



**NATIONAL TRUST**  
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION®

**Help From the National Trust Resource Center  
Information Sheet #32**

**Working with Contractors and Architects; Finding Supplies and Furnishings;  
Interior Design and Decorating**

*The National Trust's Resource Center receives questions each month from the owners of historic homes and buildings, who would like to restore or preserve their historic structures, and would like information on how to find and work with a contractor or architect, how to locate historically accurate hardware; or how to recreate historically accurate interiors. In order to easily answer these requests, the Resource Center has prepared this reference sheet.*

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**TIPS FOR CHOOSING AN ARCHITECT OR CONTRACTOR**

Your **state historic preservation office** and **statewide preservation organization** will be an excellent resource for you, as they will know of architects and contractors who have worked on historic buildings in your state. Appointed by the Governor, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in each state carries out the Nation's historic preservation program under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. A SHPO nominates properties to the National Register of Historic Places, reviews applications for certain tax benefits for rehabilitation projects, surveys and evaluates the state's cultural resources, and administers federal grants when available. A "statewide" is a nonprofit preservation organization which focuses on preservation issues in each state. To find your "SHPO" and "statewide" please use this link on the National Trust's website: [http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide\\_org.asp](http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide_org.asp) \*

\*Please note: If you are a contractor who would like to be added to a reference list of contractors who do restoration/ preservation work, you should also contact your SHPO and statewide office.

When renovating your historic home or building, it is important to thoroughly research your options before making the decision to hire a contractor or doing it yourself. Do-it-yourself jobs, while they are sometimes cheaper, can take a great deal longer to complete than working with a contractor. For those who are interested in hiring an architect or contractor for a restoration project, the **American Institute of Architects** has compiled a list of tips, and a condensed version can be found below:

1. Build a list of possibilities: find out who designed projects in your area that you like, ask historical societies, your State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), home owners in historic districts, and local house museums what architects or contractors they have used in the past for restoration projects. If you are searching for a contractor and already have an architect, your architect may be able to recommend a contractor that they have worked with before.

2. Contact the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects: the AIA closely monitors preservation issues, and will have a list of member-owned firms and companies that are trained in working on historic structures.
3. Call each firm on your list: describe your project and ask if they can accomplish it, request literature on the firm's qualifications and experience. If the company is unable to handle your project ask for recommendations for other firms.
4. Interview potential firms: Interviewing gives you a chance to meet the people who will be designing your project. Look for someone you feel comfortable with as you will be working with them for a while. Some firms charge fees for interviews so ask before hand.
5. Questions to ask: How busy is the firm? Does it have the capacity to take on this project? Who will handle the job? Be sure to meet with them. Talk about your project budget and fees, ask to see a completed project, ask for references from past clients.
6. Request Architect's Qualifications Statement (B431) or Contractor's Qualifications Statement (A305) from your local AIA Chapter. These qualification statements provide you with a way to judge the qualifications of the architect or contractor you are investigating.

For a complete copy of this checklist, visit the American Institute of Architects at [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org).

Bob Yapp, from the historic house restoration show "**About Your House with Bob Yapp**," which was co-produced by the National Trust, provides home owners with a list of concerns to think about when dealing with contractors and architects:

- Always get a contract. Even if you are friends with the contractor, a written contract will insure that everyone understands what work is to be done, when it is to be completed, and what costs are involved.
- A good tight wooden storm window is more energy efficient so don't be pressured into buying a triple-track aluminum storm window to replace your wooden one. Even if the original wooden windows need to be replaced, you can sometimes keep the original wood sashes.
- It is perfectly reasonable to withhold 5-10% of the cost of a new or repaired roof until the first heavy rain.
- Always secure permits no matter how small the job is.
- Most vinyl siding will fade and warp after 10-15 years and will require repainting and repair. Consider this when a contractor tries to persuade you to cover your historic building with vinyl siding.
- You need a lien waver signed by a contractor to show that they have been paid in full.

To contact Bob Yapp, call Preservation Resources Inc. at 574-283-0630, or e-mail [yapperman@msn.com](mailto:yapperman@msn.com).

**The National Park Service** provides services, advice, and publications on historic preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation technology. *Preservation Briefs* are available free of charge from the National Park Service. These publications offer information about restoring historic structures. Each brief deals with a specific building material, including stained glass windows, structural glass, vinyl siding, terra cotta, and ceramic tile floors. Preservation Briefs are accessible online. Please visit <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm> or call 202-513-7270.

## HISTORIC HARDWARE AND PRODUCTS

Historic buildings are often in need of renovations. Oftentimes it is both cheaper and easier to upgrade older hardware with modern commercial-grade hardware. Historic houses, though, can be stripped of their charm and historic accuracy when this is done. Air registers, bathroom fixtures, and doorknobs that are appropriate to older homes cannot be found at your standard hardware retailer. The following is a list of resources, products, and programs for those interested in buying or selling historic hardware and products.

Your **state historic preservation office** and **statewide preservation organization** will be an excellent resource for you, as they should know where to find historic hardware and products in your state. To find your “shpo” and “statewide” please use this link: [http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide\\_org.asp](http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide_org.asp) For more information on “shpos” and “statewides” see the first page of this information sheet.

**Specialty Shops** specialize in selling historic artifacts. These specialty shops range from a shop in St. Louis that primarily sells structural glass, to a store in New York City that sells everything from historic statues, fountains, and stained glass windows to doorknobs and light fixtures. Many of these stores have websites. To find these stores, check advertisements in magazines such as *Preservation*, do a search on the internet, or use your yellow pages.

**Salvage Shops** have been becoming increasingly popular as people become more interested in making the interior of their buildings accurate to the time period they were constructed in. If you have access to the internet, this would be a good place to start looking for a salvage shop that will meet your needs. There are several web directories for salvage shops in America, Canada, and Europe. Most salvage shops do not sell online, but some have a listing of what products they have available.

Some **nonprofit organizations** also have salvage shops. Habitat for Humanity has organized Re-Store, which are salvage shops that specialize in building supplies. There are now over 50 stores across the country. Please visit their website at <http://www.habitat.org/env/restore.html> for more information. To find out if there are any nonprofit salvage stores near you, please contact your statewide preservation organization. Contact information for your statewide organization is available on our website at [http://www.nthp.org/help/statewide\\_org.asp](http://www.nthp.org/help/statewide_org.asp), or call the Resource Center at 202-588-6164.

If you are interested in **buying or selling online**, the *Old House Journal* [www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com) has a section called "Sales and Swaps" and Ebay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) sells almost anything.

In the December 1998 issue, the *Old-House Journal* published **an article on Historical Hardware**, written by Gordon Bock, which contains some useful tips for those searching for hardware for an historic building. Below are some of the tips and information contained in that article:

- *Antique/Salvage*: Antique and salvage shops are good sources for finding used, historic period hardware. Keep in mind that hardware found in antique or salvage shops is usually sold as-is, and the condition and quality of the hardware is usually unpredictable.
- *Neo-Traditional*: Hardware produced in a neo-traditional style is designed based on historically inspired patterns and period motifs. This kind of hardware may not be a perfect match to other pieces of historic hardware, but the design could complement hardware from the same time period that its design is based on.

- *Reproduction*: Reproduced hardware is a new product made from an old design. The difference between a neo-traditional product and a reproduction is that the neo-traditional one is designed after a historic pattern while a reproduction is usually produced from a mold of an antique piece.

Below is Bock's **list of shopping tips** for people searching for historic hardware:

1. Prior to the 1950's manufacturers continued to keep many utilitarian hardware patterns in production for years. Some patterns from the last quarter of the nineteenth century were still in production in the early part of the twentieth century, and many of these designs will be appropriate for a historic home.
2. Be extra careful when shopping for hardware through a catalog. If an item does not look good in a picture, chances are it won't look good when you get it. Make sure the supplier has a good return policy and inspect the product thoroughly before you install it.
3. If you are trying to match a piece of hardware, take it with you while you shop around. It is easier to match dimensions, designs and details when you can compare pieces side-by-side.

For a complete copy of Bock's article, contact the *Old-House Journal* at [www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com)

## INTERIOR DESIGN AND DECORATIVE ARTS

Historically accurate interiors are important to the interpretation of a historic home and building. There are many avenues for finding information about historic interiors. Looking through older publications, photographs, and archives to find examples of the way buildings were furnished in the past is a good way to start your research. The internet is another useful tool. Search engines can turn up pictures and renderings of interiors.

Probably some of the most useful tools for educating people about historic interiors are museums. Decorative Arts museums exhibit historic decorative arts, and display period rooms for interpretation. Historic house museums are generally set up to educate the public about a certain time period, and keep historically accurate collections. Also, many architects designed furnishings for their buildings. If you are researching interiors of a certain style or architect, it would be beneficial to visit house museums built in that era or by that architect.

## NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Web Site: [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

- **Membership**: Look for advertisements from historic product and service providers in the National Trust's *Preservation* magazine. *Preservation* is one of the many benefits for becoming a member of the National Trust. *Preservation* magazine advertises for all preservation related historic hardware, furnishings, and consultants. Other benefits include free or discounted admission to our historic sites, a 10% discount in our gift shops and on our publications, and opportunities to participate in our study tours. To become a member of the National Trust call our membership office at (202) 588-6166.
- **Forum**: The National Trust *Forum* membership program is for preservation professionals. *Forum* membership includes *Forum Journal*, *Forum News*, access to the password-protected web site Forum

Online as well as full membership privileges to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Forum resources allow preservation professionals to share information, offer useful tips, and stay informed on current issues in the preservation field. Recent discussions on the Forum Online list serve covered topics such as replacing historic windows, historic paint colors, and legal guidelines for historic preservation contractors. For more information or to become a member, call the National Trust's Forum office at (202) 588-6053.

- **Resource Center:** The National Trust's Resource Center answers all general questions for the Trust. The Resource Center also produces information sheets on various topics including restoring historic houses and buildings, moving historic structures, and careers in preservation. To contact the Resource Center, call (202) 588-6164.
- Plan to attend the National Trust's **National Preservation Conference**, which is held each fall. The Conference provides all-important know-how, innovative ideas, and inspiration for persons saving America's historic places and revitalizing communities. The Conference is the premier educational and networking event for community leaders, volunteers, and staff of the historic preservation movement. For information, visit <http://www.nthpconference.org/>
- The National Trust's Preservation Books [www.preservationbooks.org](http://www.preservationbooks.org) offers a variety of helpful publications. Topics include caring for historic homes, floor covering for historic buildings, historic lighting, historic paint colors, repairing old windows, historic fabrics and historic wallpaper. Titles include:
  - The New Old House Starter Kit.
  - Fabrics for Historic Buildings: A Guide to selecting Reproduction Fabrics
  - Floor Coverings for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproductions
  - Walls and Molding: How to Care for Old and Historic Wood and Plaster
  - Paint in America: The Colors of Historic Buildings
  - Housekeeping for Historic Homes and House Museums

The publishing firm Wiley carries many books related to architecture, preservation, and interior design. They also carry a selection of books which were published by the National Trust prior to 1995. Please visit <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-2449.html> to find titles such as

- Lighting for Historic Buildings
- Wall Papers for Historic Buildings
- Frank Lloyd Wright Interiors and Furniture
- Color for Interior Architecture

## **OTHER CONTACTS AND RESOURCES**

**American Association for State and Local History**  
(615) 255-2971; [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org)

The American Association for State and Local History is a nonprofit, member organization providing leadership and support to organizations dealing in American history. AASLH publications include topics on identifying American furniture, American architectural style, and caring for antiques and historical collections. The AASLH web site offers information about the organization as well as links to regional, state, and national historic resources, and historical societies in your area.

### **American College of the Building Arts**

[www.buildingartscollege.us](http://www.buildingartscollege.us)

The college is modeled on a European guild system, and offers students intensive training in the lucrative fields of building arts. The college can be a resource for finding experts in the architectural metal, architectural stone, carpentry, masonry, plastering and timber framing trades.

### **American Bungalow Magazine**

[www.ambungalow.com](http://www.ambungalow.com)

The web site for the *American Bungalow Magazine* is a wonderful resource for people who own or are interested in historic bungalows. The site offers tips on restoration and interior design, helps you determine what style a bungalow is, has information on publications, and keeps you up to date on the Arts and Crafts movement.

### **American Institute of Architects**

[www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)

The American Institute of Architects provides information on architects, publishes guidelines to help you verify an architect's and contractor's credentials, and provides publications on restoring your home. The AIA offers technical assistance and educational workshops in the areas of historic preservation.

### **The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works**

[www.aic.stanford.edu](http://www.aic.stanford.edu)

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) is an organization dedicated to the advancement of the profession of conserving cultural property. Their website has many useful resources including information on caring for various historical objects, tips for finding a conservator in your area, conservation workshops, and technical assistance.

### **The American Society of Interior Designers**

[www.asid.org](http://www.asid.org)

The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) has several design resources listed on their website which can help you locate local designers, color palettes and product suppliers. They also have links to other organizations and design directories.

### **Arts and Crafts Society**

<http://arts-crafts.com>

The Arts and Crafts Society's online marketplace is a virtual home for the arts and crafts movement. The site contains information on companies in architecture, design, antiques, restoration products and services, wall paper, furniture, metalwork, lighting, textiles and more; there is also links to other preservation related sites, and publications on architecture, interiors, furniture, glass and lighting, and metalwork.

### **Association for Preservation Technology International**

[www.apti.org](http://www.apti.org)

The Association for Preservation Technology International provides information and services to professionals working in the area of preservation technology. Membership to APTI includes access to an international network as well as up-to-date information on preservation technology. APTI also offers publications on preservation technology, an annual conference, a directory of APTI members, and a professional journal.

**Community Revitalization Training Center (CRTC)**

<http://crtc.com>

CRTC is a national training and technical assistance center for housing rehabilitation and community development professionals. Current sessions include topics such as construction management, codes and standards, and hazards of lead-based paint.

**Daughters of the American Revolution Museum**

<http://www.dar.org/museum/default.cfm>

The Daughters of the American Revolution Museum is the largest Decorative Arts museum in the United States. Their exhibits include historic furniture, textiles and glass works along with other household items. The museum's website includes resources for taking care of your antiques.

**Ian Evan's World of Old Houses**

[www.oldhouses.com.au](http://www.oldhouses.com.au)

Ian Evan's world of old houses is an online guide to caring for and restoring old homes. The web site contains preservation product directories for the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. There are also sections for frequently asked restoration questions, essays about preservation technology, and technical tips.

**The Interactive Old House Network**

[www.oldhouse.com](http://www.oldhouse.com)

The Interactive Old House Network offers historic homeowners a place to buy and sell historic properties, antiques, and historic hardware; find companies which specialize in historic preservation, building technology, or supply restoration materials; and ask other historic homeowners questions about their restoration projects.

**Historic Lighthouse Preservation**

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/Legacy/Lighthouse/lh13.html#H>

This webpage is a descriptive summary of the interiors of lighthouses. It includes pictures, examples, and conservation techniques.

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

[www.metmuseum.org/visitor/index.asp](http://www.metmuseum.org/visitor/index.asp)

The collection of American decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum extends in date from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century and includes approximately 12,000 examples of furniture, silver, glass, pewter, ceramics, and textiles. Present in the collection are objects made on American soil

from the early colonial period, reflecting the settlers' keen desire to reproduce as faithfully as possible the material world they had left behind.

### **Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts**

<http://www.oldsalem.org/about/mesda.htm>

The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) is the only museum dedicated to exhibiting and researching the regional decorative arts of the early South. With its 24 period rooms and seven galleries, MESDA showcases the furniture, paintings, textiles, ceramics, silver, and other metalwares made and used in Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee through 1820. The Research Center and Library are open to scholars and researchers. Inquiries can also be e-mailed to [research@oldsalem.org](mailto:research@oldsalem.org).

### **National Park Service - Technical Preservation Services**

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

As mentioned earlier, the National Park Service is an excellent resource. Free publications, known as Preservation Briefs, are available on line at the website listed above. Titles include:

- Preservation Brief #9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
- Preservation Brief #18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings
- Preservation Brief #28: Painting Historic Interiors
- Preservation Brief #34: Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors

### **National Park Service - Division of Historic Furnishings**

<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/furnish/index.htm>

The DHF researches and documents the historical appearance of houses, shops, ships, military barracks, courtrooms, taverns, and other structures in the National Park System

### **National Park Service - National Center for Preservation Technology and Training**

[www.ncptt.nps.gov](http://www.ncptt.nps.gov)

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training works with organizations and institutions to advance preservation technology and conservation. NCPTT provides research, training, and education for preservation professionals.

### **National Preservation Institute**

[www.npi.org](http://www.npi.org)

The National Preservation Institute is a nonprofit organization providing specialized information, education, and professional training in the field of preservation technology. NPI offers technical assistance to owners of historic properties, particularly corporations and public agencies, and works with manufactures to authenticate and reproduce materials for historic architectural preservation projects.

### **Old House Interiors**

[www.oldhouseinteriors.com](http://www.oldhouseinteriors.com)

Old House Interiors is a journal, design center, and sourcebook with period-inspired design and home products.

### **Old House Journal**

[www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com)

The web site for the *Old House Journal* provides information on the magazine, allows you to view their classified section, presents information on new preservation related products, as well as tips for historic building preservation. You can also see historic house plans, visit the journal's publication store, and post preservation-related questions on a bulletin board. Old House Journal's **Find-A-Pro** area of their website will help you locate a local architect, contractor, or lender for your restoration project. The **Restoration Directory** webpages list preservation and building products and services from over 1900 companies across the country. The printed version of this directory can also be purchased at bookstores, or by calling their bookstore at 1-800-931-2931.

### **The Old House Web**

[www.oldhouseweb.com](http://www.oldhouseweb.com)

The Old House Web contains reviews of new restoration products, lists historic hardware suppliers, and offers tips on financial assistance, technical problems, and historic gardening.

### **“This Old House”**

[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) (look up This Old House under the programs A-Z section)

This is the web site for the well known restoration show "This Old House." The site contains articles from *This Old House* magazine, discusses topics recently aired on the program, and has a resource directory for supplies and tools used on the show.

### **Olde Good Things**

<http://www.oldegoodthings.com/>

The company has an online store of antique and salvaged items and also has storerooms in New York, Los Angeles and Scranton, PA.

### **Preservation Resource Group**

[www.PRGinc.com](http://www.PRGinc.com)

Preservation Resource Group is a mail order company catering to preservationists. Preservation Resources provides publications on architecture, preservation, conservation, inspection, interiors, maintenance, masonry and stone, metalwork, wood and rehabilitation. Also available through their catalog are tools and preservation products. To order a catalog, call (301) 309-2222 or visit their web site.

### **Preservation Trades Network**

[www.ptn.org](http://www.ptn.org)

The Preservation Trades Network provides the opportunity for both experienced and novice members of the preservation trades community to share information. PTN sponsors an annual conference which includes sessions on preservation technology.

### **Restoration Trades Exchange**

[www.restorationtrades.com](http://www.restorationtrades.com)

Restoration Trades Network contains a wealth of information on preservation technology including a service directory, bulletin boards, classifieds, job and resume postings, bid invitations, and education resources.

### **Second Chance Inc.**

[www.secondchanceinc.org](http://www.secondchanceinc.org)

Sells just about anything from buildings that have been slated for demolition. Second Chance also runs a training program to teach workers the complexities of piece-by-piece preservation of the past.

### **The Smithsonian Institution**

[www.si.edu](http://www.si.edu)

The Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Library contains 55,000 volumes which document and support the Museum's collection of 250,000 objects in decorative arts including textiles, wall coverings, metalwork, furniture, ceramics, glass, jewelry, and prints and drawings.

### **Society of Architectural Historians**

[www.sah.org](http://www.sah.org)

The Society of Architectural Historians promotes research and preservation of historic American architecture. The SAH is a good place to contact to find out information about the historic architecture in your area and about architects who have experience working on historic properties. Call the Chicago office or visit the SAH web site for the address of the SAH chapter covering your state.

### ***Traditional Building Magazine*/Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference**

[www.traditional-building.com](http://www.traditional-building.com)

The Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference includes seminars and workshops in preservation technology. *Traditional Building* magazine is a resource for historic products. The magazine was designed for those involved with restoring old buildings and who are looking for historic products. One of the highlights of the magazine is its product reports that contain information about a specific product, its suppliers, pictures of that product, and guidelines for determining its quality. Their website contains information on the magazine including an online directory of product suppliers, a product database, online articles and product reports.

### **The Victorian Society in America**

<http://www.victoriansociety.org/about.htm>

The Victorian Society in America is a national non-profit organization committed to the preservation and protection of nineteenth-century heritage and historic buildings. The site offers information about publications, resources, summer schools, symposia, and architectural study tours devoted to fostering education and appreciation of Victorian heritage.

## Winterthur

[www.winterthur.org](http://www.winterthur.org)

Winterthur, an American country estate, is the former home of Henry Francis du Pont. Today Winterthur is home to 85,000 objects made or used in America between 1640 and 1860, displayed in 175 period rooms.

**This is one of several information sheets on preservation related topics available from the National Trust's Resource Center. For a complete list of information sheets available, please send an email to [feedback@nationaltrust.org](mailto:feedback@nationaltrust.org). Related topics include:**

**Information sheet #1 – Historic Homes**  
**Information sheet #2 – Historic Buildings**  
**Information sheet #5 – The National Register of Historic Places**  
**Information sheet #7 – Plaques for Historic Buildings and Homes**  
**Information sheet #33 – Information for Realtors**  
**Information sheet #43 – Historic Mail Order Homes and Barns**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides this list of resources solely for informational and educational purposes. This is not intended as a specific recommendation or endorsement of any particular product, organization or entity.

