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The Forgotten Art Of Building A Good Fireplace



Synopsis

Since its original publication in 1969 by Yankee, Inc., Vrest Orton's classic book on fireplace design has gone through numerous printings and has brought about a revival of the Rumford fireplace. The basic principles that Count Rumford set forth in 1795 describe the construction of a large shallow fireplace which does not smoke and which throws out much more heat than many of today's fireplaces which send too much of the heat up the chimney. This new edition contains some practical notes by Wally Leeds, a mason in Tunbridge, Vermont who builds Rumford fireplaces today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Vrest Orton loved the five fireplaces in his 1828 Federal brick house in Weston, Vermont because of their architectural beauty and because of the enormous amount of heat they produced without letting smoke into the rooms. In his quest to understand why his old fireplaces worked so much better than most "modern" versions, Orton discovered the work of Count Rumford, the eighteenth-century genius who brought fireplace design to an unprecedented level of efficiency. Born Benjamin Thompson in Woburn, Massachusetts in 1753, Rumford was a Tory during the American Revolution, and he emigrated to Britain. While in Britain, he applied himself to the study and improvement of smoky fireplaces, and had so much success that his fame spread to Europe. In Bavaria, his contributions to society were so appreciated that he was ennobled as "Count of the

Holy Roman Empire" by the Elector of Bavaria. He took the name "Rumford" from the old name for Concord, New Hampshire. In this book, Vrest Orton recounts the fascinating story of Count Rumford. He then goes on to spell out Rumford's basic principals of fireplace design with the help of drawings by Austin Stevens. Since its original publication in 1969, this book has gone through numerous printings and has brought about a revival of the Rumford fireplace. Vrest Orton served in France during World War I, had a distinguished career in book and magazine publishing for twenty years, and then moved back to Vermont after Pentagon service following World War II to found the Vermont Country Store, which issues one of America's most trusted and popular mail-order catalogs. This new edition included some notes and clarification by Wally Leeds, a mason in Tunbridge, Vermont who had built many Rumford fireplaces. In addition, there is a preface by Lyman Orton, son of Vrest Orton.

Orton spent a lot of ink (the first thirty or so pages) cheering Rumsford as well as providing some insight to his own slightly eccentric (i.e. opinionated and sometimes emotional) perspectives, but only the last sixteen pages are directly concerned with the actual 'Rumsford fireplace' details. Most of the sketches and general discussions about the geometry and dimensions for a generic Rumsford fireplace are useful. If Orton had spent less time yammering and put more effort into illustrating, the book would be better.

We rebuilt an old Virginia farmhouse in 1980 using some plans from a Vermont architect whose names escapes me. Friends and family have always commented on the extraordinary warmth that one of our two fireplaces radiates (the other fireplace that is, basically, worthless was put in when we added another room in the 1990's and allowed a local mason to construct according to his personal ideas). The fireplace that was built using the directions of the Vermont architect closely follows the concepts and measurements that Mr. Orton describes in this DELIGHTFULLY written little tome. Our Tidewater Virginia winters are extremely light compared to Vermont's but, even so, we love our quasi-Rumford fireplace which is fired up daily from October til Spring---throwing off tons of radiant heat. I am getting a copy to give to friends who are preparing to build a house and might want to know about Count Rumford and his design.

This is a fabulous little book about the open hearth fireplace, and in particular about a "Rumford" fireplace. The author talks about the beauty, ambiance and joy of a fire in the fireplace, and about the experiments and designs for fireplaces developed by Lord Rumford in the late 1700s. His

research has never been bettered in 250 years. I am a builder and in years past I have purchased copies of this book and given them to my masons to show them about the "Rumford Fireplace". This small paperback that is very readable with excellent information.

This is the second copy that I have bought. Both of the others were "lifted" by friends that were building a fireplace. This book has it all. A Rumford is the only way to go if you are going to have a fireplace. We have built two so far.

Used this book to build a Rumford fireplace. Turned out great.

A lot of history and only a bit on the building. It does give enough dimensions and ratios to build, but I just can't give it five stars.

A great little read.

Wow. As I have always loved fireplaces, I had no idea that there was a more efficient model. The shallow firebox is different for me but if it provides a better heating mechanism then I am all for it.

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