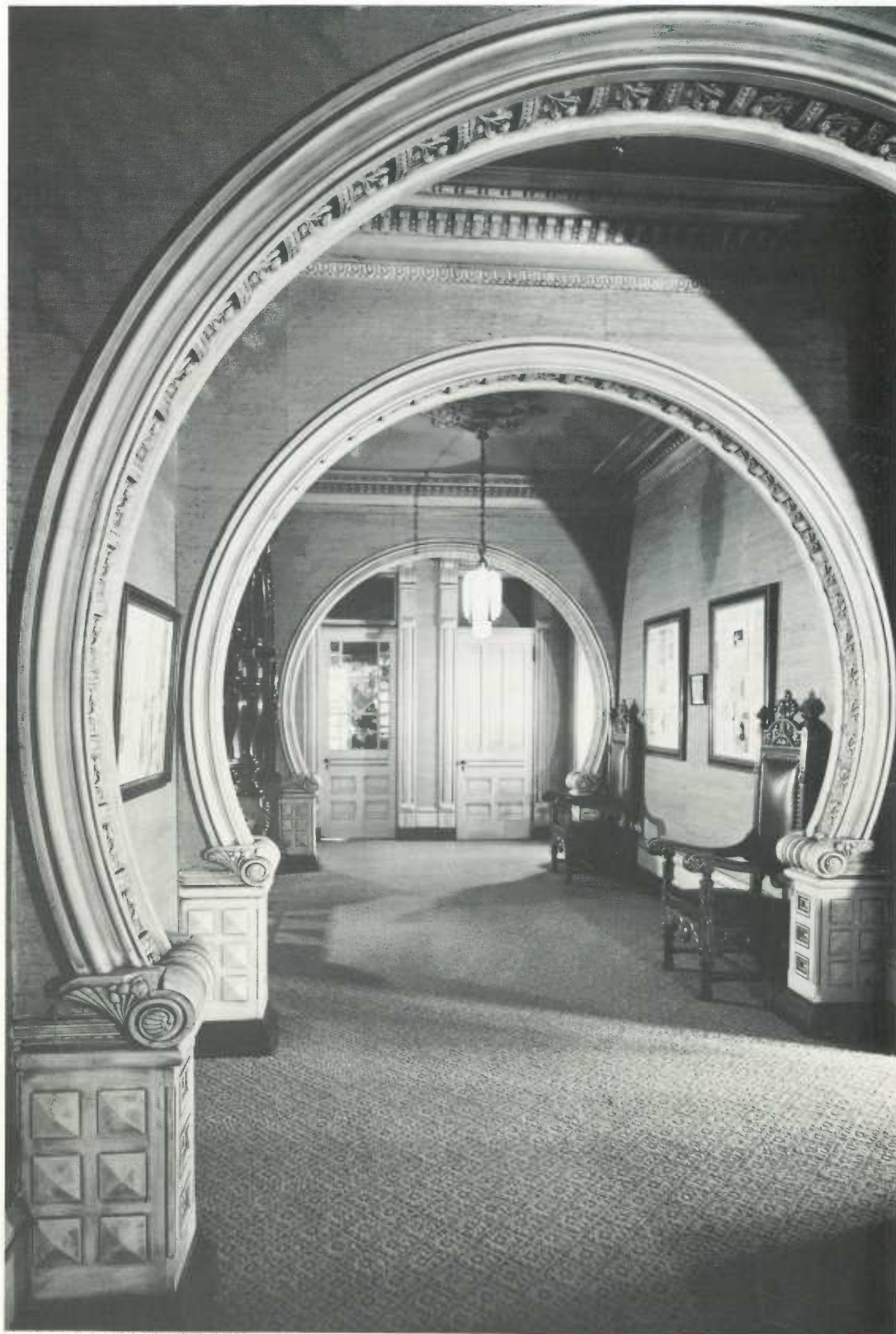


THE INTERIORS HANDBOOK FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS



The Interiors Handbook for Historic Buildings

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Historic Preservation Education Foundation
Washington, D.C.
1988

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From office building managers to house museum curators, there is widespread interest in the preservation of historic buildings. While the exteriors of historic buildings have received attention in recent years, the artistic and historical merit of interiors is now being recognized as equally important. Yet interiors are often subject to modifications over the long life of a building and are particularly at risk in a rehabilitation for new use. Since interior preservation is the most complex, least understood aspect of historic preservation, it is timely to examine the function and value of historic interiors and ways to restore and rehabilitate them successfully.

The Interiors Handbook for Historic Buildings provides a compendium of information on interiors not otherwise readily available. It incorporates many of the papers presented at the 1988 Interiors Conference for Historic Buildings, as well as other current materials. The Handbook is divided into eight sections: Planning; Architectural Features and Materials; Finishes and Accessories; Systems and Fixtures; Fire Protection and Codes; Adaptive Reuse; Manufacturers, Sources and Literature; Bibliography. The Handbook is designed to be used, expanded, updated, and personalized by its owner in response to a growing and changing field.

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Published 1988, Washington, D.C., by the Historic Preservation Education Foundation.

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The Planning Committee also wishes to thank the following for their support and enthusiasm in the preparation of this publication: Theresa Robinson, Neal Vogel and Karl Esser, National Park Service; Debra Hobbs and Angela Rush, Center for Architectural Conservation, Georgia Institute of Technology; and William MacRostie and Antoinette Lee, Historic Preservation Education Foundation.

This publication is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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The National Register of Historic Places and Significant Interiors

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Historian

National Register of Historic Places

The number of historic buildings owned and operated as house museums, and thus open to the public, has always been a minuscule part of the large number of buildings recognized in this country as historically significant. Because the majority of our historic resources remain in private ownership, frequently only their exteriors are available for public appreciation. Based upon our sensitivity to private property rights, and the necessity of retaining the good-will and cooperation of owners, there has been an inherent tendency in historic preservation either to overlook historic interiors or to treat them as of secondary importance.

Some historic buildings are virtually defined by their exteriors, and we can appreciate their contribution to our built environment regardless of our accessibility to the interiors. Examples of this would include early examples of steel-framed skyscraper construction. The great advance in American technology and engineering made by these buildings can be read from the outside. The change in American popular taste during the 19th Century, from the symmetry and simplicity of architectural styles based on classical precedents, to the expressions of High Victorian styles, with their riot of textures, colors, and asymmetrical forms, is readily apparent from the exteriors of these buildings.

Other buildings "are" interiors. The Cleveland Arcade, that soaring 19th century glass-covered shopping area, can only be appreciated from the inside. Other buildings in this category would be the great covered train sheds of the 19th century.

In some cases the loss of an interior will disqualify properties from listing in the National Register-- a historic concert hall noted for the beauty of its auditorium and its fine acoustic qualities would be the type of property that if were it to lose its interior, it would lose its value to us as a historic re-

source. In other cases, the overarching significance of a property's exterior can overcome the adverse effect of the loss of an interior. In borderline cases particular attention is paid to the significance of the property and the remaining historic features.

The significance of a building's interior is recognized under the National Register criteria in a variety of ways. National Register Criterion A recognizes properties that are important for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The interior of a building may have been the scene of a single, specific event which gives the building its significance, such as the Octagon House in Washington, D.C., site of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. Or under National Register Criterion A, a building may be associated with patterns of events which reflect a long-term use and importance of the interior. A laboratory used in the research and development of a number of important inventions, or a customs house used over the years for the collection of import duties could qualify for the National Register based upon the events which occurred inside of the properties.

National Register Criterion B recognizes those properties important for their association with the lives of persons significant in our past. Here the interiors take on a very personal quality, and the basic test for listing a property associated with an important individual is: would the person today recognize the building as his or her own? The easiest cases are those buildings preserved as memorials to historic occupants when the building has been preserved intact from their period of residence. Most properties change over time, however, and the question of whether the significant person would recognize their building becomes a subjective judgement based upon the degree and nature of the

alterations to the building.

The majority of buildings listed in the National Register qualify under Criterion C for their architectural importance. The architectural significance of interiors can relate to the building's spaces, finishes or features. Many buildings derive significance from their magnificent interior spaces. Government buildings, such as statehouses or courthouses, were designed with large, imposing open spaces to reflect the majesty of the law, or the importance of the legislative process. Privately-owned buildings, such as churches, and fraternal halls, may also contain grand interior spaces intended to symbolize and to enhance the ceremonies performed there.

The interiors of buildings may also contain significant finishes or features which add to their significance under Criterion C. Public buildings may contain murals or sculptures related to the agency's history or purpose. Private residences sometimes have important finishes, such as examples of skilled workmanship illustrating the aesthetic principles of a period, and revealing individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. These finishes may represent the work of artisans trained formally, or the skill of workmanship learned from folk traditions.

Under National Register Criterion D, interiors may also be important for their potential to yield significant information about building technology, if the information is not available through documentary research. Buildings containing evidence of unusual construction techniques, or local variations of a standard design may qualify under this criterion.

Interior plans may also contribute to the significance of historic buildings. The unique plans of octagon houses reflect a 19th-century concept of scientific design for healthier living. Plans may also represent indigenous building traditions, such as shotgun houses in the deep South, which are an example of Afro-American folk architecture. In these and other types of buildings, a change to the interior plan can have a major impact on the historic integrity of the property.

The interiors of buildings frequently receive the greatest degree of alteration in modern rehabilitations. Those buildings of standard design and repetitive interior spaces, such as speculative commercial buildings, or hotels, are more amenable to alteration while still retaining their historic identity.

A lesser degree of intervention is appropriate for those buildings whose plan or interior finishes are crucial to our appreciation of the structures as historic resources. Any alteration to an interior should be undertaken only after the building has been thoroughly evaluated and the contribution of the interior to the building's historic significance fully understood.

* * *

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do

meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or

C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or

D. a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or

E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or

F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or

G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

* * *

The Aesthetics of Everyday Interiors

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If asked to imagine a home interior from your past, it's likely that your first image would not be of a Frank Lloyd Wright house--or any other house or apartment designed by a famous architect. That's because most of us grew up in ordinary residences which belong to a class of architecture called manufactured vernacular.

Manufactured vernacular is familiar architecture. We see it every day, as we travel from place to place, because it was based on the replication of forms which were adaptable to any region. Designed by plan book architects, manufacturers or ready-cut buildings, local builders, and owner-builders whose names are now forgotten, these buildings and their interiors are rarely recognized for architectural distinction. Yet manufactured vernacular architecture comprises the majority of the American built environment.

Perceived as ordinary, and taken for granted by citizens and preservationists alike, vernacular interior elements and systems have most often been ignored or removed. Because of its design quality and the enormous manufacturing and distribution system that supported this architecture, and because of the popular and trade press that broadcast design values and ideas, this interior architecture is anything but ordinary, and accurate assessments of its significance need to be taken.

This essay addresses the issue of significance by introducing a method for dating buildings based on millwork fabrication; it presents an overview of the principal aesthetic systems of vernacular interiors, and it offers suggestions about rehabilitating historic interiors.

The Vernacular Interior

An historic vernacular interior is unique because it is made almost entirely of manufactured elements--primarily wood--originally offered in an almost incomprehensible number of choices for any one architectural element. For instance, in 1912 Farley and Loetscher, a millwork company of Dubuque, Iowa, manufactured over 250 door designs; 31 different cottage windows in 33 sizes; 56 moldings; 28 different colonnade designs; 11 storefronts; and 22 mantels. Much of this variety was available because of the interchangeability of manufactured parts. Standardized production insured that the elements were in correct proportion with other elements and of equal quality. Each time a millwork manufacturer offered a new design in an effort to boost sales, the diversity of design choices increased.¹

If we were to compile a complete catalog of interior millwork elements available in America from 1870 to 1940, it would not fully explain manufactured vernacular interior architecture. It requires an understanding of the design values and the relationships between inside and outside, among plan and circulation and fenestration. Due to limitations of this paper, I will only consider millwork and the presence of patterns inherent in the composition of the aesthetic systems.

The Chronology of Millwork Fabrication as a Method for Dating Buildings

Millwork is the crucial material for studying manufactured vernacular interiors, because it represents

the largest category of finish goods and illustrates a point of reference for design systems. My analysis Produced primarily through details and the layering of three-dimensional surfaces in both natural and geometric forms, the "treatment" was meant to be rich and elaborate. of trade catalogs reveals that it is possible to es-tablish when specific millwork designs first appeared on the market, the duration of specific elements, indications as to when designs diminished in popularity, and finally, the dates when companies ceased production of particular products.

For several years now I have been researching nationally distributed millwork catalogs to track specific design elements which might be used to estimate construction dates for buildings. This theory assumes that production was related to use. I have enough evidence to indicate that people not only used newly manufactured elements in buildings, but they used them soon after the initial production date. Not all millwork elements are reliable for pinpointing dates. The four-paneled door, for example, was in production for our entire study period, from 1870 to 1940. However, if further research bears out the preliminary findings--for instance, that the 4/1 vertically divided light window was not manufactured before 1912--then this design

should be considered a pivotal dating element. Following this logic, it would generally be true that buildings originally constructed with 4/1 vertically divided light windows, would not have been built before 1912.

At the very least I expect the research to establish peak production periods, that is, the dates when designs were at their height of popularity in the market. This data, linked with the written record and other dating evidence about millwork, should prove useful in establishing construction date brackets for buildings. In addition to dating buildings, the analysis of specific millworked elements strengthens our understanding of design change in everyday interiors.

The Composition of Architectural Elements into Design Effects

Over time a variety of elements were composed into patterns or compositional effects which were unified into an aesthetic treatment. Stylistic references, except the ever-popular Colonial, were usually avoided by plan book architects or manufacturers because they were so easily "dated." Instead, an

Woodwork Designs for the Colonial Home

MANY different articles of woodwork illustrated and described in the design section of this book (page 14 et seq.) in the same classification, are suitable for use in the Colonial house. You can make no mistake in choosing any of them, but you can obtain greater harmony in your woodwork if you select designs that "go together."

The hardware, ornaments, books, china, silver and other properties shown in the illustrations are not furnished with the woodwork. The articles of hardware are standard designs taken from the stock of the leading hardware manufacturers and can be procured through your hardware or lumber dealer. The simpler the patterns you select, the better will you carry out the spirit of the Colonial home, and the less they will cost. Directions for your guidance in finishing the woodwork for your house are given on page 166.

Bedrooms and Bathrooms C-100 C-106 C-101 C-107 C-102 C-108 C-103 C-109 C-104 C-113 C-105 C-121	Construction Brackets and Sills C-294 C-298	Hardware C-710 C-712 C-711 C-715	Wicker Tables C-782 C-785	Porcelain Washers C-1110 C-1111 C-1111 C-1114 C-1112 C-1117
Bookcases C-320 C-324 C-301 C-311 C-302 C-310 C-303 C-323 C-320	Chairs C-410 C-413 C-411 C-420 C-412 C-421 C-413	Tables C-216 C-217	Trunk Trays C-770	Staircase Washers C-1116 C-1117 C-1120 C-1121 C-1122 C-1123
Chairs C-320 C-324 C-301 C-311 C-302 C-310 C-303 C-323 C-320	Chairs C-410 C-413 C-411 C-420 C-412 C-421 C-413	Construction Brackets and Sills C-294 C-298	Staircase Washers C-1116 C-1117 C-1120 C-1121 C-1122 C-1123	Trunk Trays C-770
Chairs C-320 C-324 C-301 C-311 C-302 C-310 C-303 C-323 C-320	Chairs C-410 C-413 C-411 C-420 C-412 C-421 C-413	Tables C-216 C-217	Staircase Washers C-1116 C-1117 C-1120 C-1121 C-1122 C-1123	Trunk Trays C-770
Chairs C-320 C-324 C-301 C-311 C-302 C-310 C-303 C-323 C-320	Chairs C-410 C-413 C-411 C-420 C-412 C-421 C-413	Tables C-216 C-217	Staircase Washers C-1116 C-1117 C-1120 C-1121 C-1122 C-1123	Trunk Trays C-770

Windows

Most of the designs shown on pages 168 to 171 can be used in the Colonial house, but the divided light window, like C-1024, adheres closest to this type of architecture.

Window and Door Frames

Construction is the principal consideration with these items, for the designs will harmonize with the architectural character of any building. Specify exactly whether you want frames suitable for a frame, masonry or finish frame.

Exterior Woodwork

The principal thing to bear in mind in selecting these items, is that proportions are to be observed above all else. Consequently, suggestions for cornice construction are given on pages 214 to 220 inclusive; for porches, pages 204 to 208 inclusive.

1. The Colonial aesthetic illustrated in 1920 by the Curtis Companies with 138 suggested stock elements for achieving the design effect.