**How to survive living in a house over 100 years old**

The best piece of advice I can give to a young first time home buyer is to look beyond the old world charm and lower cost of a home constructed before 1950. Sure, they don’t make them like they used to with fancy interior trimwork, nine-foot ceilings, and ornate exterior detail. But unless you plan on spending an obscene amount of the rest of your life fixing leaks, removing and replacing crumbling plaster and peeling paint, and making enough trips to big box home improvement stores for ten lifetimes all while watching your bank account dwindle and the value of your investment drop faster than a rock launched into the Grand Canyon , there’s a lot to be said for the practicality of a sound foundation and the use of modern materials associated with newer homes. But if you don’t heed my warning, you can still survive living in a vintage home.

Many problems associated with older homes stem from inadequate joist support resulting in sagging floors. If you’ve been in an older house, you probably know what I’m talking about. Try dropping a marble on the floor of a 1910 Victorian, and watch it roll away. This, of course, creates all kinds of problems: doors refusing to close properly, floor lamps leaning like the tower of Pisa, and an unsettling feeling that you’re walking downhill into the kitchen. And just try to replace an old door with a new prehung one; when you realize you’ll have to cut the bottom of one jamb and rip the bottom of the door, you’ll shake your fists to the heavens and learn to create new combinations of cuss words that could make a sailor blush. But, the remedies here are simple enough. Buy lots of shims and then tell yourself, “It’s all good, dude . . . it’s character, just part of the charm that made me fall in love with this place” until you actually believe it.

Completing the unnecessarily difficult door hanging job, you run into another problem as you begin to complete the finish trim: the new door jambs aren’t wide enough for the walls because new building materials come in different standard sizes than they used to. The home’s vintage 2x4s are actually 2x4, not 1.5x3.5 as they are today, and plaster walls are generally a quarter of an inch thicker than today’s drywall, which means you need custom jamb extensions for your modern-sized door. As you return an hour later from big box home improvement store trip number 5,000 with $35 less in your pocket and jamb extension material, you discover how to deal with the situation. You tell yourself, “Heck, I love a good challenge. Nothing easy is worth doing. Darn it, I can do this, and if I can do this, I can do anything.” And as you consider how impressed your friends will be when you whip out all the new cuss word combinations you’ve learned, you actually start to feel sorry for those living in modern homes with no worries besides what to watch on TV.

When you finally get a chance to crash on the couch and see what you’ve been missing on *Modern Family*, the stress of the day begins to take its toll. Remembering your family, you think of how your door woes ripped you away from parenting and spousal duties. You realize that sucks. Above the TV, you notice new plaster cracks, and you begin to see the long road of living in a perpetual construction zone that has been mapped out for you. You realize this also sucks. Here’s where perhaps the best method of old house survival kicks in. Resolve to give up: denounce the sagging floors, the need for custom everything, the hassle of living in a world of constant repair, the big box home improvement stores, all of it. Instead of worrying about peeling paint or a crumbling chimney, fantasize about how the money those jobs would require could be better utilized as a down payment on a newer place requiring less maintenance and cussing.

So, surviving life in an old home in need of repair is all about convincing yourself everything’s fine. Indeed, you can learn to live like this and find peace with the crumbling plaster and peeling paint. But, it’s easier to take my first advice. Save up and go for something newer. You’ll thank me later.