

HISTORIC INTERIOR DOCUMENTATION
A CASE STUDY

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the documentation process of historical interiors, which examines the need for a procedure that records, evaluates, and documents interior architecture. In doing so, an interior space can be recreated, restored, conserved or interpreted. I seek to demonstrate that a systematic approach to the documentation process is necessary to promote and further enhance the exchange of information regarding historical interiors within the preservation field. Consideration was given to the impact of such a system on the growing interest in historic interiors. Interdisciplinary approaches, including the fields of architecture, interior design, museum science, and historic preservation, were extensively researched. This involved evaluating the efficiency, accuracy, and effectiveness of the different approaches.

The findings highlight some of the issues that have broader implications within the field of historic preservation, including the need for the further development of interior research and documentation. The aim of this study is to highlight the call for this form of investigation. In the first chapter, an examination was performed of previous critical and historical works in the field, including both academic writing and professional reports. This chapter focuses on the lack of available information on the topic and the reasons for the development of such.

Chapter two explores the historical background of the Miller Heller House of Ithaca, New York. I examined the importance of the public

interiors as they relate to William Henry Miller, owner and architect, and Candace Wheeler, leading 19th century American textile artist and interior designer. Chapter three focuses on the actual documentation process. The public interiors of the Miller Heller House form a case study for the documentation process to be illustrated.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tamra L. Brosseau has focused her Masters of Arts in Historic Preservation in historic interiors and house museum management. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and Art History from Eastern Washington University in Washington State. Tamra was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, where her children and grandchildren still reside.

Tamra has extensive experience with historic interiors beginning with a undergraduate thesis based on historic lighting in an 1898 mansion in Spokane, Washington. Tamra also resided in the Miller Heller House in Ithaca, NY as the caretaker as part of her graduate work at Cornell where her interest in historic interior documentation developed. Tamra currently is the Historic Preservation and Conservation Administrator at the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, NY.

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Morgan Miller and Christopher Brosseau. Without their blessing to move across the country this work would never have come to fruition. This thesis is also dedicated to my best friend and fiancé Brian Rooney, who has stood by me through all the trials and tribulations of earning a Masters degree.

Thank you

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	
DOCUMENTING HISTORIC INTERIORS	13
Interior Inventory Punch List	21
CHAPTER II	
THE MILLER HELLER HOUSE: Historically Significant Interiors by William Henry Miller and Candice Wheeler	26
William Henry Miller	27
Candace Wheeler	31
CHAPTER III	
THE MILLER HELLER HOUSE: Music Parlor Room 104-A A Case Study of Interior Documentation	42
Interior public room- Music Room a. 104A	44
CONCLUSION	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction	7
Figure: 0.1 Copy of 1920 photograph Music Parlor-A	
Chapter II	
Figure # 2.1	30
Details from Sitting Parlor Fireplace	
Figure # 2.2	33
Christmas card by Doris Wheeler Keith from the files of Amela Peck of the Metropolitan Museum of Art	
Figure # 2.3	33
Cherub from organ case in situ photograph taken by author	
Figure # 2.4	34
Women's Building, Columbian Exposition, Chicago in 1893	
Figure # 2.5	34
Pipe Organ parlor as photographed in 1920. Notice pendant lamps with original Tiffany shades. Copy from original which hangs in Miller Heller House.	
Figure # 2.6	35
Copy from <u>The Grammar of Ornament</u> , Owen Jones, 1856	
Figure # 2.7	36
Plaster cast from Entry Hall Frieze at 122 Eddy Street Photograph taken by author	
Figure # 2.8	38
William Miller at his pipe organ and Emma Miller at harp originally owned by Marie Antoinette. Copy from original that formerly hung in Miller House	
Figure # 2.9	40
Pendant light Music room photograph taken by author	
Figure # 2.10	40
1920 photograph of pendant lights in Music room	

Chapter III

Figure # 3.1 Floor plan of Miller Heller House	47
Figure: 3.2 Base profile	55
Figure: 3.3 Chair rail profile	56
Figure: 3.4 Picture molding profile	56
Figure 3.5 Scarf joint of egg and dart trim on same beam as figure 104-A.4	60
Figure 3.6 Butt joint on boxed beam dividing the central bay and the south bay	60
Figure: 3.7 Contrasting finishes on floor behind organ. Floor at threshold is refinished, other side of threshold is the original stain.	61
Conclusion	
Figure: 4.1 William Miller at his pipe organ and Emma Miller at harp originally owned by Marie Antoinette. Copy from original that formerly hung in Miller House	65
Figure: 4.2 Original paint uncovered on staircase Photograph taken by author	69
Figure: 4.3 Stenciled swag boarder in front entrance hall dating to the 1883 remodel Photograph taken by author	69

Figure: 4.4	70
Copy of 1920 photograph of sitting room now part of dining	
Figure: 4.5	71
Floor plan	

Introduction

The primary focus of this thesis is to establish a need for a basic standardized guideline for the documentation of historic interiors. The collection of data that is so prevalent in the documentation of exteriors of buildings is generally missing from standard documents on historic interiors. Most details of many historic interiors have been lost and little remains to describe how the room originally appeared. In the case of a natural disaster, as in the case of hurricane Katrina, or other adverse circumstances, historic interiors may be lost forever. If an interior is properly documented a re-creation or restoration can be carried out. The development of basic standardized guidelines for the documentation of historic interiors can bridge the gap between what is a currently accepted process and future interior documentation. The documentation techniques demonstrated in this work were developed to assist in the organization of data that is gathered during an investigation of historically significant interiors. While interior documentation is not new, a systematic approach to recording the data is not as developed as architectural and engineering documentation.

There are few writings on the process of documenting historic interiors, and these suggest following the example of the Historic American Building Survey, which is an integral component of the federal government's commitment to historic preservation.

The program documents important architectural sites throughout the United States. HABS documentation, consists of measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written history, but offers little insight into documenting interiors. The main focus of these reports are to create an archive of American architecture for the better understanding of historic resources and how these resources shed light on America's diverse ethnic and cultural heritage. The focus is primarily on the exterior architectural fabric with often no mention at all of the interiors. Secondly, Historic Structure Reports are often cited as a good basis for documenting interiors, but most of these leave out vital information that would be needed for proper documentation. HSRs are one of the basic planning documents used in the management of historic structures. An HSR is prepared whenever there is to be a major intervention into historic structures or where activities are planned that will affect the characteristics of a historical building. HSRs are intended to map out a plan of action that will be cost efficient, well defined, and professionally solid. These reports span the gap between planning and implementation.

However, these reports, even when working with highly sensitive interior fabrics, often reveal little detail concerning historic interiors. Often, only a single line in the report addresses an entire room. One form of report that differs in content and context from the previous two is a furnishing plan. This report type focuses on the interiors of a structure but with an emphasis on the objects that are in the room.

Occasionally details will be provided concerning the finishes of the floors, walls, and ceilings. These reports do not offer enough detail to recreate a historic interior but take a step in that direction. Historic interiors documentation often lacks the detail that is given to other aspects of structures; this reflects the larger problem with historic interiors. They are often overlooked and less attention is paid to the collection of data. Historic interiors can play a vital role in understanding the functions of a structure and its use on a day to day basis.

There are several challenges in undertaking research and documentation of historical interiors. A thorough investigation of even the most accessible sources requires considerable time and organization. The lack of a systematic approach for the recording method slows down the process. With no guide post of what type of data should be collected, each report may vary widely depending upon the background and interest of the researcher, thus making useful comparisons of interiors difficult at best.

An additional requirement is the consideration of what actually remains of the interiors and what has been lost to time. The most common technique is to interpret and evaluate interiors on the basis of the current characteristics. However, though proper research and detailed evaluation, the original functions and characteristics may be discovered.

To manage historic properties effectively, there is a need for a fixed point to measure changes in an interior as well as to evaluate actions that may be required. The documentation of existing conditions fulfills that requirement.

In this thesis, the methodological approach to historic interior documentation is demonstrated with the use of a case study. This case study focuses on the historic interiors of the Miller Heller House of Ithaca, New York. This building is owned by Cornell University and operated by the College of Art, Architecture, and Planning, at Cornell University.

Beginning in the fall of 2003 the process of collecting data and piecing together the historical context of the interiors became the focus of a series of reports that eventually became the basis of this thesis. The period of significance of the interiors encompasses the William H. Miller and his family's occupation of the house which spanned from 1876 to 1929. The house arguably has had several periods of significance, each with its own focus, the Miller family 1876-1929, Mrs. Heller, the second owner, 1929-1957 and finally the ownership of Cornell University which spans from 1957 to the present. Each of these time periods contributed to the present fabric of the structure and the interiors. The thesis focuses on the 1876-1929 period.

The interior architecture and the remaining decorative artifacts are significant for their relation to William H. Miller, the owner and architect of the building and Candace Wheeler, America's first important woman textile and interior designer. Wheeler also oversaw a remodel and decoration of the house in the mid 1880s. Miller's contributions to Cornell University, the city of Ithaca and New York State have been extensively documented and for that reason will not be restated in this thesis. The collaboration of Mr. Miller with Candace Wheeler however, has been generally overlooked.

The house's remaining original interior architecture and the few remaining decorative artifact are worth documenting for their connection to Candace Wheeler. Wheeler worked with Miller for many years and on many different occasions. Wheeler's significant influence in the decorative arts field and her contribution to the advancement of the role of women in the professional realm makes these rooms significant from a historical standpoint.

Candace Wheeler was a reformer, who spent her long life pursuing ways to better the lives of women in the United States. Between the close of the Civil War and the Panic of 1873, thousands of women entered the workforce and the reformation of women's roles in society began to take shape. Wheeler was highly regarded during her lifetime for her leading role as a professional woman in a male dominated field.

She designed beautiful textiles and shaped the profession of interior design through her own creative accomplishments and in partnership with others. In 1879, Wheeler met Louis Comfort Tiffany. Tiffany asked Wheeler to join him in a new interior decorating business he was founding, first named Tiffany and Wheeler. It drew on the talents and expertise of the painter Samuel Colman and the designer Lockwood de Forest, who traveled to India to look into the manufacturing of woodwork. Tiffany created the overall design concept and Wheeler initially directed the workshop and later designed the textiles and wallpapers.

In 1881, the firm became Louis C. Tiffany and Company Associated Artists. Large commissions followed from renowned families across the northeast. By 1883, the firm was dissolved and Wheeler started her own firm. Wheeler was known for her embroideries, wall hangings, and her color philosophy. In 1893, Wheeler was named head of the New York section of the Women's Building. Doris Wheeler, Candace's daughter, painted a large mural in the building.

In the case of the Miller home, Wheeler created a fitting showplace for Miller's extensive furniture and art collection. She coordinated the decoration of the 1882-83 additions and remodel. Wheeler and her daughter Doris collaborated on several aspects of the decorative details including a painting on the music room's ceiling that featured clouds painted on a gold background. This painting was removed in the 1950s. This mural and the flower painting can be seen in the following photograph of the Music parlor taken in 1920.



Figure: 0.1
Music Parlor-A

The public rooms of the Miller Heller House have survived for more than one hundred and twenty years remarkably intact. There are still significant amount of details left that should be documented before they are lost. The building has seen a great deal of neglect and abuse over the years. The possibility of these interiors disappearing entirely is very real. Without a thorough documentation, they may be lost to future generations.

Other thesis work has been based on this building, but none have attempted to examine the significance of the interiors. In the early stages of developing this thesis, the plan originally focused on documenting the interiors of the Miller Heller House just for their significance only, but upon discovering the lack of information on the subject of documenting interiors, the focus shifted from documenting the house's interiors to the documentation process itself. The Miller Heller House interiors would be documented in a way that would preserve their history, but the process of the documentation would evolve into a larger undertaking.

The process began with thoroughly researching Miller, Wheeler and the evolution of the house. Physical investigations turned up details that slowly unraveled the history and thus the importance of these particular interiors. Then, as the information began to build, it became apparent that there was not a set format for presenting the research and the conclusions. Thus began the process of identifying types of reports for reference that were currently being used for documentation of historic structures. These reports left more questions than answers when dealing with interiors. The need to locate and speak with experts in the field developed into interviews with many who perform this type of work.

Museum curators who have been involved with the installation of complete rooms within the museums revealed that each museum puts together teams of historians, architects, curators, and craftsmen to record the history, prepare measured drawings, photograph, dismantle, ship, and reassemble an important historical interior. It was expressed that each museum or curator handles these tasks differently and that there is no set process to follow. More interviews with experts in the field and examination of examples of interior documentation also affirmed the notion that this is an area that needed further development. A resounding, “No, there are no set procedures for documenting interiors” was repeated often.

Assembling a wide variety of interior documentation processes led to the conclusion that there was a need for a standard format that would be simple to use and follow, but be flexible enough to contain all the data that was required to be effective. The process started with breaking down the information that would be gathered in each area of the rooms. Questions that needed to be asked included; what type of information was needed to describe a floor, a wall or a ceiling? What information was important if a room needed to be recreated or restored? How should this information be cataloged to give it easy accessibility?

The format that grew out of these questions loosely follows that of a museum artifact cataloging system. Each room was broken down into specific categories.

The system reflects museum standards was used because of its universal acceptance in cataloging procedure, starting with the room name, location number of the room and the source, followed by the legal description of the structure. This information established the foundation for the rest of the information to follow. A brief description of the room is then followed by a floor plan to establish the location of the room within the structure. What follows is each component of the room: the floor, walls, windows, doors, and ceiling.

The individual components are then broken down further with measurements, photographs, and detailed description. Each room follows this same format. Creating this process took months of trial and error, but finally provided the context for all the research that had been gathered. The use of this format simplified the remaining process. Once this portion of the documentation was complete, more interviews were undertaken to establish that this was indeed an original way to construct an interior documentation report. In the process of attempting to simply document and interior of a structure this process was developed.

Information was collected from a variety of sources I.E., Cornell University's extensive collection of original documents of Miller's and writings of Wheeler, in addition to the evidence within the house. Supplementary research documentation was acquired through the generosity of Amelia Peck, a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Ms. Peck generously opened her files on Candice Wheeler and provided invaluable information, additional research included interviews with professionals in the field and extensive research into existing forms of interior documentation.

This thesis is broken into three chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter explains the rationale behind the need for developing this kind of format. The second chapter focuses on the history of the Miller Heller House and its connections to William Henry Miller and Candice Wheeler. Details of the interiors and their significance are examined in this chapter.

The final chapter and majority of the body of this thesis is dedicated to the documentation process itself. The case study of the Miller Heller House is used to present the techniques implemented to disseminate the data that was collected in situ. In this chapter, detailed measurements and material documentation is presented in a systematic format.

This format provides a basis to record existing conditions and reveal previous alterations to the interiors. Walls that have been removed leave behind telltale marks on the floor, fireplaces long since vanished leave behind their imprints in the walls, floors, and surrounding moldings. These are just a few examples of the evolving history of the house that may have gone un-noticed for decades.

Besides discovering past secrets of the building, detailed investigation can be used to evaluate the current condition of the interiors and make suggestions for any repairs or restorations that may be needed. Condition reports and repair suggestions are also included in this chapter.

It is the attempt of this thesis to provide the reader with an understanding of the relevance of historic interiors and the importance of their proper documentation and to encourage the sensitive treatment of such. The goal of this thesis is to facilitate a change in the documentation process and to encourage the preservation of more historic interiors.

CHAPTER I

Documenting Historic Interiors

Understanding, preserving and recording historic interiors is of vital importance to the study of historic preservation. Interiors reveal important clues to the lives of those who were associated with an historic structure not only those who lived or worked in the building, but that of the architect, builders, and craftsmen. How would our understanding of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture be altered if none of his interiors had survived? Wright's interiors are a significant part of his architectural legacy and without the emphasis that has gone into preserving and restoring them, a great deal that we know about his work would be lost.

In the study of historic preservation, historic interiors lack the foundation for study that other subjects are provided. In an informal survey of colleges that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in historic preservation revealed a startling lack of classes offered in this area. Of thirty colleges surveyed only eight offered classes on the topic of historic interiors. Of those eight, the average class offering was limited to one. Two of these colleges offered a major or focus on interiors. The survey was limited to degrees in historic preservation. Interior design and other non preservation degrees were excluded. The data does not represent classes that may be offered elsewhere in these colleges, only in the curriculum that directly related to historic preservation.

By comparison, the study of historic landscapes was offered either as a major unto itself or classes offered in 90% of all the colleges surveyed. This information suggests the lack of preparation that preservation students are receiving in this area and the lack of importance put upon interiors by these colleges in general.

Historical interior documentation has no set guidelines or procedures thus producing wildly varying results. One report might include measured drawings and details on the interior architecture while another might give only one or two lines to describe an entire room. Information regarding interiors is often not in print or is difficult to locate. As previously mentioned, Historic Structure Reports and Furnishing and Finishes Reports are normally the only reports that will have any reference to interiors. These reports are the basis for any future restorations.

Furnishing Plans come closest to detailed information on an interior space and are prepared in a variety of formats. Some are developed to showcase the furnishing plans with little mention of the room itself. Some will describe the room, its origins, furnishings, and distinctive architectural elements, while others will give detail on all of the above, and also include lighting, heating, paint, and wallpaper analysis. Very few give measured drawings, detailed photographs, material lists and catalog interior architecture. It is very difficult to find a finishing matrix and other detailed data. Unfortunately, some reports fall very short of providing the most basic of information.

The following two examples of HSRs, with excerpts that describe windows, provide some insight into the remarkable differences.

The first is an excerpt from the Historic Structures Report of the Susan B. Anthony House.

Windows: The single original window opening in the south wall is framed by a plain fascia surround. The molded sill sits above a plain apron. The opening is fitted with an original 6/6 wood sash with spring bolts in the upper and lower sash.¹

This type of information is so sparse that little is gained from it. Unfortunately, the lack of description and photographs provides little direction for further research or restoration. In contrast, the following excerpt from the HSR of The Stanton House: Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York, provides more details with information that is user friendly.

Windows: Three windows provide natural light to the room: two in the west wall and one in the south wall. All three windows are documented by the earliest exterior photograph of the house dated circa 1900. Those in the west façade may be seen with nine-over-six window sash. Except for the sash that was replaced in 1902-03, the windows survive intact in 1982.

¹ John G. Waite Associates, Historic Structures Report: The Susan B. Anthony House (Unpublished, 2005), pg. 44.

Original interior woodwork dating to circa 1835 included the architraves, the window stools, the window aprons, the window stop headers, and the right window stop in the west wall north side window.

In addition, evidence of Merriman-type window springs that held the bottom sash in place was found in the right side frame of all three windows. A portion of the spring hardware was still held in place with the original blunt-end screws in the west wall south side window. The hardware had been removed from the two windows but surviving mortise cutouts in the window frames attest to their existence.²

The disparity is clearly evident between these two reports. The first is vague with little usable information, the second is detail driven. Although a wide variety of reports is probably necessary given the wide variety of interiors, there should be some general guidance agreed upon by all who become involved with interiors that would provide a general template.

Just one of the many compelling reason for documentation and the standardization thereof is the loss of original fabric contained within historic interiors. Historic interiors are often ignored, lost to carelessness, or simply undervalued.

² Yocum, Barbara A., Historic Structures Report:: The Stanton House: Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York. (National Park Service, 1989), pg.171.

In a historic interior the wall and ceiling materials represents 90% of what is experienced. Plaster is just one of the materials that were used within interiors, often wood was used.

Examples such as the Board of Regents Meeting Room in the New York State of Education Building in Albany, New York, Belhurst Castle on Lake Geneva in Geneva, New York, or the Patsy Clark Mansion in Spokane, Washington, all are noted for their magnificent wood work and detailed wood carvings. Wood also created spectacular rustic interiors in the great camps of the Catskills in New York or in the lodges of the Northwest. These examples, as with most historic fabrics, if they are replaced with modern materials the experience of the interiors would be greatly altered.

With plaster, wood, or the myriad of other historic materials, conservation issues arise. Difficult decisions must be addressed, such as what are the best repair and or conservation techniques available. Historic interiors are fraught with complicated questions as to the treatment of historical fabrics that many preservationist are not prepared to answer.

The need for a systematic approach to historical interior documentation is fundamental. Without consistency, the study of historical interiors will continue to be difficult, frustrating greater appreciation, accurate interpretation and better treatment.

It is inconceivable that an area of such rich history, importance in the understanding of the past, and the preservation of historical architectural heritage should be fraught with such inconsistencies.

When approaching the subject of recording historical interiors there is little agreement on how documentation should be carried out. For example; what type of information should be included or how detailed should this information be. Each professional working with historic interiors creates their own method of collecting and presenting data. This, in turn, creates the environment of recreating what has already been done successfully by others. It is important in the development of our understandings of historical architecture to have a foundation upon which to build. This type of information would provide a solid basis for a restoration, and consistent comparables for further research.

Information that would encourage this could include the history and significance of the structure, history and significance of individual rooms, floor plans, itemization and cataloging of the interior architectural parts, i.e. floors, walls, doors and trims, windows, ceilings, conditions, and recommendations. Additional items that would enhance the process are measured drawings, paint and wallpaper analysis, a material and finish matrix along with additional research and cataloging of lighting and heating. (A basic punch list is provided at the end of this chapter.)

Other resources should not be overlooked when unraveling what interiors might have looked like in the past. Having a thorough understanding of the time period and early occupants helps to dispel misconceptions within the documentation process.

For example, W.H. Miller's art and music collection dictated the function and even design of some of the rooms within his home. Without this specific knowledge of who the original occupants were and what they held dear, the remaining interior would not tell the complete story. Susan B. Anthony is often seen as unconcerned with her living arrangements and this has been reflected in her home today. In fact, Miss Anthony dearly loved her home and took great pride in "housekeeping" and remodeling her home to reflect the latest technological advances.

These facts are not evident in the physical structure of her former home today, but studying her diaries, letters, and photographs the essence of how she lived within the space is revealed. We can interpret, to our best ability; functions and appearances of earlier times. Documentation of this type would also provide valuable information for future researchers.

Those who could benefit from this form of interior documentation would include architects, curators, interior designers, historic preservationists, historic building owners, and anyone involved with a historic interior.

The architect that oversees an interior restoration would have a simple format for employees to follow freeing up billable hours to be used elsewhere. A format would provide an approach which would supply consistent results. This format could also be a foundation for a furnishing and finishes report.

Each room could be broken down within the report with the greatest amount of data collected as possible in the least amount of time. Curators of house museums often times find themselves pressed upon to fill the role of overseeing a restoration of an important interior. Curators generally do not have the specialty training to embark on such an endeavor.

Without any standard guidelines, the curator must create from scratch what may be common knowledge to others in the field. If a standard format was available, the curator could develop an understanding for which type of information is important and how to record such information. Following the guideline, such as the one provided, the curator would understand how the areas are broken down and what problems need to be addressed. This could prevent costly mistakes and overlooking areas of importance. Historic preservationist would also have guidelines to follow but have comparable information from other historic structures to further their research. A preservationist would find a systematic format easy to use with little time wasted in organizing data.

Finally, homeowners of historic buildings would have a comprehensive report on their structure that could be used in long term restorations or, in case of natural disaster as with hurricane Katrina, a guide to rebuild. In expanding our knowledge and understanding of historical interiors, we can protect for future generations the history that we are the stewards. A first step is to accept a standardized approach to recording interiors.

The following interior inventory punch list represents a small tool that was devised by the author to help in establishing this goal. With the use of this example above, information can be provided in a simple format that can be adapted for a variety of uses. Chapter III uses this system to document the interiors of the Miller Heller House to demonstrate the quality and quantity of information that can be easily collected.

INTERIOR INVENTORY PUNCH LIST

- **Room #**

Name of room:

Source:

Location:

Description:

Height (ft, in)

Width (ft, in)

Length (ft, in)

- **General notes:**

- **Flooring Elements Material:**

Notes:

Condition:

- **Door Elements and Materials**

Notes:

Frames and trim sets:

Door (A, B, or C)

Inside trim height:

Outside trim height:

Inside width:

Outside width:

Measured drawing

Operation:

Door (A, B, or C)

Hardware

Door (A, B, or C)

Condition:

- **Window Elements and Materials**

Notes:

Frames and trim sets:

Window (A, B, or C)

Inside trim height:

Outside trim height:

Inside width:

Outside width:

Hardware

Window (A, B, or C)

Condition:

Operation:

Window (A, B, or C) (Example: A (w) is a fixed window)

Window (A, B, or C)

Projection:

Fenestration patterns:

Hardware:

Window (A, B, or C)

Condition:

- **Wall Elements and Materials**

Notes:

Base shoe:

Base:

Base molding:

Measured drawing:

Field:

Chair rail:

Field:

Picture molding:

Frieze:

Cornice:

Condition:

- **Ceiling Elements and Materials**

Notes:

Field:

Molding:

Filler:

With the use of this example above, information can be provided in a simple format that can be adapted for a variety of uses. Chapter III uses this system to document the interiors of the Music parlor of the Miller Heller House to demonstrate the quality and quantity of information that can be easily gathered.

CHAPTER II

The Miller Heller House

Historically Significant Interiors by

William Henry Miller and Candice Wheeler

The historical interiors chosen for the case study featured in this report are located in the building known formally as the Miller Heller House at 122 Eddy Street, Ithaca, New York, with 1876-1929 as the period of significance. These are the years of the Miller family occupancy. The historic interiors of this building are significant for their connections with William Henry Miller, owner architect, and Candice Wheeler, the interior designer who worked with Miller on the house in the 1880s. Without the documentation and study of these interiors, a great deal of historical information would be lost. The Miller Heller House still has enough remaining details from Miller's occupancy to provide an in-depth understanding of his approach to interior architecture.

Candace Wheeler's influence in the house gives a rare glimpse of the architect and the designer who worked together to create a complex design that is not housed in a mansion, but a middle class family home. The collaboration of Miller and Wheeler is important as it represents a turn in the view of female roles in the architectural field and the professional design field.

Candace Wheeler is a noteworthy figure in woman's history for the part she played in opening the doors for American female decorative artists to be recognized as true professionals.

William Henry Miller

William Henry Miller was the first student to study architecture at Cornell University. He studied under Andrew D. White, the first president of the university. Andrew D. White had a passionate interest in architecture that helped to shape Cornell's campus. Miller studied White's extensive architectural library, which White later donated to the university. A.D. White gave Miller a large and generous gift of an important British architectural periodical, The Builder (1840-1873), which also became an important reference for the young architect.¹ Miller left Cornell to apprentice to a local architect just months before the school of architecture was created under the Reverend Charles Babcock.² In 1871, Miller was asked by President White to help plan the revision of the President's home on the campus. Charles Babcock later took over the project and the building design is accredited to him. Miller designed later additions for the house in 1891 and 1911.³

¹ Ithaca Democrat, February 13, 1873, pg. 1.

² Morris Bishop, *A history of Cornell* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), pg.160.

³ *Diary of A.D. White*, June 8, 1874.

Miller established his own architectural firm in Ithaca by 1872. He took on several different partners in the following years as his business grew.⁴ In 1874, Miller purchased a lot on Eddy Street just south of the university from Ezra Cornell and soon after began construction of his new home.⁵

In the fall of that year, Miller, with a letter of introduction from President White, left for a seven month tour of Europe to further develop his architectural studies and to make important business contacts. In January of 1876, he married Emma Halsey of Halseyville, New York, soon after they moved into their new home on Eddy Street.⁶

Miller's career as an architect soon took off. He designed many buildings for Cornell University, its faculty, and was popular with many wealthy and influential clients, including those connected with the university, such as the Sage family and Jenny McGraw-Fiske. Miller's attention to detail and his use of interior light and space are characterized by his open floor plans. These are qualities we see in the interiors of his home on Eddy Street. Miller originally designed his home as a chalet style cottage, perched on a steep lot, which commanded views of downtown Ithaca, the Southwest hills, and Cayuga Lake to the north.

⁴ Ithaca City Directory 1872,1873-1874.

⁵ Ithaca Deeds Records, County Clerk's Office, Liber 9, pg. 80.

⁶ Ithaca Democrat, Thursday, January 20, 1876.

During the early years, Eddy Street had become a bustling venue complete with a trolley line that brought professors and students alike to and from Cornell University. Miller's first trip abroad provided him with the inspiration for his new home.⁷ The house boasted European medieval accents inside and out. (See Figures 2.1) As Miller's practice grew and evolved, so did his home. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the house would more than double in size. Between 1883 and 1884, a new entry and the music parlor were added. He experimented with new ideas and techniques that he may have first tried out in his own home. With each remodeling or addition, Miller tried something new or inventive. Even though the house was not large in comparison with many of his commissions, the house was well appointed. Mrs. Miller often said that when they returned from a trip the house the children would race through the house in search of a new discovery. The children's excitement is reflected in the following quote by Margaret Miller.

"Papa has the house all torn up. Electricity is being put in. Six rooms and the hall are being done over and a good deal of new plumbing put in – and we knew nothing of it! Ruth's and my room is 'sweet.' It has a bright pink and cream strip (sic) paper on the walls and the frieze and ceiling are magnolia flowers on a cream ground. It is very Frenchy.

⁷ Ithaca Democrat, September 3, 1874.

What wood is not the natural color is painted cream and we have a cream dresser.”⁸



Figure 2.1
Details from Sitting Parlor
Fireplace

The working relationship with Candice Wheeler, who closely worked with artisans such as Louis Comfort Tiffany, provided Miller the opportunity to fully develop his own home as a backdrop for his art collections and worldly treasures. Candace Wheeler’s involvement in the home is one of the contributing factors in the interiors significance.

⁸ Excerpt from Margaret Miller’s diary as noted by Elisabeth Hancock Sillin’s A Master Plan for the Miller- Heller, 122 Eddy Street, Ithaca, NY. Pg.16. The original can no longer be located.

Candace Wheeler

Candace Wheeler's collaboration with Miller on his home can still be seen throughout the house. Wheeler was an influential woman who was highly regarded by her peers such as Louis Comfort Tiffany. In 1877, Wheeler founded the Society of Decorative Art in New York.

By 1879, Tiffany invited Wheeler to participate in a new decorative arts business he was founding. The company was first named Tiffany and Wheeler in 1880, after several name changes, the firm became Louis C. Tiffany and Company Associated Artists. The company rounded out its talents with the expertise of painter Samuel Colman and designer Lockwood de Forest, who had a particular affinity for the arts of India. Wheeler directed the workshop and also designed the textiles and wallpapers while Tiffany created the overall design concept. The firm enjoyed important commissions from some of the country's most influential families, among them the Vanderbilts, Fishes, and Goelets. Very few interiors have survived from this team with the exception of the impressive Veteran's Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue in New York City.

By 1883, the Associated Artists disbanded and Wheeler took the name for her own firm. Wheeler's sumptuous silks were manufactured by Cheney Brothers in South Manchester, Connecticut. Woven and printed silks and printed cotton velveteens may have been the original wall coverings in the house.

Velvet draperies covered the doorways and prevented drafts in the winter. In the summer, light cotton coverings decorated with designs from India replaced these draperies. These types of fabrics can be seen in the Miller photographs taken in 1920. Wheeler's highly fashionable embroideries and tapestries, designed executed by Associated Artists, could be found in London to San Francisco.

Candace Wheeler's daughter, Dora Wheeler Keith, who played a large part in her mother's firm and in the decoration of the Miller House, was an accomplished artist. Dora created many of the designs, such as the hand painted cherubs on the pipe organs case. Her work most likely included the painting on the music room's ceiling that featured cherubs and clouds painted on a gold background, which was destroyed in the 1950s. Dora first became known in artists' circles for her Christmas cards. (Figures 2.2)

Under her mother's direction, Dora went on to design tapestries, silks, wall and ceiling murals and stained glass, which she designed for Tiffany. One of her most ambitious commissions was a set of tapestries depicting the four seasons for Mr. Fredrick Vanderbilt. She also designed ceiling murals, much like the one originally in the Music Parlor of the Miller House. One of these ceiling murals was designed for Mrs. John Williams.



Figure 2.2
Christmas card by
Doris Wheeler Keith



Figure 2.3
Cherub from the organ case
in situ

Another work with similar depictions as the Miller ceiling was a mural for Mr. C.A. Fowler's dining room. This mural depicted cherubs much like the ones in the Miller mural.

In the photograph, (Figure# 2.5) the ceiling mural featured clouds and cherubs on a gold background. The cherubs that are still in situ on the organ have been authenticated by Amelia Peck at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as to have been the work of Dora. Amelia Peck curated a show at the MET featuring Candace Wheeler that included a large collection of art by Dora. Dora also played a major role in the decoration of the Women's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893.

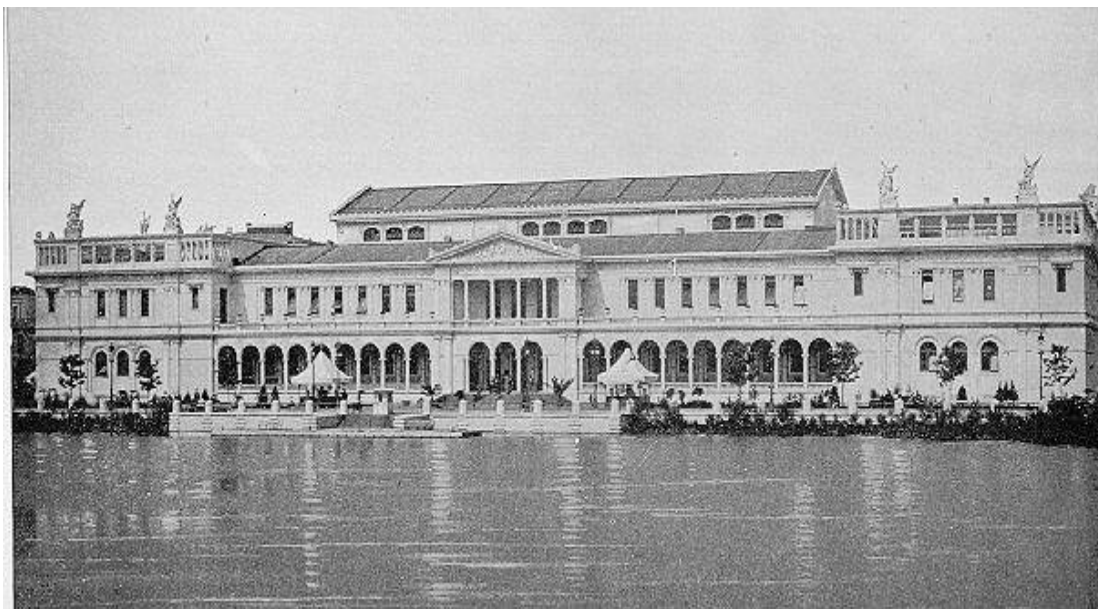


Figure 2.4
Women's Building, Columbian Exposition, Chicago in 1893



Figure 2.5
Pipe Organ parlor as photographed in 1920. Notice pendant lamps with original Tiffany shades. Copy from original which hangs in Miller Heller House.

Unfortunately, the destruction of the ceiling mural in the Miller home is a great loss of important work by Dora Wheeler Keith.

The Miller's love of the exotic, which was fully expressed in the 1883-84 remodeling, drew inspiration from distant and foreign lands. The entry hall boasts a large collection of cast reproductions from the Moorish castle Alhambra. The inscription that reads "There is no conqueror but God" was part of an exhibit by Owen Jones in his exhibition in London's Crystal Palace of Great Exhibition in 1851 and in his 1856 book detailing ornaments from around the world; The Grammar of Ornament.

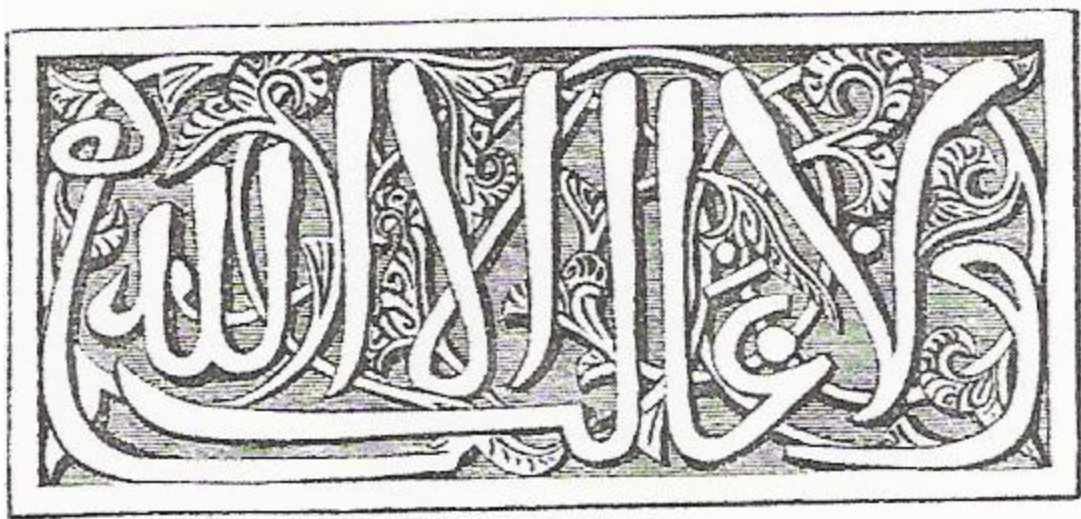


Figure 2.6
Copy from The Grammar of Ornament, Owen Jones, 1856



Figure 2.7
Plaster cast from Entry Hall Frieze at 122 Eddy Street

In all probability, Candice Wheeler influenced the selection of these details. In her work with the Associated Artist and Lockwood de Forest in particular, Mrs. Wheeler often incorporated elements of Middle Eastern designs in her work.

The ten rank pipe organ was not documented as part of the interior in this thesis due to the complexity of the topic, but a failure to discuss the organ would be a grievous omission in the discussion of the interiors. William Henry Miller's love of music was just one of the driving forces of the remodeling and expansion of his home. The Pipe organ was moved and its case rebuild several times before its final and current arrangement.

The construction of the Music room was not only to provide the home with a larger living, entertaining area and to showcase Miller's extensive art collection, but to house the pipe organ, with its bellows in the basement below.

During the late Victorian period, parlor organs were the family entertainment, and additionally, an outward expression of their spiritual beliefs. The women of the house most often played parlor organs and pianos. This fit the role of the Victorian female, but in the Miller household, it was William Henry Miller who would play the pipe organ. Miller's version was far closer and more deeply connected to the church organ than its parlor counterpart. The church organ was considered masculine while the parlor organ was feminine. Miller played the organ while his wife played the harp.

The decoration of the organ was important symbolically for its references to a church organ. The painted cherubs, as has been pointed out, are executed by Dora Wheeler Keith's hand. These paintings were originally just a portion of the decorative scheme of heavenly beings that inhabited this room. The organ featured carved cherubs, seven painted panels of cherubs, and the ceiling painting featured cherubs and clouds. A stained glass window in a quatrefoil configuration also features an angel with the word "Holy". The organ was and still is the centerpiece of this room, if not the house.

Another component of the interiors of the Miller home that deserves mentioning is the conversion to electricity in 1894. The Miller home became one of the first in Ithaca to use electricity. The lines came from downtown to power the trolley that runs up Eddy Street to campus and Miller was able to connect his home so that the pipe organ could be powered electrically.



Figure 2.8
William Miller at his pipe organ and Emma Miller at her harp originally owned by Marie Antoinette. Copy from original that formerly hung in the Miller House

The first electric lighting fixtures were a combination of gas and electric. There are no records that indicate if Miller's first electric fixtures were a combination. Currently, most of the lighting fixtures are not original to the house. The pendant lamps in the Music room (104A) are original to the 1920 photographs, except for the loss of the original Tiffany shades. In addition, the pendant lamps in the adjoining Music room (104B) are original to the 1920 photographs as well.

The first electric fixtures were converted gas fixtures and many homeowners used gas as a back up for the often unreliable electricity. The style and shape of older gas lamps had been dictated by the function of the lamp itself. There had to be a means for the gas to be carried to the mantle. A flame needed to face upward to allow for proper burning and a bowl was needed to surround the flame. This all changed with the electric lamp. If a lamp was converted from gas to electricity, the wiring was either exposed or was snaked through the existing gas pipes. When fixtures were designed expressly for the purpose of electricity, their style was unique and completely free from the previous design barriers (as seen in the pendant lamps in the following figures).



Figure 2.9
Pendant lamps with
Tiffany shades
Music Parlor



Figure 2.10
1920 photograph of pendant lights
in Music Room

Electric lights could be faced downward and could be used for task lighting. The lighting that Miller had installed, at least by 1920, was completely designed for electricity. Some of the lighting included pendant fixtures of Tiffany glass which held single bulbs hanging from exposed chains.

Miller's innovative designs and attention to detail along with Candice Wheeler's distinctive influence makes the Miller Heller House's public interiors a rare remnant of the turn of the American nineteenth century. The lavish attention to detail such as the Tiffany pendant lamps, hand painted cherubs, stained glass quatrefoil window, and of course the pipe organ, allow us a glimpse into the lives of the Miller family during the last years of the nineteenth century.

The following documentation provides the basis for a future restoration or if these interiors are ever lost completely, a record of their existence.

CHAPTER III
The Miller Heller House
Music Parlor Room 104-A
A Case Study of Interior Documentation

To demonstrate the appropriate level of documentation for interiors such as the Miller-Heller House, this chapter uses an inventory format. This form provides the specialist with the guidance necessary to record overall room dimensions and specific details. The intent of the interior inventory will dictate the level of details required in a report. If the room in question is to undergo an exhaustive documentary, research must start with the history of the house, the occupants, and intangibles that have affected the house's history. Only after a comprehensive background investigation should physical research begin followed by the actual documentation of the structure.

The following format requires a brief history of each room with floor plans, and elevations when necessary.¹¹ Each area is recorded with measurements and contemporary photographs. This kind of descriptive analysis, along with other physical investigations that focus on finishes, paint, wallpaper, lighting, and heating fixtures, can produce a thorough investigation and record of the subject interiors.

¹¹ A reflective ceiling plan and isometric might be necessary on occasion to show details that would otherwise be difficult to discern or understand.

The room's number followed by the common or formal name is given first. A floor plan indicating the room numbers illustrates the location of the room within the building. For example, in the floor plan provided, room 104-A is the music parlor. (Figure: 3.1)

Each section is broken down into manageable parts. Beginning with the floors, general notes on the current condition and any observations are addressed. For example, Door elements and materials follow. Beginning with general notes the doors are discussed and evaluated. Frames and trim sets are labeled as A, B, and C, along with the doors location in the room as in east, west, north, and south. Each door receives measurements that are taken inside and outside of the door frame. Measured drawings may be inserted in this portion. The door swing is indicated along with hardware. The descriptions of the windows follow the same pattern.

Walls also begin with general notes and then begin with the base shoe molding. The fields are addressed separately. A field may involve plaster, wood paneling, or other types of materials. The chair rail follows if there is any followed by any additional fields. Any frieze and or cornice are then addressed followed by a condition report.

The final category is the ceiling with notes, field, molding, any filler, and then conditions. The fact that historic interiors are not approached in any set manner allowed for this example to start at the floor verses the ceiling.

This approach has been used in some Historic Structures Reports.

Following this format is simple and can easily be adapted to a variety of situations. Simple rooms require far less fields to address and some areas may be left out, while more formal or complicated rooms may be more complex in plan, as well as more highly finished and decorated and require more fields. Measured drawings may be added along with photographic documentation.

The room that is used as an example to demonstrate this approach is the Music room or room 104-A in the Miller Heller House of Ithaca, New York. This room is chosen for its remaining historical fabric and importance within the building. The following research and documentation brought to light some facts that had been lost over time, such as the origins of the south bay in the room. The research and supporting evidence illustrates how this portion of the room most likely was a porch that was enclosed to widen the room.

The following is an example of a method that can be used to successfully document an interior.

INTERIOR INVENTORY

Miller/Heller

Room # 104-A

Name of room: Music Parlor-A

Location: 122 Eddy Street, Ithaca, NY, 14850

Description: Tax parcel number: 68.-3-12

Height: 10' 4" and 11' 5" in the cove

Width: 23' 2"

Length: 17' 1"

General notes: Due to the fact that this room has been chosen to represent the entire house, a more detailed description and history of the room will be provided. As described in Chapter II, the Music room is the largest of the public rooms. The room was part of the collaboration between Candice Wheeler and W.H. Miller. This room retains many original features and is a good example of the interior design collaboration between Miller and Wheeler. The Music room was designed to contain the grand ten rank organ that is still in situ.

This room contained W.H. Miller's extensive art collection as well as other musical instruments including the harp attributed to Marie Antoinette. The Music room consists of three bays that run east to west. Two of the bays, the north bay with the organ and the center bay, feature matching coffered ceilings and appear to have been built during an earlier building campaign than the third or south bay, which has a flat ceiling. This grand room was used for entertaining and family gathering.

The south bay possibly was designed as a porch and then enclosed at a later date. This could explain the south bay not being adequately supported by a proper foundation.

As a porch with no foundation support, the enclosed space lacked the structural integrity that was needed to prevent this portion of the room from sagging.

In addition, when water damage was repaired in this area the walls were stripped of their burlap rep, underneath the fabric instead of lath and plaster, horizontal boards of approximately 2 inches in width were uncovered along with remnants of old wallpaper. This finding along with that of the details of the French doors leading to the porch and the lack of foundation suggests this was originally a porch that was enclosed to create a larger room. The volume of the room is not supported by its foundations which stop under the south edge of the middle section.

Further details suggest a break in the flooring begin in the south bay, which is 2 1/2" oak strip flooring is laid north to south break 4'10 1/8" from the south wall with a 15/16" strip of oak that runs perpendicular to the flooring. The planks on the south side of this break are 1/16 wider than the planking on the north side. However, as the strips move closer to the east end of the room the difference in the width of the adjoining planks becomes more apparent. The remaining planks to the north of this line are unbroken by any other seams. This strip aligns with the ceiling's boxed beam directly above. It also lines up with the south edge of the cased opening between rooms 104 A and B. This line effectively divides this bay from the other two in the room.

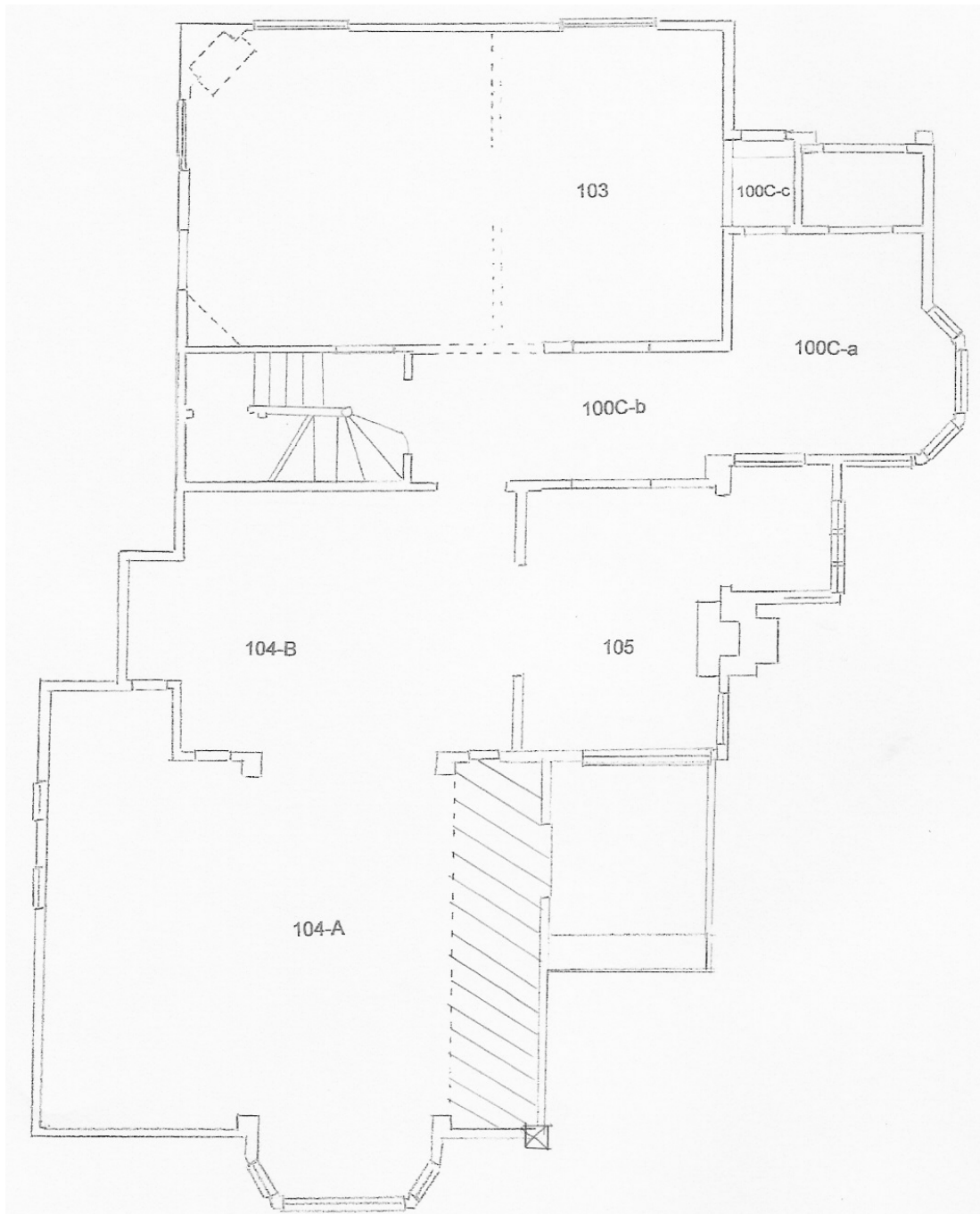


Figure: 3.1

No foundation under area denoted with hash marks. Southwest corner is supported with a post.

The difference in size and shape of materials in the south bay from the rest of the room's trim continues from the floor to the ceiling. The embossed egg and dart molding that encircles the south bay is smaller and with a slightly different shaped pattern. (Figures 3.5 and 3.6) The egg and dart pattern on the north side of the room is the same. Furthering the evidence that the two parts of the room were finished at different times is the difference in the finishing work. The person who installed the main body of the room spliced the embossed molding with a scarf or miter joint. (Figure 3.5) The embossed molding in the south portion of the room has butt joints. The scarf joint is a more difficult joint that requires skill to execute. The butt joints are simple and less time consuming with seams that are more obvious. (Figure 3.6) The finisher who trimmed the north side of the room also took time to hide the nail holes, but the nail holes can be easily seen in later addition. The entire south section of the room is so dissimilar in detail and design that the theory of an enclosed porch makes the most compelling argument. The cased opening between rooms 104 A and B is slightly off center. The molding profile is the same on both sides of the opening but the width of the top piece of trim is larger by 1/16 of an inch. (Figure 3.5 and 3.6)

It has been argued that this portion of the building was poorly designed with respect to the volume of the room.

If the room had been originally designed to be a smaller space, further enlarged by enclosing an adjoining porch, the bearing wall would have been replaced with a bearing beam put in its place. This would explain the overall weakening of this portion of the structure.

A final point is the lack of a foundation to support for this side of the room. The foundation stops under the south edge of the central bay, while a post supports the west corner of the south bay. If Miller had designed this room originally to be as it is today, why then would he not have extended the foundation to this portion of the room? The area beneath the south bay is partially exposed. An old section of the underside of this room appears to be the underside of an exposed porch. An obviously sloping floor would have provided run off for an outdoor area. The lack of foundation support has caused this portion of the room to sag putting stress on the entire support system of the addition.

Flooring Elements Material:

Notes: 2 1/2" oak strip flooring laid north to south with a break 4'10 1/8" from the south wall make up the floor in this room. The remaining width of the flooring is unbroken.

Condition: The oak flooring is in need of a complete sanding and refinishing, filling any gaps. The floor has received hard wear and has been poorly maintained.

The original color of the stain of the floor can be seen within the organ case where it has not been stripped or refinished. The color of this stain should be replicated to produce the appearance of the original floor. (Figure 3.7)

Door Elements and Materials:

Notes: Beginning at the west wall one set of old French doors lead to a porch.

These doors have an inside opening width 3' 4" and 7' 11 3/4" inside height. There is also a pair of screen doors that open into the room. Facing the screen doors on the right panel is a thin strip of oak that makes the door fit the frame. These screen doors do not fit the opening of the door. They overlap the top of the frame 1 3/4"; there is a faint but visible patch on the inside of the screen on the left hand side and a corresponding indentation on the outside of the door that indicates an earlier handle on this side. These marks, and the thin strip of extra wood, may indicate that the doors were a later addition and perhaps reclaimed from somewhere else in the house.

The outside French doors are constructed of a softer wood, such as Douglas fir or yellow pine. The glass panels measure 1' 3 3/4" in width and 4' 8 3/8" in height. The door is topped by a Queen Anne transom with diamond leaded glazing. The transom frame overall is out of square by 1/4" and the overall trim set is out by 1".

If this side of the room was an enclosed porch, one could assume that these doors are later additions, and most likely to have come from somewhere else in the building.

If this is the case, the doors may be completely reversed from their original placement. The doors could have opened into the room and the screens opened out, but were reversed for some unknown reason. This theory would explain the ghost handle marks on the opposite side of the doors.

Frames and trim sets:

The frame is oak.

Door A (w)

Inside trim height: 7' 11 3/4"

Outside trim height: 8' 2 1/2"

Inside width: 3'4"

Outside width: 3' 9 3/8"

Operation:

The French doors swing out of the room onto the porch. The screen doors open into the room.

Hardware:

Exterior door hardware is a brass lever type with a porcelain cladding on the exterior, which matches the hardware in the dining room.

The right hand door hinges are a modern addition and are completely inappropriate, but the left hand hinges appear to be original.

Condition:

These doors are in need of a thorough repair. It appears that the right hand door at some point was ripped off its hinges and new hinges were placed just above the holes from the original. These are modern, too large, and inappropriate for the time period of the house. The lever handle no longer works and needs to have the hole properly plugged and refinished so that the handle may be replaced to function correctly.

Window Elements and Materials:

Notes: A central feature in this room is a large bay window labeled A, B, and C (w). This window set consists of three windows that form the bay.

Frames and trim sets:

Window A (w)

Inside trim height: 6' 9" including transom

Outside trim height: 7' 1" including transom

Inside width: 1' 9 1/2"

Outside width: 2' 3 1/2"

Window B (w)

Inside trim height: 5' 6" including transom

Outside trim height: 5' 10 1/2" including transom

Inside width: 5' 4 1/2"

Outside width: 5' 10"

Window C (e)

Inside trim height: 6' 9" including transom

Outside trim height: 7' 1/2" including transom

Inside width: 1' 9 1/2"

Outside width: 2' 3 1/4"

Window D (n)

Inside trim height: 4' 1/2"

Outside trim height: 4' 3 1/2"

Inside width: 1' 9"

Outside width: 2' 1/2"

Window E (n)

Inside trim height: 4' 1/2"

Outside trim height: 5' 3"

Inside width: 1' 9 1/2"

Outside width: 2' 1/2"

Window F (n)

Inside trim height: 2' 2 1/4"

Outside trim height: 2' 5"

Inside width: 2" 1 1/8"

Outside width: 2' 5"

Operation:

Window A (w) glazed fixed window.

Window B (w) glazed casement.

Window C (w) glazed casement.

Window D (n) leaded glazing in a diamond pattern

Window E (n) leaded glazing in a diamond pattern

Window F (n) fixed leaded and stained window in a quatrefoil shape depicting a young girl or angel

Window G (n) fixed skylight

The two flanking windows are casements and open out of the room; the west window opens to the left and the east opens out to the right. The screens on these windows open inward.

Projection:

The bay projects 2' out from the west wall.

Fenestration patterns:

Window C (w) is a single fixed paired in a bay with windows A (w) and B (w).

Hardware:

Window A (w) a screen with modern brass lever handle, while the window itself has original brass lever hardware.

Window B (w) no hardware.

Window C (w) screen with modern brass lever handle, while the window itself has original brass lever hardware.

Window D (n) same hardware as windows A and B

Window E (n) same hardware as windows A and B

Window F (n) no hardware.

Condition:

Window A (w) and C (w) have later addition screens while window B (w) appears to have a later sill addition. Window E (w) has a screen with a simple wood knob handle while window D (n) no longer has its screen.

Window F (n) has had repairs to the outside trim.

Wall Elements and Materials

Base shoe: none

Base: simple 6" base with a rounded top edge.



Figure: 3.2

Base profile

Base molding: None

Field: plain

Chair rail: chair rail consists of two piece oak trim.



Figure: 3.3

Chair rail profile

Picture molding: 2" wide oak board topped by a 1 1/2" egg and dart, topped by 1/2" strip of oak topped of by a 1 1/2"



Figure: 3.4

Picture molding profile

Frieze: none

Cornice: none

Condition:

All trim in this room has been stripped of its original finish.

It is in otherwise good condition.

Ceiling Elements and Materials

Field: plaster

Molding: none

Filler: none

Condition:

The ceiling in the central bay is in good condition except for two spots where adhesive tape was affixed to the finish coat, and it has peeled. As previously mentioned, the ceiling in the north bay is peeling and in need of repair. The ceiling in the south bay has been painted brown and finished with plain oak strips. This ceiling is in good condition.

Recommendations for restoration and repair:

The Music room has the most potential for a complete restoration. This room interior, originally designed by Candace Wheeler, proclaimed Miller's love of music. The addition was built to house and showcase the grand pipe organ. The research on the organ and the correct procedures to restore it alone are not within the bounds of this study. The decorative features throughout the room will be discussed in terms of their contribution to the decoration of the room as a whole. The room's appearance could and should be returned as closely as is feasible to the original design.

The interior of the building is under stress due to its foundation problems. These issues must be addressed before any work is begun. The foundations should be monitored to detect the rate of any movement to determine if the movement is seasonal. Foundation supports should be added to stabilize the southwest corner of the room since this section has very little support. Lateral bracing maybe be installed under the floors and outside south wall to provide stability against wind loads.

After proper monitoring and added support provided the room can then be prepared to undergo a rehabilitation of the interior space.

Beginning with the ceiling, the most damaged area is in the plaster above the niche in the north bay. These cracks should be scraped out and prepped. Patching this area would be sufficient to restore the appearance. This ceiling may be simply painted with no additional treatments. The central bay originally featured a painting by Candace Wheeler that was removed in the 1950s. There are only a few black and white photographs that depict this painting, making it difficult to replicate.

The wall surface needs to be repaired and prepped to accept any new treatments. This would include the removal of and careful labeling of each piece of molding as to refinishing and replacement. These areas have been damaged by water and neglect over time. The walls originally consisting of lath and plaster are now difficult to establish what materials have been used over the decades without completely stripping. Currently, this is not a viable option.

To repair any minor cracks the areas should be cut out and filled, but a failure in the entire surface may require complete removal and replacement.

The best option would be to repair or replace with plaster as this was original, but this is the most expensive option and may not be

economically feasible.

After the walls have been repaired a fabric rep that matches the original sample behind the organ should be installed. Commercial grade fabric that has been chemically treated for fire resistance is required for a space such as this that is used by the public. This fabric would be placed above the chair rail (as it is currently).

The wood trim has been entirely stripped of its original finish. The stain that is still intact behind the organ should be matched and the woodwork, including the floor, should be returned to this color. (Figure 3.7) The brown finish may appear to dark by current taste, but is authentic and was the original appearance.

Special attention needs to be placed upon the Candace Wheeler's cherub paintings on the organ. These paintings, five in all, are rapidly deteriorating from sunlight, mishandling, and simple lack of care. These works should be sent to a museum that specializes in painting conservation and stabilization.

Copies can be made of the originals and placed on the organ so as not to loose a relationship with the house. After the originals have been repaired and suitably framed, they may be returned to the house. This has been accomplished with an earlier piece of fabric that was used by Mrs. Wheeler. It hangs above the niche where it originally was part of the upholstery. In caring for these objects, and keeping them

in the house, they may be enjoyed by future generations and provide further research possibilities.



Figure 3.5
Scarf joint of egg and dart trim on same beam as figure 104-A.4



Figure 3.6
Butt joint on boxed beam dividing the central bay and the south bay



Figure 3.7

Contrasting finishes on floor behind organ. Floor at threshold is refinished, other side of threshold is the original stain.

The example provided uses this simple tool to organize the information collected pertaining to this room in the Miller Heller house. For brevity of this chapter, examples of details such as a photographic documentation were kept to a minimum. By following the provided suggestions, each area can receive as much attention as is required. Every historical interior is unique and requires a wide variety of approaches, but the collecting of information should be simple and straight forward. How the information is used will depend on each circumstance.

As with this example, the information gathered can be used in a variety of ways. The data can be used to restore the interior to a period of significance or it may simply be kept as a tool for future research, but having the information is of vital importance. The specialized field of historic interiors needs to have as much information gathered as other areas of historic preservation. The need for a strong foundation is essential to the furthering of our understanding of historic interiors. As research is collected and shared awareness levels will rise for the appreciation of the interiors of historic buildings. Original interior fabric in significant buildings is being lost everyday.

As with the recent devastation of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, historic buildings can be lost, but even when the building is saved the interior may be beyond repair.

With little information regarding the interiors of the buildings, such as entire districts in New Orleans, the loss is staggering. The interiors, as with the buildings themselves, told the story of the generations who lived there. Further research and documentation of historic interiors can raise not only the specialist knowledge, but the public as well and can be a tool to help to ensure the survival of more interiors to be passed on to future generations.

CONCLUSION

Historical interiors illuminate the past in a tangible way and documenting these interiors is an important aspect of historical preservation. A systematic format to develop a data-base will promote the exchange of information and further the studies of historic interiors and historic preservation in general. How early occupants lived and interacted within the interior spaces can reveal intimate details about their lives. Interiors can reveal social aspects such as their relationships with their spouses, children, and servants. Interiors can provide information on family interaction or even servant life. Where were the children's rooms in relation to the parents? Were they down the hall or on the third floor with the servants? Where there separate staircases for family and servants or (as in the Miller household) was there just one? Just the design of the utility areas of a house can speak volumes about the occupants.

Technological questions can be answered such as how quickly the occupants embraced new technologies. In the same 19th century neighborhood, one household may have embraced electricity while others of the same social and financial status may have been hesitant.

For example, one home owner may have used electricity in their work environment and felt comfortable using it in their home. By examining the lives of the occupants within the context of their homes, we may discover obscure facts that answer these questions.

Each interior has a story to tell, as was revealed with the Miller home. W.H. Miller's home expressed his love of architecture, art, travel, and music. As each building campaign grew more complex and refined at 122 Eddy Street, Miller's professional growth as an architect was reflected. As Miller's reputation as a sophisticated architect grew his commissions expanded throughout New York. His home was a study in craftsmanship and a tribute to his attention to detail. Friendships and working relationships with artisans such as Louis Comfort Tiffany, Cottier and Company and Candice Wheeler provided Miller access to innovative styles and tastes that helped him develop his own home as a backdrop for his music, art and memorabilia collections from world travels. Without the remnants of these interiors, many historical details about William Henry Miller would be lost. The structure tells a story, but only half of the story. Researching and recording the details of these interiors provides a view of this man and his family that might otherwise be lost.



Figure: 4.1

William Miller at his pipe organ and Emma Miller at harp originally owned by Marie Antoinette. Copy from original that formerly hung in Miller House

While planning a restoration on a structure, as with the Miller home, the interior is primary importance to the building's character; ideally, the special interest of the interior should be assessed with the initial preservation plan of the structure, without the consideration of the treatment of the interior during the early planning phases historical details may be lost.

There is never enough time to perform all the research that is necessary. In this thesis, the time that was required to investigate all possible solutions was just not available. Each area of the thesis, with time permitting, could and would have been developed further.

Additional research on the finishes, materials, and possible treatment of the surfaces would have enhanced this thesis. Financial resources were not available to conduct all the interviews and site visits to relevant museums or historic houses.

If this research were undertaken now with the knowledge that I have learned from this process, one of the first changes that would be made is to ask, "To what purpose will this research be applied?" There was no clear focus on how or even if this information would be used by the current owners of the building. If the interiors were to be restored to their original appearance, the information presented here would be a good starting point, but further analysis is needed on such components as paint, wallpaper, finishes, and plaster. In addition, structural stability should be examined. However, if the interiors were to be entirely changed or the building lost completely, this would affect the type of information to be gathered. There would be little need to examine whether the keys in the plaster were intact if the building were to be torn down or the rooms gutted for an extensive remodel. The end results would greatly determine what areas should be focused on. If the house were to be turned into a house museum, other aspects would have to be examined.

If I were undertaking this research now I would approach the subject with a clear goal as the expected outcome of the study and what information will be needed to ensure such an outcome.

In addition, further investigation into each area would now be a part of the investigation. The methods and the extent of restoration would be more of a focus. As previously mentioned, color analysis of all the finishes would be added. In the ceilings and walls, plaster surfaces would be investigated to determine stability. Conservation and repairs that are required to stabilize these surfaces would be another consideration. For instance, the walls are bowing vertically and horizontally in several of the rooms, to what extent should this be corrected and how would such corrections affect the existing historical materials? Could and should areas that have been replaced with modern materials be replicated with historic fabrics and techniques? To what extent should the house be restored with the view in mind that many tactics available today would cause irreparable damage to the historic fabric of the house? These questions can be addressed in additional research of the subject.

Further research might include; what ways can historic interiors be restored without sacrificing authenticity? What role does interpretation play in documentation? In addition, how can the documentation of these interiors advance our understanding of history? Lastly, why are historic interiors often overlooked during the process of preserving historic structures?

Future researchers might also consider using technology to contribute to the advancement of preserving and documenting historic interiors, technology such as 3D imaging.

Computer programs that can simulate an interior, which are the central focus of interior designers, can be adopted to fit this research. Besides the documentation, process itself, other topics of research could include 122 Eddy Street, the restoration of the pipe organ, stability of the original surfaces including the substructures, and Candice Wheeler's impact on 19th century interiors.

From a professional point of view, questions that need further examination include; what role does this (or any) historic interior play in preserving the past? How can historic interiors be respected while being reinterpreted and adapted for modern uses? Just what are we trying to preserve? If we are saving a plaster ceiling for its historical value, what is it we are actually saving? Are we saving the unfinished plaster which, for most purposes, was never seen by the original tenants or are we attempting to save the wall paper or paint that would have been seen? Do we preserve original finishes to the point that the audience, whether public or private, loses a sense of what the original appearance of the interior or do we recreate the look at the expense of the historical fabrics?

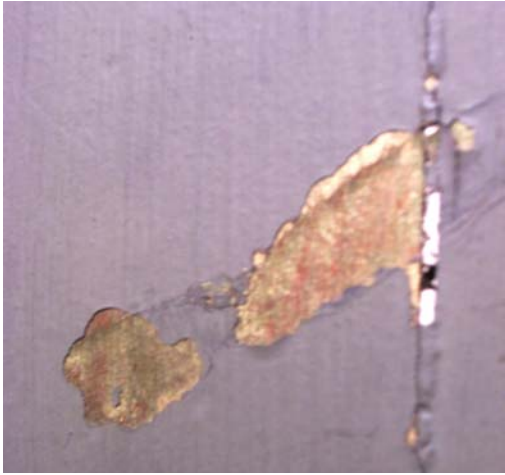


Figure: 4.2
Original paint uncovered on staircase



Figure: 4.3
Stenciled swag border in front entrance hall dating to the 1883 remodel

In the photograph above, Fig. 4.3, the original stencil still remains in the entrance hall of the Miller residence and is in relatively good condition. It could be argued that this original fabric should be left intact and not embellished, but possibly cleaned by a professional. However, what if there were only remnants left of this work?

Would we recreate it? Would the recreation have the same impact as the original? These are questions that may be overlooked in our zeal to save what is “original”.

The following photograph, Fig. 4.4, from 1920 is of the nook, (now is a closet off of the entry hall) which is adjacent to the sitting room, (now part of the dining room). These rooms have been altered from what was photographed in that year. How can we as preservationists interpret the original look of these rooms? It all depends on the present use. It was no longer useful to the current owners to retain the spaces in their original state. That is not to say that with proper documentation, these spaces could not be returned to their previous arrangement.



Figure: 4.4
Original Parlor off of dining room seen below as marked 103 and 100C-c

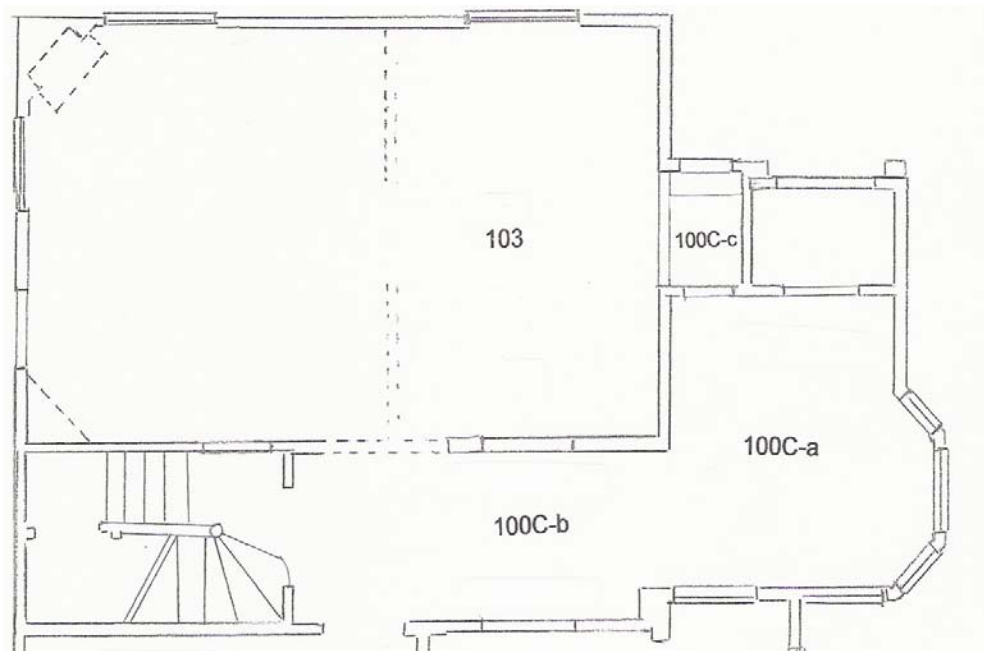


Figure 4.5
Floor plan illustrating original floor plan of dining room and sitting room

Historical interiors are complex and require a multi-disciplined approach. A wide variety of professionals is required to document, restore, conserve and or interpret historic interiors. Many professionals that specialize in historic preservation may not be familiar with the special treatments that are required for historic interiors, such as, the controlled removal of selected decorative schemes in interiors using solvents, investigating appropriate varnishes, plaster conservation, or the use of a data-base to record research findings that promote the exchange of information. These questions are left to specialists that some professionals, even those that are familiar with historic preservation procedures, may not have easy access.

The wide range of conservation skills and the range of materials that are often required for interiors projects are just not part of many architectural or preservation professional's experiences. An appreciation for historic interiors and understanding their role in interpreting the past can enhance the field of historic architecture and all that it encompasses. Developing a systematic approach to documenting historic interiors is one step in the direction toward a more inclusive approach to preservation.

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