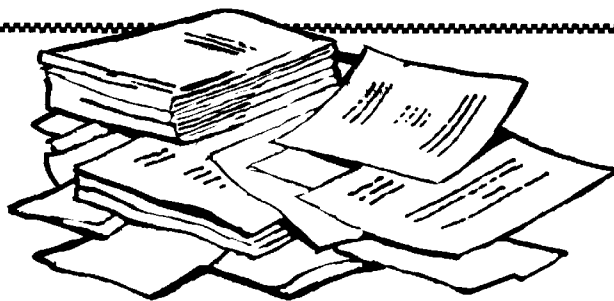


Letters



Euro-Cabinets a Welcome Trend

To the Editor:

I found the January "From What We Gather" column quite interesting. The Hardwood Manufacturer's Association is of the opinion that Euro-style cabinets are too trendy. I disagree. I suspect that the Association has a bias towards frame-type construction for cabinets since hardwoods have traditionally been the material used.

When selecting kitchen cabinets one of the client's primary concerns is with the door and drawer faces. Case construction is almost always a secondary consideration. Euro-style frameless cabinets can accept virtually any style of drawer or door that is available. They utilize superior hardware in the process.

Our firm has installed dozens of European manufactured kitchens in Fairfield County, Conn. Our experience is that they are easier and no more expensive to install than frame-type cabinets. One reason for this is that, being European, they are constructed and must be installed using the metric system. We find the metric system easier to use than American measurements. There is no need to shim the bottoms of cabinets. The adjustable legs on the Euro-style cabinets simplify the installers job as well.

We feel that European-styled cabinets are here to stay and we welcome this trend.

Joseph G. Chapman
The Carpentry Cooperative
Danbury, Conn.

Not Like NEB

To the Editor:

Mr. Spies' characterization of a conservationist as "someone who already has a cabin in the mountains" ["On the House," 2/88] is beneath the objectivity and dignity of *New England Builder* and the Small Homes Council-Building Research Council of the University of Illinois.

Ian R. Walker
Princeton, N. J.

The Main Attraction

To the Editor:

I'm invariably impressed with Joe Lstiburek's articles and responses to "Letters..." to *NEB*. His contribution to the education of small builders is huge.

A good plumber informed me once some years ago, "It's not capillary action; it's capillary attraction. Thought I'd pass on his contribution along with my thanks and good wishes to Joe Lstiburek.

Timothy D. Chase
Builder
Grove City, Pa

Stepped Footings Upside Down

To the Editor:

First, congratulations on a generally fine foundations issue. Good articles on cold-weather concreting, building with block, and of course, by Bill Rose. That said, there are some problems and clarifications needed with the details shown on pages 18 and 32.

Page 18. Just a qualification. The rule of thumb states that laterally unreinforced footings should not exceed twice the width of the wall, and should be at least as high as the wall is wide. Readers might infer from the "16-inch Min." note on the drawing that a 30-inch footing is ever better, even if it is still only 8 or 10 inches high. The standard rules from the *HUD Manual of Accepted Practices (MAP)* and the Portland Cement Association are good references [see diagram]. A nice explanation of the engineering issue is given in Ambrose's fine little book, *Simplified Design of Building Foundations*, published by Wiley and Sons.

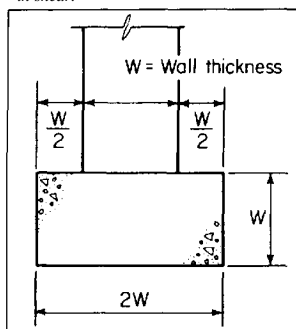
Page 32. This looks like a "sled" foundation to me. It certainly isn't stepped according to any practices I've heard of. The step should be on the bottom. The *HUD MAP* and the Canadian Portland Cement Association give the same rules of thumb: that the maximum ratio of rise/run should be 3/4. Ambrose gives a nice explanation of the problem of

generalizing, since sliding failure depends on soil type. He's more conservative — the maximum rise/run should be 1/3, and he suggests stepping whenever the slope exceeds 1/5. (The "sled" foundation is okay for grades lower than 1/5.) He also recommends that the step height not exceed 1 1/2 times the footing width, or feet, whichever is smaller.

As one of the co-authors of the forthcoming foundation manual described by Jeff Christian on page 10, I think I've seen most of the industry recommendations several times over by now, so the abnormal pops out quickly at me.

Ken Labs
Buchanan Associate
New Haven, Conn.

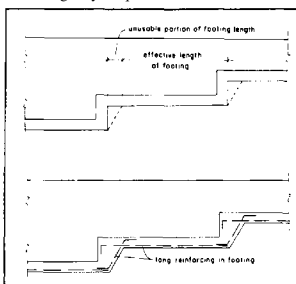
To clarify these details a bit further: The proper footing dimensions are shown in this diagram published by the Portland Cement Association. If footings are too wide for a given thickness, they can fail in shear:



The following excerpt from Ambrose's book (referenced above and reprinted with permission) should shed some light on the stepped footings issue:

There are three critical considerations for the design of the stepped footing.

1. **The length of the step.** If the step length is too short, the individual steps will have questionable validity as individual footings, and the footing is effectively the same as a sloped one. As shown in the diagram below, the toe portion of the step is essentially unusable for bearing. Thus if the step is very short, the length remaining for use as a bearing footing may be quite minor.



2. **The height of the step.** The higher the step, the longer the unusable toe portion of the flat step. This has

something to do with the soil type and is related to excavation problems. In soils that are unfeasible to excavate with a vertical cut it may be necessary to slope the stepped cut, as shown in the lower part of the diagram.

3. **The angle of the step.** For a generally conservative design, and in the absence of other design limitations, we recommend the following: Limit the step length to not less than three times the footing width (footing dimension perpendicular to the wall plane). Limit the step height to not more than 1 1/2 times the footing width, or 2 feet, whichever is smaller. Limit the height/length to one-third or less.

In summary, the "stepped" footing design we showed should only be used with very shallow slopes. Otherwise it might want to slide downhill.

—Ed.

The Final Touch

To the Editor:

I have been reading your outstanding magazine for a number of years and I find the articles very interesting and useful.

I have a problem I hope you can help me with. I've been trying to find information on porcelain tub repair. I work on new apartment construction doing the final touch-up work. During the building process bathtubs and vanity sinks get chipped and scratched. I would like any information that would teach or show how to make the proper repairs.

Keep up the good work.

David J. Tomlinson
Tomlinson Construction
Burlington, N.C.

According to Ron Fojtlin, who manages customer services at American Standard, most repairs should be made by a professional tub refinisher. You can locate such people in the Yellow Pages under "Bathroom Remodeling."

For very small nicks, you might be able to make the repair with enamel-steel touch-up paint, which Mr. Fojtlin says is probably not available through your distributor. You can obtain some, however, directly from him. Call him at 800/223-0068.

Small scratches, he says, can sometimes be polished out with pumice, but this too should be done by someone with a lot of experience.

I suggest you try the customer service department of the manufacturer who made the tubs in question. Perhaps they could be of help.

—Editor



Keep 'em coming... We welcome letters, but they must be signed and include the writer's address. *New England Builder* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *NEB*, P.O. Box 5059, Burlington, VT 05402.

Errors and Omissions

In March, in a Miscellaneous story on the Gentrex "one-step" foundation system (p. 7), we incorrectly listed the company's phone number for callers outside of California — it's 800/782-8286. Meanwhile in April, in a caption on page 51, we incorrectly identified builder Doug George as hailing from Salisbury, Conn. He is actually based in Dover, N.H.

Also in April, in a listing of

manufacturers of structural stress-skin panels, we failed to mention our next-door neighbor, Foam Laminates of Vermont, P.O. Box 102B, Hinesburg, VT 05461; 802/453-4438. Foam Laminates makes both structural and envelope-type panels in a variety of standard sizes, using a high-density polystyrene core. The company also builds custom-sized panels using a variety of facing materials.