

Greece and just about anything else that wasn't nailed down. The approach was acquisitive rather than imaginative, a blood sport that only the super-rich could play.

In the past decade, ordinary folk have gotten into the game. They are lured by quality materials and workmanship at prices that are reasonable, particularly for curious bits and pieces that may not count as important works of art but nevertheless add a distinctive touch to a room or a garden.

"Shopping at a salvage company offers you an opportunity to restore things inexpensively," says Anne McGahan, the marketing director for Salvage One in Chicago. "You can find everything from floor-register grates, glass globes, bathroom sconces and door handles all the way up to a room of French paneling, entire staircases or a huge mantel." Prices at Salvage One range from \$1 for a lamp finial and \$5 for a doorknob to \$15,000 for a mantel and \$30,000 for a complete bar.

At \$8,500 apiece, Irreplaceable Artifacts still has three New York City street lights, the long-armed variety that were in their heyday from the early 1900's to the 1950's. (People with country houses like to set them out by the driveway.) But \$90 will buy a 1920's foot-high stylized stone pineapple finial, just perfect for — well, for something.

The current enthusiasm for iron, bronze and marble, even little broken-off chunks of glazed terra cotta, comes straight out of the preservationist movement. The customers who haunt the salvage shops and make the rounds of dealers who handle architectural antiques are looking not only for rich materials and a vanished standard of craftsmanship but also for a connection with history. Charlisa Haag, the store manager of The Wrecking Bar in Atlanta, a dealer in architectural pieces, said that many of her customers have bought older homes and want to reverse the modernizing that took place over the years.

Some collectors act almost as curators. The New York law firm of Herrick, Feinstein has assembled a collection of artifacts that it displays museum-style, complete with a color catalogue. Because the firm represents many real estate clients, the collection has a New York theme, with objects that include the original finial from the top of the Woolworth Building (once the highest point in the city), the brass elevator dials from the Roosevelt Hotel and a terracotta keystone, showing a lion with a ring in its mouth, from a turn-of-the-century Harlem brownstone.

"We thought we had some obligation to the past to retain some vestiges of it," says Edward Abramson, one of the law partners. "Also, since most of these objects have some connection with sites that our clients have developed, it makes a nice signpost for the firm."

Sometimes the connections are purely personal. James Elkind, the owner of Lost City Arts in New York, a nostalgia merchant whose wares include architectural pieces, delivered two seven-foot light fixtures from the old New York Central train station in Buffalo to a woman in Nashville who needed to fill two large niches in her house. It turned out that the client had often seen the train station as a child and recognized the lights right away. Similarly, dealers in New York artifacts do a good business with transplanted New Yorkers who want to keep a little piece of the city close by.

There are also lots of people who see history as a glorious parade of styles, forms and textures just waiting to be removed from their original surroundings and thrown into new ones. Stone or cast-iron urns from brownstone porches become garden pots. Ornate elevator doors and heating grates end up as coffee-table tops. A marble capital turns out to make an ideal side table, or the base for a piece of sculpture. A terracotta medallion can be set into a garden wall or into an interior wall above a mantel. A mantel doesn't have to re-



A patinated copper ornament from the old Hotel Commodore now hangs in the board room of Herrick, Feinstein, a Manhattan law firm that collects architectural artifacts.

main a mantel, either. It can become a headboard. So can a door. Paul Episcopo, a lawyer in Chicago, took a chiseled-bronze door with an acanthus-leaf design that once belonged to a French bank and cut it down to fit the head of a bed. (A matching door became the canopy.)

Customers of Judith and James Milne, New York City antiques dealers, use old doors as table tops, convert old shutters into cupboard doors and put mirrors into ornate window frames. "People are no longer using a specific stylistic period," says Judith Milne. "Architectural elements transcend every style, so even if you have Arts and Crafts, or Art Deco, you can work them in."

Some enthusiasts go for the grand and the sumptuous. Evan Blum of Irreplaceable Artifacts has 300 running feet of glazed terra-cotta cornice in a tan, green and cream Moorish design from a Philadelphia school built in 1926. The cornice blocks will soon form the decorative border of a swimming pool in Florida.

At Architectural Artifacts Inc., in Chicago, Stuart Gran-
nen recently acquired an 80-foot-long triangular tympanum from the Sheridan Theater, near Wrigley Field. The blue and cream glazed terra-

cotta piece, which dates from 1927, depicts a strange allegorical scene that somehow manages to include a Renaissance nobleman blowing a trumpet, an American Indian and a Roman charioteer. "I've always seen it, in my mind, in Hollywood, with a reflecting pool next to it," says Gran-
nen.

There are more peculiar destinations than swimming pools. Salvage One got a call two years ago reporting an ornately carved teak exterior staircase sitting in a cornfield in downstate Illinois. It turned out to be part of Ceylon Court, the Ceylon pavilion at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. When the exposition was dismantled, a Wisconsin man bought the entire house, took it apart and had it moved to Geneva, Wis., where it was reassembled and stood proudly until being torn down in the 50's. Somehow, the staircase wound up in the cornfield. It's yours for \$6,000.

No architectural find is too strange to find a home somewhere. Salvage One is supplying the Widow Newton's Tavern, part of the new Navy Pier development in Chicago, with stained glass, marble arches and confessional doors to create a Gothic church look. In fact, religion seems

to be big this year. Some collectors have been building private chapels out of salvage material from old churches. On the beach at his lakefront vacation home, one Chicago artist has placed an eight-foot sheet-metal cross that was salvaged from a church.

The secular imagination, too, is hard at work. "We just put a polychrome terra-cotta Indian from a medical building into a home in New Jersey," says Elkind of Lost City Arts. And Irreplaceable Artifacts recently sold a pair of six-foot terra-cotta eagles from a 1920's bank building at 52 Wall Street to a Texan who has put them at the entrance to his pecan farm south of Houston. That's creative, but well within the normal range of architectural re-use these days.

Recently, a woman from Alabama ransacked Irreplaceable Artifacts for every gold bathroom fixture in sight. The pièce de résistance was a domed Victorian elevator ceiling, removed from Lord & Taylor when the Fifth Avenue store was remodeled a few years ago. It is now a shower ceiling. The buyer knew exactly what she wanted. "I'm remodeling my bathroom, and I want it all gold," she says. "I want this to look like the best whorehouse ever." ■