Changing Interior Tastes: Wall Treatments at the President's House

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The President's House--a home, an office and a place for ceremony and official events--has been occupied for almost two hundred years. Its rooms and their decorations have reflected the changing tastes of Americans as well as the personal tastes of White House residents. Walls have been painted, glazed, stenciled, papered and wood paneled. They have been covered in French papers and Japanese grass cloth. Often the wall treatments have been the most striking part of a White House interior and often commented on by visitors and guests.

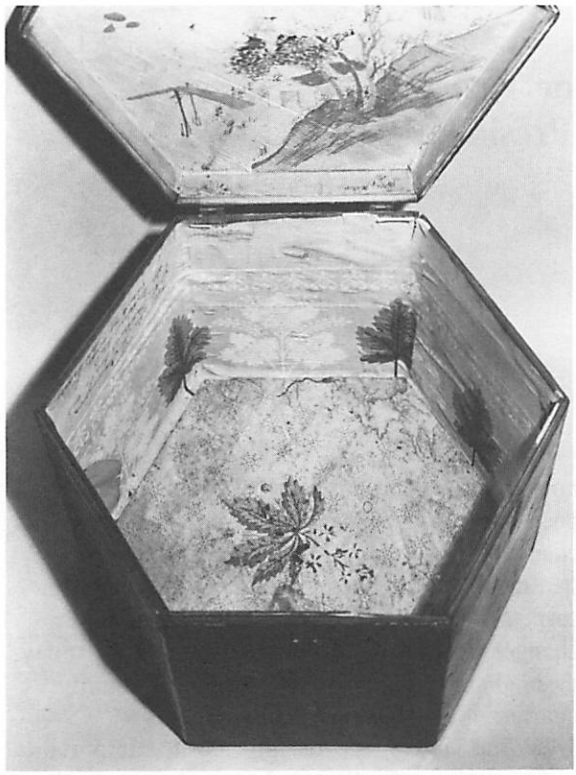
In the 19th century, the most fashionable designs of the day were often incorporated into the rooms. Rooms such as the East Room of the Jackson era with its plaster frieze of anthemions designed by James Hoban in 1817 had the latest lemon-yellow paper with a rich cloth border purchased through a Philadelphia supplier but probably of French origin. The Red Room of the 1880s incorporated the newest ideas of the day in the work of Louis C. Tiffany, whose rooms bore a harmonious look not often seen in White House interiors. The room was described as dark and moody with walls painted Pompeiian red with the three foot frieze a lighter tawny red, having designs of stars and stripes. The wainscotting was painted a darker brownish crimson and the woodwork a dark brown.

Historical revivals were prevalent in the first half of the 20th century in rooms such as the East Room with its carved and enameled wood paneling and its plaster relief panels. Charles McKim took his inspiration for this room from the 18th century French chateau, Compeigne, not the early 19th century White House. In a house open to the public where there has always been heavy use of the state rooms and occupants change every four or eight years, wall treatments have changed frequently along with carpets, draperies and furniture. Decorative changes continue to be made, except that, today, these changes occur more often in the family quarters than in the public rooms.

White House records indicate that important rooms such as the first and second floor oval rooms were papered in time for the arrival of the first president to live in the house, John Adams, who took up occupancy in November 1800. The Commissioners of Public Buildings who oversaw the building and furnishing of the house expressed a preference for French papers, but no descriptions of the paper survive.[1]

There seems to have been a preference for French papers in the early 19th century White House and indeed, French papers, both scenic and an American reproduction of a French paper with neoclassical designs, continue to be used in the house today. Contemporary American papers and a hand-painted Chinese paper are in evidence in the family quarters, but most rooms in those areas are painted. A few sitting rooms are covered in fabric stretched on the walls.

The earliest existing sample of White House wallpaper dates from the pre-fire White House of James Madison (Figure 1). A Chinese tea box acquired by the White House twenty years ago is lined with the border of a French paper which has been identified as having been printed from the same blocks used by Jacquemart & Benard, the Parisian designers active from 1791-1835. This particular design of pink paper with green and white leaves and a white fleur-de-lis



1. The earliest surviving example of a White House wallpaper is a border of an early 19th century French paper from the Madison era. The White House.

pattern was registered in 1798.[2] Julia Latrobe, the daughter of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who assisted Dolley Madison in furnishing the house, wrote on the paper the following inscription: "Paper upon the Drawing Room of the President's House in Mr. Madison's time. given to my mother by Mrs. Madison." Neither the Oval Drawing Room nor Mrs. Madison's Sitting Room (the current Red Room) were covered with paper. It is probable that this paper was in the second floor oval room, which was used by early 19th century families to receive personal guests.

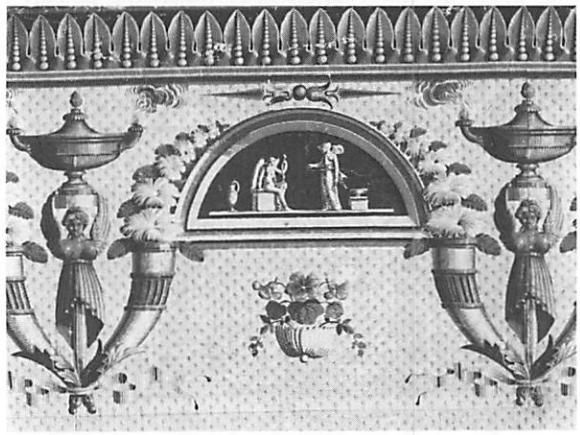
In the Blue Room today is an American reproduction of a French wallpaper by the same firm who designed the Madison paper--Jacquemart & Benard (Figure 2). Two original panels dating from 1800 were acquired by the White House in 1972 and were the basis for the reproduction paper, which does not bear the neoclassical motifs on the ground of the original paper. The Committee for the Preservation of the White House, which advises the President on the interpretation and preservation of the museum character of the state rooms, has recommended that the original motifs of lyres and classical scenes be incorporated into a new reproduction of the paper. The neutral ground has a picot design with a frieze of acanthus leaves and classical scenes with flowers, urns and classical figures. Similar elements appear in the lower border. The plaster cornice repeats the acanthus leaves of the paper in fuller dimension.

The Blue Room, called the Oval Drawing Room through most of the 19th century, is a good case study for examining the changing wall treatments in the state rooms. It is the most formal of the state parlors and a room in which some of the most historic events in the White House have taken place.

From the earliest days of the White House, it was an area in which the President received official guests, among them the foreign ministers and ambassadors accredited to the United States. It has been the scene of a presidential wedding and continues today to be used for formal receptions.

While the room was covered with French paper as early as 1800, the walls were painted under the direction of Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1809. Although there is documentation relating to Latrobe's work in this room, little is known of the walls except that they were either cream or buff.

The first description of a paper in the room dates from the Monroe White House, when the



2. Frieze of a French wallpaper by Jacquemart & Benard, circa 1800. This fragment was reproduced for use in the Blue Room in 1972. The White House.



3. A bold blue patterned paper on a white ground was installed in the Blue Room in 1853. The United States Magazine, September 1856. Photograph courtesy of the New York Public Library.

house was rebuilt and refurbished after its interior was destroyed by the British in 1814. Monroe ordered five cases of paper hangings from France in 1817 along with gilded furniture, bronze clocks and vases and other objects made by the finest craftsmen of Napoleonic France.[3] A crimson flock paper with a rich gilt border, complementing the crimson silk upholsteries and draperies, was installed in the oval room. It was the most elegant and dramatic of all the state rooms.

Descriptions of the Andrew Jackson White House indicate that the paper survived in the room until the 1830s. In 1837, the upholsteries in the room were changed to blue and a new paper, probably a silver paper, was installed on the walls. In the late 1840s the paper was described as pearl-white with small gilt figures.

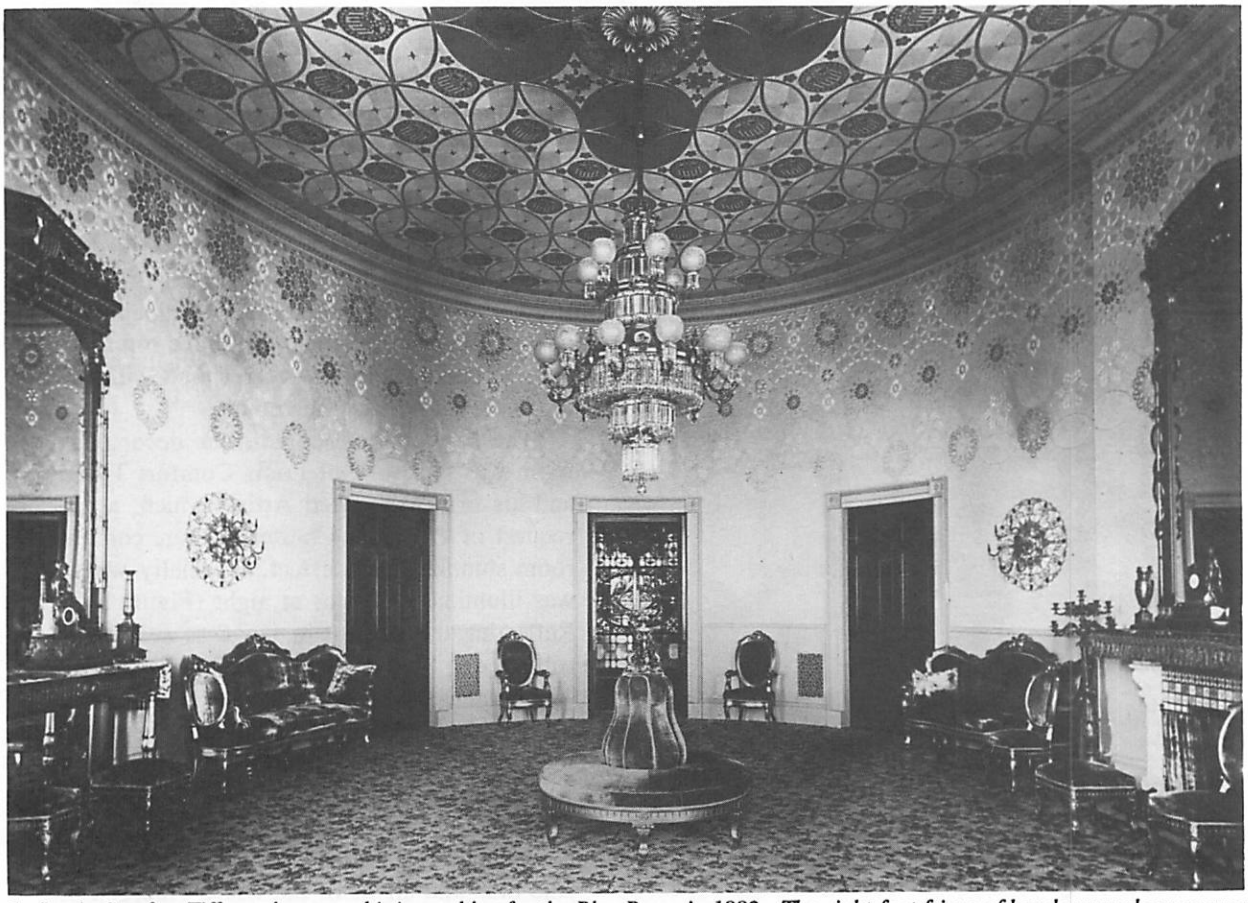
This paper did not last long. In 1853, under the direction of Thomas U. Walter, the architect of the United States Capitol, the walls were covered with a paper in a bold simple pattern of blue cyma curves on a white ground (Figure 3). A similar pattern appeared in green and red in the Green and Red Rooms.

After the Civil War, Andrew Johnson's daughter, Martha Patterson, undertook to completely refurnish the house and removed the patterned papers. In 1866, the Blue Room and all other room were papered with black and gilt panels in the latest French taste (Figure 4). Inside the panels were silk-like wallpapers. The other surfaces in this and the other rooms were painted darker colors to correspond with the upholstery colors in the rooms.

The next major change in the decor of the room was the work of Louis Comfort Tiffany and his firm Associated Artists which, at the request of President Chester Arthur, completed a room stunning in its effect, especially when it was illuminated by gas at night (Figure 5). Reflecting the interest in Japanese aesthetics, a robin's egg blue was selected for the walls.[4] The color was also chosen to complement the egg shape of the room. The walls were painted with colors gradating from dark to light tones toward the ceiling, ending in an eight-foot frieze of hand pressed paper painted silver and ivory. A visitor to the White House observed that the pale blue and silver of the frieze "merged



4. In the post Civil War Blue Room black and gilt panels containing silk-like wallpapers reflected French influences. The White House.



5. Louis Comfort Tiffany chose a robin's egg blue for the Blue Room in 1882. The eight-foot frieze of hand pressed paper was painted silver and ivory. The Library of Congress.

without an emphatic separation into the plain tint of the walls."[5]

Wall sconces, three feet in diameter, were composed of a mosaic of glass which gave the appearance of jewels. Less than ten years later Tiffany's work was gone. It was replaced with a neoclassical paper in 1891 under the direction of the decorator, Edgar S. Yergason, working for the William H. Post & Co. of Hartford, Connecticut. The blue damask-like paper had a heavy frieze with a swag motif. Yergason worked again in the room in 1899 during the McKinley administration to create a room termed "colonial in style."[6] For the first time, the walls were covered by stretched fabric (Figure 6). A pale shade of robin's egg blue damask interwoven with silver was stretched on panels within ivory and gold plaster moldings. Over each panel was a bracket of Etruscan gold whose branches carried electric bulbs.

The remainder of the walls were covered with a darker shade of blue silk in a diaper pattern. The deep frieze was an embossed under-print of garland and wreaths; one report noted that it resembled costly lace embroidery appliqued on fabric.

This was beginning of the colonial revival White House which reached its peak in the 1902 work of McKim, Mead and White for Theodore Roosevelt (Figure 7). They put particular emphasis on this room because of its historical importance. The heavy, corded blue silk had top and bottom borders of a Greek key design which also appeared in the plaster ceiling. This wall covering was replicated in several administrations in the first half of the 20th century. The 1902 wainscoting was painted a white enamel.

During the Truman renovation of 1948-1952 (Figure 8), the corded silk was replaced with a



6. In 1899, a colonial revival Blue Room was created with blue damask stretched on panels within ivory and gold plaster moldings. The Library of Congress.

blue silk fabric with large classical floral motifs in gold which remained until 1962 when, during the Kennedy administration, decisions were made to furnish the room in a style more appropriate to the French furnishings of the Monroe era purchased for the room in 1818 (Figure 9). The walls were no longer blue but covered with a striped satin fabric in two tones of cream. The walls of the Madison room provided the precedent for the color.[7] A blue valance trimmed with a tasseled French Empire purple border encircled the room below the cornice. This treatment, taken from a French Empire document, reflected Mrs. Kennedy's interest in French design and was the work of Stefan Boudin, a French designer who had worked at Malmaision, Napoleon's house outside of Paris.

Since 1972 the walls have been covered in a reproduction paper copied from an early 19th century Jacquemart & Benard design (Figure 10). With a beige picot ground and neoclassical borders this paper represents the continuity in the use of French papers in the White House.

Occasionally wall treatments reflected the nation's history. Shortly after the Civil War, the Entrance Hall saw a redecoration with patriotic motifs. Eagles, shields and the initials "U.S." were painted in red, white and blue by Hubert Shutter whose company did much work in the White House of Ulysses S. Grant. Over the mantels on the east and west walls he painted

panels with cameos of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. An outer border duplicated some of the architectural features of the exterior stonework. These painted surfaces survived until 1891, when they were replaced with an elaborate plaster relief design featuring eagles and flags.

The State Dining Room, a room which is in constant use for official dinners and receptions, has seen a variety of wall treatments. There was a patterned paper there in the 1840s and the same French black and gold panels as in other White House rooms of the late 1860s. In 1882, under the direction of Louis C. Tiffany, the walls were painted in "glowing yellows" with an elaborate painted and stencilled frieze. McKim, Mead and White commissioned the Herter Brothers firm of New York to provide a richly carved oak paneling in 1902, giving the room the appearance of an English club. During the Truman administration, a decision was made to paint the paneling a light celadon green. Several members of the Commission on the Renovation of the White House including William Adams Delano, one of the major architects of the Georgian revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, recommended the change.[8] In 1961, the walls were painted ivory and in 1985 a glazed umber was applied to highlight the architectural details of the room.

Office and family areas of the house have had various wall treatments. An artist who sketched President Lincoln's office in 1864 noted that the wallpaper was "dark green with gold stars."[9] It had been on the walls for many years. In the old 19th century cabinet room



7. In 1902, a heavy corded blue silk with gold Greek key borders was stretched on the walls. The White House.

used by President Bush as a private office, the walls were painted a pale green and glazed in 1989.

The walls of the long corridor in the second floor family quarters were covered by a dark green burlap by Charles McKim in 1902 for President and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt but a decade later Ellen Wilson, who disliked the dark walls, had a Japanese grass cloth dyed amber installed. Today, that same corridor is painted a bright yellow to bring a bit of sunshine into an area with no natural light except for the large Palladian windows on the east and west ends of the house.

These examples provide a short review of the varied wall treatments used throughout the White House in its nearly 200 year history. The continuous changes in the house have reflected the tastes and styles of the residents of the house and the times in which they lived in the President's House.

* * *



8. During the Truman renovation of 1952, the walls were covered with a blue silk having a classical gold floral motif. The White House.



9. A satin fabric in two tones of cream with a blue French Empire style valance was selected for the Blue Room during the Kennedy administration. The White House.

NOTES

[1]William Seale, *The President's House: A History* (Washington, D.C.: The White House Historical Association, 1986), p. 77.

[2]Catherine Lynn Frangiamore to Clement E. Conger, November 8, 1983. Office of the Curator, the White House.

[3]James Monroe. Message to Congress, 5 January 1825. House of Representatives Report 79. 18th Congress, 2nd Session (1825), p. 160.

[4]Wilson H. Faude, "Associated Artists and the American Renaissance in Decorative Arts." *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 110 (1975), p. 108-110.

[5]"The New Decorations of the White House," *Harper's Weekly*, January 6, 1883, p. 11.

[6]"Decoration of the Blue Parlor, Executive Mansion," Letters Received, 1899. Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Record Group 42. National Archives. Copy in the Office of the Curator, the White House.

[7]Office of Mrs. John F. Kennedy. White House press release, January 4, 1963.

[8]William Adams Delano to General Glen D. Edgerton, April ll, 1951. Records of the Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion. Record Group 220. National Archives.

[9]The drawing by C. K. Stellwagon, dated October 1864, is in the collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

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10. The Blue Room as it appears today. The White House.

In Situ Cleaning of Wallpaper: A Range of Techniques

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The reluctance to keep historic wallpaper *in situ* usually has to do with its severely deteriorated appearance and discoloration. Sometimes appearance can be improved through dry cleaning of surface dirt or wet cleaning with ammoniated water to remove oily grime. However, the best results are likely to be obtained by removal, thorough washing, repair, inpainting, and reinstallation, and an example of this approach is included for comparison.

The degree of degradation of the paper and the soundness of the media will determine the safety and success of the approach. An alkaline environment contributes to preservation and must be retained or created for future preservation.

The Wallpaper Structure

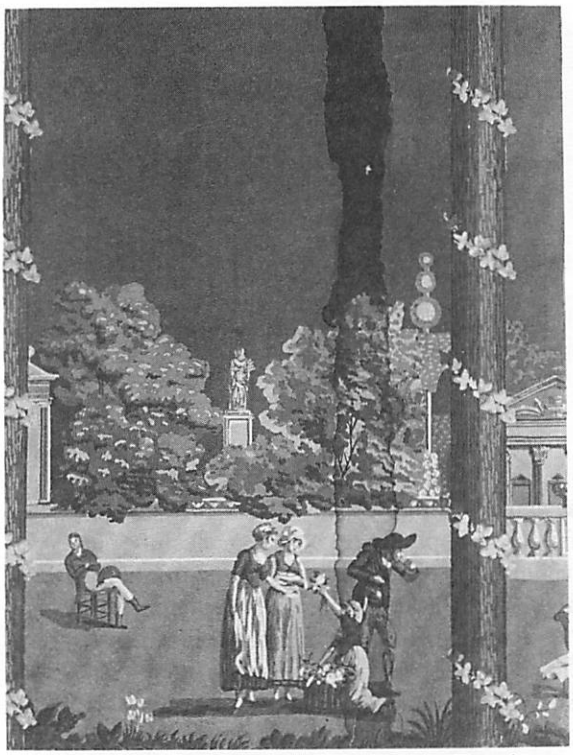
Simply described, wallpaper is a paper carrier for a printed design which can be either a repeating pattern or a series of related scenes. Paper in America can easily have originated in Europe, especially in France or England, so the history of wallpaper making in Europe is relevant to our discussion. By some quirk of fate, all three papers discussed here are of French origin and printed in gouache or distemper colors by designs carved in woodblocks. The paper was formed into long drops in one of two ways: 1) small sheets of mold-made paper were glued end-to-end, or 2) continuous paper was formed on a long screen in a manufacturing technique developed in the 1790s but not applied to wallpaper manufacture until the 1830s.

The quality of the papers themselves accounts for part of the reason for success or failure in applying a particular cleaning technique. Wallpaper was never printed on the highest quality of paper being manufactured. Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, the fibers of the paper were largely linen and cotton. Since the mid-to-late nineteenth century and all of the twentieth century, wallpaper has been commonly printed on paper made from woodpulp fibers.

A *"rag" paper* of linen and cotton fibers will retain strength and flexibility as it ages. The paper fibers break down to form organic acids and yellowish-brown, water soluble color bodies. As the paper fibers break down and become shorter, the paper becomes more brittle, tears easily, and may even crack apart on the walls. However, because the fibers are very long in the first place, the paper retains flexibility for a long time.

In contrast, *woodpulp paper* fibers are far shorter to begin with. The woodpulp is not highly processed or purified, and organic acids form as part of the aging and decomposition of woodpulp fibers. The formation of acid works to hasten the degradation process. Woodpulp paper is therefore usually highly discolored, even to a dark brown color. The color bodies dissolve quickly in water, migrate, and form severe tide lines. The paper loses strength quickly as the fibers shorten until it actually becomes powdery.

The *medium* of wallpaper has varied throughout its history. All three papers discussed here, however, had pigment in a glue medium, probably made from vegetable gums



1. French scenic paper reissued in 1924 by Huard; woodblocks produced in 1805-1810. Designer and manufacturer unknown. Title unknown.



2. Wall after treatment with a propriety wallpaper cleaner.

and not from animal glues. To make these papers, a coating was brushed onto the long sheet of paper; woodblocks were then pressed into thick paint, then struck onto the paper. Every color resulted from a separately carved woodblock, and each had to be registered perfectly. Thus, the design was made of multiple layers of paint, in some areas building up quite thickly.

The *aging of the glue medium*, whatever the mechanism, has the result of producing a design which becomes more and more fragile and flakes off easily. The thicker the pigment build-up, the more likely the entire structure will flake off down to the ground coat. Extreme care must be used in choosing a treatment technique because of the fragility of the design. Not only might it be brushed off with the swipe of a hand, but it never ceases to be water-soluble.

The Wallpaper Environment

Of all the complex environmental factors which contribute to wallpaper deterioration, only one is of interest here. *Contact with the plaster wall* appears to slow down the deterioration of the paper, whether it is rag or woodpulp. Plaster walls commonly contain lime or calcium carbonate, which are alkaline. Even a single layer of separation from the plaster, for example by a lining fabric, means a more discolored and enbrittled paper.

As evidence, the overlapping seams of many rag papers are browner than the adjacent paper which touches the wall. And the difference in a woodpulp paper lined with cloth and with a poor-quality lining paper versus a woodpulp paper installed directly against the wall can be stunning. The paper fibers in lined paper are often in the worst possible state of preservation. Another woodpulp paper of the same age, but applied directly to the plaster wall, will usually be in a much better state of preservation. This

is consistent with the long-time observation of paper conservators that alkaline papers survive better than acidic papers, hence the revolution in storage of papers to provide them with an alkaline environment.

Interestingly, other kinds of damage accompany a paper applied directly to the wall. The fate of the wall is the fate of the paper. If it is damp, mold grows. If the wall settles and cracks, the paper wrinkles and tears. However, the more integrity the paper has, the more satisfactory are the repairs which can be made to correct these damages. And, most pertinent to this presentation, any application of water for cleaning and repairing on highly degraded paper is a disaster. It is only possible when the paper has been applied directly against plaster.

Treatment Examples

The papers described here show drycleaning, surface wet cleaning, and then several ways of washing. The treatments progress from fairly simple to quite complex. The more thorough the treatment, the better the long-term preservation and the more satisfactory the esthetic results.

The 1924 French scenic paper shown in Figure 1 was printed on continuous, machine-made woodpulp paper. It is lined with a Kraft-type paper liner, and then mounted to canvas. The canvas was pasted to lathe-and-plaster walls of a house built in the late 1930s.

The paper was extremely degraded. It stained severely with any application of water, including the inpainting of losses with watercolor. Besides having surface dirt, the blue ground color was powdery and had drifted down onto the design. One drop on an exterior wall has suffered a severe water damage. This section of paper was entirely removed by the owner before I was called, but luckily it came off in one piece with no further significant damage. The stain illustrates the effect of migration of soluble deterioration particles. The blue turned black and a dark brown stain results elsewhere.

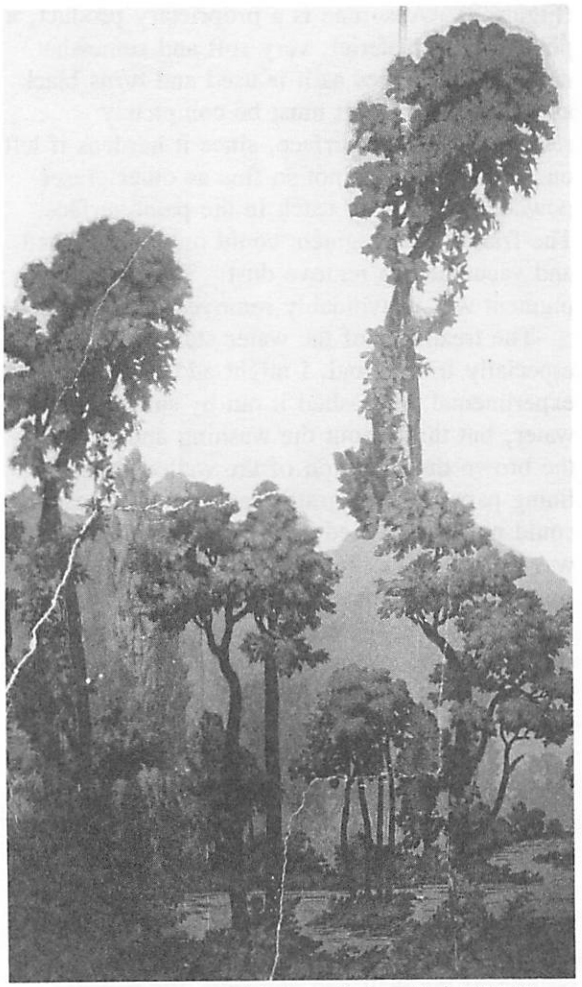
The rest of the room was surface cleaned with Absorene wallpaper cleaner. This removes dust and soot on the surface of the design (Figure 2). Absorene is a proprietary product, a pink doughy material, very soft and somewhat moist. It crumbles as it is used and turns black as it absorbs dirt. It must be completely removed from the surface, since it hardens if left on. However, it is not so fine as other eraser powder, which may catch in the paint surface. The friable blue pigment could only be brushed and vacuumed to remove dust. Some blue pigment was unavoidably removed as well.

The treatment of the water stain was especially tricky, and, I might add, entirely experimental. I washed it out by submersion in water, but throughout the washing and drying the brown discoloration of the wallpaper *and* the lining paper kept migrating around. The paper could not be air dried because of staining, so it was placed on an air suction table to pull the stains toward the back of the paper and canvas. Even so, this drop emerged from treatment darker than its unwashed neighbor and the matte blue background color had to be reapplied in pastels.

The French scenic paper shown in Figure 3 was installed 1929-1930. It is woodblock printed in distemper colors on continuous, machine-made paper, probably with woodpulp content. It was pasted directly to the lathe-and-plaster wall. Even though it was badly damaged physically by settling of the wall and abrasion, the paper fibers still had a good deal of integrity. However, the paper was really firmly attached to the wall, and since it was of fairly poor quality in the first place, removing it was not a reasonable option.

Its appearance was dreadful. A coal furnace had deposited grime on the surface, obscuring the subtleties of the colors. It was extensively overpainted in oils where there was paper loss and damage. The sky area had originally been left as bare paper, but in the early 1970s had been overpainted with white latex paint, probably because the paper had discolored. This served only to contrast with the grimy design, making it uglier still. In fact, only the curator stood fast for preserving the wallpaper, mainly on philosophical grounds.

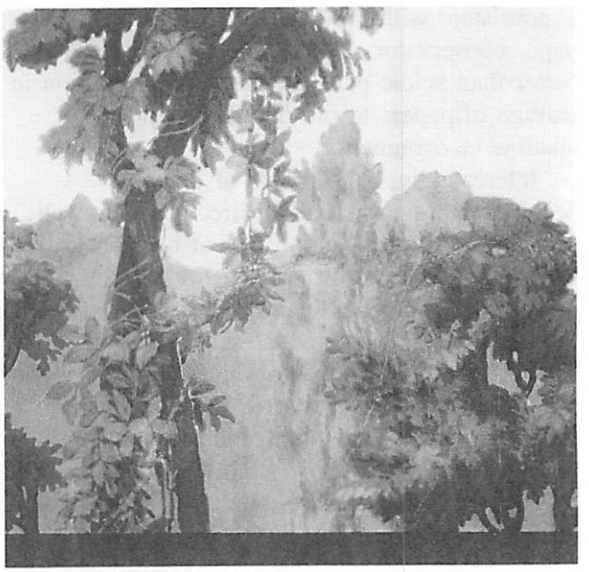
Drycleaning with eraser produced almost no discernible effect. Because the paint was sound, and because the latex paint had to be removed from the edges of the design, I experimented



3. Scenic paper, probably French, installed 1929-30. No title.

with various solvents. Ammonia attacks paint, so I tried that on the overpaint and observed that it cleaned the dirt off too. In fact, acetone was a better remover of the latex paint, so both solvents were used--acetone on the overpaint, ammonia and water on the surface grime (Figure 4). It was applied on soft cotton swabs with a rolling motion. The strength of the solution must be judged by the experience of the conservator.

WORD OF WARNING: Water is a powerful solvent to wallpaper media and can cause great harm to the paper itself. Like all conservation treatments, it should only be used by an experienced professional conservator. This is certainly not a treatment for the well-intentioned amateur.



4. After treatment with solvents.

The third French scenic wallpaper, "Le Parc Francais," was made by Jaquemart et Benard in 1831 (Figure 5).

It is woodblock printed in distemper colors on rag paper support; each drop was formed by attaching individual sheets of hand-molded paper end-to-end. This wallpaper illustrates beautifully the benefits of washing to remove acids, discoloration products, old paste, and Elmer's glue. The paper was removed from the site and treated at the laboratory of the Northeast Document Conservation Center. A washing technique first devised in Europe, called the blotter washing technique, was adapted to the treatment of this paper.

The gouache was flaking and water soluble. This washing system places the paper on wet blotters which are supported on an incline. Water is kept running under the blotter through a mylar "manifold." This spreads the water out evenly across the top of the incline and it gently soaks down between two blotters in a continuous flow. The paper and gouache paint are thoroughly soaked, but the movement of the water pulls the dirt and discoloration back through the paper and it washes out behind and below. The paint is extremely vulnerable, but sits undisturbed on the surface. After the paste was cleaned off and the paper washed again, it was placed on an air suction table for a final rinse and consolidation of the old paint with



5. "Le Parc Francais," Jaquemart et Benard, 1831.



6. After treatment.

fresh gelatin. A buffering agent, magnesium carbonate, was introduced in the air suction table wash. Other conservation steps followed, filling losses, backing with Japanese paper and canvas, and inpainting. More alkaline buffer was used to mix up the paste for lining. The paper was rehung in its original position (Figure 6).

The improvement in appearance was so dramatic that the new reproduction border which was hung against the old paper required no modification to tone down its "newness."

Summary

Drycleaning versus wetcleaning. Drycleaning uses erasers like powdered draftman's or Opaline pads, hard vinyls like Staedtler, art gums, or doughy wall cleaners like Absorene to remove just the surface layer of dirt. Since the distemper paint is often soft or friable, some abrasion of the design is possible. Wetcleaning uses water with an additive like ammonia to dissolve the surface dirt and pick it up on a cotton swab. This works well on an oily deposit which a coal furnace might generate. Counterindications for any cleaning technique are: 1) the paint layer is not sound; 2) rubbing burnishes the surface; 3) the results are uneven or splotchy. Counterindications for surface wet cleaning also include a paper which is highly deteriorated and water stains easily.

"In situ" treatment versus removal and complete treatment. When a wallpaper has enough integrity to withstand removing it from the wall, excellent results can be achieved by washing the paper in one of three ways: 1) submersion in water; 2) on a wet blotter with water flowing underneath; 3) on the air suction

table. The condition of the paint layer will be the main indicator of which technique to chose. Any use of water on a distemper paint is an extremely dangerous undertaking. It should only be part of a complete conservation treatment including medium consolidation and reinforcing backings of the paper. The great benefit of washing is to wash out the build-up of organic acids, buffer the paper, and strengthen the paper with backings.

Long-term preservation in an alkaline environment. The new alkaline environment for the paper fibers is the condition which will extend its life. The alkalie is usually in the form of magnesium or calcium carbonate and is introduced in a buffering solution or as an addition to the paste in lining.

* * *

Embossed Wallcoverings: The Ideal Choice for Your Walls

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For centuries, homeowners have been asking "what shall we do with our walls?" The dominant feature of turn-of-the century walls was texture or at the very least the illusion of texture. This texture could be achieved in an endless variety of forms, including wallpapers printed to look like grasscloth, tapestry, and scenic murals. One of the most prominent modes of achieving texture was the installation of embossed wallcoverings and leatherettes. This paper will look at these materials, what they are, how they were used, and how we can recreate this period feeling.

Leatherettes were designed to resemble stamped gilded leather. Deeply embossed cardboard was colored and textured to echo its more expensive counterpart. Thanks to the technical ingenuity and imagination of the wallpaper industry in America and abroad, everyone--regardless of their economic status--could enjoy luxurious wallcoverings (or at least the look of those wallcoverings).

Even less expensive wallpaper was manufactured with a low relief or embossing and decoratively colored to mimic leatherettes (and of course to aspire to masquerade as the real thing). Leatherettes and their facsimiles were sold prefinished; they can be easily identified by their low relief and their paper or cardboard feeling/fiber.

In 1877, an Englishman named Frederick Walton invented a product that turned the course of wallcovering history. This product, Lincrusta Walton, was considered by many to be the utopian wallcovering because of the following characteristics: A mixture of linseed oil and wood pulp was embossed in a fluid state under great pressure and then hung to dry. The result was a deep relief material, that came to be known as "the indestructible wallcovering." An advertising claim that it certainly lived up to, especially given the number of intact examples found today. It also had the extremely desirable characteristic of being sanitary or washable--a trait advocated by home decorators and periodicals of the period. And last, but certainly not least, it had the amazing ability to be finished to resemble an endless variety of other, more expensive materials such as gilded leather, metal, plaster, and wood. A quality that made it desirable to a diverse range of economic classes from the Rockefellers to a log cabin owner in a Colorado mining town.

Anaglypta, introduced in 1884, was also embossed under great pressure while in a fluid state, but it used paper pulp as its filler, resulting in a lighter-weight wallcovering that was less expensive and easier to hang. Like its predecessor, Lincrusta, anaglypta could be finished to resemble an endless variety of other, more expensive materials. And it too had a deep relief, that didn't flatten even when moist.

Lincrusta and anaglypta had many rivals and imitators. "Tynecastle," "Cameoid," "Subercorium," "Lignomur," "Corticine," "Cordelova," "Salamander," and "Calcorian" are but a few of the brand names for relief wall decorations or hangings made from paper, rubber, cork, rubber, wood fiber, canvas, and even asbestos. Introduced in the late 19th-century, these materials reached a peak of popularity in the early 1900s, with patterns being produced and published by many prominent designers including Christopher

Dresser, Walter Crane, and C.F.A. Voysey.

Where does one typically find these embossed wallcoverings? One location is high-traffic areas like hallways where, thanks to their durability, they were considered the ideal dado... able to withstand furniture moving as well as people passing by (for decades, as we've discovered). Another location is the dining room--often as a high dado (covering about two-thirds of the wall from the baseboard toward the ceiling) sometimes with a coordinating border. And hardly a decorating guidebook or publication could go by without recommending their use over plaster surfaces to hide future or present cracks, particularly on ceilings and stairwells! "The ideal way to update your older home," "Revive those unsightly, discolored walls without replastering" touted the publications and advertisements.

Armed with this bit of historical background, let's explore what is available to us today in achieving these particular textures in our turn-of-the-century interiors. First we are extremely fortunate that Crown Berger Limited of England is still manufacturing Lincrusta and anaglypta today (although anaglypta currently goes by the product name of Anaglypta SupaDurable).

These materials are sold in their raw or unfinished state, off-white in color. Through the use of faux finishing techniques, they can be finished to resemble a variety of materials including Cordovan leather, metal, wood, and plaster. Many of these techniques, including a leather look, are described in a finishing brochure offered through Crown. The process is fairly straightforward. The material is hung/installed and primed after the wallpaper glue has completely dried. Then an alkyd base coat is applied. After it's dry, a translucent glaze is applied and manipulated with brushes and/or rags to create the desired effect. The finish is then protected with varnish.

Some of Crown's patterns are period in feeling, but a few are produced from original or retrofitted rollers, such as a 1910 dado pattern designed by T. Sheffield. In addition to fills, friezes, and dados, they also produce non-directional ceiling papers.

Unfortunately, no one is currently producing leatherettes. But there are some options available. As we've seen, lincrusta and anaglypta can be finished to resemble leather. Also, there are some "naugahyde" fabrics and wallcoverings available--but beware of the color palette; selection of appropriate colors such as soft browns and umber reds is limited.

Flat wall surfaces can also be glazed, stippled, and/or ragged to resemble leather. Ideally these "leatherized" wall areas would then be segmented. Period reference books offer an endless variety of ways to divide the walls, horizontally and vertically. Wood strips, anywhere from 1/4-inch to approximately 3-inches wide were one method to articulate the wall division. Borders, often embossed and die cut or stencilled, were another popular method.

Stencilling opens up another whole range of possibilities, including creating a turn-of-the-century border over a leather finish. Fortunately today with the increased interest in early 1900 interiors, period-style borders stencilled onto canvas are even available by mail.

* * *

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Fabric Wallcoverings: Historic Use, Cleaning and Conservation

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Over the centuries, fabrics have both vied with and complemented such other forms of wall decoration such as masonry, plasterwork, woodpanelling, wallpaper, painting, and stenciling to define interiors. Furnishing fabrics offer rich and visible clues to the culture, artistic ingenuity, technological advances, and fashionable influences of a given period. When silk, wool, linen, cotton, and synthetic fibers are combined with dyes and pigments, they can provide walls with color, pattern, warmth, beauty, and acoustical benefits. Fabric environments can also emote feelings of psychological comfort, power, and prestige. Their study can be fascinating for the historian and curator; their reproduction can be an invaluable resource to the decorator and designer, and an immeasurable pleasure to the homeowner or to the museum visitor. Hence, their preservation is crucial in our understanding and enjoyment of the past.

Historic Use

The use of fabric wall coverings has a long and rich history. Virtually everything has been used to decorate or cover a wall surface. Here, wallcoverings will be broken down into two categories: those textiles meant to line the wall permanently, by means of stretching and anchoring; and those meant to cover a surface temporarily, by means of draping. Tapestries are generally in the latter category. They are included here because they make up a large and important part of historic wall coverings. Long before fabrics were adhered permanently to walls, tapestries were used to enhance walls aesthetically and to maintain warmth. Our Euro-American traditions for covering walls with fabric can be traced to the Medieval period, when wealthy Europeans hung tapestries of wool, silk, and metallic threads. Considered a status symbol, they would be woven as individual units, or in a set. They could be easily transported to different spaces, even paraded, as they only needed to be secured at the top, providing a luxurious drape. When lodgings were more stationary, tapestries were also immobilized and set into the wall with dado. Tapestries here are defined as large (c. 12' x 16') handwoven textiles with pictorial images made by discontinuous wefts (i.e., not carried the full width of fabric), and generally not having a repeat pattern, except for perhaps at the borders. Less affluent interiors were embellished with hangings of wool and linen that were painted or drawn. Known as "poor man's tapestries," these emulated the fashion of the day. Others, no doubt, used whatever textile stuffs that were available to them to decorate and insulate their living chambers. Likewise, from Medieval times sumptuous fabrics such as brocades, damasks, and velvets were used as hangings in wealthy homes. These compound weave structures produced fabrics of repeat patterns, using continuous and/or discontinuous dyed wefts.

During the seventeenth century wealthy homes hung the above fabrics, while more modest interiors used cheaper fabrics, or stenciled decorations to imitate those costlier fabrics. The practice of using a similar weave and color of fabric for walls, windows, and

upholstery was associated with the influence of Robert Adams in the 1770s and 1780s. This fashion lasted well into the 19th century, as well as to the present day. During the first half of the 19th century there appears to be a wide repertory of materials that held fashion. Elaborate silk brocades and damasks, glazed taffetas and wools, as well as plain satins, taffetas, and printed calicoes ended up stretched over walls. Technology greatly facilitated the lavish use of textile goods for interiors. Engraved copper plate printing, developed in France in 1770, created a rage for printed cotton and linen goods; the invention of the Jacquard loom, perfected in France in 1801, and later introduced into England and America in the 1820s, provided greater quantities of elaborately woven patterns in silk and wool; and the invention in 1856 of the first synthetic dye "mauvine" by the Englishman, Perkins, led to a new range of inexpensive, dyed fabric goods. These innovations in textile manufacturing produced profuse amounts of fabric choices, colorways, and patterns to an even larger market of Victorians in the latter half of the 19th century. Numerous revivals of tastes and reform movements were seen during this time, leaving a rich legacy of highly decorated interiors that are the bulk of extant historic fabric wallcoverings today. This explosion of commercially made textile stuffs created a decline for the handweaving of tapestries throughout the 19th century. But the taste for tapestries has reoccurred over the last century, and has always held a special place for stately interiors.[1] Around the turn of the century, there was in vogue the practice of using Jacquarded "tapestry-like" fabrics to decorate such special rooms as libraries in American homes. However, the majority of rooms in the United States that are decorated with fabrics tend to have panels of repeat patterned textiles that are stitched together at the selvedges, stretched vertically, and secured to moldings with tacks, nails, staples and/or glue.

Problems Associated with Fabric Wallcoverings

Tapestries

Problems generally associated with tapestries are: slits that occur when the silk used to sew together parallel designs weakens with age and breaks; silk weft elements tend to disintegrate before wool; accumulation of dust causes distortion of imagery; insect and vermin damage; distortions caused by improper hanging with rings or nails, and tearing when there has been inadequate support of the tapestry. Fortunately, tapestries were intended to be removed from the wall for vacuuming, immersion cleaning, slit repair, reweaving, strapping, and lining. The above are conventional procedures that professional conservators undertake in their laboratories.

Permanent or Stretched Textiles

Immobilized fabrics may have the following problems: they wick and release moisture (humidity, condensation, and water), which in turn can cause mildew, staining, and dye discharge; different fibers react differently to varying temperature and humidity conditions, which in turn can cause "bagging and drumming," and vulnerability to tears and physical disintegration; the fabric-lined wall can act as a giant "dust cloth" absorbing any and all particulate matter in the air; nails, tacks, and staples can and usually do rust, even with moderate humidity changes; animal and vegetable glues can discolor and harden over time; and most curiously, uneven fading, and ghost images from decorative objects hung from the walls.

Wall coverings that are stretched and permanently attached to the wall were never intended to be treated as the above mentioned tapestries. So what can be done to clean and treat the inherent problems with this unique wall surface?

A Case Study

Background

Hawthorn Hill, the Wright brothers' home in Dayton, Ohio, built in 1914, typifies many of the problems associated with permanent fabric wall coverings. It is presented here as a case in point for cleaning and treatment. The library is

the only room still authentically furnished as Orville Wright had left it at his death in 1948. That library measures approximately 12' x 18' with two north-facing windows. There is a set of leaded glass French doors facing west leading into the hallway, and there is a set of pocket doors facing east leading into the living room. Custom-made open wooden book shelves flank the south wall and half of the east and west walls. The ceiling is painted, and the oak floor varnished. There is a HVAC unit in the left window well of the north wall.

The walls are lined with gold dyed cotton and silk damask. The panels are stitched at the selvedges, and secured to moldings with tacks. The tack lines are covered with decorative gimp adhered with animal skin glue.

Problems

The tack heads holding the gimp were visible in places, had oxidized, and had discolored the damask fabric and gimp. The animal skin glue has seeped through the surface in areas, and was discolored and brittle. There were detached areas of gimp throughout, especially at the top corners of the door frame, above the bookcases, and under the cornice.

There were isolated vertical and horizontal tears throughout the damask panels. There were dark discolorations behind the hanging pictures. This was created by air currents depositing soot and dust. There were water stains (tidelines) on an interior wall from possible plumbing problems.

In addition, there was isolated bagging of the damask located above the sofa. This was perhaps due to humidity changes, or from visitors leaning their heads back onto the wall. There were irregular weaving slubs throughout the damask structure, which collected dirt unevenly. The overall damask surface was dingy and gradually darkened as it neared the ceiling. There was a slight musty and smoky smell in the room emanating from the damask walls.

Treatment

To remove the fabric from this site would cause considerable damage by the extraction of the tacks and glue. Subsequently, it would be difficult to handle wall-sized areas of fabric without separating the panels at the seams, and thus, disrupting more of the structural integrity of fabric membrane. Traditional wet cleaning would cause shrinking and possible distortions as it dried. Restretching the fabric would place extreme stress on a weave structure already weakened by 75 years of tension. In addition, there was no extra yardage to work with. Hence, it would be difficult to compensate for any damage or loss. Even though reproduction fabrics abound, they still would not come close to matching the color, pattern, and wear of the original.

Therefore, an alternative to conventional textile cleaning was necessary. An investigation of cleaning techniques for wall coverings included the evaluation of commercial spray and suction methods, "steam cleaning" devices, and surface cleaning with foam. Spray/suction and steam cleaning methods offer little control in the suction apparatus and no guarantee as to the thoroughness of removal of the cleaning agent.

The use of a foam cleaner showed more potential as a method to surface clean the walls. The fabric surfaces were first vacuumed with a soft bristle attachment and low powered suction. Then the stretched fabric was surface cleaned with a commercial foam solution.[2] The process consisted of agitating water, sodium laurel sulfate (Orvus W.A. paste, an anionic detergent used frequently by textile conservators in the United States), isopropyl alcohol and other ingredients at a pH of 10. When gently spread over the fabric with a flat applicator, the foam wicks into the surface. The foam was then removed and the surface of the fabric neutralized with a defoaming agent consisting of water and acetic acid carried in a natural sponge, and applied by hand to the surface in a forward and backward motion. The remaining moisture was poulticed with cotton terry cloth toweling and drying was accelerated with electric fans.

The advantages of this procedure are that it can be controlled by hand, and that the structure was not entirely wetted-out, so the surface air-dries very quickly. The wall covering was cleaned *in situ*, with the foam method, and there was no isolated stress, damage or mechanical stress that would be unavoidable with immersion cleaning and reattachment. The wall covering regained a natural sheen in appearance,

discolorations moved or were softened, and the musty odor was gone.

The slits were stabilized with conventional conservation treatment systems using dyed cotton fabric underlayments, couching and spannstich stitches[3], cotton thread, and a curved needle. The gimp was resecured with running stitches, cotton thread, and a curved needle.

Recommendations for New Installation

The following steps may prevent future fabric-lined installations from the possible problems inherent in covering walls: Seal outside walls with standard vapor barriers; build out surface with furring strips; seal wood strips with polyurethane varnish or latex paint; cover with another layer of vapor barrier; stretch the barrier surface with cotton muslin or canvas; sew the panels of fabric along the selvedge with a machine stitch that will allow for some give; stretch the fabric over muslin-covered surface with moderate tension; and use rust proof staples for all attaching components.

* * *

NOTES

[1]Phillips, Barty, *Fabrics and Wallpapers: Sources, Design and Inspiration*, Bulfinch Press, 1991.

[2]The ingredients include water, sodium sesquicarbonate, tetrasodium pyrophosphate, sodium sulfate, sodium laurel sulfate, and isopropyl alcohol. Foamovator Rug Solution, Duraclean International, Deerfield, IL, 60015.

[3]A German term for a two-step stitch using a continuous thread. This consists of a long stitch floating perpendicular to and over warps or wefts and short holding stitches placed at several equidistant points.

* * *

American Wallpaper Installation:

Historic Technique and Modern Guidelines

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This paper will discuss some of the techniques typical of American wallpaper installation. Borderwork, paneling and trimming technique, all of which affect appearance, are important concerns for those who seek to understand historic workmanship. Along the way the development of the trade will be outlined and some important paperhanging manuals mentioned.

Unlike interior house painting, which was carried out with raw materials, early wallpaper was a relatively "processed" product. It was dependent for its success on an international network of papermakers, designers, block-cutters, paper-stainers and retailers. Wallpaper was rare before 1750 and not manufactured domestically until 1760.[1] It was only after the new federal government was founded in 1789 that the American wallpaper industry became significant.[2]

By this time in Europe wallpaper was broadening its market base. It was embraced by the new government in France as a democratic decoration, ushering in a golden age. And by 1790 the Eckhardts of England, who boasted royal patronage, were advertising paper hangings "...so Appropriated to the various Descriptions of Houses, that the Expense may suit Persons in every Class of Life."[3] Wallpaper use had begun in these countries in the lesser rooms of the merchant class and worked its way up the social ladder, but the reverse seems to have happened in America, where early wallpaper was relatively expensive.

Like the product, early paperhangers were scarce, often "imported," and concentrated in the large cities. Surviving installations, particularly away from the cities, point to the lack of a native professional class of paperhangers. Borderwork was often casually done; mitering at corners and balancing the pattern are two conventions that were sometimes ignored. Wallpaper was often applied directly to plaster and even to wood planks--in the latter case, much to the detriment of the wallpaper.

Despite these drawbacks, wallpaper caught on; the raw materials needed for installation (tacks, glue size, wheat paste) were readily available, and wallpaper traveled well. It became an ideal carrier of fashion, from London and Paris to the large cities of the Eastern Seaboard, and then out to the countryside. Fortuitously, most early wallpaper was sold here in handjoined rolls, not individual sheets.[4] Perhaps rolls were sold more often than individual sheets because they were easier to install. Single sheet installation was complex, as drawings made in the 1730s by Frenchman Jean Michel Papillon show (Figure 1).

Borders and Paneling

Papillon's drawings, which include 85 scenes of paperstaining and hanging, are an important source for studying technique; they show borders between strips, and around perimeters of panels, frames, and walls; this last resulted in a double course of border at the inside corners of the room. In England, the fashion for borders between strips on the walls, an echo of fabric wall treatment, persisted into the 1790s.[5]



1. Drawings by Jean Michel Papillon show single sheet installation in the 1730s. Reprinted with permission from Wallcoverings, Windows & Interior Fashion, Stamford, CT.

One of the earliest surviving examples of American border use is at the Wentworth-Coolidge house in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where a ca. 1750-1770 flock installation is bordered by the same wallpaper cut into narrow strips. Borderwork covered irregularities in trimming as well as tacks (an occasional alternative to paste); the neatness of finish that it provided, particularly after the neo-classical style took hold in the late 18th century, was aesthetically important. These concerns combined to make border use quite common. Surviving installations suggest that a wide border was often used at the ceiling line, with a narrower border at the chairrail and around moldings. Consult Catherine Lynn's *Wallpapers in America* for more on their decorative uses.[6]

One question with recreating borderwork is whether or not to use a mitering technique (an angled double-cut that unites the border at each directional change). If this technique is done properly the border flows around the corner. But it may not be proper to take infinite pains with borderwork if the original installation was simply overlapped.

James Arrowsmith, writing in England in the 1830s, laments the "unfinished appearance" caused by the recent practice of abandoning borders, which he asserts is an overreaction to the "...old mode of putting on borders of preposterous breadth about every part." He suggests a compromise: to apply borders at the top and bottom only, with an inch-wide border for small rooms.[7] His important trade manual (which went through at least 6 reprintings in this country, starting in 1852) also discusses paneling with wallpaper, which he credits the French with popularizing in around 1790. The French went on to specialize in ornaments, corner blocks and other architectural effects for panels, culminating in the mid-century work of Delicourt.

Art historical interest in wallpaper falls off rapidly after the achievements of Morris and the "art wallpaper" movement, but wallpaper as a whole thrived right up to 1925 or so. A U.S. labor department study on the paperhanging trade put domestic production at 300 million rolls per year.[8] Other rollage estimates suggest that per capita consumption of wallpaper at this time surpassed even that of the late Victorian era.

Though Morris had rejected borders in the late 19th century, they continued to be a force in the mainstream market. Inspired by recent wall treatments based on classical decoration, paneling resurfaced after 1900; it was simply done, with borders and inch-wide binders replacing moldings, and large-figured or textured effects used for the fillings. Manuals of the period carried guidelines for "French" and "space" paneling (Figure 2).

"Crown effects," extra-wide friezes and "growths" were specialties of high-style English wallpaper and had a limited currency here, in a simplified form. These types were widely used in working and middle class homes of the

period. *Inside Texas*, a recent study by Cynthia Brandinmarte, is particularly good at showing the variety of border, frieze, and ceiling treatments possible in the American mass-market. Half of its 300 documentary photos show wallpaper.[9]

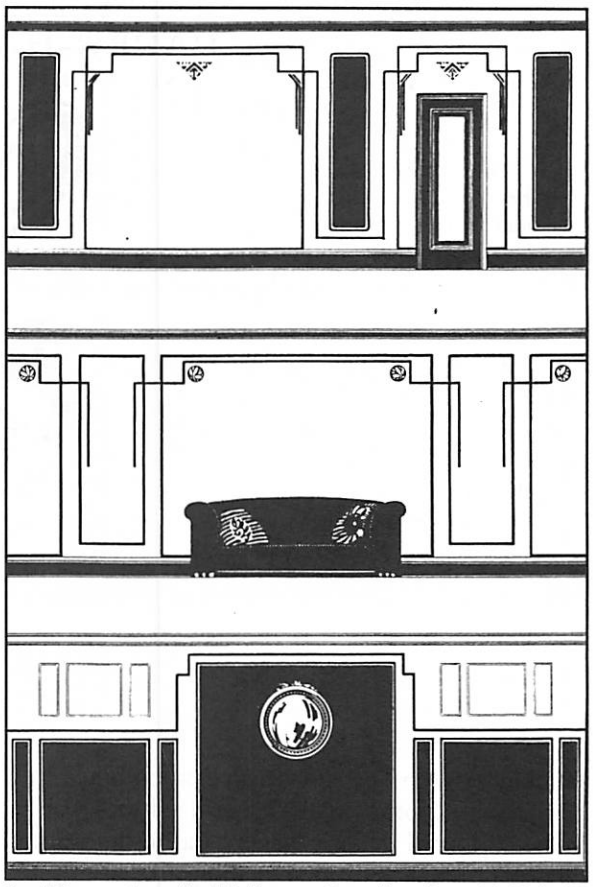
Trimming and Brushing Techniques

Papillon's drawings include diagrams for trimming the individual sheets with shears at the top, bottom, either side and at right angles, depending on their installation. In England, the tax stamp for wallpaper was sometimes avoided by installing sheets of ungrounded paper, then painting the whole.[10] There are documentary references to this method in America.

After the handjoined "piece" (roll) was achieved in the early 18th century, the paperhanger had only to trim one selvedge to the pattern. When hanging, he overlapped successive strips, progressing away from the light source in order to avoid leaving an overlap that would cast a shadow. A "butt" (flush) seam would not become standard practice until 1900 or so, and then only for the better papers. The wavering seams on much early work are suggestive of why wallpaper was overlapped to begin with. It was simply very difficult to trim a perfectly straight line using shears or a straightedge and knife.

Also, rag and cheap pulp papers were thinner and conformed to the pressure from a seam roller easily; an overlap did not "stand out" as it does today. And an overlap was safer; whether block-printed with distemper or roller-printed with the thinner clay-based inks, most colors remained water-sensitive. Wallpaper could not be washed during installation; it was 1933 before Imperial took out Patent #1,950,279 for washable wallpaper; until then, if housekeeping demanded it, wallpaper was sized and varnished after installation.

Wet-trimming (using a knife and straightedge to remove the selvedge after pasting) was described by Arrowsmith and must have been practiced here, at least among professionals. Dry-trimming, in which the entire roll was trimmed with shears, was common, though after the Civil War mechanical devices for trimming became available and were readily accepted.



2. "Suggestions for Wallpaper Paneling," p. 44, Vol. II of Modern Painter and Decorator, by A.S. Jennings, 1921.

The "machine for trimming wall paper" of D. Flower won patent #35,750 on July 1, 1862.[11] A late-19th century manual illustrates improved versions of Flower's hand-operated mechanical trimmer, capable of trimming both sides of an entire roll, and states that "...in the West, trimmers of this class are widely used, and most wallpaper stores are provided with them so that paper bought by the housewife can be supplied already trimmed."[12]

Brushing techniques evolved. Papillon's workers seem to be using their hands to smooth the sheets to the wall (Figure 1); George Washington described the next developmental stage "...with a cloth press it against the wall until all parts stick...."[13] This method persisted in England as late as 1892, according to A.S. Jennings in *Practical Paperhanging*. As cheap wood pulp became common in America, the



PAPER-HANGERS' TOOLS.

THE RIDGELY WALL PAPER KNIFE AND ADJUSTABLE STRAIGHT-EDGE COMBINED.

This TRIMMER is more easily handled than the old straight knife, and in using it there is no danger of cutting the hand, clipping the straight-edge, or snagging the paper.

It has the self acting gauge, which keeps the blade against the straight-edge, and, without changing this gauge in the least, any paper, from Brown Blank to the heaviest Ingrain, can be trimmed.

In shade work, six can be made with the use of it while you would make one in the old way.

KNIFE AND STRAIGHT-EDGE COMBINED.

3. Ridgely Track Trimmer as advertised in the catalogue of the New York Jobbing Branch, National Wallpaper Co., No. 1, Spring, 1894.

familiar "sweep" or soft-bristled smoothing brush was adopted, and a specialized tool was invented to roll delicate papers flat to the wall: this tool, which looked something like a foam-filled paint roller, came direct from the fertile mind of Charles T. Ridgely, of Springfield, Ohio.

Ridgely was born in 1854 and began inventing as a young man; he would eventually hold over 100 tool patents, mostly for painting and decorating. His obituary states that "...after a number of experiments, he perfected a workable smoothing roller in 1873. Two years later, he turned out the first bevel or corner seam roller. The first practical trimmer for trimming wallpaper after it was pasted was placed on the market by Mr. Ridgely in 1885... he received the highest award at the Chicago World's Fair in the decorator's tools section."[14] The track trimmer, in which a blade travels along a groove on a metal straightedge, became a familiar sight in early 20th century manuals, and it continues to be used today (Figure 3).

Lining Materials

The porosity of paper and water-sensitivity of the inks meant that excess pasting could adversely affect the color of wallpaper, and a damp wall could ruin it. In most locations where wallpaper has been hung directly on plaster, the transfer of moisture and seasonal temperature change has eventually saturated the ground, wrecking the wallpaper. Canvas and lining paper were helpful because they absorbed moisture. The papering over of existing wallpaper was purposeful, as well as expedient; the old wallpaper functioned as a lining paper.

A variation was to install a common paper face first to the wall, followed by the finish paper. This was done at Martin Van Buren's "Lindenwald" in Kinderhook, New York, for a Zuber scenic paper around 1840. The imprints from the ink of the small-patterned green paper survive in the plaster beneath the scenic paper. Much later A.A. Kelly was to recommend this method in his *Expert Paperhanger* (1912). Papillon's shop in 18th century France is credited with originating the "false wall" idea, in which battens and cloth create an air space for a damp wall. Reveillon carried these techniques further, adapting wallpaper to spaces in chateaux

previously hung with fabric.[15] Now expensive hangings like flock and "India Papers," installed on cloth, became movables. The tradition of personal involvement by these makers must have been a distinct advantage for the trade.

Development of the Trade

Eric Entwisle reports that 18th century English manufacturers, like Papillon and Reveillon in France, hung or were responsible for hanging their own papers.[16] In America, "throughout the early 18th century, wallpaper manufacturing, selling, and hanging were usually in the province of the upholsterer, like [Plunckett] Fleeson, or the stationer, like [William] Poyntell."[17]

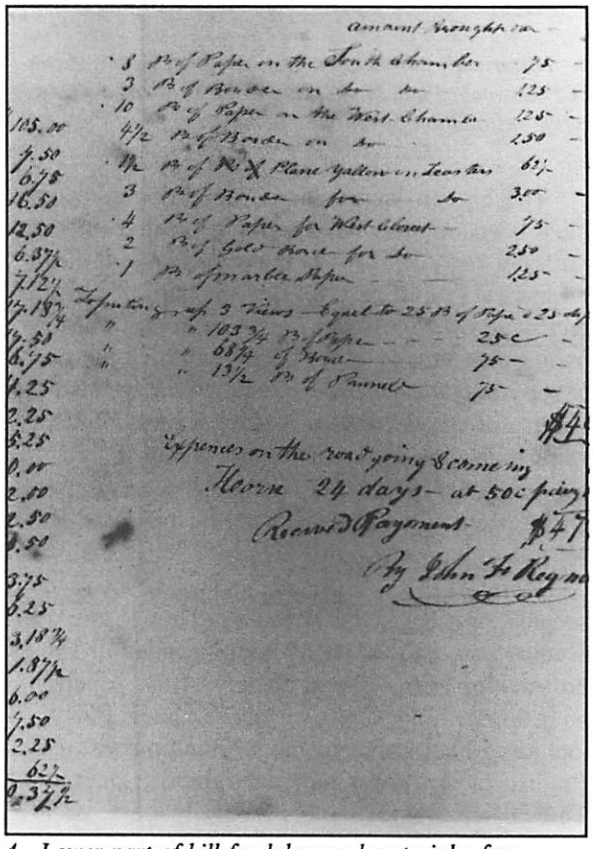
This situation changed gradually during the middle of the century, as "upholders" began to take on more of the responsibility for hanging, in their undefined role as a sort of general contractor.[18] Brock Jobe has said that "the great majority (of those practicing the upholstery trade) came from well-established, local families of the middle and upper strata of society... Boston families clearly considered the upholstery trade a suitable profession for their children."[19] The word "upholsterer" carries different connotations. He could have done the work, or arranged for it to be done; he may even have had a hand in the design.

Early craftsmen often worked a variety of related jobs; a paperhanger could also be a painter or an upholsterer, or all three. Of 246 Southern paperhangers active before 1820, 46% also worked as "painter," and 38% also worked as "upholsterer." 35% of the paperhanger/ upholsterers were immigrants.[20]

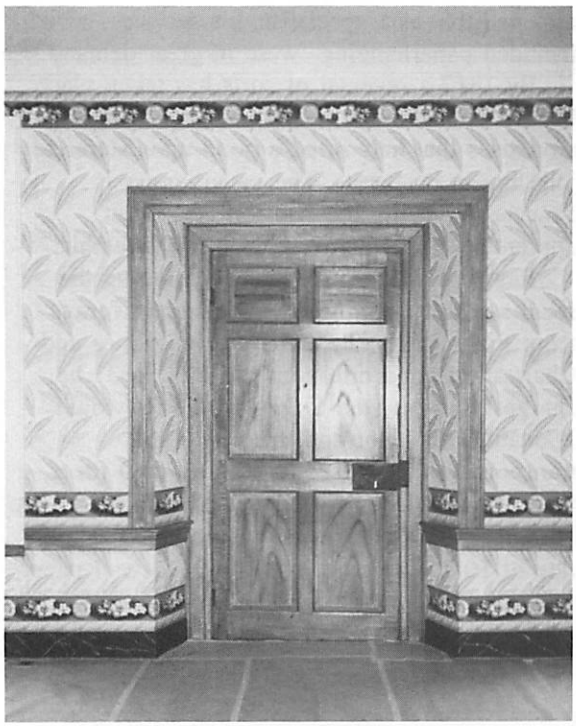
Entwisle has traced the rise of the English professional paperhanger, operating as a distinct trade, to the period 1775-1800.[21] This change is reflected in American newspaper advertising in the Washington and Charleston areas ca. 1795-1815, where the services of newly arrived French and English paperhangers are offered, either solo, or through a retailer of paper hangings.[22] The upholsterer William Neal arrived in 1806 at the age of 33, claiming "many years experience in France and England." He worked in Boston, Baltimore, Richmond, and finally Petersburg, Virginia, where it can be assumed that as a specialist, his services, which included paperhanging, were in great demand.[23]

By 1817 a reversal of sorts has taken place because a Richmond, Virginia, paperhanger advertises that he's hired a good upholsterer to join him in business. The paperhanger is Francis Regnault, Jr., who "...served an apprenticeship of many years in Philadelphia."[24]

Regnault was a busy man, combining the retail sale and hanging of wallpaper in forays from Richmond to Petersburg, Lynchburg and Charleston. In a bill from Dec. 24, 1831 he charges Humbertston Skipwith of Prestwould Plantation for labor and material, (and transportation: "horse" at $0.50 a day) for a total of $479.64. Of the 34 papers listed, 18 are borders. The borderwork was installed at the rate of $0.75 per piece while the sidewall paper was installed at $0.25 per piece (Figure 4).



4. Lower part of bill for labor and materials, from Francis Regnault, Jr. to Humbertston Skipwith, December 24, 1831. (Courtesy of Prestwould Foundation.)



5. Historically several borders were hung upside-down in Prestwould Plantation. This feature was also followed in the installation of reproduction papers.

The higher charge for border installation may have been because borders were printed in multiple rows, but it could also suggest the care necessary to outline the many mantels, chairrails and window coves in this stately home, not to mention the finely done borderwork on the bed canopy and the papered punkah. An unusual feature of the decoration is that several borders were hung upside-down, with shadow lines toward the ceiling. This personal decorating choice was followed during the installation of reproduction wallpapers (Figure 5).

Many of the wallpapers, including all 3 scenics, survive at Prestwould. Though the scenics cost $35.00 each, their installation shows no trace of lining paper. Many of the papers were hung, however, over earlier papers, including over some of the 1799 shipment of English papers from James Duppa of London. The earlier invoice details 11 wallpapers, each with an accompanying border.[25]

Other Publications

In addition to books already cited, trade magazines, especially *House Painting and Decorating* (1885), are important sources of information. Others are *The Wallpaper News and Interior Decorator* and the *Painter's Magazine*. This last published two useful compilations: *739 Paint Questions Answered* (1903) and *1000 More Paint Questions Answered* (1908); wallpaper is not the main focus but both include much technical detail.

The first editor of *House Painting and Decorating*, was A. A. Kelly (1849-1928). He also edited his own *Master Painter* magazine before self-publishing the *Expert* series of decorating books in the early 1900s. In 1912 he wrote the *Expert Paperhanger* which drew on his practical experience as well as editorial work in responding to questions, letters and articles sent in from all around the country. This book is the best all-around text for understanding the workaday world of the paperhanger.

Another practical paperhanger, C. L. Young, wrote a more "modern" manual, *Wallpaper & Wallpapering*, in 1926. Written with the cooperation of the retailer and manufacturers associations, it presents a full picture of the mass-market wallpaper trade around 1925.

Modern Guidelines

Whether in the historic home or the designer market, most reproduction wallpapers are hand-screens or European pulp-type papers. Because these types often require lining paper, hand trimming and correct border technique, they are best handled by an experienced professional paperhanger.

At one extreme are the archival specifications suitable for an historic house. These include acid-free lining papers and non-commercial sizing and pastes, mixed to archival standards. The methods used for installation should be reversible and safe for the historic fabric. Plaster should be sized with glue rather than sealed with alkyd or acrylic. Notwithstanding the fact that lining materials may not have been used in the original installation, technical advantages mandate the use of liners in the re-installation. As in an

underlayment for carpet, lining materials for wallpaper insure a long lasting installation with maximum visual effect. Borderwork, paneling and seam treatment should be done according to documented use, as closely related to the site as possible.

In the contemporary designer market, where reproduction wallpaper is most often used in the obvious role of helping to achieve a "period" look, commercial pastes and blankstock liner may be used, and a wall could be sealed with acrylic or alkyd rather than left porous.

Because it represents such a diversity of styles, colors and pattern, reproduction wallpapers are often used in the designer market as a means to a decorative end, with the historic dimension in a lesser role. Thus, there are few "guidelines" for contemporary stylistic use, except to caution that wallpaper can be a sort of loaded gun in the contemporary interior. Because historic wallpaper was much bolder than contemporary papers, reproductions often make a loud statement. Research using such documentary picture books as "American Interiors," "Authentic Decor," or "At Home"[26] may be advisable to be clear about what that statement is.

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NOTES

[1]Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper In America from the Seventeenth Century to World War I* (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 24.

[2]Richard Nylander, *Wallpaper In New England* (Boston: SPNEA, 1986), p. 26.

[3]Anthony Wells-Cole, *Historic Paper Hangings* (Leeds, England: Leeds City Art Galleries, 1983) p. 7.

[4]Lynn, pg. 32.

[5]Clare Crick, *Historic Wallpapers in the Whitworth* (Manchester, England: Whitworth Art Gallery, 1972) p. 9.

[6]Lynn, pg. 128-140.

[7]James Arrowsmith, *The Paperhangers Companion*, (1856, reprinted 1978 by American Life Foundation, Watkins Glen, N.Y.), p. 61.

[8]Bulletin on Paperhanging, May, 1925, Federal Board for Vocational Education, p. 2.

[9]Cynthia Brandimarte, *Inside Texas: Culture, Identity and Houses, 1878-1920* (Fort Worth, Texas Christian University Press, 1991).

[10]Wells-Cole, p. 45.

[11]Patents "Official Gazette," Boston Public Library.

[12] A.S. Jennings, *Practical Paperhanging* (New York: Comstock, 1892). (Later revised as *Wallpapers and Wallcoverings* in 1903).

[13]Lynn, p. 153.

[14]*Springfield Daily News*, March 11, 1940.

[15]Odile Nouvel, *Wallpapers of France*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1981) p. 9.

[16]Eric Entwisle, *The Book Of Wallpaper* (London: Arthur Barker, 1954), p. 82.

[17]Horace Hotchkiss, Jr., "Wallpaper from William Poyntell," *Winterthur Portfolio* 4, 1968.

[18]His evolution into the modern decorator is traced by Peter Thornton in *Authentic Decor*, (New York: Viking, 1984).

[19]Brock Jobe "The Boston Upholstery Trade, 1700-1775," in *Upholstery in America and Europe*," ed. by Edward Cooke (Barra Foundation, 1987). See also Audrey Michie, "Upholstery In All Its Branches: Charleston 1725-1820," in the *Journal of MESDA*, November, 1985, pp 64-69.

[20]Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Research Files, Winston-Salem, N.C.

[21]Entwisle, p. 93.

[22]MESDA Files Stephen Franklin, Peter Passet, Charles Alexander (Washington, DC);

Francis de L"Orme, Thomas Booden (Charleston).

[23]Jonathan Prown, "A Cultural Analysis of Furniture-Making in Petersburg, Va., 1760-1820," in the *MESDA Journal*, 1992, p. 136.

[24]MESDA Files Francis Regnault, Jr.

[25]Illustrated in Lynn, p. 141.

[26]Harold Peterson, *American Interiors*, (New York: Scribner's, 1979); Thornton; E. Garrett, *At Home*, (New York: Abrams, 1990).

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Passementerie: The Finishing Touches

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Passementerie are decorative elements, more commonly referred to as *trimmings*. As the finishing touches to any good design project, they have been an essential part of opulent design and elegant interiors for centuries.

Although the chronological development of trimmings is unclear, paintings, prints, carvings, and decorative art objects show historic uses of fringes and tassels. An Incan display in the Minneapolis Museum of Art provides a good example of an eight-inch tassel made of wooden molds wrapped in wool with intricate needlework patterns. The 8th century Temple of Borobudur in Yogyjakarta depicts tassels, swags and other decorative elements carved into the stone walls, although it is uncertain whether these objects were made of flowers or of fiber. Examples of tassels and cords used to embellish clothing can be seen in paintings such as *The Nightwatch* (1642) by Rembrandt, and *The Platoon of Captain Roelof Bicker and Lt. Jan Michielsz Bloeuw* by Bartholoneus Van Der Helst.

At exactly what point these items were first used to cover nailheads on upholstered chairs, decorate the edges of curtains, or hold back drapery is not known, although most certainly it came well before the explosion of European decorative arts during the Renaissance.

The use of trimmings remains functional, also fashionable. Interior designers use *passementerie* to adorn drapery treatments and furniture. A tassel, loop, or mold fringe at the edge of a drapery protects the front of the fabric from harmful sunlight. Similarly, a tape sewn on the reverse side of the drapery, from the edge of the fabric to the edge of the lining, may double the life of the window treatment.

Braids applied to the edges of upholstered walls cover the nails or staples, while narrow bands of braid called *gimps* serve the same practical purpose on upholstered furniture. Tassels can function as pull handles when applied to shades or as tiebacks when attached to cords. Rope cords can substitute for wooden railings along stairway walls or create designated areas in open spaces.

The practical application of trimmings in no way diminishes their aesthetic value. A perfect rosette of multi-colored silk with a small cord and tassel sewn at the end of an upholstered sofa arm visually completes a beautiful piece of furniture. Similarly, simple tassels sewn at each end of a thin silk cord perfectly complement a seat cushion on an early American chair.

While great energy is used to detail moldings, to analyze paint and wallpaper colors, and to select the correct period furnishings for a restoration project, trimmings are all too often chosen as an afterthought from inappropriate stock products. Many firms in the United States import trimmings in a myriad of styles and colors, generally made of spun rayon. Unfortunately, many of these imports are not historically correct.

To be historically accurate, the *passementerie* selected should be an appropriate pattern, color, shape, and fiber for the time frame required. Rayon, for instance, was not available until the 20th century, and its use in an historic project prior to approximately 1910 is, therefore, incorrect. If the budget does not allow for historically accurate trimmings, it would be far better to use none, than to use some irrelevant substitute.

Some stock patterns have been reproduced in

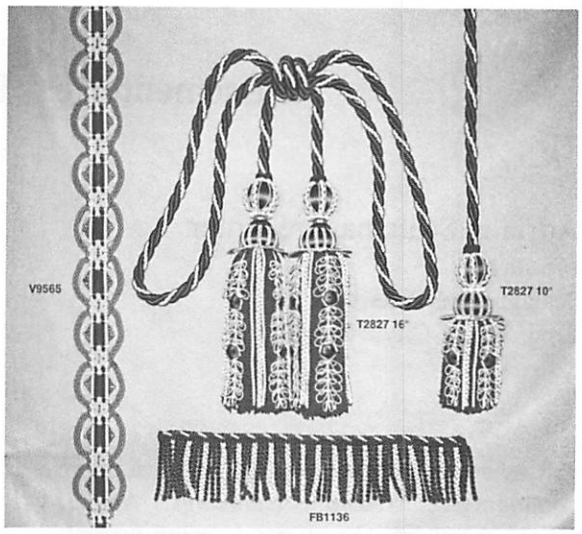
historically accurate fibers and styles, based on period documents. While there is an economic advantage to using these products, they should only be included if the designer is certain they are appropriate to the particular restoration project. If so, these stock trimmings can be piece dyed or yarn dyed to the correct color (Figure 1).

There is, however, no substitute for the original, and it is therefore imperative that the architect or designer work toward a good reproduction. Unless *all* the trimmings in the space are properly reproduced--or the originals used--we cannot confidently claim a good restoration. In a residential or commercial project it is up to the designer and the consumer to make design choices. However, in an historical restoration project, exact reproduction should be the ultimate aim (Figure 2).

Generally, historic trimmings were handmade and a proper reproduction will require the same method of manufacture. Components of trimmings may be wooden molds; loom-woven



1. Poof, cord and tassel used as a drapery tieback. Ornament with rosette, wooden mold and silk skirt. Rosette with cord and tassel to be used in drapery treatments or other detailing.



2. Silk tassel, tieback, scroll braid, and bullion fringe. These trimmings were all reproduced from samples used by Jefferson Davis in the White House of the Confederacy, Richmond.

braids, which are also used for headings of tassel or mold fringes; woven loop or cut fringe; various wires and other stiffeners; and the yarns used to wrap or tie onto these elements (Figure 3).

An exact reproduction often requires hand-cutting or a specially shaped wooden mold, as well as dyeing many yarns in a variety of colors. A reproduction firm must have the capability of dyeing minute quantities of yarns, such as one skein. There must be skilled artisans to work on hand looms, which have not changed since the middle ages, and to use tools such as spinning wheels to twist the yarn or wrap quills. There must be skilled needleworkers to sew fine netting and tie hand knots. A total dedication is required by each artisan to work with his/her colleagues to create the best possible replica of the original document (Figure 4).

Many curators, designers, and consumers believe it is necessary to travel to the far reaches of the world to discover the artists of top quality merchandise. American products are often ignored due to this concept, although some of the best artisans in the work of *passementerie* are located in the United States.

It is important that a restoration project manager understand the intricate detail involved in reproduction trimmings and be able to educate the purchaser to the need for patience and



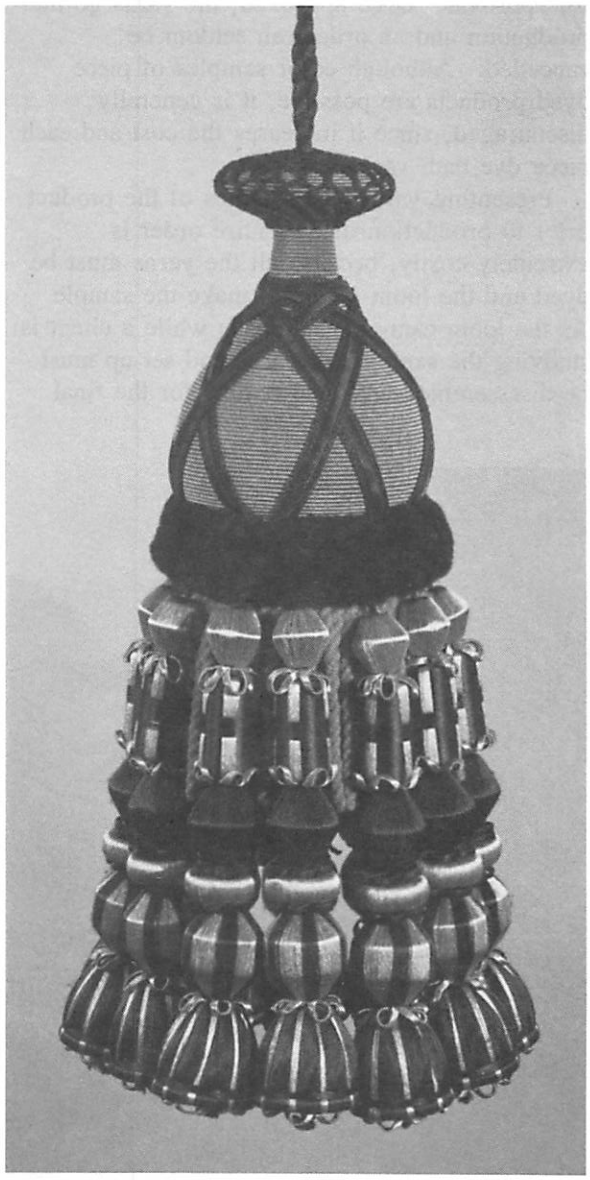
3. Examples of types of fringe made by the Scalamandré mill: base fringe, long mold fringe, short mold fringe, mold tassel fringe.

proper planning. Often, intricate scroll braids can only be hand-woven. Many are produced at a rate of one to three yards per workday, depending upon the complexity of the design. Therefore, a sixteen to twenty-four week delivery date is not unusual for the reproduction of an elaborate 19th century handmade scroll braid which may have been applied to a lambrequin (Figure 5).

In order to properly execute a restoration project the designer or architect must first familiarize himself or herself with similar interiors of the period. Today's project designers must discipline a 1990s mind to comprehend another time period, moving from the modern age into a world where labor was cheap and style was high. The following suggestions can help achieve better reproduction trimmings for restoration projects.

First, obtain the historic documentation needed to produce an accurate copy. When surviving samples of the original trimmings are not available, research is required. Although documentation may appear limited, paintings, prints, and other visual records provide an endless resource. Firms such as Scalamandré have maintained and continue to develop their own archival materials, which project designers are welcome to study.

Second, when your documentation has been prepared, meet personally with your selected manufacturer. There are, of course, companies that will handle your reproduction or substitute fabric and trimming orders, and then send them to other manufacturers to produce. However, it



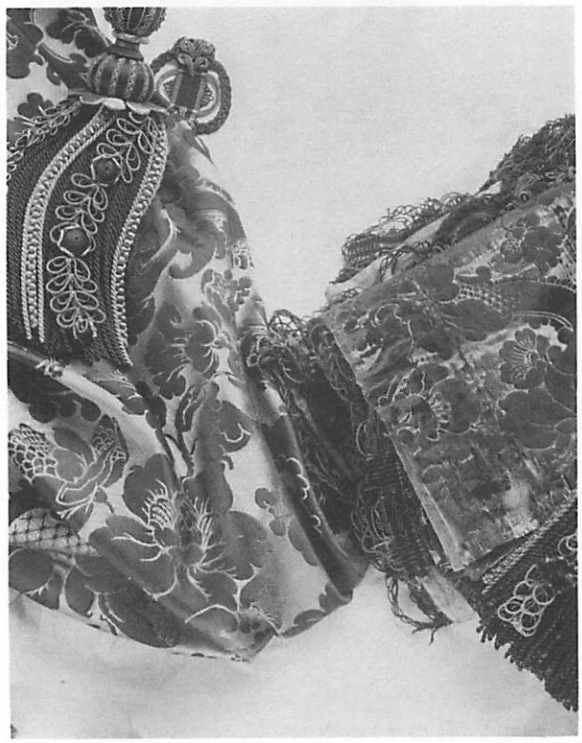
4. Tassel, silk over wooden mold, reproduction of tassels used for tiebacks and hanging ornaments in the Old Merchant House, NYC, built in 1832 for the Seabury Tredwell Family.

is far better to speak *directly* to the artisans who will be recreating the trimming, in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

The manufacturer will study the object in detail to determine the cost of reproduction. Almost any trimming can be reproduced, as they can be loomed or hand-made in the exact manner used for centuries. Therefore, it is only the cost that may hamper the ultimate goal.

Third, once the shape, yarns, and colors have been determined, the project manager should request the manufacturer to submit dyed yarns for approval. Once approved, the yarns go into production and an order can seldom be cancelled. Although color samples of piece dyed products are possible, it is generally discouraged, since it increases the cost and each piece dye bath varies.

Presenting yarn dyed samples of the product prior to production of the entire order is extremely costly, because all the yarns must be dyed and the loom set up to make the sample. As the loom cannot remain idle while a client is studying the sample, all yarns and set up must be disassembled and then redone for the final production. Therefore, when ordering gimps, cords, fringes, or tassels, samples of the yarn colors only should be sufficient.



5. Reproductions of silk tassel, scroll braid, and silk and linen brocatelle for the White House of the Confederacy. Circa 1850 brocatelle and trimmings on right.

When ordering a *mold* fringe, the project manager should request *one* sample mold for approval. If an order consists of many large, intricate tassels, managers should specify approval of the *first* tassel of the order. It is far better to remake one tassel at a cost of $500 or more, than be unhappy with twenty tassels at this cost.

Fourth, since historically trimmings were generally made to match specific fabrics, project managers should place fabric and coordinating trimming orders at the same time. The manufacturer's dye facility can then prepare the correct formulas for all the yarns and properly plan this segment of the project. A good establishment will generally wait for the approved strike-off of the fabric prior to commencing the production of the trimmings, as dyed yarns reflect a variety of colors in various weaves and textures. It is the reflected surface color, or colors of the cloth that should be matched by its complimentary *passementerie.*

American artisans are creating and reproducing some of the finest quality *passementerie* in the world today. With careful planning and research, project managers can ensure that these trimmings are effectively and appropriately employed -- that they provide the needed "finishing touches" to the rehabilitation and restoration of historic interiors.

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