

INVENTIONS



THE 100 GREATEST INVENTIONS

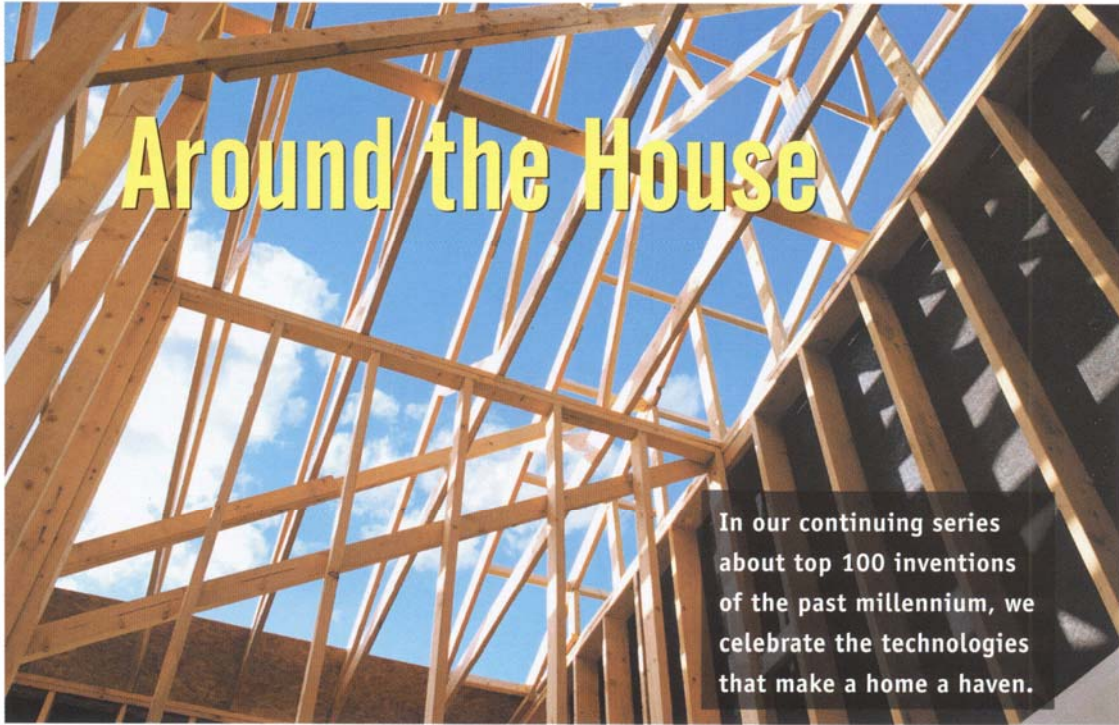
A MILLENNIUM-YEAR SPECIAL SECTION

EDITED BY BOB SILLERY

Research by Daniel Abatemarco and Liz Cowley

PHOTO: BISC

Around the House



In our continuing series about top 100 inventions of the past millennium, we celebrate the technologies that make a home a haven.

1832 WOOD FRAMING

WHEN EARTH'S forests were plentiful, most buildings were constructed with massive timber frames. But against the specter of depleted woodlands, the world needed another way.

An important yardstick in the quest for more resource-efficient homebuilding came in 1832, when a Chicagoan named George Snow was attempting to build a warehouse in a city with a shortage of big trees. Rather than mighty beams, Snow used more numerous small sticks, giving a new mode of housebuilding a name.

Stick framing would not have worked were it not for another recent development: new machines for mass-producing nails. Until this time, nails were so hard to come by that old structures were frequently burned down so that the nails could be used again. The new technique was faster, less expensive, and did not require the same level of building craftsmanship—also, homes needn't be nearly so boxy looking. Stick frame building was ideal for the burgeoning, westward-expanding American nation.

Stick framing is still widely used, though other techniques, such as steel framing, are gaining favor.

1980 SUPERWINDOWS

FOR YEARS, windows were a big yawn. Sure, they let in too much cold in the winter and heat in the summer, but *c'est la vie*. But the introduction of new glazing systems in the early 1980s kicked off a surge in window technology that sparked such enthused descriptions as "wonder windows" and "superwindows." Among the dramatic innovations were coatings that let in light but not heat; inert-gas filling between panes; and heat-stopping edge spacers. The Southwall Heat Mirror, a heat-retaining film, was one of the more dramatic advances.

POPULAR
science