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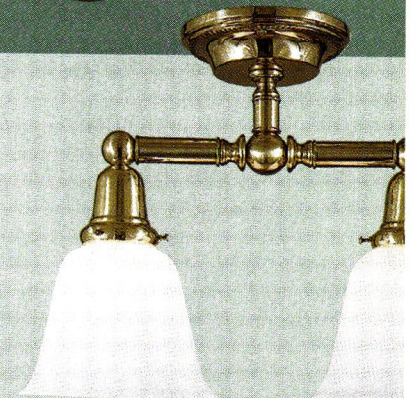
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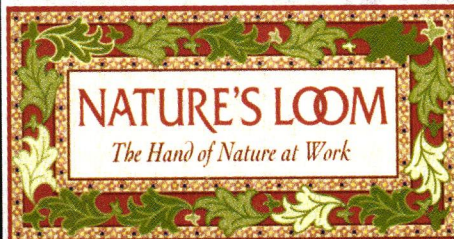
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VISITS

48 House of a Different Color

Banish fear of color! Saturated hues true to a Georgian house's past make it vibrant and timeless.

BY REGINA COLE

HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR

54 New England Colonial Revival

Literary women in the Piscataqua region of coastal New England had a pivotal role in shaping the sensibilities that are central to the Colonial Revival today.

BY THOMAS JOHNSON

INTERPRETIVE KITCHENS

63 Colorful Kitchens

Color lends delicious personality in three very different kitchens.

BY PATRICIA POORE

PERIOD INTERIORS

70 The Beaux Arts

It never trickled down to the less-than-wealthy, but the style's influence on America's architecture was enormous.

BY REGINA COLE

72 Coastal High Style

The Harlow House is a late Beaux Arts exemplar with a glamorous new life.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANNY PROVO

HISTORY GARDENS

78 Desert Landscape

The oldest succulent garden in California is at The Huntington, and it is an unearthly display of color and form.

BY GARY LYONS

BOOKS

84 The Art that is Life

Only twelve years ago, the exhibition of American Arts and Crafts objects startled the audience with its functional artistry.

84



48

8 Editor's Welcome  
The publisher makes an appearance.

12 Letters

17 Furnishings  
Mural fragments, ash-splint baskets, things for the cook's room, and Colonial Revival display.

24 News & Views  
People, places, and the Ranch house comes of age.

28 Other Voices  
The laundry room.

34 History of Furniture  
The architect as design deity couldn't leave it at the bare walls. He had to control the work in its entirety.

40 Decorator's Know-How  
How to hang period artwork.

92 Ask the Editors  
Displaying a collection; reproduction fabric; defining bed coverings.

97 History Travel  
Along California's redwood coast: Eureka and Ferndale.

106 Resources  
Find it here—or send away.

114 Motifs  
Every culture has its own distinctive version of the fret.

**ON THE COVER:** *White woodwork and Arts and Crafts-influenced paper betray Colonial Revival sensibilities at the Sarah Orne Jewett House. Cover photograph by Sandy Agrafiotis.*



17

NOVEMBER 1999

63



# What publishers do

HERE'S ONE THING OURS DOES: worries so that I don't have to. I handle content (the glamour in the not-always-so-glamorous world of publishing). He handles ledger sheets. I take on the regular but intermittent stress of printer's deadlines. He handles the unrelenting stress of our being an independent little fish in the big ocean of magazine mega-companies. Years ago, when we didn't know any better, Bill and I got it into our heads that we could go around starting magazines without a multi-million-dollar warchest, a television station, and our



own newsstand distributor. For most of the years since, I've been having a wonderful time as a writer and editor. Bill's been sweating over mail results. Sometimes I feel I should apologize for having so much fun. ■ This is all by way of saying thank you—to Bill and a lot of other people. Nothing makes you appreciate the things you've taken for granted as when you're sick. Recently I had a particularly nasty pneumonia that took six weeks out of my normal life. (Isn't it strange how you can convince your-

self you don't have time to take a nap, yet very little in the world is affected if you lie in bed for a month and a half?) Life went on and issues went to the printer. Inga Soderberg and Claire MacMaster in our art department deserve profuse thanks and praise, because it was the two of them who ultimately massaged every page in two magazines and got them out the door. Our wonderful editors took up my workload and did me proud. Our dear friend and West Coast contributing editor, Brian Coleman, sent spectacular flowers, and many others sent their best wishes. I sincerely thank you all. ■ Since my illness, publisher Bill O'Donnell has been more visible (there's the silver lining), contributing to issues and interacting with the creative staff. In fact, I even convinced him to show up for the editor's page photo this time—his first appearance in the five-year history of this magazine. Thank you, Bill, for worrying us this far.

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Patricia Poore

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Inga Soderberg

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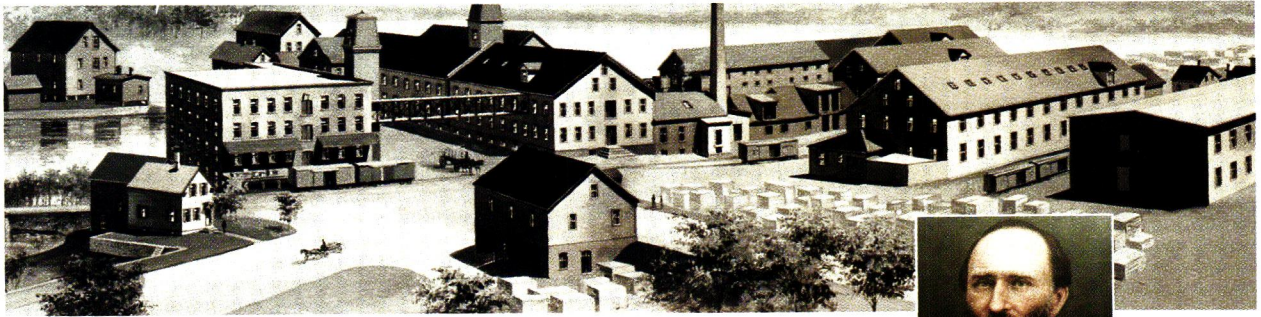


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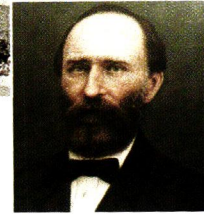


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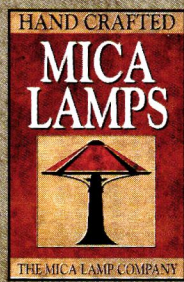
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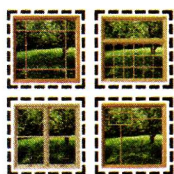
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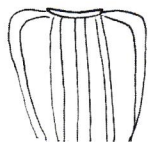
## letters

### FURTHER FACTOIDS

HAVING JUST FINISHED reading Myrna Kaye's article on "False Funny Factoids" [September 1999], here is one I thought you might want to add to the list. A realtor in my area who advertises as your "unique and historic homes specialist" was hosting an open house at a newly listed Craftsman Bungalow. During the open house we were told that they were called "Craftsman" because Sears built them . . . Craftsman *tools*, don't you know!

—LORETTA GRAHAM  
Santa Ana, Calif.

THE STORY OF "Fawbits" [Fictional Account Without Basis In Truth] interested me enough that I read the whole article. It reminded me of a visit to Monticello in 1955,



when we were told that the dining room chairs with the dip in the back were turned backwards after dinner and the dip was a chin rest. I've always been suspicious of that story. Is it another "fawbit"?

—BARBARA FONTAINE  
Park City, Utah

### WARM REACTIONS

THANK YOU! Thank you! Thank you for going to six times a year. The best just got better!

—DEL HOPE  
Kansas City, Missouri

I LOVE READING Dan Cooper's articles in OHI. [Dan has written about room screens, French furniture, and more for our "History of Furniture" department—eds.] He seems to be the only one out there with a sense of humor! This business of renovation/decora-

tion is such a serious sport that his voice is like a breath of fresh air, albeit a very educated, informed breath. Keep him employed, please.

—CONNIE GARNETT  
Elkins, W.V.

P.S. Dan: Know any good musician jokes?

### REALITY CHECK

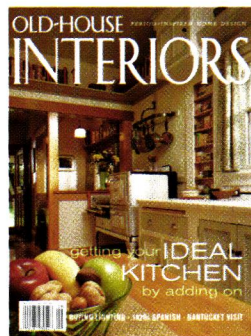
YOU ASKED FOR reader comments so off I go . . . while attending staff meetings in another state I stayed

with a family that lives in a "starter castle" in one of those big subdivisions populated with huge homes and garages with more cars than we will ever own. Everything was only a couple of years old; the master bathroom was bigger than some bed-

rooms. My "old house" seemed a little weary and shabby. Why shouldn't it: It has enfolded my husband and our five children; now three young grandchildren come through grandma's back door looking for the box of toys in the family room.

*Old-House Interiors* is a lovely magazine and I like to see the lovely homes and interiors. What I would like to see, and read about, is a bit more reality. We have an old Georgian home that was not well taken care of by the previous owners. I still have bathrooms to redo. I'd like to see some pictures with baskets by the back door filled with balls, bats, skateboards; or a swing set in the backyard. All old-house owners can't afford decorators and the skilled workmen and women that seem to be a part of magazines.

Perhaps once in a while you might have an article relating to the realities of what some old-house families



have done, lived through, challenges they've had; it could even be humorous, too, [with] before and after pictures.

—PAM AHEARN  
Hammond, Indiana

*We edit pictures as well as copy to present "best case" examples for inspiration. Magazines are part fantasy. Rest assured that the basket full of bats and balls exists everywhere—and so does the smelly dog, the trash, the room yet undone. I know firsthand!* —PATRICIA POORE

#### OLD APPLIANCE CLUB

THANK YOU so much for the article about the West Coast Bungalow in your July issue. Olivia Drescher has done a wonderful job of restoring this home without overwhelming its original style.

I particularly appreciate the information on the vintage stove. It is so nice to see vintage stoves enjoyed for their looks as well as their cooking ability. Many of the stoves from the '20s, '30s, and '40s have survived and are being used and enjoyed again.

Stove restoration is a dying art. It has become difficult to find a craftsman in many locations. Many modern appliance repair shops do not know where to obtain parts, or where to have original parts restored.

Information about the purchase of vintage stoves and stove restorations can be found on the Internet by searching "antique stoves" or by writing to the official magazine of The Old Appliance Club at The Old Road Home, P.O. Box 65, Ventura, CA 93002. Either of these sources can put you in touch with the stove shop nearest you.

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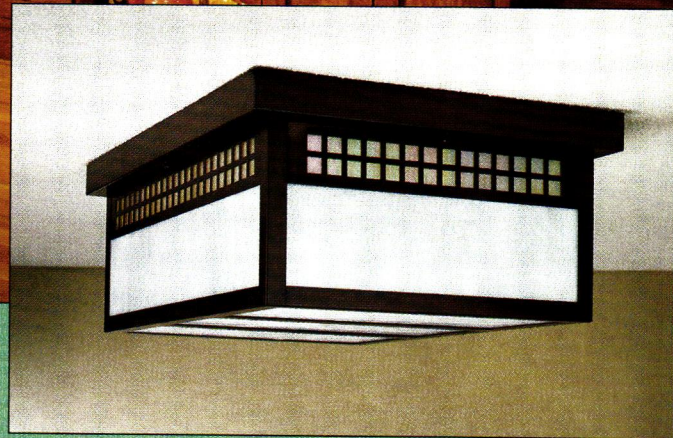
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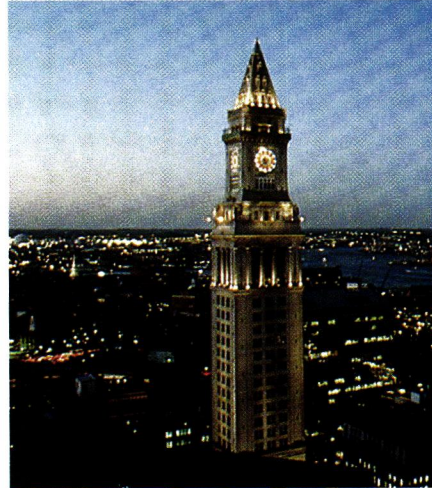


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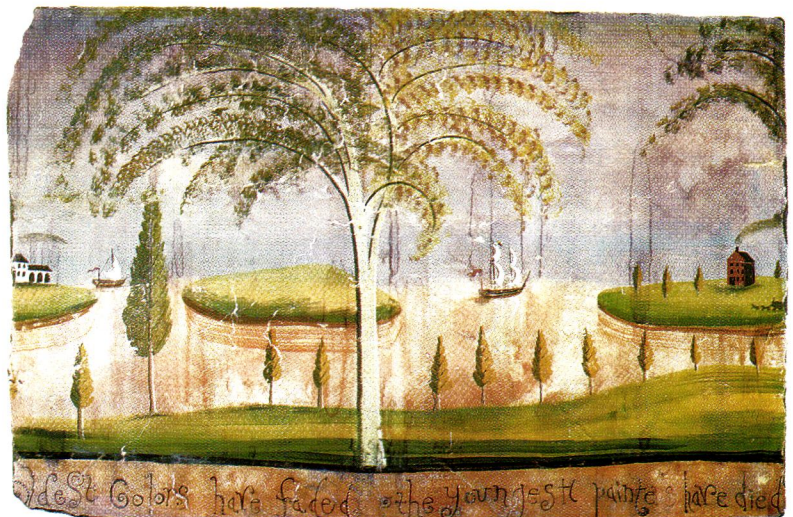


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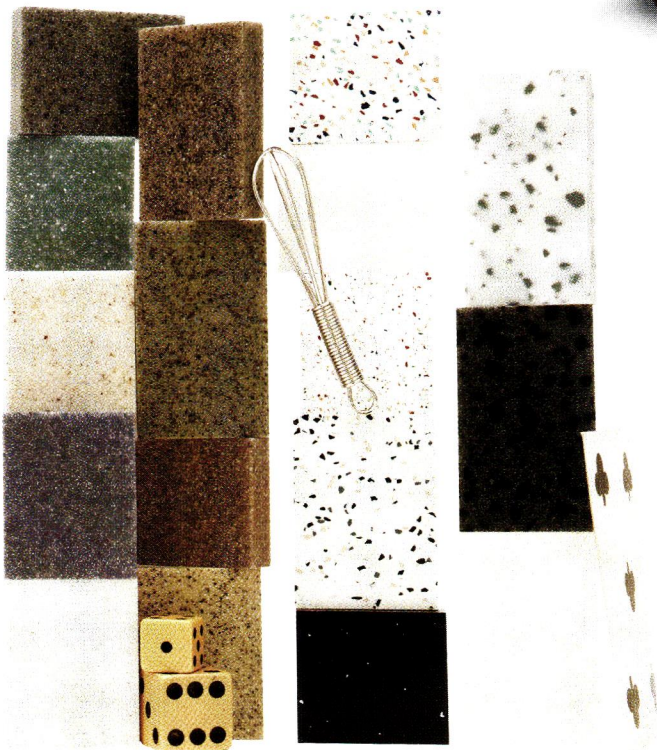


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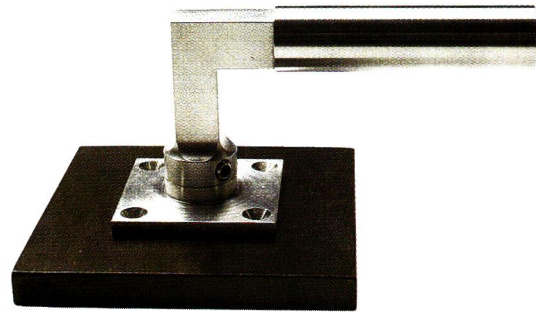


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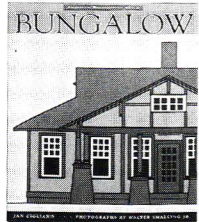


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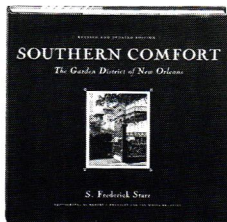
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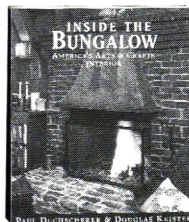
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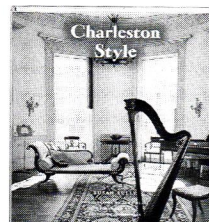
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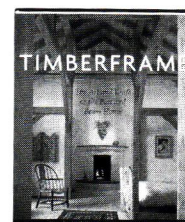
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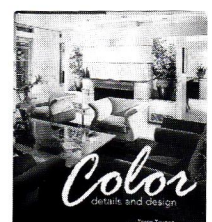
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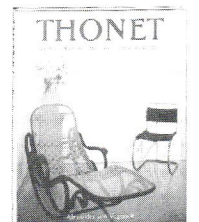
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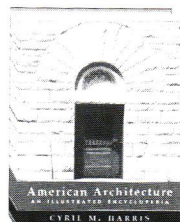
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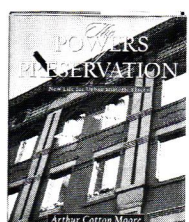
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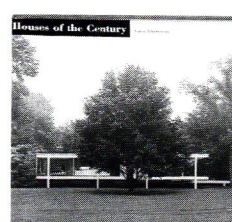
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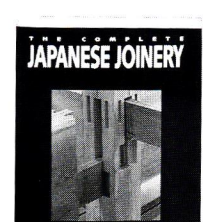
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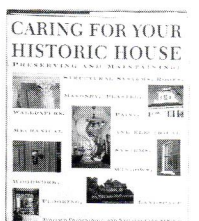
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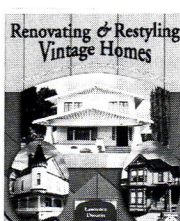
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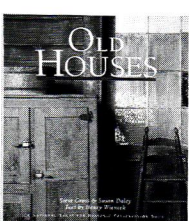
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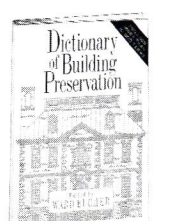
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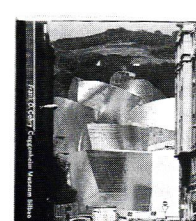
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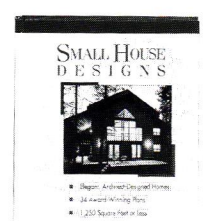
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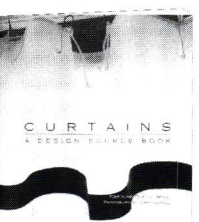
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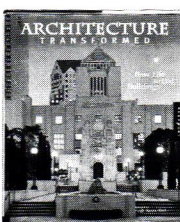
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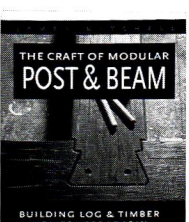
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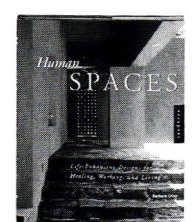
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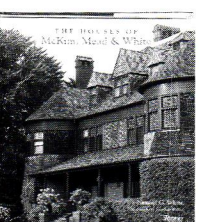
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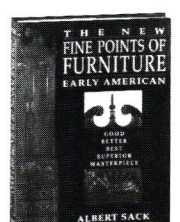
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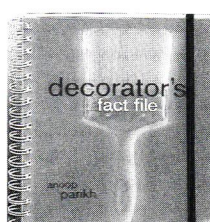
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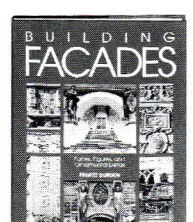
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A collection is most effectively displayed as a group. Here's a Colonial Revival wall curio cabinet for the pretty breakables. \$250, from Butler.

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Hooked rugs were especially loved by collectors a hundred years ago. Reproductions of historic examples are made by Old Order Amish women, who hook strips of hand-dyed wool fabric into burlap. From Traditions, \$360 to \$1,575; call (518) 851-3975 for retail locations, or order from SPNEA: (617) 570-9105.



### ◆ One If By Land . . .

The Americana chandelier from Framburg brings home a period sensibility with white glass, brass, and oak. Approximately \$500; call (800) 796-5514 for a retail outlet.



### Priscilla Lives ▶

Are they called "Priscilla curtains" because they're reminiscent of the woman who said, "Speak for yourself, John Alden"? Wide ruffle curtains and a matching shade from Country Curtains come in bleached or unbleached white muslin, from 30" to 90" long. \$28.75 to \$43.50. Call (800) 456-0321.

### ◆ Colonial Revived

Wallace Nutting designed this Cannonball bed; today it's made by Berea College students in wild cherry or walnut. No stains are used. Prices range from \$2,250 to \$3,150, depending on size and wood. Call (800) 347-3892.



### Tea Party ♥

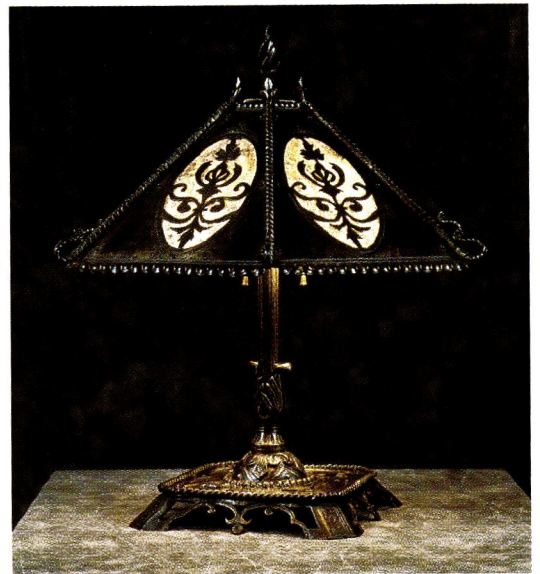
Tea caddies shaped like pears or melons were popular with a population for whom tea had both symbolic and stimulating properties. From The Federalist, prices range from \$195 for a 6-inch apple to \$335 for a 9-inch pineapple. Call (203) 625-4727.



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Few things get more beautiful with age, but the older the stone, the lovelier. Paris Ceramics salvages limestone, then cleans and sorts the flags for today's homes.

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Since 1903 Pewabic Pottery has been made in Detroit, where its 1907 Tudor Revival building is open for tours.

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# news & VIEWS



## WENDELL GARRETT'S DEFLECTIONS

Author of superb books on American architecture and interiors; Senior Vice President at Sotheby's; Editor-at-Large, *The Magazine Antiques*: His shadow is so long, we thought Wendell Garrett must have been *born* writing with confidence. But "coming from California, I didn't even know what an antique was. I wanted to study medicine," he assures us. A professor encouraged his interest in history, urging him to join the then-fledgling graduate program at Winterthur. Garrett calls his career a "series of accidents," crediting a teacher with each deflection. His take on today's antiques mania: "We all have a past worthy of study, and objects are three-dimensional documents. The more uncertain the future, the more comforting the past." His own new interest: the burgeoning world of electronic auctions.

## Restoration and Renovation in Charleston

Locals say that Charleston, South Carolina, is where the Ashley and the Cooper Rivers come together to form the Atlantic Ocean. It's also the fitting site for this fall's Restoration and Renovation Conference, to be held at the Westin

Francis Marion Hotel and the Lightsey Convention Center November 7-9.

Much of the *Old-House Interiors* staff will be there, as will experts familiar in these pages. For information, call (978) 664-6455. In Charleston, you must stroll its historic streets, so treat yourself to a copy of *The Buildings of Charleston*, written by Jonathan Poston of the Historic Charleston Foundation. Call (843) 724-8484 to order a copy.

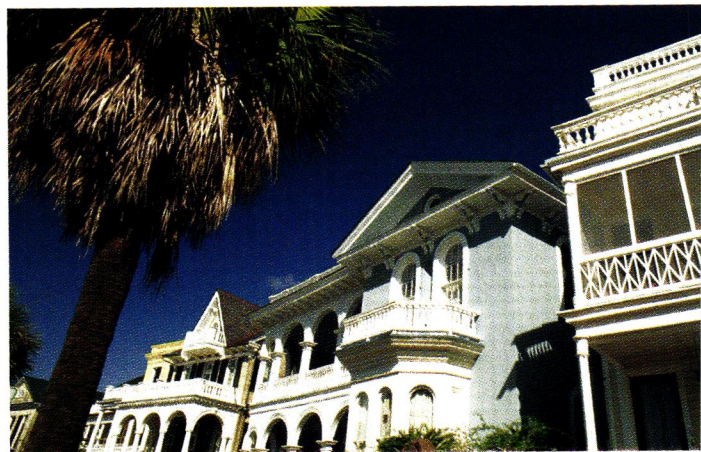
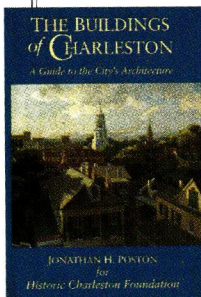
## www.homeportfolio.com

Check the performance of your stock portfolio more than once a day? Here's an alternative: Check your homeportfolio instead, and you can even do a little shopping. The website is a cyber-mall for high-end furniture, fixtures and fittings for houses old and new. Window shoppers can spend a whole day browsing the "product explorer." Time-pressured shoppers can search the database and go straight to, say, a claw-

foot tub by Waterworks. Point, click, buy.

The site does have sponsors with "virtual brochures." But unlike other company-sponsored websites, homeportfolio.com seems to have plenty of editorial integrity. Listed companies don't have to "pay to play." The list is long and top quality.

One complaint: pricing info can be hit or miss. One conservatory was spec'ed out in every detail ("triple [continued on page 26]



“Architecture is beginning, always beginning. It was not made by the Greeks nor by the Romans. It wasn't even made in the Georgian Period. It is something that has to be made afresh all the time, as life, as opportunity, as growth changes.” —FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, ARCHITECT, IN 1940.



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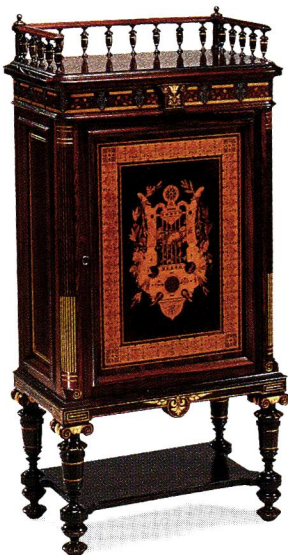
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wall polycarbonate panels in black . . . finial kit"). But list price?: \$8,000–\$100,000. Quite a range.

### American Victorian

For devotees of 19th-century American furniture, the most interesting museum exhibit right now is at the Munson–Williams–Proctor Institute in Utica, New York. "Masterpieces of American Furniture" presents more than 65 superb examples, many of them on public view for the first time. Among the artisans represented are Belter, Boudouine, Finlay, the Herter



Brothers, Roux, and Tiffany & Co. After the show leaves Utica on October 31, you'll be able to see it at the Cincinnati Art Museum from February 18 through May 28, 2000. An illustrated exhibition catalogue is available; to order copies, or for more information, call the Munson–Williams–Proctor Institute at (315) 787-0000.

## The Ranch Arrives

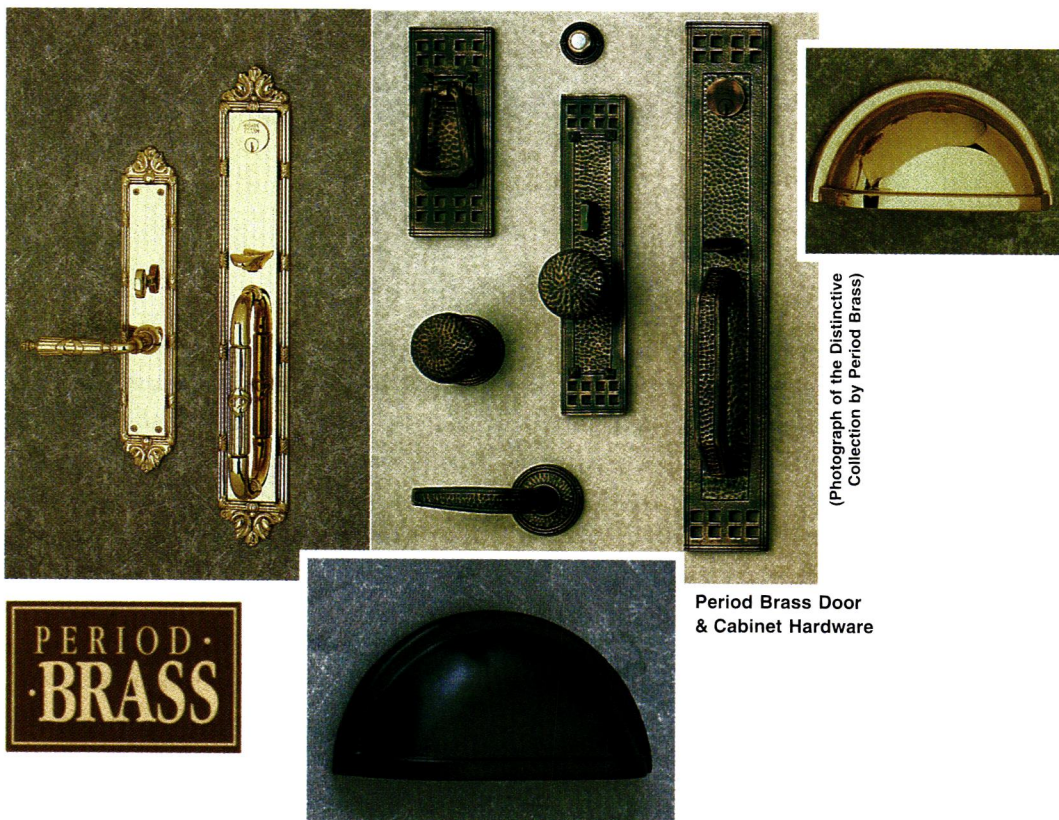
Preservationists in the 1970s used to joke that we'd all quit when the Ranch became historic. That just shows how uninformed we were. Like "Victorian" and "bungalow," the word "ranch," overused and often misapplied, had devolved into a dirty word; all three were long associated with the worst examples of their times. Study up and you'll find the extraordinary, idealistic modern designs of architect-builder Cliff May and other California dreamers. Today Hollywood moguls live in early Ranches; HG-TV has aired a persuasive hour-long documentary on the style; Phoenix includes Ranches in their historic buildings survey; and the first museum Ranch has opened (see below). Right now, a graduate student somewhere is no doubt writing a thesis on the split-level.



**OPEN HOUSE** The Wilson House in Temple, Texas, built in the late '50s by plastics king Ralph Wilson Sr., is the first suburban Ranch-style house museum and a bona-fide historic landmark. The house was inspired by a 1946 design by Richard Neutra and is typical of modern "model" homes of the period; inside, however, it was a test site for the use of plastic laminate—as wall finish, tub enclosure, cabinet facing, countertop, even furniture and decoration. Wilsonart International paid for the recent restoration privately, realizing that the house is a significant historical document (as well as a source of corporate pride). It has been furnished with classic pieces by Saarinen, Nelson, and the Eameses. The Ralph Sr. and Sunny Wilson House, located approximately 100 miles north of Austin, Texas, offers tours by appointment. Call (254) 773-9898.

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## Laundry

BY AKIKO BUSCH

THINGS, LIKE PEOPLE, can show up in the wrong place at the wrong time. The faltering marriage of a couple I know went beyond reconciliation when an unfamiliar blue handkerchief unexpectedly appeared in the dryer. Although this was a revealing moment in the pair's particular gender relations, such occurrences are routine in the laundry room. And anyone who has ever done a load of wash knows this: If the domestic realm is a metaphor for our cultural values, then the laundry room is the place where relationships between men and women reveal themselves most explicitly, most precisely, and most poetically. Current lore, as well as history, is filled with examples of this.

In the vast country houses of Victorian England, doing the laundry was considered women's work. And while most families did not actually live on such estates, of course, these rural mansions and manors served as reference points for how the middle class *hoped* to live. While in a less rigid hierarchy housecleaning and cooking might have been carried out by men as well as women, the wash was women's work alone. And wherever women were found in isolation, there was the potential for rendezvous. Throughout history, the place where laundry gets done—be it by the creek or in a freestanding shed—has been the province of courtship.

To remove its steam and smell from the rest of the house, as well as to provide enough space for drying clothes, the laundry was often placed far from the main building. This meant it tended to be near the stable, where

the presence of loitering grooms and stable hands suggested possibilities for romantic interludes to the often willing laundresses. Historian Mark Girouard points out in *Life in the English Country House* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980) that "As far as sexual segregation was concerned, the laundry was the Achilles heel of the Victorian country house." The mistress of one such estate is said to have described the laundry as "nothing but a brothel," adds Christina Hardymont in her book *Home Comfort* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1992).

The mechanization of the laundry did little to diminish its association with romance, and the modern-day laundromat holds out similar promises. From generations of TV commercials, we know, for instance, that this is where the naive bachelor is set straight by the single woman more advanced than he in the enigmas of detergents, bleach, and fabric softeners. To encourage the exercise of the libido while people wait for the spin cycle, the managers of some urban laundromats have been known to outfit them with potted plants and mini bars.

A man I know, now happily married, reports that doing laundry has become one of his domestic tasks. He admits that his skill in this area is due not to any enlightened attitude toward housework but to this years of bachelorhood when going to the laundry was synonymous with meeting women. Aside from being better for your health and cheaper than the local saloon, the laundromat was an easier place to pick up and screen potential mates. Just by glancing at a [continued on page 30]

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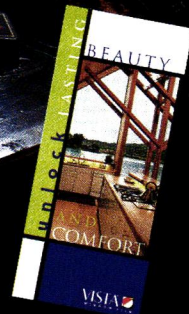
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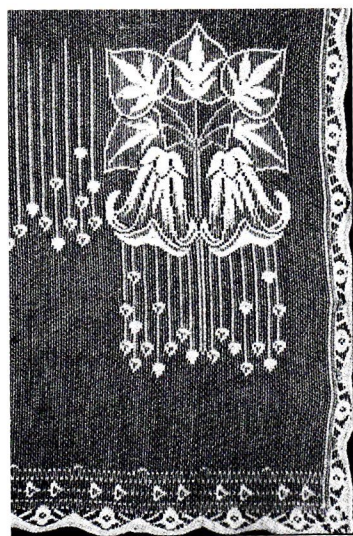
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woman's wash, he could discern the relevant facts of her life: The presence of a live-in boyfriend, husband, or children would all be made clear the instant she transferred the contents of the laundry bag into the machine. And if the clothes she unloaded indicated that she was unattached, the next forty-five minutes could be filled up with overtures.

These days, the laundry is no longer the domain of women. As the love story between two men in the eighties film *My Beautiful Laundrette* blossoms, the place gets renovated and transformed. This is about as far as you can get from conventional notions of who does the wash. But while the film challenges discriminations of any kind, it continues to reinforce the assumption that the laundry is a place of romance. In more recent film history, *Dirty Laundry* is a romantic comedy documenting the sexual vagaries and blunders and ensuing marital troubles of a New Jersey dry cleaning king. “Infidelity, Jealousy, Revenge . . . It All Comes Out in the Wash,” reads the promotional copy for the movie.

I wonder if there is something else in the act of washing clothes that arouses the senses, if there is a deeper reason why the laundry serves as a landscape of courtship. I suspect this has something to do with the idea that the laundry is a metaphor for secrets. After all, “airing our dirty linen” is the term we use for being too public with our private lives. A friend who's a smoker has run her own informational survey and found that women who are clandestine smokers often hide their cigarettes in their laundry baskets, and the annals of Alcoholics Anonymous also document that it is a favored place to conceal the gin bottle. Perhaps it is

this essential association with privacy that gives the laundry its link with eroticism. Washing one's clothes is at once an intimate and functional act, and there is something provocative about such ambiguity.

This is a room with a story to tell. No surprise, then, that it has established a literary tradition of its own. It seems we have a compulsion to document what we have washed, and the laundry list is a constant in the archives of domestic literature. Even the term “laundry list” has become a generic reference for any kind of compulsive itemization. Such tallies, in their details of household minutiae, work as a roll call for the events of daily life, shorthand for what we do, what we eat, with whom we sleep.

Not all of us, of course, do our wash in public laundromats, and as the labor of laundry moved indoors to private domestic space, its erotic opportunities somewhat diminished. Who does the wash, and where they do it, reflect our attitudes toward sex, work, and time. While urbanites can send out their wash, only those with greater resources—in both city and suburb—are able to give the laundry a room of its own. The laundry room, in fact, was not part of the original plan in the march toward modern efficiency. When industrial washing machines were first introduced to the home during the 1920s, advertisements featured them in kitchens, lined up with other household appliances. To put these machines in a separate room was perceived not as a luxury, but as a step backward.

That the laundry room has again become a desirable fixture of wealthy households speaks to our ambiguous relationship with domestic rituals. In this sense it is like the kitchen. We do all we can [continued on page 32]

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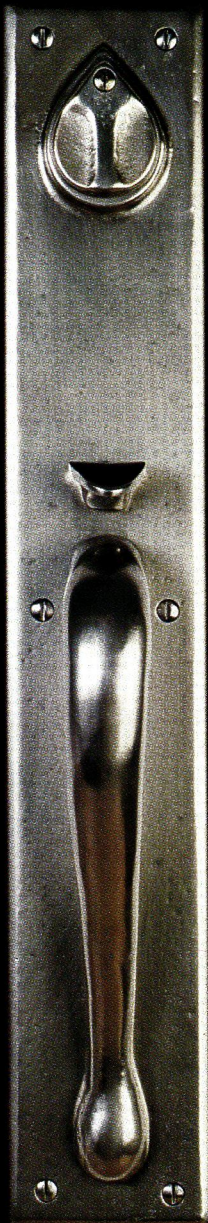
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to find appliances that will reduce the time and space needed for household tasks. Yet just as soon as we find the right labor-saving device, we look for ways to recover the rituals we have lost. That a traditional laundry room is coveted by many contemporary homeowners says something of the renewed appeal of these outmoded domestic rituals.

THIS WAS CERTAINLY true in the house I grew up in during the sixties. In our kitchen we had installed an ambitious innovation that had recently come on the market, a combination washer/dryer (the motion of its inner cylinder both washed and tumbled-dry our clothes). When it became clear that the clothes emerging from it were neither clean nor dry, my mother replaced it with a conventional washing machine.

The question then arose, where to dry the clothes? She promptly strung up a line in the grove of locust trees in the back of the house, and for the following twenty years this was where we dried clothes. On cold or wet and subfreezing days we might use some jerry-rigged drying racks indoors, or the upstairs banister. That the dryer was never replaced was a fact I have long attributed to misguided family thrift. But there was also something poetic about a string of blue pillowcases, a row of white shirts, or a single linen tablecloth hanging under the trees. Add to that the fresh scent of line-dried clothes, and I now suspect that there was a different reason why my mother never replaced the dryer in all those years. She liked it better this way.

As we aspire to a more integrated approach to housekeeping, a laundry room seems every bit as archaic as Catherine Beecher's nine-

teenth-century writings about the domestic sciences. A social reformer, Beecher encouraged women to foster the moral development of their families by creating efficiently run households. And while her views on technology were progressive for her time, her sexual stereotyping of housework was all too traditional. Too, synthetic fabrics have made it easier to clean clothes; and the idea of spending a lot of time sorting, soaking, bleaching, washing, and ironing them has long been rejected.

So today we fit our washers and dryers into some jerry-built space in the kitchen, basement, or garage. And if these machines do have a room of their own, it tends to be called a "utility room"—a neutral designation that has no gender significance whatsoever. We are as likely to find a toolbox there as a bottle of bleach. It is probably nothing but good sense to welcome it. This often small space is filled with justice, showing us, very specifically, how gender barriers at home may gradually dissolve and how domestic labor might be shared more equitably. That said, I can't help thinking of my mother's clothesline and the random ballet of tablecloths and dresses under the locust trees. Stretched from tree to tree, it spelled out its own simple calligraphy about the small, impractical, and ever personal gestures that remain essential to the comforts of home. ♦

*Reprinted from the book Geography of Home: Writings on Where We Live by Akiko Busch. ©1999 Princeton Architectural Press. \$19.95. To order call (800) 722-6657.*

AKIKO BUSCH lives in a two-hundred-year-old New England farmhouse with her husband and two sons.



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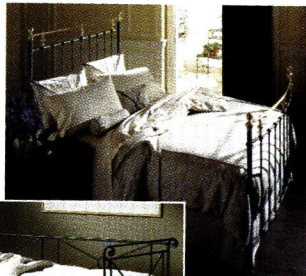


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*Architects haven't always limited their creativity to matters of structure and façade. Some who designed the four walls also designed everything within them, including the furniture.*



## Furniture of the Gods BY DAN COOPER

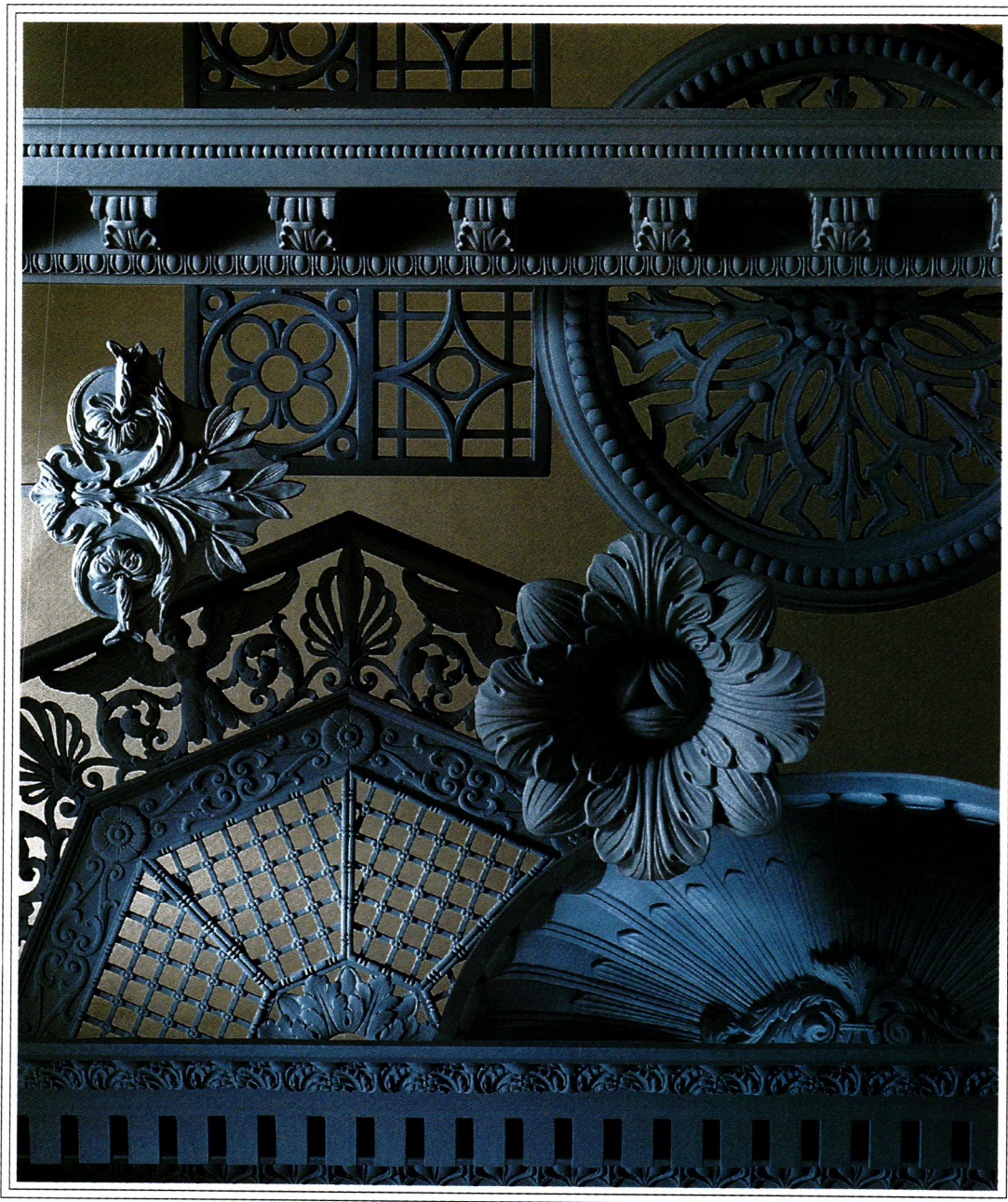
**S**HEETROCK. Freshly primed, Sheetrocked walls seem to be the point at which today's architect wipes his hands, pats the client on the back, and proclaims that He Is Finished. No paint, no wallpaper, maybe a built-in bench in the mud-room or a media cabinet in the great room, but the "decoration" of a structure is invariably left to the clients or their interior designer.

This wasn't always the case. In recent memory (historically speaking) the architect was the Creator, looking out upon the structural darkness and saying "Let there be a foundation!" And he saw that it was good and continued designing, right down to the brass toilet-seat hinge. The architect-deity of times past, unlike his colleague of today, perfected every nuance of his personal Eden.

As soon as humans moved out of caves and [continued on page 36]

**TOP:** Charles and Ray Eames' aluminum dining chair, 1959. **RIGHT:** The great Scots architect Robert Adam designed classical buildings and furniture—and such ornamentation as this London ceiling.





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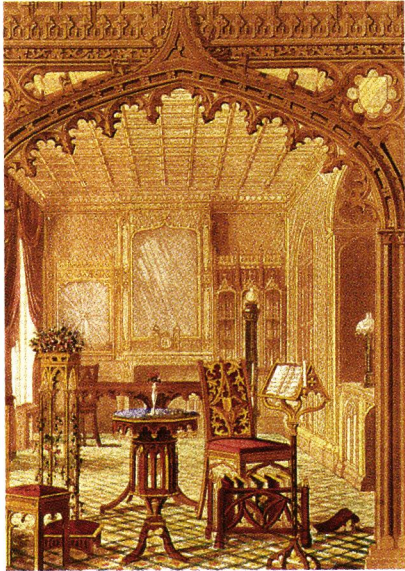
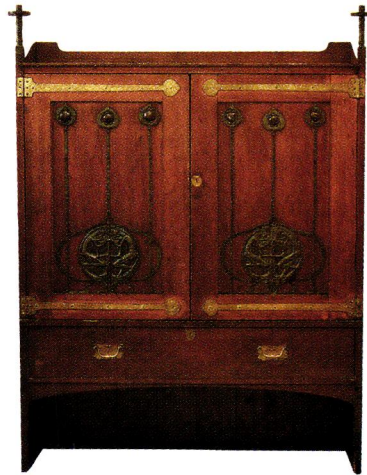
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A Mackintosh linen cupboard (ca. 1895) is reminiscent of the designs of C.F.A. Voysey. It also has strong design ties to Mackintosh's later buildings. It was originally stained green.



**LEFT:** This frontispiece of *Pugin's Gothic Furniture* by A. C. Pugin (A. W. N. Pugin's father) was published in Ackerman's *Repository of the Arts* (1827). **BELOW:** Frank Lloyd Wright, chief among micro-managing architect-deities, designed fully integrated environments like this one at the Willets house. He might even design an evening dress for the mistress of the house.

started constructing simple huts, they discovered that they needed a bigger place just to contain their offspring's toys. That an architect or Master Builder (as some were called) would make the eventual leap to designing interiors and furniture is obvious; what artisan would not want to complete a project, treating it as a work in its entirety?

The idea of a building with architecturally integrated interiors in the modern sense began to emerge in England with Inigo Jones (1573–1652). Alas, none of his designs for furniture has survived, although he must surely have made some. Peter Thornton wrote in *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France & Holland*: "One suspects that Inigo Jones, back in the 1620s and 1630s, cannot have been

*The decoration of a structure is invariably left to the clients or their interior designer. This wasn't always the case. The architect-deity of times past perfected every nuance of his personal Eden.*



content to have his neatly ordered schemes ruined by the ordinary run of clumsy Jacobean furniture." Louis XIV's ascension to the French throne in 1660 proved to be a milestone in the built environment: He established a Royal Department of Buildings that not only designed the buildings during his reign, but also commissioned cabinetmakers and upholsterers, and dictated the styles, materials, and motifs with which they were to work. The resultant "look" was thoroughly consistent, inside and out.

The great Scottish architect Robert Adam (1728–92) was one of the first Britons who not only designed magnificent buildings, but also created furnishings that coordinated with his interiors. Adam's spectacular chambers, with their delicate yet

opulent multi-colored plasterwork, were accentuated with his carpets, chandeliers, and furniture.

Rarely did such thematic consistency result as when a Gothic dwelling was created by an architect of note. It is first seen in the 1750s with Horace Walpole's work on Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, England. This large country house, reworked often by Walpole, features a riotous profusion of tracery, quatrefoils, trefoils, and crockets.



The entrance of an 1897 C.F.A. Voysey-designed house in Surrey, England.

In the United States, the most prominent Gothic Revival house is Alexander Jackson Davis's Lyndhurst, in Tarrytown, N.Y. Davis originally built it as Knoll in 1842 and was summoned back for the extensive remodeling in 1864. Every aspect of the structure, interiors, and furnishings bears the mark of that Gothicism's hand.

At the mid-point of the 19th century, Gothicism converted (or evolved, depending on your viewpoint) from a literal, ecclesiastical interpretation to a stylized treatment that became [continued on page 38]

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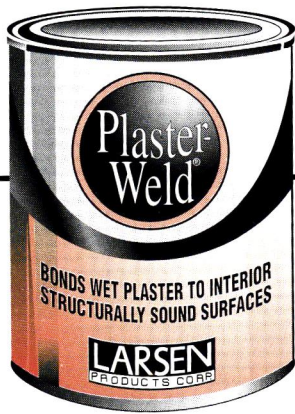
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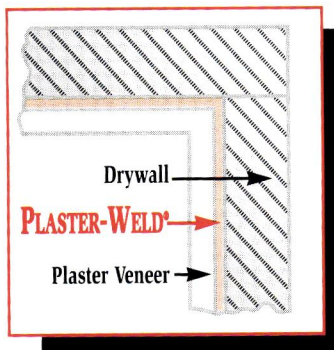
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known as "High" or "Modern" Gothic. The pre-eminent designers were William Burgess and Bruce Talbert in Great Britain and Frank Furness in Philadelphia. Their take on the Gothic adhered to Eastlake's tenets of a flat, superficial surface ornamentation that stressed a medieval-inspired rendering. Gone were the heavy, cathedral-like traceries; in their place stood a more rustic, craftsman-like treatment.

Many great painters of the 19th century designed the frames for their works. The Pre-Raphaelites, Alma-Tadema, and others come readily to mind. When their canvases are viewed with their original frames, together as a whole, a sublime symbiosis is formed and the viewer is given a truer glimpse into the mind of the

trusting wooden pegs. Perhaps part of the current fascination with this period is that each designer's work is an inclusive environment.

Walter Gropius, hero of the Modernists, continued the tradition of the architect/designer, even as he rebelled against the perceived excesses of the past century in his sleek, restrained work. His consistency of design is just as strong and pure as that of the French kings. The husband-and-wife team of Charles and Ray Eames also expressed an overall unity of design in their buildings and furniture. The Eameses were unusual in that they continued to shape modern taste into the 1970s.

So when did the schism between furnishings and structure occur? Granted, not every architect pro-

*Perhaps part of the current fascination with designs dating from the turn of the century is that each designer's work is an inclusive environment.*

creator. This logic continues with the architect and his furnishings; for to regard their structures without the accoutrements deprives us of a greater appreciation.

The Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts movements produced brilliant combinations of coordinated architecture and furnishings. We are all familiar with Frank Lloyd Wright and the Greene brothers, but just as unique and deserving are C.F.A. Voysey and Charles Rennie Mackintosh of Great Britain, Victor Horta of France, Antonio Gaudí of Spain, and H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan of the United States. These architects micro-managed their works to the utmost detail: from chairs to stained glass to textiles to minutiae as seemingly insignificant as hand-cut nails and con-

duced furniture, but we see much more of it in the past than in the present. It appears that the cult of the architect began to disband with the beginning of World War II, when design and the associated creative processes were diverted towards the war effort. After the War, R. Banham noted the demise of "the universal acceptance of architecture as the analogy for design" and "the architect's claim to be absolute master of the visual environment." From this point, as Banham put it: "Furniture is made for man and not to go with the room for which it is designed." ★

DAN COOPER is a partner in Trustworth Historical Design and business manager of J. R. Burrows & Co. He enjoys telling architects how to do their jobs.

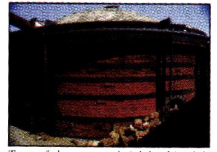
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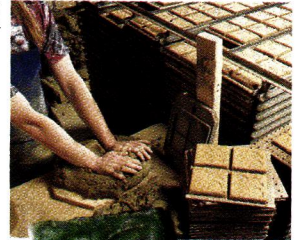


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## Past Fashions in Art BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

“MANY HOUSES show signs of excellent taste in regard to color schemes and furniture, and fail miserably when it comes to pictures and their frames.” So wrote Mabel Tuke Priestman in *Art & Economy in Home Decoration* (1908). Mabel may be long forgotten, but she was right on the money about much of the art that hangs in period homes. Even if you’ve taken pains to perfect the style of your formal rooms, you may not have given much thought to the kinds of artwork the early owners of your house chose to display. If it’s any consolation, selecting art on the basis of personal taste is a truly American characteristic, developed during the last great age of consumerism, the Victorian era.

While you may—or may not—want to recapture the artistic sensibilities of your predecessors, it’s worth taking a look at what might have been hanging beneath the picture moulding decades ago. A nod toward historic tastes in art and its display can only enhance the authenticity of a period room.

AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS loved to picture themselves. While paintings by great portrait artists like John Singleton Copley were few and far between in 18th-century America, any-



one who could afford the services of a portrait artist did so; portraiture was the dominant form of art for formal rooms well into the late 19th century.

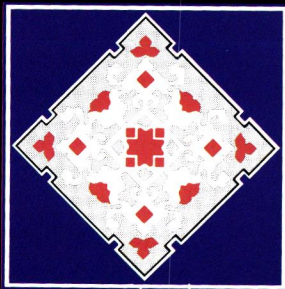
The simplest likenesses were silhouettes (profiles or figures cut from black paper and mounted on a light ground), and profiles rendered in charcoal, pastel, or tinted washes. Early oil portraits ranged from fine, European-style paintings to the crude yet

vigorous works of naïve artists with little formal training. Long prized as examples of an exuberant folk-art tradition, the best of these successfully captured the sitter’s personality, even if they failed to achieve figural proportion or realistic perspective.

The wealthy and fashionable also hung imported sporting prints as well as scenes of everyday life by artists like the [continued on page 42]

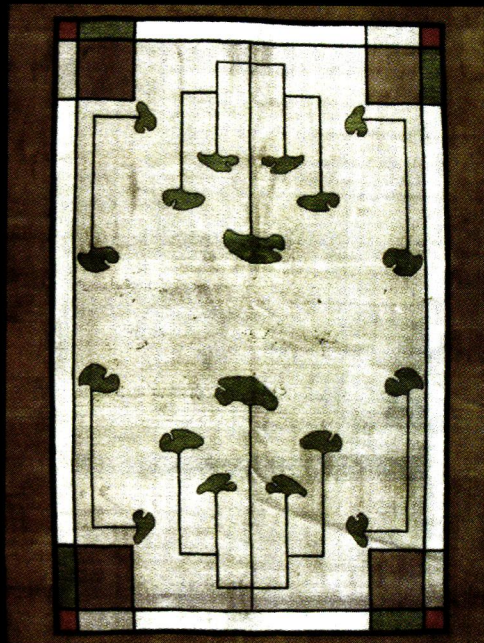
**Victorians loved to display portraits, whether suspended from picture moulding, or mounted on easels. Esteemed leaders like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and naturally, Queen Victoria, were favorite subjects of prints of the day.**





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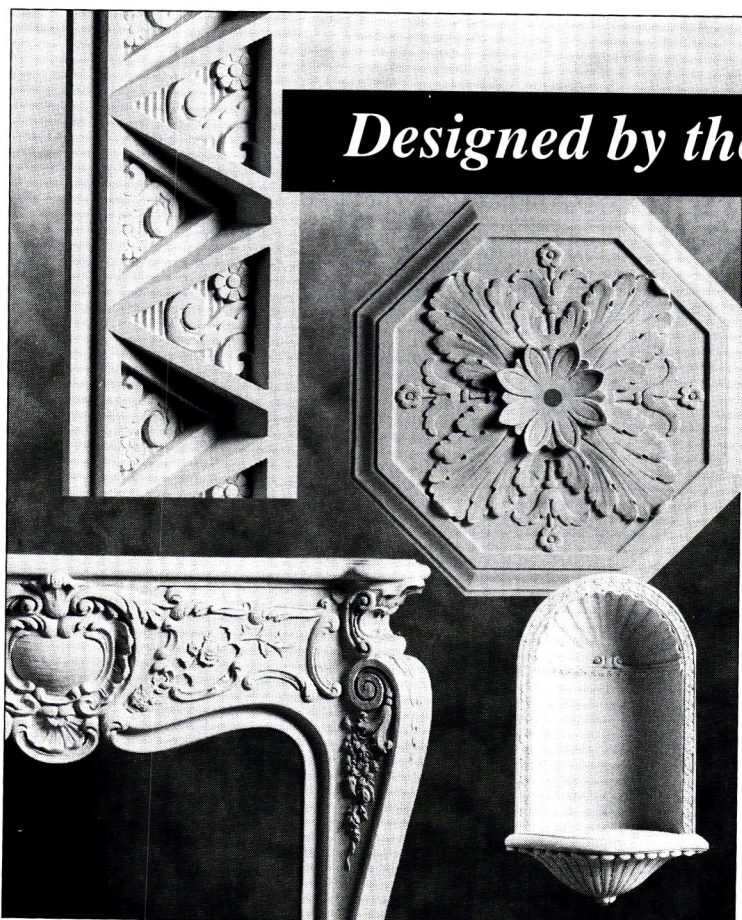


PC-3A The Grafton, a design by Archibald Knox.

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*Clearly, Mr. Currier had struck a nerve. Over the course of a half century, Currier & Ives would print thousands of hand-colored illustrations reflecting nearly every aspect of American life.*

17th-century English illustrator William Hogarth. Maps were popular as well as useful; as early as 1774, a promoter in Charleston sold 300 copies of an engraving of the city seen from the water. In the early years of the Republic, Americans became fascinated with the Greeks, importing prints on classical themes.

Early Americans hung prints and portraits in much the same style as today; they strung a wire behind the frame and suspended the picture from a nail. Maps could be framed, but it was common to hang them from wooden rollers. Outside the best rooms, prints might be sealed with varnish and nailed directly to the wall, unframed.

IN 1840, Nathaniel Currier created a sensation when he issued a full-color lithograph of a catastrophic steamboat fire less than a week after the event. Citizens in every city thronged to buy copies of the great conflagration. Clearly, Mr. Currier had struck a nerve. Over the course of the next half century, Currier & Ives would print thousands of hand-colored illustrations reflecting nearly every aspect of American life, from newsworthy events like fires, natural disasters, and sporting competitions, to landscapes and townscapes, patriotic tableaux and mottos, floral displays, every conceivable species of fish and game—even kissing cherubs.

While many of these mass-produced images seem hopelessly sentimental now, Americans eagerly framed and hung them according to taste and pocketbook. By the middle of the 19th century, however, art was

hardly limited to wall hangings. Members of the emerging middle class exercised a new-found sense of personal expression in the interiors of their homes, bedecking rooms with heroic busts, ceiling murals, art embroidery, and assorted bric-a-brac. Japanese art was so prized that even

picture toward the floor, presumably to give the viewer a better perspective. The geometric shapes formed by the wires—inverted Vs, rectangles, straight lines, and double Vs—were almost as important to the decorating scheme as the pictures themselves.

Art works were usually grouped



**In late-18th-century America, portraits were so popular that anyone who could wield a paintbrush could become a portrait artist, or limner—including sign and house painters, housewives, adolescents, slaves, and free blacks.**

humble homes sported inexpensive Japanese scrolls and palmetto fans.

Portraits of family members, mounted in ornate oval or rectangular frames, still dominated wall art, although most tasteful rooms had a landscape or two. The frames were “dropped,” that is, suspended on wires hung on brass hooks lapped over picture moulding near the ceiling. This had the effect of tilting the

together in what were called art units to take advantage of stationary sources of artificial light. At the end of the era (roughly 1893 to 1914), tasteful middle-class living rooms were dominated by collections of paintings stacked four and five high on every wall. Mantels were as likely to be covered with small framed pictures of family members as ceramic knickknacks. [continued on page 44]

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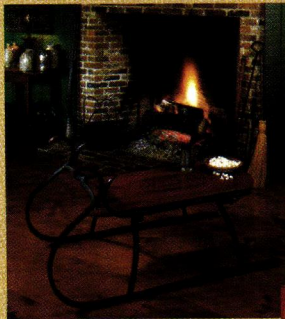
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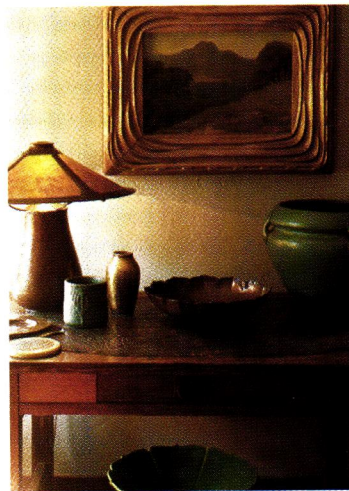
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IF THE VICTORIANS had a tendency to embrace all styles at once, 20th-century homeowners consciously sought to create a more refined sense of the tasteful. The rise of popular magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *House Beautiful* meant that there was no shortage of advice. In 1908, Mabel Tuke Priestman suggested placing a cast-plaster reproduction of a 15th-century frieze over the mantelpiece, then mixing and matching reproductions by such Renaissance masters as Rembrandt, Van Dyck, and Hol-

ceived as and destined to be wall decoration."

A single print had the potential to inspire a suitable decor for an entire room. "By getting one good Japanese print and keying the room to it, success is sure to come," wrote an unknown author in *The Craftsman* magazine, ca. 1915. "The tint of the walls, draperies, color of lights and moveable ornaments of a room can all be selected from a single good though inexpensive Japanese print."

Although Arts and Crafts paintings,



*Arts and Crafts painters brought nature indoors through plein-air landscape painting displayed in handmade frames.*

bein with halftone engravings by 19th-century painters such as Millet, Rossetti, Corot, and Sargent. "I need hardly say," she added, "that in these days pictures must be hung flat, or almost flat, against the wall."

Although Arts and Crafts practitioners advocated sparing decoration for walls, these new-age artisans nevertheless turned out wood-block prints, paintings, watercolors, photographs, batik wall hangings, and murals—plus the metalwork and quartersawn oak frames to hold them.

Japanese wood-block prints were so influential that whole schools of printmaking sprang up. "Most of these works of art were purchased by middle-class consumers, one at a time," writes David Acton in his chapter on New England color-relief printmaking in *Inspiring Reform* (Harry N. Abrams, 1997). "They were con-

prints, and photographs are highly collectible today, it's not likely that they found their way into the majority of bungalows—at least outside the hotbeds near Los Angeles and San Francisco. In San Diego, for instance, "there probably was never a very large local market for Arts and Crafts goods," writes Bruce Kamerling in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California* (Abbeville Press, 1993). "Only rarely does one find a consciously Arts and Crafts interior. Even the presumably enlightened owners of some of [Irving] Gill's most progressive designs frequently furnished their homes with highly ornamental furniture and Victorian bric-a-brac."

Perhaps it's understandable that tastes in art would lag a little behind fashions in interior decoration. In that or any other era, it appears there was no accounting for taste. ♦

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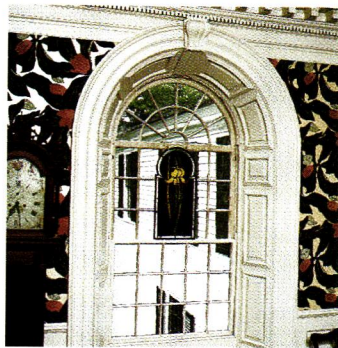
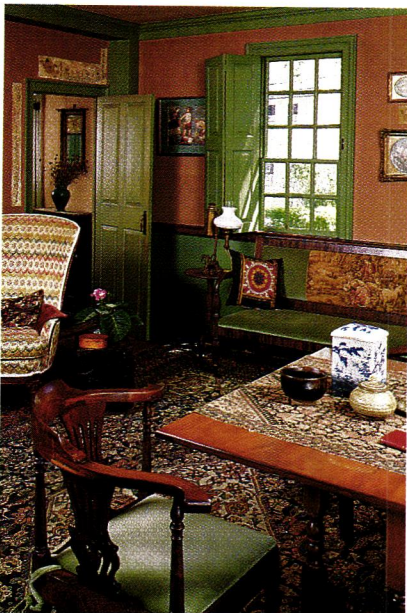
**ACADEMIC GRACE**

*The grandeur of Beaux Arts houses still appeals to us in its historical classicism. (page 70) ▶*



**COLORFUL KITCHENS**

*Whether it comes from a Victorian wallpaper, metallic paint, or a vintage tablecloth, color makes a kitchen delicious. (page 63) ♣*



**THE STYLE THAT ENDURES**

*Literary women from Boston and Maine were in the vanguard of a Colonial Revival that influences decorators today. (page 54) ♣*

**HOUSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR**

*Owners of a 1714 Georgian house appropriately painted walls pumpkin and chrome yellow and Portsmouth green—ahead of their time in 1969. (page 48) ♣*



**DESERT LANDSCAPE**

*Visitors to the oldest cactus garden in California stare incredulously at forms and colors not of this Earth. (page 78) ♣*



LINDA SVENDSEN  
(FAR RIGHT)

# HOUSE *of* *a* DIFFERENT COLOR

This story is about a 1714 Georgian house and its artist-owners. But it is also about color. Fear of color is common to late-20th-century Americans, evidenced by acres of white walls in period homes. When 1970s scholarship showed the bright colors English colonists had loved in brazen combinations, shock waves rocked historical societies from Maine to Georgia. But homeowners Joyce and Mel, who bought their old house in 1969, already knew.

BY REGINA COLE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANDY AGRAFIOTIS



**OPPOSITE:** The living room is vibrant with the owners' artwork and furniture and rugs collected over the years. Ancient wallpaper fragments are over and alongside the door. **ABOVE:** The street façade of the house is pumpkin-colored.







Back when most Americans still thought “colonial” meant dusty blue, Joyce and Mel painted their clapboards pumpkin-colored, and rooms in saturated shades of salmon, green, peach, chrome yellow, and blue. There is also eye-popping marbleizing and graining. Love of color wasn’t the only motive: careful research established the colors as authentic to the house. Shaker and Hepplewhite furniture, colorful walls, richly patterned textiles, and Joyce and Mel’s own modern paintings create a home that’s period-appropriate, yet timeless: it feels as though it’s always looked like this. But when they first came to the neighborhood, “it was covered with asphalt,” says Joyce.

“A 1970 survey said that every house in this district was substandard,” Mel says. “This was originally a parish house that had become a rooming house in the 19th century. During the 1950s the downstairs was a Holy Roller church while the upstairs was a brothel! But nothing was trashed—just covered up. Original hardware was in the attic. In the backyard dump we found the door hinges.”

They also found fragments of two very old wallpapers in the front room. The older, dated circa 1790, was one of the then-new French papers coming into high-style American homes. Respect for the past forbade removal, but Joyce admits to a lack of enthusiasm for wallpaper.

“Don Hickmott, a gifted decorative painter, chose the salmon and green colors in that room from the wallpaper,” she explains. He also found evidence of faux graining and marbleizing, which he replicated. Don



**TOP:** A wing chair covered with flame-stitched fabric is pulled up to the living room fireplace. **LEFT:** The hall from the kitchen leads into the living room.





Above a 17th-century spice cabinet hung on a kitchen wall is a carved wooden fish. From Japan, its function was to counterweigh a turning hearth spit.



LEFT: The large chimney was moved from the center of the house during an early-18th-century remodeling. BELOW: The kitchen mantel has old decorations. Primitive in styling, they are probably original.



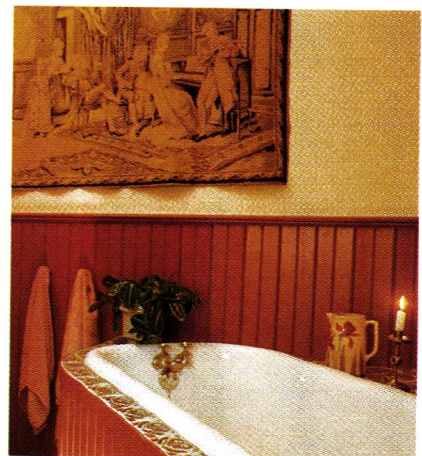




**LEFT:** The master bedroom fireplace and doors are faux-painted to resemble marble. **ABOVE:** Looking down the faux-painted stairs in the front hall. **RIGHT:** Even in the master bath, color prevails.

made extensive use of “Portsmouth Green,” which Joyce identifies as “not so much a color as a process: you put down several coats of putty color, and then you go over them with a glaze of Prussian Blue. Since the Prussian Blue is not very stable, you get this pale green glaze.”

Donald Hickmott, who died in 1997, was eulogized as “the last of the 19th-century painters.” For most of his career, his reputation was that of a local character who despised latex paint, nylon-bristle brushes, aluminum ladders, and who sang the praises of white lead—unavailable since 1970 because of its poisonous nature. Historic preservationist James Garvin said: “His artistry was best shown in



interior work. He painstakingly mixed his pigments, strained his paint through cheesecloth in the time-honored manner, applied the butter-smooth product with perfectly kept brushes, and laid on his paint with precise but effortless strokes that enabled him to outpace two ordinary men.”

Hickmott’s work, spread over much of coastal New England, lives on in Joyce and Mel’s colorful home. ✦

HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR

*New England*  
**COLONIAL  
REVIVAL**

BY THOMAS B. JOHNSON  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANDY AGRAFIOTIS

THE PISCATAQUA REGION of southern Maine is an area rich in landmarks of its colonial past. Of these, few are more prominent today than three homes in York and South Berwick, now museums, that display the decorative tastes, outlook, and social ties of the women who owned them in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These women—author Sarah Orne Jewett, mother and daughter Mary Sowles Perkins and Elizabeth Bishop Perkins, and the mother and step-daughter team of Emily Tyson and Elise Tyson Vaughan—saw the colonial past of the region as inspiration for the creation of homes incorporating room decoration, antiques, and color that evoked the heady days when the riches of the world flowed to the area through its dominance in sea trade. Each took a genuine 18th-century building and transformed it into a personal interpretation of what she perceived the Colonial era to be, and in doing so, became among the vanguard in the region of the style now popularly known as the Colonial Revival.

**The entry hall at the Sarah Orne Jewett House exemplifies the robust forms of the Piscataqua region Georgian style. Built in 1774, it was considered a veritable mansion in its day. Jewett painted the woodwork white and added the Arts and Crafts wallpaper in the late 1880s or early 1890s.**





*These women took genuine 18th-century buildings and transformed them into thoroughly individualistic interpretations of what they perceived the Colonial era to be, and in doing so, became among the vanguard in the style now popularly known as the Colonial Revival.*

Theirs was an aesthetic that focused on colonial buildings, furniture, architectural salvage, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the illusion (and sometime reality) of accumulation over generations. Well before such Colonial Revival icons as Henry Davis Sleeper's Beauport in Gloucester, Massachusetts, John D. Rockefeller's Williamsburg in Virginia, or Henry Francis Dupont's Winterthur near Wilmington, Delaware, these women were creating interiors that still influence decorative tastes today.

The embryonic development of an aesthetic appreciation of the architecture and relics of the colonial era in this region was developed in large part through the thoughts and writings of the South Berwick author Sarah Orne Jewett. Her 1877 novel *Deephaven*, a tale about a gently decaying coastal community with colonial roots (widely thought at the time to represent the town of York), was responsible for enticing a number of late-19th-century visitors to the area. They came to experience its tangle ties with the past. Among these were the Perkinses and the Tysons, whose individual libraries contained copies of *Deephaven*. Like others at this time, they developed a friendship with Miss Jewett and visited her at her family home in the center of South Berwick. Her prominent and strikingly proportioned pre-Revolutionary Georgian mansion dominated the crossroads in the town center. Here was a true touchstone to the colonial glory of the region, yet with a quirk. For, like her friends, Miss Jewett not only appreciated the

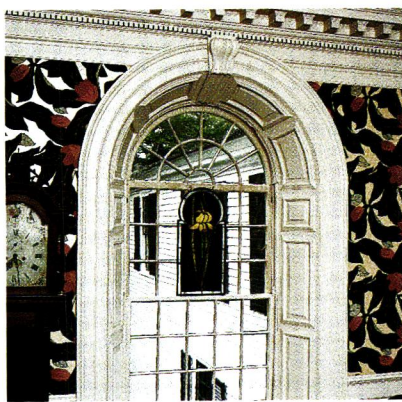
legacies of the American colonial past, but was interested in both the English and American Arts and Crafts movements of her time and their celebration of hand craft. She and others saw these movements as a harkening back to pre-industrial ways, even if their designs did not slavishly copy earlier patterns.

At the Jewett House, today a museum of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

(SPNEA), one can still see a combination of accumulated family furnishings and mementos against a backdrop of Colonial era woodwork, and, in the center hallway, a strikingly patterned Arts and Crafts-period paper accompanied by William Morris carpeting. Jewett's bedroom, unchanged since her time, preserves an Arts and Crafts-inspired American wallpaper in green and gold tones set against soft green paint on woodwork

## COLONIAL REVIVAL INFLUENCES TODAY

America's attraction to Colonial design has never really left us since the Colonial Revival mania of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Even today, designers of modern tract houses include architectural flourishes such as Palladian windows, raised-panel doors, and wooden shake roofs that evoke similar features of genuine Colonial architecture. Tastemakers espouse collecting antiques to personalize interiors, and a flourishing market in antiques and fine reproductions indicates a continuing interest in Colonial-period design on the part of the buying public.



What defines Colonial Revival interior design? Certainly maple, pine, and mahogany furniture in classic pre-1830 styles. Add to that touches of color in lightly worn oriental and hooked rugs, the jewel-like tones of early blown and molded glass, and mellow backgrounds created with either natural wood paneling or colorful wallpapers or wall murals against either classic white or colored woodwork. In the summer homes of the Piscataqua region, light curtains made of

dimity, tied back and trimmed with tatted fringe (or dotted swiss with ball fringe) provided some privacy while maintaining airiness and old-fashioned appeal. In the same vein, tester beds wore tied cotton fishnet canopies above white candlewick spreads, colorful linsey-woolsey coverlets, or jacquard-woven blankets. One of the icons of the Colonial Revival, the tall case or "grandfather's" clock, generally appeared on a staircase landing (as it does at the Jewett, Perkins, and Hamilton houses). The resurgence of fine handcrafts today follows in the tradition of the Arts and Crafts movement in its reliance on old methods of hand manufacture.



**ABOVE:** (clockwise) The flocked wallpaper in the front bed chamber dates from the time the house was built, and was retained by Jewett because of its historical associations. Her bedroom is unchanged since her occupancy. A vignette on a bureau features Bohemian glass and a toby jug in amber tones. **BELOW:** The house still dominates the center of South Berwick. The parlor retains a mid-19th-century wallpaper. **BOTTOM LEFT:** In a bed chamber, a locally made banister-back chair before an optical print paper based on an 1840s original.





salvaged from a demolished 18th-century South Berwick church and reinstalled here in 1886–1888. Re-worked to fit this space and a rear hall in the house, this is one of the very earliest instances in the Piscataqua region of re-use of historic woodwork for decorative intent. As the Colonial Revival movement gained momentum, use of old woodwork in new construction or remodeling would become increasingly popular. In another bedroom, reverence for the past led to the preservation of a faded

18th-century flocked wallpaper. The Jewett house, though primarily unchanged from its colonial form, was enhanced with contemporary decorative touches seen as sympathetic to its early roots. Both the writings and the home of this southern Maine author went on to influence the purchase and development of at least two other Colonial period homes in the immediate area.

IN 1898, EMILY TYSON of Boston and her step-daughter Elise purchased a

run-down, Georgian-style mansion. It was known locally as Hamilton House after its first owner, 18th-century merchant Jonathan Hamilton. Sarah Orne Jewett described the house, now an SPNEA property, in another of her books, *River Driftwood*, as a "... quiet place, that the destroying left hand of progress had failed to touch." Jewett had been familiar with the house since childhood, and hearing of its availability in the winter of 1897, told her Boston friends the Tysons about it. By the spring of the





**ABOVE:** (left and right) One of the true glories of Hamilton House in South Berwick are its magnificent gardens. The garden house incorporates architectural details from a demolished eighteenth-century house. **CENTER:** The view from the front door is framed by the Tysons' reproduction of Hamilton's 18th-century pillar and arch wallpaper. **RIGHT:** The dining room complements the river view with George Porter Fernald's mural wallpaper. The woven straw matting on the floor was a common treatment in the great Colonial Revival summer homes of the Piscataqua region.



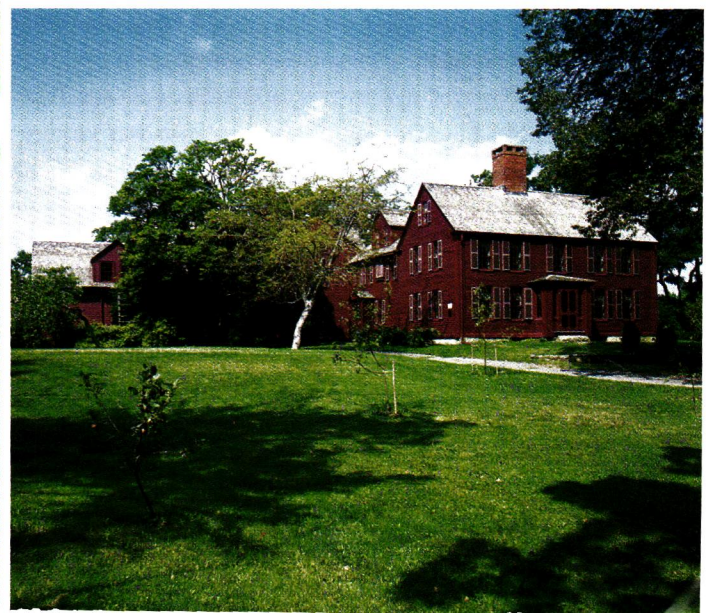
following year they owned the place. It had originally been at the center of the bustling shipping and trade interests of Hamilton, but by the 1890s the wharves were little more than decayed pilings visible at low tide, and the house's grand spaces were occupied by multiple families. Years later, Elise recalled how the finely carved woodwork of the parlor was coal black from the soot of cooking fires in the elegant fireplace.

Yet time had rooted the house deeply in local historical tradition, and the siting was still superb. The Tysons hired Boston architect Herbert W. C. Browne to supervise the renovation of the "wondrous old place" into a summer home that capitalized on its history and setting but incorporated the latest comforts of the day, including bathrooms and sleeping porches. The stateliness of the house was enhanced when the whole structure, including the four tall chimneys, was painted snowy white, with dark green blinds. Removing a 19th-century barn created room for the layout of extensive gardens and the addition of a garden house. Inside, Hamilton House was decorated with American antique furniture, prints, oriental and hooked rugs, and jewel-colored glass set against a backdrop of white painted woodwork, patterned wallpapers, straw floor matting, and dimity curtains. In the hallway, a particular reverence for the past inspired the replication of the original Hamilton-era pillar and arch wallpaper, but other rooms received more contemporary papers. In 1905 and 1906 the most striking decorative feature of the interior, murals by painter George Porter Fernald, were added. These lend an almost dreamy quality to the spaces. The murals have a predominantly blue-green color; their views of river





**LEFT:** White dotted swiss and ball fringe curtains are used throughout the Elizabeth Perkins House.  
**ABOVE:** The parlor has grey woodwork and stenciled walls in the style of Moses Eaton. Perkins collected Arts and Crafts pieces, including a Greene and Greene cigarette box. **BELOW:** Her choice of shades of red for house and shutters is maintained to this day.



reflections of stately buildings (classical in the dining room and local colonial in the parlor) evoke and expand upon the shimmering river and woodland views visible just outside the windows.

ALTHOUGH THEY had summered in the fashionable summer colony of York Harbor since 1890, Elizabeth Bishop Perkins and her mother Mary Soules Perkins decided to buy a dilapidated 18th-century home on the shores of the York River and renovate it for use as a summer home shortly after a visit to South Berwick in the summer of 1898. Winter residents of Manhattan, the Perkins women were drawn to the Piscataqua region by its history and remaining Colonial landmarks. Their purchase

of the old house in York served to solidify their ties here and put daughter Elizabeth on her path as an early advocate of historic preservation. Eventually she was involved in the rescue of at least five historic structures in the area. The summer home she created with her mother remains as one of the region's best preserved and most intact Colonial Revival summer estates, and now belongs to the Old York Historical Society. The rear wing of the house purportedly incorporates the remains of a structure built there in 1686, and the main section was raised in 1730. Between 1898 and 1926 the Perkinses enlarged, renovated, added onto, and otherwise "restored" the structure until it evolved into a twenty-four room mansion set amidst formal gardens stretching to

the banks of the river. The rooms are mixtures of inherited and purchased furnishings combined with color schemes and wall coverings evocative of the muted tones then seen as emblematic of colonial taste. A rich olive tan gives warmth to a morning room, furnished entirely with honey-colored maple furniture, and the cool grey and dark mahogany of the parlor combine with a French Aubusson tapestry carpet to create a more formal interior. Upstairs, bedrooms were outfitted with arched tester beds, airy dotted-swiss curtains, painted floors, and hooked rugs, augmented by colorful wallpapers and prints, glassware, and pieces of art pottery, metals, and ceramics in the Arts and Crafts tradition. In 1920 Elizabeth added a bedroom to the

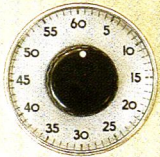
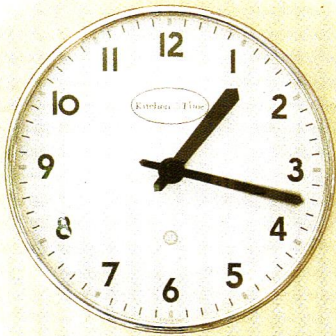
*Well before such Colonial Revival icons as Henry Davis Sleeper's Beauport, John D. Rockefeller's Williamsburg, or Henry Francis Dupont's Winterthur, these women were creating interiors that still influence decorative tastes today.*

## COLONIAL REVIVAL INSPIRATION

Since it has never gone out of style, the Colonial Revival can be re-created in homes today. The furniture of **S. BENT & BROS. (800) 253-3939** may remind you of your grandmother's house; they still make the same pieces at their Gardner, Massachusetts, factory as they did when Gran was buying a maple dining-room set with turned legs. ■ Elizabeth Perkins saw real Moses Eaton stencils in her housekeeper's home and reproduced them in her parlor; you can do so with Moses Eaton Stencil kits from **M. B. HISTORIC DECOR (888) 649-1790**. ■ Cotton ball fringe, scarcer than it ought to be, is available from **WILLIAM N. GINSBURG CO. (212) 244-4539**. ■ Three historic wallpapers at the Perkins House were computer-reproduced by **OLD STONE GRAPHICS (609) 829-1878**. ■ Mercer tile is still available from **MORAVIAN POTTERY AND TILE WORKS** at their shop in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. They have no catalog, but call them at **(215) 345-6722**. ■ Sarah Orne Jewett installed William Morris' original "Tulip and Lily" carpet in the front hall and in bedrooms; you can buy a historical reproduction from **J. R. BURROWS & CO. (800) 347-1795**. The mural wallpapers at Hamilton House were hand-painted; block-printed scenic papers are available today from **CARTER & CO./MT. DIABLO HANDPRINTS (707) 554-2682** and from **ZUBER ET CIE**, available at **CLASSIC REVIVALS (617) 574-9030**.

house for herself. It incorporates eighteenth-century woodwork salvaged from a local house that was being demolished. Stripped and waxed, it was augmented with a brick fireplace based on the design of one in the 1806 wing of York's Old Gaol, and provides a deep amber-toned backdrop to a number of inherited American antique furnishings. Above the desk, near windows looking out to the western horizon and the aqua-green waters of the York River, are shelves of Elizabeth's favorite books, including her well-worn copy of Jewett's *Deephaven*. ✦

THOMAS B. JOHNSON is the Curator at the Old York Historical Society in York, Maine. He has been appointed to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and is the Vice President of Maine Preservation.



**W**HO CAN RESIST the vivid art print; the tomato-red cookstove; ochre dinnerware from Provence, painted with flowers; a vintage tablecloth sprayed with cherries? The best part about an all-white kitchen is how much fun it is to go ahead and *ruin* its architectural purity with accent color. The white kitchen was of course popularized during the era of “germ theory” and “sanitary kitchens,” from the turn of the century

## Colorful Kitchens

through the 1920s. It has been back with us in recent decades. Magazines and architects love white,

but really, how many housewives have ever stayed with the program? Color is the rule; color is good; it’s personal, uplifting, and inexpensive. ■ Here we have three kitchens, each from a different time period, each well designed but with a quirky individualism. In all three—Victorian, Art Deco, and post-War—color brings to life not only the period, but also tells us something special about the owners.

*by Patricia Poore*



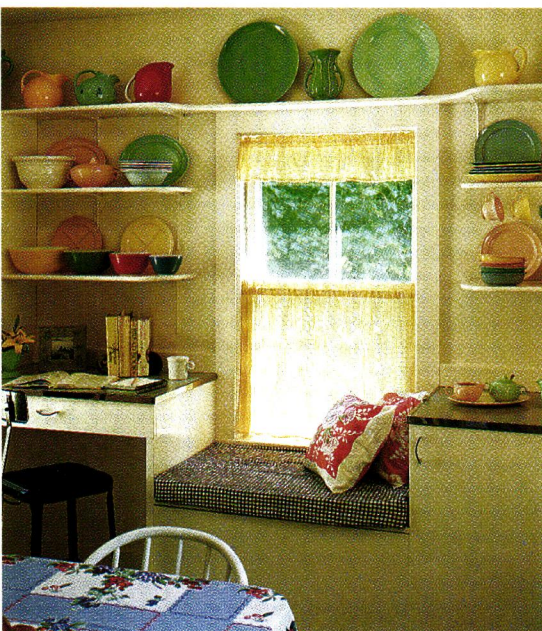
# Cheerfully 1950

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK

**C**AN YOU IMAGINE so happy a kitchen on so small a budget? It took the eye of an artist, talented friends, and a few colorful period pieces picked up at yard sales and flea markets. "When we bought our house in 1981, it was a mess!" confides Kathleen Vanden Brink, whose 19th-century vernacular house is in Camden, Maine. "We stripped the kitchen right down to the lath. One item saved was the old Youngstown sink unit with its metal base. I 'designed' the room with a tape measure and some graph paper."

Kathleen, whose husband Brian often does photography for this magazine, says her springboard was the pastel LuRay dishware she'd begun collecting. (The LuRay is complemented by a few pieces of new Fi-

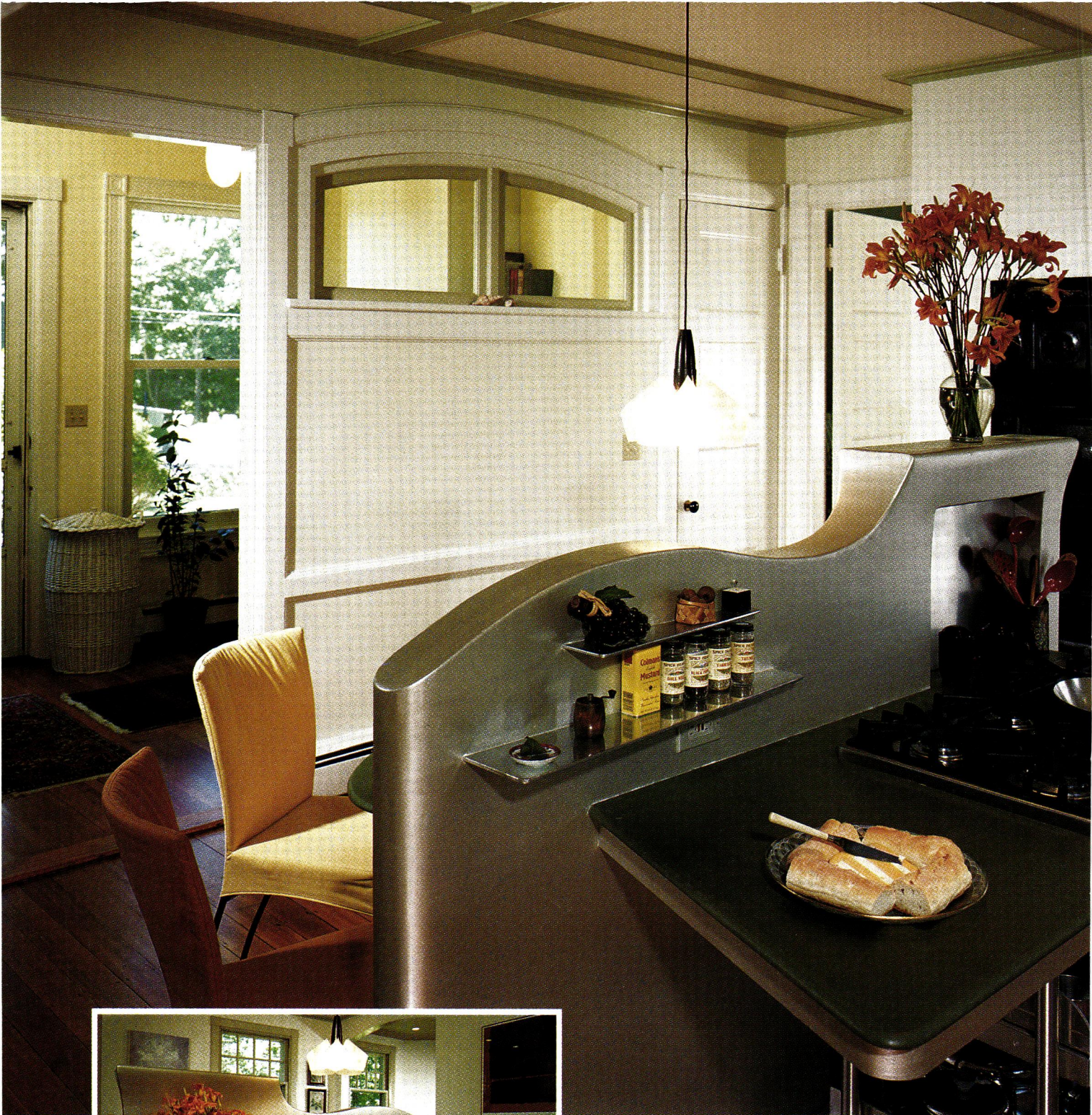
estaware, now made in pastels as well as the original brights.) She also collects, and uses everyday, tablecloths of the 1940s and '50s. Color shows best against glossy white and the palest pink walls [Benjamin Moore OW26]. Besides the sink unit, the Vanden Brinks bought some old metal cabinets and drawers—for \$100. Additional wood cabinets and shelves were built by Phil Sideris, a contractor friend, and painted gloss white to go with the metal units. Other friends, ceramists in Colorado, made and installed the tiles over the sink for the price of airline tickets. Besides the modest cost of a new floor—no-wax vinyl tiles—little money was spent. Chairs are from a yard sale. The just-right curtains, reports Kathleen, "I made from plain cotton gingham." ♦



**A cheery blend of new and not-too-old:** This 1950-look kitchen was designed around the era's metal cabinets and the colors of original tablecloths and LuRay dinnerware. Window seat, desk, and shelves are wood (left); cabinets around the fridge are metal (above).

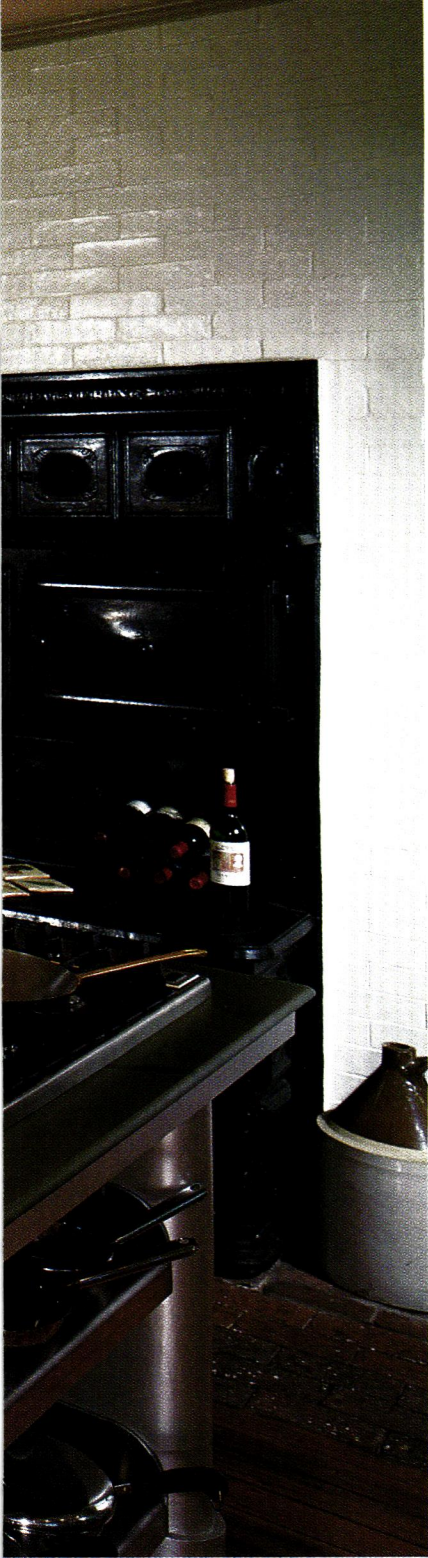






**PORTFOLIO** TABLE- AND COUNTERTOPS: Fireslate in "pistachio," through contractors; (800) 523-5902. **COOKTOP:** 6-burner gas model VG5U Professional, Viking Range Corp; (601) 455-1200. **CHAIRS:** "Spica" from Italy through Adesso, Boston, MA; (617) 451-2212. **HARDWARE PULLS:** zinc/steel #022-35-887 from Hafele (avail. in several finishes); (800) 423-3531. **ROUND SINK BOWL:** Porto Fino #K-6569, Kohler; (920) 457-4441. **PAIN (WAVE WALL):** "Evening Slipper" from Duchesse Satin metallic paints by Ralph Lauren. **PAIN (CEILING):** Benj. Moore PO-50 (off-white) with beams in Moore 501 (green).





**The sculptural cooking island/dining area is the new architectural highlight of this turn-of-century kitchen, interpreted by owners who favor Art Deco design. Such contrast only enhances the robust old stove (now used for storage) and original fir floors.**



## Shades of Art Deco

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE MARTIN

**N**O HOUSE STYLE is perhaps more open to the owners' decorating fancies than those shingled "cottages" built along the New England coast at the turn of the century. Big and unexpectedly modern, these houses present neither the constraints of great age nor the fussy dictates of Victorians. Peter and Charlotte Minasian inherited a kitchen that had not survived unscathed; in fact, it was a dysfunctional mishmash of bad updates. But the quartersawn fir floor had character, as did the original Walker

60 cast-iron stove (which, anyway, was just too big to move). The pantry was in the right place. A carriage-house window would allow light in.

The Minasians, who are judiciously collecting fine Art Deco pieces, have furnished their dining room with a striking pedestal table and a fabulous peach-glass bar. They decided to let that aesthetic guide their kitchen renovation. The colors chosen, including an arresting metallic, evoke the period. Materials with an industrial air—Fireslate counters and metal handles—are softened by curves. ✦



**PORTFOLIO** Yuschalk and Mayo are owners of **VICTORIAN INTERIORS**, a restoration and interior design business: (415) 431-7191 [crown moulding, clock, curtain hardware, and plaster rosette]. **WALLPAPER:** "Wren's Nest Poppy," reproduced (here on kraft paper) for the Wren's Nest in Atlanta, by Carter & Co./Mt. Diablo Handprints: (707) 554-2682. **MILLWORK:** San Francisco Victoriana (415) 648-0313. **SINK:** Eljer, available nationwide. **FAUCET:** Sunrise Specialty Co. (510) 654-1794. **LACE CURTAINS:** J. R. Burrows & Co., Rockland, MA (800) 347-1795.



## All in the Details

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDA SVENDSEN

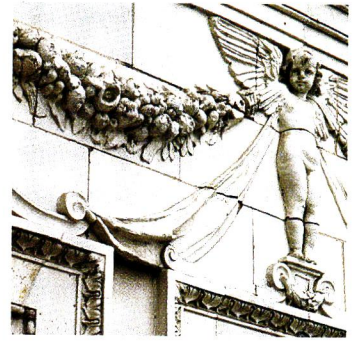
**T**HE GAS-AND-ELECTRIC fixture is still piped for gas. The vintage telephone actually works. The refrigerator and microwave oven are out of sight behind a portière drawn across the pantry door. Attention to period details makes a Victorian-era kitchen believable. This room had originally been a prep and cleanup kitchen for the butler; the working kitchen was in the basement of the 1889 San Francisco house. Besides suffering extensive water damage and settlement, it

had been ruined by a greasefire. Owners Gary Yuschalk and Larkin Mayo decided to retain the old-fashioned layout, along with old fixtures and plain-jane wainscot (which survived the fire behind pink and yellow Masonite). But they would make it discreetly modern. The large china cabinet was a lucky salvage find. The dishwasher is camouflaged behind a wainscot door. Annunciator wires discovered in the walls were restored. "We keep ringing for the servants but none of them comes," jokes Gary. ✦



Late-Victorian sensibility comes from retaining original layout and using vintage pieces (china cabinet, light fixture). Color is keyed off the historic-reproduction wallpaper. Dumbwaiter was salvaged.

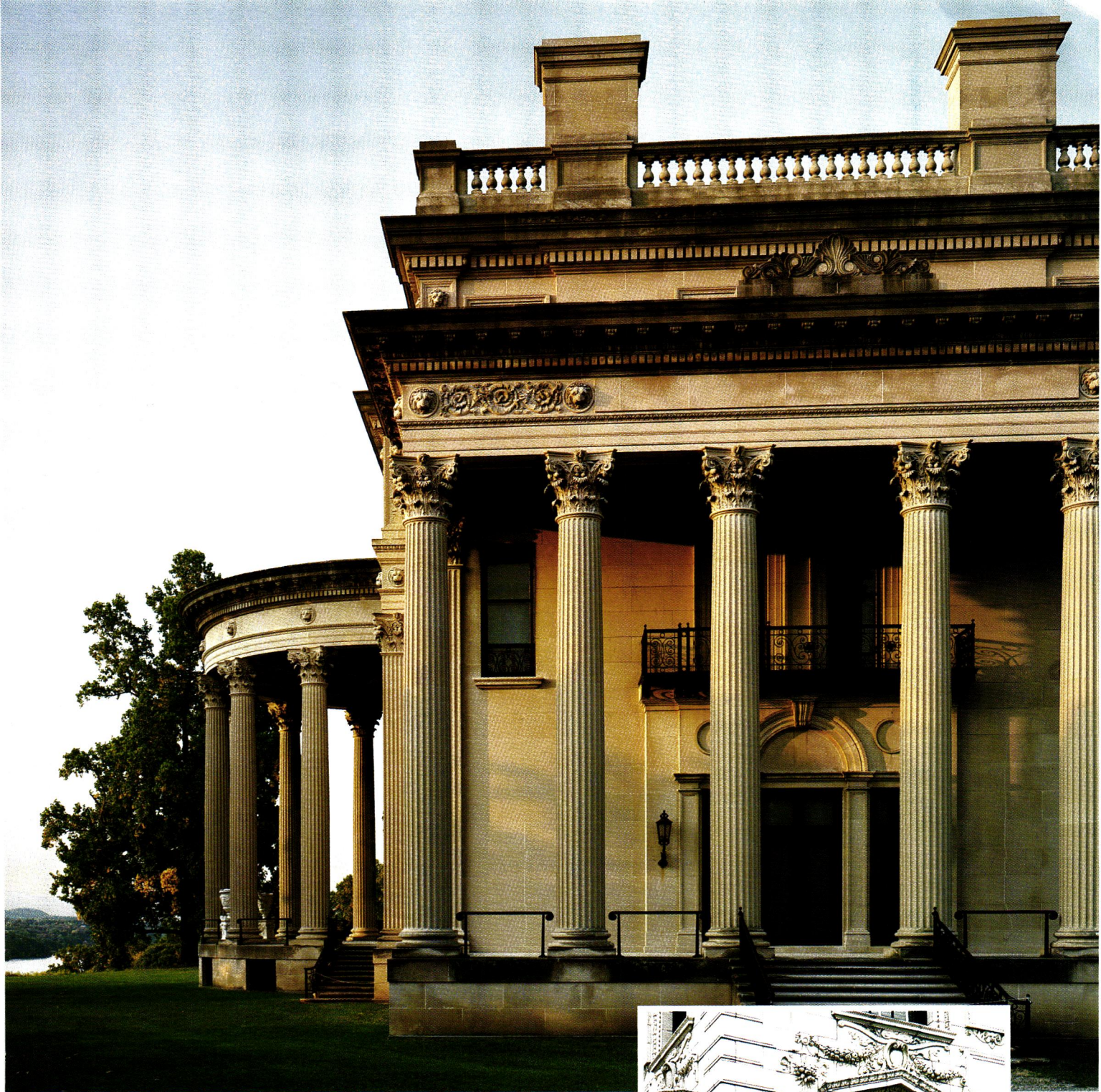
**T**HE BEAUX ARTS STYLE came along just as America's new status as a world power required a more dignified national image. Nouveau riche clownishness and provincial vulgarity, as expressed in the Picturesque styles of the mid- to late-19th century, would no longer do. Americans needed architecture with restrained styling and a disciplined use of ornamentation, particularly in their public buildings. The reaction against the stylistic excesses of the 19th century included the belief that art could (and should) be taught, and that its most sublime expressions were the evident result of systematic training in professional academies. Apprenticeship or "osmosis" were not sufficient. ■ When 19th-century Americans first sought formal architectural training, they went to Paris, to the *École des Beaux-Arts* (literally, "School of Fine Arts"), where architecture was taught from 1819 until 1968. An early alumnus was Richard Morris Hunt, a guiding spirit of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Designing the extravaganza were the most prominent architects of the day, all Beaux-Arts-trained—Daniel Burnham, Charles Follen McKim, Stanford White. In Chicago, they created a "White City" of broad avenues and monumental buildings to express Beaux Arts ideals: disciplined adaptations of past styles, the use of applied ornament, and a generous scale. Academic Eclecticism, as the style is also known, became the driving force behind the redesign of American cities, including the restoration of L'Enfant's original plan for Washington, D.C. ■ Beaux Arts railroad stations, courthouses, and libraries were built all over the country. When it came to homes, Beaux Arts was the architecture of the rich, as exemplified by the Flagler Mansion in Palm Beach; and Rosecliff, The Breakers, and The Elms in Newport. Interiors were to be consistent within themselves and with the exterior, and to express the characteristic allusions to the past. French 18th-century furnishings were standard; also favored were references to the Italian Renaissance. ■ Academic architecture was denounced by practitioners of such "Progressive" styles as Craftsman and Prairie, who believed ornamentation should be derived from the materials used, not applied to them. The Modernists dismissed both Academic and Progressive styles, calling them unscientific because they designed in a historical context. And, indeed, it was so. —*Regina Cole*



## BEAUX ARTS



**ABOVE:** View across the Main Basin of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition to the McKim, Mead and White-designed Agricultural Building. The plaster and lath buildings were destroyed after the fair. **TOP & INSET OPPOSITE:** Applied plaster ornamentation at the Patterson House in Washington, D.C. **OPPOSITE:** The Vanderbilt home in Hyde Park, New York.



*An academic style that never “trickled down” to the homes of the less-than-wealthy, Beaux Arts architecture flourished in the United States between 1890 and 1930. Houses were large, formal, almost always built of masonry, and adorned with sophisticated, classical ornament.*



*America's use of the Beaux Arts style all but ended with the 1929 stock market crash. After the Depression, Modernism held sway—but not on this Florida beach, where the homeowners built to impress. by Regina Cole | photographs by Lanny Provo*

## COASTAL HIGH STYLE

**T**O LATE-20TH-CENTURY sensibilities, the Harlow House is an anomaly. It was built in 1939 in the Beaux Arts style, which had been passé for ten years. It sits high on a sand dune, overlooking miles of beach, yet it is hardly an example of beach-house vernacular. And the original owners weren't even named Harlow.

It all makes sense when we're given a little background, and some historical context. Original owner William Rogers was president of the Florida Title and Guaranty Company: He may have been one of the few people whose fortunes improved during the 1930s. As soon as the Great Depression ended, he commissioned architect Bernard W. Close to design a house. Close's first plan, in Florida's ever-popular Spanish Colonial Revival style, was rejected. Mr. Rogers wanted a house in the style that, in better times, had stood for wealth, taste, and refinement: Beaux Arts. Back at the drawing board, Close developed a design for a U-shaped house with classical pedigree. When it was done, Mrs. Rogers further evoked a



**ABOVE:** From the front door of the Harlow House, stairs descend two terraces to a swimming pool.

**OPPOSITE:** The chandelier has hung over the circular main stairs since the house was new. The wrought-iron railings are also original to the 1939 construction.









**OPPOSITE:** A 19th-century Italian marble-topped console table in the music room stands under a framed panel of French scenic wallpaper by Dufour. **ABOVE:** Decorative painting on the dining-room ceiling was reproduced from a few remaining traces.

gilded past by naming it for her husband's maternal ancestors.

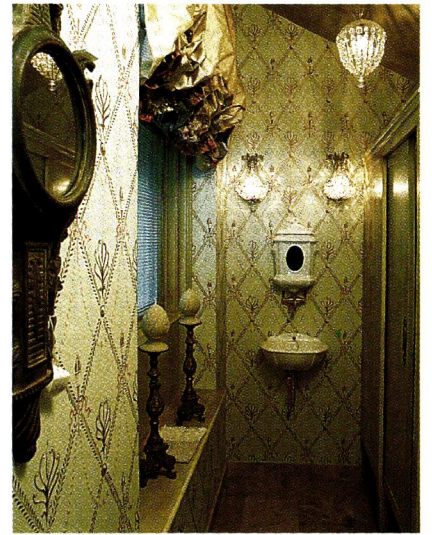
Harlow House is built of cast stone poured on site. Its pale pink coloring, now faded to white except when wet, was incorporated into the mix. The stone walls were scored to suggest limestone blocks and corner quoins. Harlow House's entrance is characteristic of the Beaux Arts style, with its Palladian window and clas-

sical design motifs moulded in plaster. Another stylistic hallmark, the exterior bas-relief frieze, encircles the house directly below the shallow hipped roof.

The beachfront location is rooted in a 19th-century love of nature, not in the era's burgeoning beach culture. But even in 1939, waterfront real estate had prestige: the neighborhood has grown into huge ex-

panses of plate glass, turreted observation towers, and multiple-level decks elbowing each other on small lots. Among them, Harlow House is the genteel grande dame, her modesty preserved by a luxurious, encircling grove of trees. Nevertheless, east-facing rooms boast endless views of the far blue horizon.

The most recent chapter in Harlow House's history brings her into



**LEFT:** A glimpse of the ocean from a bedroom, where new fabric covers classically designed old furniture. **TOP RIGHT:** The wood-paneled library. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** In the powder room under the stairs a wall-mounted cistern and lavatory save space. **OPPOSITE:** Twisted columns, stone arches, balusters, and a fountain convey leisure and luxury.

the media spotlight. Local contractor Mitchell McDaniel, who hosts public television's series "Today's Classic Home," which is carried on PBS stations nationwide, chose the Harlow House project as the touchstone for the 1999 television season. Although still a private home, the house has become a teaching tool about the Beaux Arts style, its appropriate interior decoration, and general construction and restoration techniques.

Over the years, neglect took its toll, but no major changes were ever

made to the house. With the help of preservation-minded sponsors, McDaniel's crew restored the house to period splendor while installing such modern amenities as air-conditioning. Many of today's interior furnishings are original, including 19th-century French and Italian furniture and a magnificent Chinese Art Deco carpet made for the dining room. In fact, when work on the house began,

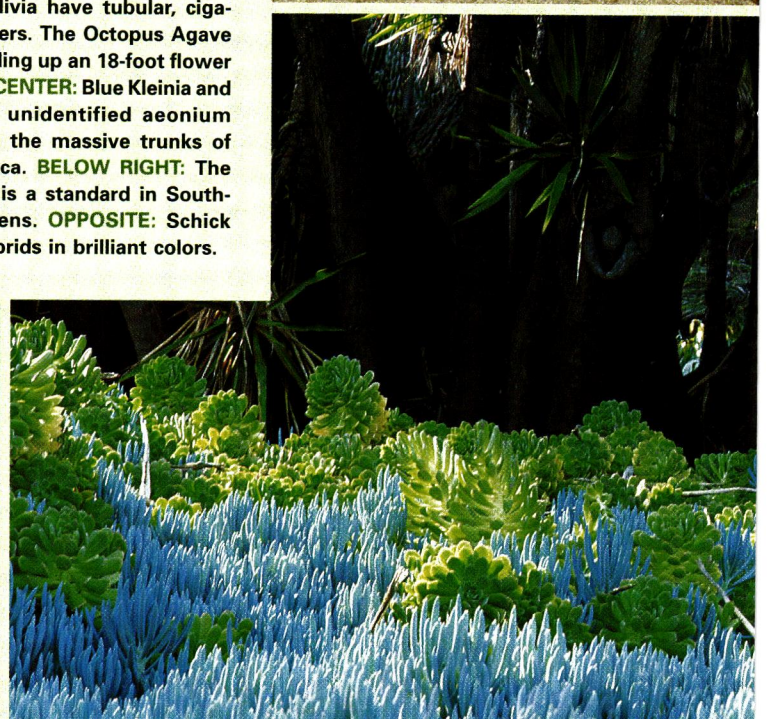
the original silk draperies hung rotting in many rooms, and the wooden horizontal blinds made in 1939 were tangled, dusty obstructions before the more than 100 windows. Television episodes demonstrate such things as the placement of plaster ornament in a Beaux Arts house, and the techniques involved in making silk tassels and fringe. Millions of viewers can thus visit this elegant survivor. ✦

**HARLOW HOUSE AND THE BEAUX ARTS STYLE WERE FEATURED NATIONWIDE ON PBS IN A THIRTEEN-EPIISODE SERIES OF "TODAY'S CLASSIC HOMES" WITH HOST MITCHELL MCDANIEL. (CHECK YOUR LOCAL TELEVISION LISTINGS.) THE SHOW'S THIRD SEASON BEGINS SOON.**





**ABOVE:** Aloe hybrids provide winter color. The tree yucca is one of the species William Hertrich brought from Mexico in 1912. **BELOW LEFT:** Woolly Torch cacti from Bolivia have tubular, cigarette-like flowers. The Octopus Agave dies after sending up an 18-foot flower stalk. **BELOW CENTER:** Blue Kleinia and one of many unidentified aeonium hybrids frame the massive trunks of the Giant Yucca. **BELOW RIGHT:** The century plant is a standard in Southwestern gardens. **OPPOSITE:** Schick echinopsis hybrids in brilliant colors.



## HISTORY GARDENS

*The oldest cactus garden in California started as a collector's showplace in 1903. Today it is part of The Huntington, a privately endowed institution that includes some weirdly beautiful acres.* by Gary Lyons | photographs by Melba Levick

# desert landscape

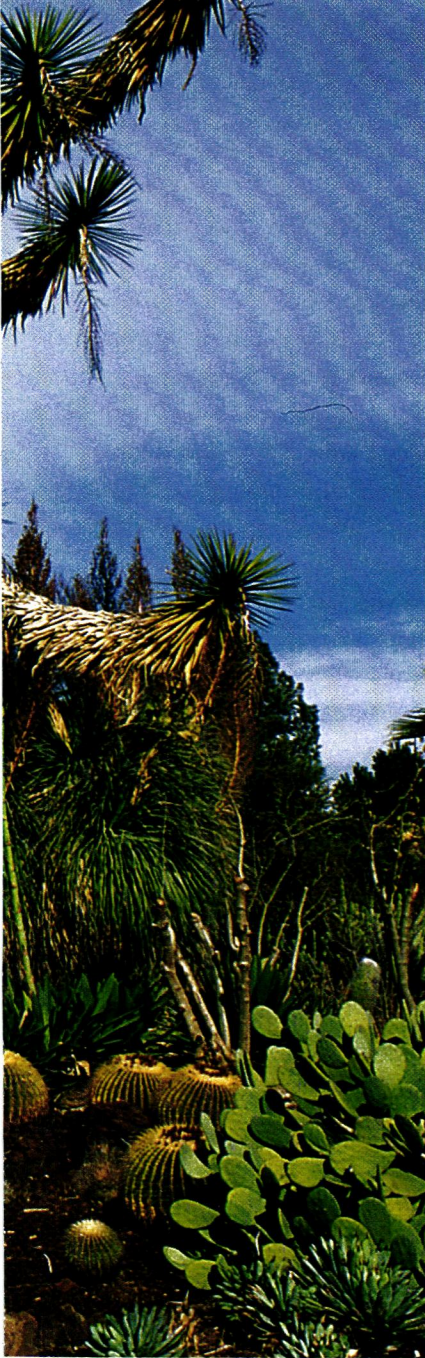
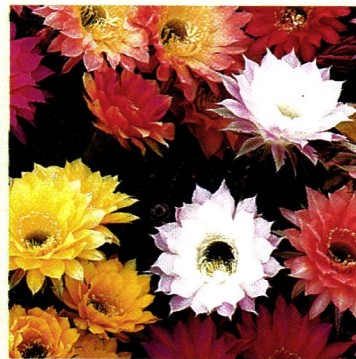
FOR YEARS I have watched visitors stare incredulously at the fantastic and exotic shapes. People lost in the maze of undulating narrow paths seem to forget what planet they're on. To view the world's greatest display of rare and strange succulents is to marvel that such forms exist at all in the natural world. They have come to The Huntington in San Marino, Calif., which boasts one of the world's most complete and colorful outdoor landscapes of cactus, aloe, stonecrop, bromeliad, euphorbia, and ocotillo. The Desert Garden is

only one part of this privately endowed institution, which was once the ranch and winter home of Henry E. Huntington (nephew of Collis P. Huntington, owner of the Southern Pacific Railway). Huntington purchased the land, then called Shorb Ranch, at his retirement in 1903. Today The Huntington includes an impressive collection of rare books, manuscripts, prints, and photographs. Its Art Gallery specializes in 18th-century English art as well as Amer-

ican art. The institution covers 207 acres; besides the Desert Garden, there are the Japanese, Zen, Bonzai, and Suiseki gardens. The Palm Garden is the largest outside of Florida; there is also a rose garden, a camellia garden, subtropical and jungle gardens. It cannot be seen in one day.

Henry E. Huntington hated cacti. He'd backed into a prickly-pear cactus while working on the Southern Pacific Railroad. So it is a credit to Huntington's visionary landscape gardener and ranch foreman, William Hertrich, that the

desert garden happened at all. Hertrich convinced the land baron that cacti would thrive on a barren slope where little else grew. Hertrich scouted estate gardens, public parks, and other Huntington properties to create a display worthy of one of world's wealthiest men. Huntington himself took little notice of the desert plants until friends began paying visits... not to see his impressive art collection or renowned book collection, but to see cactus. Everyone raved about it, until



## THINKING ABOUT A CACTUS GARDEN?

The cactus garden as a genre is a Southwest phenomenon, beginning, perhaps, with the establishment of mission gardens. Cactus and succulent gardens are especially popular in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California. The genre took off in California with the development of estate ranches in the 1880s, but it is less popular in Southern California today than it is in desert areas (Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque,

Santa Fe and, recently, Las Vegas). ■ There are species that will survive in nearly all but the New England states. Midwesterners and Easterners should become familiar with cold-hardy cacti and succulents in their areas. Besides books and local nurseries, check out the Cactus and Succulent Society of America [2391 E. Cactus St., Pahrump, NV 89048; (775) 751-1320]. The CSSA has conferences throughout the country—terrific opportunities to purchase plants and learn about regional landscaping techniques. In California there is a retail nursery directory available from the California Cactus Growers Association. [Free copy: 1151 Palm Terrace Lane, Riverside, CA 92505.] ■ Most

major Southwest cities have cactus gardens associated with zoos and civic landscapes. In the Southeast, the Atlanta Botanic Garden is experimenting with an outdoor cactus garden using plants that survive in that climate. Midwest and Eastern gardens often rely on the few native prickly pear cacti and native yucca for desert landscaping effect; there are, however, cold-tolerant plants (native to Mexico, South America, and South Africa) that will survive if given some protection.



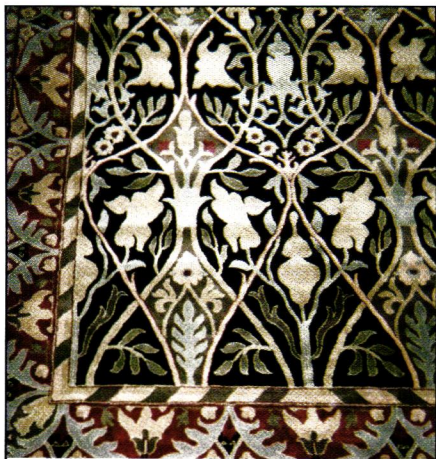
In the Pincushion Rockery.



Huntington was convinced to put serious money into the project. His man Hertrich had little difficulty finding the best specimens; the early 1900s was the Golden Age of Horticulture and, in southern California, the golden age of the cactus garden. Huntington's connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad and to the Pacific Electric Railway Co. (which he'd at one time owned) meant plants and stone often came onto the estate via railroad.

The first Desert Garden was planted in 1905. Before long it was clear that Huntington had been bitten by yet another collecting bug. Using Huntington's money, land, and railroads, foreman Hertrich secured further collections and prize specimens from wealthy competitors, nurseries, and the deserts of the Southwest (including Mexico). In keeping with the times, wild-plant collecting was a botanical big-game hunt; one trip in 1908 captured three railroad carloads of cacti from Arizona for Mr. Huntington's garden. The first landscape reflected late-Victorian conventions. Cacti were planted like troops lined up for inspection. Not much about it could be called natural; this was an age when even succulents were bedded out to create formal designs. As the garden attracted the attention of professional botanists, however, it became an important testing ground for new species of cacti and succulents. In 1915, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began sending plants for trial in Huntington's garden, a development in line with Huntington's ultimate purpose in creating the gardens.

In 1925 came thousands more specimen cacti. This new Lower Garden more than doubled the Desert Garden. In [continued on page 82]



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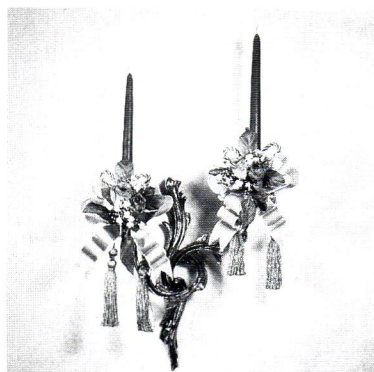
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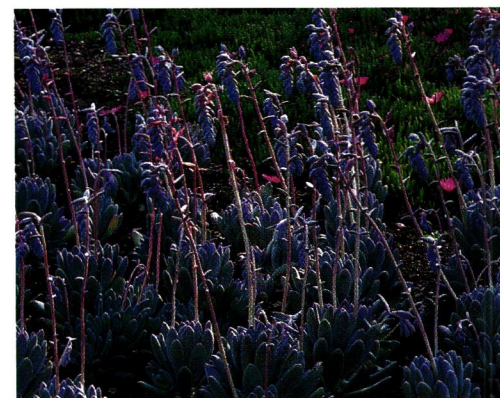
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**ABOVE:** Hardier succulents thrive in the Lower Garden, including one of the many night-blooming cereus species. **TOP RIGHT:** One of the rarer plants is placed in the Pincushion Rockery for ideal drainage and exposure. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Intergeneric hybrids thrive. This unnamed pachyveria in the groundcover bed in the lower garden.

1929, maze-like formal paths and planting beds were opened up to make way for a wide central path, in anticipation of the garden's opening to the public. Berms surrounding the path became one of the largest cactus rockeries in the world. The Huntington was transformed to a true botanical garden in 1931, when the entire collection was inventoried and an accession catalog and data card file established. By the beginning of World War II the Desert Garden had expanded to its present size of just under twelve acres. But the war created a labor shortage; the garden's decline was not reversed until 1962, when Myron Kimmach, as dedicated a cactus enthusiast as the retired William Hertrich, became the botanical garden's Director. The African Garden was made public for the first time.

Dr. James Folsom became Director of the Botanic Gardens in 1986, and initiated a plan that will eventu-

ally open all previously closed parts of the garden to the public. Surviving in a secluded portion of hillside is an undisturbed section of the original garden, which is to be replanted and preserved as an icon of late-Victorian garden design in southern California. Currently, I am conducting the first systematic survey of the collection in over 50 years. (On some days it feels like it will take that long.) The Desert Garden contains over 50,000 plants. Each day of the year brings spectacular blooms. The pa-

triarch is a gigantic night-blooming cereus (*Cereus xanthocarpus*), obtained in 1912. I guess it dates to 1880.

I can remember each morning seeing William Hertrich, then in his 80s, in the Desert Garden, writing down the names of his favorite plants, making note of their growth form and their flowering time. ✦

GARY LYONS, *cactus nut and student of the genus Aloe*, was for many years curator of the Huntington's Desert Garden and continues to consult there.

**DON'T GIVE IN TO THE TEMPTATION TO DIG UP A PLANT!** Now there are laws restricting collection of plants and seeds on state, federal, and private lands. Occasionally you can get a permit to dig in areas being cleared for development. In Arizona nurseries, it is common to see Joshua trees, ocotillos, and saguaros for sale, obviously dug in the wild. Most of these plants were removed legally and are tagged with official state permits. Check for broken or damaged seals on the tags. Only you can remove the tags and you must keep them. Freshly dug cacti have extensive root damage (or, in some cases, no roots at all). You have the responsibility to reroot them. This can mean serious business for your pocketbook. Ask for established plants that have been in the nursery for a while, or simply do not purchase wild-collected plants.





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—REVIEWED BY REGINA COLE

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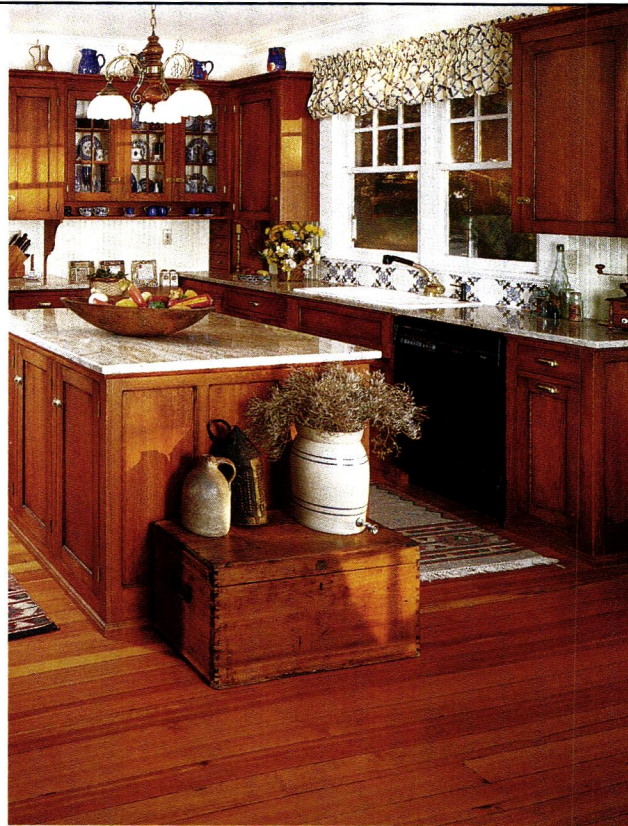
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Can Art be ephemeral? Challenging? Utilitarian? Many adopt the line of reasoning used by early Hollywood censors when it came to pornography: they can't define it, but they know it when they see it.

The lines that separate art from everything else can only become more blurred in today's antiques-and-collectibles-crazed climate. It's easy to be dazzled by astronomical prices and fevered bidding, and to confuse scarcity or value with artistic merit. Every once in a while it's good to remember that art is not determined by subject matter or medium. Some of the best reminders of the role art plays in our everyday lives are in house museums. That's where we can see that collectors whose taste and knowledge were developed through years of study and travel knew how to choose a work of art, even if it was to serve the humblest of functions.

An example is at the Elizabeth Perkins House in York, Maine (see "New England Colonial Revival," pp. 54–62). Miss Perkins kept her cigarettes in a little copper and walnut box designed in 1907 by Charles and Henry Greene, creators of a sublime Japanese-influenced style of architecture that's never been equaled. The cigarette box is as recognizably theirs in design as the iconic Gamble House in Pasadena. William Morris famously warned against having things in the house not known to be useful or believed to be beautiful. With this small box, useful *and* beautiful, Elizabeth Perkins concurred.

It is the [continued on page 88]

**CLOCKWISE:** (from above) An architectural ornament from a house designed by Louis Sullivan and George Elmslie. A jardiniere by Arthur Stone. A cushion cover embroidered after a design by Morris & Co. Weller Pottery Company's vase hints at Art Nuveau.

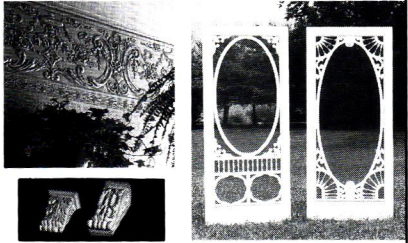
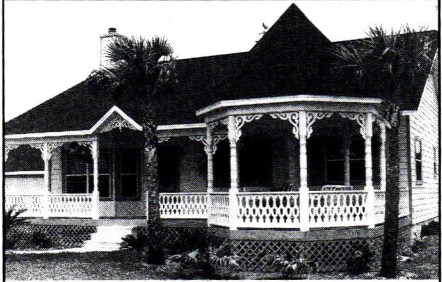


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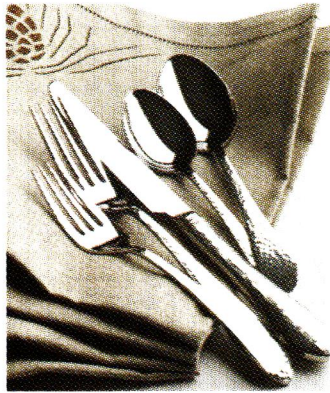


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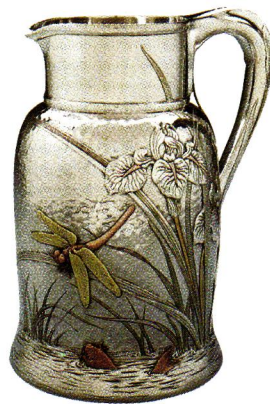
quality of usefulness that makes the decorative arts more than merely decorative (as opposed to the fine arts, which are *supposed* to be merely decorative. Go figure.). An essentially mundane item like a chair, a lamp, or a bowl transcends its functional qualities when the design is beautiful, personal, meaningful. Still useful, it is art. The marriage is, of course, the central tenet of the Arts and Crafts movement.

"The Art that is Life" was the subtitle of architect William Price's periodical *The Artsman*. Price, like his better-known contemporaries Gustav Stickley and Elbert Hubbard, spread the message of the Arts and Crafts movement with a magazine. The pregnant phrase became the perfect name for the groundbreaking exhibition mounted by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts

in 1987. Arts and Crafts objects have become so familiar to us in the twelve years since, that it's easy to forget the impact, then, of chairs, cushion covers, wallpapers, and tiles exhibited as fine art. For many, this was the first exposure to Candace Wheeler's embroidered fabrics, Grueby Faience Company's matte glazes, or Dirk Van Erp's hammered copper. The artistry behind beautiful, functional objects was evident. The exhibit's catalogue (also entitled "*The Art that is Life*": *The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920*), went out of print immediately. During the 1990s it became an avidly collected book, fetching prices upwards of \$500.

The good news in 1998 was the reissue, in paperback, of the book. When we leaf through its handsome pages, we are struck by the beauty and integrity of the objects. Most of the book features essays by such now-familiar names as Richard Guy Wilson and Wendy Kaplan (the exhibition director), but the 55 pages of color plates at the beginning are what we return to, over and over.

The inclusive dates allow for such early and late examples as La Farge's famous 1877 stained-glass windows for the William Watts Sherman House, and a magnificently fanciful Gothic crib made by Frank Jeck in 1922. Although much of the written material is well known to most devotees of this style, it is useful to be reminded that "Arts and Crafts" does not exclusively pertain to quartersawn white



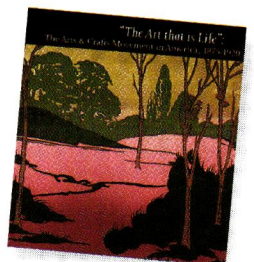
An 1878 pitcher from Tiffany & Co. is the epitome of function and beauty in a mixture of elegantly worked materials that refer to the Anglo-Japanese movement.

oak furniture. Arts and Crafts, in its narrowest sense, may refer to a design movement that came to this country over 100 years ago, but its larger philosophy informs even humble objects with the drive to create beauty and meaning in our lives. ✦

### "The Art that is Life"

**The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920**; by Wendy Kaplan; photographs by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Published by the Museum of Fine Arts, 1987.

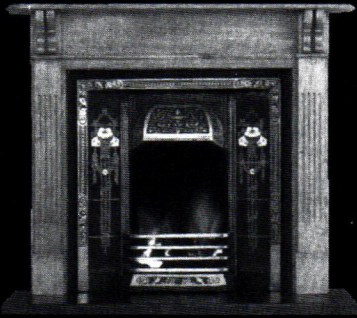
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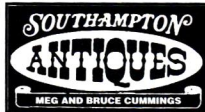
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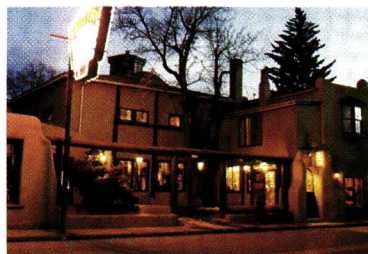
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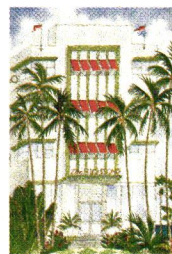
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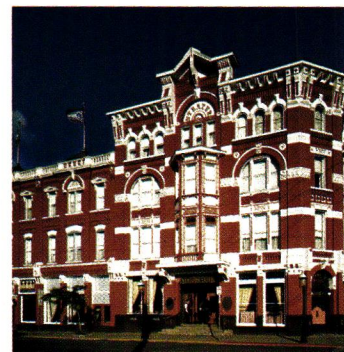
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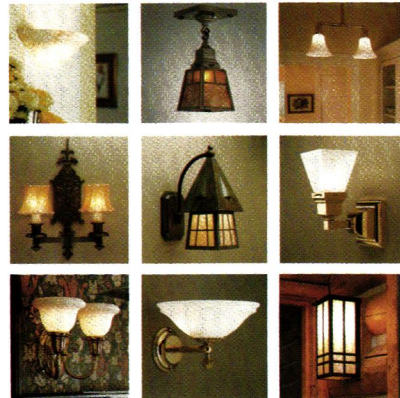
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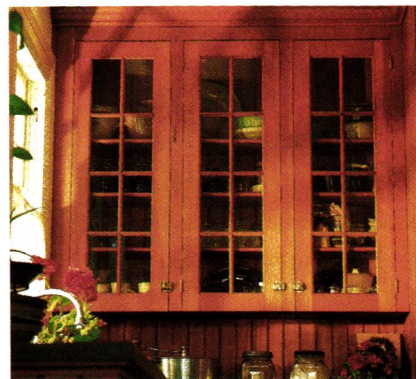
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# ask THE EDITORS

## Spectacular Impact

I have begun to collect redware pottery. If I wait until I can afford many true antiques, my collection will remain pitifully small. Would it diminish the impact of the few old pieces I have if I were to mix in reproductions? An antiques collector friend discourages this. But I love abundance! Also, would you recommend ways of displaying collections?

SANDY TRAVERS  
WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

What could have more impact than this spectacular display of fine (and not-so-fine) amber glass? Its placement in the leaded windows of a salvaged doorway is a highlight of the collections at Beauport, the summer house of decorator-historian Henry Davis Sleeper in Gloucester, Mass. Beautiful examples of antique Sandwich glass lend importance to the dime-store pieces. It is, however, the cumulative impact of over a hundred pieces of amber glass that is so effective.

Of course, it's wonderful to acquire a collection of good antiques. Your growing knowledge of form, rarity, and condition will help you recognize good values when you find them. But, as more and more people chase fewer and fewer antiques, prices can only rise. To create a collection, many people do add reproductions. Remember that there's a difference between a fake and a reproduction. If an object is honestly offered as a reproduction, labeled and priced accordingly, there is nothing wrong



**The amber glass window at Beauport, Gloucester, Mass.: Henry Davis Sleeper, an influential early 20th century designer, built his home around his many collections. The building *itself* is a collection, largely composed of recycled house parts. Here, a salvaged Connecticut doorway became a skylit display window. Beauport is a museum operated by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.**

with buying it. And if an artifact is made by the original method, and is the work of a skilled artisan, then is the artifact a reproduction or an example of a surviving craft tradition? Certainly, it is more responsible to choose a reproduction redware plate (or Windsor chair or hooked rug) if the object is going to get everyday use. The rare (and fragile) antique counterpart should be for display only.

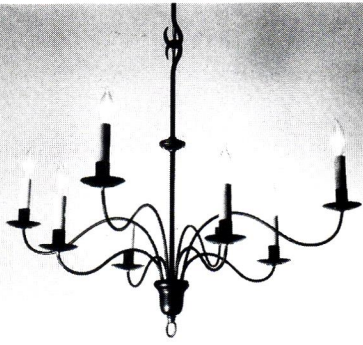
When buying reproductions, use the same critical judgment you exercise when buying antiques; not all reproductions are created equal. And not all reproductions are cheap, either. If you find a true antique for less than its reproduction (it does happen), buy

the antique.

As the photo proves, the best way to display a collection is all in one place. Henry Sleeper also collected redware; he displayed it at Beauport in pine hutches, part of a colonial kitchen context. For a gallery-like display, group plates on modern shelving. If you hang plates on the wall, be sure to use hangers with plastic protectors to prevent edges from being chipped.

**In house museums, I hear guides refer to "counterpanes" and "coverlets." They all look like quilts to me. What's the difference?**

JOYCE DEBENEDDETTO  
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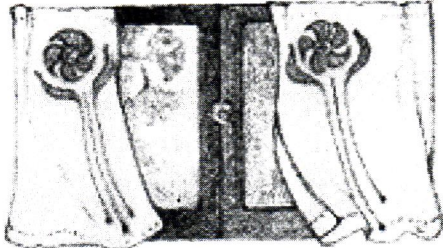
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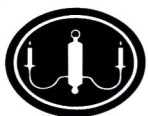


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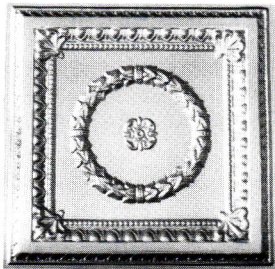
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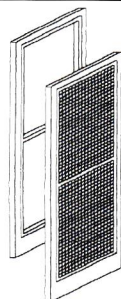


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In their 1997 exhibit on the subject, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts of Winston-Salem, N.C., defined them this way: A quilt is a bedcovering having a separate top and back, and perhaps a filler of cotton or wool, with the layers quilted together, usually with a running stitch in a pattern. A counterpane is a bedcovering of only one layer which has been decorated by embroidery. The word coverlet has historically been used as a generic term for a bedcovering. Today it usually means a cover that reaches only to the bed's rails (or the top of the bedskirt); a bedspread reaches to the floor.



tile Reproductions, Box 48, West Chesterfield, MA 01084; (413) 296-4437. The company carries a wide range of simple, vegetable-dyed and natural fiber materials for museum-quality installations, as well as 18th-century needlework. They also can reproduce many tapes and trims. Their 5/8-inch worsted twill tape (#335), available in ten colors, is an appropriate replacement for the Shaker rocker seat. This catalog also features a nice assortment of handwoven checks and stripes as well as dimity. You may order fabric swatch cards to aid in your selection.

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*Answers this month were provided by interior designer SUSAN MOORING HOLLIS, principal at Historic Interiors, Inc.: (978) 371-2622, Concord, Mass.*

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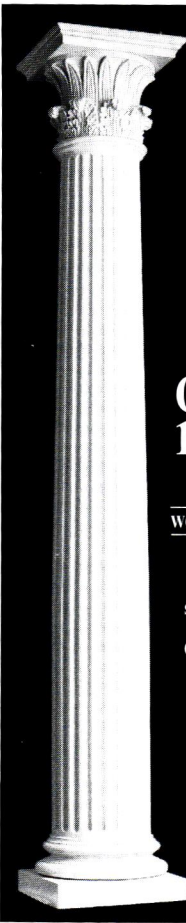
We are restoring an old Shaker rocker, a simple but beautiful piece of considerable value. The seat was woven of the same tape as the enclosed cutting [shown above]. We have exhausted all of our resources looking for replacement tape to weave a new seat. The only thing we have found that is remotely close is twice as wide and three times as thick as the original wool tape. Can you help? It would be a shame to put the heavy stuff on the seat; it would not do it justice.

KEVIN BRADY  
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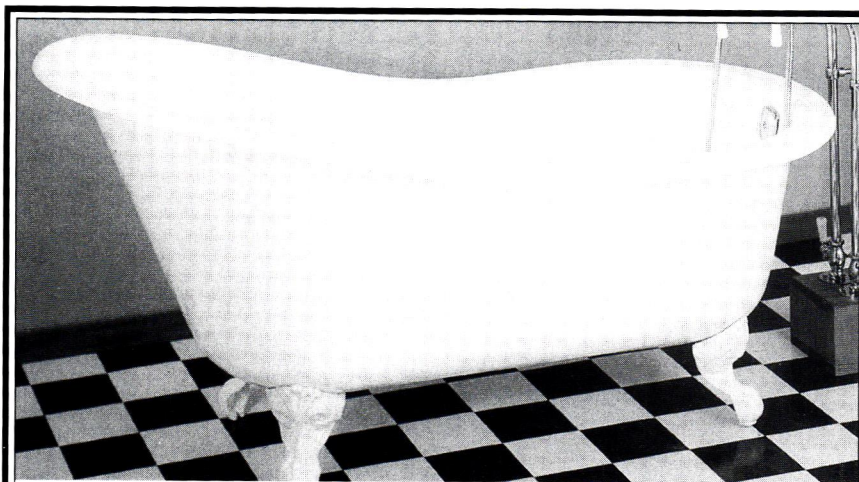
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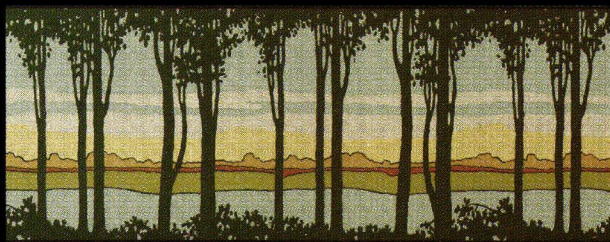
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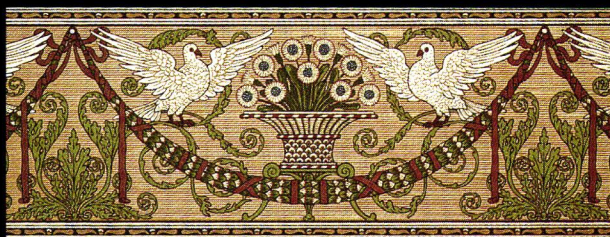
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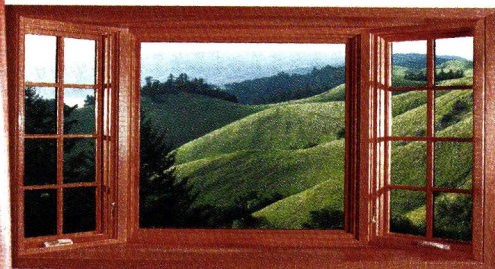
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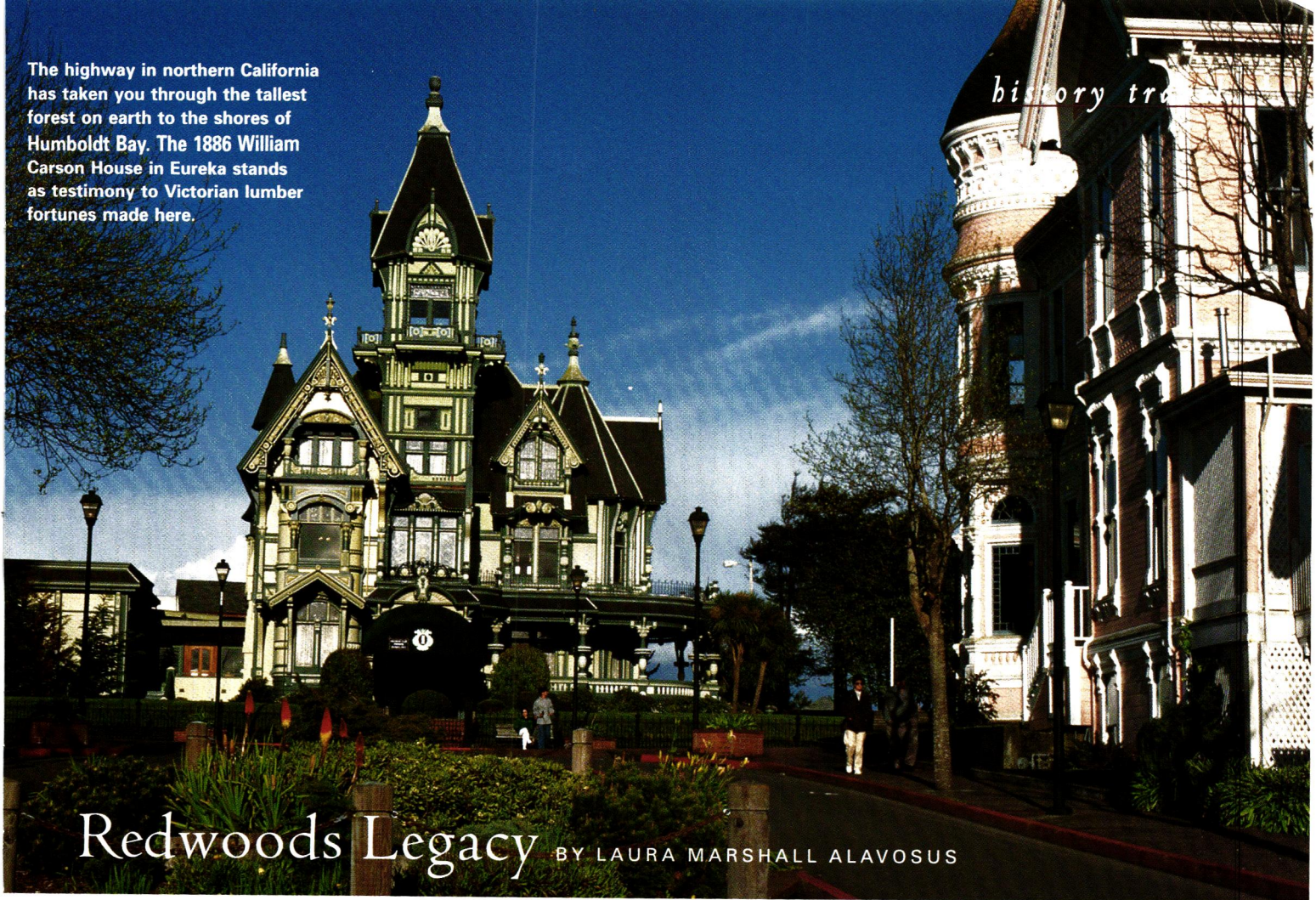
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The highway in northern California has taken you through the tallest forest on earth to the shores of Humboldt Bay. The 1886 William Carson House in Eureka stands as testimony to Victorian lumber fortunes made here.



## Redwoods Legacy BY LAURA MARSHALL ALAVOSUS



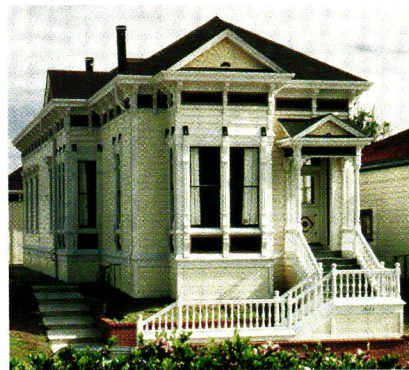
**N**ORTH OF San Francisco, driving for the first time on US 101, I am amazed at how quickly the city is left behind. In just a few hours, the freeway narrows to a road that winds through mountain gulches. The road passes through the 33-mile stretch of the **HUMBOLDT REDWOOD STATE PARK** as the Avenue of the Giants. I slow the car almost to a stop and gape at the biggest, tallest trees on earth. In straight, vertical lines, redwoods tower over both sides of the road. Sunlight glints through their evergreen tops, I park and get out of the car in awe, wondering what pioneer white men must have thought when first they en-

*In redwood country, logger barons built their displaced wives huge gingerbread mansions to remind them of the cities they'd left back East. After all, lumber was not in short supply.*

countered this forest. An information board tells me that these trees grow to 350 feet, take 400 years to mature, are 2000 years old.

Actually, the Lost Coast, as this area was once known, was "discovered" none too soon. Mountains isolated it from the east. The entrance to Humboldt Bay was hard to see from oceanside. In 1849, knowing that the Pacific lay to the west over the mountains, a seven-man team of gold diggers led by Missourian Josiah Gregg set out to find an overland route to the water. They encountered felled redwoods so large they had to lead their teams around the length of the giant trunks, often covering no more than two miles in a day. Eventually they were rewarded by the sight of Humboldt Bay.

News of a deep-water bay north of San Francisco (the only one within



**FAR LEFT:** Humboldt Redwood State Park is a 33 mile stretch of US 101 that inspires awe. **ABOVE:** The 1887 J. M. Carson House is a grand Victorian, yet it's dwarfed by the William Carson House nearby. **LEFT:** Like many houses in Eureka, the picturesque Bell Cottage serves as a bed-and-breakfast inn.

300 miles) encouraged ship captains to establish a coastal route to the area. What is now Humboldt County grew quickly between 1860 and 1900. New England lumbermen and shipbuilders, European fishermen and farmers were drawn to the flourishing community. Men arrived to log the giant redwood forest where one acre of land yielded up to a million board feet of lumber. Many made great fortunes.

The Lost Coast was still isolated, its only access to the world by ship or by stagecoach roads running only east and south. Many lumber magnates had left families behind. To entice their wives to join them, they built large houses reminiscent of those left behind in the East. Clapboard-sided, Victorian-era architecture began to line the streets. Lumber was, after all, not in short supply.

Much of this architecture famously survives in the present-day cities and towns of Humboldt County. **EUREKA** boasts more Victorian-era buildings per capita than any other city in the state, well over 10,000. One of the most photographed houses in America is in Eureka. Built in 1884-86 by lumberman William Carson, **THE CARSON MANSION** (Second and M Streets) is a kind of Gothicized Italianate building. It isn't open to the public (it is privately owned as a local civic club), but you can gawk at the mind-bending facade from many vantage points.

Eureka offers daily tours of Old Town and its residential areas. **OLD TOWN** is a restored 19th-century commercial district close to the harbor, with shops, restaurants, and art galleries. A walking map points out

the must-sees. **THIRD STREET** between J and K has been dubbed the finest Victorian residential row in Old Town for its Queen Anne, Eastlake-influenced, and neoclassical houses built between 1895 and 1904.

Visit **BLUE OX MILLWORKS** at the bottom of X Street in Eureka to understand Victorian woodworking. Self-guided tours allow you to watch artisans at work as they make reproductions of architectural millwork on vintage woodworking machinery dating from 1852 to 1940.

WHILE THE **LOGGER BARONS** of Eureka were building their mansions in the late 1800s, the town of **FERNDALE**, to the south, was having its own success in dairy farming. Danish, Irish, Swiss, Italian, German, and Portuguese immigrants [text continued on page 102]





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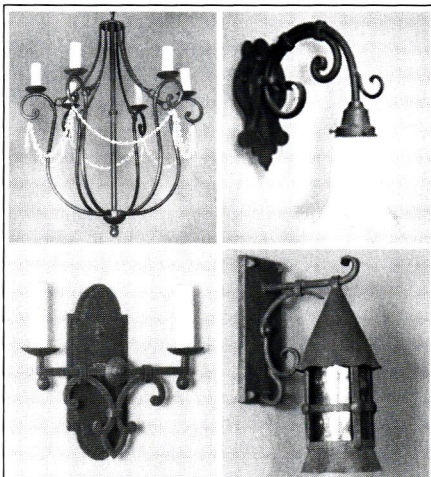
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**TOP:** The 19th-century town of Ferndale, Calif. **ABOVE:** The 1899 Ring House is also called the Gingerbread Mansion. **RIGHT:** The pristine downtown district in the town once dubbed Cream City.



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found lush pastures here. When Danish dairy farmers arrived in the 1870s, they formed neighborhood cooperative creameries. By 1890, with eleven separate creameries, Ferndale earned its first nickname: "Cream City." Opulent homes built by the dairymen were called "butterfat palaces."

Today, Ferndale remains relatively unchanged since the 1800s. The town's first large house, a Carpenter Gothic built in 1854 by one of the first settlers, stands on Main Street as a landmark. (It is now the **SHAW BED & BREAKFAST INN**.) The builder, Seth Louis Shaw, named his house Fern Dale. When it later became the settlement's first Post Office, the town took the name for its own. At the **FERNDALE MUSEUM** on Third and Shaw Streets, visitors can view period rooms, a smithy, a seismograph, farm and logging equipment, and microfilmed newspapers from as far back as 1878. **FERN COTTAGE**, an 1866 farmhouse listed in the National Register of Historic Places, accommodates tours for groups of 12 or more.

Redwood logging, of course, continues today. The town of **SCOTIA** (just south of Ferndale) has been owned and operated by the Pacific Lumber Company since the 1880s. Take a tour through its large redwood lumber mill, the largest in the world. For a taste of the old lumber camps, visit **THE SAMOA COOKHOUSE** just off US 101 across the Samoa Bridge. This original lumber-camp cookhouse first served loggers in 1893. It is now a restaurant and museum.

Leaving Humboldt County to drive south as the old stagecoaches did, try a detour off the 101, down the **PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY** through **FORT BRAGG** and **MENDOCINO**. Here you'll find more reminders of Victorian California's redwood legacy. ✦

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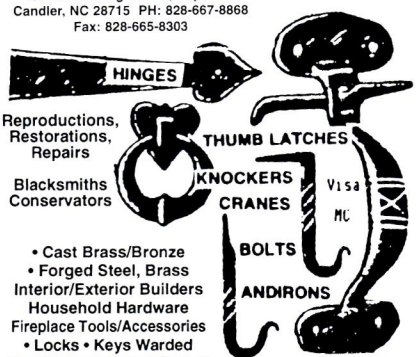
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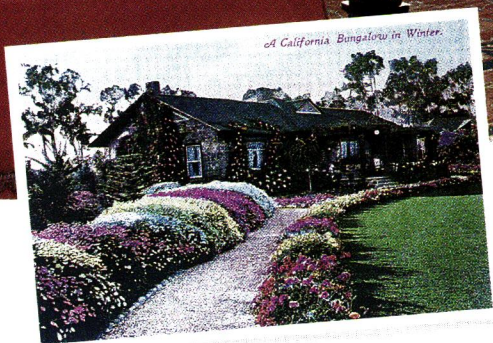
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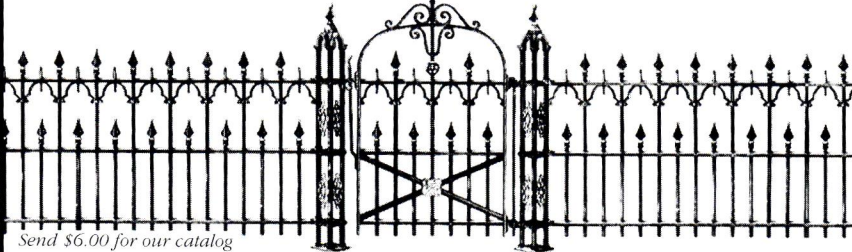
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**Objects of Desire**

pp. 84-88

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115. Call (617) 267-9300.

**Ask the Editors**

pp. 92-94

Beauport, the Sleeper-McCann House, 75

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**Motifs**

p. 114

Bradbury & Bradbury Wallpapers, P.O. Box 155, Benicia, CA 94510. (707) 746-1900. Catalog \$12. The company's Neoclassical collection includes a Greek key border.

**Calendar**

Please send calendar listing of lectures, workshops, exhibits, and other events of interest to: Calendar, Old-House Interiors, 2 Main Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.

*Connecticut*

**Tomes-Higgins, Greenwich.** (203) 552-1097. October 3-24: Designer Showhouse with Gardens.

*Delaware*

**Hall House, Dover.** (302) 672-6840. October

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3-31: Designer Showcase.

### District of Columbia

**The Textile Museum, Washington, DC.** (202) 667-0441. Beginning October 8: Peter Collingwood: Master Weaver.

### Illinois

**The Art Institute of Chicago.** (312) 443-3600. Beginning September 11: Ellsworth Kelly: The Early Drawings, 1948-1955.

### Massachusetts

**Historic Deerfield.** (413) 774-5581. Nov. 5-7: Forum: Pursuing Refinement in Early America. Nov. 27: 17th Century Celebration.

**Lyman Estate Greenhouse, Waltham.** (617) 227-3957. Beginning Orchid Growing.

**Peabody Essex Museum, Salem.** (800) 745-4054. Beginning Oct. 18: Odyssey: Two Centuries of Discovering Art, Architecture and Culture. Nov. 26-28: 27th Annual Antiques Show.

### New York

**Foundation for the Study of the Arts & Crafts Movement at Roycroft.** (800) 785-7785. Oct. 1-9: Tour of the West Coast Arts & Crafts Sites.

**69th Regiment Armory, New York.** (212) 255-0020. Oct. 15-17: Gramercy Park Antiques & Textiles Show.

### Rhode Island

**Salve Regina University, Newport.** (800) 351-0863. October 23-25: Conference on Cultural and Historic Preservation.

### South Carolina

**Historic Beaufort Foundation.** (843) 524-6334. Oct. 22-30: Fall Festival of Houses.

### Texas

**AstroArena, Houston.** (505) 255-4271. October 15-17: Furniture and Design Expo.

**Brown Convention Center, Houston.** (512) 407-9185. October 21-23: International Quilt Festival.

### Vermont

**Justin Morrill Homestead, Strafford.** (802) 765-4484. October 10: Apple Pressing Party.

### Virginia

**Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.** (800) 603-0948. October 29-31: Ghoulies and Ghosties: A Halloween Weekend in Colonial Williamsburg.

**Gunston Hall Plantation, Mason Neck.** (703) 550-9220. October 24: African-American Heritage Day.

**Monticello, Charlottesville.** (804) 984-9822. November 7-12: Elderhostel.

### Washington

**Historic Seattle.** (206) 622-6952. November 6: Bungalow & Craftsman Home Information Fair.

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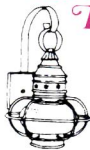
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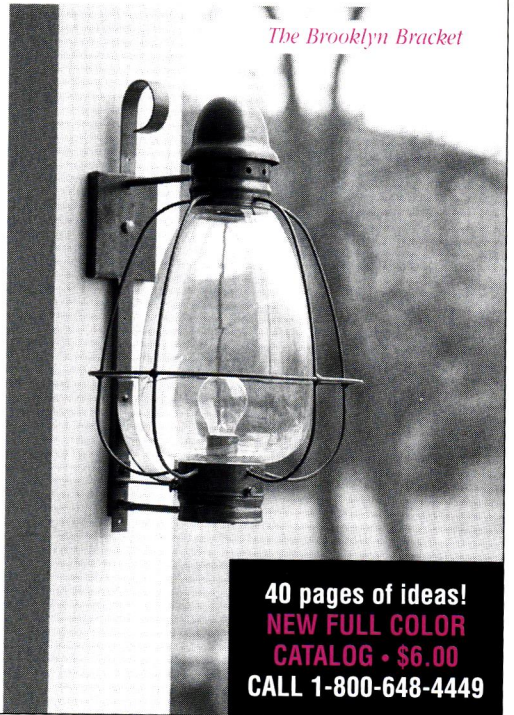
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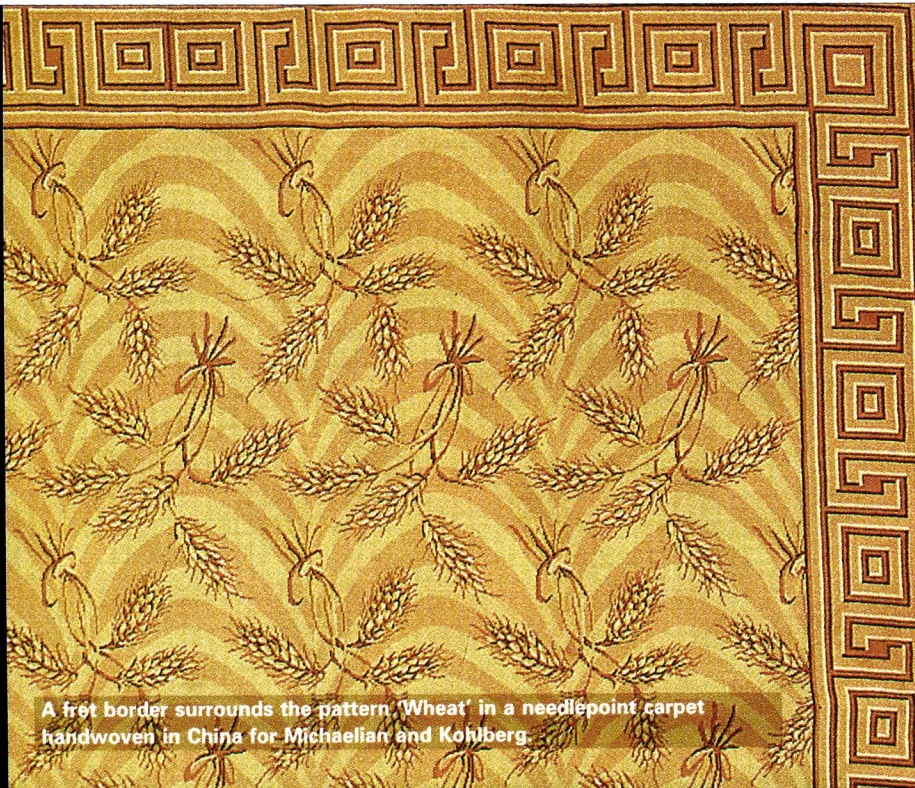
# MOTIFS

**fret:** *an ornamental pattern composed of continuous combinations of straight lines, usually at right angles*  
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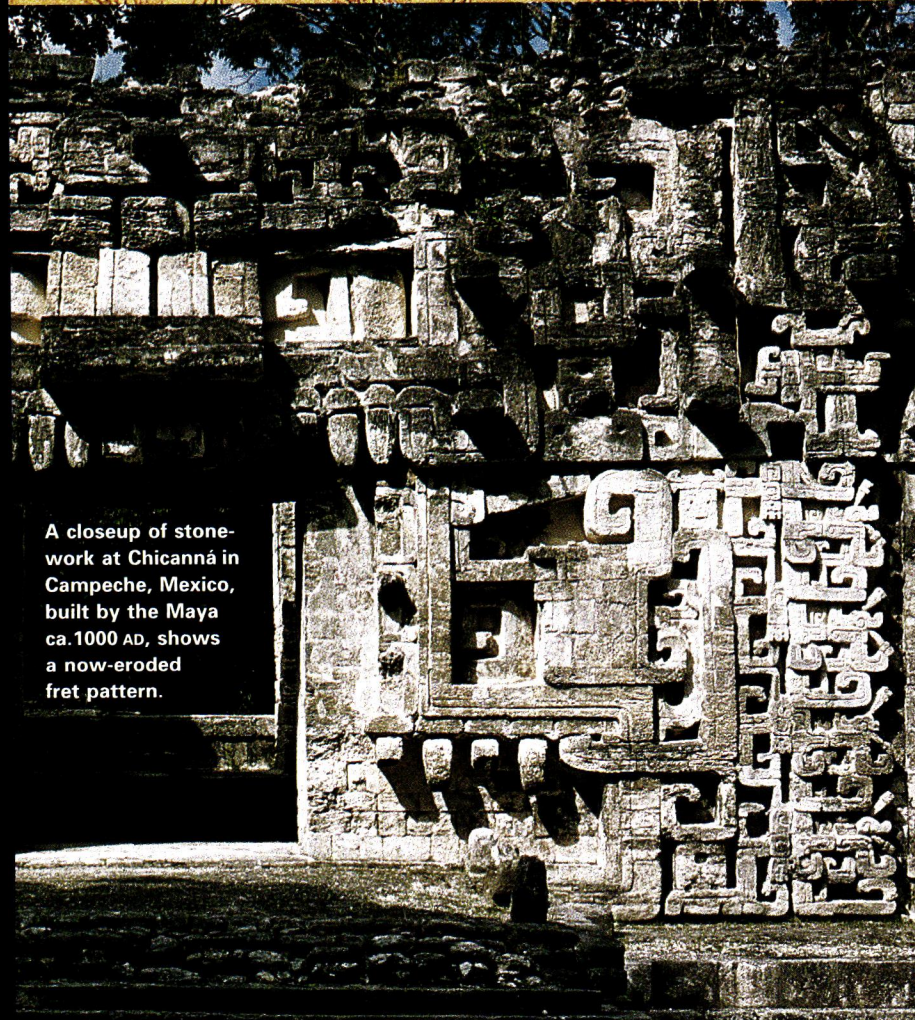
BASED ON elemental geometry, the fret is one of humanity's universal design motifs. Its use as painted or carved architectural ornament ranges from the Egyptian tomb paintings of the 4th Dynasty to the delicate latticework windows of Imperial China and the massive stone temple carvings in Pre-Columbian America. Equally universal was its use as a painted decoration for antique pottery, with examples occurring on all continents. In textiles, it appeared in woven, printed, and embroidered fabrics ranging from Japanese silks to Inca feather work. ■ In the Western world, it is generally assumed that the fret was perfected by the geometry-loving Greeks, who paid particular attention to the balance of light and dark in the design. Successive Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, and Islamic civilizations added their own elaborations.—BRUCE BRADBURY



Examples of Greek frets from Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856).



A fret border surrounds the pattern 'Wheat' in a needlepoint carpet handwoven in China for Michaelian and Kohlberg.



A closeup of stonework at Chicanná in Campeche, Mexico, built by the Maya ca. 1000 AD, shows a now-eroded fret pattern.

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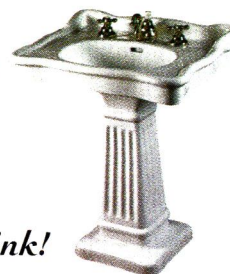
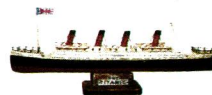


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