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WALL AND CEILING STENCILING IN
AMERICAN VICTORIAN HOMES

by

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The preservation movement in the United States is on an upward swing. The trend now includes the homeowner of old homes, whereas, in the past, attempts primarily consisted of restoration and preservation of historical landmarks by various interest groups (Weinberg, 1979). Suddenly realizing that their past was disappearing before them, individuals became involved in the movement, satisfying that underlying, psychological need to hold on to the past (Lowenthal, 1981).

One group of buildings that has become a prime target for preservationists is that of Victorian homes. Built roughly between 1840 and the turn of the century, these houses have spurred an increase in historical and restoration literature written on the subject. One facet of this restoration work, which is experiencing a renaissance of interest, includes the decorative technique of wall and ceiling stenciling.

Amidst all the current literature, however, there exists few, if any, comprehensive works on the topic. For a homeowner wishing to authentically restore or implement the craft in his home, he must consult several references to gain insights to the appropriate style, placement, color, motifs, technique, and restoration procedures. The purpose of this report is to compile such a work, eliminating the homeowner's need in spending many hours of research and legwork gathering

such information, thus, encouraging authentic restoration and reproductions. It will encompass various aspects of stenciling, including the history, cultural influences, motifs, colors, dimensions, room placement, past and present application techniques, tools and materials, discovery and restoration work, extant examples of the period, and resources and services available on the craft for the homeowner. Such a report should provide the reader with background as well as practical information for the execution of Victorian stencilwork. (NOTE: The terms "craft" and "art," when applied to stenciling, are used interchangeably within this report. In such instances, the words refer to a technique where a conscious use of skill is employed in the production of an aesthetic object.)

Limitations

Within the development of this report, several factors restricted research. The lack of original nineteenth-century documentation--photographs, actual stencilwork, home records--constituted a major limitation. Stylebooks used in the 1800s are now in rare book collections around the country, thus making them difficult to obtain for use. Furthermore, information within these books on the technical aspects of stenciling is limited, as they deal more with stylistic tastes of the time.

Geographical confinements of residing in the Midwest also restricted the study of actual stencilwork, since a larger number of extant work has been discovered in the eastern United States. This was due to a greater population density along the eastern coast in the country's early history. Therefore, financial factors were also involved in establishing boundaries for research, as traveling would

create added expenses. Likewise, the purchasing of visual aids such as slides of actual work and Munsell color chips was affected by financial limitations.

Since this writing was classified as a historical report, no field experience or original research was required. Therefore, the scope of this work assumed the characteristics typical to a report rather than research. Yet, it would be possible to draw upon this material to devise research ideas, such as comparing the geographical variations of stencil motifs, home usage, etc.

Methodology

As mentioned above, this historical report required no original research, but rather a compilation of information from many sources.

In addition to consulting the card catalogs at both public and campus libraries, inter-library loans were used extensively, especially in the acquisition of what few, rare books were available. Other sources within the library were also used: Art Index, Historical Abstracts, Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, Subject Guide to Books in Print, America: History and Life, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, The Architectural Index, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Science Citation Index, Masters Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts International, Art and Archaeology Technical Abstracts, and the computer search. (All were consulted, but only a few proved helpful.) In addition, bibliographies from books were utilized. Through leads in researching the topic, numerous individuals, historical societies, agencies, and museums around the country were contacted via letter or telephone, from whence came additional references, brochures, and slides.

Chapter 2

HISTORY OF STENCILING

Stenciling is one of the earliest decorative forms known to man, spanning many cultures and periods. The origin of the process is unknown, due partly on the perishable nature of the early stencils. Most likely, they were made from leaves or soft pelts or skin and have not withstood the test of time.

Some contend the art dates back to the Egyptian era, ca. 2500 B.C., with decorating being stenciled on mummy cases. Arguments on this theory arise, however, due to the lack of proof. Others believe the process originated in China, even before 3000 B.C. Early explorers on the Fiji Islands found coarse barkcloth beautifully decorated by a stenciling process. Since the irregular, angular cuts in the pattern were always similar, although not always exactly the same, anthropologists have concluded that the islanders adopted the shapes from the holes bored into banana and bamboo leaves by the larvae of a local insect (Bishop, 1976). Evidence from North America found the craft applied on American Indian ceramics dating to prehistoric times. It is also known that early Greek and Etruscan civilizations used the process with wax-based paints to adorn walls and ceilings, and that Buddhist artists applied the technique to decorative temples and monasteries several thousand years ago (Laliberté, 1971).

The earliest known stencil-like patterns were found in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, at Tunhuang, in western China, dating

between A.D. 500 and 1000 (Fobel, 1976). These patterns were created on a tough, treated paper with the design outlined by tiny pin pricks. After charcoal was pounced through the holes, the outlines were colored in by hand. Although this was not "stenciling" in the true sense of the word, it provides a valuable link in stenciling's history.

Later, the Chinese developed a process called *Derma*, where an acidic ink ate through paper when applied, creating a stencil design (Bishop, 1976). Early users were limited to religious subjects, but, as secular artists began to appear, the art prospered greatly with the rich silk trade between China and its neighbors. By A.D. 600, fashionable, stenciled materials became the vogue for the clothing of the wealthy.

Stenciling also appeared as early as A.D. 600 in Japan, where it probably achieved its greatest degree of refinement. Designs here reflected subjects from nature and became detailed artistic studies. The sharp and intricate patterns resulted from the refined process of producing the stencil. Paper made of pressed mulberry fiber and water-proofed with persimmon juice allowed for clean and detailed cutting. Two identical designs were cut. One stencil was then covered with an adhesive or varnish called *shibu*, reinforced with a fine web or human hair, pressed to the identical cutout and allowed to harden (Bishop, 1976).

Siam, India, and Persia also have shown proof of stenciling about the same time, although subject matter varied. Siamese patterns were similar to the Japanese motifs, but Persian artists turned to sacred designs, while Indian craftsmen concentrated on geometrics (Bishop, 1976).

Influenced by expanding trade routes, the art of stenciling was carried into the West. It is believed that early Italian children were taught their letters by stencils. Many unlettered monarchs of the Middle Ages, such as the Roman Emperor Justinian (A.D. 483-565) and the Ostrogoth King Theodoric (A.D. 454-526), used stenciled initials to sign their names to important documents, rather than the proverbial X (Bishop, 1976).

Beginning the Middle Ages, stenciling enjoyed a widespread and varied use in France. The term "stencil," in fact, was derived from the Old French word *estenceler* (to sparkle) and the Latin word *scintilla* (a spark) (Day, 1974). One of stenciling's broadest uses occurred in the ornamentation of playing cards. Such large quantities were produced that furtive card games posted a threat to the country's productivity, resulting in the issuing of several stern edicts (Bishop 1976). Stenciling was also used in the embellishment of book illustrations, textiles, and wallpapers. These wallcoverings were known as "flock papers." A sticky substance called size was applied to the paper through stencil openings, and shredded wool was blown onto the design, simulating brocade. Later, patterns were printed on the paper with wood blocks and then colored with stencils (Weeks, 1978). Stenciling was so enormously popular in France that one Frenchman, renowned for his stencil designs, was exempted from paying taxes (Fobel, 1976).

The climax for European stenciling was achieved between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth century. Although not many extant examples remain, stenciling was used in England and Germany to decorate furniture, church walls, wallpaper, and textiles (Bishop, 1976).

With the migration of European pioneers, the craft of stenciling was brought to America. In efforts to imitate the Old World

carpeting, painted decorations began to cover wood floors or to create borders around the floor's perimeter. This remained popular until almost the Civil War period. Such work was done by the "professional" decorator until floor cloths, a contemporary substitute for expensive carpeting, allowed the homeowner to personally accomplish the handiwork. Touchup work could be easily executed when the stencilwork faded, chipped, or wore out on these floor coverings (Bishop, 1982).

These stenciled floor patterns were also employed as wall designs for plaster walls. This application lacked expert craftsmanship at first, but improved as time progressed. Most of this late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century work was executed by itinerate artists who traveled from village to village, exchanging their handiwork for room and board, goods and/or a small fee (Parry, 1977). Designs of flowers, leaves, stars, birds, bells, fruit (especially the pineapple), trees (most notably the willow tree), and patriotic motifs were used as borders and all-over field designs on walls. A few original examples of these have been preserved, especially in the eastern portion of the United States. Individual stencilists have been identified, such as Moses Eaton and Jared Jessop, by their distinctive style (Parry, 1977). Various ethnic groups, such as the Pennsylvania Dutch, have also contributed to stenciling's history by introducing their own traditional patterns (Flaherty, January 1975).

As wallpaper became more readily available, stenciling declined somewhat in popularity as a wall treatment. When it was used, it imitated the wallpaper motifs. But, by the 1800s, the craft had expanded to the ornamentation of other household objects, such as furniture, clocks, jewelry boxes, and trays. Most prominent among these artisans was Lambert Hitchcock, who designed and implemented stenciled and gilded

decoration to painted chairs (Bishop, 1982).

After 1850, as wallpaper became widely used, the freely measured and whimsically planned stencil decor of earlier times disappeared. A contemporary style emerged which served as an accompaniment to wallpaper. Greek motifs of foliage and floral forms comprised border designs that commonly ran around the top of a wall, next to the ceiling and above the wallpaper. Ceilings were also stenciled to substitute for the fading popularity of plasterwork (Anon, 1977). Concave moldings were often treated with stencilwork since wallpaper would not have adhered properly to a curved surface.

As the Arts and Crafts Movement gained popularity in the late 1800s (Cooper, 1976), stenciling experienced a revival since handiwork was emphasized. William Morris, a leading figure in this movement, popularized a new style of sweeping, floral designs, often touched with overlays of gold or copper pigments (Flaherty, April 1975).

Oddly enough, it was this period--the turn of the twentieth century--that stenciling dropped out of favor with the middle class and became a decorative tool of the upper class (Cooper, 1976). Art Nouveau designers, such as Louis Comfort Tiffany and Louis Sullivan, loved elaborate, opulent decoration, often adorning entire walls and rooms with design (Parry, 1977, and Bishop, 1976). They developed a consciously eclectic style, with forms and colors representing an international potpourri of exotic sources. At this point, stenciling had reached its technical peak as Tiffany's and Sullivan's designs evolved into a craft of considerable precision and intricacy, including the use of numerous overlays in perfect synchronization.

By World War II, interiors became plainer and simpler, and stencilwork was not in demand. It was not until the mid-1960s that an interest

in the art reappeared. Today, people want some decorative form that is unique and uncommercial, and stenciling fills this need. Some devise new contemporary patterns, while others rely on patterns from the nostalgic past.

As illustrated above, the history of stenciling is a history of fragments found throughout time and space. Its evolution has experienced varied alterations from the traditional limitations. However, the art has proven so effective and broad in application that it is not surprising that it has endured so well.

Chapter 3

THE VICTORIAN ERA

Before discussing actual Victorian stencilwork, a background of the era should be reviewed to clarify the time span in reference and to analyze events and design theories which were influential in the decorative arts.

Origin

Periods of history with certain characteristics are referred to as "Ages," and are often named for some ruler or government official during whose term significant achievements were accomplished. The term "Victorian" was marked with many scientific, industrial, and literary advancements (Maass, 1957). In the United States, many elements of this era were influenced by the English, as well as other foreign sources, and events unique to this country.

Industrial Revolution

The American Victorian Period commenced around 1840. The Industrial Revolution was gaining momentum with any and every possible thing being mass-produced by the machine. This was the era when the telegraph, machine tools, farm equipment, petroleum, photography, the sewing machine, the rotary printing press, gaslight, electricity, the telephone, large corporations, and modern conveniences as heating and plumbing were all introduced or invented (Maass, 1972). As technology was improved and perfected, handicrafts disappeared from the scene.

Transportation systems also experienced a growth. Steamships brought the latest styles in decoration from England and France. The rapid expansion of the American railroads spurred a westward movement, allowing speculators to embark on new commercial ventures and provided an economical method to transport goods (Bishop, 1982).

With this economic surge, fortunes were made almost overnight, and an upper class emerged (Cooper, 1976). They now became the patrons of the arts, spending large amounts of money on aesthetic objects of which they had little background training. The interest of such objects increased with international exhibitions, such as the Great Exposition of 1851 in London. This affair inspired other similar showings of decorative arts in the United States. In 1853, the World's Fair in New York imitated London's gala event. Later, in 1876, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition created an enormous effect on the decorative arts of America (Bishop, 1982). This showcase of European cultures illustrated scientific and industrial progress, but the decorative arts were labeled "monstrosities." It marked a turning point in American design. The era is often criticized for this unqualified endorsement of excessive decoration, professing a lack of taste.

The years following the Civil War experienced an even greater acceleration of the above conditions. In the reconstruction of the country, the nation looked to the future with optimism. Manufacturing took a leap, wealth abounded, population grew, and the West expanded.

Evolution of Styles

As the nation plunged ahead with scientific, industrial, and social triumphs, designers looked to the past for design elements.

The panorama of Victorian building and furnishing styles was dazzling and somewhat confusing. A variety of foreign influences co-existed throughout the period (Savage, 1966). The Neoclassicism of the early 1800s gave way to a Gothic revival along with some sprinklings of Italianate influences. During mid-century, designers turned to the French, employing Baroque and Rococo features. Later in the century, especially after the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, evidences of a classical revival were found. Egyptian and Pompeian influences surfaced as a result of exploration and documentation of these ancient civilizations. The last two decades of the century experienced a flirtation with the Orient, especially popularizing Japanese arts, but also included Turkish and Moorish design. The turn of the century found an even more eclecticism of styles, as Scottish, German, American Colonial, and Georgian forms were displayed.

By the mid-1870s, those people in the design field were unanimously lamenting the state of decoration. Their standards of quality and taste had been lost in the whirlwind of mass-production. Out of a rebellion to the present state of the arts, the Aesthetic Movement was born, having originated in England (Flaherty, April 1975). Designers such as John Ruskin (a British architect), William Morris (a superb English craftsman), Charles Eastlake (an architect and furniture designer), and Walter Crane (an artist and designer) led the movement, protesting the factory system and the exploitation of the craftsman (Flaherty, April 1975). The movement was in essence a return to the arts and crafts, acclaiming simpler forms of decorative arts and admiring sophistication and complexity of workmanship. Style was not of primary importance, but rather truth to function and individuality of conception.

The Arts and Crafts Movement eventually merged in the late 1880s with the French interpretation of this "new look." Documented as Art Nouveau, this group supported the natural style and rejected the revivalism of historic styles (Whiton, 1974). Like the Arts and Crafts Movement, they too looked to the artist for solutions to form and beauty problems created by the machine. Tiffany and Sullivan, designers and architects of the time, were instrumental in the period's development of decorative arts, promoting an even higher level of sophistication and complexity of workmanship than the previous period. This trend continued into the twentieth century and was considered the finale for the Victorian Age.

Views on Ornamentation

The Victorians held a special reverence for ornamentation, regarding "aesthetic pleasure as an essential ingredient" of the design (Barnard, 1973). With emphasis on the visual impact of design, decoration became an unifying factor, serving as a necessity rather than a luxury. The importance of ornament was never underestimated, since it held the power to express feelings and ideas of common life experiences (Dresser, 1862).

With conflicting loyalties to various styles, the earlier decades' use of ornament was unregulated by any discipline or sense of restraint. Ornamentation exemplified the Victorian maxim that "anything worth doing is worth doing in excess" as ornament for its own sake was immoderately indulged (Greenberg, 1981). With the development of mass-production, deep undercuttings or visual reliefs accomplished by shading and shadowing were often employed. This richness of design, coupled with excessive use, became labeled as "aesthetic monstrosities,

ornamental abominations." Evidence of this was seen at London's Great Exhibition of 1851, where objects of practical utility were composed entirely of natural imitations, using the imitations as design principals instead of mere accessory (Gloag, 1962). However, such ornamentation served as visible evidence of social status for the new rich and prosperous middle classes, giving many people pleasure and a veil of fantasy over the realities of life.

Surfaces were often made to look like something else. For example, walls and floors would be painted to imitate marble or wood. Flat, naturalistic ornament attempted to copy nature by employing shadowing renditions, creating a three-dimensional effect.

Design Theories

This meaningless application of ornamentation and the consequent degredation of form and function, which typified this High Victorian period (ca. 1870-1890), disturbed a few critics. Shortly after mid-century, this reaction was evident in the publication of several books written by designers. Wornum's, Eastlake's, Jones', and Dresser's works, in addition to others, reiterated the same theory of design.

Flat, stylized design in two-dimensional illusionism was strongly advocated, intending to preserve the character of the surface. Therefore, the play of line was the main feature, and shading was obsolete. In relation to wall treatments, Eastlake (1868) commented it was common sense to decorate in a manner that would neither belie the surface's flatness or solidity.

Any attempt to imitate other materials was criticized (Eastlake, 1868). Natural forms were always treated stylistically or symbolically, rather than realistically. The image was to represent perfection

of the form--an idealized creation of the mind--and not an imitation of nature (Dresser, 1862). Likewise, the copying of materials to simulate other materials was abandoned. This philosophy for the honest use of materials also rejected veneered wood and glued-on ornament. Decoration was to be part of the structure and never attached, emphasizing that form follows function. Church (1882) declared that ornament was to heighten the general effect, giving character and beauty, not simply piling one substance upon another.

In creating the ornamental form, several principles of design were recommended. Dresser (1862) elaborated on the use and importance of order, repetition, curves, proportion, alteration, and adaptation when composing a design. Other designers supported these concepts in various descriptive terms, such as harmony, durability, symmetry, series and contrasts. In addition, several "rules" were suggested, such as: consistent and proportional division of space by bands, spaces, or interlacings; limited emphasis on secondary forms so primary forms remain prominent; soft and delicate details so secondary forms are not overpowered; utilization of all three lines--straight, diagonal, and curved--within a composition to produce a perfect form; discouragement of excess attention to the ground; avoidance of foliage emerging from both ends of a branch; forms suggesting humanistic or monster-like features; and obvious starting points for the design component (Dresser, 1862). This theory of design persisted throughout the remaining Victorian years.

Design Motifs

As mentioned previously, the Victorian era was glorified by several coexisting styles and foreign influences. Therefore, Victorian

decorative arts exemplified a variety of motifs, most of them with historic origins (Jones, 1856). Their execution varied with the design theory of current popularity, but the subject matter relied heavily on nature or geometrics.

As the nineteenth century opened, Neoclassicism (Greek and Roman influences) provided inspiration for design. Floral motifs such as laurel, ivy, palmettes, acanthus leaves, and honeysuckle were utilized along with geometric figures, including keys or frets, swastikas, crosses, guilloches, zig zags, scrolls, and dots. With the popularization of Gothic and Italianate styles around 1840, these classical motifs decreased in frequency, but were later revived in the 70s and 80s.

The entrance of the Gothic and Italianate styles into the early Victorian years (ca. 1840-1870) introduced a new variety of motifs. Foliage was again typical, employing tendrils, lobed leaves, and focusing on the oak branch and leaf. Lobed forms of the trefoil, quatrefoil, and cinquefoil were derived from such leaf forms. The architectural use of pointed arches, typical of Gothic structures, inspired ogival, cusp and tracery patterns in the decorative arts. Also, geometric motifs such as frets, chevrons, zig zag, crenelations, and arabesques were well suited for running ornament.

As the High Victorian Period developed during the mid-century, the French influences encouraged the curved forms of past Baroque and Rococo styles. Baroque scrolls (s and c curves) were especially popular, along with bouquets, festoons, and garlands of natural flowers. Roses (most notably the cabbage rose), peonies, and lilacs were commonly seen. Feminine and romantic emblems such as ribbons, bows, and doves often were intermingled with the design.

It was about this point in the period (1870-1880) that the excessiveness of design experienced negative reactions, and developed into flat, surface decoration with a two-dimensional effect. Classical and Gothic elements were revived, along with the addition of new influences, and they all prevailed simultaneously. The newly-introduced Egyptian influence utilized conventional plant forms of the lotus, lily, papyrus, palmette, rosette and geometric patterns or stars, chevrons, frets, and cartouches. In the years following 1876, a vogue for Oriental motifs emerged (Bishop, 1982). The Japanese, as did other cultures, delighted in nature as can be seen in the incorporation of bamboo, flowers, grasses, trailing plants, and cranes in their designs. Diaper patterns and fans were also common motifs. Moorish arts included horseshoe arches and geometric forms, along with floral elements. Similarly, plants--especially the carnation and tulip--were components of Turkish design and usually featured serrated edges. The ogive was often used as a contribution to the geometric repertoire.

With the rise of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, a fresh, new style emerged (Flaherty, April 1975). No longer were motifs derived primarily from historical origins, but rather created from designers of the time. Typical to this period are the sunflower, lily, peacock, cranes, fans, iris, cattail, sunburst, and other geometric patterns.

Based on a primarily aesthetic cause, Art Nouveau followed with a new kind of ornament based on the asymmetrical, flowing lines of plant forms. This style, however, was just coming into fashion as the Victorian Period came to a close.

Colors

Motifs were not complete without the addition of color. Like the theory of ornamentation, rules were written in contemporary decorating manuals for the use of colors. Dresser was one such writer, and his axioms, which were published by Shoppell (1883), are found in Appendix B, page 70.

Color choices for decoration varied throughout the nineteenth century, undergoing three major phases. The Early Victorian era (ca. 1840-1870) was definitely affected by the innovation of aniline dyes, which brightened and broadened the range of colors (Lichten, 1950). Prior to that, dyes were of vegetal origins and soft in tone. These new colors were heavy and definite and included scarlets, vivid blues, golds, green, rich browns, and purples.

As the era moved into the High Victorian Period (ca. 1870-1890), colors began to warm and become subdued. This time was often known as the "Brown Decades" because of the coloring scheme used, which was created by adding umber to the color or to a glaze (Loring, 1978). Dulled versions of the colors were used--rust, maroon, Venetian red, ochre, citron, gold, olive, sage, mauve, liver brown, peacock blue, umber--always avoiding the primary colors. Bronze, silver, and most typically gold leaf was often applied for design emphasis (Reynolds, 1980). Because of these practices, the period was also referred to as the "Gilded Age." Tiring of these dark colors that gave the period its gloomy epitaph, the Victorians embarked on a lighter color scheme of pastels around the turn of the twentieth century.

Views on Interior Design

The previous guidelines for nineteenth-century decoration played an integral part of the home's interior design. The interior treatment was regarded with utmost importance. Williams and Jones (1878, p. 40) stated that "a well appointed, tastefully furnished and comfortably arranged house enters largely into the well-being and happiness of the family residing in it." It was claimed that this cultivating of household art stimulated knowledge and kept loved ones from leaving home (Beecher, 1869). Therefore, it was worth any costs to provide a tasteful abode. Even with moderate means, critics believed possession of a refined and truly beautiful home was possible, so there was no excuse for the lack of artistic effects.

To stress this philosophy and advise the public on taste and fashion, a wealth of books and newspaper columns surfaced during the second half of the century, thanks to the technical advances of the printing press (Dutton, 1954). These were extremely influential on the public, with Eastlake (1868) rating the most successful in molding tastes (Wellman, 1939). Eastlake became a household name as Hints, the Magna Carta of home decoration, was read by all. Others followed his act, and the following resources were soon available: Beecher and Stowe (1869); Williams and Jones (1878); Holly (1878); Church (1882); Tuthill (1882); and Shoppell (1883).

Within these manuals, recommendations on wall and ceiling treatments were given. The walls constituted the major consideration to a furnishing scheme since they provided the background of tone or color. Since rooms were generally large and ceilings high, proportional relationships were vital features. It was a common practice during the

latter half of the century to divide the wall treatment into horizontal sections, breaking up the large span of wall space (Figure 1).

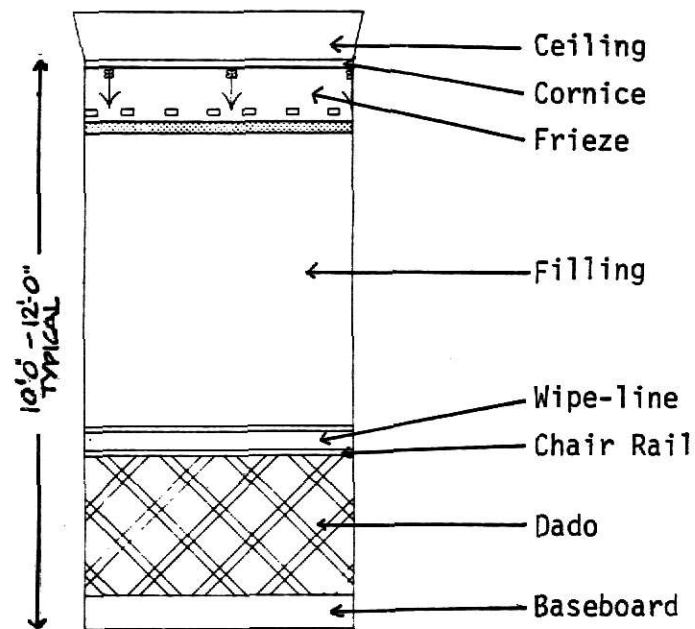


Figure 1

Common Horizontal Wall Divisions
of the Latter Nineteenth Century
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

This form of decoration was derived from the English and offered the best combination of color and pattern (Flaherty, 1977). It included a three- to four-foot dado off the floor, topped by a molding (also known as a chair rail) or border. The dado was often of stamped leather, straw matting, or wallpaper and never divided the wall in the center. Above this, a filler space existed, treated either with plain, painted walls, a version of stamped leather, or suitable wallpaper, depending on its purpose. If the area was to accentuate pictures, the filling was usually left neutral, whereas without artwork, walls were treated with patterned paper. To give continuity to the room, a margin around

twelve to fifteen inches, could be stenciled or papered as elaborately as desired. Popularized in the 70s, the frieze coordinated with the filling but embodied larger patterns (Cooper, 1976). Typically, a picture rail or shelf divided the filling from the frieze. Later in the century, a more subtle division was preferred, and the frieze design blended into the filling. As the 1900s ascended, the use of paper and frieze was discarded for plainer walls. Often, a cornice and/or cove area provided a junction between the wall and ceiling. Due to the curved surface of the cove, it was a difficult area to paper, consequently paint was usually applied to this transitional area. The most important principle of these wall divisions was that of proportion (Holly, 1878). Therefore, actual dimensions of each wall area may have varied, depending on the room size. Nevertheless, any treatment retained the wall's flatness.

Although the color between the dado and upper wall may have varied, it, too, had principles. The wall coloration progressed from dark to light, starting at the dado. The darker shade, representing strength, was near the floor, with the fill area a lighter tone. The color was concentrated in the dado and frieze, with the frieze utilizing the fill's colors, only in brighter tones. Architectural features, such as casings, required a darker shade of a color present in the room. Often, an umbered glaze or varnish was applied over the paint or paper (Flaherty, 1977).

The fashionable treatment of ceilings was also advised through these contemporary publications. Ceilings were described as being "susceptible to ornamentation," since the entire surface could be seen at once (Flaherty, 1977). If the means to decorate were limited, it was suggested to apply the efforts to the ceiling, as walls could always

be supplimented by pictures. Ceilings were never painted white--always a shade lighter than the walls providing a contrast with the wall. Occasionally, paper was applied. If painted decoration was applied, it could be either a border design or a centralized medallion, replacing the plaster ornamentation no longer in fashion, or a powdered design. A figured ceiling, however, was reserved for smaller rooms. Whatever design was applied, one principle remained constant--it must be flat, with no shade or shadows to indicate relief.

The quantity and quality of decoration in the rooms of Victorian homes depended upon the function and importance of the space. Guides for the proper treatment of individual rooms were also included in these books on fashionable home decoration. Rooms which were devoted to entertaining guests received the most lavish embellishments, since they represented the status and character of the owners. They provided the keynote to the rest of the home. Rooms out of the public view were treated more modestly (Shoppell, 1883).

Important areas were the vestibule, hallway, and staircase. Since these were the first rooms to meet the eye, they received a moderate share of attention, although they were to be somewhat subordinate to other adjacent rooms. Paint treatment was often suggested, since this area was easiest to soil, and paint was easiest to clean.

Functioning mainly for relaxation and social enjoyment, the parlor or drawing room claimed special attention and was decorated most elegantly. This room was often redecorated to accommodate the latest style. Fancy reigned supreme to compliment the gaiety of the guests and symbolize the owner's culture. Objects of fancywork and items that showed an acquaintance with the arts and European vists were prominently displayed.

The dining room also exercised the use of rich and heavy decor, since it, too, hosted guests. Warmth and cheerfulness of design were desired to capitalize on hospitality. The addition of memorabilia, pictures of a curious nature, and other objects to stimulate conversation were recommended. Although the materials may vary, it was generally advisable to use dado, filling, and frieze treatments in these rooms.

In contrast to the busy furnishings of these rooms, the rest of the home tended to be more restrained and avoided the whims of fashion. Maintaining a sober, quiet appearance, the library required more reservation. This room exemplified sternness and dignity. Bedrooms were even more constrained, designed to be cheerful, refreshing, and suggestive to comfort. Room treatment was simple with borders optional. Kitchen decor was based on convenience and practicality, so grace and color were not important. The same applied to the newly emerging bathrooms.

Chapter 4

VICTORIAN STENCILWORK

Popularity

From reviewing the above principles of nineteenth-century decoration and the social, economic, and cultural influences of the time, it is easy to place stencilwork in the context of Victorian ornamentation and national development. The craft was used widely during the era, although few records are left. Various stylebooks of the time mentioned stencilwork as replacement or an accessory to wallpaper. Shoppell (1883) was one author which gave specific directions on stencilwork application. Newspapers such as the New York Herald in 1876 made specific references to stencilwork. They commented on a Newport, Rhode Island, residence stating it had "all of its ceilings painted and stenciled in the latest English taste."

Several factors seemed to aid in popularizing the craft. Victorian homes were known to feature irregular-shaped rooms, and stenciling provided an adequate method to enhance such architectural components (Flaherty, February 1975). It also had the advantages of covering unsightly walls without the aid of a professional craftsman.

Stenciling was also an ideal technique that met the requirements of ornamentation theories then in practice. It contributed to the vogue of decoration by providing an excellent form of flat, stylized ornament. With walls being divided in horizontal sections, running stenciled designs were ideal for friezes and borders. Since technology

and transportation systems had made wallpapers economical and available to the public, painted design served as a good accessory to paper, since it was easily coordinated with the design already present in the wallpaper (Flaherty, February 1975). It also offered a good substitute for plasterwork, which had dropped out of fashion (Anon, 1977).

The rapid expansion of industry brought additional influences on stencilwork. Increased prosperity created a new class of wealthy who wished to symbolize their status with elaborate interiors. This handicraft of color and design provided one method of obtaining excessive design. Often, the stenciled design included gold leaf accents, creating a convincing illusion of solid metal, and further demonstrated the owner's success. Advanced technology and railroad expansion after the Civil War increased the use of paints with the development of pre-mixed solutions, making it easier to utilize this product by eliminating the mixing of pigments with lead or oil and making them accessible and economical throughout the country (Moss, 1981). With the development of the printing press and the infiltration of pattern and style-books throughout the country, the popularity of stencilwork was further promoted (Cooper, 1976).

Health views current at that time, also supported the use of stencilwork over paper. "The advocates of stenciling--primarily, of course, the decorating trade--recommended it particularly on grounds of hygiene: referring to the combination of rag paper, size, and paste. One trade paper warned that 'the putrid exhalations from decayed animal and vegetable substances are imperceptibly contaminating the atmosphere.' (Cooper, 1976, p. 11)."

It was within the Aesthetic Movement during the second half of the century that stenciling began its revival in popularity. Emphasizing

a return to arts and crafts, this movement contributed significantly to the craft's increased use (Anon, 1977). William Morris, a prominent leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement and an excellent craftsman himself, was instrumental in promoting stencilwork. As this trend progressed into the Art Nouveau style, stencilwork became even more sophisticated and complex, often covering the entire wall. Thus, the craft required skilled workmen which provided problems. Holly (1878, p. 168) confirms this by stating ".....in the case of interior decoration, where the higher degree of skill is required, the ability of our country, and, perhaps, of most of our city 'artists,' may well be questioned. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that those possessing positive skill can almost be counted on one's fingers." Two excellent artisans of this period who were available and extremely influential were Tiffany and Sullivan. Due to this rarity of available skilled workmen and consequently, higher prices, stenciling became a decorative tool for the elite at the turn of the twentieth century (Parry, 1977).

Location Within the Interior

Since stenciling was considered an ornamental embellishment, it was most likely found in the formal rooms used to host guests. Hallways, parlors, drawing, and dining rooms most typically donned the handicraft. Stylebooks mentioned the acceptance of such wall treatment for these rooms, and the few pictures and extant works which remain support this application.

An important element of stenciling was where it was applied in the room. A typical location was the frieze area--a decorative band at the top of a wall. Often this area was bordered by architectural moldings, but, if these were absent, a stenciled border may have defined

the space. The cove was another popular site for stenciling and became an attractive, transitional feature between the ceiling and the wall. This concave space was often a problem area for papering and was therefore more suitable for painted decoration. Plain ceilings were often enhanced with borders, lines, and stenciled designs, with powdered designs acceptable for small ceiling areas. An unusual decorative note was added by stenciling a "wipe-line" above the dado. The beginning of the wall above the dado acquired this name because the area would eventually get a dirty smear from the housekeeper's dusting of the chair rail. To camouflage this smear, a small pattern may have been stenciled and glazed with an ochre or umber-tinted varnish. This provided a durable finish for the constant cleaning (Flaherty, February 1975). Entire walls were rarely stenciled, unless they were small or were decorated around the turn of the century.

Motifs

Since several styles coexisted in the Victorian Age, motifs for stencilwork varied, encompassing historical patterns to the new forms of Art Nouveau. They followed designs used in other decorative arts, but were usually floral or geometric in origin. As seen by these examples in Figures 2, 3 and 4, patterns were taken from popular style-books (Shoppell, 1883) of the time or created to compliment forms in textiles, upholstery, and other decorative components of the room. The main guideline was to find an appropriate design to match the function of the room.

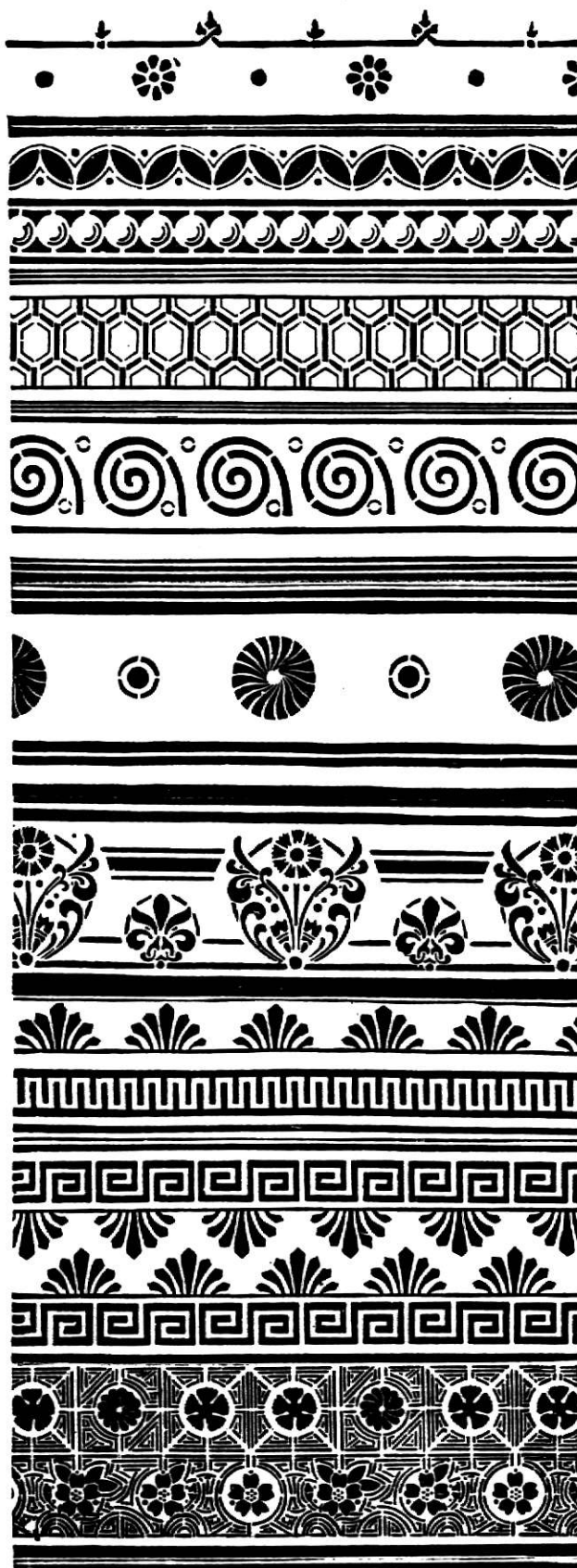
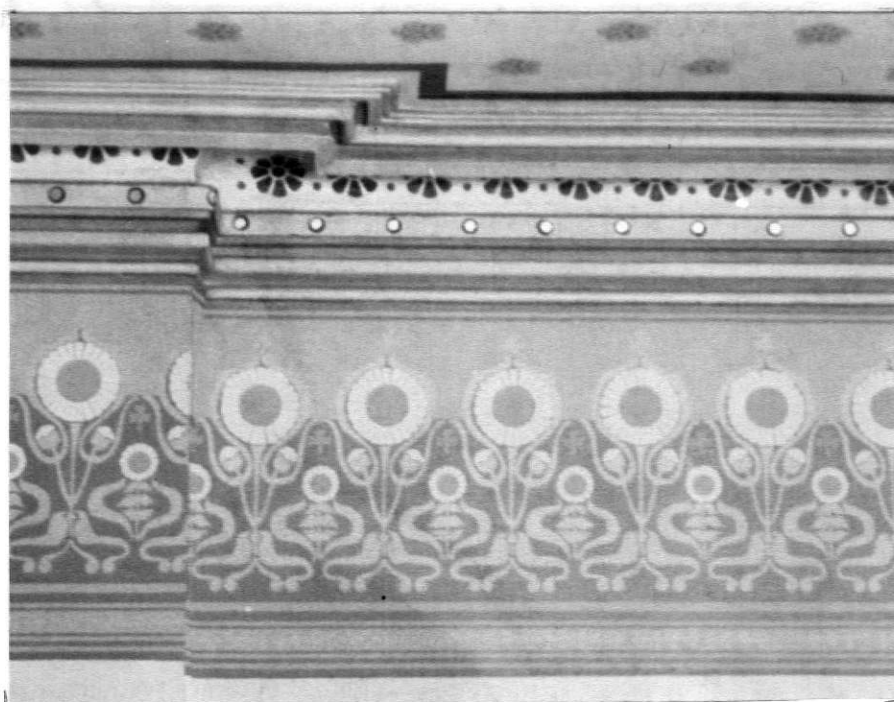


Figure 2

Early and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Stencil Designs
(See Appendix F, p. 83)



Figures 3 and 4

Late Nineteenth-Century Stencil Designs
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

Colors

The colors used in stencilwork followed the decorative trend current at the time. Usually, they supported the colors found in the remaining wall space, only in brighter tones. Gilding was often applied, adding flair to the design.

Application Techniques

The actual application of Victorian stencilwork has changed little through the years. The technique employed now was also practiced then (Shoppell, 1883). Modifications have occurred, however, in the paint technology and stenciling materials. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that ready-mixed paints and gilding sizings were available. Prior to that, dry pigments imported from Europe (Welsh, 1975) were ground in oil and lead, and writers included paint recipes and mixing procedures in their guidebooks (Shoppell, 1883).

Common paints of the nineteenth century fell into two categories--oil- or water-based paint. Lead and oil paint, oil varnishes and lacquers comprised the category of oil paint, while water paints included whitewash, milk-base or casein, and calsomine or distemper-based paints (Welsh, 1981). These were the paint types used for Victorian stenciling as opposed to modern-day versions of alkyd resin, modified oils, acrylics, and latexes. A finishing glaze or varnish was often applied to increase durability, but was lightly textured to give a satin finish rather than a gloss.

Nineteenth-century stencil plates were usually constructed of paper products, as contrasted to today's use of plastics, such as mylar and acetate.

Chapter 5

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF EXTANT STENCILWORK

Discovery and Preservation of Original Work

To determine if a home originally had stenciling, a little detective work may need to be done. If the wall is treated with paint, carefully remove the layers in an area with paint remover. If a pattern appears, sand with very fine wet and dry sandpaper. Often, designs are found beneath layers of old wallpaper. Cautiously remove the old paper, checking for traces of painted decoration transferred on the back of the paper (Martin, 1973). Decorative painting may be discerned by examining the surface under "raking light" (Mosca, 1981). This involves two people, a ladder, and a strong floodlight. Begin at the cornice in a darkened room, and shine the light across the wall. The light will accentuate to the second person standing a few feet away from the wall any ripples or variations in thickness in the paint film that may indicate the presence of stenciling. The entire wall and ceiling can be similarly examined.

If stenciling is discovered, save every bit of evidence and measure and chart the location, aiming to record a complete design unit. If possible, photograph the pattern, preferably in color. Dampening the walls lightly may help to accentuate the design. Carefully trace each unit with frosted mylar and a fine-pointed felt pin, noting colors and color placement (Martin, 1973).

Historic Paint Analysis

Following this step, a specialized form of research known as paint analysis can be conducted to investigate the historic paint, if so desired (Welsh, 1981). It consists of microscopic and occasionally chemical and ultraviolet bleaching techniques and yields such information as the number of coating layers, original colors, distribution of colors and coatings, decorative painting, types of coatings (i.e., oil- or water-base paints, varnishes, wallpaper), physical characteristics (i.e., gloss and texture), and approximate date or period of each layer. In addition, architectural alterations can be detected. Although on-site investigation must be performed for national landmarks, historic house museums, adaptive restorations and tax act rehabilitations, such services do allow old-house owners to take their own paint samples to mail to a laboratory.

The procedure begins by extracting paint samples from areas that have been sufficiently protected from wear or excessive weathering (Welsh, 1981). Avoid areas where there has been obvious paint removal or manual abrasion. The ideal size of a paint sample is about four to six inches, however, the range may vary from a minimum of one-half inch square to three feet square. Using a scalpel or X-acto knife (a #2 X-acto knife with a #22 blade works well), extract a sample by turning the blade sideways slowly to undercut the area. Attempt to keep the sample intact. However, if the layers tend to fracture, just make sure they are not lost and are retained with the specimen. Following the removal, the sample should be immediately sealed in a small coin envelope, numbered, and identified as to its location in the house. The sample number should then be keyed to an overall sketch or

photographs of the area. When mailing the paint chips, any pertinent documentation such as historical records of the house, copies of relevant old photographs, recent photos of the room, and the construction date of the house should accompany the samples (Welsh, 1981).

Upon receipt of the samples in the lab, microscopic analysis will be conducted with a high quality binocular stereo zoom microscope (10x to 70x). Special analytical research and selective ultraviolet bleaching techniques may be employed to compensate for the fading, darkening or yellowing of pigments which is likely to occur with age. Identification of pigments is not typically included in this analysis, since it is not essential for determining original color. However, if it is desired, additional inspection using polarized light microscopy or chemicals can be performed (Welsh, 1981).

Under the microscope, the analyst records the paint layers in a chromochronology (color history) and matches them to a universally recognized color system called the Munsell System of Color Notation (Mosca, 1981). Developed in the early 1900s, the system identifies any color of any material in terms of hue, value, and chroma. After professional analysis has determined the original colors and assigned a reference notation (e.g., 5Y9/1) to the color, the homeowner must contact the Munsell Color Company in Baltimore, Maryland, to acquire the color standards specified (see Appendix D, p. 77). These color chips are then used to match the color with a major paint company. Due to age discolorations, air pollutions, and oxidation reactions, some degree of uncertainty and area of tolerance must be accepted when matching colors (Welsh, 1981).

Authentic paint chemistry may not be available to the restorator due to the federal prohibition of lead-based paints for residen-

tial use. Therefore, oil-based paints must be mixed according to modern lead-free formulations. Historic water-based paints, however, can be reproduced with the addition of cost and time. In most cases, present-day latex paints prove more suitable. The reproduction of original gloss and texture is also important for accurate restorations (Welsh, 1975).

For more detailed information of costs and time required for analysis, contact the services listed in Appendix D, page 77. Mail-order analysis is moderately priced and determined on a per sample basis (Welsh, 1975). The report of findings and conclusions is typically available within a few weeks. With historical information acquired, execution of the design can now be considered.

Chapter 6

RESTORATION AND REPRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

The previous discussion focuses on extant stenciling. However, the fortunate ownership of original work is not always the case. Therefore, reproductions are very much of interest to the homeowner wishing to decorate authentically. Although the application technique for the two approaches (restoration and reproduction) are similar, variations in preparations will be discussed accordingly.

Stencil Preparation

The stencil itself can be made from numerous materials, varying in durability (Bishop, 1976). Bristol board, manila paper, oaktag, or similar card stocks are inexpensive and available. They must be sealed, however, so paints and cleaning solutions are not absorbed (Labine, 1983). Liberately coat the stencil with a 1:1 mixture of turpentine and boiled linseed oil and let it stand. After ten minutes, wipe off the excess and hang it by a thumbtack for twenty-four hours. This procedure should occur after the design is outlined, but before cutting since the oil eases the cutting task. (Caution must be taken, as the rags soaked with linseed oil are prone to spontaneous combustion. They should be immersed in water, burned, or placed in a metal container outside.) Shellacing or varnishing are other methods to sealing the stencil, but are less durable than the turpentine and oil. Several papers come pretreated such as a heavy-duty wax paper (non-durable, but easy to cut), commercial stencil board, and Morilla stencil

paper (best choice for paper stencils), which are usually purchased at art supply stores (Bishop, 1976). Other materials include those classified as transparent, which aid tremendously in transferring a design and simplifying the task of registering (lining up) multi-color stencils. These are recommended when tracing an extant sample from wall to paper. Frosted mylar (.005 gauge) is tough, accepts pen and pencil marks well, and is excellent with japan or acrylic paints. Clear acetate (.0075 gauge) is also ideal, but requires the use of a technical ink pen to transfer the design. Vinyl (8 gauge) is sometimes used for acrylics or japan paints, although best suited for simple jobs since durability and accuracy are low. Occasionally, architect's linen (not suited for japan paints) and zinc or brass plates are utilized (Bishop, 1976).

In addition to the technical drawing pen and pencils, other drawing equipment such as a drawing board, T-square, graph paper, a compass for drawing circles, tracing and drawing paper, and a metal ruler may be needed.

Patterns used for reproductions may need to be rescaled by enlarging or reducing the design before transferring to the stencil (Fobel, 1976). Only one design "unit" needs to be made since the stencil will be repeated. After the pattern is affixed to a primed stencil, the task of cutting arises (Fobel, 1976). Although there are special stencil-cutting knives, utility or mat knives, such as X-acto knives, work well for cutting all stencil material. Circular punches are also helpful for the execution of circles, while metal rulers assist the cutting of straight lines. Stencil cutting is tedious, finger-numbing work, requiring a continuous turning of the stencil while cutting perpendicularly (Figure 5).

Apply even pressure for the entire length of a curve or line and avoid lifting the knife. Cut small designs first, saving larger areas for last so the plate is not weakened. Blades should be sharpened frequently on a Carborundum stone or knife sharpener. A piece of glass or a stack of newspapers should be placed under the stencil. Accuracy is of utmost importance since ragged edges will stencil accordingly. If an accidental slip occurs, masking tape applied to both sides allows for mending and recutting (Bishop, 1976). Remove any traces of ink around the cutout with a moistened tissue.

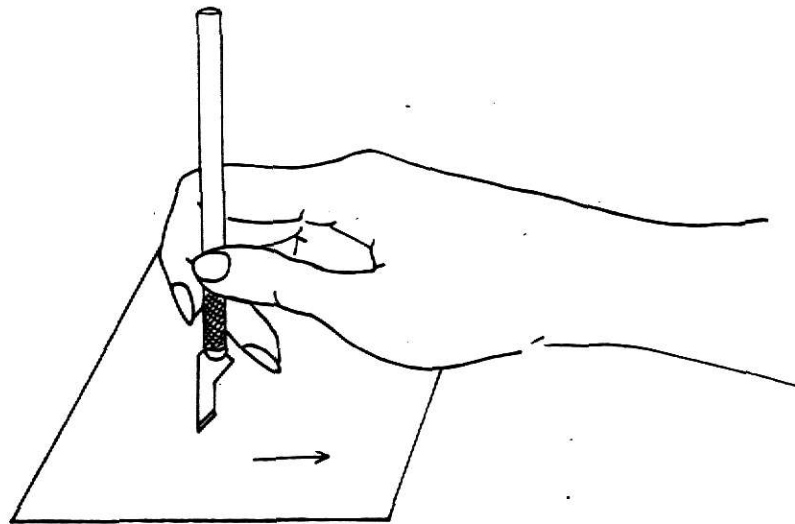


Figure 5

Correct Position for Stencil Cutting
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

Since Victorian stencilwork involves several colors, multiple stencils are most commonly used (Parry, 1977), although masking sections of the stencil plate may be satisfactory for simple color schemes (Day, 1974). Cut the needed pieces of stencil material large enough to allow a one-inch border around the complete design unit. On each sheet, trace the sections corresponding in color. In order to print two or

more stencils in proper relationship to each other, register marks or keys are needed (Bishop, 1976). On transparent stencils, dotted lines can be drawn in to match the portion already painted. Opaque stencils can be uniformly notched and the cutout area outlined on the wall in pencil as the design is printed. Another method of providing keys includes a partial cutout of one of the other design elements already painted upon which the stencil can be matched when overlapping. Paint is never applied through the keys. Figures 16-23 (Appendix C, p. 74) illustrate this technique. Long lengths of design, as a flower stem, must contain ties which keep the pattern from being vulnerable to brush action (Parry, 1977). These ties leave white spaces in the design which can be handpainted in later if desired (Figure 6).

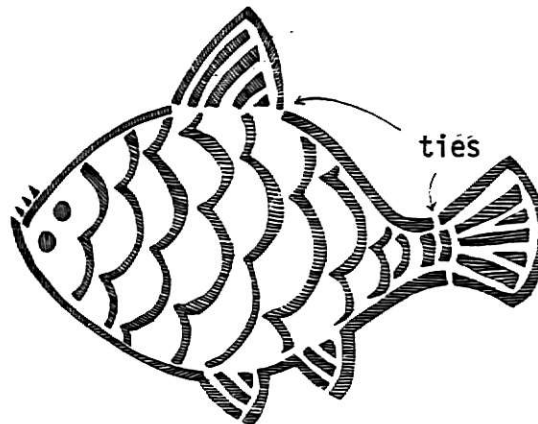


Figure 6

Illustration of Ties in a Stencil Plate
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

Design Layout

The first step in planning the room's stenciling is to draw the room to scale on graph paper. Many problems can thus be worked out beforehand. Guidelines should be placed on the wall. A running border design can simply begin at one corner and be worked around the room

(Bishop, 1976). Often the end design may need to be shortened or stretched slightly to allow for a good match at the origin (Figure 7).

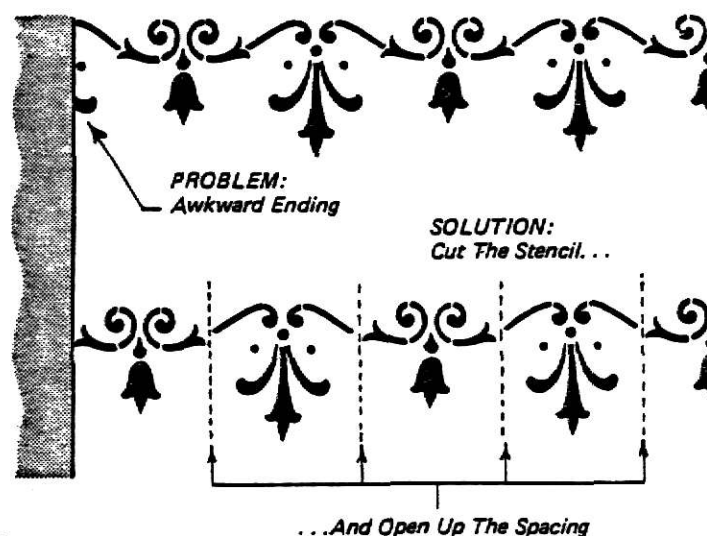
If the pattern is interrupted with more complicated designs, it will need to be centered and arranged so the principal design is not in a corner (Figure 8) (Bishop, 1976). Start at the center mark and work the design to within one foot of the corner. Return to the center and continue in a like manner the other direction. The corners should be left until last, at which point, the stencil plate can be modified to fill the void. When fewer than four walls are stenciled, the border or frieze should be visually terminated with a stripe or pattern.

Border designs that lead into flat corners can be handled several ways (Bishop, 1976). The pattern can be butted at right angles (Figure 9), mitered (Figures 10 and 11), pieced to carry the design parts around the corner without interruption (Figure 12), or designed with a special corner piece, choosing motifs found in the border (Figure 13).

Sometimes stencils cannot be placed flat on the surface, as in coves, causing the impression to be incomplete or fuzzy. Solutions to this include bending the stencil, hinging the stencil, cutting smaller stencils, or completing the design by hand.

Color Selection

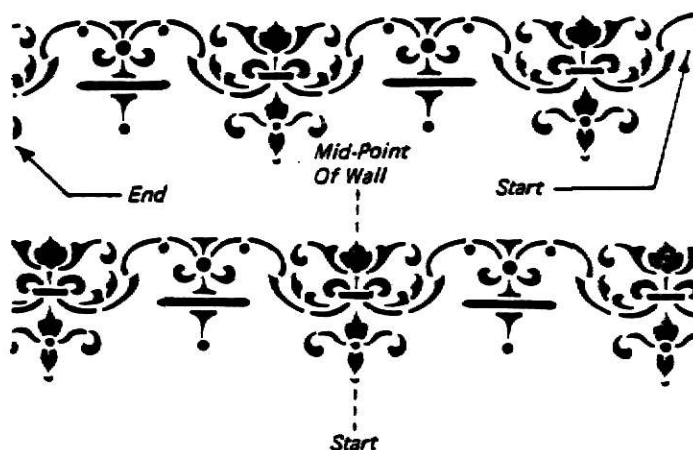
After the design, color is the most important factor. In pre-planning the colors, several tips can eliminate problems. A homeowner may wish to simulate the mellowing of age in the final product, giving it a more authentic appearance. The easiest way to accomplish this is the addition of raw umber to the paint (Bishop, 1976). Only a small



(TOP) When a border pattern is run continuously around a room, you often end up unevenly. (BOTTOM) If you pause five feet before the finish and measure how the pattern is going to end up, you can cut the stencil apart and insert a small amount of additional space between the elements so that you finish evenly.

Figure 7

How to Cheat on Design Layout at the End of a Wall
(See Appendix F, p. 83)



(TOP) One way to apply a frieze pattern around a room is to stencil each wall separately ... corner to corner. When you do this however, the pattern usually comes out differently at each corner. (BOTTOM) A better way to apply a border to a wall is to start at the mid-point and work the pattern evenly to each corner.

Figure 8

Design Layout for Stenciling Between Two Walls
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

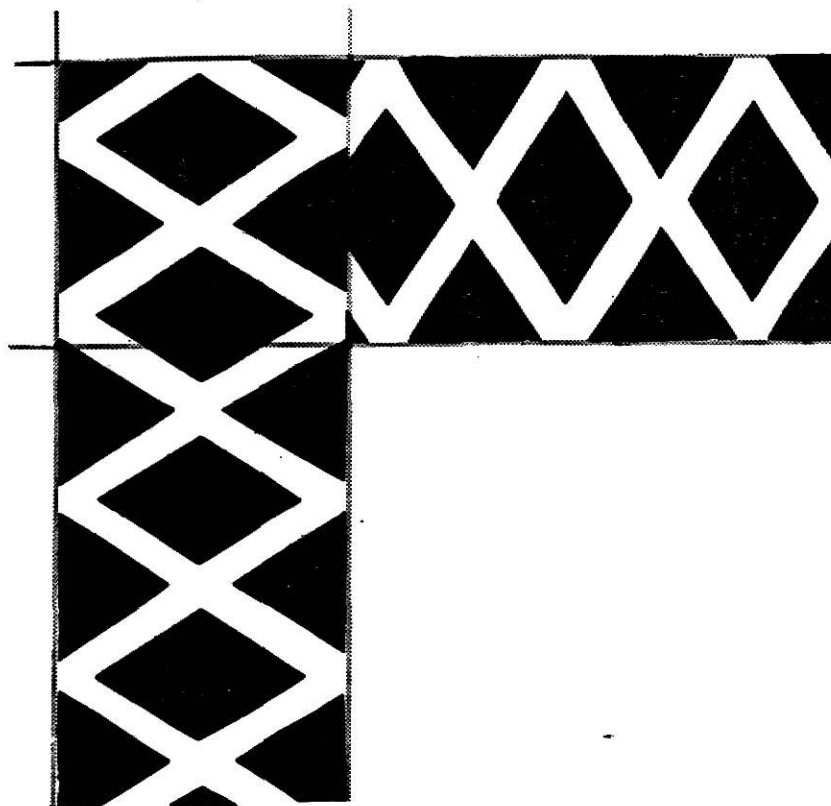


Figure 9

Border Pattern Butted at Right Angles for Corner Turn
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

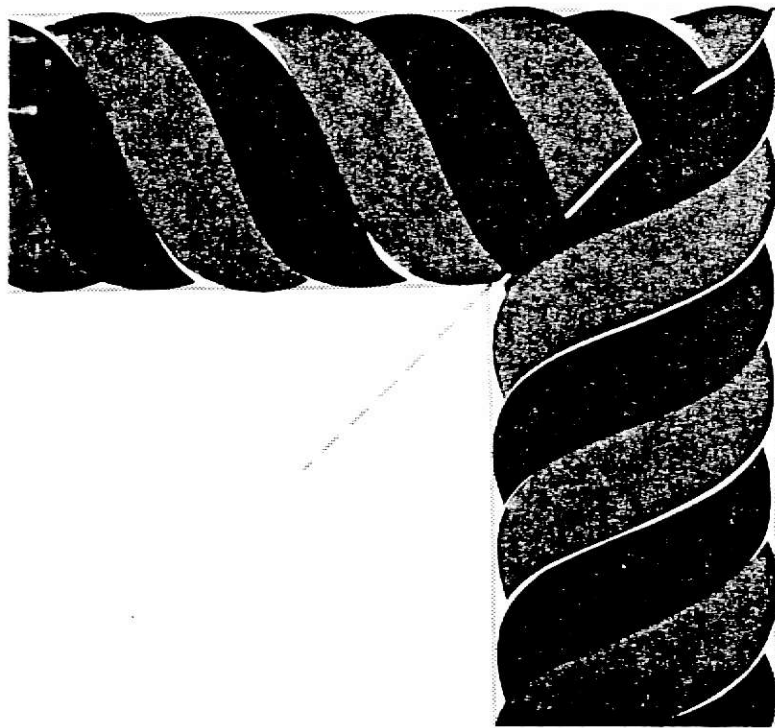
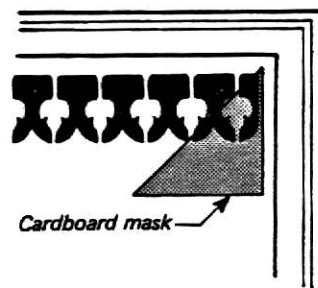
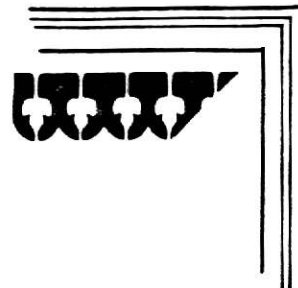


Figure 10

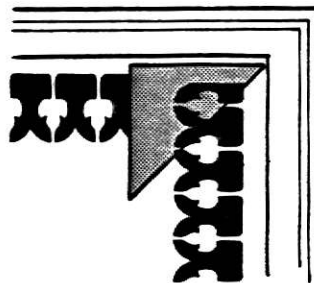
Border Pattern Mitered for Corner Turn
(See Appendix F, p. 83)



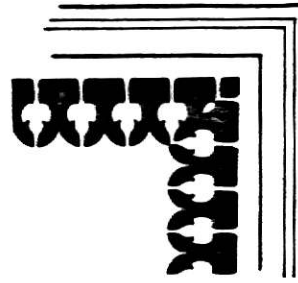
1. Cut a piece of cardboard at a 45° angle, and tape it so that it bisects the corner angle. Make sure stencil pattern overlaps the mask at every point.



2. Lift cardboard mask, revealing perfect mitre. Allow paint to dry. If you transfer the cardboard mask immediately, you may smear paint.



3. Tape mask on opposite side of the 45° angle. Make sure stencil fully overlaps the mask so you'll have a full meeting of the pattern in corner.



4. Lift mask. If the stencil hit the bisecting angle at the same point in the pattern, you'll have a perfectly symmetrical corner.

Figure 11

How to Make A Mitered Corner
(See Appendix F, p. 83)



Figure 12

Border Pattern Pieced for Corner Turn
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

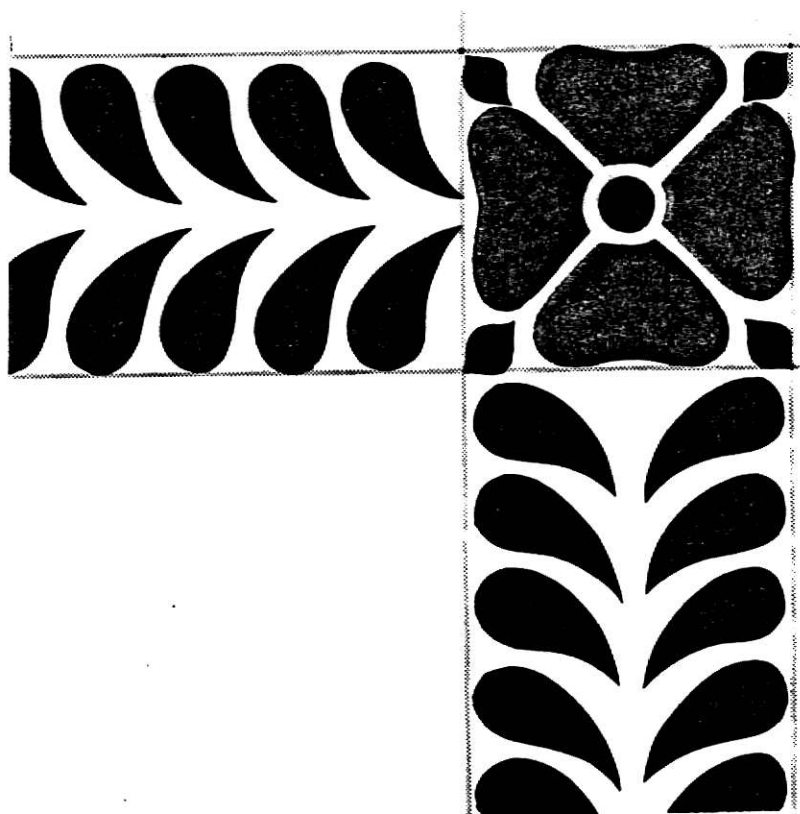


Figure 13

Border Pattern With Special Design for Turn
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

amount is needed since it is highly concentrated. Caution must be taken when varnishing over red tones as they tend to bleed more than any other color. A light coat of shellac prior to varnishing will help to protect the print. When planning the color arrangement, strive for color contrasts in the fore and background, or plan to outline forms. From a distance, colors too close in hue will blend together and be lost. Drying may also affect colors as some darken and some lighten when dry. Similarly, the lighting may wash out some colors and emphasize other components. To avoid these above problems, always experiment with the colors first, letting them dry, and analyzing the results.

Surface Preparation

Before the stencilwork can begin, surface preparation must be completed (Day, 1974). Cracks and defects should be repaired, plaster walls primed if necessary, and two coats of flat oil or latex paint applied. If walls are in good condition, cleaning may be all that is needed. If old plaster walls are in a deplorable condition and held together with layers of wallpaper that is tightly secured, spackle or sand the seams and apply a flat, oil-based paint. Always save a portion of the background paint to redo mistakes if the job is botched later (Bishop, 1976).

Materials and Equipment

The art of stenciling demands a unique type of brush (Fobel, 1976). Stencil brushes are short and cylindrical, have stiff bristles cut the same length, and come in varying diameters (Figure 14). Cabinetmaker's gluing brushes, rubbing brushes, natural sponges and small velvet pieces of fabric, are also suitable applicators (Bishop, 1976).

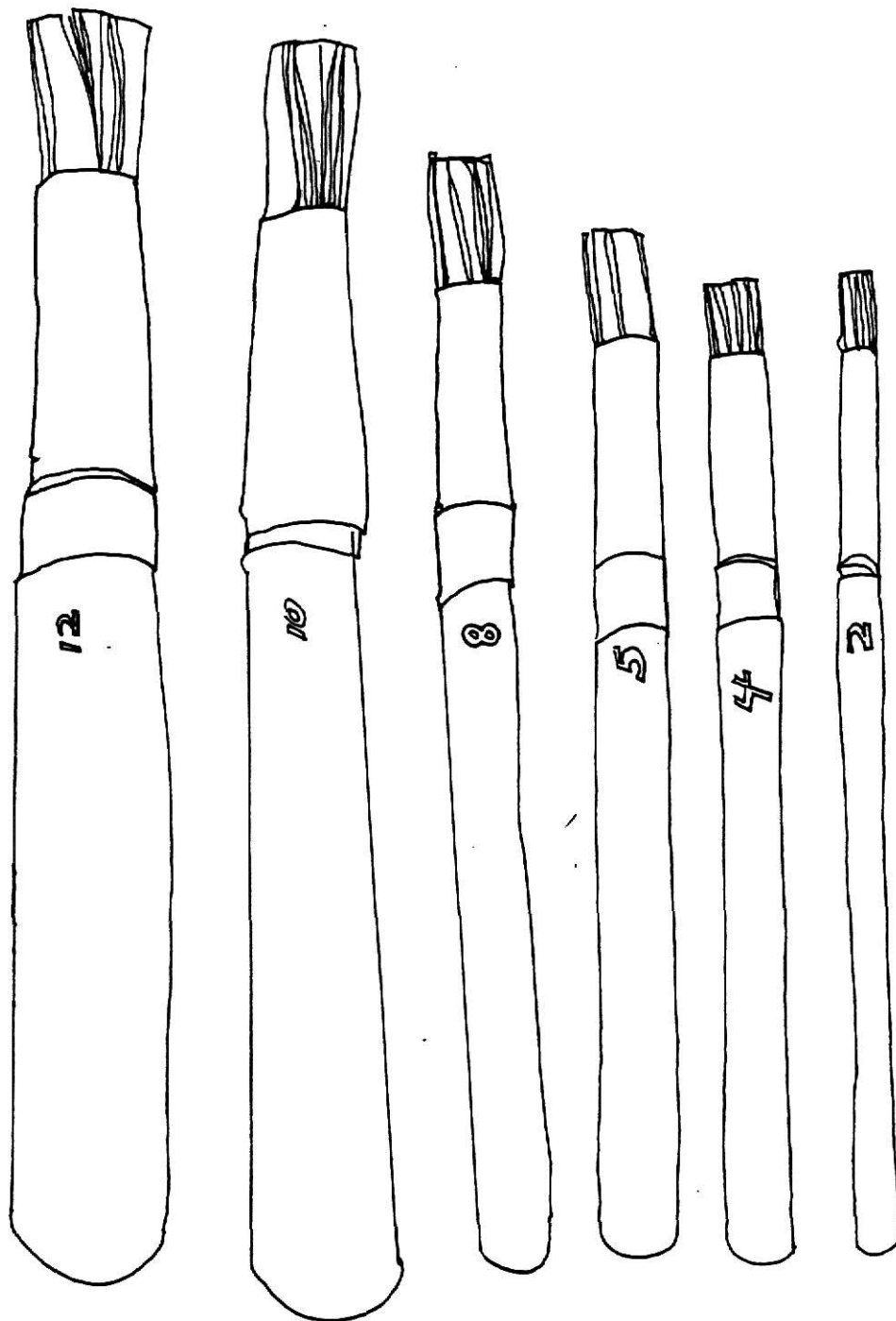


Figure 14

Stencil Brushes (Actual Size)
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

Modern-day technology offers several paint mediums appropriate for the stenciling procedures (Bishop, 1976). Japan paints, with an oil base, are thick, have a flat effect, and dry rapidly, allowing the stencil plate to be shifted immediately without smearing the paint. Although drying time is lengthy, artists' oils in tubes are also acceptable. Semi-gloss or flat, oil-based house paints possess a thick consistency, favored for stenciling. Flat, water-based paints of latex, acrylic or casein are also suggested, sporting the quality of rapid drying and easy cleanup. Acrylics are excellent due to their thick consistency. If casein paints are used, a protective coat of varnish must be applied (Bishop, 1976). Except for ceilings, spray enamels in aerosol cans are possibilities, although not widely used. The addition of japan drier to paints increases drying time. About four ounces of each color is estimated for a nine- by twelve-foot room.

In addition to brushes and paint, a hard, flat-surfaced palette is necessary to hold the paint. Pie or muffin tins work well.

Before the stenciling design is executed, the background area should be measured, lightly sanded, and painted. After a thorough drying, the background is ready for adornment.

Stenciling Technique

The stenciling technique involves a circular or "stippling" action by holding the brush perpendicular to the surface (Figure 15). Stippling with a brush is considered the most typical technique, although brushing in swirls, sponging, and spraying are alternative procedures (Day, 1974). It is imperative that a paint of thick consistency be used and applied sparingly only at the end of the brush, never on the sides. This prevents the paint from running under the stencil plate,

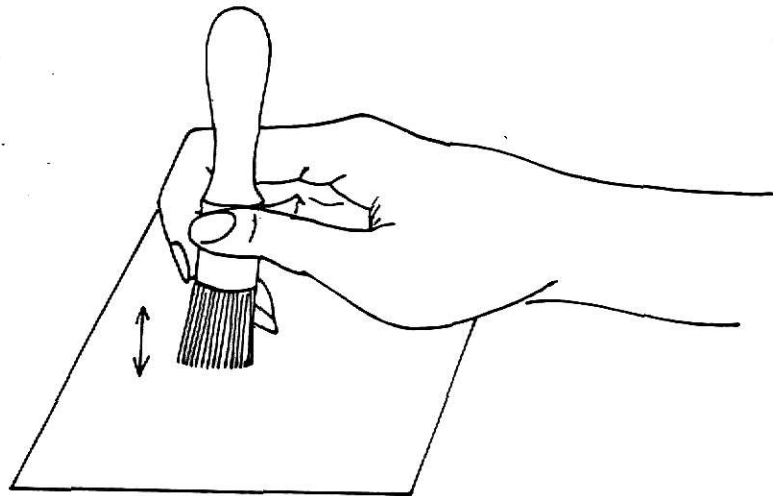


Figure 15
Stippling Technique for Stenciling
(See Appendix F, p. 83)

smearing the design. A dry, clean brush is important, so several brushes per color are recommended. Dipping it in benzine (lighter fluid) will help dry a freshly-cleaned brush instantly. Before the paint is applied, the coated brush should be worked on a stack of newspapers in a hammer-like movement to remove excess paint (Day, 1974).

A couple of methods are proposed to secure the stencil plate to the wall, preventing paint from seeping behind. Drafting tape, which is less tacky than masking tape, works well to hold the plate. Another method involves spraying a light coat of an aerosol adhesive on the back side of the stencil, allowing it to become tacky, and pressing it to the surface. When removing the plates, it is advised to lift the stencil straight off the surface (Kahn, 1983).

Several other tips help in successful application. Practicing prior to actual application will improve the end results. Continuous designs should be attempted before spot designs and the predominate color holds priority in application to secondary tones. A complete stencil plate should be painted throughout the room rather than alternating plates. This saves time and energy. If the stencil progression is from left to right, then the design should be painted right to left. This allows the paint on the overlapping side adequate time to dry. After every four to five printings, the stencil plate needs to be wiped clean. Mistakes are easily corrected if a rag with the appropriate cleaning fluid is kept handy. If necessary, the area can be touched up with extra paint. Either method, however, must be completely dry before the second painting attempt is made. Due to the tendency of sore muscles, three to four hours of work appears adequate. It also helps to relax the arm while painting, rather than tensing the muscles.

Brushes should be wrapped in damp rags or placed in plastic bags in the refrigerator to eliminate hardening if work must be temporarily halted.

When the design is completed, ties can be filled in if such effect is desired. Occasionally, topical finishes embellish and protect the stencil design. Bronze powdering (a powder medium metallic in nature) and gilding with leaf (fragile sheets of real gold or silver) can be used to highlight the design (Day, 1974). Both are applied to areas stenciled with a tinted, japan size which has reached a tacky finish and then finished with the application of a gloss varnish (Reynolds, 1980). This should be done professionally.

Even if the metallic finish is not employed, gloss varnishes or shellacs are often used as protective finishes (Bishop, 1976). If a satin finish is preferred, the gloss surface of the varnish can be dulled by sanding lightly with fine sandpaper or steel wool. To further decorate, a glaze may be utilized over the varnish, allowing the undercoat to show through. This technique adds a glowing quality, deeper dimensioning, and elegance to the form. The glazing solution of two parts varnish (flat or semi-gloss), two parts turpentine, and one-half part japan paint could be applied with a sponge for a textured effect (Bishop, 1976). It can also be made with glazing liquid to which an oil pigment (usually raw and burnt sienna or umber) is added. To acquire a mottled effect, dab lightly with cotton waste or other such materials. A period of one month should elapse before the finish surface is washed.

Cleanup of the brushes and stencils is extremely important and should be completed immediately following the job (Bishop, 1976). Brushes should be cleaned with the appropriate solvent, washed with

soapy water, and blot dried. They should then be stood upright in a container overnight or dried with a hair dryer. Similarly, stencil plates require careful cleaning with a rag dipped in the required solvent for the paint. Plates are easy to damage so should never be wiped against the edge of the design. A soaking in hot water will help clean dried paint or remove creases. Following the cleaning, stencils should be blotted with newspapers in a flat position.

Stencils should be stored in a flat position while brushes are best left upright, so the bristles are not bent. Leftover paint can be preserved in small jars with a few drops of turpentine dropped on the surface.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The handicraft of stencilwork has held an important position in the history of ornamentation, including the embellishment of walls and ceilings during the Victorian era. Its value then as an interior treatment can be evaluated by the popularity it experienced and its frequent use.

However, the craft's value today is equally as great for several reasons. Many Victorian homeowners nowadays are concerned with authentic restorations. Typically, these houses incorporate large, odd-shaped rooms, making renovations difficult and costly. If wallpaper is considered, it is soon apparent that the large-scaled patterns these rooms require are not common in today's market which is produced for smaller-sized structures (Flaherty, February 1975). The few historic wallpaper reproductions that are available are costly, in both roll price and in quantity needed. Stencilwork provides a simple, economical, and authentic answer to this decorating dilemma.

But even with this, there exists a far greater value of implementing this craft: the preservation of our heritage. It embodies the spirit of our nation when growth in industry and science was abounding; when the working man labored hard and achieved success; when the craftsman was held in high esteem; and when a conglomeration of foreign influences worked together in the formation of our country.

These ideals should not be lost, but preserved to provide a lesson for future generations. The implementation of stencilwork

provides a visual reminder of our past--where we have been--and, hopefully, where we are going.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A:
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acetate: A thin, transparent film made of cellulose acetate used for stencil plates. Acetate cleans easily but does not accept pencil markings or acrylic paint.

Acrylic Paint: A flat, water-soluble paint with an excellent consistency right from the jar for stenciling. They come either opaque or transparent and should not be used with acetate or paper stencils.

Alkyd: A synthetic, polyester resin modified with the acid of one of various drying oils, as fish, tung, soya, or linseed, that gives good adhesion, gloss and color retention. Most "oil-base" paints today are based on alkyd resins rather than the traditional linseed oil.

Architect's Linen: A stencil material sometimes used for bronze paint stenciling, but never with japan paint.

Artists' Oils: Oil paints in small tubes used for decorative painting and tinting japan colors or glazes, if necessary. Its solvent is turpentine.

Bristol Board: A cardboard with a smooth surface suitable for writing, therefore, used for stencil plates.

Bronzing Powder: A gold, silver, copper, or bronze powder used to imitate the look of real metal. It is usually used to highlight other techniques.

Calimine: A white or tinted wash of whiting (chalk), glue size, and water used typically on ceilings and walls. Vinegar and hot water will easily remove the product.

Carborundum Stone: An abrasive stone used to sharpen knives.

Casein Paint: A water-soluble paint produced from curdled milk that must be protected by a coat of varnish. Casein paints are in delicate tints with flat, opaque finishes.

Chair rail: A horizontal molding or decorative border dividing and accenting the place where the dado ends and the filling starts.

Chroma: A quality of color combining hue and saturation.

Chromochronology: The sequential history of color use in a project.

Cornice: The molding of the junction of the wall and ceiling which is usually three-dimensional.

Cove: An architectural member with a concave cross section, often a transitional area between the wall and ceiling.

- Dado: A section at the lower part of an interior wall just above the baseboard that is treated differently than the remaining wall.
- Denatured Alcohol: A solution used for thinning or dissolving shellac.
- Distemper: The general name of water-based, glue-bound paints used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- Extant: Something currently existing, that is not lost or destroyed.
- Filling: The largest area of the wall, located between the dado border and the frieze.
- Frieze: A richly ornamented, horizontal band on the upper portion of the wall, above the filling and below the cornice or ceiling.
- Frosted Mylar: A translucent, durable plastic used for stencil plates. It takes pen and pencil marks well, and can be used with japan or acrylic paints.
- Gilding: An application of gold or silver leaf to a prepared surface, creating the appearance of a solid metallic form.
- Glaze: A translucent oil or water coating, either clear or tinted, which is applied over a painted surface for protective or decorative purposes.
- Hue: The pure state of any color (the name by which a color is called).
- Japan Drier: A quick-drying additive used to accelerate drying and add cohesiveness to oil-based paints. It is usually mixed 1 part drier to 10 parts paint.
- Japan Paint: A flat, oil-based paint made by grounding pigments in japan oil, and possesses good covering qualities. This paint is designed for slick surfaces, dries quickly, and comes in vivid hues. It is soluble in turpentine. (Do not use mineral spirits.)
- Keys: Cutouts in a stencil plate that allows previously painted elements in the design to be seen. They are used to align the stencil, and not to be filled with paint.
- Lacquer: A clear or colored synthetic organic coating (a type of varnish) that typically dries to form a film by evaporation of the solvent.
- Latex: A quick-drying paint that is water soluble when wet and permanent when dry.
- Leaf: Thin, fragile sheets of metal (as real gold or silver) applied to a surface for a brilliant, highlighting effect.
- Manila Paper (oaktag): A strong, durable, opaque paper of a brownish or buff color with a smooth finish originally made from Manila hemp.

Morilla Stencil Board: A translucent stencil material produced by the Morilla Co. and created with a dry wax process.

Mylar: See "Frosted Mylar".

Oil Paint: The traditional formulation consisted of pigment suspended in linseed oil, a drier, and mineral spirits or other type of thinner. The term is now applied to alkyd paints, which come in intense colors and either a flat or gloss finish.

Pigment: Paint ingredients used to impart color and hiding power.

Pounced: Having dusted, rubbed, finished, or stenciled a surface with pounce (a fine powder for making stenciled patterns).

Powder Design: A regular disposition of design over the entire surface.

Preservation: The act of protecting and maintaining something from harm, injury, or destruction.

Register Marks: Markings that help match up and closely join each setting of the stencil plate, thus keeping the stencil straight.

Reproduction: The act or process of closely imitating or reviving something.

Restoration: The act of bringing something back to a former condition.

Shellac: A preparation of lac (a resinous insect secretion) dissolved usually in alcohol and used chiefly as a wood filler and finish. It works well as a protective coat to isolate any stenciling which tends to bleed or dissolve under varnish. The solvent is denatured alcohol.

Size: A resinous varnish that sets up tacky and used in the application of metallic powder or leaf.

Spray Enamel: A durable, oil-based paint of premixed colors sold in aerosol cans.

Stenciling: A pattern, design, or print that is produced by forcing an ink, paint or metallic powder through an impervious material perforated with a design onto a surface to be printed.

Stencil Plate: Any of numerous stencil materials containing the cutout design used for stenciling.

Stippling: The application of paint with repeated, small touches.

Tie: A structural element on the stencil plate holding two pieces together. They enable the transformation of a line drawing to a stencil form.

Turpentine: A solution used for thinning japan or oil paints, making glazes, and cleaning stencils.

Value: The lightness or darkness of a color.

Varnish: A solution of resins in a drying oil containing no pigment. It is used for mixing glazes and protective coatings and comes with either flat, satin, or gloss finishes.

Vinyl: A clear, stretchy, plastic material used with acrylic or japan paints. It tends to ripple and rejects ink and pencil lines.

White Lead: A heavy, poisonous basic carbonate of lead of variable composition that was marketed as a powder or as a paste in linseed oil and has good hiding power. It was chiefly used in exterior paints.

Whitewash: A liquid plaster whose composition is mainly slacked lime and water.

Wipe-Line: The beginning of the wall area directly above the chair rail or dado often treated with varnished, decorative stencilwork.

APPENDIX B:
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AXIOMS AND RULES OF COLOR

NINETEENTH-CENTURY AXIOMS AND RULES OF COLOR³

(Shoppell, 1883, p. 27, citing Christopher Dresser)

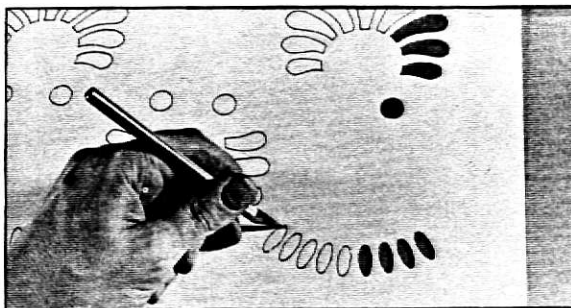
1. Regarded from an art point of view, there are but three colors, namely, blue, red and yellow.
2. Blue, red and yellow have been termed primary colors; they cannot be formed by the admixture of any other colors.
3. All colors other than blue, red and yellow result from the admixture of the primary colors.
4. By the admixture of blue and red, purple is formed; by the admixture of red and yellow, orange is formed; and by the admixture of yellow and blue, green is formed.
5. Colors resulting from the admixture of two primary colors are termed secondary; hence purple, orange and green are secondary colors.
6. By the admixture of two secondary colors a tertiary color is formed; thus, purple and orange produce russet (the red tertiary); orange and green produce citrine (the yellow tertiary); and green and purple, olive (the blue tertiary); russet, citrine and olive are the three tertiary colors.
7. When a light color is juxtaposed to a dark color, the light color appears lighter than it is and the dark color darker.
8. When colors are juxtaposed, they become influenced as to their hue. Thus, when red and green are placed side by side, the red appears redder than it actually is, and the green greener; and when blue and black are juxtaposed, the blue manifests but little alteration, while the black assumes an orange tint or becomes "rusty".
9. No one color can be viewed by the eye without another being created. Thus, if red is viewed, the eye creates for itself green, and this green is cast upon whatever is near. If it views green, red is in like manner created and cast upon adjacent objects; thus, if red and green are juxtaposed, each creates the other in the eye, and the red created by the green is cast upon the red, and the green created by the red is cast upon the green; and the red and the green become improved by being juxtaposed. The eye also demands the presence of the three primary colors, either in their purity or in combination; and if these are not present, whatever is deficient will be created in the eye, and this induced color will be cast upon whatever is near. Thus, when we view blue, orange, which is a mixture of red and yellow, is created in the eye, and this color is cast upon whatever is near; if black is in juxtaposition with the blue, this orange is cast upon it, and gives to it an orange tint, thus causing it to look "rusty."
10. In the like manner, if we look upon red, green is formed in the eye, and is cast upon adjacent colors; or if we look upon yellow, purple is formed.

11. Harmony results from an agreeable contrast.
12. Colors which perfectly harmonize improve one another to the utmost.
13. In order to perfect harmony, the three colors are necessary, either in their purity or in combination.
14. Red and green combine to yield a harmony. Red is a primary color, and green, which is a secondary color, consists of blue and yellow--the other two primary colors. Blue and orange also produce a harmony, and yellow and purple, for in each case the three primary colors are present.
15. It has been found that the primary colors in perfect purity produce exact harmonies in the proportions of 8 parts of blue, 5 of red, and three of yellow; that the secondary colors harmonize in the proportions of 13 of purple, 11 of green and 8 of orange; and that the tertiary colors harmonize in the proportions of olive 24, russet 21, and citrine 19.
16. There are, however, subtleties of harmony which it is difficult to understand.
17. The rarest harmonies frequently lie close on the verge of discord.
18. Harmony of color is, in many respects, analogous to harmony of musical sounds.
19. Blue is a cold color, and appears to recede from the eye.
20. Red is a warm color, and is exciting; it remains stationary as to distance.
21. Yellow is the color most nearly allied to light; it appears to advance toward the spectator.
22. At twilight blue appears much lighter than it is, red much darker, and yellow slightly darker. By ordinary gaslight blue becomes darker, red brighter, and yellow lighter. By this artificial light a pure yellow appears lighter than white itself when viewed in contrast with certain other colors.
23. By certain combinations, color may make glad or depress, convey the idea of purity, richness or poverty, or may affect the mind in any desired manner, as does music.
24. When a color is placed on a gold ground, it should be outlined with a darker shade of its own color.
25. When a gold ornament falls on a colored ground, it should be outlined with black.

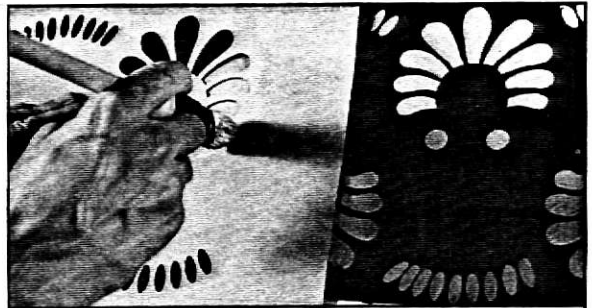
26. When an ornament falls on a ground which is in direct harmony, with it, it must be outlined with a lighter tint of its own color. Thus, when a red ornament falls on a green ground, the ornament must be outlined with a lighter red.

27. When the ornament and the ground are in two tints of the same color, if the ornament is darker than the ground, it will require outlining with a still darker tint of the same color; but if lighter than the ground no outline will be required.

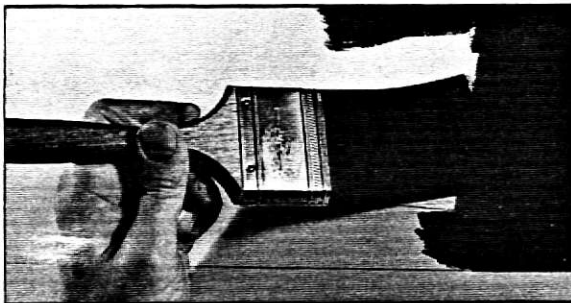
APPENDIX C:
ILLUSTRATED STENCILING PROCEDURE



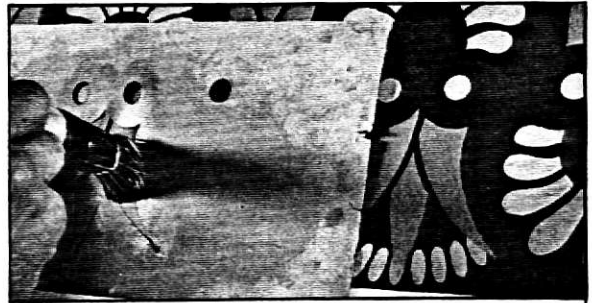
1. Pattern is drawn on stencil paper and cut out with X-Acto knife. A separate stencil is needed for each color to be used. If not waxed, stencil paper should be treated with boiled linseed oil.



3. First stencil pattern is applied to band. Brush is held perpendicular to the work. Paint can be transferred by light pouncing action or by gently swirling the ends of the bristles.



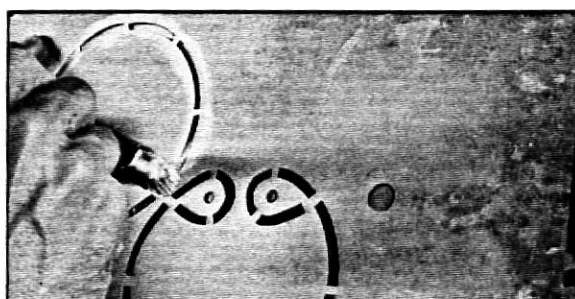
2. Limits of stencil band are measured onto wall, and lines established with a chalkline. Background color is then painted into band. We used a flat oil-based paint.



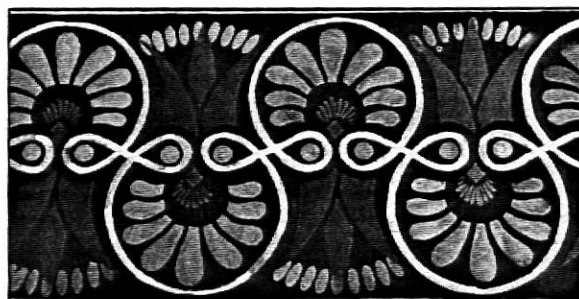
4. Second color is applied. Note hole in stencil at right. This is a registration key—designed to line up with circle of color already applied with first stencil. No paint is applied through these keys.

Figures 16-19

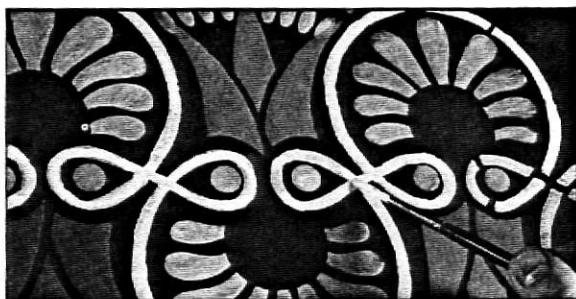
(See Appendix F, p. 83)



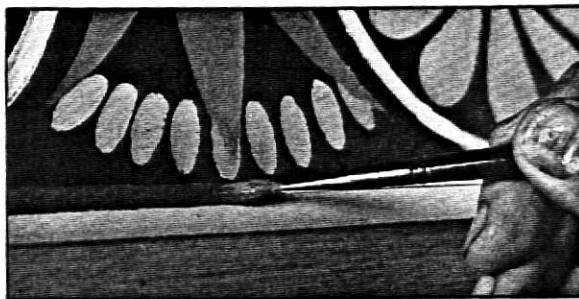
5. Third color—for the encircling ribbon—is laid down. Stencil required ties—small sections of paper running through the pattern that give strength to the stencil. Note circular key for alignment.



7. Next, hearts of palmettes are added in a brownish orange. Since completed pattern contains five colors, actual shades could only be determined after much trial-and-error on the sample board.



6. Gaps left in pattern by the ties are filled in by hand. Since paint in stencil pattern is thin and partially translucent, it takes some practice to get the painted-in areas to blend nicely.



8. Striping the frieze top and bottom adds finishing touch. Straightedge is held at an angle to the surface so that paint from the striping brush can't ooze under the edge.

Figures 20-23

(See Appendix F, p. 83)

APPENDIX D:
RESOURCES FOR THE HOMEOWNER

RESOURCES FOR THE HOMEOWNER

Note: The following list is by no means exhaustive, but recites resources discovered as a result of compiling this report.

READY TO USE STENCILS

-Mylar borders
Adele Bishop, Inc.
Box 557
Manchester, VT 05254
(802) 362-3537

-Cut and use stencil books
Dover Publications, Inc.
180 Varick Street
New York, NY 10014

Victorian Stencils for Design and Decoration. ed. by Edmund V. Gillon

Victorian Cut and Use Stencils
by Carol Belanger Grafton

Authentic Victorian Stencil Designs. ed. by Carol Belanger Grafton

Art Nouveau Cut and Use Stencils.
by JoAnne C. Day

AUTHENTIC DESIGN SOURCES TO CREATE ORIGINAL STENCILS

The Art of Decorative Design by Christopher Dresser

Designs and Patterns From Historic Ornament by W. & G. Audsley

Modern Ornamentation. by Christopher Dresser

STENCILING SUPPLIES

Most of the background and finishing supplies can be purchased at a paint and hardware store. Drawing and stenciling materials and equipment are typically found at artists' materials shops. Also, check the latest issue of The Old-House Journal Catalog and Old House Catalog (listed below) for current, individual suppliers.

-List of individual suppliers

The Old-House Journal Catalog
The Old-House Journal Corp.
69 A Seventh Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11217

-List of individual suppliers

Old-House Catalog
ed. by Lawrence Grow

-Acetate, frosted mylar, Morilla stencil paper, oaktag, utility and palette knives, japan paints, brushes

Arthur Brown and Bro., Inc.
2 West 46th Street
New York, NY 10036

Janovic Plaza
1292 First Avenue
New York, NY 10021

-Cabinetmaker's gluing brushes

Grumbacher
460 West 34th Street
New York, NY 10001

-Japan paint and gold leaf

H. Behlen and Bro.
Box 698
Amsterdam, NY 12010

-Gold leaf

M. Swift and Sons, Inc.
Ten Love Lane
Hartford, CT 06101
(203) 522-1181

Wolf Paints
9th Avenue at 52nd Street
New York, NY 10011
(212) 265-2066

M. Horowitz and Son
166 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10003
(212) 674-3284

-Stencil brushes and paints

Carson and Ellis, Inc.
1153 Warwick Avenue
Warwick, RI 02888

STENCILISTS - For other stencil services, check current issues of The Old-House Journal Catalog and Old House Catalog listed previously.

Gina Martin
359 Avery Street
Wapping, CT 06074

Howard Zucker
2611 Ocean Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11229

R. Wayne Reynolds
P.O. Box 28
Stevenson, MD 21153
(303) 484-1028

Joe and Nita Oswalt
Kansas City, KS
(913) 336-3104

DETAILED BOOKS ON STENCILING TECHNIQUE

The Art of Decorative Stenciling by Adele Bishop and Cile Lord

The Art of Stenciling by Norman Laliberté and Alex Mogelon

The Complete Book of Stencilcraft by JoAnne C. Day

The Stencil Book by Jim Fobel and Jim Boleach

Stenciling by Megan Parry.

HISTORIC PAINT RESEARCH

-Historic paint color consultants

Frank Welsh
859 Lancaster Avenue
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(215) 525-3564

Matthew John Mosca
P.O. Box 960
Bowling Green Station
New York, NY 102074
(516) 431-3592

-Color samples

Munsell Color Co.
2441 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

APPENDIX E:
EXTANT VICTORIAN STENCILWORK

EXTANT VICTORIAN STENCILWORK

Note: The following file is by no means exhaustive, but lists examples discovered as a result of compiling this report.

Colorado

Denver Botanic Gardens; Denver, Colorado

Connecticut

Lockwood-Mathews Mansion; Norwalk, Connecticut

Mark Twain Memorial; Hartford, Connecticut

Illinois

Stock Exchange Trading Room, Art Institute of Chicago;
Chicago, Illinois

Kansas

John Lamoreaux home; 108 W. Commercial, Waterville, Kansas

New Jersey

John H. Ballantine House; Newark, New Jersey

New York

John Bond Trevor's Glenview Mansion, Hudson River Museum;
Yonkers, New York

Rhode Island

Chateau-Sur-Mer, Preservation Society of Newport County;
Newport, Rhode Island

Gov. Henry Lippitt House; Providence, Rhode Island

APPENDIX F:
FIGURE CREDITS

FIGURE CREDITS

Figure

1. JoAnne C. Day, The Complete Book of Stencilcraft (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 85.
2. Robert W. Shoppell, How to Build, Furnish and Decorate (New York: Co-operative Building Plan Association, 1883), p. 28.
3. Cara Greenberg, "Clem Labine--Crusader for Historic Preservation," Metropolitan Home, (October 1981), p. 82.
4. Greenberg, p. 84.
5. Day, p. 26.
6. Megan Parry, Stenciling (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1977), p. 17.
7. Clem Labine, "Stencilling Secrets--Techniques for Laying Out Border Patterns," The Old-House Journal 11 (July 1983), p. 127.
8. Labine, p. 127.
9. Adele Bishop and Cile Lord, The Art of Decorative Stenciling (New York: Viking Press, 1976), p. 50.
10. Bishop, p. 51.
11. Labine, p. 127.
12. Bishop, p. 51.
13. Bishop, p. 50.
14. Jim Fobel and Jim Boleach, The Stencil Book (New York: Gladstone Books, 1976), p. 21.
15. Day, p. 33.
- 16-23. Clem Labine, "The 'How To' of Stencilling," The Old-House Journal 4 (November 1976), pp. 10-11.

WALL AND CEILING STENCILING IN
AMERICAN VICTORIAN HOMES

by

DIANA JO NISSEN
B.S., University of Kansas, 1973

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing, Textiles and Interior Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1983

In recent years, United States citizens have witnessed a growing popularity of the preservation movement, which now includes the homeowner of old homes. One group of buildings that has become a prime target for preservationists is that of Victorian homes (built from ca. 1840-1900). Such homes were originally decorated by various means, one of which being wall and ceiling stenciling. Consequently, this craft is experiencing a renaissance of interest. Amidst all the current literature, however, few, if any, comprehensive works exist on the historical and practical aspects of Victorian stenciling. The homeowner must consult a variety and number of sources in order to authentically reproduce or restore original work. The purpose of this report is to compile the historical background and current execution techniques of Victorian stencilwork into one work. With such information easily accessible to homeowners, hopefully, more authentic reproductions will occur.

In addition to a brief discussion on the history of stenciling, the report relates factors of the nineteenth century which affected Victorian stencilwork. Such influential elements included the occurrence of the industrial revolution, the coexistence and evolution of several foreign styles, Victorian attitudes on ornamentation and interior design, and design theories popular at the time. Contemporary ornamental motifs and color trends of the period were also reflected in the stencilwork.

Stencilwork was a common, decorative technique in the nineteenth century. Explanations for this popularity, along with motifs, colors, and typical placement within the home, of the Victorian craft are examined.

Along with these historical aspects, the report also provides practical information on the execution and restoration of stencilwork. Procedures for investigation of extant work, historic paint analysis, and restoration and reproduction work are discussed.

In addition, resources for homeowner consultation and extant examples of Victorian stencilwork around the country are listed. These are by no means exhaustive, but include information discovered in the compilation of this report.