieces have a sunrise motif. The light fixture was new old stock, in its original box.



TOP The Hoosier-type cabinet with curves and porthole vents satisfied the owner's lust for an Art Moderne piece. Its countertop is the original green marbled linoleum. **ABOVE** The 1946 Frigidaire "has been purring like a kitten since the end of WWII." It was scrubbed and painted with a Benjamin Moore appliance paint that has held up admirably.

a modest KITCHEN

"My idea was to create a period kitchen using vintage parts. It had to go with the vibe of the house, yet be functional: I wasn't going back to a small oven on legs and an icebox.

"Woodwork and windows are original. The rest had become a hodge-podge, with no per-

manent cabinetry and a 1970s fridge in front of a window. I pulled up layers of Congoleum and vinyl and sanded the heart-pine subfloor. That apparent heat register in the ceiling is actually an access hole for upstairs plumbing.

"I added a Moderne cabi-

net found on Craigslist, and reconfigured an unworkable pantry with salvaged upper and lower built-ins. The Murphy's Cabranette 1939 sink unit has integrated refrigeration on the bottom left. The cabinets over the stove were salvaged from another house"—*Matt Corso*

ABOVE LEFT The new kitchen is designed as if the original had evolved with the house. The porcelain-enamel sink cabinet has a small refrigerator. The 1943 Western Holly double-oven stove came out of a house in Amityville, N.Y.



THAT JADEITE GREEN

"I love Vitrolite [glass panels]; it goes with porcelain-enamel and linoleum, and it's easy to clean," raves the owner. "It's period and yet modern. Show me one old house where that green doesn't pop!"



Once behind a door, the pantry area was rebuilt with salvaged cabinets. The backsplash is salvaged jadeite Vitrolite glass panels; the owner rented an SUV to drive them home from a mansion in Indianapolis, "because I'm nuts," he laughs.



LEFT The ca. 1920s brass bed has heft. The side table is part of a late-30s waterfall set. **BELOW** With a box newel and square spindles, the oak staircase is more Craftsman than Colonial. The magazine stand is probably by Miller Furniture of Rochester, N.Y.



ABOVE Tiny and perfect, the retro bathroom was restored with vintage fixtures and inlaid Marmoleum flooring. The medicine cabinet is original to the house.

Matt says, “but then I didn’t have the heart to let it go ... I knew it’d belonged to their grandfather and had been in the house for about 50 years. After looking at modern recliners, I decided to reupholster the old one.” Soon an antique Limbert settle, bought at the Elephant’s Trunk flea market (etflea.com), joined the chairs. Everything else in the house is an estate-sale find or came from his own family.

Previous families had loved the house and done minimal modernizing— “close to none, actually. But that’s exactly what drew me to the house. It was so original. Only the kitchen and lone bathroom needed to be overhauled.

“This experience was stressful yet amazing,” says Corso, who may have caught the restoration bug. His brother Mike is restoring a 1902 Colonial nearby, and his brother Joe would like to join Matt in restoring an investment property. “Meantime, I’m staying here; 1100 square feet is plenty,” Matt says. “I’ll host my big family from time to time, and maybe it’ll be a little cramped. If they complain, I’ll just remind them that our fondest memories come from when 50 of us were jammed into the basement of a railroad apartment in our family’s 19th-century house in Jersey City ... What everyone wouldn’t give to spend one more Christmas Eve down there, eating fried fish and waiting for Santa.”

A typical, early-20th-century Dutch Colonial-style house with side porch extensions, a long dormer and a cambered entry portico, and cutout shutters.



DUTCH COLONIAL REVIVAL

NOSTALGIC AND BELOVED, THE STYLE EVOLVED BETWEEN THE 1880s AND 1940. **By Patricia Poore**

➔ Although there's hardly anything Dutch, or colonial, about this house style, it is universally recognized by its distinctive gambrel roof. Neither the first wave of architect-designed "cottages," nor the modest and symmetrical houses built in 1920s suburbs, were actually revivals. Instead, they represent a new, albeit nostalgic, type.

The double-pitched roof was grafted onto everything from tiny houses to impressive two-storey manors. Some houses have elements in common with Craftsman style; others feature such neoclassical details

as Greek columns, Palladian windows, or Adamesque mantels. Unlike more academic revivals, the pleasantly informal Dutch Colonial reminds us of farmhouses and barns. Houses are clad in stucco,

hand-split shingles, clapboard, and brick—as were the vernacular originals.

The gambrel roof isn't typical of houses in Holland. Furthermore, straight-sided gambrels were built in Colonial New England. But the double-pitched roof—especially those with flared eaves—will always be associated with the Dutch (and Flemish, Huguenot, or German) rural settlements of Long Island, New Jersey, and the Hudson River Valley. When such noted architects as Aymar Embury II and Wilson Eyre incorporated gambrel roofs



into their sprawling, large but informal “cottages” for wealthy clients, a so-called Dutch Colonial revival began.

Dark paint in the 1880s—shingles stained walnut brown or dark red—gave way to light and white exteriors in the 1920s. (Through the ’teens, colors imitated the aged red sandstone, whitewash, green oxide of copper, orangey iron oxide, and mildewed shingles of the originals.) For the body color, drab yellow, greys and greens, and Delft blue were popular, and by the ’20s exterior trim was lighter than the body, often painted in a warm white

or creamy yellow. A punch of color was reserved for the shutters or blinds; that dull blue–green used for a hundred years approximated early green pigments after they had aged. Dutch Colonial houses are associated with cottage shutters, with a sawn-cutout crescent, diamond, heart, acorn, heraldic shield, etc.

The architect-designed houses built before World War I have a lot in common with the Shingle Style, another modern adaptation of Colonial-era building forms. Not so the symmetrical, suburban Dutch Colonials built during the 1920s and 1930s. A one-storey wing appended to one or both ends saw use as a breakfast room or carport, later a garage. The old-fashioned, so-called Dutch door made a comeback. Builders loved the historical associations, however tenuous, and buyers loved the sweet informality. Sears was a major promoter, featuring 10 or more “Dutch Colonial” kit houses.

Dutch Colonials show up in suburbs coast to coast, but the style was especially popular, not surprisingly, in Dutch-settled New Jersey, where the 1960s brought another wave of gambrel roofs.

LEFT (clockwise from top left) Craftsman and Colonial Revival influences on a 1920s house in Indiana. • A simple swag treatment emphasizes handsome trim in a Dutch Colonial house. • An early Dutch house in Kingston, N.Y., is given a Colonial Revival treatment. **RIGHT** A picturesque brick example, in N.J.; note the entry stoop. **BELOW** Joists were exposed and walls clad in T&G boards during restoration of a ca. 1900 Dutch Colonial house in Cooperstown, N.Y. The salvaged mantel is from the Federal period. Furnishings date to the early 20th century.



the HALLMARKS

- **GAMBREL ROOF** The broken-pitch roof is the defining feature of any Dutch Colonial house built after 1880.
- **DORMER** Houses of the revival period almost always have dormers—or a single, long dormer—to provide more usable square feet upstairs.

- **ENTRY STOOP** Houses without a porch often have an entry with a cambered (arched) or projecting roof over the door and, typically, facing benches. It’s sometimes called a stoop, which, like the front steps on New York townhouses, comes from the Dutch *stoep*.

- **COLONIAL REVIVAL DETAILS** Look for neoclassical (Georgian, Federal) elements in windows, porches, and interior trim. Paneled shutters are popular, including those with a cutout motif such as an acorn, a pine tree, or a sailboat.

- **SIDE WINGS** Early Dutch houses were often added to laterally through the years. The Dutch Colonials of the revival period, however, had projecting wings right from the start: a pergola-porch, a sunroom, or a one-car garage.

JEAN KALLINA; WILLIAM WRIGHT (TOP MIDDLE); GROSS & DALEY PHOTO (BTM. RIGHT)



interiors

Iconographic “colonial” items such as a Windsor chair or spinning wheel might be set against William Morris wallpaper and the odd piece of Stickley furniture. Period photos show that a mix of Empire, Queen Anne, and Craftsman furniture was typical; consider true antiques, Flemish furniture, Colonial Revival rockers, and reproduction William and Mary, Sheraton, and Chippendale pieces. Painted furniture had motifs of flowers and medallions. Householders mixed in upholstered chairs, even willow. But Victorian furniture was never more *out* of style than in these houses.

The Colonial Revival mantel and corner cupboard are ubiquitous. Woodwork was often painted in a glossy off-white know as Colonial Ivory. Polished wood floors with scatter rugs are a Colonial Revival convention. The almost-modern houses lend themselves to treatments both informal and traditional. One example has hewn beams and country furniture; the next, a Sheraton dining room with formal drapery. In some areas, houses were built with more fidelity to original Dutch dwellings, and historical rooms can offer inspiration.

BOOKSHELF

Of general interest are books about Colonial Revival and, for houses 1904–1918, Arts & Crafts houses and interiors. More specifically:

• **THE COLONIAL REVIVAL HOUSE** by Richard Guy Wilson: Abrams 2004. A sweeping treatment of the Colonial Revival and its motifs, from Shingle Style to suburban houses. Good background in the period’s architecture and decorative arts, with 275 photos for inspiration.

• **DUTCH COLONIAL HOMES IN AMERICA** by Roderick Blackburn, photographs by Geoffrey Gross: Rizzoli 2002. The only serious recent study of 17th- and 18th-century Dutch houses in New York and New Jersey. Beautiful photos provide insight into the originals.

• **BEYOND THE BUNGALOW** by Paul Duchscherer and Linda Svendsen: Gibbs Smith 2005. This book of lavish photographs includes other houses of the bungalow period: chalets, Foursquares, and English and Colonial Revivals.

Dutch Colonials

The Dutch Colonial predated other, more formal Colonial Revivals, starting in the 1880s. This nostalgic and pleasing architectural style remained popular for decades.



DUTCH COLONIAL

ca. 1915

A new suburban style of the early 20th century, these houses were often built as symmetrical, three- or five-bay houses with a double-pile plan inside: two rooms on each side of a center hall.



SUBURBAN DUTCH COLONIAL

ca. 1923

On narrow lots, the gambrel end could face the street. In this not-uncommon example, the side wall is continuously framed; the second-floor extension is not really a dormer, the “gambrel” a decorative effect.



FLEMISH GAMBREL

ca. 1690–1720

From another era entirely: With its atypical flared eaves, the Jacobus Demarest house in Bergen County, N.J., is a model for later Dutch Colonial houses. The prominent Demarest family were Dutch Huguenots.



Firehouse Engine 17 again has two apparatus bays that replicate the originals. Iron hinges and door hardware were reproduced from similar, intact firehouses. Cream-color brick provides interest.

The Rescue of Portland's **FIREHOUSE 17**

IN WHAT BECAME THE PROJECT OF A LIFETIME, THE REHABILITATION OF A 1912 FIREHOUSE IS ADAPTIVE REUSE WITH HEART AND SOUL. DECOMMISSIONED IN 1968, ALLOWED TO DETERIORATE AND LATER REMODELED, THE OLD FIREHOUSE HAD BEEN BUILT DURING THE DAYS OF HORSE-DRAWN ENGINES. THE PROJECT WAS SPEARHEADED BY RESTORATION CONSULTANT KARLA PEARLSTEIN, IN PORTLAND, OREGON. SHE NOW CALLS THE FIREHOUSE HOME. **BY DONNA PIZZI / PHOTOGRAPHS BY BLACKSTONE EDGE STUDIOS**

OLD HOUSE JOURNAL



READER FAVORITE

PROFESSIONAL
RENOVATION

2021

The original staircase was buried beneath a residential version built in 1984. The black iron risers are original; treads are new. New beadboard walls flank the staircase, joining intact tiled wainscot in the apparatus-bay walls.

Original fir
wainscoting
found in the firefighters'
Day Room was replicated
for the former bunkroom,
now a cozy living space.

Owner Karla Pearlstein moved away from her initial plan to use only Arts & Crafts furniture, adding more playful "Buckaroo" Monterey furniture of the 1930s. Found at Revival Antiques in Pasadena, furniture features scalloped edges, metal straps, and whimsical paintings.



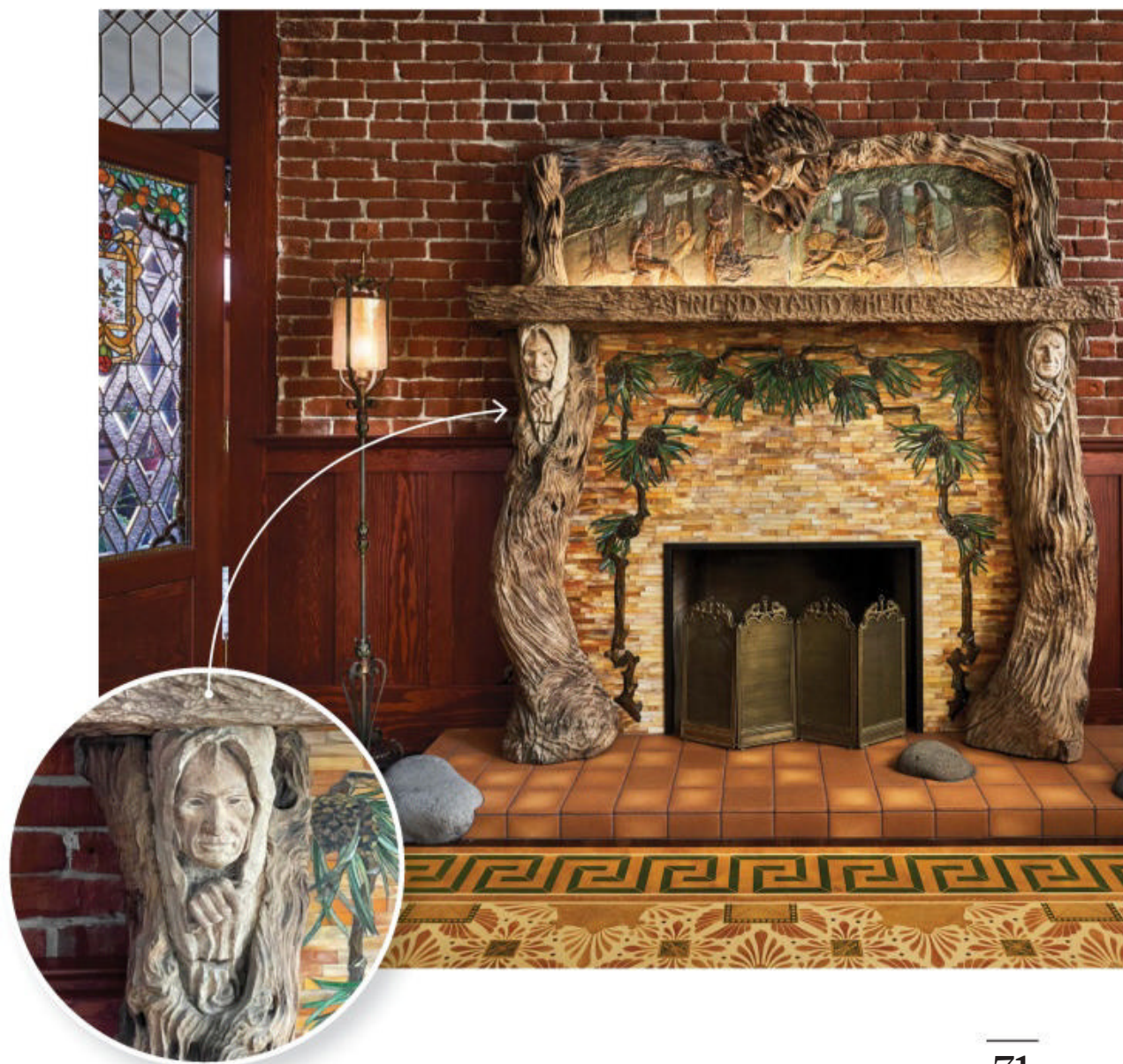
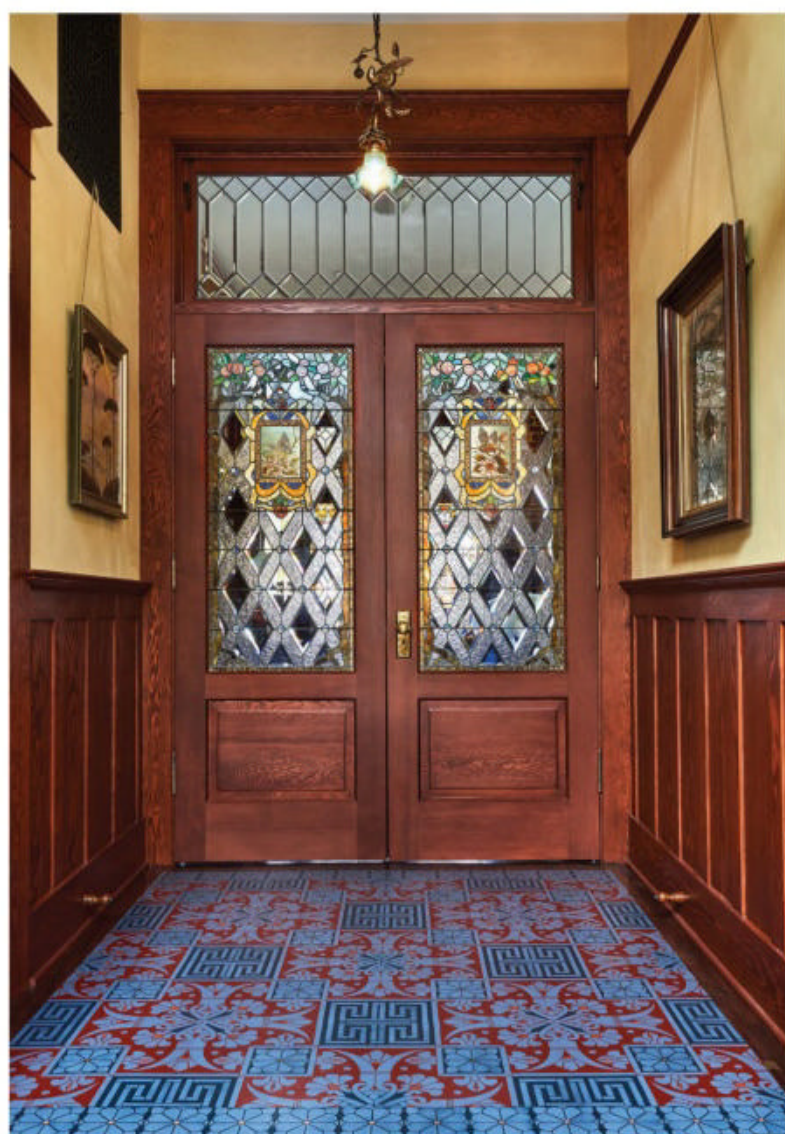
t took a devoted team to rehabilitate and restore Portland's Firehouse 17. Previously remodeled as a residence in the 1980s, the building had been stripped of much original material, and other elements covered over. A few years ago, it was slated to become four separate units, which would further degrade its history. Karla Pearlstein, a serial restorer and preservation consultant, stepped up, albeit with some reluctance. She was buoyed by collaborator Matthew Roman, a designer, who calls this restoration “one of the pre-eminent projects of my career.” Roman recruited Patrick O’Neill, of Greenline Fine Woodworking, to be general contractor. The project ultimately would win the DeMuro Award for Excellence in Preservation, Re-use, and Community Revitalization.

Firehouse Engine Company 17 was designed by then-Battalion Chief Lee Gray Holden, designer of 24 Portland firehouses and Fire Bureau Chief from 1923 to 1927. Built in 1912, this one featured dual bays



ABOVE Refurbished fire poles are protected by a gate and Plexiglass to protect the cats. The heron lamp is from Allen’s Antique Lighting.

BELOW The original firefighters’ Day Room features a ca. 1880s, carved plaster of Paris mantelpiece, depicting hunter trappers meeting Native Americans. The pine-motif surround is a commissioned mosaic by Theodore Ellison. **BOTTOM** New doors feature David Schlicker stained glass and vintage British painted birds on glass.





Using vintage machines, Monitor Millwork re-created the double-hung windows throughout the firehouse. Box beams feared to be particle-board were discovered to be fir after the paint was stripped. Walls and ceiling are of unpainted, tinted plaster.



FLOORCLOTHS as practical art

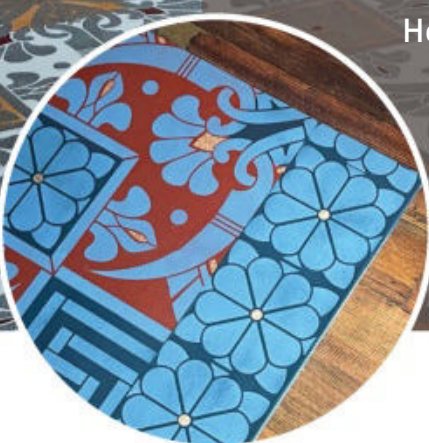
It was this restoration that gave birth to Ariel Grace Design, the custom floorcloth company that offers Late Victorian and Arts & Crafts patterns.

Homeowner/designer Karla Pearlstein is co-owner with floorcloth designer and artist Gwen Jones. Jones had long been attracted to the iconic British designer Christopher Dresser through his 1875 book *Studies in*

Design. She shared it with Pearlstein and “Karla had the excellent idea to use Dresser’s patterns to connect the overall aesthetic through floorcloths.”

“Floorcloths are nice underfoot,” Pearlstein adds; “they are long-lasting and so much cleaner than carpets.”

These are not modern-day printed plastic. Ariel Grace Design uses high-quality cotton duck and a traditional process with multiple finish coats.





to accommodate a horse-drawn steam pumper and ladder truck. Five horses were stabled on the ground floor, and six to eight firemen slept in the second-floor bunkroom. The firehouse was motorized in the 1920s, decommissioned by 1968; used only as a storage warehouse, it fell into disrepair. In 1984, the previous owner adapted it for a private residence. Meeting code requirements proved more important than aesthetics. He enclosed the staircase, demolished the recessed bay,

and removed original windows. Modern “parquet floors” were installed over the original fir. Oddly inappropriate Palladian windows and contemporary stair rails were added. Pearlstein would discover fir wainscoting obscured when a handball court was added in the Day Room.

Pearlstein praises the previous owner for daring to take on a building that had gone to rack and ruin. “But his answer was to strip it. The approach became ‘Colonial Revival Meets Victoriana.’”

Pearlstein’s team discovered the firehouse had cracked down the middle, as its foundation was built on fill from excavation in 1912. Matthew Roman had a 42” hole cut in the foundation to allow a small rig to remove the poor soil conditions and build a tunnel between a new basement and the old one. Steel pilings prevent seismic movement. An elevator now travels from the basement to the main floor and to a staircase that rises to a roof deck.

Donovan Harding of Monitor Millwork

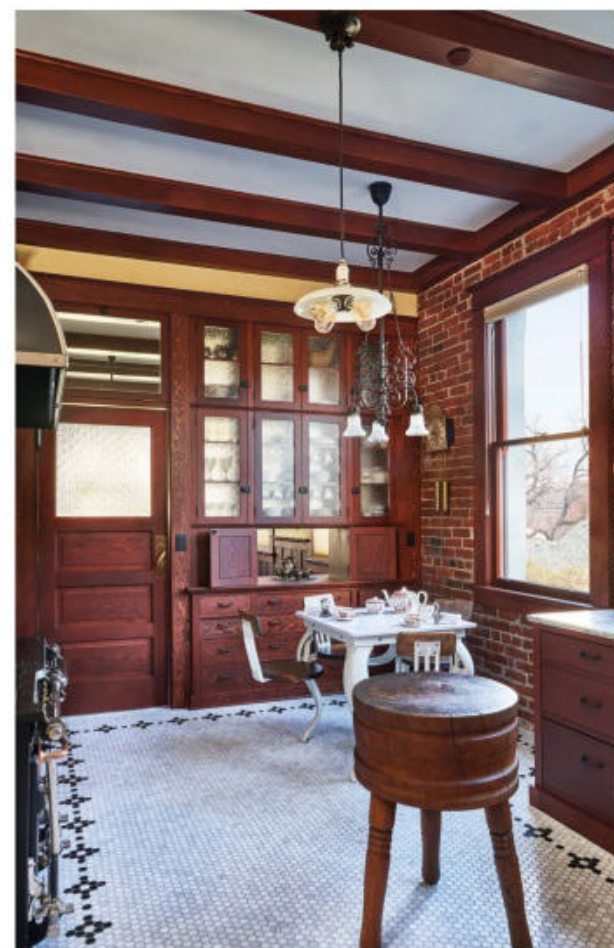


AUTHENTIC DESIGN

The antique pewter sink came from the owner's collection of salvage. The refrigerator is clad in a faux front of ammonia-fumed oak, with vintage hardware. Cabinets are flat-sawn fir with Florentine-glass inserts.



LEFT Vintage and salvaged parts are part of the period-design kitchen. **ABOVE** Finding it hard to come by ceramic tile without the modern pillowed edge, the designers used marble tile from Home Depot; it was also cost-effective. **RIGHT** (top) The previous owner had gutted and drywalled this area for a laundry. The new pantry is a meticulous evocation of 1912 cabinet design. (below) A new floor-to-ceiling bank of cabinets includes a pass-through to the dining room. **BOTTOM** This 1917 Vulcan stove came with its original hood. (Kate Winslet cooked on it in HBO's "Mildred Pierce" biopic series.)



There's a story behind every piece, salvaged or new. In the bath, cut glass rescued from a demolition site is a work of art that would have required technical skill and finesse.

has three contemporaneous machines—an 1898 chain mortiser, plus a ca. 1900 sash sticker and a single-end tenoner—which enabled him to replicate windows from a single intact original. “Finish carpentry, vintage plumbing traps ... staying historic was crucial,” O’Neill says. “We researched and consulted rather than make things up.” To comply with residential codes, the 1980s owner had buried the original staircase beneath a new one. But, by installing NFPA 13 sprinklers and adding a back stair, this team was able to restore the original staircase and still meet code requirements.

“THE KITCHEN is where the firehouse showers and locker rooms used to be, so there’s not much storage,” says Karla Pearlstein. “We created a pantry area that keeps the main kitchen uncluttered.”

Replicating that wainscoting found in the Day Room, Pearlstein transformed the former bunkroom into a cozy space replete with 1930s “Buckaroo” Monterey furniture and restored fire poles. Flooring was taken back to the original fir, and durable custom floorcloths were made to disguise imperfections while adding an Aesthetic Movement design note and anchoring the palette.

In her work, Karla Pearlstein has collected architectural antiques; most find a home with clients. For decades, she’d been storing an 1880s mantelpiece, made of carved plaster of Paris, which she bought at a Midwest auction. Now with a glass mosaic by Theodore Ellison, it is the focal point of the former Day Room.



ABOVE The mosaic wraps around the curved sink cabinet. **INSET** Bret Hodgert of Old Portland Hardware rescued the cut glass: “The artisan would’ve had to hoist it on pulleys and reposition it onto the wheel to cut the intricate work.” **BELOW** This floorcloth was inspired by an 1889 wallpaper catalog ceiling pattern. Arts & Crafts furnishings are re-issues.



ANTIQUE LIGHTING AS ART

A LIFETIME OF UNUSUAL FINDS FURNISHES THE FIREHOUSE.



Serial restorer and preservation design consultant Karla Pearlstein (restoringhistory.com) has amassed an inventory of antique and vintage pieces, for clients and for her various homes. Objects run from Art Nouveau metalwork to rolls of never-hung wallpaper. In the firehouse, her latest and most ambitious renovation, arguably the oddest piece is a plaster of Paris mantel with Native American portrait heads (previous story).

Nevertheless, it's Karla's collection of lighting fixtures that constitutes the most remarkable cache. Her previous house, dating to the 1860s, was lit chiefly by gaslight-era fixtures: Rococo designs in brass and zinc. Fixtures in this house are from the early electric era, which produced some of the most unusual and whimsical and downright strange designs. No longer was there a need to account for the gas line and open flame!

Historical revivalism was in full swing. Take the multi-tier fixture that hangs over the main staircase. It's a chunk-jewel chandelier of the Arts & Crafts period, ca. 1910. The closer you look, the more details you see. It's organic, old-world, medieval. The art-glass shades were made by Steuben Glass in Corning, New York. The piece was almost certainly designed for an entry with a high ceiling or a stairwell.

Pearlstein has found beautiful pieces even on eBay. The sconce (above center)

is a Handel piece, ca. 1905, with a slag-glass shade and metal overlay. The glass is painted and fired: "It has tremendous fire in it," Pearlstein says. It hangs from a bold, hammered metal plate.

More often, her vintage and antique lighting comes from Cindy and Chris Allen of Allen's Antique Lighting in Massachusetts. The tiered chandelier in the stairwell; a Beardslee chandelier with blossom-shaped pumpkin-glass shades—original patina in mint condition (top left); the tall floor lamp depicting herons amidst reeds (p. 71): all came from the Allens. Other antique lighting sources include Marie Gauthier's

Revival Antiques, and Old Portland Hardware & Architectural.

Everything in the firehouse has a history. Besides the plaster mantelpiece and lighting, another quirky furnishing is the breakfast table in the kitchen, with a milk-glass top and porcelain-on-cast iron legs; it came from a 1920s ice-cream parlor.

LEFT (top to bottom) Signed "Beardslee Chicago," the ca. 1910 Art Nouveau chandelier has seven Quezal pumpkin-color glass shades. • Sunroom sconces depict winged dragons holding lanterns. • In the bath, a diminutive pair of gilt-bronze figural swan sconces dates to ca. 1900; they're fitted with hand-blown Floriform shades. • Pearlstein couldn't resist this quirky horned lamp, found in Marie Gauthier's Revival Antiques (Pasadena). **ABOVE** The Handel sconce with a hammered metal plate was found on eBay.





Over the main stair hangs an Arts & Crafts chunk-jewel chandelier, ca. 1910. Irregular amber "jewels" glow when lit. Planished metalwork feels organic.

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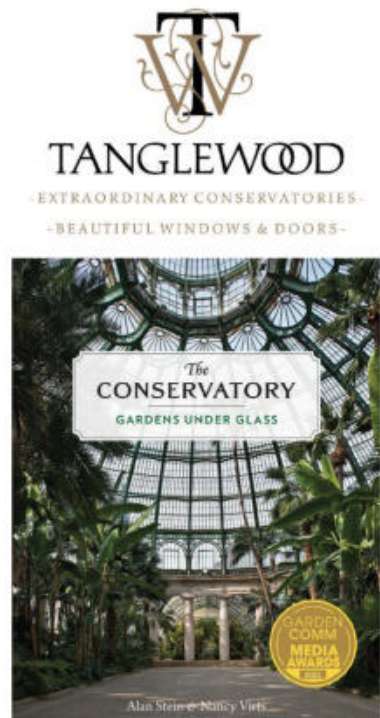
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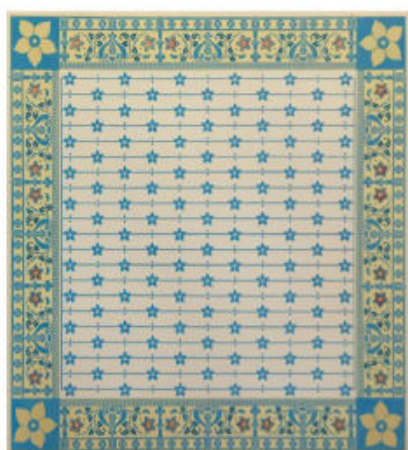
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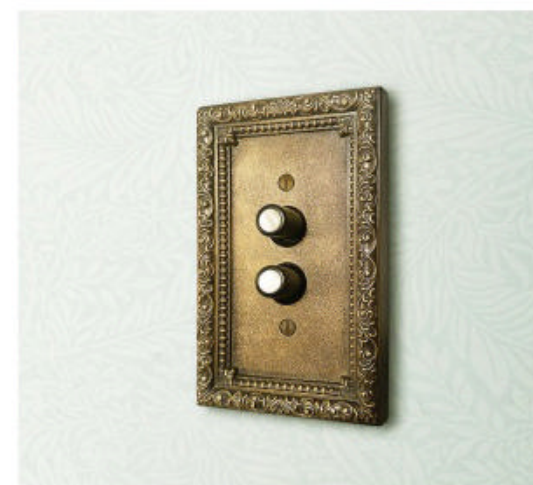
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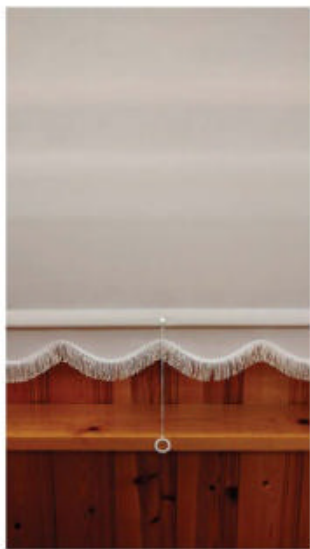
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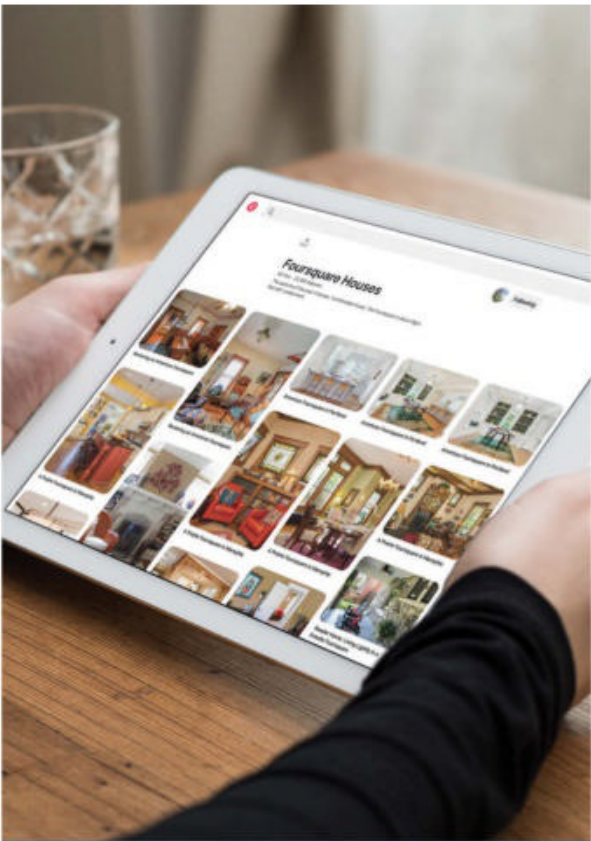
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p. 20 **DESIGN** Amy Mitchell, **Home Glow Design**, New England: homeglowdesign.com
WALLPAPER 'Chenonceau' **F. Schumacher** fschumacher.com
p. 23 **MODERN LIGHTING** Artemide 'Logico' suspension chandelier artemide.net **RE-ISSUED FURNITURE** Stickley stickley.com
EARLY LIGHTING Period Lighting Fixtures periodlighting.com
p. 24 **DESIGNERS** Peregrine Design/Build, Vermont: peregrinedesignbuild.com • **Kitchen Cove Cabinetry & Design**, Portland, Maine: kitchencove design.com
p. 25 **WALLPAPER** 'Arbutus' **Morris & Co.** morrisandco.sandersondesigngroup.com
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DESIGN Matthew Roman Design roman-design.com
CONTRACTORS Patrick O'Neill, **Greenline Fine Woodworking** greenlinefw.com • (doors & windows) Donovan Harding, **Monitor Millwork** monitormillwork.com
FURNITURE (Monterey antiques) Marie Gauthier, **Revival Antiques**, Pasadena, CA: revivalantiques.com
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“I’ll never understand the thinking behind doing something like this,” says a resident of the Nebraska town. Whether on a historical or an aesthetic basis, most of us would sympathize with her feelings. The Victorian house, built in 1894, made it to the year 2000 more-or-less intact. Then it was given a facelift meant to maximize interior space at the lowest cost. Vinyl siding was undoubtedly sold as maintenance-free.

In a higher calling, it should be noted, the house serves the women’s ministry of a faith-based rescue mission that occupies several buildings on the block. The reasons behind the remodeling now seem more justified.

Change in use very often means aggressive remodeling. It can be done in a way that’s sympathetic to the original house and, especially, to the neighborhood. Americans are peculiarly uneducated about, even unaware of, design concepts. It’s possible that design didn’t even enter into discussions among the building owner, donors, and contractors. With guidance (from an architect working pro bono?), the house could have remained a visual asset. The porch, always a welcome amenity, even may have been spared.

RIGHT The 1894 house shown before remodeling, from a newspaper article.

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