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Builder and musician Will Anderson (far left) uses an A-1 of help from the friends to raise a section of his new barn's timber frame. See "Out of the Woods," page 104.
By JOE CARRAS

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cover

Builder and musician Will Anderson paddles a paler house from a tree on his Vermont property, atop his new cedar frame barn, where he now stores a hoard of gleaming old tools left over from his American and more recent days in an ancient town, and even a portable sawmill to shape the structural timbers, posts and beams. For more on this project, see "Out of the Woods," p. 104. PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTA CLINIFF

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—BOB ADAM, *FOR MATHS HANDBOOK*



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When **JOHN MARCHESE** charts the evolution of a suburban housing crisis in New York's Hudson Valley into a full-size residence in "Time Pods" (p. 34), Marchese—who documented the struggle of his own Catskill house in *Remnants: A Father and Son Chronicle of Poverty and Redemption* (Knopf, \$24.95)—says he felt an intense debt year after year's support with homeowner David Cleveland. "We both understood that a project like this is all about taking a leap of faith," Marchese says. "You say to yourself, 'How hard can this be?' and just do it."

JOATHAN MILLS, a carpenter and furniture-maker turned writer, walks the reader through the demanding, often-reinvented, and expansion of a 1790 Cape Cod-style house in "Some Assembly Required" (p. 32). In fact, an avid student of architectural history and design, calls the strategy map of New England building construction a "topical racial studies" in architecture. "It was a rocky proposition, and I think the homeowners and their team pulled it off admirably," he says. The *Cognoscenti* readers, a former editor of *Wood Working*, is coauthoring a book about furniture of the Arts and Crafts movement, due out in 2003.



Photographer **BRUCE WEILER** brings out the solar side of a bird-headed man in this month's Tula ma Shop, "Finch Hammer" (p. 35). A few-minute vignette who captures antique carpenter and '50s wind-up toys, Weiler has an eye for the details that make similar items different, "Idiosyncrasy is fun to shoot," he says. "You have to work carefully with the lighting to reflect personalities, showing the curves and highlights of each object."

Weiler, who is based in Baltimore, Maryland, also photographed the "Wood Pioneers" feature in the November 2001 issue.

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ON THE JOB

Up the Warm Staircase

BY JORDAN REBO

When Richard Tishinsky, The Old House plumbing and heating expert, had to find a way to heat the 1801 Colonial Revival shown in the TV show's Men of the House project house, he wanted a system that would serve its five maple-veneer levels. The radiant heating going in on the first and second stories, where the ship floors were not worth salvaging, was inoperative under the boards. Installing the 3-inch-thick panels, which hold PEX tubing carrying warm water beneath the steps, would have damaged the maple and raised the boards higher than the nearby floors.

The three stairwell walls, which were going to be restored anyway, presented a location for the radiant heating that was more in keeping with the show's objective: to leave as many original details as possible. Installing the panels between the studs would also be a more effective solution because one of the three walls at the landing is at the front of the house and boasts a large arched window. "No matter how good the window is, the air around it can still get really cold, and most of the chill comes from the exterior wall," says Richard, pictured partly-dismantling the installation. "The walls are what would warm the inside and it's the best."

After foam insulation was sprayed on between the studs, plumbing and heating contractor Rich Bio put up the panels, making sure not to install any pipes higher than 4 feet off the ground. "Never put radiant panels above your belt buckle," Richard says. "That way you won't curdle the PEX when you go to hang a picture." Then subcontractors covered the whole system with wallboard and panels hiding the panels.

Richard likes the clean look, as well as the lovely temperature. "The wall system maintains the integrity of the classically designed staircase—the old boards remain intact, and there's no bareboard heater or radiator to clutter the view," he says. "It also helped us create a nice warm box around people who are either enjoying the view or just heading to another story."

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HOUSE CALLS WITH STEVE



Twice Is Nice

A couple plan their dream kitchen in two stages

BY HEATHER SMITH MAHARAAC

When it comes to kitchens, a lot of homeowners don't make the long view. "Many

people are locked into the idea that they'll renovate once, but in fact there will always be upgrading," says Cathy Guepin, "especially the longer you stay in a house." Cathy, an interior designer, speaks from experience. She and her husband, Rich, a contractor, have lived in the same Victorian era house in Seattle, Washington, for 24 years, and shepherded their kitchen through not one but two renovations. The bulk of the work and expense (about \$40,000) of the first renovation went toward reorganizing the floor plan. It involved a shaggy collection of rooms, they moved walls and doors, achieving an efficient, galley-style work zone and a gracious dining area. As the primary cook, live first there Cathy eliminated upper cabinets and installed drawers for everything: cut items and flour to rolling pastry cupboards for the rest, a move This Old House host Sam Thompson applauds. "Drawers accommodate people of all heights, allowing easy access. In addition, the metal has been moved kitchen is being spacey getting rid of the upper cabinet helps create that feeling."

Ten years later, the Guepins undertook their second renovation, upgrading appliances and making cosmetic alterations to produce the kitchen of their dreams. "With the first renovation," says Cathy, "we created what we could afford then—laminated countertops, jetted cabinets, and good but not great appliances." With new equipment. They upgraded to a cabinet-depth refrigerator because it could pass as a table end of the room. "Another smart move," says Steve. "If a particular appliance's dimensions are key to your plan, do what you can to afford it at the outset."

Though the \$30,000 expense of the second redo was significant, as Guepin was a small professional as appliances (refrigerator, oven, dishwasher) fairly slid into the space vacated by the old ones. A countertop and backdrop of golden hard limestone set the stage for a sophisticated new look. Existing cupboards, painted dark gray, complement the stone. But the best thing about the attractive kitchen, says Steve, is the carefully way the couple approached their goal. "They put their money into good design the first time around."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM WRIGHT



From an initial jumble of rooms (top photo) to a first stage polished worktop (bottom), the Guepins have arrived at their final result (see story) a warm and welcoming dream kitchen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM WRIGHT

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HOUSE CALLS WITH STEVE



With no dining room, the Clappens made the most of an existing bay window that gave out onto a new porch. An extension of the limestone kitchen countertop forms a peninsula that neatly defines work and dining areas and provides an elaborate eating area as well as a serving surface and a bar for punch. Updated lighting over the dining table includes halogen downlights on dinner nozzles, which, says Cathy Clappan, "make the crystal sparkle," and a candle-only chandelier for a softer effect.



ABOVE LEFT In the first renovation, the Clappens made the most of every inch of space, installing shallow shelves that don't interfere with dinner nozzles beneath a window opposite the dining area. Crockbooks sit on a decorative countertop extension. In the second renovation, the height of the limestone was raised a few inches to meet the counter on either side, allowing the new stone countertop to wrap around the room.

ABOVE RIGHT To comply with the zoning and subunit-depth requirements with the main, the Clappens continued the existing granite pavers in this area around them and around the fridge with custom-made panels to the stone line at the cabinets. Drawers to the right of the fridge display recycling bins. To its left, a microwave shelf, an appliance garage, and a pull-out cutting board keep the counter clutter-free.



Replacing an older cooking unit with a professional unit turned the remodel precipitated a number of changes. Though the external stove hood stayed, a more powerful fan was installed to handle increased exhaust. A new backsplash of the same limestone as the countertop ties in the look. One of Cathy's favorite drawers in the kitchen, a drawer run just beneath the countertop, custom made by traditional hand, keeps silverware and even with clean at hand.

BEFORE



Space for undercabinet lighting and subunit plus dining area was gained by removing an eating nook separated from the old kitchen by an entryway, decreasing an adjoining bathroom to a powder room, and relocating two doors.

AFTER



PHOTOS COURTESY STEVE

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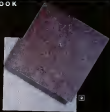
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HOUSE CALLS WITH STEVE

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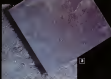
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2

"Limestone's beauty is unique, and its light, sandy tones are a plus in a kitchen where brightness is key"

—Steve Toback



3



4

Countertop limestone is often available in two finishes, giving the same stone a completely different look. Choosing a polished finish (called "polish" or "brilliant") or one that is honed smoothly is a matter of aesthetic preference. The limestone samples above illustrate the differences featured in on the bottom, shown in on the top: (1) solid grey from Jerusalem, (2) grey from France, (3) blue from France, (4) grey-splashed Jerusalem.



5



6



7



8



9

Limestone comes in assorted colors from quarries around the world. This porous stone is durable enough to handle a pot dropped on a kitchen floor or countertop. However, hot dishes can leave rings and acids and oily foods can stain, so acid is recommended. Stone care and engine pictures: (1) sand, France; (2) grey-blue, Spain; (3) caramel, Italy; (4) mottled, Portugal; and (5) grey, Nevada found in the Designer's Wellborn.

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ASK NORM

Coping with roof stains, old moldings, and floor adhesives

STUCK GARMENTS

The eavesment windows in our house were top of the line in the late '70s. But now they can't be closed completely from inside. Instead, one person has to stand outside on a ladder and pry the corner of a window with a broad rusty knife until it slips into place. This exercise is tedious and both the window and supplicant get

Mel Kucharsky, Acton, Mass.

Current windows have a broader life than double-hung. When the seal is gone, all four sides are exposed to the weather. If the seal is wood, it can rot, which can cause some of the paint to rub off against the frame when the window is opened—if it hasn't already swollen shut—the bare wood absorbs some moisture, and the window warms. That buildup on the seal and frame can also result in leaking. The fix in both cases is going to require you to remove the seal, then sand, plane, or scrape down the offending



ing seal and replace with appropriate primer and finish coat.

Another cause of jammed eavesment windows, whether they're made of wood, vinyl, aluminum, or steel clad with vinyl is corrosion, in that the seal in frame is out of square. From a hole sucking from vinyl peeling on open seal back and forth as from the loose setting—can draw window frame out of square. You have to see the problem a lot. He suggests that you open the window and check both the seal and the window framing with a framing square. Look for gaps between the square and the seal or frame.

If the seal isn't square, he says, you'll have to replace it; you won't have much luck trying to resquare the joint. If the frame isn't square, you may be able to nudge it back into place by taking either window case on both sides, removing any shims, and then, using a prybar, moving the frame back into position. A final alternative, which requires a lot of work, is to take off the entire

across the window from the wall, and reset it back into the rough opening as you would a new one. [See "Installing a Window," *Homeowner's Handbook*, March 2002, page 61.]

REUSING OLD MOLDINGS

I bought a major floor-scraper that needs to be galled. The old plaster is in terrible condition, and the heating, plumbing, and electrical systems have to be replaced. The best part of the house is the woodwork, which I want to save, and I'm willing to remove it, but the not sure anything will fit right when it's reinstalled. The new drywall-covered walls will be thicker than the old plaster-and-lath ones. Is this a problem?

Annex Room, Buxton, W.

Removing and then reinstalling all the moldings is a lot of work, particularly the crown, with no more visible joints. If they're made of hardwood or have an unusual profile, or if the house has historic value, it may be worth the effort. But when wrestling with trim on a lot of houses over the years, I've learned the not everything that can be salvaged should be.

You're right, of course: if the overall thickness of the wall decreases, the moldings won't fit in place the way they once did. But there's another problem you haven't mentioned. All

the door and window jacks will stick out beyond the surface of the new drywall you plan to install.

Rather than removing them down or chipping out all the casing with strips of wood, I'd try to keep the new wall surface at the same plane as the old one by shimming out all the studs with thin strips of wood nailed to the right thickness. You might be able to reuse the original batts for this purpose. Just be sure your drywall screws are a little longer than normal so they'll bite 3/8 inch into the studs.

If you then reinstall the molding, the joints probably won't fit perfectly. A lot of carpenters use silk with several more gaps, no wider than 1/8 inch, at the moldings will be painted. You can close up larger gaps by "stitching" the molding, stitching together (see "Leaf Joining," *Ask Norm*, July/August 2001, page 34) pieces salvaged from another room that will have all as moldings applied with care, off the shelf ones. A good lumberyard will stock lots of different profiles, and even though they might not match the other rooms exactly, you could get them close enough that only a house historian could tell. Or you could have a local millwork company duplicate the old moldings, including the handwork. At the Charleston project, for example, Tom & his salvaged most of the millwork from the old millwork, including the handwork. At the Charleston project, for example, Tom & his salvaged most of the millwork from the old millwork, including the handwork. At the Charleston project, for example, Tom & his salvaged most of the millwork from the old millwork, including the handwork.

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ASK NORM

ROOF STAIRS

The asphalt-shingle roof on my 19-year-old house is decorated by dark streaks. Now that I've noticed it on my knees, I see it on a lot of other houses in the area, too. This phenomenon is most noticeable on north-facing roofs. Surely this problem isn't limited to Illinois, as we thought you might know what it is.

Kim Davis, Mount Pleasant, IL

You're dealing with mold, or, more likely, algae. Neither is good for the look of your shingles.

Both can be killed by adding 1 ounce of zinc oxide free-base gran and 1 quart of household bleach to 5 gallons of water. Spray this solution over the stained areas, let it sit for a few minutes, and then rinse the area with clean water. Bleach is the better—designed just for this purpose. Sometimes this works, but sometimes it doesn't. You may also have to scrub the roof gently to work the solution in, particularly if the staining is extensive. I've used a telescoping window-washing brush. The soft nylon bristles don't harm the shingles, and I can work from a ladder instead of crawling out on the wet, slippery roof. Keep an eye out for nearby power lines; though, wear clothes that you don't mind getting spotted with bleach, and warn everyone going in and out of the house to keep clear and don't sit on roof. Danger from bleach-fueled drips.

Unfortunately, mold and algae spots are always in the air,

so even killing them won't prevent more. For a long-term solution (at least until you reroof the house with algae-resistant shingles), cut a strip of zinc or copper flashing (copper costs a lot more) halfway under the ridge cap along its whole length. Then whenever a rain the water will wash zinc or copper ions off the ridge of flashing and carry them down the roof, inhibiting further infestations of algae. There are several companies that market one product made specifically for this purpose, but regular zinc or copper flashing works just as well.

LAYERS OF ROOFING

Originally, my 1944 house was rooied with wood shingles, but over the years two layers of asphalt shingles were laid right over them. When I'm in the attic, I can see the underside of the shingles because they are installed over horizontal boards that are spaced about 8 inches apart and nailed on top of the rafters. Now that it's time to reroof the roof, should I remove all these layers and leave the roof sheathed properly?

Quinn Edwards, Pleasant City, PA

Your roof shouldn't even have one layer of asphalt over the shingles, let alone two. So the first step is to strip off all those layers of roofing, right down to those spaced boards, which are called skip sheathing. If you plan to restore the roof to its original look, leave them in place. They are the best substrate for wood shingles or shakes because the space between the boards allows the wood to dry out after it gets wet and thus prevent the shingles from

ADDING FLYWOOD OVER SKIP SHEATHING



curling. As long as your roofing contractor repairs any damaged boards and installs all the skip sheathing, you should be able to install new shingles or wood shingles right over them.

If you decide to go with asphalt shingles, that you'll need to go down solid sheathing plywood or oriented strand board (OSB). Either you'll have to rip up all the skip sheathing and leave the panels directly to the rafters or you can simply add them directly over the skip sheathing (after repairing and sealing it). If you take the latter route, are 4d ring-shank nails, they're long enough to go through the plywood and the skip sheathing, nail into the rafters. The skip sheathing is going over the existing boards so that the exposed plywood edges in the eaves and rakes will need to be covered with metal drip edge (which can sometimes be completely), or with a solid layer of molding to the eavesboards.

No matter what type of roofing you decide on, I'd replace all the roof flashing—at 30 years old, it's well past its useful life.

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DECK ODDS

I built a deck three years ago and there are some areas that still creak a bit. Is there some liquid I can spray on to break on these areas to stop the creak without affecting the color of the stain I recently applied?

Mark Parnis, Birmingham, Ontario, Canada

I'm afraid not. Bleeding sap is usually due to patch pockets. The grease will remove patch, but won't stop continued oozing and will probably remove some of the stain. Your best bet is to either let the patch get crusty and scrape it off with a chisel or stiff-bladed putty knife, or remove the affected boards and replace them with sap-free ones. You might also try carefully removing the sappy

boards and flipping them upside down if there are no visible pockets on the underside. Use two prybars to lever the boards free of the joists, or if the underside of the deck is accessible, bang on the bottom side of the decking with a hammer and a block of 2x stock. Once the new pieces are in place, you won't notice much of a color difference between the new and the old boards. And by the end of the season, I bet you'll have a hard time telling which ones you replaced.

UNCOVERING A FLOOR

The original owner of our house glued it by hand and now the wood flooring is covered in wax. We want to remove the wax and refinish the wood. The hand method I've found so far is to fill a tub with a heavy-duty scraper, then use a heat gun of 15 to

coldest the glue. But the tile usually crumbles, and I have to remove the remaining glue with solvent and scrapers. It's spending about 40 minutes per tile, and the fumes are getting to me. Surely there's a better way.

Ernest Koenig, Fullerton, Calif.

Professional flooring contractors have a few solvent-free tricks for removing wax and other so-called resilient floor like tile, vinyl and linoleum. Some crews will soften the adhesive of flooring that is stuck to concrete by spraying it with warm steam with delinishing steam-jet. For owners, they also use heavy-duty floor scrapers that are pulled or pushed with muscle power, but heavy rooms call for a flexi-stripper, a new patented, electric-powered contraption with a heat-treated blade that oscillates back and forth, shaving off the tiles and some of the adhesive. Blades from 6 to 16 inches wide can be used in the machine, which may be available at a local rental yard.

Once the tiles are removed, it's time to attack the remaining adhesive by hand. One tip I've heard, but have yet to try, is to spread sodium glycolate over the floor, which dissolves up some of the grout residue, making further scraping easier. Or you can use a solvent specifically designed for removing flooring adhesive. Not only are they optimized for each type of adhesive, but Kevin McNair, a technical expert at Soudol Products, a maker of mastic removers, says that the best way to choose a remover is by the color of the adhesive. Black adhesives have an asphalt base, amber or clear

ASK NORM

ones have an acrylic resin base, and cement whites ones have a latex or urethane base. If you shop around, you'll find some that are low-odor and biodegradable. The only thing I worry about with solvents is that they might affect the color of the wood flooring or its ability to accept a finish. Test a small area first, but remember that refinishing a floor is always something of a mystery—you never really know what you'll come up with until you do it.

OPENING A BRICK WALL

Our brick house has an attached garage that we want to convert into office space. Unfortunately, there's no door between the two. Can we cut a doorway through the brick wall?

Don Williams, Loomis, Ill.

Before you grab a saw or sledgehammer, have a structural engineer take a look at what you have in mind. The size of the job depends partly on how your house was built. A brick veneer with no single logs, or "wythes," at break often standard wood framing—rests on the wood framing behind the masonry for as structural support. A structural break will—two wythes with no framing—will be more work (see "Think As a Brick," December 2000, page 39). Once an engineer has determined how your house is built and the size of the door

you want to install, he'll specify the dimensions of the trim or timber lath needed to support loads above the opening and recommend suitable connections to the existing wall.

After you've answered the structural questions, contact a mason to make the hole in the wall and install the lintel. If you don't want any exposed bricks and plan to cover them with drywall or paneling, he'll finish them apart with a heavy hammer or chisel. But if you like the look of the brick and want to leave it exposed, he'll use a diamond-bladed circular saw to cut the rough opening. Lay out the size of your door, leaving a portal as plumb and straight as can be. Then a carpenter can build a jamb and hang a door or install a prehung unit. ■

Send questions to Ask Norm, The Ask Norm Magazine, 1000 Avenue of the Americas, 10th floor, New York, NY 10020. Include a complete address and telephone please.

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thing that they liked unmodified.

When they bought the house in 1991, David and Barbara, both actors, had just finished a six-year renovation of a 1778 Colonial house. It was charming—except for its location on a busy road across from a mall in New Jersey. So after they moved in a summer-stock theater in western Connecticut, they looked for a new house nearby. "We wanted another old house, but almost all of them were close to roads," says David, who had apprenticed with a carpenter during college and had accomplished those major house renovations over the years. "We reached to the idea of finding any house on a great property because we felt we could play it a bit."

The house they bought was situated exactly at the center of a secluded 16-acre run. At some point, an owner had put in a 40-by-20-foot ell into the 25-by-33-foot one-story structure built in the 1940s, making the building look like a badly designed crash house. "The way that it was constructed was a real way of putting it," David says.

The addition may have thrown off the proportions of the house, but the interior had its virtues: random-width oak floors, high cathedral ceilings, and walls provided with pecky cypress. And then there was that beautiful stone hearth. David knew that this room would become the centerpiece of his renovation, but it took him a while to plan the design. "At the time, I was doing *Thelma & Louise* or *Grease* or *Bradybunch*," he remembers. "I made a foam core model of the house and took it along to the theater and played with it every spare moment I had."

His solution was to build an asymmetry. David decided to keep one a 25-foot-wide section of the front side of the ell by 15 feet, designate it "two" to the original cabin. This addition would house only a new dining room; in the old ell and cabin David envisioned a kitchen and adjoining entry room, a master bedroom with a connecting bathroom, a guest room, and a den. In the center, the existing porch entry would still open into the original foyer.

When the ground thawed in the spring, David hired a contractor



The focus of the house is the original 16-foot stone fireplace that dominates the dramatic expanse of the new great room. To heighten that end of the room, the owners added two arched windows (based on the clearance list of a local building supply store), which also tie the entry ceiling.

to help him solve the telephone pole problem (see "Pole Position," page 48) and to dig for a new foundation for the addition. "I tried to find someone to pour the floor and build the timber-block foundation walls," David says. "But nobody would do it—it was too small a job. I had done brickwork before, but never a full wall. Still, I thought it would take me less time to do it myself than to find somebody." David studied construction manuals and built forms for the concrete footer. He even sought line-art advice on finishing concrete from the man who drove the cement truck.

With the footer in place, he bought 365 cinder blocks and had

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them to match the height of the old boardroom wall. "I figured if I made the base of my foundation match the line of the old one everything would be fine," David says. "I came within one inch."

The project proceeded in fits and starts, depending on the owner's schedule. Robert, who admits that his construction skills were limited, was away on a national tour much of the time. David was more when performing at MacLennan, and would plan his renovation workday around the two-hour drive and 8 p.m. curtain time.

Within a couple of years, David and Robert had finished the guest room and dining room. The space was rustic but comfortable, anchored by the big fireplace. The dining room walls were decorated with pecky cypress waste siding taken from the demolished wall of the old ell. The floors came from David's family's barn in New Hampshire. David placed pine or tulard wooden tables that had been created by firms in Maine and elsewhere going back to 1800. Throughout the project, David exercised his native New

England thriftiness, salvaging materials, designing around inexpensive overstock supplies he found at local lumberyards, and making things himself. He built the more than 100 doors. For example, he matched the cup-and-dado molding of the guest room to that of the dining room by covering both ceilings with 4-by-8-foot sheets of T-111 exterior siding. "I put it in the guest room first," he says, "right over the hollows excavated into the T-111 studs, and it doesn't look much." He covered the joints between panels with red pine,



The dining room addition (over street under construction) features a table and floor made from hand-planed pine boards (top right) from the Cleveland family's farm in Pine Mountain. In the kitchen (bottom right), the owner added some rustic touches by using brick fireplaces to cap part corners of the pine breakfast bar.

which he distressed and painted with a hand-cured concoction of different stains to match the look of the cypress.

The kitchen came next, and was the hardest phase of the project. "I took pieces of three different spaces to create the kitchen," David says. "Some of the old living room, some of the entrance foyer, and part of the old entrance. If you look up, you can see three different ceilings, but I covered all the beams with 1-inch pine to make it appear uniform."

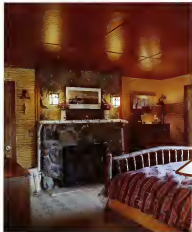
In the space once occupied by the original cabin (where there had been a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a TV room), David carved out two bedrooms and a den. He began by moving walls and doorways. He then swapped out the northeast corner of the house with a 12-by-8-foot addition in square all an old, small bathroom addition and create a bigger guest room. By now, laying a foundation for 76 square feet seemed like an easy job, and he dug the foundation himself in three days, using a pick and shovel.

At times, economy led to a design breakthrough, such as the day David was installing 4-by-8-foot hardwood planking in the master bedroom. Because he couldn't locate the large sheets up by himself, he was forced to cut them in half. While doing this, he realized he could alternate the direction of the panels and create a parquet effect on the ceiling. "I got for me



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POLE POSITION

When David Cleveland bought his new house, one thing that spoiled his mental picture of a rustic country lodge was the telephone pole standing 20 feet from the chimney. Resolved to eliminate the pole and reroute underground the telephone and electrical wires it carried, he called his local power and phone companies. Officials at both services approved of the wire relocation but said it would be costly at his expense, although the telephone company provided him with new phone wires and internal cable. David hired an excavation contractor, who used a backhoe with a laser leveling device to dig a 170-foot-long, 18-inch-deep ditch that extended from the southwest corner of the house to a pole near the barn, inside the trench David laid 200

and more from various," the owner admits. "It'll be like that for you maximum compliments for months' effort." On the other hand, watching all the mudmen was highly labor intensive, "but nobody ever notices your work," says David, who added three different sections of galvanized roof to cover the former top ends of the original structure. "It was a lot of work that required a lot of big lumber—2x12s," he says, "but the roofline really do give symmetry to the house."

Lastly, the men have been working on transforming several outbuildings. They took an exercise room and office in the barn, and transformed the garage into a guest cottage surrounded by a 1,000-square-foot landscaped flower and vegetable garden. A former chicken coop was moved into the garden to serve as a pecking shed. "We could have torn down the outbuildings," David says, "but it seemed better to turn them into useful spaces. It gets on other people to go. And it gave me something else to preserve." ■

The master bedroom, with its pergola-style ceiling, hand-hewn walls, and farmhouse-style fireplace, was formerly the kitchen. David Cleveland found the dark 1700s brick fireplace around and the wall where it sits from above. He then used it matching exterior light fixtures and added the brick trim to create a beautiful, rustic look. He also used mountain lodge.

feet of new 4/0 aluminum electrical wiring, housed in gray PVC pipe, as well as the cable and phone wires. The ground line ended at the existing barn pole, where they would be connected with warning service at the top.

A technician from the electric company disconnected the old high wires, connected the new lines, and removed the defunct pole and wires from the property. David's own electrician attached the new wire to the electric meter the same day, and the phone company made its connections a few days later. An independent inspector hired by David reviewed all the work. The project was one of the most costly in terms of time and effort, says David, "but psychologically, it's paid us back in spades." —Nancy Lindeman

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Where the Sidewalk Mends

Fixing cracks on a concrete path and steps

BY JANEY JACKMAN

Step bits of concrete fly off the front steps of a Greenwich Village brownstone in New York City as master Larry Morera chips away at a crack that spans across the bottom step. After lighting, both he is late to repair these stairs and a nearby fractured sidewalk, a day's work for this fourth-generation mason and owner of City Taken Out Construction, in Manhattan. "Concrete's worst enemy is water," he says, as a steady ping, ping, ping of hammer and chisel echoes through the air. "This probably started as a tiny hairline crack, but over the years water seeped inside, turned to ice and expanded it."

After chipping out the crack to create a smooth surface, Morera mixes a batch of chaux, which will bond the new mortar to the old concrete, and beaches it into the crack. The crack needs filling because it is deeper than 1 inch, he explains. Had it been caught when it started, it could have been checked with urethane caulk or silicone caulk. But now, Morera insists, it must be filled before it becomes a slipping hazard or a threat to the structural integrity. "Not only does water push the surface out, it also starts the area where the concrete," he says. With the chaux coat and wet, Morera fills the crack with a freshly mixed batch of mortar, smoothing it flush with the step to complete the patch.

Turning his attention to the adjacent sidewalk, he examines a 2-inch-wide split that leads to a large, curved crack. As a temporary fix and the homeowner can replace the entire sidewalk, he will repair the 15-inch-long section. The mortar-seal cracks and surface flaking—known as scaling—point to a problem with the exposed joints either too much water in the concrete mix or not enough cure time in construction temperatures. "There's no way to correct that," he says.

Morera chips out the broken pieces, fills the gap with concrete, and caulked it with a float. As he smooths the edge of the slab, the imperfections have nearly disappeared. Only a slight color variation remains to betray that the stone sidewalk is anything but "As-is."

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FIXING A CRACK IN A STEP



Chiseling is just one of the damaged front steps of a house, Larry Morris uses a Mason's solid chisel and hammer to carefully remove the crumbling pieces from the wider damaged concrete step. "It's just like filling a tooth," says Morris. "You've got to apply the new mix to a solid, sound surface for it to bond properly." He uses the best of the resilient broken pieces he uses a fine-pointed masonry tool to fix of the chisel.



2) To fix the slant crack, a fine aggregate mix that acts as a bonding agent—adhesive mix, Morris sweeps away dust from the crack and sets it with a brush. He makes the slant by adding water to a mix of 1 part Portland cement, 2 parts mason's mix (which helps adhesion), and 3 parts sand (see "Concrete Like a Pro," below). He brushes a thin coating of the slant into the crack, then rubs the surface with a wet sponge.

CAUTION WHEN WET

Morris warns Morris's masonry when mixing mortar or concrete in "wetness leads to weakness." Edmundo and steps when break or slip because there isn't too little Portland cement and too much water in the mixture. For Morris, knowing when there's too much water is not so much an exact science as a skill he's acquired with 30 years of experience.

He begins his mix by blending the dry ingredients: Portland cement, sand, and mason's mix for mortar or aggregate for concrete. (The proportions change with the project.) Then he adds water slowly, sparingly, and with an eye to consistency, aiming for a spreadable texture similar to cake frosting.

To maintain control of the wet/dry ratio, Morris makes a volcano shape

in the dry mix and pours only one cup of water into its center at a time. Clipping and sliding his pinching trowel, he pushes small portions of dry mix toward the center. With each turn of the bowl, the blend thins and gets harder to work. Morris says there's no magic formula for knowing when to stop. "Wet concrete should be still yet pliable, with no air bubbles—never soupy," he explains. "If the aggregate is swimming in the water, that's too wet. If it is, just add more dry ingredients mixed in the right proportions."



3) Morris's final mortar—crackles, grout filler—is water mixed with 1 part Portland cement, 1 part fine, and 3 parts sand. He levels it deep into the crack—only 1/2 inch at a time—then waits at least an hour before applying more layers just. Whenever crack is filled, he repeatedly swirls the flat, a long-handled wood tool, smoothing the surface of the wet mortar as it cures. This makes the new mix with the old mix while eliminating air pockets. Finally, Morris sponges down the rest of the slab and cleans the surrounding sidewalk clean with a hose.

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Play Station

A versatile desk makes the grade with children and adults

It's a typical New York success story. A young couple rises up the corporate ladder while settling down into a Brooklyn brownstone. They spend six years putting on the occasional home-built project, and suddenly their forces are upon them. And old dreams—like a new, sleek desk—come back to life. The renovation begins in earnest. "The homeowners really approached this remodel with an eye to the future," says architect Dick Buschen. Prime example: the book as study desk.

"Right now the two children need a play area," Buschen explains, "but soon their 11-year-old brother will need a place to study." To allow for the inevitable progression, Buschen designed a built-in desk that occupies a neat corner of the basement floor. Its large U shape lines up the center of the room for neighborhooding, yet provides over 40 square feet of work space. Built on-site, the desk is made of 1/2-inch cherry veneer plywood laminated into 1/2-inch medium-density fiberboard (MDF). A 1-by-2 work surface molding features and protects the exposed edges. The desktop is supported by simple rectangular wooden brackets screwed into the wall and by a cluster of L-brackets that tie into decorative load-bearing columns—an essentially light-as-design that makes for easy cleanup underneath. The work surface is reinforced with eighth-inch steel angle-iron screwed on to the bottom face, making

The large built-in, U-shaped desk helps control the homeowners' young children, Joseph and Jonathan, but the second corner of the cherry-veneer desktop is built to suit a teenage student.

the desk sturdy enough to hold everything from books to the occasional high-crapping preschooler. Ultimately, however, the owners envision more studious pursuits, like homework. To that end, Buschen called for three high-speed Internet access ports, a coaxial-cable hookup, and half a dozen electrical outlets. He also added a pair of empty PVC conduits that lead to the basement, which will enable the family to easily retrofit newer wiring technologies.

BY EVAN ROBBINS PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL WHICHELOS

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help Paquin, an architect and craftsman, is equally competent as front of a drafting table as a welder. But he doesn't have much patience for accounting, a fact that poses some problems when it comes to managing his small home-remodeling business in Oxnard, California. Typically, he approaches out-of-job situations as something akin to an emergency

trip to the doctor: "I have to go back, add things up, and see what I've lost," he says.

The need to manage costs was particularly acute on his latest project, a home-office makeover in Berkeley. Paquin had each of his carpenters add up 1,600 square feet of unpainted, \$130-a-sheet plywood destined to become a hefty array of floor-to-ceiling cabinets and doors. There

BY JAMES RYAN

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEVIN JERRY



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was also a 2,300-pound desktop made of lightweight steel concrete that had to be poured on site. "If we mess up and order too much—or have to order more—we eat those costs," he says.

Fortunately, on the job Pasquillo had a new assistant to help him keep track of his time and money. Not a "full Friday" (in even a pay Friday), but a handheld computer loaded with software designed to ease the pain of job-cost accounting, the uncertainty of estimating, and the hassle of shopping for tools and materials. That meant he could spend more time doing what he really enjoys—designing and building.

Personal digital assistants, or PDAs, have long been associated with doctors, lawyers, and investment bankers. But as prices fell, memory capacity increased, and more specialized software came on-line, they are gaining popularity with just about anyone who has to be away from a desk—from salesmen to army field commanders to building contractors. Homeowners, too, are discovering that these programs are a great way to keep tabs on their own renovation projects. "They now have access to estimating tools once available only to contractors," says Michael O'Malley, director of a vocational school in Reno, Nevada, and author of *Construction Estimator's software*. "These can save you from buying fly-by-night when you only need one."

The latest generation of PDAs for homeowners are predecessors of the handheld workstations that Pasquillo used to manage his construction business. Now, instead of referring to an ancient, dog-eared copy of the *Builder's Estimator Reference Book*, which covers its territory as lovingly as he sits at his desk, he can call clients and make estimates on the fly as construction dictates. "I'll have a meeting today and casually jot down and, if I have to, negotiate," he says. "That's a lot easier than trying to do it after a

Web-based digital assistant (PDA) and two AAA batteries, Homeowner and contractor alike can plan and keep track of the myriad tasks, estimates, and expenses of a construction site.

computing night. Pasquillo's \$200 Palm VxL came with the usual complement of built-in functions—including a calendar, contact list, to-do list, and calculator—plus a built-in wireless modem that allows him to send and receive e-mail and surf the Web from virtually anywhere. Its 8 megabytes of memory gives him plenty of room for project-

management and construction software, which he can download or purchase at such Web sites as Handago.com and PdaPages.com. Choices range from simple programs costing less than \$13 that help do it, to powerful desktops like the one and run of a estimator or calculator the amount of things needed for a new roof, to complex ones, such as the \$380 Punch List from Ivona Systems, which tracks notes, schedules, and resources and automatically sends updates to subcontractors and clients via fax or e-mail when it's interrupted with a desktop computer.

As soon as he figured out how his new handheld worked, Pasquillo went to Handago and plunked down \$20 for O'Malley's *Construction Estimator's*. Now, instead of referring to an ancient, dog-eared copy of the *Builder's Estimator Reference Book*, which covers its territory as lovingly as he sits at his desk, he can call clients and make estimates on the fly as construction dictates. "I'll have a meeting today and casually jot down and, if I have to, negotiate," he says. "That's a lot easier than trying to do it after a

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PDA MACHINE: Having a paper record reduces the chances of miscommunication during the bid, which makes a PDA available a valuable addition to any job site. Contractors can immediately receive the appropriate bid from their architect, engineer, and furnishings, and they can send along sketches to help explain matters that can't be easily described over the phone. If the machine is equipped to work as a printer, contractors with laptops can plug in and print out memos and e-mails.



DIGITAL CAMERA: One picture is worth 100 sentences on the phone, which makes digital cameras effective tools for documenting a renovation's progress. A contractor with one of these cameras can show clients anywhere in the world how work is proceeding by downloading the images into a computer and sending them via e-mail. A contractor with the equipment can maintain a permanent log that shows where when and where new issues are found, or how the job was executed in case a dispute arises about the quality of the workmanship.

CELL PHONE: One of the best ways for a contractor to keep direct, open lines of communication with a contractor in the cell phone. Most can store dozens of telephone numbers. Most also include a service that allows the phone to download e-mails within a matter of a few hundred bytes. With the \$50-a-month "text-based" models' plans, there are no per-minute charges, so you and your client can discuss remodeling plans as long as your batteries hold out.

—David Belding

project is completed."

To demonstrate how his figures electrical costs for the Berkeley project, he plugs labor and product prices into Construction Estimator, then the number of switches and outlets, panel amperage, wire run, and room dimensions. With the push of a button, the device spits out a number, which can be tallied with other job expenditures. If any component is altered, the overall project cost can be automatically recalculated.

Many versions of these and most other PDA software programs can be downloaded and tested for free—a good way to determine if they're worth the money. And there are hundreds of Web sites that make their content or services available for handheld or no cost.

A wireless modem is another handy PDA feature. When Paragloss is handling a particular product at service, he can download parts of the Blackbook of Building and Construction (www.blackbook.com), a national listing of contractors and suppliers, and peruse its content off line. Or he can go shopping among the van offerings on Internet e-commerce sites. When he found he needed a laser level, for example, he fired up his PDA's modem and searched eBay to see if anything was available secondhand. That didn't pan out, so he logged on to Amazon's "e-commerce application" (which required him first to register his credit card and a domain), and in a matter of minutes ordered the level he wanted—at 24 percent off list price—without having to leave the job site.

Choosing a PDA isn't quite as simple. There are many products, formats, and prices to consider, from the monochrome Palm M500 (\$399) to the full-color Compaq iPaq (\$680). While color is nice as a convenience, adequate memory is, you'll need at least 1 megabyte in to accommodate the necessary software. The Punch List program,

for example, runs up around 200K of space even before data is entered. With browsers for handhelds, such as the one offered by AvantGo.com, can take up 100K to 1 megabyte.

Whether or not to go wireless is a big consideration because a add significantly to the cost. Unless you choose the \$280 PalmVx, expect to spend about \$400 for a plug-in modem like the Modem, or for a PDA with built-in wireless capability such as the Handspring Treo, or a Blackberry. You'll also have to pay a wireless access fee of about \$40 to \$50 a month.

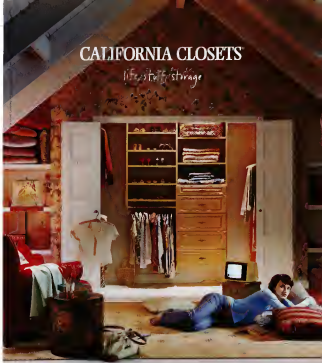
Paragloss shells out just \$10 a month, a fee he says is worth it if only so he can log on to his favorite site, Mobile Mapquest (www.mapquest.com). The free online service lets him tap in his starting point and his destination, then displays door-to-door driving directions.

After making the investment in a digital computer and loading it up with software, you may want to protect it from a job-site accident. There are plenty of products available for this purpose, including just-off-series protection (Powers, \$25), fiber-glass reinforced vinyl-panel cases (Dunham, \$30), and clear waterproof pouches (Aquapac, \$25 to \$45).

Having successfully completed the Berkeley office redo with out being crushed financially by a load of plywood, Paragloss is planning to upgrade to a \$100 titanium case made by an exotic called Rhinoceros. "To be useful, coats in general have to be simple and elegant, and handle unpleasant gaps," he says. "That goes for a chair and for a handheld computer." ■

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TALKING SHOP

Finish Hammers

Buying and using these less weighty whackers

H

olding his hammer in a relaxed grip, This Old House master carpenter Norm Abrams gently taps a finish nail into a section of window molding to get it started, then drives it home with three swift strikes. He cradles the hammer as if it were an extension of his arm, delivering the blows in a steady rhythm, without the slightest hesitation between blows. He risks and aims well, the precision of his hitting each small nail perfectly flush with the surface. Asked how he manages such precision without denting the wood, Norm smiles, quietly admitting he's had a few years to practice. But he's quick to credit the hammer as well. "It's all in the balance," he says. "A good finish hammer seems to swing itself."

Balance is the key feature of a finish hammer. A framing hammer tends to be top heavy; the entire head is required to generate the momentum to bury a large nail. A finish hammer, however, has a more even distribution of weight from head to handle, which gives a user the control needed to strike a nail squarely, even when working overhead or across the body. That balance keeps a carpenter from overexerting or bending a slender finish nail, and measures repetitive stress on muscles and tendons. But there's no simple formula for a well-balanced hammer. "Merely, it's what feels comfortable in your hand," Norm says.

After he sets the bar and along the window's edge, Norm slides the head of his hammer through the loop on his pad lock and reaches for the next length of trim. When all the pieces are in place, he will countermile the nails, leaving the wood surface perfectly smooth. "A hammer's a pretty forceful tool," he says, "but used the right way it's great for the delicate work, too."

BY CLAYTON KIDDER

REPORTED BY JORDAN REED

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE WELLEN

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WRONG



RIGHT

HANDLE GRIP

"You can always spot an amateur by the way he holds a hammer," says Tom, general contractor "Tom Glee." A novice neither cradles up on the handle head and tries to push the hammer into the nail with his, perfectly flat, palm. Instead, Tom advises, grasp the handle near the end in a relaxed grip, don't white-knuckle it or you'll tire quickly.



STARTING A NAIL

Gripping it between the index and middle fingers, balanced palm upward, hold the nail perfectly perpendicular to the surface and rap it twice or twice just enough twice to sink the point about 1/4 inch into the wood. For this precise starting stroke, to avoid hammering the hammer gently, using only the wrist, try gripping very small tack and brads by the shank with a pair of needle-nose pliers.

SWING

Face the work squarely and keep the nail directly in line with the shoulder of the swing arm. When the hammer flies the shoulder and elbow, not the wrist, and swing in a full arc. The power should come from the shoulder and forearm; the elbow should never lock. "If you feel any click, you're doing something wrong," Tom says. Keep the wrist relaxed to absorb the shock of the blow. When momentum is maximum, a sudden, controlled stroke, behind the handle parallel to the work surface as the head strikes the nail straight on. Flashy hammerers have a slight crease at the center of the striking face to keep the edge from catching the work. "The goal is to hit the exact spot, and the only way to do this is to focus your eyes on the nail," he says.



WRONG



RIGHT



SETTING A NAIL

Flashy ending is not complete until the nail has been set below the surface. Flashy nails have no head—only a shrewdly, slanted end, which is designed to be reinserted into the hole of a second. This long swirling hole is a flat steel filed with putty. To do this, it is now known as a nail set—usually a mistake on Tom, Tom, and Tom's class. It is supposed to be used to drive the nail's end and set it with the hammer.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREGORY NEMES



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TALKING SHOP Striking Features

HEAD

"Each hammer has a specialty feature," says Hammer, who heads marketing, customer care, and 10 other jobs at the company. "The heads are all made in the USA and are made from high-quality steel and are made from 'forged' or 'dead-blow'—equivalent terms that signify that the striking face has been hardened to withstand repeated blows. The dead-blow hammers (2) have an offset balanced steel and fiberglass striking face weight.

CLAW

This claw has either curved or chisel. A curved claw (3) is a great feature, but a chisel claw (4) is better at pulling, prying, and tugging, with strong beveled inside edges, which will bite into a nail shank. Some designs coat the claw. A double-point hammer (5), an English workbench tool, has a beveled end, or point, for starting nail runs, and a separate handle (6), or foot-builder's hammer, has a pointed end for setting large finish nails. Other designs include (7) hammers that carry other uses as designed "tool" specific settings in extreme.

FACE

All Smith hammers have a smooth striking face (8), as opposed to the rough, "dead-blow" or some framing hammers. The best Smith hammers have a slight "recess" in a key corner curve that helps center the face to the nail and allows a slight resistance to sink the head of a nail perfectly flush to the surface without denting the wood. A good hammer will often have a chisel head (12) around the striking face to prevent the edges from chipping.

HANDLE

Hammer handles come in wood—usually Hickory (9) or ash (10)—fiberglass (11), rubber (12), steel (13), and steel (14). In a framing hammer the handle is shaped to fit the back of a hand, but in a finish hammer handle choice is really a matter of preference. It depends on the worker's shape and surface as well as on the ability to use during a strike, because in a hammer's "strike," the hammer head is the only thing that strikes the nail. The most flexible, with rubber (12), aluminum, and steel (14) handles are in the hammer. You can find them all but strength comes from the steel. Here, on the other hand, the steel is made with a better grip (14).

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Filing for Dollars

Where to find the tax breaks in your home

BY KERRY MANNON AND AMY R. HUGHES

When Joe Marshall and his wife, Patricia (not their real names), decided to renovate their 1516-sq Colonial home in northwest Washington, D.C., they were motivated by more than just the desire for the extra space that a planned 520-square-foot addition would give them. They also hoped to make some money on the project by turning their unfinished basement into a one-bedroom rental unit with an own entrance. The couple took out a new mortgage and a home-equity line of credit to fund the renovations, a three-year understanding that cost \$176,000. They outlined the rental agreement with well-oiled carpeting, tile floors in the kitchen and bath, a washer/dryer, and a satellite TV hookup in their neighborhood, they figured, they could get \$1,250 a month for the unit.

What they didn't figure was the complicated tax implications of these decisions to expand and rent out part of their home. For instance,

once April 15, any rental money goes added to the Marshall's gross income, which could bump them into a higher tax bracket. In addition, when their house is next assessed, their property taxes may increase if the renovations are deemed improvements that add to the house's value. And if they decide to rent the house, the rental unit is not considered part of the primary residence and thus could be subject to capital-gains and other taxes.

On the flip side, the Marshalls also didn't take into account the new tax deductions they will be eligible to claim on costs related to the rental. They can write off the portion of what they pay for landscaping, utilities, homeowner's insurance, even television service that is allocable to the rental apartment—in this case 25 percent, the amount of space the 300-square-foot unit occupies in their 3,200-square-foot house. And upkeep on the apartment,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARC ROSENTHAL

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such as carpet cleaning, re-planting, a 100 percent deductible.

The rules touch virtually every aspect of home ownership. IRS regulations are complex and change often, so having a savvy accountant helps, but so does knowing where in your house to go hunting for deductions. Some write-offs, such as those for mortgage interest and property taxes, are well known. But there are a host of other, less familiar deductions, including ones for home improvements, which can reduce possible capital-gains taxes when a property is sold; the cost of maintaining a home office; raising your vacation home; and installing features like a wheelchair ramp for a sick dependant or solar panels to save energy.

The Marshalls say that they wish they'd thought about such

areas sooner. For one thing, if they had been more aware of the potential rental-related write-offs, they might have made different choices about how much to spend on their own living space. "Had we known we were eligible for certain deductions, we would have been less concerned about some of the expenses, such as adding new landscaping elements to the property and buying rugs and furniture," says Franco.

"You'd be amazed how many homeowners don't know the current tax rules, even though these rules impact their business," says Timothy Veary, a CPA and financial planner at Creative Financial Group in Atlanta, Georgia. "With that in mind, here are a few ideas for making April 15 a little less taxing."

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Upgrading a home can do more than increase its curb appeal and resale value. Improvements can also share a substantial amount from capital-gains taxes when the house is sold. Under current IRS rules, a profit above \$500,000 for a couple and \$250,000 for an individual is subject to a 20 percent capital-gains tax. But the taxable amount can be reduced by the cost of improvements: large and small—adding an outdoor deck or pool, installing an attic, installing a new bathroom, putting in landscaping—that you made to the house. (Repairs are excluded.)

Be prepared for the IRS to request substantiation of these improvements. Tax experts warn that homeowners must keep detailed records, including receipts, invoices, contracts, and canceled checks, so the deduction may be disallowed during an audit (see "The Paper Trail," p. 68).

Many people fail to lay the groundwork for the capital-gains deduction because they don't think their homes will ever appreciate enough for them to have to pay taxes on the sale. That's a mistake, says Douglas Stevens, a CPA and partner at Wein & Co. in Red Bank, New Jersey—especially in light of the ballooning prices of houses in the past few decades. "If you bought a \$200,000 house 20 years ago, it's not unusual in many areas to be a lot to sell it for three quarters of a million today. If you're single, that's a huge tax burden, and if you're a couple, it's still considerable," he says. "Documenting improvements is a lost art, but a must for homeowners."

WORKING FROM HOME

The home-office deduction has been around for years, but more people are taking advantage of it than ever before. Treasury

re-claimed more than \$4.4 billion in home-office deductions in 1999, up from \$2.9 billion in 1991, according to the latest statistics from the IRS. That's partly due to the upsurge in telecommuting, but also because of a change in IRS policy that broadened the category of workers who qualify. In 1996, the agency began allowing the deduction for self-employed people, such as plumbers and contractors, who work primarily outside the home but regularly use the office as a place to handle the managerial aspects of their business. Previously, workers could claim the write-off only if their home was their principal place of work.

But the agency remains strict about one thing: The home office must be used exclusively for business, so other activities—not even kids playing on the computer—are prohibited.

According to the current rules, if your business is based at home, or if you maintain a home office for your employer's convenience, you can deduct a portion of property taxes, depreciation, maintenance, and repairs, as well as electricity, heating, and air-conditioning costs. The amount of the deduction corresponds to the percentage of the house that the office occupies. For instance, if an office takes up 250 square feet in a 3,000-square-foot residence, 25 percent of these expenses can be claimed. However, the amount you state off account entered the total amount from your business—in

other words, it cannot be used to create a net loss. One caveat: Some tax experts say that claiming a home office is like signing a red cape in front of a bull. "It's easier to take a home-office deduction these days, but it can raise your audit risk," says Veary.

Jack and Julie McCauley found that the hard way. In 1990 they were asked by the IRS to back up several thousand dollars worth of write-offs for the home office where they handled their fledgling exterior design business in Monmouth Beach, New Jersey. "At that time, we were not very sophisticated about record keeping," says Jack, who kept track of the couple's expenses in a handwritten ledger. That moved over time when the IRS initially disallowed some of the deductions. To get the ruling reversed, the McCauleys had to walk agents

through the log of every work-related expenditure they claimed—from electronic equipment like the fax machine, photocopier, and computer to postage, a fax machine, utilities, and hotel bills. During the months it took to complete the process, the McCauleys feared that the battle would break their business. "Our company was losing money and not seeing it as a recession," Jack says. "We couldn't afford to be wrestling with the IRS. I had to get my accounts audited, and that cost money in the end, so I ended up losing on a couple thousand dollars just to win the appeal." Today, he says, every expense trail is

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the home office is stored in a computer, secured and detailed. The couple keeps separate spreadsheets for business and personal accounts and holds on to receipts for all common deductions. "Record keeping is an everyday labor," Jack says.

There is another drawback to claiming the home-office deduction: If you sell your home, the percentage of the house set aside for the office is not part of the \$250,000 or \$500,000 capital-gains exclusion. To get around that, a homeowner must convert the workspace back to residential use for at least two of the five years prior to the sale. "Every part of the house has to be reconsidered your private residence to be eligible for the full exclusion," says Jones.

TAX CREDITS AND VACATION HOMES

For some owners, home-maintenance gets a break on their state income taxes for installing energy conservation features such as solar panels for heating, windows for electricity, or even extra insulation. More taxes, for instance, allow a credit of up to \$300 for upgrading to an energy-efficient air-conditioning system; in Maryland, installing solar-powered photovoltaic cells is good for as much as \$2,000. In addition, certain states provide tax credits for up to 30 percent of the cost of heating up an old home (for a state-by-state list of preservation tax credits, see "Pound Money," June 2008, p. 84). Credits are also available to cover the cost of improvements related to a homeowner's or dependent's medical needs, such as installing an elevator for an aging parent living in the house. (As with the Medicaid addition, such situations could result in higher property taxes. However, simple improvements such as installing ramps and widening doorways for



wheelchair access generally don't have as much of a property-tax hit.)

Vacation homes can be another source of tax breaks. When a vacation house is treated as a rental property, homeowners can take the traditional mortgage-interest and property-tax deductions plus write-offs for utilities, depreciation, and home insurance (up to the amount of rent collected). In order to claim these deductions, though, the owner's use of the house is limited to the greater of two weeks or 10 percent of the total number of days it is rented. If the owner wants to exceed this limit and sell into the property, a fall into the rental-use category, and tax-deduction times are apportioned based on the amount of time the house is rented. For instance, if utility bills total \$1,000 for the year and the house is rented for six months, the deduction is limited to 50 percent, or \$500. Vacation homes that are rented for fewer than two months a year are considered residences and not eligible for any additional tax breaks—only one taxable occupancy, as state law. Like City homeowners during the 2002 Olympics in that case, the IRS lets the homeowner pocket the income tax free.

To find out more about vacation-home situations and whether your property qualifies for any of the other tax advantages, a CPA is a professional. "If you do your own tax returns, you never know if you're missing something or not," says Steiner. Experts say that homeowners lose millions of dollars a year on home-related deductions that they should take because not aware of and never even think to discuss with a tax adviser. There's a lot of money to be made on the table, especially when it comes to a lifetime of preparation and diligent record keeping to make your house work for you for a change, instead of the other way around. ■

THE PAPER TRAIL—WHICH RECORDS TO KEEP, AND FOR HOW LONG

Even if you never get audited, good record keeping will help you get a handle on income and expenses, verify property holdings, and prepare annual tax returns. There are some rules of thumb about how long you should save records, says Arnold Ballin, a CPA with Pulisitz & Mulheisen in New York City. "The main is three years, as filed on the tax-return documentation for at least that long. But even if you bought a house 30 years ago, you should still have records of the purchase and all the improvements." It also recommends tracking expenses on a duplicate and keeping a copy of the title or title in case of a fire, flood, or computer virus. The following is a list of important finance-related documents. For more guidelines, check out IRS Publication 582, Record Keeping for Individuals, on the agency's Web site at www.irs.gov. —A.R.W.

GENERAL

- Tax returns for at least three years
- The original mortgage contract for as long as you own the home
- Active life insurance and property insurance policy documents
- Updated ledger of purchase or sale of major assets
- Receipts, invoices, and canceled checks for home-improvement projects for as long as you own the home

HOME OFFICE

- Invoices, canceled checks, and receipts for business-related purchases and expenses for three years
- Updated ledger documenting office inventory and assets
- Business-account bank statements for three years
- Job contracts
- Utility and maintenance bills for three years

RENTAL UNVACATION HOME

- Log of income and expenses, backed by bank statements, receipts, invoices, and canceled checks, for three years
- Documents relating to home-improvement and landscaping projects for as long as you own the property
- Utility and maintenance bills for three years

GET OFF

(Okay, it may seem like I hate

my parents, but I'm really demonstrating what a therapist

would call "asserting my identity," so I can grow up to be

a well-adjusted individual. Sure, I say I want freedom, but

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Quiet, Please

Wood-paneled home libraries touch an English tradition.

Given the task of designing and building a home library in an 11-year-old Pennsylvania house to look classically British, craftsman Brian Perry had just two words for the homeowners: *quietness*. "It's a rugged wood with the rich look of old English brown oak," says Perry. It is also graced by red, uniform green pattern. In the period library Perry envisioned, working green marbles all over the walls would have commanded attention with the more vibrant—the books themselves.

Books are what define a library, and, ultimately, the room could assume any style so long as it provides a place for them. Yet the word "library" evokes a very specific picture of a lamp lit, wood-paneled reading room in a private house or man's club—no atmospheric place where a Noel Coward play might unfold or where a detective in an Agatha Christie novel would announce, "You may wonder why I've gathered you all

here." The owner of the vintage Perry book understands the room's mystique. "When I was 15 years old," he recalls, "I visited a friend of mine in England, and his father's library left an indelible impression on my mind."

Even though these rooms have traditionally been a symbol of the leisure class, the appeal they hold today in this country has much to do with their practical use as a place to work from home. The design challenge then is to combine the needs of a modern office with the feel of an old reading room. "We spent an enormous amount of time thinking about that," says the Pennsylvania homeowner, who commutes to Manhattan but works at home several days each month.

Before tackling its functional design, Perry had to figure out how to reimagine the existing library as an elegant space. The 337-square-foot room had plenty of bookshelves and a good location at the end of

With its custom oak paneling, fitted bookshelves, leather chair, desk, and green English, this Pennsylvania reading room evokes a traditional English library, now done with a mixture of an English-style homeowner's love, Brian Perry



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LONG LIVE YOU.

along addition—"You couldn't hear any sound from in there," says the homeowner, a father of three—but it was a plain-white space with an unadorned cathedral ceiling.

The homeowner had already had a crew of carpenters drop the ceiling to 10 feet. He then hired Perry to design the room, giving the craftsman "a very vague description" of his friend's English library. Drawing on his 26 years as a woodworker, Perry drew up a detailed set of plans, and, after working on a style for the crownmold and doors, he focused on the ceiling. First he designed a perimeter of soffits to house recessed lighting and structural wires. Then he divided what was left into 31 panels separated by a grid of box joints. "It was a huge math problem," he says.

In his New Jersey shop, Perry milled half-inch plywood on a rough-cut stock for the cabinet doors. He used a power sander to cut crisscross molding of his own design for the ceiling coffers, and he copied joints by hand to ensure a tight fit. Then he laid the bookshelves from specially ordered sheets of quarter-sawn-oak-veneer plywood (plywood, being more stable than solid wood, is used even in expensive bookcases). Once the crownwork was complete, Perry installed six with solid-oak fluted columns finished with a stain. "Because bookshelves are essentially cabinets, this project was a lot like creating a kitchen," he says.

A very expensive kitchen, however. Cost estimates for a painted library vary widely, depending on the use of the room and the amount of detail that goes into it. Kate Mangano, production director at the high-end Baltimore Woodworks mill shop, in Guilford, Con-



Before this room took shape, the four layers to determine the bookshelves, carpenter Ed Perry built each, recessed ceiling lights, and a double width of the coffered ceiling.

nect supply, conceal life detectors, and hide TVs and music in the Pennsylvania library, homeowners shield a fox enclosure. "In a classic library, you don't want that call gluing it you," says Perry. "To make electronic bookshelves easy, Perry had acoustic and phone lines installed that ran from the ceiling through the floor and directly into the cabinets."

In keeping with the library's reputation as a place of mystery, Perry had to build in a secret hidden compartment. (See below, it's beneath a bookcase column and pops open with a gentle push.) "The cabinet was a total surprise," says the homeowner. "Unfortunately, it's so well built I don't keep anything in it—if I did, I'd forget where to find it." That may be, but so the fictional world of Agatha Christie, it would be the first place Hercule Poirot would look. ■

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

We no longer had one of the hallmarks of a library is a hidden door or compartment, whether it's a secret bookcase concealing a home entertainment system or a door that opens revealing private files. A European building tradition, hiding places once concealed everything from jewelry and land deeds to commercial allies whose discovery might subject the owners to religious persecution. Now made of sophisticated hardware now offer a variety of options for clever compartments. European inventor Minge and his company, as well as spring-driven, push-release catches, install invisibly on the interior of cabinetry. A secret room or closet can be accessed through a portrait-door bookcase built on a sliding track or through a pivoting shelf and that opens on a wall-mounted shelf. For one Pennsylvania library, Brooklyn-based woodworker Raf Albano designed a traditional reading room with a floor-to-ceiling bookcase that hides almost every and a Murphy bed. The door, a 4-foot-wide cabinet—which held 400 pounds of books—was attached to a surrounding one with three 6-inch-long ball-bearing invisible hinges. The unit swings open when the homeowner pulls out a 2½-inch-long pin disguised on one of the many shelf handles. "Only a man in the wardrobe knows that something is behind it," says Albano. —Henry Lockman



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Tools & Materials



1. 20-ounce finish hammer
2. Hand plane for trimming joints extensions
3. Measuring tape
4. Router for making steel profile
5. Carpenter's glue
6. Random-orbit sander and 120-grit sandpaper (Alternate tool: sanding block)
7. Jigsaw for notching steel and profiling apron
8. Pneumatic nailer for attaching casing
9. Compass for transferring marks and round lines
10. Table saw for cutting rabbit in bottom of stool
11. Squarer for marking casing, stool, and apron
12. Pencil
13. Utility knife for trimming drywall and adjusting fit of stool (Alternate tool: scribe)

NOT SHOWN

Router saw for cutting trim pieces to length
Nail sets to recess heads of hand-driven nails
Drill with 3/8-inch-diameter bits for making pilot holes before hand cutting

"Tight seams make the difference between an amateur job and a professional one."

—TOM SILVA

Ranging from the flat, unadorned casing of simple Colonial buildings to elaborate Georgian or Victorian profiles, window trim is available in any architectural style and in at least as many woods. "It's all a matter of the look you want for your house," says Tom Silva. "And what your budget allows."

When selecting wood, Tom considers whether the trim will be painted or stained. If painted, imperfections can be filled and sanded smooth. Not so with a clear finish, where every joint and knot will be on display. When Tom wants that natural look, he selects walnut, cherry, or mahogany. For paint-grade trim, where the wood's figure (grain pattern) and color are not a factor, he chooses yellow poplar, which sands easily and finishes well. "Poplar is pretty stable," he says. "You don't have to worry about knots the way you do with pine, and it's less expensive than foam."

PLANNING AHEAD

- To determine how many linear feet of casing to buy, double the height of each window, add the width, and round up to the nearest even foot. For steel stock, note the width of this window for the width of each casing plus 2 inches for the horse. Approximate width equal the width of the window plus the width of both casings.
- Use drywall saws to notches any loose drywall or plaster to the framing around the perimeter of the window.
- With a straightedge, check that the joints on the sides and top of the window are not bowed in by insulation or drywall. If they are, set away the obstruction with a utility knife until joints are straight.
- For corner blocks, choose stock that's at least 1/2 inch thicker and 1/2 inch wider than the casing.



Installation



STEP 1: PREP THE JAMBS

- Hold a straightedge across the window and check that each jamb is flush with the wall face. If they stick out, and the walls are flat, plane them down, using the wall as a guide (see). If the walls aren't flat, see "Technique: Fill in the Gaps, Not More!"
- If the joints (at short of the wall, measure the largest gap between the straightedge and each jamb). Then, trim 1/4 inch, top jamb extends no side so that gap is 1/4 inch thinner than the thickness of the jamb. Marking the scribe to plane at its edge with the jamb's drive 1/4-inch 18-gauge pneumatic nail for fit (see note) every 8 to 10 inches. Plane any excess.
- Spread the edge of a compass 1/4 inch and set the point on one of the jamb's lower inside corners. Using the inside face of the jamb as a guide, draw a round line along the edges of all three joints.

TIP: For a tight fit between the casing and jamb, plane a slight bevel into the wall-side edge of the jamb.



STEP 2: CUT AND MARK THE STOOL

- Place a piece of side-casing flat against the wall with its inside edge lined up with the round line on a side jamb. Mark the wall at the casing's outside edge. Repeat at the same height on the opposite jamb. Measure between the marks and add 2 inches; cut the stool to this length.
- Place the stool face down on the sill near a corner of its back edge (the one facing the wall) is against the sill trim. Make a horizontal mark where the top of the trim meets the end of the stool (see).
- Keeping the back corner against the sill trim, slide the end of the square down stool against the jamb. Make a vertical mark where the end of the stool touches the jamb. Connect the two marks with a square and make an X in the area defined by the lines. This is the waste that will be cut out to make the rabbit.
- Remove the waste in two separate rip cuts on a table saw.

STEP 3: ADD HEAD CASING AND CORNER BLOCKS



- Hold a length of casing across the top of the window and mark where it meets the inside edge of each side casing. With a utility saw, make square cuts at these marks.
- Glue the head casing to the head jamb, making sure its bottom edge lines up with the round line, nail on in Step 4.
- Test fit the corner blocks at both corners to check for gaps (see). Trim the edges with a plane as needed to get a tight fit.



- Apply a thin bead of glue to those edges of the block that will join the side and head casing. Then, set glue on the back of the block; put it in place.
- If using a pneumatic nailer, drive 18-gauge nails into each corner (see note). If hand cutting, drill pilot holes, then drive in flat finish nails.
- Wipe up any glue that squeezes out.



STEP 3: NOTCH AND INSTALL THE STOOL

- Mark the stool's inside edge 1 inch from each end and hold it, face up, across the opening so the marks line up with those made earlier on the wall. Then mark where the edge of the stool meets the inside edge of both window jamba. Set a square at those marks and pencil "jamb lines" across the top face of the stool. Mark the desired profile into the stool's edge and ends, and sand smooth.
- Nail the jamb lines with the jamba's inside edges. Set the compass legs to the distance from the jamb edge of the stool to the sill trim piece. Hold the compass point against the wall and scribe lines from each end of the stool to the jamb line (jamb).
- Following the scribe lines, cut a notch into each end of the stool with a jigsaw. Hold the stool in place and check that it butts snugly against the sill trim, wall, and inside face of the jamb. Turn the fit with a jigsaw, chisel, or sandpaper. Apply a bead of glue to the sill. Fasten the stool to the sill with four evenly spaced 10-gauge nails (or 4d finish nails) placed 1/2 inch from the edge nearest the wall.



STEP 4: INSTALL SIDE CASING

- Take a piece of casing longer than the height of the opening, cut one end square on a miter saw, and end that end on the stool. Mark where its inside edge meets the jamb (noted 1 in pencil). Make a square cut at this mark. Repeat on the opposite side.
- Apply a bead of glue to the casing where it will overlap the side jamb and on the end that will meet the stool, then line up the casing's inside edge with the stool line. Fasten the casing into the edge of the jamb using 10-gauge nails (or 4d finish nails) every 8 to 10 inches. Then, 1/2 inch from the opposite edge, nail to the wall with 8d finish nails spaced every 12 to 18 inches. Flip up the squared-out gut. Repeat the process on the other side.
- Nail up through the bottom of each jamb into the ends of the casing with two 10-gauge or 8d nails. If hand nailing, drill pilot holes first. To cut snug-fitting beveled ends, put casing face up on 3/4-inch-thick scrap 2 inches from the miter-saw blade.

STEP 5: CUT AND INSTALL THE APRON

- Hold a length of apron stock face down on the stool. Mark the stock where it meets each side casing's outside edge. At the marks, make square cuts with a miter saw.
- To dress up the ends of an apron, hold the end of a scrap apron piece perpendicular to the face of the piece (just cut). Place the scrap's profile toward the end of the apron and make the edges flush (use a block plane, not a saw). Trace the scrap's profile onto the face of the apron. Repeat on the other end. Cut along the pencil lines with a jigsaw or coping saw, and sand smooth.
- Apply glue along the top edge of the apron, align its ends with the outside edges of the side casing, and press the top edge against the bottom of the stool.



- Fasten the apron at both ends of the apron and every 18 inches along its bottom edge (just cut) with 10-gauge nails (or 4d finish nails in pilot holes). Then drive 4d finish nails (pilot holes) through the top of the stool and into the top edge of the apron every 18 to 19 inches.
- Remove all nail heads with a nail and steel bar, then fill with putty.



Techniques

FILL IN THE GAP



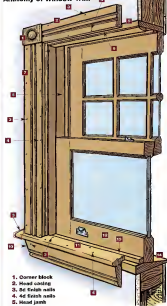
When installing window casing in old houses, Tom Oliver often has to contend with walls that dip and bulge, creating gaps between trim and wall. He can't ignore these imperfections, but he doesn't fill them with caulk. Instead, Tom uses wood filler strips. "I like to leave a nice, clean edge for the painter," he says.

To make them, he first rips a scrap piece of casing to a width of 1 inch and as long as the casing is high. He sets the legs of a compass to span the largest wall-to-wall gap (1) and bradders that distance to the top of the scrap wood (2). Next, he places the strip perpendicular to the casing at its outside edge, inserts the compass to the distance between the largest gap and the mark on the scrap, and scribes the profile of the wall onto the scrap piece (3). After cutting along that line with a jigsaw, he applies carpenter's glue to the profiled scrap piece and slides it into the gap so wall and trim meet perfectly (4). "With a light sanding and paint, the joint disappears," Tom says.

HOW TO PROFILE THE APRON'S END



Anatomy of Window Trim



1. Corner block
2. Head casing
3. 5d finish nails
4. 4d finish nails
5. Head jamb
6. Jamb reveal
7. Side casing
8. Side jamb
9. Stool
10. Apron
11. Sill
12. Sash
13. Sill trim
14. Sill

LETTER FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

Unfinished Business

BY NOEM ABRAM



W

hen I started building my house in 1991, I never dreamed that nearly 11 years later I'd still be trying to finish it. But it's true: My house is still missing several bath tubs and some trim, and my grand entry staircase is still made out of plywood.

People are always surprised to learn that the master carpenter of *This Old House* and host of *The New Yankee Workshop* hasn't yet managed to complete his pet project. But I'm like a lot of you: My house is my passion, but it's not my career. I have a full-time job—which lets me keep earning those mortgage payments—and I only work on my place evenings and weekends. And so much as I love carpentry and building, let me tell you: success can be a little too similar to my regular job. (I'm sure readers who are construction can relate.) Sometimes I come home after a full day of woodworking, and think to myself, Do I really want to go into the shop now when I'd rather lie with my family?

I know I could hire someone to push me—IOH general contractor Tim Silva and his crew could come over some weekend and help me finish up all the pending list items—but the fact is I like doing it myself. I enjoy taking the time to refine ideas, and I get a lot of satisfaction from meticulously executing my own complicated design. One of the reasons the staircase isn't finished is that it would take two or three weeks of steady work to make the buying, making, and installing exactly the way I've been imagining them—and reimagining them—for the past decade. I'd have to take a vacation to build these!

And maybe I will. Right now, I have the unusual possibility of a three-week break in the show's filming schedule starting in front of me. When again, my wife is asking me, "Are you sure you want to jump into something this big? Wouldn't you rather finish off a few spaces first?" Or I could fill that time doing the routine maintenance that will keep the house from falling apart before it's even done. Any path I choose, something will be left undone.

I think in the back of my mind I've accepted that the house will never really be completed. Sure, I'll get closer to those 100 percent—very soon, I hope—and the two front rooms on the first floor will eventually get those crown moldings and built-in bookcases. But by the time I realize all the plans I've laid out on paper, I'll probably be ready to start a room or two and do a little redecorating. Because if everything were finished, what would I do in my spare time?

Like the old Yankee who can't quit, even after 11 years, NOEM ABRAM has yet to complete his house.

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BY JEFFREY ROSE

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for more about the
Manchester project.

Left: A window bay brings abundant light into the McGuirs' expanded master bedroom. In this photo, the window is the point where a doorway from the bathroom of the master suite.

“Watch the plaster, sonny,” jokes *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva to crew member Garrett DuBois, as the pair, carrying a 40-pound sheet of MDF beadboard, easily negotiate the newly enlarged confines of the master bedroom at the TV show's project in Manchester, Massachusetts. It's late in January, and the work at David and Janet McGuir's house has gotten to the finicky stage, when moldings go up and floors go down. The reciprocating saws and framing hammers are back in the



Recently, Tom Gilbe has been working on two projects in the area of the city.

Love Is in the Air: Timothy, Top, and I have just flown off to Chicago from two separate locations. After the Silver plane and walk up the stairs, we'll be in the waiting area.



of six-over-one double-hung windows. Following Piel's plan, he also built a square, 13-foot wide bay, giving the McCoscs a better view of the scenery on the ocean side of the house. "There used to be a flat, lousy, unappealing sliding glass door to nowhere," says David. "With the new bay, our view in that direction has increased vastly."

The same thing could be said for the suit's closet space. By replacing a load-bearing wall with an IWL beam, Yum created a 7½-by-14½-foot walk-in between the bedrooms and bath, which will be efficiently outfitted with clothing, drawers, and hanging rails. "We'll now have more than enough room for our clothes," says David.

In the bathroom, there are two bathing options: the tub or the full-size steam shower. The tub stone, which occupies the spot that used to be the open landing at the top of the stairs, has a claw-foot look and a convex side, cherry-stained dressing table with mirrored legs and a limestone commode. It curved, it

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each one that he deems worth dismantling. What he looks for is "a pure piece of Colonial design," something he found in the 1790 Cape. The suggest he's after is inevitably buttressed with windows and windows made over the years, which he has had to learn to see through to find the heart of a house. It took Spurling about an hour to decide that the Widgits house was a keeper. Although surrounded by additions and enlarged by decades, the original structure declared itself in a variety of ways. Typical of an 18th-century full Cape, there were two windows on each side of the front door, and inside nearly all the handsome woodwork and hardware were intact.

Dismantling began with the demolition of the additions. After any usable woodwork was salvaged from chaos, the additions were separated from the core house and craned. Next the interior of the old house was stripped to its original bones, and the task of documentation began. Working room by room, staff architect Kruse Dugan labeled every length of chair rail, every floor board, every window, every door, and made a set of drawings essential to putting the house back together.

Once pruned from the wall, each room's moldings were bundled together and labeled with chalk tags or chalk maps. The same was done for the windows and floorboards; even the lark was carefully pruned from the stack and saved.

When nothing was left standing but the timber frame, the oak pegs locking the joints were removed, and the structure came down. The whole house was carefully arranged as a 40-foot trailer—heavy on less at the center for stability, windows and doors stacked at the back, bundles of studs and molding on the sides. The old Colonial was ready to roll.

in a storage lot. Sandy was undeterred. "When I saw the drawings and pictures of this little Cape," she says, "that was it."

The man in the boots that day was Paul Spurling. His design company, Spurling Thomas Penzel Homes, of Pittsburgh, specializes in dismantling old buildings and reassembling them wherever a buyer likes. Spurling is passionate about fine old houses, and he goes to heroic lengths to preserve in the rebuilding as much of the original house as he can. Not that he is a purist; as well as a historian, he projects every the tongue with the up-to-the-minute, the groovy and character of age with modern utility and comfort.

That suited the Dolans perfectly. "Our idea," Sandy says, "was to have a house with some age and character, yet with new systems that wouldn't require so much time and energy to maintain." The Dolans decided to sell their old house but keep some of the property and build on it, and they hired Spurling Thomas to design them a house that would incorporate the old Cape.

Paul Spurling inspects dozens of endangered old houses for



SPURLED TO: Colonial one-
house had character, light
and some windows. Back
Pencil and through the carefully
labeled and stored
hand-hewn parts of the
house, Spurling's
After more than two years
here, some of the building
pieces had served their useful
life and were replaced
with modern dimensions
beams and OSB sheathing
ON THE: Pencil Homes
a new house built that honors
the old culture and creates
passive storage space in
a house with four chimneys
and an attic.



In the new room, original bricks, 8 inch thick, are laid in a herringbone pattern over a concrete slab with radiant floor heat. The floor was then sealed with two coats of masonry sealer and painted. The tile in the new room replicates that in the old part of the house.



At 1,200 square feet, the original structure provided only about half the space the Dolsons needed, so there would have to be a substantial addition. But Sandy was determined to preserve the historic, cozy, intimate aspect of the Cape's facade. Stacey Bowser, Springfield, Massachusetts, designer on the project, managed this by adding directly off the back. "From the street, all you see is the old Cape," she says.

With around the rule of the house, however, and the simplicity of the Cape's original roofline blossoms into an aggressively cluttered arrangement of gables and dormers. Bowser's design for the addition is clearly not intended to mimic the Cape, but it weaves every such reference through the use of compatible details and shared materials. Alaskan yellow cedar shingles cover the roofs of both the Cape and the addition. Below, in a twist typical of coastal New England homes, some walls are sided with white cedar shingles and others with quarter-round pine clapboards.

Inside, the links and disjunctions between old and new continue. On the first floor, the Cape's rear wall has been removed, joining the long sleeping room to a large new sunroom. The transition

between the two is marked by a step down from the Cape into the addition. The use of staggered brick on the sunroom floor softens the contrast with the vintage-wood floors in the old part of the house. The new also has two nine-over-six windows that echo the originals in the Cape's facade, but here they are joined together on two walls to fill the new space with sunlight. A compact new kitchen, enclosed only by an L-shaped counter, straddles the old house and the sunroom.

Upstairs, the addition is given over to the master bedroom. Storage closets and nooks are built into the knee walls, and the room opens onto a fireplace in the old part of the house, making a cozy reading area. The bathroom connects and features with new fixtures. The master bath has a Jacuzzi, in the downtown bath a space-saving quarter-round shower stands across from a linen closet lined with a pair of early-19th-century 12-pane doors salvaged from a dismantled ell. Elsewhere, behind plaster and lath, the house has sound bar-water heat, a central vacuum, and apartment mechanical systems. ■



Fittingly, the screened porch built off the back of the addition is a new timber-framed structure. In the customarily framed addition, a bank of windows and a pair of French doors provide a view across the lawn to the Dolson's backyard. Upstairs, skylights brighten one side of the master bedroom.



the Night the Lights went on in Georgia

Nearly invisible
in-ground and tree-
mounted fixtures
make a house and its
landscape shine

BY JOEYAN REED

When M. Deane Johnson drove up to his stately Georgian-style Atlanta home at twilight last spring, his face lit up almost as brightly as the newly illuminated dwelling. The house seemed to flint, looking as if the lamplight outside had inhaled through the walls and bathed the detailed facade, majestic cupola, and 30-year-old Japanese maple in the front yard with a soft, golden glow. The sky was cloudy, but the two well-manicured and the yard appeared soaked with the almost otherworldly lustrousness of a full moon. "It was perfect," Johnson says. "I didn't want it lit up like a baseball field, I wanted a subtle effect, and a wow." The lighting designer, Chuck Patrick, of Duluth, Georgia-based Lighting Creations, says that such discreet schemes have become quite popular. "House lighting has significantly changed in the last six to eight years," he says. "It has moved from measured to hidden fixtures, which provide both accuracy and aesthetics but make the source 'X' His lighting goals, however, remain the same: to give perceived images the impression that someone is at home; to define paths, steps and steps so no visitors take a spill; and to focus the illumination to bring out specific architectural and landscape elements.

Instead of creating features directly to the house or atop eaves or pediments—creating what he calls a "starry effect"—Patrick turns his uplights in the earth, leaving just enough above ground for the lamps to do their job. He comes along downlights high in the trees. In Patrick's design philosophy, less is more effective. "Most lighting schemes are overpowering," he explains. "I use minimum wiring to create soft, elegant shadows and to provide warmth and ambience." He likes to work in photography, balancing up- and down-lighting, bright and dark, exposure and shadow, to focus on human subject. "I create a frame," he says, "where the picture, which includes the landscape and the perimeter of the yard. Ultimately, I lead the eye to the residence itself."



Lighting: To lay out the landscape, Patrick uses 175 feet of in-ground wiring, creating the foundation and steps, ending up the oak facing the house. The system's main wiring is 400-12 inch transformer that supplies power to the fixtures and controls settings, was mounted out of sight on the side of the house.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BURT WELLSFORD

lighting basics

seven, bulbs of various strengths (see "Beam Team," on p. 50) highlight different areas of the property, such as the foundation, garden and off by itself 30-watt bulb. The rest of the foundation was lined with 15-watters to bathe the facade. Brighter, 30-watt bulbs were placed next to the maple and magnolia and up in the oak to emphasize the trees and the rapids. Over time, hards, reflectors, and baffle (which control the direction and spread of the beams) will need to be adjusted and the wattage of the lamps will have to be increased to compensate for the growth of the foundation plantings. In this way, the designer anticipated how a maturing landscape will affect the plan as long as 15 years after installation.



ADVICE Beam tubes, the 14 below-grade fixtures on the property here, have that come-up about 1 1/2 inches above the ground alongside the foundation and just above the mounds of the base of the magnolia and maple trees. In sunny areas, which require more maintenance, the fixtures are also used in 4-inch-diameter PVC for protection and ringed in pea gravel for better drainage. The gravel also prevents grass from creeping the fixture and knocking light.



BEAM TEAM



light that gives definition to the landscape's green, brown, and grass. "Get they create a ghostly effect on the house itself," Patrick says, "so I never direct them there."

Patrick's plan called for 20 light fixtures, but he used only two types of bulbs. The majority are low-wattage halogens (bottom), which already provide daylight. "Halogen for up-and-downlighting are the best way to bring out the different details of the house and trees at night," he says. Three 100-watt mercury-vapor bulbs (top) suspended in the oak illuminate the pathway and front lawn. That strength was sufficient in this volume, but Patrick has used up to 175-watters. The taller the tree, the higher the wattage needed. Mercury vapors cast a bluish

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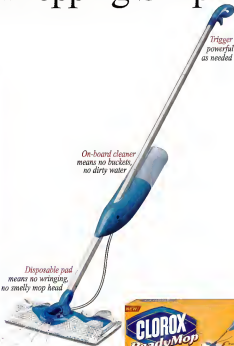


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ARROW: Punctured 30 feet up, a silver crawler attaches one of the three fixtures mounted in the oak tree. Its wire stainless steel screws to prevent rust and fungus buildup, and secures the wire to the trunk with large stainless steel staples that will accommodate the growth of the tree. Each fixture sits in an aluminum mount that holds it five or more feet away from the bark. "At the tree girth, it will swallow up these fixtures," Fabelo says. "But you've got a good 80 years before that's a problem."

WIRE: As required by code, the first 8 feet of exposed wiring was covered with PVC piping, attached to the tree with stainless-steel straps, and later spray-painted for camouflage. A junction box at the tree base connects the main feeder cable with the wires running to the fixtures. Three weatherproof PVC connectors also protect the wires from the elements.





Standing on a beam, builder and musician Will Ackerman works on a 2019 supercamp place on his timber-frame barn, circa 2010. Thanks to a Phyllis pencil sketch, the public end of the barn's TV room, all my star space with each light, except for the old up, all the wood for the same case, these trees on the Vermont property.



Builder/musician Will Ackerman and friends fashion a rough-hewn barn and cozy retreat from a hillside forest

OUT OF THE WOODS

BY JOE CARTER

Standing close to a 60-foot hemlock, his chain saw perched at his wrist, Will Ackerman cranes his neck skyward, assessing the slight lean of the trunk and the faint breeze coming up the hill. "I want to drop it between the ironwoods," he says, pointing to a slot between two small stands of hemlocks. He rears the saw and eases its spinning teeth into the trunk. Chips spew out as the saw grows its way through the living tree, and after a half minute, he kicks a fat, wedge-shaped piece from its trunk. Moving around to the other side, he starts the back cut—constantly glancing up for any hint of trunk movement. The sawing goes quickly, but instead of toppling, the tree hangs tight. "The wind's holding it up," he yells, reaching for some plastic wedges and a nail. He bangs in one, two, then three wedges. Only then does the hemlock start its slow-motion descent, thumping onto the hillside, right on target. By the end of a long day, he'll have felled a dozen more hemlocks and pines on a densely wooded slope of his Vermont acreage. Will Ackerman is building a barn, and this is how he gets his lumber.



Franchising plastic wedges into a clean saw cut, Sullivan starts a pine to the extended horizon. Every other tree is down, but he'll leave off an ideal red cut is into evidence for the younger working nearby.



Franchising plastic wedges into a clean saw cut, Sullivan starts a pine to the extended horizon. Every other tree is down, but he'll leave off an ideal red cut is into evidence for the younger working nearby.



Franchising plastic wedges into a clean saw cut, Sullivan starts a pine to the extended horizon. Every other tree is down, but he'll leave off an ideal red cut is into evidence for the younger working nearby.



Franchising chainsaw wedges into a crotch near cut, following a path to the intended direction. Carry the tree is done, but it's been off an inch, and cut is into another for the younger working nearby.



Franchising chainsaw wedges into a clean saw cut, following closely a path to the intended direction. Every other tree is down, but it's less of an issue, and cut is into sections for the younger growing nearby.

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treated steel, run diagonally up to 24 inches across and 33 feet long, with impressive accuracy. "It's good to within 1/4," says Mosler. As each plank is fixed from the log, he marks the fresh-cut timber in the field, where it meets for Achermann's crew to return from logging to framing.

On the end of August, a couple of weeks after the survey is done, the skeleton of joists and beams has risen from a concrete foundation to a second-story platform of 2-inch-thick planks. In order to go higher, Achermann has called in a crane. "We could probably haul this up ourselves, but why waste it?" he asks, citing more money 4x10s destined to become rafters. The crane is coming in \$400 a day, but it's worth it to finish before winter.

A timber frame goes up by joining joists and joists, called beams, which are assembled while lying flat, then raised into place. Today's goal is to raise three 12-foot-tall beams consisting of two joists and 6x10 beams, bolt the 4x10 rafters on top of them, and fill the space between joists with 2x6 studs. Hiding out are three more crew members: Michael McLeod, a seasoned guitar maker, Matt Chapman, an elementary school teacher, and Geoffrey Kneaf, a landscaper and the spouse of the owner. All of the men have woodworking skills, but to maintain the strength to weigh heavy green timbers.

It isn't a problem to finish a barn with lumber fresh from the woods because there's no plaster to crack as deposits settle to pop out of the frame dries and shrinks. The whole structure will grow and move, but the frame remains strong. Only the siding, Achermann's way—hole-filled pine clapboards—is a more bungle. "There's no authentic appeal to building a post and beam structure," he says. "I like the traditional approach." The ever-practical McLeod points out that this type of construction also permits wide-open interior space with out the need for bearing wall partitions.

Down on the ground, Nelson studies his plans, then reaches for a brandish 12-inch circular saw. He needs every inch of the blade as he cuts a foot post to length. Then, picking up a 7 1/2-inch saw, he begins removing the two end beams on both ends. Mortises are started with a 2-inch drill bit, then parred and squared off with a long-handled, 2-inch-wide chisel known as a duck. Everyone helps to lift, push, and pull the post

With a portable sawmill, Achermann splits and Carl Mosler cuts lumber out of logs. The split is then finished, which took 100 feet of log, along the way, includes more beams, rafters, and planks.



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After cranking together posts, beams, and braces and putting the joints in place with oak pegs, the crew raises an entire timber-frame section, called a bay. In this case, a crew provides a welcome lift.



into the second-floor girders, then they all gather to assemble the final beam. Some of the joints slide together with relative ease, but others put up a fight. Pegs and strap clamps force most of the audacious joints into their sockets, but when the wood's resistance exceeds the derrick's power, out comes "the periscope," a long-handled derrick hoist. A low well-placed blow eventually closes the joint.

The final act includes squaring post to beam and putting the joints together. "It's all by eye," Nelson announces, in much seriousness, as he checks the diagonal measure across the top of the beam. He's only half joking about the somewhat inflexible, he wants the beam to go up and square. A light kick to one timber solves the fit, and then Chapman drills a 1-inch hole through beam and brace and drives in a nail, a 10-inch red oak peg.

When all the beams are assembled and squared up, Remond runs a short yellow strap around the beam and up to the eave side of his crane. Working the lever, he slowly raises the beam. As the beam holds things steady, the crew shapes the beam over the short post sections to the second-floor deck. Remond lowers the hook and in the instant go—down. The use on the middle post can be a little too long. This isn't the final position anyway, just a firm, less pressing proximity to a spot with ceiling joists difficult. It takes a lot of cutting and forcing before the beams' tension and their association and most oak joints are positioned in place. By late afternoon, both the light and the crane's energy fade, the crane stays to help finish the frame the next day.

more than, when more has deep in the grey woods, the finished barn stands proud, snug against the wall. The regular design clearly reflects that of the neighboring cabin, a sort of Vermont Country Modern, all strap roofs and tapered post siding. Tractor and pickup are tucked under the open parking bay. A stairway up the outside wall leads to the platform where Ackerman and his crew were gathering and sweating with the beam in the waning days of summer. Now it's under a ceiling that rises 15 feet in a bank of clerestory windows. "We're going to put a bench up there," says Ackerman, pointing to the collar ties. "The view is wonderful. Down here, maybe a pool table."

In the kitchen/corner room, there's just a second to right himself, the walls of rough-hewn pine contain a small wood stove and several chairs, facing a 32-inch television. "I changed my mind," says Ackerman, waving his hands on the waves of heat pumping from the stove. "As the space cooled, I decided it was a perfect spot for me and the guys to hang out and watch the game." Welcome to the clubhouse, a rough-hewn reflection of where the music business and a year for building have brought him.

"Some people say that their ambition is to own a lot of trees," he says. "I'd go with it if my house and body weren't completely working." He grabs a stick of wood and starts to cut the frame. "I don't need to do anything but, I've done that. I've been doing a little bit of that and a little bit of that. You could do a lot worse." ■



100 The barn's clerestory light adds counterpoint to the dark wood and beams. 101 View from the living and dining areas clearly visible from the inside.



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CHISELS

BY RYAN KOPPEL



Throughout a brief design—a sharp blade affixed to a wood handle—has not changed in thousands of years. There have been refinements, of course. Four V-shaped braces used to cut spoke holes in wagon wheels so wide, rounded chisels used to smooth the decks of sailing ships. But even these specialized chisels ultimately do the same things their simpler cousins have always done: chop and pare.

Paring chisels chop. The ends of their strong steel blades are ground to a simple cutting edge, formed by a flat back and bevel, that slices straight through wood fibers. These tools are often struck with mallets, so they tend to have sturdy ash or oak handles. Chunky, square-shafted firers, stout enough to lever out deep holes in wood, are also called mortising chisels. Paring (or push) chisels are used for more delicate work. Beveled on three sides, their slender blades shave wood and slip neatly into tight corners for cleaning up joints. The 60-millimeter-wide Japanese paring chisel, or *nomi*, pictured here, is made from iron that has been layered together with steel, folded dozens of times, and then burnished to reveal a wood-grain pattern evocative of its traditional target, cedar. The backing is forge-welded to a plate of high-carbon steel that holds a keen edge. Such fine, hand-powered chisels often sport turned wings or sandalwood handles, making them look sharp, too.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN BLAIR

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1. 20-inch slick (or slipright)'s chisel. Two beveled gray, stamped metal sockets, and beveled cutting edge make it easy to pare large green timbers.
2. 2-inch frower (or slipright)'s chisel. Slick is tapered from shoulder to bevel to prevent sticking in timber-framing mortises. Handers won't split the double-humped handle.
3. 3-inch curved-slick (or frower) chisel. Front shaft keeps handers out of the way, while beveled blade cleans up ribbons and ditches.
4. 5-inch paring chisel. Beveled edge finishes straight mortises and trim wood joints. Built, polypropylene handle is chemically resistant.
5. 5-inch skewer (or chisel) chisel. Pointed blade with beveled edges reaches deep into dovetails for paring and fitting.
6. 10-inch taper-slick (or bark) narrow chisel. Curved blade leaves nail head free. Mild enflaming leather washer softens hammer strokes.
7. 3-inch beveled edge chisel. Thin blade flexes to clean out small nooks, such as lock mortises, octagonal handle mortises or off-bench.
8. 5-inch clean-cut chisel (pick). Left- and right-dogging blades clear wood and glue from hand-to-mouth joints and closed corners.
9. 5-inch corner chisel (or bevel). V-shaped blade eases up rounded corners left by routers.
10. 1-inch butt for packing steel. Short, sturdy leaf shape penetrates logs and lock mortises.
11. 20-inch zig-zag-shaped paring chisel. Although no one will admit, Pease's black bitzanger in cross-section mimics resistance when fitting coveralls or heavy work.
12. 40-mm Japanese thin paring chisel (sawtooth). Secures timbers to tight dimensions, hollow-ground back socket for faster fitting.
13. 19-inch one-piece frower chisel. Forged steel with baked-on handle grip handles heavily-duty post-and-beam construction.
14. 10-inch Japanese mortising chisel (kakemonochisel). Square blade with hollow back and slightly concave front end sides require flexion for easy paring.



Anatomy of a Chisel

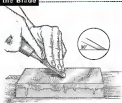
Since the Bronze Age, chisels have been cast in one of two ways. Tang chisels (A and B) have a pointed shank that is wedged into the handle. A fixed bolster, located just below the tang and cushioned by a shock-absorbing washer, prevents the tang from further penetrating and splitting the handle, as does a metal ferrule, which also keeps the blade securely seated. In contrast, the shank of a socket chisel (C) is forged as a deep, tapered cup; a wood handle (D) is then plugged into the socket to provide a forgiving (and easily replaceable) striking surface. Some chisels, like the Japanese mortiser on the inside of the poster (No. 14), use a combination tang-socket connection. Handles are often reinforced with steel hoops.



Sharpening the Blade



The back of a chisel is as important as the bevel when it comes to sharpening a razor-sharp edge. So before the bevel is sharpened, the back must be flattened. First, place the chisel's back against a nonslippery surface (a flat, wet, or diamond stone—even newspaper—will do) and rub it in a figure-eight pattern until the metal appears uniformly shiny (about 10 min). To check for fairness, edge the back with a filing motion, then give it a quick second tapping along its flat to remove bedforms or unevenness that must be leveled out. Once the back is successfully flattened, turn the chisel over and rub it up side bevel for honing (about 10 min). The angle between the chisel and the stone should be about 30 degrees. Grip the chisel's neck with one hand and steady the blade



with the other, keeping the lower flat against the stone. Work the tool back and forth, making sure not to rock the bevel on the stone. A thin wire burr will form along the cutting edge. When this occurs, switch to a finer stone, flip the chisel onto its back, and repeat the process. Then give the bevel another sharpening. Repeat the back and bevel flattening on an extra-fine stone. Finally, stop the blade on a piece of leather to remove any metal shavings. To test the sharpness, hold the tool bevel-side up and run the edge of a sheet of paper into it; a sharp chisel will split the paper. Keep chisels clean and slick free by storing them in a padded leather or canvas roll bag, front face down; otherwise, the blades will slide through the stitching.

ILLUSTRATION: MARK SHAW

TOOL FACTORY

TV CLASSICS, PAGE 120 • WHERE TO FIND IT, PAGE 111 • PROGRAM SCHEDULE, PAGE 112



PHOTOGRAPH BY OWEN THOM

Wade, New York, NY, 908-321-2942,
www.garrettwade.com

14-0c. Bowbuilder #113,385.27, Japan
Woodworker, Alameda, CA, 808-337-
7810, www.jpawoodworker.com

14-0c. Carpenter with fiberglass handle
#91,514.23, Japan Woodworker

28-0c. Full octagon style, with hickory
handles. Vaughan & Bushnell Manufacturing
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21-0c. Steel curved claw, with leather
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pg. 70-72

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MANCHESTER TV PROJECT
pg. 24-25

Architects: Stephen Roberts Hall, AIA, Methuen, MA; 978-526-1281

Plumbing and heating contractor: Enoch Inc., Bob Plumbing and Heating, Herndon, MA; 908-448-0389

Roofing/drywall contractor: Jeff Sullivan/Steve Piro, and Paul Landry, Pl Drywall, Woburn, MA; 781-899-8124

The contractor: Joe Terranova, Terconco Tile, Needham, MA; 781-296-6327

Flooring contractor: Pat Huns, Huns Hardwood Floors, Lexington, MA; 781-862-3539

Chemistry reagent/supplier: Mark Schuch, Chemistry Source, Belle Mead, NJ; 800-576-4574

Shower contractors: **Chlorie Allen** Remington, Inc., Clarksville, MA, 617-661-7411; www.chlorie-allen.com
Wallboard: **Dave Wallboard Supply**, Torrington, MA, 878 474-1008
Tiles—Shower tiles: **Vivide Luce** (see tile install master class) **Showers with tile:** **Shower Croma Line**. **Ceramic marble mosaic border:** **Banther patterns**, all supplied by **The Showers**, Worcester, MA, 617-926-1100; www.withshowers.com
Radon-free gas panels: **Spectre Vapors**, Bedford, MA, 781-271-5123; www.radonfreegas.com
Dressing table: **The Furniture, Pelham Corporation**, Essex, MA, 781-686-0261
Claw-foot style stone sinks: **Imperialy, Inc.**, CA, 800-444-4183
Stainless shower groutant: **Kohler Co.**, Kohler, WI, 800-456-4573; www.kohler.com
Recessed-panel HOF headboard: **The Rochester Bed & Bath Company Ltd.**; **Natchez**, NJ, 609-338-1079
Copper shower pan supplier: **The Tin Shop, Inc.**, Beverly, MA, 978-928-0335
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"Master Hunt," p. 34. As the Marchioness jingles the crown jewel of her mother's hair as a large stone clasp with diamond teeth and a lock of hair.

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED
pg. 82-83

Design firm: Paul Spurling, Home Proj
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ing, Framingham, MA, 508-653-4663.
General contractor: Bud Elworth, RB
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Lamps: MR16, R40, and T3 lamps, GE, www.ge.com

OWNER'S MANUAL:
OUT OF THE WOODS
pg. 104-111

Sewing: Carl Mosher, Applewood Cactus
Sewing, Pacey, VT, 802-387-4894.
Fiberglass panels: Sea-Lite HP from the
Kulbicki Corporation, 802-688-8186.
For more information—WJL Ackerman's
project: www.wjlamackerman.com
Luthier: Michael Milner, Friggy Bottom
Guitars, www.friggybottomguitars.com
Sound engineer: Carol Nelson, www.wetband.com

FOOTER: CHISELS
pg. 112-113

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Back page: (a) 2.5-mm "spleenail" level edge chisel, \$19.16, American Tool Company, Inc., 800-866-9745, www.american-tool.com; (b) 17-inch industrial heavy-duty marine chisel, #481021.64, \$13.50, Gossing-Wilde; (c) and (d) 17-inch Gossing chisel, \$30.

Berry Specialty Tools
Our thanks to Rob Nason of Enraving,
Rockford, IL, 815-397-9518, www.enraving.com.

SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE
p. 64B

For more information: The Krevling Fund of The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, www.georgiastat.org/sevland.html.
One thanks to Stadenville, Georgia, master historian Billy Weil.



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~~Chicken~~ Piccata
Pork



- 1 lb swordfish loin (seasoned with kosher salt)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons lemon pepper
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 1/4 cup dry sherry or white wine
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 4-6 thick lemon slices
- 1 tablespoon capers

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