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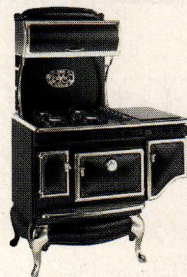
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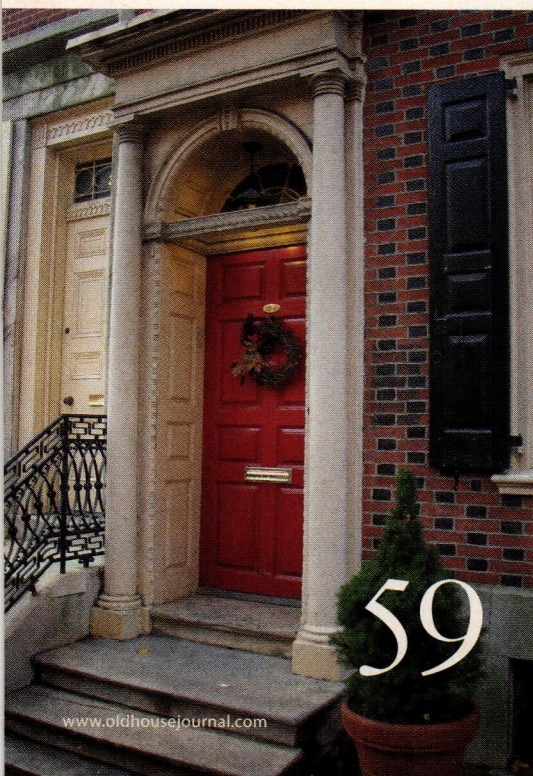
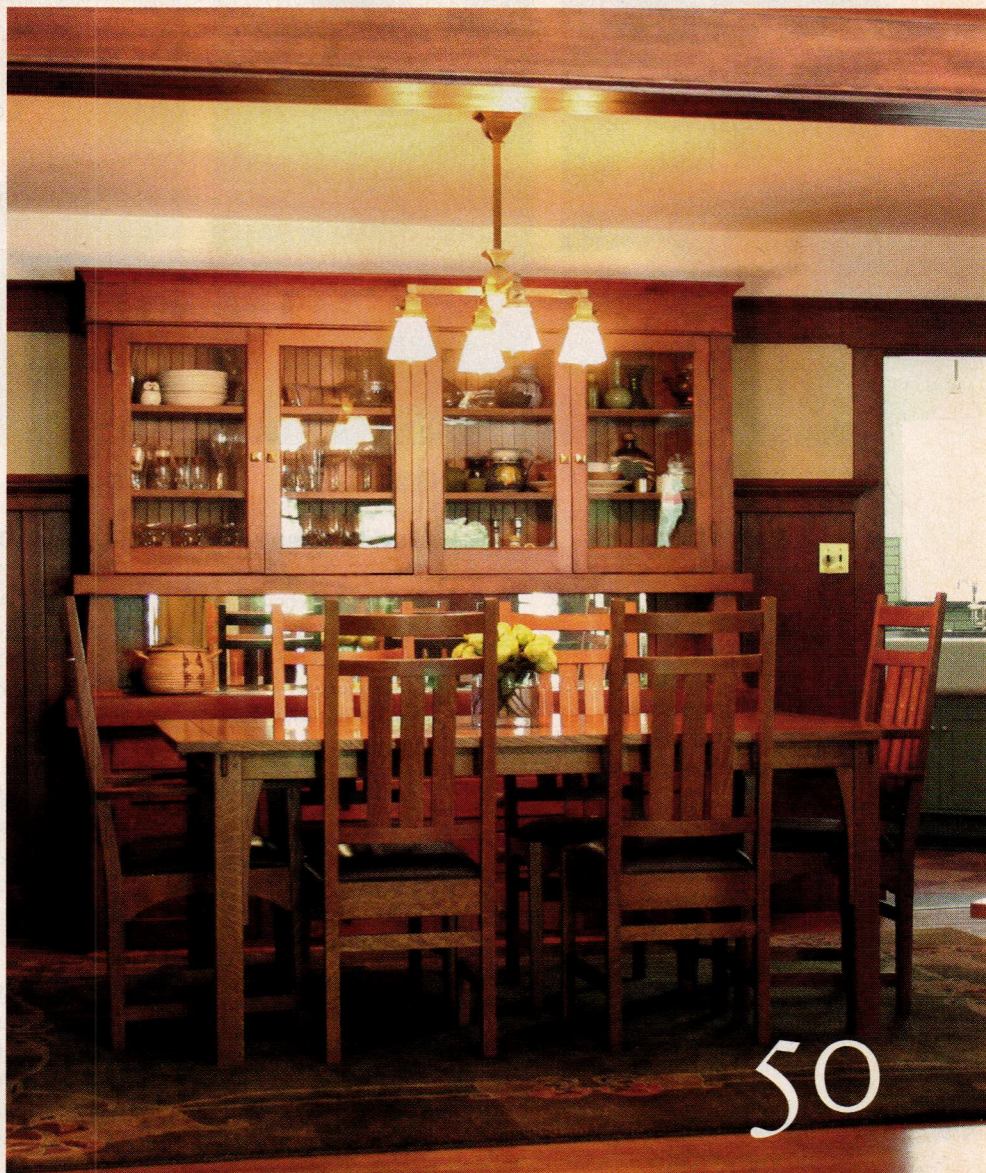
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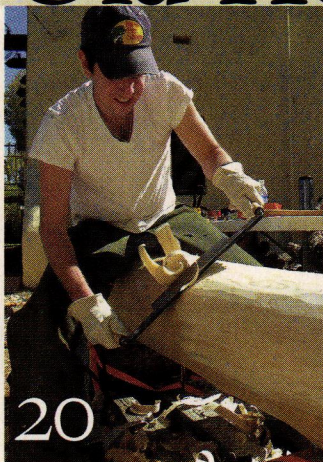
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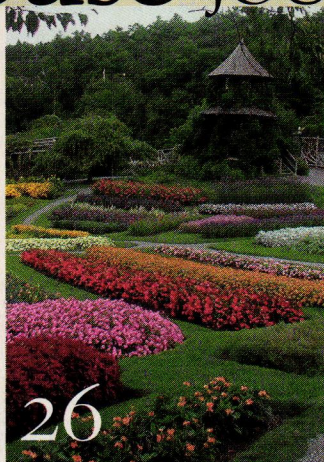
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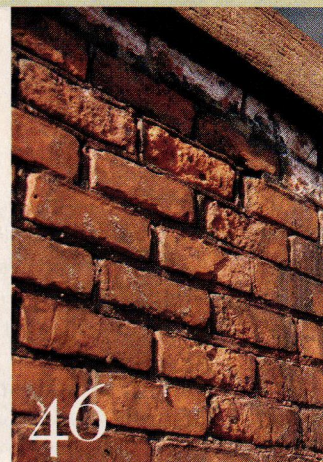
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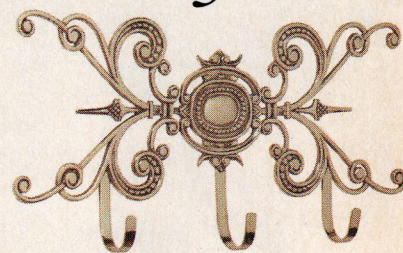


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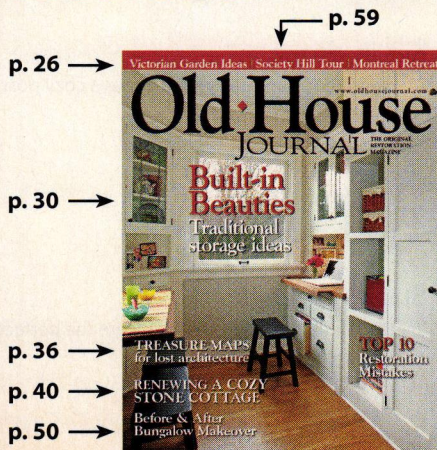
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Cover: Image by Photo Art Portraits. Modern built-ins transform the corner of a 1926 Tudor kitchen into a multitasking work and storage station. Design by Arciform LLC. Story page 30. Visit [oldhousejournal.com](http://oldhousejournal.com).

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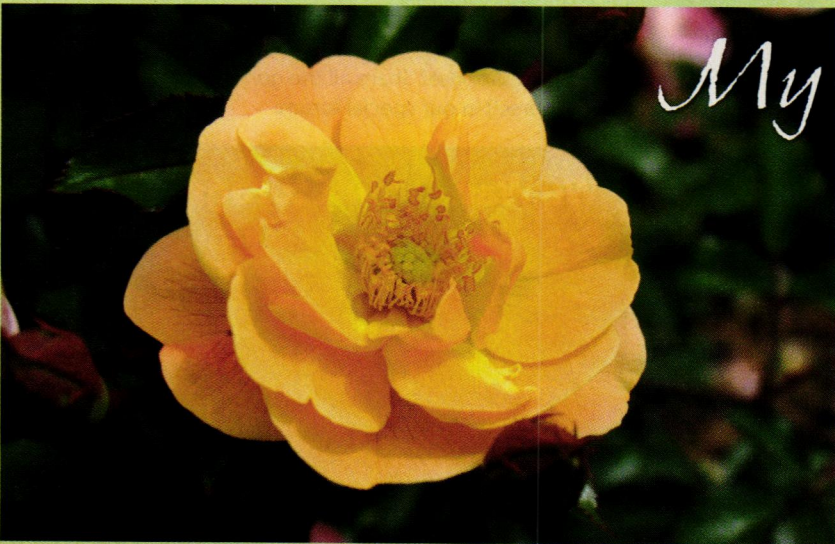
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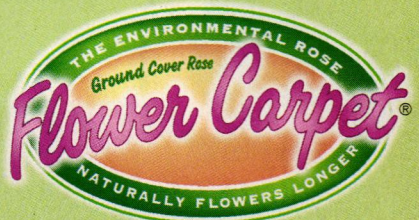
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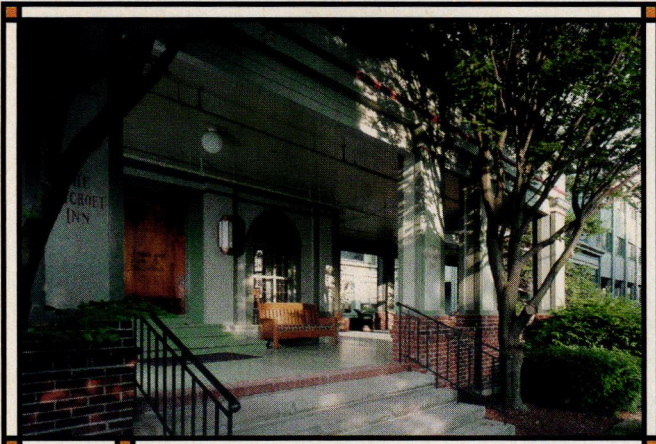


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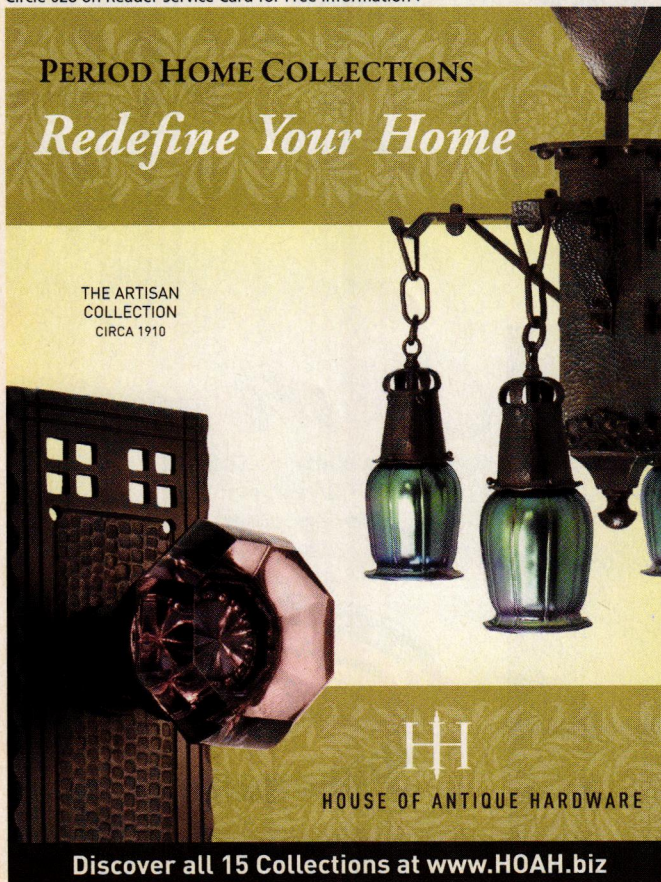
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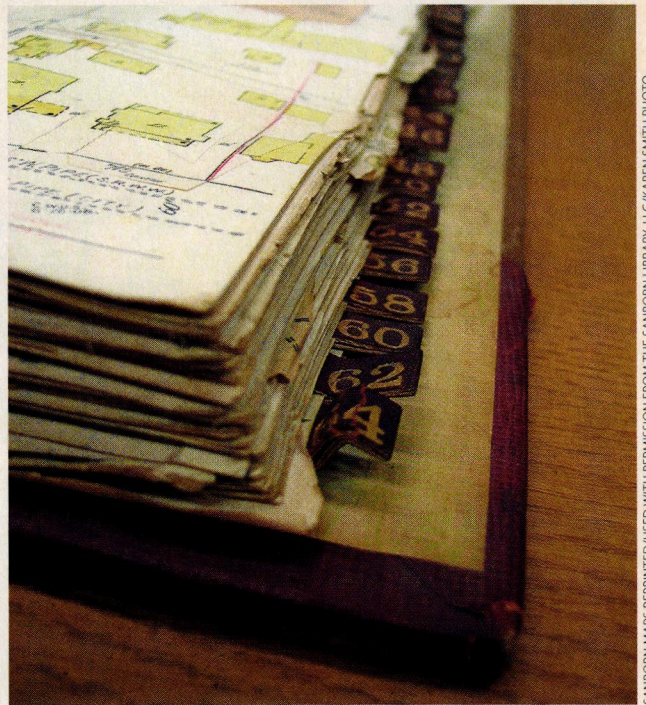


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## Searching for Sanborns

Once our story on Sanborn insurance maps (page 36) has convinced you what a valuable restoration tool they can be, you're ready for the next step: tracking down a map of your own house. Consult our directory of digital Sanborn resources, where you'll find links to libraries and databases around the country offering online access to this great research tool.

## Ouch!

We know you'd never make one of those oh-so-damaging but all-too-common restoration mistakes (especially not after reading our primer on how to avoid them on page 46). But the previous owners of our homes aren't always so prudent. We want to know—what's the worst "repair" you inherited with your house? Share all the gory details (and the photos, of course!) in our special forum.

## We Want Your Storage Ideas

When the Rolling Stones crooned that "you can't always get what you want," we can't help but wonder if they might have been talking about old-house storage space, so often have we heard tales of architecture-loving homeowners forced to make do with fewer places to stash stuff. But since necessity breeds creativity, we're betting lots of you have found inventive ways to get the storage you need. We're officially on the hunt for the best reader-generated storage solutions: Log on to [MyOldHouseJournal.com](http://MyOldHouseJournal.com) to find out how to submit photos of your brilliant ideas; our favorite will receive a one-year subscription (or renewal) to OHJ.





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# editor's note

## Storage and Stewardship



MARK W. ABBOTT PHOTO

IF YOUR HOUSE is anything like mine, it's overflowing. Tools, cooking gadgets, books, pottery collections, not to mention the kids' toys and those school art projects too precious to throw away—the trappings of modern life that pile up and easily overwhelm every inch of existing storage. For those of us in old houses, finding a place for all this stuff is a particular challenge, because space is already at a premium. While earlier generations surely had fewer things, they were also better at hiding them. Built-ins had been used for centuries

before they became wildly popular in homes constructed during the early years of the 20th century. In addition to being a terrific architectural element, they helped tame the mass of personal objects crowding new, smaller suburban dwellings. Since readers ask us constantly about ways to create storage space in old houses, we've focused two articles in this issue on the subject. The first, "Built-Inspirations," explores a range of built-in examples, original and new, that help manage the storage

showdown (see page 30). The second, "Getting Hooked," looks at an array of era-appropriate hanging hardware suitable for storing things out in the open (see page 56).

Of course, there are some things you'll never want in plain view, like damage resulting from bad restoration choices. I'm not talking remuddles here, but repair approaches that seemed like a good idea at the time, but had devastating consequences. (You may have encountered some of these in your own house—courtesy of previous owners, of course.) To get to the bottom of what not to do, expert contributor Ray

**A wall of built-in shelves in an Arts & Crafts house makes the most of available space.**

Tschoepe walks us through the worst restoration mistakes. His article highlights why you should always do your homework before beginning any project, and it's a must-read for anyone considering a repair (see "Top 10 Restoration Mistakes," page 46). Finally, if your restoration plans include bringing back lost architectural elements, we've highlighted a little-known resource that can help. Sanborn insurance maps, which detailed buildings in some 12,000 cities and towns—right down to their footprints, fenestration, and construction materials—can be a treasure trove for preservation-minded homeowners (see "Mapping Out a Restoration," page 36). No matter what projects are currently topping your to-do list, you'll find lots of ideas in this issue for solid old-house approaches, inside and out.

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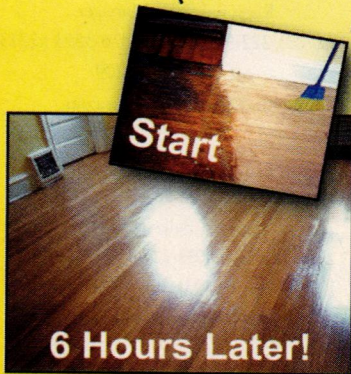


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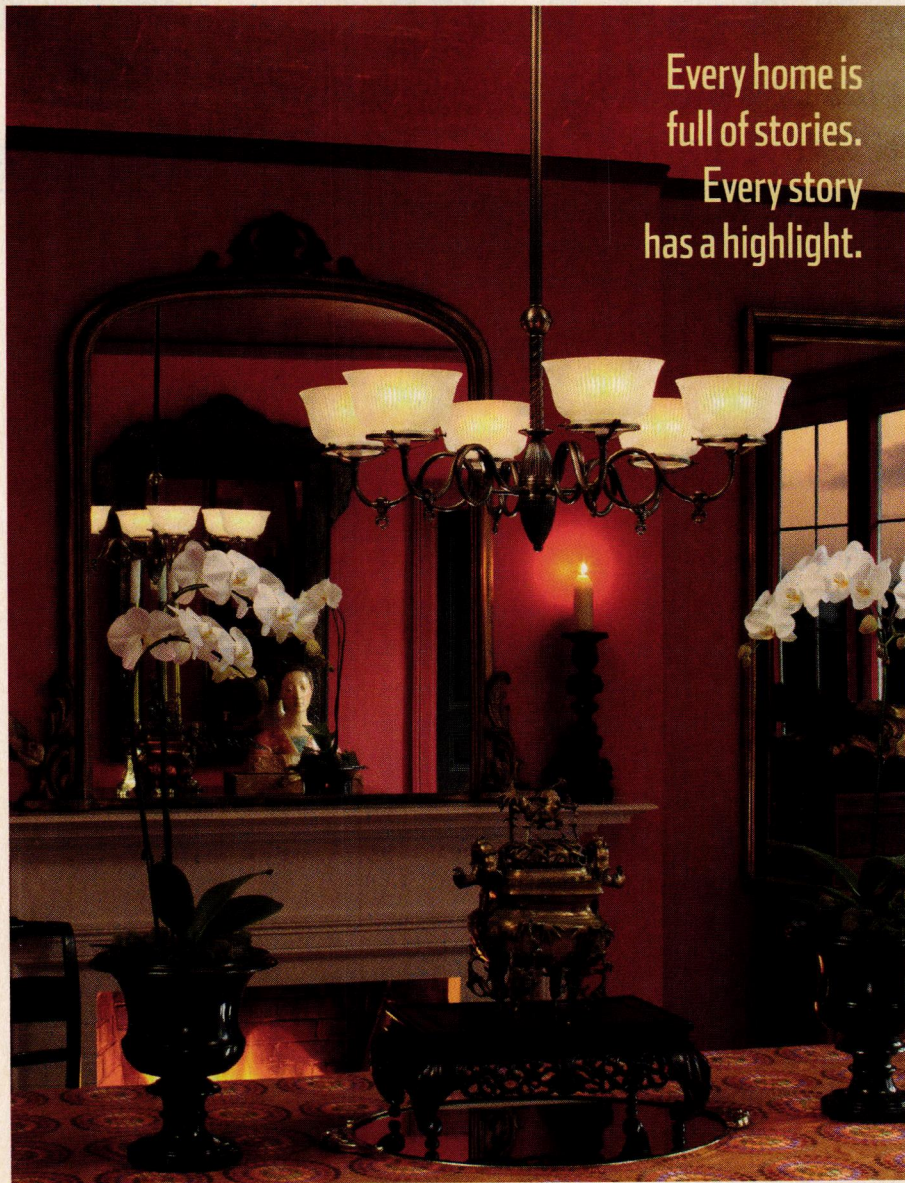
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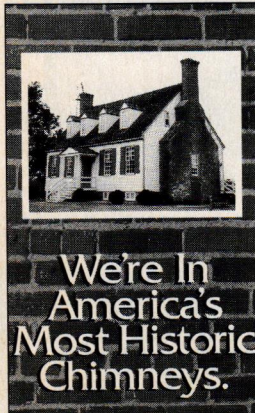
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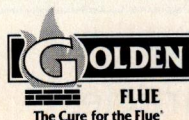
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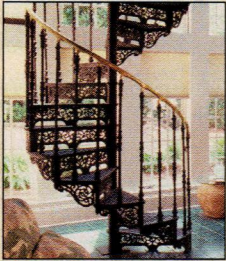
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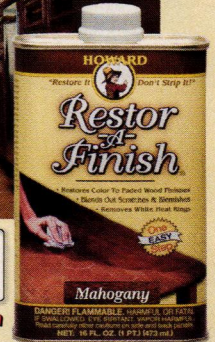


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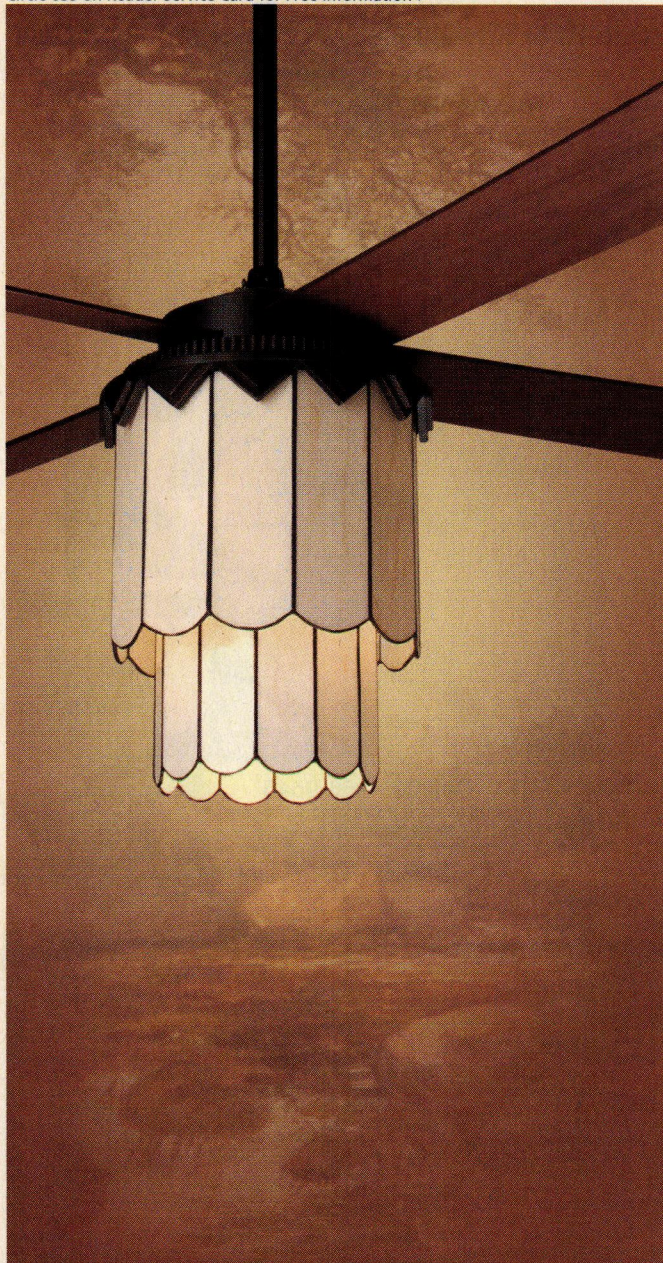
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# letters

## Kitchen Contenders

When we advertised a kitchen contest at the launch of Old-House Live, our everything-for-your-old-house show in Hartford, Connecticut, last fall, we weren't prepared for the flood of heart-felt restoration stories we'd get. Many of you have put an awful lot of time and effort into aligning your kitchens with the age and architectural style of your houses. (We heard some shocking horror stories, too, about avocado appliances pulled from Georgian homes!) We were so



impressed with the winning elements in several entries that it was impossible to choose just one winner. We loved the innovative use of pressed tin tiles as a backsplash in William Roberts & Paula Barta's Shingle Victorian in West Roxbury, Massachusetts; the hand-rubbed ash finish on the cabinets in Linda McNally's reproduction post-and-beam Cape in Harrisville, Rhode Island; the fancy tilework and vintage appliances [above] in David Weile & Fran Mayer's 1930 Tudor in Bloomfield, Connecticut; and the quarter-sawn oak cabinets with reproduction pulls selected by Janet Cesaro of West Hartford, Connecticut. Congrats to all for a job well done. —Eds.

## Serendipitous Stories

My husband and I couldn't help but laugh when we saw Lynn Elliott's article ["Light Savers"] in the January/February issue—it was a day late and a dollar short for our rewiring project [below].

I also enjoyed the story in the previous issue on researching your old house ["The Paper Trail," November/December '09].



Our preservation commission is in the middle of a seven-phase research project, and Polk directories (available at either your local library or museum) have been one of our best resources. Sanborn maps also have been invaluable. [We agree—see our story on Sanborn maps on p. 36.

—Eds.] And finally, spend some time at the County Tax Assessor's office. That's where, if lucky, one can trace the chain of title. But be warned—once you start, it is very addicting to see history unfold.

Jenifer Wilde-McMurtrie  
Yakima, Washington

## Reader Tip of the Month

Excellent article on removing rust from iron fences and railings ["Rust Removers," January/February '10]. I've found the little Dremel tool works really well on such jobs. You can even get the carbide tips to fit into many of those tight spots. (The wire steel bits also work well.) If you have a friend who works in the dental field, you might even be able to get the smaller dental tools, which are even better. Using the variable-speed Dremel on high with the carbide tips can make a job like this go quickly.

Joel Hewitt  
Sunnyside, Georgia

**Got a great tip to share with other old-house lovers? Let us know at [OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com](mailto:OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com).**

## A Stripping Solution

Loved the article about the Schoenhaus restoration ["A Rose Blooms Again," January/February '10]. Do you happen to know what product they used to strip the paint off the woodwork?

John Terracuso  
Greenfield, Massachusetts

We checked with contractor David Carey, who tells us the team used a product called Peel-Away ([dumondchemicals.com/html/peelaway.htm](http://dumondchemicals.com/html/peelaway.htm)). You apply a layer of the product to the wood, cover it with strips of fibrous laminated paper, then let it sit for a day or two before peeling off the paper (and paint!). The wood then just needs to be neutralized (Carey recommends white vinegar) and lightly sanded before refinishing. —Eds.



**Clarification:** Eagle-eyed George Barber fans pointed out a couple of inaccuracies in our story on the mail-order architect ["Barber's Shop," January/February '10]. We identified Barber as having lived at 1724 Washington Ave.; while Barber designed this house,

he never lived there. (In addition to 1635 Washington, he called 1701 East Glenwood home.) Also, the house on page 68 attributed to Barber (shown above) was in fact designed by David Getaz, a lesser-known Barbaresque Knoxville architect.

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## CALENDAR

MARCH 20-21

MANCHESTER, NH

### Old House & Barn Expo

Featuring a supplier exhibition and hourly live workshops and demonstrations, this year's expo will focus on window preservation and increasing energy efficiency in older buildings. (603) 224-2281; nhpreservation.org

MARCH 25-28

SAVANNAH, GA

### Tour of Homes & Gardens

Savannah's annual home and garden tour celebrates 75 years with a self-guided walking tour of Garden District homes, plus special workshops on a range of subjects, including preservation, antiques, and gardening. (912) 234-8054; savannahtourofhomes.org

APRIL 3

PHILADELPHIA, PA

### Old House Fair

In addition to its standard lineup of exhibitors, demonstrations, and "Ask the Expert" consultations, this year's fair will feature awards highlighting the region's exemplary restoration projects. (215) 546-1146; preservationalliance.org

APRIL 10

PORTLAND, OR

### Kitchen Revival Tour

The Architectural Heritage Center's 12th annual tour will showcase the restored kitchens of eight historic Portland homes, providing inspiration for period-appropriate kitchen design at all budget levels. (503) 231-7264; visitahc.org

MAY 19-22

WASHINGTON, DC

### Vernacular Architecture Forum Annual Meeting

The eclectic neighborhoods of Washington, D.C.—from 19th-century urban row houses to mid-century suburban developments—will provide the basis for a weekend of in-depth tours. (202) 354-2179; vernaculararchitectureforum.org

## ON THE RADAR

# Hunting for History

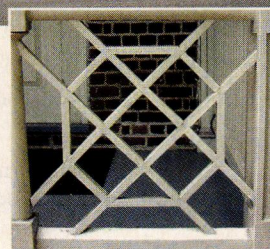
Architecture buffs tend to be pretty good at noticing the distinctive details on old buildings—say, an intricate iron balustrade or unique tilework. But identifying an entire building with that small element as the only clue? That's infinitely more challenging.

Of course, it's also a lot of fun, which is the impetus behind the handful of historic preservation scavenger hunts that have popped up around the country. Most of the hunts, such as the ones in Annapolis, Maryland, and Ogden, Utah, coincide with the celebration of National Preservation Month in May, and challenge residents and visitors to identify houses and commercial buildings in historic districts from a photo of a single defining element.

"Last year's scavenger hunt form was downloaded from our web site more than 1,000 times, and we had about 100 correct entries," reports Patricia Blick, Annapolis's chief of historic preservation,



The porch railing of the 18th-century Reynolds Tavern (a bed & breakfast in downtown Annapolis) was one of 20 clues in the city's first hunt.



PATRICIA BLICK PHOTOS

who helped organize the city's first scavenger hunt in 2009. Participants had a two-week window in which to search the city's Main Street district for the buildings that corresponded to clues; the clue sheet included a map that defined the search boundaries. The most challenging items, says Blick, proved to be a decorative relief tile tucked inside the entrance to a storefront, a fancy strap hinge on the door of a church-turned-condominium, and a ter-

razzo inlay that was a bit of a trick question—"It appears on three storefronts, but the one we were looking for was just a little bit different," she says.

Still, the hunt was such a success that the city plans to make it an annual event. "It really makes you look more critically at the buildings you see every day," Blick notes. "Anything that brings that sort of attention to the built environment is positive for historic preservation."

## OLD-HOUSE RESOURCE

### Find a Fair Mortgage

If the recent housing crisis has imparted one enduring lesson, it's that not all mortgages are created equal. But that might change soon, if the Fair Mortgage Collaborative has anything to say about it. The nonprofit consumer watchdog group formed in the summer of 2009 to develop standards and certification for lenders, as well as education tools for homeowners and -buyers. Their latest venture is the Fair Mortgage Cost Check, an interactive tool they describe as a "GPS for mortgages," which allows consumers to get up-to-the-minute infor-

mation—including interest rates, fees, and closing costs—based on their ZIP code. The FMC hopes this tool will provide homeowners (both those seeking new homes and those looking to refinance) with the leverage they need to negotiate good loans. Since it's not tied to a particular lender, the Fair Mortgage Cost Check presents an unbiased, non-commercial snapshot of current rates. "This tool will empower consumers to find fair and safe mortgage rates," says Howard Banker, the group's executive director. To find out more, visit [fairloan certification.com](http://fairloan certification.com).



## IT'S TIME TO...

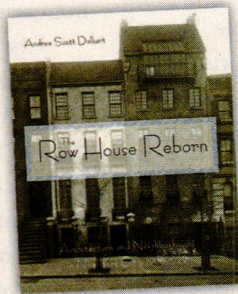
### Keep the Basement Dry

Your skin might welcome the change from dry winter air to the humid breezes of spring, but your basement? Not so much. To keep mold at bay, you'll need to begin running a dehumidifier once the weather warms up. Choosing the right size dehumidifier is essential in controlling moisture; you want one that's big enough to handle the square footage and dampness level of your basement. Emptying the basin regularly is also key—make it a point to dump it at least once a day, as standing water inside the machine can contribute to mold growth, too.

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

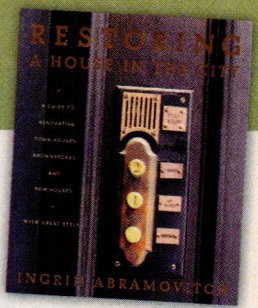
From Boston's Beacon Hill to London's Sloane Square, the row house stands as an enduring symbol of urban life. Two new books explore the row house's place in history, and the challenges of adapting its traditional features to modern life.

Andrew Scott Dolkart's *The Row House Reborn* focuses on a distinct turning point for the now-iconic row houses of New York City. In the early 20th century, many of these ramshackle dwellings were facing death by wrecking ball when architects and homeowners throughout the city decided to update the homes for a new generation. They reimagined the Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate façades in the popular Mediterranean style of the day, adding



stucco, window boxes, shutters, and compact gardens. The movement was one of the country's first examples of gentrification; the book explores both the meticulous details of the restorations and the long-ranging social change they ushered in.

Nearly a century later, many homeowners again find themselves facing the challenge of updating these homes while preserving their past. In *Restoring a House in the City*, Ingrid Abramovitch gives readers a guided tour of successful restorations in row houses around the country, from a quirky Brooklyn brownstone to a gracious Greek Revival in Savannah. In addition to nearly 300 pages of envy-inducing photographs, the book is packed with helpful tidbits—from tips on adding ornamental plaster to a primer on refurbishing wood floors—to guide homeowners through the unique legacy of row-house restoration.



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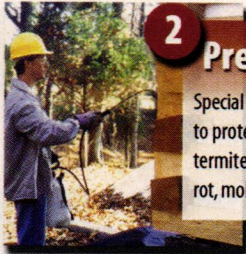
# 4 Easy Steps to Beautify & Protect Your Dream

## From the Wood Home Care and Maintenance Authority

1

### Restore

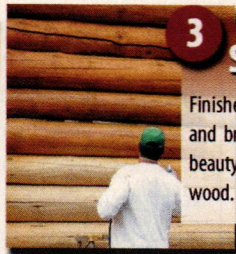
Restoration products to remove old finishes and make dirty wood look like new.



2

### Preserve

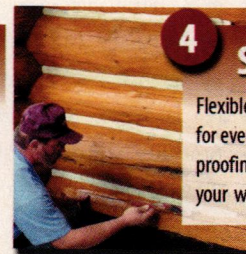
Special preservatives to protect against termites, insects, rot, mold & mildew.



3

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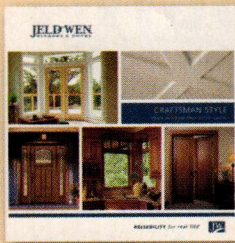
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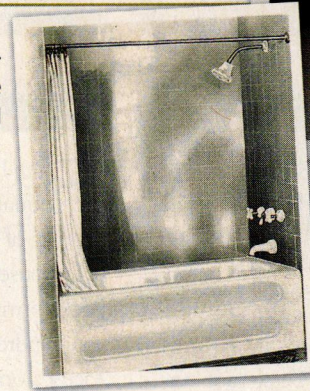
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# ask ohj

**Q** I have an old porcelain shower head with a loose male threaded part. How do I tighten it so it won't leak?

**A.** **Don Hooper:** It's not uncommon for old bathroom fittings to be difficult to get apart, but in the decades I've spent restoring vintage bathroom parts, I've learned a few tricks that can help. In its present state, the fitting on your shower head cannot be tightened, and any effort to turn it will result in shattering of the china shower head (something you'll obviously want to avoid). Fittings can become "frozen" together for a number of reasons. If they were originally assembled using plumber's putty, it may have since turned to cement. (That's why modern plumber's putty is "guaranteed never to harden.") Heat works well to mitigate this problem, because it will expand brass or iron parts enough to break their bond with the plumber's putty. I like to use a small handheld propane torch with a fine, medium-heat flame for this purpose. However, before using heat you'll need to disconnect the porcelain element, because when heated metal expands, it will also break any attached ceramics.

In the case of a shower head fitting that's become loose, yet will not tighten or come apart, there is likely a different problem afoot. Brass fittings often have an internal part with locking "ears" that secure into a keyway cast in the top portion of the shower head. The internal and external parts of the metal fitting screw together with a rubber gasket in between, tightly fitting the china head. In this case, the rubber gasket can harden and shrink over the years, causing a leak. Extreme care and patience are needed to get the fitting out of the shower head in order to avoid shattering the fragile china. You'll need to soften or dissolve the rubber gasket so that it no longer prevents the metal fitting



Hajoca Plumbing brochure (left), had a spurt of popularity in the early 20th century.



Porcelain shower heads, like these from a Thomas Maddock & Sons catalog (above, right) and a 1930s

from being disassembled from the head.

First, place the shower head in a container large enough to cover it with petroleum-based solvent, paint thinner, or WD-40. Immerse the head in a bath of one of these chemicals (which won't damage the china or the brass fitting) and let it sit for several days; this should break down the gasket. Once the gasket has softened, the fitting can be carefully turned counterclockwise, and the metal internal locking "ears" removed from the china head. After the brass fitting is removed from the china head, it can be heated (as mentioned previously), then unscrewed.

When you're ready to reassemble, you can cut a new gasket by hand from rubber gasket stock readily available at any hardware store. Before reassembling, clean all parts well and apply a penetrating oil (like Liquid Wrench) to the threads of the fitting. Next, install the new gasket, fit the ears of the internal part back into the head, and tighten the external part of the fitting onto the gasket until it's snug. You shouldn't have any more leaks. 🛠️



Don Hooper owns Vintage Plumbing Bathroom Antiques and has been collecting, buying, selling, and restoring antique bathroom fixtures for 35 years.

Have questions about your old house? We'd love to answer them in future issues. Please send your questions to **Ask OHJ, 4125 Lafayette Center Dr., Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151** or by e-mail to [OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com](mailto:OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com).

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Aetna Flue pattern of American Radiators.

Showing how a radiator may serve both usefully and ornamentally in what might otherwise be a cold, inhospitable nook or corner of a room. This "cozy corner" is part view of the living room of our Colonial Model House, at St. Louis World's Fair, see pages 24 to 27.

ARCALUS ARCHIVES/REJUVENATION COLLECTION

*Radiation and Decoration*, American Radiator Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1905

## Turning Up the Heat

BUILT-INS DON'T JUST ACCOMMODATE our stuff—like dishes, blankets, or books—they accommodate us, too. From inglenooks and breakfast nooks to fold-away beds and benches by the front door, early 20th-century homes excelled in creatively comfortable settings to stow oneself. And in the days before blankets with arms, what better way to relax on a cold winter day than in a plush fireside alcove warmed by a cleverly concealed radiator?

Appearing in the 1905 booklet *Radiation and Decoration*, this seductive scene features an elegant Gibson girl with her hair piled high and her billowing dress in harmony with the wallpaper and draperies. We can only assume the forlorn fireplace at her feet must have suffered pangs of inadequacy.

This cozy setting was in the "living room" of the Standard Radiator Company's Colonial Model House at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. The Grand Prize-winning exhibit boasted a two-story home built inside the Palace of Manufactures, with one exterior wall cut away to reveal eight fully decorated rooms selling the beauty and convenience of steam heat. We're not sure if this particular tush-warming tableau caught on like wildfire, or just caught on fire. 🏠

**Bo Sullivan is the historian for Rejuvenation and the owner of Arcalus Period Design in Portland, Oregon. He is an avid collector and researcher of original trade catalogs.**

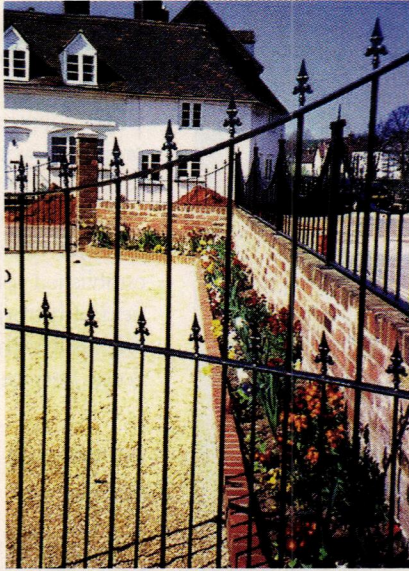
# period products

BY CLARE MARTIN

*Spring has sprung with new products for the yard and garden, plus colorful fruits and florals to spruce up interiors.*

## Iron Giant

Wrought iron—whether used on windows, balconies, balusters, or garden gates—has long been a favorite exterior decoration on homes of various architectural pedigrees. Whether you need to replace missing elements or simply want to beef up your landscaping with period-appropriate additions, Outwater's newly updated line of wrought-iron components has you covered. Their durable railings and fittings are available in myriad classic styles, and are easy to weld, paint, or treat with patinas, providing virtually unlimited options for projects of all stripes. Individual components range from \$.50 to \$60. Call (800) 835-4400, or visit [outwater.com](http://outwater.com).



## Stepping Back

The Biltmore Estate, George Vanderbilt's sprawling French Renaissance mansion outside Asheville, North Carolina, is a veritable monument to Gilded Age excess. While today's times may be decidedly leaner, a little Biltmore grandeur can be a good fit in and around a stately old home—especially if adding it doesn't require a Vanderbilt-sized bank account. These fleur-de-lis stepping stones, part of Manual Woodworkers & Weavers' new Biltmore Collection, take their inspiration from the classic French symbol of power, which is found on items throughout the estate. \$22 each. Call (800) 542-3139, or visit [manualww.com](http://manualww.com).



## Fresh Air

We might all wish for an English country estate we could steal away to when the weather turns warm, but few of us are lucky enough to own one. Fortunately, the wallpapers and fabrics in Thibaut's new Gatehouse Collection capture that pastoral elegance accurately enough to impress even the most discerning Austen heroine. Taking inspiration from classic English gardens and architectural details, the collection features 11 different wallpaper patterns and 12 printed fabrics, all in a range of spring-fresh colors. Wallpaper from \$54 to \$104 per roll; fabric from \$66 to \$130 per yard. Call (800) 223-0704, or visit [thibautdesign.com](http://thibautdesign.com).



## In Vino Veritas

No matter where you fall on the wine-loving spectrum—from unabashed oenophile to non-tipping teetotaler—you can't argue with the earthy appeal of Motawi's new Grapevine series of art tile. Created from a carefully carved mold, the tiles feature juicy bunches of grapes and delicately veined heart-shaped leaves, perfectly replicating a vine ready for harvest. They're available in three wine-soaked colors—from left, Merlot, Chardonnay, and Burgundy—that coordinate with warm Arts & Crafts interiors. Individual 4" x 8" tiles, \$54; framed set of three, \$332. Call (734) 213-0017, or visit [motawi.com](http://motawi.com).

# preservation perspectives



JONAS LANDES PHOTO

**LEFT:** The scheduled restoration of the Alpine Guard Station in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest is one of many HistoriCorps service learning projects that will combine academic curriculum with meaningful community service.

Rocky Mountain Region Heritage Program Leader for the Forest Service, both of whom had been involved with volunteer-based preservation projects—working on a shoestring, one project at a time—for years. They realized that ramping up efforts had the potential to create a more permanent, established volunteer workforce in the field of historic preservation, so they pitched it to the D.C. office of the U.S. Forest Service.

**DA:** What will determine the project's success?

**JL:** The timely, efficient completion of the projects, coupled with the meaningful, active engagement of many volunteers.

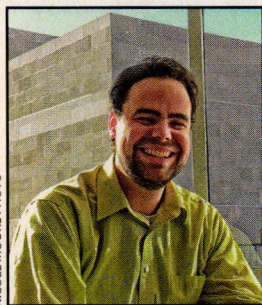
**DA:** Who are the instructors?

**JL:** Instructors will be contracted HistoriCorps employees—we're looking to hire specialists currently working in the field of historic preservation. For example, our log work instructor has helped restore National Historic Landmarks in New York, as well as log structures in Wyoming and Utah. Most of the 2010 project sites will require log work and window work.

**DA:** Where will volunteers come from?

**JL:** They will primarily be college students from within the state of Colorado, and possibly Wyoming. We also plan to run two projects in conjunction with Community Corps, which is a program that gives meaningful work experience to high school students. Volunteers can come from other places, too—I'd encourage anyone who wants to come to Colorado to experience the high country and forest lands to apply.

## Taking the High Ground



NICOLE MOORE PHOTO

A new program called HistoriCorps aims to combine service learning with historic preservation—beginning with a slate of projects in Colorado's high country. We spoke with program manager Jonas Landes to find out how it works.

BY DEMETRA AOSPOROS

**DEMETRA AOSPOROS:** What is HistoriCorps?

**JONAS LANDES:** HistoriCorps is a service-learning opportunity involving historic preservation projects on public lands that allows students to get engaged with their historic resources.

**DA:** How does the program operate?

**JL:** It's a private/public partnership run by Colorado Preservation Inc., a private nonprofit that provides all of the administrative background and technical expertise.

The U.S. Forest Service has hired us to do the work, and we received funding from the D.C. office of the Forest Service; in 2010, all of our projects will be on Forest Service land. This is the pilot program—we're still defining the model—but if successful, it could be implemented elsewhere.

**DA:** How did this initiative evolve?

**JL:** It's really the brainchild Ann Pritzlaff, a former Colorado Preservation Inc. staffer now on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Terri Liestman, the

## Engaging people with public lands encourages stewardship.

### **DA: How much time must volunteers commit?**

**JL:** Projects are broken into two categories. The short two- and three-day weekend projects are less skill-based, and won't require overly technical training. Weeklong projects will give volunteers the opportunity to learn specialized skills, like window, log, and roof repairs. That said, some people will choose to volunteer for the whole summer, and they also can be given some type of volunteer leadership role, like assistant project leader. All of the work will be started and completed between mid-June and early October.

### **DA: Can volunteers get school credit for participating?**

**JL:** Not at this point. However, we've been working closely with the University of Wyoming to partner with the Historic Preservation classes in their American Studies program, and we hope to move this forward to allow HistoriCorps to qualify as a portion of their lab study credit.

### **DA: How does travel and lodging work?**

**JL:** We provide meals, leadership, and training; volunteers are expected to provide their own transport to and from sites and to bring their own tent. On some sites, people can camp out in Forest Service bunkhouses, former guard stations, or rental facilities—when that's the case, we will coordinate the lodging. All of the sites are beautiful—they're all in the high country. The lowest site is at 8,000 feet; the highest at 10,500 feet.

### **DA: How were the sites selected?**

**JL:** First and foremost, they must be historically significant—either listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They also have to provide the greatest good to a number of people—that's why we're involved with public lands. We feel that engaging people with public lands encourages stewardship.

We take a site's needs and location into consideration, because we want to be able to provide a diversity of projects for volunteers, both in the work—everything from log and stone work to restoring windows and doors—and in the setting. Such variety gives people a greater incentive to return and do more.

All sites are currently vacant and underutilized—we'll be taking them from a ruined condition to a finished condition—and the program intends to make them publicly available as rentals or recreation facilities to the general public. This may become the working model, but we aren't limiting ourselves to that; it could just be one interpretation. In the future, we might work with a municipality that needs help with their Main Street, but right now our client is the Forest Service.

### **DA: I understand there's an element of sustainable energy/green technology involved with the work. Can you elaborate?**

**JL:** Many of these sites have either never been on the grid, or were on the grid at one time but have lost systems, so we aim to utilize sustainable technology whenever possible. On one site, we'll install a photovoltaic energy system [solar panels] and a battery bank to bring electricity where it never has been. We'll be improving insulation and using natural insulation when available—blown cellulose, for example. We're talking about sites that are purposefully and historically rustic, so it's not appropriate to install blueboard or fiberglass. We're also installing interior storm windows, and providing the opportunity to do energy audits on sites, so that people can learn how to assess energy efficiency and apply it to their own homes. 🏠

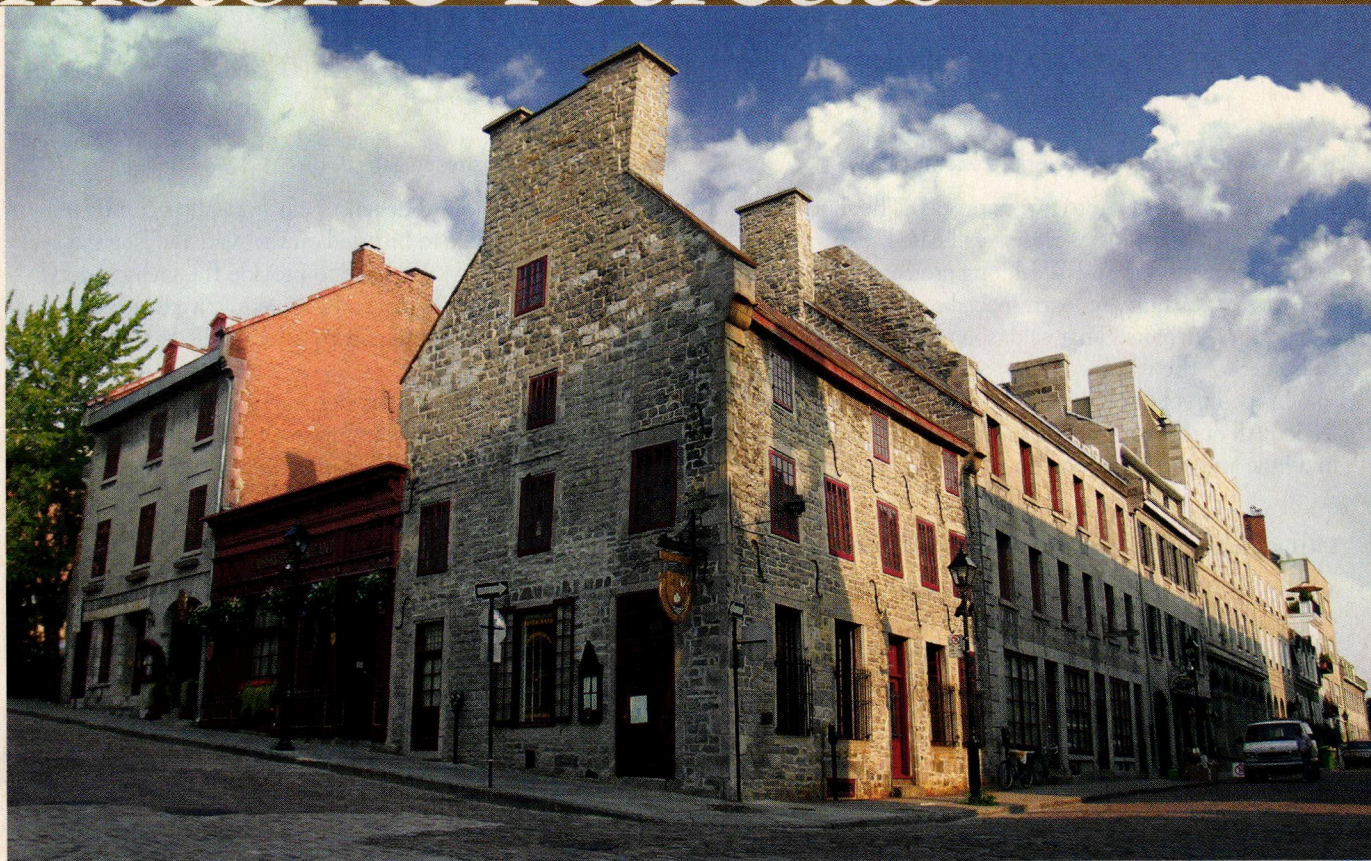
*For more information on the HistoriCorps program, visit [coloradopreservation.org/historicorps](http://coloradopreservation.org/historicorps).*



JONAS LANDES PHOTO

**LEFT: Andres Cueva of Monterrey, Mexico, drawknives a spruce log at a hands-on learning workshop in Saguache, Colorado.**

# historic retreats



## Maison Pierre du Calvet

*A small inn in one of Montreal's oldest homes stands as a testament to the city's Old World charm—and its dedicated preservation efforts.*

BY CLARE MARTIN

**H**istoric preservation runs in Gaëtan Trottier's blood. As a child growing up in the 1960s, the proprietor of the Maison Pierre du Calvet in Old Montreal watched as his parents successfully fought the construction of a superhighway that would have decimated the now-celebrated historic quarter of the city. As part of their quest to turn the virtually abandoned district into a bustling, preservation-minded hotspot, in 1962, the elder Trottiers moved their family into an 18th-century stone house once owned by French-Canadian merchant and revolutionary Pierre du Calvet. They opened a restaurant, Les Filles du Roy, on the ground floor, and their family of nine inhabited the three floors above it.

**The oldest part of the Maison Pierre du Calvet, a 1725 Breton-style stone house originally used as a warehouse, stands at the corner of the cobblestoned Rue Bonsecours in Old Montreal, just across the street from the historic Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours church.**

“Old Montreal had been abandoned, so it was like living in a small village,” Trottier recalls. “We knew all of our neighbors—everyone who bought a house here wanted to preserve the neighborhood. They are the reason why we still have Old Montreal.”

Trottier also fondly remembers following the stonemason hired by his parents as he meticulously restored the home's ancient stone walls; it was experiences like this that entrenched in him a deep love for old buildings. In 1992, Trottier and business partner Ronald Dravigné took over the management of the café and added a gourmet grocery. While Trottier still called a small corner of the building home, he no longer needed the majority of the space, so the two men eventually turned the upper floors into a 10-room inn.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAISON PIERRE DU CALVET

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The lobby is bordered by the sunny Victorian-style greenhouse, created in the 1960s by enclosing a courtyard between two of the houses. A small area on the ground floor, formerly an additional dining room, now serves as a gallery for proprietor Gaëtan Trottier's bronze sculptures. The Bonsecours dining room, lit by a converted gas chandelier, provides an intimate setting for the inn's restaurant, Les Filles Du Roy.**

"We wanted to keep the atmosphere of a family home," says Trottier. "We could have put in more rooms, but we wanted to retain the charm of the house."

In addition to the 10 guest rooms, the inn also boasts a cozy, fire-lit dining room that's home to Les Filles du Roy and its traditional Québécois fare, a small salon that can be reserved for private meals, a library, a Victorian-style greenhouse that's home to a smattering of parrots, a sunny terrace, and a gallery that showcases Trottier's bronze sculptures. (In addition to being a historic-preservation enthusiast and hotelier, he's also a talented artist.)

This eclectic collection of spaces fits together almost like a puzzle in what was originally three separate houses. The oldest of the three is the 1725 stone house, which holds the guest rooms, gallery, and Les Filles du Roy; it was originally used as a warehouse by Pierre du Calvet for his thriving import-export business. (In his spare time, du Calvet found time to advocate for democratic rule in Quebec, counting Benjamin Franklin among his cohorts.) Today, the building is the oldest home in Montreal open to the public.

While the heavy lifting on restoring the buildings was completed by Trottier's

parents in the 1960s (they oversaw restoration of the stone façade and replaced the rotted wood casement windows with exact replicas copied from an original), he still keeps himself busy caring for the old house. The greenhouse roof was recently repaired, and a new cycle of mortar restoration has begun on the stone walls. "There's always some important work to do on the house," Trottier observes.

Converting the building into a hotel has proved to be his biggest task, although even that challenge was simplified by the fact that the upstairs floors had already been used as living space. Trottier recon-

# historic retreats



**ABOVE:** Trottier had the guest rooms' canopy beds custom-made from Honduran mahogany. Each bed prominently features the ancient coat of arms of the Trottier fellowship, whose motto translates to "My house is your house."

**RIGHT:** In the dining room, antique hunting trophies, accompanied by a portrait of co-owner Ronald Dravigné's great-grandfather, pay tribute to Quebec's hunting legacy.



figured the layouts of the existing rooms to give each space a private bathroom, leaving the distinct stone walls and age-old wooden ceiling beams intact.

He then thoughtfully furnished the inn with a careful mix of antiques and reproduction pieces. English Chesterfield sofas and hunting trophies mingle with Louis XIII tapestry chairs and a retrofitted gaslight chandelier in the opulent dining room. Family heirlooms are scattered throughout the inn in a nod to his family's role in the house's history—his grandmother's dining set, for example, resides in the Salon Beauvillé. For the guest rooms, Trottier commissioned a Honduran designer to create French Regency-style mahog-

any canopy beds, dressers, and desks, all of which are detailed with his family's crest.

"I did a drawing of Louis XIII's bed and took the plans to Honduras," Trottier says. "It was a two-year job, but it was worth the effort."

Like his parents before him, Trottier stands firm on the principle of honoring the past; as a result, the Pierre du Calvet inn retains plenty of the Old World atmosphere that the original preservationists in Old Montreal strove to create. And, just like in the 1960s, he has plenty of support in his efforts: "People are more conscious of historic preservation in Old Montreal," he says. "It's still a community of old-house lovers." 🏠

## Maison Pierre du Calvet

405 Rue Bonsecours  
Montreal, QC H2Y 3C3  
(514) 282-1725  
pierreducalvet.ca

Room rates start at \$295 per night and include a continental breakfast. Both Trottier's art gallery, Le Musée du Bronze de Montreal, and the restaurant, Les Filles du Roy, are open to the public.

# old-house toolbox



TERESA COLEMAN PHOTO

## Compact Table Saw

*Today's compact table saws combine loads of features with sleek, portable designs.*

BY MARK CLEMENT

**W**hen I started in carpentry 20 years ago, there were essentially two kinds of table saws in a home workshop or job site.

First was the big, cast-iron contractor saw—a 2.5-horsepower, 240+-pound behemoth that was, if you can believe it, considered portable and often moved to job sites.

At the opposite end of the spectrum were the newer-fangled but considerably lighter-duty portable table saws. Weighing roughly 200 pounds less than their big brothers, they were sparingly detailed and delivered (barely) the most basic functions.

Over time, these portables have evolved to more closely resemble their professional counterparts, minus the

bulk. The biggest breakthrough came a couple of years ago, when a new wave of feature-rich portables hit the market, combining details and small size in the same package. This newest fleet of compact saws boasts some advanced features I really like.

### What to Look For

**Power.** A table saw's stock-in-trade is ripping (cutting along the length) of 1-by and 2-by lumber. (Note: No table saws, even the big old ones, were designed to cut sheet goods like plywood.) A motor powerful enough to smoothly devour sawn lumber—at least 15 amps—is key to me. All the pro-grade compacts on the market have the muscle. Less expensive saws still make the cut, but you can feel the difference.

**Fence.** A stout, straight fence that stays parallel with the blade is essential

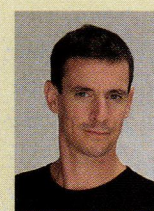
for accuracy and efficiency. One that stays parallel and adjusts easily—i.e., doesn't stutter or catch on sawdust in the rails—is even better. A rack-and-pinion fence adjustment generally delivers on both counts.

**Blades.** For rough work, the included blade will probably get the job done. For jobs where swirl marks from your cuts will show—like on a saddle threshold or a custom doorjamb—a higher quality blade is a must. They're more expensive and cut slower, but they deliver smoother, cleaner cuts, reducing or eliminating sanding requirements in trim pieces.

**Portability.** As important as portability is, it means different things to different people. If all you're talking about is a manageable size and weight (around 50 pounds), most compacts fit the bill. But if you move the saw around a lot—whether it's to job sites or up and down stairs between a workshop and projects within your own house—you might benefit from some of the newest portability add-ons like over-molded rubber grips at carry-points or a handle that allows you to carry the saw like a suitcase.

### The Bottom Line

If you depend on larger portables for woodworking (which will give you more comfort, stability, and cutting options) you might find the compacts...well, too compact. But if you're moving around or have a confined shop space, and depend on a table saw for a combination of rough carpentry (fences, porches, framing) and trim (cabinet fillers, flooring, thresholds), then a compact with a powerful motor, primo fence, and small footprint can deliver big work without taking up much space. 🛠️



**Carpenter Mark Clement is working on his century-old American Foursquare in Ambler, Pennsylvania, and is the author of *The Carpenter's Notebook*.**



## Blooming Inspiration

*The colorful, fragrant garden bedding popular during the Victorian era can be a fitting addition to a range of old-house landscapes.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

**G**arden fashions tend to come and go. Such was the case with Victorian bedding, a landscape style popular from about 1865 to 1900. Combining large, decoratively shaped garden beds with masses of single or contrasting brightly colored flowers, Victorian beds

were an attention-grabbing, and often fragrant, outdoor element. Sometimes they were even punctuated by large, lush-leaved tropical plants. Such elaborate gardening became possible after the middle of the 19th century, when increased travel and commerce delivered new plants and

hybrids, and the introduction of cheaper glass panes made greenhouses—necessary for giving annuals an early start—more affordable. But this festive look came at a price, literally. Because the flowers were annuals, each spring heralded a new wave of planting—and perhaps even replanting some flowers, like popular bachelor's buttons, that petered out before the growing season ended. Spent flowers might also need to be “deadheaded”—that is, to be pinched or clipped to redirect the plant's energy into seed formation rather than pumping out new flowers. Poor execution, overuse, and the time and money these gardens required all eventually contributed to their fall from favor. Nonetheless,



Victorian bedding may still have a place in today's gardens—not only around houses built when bedding was at its peak of popularity, but even, with some modifications, to accompany later homes. A look at one of the period's shining stars can provide fresh inspiration on this gardening style.

### An Era Example

The gardens at Mohonk Mountain House, a historic hotel in the Hudson Valley region of New York, are a textbook illustration of Victorian bedding. Mohonk's beginnings stretch back to 1869, when Albert K. Smiley, forebear of the hotel's present owners, purchased the mountaintop site.

Within a few years, work began in carving out gardens from the surrounding wilderness, including beds for annuals. Today, as has been done every spring for more than a hundred years, Mohonk's gardeners move tens of thousands of bedding plants from the greenhouses into the fertilized soil of planting beds to create a patchwork quilt of color on the manicured lawns. Although the beds are permanent, each year the garden staff evaluates plants to plan for the next year's designs.

Nourishing such exuberant growth demands rich soil. At Mohonk, enormous amounts of dirt were initially hauled in to beef up the thin, infertile, acidic ground that had originally been home to pitch

**OPPOSITE: Mohonk Mountain House's colorful beds surround a rustic summerhouse based on a Downing design. ABOVE: Waves of intense hues flow across the grounds.**

pinus and mountain laurels; today, compost created onsite helps maintain the soil's fertility. Enriching the soil of a home landscape shouldn't require such heroic efforts, but any garden—especially one with beds of hungry annuals—will benefit from having the soil dosed with organic materials like fresh or rotted autumn leaves, mushroom "dirt," or compost.

Annual plants, which have to set down new roots every year, also need soil that's consistently moist in order to thrive. When rainfall fails to deliver the needed 1"

## outside the old house



**TOP:** Beds are filled with single species of flowers in blazing colors, like yellow marigolds and calendula. **BOTTOM:** The garden's red portions mix bright and earthy tones; transitions between beds are smoothed by the flowers' proximity on the color spectrum.

of water per week (easily measured in a coffee can or other straight-sided container), providing additional water through drip irrigation—an amenity not available to Victorian gardeners—or sprinklers maintains strong growth.

In keeping with their historical roots, the beds at Mohonk Mountain House are packed full of plants popular during Victorian times, such as geranium, coleus, and cleome. Heliotrope, mignonette, and flowering tobacco are other historically accurate plants that have the added benefit of suffusing the gardens with heavenly aromas. Any contemporary gardener could do well incorporating these plants into beds, as well as more carefree varieties, like the Supertunia Raspberry petunia, which naturally sheds its spent flowers and so doesn't need deadheading to stay spry. With the current appreciation for edible landscaping, red-leaved Swiss chard, brightly colored sweet peppers and eggplants, lettuces in a variety of colors and textures, and



other ornamental vegetables also could share the floral beds.

## Mixing It Up

Mohonk's gardens also combine Victorian bedding with other landscape styles, and at-home gardeners can take cues from this stylistic blending as well. The British landscape and American picturesque (or romantic) styles also popular in the latter half of the 19th century are as prominent on Mohonk's grounds today as they were in its early years. Stately trees—including cutleaf and weeping beeches dating back to the garden's beginnings, as well as dawn redwood, tree lilac, and red oaks—reign over 2,000 acres of rolling parkland, in the British tradition. So there's no need to give a home landscape wholly over to Victorian bedding to the exclusion of other styles. Remember, one reason bedding fell out of favor was its overuse.

Fanning out from Mohonk's Victorian beds, with a nod to the American pictur-

esque landscape style, are vine-covered pergolas and arbors and a two-story summerhouse, all constructed of rustic cedar. The summerhouse design was taken from a sketch in a book by America's pre-eminent 19th-century landscape architect, Andrew Jackson Downing. These rustic fences and arbors visually tie the gardens together and link them to the surrounding woods, recalling Downing's preference for using low-key garden ornaments to enhance the surrounding natural beauty. A favorite spot at Mohonk is a rustic catwalk bridge that takes you across a rocky ravine through perennial flowers happily commingling with shadbush, mountain laurel, lowbush blueberries, and other natives.

None of these elements are out of place in contemporary gardens, where, after years of attempting to overpower Mother Nature, she is once again being welcomed. Victorian bedding can easily be used, as it is used at Mohonk, as a transition from the "civilized" to the "natural."

**ABOVE, LEFT: Behind the fiery purple coleus, an abstract fence encloses a maze of arborvitae trees, and strategically placed benches offer stunning views. RIGHT: Hot dahlias sit beside peachy snapdragons.**

Mohonk's 30 acres of manicured lawn and gardens sit congenially, along with the hotel itself, as a pocket of civilization in a vast wilderness. And wilderness it is: Beyond the grounds, more than 6,000 acres of surrounding forest are protected by the nonprofit Mohonk Preserve, while to the south, the Minnewaska State Park Preserve encompasses another 12,000 acres.

Your manicured Victorian beds could likewise sit close to your home, with more naturalistic landscapes at further reaches of your property, a plan that makes practical as well as aesthetic sense. 🏡

**Lee Reich** lives in an old house in upstate New York; his new book, *Landscaping with Fruit*, is available through Storey Publishing.

# Built-Inspirations

NEED MORE  
STORAGE SPACE IN  
YOUR OLD HOUSE?  
BUILT-INS ARE  
A GOOD WAY TO  
FIND IT.

BY THE OHJ EDITORIAL STAFF

COURTESY FABIENNE PHOTOGRAPHY/ACTFORMYLLC



Historic houses are known for many fine original details—leaded glass windows, parquet floors, ceiling medallions, rich woodwork—but storage space isn't usually one of them. In fact, fitting an accumulation of 21st-century belongings into an 18th-century house can be a challenge of epic proportions.

The clever use of built-ins can help. Built-ins had already been popular for centuries (Thomas Jefferson designed several for his rooms at Monticello) by the time they reached their peak in the early 20th century, thanks to architects (and plan books) who used them at seemingly every opportunity. Nothing makes better use of space, per square foot, than a well-conceived built-in—one that aligns with the rest of the woodwork and trim in your house, and incorporates clever shelving, drawers, cubbies, or doors. Built-ins are also generally easy to retrofit into an existing space, so they're worth considering for old-house areas that need de-cluttering. We've rounded up some good examples of built-ins, old and new, in a room-by-room breakdown, hoping they'll inspire a new look at an old-house storage workhorse.

## Creative Solutions

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR RIGHT: A new laundry area is topped with cabinets and shelves made era appropriate with beadboard and compound-profiled supports. An entryway in a grand Colonial Revival house boasts a wall of original glass-enclosed shelves grounded by a row of drawers (a clever design concept that pulls double duty). Tucked beneath the stairs of a Richardsonian Romanesque Victorian, a closet ekes every inch of storage out of an otherwise unused space. (Under-stair areas are ideal spots for shelves and hooks, too.) OPPOSITE: A staircase landing proves the perfect spot for a linen closet so roomy it can house a wardrobe as well. The attached bench (with drawer) is a good place to sit and fold towels.



# Hallways

In old houses and new, we tend to think of hallways as dead space—narrow passageways with a single purpose of connecting rooms. In fact, hallways practically beg for storage: under stairs, within long walls, or at the end of a landing. Carving out cabinets and closets on the way to the kitchen or bedrooms is a great way to prevent clutter from invading your living space.



# Bedrooms

Let's be honest: Most old-house owners don't purchase their dream homes because the bedrooms boast an excess of square footage. Rather, the opposite is true—they become smitten with the charm of the home, despite the tight quarters (sometimes shockingly so) in the boudoir. But the solution to squeezing out more space in old-house bedrooms—adding shelves, cabinets, seats, and nooks—will simply increase the charm factor, while accomodating books, clothes, and maybe even a lounging person or two.



## Walls of Wardrobes

Floor-to-ceiling built-ins can make the most of bedroom walls, and make bulky armoires, chiffarobes, or dressers unnecessary—freeing up valuable floor space. Creative configurations can include sky-high compartments for off-season storage, large mid-sections to hide hanging shirts and slacks (or perhaps even a television set), and rows of drawers. These modern examples also use distressed finishes (above) and glass pulls (left) to complement their accompanying century-old houses.

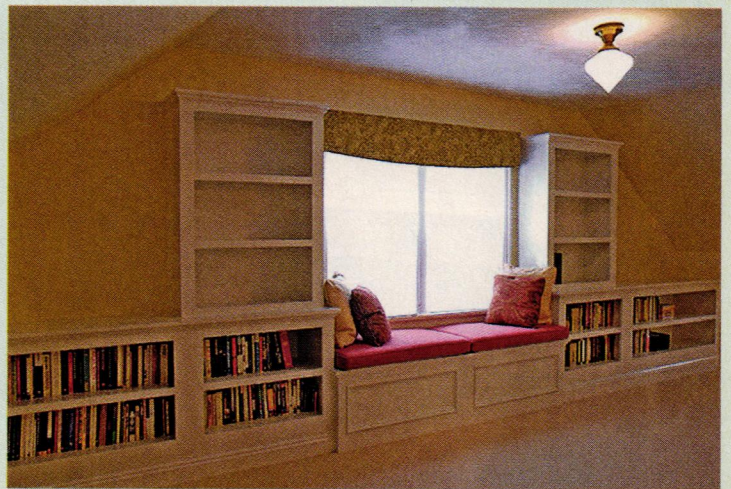
TOP: THERESA COLEMAN PHOTO; BOTTOM: COURTESY ARCIFORM LLC

Send us photos of your own creative storage ideas, and you could win a free year of OHJ!

OldHouseJournal.com

## Bookshelves

Old houses and old books are a natural pairing. But all those books need a place to live, and piling them on the floor is only quaint until someone trips over the stack. Built-in bookcases surrounding a fireplace (right) maximize unused real estate on the wall, and are easily accessible on lazy afternoons.



## Window Seats

We all know that benches beneath windows are a wonderful place to sit and read a book—but they're also an easy place to incorporate hidden storage. Clever add-ons like inset drawers (as seen on page 30) or hinged lids (above) maximize the utility of these comfortable old-house staples.

## Attic Spaces

The walls of steeply pitched attics can be a perfect spot for sneaking in storage that extends nearly to the eaves. These retrofitted knee walls (left) blend in by matching baseboards and trim to the wide, simple window casing, and allow tons of provisions to be shoehorned into an otherwise cramped room. (For a tutorial on how to install similar knee walls yourself, see "Wraparound Storage," OHJ Nov./Dec. '08.)

# Kitchens & Baths

Any old-house owner who claims not to need more storage in the kitchen and bathroom has either embraced a minimalist lifestyle or is flat-out lying. When you factor in all the accoutrements needed in these spaces with traditional challenges like small footprints and pedestal sinks, you've got a recipe for not enough storage. But built-ins can again provide salvation, tucking everything from cabinets and shelves to seating and desks into unused corners.



## Bathrooms

Pedestal sinks and chrome-legged washstands are essential in re-creating early 20th-century bathrooms, but they have a distinct storage disadvantage over today's hulking sink vanities. Linen closets (right) are perhaps the most common way to regain this storage space. More creatively, a set of built-in cabinets (above), bridged by a vanity and adorned with period-style glass pulls, offers space for towels and toiletries, as well as a place to primp.



## Ironing Solutions

In the early 20th century, new ideas about kitchen efficiency collided with the mania for built-ins to create ingenious household helpers such as shallow cabinets built to hold fold-down ironing boards. As laundry tasks migrated into their own space over the years, many of these original ironing-board built-ins were turned into shelves—their narrow depth makes them perfect for use as spice racks. However, new inventions, such as this pull-out ironing board concealed by a drawer (above), make it possible to recapture that once-revolutionary kitchen concept.



## Shelves, Take Two

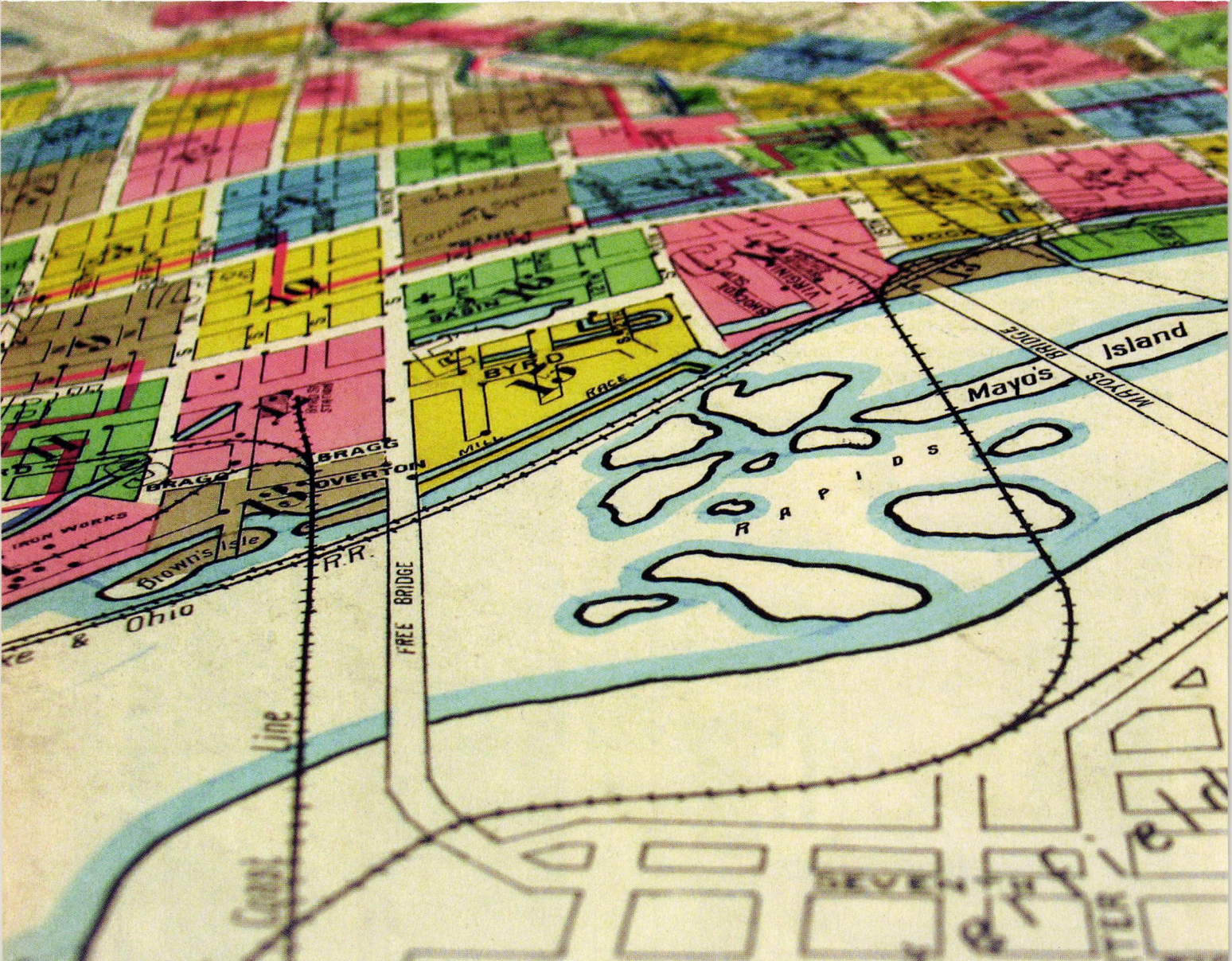
We tend to think of cabinets and drawers as the primary kitchen storage must-haves, but shelves can be just as useful, both for easy access and for highlighting the beauty of everyday objects. A tall shelf built into kitchen cabinets (right, top) puts cookbooks within easy reach, and their colorful spines help brighten up the all-white décor. A shallow built-in shelf above a bar in a late-19th-century bed and breakfast (right, bottom) keeps glasses close at hand and makes an elegant display out of functional objects.



## Breakfast Nooks

The kitchen's new status as the hub of the home dictates that it must have areas for activities other than cooking—eating, socializing, even paying bills and doing homework. This breakfast nook (above), designed by Portland, Oregon's Arciform, packs a lot of living space into not a lot of square footage by taking advantage of the room's unusual configuration to carve out an eating area, desk, cubbies, and display cabinets highlighted by new leaded glass.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY PHOTO ART PORTRAITS; ARCIFORM LLC; COURTESY PLAIN & FANCY; SWANNI HOUSE PHOTO BY NATHAN WINTER



# Mapping Out a RESTORATION

*From the Civil War until Nixon, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company's maps meticulously documented buildings in thousands of cities. Today, they can be invaluable for uncovering your home's long-lost historical details.* BY WILLIAM RICHARDS

Digging up historical data on your old house—things like its original footprint or construction material—can be a daunting task, but it's all a matter of where you look for information. Whether you're preparing your home for a restoration, researching the building's history, or gathering information for your real-estate agent, it's helpful to have an accessible set of data that's easy to read. Enter Sanborn maps.

For more than 100 years, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company painstakingly recorded every building in every major population center in the United States. Sold to regional groups of insurance underwriters, Sanborn maps provided detailed information about residential, industrial, and commercial buildings, including height and materials, fenestration, roofing, lot lines, water access, and block-to-block infrastructure, in more than 12,000 places in North America. Although they were discontinued in 1970, Sanborn maps—now held in many local historical societies and libraries—have become an important reference tool for homeowners, business owners, preservationists, urban planners, and architects looking to locate detailed information about a structure.

"In lieu of extant architectural drawings, they are the best guide you can find," says Vincent Brooks, senior records archivist at the Library of Virginia. "They give you construction materials, exterior dimensions, roofing information, and, since they were updated every year, you can see changes over time."

### Plotting the Course

In the late 19th century, the advent of lithographic printing and the extension of rail lines collided with a near tripling of the U.S. population to create a booming market for insurance-based mapmaking. As new "fireproof" construction materials gradually appeared on the market to replace traditional wood and cast iron, insurance companies discovered a need to know what kinds of structures they were insuring before issuing policies. Between 1850 and 1900, companies like Aetna and Hartford Fire Insurance Company competed to track new and existing construction of homes, businesses, and property interests. Established in 1867, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company's map division came to dominate the industry by doing two things well: producing readable, uniform maps of towns and cities, and systematically absorbing local map companies. In 1883, the Sanborn Map Company began registering their maps with the copyright division of the Library of Congress, preserving a wealth of information for today's homeowner. "Depending on what city you're in, and depending on when they instituted a building permit process, Sanborns could be your only source for information," notes Brooks.

Each Sanborn map was drawn at a scale of 1" to 50' on a uniform 21" x 25" sheet, cross-ruled in 1" squares. What makes the



**Bound by city and organized by year, the collection of original Sanborn maps is housed at the Library of Congress.**

maps especially useful for homeowners is their consistency from year to year and their color-coded key, which indicates a wealth of easily identifiable detail: type of construction (concrete block, brick, stone, or wood frame), fireproof or not, cornice material, cladding material, wall thickness, type of shutter cladding (iron or tin), and exact window sizes. Because of their clear and consistent graphic style, Sanborn maps are particularly easy for non-professionals to read and use. In recording these kinds of details, the company inadvertently provided a crucial tool for historic preservation officials—as well as the average curious homeowner.

"It gives you a gross level of information, like a footprint—was there a porch, was there an addition?" says Kim Chen, a historical architect whose firm has completed projects up and down the East Coast. "If you can get the color versions of the map, it will tell you if the building is brick or frame. Sanborns are just one piece of the puzzle, but they're a great first step."

Today, the collection of original Sanborn maps at the Library of Congress (donated in the '60s) spans from 1867 to the late 1950s, but you don't have to travel to Washington, D.C. to take advantage of them for your next restoration project. More than 50 state, local, and university libraries across the country were gifted with duplicate sheets from the collection that represented their regional areas. In addition, many libraries and universities subscribe to ProQuest's Digital Sanborn collection, a searchable, printable database of all the Sanborn maps in the Library of Congress' collection (plus those up until the 1970s), reproduced in black and white. Whether

they've been digitized, microfilmed, or remain in their original large-format printed state, Sanborn maps are one of the most accessible and useful research tools for anyone with a little patience and an hour or two to spare.

## Practical Applications

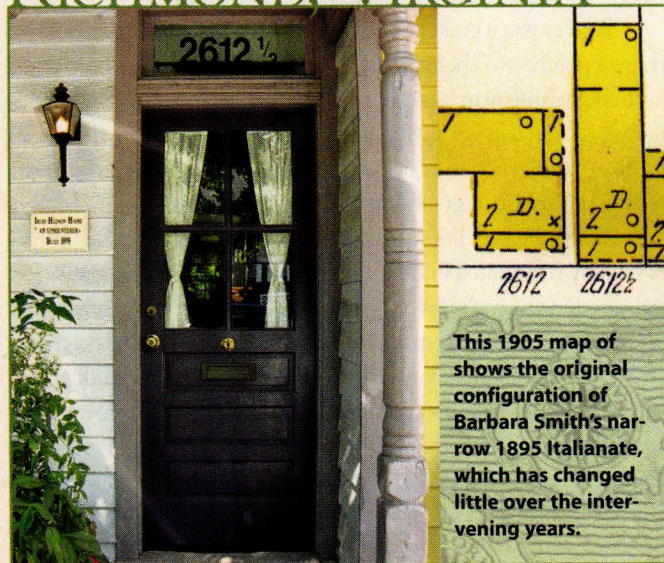
"Property assessments are great, deeds are wonderful, but I depend on Sanborns to tell me if there have been any changes," says Barbara Smith, a Virginia homeowner who writes local house histories. Her 1895 Italianate home, barely 10' wide, is a two-story wood-frame structure tucked into the heart of Richmond's historic Church Hill.

As the neighborhood expanded during Reconstruction, she explains, the economics of homeownership became more favorable for the working class. In 1895, Richmond paperhanger and upholsterer Irvin Hudson built Smith's modest home, just two blocks from one of the city's main thoroughfares.

"It's a funny little house," she says, "but it says a lot about how a person like Irvin Hudson lived. With family nearby and a trolley line he could use, he represents an important chapter in Richmond's history—and where he lived is a big part of that."

Smith found the peculiarities of her property's history useful as she prepared to put it on the market in early 2009. Remarkably, the house remained in Hudson's family for 85 years, which she determined through city records. By tracking the home on successive Sanborn maps, however, she determined that little about it had changed beyond some cosmetic, electrical, and HVAC upgrades.

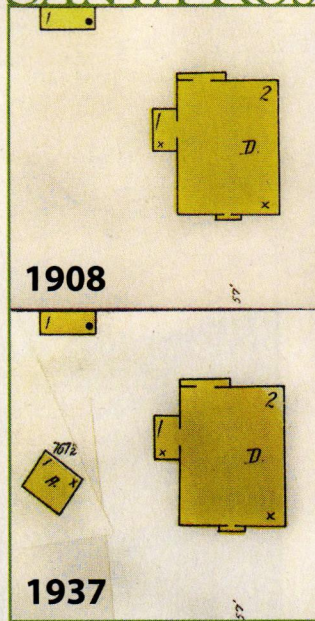
## RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



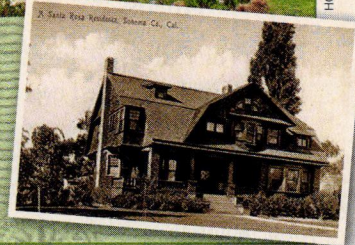
This 1905 map of shows the original configuration of Barbara Smith's narrow 1895 Italianate, which has changed little over the intervening years.

HOUSE PHOTO BY WILLIAM RICHARDS

## SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA



The 1908 and 1937 Sanborn maps (left) of Santa Rosa, California, reveal that Comstock House (right, in 1908 and above, today) received a detached garage, complete with its own half address, sometime during the early 20th century.



HOUSE PHOTO AND POSTCARD COURTESY JEFF ELLIOTT

"It's good information for a potential homebuyer," says Smith, "and it's information that you can back up with evidence."

Sanborn maps not only provide data about individual structures, but also can reveal information about the texture and character of neighborhoods.

"They help me understand that, say, between 1918 and 1924, there were six houses in a neighborhood. Then you look at the 1932 map and see that 300 houses were developed by that time," says Chen. "You start asking yourself, why did this happen?" The extension of city trolley lines often brought development, as did the construction of a factory nearby. Where there was local employment and accessible transportation, especially before the automobile's dominance, there was housing. "Now you know something about the social and professional fabric of your neighborhood—and your house," notes Chen.

The maps can reveal details about your surroundings that you may never have suspected. While researching the background of his home, Jeff Elliott, a homeowner in Santa Rosa, California, made a surprising discovery about a two-story circa-1880 Greek Revival home on his block.

"The house is an oddity on the street," he notes, "where nearby houses are single-story cottages or Western ranches built between 1930 and 1950."

After comparing two Sanborn maps from 1908 and 1937, Elliott discovered that the original site of the house was nearly a football field away from its current location. The building began life as the farmhouse on land that was eventually turned into a mid-century subdivision. "At some point after 1908, they lifted the old girl and moved her—probably with mules pulling a platform over rolling logs—while spinning it around 180 degrees at the same time," Elliott says. "Quite a trick."

Of course, the most handy—and common—use for Sanborn

SANBORN MAPS REPRINTED/USED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE SANBORN LIBRARY, LLC/KAREN SMITH PHOTOS



maps is to provide essential details that can help inform restoration decisions. For instance, on Comstock House, Elliott's own home, an adjacent garage on the property presented "some serious structural issues that needed prompt attention," he says, in turn raising questions about the outbuilding's origins. "I needed to know whether I should approach it as a historical restoration."

By studying the available Sanborn maps for his area—1904, 1908, and 1937—Elliott confirmed several things. First, the garage was not original to the house—it was built later, sometime between 1908 and 1937. One could then rule out the possibility that it was an existing carriage house later converted to a garage, as its probable construction dates correspond to the introduction of the affordable automobile. Second, and more curiously, Elliott noticed that the building had its own half address (767½), which corresponded to the main house's 767 street number.

Although Elliott still has more research to do—"Does that half address impact a possible future conversion from outbuilding to 'granny unit'?" he wonders—he calls this quick research project "a perfect example of how useful the maps can be."

In addition to helping uncover invisible changes that have happened to a property over time, Sanborn maps also can clarify visible changes that seem out of place.

Carl Nittinger, a historic preservationist in New Jersey, relays a story about a double house in Haddonfield, New Jersey, with symmetrical detailing. While the local historic preservation commission approved the reconstruction of a front porch on one side of the Queen Anne structure, something was slightly off about its appearance compared to the other side.

Part of the problem lay in the fact that the porch was built in concrete, instead of a more authentic wood decking system, but Nittinger also noticed that the porch seemed to protrude from the building in an "acutely apparent" way. "I consulted the historic Sanborn map of the neighborhood and found that the footprint was not consistent with the original roof, and the new, angular replacement porch extended beyond the Sanborn footprint," he reports. "It's a good example of how a restoration project could have been executed in a historically correct way by consulting the Sanborn."

On another level, the original Sanborn maps are handsome objects in and of themselves. All colored by hand in the Sanborn home office, some maps show richly detailed and dense city streets, while others seem almost abstract in their careful register of sparser industrial tracts.

The insurance division of the Sanborn Company is long gone, having evolved into a provider of data for geographic information system (GIS) mapping services. Yet Sanborn's early maps remain, not just as tools, but also as vivid links to the past.

**William Richards**  
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Richmond, Virginia,  
and editor of Inform:  
Architecture and Design in the Mid-Atlantic.

Find links to some of the best digital Sanborn databases in the country.  
**OldHouseJournal.com**

## Reading the Key

All Sanborn maps provide a key, which can be found at the beginning of a bound volume. Through a combination of graphic symbols, universal signs (such as a thick Greek cross to designate a hospital), and text, these keys will help you decipher everything in the pages that follow.

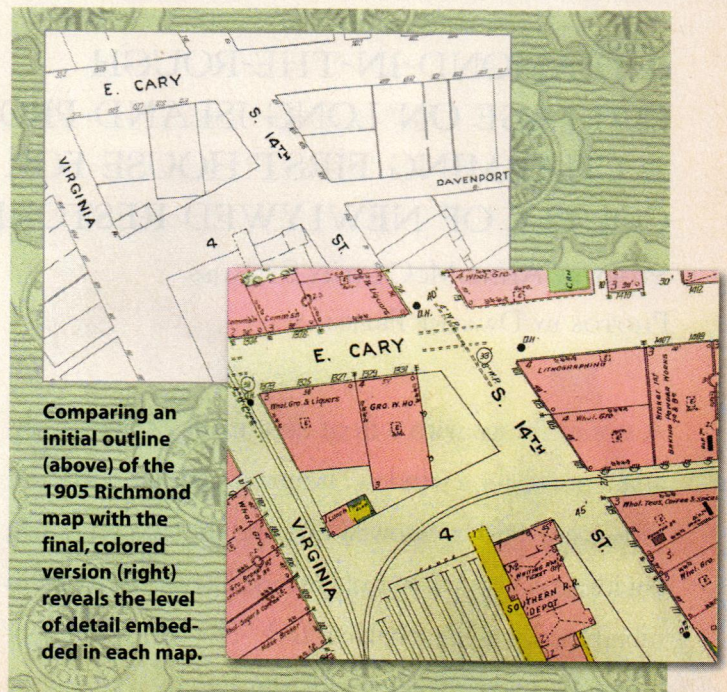
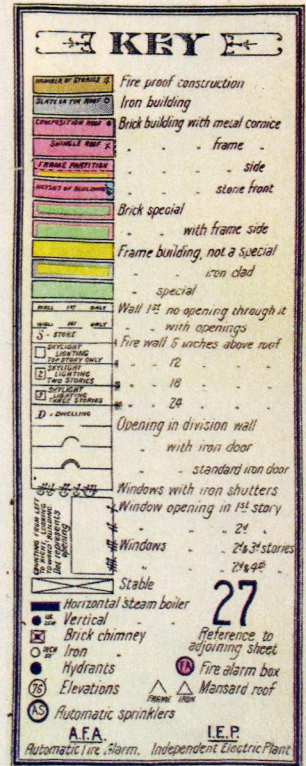
Colors in the early maps will always tell you building material; in later black-and-white folios, text is used to indicate the same thing.

Because space is at a premium (no pun intended) in these insurance maps, abbreviations are used to indicate cladding (cl), roof (rf, or sometimes r'f), or a vertical pipe (VP).

Buildings are usually swarming with numbers, and it's important to understand how they relate to the parts of the structure. Some are street numbers, while others are building dimensions; the key provided for each Sanborn map will tell you precisely what each number means.

On some maps, street numbers closer to the building are actual (at the time of the map's delineation), while numbers farther away reflect the old street numbers.

The more interesting markings used on buildings relate to openings in their façades or roofs. Garages, windows, skylights, fire doors, regular doors, drains, and other features are marked with hatching, squiggles, and seemingly runic symbols.



# Set in Stone

A DIAMOND-IN-THE-ROUGH COTTAGE ON LONG ISLAND PROVES A CHARMING FIRST HOUSE FOR A COUPLE OF NEWLYWED RESTORERS.

STORY BY ANNE MCCARTHY STRAUSS

PHOTOS BY DWAYNE FREEMAN

A stone cottage with a front door made of tree trunks and a portal for a window? It may sound like the forest dwelling shared by Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, but it's actually the home of Lou and Denise Tortorelli in suburban Sound Beach, New York. The 900-square-foot house, located 65 miles east of Manhattan, was built by

hand in 1931 by a New York state trooper who got the land when the *New York Sun* offered small plots in a then-remote area of Long Island to anyone signing up for a subscription. From first glance, the home's whimsical nature appealed to Denise's artistic side. "I think our house looks like something out of a fairy tale," she says.



**OPPOSITE:** The 1931 uncut stone house was hand-built by a New York state trooper gifted the land (in Sound Beach, a then-remote area of Long Island) as a value-added premium on a newspaper subscription. **INSET:** As with many stone cottages, a traditional "luck brick" is ensconced beside the front door. **THIS PAGE, TOP:** Lou and Denise Tortorelli are proud of their home of multicolored and -sized stone. **BOTTOM:** An original exterior stone shelf, supported by tree-branch brackets mortared between stones, is one of the home's many well-conceived design details, as is the rowlock sill of clinker bricks.

## Stone Dreams

As a young married couple on Long Island, where real-estate prices are relatively high, Lou and Denise had accepted the fact that their first home would be a small one. "I was okay with a small house," Denise explains. "I never imagined we would find something so incredibly unique with the sort of stone exterior I'd only seen on larger homes in elegant, affluent neighborhoods." Adding to the home's unique appeal is its one-of-a-kind log door, which had originally come from a clipper ship. Framed by oak trees, the door's unusual design required creative restoration work, including heavy insulating with adhesive foam.

The charming stone exterior also needed some work. "Some of the stones had fallen off, others were cracked, and all of them were in dire need of cleaning," explains Lou. The couple wanted to restore the luster of the stones—a combination of granite, feldspar, basalt, felsite, and pumice, a variety that gives the house a unique multi-toned, multi-textured exterior—without deflecting from their rustic, natural appearance. Cleaning the stones required careful power washing and hands-on scrubbing with nylon brushes. Denise and Lou avoided using harsh chemicals or extensive force, which could loosen or damage the stones, and they paid special attention to the original "luck brick" near the front door, a symbol of good fortune traditionally built into stone cottages.





**ABOVE:** The house's solid, impressive log front door began life on a clipper ship, and has a cutout portal window (here partially hidden by a wreath). The Tortorellis had to get creative in their efforts to restore and weatherize the door.



**ABOVE:** With front door opened, a row of ceiling beams is on prominent display; their knarls and knots echo the rough-hewn charm of the door's unusual oak-tree framing.

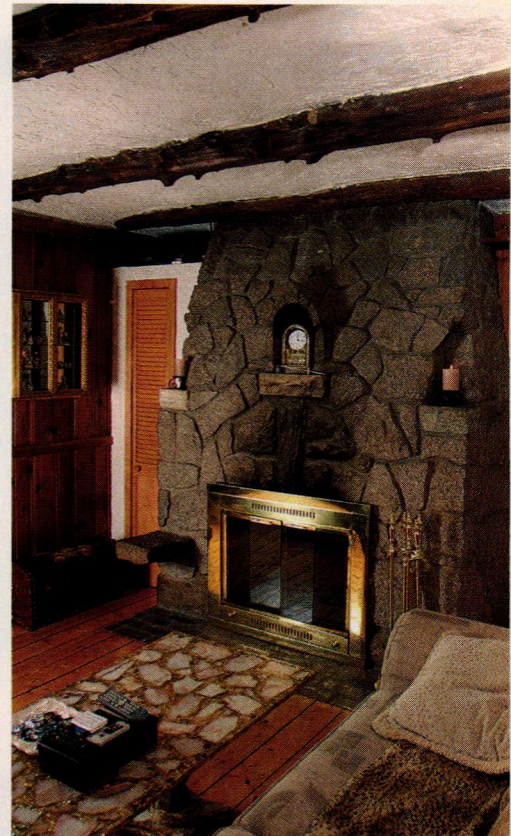
The thorough cleaning made the stones' colors pop in a palette of pretty pastels. Lou and Denise wanted to keep this natural look, so they opted not to have the exterior of their home coated with sealant, fearing it would appear artificial.

The next outdoor project was cleaning up the well-house and its now-sealed well (originally a source of water for the entire town of Sound Beach) in the front yard. Denise and Lou repaired the well-house's rotted roof and made it a usable space by adding a picnic table nearby and filling the lawn around it with perennial plantings. The resulting landscape is inviting, and ensures that the couple will be surrounded by colorful bursts of nature when dining alfresco.

### **An Inside Job**

Inside the house, visitors are greeted by a great room with wide plank floors, a massive stone fireplace, and a plaster ceiling with oak trees used as beams. Here, Lou and Denise have sought to bring the home into the 21st century while retaining its unique features.

The fireplace, a focal point of the



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** The couple spends the majority of their time in the great room, which doubles as a sound stage for Denise. A massive original fireplace with built-in nooks grounds the space. Lou and Denise updated their kitchen with the help of some handy family and friends.

great room, is made from a selection of stones from the home's exterior. Lou and Denise cleaned it with a specially formulated no-rinse soap that leaves a light, protective film while enhancing the luster of individual stones. Again, they opted to avoid sanding or staining to maintain the same earthy appearance as the home's façade.

Other projects beckoned, both overhead and underfoot, as both the ceiling and flooring needed work. The plaster



**CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:** The rehabbed attic bedroom is a snug, comfortable space. An array of artful trunks throughout the house doubles as on-the-ground storage. The dining room's ceiling appears good as new after spackling and painting.



ceiling, held together with an unusual mesh of chicken wire, was spackled and painted to remove staining that had occurred over the years. The couple also reinforced the decorative oak-branch beams, and secured or replaced the more traditional wooden ones. The wide-plank maple floors were sanded and coated with polyurethane to enhance their sheen.

"We opted to keep the existing wood paneling on the walls," says Denise. "With a great room interior composed of wood and stone, paneling seemed the most appropriate option." The couple scrubbed

the walls repeatedly, and were pleased with the glowing hue that emerged. "As we worked, the home began to look less dismal and to show the distinct potential we'd envisioned," says Denise.

The great room was reconfigured to include two distinct living spaces. Denise designed a full dining room area that accommodates a breakfast table for six. The living room, centered by the spectacular stone fireplace, became home to a full-sized couch, loveseat, and a mother-of-pearl coffee table that's been in Denise's family for generations.

"We used furniture that would compliment the décor and brighten it up," says Lou. "Finding the right furnishings turned out to be less of a challenge than getting them into the house." Maneuvering pieces around the knots in the door jamb proved particularly difficult.

To separate the eat-in kitchen from the living and dining areas, the couple built an open-arched wall. "The original kitchen had sparse, dark cabinetry with a gigantic slop sink," Denise explains. "It was quaint but impractical, with very little storage space and virtually

no surface on which to prepare food.” The couple’s kitchen renovation project included covering a window and adding cabinets, a granite countertop, a tiled backsplash, and new appliances. Denise chose cream-colored cabinets and tiles to brighten the room.

“We’re fortunate to have a number of craftsmen among our family and friends who worked with us on projects,” Lou says. One relative installed the kitchen cabinets, another installed a new lighting fixture, and Denise painted and decorated. On a small budget, they transformed the kitchen into a bright, cheerful eatery.

In the bedroom, Denise’s father built an unobtrusive closet that wouldn’t interfere with the old-fashioned look the couple sought to maintain. Lou and Denise added lighting fixtures with dimmers, painted the walls a soft cream color, and furnished and decorated until the formerly

dank room was transformed into an inviting boudoir with a whimsical feel, in tune with the rest of the house.

With storage space at a premium, the couple installed several additional small closets and incorporated a series of beautifully crafted trunks throughout the house for both added storage and decoration.

## Home Sweet Home

Denise, a true Renaissance woman whose avocations include music, writing, painting, and dance, makes a living as a marketing manager, but stays true to her creative nature by playing electric bass in a local rock band on weekends.

“Living in such a special—almost enchanted—house enhances my creative spirit because I’m surrounded by such whimsical beauty,” says Denise. “I would never find the kind of inspiration I’ve found here in a more traditional house.” 🏠

**BELOW:** The front yard’s well-house marks the spot that once provided water to the entire town; the Tortorellis reconstructed its roof, and made it an outdoor focal point with new landscaping and a nearby seating area.



When late-afternoon sun hits the stones, it highlights their variety and depth of color—yet another reason the Tortorellis appreciate their one-of-a-kind abode.

TOP 10

# Restoration Mistakes



LEFT TO RIGHT: IMAGINATION UNINCORPORATED PHOTO BY KELLY CRAIG; RAY TSCHOEPE PHOTO; KAREN SMITH PHOTO

Read up on these common renovation don'ts to avoid making them on your old house.

By Ray Tschoepe

**A**fter working on your old house for a number of years, you've probably found that a fair amount of your time is consumed by correcting old "repairs" and "renovations." No doubt they were installed with the best of intentions, but misguided repairs can be a death knell for old houses. These mistakes often result from a homeowner's lack of knowledge, haste, or desire to keep costs to a minimum. Don't fall into this trap yourself—avoid these 10 pitfalls at all costs.

## # 1 Cheap Paint

With most products, you really do get what you pay for. The highest quality paints are usually among the most expensive; individual components that give paints longevity and durability are costly. Professional painters can be reluctant to change brands because they often receive trade discounts, but since the paint itself is usually only a small percentage of a paint job's total cost, do your homework. Read reviews and choose the best paint you can afford. If a painter balks, ask him how many gallons he will need, and buy the paint for him. It's time and money well spent.



## #2 Poor Paint Prep

Even the finest paints money can buy will perform poorly if the underlying surface isn't properly prepped. Rein in your desire to see the finished job as soon as possible, and take time to carefully remove old failing paint and sand all surfaces. Follow by thoroughly cleaning to remove dirt and dust. Only at that point are you ready for priming. For best results on previously painted wood, use an alkyd primer manufactured by the same company producing the finish paint. Carefully caulk where necessary, then apply the finishing alkyd or latex paint after the primer has completely dried.

## #3 Mixing Metals

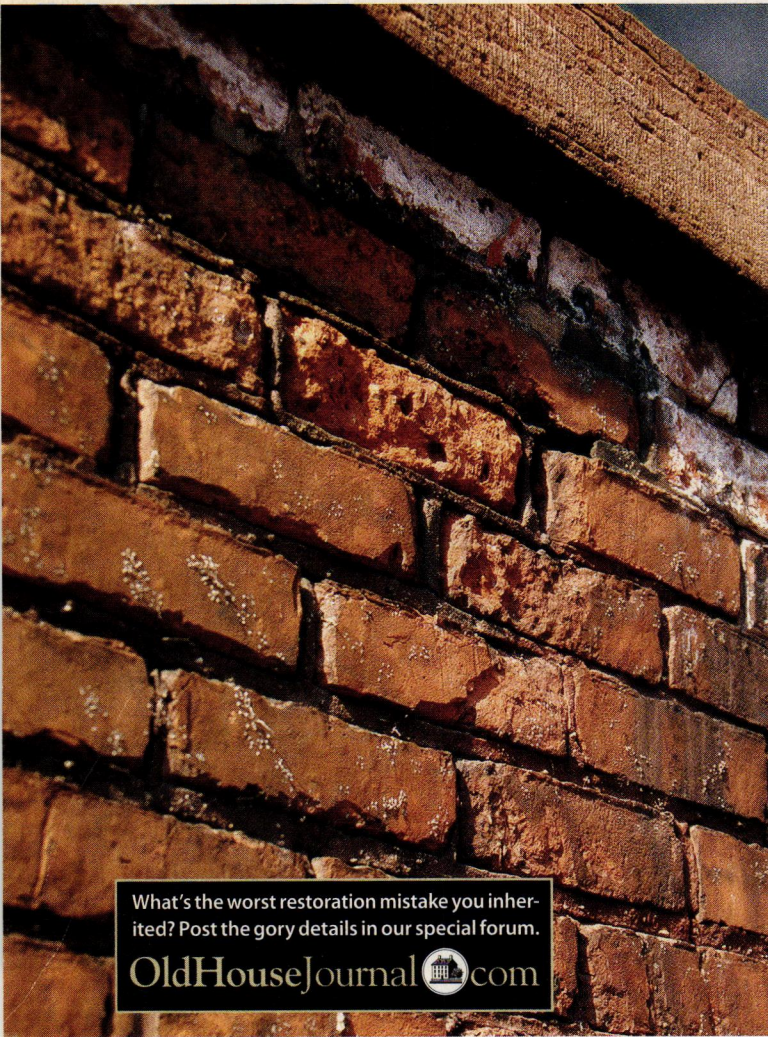
This concept often escapes even tradesmen who work routinely with sheet metal and metal fasteners. Metals are generally grouped by their atomic nature on a continuum. On one end are metals that readily give up electrons (zinc and magnesium); on the other are those that readily accept them (silver, gold). In between these extremes lie copper, iron, lead, etc. Any time unlike metals are put into direct (electrical) contact, a reaction between them accelerates the corrosion of one over the other. For this reason, make sure you or your contractor always use like metals. Never, for example, fasten copper sheets with steel nails, or use aluminum downspouts on copper gutters.

## #4 Epoxy Overuse

As a filler, epoxy is a wonderful material. For those who don't have deep pockets, it's often the difference between a serviceable repair and an unaffordable rebuild. But don't believe ads claiming epoxies can reconstruct entire wooden elements like the base of a column or the side jamb of a window. Epoxy is an expensive filler, and as a plastic, it doesn't generally share the expansion and contraction characteristics of surrounding wood. These movement differentials show up over time as epoxy loses its flexibility. Eventually, the epoxy will break free of its surrounding material, leaving an even larger gap. Epoxy fillers function best when they're used in limited roles.



**THIS PAGE:** A circa 1790 house (top) in the tiny village of Niskayuna, New York, shows a restoration handled properly. Too often, poor prep or cheap paint can result in complete paint failure—like the above example on a building painted just six years ago. **OPPOSITE:** Repairs gone wrong can result in rot, failures, and cracks.



What's the worst restoration mistake you inherited? Post the gory details in our special forum.

OldHouseJournal.com

ANDY OLENICK PHOTO

## #5 Waterproofing Exteriors

It's easy to be convinced that waterproof coatings are a cure for aging masonry or even wood siding. A number of industrial-coating manufacturers have entered the residential market with truly waterproof coatings. However, most houses are clad with a number of different materials that intersect at lines of unequal expansion and contraction; any coating will eventually admit water into these entry points. Problems arise when this water turns into water vapor that's drawn into the house to ruin interior finishes, or drawn to the exterior, causing waterproof coatings to blister and peel. Painting a waterproof coating on your house is like putting it into a plastic bag; it can't breathe. And houses need to breathe, since water enters from outside and is also generated in large volumes on the interior (by cooking, washing, and even exhaling). When coatings are absolutely necessary—to save spalling brick, for example—look for mineral silicate paints, which are durable and can transmit 90 percent of internal water vapors.



ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AGENCY PHOTO BY MIKE JACKSON

**LEFT:** Unnecessary exterior waterproofing can result in trapped water that destroys old bricks. **ABOVE:** This late 19th-century Chicago, Illinois, townhouse shows pitted scars where paint was removed by sandblasting (the smooth bricks above were protected by a shutter).

## #6 Waterproofing Interiors

As with exterior waterproofing, homeowners sometimes try to fix damp or even wet basements by painting a waterproof coating on interior walls. But this causes “stopped” water flowing from outside to sit in masonry foundation walls for a prolonged period of time before finding a new route to the water table. In the meantime, two other things happen: First, the lime in mortar between the stones begins to dissolve. Second, the waterproof coating begins to blister. Always remember that water can be conducted, but rarely stopped. To dry out a basement, the approach must be made from the exterior by exposing foundation walls, coating their exteriors, and installing drainage around the home's perimeter. Much of the time, simply unclogging downspouts, adding splash blocks, and re-grading eliminates the bulk of water infiltration.

## #7 Removing Masonry Finishes

Removing paint applied to masonry is often high on the list of big-ticket repairs, but it must be done carefully. Sandblasting, while less common today than in the past, can cause lasting damage. Even high-pressure water can erode soft masonry. Before committing to any method, research the nature of your stone or brick. Is it mostly soft sandstone? Are the bricks hard-fired early 20th-century examples, or soft, hand-packed late 18th-century versions? An architectural conservator can help determine the best paint removal technique, but in the end, a chemical poultice might be the most appropriate solution. Don't be talked into the wrong technique; a mistake can be irreversible.

## #8 Removing Wood Finishes

Those of us who own wood-clad houses cringe at the thought of repainting, but sometimes supervising a contractor is even more difficult. To contractors, speed is of the essence. That's why in the past 10 years, all but the hardiest have abandoned scraping and sanding for power-washing and -scraping. On the plus side, both techniques can be fast and effective. But power-washing strong enough to remove more than just the peeling paint can force gallons of water into the wood substrate, the wall cavity, and even the house. Power scrapers, which are like disc sanders but use spinning carbide blades instead of sandpaper, grind away paint but leave blade marks that are visible in raking light. They can be sanded out, but who wants to take that extra step? Chemicals, steam, infrared lamps, and cautiously applied heat guns, which have proven effective and are easy on the wood, are worth exploring.

## #9 Using the Wrong Mortar

The interaction between mortar and different types of brick or stone is a complex one, but a misunderstanding here could cause failure in masonry that's lasted hundreds of years. There are two classes of mortars: those based on lime, and those based on Portland cement. Portland cement mortars are very hard and slow to transmit water or water vapor. Lime mortars are quite soft, and readily allow water and water vapor to pass. While Portland cement is a good pairing with modern hard-fired brick or hard stone, trouble arises when it's used with older, hand-packed bricks fired at a low temperature (which are relatively soft) or fieldstones. In this pairing, the hard Portland cement mortar will cause soft brick and stone to deteriorate at a rapid pace. Lime mortars readily accommodate older brickwork. When in doubt, use a soft mortar.

## #10 Bad Design

For exterior surfaces to be durable, they need to be able to shed rainwater, but design that allows a single drop of water to flow from a house's highest point to the ground without getting stuck on a horizontal surface or vertical joint can be elusive. All exterior surfaces—from window sills to porch floors—should be angled away from the building. A slot on the lower edge of a window sill a short distance from the edge, for instance, encourages water to drip off rather than flow back onto the wall surface. Wrapping the lower portion of columns in wood creates large vertical or “up-facing” joints. Even with paint and caulk, without water-shedding design, joints can open in several years to allow water to enter, which will be followed rapidly by fungal deterioration. Many routine repairs and major expenditures can be avoided by using water-shedding designs on all outdoor restoration work. 🏠

*Ray Tschoepe, one of OHJ's contributing editors, is the director of conservation at the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust in Philadelphia.*



KAREN SMITH PHOTO

**ABOVE:** Mixing unlike metals will result in galvanic corrosion and telltale staining. **BELOW:** Bad design has ruined many an otherwise good repair, as in this example of a replaced wooden window sill that neglected to pitch away from the building, trapping water (and inviting rot) instead.



RAY TSCHOEPE PHOTO

# Stroke of Luck

**Thanks to a few fortunate coincidences, a California couple was able to create the ideal bungalow for their young family.**

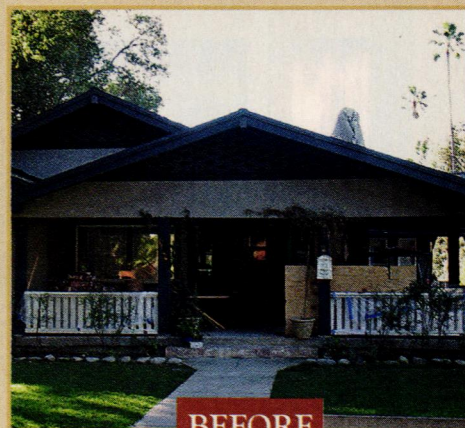
STORY BY CLARE MARTIN ♦ PHOTOS BY CURT BEECH

You could say Bridgid Fennell and Anthony Molinaro got lucky. In the months leading up to their wedding, the couple had been searching for the perfect Craftsman bungalow. Their first bid on a house in South Pasadena had been rejected, but while they were on their honeymoon, they got a call about another house that was about to come on the market—one with the exact same floor plan, and a very similar exterior.

“They were both plan-book houses, we think from a company in L.A.,” Bridgid says. The couple snapped up the house before it was even shown to the public, and began settling into their new neighborhood and rectifying remuddles inflicted on the house by previous owners.

Because Anthony had recently begun taking woodworking classes at a local workshop, the couple’s first order of business was to restore the woodwork in the living and dining rooms, which had either been painted or removed entirely. They hired local painter Mary Gandsey to strip and refinish what remained—the dining-room breakfront, molding, window and door casings, and some wainscoting—while Anthony set about re-creating the missing elements. His work was aided by a fortunate discovery: an original door from the long-gone colonnade, which he unearthed while trying to evict a family of feral cats from the attic.

“It matched the profile of the breakfront, and looked like a door from a standard colonnade-style bookcase,” Anthony says. “Using the breakfront as a guide, I was able to design a new colonnade based on the profile of that door.”



BEFORE PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARVEST ARCHITECTURE;  
BELOW: SCOTT KLINGER PHOTO

ABOVE and BELOW: Compared to the interior transformations, work on the outside of the house was minimal. Homeowners Bridgid Fennell and Anthony Molinaro refreshed the house with era-appropriate paint colors and added copper gutters and rain chains. OPPOSITE: Sage-green tile with gray grout creates a unique backsplash for the new farmhouse sink, situated in a sunny corner of the kitchen that once housed a cramped breakfast room.

AFTER





**AFTER  
BEFORE**



The poppy art tiles on the backsplash (above) are a nod to Bridgid's favorite flower. By reconfiguring the appliances, architect Lisa Henderson created a layout that subtly echoes the dining-room arrangement while making room for a cozy built-in breakfast nook (below).



Anthony also created a new mantelpiece for the reconstructed masonry fireplace in the living room, and a plate rail and wainscoting for the dining room, using Douglas fir paneling salvaged from a nearby bungalow that was being torn down.

After a few years of living in and working on the house, the couple happened upon another lucky break. While volunteering as docents on a neighborhood house tour, they met architect Lisa Henderson, who had recently left her job at a large corporate architecture firm to embrace her passion for historic preservation by starting her own residential firm, Harvest Architecture. The

three hit it off right away, and Bridgid knew Lisa was just the person to help them tackle some of their home's larger issues—namely, two cramped and period-inappropriate bathrooms and an awkward, closed-off kitchen.

"We clicked very well," Bridgid remembers. "She was the only architect we interviewed."

Lisa needed no introduction to Bridgid and Anthony, having witnessed their resto-

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Benjamin Moore: [benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com)  
California Faucets: [calfaucets.com](http://calfaucets.com)  
Dal Tile: [daltile.com](http://daltile.com)  
Forbo: [forbo.com](http://forbo.com)  
Linoleum City: [linoleumcity.com](http://linoleumcity.com)  
Meredith Art Tile: [meredithtile.com](http://meredithtile.com)  
Mission Tile West: [missiontilewest.com](http://missiontilewest.com)  
Modern-Aire: [modernaire.com](http://modernaire.com)  
Rejuvenation: [rejuvenation.com](http://rejuvenation.com)  
Rohl: [rohlhome.com](http://rohlhome.com)  
St. Thomas Creations: [stthomascreations.com](http://stthomascreations.com)  
Swiss Guy Construction: (626) 389-8759  
Viking: [vikingrange.com](http://vikingrange.com)  
Walker Zanger: [walkerzanger.com](http://walkerzanger.com)

ration work firsthand while walking her dog around the neighborhood: "There used to be this horrible fence in their front yard. Right after they moved in, it disappeared—they were the heroes of the neighborhood."

Once she was able to peek inside the house, Lisa had some definite ideas about how to best maximize the space. "It's such a fun puzzle for me to look at the floor plan and see how I can repurpose the space," she says.

In this case, she reoriented the kitchen by removing a bank of cabinets and relocating the appliances, creating a corner breakfast nook. The move freed up some extra space, allowing Lisa to shift a wall to create a roomier master bathroom. That, plus the removal of a blue-tiled shower stall, helped transform the bathroom from "dark and clunky" into an airy retreat.

"She did a lot of problem-solving," says Bridgid. "She flipped everything and made it all fit in a limited amount of space."

The guest bathroom footprint remained unchanged; Lisa merely removed a tiled divider and some poorly placed cabinets to open up the room. "The divider on the end of the tub wall was blocking the whole room," she says. "It sucked all the air out of the space."

In the process of rearranging the rooms, however, Lisa and her team stumbled upon a couple of decidedly unlucky obstacles. After gutting the kitchen, they discovered that, in the process of performing electrical work,



previous owners had over-and-under-cut the floor joists so many times that little more than an inch of support was holding the kitchen up over the small basement beneath it. "I've seen some bad stuff," says Lisa, "but when we discovered that, I literally told everyone to take a step back."

The process of shoring up the kitchen floor led to another project not part of the initial plan: remodeling



**TOP:** Lisa brightened up the guest bathroom by removing the tiled tub divider, and adding a pedestal sink and period-style hex tile in a daisy-chain pattern she and Bridgid devised. **BOTTOM:** Unexpected obstacles forced the couple to turn the basement into a family room, which now boasts bright walls and cork flooring.



AFTER  
BEFORE



**PRODUCTS:** All paints, Benjamin Moore; all light fixtures, Rejuvenation. Dining Room: Raleigh chandelier with frosted pyramid shades. Kitchen: Adam's Gold (walls) and Wethersfield Moss (cabinets) paint; Newcastle and Upshur pendant lights; Custom cabinets, Swiss Guy Construction; Sahara and Henna Marmoleum checkerboard floor, Forbo; Hand-painted Poppy and Timeless Crackle backsplash tiles, Meredith Art Tile; Basaltina countertops, Walker Zanger; Range, Viking; Range hood, Modern-Aire; Shaws fireclay sink and Country Kitchen faucet, Rohl. Basement: Adam's Gold paint; Cork Click-It flooring, Linoleum City. Master Bathroom: Eclipse paint; Matte gray and white hex floor tile, Mission Tile West; White 3x6 field wall tile and Carrara mini-brick liner, Dal Tile; Custom cabinets, Swiss Guy Construction; Venice lavatory set, California Faucets. Guest Bathroom: Sheer Romance paint; Matte blue and white hex floor tile, Mission Tile West; Custom cabinets and counters, Swiss Guy Construction; Richmond pedestal sink, St. Thomas Creations; Venice lavatory set, California Faucets.

The ghost of the original colonnade was visible on the bungalow's floor; with an original door (discovered in the attic) and other neighborhood examples providing guidance, Anthony designed and built a new colonnade between the living and dining rooms.

the basement, which Bridgid and Anthony had been using as a laundry room.

"We weren't going to touch it," says general contractor Gilbert Vuagniaux, "but when we found out the floor in the kitchen was so bad, we had to add new ceiling joists and beams anyway."

So the team went about putting new framing and drywall in the basement, only to run into another obstacle: Upon inspection, they learned that the space—a later addition by previous owners—wasn't up to code, thanks to a half-inch ceiling height discrepancy on one side of the room. They were given two choices: "Either rip it all out and have it be a typical California basement, or bring it up to code," says Lisa. Weighing

their options, Bridgid and Anthony decided the best choice was to turn the 10' by 10' room into additional living space.

Doing so required some heroic measures from Gilbert's team—including jacking up the corner of the house, removing the basement walls and pouring new ones without the aid of machinery, rebuilding the staircase, and installing window egresses—but once it was finished, the space quickly became one of Bridgid and Anthony's favorites.

Thanks to its southern exposure, "it gets all this light that the living room doesn't," says Bridgid. "It's one of the nicest rooms in the house."

Because it wasn't original to the house, Bridgid and Anthony took a few liberties with the basement



STYLE

The entrance to the 1790 Pancoast-Lewis-Wharton House is enriched with a Tuscan frontispiece. A King of Prussia marble stoop and Flemish bond brickwork with glazed headers are both typical of the period.

# High Society

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAMES C. MASSEY AND SHIRLEY MAXWELL

IN PHILADELPHIA'S SOCIETY HILL,  
URBAN RENEWAL AND HISTORIC  
REVIVAL COMBINE TO REVEAL  
ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES GALORE.



**LEFT:** The house that carpenter Thomas Nevel built for himself in 1770 has a decorated dormer window and an uncommon mutule cornice—good Georgian features. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Rows of compatible houses build the charm of Society Hill. **BOTTOM:** More refined Georgian houses, like the circa 1785 Francis Hopkinson House, typically boast pedimented entries and fancy brickwork.

By the 1970s, the neighborhood had become the setting for yet another success story—the renewal of its old buildings’ luster and its cachet as one of the city’s most coveted residential addresses. Today’s Society Hill—a near neighbor to touristy Independence National Historical Park, prestigious mixed-use Washington Square, and Philadelphia’s noisy urban core—is an intriguing architectural blend of sedate antiquity and in-your-face modernity.

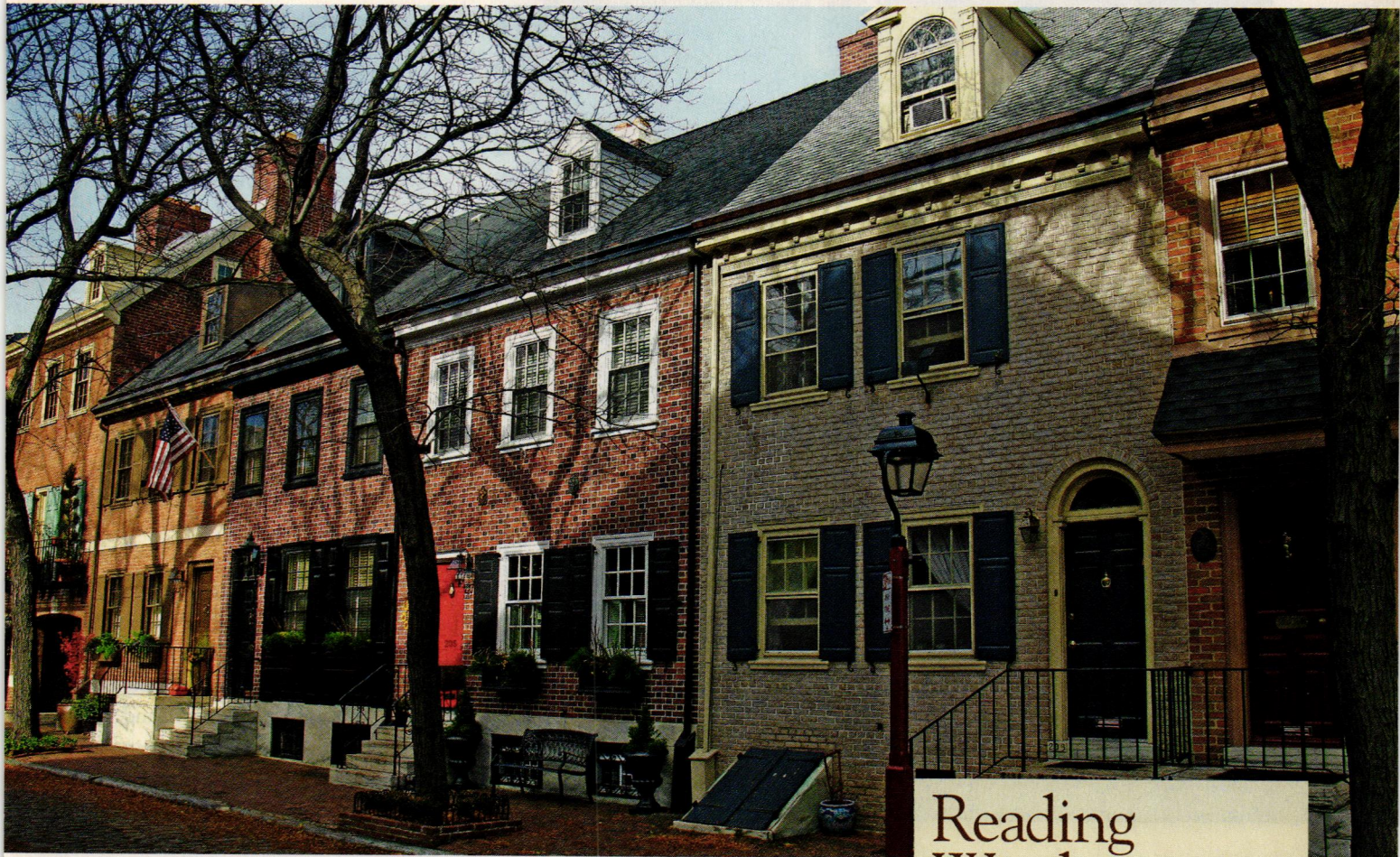
### Fighting Times

In between these ups, however, were some very conspicuous downs. After the Civil War, Philadelphia’s upper crust moved out, and a myriad of less prestigious tenants moved in, including produce warehouses, slum tenements, saloons, and factories.

By the 1960s, Society Hill was deemed “blighted”—fair game for massive redevelopment under Urban Renewal. The proposed revitalization project, intended partly to spruce up the area surrounding nearby Independence National Historical Park and partly to upgrade a notably rundown neighborhood, suggested demolishing hundreds of dilapidated 18th- and 19th-century buildings. These “relics,” including some of the country’s finest Georgian- and Federal-style architecture, were to be replaced by modern high-end residential and commercial new construction.

Historic preservationists, however, begged to differ with that plan. Since the late 1940s, a few dedicated souls had been buying, restoring, and fixing up old Society Hill buildings, risking life and property in the crime-ridden area. Urban Renewal gave them a rallying point and a broader audience, and they sprang into action to save the historic

In Philadelphia, the high land between the Delaware River and what is now Eighth Street has a storied past. In the late 1700s, a London development company called the Society of Free Traders sold building lots there, and soon Colonial- and early National-era movers and shakers lined the narrow streets with handsome houses. Thus “The Society’s Hill” came to contain one of the largest concentrations of 18th- and 19th-century houses in America, most of them the brick row houses for which Philadelphia has become famous.



## Reading Windows

In Georgian houses, windows are relatively small overall, with double-hung sash, frequently twelve-over-twelve, nine-over-nine, or nine-over-six panes, and thick muntins. In Federal-style houses (as above), windows are likely to be taller and larger, with fewer and larger panes of glass, typically six-over-six, and narrower muntins. Floor-length windows on the second story usually indicate an upstairs principal parlor. Greek Revival houses generally have large, six-over-six double-hung windows and narrow muntins.

neighborhood. Their efforts helped pave the way for a thoughtful redevelopment-cum-preservation plan put in place by Edmund N. Bacon, Philadelphia's legendary postwar planning czar.

Though some was indeed lost in the redevelopment, much also remains to be admired in 21st-century Society Hill. In addition to the many cherished antiquities that have been restored or rehabilitated, numerous mid-20th-century infill buildings blend fairly comfortably, if not altogether seamlessly, into the rows of 18th- and early 19th-century buildings.

### Construction Clues

Since fire was an ever-present danger in densely built areas, most Philadelphia houses are made of brick. The various brick bonding patterns used in a building's façade give clues to its date of construction. Decorative

Flemish bond, with alternating dark glazed headers (bricks with short ends facing out) and unglazed stretchers (long sides out) with prominent mortar joints, characterize the Georgian style, while the calmer plain Flemish bond (unglazed headers and stretchers) with thinner mortar courses is typical



# Time Traveling

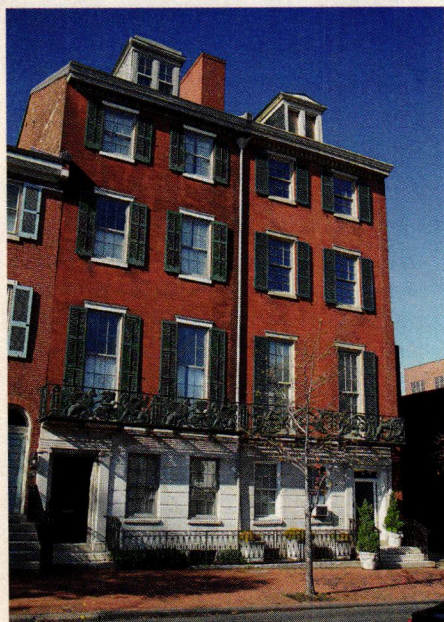
Seeing Society Hill is definitely a pedestrian activity—unless, of course, you choose to do your touring aboard one of the many horse-drawn carriages that clip-clop along the brick-paved streets, frustrating motorists with their slow progress but providing local color and steady work for street cleaners—as well as an era-appropriate mode of transport.

Doorways in Georgian houses are often elaborate, with classical frontispieces featuring columns, pediments, and semicircular fanlights, as well as recessed doorways. Simpler houses often have plain doorways, perhaps topped by a transom. Six- and eight-panel doors are standard.

## Georgian Highlights

Largely because of the early Quaker influence in Philadelphia, Society Hill houses tend to be somewhat restrained compared to those in cities like Boston and New York. That said, some of the earliest—and showiest—of the big houses in Society Hill are in the Georgian style. The Powel House on South Third Street, often considered the finest of its era in the city, was built in 1765 for a wealthy merchant, but it's better known as the home of Samuel Powel, Philadelphia's first mayor under the new republic. It is known for its elegantly restrained façade and rare side yard. From the outside, lead tracery turns the arched fanlight gracing its front door into a rayed flower of glass beneath a dignified classical entablature. Now a decorative arts museum, the house's interior contains a dark-mahogany-paneled staircase and handsomely carved mantelpieces with classical motifs.

More subdued is the 1787 Bishop William White House, also a museum house, located on the edge of Society Hill at Third and Walnut streets. The Reverend Dr. White, chaplain of the Continental Congress, chose this handsome brick Georgian-style row house as his residence because it sits midway between the two churches he served. Other houses in the row are all in the Federal style.



**TOP:** The projecting pent eave between floors and the plain doorway on the 1758 Rhoads-Barclay house are typical of earlier homes.

**BOTTOM:** The Winder houses, with marble first floors and elaborate second-story balconies, are high-style Greek Revival examples.

of the Federal style. Common bond later became the norm, as it did everywhere.

Generally, 18th- and early 19th-century houses have gable roofs, although there are a few gambrels. Georgian gables tend to be steeper than Federal ones. As the decades wore on, roofs generally became flatter, and by the 1850s, completely flat roofs had come into use. A few of the earliest houses have pent eaves extending between stories on the front of the house, sheltering the walls and windows below, but these are rare after 1760.

The size and shape of dormers and the size of windows and panes also helps date buildings (see "Reading Windows," page 61). Early dormers were plain, usually with shed roofs, but these also appear frequently on small houses of later periods. Georgian dormer roofs are pitched and often pedimented, with elaborately trimmed windows bearing fancy scrolled consoles at the cheeks. In the Federal period, arch-head dormers became fashionable.



## Federal Characteristics

Perhaps the easiest way to differentiate between Georgian- and Federal-style houses is to take stock of their visual weightiness. Comparatively speaking, Federal houses usually seem lighter, taller, and less bold than Georgian ones. The Hill-Physick-Keith House (1786) on South Fourth Street offers a low-hipped roof, flat string-courses of stone at the second and third floors, and an impressive entrance with delicate tracery in its arching fanlight and sidelights.

Unlike most Philadelphia houses, which are party-wall row houses, the Hill-Physick-Keith House is a freestanding mansion with a restored side garden. Now a museum, it provides visitors a glimpse of Federal-style furniture in an appropriate setting.

## Greek Revival Features

Often called America's first national style, the Greek Revival is well represented in Society Hill. Girard Row, located in the

300 block of Spruce Street, is a set of five row houses built as an investment in the Greek Revival style in 1833 by Philadelphia financier Stephen Girard. Distinguished by high, marble-faced basements and first stories, with elaborate cast-iron railings beside the marble steps, they remain a handsome intact grouping.

The identical Winder Houses on Third Street (1844; architect Thomas U. Walter) have remarkable cast-iron balconies at the second floor, one featuring griffins; the other, lions.

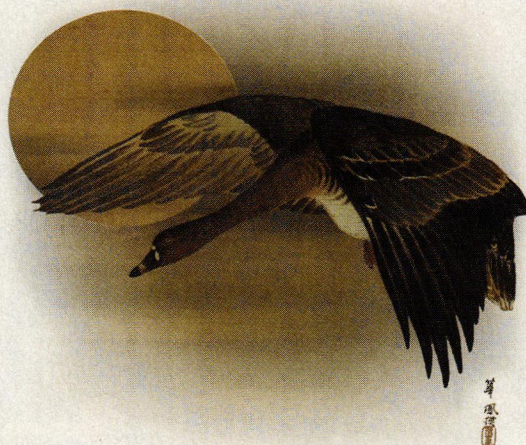
Of course, not all houses of note in Society Hill are mansions or even upper-middle-class residences. There are still plenty of small, working men's two-story houses mixed in with the three- and four-story dwellings of wealthy merchants and gentry. The 1770 home of master carpenter Thomas Nevel on Fourth Street is a good example—one of many buildings grand and small worth visiting on any tour of Society Hill. 🏠



**TOP:** These early 19th-century houses with first-floor stores face the old Second Street Market Headhouse and the market shambles. **BOTTOM:** Probably the neighborhood's finest Federal house, the Hill-Physick-Keith house features a distinctive entry with an elaborate fanlight.

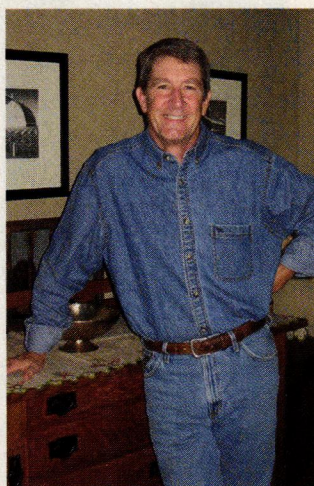


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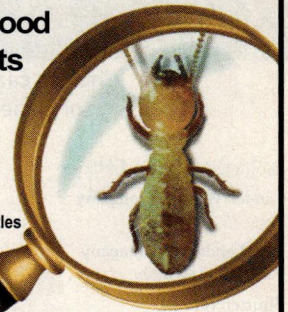
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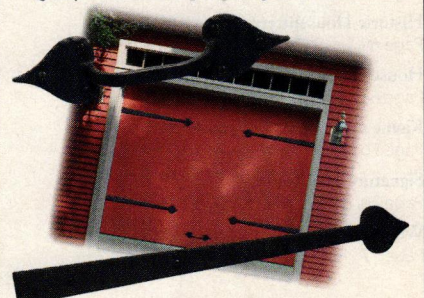
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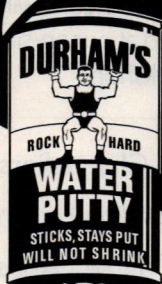
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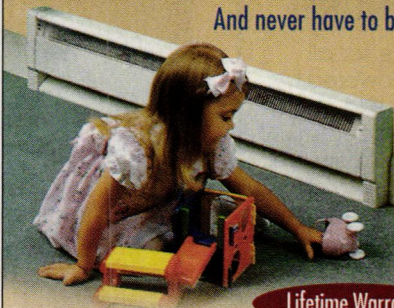
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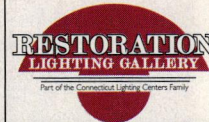
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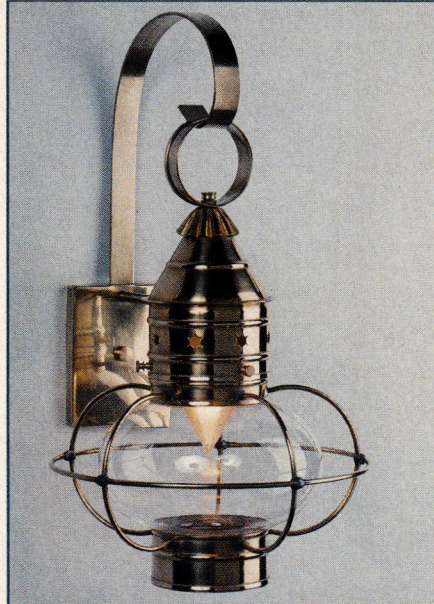
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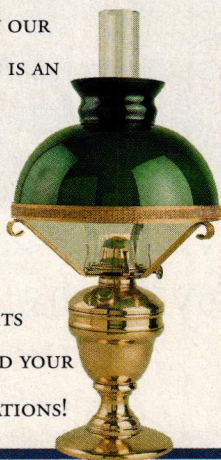
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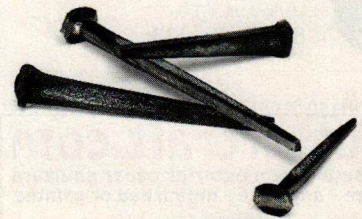
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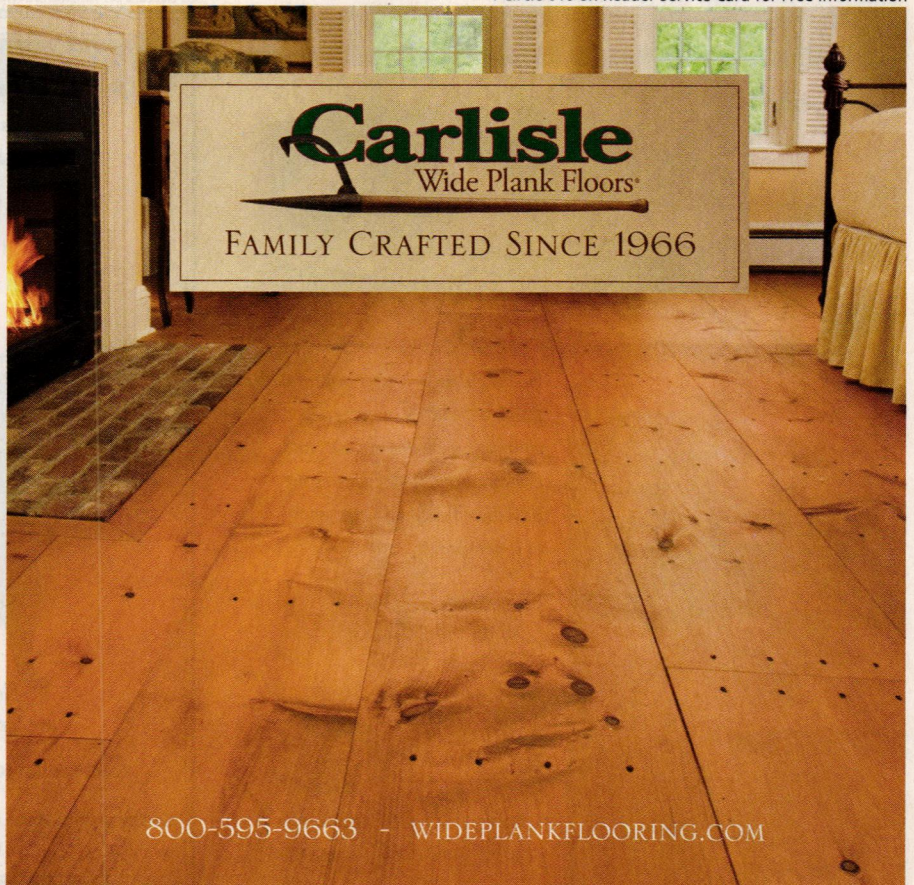
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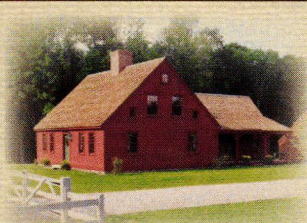
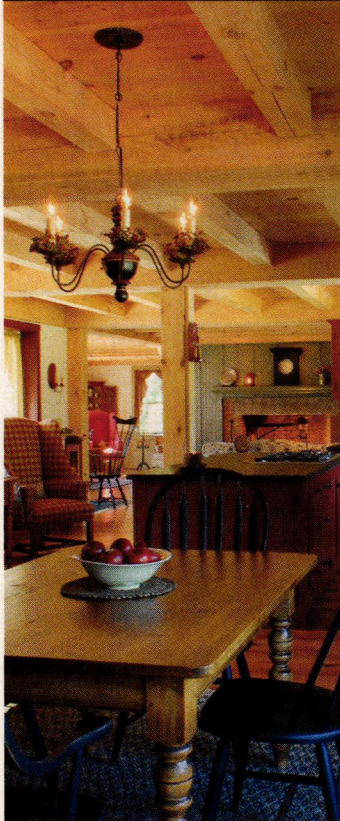


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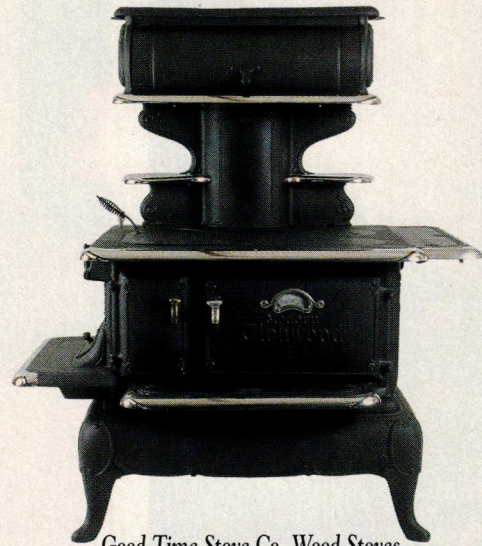
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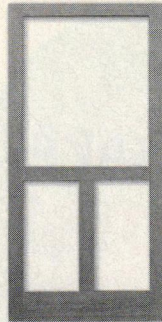
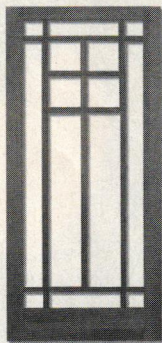
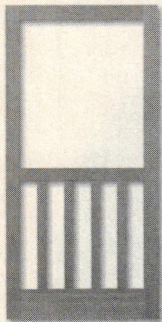
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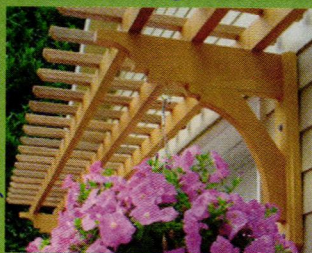
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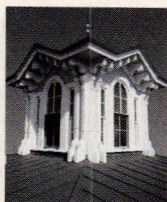
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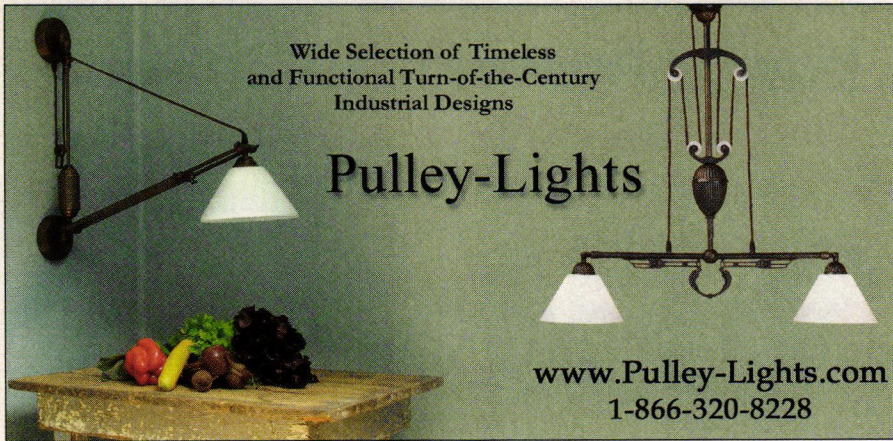
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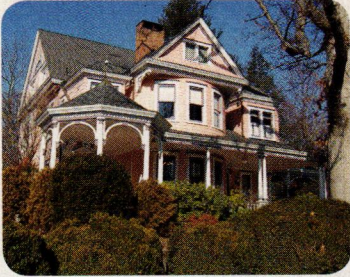
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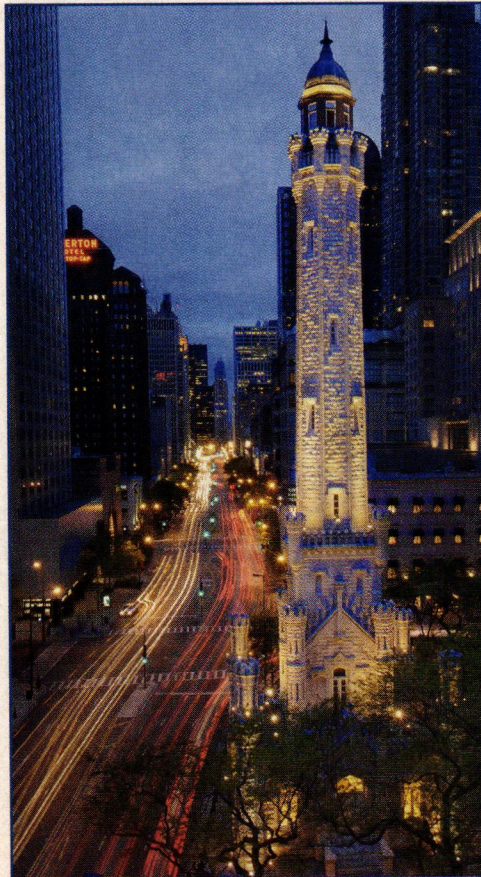
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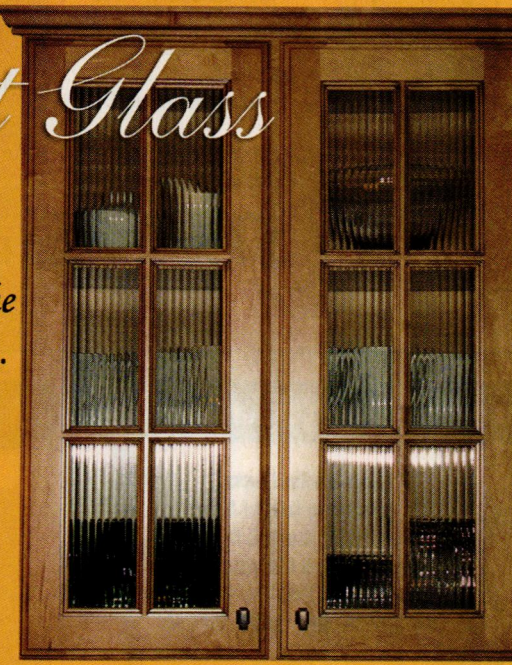
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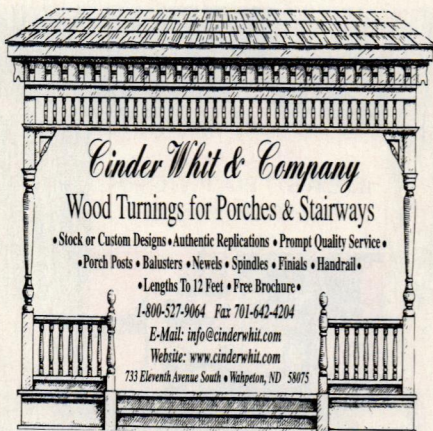
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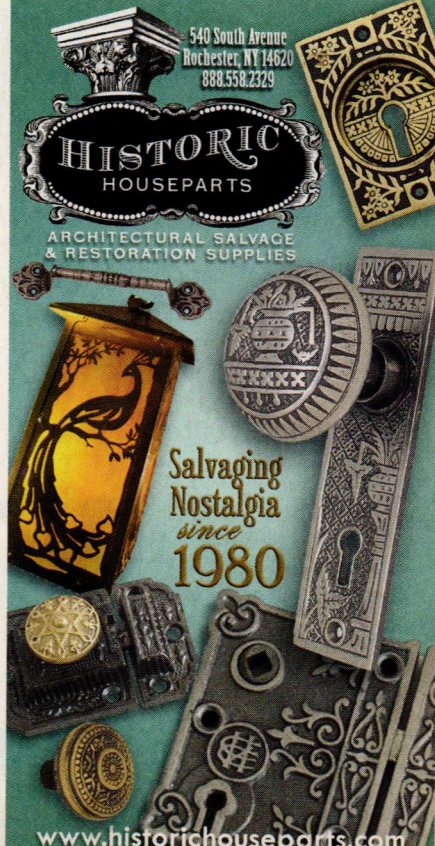
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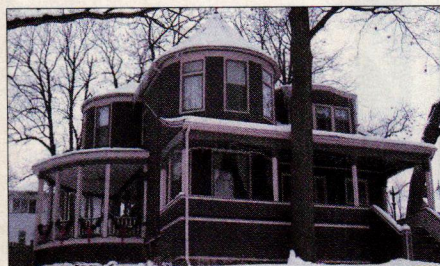
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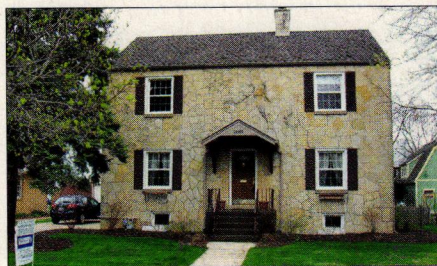
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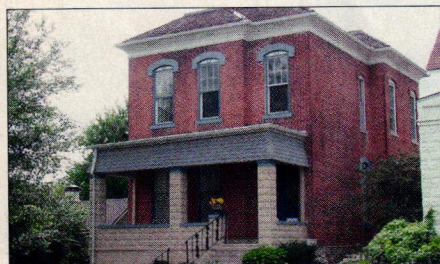
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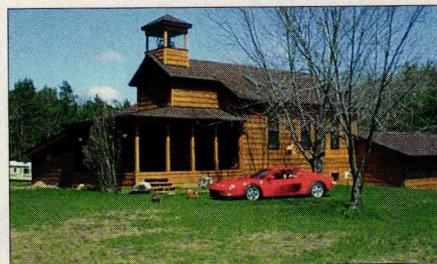
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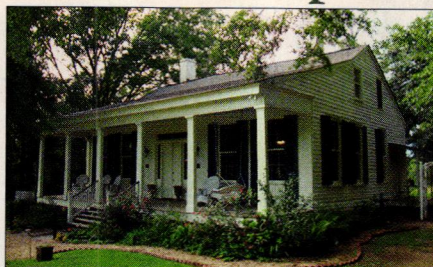


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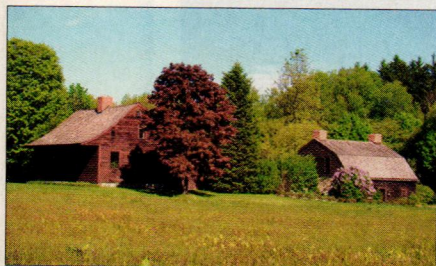
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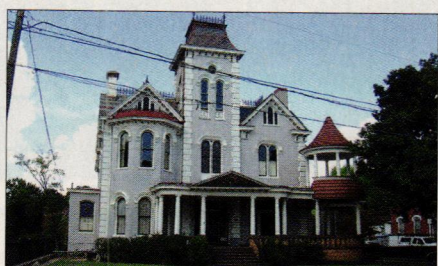
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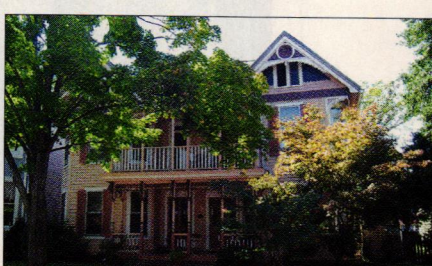
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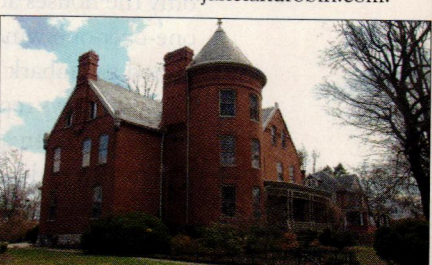
**FREDERICKSBURG, VA**—Classic Victorian, circa 1894, built in mirror image to adjoining residence. German siding, detailed gingerbread trim, 4 covered porches and a fenced garden highlight the exterior. Original pine floors, double parlors, bull's eye trim, 10-foot ceilings plus a walk-up attic ideal for finished space. Walk to downtown. \$489,900. Coldwell Banker Carriage House Realty, Janel O'Malley, 540-850-3141 or Robin Marine, 540-842-3367. [www.janelandrobin.com](http://www.janelandrobin.com).



**FREDERICKSBURG, VA**—Fine example of Queen Anne architecture, circa 1900, is within walking distance of downtown and the train. Three stories of finished living space. Exceptional woodwork includes parquet floors, double crown moldings, wainscoting, chair rails, detailed mantels and classic columns. 7 fireplaces, front and rear staircases, pocket doors and a wrap covered porch. Coldwell Banker Carriage House Realty, Janel O'Malley, 540-850-3141 or Robin Marine, 540-842-3367. [www.janelandrobin.com](http://www.janelandrobin.com).



**SAXE, VA**—Sylvan Hill Plantation. Elegant 1802 manor house. Breathtaking views. 12-room gem restored to original grandeur. Period lighting throughout. 14' x 35' kitchen in English basement. 10 fireplaces. Porches front and back. 4 full baths. Central HVAC. New plumbing & electrical. 4th floor tower. House and outbuildings sit high up on 9.4 acres. 5-bay carriage house. Much more! Motivated seller. \$569,000. Max Sempowski, Antique Properties. 434-391-4855 or [www.oldhouseproperties.com](http://www.oldhouseproperties.com).



**CHARLES TOWN, WV**—The Perkins' House, circa 1891, is a 7,000 sq.ft. Elizabethan mansion. The side yard is the historic site of the hanging of abolitionist John Brown. Features include Tiffany glass, handmade shutters, and exquisite mantels throughout. 5 bedrooms, 4 full and 2 half baths. Modern kitchen with commercial grade appliances. On the National Register. Within an hour to DC or DC airports. \$2,250,000. Rob Nelson, 434-409-7443 or Crick Schulz, 304-725-0000.

# remuddling



## Business Class?

SOMETIMES THE CHANGES OLD HOUSES make can call to mind the modern airline industry, where mergers and acquisitions have made familiar concepts like customer service increasingly harder to find. Take, for example, these four transitional folk Victorian houses sitting side by side on a quiet city street. While all retain their gable-front family status, third-story Palladians, and two-story side bays, only the houses at right have kept their original porches, front doors, ground floor one-over-one windows, and brick cladding. The houses on the left, meanwhile—joined to embark on a business venture—have seen their front doors and ground floor windows replaced with tall, skinny casements, and cement veneers added to their façades. In addition, the new door uniting them is docked in a wingspan-like hyphen topped by a butterfly roof that appears to be airborne.

“I’m all for repurposing buildings,” says our contributor, “but this is a bit much.” We think that when houses attempt to upgrade to business class, connections are easy to miss. 🏠

**WIN \$100:** If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color prints or digital images. We’ll give you \$100 if your photos are published. The message is more dramatic if you include a picture of a similar unremuddled building. (Original photography only, please; no clippings. Also, we reserve the right to republish the photos online and in other publications we own.) Remuddling Editor, Old-House Journal, 4125 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151; or via e-mail: [OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com](mailto:OHJEditorial@homebuyerpubs.com).

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