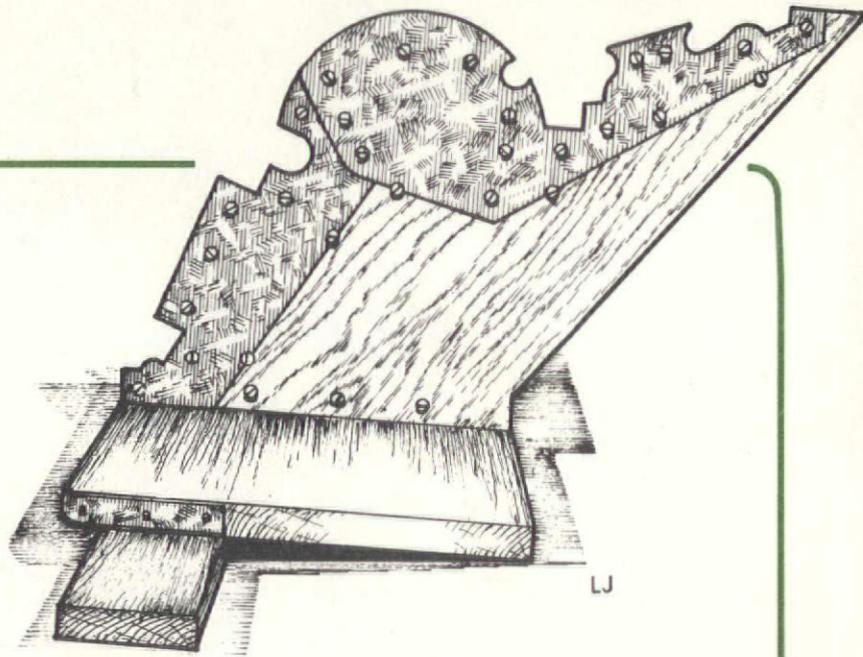


# The Old-House Journal

## DECORATIVE PLASTER:

# RUNNING CORNICES



by John Mark Garrison

**O**UR PREVIOUS ARTICLE showed how to mix materials, construct a mould, and run mouldings on a bench. Now we're moving on to cornice work, the most exciting and challenging of all plaster work. A lot of what's described here will be beyond the capabilities of the average homeowner, although the fundamental techniques are those we've already described. Constructing an elaborate cornice is a complicated job, but you shouldn't let that scare you away from a small-to-medium-sized project. (The hassle of finding qualified people to do the job may force you to attempt it yourself!)

A CHRISTMAS SAMPLER.....	220	YOUR SHPO, PART 3.....	230
BUILDING BRICK BAKE OVENS.....	222	THE 1984 OHJ INDEX.....	231
THE GOTHIC REVIVAL STYLE.....	226	In the next issue...	
RESTORATION PRODUCTS.....	228	RESIDENTIAL ART DECO	

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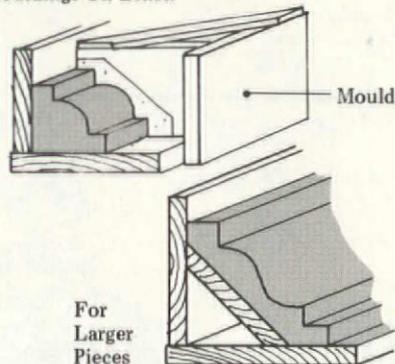
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## Bench Work

**T**HE MOULD for running a cornice must be designed to run on two surfaces that form a 90-degree angle.

A simple approach is to construct a backing box of two long, straight boards that are fastened edge to edge at right angles. If you're running a larger moulding, an angled piece of wood can be added to the inside corner of the box. It prevents the use of unnecessary amounts of plaster, and reduces the weight of the moulding.

Mouldings On Bench



RUNNING a section of cornice on the bench lets you shape almost any contour; even undercut cuts are possible, because the mould runs out at either end of the piece. After it cures, plaster has amazing strength for its weight -- you will be surprised at the size of pieces which you can make and conveniently handle.

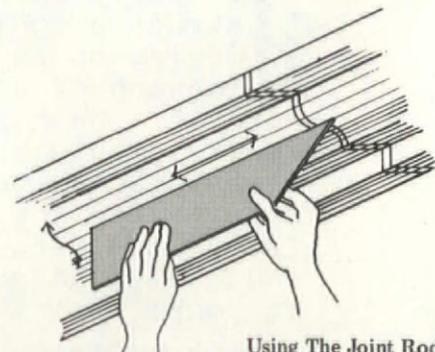
OF COURSE, as the size of the piece increases, the amount of plaster increases -- and so does the working time needed to complete it. You may have gotten by before, using pure plaster of paris with small mouldings, but the larger pieces discussed here require a plaster/lime putty mix. (Consult the article in the Aug.-Sept. 1984 OHJ for the mixing of plaster materials.)

**YOU CAN REPAIR** a damaged section of cornice by forming a replacement on the bench. Simply splice it in by cutting back the existing cornice to sound material and then installing the new piece in the missing section. The area behind the cornice itself also needs to be cut back of any material that would interfere with the correct placement of the new piece. Investigate

this condition before constructing the backing box for the new piece; the cornice already in the room was most likely formed in a slightly different fashion.

INSTALLING A PIECE of any size requires more than a simple "gluing" with plaster; you have to nail or screw it to the wall and ceiling. As discussed previously, this involves predrilling and careful nailing with finishing nails. Be sure that the nails find wood: wood lath, if that's the foundation material; studs or joists, if the backing is metal lath. You can't attach the new piece only to old (and potentially loose) plaster.

THE INEVITABLE GAPS between the new and old sections are then filled with plaster. Pure gypsum plaster is fine for small-to-medium-sized cracks. Trim away the excess with a "joint rod": a 1/16-in. piece of steel, about 4 in. wide, with a good straight edge that measures from a few inches to 2 ft. in length. One of the ends is cut at a 45-degree angle, so it can get into tight corners. If you're lucky, you'll get it from a masonry- or plastering-supply house; otherwise, it's easy enough to make your own from a piece of steel. Use a steel stiff enough not to bend easily in your hands. (Aluminum or sheet-metal flashing are too soft.) Be sure the edge is perfectly straight. Joint rods are also called "mitre rods," as their main use is to form mitres for cornice work.



Using The Joint Rod

TO USE THE JOINT ROD, hold the straight edge against the cornice and move it up and down so that the rod follows the contour and trims away the excess plaster. A slight back-and-forth motion helps cut away the wet plaster and leaves a smooth surface.

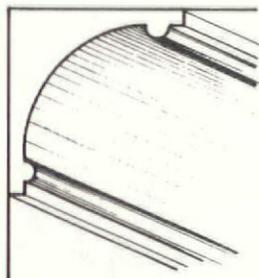
WHENEVER APPLYING new plaster to existing material, dampen all surfaces thoroughly, either with a pump bottle or by throwing water onto the surfaces with a brush. This cuts down on the "suction" of the dry plaster and prevents the new material from drying out too fast.

SMALL, FLEXIBLE, rubber bowls are handy for mixing the small amounts of plaster used for patching and filling. Unused plaster can be left to dry in the bowl and then popped out. They're usually available from sculpture or hobby stores, but if you can't find them, you can make a reasonable substitute by slicing rubber balls in half. Small spatulas of different shapes can also come in handy (especially later, when we get to the fancy stuff). Used for sculpting clay, they're just right for mixing, filling, and shaping ornaments and odd shapes.

DON'T FEEL TEMPTED to construct a cornice for an entire room by forming it in sections on the bench. Each bench-made section of cornice can take on even slight twists or rackings in the wood of the backing box; you can't expect all the pieces to meet each other perfectly. The box-formed pieces can also be distorted if they're laid on an unsmooth surface before they've fully dried. And if you could get them perfectly straight, they wouldn't fit any unusual bends in the wall or ceiling.

### Running A Cornice In Place

IF YOU'VE MASTERED the work discussed so far, you're ready to try the same process over head in place. This may seem like a hopeless task the first time you try it -- it



certainly did my first time. However, after you get over the initial awkwardness, you may find a medium-sized cornice is well within your capabilities. More ambitious readers may even want to take on something as large and elaborate as the cornice shown in the photos, but that's definitely not a beginner's project. Instead, let's imagine something a little simpler, such as the cornice in my turn-of-the-century apartment, illustrated here.

CERTAIN FACTORS are actually in your favor with such a job. To begin with, you won't be working alone: Running a cornice in place is definitely a task for two people. Also, the basic process has only minor variations from the one that's already been explained. There are only two principal difficulties: applying and working the plaster overhead, and timing.

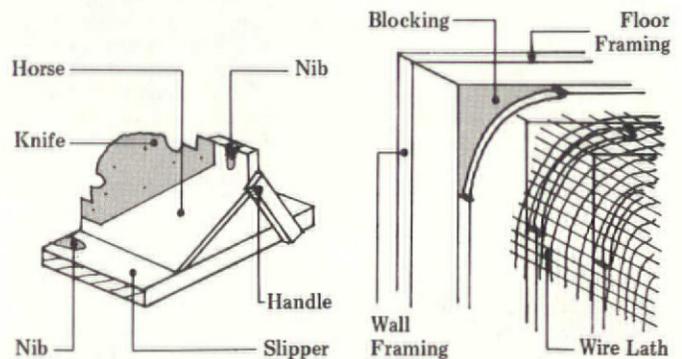
THE FIRST of these can be mastered fairly quickly. The plaster must be mixed to the proper consistency: stiff enough to remain where it's plopped, but also soft enough to be workable. When you've gotten that, and you

have the proper set-up, the mould is run just as easily as if it were on the bench.

TIMING is somewhat harder to master, and is far more critical. One essential is good coordination between the two people on the job; one mixing and applying the material, the other running and cleaning the mould. On a large project, a rhythm should eventually be established in which there's little wasted motion -- and equally little rushing. Remember, once a batch of plaster is mixed, you must work with it on its schedule. You can't pause and reflect when you're in the middle of running a cornice moulding. With some experience, you'll be able to control the material so that your pace coincides with the pace of the plaster. Then, the only surprise you'll experience will be over how fast and comfortably the work moves.

### Mould, Lath, Base Coats

SHOWN BELOW is a mould designed to run the cornice illustrated above. Unlike the mould described in the previous article, this one is constructed to be guided along the wall by the edge of the slipper; along the ceiling, by the top edge of the horse. Thus, for most cornices, the horse angles out toward you, beyond the outer edge of the slipper. The handle is set at a corresponding rake. Note too that this mould includes nibs (which were mentioned but not included in the earlier mould). You'll be running this mould on plaster, and the sheet-metal nibs provide a smooth surface on which the mould can slide.

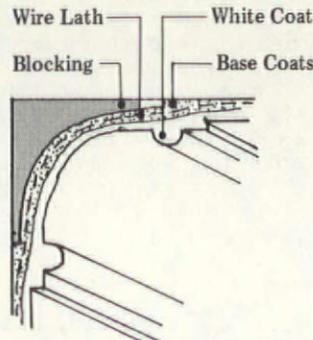


TO REDUCE unnecessary plaster and weight, the lath behind the cornice should follow the final profile as closely as possible. This is usually done by blocking out between the studs of the wall and the joists above, with pieces cut to the basic contour of the cornice, leaving about 1/2 to 1 in. for lath and plaster. The lath is then nailed to these blocks, as shown above.

THE BASE COATS proceed in the same manner as flat work: a "scratch coat" to key into the lath, and a "brown coat" that serves as the base for the finished work, or "white coat" (which here is the cornice moulding). These coats are most easily made of "Structo-lite" or one of the other ready-mixed, base-coat materials (basically a combination of gypsum plaster and lightweight aggregates). Mixing directions are given on the bag.

THE SCRATCH COAT is trowelled on with just enough pressure to form "keys," small blobs of plaster on the back of the lath. When these keys harden, they become the anchor for the rest of the coats. Don't use too much pressure during application; you'll just be pushing useless amounts of plaster through the wire lath. When this coat has set slightly, scratch it in a crisscross pattern to form a mechanical bond with the next coat.

THE LATH is stiffened by the scratch coat, which provides uniform suction for the brown coat. Once the scratch coat has set up, apply the brown coat over it. Form a level, smooth surface, filling in any irregularities in the scratch coat. The brown coat should be trowelled in along the curve of the cornice, leaving just enough room for 1/4 to 1/2 in. of white coat, along with any projections or beads in the final moulding.



### Dots & Screeds

THE MOULDING will be run on two surfaces, wall and ceiling; in most cases, they'll correspond to the finished wall and ceiling surfaces. These new surfaces are called "screeds"; the term also refers to any surfaces about 4 to 6 in. wide, which are used to establish a level in plastering. Screeds for cornice work are formed out of the same material as the cornice itself: a high-gauge putty or white coat. ("High gauge" refers to the high amount of plaster in the mix, usually about 50:50 gypsum plaster and lime putty.)

ESTABLISH THE WALL SCREEDS FIRST. Determine the level of the finished wall in the corners of the room at a level just below the bottom of the cornice. Dots of high-gauge plaster are applied to the wall and trowelled smooth. These screeds must be absolutely straight, because they'll determine both the line of the cornice and the surface of the finish walls. Double-check corners for square; compare the level of the ceiling against a level line run around the room. (A water-level or just a length of clear plastic hose filled with water will be quite handy.) Progressing from one point to another, all the way around the room, record level marks on all the walls. (Mix a little food coloring or powdered blue chalk from a chalk-line into the water, to make the level easier to see.)

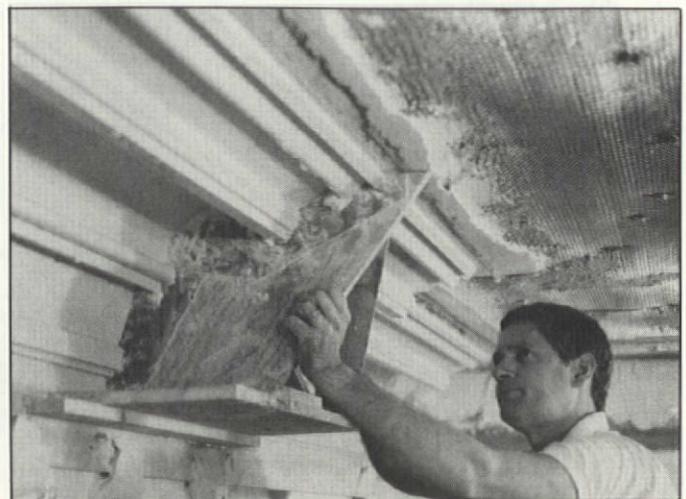
ONCE THE CORNER DOTS ARE SET, establish intermediate dots around the room, spacing them so that a straight edge can reach from one dot to the next. Form these intermediate dots by stretching a line between the corner dots and levelling to that line. For greater accuracy, hold the string off the corner dots by wedging a finish nail under it. Use the same-sized nail as a spacer gauge for intermediate dots.

WHEN ALL THE DOTS ARE ESTABLISHED, enlarge them by building up material above or below each dot and pressing a "plumb dot": a dot about 6 in. long, pressed vertically to the other dots. Use a hand level and a piece of paper over each dot to prevent the level from sticking to the plaster. Form screeds to the dots, all the way into the corners, completing a band of white-coat plaster around the room, just at the bottom of the cornice line.

MARK A LEVEL LINE onto this plaster band; use the water-level to establish levels in the corners, and then snap lines around the room with a chalk-line. Use this line for the top edge of the batten on which the mould will eventually rest; establish its height by holding the mould itself in place and marking against the bottom edge of the slipper. Hold the water-level against the mould to ensure it isn't crooked. Leave enough space between the top of the mould and the ceiling for the ceiling screed. Take particular care in the corners of the room: The lines marked on each wall must come together exactly, or it'll be impossible to form the mitres of the cornice.

TAKE GOOD, CLEAR PINE STRIPS, each about 1/2 in. thick by 1-1/2 in. wide, and nail them into the screed, keeping the top edge of the strip exactly on the line. Space the nails about 18 in. apart. Do this slowly and carefully: When the ends of the two battens meet, both in the corners and along the wall, one better not be higher than the other! Once you've checked the accuracy of the wood strip, reinforce it with blobs of high-gauge plaster over the batten and against the wall. Space them every 12 in. or so, to keep the batten from moving while the cornice is being run.

THE CEILING SCREED is formed in much the same manner as the wall screed. Establish dots around the room on the ceiling, using the mould itself as the gauge. Set the mould with the slipper resting on the cornice strip that's fastened to the wall. Level it with the water-level. A vertical batten nailed against the horse at right angles to the slipper can be used as a guide for the level.

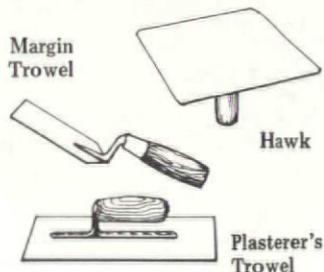


David Flaharty is seen here with the mould used to run the cornice in the Greek Revival room of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. That was a pretty elaborate job, as you'll see from the photos, but its basic principles are the ones explained in this article.

AFTER THE DOTS HAVE SET, form a band of plaster, connecting the dots with a straight edge. The ceiling screed must be extremely straight and true, with no pocks or bumps, because the top edge of the mould has only one point of contact with the ceiling (whereas the length of the slipper can compensate for any small irregularities on the wall).

## Running

**N**OW (AT LAST!) you're ready to actually run the cornice. But before you do, check your set-up one more time. Make sure you have enough of your materials (lime putty, plaster, water) on hand. Besides water for mixing, you should have a separate supply for cleaning tools; also a garbage pail for old plaster and other junk. Your mixing board should be at a comfortable height, and located so the mixed plaster can be transferred easily up to the cornice. A plasterer's "hawk" and a standard plasterer's trowel, shown here, are used to handle the plaster once it's mixed.



**MAKE SURE** your scaffolding is comfortable and safe -- no wobbly planks or precarious perches! Your staging must be wide enough and solid enough for you to walk confidently on it while your attention is on running the mould. Just to be sure, first run the mould dry a couple of times. Check that it runs smoothly and straight. Strike a line on the ceiling screed, where the nib of the horse runs; it'll serve as an additional visual check that you're not running off course as you go. Run the mould once just to observe whether or not the top edge of the horse follows the line on the ceiling. If it swerves off, something's wrong with your layout. (If it veers outside the line, the cornice strip on which the slipper runs needs to be shifted down; if it veers inside, the strip must be shifted up.)

**IF EVERYTHING LOOKS GOOD**, go ahead and run the cornice. The easiest procedure is to have one person mix and apply the plaster, and another person run the mould. Do the first application with the trowel, directly onto the cornice area. Run the mould over the plaster to cut off any high spots and to start forming the profile. This formation of the rough shape of the cornice is called "blocking out." As you run the mould, it will remove the large amounts of plaster that stick out beyond the finished profile. The person applying the plaster should stand by with the hawk and trowel, ready to catch these falling pieces; besides saving waste, this will keep the scaffolding from becoming a mess. At the end of the run, this material can be reapplied to low spots, and the mould run again.

**ONCE THE PROFILE** begins to take shape, you can start applying more plaster directly to those areas that need it. The plaster used for



The cornice has been blocked out, and plasterer Steve Zychal can now begin troweling on the white coat.

blocking out needs to be retarded sufficiently, so that you can have plenty of working time. As you apply the plaster, be sure to keep it off the cornice strip and screeds, so that the mould isn't thrown off course. Examine those areas after each run and check that they're clean. Also make sure that the mould is kept clean of accumulating plaster.

**ONCE THE CORNICE** is about 80% formed, you can begin "stuffing" (applying plaster directly to) the mould. Use either a trowel or a rubber glove. Push the plaster up against the front edge of the knife while the mould is being run; this will fill out the gaps in the profile and form the fine details of the cornice. To ensure enough working time, mix a fresh batch of plaster for stuffing. If you are running a long section, you'd do well to set aside half of one batch unmixed.

**REPEAT THE STUFFING PROCEDURE** until the cornice profile takes shape. Remember to clean the mould well between runs, especially on the back of the knife where plaster builds up. Any small chunks of hardened plaster here will gouge the surface of the cornice; larger pieces can distort the profile and throw the mould off course, or even drag up and peel away areas of plaster behind the mould. Watch out for plaster build-ups on the screeds and the batten too.

**THE Mould WILL RUN THE CORNICE** up to within a few inches of the corners, but because of its construction it won't complete the corner of the room. The remaining space must be filled in using a joint rod. Therefore, be sure that plaster doesn't build up in the corners beyond the profile of the cornice; any material that does will have to be chopped away.

**AS THE CORNICE NEARS COMPLETION**, touch up any small pocks and voids in the surface with a slightly looser mix. The plaster will swell as it sets, so keep running the mould over the cornice every minute or so, even if you aren't adding more plaster. If you wait too long between runs, the cornice could enlarge beyond the profile of the mould.

**GIVE THE CORNICE** its final "polishing" by applying water ahead of the mould with a large

brush. The action of the knife and the water on the curing plaster should create a smooth, shiny appearance.

YOU SHOULD NOW have completed your first section of cornice. Don't feel bad if your first attempt isn't perfect -- small gaps in the surface can be filled in and trowelled off later.

### Making The Mitres

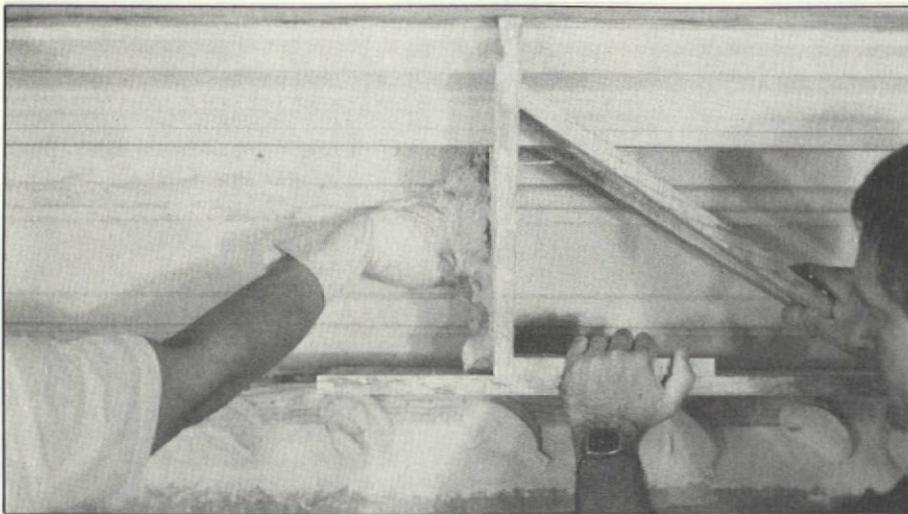
**A**FTER THE CORNICE has been run around all the walls of the room, you have to use a joint rod to complete the corners, or mitres, of the cornice. The rod must cover the size of the mitre, which is the distance it must span. It must be six inches greater than that length, to ensure a bearing on the cornice which can guide you in projecting the members of the cornice into the corner.

THE PLASTER FOR THE CORNER should be mixed in the same proportions as the rest of the cornice. Fill in the mitre area, roughly blocking it out with a trowel. Bear part of the joint rod's surface against the completed cornice; complete the mitre by running it over this surface with a slight back-and-forth

motion. This procedure requires a good deal of control to get good results. The straight edge of the rod must bear completely against the surface of the cornice at all times -- but don't use too much pressure, especially when you have fresh plaster forming the corner.

KEEP ALTERNATING from one side of the mitre to the other, to ensure that the profiles line up and to create a sharp corner. Be careful when working from one side with the joint rod that you don't damage the adjacent section. Once the mitre has begun to take shape, use the joint rod to remove any high spots. With a smaller margin trowel, daub additional material onto any areas requiring more plaster. Fill small voids in the profile by brushing on a mix of loose plaster. (This avoids damaging the newly shaped sections with a trowel.) Carefully level these small areas with the joint rod.

THE FINAL SHAPING of the point where two walls meet is done by hand, with a small sculpting tool that's shaped like a miniature mason's trowel. You need a good eye and a steady hand to create sharp profiles and a straight corner. The final touch is a clear, crisp joint: It's traditional to scribe a line in the corner exactly where the two profiles meet. Use a trowel guided on a straight edge held at a 45-degree angle away from the wall. 



That's Steve's hand in the rubber glove, stuffing the mould which David Flaharty is pushing. The mould is moving from right to left in this photo -- note the roughness of some of the cornice on Steve's side. (It's not too bad looking, as the cornice is nearly complete at this point.) In both this photo and the one below, you can see the blobs of plaster used to reinforce the batten against the wall.



David, pushing the mould away from the camera, has just about completed running the cornice. That gaping section of wire lath visible at the far right is one of the mitres that still have to be closed up. What's special about this particular mitre is that it's one of the two points where the chimney breast extends out of the wall, and not just one of the room's corners.



The running of the cornice has been completed, and now Steve can get to work on the mitre. In this photo, the top section of the moulding has already been blocked out; the lower part, right by Steve's hand, hasn't yet been started.



With the completion of the return of this chimney breast, the entire cornice is finished. As the photo attests, it's virtually impossible to detect where the mould left off and where the craftsman shaped the plaster himself.



Of course, there's always something else to do, even after the job has been completed. In this case, the something extra involves casting sections of plaster ornament and attaching them to the cornice with wet plaster.

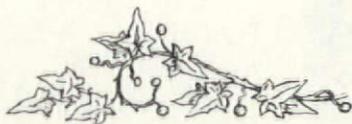
# Christmas Comes But Once A Year... A Christmas Sampler

compiled by Sarah McNamara

**D**ESPITE THE COMMERCIALISM associated with it these days, Christmas is still an old-fashioned holiday. As December nears, we remember -- and anticipate -- the sights and smells of Christmas as we've always known it: snow, abundant evergreens, the aroma of homemade gingerbread and roasting turkeys. We carry on our family celebrations with fervor, often without realizing that the same traditions may have been practiced over a hundred years ago!

CHRISTMAS HAS BEEN CELEBRATED in Europe -- especially Germany -- for well over four hundred years. The holiday and all its trimmings became popular in England during the reign of Queen Victoria. Prince Albert, the royal consort, is credited with bringing the first tree to England from his native Germany. Once Christmas reached the height of its popularity in England, it didn't take long for the custom to reach America.

HERE AT THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, we're lucky enough to have an extensive library of books from or about the last century. We've put together a Christmas sampler from these publications to help give you the flavor of and perhaps some insight into Christmas as it was celebrated a long time ago.



**I**T WAS CHRISTMAS EVE! From many a church tower the bells were chiming with a musical monotone, bearing far away into the echoes the tidings of the anniversary. The moon was clear and bright; the snow lay in white hard masses over roads and walks, and the merry jingle of the sleighbells sounded on the night air. Large houses, illuminated in every room, were filled with revelers; stores were crowded with busy customers; trees laden with the wonderful fruit that grows only once a year upon them, were delighting merry eyes; everywhere were mirth and gladness.

from CHRISTMAS EVE  
by S. Annie Frost,  
Godey's Lady's Book,  
1867

**I**HAVE BEEN LOOKING ON, this evening, at a merry company of children assembled round that pretty German toy, a Christmas tree. The tree was planted in the middle of a great round table, and towered high above their heads. It was brilliantly lighted by a multitude of little tapers, and everywhere sparkled and glittered with bright objects.

Charles Dickens, 1850

## A Homemade Cornucopia

**T**O MAKE PAPER CONES, cut squares in white or coloured paper. Fold the square in half, like Fig. 1 and cut off the piece at the top, making the two sides equal. When opened it will resemble Fig. 2. Gum it as far as the dotted line, and join it. Be sure to join it so that there is not a hole at the point. If it is made of white paper, cut some strips of red, or green, and of gold paper. Edge it with gold, and paste strips of red, green, and gold round it spirally at intervals. If the the cone is made of coloured paper, use gold, white, and some contrasting hue. Fig. 3 illustrates it. Fill with sweets and toys and hang from the Christmas tree.

from CASSELL'S HOUSEHOLD GUIDE, 1800s

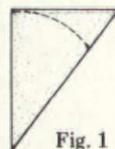


Fig. 1

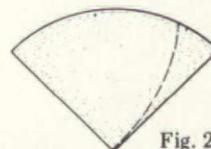


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

## Dressing The Home For Christmas

**I**T TAKES BUT A LITTLE GREEN to give the house a holiday air, if that be well arranged. Fortunate those who have long plants of Ivy grown in pots, as they have a capital material at hand, and one vastly better than any made-up wreaths. A few evergreen trees of small size and neat habit in the hall, or on the stair-landings, go a great way towards decorating the house. Hemlocks, Junipers, Spruces, etc., are often cut and put in place for this purpose . . . There are two or more kinds of club-moss (Lycopodium) to be found in the woods, especially northward. These are known also as Ground-Pines and Bouquet Green. All

# CHRISTMAS

A LONG TIME AGO.



SINCE FRESH FRUIT WAS not readily available, cider was the beverage for a Christian child's Christmas dinner. Desserts were an important part of this feast and were plentiful. Christmas rated a plum pudding; New Year's got a mince pie. Between meals, fruitcakes, which had been curing since autumn, and included at least four varieties, were available to all.

IN LATER YEARS, the Christmas menu was changed to include filet mignon with mushrooms and wine, followed by fresh ham and vegetables, mince pie with champagne, and fruitcakes with liqueurs. But in those early days, nothing alcoholic was served.

from KEEPING CHRISTMAS, AN EDWARDIAN AGE MEMOIR, by William F. Stricker

## The Dear Old Tree

BY LUELLE WILSON SMITH

There's a  
dear old tree,  
an evergreen  
tree,  
And it blossoms  
once a year:  
Tis loaded  
with fruit from  
top to root,  
And it brings to  
all good cheer:

For its blossoms  
bright are small  
candles white  
And its fruit is  
dolls and toys  
And they all are  
free for both  
you and me  
If we're good little  
girls & boys



### Best Christmas Plum Pudding

ONE POUND OF RAISINS, one pound of currants, one pound of bread crumbs, half a pound of suet chopped fine, eight eggs, one quart of milk, one teacupful of sugar, one nutmeg, quarter of a pound of candied citron, quarter of a candied lemon cut in strips, salt and other spices to taste; boil slowly for four hours, and eat with rich sauce.

from MRS. PORTER'S COOKBOOK AND HOMEMAKER'S COMPANION, 1891

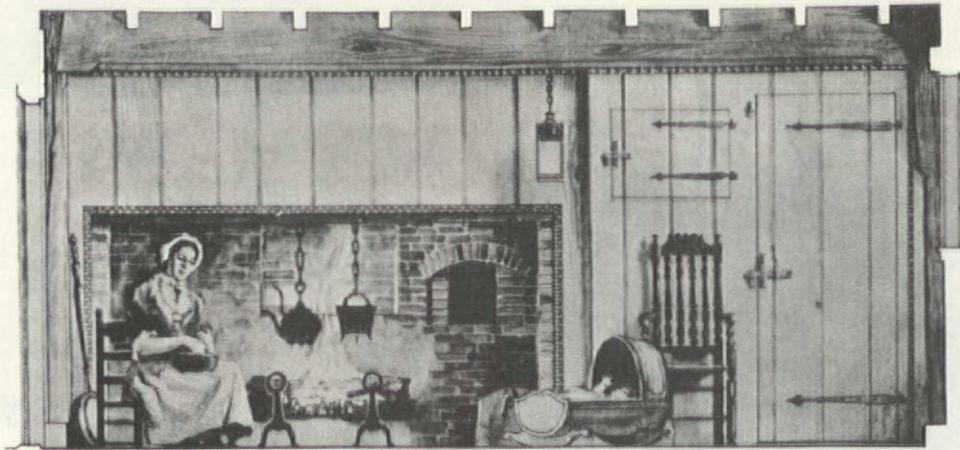
The entire OHJ staff wishes you a very merry Christmas!

these are excellent for making small wreaths -- the dealers call them "ropings" -- as they do not drop, and they hold their color well. The running club-mosses have long, slender, prostrate stems, that will allow them to be joined directly into wreaths . . . Of course, those who are fortunate as to have fresh flowers can use them in decorating, but bright berries and fruits seem more appropriate to the season, and some may still be found, unless the birds have been too busy among them. Substitutes for berries may be made in various ways. Cranberries can be arranged in bunches with little trouble. Each berry is strung on fine wire the ends of which are then doubled and twisted together, and six or eight of the berries are thus tied into a small bunch. Peas and beans, softened by boiling, can be put on wire in the same manner, and given a scarlet coat by dipping in sealing-wax dissolved in alcohol, before making into bunches.

from OUR HOMES: HOW TO BEAUTIFY THEM, by O. Judd Co., 1887

### The Christmas Menu

THE TURKEY WAS USUALLY STUFFED with a combination of sausage and chestnuts, which was the family favorite over sage and oyster dressing. Since frozen vegetables had not yet become a part of our lives, the vegetables were home-canned string beans, peas and tomatoes seasoned with fresh onions and croutons. In my family, sauerkraut was not served with turkey, but there were always side dishes of coleslaw, pickles, homemade bread and biscuits.



# Building A Brick Bake Oven

by Doug Turetsky

**I**N AMERICAN LORE, the hearth is the center of the home. Family and friends would gather around it, attracted by the warmth and the almost irresistible allure of the burning fire. What also drew people to the hearth was the aroma of breads, cakes, and pies cooking in the brick bake oven.

THE BAKE OVEN -- sometimes called a "beehive oven" because of its domed shape -- can be traced back to ancient Rome. The early bake ovens were free-standing, outdoor structures built of mud plaster. By the time of the American Colonies, ovens were part of the central masonry core of the house, and brick-making had become an industry. Construction with bricks reduced the chance of fire and improved the heat retention of the ovens.

TODAY, it's not so easy to learn about building or restoring brick bake ovens. They were so common from the 1650s through the 1850s, that people had little reason to record information on their structure and use. In each home the oven was somewhat unique, varying with the materials used and the idiosyncracies of the homeowner and mason. But what made all these ovens similar were the flat hearth, coursed brick walls, rectangular or arched opening, and of course, the domed roof.

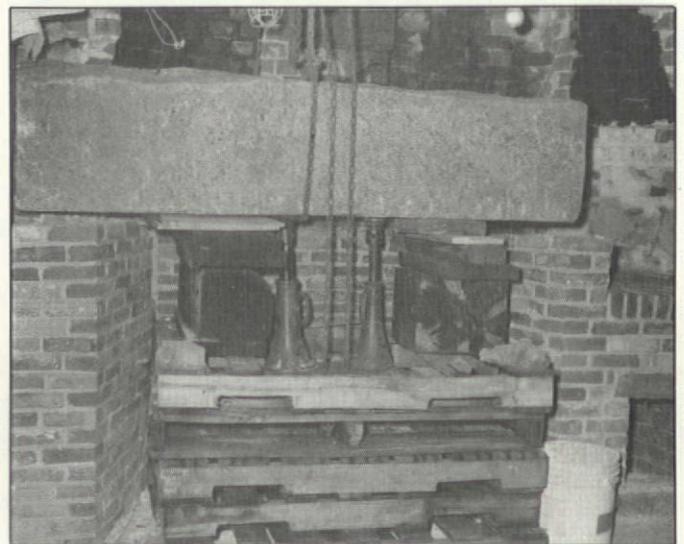
BY THE MID-19TH CENTURY, the brick bake oven began to decline in the face of safer and more efficient cast-iron stoves. Today, however, there's a resurgence of interest in the brick oven, not only for historical and aesthetic reasons, but also because many cooks believe that the taste and texture of foods baked in an old-fashioned brick oven cannot be equaled.

## Planning Your Bake Oven

**T**HE BRICK BAKE OVEN is a relatively simple structure. When renovating or restoring a house, a mason can easily incorporate it in the fireplace complex. There is no one single plan for building a bake oven, and so the mason and homeowner have several options to consider when they plan this project.

WHERE TO PLACE THE OVEN is the first decision, and it involves considerations of both history and safety. Ovens placed in the rear wall of a kitchen fireplace are the simplest to build because they don't require a separate flue or ash pit. But these are also the most dangerous ovens to use: Unless the fireplace opening is unusually wide, the cook may have to reach across a fire that's burning in the hearth. Rear ovens generally aren't found in houses built after 1750. (Before 1750, burning was the second most common cause of death among women.) If the oven is located inside the hearth, you'll need a large chimney core, and that can influence the placement of other fireplaces and flues in the house.

FIREPLACE CONSTRUCTION evolved with the 18th century. The opening became smaller and less cave-like, and bake ovens thus shifted to one of the fireplace jambs. This type of oven is



This granite lintel, steady on house jacks supported by timber cribbing, is for a fireplace built in the Samuel Richardson house. The chain fall, which raised the stone into place, provides added security until the right-hand jamb is built up to the underside of the lintel, and the mortar has cured. At right, you can see the completed ash pit and the finished floor of the brick bake oven.

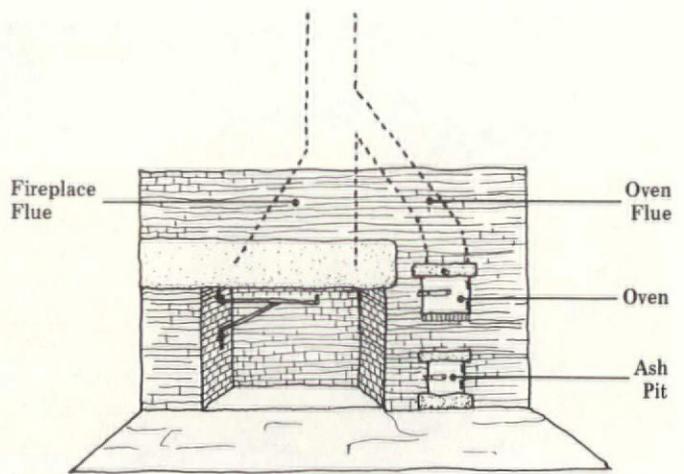
All photos by Henry E. Peach, Old Starbridge Village

safer to use but more challenging to build. It needs its own flue, and may require later innovations such as a damper and a hinged door with a cast-iron frame. Ovens placed in the fireplace jamb generally had an ash pit directly underneath. Besides being historically accurate, an ash pit in the oven design saves bricks and gives you a handy place to deposit smoldering ash when the oven's in use.

CONSIDER SEVERAL FACTORS when determining the dimensions of the oven. Its opening must be relatively small (to reduce heat loss), but large enough so the oven can be used conveniently. Generally, openings ranged from 14 to 16 in. wide by 10 to 16 in. high. The exact size of your opening will be determined largely by the type of lintel or arch used. To reduce heat loss, the opening must be more wide than tall. When choosing the size of the oven for a 19th-century house, you may want to consider the stock sizes of cast-iron frames for the oven opening; custom-made frames can be very costly. For earlier houses, stone or iron lintels are appropriate.

THE SHAPE of the oven hearth and the height of the oven can also vary, depending upon the cook's (and/or the mason's) predilections. A hearth floor can be round, angled to one side, or oval and very deep. When positioning an oven, consider whether the cook is right- or left-handed. Base the height of the hearth from the ground on what's comfortable for the cook. Depending on the design you choose, the size of a bake oven is approximately 26 to 30 in. wide by 26 to 40 in. deep. You'll want to keep the oven as short as possible: the less space in which the heat can rise, the greater the intensity of heat at the oven hearth. The hearth is usually some 30 in. above the floor.

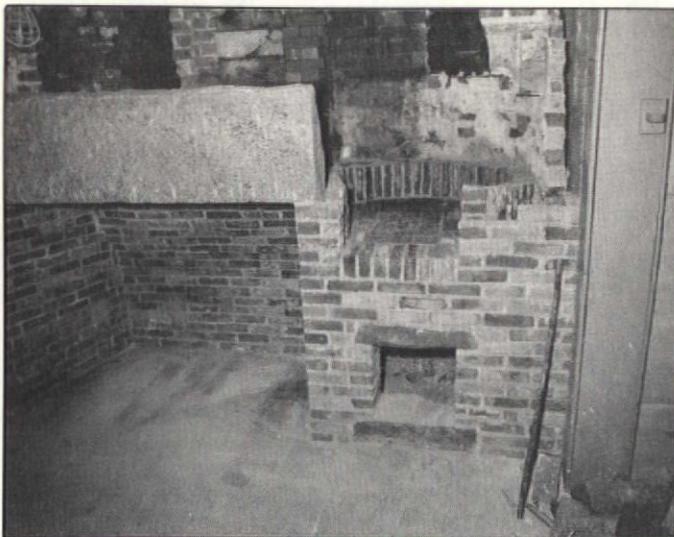
ONCE YOU'VE COMPLETED PLANS for the design and positioning of the oven, investigate bricks and mortar. Opinions differ on their proper compositions, but the common wis-



Front Elevation

dom is that the hardness of the brick should match the hardness of the mortar (because the brick and mortar must expand and contract at the same rate when the oven heats and cools).

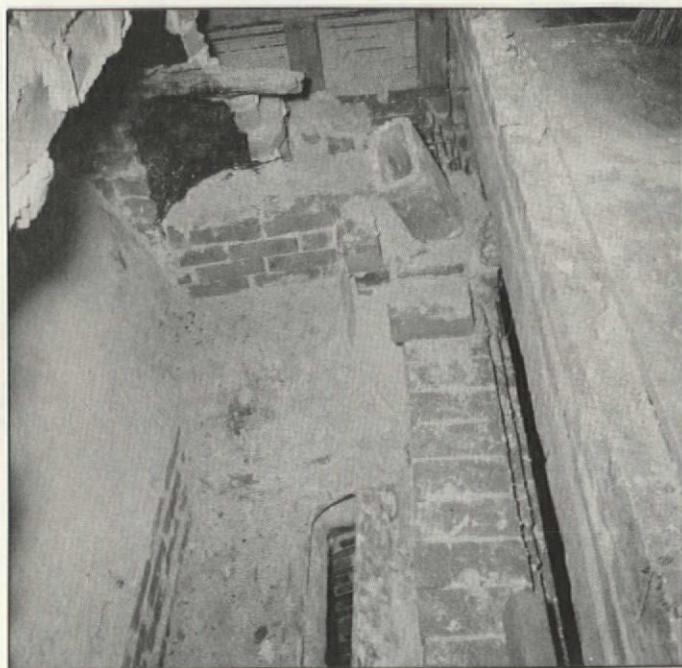
PRIOR TO the late 19th century, most of the brick produced was soft. Earlier kilns could not keep the hot, steady fire needed to make hard brick -- only the bricks close to the heat source of the kiln assumed the heavy, dense quality of hard brick. Consequently, hard brick was more expensive. It could also withstand weathering better than soft brick, and so its use was reserved for exterior walls and chimneys. Interior walls and fireplaces (and bake ovens) were constructed with the cheaper, more readily available soft brick.



Above: After the mortar cured, the timber cribbing was removed; the lintel now is in place, spanning the firebox jambs. (Note the second lintel over the ash pit.) A soldier course of bricks lays out the floor plan for the bake oven.

Right: The bake oven's arch and dome have been completed, and the dome's brickwork surface parged with mortar.





Left: Here's a view looking down from the second floor. The narrow opening at the center of the photo is the damper for the chimney flue. The course of bricks parallel to the damper and to its right are in place all the way across the granite lintel. Looking up that course, you can see the first section of tile liner for the bake oven's flue.

Right: The mortar has set sufficiently, and mason Bud Kupiec can now rake out the sand that supported the construction and curing of the bake oven's dome.



SOME PRESERVATIONISTS and masons believe that soft brick may have been used in bake ovens because it retains heat better than hard brick does. The oven's temperature extremes may deteriorate soft brick more quickly than hard brick, but the efficiency for cooking is a reasonable compensation.

SOME OVENS, including those built as late as the 19th century, were mortared with clay. Although it can remain remarkably durable, clay can be a fire hazard when used as a mortar. Many a colonial home burned down when fire ate through weak joints and ignited wooden partitions.

LIME/SAND MORTAR was another common pre-20th century bonding material. (New Englanders used it almost exclusively.) A soft mortar, it took several years to harden completely, and it deteriorated faster than the brick did. As with any mortar, the proportions of lime, sand, and water varied according to local custom and individual preference, but it always had a light color. Preservationists often recommend adding some lime to modern mortar mixtures to recreate this coloring. If you adjust your mortar color, remember that it also depends on the color of the sand you use.

ANYONE RESTORING A BRICK OVEN must use a mortar with a composition comparable to that of the mortar already present. Using today's hard cements in conjunction with soft bricks and existing soft mortar will usually cause cracking, because their thermal properties are incompatible. Their unequal expansion and contraction will also cause the edges and corners of the old brick to spall and flake. (If you've never done any masonry work before, you may want to hire a mason to construct the oven. This article is meant to give pointers

specifically about bake ovens; this isn't the place to go into mortar mixing or brick work.)

**A**FTER THE PRELIMINARY PLANNING, methods of constructing any type of brick oven are generally the same. The oven hearth is composed of bricks and should be supported by at least one flat stone embedded in the masonry complex below the oven. Don't use hardwood planks; wood on the hearth floor is a fire hazard. You can also support the brick hearth by laying a reinforced concrete pad, which will be hidden from view. You'll need to build a wooden form and assemble a grid made of corrugated steel rods. Use a mixture rich in portland cement to make the concrete.

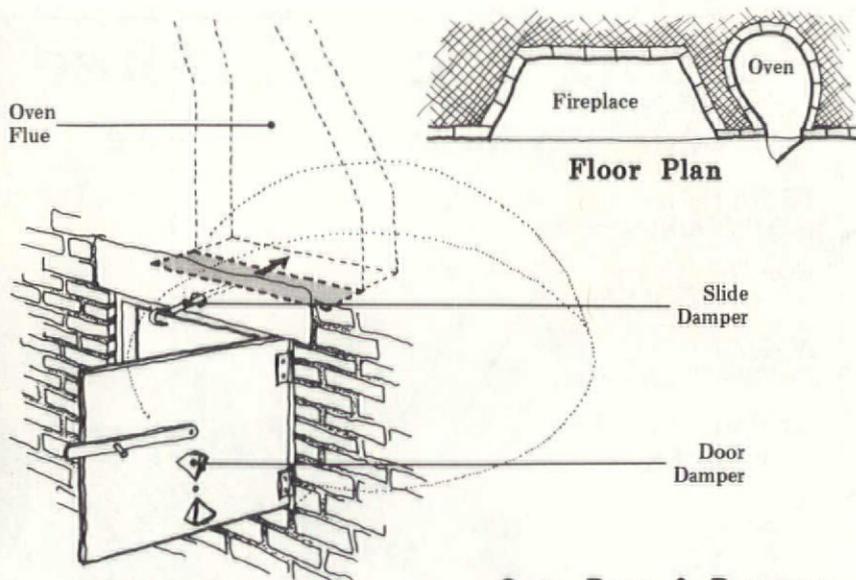
SET THE BRICKS for the oven hearth in parallel rows, facing from the rear wall toward the oven opening. This makes it easier to rake out hot coals, and helps prevent pots of food from catching on corners and overturning when you push them in or out of the oven.

AFTER YOU'VE LAID THE HEARTH, begin building the oven walls. Make the walls at least two bricks wide and alternate the joints. This helps retain heat and strengthens the structure; it also protects against fire burning through the joints. For the most effective heat radiation, keep the interior surfaces of the oven smooth and even. Use as little mortar as possible between the inner joints -- mortar will crack and crumble from thermal changes faster than brick will.

THE MOST COMPLICATED PART of building the oven is forming the domed roof. It too should be constructed with at least a double thickness of brick. The degree of curve in the dome depends upon how many courses of the wall are



A pie's-eye view: This is the inside of the completed brick bake oven.



### Oven Door & Dampers

laid before beginning the dome. Here again there are many variations. Two of the most common designs begin the dome on either the third or the seventh brick course. But other local variations are just as historically accurate. The height of the oven can be the same with any of these designs. The difference will be in the slope of the interior walls. The key to building any bake oven dome, though, is rolling the brick.

**ROLLING**, like corbelling, eliminates jagged edges and creates a smooth domed surface. It involves laying a brick lengthwise and tipping it inwards. Mortar the brick's outer edge more heavily than the inner -- apply just enough on the inner edge for a tight bond. The roll will become more pronounced as each course is built. Determine the degree of roll by completing one course before beginning the next. Low vertical walls and a gently rolled dome create a squat oven; the easiest, most structurally sound oven to build.

**IF YOU'RE A BEGINNING MASON**, consider using a mould to hold the shape of the dome until the mortar sets. It'll help you form the dome and prevent its collapsing from an improper mortar mixture. Many historians believe moulds were traditionally used in making bake-oven domes. One of the easiest moulds is formed by packing wet sand against the bricks. The masons who built the communal ovens in the Moravian settlement at Winston-Salem, N. C., built a huge mounded dome of damp sand and laid the bricks in courses to conform to the dome. Once all the courses were completed and the cap was in place, they let the oven stand until the bonding set and then shoveled out the dried sand.

**TO INCREASE HEAT RETENTION**, cover the completed walls and dome with some additional insulation. An insulation method used by some early masons was to cover the outer walls and dome with sand, and then plaster with another layer of clay or cement.

**THE OVEN FACING** can be built while working on the walls and dome, or after they've been completed. Make sure to leave enough room for the flue, which should be located in front of

and above the oven opening. (An oven built into one of the fireplace walls can share the fireplace's flue.) The oven flue should connect with the fireplace flue at about the height of the room's ceiling. Line the flue with standard chimney-flue tiles. Although not period practice, it's a very good idea to leave room for inserting a standard-size damper. A swing-type damper must be mortared into the brickwork; a sliding damper requires a hole for its handle, in either the brick facing or the cast-iron door frame.

**AN ARCH OR LINTEL** at the front of the oven above the opening will help support the weight of the masonry complex. Many masons prefer a lintel, but an arch is also historically correct. Brick oven arches can be messy looking, because a mason must make very wide mortar joints to span the relatively small opening of the oven. A lintel -- either iron or stone -- should span the oven opening on both sides by several inches and be mortared into place.

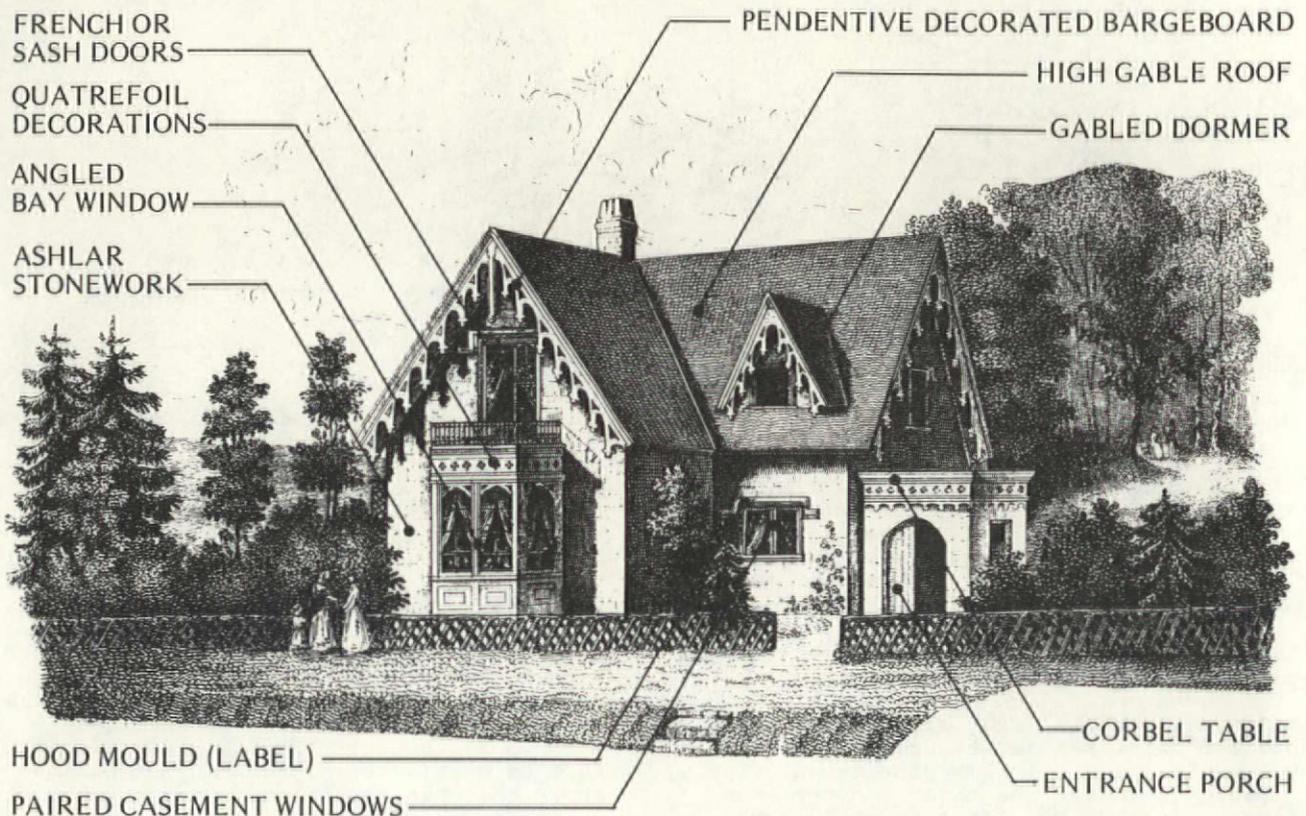
**LEAVE ROOM IN THE FACING** for the type of oven door you plan to use. The cast-iron frame for a hinged door must be mortared into the brickwork. The slots for a portable door can be made in two ways. A slot about 1 in. deep and slightly taller than the oven opening can be left between the facing bricks and those at a right angle to the jambs. The door can be angled in and out of this slot. The other method is to build a 1/2-in. edge projecting around the opening. The door can be propped up with a metal bar extending from its handle.

**BUILDING A BRICK BAKE OVEN** offers many options in style and design. It requires creativity and a willingness to experiment. Using your bake oven also offers many possibilities -- and involves learning a whole new way of cooking. Your discoveries just may produce aromas that will pull your family and friends around the hearth.

**SPECIAL THANKS** to John Curtis of Old Sturbridge Village, for his help in the preparation of this article. All photographs courtesy of Old Sturbridge Village; Henry E. Peach, photographer.

# Reading The Old House

## The Gothic Revival: Everyman's Castle



SOURCE: BUTE COTTAGE, FROM MRS. L.C. TUTHILL, *HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE...* (1848)

## The Gothic Revival

by James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

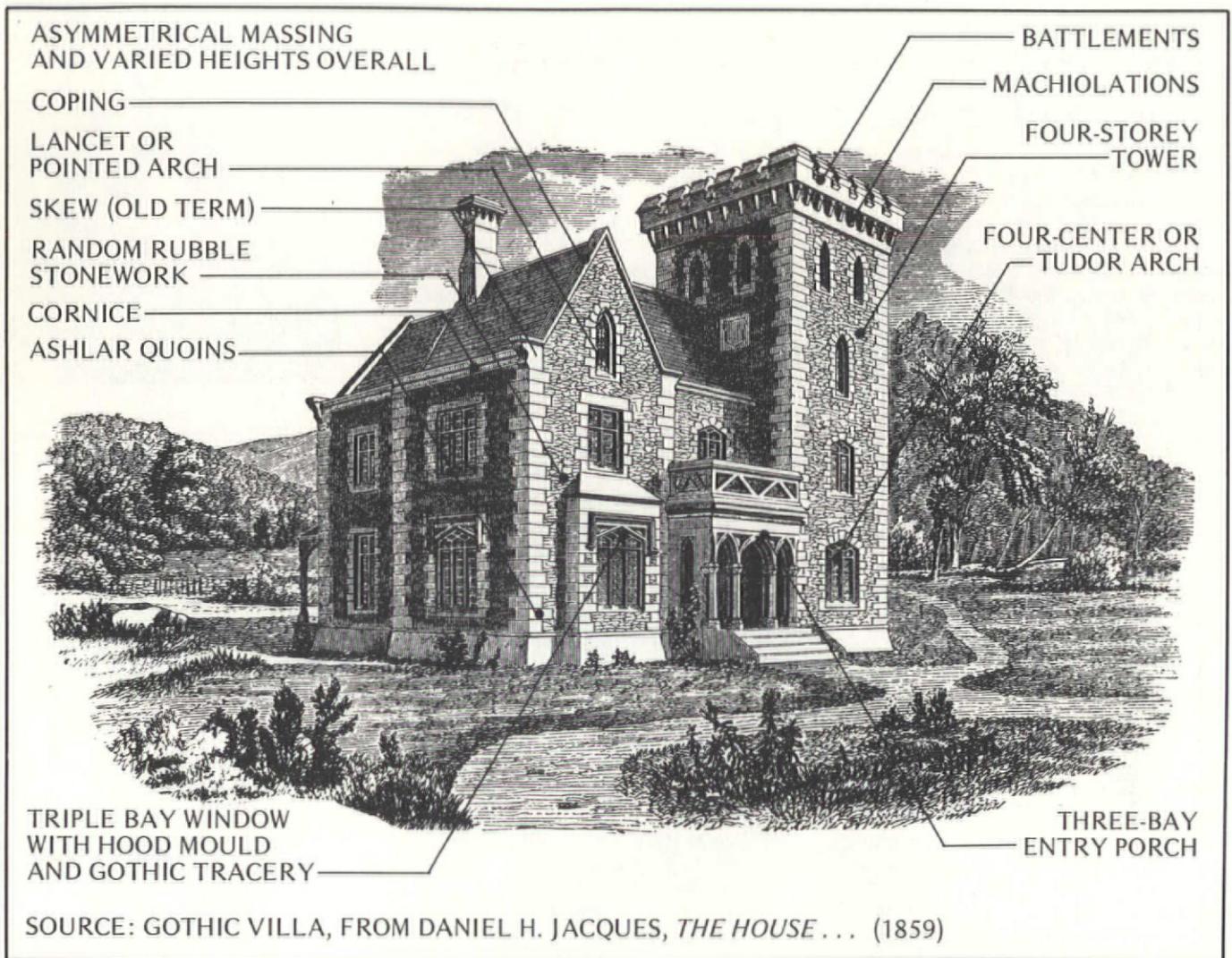
**A**MERICA'S remarkable mid-19th-century architectural cause celebre was the Gothic Revival, which carried with it a richly descriptive vocabulary forged in a venerable liturgical and literary past. The general term embraces a variety of specific "Gothic" styles, from pointed to perpendicular. In the 1850s "Modern Gothic" or "Rural Gothic" were the commonly used style terms. The variant "Gothick" refers to an earlier decorative manifestation, more survival than revival. Virtually every ornament and structural part found in the elaborate architectural fabric of the Gothic Revival has its own highly specialized name, most often derived from an example found in the medieval church.

The style blended two separate architectural trends: a revived Christian symbolism, best seen in the church designs of England's pioneering Gothic Revivalist, A.W.N. Pugin; and secular Picturesque Romanticism, freely interpreted for the American home builder in the

villas and country "cottages" of A.J. Downing and A.J. Jackson. The romantic novels of Sir Walter Scott, with their brooding castle settings, helped popularize it, as did the architectural pattern books that translated it into relatively modest rural and suburban residences. In its residential form, it was essentially a rural style, promoting the liberation of America's emerging middle class from the spatial constraints of tightly clustered city rowhouses.

**I**N THE MID-19TH CENTURY American Gothic Revival houses exhibited "picturesque," asymmetrical massing and varied building heights, steeply gabled rooflines, pointed arches of many types, and elaborate ornamentation in the Gothic mode -- trefoils, quatrefoils, cinquefoils, pendentives, tracery, and clustered columns. Despite the structural origins of the true Gothic, the Gothic Revival was a consciously decorative phenomenon, inspired by the omnipresent pointed arch.

OF THE SEVERAL TYPES of pointed arch popular with the Victorians, the lancet is the most



vertical, its height clearly greater than its breadth. The equilateral arch, as its name suggests, is based on an equilateral triangle and is almost as high as it is wide, whereas the drop arch is rather broader than it is high. Also frequently used were the Tudor (or four-centered) arch, a low segmental curve with a peak at the center, and the ogee arch with S-curved sides.

IN KEEPING with the Victorian penchant for combining modern convenience with picturesque effect, the functional bays, oriels, towers, porte-cocheres, and entrance porches sported purely symbolic battlements, turrets, and bartizans. Types and terms became increasingly differentiated. What we call the 'porch' today may then have been a verandah, piazza, or ombra. (In the 19th century the term porch referred only to an entry porch, covered or enclosed.)

MEDIEVAL-STYLE CASEMENT WINDOWS, in which the sash swings out rather than sliding up, enjoyed a renewed popularity. They were often embellished with elaborate tracery in stone or wood and framed within pointed arches. Pointed-arch hood moulds or labels replaced straight or round-arched lintels above windows. Small stationary windows in trefoil,

quatrefoil, or cinquefoil shapes channeled light through three-, four-, or five-lobed openings.

## The Wooden Gothic



HE AMERICANS quickly concluded that wood was as suitable a building material for Gothic designs as stone or masonry, and the upright lines of board-and-batten construction enhanced many a Gothic cottage. Jigsaw-cut wooden vergeboards (or bargeboards) dripping pendentive (hanging) hanging ornament became almost synonymous with Rural Gothic cottages. (Carpenter Gothic is a 20th-century term for such houses.)

### FURTHER READING:

A.J. Downing, *The Architecture Of Country Houses*, 1850.

Calder Loth and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr., *The Only Proper Style: Gothic Architecture In America*, 1975.

William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings And Their Architects: Technology And The Picturesque, The Corporate And Early Gothic Styles*, 1980. 



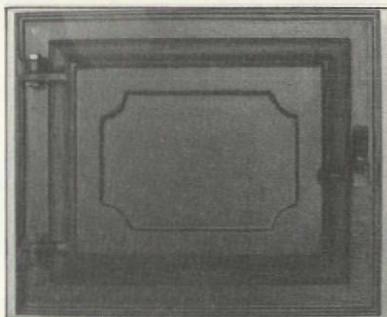
## Plating & Polishing

We recently received a letter from Tom Link of Washburn, N.D. He told the kind of story we really like — one with a happy ending. "For the past three years I've been trying to find a company that will renickel the bathroom fixtures of my 1897 house. I first approached motorcycle shops. They said, 'Sorry, we only do motorcycle parts.' I wrote to OHJ, and you suggested I contact plating companies in a larger city. I wrote to several, and their prices were astronomical. Finally, I found a company in North Dakota to do the plating for me: Reliable Plating & Welding. They did excellent work at a fair price — the lowest quote the other companies gave me for one piece was \$50; Reliable did it for \$10! I would highly recommend Reliable to any restorers."

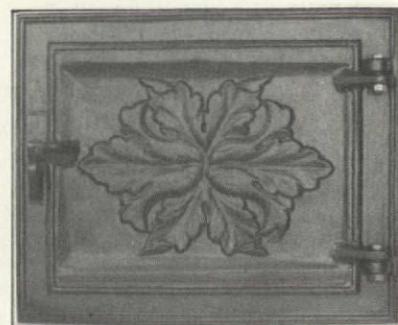
I contacted Reliable, and learned that the firm does chrome, copper, nickel, and brass plating. They also polish, weld, and sandblast rusty metal parts. They've stripped, polished, and renickled bathroom fixtures as well as antique stove and range parts. They can even polish and/or replat antique light fixture parts. For a rough price quote, send SASE, a photo of the objects that need polishing or replating, and a description of what you want done. Write Reliable Plating & Welding, Cole-harbor, ND 58531. (701) 442-3118.

## Cast-Iron Stove Doors

The Brick Stove Works of Washington, Maine, designs and builds masonry wood-burning cookstoves, firestoves, Dutch beehive ovens, and Rumford fireplaces. They can design efficient masonry stoves for existing structures as well as for new ones. Canadian Soapstone is also available either raw or custom-carved and polished for use as stove and counter tops.

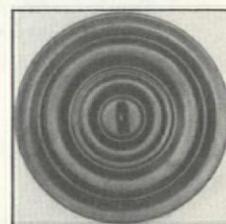


Decorative cast-iron stove-loading or cleanout doors have been hard items to come by. The Brick Stove Works currently offers two types described as Early American designs: the Oak Leaf and Classic Relief. These Brik-Doors are machine cast in Maine and have inside frame dimensions of 8 x 10 in. and outside frame dimensions of 10 x 12 in. They weigh 13 lbs. and sell for \$60, complete with installation instructions.



The Brick Stove Works also produces a cast-iron Circular Thimble that can be used as a 6-inch stovepipe entry into chimneys or can be built into firestoves as a viewport or cleanout. It has a secure locking system with easy access and sells for \$48.

Write for a free brochure or send \$2 for a complete information packet on masonry stoves from The Brick Stove Works, Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 374, Stickney Corner, Washington, Maine 04574. (207) 845-2440.



## Coal & Wood Range



I don't know whether you would call the Enterprise Monarch Range a reproduction or not, since it's manufactured by the Enterprise Foundry Co. of New Brunswick, Canada, who has been making stoves and ranges continuously since 1872. It would take an antique-stove expert to tell it from an original, turn-of-the-century model. The first one I saw, I almost mistook for a restored original, but the tempered glass viewing panel on the oven door gave it away.

The beautifully crafted range has a machined cooktop with black porcelain enamel on the rest of the body. All of the intricate and decorative trim on the range, right down to the foldable warming trivets (with the 'E' logo on the splashguard) are nickel-plated, just like the old ones. The roast-size oven and the ash removal drawer are porcelain enameled for easy cleaning.

The wood- or coal-burning, cast-iron firebox with rocking grates measures 17 in. x 10 in. x 24 in. and has a grate-level

poker door for coal clinkers. Atop the range is a warming closet featuring a balanced swing-up door and a 33-in. towel bar. An easy-to-install, optional 10-gal. warm-water reservoir (pictured on the right of the range) is available.

The range is not only exceedingly decorative but designed for a lifetime of use; with the reservoir, the range weighs in at a rock-solid 625 lbs. The Enterprise Monarch with reservoir sells for \$2250, the range alone is \$2095 not including shipping. Even if you're not in the market for a range you should still order Lehman's Non-Electric, 'Good Neighbor' Heritage Catalog. There is an amazing collection of general-store type merchandise, much of which I have never seen anywhere else, pictured in the \$2 catalog. Contact Lehman Hardware & Appliances, Inc., Box 41, Dept. OHJ, Kidron, OH 44636. (216) 857-5441.



Garret Wade Company has just introduced its new 1985 Master Catalog containing more than 2500 fine hand tools on 212 pages. Not only is it loaded with hard-to-find old-style tools, but each chapter contains informative introductions which provide valuable facts on tool construction and use.

The catalog is \$3 from Garret Wade Co., Dept. OHJ, 161 Ave. of The Americas, New York, NY 10013. (212) 807-1155.

## Pigeon-Control Netting

ProSoCo, Inc., maker of masonry cleaning products, has just introduced a knotted and tied netting for protection against pigeons and their damaging droppings. Conservare Pigeon Control mesh netting is designed to be anchored and stretched over areas where pigeons like to stand and roost. Water tables, cornices, ornamental masonry, and statuary can be permanently protected without harming either the building or the birds.

The lightweight, UV stable, plastic netting is anchored with stainless steel pins set into the masonry. It weighs about 4 lbs. per 1,000 square feet. The pricing varies with the amount purchased, but for less than 1,000 square feet it costs about \$.60 per square foot (including shipping and handling).

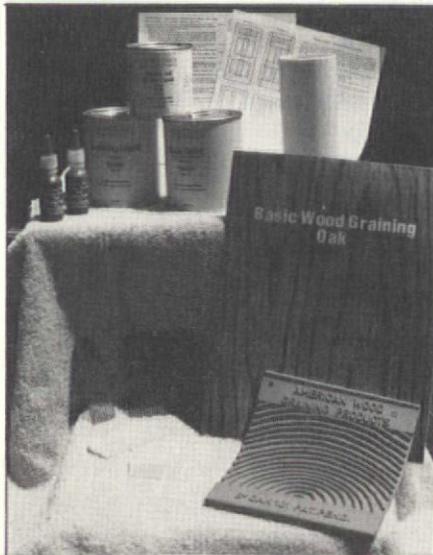
To find out more contact ProSoCo, Inc., Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 1578, Kansas City, KS 66117. (913) 281-2700.



## New Wood-Graining Kit

The biggest problem for novice wood grainers hasn't been a lack of proper tools, but the lack of step-by-step primers to show how it's done. But now, American Wood Graining Products has made the whole process a lot simpler with the introduction of their Nature's Touch Basic Wood Graining Kit for Oak.

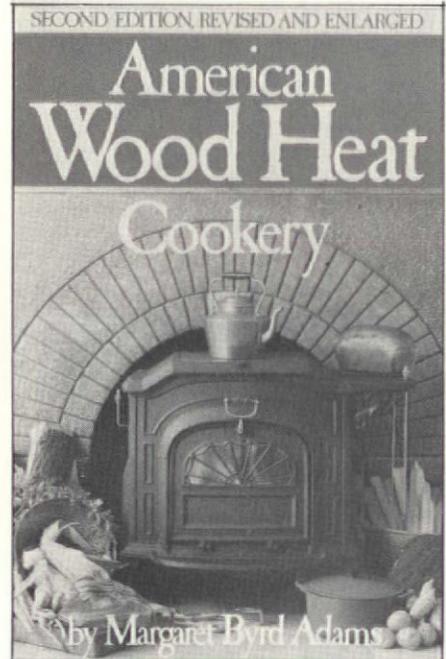
What I like best about the new kit is the 16-page booklet which begins with a glossary of graining terms, lists supplies needed, surface preparation, base color painting, secondary graining, primary graining, applying shadowing and toning, general techniques, graining raised panels and mouldings, and finish coats and touch-ups. The booklet is well-illustrated with easy to understand, step-by-step color and black and white photos. The text is very easy to follow and is loaded with good tips to help you do a better job.



The kits sell for \$29.95 and come with: a rubber graining tool, four graining combs, graining booklet, a pint of base color, work sheets, a pint of graining liquid, a 1/2 pint of shadow and toning liquid, 1/2 oz. of red tinting color, and 1/2 oz. of brown tinting color. You have to specify brown or light brown.

The Graining Liquid supplied with these kits has been specially formulated for wood graining, and it makes the job a lot easier, especially for the novice.

If you have the patience and are willing to practice, American Wood Graining has the kit to get you started. Write for a free brochure from: Ann Jordan, Dept. OHJ, P.O. Box 380084, Denver, CO 80238. (303) 399-3474.



American Wood Heat Cookery is a newly revised and enlarged guide to cooking on a wood-heat stove. Normally a cookbook is a little out of our realm, but I think anyone who uses a wood-burning stove or has even a passing interest in Americana will be fascinated by this book.

The author, Margaret Byrd Adams, has collected 284 original wood-stove recipes that were brought to this country by immigrants. What I found most enjoyable were the historical, and unusually amusing, anecdotes that preceded each dish — how it developed, and when and how it was first introduced in America: Thresher's Chicken, Seed Cake, Smoky Mountain Corn Bread, Pine Bark Fish Stew, War Cake, and one of my favorites, Texas Chili.

Not being an experienced cook on any sort of stove, I was relieved not to find any of that 'pinch of this' and 'add to taste' stuff. Everything is spelled out in standard measurements. Plus, all of the dishes can be prepared on conventional ranges.

Besides tasty recipes, one of the real values of this book is the wealth of technical information it supplies. There are tips on using wood stoves, appropriate cookware, cooking and baking methods, stove care, chimney cleaning and chimney fires, wood usage, and even a listing of stove-paraphernalia suppliers.

To order the 252-page book, send \$7.95, plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling to Pacific Search Press, Dept. OHJ, 222 Dexter Ave. North, Seattle, WA 98109.

# GO TO YOUR SHPO ( State Historic Preservation Office )

Here we conclude our list of the State Historic Preservation Offices. If you want to know more about what your SHPO can do for you, consult our article in the August-September 1984 OHJ.

## OREGON

David Talbot, State Pks. Superintendent  
Historic Preservation Office  
State Parks & Recreation  
525 Trade Street, S.E.  
Salem, OR 97310  
(503) 378-5019

Technical Assistance  
David Powers 378-5002  
National Register  
Elizabeth W. Potter 378-5001  
Tax Incentives / Grants  
Kimberly Lakin 378-6858  
Karen Zisman  
Review & Compliance  
Dr. Leland Gilson 378-5023

## PENNSYLVANIA

Dr. Larry E. Tise  
Penn. Historical & Museum Commission  
PO Box 1026  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
(717) 783-4363

Technical & Tax Assistance  
Barry Loveland  
National Register  
Greg Ramsey 783-8946  
Review & Compliance  
Dr. Barry Kent

Publications: *Preservation Quarterly*, free  
Other services: *museum store*

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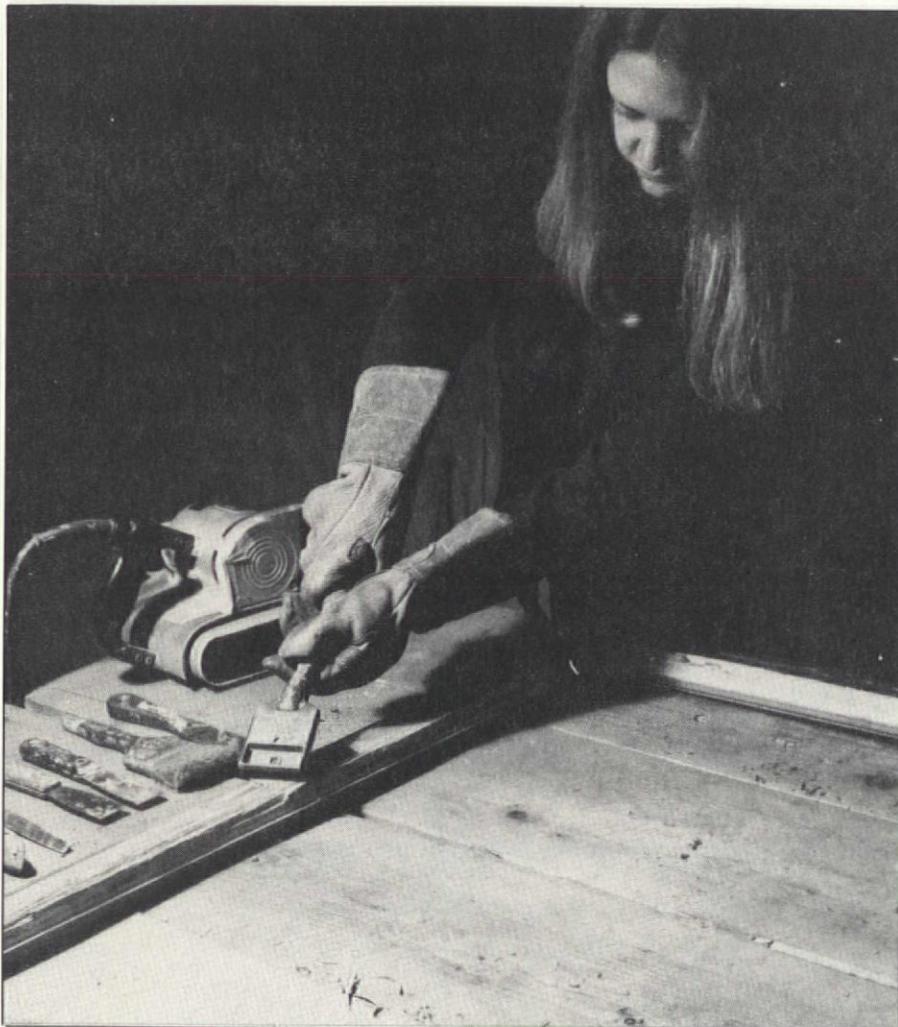
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Kent Powell 533-6017

Publications: *federal program brochures*;  
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**Publications:** *State Parks Historic Monuments & Marker Programs brochures*

# 1984



 The Old-House Journal

# INDEX

## A

Acoustical Tiles, Removing . . . . . Jun 108  
 Adhesive Removal, Acoustical Tile . . . . . Jun 108  
 Advisory Council On Historic Preservation (G) Jun 103  
 Aesthetic Movement, History Of . . . . . Aug/Sep 144  
 Air Valves, Radiator — Reviving (RN) . . . . . Mar 43  
 Allergies, Mold (RN) . . . . . Jul 126  
 Anaglypta (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Anderson, Jan. . . . . Jan/Feb 2  
 Anglo-Japanese Decor . . . . . Aug/Sep 144  
*(See also Aesthetic Movement)*  
 Antique Stove Assn. (RN) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Arbors — *See Pergolas*  
 Architectural Styles Guide (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Art Movement — *See Aesthetic Movement*  
 Audsley, George & Maurice — Wallpapers (P) . Jun 107

## B

Bake Ovens, Brick — Designers & Parts (P) . . . Dec 228  
 Bake Ovens, Brick — History & Construction . Dec 222  
 Baltimore Heaters, Repairing . . . . . Nov 191  
**BALUSTERS:**  
 Concrete — Repairing . . . . . Nov 202  
 Porch — Loose (RN) . . . . . May 88  
*See also Porch Spindles*  
 Bar Backs, Kit (P) . . . . . May 86  
 Basement Stairs, Rebuilding . . . . . Jul 117  
 Basements, Wet — Drain Systems For . . . Aug/Sep 150  
 Bathroom Furnishings, Victorian (illus.) . . . Mar 46  
 Bathroom Hardware, Brass (P) . . . . . Jul 127  
 Bathroom Tile, Cleaning & Grouting . . . . . Mar 45  
 Bathroom Fittings, China (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Bathtubs, Claw-foot (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 157  
 Bathtubs, Claw-foot — Plumbing Fittings (P) . . Mar 51  
 Bathtub Near A Window (RN) . . . . . Mar 48  
 Bathtubs, Cleaning (RN) . . . . . Oct 179  
 Beam Repair Basics . . . . . Oct 175  
 Bed & Breakfast Directory (B) . . . . . Jul 126  
 Beehive Ovens — Designers & Parts (P) . . . Dec 228  
 Beehive Ovens — History & Construction . . . Dec 222  
 Bell Tower Roof — Framing . . . . . Mar 35  
 Bell Tower Roof — Sheathing . . . . . Apr 58  
 Benchwork — For Running Plaster  
 Cornices . . . . . Aug/Sep 136  
 Dec 214  
 Bevelled Glass (P) . . . . . Apr 68

## C

Bird Control (P) . . . . . Dec 229  
 Blinds, Washing (RN) . . . . . Oct 179  
 Block, Concrete — In House Construction . . . Oct 165  
 Block, Ornamental Concrete — Repairing . . . Nov 201  
 Boards, Salvaged — Cleaning & Drying (RN) . . Nov 205  
 Boots, Period (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 156  
 Boxing Paint For Mixing . . . . . Jan/Feb 8  
 Bradbury, Bruce . . . . . Aug/Sep 144  
 Brass Buying Tips . . . . . Apr 57  
 Brass Finishes, Types . . . . . Apr 57  
 Brass Polish (P) . . . . . Apr 68  
 Aug/Sep 156, 157  
 Brass, Polishing . . . . . Apr 55  
 Brass, Stripping Plating From (RN) . . . . . Aug/Sep 163  
 Brass, Stripping Paint From . . . . . Apr 55  
 Brick Bake Ovens — Designers & Parts (P) . . . Dec 228  
 Brick Bake Ovens — History & Construction . . Dec 222  
 Bricks, Stripping Paint From (RN) . . . . . Oct 179  
 Brickwork — Rolling For Dome Construction . Dec 225  
 Brushes, Paint — *See Paint Brushes*  
 Bungalow Style — Editorial . . . . . Aug/Sep 132  
 Bungalow Style — Old-House Living . . . Aug/Sep 133  
 Bungalows, Pergolas For . . . . . Apr 53  
 Burden, Jane (Jane Morris) . . . . . Aug/Sep 147  
 Busy Bodies (P) . . . . . Jun 108, Aug/Sep 156

Calcimine Paint, Removing (RN) . . . . . Nov 200  
 Candles, Electric — Brass (P) . . . . . Nov 210  
 Canvas, Wall — To Cover Cracked Plaster . . . Jul 124  
 Capitals, Column — *See Also Columns*  
 Capitals, Columns — Ordering . . . . . May 83  
 Cards, Historic House (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 32  
 Carpenter Magazine . . . . . Mar 37  
 Carpets, Straw — Source . . . . . Jun 105  
 Cast Iron, Stripping Paint From (RN) . Jul 126, Mar 43  
 Caulk In Small Tubes (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Ceiling Paper (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Ceilings, Stripping Calcimine From (RN) . . . Nov 200  
 Cellar Stairs — Construction . . . . . Jul 117  
 Cellars, Wet — Draining . . . . . Aug/Sep 150  
 Cement Block — History & House Styles . . . Oct 165  
 Ceramic House Portraits (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 32  
 Ceramics, Odors In (RN) . . . . . Jan/Feb 27, Apr 54  
 Certification Rules — For Rehabilitation . . . Jun 101  
 China, Bathroom Fittings (P) . . . . . May 87  
 China — Mouse Urine Odors In . . . Apr. 54, Jan/Feb 27  
 Christmas, Descriptions Of — Old Sources . . . Dec 220  
 Christmas Tree Ornaments (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Christmas Tree Ornaments, Paper — Making . . Dec 220

Chroma (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Chrome Plating, Removing (RN) . . . . . Aug/Sep 163  
 Circular Tower Roof — Framing . . . . . Mar 35  
 Circular Tower Roof — Sheathing . . . . . Apr 58  
 Cistern Pump — Source (RN) . . . . . Nov 205  
 Clapboards — *See Also Siding, Wood*  
 Clapboards, Repairing & Replacing . . . . . May 78  
 Cleaning Painted Surfaces . . . . . Aug/Sep 142  
 Clear Wood Finishes (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Clendenen, LaDel . . . . . Jun 93  
 Clothes Dryer Used As Humidifier (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 31  
 Coal Range, Kitchen (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Colonial House Restored — Old-House Living . Oct 167  
 Colonial Revival — A Post-Victorian Style . . . May 73  
 Color Matching, Paint . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Color Placement, Paint . . . . . Mar 40  
 Color Wheel . . . . . Jan/Feb 9  
 Colors — Aesthetic Movement . . . . . Aug/Sep 148  
 Colors, Paint — How To Mix . . . . . Jan/Feb 8  
 Colors, Paint — Matching . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Columns — *See Also Capitals, Column*  
 Columns, Exterior — Installation . . . . . Jun 96  
 Columns, Exterior — Ordering . . . . . May 83  
 Columns, Exterior — Sources For . . . . . May 82  
 Columns, Exterior — Types . . . . . May 83  
 Columns, Exterior Wood — Painting . . . . . Jun 99  
 Comic Strips — *See Fred & Martha Comics*  
 Compass For Scribing To Irregular  
 Surfaces (RN) . . . . . Nov 200  
 Complementary Colors (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Concrete Block — History & House Styles . . . Oct 165  
 Concrete Block, Ornamental — Repairing . . . Nov 201  
 Copper Shingles (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 31  
 Copper Tubs, Restoring (RN) . . . . . Nov 205  
 Cornice Mouldings — Color Placement On . . . Mar 41  
 Cornices, Painting Galvanized . . . . . Jan/Feb 10  
 Cornices, Plaster — Installing . . . . . Aug/Sep 141  
 Cornices, Plaster — Running On Bench . . . Aug/Sep 136  
 Cornices, Plaster — Running In Place . . . . . Dec 213  
 Cotton, J. Randall . . . . . Oct 165, Nov 200  
 Cracks, Hairline — Repairing In Plaster (RN) . . May 88  
 Craftsman Magazine . . . . . Apr 53  
 Craftsman Style Pergolas . . . . . Apr 53  
 Crane, Walter — Dado By . . . . . Aug/Sep 147

### KEY

- (B) = Book Review or Literature Listing
- (P) = Product Listing
- (G) = Glossary Listing
- (RN) = Short Item (Restorer's Notebook, Ask OHJ, etc.)

# D

Dampers — For Bake Ovens . . . . . Dec 225  
 Decorating Supplies Catalog (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Dental Picks For Stripping Paint (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 32  
 Desks, Roll-Top — Kit (P) . . . . . May 86  
 Detection Mirrors (Busy Bodies) (P) . . . . . Jun 108  
 Diedrich, Kate — Comics By . . . . . Jun 92, Jul 112  
 Aug/Sep 132

Dirt Removal — From Painted Surfaces . . . . . Aug/Sep 142

## DOCUMENTATION FOR CREATIVE RESTORATION OF OLD HOUSES:

Bathrooms, Victorian (illus.) . . . . . Mar 46  
 Porches (illus.) . . . . . Jan/Feb 20  
 Documenting Restoration With Photos —  
 Editorial . . . . . May 72  
 Doors, Panel — Color Placement On . . . . . Mar 42  
 Doors, Exterior — Reproduction (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Doors, Panel — Reproduction (P) . . . . . Oct 188  
 Doors, Screen — Restoring . . . . . Jul 122  
 Double-Hung Windows — Holding Rope In Sash  
 (RN) . . . . . Mar 43  
 Drain Systems For Wet Basements . . . . . Aug/Sep 150  
 Drinking Fountain, Cast Iron (P) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Drywall Tile Backer Board (P) . . . . . Apr 69  
 Drywall Mesh Tape, Self-Stick (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 31  
 Dust Corners For Stairs (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 30, Oct 188

# E

Easements, Facade . . . . . Jun 102

## EDITORIALS:

Aquamarine Cave . . . . . Nov 192  
 Bungalows — Call For Case Histories . . . . . Aug/Sep 132  
 Photograph Your Restoration . . . . . May 72  
 Remembering Harry . . . . . Oct 166  
 Electric Brass Candlesticks (P) . . . . . Nov 210  
 Electric Light Switches, Pushbutton (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Electrical Wire — Repairing Insulation (RN) . . . . . Jun 100  
 Embossed Wallcoverings (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Epoxies For Wood Repair (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 30  
 Etched Glass — Patterns For (RN) . . . . . Jul 126

# F

Fans, Ceiling — Low-Profile (P) . . . . . Jun 107  
 Fans, Ceiling — Support For (P) . . . . . Jun 107  
 Faucets, Brass — Antique (P) . . . . . Mar 51, Jul 127  
 Feather Dusters (P) . . . . . Mar 51  
 Federal Preservation Regulations . . . . . Jun 91  
 Fences, Picket (P) . . . . . May 86  
 Finishes, Exterior Wood — Clear (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Finishes, Clear — Selecting . . . . . Nov 197  
 Finishes, Clear — Wax For Reviving (P) . . . . . Apr 68  
 Firebacks, Cast Iron (P) . . . . . Oct 188  
 Firecut Beams . . . . . Oct 177  
 Fireplaces — Building Brick Bake Ovens For . . . . . Dec 222  
 Fixtures, Metal — Cleaning & Replating (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Flag Poles (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 158  
 Flags, Historic Replicas (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 158  
 Flaharty, David . . . . . Dec 216  
 Flashing — For Exterior Columns . . . . . Jun 97  
 Floor, Pine — Finishes For (RN) . . . . . Aug/Sep 163  
 Floor Plans — Measuring For . . . . . Oct 172

## FLOOR REPAIRS:

Fixing Squeaks (RN) . . . . . Mar 48  
 Parquet Repairs . . . . . Jan/Feb 28  
 Unwarping Wood Floors (RN) . . . . . Jun 100  
 Folding Saw (P) . . . . . Apr 69  
 Foundation Seepage — Cures . . . . . Aug/Sep 150

Fountain, Drinking — Cast Iron (P) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Fred & Martha Comics . . . . . Jun 92, Jul 112, Aug/Sep 132  
 Freeman, John Crosby . . . . . Jan/Feb 10, Aug/Sep 167  
 French Roof . . . . . Aug/Sep 131  
 Furniture Kit (P) . . . . . May 86  
 Furniture — Summer Slipcovers For . . . . . Jun 104  
 Furniture, Garden — Wood (P) . . . . . Jul 127

# G

Gallier House, New Orleans — Summerizing . . . . . Jun 104  
 Galvanized Metal, Painting . . . . . Jan/Feb 10  
 Game — 18th-Century Village (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Garden Furniture, Wood . . . . . Jul 127  
 Garrison, John Mark . . . . . Aug/Sep 136, Dec 213  
 Gilding Methods & Supplies (P) . . . . . Jun 107  
 Glass, Etched — Patterns (RN) . . . . . Jul 126  
 Glass, Window — Scraping Paint From (RN) . . . . . May 88  
 Gold Leaf Techniques (P) . . . . . Jun 107  
 Gothic Revival — Illustrated . . . . . Dec 226  
 Grained Surfaces, Touching Up . . . . . Jun 100  
 Graining Kits (P) . . . . . Dec 229  
 Grant Assistance . . . . . Jun 91, Aug/Sep 159  
 Grant Winners, OHJ . . . . . Jan/Feb 2  
 Greenaway, Kate —  
 And Aesthetic Movement . . . . . Aug/Sep 147  
 Grout — See Also Tile  
 Grout (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Grout In Tubes (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Grouting Tools (P) . . . . . Mar 51  
 Gult, Kim . . . . . Aug/Sep 133

# H

HABS — And Federal Regulations . . . . . Jun 103  
 Hand Tools (P) . . . . . Dec 229  
 Hardware, Bathroom — China (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Hardware, Iron (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 30  
 Hardware, Metal — Cleaning & Replating (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Hardware, Metal — Stripping Paint From (RN) . . . . . Mar 43  
 Heat Gun, Light For (RN) . . . . . Jun 100  
 Heat Gun — To Strip Paint From Plaster . . . . . Jul 125  
 Heat Plate, Stripping Paint With . . . . . Jan/Feb 12  
 Historic American Building Survey —  
 And Federal Regulations . . . . . Jun 103  
 Holly, Henry Hudson . . . . . Mar 49  
 Hue (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Humidifier — Clothes Dryer Used As (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 31



References are to  
 Month and Page of issue

# I

Ice Dams, Water Shield For (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 157  
 Insulation, Wall — Thin (RN) . . . . . Jan/Feb 27  
 Intensity (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Interior Decoration Of Victorian Bathrooms . . . . . Mar 47  
 Internal Revenue Service . . . . . Jun 91, Aug/Sep 159  
 Investment Tax Credits . . . . . Jun 101

# J

Japanese Decoration . . . . . Aug/Sep 147  
 Jekyll, Gertrude . . . . . Apr 64  
 Jenkins, Joe . . . . . Jul 113  
 Joint Rod, Use Of . . . . . Dec 214  
 Joists, Cracked — Repairing . . . . . Oct 175  
 Jowers, Walter . . . . . Jan/Feb 7, Jul 122

# K

Kahn, Renee . . . . . Apr 53  
 Kitchen Appliances — See Also Stoves  
 Kitchen Wall Racks (P) . . . . . Jun 106

# L

Lacquer, Brass . . . . . Apr 55  
 Lamp Cord, Fabric-Covered (P) . . . . . Apr 68  
 Latrobe Stove, Repairing . . . . . Nov 191  
 Leeke, John . . . . . May 71, Jun 96  
 Lemonade Recipe . . . . . Jun 105  
 Lichtblau, Julia . . . . . Oct 167  
 Lighting, Museum (P) . . . . . Apr 69  
 Lights, Christmas Tree (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Lightswitches, Pushbutton (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Lime Finish, Stripping (RN) . . . . . Jun 108  
 Lime/Sand Mortar — For Bake Ovens . . . . . Dec 224  
 Linerusta-Walton (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Loveseats (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 157

# M

Magnet, Removing Metal Dust With (RN) . . . . . Nov 200  
 Mansard Style — History . . . . . Aug/Sep 132  
 Mansard Style — Illustrated . . . . . Aug/Sep 155  
 Mansart, Francois . . . . . Aug/Sep 152  
 Mantels, Kits For (P) . . . . . May 86  
 Marble, Patching (RN) . . . . . Jun 100

Masonry — Brick Bake Oven Construction . . .	Dec 22
Massey, James C. . . . .	
. . . . . Mar 49, May 77, Aug/Sep 155, Dec 226	
Maxwell, Shirley . . . . .	Jun 91, Dec 226
Measured Drawings —	
Techniques For Dimensions. . . . .	Oct 172
Metal Care — Brass. . . . .	Apr 55
Metal Dust, Removing (RN) . . . . .	Nov 200
Metal Fixtures, Cleaning & Replating (P) . . . .	Dec 228
Metal, Galvanized — Painting . . . . .	Jan/Feb 10
Metal Polish (P). . . . .	Aug/Sep 156
Metal Push Guards For Screen Doors. . . . .	Jul 122
Metal Roof, Installing. . . . .	Jan/Feb 1
Mildew, Eliminating (RN) . . . . .	Jul 126
Milk Paint Formula (RN) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 27
Mirrors, Door Reception (P) . . . . .	Aug/Sep 156
Mitre Rod, Use Of . . . . .	Dec 214
Mitres, Plaster Cornice . . . . .	Dec 218
Mold, House — Eliminating (RN) . . . . .	Jul 126
Money — Sources For Rehabilitation. . . . .	Jun 91
Mortar, Lime/Sand Or Clay —	
For Bake Ovens. . . . .	Dec 224
Mosquito Netting . . . . .	Jun 104
Mould For Plaster Work . . . . .	Aug/Sep 136, Dec 213
Moulds For Casting Ornamental	
Concrete Blocks . . . . .	Nov 204
Mouldings, Plaster — Installing . . . . .	Aug/Sep 141
Mouldings, Plaster — Running . . . . .	Aug/Sep 136, Dec 213
Moose Urine —	
Combatting Odor . . . . .	Jan/Feb 27, Apr 54
Moving Houses . . . . .	Jun 93
Murals, Wall . . . . .	Jul 113

## N

Nail Holders, Homemade (RN). . . . .	Jan/Feb 33
Nails, Resin-Coated (RN) . . . . .	Jun 100
National Historic Landmarks . . . . .	Jun 103
National Register & Federal Regulations . . . .	Jun 103
National Register — Placement. . . . .	Aug/Sep 159
Neo-Colonial Style — History . . . . .	May 73
Neo-Colonial Style — Illustrated. . . . .	May 77
Neutrals (G) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 7
NHL . . . . .	Jun 103
Nickel Plating Service (P) . . . . .	Dec 228
Notches In Beams — Right & Wrong . . . . .	Oct 178
Note Cards, Historic House (P). . . . .	Jan/Feb 32

## O

Oak Shingles — History & Source . . . . .	Oct 184
Oil Paintings, Cleaning (RN) . . . . .	Mar 43
OLD-HOUSE LIVING:	
Victorian in Massachusetts . . . . .	Jan/Feb 3
Surviving Restoration. . . . .	May 80
Victorian in Anaheim, California . . . . .	Jun 93
Mural Mania in California . . . . .	Jul 113
A California Bungalow . . . . .	Aug/Sep 133
A Connecticut Colonial & Its Family. . . . .	Oct 167
A Nebraska Greek Revival. . . . .	Nov 193

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(RN) = Short Item (Restorer's Notebook, Ask OHJ, etc.)

Old Sturbridge Village —	
Bake Oven Construction . . . . .	Dec 222
Opaque Stains — Survey . . . . .	Jul 112
Ornaments, Christmas (P) . . . . .	Nov 211
Oven Doors, Cast-Iron —	
For Colonial Bake Ovens (P) . . . . .	Dec 228
Ovens, Brick Bake — Designers & Parts (P) . . . .	Dec 228
Ovens, Brick Bake — History & Construction . . . .	Dec 222

## P

Paint Brushes, Cleaning (RN). . . . .	Jan/Feb 33, May 88
Paint Brushes, Decorative (P). . . . .	Jun 106
Paint Colors, Architectural Placement Of . . . . .	Mar 40
Paint Colors, Matching . . . . .	Jan/Feb 7
Paint Colors, Mixing — Tips. . . . .	Jan/Feb 8
Paint, Interior — Renewing . . . . .	Aug/Sep 142
Paint, Scraping From Window Glass (RN) . . . . .	May 88
Paint Stripping — Calcimine (RN) . . . . .	Nov 200
Paint Stripping — From Brass. . . . .	Apr 55
Paint Stripping — From Bricks (RN) . . . . .	Oct 179
Paint Stripping — From Metal Hardware (RN). . . .	Mar 43
Paint Stripping — From Plaster. . . . .	Jul 125
Paint Stripping — From Radiators (RN) . . . . .	Jul 126
Paint Stripping — Lime Finish (RN) . . . . .	Jun 108
Paint Stripping — With Dental Picks (P) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 32
Paint Stripping — With Heat Gun (RN) . . . . .	Jun 100
Paint Stripping — With Heat Plate. . . . .	Jan/Feb 12
Painted Surfaces, Washing . . . . .	Aug/Sep 142
Painting, Exterior — Galvanized Metal . . . . .	Jan/Feb 10
Painting, Exterior — New Clapboards . . . . .	May 79
Painting, Exterior —	
Spray Vs. Brush (RN). . . . .	Aug/Sep 163
Painting, Exterior — Wood Columns . . . . .	Jun 99
Painting, Interior — Tools For (P) . . . . .	Jun 106
Paintings, Oil — Cleaning (RN) . . . . .	Mar 43
Paperhangers Guild (P) . . . . .	Jun 106
Parquet Floors, Restoring . . . . .	Jan/Feb 28
Pergolas — History & Design . . . . .	Apr 53
Pest Control — Squirrels (RN) . . . . .	May 85
Photo Documentation . . . . .	May 72
Pianos — Removing Finish (RN) . . . . .	Mar 48
Picket Fences, Colonial (P) . . . . .	May 86
Pickled Finish For Wood (RN) . . . . .	Nov 205
Picture Frames, Gilded — Restoring (P) . . . . .	Jun 107
Picture Hanging, Moulding Hooks For (P) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 32
Pigeon Control (P). . . . .	Dec 229
Pillars — See Also Columns	
Pilling, Ron . . . . .	Nov 191
Pitchboard For Stair Layout . . . . .	Jul 118
Plaster, Mixing . . . . .	Aug/Sep 136
Plaster Mouldings —	
Benchwork. . . . .	Aug/Sep 136, Dec 214
Plaster Mouldings, Running . . . . .	Dec 213
Plaster Ornament, Installing. . . . .	Aug/Sep 141
Plaster Ornament, Making . . . . .	Aug/Sep 136, Dec 213
Plaster Ornament — Paint Removal . . . . .	Jul 111
Plaster — Repairing Hairline Cracks (RN) . . . . .	May 88
Plaster Walls, Stripping Paint From . . . . .	Jul 124
Plastering —	
Screed Work For Running Cornices. . . . .	Dec 216
Plastering Techniques —	
Running Mouldings . . . . .	Aug/Sep 136, Dec 213
Plastering Tools. . . . .	Dec 217
Plating, Chrome — Removing (RN) . . . . .	Aug/Sep 163
Polish, Metal (P) . . . . .	Aug/Sep 156
Polychrome, Interior — Principles. . . . .	Mar 40
Poore, Jonathan . . . . .	Mar 35, Apr 58, Jul 117, Oct 172
Porch Balusters, Repairing (RN). . . . .	May 88
Porch Columns — See Also Columns, Exterior	
Porch Floors, Rebuilding (RN). . . . .	Mar 48
Porch Roofs, Repairing . . . . .	Jan/Feb 1
Porches, Victorian — Designs . . . . .	Jan/Feb 20
Portraits, House (P) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 32
POST-VICTORIAN HOUSES:	
And Concrete Block. . . . .	Oct 165
Neo-Colonial Style. . . . .	May 73
Prairie Style . . . . .	Jan/Feb 14
Poultice For Cleaning Painted Surfaces . . . . .	Aug/Sep 143
Prairie Style — History . . . . .	Jan/Feb 14
Prairie Style, Influences Of . . . . .	Jan/Feb 19
Preservation Assistance Division . . . . .	Jun 103
Preservation Grants, OHJ — Winners . . . . .	Jan/Feb 2
Preservation Society — Starting . . . . .	Jan/Feb 3

Preservatives, Wood —	
On Interior Beams (RN) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 27
Primary Colors (G) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 7
Profile, Moulding — Scribing Methods . . . . .	Aug/Sep 138
Pushbutton Electric Switches (P) . . . . .	Nov 211

## Q

Queen Anne Style (illus.) . . . . .	Mar 49
Queen Anne Towers — Building . . . . .	Mar 35, Apr 58

## R

Racks, Wall (P) . . . . .	Jun 106
Radiator Vents — Renewing (RN). . . . .	Mar 43
Radiators — Moving On Casters (RN) . . . . .	Oct 179
Radiators — Stripping Paint From (RN) . . . . .	Jul 126
Radios, Vintage — Replicas (P). . . . .	Aug/Sep 156
Rafter Ends, Pergola — Designs . . . . .	Apr 67
Rafters For Circular Tower Roof . . . . .	Mar 35
Rafters, Porch Roof — Repairing . . . . .	Jan/Feb 1
Range, Coal & Wood (P) . . . . .	Dec 228
Recipes — Traditional Americana (P). . . . .	Dec 229
REFINISHING STRIPPED WOOD:	
Balusters (RN) . . . . .	Jan/Feb 33
Selecting Clear Finishes . . . . .	Nov 197
Regulations, Federal Tax — For Rehabilitation . . . .	Jun 91
REMUDDLING OF THE MONTH:	
Aluminum Siding In Oregon . . . . .	Jun 110
Architect's Statement In Chicago . . . . .	Oct 190
Mangled Greek Revival In Rockford, IL. . . . .	Nov 212
Multi-Family House In Connecticut . . . . .	May 80
Penthouse In Massachusetts. . . . .	Apr 70
Picture Window In West Virginia . . . . .	Mar 52
Queen Anne International In Utah . . . . .	Aug/Sep 164
Satellite Dishes In Wisconsin . . . . .	Jul 130
Solar Addition In Wisconsin . . . . .	Jan/Feb 34
Tower Trouble In Missouri . . . . .	Dec 232
Renovation — Emotionally Surviving. . . . .	May 80
RESTORATION DESIGN FILE:	
Circular Tower Framing . . . . .	Mar 39
Circular Tower Sheathing . . . . .	Apr 60
RESTORE — Preservation Organization . . . . .	Jan/Feb 2
Roof Leaks — In Terra Cotta Tiles (RN) . . . . .	May 85
Roof, Metal Pan — Soldering . . . . .	Jan/Feb 1
Roof, Porch — Rebuilding. . . . .	Jan/Feb 1
Roof Shingles, Copper (P). . . . .	Jan/Feb 31
Roof Shingles, Oak — History & Source. . . . .	Oct 184
ROOFS, CIRCULAR TOWER:	
Framing. . . . .	Mar 35
Sheathing. . . . .	Apr 58
Round Surfaces, Scraping (RN) . . . . .	Nov 200
Router — Used For Stair Strings. . . . .	Jul 119

## S

Sanding In Nooks & Crannies (RN). . . . .	Nov 200
Sanding Round Objects (RN). . . . .	Jan/Feb 33
Sandpaper — Cleaning (RN). . . . .	Mar 48
Sarabia, Richard . . . . .	Jan/Feb 3
Sash Rope Retainers (RN). . . . .	Mar 43
Saws, Folding (P) . . . . .	Apr 69
Schultz, Danielle . . . . .	May 80
Scrapers For Round Surfaces (RN). . . . .	Nov 200
Screen Doors, Post-Victorian — Repairing . . . . .	Jul 122

Screws, Drywall — Multiple Uses (RN) . . . . . Mar 43  
 Scribing A Moulding Profile . . . . . Aug/Sep 138  
 Scribing To An Irregular Surface (RN) . . . . . Nov 200  
 Sears Concrete Block Machines . . . . . Oct 165  
 Second Empire Style — See *Mansard Style*  
 Secondary Colors (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Secretary Of Interior Guidelines . . . . . Jun 103  
 Seeds, Wildflower (P) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Shade (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Shades, Window — Old Style (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Sheetmetal, Painting . . . . . Jan/Feb 10  
 Shingles, Copper (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 31  
 Shingles, Oak — History & Source . . . . . Oct 184  
 Shoes, High-Top (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 156  
 Shower Fixtures, Antique (P) . . . . . Mar 51  
 Shower Next To A Window (RN) . . . . . Mar 48  
 SHPO — See *State Historic Preservation Offices*  
 Shutters, Washing (RN) . . . . . Oct 179  
 Siding, Wood Clapboard —  
 Repairing & Replacing . . . . . May 78  
 Silver Polish (P) . . . . . Aug/Sep 156  
 Sinks, Cleaning (RN) . . . . . Oct 179  
 Sisters — In Beam Repair . . . . . Oct 177  
 Slip Covers . . . . . Jun 104  
 Soapstone For Stove & Countertops (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Soldering Metal Roofs . . . . . Jan/Feb 24  
 Splice Joints For Beams . . . . . Oct 178  
 Squeaking Floors — Repair (RN) . . . . . Mar 48  
 Squirrel Control (RN) . . . . . May 85  
 Stains In Wood, Removing (RN) . . . . . May 85  
 Stains, Opaque — Survey . . . . . Jul 112  
 Stair Dust Corners (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 30, Oct 188  
 Stairs, Basement — Rebuilding . . . . . Jul 117  
 State Historic Preservation Offices —  
 And Federal Regulations . . . . . Jun 103  
 Functions Of . . . . . Aug/Sep 159  
 Lists Of: Alabama Through Maryland . . . . . Aug/Sep 160  
 Massachusetts Through Oklahoma . . . . . Oct 186  
 Oregon Through Wyoming . . . . . Dec 230  
 Steel Wool Alternative (RN) . . . . . Jan/Feb 33  
 Steiner, Frances — On Prairie Style . . . . . Jan/Feb 14  
 Stencilling, Quick-Dry (RN) . . . . . Jan/Feb 33  
 Stencilling, Stick-On (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Stencils — Source (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Stickley, Gustav — And Concrete Block . . . . . Oct 165  
 Stickley, Gustav — On Pergolas . . . . . Apr 53  
 Storm Doors — Disadvantages . . . . . Jul 122  
 Stove, Coal & Wood (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Stove Repair — Baltimore Heater . . . . . Nov 191  
 Stove Repair — Parts & Service (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Stove Tops, Soapstone (P) . . . . . Dec 228  
 Straw Matting — Sources . . . . . Jun 105  
 Stripping Paint — See *Paint Stripping*  
 Stripping Tools — Dental Picks (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 32  
 Stripping Tools — Heat Gun (RN) . . . . . Jul 125  
 Stripping Tools — Heat Plate . . . . . Jan/Feb 12  
 Summerizing The Victorian House . . . . . Jun 104  
 Sundials (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Supaglypta (P) . . . . . Jul 128

References are to  
 Month and Page of issue

T

Tape, Adhesive — For Cracks (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 30  
 Tape Measure — For Measured Drawings . . . . . Oct 172  
 Tarnish Removal From Brass . . . . . Apr 55  
 Tea Sets, Suffragette (P) . . . . . Jan/Feb 32  
 Technical Assistance, Sources Of —  
 See *State Historic Preservation Offices*  
 Telescopes (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Terne-Metal Roofing, Installing . . . . . Jan/Feb 1  
 Terra-Cotta Roofing, Leaks In (RN) . . . . . May 85  
 Tertiary Colors (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Tertiary Colors — Aesthetic Movement . . . . . Aug/Sep 148  
 Texture Paint, Removing (RN) . . . . . Aug/Sep 163  
 Tile — See *Also Acoustical Tile; Grout*  
 Tile, Bathroom — Backer Board (P) . . . . . Apr 69  
 Tile, Bathroom — Cleaning & Grouting . . . . . Mar 44  
 Tile Caulk (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Tile Cleaners (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Tile, Roofing — Leaks In (RN) . . . . . May 85  
 Tile-Setting Tools (P) . . . . . Mar 51  
 Tinned Tubs, Restoring (RN) . . . . . Nov 205  
 Tint (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Toilet Tanks, Leaky (RN) . . . . . Jun 108  
 Tonal Value (G) . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
 Tools, Hand (P) . . . . . Dec 229  
 Tools, Plastering . . . . . Dec 217  
 Touch-Up Painting . . . . . Aug/Sep 143  
 Towers, Circular — Roof Framing . . . . . Mar 35  
 Towers, Circular — Roof Sheathing . . . . . Apr 58  
 Trellises — See *Pergolas*  
 Trunk Parts, Antique (P) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Tubs, Copper — Restoring (RN) . . . . . Nov 205

U

Unmuddling — Case History . . . . . Aug/Sep 133

Urine Odors On China —  
 Removal . . . . . Jan/Feb 27, Apr 54

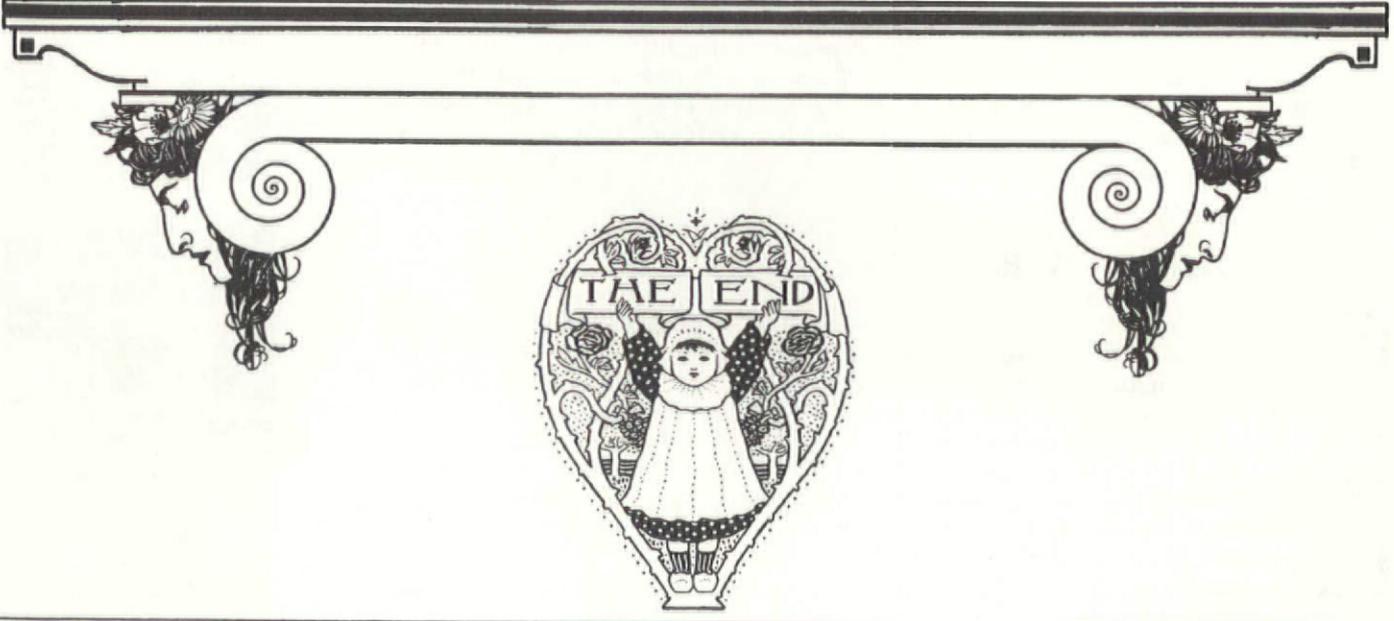
V

Venting — For Exterior Columns . . . . . Jun 97  
 Vents, Air — Reviving (RN) . . . . . Mar 43  
 Victorian Exteriors — Circular Towers . . . . . Mar 35, Apr 58  
 Victorian Exteriors, Restoring . . . . . Jan/Feb 3, Jun 93  
 Victorian Interiors — Bathrooms . . . . . Mar 46  
 Victorian Interiors, Decorating . . . . . Jan/Feb 3, Jun 93  
 Victorian Interiors, Summerizing . . . . . Jun 104

VICTORIAN STYLES:  
 Aesthetic Movement . . . . . Aug/Sep 144  
 Gothic Revival . . . . . Dec 226  
 Mansard . . . . . Aug/Sep 131

W

Waldemar, Harry . . . . . Mar 36, Jul 117  
 Waldemar, Harry — Remembering . . . . . Oct 166  
 Wallcoverings, Embossed (P) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Wallpaper For Ceilings (P) . . . . . May 87  
 Wallpaper Hangers Guild (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Wallpaper, Neo-Grec (P) . . . . . Jun 107  
 Wallpaper Removal — Steam (RN) . . . . . Aug/Sep 163  
 Wall Racks (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Walls, Plaster — Stripping Paint From . . . . . Jul 124  
 Washing Painted Surfaces . . . . . Aug/Sep 142  
 Washington, George — Memorabilia . . . . . Jul 113  
 Water Beds — Supporting (RN) . . . . . Jul 126  
 Water Level, Use Of . . . . . Dec 216  
 Wax, Finish Reviving (P) . . . . . Apr 68  
 Weinstein, Nat . . . . . Jan/Feb 7  
*What Style Is It?* (B) . . . . . Jul 128  
 Wildflower Seeds (P) . . . . . Oct 189  
 Window Glass, Scraping Paint Off (RN) . . . . . May 88  
 Window Shades, Cloth (P) . . . . . Mar 50  
 Winterthur Museum Board Game (P) . . . . . Nov 211  
 Wire, Electrical — Insulating (RN) . . . . . Jun 100  
 Wood Finishes (P) . . . . . Jun 106  
 Wood Finishes, Clear — Selecting . . . . . Nov 197  
 Wood Preservatives On Beams (RN) . . . . . Jan/Feb 27  
 Wood, Stained — Cleaning (RN) . . . . . May 85  
 Woodstove Directory (P) . . . . . Nov 210  
 Wright, Frank Lloyd — Prairie Style Of . . . . . Jan/Feb 14



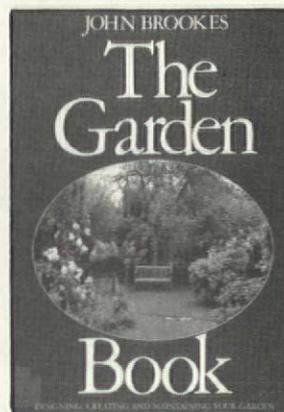
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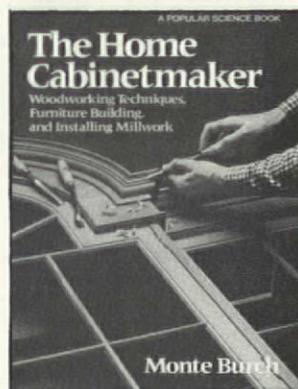


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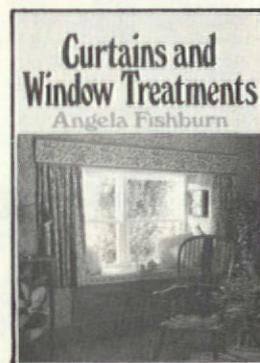


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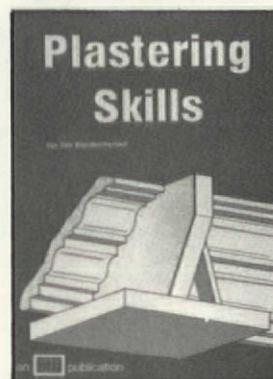


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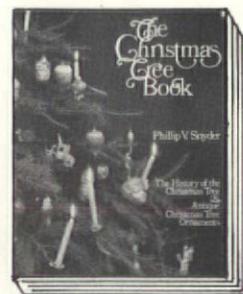
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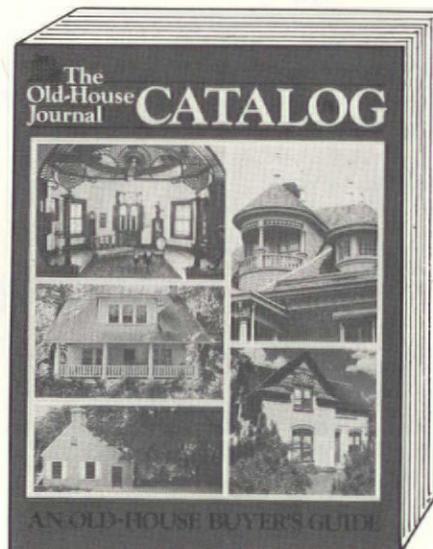
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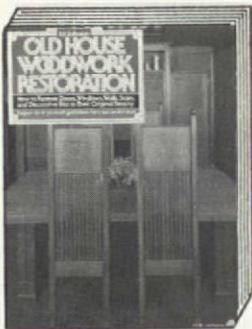
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Over 10,000 OHJ subscribers have purchased the Heavy-Duty Heat Gun, and discovered the best tool for stripping paint from interior woodwork. (A small amount of chemical cleaner is suggested for tight crevices and cleanup, but the Heat Gun does most of the work.) It will reduce the hazard of inhaling methylene chloride vapors present in paint removers. Another major safety feature is the Heat Gun's operating temperature, which is lower than a blowtorch or propane torch, thus minimizing the danger of vaporizing lead. The Master HG-501 Heat Gun operates at 500-750°F, draws 15 amps at 120 volts, and has a rugged, die-cast aluminum body — no plastics!



## The Heat Plate

For any flat surfaces -- even clapboards!



After testing all of the available heat tools, the OHJ editors recommend the HYDElectric Heat Plate as the best tool for stripping clapboards, shingles, doors, large panels, and any flat surface. The Heat Plate draws 7 amps at 120 volts. Its electric resistance heating coil heats the surface to be stripped to a temperature of 550-800°F. The nickel-plated steel shield reflects the maximum amount of heat from the coil to the surface. And among the Heat Plate's safety features is a wire frame that supports the unit, so you can set it down without having to shut it off.

Both the Heavy-Duty Heat Gun and the HYDElectric Heat Plate come with complete operating and safety instructions, and are backed by The Old-House Journal Guarantee: If your unit should malfunction for any reason within two months of purchase, return it to us and we'll replace it.

The Heat Gun is available for only \$77.95; the Heat Plate for only \$39.95. (These prices include fast UPS shipping.) You can order either or both by filling out the Order Form in this issue, or by sending a check or money order to The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.



## FOR SALE

**VICTORIAN DOUBLE DOORS**, lovely bevelled glass, nice detail. \$450. Lisa Vickery. (212) 285-8231 days; (201) 656-0582 evens.

**1885 THOMAS PUMP ORGAN**, walnut, stripped & re-finished, exc. tone, in need of minor repairs. \$400. R. Law. PO Box 40, Amenia, NY 12501. (914) 373-9619.

**ASSORTMENT OF OLD LINENS**, min. of 7 pieces, in good condition, \$6 per packet, ppd. Also, old black porcelain doorknobs, \$3.50 per set, ppd. Or will trade for old dolls. Ruth Stahl, 4744 E. River Rd., Grand Island, NY 14072.

**SEVERAL OAK MANTELS**, some w/ mirrors, some w/ fancy mouldings and detail. Send \$1 for each photo. Dan Poslusney, 4955 Rt. 8, Gibsonsia, PA 15044. (412) 443-8540; 931-3340.

**COUNTRY PINE WARDROBE**, c. 1870, fine Danish craftsmanship w/ original hardware, hand-drawn moulding, panel door and drawer, peg construction, 38 x 72 x 19 in., \$625. Several other antique country pine pieces available. Box 2175, Haddonfield, NJ 08033. (609) 429-6659.

**WOOD-BURNING KITCHEN RANGE**, "Kalamazoo," c. 1925. White & tan enamel, 48 in. x 26 in., 4 lids, oven, temperature gauge, warming shelves, water heater. Very good cond. Best offer over \$250. Steve Elliott, 2405 N. Franklin St., Wilmington, DE 19802. (302) 571-8211.

**VICTORIAN BOOKS**, authentic 19th-century books in good condition for children & adults, many illustrated and w/ ornately decorated covers. For detailed descriptive list, send \$1 (refundable w/ first purchase) to Isabel Sloane, 141 Mt. Pleasant Ave., Gloucester, MA 01930.

**PORTRAIT OF YOUR HOME** — Your choice of pen & ink or pencil. Clear photo needed. Ave. price, \$70-\$100. Rhonda Johnson, Rt. 2, Box 155, Chester, IL 62233.

**CLAWFOOT BATHTUB**, 1910, 4 ft. x 28 in. Good condition. \$100. Boston area. (617) 933-4636.

**CAST-IRON FP**, separate pieces to be assembled. Mantel, curved side panels attach to front, pierced fire screen. Best offer. Kimball, 220 E. Cardinal St., Wheeling, WV 26003.

**ORIGINAL GE REFRIGERATOR**, monitor top, about 1920-1930. Still in good working order. Best offer. J. Craven, 1056 Gillespie St., Schenectady, NY 12308. (518) 372-0969.

**ROPER GAS RANGE** — 1930s, in good working condition w/ 4 burners, oven, broiler, second broiler/oven & storage drawer. White enamel w/ light & timer. Best offer over \$150. Joe Vivona, 735 Penn Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30308. (404) 872-8302.

**VICTORIAN MARBLE FP** — We've collected over 150 Victorian marble mantels over the past 15 years. Carved & restored in our own marble shop. We have a variety of colors. Sizes & photos can be sent upon request, as these pieces are one of a kind. Roman Marble Co., 120 W. Kinzie St., Chicago, IL 60610. (312) 337-2217.

**WIDE PINE FLOORING**, original, untouched, 18th- & early 19th-century hand-hewn beams, beaded chestnut panelling, hardware, clear pine sheathing, etc. Beautiful, ready to use. Adaptable to any house. Reasonably priced. J. Gunderson, 64 Philip St., Lake George, NY 12845. (518) 668-2221.

**BLACK FAUX MARBLE FP**, 55 in. W x 44 in. H, arched opening approx. 30 in. H x 28 in. W, from house built 1850. \$350 plus shipping. (May help w/ shipping in Northeast.) (315) 363-7622.

**PARTS FROM THE SUMMIT HOTEL**, Summit, NY, built 1853. Greek Revival front entrance, doorways, windows, stairway w/ walnut rail, maple spindles, and pine treads. Also many other old house parts. Send SASE for price list. Phil Snyder, RD 1, Sprakers, NY 12166. (518) 922-6699.

**1924 CAST-IRON CLAWFOOT bathtub**, shower apparatus. Porcelain v. good condition. Exterior needs paint. 30 x 66. Best offer. (607) 724-7858.

**PARLOR STOVE**, Sunny Hearth No. 3, dated 1886. Made by Southard, Robertson and Co. Peoples Stove Works, Peekskill, NY. Approx. 33 in. H x 21 in. W. Very decorative, very good condition. \$450. Liz Heywood, Box 31, RD 1, Red Hook, NY 12571. (914) 758-8088.

**GORHAM STERLING SILVER** service for 8, 1943, custom hand-engraved, unmonogrammed. \$1600. Evelyn Baker, 52 Richmond St., Latrobe, PA 15650. (412) 539-2171.

**DOUBLE-HUNG STAINED GLASS window**. Each section 41 7/8 in. W x 48 in. H. Old, enameled gas stove. Assorted hardware. Chestnut church pew. 15 Harrington Ave., Westwood, NJ 07675. (201) 666-4842; 358-0732.

**PEN & INK DRAWINGS** of your historic home, rendered in the "stipple" technique, 11 in. x 14 in. and 16 in. x 20 in., \$75-\$100. Send clear b & w color photo, 3 1/2 x 5 or 5 x 7. J. Wayne Wade, Graphix Unlimited, 900 Lehigh, Hartshorne, OK 74547.

**BLACKSMITH SHOP**, early 19th cent., from Charlton, Mass., in rough restorable con. Measures 25 ft. x 17 ft. Raised on cribbing for transport or can be disassembled by buyer. Thorough measured drawings, historical background, photos, many hand tools & appurtenances. Serious inquiries only. \$2,500 or best reasonable offer. John O. Curtis, Director, Curatorial Dept., Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA 01566. (617) 347-3362, ext. 235.

**CLAWFOOT BATHTUB** including faucets, bathroom lavatories, & kitchen flat & kitchen corner sinks, all white porcelain, in exc. condition, some w/ fixtures. Reasonable. PO Box 146, Cottage Grove, WI 53527. (608) 839-4709.

**OLD-TIME STORE ICEBOX** display case, oak, glass front, top, and one end. Marble inset above icebox. 2 hinged doors, 2 shelves. 38 1/2 in. H, 28 in. D, 72 in. L. \$750 or best offer. William Coffee, 118 W. Second, Hinsdale, IL 60521.

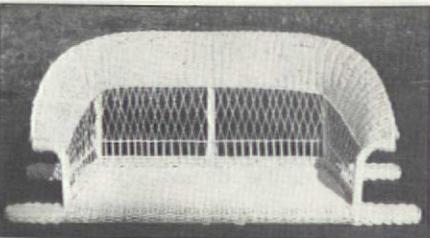
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**ORIGINAL COLOR** research, documentation, and Munsell notation. Carlson-Jameson, Inc. Art & Design, PO Box 100, N. Beach, MD 20714. (301) 855-5408.

**HOMESTEAD CHIMNEY** restoration services. We clean, evaluate, repair, & reline chimneys. Specialize in Perma-Flu Chimney Relining. It seals, strengthens, insulates, & restores without major reconstruction. Surpasses UL 103 & is recognized by BOCA. Lifetime guarantee. For FREE booklet: Homestead Chimney, PO Box 5182, Clinton, NJ 08809. (201) 735-7708.

**WOOD STRIPPING & refinishing** of interior woodwork & exterior doors. Repair & restoration of fine woodwork. Natural & decorative finishes our speciality. All work done on location. Highest quality, references, portfolio. Wayne Towle Inc., Boston, MA. (617) 738-9121.



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**HISTORIC RESTORATION** trouble shooter. New Jersey area. 10 yrs. experience in cabinet refinishing, window rebuilding bathroom rejuvenating, wallpaper hanging, interior & exterior painting, hardwood floor rebuilding & refinishing. We Work Co., PO Box 228, Montclair, NJ 07042. (201) 746-6386.

**CLOCK REPAIR**, restoration, sales, & parts. Once Upon A Time Clock Shop, 12 Byers St., Staunton, VA 24401.

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## BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

**YUSCHT FER SCHEE**: Architectural Ornament In Allentown. Results of NEH-funded study of wooden arch. rowhouse ornament produced 1850-1910. Analyzes carving/cutting tools, techniques, etc. \$6 + tax, 50+ photos. Lehigh County Historical Society, PO Box 1548, Allentown, PA 18105.

**SAUTTER HOUSE FIVE**: Wallpapers of a German-American Farmstead. Text, color/ b & w photos of wall coverings, 1860s-1916. Nebraska's pioneer period. Historically documented. 1983, 33 pp., pbk., 8 1/2 x 11, \$8.50 + \$1.50 shipping. Bulk rate available. Douglas County Historical Society, PO Box 11398, Omaha, NE 68111. (402) 455-9990.

## POSITIONS WANTED

**CARPENTRY**, cabinet shop or rehab/restoration for knowledgeable homeowner. Full or part-time in Bay Area, Calif. 3 summers' rehab exp., have also built over 20 pieces of furniture to order. Dependable, hard-working, 39 yrs. old, relocating in Jan. Have tools, transport. References. Call collect. Doug Temkin. (312) 955-3920.

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Write: Emporium Editor, Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

**REAL ESTATE**

**BAKER, OR** — Native stone house, c. 1909 on Nat'l Register. 4 BR, 1 bath, tarnished copper hardware, natural woodwork, needs some work. \$49,950. Owner, 1700 4th, Baker, OR 97814. (503) 523-3308.

**CASTLETON-ON-HUDSON, NY** — Vandalized but restorable c. 1830 brick centerhall Colonial. Frame additions including summer kitchen, Victorian porch, iron fence, barn/outbuildings, 89 acres. Easy Albany commute. Asking \$100,000. Deborah Byers, COHNA, Box 163, Castleton-on-Hudson, NY 12033. (518) 732-2038.

**SUSSEX COUNTY, VERNON, NJ** — Authentic c. 1800 rambling farmhouse. 120 acres. Working produce farm & pasture. Eyebrow windows, wainscoting, exposed beams, mock FP, parlor stoves, etc. 6 BR, 2 parlors, kitchens & baths. Owner financing. \$371,000. Crystal Paling, Telridge Associates Realtors, PO Box 188, Hamburg, NJ 07419. (201) 827-6500.

**SPRING LAKE, MI** — Restored 85-year-old clapboard-stucco home on approx. 2 acres & 500 ft. lake frontage (Lake Mich. access). 5 BR, 2½ baths, LR, Fam. Rm., DR, office 3 FP, pot belly, 22 x 30 garage. \$225,000. (616) 846-4373.

**TUCSON, AZ** — Charming 1903 Victorian in Tucson's West University historic district. Turn-of-the-century elegance w/ southwestern flavor. Bay windows, original FP, pocket doors, parquet floors, 11-ft. ceilings, 2,200 sq. ft. of home/office space on large, landscaped city lot. Business zoning, centrally located in residential/professional neighborhood. \$115,000. Advantageous terms. (602) 624-6629.

**JACKSON, MO** — Turn-of-century 2-storey brick. Some original light fixtures, wainscot, hardwood. 2 claw bathtubs, laundry, mail shoots, upstairs backporch, attic, ladder to roof. Dry basement, plenty extras. Large lot, detached double garage. Commercially zoned, possible B & B, rental, shop, or home. Good condition, needs rewiring. Under \$35,000. Patricia Wischmann. (314) 238-2230.

**SPRINGFIELD, MA** — Nat'l Register Victorian showplace, almost acre overlooking city, views, tennis court, seconds to major highway. Perfectly restored, 12 rooms, 6 FP, 2 baths, 4 BR, beautiful staircase & woodwork + additional wing w/ 3 BR, 2 baths for B & B, whatever. \$170,000. (413) 737-5475.

**GREENVILLE, TX** — 2-storey 1894 Victorian showplace, restored to perfection. 4 BR, 1½ baths, central heat, a/c, 2,900 ft. of charm. Lots of stained glass & oak woodwork. A part of Greenville history. 40 mins. from Dallas, \$65,000. Gail. (214) 494-2720.

**ST. JOHNS RIVER, FL** — 5 acres encompass this beautiful mile-wide river view. Restored mansion, boat shed, slip, guest cottage, and 4-stall garage. Permitted usage: marina, lodge, multi-family dwelling, etc. Priced \$295,000. Owner financing. Dorothy Z. Wise, Realtor, PO Box 1891, Palatka, FL 32078-1891. (904) 328-9473.

**SARANAC LAKE, NY** — Adirondack Park Olympic Training Area, back of Mt. Pisgah ski center — the worst-looking house in prime neighborhood in village is for sale. Historic property on ¼ acre has wood-beamed ceilings in formal LR & DR, 5 BR w/ 5½ baths. Can be used as single family, mother/daughter, or 4-family dwelling. Well-insulated. Ideal for condo investment. Principals only. PO Box 332, Saranac Lake, NY 12983. (518) 891-5543.



**RHINEBECK, NY** — C. 1730 Nat'l Register stone house 6 wooded acres on country lane, mins. from historic district village. Mostly original, modern plumbing & electric, greenhouse. Structurally sound, in need of interior cosmetics. 2-hour drive or 1½-hour Amtrak express from NYC. \$165,000 firm. Paul Eifenbein, Box 253, Rhinebeck, NY 12572. (914) 876-6385.



**ORLANDO, FL** — Classic Revival mansion in fashionable Mt. Dora near Orlando/Disney. 7/2, 2½-storey, double parlors, sunroom. Beautiful light fixtures. High on hill, on chain of lakes w/ ocean access. Walk to stores, antique shops. Tranquil, safe, secure. \$295,000. Owner, Michael Vest, 939 Page Lane, Mt. Dora, FL 32757. (904) 383-4691.

**YORK, PA** — 1875 brick row house, Victorian. Partly restored w/ original woodwork, floors, lighting, & hardware. New oak/Corian kitchen & electrical system, off-street parking. Located in historic district close to theater, dining, & farmer's market. \$37,000. Robert & Pamela Pryor, 236 N. Grant, Waynesboro, PA 17268. (717) 762-2320.

**BERGEN CO, NJ** — 1810/1870 Greek Revival farmhouse on 1 beautiful acre w/ brook. LR, DR, library, breakfast room, family room, cherry kitchen, 4-5 BR, 2 baths, 3 FP + stove. Commute to NYC. Low taxes. Listed on local register. \$279,900. Jahn Realty. (201) 327-9494.

**JONESVILLE, MI** — 10 authentic FP and 6+ BR in this brick Greek Revival home, c. 1835. Located in southern Mich. community near college & major highways. \$89,000. Free brochure. Lynn Cook, Lenawee Properties, 118 W. Chicago Blvd., Tecumseh, MI 49286. (517) 423-2191; 413-2393.

**EATONTON, GA** — 2-storey late-Victorian house w/ stained glass door panels, ornate millwork. 1 acre. \$125,000. Exc. condition. Buckhead Brokers, 3650 Habersham, Atlanta, GA 30305. (404) 237-5227.



**BROYLESVILLE, TN** — 1790s wooden inn near Jonesborough much original detailing, in need of plumbing & heating systems. Nat'l Register nomination in progress. 4 acres -- low 20s. Additional land available. (615) 928-0224.

**MEETINGS & EVENTS**

**A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS** in historic district of Eureka Springs, Ark. Dec. 1, 8. Afternoon tour of homes & buildings decorated for the season; hostesses in period dress. Evening performance of Dickens' Christmas Carol. Eureka Springs Preservation Society, PO Box 404, Eureka Springs, AR 72632. (501) 253-7416.

**150 YEARS OF AMERICAN FURNITURE**, a 5-week course covering furniture styles from Pilgrim to Chippendale, including a session on Windsor chairs, taught w/ color slides of pieces in museums & private collections. Thurs. eves., Jan. 10 - Feb. 7. Pat Riley, Strawberry Banke, PO Box 300, Portsmouth, NH 03801. (603) 436-8010.

**OLD WILMINGTON, NC** by Candlelight, an opening of homes & churches in the old city. Refreshments, carols, music, Christmas shop, & candles light your way. Dec. 8-9, 4 - 9 PM. Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, PO Box 813, Wilmington, NC 28402. (919) 762-0492.

**WANTED**

PATTERN BOOKS and "house books" of the early 20th century, showing elevations, floor plans, photos, etc. Write or call giving title, description of contents, condition, and price.

Librarian  
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Brooklyn, NY 11217  
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**WANTED**

**CHICAGO AREA**, Victorian or 19th-century house, hopefully restored. Robert G. McClellan, Box 563, Northbrook, IL 60062. (312) 564-0360.

**SQUARE PARLOR GRAND PIANO** in restorable condition. Prefer carved legs. Please send photo, description, price. R. Udelhofen, Box 276, Bloomington, WI 53804. (608) 994-2837.

**OLDER HOME** in or near Rapid City, South Dakota. Restored or restorable. Min. 1,300 sq. ft., preferably w/ full basement. Must be structurally sound w/ lots of character in an exc. neighborhood. (406) 453-3311.

**DINING TABLE AND CHAIRS** for at least 10, preferably 12 to 14 persons. Eastlake or Gothic style preferred. Jim Huntsman, 416 S. 4th St., Stillwater, MN 55082. (612) 439-8294.

**GAS LOGS**, 3 sets, 20 in. or less across. (606) 252-8678.

**2 OAK MANTEL POSTS**, approx. 45-7/8 in. H, approx. 6 in. W. Also need antique stained glass panel 15¼ x 35¼ for above front door. Will return photos. Please send w/ price to Beth Fenner, 506 N. Charter St., Monticello, IL 61856.

**A SECLUDED**, charming restored house, with acreage and pond, within 2 hrs. of NYC. Stephanie Newman. (212) 851-6415.

**MURPHY BED** or hardware only for making one. Richard Hammel, 333 Jay Trail, Murfreesboro, NC 27855. (919) 398-5224.

**MANTEL**, at least 60 in. W x 11 in. for Queen Anne house. Either ornate wooden or marble. M. L. Thompson, 623 W. Main, Clarinda, IA 51632. (712) 542-4105.

**INNS & HISTORIC HOUSES**

**BERKSHIRES**: Enjoy B & B in our 1818 refurbished home next to village green. Full complimentary breakfast & afternoon tea. Quiet town near many cultural, historical, natural attractions. Fine antique shops & auctions nearby. Steaveleigh House, Sheffield, MA 01257. (413) 229-2129.

**VICTORIAN B & B** hideaway in the historic gold mining town of Julian set in the San Diego mountains. On Nat'l Register and Calif. "Point of Historic Interest." Julian Gold Rush Hotel offers 15 guest rooms & a cozy Honeymoon House. PO Box 856, Julian, CA 92036. (619) 765-0201.

**LAFAYETTE HOUSE**, B & B, St. Louis, MO. Twin-bedded 3rd-floor suite in Second Empire townhouse in Lafayette Sq. Historical District, close to downtown, Convention Center, universities, hospitals. 1825 Lafayette Ave., St. Louis, MO 63104. (314) 772-4429.

**B & B** near historic Fredericksburg, VA. Spacious 3-room suite + bath in 1838 Greek Revival home. Country setting, stocked pond, private entrance, FP, farm egg breakfast. Convenient to I-95. Children welcome. Free brochure. LaVista, Rt. 3, Box 1255, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. (703) 898-8444.

**WHITE LACE INN**, a Victorian Guest House. 11 intimate rooms, all w/ private baths, 6 w/ FP. Open all year round. Brochure available. 16 N. 5th Ave., Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235. (414) 743-1105.

**STRAWBERRY CASTLE B & B** — Brick Italianate on 3 acres, nominated for Nat'l Register. 2 luxury 2-room suites available in Rochester/Finger Lakes region. Brass beds & lace, antiques & down pillows. Brochure. 1883 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY 14526. (716) 385-3266.

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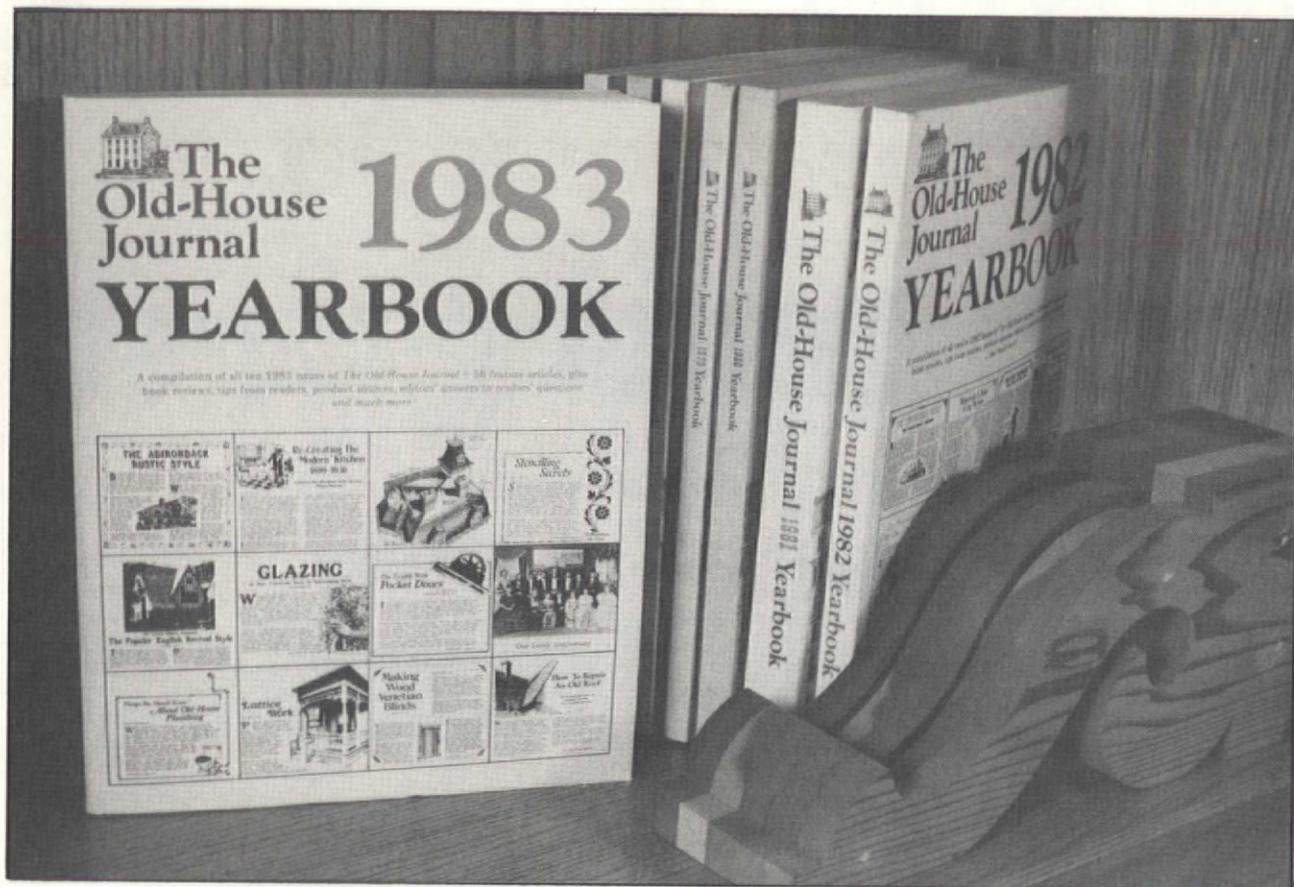
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opinion...

# Remuddling



**N**O, RAPUNZEL HAS NOT MOVED TO KANSAS CITY, Missouri. Although many of us dream of living in a "fairy tale" house -- a Queen Anne with towers, turrets, and lots of gingerbread -- most of us are content to accept and work with the styles of our old houses, as plain as they may be. Unfortunately, the owner of this house just couldn't control himself.

ACCORDING TO MARK REYNOLDS of Royal Oak, Michigan, this house is typical of midtown Kansas City and is known in Western Missouri as a "Kansas City Shirtwaist." The shingles, siding, windows, and masonry are all original and typical of post-Victorian homes. If the house had been built with a tower, it would

not have looked like this. The current owner made the mistake of adding the tower without the benefit of an architect. The tower itself is disproportionate to the rest of the house and is poorly connected to the porch. The windows, too, are out of scale.

IF THE OWNER HAD LEFT well enough alone, this house, with some painting and cleaning, could have looked as it did when it was built early in the century. Now, major roof work will have to be done to return it to its original appearance. Since the tower is for decorative purposes only (it's not large enough to be used as living space), we hope the owner will reconsider this "Grimm" remuddling. -- SJM



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