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**Ohio choices: Wall stenciling in the Western Reserve before  
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**Borkan, Christine Edwards, M.A.**

**University of Delaware, 1990**

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OHIO CHOICES:  
WALL STENCILLING IN THE  
WESTERN RESERVE BEFORE 1860

by

Christine Edwards Borkan

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of  
Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

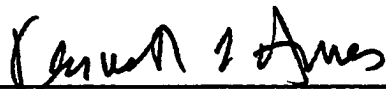
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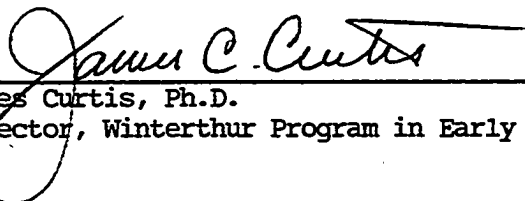
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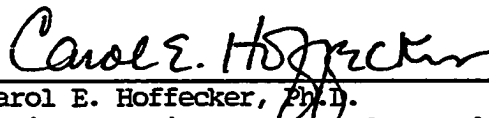
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My biggest debt of gratitude is owed to the owners of the houses in my study, who allowed me numerous visits and shared their own discoveries with me. Without the selfless cooperation of the Bobbitts, the Dussaults, the Cornelisons, Greenbriar Interiors, Claire Mitchell and his daughter Clare Timmons, the Oberles, the Rohmanns, the Schroaths, and Hale Farm and Village, there would have been no project. Much of my research was undertaken at the Western Reserve Historical Society, whose Museum and Library staff were enthusiastic helpers.

Pat Eldredge, Archivist for Sherwin-Williams Paint Company, was instrumental in taking paint samples, having them analyzed, and interpreting their results. Jessica Bond, Phyllis Keagan, and the Shelburne Museum allowed the comparison of Ohio stencil tracings with patterns in their own collections. Priscilla Graham and Jane Hageman were both generous with their research files on Western Reserve craftsmen. Several staff members at the Winterthur Museum offered valuable suggestions for further exploration; especially helpful were Kevin Sweeney, Bernard Herman, and my advisor, Ken Ames.

A special thank you goes to my husband, Michael, and my daughter, Jessie, who have patiently awaited the end of my pre-occupation with this project.



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## ABSTRACT

Painting plaster walls with stencils was one design option used in Western Reserve homes before 1860. This study of nine stencilled houses in the eleven-county area documents the designs, comparing them with contemporary New England and New York. The owners were evaluated in terms of occupation, financial status, community participation, and geographic origin in order to determine patterns in the preference for stencilling's use. Included is a biography of stenciller H. W. Sabin and an analysis of his craft practice. One section discusses the results of laboratory paint testing (casein), the pigments and method of manufacture. The designs are iconographically described and compared with other decorative arts of the era.

Business considerations are examined in Cleveland advertisements. An attempt to place stencilling in an economic spectrum along with its alternatives helps to form the conclusion that the choice was one of stylistic preference and availability rather than cost.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Painting repeated designs on plastered walls through a paper cut-out is a traditional decorative technique in Anglo-American culture. The first colonists were familiar with the art of stencilling (even though it was not known to have been used); according to this English historian, stencilling was common in Elizabethan England in the sixteenth century:

arabesque and other repetitive ornaments, like flower patterns and antique work, were frequently produced by means of stencils; but this mechanical device was frowned upon by the Painter-Stainers Company, who quite rightly regarded it as a 'great hinderer of ingenuity and a cherisher of idleness and laziness.'<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of stencilling has repeatedly crested and fallen in the history of American settlement, and has often followed geographic waves of prevalence. As was the case with most matters of style, the mid-Atlantic region was the first to adopt the "new" method of decoration directly from Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century, as evidenced in this advertisement of William Priest in 1795:

PAINTING In imitation of Paper-Hangings, By a mechanical process, which, from its facility, enables the operator to paint a room, stair-case, &c. upon lower terms than it is possible to hang it with paper of equal beauty. This method of painting (lately invented in Europe) being totally unknown in America, so of course are its many advantages; but as paper-hangings in a warm climate, are a receptacle for contagious infection, and a harbor for dust and vermin, it is to be presumed, this mode of painting will be found to answer all the purposes of papering without any of its inconveniences.<sup>2</sup>

Physical evidence of early use in the area survives in the George Read II house in New Castle, Delaware, which was stencil-decorated between 1804 and 1810.

Within twenty years, the process had infiltrated the country. In Charleston, South Carolina, a Mr. S. G. West advertised in the local newspaper in 1817 that he stencilled plastered rooms and staircases, and that he had been trained in London. New England is especially rich with stencilled dwellings, many of which were documented as folk art by Edward B. Allen in the 1920's<sup>3</sup> and Janet Waring in Decorative Stencilling on Walls and Furniture in 1937.<sup>4</sup> Though dated examples of stencilling are scarce, the New England houses are dated from around 1810 to the 1840's. As New Englanders moved westward, they carried with them stencils for decoration of the new houses in New York state,<sup>5</sup> Ohio, and Indiana.

The Connecticut Western Reserve is a three million acre tract of land in northeastern Ohio given to the state of

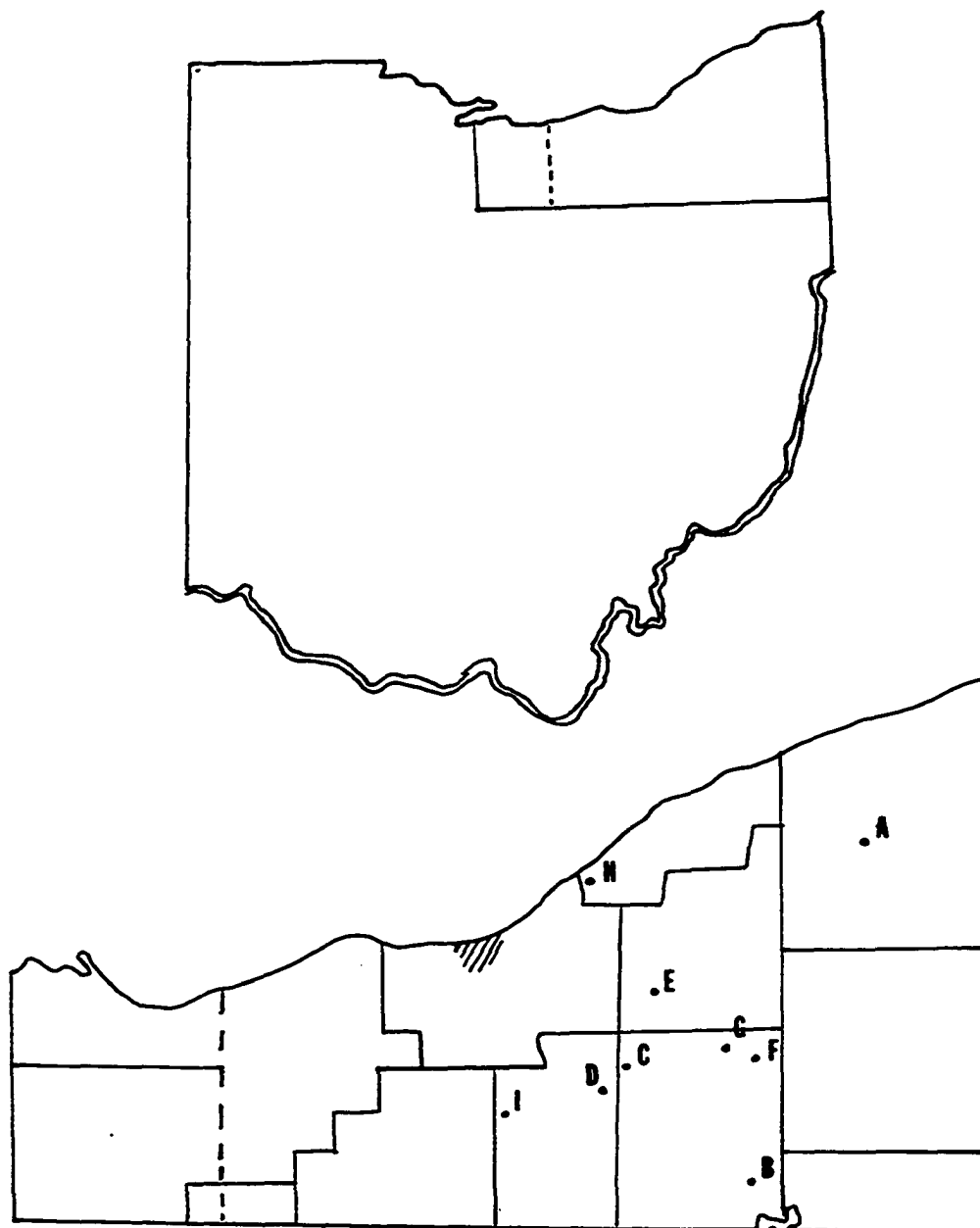
Connecticut to sell for support of its public school system. The eleven-county area was first surveyed in 1796 and settlers began to migrate in 1800; since the land was sold by New England agents (most notably the Connecticut Land Company) the majority of the settlers were from Connecticut and Massachusetts. The isolation of the early small towns combined with the frontiersmen's pre-occupation with survival to create simplistic domestic environments. When the Ohio Canal system opened in 1827, the latest goods and tastes were more quickly disseminated. By this time the population was large enough to support a network of craftsmen who could build, decorate, and furnish more elegant homes.

The evidence of surviving architecture in the Western Reserve is testimony to its inhabitants' preference for the federal and Greek Revival styles during the period of rapid growth from 1820 to 1850. Concurrent with this building spurt in Ohio was stencilling's zenith in popularity for reasons of cost, availability and durability. As the craft required little natural talent and few tools or materials, its popularity transferred to the Reserve quite readily.

This study is based on nine Western Reserve houses found to contain one or more rooms with stencilled walls (see their locations on the map in figure 1). The area presumably had many



more homes decorated in similar fashion; unfortunately, plaster walls are often painted, papered, or plastered over or removed for replastering during subsequent remodellings. Conservation and restoration of stencilled walls are usually not undertaken. These nine examples, however, should provide sufficient insight into the stencilling genre, as the avenues of economic and social status, cultural heritage, craft technique and marketing are explored.



**Figure 1** Map of Ohio showing Western Reserve area and detail of the Reserve marking stencilled houses.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HOUSES AND PEOPLE

The houses researched herein are given building dates usually derived from tax records; the organization is chronological according to the estimated stencil date. Unless the stencil design incorporates the date of the painting, it is generally assumed to have been painted shortly after the building date of the house.<sup>6</sup> In at least two cases, however, it is easily proven that the stencilling was done during a remodelling fifteen years after the building's completion; this may be true of many of the houses documented throughout the country.

#### E. N. House

The spacious and impressive federal-style house (figure 2) which dominates Ray's Corners in Lenox Township, Ashtabula County, was built there in 1819, the year Lenox opened its first sawmill. The owner, Colonel Erastus Norton House, emigrated to Ohio in 1811 from Sandisfield, Massachusetts, where he had served as a land agent;<sup>7</sup> his two hundred and thirty-three acre parcel of land was

payment for his sales. House built two log dwellings in the township before commissioning this more elaborate, permanent structure for his recently married second wife and his three small children.

Colonel House was a farmer (he owned the largest dairy herd in the county in 1844), with orchards, maple sugar groves, and cattle to keep him busy. In 1825 he was selected to be the first postmaster for the township, a business he operated from the old log cabin beside his house. Being conscientious of civic duties and married to a fanatically pious woman, House gave lodging to many youngsters, ministers, sick persons, and runaway slaves, and donated land for the Free Will Baptist Church and the local cemetery.<sup>8</sup> The Colonel and "Good Mother House" were, according to the preface of her memoirs, well-respected leaders of the community in temperance, abolition, and religion. At the time of his death in 1854, Mr. House's net worth was \$9389, double that of any other person in the township.<sup>9</sup>

The interior of the House dwelling was finished with simple yet delicate woodwork. The parlor and hall were both painted with stencil designs; the parlor designs were painted over without documentation, but the hall has been professionally restored in the original colors and patterns. Designs include common leaf and floral motifs, as well as the patriotic swag and bell frieze and a

neoclassical urn full of flowers. (See figures 3, 4, 5, and 6.) One sunflower motif and a vertical vine of carnations are nearly matches to those in the Ruggles house in Palmyra, Portage County, Ohio. More than half of the motifs in the House hall are similar to those found in western New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island.<sup>10</sup> The swag and bell and swastika designs were also painted in the Josiah Sage house in Sandisfield, Massachusetts, a house the Colonel may have visited.<sup>11</sup>

Abigail House, a native of Hartford County, Connecticut, was also probably familiar with stencilled decoration. She writes in her memoirs, however, that it was evil to have "trifling ornaments," to dance and find enjoyment in life.<sup>12</sup> The bold, bright patterns in her parlor and hall walls seem much too frivolous for this serious woman, unless their meaning was religious. The stencilling was probably visible into the second half of the nineteenth century, when the walls were painted a deep rose color.

Although the walls were painted by an unknown artisan, several likely candidates may be found. Through the years at least five ministers lived with the House family, and in 1835, "a young man came into Town to follow the mercantile business, and boarded with us."<sup>13</sup> S. N. Smalley arrived in nearby Jefferson in 1833 and was a successful ornamental painter there until 1852.<sup>14</sup> William Morton advertised for over five months in 1839 in the Ashtabula Sentinel

that he painted "in all its various branches," in the larger city of Ashtabula.<sup>15</sup> A house, ship, coach, and sign painter for Ashtabula County was Freeman Hull, known to have worked west of Jefferson and therefore near Lenox.<sup>16</sup> Any of these men could have done the work for House in a couple of days per room.

#### A. Ruggles

On a hill overlooking Palmyra Center in Portage County stands the federal-style house built by Artemas Ruggles between 1823 and 1826. (See figure 7.) The original six-room log frame house followed the central stairhall plan in which the wide stairhall separated two equal-sized rooms on each floor. Serving as the main homestead on a one hundred and sixty acre farm, the house was surrounded by a barn, granary, several acres of orchard, and fields.

Artemas Ruggles and his wife Esther Clinton Ruggles arrived with their children from New Milford, Connecticut, in 1807. Ruggles farmed nearly three hundred acres, and in his spare time returned to the blacksmithing trade in which he had trained in Connecticut.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the house are iron door latches probably forged by Ruggles himself.<sup>18</sup> Ruggles was certainly not the most landed owner in Palmyra, nor did he show the large amounts of cash value that some of the non-resident owners did. However, he was reportedly

a well-liked community leader, becoming a township officer in 1810. The Ruggles family donated land for the town's first cemetery the same year.

This Palmyra house was decorated with stencil designs in all three upstairs rooms. The master bedroom was painted in red and green on the white plaster in designs (figures 8 & 9) very similar to those found in New England, especially in the Josiah Sage house in Sandisfield, Massachusetts. The motifs in this room are stylized and angular, producing a bold masculine effect. Special treatment was given to the area between two windows bordered by the mirror rail and chair rail, where a concentrated sampler of most of the room's designs appears (figure 10). Three of the designs (compare figure 9 with figure 3) nearly match the House stencils in Lenox; three different designs are comparable to those found in the Little house in Aurora, Ohio (compare figure 9 with figure 15). The second bedroom shows curvilinear floral motifs in orange, green and brown, again on an unpainted plaster ground. (See figures 11-13.) The only portion of the stairhall stencilling seen showed a pattern repeated from the master bedroom in red and green.

In most documented cases of wall stencilling, the rooms viewed by the public were more likely to be painted than the sleeping chambers. It is probably safe to assume the three

downstairs rooms had stencilled walls also, although the wallpaper was not removed to investigate.

Ten miles away in Ravenna was a T. Carnahan who advertised as a painter of fancy chairs, houses, and signs in 1829.<sup>19</sup> M. Carnahan continued the family business as a painter and paperhanger. From 1841 to 1843 his apprentice was eighteen-year-old Thomas R. Williams of Palmyra, who became a journeyman painter and eventually bought the Carnahan business. Thomas's father William J. Williams, an immigrant from Wales in 1830, was also a painter by trade.<sup>20</sup> If the Ruggles house was stencilled before 1841, when Thomas began his apprenticeship, one of the other men might have been the painter.

#### W. G. Little

South of Aurora in Portage County is the federal-style home built by Warren G. Little (see figure 14). The rear ell of the house was the original dwelling built before 1825; the more elaborate stencilled portion of the structure was added in 1830.<sup>21</sup> Little built the house on 54 of his 170 acres, using the remainder for crops and a herd of dairy cattle. Little was an ordained Congregational minister, though he seems never to have been dependent on the Church for his livelihood in Ohio. He and his soon-to-be second wife travelled together in a group of settlers from Middlefield,



Massachusetts, in 1812; they lived on this same property from 1815, yet did not build the larger home until Warren was fifty years old.<sup>22</sup>

Warren Little leaves no trace of having been an active community leader, but his participation in the cheese industry apparently brought him financial prominence; his net worth in 1860 was \$16,620.<sup>23</sup>

The best parlor in the central-chimney-plan house boasts a beautifully carved mantel attributed to Lemuel Porter, master builder of many of nearby Hudson's finer homes. This parlor shows no evidence of stencil painting. The opposing hall was painted in red, green, blue-green and probably yellow on a white ground. (See figures 15-17.) The pineapple vine border is especially reminiscent of the Josiah Sage house design in Sandisfield, Massachusetts, where the details of the pineapples were painted in yellow over the red ovals.<sup>24</sup> The urn matches exactly the one at the Sage house. The bell motif and acorn vertical are similar to those in Lenox (figure 3), and the carnation and floral verticals compare with designs in the Ruggles house (figure 9).

An unclear inscription in pencil on the plaster indicates the stencilling was present at the time of the writing, which is headed, "June 22, 1844." Mrs. Susan Little died in 1838, and by

1844 Warren Little had married his third wife. The popularity of stencilled walls was far from decreased in the 1840's, yet the designs themselves seem to compare stylistically with those of the 1820's and 1830's in New England. These walls were probably painted between 1830 when the house was completed and 1838 when its mistress died.

No clue remains to the painter's identity. The local chair factory might have employed a journeyman painter. One other house in Aurora destroyed before 1940 also had stencilled walls.<sup>25</sup>

#### E. S. Wooden

The cobbler shop of Hine & Wooden was built on Hudson's Main Street in Summit County in 1832 (figure 18). Elixius S. Wooden, the resident, bought his partner's interest in the joint property the next year and sold the house in 1834 on its third of an acre. Between 1834 and 1847 the property was bought and sold several times.<sup>26</sup> Because of the rapidity with which the property changed hands, it is likely that any stencilling was done during its initial ownership. Although spacious and well-located for commerce, the Wooden house was not particularly lavish in its interior decoration, attested to by fairly plain mouldings and flat corner blocks on opening surrounds in the parlor.

Wooden was neither a significant community leader nor a financial genius, and when he left Hudson in 1834 it was to seek his fortune in Louisiana.<sup>27</sup> By 1850 Wooden appeared in the Cleveland census, this time as a lumber dealer worth \$1000 in real and personal property; he and his wife were both born in Connecticut, according to the census.

The front stairhall and parlor were both stencilled in patterns different from one another. There are no surviving photographs or descriptions of the stair designs, but tracings of the parlor stencils were made in 1972 for restoration purposes (figure 19). The stencilling is now covered with wallpaper in both areas.

The patterns in the Wooden parlor were all similar to designs painted by Moses Eaton, Jr., a prolific stencil painter from Hancock, New Hampshire;<sup>28</sup> four of the designs are perfect matches with stencils in Eaton's kit, now the property of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston.<sup>29</sup> Unproven rumors maintain that the itinerant travelled to Ohio once during his career, and that Eaton sold designs through the mail. The popular hospitality pineapple and other Wooden designs have been found in six houses in New Hampshire, three in Maine, and others in Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts.

Since Hudson was the home of the Western Reserve College from 1826 to 1882, many talented students and craftspeople were drawn to the community. No specific painters advertised, however, until the 1850's.<sup>30</sup>

### J. Morton

A small 1841 farmhouse built in Newbury, Geauga County, was occupied by sheep farmer Joseph Morton and his wife Polly (see figure 20). Their earlier home on a nearby parcel of land was larger, and probably was abandoned because most of their six children were grown. Only nine years after the house's construction, the Mortons retired to live with their daughter in Parkman, selling the 237-acre farm to a son.<sup>31</sup> A native of Oneida County, New York, Joseph Morton had prospered well in Ohio: in 1850 when he sold the farm he owned real estate valued at \$2000, 5 horses, 22 cows, 230 sheep, 1 hog, a carriage, and \$300 in cash,<sup>32</sup> making him among the five wealthiest residents in the county. Morton had been living in the area since at least 1812, when he served in the militia from Parkman.<sup>33</sup>

The parlor and dining room were stencilled with the patriotic swag and bell motif, urns of flowers, and other designs (see figure 21) reminiscent of the houses in Palmyra and Aurora, Ohio, as well as two in Vermont, one in Rhode Island, one in New

York, one in Massachusetts, and one in Polly Morton's native Connecticut. According to family tradition Mrs. Morton was blind; if she were in the process of becoming blind, the large bright designs may have been easier for her to see than a small subtle wallpaper pattern. The decoration most likely was painted soon after the house was built, indicated by the open spacing of the designs like that of earlier work in New England. The plaster walls are now covered over so that none of the stencilling is visible.<sup>34</sup>

No artist's name is associated with the Morton house. A Barton F. Avery worked in the area from 1816 to at least 1830 painting tavern signs and furniture.<sup>35</sup>

#### J. G. Stevens

The twelve-room Greek Revival residence built on 25 acres in Nelson, Portage County (figure 22), is a rare case study which answers several questions about the relationships of the owner, the builder, and the painter to a particular house.

Benjamin Fenn owned the property from 1821 to 1839, and from the indications of his tax records the house was built between 1827 and 1830.<sup>36</sup> The preacher was active throughout the Western Reserve; he served on committees for the Western Reserve College in Hudson and the Nelson Academy, and was instrumental in raising

a building fund for the first Nelson Church erected in 1825. The builder of that church (and the house) may have been Fenn's friend Lemuel Porter, a master builder then working in Hudson.<sup>37</sup>

When Fenn left the county he sold his property to local physician John Gordon Stevens, who owned it during its 1843 stencilling. Being one of the wealthiest men in the township and the father of five children, Stevens purchased the most prominent large home in Nelson. Two years after the Stevens moved in, Mrs. Isabella Stevens died. The doctor then married his dead wife's sister Mary in May of 1843, just seven months before the stencilling was dated; the decoration may have been Mary's way of changing the house to reflect her own tastes. Both Mr. and Mrs. Stevens emigrated from Massachusetts as young adults.

The parlor and stairhall of the Nelson house were stencilled, the parlor much more neatly than the hall. (See figures 23-26.) The parlor decoration consists of the typical wide cornice frieze, a thin floral stripe bordering all sides of the room openings, and the rest is an all-over pattern dominated by laurel wreaths whose centers are on a precise twelve-inch grid. The effect is the same as the results of a proper wallpapering, where a pattern would be put on the wall first and the cut edges covered by smaller paper borders. The parlor is painted in red, orange, green, brown and yellow on an ochre ground, and the front wall above the mirror rail

bears the freehand inscription, "H. W. Sabin, Room Painter,  
Dec. 21st 1843." (See figure 26.)

The stairhall is covered with a diaper pattern containing daisies in red and green on bare plaster, and its frieze is an orange blossom (figure 27), popularized by the use of that flower in the 1840 wedding of Victoria and Albert. In this room there is no base paint layer, there are no thin borders for doorways and windows, and the geometric grid formed by the diamond pattern is far from perfect. The signature in this instance was a stencilled, "H. W. Sabin &," the ampersand possibly present on the stencil to connect the word "sons," "company," or a second surname, which was omitted for this project (see figure 28).

The signature and date painted on the Nelson walls illuminate certain points about the decoration. Most obviously, the identity of the painter was given, enabling his biography to be found (this has been pursued in the next chapter). The not-often-seen date provided implies the amount of time needed for the stencil process (one day); feeds the theory that much nineteenth-century craft work was performed in the off season from farming; and firmly dates the decoration, in contrast to the established dating system based on style, whose entire network rests upon speculation.<sup>40</sup> Another important aspect of the date is the determination of the time lag

between the building's construction and its decoration, a factor that might well be remembered in looking at other houses whose decoration is undatable.

The John Graves house in Junius, New York, uses both the laurel wreath and the rose designs common to the Nelson house but not taken from New England houses the way so many of Ohio's designs were. Two other patterns are similar to those found in New York houses.

#### J. I. Young

James I. Young emigrated to Ohio as a child, his family having moved from Sterling, Connecticut, to North Providence, Rhode Island, to Hiram in Portage County in 1811. By 1828 Young owned two parcels of land in the township, which he farmed, and had inherited money from his father, the local tailor. Since James married the daughter of local builder Peletiah Allyn, there is a strong possibility that the 1834 Young house (figure 29) was built by Allyn or his house-joiner son.<sup>41</sup> Given the local prominence of both the Youngs and the Allens, the modest size and austerity of the new home is puzzling, especially considering that Young had seven children. Built on 19 acres, the federal house incorporates simple mouldings, mantels, and exterior door surrounds.



The parlor and small chamber behind it were stencilled, both in three colors on bare plaster. The parlor plaster was removed before the designs could be determined. The small chamber, however, used the same layout and shared a common design with the Stevens house five miles away in Nelson. (See figures 30 & 31.) On the basis of the matching laurel wreath pattern and the proximity of the two houses, the Young house has been attributed to Henry W. Sabin, the painter of the Stevens house; the Young house may or may not have been decorated at the same time as the Nelson house in 1843.

The ivy motif found in the Young house frieze is similar to those found in New Hampshire and Vermont, while the laurel wreath symbolic of both the Republic and ancient Rome was known to have been used in New York stencils. The stencilling no longer exists in either room, the poor condition of the plaster having forced its removal.

W. P. Robinson

Seemingly prosperous mill owner William Peck Robinson came to Chagrin (now Willoughby) in Lake County in 1827. On part of his 170 acres of land Robinson commissioned master builder Jonathan Goldsmith to build a beautiful eleven-room house (figures 32-34)

between 1829 and 1831.<sup>42</sup> In 1831 Robinson died suddenly, leaving his wife and four children with barely enough money to cover the debts of the estate; their state of genteel poverty was prolonged by years of financial mismanagement on the part of Robinson's son-in-law, the designated guardian for the Robinson children. The unfortunate decline in building funds forced Caroline Robinson to live in her new house before the interior decoration was complete; the plaster walls were not papered or painted for several years, and the parlor was not decorated until 1845.<sup>43</sup>

Having been raised as a gentlewoman in Goshen, Connecticut, Caroline Buell Robinson found frontier life to be particularly trying. Her poverty reduced the household staff to about three persons, and ultimately led to her taking in boarders and later renting out the main block of the house while she moved to one of the small side wings. Caroline's deep religious convictions helped to sustain her spirits. An added comfort was the knowledge that her three younger children were being well educated at Yale University despite the expense.

From the indications of family letters, the Robinsons did not interact extensively with their Ohio community. The children lived in Connecticut most of the time and were visited frequently by their mother. If not for Mr. Robinson's early demise, Caroline

might have devoted more attention to social affairs in her new home, and the family would probably have exhibited a certain amount of community leadership.

The one area stencilled in this house was an upstairs sitting room (see figures 35-38), painted with a twenty-seven eagle frieze; each eagle is surmounted by twenty-seven stars representative of the states in the Union. Since the twenty-seventh state was added March 3, 1845, and the twenty-eighth was added December 29, 1845, the stencil decoration can thus be dated to that time span or shortly thereafter. Two boarders named Burgess and Benson were in residence by November 14th of that year<sup>44</sup> and either could possibly have bartered for his board by painting. Since 1845 was the year Caroline was given money for fixing up the parlor, she might have hired local talent at that time to add color to the upstairs as well. At least one house and sign painter, Simon S. Hickok, advertised in Painesville from 1839 to 1845.<sup>45</sup>

The design concept is typical of earlier stencilled walls in which the large areas beneath a deep frieze are widely divided by evenly-spaced verticals, interspersed with various floral or geometric motifs. Often, as seen here, a particular design is used only next to the boxed corner posts, or only above openings. The Robinson house has grape vine verticals growing out of neo-classical urns near the baseboard. The cyma curve and star motif

at the baseboard was derived from wallpaper strips representing twisted festoons of fabric, and is one of the rare instances of stencils actually imitating a wallpaper motif.

At least six of the designs from the Robinson sitting room match exactly with those in the Farmersville Inn in Farmersville, New York.<sup>46</sup> The eagle design from the Farmersville Inn differs in that its 26 stars indicate an earlier painting date, yet the stars were not moved in the least to accomodate the 27th star in the Ohio pattern. The same stencils might have been transferred physically from New York to Willoughby by the painter, in contrast to the many instances where the concept and iconography are transferred but a new interpretation is employed.

The Robinson house was moved to Hale Farm and Village where it has been painstakingly restored, including three of the four walls of stencilling.

#### C. N. Jagger

The more urban dwelling of Clement N. Jagger was built on an acre of land at Hammond's Corners in Bath Township, Summit County, around 1845 (figure 39). The Greek Revival house has seven compact rooms, and the woodwork and paint throughout show great attention to detail. Jagger was a native of West Richfield

(also in Bath Township) who moved to Hammond's corners in 1852 and set up shop as a wagon maker in the building beside his home. His wife, Jane Jagger, enjoyed renown as a descendant of Oliver Hazard Perry. By the end of his life Clement Jagger was listed in the county atlas as one of the wealthiest men in the area.<sup>47</sup>

The central sitting room (the parlor was in a wing) of the Jagger house was stencilled in eleven-inch wide vertical stripes of alternating acanthus-leaf design and another floral motif (see figures 40-42), with the intertwining pattern running continuously the way a Victorian wallpaper might. The rich colors--ochre ground with black, green, blue, and gray--are also later in fashion than 1845, and probably date from 1850 to 1860. The decoration, then, documents a transition from the earlier simple and brightly colored motifs to the heavy ornate motifs of the rococco revival era.

By the mid-nineteenth century, most wagon makers were either talented in the arts of carriage painting or employed someone who was. The acanthus leaf pattern is very linear and displays a similarity to striping and scrollwork. The other floral motifs are shaded in the manner of furniture stencilling, a component of the experience of many wagon painters.<sup>48</sup> Clement Jagger might possibly have painted his own walls; more likely one of his employees did.

The Jagger house was moved from its original site to Hale Farm and Village, located in the same township. The stencilled walls have been restored, while the best preserved panel of original paint is still visible. This specimen was included because its dating fits into the stencilling continuum at the end of the early American period just before the Civil War. Its elaborate designs hint at the complexity and sophistication of Victorian stencilling twenty years in the future, while simultaneously using a technique made nearly obsolete by the availability and low cost of domestic wallpapers.



Figure 2 Exterior of E. N. House house, Lenox, 1819.

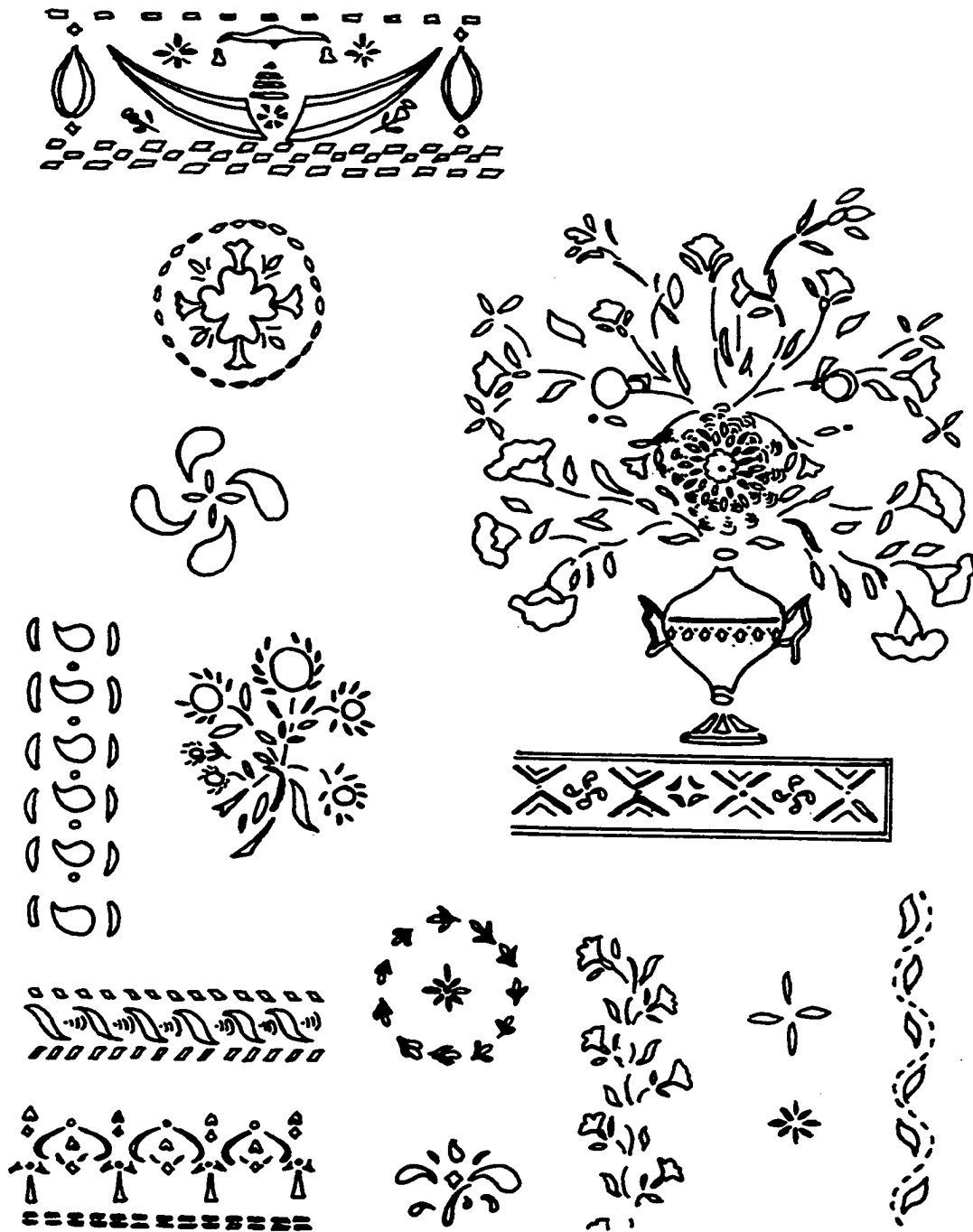


Figure 3 House house, design renderings.



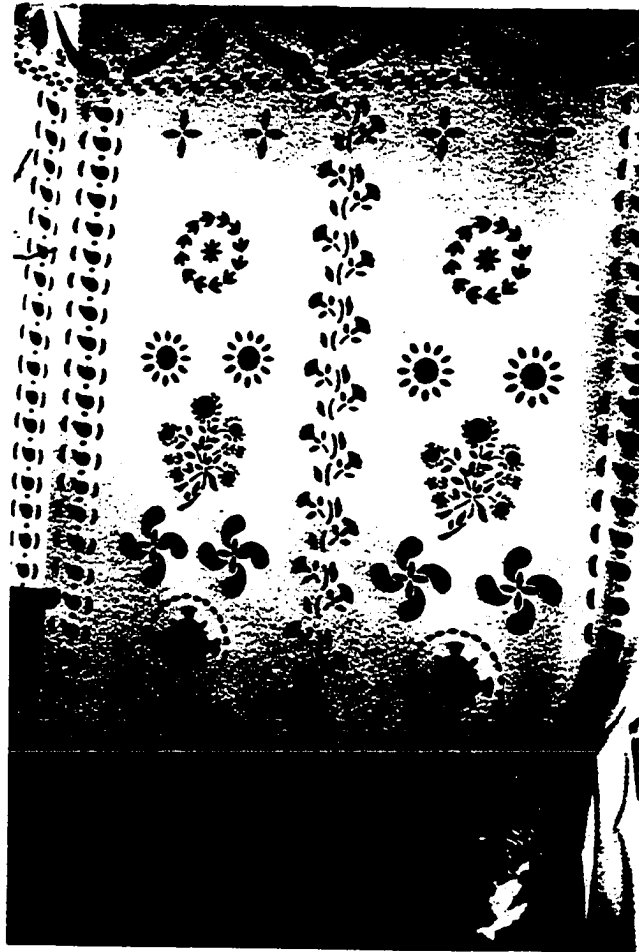


Figure 4 House house interior, restored patterns.

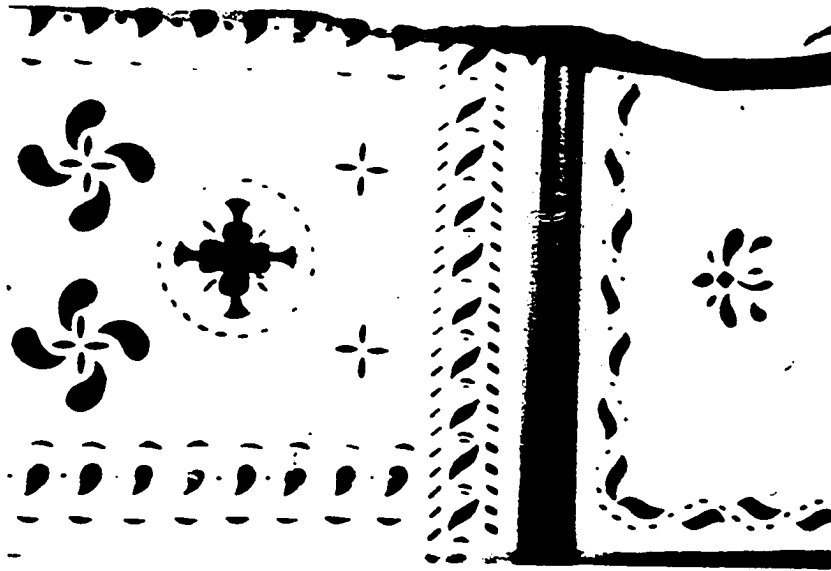


Figure 6 House house interior,  
detail.

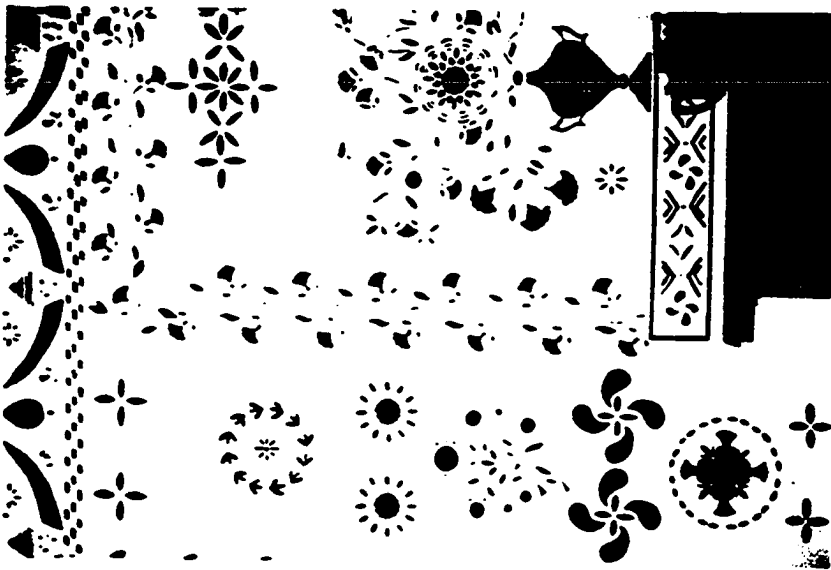


Figure 5 House house interior,  
fireplace wall.



Figure 7 Exterior of Ruggles house, Palmyra, 1823-26.



Figure 8 Ruggles house interior, master bedroom.

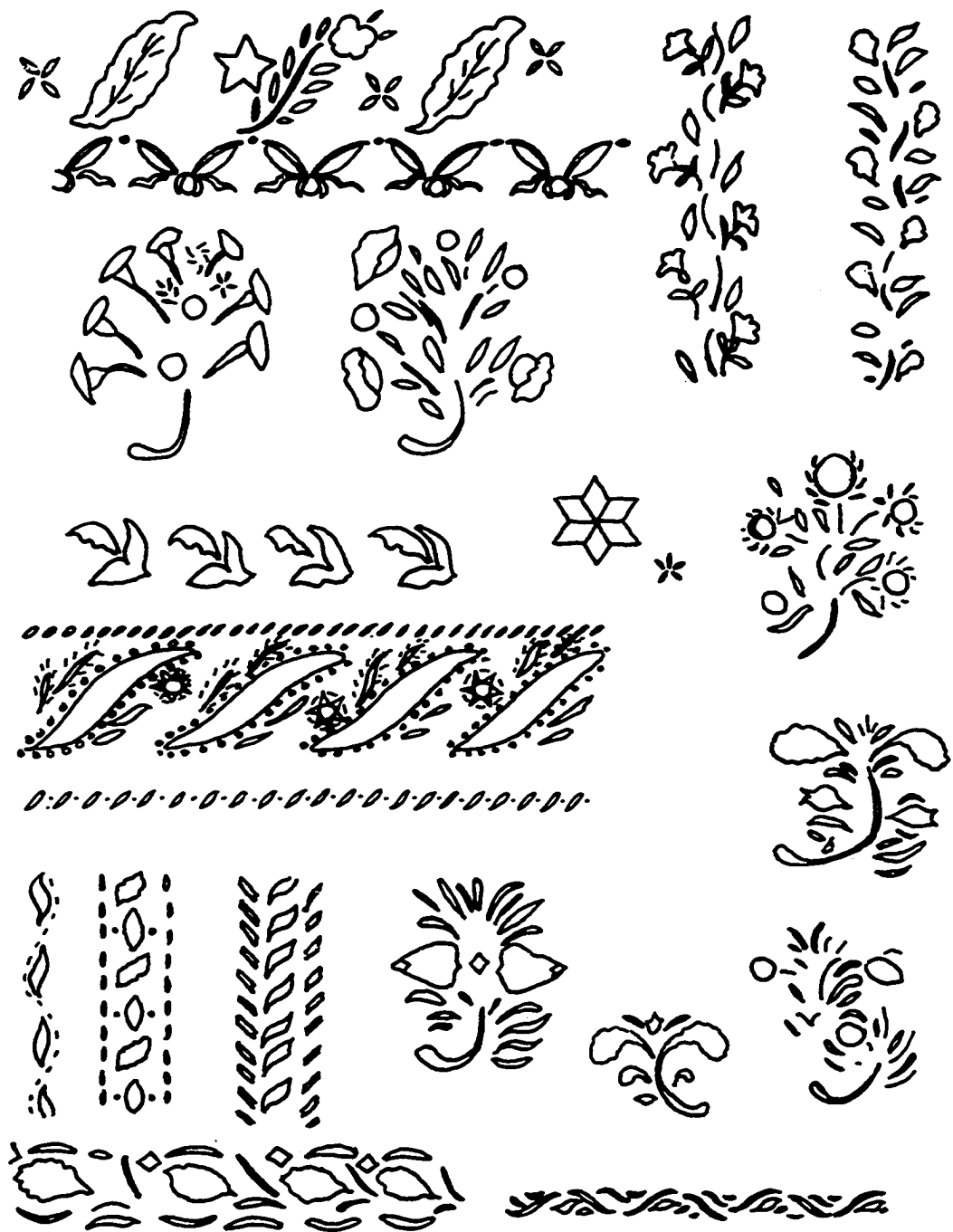


Figure 9 Ruggles house, design renderings.

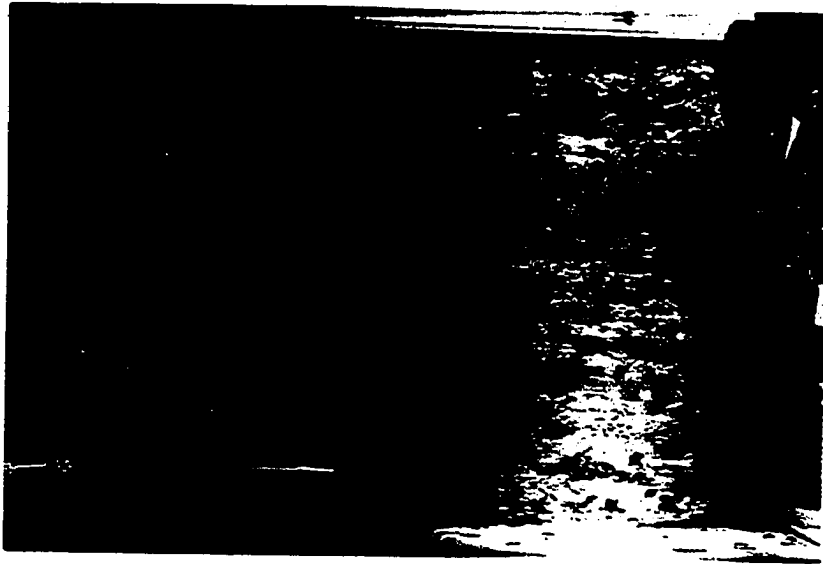


Figure 11 Ruggles house, second bedroom.



Figure 10 Ruggles house, master bedroom detail.

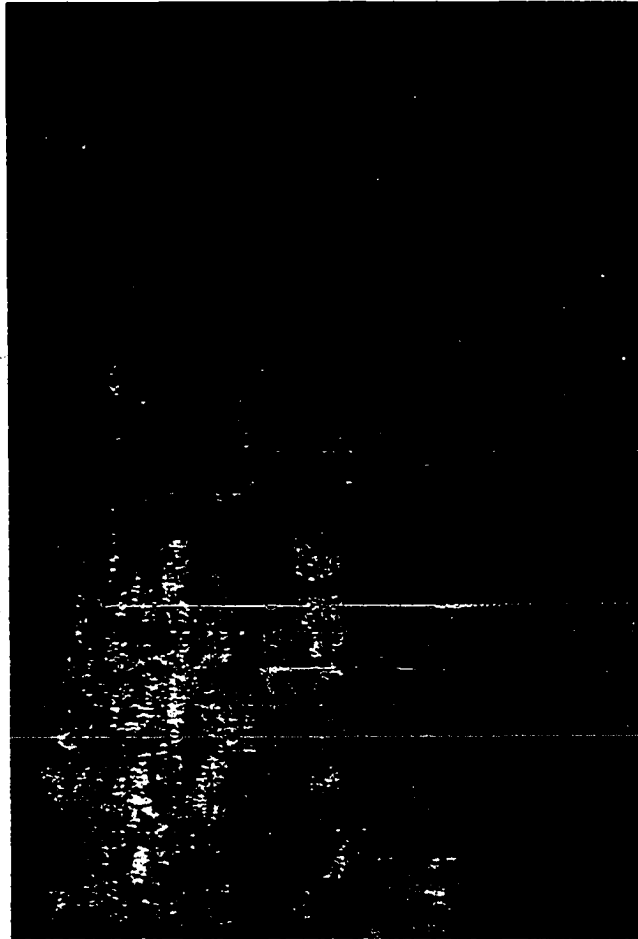


Figure 12 Ruggles house, second bedroom detail.

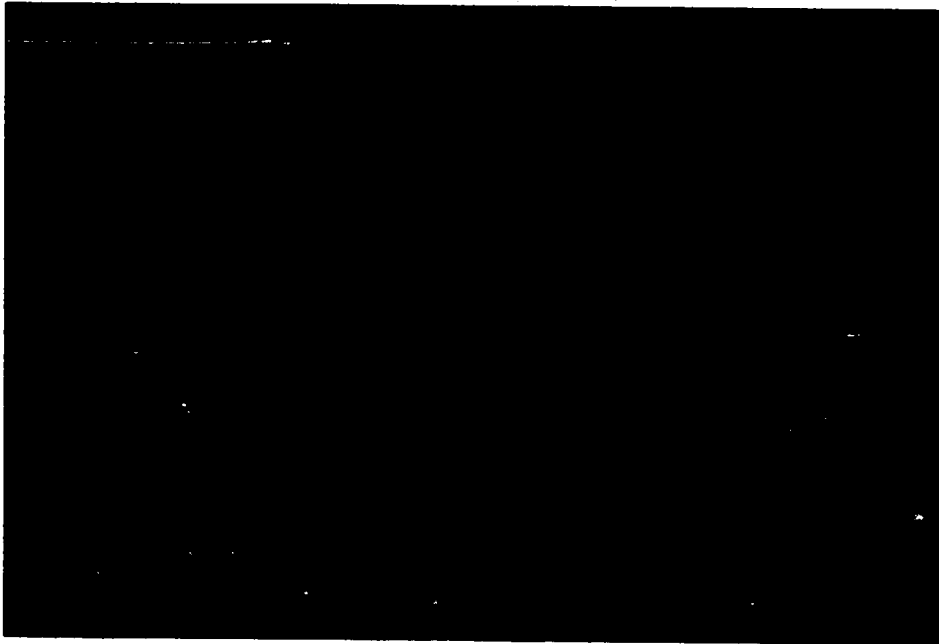


Figure 13 Ruggles house, second bedroom frieze.



Figure 14 Exterior of Little house, Aurora, 1830.

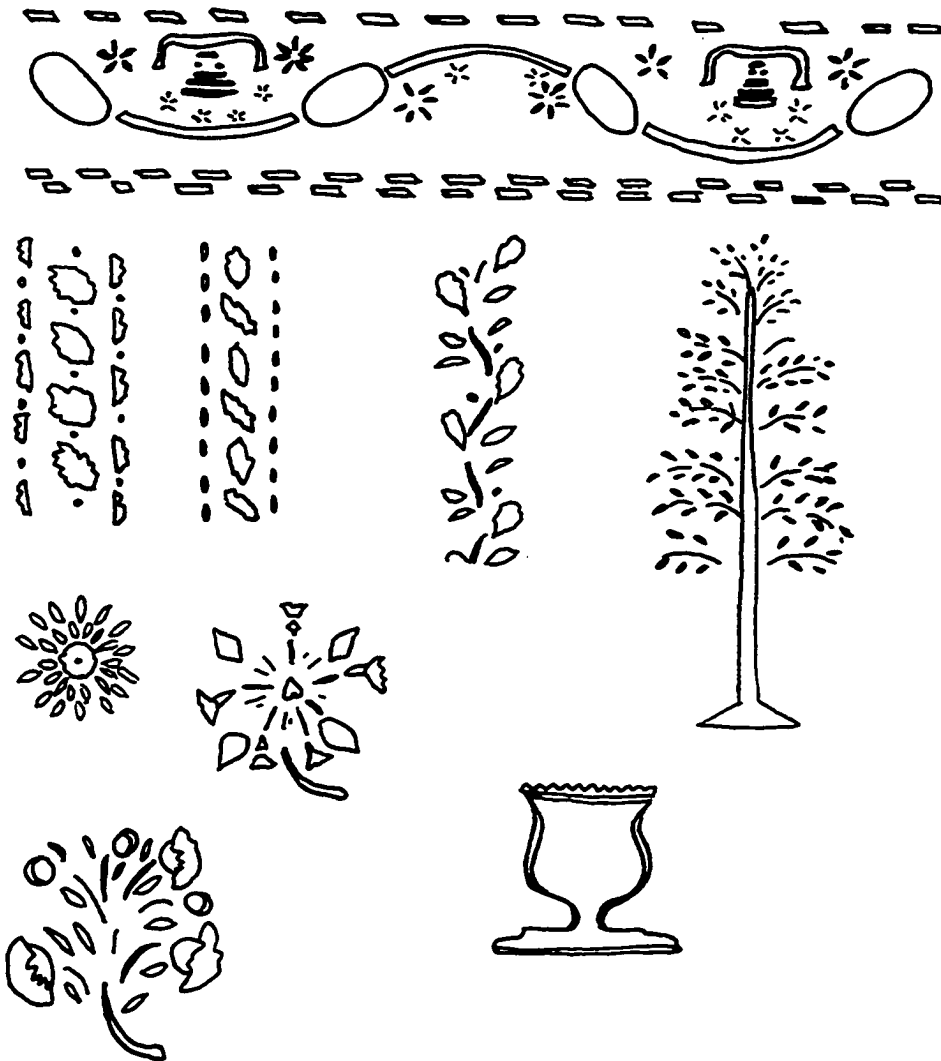


Figure 15 Little house, design renderings.





Figure 16 Little house, hall stencils.

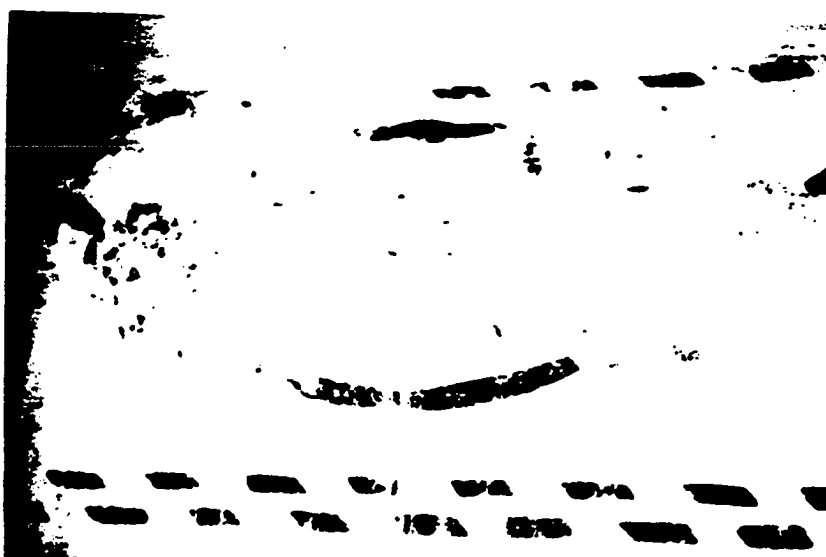


Figure 17 Little house, interior.



Figure 18 Exterior of Wooden house, Hudson, 1832.



Figure 19 Wooden house, design renderings.



Figure 20 Exterior of Morton house, Newbury, 1841.

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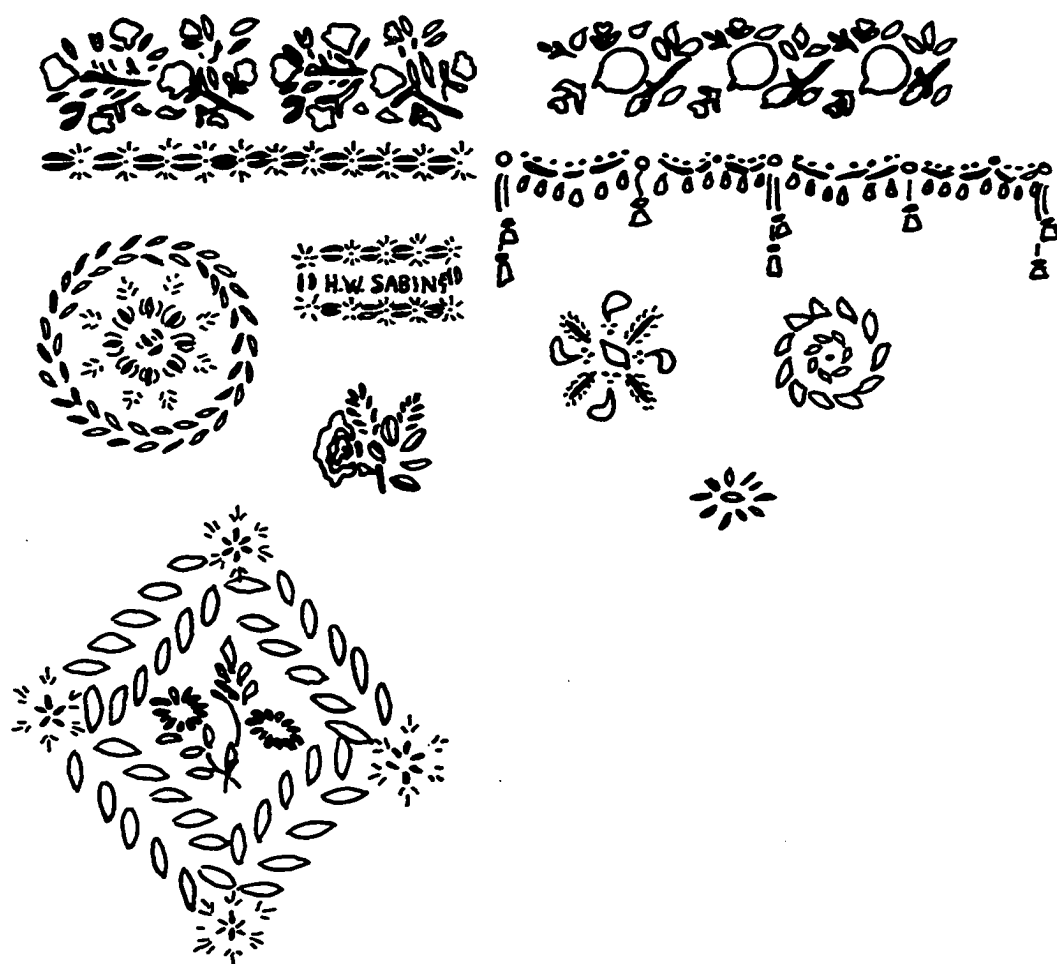
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Figure 22 Exterior of Stevens house, Nelson, 1827-30.



*H. W. Sabin, Room Painter. Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> 1843*

Figure 23 Stevens house, design renderings.



Figure 24 Stevens house, parlor.

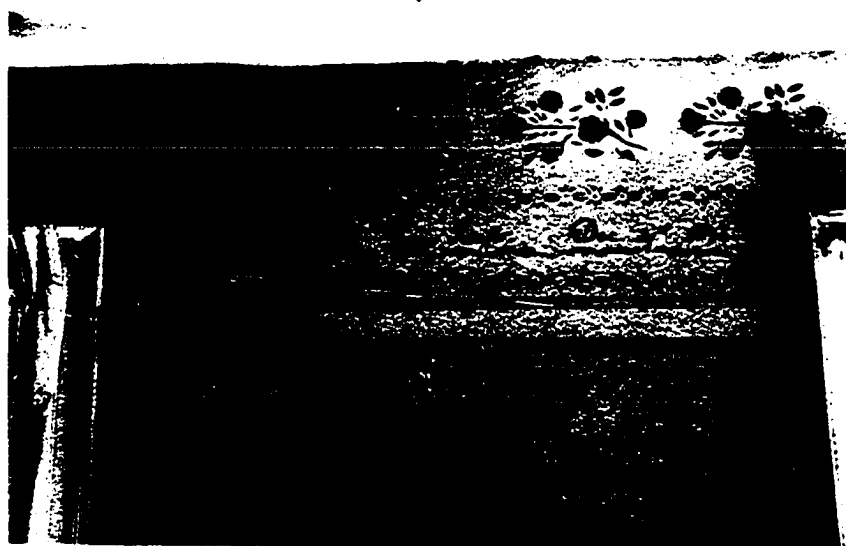


Figure 25 Stevens house, parlor inscription.





Figure 26 Stevens house, parlor detail.

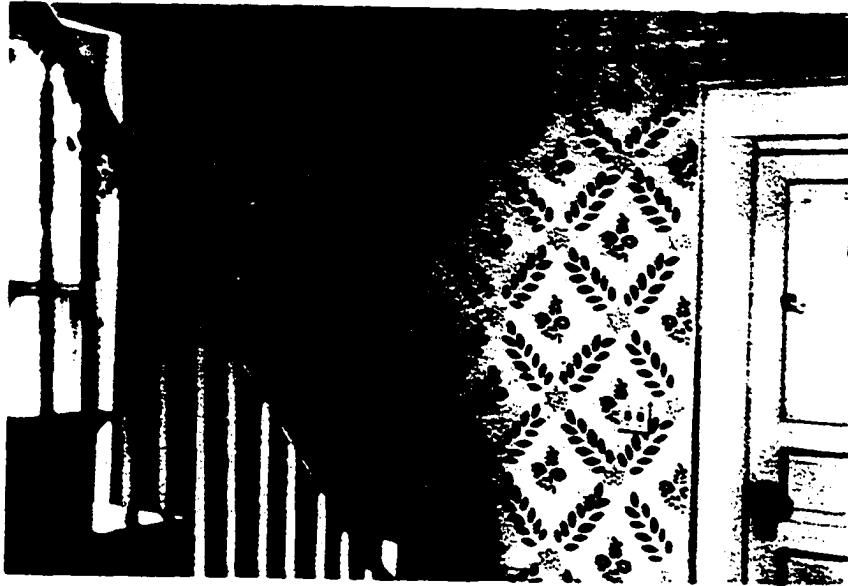


Figure 27 Stevens house, hall.



Figure 28 Stevens house, hall inscription.

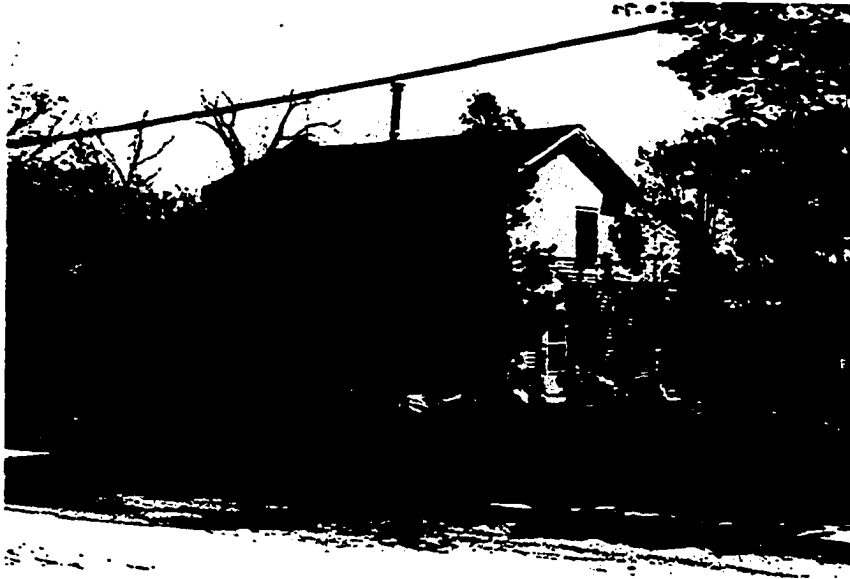


Figure 29 Exterior of Young house, Hiram, 1834.



Figure 30 Young house, design renderings.



Figure 31 Young house, small chamber detail:



Figure 32 Exterior of Robinson house, Willoughby, 1830-31.



Figure 33 Robinson house, interior woodwork detail.

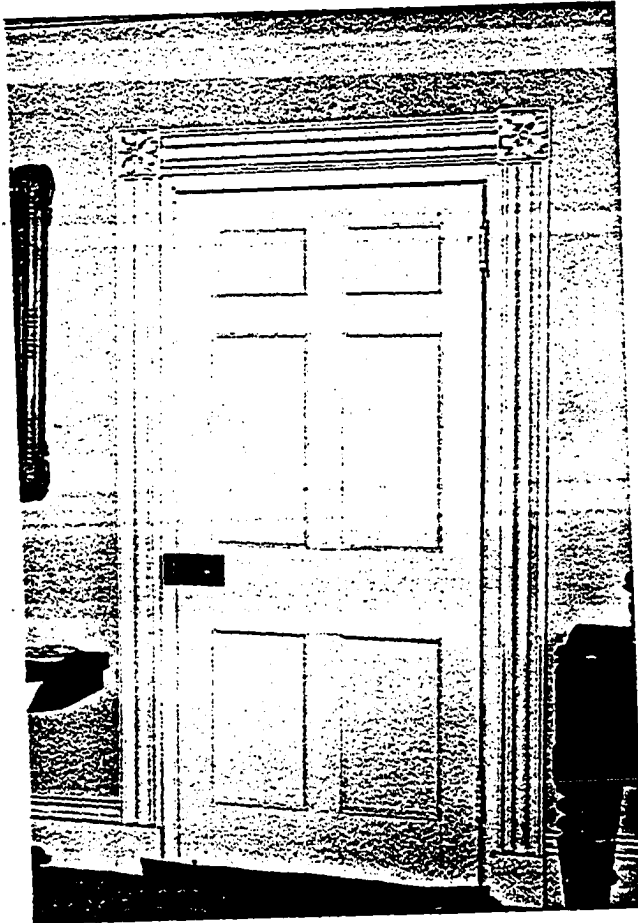


Figure 34 Robinson house, interior woodwork detail.



Figure 35 Robinson house, design renderings.

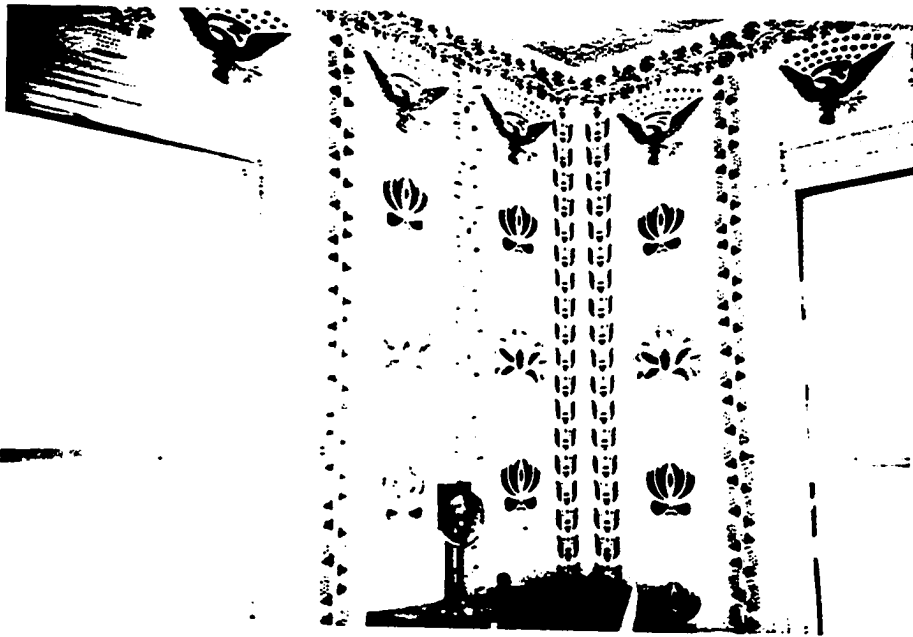


Figure 36 Robinson house, upstairs sitting room.

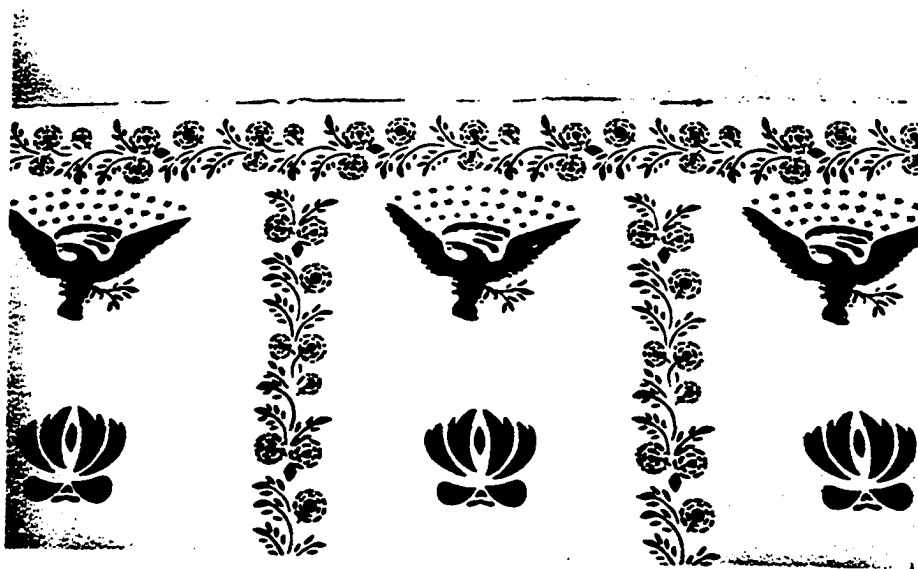


Figure 37 Robinson house, detail of eagle.



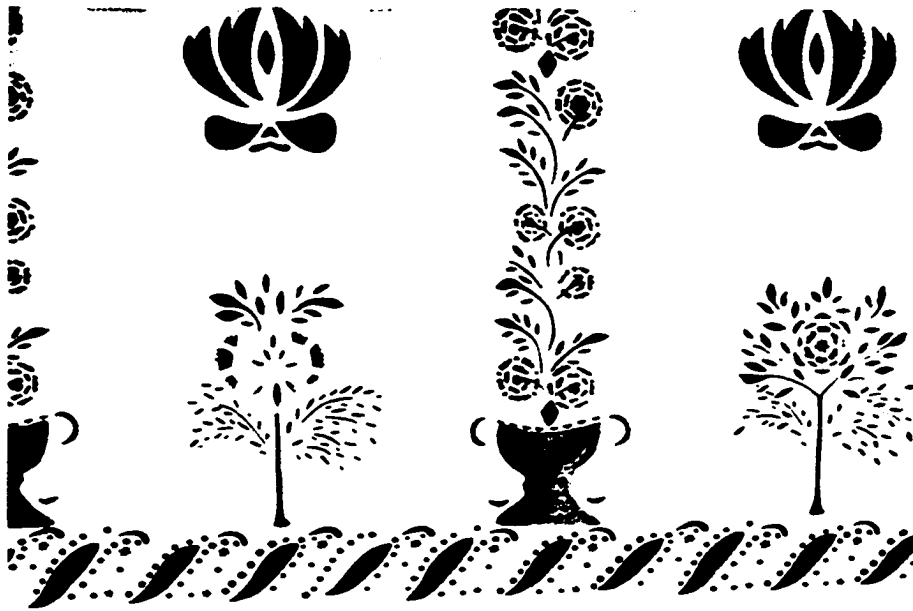


Figure 38 Robinson house, detail.



Figure 39 Exterior of Jagger house, Bath, c. 1845.



Figure 40 Jagger house, design renderings.

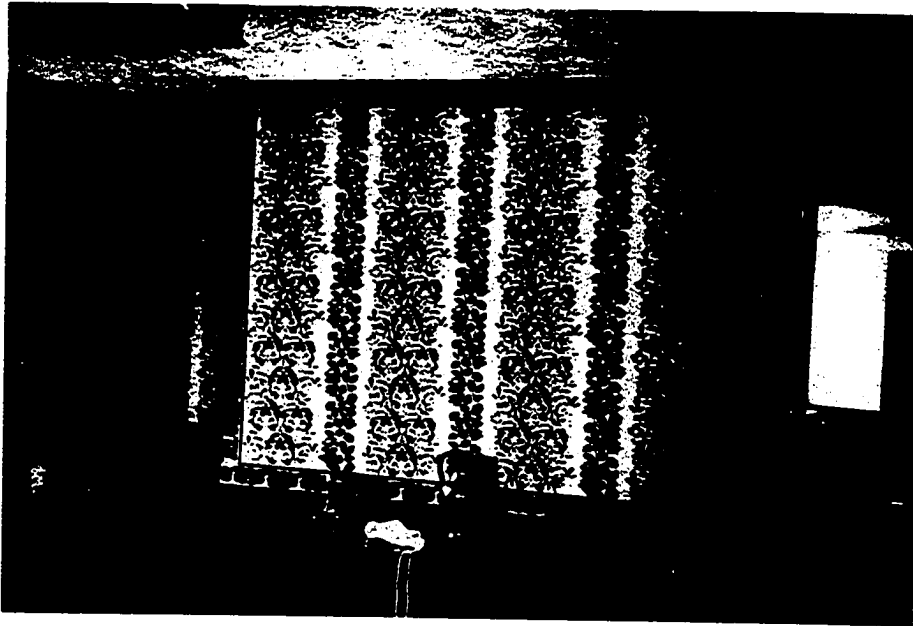


Figure 41 Jagger house, sitting room.



Figure 42 Jagger house, sitting room detail.

### CHAPTER III

#### STUDY OF A PAINTER: H. W. SABIN

The only H. Sabin listed in the census for Ohio between 1796 and 1870 was Henry Wells Sabin (1795-1871), a native of Rockingham, Vermont. The third son in a household of eight children, Henry was probably not groomed to undertake the management of the family farm; he might also have wanted to escape the shadow of the greatness of his father, the local physician and a church benefactor. As a youth, Sabin lived in nearby Brattleboro, where he may have been apprenticed to a painter. In 1820 he travelled on foot to Cleveland, Ohio, and settled on 108 acres in Strongsville. It is not known what drew him to Ohio; the other Sabins in the Western Reserve were very distantly related to him, if at all. He had most likely purchased Ohio land in New England and came West to investigate; soon after his arrival he returned to Brattleboro for his bride, Clarissa Church.<sup>49</sup>

The Sabins lived on their Strongsville farm in Cuyahoga County, with its woods, orchards, and fields, from 1821 to 1850. In the census Henry consistently called himself a farmer. He was

active in the community from the beginning, becoming a township appraiser in 1824<sup>50</sup> and undertaking various highway projects. Clarissa Sabin devoted her time to raising eight children and teaching a community school in their home. The few mentions of Sabin in the Cleveland newspapers were for being delinquent in taxes (1822),<sup>51</sup> buying a stray mare for \$45, and making the best fifteen yards of flannel for the fair.<sup>52</sup> No advertisement for Sabin as a craftsman has been found.

With much regret Sabin left Strongsville to move to Hudson in Summit County, a town equally near to Cleveland and much more promising in the area of academia. It was Mrs. Sabin's wish that her children be educated at Western Reserve College in Hudson; the house they rented and later purchased was on two-thirds of an acre directly across the street from the college grounds.<sup>53</sup> That same year, in 1850, Clarissa died, but Henry remained on the same property until his own death in 1871. Other than some land speculation in 1869, Sabin owned no property in Hudson except for his two-thirds of an acre, and he still listed himself as a farmer. His savings (according to the tax returns) was seemingly insufficient to afford retirement, but gradually increased as he sold off his three parcels of land in Strongsville. Ever interested in transportation, Sabin became the Superintendent of Roads and Highways in Hudson in 1855.<sup>54</sup>

A photographic portrait of Sabin appeared in the 1903 The History of Strongsville, Cuyahoga County, Ohio.<sup>55</sup> Another photograph of Henry with two of his brothers was taken in Vermont, probably when he returned for the funeral of his mother in 1860. (See figure 43.)<sup>56</sup> Since artists often became daguerreotypists, Sabin's earlier portrait might have been the work of a friend or acquaintance; not many rural Midwesterners had had their likeness taken before 1850.

Sabin's financial status, while never truly remarkable, was always secure. His net worth peaked in 1862 when he was assessed at \$798 in real estate and \$3069 in personal property; during his years in Hudson his net worth consistently fell in the top ten percent of Hudson residents. At his death Sabin was worth \$1077.<sup>57</sup>

This information helps to recreate Sabin's life, but what does it say about his craft? The stereotypical concept of the nineteenth-century stenciller is the one set forth in Janet Waring's Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture in 1937 and reiterated for decades by proponents of folk art, that the painters were itinerants peddling their talents around the country in exchange for room and board. While Sabin did not live in the Nelson-Hiram area where he painted, he did have a home forty miles

away, an established occupation, and a family to whom he probably returned after only a couple of days' absence. His was not the life of a rootless wanderer, but that of a businessman who would employ any and all of his talents in the pursuit of financial enrichment.

The phenomenon of farmers performing many side jobs in the off season and still considering themselves primarily farmers has been noted in other studies of early nineteenth-century rural culture.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps a multi-talented craftsman would not find the variety and quantity of odd jobs if he were associated with one specific occupation, whereas it was assumed that a frontier farmer would have to be experienced at many tasks. More likely the census taker made the decision based on the occupation bringing the greatest income.

No advertisements of Sabin's work could be found. Oral advertisement was a viable method in the nineteenth century, but would news travel from Strongsville to Nelson? Perhaps a mutual friend connected the artist and John Stevens. Perhaps Sabin was employed occasionally as a journeyman painter for a Cleveland decorating concern, under whose name any advertising would have appeared. The rare signature (fewer than twenty stencillers' names are known from this era) may have been an attempt at gaining

recognition as an artist independent of the contracting firm. The lack of a complete investigation of the Young parlor before its destruction is unfortunate, since it would be interesting to know whether or not there was a signature.

The distance travelled between Sabin's farm and his clients' houses seems greater than expected. Surely by 1843 there were closer painters. However, if the homeowner's only resource were the Cleveland papers, whose painters often advertised they would travel anywhere, it is quite possible that Sabin were contracted without considering the journey. Cleveland was definitely the style center for most of the Western Reserve, so it is logical that a man of wealth and position like Stevens would seek a decorator there.

One question for which there is no apparent answer is that of Sabin's artistic training. Henry's father Levi was a physician, so the trade was probably not learned at home. The period of his youth spent in Brattleboro may have been an apprenticeship in painting, although Henry may have simply been sent there to school. The process of stencilling was simple enough that any person of reasonable intelligence and a little native talent could learn from watching once. The materials were available commercially including the dry pigments. Sabin probably saw stencilled walls often in his native Vermont, and may have learned the craft there. Since some of his designs bear similarity to New York patterns, Sabin may have



learned to stencil on his way through New York to Ohio. The one certainty in studying his methods and motivations is that Harry Sabin never considered his stencilling to be of so much import; little did he guess that future generations would use him as a key to understanding his craft.



**Figure 43** Photographic portrait of H. W. Sabin (at left) in 1860. From Lyman Simpson Hayes, History of the Town of Rockingham, Vermont 1753-1907 (Bellows Falls, VT: L. S. Hayes, 1907), after 748.

## CHAPTER IV

### TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Of the nine houses in this study, the original paint surface is visible in only six. The paint appears to have been thinly applied and has dried to a matte finish. The colors are all hues available from organic pigment; all nine houses used green, and all but the later Jagger stencils used red. Other colors present were yellow, black, orange, blue, brown, and gray. Three of the sixteen rooms were painted initially with a yellow tinted basecoat, the remainder having been stencilled directly on bare dry plaster.

The painted walls all had been covered over, most with wallpaper, two with whitewash, and two with old paint. In the cases of whitewash and paint, which had to be scraped away to reveal the patterns underneath, no paint thickness remained; the shadow of the pattern is the paint that was absorbed into the plaster at the time of the stencilling. Wallpapers, while aiding in the preservation of the painted motifs, usually pulled off the paint layer because of the strong glue adhesion, again leaving a paint shadow. In one house the glue had crystallized, crumbling the paint surface with it. Because of the difficulty in finding a

paint layer thick enough to be removed in a usable chip, only two of the houses' paints were analyzed: the Robinson house from Willoughby and the Jagger house from Bath.<sup>59</sup>

Paint analysis of the five samples<sup>60</sup> revealed no heavy metals or diffraction patterns to indicate the use of oil paints. A protein test proved the pigments to be organic in nature. The quantities of calcium and sulfur present suggest the use of a casein, or milk-based, paint.

Although oil paints were available in Cleveland by at least 1837 and probably earlier, the traditional paint used in decorative wall painting was tempera. Although this period term is derived from distemper, a glue-based paint, both tempera and distemper were used to describe egg- or milk-based paints as well. Casein paint was much cheaper than oil, required less drying time than oil, and was more durable than either true distemper or whitewash.<sup>61</sup> After the publication of a French recipe for milk paint in 1801, American newspapers and trade books repeated the French formula to a public eager to adopt its use.<sup>62</sup> Casein paint for stencilling was made on site from skim milk, slaked lime, whiting, charcoal, and water. The mixture was quite hard and durable once it dried.<sup>63</sup> Mixing the paint was often the task of an apprentice.

Hezekiah Reynolds' renowned book for tradesmen, Directions for House and Ship Painting (1812) describes only the manufacture of oil-based paints. For the decorative painter, however, a more useful manual would have been the Towers' A Guide to Painting and Graining (1830), with its chapter on "Distemper colors for Walls." The Towers' book gives a recipe for distemper made mostly of Spanish white (purchased from a paint store), water, and a size, probably glue or milk. The various colors were mixed from given proportions of the Spanish white base, purchased dry pigments such as Venetian red, rose pink, or burnt umber, and natural materials like copper, indigo, and lampblack.<sup>64</sup> Traditional information on itinerant painting asserts the use of all natural pigments, especially fruit and vegetable dyes, to color the casein; however, this is not substantiated in the contemporary trade literature.

A stencil kit contained knives for cutting patterns, round stiff brushes with blunt ends for stippling the paint on rather than stroking it, string and chalk for laying a grid on a wall, the dried pigments to mix with a medium, and most importantly, an array of designs. A choice of several each friezes, thin borders, small and large single motifs, and a couple of special-focus motifs (like urns, birds, or willow trees) were generally found to have been used by any one artist.<sup>65</sup> No stencils or tools have been found in Ohio.

The repetitive and imitative nature of stencil work might seem to indicate a lack of imagination and little opportunity for variety. On the contrary, no two stencilled rooms are ever alike. While the act of stencilling is a controlled work of certainty<sup>66</sup> because of the rigidity of the patterns, the process has room for creativity and choice in the colors used, the layout, and the combination of patterns.

The cardboard patterns were cut by the stenciller himself, though the designs were mostly copied (or even traced) from other stencilled walls. Westward migration carried the patterns to Ohio—as seen in the Robinson house with its motifs from Farmersville, New York—transferred in the form of a physical stencil, sketch, or mental image. Certain Western Reserve stencils correspond exactly to designs painted in houses hundreds of miles away; others are merely similar. The exact matches indicate closer relationships between the houses, one perhaps of shared artisans. Or the artist may have traced an Eastern design that he had seen; throughout her paper on stencilled houses in New York state, Leigh Jones points out that many of them were public buildings or inns.<sup>67</sup> In either case a human would have been the physical bridge for houses at some distance from one another. Another explanation for matching designs involves a third party selling patterns, perhaps through the mail, though no evidence has been found to support this theory.

While the majority of emigrants to the Reserve were from New England, especially Connecticut, settlers born in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Europe also found refuge here in large numbers.<sup>68</sup> It is no coincidence that of the eighteen owners of the nine houses in this study, nine were from Connecticut, four were from Massachusetts, two were from New York, one was from Rhode Island, and the known artist was from Vermont. Natives of the mid-Atlantic region would likely have thought stencil decoration passé by the 1820's to 1840's, since its introduction and decline were much earlier in the mid-Atlantic.

Regardless of the manner in which stencils were brought to Ohio, the fact of stencilling's popularity attests to the strong ties to New England in matters of style. Most emigrants to the Western Reserve left behind friends and relatives who were more important in the sphere of peers than new neighbors in Ohio; tasteful decorating in a method acceptable in New England would have made a statement about the sophistication and civility of the West to contrast with tales of Indian massacres, hedonism, and wildness. Far from rebelling against their New England heritage, the Westward pioneers wanted to recreate their former environment on the vast expanse of fertile land.

The architectural styles of the houses in this study emulate the styles popular nationwide from 1800 to 1840--the

Neoclassical Revival; their interpretations of the federal and Greek Revival in proportion, ground plan, and materials are identical to New England, from whence came the builders and the builders' guides. A comparative look at the plans (see figure 44) reveals little change from the house plans of New England. Also included for visual comparison are the relative sizes of houses and the placement of the stencilled walls. Note that the paint is generally located in the home's frontal or public spaces.



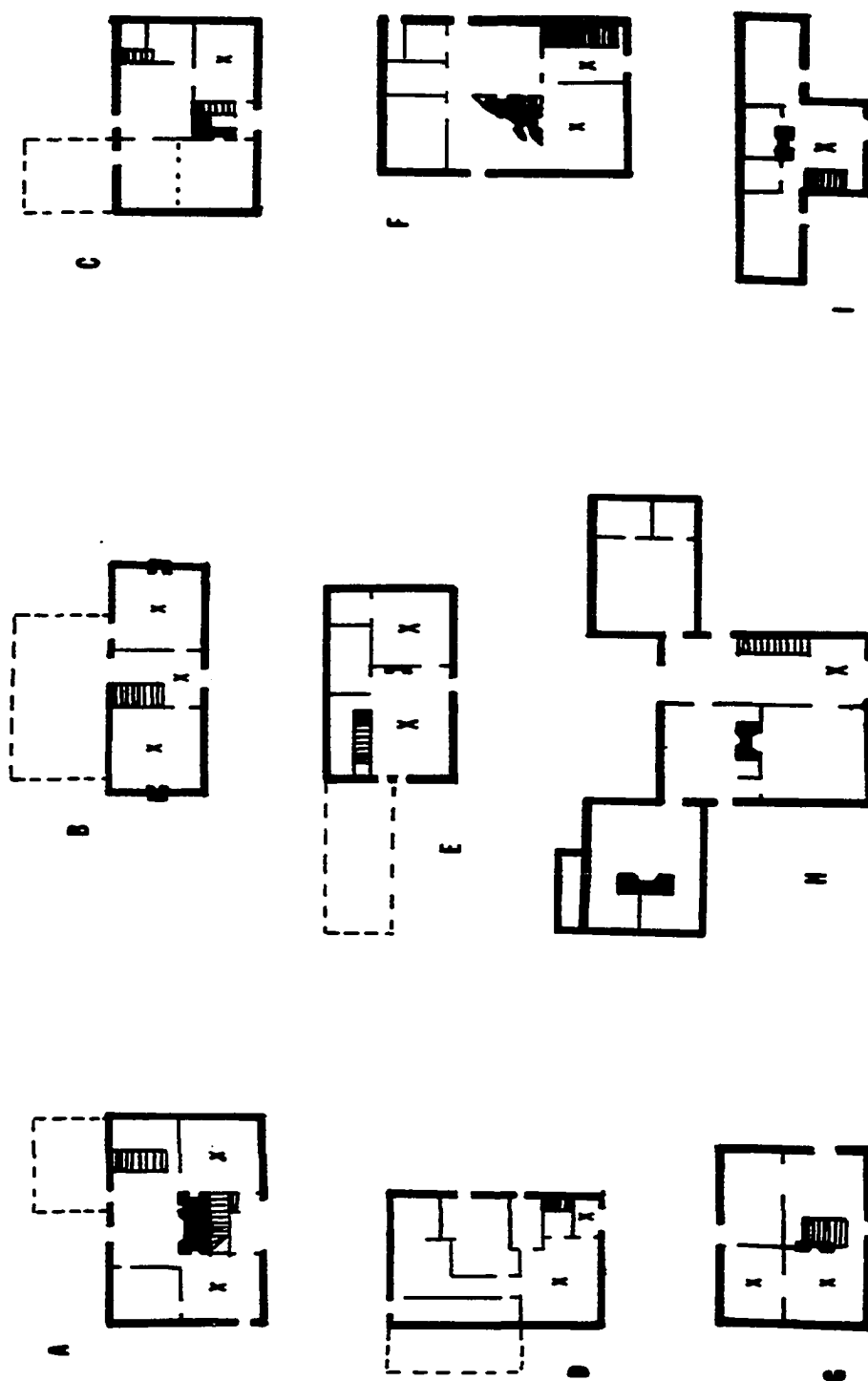


Figure 44 Comparative floor plans of the nine stencilled houses.

CHAPTER V  
BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS

Newspaper advertisements and city directories are the only primary documentation of many stencil painters. The 1850 Ohio Census for Portage County (where four of the nine houses were found) alone lists twenty-eight painters, eleven of whom were old enough to have been painting professionally ten years earlier. One of the best ways to compete for business, presumably, was via the local paper; however, the advertisements for house and ornamental painters did not appear in the small rural papers where the stencilling was done, but in the urban center where no stencilling of the period survives. Proof that some city firms were willing to travel to the rural areas lies in Thomas Tyler's ads from 1826 that he

. . . hopes to receive a share of the custom, both of the town and country. All calls from the country will be attended to, at the shortest notice . . . <sup>69</sup>

Between 1826 and 1850 at least thirteen painters advertised in the Cleveland papers. The artists typically described themselves as house, sign, and ornamental painters, with many listing several

related services available in one establishment:

Paper Hangings in Connection With House, Ship & Sign  
Painting, Gilding & Glazing. D. Jones & Co. . . .  
Cleveland, Ohio, are prepared to execute every variety  
of work in their line of business, in a superior style,  
and on the most favorable terms . . . have on hand . . .  
Paper Hangings, which will be hung to order by the  
best workmen, or furnished by the piece . . . window  
shades . . . Paints, Putty, Glass, Oil, Varnish,  
Japan &c., always on hand and for sale. . . <sup>70</sup>

With the diversity of skills offered, the proprietor might have played the role of merchant and general contractor, sending employees on the jobs for which they were best suited. The newspapers do reveal that some businesses hired journeyman painters. Thomas Tyler claimed he "Wanted Immediately, Journeyman Painter," just eight months after he opened his Cleveland shop.<sup>71</sup> Ten years later, in 1836, this advertisement appeared:

M. Carson & Co. House & Ship Painters, Gilders, Glazers & Paper Hangers, Superior St. All orders promptly attended to. Wanted 8-10 good journeymen house painters to which good wage will be given by M. Carson & Co.<sup>72</sup>

Henry W. Sabin in Strongsville, sixteen miles distant, may have been one of the journeymen looking for a "good wage;" since a journeyman by definition is paid by the day, Sabin need not have made any commitment to a painting firm that would interfere with his farming.

Advertisements for the painting business almost always mention the sale of paint. A few specified the use of either oil colors or distemper on walls and ceilings.<sup>73</sup> The oil paints,

attractive to the consumer for their popular colors and durability, were probably more expensive. "Distemper," the common misnomer for milk paint, would have been a stenciller's choice for its facility of application and its quick-drying properties. Trade books of the early nineteenth century, like Edward Hazen's Encyclopedia of Early American Trades (1837), describe the house and sign painter using only oil-based paints.<sup>74</sup> Milk paint may have been chosen instead for use in rural areas where it is easily made in order to lower the cost of materials.

One business technique was tested in Baltimore, Maryland, when Ephraim Hands patented the stencilling process for a period of fourteen years beginning in 1803.<sup>75</sup> The patent apparently gave him sole business rights to the painting technique for the entire state, which right he proposed to sell by county. Such a monopoly might have hindered the spread of the decoration's popularity in Maryland. No similar restrictions are discussed in Western Reserve newspapers.

No clue survives of the economic framework into which wall stencilling in Ohio fits. The assumption is made that painting was less expensive than wallpaper yet had similar decorative benefits. William Priest, the 1795 Baltimore stenciller, had advertised, ". . . upon lower terms than it is possible to hang it with paper of equal beauty."<sup>76</sup> Since the painters and the paper

hangers were usually in the same shop, the daily wages of the workers were probably the same, making the cost difference between painting and papering one of materials cost. Wallpaper, either the imported or the scarce domestic variety, would have cost more in Ohio than back East because of the added shipping charges. If a local painter rather than a city firm were hired, the expense of painting would be considerably less.

Stephen Clark in 1828 New York earned \$2 to \$5 a day, time enough to paint one room.<sup>77</sup> In Vermont, Sally Experience Brown recorded in her diary in January of 1832 that, "Two men came to paint the house in imitation of paper. They mix paint with skim milk using Spanish white . . . ," and two days later,

Mr. Livingston finished painting the house. He used rose pink to make lilac or peach blossom colors mixing it with Spanish white and milk--yellow and prussian blue for green. <sup>78</sup>They had between six and seven dollars for the job. . .

The same year in the Western Reserve, a cow was worth \$8, a horse \$40, and an acre of land could cost from \$1 to \$10.<sup>79</sup>

Those prices, if similar to painting costs in Ohio, were considerably less than the expense of purchasing wallpaper for rooms of comparable size. Ephraim Brown of Bloomfield (Trumbull County, Ohio) purchased wallpaper in Boston in 1821; the \$12.80 paper was enough to paper two rooms. In 1835, the Harpers of Shandy Hall (Unionville, Ashtabula County) brought French paperhangings back

from Buffalo at a cost of \$26.55 for one room. Neither figure included the wages of a paperhanger's labor.<sup>80</sup>

CHAPTER VI  
THE MEANING OF THE MOTIFS

Any ornamentation so full of recognizable forms yet lacking any obvious meaning is likely to contain a high degree of symbolism. Such symbolism requires the observer to bring with him a previous knowledge of the symbolic meaning in order to understand the ornamented room fully, and becomes a form of aesthetic snobbery. Our century cannot know the depth of understanding which our early nineteenth century predecessors possessed of the ancient, early Christian, and medieval meanings of most of the symbols found in the Ohio stencilling. To those viewers, the iconography may have been quite complex or relatively simple.

The idea of harmonious interior and exterior styles put forth by Christopher Dresser in the 1870's was probably not a new one:

It is obvious to all that if a building has pure architectural features there should be a unity of style between the decorations and the building. . . . if it is Greek, the decorations should be of Greek ornament . . . .<sup>81</sup>

Since all of the houses in this study were built in the federal and Greek Revival styles, it is not surprising to find many common

Neoclassical motifs on the stencilled walls. The eagle, bell, swag and tassel, urn, willow, pineapple, beribboned column, and laurel wreath all are reminiscent of classical designs. The eagle of the Robinson house copies the United States seal, from his E PLURIBUS UNUM banner to the shield and arrows he grasps. This same configuration may be found on federal period furniture inlays, imported ceramics, and on mirror crests, such as the one in figure 45. The swag and tassel motif, used in the Stevens house under the windows, is commonly seen as sprig-molded decoration on woodwork or carved decoration on federal chairs (see figure 46). The laurel wreath, popularized by Napoleon, was a symbol of victory used in ormolu mounts on Empire furniture and seen often in needlework, as in figure 47. The wreath is used in both the Stevens and the Young houses with a floral design in the center.

The urn with flowers appears over the mantel in the House and Little houses, and in the center of the wall at the Morton house. In Willoughby, the urn at the baseboard supports a grapevine. A vase full of flowers symbolizes fertility, while the urn usually signifies death. The grapevine, while alluding to the blood of Christ and Christian peoples, also symbolizes abundance of life.<sup>82</sup> Other than the urns in early nineteenth century mourning pictures, whose meaning obviously relates to death, most Neoclassical urns (found in the backs of federal chairs, in the shape of federal



silver holloware, and as inlays for federal furniture) seem only to promote a connection with the ancient civilizations. The urns of flowers painted on Pennsylvania German blanket chests stand for life and fertility, an agrarian meaning that may be applicable in the Western Reserve as well.

Other designs drawn from federal period furniture include the long borders of checkerboard and herringbone patterns, which are very similar to inlaid banding.

The pineapple, while carrying no known meaning from ancient or Christian times, has traditionally come to mean hospitality. Empire period silver utilizes cast pineapple finials, and Empire sideboards and dining tables are often supported by carved pineapple balusters. A cotton Marseilles work spread in the Winterthur Museum from 1800 to 1825 uses a pineapple design (see figure 48).

A few of the long thin stencilled borders seem to be derivative of the classical fabric twists and ribbon and leaves twined around a column (see figure 45). The fabric motifs were often printed on deep borders of French wallpaper, a rare instance of the stencilling resembling wallpaper designs.

A continuous vine is a reference to God and his people, resurrection, safety, happiness, and Christ.<sup>83</sup> However, its use

throughout the history of decorative arts in all media endows the vine with a more universal non-meaning; i.e. its ubiquitous portrayal indicates it is being used out of habit rather than necessity. English "gaudy ware" of the eighteenth century uses an ivy decoration very similar in form to the stencilled varieties. The Germanic peoples of Pennsylvania and Ohio often inlaid ivy borders in light wood on dark furniture, as seen in figure 49.

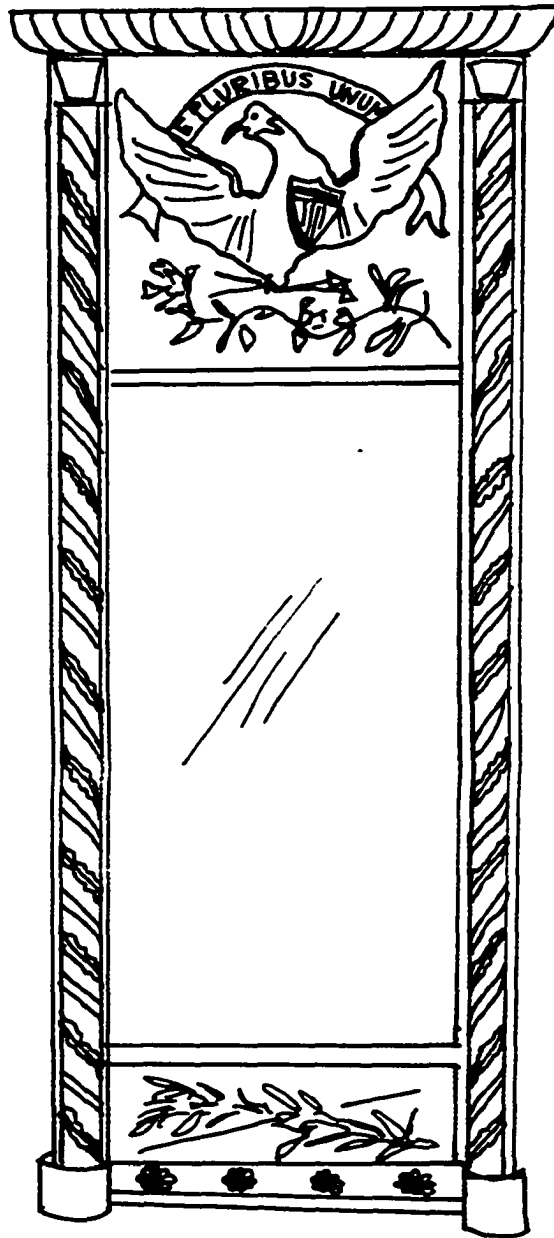
A motif which appears in the House and the Stevens parlors is the pinwheel or swastika moving clockwise. This Germanic cross may also be found on furniture from many areas from around 1750 to 1850, some notable examples illustrated in figure 50. From the pediment of a North Carolina desk and bookcase to the rosettes in a Pennsylvania clock and a Connecticut high chest to the punched tin panels in an Ohio pie safe, the simple form is cheery and uplifting. When rotating clockwise, the swastika signifies spring, the sun, and growth; in short, prosperity in agriculture.<sup>84</sup> Given such a meaning it is likely the craftsmen in agrarian communities employed the symbol intending its full import as a good luck charm.

Dominating the Ohio stencil designs are floral motifs, leaves, vines, trees, and fruits. Most flowers represent some aspect of Christianity, love, and fertility. The red rose, for example, means divine love and motherhood.<sup>85</sup> The red carnation is connected

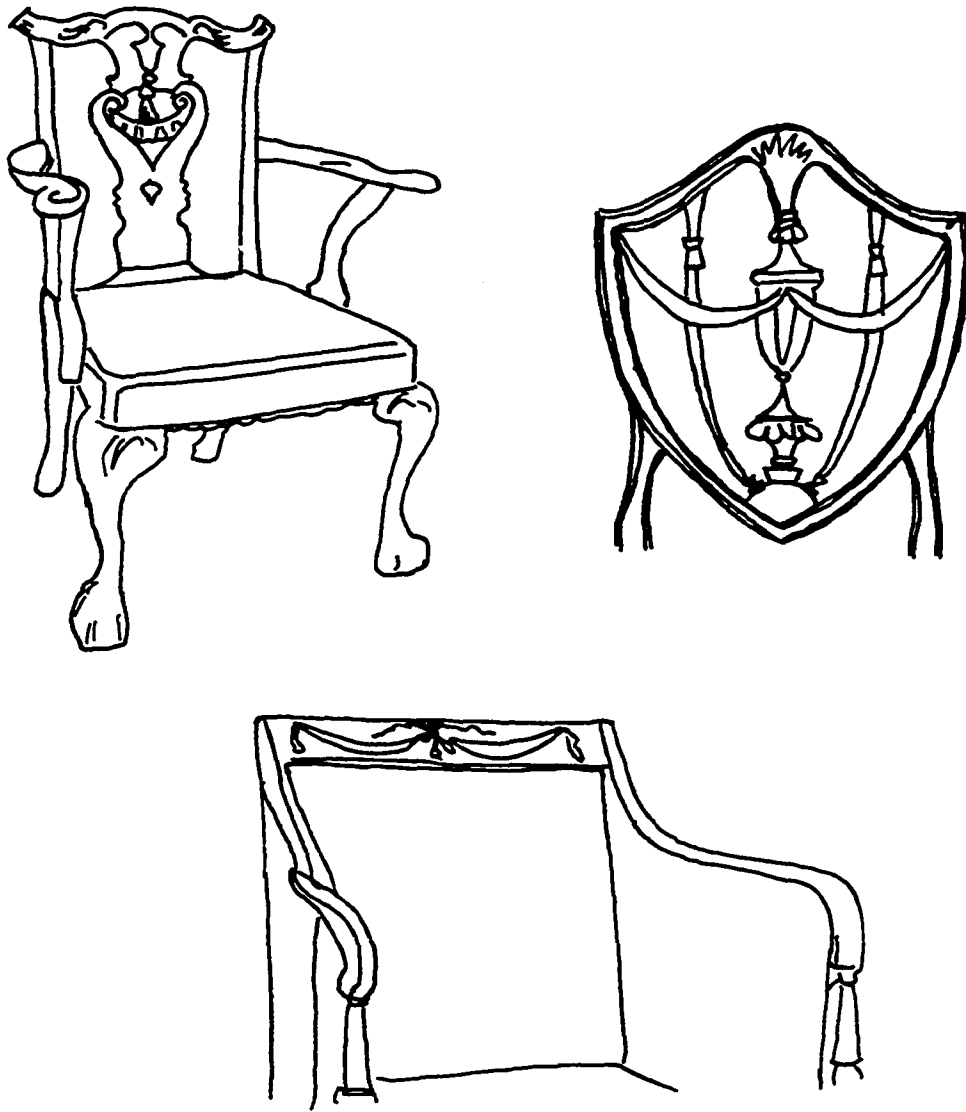
with pure love and fidelity.<sup>86</sup> A basket of flowers represents the womb,<sup>87</sup> while paired trees (as on the mantel in the Little house) indicate marital fidelity and love.<sup>88</sup> While the house owners were all active in the Protestant church--the first half of the nineteenth century was a time of increased religious fervor throughout the newly settled Reserve--they were also rural farmers. The use of motifs drawn from the local environment, whether in New England or Ohio, might have been simply a choice of the familiar, with coinciding religious significance.

Very few of the patterns found in this study are unique to Ohio. In fact, most of the designs are copies of, some even traceable matches with, those found in New England houses. An ornamental painter's pattern book from 1811 New York reveals a very good cross-section of patterns similar to the Ohio stencils.<sup>89</sup> Though Christian Nestell painted freehand and had a much larger repertoire than the stencil designs, the similarities indicate that stencils were derivative of popular ornamental work rather than the more logical source of wallpaper designs. Nestell's patterns include an urn with garland, an eagle with a shield, a grapevine, a pineapple border interspersed with flowers, a basket of flowers, a festoon of twisted fabric, and a border made of leaves twined around a column; all of which are similar enough to be considered the same motif as those of the stencilled walls.

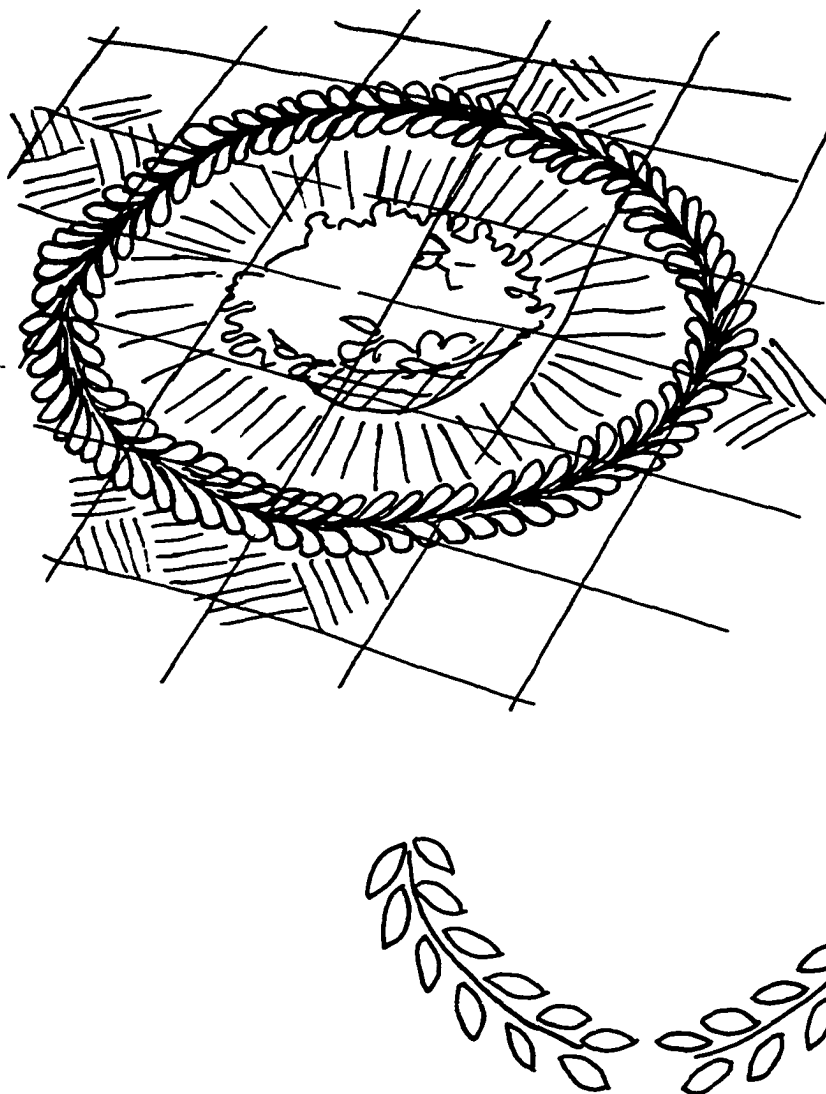
The conclusion drawn as to the desirability of stencilling versus wallpaper to ornament walls is that certain designs were available in each medium. While the wallpaper designs were European in the latest popular style, the stencil designs were American patterns which were traditional and comfortable aesthetic language, having been used on furniture, ceramics, and needlework long enough to become mainstream. Rather than being a second-rate version of fashionable wall hangings, the stencils offered familiar iconography unavailable in those wall hangings. The choice was a deliberate one.



**Figure 45** Eagle pattern. Looking glass, England or Europe, 1810-25, Winterthur Museum #57.941.



**Figure 46** Swag and tassel designs. Armchair, New York, 1765-75, Winterthur Museum # G 59.2826. Side chair back, Salem, Massachusetts, c. 1795, Winterthur Museum #57.692. Easy chair, New York City, 1800-15, Winterthur Museum #52.93.



**Figure 47** Laurel wreath patterns. Quilt pieced with silk, Rachel Goodwin Woodnutt, Salem, New Jersey, 1787-1828, Winterthur Museum # 60.34.3. Marseilles work cotton spread, United States, 1800-25, Winterthur Museum # G 65.2702.



Figure 48 Pineapple pattern. Marseilles work cotton spread,  
United States, 1800-25, Winterthur Museum # G 65.2702.

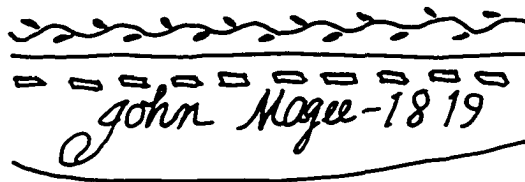
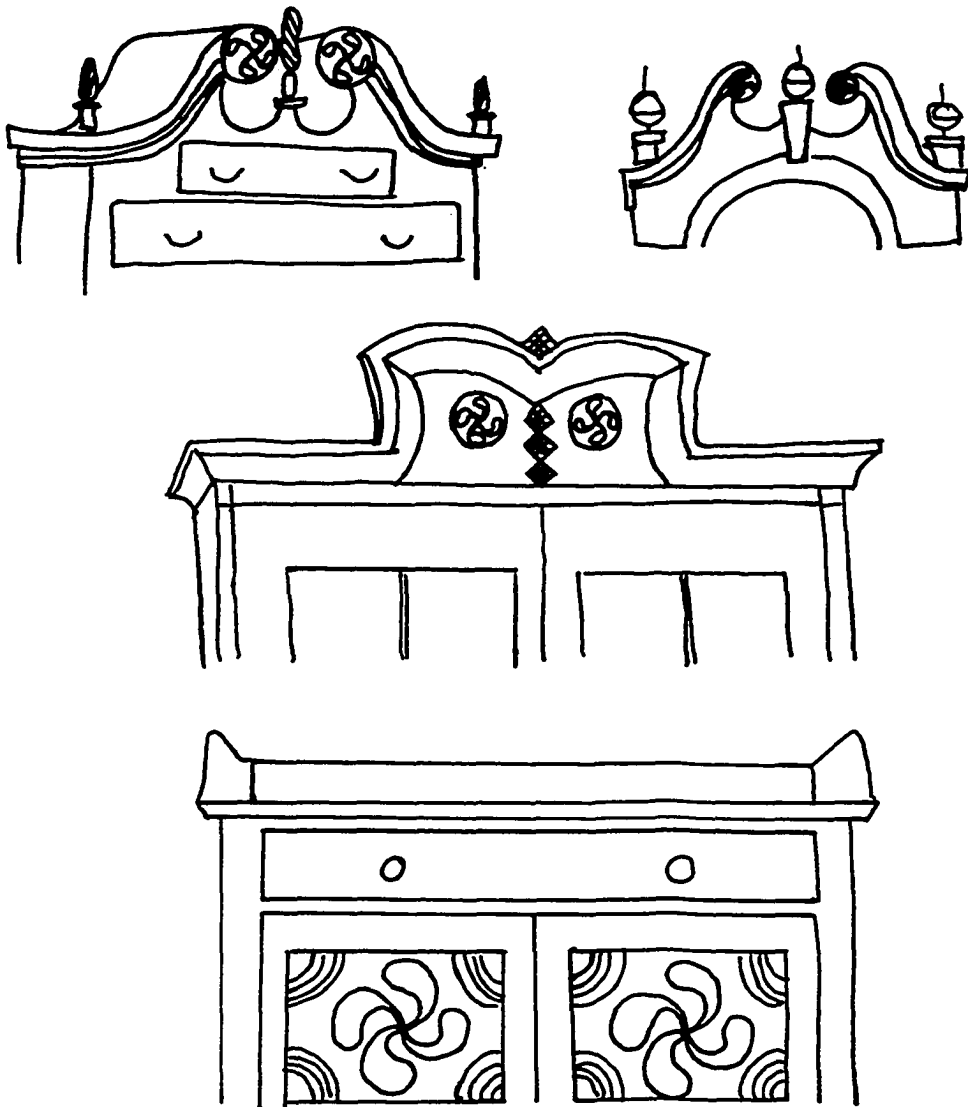


Figure 49 Ivy border. Detail of walnut desk, John Magee,  
Marietta, Ohio, 1819. Columbus Museum of Art,  
Dayton Collection.





**Figure 50** Swastika designs. High chest, Newtown, Connecticut, c. 1769, Connecticut Historical Society. Tall clock, Jacob Ely, Manheim, Pennsylvania, 1810-20, Winterthur Museum # 57.627. Desk and bookcase, Piedmont, North Carolina, 1790-1800, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Cherry Pie Safe, South Charleston, Ohio, early nineteenth century, private collection.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The question remains whether the Ohio stencillers were itinerants from New England. In the strictest sense any non-resident painter might be an itinerant, since he had to travel to his work site. The class into which stencillers have been placed is characterized by long-distance travel, homelessness, and room-and-board barter; this romanticized picture<sup>90</sup> more aptly describes the peddlars and circus people of the first half of the nineteenth century<sup>91</sup> and brings negative and false notions to the artists' reputations. No refined family would have allowed into its home an artist who was not professional and business-like.

Travellers from the East, however, who visited in order to survey the landscape as a potential home were welcomed. Probably many craftsmen in various branches came to see Ohio before finally selling their former properties and businesses. If that trade were plied enroute, then indeed the craftsman, perhaps a journeyman, became an itinerant. Once he settled in the Reserve for any length of time, his work cannot be considered that of an itinerant as described by Waring. Further, if itinerants had found many

subscribers in the Reserve, clusters of houses should appear with identical designs to mark the artist's journey.

The complexity of later nineteenth-century culture as reflected in economy, business practices, and lifestyles had begun with Westward expansion in the earlier decades. Little information is available concerning the fewer than twenty named stencillers, and the data gathered about one should not be projected on the rest. Waring's thesis that some of the New England painters were itinerant cannot be refuted, since it is based on the evidence of the prolific Moses Eaton, Jr., to whom several houses in three states are attributed. Just as authoritative is the record, both documented and surmised, of Henry Wells Sabin. Even if he painted houses on his walk from Vermont, his work once he reached Ohio—in Nelson and in Hiram—does not constitute itinerancy. In contrast, the matching designs from Farmersville, New York, to Willoughby, Ohio, strongly suggest the hand of a roving painter. The truth is not simple; every transaction between stenciller and homeowner carried a conglomeration of varying circumstances which make modern labels both impossible and unnecessary to determine.

Occupational diversity in Ohio craftsmen, as in the case of Sabin, obviated the need to seek work by travelling. More often than not the Western Reserve stencillers were local talent, and

their patrons had made a deliberate choice to support the members of their communities morally and financially.

The other generalization dealing with the choices of the individual homeowners in Ohio is that stencilling was the poor man's wallpaper. Without a doubt, patterned walls were a fashion whose popularity had steadily risen since the Revolutionary War. The availability of paper hangings in nearby Cleveland is advertised as early as house painting (1826), thirty years after the city's founding. Goods from the East were brought from Buffalo to Cleveland and distributed via the canal system to most parts of the Western Reserve. Thus imported French and English papers as well as domestic handprinted wallpaper could be purchased in Eastern cities and shipped to Ohio quite easily. Beginning in the 1820's American factories increased in number and gradually changed their hand processing to make the paper and print it by machine. Catherine Lynn in Wallpaper in America estimates that by 1840 domestic wallpaper was so cheap that nearly everyone could afford to buy it.<sup>92</sup>

Whether or not the cost of buying and installing wallpaper was prohibitively expensive differed according to the time period. For homeowners like Erastus House, Artemas Ruggles, Warren Little, and the Robinsons, wallpaper would have been very dear; because of the heavy importation duties imposed after the Revolutionary War

(in 1804 the tax rose to 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ %<sup>93</sup>), the shipping costs to continue the paper to Ohio, and the cost of labor for its installation. The early builders often left their plaster walls unpainted or unpapered for as long as fifteen years, perhaps because of the expense. This has been illustrated in the case of Caroline Robinson in Willoughby, whose financial straits upon her husband's death left her unable to properly decorate the parlor in her 1830 house until she demanded money for that purpose in 1845.<sup>94</sup> If the opportunity arose to have an artist paint the walls, the relatively reasonable cost might have determined the choice.

Six of the nine houses in this study were decorated in the 1840's or later, at a time when competing factories and paperhangers would have begun to lower the cost of wallpapering a room. In nearly every community, the stencilled house was one of the largest and most aesthetically impressive of the structures. The owners were all integral parts of their social, economic, and political environments. They were not poor, merely thrifty.

An argument against wallpaper for reasons of sanitation was given in the 1795 advertisement from Baltimore, stating that the paper was, "a receptacle for contagious infection, and a harbor for dust and vermin. . ."<sup>95</sup> Apparently parasitic worms were a common problem, at least in the warm humid climates. Ohio residents were probably not so worried about insects.

For most owners of stencilled houses in Ohio, the choice was an aesthetic one. A technique popular in their former New England home would have been a comfort in the face of homesickness and frontier hardship. The vibrant colors and bold designs, perhaps reminiscent of childhood days, were cheery and warmer than many wallpapers, which were often printed in cool, lifeless colors. The social status of these community leaders was enhanced by the novelty, even faddishness, of their new decoration. Stencilling allowed a greater margin of personal choice in color and pattern combinations, an appeal to the intelligence of the consumer. Rather than choosing a mass-produced paper that many others could also buy, an owner was able to use his dwelling as an individualized statement of his cultural heritage and good taste.

## NOTES

1. Edward Croft-Murray, Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837 (London: Country Life Limited, 1962), 30.
2. Federal Intelligencer and Baltimore Daily Gazette, Maryland, 16 August 1795, 3-4.
3. Edward B. Allen, Early American Wall Paintings 1710-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926).
4. Janet Waring, Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture (William R. Scott, 1937; New York: Dover Publications, 1968).
5. Janice Tauer Wass and Philip Parr, Wall Stenciling in Western New York, 1800-1840 (Rochester, NY: Rochester Museum & Science Center, 1985).
6. This method of dating stencilling sometimes results in error, but remains more accurate than stylistic dating. See Waring, Stencils, 23.
7. The biographical data herein was mostly found in Josiah Atkins, An order for the record a brief history of Lenox, June 10, 1847, Western Reserve Historical Society (hereafter listed as WRHS) Library, Cleveland, Ohio, Mss vertical file A, 21-66. The rest was taken from William W. Williams, Williams' History of Ashtabula County, Ohio (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878; reprint, Evansville: Unigraphic, 1974), 222-225.
8. Ashtabula County, Ohio, Recorder, Deeds, Book 29, #478, County Courthouse, Jefferson, Ohio.
9. Ashtabula County, Ohio, Auditor, Tax Duplicates Book 1854, n.p., County Courthouse, Jefferson, Ohio.
10. The specific houses whose designs compare or match are listed in the Appendix on the data sheet for each house in the study.

11. Waring, Stencils, figures 30-33.
12. Abigail House, Memoirs (Jefferson, OH: Josiah Atkins, 1861), 6-8, 12.
13. House, Memoirs, 45.
14. Williams, History, 100.
15. Ashtabula Sentinel, Ohio, 29 June 1839, 3-6.
16. Rhea Mansfield Knittle, Early Ohio Taverns: Tavern-sign, Stage-coach, Barge, Banner, Chair and Settee Painters, Ohio Frontier Series 1767-1847, no. 1 (privately published, 1 August 1937), 42.
17. Two Centuries of New Milford, Connecticut (New York: The Grafton Press, 1907), 101-2. R. C. Brown and J. E. Norris, comps., History of Portage County (Chicago: Warner, Beers, & Co., 1885, reprint, Ravenna, OH: Portage County Historical Society, 1972), 501, 503, and 527. Harley S. Tuttle, Palmyra, My Old Home Town (Palmyra, OH: Wilbur C. Knipe, 1930), 22.
18. James B. Holm, ed., Portage Heritage (Ravenna, OH: Portage County Historical Society, 1957), 19.
19. A Portrait and Biographical Record of Portage and Summit Counties, Ohio (Logansport, IN: A. W. Bowen & Co., 1898). Portage County Historical Society, 1874-1978 Bicentennial Atlas of Portage County, Ohio (Ravenna, OH: Portage County Historical Society, 1978), A-41.
20. Western Reserve Courier, Ravenna, Ohio, 18 April 1829, 4-3.
21. The 1830 tax list says, "House added this year," Portage County Auditor, Tax Duplicates, Akron University Archives, Akron, Ohio. Interior framing shows the front portion of the house to have been added to the rear. Since Solomon Little stated that he had been born in the house in 1825, the rear portion must have been built prior to that date. Brown and Norris, History, 597.
22. Biographical data on Little is from Edward Church Smith and Philip Mack Smith, A History of the Town of Middlefield, Massachusetts (Menasha, WI: privately published, 1924), 524-525; Brown and Norris, History, 597.



23. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census Reports for the State of Ohio, Washington, D. C., 1860 Portage County, Aurora, Roll #1025, 16.

24. Waring, Stencils, 34, figure 33.

25. I. T. Frary, "Old Wall Stencils of Ohio," Antiques (October 1940): 169.

26. Summit County, Ohio, Recorder, Deeds, Hudson Heritage Association, Hudson, Ohio.

27. David Hudson, Jr., Diary: 1825-29, 1831-35, Hudson Library, Hudson, Ohio, n.p.

28. Waring, Stencils, 56-63.

29. The comparison of tracings of Eaton's designs was made possible through the kindness of Jessica Bond in Dorset, Vermont.

30. I. C. Hotchkiss, painter and glazer, is listed on an 1855 map of Hudson; also present was H. W. Sabin (from 1850 to 1871), a known stenciller.

31. Geauga County, Ohio, Recorder, Deeds, County Courthouse, Chardon, Ohio, 42, 337. To George Morton for \$2500, 130 acres.

32. Geauga County, Ohio, Auditor, Tax Duplicates, Geauga County Library, Chardon, Ohio, 1850 Assessor's Returns.

33. Geauga County Historical and Memorial Society, Pioneer and General History of Geauga County, Ohio (Burton, OH: Geauga County Historical and Memorial Society, 1953, reprint, 1979), 101. Other biographical information found on p. 665.

34. The only documentation of the designs is Frary's article in Antiques: 169.

35. Knittle, Ohio Taverns, 38.

36. The taxes jumped from \$206 to \$526 for the same acreage; no tax records are available for 1828 or 1829.

37. Mary Grzeskowiak, "It's Not Unfinished--It's Falling Apart: The Story of the Nelson Congregational Church, Nelson, Ohio," Department of History, Hiram College, 1983, 22. Frederick Clayton Waite, Western Reserve University: The Hudson Era (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1943), 184.

38. Portage County, Ohio, Auditor, Tax Duplicates; by 1845, Stevens had over \$1000 in cash plus 74 acres of land in Nelson.

39. Biographical information was mostly drawn from Samuel Bissell, Twinsburg, Ohio 1817-1917 (Twinsburg: Memorial Library Association of Twinsburg, 1917), 38, 90, 144, and 472.

40. One of the main drawbacks of Waring's Early American Stencils is that it lacks definite dates. Her chronology for American stencilling, in fact, begins with the Goodale house in Marlborough, Massachusetts (p. 26), reportedly stencilled in 1778. Recent research shows a stencilled date of 1841 in the Goodale attic. See Gail Nessel, "The Goodale Family: Seven Generations of Continuity and Change in Marlborough, Massachusetts," Master's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1985.

41. Biographical information was pieced together from the Ohio Census, Portage County Tax Duplicates, Portage County Deeds, and brief mentions in Brown and Norris, History, 470.

42. The tax and deed information was drawn from Anne C. Haskell, "The Robinson House," WRHS, 1976, an unpublished typescript of research done by staff for use in museum interpretation of this restored building. The biographical information is mostly gleaned from the Robinson family correspondence in the Mason Family Letters, WRHS Library, Cleveland, Ohio, Ms. 3254 Cont. 2 Folders 5-8.

43. Mason Family Letters, December 6 and 17, 1845.

44. Mason Family Letters, November 14, 1845 and January 26, 1846.

45. Knittle, Ohio Taverns, 42.

46. Wass and Parr, Wall Stenciling, 33-38.

47. A Portrait and Biographical Record, 462-3.

48. Archibald Willard in Wellington, Ohio, for instance, worked as a carriage painter and a furniture decorator, combining elements of each traditional craft in order to decorate both. Willard F. Gordon, "The Spirit of '76" . . . . an American Portrait (Fallbrook, CA: Aero Publishers, Inc., 1976), 41-2.

49. Lyman Simpson Hayes, History of the Town of Rockingham, Vermont 1753-1907 (Bellows Falls, VT: L. S. Hayes, 1907), 746-8.

50. Crisfield Johnson, comp., History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio (Cleveland: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1879, reprint, Cleveland: The Greater Cleveland Genealogical Society, 1974), 526.
51. W. P. A. Project in Ohio, Annals of Cleveland, WRHS Library, Cleveland, Ohio, vols. 2-4, 248 #410, from the Herald, 14 May 1822.
52. W. P. A., Annals, vols. 15-17, 178 #194, from the Herald, 5 July 1834; vol. 24, 8-9 #33, from the Herald, 27 November 1841.
53. History of Strongsville, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, 2d ed. (Berea, OH: Advertiser Print, 1903, reprint, Strongsville: Strongsville Chamber of Commerce, 1958), 101. Summit County Deeds.
54. Ohio Observer, Hudson, Ohio, 2 May 1855, 3.
55. History of Strongsville, after 102.
56. History of Rockingham, opposite 746.
57. Summit County, Ohio, Auditor, Tax Duplicates, Akron University Archives, Akron, Ohio.
58. Two studies in Indiana focus on craftsmen who were listed as farmers in the census: Warren E. Roberts, "Ananias Hensel and His Furniture: Cabinetmaking in Southern Indiana," Midwestern Journal of Language and Folklore 9, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 69-112; Warren E. Roberts, "Turpin Chairs and the Turpin Family: Chairmaking in Southern Indiana," Midwestern Journal of Language and Folklore 7, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 57-106.
59. Thick paint layers on the back of peeled paper could not be used because the glue would skew any test results.
60. Performed by Don T. Smith of the Chicago Research Center, Color, Computer & Surface Science Laboratory, April 1986, through the kindness of Patricia Eldredge of Sherwin-Williams Paint Company.
61. Theodore Zuk Penn, "Decorative and Protective Finishes—1750 to 1850," Master's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1966, 81-3.
62. The Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser, Richmond, VA, 17 November 1802, 3-3, gives one contemporary example of the published recipe; also see Richard M. Candee, "The Rediscovery of

Milk-based House Paints and the Myth of 'Brickdust and Buttermilk' Paints," Old Time New England 58, no. 3 (Winter 1968) ser. #211, 79-80.

63. Penn, Thesis, 83.

64. W. Towers and T. J. Towers, Every Man His Own Painter: A Guide to Painting and Graining (Utica, NY: 1830), 93-109.

65. Waring, Stencils, 57-8, figures 58, 59, and 70.

66. David Pye sets forth the concept of work of certainty in his book, The Nature of Art and Workmanship (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

67. Leigh Rehner Jones, "19th Century Interior Decorative Wall Painting: A Four-County Central New York Overview," Coopers-town Program, State University of New York College, Oneonta, New York, 1979.

68. Ohio Census, 1850.

69. W. P. A., Annals, vols. 9-11, #193, from the Herald, 10 February 1826.

70. Elijah Peet, Peet's General Business Directory of the City of Cleveland, for the years 1846/7 (n.p., 1847), n. p.

71. W. P. A., Annals, vols. 9-11, #197, from the Herald, 27 October 1826.

72. W. P. A., Annals, vols. 18-19, #736, from the Herald, 16 April 1836.

73. Julius P. Bolivar MacCabe, A Directory of the Cities of Cleveland & Ohio, 1837-38 (Cleveland: Sanford & Lott, Book and Job Printers, 1837), J. D. H. Murphy ad, n.p.; J. S. Phillip in Smead & Cowles' General Business Directory of the City of Cleveland, for 1848/49 (n. p., 1848), 141.

74. Edward Hazen, Encyclopedia of American Trades (Philadelphia, 1837, reprint, Watkins Glen, NY: Century House, 1970), 215-17.

75. Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser, Easton, Maryland, 28 August 1804, 3-5.

76. See note 2.

77. Wass and Parr, Wall Stenciling, 6.
78. Hyde Leslie, The Diaries of Sally & Pamela Brown 1832-1838 (Plymouth Notch, VT: Hyde Leslie, 1887, reprint, Springfield, VT: The William L. Bryant Foundation, 1970), 7.
79. Based on tax valuations for 1832 from Portage and Geauga Counties.
80. Receipted bill of E. Brown for items purchased from Grant's PaperHanging Warehouse. Dated: Boston, July 17, 1821. Mss vertical file G, WRHS, Cleveland, Ohio. Susan Page Tillett, "The Robert Harper Family; a Study of the Settlement of the Western Reserve," Master's Thesis, George Washington University, 1978, 39.
81. Christopher Dresser, The Language of Ornament: Style in the Decorative Arts (originally Studies in Design, London: Cassell, Petter, & Galpin, 1876; New York: Portland House, 1988), 15.
82. Steven Olderr, comp., Symbolism, A Comprehensive Dictionary (Jefferson, NC & London: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1986), 143. George Wells Ferguson, Signs & Symbols in Christian Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 38. Boris Matthews, trans., The Herder Symbol Dictionary (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1986), 90-91.
83. Olderr, Symbolism, 144. Ferguson, Signs, 51.
84. Olderr, Symbolism, 133. Matthews, Herder, 189.
85. Olderr, Symbolism, 113.
86. Ferguson, Signs, 34.
87. Matthews, Herder, 18.
88. Matthews, Herder, 150.
89. Pattern book of an ornamental painter, Christian M. Nestell, New York 1811, The Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, 84 x 89.
90. Waring, Stencils, 23, 56, and 57.
91. Richardson Wright, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1927), 129 and 130.

92. Catherine Lynn, Wallpaper in America From the Seventeenth Century to World War I (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), 301-2.

93. Lynn, Wallpaper, 109.

94. Haskel, "Robinson House," 27.

95. See note 2.

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APPENDIX  
DATA SHEETS ON EACH OF THE HOUSES

The following data sheets follow a format devised by the author as a way of assembling miscellaneous information in an orderly fashion. The consistent categories and placement enable quick comparisons of certain facts from house to house, e.g. paint colors used. Some of the data is repeated in the text, and much of it is not. It is hoped that this information will be used as a starting point for future researchers, especially the present house owners, to complete more conclusive studies about their individual homes.

Included on these pages are the number of houses in other areas whose stencil designs compare with the Ohio stencils.

## HOUSE: ERASTUS NORTON HOUSE

LOCATION: Ray's Corners, southeast corner of  
Rt. 46 and Footville-Richmond Road  
TOWN: Lenox  
COUNTY: Ashtabula  
TWP: 10 RANGE: 3 LOT: 24  
MAILING: Trent & Norma Bobbitt  
175 Footville-Richmond Road  
Jefferson, Ohio 44047

DATE OF BUILDING: 1819-? BUILDER:  
# OF ROOMS: 10 original  
# OF STORIES: 2  
CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard  
central chimney, front stairhall  
ACREAGE OF PARCEL: original 233a; present 1.28a  
ORIGINAL USE: residence, after 1825 post office  
PRESENT USE: residence, antique store

ORIGINAL OWNER: Erastus Norton House, Abigail Fish House  
DATES: 1786-1854 1790-1861  
FROM: Sandisfield, MA Sheffield, CT  
MIGRATION DATE: 1811 1818  
OCCUPATION: dairy farmer, postmaster  
ECONOMIC STANDING: 1850--worth \$7000

STENCILLING DATE: PAINTER: in area--Smalley,  
ROOMS/USE: front hall, front parlor Morton  
COLORS: white ground with red, green  
CONDITION: replastered, repainted, one re-stencilled  
PHOTOS: of original, owner of restored, author  
TRACINGS: owner, author  
PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
CF. DESIGNS: 10 NY, 2 MA, 2 OH, 2 VT, 1 RI, 1 NH

PUBLISHED: Trent and Norma Bobbitt, "Restoring Sandisfield House,"  
Western Reserve Magazine (Cleveland, OH) April 1988, 38-45.

## HOUSE: ARTEMAS RUGGLES

LOCATION: north side of Rt. 18, 1 mile west of center of  
Palmyra  
TOWN: Palmyra  
COUNTY: Portage  
TWP: 2 RANGE: 6 LOT: 8, Div. III  
MAILING: Bob Buchanan  
8975 Talmadge Road  
Diamond, Ohio 44412

DATE OF BUILDING: 1823-30 BUILDER:  
# OF ROOMS: 6 original  
# OF STORIES: 2  
CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, 2 end chimneys, central  
stairhall  
ACREAGE OF PARCEL: original 160a; present 6a  
ORIGINAL USE: residence  
PRESENT USE: residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Artemas Ruggles, Esther Clinton Ruggles  
DATES: 1764-1853 1770-1856  
FROM: New Milford, CT New Milford, CT  
MIGRATION DATE: 1807 1807  
OCCUPATION: farmer, blacksmith, dentist  
ECONOMIC STANDING: owned 297 acres, little livestock, no carriage;  
by 1846 personal property worth \$471

STENCILLING DATE: PAINTER: in area--Williams,  
ROOMS/USE: 2 upstairs bedrooms, Williams, Carnahan  
stairhall, prob. both down also  
COLORS: white ground with orange, green, brown/ white with red, green  
CONDITION: 1 under new paper, restencilled/ 1 under old paper/  
1 under thin plaster layer  
PHOTOS: author  
TRACINGS: author  
PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
CF. DESIGNS: 4 NY, 4 MA, 3 NH, 2 OH, 1 RI, 1 VT  
PUBLISHED:

## HOUSE: WARREN G. LITTLE

LOCATION: on S. Bissell Road, 4th house on left coming from  
central Aurora (across from Walden entrance)

TOWN: Aurora

COUNTY: Portage

TWP: 5 RANGE: 9 LOT: 19

MAILING: Dick & Diane Oberle  
665 S. Bissell Road  
Aurora, Ohio 44202

DATE OF BUILDING: 1829-30

BUILDER: 5 similar on road

# OF ROOMS: 8 down, 5? up

? Lemuel Porter

# OF STORIES: 2 rear ell pre-1825

CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, central chimney

ACREAGE OF PARCEL: original 54a; present 3.754a

ORIGINAL USE: residence

PRESENT USE: residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Warren G. Little, Susannah Spencer Little  
(3rd wife) Mary P. Kennedy Little

DATES: 1780-1868 1781-1838  
1789-1880

FROM: Middlefield, MA Middlefield, MA

MIGRATION DATE: c. 1812

OCCUPATION: farmer, minister

ECONOMIC STANDING: owned 170a and dairy herd, no cash value until  
1846, then \$306; by 1860 \$13,440 real estate and \$3180 in  
personal property

STENCILLING DATE: before 1844

PAINTER: ? painter from chair

ROOMS/USE: hall/sitting room

factory in Aurora

COLORS: white ground with red, green, blue-green, yellow

CONDITION: covered with new paint and restencilled, portion  
preserved

PHOTOS: owner, author

TRACINGS: owner, author

PAINT ANALYSIS: no

CF. DESIGNS: 5 NY, 3 OH, 3 NH, 3 MA, 1 VT, 1 RI

PUBLISHED:



## HOUSE: ELIXIUS S. WOODEN

LOCATION: 219 N. Main St., just north of town square  
 TOWN: Hudson  
 COUNTY: Summit (formerly Portage)  
 TWP: 4 RANGE: 10 LOT: 56, Village #3  
 MAILING: Ted Milby  
 Greenbriar Interiors, Inc.  
 Box 673  
 Hudson, Ohio 44236

DATE OF BUILDING: 1832 BUILDER:  
 # OF ROOMS: ? only parlor is still intact  
 # OF STORIES: 2  
 CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, fireplaces and walls completely removed for retail shop  
 ACREAGE OF PARCEL: .33a  
 ORIGINAL USE: residence, cobbler shop  
 PRESENT USE: interior design (The Perfect Answer)  
 and residence on floor 2

ORIGINAL OWNER: Jehial M. Hine, Elixius S. Wooden, Betsy Wooden  
 (also spelled Woodin) 1834--just Woodens  
 DATES: both Woodens 1807-?  
 FROM: both Woodens from CT, went to LA after OH  
 MIGRATION DATE: before 1832, to Cleveland, OH by 1850  
 OCCUPATION: cobbler (lumber dealer in LA and Cleveland)  
 ECONOMIC STANDING: in 1850 worth \$1000

STENCILLING DATE: prob. 1832-39 PAINTER: in area--Sabin,  
 after 1839 changed hands often Hotchkiss  
 ROOMS/USE: parlor, stairhall  
 COLORS: white ground with green, brown, orange  
 CONDITION: both rooms under wallpaper, parlor restencilled  
 PHOTOS: of parlor original, P. Keegan  
 TRACINGS: of parlor original, P. Keegan, author  
 PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
 CF. DESIGNS: 6 NH, 3 ME, 3 VT, 2 NY, 1 MA 4 match Eaton stencils

PUBLISHED: Patricia Eldredge and Priscilla Graham, Square Dealers  
 (Hudson: Hudson Heritage Association, 1980).

## HOUSE: JOSEPH M. MORTON

LOCATION: north side of Bell Road between Munn Road & Rt. 44  
 TOWN: Newbury  
 COUNTY: Geauga  
 TWP: 7 RANGE: 8 LOT: 26 SE  
 MAILING: Clair Mitchell Clare Ann Timmons  
 10608 Bell Road 16495 Munn Road  
 Chagrin Falls, Ohio Chagrin Falls, Ohio  
 44022 44022

DATE OF BUILDING: 1841 BUILDER:  
 # OF ROOMS: 6+  
 # OF STORIES: 2  
 CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard; cabin on site by 1834  
 ACREAGE OF PARCEL: 50a  
 ORIGINAL USE: residence  
 PRESENT USE: residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Joseph M. Morton, Polly Ann ? Morton  
 also living there, an uncle Abraham Morton  
 DATES: 1793-1869 1794-1864  
 FROM: born Oneida Co., NY born CT  
 uncle from E. Freetown, MA  
 MIGRATION DATES: by 1817 (in Parkman by 1812)  
 OCCUPATION: farmer, soldier War of 1812  
 ECONOMIC STANDING: 1848--4 horses, 17 cows, 280 sheep, 1 hog,  
 1 carriage, \$300 cash; 1850--\$2000 in real estate

STENCILLING DATE: PAINTER: in area 1816-30  
 ROOMS/USE: parlor, dining Barton F. Avery, painter  
 COLORS: yellow ground with red, green of signs and furniture  
 CONDITION: under wallpaper  
 PHOTOS: Ohio Historical Society, Frary collection  
 TRACINGS: none  
 PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
 CF. DESIGNS: 1 NY, 1 RI, 2 VT, 2 CT, 2 OH (Ruggles, Little), 1 MA

PUBLISHED: I. T. Frary, "Old Wall Stencils of Ohio," Antiques  
 38, no. 4 (1940): 169.

## HOUSE: JOHN GORDON STEVENS

LOCATION: east side on Windham-Parkman Road,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of  
Nelson Circle  
TOWN: Nelson  
COUNTY: Portage  
TWP: 5 RANGE: 6 LOT: 31  
MAILING: Rick & Jody Schroath  
11554 Windham-Parkman Road  
Garrettsville, Ohio 44231

DATE OF BUILDING: 1827-1830 BUILDER: ? Lemuel Porter  
# OF ROOMS: 12 owner when built Benjamin  
# OF STORIES: 2 Fenn  
CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, central chimney  
ACREAGE OF PARCEL: 25a  
ORIGINAL USE: residence  
PRESENT USE: residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: John Gordon Stevens & Isabel Wadsworth Stevens  
DATES: 1805-1881 1811-1841  
FROM: Lanesborough, MA MA  
MIGRATION DATE: with family after 1810, before 1831  
OCCUPATION: physician  
ECONOMIC STANDING: 1843--2 horses, 2 cows, \$50 cash; 1850--real  
estate \$6940; 1860--real estate \$11,900, personal property \$1300

STENCILLING DATE: "Dec. 21st, 1843" PAINTER: H. W. Sabin  
ROOMS/USE: parlor, stairhall  
COLORS: ochre ground with red, green, orange, brown; white  
ground with red, green, orange  
CONDITION: panel preserved, remainder restencilled  
PHOTOS: previous owner Rohmann, author  
TRACINGS: author  
PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
CF. DESIGNS: 3 NY, 1 OH (Young) matches, 1 MA  
PUBLISHED:

## HOUSE: JAMES I. YOUNG

LOCATION: Rt. 700 N. east side across from Buckingham Place  
 TOWN: Hiram  
 COUNTY: Portage  
 TWP: 5 RANGE: 7 LOT: 23 NE corner  
 MAILING: Peter & Paula Cornelison  
 P.O. Box 53  
 Hiram, OH 44234

DATE OF BUILDING: 1834 BUILDER: possibly Peletiah  
 # OF ROOMS: 8 Allyn (father-in-law) or  
 # OF STORIES: 2 P. Allyn Jr. (brother-in-law)  
 CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, central chimney  
 ACREAGE OF PARCEL: 19a  
 ORIGINAL USE: residence  
 PRESENT USE: residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: James I. Young, Mary Allyn Young  
 DATES: 1802-1881 1809-1852  
 FROM: born RI, from Windham Co., CT; Litchfield, CT  
 MIGRATION DATE: 1811 1810-26  
 OCCUPATION: farmer  
 ECONOMIC STANDING: 1850—\$2000; 1860—\$2023 real estate, \$784  
 personal property, 128a

STENCILLING DATE: possibly 1843 PAINTER: attr. H. W. Sabin  
 ROOMS/USE: parlor, rear chamber  
 COLORS: white ground with yellow, green, red  
 CONDITION: plaster removed to lath and destroyed 1982  
 PHOTOS: of fragments removed  
 TRACINGS: author, partial of rear chamber  
 PAINT ANALYSIS: no  
 CF. DESIGNS: 1 OH (Stevens) match, 1 NY, 3 NH, 1 VT, 1 MA

PUBLISHED:

## HOUSE: WILLIAM PECK ROBINSON

LOCATION: (when built) west of Chagrin River at corner of Lake St.  
and Mentor St. at 3750 Erie St.

TOWN: Willoughby Twp., then called Chagrin

COUNTY: Lake

TWP: 9/10 RANGE: 10 LOT:

MAILING: (moved 1973) Hale Farm & Village  
P. O. Box 256  
Bath, Ohio 44210

DATE OF BUILDING: 1829-31

BUILDER: Jonathan Goldsmith

# OF ROOMS: 13

1783-1847 Painesville, Ohio

# OF STORIES: 2

born New Haven, CT

CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard

ACREAGE OF PARCEL: 170+a purchased 1829 for \$1200

ORIGINAL USE: residence

PRESENT USE: restored house in outdoor historical museum

ORIGINAL OWNER: William Peck Robinson, Caroline Buell Robinson

DATES: 1786-1831

1799-?

FROM: Lanesborough, MA

Goshen, CT

MIGRATION DATE: 1827 via New Haven, IL

OCCUPATION: mill owner

ECONOMIC STANDING: 1827-31 land valued \$1400 house cost \$1500;  
seemingly wealthy til his death, left debts.

STENCILLING DATE: 1845

PAINTER: ? boarders Benson

ROOMS/USE: upstairs sitting room

or Burgess

COLORS: white ground with green, red, black

CONDITION: one wall preserved, 3 walls restored on wallpaper

PHOTOS: author

TRACINGS: owner, author, P. Parr

PAINT ANALYSIS: yes, casein

CF. DESIGNS: 5 NY (2 NY match Farmersville Inn), 2 VT, 1 RI

PUBLISHED: "Hale Farm's Goldsmith House," Western Reserve Magazine

August-September 1985; typed unpublished ms. at WRHS library,

Anne C. Haskell, "The Robinson House."

## HOUSE: CLEMENT N. JAGGER

LOCATION: (when built) 3 houses SW of town square at Hammond's  
Corners on Cleveland-Massillon Road  
TOWN: Bath Township  
COUNTY: Summit  
TWP: 3 RANGE: 10 LOT: 25  
MAILING: (moved 1961) Hale Farm & Village  
P. O. Box 256  
Bath, Ohio 44210

DATE OF BUILDING: c. 1845 BUILDER:  
# OF ROOMS: 7  
# OF STORIES: 2  
CONSTRUCTION: timber frame, clapboard, central chimney  
ACREAGE OF PARCEL: 1a  
ORIGINAL USE: residence, wagon-making business  
PRESENT USE: historic house museum

ORIGINAL OWNER: Clement N. Jagger, Jane Perry Jagger  
DATES: 1827-1898+ 1836-1895  
FROM: W. Richfield, OH Brecksville, OH  
MIGRATION DATE: to Bath 1852  
OCCUPATION: professional wagon-maker  
ECONOMIC STANDING: 1860--\$1000 real estate, \$500 personal property  
1870--\$1500 real estate, \$650 personal property

STENCILLING DATE: c. 1850-60 PAINTER: ? perhaps Jagger  
ROOMS/USE: sitting room  
COLORS: ochre ground with blue, green, black, gray, white  
CONDITION: panel preserved, rest painted and restencilled  
PHOTOS: Hale Farm, author  
TRACINGS: author  
PAINT ANALYSIS: yes, casein  
CF. DESIGNS: none

PUBLISHED: "Historic Stenciling," Stenciling Quarterly no. 3,  
54-59; "The Greek Revival House," The Historical Society News  
v. 21 (September 1967) no. 9, p. 2.