

Thinking about Buying an Older Home?

Advantages of buying an older home:

1. You can buy a larger home for less money. Generally, there are more square feet for less money than offered in a newer home.
2. An older home has more uniqueness and personality: they are not a new cookie cutter home.
3. Many older homes were built to withstand the test of time.
4. Unlike newer homes, brick is brick, wood is wood. This makes repairing with materials more straight forward than with a newer home.

So let's assume that you are thinking about buying an older home – what's next? The members of the Sioux City Historic Preservation Commission hope you will recapture some of the original character of your home when it was first built.

First you will want to identify the style of your home:

In Sioux City few homes still exist that were built prior to 1885. So your style will be limited to the late Victorian style and other later house styles. The year the house was built will be important. Look at your abstract for the date your house was built.

If this is not available, there are other ways to determine the style of your house:

1. Search the internet for websites providing examples of old house styles.
 - [American Housing Styles](#)
 - [Architecture and Design styles](#)
 - [House Style guide](#)
 - [Housing types and styles](#)
 - [Period home and style guide](#)
2. Books on identifying house styles available at Amazon.com:
 - "A field guide to American Houses" by Virginia & Lee McAlester.
 - "American House Styles: a Concise Guide" by John Milnes Baker, A.I.A.
3. Sioux City Museum's Research Center located in the museum located at 607 4th Street.

Once you know the style, how will this help you? This will help you with appropriate exterior colors, repair of architectural details, both exterior and interior, to achieve the ambiance you based your decision on in purchasing the home in the first place.

Next you will look at the exterior of the home:

You need to establish what the original exterior of the home was made of. Was it wood siding, wood shingles, stucco, brick? What were the architectural details that are there, partially there or missing that needs to be repaired or replaced? What were the original colors of the materials used on the home? Is the foundation and roof in good condition or does it need repair or replacement? Look at the gutter conditions and determine if you are going to use modern gutters or restore back to original gutter style. Look at the windows and see if they are allowing heat to escape to the outside. A sure sign that you have a problem is if the windows are icing up or fogging in cold weather. Hire a person to perform an infrared heat loss test to determine air flow loss around the windows, doors and walls. It would not hurt to have a home energy audit performed by MidAmerican Energy Company.

Painting your home will bring out everyone's opinion. Everyone has their ideas from grandma to the garbage man and they won't be afraid to tell you. Colors bring out a lot of emotions in people unless you paint your home all white.

You may prefer to paint your home in historically appropriate colors rather than historically accurate colors. What this means, is that for historically correct colors, you would have your paint on your house scientifically analyzed by scraping paint off your home down to the original colors. For the historically appropriate colors, you find out what was used for the style of home in the time it was built and choose the colors from that list to paint your home.

Available resources for deciding colors for your home style are in:

Books:

- for the Victorian style home – “Victorian Exterior Decoration: How to Paint Your Nineteenth-Century Home Historically” by Roger Winkler and Gail Caskey Winkler
- another book for the Victorian style home – “American's Painted Ladies” by Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen
- For the Bungalow style home – “Bungalow Colors Exteriors” by Robert Schweitzer
- [Exterior Color Consulting by Robert Schweitzer](#)
- [Cabot Stains](#)



Internet surfing:

In Sioux City for example, Victorian homes for the most part had colors of dark mulberry, ginger, moss green, brick red and buff. For colonial revivals, the colors were mid blues, grays and taupe.

References and companies for repairs of the exterior:

Book – “Old House Dictionary” by Steven J. Phillips

Wood Siding – Lechner Lumber located in Sioux City, IA

Custom Woodworks located in Sioux City, IA

For porch railings – Wood Factory located at 111 Railroad Street, Navasote, TX 77868 (get an architect to draw up your porch design)

For old style gutters, search out:

- [Classic Gutter Systems](#) located at 5621 East ‘D.E’ Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49004
- [The CopperWorks of Don Miller](#)

For windows, screen and window combination and curved windows: use Marvin windows sold by [Schiebout Window and Door](#) in Orange City, IA and [Adams Architectural Millwork](#) located in Dubuque, IA.

For architectural epoxies, check out [Abatron Inc.](#) They have many epoxies, where you can create molds to replicate outside and inside architectural details such as tin ceiling fixes, outside porch pillars, plaster pieces for decorations used inside the home.

For street lighting, cobblestones, limestone lions and other historic lawn ornaments – visit your architectural salvage shops located near larger cities or cities doing a lot of historic restoration work.

There was a pamphlet listing for architectural salvages shop sold on eBay. It was called “Architectural Salvage Directory”. If you can’t find that, then go to these websites:

- [A co-op of salvagers](#)
- [Salvage Directory from Old House Online](#)
- [Connors Architectural Antiques](#) located in Lincoln, NE
- [A&R Salvage and Recycling](#) in Omaha, NE

Interiors for Old Homes:

Floors in older homes can have hardwood, hardwood with border patterns, parquet, historic rugs, and tile. Before putting any tile in older homes that did not have it to begin with, make sure to level the floor so it has no bounce before putting the tiles down. It is helpful to use radiant heat under older floors, since it will reduce the heating requirements in these older larger homes.

A good source for flooring for older homes is a book, “Floor Coverings for Historic Buildings” by Helen Von Rosenstiel and Gail Caskey Winkler. Resource companies for materials for the repair and replacement of old home floors are:

Wood Floors:

- [New England Wholesale Hardwoods Inc](#) located in Pine Plains, NY
- [Historic Floors of Oshkosh](#) located in Oshkosh WI
This company offers wonderful inlays for borders around hardwood floors. You can customize design, style and size with this company.

Floor Tiles:

- [Tile Source Inc.](#) located in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina
This company deals in high end geometric tile floors that are made in England.
- [American Restoration Tile](#) located in Little Rock, AR
- Dal-Tile – some restoration tiles available (many distributors sell their tile)
- [Tile Restoration Center](#)
- Search on eBay for floor tiles
- [Tile floor cleaners](#) available at an English store

Carpet for older homes:

- [J.R. Burrows & Company](#) located in Rockland, MA (Some carpet but great old fashion lace curtains)
- Mohawk Commercial Carpet – Palladium II Style
- Karastan Carpets
- Area carpets from many dealers around the country including Nebraska Furniture Mart

Wall coverings:

- [Bradbury & Bradbury](#) located in Benicia, CA
- [Charles Rupert Designs](#) located in Victoria, BC Canada
They have several showrooms around the USA including one in Omaha NE
- [Victorian Collectibles](#) located in Milwaukee, WI

Bathroom renovations:

Radiant heat will work great in restorations of bathrooms in older homes. There are many ways to heat a floor, some with hydronic (liquid) heat or electric heat. Depending on where in your home you want to use this, you want to choose carefully which type you use if this floor is located on a second floor. There are many electric companies in Sioux City that could install the radiant heat for floors and many plumbers who would put in the hydronic heat for floors.

Fixtures:

If you want antique fixtures, look to eBay or salvage shops. If you want some original and wonderful antique plumbing fixtures, accessory bath pieces along with breathing taking prices to match, visit [Vintage Plumbing Bathroom Antiques](#) located in Los Angeles, CA. Don Hooper is very helpful in getting items to make older fixtures work in your bathroom.

If you want restoration fixtures (bathtubs, toilets, sinks) that will work, you need [Bathroom Machineries](#) located in Murphys, CA

For upscale fixtures: Visit [Urban Archaeology](#) located in New York City, NY. It is beautiful stuff but not for the faint of heart.

Marble Vanity Tops:

Visit [Roman Marble Works](#) located in Chicago IL. This company will manufacture vanity tops as they were done over 100 years ago along with authentic OG edges, with recessed tops and authentic honed surfaces.

Wall Tiles:

- Check out tiles available at [Walker Zanger's site](#). Here again gorgeous tiles to choose from but pricey.
- [Dal-Tile Company](#) with various tiles available

Plumbing Fixtures:

Plumbing fixtures from Kohlers and Rohls have great faucets.

Old Sinks for Bathrooms Vanities: Visit Salvage Shops to search for round or oval china sinks.

Miscellaneous Interior Resources:

Fireplaces:

For older smaller converted gas fireplaces, small gas inserts can be used. The Company, [Valor Radiant Gas fireplaces](#) manufactures smaller fireplace inserts that will fit behind the older fireplace mantles, tiles, and metal fireplace surround. There are dealers located in Lincoln, NE.

Notice: Materials gathered and produced by Dr. Ivan Salmons, a member of the [Sioux City Historic Preservation Commission](#). The attached list of names should be used as a guide for selecting products and services. While many of the companies and products named in this list have been successfully used on historical properties, the listings, in no way constitutes a recommendation or endorsement by Dr. Salmons or the Sioux City Historic Preservation Commission. You are encouraged to check references as well as review the work, products and services prior to making any selection for your projects.