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Old-House Journal

September 1986 / \$2.95



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Editor

Patricia Poore

Production Editor

Cole Gagne

Associate Editor

William J. O'Donnell

Assistant Editor

Eve M. Kahn

Graphic Design

Bekka Lindstrom

Contributing Editors

J. Randall Cotton

Walter Jowers

Roland A. Labine Sr.

Technical Consultants

Jonathan Poore

Larry Jones

Circulation Department

Jeanne Baldwin

Elaine Lynch

Grace Rutigliano

Office Manager

Barbara Bouton

Advertising Production Mgr.

Tricia A. Martin

Publisher

Clem Labine

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Contents

Vol. XIV No. 7

September 1986

Before, During, and.... 321

Old-house living in Upstate New York

Wood Woes 325

Problems with yellow pine and treated lumber

The Great American Garage 328

*Part I: A review of styles and materials
from the heyday of the garage*

Tile Floor Patterns 336

Ideas for laying tile, from a '20s source

A Primer on Weatherizing 338

*How to tighten up a wood-frame house —
even if it's really old*

Editor's Page 314 Emporium 352

Letters 316 Advertisers' Index 357

Restoration Products 345 Remuddling 360

Ask OHJ 350

Cover: An early garage, preserved as originally built except for the pleasing patina of eight decades. Photographed in the village of Annisquam, Massachusetts.

My New Passion

I CAN'T GET OVER how many great old garages there are! It seems they weren't there last winter; now, all of a sudden, they're everywhere I go. I noticed them on a weekend bicycle ride: garages that used to be barns ... late Victorian carriage-house garages ... dozens of early suburban garages. On most, one door is missing and the other is sitting heavily in tall grass, long unopened.

I noticed them in Massachusetts when we visited family. In the village of Annisquam, on the grounds of a shingle-style home built in 1907: a vine-covered, two-bay garage with chauffeur quarters. A

tiny one-bay garage in Pigeon Cove, freshly painted to match the house. And my favorite, the regional vernacular: granite garages that front directly on the street, growing out of the famous granite walls of Cape Ann.

Why didn't I ever notice them before?

YOU JUST don't notice something until you appreciate it. And you don't care enough to restore something until you can appreciate it. Thanks, Randy Cotton, for writing this month's article about garages. Learning to "see" things that were always there is the fun part of this old-house business.

Patricia Moore

colored pencils. Inside was a 3x5 card with a history of the house carefully printed on it, along with the names of the three teenaged boys in the family who had prepared the box and a description of the remodeling that was being done at that time -- 1939. They had cut pictures from LIFE magazine showing 1939 cars and the latest fashions. One of the boys wrote that the United States was threatened with war. He hoped for peace, although it looked as if there would not be peace. We've since learned that one of the boys became an engineer, another a musician. The third boy died in Italy during World War II, four years after they'd all fixed their tin-box time capsule.

It was time to seal the wall again. We placed the little box back in its buried vault between the studs and added a glass mayonnaise jar with our story in it: our names, the date, a remodeling outline, a few pictures. The carpenter's son dropped in two new pennies. Another chapter was added to the house's history.

Last Christmas we held a family dinner in the unfinished dining room. All 22 of us signed our names to the bare wall, along with birthdates and relationships to each other. A niece impulsively added, "This was a happy day." Surprise for the next people, 25 or 50 or 100 years down the line, when they take the paper off! And a silent message to say we love the house enough to acknowledge our presence, not with engraved brass plates or changes that violate, but in an unseen place only the house will know.

We're betting this old house will hide our messages until the new people respect its unpretentious, unabashedly upright character. Only then will it yield its secrets. By that time they too will understand that this is a structure which must be lived up to with integrity.

-- Frances Jones
Carthage, Missouri

Time Capsule

Why bother with these old places? Because you find yourself enjoying things like period garages ... and being touched by history in a very personal way.



Mrs. Jones points to the wall that holds secrets. *Below*, the solid Foursquare.



Dear OHJ:

A 90-day project stretched into a year-and-a-half of headaches, backaches, and bellyaches with few inspiring moments. A ragged 80-year-old, our Foursquare house stands with the substantial dignity of one who is sure of a solid foundation and sound workmanship.

Originally, we had planned quaint touches that would relieve its severity, but the house would have none of them. It demanded straight-backed, eyes-ahead, no-nonsense attention from us.

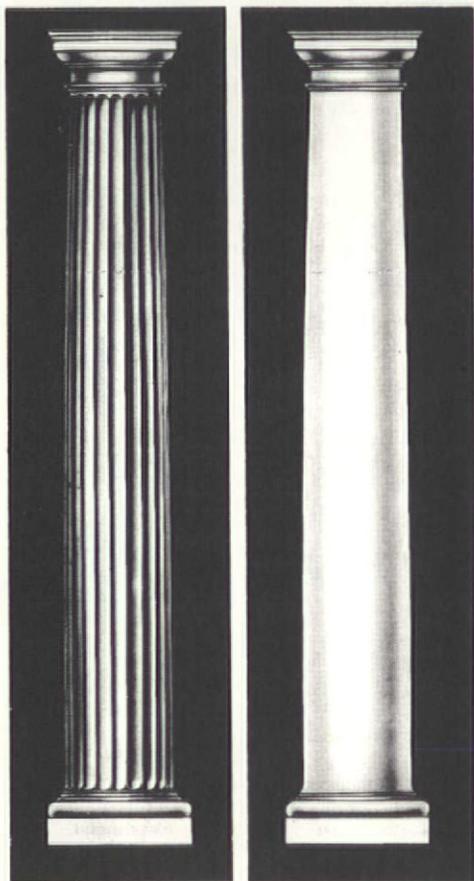
But it held hidden secrets that it revealed in due time. We came upon the first one penciled on a bare living room wall after we stripped the wallpaper. Giant signatures of a former resident's children: The date was 1957 and they had written their ages and grades in school after each name. It was an unexpected "how do you do" from the recent past and we felt as if the house were choosing to let us see.

Not long after, while removing a beaverboard wall in the stairwell, we found a little tin box advertising

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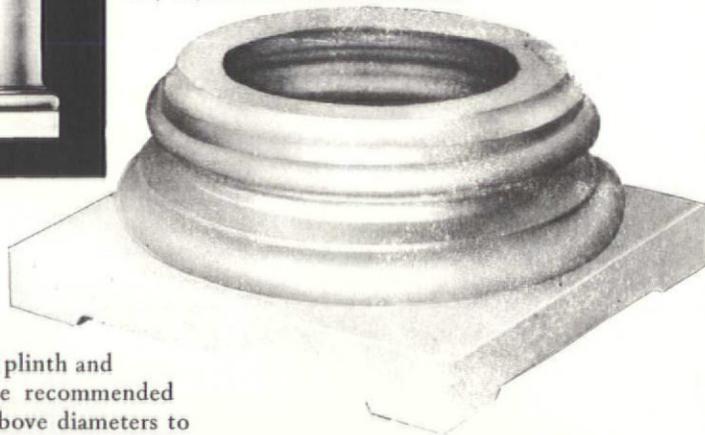
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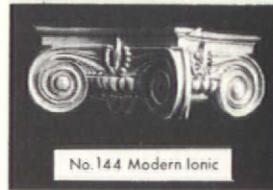
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Lane Hooven House



Our Octagon

Dear Ms. Poore:

I just finished reading the article about octagonal houses (June 1986). I thought your readers might enjoy seeing this community's version.

The photograph is of an octagonal house built in 1863, in the architectural style best classified as Victorian Gothic Revival. Very, very few octagonal houses were built in this style.

This house has undergone an eight-year restoration (often with the help of articles in *The Old-House Journal*). As with most restorations, it will never be complete; however, except for shutters, the exterior is virtually restored, and the interior has six of its nine main rooms restored. This house has an outstanding spiral staircase which ascends to the cupola. The original decoration in nine colors has been restored completely. The staircase alone is a sight to behold.

We were blessed at the outset of the restoration because the house had never been abused. It suffered only minor alterations at the hands of former occupants.

The building is now used as offices for its owner, The Hamilton Community Foundation, and a tenant, The Hamilton-Fairfield Arts Council. Some rooms are decorated as they would have been when the building was a residence, but other rooms, now used as offices, are being furnished as 1860-1890 offices.

Visitors are welcome weekdays (no charge) during normal office hours. An advance call is suggested for groups or if the visitor would like a special tour. The house is in The National Register of Historic Places. Across the street is the public library, also an octagon -- that one in the Romanesque Revival style.

The house is officially known as the Lane Hooven House, 319 N. Third St., Hamilton, OH 45011. The phone number is (513) 863-1389.

-- Thomas B. Rentschler
Hamilton, Ohio

Ivy Inquiry

To the editor:

The "Ivy" story (June 1986) was very enlightening. I'd never heard of this practice before. Was it, I wonder, something that the "taste-makers" of the era advocated, but that wasn't widely put into practice? The whole idea seems wrought with problems -- ivy and other vines are known to trap moisture, do damage to surfaces, and need constant attention. Their use on interiors would seem to invite staining and damage to walls, woodwork, paint, wallpaper, etc. In my opinion, some of the Victorian Tastemakers' ideas were intriguing, but there were good reasons why the ideas didn't take hold.

-- Randy Cotton
Wayne, Penna.

Painting Tips

Dear Editors:

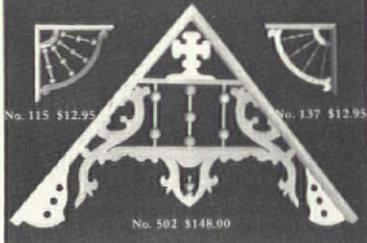
I thoroughly enjoyed your comprehensive special report on painting featured in the May issue. I'd like to offer a couple of painting tips that I learned the hard way.

First, I agree that when doors are painted, all hard-

ware, including hinges, should be removed for stripping, polishing, and lacquering before reinstallation on the freshly-painted door. When you remove hinges, I suggest you label the exact location of each leaf. Even steel hinges develop specific wear patterns over the decades, and failure to accommodate this "wearing-in" may result in squeaky or balky hinges. It's also a good idea to apply a thin coating of grease to the hinge pin before insertion.

Second, regarding masking: Regular masking tape will damage fragile surfaces (wallpaper, for example). For most applications, I prefer to use drafting tape. This low-tack tape is designed to hold down firmly, yet lift off easily. (It's available wherever drafting or blueprinting supplies are sold.) If you desire a razor-sharp paintline, a good choice is the specialized masking tape used by automobile paint shops. It's more resistant to paint solvents than household masking tape, so it's less likely that paint will seep under the edge. (Look for it at well-stocked automotive stores.)

-- Jim Coman
Asheville, N.C.



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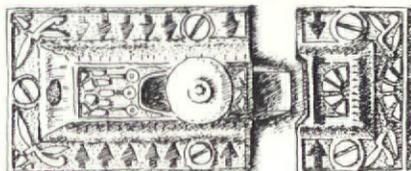
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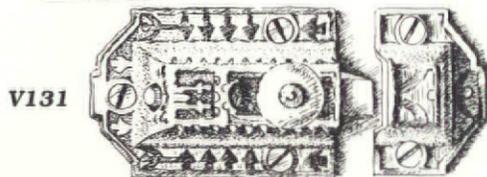
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From Norway to Texas

Dear Ms. Poore:

I am writing regarding the Vernacular Houses page in your April 1986 issue (Norwegian stone houses in Texas). Last summer, I took this photo (top) of our "family" house in Skogn, Norway (near Frondheim). My cousin, Erik Ree, and his mother still live in the house. The house is nearly 300 years old, and has been occupied by my ancestors since it was built. It sits on a hill overlooking the Frondheim fjord and the tiny town of Skogn. The two end sections (each with four windows and one door) were added within the last 70 years, although they were designed with respect for the building.

The original slate roof was just replaced last year. Erik replaced the slate with a synthetic material that looks exactly like a clay tile roof. (If you look closely, you can see the curves.) The house was originally stone; the

timber siding was added later to retain heat.

The place is massive. The support beams of the roof are huge. Solid birch exists throughout. The Norwegians really do know how to build houses.

Our family church is one of only 30 remaining stave churches. It was built in 1150, and is still routinely used for services.

-- Clara J. Lyle
Chicago, Ill.

Aspiration Article

Dear OHJ:

I would be very interested in seeing an article comparing various industrial or commercial "dust collection systems" (i.e. vacuum cleaners that can handle restoration dirt).. I burned out a shop-vac in about a month. A good product would have to be powerful, portable, and have good filters to keep the toxic dust down.

Some of your most helpful articles have been the ones on How to Cope With it All and Still Stay Sane. I've been at this extremely undercapitalized restoration for three years now, and I've weathered two major burn-out stages. Ms. Poore's excellent piece on walking barefoot (December 1985 OHJ) restored my sense of humor and helped me focus on How It Will Be (a.k.a. Someday...) instead of on Reality.

-- Ellen Kardell
Washington, D.C.

Won Over

Dear Patricia:

I must say that it took a few issues of your new format to win me over. Like many long-time subscribers, I was at first not 100% for the new look. But after setting aside my dislike for change in general, I must admit -- I LIKE IT! Keep up the great work.

-- Joe Scaduto
Lynnfield, Mass.

Dear OHJ:

I very much like the new format, and agree with G. Kaye Holden of Jersey City (June 1986) that your grouchy, "long-time readers" will look a long time elsewhere, to find another magazine with the helpfulness and quality articles your magazine delivers.

I also agree wholeheartedly with Elizabeth A. Griffith's letter, "In Defense of Yuppies" (same issue). It is the effort and respect of these young people that will restore the grand old neighborhoods, and the suburban areas, to their former glories.

I don't think I am too likely to undertake any old-house restorations, but I still enjoy the magazine very much. Keep up the good work!

-- Elizabeth M. Johnson
Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Old-House Journal-ites:

I have been converted. When you first changed the format, I was immobilized. Change has never gone well with me. Now, I eagerly await each new edition of OHJ. A convert -- always hard for me to admit. I love this magazine, it's Number One. Bravo to all of you.

-- Happy Price
South Dartmouth, Mass.

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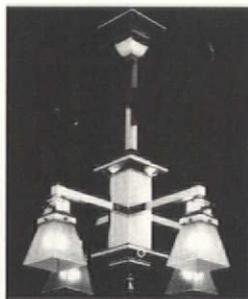
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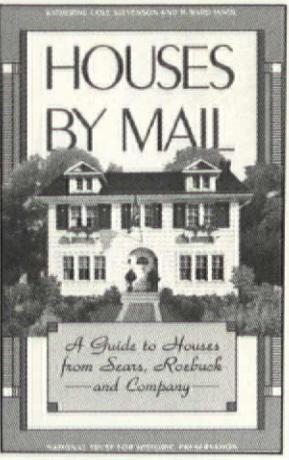
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1960

Before



1986

During...

by Eve Kahn

Old-
House
Living in
Upstate
New York

BRUCE AND ANNE CAMPBELL bought an old house in Carmel, New York, three years ago. It was nothing special, they thought. A pond in the backyard and a back stairway; other than that, it was just another house in need of lots of work. But the place started growing on them. Bruce found *The Old-House Journal*. Anne started getting crazy ideas, like should they tear off the aluminum siding? Bruce was inspired by old photos the sellers gave him, showing the house in pre-siding days. Tearing off siding was only the first step. Before they knew it, Bruce and Anne were in the midst of a full-scale restoration.

THIS IS NOT a "before-and-after" story. It's more like "before-and-during." If you have an old house "in process," you'll sympathize. Or if your project's nearing the end, you can reminisce about the days of grit and grunge.

WE -- MY MOTHER and I -- met Anne Campbell on a sunny Saturday afternoon at a Greek Revival mansion in Brewster, New York. She wanted us to see this grand house, once the home of town father Walter Brewster, because it is the town's most successful and challenging restoration project. The woman restoring the place, her hands covered in plaster, stopped working to show us around. The house had marble fireplaces, a sweeping staircase, and many

sunny rooms, some with faux marbre and some already furnished in the high fashion of 1840. Anne kept protesting, modestly, "After this, our place is going to look like nothing."

WE FOLLOWED ANNE to the farmhouse where she and Bruce live with two cats and a dog. Her solid Volvo, and our rickety Cutlass, traveled down country roads, past the nearest signs of civilization (a bar and a Baptist church) to where the paved road turned to dirt. As we rounded a corner, a well-kept farmhouse, gleaming with new paint, the lawn recently mowed, came into view. My mother asked excitedly, "Is that it? What a pretty house!" But Anne kept going, to a house a little less kempt, but to my eyes much more interesting.

THE DOG BOUNDED up to greet us, accompanied by Bruce. As our tour began, Bruce and Anne both talked about the house, often at the same time. They wanted to show us every inch of woodwork that they'd slaved over.

WE SLOWLY CIRCLED the house as they told its story. Though the sellers had said it was 100 years old, it actually began life as a farmhouse around 1840. During the 1940s it lay abandoned for a few years, and then a family purchased it as a vacation house; Bruce and Anne bought it from them. No major remud-

ding: The family hadn't been around much; they'd even left the outhouse. But they had done some damage. The most visible and destructive change was the pale-green aluminum siding: "like putting a house in a tin can."

THE FRONT OF the house showed no trace of siding. Bruce and Anne had decided to finish one part of the house, to boost morale. Every last siding nail had been pulled out and the holes filled. Real wooden storms hung over the first-floor windows. Up above, re-created trim surrounded the blind eyebrow windows.

THE SIDE WALL was not yet as perfect as the front. There were still nails, siding remnants, and aluminum storms attached by rusting staples. The Campbells showed us their scars: The siding contractors had hacked off every bit of trim -- crown moulding, window frames, even drip edges. Bruce picked up the crown moulding he'd had custom milled for the porch, saying bitterly, "\$110 worth of wood."

WE WANDERED TOWARDS the rear of the house, where there was an intriguing one-room addition. Its windows were smaller and lower than those on the house; its clapboards, narrower and flatter. It looked like an 18th-century building, hauled to the property perhaps in the late 1800s. Anne said that a friend who's active in preservation thinks so too. Inside, she explained, a tiny staircase leads to an attic crawlspace; was this once a small house?

STANDING NEAR the vegetable garden in the rear, we turned to face the house. From the



Shorn siding lay in heaps around the house.

"You do one thing, but you're never 'finished' because that one thing shows up the parts nearby that aren't done. It keeps you motivated."



Bruce's favorite part of the front porch is the band of red trim just under the roof.



Trim has since been restored to the blind eyebrow windows.

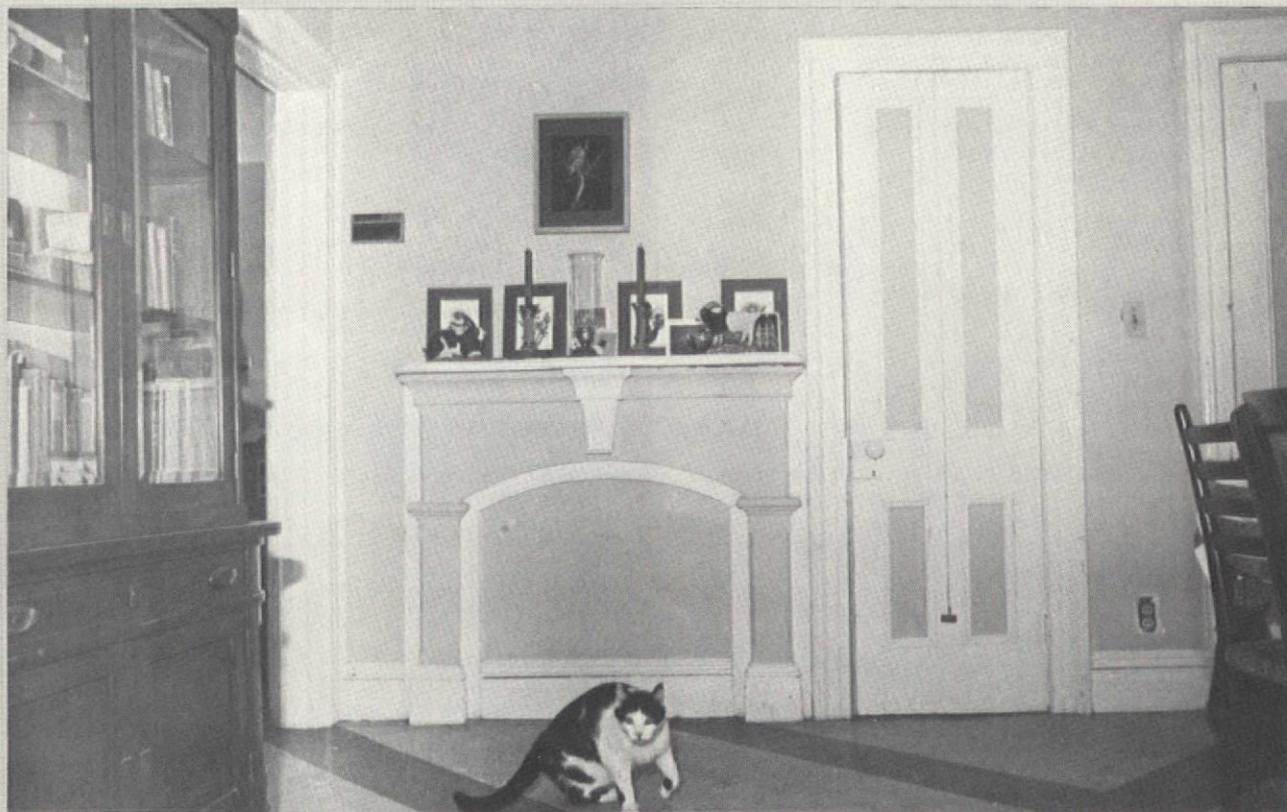
**“The house keeps saying,
‘Leave me alone, leave me alone,
live with me,’ so we’re starting
to say, ‘OK, OK!’”**

front it had looked like a standard farmhouse -- "the ranch house of the 1840s," said Anne. We'd seen several like it on the drive up. But from the rear it was a curious mixture of a 1920s garage, a 1950s shed, an 18th-century wing, all at various heights and angles.

WE ROUNDED the rear of the house. A pile of mangled siding lay next to it; Anne told horror stories of how many trips to the dump it took to remove the stuff; how they had to rent dumpsters when the dump closed. With weary familiarity she picked up a chunk of quarter-inch-thick foamboard -- "I've picked hundreds of these off my lawn," she explained. "These too," she added, stooping to snatch up a scrap of aluminum foil that blew past. (Foamboard and aluminum had lined the siding.) We examined the rear wall, studded with nails. "I've pulled hundreds of these out of my walls," said Bruce; his estimate seemed modest.

WE ENTERED the house by the front door. Sunlight streamed in. The living room was comfortable, though it still needed work. Anne showed us the "painting skills" of the previous owners: a two-foot-square spill of white on the oak floor. Still, she said, the floor "will finish nicely, someday."

THE DINING ROOM was even sunnier, with a bay window and yellow walls -- texture-finished, Anne said, but the texture washes off. We peered into Bruce's office, lined with shelves and file cabinets. Moulding and hardware catalogs were tacked up for easy reference.



The cat poses before the mantelpiece and texture-finished wall in the dining room. At left is the Campbells' Art Nouveau glass-front cabinet.



THE REFRIGERATOR was vintage 1955, "and it'll go for 30 more years," said Bruce. Beyond the kitchen, a door led to the only completed part of the interior. Aided by a clever carpenter, the Campbells had gutted the 18th-century room (nothing salvageable was left) and turned it into an oversize bath/ laundry room, the only bath in the house. The walls and floor were polished wood; tub and toilet were separated by wood partitions. Only the old beaded ceiling still needed stripping. Anne showed us the tiny rear stairway, leading to the unused crawlspace; the door to it latched with a dusty Eastlake-style lock that didn't quite catch anymore, since the house had settled.

WHILE ANNE MADE tea, we looked through her scrapbook. First came the scraps of wallpaper she had carefully removed from the rear wall of the 18th-century wing. (She found layer after layer, and preserved them in the order in which she found them.) Then there was a note from an expert at Colonial Williamsburg, saying that the papers could indeed be from the 18th century. There were notes from friendly carpenters, copies of the old photos given by the previous family to Bruce and Anne, and then Anne's own photos: her family, her parents' Greek Revival in Maine, Bruce at work on the house; and the enormous wasp nest which turned up under the dropped porch ceiling that Bruce was so glad to rip down.

I ASKED the Campbells about their decorating plans. Anne said, "I'd love to do the dining room in a high style, like Art Nouveau" (to match the room's wood-inlaid cabinet) "but I don't think my taste is sophisticated enough." Bruce said he'd never noticed old houses before they started on this one, and now he

could see fixing up more than one ... they exchanged glances, and Anne looked dubious. "But we've got ten years of interior work here first," he added, to Anne's apparent relief.

THEY TOLD ABOUT the disastrous plumbing that had to be taken out and replaced from scratch -- and all before the first frost, though Bruce had a broken arm. They reminisced about the days before the siding came off, how it clanged like a subway train when it heated up, how people thought they were crazy to take it off -- and how aluminum-siding and storm-window salesmen still call (and Bruce hangs up).

WE SIPPED our tea in silence for a moment. My mother said, "You know, it's a happy house." Anne smiled. "That's what my mom said too, when we bought the place."

WE TOOK the back stairs up from the kitchen. A few odd shutters and a door leaned against a wall in the hallway. There were four bedrooms, plus a big closet that Anne said could be a second bath someday, if they ever figure out a way to get plumbing up there without destroying too much. She showed us the original hooks in a bedroom closet. I marvelled at the eye for detail that old-house people develop.

SHE TOOK ME to the attic last. The brick chimney was parged with cement and stained brown by leaking water. The Campbells can't find a mason who will work on it. Sunlight shone in the gap between chimney and roof. Anne put her hand on the stack, related the hellish logistics of relining or replacing it and shook her head. "The house keeps saying, 'Leave me alone, leave me alone, live with me,' so we're starting to say, 'OK, OK!'" 

WOOD WOES

Questions similar to the two below -- both regarding wood technology -- come from readers surprisingly often.

The first relates to finishing problems with Southern Yellow Pine. The second question is from a reader who's had disappointing results using treated lumber. For the benefit of all, here's what we came up with.

by Larry Jones

Yellow Pine and the Red Caboose

OLD HOUSES and old train cars have a lot in common when it comes to restoration, as reader Don Plotkin of Champaign, Illinois, can attest. He purchased a thirty-foot, twenty-ton "fixer-upper" in the form of a 1929 B&O caboose, thinking it just needed a little paint. (Does this story sound familiar?)

MUCH TO his chagrin, Don found that everywhere the vertical V-groove, Yellow Pine siding hadn't been painted, the wood was rotten (for example, under the trim and in the tongue-and-groove joints). It's just that sort of deterioration on old houses that prompts us to advise treating and back-priming replacement lumber that will be exposed to harsh weather.

FACED WITH REPLACING virtually every piece of siding with new Yellow Pine, Don decided to dip-treat the new pieces for 24 hours in Woodlife II, a paintable preservative.

DON BRUSH-PRIMED the backs and then edges of the siding before installation. Unlike houses, where the siding is generally nailed on, the stresses and strains of caboose life require that the siding be installed with countersunk and plugged woodscrews -- about 750 of them per side. (Screw gun, anyone?)

TO FINISH the job, Don applied a high-quality, oil-base primer and high-gloss enamel that almost exactly matched the original caboose red. Well, things went well and then things went bad. About six months after it was painted, all of the paint began to come off right down to bare wood, not in little flakes but in giant pieces all over the car. The surface had been well sanded. The preservative was paintable, and was allowed plenty of

time to dry. The preservative, primer, and top coats were compatible. So what was the problem? As Don discovered, the problem was Southern Yellow Pine. It doesn't hold paint well -- especially oil-based paint.

DON'S PROBLEM intrigued us, so we did some detective work. Our archives turned up a similar problem -- oddly enough, also from a reader in Illinois -- who had written to Building Age magazine way back in 1915. Their reader couldn't keep the Yellow Pine trim on his house painted. Here was their answer: "Yellow Pine is very sappy or resinous and whenever direct sun strikes the exposed painted surface it draws sap, which is bound to throw off paint. When pitch or sap is not plentiful and the wood well seasoned, coating it with shellac varnish before painting will usually hold back the sap."

THEY ALSO OFFERED a solution that's no longer legal today: using a mixture of equal parts (by weight) of white lead in oil (keg lead) and dry red lead, mixed with two parts (by measure) of pure raw linseed oil and one part turpentine. The mix was strained through a sieve and applied as a primer with the consistency of thin paint. If you didn't like the pink color, then you could add a little lampblack and follow with a thicker top coat of white lead and oil. Such paint finishes remain fairly soft and pliable for a long period, not unlike our latex paints today. But, as the lumber Don used was kiln dried, we really didn't suspect that sap was the culprit. So we looked further.

NEXT WE consulted an excellent little trade booklet about exterior wood finishes. It states, "The ability of lumber to retain and hold a finish is affected by species, by grain direction or how the piece was sawn, and by smoothness. The weight of wood varies tremendously among species. Some common construction woods such as Yellow Pine are dense and heavy with respect to lighter woods such as redwood and cedar. The weight of wood is important because heavy woods shrink and swell more than light ones. This dimensional change occurs as the wood gains and loses moisture. Excessive dimensional changes in wood consistently stresses a paint film and may result in early failure."

YELLOW PINE and some boards of Douglas Fir have dense, dark, wide bands called summerwood or latewood, to which paint will not stick well. These bands alternate between those of softer springwood or early wood, to which paint does stick well. That's why woods without wide summerwood bands (such as redwood and cedar) tend to hold paint better.

IT WAS BEGINNING to sound like there's no way to keep paint on Yellow Pine. Yet they managed to keep it on all those cabooses for all those years. To get to the bottom of this, we contacted Dr. William Feist, researcher at Forest Products Laboratory. Dr. Feist's advice: Don should strip the existing paint, treat the wood with a paintable water repellent or water-repellent preservative; then apply one coat of latex primer followed by two top coats of latex (all of the same system or brand). And the paint should be brushed, rather than sprayed.

PLYWOOD SOMETIMES has paint-adherence problems, too. Often, the problem is compounded because the wood also exhibits face-checking. So while we were at it, we contacted Harry Jorgensen of the American Plywood Association. Mr. Jorgensen and Richard A. Miller had carried out a 66-month test to determine the outdoor performance of various paint systems on both sanded and rough-sawn softwood plywood. Paint films were evaluated for check and crack resistance, flaking, and extractive staining. Their test results, published in 1983, showed that an all-acrylic-latex, stain-blocking primer with an all-acrylic-latex top-coat system gave the best performance, was the most flexible, and had the best crack resistance. (Incidentally, the poorest performers were vinyl-acetate latex primers and paints.)

FINALLY, we checked in with the technical staff at Sherwin-Williams. For Yellow Pine lumber (which normally doesn't face-check like plywood), they recommend using an alkyd exterior primer/undercoater, followed by two compatible acrylic-latex top coats. But for Yellow Pine plywood, they suggest using their Check-Guard latex primer, followed by two latex top coats.

BACK TO our friend Don. He wants the same high-gloss paint sheen that originally graced his caboose. Acrylic-latex paints are fairly glossy but they haven't yet matched the high gloss of enamels. Unfortunately, the high-gloss, oil-based enamels that Don would like to use were found (in U.S. Plywood tests) to become increasingly brittle and crack-prone with age. Perhaps it's better to sacrifice a little gloss for a lot less repainting. A latex-paint conditioner called Flotrol, made by Flood Chemical and widely available, makes the latex flow on smoother.

AN EPILOGUE: Besides finding Yellow Pine hard to keep painted, Don also discovered the wood is highly prone to warping and checking before installation. And he found it splits very easily if you nail too near the edges (use the old carpenter's trick of blunting the nail point before pounding it in). Finally, he found the wood was very difficult to sand without creating ridges, again due to the summerwood. All in all, Don notes, "If I had to start restoring the car all over again (and I hope that never happens), I think I'd leave the Yellow Pine at the lumberyard."

Bad Luck with Treated Wood

I HAVE A PROBLEM using pressure-treated wood," begins an all-too-typical letter. "I bought Wolmanized 1x4-inch, tongue-and-groove lumber, and built two exterior cellar doors with it. After I assembled the doors, I allowed them to stay clamped and weighted down for seven days; they were flat and true at the time of installation.

"THE DAY after I installed the doors, they had warped so badly that they couldn't be opened. First they expanded, then a few days later the

boards started to cup, causing the width to shrink by 1/2 inch. Also the boards split lengthwise. I cross-braced the door with oak, glued and bolted in place, and attached angle-iron horizontal braces top and bottom. And within three days in the sun, the boards had warped to the point where all the glued tongues had split. I rebuilt the doors and the same thing happened! I've since built entirely new ones out of tongue-and-groove cedar and have had no problems.

"WHEN I went back to the lumberyard, they said, 'What do you expect when you bought treated white pine?' At the time of purchase, I wasn't told that I was purchasing white pine and I assumed that I was buying a good grade of wood. It certainly wasn't cheap. It turns out the wood was guaranteed against rot only, not against warpage. I plan to replace our tongue-and-groove porch floor next year and now I don't know what kind of lumber to use! Besides white pine, the only other treated lumber around this area is a poor grade of fir flooring that's not at all like the good Douglas Fir flooring I've seen. Please advise."

Misconceptions

MANY HOMEOWNERS buying pressure-treated lumber assume they're getting lumber that is rot resistant, mildewproof, water repellent, and paintable. There's also an assumption that wood which doesn't rot ALSO won't suffer the usual weathering problems of untreated wood -- shrinking, swelling, cupping, bowing, warping, or splitting -- even if it's left unpainted. This is not the case. Treated wood offers some protection against decay, but it is still wood and it behaves like wood.

TREATED WOOD is sometimes seen as the culprit in a failed project, when really the problem is poor detailing or some peculiarity in individual pieces of wood.

MOST FACTORY-PRESSURE-TREATED LUMBER available at the lumberyard is treated with CCA (Chromated Copper Arsenate). The lumber has a greenish color, is odor-free, and has a clean surface. The best known across the country is Wolmanized brand. Wolman preservative is a product of the Koppers Company, and Wolmanized wood is pressure-treated by licensed treaters.

FOR GUIDELINES, we contacted three good sources: the Koppers Company; Cox Wood Products, a licensed producer of Wolmanized lumber; and Dr. William Feist, Research Chemist at the U.S.D.A.'s Forest Products Laboratory. Compiled here are their comments and suggestions, plus a few of our own.

Thirteen tips for better luck

I READ THE FINE PRINT. Most treated lumber is meant for weather-exposed applications where termite and fungal decay damage are likely. Some treated lumber can also be used indoors for beams, trusses, framing, flooring, and sills. (Check the specific manufacturer's product literature.) For residential use, Wolmanized lumber carries a 30-year warranty against termite and decay damage, but it does not cover warping, checking, or splitting.

2 BUY A BRAND-NAME PRODUCT from a well known, reputable dealer. He's the first guy you contact if you have trouble. You don't want to have to deal with the joker who tells you you should've known better. The brand should be stamped on the wood.

3 BE AWARE OF WOOD SPECIES. The type of wood that is treated or Wolmanized varies by region. The more common types are Southern Yellow Pine, Red Pine, Douglas Fir, Hemlock, Spruce, and White Pine. Before you buy, find out what types of treated wood are available in your area. Dr. Feist says to avoid buying lumber with uncommon names ("White Mountain Pine"). Woods like Yellow Pine are notorious for being dimensionally unstable and holding paint poorly, so save them for rough carpentry. Porch floors are best laid from good, hard, vertical-grain Douglas Fir, not soft pine. Don't settle for inappropriate lumber simply because it's available treated.

4 BUY DRY LUMBER. Moisture in pressure-treated lumber seems to be the main cause of trouble for our readers. Before it is pressure-treated, wood arrives at the treater kiln dried. After treatment, the wood is moist inside. Then it may be thoroughly kiln dried again, or it may be not-so-thoroughly kiln dried, or it may be thoroughly and properly air-dried, or it may be not-so-thoroughly or properly air dried. We favor buying kiln-dried, treated lumber. (Like buying prewashed and preshrunk jeans, you'll have some idea from the start of what you're getting.) Kiln-dried treated lumber is not available in all areas, and you can expect it to cost more. We think it's worth it for finish carpentry where a lot of movement would cause expensive problems.

Wolmanized wood that has been dried after treatment has that information stamped on it. The orange-labelled #1 grade is the best and most dimensionally stable.

Short of taking a moisture meter with you to the lumberyard, there's no way of telling how moist the treated lumber is, even if the wood has been kiln dried. Bundles of moist wood can come from the treating plant to the lumberyard and stay that way until you get it home and build something. Then the wood starts to dry and trouble begins. So if you have the dry space and the time, let the treated lumber sit for a few weeks (properly stacked for air drying, of course). It's good insurance.

5 PICK YOUR PIECES CAREFULLY when you buy treated lumber -- even at the risk of aggravating the lumberyard operator. The dimensional stability of wood depends on its species, grain pattern, and natural defects such as knots. Pick treated wood that is visibly clean and has no surface residue.

6 FINISH THE WOOD. Don't expect pressure-treated lumber to look very good if you leave it exposed to the weather with no protection (such as water repellent, water-repellent stain, or paint). Raw wood can be expected to soak up and give off moisture readily, causing excessive dimensional movement, which leads to cups, warps, shrinkage, and splits.

7 DECIDE WHAT FINISH you'll want before you buy. Consult the specifications of the lumber, and use only the types and brands of finishing products that they say are compatible.

Koppers advises using their RainCoat-brand water repellent to retard the movement of moisture into and out of the wood and to reduce dimensional change. If you intend to paint, we favor applying a paintable repellent before you prime. For wood exposed to harsh weathering, dip-soaking in water repellent is recommended. To stain, Koppers suggests alkyd-based solid or semi-transparent colors (ideally their own brand). They claim these have quicker drying times and better color retention than linseed-oil-based stains.

8 USE GOOD CONSTRUCTION DETAILING and methods, just as with untreated wood construction. Avoid open joints, seams, and exposed end-grain that allow moisture into the wood. (That will wreck a painted finish.) Designs that allow water to puddle on the surface are destined for trouble. Whenever possible, lay boards face up (bark side up -- the outside curve of the growth ring is the bark side).

9 AVOID LONG SPANS. The greater the distance between anchor or fastening points, the more force the wood develops as it's drying, and the more movement there will be. Avoid cantilevered beams and boards that aren't secured on one end.

10 DON'T USE LUMBER WIDER THAN 6 INCHES to form a flat outdoor surface. (Two 2x6s are better than one 2x12.) Moisture on wide boards makes them cup.

11 USE PROPER ANCHORS. With treated wood, use only hot-dipped, zinc-coated nails. Harsh environments (and perhaps even the preservative itself) can cause other ferrous fasteners to rust.

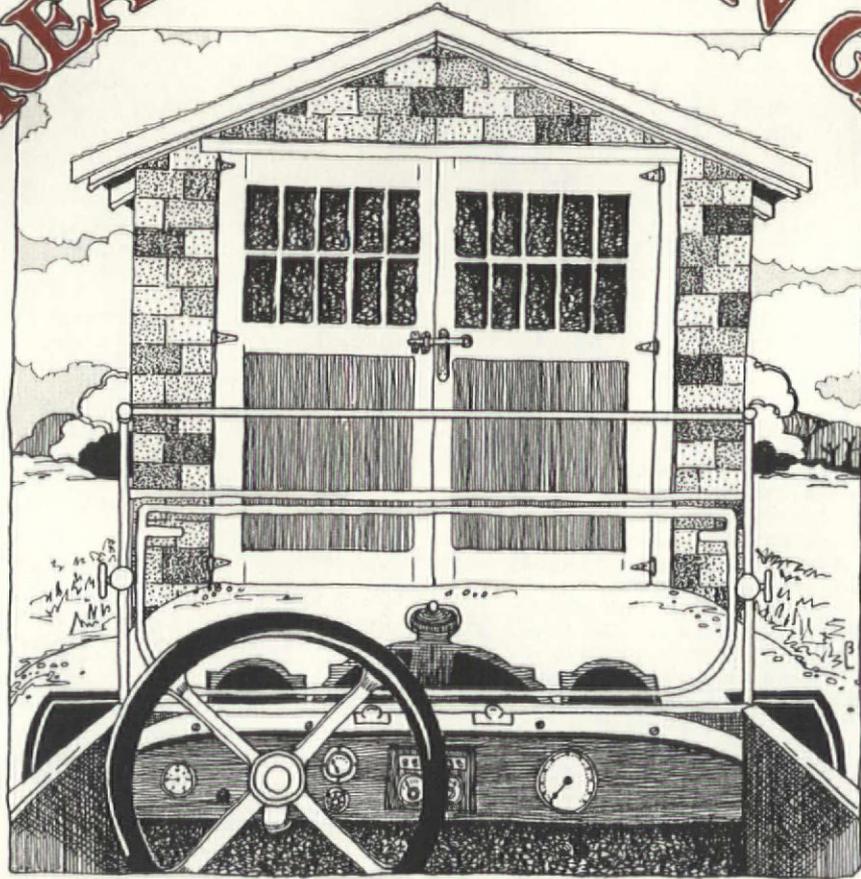
12 USE ENOUGH ANCHORS. For 2x4s, use two nails across; for 2x6s, use three nails across. For the greatest holding power, use ring-shank or spiral-shank nails or galvanized power-driven screws such as those made by Weather Challenger. Pre-drilling nail holes at the ends of boards helps reduce splitting.

13 USE IT SAFELY -- and only where necessary. Wolmanized woods are treated with an EPA-registered pesticide containing inorganic arsenic. Always wear gloves to avoid splinters. Wear a dust mask when cutting it. Don't use treated woods for countertops and cutting boards. Don't use scraps as firewood -- and don't dispose of the wood where someone else may pick it up for firewood.

FOR A LIST of government publications on various preservative treatments for wood, write to Forest Products Laboratory, Dept. OHJ, Publications Info., 1 Gifford Pinchot Drive, Madison, WI 53705. (608) 264-5657. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you need more information on handling Wolmanized Pressure-Treated Wood, write to Koppers Co., Dept. OHJ, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

THE GREAT AMERICAN GARAGE

PART ONE



by J. Randall Cotton

DURING THE PAST ten years a new type of outbuilding has come into being," says an architect in 1912. "It is to be seen today about the grounds of most suburban and country homes, sometimes ornamental and more often not." What he is describing probably ranks as one of the most ubiquitous yet taken-for-granted of all building types: the garage.

THE GARAGE CAN range from a sophisticated architect-designed example (grand enough to be a house for most of us) on a large estate to the humbly functional little sheds that seem squeezed into every last bit of space along our urban alleyways.

IF YOU OWN an old house with an early garage, perhaps this article will give you a new appreciation for its history. Next month, we'll give guidelines for building or adapting a new garage to be appropriate for your old house.

The Auto House

FROM THE START, America has had a love affair with the automobile, and no single invention has changed the way we live and how our environment looks more than the "horseless carriage." Though in the 1890s the auto was a

fad for the very rich, it soon became a "necessity" for moneyed businessmen and professionals, and eventually for the broad-based middle class as well. As more and more carriage manufacturers converted to automaking, the price of autos came down and by 1909 one manufacturer, Charles Duryea, said, "The novelty of owning an automobile has largely worn off. The neighbors have one. The whole family has become so accustomed to auto riding that some members generally prefer to remain behind while others go."

THE WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE of the automobile presented a host of problems, however, including the need for better roads, service and fuel stations and, not least, a place to store the contraption. Many an owner added insult to injury by putting his auto next to the soon-to-be-phased-out horse in an existing carriage house. In fact, the private garage is in many ways a result of a gradual evolution from the horse barn or another outbuilding. Even today we find many 19th-century carriage houses which were converted to garages many years ago. The carriage house itself was really a glorified barn which saw its heyday in the Victorian era. It was common practice at the time to mimic the architecture of the main house. Brackets, spindlework,



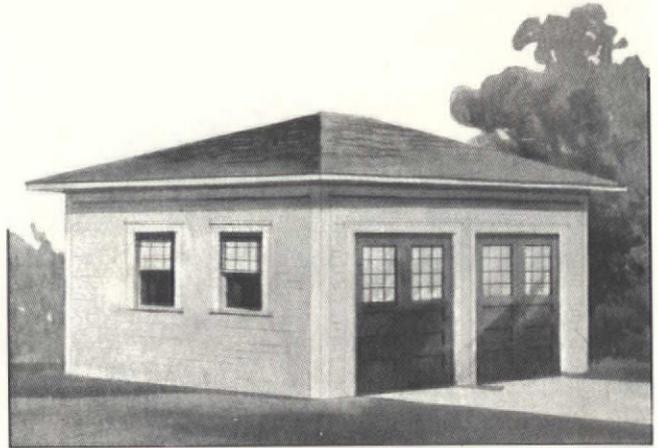
decorative wood shingles, fancy cupolas, and multi-colored slate mansard roofs were common appurtenances on Victorian carriage houses.

ALTHOUGH ADAPTING CARRIAGE houses for auto storage remained popular in non-urban areas, it was a different story in the city. Contrary to popular belief, earlier city dwellers did not all own horses, but rather relied on public transportation or walking to get around. Because of the crowded city environment, along with the smell and filth associated with horses, urbanites who did own a horse usually put it up at a livery stable. Hence there was initially a lack of existing space that could be converted to store the new-fangled automobile.

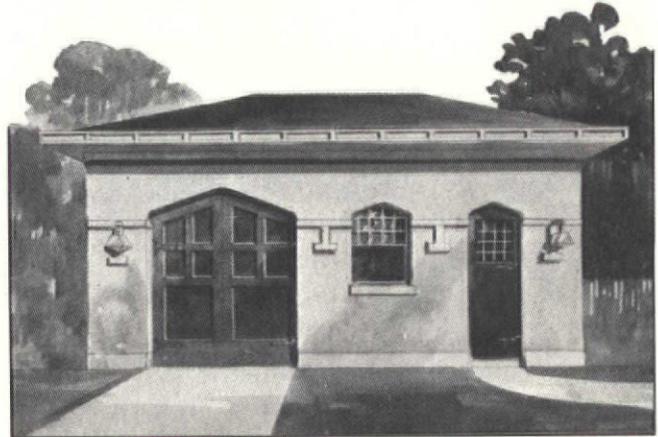
THE FIRST SOLUTION for urban auto storage was publicly and privately owned large-scale garages, a natural outgrowth of the livery stable. For \$15 to \$20 a month, an owner could store his auto along with up to 100 others in a large, heated space where maintenance and cleaning services were provided. But by 1910, automobile ownership was so widespread that a new building type had to be invented. Initially called auto houses or motor houses, the first garages did not have the objectionable characteristics of horse barn -- namely odor, waste, and germs. Hence the garage's "proximity to the house is an advantage rather than a drawback," said one observer.

The Early Garage Is Refined

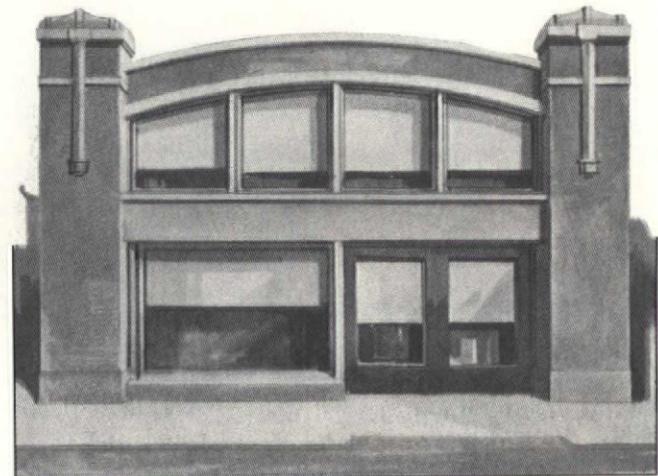
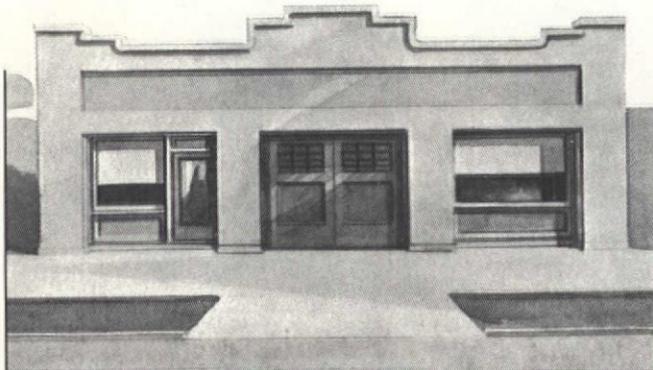
AS WITH ALL new building types (such as the skyscraper or railroad depot), there was a period of experimentation with the garage. (The word, by the way, comes from the French *garer*: to protect; now: to park.) How exactly should it look? How should it function? What are the best materials and construction method to use? People disagreed. Some thought "a garage is strictly for business. The utilitarian side must dominate." Others decried what they saw as hideous little sheds "of a mechanical nature" which are "apt to be ugly" and called instead for "decorative utility." Those who took the latter view suggested garages follow the architecture of the house much as Victorian carriage houses had.



Variations on this simple, hipped-roof garage can be found in alleys and backyards across America.



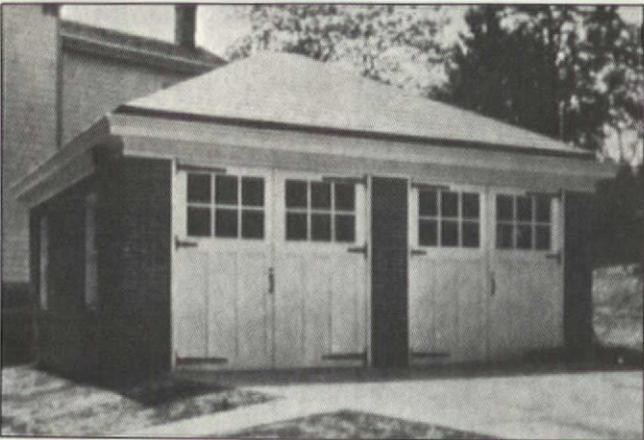
A rather elegant garage from 1909 probably served affluent suburbanites; at right is the door to the chauffeur's quarters.



These are early commercial garages; their facades are updated versions of the typical urban livery.



ONE OF THE FIRST solutions was the so-called "portable" garage, available as early as 1908. These were really small, partially prefabricated structures consisting of wood or metal panels. They were manufactured by such companies as Hodgson Portable Homes, were available for \$140, and could be put up in one or two days. They were relatively inexpensive, but they were flimsy and so a less than ideal solution; still, they remained popular throughout the first part of this century.

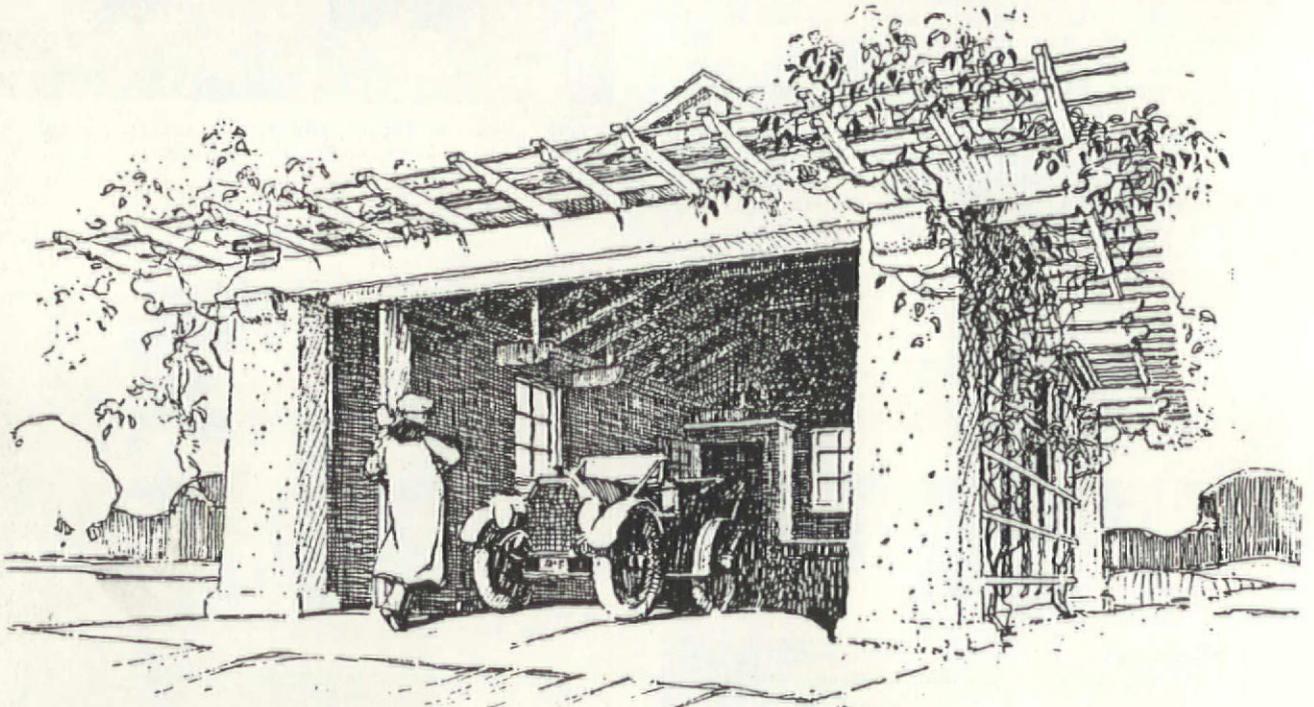


MORE SUBSTANTIAL prefabricated garages were also introduced. Most of the companies that produced "ready-built" homes also carried prefab garages. Sears, Roebuck was among the most successful in this endeavor and sold mail-order garage "kits" during the teens, '20s, and '30s.

LIKE PATTERN-BOOK HOUSES, pattern-book garages also proved popular. For example, the Home Builders Catalog Company of Chicago illustrated dozens of garages in their catalogs; complete blueprints could be purchased for \$5. The Southern Cypress Manufacturers' Association offered a "pergola-garage" working drawing which, of course, espoused decay-resistant cypress as the best garage-building material. The true impact of pattern books is hard to estimate, but chances are that if you own a 1910-1930s garage, it owes its design to a published plan that the contractor followed.

Simply by repeating bays, the garage could be for one car or two.

SUBURBAN GARAGES WERE usually functional in appearance. The basic plan was rectangular (approximately 12 by 18 feet), large enough to accommodate one auto and not much else. Multi-car garages were built simply by repeat-



Wall construction is stucco on terra-cotta block; the pergola effect and trellises are wood. (1914)

A. M. GITHENS



ing this basic plan, with two or more bays side by side. The major distinguishing feature of these plain structures was their roof. While gabled roofs were the most common, flat, shed, gambrel, and hipped were popular, too.

BECAUSE OF THE FEAR of auto-related fires, garage-builders paid great deal of attention to "fireproof" construction. Vitrified brick, cast concrete, and hollow tile were considered safe.



Pebble-dash

When a frame garage was built, or an old carriage house converted, the framework was often covered with plaster, tin, or better yet, glazed tile (to retard fire). Frame garages had clapboard siding, of course, but stucco surfaces were also used, particularly with a coarse aggregate (sometimes called "pebble-dash"). Thin metal panels were sometimes used

as siding; these had decorative pressed designs much like the metal ceilings of the day. Roofing materials were any of the standard fare including slate, metal, terra-cotta tiles, or shingles of asphalt, wood, or asbestos. Floors were sometimes simply gravel or cinder, but most consisted of poured concrete. Often the floor slanted down slightly toward the front, so that if all else failed, a little push could serve to start the car.

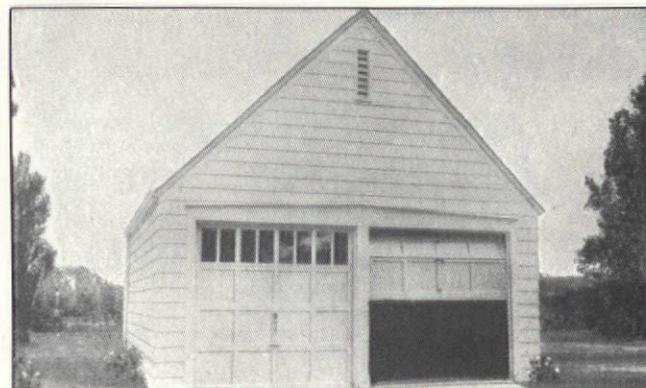
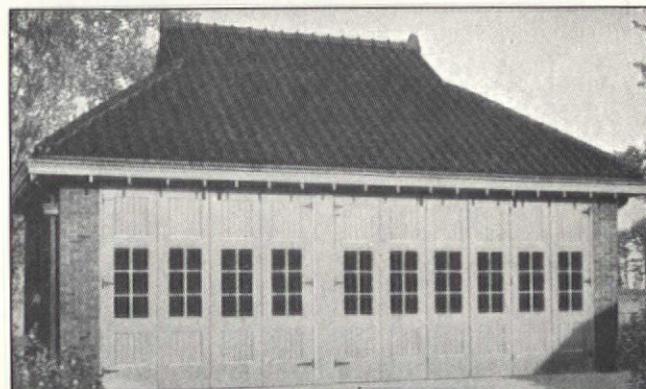
Windows and Doors

FROM THE BEGINNING, garages had windows to provide ventilation as well as light. These were mostly stock sash units similar to those used in houses. One window along each side was the usual arrangement, and garage doors almost invariably had several glazed panels.

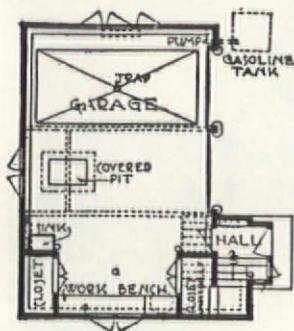
NOT SURPRISINGLY, the first garage doors were identical to barn doors. Big double-leaf doors which swung out on heavy strap hinges were the most common. These had the disadvantage, though, of being both heavy and temporarily disabled by uncleared snow. Barn-like sliding doors were better, but not all garages were wide enough to allow the doors to be pushed to the sides on tracks.

SOON MANY NEW door types were developed just for garages. New sliding doors, divided into vertical sections, could slide around the inside of the garage. Bifold (or "accordion") doors were also popular, often used in combination with swinging doors. The sectionalized roll-up door, the most popular today, appeared soon after the turn of the century despite an early claim that "such doors as those that roll up after the fashion of the old-time roll-top desk have proved effective, but are not in widespread use, and probably never will be." So much for predictions.

ROLL-UP AND SWING-UP garage doors were spring-loaded for easy operation and early ads often showed a small boy lifting them. A smaller "wicket door" was sometimes incorporated into the main door so that one could enter the



The multiform garage could follow any house style. From top to bottom: Dutch Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Mediterranean Revival, or generic gable.

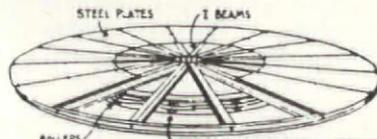


Built for a "suburban mansion," this circa 1912 garage offered a covered pit/work area, gas pump and tank, sink, work bench, and two closets.

garage without opening the entire door. Some garages provided doors at each end so that the car could enter one way and exit the other.

Amenities

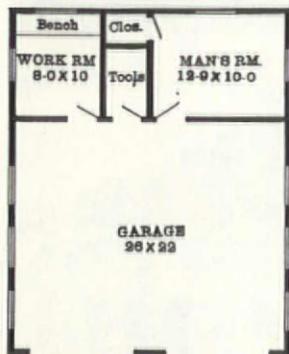
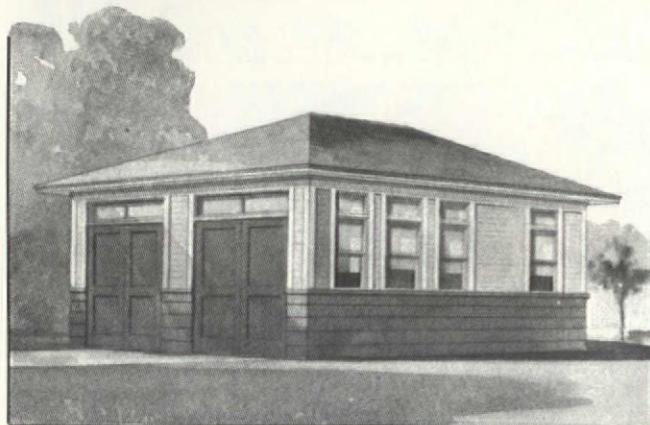
BEFORE GAS STATIONS and repair shops were widely accessible, auto owners did much of their own servicing. Thus early garages were often better equipped than their modern-day counterparts. It was not unusual to find them outfitted with hoists, workbenches, repair pits, storage cabinets, electric lights, and washbasins. Many were heated by their own



AUTOMOBILE TURNTABLE

furnaces. Some even had a turntable built into the floor so that the car could be turned around.

The turntable eliminated the need for backing out, which brought the risk, according to one contemporary, "of bowling someone over." Individual pumps and underground gas tanks, built in or near the garage, were also used in pre-gas-station days.

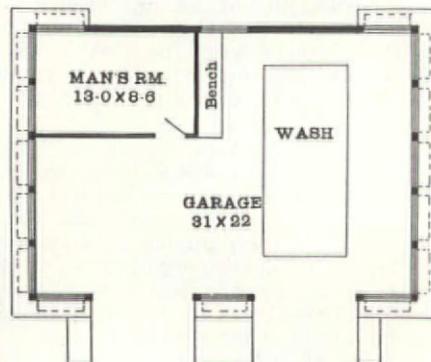
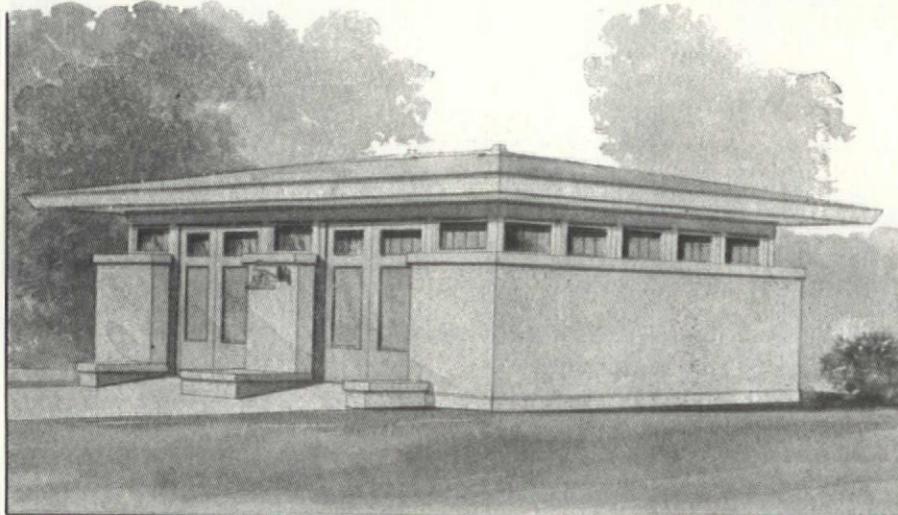


The 1909 garage above provides a generous 12'9" x 10'-space in the rear for the chauffeur (see plan at left). There's also a closet, work room, and tool room.

SOME CONVENIENCES we assume are modern were available early on. An overhead hose on a revolving arm was used for washing cars, like today's do-it-yourself car washes. Even the "modern" electric garage door opener was available in the 1920s. These devices were usually key-activated by a pole-mounted switch next to the driveway. A remote-control radio-signal unit, activated by a knob on the dashboard, was also introduced in the '20s.

The Heyday of the Garage

BY THE 1920S, automobiles were commonplace. In the cities, alleys originally intended as secondary roads for horse-drawn service vehicles and garbage removal were now lined with small garages. These were usually set on the rear corner of the narrow lots. Sometimes a



The Prairie-style garage at left appeared in a Radford plan book dated 1909. In its plan (above), the area marked 'Wash' probably denotes the reach of a car-wash hose.

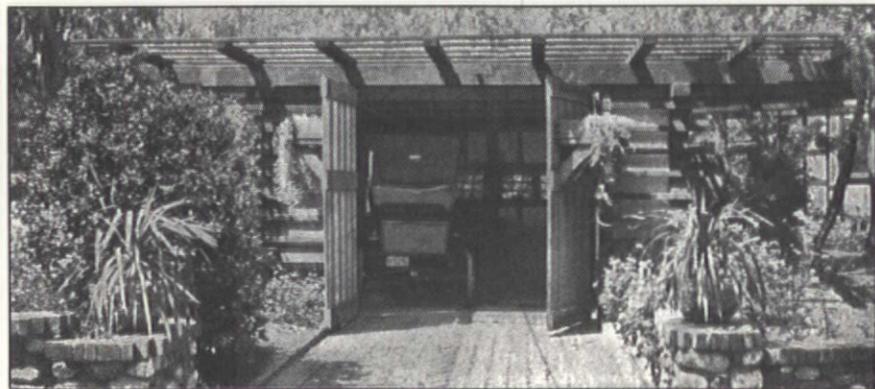
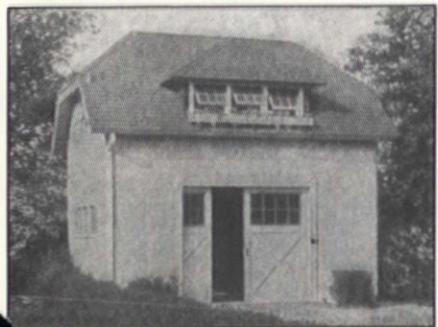
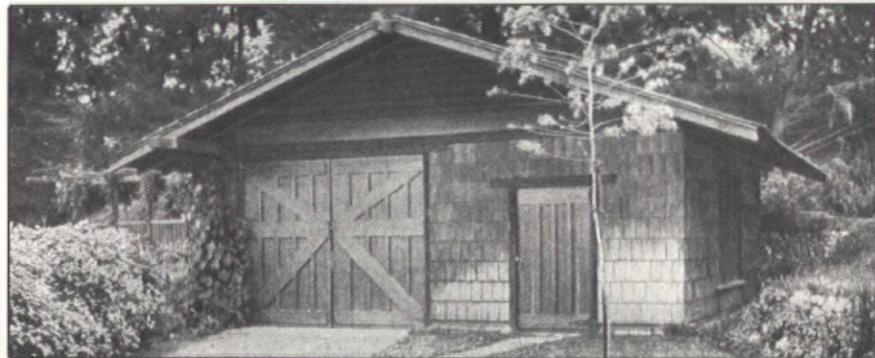
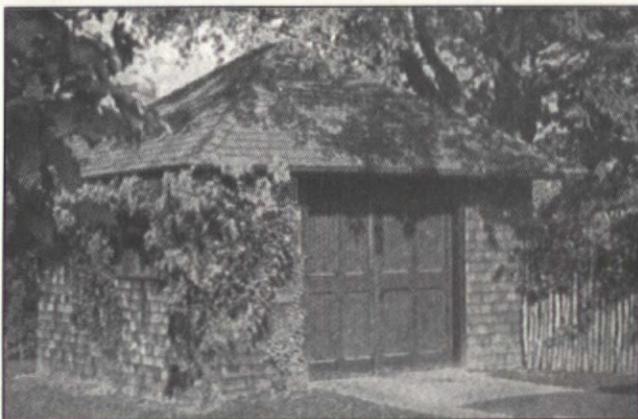


Wide multi-bay alleyway garage served several owners. In the post-Victorian suburbs -- whose development the automobile greatly encouraged -- individual freestanding garages with driveways to the street were the norm.

WHILE FANCY GARAGES had been built all along -- for the wealthy -- it was not until the 1920s and '30s that every automobile owner could choose from a variety of garage styles which matched his house. These decades can be considered the heyday of the freestanding American garage.

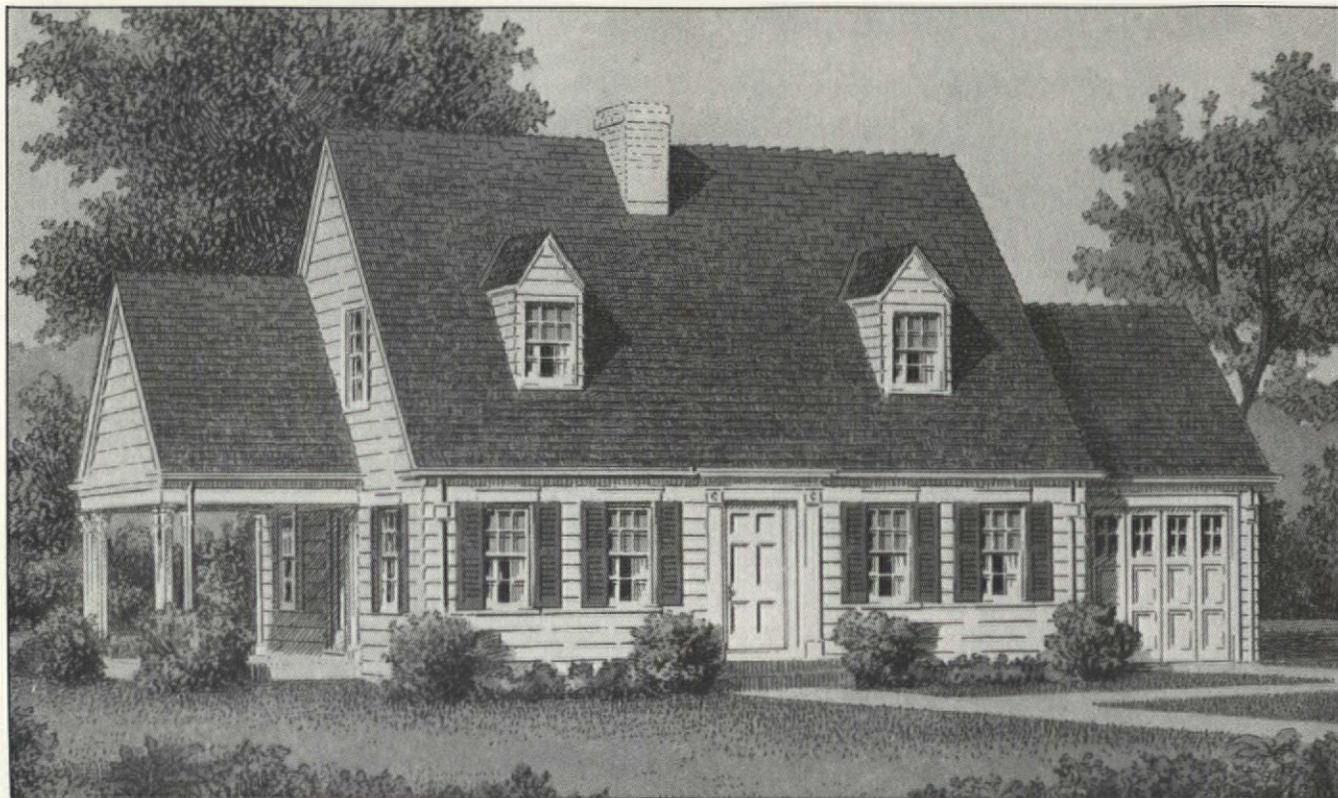
THE MEDITERRANEAN, French, Colonial Revival, and various English revival styles were all manifested in garage designs. The Craftsman school of architecture was especially adaptable to garages, as it extolled the virtues of wood shingles, openly expressed framework, wall lattice for vines, and attached pergolas. More than a few garages resembled Japanese buildings with wide kick eaves and upturned roof rafters. Spanish-influenced garages had tile roofs, smooth wall surfaces, and sometimes a Mission facade complete with a curvilinear parapet and an arched side portal leading to the garden.

THE GARAGE'S ROOF shape, siding, color, cornice detail, and material were often identical to those on the house. And the garage grew in size, too, to accommodate the larger automobiles. Many had finished attics or back rooms used as small chauffeur apartments for, as one observer put it, "chauffeurs, as we all know, rank infinitely higher

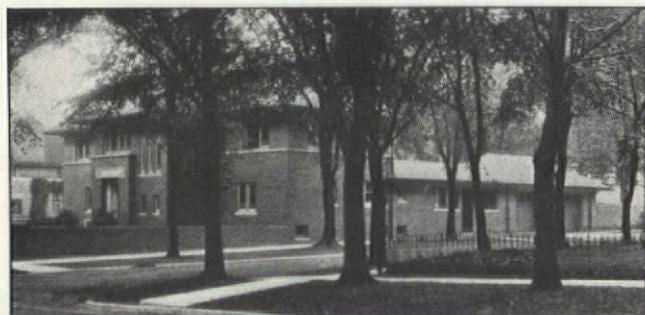


The two above, as well as the two in the upper right, are all suitable for Craftsman influenced houses or bungalows, with their natural materials and simple shape (all circa 1912).

With their horizontal lines and extended eaves, these garages have a definite Japanesque air.



This Georgian Revival house from the late '20s has a typical formal symmetry, the garage wing matched by the porch wing.



Pergolas, breezeways, and loggias increasingly linked the garage to the house, until it was absorbed into the main building.



The far wing of this provincial-style house, circa 1925, probably contained a garage. The architect was attempting to imitate gathered, walled-in outbuildings.

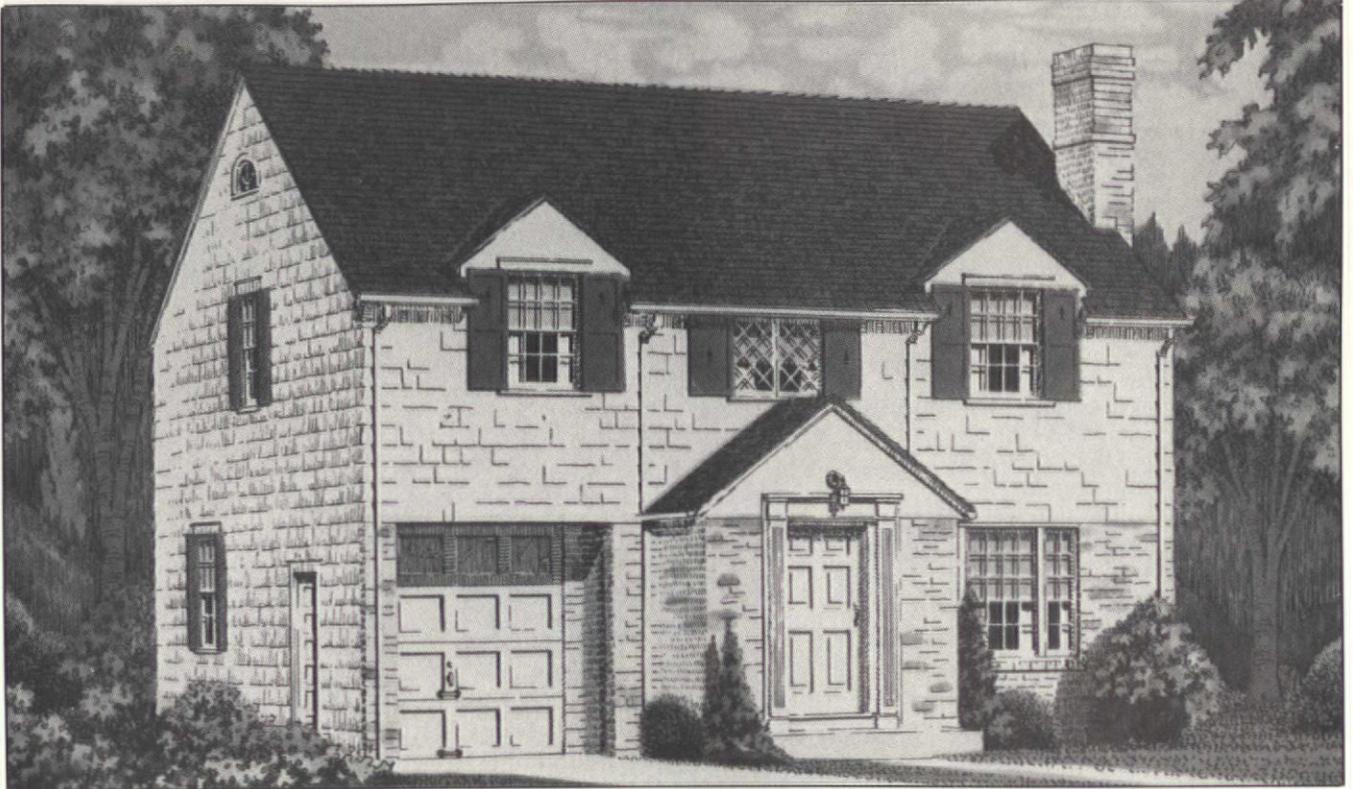
than grooms in the social classification of the household, and they may naturally expect quarters." (Such were the 1920s.)

The Garage Comes Home

AS THE AUTOMOBILE insinuated itself ever more strongly into our lives, it was inevitable that the car would come home to "live" with us, as it were. More and more, the once free-standing garage was connected to the house, eventually becoming an integral part. Beginning in the 1920s, garages were less frequently placed on the back of the lot. As they were drawn alongside the house, loose connections were made via covered walkways, pergolas, and breezeways. House and garage might be joined by a low wall which formed part of a courtyard. Here the garage played the part of the barn in the 1920s revival of picturesque English and French architecture, hearkening back to medieval walled compounds.

GARAGES BECAME DIRECTLY connected to houses when the initial fear of the incendiary nature of early autos was overcome. Still, for some time, fire walls were required between house and garage or else insurance companies would place higher rates on the whole house.

FOR COLONIAL REVIVAL houses, architects often emulated the rambling connected buildings of vernacular 19th-century New England farmsteads, and made the garage part of this complex. In a more formal arrangement, garages



This house, a circa 1930 forerunner of the raised ranch, boldly reveals its integral garage as part of the first floor.

became a side wing to Georgian Revival houses, balanced by porch wings on the other side.

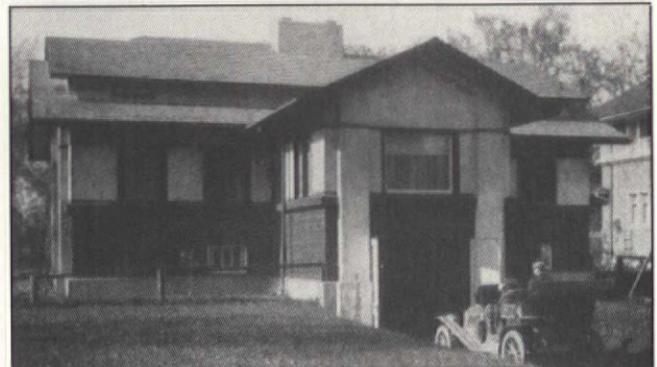
FINALLY, THERE WAS complete integration of house and garage. For example, basement-level garages were built under the main living quarters -- this kind of garage was made accessible by a down-sloping driveway. In urban areas, the semi-raised basements of rowhouses were sometimes converted to garages. Particularly appealing was a two-storey wing with garage below and bedrooms or sleeping porch above; Tudor Revival houses, with their picturesque irregular massing, often had this arrangement. In all these early-20th-century examples, the visual impact of the garage was minimized. It was not until the birth of the split-level ranch after World War II that the broad, blank-faced garage door was openly and unabashedly displayed. It was no longer declassé to have the car live with us.

THERE YOU HAVE IT: From converted carriage houses to the stylized yet functional structures of the 1920s to the modern garage/house combination, the American garage has become an everyday part of our lives. 🏠

Randy Cotton is a contributing editor of OHJ. Next month we'll feature his article on designing a garage that's compatible with an old house: how to match garage with house; what roof configurations, details, doors, and windows are appropriate.



The irregular rooflines of Tudor Revival homes lent themselves to integral garages, as on this 1926 house.

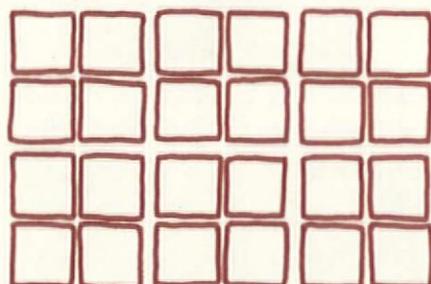


This circa 1921 house contains a very early example of an integral garage; the plan book in which it appears calls the building "an interesting suburban home with a garage in the basement."

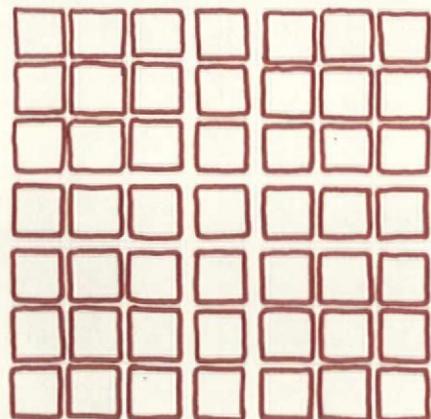


TILE FLOOR DESIGNS

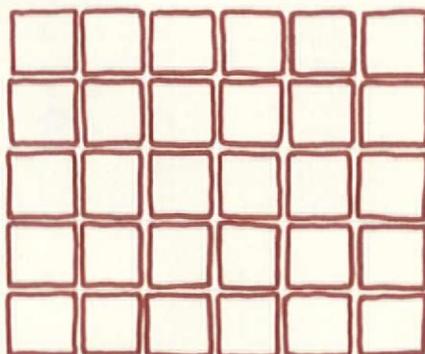
Tile floors were popular features of houses built in the 1920s. William Radford's *Architectural Details* (1921) is a good guide to what was common then. His designs are based on three shapes: the full-size square, the $\frac{1}{4}$ -square, and the rectangle made from two $\frac{1}{4}$ -squares. Radford warned against using squares smaller than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the large square because "the pattern runs off at the side" and so lacks "repose."



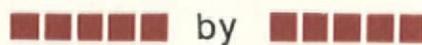
When a four-unit square is made with joints in scale, the overall scale can be increased by separating the units with wider joints.



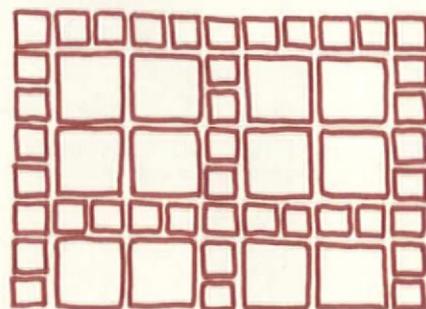
A larger room will allow nine-unit squares separated by bands of single squares; wider joints isolate the crossing bands.



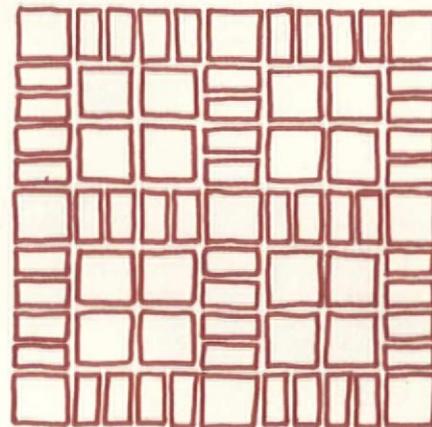
The simplest floor, with large square tiles, "is interesting if the joints are in scale."



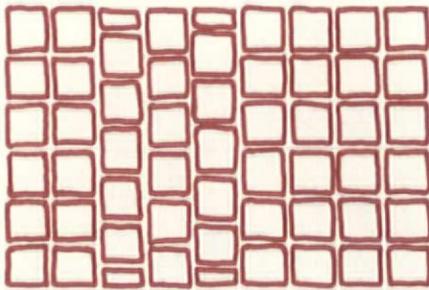
John Crosby Freeman



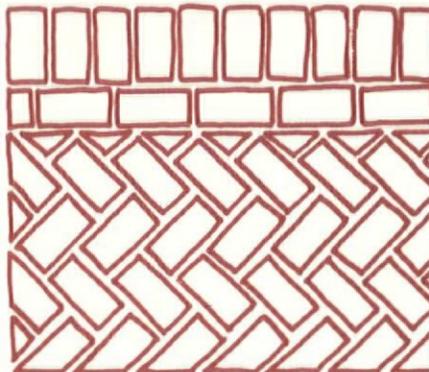
The overall scale can also be increased, and the design enlivened, by separating four-unit squares with $\frac{1}{4}$ -squares. All joints are in scale.



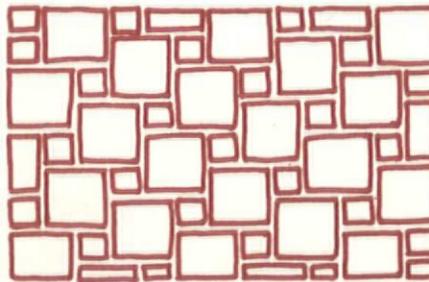
These four-unit squares are divided by single large squares at the corners and joined by rectangular tiles. For very large areas, nine-unit squares could be used.



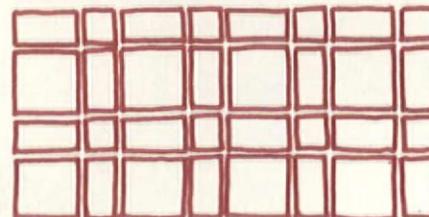
In a field of square tiles, the long lines for the border are provided by three rows with broken joints, which otherwise should be avoided in any field.



This classic herringbone is made solely of rectangular tiles. Notice the wide border also made of rectangular tiles.

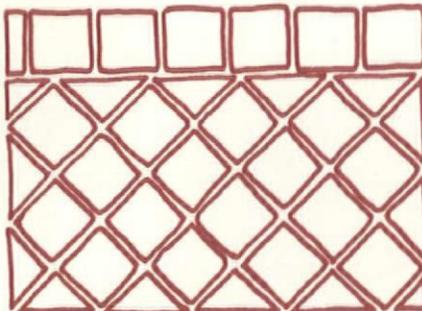


A "windmill" effect is created by large squares arranged diagonally, with the resulting spaces filled with $\frac{1}{4}$ -squares. At the perimeter or borderline, the field is finished with rectangular tiles.



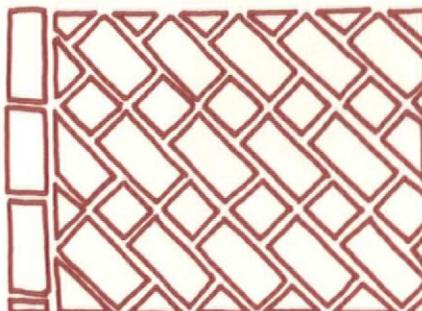
The plaid-like design here has a tighter "weave" than the pattern at right.

The next three illustrations demonstrate methods of creating borders:

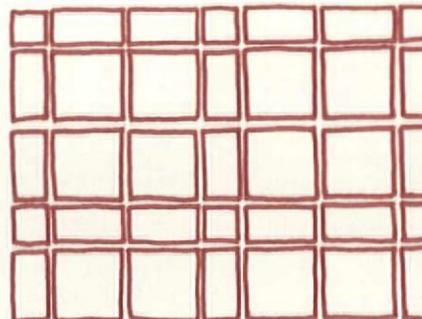


A simple border for a diagonal pattern of squares laid parallel to the perimeter.

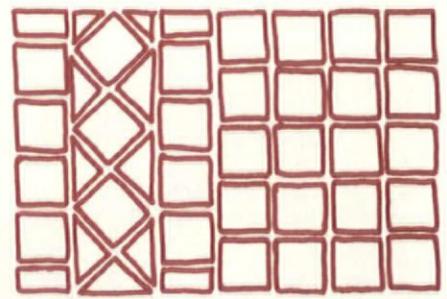
The last group of illustrations shows more decorative fields, beginning with three different varieties of "herringbone."



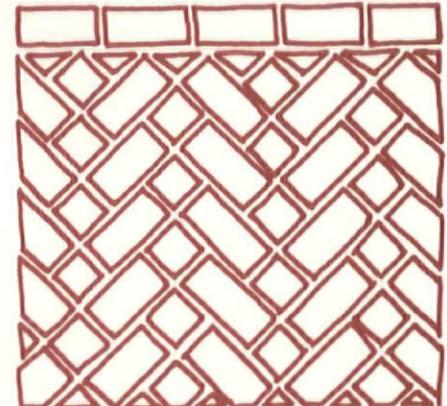
This design uses the same units in a more subtle herringbone design, in which straight diagonals subdue the zig-zag.



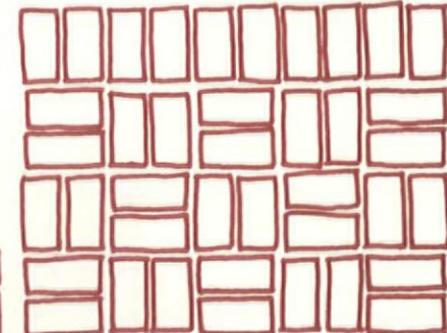
Like the "windmill" and "basket" above, this and the pattern below left evoke something other than tile: plaid cloth.



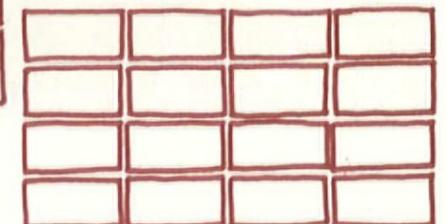
A decorative border can be enlarged by breaking the joints on either of its sides. This example features squares laid diagonally with triangles broken out of the squares.



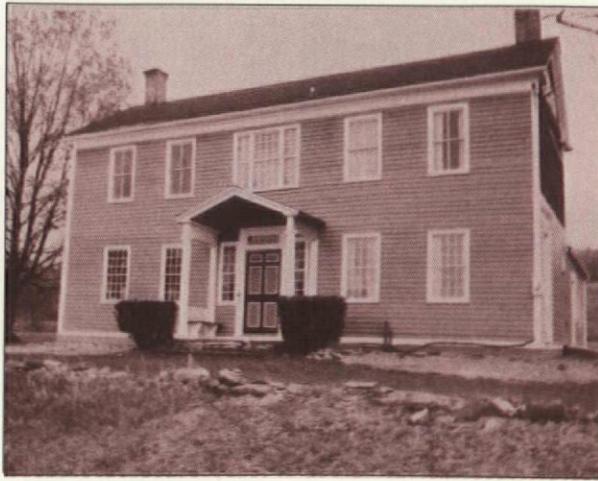
This herringbone has a more complex pattern, using a combination of $\frac{1}{4}$ -squares and rectangles.



A "basket pattern" results when rectangular tiles are laid as squares. Note how the joints have as much impact as the tiles.



This straight marching band of rectangular tiles is recommended for corridors.



WEATHERIZING THE OLD HOUSE

How To Make Yourself Comfortable

In A Wood-Frame House,
Even If It's Been Around For
130 Years Or More

BY ANDY WALLACE

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE I'll be digesting my latest issue of OHJ and come across a reference to resigning oneself to high fuel bills and some measure of discomfort if one suffers from a love of old houses.

AS I WRITE this I'm sitting in my 1797 farmhouse in cold Otsego County, New York. It's five degrees outside, with a brisk breeze, making for a wind-chill factor of thirty below. A year ago icicles would have been hanging from my nose and the drafts would have blown the cat out the crack under the door. I haven't had to take out a second mortgage or sell my firstborn to pay the fuel bill; I just spent a modest amount of cash and a lot of time on what's known as "weatherization."

WEATHERIZATION is a relatively new word, coined in the '70s, but the concept is one that the folks who built old houses were well aware of. After the early years of settlement, firewood was a scarce and expensive commodity. Houses were designed and built to use a minimum of it. Hence the compact, center-chimney saltboxes of New England with no north-facing windows, or the urban row housing of Boston or New York, with thick masonry party walls.

CONVERSELY, in warmer climates, homes were built to minimize solar gain from the summer sun. Exterior balconies, porches and wide roof overhangs, awnings, and shade trees were typical features of early Southern housing. Second floor living spaces to catch breezes and escape the radiant heat of the ground were also incorporated. Early Northern structures tended to have dark-hued exteriors to absorb the winter sun; those of the South were painted in light colors to reflect the summer sun. Old-house owners should understand these inherent energy-saving qualities and take advantage of them.

HERE, WE'LL REVIEW some of the ways to make your old house more comfortable and less expensive to heat and cool. (The Old-House Journal devoted two issues to this subject a few years ago -- September 1980 and September 1981. The information in them, both practical and technical, is invaluable.)

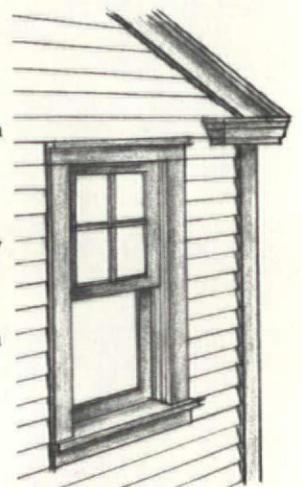
What To Look For

FOR STARTERS, arrange for an "energy audit." Many utilities offer this service at little or no cost -- and they can be worthwhile. Utility audits are no substitute, however, for your own detailed inspection. They're geared toward newer housing and emphasize heating systems, window replacements, and capital investments rather than the nitty-gritty sorts of things that are far more cost-effective.

HEAT IS LOST through two processes: infiltration and conduction. Infiltration is air movement through cracks and joints (drafts). Conduction is heat transfer through materials. The greatest heat loss through conduction occurs via window glass. Weatherstripping and caulking limits infiltration; insulating and installing storm windows slows conduction.

Limiting Infiltration

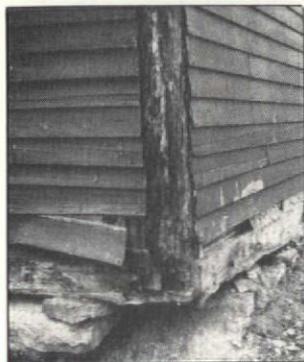
ANTI-INFILTRATION work is the heart and soul of weatherization. It's very time-consuming, picky work, and it requires a thorough knowledge of how your house is put together (it's a great way to learn). It has the best payback of any measure you can take. Caulking is the number one priority for stopping infiltration, both interior and exterior. Plan on using a couple of cases, maybe more, to do a thorough job. Buying by the case reduces the cost, too.



Andy Wallace has helped weatherize several hundred homes as Director of the Otsego County, N.Y., weatherization program. He's also restored three pre-1840 homes of his own.

EXTERIOR CAULKING will prevent water (more than air) infiltration, though it certainly cuts down on drafts. It's part of preparation for painting, and worth rechecking now unless you've painted very recently. Caulk around all window and door frames (but not under them), where clapboards or shingles meet edge trim, construction joints, and between dissimilar materials, such as brick and wood. Never caulk the spaces under clapboards or shingles; they allow the house to breathe and water vapor to escape from the walls.

WHILE WE'RE OUTSIDE, a word about the importance of pointing up foundations is in order:



In my neck of the woods, dry stone foundations were common during the nineteenth century (when most of the houses were built). An enormous amount of air (not to mention water) infiltrates through these foundations into basements and crawlspaces. A few hours spent with a trowel closing up these holes can make a big difference in comfort and fuel bills.

NOW FOR INSIDE: Thorough caulking on the interior is often overlooked. Yet it is the most effective way to stop air infiltration. (It also helps reduce moisture migration into the walls.) The best time to go sleuthing for drafts is in cold weather, preferably on a windy day. Take along a pad and pencil to note trouble spots and go over all surfaces at close range. No two houses will have exactly the same infiltration spots. But, in general, the following joints should be caulked on the indoor side of all exterior walls:



- Between window and door casings and walls, including tops and under sills.
- Joints in window jambs and casings, and the joint between window stop and jamb.
- Upper window sash, if stationary.
- Joints of baseboards and base mouldings.
- Corner joints and joints of boxed beams in post-and-beam construction.
- Ceiling-to-wall junctions, including crown moulding joints.
- Wall panelling joints (such as where wainscoting meets plaster).
- Around ceiling fixtures and penetrations (vent pipes, etc.) on the top floor.

● Insides of closets, cupboards, etc. These spots are often neglected and leak badly.

FOR AREAS that will not be painted over, use a clear, silicone-based caulk. The results will be virtually invisible if you run a neat bead.

For areas you plan to paint, use a high-quality, acrylic-latex caulk. Bargain-grade caulks are no bargain; they'll crack and shrink, and they won't last very long.

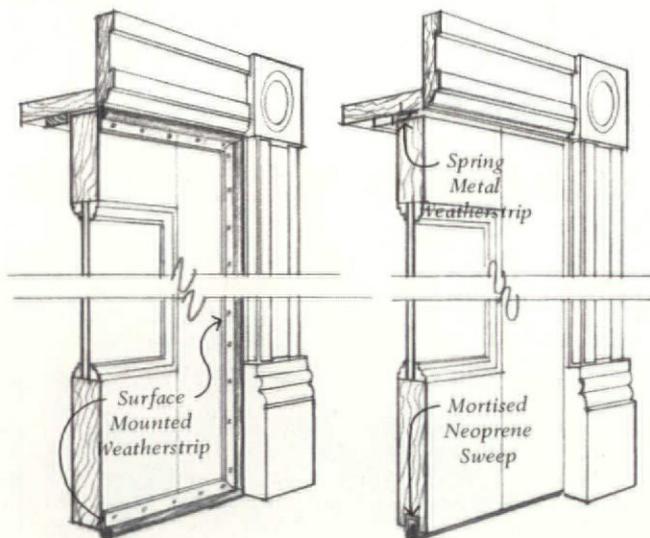
NEXT, SEAL AROUND electrical boxes. Turn off the circuit and remove the cover plate. If the box is tight to the wall, caulk around it and use a foam gasket under the cover plate. If there's a large gap, use spray foam to seal around the outside of the box.

Sealing Doors

MUCH OF THE AIR LEAKAGE in older homes occurs around and through doors and windows that have had better days. Often weathered, and usually out of square, they give an old house much of its character. Forget all the hype about shiny new, triple-glazed, vinyl-track, super energy-efficient replacement units. The payback on these babies runs to several generations, and what they take away from the house may never be returned. With a little time and care, you can preserve your old doors and windows and make them tight.

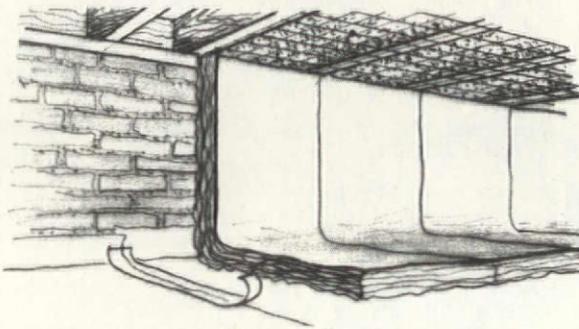
OLD DOORS require a lot of work to make them airtight, but it's worth the effort. First of all, the door itself must be in good shape. Getting it that way may involve removing the door, regluing and/or repinning loose joints, adjusting hardware, moving the stops, and finally, trimming the door to fit so that it latches snugly yet easily (see "How to Fix Old Doors," June 1986 OHJ).

INTEGRAL-METAL and spring-metal weatherstrip last the longest, but the materials are rather expensive. I prefer to use a good quality vinyl tube or flap weatherstrip. It's available in either wood or metal.



SETTING THE WEATHERSTRIP requires precision. With the door closed, cut the top piece to length and set it so that it just touches the door surface. Tack it up with a couple of finish nails. Repeat this procedure with the hinge side and then the latch side, making sure the gasket is touching at all points. Don't drive the nails home -- yet. Now, measure the distance between the side pieces of weatherstrip and cut your door sweep to fit.

Don't Forget The Cellar



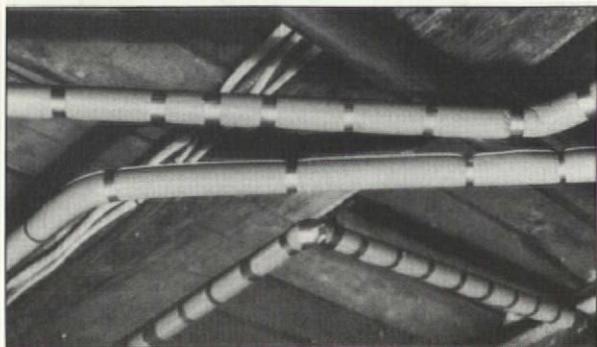
SPENDING THE DAY in the dingy confines of the cellar bumping your head on pipes and walking into cobwebs is no joy, but it is important. Cellars are often left neglected and can be real trouble spots of efficiency.

FIRST, SEAL air leaks. Caulk, spray-foam, or point cracks in the foundation, between sill and foundation, and where pipes, wires, etc. enter the house. Do this on a cold day so you can use your hand to feel for drafts. If you turn the lights off for a moment, you'll be able to spot minuscule cracks with daylight shining through them. Check windows for proper glazing and weatherstripping.

INSULATE ALL AROUND the perimeter with six-inch fiberglass, paper face showing. This will diminish infiltration — it's difficult to seal a cellar by caulking alone. Insulating between the joists with the vapor barrier up — towards the first floor — will keep your feet warm as you walk around the house. If you have an exterior door or hatchway, make sure it, too, is tight.

INSULATING your water heater (if it's more than five years old) and domestic water pipes is a good idea. Rather than buy one of those expensive water-heater jackets, wrap the heater with 3½-inch fiberglass and hold it on with wire. Don't wrap the top or bottom section where the pilot, controls, and vent outlet are. A fire or carbon monoxide poisoning could result.

THE BEST PIPE INSULATION is the extruded-foam kind that comes in 3-foot lengths with a slit down the middle. Duct-tape all seams for a tight seal. Insulating cold-water pipes won't save energy, but will prevent sweating in warm weather, if that's a problem for you.



MANY PRODUCTS are available for sealing the bottom of the door, but for older houses, I prefer a quality neoprene sweep that attaches to a mortise in the door and can be adjusted to the slope of the threshold. Particularly useful are the sweeps that operate with a bushing and spring, closing down when the door is shut, and springing up when the door is open. This allows the sweep to clear a carpet or, heaven forbid, a sloping floor.

SET THE SWEEP so that it just touches the threshold with the door closed. Try the door several times to make sure it closes easily and the weatherstrip contacts all points. Make minor adjustments, resetting the weatherstrip as necessary. When the fit is just right, set the nails, and caulk the joints between jamb and stop and stop and weatherstrip.

DON'T FORGET THE DOOR to the basement, doors into unheated rooms, and the door or hatchway into the attic. Making a new attic hatch and adding a stop may be necessary to get a good seal. Don't neglect this: Heat rises in a chimney effect, and lots of it is lost through loose hatches.

Windows

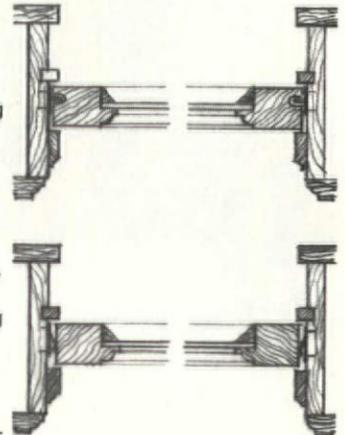
ORIGINAL WINDOWS are one of the prime sources of energy loss, because they lose heat by both conduction through glass, and infiltration around edges and through joints.

HEAT LOSS THROUGH WINDOWS has been examined closely in recent years. What's come out of the studies is that taking the following measures will save energy:

- weatherstrip sash;
- install storm windows;
- caulk all joints between fixed parts;
- install pulley seals.

FIRST, YOUR WINDOWS must be good shape and properly glazed. If they're not, I suggest you refer to Bill O'Donnell's excellent and comprehensive article, "Troubleshooting Old Windows" (Jan./Feb. 1986 OHJ). Having just gone through the process he describes on 22 "12-over-12" original sash, I can attest to the fact that it's incredibly time-consuming, but well worth the effort.

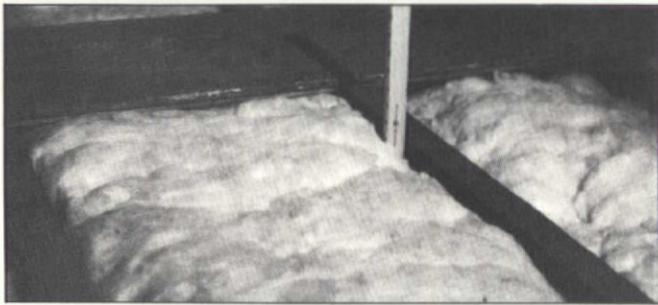
IF YOUR WINDOWS are in bad enough shape to warrant removal and repair, you might consider installing spring metal or integral weatherstrip. Otherwise, it's not a cost- or time-effective measure. The materials are rather expensive, and rope clay (Mortite, for example) will accomplish the same thing at a fraction of the cost and time spent. If your house is pre-1840, as mine is, then the upper sash is probably stationary and can be caulked in place.



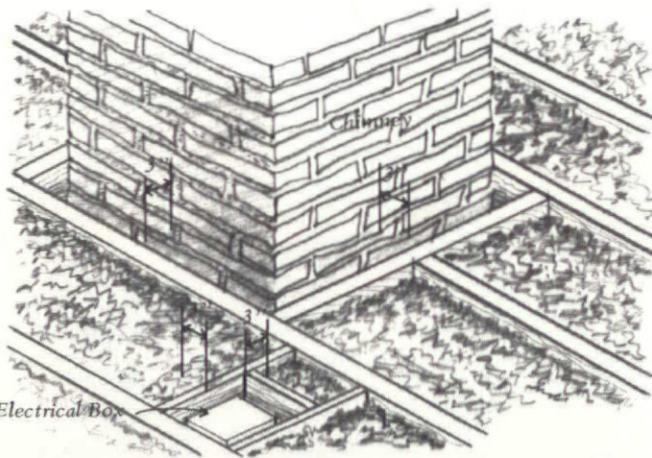
PULLEY SLOTS are a serious source of air leakage. The Anderson Pulley Seal remedies the problem. Made of flexible plastic with a self-sealing surface, the pulley seal is unobtrusive, installs easily, and doesn't interfere with operation of the window. It really works!

STORM WINDOWS are to my mind a necessity from a preservation standpoint. (See box.)

Old House Insulation



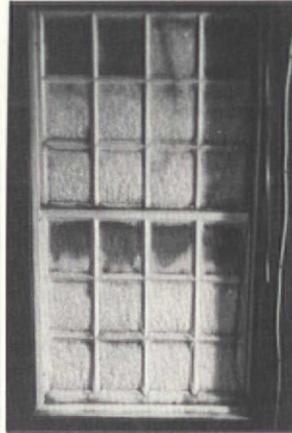
ATTIC OR CEILING insulation is a must. Fiberglass batts install easily if the attic is unfloored. Lay the batts, vapor barrier down, between the joists. Butt them tightly together. If the joist spacing is uneven or other than 16" or 24" on center, try using blown or poured insulation. It will provide more effective coverage than pieced-together batts. Dam around chimneys and electrical boxes (allow 3" clearance).



ATTIC VENTILATION (to allow water vapor to escape before it condenses) is usually provided for at gable ends. Metal vents are readily available in a variety of shapes and sizes. But for a period house, it's much more sensitive to fashion a wooden-slat vent (screened on the inside to keep bugs out) that matches the existing trim.

METAL SOFFIT VENTS, ridge vents, and roof vents are easy to find, though I'd avoid using the latter on an old house. (They will alter the exterior appearance somewhat.) Adequate attic ventilation is a must, however, even if it means installing metal vents. Depending on conditions, requirements vary from 150 to 300 square feet of attic space per square foot of vent. Check this out locally.

Storm Windows

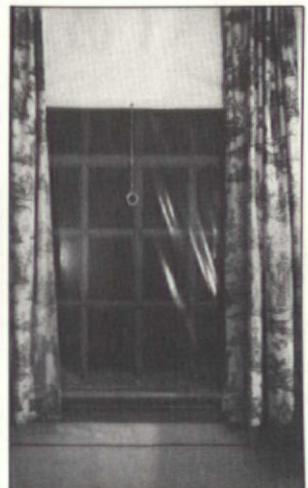


TRADITIONALLY, storm windows have been installed on the outside of a house to protect the prime window from winter weather—rain, snow, wind, and sleet. Their energy-saving value is chiefly related to conduction. They create a dead air space and slow heat loss through the main window. They are not meant to be completely airtight; in fact, they have weep holes at the bottom to allow moisture to escape.

THE OLD-FASHIONED wood storm is more efficient than modern aluminum triple tracks — wood is a much better insulator than metal. Wood storms are less convenient, though; they are inoperable, and they have to be put up and taken down every year. While I prefer wood storms, aluminum storms will protect your windows and are perfectly acceptable for old houses according to the Secretary of the Interior's Preservation Guidelines. (They come anodized or enamelled in several colors now; so avoid the raw aluminum look.)

LATELY, I've become convinced that interior storms are the best bet for saving energy. I recommend them even if you already have storms on the outside. The product I'm most familiar with, having assembled and installed them on several hundred homes, consists of a rigid aluminum frame, called Bailey or "C" sash, with pile weatherstripping, and either glass or .100 acrylic (a better insulator) in the gasketed frame. Corners can be mitered or square with plastic corners that press in. They're easy to make and can be mounted either on top of the window casing or recessed against the stop within the jamb.

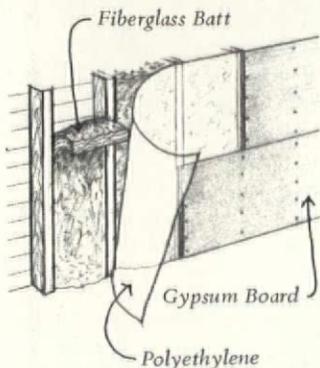
WHEN properly installed, interior storms are completely airtight. They eliminate condensation (the primary cause of window deterioration). They're easily removable, so you can take them down during warm-weather periods.



Heat-shrunk plastic sheet, or "poor man's storm."

Wall Insulation?

FEW WEATHERIZATION ISSUES cause as much debate as whether or not to blow insulation into the walls of a house without a vapor barrier. While there is no pat answer to this question (with success or failure depending on the construction of the house, the climate, how well the job is done, and other variables), on the whole, I'm a firm advocate of the process. I've seen dramatic differences in fuel bills and comfort with relatively few problems in hundreds of houses insulated in this way.



IN COLD CLIMATES, wall insulation is a cost-effective weatherization measure. If your house has a wet basement or crawlspace, unvented bathroom or kitchen, a clothes dryer vented indoors, or exterior moisture problems caused by plants too close to the house, broken gutters, etc., don't insulate. Remedy all moisture problems before blowing the insulation in. After correcting

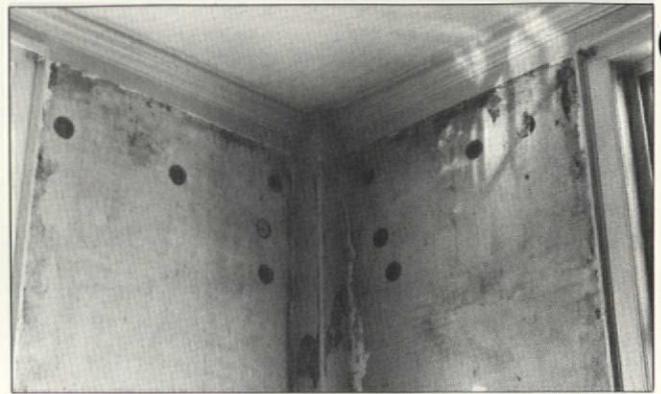
these problems, paint interior surfaces (after caulking) with a vapor barrier paint followed by an oil-base primer or finish coat.

SEVERAL KINDS of blown-in insulation are available; fiberglass, rock wool, and cellulose are the most common. Cellulose is the most popular because of its lower cost, superior packing properties, and fire resistance (Class 1). It will retain moisture and lose some of its insulating value as a result, but if you've remedied all moisture problems, this will be a negligible factor.

BLOWING INSULATION is not a do-it-yourself project, even though you can rent blowing machines, buy bags of insulation, and attempt the job yourself. You're much better off hiring a reliable contractor, after getting several bids and checking out references, preferably on houses of similar age and framing construction as your own. Understanding framing makes for a good insulation job.

STANDARD PRACTICE calls for drilling holes (1-2" diameter) in each wall cavity every forty inches vertically. Insulation is blown into the holes, the holes are plugged, filled, and primed. If properly done, the work will be nearly invisible.

A BETTER METHOD on clapboard or shingle-sided homes is to carefully remove courses of siding and replace them after blowing. This enables the contractor to probe for hidden obstructions (knee braces, firestops, etc.), and makes for a better looking job. It also gives you an opportunity to check the work for voids and proper pack. Cellulose should be densely compacted in the wall so that there will be little settlement. If properly executed, the insulation will not fall out even if you remove the siding.



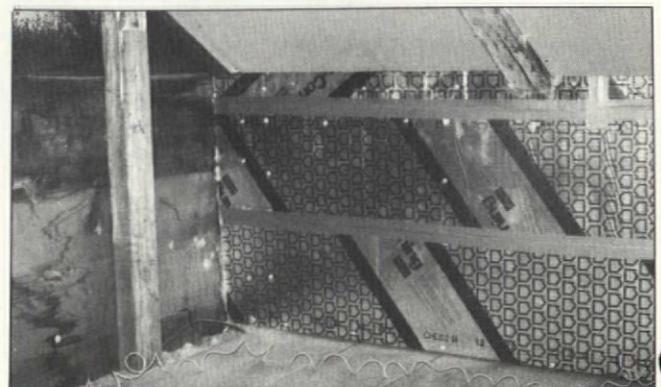
Another option: If there's a lot of plaster damage to be repaired, consider blowing in the insulation from the inside.

A Word Or Two About Retrofitting

ALL OF THIS ASSUMES that you are dealing with the original walls, ceilings, and exterior siding which, alas, is not always the case where neglected old houses are concerned. While wishing to preserve original material, it's often necessary to remove deteriorated plaster and lath or to replace hopelessly deteriorated siding. This makes it easy to insulate with fiberglass.

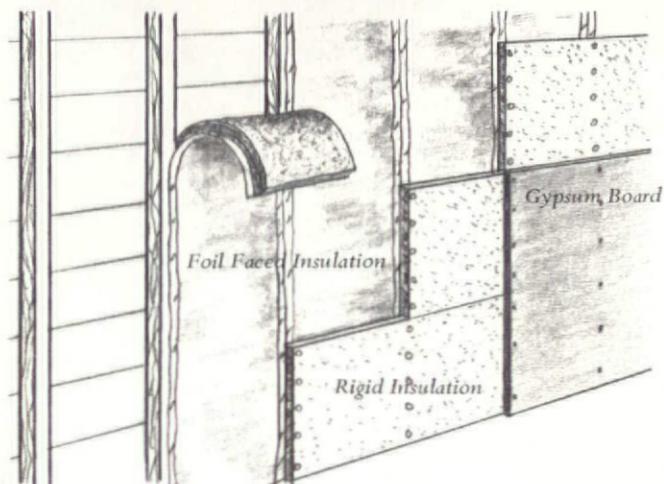
IF THE STUD SPACING is irregular, use unfaced fiberglass, tightly fitted (it's okay to compress it a bit) and install a polyethylene (plastic) vapor barrier over it (on the inside) taping all seams, including floor and ceiling, and electrical boxes with duct tape. Then install Sheetrock or rock lath.

IF YOU HAVE narrow stud cavities (many pre-1840 houses have less than three inches), or plank walls with no cavities, consider installing rigid foil-faced insulation, such as Thermax or Energy Shield, beneath the inside walls. If you have a narrow wall cavity, fill it with fiberglass batts first, then fasten the rigid insulation to the face of the studs with two-inch roofing nails. If you're installing it over plank walls, fir it 1 inch away from the wall to provide an air space. One caution: Rigid insulation releases toxic fumes when burned. Local codes may require it be covered with 5/8" Sheetrock.



Rigid insulation covered (partially) by Sheetrock.

RIGID INSULATION comes in several thicknesses from 1/2" to 2". With the seams properly taped, it forms a very effective vapor barrier (making plastic unnecessary). It has an R value of about 8 per inch, so it's ideal where space is limited. Although you may have to deepen your window jambs, it's worth the extra work in comfort and fuel savings. Do not, however, use it as exterior sheathing. It's a great vapor barrier and will trap moisture in your walls. If you're going to re-side, wrap the exterior in Tyvek, a tough, moisture-permeable sheeting that reduces air infiltration. Siding is simply nailed on top of it.



The Heating Plant

LAST, BUT FAR FROM LEAST, we come to the furnace itself. This is an area for a specialist, of course, and I can't pretend to be one. But there are a few observations I'd like to make.

ANNUAL CLEANING and tuning of your furnace or boiler saves fuel and headaches down the pike. When you have this done, request an efficiency test and have the technician explain the results to you. You may find the old monster worth replacing. If it's less than 75% efficient, investing in a new burner, (a Beckett, for example) could raise the efficiency to the 80-85% range, and pay for itself quickly in a large old house. If your furnace is on its last legs, you should look into the new generation of super-efficient (90-95%) heating plants that waste so little heat that they require only plastic (PVC) stacks (check local codes). They're more expensive than conventional units, but worth investigating.

IF YOU HAVE TAKEN any or several of the measures discussed in this article since your furnace was last tested, you may be able to have the nozzle size on your burner reduced (on oil-fired furnaces). Nozzles are rated in gallons per hour consumed, and a reduction in nozzle size of 1/2 gph after weatherization is common.

We wish to thank John Obed Curtis for his assistance in preparing this article. John directs the curatorial department at Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts.

The Wall-Insulation Controversy

THE PHONE RINGS one morning: a subscriber with a technical question. She explains, "Last year I had insulation blown into the wall cavities of my house. The local utility company helped arrange for the work. I've never had a problem with the exterior of my home, and it was just painted three years ago. Now, paint is blistering off the clapboards in several areas and some of the plugs that fill the holes they drilled have popped out. The utility company has been very sympathetic; they even offered to fix the problem. But they want me to tell them how to fix it. In the meantime, water is entering my house through the popped plugs."

WE'VE HEARD many similar stories. That's why we've always recommended against blown-in insulation as a first step in weatherization. Blown-in insulation will only be a cost-effective investment if you've taken all of the other steps outlined in this article. You have to ask yourself: "If I've done all I can to eliminate air infiltration; if I've tightened the windows and installed storms; if I've added attic insulation and bought a few nice sweaters, will it still be cost-effective to pay a contractor to insulate the wall cavities?" In harsh environments, the answer is probably "yes." The payback will take a while (but you'll be more comfortable in the meantime), and there is some risk involved.

ANDY WALLACE comes out as a strong advocate of blown-in insulation, especially for free-standing, wood-frame houses in harsh environments. (His own house is located in a wind-blown valley in Upstate New York.) But if you read closely, you'll see that he has the same concerns as OHJ.

ANDY POINTS OUT the importance of eliminating all moisture problems first, providing ventilation (particularly in kitchens and baths), using a vapor-barrier paint, caulking thoroughly, and hiring a qualified contractor.



One possible consequence of blown-in insulation.

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Restoration Products

Reviewed by Eve Kahn



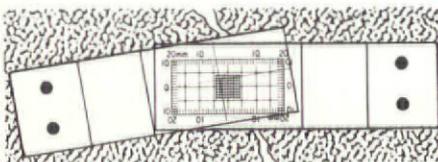
Slate Look-Alike

There is a substitute for slate shingles: reinforced-cement shingles that approximate the look of slate, but are lighter and one-third the cost. (Even though the biggest cost in a major roofing job is labor, the saving in materials may be important.)

The manufacturer, Atlas International Building Products, claims that cement shingles can last "indefinitely," and they offer a 30-year guarantee (Vermont slate lasts 75 to 100 years or more). AIBP's asbestos-fiber cement shingles come in black, red, grey, and green, and cost around \$400 per square, installed (or \$165 to \$180 loose). They won't curl; they

resist chipping, and weigh about half as much as real slate. Their colors are integral, which means that if one does chip, or is cut to fit a tight space, it shows the same color throughout.

AIBP provides a booklet with complete installation instructions. The small amount of asbestos in the shingles, by the way, is encapsulated and not considered a danger. AIBP sells through distributors (call for the location of the nearest dealer). Individual contractors can call and order the shingles, although they then pay shipping costs. If you're willing to wait until a full truckload of orders is going to your area, shipping

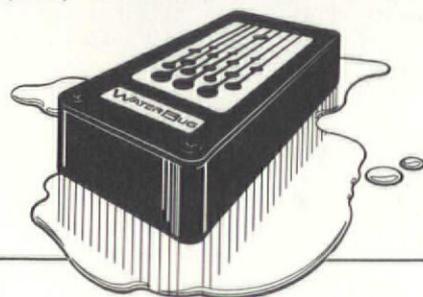


Water & Crack Gauges

To keep track of your house's (expanding?) cracks, PRG sells a telltale called Avongard. It's an acrylic gauge that can be applied with screws, nails, or epoxy and left on the crack year-round. It has two halves that pivot around the center, which is positioned atop the crack's center. If the crack moves or expands, the two halves will move, and the center gauge will measure the extent of the movement. Avongard is accurate to one millimeter. Each unit costs \$13, postpaid; you can buy ten or more at a discount.

PRG also makes a water detector called the Waterbug.

Its alarm sounds when the unit touches water, but it doesn't react to high humidity or surface dampness (which makes for fewer false alarms). It's especially useful for basements, where humidity isn't a concern but flooding is. Complete with batteries, the pocket-size Waterbug (about four inches long and an inch wide) costs \$24.95 postpaid. PRG also sells many other useful gauges and measuring devices for old-house owners, and they send out free brochures and product bulletins. PRG, 5619 Southampton Dr., Dept. OHJ, Springfield, VA 22151. (703) 323-1407.



costs are much lower. For a free brochure, contact AIBP, 5600 Hochelaga St., Dept. OHJ, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H1N 1W1. (800) 361-4962.

Latex-Based Chinking

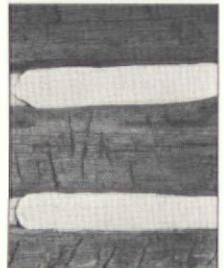


If you own a log home, you've undoubtedly experienced mortar or chinking failure. A low-maintenance alternative to real mortar is Perma-Chink, a latex-based sealant that hardens to a strong yet flexible consistency. It remains airtight, even if the logs settle; it's reasonably easy to apply, and you can apply it directly on top of failed mortar. It comes in two shades of grey plus white, beige, and tan, so you can approximate the color of your old mortar.

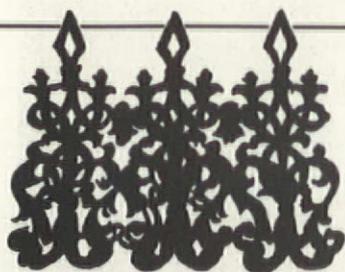
Perma-Chink costs \$66 for a five-gallon pail, and the manufacturer also sells the tools you'll need to apply it: caulking guns, application bags (the material is applied like cake frosting), plus the Styrofoam-like backer board.

Purists should note: Once this stuff cures, it is difficult if not impossible to remove (it permeates the surrounding wood).

Perma-Chink Systems' free information packet includes application instructions and charts for estimating quantities and cost. The company sells both direct to consumers and through dealers. Perma-Chink Systems, 17455 NE 67th Ct., Dept. OHJ, Redmond, WA 98052. (206) 885-6050. Also, 1605 Prosser Rd., Dept. OHJ, Knoxville, TN 37914. (615) 524-7343.



for Victorian buildings



Cast-Iron Cresting

To replace the iron roof cresting that some Victoriana-phobe tore off your roof, Robinson Iron offers a line of six stock crestings that are exact duplicates of originals. Or, if you know what yours actually looked like, Robinson can re-create it from either a fragment or a photo.

The minimum order of stock cresting is \$150. The panels range in length from 16 to 28

inches, and in price from \$21 to \$41 each (so your minimum order is between four and seven feet, depending upon which model you choose). Two of the six patterns also have matching posts. If you need a specific length, Robinson can cut panels to fit (or you can have that done on site). Delivery time is four to six weeks; expect to wait up to eight weeks for custom work.

As for installation, most of the panels come with lugs at the bottom so that you can attach them with lag screws. If you have any questions

Cresting, far left, costs \$35 for a 23-in.-wide panel, 18 in. high; below left, \$28 for a 28 1/4-in.-wide panel, also 18 in. high. Right, the Oswego model comes in panels 28 in. wide, 25 in. high, for \$41 each. Posts are \$38.



about installation, Robinson will try to answer them over the phone (ask for Scott Howell), but it's best to ask also the advice of a roofer who's experienced with metals. The company sends out information with photos of the designs and a price list. Robinson Iron, Robinson Rd., Dept. OHJ, Alexander City, AL 35010. (205) 329-8484.

for post-Victorian buildings

Craftsman-esque Rug

This rug, with its border of oversized flowers, would fit well into any early 20th-century house, from Craftsman right through the 1930s. It's part of Couristan's "Symphony" line, and there are two color schemes available: shades of beige and shades of powder blue. There are three sizes: 4'1" x 5 1/2', 5 1/2' x 8', and 8'3" x 11'2". Suggested prices vary, but the average, for the 5-1/2'-x-8' rug, is \$469 on the East Coast, \$485 in the West. Contact the importer for the address of the nearest dealer: Couristan, 919 Third Ave., Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10022. (212)371-4200.

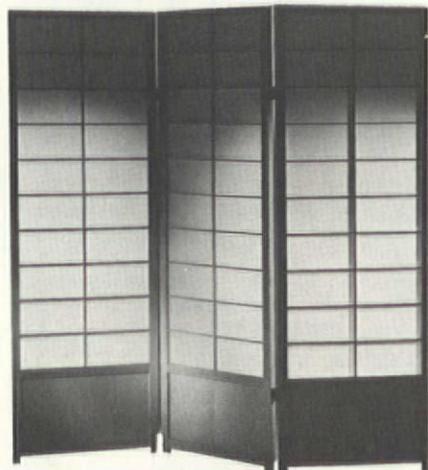


Shoji Screens

The influence of Asia has persisted in American interior decoration ever since wealthy colonists covered their walls with Chinese wallpaper. In the 1870s and '80s, the Anglo-Japanese style interpreted Japanese motifs. But it was not until the early 20th century that entire interiors were done in an Oriental-influenced fashion. Owners of some Craftsman and most Japanese bungalows, and architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, strove to imitate the uncluttered lines and simple, low furniture of Japan.

Shoji screens have come back in vogue, and they make very appropriate room dividers, doors, or freestanding screens for these Craftsman or Japanese homes. Miya Shoji has

been making Shoji screens for some 35 years. (Don't expect real rice paper; what you will get is fiberglass or laminated rice paper that has the irregular translucence of paper but not the fragility.) Frames are of basswood and, for an extra charge, they can be customized with any finish you like. Miya Shoji also sells frames and material separately so you can assemble the screen yourself. Prices range from \$90 for a 24-by-36-inch frame with fiberglass to \$360 for a 48-by-96-inch frame with laminated rice paper. Call or write for a free flyer: Miya Shoji & Interiors Inc., 107 W. 17th St., Dept. OHJ, New York, NY 10011. (212) 243-6774.



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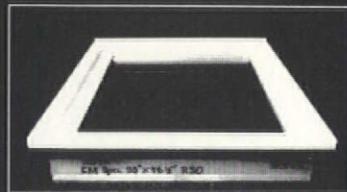
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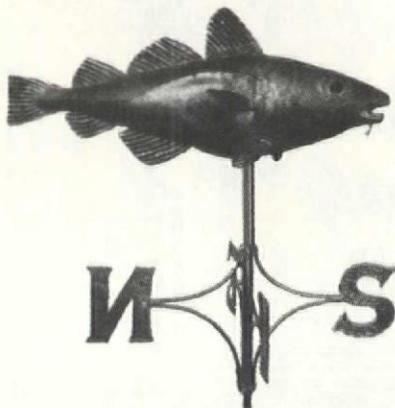
Copper Weathervanes

Travis Tuck's first weathervane, made in 1974, was in the shape of a great white shark. It was used, not surprisingly, in the movie "Jaws." (You can spot it atop the house of the shark hunter, Quint.) Since then Travis, trained as a sculptor, has branched out into weathervanes of all sorts, like sheep, whales, mice, osprey, geese, and old standards like weathercocks and arrows.

He offers six stock designs

and any kind of custom work. The vanes are handmade by the old-fashioned repousse method, which involves hammering the metal over a concave block of wood. The results are three-dimensional copper pieces that can truly be considered sculpture. Tuck also engineers each piece so that it really points into the wind.

If you balk at the prices -- from \$1200 to \$2100 -- keep in mind that these not only took more than 40 hours each to create, but also that they'll become part of the legacy of



your house. All vanes have bases with mounting brackets and the four points of the compass. And in case you love your vane too much to leave it outside, Travis sells an indoor display base for \$150.

Packing, shipping, and insurance cost \$55; or you can pick up your vane at the studio on Martha's Vineyard and get a chance to see the artist at work. He sends out a color brochure and price list for \$1. Travis Tuck, Metal Sculptor, Box 1832H, Dept. OHJ, Martha's Vineyard, MA 02568. (617) 693-3914.

Colonial Kit Furniture

In 1949, Francis Hagerty had what was then a radical idea: selling kit furniture by mail. His goal was to offer quality reproductions of colonial furniture at reasonable prices. That's what Cohasset Colonials, the company he founded, still does; it's now run by Francis's son John. Some examples from the catalog: A bowback Windsor armchair kit sells for \$198, a four-poster canopy bed kit for \$435. Cohasset recently started offering its collection in finished, assembled

form, but the kits are still tempting -- the assembled pieces cost about twice as much, yet the kits require no more than three or four hours to put together.

Decorators will be pleased to know that the company has also branched out into selling lighting fixtures, fabrics, paints, stains, bed hangings,

curtains, and pewter accessories, though their specialty is still furniture. There's even a "Decorator Pack": coordinated fabric samples, paint chips, a catalog of room settings, and price charts. Cohasset also offers customers free decorating consultations by mail.

The colorful catalog (\$2 for two years) shows several colonial room settings, and it names the museum where the originals of its reproductions can be found. The Decorator Pack costs \$9, applicable toward fabric purchases of \$35 or more. Cohasset Colonials, 646GX Ship St., Dept. OHJ, Cohasset Harbor, MA 02025. (617) 383-0110.

This birdcage Windsor armchair sells in kit form for \$155 (assembly time: two hours) and pre-assembled for \$324. The four-poster, queen-size bed is \$459 in kit form, \$819 pre-assembled (full: kit, \$435; \$798, pre-assembled).



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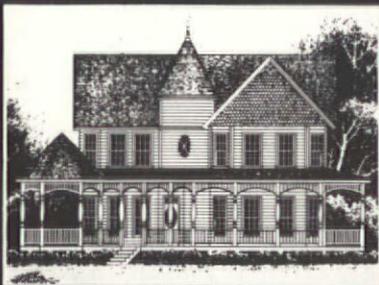
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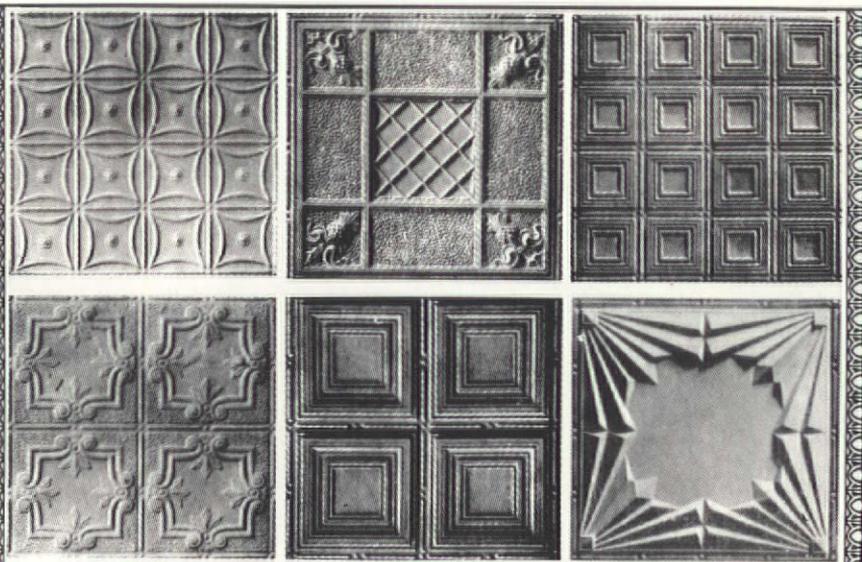
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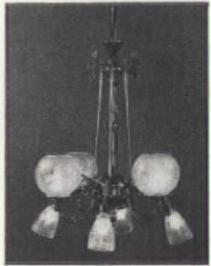
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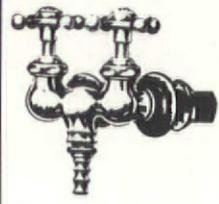


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Name That House

Q: CAN YOU IDENTIFY the house in this photo? I believe it to be of the "Gothic Revival Dormer" style, but I don't know for sure. The local real estate people call it a "Colonial." Of course, they label any pre-1930 structure as Colonial. The house was built in 1803 and is located on the waterfront in Mattapoisett, Mass. There are other examples of this style in the area, including several on the main street in Plymouth.

-- Bob Whittier, Duxbury, Mass.

A: IF YOU'RE CERTAIN about the date of the house (1803), those dormers aren't original. It looks like a full Cape (Cape Cod house), to which gabled dormers were added, most likely during the Gothic Revival period -- probably around 1860.

Heat Gun Hypothesis

Q: IF THIS QUESTION is as hopelessly ignorant as I suspect it might be, please don't use my name in print. I'd been stripping interior wood with a heat gun for some time before I read the relevant articles in back issues of OHJ. I notice that you advise against using the heat gun once you get down to the varnish level. Before I read that, I had been cheerfully using the heat gun on varnish with great success. Why do you recommend chemicals at this stage?

-- Kay Denmark, New York, N.Y.

A: GOOD QUESTION. We've found that heat makes a gummy mess of varnish and is ineffective in removing it. That's why we recommend chemicals. If you're having success with the heat gun, great! We'll bet you still have to use some chemicals for the final cleanup, though.

Stripping In The Tub

Q: AT SOME TIME IN THE PAST, the bathroom wall tile in my house was painted over. What is the best way to remove the paint without damaging the tiles?

-- M.C. Hennessy, Annapolis, Md.

A: YOU SHOULD USE a thick semi-paste paint remover such as BIX Tuff Job or Zip-Strip. Just flow it on and remove the sludge with plastic scrapers -- metal scrapers can scratch the tile. Use a plastic brush to scrub out the grout lines. Clorox will help whiten them. Unfortunately, the grout may never come back to its original color; you can dig it out and regrout. (See "Renewing Old Bathroom Tile," March 1984 OHJ.) Remember to wear a respirator and keep the bathroom well ventilated when you strip.

Substitute Shakes

Q: THE WOOD-SHINGLE ROOF on our dear old 1830 house is in pretty bad shape. While it's been patched and treated several times, replacement is inevitable. Problem is, there's a local ordinance against re-roofing with wood shingles because of the fire hazard. We've seen some fire-resistant substitute shingles that are supposed to look like wood, but we think they're poor imitations. Are there any "artificial" wood shingles that look like the real thing?

-- John Sargent, Bronxville, N.Y.

A: NO SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS have been able to perfectly imitate the natural, textural variety of wood. However, fire-retardant wood shingles are available and are permitted by many municipalities (check this out locally). The best looking imitations were asbestos-cement shakes; unfortunately the company that manufactured them ceased production in the 1940s.

Perhaps the best product currently available is Ludowici-Celadon's clay tile shake. Their "Georgian" line has been used to imitate wood shakes in Colonial Williamsburg. From a distance, only the most astute observer will be suspicious. They do have the disadvantage of being heavy (1400 lbs./square) and quite expensive. For more information, write to Ludowici-Celadon, PO Box 69, Dept. OHJ, New Lexington, OH 43764. (614) 342-1995.

Hendricks Tile Manufacturing makes a steel-reinforced concrete "shingle" which is also heavy, but cheaper than the tile. It too is a pretty good facsimile of wood. Hendricks Tile Mfg., PO Box 34406, Dept. OHJ, Richmond, VA 23234. (804) 275-8926.

Your other option is to buy high-quality, composition (asphalt) shingles that don't seek to imitate wood, but are compatible in color and texture. Look to the top-of-the-line shingles -- they're only a little more expensive than average, and they look better and last longer. Additional advantages: They don't add weight, and it's easy to find a roofer to install them. (For additional information, see "Substitute Roofings," April 1983 OHJ).

General interest questions from subscribers will be answered in print. The Editors can't promise to reply to all questions personally—but we try. Send your questions with sketches or photos to Questions Editor, The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

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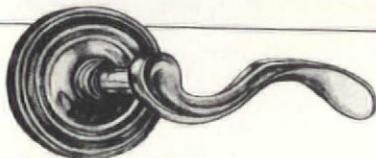
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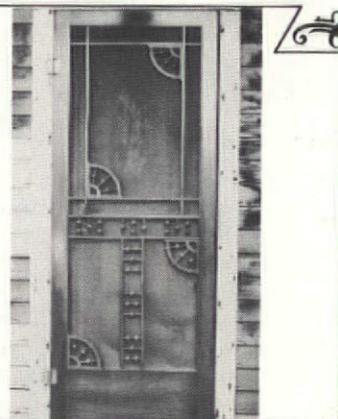
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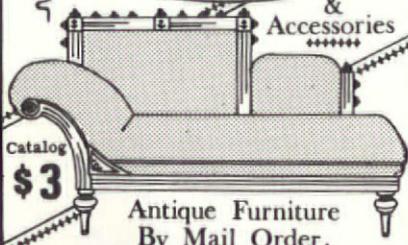
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19TH ANNUAL OXFORD ANTIQUE SHOW and Sale, Oxford Firehouse, Oxford, Maryland. Sponsored by Oxford Fire Co. & Oxford Museum. Fri., Sept. 26: Noon to 9 p.m. Sat., Sept. 27: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sun., Sept. 28: Noon to 6 p.m. General admission, \$2.

THE SHOWHOUSE IN SWAMPSCOTT, an ocean-front estate on the North Shore. This 19th-century home & gardens will showcase the work of 30+ interior designers & landscape architects from Boston. To benefit North Shore Jewish Community Center. Sept. 8 to Sept. 28. Admission: \$10; \$7 for groups of 20 or more. For information, call Nancy Fromson, (617) 599-0324.

HISTORIC CHARLOTTE INC. presents the 7th Annual Maple City Historic Tour in Charlotte, Mich. on Oct. 5, 1986 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. 12 hist. homes & bldgs. will be featured. J. Edgerly, 733 N. Cochran, Charlotte, MI 48813.

ELLCOTT CITY, MD — Country Fair & Antique Auction. Sat., Sept. 20 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (rain date Sept. 21). Free admission. Country crafts, antiques, scarecrow making, pumpkin painting, crafts demonstrations, music, food, & entertainment. (301) 992-2483 or 992-2323.

GUIDED TOURS of the Near Westside Historic District, Elmira, N.Y. during the 6th annual Heritage Day Festival. Sat., Sept. 13, 10 to 4, W. Church St. Arts & crafts dealers, food, music. (607) 733-4924.

HERITAGE HOMES OF PETALUMA, 1986 Walking Tour, Sept. 21. Tour 9 impeccably restored Vict. homes in a charming setting. Also wine tasting & art exhibit. Heritage Homes of Petaluma, PO Box 2152, Petaluma, CA 94952.

BELLINGHAM, WA — 10th annual tour of historic homes. Sat. & Sun., Sept. 27 & 28. Self-guided tour begins 11 a.m. on Sat. & 12 noon on Sun., runs until 4 p.m. both days. Features 8 turn-of-the-century homes in Nat'l Register neighborhood. Tickets: \$4 adults, \$3 children & senior citizens. Proceeds to go to neighborhood restoration projects. Megan Davidson, (206) 671-0664 or Barb Visser, (206) 671-5349.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY CONFERENCE: "Breathe Easier: Indoor Air Quality Problems & Solutions." Oct. 10 & 11, Cleveland State Univ., Cleveland, Ohio. Housing Resource Center, 1820 W. 48th St., Cleveland, OH 44102. (216) 281-4663.

PHILADELPHIA'S RESTORATION FAIR — 3rd annual trade fair to introduce homeowners to regional & national restoration specialists & suppliers. Lecture program on maintenance. Sept. 13, 11 to 4, First Bank of U.S., 3rd & Chestnut Sts. Free admission. Sponsored by Maxwell Mansion & Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia. (215) 735-4701.

2ND ANNUAL BED & BREAKFAST TOUR — Sept. 20, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., w/ champagne reception. Assoc. of B&B, 82 Armstrong, Eureka Springs, AR 72632. (501) 253-6767.

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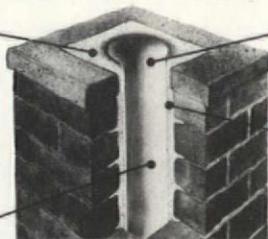
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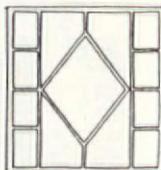
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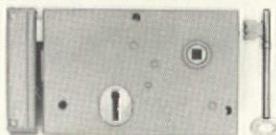
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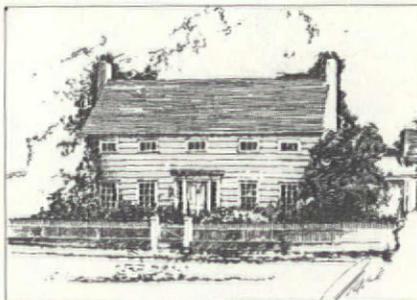
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ADVERTISERS' INDEX

AA Abbingdon 349
 A.F. Schwerd 315
 Abatron. 356
 Ahren's Chimney Technique . 354
 Anthony Wood Products. . . 317
 Antiquaria. 351
 Ball & Ball. 317
 Besco Plumbing. 354
 Bradbury & Bradbury 317
 Brass Light Gallery 353
 Brian F. Leo Custom Hardware 351
 Carlisle Hauling 351
 Classic Accents 317
 Crawford's Old House Store . 351
 Decorator's Supply Co. 347
 E.T. Moore, Jr. Company . . . 319
 Historic Housefitters 351
 Historical Replications 349
 J.R. Burrows & Co. 353
 London Country 351
 M-H Lamp & Fan Company . 356
 Marvin Windows 347
 Midwest Wood Products . . . 354
 Mountain Lumber Company . 353
 Muralo Company. 349
 Nixalite of America. 353
 Oak Crest Manufacturing. . . 351

Oregon Wooden Screen Door Company 351
 Perma Ceram Enterprises. . . 351
 Rejuvenation House Parts . . 319
 Roy Electric Company 349
 Samuel B. Sattler & Co. . . . 356
 Scalandre . Inside Front Cover
 Shuttercraft. 352
 Silverton Victorian Millworks 354
 Smith-Cornell 352
 Steptoe & Wife 354
 The Joinery 347
 Transylvania Mountain Forge 352
 Vande Hey Raleigh Inside Back Cover
 Victorian Lighting Works . . 347
 Vintage Lumber 352
 Vintage Woodworks 351
 W.F. Norman Corp. 349
 Wes-Pine Millwork. 319

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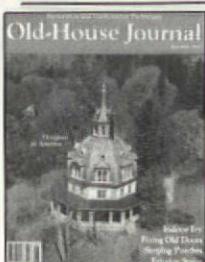
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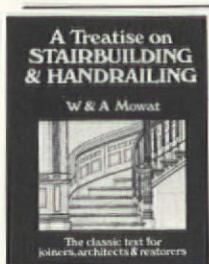
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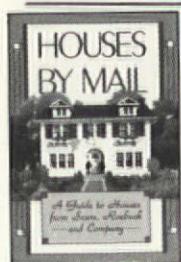


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The Strip Shop

There's a big difference in heat tools. Most hardware stores carry only plastic, "homeowner-grade" heat guns. The two heat tools below have proved best in tests conducted by the OHJ editors. Whether you're stripping clapboards, shingles, interior woodwork, trim, or furniture, they'll remove 98% of the paint. (A one-coat clean-up with chemical stripper removes paint residue plus any underlying shellac or varnish.)

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— Hal Peller

OHJ's editors have been conducting extensive tests on all the new plastic heat guns that have been advertised on TV. And we've come to the same conclusion as Hal Peller: The red, all-metal Master HG-501 takes off the most paint in the shortest time.

Family Handyman magazine found the same thing. In test results reported in the March 1985 issue, the *Family Handyman* reviewer said of the Master HG-501: "It did the best job for me."

Although *The Old-House Journal* has been selling the Master HG-501 for several years, we have no ties to Master. (We are free to sell *any* heat gun — or no heat gun at all.) We offer the Master HG-501 because it is an industrial tool that is not generally available to home-

owners. For our readers who want the best, we'll continue to make available the all-metal HG-501 by mail.

THE HG-501 vs. TV HEAT GUNS

In our tests, we found three major differences between the Master HG-501 and the mass-market TV heat guns: (1) the phrase "high-impact corrosion resistant material" means "plastic." The HG-501, on the other hand, has an industrial-quality cast-aluminum body that will stand a lot of rugged use. (2) With cheaper heat guns, heat output drops off after a while — which means slower paint stripping. The HG-501 runs at a steady efficient temperature, hour after hour. (3) When a cheaper heat gun is dead, it's dead. By contrast, the long-lasting ceramic heating element in the HG-501 is *replaceable*. When it eventually burns out, you can put a new one in yourself for \$8. (OHJ maintains a stock of replacement elements.)

Also, with the HG-501 you get two helpful flyers prepared by our editors: one gives hints and tips for stripping with heat; the other explains lead poisoning and fire hazards. OHJ is the *only* heat gun supplier to give full details on the dangers posed by lead-based paint.

HOW WE CAME TO SELL THE MASTER HG-501

The *Old-House Journal* created the market for paint stripping heat guns. Back in 1976, Patricia & Wilkie Talbert of Oakland, Calif., told us about a remarkable way they'd discovered to strip paint in their home: using an industrial tool called a heat gun. We published their letter. . . then were deluged with phone calls and letters from people who couldn't find this wonder tool, the HG-501.



Hal Peller, President — Allstrip, Inc. — Ridgewood, N.Y. — (718) 417-1571

Further investigation revealed that it was a tool meant for shrink-wrapping plastic packaging. The HG-501 was made by a Wisconsin manufacturer who wasn't interested in the retail market. So, as a reader service, *The Old-House Journal* became a mail-order distributor. Since then, more than 12,000 OHJ subscribers have bought the HG-501. . . and revolutionized the way America strips paint.

Specifications for the HG-501:

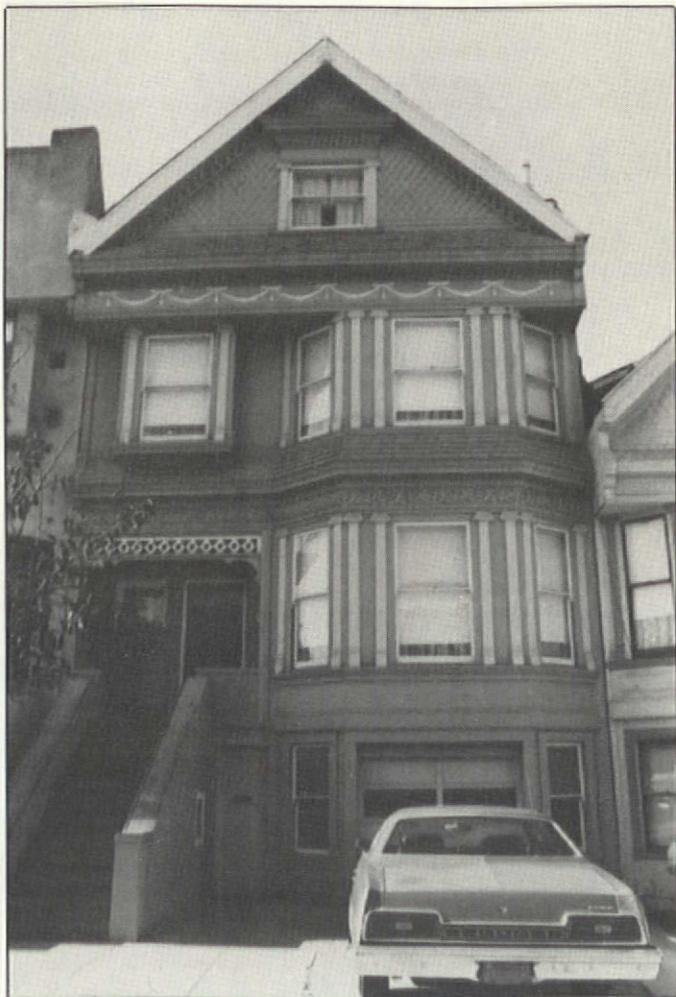
- Fastest, cleanest way to strip paint. Heat guns are NOT recommended for varnish, shellac, or milk paint.
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- Price: \$77.95 — including UPS shipping. Use Order Form in this issue.



The HG-501 blows hot air into carvings — causing paint to melt. The tool is ideal for stripping ornamental woodwork, and will strip flat work as well.

opinion...

Remuddling



SOMETIMES, in an old gangster movie, you'll hear the heavy threaten to put someone "in a cement kimono" -- an excellent way to eliminate troublemakers. We don't know who was troubled by the house pictured left above, but it's been dealt with as ruthlessly as any B-movie stoolie: Its character has been virtually destroyed by that stucco straightjacket. It was probably the twin to the house pictured above right; both were constructed around 1900 by Fernando Nelson, San Francisco's most prolific Victorian-era builder. Of course, these houses are neighbors, and that's the worst news of all. As you can see from the picture at left, this remuddling has done more than eliminate the beauty of one old house; it's compromised an entire street. (Our thanks to Linda and Wolfgang Liebelt of San Francisco for sending us these photographs.) -- Cole Gagne

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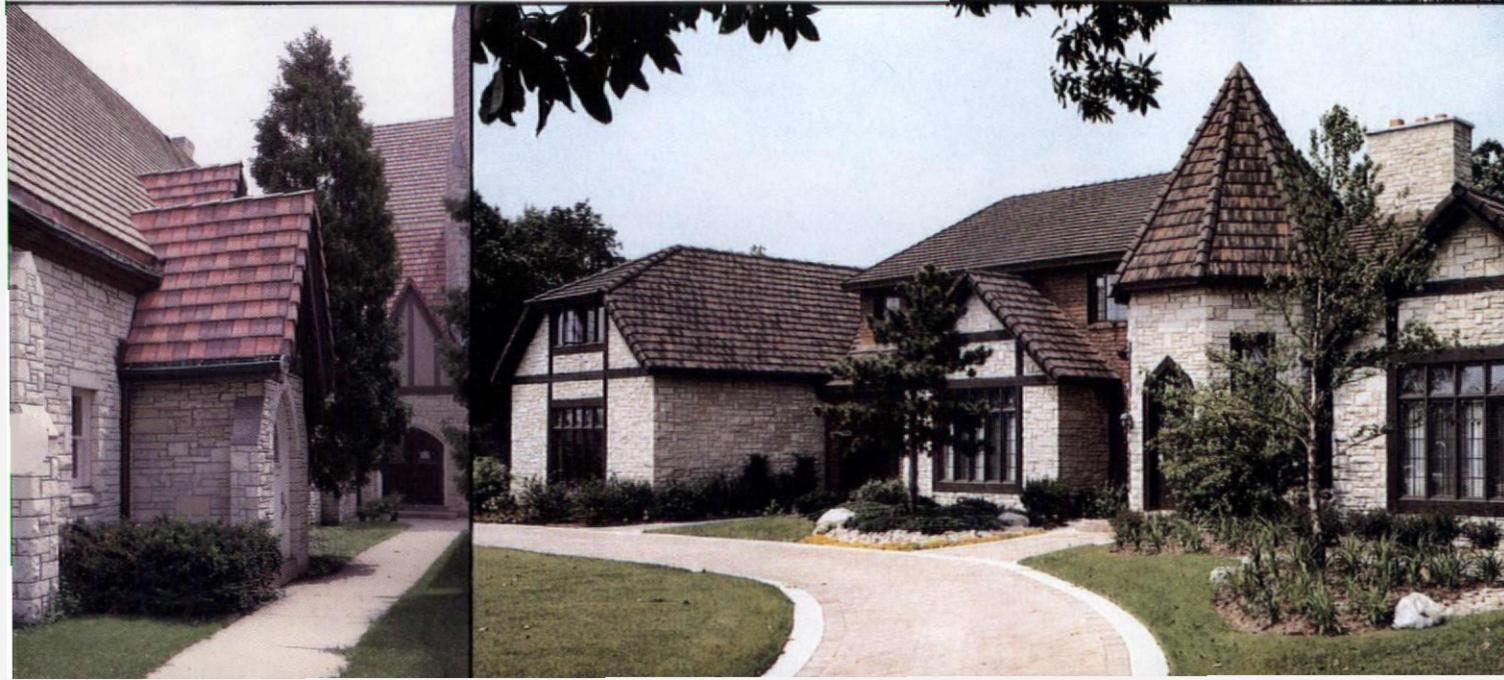
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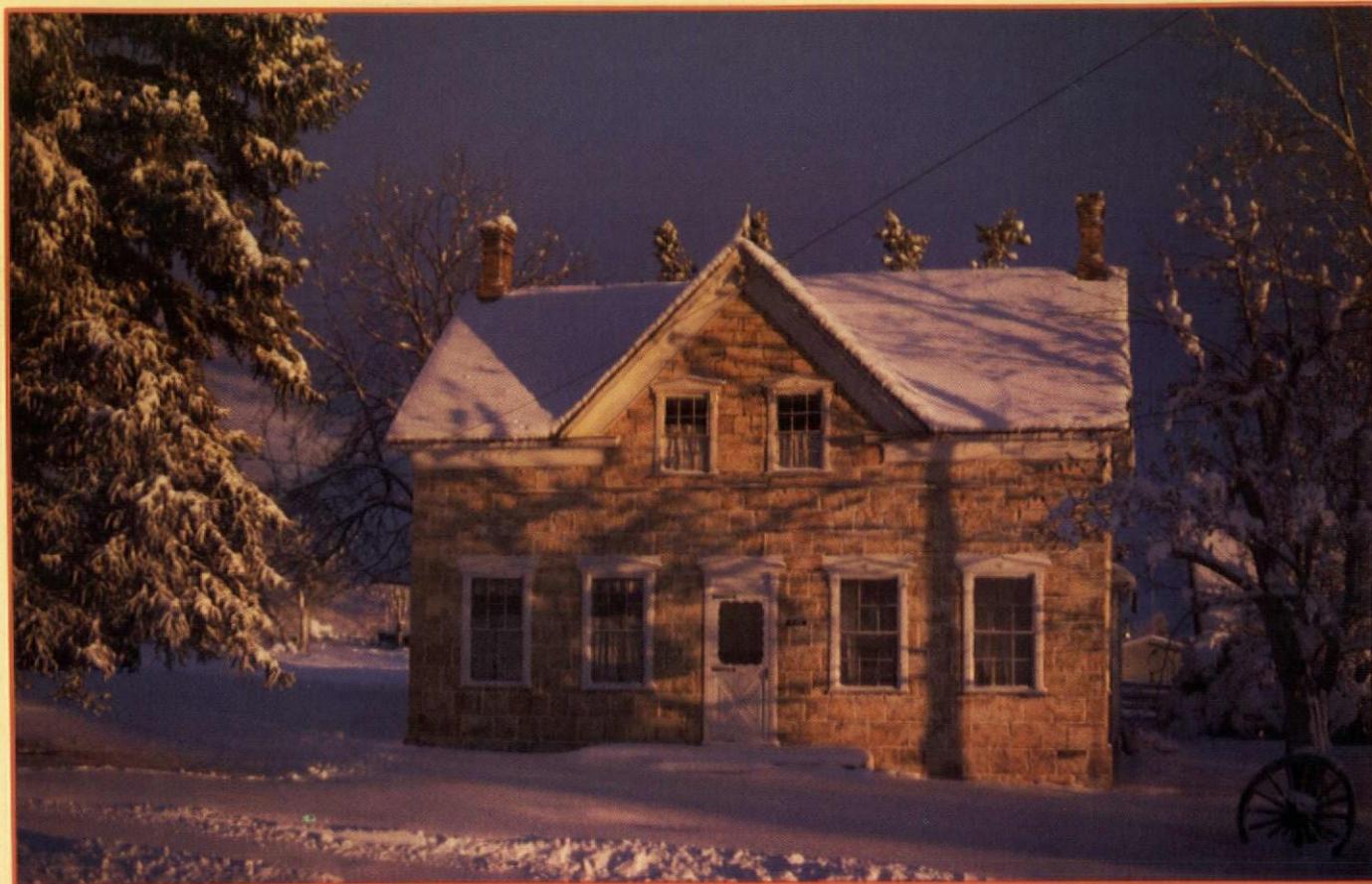
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Mormon Hall-Parlor House

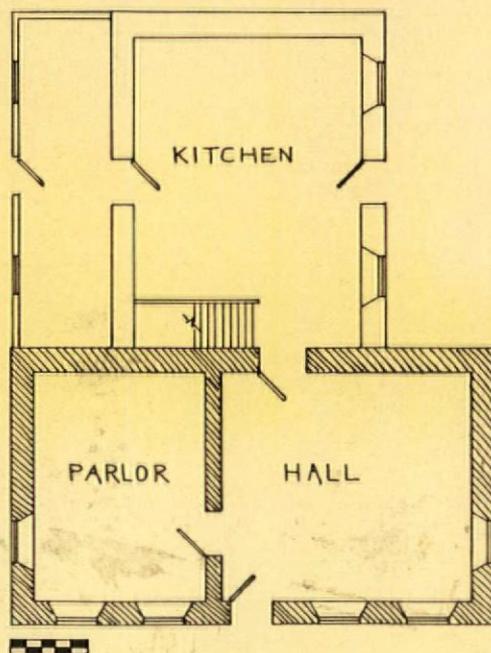
— submitted by Thomas Carter,
Utah Division of State History

Easily the most common 19th-century house type in the Mormon-settled Far West is the hall-parlor house. It can be found throughout Utah and in contiguous areas of Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and Wyoming. The hall-parlor form is recognized by its basic two-room plan and symmetrical three- or five-bay facade. (A kitchen wing is generally found at the rear.) Building materials vary: Stone and adobe were used frequently during the initial settlement period, but everywhere were replaced by brick by the 1880s. The Mormon hall-parlor house may be one, one-and-a-half, or two storeys. The one-and-a-half

storey height was particularly popular, and it commonly had wall dormers or a centrally-placed cross gable. Greek and Gothic motifs were freely employed — often on the same house.

The hall-parlor type is a post-medieval English form carried here during the colonial period. Although it remained a staple of American vernacular building for 200 years, by the early 19th century, it was gradually surpassed in popularity by the central-passage form. However, in the Mormon West between 1850 and 1890, the hall-parlor house enjoyed something of a revival, becoming common once again on the landscape.

Photo and drawing by Tom Carter,
3/10/82, of the John Blain house,
Spring City, Sanpete County, Utah.
Built circa 1875 of local oolite



limestone, the 1½ - storey design is dominated by the forward-facing gable. Greek and Gothic decorative details are freely mixed.