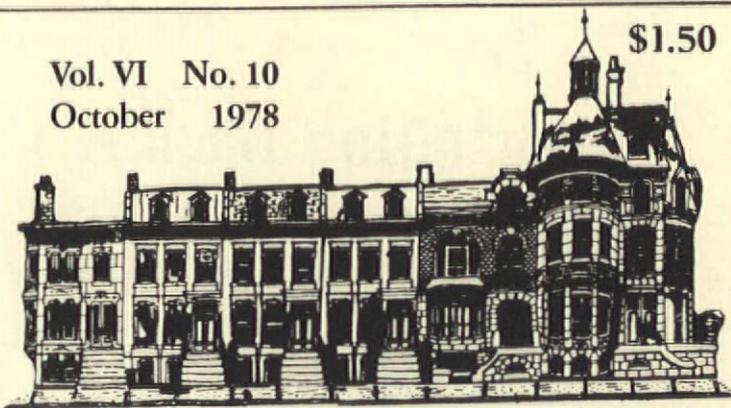


# THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Vol. VI No. 10  
October 1978

\$1.50



Restoration And Maintenance Techniques For The Antique House



## Kitchen Cabinets For The Old House



By David and Ruth Gillespie, Chicago, Ill.

WITH WHAT WE HOPED was a beautiful kitchen all laid out on the drawing board (see OHJ-June 1978 issue), my wife and I went to look at kitchen cabinets. Like most old house people we were on a limited budget and one glance at the price tags was enough to let us know that something was going to have to give somewhere.

WE VERY PAINFULLY cut up our original kitchen plan and went back to the showrooms with a dismal feeling that we had prostituted an ideal kitchen. Although the total price was better we were still not happy with the plan and turned off for new reasons. Ruth did not want the standard "brown tunnel" look of contemporary tract house kitchens for which the majority of cabinets are remarkably well suited. I was appalled at the quality of the available cabinets--a veritable playground of staples and hardboard. So we decided to build our own.

PUTTING OUR HEADS together we settled on the basic design. An old cabinet, probably built with or soon after the house was beyond re-

### In This Issue

Bringing Back A California Beauty.....	110
Fireplace & Furnace On Same Flue.....	113
Sprucing Up Old Radiators.....	115
Alligator Paint.....	119
Weatherstripping Products.....	120

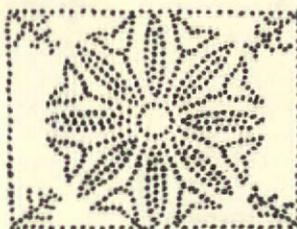
### Coming Next Month

REWIRING OLD LIGHTING FIXTURES

pair and had to be taken out. Still, it did provide a model for the basic shape of the bake center cabinet with some modifications to give counter space. Ruth specified a marble counter top for her baking on that counter with the remainder to be of formica. Neither of us was very fond of formica-type counters, but in this case the material solved some problems of function and cost so we decided to go with it. The remainder of the cabinets were to be more or less standard floor units built in place and faced with hardwood.

I BEGAN BY CONSTRUCTING a base out of 2x4 and 2x2 stock. It helps if your floor is level but if not, constructing your cabinets in place allows you to compensate for all sorts of irregularities. The base (Illus. A) was a simple ladder frame 20 in. wide, built of

2x4's on edge with center members placed to carry the weight of the cabinets above. Toe kick materials are usually 4 in. high (we used the basic brown rubber ones) which means that the frame must be shimmed up either by nailing 1x2 furring strip on top of the



(Continued on pg. 116)

# Bringing Back A California Beauty

By Barney Curren

**W**HEN VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA, realtor Peter Curren first came upon it, he recognized the rambling five-bedroom mansion to be a prime example of a mid-90s Queen Anne Victorian--sadly shorn of its characteristic gingerbread. Twenty years earlier, the deteriorating home had been "renovated" inside and out. Because of the building's size and prominence, a local newspaper had even printed a story describing the "Cinderella transformation," including with it a pair of "before and after" photos.

ONCE PETER AND JEAN SOMERVILLE, a Vallejo schoolteacher, came across the old picture in the newspaper's back files, the two Victoriana buffs decided to embark on a "Cinderella transformation" of their own, by restoring the home's original facade.

UNLIKE HOUSES WHOSE FISHSCALE siding, gingerbread and filigree have merely been covered over with asbestos, the Vallejo home had been literally stripped of all embellishment. Restoring its original appearance was a matter of reconstructing every pendant, fan, balustrade, and decoration shown in the newspaper photograph--the only existing illustration of the home in Victorian garb.

**F**INDING A CRAFTSMAN with both the knowledge and the expertise to re-create elaborate ornamentation from a single photograph--and do it at a realistic price--was possibly the largest problem Peter and Jean faced at the outset. The Old-House Journal's Emporium Section provided the solution by putting them in touch with Dave Yager, owner of a woodworking shop, Hallelujah Redwood, located some 130 miles northwest of Vallejo in the California coastal town of Mendocino.

WORKING ENTIRELY from the old photograph (together with recent measurements of the structure), Yager designed and handcrafted over 100 separate pieces of Victorian bric-a-brac out of California redwood. Once completed, the pieces were delivered to Vallejo for painting and installation.

MIMICKING A CHARACTERISTIC architectural style from a lone photograph is hardly the same as creating gingerbread from diagrammed blueprints. Most of the stripped-away bric-a-brac had originally been turned on specialized wood moulding machinery long since obsolete. Luckily, Yager had actually located one of these unique machines in a junkyard, re-conditioned it, and with the help of an elderly craftsman who had run one around the turn of the century, began learning how to operate it.

## THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL®

Published Monthly For People Who Love Old Houses

Editor .....	R.A. Clem Labine
Decorative Arts Editor .....	Carolyn Flaherty
Circulation Director .....	Paul T. McLoughlin
Circulation Assistants .....	Joan O'Reilly
	James Graham
	Shirley Zucker
	Michael Carew
Midwest Editor .....	Tom H. Gerhardt
Contributing Editors .....	Claire Wood Labine
	R.A. Labine, Sr.
	H. Weber Wilson
	Barbara Schiller

Published by The Old-House Journal Corporation, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217. Tel. (212) 636-4514. Subscriptions \$12/yr. in U.S. and Canada; \$20/yr. elsewhere. Printed at Royal Offset Co., 34 W. 15th St., NYC 10011. Contents of the Old-House Journal® are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without specific permission in writing from The Editor.



This photo was taken in 1957 and is the only known picture of the Vallejo home's original facade.

HOWEVER, NEITHER HE NOR PETER could determine exactly how the fan motif--a staple of Queen Anne architecture reproduced about the corners of the attic window and echoed elsewhere in the facade--had originally been created. Individual "rays" of the fan appeared to be turned on a lathe, then sawn in half for mounting on semicircular panels. But the narrow ends of the rays in the photograph were too tiny to be turned on any of Yager's modern lathes.

**A**S A COMPROMISE, two alternate fabrications of the fan motif were developed. The first, utilizing machine-turned dowels split lengthwise and set into a framing panel, reproduced the semicircular texture of the original, but required the dowels be set too far apart at their extremities to project the characteristically fan-like appearance from a distance. The second alternative employed a series of flat, bandsawn, stylized tapering rays emanating from a similarly flat bandsawn core design. While not as literally faithful to the original architectural motif, the second alternative was ultimately chosen due to the more effective contrast it presented when viewed from a distance.

EVEN MORE of a problem than the replacement of the dozens of small pieces of individual trim was restoration of the two huge gable embellishments that had adorned the peaks of the main and porch roofs in the 1957 photograph. Both of these floral decoratives had been set in plaster from hand-carved wood mouldings. Of course, all the equipment, along with the expertise necessary in its employment, had simply vanished over the past 85 years.

CARVING AND POURING new castings was clearly out of the question. But the possibility existed that the two gable embellishments

could be re-created as twin redwood carvings, painted to look like plaster, and mounted with the rest of the ornamentation.

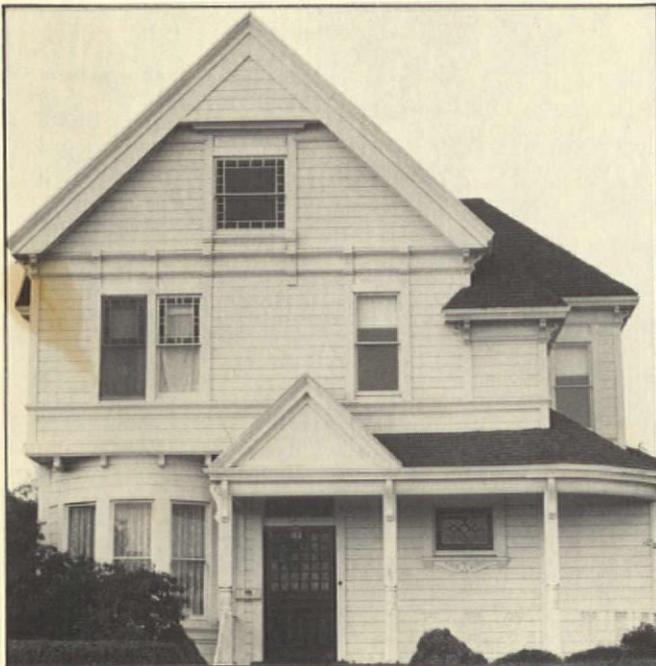
**V**ALLEJO, set on the northeastern edge of the San Francisco Bay, is fortunately located just south of the heart of Northern California's wine country. Thus Peter began to investigate the possibility that one of the region's oaken wine barrel sculptors might wish to turn his talents to Victorian architectural design.

FORTUNATELY ENOUGH, just such a craftsman--Jerry Bettman, a local elementary school teacher and part-time wine barrel carver--was intrigued by the idea. And again, working entirely from the sole extant photo of the old house, Bettman designed two elaborate floral decorations and carved them onto two triangles of California redwood.

**O**VER THIS PAST SPRING and summer, dozens of the pieces that were to make up the enormous Victorian jigsaw puzzle began to collect in the yard behind the house. The next step in the rehabilitation was to identify, paint, and mount them all.

JEAN AND PETER had anticipated the problem of identifying each bracket, panel and column and guiding it to its proper location on the house before the restoration began. To keep track of the pieces, a 2x3 ft. master enlargement of the 1957 photo was made. From this enlargement, every component piece was traced and individually identified by number and letter. Letters referred to the classification of the piece; the number to the sequence of installation.

EVEN WORKING from this carefully drawn map, however, the attachment of the ornamentation



The home had been modernized and stripped of its architectural trim and ornament when this "after" photo was taken.



Twenty years after its "modernization" the Queen Anne house is restored to its 1894 beauty.



This detail of one of the redwood brackets shows how contrasting paint colors accent the sculptural richness.

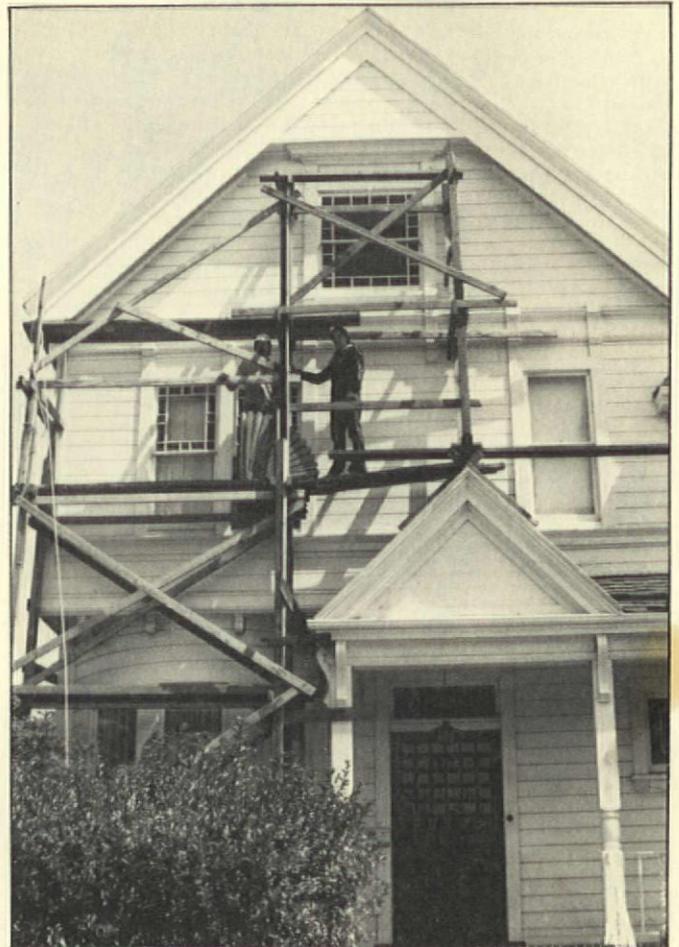
was a long and difficult process. Sections of the house had settled, wooden surfaces were warped, and entire panels had become subtly distorted. To accommodate these discrepancies from the measurements, each individual piece of trim had to be sanded, sawn, re-turned or in some way modified before it could be fit snugly into its appropriate niche.

**M**OUNTING THE RE-CREATED bric-a-brac did, however, provide one great advantage--much of the contrast painting could be done at ground level before the trim was mounted 30 and 40 ft. above the street. Because the job of repainting the house some time in the future is such a Herculean task, Peter used (and recommends to other Victorian preservationists) nothing but the highest quality paint.

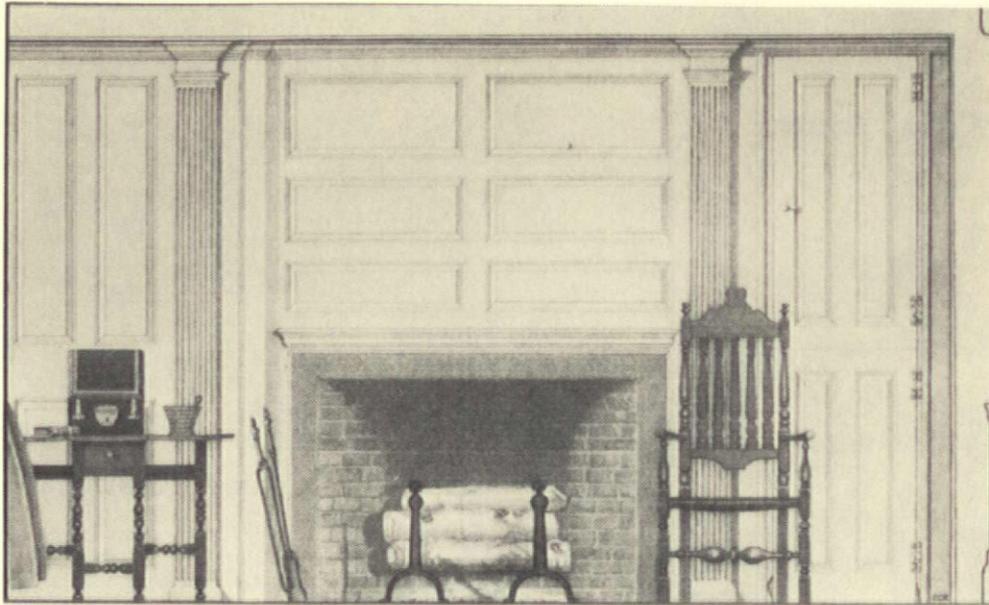
ALL THE NEW REDWOOD TRIM was initially treated with copper naphthenate, all-purpose wood preservative. Then the house and trim both were spackled, sanded, primed with an oil-based paint and then finished with a coat of white. Contrast trim not painted white was given two coats of either light brown or yellow prior to installation.

THE CAULKING, SPACKLING and final painting applied to the house was all acrylic-based. The couple's experience with oil-based caulking had been that it tended, over years, to crack, peel, and pull away from the wood surface. Latex, on the other hand, tends to remain flexible, expanding and contracting with temperature changes while retaining its original color.

THE TIME AND CARE bestowed on the restoration of the house should reward Peter and Jean for years to come; the York Street home, long a local landmark, is scheduled to be included on a proposed walking tour of Vallejo's architectural heritage. And in addition to the physical restoration of the building, the two homeowners have completed an exhaustive compilation of the entire chain of the home's former occupants--several of whom were prominent figures in the history of this former capital of the state of California. ■■



Peter and Jean climb the scaffolding at the outset of the restoration. Old paint and scars from the original wood trim helped them to mount the redwood replacements.




---

## A Fireplace & Furnace On The Same Flue

---

By Allen D. Griffiths, O.D.,  
Washington Court House, Ohio

**I**N MAY OF 1977, Patty and I purchased an 1875 Georgian revival home in Washington Court House with the idea of restoring the structure to the way it was when it was built. The previous owner, being a paint and wallpaper salesman, had completely redecorated and remuddled the interior of the house. However, the basic structure was unchanged... having not been altered since 1875.

THE HOUSE WAS ORIGINALLY built with six fireplaces, all of them burning wood or coal. The kitchen had been fitted with a large iron stove that unfortunately had been removed by a previous owner. None of the original six fireplaces were in working order: Three of them had been bricked up, one had its chimney removed, and the remaining two had been converted to decorative fireplaces.

**T**HE FIRST ROOM that we "attacked" was the dining room. First the wallpaper came off. Then off came the wall-to-wall carpeting. This revealed a quarter-sawn oak floor that had been installed in 1919. It was nice...but it wasn't original...so up it came. Beneath the oak was a soft pine tongue-and-groove floor. It showed that there had been a hearth on the outside wall.

THERE WAS ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE that a fireplace had been on that outside wall because a chimney breast protruded four inches from the rest of the wall. However, a steam radiator had been placed in front of the suspected fireplace opening around the year 1900. In gleeful anticipation, I chipped away at the plaster and discovered as the bricks fell away that the

firebox and hearth had been completely removed—but the flue was in good working order. In fact, the flue was currently in use by the existing furnace and hot water heater.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL remained for about three months while we pondered the problem of how to get the fireplace back in working order. Standard practice dictated that the fireplace would require a separate flue, totally independent of the flue currently being used by the furnace. While we were mulling this problem, we found—fortunately—that no furnace gases came into the room through the hole in the bricks I had made because of the natural draw of the chimney.

### The One-Flue Quandry

**A**LTHOUGH I WAS DETERMINED to have a wood-burning fireplace, my contractor was none too encouraging at first. He said, "Well, it looks like you are going to have to box in another flue." But we couldn't do that because all the interior walls are solid brick—and there are windows on both sides of the chimney breast. There wasn't really another wall that could be boxed in without drastically changing the floor plan of the room. Besides, I didn't want to do that because it wouldn't be faithful to the original appearance of the house.

I WAS SURE THAT there must be another solution to the problem. After repeated consultation with my contractor, he thought of a novel way to allow the fireplace and furnace to use the

same chimney flue. Although quite unusual (I know of no precedent for this design), the system has worked very well.

## A Flue Bypass

**B**ASICALLY, our system is built around a couple of metal pipes that conduct the combustion gases from the furnace and hot water heater around the fireplace. The furnace gases combine with the fireplace gases well up in the chimney. You can get a better idea of how the system works by referring to the diagrams.

WE WERE ABLE TO FIND ROOM for the metal pipes because the new firebox we built had slanted sides—since we built it according to Count Rumford's specifications (see OHJ "The Right Shape For A Fireplace," Mar. 1976, p. 5). This design creates a space between the bricks of the tapered firebox and the bricks of the rectangular chimney. Normally, this space is filled with rubble.

INSTEAD OF RUBBLE, in our case we were able to use the space to bring metal flue pipes up from the furnace and water heater in the basement. The metal flue pipes were extended above the damper and smoke shelf a sufficient distance so that the natural draw of the chimney would pull the gases up the chimney,

rather than letting them filter down through the damper into the fireplace opening.

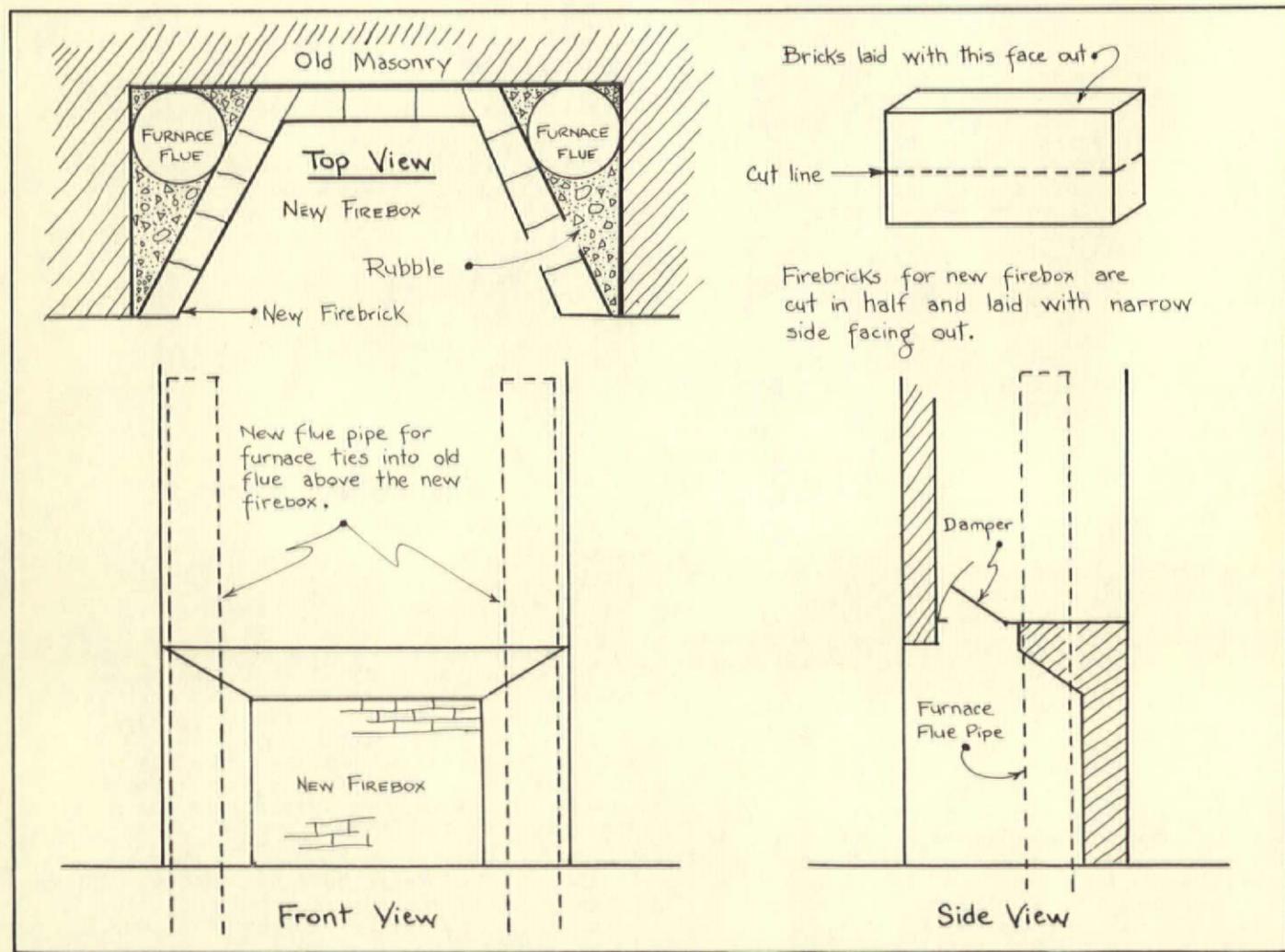
TO REBUILD THE FIREBOX, the contractor used red firebricks, which he sawed in half lengthwise. These were then laid so that the cut side faced the back of the firebox. These narrow red bricks made it look much more like an old-fashioned fireplace than it would have if the standard large, tan-colored firebricks had been used.

THE CONTRACTOR followed the proportions for the firebox as set forth in The Old-House Journal article cited earlier. The result was a perfect reproduction antique fireplace that draws well—and still accommodates the furnace on the same flue.

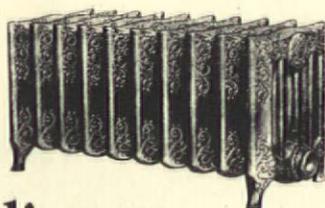
## The Ultimate Test

**E**VEN THOUGH our flue system is quite unconventional, it passed the two most important tests. The system works beautifully, and—equally important—the local building inspector gave it his approval after he saw it in operation.

AND I WOULD like to acknowledge Mr. Dan Leaverton of Dan Leaverton Construction who had the original idea and who made it a working reality. ■■



# Sprucing Up Old Radiators



**I**N THE AUGUST ISSUE, Nan Harrington sought advice from other readers on how to treat the old cast iron radiators in her 19th century farmhouse. We received several dozen replies...far too many to print in this limited space. But there was a lot of agreement on some of the most basic points:

● **FROM THE STANDPOINT** of maximum heat efficiency, a radiator shouldn't have any paint on it. Any paint that is added on top of the iron will reduce heat transfer marginally. However, from the standpoint of preventing rust (a rusty surface also cuts down heat transfer) and from the appearance standpoint, a thin coat of paint is desirable.

● **THICK COATS OF OLD PAINT** not only cut down on heat transfer, they also hide some of the decorative details that were often cast into the old radiators.

● **TO REMOVE ACCUMULATED** paint, the readers have used just about every stripping process. The most popular was sandblasting. Some people brought them to commercial dip tank services. (Because of the weight, however, not every dip tank operator will deal with radiators.) A few readers reported success with the wire roto-strippers that fit into portable drills.

● **IF A RADIATOR** has been disconnected for stripping, it's also a good idea to see how much of the accumulated rust and scale you can remove from inside. (The scale cuts down heat transfer.) Some commercial dipping processes will also remove some of this inside scale. Another way is to take a solution of baking soda in hot water and flush it through the radiator, followed by a flush with clean water.

● **REGARDING RADIATOR COVERS**, there was a wide divergence of opinion. There was much sentiment for leaving them totally exposed (especially the highly decorative ones) since they are antique plumbing fixtures. Too, they pointed out, any radiator cover—no matter how good the design—will cut down somewhat on heat efficiency.

## The Best Paint

**T**HERE DIDN'T SEEM to be any definitive "expert opinion" on the best paint to use in repainting a radiator after it had been stripped of all its old paint. The biggest factor in selecting a radiator paint is that it be heat resistant; i.e., it won't flake and discolor as it is heated by the iron.

THAT'S WHY the aluminum and bronze powder paints have been so popular for radiators over the years. These paints are heat resistant because of their metallic pigments. Although from a radiation efficiency standpoint a flat black paint would theoretically be best, the heat resistance afforded by the metallic pigment paints has been the over-riding factor.

MANY READERS, however, report satisfactory results with ordinary wall paint. So the odds are that if you paint a radiator with the same paint as you are using on the walls (or a contrasting color) the paint will probably adhere alright and won't be adversely affected by heat. If you want to be conservative and super-safe, however, then stick with the aluminum or bronze powder paints that have been used traditionally.

**T**HERE ARE SOME comments from John E. O'Brien of Chicago, Ill. His letter neatly distilled a lot of the expertise that many of the readers had gathered on a trial-and-error basis:

"IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT the radiators be disconnected for stripping. This not only makes the stripping easier, but it also simplifies the recoating of the radiator once it's clean.

I HAVE USED both sandblasting and dip-stripping to clean radiators. A small sandblaster can be rented or purchased rather economically. And the blasting grit can be reused, thus adding to the economy of this method. A medium silicate material will usually cut through the thickest paint.

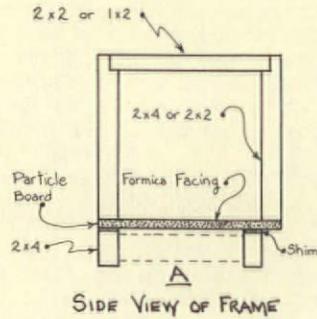
IF YOU PREFER DIPPING, I would suggest knocking together a wooden box and overlaying it with heavy clear plastic. This will form a makeshift tank into which the various radiators can be dipped into the lye or other stripping solution. The work should be done in a garage or under a large tree so you can rig a block and tackle to lift the radiators in and out and to swing them clear for a hose down. Be sure to flush the radiators upon completion of the dipping process to make sure they are clean and free from rust and stripping solution.

I PERSONALLY HAVE had best results with Rust-O-Leum paint. All others I've tried have given away to flaking and peeling. Spray cans save a lot of painting time. Or, if there are many radiators, consider renting a paint-spraying unit." ■■

SPECIAL THANKS to the following readers for contributions that were very helpful:

Howard Zucker, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
John E. O'Brien, Chicago, Ill.  
Rick Mordwin, Montclair, N.J.  
Marilyn Raffaele, Traverse City, Mich.  
Vera L. Griffiths, Lebanon, N.J.  
Alice Woodward, Dayton, Ohio  
David M. Doody, Wilmington, Del.  
Phyllis R. Alexander, Chevy Chase, Md.  
Yvonne A. Kenward, Tujunga, Calif.  
Bill & Frances Gay, Charlotte, N.C.

frame or by shimming it 1/2 in. off the floor. Plumbing and wiring should be roughed in at this point and space left in the frame to accommodate appliances.



I NAILED 5/8ths sheets of particle board over the frame which were later covered with scrap formica to form the bottom shelf of the cupboard. This board should be 24 in. wide and will protrude 4 in. beyond the base to give you a toe kick. From here the frame is built up of 2x2 squares tied together horizontally with 1x2's. Height will depend on the thickness of your counter top. Remember that taller people may want counters 1 to 2 in. higher than the standard 36 in. off the floor.

**P**RE-FORMED LAMINATE TOPS are readily available and easy to install. Preferring the crisp, square lines of the hand-laid kind, we elected to lay the counters ourselves and have a professional glue down the laminate afterward. Standard particle board is a bit porous for good countertops and a denser grade is available at most shops that do formica work.

INSTALL WITH SCREWS coming up through the framing from below so that the top can be unscrewed and removed if necessary. The front lip was a 1x2 nailed with the edge flush with the counter top. Sand off any unevenness, countersink nails or screws and double check to make sure the entire top is level.

### The Back Splash

**T**HE BACK SPLASH, a 1x4 strip, is not installed until the surface of the counter is applied. Make cut-outs for the sink or stove top before applying the laminate since it is a good deal cheaper to replace the particle board without the laminate if you goof than to replace the whole thing. With the counter securely in place and cut-outs made, you are ready for surfacing--a difficult and tricky job that I was glad to leave to professionals.

NINETEENTH CENTURY materials make a big difference to the look of the finished kitchen. The bake center was surfaced with a slab of marble and, as it turned out, real marble was cheaper than the synthetic version we had contemplated. Natural wood floors have something of the same effect on a kitchen.

THE INSIDES of the cabinets were finished with standard pre-finished panelling. The only place I know of where commercial paneling looks good is where it can barely be seen. Easy to clean because of the pre-finished surface, it gives an impression of finished wood on the interior which is almost never seen at close range anyway. It is available in many finishes and can be matched to most hard and soft wood exteriors.

OVER THE PANELLED INTERIORS I installed movable shelf brackets and shelves constructed of 5/8ths particle board with a strip of cherry glued to the leading edge and moulded with a plane or router.

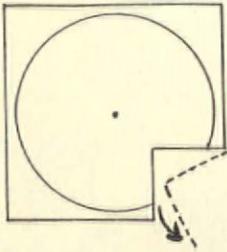
### The Drawers

**B**Y THIS POINT THE HOUSE had become a family project and Ruth's father offered to construct the drawers. They were painstakingly put together with dove-tailed joints and 3/8 in. white pine. Good drawers can be made with a half-lap joint and plywood but drawers do get very hard use and should be constructed with great care if you want to avoid doing the whole job again in two years or so.

THE EASIEST WAY to install drawers is to apply the facing later. The actual drawer box can be made of scrap materials. (Illus. D) Metal slides can be used on the side with this method because the inch or so clearance between the drawer width and the width of the opening can be covered by the facing piece which is applied to the drawer box after the fronts of the cabinets have been completed. The face will also serve as the drawer stop on the finished product.



The bake center cabinet has a real marble counter. Space between top of cabinet and ceiling enhances the period effect. Panels in lower doors are pierced tin.



ONE OF THE HARDEST cabinets to build was the lazy susan corner cabinet. It should protrude 3 ft. out from the corner on both walls, although these dimensions can be fudged a little if necessary. Shelves are made by cutting large circles out

of particle board with a pie-slice shaped piece taken out to give the door room to shut. The trick is to fasten the pole to the floor of the cabinet and then adjust the upper fastener until you have an absolute balance point on your shelves.

SHELVES IDEALLY should rotate smoothly and, if they "fall" back into any position, it should be the closed position. Fasten the pole hardware on the bottom of the cabinet, and with the shelves in place on the pole, experiment with the placing of the top point. Mark the holes, and fasten the upper plate to the bottom side of the counter top, being very careful not to drill completely through the top. It might be a good idea to do this before having your counter top laminated.

### Building In Place

ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES of building cabinets in place is that you can use them before they are completely finished and will be able to move into your house that much sooner. If you are living in the house you will want to have the use of the kitchen as soon as possible. With the basic spaces, shelves, drawers, and counter-top in position you have only to hook up the sink, stove and appliances to have a functional kitchen. It may not look like much but it can be used. The danger is that you may never get around to finishing them!

FACING THE CABINETS is a long job but since this is the most visible part you will want to take time to do a good job. The back of the free-standing peninsula in this kitchen was the easiest aspect. We had an original bathroom with a tongue and groove dado. Since this had to be removed to rehabilitate the bath anyway,

I had little hope that it would survive. As I removed it, however, I found that it was beaded on both sides and could be reused without stripping by simply turning it around. This beaded tongue and groove material is common in turn-of-century houses and was often used as ceiling material on porches. Called "partition panel," it is still available in some lumber yards although salvaged material has a much deeper color.

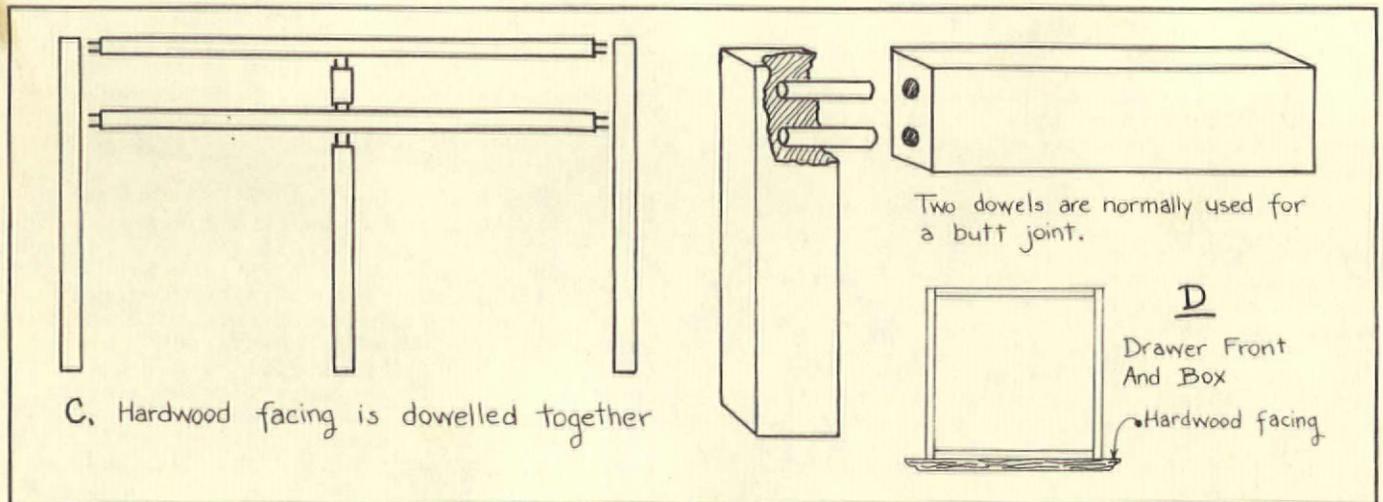
WE HAD ALREADY decided to try to approximate Victorian kitchen furniture and cherry seemed a natural choice for the wood although it is extremely hard and difficult to work with. A simple frame was made by dowelling and gluing cherry stiles and rails together. Pieces were about 2½ in. wide but can be varied to get the most efficient use of your lumber or space. Box drawers were already in place on their metal runners. The faces for the drawers were cut from a ¾-in. board and were cut large enough so that they overlapped the drawer opening ⅜ in. on all sides. The drawer faces were bevelled on a table saw by running them through with the blade set at a 12° angle.

ALL WOODWORK was sanded and finished before installation. Doors for the cabinets were constructed of simple frames but jointed and dowelled together. The inner edge of the back side was rabbetted out about ⅜ in. to receive the panels, which were secured in place with a quarter-round moulding.

### Punched Tin Panels

WHILE DAVID WORKED to frame out the cabinets I began to think about the inset panels. We had decided to use punched tin panels partly to offset the brown surface of the cabinet fronts and partly because many Victorian kitchens seem to have had a pie safe with a punched tin front in them somewhere.

SHEETS OF TIN in a variety of thicknesses can be had at most large metal working shops. It should be thick enough so that it will not bend easily but thin enough so that you can work with it, punching holes through it with a nail or similar tool.



**F**OR PATTERN IDEAS I went to the library-- public or university libraries are fine-- and got all the books out I could find on folk art. Included in most such books are large, simple designs such as Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs, quilt patterns, and stencil patterns. If these don't appeal to you make up your own. You might want to use designs that have meaning for you or your family. My mother, for example, included an outline of their family pet on a panel for her pie safe.

MODERN LINEAR PATTERNS work well and even a relatively complicated pattern such as the Shaker Tree of Life design can be made to work. Try to make your designs large and fairly simple because very complicated or small designs can't be distinguished in punched tin. You can use one pattern for all the fronts or change them as often as you like. I tended to repeat my designs using a series of Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs on the built-in bake center.

TO MAKE THE DESIGN, simply draw it out on heavy paper the size of the panel needed. Don't forget that the edges will be recessed into the frame of the door so you will need to leave an extra quarter-inch margin on each side in addition to whatever margin you choose for your design. A compass, ruler and cut-outs of circles, hearts, stars and leaves should be all you need to come up with your designs.

### Transferring The Patterns

**N**EXT, TAPE YOUR DESIGN directly to the tin panels (already cut to their proper size) and put it in the door frame to see how it will look. If everything seems to look the way you want it then you are ready to punch the design. Place the tin panel on a large piece of scrap lumber (an old sheet of panelling will do nicely) to avoid ruining your work table. Then, following your design, punch holes at regular intervals with a hammer and nail or punch. You can vary the design by using different size nails to give larger and smaller holes and you can vary the distance between the holes.

WE FOUND THAT 3/8 in. between the holes was good for larger, open designs while the space had to be narrowed for smaller or more intricate designs. As you punch the design into the tin it will begin to curve inward. This is not too serious and can be pushed back into its original flat shape if you are careful. The danger is in actually bending the tin as the creases will not come out and will mar the final product.

WHEN FINISHED, the punched tin panels were fitted into the door frames with the rough side in. This is not the "right" way to do it but it will save your children, stockings, fingers and so on from serious damage--rough metal cuts faster than anything I know. If you are really worried about this you could face the rough inner side of the door with something to prevent touching the tin although it will change the exterior look of your door and will prevent air from moving through the cabinet (one of the great advantages of this sort of front.)

WHILE THE DOORS were being completed, we also worked at facing the cabinets. I found it easiest to completely construct and finish sections before assembly. Working with units of approximately 48 in. wide, the entire face with doors attached to the frame can be installed with counter-sunk finishing nails. Drawer fronts are the last step and are attached to the drawer box so as to cover the drawer opening in the facing frame.

**U**PPER CABINETS were made differently since they could not have a visible frame. Here the sides were screwed into the wall and the cabinet on either side with the bottom pieces rabbetted into them and secured with glue and screws. A 1x2 was screwed horizontally to the back wall so that the entire width of the cabinet rested on it giving extra support for the center divider. The entire cabinet was then faced out in the same manner as the lower cabinets. The small spice drawers were a pain to make but they do break up the square look of the cabinet and are typical of 19th century kitchen cabinets.

### Good Materials Essential

GOOD MATERIALS ARE NECESSARY IF you want a good finished product and one that approximates the feel of Victorian kitchen furniture. I have two pet peeves in kitchens. One is putting cheap looking hardware on nice cabinets. Why not take a little time to buy good reproduction hardware or, better yet, search out some period hardware.

GOOD QUALITY LUMBER is another necessity both for esthetics and because it must hold its shape under loads. If you can get it, full dimension lumber is helpful (when was a 3/4-in. board really 3/4 of inch thick?) Using genuine materials like the marble countertop also helps and we discovered to our delight that it was actually cheaper than the "cultured" marble substitutes being marketed today. While offering some advantages over marble, these substitutes simply do not have that Victorian feel about them--at least to us.

**A**LARGE CROWN MOULDING can do much to enhance the effect of your cabinets and, if you build them to the ceiling, there will be considerable extra storage space. On the other hand, you can kill the whole effect of a Victorian kitchen by having a flat, plain panel above the cabinet doors. The crown moulding shown in our kitchen was constructed with nothing more exotic than a flat 6 in. board with a 45 degree cut on each edge and 1x2 laid on the top.

THE RESULTING KITCHEN was straight-forward and modern yet the cabinet treatment lent enough Victorian feeling to tie the kitchen into the rest of the house. The cabinets required about 250 board ft. of cherry to face and the entire kitchen including countertops, quarry tile floor, hood, lighting fixtures, and all appliances excluding the refrigerator cost just under \$3000. The work was enjoyable taking about six months to complete and in the end all the cabinets worked smoothly and could be sat upon without fear of collapse. ■■

# Restorer's Notebook

## Alligatored Paint

OUR 1826 HOUSE had layer after layer of various wall coatings. Among the paint coatings we found (starting at the plaster) were: Calcimine, oil base, stucco texture paint, then more oil base paint, and finally, latex.

WITH THIS THICK paint build-up, the surface was completely alligatored to a depth of 1/16 in. Repeated fillings of these cracks did no good; they always opened up again.

WE WANTED TO AVOID stripping all the old finish off the walls because we were afraid the stripping process would damage the fragile wall plaster. So here's what we did:

TO STABILIZE THE SURFACE, we first rough-sanded the walls, dusted them thoroughly, and then applied cheesecloth with regular water-mixed wallpaper paste. Paste was first brushed on, then cheesecloth rolled off a bolt into the wet paste. The cloth was smoothed into place with the wet wallpaper brush. A second (or third) pair of hands is helpful here. Seams were overlapped 1/2 in. and pasted well. We pasted only small sections at a time until we got the hang of it.

AFTER THOROUGH DRYING, we applied three brushed-on coats of joint compound, which had been thinned with water to allow brushing. We used a random-brush texture to complement the stucco look of the texture paint that still remained on other walls elsewhere in the house. The finished effect was similar to an artist's painted canvas. Other textures, including flat skim troweling, can be used, since the cheesecloth base provides a firm anchor for finishing.

THE WALLS treated in this way are still perfectly sound and alligator-free after 5 years.

Bert Waggott  
New York, N.Y.

## Cleaning A Damper

I WAS DELIGHTED WITH Eva Horton's article on sweeping chimneys (OHJ Aug. 1978). But in cleaning our 80-year-old fireplace last spring we encountered a problem she didn't touch on—and which other old-house owners may face.

YEARS OF ASH and deteriorated mortar had fallen onto our smoke shelf to the extent that the damper could only be opened an inch or so—not far enough to admit a hand, brush or vacuum tube. Because we have a Heat-a-lator

whose heating tubes run below the damper, and because the damper is hinged on the inside, we couldn't remove it. Our chimney man suggested removing bricks from behind the shelf, but that would have meant going through the dining room wall. Dilemma!

MY SOLUTION was to drill a few holes in the damper itself with a 1/2-in. drill. I then "jiggled" out enough of the mortar and ash with a stiff wire to open the damper far enough to finish the job. The holes were later closed with 3/8-in. bolts and heavy washers.

William O. Makely  
Downers Grove, Ill.

## Aluminum For Repairs

HERE'S A TRICK that can be used as a temporary repair for cracked siding and clapboards. Slip a piece of thin aluminum sheeting under the clapboard behind the crack. It will keep out the rain until you get around to replacing the piece.

TO GET THIN ALUMINUM sheets, I purchase (for 40¢ each) the old offset printing plates from our local newspaper.

I HAVE ALSO used this thin aluminum to make other temporary repairs on exterior woodwork... cutting patches and tacking them in place over holes and the like. The aluminum can be painted.

Birdie Bates  
Kellogg, Iowa

## More On Paint Brushes

IN REFERENCE to the August 1978 "Avoiding Brush Cleanup," be sure the aluminum foil is tightly sealed when wrapping paint brushes to stick them in the freezer. We learned the hard way when my sons put open paint trays and rollers in the freezer. The food in the freezer absorbed the paint fumes.

ALSO, we discovered that zip-lock bags or other tightly sealed plastic bags will keep brushes moist and pliable for several days with no refrigeration or freezing. Brushes tightly wrapped in aluminum foil will also keep for several days outside the freezer.

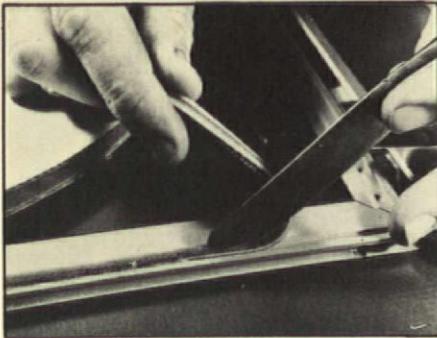
C. W. Hurlbut  
Mercer Island, Wash.

## Got Any Tips?

Do you have any hints or short cuts that might help other old-house owners? We'll pay \$15 for any short how-to items that are used in this "Restorer's Notebook" column. Send your hints to: Notebook Editor, The Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

# Products For The Old House

## Weatherstripping Products



FABRIC PILE WEATHERSTRIPPING used on aluminum storm windows and doors made several years ago is vulnerable to shrinkage and wear, decreasing its sealing effectiveness. To deal with this problem, there is a replacement pile produced called Polybond which do-it-yourselfers can install with very little difficulty.

POLYBOND weatherstripping is a chemically-treated polypropylene pile strip which has low friction for easy sash movement. It is highly resistant to shrinkage, rot, mildew or the effects of sunlight. It is available in 40 ft. rolls and is \$3.98 per roll.

THE MANUFACTURER, the Schlegel Corp., has a wide range of weatherstripping products. Polyflex is a door sealing system that reduces energy waste through entry doors. It is a flexible, high-impact plastic material which can be cut with scissors. The seals have a pressure-sensitive adhesive backing and come in white, black or beige.

K-FOAM is a replacement seal for metal doors made of soft, compressible polyurethane foam with a vinyl wrapper.

FOR INFORMATION about their products write: The Schlegel Corporation, Box 23113-J, Rochester, New York 14692.

## Helpful Publications

### Rehabilitation Tax Incentives

TAX INCENTIVES for the preservation of historic commercial and income-producing structures were established by Section 2124 of the Tax Reform Act of 1976.

THESE PRESERVATION provisions permit owners of certain depreciable properties to amortize the costs of a rehabilitation over a five-year period or to depreciate the costs of a substantially rehabilitated structure at an accelerated rate.

THE STRUCTURE must be part of a registered historic district (either listed on the National Register or designated under a certified State or local statute) to qualify.

A PACKET of printed information is available, free, by writing to: Tax Reform Act, Office Of Archeology & Historic Preservation, HCRS/Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

### Conserving Energy In Old Buildings

MANY OLD BUILDINGS have energy-saving physical features and devices that contribute to good thermal performance.

OLDER BUILDINGS probably require fewer weatherization improvements because they were built with a well-developed sense of physical comfort and because they maximized the natural sources of heating, lighting and ventilation. The old-house owner should understand these inherent energy-saving qualities.

PRESERVATION BRIEF 3, from the Technical Preservation Services Division of the Dept. of the Interior is an excellent discussion of energy conservation in older buildings. To obtain a free copy, write to: Technical Preservation Services Division, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U. S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

### New!

### The Old-House Journal 1978 Catalog

- Buyers' Guide Directory to 5,873 hard-to-find items and services for the old house;
- 525 Companies listed;
- 219 of these sources are new—did not appear in the 1977 Buyers' Guide.

Single copies: \$7.00  
(\$4.00 to subscribers)

Order from:

The Old-House Journal

199 BERKELEY PL. • BKLYN, N.Y. 11217

### Subscriptions: The Old-House Journal

Enclosed is my \$12 for a one-year subscription to The Old-House Journal.

Subscription is: Gift  Personal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: The Old-House Journal, Dept. 7,  
199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217