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the colors have similar undertones, complement and coordinate? Consider a neutral hue for transitional spaces. I use a medium taupe in the Forsstrom House, as it coordinates with my paint colors and the dark woodwork of the main salon. It has the same muted undertone of my historic colors. For an additional challenge, coordinate with the exterior paint color palette. Don't worry if it takes time, it took me about a year to finalize my color choices.

One option is to determine original colors, which can be done by analyzing paint layers. There are companies that do this, however, it's easier to scrape under a sconce or molding for old colors and wallpapers. Paint with the best approximation of the original color. In the case of the Forsstrom House, this would be a lot of green. The master bedroom is historic green for this reason.

One can choose historically accurate colors for the various styles in the age of the home – colors the owners might have chosen. Many paint companies also have well curated historic color collections, obtained by analysis of paint layers in historic buildings. These colors generally have a logical relationship and complement one another. Benjamin Moore introduced a Historic Color collection in 1976. It is an excellent resource and my “go-to” for colors.

Standardized ready mix paint was not commercially available until 1875. The introduction of standardized colors led to the exuberant Victorian polychrome era. Polychrome means “many colors.” An example is the Victorian “Painted Lady” exterior color scheme. Homeowners could choose from an increasingly sophisticated color palette.

Late Victorian color selection features the contrast of rich shades from opposite sides of the color wheel. One can pair burgundy with green, amber with purple, and blue with coral for good results. Victorians brought many design elements together and layered them. A three-color scheme with a primary, secondary and accent color works well. In Late Victorian homes, public rooms often had darker and more intense colors than private areas, such as bedrooms, which featured lighter colors.

Colonial Revival homes featured lighter colors and painted trim in aged white or ivory. Softer pastel colors and lighter colors were popular as well.

The Craftsman style, which evolved from the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, fea-



For a period look, pair the lighter colors with aged white or ivory trim.

tures autumnal earth tones; ochres, browns, greens, rust, some blues, amber and so on. Natural wood is a defining feature of Craftsman style. Remember, color works best to show off natural or stained woods. Opt for matte finish if possible.

Confused by endless color choices? Consult a colorist or browse online for ideas. Selecting paint from a small color card is difficult. The color depends on lighting, number of coats and finish. Matte finish is the best approximation of the color chip. Buy a paint sample and give it a large test. Paint two thin coats, let it dry completely and live with it. You can then assess the undertone and color in your house.

Choose quality paints that will hold up to wear. Eggshell finish is a good choice for touchable walls. I prefer to use matte for the upper parts of walls and ceilings. It hides plaster imperfections best. Trim needs a touch of soft gloss for wear.

Avoid high gloss in older homes as it can magnify surface problems and look too contemporary. I like to brush with a 2-3 inch angled brush for control and coverage, painting extremely thin and with many coats. Multiple thin coats are better than one thick coat. There are alternative paints for historic preservationists; linseed oil paints, milk paints and lime wash colors for plaster.

Send me pictures of your historic color choices to ForsstromHouse@gmail.com. I would love to see them!

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ABOVE: A Forsstrom House bedroom with stained vertical grain Douglas Fir trim and Craftsman color choices of Louisburg Green HC-113 and Decatur Buff HC-38 from the Benjamin Moore Historic Color Collection.

LEFT: An actual paint color sample from the Victorian period, c. 1871. Victorians loved color!