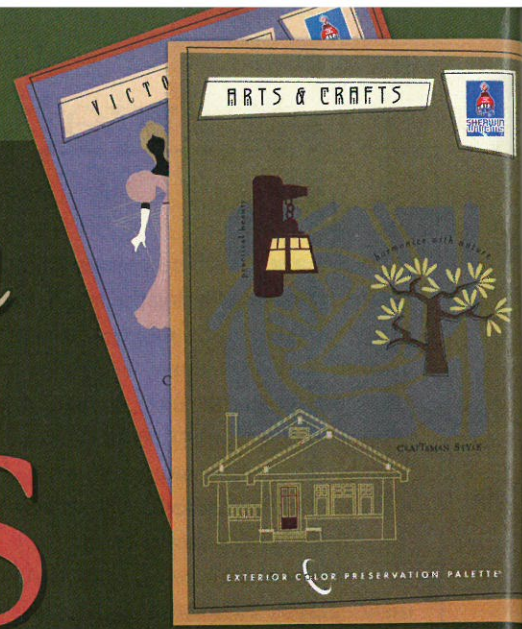


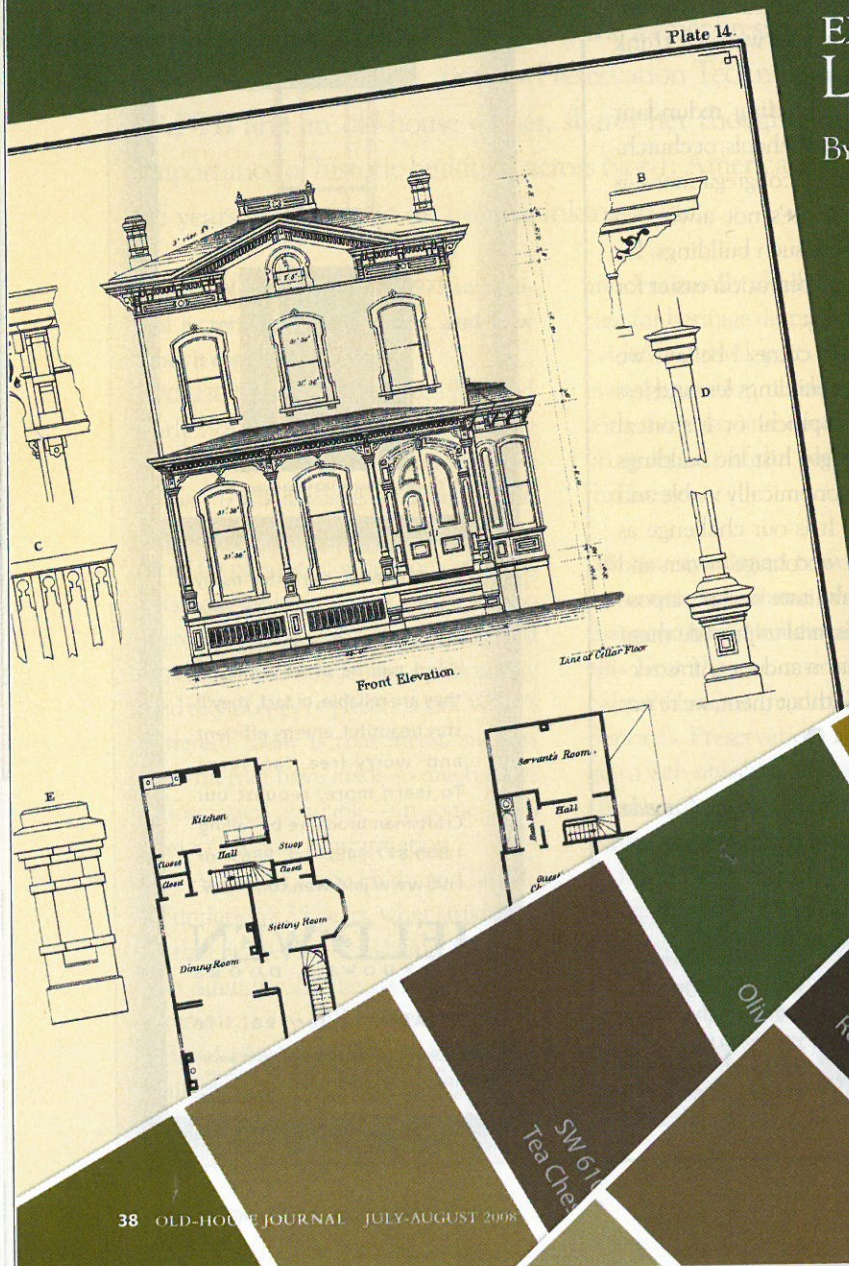
Living Life in Colors



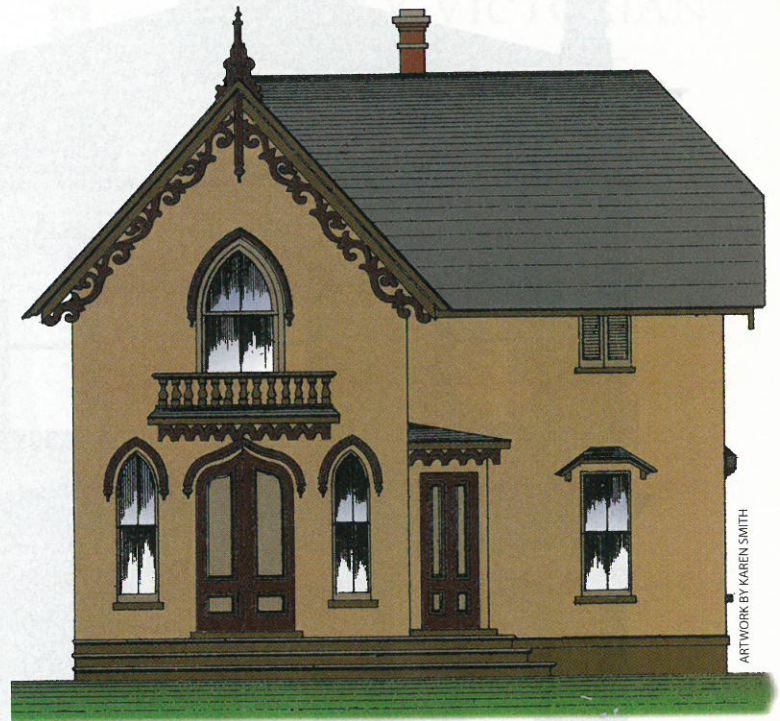
INTIMIDATED BY SELECTING EXTERIOR PAINT COLORS? LEARN HOW TO TAKE CONTROL.

By JOHN CROSBY FREEMAN

I'll never forget the lady who faced the great wall of color chips in her home center for the first time and wailed, "Oh my gosh! Where do I begin?" She was stymied by sensory overload, a condition I call "color intimidation." I'm convinced that most Americans aren't afraid of colors; they're discouraged by the process of selecting a personally pleasing body color and appropriate contrasting colors for trim and accents.

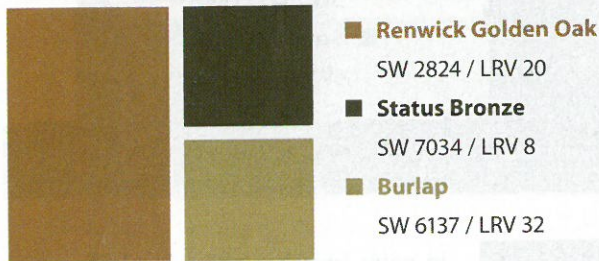


The six era-appropriate color schemes on the following pages, suitable to a variety of architectural styles, were dreamed up by our color expert using Sherwin-Williams' Preservation Palette.



ARTWORK BY KAREN SMITH

ORNAMENTAL COTTAGE



But with a little study of color relationships, you can approach your exterior decoration with confidence. The cure for color intimidation is to focus on the colors you like, and ignore the ones that distract and disturb you. Group your colors in complementary pairs—one from the warm (or red-yellow) side of the spectrum with another from the cool (or green-blue) side. Arrange each side vertically from light to dark according to the light reflectance value (LRV) of each color, which will be listed as a percentage on a color strip or in the index of a fandeck. Dark colors will have lower LRV numbers because they reflect less light. When it comes to the holy trinity of exterior colors—body,

GOTHIC REVIVAL



trim, and accent—LRV will help you separate dark accents from lighter trim and body colors.

My general sense of appropriate light reflectance values for exterior colors came in handy when I isolated 60 exterior colors in *The Painter's Hand-Book*, an 1887 book written by the secretary of The Master House Painters' Association (a trade-organization ancestor of today's Painting and Decorating Contractors of America). The book's 116 chromo-lithographed color samples didn't distinguish exterior and interior colors, because Victorian master painters would have known the difference.

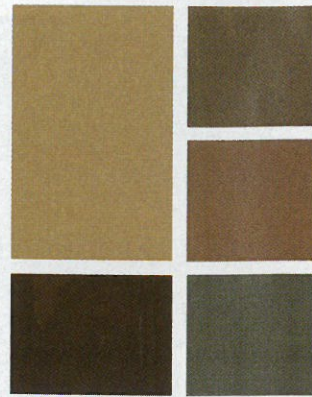
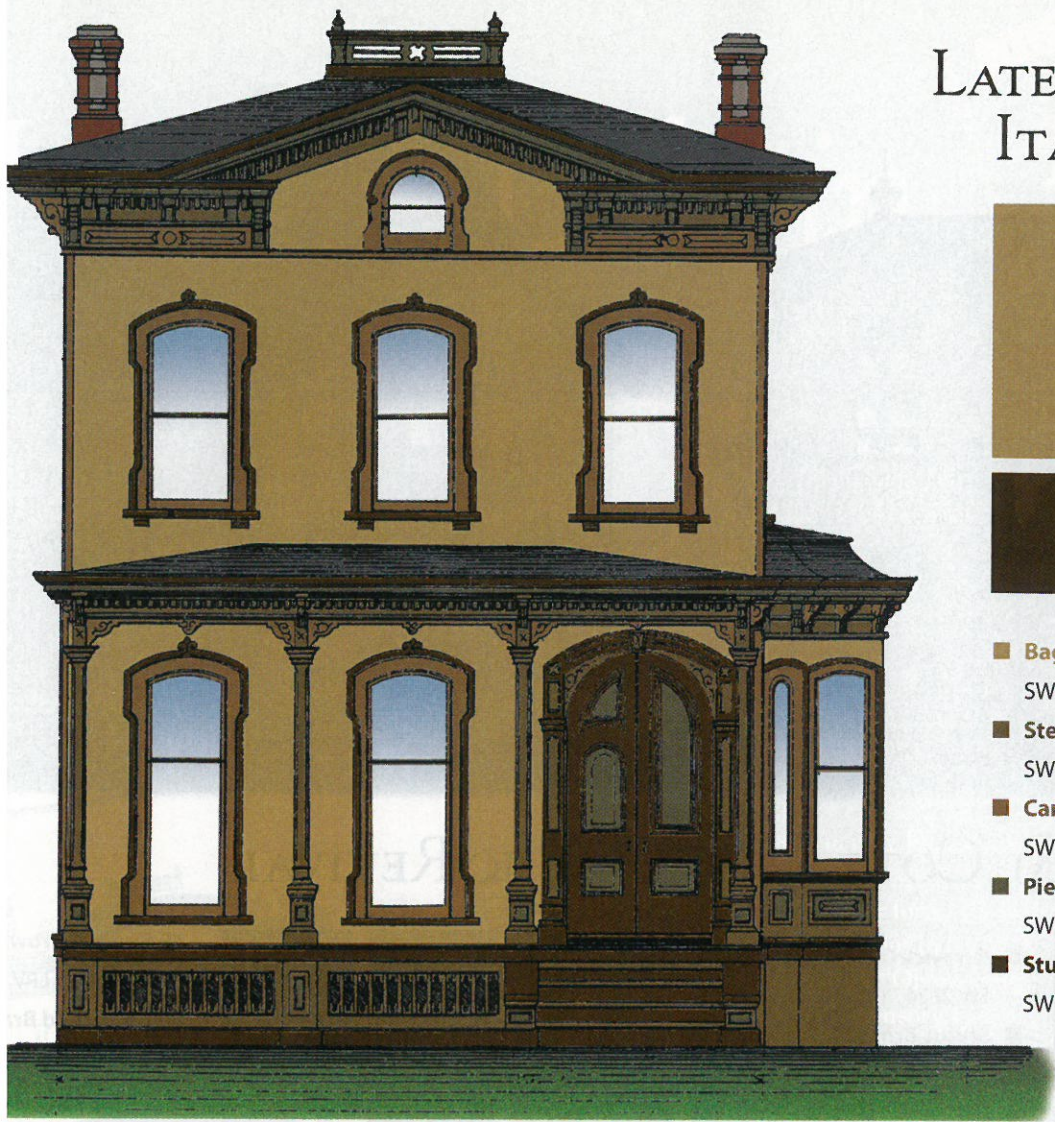
The big payoff came when I found these same 60 colors

Light Reflectance Value (LRV)

A color's LRV tells you how much useful light is reflected. The higher the LRV number, the lighter the color.



LATE VICTORIAN ITALIANATE



- **Baguette**
SW 6123 / LRV 32
- **Steady Brown**
SW 6110 / LRV 17
- **Cardboard**
SW 6124 / LRV 22
- **Pier**
SW 7545 / LRV 11
- **Sturdy Brown**
SW 6097 / LRV 8

Color TIP

Wisdom of the Ages

The Painter's Hand-Book was prophetic when its author, B.S. Mills, wrote, "A number of works are published with the object of informing the public how to color houses just right." Thankfully, he continues, "I get confused at the multitude of good counsel. I shall not attempt to add to this confusion." Instead, Mills put forth some "general principles" for capturing the quintessence of architectural color selections. Here are a few that are still every bit as helpful today:

- Get *en rapport* with the architect of the house, if possible, and aid in bringing out his idea with colors. If it's a plain, substantial house, paint it with good, substantial-looking colors, also paying respect to its surroundings.
- Gothic, Swiss, and other houses of that [ornamental] character allow a greater display of taste and stronger effect, while the Queen Anne style gives opportunities for stronger effects still.
- If you select a palette from some other house, don't be surprised if it looks very different on your own, due to the differences in style, aspect, and surrounding.
- Some of these colors (remember, there are 116 of them) may not be considered very pretty, but there are no ugly colors if rightly placed. The art is in combining them to bring out their beauty.

in paint swatches at my local Sherwin-Williams store. Having previously divided the 60 exterior colors into body, trim, and accent categories, I discovered that traditional body colors tend to be in the range of 20 to 40 percent LRV, trim colors 10 to 20 percent, and accent colors 10 percent or less. (Another option is to reverse the usual body-trim relationship and select a body color in the 10- to 20-percent range, trimming it out with a color in the 20- to 40-percent range.) These LRV ranges can help you sort out and take control of your exterior color choices. It's also helpful to know that most traditional exterior colors emulate traditional building materials, such as stone, brick, tile, stucco, weathered shingles, old copper, bronze, and exposed timbers.

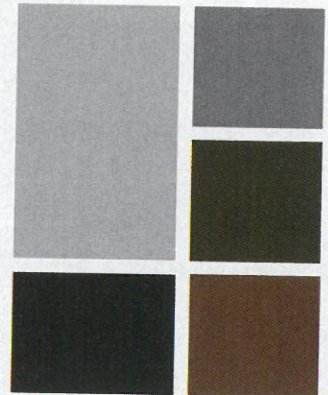
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EARLY VICTORIAN ITALIANATE



- **Proper Gray**
SW 6003 / LRV 41
- **Mink**
SW 6004 / LRV 20
- **Rookwood Dark Brown**
SW 2808 / LRV 7
- **Quartersawn Oak**
SW 2836 / LRV 14
- **Bitter Chocolate**
SW 6013 / LRV 6

Be a Master Painter Colorist

The Painters' Hand-Book listed the pigments for each color's formula in descending order. For example, light russet (akin to Rookwood Antique Gold in the Sherwin-Williams Preservation Palette) is made up of white, orange chrome, Venetian red, and black. Master painters 130 years ago would adjust these formulations, and alter their LRV, as required by the job site. Today, being a master painter colorist is much easier. Each of the 60 exterior colors in a Sherwin-Williams selector is surrounded by alternatives. On a color strip, each shade is like a color note on a scale, with lighter tints above and darker ones below. Adjacent color strips show related analogous colors.

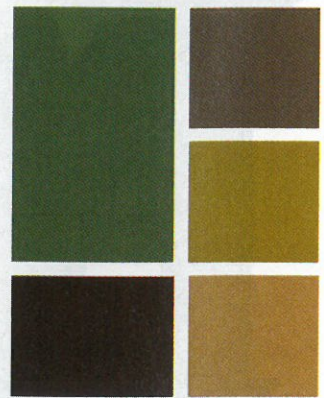
When it comes to applying color, I prefer options to imperatives. I question, for example, the logic of painting doors and shutters the same accent color. Doors and window shutters have different functions, so they don't need to be the same color. Door casings might be painted to match the porch floor, serving as a bridge between the rich, dark door color and the much lighter wall color. Paneled shutters might tolerate their own color trinity for the body

panel, framing trim, and molding accent. Victorian ornamentalized windows might be defined by different colors on the sash, casing, moldings, lintel, window cap, and sill. If you have a porch, its cornice might be distinguished from the cornice on the roofline of the house by a different color scheme. Soffits might be painted a lighter color, especially if the overhang is deep. Recessed faces of compound brackets might be accented with a lighter trim color. Porches are good candidates for special colors on both the ceilings and floors. I recommend limiting yourself to no more than seven or eight colors, including such given colors as an asphalt roof and masonry walls; however, you can create the illusion of extra trim or accent colors by placing them in the context of different color combinations.

Punctuate Your House with Colors

Despite the late-20th century Victorian Revival and its multi-colored houses, our historic birthright to living life in exterior colors has vanished in former cornfields planted with subdivisions clad in boring beige vinyl siding. I'm confident this will

BARBER VILLA #1



- **Olive Grove**
SW 7734 / LRV 20
- **Tea Chest**
SW 6103 / LRV 14
- **Gallant Gold**
SW 6391 / LRV 22
- **Bosc Pear**
SW 6390 / LRV 32
- **French Roast**
SW 6069 / LRV 5

change. It's a longstanding American architectural tradition to modernize old houses with new additions and paint colors. Colonial homes survived with Victorian architectural ornament and additions, and the lives of early Victorian homes were extended by late Victorian color schemes. During the 20th century, lashings of white paint obscured the ornamental sting of late Victorian homes and made them appear more Colonial. Eventually, those vinylized bruises on the landscape (which I like to call "homa-tomas") will be updated with less boring paint colors.

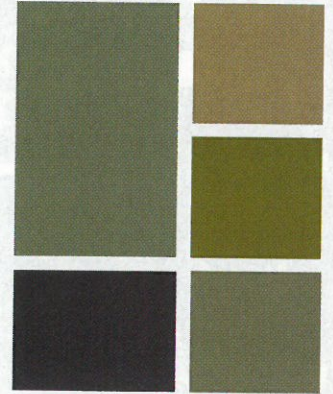
The traditional function of exterior paint is to serve architecture, not be its master. Follow the advice of *The Painter's Handbook* (see "Wisdom of the Ages," page 40) and "get *en rapport* with the architect of the house and aid in bringing out his idea with colors." This doesn't have to be complicated if you take the time to absorb the architectural syntax of your

home: the story of its beginning, middle, and end; its structural balance of verticals and horizontals; its rhythm of projections and recesses; the pleasures of its ornaments. When you are ready for showtime, punctuate your syntax with harmonious contrasting colors.

Living your life in exterior colors is all about you and your architecture. If friends, neighbors, and strangers challenge you to defend your color scheme, answer them with the wisdom of that sage of the silver screen, Mae West. She could have been talking about the benefits of architectural color selection and placement when she said, "It's better to be looked over than overlooked." 🏠

John Crosby Freeman is known as The Color Doctor and is a longtime contributor to Old-House Journal. He lives in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and can be reached at www.colordoctorg11.com.

BARBER VILLA #2



- **Roycroft Brass**
SW 2843 / LRV 15
- **Peristyle Brass**
SW 0043 / LRV 33
- **Eminent Bronze**
SW 6412 / LRV 15
- **Artifact**
SW 6138 / LRV 24
- **Best Bronze**
SW 6160 / LRV 9

Color TIP

What's in a Name?

Shades and Tints: Names or Numbers? is the title of a rare 1899 Sherwin-Williams booklet defending the company's refusal, at the time, to name exterior paint colors.

"No two people have exactly the same ideas as to the proper names to be applied to many shades," the booklet explained. So instead, the company numbered its colors. Two indexes link these numbered colors with their commonly associated names through the years. For example, consider SWP 485. It could be called 12 names, not including its master painter color name, Russian Grey. It became Warm Drab when Sherwin Williams gave names to SWP colors early in the 20th century. Today, it survives in the Preservation Palette as SW 2827, Colonial Revival Stone. Avoid the morass of color names by concentrating on what a color is and ask, "Does it work for me?" Clarify your perception of a color by revisiting the language of your childhood box of crayons. For example, ask, "Is this color a yellow-green, or a green-yellow?" This will aid your awareness of the color's undertones, and help you select harmonious contrasting colors.

