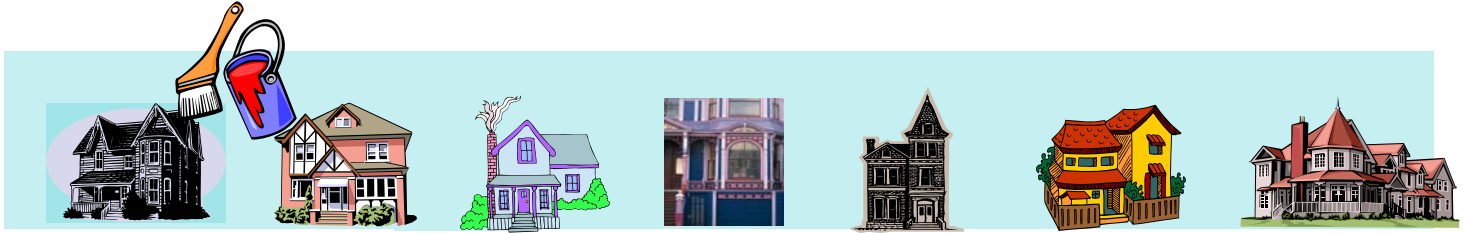


# Vintage Home renovation tips column *by Marjorie Lewis*



Volume 8 September 2008

## Win a prize! Details on back

### How to Choose Paint Colors and Their Arrangement Appropriate for the Style of your Home

I have been asked by many clients over the years "What color do you think I should paint my vintage home AND should I use more than 2 colors?" It was a question that was poised to me again last month—so I thought it might be of interest to make this the topic for my latest renovation tips newsletter. **Indeed, the relationship between architectural style and paint color can be confusing.** After all, you are not painting a basic tract home. Understanding the style of your house, the paint colors and technology available during different historical periods, and how colors influence each other are helpful steps in choosing colors that are appropriate for the architectural style of your home and what will work well together. Often the placement of paint colors on a building is more critical to conveying the original sense of it's design.

### The 3 color application

Nearly all 19th and 20th century houses were to be **Painted in three colors**; 1) the main body of the house, 2) the trim color, used on all the decorative woodwork and 3) the sash and door colors, used only on the moveable parts of the windows and doors. Sashes and doors, which recess into the building, provide a psychological sense as well as an actual means of entry into the building. For most of the 19th-century, sashes and doors were painted in deep colors that drew the eye into the building. reinforced perception of depth.

**One exception to using this 3 color paint scheme is on Spanish Style homes (typical is one body color and one trim color)**

### The Use of Multiple Body Colors

A house that has more than one major sheathing or siding material can have two body colors. **A change in the major siding material indicates the original designer's intent for a change in color as well.** A good example are Queen Anne and Princess Anne houses where a ground floor is sheathed in clapboards and the upper stories, gables or running bands are fish scaled shingled. Wherever the second siding material appears, it is painted in the second body color; the use of the second body color then becomes the identifying characteristic of



that material, building a "theme" that will ensure a consistent visual organization to the paint scheme as a whole. When two body colors are used, the trim color remains the same throughout.

**An exception to the use of a second body color** is where the secondary sheathing material does not completely encircle the building or is not itself completely encircled with trim.

### The Use of Accent Colors

As in the use of a second body color, the key to successful use of accent colors is their consistent application. Randomly painting details in a bright or contrasting accent color creates confusion rather than whimsy. Accent col-

ors can enhance unique detailing when used correctly **but consider the features of the building that are truly unique and worth calling attention to: sunbursts in pediments, the mouldings framing the panels of a bay, or other ornament applied on top of, projecting from, or recessed within the main surface of the trim.**



Try to focus the accent color on a moulding that circles the building completely, such as the band moulding that covers the joint between the fascia and soffit at the eaves of the roof, then apply the accent color to that moulding everywhere it appears on the house, including, for example, secondary rooflines on bays and porches.

Avoid accenting standard components of the building such as gutters and porch floors, as it can create confusion and reduces the visual impact the accent color was intended to offer. Also, the band mouldings that may be found on window casings will only be on three sides of the window: the mouldings stop at the sill. Accenting these band mouldings is often suggested by painting contractors but can result in an incomplete "frame" of color around the window.

Ask the painter (or yourself) to add the accent color after the main body and trim painting is complete, and then proceed cautiously once you have identified the elements to be accented.

### Choice of Colors

The style of Architecture of your home should be taken in to consideration when choosing paint colors. It is also important to consider the roof color to harmonize with paint color and your paint color to not clash excessively with your neighborhood. Historically the following colors were used on:

**Craftsman Exteriors:** Natural colors were used to complement the Arts and Crafts Style. Homes were designed and built to look as if they were in harmony with the environment. Forest greens, moss, earthy browns, taupes, and mineral reds are good paint color choices for these homes to blend naturally with their earthly surroundings

**Victorian Exteriors:** The Victorian styles are not confined to a single design influence, but an eclectic blend of styles, including Elizabethan, Classical Greek, Gothic, Queen Anne, American Four Square or Classic Box style. Although the brightly colored Victorians in San Francisco, called "Painted Ladies" are sometimes associated with the colors Victorians used, that is not the case. In Victorian times, natural earth tones were also used; common were shades of green, brown, red and mustard.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS: VICTORIAN EXTERIOR DECORATION** by: Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler AND **BUNGALOW COLORS EXTERIORS** by Robert Schweitzer

References: Excerpts taken from *Painting Historic Exteriors: Colors, Application, and Regulation*, Chapter II, pp. 1-3.

*Behr paint & Sherwin Williams historic color website*

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# Old house repair tip newsletter

Newsletter for vintage homeowners

Vol. 8, September 2008

**Marjorie Lewis**

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ment of exterior**

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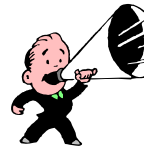
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