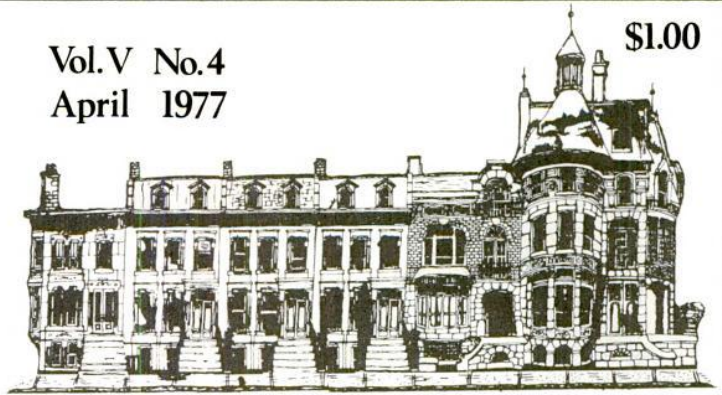


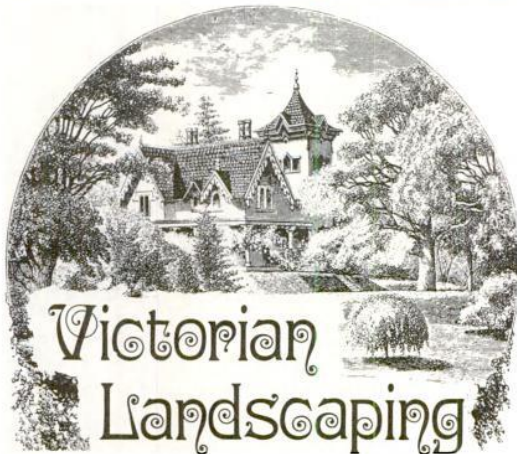
# THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL

Vol. V No. 4  
April 1977

\$1.00



Renovation And Maintenance Ideas For The Antique House



## Victorian Landscaping

By Donna Jeanloz

WHILE ENGLISH GARDENING STYLES underwent a profound change in the 18th century, coincidental with the Romantic Movement, American gardens continued to follow the earlier Tudor traditions of geometric gardens until well into the 19th century. It was not until the appearance in 1841 of Andrew Jackson Downing's book, "A Treatise On The History And Practice Of Landscape Gardening," that popular taste shifted toward the English naturalistic garden style.

DOWNING'S NAME is familiar to any student of the 19th century. "A Treatise" was the first of his several enormously popular books, written while he was a young nurseryman in Newburgh, N. Y. It was an overnight success, virtually revolutionizing middle-class garden styles. The neat, geometric, ordered garden was out, replaced by man-made "nature": soft, curving masses of green.

DOWNING evidently gleaned many of his ideas from the leading British landscape authority of the day, J. C. Loudon, who had conveniently published a book on landscape gardening a year previously.



## In This Issue

<a href="#">Dealing With Old Sinks And Tubs.....</a>	<a href="#">38</a>
<a href="#">Re finishing Wood Floors.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Towering Victorian Status Symbol.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Helpful Publications.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>
<a href="#">Awnings For Old Houses.....</a>	<a href="#">48</a>

## Coming Next Month

REMOVING STAINS FROM MASONRY

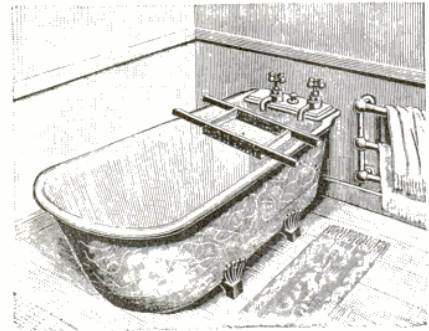
HERE WERE a number of reasons for the overnight success of Downing's book. For one, it was written by an American specifically for the American scene at a time when national pride and self-confidence was on the upswing. Life styles were changing with the growth of industry, and the many solid citizens benefitting from this growth felt intuitively that their gardens no longer needed emphasis, direct or implied, on simple survival. The outdoors was increasingly regarded as a place to play rather than as a hostile environment.

ALSO, the introduction of exotic plant material including colorful annuals and a marked increase in horticultural journals and available printed information did much to interest the public in improving its surroundings. Further, the passage of fence laws starting at about this time had a strong influence on the householder's view toward improving his property. Fence laws obligated the owner of livestock (cattle, swine, etc.) to contain the animals, whereas before the burden of fencing had been on the gardener to keep the free-roaming animals out of the garden.

IN HIS BOOK, Downing divided art into two realms, the beautiful and the picturesque, and suggested that

[\(Cont'd on page 44\)](#)

# The Vexing Problem Of Old Sinks And Bathtubs



IN THE FEBRUARY 1977 ISSUE, we asked readers to share their experiences with rejuvenating old porcelain fixtures. A cross-section of the responses will be found on these two pages.

IN BRIEF, there are two approaches: (1) Re-surface old fixtures with epoxy; or (2) Learn to love them as they are. Readers report mixed results with epoxy paints. The most common complaint is peeling of the epoxy within a year or so. This relates to surface preparation. The slightest bit of soap or other contaminants embedded in the old porcelain will keep the epoxy from adhering. Thorough cleaning according to manufacturer's instructions is imperative. Where a filler is needed for chips, some readers report success with the two-tube epoxy "liquid steel."

BUT EVEN UNDER the best of conditions, an epoxy coating is not a permanent cure. Like the paint on the exterior of a house, it will have to be renewed from time to time. It all comes down to aesthetics: If the chipping and staining isn't too bad, perhaps the best thing to do is to reverse each blemish as a badge of antiquity!--CL

To The Editor:

UPON MOVING INTO our 1850's home, we found an old claw-foot, oak-rimmed tub that dated from the 1880's. But it was in terrible shape. A brass water heater had leaked into it for years, resulting in brown stains that could not be removed.

WE DECIDED TO TRY a do-it-yourself epoxy paint. We cleaned the tub thoroughly, then wiped it out with epoxy thinner. We applied two coats of epoxy, building up the chipped areas with heavier layers of paint. We sanded lightly between coats with crocus cloth and allowed 7 days drying time after the second coat. The oak rim was finished with marine varnish.

FOUR YEARS LATER, the tub still has a nice shine—despite hard use by our family of seven. I don't use abrasive cleaners on the surface, but rather spray-on foam cleansers.

Jan Zenner  
Dubuque, Iowa

SPECIAL THANKS ALSO TO: Anna P. Waterloo, Palatine, Ill.; Charlotte A. Winzenburg, Denver, Colo.; Mrs. A. K. Henry, Manistee, Michigan.

To The Editor:

WE USED A COMMERCIAL SERVICE that recoats old tubs with epoxy enamel. It was done only 6 months ago, so we can't be sure how long the job will last. But so far we are quite happy.

OUR TUB WAS IN very bad shape, with many gouges in the porcelain. We chose to have the tub worked on while in place—although the company would have taken it into their shop if we preferred. It turned out to be a three-step process: (1) epoxy filler was applied to the gouges and allowed to cure; (2) primer coat applied and allowed to cure; (3) finish coat applied. In all, the tub was out of commission for about two weeks.

BECAUSE OUR TUB REQUIRED so much filling—and because we wanted a special color—total cost ran about \$250. A simpler job in white that didn't require filler would have been about \$150. The service we used was Tuff-Kote Industries, which serves the New York metro area.

Joseph Kitchel  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

**THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL<sup>®</sup>**  
Published Monthly For People Who Love Old Houses

Editor .....	R. A. Clem Labine
Decorative Arts Editor .....	Carolyn Flaherty
Circulation Director .....	Paul T. McLoughlin
Circulation Assistants .....	Joan O'Reilly Peggy Scaglione
Midwest Editor .....	Tom H. Gerhardt
West Coast Representative .....	Carol A. Barrette
Staff Photography .....	Jim Kalett
Contributing Editors .....	Claire Wood Labine James R. McGrath R. A. Labine, Sr. H. Weber Wilson

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

# Caring For Antique Plumbing Fixtures

By Beth Yenchko Facinelli, Elizabethville, Pa.

**W**HEREVER I GO, the plumbing fixtures—unusual and mundane alike—always get a second glance from me. The daughter of a plumber can't help but have some of her dad's knowledge rub off on her! So it was natural when my husband and I started our own restoration company (and bought our own old house) that I would take a special interest in the plumbing fixtures that we came across.

UNFORTUNATELY, because of age and incorrect cleaning procedures, most old fixtures that we see are badly worn or discolored. Many people have tried various ways to rejuvenate these antique lavatories and tubs—but no method is long lasting or truly adequate. To learn why, we must look at the way fixtures are made.

## Cast Iron Fixtures

CAST IRON BATHTUBS AND SINKS are made in two steps. First the iron is cast in a sand mold, cooled, cleaned and ground down to remove rough edges, etc. It is also smoothed to create a good bonding surface for the next step: Applying the porcelain enamel. The cast piece is reheated in a kiln until it is red hot, and then pulled out. While still red hot, ground glass (enamel) is sprinkled uniformly over the fixture. When it cools, the porcelain enamel finish is smooth, shiny and ready to go. No polishing is required.

IF THE PORCELAIN FINISH should become worn, pitted or scratched, the only way to renew it permanently is to refire it as was done at the factory.

## Vitreous China Fixtures

VITREOUS CHINA FIXTURES are also manufactured in two main steps. First, clay is cast into the desired fixture shape, and when it is dry, is trimmed and smoothed. Then the "green" piece is fired for the first time. After the first firing, the fixture is coated with glaze—which is a suspension of chemicals in a liquid phase that form a glass-like coating when fired.

AS WITH CAST IRON PIECES, the only way to get a permanent repair to the porcelain finish on vitreous china pieces would be to reglaze and refire. However, this would be prohibitively expensive—even if you could find someone to do it.

Special thanks to Dick Lemmerhirt of Kohler Co. for the information he provided.

## Limits Of Porcelain Paints

**B**ECAUSE THE PROCELAIN FINISH is essentially a thin coating of glass, it should be clear that there is no such thing as true "re-porcelainizing" short of re-firing in a furnace. The materials that are sold for this purpose (and services that advertise) are just paints—usually epoxy. No one should delude themselves that a paint will be as long-lasting as the original porcelain.

EPOXY PAINT does look all right (right after you do it and if the fixture is seldom used) but it requires painstaking surface preparation and may last only a year or two. We tried an epoxy in our bathtub, and it began peeling in a year.

MY ADVICE is to use old fixtures as they are or else throw them away. Both worn china and cast iron fixtures are quite useable as long as they hold water and have no major cracks or leaks. Surfaces that are crazed present special appearance problems, however. Crazing consists of many small cracks in the enamel glaze on vitreous china. Dirt works its way through the cracks and into the clay body itself, turning the cracks dirty brown.

THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY to clean crazed surfaces is with muriatic acid. It may or may not work—and of course the user must be extremely careful of eyes and skin while working with muriatic acid. Some stains can also be removed with muriatic acid, but before trying acid, try the milder methods described below.

## Cleaning Products For Porcelain

**T**HERE ARE SEVERAL good non-abrasive cleaners that can help clean your fixtures without wearing the enamel away any further. It is especially important to use one of these non-abrasive cleaners on new porcelain so that you don't start the wearing-away process.

BON-AMI (available in grocery stores) and Kohler Cleanser (available through your plumber) are the only powders I know of that have little or no abrasives. Most grocery store cleansers (such as Ajax and Comet) have a high abrasive content and destroy enamel.

MULE-KICK is a pink polishing cream made by Sexauer and should be available through your plumber. It will remove marks and dirt, and will clean and protect your cherished antique fixtures for years. My parents' bathroom fixtures were cleaned exclusively with this product since installation, and the enamel finish still looks brand new—25 years and three kids later.

PROPER CLEANING won't restore damaged porcelain...but at least it can remove many of the marks and won't damage the fixture any further. Any scars that remain can be attributed to the character and antique nature of the fixture!

A

Towering

Victorian

Status Symbol

By Barbara Schiller

**B**EN ENSLEY, like many a newly-rich man before and after the 1860's, wasn't shy about showing off what money could buy. His fabulous Michigan farm boasted barns big enough for 200 head of cattle, a grand many-gabled farm house, a smoke house resembling a small cathedral, a gingerbread brick privy with ornamental ceiling and birdseye maple seats.

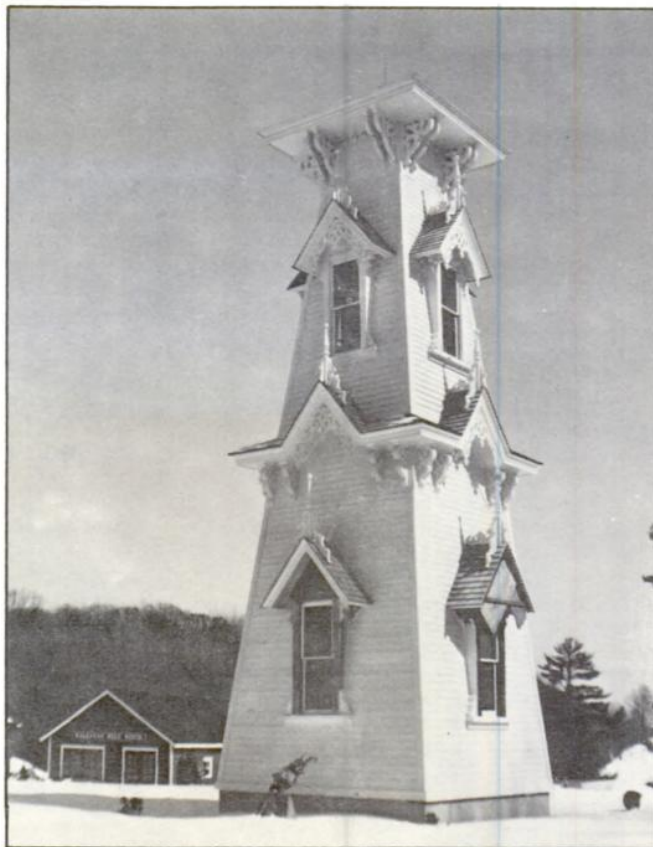
BUT TOWERING ABOVE ALL this architectural splendor was the pièce de resistance of the Ensley place--the windmill tower. A bracketed marvel of intricate symmetry with its gables and cornices delicately decorated with scrollwork and its peaks capped with beautifully turned finials.

HARLEY STOVEN FIRST SAW the Ensley tower in 1952 and in spite of its shabby state immediately knew it for what it was--the finest example of a decorated windmill tower he had seen. Feeling a deep responsibility to preserve this piece of America's heritage, Harley started negotiating for its purchase.

BY 1965 HE WAS TIRED of trying to buy the tower and had decided to content himself with making a scale model. Harley had devoted the years since the early fifties to research on the American windmill. He has original catalogs, photographs, drawings, clippings, and Windmill Gardens Museum Village--the historic restoration that the Stoven family operate during the summer in Fremont, Michigan.

**T**HEN, JUST LIKE THAT, the tower was given to the Stovens. The owners needed the site for a new silo.

BUT HOW WERE THE STOVENS to get their 43-ft., 15-ton structure to the mill yard at Windmill Gardens? There were two bridges across the Muskegon River. Neither would accept the tower because of possible damage to their metal work. Luck intervened again. A new bridge without superstructure was opened. Now all that was needed was money and a crane to accomplish the let-down and 30-mile trip of the Ensley tower. The local historical society



donated \$500. But no crane contracting company would even bid on the job. These obstacles only served to make Harley more determined. So he devised his own plan for the move, using rented equipment. The tower was to travel by goose-neck trailer, resting on its most deteriorated side. All details and trim were removed from this side and extra bracing added.

**T**HE LET-DOWN was to be accomplished by using the winch of a wrecker with steel cables and tepee-rigged shear poles. Everything proceeded smoothly according to plan. The tower was eight ft. from the ground when the brake started to slip, unable to hold the great weight any longer. The wooden shear poles bowed and "exploded." Down dropped the tower--onto five stacks of rubber tires--safe and sound. Harley laughs about this near-disaster now. "I bought those tires that morning just as an afterthought."

BY THE WINTER OF 1967 a new foundation and new sills were laid. The tower received further reinforcement in preparation for its lift-up by a 70 ft. boom crane. For a tense hour and fifteen minutes the old tower hung between earth and sky. Then at 1:55 it was gently hinged onto its new foundation.

THE STOVENS had fulfilled their fifteen year old ambition...almost. Restoration was to take longer than they had planned. They scoured the countryside for materials from old houses being wrecked. They found sashes, glass and rough sheeting lumber laden with layers of paint.



This section of the mid-tower roof shows the extent of deterioration.

**S**TARTING AT THE TOP and working with two or three craftsmen, Harley sought for an accurate restoration, using only those modern materials that would serve best to preserve a structure that had not been repaired since 1910. The original batten roof was replaced with plywood and selvage edge roofing. Extra flashing and new shingles were added. In six weeks the top half was completed, and the Stroven's resources depleted.

IN 1973 they regrouped and began work on the lower half. As she had before, Mrs. Stroven did all the painting, working downwards on the scaffolding with the carpenters. To make seven new finials Harley had to put an old wood lathe big enough to handle the 6x6 lengths back into working order. Their daughter traced patterns and cut scrollwork of 1½ in. pine seemingly by the mile on a bandsaw.

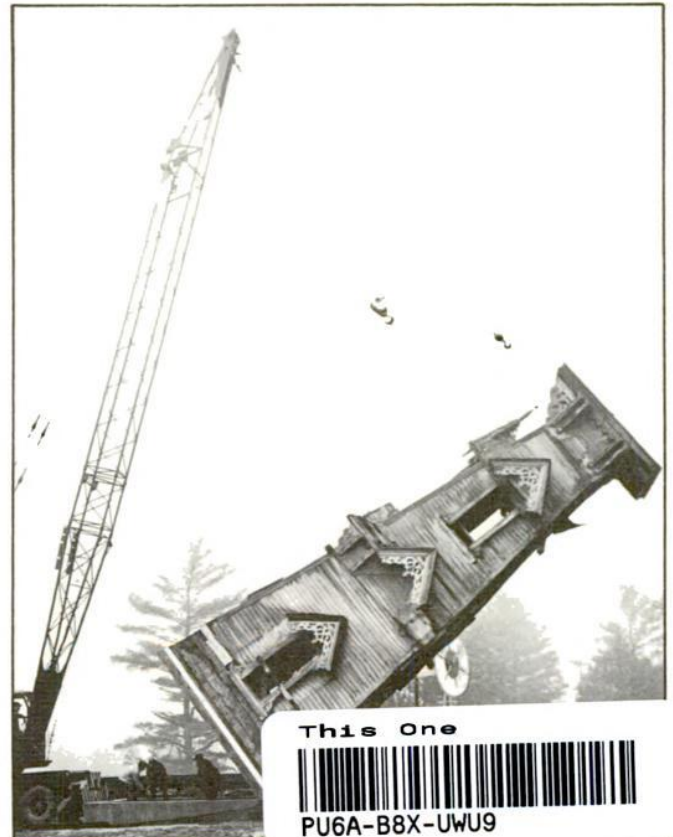
THE PAINT-LADEN salvaged sheeting lumber was recycled by putting it on backwards and skimming off the old saw marks with a disc sander. An elderly Belgian woman told the Strovens about a "natural way" to straighten warped woodwork. The 30 in. scrolls were placed on the damp grass and if the sun was good and hot they would be straight in a matter of hours.

**T**HE STROVENS were aiming to have the Ensley tower ready by July 4, 1976. They beat their Bicentennial deadline by two days. However, as with any old building, the work is never finished. There is still 40 ft. of railing to be restored. Mrs. Stroven wants to paint the trim its original color, a dark wine red. And as the crowning effort, a ten ft. wooden wheel will be added so that the Ensley tower will look as it originally did over a hundred years ago.

FOR THOSE OF OUR READERS who might like to visit the Windmill Gardens Museum Village in Fremont, Michigan: It is located one mile east of Fremont and half a mile north on Luce Avenue. It is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Memorial Day to Labor Day.



The extensive repairs necessary for the gingerbread, clapboards, etc., required full scaffolding to be set up.



This One



PU6A-B8X-UWU9

A 70-ft. crane raises tower onto its new foundation. For move, all projecting trim had been removed from one side.

# Refinishing Wood Floors

By Frank Broadnax

**W**HEN YOU DECIDE to refinish your floors, the preparatory work is difficult and somewhat special. The Old-House Journal did an excellent job on this in its December 1974 issue. You may wish to refer to that article in preparing your floor for its new finish.

ONCE YOUR FLOOR IS nice and clean, free of any old finish, dust, dirt, wax, etc., you are ready to apply the new finish. Here I'm assuming that you'll want a clear finish that will allow the beautiful wood grain to show through. In The Journal's January 1975 issue, Clem Labine described his favorite finishing system. I have some different techniques, and this is what I will share with you in this column.

## Before The Finish Goes On

**F**IRST OF ALL, the weather plays a major part in applying a successful finish. NEVER apply a sealer or finish in damp, humid weather. I prefer the humidity to be 50% or less...and the temperature to be somewhere between 50-95 F. Make sure the floor is dry and that you have good ventilation.

IF YOU USED a mineral spirits or turpentine-soaked cloth to remove dirt or dust, you saw what the floor will look like when it has its new finish. If you did not use such a cloth, at this point I suggest that you moisten a small section of the floor with turpentine or mineral spirits. This will tell you whether or not the floor will be too light with its natural finish...and whether you'll want to stain. Obviously, you have to stain before sealer is applied.

WHEN AND IF you stain the floor, allow the stain to dry at least 12 hr.—and preferably 24 hr. You should buff lightly with fine steel wool...using a machine if you have ac-

### Your Questions Answered

IF YOU HAVE any special problems with wood finishing, stripping, rescuing old finishes, etc., we'll try to provide answers. Describe the problem as completely as possible and send—along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope—to: Refinishing Clinic, The Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217. Questions of widest interest will also be answered in this column.



cess to one. Otherwise, it's hands-and-knees time. Anytime you buff with fine steel wool, you should vacuum to remove the fine dust and bits of steel.

## Sealers & Varnishes

**T**O SEAL THE FLOOR, I prefer to use refined tung oil. It is quite easy to apply: Use a good soft bristle brush and apply a thin coat, brushing with the grain of the wood. By putting on a light coat, you avoid the need to wipe out excess with a soft cloth as one would when refinishing furniture. Allow the tung oil to dry 24 hr.

NEXT I APPLY A good floor varnish. I prefer one that has a tung oil base. Two such brands that we have available locally are Var Tung and Tung-Roc. Among the nationally distributed brands, McCloskey's is the one that I use most often.

IF I WANT A HIGH GLOSS, I go with gym-coat. This is the type of varnish used on gym floors. Always apply at least two coats, allowing 24 hr. drying time between each coat. Remember that applying several thin coats is always far superior to one thick coat.

SHOULD YOU NOT WANT a high gloss, use a satin finish varnish. Again, apply at least two thin coats.

**I** THINK THE MOST BEAUTIFUL floor I've ever done used a combination of high-gloss and satin finish varnish. Here is the procedure I followed:

- (1) Apply a thin coat of tung oil to seal the floor;
- (2) Apply one coat of gym-coat high-gloss varnish;
- (3) Apply a final coat of satin-finish floor varnish.

The top finish had a soft, satiny look. But by using the high gloss as an in-between coat, the finish had a deep, rich appearance—even though thin coats had been used.

HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF FINISH hold up? Great! It will last for years. And if you use a good quality varnish that doesn't darken with age, you can apply a touch-up coat as the finish wears off in high-traffic areas.

## Floor Care

TO CARE FOR the finished floor:

- (1) I never recommend waxing. This only leads to trouble...especially if you ever want to add a touch-up coat of varnish. Should you use wax, use a paste wax. Carnauba wax is the hardest available and does not turn yellow. Carnauba will last 8-12 months longer than other waxes.
- (2) To care for the floor, vacuum regularly and dust with a treated dust mop. You can

treat your own string mop with a product such as Endust.



WORD ABOUT POLYURETHANE. I personally feel the virtues of polyurethane have been oversold. I no longer use it, nor do many of the experienced floor finishers that I know. It is quite possible to get unpleasant surprises with polyurethane, many of which stem from its rather long drying time. If you are using polyurethane, be doubly sure not to apply it in humid weather and to allow plenty of time between coats.

FRANK BROADNAX is President of Broadnax Refinishing Products. One special item they sell is a furniture refinishing kit. To get free product information, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Frank at: P.O. Box 196, Ila, GA 30647.



## Recent Arrivals...

# Helpful Publications

## Manual Of Neighborhood Preservation

"A NATIONAL LOOK AT MAKING NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION SUCCESSFUL" is the subtitle of the Proceedings of the 2nd annual Back To The City Conference held in St. Paul, Minn. in 1975. This 66-page softcover volume is a valuable compendium of know-how and case histories from neighborhood revivalists across the U.S. Among the 21 articles: Creative Promotion Techniques; The Corporate Conscience; Townscape Conservation—A Manifesto for Activists; Neighborhood Preservation and Downtown Vitality; Dealing With Displacement; New Life for Old Buildings. Copies of the Proceedings of the St. Paul Conference can be obtained by sending \$5.00 to: Back To The City, 12 E. 41st St., New York, NY 10017.

## Tips On Historic Paint Colors

ANYONE PLANNING TO PAINT their old house—inside or out—should have a copy of this 8-pg. brochure: "Property Owner's Guide to Paint Restoration and Preservation." It contains useful guidelines on researching original color schemes, and has helpful hints on the types of new paint to apply. Especially valuable is the bibliography of sources for additional information. Bulk rates are also available for this booklet, so it could be a useful handout for neighborhood groups trying to interest property owners in restoring historically appropriate colors. Single copies of Technical Series #1 can be had by sending \$1 to: Preservation League of NY State, 184 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210.

## Dealing With Architects & Contractors

"HOW TO BUY AND FIX UP AN OLD HOUSE" is directed more to the remodeler and renovator than to the person who is attempting a sensitive restoration of an old house. Thus some of the specific advice on what to do to a structure will not be appropriate where the owner wants to restore. But where the book is particularly helpful is in its sections on selecting and dealing with architects, contractors and decorators. It contains a lot of practical advice as well as useful checklists and sample sets of specifications. If you have a major project coming up, the book could be a worthwhile investment. 125 pp.; softcover; comb bound. \$8.95 from: Home-Tech publications, 7315 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 20014.

## Architectural Styles In Masonry

EVERYTHING about this delightful 42-page booklet is clear and easy to understand—except its title: "Evolution of Masonry Construction in American Architectural Styles." Behind that rather imposing title stands a well-illustrated, brief history of the major architectural styles in the U.S. as exhibited in masonry structures. Because the scope is limited to masonry, most of the buildings shown are either public edifices, or else rather grand private dwellings. Of particular interest, the styles are grouped together according to their historical roots, which makes it easier for the neophyte to see how some of the finer points of architectural detailing relate to each other. The booklet, written by architect Maximilian L. Ferro, is available for \$1.00 by writing to: Delbert D. Stoner, Sermac Surface Maintenance Systems, 2300 Warrenville Road, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515.

architectural styles and landscape improvements should complement each other. He felt that the classical architectural styles--Greek Revival, Italianate, Tuscan--represent the beauty of harmony and grace and call for the beautiful landscape treatment, while the irregular architectural styles--Gothic, castellated, Norman, bracketed--require the picturesque mode of landscape improvement to balance their striking and unsymmetrical aspect. With typical American preoccupation with the new, he did not consider any of the pre-existing residential styles as candidates for either mode of the new landscape gardening.

**H**OW DID THE BEAUTIFUL in gardening differ from the picturesque? The beautiful was thought to embody grace and harmony; hence it was represented by softly flowing grassy lawns studded with stately, regular-shaped trees and shrubs. Curving paths wound among the trees on the grounds, and in the flower garden a path might be cut through the lawn, which was punctuated with curly-shaped flower beds.

THIS "ENGLISH FLOWER GARDEN" was characterized by rather violently curved outlines. Each bed was planted with only one or two varieties of colorful blooming annuals--"the aim being a brilliant effect." Favorite plants were fuchsia, salvia, lobelia, and red geranium. Shrubs were planted near the house, in beds along the walkways. Flowering shrubs such as mock-orange, lilacs, etc. were preferred.

DOWNING FURTHER recommended that classical-style houses should be tied to their grounds by terraces with balustrades reminiscent of the Italian gardens of the Renaissance. He recommended a terrace 5-20 ft. wide, and raised 1-8 ft. above ground level, paved with flagstones, and bounded by a balustrade with coping studded with "architectural decoration" at regular intervals. The architectural decoration might consist of vases or urns, either empty or planted in the Italian manner with formal plants (topiary work, or yuccas) or statuary. If money for the grand balustrade treatment was unavailable, vases or urns might be set on

plinths or pedestals to delineate the terrace area.

**T**HE PICTURESQUE IDEAL emulated wild nature. The total effect was much less carefully groomed and harmonious than in the beautiful mode; the goal was a kind of raw roughness appropriate to craggy stones, rushing water, and dark thickets. This effect was achieved in landscape planting by the use of irregularly-shaped or dramatic trees, especially conifers, used in tighter groups to simulate natural groves or thickets and to increase the play of light and shadows. Native shrubs might be used in naturalistic plantings. Paths through the grass and woods were even more meandering and rustic, sometimes with sharp changes in level. Rockeries, grottos, and other oddities were appropriate.

DOWNING DESCRIBES a flower garden suitable to this mode in the following terms: "The irregular flower garden is surrounded by an irregular belt of trees and ornamental shrubs of the choicest species, and the beds are varied in outline, as well as irregularly disposed, sometimes grouping together, sometimes standing singly, but exhibiting no uniformity of arrangement." This was considered a suitable accompaniment to the house and grounds of a lover of the picturesque-rural Gothic style.

DOWNING WAS ALSO a great advocate of the use of vines to soften and give character to architecture -- the stylistic prelude to the use of foundation planting for the same purpose after the turn of the century. Vines growing up on wires were used to screen areas of the verandah or porch from public view, and vines were encouraged to ramble over features such as bay windows. Hall's honeysuckle, introduced from the Orient in this period, quickly became a favorite.

**I**T IS IMPORTANT to note that while the grounds and pleasure gardens visible from the street and house--the modern equivalent would be the front yard--followed the new stylistic trend toward "nature," every household continued to require the same service spaces as before for drying laundry, chopping wood, etc. Most homes were still outfitted



This is an example of Downing's landscaping in the "beautiful" manner.



The imitation of wild nature is evident in Downing's "picturesque" style.





At left is Downing's "English Flower Garden," a suitable accompaniment to the beautiful mode of landscape gardening.

At right is Downing's "Irregular Flower Garden," recommended for the Gothic Revival and other romantic styles that called for the picturesque manner of landscape gardening.

with the sheds, dependencies, barns, and stables of the former era. These were carefully placed behind the house and screened in some way from the street and drive. Behind them could be found the vegetable garden and fruit trees, planted in rows.

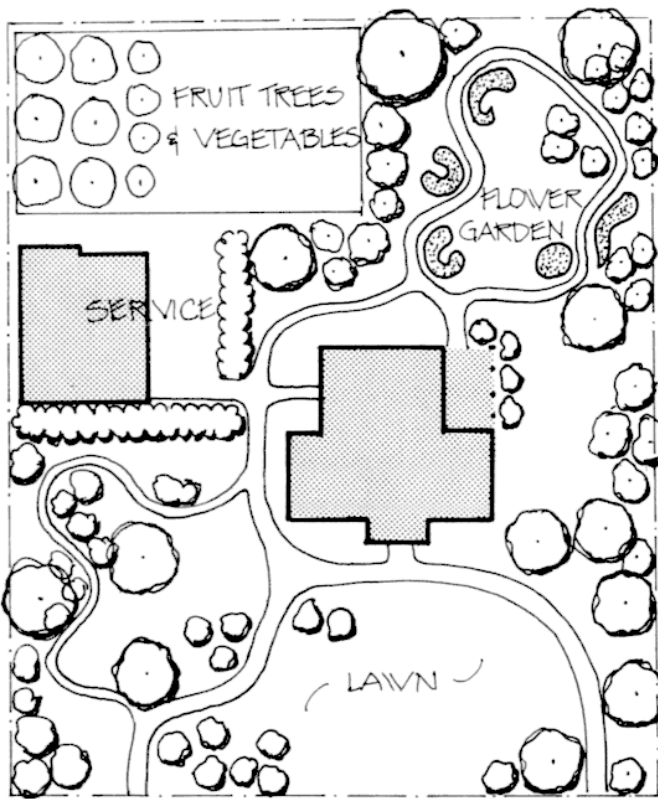
DOWNING'S BOOK ran through 6 editions, the last of which was published more than 20 years after his untimely death in 1852. During the decades following the Civil War, the streetcar changed the shape, size, and social climate of the city as millions of well-to-do Americans moved out into newly created suburbs. The average suburban lot was far smaller than the grounds surrounding the "rural villa" of Downing's time, and its proximity to its neighbors

demanded a slightly different treatment than the "beautiful" or "picturesque" advocated by Downing 30 years before.

AT ITS BEST the suburban concept was that of gracious homes set in a shared park-like environment, and the problem presented to the landscape designer was thus how to maintain the overall effect while affording privacy and individuality to each of the houses.

**B**Y THE 1880's two features were considered essential to a businessman's home: A fine lawn and large trees. The development of the lawnmower as we know it today (almost) did a lot to popularize the fine lawn. Instead of designating certain spaces within the lot for planting grass, the entire lot was thought of as a lawn, and plantings, drives, etc. were cut out of the grass area, much as a sub-division builder does today.

Plan of a "Suburban Villa" and grounds, ca. 1850.



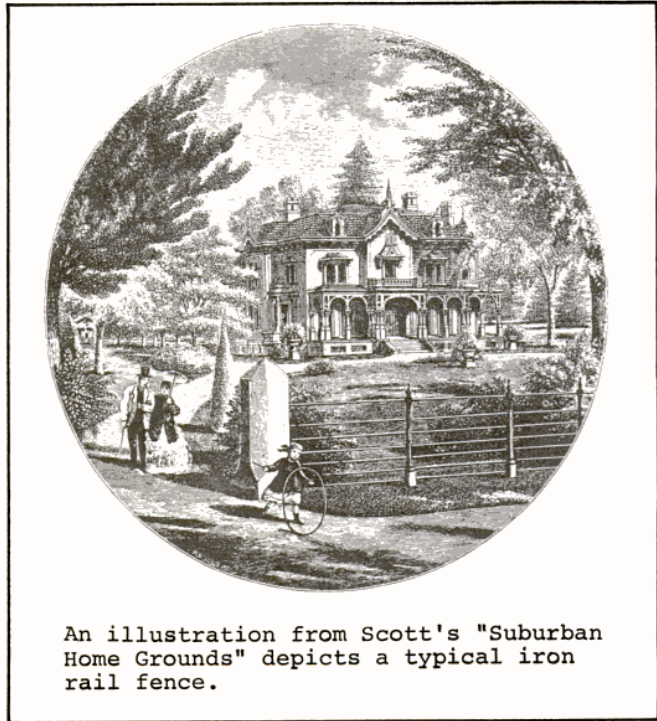
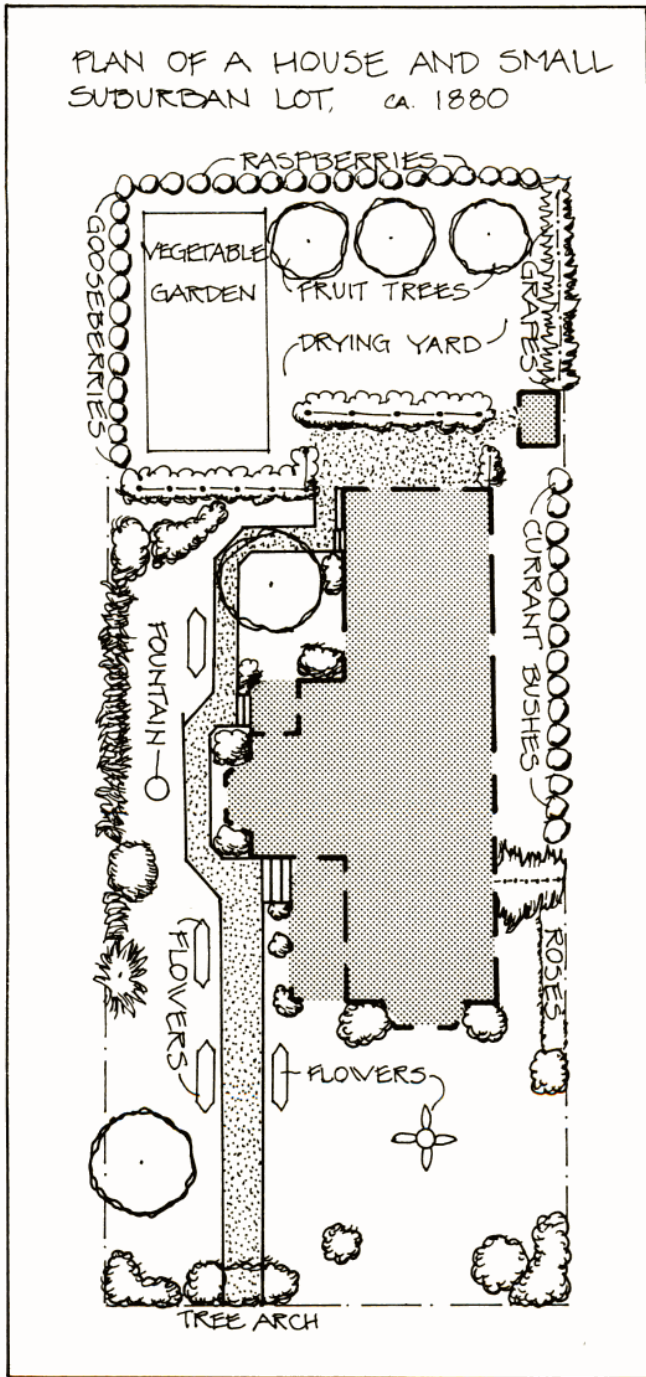
TREES WERE STRATEGICALLY PLACED in the lawn to provide shade or complement architecture by providing a backdrop or accent, but they were very rarely used en masse to create a grove or a barrier. Large, stately trees such as American elm and European beech were extensively used as suitable companions to the large homes of the Queen Anne style, and fast-growing trees such as silver maple were also popular.

**S**HRUBS BECAME increasingly popular, both in mass plantings and as single specimens. Naturalistic plantings of shrubs in clumps and groups were used to screen undesirable views into neighboring windows and service areas, to delineate property boundaries and areas of lawn such as the croquet field, and to direct the view to and from the street.

SINGLE SHRUBS were used as accents in the lawn and as centerpieces for garden beds. Although planting to hide the house foundation had not yet appeared, flowering shrubs were often planted along the verandah's edge or under a window for their beauty and fragrance.

FLOWERBEDS REFLECTED the Victorian era's love of ornament and ostentation. Typically they were now complexly geometric: starshaped, cruciform, trefoil, and combinations. They were cut out of the lawn along walkways or in strategic and conspicuous places and planted with brilliantly colored annuals or with

PLAN OF A HOUSE AND SMALL SUBURBAN LOT, ca. 1880



An illustration from Scott's "Suburban Home Grounds" depicts a typical iron rail fence.

WHEN THE LOT WAS FENCED, as it frequently was, the fencing was of a type allowing maximum visibility, usually iron bars or rails, as the goal seems to have been a psychological sense of boundary rather than a barrier to produce privacy. Often the ground level of the lot was raised slightly above the sidewalk by a concrete or cut stone retaining curb which served a boundary function similar to the fence. It was considered desirable to have the land slope up to the house from the street, as this made the house appear larger and taller. If screening or privacy from the street was desired, shrubs were the usual solution.

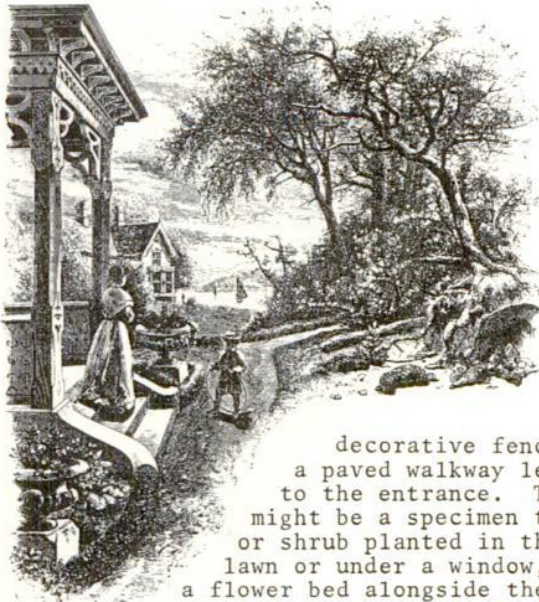
MOST SUBURBAN HOUSES concentrated their landscaping efforts on the front yard, as the side yards were quite narrow and the backyards continued to be taken up by carriage houses, privies, wood or coal sheds, drying yards, and vegetable gardens. In Frank J. Scott's "Suburban Home Grounds," published in 1886, almost all the suggested lot layouts show vegetable plots and fruits. Those which are simply too small to accommodate vegetables use fruit trees and bushes as the ornamental landscaping elements.

roses. Flowering shrubs or fountains or statuary might provide the centerpiece for a circular bed or arrangement of beds.

**S**UBURBAN HOUSES, like their urban predecessors, usually had two entrances from the street: a straight or elegantly curving formal walkway from the street to the front entrance, and a less elegant drive leading to the service areas hidden in the recesses of the lot. The view of the house as one approached from the street was carefully controlled. The walkway was placed to give maximum effect to the house, and plantings were introduced as necessary to enhance this view.

**T**HE URBAN DWELLER of the Victorian period was generally far less concerned with landscape improvements. After all, he had less space, particularly in an attached row house with no side yards or drives to worry about. The service areas were located behind the house, with access via an alley. This rear area is now often very successfully converted into a small city garden. It need not be a period garden or a restoration since it was not originally a garden area at all.

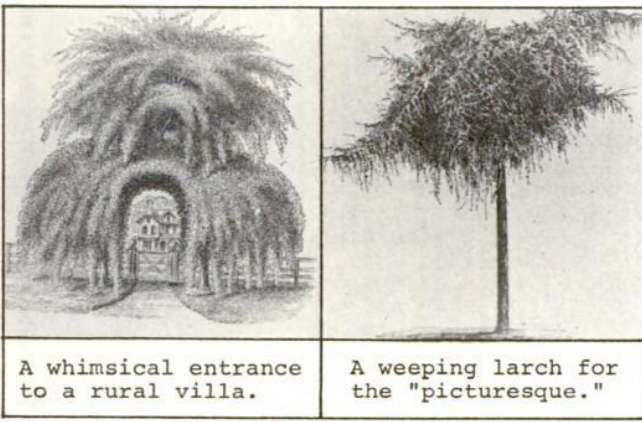
THE FRONT YARD, usually quite small, was grassed over and often enclosed by a cast iron



decorative fence. a paved walkway led to the entrance. There might be a specimen tree or shrub planted in the lawn or under a window, or a flower bed alongside the walkway, or a geometric flower bed cut into the lawn to be viewed from an upstairs window. Ivy and other vines might be encouraged to cover the masonry or twine up the downspouts.

**B**Y THE END OF THE 19th century many of our modern annuals had been developed, and horticultural institutions were sending expeditions to the Orient to discover new plant materials suitable to our temperate climate. Japanese yew was introduced in 1855, Siebold viburnum by 1880, weigelia in 1845, kudzu vine in 1885, Boston ivy in 1862, Japanese barberry in 1875, flowering quinces before 1880, and pee gee hydrangia in 1862. In California, the eucalyptus species were introduced from Australia and New Zealand. Flower favorites, predictably, were in brilliant colors: geraniums, coleus, cockscomb, castor beans, cannas, nasturtiums, lobelias, alyssum, zinnias. Extensive work was done in developing vegetables and fruit, especially by Luther Burbank, resulting in sweet corn and smooth red tomatoes.

WHIMSEYS OF ALL KINDS enlivened the Victorian garden. Dripping fountains and birdbaths, statues of children and animals, complex

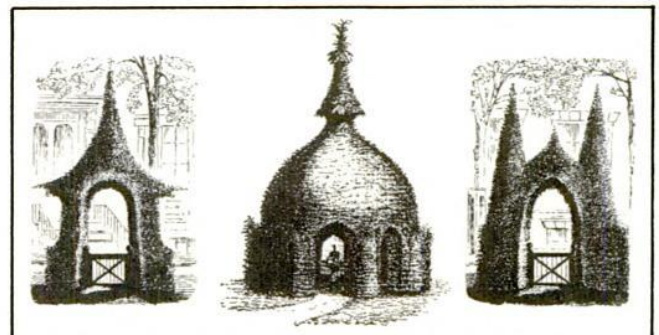


A whimsical entrance to a rural villa.

A weeping larch for the "picturesque."

## Victorian Garden Book

Frank J. Scott's famous book on landscaping published in 1886 is now available in a soft-cover reprint. Originally titled, "Suburban Home Grounds," it contains over 200 illustrations of plans for gardens and embellishments. The reprint version has a sewn binding and it is retitled "Victorian Gardens For Victorian Homes." To order "Victorian Gardens," send \$6.95, plus 50¢ postage and handling, to: The Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, New York 11217.



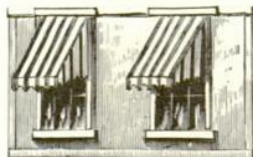
These whimsical examples of Victorian topiary are from Frank J. Scott's book, "Suburban Home Grounds."

arbors, garden houses, rockeries, grottos, and fantastic and complicated topiary work were all welcomed.

BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY garden styles began a definite shift back toward naturalism from the striking stiffness of the late Victorian period. Gently curving "borders" of flowers and shrubs were used to delineate spaces, with individual species planted in clumps or drifts. Perennials became popular again, as did pastel-hued flowers. The lawn with trees remained an American institution, no longer interrupted by flowerbed cut-outs but as a continuous sweep of green carpet from border to border. And the new vogue for foundation planting decreed that every house be tied to the ground by a layer of massed shrubs.

**D**ESPITE THE ever-increasing amount of exotic and Oriental plant material, there was a growing respect for native shrubs and trees. This was especially true in the prairie states, where extremes of cold, wind, and drought combined to make foreign plants less than happy. Shrubs such as box-elder and osage orange and our native willows, cottonwoods, and elms were extensively used by garden designers evolving a uniquely American landscape art which was the complement to the developing prairie school in architecture.

# Products For The Old House



## Awnings

AWNINGS are really an old-fashioned way to reduce heat and sunlight in the home.

ROOMS WITH AWNINGS on the windows are 8° to 15° cooler and, if the room is air-conditioned, operating costs will be considerably reduced.

BLOCKING THE SUNLIGHT coming in a room also protects rugs, drapes and fine furniture from deterioration.



The 100-year old Astrup Co. makes fine fabrics and hardware for the awning manufacturer. While they make many different patterns, the old-fashioned stripe is recommended for the old house.

SINCE ALL awnings are custom-made anyway, it should not be difficult for the homeowner to have the maker create exactly the style most suitable for the period house.

WRITE TO Astrup for the name of the dealer in your area. Astrup will also send you information sheets on their fabrics. Contact: Mr. L. A. Millward, General Sales Mgr., The Astrup Company, 2937 West 25th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44113. Tel. (216) 696-2800.

## Custom Duplication Of Hardware

RITTER & SON can reproduce almost any piece of cast or wrought hardware. They began this service for the U. S. Nat'l Park Service to replace hardware needed in historic structures. For cast hardware, they pour only brass or bronze. For wrought hardware, they use steel, iron, brass, bronze, tin, and other metals. Some of the items commonly reproduced are: pulls, knobs, keyholes, rosettes, legs, hinges, hooks, finials, lamp-bases, candlesticks, door knobs, door bell housings.

THIS, OF COURSE, is not an expensive service and there is a minimum charge of \$25.00. It is best to write first, preferably enclosing a snapshot, to get an idea of the magnitude of the job.

Ritter & Son also has a stock of Victorian hardware including: dresser pulls, keyholes, lockplates. Catalog is \$1.00 but they will send it free to readers of The Journal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about their stock or custom service, contact: Walt Ritter, Ritter & Son, P. O. Box 907, 119 E. Alice Ave., Campbell, Calif. 95008. Tel. (408) 378-3272.

## Shutters: Standard & Custom



WHILE THE FRIENDLY neighborhood lumberyard usually carries stock shutters, invariably they don't have the right size. That is why it's handy to have the price list and spec sheet of a major shutter supplier handy. It tells you which sizes are standard...and which would require special make-up.

THE PRICE LIST covers both the stock items and custom fabrication. Shutters are pine, and can be ordered unfinished or with a standard color or stain. If you have to match existing hardwood window framing, shutters could be grained as described in The Journal, June 1975. Price list free from: Perkowitz, 135 Green Bay Road, Wilmette, Ill. 60091.

**FOCAL POINT Inc.**  
4870 S. Atlanta Rd., Smyrna, GA 30080

Write for Literature  
or Call Collect 404-351-0820  
Ask for Dept. O.H.

## 1977 Buyers' Guide

- Catalog of sources for 4,286 hard-to-find items and services for the old house;
- 383 Companies listed;
- 171 of these sources are new—did not appear in the 1976 Buyers' Guide;
- An invaluable reference

Single copies: \$5.50  
(\$3.50 to subscribers).

Order from:

**The Old-House Journal**  
199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217

## Subscriptions: The Old-House Journal

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

Subscription is: Gift  Personal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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