

City pantries, country butteries

BOOK REVIEW

BY Laura Jean Whitcomb

My old apartment in Hartford, Conn., had two pantries located on opposite sides of the kitchen. One pantry held all of our miscellaneous dishes, bowls, graters and oversized platters; the other was a catchall for whatever we trekked up three flights of stairs. (It stored hats, umbrellas, gloves and bags — items ready to take out the door — as well as things that needed attention on the weekends, like sales flyers and recycling.) I had forgotten how much I loved those pantries until I saw Catherine Seiberling Pond's new book, *The Pantry: Its History and Modern Uses*.

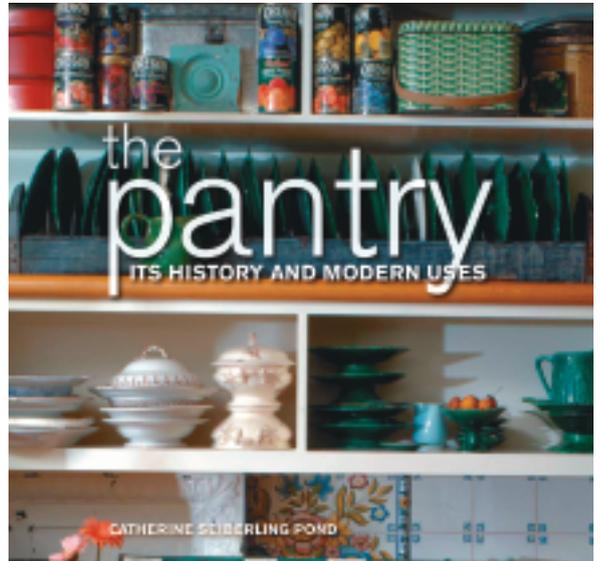
Pond, a New Hampshire resident, wrote an article on pantries for *Old-House Interiors* after her family added two adjoining butler's pantries (or china pantries) to their Federal home. She has memories of her grandparents' home, which included a serving pantry as large as the kitchen. In her new book, published by Gibbs Smith in April, she's combined her love of small, organized spaces with history, wonderful photography, and vintage illustrations and advertisements from her own collection.



“One of the best things about writing this book was the amount of historic information, especially primary sources from the late 19th and early 20th century, that was available on pantries,” says Pond, an architectural historian and former museum manager. “As these rooms were once essential to every kitchen, entire chapters on pantries were often included in domestic economy books about their design, contents and maintenance. I also took great delight in finding many descriptive quotes about pantries in period literature and poetry, including children's books.”

According to Pond, no book has ever been written exclusively on pantries from the design or historical perspectives. Nor has anyone tracked their resurgence, due in part to nostalgia by the Baby Boomer generation.

“Up until the 1930s, kitchens were largely utilitarian spaces with just the essentials. Pantries were important ancillary kitchen spaces, like mini-galley kitchens with drawers, cupboards, counters and fun little nooks and crannies,” says Pond. “What happened as the 20th



century progressed is that the pantry literally came into the kitchen; as that space expanded and build-ins and cupboards were added, the pantry all but became obsolete.”

If you're looking to add some storage space to your home, Pond says that “anyone can create a pantry: Out of a small room, a closet, even a cupboard.”

The Pantry: Its History and Modern Uses is \$16.95 and available at local bookstores. Pond also maintains a blog on domestic life at www.inthepantry.blogspot.com and has a Web site at www.catherinepond.com 