

Selections from
the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities



WALLPAPER
in
NEW ENGLAND

Richard C. Nylander, Elizabeth Redmond, and Penny J. Sander

470
Wallpaper in
New England
\$26.95

Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ashlar and Marble Wallpapers



45-a Stair hall of the Judge Hayden House, Roxbury, Mass. Photograph by the Historic American Buildings Survey, 1940. Photographic Archives, SPNEA.

Paper imitations of marble or stone continued to be very popular wall treatments for entries and stair halls through the middle of the nineteenth century. The early 1840s witnessed an elaboration of this genre, however, as repeating patterns of small bricks or stones were superseded in wallpaper fashion by elaborate schemes incorporating columns, cornices, and marble panels. In an early 1842 draft of advertising copy, Josiah Bumstead included "Elegant Marble Columns with caps and bases—a new style for Entries." His first mention of the style had been a few months earlier in notes regarding a visit from Mr. Howell, the Philadelphia manufacturer. "Speaking of the column & marble papers for entries—he thought that at least 1000 entries had been done with it at Phila. The price charged by the paper hangers is 25¢ for the marble and 50¢ for the column."¹ By the 1850s Bumstead's billhead featured

COLUMNAR STYLES. Gothic, Grecian and other orders; with panels; for Halls, Entries and Vestibules.²

A fine example of this columnar style of paperhanging was recorded in 1940 by the Historic American Buildings Survey in the front hall of the Judge Hayden House in Roxbury, Massachusetts (45-a). This large Greek Revival house with its two-story Ionic portico along one side was impressively situated on a hill above a terraced garden. Its equally impressive front hall featured marble columns topped with Corinthian capitals interspersed with panels of a different variety of marble, a heavy cornice, and an egg-and-dart base molding—all made of paper.

In addition to this new column and panel style, however, traditional forms of masonry imitation remained popular, and a wide range of patterns and qualities of wallpaper was available. A conventional ashlar pattern of stone blocks carved in relief and surrounded by naturalistic twining grape vines (45.1) was found with the other unused wallpapers in the Swift House in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The paper was roller-printed, and it preserves evidence of some of the kinds of

problems involved in mechanized wallpaper manufacture. Well into printing the roll, the paper became creased, and the cylinders continued over this large wrinkle in the paper, leaving a jagged, quarter-inch gap across the design when the paper was smoothed out. Such flaws notwithstanding, the impressionistic, three-toned design of this wallpaper is effective from a distance. This paper, however, was not used in the front hall of the Swift house (see 47.4), but it may have been used in a side hall.

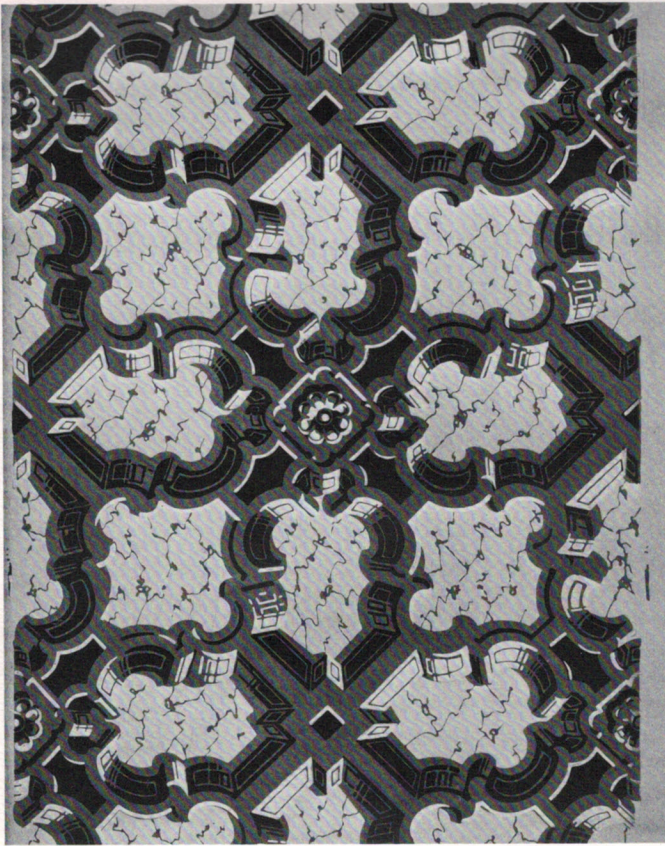
At the other end of the spectrum from the roller-printed Swift House pattern is a finely block-printed wallpaper that is a masterful *trompe l'oeil* representation of a carved wooden screen backed by gray marble (45.2). Although the perspective is not consistent from



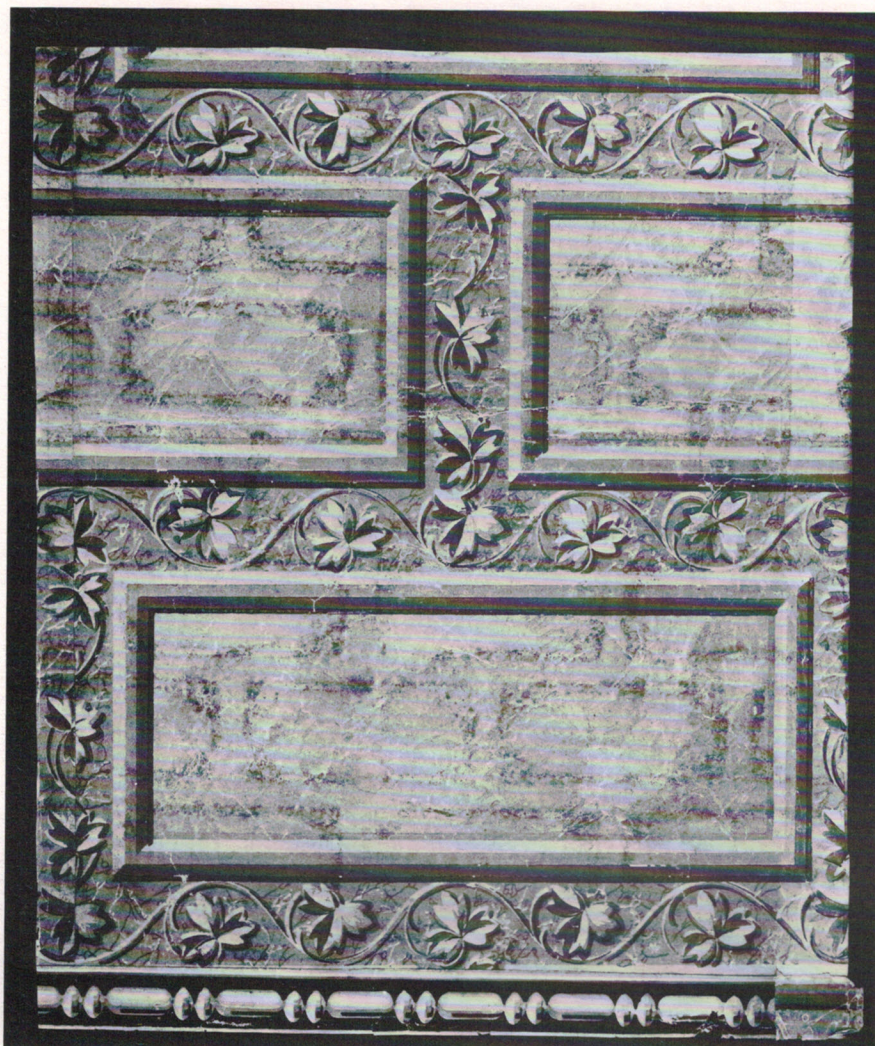
45.1 Ashlar Wallpaper
United States, 1845-1855
Roller-printed in gray, brown, and taupe
on white satin ground
Continuous paper; 19 7/8" (49.9 cm) wide
Printed width: 18 1/2" (47.0 cm); repeat:
18 3/4" (47.6 cm)
1973.121 Gift of Mrs. Quentin Maver

one portion of the design to another, the printed highlights and shadows convincingly create an illusion of depth, which must have made this a vigorous pattern when installed on a wall. The partial rolls in SPNEA's collection are from an unspecified source. A sample of the paper, however, appears in George Creamer's sample book in the 1850s, where it is among his mid-priced papers at 42 cents per roll.³ A roller-printed paper depicting marble panels outlined by raised moldings and surrounded by stylized vines (45.3) combines elements of the two preceding examples. It was the third layer in a sequence, most likely from a hallway, in one of the houses in East Lexington, Massachusetts, associated with the Robbins family. The subtly modeled design, carefully printed in five shades of gray, was used with an elegant, red-and-white, bead-and-reel border.

The Robbins wallpaper sequence demonstrates the continuous popularity of ashlar papers because it is the third layer of the same pattern type, used in the same location in as many decades. The first layer is an 1830s design of gray bricks outlined by bright green Chinese-style meanders. The volatility of the green pigment was such that it absorbed moisture through two subsequent layers of paper and caused mold to grow on the front of the final paper. Dark lines that follow the brick design are visible on the front of the sample. The middle pattern, which survives as an off-print on the reverse of the final layer, was a large ashlar design of plain, marbled



45.2 Marble Wallpaper
Probably United States, 1840-1860
Block-printed in dark gray, two browns,
and light orange on gray satin ground
Continuous paper; 22 3/8" (56.2 cm) wide
Printed width: 20 9/16" (52.2 cm); repeat:
20 1/16" (52.2 cm)
1985.20 Museum Accession



45.3 Ashlar Wallpaper
 England or United States, 1850–1860
 Roller-printed in five grays and white on
 white satin ground
 Continuous paper
 Printed width: 18 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (46.7 cm); repeat:
 18 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (47.9 cm)

Bead-and-Reel Border
 England or United States, 1840–1860
 Block-printed in white and three grays
 and stenciled in red on light gray
 ground
 Continuous paper
 Cut width: 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (4.1 cm); repeat: 2 $\frac{9}{16}$ "
 (6.5 cm)
 1985.4 Gift of Ellen Stone

blocks separated by thin, dark gray mortar joints. This simple type of marble pattern was probably widely used in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1841, Josiah Bumstead remarked that a New York dealer had in stock a "good marble blocked off—40^c [per roll]—satin [ground]," and in

1851 he referred to "300 rolls of block marble best buff satin."⁴ Throughout the period of his journals, from the early 1840s to the early 1860s, Bumstead frequently referred to "marbles" and "siennas" (sienna marble), intended for use with or without columns. These were not necessarily printed into ashlar patterns, however. In addition to COLUMNAR papers, Bumstead advertised in an 1853 circular:

MARBLE AND GRANITE.—Sienna, of variegated hues and veins; White do.; Scagliola do.; Egyptian do.; varnished or unvarnished. Also, the Scotch Frosted Granites, veined. These, cut into large or small blocks, are much used in halls, entries, &c., producing a substantial looking effect, and withal very durable in wear.⁵

Granites, as labeled in George Creamer's book of samples, were papers splattered with color to

simulate the grain of the stone. One such paper is in SPNEA's collection, used by the Robbins and Stone families of East Lexington.⁶ Small round splashes of black and white randomly cover a deep gray ground.

As late as the 1870s, a roller-printed paper with brown, marbled blocks divided by bands of stylized orange flowers was used in the hall of an early-nineteenth-century house in Charlestown, Massachusetts.⁷ This example marks the end of the tradition of imitation stone wallpapers in halls. In the 1870s tastemakers began to advocate hall treatments of dado, fill, and frieze in the Aesthetic styles (see entry 59).

1. Bumstead, 2:211, [n.d.]; 2:178, Jan. 20, 1842.

2. Billhead of Josiah F. Bumstead & Co., Sept. 12, 1853, Trade Cards and Billheads Collection, SPNEA Archives.

3. Creamer sample book, no. 557.

4. Bumstead, 1:118, Oct. 21, 1841; 6:607, May 14, 1851.

5. Circular letter, J. F. Bumstead & Co., 1853, Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, 74×281, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.

6. SPNEA access. no. 1968.51.

7. SPNEA access. no. 1980.203.

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Redecoration of the Samuel Fowler House

In 1841 John Hayman, Jr., a Salem painter, billed Henry Fowler (1810–1881) for painting the inside of his house, glazing some windows, and "Laying 55 $\frac{1}{2}$ rolls paper."¹ Fowler lived with his father, Samuel, in the Danversport house built in 1810 (28-a). This major refurbishing came three years after the younger Fowler's marriage.

Which, if any, of the many mid-nineteenth-century wallpapers associated with the Fowler house

