

A Simple Custom Entry

by Charles Wardell

Off-the-shelf materials make for an economical, traditional porch



From the street, this well-proportioned entryway resembles other Colonial-period porches in the neighborhood, though its construction is simplified. For instance, instead of building a true barrel-vault ceiling, the author fastened the beadboard ceiling directly to the rafters, then added a curved plywood facade.

Many homes are built with uncovered exterior doors that open onto the main living space. That's a shame. Not only does a sheltered entry provide a needed transition between inside and outside, but it's also a place to kick the snow and mud from your shoes and to stay dry while you're fumbling with the lockset in a rainstorm. One reason so few homes have good entries is the perceived cost of a quality job. But as this entry that I built a few years back in Cambridge, Mass., shows, it's easy to build an attractive entry with stock materials from the local lumberyard.

The frame was a model of simplicity. The gable end rested on a pair of 4x4 pressure-treated posts that bore on son-

tubes sunk 4 feet into the ground (the code-mandated depth for footings in this area). Against the house, I installed a pair of 2x4 pressure-treated pilasters right over the vinyl siding and lagged them to the house framing. A built-up beam made from three 2x4s linked the top of each post with the corresponding pilaster.

I cased the frame with clear pine primed on both sides with two coats of oil-based primer. The roof was framed with 2x4s and sheathed with plywood. A 3/4-inch exterior-grade plywood arch beneath the rake matched the arches on the porches of the other Colonial homes in the neighborhood.

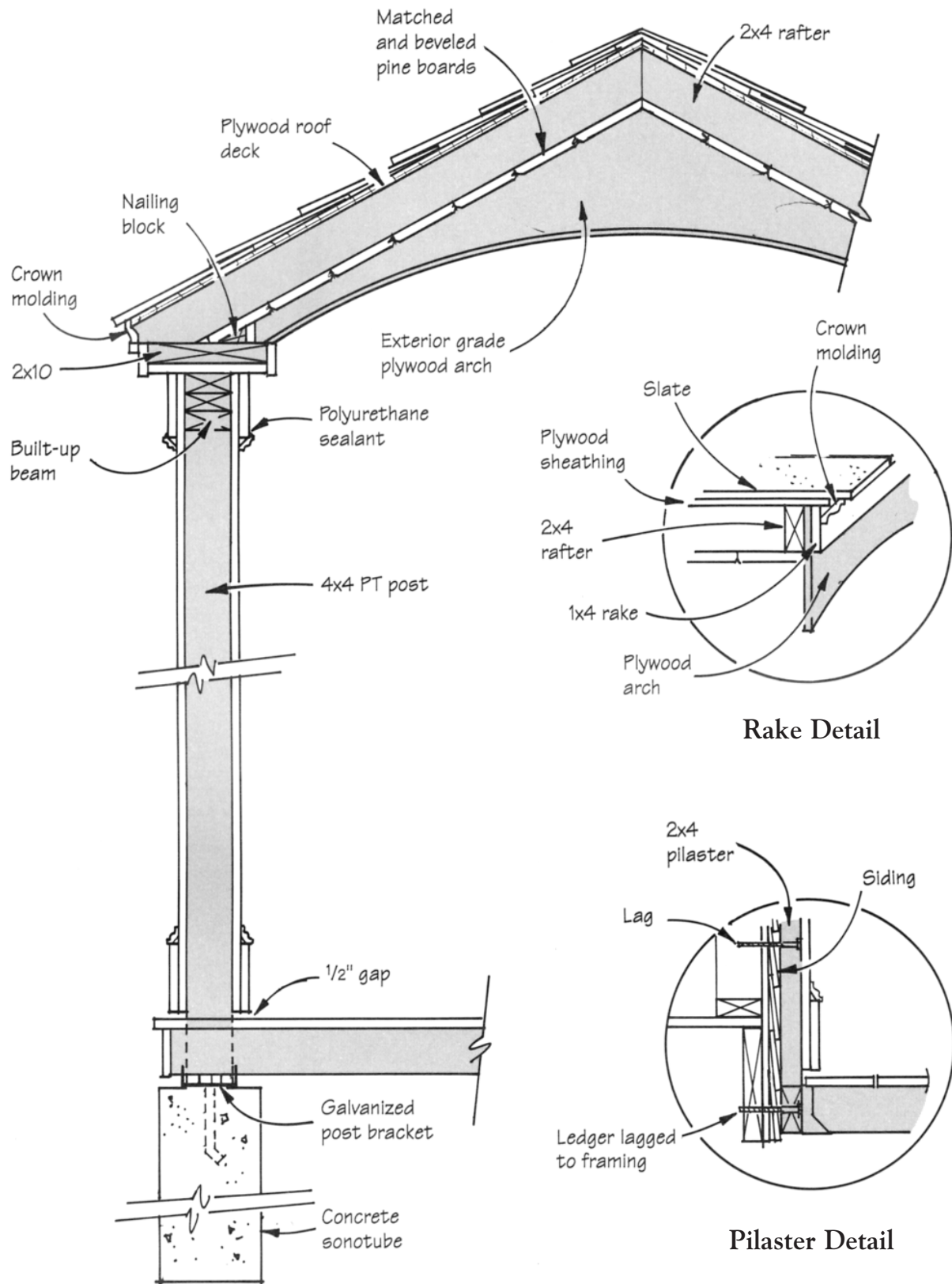
I trimmed the entry with stock moldings from the lumberyard. Most exterior

structures seem to rot from the ground up, but a gap beneath the plinth blocks at the base of the posts, and a concealed drainage space between the posts and the deck frame help to prevent this. The ceiling consisted of beaded-edge, tongue-and-groove pine. If I were doing the job today, though, I would use a new product called Ply-Bead (Georgia-Pacific 133 Peachtree St. NE, P.O. Box 105605, Atlanta, GA 30348; 404/521-4728). It's an exterior-grade plywood panel with decorative beads routed into its face.

The pine was painted white and the ceiling a traditional light blue. ■

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Construction Details



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Borrowing ideas from nearby houses, the author used off-the-shelf moldings and lumber to design and build this simple classical entryway. Pressure-treated lumber and good watershedding details ensure it a long life.