



## PLEASANT HOMES

by Elizabeth MacRea Boykin

MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING VIA THE WAY OF A LADY WITH A CAN OF PAINT.

A Paint Brush and an Old Piece of Furniture Makes an Artist out of any Lady with a House—Suggestions for Doing Over Old Furniture—Some Ideas About Colours and Decorations.



A charming room for a young girl is this one in an attic with sloping ceiling, sprigged wall paper and furniture painted in pale apple green with flower decoration. This room was designed by Elizabeth Peacock, who is very clever about decorations for both furniture and door panels.

Fine feathers may not make fine birds, but a good job of painting can go a long way toward making an ugly piece of furniture into a star. All painted furniture need not be reserved for informal or peasant rooms either. Remember that many types of quite fine 18th century French and English furniture were painted as well as the very grandest of the Venetian pieces. However, for practical purposes, it's just as well to stay to the less formal types of painted furniture till you're a real expert at the job.

Painted pieces for the pleasantly informal and typically American home are charming accents that add "decorator touches" to many an otherwise nondescript room. They have a distinguished heritage, too. When furniture had to be made of necessity of the more common woods and without fine inlay or skilled cabinet finish, people took to painting their own colorful designs on their beds and tables and chairs to add zest to unpretentious cottages and homely roof-trees. So de-

veloped the peasant and provincial feeling in painted furniture—French, Mexican, Swedish, Swiss, Tyrolean, Dutch. Not to mention the carry-overs into our own colonial furniture, such as the Hitchcock chair with its stencilled decoration, the Pennsylvania Dutch marriage chest, the California painted cabinets and chairs.

This universal urge to make something out of nothing which prompted these early homemakers to take up their brushes for better or worse still keeps us at it to this day. Only we have far more sources to draw on than ladies with paint brushes in other days. For we have access to all the different peasant design sources and can copy our motifs as we will.

So if you like to "fool around" with paint and brushes, look up at the library the type of painted furniture you want to have, then follow your style sources. Keep mindful of the fact that there's a big difference between painting and daubing. An awful lot of amateur jobs are nothing more or less

than smears—and yet it is quite possible to have a trim neat job if you take pains about it.

As to colors, ponder ponderously. If your room is toned down or drab in coloring anyway, don't have primary or clear tones in your painted things. The more mellowed shades in paint will brighten the room without making the old things look dingy by contrast. Greyed-greens and dusty peach tones are very smart in painted furniture. So are pink-beiges, antiqued powder blues and dull old reds.

On the other hand, if the rest of the room can stand it, the clear incisive paint colours have a crisp fresh charm not to be equalled by the greyed casts. And as a rule, if you're striving for the peasant effect, the very bright clear colours are more authentic. For the very average type of room, such colours as henna, delit blue, jade, grey and Mandarin red are usable colors. Don't forget that a very modern room can be successfully but inexpensively achieved by the use of simple pieces

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painted subtly.

When all's said and done, nothing is nicer than flower decorations on painted furniture. These can range from the very dainty feminine florals painted on white or pastel painted surfaces to the dashing modern effects. Often you can get very pretty decalcomania motifs to transfer on your furniture, or here too you can resort to tracing. Or you'll be surprised what versatile effects you can get with wall paper pasted on furniture and shellacked over. Borders are pretty to outline the

drawer panels, or bouquets cut out and pasted on the centres of the drawers are decorative.

The informality of Colonial backgrounds will accept painted pieces with graciousness. There are, of course, the Hitchcock type of painted rockers, straight chairs and settees, very fine copies of which can be bought today at prices within the bounds of reason. If you own some originals which have been pretty badly stayed with through the years, you may restore them if you're clever that way. Or some job

design, and interior of cupboard painted a tone to harmonize with one of the brighter colours in the stencilled design.

But it's in the kitchen that you can really go to town with paint. How about having Swedish peasant figures in clear blue and lemon yellow on white walls, then repeat the figures on the doors of the cabinets? White breakfast nook with top of table and seats of benches or chairs painted lemon yellow. Blue straight curtains at the windows. And if possible, a scalloped tin hood over the stove!

But a Pennsylvania Dutch kitchen would be a real joy. Have stylized tulips in red and blue as a border for the white walls and paint the ceiling delft blue. Blue calico curtains of course, a Hitchcock rocker near the breakfast alcove, rush-bottom chairs for the breakfast alcove painted blue with tulip design repeated on chair-backs. Blue breakfast table. And, if possible, a row of copper pots prominently hanging on one wall.

French provincial kitchens have their own hearty charm. Grey walls with red and white gingham curtains, for instance, and chairs painted grey with red flowers for decoration would be a nice version of this.

For bedrooms, painted pieces score again. At foot of bed a chest will hold extra blankets. At mid-afternoon a painted rocker will rest a tired back. For household accounts a French painted desk will give a lady a sanctuary away from the bustle of the household traffic. Instead of the almost inevitable slipper chair, a pair of straight chairs painted to harmonize with the decorative scheme of the room could be placed near "His" and "Her" closet in a master bedroom.

For children's rooms there is practically no limit to the possibilities of painted furniture. We know one little

boy whose mother is tracing cowboy and Indian motifs on his furniture to paint in Western colours. The furniture itself is enamelled in a light sky blue against which those pioneer symbols stand out brightly. And another little boy is having his furniture painted with his favourites in the animal kingdom, traced from simple picture books. A little girl we think the world of has her beloved "Heide" traced and painted on her furniture, and another has Uncle Remus decorations wandering over the drawer fronts. Remember that, by relying on the tried and true method of tracing, there's almost no limit to where your artistic ambitions can take you!

We have two bulletins that you might find useful if you have furniture painting on your mind and conscience. One is "How to Paint Furniture", and the other is "Designs for Painted Furniture Decoration", which has peasant motifs you can trace. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope and state which bulletin you wish.

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### ONIONS

(Toronto Telegram)

Man accused of onion theft pleaded guilty. Probably with tears in his eyes. Some steal onions. John L. Lewis is accused of stealing unions.

Years ago, onion thieves were given one penalty only—the stake.

Sault Daily Star:—One section of the annual fair at the Garden River reserve of the Ojibway Indians which always attracts the attention of visitors is the arts and handicrafts department. Some remarkable work is shown there, demonstrating that these native Algoma crafts are well worth preserving.



A chest of this type is very effective with a painted wavy outline for drawer fronts and cabinet doors with a modernized peasant design in the centre, as here shown.

painters will take your old Hitchcock pieces and refinish them so that they look as they did when great-grandmother was a girl. Or, it's fun to buy good unpainted copies of colonial straight chairs, and do your own painting jobs, adding simple designs. You can trace patterns from books in the libraries or from other furniture, make stencils of the patterns and go to work. Do four chairs in different colours—a green-blue, a grey-green, a smoky yellow and a deep rust, using the same stencils on each. Have these four for the bridge table on the sun porch and lend a touch of true Americana to your ultra-modern Contract.

A painted lift-lid chest in front of the fireplace adds an interesting colour note to many a room and makes a grand place to sit and watch the dying embers. A plain pine box may be bought or made with a hinged cover (incidentally the box is a good place to store bridge equipment, or magazines you want to clip later, or Junior's violin music, or the baby's assortment of downstairs toys). Art departments in department stores have attractive stencils for you to use, or you can make your own. A simple ivy pattern around the edges of a pine box painted the Williamsburg red (a deep purple tone) the trailing ivy stems in white and the leaves in dull blue would be interesting in lots of places.

Colonial or provincial dining rooms adapt painted motifs with a grace, consider how a painted chest under a window to hold linens would look. Or add a stencilled design to the doors of your corner cupboards (stylized fruits and flowers and leaves are good here). Try a jolly border painted around that old fashioned plate rail that you've been wondering what to do with. Border stencils are often available in the large department stores, and you could repeat your plate rail border on wooden valances over the windows, then hang simple, peasant cloth curtains at the windows.

But what's the best solution of what to do with the old time sideboard that's not old enough to be "antique" but is old enough to belong to the golden oak and mission periods? We've liked the Mexicanization of these! Several people we know have painted them in Mexican and California colours and decorations. It gives an old dining room a new lease on life. Another suggestion for reviving a tired dining room—maple early American furniture, hooked rugs in bright floral patterns for the floor, dark blue walls, white plate rail and valances with stencilled flowers in reds, blues and greens, white dotted Swiss or sailcloth curtains at window and a white chest repeating the floral design under one window. Corner cupboard white with stencilled



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