

FRENCH SCENIC WALLPAPER IN THE AMERICAN HOUSE MUSEUM:
A PANORAMIC VIEW OF ITS HISTORY, PRODUCTION, ROLE IN THE ARTS,
SELECTION, INSTALLATION, CARE, AND CONSERVATION,
WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON LINDENWALD AND VIZCAYA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to explore the history and current state of French scenic wallpaper in the United States, along the way correcting several misconceptions that have formed over the years. The author has conducted research, interviews, and site visits in an effort to explore all relevant aspects of the history and use of scenic wallpaper, including how it developed to reach its nineteenth-century heyday, how it was produced, how it related to other art forms (and what its own artistic merits are), who selected the wallpaper for purchase and why, and how it is cared for and conserved. Case studies are used herein to illustrate specific issues. In its entirety, the thesis attempts to demonstrate the utility of historic house museums as a vehicle for the interpretation and care of scenic wallpaper, and also to bring to light little-known facts about the wallpaper.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Follman is a graduate of the University of Florida, and with this thesis seeks to complete her Master of Arts degree in Historic Preservation Planning at Cornell University. Ms. Follman has been involved with a number of professional and student organizations, including the Preservation Studies Student Organization and the Organization of Cornell Planners, and was elected as President of the Cornell University Chapter of the Association for Preservation Technology. In the last several years, Ms. Follman has volunteered in the collections department at the Tampa Bay History Center, and interned with both the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations.

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INTRODUCTION

With its large scale and painstaking attention to the tiniest detail, scenic wallpaper is the pinnacle of artistry and craftsmanship. Known in French as *papiers peint panoramiques* (panoramic wallpapers), *paysages panoramiques* (panoramic landscapes), *tableaux panoramiques* (panoramic paintings), *tableaux-tentures* (paintings as wall-hangings), *papiers peints-paysages* (landscape wallpapers), and simply *paysages* (landscapes), in English the wallpapers are also called “scenics” and “panoramas.” In the nineteenth century, Americans called them “landscape papers,” “landscape views,” “long-strip landscapes,” “scenery papers,” or merely “views.”¹ Scenic wallpaper is characterized by its lack of a repeating pattern, and can be described as a mural of a landscape presented in wallpaper form. While some American manufacturers produced scenic wallpapers, the Golden Age of the craft was reached by French manufacturers between 1800 and 1850.

The term “panorama” was coined by Irish artist Robert Barker, who painted a wide view of Edinburgh for exhibition in the late eighteenth century. The exhibition was a great success, and led to several imitations depicting other world capitals and battle scenes. The phenomenon spread to France, and art historian Henri Clouzot asserts that the two *rotondes* that opened there in 1800 inspired wallpaper manufacturers in Mâcon and Rixheim.²

This thesis seeks to articulate what sets scenic wallpaper apart from other wallpapers found in America; to examine its historical precedents, manufacturing process, and role in the arts; to detail methods of selecting, installing, caring for, and conserving scenic wallpaper; and

¹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 181.

² Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 19. What are typically called “panoramas” today (and were sometimes referred to as *rotondes* by the French) were also known as “cycloramas” in English-speaking parts of the world.

finally to present in-depth case studies of scenic wallpapers presently found in American house museums. Scenic wallpaper is an extremely fragile and valuable historic resource, little understood by many museum curators and docents.

Although produced in France, antique scenic wallpaper is easier to come by and more appreciated in America than in Europe.³ The house museum is an ideal vehicle for the study of scenic wallpaper, as it showcases the wallpaper preserved in context. Fine and decorative arts museums also display scenic wallpapers, but generally provide no information regarding how they fit into historic rooms. Buildings with scenic wallpapers that are not open to the public also exist, but they are typically not interpreted or conserved as wallpapers in house museums are.

This thesis is the product of an exhaustive review of literature on the subject, as well as in-person inspections of scenic wallpaper from Florida to New York. Further information was collected in the field at case study locations, where site archives were reviewed, and employees were interviewed.

The “Historical Precedents” chapter recounts a brief history of wall hangings in America, with an emphasis on various forerunners of scenic wallpaper. “Scenic Wallpaper Production” lays out the lengthy and detailed process of manufacturing block-printed scenic wallpaper. The “Scenic Wallpaper and the Arts” chapter discusses the design process and subject matter of scenic wallpaper, its artistic influences, individual artists who designed iconic scenic wallpaper sets, the lack of accord over the proper place of scenic wallpaper in international exhibitions, and some critics’ views of its artistic merits. “Selection and Installation” addresses the array of factors involved in selecting a scenic wallpaper for one’s home, and the choices available in terms of where and how to install the paper. “Care and Conservation” gives an overview of how

³ A. L. Diament & Co., *Historic Notes on the Scenic Papers of A. L. Diament & Co.* According to noted collector André Carlhian.

to handle—and how not to handle—a scenic wallpaper in a house museum setting, with a particular focus on the many restoration and reproduction options available. Finally, case studies illustrate the challenges faced by those responsible for maintaining the scenic wallpapers installed in two particular locations: Lindenwald, the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site; and Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. The concluding chapter then surveys the current state of scenic wallpaper in America, identifies a few especially valuable print resources, and suggests topics for future research on the subject.

While all wallpapers serve to “finish” a room, the level of detail in a scenic wallpaper makes a strong visual impact; indeed, a room fully papered with scenic wallpaper is often the most memorable sight in the building where it is installed. Scenic wallpapers give “a sense of sweeping recession to distant spaces.”⁴ Even in presidents’ homes and palaces, a person viewing such wallpapers can become lost in a far-away land.

⁴ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 185.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

Magnificent, non-repeating scenic wallpaper “murals” were developed in nineteenth-century France as the culmination of many years of technological and artistic growth. A set of scenic wallpaper is comprised of vertical panels of block-printed wallpaper, which, when hung in order, form a panoramic and non-repeating vista. From ancient tapestries to hand-painted Chinese masterpieces, each of the wall coverings used in America identified in this chapter can be viewed as a link in a chain that leads to the popular use of scenic wallpaper in America.

The earliest known wall hangings in America were imported tapestries depicting individual scenes, owned by only a few well-to-do seventeenth-century colonists.⁵ Such tapestries were most typically textiles, but could also be made of paper or leather. Also popular during this period amongst the very elite were “mock” tapestries (painted or flocked⁶ canvas) and gilt leather hangings.⁷ Such hangings warmed up the walls and gave interiors a more polished look.

By the eighteenth century, imported paper hangings were available for purchase in American shops. Most wallpapers were imported from England, but others came from China and France, among other sources. Based on the scanty records available, wallpaper historian Catherine Lynn surmises that pre-1750 American walls were “whitewashed, painted, wainscoted, and hung with a variety of materials,” but wallpaper was “still beyond the budget of most householders.”⁸ The most popular known designs from this period in America were repeating

⁵ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 19.

⁶ Flocking is the process of adhering fiber particles to the surface of a wallpaper (or other material) to create a design.

⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 20–22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

floral patterns, based on textile designs and produced in England.⁹

Some early precursors to scenic wallpaper were introduced in America in the mid-eighteenth century: landscape papers and print rooms. Landscape papers are hand-painted scenes made in England, most typically classical ruins in *grisaille* (monochrome), surrounded by wallpaper or *papier-mâché* frames. These papers differ from traditional scenic wallpaper in that landscape papers were manufactured in England instead of France, they were hand-painted and not block-printed, and are composed as individual scenes, and not a continuous panorama. A good example of such landscape papers has survived in the Jeremiah Lee Mansion in Marblehead, Massachusetts, since its installation in the 1760s (see fig. 1). The Lee landscape papers consist of hand-painted images of Roman ruins surrounded by elaborate Rococo wallpaper frames and “trophies,” with narrow printed borders along the cornice, chair rail, doorways, and windows. The design of the ruins is modeled after Pannini engravings, and the trophies are derived from Jean Charles Delafosse’s *Attributs Pastorals*.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰ Ibid., 76.



Fig. 1. Ca. 1760s hand-painted English landscape paper installed in the Jeremiah Lee Mansion, Marblehead, Massachusetts. (Marblehead Museum, “Jeremiah Lee Mansion.”)

Print rooms were especially popular in England, and consisted of engraved prints framed by wallpaper and artfully arranged on the walls. Prints were often accompanied by wallpaper in architectural ornament motifs. Both landscape papers and print rooms use the medium of wallpaper to mimic the look of framed paintings. The engravings used for this purpose in print rooms tended to be of a much smaller size than the hand-painted landscape papers. The overall appearance of print rooms can be less refined and more handmade than rooms decorated with landscape papers, as print rooms were often located in secondary spaces, and created as a decoupage-type hobby by their owners. There is evidence of the existence of print rooms in America, but few still exist in their original form either in America or elsewhere. Print rooms are unusual amongst the precedents of scenic wallpaper in that their arrangement and overall design are entirely a product of the person hanging the prints; in contrast, scenic wallpapers feature a

carefully composed flow of scenes. Individual engravings would later have a large impact on scenic wallpaper design, and the spirit of freedom in installation that had made print rooms so attractive would also appeal to scenic wallpaper purchasers.



Fig. 2. The Print Room, Castletown, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, Ireland, decorated by Lady Louisa Lennox in 1768 as a small sitting room. (Pinterest, “18th century print room, Castletown House, Ireland . . .”)

Americans continued to import British wallpaper after the Revolutionary War—by special order and through American merchants of paper hangings—but England lost a large portion of its market share to the French, and even to some American manufacturers.¹¹ At this time, wallpaper fashions were getting ever closer to the aesthetic of scenic wallpapers, including patterns with landscape figures and scenic vignettes such as that in *Sacred to Washington* (see fig. 3). In 1800, American paper stainer Ebenezer Clough used a pillar-and-arch design to create

¹¹ Ibid., 71–72.

a memorial wallpaper for George Washington, who had passed away the previous year. Such pillar-and-arch patterns typically have a large repeat, and consist of “a round-headed arch carried on two columns or pillars.”¹² The opening under the arch is used to feature a portrait, urn, or other device (and in *Sacred to Washington* a monument to George Washington, with the figures of Liberty and Justice mourning his loss).¹³ Another example in this category is a view of a railway station shown in figure 4 and produced by British manufacturer Potters of Darwen. Both *Sacred to Washington* and *Perspective Views of a Railway Station* depict then-contemporary scenes in repeating vignettes. The growing popularity of figural and landscape patterns, including portraits, memorials, and commemorations, signaled the trends that would lead to the development of scenic wallpaper in France.

¹² Ibid., 66.

¹³ Herringshaw, “Sacred to Washington.”



Fig. 3. *Sacred to Washington*, produced by Ebenezer Clough of Boston, Massachusetts, ca. 1800. (Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, “Sidewall, Sacred to Washington, Ca. 1800.”)



Fig. 4. *Perspective Views of a Railway Station* by Potters of Darwen, Lancashire, England, ca. 1853. (Victoria and Albert Museum, “Perspective Views of a Railway Station.”)

There was little papermaking in Colonial-era America, but there is evidence that some production was taking place by the 1760s, and it increased rapidly thereafter.¹⁴ *Sacred to Washington* ca. 1800 is one of the earliest American-made wallpapers in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. In 1851, Jean Zuber (son of the Zuber & Cie.¹⁵ founder) wrote in the *Revue Économique*:

North America is bringing up the rear in terms of wallpaper manufacture, but the young giant has entered the fray taking giant steps. Today there are first-class firms in terms of size and output. America has only been manufacturing for eight or ten years . . . but has gone straight for steam power . . . This nation is not concerned about foreign competition, nor is it interested to know how things are done elsewhere . . . Although they buy luxury papers from France, Americans will continue to make their own paper for mass consumption.¹⁶

¹⁴ Smith, *History of Papermaking in the United States (1691–1969)*, 12; Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 24.

¹⁵ Zuber & Cie. was a top manufacturer of scenic wallpaper. Much more information about the firm follows in subsequent chapters.

¹⁶ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 31.

Despite the gains being made in America, French wallpaper was known for its quality, and accordingly it was often chosen over British or American-made products. The high standard of quality was the primary reason for the popularity of French wallpaper, but its popularity was also boosted by the removal of French export duties and British restrictions on non-British goods.¹⁷ French wallpaper was advertised in America beginning in the 1790s.¹⁸ During the eighteenth century French manufacturers honed their craft by adopting the best English techniques and then expanding upon them. Jean-Baptiste Réveillon, through his masterful use of block-printing in distemper colors, became known as the leading craftsman of wallpaper. Réveillon's use of brilliant color and shading were revolutionary in the industry, and his operation grew to employ over three hundred people.¹⁹ Réveillon's factory produced wallpaper for three classes: *grand lux*, *communs*, and *ordinaires*.²⁰ Papers created for the wealthiest purchasers would be made using up to eighty wood blocks, papers for the bourgeoisie using approximately seven or eight blocks; by contrast, the most affordable papers would be produced in a single color.²¹

Réveillon was at his peak between 1765 and 1789.²² He was a successful businessman, and was able to buy a large property in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Louis XVI named him "Royal Manufacturer" in 1784, which in part contributed to the burning of his factory by a mob on April 28, 1789—one of the earliest uprisings of the French Revolution.²³ The Réveillon operation was

¹⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 89.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 21.

¹⁹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 90; Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 13.

²⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 90.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

purchased by Jacquemart et Bénard in 1792, which would later produce scenic wallpapers.²⁴ Today Réveillon is considered one of the fathers of the French wallpaper industry, along with Jean Papillon (1661–1723) and his son Jean-Baptiste-Michel Papillon (1698–1776), who “made major refinements in the craft.”²⁵ The improvements made by the Papillons included extending patterns beyond a single sheet of paper.²⁶ Furthermore, Jean-Baptiste-Michel Papillon has been called the “historian” of wallpaper for his decades of written work on the subject.²⁷ Without the foundation and techniques created by these eighteenth-century French manufacturers, scenic wallpaper may never have been created.

From the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese and Chinoiserie²⁸ wallpapers were much admired in America. Chinese papers were hand-painted and non-repeating, and are known primarily for their abundant use of oriental flora and fauna—quite exotic to the European and American wallpaper markets. The quality of the papers was very high, as each was custom-made, and thus commanded the highest prices. It is possible that this higher cost tier increased the market for French scenic wallpapers as a comparably priced alternative. The coloring, scale, and subject matter of Chinese wallpapers would come to influence later designers of scenic wallpaper. In fact, in 1832, the Zuber factory added *Décor Chinois* to its lineup of scenic wallpapers, an imitation of Chinese wallpapers created by Alsatian artists Eugène Ehrmann and Georges Zipelius.²⁹ Chinese papers can be distinguished chiefly by their “flat” appearance, using traditional non-Western perspective, in contrast to the three-dimensional look of scenic wallpapers produced in Europe.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 89.

²⁶ Ibid., 90.

²⁷ Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 12.

²⁸ Chinoiserie wallpapers were Western works made in imitation of the Chinese style.

²⁹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 174.



Fig. 5. Ca. 1725–1750 wallpaper from Guangzhou, China in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. (Victoria and Albert Museum, “Wallpaper.”)

The nineteenth century brought about an expansion of wallpaper trends and techniques, and an increase in the volume of wallpaper sold. Landscape vignettes used on wallpapers and products such as fire boards, fire screens, and folding screens morphed into large-scale scenic wallpapers, and the complexity of scenic wallpaper design shows the expertise gained with these smaller-scale ventures. The supremacy of French wallpaper manufacturers such as Zuber & Cie. and Dufour & Cie. in America lasted three-quarters of the nineteenth century, until increased industrialization and changes in trends toward more abstract patterns made the English once again the dominant exporters of wallpaper to America.³⁰ In fact, the 1861 International Exhibition in Paris had more machine-made wallpaper than hand-printed.³¹

Scenic wallpaper continued to be used during the twentieth century until after World War II, when interiors were designed in a more modern fashion. Scenic wallpapers experienced a resurgence in popularity, however, following First Lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy's restoration of the White House with not one, but two scenic wallpapers.³² With the assistance of American antiques expert Henry Francis du Pont and renowned interior decorators "Sister" Parish and Stéphane Boudin, she selected Zuber's *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* (Views of North America) for the Diplomatic Reception Room and Zuber's *La Guerre D'Indépendance Américaine* (The War of American Independence) for the President's Dining Room—the only scenic wallpaper patterns depicting America. A tour of the White House led by the First Lady and featuring her renovations aired on CBS on Valentine's Day 1962, and had an amazing 56

³⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 21.

³¹ Oman and Hamilton, *Wallpapers: An International History and Illustrated Survey from the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 68.

³² Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 74–76.

million viewers.³³

The 1834 Zuber printing of *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* now hanging in the Diplomatic Reception Room was rescued from the Stoner House in Thurmont, Maryland, which was scheduled for a speedy demolition to make way for a supermarket.³⁴ Peter Hill, a part-time antiques dealer from Washington, was told that if he could remove the wallpaper in a matter of days, he could have it for \$50.³⁵ He patiently and painstakingly removed approximately forty-eight feet of the wallpaper as best he could, leaving only a few inches behind.³⁶ Hill brought the paper to a contact at the Smithsonian, who encouraged him to offer it to the White House. Mrs. Kennedy saw the paper in the office of the White House curator, and insisted that she must have it. *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* was then purchased by the National Society of Interior Designers (NSID) from Hill for \$12,500, and gifted to the White House.³⁷ Publicity over the purchase led to a small scandal in the news, when a decorator from a rival interior design association accused “some one” of overpaying at \$12,500, when a new printing from Zuber was reportedly \$1,650 per set.³⁸ While taxpayers’ complaints of the First Lady’s extravagance at their expense were mostly unfounded, a press secretary for the White House privately acknowledged that they learned after the fact that the NSID had solicited private funds for the purchase of *Les*

³³ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, “Jacqueline Kennedy in the White House.”

³⁴ Press release from the Office of the Assistant Social Secretary for Press dated October 8, 1961, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF033-014, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum; Wireman, *Gateway to the Mountains*, chap. 35.

³⁵ Wireman, *Gateway to the Mountains*, chap. 35.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Letter from John W. Taliaferro, National Society of Interior Designers to Letitia Baldrige, White House dated October 11, 1961, enclosing newspaper clipping “Somebody Got Stuck?: White House Paper Work Hit,” Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF033-014, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

Vues d'Amérique du Nord without their knowledge.³⁹

The sets of both *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* and *La Guerre D'Indépendance Américaine* were supplemented with additional Zuber panels purchased from A. L. Diament & Co.⁴⁰ An additional twenty-six panels were added to the set of *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* in the large Diplomatic Reception Room, the oval shape of which was perfectly suited to the scenic wallpaper.⁴¹ The NSID also paid for the additional papers hung in this room, as well as for and the conservation of the wallpaper.⁴² Holes and tears were repaired in the antique scenic wallpaper from the Stoner House, and some hand-painting was performed to fill a gap near the ceiling that was visible after the paper had been hung.⁴³ There is less information available on the panels of *La Guerre D'Indépendance Américaine* hung in the President's Dining Room (also known as the "Family Residence Dining Room"), perhaps due to the aforementioned negative publicity, but we do know that this wallpaper was a modern printing, and that the paper and its conservation were paid for with contributions to White House refurbishment committees.⁴⁴ It

³⁹ Letter from Pamela Turner, Asst. Social Secretary for the Press to Margaret [Robson] dated November 27, 1961, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF033-014, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

⁴⁰ Letter from Goodhue Diament, A. L. Diament & Co. to Mrs. John F. Kennedy dated October 3, 1961, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF033-014, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

⁴¹ Ralph and Terry Kovel, "Paper Peeled Off Wall for White House Room," "Know Your Antiques" column, *The Family Living Press*, October 13, 1961, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF034-006, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

⁴² Wireman, *Gateway to the Mountains*, chap. 35. White House records also show a donation of antique "Wallpaper of Zuber Sky" for the Diplomatic Reception Room from Mrs. John T. Nightingale. "Contributions to The White House" memorandum dated November 21, 1961 and untitled memorandum labeled "End of September," Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF034-006, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

⁴³ Wireman, *Gateway to the Mountains*, chap. 35.

⁴⁴ Press release from the Office of the White House Press Secretary dated February 15, 1962, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, Digital Identifier: JBKOPP-SF034-006,

was later removed by First Lady Betty Ford, “who thought the violent subject not appropriate for lunch.”⁴⁵ Soon thereafter, however, the wallpaper was restored in its former place by the Carters, and then ultimately covered over during the Clinton administration. *La Guerre D’Indépendance Américaine* reportedly lies protected underneath the current gold wall covering in the President’s Dining Room, which is hung on thin strips of lath over the scenic wallpaper.

The White House Historical Association was founded by Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy in 1961 to showcase the best of American history and culture—the same lens she used in her renovation of the White House itself.⁴⁶ And yet her selection of the scenic wallpapers for the White House demonstrates the allure of the French style, even during a renovation specifically tailored to highlight America’s own heritage. Scenic wallpaper is expensive, delicate, and requires much care, but it is desirable enough for many to brave the difficulties of acquiring, installing, and maintaining it. Through an evolution spread out over a century, French wallpaper manufacturers were clearly able to achieve something special with the creation of scenic wallpaper.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum; Donna Lehman (Archivist, Gerald Ford Presidential Library), e-mail message to author, December 14, 2015.

⁴⁵ Conroy, “Wallpaper—Exposing the Great Cover-Up,” *The Washington Post*. The removal was approved by the Committee for Preservation of the White House on March 11, 1975. Donna Lehman (Archivist, Gerald Ford Presidential Library), e-mail message to author, December 14, 2015.

⁴⁶ White House Historical Association, “About Us.”



Fig. 6. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy standing in front of the newly hung *Vues d'Amérique du Nord* (Views of North America) in the White House Diplomatic Reception Room in 1961. (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, "Jacqueline Kennedy in the White House.")

CHAPTER 2: SCENIC WALLPAPER PRODUCTION

The production of any scenic wallpaper is a long and difficult process. Manufacturers rely upon skilled teams to see them through each phase of production, from design and layout through shipment abroad. Over time, French wallpaper firms made significant refinements to the process that allowed for greatly increased output. In so doing they created a business model envied by other manufacturers around the world.

In the eighteenth century the population of France doubled, and the urban population of France quadrupled. As more wealth was generated, the demand for wallpaper increased.⁴⁷

The first decades of the 19th century saw an unprecedented increase in production. Study of the available evidence shows that French manufacturers were extremely inventive not only in design but in the improvement of manual techniques, reflected in forty-seven patents applied for by 1844. In 1847, 3,300 workers were employed in more than 140 manufactories printing some 2,000,000 rolls of wallpaper, most of it intended for the top end of the market.⁴⁸

Scenic wallpaper could not exist at all without some of the technological innovations of the period. Continuous rolls of paper, graduated color, iridescent paper, and new colors such as Schweinfurt green and ultramarine were all developed by the Zuber firm alone, and stood as closely guarded trade secrets.

“Seamless” or “continuous” paper began to be used regularly ca. 1835–1840.⁴⁹ Before this, wallpaper was composed of small individual “domino” sheets pasted together. These composite “lengths” (or “panels”) averaged approximately twenty inches wide and eight to

⁴⁷ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 56.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 41, 181. First used by Zuber & Cie. as early as 1820.

twelve feet long, and a set, or complete pattern, averaged about twenty to thirty lengths.⁵⁰ Although machine-made paper was available for a majority of the time scenic wallpapers were produced, manufacturers continued to use handmade paper because of its superior quality and strength. Early (pre-1830) scenic wallpapers can be identified by their horizontal seams, which are not present on wallpapers printed on continuous paper. Heavy rag paper was the highest quality available in the period, and remains excellent even by the standards of today. The strength of the rag paper was not only key to withstanding the prolonged handling involved in the production of scenic wallpaper, but would eventually allow finished wallpaper to be relocated from one wall to another.

The process of printing a scenic wallpaper involved hundreds or even thousands of hand-carved wood blocks. These blocks are also known as “prints.” Délicourt reportedly “boasted that he had used four thousand blocks in making his [1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition] showpiece, ‘*La Grande Chasse*’” (see fig. 7).⁵¹ The blocks used to print a scenic wallpaper were approximately two inches thick, and were formed by stacking and gluing together at least three layers of wood boards, with the grains of the boards at cross-angles for added strength.⁵² The top layers of a block were often made of poplar, but the bottom layer—the layer to be carved—was typically pear wood, chosen for its tight grain and hardness.⁵³ The carver was known as the *metteur sur bois* (wood engraver).⁵⁴ The blocks were highly detailed and varied tremendously in size—from over a foot wide to under an inch—with a handle or strap often added to aid in lifting the larger

⁵⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 181; A. L. Diament & Co., *Historic Notes on the Scenic Papers of A. L. Diament & Co.*

⁵¹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 182.

⁵² Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 47.

⁵³ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 47; Nouvel, *Wallpapers of France 1800–1850*, 21.

⁵⁴ Nouvel, *Wallpapers of France 1800–1850*, 21.

ones. For some very intricate blocks, brass was imbedded in the wood to allow for extra detail.⁵⁵ Every block in a set was numbered, lest the printer lose track of which block corresponded to which design element.



Fig. 7. A detail of Délicourt's *La Grande Chasse* printed with four thousand blocks; one of the highest achievements of the art. This paper is located at the Ames Manor House, Ames Plantation, Grand Junction, Tennessee. (Ames Plantation, "The Grande Chase.")

As should be immediately apparent, the process of creating the printing blocks for a new scenic wallpaper is itself lengthy and expensive, and requires talented craftsmen. Consequently, many sets of wood blocks have outlasted the companies for which they were made, and some have changed hands several times. Other manufacturers of scenic wallpaper often purchased sets

⁵⁵ Nouvel, *Wallpapers of France 1800–1850*, 21.

of blocks from the estates of deceased owners, or from out-of-business companies.⁵⁶

Manufacturers of scenic wallpaper used distemper paint to create their masterworks. Distemper is composed of pigment bound in a combination of whiting (chalk), hide glue or sizing, and water. It came into wide use in the industry by the mid-eighteenth century because of its affordability, coverage, and drying time.⁵⁷ The matte appearance of the paint results from the high ratio of pigment to medium.⁵⁸ Distemper has been used in fine art for ages, but it is not waterfast and has a porous surface layer.⁵⁹ This is one reason why some scenic wallpapers were varnished.

Many scenic wallpapers feature more colors than are readily apparent. When every minute detail is accounted for—the tiniest of leaves, the shade thrown from a boat on the water—it can add up to hundreds of hues. The notes of Eugène A. Fauconnier, *chef de fabrication* for Desfossé et Karth for twenty-two years, indicate that the firm used 57 colors in *Les Quatres Saisons en grisaille*, and 1,099 in the full-color *L'Eden*.⁶⁰ Papers printed *en grisaille* were produced in monochromatic shades, typically gray or brown. For those papers and full-color printings alike, color mixers would create customized shades for individual designs by adding in the powdered pigment by hand, until just the right hue was achieved. Zuber recalled that during the manufacture of *L'Hindoustan* his color mixer was “so worked up that within a few days he went mad.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 182. The Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum has the 1935/1936 notes of Eugène A. Fauconnier in their research files, detailing which blocks were purchased from other manufacturers and the productions using those blocks.

⁵⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 41.

⁵⁸ Myers, “The Conservation of Wallpapers in Historic Buildings,” 47.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 182–183.

⁶¹ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 32.

Jean Zuber and Joseph Dufour were known taskmasters, and insisted on perfection at any cost. Accordingly, they spared no expense for their artists (who created the scenic wallpaper designs), and hired superb artisans who were able to execute the artists' visions perfectly with their engraving, color mixing, and printing. It may be of interest to modern readers that child labor was also used in the production of scenic papers. This was common practice during the period; child labor laws were not enacted in France until the mid-nineteenth century. Historical records show that from 1839–1845, children under the age of sixteen made up 11.5 percent of the workforce in the French paper and printing industries.⁶² Although there were not necessarily any tasks associated with wallpaper production that absolutely required the small frame of a child, manufacturers could pay children a third of the sum they would pay a man, and thereby recoup some of the additional wages commanded by their most highly skilled employees.⁶³

The first step in producing a scenic wallpaper was to create the design for the entire scheme. The subject matter was selected by the manufacturer, and prints by fine artists were often copied in the design of a panel, or in individual elements carried throughout. Profitability was always among the foremost concerns for manufacturers, as the production of any new scenic wallpaper was a major financial undertaking. They did their best to ensure that the subject matter was commercially viable.⁶⁴ But manufacturers were also aware of a scenic wallpaper's additional value in helping to advertise and market their other papers, as some especially fine scenic wallpapers won prestigious awards and brought considerable renown to the producers.

⁶² Heywood, *Childhood in Nineteenth-Century France: Work, Health and Education Among the Classes Populaires*, 104.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁴ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 99.

Initially, an artist would create the exact design layout by fashioning a small-scale drawing.⁶⁵ Once the small drawing was approved, the artist would produce a full-scale drawing with each color labeled with a number to indicate the printing order.⁶⁶ Wood blocks were then created by the engraver, tracing the mock-up.⁶⁷ A distinctive feature of scenic wallpapers is that the first and last panels are designed to join to one another seamlessly, forming a perfect panorama. Once the scheme was laid out in full, the printing process could begin.

To print a scenic wallpaper, craftsmen would first apply the ground color with large brushes. The ground on some scenic wallpapers is a simple solid color, but the Zuber company was famous for its striking *ombré* skies. The difficult *ombré* technique produced a gradation from darker blue at the top to lighter blue at the horizon line, incorporating subtle tints of pink and yellow that gave the effect of sunlight hitting the clouds.

Next, the block-printing process would begin. Stenciling, penciling (hand-painting), and flocking were also in use in the period, but block-printing was the most commonly used technique for producing wallpaper in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁶⁸ With very limited exceptions, block-printing was the method used to create the dramatic layering of colors in scenic wallpapers. Craftsmen would stretch an animal skin or a length of rubber over a thirty- to thirty-six-inch wooden tub filled with water, then lay felt across the top and spread paint over the felt surface.⁶⁹ The first wood block, depicting part of the background image for the wallpaper, would then be lowered onto the paint and struck twice on the paper, sometimes with the help of a wooden lever: first very lightly to deposit most of the color, then more firmly to

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 47.

⁶⁹ A. L. Diament & Co., *Historic Notes on the Scenic Papers of A. L. Diament & Co.*

ensure that all portions of the print were impressed upon the paper.⁷⁰ The wood blocks were operated somewhat like large rubber stamps, and the flexibility of the non-mechanized process allowed the paper to be moved around as necessary to get the best impression. Obviously, this same process would have to be repeated with each new color and wood block.

The craftsmen had to plan for drying time between colors, then continually repeat the process as the images gradually evolved from amorphous blobs to highly detailed figures. For example, if a rose was being printed, the craftsmen might first print a red generic rose shape, then a dark green stem and thorns, then pink petal highlights, and finally light green shading on the stem. In order to keep everything aligned properly during the printing process, some of the wood blocks had small brass pins at the edges that left tiny pinpoints of color, indentations, or even holes to indicate precisely where the next block should be placed. The small marks left behind from the *picots* were expertly covered up by subsequent block prints. Printing generally progressed from largest to smallest blocks, and darkest to lightest colors. Because so much drying time was required, most factories had to be immense, so as to accommodate many hanging lengths of paper in varying stages of production.⁷¹

After the printing process was complete, the panels would be checked, numbered, and arranged in order. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century at the latest, completed sets of scenic wallpaper would then be wrapped in tin foil for protection during overseas shipping.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 24.

⁷² Ibid.

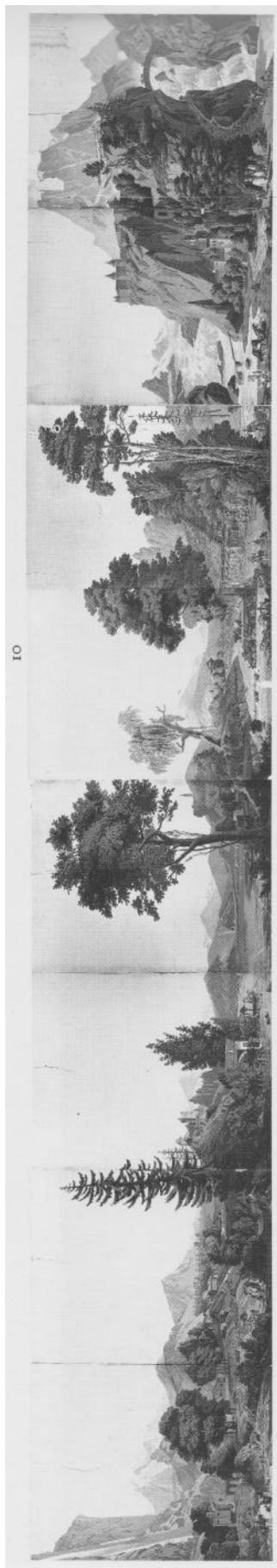


Fig. 8. All sixteen lengths of Zuber's 1804 *Les Vues de Suisse*. (Catalogue Raisonné, Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 294.)

Scenic wallpaper's unique look is created by the combination of velvety distemper paint block-printed on high-quality paper. The wood blocks leave veining and sharp edges, and the thick paint covers the layers of paint underneath. The wood-block printing method can sometimes leave an eggshell texture, created by air bubbles that pop when the block is applied to the paper during printing. Today, such "flaws" are considered desirable, as they give the wallpaper a texture absent from modern wallpapers.



Fig. 9. Bubbles, layering of paint, and paper seam (center) visible up close in a wallpaper block-printed with distemper paint. (U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 11.)

From design to delivery, the production of any scenic wallpaper was a mammoth undertaking for a manufacturer. Each producer needed talented and motivated workers, as well as considerable material resources to see the project through. Many hands can be seen in the final product, from those of sketch artists working up the design to engravers carving the fine details to expert paint mixers creating dozens upon dozens of colors. Fortunately, pride and profit converged for French manufacturers of scenic wallpaper, and their products, together with the invaluable wood blocks used to create them, have stood the test of time.

CHAPTER 3: SCENIC WALLPAPER AND THE ARTS

No discussion of scenic wallpaper would be complete without reference to its artistic merits. Marilyn Oliver Hapgood aptly summarizes the challenges faced by wallpaper artists in her book *Wallpaper and the Artist: From Dürer to Warhol*: “They have needed to take into account the limited number and quality of colors available, the width and quality of the paper, its vulnerability to dampness, heat, light, and dust, plus some regard for the market.”⁷³ Although artists working on scenic papers had more resources available to them than many artists, wallpaper is inherently more constrained as a form than are most other visual arts. Nonetheless, as detailed below, designers were able to translate their inspirations into scenic wallpapers with a wide range of subjects, demonstrate considerable ingenuity in reusing elements from existing scenic designs, learn from related arts and crafts (and collaborate with other artists), showcase their talents in prestigious international exhibitions, and persist in all of the foregoing in the face of often harsh criticism.

Most scenic wallpapers are unsigned and many individual artists remain anonymous, but research has determined the sure or likely designers of several specific scenic wallpapers. Scholars are fortunate in that the small number and distinctive appearance of scenic wallpaper patterns makes it relatively simple to identify the wallpapers themselves. Dateable pigments and paper manufacturing techniques also combine to allow for an “earliest possible” date for some scenic wallpapers.

⁷³ Hapgood, *Wallpaper and the Artist: From Dürer to Warhol*, 10.

As sole proprietor, Zuber hired the finest designers from the outset. These included J. L. Malaine and Pierre-Antoine Mongin.⁷⁴ Malaine had previously worked as a designer for the wallpaper firm of Arthur et Robert and at the Gobelins (tapestry) works.⁷⁵ Mongin was known as a painter of battle scenes, and became Zuber's preeminent designer of scenic wallpapers, with credits including *Les Vues de Suisse*, *L'Hindoustan*, *L'Arcadie*, and *L'Helvétie*.⁷⁶ The 1804 *Les Vues de Suisse* was Zuber's first scenic wallpaper, and possibly the very first scenic wallpaper. It was awarded the highest honor at the Paris Exhibition of 1806.⁷⁷

The celebrated designers Xavier Mader and Jean-Gabriel Charvet were employed by the Dufour firm.⁷⁸ Known as Dufour's most important designer, Mader designed *L'Histoire de Psyché* and *La Galerie Mythologique*, amongst others, focusing mostly on classical subjects. Charvet is known for his design of the epic *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*.

Scenic wallpaper manufacturers and designers often looked to fine art prints as inspiration for subject matter and details. In most cases, only themes or individual elements were duplicated in wallpaper designs, but some designs were lifted wholesale from books of engravings and other sources. This is not to say that "borrowing" prints made wallpaper design easy; much work was still required to convert the subject into its new form. The most important consideration was proportion, but color and depth were also crucial in transforming any print into a scenic wallpaper. (See figs. 10 and 11.)

⁷⁴ Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 28.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Greysmith, *Wallpaper*, 94.

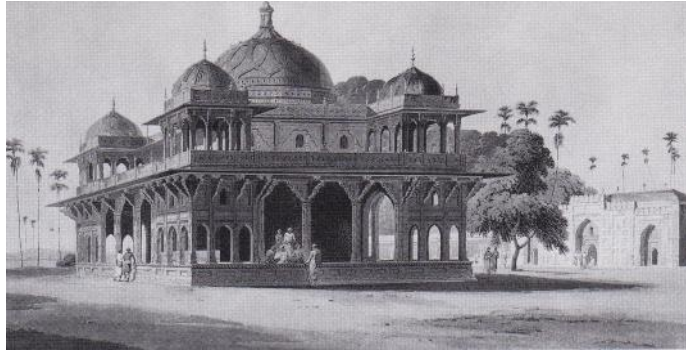


Fig. 10. Thomas and William Daniell's 1795 print *Mausoleum of Mucdoom Shah Dowlut, at Moneah* was used as inspiration by Pierre-Antoine Mongin of Zuber for his 1807 *L'Hindoustan*. (Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 100, Image 133.)



Fig. 11. Detail of Zuber's 1807 *L'Hindoustan* designed by Pierre-Antoine Mongin, incorporating the Daniells' image of a mausoleum (fig. 10) as a lake pavilion. (Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 100, Image 134.)

For the convenience of the reader, scenic wallpapers have been divided herein into five categories of subject matter: pastoral scenes, urban scenes, exotic scenes, literary or mythological scenes, and military scenes. Collectors and researchers have used numerous classification systems, but they tend to include large numbers of categories without ever being quite all-encompassing. The pastoral scenes designated herein include images of the bucolic countryside, well-tended gardens, and lively hunts. Urban scenes show the monuments of Paris,

London, Lyon, and elsewhere. Exotic locations include Japan, ancient Rome, and even the mythical city of El Dorado. Literary and mythological subjects include relatively contemporary works like *Paul and Virginia*⁷⁹ and classical subjects like Cupid and Psyche. The final category—battle and victory scenes—portrayed various foreign conquests and the liberation of subjected peoples.

After the Reign of Terror (1793–1794) concluded, French wallpaper manufacturers turned for inspiration to the contemporary fascination with classical sources fueled by the rediscovery of Pompeii (early 1800s) and Napoleon’s expeditions to Egypt (1798–1801). Exotic locales and historic events made for compelling subject matter for scenic wallpapers, and the neoclassical elements also appealed to Americans, who “associated them with the virtues of Greek democracy and the Roman republic.”⁸⁰ Amongst many other thrilling images, scenic wallpapers depicted jaguar hunting in the new empire of Brazil, the striking architecture of India, and the pastoral Alps in Switzerland. Eliza Chinn Ripley recollected her apprehension upon entering the stair hall at a friend’s plantation in Ascension Parish, Louisiana, in 1849:

The hall was broad and long, adorned with real jungle scenes from India. A great tiger jumped out of dense thickets toward savages, who were fleeing in terror. Tall trees reached to the ceiling, with gaudily striped boa constrictors wound around their trunks; hissing snakes peered out of jungles; birds of gay plumage, paroquets, parrots, peacocks everywhere, some way up, almost out of sight in the greenery; monkeys swung from limb to limb; ourang-outangs and lots of almost naked, dark-skinned natives wandered about. To cap the climax, right close to the steps one had to mount to the story above was a lair of ferocious lions!⁸¹

In the 1840s, designers shifted their focus to Garden of Eden–like settings with much larger plants and few if any people. Examples of this include Zuber’s 1843 *Isola Bella*, Zuber’s

⁷⁹ *Paul et Virginie (Paul and Virginia)* was a popular novel by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, which was first published in 1788.

⁸⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 90.

⁸¹ Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750–1870*, 35.

1849 *El Dorado*, Zuber's 1855 *Les Zones Terrestres*, and Desfossé's 1861 *L'Eden*. These scenic wallpapers feature bountiful nature scenes with luxuriant flora and fauna, and are reminiscent of botanical illustration in their detail.⁸² “[The mid-nineteenth century] was the age of conservatories and winter gardens,” and viewers were enchanted by the romantic, lush backgrounds.⁸³ Older schemes showed humans in harmony with nature; the newer papers showed worlds untainted by the human hand.

Scenic wallpaper garnered more interest than other wallpapers imported to America. The realism of scenic wallpapers allowed viewers to look through their walls and into faraway places, “deliver[ing] American provincials to the glamorous tourist meccas of Europe and sooth[ing] the nerves of city-dwellers with vistas of serene countryside and garden.”⁸⁴

The possible impact of scenic wallpaper's subject matter is illustrated by Dufour's ca. 1818 *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso* (Landscape of Telemachus in the Island of Calypso), installed at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage. Construction of the Federal-style Hermitage was completed in 1821, and the house was designed with a wide center hall.⁸⁵ Jackson's wife, Rachel Donelson Jackson, loved the story of Telemachus, and ordered the Dufour paper direct from Paris sight unseen for \$131.00 (\$2,736.25 in today's dollars).⁸⁶ The wallpaper was installed in its place of prominence in the center hall.

The early panels of the wallpaper show nymphs dancing on Calypso's island of Ogygia and making offerings to Demeter. Next, Telemachus, Odysseus's son, arrives on the island with his companion, Mentor—unbeknownst to Telemachus, the goddess Athena in disguise. Seated

⁸² Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 103.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 183.

⁸⁵ Andrew Jackson Foundation, “The Hermitage Mansion Story.”

⁸⁶ Andrew Jackson Foundation, *Odyssey of the Wallpaper*.

beside a fountain, Telemachus and Mentor relate to Calypso and the nymphs the story of their journey to find Odysseus. (Calypso has kept Odysseus imprisoned on her island for many years.) The goddess Aphrodite descends on a chariot drawn by two white doves from the heavens, and brings her son Eros (Cupid) to Calypso; in the background is Calypso's palace with a grand staircase. Eros is supposed to shoot his arrows into the hearts of Telemachus and Calypso, so that Telemachus will forever remain a prisoner on the island, like his father. Instead, Eros has a hand in making Telemachus fall in love with the beautiful nymph Eucharis. Telemachus and Eucharis go stag hunting in the woods, and Eucharis tries to tempt Telemachus to stay with her on the island forever, while Calypso enviously spies on the couple. In the following scene, nymphs make offerings to Demeter with a circular temple in the background. In the final scene, Calypso orders Telemachus's ship to be set afire, and Telemachus and Mentor are forced to jump into the sea. They are rescued by a ship in the distance and Calypso is incensed.

Rachel Jackson used the scenes in the wallpaper to teach the family's wards about morality and mythology, and on special occasions the whale-oil chandelier would be lit, musicians would play in the adjoining parlors, and the center hall would be used as a ballroom.⁸⁷

Mrs. Jackson died unexpectedly in 1828, and a distraught Andrew Jackson buried her in the white gown she had purchased for his upcoming inauguration.⁸⁸ She was interred within sight of Andrew Jackson's office in the house, and in 1831 the president commissioned architect David Morrison to build a tomb for himself and Mrs. Jackson.⁸⁹ The limestone tomb is modeled after a round Greek Temple, and strongly resembles one that appears in the beloved hall wallpaper. Jackson ensured that the tomb was picturesquely landscaped and lovingly tended, and

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Black, "Rachel Donelson Jackson," excerpt from *The First Ladies of the United States of America*.

⁸⁹ Andrew Jackson Foundation, "Jackson's Tomb."

he joined his wife in 1845.⁹⁰



Fig. 12. Panels 18 and 19 of Dufour's ca. 1818 *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso*, with round temple in background that apparently served as the inspiration for the Jacksons' tomb at The Hermitage. (Belmont Mansion Association, "Telemachus Wallpaper.")



Fig. 13. Tomb of President Andrew Jackson and Rachel Donelson Jackson on the grounds of The Hermitage, Nashville, Tennessee. (Andrew Jackson Foundation, "Jackson's Tomb.")

⁹⁰ Ibid.

A few sorts of wallpaper are commonly considered to be scenic wallpaper despite some key differences from the most typical scenic wallpapers. These differences can include being printed on machine-made paper, having a small number of repeats (as opposed to none), featuring borders, or depicting indoor scenes. Dufour's 1814 *La Galerie Mythologique* is non-repeating, but depicts a series of figures on a plain background rather than a continuous landscape. Dufour's 1816 *L'Histoire de Psyché* has a full background but is set primarily indoors instead of out. Desfossé's 1854 *Les Pierrots* or *Les Prodiges*, discussed further below, was created as a single scene and was also set indoors. These papers are typically hung with borders dividing the individual scenes, making them more clearly an alternative to hung paintings than are other scenic wallpapers.

The *Tree Tapestry* pattern by M. H. Birge & Sons Co. of Buffalo, New York, could be considered another type of exception to the genre, as it is one of only a few scenic wallpaper patterns not manufactured in France. The pattern was designed with two panels for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, and was later expanded to four or perhaps five panels due to its popularity.⁹¹ The pattern was printed on machine-made paper. The 1907 Birge & Sons catalogue states that the panels contain some repeats within themselves, and encourages the purchaser by asserting that the panels can be hung in many ways to avoid any appearance of repetition.⁹² This advice was heeded by Luella Pugh Knott, wife of Florida State Treasurer William V. Knott, who installed the *Tree Tapestry* between 1928 and 1930 in her home in Tallahassee, Florida, in a completely unique collage-like fashion.⁹³ Mrs. Knott hung the paper in a stair hall, and in order to conserve paper during hard economic times, as well as to address varying ceiling heights, she

⁹¹ *Tree Tapestry* wallpaper file, Knott House Museum Archives.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

trimmed the paper along the outlines of the treetops, leaving bare paint at the tops of the walls. Mrs. Knott treated the installation as part wallpaper, part decoupage project, pasting in extra trees she had cut from elsewhere in the wallpaper as she saw fit.⁹⁴ The paper must have held particular appeal for her, as the landscape depicted is evocative of the rivers and cypress trees of the native Florida landscape.



Fig. 14. Stair hall at the Knott House Museum, Tallahassee, Florida, with American-made *Tree Tapestry* pattern by M. H. Birge & Sons Co. hung by Luella Pugh Knott. (Zimny, “Knott House Museum,” *Florida Trend*, 9.)

⁹⁴ There are other known examples of this decoupage technique used on wallpaper. One famous example is that of the Marchioness of Hertford. The Prince Regent (later King George IV) gifted Lady Irwin of Temple Newsam, Leeds, with imported Chinese wallpaper after falling in love with her daughter, the Marchioness of Hertford. The Marchioness installed the paper at Temple Newsam in the 1820s, and added birds cut-and-pasted not only from corners of the paper itself, but also from John James Audubon’s first series of *Birds of America*. The Prince Regent also used this decoupage method personally for the decoration of the saloon at his Royal Pavilion at Brighton. Hapgood, *Wallpaper and the Artist: From Dürer to Warhol*, 39.

Because the design and block-carving for a scenic wallpaper pattern required years of labor, manufacturers would often reuse wood blocks to create modified patterns under different names. This was done both with firms' own blocks and with blocks acquired from retired or deceased manufacturers. One illustration of the practice is found in *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* (Views of North America) and *La Guerre D'Indépendance Américaine* (The War of American Independence), both designed by artist Jean-Julien Deltil for Zuber. *Les Vues d'Amérique du Nord* predates *La Guerre D'Indépendance Américaine* by eighteen years, and the "Stagecoach and the Natural Bridge" panel depicting a stagecoach and sophisticated African-American onlookers is transformed in the later work into a military scene with British soldiers. Zuber's 1821 *Les Jardin Français* by Pierre-Antoine Mongin was modified in 1836 by hand-painting contemporary dress on the figures, and modified again in 1849 to feature Spanish figures and thus become *Les Jardin Espagnols*.⁹⁵ Arguably the least successful of these modified sets is Zuber's 1848 *La Conquête du Mexique* (Conquest of Mexico), with little to differentiate it from Jean-Julien Deltil's 1829 *Les Vues du Brésil*. As described above, sometimes new blocks were cut to produce the modified papers, and sometimes the changes were hand-painted. Overall, manufacturers of scenic wallpapers found this to be an economical and effective technique for updating patterns.

Because scenic wallpapers are continuous, viewing one is much like the tranquil experience of viewing a large painting. By contrast, the repeating figural and landscape patterns of other nineteenth-century wallpapers appear very busy, and were therefore often considered "gaudy" and suitable only for public places intended for use by the lower classes (see fig. 4).

⁹⁵ Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 29.

Scenic wallpaper fits into larger nineteenth-century trends in the decorative arts, and was specifically influenced by textiles in addition to prints. Similarities in the techniques used to produce both textiles and scenic wallpaper perhaps made this inevitable; indeed, the two industries would come to draw from a considerably overlapping pool of workers. The links between the industries are well illustrated by a close look at the rise to prominence of Jean Zuber. When in 1791 Georges Dollfus opened a small wallpaper factory in Rixheim, France, he hired Zuber to work for his company as a travelling salesman.⁹⁶ Zuber became a partner and eventually the sole proprietor, leading what would become the most famous scenic wallpaper firm.⁹⁷ Dollfus had initially been a manufacturer of printed calicoes, and the small town of Rixheim was next door to Mulhouse, a center of textile production.⁹⁸ Zuber himself was the son of a draper, and the transition from producing textiles to producing scenic wallpaper happened organically. The block-printing production process used to create scenic wallpaper is very similar to the process of block-printing on fabric.⁹⁹ In addition to the wide overlap in geography, workforce, and technique, there are many similar subjects to be found in the two crafts.

⁹⁶ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 32.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 32; Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers 1800–1860*, 27.



Fig. 15. Detail of ca. 1785–1789 block-printed toile cotton textile *L’Hommage de l’Amérique à la France* from Jouy, France, thematically similar to Zuber’s 1834 *Les Vues d’Amérique du Nord*. (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, “Toile Coverlet: ‘Hommage de l’Amérique à la France.’”)

While more comparable in its manor of production to printed textiles, scenic wallpaper is perhaps most similar visually to its more obvious predecessor: tapestries. The French were widely celebrated for their extravagant tapestry work, but in the nineteenth century scenic wallpaper managed to overtake tapestries in popularity. Exactly as scenic wallpaper manufacturers of the period did, tapestry weavers sought to make their products look ever more like paintings.¹⁰⁰ With members of high society no longer forced to live the itinerant lives they had in past centuries, they could now feel more comfortable purchasing fixed furnishings such as wallpaper, as opposed to easily transported tapestries.¹⁰¹ (Indeed, partly as a reflection of this new reality, tapestries themselves began to change, with larger and more custom-fitted tapestries

¹⁰⁰ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 57.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

designed to be installed in particular rooms.¹⁰²) While scenic wallpaper and hung tapestries depicted much of the same subject matter, many nineteenth-century purchasers found the former to be preferable, as scenic wallpaper was often brighter, and thus more inviting, while still being less expensive.¹⁰³

Scenic wallpapers were exhibited at the *Expositions des Produits de l'Industrie Française* in Paris between 1806 and 1849, the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London (the Crystal Palace Exhibition), and other such forums. Délicourt's *La Grande Chasse* was called “[amongst] ‘the most remarkable *oeuvres* [works] in the [Crystal Palace] Exhibition.’”¹⁰⁴ According to Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, the use of the words *paysage* and *tenture* by the juries reflect the struggle over whether to identify scenic wallpaper as a “major” art, with *paysage* (landscape) leaning toward its being classified as such, and *tenture* (tapestry) leaning instead toward its being classified as a minor, decorative art.¹⁰⁵

At the Paris Exhibition of 1855, Desfossé showed *Les Pierrots* or *Les Prodiges*, a scenic daringly signed by and produced in conjunction with the famous painter Thomas Couture.¹⁰⁶ Couture was concurrently painting the same image in oils and oversaw the entire wallpaper production process.¹⁰⁷ This collaboration was especially notable, as many painters found scenic wallpaper to be a threat to their livelihoods.

¹⁰² Ibid., 57–58.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰⁴ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 96.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 98.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 110–112.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.



Fig. 16. *Les Pierrots* or *Les Prodiges*, designed by Thomas Couture for Desfossé in 1855. (Les Arts Décoratifs, “Tableau de Papier Peint: ‘Les Prodiges.’”)

Many early and mid-nineteenth century wallpapers contained realistic depictions of nature. English critics such as Richard Redgrave and Henry Cole acknowledged such papers’ technical achievements, but did not approve of their three-dimensionality, finding it “dishonest” on wallpaper’s flat surface. Honoré de Balzac penned a famous critique of scenic wallpaper in his novel *Père Goriot*, describing a set of *Telemachus* paper hung in a dilapidated boardinghouse dining room as the subject of decades of coarse jokes.¹⁰⁸ The novel aptly illustrates the popularity (and perhaps oversaturation) attained by scenic wallpaper and the panorama, with

¹⁰⁸ de Balzac, *Père Goriot*, 8.

characters cheekily tacking on the suffix *-rama* in their dialogue (““Are we ever going to have *dinnerama?*”” asks Bianchon).¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, whether such critiques and mockery were directly responsible or not, the pendulum swung; scenic wallpaper was deemed to be old-fashioned and even garish, and its decline began.

Despite the tastes of nineteenth-century critics, however, today scenic wallpaper is the most prized of all wallpapers, and can be found in numerous respected art museums and auction houses. A layperson would naturally compare a scenic wallpaper to an original painting, and one can easily see the struggle faced by judges at exhibitions, as to whether scenic wallpaper was to be considered an art or a craft. Unlike most paintings, of course, scenic wallpaper was designed to be duplicated—the only way that the major production of a scenic wallpaper could be cost-effective. This distinction alone reduces its value in the eyes of some, but to others, the fantastic subjects and splendor of the panorama are more than sufficient to prove the artistic merits of scenic wallpaper.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 57. Emphasis in original.

CHAPTER 4: SELECTION AND INSTALLATION

Styles of wallpaper and the installation of that wallpaper changed greatly over time. A review of historical records shows that scenic wallpaper became a fashionable choice in America in the nineteenth century, aided not only by its appearance, but by its origins, cost, and versatility in hanging. The wallpaper was easy to acquire and suitable to many spaces.

It is well established that colonists in North America sought to recreate European comforts in their American homes. Wallpaper went a long way toward making a home look finished. American tariffs on wallpaper protected the fledgling enterprise at home but still allowed for the affordable importation of foreign papers.¹¹⁰ Wallpaper became widely popular in England in the mid-eighteenth century, and America followed the trend.¹¹¹

Unfortunately, applied (hung) wallpaper was not usually included on the lists of “moveables” in early American estate inventories, a primary source of information about historic interiors. As a result of this, and the fact that wallpaper is delicate, there is less documentation pertaining to early wallpapers used in America than to wood furnishings, for example. Even so, “surviving wallpapers, sometimes in the form of dingy scraps in old houses; advertisements, bills, comments in correspondence, diaries, and travelers’ accounts” can all be used to determine which wallpapers were prevalent where in America.¹¹² Evidence shows that the use and perceived importance of wallpaper increased continually as America approached the twentieth century.

¹¹⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 109–110.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 164.



Fig. 17. Lithograph of an 1840s Philadelphia paper hangings warehouse, displaying the scenic wallpaper *Les Huguenots* by Pignet in the windows. (Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 314.)

Scenic wallpaper was fashionable in America for a number of reasons, not least of which is the influence of notable Francophiles such as Thomas Jefferson. France was an American ally in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and people admired French tastes and felt comfortable supporting the French financially. Additionally, Lafayette's famous tour of America in 1824–1825 “rekindled enthusiasm for France and things French.”¹¹³

¹¹³ Ibid., 177.

In the nineteenth century weighty pattern books such as Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* were supplanted for the first time by a new category of home decoration books marketed to middle-class women.¹¹⁴ In this literature the virtues of wallpaper were extolled to female homemakers, who came to hold increasingly larger sway over the decoration and running of the home now that their husbands had left to work in industrial operations in urban areas. This physical separation of husband and wife sharpened the roles defined for women, and they were now tasked with decorating the home in addition to caring for it and the family; architecture books continued to be directed toward men. The physical separation also sharpened the nostalgia for the "old homestead" and its great moral influence as a place of refuge. Now that men and families were moving into grimy urban areas, women sought to make the house a soft landing place by decorating the home with comforting depictions of nature.

All this can be read as expressive of the nostalgia for nature, for the soft and feminine, for individual expression, and for the vivid coloring of the outdoors—in sum, it all contrasted sharply with the impersonal quality of life among large numbers of strangers, with the hard-edged mechanical forms of the factory, with the dirt of cities, with the grime surrounding the urban poor, and, perhaps most of all, with the toughness and sharpness men were being forced to cultivate in the commercial world.¹¹⁵

The new decorating books not only gave a moral impetus to women by suggesting that decorating their homes in a welcoming, soothing fashion was a kind of duty, but by addressing women directly, also suggested that they should have their own power to make purchases. These store-bought goods had the added benefit of displaying purchasing power to one's neighbors, in a time when more income could be spent on household decoration than ever before.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 165.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 167.

¹¹⁶ Greysmith, *Wallpaper*, 92.

Women were now encouraged to choose wallpaper that had a positive moral influence in the home, and especially on their children. The literature went so far as to state that women had an awesome power to shape the character of future civic leaders through their furnishings.¹¹⁷ To this end, manufacturers stressed the realism of the images that appeared in their scenic wallpapers. Geography, botany, literature, and history lessons could be taught using the wallpaper for illustration. The patterns were considered an “extension of the family library,” and reflected the topics popular in books of the period.¹¹⁸ Scenic papers depicting European capitals appeared highly sophisticated to rural Americans, and included landmarks that could be pointed out to children. Naturally, as a concession to the tastes of the day, manufacturers were careful to omit scenes or figures that were too distasteful to be on constant display on one’s walls, and even violent scenes were made to look peaceful.¹¹⁹ Jean-Julien Deltil wrote to Jean Zuber of his *Les Vues du Brésil*, “I have taken great care in the finishing of the figures and animals and if I used cross-hatching for the savages and unclothed anatomy, it is because things which are too harsh shock the eye and are generally disliked by sellers and buyers.”¹²⁰

Manufacturers would sometimes create lithographs of the complete arrangement of panels in a scenic wallpaper for advertisement, providing the salesman with a handy reference and sometimes including elaborate descriptions. This is best exemplified by Dufour’s *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*. The accompanying pamphlet described the history of Captain Cook’s voyage to the South Pacific, and detailed the action in each panel:

¹¹⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 167.

¹¹⁸ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 104.

¹¹⁹ The discerning reader will recall from Chapter 1 that Betty Ford would eventually cover over the set of *La Guerre D’Indépendance Américaine* hung in the President’s Dining Room, because she did not want to see battle scenes during her luncheon. She would likely disagree that Zuber had done enough to censor the content of his papers.

¹²⁰ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 90. Letter from Deltil to Zuber dated September 7, 1829.

We felt that it would be worthwhile to bring together into one convenient form this multitude of peoples separated from us by the expanse of oceans. Thereby a cultivated man, who has read the accounts of travelers and is aware of the history of exploration, on which our work is based, can, without even leaving his room, find himself in the presence of these people, and see their lives unfold around him . . . So a mother can give her daughter living lessons in history and geography, teaching her to make better use of her education. And even the trees and flowers will serve as an introduction to botany . . .¹²¹

There is some debate over which is the very first scenic wallpaper, but there was assuredly scenic wallpaper for sale in America by 1802.¹²² Most scenic wallpaper imported into America in the first half of the nineteenth century was produced by the firms of Zuber and Dufour, with third place likely going to Jacquemart et Bénard (successors to the Réveillon firm).¹²³ According to Catherine Lynn, wallpaper served as a “transmitter of style” to America.¹²⁴ It was easy to transport, even to remote frontier regions. The Zuber records and local newspapers show that all of Zuber’s scenic patterns were available for sale in major American metropolises, both north and south.¹²⁵ Unlike in the eighteenth century, and contrary to the assertions of out-of-date texts on scenic wallpaper, potential purchasers did not need an agent in France or a friendly sea captain to buy scenic wallpaper in New York or New Orleans. The nineteenth-century sale or installation of scenic wallpapers has been documented in Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia. Zuber’s historical records, preserved at their factory in Alsace, show “dealings during the 1820’s of the Zuber factory with a hundred American importers from Maine to New Orleans.”¹²⁶

¹²¹ Teynac, Nolot, and Vivien, *Wallpaper: A History*, 113.

¹²² Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 190.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 22.

Scenic wallpaper cost between 60 and 200 gold francs in 1850, while an original portrait cost 1,000 francs.¹²⁷ Zuber's prices for scenic wallpapers ranged from 45 francs for a monochromatic printing of *L'Arcadie* (monochromatic scenic wallpapers were always less expensive than those printed in full color) to 120 francs for its largest multi-colored scenic paper, *Paysage de l'Helvétie*. From 1815–1835, the average cost of a Zuber scenic wallpaper set was 70 francs.¹²⁸ Délicourt's labor-intensive *La Grande Chasse* cost 190 francs in 1854.¹²⁹ While not inexpensive by any measure, scenic wallpaper remained far more affordable than original paintings, and meanwhile was growing in esteem. America was the principal destination for French export papers, and Americans were enthusiastic and frequent purchasers of scenic wallpaper in particular.¹³⁰ In fact, scenic wallpaper was one of the most profitable items exported to America by French wallpaper manufacturers.¹³¹

Because grand houses are more likely to be preserved than middle-class abodes, many have the impression that scenic wallpaper was used only by the wealthy; this is not true. An 1819 sale of scenic wallpaper in Boston from J. W. Foster to Jacob Wendell was recorded for 10 dollars, and consumer prices typically ranged from 10 to 40 dollars. This is within the same range as other expensive wallpaper of the period—at \$2.50 a roll for non-scenic but still pricey wallpaper, the number of rolls equivalent to a full set of scenic wallpaper would have cost \$50.

¹²⁷ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 52.

¹²⁸ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 217. Sixteen years later, Zuber's 1851 recommended retail price lists show a range of 12 to 120 francs, undifferentiated by export destination. The least expensive scenic papers were older or simpler patterns. The average recommended retail price at that point was 57 francs. Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 97.

¹²⁹ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 110.

¹³⁰ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 59; Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 184.

¹³¹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 184.

In comparison, however, the cheapest wallpaper available sold for 25 cents per roll.¹³² In other words, scenic wallpaper was costly, but not cost-prohibitive to obtain in America. United States prices were only slightly higher than those in Western Europe, and it can therefore be established that “it was distance, status as a fashionable article, and French origin that made scenic wallpaper a luxury item abroad.”¹³³

¹³² Ibid., 225.

¹³³ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 86.



Fig. 18. Ca. 1940s photograph of Dufour's 1804 *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* hung directly onto unfinished wood plank walls in a North Carolina house. (U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 26.)

Scenic wallpapers were and are selected for all manner of private and public buildings, including palaces, embassies, capitols, and humble homes. Some rooms were designed or remodeled specifically to accommodate a set of scenic wallpaper. Scenic wallpapers are most commonly found in public first-floor rooms, such as dining rooms, salons, and halls. They are less common in bedrooms, and when found there are often in a *grisaille* color scheme, for a more calming effect.

Despite its frequent presence in publicly open spaces, scenic wallpaper has often proved quite durable.

[O]nce on the walls, wallpaper often outlasted all manner of neglect and abuse for the simple reason that it was easier to cover it over than to strip it off a wall. Unlike furniture, wallpaper was seldom removed from the original context in which it was used. Though battered and discolored, many fragments of wallpaper remain in place, where they were hung two hundred years ago, telling us something about the tastes of ordinary people who seldom wrote about their aesthetic preferences.¹³⁴

There were a great many ways to hang a scenic wallpaper, and the manner of its hanging can tell contemporary observers as much as, or perhaps even more than, the paper selection alone.

Scenic wallpapers were designed to be hung much like Chinese wallpapers—between the chair rail and ceiling, on the sidewall (or “fill”). They were most often trimmed by wallpaper borders, friezes, or dados, and sometimes by plaster or woodwork. It was very common to hang a wallpaper balustrade or paneling below the chair rail, as seen in figure 25. Typically, the horizon line on the wallpaper would be installed at eye level, with the sky making up as much as two-thirds of the height of the installed paper.¹³⁵ The bottom of the installed scenic usually hits between thirty-two to thirty-six inches from the ground, with the dado below.¹³⁶ While this may

¹³⁴ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 13–14.

¹³⁵ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 96.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

sound like a complicated hanging scheme to twenty-first-century readers, the most detailed organization of the wall plane was found later in the nineteenth century, when the walls would be divided horizontally with some combination of moldings, wallpaper, and paint into as many as seven sections, with the ceiling further divided.

Most scenic wallpapers were designed as true panoramas, so that the first and last panels matched up perfectly. Most rooms were not this exact size, however, so purchasers had to decide how many panels to order, and hangers had to decide exactly how to hang it. The panoramic effect much depended upon the skill of the paper hanger. The long panel lengths were designed to fit in high-ceilinged rooms, and also to have enough “sky” that the upper portion could be removed and used to fill in above doors and windows without requiring the purchase of extra panels just for that purpose. In some instances, scenic wallpapers were hung on top of jib doors (fig. 19 below) to continue the uninterrupted flow of the design.



Fig. 19. *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (ca. 1790–1800, manufacturer unknown) installed over a jib door for continuity. (Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 97, Image 132.)

The ideal room for scenic wallpaper has high ceilings, few windows and doors, and few large items of furniture to be placed against the wall. In some instances where a large mirror or other item was to be used, the paper hanger would leave a gap in the paper behind the item. This

technique used less paper and did not cover any part of a “scene” from viewers. It did mean, of course, that the furniture placement was permanent. Because scenic wallpaper is non-repeating, viewers would be unable to determine what had appeared originally in any portions covered or cut out. Often, the designer of a scenic wallpaper would use rocks, trees, or other natural formations as a device to create a natural break between the scenes or tableaux. These “separators” were a common choice for hidden or removed sections. Caroline King recalled looking forward to a deep cleaning of her childhood home in Salem, when the large bookcases would be pulled away from the wall, likely hung with a paper by Zuber & Cie., “[a]nd I remember the glee with which we eagerly slipped behind them and greeted our Swiss friends once more.”¹³⁷ More complicated scenic wallpapers came with hanging instructions that identified which panels were best suited to areas with windows, etc. This was not common, however, and even with such instructions the hanger had to make accommodations for a room’s specific needs.

In other instances, wallpaper “frames” were used to highlight individual scenes. This alternative treats the scenic wallpaper more like paintings or prints, and provides cost savings while eliminating the panoramic effect. One such method was to separate the scene or scenes with wallpaper pilasters. This technique is consistent with the mid-nineteenth century trend of emphasizing the vertical in the organization of the interior wall plane, which would transition to emphasis of the horizontal, as the influence of the Aesthetic movement in England grew over the latter half of the century. Moreover, in some properties just a single scene is framed with wallpaper trim and hung alone. There are also some reports of scenic wallpaper found pasted on large screens; perhaps this was a way to use up leftover panels, as well as a hearkening back to

¹³⁷ Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750–1870*, 191–192.

the large decorative folding screens that were a precursor to scenic wallpaper.¹³⁸

Walls should be properly lined before scenic wallpaper is installed, so that it can be removed later if necessary. According to A. L. Diament & Co., the walls should be lined horizontally with paper, then vertically with muslin or canvas, and then horizontally again with lining paper. The seams for all lining papers should be abutted and not overlapped.¹³⁹ Most scenic wallpapers are hung with just one lining paper, however. Additionally, while there are now superior modern adhesives available, most scenic wallpapers hung in the nineteenth century were affixed to the walls with a simple flour-and-water paste. It is easiest to hang wallpaper of all varieties in warm weather, when the likelihood of adhesive failure is significantly reduced; Zuber scenic wallpaper sales commonly rose in April and May, suggesting that many purchasers were aware of this fact.¹⁴⁰

Scenic wallpapers were by no means the most popular wallpaper of their period, but due in part to their celebrated appearance they have survived at a much higher rate. American purchasers of scenic wallpaper were swayed by the beauty and panoramic effect of the paper, and took advantage of the many ways it could be installed and used. A scenic wallpaper could be hung so that a favorite panel had pride of place, and the paper overall could be used to provide a homey yet elegant atmosphere—one which draws the viewer into the room and transports him to exotic destinations, cosmopolitan capitals, or action-filled battlefields.

¹³⁸ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 96.

¹³⁹ A. L. Diament & Co., *Historic Notes on the Scenic Papers of A. L. Diament & Co.*

¹⁴⁰ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 98.

CHAPTER 5: CARE AND CONSERVATION

Antique scenic wallpaper presents myriad challenges to its caretakers in house museums. The handmade paper is of high quality, but like all wallpaper, it is sensitive to moisture, insects, neglect, and, of course, fire. The block-printed distemper paint is applied more thickly than on other wallpapers, and often begins to flake with age. Furthermore, scenic wallpaper is by its nature non-repeating, making replacing a panel a good deal more difficult than with traditional wallpapers. Below, information on housekeeping, visitors, conservation, and replacement is presented for the benefit of caretakers of scenic wallpaper in a house museum or similar environment.

Housekeeping

Scenic wallpaper is a historically significant resource and should not be cleaned or touched in any way without the supervision of a paper conservator.¹⁴¹ Some wallpapers can be cleaned by house museum staff with proper direction, but that is not appropriate for scenic wallpaper. Care must be taken to avoid contact with the paper when dusting, spraying cleaning products, moving items, and otherwise working in the room. All cleaning staff should be made aware that any scenic wallpaper on the premises must be left to the care of experts.

According to the National Trust, “[d]amage results mainly from rubbing or leaning against the wallpaper, touching it around light switches or around corners, knocking it with chair backs, from opening and closing curtains, and careless cleaning of contiguous features such as chimney pieces and pier tables.”¹⁴² These problems can mostly be avoided through the

¹⁴¹ Heaver, *Housekeeping for Historic Homes and House Museums*, 11.

¹⁴² National Trust, *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping: Care and Conservation of Collections in Historic Houses*, 192.

preventative measures discussed above. Moreover, annual inspections by staff (noting areas of concern or change) are useful both in the moment and going forward. Any fully detached pieces of wallpaper found should be placed in an archival envelope labeled with the location and date of discovery.¹⁴³

Visitors

Visitors should be instructed to check large bags or leave them in vehicles, to prevent hardware from scraping against wallpaper. Plexiglass (acrylic) and ropes can also be used as barriers to keep visitors a safe distance from the wallpaper. Plexiglass is nearly foolproof in this regard, but can trap moisture and detract from the appearance of the wallpaper. Holes must also be drilled through the wallpaper to install plexiglass barriers. The most valuable tool in protecting scenic wallpaper from visitor negligence is docent guidance.

The Conservation Process

Several problems are commonly found with historic wallpapers: wallpaper pastes degrade over time, wallpapers become dirty and stained, wallpaper paint can break down in any number of ways (cracking, flaking, etc.) as the binder deteriorates, and applied varnishes can make wallpaper yellow and brittle.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, wallpapers are vulnerable to any fluctuations in the backing walls—whether through movement or an influx of moisture. Proper conservation of scenic wallpaper requires close adherence to a multi-step process.

Research:

Once a site has determined that its scenic wallpaper is in need of some level of conservation, the first step is research. The researcher must become familiar with the scenic wallpaper pattern, the condition and physical circumstances of the paper, and any historical

¹⁴³ Ibid., 193.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 190.

records relating to the paper before any conservation or construction work begins. If the exact scenic wallpaper pattern is not already known, outside expertise can be solicited for wallpaper identification. Samples can be identified by institutions such as the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum at relatively low cost. In most cases, a paper conservator is then brought in for preliminary inspection and to develop a plan of action. The paper conservator will refer to the room, walls, and scenic wallpaper panels using an identification system, so all participants are, in a very real sense, speaking the same language.

Conservation:

Although it is possible for some repairs to be done in situ, it is often necessary and advisable to consolidate¹⁴⁵ the scenic wallpaper and then remove it for repairs. Once in the conservator's studio, often the back of the scenic paper is repaired and cleaned first. Losses are commonly filled with Japanese tissue, and methyl cellulose is used to consolidate losses and flaking paint. After stabilization and basic repairs are completed, any in-painting can begin. Once conservation is complete, the paper is usually documented again (in reports and in photographs), and then carefully transported back to the site and reinstalled.

Best Practices:

Preliminarily, the building and records should be thoroughly searched. Wallpaper found in secondary layers or scraps can be used to help date architectural changes, provide a historic record, and provide information to assist in the conservation of the scenic wallpaper. Leftover scraps of wallpaper may have been used to line drawers, shelves, chests, hatboxes, fireboards, and other such items. Often extra panels of unhung wallpaper that could be used for color

¹⁴⁵ "Consolidation is defined as the application or (in some cases) the regeneration of binding material to improve cohesion of loose or friable media or substrate and reattach it (if necessary) to its support." Henry, et al., "Consolidation/Fixing/Facing," Chap. 23 in *Paper Conservation Catalog*, 5th ed.

matching or infill were stored in attics. Investigators should look in closets, cabinets, mirrors, casings, and behind other large or difficult to move objects. Painted walls should be searched with a raking light to look for wallpaper seams under the paint.¹⁴⁶ Bare plaster walls should be searched with a black light to look for chemical traces of wallpaper left behind.¹⁴⁷ The search should cover all the edges of the walls and ceiling, as wallpapers were hung in all locations, and scraps could be easily hidden. Photographs and measured drawings of any discovered wallpapers should be prepared.¹⁴⁸

Any wallpapers used to line the wall behind the scenic wallpaper (and any additional “sandwiched” wallpapers) affect the acidity, movement, and appearance of the topmost scenic wallpaper, making information on those papers useful to conservators. Anything larger than small samples should be removed by a trained conservator, and papers found layered one atop the other can be carefully steamed apart by such a conservator to determine the record. Covered-over wallpaper can rarely be restored, but can be identified and replicated. The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) can be a useful resource when selecting a paper conservator.

Family and business records should be combed through for purchase orders, hanging instructions, and the like, and all visual depictions of the room in question should be reviewed carefully. These documents could indicate that the scenic wallpaper previously continued into an alcove, that the wallpaper was previously hung in another room, or even that there may be scenic wallpaper hung underneath a newer wallpaper. Dateable photographs can document the condition of the paper over time. Armed with this type of information, historic site staff and

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 41.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

conservators can be assured that they are making informed decisions.

Any wallpaper conservation plans should emphasize the condition of the backing wall. Structural problems should be addressed first and foremost. Next, the envelope should be secured, to ensure windows, walls, and roofs do not allow any leaks that would damage the wallpaper. Afterwards, the walls should be tended to; they must be dry and stable. After all other construction is complete, the conserved wallpaper can be reinstalled. Monitors should be in place to ensure temperature and relative humidity are properly maintained going forward. It is handy for historic sites with scenic wallpaper to maintain an ongoing relationship with a paper conservator for touch-ups and follow-up questions.

Conservation and Replacement Alternatives

A historic site with a damaged scenic wallpaper in place has to weigh its options carefully, based upon availability of conservators, wallpaper condition, and expense. It is common for the process of locating conservators, inspecting the wallpaper, gathering quotes, and completing conservation to take a few years. Damaged scenic wallpapers can be conserved or replaced, and sometimes a combination of both. Scenic wallpapers are works of art, and should be thought of as such when being handled for any purpose.

Conservation—Off-Site:

In many instances, a scenic wallpaper's value, delicacy, and condition will require that a professional conservator remove the paper from the wall to repair it. The repairs can take several weeks. With this option, the paper is cleaned and lined before rehanging, holes are patched, loose flakes of paint are fixed individually by hand, and any unwanted varnishes are addressed.

Once site managers have decided to have a scenic wallpaper conserved, there are two further decisions to be made: whether to in-paint in full or part, and whether to apply a coating to

the conserved paper. Historic varnishes were often used to keep the flaking nineteenth-century distemper paint in place, but the varnish itself can be damaging. Modern coatings are advised by some conservators, and liquid fixatives are used in conjunction with other products. It is important to consider the long-term effects of the particular coating, and whether it will affect the chalky, matte appearance of the original paint.

Unlike wallpapers with repeating patterns, when there is significant paint or paper loss on a section of a scenic wallpaper, the viewer cannot determine the missing elements in the composition. Museum, academic or manufacturer sources can be used to identify the missing elements, and those elements can be “in-painted” by hand on the wallpaper. Most sources state that in-painting should be done with Windsor or Newton watercolors or gouaches, but opinions differ on the technique.¹⁴⁹ Some experts recommend that efforts be made to replicate the look of the original block-printing technique when in-painting.¹⁵⁰ This (perhaps dominant) school of thinking espouses that the more indistinguishable the in-painting is from the original block-printing, the better. It is also possible to evoke the look of the missing elements, but in a less detailed way. This approach uses washes or splotches of color in the general shapes of the missing elements, and therefore does not attempt to look original, and can be distinguished as modern. This is presumably less popular because it takes the overall look farther away from the original appearance. Furthermore, block-printing as a technique is already less detailed than hand-painting, so removing still more detail can seem undesirable. Some historic sites may opt for minimal in-painting as a means to interpret the conservation process, in combination with displays of in-progress photographs, or framed pieces of scenic wallpaper that were not conserved.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Conservation—On-Site:

Some, but not all, of the conservation practices done in a professional studio can be done with the paper in place. Superficial cleaning and final touches like in-painting are typically done in situ. This is only an option when the scenic wallpaper and the entire room are in good condition. It is preferable when the scenic wallpaper would be significantly damaged by removal from the walls.

Replacement—Antique Scenic Wallpaper:

Antique scenic wallpaper panels can be found for sale in auction houses and private collections. Research shows that a few papers can be found for sale online at any given time, but the likelihood of the specific pattern needed being available at precisely the right time (and at a palatable price) is low. That said, the timeworn look that an antique paper provides could be considered the most truly authentic option in situations where the scenic wallpaper in place could not be saved. It is best to allow quite some time—even years—to find an antique replacement scenic wallpaper.

Replacement—Block-Printed Modern Scenic Wallpaper:

Zuber & Cie. is the only original manufacturer of scenic wallpapers that is still printing from their historic wood blocks. None of the other scenic manufacturers have survived. Zuber presently produces fourteen scenic patterns with the original wood blocks.¹⁵¹ Aside from Zuber, there are a small number of companies (e.g., A.L. Diament & Co.) that have purchased sets of nineteenth-century wood blocks and are also block-printing full scenic patterns. All manufacturers now use different paper than that used in the nineteenth century. When a site selects a modern reprint of a scenic wallpaper from the original blocks, it is getting the best of

¹⁵¹ Zuber, “Decors Panoramiques Zuber ‘Imprimes a La Planche.’”

both worlds—a brand-new wallpaper with the technique and paint texture of an antique. This is a good option, and it is invaluable when original scenic panels are damaged beyond repair.

Replacement—Non-Block-Printed Modern Scenic Wallpaper:

In addition to its modern block-printed scenic wallpapers, Zuber & Cie. also screen-prints twenty-five scenic patterns for which the blocks have been lost or destroyed, with hand-brushed backgrounds.¹⁵² These scenic papers can be ordered in polychrome or monochrome.¹⁵³ Screen-printed wallpapers first came on the market around 1938, but were not prevalent until after World War II.¹⁵⁴ In addition to Zuber, a handful of other companies screen-print full scenic patterns. It is vastly easier and less expensive to order a pattern from a company's regular catalogue, as opposed to their custom recreation of an out-of-print scenic pattern.

Replacement—Custom Scenic Wallpaper:

With this option, a site hires a company to make a custom reprint of a damaged scenic wallpaper. This option carries a significant amount of work, and is generally not considered if the pattern is already being produced elsewhere. Such wallpapers are usually screen-printed, but can also be created digitally.

Above and beyond the printing method, other details must be decided upon for a custom reproduction. One such key decision pertains to the color values. Samples from the existing damaged paper can be compared with samples from other locations to determine the appropriate hues.¹⁵⁵ The site must decide whether to temper bright new panels or painted infill to better match the old panels. Wallpaper historian Richard Nylander urges against installing “antiqued”

¹⁵² Zuber, “Products.”

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Herringshaw, “Innovative Printers in Brooklyn.”

¹⁵⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 50.

reproduction wallpapers to mimic an aged look, although it is a common practice.¹⁵⁶

A major consideration is cost. Often manufacturers have a minimum purchase requirement for reproduction papers, which can increase the cost. This is not always bad in the long run, however, as extra paper is useful to have on hand for future repairs. See “Further Thoughts” below for more information on custom reproductions.

Replacement—Other Options:

The last option when replacing a damaged scenic wallpaper is to replace it with something other than a scenic wallpaper. This can be done with a different period-appropriate wallpaper, a hand-painted scenic mural, or a plain wallpaper or paint. Sometimes one of these options is used as a temporary measure until replacement scenic wallpaper can be acquired.

Further Thoughts on Restorations and Reproductions

Wallpaper is often put last on the to-do list for interior restorations, but it makes a dramatic difference. As Catherine Lynn points out, “19th-century owners, architects, and builders may have visualized certain spatial effects of light, warmth, mood, and proportion dependent on the use of wallpaper—effects which are completely distorted when the walls are painted a solid color.”¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, wallpaper must not be hastily chosen. It is perhaps inappropriate to install a scenic wallpaper in a restoration without evidence of such a paper having been in place previously, as it is often the “loudest” item in a room. Historic site staff and boards should refrain from making decisions based on personal taste, contemporary fashions, and other concerns beyond protecting and interpreting their site. For example, if a scenic wallpaper installed elsewhere were in danger and were offered to the site, if inappropriate historically, it

¹⁵⁶ Nylander, *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproduction Wallpapers*, 22.

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Wallpapers in Historic Preservation*, 1.

should be declined in favor of donation to a more suitable museum or location.

In cases of “mistakes” made in the original hanging of the wallpaper, management must decide whether or not it is appropriate to correct them. There is no harm in updating the hanging technique to include paste that will not attract insects, and lining paper that will protect the wallpaper, but what if, for example, a scenic wallpaper was hung with a large gap to accommodate a wardrobe, and the wardrobe is no longer present? Or what if the balustrade dado was originally hung upside down? These types of questions must be posed and considered.

Conservation and replacement of scenic wallpapers is not a new phenomenon. In the 1830s the second floor of The Hermitage caught fire, and the Dufour scenic wallpaper *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso* was irreparably damaged by water and smoke. The destroyed paper still held considerable sentimental value for Andrew Jackson, who ordered three new sets of it to be shipped from Paris. The wallpaper arrived via the John Randolph steamboat to Nashville, but a fire caused the boat to explode and sink. One crate of the wallpaper was recovered, but the ship manifest had been lost, and the crate that had somehow survived was bought on the docks by local man W.G.M. Campbell and installed in his home. After that ordeal, Jackson bought new sets of the wallpaper once again, and had it shipped to New Orleans and then transported to The Hermitage. The wallpaper was successfully reinstalled in the restored center hall.¹⁵⁸

The saga continued at The Hermitage in 1889, when the Ladies' Hermitage Association took over the property. The scenic wallpaper was peeling, pieces had been cut out as relics, and mold, scratches, and tears were present.¹⁵⁹ As one of its first acts of business, the Ladies' Hermitage Association brought in experts, and the first conservation of the paper was completed

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Jackson Foundation, *Odyssey of the Wallpaper*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

by 1890.¹⁶⁰ There was likely no scenic wallpaper on the second floor hall by that time. In 1904 an artist named Mary Jennings spent three months in The Hermitage painting a replica of the scenic onto canvas, for a smaller-scale replica of The Hermitage at the World's Fair in St. Louis. After the fair, Jennings presented the paper to the Ladies' Hermitage Association, which had it hung upstairs at The Hermitage.¹⁶¹ There were several conservation campaigns in the twentieth century, and ca. 1935–1936, a man now remembered as Mr. Wilson, who had advertised himself as an expert conservator of scenic wallpaper across the South, removed the scenic, treated it, and remounted it on newsprint.¹⁶² At this time a blue border was added at the top of the wallpaper.¹⁶³ In the 1990s an antique set of *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso* was removed from a house in France, and installed upstairs to replace the Jennings paper. The hand-painted replica paper hung in the upstairs hallway was much more susceptible to looters due to its location, and was therefore in worse shape than the “original” paper downstairs. Christine Young, The Hermitage wallpaper conservator, in-painted the antique set upstairs, toned the sky to better match the paper at the bottom of the stairs, and hand-painted two missing strips.¹⁶⁴ Today, the wallpaper purchased by Jackson after the fire at The Hermitage still hangs downstairs in the hall and wraps up the staircase; in the upper hall, the newly acquired antique set hangs. Ms. Young is still actively investigating all she can about the wallpaper.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Mullin (VP Museum Services & Chief Curator, Andrew Jackson Foundation/Andrew Jackson's Hermitage), phone interview by the author, July 16, 2015.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Andrew Jackson Foundation, *Odyssey of the Wallpaper*.

¹⁶⁵ Mullin (VP Museum Services & Chief Curator, Andrew Jackson Foundation/Andrew Jackson's Hermitage), phone interview by the author, July 16, 2015.



Fig. 20. Center hall in 1892 with *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'île de Calypso* in poor condition, The Hermitage, Nashville, Tennessee. (Andrew Jackson Foundation/Andrew Jackson's Hermitage.)



Fig. 21. Center hall in 1995 with *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso* in restored condition, The Hermitage, Nashville, Tennessee. (Andrew Jackson Foundation/Andrew Jackson's Hermitage.)

According to Richard Nylander, interest in historic wallpaper patterns appears to have begun with the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.¹⁶⁶ Americans finally felt they had enough heritage of their own to be respectable, and thus need not look to Europe for guidance. Reproduction wallpapers were available for purchase in America by the turn of the twentieth century, although they have improved considerably since then. Both then and now, however, reproduction wallpapers were expensive enough that those who were considering them should be quite careful

¹⁶⁶ Nylander, *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproduction Wallpapers*, 15.

in researching and thinking through the options in printing methods, paint, and paper before committing to a reproduction scheme.

In the mid-twentieth century, the fashion for stark white walls in museums was adopted by numerous house museums, and reproduction wallpaper that had only been in place for a generation was stripped.¹⁶⁷ We now have a better understanding of the historic room as a whole, and reproduction papers are being produced in quantity.

Reproduction wallpapers come in two types: exact reproductions and adaptations.¹⁶⁸ Adaptations may make changes to color, scale, or technique, to appeal to contemporary buyers and/or reduce cost.¹⁶⁹ An exact reproduction of a block-printed paper will reflect the imperfection of that technique. If a printing method other than actual block-printing is selected, the most successful imitation of this look is accomplished with silk-screening.¹⁷⁰ Even in so-called “exact” reproductions, concessions are made. Often historic production methods are forgone for cost and labor savings; this is acceptable if the overall look is consistent with the original. Modern paper typically comes in greater widths than historic papers, and these paper sizes are typically chosen over hand-pasted domino sheets or smaller panel widths for reproductions.¹⁷¹ Overall, these minor differences appear much more dramatic when the original and reproduction are held side-by-side than when the reproduction is installed in a fully decorated room.

Several sources have compiled useful lists of resources for those looking to identify or conserve their scenic wallpaper; these include Richard C. Nylander’s *Wallpapers for Historic*

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproduction Wallpapers, and Editor Lesley Hoskins' *The Papered Wall*.

As shown with The Hermitage above, the care and conservation of scenic wallpaper has been an area of concern for ages. Even things as simple as careless cleaning and visitor negligence can cause damage to scenic wallpaper. When a scenic wallpaper is in need of repair, the decision of whether to conserve or replace it should be thoughtfully reached, in consultation with experts in the field. Research of the scenic wallpaper and the setting in which it is hung is critical to having a wide view of what the paper is, and how and why it was hung at the property. With this information in hand, those in charge can make a decision that is suitable to their specific circumstances from amongst the numerous alternatives for conserving and replacing a damaged scenic wallpaper. For any conservation decisions, shortcuts due to expense and time should be nixed in favor of a solution that maintains the historical integrity of the site and wallpaper. As the early wallpaper historian Phyllis Ackerman states, a truly historically accurate wallpaper lends a room an “individuality and wistful charm” that cannot otherwise be achieved, and every effort should be made to keep a scenic wallpaper in place.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Ackerman, *Wallpaper: Its History, Design and Use*, 80.

CASE STUDY: LINDENWALD
Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, Kinderhook, New York
Paysage à Chasses, Jean-Julien Deltil for Zuber & Cie., 1831

Lindenwald, now known as the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, was the home of the eighth president of the United States, Martin Van Buren (1782–1862). Van Buren’s home underwent major remodeling and updating during his time, one feature of which was the hanging of the hunt landscape *Paysage à Chasses* by Zuber & Cie. By the 1970s, the wallpaper was in need of significant repair. The *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper was indeed conserved, and the property, now operating as a house museum, provides visitors with a guided interpretation of the paper.

In 1839 President Martin Van Buren acquired the Lindenwald estate just outside his home village of Kinderhook, New York.¹⁷³ Van Buren was president from 1837–1841, and after his bid for reelection failed in 1840, he moved to the property to plan his next campaign. He made the move permanent after failing to recapture the presidency in 1848.¹⁷⁴ Van Buren then lived at Lindenwald as a gentlemen farmer until his death in 1862; according to the president himself, it is where he spent “the last and happiest years of my life, a farmer in my native town.”¹⁷⁵

The house was built in 1797 in the Federal style, but in 1849 Van Buren had it extensively remodeled in the Gothic Revival style by preeminent architect Richard Upjohn. Major changes included the addition of a tower, gabled dormers, and modern conveniences such as a bathroom, furnace, and call-bell system. As part of the renovations, the stairs were removed

¹⁷³ The Kinderhook of Van Buren’s childhood was quite different from today; he grew up in a family that spoke Dutch and owned slaves.

¹⁷⁴ National Park Service, “Martin Van Buren National Historic Site.”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

from the entrance hall, and the expanded room became a grand center hall for balls and dinner parties.

Zuber's 1831 *Paysage à Chasses* was selected by Van Buren with the input of his daughter-in-law, Angelica Singleton Van Buren. Van Buren's wife, Hannah Hoes Van Buren, had died of tuberculosis in 1819.¹⁷⁶ Martin Van Buren never remarried, and Angelica Singleton Van Buren acted as the de facto First Lady during the President's time in office, conducting his social and domestic affairs under the tutelage of her cousin, Dolley Madison. The scenic wallpaper was installed as the centerpiece of the hall in 1841, and was kept when Lindenwald was remodeled in 1849.¹⁷⁷ The cost of the wallpaper in 1833 was 35 francs.¹⁷⁸

Kinderhook is only about twenty-five miles from the state capital of Albany, and Lindenwald itself is situated on the Old Post Road—a historically busy thoroughfare between New York and Albany. Accordingly, Lindenwald hosted many politicians as guests. Visitors spent a good portion of their time at Lindenwald in the hall, dining, exchanging news, and planning Van Buren's next presidential campaign. The hall was also used by the family, and in the summer of 1845, Van Buren's seven-month-old grandson is said to have made “little shrieks of delight” when shown the animals on the scenic wallpaper.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Black, “Hannah Hoes Van Buren,” excerpt from *The First Ladies of the United States of America*.

¹⁷⁷ Hamm, Patricia, and James Hamm, “The Removal and Conservation Treatment of a Scenic Wallpaper, *Paysage à Chasses*, from the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*.

¹⁷⁸ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 280.

¹⁷⁹ Kohan, “Historic Furnishings Report for ‘Lindenwald,’” 18.



Fig. 22. Printing of *Paysage à Chasses* at the Zuber factory. (Zuber & Cie., “Le Paysage à Chasses.”)

Zuber & Cie. first issued *Paysage à Chasses* in 1831.¹⁸⁰ The wallpaper, known variously as “The Country Hunt,” “Hunt Landscape,” and “Hunting Scene” in English, was designed for the company by the artist Jean-Julien Deltil. *Paysage à Chasses* is composed of 4 scenes in 32 strips, and is printed in 142 colors using a staggering total of 1,253 wood blocks.¹⁸¹ The original wood blocks are classified as a *monument historiques* by the French Minister of Culture.¹⁸² The colors used in this landscape are especially vibrant; as Van Buren is reputed to have said, “I like it because the colors are so . . . Dutchy.”¹⁸³ The panels depict fowl-, boar-, and stag-hunting, as well as a post-hunt picnic.

¹⁸⁰ The first mention of the pattern in correspondence is dated December 22, 1830, and the engravings date to 1831, but the first set was not sold until 1833. Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 280.

¹⁸¹ Zuber, “Le Paysage à Chasses.”

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Brown, Jr., ed., *Our Glowing Heritage: French Panoramas of the Golden Age, 1797–1834*, 299.

The large hall in Lindenwald used approximately one and two-thirds sets of *Paysage à Chasses*.¹⁸⁴ As is typical, the scenic wallpaper was installed with a paper depicting a balustrade on the dado; this one was made by Jacquemart et Bénard. The excess “sky” trimmed from the top of the Zuber paper was used to fill in above doorways. Underneath the scenic wallpaper, the entire room was lined with a block-printed geometric repeating wallpaper featuring a green distemper print on a white ground, ca. 1840 (contemporary to the date of installation).¹⁸⁵ The rag lining paper was machine-made. Additionally, a sample of another paper—a block-printed floral in yellow, green, and brown on a white ground—was found between the scenic wallpaper and green-on-white geometric paper in one area.¹⁸⁶

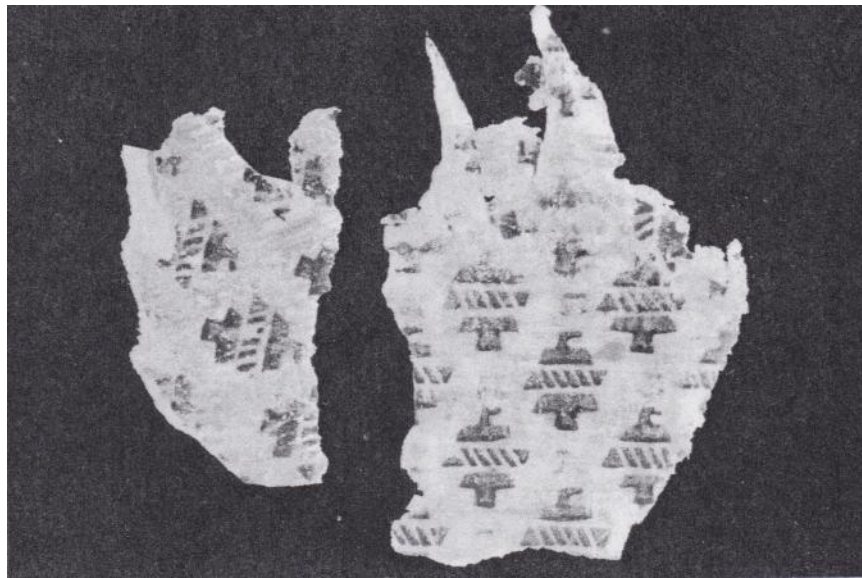


Fig. 23. Ca. 1840 geometric wallpaper used as lining paper under *Paysage à Chasses* at Lindenwald. (Historic Structure Report, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.)

¹⁸⁴ Hamm, “The Reinstallation of an 1830’s Zuber Scenic Wallpaper at the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site,” *American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group Annual*.

¹⁸⁵ Historic Structure Report, Architectural Data Section, Vol. 2: Appendixes, p. 289, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 305.

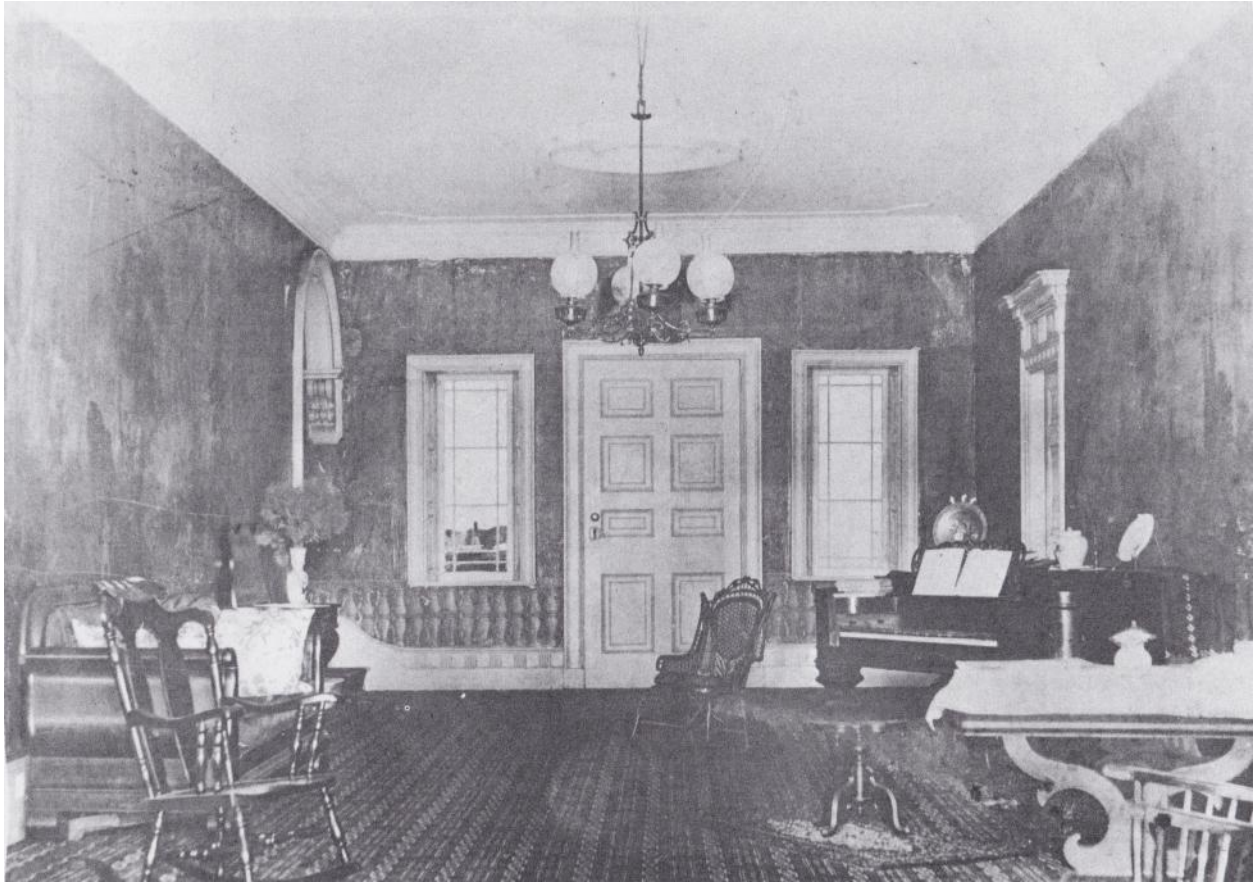


Fig. 24. Lindenwald dining hall ca. 1917–1924, with visible scenic wallpaper patch. (Historic Structure Report, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.)

In 1961, Lindenwald was designated as a National Historic Landmark, and in 1974, after decades of effort, it was acquired by the National Park Service and the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site was established.¹⁸⁷ The work of restoring the property and developing its interpretation began immediately, with the goal of completion in time for the 1982 bicentennial of Martin Van Buren’s birth.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Julin, “Martin Van Buren National Historic Site: Administrative History, 1974–2006.”

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

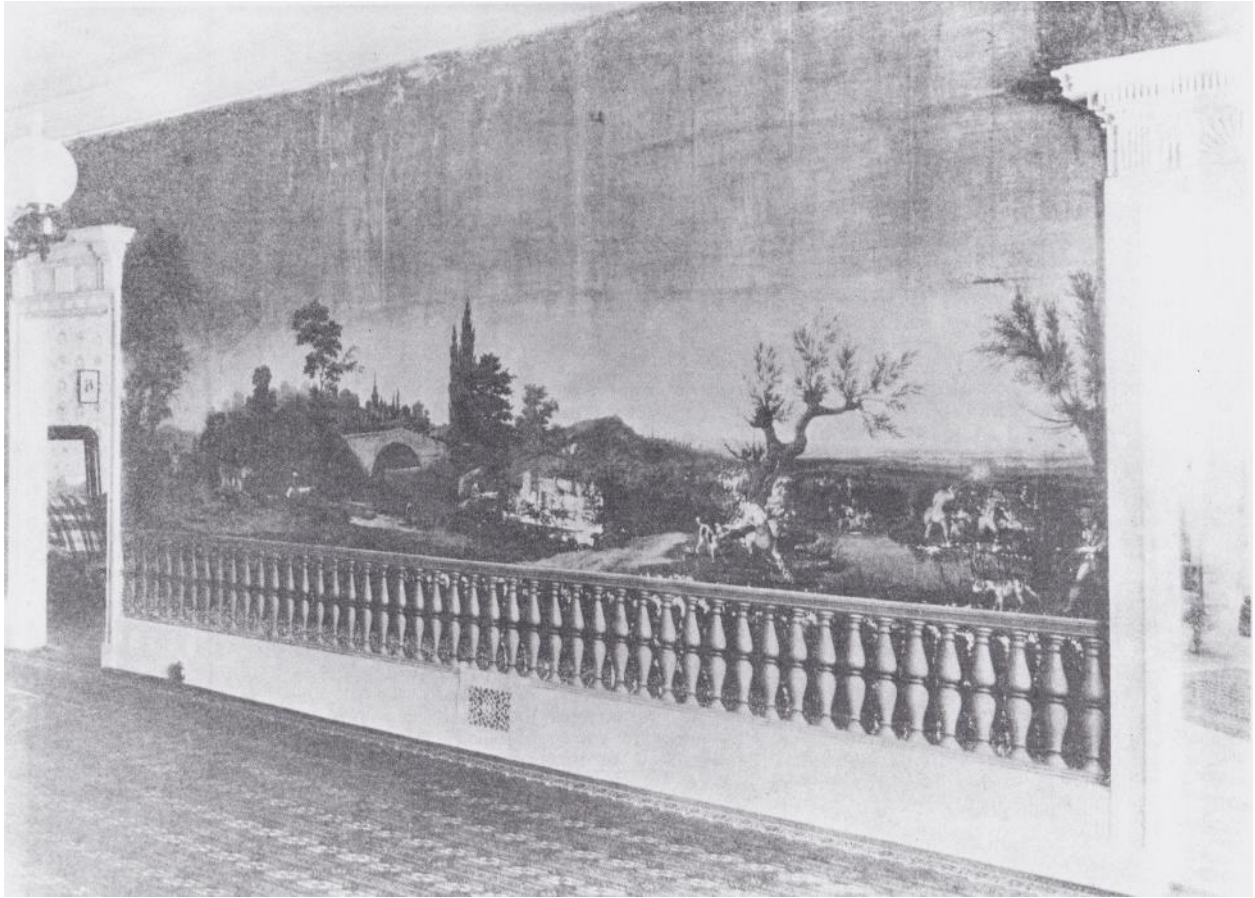


Fig. 25. North wall of Lindenwald dining hall ca. 1924. (Historic Structure Report, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.)

Several paper conservators inspected the scenic wallpaper and dado on site, and samples were removed for testing. By way of the inspections and testing, they were able to determine which conservation methods and materials were most suited to the specific papers at Lindenwald. The conservators had to develop plans on how best to consolidate the materials, clean the panels, repair tears, and in-paint, all at the highest level of skill and care. To this end, in April 1978 the NPS convened a symposium on the scenic wallpaper, with conservators, architectural analysts, and curatorial staff, for the purpose of coming to a consensus on treatment

and reinstallation.¹⁸⁹

In 1978, paper conservator Edith K. MacKenna issued a report on the state of Lindenwald's *Paysage à Chasses*. MacKenna examined the paper and conducted preliminary tests. She determined that there were a total of fifty-one panels at the site, each approximately seven feet by eighteen inches in size, with sixteen-inch-wide dado panels overlapping the bottom of the scenic by approximately three inches. The scenic wallpaper was backed with the medium-weight lining paper, and the adhesive between the scenic wallpaper and lining paper, as well as between the lining paper and the wall (including remaining layers of previous wallpaper, paint, and the plaster wall itself), was likely starch-based.

MacKenna found that “[t]he wallpaper and dado are in extremely poor condition, due to neglect, damage caused by moisture, insects, light, nails, tacks, mechanical abrasion and stresses from cracking in the wall plaster.”¹⁹⁰ There were “tears and losses, many of them several feet long”¹⁹¹ along with buckling, cracking, cupping, and flaking. A coating of what appeared to be animal glue on the surfaces of the wallpaper and dado exacerbated damage to the paper. Additionally, tapestries trapped moisture and caused significant damage on the north and south walls, although she found no evidence of mold. In sum, the paint losses were especially bad on the north and south walls, with more deterioration near the windows, and little left to conserve on the east wall.¹⁹² The wallpaper on the west wall had been removed. It was estimated that six

¹⁸⁹ Hamm, Patricia, and James Hamm, “The Removal and Conservation Treatment of a Scenic Wallpaper, *Paysage à Chasses*, from the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*.

¹⁹⁰ “Report on Scenic Wallpaper ‘Paysage à Chasses’” by Edith K. MacKenna dated February 23, 1978, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² “Survey Report Covering Support & Media,” *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives. Only twenty percent of the wallpaper remained on the east wall.

hundred eighty square feet of the original nine hundred remained in 1977.¹⁹³

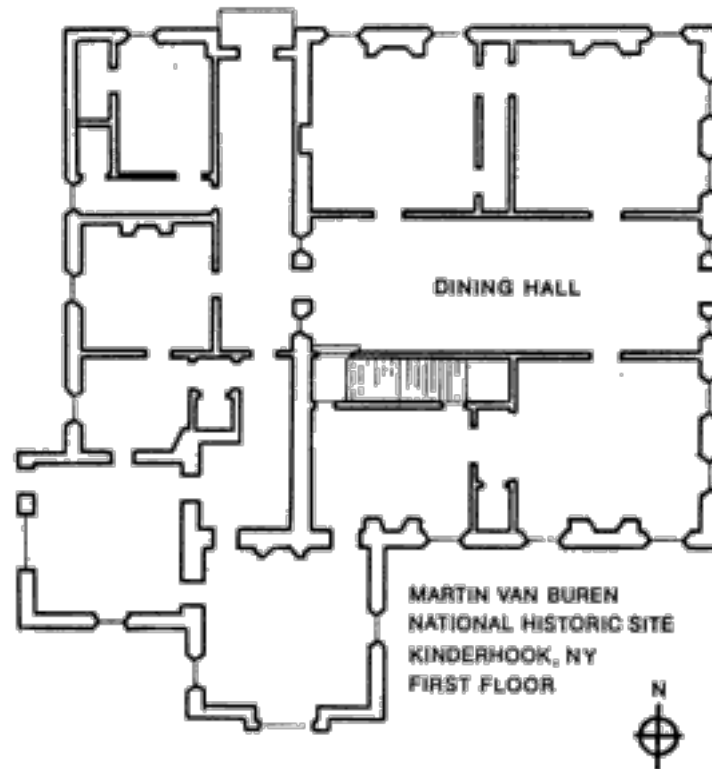


Fig. 26. Plan of present-day Lindenwald first floor, showing orientation and dining hall. (Hamm, "The Reinstallation of an 1830's Zuber Scenic Wallpaper at the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site," *American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group Annual*.)

A further Lindenwald NPS report identifies additional damage: water intrusion due to roof damage caused active mold on the east wall, efflorescence, and paint cleavage.¹⁹⁴ Although the room conditions were not good (the relative humidity and temperature were unstable and uncontrolled), the nature of the scenic wallpaper itself had contributed to its decline; the thickness of the paint was a cause of flaking and other paint loss, and the weight of the paper caused large tears when it started to come loose from the wall. The dado wallpaper was in a similar state of disrepair.

¹⁹³ Hamm, "The Reinstallation of an 1830's Zuber Scenic Wallpaper at the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site," *American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group Annual*.

¹⁹⁴ "Survey Report Covering Support & Media," *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

MacKenna recommended that the paper either be conserved and stored, or conserved and reinstalled. If the paper was to be reinstalled at Lindenwald, she recommended two options: (1) the re-lined paper could be directly affixed to the repaired plaster wall; or (2) the re-lined paper could be affixed to rigid panels that would themselves be affixed to the wall. Such panels would protect the paper from potential wall movement and make any future removal easier, but would project over a portion of the door and window frames and would therefore not have the original “look.” Furthermore, MacKenna evinced concern that uneven cleaning of the surface (only stable sections of paint could be cleaned) would lead to a mottled overall appearance.

Other NPS reports further recommended a relative humidity of thirty to sixty percent; temperature under sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit; filtered ventilation; a cleaning program; light levels below ten-foot candles; well-sealed windows, doors, and roof; and monitoring of guests to prevent them from touching the paper.¹⁹⁵ As to the conservation work, it recommended that limited in-painting “should be [performed] only in areas of loss and should be kept several values under the original. Reconstruction of subject should be minimal.”¹⁹⁶

The well-regarded New England Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) also inspected the scenic wallpaper and issued a report, which reiterated the major factors that had resulted in the pre-conservation state of *Paysage à Chasses*: seasonal and diurnal fluctuations in temperature and humidity, the nature of the media, and water intrusion. The NEDCC formally recommended an upgraded security system (from temporary intruder alarms), smoke alarms with halogenated fire-quenching system, relative humidity of forty-five to fifty-five percent, and temperature of sixty-eight to seventy-two degrees Fahrenheit.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.



Figs. 27 and 28. Details of post-hunt picnic scene, pre- and post-conservation. (Hamm, Patricia, and James Hamm, "The Removal and Conservation Treatment of a Scenic Wallpaper, *Paysage à Chasses*, from the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*.)

The NPS ultimately determined that replacement panels were necessary for the east and west walls, and that the NPS should also be in possession of panels for the remaining walls, in case conservation became unworkable. Through research, it found that the Zuber company in Alsace, France, A. L. Diament & Co. in Philadelphia, and Louis W. Bowen, Inc. in New York were the only sources at the time that had sets of *Paysage à Chasses* printed from the original

wood blocks for sale.¹⁹⁷ A. L. Diament & Co. was selected for its reputation, the superior paint color of its available panels, and its willingness to break up a set in order to provide only the number of panels needed by the NPS.¹⁹⁸ The total cost was \$9,165.¹⁹⁹ The replacement panels purchased had been printed by Zuber in the 1950s.²⁰⁰

An early report justifying the procurement of replacement panels from A. L. Diament & Co. calls the scenic wallpaper “the greatest historical resource in Lindenwald.”²⁰¹ The NPS understood that the printing and hanging methods for replacement panels were nearly as critical as proper conservation of the extant wallpaper, in view of the overall composition.

The wallpaper was removed and treated in 1981 by conservators James and Patricia Hamm, and kept protected in storage until all of the remaining restoration work at Lindenwald had been completed.²⁰² The restoration was completed in 1986, and *Paysage à Chasses* was rehung.²⁰³ The conserved panels were hung on the north and south walls, before the “new” scenic panels were hung on the east and west walls.²⁰⁴ The scenic was hung as it had been originally, with the same relationship between the dado and the moldings as in Van Buren’s day. The

¹⁹⁷ “Martin Van Buren National Historic Site: Findings and Determination Under Section 302c (10) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as Amended . . . ,” *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. \$5,425 for a full set plus twenty-two panels at \$170 apiece. Louis W. Bowen, Inc. quoted \$8,250 for each full set.

²⁰⁰ Hamm, “The Reinstallation of an 1830’s Zuber Scenic Wallpaper at the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site,” *American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group Annual*; WHS [Wallpaper History Society] newsletter, Issue 4, Autumn/Winter 2010, *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

²⁰¹ “Martin Van Buren National Historic Site: Findings and Determination Under Section 302c (10) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as Amended . . . ,” *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

²⁰² Hamm, “The Reinstallation of an 1830’s Zuber Scenic Wallpaper at the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site,” *American Institute for Conservation Book and Paper Group Annual*.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Jacquemart et Bénard balustrade dado was reproduced by Scalamandré of New York in 1985.²⁰⁵ If the scenic wallpaper ever needs to be removed, the bond between the sized liner and the adhesive attaching the wallpaper/fiberglass laminate can be broken with a series of thin metal spatulas.²⁰⁶ A small, approximately one-inch band of blue was painted on the top of the lining paper where it meets with the crown molding, so that any breaks in the top of the scenic wallpaper would be less obvious.²⁰⁷ This was also done in other areas of the room with the same issue. Another complication that presented itself was a vertical gap, approximately 1.5” in width, that was left after hanging the conserved paper on the north and south walls. The gaps were filled with slivers from the leftover replacement panels, with hand-painted infill to match the adjacent conserved panels.²⁰⁸ The replacement panels on the east and west walls were hung by experienced paper hanger Bob Kelly. Complete details of the materials and techniques used by the conservators in the treatment and hanging of the wallpapers have been published; see the Bibliography for further information.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.



Fig. 29. South wall of Lindenwald dining hall in 2011. (Author.)

In their current states, the east and west walls appear lighter and brighter in color than the long north and south walls. This is because the wallpaper on the east and west walls is the newer printing, and has not been subjected to the varnish and wear-and-tear of the original wallpaper on the north and south walls. The overall effect is still cohesive, but this appearance allows visitors to appreciate both the authenticity and conservation of the original wallpaper, and the striking beauty of *Paysage à Chasses* as Van Buren himself would have seen it. For this reason, it was appropriate to keep the newer papers in pristine condition, and not darken them to “match” the original wallpaper on the north and south walls. Conservator James Hamm remarked on the quality of the mid-twentieth century Zuber printing of *Paysage à Chasses* in an article for The

American Institute for Conservation, stating that in a side-by-side comparison of the new printing and the original nineteenth-century printing, he could detect that a lower quality of paper had been used in the new printing, and that the wood blocks had lost some of their fine detail with the passing of time.²⁰⁹ These quibbles notwithstanding, the new printing is gorgeous.

The NPS decided that preservation of the original appearance of the scenic wallpaper was crucial to maintaining the integrity of President Van Buren's home.²¹⁰ Although the wallpaper was in dire need of conservation when the NPS took over the site, several factors had helped to ensure its survival: the strength of the paper; the location where it had been hung, with three large, nearly unbroken interior walls preventing the intrusion of further light or moisture; and the previous owners' regard for the value of the paper.

The Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in Kinderhook is an exemplary model for historic sites with scenic wallpaper in poor condition. The NPS took its time researching both the wallpaper and the available conservation options. It consulted with several paper conservators, and ultimately opted for a measured repair that would return the scenic to good usable condition without attempting the heavy in-painting and over-painting that would have been necessary to make it look like it was newly printed. Conservators James Hamm and Patricia Hamm come back for touch-ups as needed. The NPS also contracted with the renowned Scalamandré firm to have the Jacquemart et Bénard balustrade dado paper reproduced, along with several other wallpapers in the home.²¹¹ Finally, the NPS has incorporated the installation and conservation of

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ "Martin Van Buren National Historic Site: Findings and Determination Under Section 302c (10) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as Amended . . .," *Paysage à Chasses* wallpaper file, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Archives.

²¹¹ Nylander, *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproduction Wallpapers*, 79–80. The balustrade wallpaper is available for purchase from Scalamandré along with several other reproductions created for Lindenwald.

Paysage à Chasses into its standard tour of Lindenwald, allowing visitors to grasp the historic significance of the wallpaper, and the immense effort that went into its present appearance.

CASE STUDY: VIZCAYA
Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, Florida
La Galérie Mythologique, Xavier Mader for Dufour & Cie., 1814

The fantastical Vizcaya estate in Miami was the creation of James Deering (1859–1925). Deering and his team of professionals designed the residence from the ground up, including the main house, gardens, and dependencies. The interiors were of particular concern in the plans, and years were spent collecting antiques, one of which was the scenic wallpaper *La Galérie Mythologique* by Dufour & Cie. The house was converted into a museum shortly after its completion, but was beset by tropical weather. A full conservation of the wallpaper was undertaken in the early 2000s, and the historic site is presently expanding.

Deering was a retired millionaire suffering from “pernicious anemia” when, in 1914, he decided to focus his efforts on creating a winter estate in Florida.²¹² Doctors had recommended warm weather to soothe his ailment.²¹³ Deering had inherited and grown the Deering Harvester Company, and was on board when the company merged with other agricultural equipment firms to become the mammoth International Harvester Company. Deering was a bachelor and one of the wealthiest men in the country, and poured his attention and capital into creating a fantasy ancestral home for himself—a lavish homage to European villas.

James Deering was introduced to Vizcaya’s artistic director, Paul Chalfin, by the famous interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe.²¹⁴ The house itself was designed by architect Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr., in the Mediterranean Revival/Italian Renaissance Revival style. Deering and Chalfin made many scouting trips to Europe, sourcing antiques and visiting villas for

²¹² Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “Timeline”; Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “James Deering, the Patron.”

²¹³ Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “James Deering, the Patron.”

²¹⁴ Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “Timeline.”

architectural inspiration.²¹⁵ Deering was quite taken with both the cultural heritage of Europe and the lush landscape and Age-of-Discovery exploration of South Florida.²¹⁶ This accounts for his romantic choice of name for the estate: *Vizcaya*, adapted from the name of Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno, who was thought at the time to have landed in the area. Although that assertion has since been refuted, it also led to the naming of Biscayne Bay, on which Vizcaya is situated.

Dufour's *La Galérie Mythologique* was selected by Deering and Chalfin for the entrance hall at Vizcaya. The pattern shows draped classical figures posed as trompe-l'œil sculptures on a plain background. The scenes of the full pattern depict Time and the Seasons, Apollo and Phaëton, Diana and Venus, the Vengeance of Ceres, the Judgment of Paris, and the Muses. The majority of the pattern was installed in Vizcaya, with the exception of the Vengeance of Ceres panel and some accompanying trophies. *La Galérie Mythologique* is considered a scenic wallpaper, but is different from most scenic wallpapers in that it does not depict an outdoor landscape, and also in that it has a plain background. The wallpaper was designed for Dufour by Xavier Mader, and was influenced by the Four Seasons Room in the Hôtel de Beauharnais (now the German embassy in France).²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, "Vizcaya's Name."

²¹⁷ Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, 157.



Fig. 30. Four Seasons Room in the Hôtel de Beauharnais (now the German embassy in France), an influence on Mader's design for *La Galerie Mythologique*. (Marc Maison, "Hôtel de Beauharnais.")

Vizcaya's records show that the ca. 1814 paper was purchased from a dealer in New York for \$450.²¹⁸ When installed, it was the only known set of *La Galerie Mythologique* in the United States. The paper was printed in *grisaille* on a sea green background, and the classical subject matter and age of the paper must have appealed to Deering and Chalfin.

La Galerie Mythologique was hung in the entrance hall, sometimes called the Directoire Entrance Hall, where guests would first arrive. The intended use for the room was to allow

²¹⁸ Object record "Wallpaper: Galerie Mythologique," p. 1, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

guests an opportunity to freshen up, and to deposit their cloaks in the adjoining cloakrooms. The entrance hall was one of their first impressions of Vizcaya, and was lavishly but sparsely furnished in marble, and with a limited color palette of black, cream, green, crimson, and gold. Chalfin decorated the hall as a whole composition in the Directoire style—a Neoclassical style based on Roman objects discovered in Pompeii.

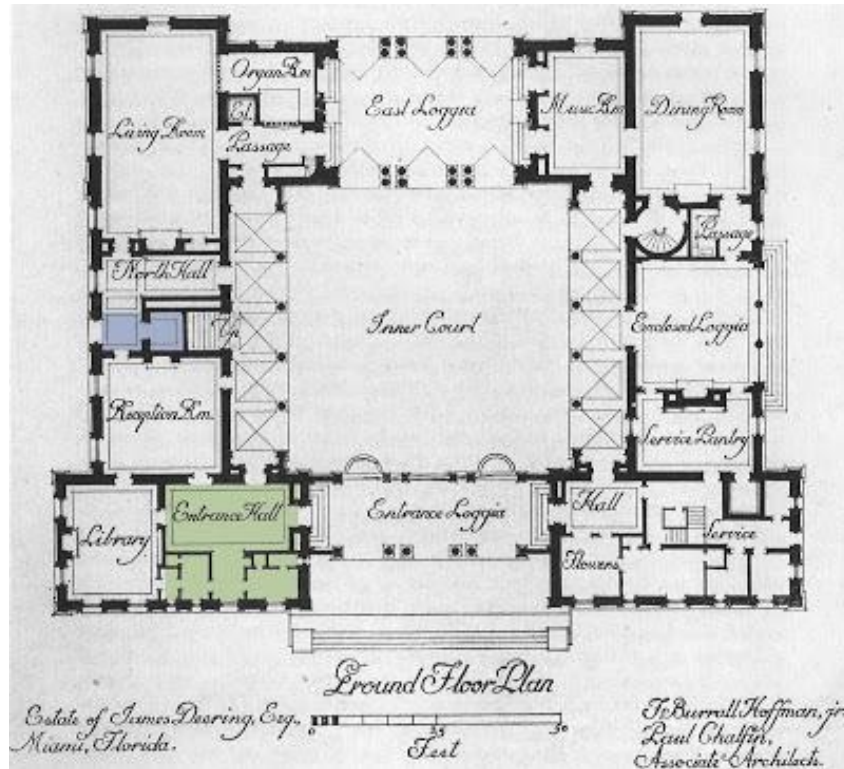


Fig. 31. Floor plan of the ground floor of Vizcaya showing the entrance hall in green with adjoining cloak rooms. (“Vizcaya: Entry Hall.”)

Paul Chalfin selected a crimson frieze to complement the paper, and used elaborate custom plasterwork to surround the wallpaper panels.²¹⁹ Conservators at the site found the walls to be more flexible than one might expect of plaster, and speculated that the lined scenic may have been pasted onto a wood mount.²²⁰ Chalfin considered the dimensions of the room, the size

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ “Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 7, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

of the wallpaper panels, and his overall design scheme, and chose a layout for the scenic panels that he felt best suited the space. As part of his installation, he cut and placed some details, like the titles on the panels, to better fit the proportions of the room. The scenic tableaux were placed in an elaborate composition with antique mirrors, sconces, and pilasters. Every facet of Vizcaya was carefully thought out from the very beginning, from the architecture itself to the smallest gold-braided trim on the furnishings.



Fig. 32. Entrance Hall at Vizcaya with Dufour's *La Galerie Mythologique* hung by Paul Chalfin. (Vacation Maybe, "Vizcaya Museum & Gardens in Miami, FL," by Bill Sumner.)

Although James Deering took great joy in the creation of Vizcaya, he was ill throughout its construction, and passed away in 1925. In 1934, his heirs engaged Paul Chalfin to repair damage the estate had suffered in the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926, and to prepare it for

conversion to a museum.²²¹ Vizcaya opened to the public the following year, but visitation was halted after another hurricane struck.²²² The bulk of the property was then transferred to Mercy Hospital and the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine in 1945.²²³ In 1953 the property reopened to the public, this time as the Dade County Art Museum (now known as Vizcaya Museum and Gardens).²²⁴ The property was conveyed to Miami-Dade County, and private fundraising, together with a \$50 million municipal bond, ensured that preservation and interpretation of the estate would continue.²²⁵ Vizcaya was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, and was named a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

There are presently plans in place to privatize Vizcaya with a public partnership. The County would maintain ownership and provide subsidies, and a new non-profit organization would streamline operations.²²⁶ The hope among supporters is that the creation of a board with more power would encourage further donations and thus enable expanded interpretation of the site, returning to the fold a parcel of land across the street that was part of the original grounds. Opponents have voiced concerns about a potential lack of government oversight.

La Galérie Mythologique has survived, but not without trials along the way. The central courtyard of the house was first enclosed in 1986, at which time air conditioning was installed, allowing Vizcaya to receive accreditation from the American Association of Museums.²²⁷ This wholly changed the climate of the building, and provided more control over the valuable artifacts inside. Additional measures to safeguard the collections included the installation of plexiglass

²²¹ Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “Timeline.”

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Hanks, “Vizcaya Museum Would Be Privatized Under Miami-Dade Plan,” *Miami Herald*.

²²⁷ Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, “Timeline.”

barriers over the scenic wallpaper, with spacers leaving a gap between the paper and the acrylic.²²⁸ The transition to a fully air-conditioned building was not seamless; a 1986 memo shows that the entrance hall had trapped so much moisture that water was dripping from the ceiling.²²⁹ The air conditioning was turned off in that area as a temporary measure. Before the situation could be fully remedied, water leaking from an air conditioning vent over the Judgment of Paris panel caused mildew and staining along the top of the paper.²³⁰

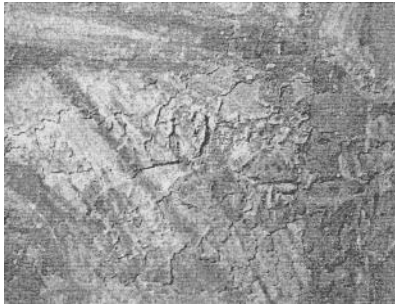


Fig. 33. Detail of pre-conservation wallpaper, showing friability of paint and losses. (“Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 2, *La Galérie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.)

²²⁸ Letter from Chief Museum Curator Doris B. Littlefield to Susan Nash Munro, dated March 8, 1993, *La Galérie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives. The acrylic panels were put in place in 1974.

²²⁹ “Memo: A/C,” from D.B. Littlefield to Dick Farwell, dated September 22, 1986, *La Galérie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

²³⁰ “Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 3, *La Galérie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.



Fig. 34. Detail of pre-conservation wallpaper, showing extent of losses. (“Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 3, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.)

Inspections of the scenic wallpaper by several paper conservators revealed additional concerns. There were uneven vertical streaks visible on the front of the scenic from the application of paste during hanging. There were some small paper losses, and pockets where the paper was not adhered fully to the wall.²³¹ A significant quantity of paint had flaked off in areas where paint application was thicker, and also in areas where there had not been sufficient binder used in the paint.²³² The wallpaper exhibited a pale greenish-gray efflorescence just below the bottom decorative borders, and dirt and mildew were present on the surface of the paper.²³³ The majority of the paper was coated in an aged, brittle, and yellowed varnish.

In addition to the foregoing, a considerable amount of in-painting and over-painting had been performed on the paper previously. Some of this had been done sensitively, some quite

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Treatment proposal from ConservArt to Michelle A. McDonald, Chief Curator, dated July 3, 2002, p. 2, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

crudely. According to conservator George Schwartz, “[l]arge passages have been over painted in a wholesale fashion with a variety of paints which, one must presume, must have matched the surrounding areas at the time of application.”²³⁴ The level of in-painting was fully revealed with the removal of the acrylic panels for conservation. Photographs of the antique paper prior to installation allowed the conservator to determine that most of the in-painting was done prior to purchase of the antique paper, and must therefore have been desirable.²³⁵ (Deering and Chalfin intended for Vizcaya to look like an ancient, lived-in villa; a pristine wallpaper would not have been ideal for this purpose.) The in-painting also proved useful to subsequent color-matching efforts, as it revealed that the original color scheme had been in a blue tone, not the warm, yellowed appearance left by the varnish. A final point regarding the pre-conservation in-painting is that some of it had been done, and done well, by Paul Chalfin himself, and thus arguably maintains its own historical significance. This fact argued against full removal of all non-original paint from the surface during conservation.

Proposals were solicited from several paper conservators, and in 2002 a major restoration of the wallpaper was undertaken by ConservArt, Inc. The conservation took approximately six weeks, and cost \$54,000. After due consideration of the options, it was decided that all twenty-one panels in eleven tableaux would be conserved in situ. This was deemed best for three primary reasons: the stability of the site; the excellent adhesion of the wallpaper to the wall; and the collage-like application of the wallpaper components, which would make them difficult to remove.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ “Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 2, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

ConservArt provided Vizcaya with three treatment options, at varying levels of intervention. The site management elected to follow the recommendations of the head conservator on the project, and ordered loose fragments and paint to be consolidated, small losses to be filled with mulberry paper, the surface to be cleaned, missing sections to be inpainted with watercolors (diluted in a solution to thicken the paint while maintaining reversibility), and “offensive over-painting both in pictorial and background areas” to be removed.²³⁶ The site management declined any further removal of over-painting.

All of the ordered conservation work was completed by ConservArt, and Senior Conservator George Schwartz indicated that post-conservation, the wallpaper should not require any additional care beyond surface cleaning for fifty to seventy-five years.²³⁷ He did recommend, however, that anti-reflective safety glass panels replace the existing acrylic panels.

²³⁶ Treatment proposal from ConservArt to Michelle A. McDonald, Chief Curator, dated July 3, 2002, p. 6, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.

²³⁷ “Treatment Record” from ConservArt, dated January 31, 2003, p. 5, *La Galerie Mythologique* wallpaper file, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives.



Fig. 35. Detail of the Judgment of Paris scene from Dufour's 1814 *La Galerie Mythologique*. (Musée de Valence, "La Galerie Mythologique.")

Vizcaya falls somewhere between traditional house museums like Lindenwald and decorative arts museums with very little interpretation pertaining to the former residents, such as Winterthur²³⁸. While Vizcaya is presented as the home of James Deering, it could almost have been considered a decorative arts museum at the time of construction, as Deering made such concerted efforts to select only the finest furnishings. Vizcaya is one of a kind, and the estate proved to be Paul Chalfin's greatest achievement; he was never again able to find a comparable patron of the arts.

The director and board planned and budgeted for years to repair the scenic wallpaper, consulted with several paper conservators, and viewed other conserved scenic wallpapers before going forward with their own project. The antique paper and unique installation by Paul Chalfin were addressed sensitively in the conservation; perhaps the only fair criticism is that the overwhelming volume of other art at Vizcaya makes it difficult to interpret the scenic wallpaper with more than a sentence or two on a standard tour. One could also argue that the acrylic panels over the wallpaper detract from its appearance, but as self-guided tours of the estate are permitted, there obviously must be some barriers in place. It is likely that in time more sites where antique scenic wallpapers have been hung will achieve their own historic significance, making sites like Vizcaya a good model to study.

²³⁸ Winterthur was the childhood home of antiques collector Henry Francis du Pont, and the site operates as a decorative arts museum focusing on its extensive collections and research programs—not the du Pont family or the house itself.

CONCLUSION

The research and interviews undertaken for this project, together with inspections of scenic wallpaper at historic sites, led to a comprehensive understanding of how the wallpaper was created, who purchased it, and the different ways in which it was hung and cared for over the years. It is regrettably often the case that house museums view scenic wallpaper as “just wallpaper,” and that fine art museums view it as just another object in their collections. There are other references available on some of the discrete aspects of scenic wallpaper discussed herein, but none are written from the perspective of the historic house museum, which has the most practical need for the information.

Improvements in technology allowed the creation of scenic wallpaper, but they also led to its decline. Wallpaper became a vastly cheaper commodity with the rise of mechanized production. The printer’s rolling machine was introduced around 1850, which correlates exactly with the demise of scenic wallpapers.²³⁹ As technologies changed, so too did fashions, and “[n]ew houses were simply too small to accommodate [scenic wallpapers].”²⁴⁰

The production of new scenic wallpaper patterns ended around 1865, and such new patterns did not return to the market until the 1970s, with Zuber designs by artists Jean-Michel Folon and Alain Le Foll.²⁴¹ Following subsequent advances in digital printing, many companies now offer affordable custom panoramic wallpapers. Modern techniques for the production of scenic wallpaper include screen-printing, roller-printing, and rotogravure. One could even claim that the most *au courant* equivalent to scenic wallpaper is found in the form of large-scale video

²³⁹ A. L. Diament & Co., *Historic Notes on the Scenic Papers of A. L. Diament & Co.*

²⁴⁰ Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 54.

²⁴¹ Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, 113; Brunet, *The Wallpaper Book*, 54.

art installations, such as French artist Samuel Rousseau's "video wallpaper," or electronic multimedia walls.



Fig. 36. Zuber's 1976 screen-printed *Les Falaises* designed by Alain Le Foll. (Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, "Sidewall, Les Falaises, 1976.")

The history to date of scenic wallpaper can be summarized in a few admittedly overbroad statements. Earlier forms of wall coverings and décor greatly influenced the creators of early scenic wallpapers, and technological advancements were crucial to their creative efforts. French scenic wallpaper was popular in America, and in presidential households in particular.²⁴² The production of this wallpaper was an elaborate process that required skilled hands. That production process changed over time, with the use of domino papers transitioning to the use of seamless papers. Even when manufacturers' operations ceased, their wood blocks were often sold to other concerns. Scenic wallpapers have close ties to other art forms, such as prints and tapestries, and experienced a series of artistic highs, such as their supremacy at international exhibitions, and lows, as when they were lampooned by art critics. One reason for their success

²⁴² Another president, John Quincy Adams, reportedly ordered a set of scenic wallpaper in 1818, Dufour's *Vues d'Italie*. Mayhew and Myers, Jr., *A Documentary History of American Interiors: From the Colonial Era to 1915*, 117.

was that the subject matter of scenic wallpapers was more deeply evocative and memorable than that of other papers of the period. As it turns out, politics, morals, and other complex forces were at work in influencing the purchase of scenic wallpaper. Once purchased, the wallpaper could be hung in a number of different ways, which highlighted either the pure panoramic effects of the paper, or individual scenes as part of a larger decorative scheme.

Damaged scenic wallpaper can be handled in many ways, and a paper conservator with relevant expertise should be sought out to ensure that the paper is being cared for as best it can, based on the site conditions and a host of other factors, focusing on reversibility and future repairs. The National Park Service handled the unstable wallpaper at Lindenwald admirably. The scenic wallpaper was in poor condition, and the NPS thoughtfully selected a measured conservation, so that the site now enjoys the combination of visually-appealing modern replacement panels alongside historically-appealing conserved original panels, together with a guided interpretation of the conservation process. Vizcaya's challenges were different from those at Lindenwald. The scenic wallpaper there was not originally installed new but as an antique, and features previous in-painting that has acquired its own significance. Furthermore, the site allows self-guided tours. These issues were factored into the conservation of the wallpaper.

Time and travel limitations prevented the inspection of the Zuber factory in France and additional house museums in America for this thesis. All major literary resources on scenic wallpaper were consulted, however, and a number of lesser-known resources came to light as well. Odile Nouvel-Kammerer's *French Scenic Wallpaper: 1795–1865*, for instance, features essays by multiple authors, excellent illustrations, a financial analysis of the historical records of the Zuber firm, and the Catalogue Raisonné of all then-known scenic patterns prepared by André Carlhian in the 1920s. One especially valuable—or perhaps *invaluable*—source discovered

during this project was *Our Glowing Heritage: French Panoramas of the Golden Age, 1797–1834*, an unpublished book funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The book was begun by conservator Maria de Kosenko and completed after her death by Warren P. Brown, Jr. The only known copy of the work is presently maintained at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. The NEH could not find any record of the project.

More research should be devoted to scenic wallpaper. As expert Catherine Lynn has stated, “[d]uring the first half of the nineteenth century, these papers made the most conspicuous contribution to the history of wallpaper used in America.”²⁴³ The 1980s brought about a resurgence of academic interest in the subject, but the research has scarcely been updated since, either to delve deeper into primary sources or to reflect changes in conservation techniques. It would certainly be compelling to research some of the more legendary tales, such as mildew spots on antique papers having been caused by hiding the sets in caves to protect them from the ravages of war.

A complete survey of scenic wallpaper in America would be a worthwhile project for future researchers. Multiple sources, including the aforementioned *Our Glowing Heritage*, have attempted such surveys previously, but their lists could be confirmed and expanded upon. A complete and current survey would enable curators and researchers to communicate with other sites where the same scenic wallpaper patterns were installed or stored, so that they could consult one another on conservation efforts, interpretation, and other topics.

One can still order block-printed scenic wallpapers from Zuber & Cie., but there can be no long-term guarantee that Zuber will continue to manufacture new sets of scenic wallpaper. The high level of skill necessary for production is rare, and the economic incentives for

²⁴³ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 183.

continued production are not proportionate. Furthermore, the original wood blocks continue to degrade over time.

It should also be noted that the resurgence in popularity of scenic wallpaper in recent years may come at a cost. Scenic wallpapers have appeared in shelter magazines in spreads on famous interior designers, and images of scenic wallpaper are popular on platforms like Pinterest. To the extent that these developments lead to increased demand for the purchase of scenic wallpaper, the market could shortly see an increased scarcity of antique papers, increased wait times for the production of new views, and a general perception of these papers as a fad. Perhaps viewing scenic wallpaper as part of a trend would make it appear more disposable—although it is also possible that increased exposure would lead to better care.

A thorough review of scenic wallpapers across settings will reveal that different ways of presenting and caring for the papers have their own merits, but the wallpaper can best be understood in a house museum setting. This puts the wallpaper under a museum-appropriate level of care, while at the same time allowing viewers to understand the wallpaper in context. Wallpaper is inherently more vulnerable to deterioration than most fixtures and decorations—it is, after all, made of paper and friable paints, and it was often hung without regard for future relocation or repairs. Luckily, scenic wallpapers are more likely to be saved than other wallpapers, and will thus hopefully survive for future generations to enjoy.

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