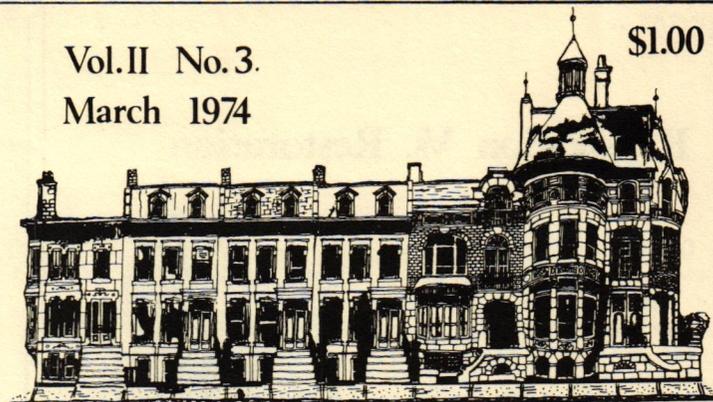


THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

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Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House

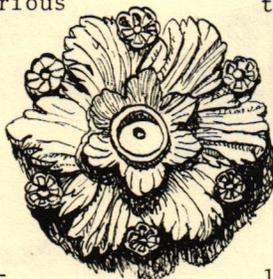
Plastering Part IV

How To Duplicate Plaster Castings

ORNAMENTAL PLASTERWORK divides into two main categories: Run-in-place moldings characterized by their straight lines (detailed in the February issue) and "enriched" moldings that contain designs in three-dimensional relief. Enriched moldings are always cast. It's not uncommon for complex cornices to contain plasterwork of both types.

IN THIS ARTICLE, we'll review various methods for reproducing enriched moldings from fragments you may have on hand. And if you don't have anything left to take impressions from, we'll tell you where you can get new ornamentation, either made from plaster or new lightweight materials.

COMMONLY, THE ORNAMENTAL PLASTERWORK in an old house is partially damaged or totally missing. The case of Samuel E. Gallo, the noted sculptor, is not uncommon: Gallo's Brooklyn townhouse had been "modernized" 30 years ago, complete with dropped ceilings and acoustical tile. As part of these "improvements," workmen had carefully re-



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Coming Next Month

Drapes And Curtains In The Old House

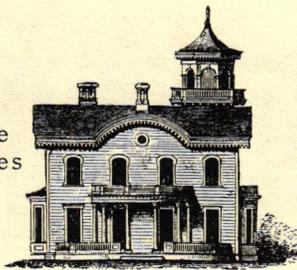
moved all of the decorative plaster—both from the ceiling and from the wall friezes. However, above the dropped ceiling he found a portion of the original ceiling molding that had survived. And in the back of a closet that had been added during the alterations Gallo found a 3-foot section of the wall frieze. Starting with just these two fragments, Gallo was able to totally restore the plasterwork to the same state it was in when Victorian ladies and gentlemen graced his front parlor.

ASSUMING YOU HAVE A FRAGMENT to work from, your first problem is to make a mold from which you can make future castings. The method that will be described here is the most commonly followed procedure—making a mold from rubber latex. This is suitable for making large molds. Special techniques for making small

(Continued on p. 5)

Renovation Vs. Restoration

AN OLD HOUSE brings with it some responsibilities along with its joys. A house that has survived the ravages of the years and previous owners is now part of our cultural history. So before taking hammer and wrecking bar in hand, the following guidelines are offered for consideration of those who have just bought—or are about to buy—an old house:



BE CLEAR ON YOUR PURPOSE. Do you intend to restore your house or merely renovate it? A restoration is putting the house back into a state that resembles its condition in an earlier period. A renovation is just putting the house back into sound mechanical condition without regard to any particular style. Restoration vs. renovation is a basic design decision.



DON'T DESTROY DETAIL. Removal of architectural detail should be regarded as a cultural high crime. Detail represents labor and craftsmanship, which because of today's economics, is an irreplaceable resource. Restoration of detail is within the capabilities of most home craftsmen. The basic ingredient is time and patience.

IT IS DETAIL, both interior and exterior, that distinguishes most old houses from the cardboard boxes of modern builders. By preserving detail, you are not only conserving a cultural resource but also insuring the long-term market value of the house. Happily, preserved detail can be made harmonious with either a restoration or a renovation.

DON'T DO ANYTHING THAT CAN'T BE UNDONE. Nothing lasts forever. Everything you do to a house today will have to be re-done by somebody (maybe you) at a later date. So each project should be undertaken with the idea: "How can this be renewed in the future?"



BE WARY OF PERIOD CHANGES. There's no way to transform a big old Victorian house into a cute little colonial. Learn as much as you can about the period in which your house was built and then try to keep your modifications consistent with the concept of the builders.

OLD HOUSES ARE A FRAGILE RESOURCE. They are impossible to replace—but very easy to destroy.
--R. A. Labine

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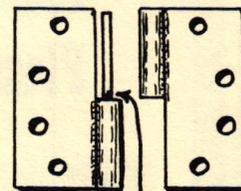
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Logo art: Stanley Skardinski

Notes From The Readers...

Adjusting Door Heights

To The Editor:

Many old houses have loose-joint hinges on interior doors. I found out one useful characteristic of these hinges during a recent project. The bottom of one door was scraping the floor due to settlement of the house. I thought I was going to have to re-hang the door to get it to swing freely again.



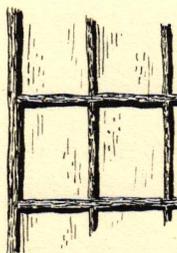
Slip Washers In Here

(I didn't want to cut the door at all.) Then I noticed the loose-joint hinges and found I could easily raise the door the required 1/8 inch by slipping a couple of small washers over the hinge pin.

Incidentally, I find these loose-joint hinges a joy to work with because they make it so easy to remove the door. Just lift and the door comes right off. Anybody know why this type of hinge doesn't seem to be popular with modern-day hinge manufacturers?

R. A. Labine, Sr.
Somers, Conn.

Needed: Source Of Leaded Windows



To The Editor:

Does anyone know a source of leaded windows? We've tried dealers in architectural antiques in our area with no luck.

Nancy Kullman
Cambridge, Mass.

A Town House In Trenton

By Claire Wood

TOWNHOUSE LIVING in the urban centers of the U.S. traditionally has been the province of the affluent. But there are areas where some of the affluent residents departed for the suburbs—leaving their magnificent houses behind them. Often the familiar pattern of decline and decay followed, with the result that homebuyers today with a discerning eye and the urge to do a little pioneering can pick up townhouses at bargain prices. To use the real estate agent's euphemism, these houses usually "need work," but the basics are all there.

THIS SITUATION IS DRAMATICALLY EVIDENT in the Mill Hill historic district in Trenton, N.J. Like a penny candy store where a dollar suddenly seems to have real possibilities, this charming, closely contained little community, close by the site of the second battle of Trenton, offers a lot of low-cost potential in old-house living.

A STROLL down brick-lined, gaslit Mercer and Jackson Streets in the Mill Hill District is enough to throw any old-house lover into a raging fit of house fever. The stroller sees brick rowhouses, a New England salt-box, a mansard-roofed Victorian fantasy, a 4-story brick townhouse with cast-iron lintels, and a tiny jewel-box Victorian cottage—all with prices ranging from \$3,500 to approximately \$10,000.

THIS, mind you, is within a one-hour commute from New York (with the railroad station at your doorstep), or 20 minutes from Philadelphia, or a 5-minute stroll from the state office complex. The Mill Hill district benefitted from the Mercer-Jack-



son Urban Renewal Project that was started in 1968 as a housing restoration and rehabilitation program. The area was chosen because of its historical nature and uniquely convenient location in downtown Trenton.

THE CITY HAS REMOVED impossibly blighted buildings, installed brick sidewalks and gaslights, arranged financing for people undertaking purchase and renovation of houses, and generally provided help and encouragement for the renovators.

AS WITH MOST URBAN RESTORATION areas, the most important assets of Mill Hill are the people who've chosen to live there. Among them are Larry and Rogette Reilly and their daughter Mimi, who in 1971 paid \$7,000 for an 1850 three-story brick house in "miserable" condition. So miserable, in fact, that on the first family visit to inspect the property, their parents declined to cross the threshold.

TODAY, after an investment of twice the purchase price, and countless hours of back-breaking work, the Reilly house is an inspiration and a reinforcement to old-house lovers with a limited budget but a lot of energy and imagination.

DURING THE FIRST YEAR of their ownership—a protracted struggle with the red tape of a city rehabilitation loan—Larry and Rogette commuted weekends from New York with Mimi and three sleeping bags. They'd spend Friday to Sunday night cleaning out the flotsam and jetsam of the former rooming-house tenants. They finally arranged private financing and moved from New York to an apartment around the corner.

WHILE Larry went to work for the state, Rogette took a year off from teaching and they devoted every spare minute to renovation. They were able to move in three months later. Within another year, the house was essentially finished.

LARRY HAD A HEAD START on what you need to know to undertake your own restoration because his father is a plumbing contractor in Westchester, N.Y., and he had some summer jobs during college doing construction work. Nonetheless, the Reillys paid for approximately 100 hours work by a genial



Reilly built door trim from standard moldings to match original woodwork.



Reillys' parlor is furnished with 19th century antiques.

local contractor who taught them whatever they needed to know at a given moment about masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electricity, tile and plasterwork. Rogette declares fervently: "Every renovation should have a contractor like that!"

THE MOST UNPLEASANT job they undertook was the removal of 8 coats of paint and red brick stain from the front of the house. Process involved spreading plastic around the bottom of the house, rop-

ing off the sidewalk, rigging a scaffold, donning old clothes, goggles, hats and gloves—and then painting the house with a mixture of lye, cornstarch and water.

LYE COATING was allowed to remain on the brick for four days, spraying it two or three times a day—whenever it began to dry out. At the end of four days, Larry rigged a jetty pump to the hose and the lye mixture was flushed off the front of the house under high pressure. The whole process was repeated two more times, and then the brick was given a final muriatic acid wash.

ROGETTE, a woman of great enthusiasm and good humor, had one other experience she'd just as soon forget. She was carrying a load of bricks, tiptoeing across the exposed floor joists of an upstairs bedroom, when she lost her balance. Her feet plunged halfway through the dining room ceiling below, taking the ornate ceiling medallion with her. Since accidents of this nature occur only when a ceiling has been freshly restored, Larry was somewhat

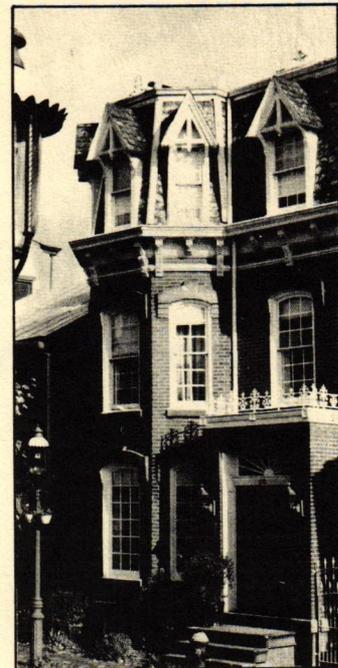
disturbed—an attitude Rogette was prepared to understand. What she found difficult to handle, suspended helplessly between two floors, was his shouting accusingly: "Now look what you've done!" But then, we all know that an old-house renovation is the acid test of any marriage.

REILLYS' house grew organically. The original three-story building was constructed around 1850. A two-story extension was added around 1870, and a third major renovation occurred sometime around 1900. This 1900 remodeling resulted in double walls in some areas and dropped ceilings, plus false wooden lintels outside, which Larry removed.

THE REILLYS HAVE SPENT MOST OF THEIR MARRIAGE collecting 19th century furniture, which now fills three floors and five bedrooms. The ambiance of the house is one of vitality and fun mixed with tradition—all on mortgage payments of less than \$100/mo.

IN ADDITION TO THE THREE REILLYS, the Trenton townhouse is also home to seven cats (five regulars upstairs, two wintering in the basement), six huge goldfish, and a vicious African frog named Mean Mary Jean who has an insatiable appetite for guppies.

WITH HIS FRIEND and neighbor, Ken Butko, who works for Model Cities, Larry has undertaken purchase, renovation and eventual sale of two other houses in the Mill Hill District. The Butko house on Mercer St. has undergone a renovation as extensive as the Reillys'. The imaginative and eclectic interior of the Butko house is highlighted by a collection of Ken's photographic



Piece of 1860 Victorian gingerbread on Jackson St. owned by Robert E. Allen.



Townhouse on Mercer St. before (above) and after (right) restoration by Ken Butko.





work. Next door to Ken and his wife Lucy lives Trenton's mayor, Arthur J. Holland, who moved to the area several years ago. Up the street is the newly renovated home of Fred Trivisano and his wife Laurel, the inside of which is full of space, light, a dazzling variety of plants, two handsome children and a hungry rabbit. Back on Jackson St., Robert

Allen lives in a brick, mansard-roofed, ornately linteled house which seems determined to pack as much Victoriana as possible into every exterior inch.

MILL HILL IS A COMMUNITY which a visitor leaves with regret—a neighborhood that has a great sense of life and adventure about it and an eagerness to share with newcomers its own special interpretation of old-house living.

(Plaster Castings—Continued from p. 1)

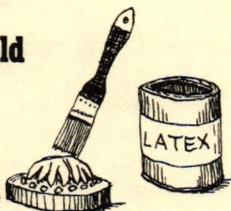
molds will be described later in this article.

MOLDS CAN BE MADE of fragments that are still attached to walls or ceilings, but it's a lot easier if the piece can be detached so that you can work on a table or on the floor. Some ornate plasterwork like ceiling medallions were usually glued in place (often with a thin layer of plaster of paris) and gentle prying often will free the piece. In other cases, you might want to cut out a chunk of wall or ceiling that contains the fragment and bring it down to ground level for further operations.

A LITTLE SCULPTURE MIGHT BE IN ORDER to patch the fragment or fill in any portions of the pattern that have been damaged. Spackle or your favorite patching compound can be used here. Next, prepare the fragment for mold-making by carefully cleaning it. It can be coated with shellac or Krylon spray to give easier separation from the rubber latex. Most restorers report that they get good separation from clean plaster without using any coating. If the plaster is painted with bronze or any copper-containing pigment, however, the Krylon or shellac coating is essential.

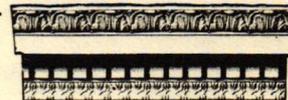
Making The Mold

NEXT STEP IS TO BRUSH THE master piece with the rubber latex.* Be sure all crevices are coated. Latex should be allowed to cure or vulcanize according to manufacturer's instructions. The Cementex product cited below, for example, gives optimum results when cured at about 110 F. You can obtain this temperature with infrared heating lamps, an electric hair dryer, sticking it in a slightly warm oven, or using some other heating system of your own design. After the rubber has

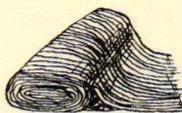


*Rubber latex for mold-making is a standard craft supply. If you have difficulty locating a source in your area, one product that has been used successfully by renovators is Latex #660 sold by Cementex Co., 336 Canal St., New York, N.Y. 10013. Price is \$10 per gal., postpaid. Send order to Mr. Frank Nishio and he'll see that detailed application instructions are included.

cured for the correct period of time (usually at least 1 hr. when heat is used) it's ready for the next latex coating. The number of coats that will be required is dictated by the size of the original and depth of the relief. The bigger and deeper the piece, the thicker the mold you'll need. It's imperative that each layer be cured according to instructions or else the layers may not bond properly to each other.



YOU CAN CUT DOWN on the number of latex coats needed if you incorporate cheesecloth into the mold layers. The cheesecloth acts much like the steel bars in reinforced concrete. With this type of reinforcement, you'll probably need only four to six layers of latex, even for large molds.

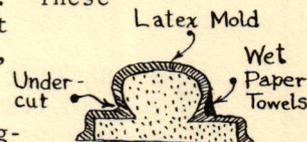


IF YOU HAVE TO MAKE A MOLD ON WALL OR CEILING because you can't detach the original, you'll probably have to let time do the vulcanizing rather than heat. This will usually mean several days between latex coats and then leaving the whole mold in place several weeks while the final curing takes place.

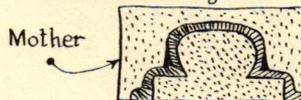
Building A Mother

BEFORE STRIPPING THE LATEX MOLD from the original, the next task is to make a "mother." Function of the mother is to support the mold when it's filled with wet plaster so that it doesn't distort. The mother is made of plaster, reinforced with coarse burlap.

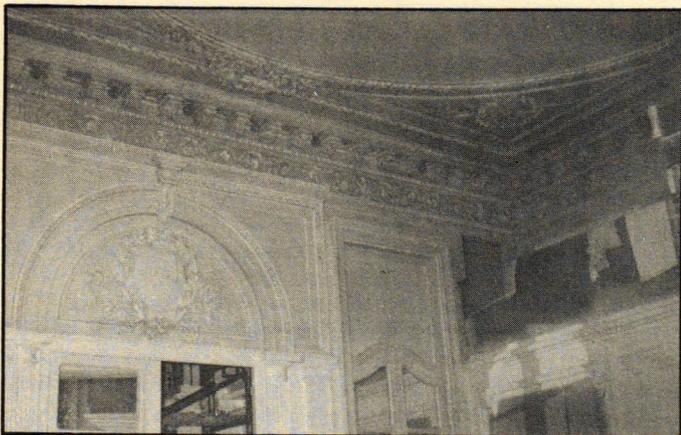
BEFORE POURING PLASTER FOR THE MOTHER, check latex mold for undercuts. These should be filled with wet paper towels. Otherwise, the mother will lock in there and you'll never separate it from the original. A thin layer of wet paper towels should also be laid over the entire surface of the rubber mold. This will prevent the plaster in the mother from sticking to the rubber.



Cross-Section: Mother, Mold And Original



A FRAME around the mold will let you pour a mother than has square sides and a level bottom. The mother should be at least 1/2-in.



Restoration of elaborate cornice and ceiling moldings in New York townhouse. Photo courtesy of Felber Studios.

thick at the highest point of the mold. As plaster is poured for the mother, incorporate generous amounts of coarse burlap. This will not only greatly increase the strength but will also considerably reduce the weight.

THE MOTHER CAN BE PULLED from the mold as soon as the plaster has set...in less than an hour.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN FORCED TO MAKE A MOLD of a fragment that is still attached to the wall or ceiling, you'll have to peel the mold from the original before making the mother. The problem is to make a mother for the mold without crushing and distorting it with the weight of wet plaster. Here's one way: Make the mold with a 4-in. flange while on the wall so it will lay flat face down on the floor. After filling undercuts with wet paper towels, saturate cheesecloth with wet plaster and lay it carefully on the rubber mold so it isn't distorted. After plaster has set, you'll have a stiff surface and you can brush on another coat of plaster. Once this is dry, you can pour the final application of plaster and the coarse burlap.

AFTER SEPARATING THE MOTHER from the rubber mold, you can pull mold from the original. Care

must be exercised because the mold will tend to pull away the plaster where there are undercuts. Also, sometimes the insides of the mold will stick to itself if you happen to squash it while handling.

INTERIOR OF THE MOLD should be washed with soap and water to remove any residual byproducts from the vulcanizing process.

Special Small Molds

IF YOU JUST HAVE TO MAKE A SINGLE CAST of a small fragment, there are simpler mold-making procedures you can use—especially if the original doesn't have any undercuts on it.

ONE WAY is to take paraffin and soften it by gentle heating in warm water. Simply press the soft paraffin over the original to make the mold. Or you can use modeling clay, exercising care not to distort the shape in handling. Both wax and clay molds can only be used once because you destroy the mold when removing the plaster cast.

FOR EXTREMELY SMALL AND FINELY DETAILED reproductions, you can borrow the technology of the dentist. You can use dental alginate to make a mold. This gives a soft, flexible mold that faithfully reproduces all undercuts and detail. From this, you can make a plaster cast. Or if you want an especially hard and durable reproduction, you can use Lucite molding compound. Both the alginate and Lucite can be purchased at dental supply houses.

SILICONE RUBBER also works well for molds up to about 6 inches across. See box on opposite page.

Casting Techniques

ONCE YOU HAVE THE MOLD, making a casting is a fairly simple process, although there will be some tricks you pick up as you go along. Plaster of paris is the most common casting material, although you might want to use some of the special molding plasters that have a

Sources Of Plaster Ornaments

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH PLASTERWORK left to restore, you can order new plaster ornaments—or you can have your own custom moldings prepared.

Felber Studios, Horsham, Pa. specializes in installation and re-construction of antique plaster. They have an extensive stock of patterns on hand. Or they will create one to your specifications. For catalog sheets indicating the cornice

and medallion patterns they have available write: Felber Studios, Box 74, 470 Easton Road, Horsham, Pa. 19044.

Another good source is Decorators Supply Corp. in Chicago. Their catalog is a delicious collection of rosettes, medallions, cornices and ceiling decorations. Ask for Catalog No. 130 "Plaster Ornaments" from Decorators Supply Corp., 3610 So. Morgan St., Chicago, Ill. 60609.

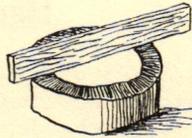
very fine particle size, which gives a smooth dense surface to the casting. Typical brand names would be Gold Bond's Kal-Kote Finishing Plaster or Red Top Molding Plaster.

A GOOD CASTING MIXTURE will be 7 parts by volume of plaster to 4 parts water. To retard set-up time, always use cold water and put the water into the mixing container first. Then sprinkle plaster powder in slowly, stirring as little as possible. Stirring hastens set-up and may also entrain air bubbles in the plaster. If you need to retard set-up even more, add a teaspoon of vinegar to the water before sifting in the plaster.

FOR A MIXING VESSEL, you're best off using a flexible plastic container such as a cut-off Chlorox bottle. To clean out excess plaster, just let it harden in the vessel, then squeeze. The excess plaster will crack and fall right out of the vessel.

BEFORE POURING PLASTER INTO MOLD, fill it first with water and then pour water out. This will moisten the walls and ensure penetration of the plaster into all crevices. Make sure the mold is nestled snugly into its mother, then use a small brush to work plaster into all nooks and crannies so you won't have any trapped air bubbles. Then add plaster and cheesecloth or burlap strips for strength. Even very delicate frieze tracery will turn out amazingly strong when cheesecloth is incorporated into the cast.

ONCE THE MOLD IS FILLED WITH plaster, jog it gently to nudge plaster into all the indentations. Then level the plaster by working a straightedge across the top of the mold.



PLASTER SHOULD BE HARD ENOUGH to remove from the mold in 30 min. But castings should be allowed to air-dry for 24 hr. before attempting to install them.

LARGE THICK CASTINGS can be made hollow. Use a thick plaster mixture and plenty of burlap to

Room-Temperature Vulcanizing

There is a room-temperature-vulcanizing silicone rubber that will make molds a lot faster than regular latex. A silicone rubber mold can be made in one pouring and will cure at room temperature in 24 hours. It makes a soft, flexible mold that will accurately reproduce undercuts. The material is quite expensive, however (about \$7.50/lb), and will work best for small castings. An excellent booklet, "How To Make A Mold With Silastic RTV Silicone Rubber" can be obtained by writing to: Public Relations Dept., Dow Corning Corp., Midland, Mich. 48640. Ask for Bulletin 61-192.

build up the sides. In this way, the casting will be strong and not terribly heavy.



A SPECIAL TRICK that's used in making beaded molding is to insert a loop from a long piece of string into each bead. The string also runs in the channel between beads. The plaster between the beads inevitably cracks, but the string holds the whole line together.

Installing Plasterwork

TO AFFIX PLASTER CASTINGS TO WALLS OR CEILINGS, the old-timers often used a thin coating of plaster of paris as an adhesive. They'd just hold the piece in place for a few minutes until the plaster set. The advantage of using plaster as an adhesive is that it won't deteriorate with age as organic glues will.

LIGHT PLASTER MOLDINGS can be put in place using a mastic adhesive or epoxy. Gypsum board joint cement also makes an excellent adhesive for light pieces.

FOR HEAVY CASTINGS, you may want to drill

Materials That Simulate Plaster

NORMALLY The Journal does not recommend materials that pretend to be something they're not. (For example, you'll never see plastic "wood beams" listed in these pages.) But we make an exception with plaster ornaments. Real plaster can be quite heavy and require an expert to install. So you might want to consider these alternatives:

Focal Point, Inc., has some very attractive cornice and medallion patterns made from foamed polyurethane. The ornaments are

light and can be drilled, sawed or nailed. They come factory-primed ready for painting. For patterns available write: Focal Point, 1760 South Roswell Rd., Marietta, Ga. 30060.

Another alternative is Anaglypta. This is a very lightweight material made from liquefied rag stock molded under pressure. Final form resembles papier-mache. Anaglypta ornaments can be applied with adhesive. Imported from England. For brochure write the U.S. distributor: W.H.S. Lloyd Co., 979 Third Ave., Suite 1022, New York, N.Y. 10022.

holes in them with a carbide-tipped bit and secure them to the ceiling beams with screws. Once the casting is in place, you can fill any seams, holes and crevices with spackle.

FOR VERY LARGE PIECES, you might want to make the casting out of fiberglass and plastic resin rather than plaster to cut down on the weight. You can use the rubber molds constructed in the manner described above, but the casting procedure is considerably more complicated. A good description of the procedure is contained in the book "Plastics As An Art Form" by Thelma Newman. If not available in your local bookstore, you can order from: Chilton Book Co., Sales Service Dept., Radner, Pa. 19089. Price is \$12.50 plus 60¢ shipping and handling.

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY locating a local supplier of resin and fiberglass for casting, one source that has been used by renovators is Industrial Plastics Supply, 324 Canal St., New York, N.Y. 10013. They will service mail orders, although they have a minimum \$3.50 handling and shipping charge.

ORNATE PLASTERWORK is one of those finishing touches that make old houses so distinctive. Although restoring plaster can get pretty involved, the end result of your craftsmanship will be a pleasing display that you'll enjoy for all the years you're in the house.



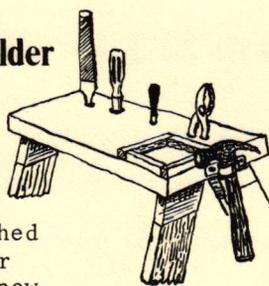
Hints For The Renovator

Detecting A Vanished Pattern

EVER WONDER what was on the walls of your house originally? This trick won't work every time, but it's worth a try when all else fails. One restorer we've heard about, when faced with bare plaster in his old house, exposed the wall to a black light (the kind used to make psychedelic posters glow). With the black light, she could see the pattern of the wallpaper that had originally been applied to the walls. Pattern was then traced and repainted directly on the plaster. Apparent cause of the phenomenon: Early wallpapers used water-soluble pigments. When the paper was applied with a water-based paste, some of the pigment migrated through the paper and was held in the paste. Enough of the pigment-containing paste remained on the wall to show up under the black light.

Convert Ladder To Toolholder

STEPLADDERS are great for reaching high places. But they don't help you much after you're up there. It gets very frustrating perched eight feet above the parlor floor trying to install a new chandelier while your tools keep rolling off the ladder. However, there are a number of simple modifications you can make to convert a stepladder from a passive footrest to an active helper. Start by drilling a few holes of varying sizes in the top. This will allow you to set in tools like screwdrivers and



pliers so they won't roll off. Fastening a broom clip to the side makes a handy way to hold a hammer. Making a 4-in. square out of molding tacked to the top makes a spill-proof place to keep small screws and nails. For painting jobs, you can nail to the top a pie plate that's just a little bigger than the paint can you'll be using. This not only keeps the can from sliding off, but it also keeps paint that runs down the side of the can confined to the plate.

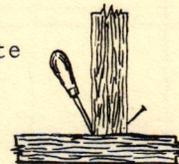
Handling Steel Wool

SPLINTERS OF STEEL WOOL in the fingers are an occupational hazard for everyone who does stripping and refinishing. If you don't like wearing rubber gloves because it lessens your feel of the job, here's something you can try: Cut a small rubber ball in half and use one of the halves as a gripper to hold the pad of steel wool as you work.



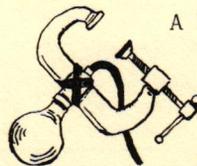
Toenailing Studs

TOENAILING A STUD to the sole plate while framing a wall or partition creates the problem of the stud slipping out of alignment as you are hammering on one side. Old-time carpenters had a quick solution: Jab an icepick or thin awl into the plate opposite the side that you're nailing.

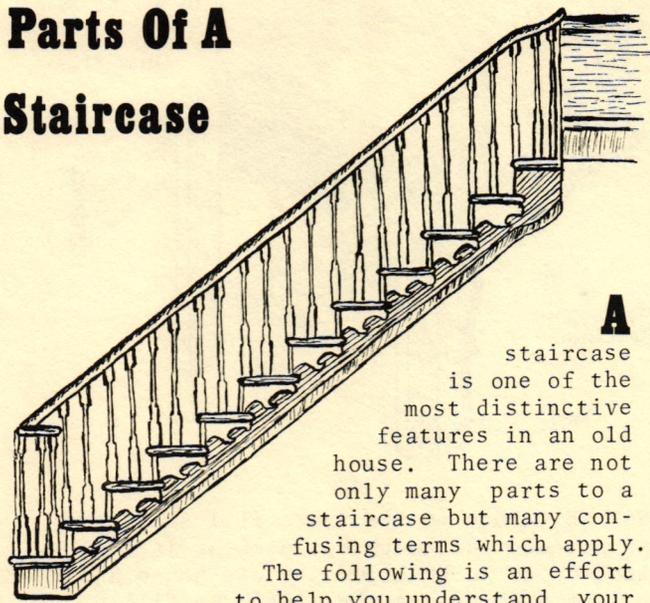


Portable Worklight

A HANDY PORTABLE WORKLIGHT can be jury-rigged by taping the socket of an extension-cord light to a C-clamp. When fully closed, you can hang clamp from a nail; otherwise clamp to nearest surface.



Parts Of A Staircase

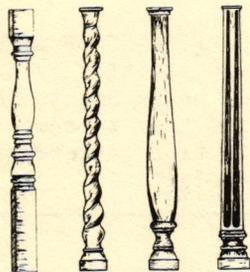


A staircase is one of the most distinctive features in an old house. There are not only many parts to a staircase but many confusing terms which apply. The following is an effort to help you understand your staircase.

Balustrade — The combination of balusters and posts topped by a hand rail.

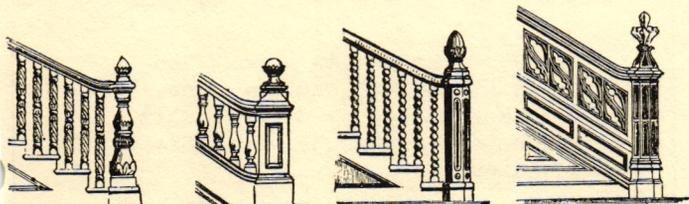
Baluster — A small pillar or column, supporting a hand rail.

In the late 18th century, it became fashionable to have turned, spiral or fluted style balusters. Also integral to the style of a staircase was whether a step held one, two or three balusters.



Newel Post — Usually the lowest post of the stair, that at the start. In a winding staircase, it is the central pillar from which the steps radiate. In a square staircase it is the principal post at the angles which support the handrail.

Many beautiful newel posts are found in old New England houses. Ship carvers who lived in seacoast towns would carve them in one piece, with great attention to detail.



Hand Rail — Topping the balusters and secured to the newel posts at each end.



Scroll — A spiral turn at the end of a stair rail.

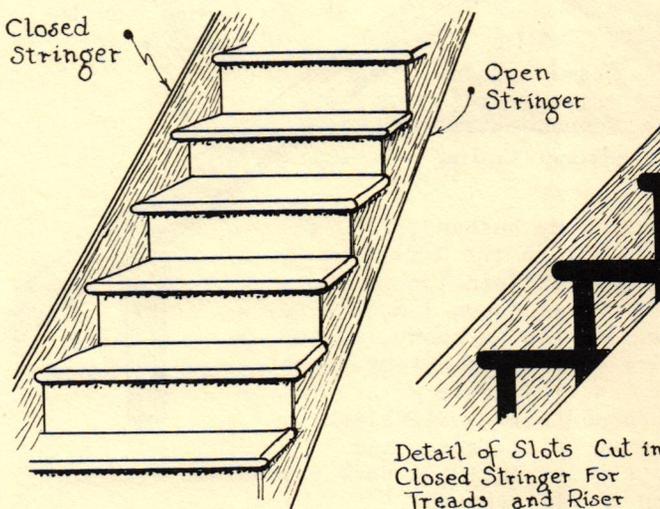
"Banister" is a confusing colloquialism often used to refer to a hand rail or a baluster, but it is a term which lacks a precise architectural definition.

Spandrel — The triangular surface between the outer string of a stair and the floor. Designs are carved on a spandrel in many staircases.



Spandrel Ornaments

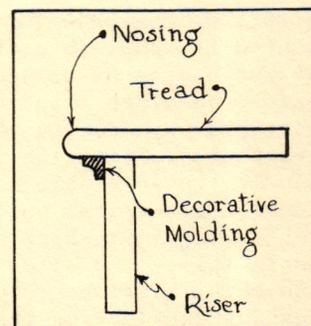
Stringer — The support of the steps of a stair. In an open-stringer staircase, the top edges of the stringers are cut out saw-tooth fashion, and the steps fitted to them. In a closed-stringer staircase, the edges of the stringers are straight, but grooves are cut into their inside faces to support the steps.



Tread — The horizontal part of a step.

Riser — The vertical part of a step.

Nosing — A small, molded projection occurring on the edges of steps and landings.



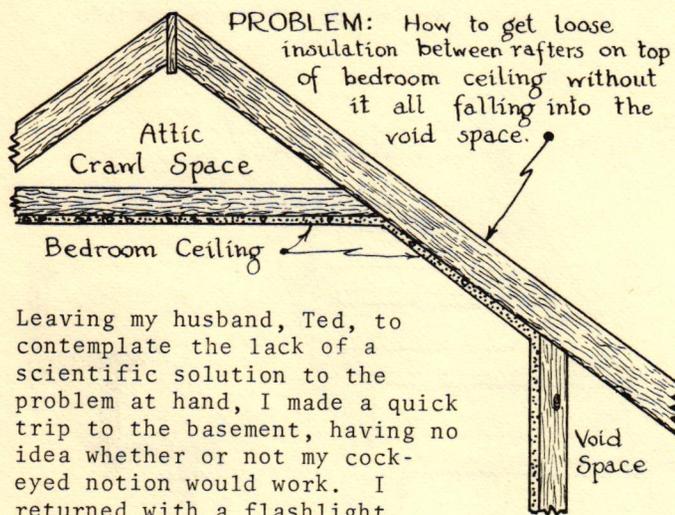
One Way To Insulate An Attic

by Rae J. Bachelder

Old-House owners frequently run into situations that challenge their ingenuity. Here's how one person coped with a tricky attic problem.

WE ARE AMONG THE THOUSANDS WHO, foreseeing spiralling fuel costs and critical shortages, began early last fall to take measures that would help button up a drafty old house.

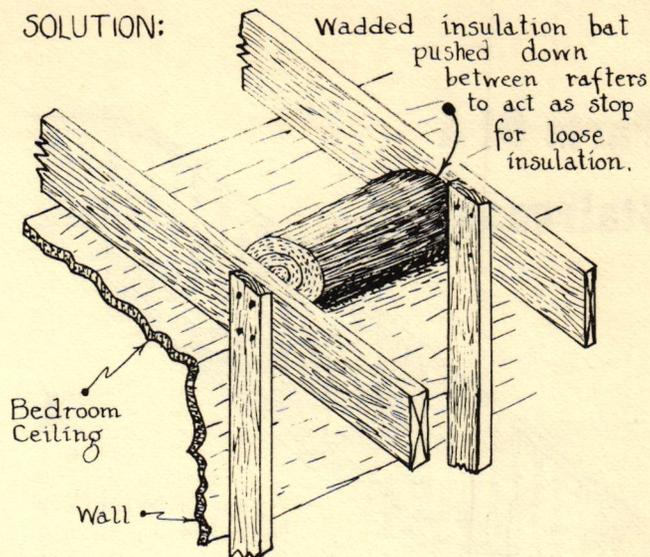
One rainy Saturday we decided to insulate the cap of our 1803 farmhouse. To two neophytes, the idea of successfully capping the crawl-space over the third floor bedrooms to prevent heat loss seemed almost impossible. It wasn't difficult to lay bats of insulation horizontally. The problem was insulating between the rafters down to distances of about five feet (the slope of our third floor bedroom ceilings) without pouring wool clear to the rafter plate.



Leaving my husband, Ted, to contemplate the lack of a scientific solution to the problem at hand, I made a quick trip to the basement, having no idea whether or not my cock-eyed notion would work. I returned with a flashlight, a pair of scissors, and most importantly, a dust mop handle with the mop itself removed.

FIRST, WE MEASURED THE LENGTH of the space we wanted to insulate with the mop handle. Then we cut pieces of rolled insulation that were larger in width than the space between the rafters. By forcing the insulation down between the rafters the length of the mop handle, we were able to seal the hole just above the vertical wall drop, building a barrier against which we could pour the loose fill. The alternate use of handle tip and metal fitting proved invaluable for pushing and tucking the insulation roll as the situation required.

SOLUTION:



NEXT WE TOSSED in the loose fill and poked and prodded (although not packing it too tightly, as we realized the old house had to have room to breathe) until we filled the hole to the attic floor joist.

THEN, COLD AND WEARY, covered with cobwebs, and suffering from "fiberglass discomfort," we laid the last horizontal bat and lowered ourselves down through the crawl-space.

OUR FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT was diminished only slightly by the thought that if the old house starts to sweat in the spring, we will have to come up with another ingenious solution to retrieve \$150 worth of loose insulation!



Rae J. Bachelder is a poet and an "ex-suburbanite" who now owns, with her husband Ted, a colonial farmhouse on the Sheepscot River in Maine.



Preserving Wood

Purpose of this 10-page booklet is to sell you Cuprinol stain. But in doing so, the manufacturer also presents useful information on the physical nature of wood—in a colorful and easy-to-understand manner. It describes the way fungi attack wood and steps to take to prolong wood's usable life. Also delineates the advantages that water-repelling wood stain has over a painted finish. Free. "Trees, Wood and Cuprinol Stain," from Darworth, Inc., Avon, Conn. 06001.

Basic Beginners Book

Florence Adams has written a how to fix-it and build-it book, "I Took A Hammer In My Hand," and begins at exactly that point. The first of her many line drawings detail a hammer, its parts and how to hold it. Starting with tools—buying and using—and clear directions for building simple projects, she moves on to cover the intricacies of plumbing, heating systems, etc. Because the book is written for the novice, she tackles these subjects from the beginning—such as explaining how to turn off the water or the electricity. Advice is also given for women on how to deal with male chauvinists encountered at the lumberyard or hardware store. Adams has a readable, breezy style and the feminist polemics will inform, delight or annoy the reader, depending on which trench they occupy in the battle of the sexes. \$9.95 from William Morrow & Co., 105 Madison Ave., New York, N. Y. 10016.

Nail Chronology

The types of nails found in a building can be a good indication of the time it was built and the number of additions, alterations, or simple maintenance measures it has been subjected to. An illustrated technical leaflet on Nail Chronology that discusses types—hand-wrought, cut, wire—their history, characteristics and manufacture is offered by the American Association for State and Local History. They also have leaflets on subjects such as "Tools of the Woodworker," "The Care of Antique Silver," "A Glossary of Old Lamps," or "Paint Color Research and Restoration." A large selection of leaflets designed to aid the small historical society is also available. "Nail Chronology As An Aid To Dating Old Buildings" Technical Leaflet 48, is 50¢. For it, information on bulk rates, and other reprints, write to the American Association for State and Local History, 1315 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

Colonial Iron Hardware

The Old Smithy Shop in Milford, New Hampshire carries an extensive line of hand-finished authentic reproduction colonial iron hardware. In addition, they offer a limited line of completely hand-forged hardware. Free catalog and price list from The Old Smithy Shop, P. O. Box 226, Milford, N. H. 03055.

Drywall Handbook

Illustrated instructions on all phases of gypsum board application from framing to finishing are contained in this handbook on dry wall construction. Also has standards for partition, ceiling and fireproofing materials and their application. Well-indexed, the book covers such things as tools, structural accessories, fasteners and adhesives. Written mainly for architects, builders, contractors and dealers, it will help you know the many types of fittings and accessories available for your own needs. "Drywall Construction Handbook, 6th Edition," \$1.50, from United States Gypsum, 101 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606.

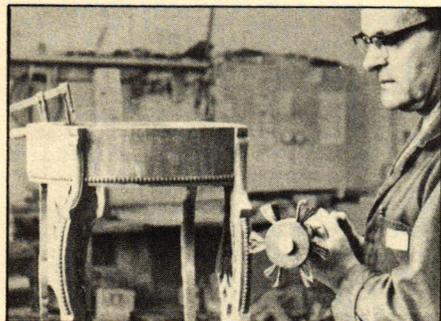
Early American Masonry

A summary of lectures on American masonry by Prof. McKee is reprinted in a softcover book that pulls together the information gathered by many specialists in the field of early American building. Stone, brick, mortar and plaster are thoroughly explored from their history, nature, quarrying methods or manufacture, with illustrations of types and composition of these materials. The early American home owner will be particularly interested in causes of deterioration and remedial measures. \$4.50 plus 50¢ handling and postage from The National Trust for Historic Preservation Bookstore, 740 Jackson Place N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006.

Woodworkers Catalog

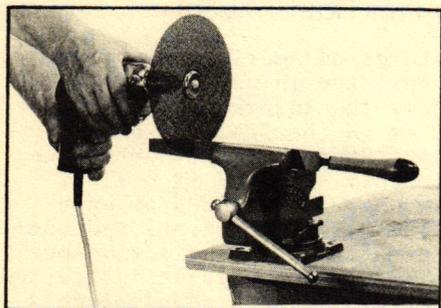
This catalog from the Minnesota Woodworkers Supply Co. wasn't received in time to be included in the January review of helpful tool catalogs. But it is comprehensive enough to warrant special mention. In its 110 neatly laid out pages is a wide range of woodworking tools and supplies, including: Box hardware, hinges and fittings; pre-shaped wood spindles, moldings, and other parts; veneers and inlays; upholstery supplies and tools; finishing materials and adhesives. A valuable reference for the woodworker and catalog collector. Price: 50¢ from Minnesota Woodworkers Supply Co., Rogers, Minn. 55374.

Products For The Old House



Flex-Wheel Abrasive

Wheel with 1/8-in. wide slash-ed strips of abrasive cloth, each backed by a bristle brush, enables tool to get down into scroll work. Removes material gently, so won't cut through thin veneers. Sand-O-Flex kit available for \$19.95. Con-tains 8-brush contour sander that fits any 1/4-in. drill. Plus 3 abrasive refills and adapters. \$2.00 shipping and handling on mail orders. Merit Abrasive Products, 201 W. Man-ville, Compton, Calif. 90224.



Cutting Disk

Cut any material from hardened steel to stone with this silicon carbide cutting wheel. Slip the shank into chuck of your electric drill and you're ready to go. Shatterproof disk, which will cut things like concrete and brick, is said to be completely safe. Has no sharp teeth to bind or grab the workpiece. Kit No. 1405 (includes 5-in. disk, 1/4-in. shank arbor, 2 steel flange washers) is \$1.69 post-paid from Arco Tools, 421 West 203 St., New York, N. Y. 10034.

The Best Home Repair Manual

In addition to specific in-formation on restoration, every old house should be equipped with a basic repair manual that tells you things like what to do about a leaky toilet.

The best of the home repair manuals that we've seen is the new "Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual" published by Reader's Digest. Outstanding feature of this 600-page volume are the illustrations: They are numerous (2200 of them), clear and complete. Basic ap-proach used by the editors in compiling this volume is that information and procedures should be communicated by the photos and drawings; text is used only to supplement the information in the illustra-tions.

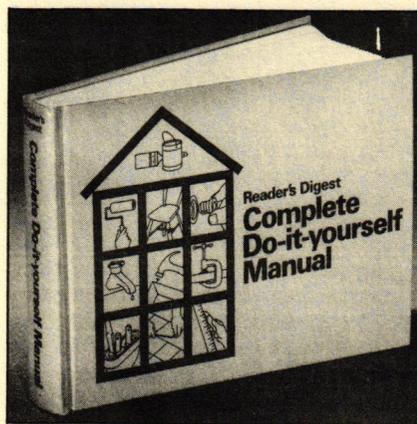
Books's three ma-jor sections focus on: Tools —Their selection and proper use; Maintenance and Repair in the Home; and a sec-tion devoted to 50 projects you can build. The old-house owner

will find the project section least applicable, but it is a small portion of the book.

Manual's 17 chapters cover re-pair jobs usually done by such experts as cabinetmakers, car-penters, electricians, heating technicians, locksmiths, masons, paperhangers, plasterers, etc.

Typical problems handled: Squeaky floorboards, patching plaster and gypsum board, blown-out pilot lights, paint-ing a stairway ceiling, fixing a leaky hot water tank.

Also has a good section on the basic hand and power tools plus details on fasteners, hardware, adhesives and all the ways to join things together. And a nice lie-flat binding that keeps the book open as you work.



Available in most bookstores or order direct. Send \$12.39 (in-cludes postage and handling) to Reader's Digest, Book Department, Pleasantville, New York, N. Y. 10571 --R.A.L.

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