

Fancy finishes work all around the house

There was a time when home decorating meant picking out a paint or wallpaper, and finding a good match for the trim colour.

These days walls and trims, furniture and floors can take on any one of dozens of faux finishes and decorative painting techniques.

Colour washing, wood wash, decoupage and crackle glaze are just some techniques which

can turn an ordinary room into a nostalgic retreat or an exotic sanctuary. There's no great cost involved and the work can be carried out with a minimum of fuss.

If you've just moved into a new home, give yourself some time to settle in before you start experimenting with glazes and sponges, feathers and plastic bags — items which can all be used in inventive paint jobs.

Watch the light in the rooms during the day to see if a particular spot might highlight a faux finish. Maybe you'll discover the kitchen's too dark for the colours you had planned, and you'll want to rethink your scheme.

For walls and ceilings, colour washing adds depth and subtlety to paints with a pre-tinted, water-based glaze. It can be applied straight to plaster, even rough plaster, which tends to take the look of the room back a century or two. You can buy ready-mixed colour washes, or make your own.

Wood washes give an old look to new wood, and kitchen cabinets, plate rails, window frames and new and used furniture take the treatment well.

Verdigris creates a patinated bronze and copper effect and works well on lamps, picture and mirror frames, and other knick-knacks. Faux marble and granite finished can do wonders for fireplaces and mantelpieces, dresser and chest tops.

Create what looks like a cracked, worn surface with crackle glaze. Small items like jewellery boxes can be given a novel new look, and decorating something that size lets you practise before you move on to bigger pieces like dressers.

In the 18th century, a popular past time was decoupage, or cutting out motifs to decorate furniture. Today, pieces can be cut from left-over wallpaper, old borders and even magazines and picture books. These pieces can then be used to decorate everything from window frames and light fixtures to flower pots and chests of drawers.

Vines and flowers can trail elegantly down a

door frame, or individual figures cut from wallpaper designed for a child's room can become part of a mural.

Sponging adds depth to paint colour through a layering process and gives a soft, attractive finish. The walls should be painted with latex if you want to sponge on latex, or with an oil-based matte eggshell if you want to sponge in a glaze or an oil-based paint. Besides using sponges to put on or take off colour, you can use soft cloths, plastic bags and stipple brushes, to name a few, for different effects.

Stencilling is another way to add decoration to a plain paint finish. You must use materials with the right consistency for a successful job. Anything too thick, thin or slow drying will tend to ooze under the stencil frame, or start to spread when the stencil is removed. Natural wood, wood finished with a water- or oil-based eggshell paint or a matter varnish should take stencilling well.

Decorating options these days are as limitless as the imagination. There are many good books and magazines available in stores and libraries, and classes can give you hands-on experience. Some home decorating stores also make video presentations of various techniques.

This article is provided by local Realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

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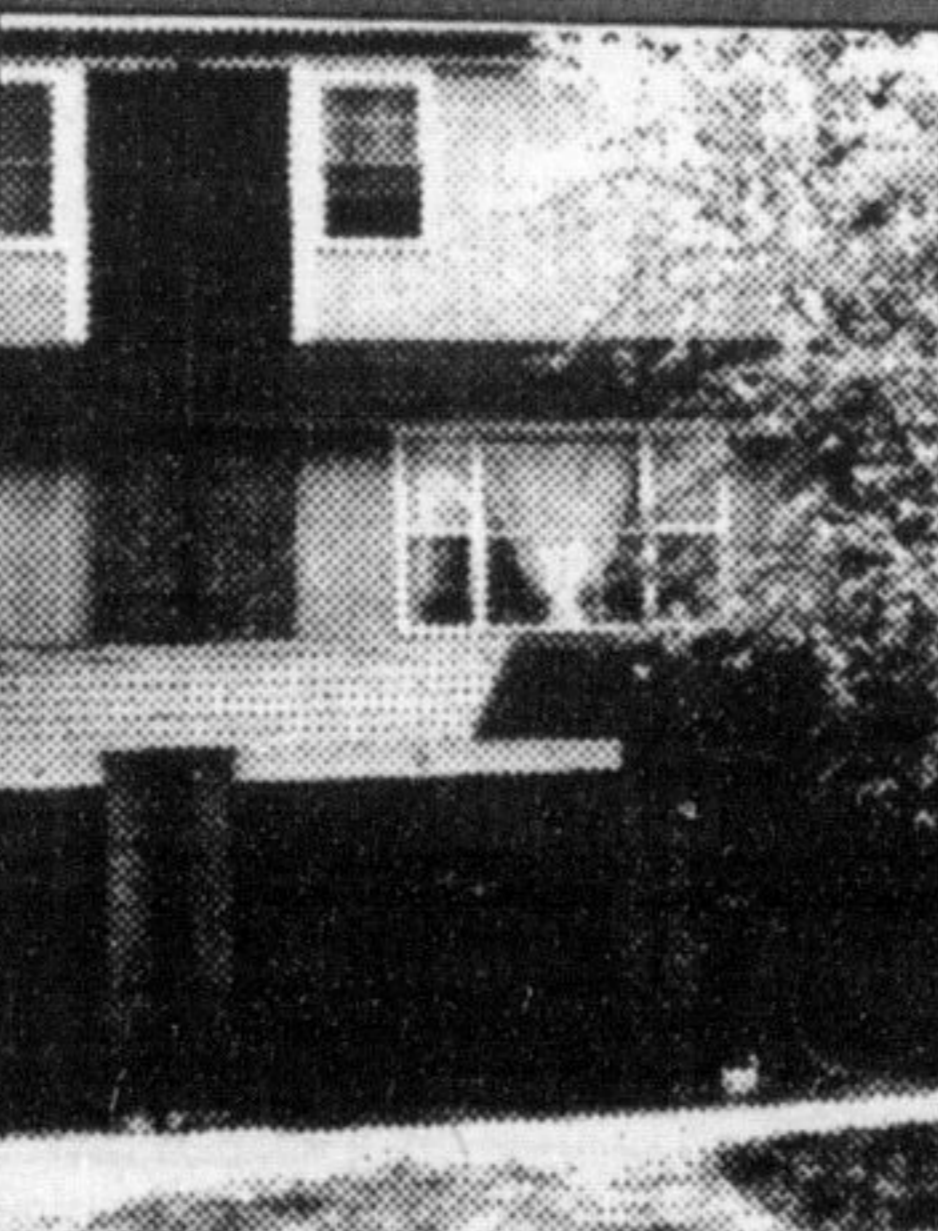
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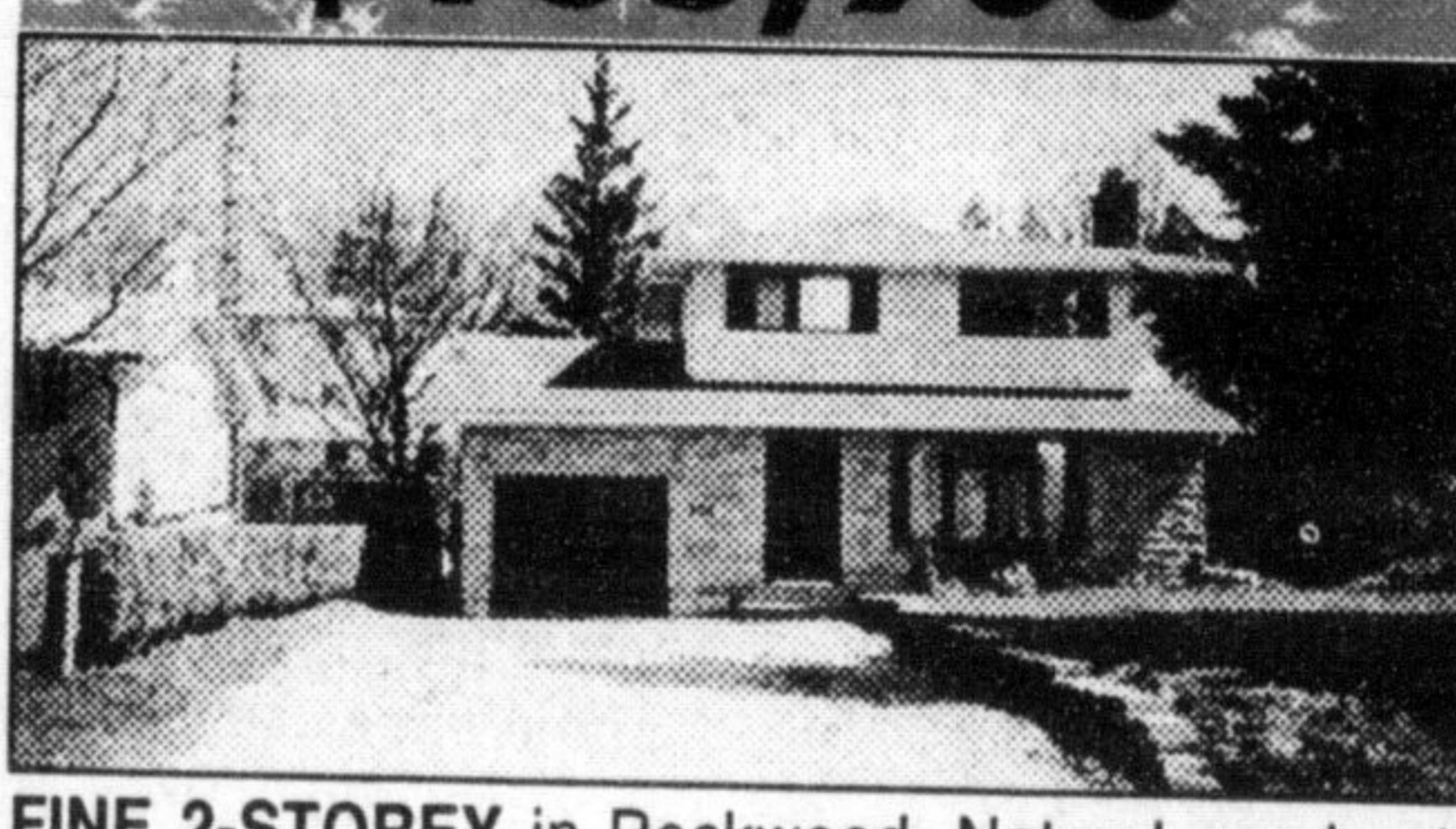
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